

KEEP COMING BACK
(second draft)

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A BIG GUY

Stares at us, getting a good read. His name is JAMES FEARING (30's).

And sitting across from him, in a La-Z-Boy chair, is a thirty-two year old man.

His name is MARK.

The year is 1992.

JAMES

You look comfortable, is that comfortable?

MARK

Sure.

JAMES

Does it, like, recline?

MARK

Yeah.

Mark reclines.

JAMES

Nice.

Mark returns to an upright position.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So, maybe you know why I'm here.

MARK

I think so, sure.

JAMES

My name is James--

He reaches to shake Mark's hand, knocking over a bunch of empty beer cans with a sudden CRASH.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Whoa, sorry.

MARK

No, it's cool.

James tidies up, methodically stacking the cans (there's a lot of them).

Then.

JAMES

Listen. I don't wanna waste your time, so why don't we just get to it and I'll be outta your hair, OK?

MARK

Sure.

Beat.

JAMES

You drink, what, beer?

MARK

Yeah, beer mostly.

JAMES

How many?

MARK

Couple a day.

JAMES

Couple a day. Where, like with your buddies, watching the game kinda thing?

MARK

Nah, not really.

JAMES

Where do you drink?

MARK

Usually here, or ... in my car.

JAMES

In your car.

MARK

Sometimes.

JAMES

What, you got like a case under the seat, or--

MARK

Yeah, under the seat like.

JAMES

And you just toss the empties, where?

MARK
In the trunk.

JAMES
Toss the empties in the trunk,
sure. You drink alone?

MARK
Mostly. Yeah.

JAMES
Alone in the car.

MARK
Yeah.

JAMES
Hm.

Silence. James thinks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
So, whattayou think, Mark.

MARK
What.

JAMES
You drink alone in your car and you
toss the empties in the trunk.

Stares.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Whattayou think?

MARK
Well, you know, that's ... probably
not *normal*.

JAMES
Ya think?

MARK
... no ...

JAMES
Here's what we're gonna do.

Leans in real close.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There's Plan A-- which I *highly* recommend. And then there's Plan B. Now, Plan A's got rope swings. You like rope swings?

MARK

Rope swings? Yeah.

JAMES

Plan A's got rope swings. Lounging by the pool kinda thing. Tennis courts, a fireplace-- *I've done Plan A.* I like Plan A. It's like a big country club in Wisconsin, which is gorgeous this time of year, by the way. Chilled out, cleared my head, cuz back then, *man-* I was struggling just to keep up appearances, right?

(beat)

Maybe you know what I mean.

Mark bites his lip.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Maybe not.

MARK

What's Plan B?

JAMES

You don't want Plan B.

MARK

Why?

JAMES

You don't want Plan B.

MARK

Maybe I do.

JAMES

Plan B ...

A HUGE SHOE lands with a THUD on a coffee table.

JAMES (CONT'D)

--involves my size 13's.

Mark stares.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Whattaya think. Chill out for a
month. *Re-lax.*

MARK
I mean, that sounds nice, but--

A PHONE slides across the table.

JAMES
Let's give em a call.

MARK
I dunno, I just lost my job and I
can't really afford something like
that.

James turns to Mark's wife, SHARON (30's), who's been
standing there all along.

JAMES
Can he afford it?

SHARON
It's covered.

JAMES
Your wife says it's covered.

MARK
(to Sharon)
Where you gettin that kind of
money?

James slips a pamphlet into Mark's hand.

JAMES
There's the number.

MARK
How would I even get there--

JAMES
I'll take you.

Silence. There's nothing more.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Why don't we give em a call.

Mark bites his lip again.

MARK
(to Sharon)
If I go ... will you--

SHARON
That's not fair.

JAMES
Your wife loves you very much.

MARK
She's divorcing me. I dunno.

JAMES
Let me ask you one more question.

Beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What are you pretending not to
know, Mark?

Mark blinks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What are you *pretending not to
know?*

Mark's eyes well up and *he breaks down.* Hard.

JAMES (CONT'D)
C'mere.

James leans over, KNOCKING the stack of empty beer cans
again, wrapping Mark in a huge bear hug and smothering his
face.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Let's do this.

WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

EXT. A SUBURBAN HOME - MINNEAPOLIS, MN. - DAY

Garage door open, cars in the street.

A makeshift den.

And sitting among the free weights, air hockey table and a
stray pizza box, Mark slowly dials the number on the
pamphlet.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm a sad man.

OFF-SCREEN LAUGHTER.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No, seriously, I am. I'm a deeply
unsatisfied person.

INT. AIRPORT BAR - NIGHT

A small, dark bar packed with men in suits.

Mark is hammered.

A dozen or so beer bottles are lined up on the counter, his face near purple with laughter: James dances "The Running Man," working his way through the crowd, approaching Mark with a single bottle of beer.

JAMES (V.O.)
I was ruined as a little boy.
Holly Fitzgerald. You guys know
who I'm talking about.

MORE OFF-SCREEN LAUGHTER

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You didn't touch her, did you? Cuz
I'll kill you. I will.

LAUGHTER AGAIN (*sounds of a comedy club?*)

James hands Mark the beer.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(over the music)
This is your last one, my man.

INT. AIRPLANE - MOVING - NIGHT

Economy Class.

Mark is passed out on James's shoulder, the entire cabin dark except a single light above James: he's engrossed in a magazine or something, a pen aloft ...

JAMES (V.O.)
She was the girl who undressed with
the shades open, right?

A catalog. CLOSE-UP: a photo of an luxury leather briefcase. He circles it.

EXT. RECOVERY CENTER - OCONOMOWOC, WI. - DAY

Mark steps out of a cab, hung-over, looking at a squat, concrete fortress: an insane asylum (or certainly looks like one).

MARK
Whoa, wait a minute--

James throws an arm around Mark and muscles him towards the entrance.

INT. RECOVERY CENTER - DAY

Patient intake.

Mark just stands there, staring at the near-empty Visiting Room, a TV blaring a *Roadrunner* cartoon to no one.

JAMES (V.O.)
She was the girl who sunbathed on
the front lawn, you get the idea.

A friendly-looking WOMAN takes Mark's hand with a smile.

WOMAN
(sing-song)
Hi, I'm Beverly. Why don't we--

And she ushers him down a long, endless hallway, Mark looking back at James over his shoulder.

James gives him a Thumbs Up and a Wink.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sharon sits beside her FATHER (60's), counting out several hundred dollar bills, slapping them down on the kitchen table.

JAMES (V.O.)
And I'm convinced that God put this
girl, Holly, on the planet to test
me.

OFF-SCREEN LAUGHTER

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Keep laughing, but I'm serious.

James scoops up the wad of cash and pockets it, vigorously shaking the man's hand.

CUT TO:

AN ITALIAN LEATHER MEN'S BRIEFCASE

Swinging at James' side, as he swaggers out of the Mall of America.

JAMES (V.O.)
Cuz if she's not part of some
larger plan, then I am truly lost.

CUT TO:

THE SAME LEATHER BRIEFCASE

Now resting on a podium. A church basement. An AA Meeting.

And James stands before fifty or so AAs, continuing to lead a "speaker meeting."

MARK sits in the front row, a nervous newbie.

JAMES
She was a demon.

LAUGHTER.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She was. I met Holly at a birthday
party for a buddy of mine ...

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The BUDDY of his (14) is being spun in circles beneath a unicorn piñata, blindfolded. He grips a big whiffle bat.

JAMES (V.O.)
And she just plopped down right
next to me ...

A fourteen-year old James Fearing (ratty jeans, Allman Bros. T-shirt) and a fourteen-year old HOLLY FITZGERALD (designer jean-skirt, pert, WASP), sit side by side, a quilt covering their laps.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Grabbed my hand and ...

BENEATH THE BLANKET: James has his hand beneath Holly's skirt, rubbing the crotch of her tights.

CUT BACK TO:

JAMES - AA MEETING

He stares in the mid-distance ...

JAMES
It was ... I dunno.

The meeting gets real quiet. (A cough)

JAMES (CONT'D)
But I know this ...

CUT TO:

A CLOSET

James and Holly make-out behind a row of winter jackets, tongues deep in each others' mouths.

JAMES (V.O.)
It was Holly that gave me my first drink.

She takes a swig from a BOTTLE OF GIN and offers it to him.

He takes a sniff.

Then ...

Takes a swig.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And that was it.

Holly rips open his shirt, buttons popping, and breathes hard into his ear--

HOLLY
I wanna lick your guts.

James pulls back, wide-eyed.

JAMES (V.O.)
 Something happened to me that
 night.

CUT BACK TO:

A FOLDED NOTE

With Mark's name on it, quietly passing from hand to hand,
 landing at Mark.

JAMES
 It was my First. The First Drink,
 the First Hit, the First Kiss, the
 First.

He unfolds it: "Easy does it"

Looks up at James. James WINKS at him, *That's for you.*

JAMES (CONT'D)
 And we all know I didn't have a
 fighting chance.

Solemn nods, *Amen*, Mark nodding too, watching and following
 the group's cues.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 But we had a great time, didn't we?

Laughter.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Until we didn't.

CUT TO:

THE CLOSET DOORS

Sliding open with a SLAM.

HOLLY
Daddy, no!

And HOLLY'S DAD (30's), a man with a mustache, reaches into
 the dark and YANKS James out in the open.

JAMES (V.O.)
 I swear to God, I couldn't get
 enough of this girl.

INT. CAFETERIA - HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Prom.

A wonderland of streamers.

JAMES (V.O.)
I tried other girls over the years.

A sixteen-year old James (in a rented tux) and his bored, skinny GIRLFRIEND (a pink dress) sit at a cafeteria table.

They both blankly watch HOLLY, sitting across from them, devour some big, handsome QUARTERBACK, her mouth and hands all over him.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But there was only one Holly.

UNDER THE TABLE: Holly slips her bare foot up James's pant leg. She drowsily opens her eyes, watches him, making sure he's paying attention, smiles, and then closes her eyes again, working over her date.

James blinks.

He wordlessly stands up ... and PUNCHES the Quarterback.

INT. HOLLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

An eighteen-year old James and Holly are half-naked in her single bed, DRUNK, passing a bottle of wine between them.

JAMES (V.O.)
My life made sense with Holly.

A KNOCK at the door, the handle jiggling, locked, and they scramble to their clothes--

HOLLY'S DAD busts down the door (his moustache a bit gray now), charges at James and YANKS him out the door.

HOLLY
Daddy, no!

JAMES (V.O.)
My life had purpose with Holly.

CUT TO:

THE FITZGERALD MANOR

James is tossed out the front door, barefoot, his shirt ripped and Holly watches from her third floor bedroom window.

Holly's Dad rolls up his sleeves, squaring off with James.

HOLLY'S DAD
You stay the hell away from my--

James PUNCHES him, suddenly, a wild throw and they both fall to the grass, wrestling on the front lawn.

HOLLY
Daddy, no!

JAMES (V.O.)
*I was to get trashed. Every day.
 All day. Till I die.*

CUT TO:

JAMES

Slamming a beer, sitting beside a beach campfire, a guitar in his lap.

JAMES (V.O.)
*But God had a plan, he does, I'm
 here to tell you ...*

And through the flames of the fire, a cute COLLEGE GIRL stares at James over the rim of her plastic cup.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 (singing)
*"Wake up Maggie, I think I got
 something to say to you--"*

Maggie May by Rod Stewart.

Kids are leaving, booing, a beer can hits James' guitar, but he doesn't stop ...

And she doesn't move.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Her name was Colleen.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

James and Colleen sit next to each other now, alone.

COLLEEN

How can you say that?!

JAMES

Listen, I don't expect you to
understand *Blazing Saddles*--

They lean into each other, *fiercely debating*, eyes bright
with excitement.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She didn't take any of my bullshit.

JAMES AND COLLEEN

Stroll along the lake shore, the sun rising, *still arguing*.

COLLEEN

That is COMPLETELY insane.

JAMES

It's the truth, though, right?

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She stopped me dead in my tracks.

PARKING LOT - MORNING

Kids shuffle back to their cars, hung-over, and James
awkwardly stands at Colleen's car, her GIRLFRIENDS half-
asleep in the backseat.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And for a guy like me, who was
racing for the finish line--

He LUNGES FOR HER-- and she quickly pulls back.

COLLEEN

Going in for the kill, huh.

Dumb stare.

JAMES

No.

Runs his hand through his hair.

COLLEEN
You got my number, right?

JAMES
Sure.

COLLEEN
OK, then.

She hops in her car.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
Use it.

And she drives off.

JAMES (V.O.)
We were married a year later.

CUT BACK TO:

JAMES - PRESENT

A big smile.

JAMES
And I never saw Holly again. She
was shipped off to some fancy
university and that was that.
(beat)
Except once.

CUT TO:

AN AUDITORIUM

A ten-year high-school reunion.

JAMES (V.O.)
I was pretending to be a normie,
then.

A twenty-seven year old James (beer in hand) and Colleen sit
at a dinner table.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But not Holly.

HOLLY sits across from them, throwing back a shot, her arm
loosely hung over a big, HANDSOME GUY.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
She hadn't changed at all.

Colleen silently watches her husband as he animatedly talks to Holly, leaning close, touching her arm.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was like we were in high school
all over again.

CUT TO:

A DARK HALLWAY

Lined with lockers, music quietly coming from the auditorium.
And at the end of the long, dark hallway, TWO SILHOUETTES huddle close together.

JAMES (V.O.)
And even though I had convinced
myself that I had everything under
control-- I was married, working a
job, looking to the future ...

James and Holly greedily kiss, their mouths all over each other, breathing hard.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was lost.

VOICE (O.S.)
Jim?

James quickly pulls away, caught, revealing:

COLLEEN.

Just standing there, eyes wet, clutching her purse.

CUT BACK TO:

JAMES - PRESENT

A big sigh.

JAMES
I finally checked myself into
treatment ...
(beat)
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
 See, I'm committed to the service,
 working the steps, thankful to be
 alive, but I gotta tell ya-- it's
 not easy.

It gets quiet again.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 When you're eleven years sober, the
 Holly Fitzgeralds of the world only
 get farther and farther from your
 grasp, *Thank God*, but here's the
 kicker: *She will always be a part
 of us.*

He stares at the audience for a moment, as if he's going to
 say something else ...

Then.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Keep coming back. Thank you.

APPLAUSE.

CUT TO:

MARK

Walking fast, moving through a large group of AAs (all
 smoking) and into the church parking lot.

VOICE (O.S.)
Hey, man, hold up.

SOMEONE jogs after him, Mark picking up the pace, pretending
 not to hear--

VOICE (CONT'D)
 MARK.

And Mark STOPS, caught, a MAN stepping up to him with an
 outstretched hand--

MAN
 Hey. I'm Potts.

MARK
 Hey.

They shake.

POTTS
 First meeting, huh?

MARK

Yeah.

POTTS

Got a sponsor yet?

MARK

Yep.

POTTS

Really?

MARK

No, not yet, but ... yeah.

A shrug.

MARK (CONT'D)

I should probably--

POTTS

Why don't you come out with us?

MARK

No, I got some ... stuff.

POTTS

James wants to check in with you,
see how you're doin.

MARK

I can't right now.

POTTS

Cup of coffee, meet the Gang.

MARK

I can't.

CUT TO:

INT. ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mark sits in a booth.

James, Potts and CHIEF (70's), a silent AA Old-timer, sit across from Mark, watching him.

He shifts in his seat.

JAMES

Fire in them eyes ...

They all solemnly nod.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You got fire in them eyes, Mark.

MARK
Allergies.

JAMES
Talk to me.

MARK
Nothing to talk about, really.

JAMES
You did treatment.

MARK
Yep.

JAMES
How you feelin.

MARK
Fine. Good.

Mark shifts in his seat again.

JAMES
What'd you think of tonight's
meeting?

MARK
Fine.

Nods and smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)
Listen. You guys seem like cool
guys ...

JAMES
We are.

MARK
But I'm just not feeling it, this
whole AA thing. I mean, no
offense, but I got, like, *real*
issues.

(beat)
The divorce.

Nothing.

MARK (CONT'D)
Lost my job ...

Still nothing.

MARK (CONT'D)
Losing my house, my kid, so--

JAMES
You're an alcoholic.

MARK
I'm not. Anymore.

JAMES
You are.

MARK
I did treatment.

JAMES
It's called alcholism, not
alcoholwasm.

MARK
Well, I'm not like you guys, OK,
with all your God talk and "inner
treasure"-- *I'm done.* That's
over. Now I just gotta, like, get
my life back together.

JAMES
(waving)
Excuse me.

Their WAITRESS (20's) steps up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Whoa. Who are you?

WAITRESS
Allison.

JAMES
You're new. Welcome Allison. This
is Mark, *he's single*, and this is
Potts (*Hello*) that's Chief (*a nod*)
and I'm James ...

Hands her a business card.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We'd like to get an order of potato
skins and mozzarella sticks--
wait. Does this Sampler thing ...
(reads the menu)
No, no, let's get this. Let's just
get the Sampler, and--
(to Mark)
Coffee?
(he nods)
Four coffees. And I want a vanilla
milk shake.

ALLISON
We don't have--

JAMES
NO!
(SLAMS the table)
All right. Let's just get one of
those huge slices of carrot cake.
For everyone.

ALLISON
You got it.

She leaves.

JAMES
You're not special, Mark.

Mark blinks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Those are some high quality
problems you got there, but they
don't impress me.

POTTS
"Terminal uniqueness."

Chief gravely nods.

JAMES
They're dying all around us, Potts,
of terminal uniqueness.

A muffled RING. James reaches into his briefcase, lifting a
huge plastic brick to his ear: A Motorola MOBILE PHONE.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Dr. James Fearing ...
(rolls his eyes)
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Bullets, Dee, bullets ...
 Get the digits, close it up, then
 call me.
 (covers the mouthpiece)
You want a job?

MARK
Really?

JAMES
 I'm hanging up, Dee. I'm doin it,
 it's coming, here it comes--

He hangs up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 You're hired.

MARK
Wow. Thank you.

JAMES
 On one condition ...

Leans in.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 I'm your sponsor.

Another muffled RING.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Hold that thought.

James answers the enormous phone again.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Dr. James Fearing.
 (he deflates)
 Picking us up some food, baby, did
 you want that carrot cake?

He throws down a handful of bills, pushing Potts and Chief
 out of the booth.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 No, I'm in the car, coming down the
 street right now, bye.

He hangs up, the Gang standing over Mark.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Whattaya say, I'm throwing you a
 life jacket, here.

MARK

Let me think about it.

JAMES

We're over here in a boat and
you're out there treading water.

MARK

What would I have to do?

JAMES

Simple. I'm in charge. You do as
I say and you don't leave my side
till I put out that fire in your
eyes.

MARK

I don't even know what that means.

JAMES

What do you want, Mark?

A shrug.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What. Do you. Want?

MARK

I want my life back.

JAMES

Then get off your ass.

An outstretched hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And get on the firing line. Deal?

And with much reluctance, Mark takes it.

MARK

Deal.

They shake.

INT. SMALL SUBURBAN HOME - PLYMOUTH, MN. - NIGHT

James opens the front door a sliver, peeking in.

JAMES

Heeelloooo?

Nothing.

He sneaks in, carrying a plastic LASER TAG GUN, Mark shuffling in behind him, holding take-out bags--

A SCREAM

And two little TODDLERS, a boy and a girl, charge for James, screaming and firing Photon guns.

JAMES (CONT'D)
OhmyGOD, NOOO!

He dives into the foyer, zapping his kids in mid-air, hitting the floor with a LOUD THUD, and the kids overwhelm him, giggling and crawling all over his chest.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You got me.

Mark just stands there, staring at the kids-- *longingly*.

VOICE (O.S.)
Alright, you two.

COLLEEN (30's) stands at the top of a stairway.

COLLEEN
Into bed, let's go.

JAMES
Listen to your Mother, chillens.

They climb off.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Slobbers.

They kiss him and he stands, Mark watching the kids stomp upstairs, past their Mother.

COLLEEN
You know that phone that costs us a thousand bucks a month?

JAMES
Yes.

COLLEEN
It'd be nice if you used it to call me, let us know when--

JAMES
Making money, baby, making money.

COLLEEN
Cuz you got kids here that wait up
for you, I don't know if you know
that.

JAMES
Colleen.

COLLEEN
Do I need to set a curfew for you?
C'mon, don't make me hunt you down.

He points the laser gun at her.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
Jim. See this?
(re: her face)
This is Serious Colleen.

JAMES
How you doin upstairs, you want
some company?

COLLEEN
(re: Mark)
Who's this?

MARK
(blurts)
*You have a lovely house and family,
Mrs. Fearing.*

A frozen smile. Weird beat.

COLLEEN
Thank you. Try convincing your new
best friend there.
(turns on a heel)
There's pillows in the hall closet.

JAMES
Carrot cake?

A door slam.

And a heavy sigh.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Working my way back into the Big
Bed.

He turns to Mark ...

He's gone.

CUT TO:

MARK

Walking fast down a suburban street, juggling the take-out bags, James coming after him.

JAMES

*Where do you think you're goin,
Mark.*

MARK

I gotta get home.

He rushes for a parked Datsun, fumbling with his keys.

JAMES

We made a deal, remember?

MARK

I know, but, I gotta do something.

The keys hit the pavement--

MARK (CONT'D)

Shit.

Mark bends over, quickly snatching the keys, *What are you doin, Mark?*, James SPRINTING at him now and Mark unlocks the car, ducks inside and SLAMS THE DOOR just as James BANGS up against the window-

JAMES

DON'T YOU RUN AWAY FROM ME!

MARK

Leave me alone.

The car roars to life, James banging on the windows and Mark guns it, SCREECHING down the street.

CUT TO:

TAKE-OUT BAGS

Tumbling out of an open car door, a FOOT stepping into the carrot cake and Mark shakes it off, racing up the driveway.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

The front door BURSTS OPEN, Mark standing in the foyer for a moment, eyes wild, looking up the staircase.

MARK
SHARON?!

CUT TO:

ANOTHER DOOR

Banging open, a *SCREAM*, Sharon pulling the covers up to her neck and sitting upright in a bed.

SHARON
What the hell are you doin--

MARK
Don't be mad.

SHARON
You're not supposed to be here.

MARK
Five minutes.

SHARON
You have to leave, now.

MARK
Two minutes.

SHARON
Mark.

MARK
I stopped drinking.

SHARON
I know.

MARK
I'm totally cured. I am. I don't want to drink anymore, and, and--
I got myself a job, an accounting job.

SHARON
You did?

MARK

Great firm, good pay, picking up
exactly where I left off and I'm
thinkin I could move back in, just,
like, for a little while and see
how that goes ...

She softens.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'll move into the garage if you
like, that's no problem, not a
problem at all, whattayou think.

They stare at each other.

SHARON

Honey.

MARK

Please.

SHARON

You have to leave.

MARK

But *I don't want to.*

A silence.

MARK (CONT'D)

How's Max?

SHARON

Sad.

A TERRIFYING SCREECH

Comes from outside, and Mark scurries to the window, pulling
at the curtain, looking down at the front lawn: JAMES.

He hops out of his car (still running) and sprints for the
front door.

MARK

Oh, no.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark quickly enters a dark, little room and shuts the door a
crack, peering out.

KNOCKING and BANGING from downstairs.

VOICE (O.S)

Daddy?

A young voice.

MARK

Oh, hey, kiddo, shhhhh. Try to be quiet, ok?

His four-year old son, MAX, sits upright in a racing-car bed.

MARK (CONT'D)

Wow, I really like your bed. Did you just get this?

A tiny nod. Mark sits down beside him.

MARK (CONT'D)

It's cool.

MAX

Are you staying?

MARK

No. Not tonight, Max.

MAX

When are you coming back?

MARK

Soon, kiddo, soon.

A kiss to the forehead. MORE BANGING from downstairs.

MARK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You go to sleep, OK?

MAX

OK.

Mark goes back to the door, peeking out-- a silent, empty hallway.

Turns back to Max.

MARK

Love you.

But he's already asleep.

CUT TO:

MARK

Moving stealth-like down the hallway stairs, James' booming VOICE coming from somewhere in the house, Sharon speaking to him in hushed tones--

Mark bolts for the front door.

JAMES (O.S.)
Hey, hey, hey, where you goin?!

CUT TO:

MARK SPRINTING

His arms and legs pumping, tearing down the dark, suburban street, the sound of heavy footfalls behind him, getting louder and closer--

JAMES
We made a deal.

Louder and closer and louder and closer and James takes--

A RUNNING LEAP

TACKLING Mark, their bodies hitting the ground, HARD.

MARK
--the FUCK?!

They roll over together and James straddles Mark's back, pulling at his arms--

MARK (CONT'D)
What are you--

Click.

Handcuffs.

MARK (CONT'D)
You're handcuffing me, you can't handcuff me--

JAMES
--the hell I can't.

Pulls him to his feet.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm a doctor.

INT. REC ROOM - FEARING HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

James lies on a pull-out bed, wrapped in a sleeping bag and picking at the smashed carrot cake, absently watching the local news.

Mark sits on the edge of the bed, the Big Book in his lap, his hands cuffed to a side table.

MARK
Could you just- please, undo these?

JAMES
Working the steps, c'mon.

MARK
It's, like, really diggin into my wrists.

JAMES
Step One.

A heavy sigh, then.

MARK
(reading)
"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol."

A silence.

MARK (CONT'D)
Step Two?

Mark looks up: James is fixated on the TV.

A female Sportscaster shoves a microphone at a shirtless QUARTERBACK. Beneath the Sportscaster, the graphic reads:

"HOLLY FITZGERALD"

MARK (CONT'D)
Wait.

JAMES
Yep.

MARK
No. Is that ... ?

JAMES
The punch line.

MARK
Whoa.

James nods.

JAMES
It never goes away, my man.

MARK
That sucks.

A montage of Holly interviewing celebrity ATHLETES: a baseball player, a boxer, a jockey, landing on a black-n-white mug shot. James turns the volume up:

VOICE (V.O.)
--a *misdemeanor, but her second DUI*
is considered a felony due to the
extensive property damage done to
the Burger King drive-thru. Ms.
Fitzgerald is now facing a possible
year in jail ...

James just stares at the TV, not moving.

JAMES
(under his breath)
... you need help ...

MARK
She hasn't changed much, huh.

James' eyes flicker with the blue light of the monitor ...

MARK (CONT'D)
James.

Hypnotized.

MARK (CONT'D)
I have to piss.

CUT TO:

THE NEXT DAY

James and Mark sit in a parked Chevy Cavalier, staring at the Fitzgerald mansion (looking the same since we last saw it).

Mark is cuffed to the door handle.

JAMES
We're gonna behave, right?

MARK
Yeah.

James reaches over and unlocks the handcuffs, handing Mark a PAMPHLET.

JAMES
First assignment. Stick this--
(points to the mansion)
Into the front door there.

MARK
Why?

He's PUSHED out the door--

Then, James grabs his arm.

JAMES
Look at me.
(serious)
Don't get stupid.

MARK
I get it, no funny business, fine.

Mark gets out of the car.

And he lopes across the vast front lawn, sighing, taking in the general peace and tranquility of suburban Edina, Minneapolis: a Jag in the driveway, the lawn jockey in the garden, the bright tulips ...

MARK (CONT'D)
Cake eaters.

He steps onto the porch. Quietly opens the screen door--

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS

And a woman stands there, CLAIRE FITZGERALD (60's), tall, patrician and surprised.

CLAIRES
Can I help you?

MARK
Uh.

He sticks the pamphlet into her hand.

And abruptly turns away, walking fast to the already moving car.

JAMES
Get in, get in, get in.

And he gets in, the Cavalier tearing down the street.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Good work.

INT. OFFICE - STRIP MALL - MORNING

"The National Counselling Intervention Specialist"

A staff of four. All recovering addicts.

"The James Gang."

There's BOBBY, (40's), ex-convict, steely, one year sober, SPANKS (30's), always smiling and always thirty days sober, and DEE (20's), skateboarder, covered in tattoos, just barely thirty days sober.

James opens the door, pushing Mark with his briefcase (Napa leather)--

James STOPS.

JAMES
Seriously?

Everyone freezes.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You're seriously wearing shorts in
my office.

And Dee stands, a manila folder in his hand. He's wearing "jams."

DEE
I thought--

JAMES
You thought I wasn't coming in
today?

DEE
Right.

JAMES
This is Mark, everyone.

Hello, Hi Mark.

JAMES (CONT'D)
And I had hoped to show Mark how professional and serious-minded we all are here, but since Dee didn't think I was coming in today, I guess it's OK to sit around in *SHORTS* and jerk off.

DEE
I'm sorry--

JAMES
No, it's cool, let's all get a little more comfortable.

He starts to unbuckle his belt--

JAMES (CONT'D)
Give our balls some air.

His pants hit the ground.

The PHONE RINGS.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Don't answer that.

It rings. And rings and rings and rings.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Go ahead, pick it up, Spanks.

Spanks, sitting at a desk, slowly picks up the phone.

SPANKS
(quiet)
National Counselling Intervention
Specialist, how may I help you?

James stands there, defiant, his pants around his ankles.

DEE
I'm sorry.

JAMES
Lose my number.

DEE
C'mon, James--

JAMES
*I'M SAVING LIVES, GODDAMNIT, AND
YOU'RE WEARING SHORTS!*

Quiet.

DEE
I got someone on the hook, just now-

JAMES
Get outta here.

James rips the manila file from Dee and shoves it into Mark's hand.

DEE
*It's big, just came in, look at the
folder--*

SPANKS
(waves excitedly)
Gotta live one here.

James quickly pulls up his pants.

JAMES
Watch and learn.

INT. JAMES' CORNER OFFICE - MORNING

Certificates and family photos, all framed, line the walls and hang above tropical aquariums. Lots and lots of aquariums.

James reaches for his desk phone, pointing to the phone on a coffee table.

JAMES
Use that phone there.

Mark sits on the couch, reaching for it--

JAMES (CONT'D)
Hold up.
(serious)
Addicts are easy, families are
hard. Say it.

MARK
Addicts are easy, families are
hard.

JAMES
Remember it. You ready?

MARK
What am I doin?

JAMES
You're on the firing line now, kid.
One. Two. THREE--

They both pick up the phone.

CUT TO:

A YOUNG LADY

Sitting on the floor.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A call comes in, like this young
lady ...

Her back is against the bed, clutching a phone, whispering:

YOUNG LADY
My husband ... he drinks.

JAMES (V.O.)
She doesn't really know why she's
calling. She's looking for any
excuse to hang up and as much as
she wants her situation to change,
she'd rather keep things the same.
It's easier. Safer.

There's a BANG at the door. She jumps, frantically reaching
for her purse.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
So we got this window, a very small
one, to get her to agree to an
intervention ...

CLOSE-UP: A hand searches the purse, pulling out a VISA
card.

CUT TO:

A PHONE

Slamming down.

JAMES

And that's how they do it downtown,
baby.

INT. TRACT HOME - SEWARD - AFTERNOON

A door opens.

James and Mark stand on the front porch, smiling.

JAMES (V.O.)

Pre-intervention. Lemmee break it
down ...

A CRAMPED LIVING ROOM

The entire family is stuffed onto a couch: GRANDMA, MOM, STEP-DAD, the BEST FRIEND and the Young Lady (LAURA), all stoic, all hard nuts to crack.

JAMES (V.O.)

For twenty minutes or so, I beat em
up a little, give them a crash
course in AA 101 ...

James sits across from the family, on the edge of his seat,
wildly gesticulating--

JAMES (CONT'D)

And WHY do you enable Milo?
Because you LOVE Milo, and the
powerful stuff of secrets and
silence will kill him, folks--
bottom line, it will KILL him--

--spitting out the words, Mark dutifully taking notes at his side.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then I turn the tables round and
let them talk ...

GRANDMA

James kneels beside her, holding her hand.

GRANDMA
He's my only grandson. Curly hair.
Girls just loved him ...
(breaks down)
I miss my little baby.

James hugs her.

JAMES (V.O.)
By now, everyone's crying. So we
break for an Intermission.

INTERMISSION

James and Mark huddle on the back porch, eating home-baked cookies.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Whattaya think?

MARK
It's a ...

JAMES
It's cool, right? You're having a
good time.

MARK
Not really.

JAMES
If you wanna stay sober, Mark, you
gotta be on the firing line.

Beat.

He points to Mark's note pad.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'd jot that down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - TRACT HOME - NIGHT

Everyone is standing.

JAMES (V.O.)
Now I'm Steven fuckin Spielberg ...

James pulls the Best Friend to the couch.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You're gonna sit here. And you--

Points to the Step-Dad.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You'll sit right here, next in
line.

SHEETS OF PAPER

Are passed from hand to hand.

JAMES (V.O.)
Then I prepare their scripts ...

James stands in front of the family, lecturing them:

JAMES (CONT'D)
Letter One. Show Milo what he's
done. Stick to the facts. Go
ahead, Laura, give it a go.

Milo's wife sits upright, giving it a go:

LAURA
Milo. You're embarrassing. Stop
drinking.

Silence.

JAMES
OK. That was nice. Now, let's try
starting every sentence with "I"
instead of "You."

LAURA
Milo. I'm embarrassed. Stop
drinking.

JAMES
OK, sure. Letter Two. Tell Milo
how his addiction has affected you.

Milo's Best Friend.

BEST FRIEND
I took you to that Anthony Robbins
thing and you just kept making fun
of it and talking loud and I dunno.
You vomited. In your lap. Right
in the middle of the seminar.
(beat)
I didn't appreciate that.

MILO'S MOTHER

A petite little woman, cries.

MILO'S MOM

And you're screaming, "F your
grilled cheese sandwiches, I hate
your *effin* grilled cheese
sandwiches, how about making me
some *effin* waffles for a change,
bitch."

MILO'S STEP-DAD

Steely-eyed.

STEP-DAD

I just want my car back.

James claps his hands.

JAMES

*All right, let's save some of this
for tomorrow. Final Letter.
What's your bottom line?*

Points down the row.

JAMES (CONT'D)

GO.

LAURA

I won't let him stay at the house.

JAMES

Good. *GO.*

GRANDMA

I won't talk to him when he's
being crazy?

JAMES

That's right. *GO.*

MOM

I won't pay his bills.

JAMES

GO.

BEST FRIEND
No more booze runs.

JAMES
GO.

STEP-DAD
I'll call the cops next time.

JAMES
Yes, you will, great, great.

He stands.

JAMES (CONT'D)
So. Are there any final questions?

A raised hand.

STEP-DAD
This is a crock of shit.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - MORNING

James and Mark stride across a parking lot, the family following in a tight group behind them.

JAMES (V.O.)
The Intervention is scheduled for the next morning, because things seem more possible in the morning.

James stands outside the motel door. He silently motions to Milo's wife and she joins him. He KNOCKS on the door.

Nothing.

He makes a rolling gesture at Laura, *Go ahead.*

LAURA
Milo? It's Laura. Everyone's here and we just wanna talk ...

She looks at James:

JAMES
(mouths)
I love you.

LAURA
I love you ... honey.

A BANG against the door, everyone jumping back.

MILO (O.S.)
*I am NOT (unintelligible) if you
 fuckers (unintelligible) kill
 myself, I will--*

James points at Mark, *C'mere*, and Mark squeezes through.

JAMES
 (mouths)
One.

MARK
 (mouths)
What?!

JAMES
Two.

LAURA
 (hissing)
What are you doin?

JAMES
 It's OK. I'm a doctor.

KICKS IN THE DOOR

The door blown off the hinges ...

A dim hell. Furniture turned over, bottles everywhere. A lamp giving off a urine glow. And MILO. A squirrely, tiny bald dude. Tighty-whiteys.

He waves a whiskey bottle.

MILO
I fucks you up, bitches.

And he TOSSES THE BOTTLE--

SHATTERING across Mark's head.

He's down. And Milo's gone, a DOOR SLAMMING, locked in the bathroom and James takes a running start, KICKING THE DOOR DOWN, splintering it in two.

He stops, standing there in the doorway:

The window is open, a curtain blowing in the wind.

CUT TO:

JAMES SPRINTING

On the shoulder of a highway, Milo running ahead of him, wearing nothing but his underwear, cars zipping by, honking.

JAMES
IT'S NOT OK TO BE WHO YOU ARE!

They keep running and running and running,

JAMES (CONT'D)
*DRUNK OR SOBER, MILO, IT'S NOT OK
TO BE WHO YOU ARE!*

And running and running, till finally, Milo just collapses at the side of the road, coughing and retching, in the fetal position.

James falls to his knees beside him, breathing hard.

Milo lies there. Sobbing.

CUT TO:

JAMES

Carrying the near-naked Milo in his arms, like a child, plodding alongside the road, cars flying by in a constant blur.

JAMES (V.O.)
The rest is easy.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The family sit at their marks, reading from their letters.

JAMES (V.O.)
We offer him the Golden Ticket.

Milo's on the bed, wrapped in a blanket.

LAURA
Will you accept this gift that we are giving you?

MILO
Don't leave me.

LAURA
C'mon, that's not fair--

MILO
I'll get better, OK, just no
divorce.

Mark blinks, staring wide-eyed at the familiar scene.

LAURA
Will you accept this gift. Please.

MILO
... ok ...

Everyone bolts to their feet, erupting in tears and hugs.

JAMES (V.O.)
We offer him an opportunity to get
help, to save his life.

James watches the family ... holding back his own tears.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's my favorite part.

Mark watches him.

JAMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And that's why I do this.

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

James drives and Mark sits in the passenger seat (head bandaged). Milo's slumped in the backseat, passed out.

JAMES
(into the phone)
Needle's in the red zone, Potts,
bullets, gimmee bullets-- A
CELEBRITY?! Really?
(to Mark)
You got that client folder I gave
you?

Mark reaches for James' briefcase (crocodile leather),
opening the manila folder.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I haven't been in the office, how
would I know, just tell me who it
is ...

Mark stares at the file.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Fine, I'll check it out. You're
one of the dozens, Potts, seeya at
the OPH.

Tosses the phone.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What, who we got there?

He rips the folder out of Mark's hands.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Potts won't tell me ...

A sheet of form paper.

CLIENT NAME: Holly Fitzgerald

...

The car slowly pulls over to the side of the road. They sit
in silence, the car idle.

Crickets.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Mark.

MARK
Yeah?

JAMES
How you doin, you good?

MARK
Me?

JAMES
Yeah, you OK?

MARK
I think so.

Mark thinks, staring out the window.

MARK (CONT'D)
It's weird.

Looks back at Milo, drooling on himself.

MARK (CONT'D)
That was me ... like, twenty-eight days ago.

JAMES
Twenty nine days. Don't sell yourself short.

A big smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You're kickin ass, man.

MARK
I am?

JAMES
You're doin it.

MARK
I am, right?

JAMES
You're finding your way.

MARK
James, I don't wanna be like that--
(thumbs at Milo)
That's not me. I gotta be better
than that if I want my life back,
you know.

JAMES
Now you're talkin--

MARK
Tell me what to do, man, you're my
sponsor, I'm all in, what's next.

JAMES
Listen.

He listens.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm not going anywhere. *I'm here.*
Follow my lead, do as I say, you'll
get well.

Mark takes that in.

MARK
What about ...

Points to the file.

JAMES
(laughs)
Oh, fuck.

James stares at the folder, nodding mechanically.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Our first celebrity client, huh?

A frozen smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We've hit the big time.

INT. ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

The entire "James Gang" is there. Coffee and pie.

James holds court.

JAMES
We just snatched ourselves a big
payday, gentlemen. Give it up for
Dee.

Dee is back, *Applause*, he smiles sheepishly.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's funny. I was just talkin
about this the other day with
Chief, remember?

Chief nods knowingly.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Our first celebrity client.

James leans back luxuriously.

JAMES (CONT'D)
This is monumental. HUGE. You
know what this means--

DEE
Geraldo.

JAMES
Geraldo, Sally Jessy, Maury, all of
em, let the whole world know what
we're doin out here, right guys?

They all smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Get that celebrity into treatment,
keep that celebrity sober, make the
rich client happy, and *BAM*, next
thing you know it's long, black
cars and cigars.

Yeah.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Spanks.

SPANKS
Yessir.

JAMES
I need you to set things up with
Betty Ford.

SPANKS
Got it.

JAMES
Potts. Arrange some First Class
transportation. No more Last Class
for us, get us three tickets:
myself, our celebrity and Mark,
here.

Mark raises an eyebrow.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Mark killed it today, guys.

Nice work, light applause.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Bobby.

Bobby perks up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We need to borrow your Beemer.

BOBBY
Done.

JAMES
Need it tomorrow.

BOBBY

No problem. Lemmee ask my wife,
but, yeah, it should be cool.

JAMES

Bobby, c'mon.

BOBBY

I'll rent one.

Points to Chief and Dee.

JAMES

Chief, Dee, you guys'll be our
floaters-- get Milo's clothes to
Hazelden, be on call, hold down the
fort.

DEE

Copy that.

JAMES

Allison.

Points to the waitress, walking by.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You're gonna take my credit card
here and pay for the entire meal.

ALLISON

Yessir.

Thanks from the Gang.

Then.

SPANKS

I could take this one, James.

JAMES

What- whatayou mean.

SPANKS

Well, with it being Holly
Fitzgerald and all, I thought maybe
you'd ...

It gets quiet.

JAMES

What.

SPANKS

Well, you know.

JAMES

I'm sorry, I'm not following.

SPANKS

(delicately)

The guys and I ... we've been talking, and it just seems a *bit* much, you know, with your history with her, and hell, I've been wanting to give it a shot, do an intervention myself, so ...

Silence.

JAMES

You guys have been talking, huh.

Slight nods, everyone staring at their coffees.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You got any other suggestions.

Nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Potts?

A shrug.

POTTS

... probably a good idea. Big client, don't wanna--

JAMES

What, fuck it up?

POTTS

Well.

Goes to say something--

Doesn't.

...

A muffled RING breaks the silence--

James reaches into his briefcase, pulling out the phone.

JAMES
Dr. James Fearing.
(deflates)
I'm picking us up some food, baby,
you want that carrot cake?
(mouths to Mark)
Get in the car.

Marks stands, mouthing *Bye* to the guys and leaves.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
Whoa, no. No, no, not tomorrow, I
can't do that tomorrow, Colleen.

He stands.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(covers the mouthpiece)
You're fired. All of you.

Blank stares.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Pack up your shit and be out by
tomorrow.

POTTS
Now, wait a sec--

But James is already gone.

And the Gang just sits there in silence, staring at each other.

BOBBY
Toldja.

CUT TO:

A DOOR BURSTING OPEN

James charges into the foyer.

JAMES
COLLEEN?!

Mark slinks in after him.

JAMES (CONT'D)
COLLEEN?!

COLLEEN (O.S.)
(hissing)
Shhhhh-- the kids.

Colleen appears at the top of the stairs, wearing a bathrobe.

JAMES
I'm on the cusp of something big,
Colleen, I can't do tomorrow, we
got a HUGE celebrity client on the
hook here, HUGE, and I can't--

COLLEEN
Who?

JAMES
--just drop everything for your
goddamn parents, don't we, Mark?
Don't we have a huge celebrity--

MARK
Yes.

COLLEEN
Who?

MARK
Holly Fitzgerald.

JAMES
Well, no, not her, exactly--

Colleen just stares at him. Mark's face falls, realizing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Not *that* Holly Fitzgerald. The
other one, you know, the ...

Beat.

MARK
... figure skater.

JAMES
Right.

COLLEEN
(near tears)
You're an asshole.

She turns on a heel.

JAMES

*This is my moment, Colleen, I can't
pass this up, not because I knew
her, like, a hundred years ago--*

A door slam.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Shit.

MARK

I'm sorry.

JAMES

It's fine.

MARK

I wasn't thinkin, I--

JAMES

It's fine, whatever, she doesn't
understand.

Shakes his head.

JAMES (CONT'D)

She never understands.

A muffled RING. James pulls the phone out of his briefcase:

JAMES (CONT'D)

What.

A slow smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Bobby got the Beemer.

CUT TO:

THE BEEMER

Slowly pulling in front of the palatial Fitzgerald estate.

Bobby drives, the chauffeur, while James and Mark lounge in
the backseat wearing dark suits, ties and sunglasses.

JAMES

Stop right here.

He takes a deep breath. Stares at the mansion.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Bobby. Stay here with the car.

BOBBY
Gotcha.

Takes off his sunglasses.

JAMES
Mark.

MARK
Yeah?

JAMES
You're going to lead the pre-intervention meeting today.

MARK
Wha-- No.

JAMES
You got your notes, right?

MARK
No, no way-- *Why?*

JAMES
Well. There's a slim possibility that Holly's Dad could ... maybe, recognize me.

MARK
So?

JAMES
So we didn't get along and I'm not gonna squander this opportunity because of some *whatever* 18 years ago.

MARK
I'm not doin it.

JAMES
You'll be fine.

MARK
James, c'mon.

JAMES
I'll be your wing man.

MARK
I'll blow it.

JAMES
I'll be right next to you.

MARK
I'm a fuck-up, you know that.

JAMES
Look at me.

He does.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You can do this.

Mark nods.

MARK
OK.

JAMES
If you wanna stay sober--

James slips on his disguise: a pair of Coke-bottle glasses, his eyes huge and blinking.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You gotta be on the firing line.

Mark stares at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Let's do this.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THE FITZGERALD MANOR - DAY

Old money. Edina money. A quiet, serious room.

Mark and James sit stiffly on an antique couch, Claire Fitzgerald sitting cross from them.

CLAIRES
My husband will join us in a moment. But, I should forewarn you... he doesn't really believe in all this.
(a weak laugh)
He's indulging me.

VOICE (O.S.)
I'm sure my wife has already told
you--

BORIS FITZGERALD strides into the room, walking and talking,
his mustache a shocking white--

BORIS
I think this intervention business
is a waste of all of our time and
certainly my money.

Sticks a hand out.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Boris.

Mark and James stand up, Mark firmly shaking Boris' hand.

MARK
Nice to meet you. I'm Dr. Warren--
Beatty.

BORIS
Pleasure.

MARK
And this is my, uh, associate--
(gestures to James)
Steve ... Stimple- stein.

BORIS
Steve Stimplestein, OK.

They shake, James not meeting Boris' eyes.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Have a seat.

They take a seat.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Let's not beat around the bush. My
daughter is a gutter drunk.

CLAIRES
Boris, please--

BORIS

She's been like this for as far as I can remember and frankly, if it were up to me, I'd hire some guys to throw a sack over her and dry the brat out.

CLAIRES

Boris.

BORIS

Don't "Boris" me now, we've tried every goddamn thing with her and I'm done.

He leans back, hands behind his head.

BORIS (CONT'D)

So. Gimmee the hard sell.

James leans forward, STOPS, and reluctantly sits back, pushing Mark forward.

MARK

Well, sir ...

He coughs. Checks his notes, flipping through his note pad. Flips and flips.

MARK (CONT'D)

Ah. Addicts are easy, families are hard.

Silence.

MARK (CONT'D)

So, there's that ... to think about.

Checks his notes again.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oh. Also. It's *very important* to understand that your daughter drinks because *you enable her*.

Beat.

BORIS

You're telling me it's my fault.

MARK

Uh.
(checks his notes again)
Yes.

BORIS
Get outta here.

Boris STANDS and James meets him toe-to-toe.

JAMES
Are you prepared to get real tough.

BORIS
--the hell you think I've been
doing--

JAMES
Where does your daughter live. An
apartment?

BORIS
Uptown.

JAMES
You paying for it?

BORIS
Well, yeah.

JAMES
You help her out financially,
right, pay her bills, bail her out,
that kind of thing.

BORIS
Of course, she's my daughter.

JAMES
Like I said. Are you prepared to
get tough?

Boris blinks. And sits down.

James follows.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Your daughter has a disease.

CLAIRES
See, I told you.

JAMES

And part of what's so frustrating about this disease is that it tells the person suffering from it, that they don't even have it.

Boris is listening.

JAMES (CONT'D)

We need to corner this disease, force a crisis and make your daughter live with the consequences.

BORIS

How do we do that?

JAMES

(simply)

Love.

Mark watches, awestruck.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Talk to me. How has your daughter's behavior affected you?

BORIS

Well. She was arrested again--

JAMES

No. You. How does she make *you* feel?

A long silence.

BORIS

I'm mad.

JAMES

Of course.

BORIS

I'm real mad.

JAMES

Tell me.

BORIS

I did everything right. Gave my kids what they needed. What they wanted. That's what a good father does. You provide.

(MORE)

BORIS (CONT'D)
And after all the bailing out,
picking up the pieces, all that, if
she had just once said--
(eyes well up)
Thank You, Dad.
(breaks down)
I don't even know her anymore.
She's this ... curse ... that I
live with every day.
(beat)
I hate her.

CLAIRES
Honey.

BORIS
I hate her so much.
(pleading)
What did I do wrong?

James leans in, a hand on his arm.

JAMES
You did nothing wrong.

Claire is crying now too, holding her husband and the three
of them hug each other in a tight circle.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I always envied Holly and how
involved you were in her life.

Mark raises an eyebrow.

JAMES (CONT'D)
See, there's something's inside of
me, something nagging, this itch
that I can't seem to ...

He slowly pulls away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
This isn't right ...

He whips off his Coke-bottle glasses.

JAMES (CONT'D)
My name is Dr. James Fearing.

Boris narrows his eyes.

JAMES (CONT'D)
"Jimmy."
(tears come)
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
And I'd like to make amends for all
the harm that I did to you and your
family.

Beat.

BORIS
You.

A hand CLUTCHES James' neck.

CLAIRES
BORIS!

They tumble to the floor.

JAMES
(choking)
I'm sorry--

BORIS
It was YOU.

JAMES
I'm sorry I harmed you--

BORIS
YOU screwed her up--

JAMES
And I forgive you.

BORIS
You forgive ME.

He BANGS James' head against the floor, over and over again, Mark and Mrs. Fitzgerald trying to pull Boris off and he LETS GO, finally, James rolling to his side, red-faced and coughing.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Get him outta here.

James sits up, rubbing his neck.

JAMES
Sir.

BORIS
Don't you say another word.

JAMES
Please.

CLAIRES
Let him talk, Boris.

Hard breathing.

JAMES
She can be saved.

A silence.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I can save her.

BORIS
How do I know that.

MARK
He saved me.

Everyone looks up, suddenly remembering the other person in the room.

MARK (CONT'D)
He can do it.

James smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)
I know.

They just stare at Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)
Because of him ... I'm alive today.

And that settles it.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - MORNING

James has an ear pressed against an apartment door.

BORIS
Honey. It's your Father.

JAMES
(mouths)
I love you.

BORIS
(tight)
I love you.
(MORE)

BORIS (CONT'D)
Your Mother and I are here and uh,
... we'd like to talk to you.

Nothing.

CLAIRES
C'mon, honey, open up.

James wordlessly nods and Boris turns the apartment KEY into the lock.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - ST. PAUL - MORNING

The door opens ...

A lavish loft-like apartment, all windows and sparse modern furniture.

CLAIRES
Holly?! Holly, it's your Mother.

BANG

An empty vodka bottle skitters across the floor.

And CRUNCH, Mark steps in dry cat food, scattered about the floor. James stands at the dining room table, flipping through a pile of unopened mail.

JAMES
I don't think she's been here for awhile.

CLAIRES
I just talked to her yesterday.
Maybe she went out for coffee or something.

Nobody believes that.

JAMES
(suddenly, to Boris)
The credit cards she uses-- they're in your name, right?

Boris nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Let's call them up and check the last place she spent money.

James hands Boris his phone.

Mark stands in front of the refrigerator, squinting at a collage of PARTY PHOTOS pinned to the door: there's Holly looking pouty on a cruise, sticking her tongue out on Bourbon Street and in every single snapshot, there's a martini glass in one hand and an arm around a different BIG, HANDSOME GUY.

BORIS
(into the phone)
Boris Fitzgerald.

James strolls about the apartment, hands behind his back, observing the apartment with a professional distance: there's a cluster of empty bottles hidden behind a couch, clothes slung over a chair and then ...

He stops.

Sitting starkly on a side table, is a LIPSTICK TUBE.

He looks around (no one is looking) and slowly reaches for the table, turning his back to everyone.

He snatches the lipstick. Uncaps it. And achingly pushes the blood red tube, ever so slowly, up to his face ...

BORIS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She's in Chicago.

James pockets the lipstick.

CLAIRES
Chicago? What's she doing in
Chicago?

BORIS
Ordered room service last night at
the Drake.

JAMES
Here we go.

BORIS
I dunno.

JAMES
Sir.

BORIS
This just seems impossible.

JAMES

You need to show her who's boss,
show her how serious you really
are.

CLAIRe

I think we should go.

JAMES

I think your wife is right.

Boris rubs his chin, then.

BORIS

Chicago, huh.

CUT TO:

A DOOR BURSTING OPEN

James charges into his house, carrying a MINK COAT.

JAMES

Colleen?!

Mark slinks in after him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

One intervention, baby.

He searches the Rec Room ... nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

*I paid for this with one
intervention, what did I tell you?*

THE KITCHEN

James rushes to the kitchen table and finds a NOTE.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(reads)

Damnit.

Mark quietly enters behind him.

MARK

Everything OK?

JAMES

She's staying with her folks for
awhile-- ah fuck.

Dumps the mink on the table.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She doesn't get it.

A heavy sigh.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She just doesn't get it.

THE DOOR BELL RINGS

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR

Swinging open and a CHAUFFEUR (50's) stands there, wearing all black, all formal.

CHAUFFEUR
Dr. Fearing?

JAMES
... yeah ...?

CHAUFFEUR
Your car is here.

OVER THE CHAUFFEUR'S SHOULDER: a long black limousine stretches down the suburban street.

INT. LIMOUSINE - MOVING - DAY

James and Mark sit in the backseat, legs spread out, giddy as teenagers.

JAMES
Check it out.

He reaches into his briefcase (a deep burgundy) and pulls out TWO HAVANA CIGARS with a wide smile:

JAMES (CONT'D)
Huh? Huh?

Starts to light one--

JAMES (CONT'D)
Oh, hey--
(leans forward)
Can we smoke these in here?

CHAUFFEUR
(over his shoulder)
Be my guest.

He lights and puffs, lights and puffs both cigars and they lean back, the backseat filling with smoke.

JAMES
You're something else, man.

MARK
What?

JAMES
"He saved me." Classic.

Mark sheepishly smiles.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You got it. You got the killer instinct. You could be really good at this.

MARK
You think?

JAMES
Hell, yeah.

Takes a long drag ...

JAMES (CONT'D)
You and me?

Blows smoke rings.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We're going places.

INT. AIRPLANE - MOVING - NIGHT

First class.

Boris, Claire and Mark are all wrapped in blankets, sleeping, the entire cabin dark except one overhead light. It shines directly above James.

JAMES
(waves to an attendant)
Kristy, honey? Could I get another one of these Shirley Temples.

CLOSE-UP: a catalog. Another luxury leather briefcase.

He circles it.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey, Mark.
(nudges him)
Mark, look--

Mark wakes up, barely, and they stare out the window together, two beaming faces pressed against the glass:

CHICAGO

A twinkling phosphorescent grid. A Saturday night on Saturn.

CUT TO:

MICHIGAN AVE

Water Tower, tree lights, carriages.

It all rolls past the window, floating over James and Mark's faces, sitting in the backseat of another long, black limo, the Fitzgeralds sitting across from them.

EXT. THE DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

James and Mark step out of the limo.

Bright lights and uniformed men.

They try hard not to look excited as the CONCIERGE pulls their luggage from the trunk. James and Mark go to grab them-STOPPING.

Then, playing it super-cool.

And with hands deep in their pockets, they swagger to the entrance and through the revolving doors.

INT. THE DRAKE HOTEL - NIGHT

The lobby.

Like a Henry Mancini song. Dark. Sexy.

James and Mark just stand there, frozen, seized with class anxiety. They look at each other: pleated khakis, Polo shirts and dock shoes.

MARK
We don't belong here.

JAMES
The hell we don't.

James strides to the front desk, stepping up beside Boris.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I got this.

Slaps down a credit card.

BORIS
Oh, no.

JAMES
Sir. Please.

The WOMAN behind the counter takes it.

BORIS
You sure?

Looks at him, *C'mon*.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Well.
(sincere)
Thank you.

JAMES
My pleasure.

The woman behind the counter looks up.

WOMAN
I'm sorry, sir, but your card's
been declined.

JAMES
(laughs)
Every time, with you people.

Hands her another card.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Try my Platinum.

WOMAN
Yessir.

James shrugs.

JAMES
It does that sometimes.

She tries the Platinum.

WOMAN
I'm really sorry, sir, but this
card was declined too.

BORIS
I got it--

JAMES
(holds up a hand)
Please.
(to Mark)
The business card.

Mark stares at him, confused.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You know, the corporate card.

Mark realizes, shaking his head slightly, *No Way*.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I gave it to you before the flight,
remember?

James narrows his eyes at him ... and Mark relents.

MARK
Corporate card. Right.

Slaps down his own credit card.

JAMES
(to Boris)
What room number is your daughter
in?

BORIS
Eight fifty-five.

JAMES
Let's get freshened up, gather our
thoughts and meet at her room in an
hour.

BORIS
In an hour. Fine.

JAMES
I won't let you down, sir.

Boris allows a slight smile.

And as the Fitzgeralds stroll arm-in-arm across the lobby,
the Woman behind the counter hands Mark a sheet of paper.

WOMAN
Your bill, sir.

CUT TO:

MARK

Face in his palms.

MARK
Eleven-hundred dollars?

JAMES
C'mon, get dressed.

MARK
Who charges five hundred dollars a
night, who does that?

JAMES
We gotta go.

MARK
This is too much, I'm done, find
someone else.

JAMES
I'll pay you back, OK?

MARK
You let *ME* pick up the tab?

JAMES
Mark.

MARK
--I'm goin through a divorce, do
you understand that? I'm losing my
house, my kid, yeah, let's let that
JERK blow eleven-hundred dollars.

JAMES
Mark. I'll get you back when we're
done with this job, OK? I swear.

MARK
Ah, who am I kiddin--

Mark falls back on the bed.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'm no interventionist.

JAMES
That's not true.

MARK
I'm a fuck-up. Drunk or sober.

JAMES
That is not true.

Mark just stares at the ceiling.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I need you.

MARK
Sure.

JAMES
I do, man, you're one of the
dozens.

Then.

MARK
I miss her.

JAMES
I know.

MARK
I miss my kid--

He wipes his eyes.

MARK (CONT'D)
Shit.

JAMES
C'mere.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mark stands before a bathroom mirror, James shaking up a
cannister of SHAVING CREAM.

JAMES
You believe in God?

MARK
I dunno, man.

JAMES
Do you think God has forgiven you?

MARK
Sure.

James sprays out the letter "N" in shaving cream. Then the letter "O" and so on, spelling out in big, foamy letters the phrase: "NOT GUILTY"

JAMES
Who the hell are *YOU* to overrule
God?

Mark looks at himself in the mirror.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Believe it.

And he leaves Mark to stare at his reflection, a tired, sad reflection, the phrase "NOT GUILTY" emblazoned across his forehead.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I steamed your suit.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - THE DRAKE - NIGHT

James and Mark stride down the hallway, looking like high rollers, the Fitzgeralds close behind, everyone counting down the room numbers.

Room 855.

JAMES
(quiet)
Here we are. Everybody good?

Silent nods and James KNOCKS on the door, everyone holding their breath ...

A silence.

And.

Nothing.

BORIS

Goddamnit. This is a waste of time.

JAMES

No need to panic. We're gonna plant ourselves at the end of the hallway there--

Points to TWO CHAIRS at the end of the hall, flanking a coffee table.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Boris, Claire. Why don't you two go back to your room, get a solid night's sleep and let us do our jobs.

Boris and Claire just stand there, looking a little lost.

JAMES (CONT'D)

We got it under control.

CUT TO:

A COURTESY PHONE

Sitting on a coffee table.

JAMES

Call me on that, if you see Holly.

James stands above Mark, sitting at the end of the hallway, several doors down from Holly's room.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Make sure she doesn't go anywhere.

MARK

Wait-- where you goin?

Punches him in the arm.

JAMES

Stay sharp.

INT. LOBBY - THE DRAKE - NIGHT

The late night crowd. Dark suits and high heels.

James stands in the middle of the lobby, briefcase at his side (patent leather), an unlit cigar stuck in his teeth, and watching a BUSINESSMAN shake hands with another BUSINESSMAN. They both wear LANYARDS around their necks. And they both smoke cigars.

CUT TO:

AN UNLIT CIGAR

Poking between the two Businessmen.

JAMES (O.S.)
Gotta light?

BUSINESSMAN
Oh, yeah, sure.

He pats himself down, looking for a lighter, finds it and James leans into the flame, puffing and puffing, EYEING THE NAME TAG around the man's neck:

"National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association"

He leans back, satisfied.

JAMES
Thank you, gentlemen.

BUSINESSMAN
That a Cuban?

JAMES
Is there any other kind?

Laughter and back slaps.

THE PALM COURT - CORNER BAR

Packed with sportscaster and sportswriters, jackets off and sleeves rolled up. Cigarette smoke, quiet JAZZ.

And James stands at the entrance, scanning the crowd ...

Nothing, no Holly.

Instead, a LANYARD. Draped over a bar stool.

He casually strolls over, smoking his cigar, dancing a bit to the music, smiling at the BARTENDER, and--

HE SNATCHES THE LANYARD

CUT TO:

MARK

Keeping watch, making spit bubbles.

WOMAN'S LAUGHTER

And a door bursts open, right in front of Mark, food trays tumbling to the floor, *Whoops*, a middle-aged RED-HEAD pokes her head out, drunk and half-naked.

RED-HEAD

Oh. *Shhh.* Sorry.

Mark gives her a half-smile and she disappears back inside, *Ohmigod, there's someone out there*, laughter, and the DOOR SLAMS.

He blinks.

A half-glass of WHITE WINE sits in front of him. Just sitting there, all alone, in an empty hallway.

Mark bites his lip.

And with his foot, he reaches for it, not leaving the chair, his shoe snaking across the carpet, Mark hanging onto the chair like a buoy, reaching and reaching for the glass, till finally, with his tippy-toe, HE KNOCKS IT OVER, the wine spilling and spreading across the carpet.

He crawls back up the chair.

Pale, breathing hard.

...

He closes his eyes.

INT. LOBBY - THE DRAKE - NIGHT

James wears the lanyard around his neck, striding past a YOUNG LADY sitting at a swag table--

YOUNG LADY

Sir.

James freezes.

YOUNG LADY (CONT'D)
You'll have to put out your cigar.

JAMES
Ah. Of course.

Takes a few puffs--

JAMES (CONT'D)
Did I miss dessert?

YOUNG LADY
(smiles)
No, I don't think so.

He stubs the cigar out in an ashtray--

JAMES
I like the sweater.

And he saunters through the banquet doors.

THE GRAND BALLROOM

James enters the vast, dark room and MUSIC KICKS IN.

A haunting voice:

VOICE (O.S.)
"Come let's stroll, stroll across
the floor ..."

The Stroll by The Diamonds. A burlesque beat echoing throughout the near-empty ballroom. A banner hangs over a makeshift stage: "ROCKIN BACK IN TIME!" And a '50s cover band rocks and rolls, wearing white suits and pomade hair.

VOICE (CONT'D)
"Feel so good, take me by my hand."

And on the small dance floor, two rows of BABY BOOMERS do the Stroll, clapping together, completely wasted, ties wrapped around their foreheads, heels off, COUPLES moving down the Avenue together, bumping and grinding, everyone very committed to Strolling.

James scans the hall: knots of PEOPLE talk at numbered tables, sitting in shadow.

He moves closer to the dance floor ...

VOICE (CONT'D)
"There's my love, strolling in the door ..."

HE STOPS.

Holly Fitzgerald.

Slowly moving down the Avenue ...

Eyes locked on James. As if she's been waiting for him all along.

A martini in her hand, a red cocktail dress, seriously Strolling towards James, all on her own, people moving down the line, clapping and dancing mechanically around her.

He's frozen.

VOICE (CONT'D)
"Baby, let's go strolling, by the candy store ..."

She steps off the dance floor, mascara smeared, still dancing, approaching slowly, her half-mast eyes never leaving his, until finally, she's toe-to-toe with him.

The music stops.

APPLAUSE.

Hard breathing between them. The dance floor empties, lights dim and a disco ball spins.

Then.

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes by The Platters.

They stare at each other. She touches his stomach.

HOLLY
 Lil belly.

Looks him over, a small smile.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 Lil grey hairs ...

Moves in close, smelling his neck.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Jimmy.

JAMES
You need help.

HOLLY
I do.

Nuzzles into his chest.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Help me.

She sways to the music, not touching him.

JAMES
Holly.
(rote)
Your life has become unmanageable.

HOLLY
(quietly sings)
"When your heart's on fire--"

JAMES
You're powerless over alcohol.

HOLLY
--you must be alive--

JAMES
Let go and let God.

HOLLY
"Smoke gets in your eyes."

JAMES
(blunt)
Your father's here.

She suddenly pulls back.

HOLLY
Where'd you go?

Searches his face.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Where are you? Where's my *Jimmy*?

He squarely looks at her.

JAMES
Holly. Please.

HOLLY
(a slow smile)
There you are.

She touches his face.

JAMES
Listen.

Now he's swaying to the music too.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Things have to change for you--

HOLLY
Did you miss me?

JAMES
--the way things changed for me.

HOLLY
Tell me.

JAMES
What?

HOLLY
Tell me you missed me.

JAMES
I remember you fondly, yes.

HOLLY
I don't believe you.

JAMES
Holly.

HOLLY
Jimmy.

JAMES
You need to get into treatment.

HOLLY
Can I ask you something?

She grabs his hand and places it on her chest.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Do you feel that?

He closes his eyes.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Am I still pretty?

JAMES
I've arranged everything at the
Betty Ford Center.

HOLLY
Tell me I'm pretty.

JAMES
(quick)
You're pretty.

HOLLY
Do you really think so?

She wraps her arms around him.

JAMES
Please don't do that.

HOLLY
Let's get outta here.

JAMES
No.

HOLLY
Jimmy.

JAMES
I can't.

HOLLY
You can.

JAMES
Please. Go to treat--

She kisses him, softly, cutting him off.

HOLLY
I think ...

Eyes flutter, her head lolling back.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Catch me.

And he catches her, tight-- *kissing her on the mouth.*

...

They pull apart, staring at each other.

JAMES
Let's go.

CUT TO:

JAMES AND HOLLY

Running through the lobby together, hand in hand, like teenagers--

JAMES
(laughing)
Wait, wait. We can't go back to
your room.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DESK

The GENTLEMAN behind the counter shakes his head.

GENTLEMAN
I'm sorry, but we're all booked for
the night.

She slaps down her father's credit card.

HOLLY
Give me the best you got.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

Blackness.

The DOOR BURSTS open, two SILHOUETTES in the doorway and the lights click on ...

The Presidential Foyer.

James stands there, mouth open, and Holly casually throws her purse on a chair.

She walks deeper into the suite, pulling off her clothes, dropping one item at a time, leaving a trail for him to follow, which he dutifully does, tossing his briefcase on an ottoman.

THE PRESIDENTIAL LIVING ROOM

Holly stands in front of a window, just a SHADOW, the city skyline behind her, a continuous streak of red and white lights zipping along Lake Shore Drive.

James stands there and stares ...

The palatial suite.

The twinkling city.

Holly.

Everything he's ever wanted.

He cries.

Quietly. Tears streaming down his face.

HOLLY
C'mere.

A voice in the dark.

He goes to the voice, mechanically, and embraces the shadow.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I've got you.

And as she pulls him into the Presidential Bedroom, slowly, there's a MUFFLED RING coming from James' briefcase.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mark sits where we left him, the courtesy phone to his ear.

MARK
Pick up, pick up, pick up.

Standing in front of Holly's room is a BIG HANDSOME GUY (30's). He BANGS on her door.

HANDSOME
C'mon, Holly.
(kicks the door)
Let me in--

Turns to Mark, sitting at the far end of the hall.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
Hey.

Starts to walk over (Mark quietly hangs up the phone).

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
You see anyone come out of that room?

MARK
(a shrug)
I don't think so, no.

HANDSOME
Shit.
(sighs)
Well, thanks.

Mark closes his eyes, squeezing the bridge of his nose.

MARK
Where the hell are you ...

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS

A KNOCK

Eyes snap open.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

A MAID (50's) stands outside of Holly's door, a toiletry cart parked alongside the wall.

THE NEXT DAY.

Mark rubs his eyes and sits upright, watching the Maid open the door to Holly's room.

VOICE (O.S.)
What's going on here?

BORIS stands over him.

MARK
Wha--

BORIS
We've been trying to get a hold of you all morning.

MARK
I've been-- I'm on watch.

BORIS
Yeah, well, keep up the great work.

Boris rushes down the hall, Claire and Mark trailing after him and they all charge into Holly's room.

HOLLY'S ROOM

Nobody's there. Just the Maid, standing in the middle of the room with a pillow in her hand.

Boris turns on Mark.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Where's Jimmy?

He opens his mouth to answer ...

Closes it.

BORIS (CONT'D)
You don't know where he is, do you?

MARK
He was following a lead, and, I--

BORIS
Bunch of yahoos.

Boris strides to the phone next to the bed and picks it up.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Front desk.

CUT TO:

THE FITZGERALDS

Charging down the hallway again, Mark on their heels. Boris sticks a room key into the Presidential Suite's door.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - MORNING

It's quiet.

Boris and Claire rush through the Presidential Foyer, Mark pausing at the ottoman ...

James' briefcase.

He closes his eyes, fearing the worst.

THE PRESIDENTIAL BEDROOM

The door swings open ...

James sleeps upright in a king-sized bed, shirtless, Holly draped across his chest.

His eyes snap open.

JAMES

Hey.

Boris and Claire stand in the doorway.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I found Holly.

BORIS

SonuvaBITCH--

He CHARGES for the bed, Holly suddenly awake.

HOLLY

Daddy, no!

James hits the floor, naked, pulling Holly with him, side-stepping Boris and slipping into--

THE PRESIDENTIAL BATHROOM

He locks the door, faces flushed, laughing, A BANG AT THE DOOR, *Goddamn you, Fearing!* Quickly getting dressed, James and Holly run for another door, *I'll KILL YOU*, slipping into the--

PRESIDENTIAL FOYER

Mark stands there, wide-eyed.

JAMES

Grab my briefcase.

He snatches it and the three of them sprint for the door.

INT. LOBBY - THE DRAKE - MORNING

James and Holly run across the lobby, barefoot, shirts unbuttoned, Mark right behind them--

VOICE (O.S.)

HOLLY?!

The BIG, HANDSOME GUY.

He runs after them, his face falling when he sees James--

HANDSOME
Who the hell--

HOLLY
Oh, Hi.

He PULLS at Holly's arm and JAMES CLOCKS HIM, hard, the poor guy sprawling backwards--

HOLLY (CONT'D)
That was my boyfriend.

And they're laughing and running again, tearing through the revolving doors--

EAST WALTON PLACE

They run for the curb, James WHISTLING, a cab screeching in their path, the three of them tumbling inside, never missing a beat, the taxi pulling away and Holly's Boyfriend runs after them, *HOLLY, PLEASE, HOLLY*, waving his arms.

INT. CAB - MOVING - MORNING

James leans forward.

JAMES
O'Hare airport.
(to Mark)
Mark, I'd like you to meet Holly.
My fiance.

MARK
Fiance.

She holds out a limp hand.

HOLLY
Charmed.

James is already dialing his phone.

JAMES
I feel, I don't know how I feel,
man, it's incredible. There's like
lightning bolts comin out my
fingertips, you know.
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm a God on a mountaintop, looking down at my future and it's lookin good, man, REALLY GOOD--

(into phone)

Potts. How you doin, you doin good? Good, good, you're one of the dozens, Potts, listen--

HOLLY

I feel sick.

JAMES

I need you to book those tickets outta Chicago now and I need it today, like, in an hour--

HOLLY

Gimmee that.

JAMES

What, no, *not the*--

She VOMITS in his briefcase.

INT. AIRPLANE - MOVING - DAY

First class.

Holly is unconscious on James' shoulder. Mark sits across the aisle.

JAMES

(fast)

I've been asleep all these years, you know, just asleep on my feet, walking and talking--

(robot voice)

*Good Morning, Sir, Nice Weather
We're Having, Beep-Bop-Boop, it's
BULLSHIT, you know, asleep on my
feet for years and for what, Mark,
tell me, because none of it adds up-*

Mark patiently listens.

INT. CAB - MOVING - NIGHT

Holly is still unconscious on James' shoulder.

JAMES

And this *itch*, or whatever you want to call it, that's been eating me from the inside all these years, I realized, isn't something you can ignore, it isn't something you can willfully push away, but rather something you have to embrace, Mark. You have it hug it tight and never let it go, because it's YOU. You gotta lick it, eat it, devour it--

Mark nods, not understanding at all.

EXT. BETTY FORD CENTER - CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

James pushes Holly in a wheelchair down a long hallway. Mark follows.

JAMES

And all this time I've been talking about Holly like there's something wrong or sick about it, instead of what she really is ...

(stops)

Me. She is me. I am her.

(makes a fist)

We are one. And that's the truth here, with a capital T. It isn't about Right or Wrong or Addiction, all that nonsense that's been clouding my head, like, forever, but Life and the freedom to live the way you were destined to.

Patient intake. An ELDERLY WOMAN behind a counter. James kneels in front of Holly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(quiet)

Wake up, baby. Time to go.

She opens her eyes, barely, the light too bright.

JAMES (CONT'D)

C'mon, say Goodbye.

HOLLY

I need a drink.

JAMES
I know, baby.

She rubs her eyes, sitting upright.

HOLLY
Where are we?

JAMES
You're at the Betty Ford Center.

HOLLY
Whoa-- what?

She looks over his shoulder: a long, cold hallway.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
No.

JAMES
Listen to me--

HOLLY
I'm not doin it, I can't do it.

JAMES
Yes, you can.

HOLLY
No, please.

JAMES
Holly. You can do it and you wanna
know why?

She stares at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Because you want to.

She thinks about that.

HOLLY
You wanna marry me, right?

JAMES
Absolutely.

Her eyes well with tears.

HOLLY
After ... ?

JAMES

What, baby?

HOLLY

After here, is life ... ?

JAMES

Tell me.

HOLLY

Fun?

JAMES

Of course.

HOLLY

You can love *big*, right?

JAMES

Yes.

HOLLY

You do, right? You love big?

JAMES

I do.

HOLLY

Like your wife. You loved her big once.

He blinks.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Your kids too, right?

He just stares ...

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I've never loved anyone like that.
Except maybe you. Jimmy?

The Elderly Woman approaches.

ELDERLY WOMAN

OK, Holly. Let's get you started.

HOLLY

Jimmy?

JAMES

Yes.

HOLLY

What if I'm dull? I don't wanna be dull, Jimmy. I don't want life to be dull, is it dull?

James just stares at her as she's wheeled down the long, white hallway.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(calling to him)

Is life dull, Jimmy? I wouldn't be able to stand that, Jimmy, I wouldn't--

Mark stands behind him and they both watch her disappear behind the swinging doors.

A silence.

MARK

You OK?

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

James stares at a cup of coffee.

Mark watches him.

Easy Listening plays from somewhere.

MARK

Hey.

Nothing.

MARK (CONT'D)

Hey, you OK, or--

JAMES

You get it, right? Me and Holly?

MARK

Sure.

JAMES

You do? You do. We're like--

Makes a fist.

A muffled RING.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm not here.

He TOSSES the phone across the table and Mark fumbles with it, answering:

MARK
Uh, Dr. James Fearing-- *his phone.*
Hello.
(covers mouthpiece)
It's Colleen.

James shakes his head, *No Way.*

MARK (CONT'D)
Hey, uh, he's not here, could he
call you back?
(bites his lip)
Oh. OK. I'll tell him, then.

Hangs up.

JAMES
I'm not going back.

Mark doesn't say anything.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm not. I say we book ourselves a
room round here, a Holiday Inn or
something and just be, like,
available, you know, till Holly
gets through this-- in fact, let's
just move our operations out here.
(a smile)
In Palm Springs. Why not, right?
Start a branch out here in
California, lotsa celebrities,
lotsa addicts and then, who knows,
maybe New York, or--

MARK
Colleen's divorcing you.

James blinks.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

JAMES
No.

Shakes his head, eyes closed.

JAMES (CONT'D)
No, she's not.

MARK
She said--

JAMES
No, she's not. This is what she
does, see, she does this--

MARK
She sent papers.

JAMES
She sent-- what?

MARK
Divorce papers. To the office.

JAMES
No, she didn't.

MARK
Potts has em.

JAMES
Potts.

MARK
Yeah.

Silence.

Then, a sharp LAUGH.

JAMES
Fuck her.

Waves a hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I love Holly. Doesn't matter.

Sips his coffee.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Doesn't matter.

MARK
Maybe you should call her--

JAMES
 (suddenly)
 Where the hell are my nachos?

Waves to someone OFF SCREEN:

JAMES (CONT'D)
 What do I gotta do, huh-- how hard
 is it to make chicken nachos?

MARK
Shhh.

JAMES
 (voice raising)
 No, I gotta tip the guy, like, what-
 ten, fifteen percent and he's gonna
 ignore me, like I'm some bum in the
 corner, with just a cup of coffee--

MARK
Keep your voice down.

JAMES
 Dontcha think, though?

MARK
 What.

JAMES
FUCK HER, right? So much blah blah
blah, you know.

He doesn't know.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Controlling, uptight, Betty Crocker-
 (sudden)
 Why, whatayou think?

MARK
 What.

JAMES
 You're me. What would you do?

MARK
 Well.

He thinks.

MARK (CONT'D)
 I wish I had a second chance.

JAMES
She's had plenty of chances.

MARK
No, I mean-- I dunno, man.
(beat)
I love my wife.

JAMES
I love my wife.

Mark blinks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What, you don't think I love my
wife?

MARK
I--

JAMES
She's the mother of my children,
Mark, of course I love my wife,
that's not the point.

MARK
I'm confused.

JAMES
You know what, forget it. No one
understands. It's so beyond the
common, like, human understanding
of things, that I don't even know
if I can talk about it in a way to
make it more clear for you, just
forget it, ok, just ...

He trails off.

They sit in silence.

Easy Listening music again.

VOICE (V.O.)
*"Wake up Maggie, I think I got
something to say to you--"*

Maggie May.

James looks up. Stares dumbly at Mark.

CUT TO:

JAMES AND MARK

Falling into the backseat of a cab.

MARK
(leans forward)
Airport.

JAMES
Such a FUCKIN ASSHOLE, what the hell was I thinking, ohmigod, please, please, please, God, I fucked up bad, I fucked it up so bad this time--

Mark patiently listens.

INT. AIRPLANE - MOVING - NIGHT

Economy class.

James and Mark are squeezed together.

JAMES
(fast)
So I'm pinned under my car, right, and here comes lil Colleen, screaming for help and nobody's coming. So she grabs the car, my lil Colleen, and she LIFTS the damn car off me, Mark, like a superwoman. Now how can a lil woman like Colleen, my baby Colleen, lift a goddamn automobile off a dying man, I ask you? Love, Mark. Love. She loves me like that.

Mark nods.

INT. MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

James and Mark SPRINT though a crowded airport lobby, James yelling into the phone:

JAMES
Meet me at the house in twenty minutes, Potts, and bring those papers, you understand, bring the divorce papers--

EXT. FEARING HOUSEHOLD - MORNING

A cab comes to a screeching halt.

James and Mark jump out, the James Gang standing on the front lawn-- Bobby, Dee, Chief, all of them walking fast behind James and Mark, keeping pace, and Potts, holding out the divorce papers.

POTTS
Here you go, Boss.

James snatches the documents, looking them over.

BOBBY
Everything OK?

JAMES
Working on it. Here.

Tosses something to Mark.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Hang back, fellas.

And the Gang falls back, keeping a respectful distance. Mark opens his hand:

Holly's lipstick.

INT. FEARING HOUSEHOLD - MORNING

The door bursts open.

JAMES
COLLEEN?!

The kids run into the foyer, James scooping them up into his arms.

JAMES (CONT'D)
COLLEEN!

And there she is.

Standing at the top of the stairs. James kisses the kids.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We'll play later, OK, run along.

They take off.

A long silence.

COLLEEN
What.

He raises the divorce papers. RIPS THEM IN HALF.

JAMES
I won't do it.

He moves to the stairs.

COLLEEN
You stay right there.

JAMES
Honey.

Hands up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Honey. I'm wrong.

She rolls her eyes.

COLLEEN
Here we go.

JAMES
I'm wrong. And you can go ahead and divorce me but I won't accept it, OK? You're going to have to understand that. I won't accept it.

COLLEEN
Really.

JAMES
I'll camp outside. Right there on the front lawn, married to you forever, understand? You can remarry someone else and I'll still be out there, baby, wearing this ring.

COLLEEN
You talk and talk and talk--

JAMES
Test me. Go ahead, move to New York. I'll be living on the fire escape.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
Move to Alaska, I'll be sleeping
with the dogs, you can't get rid a
me.

COLLEEN
I'm sick of you, Jim. All the
lying and cheating--

JAMES
Me too. I'm sick of me too, baby,
lemmee tell you, I sicken myself.

COLLEEN
It's you and you and you and then
it's AA and your AA friends and
then the kids and I'm, like,
somewhere waaayyy down there.

JAMES
That's not true.

COLLEEN
You know it is, Jim.

JAMES
You're number one.

COLLEEN
Get outta here.

He takes a step on the bottom step.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
Stop right there.

JAMES
I don't know what I'm sayin or
doing, I'm just winging it
everyday, trying to live right by
you and the kids and I'm not, I
know that, I am not.

He takes another step.

COLLEEN
Don't take another step.

JAMES
I'm coming, baby. You can't stop
me.

COLLEEN
I don't want you anymore, I wanna
divorce.

JAMES
You don't mean that.

COLLEEN
Yes, I do.

JAMES
You remember our deal?

COLLEEN
Don't.

JAMES
What did we say.

COLLEEN
Don't take another goddamn step.

He takes another step (halfway there).

JAMES
You were goin to Hawaii, remember,
a family vacation.

COLLEEN
No.

JAMES
And we made our deal.

Takes another step.

JAMES (CONT'D)
If we missed each other as much as
we thought we would ...

Her eyes well up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We'd get married.

COLLEEN
Stop it.

JAMES
I love you.

COLLEEN
Stop it.

JAMES
I'm sorry.

COLLEEN

No, you're not. You don't care about anything except you.

JAMES

Listen to me.

He takes another step, near the top now.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

COLLEEN

Mean it.

JAMES

I'm sorry.

He's face-to-face with her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I love you.

He picks her up, carrying her like a little girl.

COLLEEN

Why do you hurt me.

JAMES

I dunno, baby, I dunno.

She buries her face in his chest.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'll never let anything happen to you, Colleen.

COLLEEN

No more.

JAMES

No more. You're everything.

And he carries her into the bedroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FEARING HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

All's quiet.

The front door opens and Mark slips in.

A muffled RING.

Coming from between the pillows of the couch. The phone. Mark answers it.

MARK
Dr. James Fearing's phone.

JAMES (O.S.)
(a whisper)
Hey.

MARK
Hey, man.

JAMES (O.S.)
You just get in?

MARK
Yeah. Went and saw a movie.

JAMES (O.S.)
Guess what?

MARK
What.

JAMES (O.S.)
I'm back in the Big Bed.

CUT TO:

JAMES

Sitting on the edge of the Big Bed, his back to a sleeping Colleen.

JAMES
Sweet-smellin sheets.

MARK
Congratulations.

JAMES
Yeah. How you feelin, you good?

MARK
Yeah, yeah. I'm good.

JAMES
Good, good. One step at time, brother. You get some sleep now.

MARK

I will.

JAMES

Oh, and Mark?

MARK

Yeah?

JAMES

Thanks.

Beat.

MARK

Of course.

JAMES

Good night.

Click.

COLLEEN (O.S.)

Who was that?

JAMES

Just wrapping things up, baby, you
wanna glass of water?

COLLEEN

C'mere.

She pulls him back to bed, resting her head under his chin.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

Stay.

JAMES

I'm here.

And she nestles closer, grabbing his hands and instantly
falling back asleep.

A long silence.

SLOW PUSH IN on James, just lying there, staring at the
ceiling and blinking in the dark ...

A clock ticks somewhere.

The hum of an air-conditioner.

James shuts his eyes tight.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

An overgrown, neglected yard.

The sound of a sputtering engine.

At a picnic table, the kids throw ice at each other and Colleen waves at them, *Knock it Off*, with a wooden spoon.

The sputtering engine gets louder and LOUDER and JAMES APPEARS, hunched over, pushing a LAWN MOWER, trudging past his family and he disappears again, the engine fading OFF SCREEN.

Colleen swipes a hot dog from one of the kid's hands, scolding them with it, *Keep your hands to yourself*, and the mower gets louder and LOUDER, James appearing (red-faced, sweaty) and disappearing again.

James' daughter suddenly stands up on the picnic bench, YELLING something, waving his mobile phone.

CUT TO:

MARK

Taking a nap on the couch, a hand shaking him.

VOICE (V.O.)
Marky Mark, wake-up.

Mark's eyes snap open.

INT. REC ROOM - MORNING

James hovers over him, the mobile phone pressed to his ear.

JAMES
(into the phone)
Have you contacted her parents?

James excitedly paces the room and Mark sits up, rubbing his eyes.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Don't contact the parents.
(mouths to Mark)
Outside.

EXT. FEARING HOUSEHOLD - MORNING

They walk fast to the parked car in the driveway.

JAMES
(into phone)
No, no, no, don't do anything,
we're on it.

Hangs up, starts dialing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's Holly.

Mark STOPS at the passenger door.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She just left treatment.

He hops into the driver's seat and turns the ignition, the car idle.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She's heading home but we should have someone at the Drake, just in case--
(into phone)
Bobby. Get packed. You're goin to Chicago.
(to Mark)
Let's go.

Mark just stands there.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Probably an hour or so, I'll talk to Potts--
(to Mark)
Get in the car.
(into phone)
Let me worry about the ticket.

He hangs up and reaches for the passenger door, opening it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What are you doin, c'mon, let's go.

MARK
Just.

JAMES

What?

MARK

Slow down.

JAMES

(laughs)

All right, OK, fine.

James turns off the ignition.

A silence.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You OK?

MARK

Yeah.

JAMES

Sit down.

Mark sits down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Talk to me.

MARK

Gimmee a sec.

Beat.

MARK (CONT'D)

This Holly thing.

JAMES

Tough nut to crack.

MARK

Yeah, well. Maybe ...

Beat.

MARK (CONT'D)

Maybe you should, I dunno ... let
someone else-- you know.

James narrows his eyes.

JAMES

No. I don't know.

MARK

Let someone else take care of this
one.

JAMES

You think?

MARK

Yeah. Get your house in order,
before you start--

A BURST OF LAUGHTER.

JAMES

Guy's outta treatment for thirty-
four days, and now he's tellin me
how to run my business.

MARK

No, it's not like that--

JAMES

Here.

Tosses Mark the phone.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You make the calls.

MARK

C'mon.

JAMES

You're some kinda expert. Save
some lives.

MARK

All I'm sayin, is you should slow
down for a second.

JAMES

(suddenly)

Get out.

MARK

What?

JAMES

Get outta the car.

Mark stares at him. James snatches his phone back.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Lose my number.

MARK
You serious?

JAMES
I open my house to you, I give you
a job, *I saved your life*, for
chrissakes, and you're gonna tell
me what to do--

MARK
No. I just thought--

JAMES
I'm eleven years sober. I'm a
fuckin rock. You think I need *your*
help?
(snorts)
Get out.

He turns the ignition.

MARK
James.

James stares forward.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I am. I thought I
could help. You told me I was
getting good at this and ...

Nothing.

MARK (CONT'D)
James. Please. I got nothing. I
got nowhere to go.

His eyes well up.

MARK (CONT'D)
Dude. C'mon. I'm sorry, OK, I'm
really, really sorry, I--
(sudden)
You don't have to pay me back for
the hotel, OK? We're square. Or,
or, I'll work for free for a little
while, just until ...

A long silence.

MARK (CONT'D)
Talk to me.

An idle engine.

MARK (CONT'D)
Well, let's just take a break, OK,
and ... we'll talk tomorrow?

Mark slowly gets out of the car and James violently backs the car out of the driveway, bouncing off the curb--

MARK (CONT'D)
(calling out)
It's cool, you can borrow--

The car SCREECHES down the street.

MARK (CONT'D)
My car.

DISSOLVE TO:

MARK WALKING

Night.

His hands are shoved deep in his pockets, hunched over, aimlessly walking down a commercial street, occasionally peering into a dark storefront window.

He stops.

"Blame It On Midnight"

Blinks from a neon sign above him. A nightclub.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Mark sits at the empty bar counter, staring at his hands.

BARTENDER
Whattaya think?

MARK
Huh?

BARTENDER
To drink. Whattayou want to drink?

MARK
What's, uh ...

Vaguely gestures to the tap.

BARTENDER
Bud, Bud Light, Pabst, Miller.

MARK
Hm.

He bites his lip.

BARTENDER
Tough choice, I know.

MARK
Bud.

The Bartender turns his back to him, filling up a tall stein
glass--

BARTENDER
Quiet night.

Tops off the foam and turns back to the counter ...

Mark's gone.

CUT TO:

OVER MARK'S SHOULDER

Staring at a large suburban house.

His home.

On the front curb, sitting among plastic garbage bags, a
rusted BICYCLE and stacks of fiber glass ... is a chair.

A LA-Z-BOY CHAIR

Mark slowly goes over to it and wipes the seat with his hand.

He sits down. Stares up at the dark house, a bedroom window
flickering with the blue light of a television.

Shoves his hands into his jacket pocket-- *finds something.* A
folded note. With his name on it. He opens it:

"Easy does it"

He leans back ...

And reclines in his La-Z-boy.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE BIG BOOK

Being cracked open. Mark sits at a cafeteria table, quiet.

An AA meeting.

Fluorescent lights, folding chairs and a handful of middle-aged AAs, a serious group, *My name is Patrick, I'm an alcoholic, HI PATRICK*, everyone working the steps, taking it day by day and the group turns to Mark.

He bites his lip.

MARK

Uh. My name is Mark.

(beat)

I'm an alcoholic.

CUT TO:

A YMCA PARKING LOT

Another night, WEEKS LATER, Mark standing with a knot of AA smokers.

He's a bit more comfortable now, a cup of coffee in his hand, smiling warmly and laughing at someone's tragic story.

CUT TO:

A FRONT DOOR

Swinging open.

Colleen stands in the doorway, the kids running up and down the stairs behind her.

MARK

Hey.

COLLEEN

Hey.

Beat.

MARK

Mark.

COLLEEN

Sure, I know who you are.

MARK

Right, of course.

Beat.

MARK (CONT'D)

Is, uh, James around?

COLLEEN

No. He's ... you know. Around.

MARK

Right.

Silence.

COLLEEN

Is it an emergency?

MARK

Oh, no, no, it's fine, I just ...

Another silence.

COLLEEN

You OK?

A shrug.

MARK

I'm worried, you know. About James.

COLLEEN

Why.

MARK

*Well. He's been-- you know, with
the whole ...*

She just stares at him, not getting it.

MARK (CONT'D)

The divorce ...

COLLEEN

What about it.

MARK

Nothing, I guess.

COLLEEN

(defensive)

I love him.

MARK

Of course.

COLLEEN

He drives me crazy, but whattayou
gonna do, he's my husband.

MARK

Well, I'm sure you--

COLLEEN

There's nothing you can do.

End of discussion.

He bites his lip.

JAMES

OK.

(sudden)

Thanks.

He turns to leave, walking to his parked bicycle--

COLLEEN

Wait. I have something for you.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mark sits at the kitchen table, a tall glass of milk in front of him, the kids eating cookies.

A SET OF KEYS are dropped in front of him.

COLLEEN

Your car's in the garage.

MARK

Oh. Thanks.

She sits down.

COLLEEN

I know it's not normal, you know.

Mark nods.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
I'm not an idiot.

MARK
No.

COLLEEN
OK.

Colleen's daughter stands on a chair, dunking a cookie into Mark's glass.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
Hey. You have your own milk.

MARK
It's OK.

And Colleen's son crawls up onto Mark's lap, gnawing on a huge cookie.

A long silence.

MARK (CONT'D)
It's getting late. I should probably go ...

But he doesn't move.

And Colleen doesn't say anything.

And they all just sit there, under the single kitchen light, eating cookies.

CUT TO:

A BICYCLE WHEEL

Clicking and clacking, a playing card in the spokes.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - TWILIGHT

Mark pedals hard on his rusted bike, wind in his hair, smiling, as he tries to keep up with a four-year old kid riding a bicycle with training wheels.

MAX. His son.

Max breaks ahead of him, turning into the driveway of his former suburban home as Max's Mom, SHARON, opens the front door.

Mark stops.

MARK
Alright, Mr. Max.

MAX
Dippy's!

MARK
No, not tonight, kiddo, I gotta get going.

MAX
Tomorrow.

MARK
Tomorrow, you got it. Gimmee a lil somethin.

Max gives him a kiss.

MARK (CONT'D)
Don't give Mom any trouble.

Mark sits back on his bike seat and gives his ex-wife a little salute.

She salutes him back.

And as Mark kicks the kickstand and slowly turns his bike around, Sharon and his son watch him ride down the empty suburban street, weaving in and out of street lamp light, the wheels clicking and clacking, clicking and clacking.

DISSOLVE TO:

MARK

Standing under a florescent light.

A long silence. (He's nervous)

Then.

MARK
I don't have any friends.
(beat)
Drinking. That was my only friend.
(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

(thinks)

And I miss my friend. *But.* I'm sober now. And I'm starting to get out there, you know ... starting to meet people and see things ...

(beat)

I saw this couple. I was driving down the street, my brain churning over all my bullshit, you know, and I just glimpsed out the window and I saw this teenage couple. They had to be, like, fifteen years old and the girl was leaning up against the porch wall, stand-offish-- upset, you know, and the boy said *something*, I don't know what, but she suddenly lunged for him and they were hugging each other, tight, and then they were gone ...

(beat)

I don't really know what I'm sayin.

(a crooked smile)

I think I'm done.

He sits down.

Thank you for your share.

CUT TO:

AN EVICTION NOTICE

Being ripped off a glass door.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

"The National Counselling Intervention Specialist"

Mark stands at the door, the orange notice in his hand.

MARK

... hello?

The place is empty.

Phones ring and tropical fish float belly up in aquariums.

A toilet flush, a DOOR BURSTS OPEN and Potts stumbles out of the bathroom, tucking in his pants.

POTTS

Mark.

MARK

Hey.

POTTS

Where's James?

MARK

You don't know?

POTTS

Hold up.

He picks up a phone:

POTTS (CONT'D)

National Counselling Intervention
Specialist, please hold.

(stabs a button)

National Counselling Intervention
Specialist, please hold.

Stabs another button and turns to Mark.

POTTS (CONT'D)

You don't know where he is either?

MARK

No, he's not even pickin up his
phone.

(holds up the notice)
What's this?

POTTS

Shit. No, really?

The phones start BEEPING.

POTTS (CONT'D)

Dammit.

He gets back on the phone:

POTTS (CONT'D)

Sorry for the delay, what can I do
for you?

And Mark stands there for a moment, unsure what to do.

Then.

He sits down at a cubicle.

Picks up a phone.

MARK

National Counselling Intervention
Specialist, how can I help you?

INT. ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mark sits at the head of a table, a BINDER open in front of him.

MARK

I'm looking over the books, guys,
and honestly-- we're sunk.

Potts, Dee, Spanks, Bobby and Chief. They all sit around the table, solemnly nodding.

POTTS

I predicted this.

MARK

These books are a disaster. I mean, short of burning the place down to the ground, I'm not sure how we can get outta this mess.

BOBBY

I know a guy.

MARK

No. Thank you. But I think this place is worth saving, so ... hear me out.

He leans forward.

MARK (CONT'D)

Spanks.

SPANKS

Yessir.

MARK

I got us a pre-intervention meeting tomorrow morning in Loretto.

Eyes wide.

MARK (CONT'D)

You wanna give it a shot?

SPANKS

Yeah.

MARK

Great.

(hands him a folder)
 Details are inside. *Bobby*. I need
 you work the phones, *alone*, cuz I
 need everyone else out in the
 field, distributing these--

He dumps a huge stack of PAMPHLETS on the table.

MARK (CONT'D)
 We all good with that.

Yeahs, Of Course.

MARK (CONT'D)
Chief.

He looks up.

MARK (CONT'D)
 How am I doin?

A wink.

MARK (CONT'D)
 And finally ...

Throws his hands up.

MARK (CONT'D)
 Where the *fuck* is James?

CUT TO:

JAMES AND HOLLY

Kissing slowly, sitting on the edge of a bed, just the quiet
 sounds of their lips moving.

A roadside motel.

Heart-shaped bed, smoky mirrors, pink rococo.

James touches her breast ... she grabs his hand, entwining
 fingers. He touches her other breast with his other hand and
 then, between kisses:

HOLLY
 Could we ...

He tries to unzip her dress.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Jimmy?

JAMES
(mouth full)
Hm?

HOLLY
Could we--

She pulls away.

JAMES
What's the matter.

HOLLY
Could we, just, I dunno--

A shrug.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Talk?

JAMES
(a smile)
Of course, honey, of course--

HOLLY
I'm just a little nervous.

JAMES
Me too, me too.

HOLLY
Sorry.

JAMES
No, no, no, don't be.

Beat.

HOLLY
I like it, our room.

JAMES
It's cool, huh?

HOLLY
All red and pink. Very honeymoon.

JAMES
Very honeymoon.

HOLLY

I want our wedding to be just like
this room, all red and pink.

JAMES

Absolutely.

Beat.

HOLLY

Here we are.

JAMES

So crazy, right?

HOLLY

Yeah.

They shake their heads. A silence.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I love you.

JAMES

I love you.

Another silence.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You hungry?

HOLLY

I don't think so, not yet.

Beat.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Why, are you?

JAMES

I could eat.

HOLLY

I could eat too.

JAMES

You know what-- let's wait. We'll
order room service--

HOLLY

Yeah!

JAMES

Right after we work up an appetite--

HOLLY

I'm gonna fuck you so hard.

JAMES

You're nasty.

Beat.

HOLLY

I should call my parents.

JAMES

Yeah.

HOLLY

Tell them I'm OK, you know, so they
don't worry.

JAMES

Go ahead.

She looks at the bedside phone.

HOLLY

Later.

Another silence.

Then.

They KISS again, passionately, tearing at each other's
clothes, breathing hard, Holly suddenly shaking, her
shoulders trembling, a shrill noise coming between them--

JAMES

Hey, hey, what's the matter?

HOLLY

Nothing.

She's crying.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Hold me.

She crawls up into his arms and he cradles her as she
uncontrollably sobs his arms.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Jimmy, I'm sorry.

JAMES
It's OK, don't worry--

HOLLY
Goddamnit.

She bolts upright, shaking her head and covering her mouth.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

And she runs to the bathroom, slamming the door behind her.

James just sits there, confused.

JAMES
(calling out)
You OK in there?

Nothing.

He goes to the bathroom and presses an ear to the door.
Knocks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Holly, honey.

Turns the doorknob ... locked.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Hey. You OK?

HOLLY (O.S.)
Could you-- Jimmy?

JAMES
What is it.

HOLLY (O.S.)
Could you, just, leave me alone.

JAMES
... ok ...

HOLLY (O.S.)
Please. I need a minute.

And James wanders back into the room, sitting on the bed.

Stares at the blank TV.

A muffled RING.

He JUMPS over the bed, nearly diving for his briefcase (Croco-embossed) fumbling for his mobile phone, answering it:

JAMES
Dr. James Fearing, yes.

He stands.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Whoa, what?

Swings on his jacket.

JAMES (CONT'D)
*Dee, Dee, hold up, calm down.
Where are you?*

Snatches his briefcase and slips out of the motel room--

JAMES (CONT'D)
Don't do anything, OK?

Strides past Holly's parked PORSCHE, moving fast across the parking lot.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

JAMES JOGGING

On the side of the road, sweating, his shirt soaked and open, the phone pressed to his ear:

JAMES
(leaving a message)
*POTTS?! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?!
We gotta situation with Dee, he
slipped, a relapse, I think, and
I'm meeting him at the Hilton right
now, I can't seem to reach Bobby or
Chief and I need someone to pick me
up, OK, I need someone to come get
me, like, NOW--*

EXT. HILTON HOTEL - MINNEAPOLIS - MORNING

A motorcycle with TWO RIDERS screeches into the parking lot.

James swings off, on the phone, SPRINTING to the hotel entrance as the driver, MILO (fifteen pounds heavier, sober), tries to keep up.

JAMES
 (leaving another message)
*Pick up the phone, man, I'm here,
 I'm in the lobby--*

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MORNING

James and Milo run past room numbers, STOPPING at an open door.

JAMES
DEE, you in there? I'm comin in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

James freezes.

Everybody's there: Colleen, Potts, Dee, Bobby, Chief, Spanks. All sitting on a couch.

And Mark.

An intervention.

MARK
 Hey, man.

He stands.

MARK (CONT'D)
 Why don't you have a seat, James.

JAMES
 You gotta be fuckin kidding me.

Mark gestures to an empty chair. He's the leader.

MARK
 Have a seat.

COLLEEN
 I love you honey.

BOBBY
 We're here for you, buddy.

Solemn nods, *We care about you, man.*

MARK

We just wanna say a few things and
then we'll be outta your hair.

James blinks.

MARK (CONT'D)

C'mon, you know the drill.

Mark goes over to him, takes his arm and sits him down.
Milo, not knowing what to do, plops down on the bed.

A nervous silence.

MARK (CONT'D)

Go ahead, Dee.

A snort.

JAMES

Yeah, you go ahead Dee.

Dee sits forward, a letter shaking in his hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Look at you.

DEE

(reading)

"James. Your behavior has affected
me negatively in the following
ways..."

JAMES

You were wearing your pants
backwards when I met you.

DEE

"You have fired and re-hired me six
times now--"

JAMES

You drank Scope from a bottle,
remember?

DEE

And that makes me constantly
insecure and worried for my well-
being.

JAMES

This is a joke. Who's next?

MARK

James, please.

(to Dee)

Are you finished?

DEE

You give some great advice, James,
but you just don't follow any of
it.

JAMES

That all?

DEE

That's it.

MARK

Bobby. Your turn.

JAMES

Really, Bobby? You got something
to say?

(to Milo)

This guy used to live under the
Hennepin Bridge.

Milo nervously laughs.

JAMES (CONT'D)

At his first meeting, he pissed
himself, right in the middle of his
share.

MARK

Go ahead, Bobby.

Bobby goes to read his letter, but instead folds it and
speaks directly to James.

BOBBY

I just think you should stay outta
people's heads and beds for awhile.

JAMES

Profound. Thanks.

(to Spanks)

What about you, Spanks? What words
of wisdom does the spit-back
methadone king have to impart.

SPANKS

(reading)

"You once said to me, that you
operate in two speeds: full speed
ahead and fuck it."

(looks up)

James. It's time you find another
gear.

JAMES

What are you even talking about,
dude?

MARK

JAMES, please.

JAMES

What, you think you're in charge,
Marky?

(to Milo)

This guy, just weeks ago, was
crying to me --

(whining)

My kids, my wife, my house.

COLLEEN

We're trying to help you, Jim.

JAMES

Ah, the withholding bitch speaks.

MARK

Stop it--

JAMES

Gentlemen, this is Colleen. Now,
you don't really know her because
she doesn't take AA or my career
seriously and doesn't want anything
to do with you all.

COLLEEN

That's not true.

JAMES

Of course, she doesn't complain
when I pay the bills--

Mark abruptly stands.

MARK

You're gonna stop it, James, right
now.

JAMES

No, no, no, I wanna hear more.
Whattaya got Potts?

Potts shrugs.

POTTS

You're being a dick.

JAMES

You would know.

(to Milo)

Actually, Milo, you and Potts have a lot in common. You both like to beat the shit outta your wives when you're drunk.

Potts LUNGES for James, Mark getting in the middle.

MARK

Hey, hey, hey.

JAMES

What's the matter, Pottsy, you got something to say to me, huh? Why don't you read your letter, ya piece a shit, all of you, lemmee hear your letters, because when you add up your chips, fellas, it don't even come close to my eleven years.

CHIEF

Bullshit.

The Old-timer speaks.

For the first time. James shuts up.

The room gets real quiet.

CHIEF (CONT'D)

Now you're a good kid--

JAMES

C'mon, Chief--

CHIEF

Shut-up.

He shuts up.

CHIEF (CONT'D)
You've done us all alotta good ...
Not one of us would be alive if
weren't for you, ain't that right?

Everyone nods.

CHIEF (CONT'D)
But you're gonna sit there--

He leans forward with a creak.

CHIEF (CONT'D)
And listen. Because we've done
alotta listening to you.

He sits back.

CHIEF (CONT'D)
Carry on.

MARK
Thank you, Chief.
(beat)
Colleen. Why don't you go next.

She slowly unfolds her letter.

COLLEEN
(reading)
"James."

And she starts to cry ...

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
"When you love me, there's nothing
like it. I feel safe and
protected, like nothing could ever
hurt me. But when you don't love
me ..."

James stares at the floor.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
"It's like the sun shuts off."

She lowers the letter.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
We need help, honey. What we do...
it's not good for the kids, your
job, us, it's not good ... for me.

James looks at her, a bit shaken.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
I'm going to Al-Anon. Will you go
to treatment?

He BOLTS to his feet.

JAMES
I have to use the bathroom.

And he runs for the door.

Mark goes after him, pausing at the door--

MARK
(to everyone)
I got it, stay here.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Mark stands outside a hotel bathroom.

MARK
James. You OK in there?

He knocks.

MARK (CONT'D)
Listen. I know this is hard for
you. But. Things have really
gotten outta hand, you know,
chasing down Holly and then chasing
down your wife and I just think you
need to stop for a second and be
still.

Nothing.

MARK (CONT'D)
James. C'mon, we're all waiting.

He pushes the door-- LOCKED.

MARK (CONT'D)
Wha-- ?

He SLAMS against the door with his shoulder, over and over
again--

HE KICKS THE DOOR

It bangs open:

MARK (CONT'D)
Motherfucker.

The window is open, a garbage can beneath it.

CUT TO:

MARK SPRINTING

Tearing across a busy street, weaving in and out of moving cars, James a hundred yards ahead of him--

A HONK

And Mark SLAMS against the hood of a car, rolling off with ease, *Sorry, I'm Sorry*, and he's on his feet again, not missing a beat, SPRINTING down a commercial street, weaving in and out of pedestrians and now he's on James' heels--

MARK
YOU CAN'T KEEP LIVING LIKE THIS!

CRASH

A grocery cart topples at Mark's feet and he LEAPS OVER it, chasing James into--

A SUPERMARKET

Heads turning, people SCREAMING as Mark chases James down the frozen food aisle--

MARK (CONT'D)
*DRUNK OR SOBER, YOU CAN'T DO THIS
ANYMORE!*

And they're running down the breakfast aisle, James pulling cereal boxes off the shelves, CHUCKING them at Mark, sugar pops exploding off of Mark's head, scattering everywhere, crunching underfoot, James disappearing into--

THE BACK ROOM

Mark stops dead in his tracks, standing in the middle of the windowless room, craning his neck over boxes and forklifts--

A FLASH OF LIGHT

The emergency door KICKED OPEN, ALARMS SHRIEKING, JAMES looking back, grinning, and Mark is off again, tumbling-

OUTSIDE

Into the bright sunlight, blinded for a moment, and he's on the chase again, pumping his arms and legs, running across another busy street, cars slamming on their brakes, HONKING, and then it's quiet, just Mark and James' hard breathing and heavy footfalls, running down a suburban street--

MARK (CONT'D)
C'mon, James! Slow down.

And they're jogging through a vast public park now, running across a little league diamond and into the vast outfield, slowing down, slower and slower, then--

MARK (CONT'D)
C'mon.

They stop.

Coughing, bent at the waist, in the middle of the lush park.

JAMES
How does it feel?

Between gasps.

MARK
What?

JAMES
Being close to the flame?

MARK
James.

JAMES
Trying to prove something to yourself, huh?

MARK
James.

JAMES
On the firing line now, man, you're on the firing line.

MARK
You need help.

JAMES
The one that needs help here, buddy, really needs help, is you.

MARK

Don't.

JAMES

I've seen you. I've seen the fire
in your eyes, Mark, the struggle
inside, beating it back everyday,
and you're tired, aren't you?
Exhausted. And right now, you're
not even sure if you can beat this
thing, am I right?

Mark doesn't say anything.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I get it, man. I do. It's not
pretty what's goin on in your head.

A hand on Mark's shoulder.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But that's why I'm here.

(beat)

I'm not just a friend or your
sponsor or a helping hand ... I'm
an awakener.

Mark stares at him. Stone-faced.

MARK

You.

JAMES

Yeah.

MARK

Are out of control.

James flinches.

MARK (CONT'D)

And you're going to treatment.

JAMES

Really.

MARK

It's all set up.

JAMES

(explodes)

FOR WHAT?!

PUSHES him.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I've been sober for eleven goddamn years, ELEVEN, never slipping, NOT ONCE, staying dry and saving lives on the front line and you're gonna tell ME I need to go to treatment? Who the fuck are YOU, huh? Some loser who doesn't have a pot to piss in, no job, no wife, no house, no money, no NOTHING--

MARK
(rote)
If you accept this Golden Ticket,
we have a flight arranged--

JAMES
You're unbelievable, you know that.

MARK
--to a recovery center in
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin--

JAMES
Why are you doing this?

MARK
--all you have to do is say Yes.

JAMES
Mark. Please.

A pause.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Why are you doing this?

MARK
Because I care about you. We all
care about you.

JAMES
No, really.

MARK
I care about you.

JAMES
Bullshit. Say it.

MARK
I told you--

JAMES
Fuckin say it, I dare you, because
I know you don't have the guts to.

MARK
What are you--

JAMES
Tell me. Why.

MARK
Because. I care about--

JAMES
No, say it.

MARK
What?!

JAMES
Say the words.

MARK
WHAT?!

JAMES
Tell me why you're doin this?!

MARK
(blurts)
I dunno.

Beat.

MARK (CONT'D)
You. You're the reason why I'm
here. You. And even though
everything is so bad right now and
I feel so alone and I don't know
what my future is anymore, I ... I
felt cared for, loved, you know ...
by you. And I gotta believe in
this, believe in you, or...
(shakes his head)
James. You gotta walk the walk,
man, you gotta be better than you
are ... or I'm finished. We're all
finished. Bobby and Dee and Potts
and Spanks and Chief, all of em.
Colleen. They love you.
(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)
(beat)
I love you.

A silence.

Then, a snort.

JAMES
Get the hell outta here with that.

Mark's face falls.

JAMES (CONT'D)
"I love you." Puh-lease.

Mark just stands there, frozen. Slowly shakes his head.

MARK
... you're sick ...

He turns away.

JAMES
I'm sick, right.

Mark starts to walk away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(calling after him)
You're the sick one.

Nothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You know what-- *fuck you.*

Mark picks up the pace.

JAMES (CONT'D)
FUCK YOU and your sanctimonious bullshit.

James just stands there ... a lone figure in an empty pasture.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Aw, c'mon, man.

He starts to walk after him.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You gotta be tougher than that. I
love you too, man, I do. That was
the right answer.

Mark ignores him, walking faster.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 I was testing you and you passed.
 You're a bona fide interventionist
 now.

James starts to jog.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 C'mon, Marky Mark, come back. I'm
 sorry, OK?

MARK
 (over his shoulder)
 Leave me alone.

JAMES
 I'll go to treatment. You hear me?
 I'll go.

MARK
 I don't give a shit.

James is running now.

JAMES
 Hold up, man, hold up.

MARK
 Leave me alone.

And Mark is running now too.

JAMES
 Let's just hug.

MARK
 Get away from me.

They're on the chase again.

JAMES
 COME BACK, MAN! I'M SORRY!

A FULL-SPRINT, both running down another suburban street--

JAMES (CONT'D)
 COME BACK!

James REACHES FOR MARK, his hand outstretched in mid-air--

JAMES (CONT'D)
COME ON, MARK, DON'T LEAVE ME!

Nearly catching his shirt, his face twisted with effort, chasing and chasing, two grown men running and running in circles.

Then.

VOICE (V.O.)
I don't know who I am.

OFF-SCREEN LAUGHTER

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No, seriously, I don't. I have no idea who I am.

And chasing and chasing, fingers touching Mark's shirt, just barely, chasing and chasing--

JAMES
COME BACK, MAN, C'MON!

VOICE (V.O.)
There was this guy, see. I only knew him for a very short while, but he was a big part of my life.

Chasing and chasing.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He's in my head still, you know, talking straight and keeping me sober, and this guy, a wise man, once said to me about AA ...

His fingers graze Mark's shirt, James' face lighting up, almost there, almost got it--

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Thousands come. Dozens stay.

CUT TO:

AN AA MEETING

MARK stands at the podium, alone under a single light, a dark auditorium spreading out before him.

MARK

See, I'm committed to the service,
working the steps, taking it one
day at a time, but I gotta ya-- I
still don't know who I am.

A shrug.

MARK (CONT'D)

And that's OK. Because I do know
one thing ...

He stares at the audience for a moment. (a cough)

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm one of the dozens.

He smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)

Keep coming back. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

Roll credits.