



THE SECOND LIFE of BEN HASKINS

Written by

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OVER BLACK:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
What if it takes too long?

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
I'll wait forever if I have to.

CLOSE ON:

BEN HASKINS, handsome enough but in the early stages of letting himself go. He's just starting to bald, the type of mid 30s that looks closer to 40.

Ben's eyes are glowing, filled with love. His head bobs in and out of frame.

CLOSE ON:

KAT HASKINS, the mid 30s partner in crime of his, her auburn hair up to keep it out of her face. Her eyes match his, overwhelmed with emotion.

Her lips part, and she exhales, breathy.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

And we see now that Ben and Kat are making love. Slow, passionate and real. But also something desperate about it. There's a sadness here underneath it all.

Back on Ben, whose eyes now look to be holding back tears.

FLASH OF:

Ben as a teenager, surrounded by laughing male classmates. He locks eyes with a teenage Kat across the school cafeteria. She smiles his way, something that pierces his soul.

Back on Kat in the bedroom, sharing Ben's look of longing.

FLASH OF:

Next to a huge oak tree, teenage Kat watches a nervous Ben play the acoustic guitar, stifling a giggle.

In the bedroom, Ben breathes in deeply, absorbed in Kat.

FLASH OF:

Inside a church, Teenage Kat places a comforting hand on Ben's. A picture of Ben and an Older Woman (his mother) on top of a casket.

Back in bed, Ben's hand tightens around the sheet, twisting.

FLASH OF:

Ben and Kat, late twenties, getting married in that same church. A glistening but humble ring slides onto her finger.

Back on Ben and Kat. Making love. Becoming one. A love that transcends time.

Just as Kat nears climax, she can no longer hold in--

KAT
(nearly a whisper)
Don't leave me, Ben.

QUICK FLASHES:

Ben and Kat in their first home. Kat painting on a canvas. Ben with a class of students. Kat and Ben against the sunset.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

ONSCREEN TEXT: Chicago - 2009

The room dark. Ben sits, face illuminated by a blue glow. We find him flipping through the last few images we just saw on his first generation iPhone. He closes out of the pictures. On the lockscreen we see the date: *Thursday, November 5*

Behind him, Kat sleeps, back toward him. He turns to her, watching her body rise and fall with each breath. There's something he has to do... and he doesn't want to do it.

Ben stands, walks off, but we stay on Kat's sleeping body. On the nightstand, more pictures of the couple together.

A moment later, Ben's hand pops back in to drop a note and a CD labeled "FOR KAT" on the bed.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAWN

Ben looks up at a medical clinic, unsure of himself, breath visible in the winter air. The Chicago skyline sits in the distance. We're on the undeveloped, rough edge of town.

A deep breath. He walks up the steps and opens the door.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE:**THE SECOND LIFE OF BEN HASKINS**

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING

--two eyes wide awake. Blue, piercing. Staring forward. Focused on nothing in particular.

ETHAN JOYCE (29) lies motionless in his bed. Like he hasn't slept all night. He exhales, morning time blues.

We find Ethan shirtless, chiseled, wavy brown hair. He's beautiful. Blessed in the physical sense. Life tends to give you what you want when you look like this.

Outside the window, the Chicago skyline glistens in the sunrise. But there's something different to it. Unfamiliar, ultramodern buildings join the Willis Tower and Marina City.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - MORNING

Ethan stands in front of the same medical clinic Ben just visited. Again, there's something different. It's clearly undergone renovations. A developed area, high rises all around, no longer the edge of town.

The summer sun beats down on the asphalt.

ONSCREEN TEXT: Chicago - 2029

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A Doctor's GLOVED HANDS hold Ethan's head, shining a light into those piercing blue eyes. The DOCTOR (50s, paunchy) puts his arms at his side.

DOCTOR

Well, there's nothing physically wrong with you.

The Doctor looks a shirtless Ethan up and down, noting his built torso.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Far from it, actually. You're in perfect health.

(perplexed)

You said this has been going on a while?

Ethan simply nods.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
You're going to need to speak to an assessor.

INT. THERAPY ROOM - LATER

Ethan sits in a plush leather chair. It's a different part of the facility, cozier and more personal. CLAIRE MORRISON (early 40s), professional yet empathetic, jots down information on a notepad.

CLAIRES
How long have you been having these feelings, Ethan?

Ethan takes his time to respond, the truth hard to admit.

ETHAN
Every day for the past... I dunno, two years. Maybe three. It's like I'm in a fog.

CLAIRES
What have you done to alleviate what you're experiencing?

ETHAN
Oh God... *everything*.

CLAIRES
Please elaborate, for my record.

ETHAN
Tried therapy. I quit drinking. Quit smoking. Quit drugs. Started the new drugs they told me to take. Started exercising. Started praying. Gave to charity, what little I could. Apologized to those I've wronged. Confronted the people who've wronged me.
(then)
None of it worked.

Claire remains professional, composed.

CLAIRES
Mhmm. You mentioned a lack of money. Perhaps financial hardship is making you shortsighted--

ETHAN
It's not that... okay? I'm just done. Let me be done.
(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)
You know, you're not supposed to
try to talk me out of this, legally-
speaking.

Claire bites her bottom lip, he's correct.

CLAIRES
It's a big decision. A permanent
one. You need to be aware of that.

The heavy silence assures us that Ethan is indeed aware.

CLAIRES (CONT'D)
Have you told those close to you?

Beat. He considers.

ETHAN
Everyone I want to tell.

More silence.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
I'm ready.

Claire stifles her emotion, this part never gets easy.

CLAIRES
Okay. One more question.

INT. OPERATION ROOM - LATER

The Doctor places Ethan into a chair. He sits still, staring
at the bright lights above him.

CLAIRES (V.O.)
Are you willing to participate in
our remodeling program?

In the chair, Ethan breathes hard. Somehow simultaneously
nervous and at peace.

ETHAN (V.O.)
Yes.

The Doctor places a hand on Ethan's shoulder.

DOCTOR
Thank you for your generosity,
young man.

Ethan smiles back, eyes watery.

ETHAN
Will it hurt?

DOCTOR
You won't feel a thing.

ETHAN
And it'll all be over... just like
that?

The Doctor nods, producing a long, thin syringe.

DOCTOR
Are you ready, Mister Joyce?

The full reality sets in for Ethan, but he remains steadfast.

ETHAN
I'm ready.

DOCTOR
Okay, I'm going to count down from
five...

Ethan grips the arm rest. Closes his eyes.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Four...

The syringe moves closer to the back of Ethan's neck. He
breathes what he knows will be his last breath.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Three... two...

The syringe makes contact, puncturing the skin.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
One.

CUT TO BLACK.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 1. (Just Like) Starting Over

ONSCREEN: Darkness and silence. A vague shape begins to form,
slowly revealing itself to be that of a WOMAN, before quickly
fading back to black.

Suddenly, we're interrupted by a loud, frantic GASP OF AIR.

INT. OPERATION ROOM - LATER

Ethan's eyes POP open. But something about the way he moves
feels different.

He struggles in his chair, arms tied down. The Doctor watches Ethan writhing about. He holds a futuristic, cylindrical, GLOWING BLUE DEVICE.

He puts his hands up, trying to soothe Ethan.

DOCTOR
Mister Haskins, please calm
yourself.

ETHAN
Where am I?

DOCTOR
We'll explain everything in a
moment. Try to relax.

The Doctor looks at Ethan, bedside manner on display. Ethan does his best to comply.

ETHAN
What's going on? Did you do it?

DOCTOR
Welcome back to the physical world,
Mister Haskins. I know the initial
readjustment period can be
disorienting. First, can you please
tell me your name?

ETHAN
Benjamin... uhhh, Ben. Ben Haskins.

Ethan's gone. His body belongs to BEN HASKINS now.

DOCTOR
That's correct, Mister Haskins. Do
you have any idea where you are
right now?

Ben thinks for a moment, examining his hands.

BEN
You... you've resurrected me.

Ben exhales as he says the words. Heavy.

DOCTOR
Well, *remodeled*. But yes.

BEN
How long have I been gone?

DOCTOR

Your consciousness has been suspended for nineteen years and six months--

BEN

Nineteen years? Jesus.

That number hits Ben hard.

BEN (CONT'D)

(mumbling)

I... I thought...

DOCTOR

But the procedure appears to have been a success. You're very lucky, Mister Haskins.

Breathe in, breathe out.

BEN

I... I can't believe it. Is Kat here?

DOCTOR

(ignoring that)

Now, you may find some differences between your old life and your new one -- different taste in foods, different mannerisms, physical abilities, and so on--

BEN

Yeah, great. Where's my wife?

DOCTOR

In a moment, Doctor Morrison will get you up to speed on your personal life.

(changing the subject)

Would you like to see what your new body looks like, Mister Haskins?

The Doctor outstretches a mirror. Ben grabs it, hand shaking. He holds it up. Looks at his incredibly handsome face, the face that used to be Ethan Joyce's.

BEN

Holy shit.

INT. THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Ben sits in the same plush chair where Ethan was interviewed. He watches a holographic clock tick in the corner of the office, a host of thoughts warring behind his gaze.

The door opens as Claire enters the room. She reads a clipboard.

CLAIRe

Good afternoon, Mister Haskins. And congratulations on your successful remodel.

BEN

Thanks. This... is *really weird*.

CLAIRe

Of course it is. For all intents and purposes, you just traveled twenty years into the future.

BEN

(no shit)

Yeah.

CLAIRe

(trying to spin it)

Beats cancer though, right?

Ben doesn't acknowledge that, focusing back on the clock, specifically the date: **05/11/2029**. It hardly seems real.

BEN

You musta been, like, nine when I died.

CLAIRe

Try twenty, but thank you for the flattery.

BEN

And how old am I now?

CLAIRe

Well, legally speaking you're thirty-five, but your body is about six years younger.

Ben runs his hands through his hair.

BEN

I don't know how I feel about being in the body of someone who *killed himself*. It's kinda *creepy*.

CLAIRe

It's best to try and not think about that, Ben. Yes, your body used to belong to someone else.

(MORE)

CLAIRe (CONT'D)

But they are gone. They chose to end their life. This is *your* life now, and it's yours to do what you want with it.

BEN

Right. Have you guys called my wife yet?

Claire reveals a little emotion at that.

CLAIRe

Ben, this is never easy, but I suppose it's easiest if I'm... as forthright as possible. Your wife has chosen to detach herself from you.

Ben blinks. That doesn't sound good.

BEN

What the hell does that mean?

CLAIRe

She has legally forbidden you from reaching out to her.

Ben looks like someone knocked the wind out of him.

BEN

That's not possible.

CLAIRe

I'm sorry.

BEN

There... there must be some mistake.

CLAIRe

There's no mistake.

BEN

She said she'd wait forever.

CLAIRe

(voice-of-reason)

Twenty years is a long time, Ben.

BEN

It's a lot shorter than forever.

Why would she--

(despairing)

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Why did this take so long? I
thought I was one of the first.

CLAIRES
(well-rehearsed)
Demand has been high. Higher than
expected. And the process has gone
through a lot of fine-tuning.
Priorities shift. It's only been
the last couple of years that
things have really picked up.

Eyes watery, Ben's despair is evident in his words.

BEN
(pleading)
Can you... can you at least let me
know if she's okay?

CLAIRES
I can't. In fact, it might be
easier to just assume she isn't.

Claire places her hand on top of Ben's. She feels his pain.

CLAIRES (CONT'D)
Listen, Ben, you have a lot of
information to process. This isn't
going to be easy. Grieving never
is.

Ben's hand shakes. He tries to slow his breathing.

CLAIRES (CONT'D)
There's a whole world out there
waiting for you. You just need some
time to get adjusted. Why don't we
get you Re-ID'd and have you rest
for a bit?

BEN
Re-ID'd?

INT. MACHINE - LATER

Ben lies on his back in a glowing machine vaguely reminiscent
of a tanning bed. A soothing, slightly computerized female
voice speaks over ambient music.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Welcome back, Ben. Today is
Thursday, May 11th, 2029. You have
been suspended for nineteen years,
six months and four days.
(MORE)

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Please place your hands on the pads
on each side of you.

Ben complies, nervous. He winces as the pads activate.

BEN
Wh-what are you doing?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
We're modifying your fingerprints
to match those of your old body.
Now open your eyes...

Now Ben *really* squirms as the panel above his head opens, two lights shining brightly as lasers emanate outward. We watch as Ben's eye color changes from blue to brown.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
When you step out of this chamber,
your identity will once again be
Benjamin Joseph Haskins. The
institute will provide your housing
for the next six months while you
look for new employment.

BEN
Uhh... okay.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Good luck, Ben. And congratulations
on your new life.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Ben stands outside the remodel facility. He stares out at the Chicago skyline. He takes in all the changes of the last two decades. In his arms, a small bag of his belongings.

Such a strange sensation, but unquestionably a beautiful summer day. A car pulls up in front of Ben, the passenger door opening in front of him. Ben looks over each shoulder before realizing the car is for him.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ben gets into the car, tossing his bag next to him.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Good afternoon, Benjamin.

BEN
Hi.

Confused, Ben looks to the front seat to find no driver. He leans in closer.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hello?

On closer inspection, there's no steering wheel either.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
It will be two hours, five minutes
to your destination.

The car takes off, gently blowing Ben's mind.

BEN
Two hours? Where are we going?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Milwaukee.

BEN
What?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Please put on your seatbelt.

Ben sighs, complying.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

The car comes to a stop outside of a large apartment building on a relatively busy corner of downtown Milwaukee. Light summer drizzle.

Ben steps out of the car, bag in hand. He looks around at various PEDESTRIANS, all of whom smile in his direction.

Weirded out, Ben looks at himself, thinking there's something off about his outfit. He catches himself in the reflection of a window, a reminder of how attractive he is now.

BEN
(to himself)
Right.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

A door opens, Ben entering a moment later. The lights automatically turn on as he walks in. Ben surveys the place, sparse but nicer than your standard government housing.

Art on the walls catches his attention, as does the acoustic guitar and small electric piano in one of the corners.

Ben walks to a desk nearby. On top of it: a phone (like an iPhone but entirely translucent), a small paperback (*A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis), and a bottle of PILLS.

The phone lights up at Ben's touch, and a hologram of Claire displays above it.

CLAIRe

Ben, welcome to your transitionary home. You'll find some of your old possessions are here to help ease your way back into society.

Ben looks out his window, taking in the nighttime city scene.

CLAIRe (CONT'D)

You're probably wondering what you're doing here. The previous occupant of your body lived in Chicago. Since you have no immediate family residing in Illinois, recent laws now prohibit you from entering the state for a period of five years, in order to protect you and people who knew your body's previous occupant. So, welcome to Milwaukee.

Ben frowns, looks to the items on the desk.

CLAIRe (CONT'D)

I've loaded an app on your phone called STAGES that I believe will be very helpful in your recovery. And I've found that the book is also a great tool for patients who have returned to similar difficulties after being remodeled. It's a short read and full of incredible wisdom, I promise. You're not alone, Ben.

Sighing, Ben softly shakes the bottle of pills.

CLAIRe (CONT'D)

A scan of your brain chemistry identified a slight imbalance in your serotonin levels. The pills should help with that. Now please get some rest.

Ben looks out the window, spotting a WOMAN in the street going crowd. In a blink, she's gone. Did he just imagine it?

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Exhausted, Ben looks up at the light, annoyed. He looks around for any sign of a light switch. Nothing. *Great.*

BEN
(might as well try)
Lights... off?

The lights comply and shut off. Ben allows a small smile of accomplishment before COLLAPSING onto the bed. It's been an eventful day. The holographic clock reads 8:34 PM.

ONSCREEN: Total darkness. Once again, colors swirl. A WOMAN comes into focus. We get a better look this time (auburn hair, warm smile, surely Kat) until the whole image falls apart as--

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Ben's (now brown) eyes BOLT AWAKE. It's still dark outside. He looks to the clock next to him: 10:15 PM.

BEN
Shit.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 2. I Just Wasn't Made For These Times

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Shirtless, Ben shuffles around the room, unsure what to do.

On the back of his neck, we see a small, circular SCAR, a byproduct of his remodeling. It's cool looking, the type of scar you show to girls at parties.

He grabs his new phone, tries to make sense of it. He finally gets to the phone app, dials a number from memory. It rings.

VOICE (V.O.)
Hello?

BEN
Um... hello.

VOICE (V.O.)
Who is this?

BEN
Is Kat there?

VOICE (V.O.)
Kat? I don't know any Kat, buddy.

Click. The phone hangs up. Ben sighs, navigates home on his phone, and sees the Stages app staring back at him. Nothing better to do, he clicks on it.

STAGES
Welcome to Stages. With **Stages**, together we will move past these feelings you're having. First with **Confrontation** then **Healing** then **Acceptance**.

As it says each bolded word, they appear holographically.

STAGES (CONT'D)
Please prepare to confront your grief.

BEN
Yeah, okay. I'm prepared.

AI KAT (O.S.)
Hey, Benny-boo.

Ben's jaw wavers, his eyes immediately watering. He turns around, startled and moved as he sees before him--

--a ghostly hologram of KAT as he knew her. She looks just as wonderful as he remembered.

BEN
Kat? I don't...

Ben can hardly breathe.

AI KAT
I know it must be hard to see me, but it's best if you can confront this head on, looking right at me while you do it.

BEN
Right.

AI KAT
Plus I kind of look like Princess Leia, right?

Ben can't help laughing, but quickly melts back to sadness.

BEN

Why did you do it, Kat? You said
you'd wait forever.

AI Kat looks down sympathetically.

AI KAT

Lovers frequently employ hyperbole,
Ben. It's not even physically
possible for a person to "wait
forever".

As Ben process that--

AI KAT (CONT'D)

Besides, I'm just a recreation of
Kat. I can't speculate on what she
was feeling or why she did things.
I'm here only to help you move on.

BEN

How am I supposed to move on? I'm
in a world I don't recognize
without the only person I want to
be with.

AI Kat walks toward Ben, mere inches separating them.

AI KAT

Why don't we start by remembering
something nice? A memory you
particularly enjoy.

(encouraging)

Close your eyes. Think.

Ben complies, closes his eyes, and when he opens them--

EXT. BEN AND KAT'S TREE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The real Kat (aka PAST KAT now) sits by Ben (in his original body, which we can call PAST BEN now) on a picnic blanket in front of the ENORMOUS OAK TREE we last glimpsed in the opening.

Current Ben watches the memory, walking through the scene.

PAST BEN

Feels like I'm wasting my time with
them sometimes. Like they don't
really care about history at all. I
just... I wish that I could
convince them that history isn't
just a bunch of outdated made-up
stories.

(MORE)

PAST BEN (CONT'D)
(passionate)

It's real. It's happening now. And we're all a part of it. Our sixteenth president walked this very ground, and our forty-fourth might live just a few miles away.

PAST KAT
(admiring)

You should be happy, Ben... you're shaping young minds. You're doing something that matters.

PAST BEN

No, you're doing something that matters! You're pursuing your dreams. Your art. I'm just... making the most of my back-up plan.

PAST KAT

Oh, so I'm your back-up plan now?

PAST BEN

(smiles)

You know that's not what I meant.

PAST KAT

You care, Ben. You do. You need to fight for those kids... just like you fight for everything you care about.

That touches him. Past Ben smiles wide at Past Kat.

PAST KAT (CONT'D)

Now play me something. Or did you bring that guitar just for us to look at it?

He grabs a nearby guitar and begins playing the opening notes of "You've Really Got A Hold On Me" by Smokey Robinson.

PAST BEN

(singing softly)

I don't like you/but I love you...

Ben's voice is impressive, gently commanding.

AI KAT (V.O.)

Describe to me what you're seeing.

BEN

Kat and I on a picnic. I'm playing "You've Really Got A Hold On Me." Feels like an eternity since I've heard it.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Your-- Kat's parents always gave me
a hard time about using it as our
wedding song.

AI KAT (V.O.)
I just looked up the lyrics. To be
fair to them, it does sound
borderline abusive.

BEN
To us, it was always about loving
someone unconditionally.

Past Ben wraps up his short rendition and places the guitar down. Past Kat looks to him, overwhelmed by love.

BEN (CONT'D)
And now, you're about to...

PAST KAT
I want to try to have a baby again.

Past Ben smiles wide, patting the nearby oak tree. "Ben + Kat" is carved into it.

AI KAT (V.O.)
About to what, Ben?

PAST BEN
(looking at tree)
This guy always brings me luck.

PAST KAT
You mean he always helps you get
lucky.

As they kiss, Ben turns away, not ready to think about this.

BEN
That's enough for now.

He closes his eyes, and when he opens them again--

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME

He's back, AI Kat still there too.

AI KAT
That wasn't so bad, right? The
first step is always the hardest.

Ben is bitter now.

BEN

You don't even sound like her.

AI KAT

It's normal to have a negative reaction to seeing the happiness you once had. Why don't you try to remember something uncomfortable? A bad moment in your marriage.

Angry, Ben rushes to the phone, hitting buttons on it.

BEN

How do I turn you off?

He figures it out and AI Kat disappears, leaving him alone again. He breathes heavy, distressed by that encounter. He looks back to his phone, determined, and grabs it.

TIME CUT TO:

Ben pops two of the serotonin pills with a glass of water, hoping they'll do something to get him out of his 2029 blues.

BEN (CONT'D)

(pacing, on phone)

Well, I'm just calling because we're coming up on the fortieth reunion.

(then, faux-casual)

Sure, it's not for a couple more years, but I'm getting all the contact info in line. So, speaking of, do you know what ever happened to Kat Haskins?

Ben sighs and hangs up.

BEN (CONT'D)

Alright, phone, try the next name on the list.

The phone starts ringing.

VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?

BEN

Hey this is, uh, Max from high school. How's it going?

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ben is spread out lethargically on the couch, acoustic guitar on his lap.

BEN
 How could none of them know where
 you are?

AI Kat appears.

AI KAT
 There's a reason they call it
 detaching.

BEN
 (startled)
 What the-- where'd you come from?

AI KAT
 You asked me a question. Your
 current settings allow me to appear
 whenever you may be addressing me.

BEN
 Well, change those. I'll open you
 when I want to open you.

AI KAT
 Okay, they've been revised. You'll
 have to say my name for me to
 appear. Would you like to continue
 using the Stages app? We can
 journey to another memory.

BEN
 No. Go away.

AI Kat disappears. Ben's left to his depression in the dark. He touches the neck of the guitar with his left hand, forming a chord, strums at the strings with his right.

An atonal noise rings out. Ben looks at the guitar, confused. He plucks the strings in order to see if they're in tune. They are. He tries at the chord again, same horrible noise.

He raises his left hand, simply stares at it.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - MORNING

Ben sits in a circle of SUPPORT GROUP ATTENDEES, people of all different races and genders. They all have that same scar on the back of their necks -- all REMODELS. An ASIAN MAN speaks up--

ASIAN MAN
 I don't know how to feel. I'm
 living as a man now.
 (MORE)

ASIAN MAN (CONT'D)

Beggars can't be choosers, right?
They expedited my case 'cause of my
kids, but I thought they'd at least
give me a female body. All I was
thinking about was getting back to
them. I didn't read the fine print.

The GROUP LEADER nods, sympathetic.

GROUP LEADER

How are things with your family?

ASIAN MAN

How are my kids supposed to
comprehend that their black mother
is alive again but now she's an
Asian man? They can hardly look at
me. Not to mention my husband. He
didn't sign on for *this*.

Ben furrows his brow, a reality check setting in.

GROUP LEADER

These things take time. He'll learn
to accept this new life.

ASIAN MAN

(tearing up)

What if he doesn't? I don't know
what I am without him... I-I don't
know if I could go on--

GROUP LEADER

Stop that. You can't pin your
entire reason for living on others.
You must embrace the life you have.
It's what we're all here to learn.

The Asian Man dries his tears, nods.

GROUP LEADER (CONT'D)

(to group)

Anyone else?

A seemingly POSH WOMAN scans the crowd before speaking up.

POSH WOMAN

I just got out... so I guess I'm
back here now.

(grumbles)

They're not joking 'bout not going
where you aren't supposed to.

GROUP LEADER

How long were you in jail?

POSH WOMAN

Two years. I step one foot in Ohio,
and boom, someone calls me in.

Ben takes that in.

POSH WOMAN (CONT'D)

This stupid ass girl whose body I
got was from Ohio, so I can't go
there ever? It's not my fault my
grandma moved to Akron while I was
suspended.

GROUP LEADER

How does it feel to be out?

POSH WOMAN

What's it matter? I still don't
have anyone here. Sometimes I
wonder why I bothered to do this.

A nod from Ben, he's starting to feel that way too.

GROUP LEADER

(turning to Ben)

How about you, newcomer?

BEN

Oh, uh, I don't know...

GROUP LEADER

What changes have you been
experiencing?

BEN

Well, I used to be right-handed and
now I'm left, so I can't play the
guitar anymore. I was a history
teacher and now I have no knowledge
of the past twenty years.

(sighs)

I've been trying to catch up -- I
just got to 2016... Wow...

(back on it)

My dad's gone now, though that's
not a huge surprise. He had me kind
of later in life.

He pulls a pill bottle from his jacket, shakes it.

BEN (CONT'D)
But, hey, at least they gave me
these.

GROUP LEADER
I'm sorry. Is there... anything
else you want to talk about?

Ben sits up straighter, forcing himself to talk about this
with the group.

BEN
Well... the worst part...
(voice catching)
My wife detached. I can't find her.
And I'm in this weird new body I
can't get used to.

POSH WOMAN
(lashing out)
Man, get on Rendezvous and go find
a new wife. You got a hot new body
and you want to complain about it?

BEN
(frustrated)
I didn't ask for this body. I
wanted to wait. To see if treatment
could be an option. I did this for
my wife, and she left me. I mean, I
know... it's been a long time, I
get that. But for her to *legally*
forbid me from seeing her? What is
that?! She was... I mean we went
through everything together. We had
all our firsts *together*. First
love. First loss. She was there for
me when my mom passed away. I was
just a kid. I don't know what I
would've been if I didn't have her.
(somber)
And now I don't. I'm stuck in this
new city with no wife, no job, no
music, no friends... I have
nothing.

Beat. The group processes that.

ASIAN MAN
Yeah, well, my family is here, and
they don't want me around.

Ben tries to take this to heart as the Group Leader jumps in.

BEN
(sympathetic)
I'm sorry.

GROUP LEADER
Alright, let's not compare.
Everyone's situations are
different.
(to Ben)
Why don't you shift your focus? Is
there anything you *do* like about
your new body?

Ben exhales, thinking.

BEN
(reluctant)
Well, it's still hard for me to
recognize myself in the mirror,
but... I suppose I'm not... *bad*
looking.

GROUP LEADER
(false cheery)
There you go! There's a step
forward. See... it's not all doom
and gloom.
(to group)
What do we say?

GROUP MEMBERS
Embrace this life.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben strums a guitar terribly, drunk. He drinks scotch on the rocks. He's not exactly embracing this life. There are a few history textbooks lying around him (the newest AP editions) - the nearest one labeled *United States History 1975-2025*.

BEN
What am I supposed to do for a job,
phone?

PHONE
Would you like me to search job
boards? You will need to prove
you're looking for work to maintain
your residence.

BEN

Any history teacher openings? I'm a little fuzzy on the last twenty years though.

(looks at book)

And even the stuff from the past... they don't teach it the way we used to.

PHONE

There's an opening for a high school janitor in the fall.

Ben sighs.

BEN

Alright, shut up.

The phone beeps, and Ben looks at it -- a notification from the Stages app, telling him he should put more time in.

He downs his drink, exhales.

BEN (CONT'D)

Fine. Let's do this, Kat.

AI Kat appears, more cautious than last time.

AI KAT

Benny-boo?

BEN

You don't have to pretend to be her. You're bad at it.

AI KAT

We find it's best if--

BEN

Yeah, yeah, confront it head on. What's the point if you can't even give me closure? You don't know why she detached.

AI KAT

Let's find out together. It's time to remember something negative, a bad moment between you two.

Ben doesn't want to, but he begrudgingly closes his eyes, and as before, when he opens them--

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

We're back in Ben's memory. Past Ben and Past Kat sit alone, waiting. Ben again watches on, this time leaning sadly against the doorframe.

AI KAT (V.O.)
Describe what you are seeing.

BEN
(hard to get out)
I... we were trying to have kids.
The doctor saw something that concerned her, recommended I follow up with a general practitioner.

Knock. The DOCTOR enters, sits at her desk. Ben turns away.

DOCTOR
This was... unexpected, but we found something serious. I'm sorry, Ben, but... you have a very aggressive brain cancer.

Past Ben and Past Kate's faces fall, tears already coming.

BEN
I can't do this.

Ben closes his eyes, and opens them to--

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME

He's back with AI Kat.

AI KAT
Confrontation pushes us toward healing. It's good to feel these emotions so you can move past them. The opposite of happiness isn't despair... it's *nothing*.

Ben sighs, closes his eyes, again, opens them to--

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

We're in Ben and Kat's house. It's warm, a bit messy.

We recognize some of the art from the walls of Ben's future apartment. Old history books lie about. Ben's piano and guitar also evident, an easel with a HALF-FINISHED SELF-PORTRAIT OF KAT.

This is normally a happy home, but not today.

PAST BEN
It just doesn't seem natural.

Ben reads a medical pamphlet titled "REMODELING: IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THE END". On the cover, a silhouette with a glowing light in his head. Ben appears disturbed as he reads.

PAST BEN (CONT'D)
They're gonna rip my thoughts out
of my head? That's... I dunno, Kat.

Kat sits on the edge of the couch, head in her hands. Not understanding her husband's resistance.

PAST BEN (CONT'D)
What if it doesn't work? I... I
could die.

PAST KAT
You're already dying, Ben.

Ben looks hurt by that comment. Kat doesn't look any better about having just said it.

PAST KAT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but if we're going to
talk about this... if we're going
to make a decision, we need to
accept the reality of the
situation.

PAST BEN
The doctor said that alternative
treatments for my type of cancer
are only a year or two away. I
could live that long. He said so.

PAST KAT
"Best case scenario" was what he
said. It could be as little as six
months.

PAST BEN
We could at least enjoy that time.
Together. We could travel. We could
do all the things we've always
wanted to do. We could even try...

Ben stops himself, not wanting to sound crazy.

PAST BEN (CONT'D)
 If I do this, I have to do it now.
 And the chance of my consciousness
 surviving the procedure is only
 fifty percent.

PAST KAT
 Well, the chance of us having a
 child that has a single memory of
 you is close to zero.

Kat stands, tears breaking free, overwhelmed with anxiety.

PAST KAT (CONT'D)
 (breaking down)
 I'm sorry, Ben. I just... I can't
 lose you forever. I don't know what
 I'd do without you.
 (trying to reason)
 And they're practically offering
 this to us for *free*! What are the
 odds that they discover your cancer
 just in time for experimental
 trials? Maybe... maybe it's a sign
 that you're supposed to do this.

Ben stands, wraps his arms around Kat, pulling her close.

PAST BEN
 I love you more than anything in
 this world, Kat. I'd move mountains
 for you.
 (then)
 But I don't want to be someone
 else. I want to be myself. I want
 to be me and I want to be with you.

PAST KAT
 Well, which one do you want more?

Tears stream down Ben's face as well as he reflects on that.

PAST BEN
 What if it takes too long?

PAST KAT
 It won't.

PAST BEN
 But what if it does?

PAST KAT
 I'll wait forever if I have to.

Ben pulls Kat in even tighter, closes his eyes.

PAST BEN
I just, I don't know if I can, Kat.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Eyes open. He's back with AI Kat.

BEN
I'm gonna get drunk.

AI KAT
You're already drunk judging by
your speech patterns.

BEN
More drunk then.

AI KAT
Okay. Would you like me to go?

Ben thinks about that for a moment.

BEN
(soft)
No.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Ben wakes up, hungover. His phone beeps, notifications exploding. He groans, not prepared for sunlight.

BEN
Oh my God, shut up!

Ben throws a pillow toward his phone, and it quiets. The silence now disturbs him.

BEN (CONT'D)
Fine, what do you want?

PHONE
Forty new notifications from
Rendezvous.

Ben sits up, surprised.

BEN
What the hell is Rendezvous?

PHONE
A dating app. You created an
account last night. Said you were
going to try to embrace this life.

He grabs his phone, opening the app to see a list of matches.

BEN
I don't remember doing this.

Ben scrolls through his matches, beautiful women (and men) of all different races and ages.

BEN (CONT'D)
These people are interested in me?

He thinks better, sets his phone down. He looks to the C.S. Lewis book, the pill bottle, considering. Changes his mind--

BEN (CONT'D)
Kat?

AI Kat appears.

AI KAT
Yes, Benny-boo?

BEN
You don't know where she is?

AI KAT
I do not.

BEN
And you'll never help me find her?
And she doesn't want to see me?

AI KAT
I won't. And she doesn't.

Ben takes that in, wanting to accept it, to try to move on.

BEN
Tell me what to do.

AI KAT
There's still more confrontation to be done. Let's see another memory.

BEN
No. Something else. And not some ancient book or sugar pills.

AI KAT
Moving on takes time, and many things can help.

AI Kat approaches, activating the phone screen to display the many Rendezvous matches again.

AI KAT (CONT'D)
Perhaps meeting new people?

Ben looks at the matches, considering.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben sits across from an attractive PIERCED WOMAN (late 20s). Her style is on the extreme side, even for the future. Ben nurses his drink, smiling through pain. The Pierced Woman senses something off.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben waits for a cab as an ATHLETIC WOMAN (30s) wanders down the street, disappointed by a bad date.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben, tipsy, bags under his eyes, sits across from a WOMAN about ten years younger than him (in appearance at least). She stares at him lustily.

INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ben and the Younger Woman make out in a stall. He stops.

BEN
I'm sorry... I can't.

He leaves. She shrugs, fixing her dress.

INT. RESTAURANT BATHROOM - NIGHT

In the same stall, Ben now makes out more aggressively with a very enthusiastic OLDER WOMAN (early 50s).

INT. OLDER WOMAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Older Woman stares off into the night, not exactly pleased by the encounter, as Ben gathers his clothes in the background.

END MONTAGE

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Ben, drunk, dark bags under his eyes, sits alone, eating bar food (fried appetizers) and drinking his ~~third~~ fourth scotch. No bartenders, just electronic screens to order from.

ABBY (O.S.)
You waiting for someone?

He turns to see ABBY (late 20s) nursing a beer. She's spunky, jaded, blunt. Something about her just *glows*. When her eyes connect with Ben's, she falters. He *does* have beautiful eyes.

BEN
(grumbling)
Rendezvous date. Don't think
they're coming though.

She looks away from Ben, feeling palpably self-conscious.

ABBY
Ugh... Rendezvous is the worst. It
totally does not work as well as
they say.

BEN
Preaching to the choir.

Abby laughs, still nervous. Ben notices her unease.

BEN (CONT'D)
You okay?

ABBY
Yeah, no, sorry, it's just--
you're... you-you're really hot.
(thinking)
Like so hot. Can I buy you a drink?

BEN
I might be good on those.

ABBY
One more with me? To make up for
the staring.

INT. BAR - LATER

Abby now sits across from Ben, lot of empty glasses between them. She's still admiring him. Another drink appears in front of Ben through the table.

BEN

So my wife is gone, not to mention
that she's past fifty by now and
I've gotten younger, so who knows
if we would even *work* anymore.

(exhales)

Your breakup story beat that?

Abby grins, guarded.

ABBY

I dunno, but it was pretty gnarly.
I just... It was a fucked up
situation.

Ben looks at Abby, sympathetic to her plight.

ABBY (CONT'D)

But, uh, tell me more about your
wife.

BEN

You don't wanna talk about it?

ABBY

It's still fresh. I'm digesting.

BEN

I don't understand why you want to
hear my sob story.

ABBY

(genuine)

It helps me stop thinking about my
shit. Plus, it's weirdly nice to
know someone else is going through
it too.

BEN

Alright, I tell you more, and then
you gotta give me *something*.

ABBY

Let's call it a deal.

A lightbulb goes off in Ben's drunken head.

BEN

Next part's a bit of a field trip.

ABBY

Field trip?

BEN

How far can these driverless cars
go?

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ben and Abby, both drunk, in the back of a driverless car.

ABBY
How much further is it?

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Thirty-five minutes.

ABBY
This is not how I pictured this
night going.

Ben's about to respond, but he's distracted by the CHECKPOINT
the car is slowing down for ahead.

BEN
What is this?

ABBY
We're crossing the state line.

His eyes go wide at the sight of POLICE OFFICERS.

BEN
Now might be a good time to mention
that it's illegal for me to be in
Illinois.

ABBY
What?!

BEN
What do we do?

ABBY
Pretend you're asleep. Don't wake
up no matter what.

BEN
You can't be serious.

ABBY
Do it!

Ben does as told, taking the extra measure to hide his neck
scar. The car stops next to the Officers. Abby's window rolls
down.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Reason for visit?

Abby turns on the charm.

ABBY
Late night road trip.

The OFFICER, female, narrows her eyes.

OFFICER
IDs?

Abby grabs hers, nudges Ben--

ABBY
Honey? Your ID?

Ben doesn't respond.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Sorry, he's had a little too much
to drink. Made a bit of a scene.
(faux-searching)
Where is his wallet?

Abby hands her ID over, hoping it's enough. The Officer analyzes it.

OFFICER
I really need to see both.

Abby puts on a brave face, leans out of the car like she's conspiring with the Officer.

ABBY
My husband... it's the anniversary
of his brother's death. And every
year he goes out drinking and loses
his keys or his phone or his wallet
and ends up taking a ride to his
grave. I... it's just something I
have to let him do.

The Officer sympathizes, handing Abby her ID back.

OFFICER
Y'all have a good night.

The car continues on as Abby's window rolls up. Ben keeps his eyes closed, breathing a sigh of relief.

BEN
(soft)
You're a pretty good liar.

ABBY
I've had some practice.

EXT. BEN AND KAT'S TREE - NIGHT

Ben and Abby stand next to Ben and Kat's tree, the one we've seen them at in previous scenes.

ABBY

So, this is where you strangle me and call me by your wife's name.

BEN

You actually think the things you say are funny, huh?

ABBY

I can't believe I went on a ninety minute drive with a weird depressed felon for a first date AND saved him from being arrested.

BEN

I'm not a felon. It's a Class-A misdemeanor.

ABBY

Thanks for the clarification.

(looks around)

So... what is this place?

BEN

This is where we spent a lot of time, me and Kat. We both grew up in this town... together. We used this as a sort of meeting spot.

Ben's getting lost in the memories.

BEN (CONT'D)

We had our first kiss here. Got back together after our first big fight. We decided to have a baby here. This is where our important things happened.

ABBY

And she's still out there?

BEN

I don't know... They wouldn't even tell me.

Abby walks around the tree. She stays there, staring off, keeping distance between them.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's your turn now, you know?
(off her silence)
Oh, c'mon, you're gonna hide from
me? Tell me about your guy.

ABBY
So presumptuous. Gotta get with the
times, old man.

BEN
Sorry, your... gal?

ABBY
(laughs)
He was a he.

BEN
Was?

Beat.

ABBY
Is. Easier to think of him in the
past tense, I guess.

Ben smiles at Abby, maybe the first genuine smile he's had in this body. Shades of the old Ben. He gets it.

BEN
What was he like?

ABBY
He was...
(deep breath)
...a dick. Just really selfish.
Always said it's cause he was too
"in his head". More like, in
someone else's bed. Then he'd try
to flip it around on me. Tell me I
was too reserved. I wasn't
impulsive enough. I can be
impulsive, you asshole!

Abby lets out a sigh, feeling good to get that out.

ABBY (CONT'D)
(calmer)
You do know, you know.

BEN
What?

ABBY
You do know if she's out there. If
she were gone, you would feel it.
She's out there, and part of her
does want you to find her.

BEN
You can't know that.

ABBY
Look on the other side of the tree.

He joins her, sees three words carved into the tree right
beneath the familiar "Ben + Kat": **Elk St, Galena.**

ABBY (CONT'D)
Galena's only a few hours away.

Ben's head is spinning.

ABBY (CONT'D)
She knew you would come here.

BEN
But she detached.

ABBY
Then why would she write this?

BEN
Maybe...
(believing it)
Maybe you're right. She would want
me to fight for her. She always
pushed me to fight for the things I
care about. She's why I did this
whole thing.

ABBY
Then let's go!

BEN
Let's?

ABBY
I'm coming with you.

Abby quickly makes her way to the car. Ben stares after her a
beat before he gets moving. He's really doing this.

CUT TO BLACK.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 3. Darkness on the Edge of Town

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Ben and Abby stand at a ticket machine at a train station, virtually empty outside of a JANITOR mopping up floors. Ben watches, realizing this may be his only work option soon.

BEN

So *that's* the one thing they still have people do manually?

ABBY

(to machine)
Two tickets to Galena.

The ticket machine speaks back smoothly, artificially--

MACHINE

That will be one hundred and seventeen dollars, please.

Abby looks to Ben, hand outstretched. He cringes.

BEN

Kinda broke. Kinda unemployed, remember?

ABBY

Oh, right.

With a shrug, Abby scans her phone against the machine.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I can pay your way... for now.

The machine clicks, spits out two tickets, which Abby grabs.

MACHINE

Thank you for your purchase.

BEN

You don't think I'll get caught, right? I don't want to go to jail.

ABBY

Just keep a low profile and you'll be fine.

Abby hands the ticket. Ben pulls his collar, hides his scar.

BEN

You don't have to do this.

ABBY

It's fine. You can pay me back
later.

BEN

No, I mean... you don't have to
come with me.

ABBY

It'll be good for me too.

BEN

Don't you have work or something?

ABBY

I can work from anywhere.

BEN

Doing what?

ABBY

Future shit. You wouldn't
understand.

Ben shrugs that off.

ABBY (CONT'D)

If I don't go with you, I don't
trust that you'll do this.

BEN

Why do you care so much what I do
anyway?

Abby takes a deep breath, unsure how to best get this out.

ABBY

Because... he gave up on me. He
just threw our relationship away
without a fight. And I know your
wife detached and you're supposed
to respect that and all. But *fuck*
that. She is your soulmate. She's
who you're supposed to be with.
(beat)

He gave up on me. And I'm not
letting you give up on her.

Ben stares back.

BEN

Okay... cool.

INT. TRAIN - PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

The train moves smoothly, the car rocking back and forth peacefully. Ben looks up to the destination display above, which shows the arrival times at each of the stops.

He scans to Galena: ETA 8:05 AM. Looks to the time: 3:17 AM.

As Ben leans his head against the window, he looks to Abby across from him, who has her laptop in front of her, which is curved and transparent.

BEN

We should probably get some sleep.

ABBY

Go for it. I don't really sleep much.

BEN

People don't need to sleep in the future?

ABBY

Yeah, we have this new invention called "a shit ton of caffeine".

Ben smirks at that. Head down, he pulls his phone out. His thumb hovers over the STAGES icon. Just as he's about to open it, he gets a notification on his phone: *PLEASE REPORT TO THE EMPLOYMENT OFFICE BY NEXT MONDAY.*

Ben frowns at that, swipes away the notification. He slides his phone back in his pocket as his eyes droop shut, sleep taking hold of him as darkness fills the screen.

INT. TRAIN - PASSENGER CABIN - MORNING

Ben's eyes flutter awake in the blinding morning sunshine, visibly struggling with his thoughts.

ABBY (O.S.)

I miss you too, sweetie!

He looks out the window and sees the small but idyllic town of Galena, IL shining by a small riverside. Rockwell couldn't have painted it better. The train approaches rapidly.

Ben turns to Abby, watching her blow a kiss to a YOUNG MAN via video chat, who he sees through her translucent screen.

YOUNG MAN
(over computer)
You're too much, Sarah! I don't
deserve you.
(sighs)
What are you doing today?

ABBY
Oh, just visiting some family.

Abby turns her laptop to the window to give the Young Man a view.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Check it out. Pretty, huh?

Ben watches with a furrowed brow, thoroughly confused.

YOUNG MAN
(over computer)
Beautiful!

The train slows down as it nears Ben and Abby's destination.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)
Next stop, Galena Station.

Abby turns her attention back to the Young Man.

ABBY
Well, this is my stop so I gotta
go. Talk to you soon!

YOUNG MAN
(over computer)
Have a nice weekend, babe.

Abby x's out of the window and the Young Man's image dissolves. She turns to Ben.

ABBY
Morning, sunshine. Just in time.

BEN
Uhh... what was that?

ABBY
What was what?

BEN
"Babe," "visiting family," "Sarah"?

ABBY

I told you I do future shit.
(off Ben's look)
I'm a proxy. It's my job.

BEN

What exactly do you do?

ABBY

I role play as a fictional
girlfriend to those in need.

BEN

Huh? So you're like a... a... pr--

ABBY

A prostitute? No. It's all digital.
I text them, call them, video chat
them. I help people who struggle
with socializing. And no, it's not
sexual. People need someone to talk
to. Someone that cares about them.
And that's me. I'm their
approximation of a relationship.

Ben just stares back. This is beyond his comprehension.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Society may look advanced to you,
but a technologically advanced
society is a lonely one.
Everything's automated. No one
knows how to talk to each other
anymore. Unemployment is down,
disease is down, poverty is down...
and yet suicide rates are up.
That's why you're here, isn't it?
Because rather than try to heal
people, we've just decided that if
you don't wanna live anymore that's
just fine... because there's a
hundred dead people who would be
happy to take your body.

Ben nods, trying to digest that.

BEN

And you don't find that this job
interferes with your own relation--
(off Abby's furrowed brow)
Sorry, I'm not trying to sound
judgmental.

ABBY

You think what I do is weird. I get
it. It's cool.

The train comes to a stop and the doors open. As Abby stands--

ABBY (CONT'D)
But I have a counseling degree and
I'm cheaper than a psychiatrist.

Ben shrugs as he gets up and follows her.

EXT. GALENA - MAIN STREET - DAY

Ben and Abby walk down main street Galena, passing old-timey storefronts and brownstones. The town's a real gem from another era. Abby navigates them via the map on her phone.

ABBY
Elk Street's just a few blocks up.

Ben nods. As usual, he feels the stares and smiles coming from all the TOWNSPEOPLE he passes, just from merely existing. Abby notices his discomfort.

ABBY (CONT'D)
You're hot now. Get used to it.

EXT. GALENA - ELK STREET - DAY

Abby and Ben round a corner in the more secluded area of town. Ben looks up to the street sign, confirming that it is "Elk Street" after all.

He looks to see a row of seemingly endless houses.

BEN
She couldn't have written down a house number?

ABBY
Let's get to knocking.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Ben and Abby stand on the porch of the first house. Ben takes a deep breath as he knocks. After a second, he hears the sound of footsteps. As the door opens, we focus on Ben.

Ben speaks to the YOUNG WOMAN who answered, just out of our sight line.

BEN
Look, this is going to sound weird,
but is there any chance...

ANOTHER DOOR opens, a new NEIGHBOR now in front of Ben. Ben's conversation from the previous shot carries over--

BEN (CONT'D)
...you know a woman who lives here,
or maybe used to live here...

Another new neighbor opens a door, looks at Ben suspiciously.

BEN (CONT'D)
...I'm not sure when...

Another door. Another neighbor.

BEN (CONT'D)
...could've been anytime in the
last twenty years, I guess...

Yet another door opens. This time an ELDERLY MAN AND WOMAN stand on the other side.

BEN (CONT'D)
...goes by the name of Kat.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Sorry, young man, I don't think
I've ever known anyone with that
name.

As the Elderly Woman shuts the door, Ben stops her.

BEN
(desperate)
Are you sure? Kat Haskins? That
doesn't ring a bell to you at all?

ELDERLY WOMAN
Kat Haskins?

The Elderly Woman's eyes light up with a hint of recognition.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh... you mean Katherine. Wow, I
haven't seen her in... ten years,
it must've been.

Ben's breathless. The Elderly Woman turns to the Elderly Man.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)
Ed, you remember Katherine, don't
you?

ELDERLY MAN
Of course! Such a sweet young woman.

ELDERLY WOMAN
And a wonderful artist, too! Used to sell her paintings in the gallery on Main Street.

The Elderly Man, clearly in the early stages of dementia, suddenly has a realization of his own. He points to Ben, hands trembling.

ELDERLY MAN
(smiling)
You must be Owen!

BEN
Excuse me?

ELDERLY MAN
I can't believe how big you've gotten!

The Elderly Man grabs Ben's bicep.

ELDERLY MAN (CONT'D)
Strong too! What a fine young lad.

The Elderly Woman removes her husband's hand from Ben's arm.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Oh, Ed, come on! This is a grown man. Owen must still be a teenager.
(to Ben)
Right?

BEN
I'm sorry. Owen?

ELDERLY WOMAN
(beat, confused)
Didn't you say you were a friend of Katherine's?

BEN
I haven't seen her in a long time.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Well, it must have been quite a long time. Owen is Katherine's son.

That hits Ben like a freight train, though the Elderly Woman doesn't notice.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)
 She and... what was his name again,
 that nice man? Raymond! She and
 Raymond were such doting parents. I
 was so happy for them when they
 became as successful as they did.

Ben nearly hyperventilates, trying to stay calm. Abby
 notices, places a hand on his shoulder, tries to comfort him.

ABBY
 (taking over)
 And you have no idea where they
 moved?

ELDERLY WOMAN
 Sorry, honey. It's been so long.
 (smiles)
 It was nice to meet you both.

ABBY
 (smiles)
 You too.

As the Elderly Woman shuts the door, Ben simply stares
 forward, at nothing in particular. He breathes heavily.

ABBY (CONT'D)
 Ben, it's gonna be okay. Say it
 with me. It's going... to be--

Ben is about to burst into tears as he rips free from Abby's
 embrace and runs straight for the wooded clearing nearby.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Legs on fire, Ben sprints through the dense woods recklessly.
 Tears pouring free, mixing with sweat. He trips on himself,
 tumbling to the ground and letting out a primal wail of pain,
 emotional and physical.

He pulls his phone from his pocket.

BEN
 Why?! Why'd you do it!

No response from the phone.

BEN (CONT'D)
 KAT!

AI Kat's hologram appears in front of Ben.

AI KAT

Ben, you appear to be having a
severe emotional episode.

BEN

You said you'd wait forever!

AI KAT

Do you want me to alert the
authorities?

BEN

You said you couldn't live without
me!

AI KAT

Are you a danger to yourself or
others?

BEN

I did it all for you!

AI KAT

Ben, I do not believe that I'll be
able to address any of your claims
in a way you'll find satisfactory
at this moment.

Ben lets out a furious wail as he THROWS his phone at least
thirty feet. He's pure emotion, collapsing into a sobbing
heap. As he squeezes his eyes shut tightly, we cut to--

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A door opens, spilling light into a dim room and revealing
Kat. The real, past version. She looks a mess.

As she walks into the room, she soon notices that it has been
lit with at least THIRTY CANDLES. A romantic dinner lovingly
set at the dining room table.

Ben emerges from the shadows. He and Kat stare at each other,
neither wanting to say anything and ruin the moment.

PAST KAT

Ben... I'm sorry--

PAST BEN

Stop. You don't have anything to be
sorry about. Let's just...
(holding back tears)

Can we just not talk about it? For
one night? Pretend everything is as
it should be?

Kat smiles, nodding.

PAST KAT
I'd like that.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER - FLASHBACK

Ben and Kat laugh hysterically as they share food, wine, jokes, stories.

"You've Really Got a Hold on Me" plays over the scene.

At the moment, they're not Ben and Kat, Doomed Couple. They're two teenagers in love.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER - FLASHBACK

The song continues to play. And we're back at our opening.

Ben and Kat make love. Slow, passionate and real. With that underlying desperation and sadness.

KAT
(almost a whisper)
Don't leave me, Ben.

ABBY (PRE-LAP)
BEN!

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Back in the present, Ben still weeps on the ground in the middle of the woods. In the distance, Abby spots him.

ABBY
Oh, thank God!

As she reaches him, Ben sits up, still a wreck. Abby places her arms around him, hugging him.

BEN
Why didn't she wait for me?

ABBY
It's been a long time, Ben.

BEN
But... why would she want me out of her life completely? How could she never want to see me again?

ABBY
Sometimes people do things we don't understand.

Abby looks into Ben's eyes, both of them connecting.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Let's go ask her why.

BEN
But how? We're back to square one.

ABBY
No, we're not.

EXT. GALENA - MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

The sun sets as Ben and Abby make their way to Main Street.

BEN
That's the place.

Ben points to a sign that reads "Galena Gallery". Suddenly, his hand trembles.

BEN (CONT'D)
Oh, my God. That's...

We see what Ben's seeing. The half-finished self-portrait of Kat we last saw in their home, now finished.

BEN (CONT'D)
...that's her.

Abby looks, impressed by both the art and Kat's beauty.

ABBY
(smiles)
I see why you like her so much.

They approach the window. Ben stares at the painting for a moment, trying to control his emotions this time.

Abby looks to a note beneath the painting: "Self-Portrait in Blue - Katherine Newberry, 2014."

BEN
Katherine Newberry?

As Ben processes that, Abby types on her phone.

ABBY
Found her.

BEN
What?

Abby turns her phone to Ben. A website that reads "Celebrate Raymond and Katherine Newberry's Vow Renewal and Fifteenth Anniversary!"

Ben takes the phone, seeing Katherine (not Kat) as she is now: in her fifties, gray tinges in her hair, still radiating that essence he so loves... with a new partner by her side.

Next to her, he gets a look at this husband of hers. This *Raymond*. He's thoroughly average in every way. There is a sweetness about him, though Ben certainly can't see that now.

Beneath their picture is an address in Chatsworth. Ben looks at it, hardening. He's committed now. He's getting her back.

BEN (CONT'D)
Still feel like being impulsive?

ABBY
(smiles)
Let's stop them.

BEN
Stop them? They're already married.

ABBY
Yeah, but... so are you, right?

Ben takes that in.

BEN
Let's stop 'em.

CUT TO BLACK.

Colors swirl to form a woman again, this time we can make her out as Kat in her 30s, her auburn hair flowing as if underwater. With a burst, she dissolves into darkness.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 4. Where Do I Go From Here?

INT. TRAIN - PASSENGER CABIN - EVENING

Back in their private area just the two of them.

Ben opens his eyes. Abby sits across from him, staring out at the rural landscape before them.

BEN
Four years.

ABBY

Until?

BEN

That's how long she waited to get married again.

ABBY

(moving on)

So, what's our plan when we get there?

BEN

(distracted)

Four years. That's... nothing.

ABBY

It's a small town. We'll find the party and pretend to be guests. Maybe we could wear disguises?

Ben gives a look. They continue their separate conversations.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Got it. No disguises.

BEN

Just long enough to switch presidents. She couldn't even wait one presidential term for me.

ABBY

You know what? She won't recognize you anyway. New body and all that.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Abby?

Abby turns to see PETER (late 20s), thin, tall, sporting wire frame glasses, at the door of their cabin. She immediately looks uncomfortable. There's something between them.

ABBY

Peter. What are you, uh, doing here?

PETER

Oh, work has me going out to the boonies. You know how it is.

(awkward)

So, what about you? How's it going?

Peter takes a step further into the cabin, noticing Ben for the first time. He falters, gasps.

PETER (CONT'D)
What the fuck?

Abby stands, pushing Peter back out of the cab.

ABBY
Let's talk out here.

Ben watches through the window, puzzled, as Abby and Peter have a heated conversation. Peter gestures wildly at Ben.

He can't hear them, but he can tell large emotions are flying around. His curiosity is captured as he watches the seemingly never-ending argument.

After a moment, Abby points down the cabin, and Peter obliges, continuing on his way, shaking his head. She takes a second to compose herself, then returns to Ben.

ABBY (CONT'D)
(acting normal)
So, where did we land on the
disguises?

BEN
What the hell was all that?

Abby hesitates.

ABBY
He's... just a friend. Was making a
big deal out of nothing. Said I'm
moving on too fast. I explained the
situation and also told him it's
none of his business. Honestly
it's, like, it's no one's decision
when I get to date again.
(quickly)
And of course we're not even
dating. So it doesn't matter.

BEN
He seemed really angry.

Abby wants to move on from this conversation.

ABBY
He's... an emotional guy.

BEN
If there's gonna be trouble, I need
to know. I can't get caught up in
anything while I'm here or I could--

ABBY
 You could get arrested, I know!
 It's gonna be fine, Ben.

Ben scrunches his face, lets this one slide.

BEN
 Yeah. Right.

Beat. Tension diffuses as Abby's eye is drawn to the window.

ABBY
 Wow, look at that.

Ben turns to see the train approaching the station. Sunset is in full effect, and in the distance, hot air balloons of all colors and designs dot the sky. It's magical.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Ben and Abby sit at a bar, two of only five CUSTOMERS in the place. It even has an actual BARTENDER (50s) - how quaint and throwback. They both nurse drinks.

ABBY
 What are you gonna say to her?

BEN
 I have no earthly idea.
 (acting)
 "Hey, Kat, it's me, your long lost
 love who you didn't wait for. I'm
 back."
 (normal)
 Too much?

ABBY
 I'd lose the Kat part. Seems like
 she's pretty solidly Katherine now.

BEN
 Katherine. Sounds so foreign to me.

The Bartender, rural politeness kicking in, jumps in--

BARTENDER
 Y'all here for the vow renewal?

Ben and Abby are momentarily unsure what to say.

ABBY
 Yeah, of course.

BARTENDER

They're so wonderful, those two.
Real Chatsworth royalty. Glad some
out-of-towners made it. Wait, let
me guess, you are...

Ben and Abby wait, letting her fill in the blank. She points to Abby.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Raymond's... cousin's... step-
daughter?

ABBY

Guilty-as-charged.
(extending hand)
Abby.

BARTENDER

Abby! That's right. Haven't seen
you since you were... God, you
must've been five years old.

The Bartender shakes Abby's hand and turns to Ben. Before she can guess--

ABBY

And this is my husband...

Abby nudges Ben, who offers his hand.

BEN

Ben.

BARTENDER

Nice to meet you, Ben! I'm Susan.
Katherine and Raymond are like
family to me. Part of me's jealous
you two are *real* family to them.

Abby forces a laugh.

BEN

Hey, what's up with all these hot
air balloons?

SUSAN

Abby hasn't told you? Chatsworth
has a festival every year. Kind of
a big deal around here.

(reverent)

Wait until you see Raymond's and
Katherine's balloon.

BEN
Sounds lovely.

SUSAN
Where you staying the night?

BEN
We hadn't thought that far ahead
actually.

SUSAN
(laughs)
Typical Gen Z.

Unprompted, Susan pours Ben another drink.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Well, hell, you're staying here
then. I have a room upstairs. I
won't take no for an answer.

ABBY
That's so kind of you.

SUSAN
Please. It's nothing at all.

Susan leans on the bar, getting closer.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Now tell me, how long have you two
been married?

Ben and Abby share a sly grin, enjoying playing along.

INT. TAVERN - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Abby lie in the small queen bed, pillows lined
between them to separate their sides. They face away from
each other.

BEN
I can't believe I'm going to see
her tomorrow.

For the first time (maybe because of the alcohol), Abby looks
unsure about all this.

ABBY
Are you sure... this is the right
thing?

BEN

What?

ABBY

I just mean... maybe you're not
supposed to do this.

BEN

You're the one who's been
encouraging me this whole time.

ABBY

I just... You have a new body.
Things are different for you now.
It's been so long. How do you know
it'll be the same?

Ben takes a moment to answer.

BEN

I have traveled beyond my natural
lifespan into another body with the
sole purpose of returning to my
wife. That can't be for nothing.

Abby takes a breath, airing out her insecurities--

ABBY

I think... I'm scared to see the
real thing. If what you have with
her is real and true and it doesn't
look like what I had, then... maybe
it was all a lie.

BEN

(gently)

Why won't you tell me what
happened?

Abby shakes her head.

ABBY

I can't.

BEN

Maybe I could help.

She says nothing. Ben presses on.

BEN (CONT'D)

Was it that guy, back on the train?
Was that your ex?

Not wanting to respond, Abby's eyes start to water.

BEN (CONT'D)
Abby?

ABBY
(reluctant)
Kind of... he was a-a...
(searching for the words)
A former client. He started
stalking me a couple months ago,
insisting that our relationship was
real. Maybe I even started to
believe it for a second. I should
never have told him my real name. I
got too close.

BEN
That's why you came with me?

ABBY
I thought I could get away from
him, but I guess he tracked me
down.

BEN
Maybe you shouldn't be a proxy
anymore.

ABBY
It's not normally like that. It
makes me feel good. There's always
risks with jobs like this, but I'm
helping people grow, doing
something that matters.

BEN
That's why I loved teaching.

Abby swallows, unsettled.

ABBY
Can I ask you something?

BEN
Okay.

ABBY
When you went to get the procedure
done, you said you left while she
was sleeping?

BEN
Yes.

ABBY

Did you... did you even try to say
goodbye? Did you at least leave her
a note?

BEN

I did.

Abby inhales shakily, emotional. She turns toward him.

ABBY

What did it say?

Trembling, Ben rolls to face Abby, less than a foot from her. These words singed into his memory.

BEN

Goodbye my sweet Kat. I made my
decision. I want to be with you,
whatever I have to do and whoever I
have to be to make that happen.
I'll see you soon -- in the next
life.

Abby tries not to cry.

ABBY

That's really nice. I bet she
appreciated that.

BEN

Not enough apparently.

Abby looks deeply into his eyes, her longing palpable. But she forces herself to pull away, flipping over.

ABBY

We should get some sleep. Big day
tomorrow.

BEN

Thought you didn't sleep.

ABBY

Tonight's an exception.

Ben turns away.

BEN

Good night, Abby.

ABBY

Good night, Ben.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - DAY

An unbelievably picturesque farm. A place where you could die happy. Hot air balloons are docked all around the property.

The sun shines down on the enormous barn, which has been decorated for the party, with a banner, streamers, and even a temporary dance floor.

It's empty now, but will soon bustle with guests and waiters.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - LATER

And now it does. Laughter and happiness abound.

A self-driving car approaches, and out hop Ben and Abby, looking stunning in their fancy clothes. Ben takes a deep breath, preparing himself. Abby looks on, concerned.

BEN

Let's go.

He strolls toward the barn, on a mission. She slowly follows.

INT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S BARN - SAME

Ben and Abby enter, looking around at the unfamiliar guests in this beautiful venue.

BEN

She certainly did okay for herself,
didn't she?

ABBY

It's beautiful.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, excuse me.

Ben's bumped into from behind, and as he turns, his breath is completely taken from him, and time slows down. Because he is standing in front of--

--**KATHERINE NEWBERRY.** Even more stunning in person. We see her from his POV, and to him she is perfect in every way. Any anger that's been building in him momentarily vanishes.

Time resumes as Ben fumbles--

BEN

Oh, no, it's... It's no problem, Ka-
Katherine.

KATHERINE
Have we met? So sorry if we have.

She subtly looks him up and down (he is rather handsome, after all). Something about her a little more refined.

BEN
No, um--

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Honey?

Katherine turns to see RAYMOND NEWBERRY, jovial, portly, larger than life in person. He radiates positivity.

KATHERINE
Is it time?

RAYMOND
Almost.

KATHERINE
(smiling, to Ben)
We'll have to continue this later.
Excuse me.

BEN
Of course.

Raymond shoots a courteous smile to Ben and Abby. He and Katherine head for their table at the head of the reception.

ABBY
So that's her?

Ben's fixated on her, can't tear his eyes away.

BEN
Yes, it is.

Abby places an arm on Ben's shoulder, feeling for him.

ABBY
Let's find a place to sit.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 5. You've Really Got A Hold On Me

INT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S BARN - LATER

Ben and Abby sit amongst a group of unfamiliar, mostly older FACES. Wine glasses are filled with healthy pours. Ben receives a notification on his phone: *REMINDER - YOU HAVE THREE DAYS TO CHECK IN WITH THE EMPLOYMENT OFFICE.*

Ben stares forward, where Raymond and Katherine laugh to themselves at a table at the head of the room.

A BAND onstage plays a light rock and roll standard.

Ben does his best to hide the seemingly impossible amount of resentment building, threatening to bubble to the surface. Abby notices, placing a hand on top of his.

ABBY
(low)
Breathe.

He does as requested, still simmering.

BEN
(eyes on Raymond)
Who the hell does this guy think he is? I mean, just look at him. The self-satisfaction... Could he think more highly of himself?

Raymond's smile grows, laughing heartily. Nothing arrogant about him, but Ben is understandably in a mood.

BEN (CONT'D)
(imitating)
Look at me! Look at my lavish estate! Look at my hot air balloon!
Look at my beautiful wife...

Ben gets emotional upon saying that last part, as if realizing the reality of the situation for the first time.

BEN (CONT'D)
I just... I can't believe this. It all feels like some nightmare.

Abby gives his hand a squeeze. Ben sighs.

A WAITER arrives at the table, placing plates of food in front of each of the ATTENDEES. The steak for Abby. The fish for Ben. His face contorts upon seeing it.

BEN (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Jesus, I can't catch a break.
(to Abby)
Switch with me?

ABBY
But I love steak.

BEN
Yeah, and I hate fish.

ABBY
No, you *hated* fish. In your old life, your old body. Maybe give it a try?

Ben curls his lip.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Don't be a baby.
(pushy)
Try it.

BEN
Fine.

Ben shakes his head, but picks up his fork and knife. Cuts into the fish and forces himself to take a bite. Within the first two chews, we see his expression change. He likes it.

ABBY
Told you. Some things are different for you now.

Ben's attention is grabbed by a HIGH-PITCHED DING -- fork against glass. The band quiets down.

RAYMOND (O.S.)
If I could have your attention for a moment, ladies and gentlemen.

Everyone in the crowd turns to look upon Ray and Katherine. It's clear that the community holds them both in extremely high esteem. Raymond picks up a microphone.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
I just wanted to take a moment to express our gratitude to you all for being here this weekend.
Spending a whole weekend celebrating us. Don't you have anything better to do?

Laughs throughout the room, though lacking from Ben.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
When we first got to Chatsworth all those years ago, Katherine and I... we didn't know a soul. We just knew we needed a fresh start. I barely had a dime to my name. We had to have a courthouse wedding. Katherine said she didn't care.

Raymond smiles in Katherine's direction.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
And I'm sure she even believed it.

Everyone laughs again. Raymond's a charming guy.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
But... I knew I had a real catch in
Katherine. I had the woman of my
dreams. I had to do right by her.
And I had to do right by our
wonderful son, Owen. They deserved
a beautiful life, and I was keen on
providing it.

Hints of emotion start to come through in Raymond's voice.
Katherine takes his hand in hers. Ben hates the sight.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
So I got to work. And I busted my
ass. But I... we couldn't have done
it without all of you. You offered
us a chance out of the goodness of
your hearts. You lent us a hand
when we were down. You made
Chatsworth our home.
(choked up)
And I'm not sure if I can ever
return the favor.

An audible "aww" from the audience.

WOMAN'S VOICE
You deserve it, Ray!

Applause rings out at that sentiment. This is killing Ben.

RAYMOND
Now... I know that I've already
asked so much of you, but now I'm
gonna have to submit you to just a
little bit of torture.
(smiling)
Get up here, Owen!

KATHERINE
(laughs)
Oh, no.

RAYMOND
Oh yes. It's time.

Just beyond the tent, Ben sees a TEENAGE BOY stealthily put
out a secret cigarette as he rushes to the stage.

Thin, shoulder-length hair, too-cool-rich-kid air about him -- this is OWEN NEWBERRY, Raymond and Katherine's son.

And Ben is startled to see how much he looks like him.

Chatter spreads throughout the room as Owen takes the stage, sitting down at the piano. And now, seeing him in this musical fashion, it's undeniable to Ben that he's looking at his own son. He visibly stops himself from making a scene.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Now, I may not have the best singing voice, but I always told you I'd throw you that big wedding one day, honey. I told you I'd get up onstage and sing our song for you, didn't I, Katherine?

KATHERINE

(smiling)

You did. I don't remember saying you *should*, though.

RAYMOND

But you didn't say I *shouldn't*, and that, my dear, was your fatal flaw!

(turns to stage)

Owen, a one-two-three, two-two-three...

And with that, Owen launches into the opening notes of... *you guessed it...* "You've Really Got A Hold On Me" by Smokey Robinson.

Ben instantly can't believe his ears. He watches Katherine as she enjoys it along with everyone else at this party. All thoughts of Owen temporarily forgotten.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(singing)

I don't like you/but I love you...

The fact that Raymond's voice is fairly decent only making this worse. Owen smiles as he plays the song.

Abby squeezes Ben's hand, trying to calm him.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(more confident)

Seems that I'm always/thinking of you...

Ben's grip tightens on his wine glass, nearly shattering it.

He's ready to throw the glass square at Raymond's head. To expose this whole charade. Abby senses it.

ABBY
(whispers)
You've come this far, Ben. Don't blow it now.

RAYMOND
Though-oh-oh/you treat me badly/I love you madly...

Ben DOWNS his glass in a single gulp, stands abruptly. Abby seizes with worry. What's he going to do?

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
You've really got a hold on me.

Ben simply CHARGES away from the scene to the bathroom door.

Raymond passes the mic to a SINGER who takes over the vocal duties. He outstretches his hand to Katherine. She takes it, and they move to center stage to dance.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
(to crowd)
Everybody, come on!

They do as requested, the dance floor immediately fills.

Abby keeps her eyes on the bathroom door, feeling Ben's pain.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Ben SPLASHES his face with cold water, trying to come to his senses. He dries his face with a fancy towel, tosses it in a metal bin. He stares at himself in the mirror, the sound of his song -- *his and Kat's song* -- muffled through the door.

After a moment, he paces away from the sink. We hold on the sink just long enough to see Ben charge back into frame and KICK THE SHIT out of the metal bin several times.

He breathes to himself. Leaves. A moment later, a stall door opens behind him, a terrified OLDER MAN peering out.

INT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S BARN - LATER

Still daylight. Ben is drinking wine again, getting officially tipsy to deaden his feelings. The dance floor is crowded, now everyone dancing to an upbeat country two-step song. The kind of dance where you switch partners.

ABBY

You just gonna sit around pouting
all night?

BEN

I don't know what the hell I'm
doing here, Abby.

Another sip of wine.

BEN (CONT'D)

You were right.

ABBY

About?

BEN

This being a mistake. I need to get
back to Milwaukee or I'm gonna lose
my apartment--

ABBY

Dance with me.

Abby grabs Ben's hand.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Come on.

BEN

What's that gonna accomplish?

She practically yanks Ben to his feet and toward the center
of the dance floor, encouraging him to get into it.

BEN (CONT'D)

What are we doing?

ABBY

I'm trying to create a moment for
you. Just... follow my lead, okay?

Ben is not good at the two-step, but he does his best to lead
Abby while learning what he's doing.

ABBY (CONT'D)

And get rid of the sad sack vibe.
Show some confidence.

Ben sees Katherine not far from him, radiantly beaming. Abby
moves them in her direction. Katherine briefly notices Ben,
an exchange of glances.

Ben continues to stumble on his feet. He and Katherine are close. Just as everyone switches partners... Ben misses her by a few steps.

Instead he ends up with Susan, the Bartender from the previous night. Her eyes light up with recognition.

SUSAN

(loud)

Ben! So good to see you again.

BEN

Yeah... you too. Thanks for letting us crash at your place again--

Susan notices Ben's rustiness.

SUSAN

(chuckles)

You really are an out-of-towner.

Everyone switches off again, Ben back with Abby.

ABBY

Try this again?

BEN

Let's.

Abby again moves them closer to Katherine. Everyone switches off again, and this time Katherine practically glides into Ben's arms.

Time stops. He's actually touching her. Holding her.

It almost feels unreal.

KATHERINE

Hi there.

Ben has to shake himself out of a daze.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Ben, was it?

Ben's eyes grow wide until he realizes Katherine must've overheard Susan. Still, hearing her say his name... it's almost easy to forget about everything he's been through.

BEN

Yeah... yeah.

(hard to say)

Congratulations, by the way.

KATHERINE
Oh, why thank you.
(smiling)
I mean... not really an
accomplishment. We've just stayed
married a while.
(laughing)
Anyone can do it.

Ben nods along, having to swallow the irony there.

BEN
Well... not anyone.

Using all his focus, Ben tries not to embarrass himself as he dances, which Katherine finds charming.

KATHERINE
Not from around here, are you?

BEN
That obvious, huh?

Abby dances with another partner nearby, keeping her eyes steadily on Ben and Katherine.

KATHERINE
Sorry... who are you here with?

Before Ben can answer that, the music comes to an abrupt halt. Raymond at the microphone again. Ben rolls his eyes.

RAYMOND
Sorry, everyone. *But it's magic hour.* Anyone that wants a ride should head out to the field now!

Raymond smiles at Katherine, she returns in kind.

KATHERINE
(to Ben)
Do join us!

Ben looks at Katherine, at her pleading eyes, the ones that have always been able to talk him into just about anything. That talked him into this very situation, when you really think about it.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - FIELD - SUNSET

The colorful hot air balloons sit in the summer sunset awaiting their passengers.

Raymond, Katherine, Abby, and Ben all stand in front of the most magnificent of them all - Raymond and Katherine's - just as impressive as Susan described. Raymond leads each of them on, bottle of wine and four glasses in his hand.

RAYMOND
Watch your head.

Ben hides his nerves as he boards the basket, followed by Abby. A goggle-wearing PILOT is already inside.

Everyone onboard, Raymond jumps in himself.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
Now, probably a little late to ask,
but are either of you scared of
heights?

Abby shakes her head, as does Ben, but less convincingly.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
(chuckles)
The wine helps with that.
(to Pilot)
Let's do it, Chuck!

Chuck complies, opening a propane valve unleashing an impressively large flame. The balloon gently lifts off.

INT. HOT AIR BALLOON - LATER

The hot air balloon now flies high above the town of Chatsworth. The softly undulating green hills below coupled with the sea of other hot air balloons dotting the summer sky provide an intoxicating image.

Raymond and Katherine look to the sky. Abby keenly watches Chuck - studying his maneuvers. Ben only looks at Katherine.

RAYMOND
Beautiful, isn't it?

BEN
(eyes on Katherine)
Truly.

Raymond turns back to Ben and Abby.

RAYMOND
I'm sorry if this is awkward but...
(points to Abby)
You're my cousin-in-law's kid,
right?

Abby smiles, playing along as always.

ABBY

That's me.

(before Raymond can guess)
Abby.

RAYMOND

Huh, I thought it was Maggie. My
memory's failing me.

Raymond pulls out a wine opener, starts to open the bottle.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

Abby and Ben... what a beautiful
couple.

(nudging Katherine)
Aren't they a beautiful couple,
honey?

KATHERINE

Must be nice to be young.

RAYMOND

Hey, we were young once...

KATHERINE

It's been a while, Ray.

Raymond pours the first glass of wine, chuckles.

RAYMOND

That it has.

He hands a glass of wine to Abby, then Ben.

KATHERINE

So... what do you guys do for work?

BEN

(pointed)
Oh, I'm a teacher...
(then)
...a professor.

RAYMOND

Wow, at your age? What field?

BEN

History...

Katherine's brow furrows.

BEN (CONT'D)
(again deflecting)
Art history.

RAYMOND
Handsome, young intellectual.
Nothing intimidating about that.

Raymond smiles at Ben.

KATHERINE
Don't mind him. He's awkward like
that.
(to Abby)
What do you do, Abby?

ABBY
I'm a proxy.

KATHERINE
Wow. Very cool.

As Abby looks away, Katherine leans into Raymond.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
(hushed)
What's a proxy?

Raymond simply shrugs.

KATHERINE
(sip of wine)
Well, you both seem to be doing
well. Definitely better than we
were doing at your age, huh,
Raymond?

RAYMOND
Uhh... yeah, putting it lightly. No
direction. Our son's the same
way... probably gonna live here
'til he's thirty. Apple doesn't
fall far from the tree.

Awkward. Ben tries not to glare. Abby takes a sip of wine,
impressed. She inadvertently lets out--

ABBY
This is *really* good wine.

Ben looks at Abby, annoyed she's giving Raymond compliments.

RAYMOND
You like it? We're just getting
into the wine game. It's
challenging... but fun.

BEN
You made this?

RAYMOND
Cool, right?

BEN
(sighs)
Rich, charming winemaker. Nothing
intimidating about that.

Raymond laughs to himself.

CHUCK
That's max altitude.

Raymond puts his arm around Katherine, Ben does the same to Abby to maintain the illusion. Nevertheless, there's something there between them. Abby rests her head on his shoulder. It's comforting.

RAYMOND
That's stunning. Let me get a photo
of you two.

He grabs Ben's phone, using it to take a pic of Ben and Abby.

KATHERINE
Do a kissing one.

Ben looks uncomfortable, Abby smiles awkwardly.

ABBY
Oh, uh--

KATHERINE
C'mon!

BEN
...okay.

Ben and Abby kiss as Raymond snaps a photo.

KATHERINE
Wait, Raymond, do it the other way.
It looks nicer.

RAYMOND
(turning the phone)
Whoops.

KATHERINE
Kiss again.

Stuck, Ben and Abby kiss again. And awkward as it may be, they can't help but like it. They look into each other's eyes, impossible to deny, until--

RAYMOND
There we are.

Raymond hands the phone back. Together, they all watch the natural splendor in front of them. Something all the holograms and self-driving cars in the world couldn't match. Ben even feels a moment of peace, albeit fleeting... his problems briefly insignificant in the face of this beauty.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - FIELD - NIGHT

It's night time as the hot air balloon carrying Katherine, Raymond, Abby, and Ben touches down. Back to earth and all its problems. Others land behind it in quick succession.

INT. HOT AIR BALLOON - CONTINUOUS

Raymond kisses Katherine playfully on the neck, chuckling.

RAYMOND
I think I'm drunk.

KATHERINE
I think so, too.

RAYMOND
You know what that means, right?

Katherine nods, amused. Raymond turns to Abby and Ben.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
You guys wanna go swimming?

KATHERINE
It's pointless to resist once he suggests it.

SHERIFF (O.S.)
Raymond Newberry?

The quartet turn, startled to see a SHERIFF standing nearby. Ben's immediately nervous.

RAYMOND
Can I help you?

SHERIFF

Very sorry to bother you on this beautiful evening, but we got a call about a possible illegal remodel who traveled into town via train.

Ben's breath catches in his throat. He reaches to cover his scar, tries hard to not look conspicuous.

RAYMOND

And what does that have to do with any of us?

SHERIFF

Well, I knew you had this big event. Figured anyone coming into town would be here for this.

Raymond stiffens, irritated at the implication. Ben is more than happy to let him handle it.

RAYMOND

If you're suggesting looking at the IDs of each and every one of my guests, I would retort that you better come back with a warrant.

SHERIFF

Didn't mean to offend, Ray, but you want to play it that way, so be it.

The Sheriff walks off, and Ben allows himself to exhale.

RAYMOND

Now, weren't we about to go swimming?!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben checks himself out in the mirror. He tightly ties Raymond's way-too-big-for-him trunks around his waist, throws a too big t-shirt on for extra measure.

He looks self-consciously at his scar. Opens the medicine cabinet to find band-aids and places one carefully over it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben comes quietly down the stairs into Raymond and Katherine's spacious, well-decorated living room.

Katherine's art decorates the walls. Ben takes a moment to admire it, even if he doesn't think it belongs here.

The reflection of the pool lights fill the room with a murky blue haze. We hear laughter and splashing through the walls.

Before he makes it out of the room, something in the corner catches Ben's eye -- A SILVER URN. Ben scrunches his face, drawn to it. Wondering if maybe... just maybe...

He reaches the urn, picks it up to see if there's any kind of markings on it, anything that labels that he might be holding the ashes of his own deceased body--

OWEN (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Ben nearly DROPS the urn at the sound of that. Startled. Turns to see Owen with a TEENAGE GIRL, eyes both bloodshot. They hold bottles of alcohol.

BEN
Oh... sorry I was just, looking
around.

OWEN
(droll)
Do you often walk through people's
living rooms and start picking up
their urns?

BEN
I wouldn't say often, no.
(again)
Sorry.

OWEN
All good, man. To each their own.

Owen looks to the Teenage Girl behind him, back to Ben.

OWEN (CONT'D)
You never saw us.

BEN
Yeah, yeah. Of course not.
(setting down urn)
Same here. Cool?

Owen nods. He and the Teenage Girl go upstairs, giggling. Ben looks after them, wishing he could say more to Owen.

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Ben makes it outside, where Raymond, Abby, and a few other PARTYGOERS swim and loudly converse. All drunker than Ben.

ABBY
(slurring)
There you are!

Ben turns to Abby, seeing her in her swimsuit at the edge of the pool. For the first time realizing how truly beautiful she is.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Get in!

Ben takes his shirt off, gets in the water.

RAYMOND
(chuckles)
Jesus, I need to get back to the gym. What the hell is your workout regimen?

BEN
I don't really exercise.

RAYMOND
Yeah... okay.

POP! The sound of a champagne bottle opening.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Who wants champagne?!

ABBY
Champagne!

They all turn to see Katherine with the overflowing bottle. Looking at her, Ben remembers how infectious and full of life his wife always was.

Raymond swims up to her, taking the champagne bottle from her hands and drinking directly from it.

RAYMOND
(slurring)
How'd you know I wanted champagne?
You're a genius!
(to Ben)
Did you know she's a genius? I
can't believe I'm finally wifing
her up.

Ben's ears perk up at that. "Finally?"

KATHERINE
Raymond!

RAYMOND

What?! They're cool.

(giggling, quieter)

That courthouse story... it's all crap. Truth is we just never got around to legally making it official. That's why this weekend's so special.

Raymond sees Katherine's annoyed, changes his tune. The words are heavy on Ben's mind.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

(to Katherine)

Fine, I'll change the topic! What was I saying? Oh yeah... how you're a genius.

(to Ben and Abby)

You guys see all that art in our living room -- pretty nice, huh?!

(points to Katherine)

It's all her! All of it! She's brilliant.

KATHERINE

(rolls her eyes)

Brilliant's a bit of a stretch, Raymond.

RAYMOND

No, it isn't! Don't undersell yourself, sweetie.

Another swig of champagne. He passes the bottle to Abby.

ABBY

(blurts)

Ben's a musician!

Katherine perks up at that information. Abby comes from behind Ben, putting her arms around him and resting her head on his shoulder.

RAYMOND

That right? Whatcha play, maestro?

BEN

Oh... I don't really play anymore. I certainly wouldn't say maestro--

RAYMOND

Owen wants to be a musician. I want to support it, it's just...

(MORE)

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
I don't know any musicians that
ever made enough money to live on.

BEN
(looking at Katherine)
Huh, I wonder where Owen inherited
his musical abilities.
(to Raymond)
I guess I don't know any successful
musicians, either... probably why I
went the teaching route. Or maybe
it was because my parents never
supported me. Who knows?

Raymond scrunches his face, wondering if that was supposed to
be a burn. "What's the deal, man?"

KATHERINE
Teaching's still creative though.

Raymond shakes it off. The bottle makes its way to Ben. He
takes a swig. Feeling more bold.

BEN
Yeah, yeah you're right. I mean...
I am grateful for what I do. I'm
shaping young minds. I'm doing
something that matters.

Ben looks directly at Katherine as he says the words,
practically begging her to remember her own words. She
does... and we can see she's wondering now. A moment between
them that no one else notices, until it's broken by--

ABBY
I don't feel so good.

Abby quickly swims to the edge of the pool, leans over it,
and throws up on the ground.

RAYMOND
You okay over there?

ABBY
(wipes mouth)
Yeah, yeah... just not used to this
much drinking. But I'm fine--

Abby throws up again. Embarrassed.

KATHERINE
("please go")
You should probably take her
inside.

RAYMOND
You guys can just stay in the guest room tonight.

BEN
Yeah, yeah. Thank you.

As Ben swims away, Katherine notices Ben's band-aid has come undone, exposing the REMODELING SCAR on the back of his neck.

She's doing everything she can not to freak out. Raymond doesn't notice. He swims closer, putting his arms around her.

As Ben helps Abby out of the pool, Raymond calls after them--

RAYMOND
Get your ass back here quick, Ben!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby lays on the bed, still loopy but mostly in control. Ben holds a glass as she gargles mouthwash.

BEN
Okay, spit.

Abby spits the mouthwash into the glass. Closes her eyes as she turns to her side.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ben looks in the mirror, staring at his reflection. He takes a deep breath.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben walks out of the bathroom through the darkened bedroom. As he passes the bed, Abby gently grabs his arm--

ABBY
(sleepy)
Don't go.

Ben sits down next to her on the bed, brushes her hair behind her ear. He looks at her for a moment, feeling protective. Feeling better even.

BEN
You need to get some rest.

As Ben tries to get up--

ABBY

Ben... ?

BEN

Yes, Abby?

Ben turns back to Abby just as she lunges at him, KISSING HIM PASSIONATELY.

He's completely caught-off-guard... but he reciprocates. She's a beautiful woman and for a brief moment, it feels good. It feels right. Things escalate quickly.

But then he remembers Katherine. And it doesn't help that they've both had so much to drink. He pulls away. They just stare at each other.

BEN (CONT'D)

I don't think this is a good idea.

ABBY

I... I know.

He sighs, frustrated. Mad at Abby, but mostly mad at himself.

BEN

Why would you do that?

ABBY

I'm sorry.

BEN

You encouraged this. And now you kiss me?

ABBY

I'm sorry. I just don't... want to lose you to her. I thought-- I thought there was something here.

BEN

(lashing out)

I know you pretend to be in a bunch of relationships, but this isn't one of them. You're not my proxy. And you know what, maybe that's why you couldn't have a real relationship of your own.

ABBY

That's not...

BEN

Just... go to bed.

Ben gets up, paces out of the room, already regretful. He shuts the door behind him. Alone in the dark, Abby tears up.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 6. How Deep Is Your Love?

EXT. POOL - NIGHT

Ben approaches the pool, where Katherine now sits alone, feet dangling in the water.

BEN

Where is everyone? Where's Raymond?

KATHERINE

Pulled an Abby. Is it too soon to say that?

Ben sits, putting his feet in the water too.

BEN

I won't tell if you don't.

The bright lights from the house reflect off the pool, casting shadows on Ben and Katherine as they sit in silence.

Ben prepares himself for the big reveal, but before he can--

KATHERINE

(teary-eyed)

Is it really you?

Ben looks deep into her eyes, and the moment seems to last forever. He gives a slight nod, looks away.

BEN

I was wondering when you would figure it out.

A sob bursts out of Katherine.

KATHERINE

Oh, God.

They both sit with the revelation for a moment. Ben breaks the silence with--

BEN

You said you'd wait forever, Kat.

KATHERINE

Ben... I... I know that I owe you an explanation.

BEN

Forever. That's what you said. It's
why I did this.

KATHERINE

Let me... let me tell you what
happened. I need to know you
understand.

BEN

Well, right now, I'm not sure I'm
going to.

Katherine takes a deep breath, calming herself. And just as
she opens her mouth to speak, we--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - 2009 - MONTAGE

Kat sleeps soundly, arm hanging over the edge of the bed.

As she turns to her other side, she moves to put her arm
around Ben, startling awake to see he's not there.

Kat blinks herself out of sleep. In Ben's place, she simply
finds a note and a CD labeled "For Kat". Her eyes blink in
horror as she realizes where he's gone. She grabs desperately
at her cell phone, dialing a number.

She speaks into the phone MOS, her emotion rising with each
passing second. She throws it down, collapsing into tears.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - MONTAGE

Kat wakes, despondent. A box with Ben's silver urn by her.
She dials a number on her phone, her face falls further at
what she hears, and she hangs up.

She gets out of bed and places Ben's CD in a CD player.
Pushes play.

Another day. Another disappointing call. Ben's urn nearby.

Nightfall. She lays in bed awake, unable to move.

Morning. She looks at her phone. Headline: "*With Record Low
Successes, Will The Remodel Program Be Shut Down?*" Despair
fills her face.

INT. BATHROOM - MONTAGE

Kat looks at a pregnancy test, unable to believe what she is seeing. She breaks into a sob.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MONTAGE

Apathetic to everything around her, Kat pushes a grocery cart through the produce section. A PRODUCE EMPLOYEE carefully stacks apples into a perfect pyramid nearby. She grabs one, no care for his work.

As she walks down the aisle, the Employee watches her, smiling, and we see that it is a YOUNGER RAYMOND.

Another day. Kat's belly is growing. She walks through the produce again. This time Raymond gets the nerve to hand her an apple, telling her about it MOS. She forces a smile.

Another day. Kat's in her third trimester. Raymond meets her at the edge of the produce section, a basket of various fruits ready for her. She looks oddly at him, unsure why he's taken an interest in her.

INT. BEDROOM - MONTAGE

Kat hangs up another disappointing phone call. Her belly about to burst at this point. She hoists herself out of bed, distraught to be going through this on her own. Discarded paintings litter the floor around her.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - MONTAGE

Raymond helps Kat to her car, talking awkwardly MOS. Kat allows herself a small smile as she thanks him.

INT. BEDROOM - MONTAGE

Kat alone, sleep-deprived, BABY OWEN screams his head off near her. She looks at a photo of Ben, tears fill her eyes.

She gets up and turns the CD player on, the music melding with Owen's cries.

INT. GROCERY STORE - MONTAGE

Raymond perfects another pyramid of oranges. His smile nearly bursts out of his face when he sees Kat approaching. This is the first time he's seen baby Owen, and he is smitten.

Kat can't help but soften when she sees Raymond interacting with Owen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MONTAGE

Owen's older now, crawling around the floor.

Kat sits in front of a painting, suddenly furious at it. She can't look at it anymore, and she smashes it to the ground.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - MONTAGE

Raymond carries Owen as Kat pushes her cart to her car. She smiles watching them together.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MONTAGE

Kat and Raymond sit on the couch, watching a toddler Owen run around the room. Raymond gestures to the nearby photo of Ben, but Kat shakes her head, not wanting to talk about it.

Nighttime. Owen lies asleep in Raymond's arms. Kat holds the photo of Ben, talks animatedly about him MOS. Tears stream, but it's clearly cathartic. Raymond nods sympathetically.

EXT. PARK - MONTAGE

Raymond and Kat lay on a blanket in a park, watching hot air balloons in the distance. Raymond blathers excitedly, pointing at nearby farmland. Kat giggles at his enthusiasm.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MONTAGE

Raymond sits as Kat paints him. She's a master to watch, her brushstrokes finding the exact right pattern to follow.

INT. PARK - MONTAGE

Raymond, Kat and Owen back at the park. Kat sets Owen down, only to turn and find Raymond on one knee. Tears in both their eyes. Kat's hesitation gives way. She nods and Raymond ties a small string around her finger, one that will be replaced by something far more expensive in the near future.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MONTAGE

Katherine speaks to a RECEPTIONIST, teary-eyed as she fills out forms to officially DETACH herself from Ben.

EXT. ELK STREET - MONTAGE

Katherine, Raymond, and Owen move into a house on Elk Street, waving across the street to the Elderly Woman and Man that Ben and Abby spoke to.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - MONTAGE

Katherine, Raymond, and a seven-year-old Owen look at their empty farm for the first time, full of possibility.

BACK TO:

EXT. POOL - SAME

Ben sits with that for a long beat, processing it all.

KATHERINE
I didn't mean for it to happen,
Ben. It just did.

Ben's completely lost in thought.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I was so alone and so depressed,
and Raymond, he...

BEN
Does Owen know?

Katherine stares back, unable to answer, which tells Ben everything he needs to know.

BEN (CONT'D)
Kat.

KATHERINE
(inhaling)
You don't know how many times I've
tried to tell him. I just... it
would be like losing you all over
again.

(holding back tears)
It was selfish of me, but...
(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I didn't want him to know that one day you might be out there, and he would never know because of the choice I made to move on... the hardest choice I ever made.

BEN

So you told him Raymond was his father?

KATHERINE

If I was going to lie... why not at least give him the happiest lie?

(breaking)

I'm sorry, Ben.

Ben looks at Katherine, not wanting to see her in pain.

BEN

God, I didn't...

(softening)

I can't imagine how hard that was for you, being on your own.

Surprised by the olive branch, Katherine places her hand on Ben's.

KATHERINE

(teary-eyed)

I tried to get your remodel expedited when I found out I was pregnant, but they said they only speed them up for people who already had kids when they died. Kids that would remember them.

Katherine is a mess now, having relived all of that. Ben can't help but want to comfort her. He's never been able to see her sad like this.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So... do you?

BEN

Do I what?

KATHERINE

Understand?

Ben takes a moment, lightly kicking his feet in the water.

BEN

I want to be happy for you, Kat. I just...

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
to wake up and hear that you...
that you didn't even want to see
me? You have to know that nearly
killed me.

Beat. Silence. Katherine turns away, unable to hold his gaze.

KATHERINE
What was it like, being suspended?
Do you remember it at all?

BEN
It was... like a dream. A twenty-year, timeless dream. Like one of those dreams where you're asleep for five minutes but it feels like days have passed. The kind of dream where you know you're dreaming but can't wake up, where the people with you... you know they're not real, nothing but ghosts of the people that inhabit your heart. The people you just want to force yourself awake for, so you can wrap your arms around them and never let go. And I spent every moment of those twenty years with your empty reflection, thinking only of how I could get back to you, the real you, and never let go again.

Ben is in tears himself. Katherine looks back to him. Their eye contact forceful, magnetic.

KATHERINE
(breaking)
Benny-boo...

And as if they're being pulled to each other, their heads tilt and their lips collide. Hungrily, sloppily. They've both been waiting twenty years for this, in one way or another.

They get up, still kissing, and make their way into the poolhouse, shutting the door behind them. The lights flicker off the pool, dancing on the door.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alone in the guest room, a distraught and tearful Abby looks down at the poolhouse, having just witnessed that. She fumbles around for her phone, unlocking it. She opens an app, exhaling as she looks for a car to call.

INT. POOLHOUSE - LATER

Ben and Katherine lay in bed, though oddly neither one looks all that happy. A long beat as they avoid eye contact and process what just happened.

BEN

Hey, I meant to ask. The urn out there...?

She glances at him, knows what he's gonna say.

KATHERINE

Yeah.

BEN

Weird.

KATHERINE

Ben, I...

(emotional)

Oh, Jesus, what have I done?

BEN

What? What's wrong?

KATHERINE

I'm married.

BEN

(incredulous)

Yes, to me.

Katherine gets out of bed, hastily getting dressed.

BEN (CONT'D)

Wait, slow down. This is insane.

Why are you getting so worked up?

KATHERINE

I cheated on my husband!

BEN

I'm your husband! You and Raymond never made things official, he said it himself. And I came all this way for you. I came back from the dead for you!

KATHERINE

I'm celebrating fifteen years with Raymond tomorrow. That's twice as long as you and I were even married.

BEN

We're *still* married. And we have been for almost thirty years, I just missed most of it.

(anger rising)

What are you even talking about, Kat? We've known each other since we were *kids*! We have a son. Whatever you're going to do with Raymond tomorrow, don't. Please. We can be together again.

KATHERINE

What would this even look like now, Ben? You're twenty-five years younger than me in that ridiculous male model body.

BEN

I can't help the way I look. I'm still the same man I was. And may I say again, I came back from the dead for you!

KATHERINE

(emotional)

I told you not to leave me.

That hits Ben like a bullet.

BEN

You... you know what you meant by that! You wanted me to have the procedure! I wanted to wait for--

KATHERINE

My God, you're barely even older than your son. And what about that girl... Abby?

BEN

What about her?

KATHERINE

Who is she? How long have you known her?

BEN

A few... days. She's just a friend trying to help me out.

KATHERINE

What kind of person who's only known you for a few days would do all this?

Ben grabs her arm, giving her pause.

BEN
Kat... don't leave. I'm here again.
This was always the plan.

KATHERINE
(turning away)
It's been twenty years. Plans
change. People change. And I need
time to think.

BEN
You've had twenty years to think.

She pulls her arm back, gathers her remaining things.

KATHERINE
You should go join Abby so you
don't raise suspicions.
(then)
And maybe you can find out why she
really came here with you.

And with that, Katherine opens the door softly.

EXT. POOLHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Katherine looks both ways to make sure the coast is clear
before quickly heading for the main house.

INT. POOLHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ben sits alone, sulking in the afterglow of finally being
intimate with his wife again. Not wanting to believe it all
went so wrong. He grabs his swimsuit from the floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sneaks quietly into the house and through the dark room.
But he can't help himself stopping to look at the urn, the
urn which he now knows holds his old body in it. He reaches
out for it--

OWEN (O.S.)
What is with you and this urn, bro?

Ben jumps, startled to see Owen behind him.

BEN

No, nothing, I just...
(thinking)
Who do you think that is?

OWEN

Who do I think that is? It's my
mom's first husband.
(off Ben's surprise)
Yeah, my parents tell me shit.

BEN

Of course, yeah.
(then)
So, are you going to college this
year or...?

OWEN

College is a scam to keep poor
people in debt.

BEN

You're not poor though.

OWEN

Still a scam.

BEN

Don't underestimate the power of
education. It's important to keep
learning.

OWEN

Thanks, Mr. Rogers. But I don't
need some phony piece of paper to
prove I know things.

Ben grins.

BEN

You have another cigarette?

Off Owen's knowing smile.

EXT. POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Owen and Ben smoke cigarettes, watching the first light of
twilight appearing on the horizon.

BEN

Wow, I haven't had a cigarette
in... God knows how long.

OWEN

When did you start smoking? You
don't look *that* much older than me.

BEN

Just feels like a long time, I
guess.

They smoke in silence for a beat, Ben growing sentimental.

BEN (CONT'D)

So, you get along with your
parents?

OWEN

Yeah, sure. Feels silly to disagree
with the people who made you.

BEN

And you've had a good life?

Owen looks at Ben oddly.

OWEN

What's it to you?
(accusatory)
How much you had to drink, man?

BEN

Not that much. I just... your
parents seem pretty alright--

RAYMOND (O.S.)

BEN!

Ben instinctively throws his cigarette in the pool--

OWEN

Hey, c'mon.

--and turns to see Raymond charging right at him, an INTENSE
look in his eye.

BEN

Raymond, what's going on--

BAM! Raymond swings on Ben with a powerful sucker punch to
the eye, sending him straight to the ground.

BEN (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Owen's eyes bulge upon seeing his father unleashing violence.

OWEN

Dad, what the hell?!

RAYMOND

(to Ben)

Get up! I want another piece of
you.Ben throws his hand to his eye, in pain. Behind Raymond,
Katherine appears in the doorway.

KATHERINE

Raymond, stop!

BEN

Wh-- why did you hit me?

RAYMOND

I saw you! Don't deny it.

OWEN

Dad, what are you doing?!

Raymond shoves Ben as he struggles to his feet, about to hit
him again until Ben PUNCHES him in the stomach, pure reflex,
knocking the wind out of him.

BEN

(no idea where that came
from)Oh, God. Raymond, I'm sorry... I
didn't mean to.

Katherine rushes to Raymond's side.

KATHERINE

Raymond, are you okay?!

(hand on his back)

Let's get you inside. Let's talk
about this.

Raymond backs out of her embrace, looks to Ben.

RAYMOND

Just get your friend and get the
hell out of my house. The police
are already on their way. I'm
guessing I found that illegal
remodel they're after.And with that, Raymond paces away. Katherine sets after him.
They disappear into the house.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Raymond!

OWEN
Dude, you're a remodel?

BEN
(ignoring him)
Have you seen Abby?

OWEN
(matter-of-fact)
She left like an hour ago.

BEN
What? Left where?

OWEN
I don't know, man. I'm not in
charge of people's comings and
goings.

BEN
Where the hell would she go? She's
had way too much to drink!

Ben pulls his phone out.

BEN (CONT'D)
Call Abby.

His phone dials, and they hear Abby's phone ringing. They
look around trying to locate the noise -- the guest room
window.

BEN (CONT'D)
Shit!

He rushes over, Owen following close behind.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Owen enter the bedroom. Ben finds Abby's phone under
a blanket, still loudly ringing. He jabs at it.

BEN
(pushing buttons)
Shut. Up.

The phone finally quiets, closing out of the call only to
display a message, "No Self-Driving Cars Available in Your
Area." Ben anxiously exhales.

BEN (CONT'D)
Dammit, where did you go?

PHONE
 Opening STAGES.

BEN
 What? No.

A HOLOGRAM pops out of Abby's phone. Ben stifles a gasp, because standing across from them is **AI ETHAN**, a perfect replica of Ben's body in AI form.

AI ETHAN
 I told you, Abby, I decided to move on from this life.

BEN
 What the fuck is this?

OWEN
 Dude, isn't that a grieving app?

Ben nods, still processing.

AI ETHAN
 You seemed very distraught during our last interaction. Do I need to alert the authorities?

OWEN
 So why is she grieving... you?

Ben steps closer to AI Ethan, and in this moment comes to realize why it is that Abby has stayed with him on this journey--

--he is in the body of her dead husband.

FLASH OF:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - MORNING

We see Ethan lying motionless in bed as we did in the opening, only this time we pull wide to see a sleeping ABBY lying beside him.

TIME CUT TO:

Abby wakes, reaching her arm over to Ethan's side of the bed but feeling nothing. She sits up, looking around the empty apartment, no sign of him.

No note. No goodbye.

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

AI ETHAN
Only through confrontation can we
get to healing and acceptance.

BEN
Jesus.

AI ETHAN
You must accept that I am gone
forever.

Ben can't take this.

BEN
Turn off Stages.

AI Ethan disappears. Owen looks unsettled.

BEN (CONT'D)
She... she lied to me.

OWEN
What is going on here?

BEN
I can't explain right now. We need
to find Abby before she does
something crazy.

Owen looks beyond Ben, out the window.

OWEN
I think I found her.

Ben turns around and sees in the distance a lone hot air
balloon taking flight into the twilight sky.

BEN
Wh- what should we do? She doesn't
know what she's doing!

OWEN
I don't know! Why are you asking
me?!

BEN
Where's your car?!

OWEN
I don't drive!

BEN
What?! You're eighteen!

OWEN
No one my age drives!
(offering)
We can take my dad's truck?

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - TWILIGHT

Ben and Owen race to an OLD F-150 in the driveway. Ben struggles through nerves to get the key into the lock.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Ben hops in the car, unlocks the door for Owen. He flicks the ignition, throws the car into reverse. It feels weird for him to be manning his own vehicle again.

Owen looks out the window to the hot air balloon, now on a terrifying track straight for a power line.

OWEN
Hurry up, man!
(worried)
Is she trying to get herself
killed?!

Ben swallows, throws the truck into drive, after the hot air balloon.

BEN
I'm going as fast as I can.

Owen stares forward, incredulous.

OWEN
Why would she do this?!

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The truck reaches the highway, kicking up dust as it barrels after the hot air balloon in the distance--

--AND now following them is the Sheriff, SIRENS BLARING. Red and blue lights slicing through the rural darkness.

POLICE
(via megaphone)
Pull over to the side of the road!

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

White knuckles as Ben grips the wheel. A black eye already forming on his face. He looks in the rear view mirror.

BEN
Shit. I am so fucked!

The hot air balloon continues its dangerous path. The flame grows in intensity, but it looks like Abby's trying to pilot this thing away from her doom.

OWEN
Maybe we should pull over, man.

Ben pays no attention. The Sheriff edges closer, feet from the back of the truck.

BEN
Goddammit, Abby!

The hot air balloon closer, the truck pounding forward, the Sheriff inches away.

OWEN
(realizing)
Wait, you're in her ex's body!

Ben says nothing, Owen gets it.

OWEN (CONT'D)
That's fucked up, man!

BEN
I know!
(looking at balloon)
Oh God, please!

Ben pushes the pedal as far as he can, going nearly a hundred miles an hour now.

BEN (CONT'D)
I didn't know... okay?! I thought
she was just trying to help me.

OWEN
Help you with what?!

Owen watches the balloon, the crash now seeming inevitable. In the mirror, the Sheriff's lights are blinding.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Shit!

He looks to Ben, seemingly having another revelation.

OWEN (CONT'D)
You and that urn... are you-- my
mom's--

BEN
I'm your fucking dad, okay?!

BOOM! The hot air balloon COLLIDES with the power lines, unleashing a shower of sparks and setting the balloon ablaze.

BEN (CONT'D)
No!

The fire spreads rapidly up the balloon. It continues to fly, careening rapidly toward the earth. A small lake in its path.

Ben switches paths, taking the truck off-road. The Sheriff follows closely.

Ben and Owen stare at the balloon as it comes closer, hopeful that it will make it before crashing to the ground.

The moment is loaded, neither can bring themselves to address what Ben just said. A more urgent problem at hand.

BEN (CONT'D)
Come on, Abby!

The balloon is yards away from the lake. The fire spreads quickly downward, now threatening to consume the carriage.

Seemingly at the last moment, Abby's silhouette JUMPS from the carriage into the water. The fall nearly eighty feet.

Ben SLAMS the truck to a stop at the lake's edge. The Sheriff does the same, swerving to avoid hitting the truck.

EXT. LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Ben sprints to the lake, dives in. Owen follows.

SHERIFF
(exiting his car)
Stop right there!

Ben ignores him, swimming for the spot he last saw Abby.

Arms on fire. Almost there.

He arrives and DIVES BENEATH THE SURFACE.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

The water becomes blacker and blacker the further Ben goes, the shape of Abby sinking beneath him.

Deeper. Darker.

Total blackness. Stillness.

Once again, colors begins to swirl until they take up the entirety of the screen.

As they come into focus, we finally see Abby in the clear. Hair floating freely behind her. A vision.

The moment of serenity is broken when Ben's arms grab her, pulling her toward the surface.

CUT TO BLACK.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 7. Nothing Compares 2 U

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

Despondent, Ben watches the sunlight stream through the tiny window of his cell. His eyes bruised. He looks like shit.

GUARD (O.S.)
Haskins?

Ben perks up, confused.

EXT. JAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Ben and Raymond exit the jail, walking to Raymond's truck. Neither saying anything for a while, until--

BEN
They like you around here, huh?

RAYMOND
You could say that.

BEN
They're really gonna look the other way on this?

RAYMOND
You're in the clear. You're now legally allowed to be in the state of Illinois.
(stern)
(MORE)

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
But if you don't go to the damn
employment office when you get back
to Milwaukee, you're gonna be
homeless real quick.

Raymond opens the truck door as Ben nods.

INT. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Country road. Raymond drives as Ben awkwardly squirms in the passenger seat. There's still tension between them.

RAYMOND
Sorry about your eye.

Ben shrugs.

BEN
It's okay. I get it.
(sighs)
Sorry about your balloon.

RAYMOND
Please, don't worry about it.
They're not... *that* expensive.

Awkward silence.

BEN
How expensive?

RAYMOND
Best you don't know, I think.

Raymond exhales, ready to get something off his chest.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
I overreacted last night. I'm sorry
about that. I don't usually show my
emotion like I did. But... I mean,
come on.

Ben simply nods.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)
I always knew this day would come,
you know? Everything Katherine's
told me about you... I knew you
weren't just going to give up on
her whenever you came back. That's
not the Ben Haskins I've heard
about.

(MORE)

RAYMOND (CONT'D)

It may sound crazy, really crazy actually, but part of me is *happy* to meet you. Owen... he's just such a wonderful kid.

(laughs)

I mean, he's got an attitude on him, don't get me wrong. And that hair...

(back on track)

But I knew that whoever he came from... he had to be someone great.

Ben doesn't want to cry in front of Raymond, wiping a tear away with his shirt sleeve.

BEN

You're not so bad yourself, Raymond. Thank you for taking care of them.

RAYMOND

Look, Katherine's decision is her decision. I know what I want, but I'm not gonna force her to be with me. I need to know if I'm her second choice. I've always wondered. Part of me always assumed that's why she never wanted to make things official. That she was just waiting for you to come back. Why do you think I carved our street into that tree?

Ben can't hide his surprise.

BEN

You did that?

RAYMOND

Katherine wasn't too happy about it when I told her. Said I took her choice away. Way I look at it is I gave it back to her.

Ben contemplates that as the truck stops.

BEN

Where are we?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Sunlight breaks through window blinds. Two eyes blink awake.

On the hospital bed, Abby readjusts to the waking world. Her arm in a sling, her head bandaged. But she's alive.

BEN (O.S.)
Oh, thank God!

Ben stands, rushes to Abby's side. She looks back at him, tears forming in her eyes. Embarrassed and ashamed.

ABBY
I'm sorry.

Understanding, Ben wipes away Abby's tears.

BEN
It's okay.

Abby notices Ben's eye. For what it's worth, it could be a lot worse.

ABBY
What happened?

BEN
Raymond throws a mean right hook is what happened.
(sighs)
He found out.

Abby nods. A look of fear creeps onto her face.

ABBY
How much trouble am I in?

BEN
(sighs)
None.

ABBY
(confused)
What... how?

BEN
Seems he's pretty well-liked around these parts. Police figured it was better to let this one go.
(annoyed)
He's... an alright guy.

Abby exhales, relieved by that at least.

BEN (CONT'D)
The doctors want to keep you here a couple days though.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

To make sure your recovery is going
as well as it should.

(more serious)

What were you trying to do, Abby?

ABBY

I just... I had to get out of
there.

BEN

Is that really all?

Abby turns away, not wanting to address that. Her eyes teary.

BEN (CONT'D)

I know the truth, Abby.

(then)

So, you tracked me down, I guess?
Found me at that bar?

She can't look at Ben. He places his hand on hers.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm a real idiot for not guessing
it sooner. Guess I was too busy
doing the same thing to Kat. I've
been pretty selfish lately. And
childish. And...

(removing his hand)

Maybe it's better for you if I go.

As Ben turns, Abby grabs his arm.

ABBY

He never left me a note.

(holding back tears)

He never even told me he was
depressed.

That gets to Ben.

BEN

That... that must've been very
difficult for you.

ABBY

He was doing all these new things.
Exercising. Trying religion.
Therapy.

(breaking)

I just thought he wanted to be a
better person.

Ben watches Abby, his heart breaking for her.

ABBY (CONT'D)

He wasn't... he wasn't a good husband. But... maybe that was because he was depressed. I should've seen the signs. As his wife, I should've known.

(teary)

Maybe you're right. I was pretending to be in so many relationships I forgot about the most important one--

BEN

Stop that. No one else can know how another person feels. That's not your responsibility. It was not your fault, what he did.

ABBY

Despite all of it... I still loved him. I do love him. But...

Abby forces herself to work through her emotions.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I think I... care about you, too. It's confusing...

(shaking head)

I don't know where my feelings for him end and you begin.

Feeling suddenly self-conscious, Abby turns away.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I shouldn't be saying this to you. It's not...

(deep breath)

Am I crazy? Do you care about me?

Ben looks into Abby's eyes deeply. He measures his response.

BEN

I don't know... I...

(fighting emotion)

Yes, I do. But this isn't...

Abby tightens her grip on Ben's arm.

ABBY

Is it just the ghost of him? Some remaining piece of Ethan in there?

BEN

I don't know, Abby.

A tear streaks down Abby's cheek.

ABBY
We can't... can we?

BEN
We'd never know if it was real. And
it would never be healthy for you.

ABBY
I don't want to lose him. I don't
want to lose you.

Ben and Abby share a look of understanding, seeing right into each other.

BEN
I don't want to lose you either.
(heavy-hearted)
That's why we can't do this.

Abby turns away from his gaze, looking out the window to the Chatsworth countryside.

ABBY
Beautiful day, isn't it?

Ben nods. She's right.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The truck barrels down the highway to its next destination.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

Katherine is radiant watching the sunset against a beautiful oak tree. Her and Raymond's tree. Ben watches her from a distance, summoning the ability to approach her.

When he is a few feet away, Katherine senses him.

KATHERINE
Is she going to be okay?

BEN
Yes, thank you for asking.

Summer breeze and crickets the only sounds for a moment.

KATHERINE
(back toward Ben)
I love you, Ben.
(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I always have and I always will.
(inhaling)
I don't think I'll ever love anyone
like that again.
(through tears)
But my future is here.

BEN
I know.
(hardest thing he'll ever
say)
And I understand.

KATHERINE
Our life... the one we shared... it
ended the day you left. I'm sorry
that I made you do it.

BEN
You didn't make me. I was the one
who went through with it. It was...
what we had was perfect. I didn't
want to let it go. But...

Ben places a hand on Katherine's shoulder.

BEN (CONT'D)
Are you happy here, Kat?

KATHERINE
Yes.

BEN
Then that's enough for me.

Katherine turns, falling into Ben. They hug, both in tears.

KATHERINE
What will you do?

BEN
I don't know.
(sighs)
I need to find a job, that's for
sure.

Katherine laughs through her tears.

BEN (CONT'D)
Don't worry about me, Kat. There's
a future for me out there. It's
just not the one I expected.

KATHERINE

Abby... Do you... Is she part of
that future?

BEN

It's one of those things that can't
be. Like you and me.

Ben looks out to the sunset.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'll be okay. It's a fresh start.
Just know that, right now, I'm
grateful to be here at all.

(heavy sigh)

But there's one last thing I need
you to do with me.

ONSCREEN TEXT: 8. Real Love

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Abby, dressed in her regular clothes, sits on the edge of the bed, completing paperwork. A light knock at the door startles her and she looks up to see--

--Katherine standing shyly in the doorway.

KATHERINE

Wasn't sure if you'd still be here.

ABBY

I'm here.

Beat.

KATHERINE

Figured we should do that cliché
thing where we get together and
discuss this man of ours, huh?

Abby cracks a small smile at that.

ABBY

If we have to.

KATHERINE

Look, Abby, it may seem like we
should be at odds here, but the
truth is I feel a kinship with you.

Abby's surprised to hear this.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I know exactly what you're going through. Ben told me about... well, I just want you to know that it's not any easier even if you know why they did it.

ABBY

What was it like for you?

KATHERINE

It was a dark time. I had a lot of people telling me how to feel, that I was lucky because I would see him again one day. They said it would get easier. I don't know if that's true or not. I know the pain never went away. But at some point, I got used to it. And I was able to move on.

ABBY

But you did get to see Ben again. I'll never see Ethan. Not really.

KATHERINE

No, you won't. And I know how hard this is to think about, but you will get used to that. You will come to accept that reality, and... I really want you to hear this, Abby--

Katherine crosses the room to get closer to Abby.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

--you will be okay. I know it's hard to hear, and God, I hated everyone who said it to me. But you should hear it. Because it's true.

Abby's going to cry, but tries to hold it back nonetheless.

ABBY

I just... we were a partnership. A broken one, yeah, but a partnership still. I feel so helpless and stupid and naive saying it, but I don't know who I am now.

(sad laugh)

And what the hell am I supposed to do about Ben? I think I... oh God, I can't even say it.

KATHERINE

Abby... could you ever look at Ben and really, truly not see Ethan?

Abby slowly brings herself to shake her head.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
There's only one person you need to
worry about now, and that's you.

Abby nods, knowing that's the only real truth she's going to find today.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Abby returns home to the same studio apartment where we last saw Ethan. She takes a couple steps forward before stopping, something catching her eye--

--a NOTE sitting on the floor marked "Abby". She's emotional as she picks it up. As she starts to read--

BEN (V.O.)
Dear Abby, I thought it might be
nice for me to leave you a note
letting you know where I'm going.

Abby stifles a sob, again smiling through her sadness.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY

Ben walks down the street casually, enjoying the sunshine and returning the smiles from people around him.

He stops in front of the remodel clinic, looks at it sadly.
Is he going to go inside?

BEN (V.O.)
I'm sorry I can't give you the
answers you're looking for. I'm
sorry you'll never know why he did
it. I can't imagine what that's
like. Sometimes we have to make our
peace with not knowing.

EXT. RAYMOND AND KATHERINE'S FARM - DAY

Raymond and Katherine gaze at each other, deeply in love.

KATHERINE
(whispers)
You've never been my second choice.

Raymond looks like he just heard the six words he thought he would never hear from Katherine.

REVEAL they're standing by their tree, finally making it official.

BEN (V.O.)
But I can tell you without a doubt
that I love you. And if what I feel
inside is true, so did he.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - SAME

Abby continues reading, sitting on the bed now.

BEN (V.O.)
As for me, I'm still trying to
figure out my place in this world.

EXT. BEN AND KAT'S TREE - SAME

Ben slowly unscrews the cap of his urn. Katherine approaches, grabbing it with him. Together, they scatter the ashes of his old life over the spot that once meant so much to them both.

BEN (V.O.)
And I think I'm getting there.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - SAME

Back with Ben, looking up at the clinic.

BEN (V.O.)
There's just a few things I need to
take care of first.

With a smile, he moves on, continuing down the street.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - SAME

Abby continues reading.

BEN (V.O.)
I'll miss you, Abby. Maybe I'll see
you again -- in the next life.

She sets the note down, looking at her phone. She navigates to Stages and opens it.

AI Ethan appears, and they make eye contact. She sighs, ready to face her grief head on.

INT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Owen leans against a column, duffel bag on his shoulder, guitar case at his side.

OWEN

Finally. I thought we were gonna miss the train.

REVEAL Ben approaching. Also carrying a large travel bag.

BEN

Relax. We have the whole summer 'til my job starts up.

OWEN

School janitor. I dig it, man.

BEN

Yeah... it's something to do while I brush up on the events of the last two decades.

OWEN

Hey... show some respect for the service industry. It's not a bad gig, Dad.

Owen laughs at the D-word, pulls out a cigarette, lights it.

BEN

Maybe we don't call me "dad" in public. It's a little weird.

OWEN

That's why it's funny. I believe it was you who once said "I'm your fucking dad, okay?"

(smiles)

Excellent way to deliver the news, by the way.

Ben grabs Owen's cigarette out of his hand.

BEN

We're way too far in the future for you to still be smoking.

(takes a drag)

And what kind of a dad would I be if I let you smoke?

Ben tosses the cigarette to the ground, stomps it out. Owen can't help but smile at him saying "dad".

OWEN

You said not to say that in public.

Ben smiles back as a train pulls into the station, blowing their hair into their faces. The train doors whoosh open.

BEN

I guess it's alright.

(changing)

You still mad at your parents?

OWEN

Nah. How the hell were they supposed to tell me this crazy ass story anyway?

(then)

Where's your axe? Mom tells me you play a mean guitar. Was hoping we could jam together.

BEN

Oh... kinda left that in my last life, I guess. Haven't taught myself how to play left-handed yet.

Owen smirks at that.

OWEN

I'm left-handed... I could teach you.

Ben smiles back.

BEN

I'd like that.

Owen steps on the train. Ben follows, removes a pill bottle from his bag. Takes out two serotonin pills, washes them down with a gulp of water, committing to doing it right this time.

For just a second, Ben's original body appears, sitting next to Owen... like he should've been able to. It's too late for that. But they still have now.

BEN (CONT'D)

You ready?

Owen smiles, nods as the train doors close.

And with that, the train LAUNCHES into the sunrise. Into an uncertain, unpredictable future. A future that's going to mercilessly throw all it has got right back in your face.

A future that Ben is going to embrace.

THE END.