

THE GRAVEYARD GANG: PUNCHED BACK IN

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CHIP VAN BRIAR AUTO PARTS, WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a long line of fourteen TEAM MEMBERS, each of them an arm's length apart from one another. They all sport blue, company t-shirts that read "Chip Van Briar Auto Parts".

A pair of VOICES boom to life -- energetic and passionate.

VOICES
(shouting, in unison)
Buzz Lightyear!

The Team Members stretch their arms up high, reaching for the sky, obeying the odd command issued by the Voices. The Team Members hold the pose while the Voices count.

VOICES (CONT'D)
One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six!
Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

While the Voices count, ZERO IN on aisles upon aisles of shelving -- storing a wide assortment of different sized boxes. The shelves extend almost as high as the rafters, easily thirty to forty feet.

VOICES (CONT'D)
Hitchhikers!

The Team Members fully extend one arm out in front of them, with their palm facing up.

The Team Members take their other hand and bend the fingers of the open palm downward, stretching out their wrists. They all twirl the thumb of the hand being stretched as they hold this pose for another ten count.

VOICES (CONT'D)
One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six!
Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

During this ten count, ZERO IN, getting a much closer look at all the different types of boxes, resting on the shelves -- spark plugs, radiators, alternators, windshield wipers, rotors, shocks and struts, etc.

The Team Members switch arms and perform the "Hitchhiker" stretch on the opposite hand. Again for another ten count.

VOICES (CONT'D)
One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six!
Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

CLOSE ON several aisles of exhaust pipes, ranging in sizes.

CLOSE ON car floor mats. All different types and colors, catering to all sorts of models -- Jeep, Ford, Chevy, Subaru, Honda, etc.

VOICES (CONT'D)

Flamingos!

The Team Members grab one leg at a time, pulling it backward, stretching out their quads.

VOICES (CONT'D)

One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six!
Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

CLOSE ON long conveyer terminals, with numerous blue totes, streaming down the lines, twisting and turning throughout all corners of the warehouse.

The Team Members switch legs, performing the "Flamingo" stretch on the opposite leg. One final ten count sounds off by the Voices.

VOICES (CONT'D)

One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six!
Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

Various WORKERS weave their way in and out of the aisles on Order Pickers (stand-up forklifts).

Order Pickers are unique, as the blades that enable the operator to lift pallets, are located in the back instead of the traditional front location on a sit-down forklift. The worker is harnessed in, preventing he/she from falling off the Order Picker.

One Worker operating an Order Picker stops in front of a certain bay, rises up to the tenth shelf, scans a barcode, receiving an item into the system via their scanner gun.

The Worker turns, reaches into the load they're carrying on the Order Picker, retrieves the particular part they just received into their gun, and places the part on the shelf in its designated location.

VOICES (CONT'D)

Let's clap it up!

CLOSE ON the Team Members, clapping their hands in unison, following the Voices' lead.

PULL BACK, finally revealing the two Voices that have been leading the team in stretches.

Two bespectacled guys in their mid to late thirties, LOUIE HERZERG, who could use a good shave and RICH WESLEY, who could use a little more hair on the top of his bald head, clap their hands with intensity.

LOUIE
(clapping)
You know the drill, guys!

RICH
(clapping)
It's Friday! Let's get loud!

LOUIE
(shouting)
Auto parts!

RICH
(shouting)
That you desire!

LOUIE AND RICH
(in unison, clapping)
Chip! Van Briar! Chip! Van Briar!
Chip! Van Briar!

Some Team Members chant proudly along with Louie and Rich, clapping their hands. Some are a little less than enthusiastic. A few are completely silent, rolling their eyes at how cheesy and lame the whole thing is -- a team of mixed emotions.

RICH
Alright guys. You have your assignments. Let's have a good night!

The Team Members disperse, heading off to their designated work areas.

LOUIE
(facetious)
Really feelin' the love.

RICH
It's a work in progress.

Louie and Rich approach the office of their department, Quality Assurance.

INT. QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A small, cozy little office.

Numerous scanner guns line the back wall, perched on a long wooden shelf. Belts, with holsters attached to hold the scanner guns, hang in a corner.

Numerous employee plaques and framed certificates hang above the scanner guns, displaying company achievements and training completion awards to individual team members.

CLOSE ON the company slogan, painted in big, bright blue letters across one of the walls. It reads, "Auto parts that you desire! Chip Van Briar!"

Rich circles around his desk, plopping into his seat. CLOSE ON his placard, "Rich Wesley Cycle Count Supervisor".

Louie drags his feet to his desk. CLOSE ON his placard, "Louie Herzberg Stocking Supervisor".

LOUIE

Why does the team always seem more excited when Terrell leads in stretches?

RICH

Well, Terrell's got the "it" factor.

LOUIE

Are you saying that I don't?

RICH

Well, now that I think about it, they never did actually build that monument of you in the parking lot at the newspaper factory like you claimed they were going to. So, I think that automatically disqualifies you from possessing the "it" factor.

LOUIE

And just when I thought I successfully pushed the thought of that shit-hole out of my head -- you have to pull a fucking Inception on me.

RICH

What can I say, planting the right seeds at the right time is sorta what I do, just like Leo DiCaprio's character.

LOUIE

Yeah but Leo specialized in planting an idea in someone's head. You only planted a thought just now. And if we're really gonna get into it, you're way more like the old Japanese dude that gets lost in limbo for like a million years and doesn't know his ass from last Tuesday until Leo shows up to save him.

RICH

Okay. For starters, Saito became acutely aware of his situation when the guards showed him the totem that was in Leo's possession. Leo was the one who got dragged into the dining room and had to be reminded who the fuck he was!

LOUIE

Wait, who the fuck is Saito?

RICH

The old Japanese dude, as you so eloquently put it.

LOUIE

Are you sure?

RICH

Yes. I'm 100% sure that Saito was the --

LOUIE

(interrupts)

No, no, no! Are you sure about the crazy old Japanese dude reminding Leo who he was.

RICH

Dude. Leo was totally out of it! He was delirious. He was face down in the sand when the guards found him. He didn't even actually find Saito like he originally set out to do. It was pure luck that he just happened to wash up on the shore of some grand, Japanese castle that Saito was living in.

LOUIE

I refuse to believe I'm wrong here.

RICH
Color me shocked...

LOUIE
Well, considering I had to correct you on how you planted a thought instead of an idea, thinking you were so clever working off my Inception reference, when realistically you just sounded like an idiot, I'm not giving up too easily on this one. We need an authentic second opinion.

Rich rolls his eyes, shooting Louie a "oh, here we go" type of look.

Suddenly, an energetic and enthusiastic African American in his mid to late thirties, saunters into the office, cool as a cucumber.

He's not even slightly fazed by the fact he's about twenty minutes late for the shift. This is TERRELL ROBINSON.

TERRELL
Well, well, well if it isn't my two favorite Sith Lords! What's goin' down in your side of town?!

RICH
Sith Lords?! I thought we were Jedi Knights?

TERRELL
Yeah, like ten years ago. Becoming a supervisor is an automatic switch to a red lightsaber, dawg.

LOUIE
Nevertheless, this is perfect timing! The last true Jedi Knight...
(smiles, points to Terrell)
Master Rells, is just the man to settle the score.

RICH

(re: Terrell)

If his timing was nearly as perfect for showing up to work when he's actually expected to be here as it is for coming to your aid, then and only then would I actually consider Terrell's opinion "authentic".

TERRELL

First off, I never come to any Sith Lord's aid. I come to duel. Secondly, authentic is my middle name, baby boy! You know I always show up to the game in uniform! I'm live and direct!

Terrell accentuates the word "direct" so it sounds more like he's saying "die-wrecked".

RICH

(accentuating "directly",
poking fun at Terrell)

Yeah well you're about to be directly sent to the unemployment line if you keep this up, man. You know how strict Van Briar is when it comes to tardiness.

LOUIE

As much as I hate to agree with Rich on anything, he's right man. We don't make the rules. We're just forced to follow 'em. And one too many occurrences, especially when it comes to being late, will get you pink slipped.

RICH

(to Terrell)

This isn't the newspaper factory anymore man. And as much as I wanna be a chill ass supervisor like Robbie was back in the day, this place actually has rules and regulations that we all have to abide by.

LOUIE

Hmm. Like an actual, real job.

RICH

Who woulda thunk it, right?

TERRELL

Nah, I feel yuh. That's mah bad, guys. This one's on me. From here on out, I'll be docking the ship in the hangar and reporting for duty promptly at 1600 hours.

RICH

It would behoove you to do so.

Louie clears his throat.

LOUIE

(to Rich)

Now that we've asserted our authority as Sith Lord supervisors, can we please set the record straight on Inception?

Rich sighs heavily.

RICH

If it's gonna make you feel better, by all means, Louie.

LOUIE

Terrell. Rich seems to think that Saito was the--

TERRELL

Whoa whoa whoa! I'mma gonna stop you right there, baby boy. The only mind blowing thing about that flick is that Leo was way too caught up about some dead ass broad who only existed in his dreams, rather than focusing on what was right in front of him the entire fuckin' movie!

LOUIE

Which was, what exactly?

RICH

Yeah, enlighten us there, Jedi Knight.

TERRELL

Ellen Page, dawg! You guys for real? Cute ass little white girl like that? Man, if Chris Nolan had put one of the brothas in that flick, we woulda been taggin' and baggin' all night!

(MORE)

TERRELL (CONT'D)

But instead we get the one poor little white boy who's literally always caught up on one chick in all his movies! And in this movie especially, he was more concerned about having wet dreams over his dead wife than actually gettin' real pussy. Leo needs to learn how to expand his horizons.

RICH

(to Louie)

I mean, Terrell does make a pretty good point. Romeo and Juliet.

TERRELL

Claire Danes! One pussy!

RICH

Titantic.

TERRELL

Kate Winslet! One pussy!

RICH

Oh, oh! The Great Gatsby.

TERRELL

Carey Mulligan! One pussy!

RICH

And the flick that brings everything full circle, Inception.

TERRELL

Marion Cotillard! One, dead ass, pale, dried-up, non-functioning pussy.

RICH

Oh shit. I forgot about Shutter Island!

TERRELL

(accentuating the word "lord")

Oh Lawwwdddd! Another flick about a dead wife!

Rich shrugs his shoulders, smirking.

RICH

Another flick about a dead ass pussy.

TERRELL

Fuckin' Leo, man! Dat boy need to
branch out, yuh feel me?

Beat.

Louie shakes his head in disapproval.

LOUIE

And one simple answer to prove that
ridiculous logic wrong.

Rich and Terrell lift their eyebrows, eyeing Louie, waiting
patiently.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

The Wolf of Fucking Wallstreet.
Plenty of god damn pussy. Pussy for
days! Hell, pussy for years! Bam!

Louie proudly rises from his chair, exuding confidence.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

(points at Rich)
I've proved you wrong!
(points at Terrell)
And now I've proved you wrong. My
day is complete.

Louie does a "mic-drop" gesture with his hands.

RICH

(to Louie)
You need to rewatch Inception, you
jackass.

TERRELL

Man, ain't nobody gonna rewatch
that shit until they reboot it with
one of the brothas! They gotta put
my boy Denzel in there! He'd be
lightin' shit up!

RICH

By lighting shit up, do you mean
kicking ass or fucking pussy?

Terrell purses his lips, shooting Rich a look.

TERRELL

You know Denzel is multifaceted,
Rich. You already know the name of
the game!

(MORE)

TERRELL (CONT'D)

Because as it stands right now,
Inception with Leo -- absolute
weaksauce! My boy Dalen wouldn't be
writing flicks like that. He knows
what's gucci.

RICH

Wait, so Dalen became an official
honorary member of "The Brothas"?

LOUIE

We musta missed that one, Rich.
Last time I checked..
(moves fingers up and
down, doing the quoting
gesture)
"Dat boy", is Wonderbread.

RICH

Dalen is definitely a Cracka.

LOUIE

A saltine.

RICH

A bottle of milk.

LOUIE

(to Rich)
You think The Brothas hold a huge
ceremony when they induct someone
new like that? Especially someone
as special as Dalen?

RICH

If they do, my invitation certainly
got lost in the mail. I woulda
loved to see white chocolate get
inducted.

LOUIE

I'm willing to bet they gave him
the first ever black lightsaber as
a token of their appreciation.

RICH

Good call.

Terrell cradles his head in his hand, shaking it back and
forth.

INT. GOLDEN AGE PRODUCTIONS, OFFICE - DAY

An upscale, corporate office of a movie studio. Many framed, full sized movie posters decorate the long halls.

Audible typing noises, printers going off, fax machines coming to life, and phones ringing, emanate from all corners of the office.

Numerous TV's play different movies in the main lobby while a group of INTERNS, early twenties and in college, emerge, entering the threshold with take-out lunch orders in tow.

The Interns make their rounds, distributing the lunch orders to the employees.

INT. GOLDEN AGE PRODUCTIONS, DALEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DALEN GUS, mid to late thirties, sporting a tailored suit with a neat and trim beard, types vigorously on his desktop, engrossed in his work.

CLOSE ON the computer screen -- a screenplay. Dalen puts the finishing touches on a passage of dialogue.

A tall, heavysset male, early 50s, with a bunch of paperwork tucked underneath his arm, pops his head into Dalen's doorway. This is MIKE BADENHOP.

MIKE

Dalen, got a minute?

Mike jolts Dalen back to reality. Dalen quickly minimizes his screenplay and pulls up work related files on his desktop, a bit fidgety and nervous.

DALEN

Mike! Certainly. Come on in. Just finishing those uh --

MIKE

(finishing Dalen's statement)

-- N.O.I. reports?

DALEN

Right. I apologize for the delay.

MIKE

Is it our team of misfits out there not finishing them in a timely fashion or..?

DALEN

The interns this semester are great. Completely my fault. I just need some extra time to finalize them.

Mike takes a seat, in front of Dalen's desk. He looks relaxed.

Beat.

MIKE

Remember when I hired you back on the east coast?

Dalen throws his shoulders back, straightening his posture.

DALEN

I'll never forget it.

MIKE

Do you remember why I did?

DALEN

Because I cleaned up your spilt coffee in the break room?

Mike chuckles over the memory.

MIKE

Because you never waited for anyone to ask you to do something. You just simply did it.

Beat.

We can discern from the look on Dalen's face that he's remembering better days.

DALEN

You're right.

MIKE

We've known each other for a long time.

DALEN

Ten years.

MIKE

If there's anything on your mind, my door is always open.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

And it'll remain open for the rest
of the day for when those N.O.I.
reports are ready to be delivered
as well.

Mike winks, and gives a playful nudge to Dalen's arm. Mike
rises from his chair.

DALEN

Hey, uh -- Mike.

Mike turns, meeting Dalen's gaze.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Thank you. I needed that.

MIKE

(smiles)

Get some work done.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Dalen pulls up work related files. He begins to type and
then stops -- a clear struggle to get started.

-- Dalen prints off scripts. He stares at the printer,
watching the papers spit out one by one. He taps his fingers
on the desk with one hand and repeatedly clicks a pen in his
other hand -- bored, disinterested and completely out of it.

-- Dalen distributes the printed scripts to the Interns and
tries to give a smile, but it emerges crooked and small.

-- Dalen drags his feet into the break room. He approaches
the Keurig machines, selecting a tea from the many choices.
He inserts the pod into the machine and initiates the brewing
process.

-- CLOSE ON Dalen pursing his lips, gazing at the TV, playing
"Judge Judy". He crosses his arms, shaking his head as he
watches. He grabs his tea and sidesteps a large puddle of
coffee on the floor, completely neglecting the spill, exiting
the break room.

-- Dalen sluggishly makes his way back to his office. He
passes by his CO-WORKERS in their offices. Some laugh, some
engage in conversation with one another, some completely
focused on their tasks. No matter what they're doing, Dalen
can't seem to relate.

-- Dalen finally makes it back to his office, plopping into
his chair. He places his tea down beside him and pulls up his
e-mail.

-- CLOSE ON computer screen, one new message appears and Dalen's eyes widen -- the first glint of hope he's shown all day. Dalen leaps out of his chair, and closes his office door. He loosens his tie, taking a deep breath. He approaches his desk and sits down slowly, pulling his chair up to his desk and straightening his posture simultaneously.

-- CLOSE ON Dalen's hand hovering over the mouse and then back to his eyes. Beads of sweat drip down his forehead. He finally grips the mouse and clicks. His e-mail pops up on the computer screen.

-- CLOSE ON one line in the e-mail "Dalen, we regret to inform you that your screenplay has not been selected to advance in our competition this year."

-- A look of pure anguish fills Dalen's face. He slumps down in his chair and exhales a large breath, completely defeated by the day's events.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

EXT. JAMES' BEACH BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

An establishing shot of a small, unique and hip bar. Small little groups of CALIFORNIANS mill outside of the restaurant.

INT. JAMES' BEACH BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

Dalen tips back his beer as he shares a high table with ATHENA RAY, a striking brunette in her late thirties.

We drop in, mid conversation. Athena is laughing over something that was just said. Her smile is absolutely radiant.

ATHENA

I hate to break it to yah, but you do realize you did the same exact thing to me when you were an intern, right?

DALEN

Must be a snotty college kid type-ah thing.

ATHENA

Or maybe it's just an overly pretentious artist type of thing?

DALEN

Hey it worked wonders didn't it?
You gave me your job.

ATHENA

I didn't give you anything, Dalen.
You earned it. But hey, that's the
type of response I would expect
from an overly opinionated
screenwriter who thinks he's right
about everything.

Athena winks.

Dalen emits a light laugh.

DALEN

See? I was always perfectly content
with you giving me abuse.

ATHENA

And you clearly still are.

Dalen nods in accordance, raising his glass of beer.

DALEN

And I clearly still am.

Athena takes her drink and clinks glasses with Dalen,
toasting.

ATHENA

So, in all seriousness, I am sorry
to hear about the fate of your new
script. But that type of thing has
never gotten you down before and it
shouldn't now.

DALEN

Yeah, but that was back when I was
just a fresh, new intern, getting
my feet wet in the movie industry.
Everything was still in front of
me. Now, shit. I feel like I'm
slowly drowning in the churning,
political ocean of Hollywood.

ATHENA

Dalen, you're acting like you're
ancient. Which I guess would mean
I've been dead for at least several
years.

Dalen chuckles.

DALEN

Oh, stop. You're like the youngest looking thirty nine year old I know.

ATHENA

Hey! Do you mind? Some of my Tinder matches could be lurking around in here.

DALEN

Oh god, you're not one of those people!

ATHENA

The ones who believe in love at first swipe? Totally.

DALEN

Jesus Christ.

ATHENA

At least I'm hopeful! You could learn a thing or two from me!

DALEN

Of course I could. Why do you think I still meet up with you for these monthly get-togethers?

ATHENA

Because we both live in LA now and it's super convenient for you?

DALEN

That and because you usually pay the tab.

ATHENA

Oh you're not pullin' that shit again!

Dalen digs in his pocket, revealing his wallet.

DALEN

I remembered it specifically for you. My generosity absolutely kills me sometimes.

Athena smiles, taking a generous sip of her drink.

ATHENA

So, tell me what's really goin' on with you.

DALEN

In terms of?

ATHENA

All of this. Being three thousand miles away from home. The job. Just you in general. If anyone can relate, Dal -- it's me.

Dalen considers this.

DALEN

I dunno, I guess I just sorta... I dunno. Just bear with me for a sec, I'm gonna sound ancient again.

ATHENA

Gotch yah, buckling up!

Athena takes her hand and does a "buckle up" gesture across her chest.

DALEN

When I was twenty-five and interning for you back home in Boston and finishing up school and working my minimum wage job at some shit-hole newspaper factory... I just envisioned my life completely different by the time I hit thirty-five. And unfortunately, now I'm here.

Athena takes her hand and does an "unbuckling" gesture from her waist up to her chest.

ATHENA

Phew. That wasn't too bumpy.

Dalen stifles a laugh.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Dalen, stop being ridiculous. You're doin' what you love to do. You're writing scripts.

DALEN

Ones that don't sell.

ATHENA

You're still working in the movie industry.

DALEN

As a baby-sitter for interns.

ATHENA

All I'm sayin' is, don't let Hollywood's approval determine your success as a writer. You always act like you're right about everything. So act like you're right about eventually achieving your dreams.

DALEN

Did you just encourage me to be a pretentious artist?

ATHENA

Believe it or not, I do actually want this one thing to go to your head. This one time. You have my seal of approval.

DALEN

Yah know Miss Athena, just for that, I think I'm gonna grab the tip for tonight as well.

ATHENA

Wow. The bill and the tip!? Makin' moves!

DALEN

Million dollar moves!

ATHENA

See? The power of positivity goes a long way.

Athena and Dalen exchange a long, warm smile.

DALEN

So, tell me about your upcoming photog excursion. You're heading back to the east coast, right?

ATHENA

For sure! Our neck of the woods. I'll be up in Vermont and New Hampshire mostly.

DALEN

How long yah gonna be gone this time?

ATHENA

You know me. I kinda just, go where the wind takes me. Could be a week. Could be a month.

DALEN

Yah know, I envy you for that. I always have actually.

ATHENA

You envy me for my inability to stay in one place because I constantly allow my anxieties to get the better of me?

DALEN

That's never how I viewed it.

ATHENA

Well, now I'm intrigued. Paint me a picture.

DALEN

While you think it's an inability, I envy for your actual ability to be courageous and walk into the unknown and embrace whatever you come across. Yah know, it's... it's really admirable, Athena.

Athena stares intently into Dalen's eyes, taking it all in.

Based off her look, we can discern that she probably needs equally as much encouragement as Dalen did for his reservations about screenwriting.

DALEN (CONT'D)

I'm the one who suffers from the inability to take leaps. I find a spot and get too comfortable and try and stay there for as long as I can. I mean, shit. Can I be straight forward with you for a minute?

ATHENA

I wouldn't want it any other way. Spill it.

DALEN

Yah know, for the short time we worked together in the office when I was in college, you, uh... well, you left a huge impression on me.

(MORE)

DALEN (CONT'D)

Professionally and spiritually. You made that internship really fuckin' pleasant, especially when I was scared to death to even take that leap, ten fucking years ago.

Athena considers this.

ATHENA

I'm gonna tell you something my dad once told me.

Athena leans forward, placing her elbows on the high table.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

Being a risk taker leaves you more susceptible to being face down and blood bathed in the arena. But if you believe in what you're doing, you get back up, each and every time and you charge. And God have mercy on whatever or whoever is standing in your way when you do.

Dalen listens attentively.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

I don't know if I deserve all those words, Dal. But I'm very thankful for them.

DALEN

No thanks required. Just speaking honestly.

ATHENA

I would expect no less from you. Now stop doubting yourself and promise me you'll go write me an award winning screenplay. You've done it once before!

DALEN

One screenwriting competition. It didn't even get optioned! Not one production company wanted it.

ATHENA

One screenwriting competition that had thousands and thousands of entries and you came out on top. And what did you do with that prize money?

DALEN

Paid off my student loans.

ATHENA

Hmmm. More than those other 3,000
plus entrants could ever claim.
Life ain't so bad afterall.

Athena purses her lips, crossing her arms, shooting Dalen a look.

DALEN

Okay, okay. You're right. I have
absolutely nothing to complain
about. I'm actually quite
fortunate.

ATHENA

So tell me what you're gonna go do.

DALEN

I'm gonna get back up and charge.
After I wipe up my bloody face of
course. And, I guess there may be
some dirt to wipe off too. Depends
on what type of arena I face
planted in.

Athena laughs.

ATHENA

And then?

DALEN

I promise I'll write you another
award winning screenplay. You have
my word. As long as you take some
badass pictures for me on your next
adventure.

Athena nods with an ear to ear grin, illustrating her approval.

ATHENA

Deal. I'll even frame them for you
this time. You've always been my
biggest fan.

Something catches Dalen's attention from afar.

DALEN

And I think you may have just
gained a few more...

Dalen gestures to a COUPLE, standing at the far end of the restaurant, admiring a series of professional photographs, hanging above the dining room tables.

Athena turns, taking a look for herself. She flickers a smile.

CLOSE ON an elegantly framed still photograph, depicting a series of small waterfalls, below an aged, but structurally sound stone bridge. Colorful foliage hugs the falls.

The photo encompasses everything that makes autumn such a special and vibrant time of year.

A tag below the photograph reads, "Athena Ray Photography. Doane's Falls. Royalston, MA". A price is indicated, along with Athena's contact information.

INT./EXT. LOUIE'S CAR (IDLING), RICH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Snow blankets the ground and glistens under the lone street light outside of Rich's apartment.

Louie and Rich sit silently in Louie's car for a moment, taking in the peaceful, snowy bliss of their hometown in the dead of night.

CLOSE ON Louie's car clock -- "2:37 AM".

LOUIE

Do you ever miss it?

RICH

Are we pickin' up on a conversation
I don't remember leaving?

LOUIE

This time of night always gets me
thinking about it.

Rich considers this.

RICH

The newspaper.

LOUIE

That place really was the fuckin'
bane of my existence but I'd be
lyin' if I told you I never thought
about all the crazy shit we did
there.

RICH

I mean in hindsight, we woulda been fired at any other place in an instant for half the stuff we did there.

LOUIE

Ain't that the truth. How about the time we rollerbladed upstairs?

RICH

Holy shit! Right after they cleared out all the cubicles and it was just this one, giant open space, with perfect hard tile floors that were just as smooth as the roller rink downtown.

LOUIE

And then we idiotically brought Terrell's old school boom box and blasted Final Fantasy battle themed music to skate to, before our shift one night.

RICH

Yeah! And Robbie was there early and could feel the whole building vibrating.

LOUIE

Pretty sure he thought it was a fuckin' terrorist attack.

Louie and Rich chuckle over the memory.

RICH

I'll do you one better. How about the time we helped out Smelly Dave and gave him somewhere to live during one of the coldest weeks in recorded history.

LOUIE

Yes! The homeless guy who lived under the bridge right in town, a stone's throw away from the factory.

RICH

Yeah, we brought him upstairs into the boiler room and made a little makeshift room out of it.

LOUIE

And then he kept gettin' caught by the pressmen at night when he would have to go to the bathroom every five minutes because he was such a drunk...

RICH

... Until eventually Danny Devito found him one morning, completely naked and passed out in the pressman's locker room and ended up kicking him outside, into the cold.

LOUIE

Now that's one prick I don't miss. The fuckin' Penguin.

RICH

Dude. How many nicknames did people have for that guy? He was literally the most miserable asshole in existence.

LOUIE

Danny Donuts.

RICH

The Turd On Legs.

LOUIE

The Shitsicle.

RICH

The Prize in The Cereal Box.

LOUIE

And he was a fuckin' Republican. There's nothing I hate more than a fuckin' Republican!

RICH

Yeah, a short, fat and ugly one at that too.

LOUIE

Ah, man.

Rich looks over at Louie, noticing how happy he looks, relishing in the memories.

RICH

Alright, fine. You win this round.

LOUIE
Whatta yah mean?

RICH
I do miss that place.

Louie grins.

LOUIE
I know.

Rich rolls his eyes.

RICH
Go home and rewatch Inception, you
asshole.

LOUIE
Still caught up on that, huh?

RICH
On the fact that I'm right? Yah
damn skippy.

LOUIE
Alright, Terrell.

Rich swings the door open, pulling on his winter hat as he
exits the car.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
Oh hey, uh, Rich.

RICH
Oh, now I'm Rich again? Because I
was okay with being Terrell just
now.

LOUIE
Just shut the fuck up for a sec
while I try my best to be a good
friend. This shit is hard for me...

Rich meets Louie's gaze and extends his hand, gesturing that
the floor is his, as he leans on the open car door, waiting
patiently.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
Happy Anniversary, man.

Louie's genuine tone catches Rich off guard. A smile inches
across Rich's face.

RICH
Thanks man. I actually really
appreciate that.

LOUIE
I know.

RICH
You do realize that's the second
time you've Han Solo'd me in the
span of a minute, right?

Louie begins to open his mouth in response but before he can do so, Rich swings the car door shut, and gives a middle finger to Louie, shooting him a "not gonna get me again" type of look.

Rich approaches the front entrance to his apartment, disappearing inside.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rich advances towards his apartment. Before he can open the door, his phone goes off. He digs it out of his pocket and reads a text he just received.

CLOSE ON cell phone screen. From Louie: "I know."

RICH
(under his breath)
This motherfucker.

Rich's phone goes off one more time. He sighs heavily and looks at it again.

CLOSE ON cell phone screen. From Louie: "Got 'em a third time!!!"

Rich shakes his head, smiling, as he enters his apartment.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Rich emerges from the hallway and quietly closes the door. He removes his winter coat and hat, hanging it up on the coat rack, beside the door.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Rich enters the kitchen, placing his lunch bag on the counter. He opens it and takes out a dirty tupperware dish, placing it in the sink.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rich tiptoes into the bedroom, and approaches his wife, BETHANY who appears to be sleeping. He leans down, giving her a gentle kiss on her forehead.

RICH
(whispering)
Happy Anniversary, my love.

Bethany stirs. She rubs the sleep from her eyes, getting her bearings.

BETHANY
Hey, you. Happy Anniversary.

RICH
(whispers)
Sorry babe. Go back to sleep. I
just wanted to --

Without hesitation, Bethany pulls Rich's head closer and gives him a big kiss.

BETHANY
How was work?

RICH
It went well, thanks.

BETHANY
What shenanigans did Louie and
Terrell cause tonight?

Rich stifles a laugh.

RICH
I can tell you all about it
tomorrow at breakfast. But Louie
did wish us a Happy Anniversary,
just now.

BETHANY
Louie?!

RICH
Thank you. That was my reaction
too. Internally of course.

Beat.

BETHANY
I was gonna wait until tomorrow
morning to tell you...
(MORE)

BETHANY (CONT'D)

but I wanna do it. I wanna do what we've been talkin' about. Who cares if it's only been ten years. We've almost been together as a couple for twenty. It's something I wanna do.

Rich smiles.

RICH

I would love to renew our wedding vows, Bethany.

BETHANY

Good answer.

RICH

Happy wife, happy life, right?

Bethany playfully punches Rich's arm.

Rich chuckles.

RICH (CONT'D)

But in all seriousness, think about the time we live in. If people are allowed to have fuckin' Reveal Parties, I'm sure that gives us the right to renew our wedding vows whenever we damn well please.

BETHANY

I knew there was some reason I married you.

RICH

We'll talk more about it in the morning. I'm gonna go unwind from work. Get some sleep.

BETHANY

I love you.

RICH

And I love you.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rich cracks open a beer, places it down on the table right next to his laptop and plops onto the couch, taking a much deserved breather after a long night. He boots up his laptop, taking a few swigs of his beer.

Rich brings up Facebook, checking his notifications.

CLOSE ON computer screen: Louie has already sent Rich a Star Wars GIF of Han Solo and Princess Leia.

RICH
(chuckling)
Looks like I may need two drinks.

Rich leans back on the couch. The glow from his laptop illuminates his face in the pitch black room. Based off his look, he's in deep thought.

He leans forward, contemplating. He starts clicking and scrolling on his laptop -- bringing up some old photo albums.

CLOSE ON the photos on the computer screen. Various pictures of he, Louie, Terrell and Dalen at the newspaper factory, at Louie's house, playing pool and drinking -- THE GANG.

Rich clicks on a different photo album, bringing up his wedding pictures from ten years prior.

ZERO IN on The Gang, looking dapper as hell in their tuxedos. Dalen, Louie and Terrell stand as groomsmen for Rich as he and Bethany officially tie the knot.

Suddenly, Rich's phone begins to vibrate. He digs it out of his pocket. He peers down. His eyes widen, incredulous.

He accepts the call, placing the phone to his ear.

RICH (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Dalen?!

EXT. JAMES' BEACH BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Dalen waves to Athena, who catches a cab in the distance, concluding their get-together for the night.

DALEN
(into phone)
Roller Coaster Rich!

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION:

RICH
You know I fuckin' hate that
nickname, man.

DALEN

Precisely why I said it! What better way to break the ice than to hop into the time vault and bring you all the way back to the first grade!

RICH

Last time I checked, that was Louie's job to bring up my miserable and abusive childhood. You've typically always been the good one.

DALEN

Keyword, typically! I mean yah gotta figure, ever since I got an office job, I'm technically a Sith Lord now, right?

RICH

Well, that makes two of us!

DALEN

Jesus Christ! Are there any bearers of the blue or green lightsaber left in the galaxy?

RICH

I think Terrell is probably the only one.

DALEN

Wait, doesn't he have a purple one?

RICH

Dude, just because he's black doesn't mean you automatically need to go the Mace Windu route.

DALEN

Fair enough.

Rich laughs from the other end.

RICH

So how the hell are you, man? This is unexpected. Especially at this fuckin' hour.

DALEN

Dude, I'm so sorry. I wasn't even thinking about the time zone difference. I just got outta the bar. It's Friday night.

RICH

No sweat, Dal. It's good to hear from yah. Louie, Terrell and I work second shift now. I literally just got home about a half hour ago.

DALEN

Good! So you're wired! You're ready for my special delivery!

RICH

You really shoulda Facetimed this. It woulda been funnier.

DALEN

I'm not trying to be funny. I'm trying to be serious, yah asshole.

RICH

Attempting to be serious with a few drinks in yah? This oughta be good.

DALEN

I just wanted to wish you and Bethany a Happy 10th Anniversary. I gotta be the first one. Tell me I'm the first!

Beat.

RICH

Yah know, you're never gonna believe this, but Louie actually beat you to the punch.

DALEN

Louie?! That kid doesn't even remember our birthdays but he knew it was your wedding anniversary?

RICH

I'll never figure him out man.

DALEN

He's a total enigma.

Rich crackles with laughter.

RICH

But in all seriousness man, thank you. Having two of my best friends wish me a Happy Anniversary only a few hours into the actual day of the Anniversary, means the world.

DALEN

Well, technically only minutes for me, west coast and all but, wait, wait... so Terrell didn't wish you one yet?

RICH

Not yet.

DALEN

That's it. It's time to reevaluate what constitutes being a Sith Lord and a Jedi Knight!

RICH

Well, there may actually be an opportunity to congregate around the Knights of The Round Table and discuss important matters... for old time's sake of course.

DALEN

I'm all ears!

RICH

Well, uh... Bethany and I have been talking about renewing our wedding vows for a little bit and I think it's something we really wanna do. Was hoping maybe you could, yah know --

DALEN

-- Say no more, Rich. I'm there.

RICH

Really?

DALEN

Dude. Your Best Man wouldn't miss it for the world.

Rich flashes a warm smile.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. GOLDEN AGE PRODUCTIONS, OFFICE - DAY

Dalen works around the office, only this time looking much more energetic and enthusiastic in comparison to when he was introduced.

He moves about with a newfound vigor, conversing with his colleagues, eating lunch in the break room with the Interns, laughing and chatting and offering his insight about the job.

We see Dalen in Mike's office, talking with Mike, and filling out a form simultaneously.

CLOSE ON the form Dalen is filling out -- He's jotting down dates and checking certain boxes, requesting vacation time.

Dalen and Mike exchange smiles.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rich and Bethany sit on the sofa, looking over their wedding albums, relishing the memories. Bethany nurses a glass of wine as Rich tilts back a beer.

They flip through the albums, pointing at certain pictures.

CLOSE ON the pictures, Rich and Bethany cutting the cake and having the first taste, Bethany smothering Rich in frosting, all the guests dancing during the reception, etc. The wedding seems small and very intimate, but beautiful and genuine, nevertheless.

PULL BACK, Rich and Bethany smile and kiss as they continue to have a nice evening to themselves, reflecting on their big day.

INT. DALEN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

An open suitcase lies on Dalen's bed, an assortment of clothes tossed on top, all very disorderly.

Suddenly, a flannel flies into frame, landing on the top of the pile in the open suitcase. A pair of jeans come flying over next, then a winter hat, etc.

PULL BACK, revealing Dalen, in his closet, digging for certain items. He continues to toss clothes over to the open suitcase from afar.

Dalen stops, as he comes across something in the bottom of his closet.

CLOSE ON Dalen's hands, unveiling an old screenplay. The title page says "EXTRACTION by Dalen Gus". He flips through the thick layer of pages. Underneath the script, he reveals another document.

CLOSE ON the second document, "Extraction coverage by Athena Ray". Dalen smiles, flipping through the coverage.

CLOSE ON a section in the document "Strengths", with a large paragraph highlighting key words, "Masterfully crafted action descriptors", "high stakes", "intriguing possibilities", "exceptional character development".

Based off Dalen's look, he's reflecting on old memories.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Athena racks the focus on her camera. She motions with one hand, directing her subjects in front of her.

PULL BACK revealing Athena snapping several photos of snowshoers, posing on the precipice of the mountain, overlooking a majestic, snowy landscape. Some of them hold up their snowshoes, smiling and shouting in victory.

Athena pulls her eye away from her viewfinder, taking in the moment, smiling.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. LOGAN AIRPORT, TERMINAL C - DAY

A beautiful but frigid day in Boston, MA. The wind howls, creating whirlwinds of snow all around the roads and sidewalks, along the pickup portion of the airport.

Rich, Louie and Terrell wait patiently in their car, parked next to one of the sliding glass doors, leading into the bustling airport. Many TRAVELERS emerge, with luggage in tow, looking for their rides.

TERRELL

Damn, man! Where's da next Steven Spielberg at?! We been here for like forty-five minutes, dawg.

RICH

Terrell, you're not exactly Mr. Punctuality.

LOUIE

Hey, there's nothin' wrong with
being fashionably late, Rich.

TERRELL

Dats my man right there!

Terrell holds up his fist. Louie fist bumps with him.

TERRELL (CONT'D)

Louie knows wassup. Dat razzle
dazzle don't come from people who
show up early. You gotta walk in so
dat all eyes are directly on you.
Yuh feel me?

RICH

So wouldn't that technically mean
Dalen is bringing the razzle dazzle
because he's so late and we're all
sitting here waiting for him?

TERRELL

In sub-zero degree temperatures
with my stomach growling? There's
exceptions for everything, Rich.
The sooner you learn dat, da
better! When a black man's gotta
eat, he's gotta eat. That's just
something yah don't mess around
wit.

LOUIE

Did someone say... sub-zero?

TERRELL

Straight up! I'mma bout to go
Mortal Kombat on this motherfucker!

LOUIE

(in a low tone)
Finish him!

RICH

And there he is!

Rich motions towards the sliding glass doors of the airport.
Dalen emerges into the sea of Travelers, pouring out.

Rich hops out of the car.

Louie and Terrell trail him, greeting Dalen.

TERRELL
 (shouting, excited)
 Darth Dal! You just saved your boy
 Rich from a fatality!

Dalen notices The Gang approaching him. He gives a warm smile and a head nod.

DALEN
 Good. Hopefully that'll make up for
 the fact I didn't buy him
 Starbucks!

Dalen holds up a full and clear venti iced chai from Starbucks, stirring the cup in the air, showing off.

The Gang approaches Dalen.

RICH
 No skin off my nose, man.

LOUIE
 Yeah, you know Rich -- he prefers
 Dunkin Dog Nuts over Bucks!

RICH
 What can I say, man? A true
 Masshole at heart always chooses
 The Dunk.

DALEN
 Just remember Rich, America doesn't
 run on Dunkin. Dunkin gives America
 the runs.

Dalen holds up his cup, in a "cheers" type gesture.

Rich laughs.

RICH
 We really missed yah, man.

The Gang gives hand shakes, fist bumps and hugs to each other. Each hug is long, and genuine -- a sense they're being reunited after quite some time.

TERRELL
 How bad they butcher your name this
 time, playa?

Dalen holds up his Starbucks cup.

CLOSE ON Dalen's name, scribbled in black marker. It's messy and illegible.

Some letters are drawn over with different letters, illustrating that the person who wrote it, second guessed themselves on the spell job.

DALEN

I knew my day was gonna be full of surprises, but I definitely didn't expect them to write my name in Arabic.

The group bursts into laughter.

Terrell inches closer to Dalen, placing his hand on Dalen's shoulder. He looks him up and down.

TERRELL

Damn, baby boy! I thought you'd at least be a little more tan. West coast livin' and all.

DALEN

You know me, Master Rells. It's either red as a lobster or as white as Casper. There's no in-between.

Rich and Louie exchange glances.

RICH

How do yah think the Brothas would feel about that, Louie?

LOUIE

I'm just hoping they don't make him relinquish his honorary black lightsaber.

RICH

I think he's okay. They probably accepted his flaws many moons ago.

LOUIE

As long as he can walk the walk...

RICH

... and talk the talk.

LOUIE

As long as he's taggin'...

RICH

... and baggin'!

Terrell extends his arms, walking in between Rich and Louie, breaking them up.

TERRELL

Iight, iight! That's enough! Stop stealin' our vernaculars! Dats me and Dal's thing. Yah dig?

Dalen looks to Terrell.

DALEN

Master Rells in the clutch! Set these clowns straight. There's only one dynamic duo around here that simply does... whatever's clever!

Terrell does a leap of joy, overly animated.

TERRELL

(shouts)

God damn! Dal said we do whatever's clever! My man, coming back to The Bean like he the bomb dot com!

Louie grips his head, embarrassed.

Rich looks around, nervous.

RICH

Jesus Terrell! This is a fucking airport!

TERRELL

Yeah, and?

DALEN

He's right, dude. You uh... you sorta shouted the B word.

TERRELL

What? Bomb?

LOUIE

(flustered)

Terrell!!!

TERRELL

Is that actually a thing?

RICH

Since 9/11, yes. It's a thing.

TERRELL

Damn, all these years later and peeps still soft over that shit?!

Dalen clears his throat, putting his hand on Terrell's shoulder, trying to reason with him.

DALEN

Master Rells. Put yourself in the shoes of the Imperials. Think how you would feel about the destruction of The Death Star. Think how pissed off you'd be at Luke Skywalker and the rest of the Rebel Alliance. Even all those years later.

Terrell considers this. His eyes suddenly widen -- an epiphany.

TERRELL

(accentuates "is")
Oh shit! That is fucked up! This one's on me, guys.

The Gang rolls their eyes as they lead Dalen to the car.

RICH

(to Dalen)
You hungry?

DALEN

In the words of Master Rells, what's mah name, baby boy?!

RICH

I figured as much. Hop in the blue torpedo and we'll take yah to your favorite place.

Rich pops open the trunk.

Dalen circles around Rich's old, blue Chevy Cavalier, sliding his hand across the surface. He hoists his bag up, tossing it in the open trunk.

DALEN

Cannot even believe this thing is still kickin'.

RICH

Always gets us from A to B.
Especially in the frozen tundra.

Rich motions towards the snowy landscape, surrounding Logan airport in Boston, MA.

Dalen flickers a smile, hopping in the car, riding shotgun. Terrell and Louie hop in the back as Rich situates himself behind the wheel.

The blue torpedo wheezes to life and rattles forward.

INT. SAWA RESTAURANT - DAY

An Asian bistro with a sushi bar towards the rear of the restaurant.

PATRONS sip on mai tais, scorpion bowls and all sorts of mixed drinks. A Boston Celtics game plays on the large TVs, suspended above the bar.

The Gang has their own table, towards the back near the sushi bar. They fiddle with their chopsticks, pulling them out of the paper holders as plates of sushi are distributed.

RICH
(to Dalen)
Bet they don't have the notorious
Boston roll out in LA.

DALEN
One thing the west coast is
seriously lackin' -- a fresh supply
of Boston rolls.

CLOSE ON a plate of Boston rolls -- shrimp, mayo, cucumber and avocado, wrapped with white rice.

Terrell, Louie, Rich and Dalen pinch a Boston roll with their chopsticks and lift them in the air, as if they're gonna toast.

TERRELL
Welcome back, playa!

LOUIE
Little taste of home.

DALEN
The taste of victory!

The Gang eats their first Boston roll.

As the Gang chews their sushi, a FEMALE VOICE becomes audible.

FEMALE VOICE

You guys didn't just have the first
homecoming Boston roll without me,
did you?!

The Gang turns, meeting Bethany's gaze. We get a full look at Bethany for the first time in daylight. She's tall, with wavy brown hair. The very definition of a MILF, without the kids.

Rich hops out of the booth, putting his arm around Bethany's shoulder and giving her a kiss on her cheek.

DALEN

Well, well, well! If it isn't
Rich's hotter half and everyone's
favorite soccer mom in the
neighborhood... without the kids of
course!

Bethany locks eyes with Dalen.

BETHANY

Well, well, well! If it isn't our
famous screenwriter friend from
Hollyweird... without the blue
check mark on his Twitter account
of course!

DALEN

In due time, mah lady.

Dalen rises, stepping out of the booth. He and Bethany embrace, hugging tight.

BETHANY

It's good to see yah, kiddo. It's
been a hot minute.

DALEN

Gotta lotta ground to cover.
Anything newsworthy that I should
know, right outta the gate?

Rich, Dalen and Bethany slide into the booth, getting situated.

RICH

Actually, speaking of newsworthy, I
spoke to a certain somebody earlier
and what he told me, may be worth
making the headlines for the day.

TERRELL

Well shit, Rich. Don't leave us in the dark. What's gucci, baby boy?

Rich clears his throat.

RICH

Robbie said he would be attending the festivities when Beth and I renew our wedding vows this weekend.

BETHANY

(to Rich)

Wait, who's Robbie?

Terrell accentuates the word "man", saying it like Tony Montana from Scarface.

TERRELL

Holy shit, mang! Dat guy is still alive?!

LOUIE

Now that's a blast from the past!

DALEN

(excited)

Broski!

BETHANY

Gettin' a little lonely in the dark over here...

Rich turns to Bethany.

RICH

Sorry, hun. I knew the guys would be excited about this one. Robbie is actually our old supervisor from the newspaper factory.

BETHANY

Oh, right! You did mention him a lot.

LOUIE

How could he not?! Robbie was a living legend.

DALEN

(to Rich)

Wait, so...

(MORE)

DALEN (CONT'D)
have you been in contact with
Robbie this whole time?

RICH
Not at all. Chance encounter the
other day at Bogey's.

LOUIE
I can't picture Robbie at a sports
bar.

TERRELL
Damn man, he was probably tryin' to
score one of dem dank ass bongos
they have up for grabs. You see
those bad boys? They the size of
the Empire State building, dawg.
Get you high as fuck!

Everyone shoots Terrell a look.

RICH
Terrell. You do realize those are
beer dispensers, right?

Everyone busts a gut laughing. Terrell sits there with a look
of incredulity.

DALEN
Damn, man. Robbie of all people,
huh? Now this is what I call a
homecoming.

RICH
My thoughts exactly. I figured with
you coming back, the last crucial
piece to reuniting the entire gang
was, of course, Mr. Robbie Roberts
himself. I'm just glad I ran into
him.

LOUIE
Yeah, no shit. Who knows what box
that guy is livin' out of nowadays.

A loud notification tone from a cell phone interrupts the
conversation.

Bethany digs her phone out of her purse, looking at the
screen. Her eyes dart back and forth. A look of concern
splashes across her face.

BETHANY
Oh god...

RICH
Everything alright, hun?

BETHANY
Our photographer just bailed.

RICH
You're kidding!

LOUIE
Jesus, two days before the event?

BETHANY
I don't know anyone else I can
replace her with. I mean especially
this short notice and --

DALEN
Wait, wait. I uh, I may be able to
get you a last minute replacement.
A really good last minute
replacement.

Rich and Bethany don an expression of relief.

BETHANY
Dalen, that would be so awesome!

RICH
Who is it?

DALEN
Let me just... yeah.

Dalen slides out of the booth, pulling out his cell phone.

DALEN (CONT'D)
Let me make a quick phone call. I
don't wanna get your hopes up, but
I'll give it a valiant effort.

Rich flashes a warm smile.

RICH
Thanks, Dal.

DALEN
Don't thank me yet. I'll be back.

EXT. SAWA RESTAURANT - DAY

The wind continues to howl just as hard as it did at Logan
airport.

Dalen rubs his arms, shivering as he punches in a few numbers into his phone, placing it to his ear, waiting.

INT. VISITOR'S LODGE - DAY

A river of SKIERS and other OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS, all bundled up in their winter garb, flow through the lodge.

CLOSE ON a table with Athena and the other Snowshoers she was with on the mountain. They're conversing and sipping coffee.

Athena's phone begins to vibrate on the table. She scoops it up, noticing it's Dalen. She smiles before accepting the call.

ATHENA

I'm pretty sure it hasn't been a month yet.

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION:

DALEN

As much as your highly anticipating our next dinner date, this is about something slightly different.

ATHENA

Hit me with the damage.

DALEN

You're uh, not by any chance still in New England, are yuh?

ATHENA

I am. Actually currently in Vermont.

DALEN

So perfect!

ATHENA

We'll see about that. What's up weirdo?

DALEN

So I didn't tell you... but I'm actually back home in Mass right now.

ATHENA

Is everything alright?

DALEN

Oh yeah. Everything's great. I'm here because my good buddy Rich is renewing his wedding vows.

ATHENA

Ah, they need a photographer, don't they?

DALEN

Ding, ding, ding! Who yah gonna call?!

ATHENA

Ghostbusters?

DALEN

Well considering you're like the real life Lara Croft, it wouldn't surprise me at all if fighting off the supernatural was also on your daily to-do list.

ATHENA

Oh god no. Way above my pay grade. I just stick to the basics.

DALEN

Jumping out of planes?

ATHENA

And not landing in a pool of piranha.

DALEN

All while in hot pursuit of those lost relics.

ATHENA

Someone's gotta do it!

Dalen chuckles.

DALEN

So, uh... I dunno, do yah think you could...

ATHENA

Obviously I'm not gonna say no, Dalen.

DALEN

You know you could though, right?

ATHENA

And pass up an opportunity to make
my triumphant return to the
greatest state in the world? I
think not.

DALEN

Love that dirty water!

ATHENA

Boston, you're my home!

INT. RICH'S CAR (IN MOTION) - LATER

Dalen distributes the fortune cookies to The Gang.

RICH

Alright let's hear 'em boys!

Louie rips into his cookie first.

LOUIE

(reading)

"Bad luck and misfortune will
infest your pathetic soul for all
eternity."

RICH

(rolls eyes)

Every fuckin' time...

DALEN

What does it really say you
asshole?

LOUIE

Get new friends.

RICH

You know you love us!

Dalen cracks his cookie open, pulling out his fortune.

DALEN

(reading)

"Skip dessert and go start an
adventure."

(beat)

Rich?

Rich hands Dalen his fortune.

RICH
Read it off for me.

DALEN
(reading)
"There are those to complicate you
and others to compliment you."
(beat)
Damn, that's a good one.

RICH
Certainly rings true at times.
(beat)
Terrell?

Terrell is chomping away at his cookie in the back seat.

TERRELL
(chewing, mouth full)
What?

LOUIE
We're reading fortunes, dipshit.
What's yours?

Terrell stops chewing. He looks down at his mouth. A look of concern splashes across his face. He swallows hard, rubbing his throat.

TERRELL
Ummm... I didn't get one.

The Gang bursts into uncontrollable laughter.

RICH
Definitely time to drop you clowns
off.

Rich pulls to the side of the road, in front of a house in a quiet section of the neighborhood.

Louie unbuckles his seat belt. He points to Dalen.

LOUIE
Dalen. Good to have you home.

DALEN
More to come. Stay tuned, brotha.

Terrell leans forward, giving Dalen a handshake.

TERRELL
My man!

DALEN
Master Rells. Be good.

Louie and Terrell hop out of Rich's car.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dalen and Rich are seated at the dinner table. They wait patiently, as Bethany distributes the last remaining side dish of mashed potatoes, placing it in the center of the table.

Bethany takes a seat and all three grab their utensils, digging in to the delectable meal that sits in front of them.

RICH
This looks fantastic, hun.

DALEN
Above and beyond the call of duty.

BETHANY
You know I'm happy to do it.
Especially considering we have the
award winning screenwriter in the
house!

Dalen chuckles.

DALEN
Nine years ago, Miss Bethany. One
screenwriting competition. Nothin'
to get too excited about, I assure
you.

BETHANY
Listen here, bucko. I graduated
college over a decade ago.

Bethany turns, pointing to her framed degree, hanging on the wall, adjacent to the dinner table.

BETHANY
And that degree still acts as a
badge of honor. Even after all this
time. An achievement is an
achievement. Never discredit
anything you do. Gotta keep
charging forward.

Dalen considers this.

DALEN

Yah know, you're the second person
in the last few weeks to
essentially hit that point home.

BETHANY

Well, listen up! Sounds like the
people around you know what they're
talking about!

Dalen flashes a warm smile.

DALEN

Love you guys. For real. Really
can't thank you enough for having
me.

BETHANY

Dalen, you know you're welcome here
anytime.

DALEN

Still weird to think I can't even
go back to my childhood home when I
come back to visit though.

RICH

How long your parents been out west
now?

Dalen takes a sip of his beer.

DALEN

Well, let's see. This spring, it
will have been ten years since I
graduated college.

RICH

Shit. Same exact time the newspaper
shut down.

DALEN

Right. Finished up my internship
about a month later. Worked in the
Boston office for close to five
years.

RICH

Still lived at home during that
time.

DALEN

Oh, of course. Anyway to save some
keesh.

BETHANY

We definitely hear yah on that one.

DALEN

And when I got transferred to the LA office, I was out there on my own for about a full year until the rents decided to pack it up and head to greener pastures. So they've been out in Montana for about four years.

BETHANY

(winks)

They were just finally waiting for baby bird to leave the nest.

DALEN

Heh, not too far from the truth. God knows I'm the epitome of a parasite. I milked that scenario for as long as I could.

RICH

Hey man, Bethany and I did the same for a bit.

BETHANY

Even after we got married. We lived upstairs from my parents until we finally had stable jobs and a steady income.

DALEN

It certainly has become the norm. I mean, living out in LA ain't the easiest thing to do. Especially on your own.

RICH

Speaking of which, how's it goin' out there?

DALEN

Aside from all the provocatively dressed artsy fartsy folk, it ain't half bad.

RICH

(facetious)

People trying to evoke a response out in LA of all places?! You're kidding!

DALEN

Always a photo op, my friend.

BETHANY

So give us an example.

DALEN

I'd rather not.

BETHANY

You're the one who brought it up.
Now you gotta follow through.

Dalen looks to Rich for his approval.

RICH

The lady has spoken. Remember, she
is the one feeding you.

DALEN

Put it this way, the women are
shameless out there.

Bethany stops chewing her food. She wipes her face with her
dinner napkin, eyeing Dalen.

Rich continues to eat, listening.

BETHANY

Elaborate.

DALEN

I mean just a week ago I was
walking on the pier and this woman
wasn't dressed appropriately.
Especially for public standards.
Yah know what I mean?

BETHANY

I don't actually.

DALEN

She was wearing cut off jean
shorts. But the jeans were cut off
so high that you could literally
see half of her ass cheeks. And
when I say half of her ass, I mean
the entire bottom half of her ass.
Yah know, who honestly wants to be
looking at that?

BETHANY

So I take it she wasn't a size
zero?

Bethany's tone changes. Rich looks up and stops eating.

DALEN

Well not.. I mean... what does that have to do with anything?

BETHANY

I think it has everything to do with it. If she was a super model, you probably wouldn't be complaining about it, would yah?

Dalen snickers. He clears his throat.

DALEN

You're not actually defending that type of behavior are you?

BETHANY

I think you're looking at it the wrong way Dalen. You have no idea who that woman was or where she came from. What if dressing like that makes her feel better about herself?

RICH

Alright guys, that's enough. Let's just enjoy dinner, yeah?

DALEN

Listen Bethany, I didn't mean to strike a chord but all I'm saying is, people in general, not just that woman, should have consideration for everyone else around them and should learn to set some boundaries. That's all.

BETHANY

And I think you should learn not to be so judgmental.

RICH

Alright, that's enough.

DALEN

I mean Rich, you surely understand where I'm coming --

RICH

(interrupts)
Dalen.

Dalen locks eyes with Rich.

Rich remains cool, calm and collective throughout the whole thing.

RICH (CONT'D)
Just let it go. Please.

Dalen grabs his beer, taking a generous sip. He places it down gently.

DALEN
Okay. Forget I said anything.

Rich nods.

The group goes on eating silently. All that's heard for several beats is the clinking of silverware. There's an undeniable awkwardness in the air.

EXT. RICH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Dalen stands outside, bundled up. Compared to daytime, it's a calm, still night. The howling wind is nonexistent.

Nevertheless, it's freezing, as Dalen's breath is visible under the stoop lights of the apartment complex.

A cigarette dangles spastically from Dalen's mouth. He's shivering as he struggles with a lighter, trying desperately to spark a flame.

Rich emerges from the complex. He looks surprised.

RICH
Since when the fuck do you smoke?

DALEN
Recently took it up.

RICH
That's a terrible habit to just randomly take up.

DALEN
It's not a habit, Rich. It's a commitment.

Rich reaches for the lighter, noticing Dalen's struggle.

RICH
Lemme see it.

Dalen hands the lighter to Rich and Rich is able to spark a flame on his first try. He leans close to Dalen, offering him the light.

An orange glow appears from the end of Dalen's cigarette as he inhales.

DALEN

Thanks.

A beat.

RICH

What the fuck were you thinking in there, man?

DALEN

You know me, dude. I'm very outspoken and it tends to get me in trouble. Listen, I apologize for being a little forthcoming.

RICH

A little?!

DALEN

Rich, it was never my intention to insult Beth. I saw it in my head one way, and it was taken completely different once I said it.

RICH

I know that. You just gotta be careful. Especially what you say about other women, man. And body shaming is a whole different ball game. Jesus. Of all things you coulda picked, you landed on that?! You know Bethany struggled from an eating disorder for years!

Dalen stops, realizing.

DALEN

Oh, wow.

RICH

Yeah.

DALEN

Jesus Christ.

RICH

Mhmm.

DALEN

Dude. I wasn't even thinking.

RICH

Self-evident.

DALEN

I'm gonna go back inside and --

RICH

Please.

Rich extends his hand, inviting Dalen back inside. Dalen takes one last drag off his cigarette and puts it out.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bethany lounges on the couch, flipping through the channels on TV.

Dalen tiptoes behind her. He gently wraps his arms around her, giving her a gentle hug.

DALEN

You know I'm an idiot.

BETHANY

You certainly can be. But all is forgiven.

DALEN

But seriously, Beth. I wasn't even think --

Bethany turns, facing Dalen.

BETHANY

(interrupts)

Dalen. Rich and I know you very well. You're an opinionated person. I learned that years ago. Hell, that's probably what's going to make you so damn successful one day.

Dalen perks up, lifting his eyebrows -- the last statement getting his attention.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
I know you mean well. But to
complete strangers, that may come
off as something else.

DALEN
Arrogance?

BETHANY
Among other things. Just be
careful, okay?

Dalen nods, smiling.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Wait a minute.

Bethany grabs Dalen and yanks him in close. She sniffs him.

BETHANY (CONT'D)
Were you smoking just now?

DALEN
Uh, well...

Bethany scrunches up her face in disgust and disappointment.

BETHANY
Dalen!

DALEN
I know, I know.

BETHANY
Why are you smoking? That's so not
you!

DALEN
Alotta stress lately I guess. It's
a lame excuse.

BETHANY
Well, if you really wanna get in my
good graces after tonight...

DALEN
You want me to quit smoking?

BETHANY
That's a good start. But I was
actually just gonna suggest you
come to yoga tomorrow with me and
Rich. There's better methods to
relieving stress than smoking.

DALEN
Pump the brakes. Rich does yoga?!

Rich emerges.

RICH
It's an excellent way to center
yourself. Don't knock it, till you
try it!

DALEN
I totally gotta see this to believe
it. Count me in!

BETHANY
Be careful what you wish for. You
may just find yourself a new hobby!

DALEN
Route Sixty Rich! Grab us some
drinks! Here's to new beginnings!

BETHANY
Oh! Another nickname! Do tell.

Rich rolls his eyes, heading into the kitchen.

RICH (O.S.)
We're not getting into it!

INT. YOGA STUDIO - DAY

A full class prepares.

Mats are distributed to each of the YOGIS by an older woman
in her early 60s. She's in incredible shape and has her long,
salt and pepper colored hair tied back. This is the yoga
instructor, MANDY.

Everyone spreads out, picking their spaces, getting situated.

MANDY
Welcome everyone. Come grab a mat
if you haven't already. We'll be
getting started shortly.

Bethany and Rich enter the studio. Dalen trails them.

As Bethany and Rich lead the way, Dalen makes zero effort to
conceal his incessant staring, checking out all the women his
age, and even younger ones in their 20s.

DALEN

Why haven't I done this sooner?!

Bethany approaches Mandy with a smile.

MANDY

Bethany. Rich. So good to see you.

BETHANY

Hi Mandy! We're excited about today. We brought a special guest.

MANDY

Wonderful. I always love to see new faces.

RICH

This is our friend, Dalen. He's visiting all the way from LA.

MANDY

Dalen. It's very nice to meet you.

Mandy hands Dalen a yoga mat.

DALEN

Thanks for having me. I'm pumped to see what all this yoga business is about.

BETHANY

(points to Dalen)
First timer!

MANDY

Ah, even better.

Bethany leads Rich and Dalen to an open space on the floor with enough room to accommodate all three of them.

All three begin to roll out their mats.

BETHANY

(to Dalen)
Try and be on your best behavior. I know there's a lot of... I dunno what would you call it... talent perhaps, in here at the moment.

DALEN

Nailed it! I'll try my best. No guarantees though!

Bethany shoots Dalen a look.

DALEN (CONT'D)
Kidding! I owe you one, remember?

BETHANY
Thank you.

Mandy approaches the door to the studio and shuts it quietly.

MANDY
Alright everyone, let's get started.

Mandy heads back up to the front of the studio, facing the class.

MANDY (CONT'D)
(instructing)
Come into a seated position on your mat. Whatever's comfortable for you and serves you in this moment.

The class complies, sitting on their mats.

MANDY (CONT'D)
You can rest your hands, palms downward on your knees or if you're so inclined you can bring one hand over your heart and the other resting on your abdomen.

Dalen scans the class, watching what others are doing. He notices Rich and Bethany both bring one hand over their heart and rest the other on their abdomen.

Dalen shakes his head, smiling. He follows Rich and Bethany's lead.

MANDY (CONT'D)
Gently close your eyes or bring your gaze to your lap. Take a deep, full breath in and as your belly expands, feel your hand on your abdomen move with your breath.

The soothing sound of everyone's breath can be heard throughout the room. A few beats of this until -- the ringing of a cell phone comes to life, interrupting the flow.

Bethany and Rich's eyes pop open almost immediately. Bethany whips around, glowering at Dalen.

Dalen fiddles with his phone, trying to silence the call.

DALEN

Sorry everyone! That's my bad.

MANDY

Just no cell phones next time,
Dalen. There is a sign on the door
before you come in, indicating so.

(beat)

Continue breathing as you were,
using the breath to energize every
cell in your body.

Everyone goes right back to their breathing.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Mandy leads the class in neck exercises. The class tilts their heads, looking to the ceiling. They slowly rotate it in one direction. As they rotate, they bring their chin all the way down to their chest, looking at the floor until rotating it back upward, looking at the ceiling. After a few rotations, they switch directions.

-- The class stands in mountain pose -- standing straight up normally, with their backs as straight as possible and feet grounded to the floor.

-- The class exhales, stepping their feet four feet apart, one in front of the other. They sweep their hands high above their heads, arms parallel to each other, moving into Warrior One pose.

-- Mandy continues to lead the class in a series of various poses.

-- Bethany moves through the motions fluidly, illustrating her years of experience.

-- Rich uses blocks for certain stretches and poses to assist him, as he is not as flexible as Bethany. But he does so quite gracefully. He's clearly a beginner but has a good grip on what he's doing.

-- Dalen struggles with just about every pose. As the class begins to move into tree pose, Dalen loses his balance as he attempts to stand on one leg and move his other leg up his calf, trying to stabilize himself, but to no avail. He topples over.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

Mandy continues to lead the class into its final stage.

MANDY (CONT'D)

At this time, come to the mat and lay flat on your back as we come into final relaxation pose, also known as savasana.

The entire class complies, lying flat on their backs, getting comfortable and waiting for further instructions.

DALEN

Now this is way more my speed!

BETHANY

Shhh!

DALEN

Right. Sorry.

Rich shakes his head, illustrating a slight annoyance over his friend's behavior.

MANDY

Extend your legs and let your feet fall to the outside.

Mandy scans her class, making sure everyone is in position before continuing. Mandy's process is slow and methodical.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Pull your shoulder blades to the spine and let them relax into the mat.

CLOSE ON Dalen, finally looking like he's comfortable and in his element. He closes his eyes.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Let your arms rest easily by your sides, palms facing upward to be receptive or palms facing downward to ground yourself --

A vibrating phone rattles to life on the wooden floor of the yoga studio.

Dalen's eyes snap open. He peers to his side and notices it's his phone again. He scoops it up, looking at the caller ID. His eyes widen.

He leaps up from his mat. Holding up his index finger.

DALEN
(whispering)
Excuse me for a moment. I
apologize.

Mandy waves him off, dismissing him.

CLOSE ON Rich, scrunching up his face in disgust.

CLOSE ON Bethany, her cheeks are bright crimson, becoming
flushed with embarrassment.

INT./EXT. RICH AND BETHANY'S CAR - LATER

Rich and Bethany are alone in their car, coasting down the
road of their quiet and elegant neighborhood. There's little
to no traffic.

Bethany is driving. Her hands are bright red, gripping the
steering wheel with force. Her eyes are laced with annoyance.

Rich sits uncomfortably in the passenger's seat. He clears
his throat.

RICH
Listen hun, I'm really sorry.

BETHANY
Rich, don't apologize to me. It's
him who needs to apologize.

RICH
No. I do. He's my friend. He's my
guest for the week. His behavior
reflects on me. So, I'm sorry.

BETHANY
It doesn't reflect on you, Rich.
I've known Dalen just as long as
you have. We know what we signed up
for. He needs to apologize for his
actions. Because he's been doing
nothing but acting up since he
arrived.

RICH
Right. He's been a handful. And it
wouda never been an issue if I
didn't call and invite him in the
first place.

BETHANY

He was your best man at our wedding, Rich. He sorta deserves to be here.

Rich's tone changes.

RICH

He doesn't deserve shit. That's always been the problem with Dalen. Since day one. He feels entitled. He's the quintessential fuckin' Millennial.

Bethany finally pulls into their driveway, putting the car in park and cutting the ignition.

She takes a beat, then turns, meeting Rich's gaze.

BETHANY

That's your best friend. How do you think Dalen would feel if he knew you were talking about him like that?

Rich becomes flustered.

RICH

Whose side are you on anyway? I thought you were mad at him?!

BETHANY

I'm not on anyone's side, Rich. And that's the problem with how you're viewing all of this. You're taking sides when you shouldn't be. You should be looking at it from all perspectives instead of throwing your best friend out in the cold and pinpointing him as the source of the problem.

RICH

I'm taking sides because Dalen is in the wrong! What he did at dinner last night was disrespectful. What he did back there at yoga was rude. As hell. And then he just ups and leaves on his own without telling us? I think I have every right to be pretty annoyed or pissed off at this point.

Bethany cups her hands, placing them gently around Rich's cheeks. She remains calm.

BETHANY

Rich, I love you. And I appreciate everything you do for me. But you don't have to apologize for your friend's actions. Leave that to him.

Bethany leans in and kisses Rich on the forehead. She leans back in her car seat.

RICH

So what am I supposed to do? Just sit back and let it keep happening?

BETHANY

Inquire. Talk to him. Maybe Dalen is having a rough time. How would you feel if you moved to a different place, thousands of miles away, without really knowing anyone?

RICH

He's lived in LA for years Bethany.

BETHANY

Maybe he's been struggling for years. Maybe he just needs someone to talk to. Someone he can trust. Someone he knows.

Rich considers this. After a few beats, he nods his head in approval.

RICH

What did I do to deserve you?

Bethany crosses her arms, pursing her lips.

BETHANY

(jokingly)
You don't really deserve anything. It's probably just because you feel so entitled all the time.

A smile inches across Rich's face.

RICH

Well played.

BETHANY

I have my moments.

Rich and Bethany embrace, kissing.

EXT. LOGAN EXPRESS, BUS STATION - DAY

Athena waits outside of the bus station that shuttles travelers to the airport and back. Half of her face is hidden in her scarf. She rubs her hands, which are covered by two massive mittens, back and forth. Multiple bags sit by her side on the pavement.

Suddenly, a car pulls up, honking. The window rolls down, revealing Dalen, with a huge grin on his face.

DALEN

Now here's one hitchhiker I'll gladly oblige!

ATHENA

Where have you been?! I'm pretty sure my bags are frozen to the ground.

Dalen momentarily puts the car in park as he leaves the engine idling and hops out.

DALEN

I was actually hoping you were gonna be waiting inside and I would round the corner to see you doing one of those classic numbers where you lift your skirt up halfway, run your fingers up your leg really slow and sexually and say "can I get a ride?"

Dalen accentuates the last statement in a very feminine tone.

ATHENA

Wow. I didn't think your voice could get that high.

Dalen leans, scooping up Athena's bags.

DALEN

I guess purposely leaving my balls in my sock drawer at home today really paid off.

ATHENA

Speaking of which, do you ever remember to attach them?

DALEN

Well with as many low blows as you deliver to me, much like that one, I think it's best that I don't remember to put them on before starting my day.

Athena laughs.

ATHENA

I definitely want this exact conversation in your next script. Find a way to squeeze it in there. Word for word.

DALEN

That good, huh?

ATHENA

I feel like the majority of our exchanges are.

DALEN

Well, they're definitely not sleep inducing.

ATHENA

This is very true.

DALEN

Listen to you! You're starting to sound as pretentious as me!

ATHENA

A match made in heaven.

DALEN

Oh god no. We're way too diabolical for heaven. Plus, I'm wearing my horny devil boxers today.

ATHENA

And I think that's our cue to get the hell out of here.

Dalen laughs.

He carries Athena's bags to the back of the car, hoisting them up and tossing them in the trunk.

Dalen and Athena hop into the car.

INT. CAR (IDLING) - CONTINUOUS

Athena buckles in as Dalen situates himself behind the wheel.

Dalen's phone begins ringing. He scoops it up, rolling his eyes. He accepts the call.

DALEN
 (into phone)
 Uncle Royall! How the hell have you
 been?

INT. LOUIE'S ROOM - DAY

Louie paces back and forth, continuously tossing a hacky sack up in the air and catching it.

He looks a little more than mildly annoyed.

LOUIE
 (into phone)
 Dude you said you were gonna be
 gone for forty-five minutes, tops.
 I need my fucking car.

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION:

DALEN
 Uncle Royall how many times have I
 told you? The whole Klan cologne
 joke is not gonna go over well with
 the boys at Bingo on Thursday. No
 matter how much Walter smells like
 kerosene, yah gotta let this one
 go.

Athena gives Dalen a quizzical look, very taken aback.

LOUIE
 I'm not fuckin' around Dalen! This
 is the last time! You better not be
 using it to go pick up some fuckin'
 chick.

DALEN
 No, no. Don't tell the buckwheat
 jokes either. I know he was one of
 the Little Rascals but some people
 won't appreciate that.
 (MORE)

DALEN (CONT'D)

You know very well what happened last time you told one of those jokes with Demetrius in the same room!

Athena puts her hand to her mouth, suppressing laughter over Dalen's random and awkward phone conversation.

Louie rolls his eyes, accustomed to Dalen's antics.

LOUIE

You are seriously the ugliest person I know.

DALEN

Yes Uncle Royall. The Trump jokes may be a better option. Okay. Yes. Of course. I'm happy to give you my opinion, as always. Talk later, Uncle Royall. Don't chew too many pieces of Double Bubble.

Dalen ends the call.

ATHENA

Your Uncle sounds like quite the character.

DALEN

Cat's outta the bag. Now you know where I get all my brilliant jokes for my scripts.

ATHENA

Give me your best Uncle Royall joke.

DALEN

That's probably not a good idea.

ATHENA

Come on. Lay it on me.

DALEN

He's super racist. An old, cantankerous bigot.

ATHENA

The worst, most offensive one you've got.

Dalen clears his throat.

DALEN

What's the most confusing holiday
for a buckwheat?

A beat. Athena looks intrigued.

ATHENA

I give up. Tell me.

DALEN

Father's Day. Because all
buckwheats ever do on that day is
walk around and say, "who's yo
daddy?"

Athena bursts into laughter.

ATHENA

You've got all the tools for
success, Dal. Now you just gotta
put it together and make it happen.

DALEN

Thanks, Athena.

ATHENA

Oh and by the way, point out your
friend tomorrow for me at the
festivities so I can sincerely
apologize to him for this whole you
borrowing his car for too long
thing.

Dalen gives a "oh shit, I've been caught in the act" type of
look.

DALEN

You didn't think that was really my
Uncle Royall I was talking to just
now?

ATHENA

Not even for a split second. But it
was very creative and funny.

Dalen gives a warm smile.

DALEN

I really appreciate you coming out
here and doing this for my friends.
It's gonna mean the world to them.

Athena returns Dalen's warm smile.

ATHENA

I'm excited to capture the magic.

DALEN

You're the best person for the job.

Dalen puts the car into drive and pulls off, driving away from the bus station.

EXT. LOUIE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Louie stands impatiently at the edge of his driveway. He's tapping his foot, arms crossed.

Dalen pulls around the corner. He slowly turns into Louie's driveway.

Dalen emerges from the car.

LOUIE

Fuckin' really?

DALEN

Dude, I wouldn't ask to borrow your car if it wasn't for something important.

Dalen rounds the car, coming to the side that Louie is standing on.

DALEN (CONT'D)

So I was gone for a little longer than I anticipated. What's the big deal?

LOUIE

That's exactly it! It's never a big deal, at least to you. Where were you?

DALEN

I was picking up the photographer for Rich and Bethany's thing tomorrow. She was stranded without a ride. Satisfied?

LOUIE

Not even close.

DALEN

Not even close as in.. you're not satisfied or not even close as in you think I'm lying?

LOUIE

A little bit of both.

DALEN

I don't know what to tell you, man. I was doing something that's going to help out Rich and Bethany in the long-run. This was for their benefit. Not mine.

LOUIE

Was it though? Was it really for them?

DALEN

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

LOUIE

Your reasoning for going to pick up... whoever, with my car no less, just doesn't really hold up all that well when Rich has been blowing up my phone all day, asking if I knew where you were.

Dalen reaches behind his head, scratching the back of his neck, looking real guilty of something.

DALEN

Ah, shit.

LOUIE

And there it is.

DALEN

Don't act like you know things.

LOUIE

But yah see, I do know Dal. I know that you bailed on Rich and Bethany earlier to go pick up some chick. I know that you lied to me about why you needed to use my car today.

DALEN

(flustered)

I didn't lie to you! You never asked! I said it was for something important!

LOUIE

Yah know, it's almost an exact repeat of that shit you pulled at Rich's wedding shower when you had to go pick up Ell..

DALEN

(interrupts)

No. Stop. Don't even say her name. Do not fucking go there. This is nowhere close to being the same as... that whole thing. That was a whole different life ago, Louie. I learned my lesson with her. I can't even believe you would bring that shit up.

LOUIE

But see, that's the problem, man. That's the Dalen I do know. The Dalen that had no problem walking out on a friend's big event or special day or whatever... just so he could go get his fuckin' dick wet. How am I supposed to know that you've changed? You haven't been around.

Dalen nods, realizing.

DALEN

So that's what this is really about, isn't it? Me moving away and bailing on my best friends for a different life?

LOUIE

That's what you're notorious for.

Dalen glowers at Louie, letting that statement sink in for a moment.

DALEN

Yah know what? Fuck you, Louie. Don't fuckin' stand there and drag me down to your level just because you never had any dreams and aspirations to do anything in life after high school. If you were half the friend you claimed to be, you would have fully supported my move out to LA.

(MORE)

DALEN (CONT'D)

Do you even realize how hard it was for me to leave everything that I knew behind to go chase my dream? To move away to a place that was completely foreign to me?

LOUIE

And how has that worked out for you? How many screenplays have you sold?

Dalen throws his arms in the air.

DALEN

Well fuck me for trying, right? Yah gotta fail in order to succeed, Louie. Problem is, you've always just been too scared to go out there and fail. You're fully content with living life in your tiny box of comfort. With zero change. And zero responsibility. And if that's all you want outta life, god bless yah man. But that's not me. And it never will be. And that's something I'll never apologize for.

Dalen tosses Louie's car keys in the air, turning on his heel and walking away.

Louie catches the car keys. A mixture of sorrow and regret fill his eyes as he stares at the back of Dalen's head.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Dalen walks with his hands in his pockets past the many little intimate shops of his hometown.

Lights dim, and doors are closing for the night. Christmas lights, strung all throughout downtown are the only thing giving the cold, dark night any sense of warmth.

Dalen keeps his head down, deep in thought, not wanting to draw much attention to any passersby, coming and going from the local bars. He's in his own little world.

EXT. RICH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Dalen advances towards the front entrance of Rich and Bethany's apartment complex.

He stops, and digs in his back pocket, revealing a pack of cigarettes. He pulls one out, places it in between his lips and fumbles with his lighter.

After a few flicks, he sparks a flame, bringing it to the tip of the cigarette. He inhales and blows out a billowing cloud of smoke.

Dalen gazes down at the cigarette in between his fingers, contemplating. He nods his head as if coming to his senses and drops the cigarette on the pavement. He places his foot over the cigarette, putting it out.

Dalen searches for Rich and Bethany's apartment number on the list outside the door before hitting the buzzer.

After a few brief moments, Dalen is granted access as someone buzzes him in. He takes a deep breath, entering.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Dalen emerges. He scans the area -- empty and lonely.

Suddenly sounds from the TV emanate from the adjoining room. Dalen inches his way towards the sounds.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rich is sprawled out on the couch watching a movie.

CLOSE ON the TV -- the movie Clerks is on, as two of the main characters hang out in the convenience store, shooting the shit with one another.

Dalen leans in the doorway, clearing his throat.

DALEN

Watching one of our favorites, huh?

Dalen fully enters the room, plopping down in a recliner, right next to the sofa that Rich is sprawled out on.

Without taking his eyes off the TV set, Rich speaks up.

RICH

Yah know, a few weeks ago at work, the entire distribution center was forced to come in on a Saturday because it's been so crazy there lately. Just acquired fifty new stores. The volume of freight is insane.

(MORE)

RICH (CONT'D)

So we went in and stocked for ten hours on our day off. And the entire time, I thought to myself, why can't my unexpected Saturday at work be as eventful as Dante and Randal's?

Rich gestures to Clerks playing on the TV.

DALEN

So what you're sayin' is there was no hockey games on the roof?

Rich finally sits up, turning, and making eye contact with Dalen for the first time.

RICH

No hockey game. No free Gatorade...

Dalen grins, working off of Rich.

DALEN

No spitting water in the face of some unruly customer...

RICH

No sucking any dick on the way through the parking lot...

DALEN

No leaving work for a few hours and knocking over a casket at a wake...

RICH

Not even one spontaneous trip to Big Choice Video! Louie wouldn't let me borrow his car!

DALEN

Well what about salsa sharks?!

A smile inches across Rich's face.

RICH

Jesus Christ! The one thing I could have actually pulled off for the day and it never even crossed my mind.

DALEN

This is exactly why you need me around, man!

A silence falls between Dalen and Rich.

Rich gives Dalen a look. Dalen realizes.

RICH

You said it, man. Exactly what's been on my mind all day.

DALEN

Listen Rich, I uh, I know I have some explaining to do. Probably some making up to do.

RICH

I'm all ears, Dal.

A beat.

DALEN

Things that I say can be easily misconstrued. Things that I do, can be easily taken the wrong way.

RICH

Dal you just upped and left today. No explanation. No text. No call. Nothing. I think Bethany and I have every right to be taking it the wrong way.

DALEN

You're completely right. My impulsiveness gets the better of me. I set my mind on a task and I just go 100 miles per hour. Without even thinking. Just know, that what I was doing today, was for you two.

RICH

But Dal, I mean you --

Dalen holds up his hand, stopping Rich in mid-sentence.

DALEN

I know, I know. Please, just allow me to make this up to you guys. I've got a great idea cooking. I brought my camera with me for the big day tomorrow, and I think once I put it all together, it's gonna be a certain kind of beautiful.

Rich appears reluctant, but nods his head in approval anyway.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Where's Bethany, anyway?

RICH

She's at one of her bridesmaids' house for the night. Next time we'll see her is tomorrow.

DALEN

Doing things traditionally just like your wedding day, huh?

RICH

We figured there's no other way.

DALEN

I love it, man. This is gonna be perfect.

RICH

I sure hope so.

Dalen rises from the recliner, stretching his arms up high, emitting a drawn out yawn.

DALEN

So, uh. You're not mad, right?

Rich considers this.

RICH

Nah, Dal. I'm not mad. Just maybe a little communication next time would be uh, nice?

Dalen nods his head.

DALEN

I'm gonna throw in the towel for the night.

Rich leans up from the couch, scratching his head.

RICH

You and me both. I'll cya in the A.M.

Dalen gives a little salute, exiting the room.

A beat.

CLOSE ON Rich, a look of uncertainty in his eyes. We can discern he's still bothered by Dalen's behavior.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, GUEST ROOM - DAY

A bunch of clanking and banging emanates from the other rooms, waking up Dalen. He squints his eyes, as bright rays of sun peek through the window.

He sits up, rubbing his eyes, getting his bearings.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Dalen emerges.

The kitchen is steamy as Rich stands over the stove, whipping up bacon and eggs.

RICH

Really hope that's not what you're wearing to the Renewal today!

Dalen looks down, noticing he neglected to put on pants before leaving the guest room. He's in his horny devil boxers and weathered Captain America t-shirt -- faded and filled with numerous holes.

DALEN

Shit, someone's gotta bring the life to the party.

RICH

Isn't that role typically reserved for Terrell?

DALEN

Time for the lone Jedi Knight to take a back seat to the Sith Lords!

RICH

Nothin' says sheer dominance like takin' back control of the galaxy in your boxers.

DALEN

Always happy to lead the charge!

Dalen takes a seat, as Rich comes over with a plate of bacon and eggs, sliding it in front of Dalen.

DALEN (CONT'D)

So when those clowns getting here anyway?

RICH
Terrell should be here shortly.
Louie said he'd be meeting us
there...

Dalen freezes in an expression of uneasiness.

Rich immediately picks up on Dalen's awkward state.

RICH (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

DALEN
Nothing.

Dalen digs into his food, trying to avoid disaster.

RICH
Something happen between you two?

A beat.

DALEN
I'm sure he has his reasons. You
know Louie.

Rich gives Dalen a skeptical look.

RICH
Yeah, I guess.

The buzzer to the apartment sounds. Rich walks over, hitting a button.

DALEN
Master Rells, I presume?

RICH
Fashionably late as always.

Rich walks back over to the stove, preparing another plate of breakfast for Terrell.

Dalen continues to eat. He looks distracted by numerous thoughts, swirling frantically in his head. We get the impression he's trying to form a game plan to go about the day without having things blow up in his face.

Suddenly, the front door to Rich's apartment clicks, swinging open.

Terrell stands in the doorway with his arms spread wide, a huge grin donning his face.

TERRELL

Love is in the air, baby! We bout to get dem big things poppin' and dem little things stoppin'! Yah dig?

RICH

Oh trust me, it's been poppin' for the last ten years.

DALEN

And still going strong!

TERRELL

Oh snap!

RICH

Yeah. Literally.

Dalen chuckles.

TERRELL

Shall we fetch our fancy, bow-tied robes for the festivities?! The Knights of The Round Table dress to impress, young squire.

RICH

Do you not realize I'm holding an entire plate of bacon right now?

TERRELL

Ooohhh-weeee! Dat man said bacon! Priorities! Hit me up, baby boy!

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. BETHANY'S FRIEND'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a shot of Bethany's white wedding dress, hanging from the headboard of a queen sized bed. The dress flows and sprawls outward on the bed, illustrating its depth and beauty.

Bethany is surrounded by her BRIDESMAIDS, getting dolled up and being treated like a queen.

CLOSE ON a few LADIES applying their make-up and assisting others with their sparkling jewelry, clamping on necklaces and adjusting them.

Others surround Bethany, doing Bethany's hair to perfection as Bethany sits in a chair, adjacent to the bed, allowing her friends to take control of the process.

Athena enters with a welcoming smile. The Bridesmaids greet her, giving her a hug and introducing themselves. Athena makes her way to Bethany, smiling and extending her hand. They shake.

Athena pulls out her camera and begins to capture the magic behind the scenes.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rich, Dalen, and Terrell are fully dressed, putting the finishing touches on their bow ties and slipping on their glossy black shoes.

Dalen takes a moment, gazing around the room, noticing his two friends and realizing that Louie's absence is completely his fault. There's an emptiness that fills Dalen's eyes -- a look of guilt.

Rich scoops up Dalen's camera bag, handing it to Dalen. Dalen tries a smile, but it emerges crooked and small. He takes out his camera, preparing it for action.

EXT. BETHANY'S FRIEND'S HOUSE, FRONT LAWN - DAY

Snow blankets the ground but the sun shines bright, slowly melting the white stuff and making the pavement wet around the edges -- a warmer day than most. New England is a strange place.

All the Bridesmaids are lined up in their dresses.

Bethany emerges in her majestic white dress, radiant and beautiful. Her Bridesmaids cheer her as Athena racks the focus on her camera, taking numerous snaps of the group, laughing, cheering, and celebrating.

Athena looks up from the viewfinder of her camera, donning a huge grin on her face.

A limo pulls up and the group congregates around the door, waiting for the DRIVER to assist them. The Driver hops out of the limo, rounds the car and opens the door for the ladies.

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, LOBBY - DAY

A river of GUESTS for the wedding renewal flow into the building. Everyone looks genuinely happy.

Louie finally appears through the thick curtain of Guests, congregated in the main lobby. He scans the group of people, trying to pick out a familiar face.

Rich glances over, making eye contact with him, waving him over. Louie approaches, saying his hellos to Rich and Terrell.

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, DINING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON numerous crystal clear wine glasses, set up elegantly, around decorated tables.

PULL BACK revealing an establishing shot of the main area where the festivities will be taking place. The dance floor, the dining area and everything else is all one giant room.

CLOSE ON Dalen, setting up his camera on a tripod, readying it for the ceremony.

Rich, Terrell, and Louie enter the room, approaching Dalen. They discuss the game plan back and forth. Louie neither makes eye contact nor does he greet Dalen. Rich notices the distance between them but doesn't bring attention to it. There's an undeniable awkwardness in the air.

The Guests begin to file in, taking their seats and preparing for the ceremony.

Rich leads The Gang to the center of the room where the JUSTICE OF THE PEACE awaits. Louie stands at the far end, making sure Terrell stands in between he and Dalen.

As The Gang lines up and faces their audience, an OLDER GENTLEMAN appears, making his way towards the center of the room.

Curly and shaggy gray hair cascades over the Older Gentleman's forehead. He sports a pair of black shades. He's a rough sketch of a rock star, past his prime. He pulls the shades down with his index finger, resting them on the edge of his nose and gives the group a wink. This is ROBBIE ROBERTS -- the Gang's former supervisor from the newspaper factory.

Robbie cracks a huge smile as he gives handshakes to Louie, Terrell and Dalen. As he makes it to Rich, he extends his arms wide and gives him a big hug.

The Gang is genuinely excited to see him in the flesh. Robbie takes his place in line with The Gang.

CLOSE ON a LITTLE GIRL, walking down the aisle, approaching The Gang. The Guests turn and smile. The Little Girl holds a wide, decorated sign that reads, "Rich, here comes your woman."

CLOSE ON Rich, an ear to ear grin as he looks on.

CLOSE ON the Justice of The Peace as he smiles warmly.

CLOSE ON The Gang, high with anticipation.

Suddenly, Bethany rounds the corner, entering the room and completely lighting it up with her presence. She's walked down by her father, with their arms hooked gently.

CLOSE ON the Justice of The Peace, as he reads. Rich and Bethany stare into each others eyes as the words are spoken.

CLOSE ON Athena, snapping pictures of the ceremony, completely engrossed in the moment.

Rich and Bethany slide their rings onto each other's fingers. They embrace, kissing. As they kiss, Rich scoops his arms around Bethany, dipping her downward to the floor, for a picture perfect moment.

Athena wastes no time capturing it with her camera.

END MONTAGE.

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, DINING ROOM - LATER

The lights dim. Rich and Bethany make their way out onto the dance floor. A live BAND begins to play slow music.

The Guests all stare on, drinking wine, and admiring Rich and Bethany as they sway back and forth, embracing each other, sharing their moment.

CLOSE ON Dalen and Athena, sitting in the way back, looking on. Athena nurses a glass of wine as Dalen sips on a beer.

Without making eye contact with Dalen, Athena clears her throat...

ATHENA

Yah know, I'm really glad you asked me to come out here.

Dalen pauses, and turns to Athena. Athena turns and they meet each other's gaze.

DALEN

Any guesses on why yah think I did?

ATHENA

Well. So your friends could take advantage of my vast skill at a discounted rate, of course.

Dalen chuckles.

DALEN

It's all about the connections, right?

ATHENA

That's what they always tell me.

DALEN

Who's they?

ATHENA

The higher ups in life. The people who pay my bills.

DALEN

Yeah, but you've traveled the world three times over, already. Haven't you made so many new connections that you no longer have to submit to the vice grip of the system?

ATHENA

Oh trust me, we're still all slaves to the system, Dal. Whether we like it or not. But yes, you're not totally off from the truth. I have carved my own path. And that has definitely helped me live the life I want to live.

DALEN

Nothing comes easy, Athena.

ATHENA

No it does not.

Dalen looks back out onto the dance floor, admiring his best friend's happiness.

DALEN

It's crazy how Rich and Bethany can make it look so easy.

ATHENA

Don't let it fool you. I'm sure they both had to work very hard to get to this point.

DALEN

I think it all comes down to luck. Just like Rich and Bethany, you've manufactured your luck by working your ass off for it. That whole path that you carved for yourself... I'm glad I'm apart of it.

Athena emits a warm smile.

ATHENA

This is why you're one of my favorite people.

Dalen flashes a smile.

DALEN

Elaborate.

ATHENA

You just always find something new to say. You always keep it fresh. Interesting. And everything you always say is genuine.

Without hesitation, Dalen leans into Athena, kissing her softly on her lips.

Athena doesn't stop Dalen, but she also doesn't fully embrace the kiss either.

After a moment, Dalen pulls away slowly, looking deeply into Athena's eyes.

DALEN

Was that uh, was that not okay?

Athena considers this. She bites her lip, reluctant.

ATHENA

I think you misunderstood me.

Dalen furrows his brow, completely taken aback.

A beat.

DALEN

Maybe I, uh... misunderstood this.

Dalen gestures to both he and Athena with his finger.

DALEN (CONT'D)

This in general.

ATHENA

I was afraid this was gonna happen.
I kept tellin' myself, convincing
myself even that you were
different. That you weren't like
every other guy.

DALEN

Kissing you makes me like every
other guy?

ATHENA

Falling in love with me, Dalen.

Dalen exhales a large breath, ruffling his fingers through his hair, trying to grasp the gravity of the situation.

DALEN

Now I finally know what you're
afraid of.

ATHENA

You don't know me at all.

DALEN

But I want to.

Dalen leans in again, going for a kiss, but before he can make contact, Athena shoves him away this time.

ATHENA

That wasn't a fuckin' invitation,
Dalen.

Athena sets her wine glass down and scurries out of the room.

DALEN

(shouting)

Athena. Athena wait!

Athena vanishes.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Dammit!

The Guests around Dalen's table stare at Dalen, taken aback by his sudden outburst.

Rich and Bethany's dance ends.

Dalen fumbles out of his seat. Tripping and knocking wine glasses onto the floor. The glasses shatter, creating a small scene.

Rich looks over at the commotion that is stirring up and notices Dalen spur out of the dining room. A sheer look of concern splashes across Rich's face. He advances towards the exit, pursuing his friend.

EXT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The sound of a car rumbles to life. Dalen bursts out the front doors, gasping for air, scanning the parking lot for any traces of Athena.

Suddenly, a car pulls out, screeching and escaping like a bat out of hell.

Dalen runs after the car, waving his arms.

DALEN

Athena! Stop! Where the hell are you --

But before Dalen can finish his statement, Athena is all but gone.

Dalen stares off into the distance, completely bewildered.

DALEN (CONT'D)

What the fuck just happened?

Rich appears. He stares at the back of Dalen's head for a moment, studying his friend, trying to grasp the situation.

Rich clears his throat.

RICH

Dalen.

Rich's voice jolts Dalen from the moment and back to reality. Dalen turns, locking eyes with Rich.

DALEN

Listen, Rich. I know what you're gonna say so please just save me the time and --

RICH
 (interrupts)
 I don't think you do know what I'm
 about to --

Dalen throws his arms up, acting overly dramatic.

DALEN
 (interrupts)
 What's your fuckin' encore Dalen?!
 First you come into my home, insult
 my wife, then you bail on us after
 inviting you out, and to top things
 off, you create a scene at my
 wedding renewal. I know. I'm a
 terrible fuckin' best man. I was
 then, ten years ago, and I am now.
 I know I've been non existent. To
 you, Louie, Terrell, hell everyone!
 Did I leave anything out? I think I
 pretty much covered all the bullet
 points, right?

Rich stares at Dalen with wide, surprised eyes.

A beat.

RICH
 I uh, I actually just came out here
 to ask if you were okay.

Dalen dips his head in shame, shaking it back and forth,
 realizing he took it too far. He looks back up at Rich,
 completely defeated.

RICH (CONT'D)
 I'll give yah a minute.

Rich turns on his heel, heading back inside.

Dalen lifts his hand, opening his mouth, as if he's about to
 say something, but nothing comes out. He drops his arm by his
 side and clenches his teeth. From the look on his face, we
 can easily discern he's disappointed with himself.

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Dalen reenters the building. The dance music from the
 adjoining room is faint and low as the double doors have been
 shut.

CLOSE ON Dalen, completely at odds with himself -- his eyes
 laced with uncertainty and maybe even a bit of cowardice.

Dalen reluctantly inches towards the double doors leading into the dining room. He extends his arm, reaching for the door knob but stops midway. He shakes his head and turns on his heel.

Right as he makes his final step toward the exit, a VOICE booms to life behind him.

VOICE

Broski! Leaving so soon?

Dalen turns, meeting the gaze of his old supervisor from the newspaper factory, Robbie, emerging from the bathroom.

DALEN

Hey Robbie. It's really good to see you man.

ROBBIE

I wish I could say the same about you. You look like fuckin' hell blown over.

DALEN

Way to sugar coat it.

ROBBIE

I know what's wrong. Is it because you're finally coming to terms that you're no longer a Jedi Knight?

A smile creeps up on Dalen's face.

DALEN

I see you've been talkin' to Terrell.

ROBBIE

Hey! That's Master Rells! You know how sensitive those Jedi Knights can get when you don't give them the proper recognition.

DALEN

Well, then I fully expect you to refer to me as Darth Dal for the rest of the day. It seems I've rightfully earned that title as of late anyway.

ROBBIE

Well, if it makes you feel any better, it does have a pretty nice ring to it.

Dalen dons a full smile now.

DALEN

Isn't there a bar in this place?
Lemme buy you a drink. It's been
too damn long since we've had one
of our famous pow wows.

ROBBIE

I thought you'd never offer!

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, BAR - LATER

A lonely and deserted area. Faint and low sounds from the dining room can still be heard from this end of the building.

Dalen and Robbie have the bar to themselves, already a few drinks deep. They exchange laughs.

ROBBIE

You're fuckin' kidding, right? He
actually ate the fortune while it
was still in the cookie?

DALEN

I swear, ask Rich and Louie.
Multiple eye witnesses!

Robbie continues to howl with laughter. He picks up his beer, throwing the last gulp down the chute. He taps the glass on the bar, raising his finger to the bartender, gesturing for another round.

ROBBIE

Speaking of the guys, tell me
what's really been going on. From
what I've been hearing as of late,
this ain't The Graveyard Gang that
I'm familiar with.

Dalen snickers.

DALEN

Guess it all depends on what you've
been hearin' and who you've been
talkin' to.

ROBBIE

Louie and I met up last night and
had a few drinks.

DALEN

Jesus, you're really makin' the rounds around here, huh?

ROBBIE

Yeah, only difference being, I had to pay for his. The fuckin' cheap skate.

The BARTENDER approaches with two new fresh glasses of beer. He slides them in front of Robbie and Dalen.

DALEN

Would you expect any less from Louie?

ROBBIE

Valid. But you know who I do expect a lot from?

Dalen eyes Robbie, waiting.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You. Especially when it comes to keepin' these clowns in line.

Dalen dips his head, ashamed of himself.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Hey. You remember what I told you when we had our last conversation in my office before that shit-hole shut down?

DALEN

That was ten years ago, Robbie.

ROBBIE

And clearly I didn't hit the point home well enough. So allow me to redeem myself now.

Robbie puts his hand on Dalen's shoulder. Dalen continues to look down at his beer.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You fuckin' listenin'?

Dalen looks up, meeting Robbie's gaze. He nods.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I told you that I wasn't worried about you or Rich because you two always had a good head on your shoulders. I was way more worried about Louie and Terrell, guys who had no back-up plan.

Dalen considers this, taking a sip of his beer.

DALEN

I do remember that.

Robbie grabs his drink, taking a generous swig.

ROBBIE

So, from your humble opinion, what do you think I was trying to imply there, moving forward?

DALEN

To encourage. To motivate them.

ROBBIE

Very good. And what did you end up doing yesterday with Louie?

Dalen runs his fingers through his hair, exhaling a large breath.

DALEN

I uh, well.

ROBBIE

Well uh, you uh?

Dalen clears his throat.

DALEN

I probably discouraged him a little bit.

ROBBIE

A little bit?!

DALEN

Jesus Christ. How much did he tell you?

ROBBIE

Enough.

A beat.

DALEN

I've been in the wrong a lot lately, Robbie. Ever since I came back here to visit for Rich and Bethany's renewal.

ROBBIE

That may be so. But listen, Dal. You're not wrong for going to the west coast and pursuing your dreams. People move on and they change. But when you come back here, and see the ones that you used to be close with, you can't just assume they're the same people they were ten years prior, just because that's the last time you saw 'em. Just like you, they moved on too. They've created a life for themselves. They just chose to do it in their backyard instead of going across the country.

Dalen listens attentively, nodding his head, taking in and digesting Robbie's words.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Again, I admire what you've done and what you continue to do, but not everyone wants to be this big famous figure. Some just want to have a family, some just want to have a steady job that genuinely makes a difference in people's lives. And Louie, of all people, has done that. He's a supervisor over at Chip Van Briar, a nation wide company, earning a salary. He's come a long way since the newspaper.

Dalen nods his head, realizing.

DALEN

I need to talk to him.

ROBBIE

A little communication goes a long way.

DALEN

And Rich. And Bethany.

ROBBIE
And probably that young woman that
ran out on yah too, huh?

Dalen scratches the back of his neck.

DALEN
Yeah... her too.

ROBBIE
What's the deal with her? She's a
looker, huh?

DALEN
Remember the girl I always used to
talk about with you. The one from
my movie internship, way back when?

ROBBIE
That was her?!

DALEN
That's Athena.

ROBBIE
How long you guys been together?

DALEN
Um, well... we're not.

ROBBIE
Whatta you mean?

DALEN
We've never been together.

ROBBIE
Well there's the fuckin' problem.
You've been yanking her around for
ten years. Which is funny, because
usually it's the other way around.

DALEN
Very funny.

ROBBIE
Just be careful.

DALEN
Don't yah think being careful is my
problem? I've been playin' it safe
for ten years by never pullin' the
trigger!

ROBBIE

When it comes to what you want to do, that can be a good thing though.

DALEN

How do yah figure?

ROBBIE

You're trying to achieve a very specific thing. You wanna be a screenwriter. You wanna make films. The wrong woman can really put a dent in those plans.

Dalen's eyes widen -- an epiphany.

DALEN

Oh my god. That's it. That's why neither of us have ever made a move! We're the same fuckin' person, Robbie!

ROBBIE

Then I wish nothing but the best for both of you.

DALEN

I gotta go talk to her. I gotta talk to everyone!

Dalen rises from his chair.

ROBBIE

Oh, hey, Broski!

Dalen turns, locking eyes with Robbie.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Do me a favor and remember this. Don't let silence kill what a conversation can cure.

Dalen throws his arms around Robbie, giving him a big hug.

DALEN

Thank you. For everything. I needed this.

Robbie smiles, embracing Dalen.

ROBBIE

Just get the fuck outta here, alright?

Dalen turns, running out of the bar.

Robbie sits at the bar, with an ear to ear grin on his face.

The Bartender walks over and slaps the bill down in front of Robbie. Robbie looks over to the doorway, realizing Dalen didn't pay.

Robbie crackles with laughter, digging in his back pocket for his wallet.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Fuckin' Millennials.

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Dalen advances towards the entrance. He stops in his tracks, smiles.

He turns and heads into the dining room.

INT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dalen emerges once again and notices that the festivities are still in full swing.

Dalen approaches his camera on the tripod, which is still recording everyone on the dance floor.

He takes the camera off the tripod, and begins approaching tables, rounding up certain individuals.

EXT. KAMALOHT BANQUET FACILITY, PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Dalen leads the group of people outside. They advance toward a garden on the side of the building and Dalen begins to give direction.

DALEN
Alright guys. I just wanna grab a few statements from each of you, congratulating Rich and Bethany. Add in whatever you like. Maybe how you met them, a funny story or memory, etc.

Dalen grabs the first COUPLE, directing them where to stand right in front of the garden.

Dalen mounts his camera on his tripod, focuses in, and begins rolling.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Whenever you guys are ready. It's
all you!

PULL IN on Dalen, as the first Couple gives their statements. A newfound vigor fills his eyes. We get a sense what Robbie said, has really filled him with new life. Dalen emits a warm smile as he looks on through the viewfinder of his camera.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dalen lays in bed, with his laptop open, editing footage from the wedding renewal. He's stringing the events together and producing one neat little package. He diligently hammers away at the computer with confidence.

CLOSE ON images of Rich and Bethany, kissing and sliding their rings on each other's fingers, cutting the cake, guests dancing on the floor, and finally images of couples in front of the garden, issuing a well deserved congratulations to Rich and Bethany.

CLOSE ON an alarm clock that reads 2:35 AM. We remain on the alarm clock, hearing nothing but the audible sounds of Dalen hitting the keys on his laptop until...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE ON sizzling bacon in a frying pan.

PULL BACK revealing Dalen, cooking breakfast, alone in Rich's kitchen.

He's finishing up, as he slides the bacon onto plates, already lined up on the counter, beside the stove. The bacon joins a full plate of eggs and toast and hash browns.

He scoops up the two plates.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Several knocks on the door before Dalen emerges.

Rich and Bethany both wake with a start from the heavy loud knocks.

DALEN

You guys aren't havin' sex are yah?

Rich rubs the sleep from his eyes, he reaches for his glasses on his night stand.

RICH
You're a little late, that was last night.

BETHANY
Well, technically this morning.

RICH
Touche.

Dalen distributes the plates to Rich and Bethany, while they both sit up in bed.

DALEN
Please, no dirty details.

BETHANY
Dalen, you didn't have to --

DALEN
(interrupts)
Just don't say anything. Not a single word. Eat and enjoy while I cue up the entertainment. Give me a quick sec!

Dalen runs out of the room.

Rich and Bethany exchange glances, sort of bemused by Dalen's behavior, but definitely not mad at it. They dig into their food.

Dalen reemerges with his laptop tucked underneath his arm.

BETHANY
Dalen what are you --

DALEN
(interrupts)
Eat, eat! Let me worry about this.

Dalen approaches the TV set in the room. He reaches for the HDMI cable, hooking in his laptop. He turns on the TV, setting it to the appropriate channel. Dalen's desktop image on his computer pops up onto the TV screen.

Dalen clicks on an icon and a video pops up. He hits pause before it starts.

Dalen clears his throat.

DALEN (CONT'D)

I want you guys to know, I'm not trying to make up for my actions this weekend. I needed to make those mistakes. I don't regret any of them. Because I'm never gonna learn how to do it the right way if I don't start off by doing it the wrong way. But, with all that said and done, I did wanna do something nice for you guys. To show my love for you two. Because despite how I may come off at times, you guys are some of the most important people in my life. And I appreciate the living fuck out of you two. So uh, yeah... here it is.

Rich and Bethany stop eating. They both share a look of incredulity as they stare at the TV, waiting patiently.

Dalen cues up the video.

A song fades in and images from the entire renewal ceremony fill the screen -- a music video.

CLOSE ON Rich and Bethany as they watch intently. Bethany puts her arm around Rich, kissing him on his forehead. They both smile warmly as their eyes remain glued to the screen.

BETHANY

This is our song.

RICH

That it is.

Bethany looks over to Dalen.

BETHANY

We're so lucky to have you. This is beautiful.

Dalen nods, with an ear to ear grin.

The three continue to watch the video as it plays out.

INT. RICH'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dalen packs his things. Rich emerges, leaning in the doorway.

RICH

Yah know, Beth hasn't stopped talkin' about it.

Dalen looks up from his suitcase.

DALEN

I enjoyed making it for you two.
I'll plop it on a blu-ray, along
with the whole ceremony and mail it
out to you guys.

Rich nods. Dalen continues to gather his things, putting them
in his suitcase.

RICH

So, uh... what's the plan?

DALEN

Go back to LA, I guess.

RICH

Is that really what you want?

Dalen stops, considering this.

DALEN

No. But I gotta for now. I have
some unfinished business there that
I gotta take care of.

RICH

What about your unfinished business
here?

DALEN

So you've talked to him too, huh?

RICH

I didn't have to. I could sense the
distance between you guys yesterday
at the renewal.

DALEN

Yah know if it wasn't for me and my
--

RICH

(interrupts)
I don't need to know what happened.
That's between you and Louie.

DALEN

I've gotta go talk to him.

RICH

I've got an idea. It would require
you stayin' an extra day though.

Dalen flickers a smile.

DALEN
Thanks, Rich.

RICH
Hey. You spent all last night being creative and putting that video together for Beth and I. Now it's my turn to get creative.

DALEN
Now you got my attention!

INT. CHIP VAN BRIAR AUTO PARTS, WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Louie leads his team in stretches at the start of the shift. There's little to no enthusiasm from Louie's end. His energy is completely depleted.

LOUIE
Buzz Lightyear, guys.

The team stretches their arms up high.

Louie begins to count slowly and sluggishly.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
One. Two. Three. Four.

Suddenly, Dalen and Rich round the corner. Dalen is sporting a Chip Van Briar shirt. Dalen claps his hands, shouting with loads of energy.

DALEN
Buzz Lightyear?! We gotta change these bad boys to Sheriff Woody's! Reach for the sky!!

Dalen and Rich step into line with Louie, facing the team of co-workers.

Louie pauses, incredulous at Dalen's presence.

Dalen and Rich extend their arms up high, finishing Louie's lead on the stretch.

DALEN & RICH
Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

Dalen nudges Louie's arm, smiling.

DALEN

Come on, brotha! We got this.

Louie returns Dalen's smile.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Show me your best Hitchhikers,
team! Extend those arms out!

The team extends their arms out, stretching out their wrists.

DALEN & RICH

One! Two! Three! Four!

Dalen and Rich look to Louie, shooting him an encouraging look. Louie begins to count, this time with as much energy as Dalen and Rich.

DALEN, RICH & LOUIE

Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

Dalen, Rich and Louie continue to lead the team in stretches, going through all the same exact motions that we saw at the beginning of the film. In comparison to the first time, the entire team oozes enthusiasm and charisma.

Once they finish their final stretch, Dalen takes them home.

DALEN

Alright team! You know the drill!
Rich, lead me in!

RICH

(shouting)
Auto parts!

DALEN

(shouting)
That you desire!

DALEN, RICH & LOUIE

(clapping, in unison)
Chip! Van Briar! Chip! Van Briar!
Chip! Van Briar!

LOUIE

Alright team. Let's have a killer
Monday! You know your assignments!

Louie turns to Dalen.

LOUIE (CONT'D)

Well. That was unexpected.

DALEN

Can we talk?

Louie gives Dalen a long, hard look.

LOUIE

Yeah. Course we can. Come on, we'll go to my office.

Rich gives his two buddies a pat on the back as they head toward the Quality Assurance office.

INT. QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICE, WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Louie leads Dalen inside. Louie extends his hand, inviting Dalen to sit in front of his desk.

Louie rounds his desk, taking a seat.

Dalen takes a look around, taking in the office. He notices Louie's supervisor placard. He looks up at Louie, who is waiting patiently for Dalen to break the ice.

DALEN

Well, I'm an asshole.

Louie snorts with laughter.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Look at this place man. Look at you!

Dalen picks up Louie's placard, reading it.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Stocking Supervisor, Louie Herzberg.

LOUIE

Well, it's not like I'm earning a million dollars or anything, but it'll do for now.

DALEN

This is something to truly be proud of, man. You're doin' it. You're really fuckin' doing it. I was completely in the wrong for saying all that stuff about --

LOUIE

(interrupts)

We were both wrong, Dal.

(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)

There was no reason for saying those nasty things about your screenplays. Because what you said about failing in order to succeed.... You were right. I failed so many times and learned things the hard way until I got this position. Is it even a great position? No. But it is a step in the right direction. And that's all I could ask for. And I know that one day you'll write the script. The big one. The right one.

Dalen nods.

DALEN

In the meantime, can we just keep cheering each other on?

LOUIE

I mean, after that Bring It On like performance out there in front of my team, I thought it was gonna start gettin' cold in thurr.

DALEN

Shit! There must be some Toros in the atmosphere!

LOUIE

Oh-ee-oh-ee-oh-ee!

DALEN

Ice, ice, ice!

Dalen and Louie crackle with laughter.

LOUIE

Damn. We better let Terrell know that the Sith lords are changin' their colors from black to rainbow.

DALEN

Oh hell no. If we tell him that, he'll wanna join!

Louie and Dalen exchanges smiles.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. LAX AIRPORT, LOS ANGELES - DAY

An establishing shot of the LAX airport. Suddenly, a plane flies into frame, touching down on the strip, landing.

INT. LAX AIRPORT, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Dalen emerges from his gate through the sea of TRAVELERS. He scans his surroundings, taking a breath. From the look on his face, he's all business. He's back here for a reason. He has confident and determined eyes as he slithers his way through the airport.

INT. DALEN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dalen unpacks his suitcase. As he puts a few things away in his closet, he notices the same script he found at the beginning of the film, "Extraction" and the coverage that Athena wrote for it. He pulls it out, placing his hand on it, contemplating.

He flips through the pages, smiling. A renewed hope fills his eyes. A creative spark, perhaps?

INT. GOLDEN AGE PRODUCTIONS, DALEN'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON various boxes, strewn about on the floor. A pair of hands places items into the boxes.

PULL BACK revealing Dalen, packing all his personal belongings that once warmed his office. Instead of getting settled back in, the sight is quite the opposite. Dalen is moving out...

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Dalen lounges in one of the comfy arm chairs, in the corner of his local Starbucks. He has his laptop out, hammering away vigorously at the keypad.

CLOSE ON a venti iced chai, sitting beside Dalen. Dalen's hand reaches into frame, grabbing the drink. In the background is the bright screen of Dalen's laptop, as words continuously flit across the screen at a rapid speed -- Dalen is working on a new screenplay.

INT. DALEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

More boxes. More personal belongings, strewn about everywhere.

Dalen appears. He tapes up one of the finished boxes, grabs it and exits the room.

INT. GOLDEN AGE PRODUCTIONS, OFFICE - DAY

Dalen shakes hands with his boss, Mike Badenhop. Mike smiles, wishing Dalen well, but simultaneously looks sad that he is losing someone as indispensable as Dalen.

Dalen makes his rounds to all his co-workers, saying his final good byes.

Dalen approaches the Interns. They all run up, giving him a group hug. Dalen laughs, embracing the warmth of the ones he has looked after and guided.

INT. STAPLES - DAY

Dalen hands the STORE CLERK a thumb drive. The Store Clerk inserts the thumb drive into a computer, clicking through various files.

A printer hums to life and begins spitting out sheets of paper.

CLOSE ON the sheets of paper -- endless passages of dialogue between characters. This is Dalen's new script.

As Dalen waits for the script to be printed, he pulls out his phone. He scrolls through his contacts until he lands on Athena's number...

His thumb hovers over the call button for a few beats until he hits it, placing the phone to his ear...

END MONTAGE.

INT. JAMES' BEACH BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Dalen sits by himself at a high table, waiting patiently. A full beer sits in front of him that he hasn't even touched yet.

Suddenly, Athena appears in the doorway, scanning the bar. Dalen notices her, waving her over.

Dalen hops off his chair, rounding the table, pulling out the chair for Athena as she approaches.

ATHENA

Thank you.

DALEN

Glad you could make it.

Dalen and Athena take their seats.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Rich and Bethany loved the photos. They've been sending me texts nonstop, raving about them.

ATHENA

Good. I'm glad I could help out.

DALEN

You didn't just help out. You made it special. Thanks for sending the photos to them, despite everything that's --

ATHENA

(interrupts)

It was my pleasure to do that for your friends, Dal. What happened between us wasn't gonna stop me from completing the job.

DALEN

That's one of the many things I love about you...

Athena sighs heavily.

ATHENA

I'm sorry for the way I acted, Dal. It just really took me by surprise. I thought what we had was spelled out very clearly. It wasn't my intention to disappoint you.

DALEN

It's impossible for you to disappoint me.

ATHENA

Dalen, I'm trying to protect you.

DALEN

From what?

ATHENA

From me. The way I am. The lifestyle that I live. It's been an ongoing problem when it comes to relationships. And I've accepted that over the years because I refuse to change who I am just for someone else.

DALEN

When did I ever ask you to change? What you do, is the very thing I love about you.

ATHENA

You love the fact that I'm never around? Always off in some corner of the world, neglecting everything else?

DALEN

I love the fact that you would never let anyone get in the way of your dreams. Kinda like how you would never get in the way of my dreams. And if nothing else, that is the one thing that has been spelled out very clearly between us over the years.

Athena considers this.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Don't you realize that we're the same exact person?

ATHENA

How so?

DALEN

Well, we're both never around. You physically go out and get lost in the real world and I get lost mentally in the world inside my head as I create my stories. I need that time. It's precious to me. And it only involves me and no one else. Kind of like how you need your time and how it only involves you.

ATHENA

And what kind of relationship would that end up being in the long run?

DALEN

One where you do your thing, I do
my thing, and we meet half way.

ATHENA

You make it sound too easy.

DALEN

We'll never know if we don't give
it a real try.

Athena takes a moment, looking real conflicted.

ATHENA

I just don't wanna make any
promises, Dalen.

DALEN

But last time we were sitting here,
you made me promise you to do
something.

ATHENA

(winks)
Did I?

DALEN

It's the main reason I wanted to
meet up with you tonight.

ATHENA

So that must mean you have
something for me...

DALEN

I do.

Dalen reaches down inside of a bag sitting beside his chair.
He unveils a thick layered document, slapping it on the table
in front of Athena.

Athena emits a warm smile, pulling the document close to her.

ATHENA

Is this my award winning screenplay
that I've been asking for?

Dalen nods.

Athena looks down, reading the title aloud.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

The Graveyard Gang. Written by
Dalen Gus.

Athena looks up, meeting Dalen's gaze.

ATHENA (CONT'D)

This is about you and your friends,
isn't it?

DALEN

You gotta write what you know,
right?

ATHENA

Why do you guys call yourself The
Graveyard Gang?

DALEN

We all used to work the graveyard
shift at the newspaper factory
together.

Athena grins, taking this in.

ATHENA

Well, speaking of promises...

Athena digs in her large purse and pulls something out...

DALEN

What could this be...

ATHENA

Just open it.

Dalen slowly unwraps the gift to find a beautifully framed
photograph.

CLOSE ON the photo: A close up of the groomsmen lined up at
the ceremony, but instead of a straight on photo, it's a side
profile of all of them. The focal point of the picture is
their bow ties that they're wearing. As you look at the
photo, it's like you're staring down a pipeline of bow ties.
The closest one, in the foreground, is in sharp focus and the
last bow tie, in the background, is in soft focus.

DALEN

This is such a great photo.

ATHENA

It's you guys, from the renewal.
It's The Gang.

Dalen rises from his chair, circling the table and wraps his
arms around Athena, squeezing her tight.

DALEN

It's perfect. Thank you.

Athena places her hand on the script.

ATHENA

I can't wait to read this. What's the plan with this one?

Dalen sits back down, looking into Athena's eyes.

DALEN

With this script... I'm gonna do something that I should have done a long time ago.

Athena smiles, realizing.

ATHENA

When are we moving back?

Dalen flashes a smile. He places his hand on Athena's. Athena takes her other hand, placing it on his. They exchange smiles.

INT. CHIP VAN BRIAR AUTO PARTS, WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

An eerie quiet. The calm before the storm.

Suddenly, the doors from the break room burst open. Louie leads the pack. Terrell and Rich trail him.

They walk up, surrounding the time clock with their badges in hand, ready to scan themselves in for their shift.

RICH

So, do you think his highness will be joining the rest of us tonight... or?

Louie lifts his eyebrows, grinning.

LOUIE

I think you can absolutely count on it.

TERRELL

Man, I ain't gonna believe it till I see it, dawg!

LOUIE

Well, feast your eyes on the prize!

Louie grabs Terrell's shoulders, spinning him around to face the doors leading to the break room. Dalen approaches, opening the door, entering the warehouse.

TERRELL

God damn, baby boy! I thought these motherfuckers were joshin' me!

DALEN

Come on, Master Rells. I couldn't show up to my first shift without bringin' a little razzle dazzle to the place!

TERRELL

I see you, I see you playa! Pop that collar!

Dalen flicks his Chip Van Briar Auto Parts t-shirt where the collar would traditionally be.

The Gang laughs.

TERRELL (CONT'D)

Iight. Let's get serious, doe. Why on earth is the next Steven Spielberg back in Massachusetts working in some auto parts dungeon instead of rollin' the cameras, out in LA?!

DALEN

Oh, trust me when I say, the dream to roll the cameras is more alive than ever, my friend.

TERRELL

Oh shit. Baby boy got something cookin' in the kitchen. I can see it in his eyes. Spit game.

DALEN

I'm doing what I should have done as soon as I graduated college, boys. I'm rounding up the troops. All the guys I know from film school. And I'm finally gonna direct and produce my own feature film.

RICH

Hey man, out here, you'll always be a big fish in a little pond.

LOUIE

And, like you said, you have all your contacts out here to get the job done.

TERRELL

True that. In a town like this, when you at the bar and you tell a girl you's a screenwriter, that's a fuckin' conversation starter. When you out in LA and you tell someone the same thing, they just roll their eyes.

RICH

You know, Master Rells might actually be onto something right there.

Dalen laughs.

DALEN

As nice as it would be to impress some fine females with my movie magic, that's not the reason I moved back here. And anyway, I'm already taken.

The Gang starts hooting and hollering, nudging Dalen, and playfully punching his arm.

RICH

It's about fuckin' time, man!

LOUIE

Finally manned up and pulled the trigger, huh?

DALEN

I know, I know.

TERRELL

My man! Athena is cute as hell too.

DALEN

Thanks man.

LOUIE

So you got the script?

RICH

Yeah, what's the flick about?

Dalen looks around at each of his friends, flickering a smile.

DALEN

It's about us. It's about The Gang.

RICH

I want the first copy!

TERRELL

(to Dalen)

Yo son, you better be gettin' my vernaculars right. In fact, I wanna be in the movie! You casting me, right?! Ain't nobody can play me 'cept me!

LOUIE

Jesus Christ, you're already givin' the poor guy lip service? You haven't even read a single word from the script yet!

RICH

Plus, no one wants to see your black ass in any movie.

LOUIE

That would require memorizing lines, Terrell.

RICH

And to memorize lines, traditionally you have to read them first.

LOUIE

We all know how much this lazy fuck loves reading. What's the last book you read from cover to cover anyway, Terrell?

RICH

Probably "If You Give A Moose A Muffin" back in second grade!

Rich and Louie crackle with laughter, busting Terrell's balls.

TERRELL

Man and all yall wonder why you Sith Lords these days! Always puttin' the brotha down!

DALEN

Whoa, whoa, whoa. That's enough of that nonsense. We're all on the same shift again, boys! So you know what that means, right Master Rells?

Terrell purses his lips, trying not to give in.

LOUIE

Come on, you know you wanna.

RICH

He's gonna burst! I can see it!

A smile starts to slowly inch across Terrell's face.

DALEN

Lead us in, Master Rells!

Terrell throws his arms up in the air, overly dramatic but this time, cracking a full ear to ear grin.

TERRELL

Damn! Alright. Alright.

Terrell rubs his hands together, warming up.

He extends his arms, starting a football-like huddle.

TERRELL (CONT'D)

Jedi Knights...

Rich, Louie and Dalen extend their arms too, locking into the huddle.

TERRELL (CONT'D)

It is time to dock the ships in the hangar...

LOUIE

Don our robes...

RICH

And congregate...

DALEN

Around the Knights of the Round Table.

The Gang breaks from the huddle.

Louie approaches the time clock, takes his badge and scans himself in.

Terrell repeats the process.

LOUIE

Let's go, Master Rells, I have a
very special assignment for my
fellow Jedi Knight tonight.

Terrell rolls his eyes as he walks with Louie.

TERRELL

And there's The Dark Side...
creepin' back up...

Rich and Dalen chuckle. Rich takes his badge and scans in for
the night.

Rich extends his hand, gesturing to the time clock.

RICH

Last but not least.

Dalen steps up to the time clock, grips his badge and puts it
up to the scanner but before he places it under the red beam
that reads the barcode on his badge he takes a moment to
himself.

His face tells the story -- He's ready. He's determined. He
knows this is the right move. And he couldn't be more excited
for it.

DALEN

Round two.

Dalen places his badge under the red beam, scanning himself
in.

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLE CARD:

THE GRAVEYARD GANG: PUNCHED BACK IN

