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KARMIC BUYBACK: A PILOT PROGRAM

by

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B.A. New College of Florida, 1992

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ABSTRACT

"Karmic Buyback: A Pilot Program", a screenplay, is the story of Oliver Harker, a water resources engineer in his early thirties, adrift in a world of lost social connections. Aside from this work, which he describes as "just a lot of redundant paperwork," his only connection to the outside world is his exuberant younger brother Van.

With no father to speak of, and harboring long term resentment against his mother who ran away to Africa the day after Van's high school graduation, Oliver's defining tragic moment came three years earlier. It was then he discovered Eva, the woman he planned to marry, cheating with an old flame. Isolating himself from his few remaining friends, Oliver has become a short-tempered, unbearable grump.

Meanwhile Eva, unbeknownst to Oliver, has recently died. She wakes to find herself in a strange, antiseptic afterlife where she is given the opportunity to repair some of the bad karma she accumulated in her short life, specifically in regard to Oliver.

As Van begins to help him reestablish social ties, an accident which lands Oliver in the hospital finally draws their mother back across the Atlantic. Oliver must decide between Eva, in her foolish attempts to win him back as a result of the ultimately misguided Karmic Buyback Pilot Program, and the real people who love him.

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Karmic Buyback: A Pilot Program

FADE IN:

At first glance, this is a DMV office. Three attendants wearing crisp white shirts with a stitched emblem of pale blue wings sit behind a long counter in the back of the room, with short partitions between them. Two of the attendants have "customers" who are quietly arguing with them, while the last customer appears silently resigned to whatever she's being told.

Lettering above the counter, in cursive calligraphy, reads: "Karmic Intervention and Buyback Office".

On a very clean wipe board off to one side is the following hand-written sign: "Please take a number and take your place in line. Patience is a virtue." Next to the sign stands a DMV-style number machine. The number protruding from the machine: 418,267.

Behind the sign a line of people of all shapes, ages and nationalities curves around several times and stretches out of sight into whiteness.

In the front of the line stands EVA BENSON, late 20s (but looks closer to 17), petite and pixie-ish with dark lipstick and a tailored suit. Both the lipstick and suit appear too old for her. She wears a "Hello, my name is Eva" nametag.

Eva glances at the man behind her in line. He avoids her eyes. She checks the stub of paper with her number and takes a deep breath. In contrast to most of the other individuals, with their haunted eyes and slumped shoulders, she stands up a bit straighter, smooths the front of her skirt and clasps her hands in front of her.

The male customer at the far left counter, 60s and very professional in appearance, raises his voice.

MALE CUSTOMER

You can't do this to me! I was a partner at the second largest law firm in New York! I demand to see your supervisor.

ATTENDANT

Only the second largest? I'm sorry sir. I can call the Goddess in charge, but she has been in something of an anti-lawyer mode for the last half century.

The man opens his mouth to speak further, decides against it, angrily grabs his paperwork and exits the room without another word.

ATTENDANT

297,264 please.

Eva takes a deep breath and approaches the counter. She lays her number down and waits. The attendant, CARMEN, types busily into her computer. She smiles at Eva.

CARMEN

Name?

EVA

Eva Benson.

Eva waits quietly while Carmen finishes typing.

CARMEN

Do you know why you're here, hon?

EVA

To work off some bad karma which, uh, accumulated due to poor choices.

CARMEN

Ah, love karma. Always tricky. Cheating, heart-breaking?

She types some more, and pushes a form across the counter for Eva to sign. Eva frowns as she signs.

EVA

Basically.

CARMEN

Not to worry, hon. You'll do fine.

EVA

Will I get a job like yours? I've done some customer service.

CARMEN

Sorry hon, the karmic buyback fits the karmic crime.

EVA

So you—

CARMEN

I was a complete horror to many poorly paid workers in my time.

She shakes her head with sincere regret.

CARMEN

Oh, no. Your buyback time is likely to be much more fascinating than mine.

Carmen glances at the worker beside her, then lowers her voice and leans forward across the counter.

CARMEN

Just remember: follow the rules and everything will work out.

She winks and pushes another stack of papers across the counter. One of them is clearly marked "The Rules." Eva gathers them up.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

This is a large living room in an older, upper-class house. A majority of the furniture has been covered with some kind

of plastic or protective cover. Large boxes, some full and some empty, are scattered throughout the room.

OLIVER HARKER, mid 30s, neat but morose with wild, mopy hair and wearing khaki shorts and a polo shirt, is sorting through papers at a fancy dining room table. The table is next to a doorway which connects the room to the rest of the house. No chairs are in evidence.

A younger man, VAN HARKER, slender and attractive, with a boyish, friendly face and a unique and very loud sense of style, bounds into the room. He looks around, hands on his hips.

VAN

I guess we've made a little progress.

OLIVER

A little. So Van. You knew Mom was selling the house?

VAN

Not until two days ago.

OLIVER

How considerate of her.

Van shrugs. He struggles to fold down the top of the box in front of him. Finally he fits the last piece in place. He takes a step back, admiring his handiwork, and promptly trips over another box behind him. Oliver stifles a laugh. Van composes himself, pretending nothing happened.

VAN

It's just Mom. She doesn't mean anything by it. If you called her-

OLIVER

Don't start.

Van shrugs. He picks up the box.

VAN

You didn't have to come, you know.

OLIVER

I know.

Struggling, Van carries the box out of the room. After he's gone, Oliver addresses the doorway.

OLIVER

So, dorkboy, you got somewhere to live?

A moment later, Van reappears. He pauses in the doorway.

VAN

Did you say something, Einstein?

OLIVER

No.

Van walks over to the table, and rifles with little interest through some of the paperwork.

VAN

She's in Kenya now. New clinic needed a nurse.

OLIVER

What's it been? Five years?

VAN

Six. Day after I graduated high school.

OLIVER

Right. I can't believe you were never pissed at her.

VAN

Sure I was pissed. People get over these things.

Van looks at Oliver.

VAN

Some people.

Oliver shrugs. They both read through papers in silence, until Oliver finds something of particular interest.

OLIVER

Damn. My elementary school diploma. Didn't know she saved this thing.

VAN

She saved all.

Oliver shrugs. He clears his throat. He looks at Van, then looks away.

OLIVER

So you got somewhere to stay or what?

Van grins and claps him on the shoulder. Oliver scowls and grunts.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Oliver gathers a pile of papers and crosses in front of the doorway toward a large trash bin on the other side. He collides with Van, who has just entered carrying a stack of photographs.

Papers and photos flutter to the ground around them. Oliver pauses and looks at the mess. Van squats down to reclaim his stack.

OLIVER

I'm amazed you lived here this long without destroying the place.

VAN

Oh, lighten up, Einstein. You gotta see this stuff I found.

Oliver squats down beside him, pushing Van over in the process. Van straightens back up and ignores Oliver for a moment until he finds one of the photos he was looking for. He smacks the back of Oliver's head.

VAN

Oliver! Look at this shit -
remember Mom's boyfriend, that
crazy ass cowboy?

He offers the photograph to Oliver. Oliver takes it,
smiling despite himself.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

A petite, fierce-looking woman, mid-40s, stands with her
arm around the (lower) waist of a very tall man with a
large belt buckle, enormous cowboy hat and cowboy boots.
Horses graze in the background.

BACK TO SCENE

OLIVER

Didn't they take you to a rodeo or
something, once?

VAN

Ha. No way. I told him to get
lost. Mom was pissed.

Oliver finishes gathering up papers and throws them in the
bin. He squats to help Van pick up the rest of the photos,
and pauses, studying one of them.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

A picture of a younger Oliver with his arms around a man
and a woman. Oliver and the other man are wearing
University of Florida T-shirts and holding out glasses of
beer, as if in a toast. The woman is holding up a lit
cigarette. It is dusk, and they are standing outside on
someone's patio.

BACK TO SCENE

Van looks over Oliver's shoulder with interest. He waits a
moment for Oliver to speak. After a moment, Oliver sticks
his hand out and drops the photo on Van's collected stack.
Oliver walks back over to the table.

VAN
Jack and... Kathy?

Oliver does not turn around.

OLIVER
Kate.

VAN
Heard from them lately?

OLIVER
Nope.

Van waits a moment to see if Oliver is going to add any information, then stoops to pick up the last photograph. He stands, looking at it silently.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

A somewhat younger Oliver, smiling widely, is standing on a beach next to a short blonde in a crazy, ruffled pink bathing suit. It is a younger Eva, from the Karmic Buyback Office. She is laughing and pointing at something outside the frame.

BACK TO SCENE

Oliver, standing behind him, rips the photo from Van's hand. He tears it calmly in several pieces and throws them at the bin. He stalks back to the table, picks up some of the remaining papers and begins to throw them into an empty box.

Van stares at Oliver's back, then picks up the pieces of torn photograph that have fallen next to the bin.

OLIVER
Go ahead, Van, say whatever fool thing you feel the need to say.

VAN
It's been years, man. I can't believe that damn chick Eva wrecked you for good.

Oliver picks up a document, and scans it.

OLIVER
(to himself)
Good enough.

Beneath one of the last stacks of unsorted papers, Oliver finds a small china dog, a brown mutt with its tongue hanging out. He frowns, pained, fingers it a moment, then drops it into his pants pocket.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Wisps of pale smoke rise from the corners of a mostly bare, oblong room with a white tile floor. Eva, in the same clothes and nametag as earlier, stands to one side beside a folding chair and a small table. Next to the table a long golden cord with a large tassel at the end hangs almost to the floor. On the table is a thin white binder.

INSERT - BINDER

Beneath the blue wings logo, in large, rounded calligraphy, is the title, "Non-Violent Karmic Buyback: A pilot program instituted by the Office of Divine Corrections."

BACK TO SCENE

Eva sits down and as she reaches for the binder, a calm, soothing female voice fills the room

VOICE (V.O.)
Hello traveler, and welcome.
Please direct your attention to the
video screen at the back wall, as
you learn about this unique
program.

Eva sucks in her breath as a huge rectangle of deep blue light fills the back wall. Titles appear. The voice reads along with the text throughout the video.

INSERT - VIDEO SCREEN

As the text scrolls up, muted hues of blue and purple swirl soothingly in the background.

VOICE (V.O.)

"Non-Violent Karmic Buyback: A pilot program instituted by the Office of Divine Corrections.

The purpose of human life on earth is to explore one's compassionate capacity, to work on one's compassionate nature and thus to accumulate what you might call positive karma. Once a sufficient amount of positive karma has been accumulated, the being is able to move on to the next cycle of existence.

We at the Department of Divine Corrections have long felt that when a human specimen with less than stellar karmic development loses her life in the midst of a selfless action, that being deserves another chance to accumulate positive karma.

This program, also known as the Non-Violent Karmic Buyback Program for Those with Positive Potential, is our attempt to address this issue. And you have been selected to participate in our inaugural trials.

We have provided certain amenities to make your stay as comfortable as possible. Please read the literature. Your time spent here will determine where on the rebirth spectrum you will next emerge. It's up to you now. Good luck."

The final words fade out and the blue screen dissolves back into whiteness.

BACK TO SCENE

Eva hesitantly picks up the binder and flips to the first page. As she reads, her face lights up.

INSERT - BINDER PAGE

EVA (V.O.)

1. Environment

We at the Office of Divine Corrections would like you to feel at home during your stay with us. As such, our complete warehouse of fine furnishings, from 1960 to 2010, is at your disposal. Illustrations of various items can be found at the back of this booklet. Simply ring the bell for assistance.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT - LATER

The room has undergone a radical overhaul. Two orange armchairs are arranged behind a coffee table over a super shag rug. The binder is sitting on the coffee table. The walls sport a polka-dot pattern.

To one side is an art deco bar with green glasses hanging overhead and lava lamps on both ends. Eva, hands on her hips, surveys the room. She wears bell bottoms, a fringy halter top and dayglo lipstick.

ALEX enters through an invisible doorway in the wall, and surveys the room. He is mid 40s, looks like a history professor, with glasses that he is constantly pushing back up his nose. He is wearing khakis, a white shirt with the blue wings logo, and a "Hello! My name is Alex" nametag. He raises his eyebrows slightly at what he sees.

Behind him the door opens again, and an ATTENDANT with a white lab coat struggles in carrying two fuchsia standing lamps with fringed shades. The attendant stands uncertainly, waiting to be noticed. Finally, he clears his throat.

ATTENDANT

Will this be all then, Miss?

Eva turns around. She sees both men and is momentarily flustered. She motions for the attendant to bring the lamps over to the couch. As she helps him set them down at either end, she glances back over her shoulder toward Alex.

EVA

Can I help you with something?

She turns back to the attendant.

EVA

I think that's it! Thank you so much.

The attendant breathes an audible sigh of relief and leaves, wiping his brow as he goes. He bows to both Eva and Alex, then disappears through the invisible doorway.

Eva walks over to Alex. They shake hands. Alex looks around at the décor.

ALEX

I see you really went for it with the environment details.

Eva looks around again. She frowns and moves forward to adjust one of the chairs two inches to the right. Alex wanders over to the couch and feels the fabric.

EVA

I was studying nights to be an interior designer. What do you think? Pretty swank, right?

ALEX

Very... interesting.

EVA

(suddenly nervous)

So, um. Who are you?

ALEX

I'm your karmic intervention officer. I guess you didn't have time to read the literature?

Eva adjusts the fringy shade of a standing lamp and shrugs sheepishly.

EVA
I sort of skimmed it.

Alex sits down in the one of the chairs, and swivels it so that he's facing Eva.

ALEX
I'll just be here to make sure things run smoothly.

EVA
So, like, I'm going to watch relationship videos and then help some poor sod with his love life?

ALEX
Well, it's a bit more complicated than-

A CLICKING noise. A slot opens in the wall across from the bar. Eva and Alex both look toward the wall. Another thin white binder with the pale blue wings logo comes through the slot and drops to the floor with a clatter.

ALEX
Oh good, our client information.

They both walk over to the binder, and Eva picks it up. Alex watches with interest as she turns to the first page.

INSERT - THE BINDER

```
"Client Information
Name: Oliver Harker
Age: 35
Occupation: Engineer
Relationship history: Messy
Significant Other: None"
```

(O.S.) A loud THUD and a smaller CLATTER as the binder falls to the floor.

BACK TO SCENE

Eva has fainted, and the binder lies open beside her. Alex kneels down beside her. He checks her over to make sure she is unhurt.

ALEX
(toward the ceiling)
Cleanup on aisle disco.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is a cozy and neat bachelor house living room, with an expensive brown leather couch and loveseat, and a stylish entertainment system with a huge TV and stereo. Two tall bookshelves are filled with books and boxes. Next to one of these is a lined wicker wastebasket.

Though many of the walls are bare, photos of remote and beautiful nature scenes are placed artfully throughout the room.

Van stands next to the couch, a large green duffel bag at his feet. Oliver comes out of the back hall with a pile of blankets and linens and drops them on the end on the couch.

OLIVER
Make yourself at home.

VAN
Thanks.

He tests the couch cushions for firmness, seems satisfied, and sits down. Oliver, watching, shakes his head and exits the room.

OLIVER (O.S.)
The remote is next to the TV. Let me know if you need anything.

VAN
Cool, thanks.

Van stands and gets the remote. He fiddles with it while walking slowly around the room, taking a closer look at

pictures and the books on the bookshelves. He picks up *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson.

VAN

Wasn't I just here like a month ago? Since when do you read science fiction?

He slides the book back into its place next to books on engineering and mathematics. On one of the top shelves, Van notices the small china dog that Oliver took from their mother's house. He picks it up, frowning, as if trying to remember where he's seen it before.

He turns around, holding out the dog and about to speak, when he sees that Oliver has come back into the room. He closes his mouth and lowers his hand.

Oliver appears embarrassed, but doesn't say anything.

VAN

Didn't you buy this for Mom that year she was supposed to come home for Christmas?

Oliver is silent. Van pauses a moment, thinking. Suddenly he turns to gently place the dog back on the shelf.

VAN

Oh, that's right. It was Eva. So you—

Oliver appears behind him, plucks the dog out of Van's hand, and drops it into the wastebasket.

OLIVER

There's beer in the fridge. Help yourself.

Oliver leaves the room. Van sighs, then finds the remote again and settles in on the couch, plumping up a pillow behind his head.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva, lying crookedly on one of the shaggy armchairs, slowly wakes up. Alex waits patiently in the opposite chair. The client information binder sits closed on the coffee table.

Eva sits up, rubbing the back of her head.

EVA

What—?

She notices the binder, groans, and flops backward again, covering her face with her hands.

EVA

Just kill me now.

Alex looks at her patiently.

ALEX

What was that?

Eva sits up, then stands and paces.

EVA

Why did it have to be Olly? This
is terrible. Just terrible. If I
wasn't dead I'd kill myself.

She sits back down and hangs her head. Alex produces a remote control from beneath the seat cushion and aims it at the back wall.

ALEX

Take a deep breath.

A large video screen unrolls from a slot in the ceiling until it is covering most of the back wall. Eva peers out from beneath her fingers.

A blue screen comes on, and then a menu appears. Each item is highlighted briefly as Alex scrolls through. Eva gasps audibly and stands up.

INSERT VIDEO SCREEN

Oliver Harker: Love Life

1. Lorrie
2. Cara
3. Carrie
4. Sophia
5. Liz
6. Stacy
7. Eva

EVA (OS)

Why don't we get to see the girls
after me?

BACK TO SCENE

ALEX

Because there aren't any.

Eva draws in her breath loudly and sits heavily back down.
Her voice drops to a whisper.

EVA

But that was three years ago.

Alex scrolls back through the list and stops at 7, which
expands into a new list.

INSERT VIDEO SCREEN

7. Eva
 - longterm - serious
 - a. first date
 - b. moving in
 - c. breakup
 - d. supplementary material

The cursor stops at 7-a.

INT. EMERGENCY VET CLINIC LOBBY - NIGHT

ALEX (V.O.)

Let's start at the beginning.

A younger, warmer, more energetic and very concerned Oliver enters the lobby, in a soaked white T-shirt and jeans. In his arms lies a wet, furry mass wrapped in a sweatshirt.

An older gentleman vet waits in the lobby. He ushers Oliver to a back room with his bundle.

INT. EMERGENCY VET CLINIC EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

As the vet unwraps the unconscious dog and probes it for injuries, an assistant comes in and gently removes the collar. The tags jingle softly. The assistant exits. Oliver stands out of the way, watching.

INT. EMERGENCY VET CLINIC LOBBY - LATER

Oliver sits quietly in the lobby, slightly less wet than when he arrived, when the door slams open and a younger Eva (with the same hairstyle as the old beach photo) rushes in and up to the desk. She wears a sparkly blouse and short skirt, as if she was on her way out for the night. She seems young for the clothes and makeup she is wearing.

EVA

Eva Benson. My dog Henry—

Oliver stands up, and Eva turns around.

EVA

Are you the one who brought my dog in?

Oliver nods, but doesn't have a chance to get a word out. Eva frowns and takes a step toward him.

EVA

Did you run over my dog?

Oliver holds up his hands in an attempt to calm her.

OLIVER

No, no. It was a hit and run, I just happened to—

EVA

You stopped and brought him in.
Thank you!

She hugs him spontaneously. Oliver stands quietly, somewhat taken aback, as Eva turns back around to the woman at the desk.

EVA

How is he? How's Henry? Is it bad? Can I see him?

The woman behind the desk shares a smile with Oliver and then takes Eva's hand and pats it.

WOMAN

Henry will be fine, hon, but just to be safe we'll keep him overnight.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small, bright and (almost painfully) colorful apartment, with lots of pink. There is a small dog bed in one corner. Oliver reads the spines of CDs on a bookshelf.

OLIVER

(to himself)
Shania Twain. Oh god, no.

OLIVER

(loudly)
You really don't need to go through all this-

EVA (O.S.)

Making you dinner is the least I can do after you saved Henry.

Eva appears with a glass of wine and hands it to him. Oliver takes the glass, with a nodded thank you.

OLIVER

Do you mind if I ask how old you are?

Eva sighs dramatically and goes back toward the kitchen.

EVA (O.S.)
I know, I know. I look about 16.
But don't worry, I'm legal.

Oliver laughs to himself.

EVA (O.S.)
I'm 24. You want to see my
driver's license?

He sits in a brightly colored but worn vinyl armchair, and moves around a little to sample the squeaking of the vinyl. He takes a drink, grimaces at the taste, and places the glass on a small table beside him.

OLIVER
No, no. That's fine.

EVA
Hey, your wife's not going to be
wondering where you are or
something—

She comes into the room and stands across from him with another glass of wine.

OLIVER
Nope, not married.

EVA
Me either, as you can probably
tell.

She gestures around at her belongings, then sits down across from him in another worn vinyl armchair.

EVA
In fact I recently ended a dead-end
long distance relationship.

Oliver nods with understanding, but doesn't say anything.

EVA
Cute guy, too. English accent.

She smiles, and pauses to take a breath and a drink.

EVA
So what do you do?

OLIVER
Water resources engineer.

EVA
Huh. Environment and junk?

Oliver nods.

OLIVER
So do you often bring strange men
to your apartment? Could be
dangerous.

Eva smiles. They look at each other. Oliver is a little embarrassed but there is definitely a spark. Oliver's nose twitches. He sits up straighter, frowning.

OLIVER
Do you smell-

Eva jumps up.

EVA
Oh my god! The stove!

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN

They both rush to the kitchen where a small grease fire is rising over a blackened pan. Eva turns on the faucet, and fills a glass with water while Oliver reaches around as carefully as possible to turn off the burner.

He sees what she's doing, catches her wrist very firmly while it's still over the sink, and pours the water out.

OLIVER
Fire extinguisher?

Eva stares trancelike at the flame on the stove. Oliver grabs a towel off a stack on the kitchen table and runs it under the faucet until it's soaking.

EVA
Oh my god! My mom gave me those towels.

She glances at the flame, squeezes her eyes shut, and changes her mind.

EVA
Ok, ok. Do it.

Oliver tries to lay the towel carefully across the flame but burns his arm. He lets out a yelp. The flame goes out under the weight of the wet towel.

INT. HOSPITAL EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Oliver sits on the edge of a hospital bed, his forearm wrapped in white gauze. Eva sits beside him, her knee just barely touching his. She looks concerned.

OLIVER
Next time, I cook.

Eva looks up hopefully.

EVA
Next time?

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Alex and Eva watch the screen intently. Alex smiles to himself. Eva looks embarrassed.

EVA
I know! Two emergency rooms in one night. I guess I flipped out a little.

The screen goes black.

EVA

Wait, wait. He kissed me right
after that.

She sighs, stands up, walks across the room.

EVA

Such a great guy, right? But
serious too. Sometimes he was so
damn serious.

She returns to the chair and sits back down.

EVA

So what now?

ALEX

Now you help him.

EVA

But how? I'm a mess. I wouldn't
know where to start. He hates me.

ALEX

Take some time. Think about it.

Eva jumps up again and resumes pacing.

INT OLIVER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Van walks into the house through the sparsely decorated
entryway, pulling his key out of the door on his way in.
He wears a tight T-shirt and dark jeans.

Oliver sits at the kitchen table intently reading text on a
laptop computer. He wears a button-down shirt, now
unbuttoned, and dark pants (almost certainly work clothes).

He looks up as Van walks into the kitchen.

OLIVER

How was work?

VAN

Not bad. Your usual assortment of unruly drunks and half-naked women.

He crosses to the fridge, opens it and scans the shelves. He takes a mini Gouda round and unwraps it.

VAN

You? Any hot chicks cross your path today?

He grins comically. Oliver goes back to reading something on his laptop.

VAN

Would you notice if they had?

OLIVER

You're really a pain in the ass, you know that?

Van shrugs. He scans a pizza menu that is stuck to the fridge with a magnet, accidentally pulling it off so that the magnet clatters to the floor.

Oliver looks up.

OLIVER

I got some of those frozen ones you like.

VAN

Aww gee, thanks, Mom.

Van grins. Oliver makes a face at him, then goes back to reading his laptop. As Van awkwardly sticks the delivery menu back on the fridge, he notices a 3" x 5" photo that had been beneath it. He picks it up to take a closer look.

INSERT - PHOTO

This photo shows Oliver with the couple from the photo at their mom's house, but this time, he and Jack are wearing tuxedos and Kate is wearing a wedding dress.

VAN
Hey, I didn't know you were a best
man.

OLIVER
Best what?

Oliver looks up and sees what Van is holding.

OLIVER
Oh. Yeah. Long time ago.

Van fiddles with the photo without speaking for a moment as
Oliver's fingers click clack click over his keyboard.

VAN
I'm a little worried about you,
Einstein. You need to, like, get
out more. Come down to the bar.

He opens the freezer and pulls out two fancy organic
pizzas, trying to decide between them.

OLIVER
Yeah, sure.

VAN
No, I mean seriously. How about
Tuesday?

Oliver types another line then shuts off his computer and
stands up. His movements are weary.

OLIVER
Ok, Van. Tuesday.

He stands, stretches a little, then exits the kitchen. Van
takes the pizza out of the box and starts to peel off the
plastic.

OLIVER (O.S.)
And save me a slice for once, for
chrissakes.

Van makes a face at Oliver's retreating back.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Alex and Eva watch Van and Oliver, in real time, on the video screen. Alex reaches over and shuts off the video. Eva stands and adjusts the corner of the rug.

ALEX

Did you know them? Jack and Kate?

EVA

Not really. We went out of few times. Kate had a thing for Oliver once. I don't think she liked me.

Alex waits for her to say more.

EVA

At some point we just stopped seeing them. I didn't even know he was the best man at their wedding.

She shakes her head, moving furniture slightly as she wanders the room.

EVA

Why are you asking me about them, anyway?

Alex pats the couch beside him for Eva to sit back down, and he turns the video screen back on.

INSERT VIDEO SCREEN

7. Eva
 - longterm - serious
 - a. first date
 - b. moving in
 - c. breakup
 - d. supplementary material

ALEX(OS)

Helping someone with their love life is about all the people they love, not just one.

The cursor stops at 7-d, which is highlighted briefly, and then fades out to reveal

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A middle-class house with a classic rock theme. Framed Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and other classic rock posters adorn the walls. Boxes of various sizes, some empty, some half-empty, suggest the owners have just recently moved in.

A younger and happy seeming Oliver sits at a table with KATE and JACK from the wedding photo, and a fourth, RANDY, sit playing cards at a round table in the dining room.

Nickels, quarters and a few crumpled bills illustrate the stakes. Kate, in an oversized AC/DC T-shirt, accepts a kiss from Jack as he sets down his cards upside down and gets up from his chair. Kate hides her cards as he tries to steal a peek. He feigns shock.

JACK

Another beer, anyone?

OLIVER

Great, thanks.

Randy shakes his head as he scrutinizes his cards. He throws them on the table, upside down, next to Oliver's discarded hand.

RANDY

I can't play with this crap!

Oliver and Kate exchange a look. Randy pushes back his chair and runs his hands through his hair.

RANDY

I need a smoke.

Jack re-enters the room with two beers. He hands one to Oliver and looks at Randy's retreating back.

JACK

Me, too.

Kate rolls her eyes. Jack shrugs, kisses the top of her head, and follows Randy outside. Kate calls after him:

KATE
I'm taking the pot.

He waves his hand dismissively toward her. Oliver smiles and helps her gather up the nickels, quarters, and crumpled up dollar bills. Her loot pile is quite large.

KATE
So how are you, Oliver, really?

OLIVER
Not bad.

Kate starts to say something, but hesitates. She scratches the back of her hand.

KATE
How's Eva?

OLIVER
Terrific. Adorable. She'll never be a great cook but... oh! And she's taking interior design classes.

Kate's mouth makes an "O". He smiles broadly.

OLIVER
I know, I know! It's not exactly my taste either, but she's very enthusiastic.

KATE
So things are good.

OLIVER
Yeah. I know you don't love her, but I thought you were sort of coming around?

Kate continues to fidget. Oliver's smile falls slightly.

KATE

It's just. God. I don't know what to do.

OLIVER

What? Come on. You know you can tell me anything.

KATE

I know. I know.

OLIVER

What about her?

KATE

It's just...

Her voice trails off and she frowns, looking at her hands. She takes a breath and the rest comes out in a rush.

KATE

I saw her with another man, Oliver. I mean, I'm pretty sure I did, and..

Her voice trails off again. Oliver sits back in his chair. He smiles and pats her hand.

OLIVER

Not a chance. We're very happy. It must have been someone else.

He stands, and bends to kiss her cheek. Jack and Randy come back in. Randy reads the display on his cell phone, then shoves it into his pocket.

JACK

I knew it! My wife and my best friend-

KATE

Oh shut up, Jack.

Kate's brow remains furrowed.

RANDY

I'm going to head out. The sitter has to go home and Tracy isn't home yet.

This sobers everyone.

KATE

Will you be ok, driving and... stuff?

Randy shrugs and sighs. He gives her a peck on the cheek and nods at Jack and Oliver. Oliver sits back down.

RANDY

Yeah. I guess. See you guys.
Love the house.

He smiles half-heartedly, then leaves. Jack starts to clear the table. He looks at Kate. She shrugs. He looks at Oliver. Kate picks up a few things and takes them into the kitchen. Jack sits down.

OLIVER

Randy and Tracy still having a rough time, I guess.

JACK

Yeah. They're both so bull-headed.

They are silent for a moment, drinking beer.

OLIVER

I couldn't live with Tracy. She's whacked.

JACK

Yeah. So. Things good with Eva?

OLIVER

Yeah, really good. No kitchen fires this week.

Jack smiles half-heartedly and leans back in his chair, fingering the label on his beer.

JACK

Did Kate-

OLIVER

Yeah, Kate told me but I'm sure it was a mistake. I appreciate you guys looking out for me, really I do.

JACK

Ok.

Jack frowns. Kate comes back in and sits down next to Jack. She absent-mindedly rubs his back.

OLIVER

And actually, her father was in town last week. If you really did see Eva, it was probably with her father.

Kate mumbles something.

OLIVER

What was that?

Jack clears his throat.

JACK

Oh, you know Katie. She's just jealous because she doesn't see you nearly as much as she used to.

He winks at her. Oliver stacks his coins as Kate continues to look miserable. She looks at Jack, but Jack only shrugs helplessly at her. She clears her throat.

KATE

He didn't seem... fatherly.

Oliver sighs.

OLIVER

Ok, sure, we're not a perfect couple like you guys.

JACK

Oh, don't be ridiculous. We were just-

KATE

We're not perfect, believe me.

Oliver slowly begins to lose his good humor. He knocks over the stack of nickels he was so carefully building.

OLIVER

Ok, Kate. Fine. Whatever. Jesus.

KATE

We want you to be happy, Olly.

Jack lays his hand on Oliver's arm.

JACK

Oliver, I-

Jack pulls his arm away and stands up.

OLIVER

What is wrong with you people? I said you made a mistake. I'll ask her, ok? Will that make you happy?

He gathers his coins, shaking his head, and shoves them into his pocket. He changes his mind and leaves the rest on the table.

OLIVER

Damn, I was having such a nice time. Thanks for the beer.

JACK

Sit down, Oliver. Don't be an ass. She just-

KATE

Please don't go, Oliver. I didn't mean to-

OLIVER

Yes, Kate, of course. You didn't mean to. Have a nice night.

He leaves.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva and Alex continue to watch the video screen as it fades out. Eva sits back and sighs, then stands paces.

EVA

So that's why he stopped seeing them. He never told me.

ALEX

Never asked about...?

EVA

Not once. Poor Olly. What did I do?

She sits down again and covers her face with her hands.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

Van and another bartender, CRISTAL, try to keep up with all the orders coming in. Cristal is mid-40s, very efficient and with a few bottle tossing tricks.

Oliver arrives and takes one of the few remaining seats in the middle of the bar. He waves to Van, then watches as another woman, GRETCHEN, moves aside a small white "reserved" placard at the seat closest to the kitchen. Gretchen rummages through a bulging backpack.

Gretchen is mid 30s, cute and a bit of a mess, wearing earth tones and a ponytail. She neatly lines up Kafka's *Complete Stories* and a copy of *Snow Crash*, two pens, and several notebooks in front of her. Unhappy with their

arrangement, she moves some things around until she is satisfied, then goes back to the backpack.

Cristal deftly drops a clear drink with a huge slice of lime in front of Gretchen between orders.

CRISTAL

Vodka tonic. The great writing inducer.

GRETCHEN

Hope so. Damn paper is due next week, my laptop is fucked, and my brother is driving me nuts—

Suddenly she notices Oliver watching her. She smiles, embarrassed, then goes back to rummaging in her backpack.

Van tries to make his way over to Oliver but is stopped by a frantic waitress with an order. He holds up a finger to Oliver, fills two draft beer mugs, and gives them to the waitress. Van gets a step closer to Oliver but is stopped by another waitress. Over the waitress' head, Van notices something.

Oliver, turning to follow Van's gaze, finds Jack standing behind him. Oliver and Jack both seem very surprised. After a pause, they both speak at the same time.

OLIVER

Jack. Wow. What are you—

JACK

Olly! Sorry I'm late, I—

They both fall silent.

JACK

You didn't know I was coming, did you?

OLIVER

Nope.

They both turn to look at Van, who is watching intently. Suddenly Van remembers something very important he needs to get from the back and disappears. Jack and Oliver face each other again.

JACK

Well, it's great to see you, man.
How about a drink?

OLIVER

I don't... sure.

INT. RESTAURANT - A BIT LATER

Oliver and Jack, each with a beer, sit at a booth near the restroom sign.

JACK

Don't be pissed at Van. He's a
great kid.

OLIVER

A great kid who's driving me nuts.

Jack stifles a laugh.

JACK

So how you been, man? Katie would
love to see you. You should visit.

Oliver is only half-listening. He is watching something. Jack turns to see Gretchen, the woman from the bar, as she comes down the aisle toward the restrooms. After she's gone, Oliver looks back at Jack.

OLIVER

What was that?

JACK

She was cute.

OLIVER

What? Who?

JACK
That woman who just walked by?

OLIVER
Women suck. Anyway. I've been a
hermit, I guess.

Jack nods sympathetically, encouraging him to continue.
But Oliver does not elaborate.

OLIVER
Eh, what's good here?

He opens his menu.

JACK
You seem so, I don't know,
different. Dating much?

Oliver snorts. He shakes his head. Just then, a beautiful
woman walks by the table on the arm of an attractive man.
Oliver waits a moment until they are out of earshot.

OLIVER
Take that woman.

Jack looks up.

JACK
What woman?

OLIVER
That woman who just walked by with
her boyfriend. Probably screwed
some stranger after he left for
work this morning.

JACK
Oliver. Damn.

He waits to see if Oliver has anything further to add. They
page silently through their menus.

JACK

So how about resurrecting the old
poker night? Our place. All you
have to do is show up.

OLIVER

Eh, I don't know.

A waitress brings two beers and basket of rolls and sets
them down on the table. Jack looks up at her.

JACK

Thanks.

Oliver reaches for a roll and tears it open.

OLIVER

Miss my charm and banter, do you?

JACK

Nope, I just want to win some money
from your sorry ass.

OLIVER

Well, if you're gonna be all sweet
about it.

JACK

Great.

OLIVER

Randy?

JACK

A very ugly divorce.

OLIVER

I've had the blues... and the reds
and the pinks.

They finish the lyric in unison.

JACK
Love stinks.

OLIVER
Love stinks.

JACK
Anyway, Kate knows someone looking
for a poker game.

OLIVER
Kate. God. I was such an ass.

JACK
It's forgotten, Oliver. Really.

OLIVER
Ok, ok. I'll bring Van. He sucks
at poker.

They grin at each other, relaxing, as if the old camaraderie may still be intact after all.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE - DAY

Van sits at the kitchen table in boxer shorts and a short open robe, with very messy hair. He eats pizza. Behind him, pale smoke appears to be just starting to stream from the oven.

Oliver enters the kitchen in plaid lounge pants and a T-shirt.

OLIVER
Pizza for breakfast. Did you save
me any?

Van stands up, and as he turns to gesture toward the oven, smoke coming out faster now, the smoke alarm goes off with an ear-piercing shriek.

Both Oliver and Van cover their ears. Oliver rushes to the oven, flips the knob, and pulls open the oven door. Van gestures ineffectually with a piece of pizza.

OLIVER

How many times do I have to tell
you? Do not shut the door on
broil!

Van nods sheepishly, dropping his pizza onto his plate. He crosses to the sink and climbs onto the counter to turn off the smoke alarm. Oliver carefully slides a blackened half pizza out of the oven and sets it on the stove. He shakes his head.

Van gets the smoke alarm shut off. He climbs back down, goes back to the table and picks up his plate with one half-eaten slice left. He offers it to Oliver. Oliver waves him off with a long-suffering look. Van sits back down.

Oliver goes to the fridge and scans the shelves. Finding nothing, he opens the freezer and pulls out an ice cream bar. He sits down at the table, unwrapping it. He opens the laptop and turns it on.

VAN

Breakfast of champions.

OLIVER

No doubt.

VAN

So I think I found an apartment.

OLIVER

Oh?

VAN

Yeah, little dive downtown. Pretty cool, though.

OLIVER

Maybe my apartment won't burn down
this year after all.

Van makes a juvenile face and picks the newspaper back up. Oliver types with his free hand.

OLIVER
So Van, I got the strangest email
last night.

Van takes a bite. He raises his eyebrows, looks around the
kitchen, and tries, badly, to whistle.

VAN
Hmm?

OLIVER
Why yes, it seems I've been signed
up for an online service called
Webflame.

VAN
No kidding. My goodness, who would
do such a thing?

Oliver narrows his eyes and shrugs dramatically. Van
pushes back his empty chair and carries his empty plate to
the sink.

OLIVER
Gosh, I just can't imagine.

Van sets the plate in the sink but stays on the far side of
the kitchen.

VAN
So you got some hits?

OLIVER
So it seems.

Van watches Oliver for a moment, takes a few steps forward,
and pauses.

OLIVER
Oh for christ's sake, sit down.

Van does an impromptu jig and clasps Oliver by the
shoulders. He sits down beside him and pounds the table,
leaning over to look at the laptop screen.

VAN
Let's see what we... er. Let's see
what you got.

Van sits and scoots over next to him.

VAN
Come on, let's take a look.

OLIVER
You're so interested, you look.

Oliver stands up and disappears down the hall. Van pulls
the computer over in front of him.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN

WebFlame's main page, showing a variety of attractive
people, all different ages and ethnicities. A large box in
the upper corner is flashing "You have new mail!" Van
clicks a button that says "INBOX - Oliver1972." The inbox
opens. It says, "You have three new messages."

VAN (OS)
Three! Now we're talking.

He clicks on the first message, and reads aloud as the text
appears on the screen.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN

"TO: Oliver1972
FROM: Partygal2004

Dear Oliver1972,

I love your story. I come from
Russia and look for a very nice man
lik you. I put nice picture for
you. Please writ me your address.

Love to you, Partygal2004"

CLOSEUP OF SCREEN - PHOTO OF PARTYGAL2004

A nearly naked, blurry, photo of a woman of indeterminate age in a sparsely decorated room.

BACK TO SCENE

Oliver has returned in shorts and a plain T-shirt. He reads over Van's shoulder. Van slowly scratches the side of his face, somewhat taken aback.

OLIVER

Um. No.

VAN

Right. Next.

VAN

My goodness. That's... um.

OLIVER

Webflame. Not one of your best ideas.

Oliver sits down and smacks Van on the back of the head. Van frowns comically, rubbing his head.

VAN

Hold on, hold on. There's more.

Van clicks the mouse. He scowls, reading the text.

VAN

Want a better sex life but can't afford Viagra or penis enlargement procedures? Our breakthrough herbal supplement is guaranteed to-

OLIVER

Brilliant.

VAN

Ok, ok. I have a good feeling about the next one.

Van reads aloud as the text scrolls across the screen.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN

"TO: Oliver1972
FROM: DiosGypsy

Hey Oliver-
Drop a line if you like. Profile
attached.

WebFlame Profile: SWF, (34),
curvy, does not wear heels. Likes
science fiction, computer games,
cinema ale houses and horseback
riding. Ronnie James Dio fanatic.
Graduate student - German Lit.
Favorite films: Wings of Desire,
LoTR, The Station Agent.

Seeking: Generally sane, cute
tree-hugger type."

BACK TO SCENE

Van sits back in his chair, thumping Oliver on the back.

VAN
I like her!

OLIVER
Forget it. You like her, you date
her.

VAN
Nonsense. Do you need me to
dictate a reply? Let's start with-

Oliver pulls the computer back. He glances at the email
then mutters as he closes the laptop.

OLIVER
In case I hadn't mentioned it
lately... women suck.

Van frowns as Oliver walks over to the couch, pushes aside the pile of sheets, grabs the remote and turns on the TV, ending the conversation.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

The room has undergone another overhaul, and now looks like something out of Arabian nights. Gold, purple and olive-colored sheets billow softly from the ceiling and walls. Instead of armchairs there are two plush ottomans with gold trim beside a low, oval coffee table.

The bar is gold and black, with brass goblets lined up beneath a long antique mirror. The client information binder lies open on the bar. Eva repositions the ottomans as Alex enters from outside the room.

ALEX

I see you've been spending your time wisely.

EVA

It helps me think. Plus, I got this vibe you didn't like the 70's thing.

Alex reaches down and strokes one of the ottomans.

ALEX

Yeah, not my thing. This is, um, this...

Eva's smile falters.

EVA

You don't like this either? Don't you have any taste?

Alex crosses his arms, insulted.

ALEX

Yes, I'd like to think I do, actually.

EVA
Coulda fooled me...

ALEX
Let's talk about Oliver, Eva.

Eva frowns and sits down.

EVA
Yeah, ok. I'm sorry. I'm a bit stressed.

Alex nods in sympathy.

ALEX
It's ok.

EVA
I read a little bit.

She gestures toward the open binder.

EVA
About how Oliver doesn't know that I'm dead. And stuff.

Alex nods.

EVA
So I'll just knock on his door. What's he gonna do, kill me?

ALEX
It's a start.

INT. VAN'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Van and Oliver maneuver a slightly tattered couch through the front door and into a living room filled with boxes, an armchair and a funky entertainment center. It appears as though most of the moving is finished.

Empty beer cans litter the top of a small round table. Jack, tired and sweaty, sits at the table finishing a beer.

JACK

I better run. Katie wants to see
some new slasher flick tonight.

He makes a face suggesting slasher flicks are not his
favorite. Oliver shakes his hand.

OLIVER

Thanks for coming out, Jack.

VAN

Yeah, I really appreciate it.

Jack stands and walks toward the door.

JACK

Any time, man.

Oliver starts to say something, stops. Jack opens the door
to go.

OLIVER

How long you been married?

Jack turns back.

JACK

I guess it's-

He pauses, counts silently on his fingers.

JACK

Eight years now. Damn.

He pauses, thoughtful.

JACK

We have our ups and downs, you
know, and I complain. But you
should really..

Jack shrugs slightly at Van, then addresses Oliver again.

JACK

Whatever you need to do, man.
Katie's looking forward to seeing
you. You too, Van.

Jack waves and leaves. Oliver, suddenly looking very tired,
sits heavily on the couch while Van fusses with his boxes.

OLIVER

You want to grab something to eat?

VAN

Actually, I have sort of a date.

OLIVER

Oh, that's great.

Oliver stands to leave.

VAN

It's not for a while yet, if you
want to hang out—

OLIVER

No, it's cool.

Van closes the box he was working with, and sits in the
armchair.

VAN

So, Oliver. There's something I
should probably tell you.

OLIVER

Ok.

VAN

You know that woman I liked, the
one who answered your Webflame ad?

Oliver sits down, looking confused.

OLIVER

That's your date? A woman?

VAN
No, no. But, um—

OLIVER
What did you do?

VAN
I sort of answered the ad. For
you.

Oliver's voice lowers. His eyes narrow. He stands slowly.

OLIVER
You did what?

VAN
I'm sorry, man, I just—

OLIVER
I appreciate what you did about
Jack, but this bullshit meddling
needs to stop. Goddamn.

He slams the door on his way out. Van runs his hands
through his hair.

VAN
Crap. That went poorly.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Oliver enters his apartment, dressed as he was at Van's
place. He throws his keys on the kitchen table and opens
the computer. He grabs a beer from the fridge and turns on
the stereo before sitting down at the table.

There is a KNOCK at the door. He frowns and stands up,
kicking back his chair.

OLIVER
That better be a Jehovah's Witness
and not you, Van. Because this time
I will kick your—

Oliver opens the door.

EXT. OLIVER'S DOORSTEP - CONTINUOUS

Eva is standing on the doorstep, dressed smartly in dark jeans and a blazer. She attempts a smile. Oliver realizes his mouth is open. He closes it.

OLIVER

Evie.

EVA

Hi, Olly.

A moment passes.

OLIVER

What the hell are you doing here?

Eva glances past him into the house.

EVA

Are you busy? I could come back.

OLIVER

Come back? For what? What do you want?

She falters.

EVA

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come.
I'm sorry, Oliver.

She turns to go. Oliver hesitates for a split second, then gently touches her shoulder. She turns back.

OLIVER

You may as well come in, since
you're already here.

She nods, thankful, and moves past him into the house.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Eva stands awkwardly in the doorway as Oliver moves past into the living room. Eva follows him.

OLIVER

So.

EVA

This is a nice house, Olly. Thank you for letting me come in.

Oliver shrugs. Eva recognizes one of the nature scenes near the bookshelves and goes over to it.

EVA

I always liked this one.

She touches it lightly, then turns back around to face him. Oliver has taken up a position across the room, his arms folded across his chest.

OLIVER

What do you want, Evie?

EVA

I just wanted to tell you—

She stops and takes a deep breath.

OLIVER

Yes?

EVA

—that I am very sorry. You didn't deserve that. What happened.

Oliver nods. His stern expression falters slightly.

OLIVER

No. Anything else?

She shakes her head, looking miserable. She turns back toward the bookshelf, hiding tears perhaps. She notices

the china dog (which is back on the shelf despite Oliver's big show of throwing it away in front of Van). She picks it up.

EVA

You kept it. I forgot how much it looked like Henry.

Oliver shrugs.

OLIVER

How is the little monster?

Eva's face falls. She gently sets the china figure back onto the shelf. She mumbles something unintelligible. She turns to face him.

EVA

We-

She covers her mouth with her hand for one second, then pulls it away and smooths the front of her jacket.

EVA

He. He got hit by a car. And he wasn't so lucky the second time.

OLIVER

I'm sorry. It hurts to lose something you love, doesn't it?

She nods, shuddering slightly.

EVA

I just wanted to see you happy. To see that you moved on.

Oliver shrugs.

OLIVER

Not your business, Evie.

EVA

No. I know. You're right.

Oliver walks toward the door. Eva watches him for a moment, touches the dog one more time, then follows Oliver out. He opens the door.

OLIVER

If you must know, I've been dating quite a bit. I don't think about you anymore, Evie.

Eva nods. She glances back at the bookshelf. She exits.

Oliver goes back to his computer and opens it. He starts typing.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

He pulls up Webflame's main page. It says "You have no new messages." He clicks a button that says "INBOX - Oliver1972." The inbox opens. It says, "You have no new messages." He opens the deleted folder, and double clicks on the message from "DiosGypsy." It reads:

Hey Oliver-
Nice to hear from you. Do you know
the Macaroni Grill on Alafaya? I
know the bartender. How about
Wednesday around 7:00?
Gretchen

BACK TO SCENE

Oliver scratches his head, his brow furrowed. He mouths "Gretchen," as if trying to remember if he's heard the name before.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

He hits the reply button and replies.

"Gretchen-
See you Wednesday at 7:00.
Oliver"

He pauses over the send button then finally hits it.

BACK TO SCENE

He closes the Webflame page and closes the computer.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Alex and Eva watch the screen, which shows Oliver at his computer in his apartment. Oliver stands up, on the screen, pushes in his chair, and disappears down the hall. The screen goes dark.

Eva jumps up and grabs Alex's arm excitedly.

EVA

Omigod. Omigod. I did it! He's going on a date to spite me.

Alex smiles. He gently removes Eva's iron grip from his arm.

ALEX

It's a start.

Eva's smile disappears.

EVA

A start? What do you mean?

ALEX

Well, if he's going on a date to spite you, do you really think his heart will be in it?

Eva sits back down.

EVA

I'm going to have to do more, right?

Alex nods.

EVA

Sucky.

Alex stands up. He yawns.

ALEX

Get some rest. You've got a lot of thinking to do.

Eva nods unhappily. Alex crosses the room and disappears through the invisible door. Eva lies down on the couch, fidgets and changes position several times. Finally she sits back up.

She searches beneath the cushions for the remote and pulls it out. She aims it at the back wall, pushing buttons, but nothing happens. She fiddles with it, a determined look on her face. Finally, the video screen comes on.

INSERT - VIDEO SCREEN

Oliver is asleep in bed, in a very sparsely decorated bedroom. Faint moonlight streams through the sides of the window shade.

BACK TO SCENE

Eva stands and watches the screen. She tiptoes over to the wall and touches the side of Oliver's sleeping face. She wipes at her eyes, then backs up to the couch and sits back down, watching.

INT. UPSCALE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Oliver and his date, Gretchen Bales, are sitting at the restaurant bar where Van works. Gretchen is the same woman who came in with the books the night Oliver met Jack. Cristal brings them two beers.

GRETCHEN

Thanks, Cris.

She turns to Oliver.

GRETCHEN

This is my friend, Cristal. She's good for a few free drinks.

Cristal narrows her eyes, but good-naturedly.

CRISTAL
Nice to meet you...

GRETCHEN
Oliver.

CRISTAL
Nice to meet you, Oliver.

OLIVER
I believe you know my brother, Van.

CRISTAL
Holy crap! You're Olly.

OLIVER
Yeah, yeah.

Two customers take a seat at the opposite end of the bar. Cristal turns slightly so Oliver can't see and mouths "cute" to Gretchen before attending to her other customers. Oliver lifts his beer. He seems distracted.

OLIVER
Nice to meet you.

Gretchen and Oliver clink their beers.

GRETCHEN
Her husband has a Kafka class with me.

OLIVER
Kafka.

A pause.

OLIVER
Guy turns into a fly, or something?

GRETCHEN

Cockroach.

OLIVER

Ouch.

They both take a drink, and the silence stretches between them for a few moments.

GRETCHEN

So you're an engineer? What kinda stuff?

OLIVER

I work with city governments mostly, trying to keep the water supply safe.

GRETCHEN

So, how's that going? Any recent mercury contaminations? Nuclear waste, maybe?

OLIVER

So far, so good. More or less.

He takes a drink, looking around at everything but Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

A servant of the people. Very noble.

OLIVER

Not really. Just a lot of redundant paperwork.

They are quiet for another couple moments.

GRETCHEN

I may try teaching high school.

OLIVER

Another meaningful profession.

GRETCHEN

I don't know. Might just be a lot
of Neanderthal teenagers.

Gretchen draws lines in the condensation on her glass with
her finger.

GRETCHEN

So what else do you do? Besides
crediting dead but brilliant German
writers with bad horror flicks?

OLIVER

Oh I don't know. The Jeff Goldblum
one had some merit.

GRETCHEN

Hmm.

OLIVER

Oh, come on. Remember when he was
almost totally Brundle Fly and the
only way he could eat was to spew-

Gretchen holds up her hand, grimacing.

GRETCHEN

Oh my god. I remember. Foul.

Oliver smiles.

GRETCHEN

Two points for you then.

OLIVER

Ah. So we're going with the point
system.

GRETCHEN

The strength of the point system,
of course, is its simplicity.

Oliver nods seriously.

GRETCHEN
So. Are ya hungry? Feel like
maybe going elsewhere?

OLIVER
I don't know. I-

GRETCHEN
Oh, that's cool. It was just a
thought.

He regards her for another moment.

OLIVER
Actually, why not? Let's go.

They wave at Cristal on their way out. Cristal looks up
just long enough to give Gretchen a thumbs up.

INT. RESTAURANT LOBBY - NIGHT

Oliver holds the door for Gretchen. He follows behind her
and stumbles over the exposed edge of the carpet. Catching
his balance, he is relieved to see that she didn't notice.

INT. OLIVER'S BMW - NIGHT

Oliver concentrates seriously on driving because of rain.
Gretchen admires the expensive stereo in Oliver's car, lots
of color and flashing lights. She notices a CD case on the
floor and picks it up. Oliver glances over nervously but
doesn't say anything.

GRETCHEN
Let's have a look. Oh! Black
Sabbath. Classic.

OLIVER
You got that right.

Suddenly the car makes a loud POP, and then a lurch, and
then the car goes BUMP, BUMP, BUMP.

OLIVER
Oh shit!

The car skids lightly before stopping on the shoulder.

GRETCHEN
It's OK. Probably just a flat.

Oliver pulls off the road onto the shoulder. He pulls out his cell phone and dials.

OLIVER
Hello, I need a tow. We're on I-4.
Near Fairfield.

Gretchen runs her hands through her hair, grips it tightly for a moment, then lets go. She sighs.

OLIVER
Two hours?! Are you kidding me?
Fine. Bye.

GRETCHEN
We could change it.

Oliver looks at her. The comment clearly surprised him. He almost smiles.

OLIVER
True, true. Wish it wasn't
raining.

GRETCHEN
Oh for chrissakes. Got a jack?

Oliver scoffs at her.

OLIVER
Don't be ridiculous. Of course
I'll do it. You stay in the car.

GRETCHEN
I won't melt.

OLIVER
Don't be silly, I-

GRETCHEN

Don't you be silly. I'll hold the flashlight at least.

OLIVER

Are you always this argumentative?

GRETCHEN

You betcha.

She grins. Oliver sighs. He reaches forward and pops the trunk as they both get out of the car.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

The room décor has changed again. The tile floor is now black, with a lavender area rug, a dark wood coffee table and deep yellow armchairs. The wall is dark yellow with lavender cloud accents. Eva is trying to find the right spot for a tall brass lamp.

Alex enters the room. He seems pleasantly surprised.

ALEX

You've been busy again, I see.

EVA

There's a whole bunch more stuff I want to put in, like-

ALEX

Actually, could we keep it like this for a while? I like it.

Eva nods, disappointed but taking it well. Alex produces the remote control from his back pocket and aims it at the back wall.

ALEX

Besides, we want to see how Oliver's date is going.

Eva claps her hands together.

EVA

Oh! Great! I think.

Alex pats her gently on the shoulder. They take their seats as the scene comes up on the video screen.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The rain has stopped, but Oliver and Gretchen are both drenched. Passing cars illuminate the scene briefly before flashing past.

EVA (V.O.)

Poor things, they look like drowned rats.

ALEX (V.O.)

Shhhh. Just watch.

The car is up on a jack, with the flat tire beside it in the grass. Gretchen shines a flashlight into the trunk while Oliver struggles to pull out the spare tire. The trunk is almost spotlessly clean.

GRETCHEN

Did you clean out your car recently?

OLIVER

No.

She opens her mouth to say something more but stops. Oliver hefts the tire out and leans it against the car. Gretchen sets down the flashlight to help him pick up the flat. Oliver waves her off.

OLIVER

I got it. I got it.

Gretchen shrugs and picks the flashlight back up. She pulls up the carpet so he can put the tire into the well. Oliver nods a thank you. They go back to the side of the car.

OLIVER
Can you hand me one of the lugs?

A pause.

OLIVER
Please.

Gretchen shines the light at the grass next to the tire,
then at Oliver.

GRETCHEN
I thought you were going to put
them in your pocket. I don't have
any pockets.

OLIVER
I thought you were going to hold
them.

GRETCHEN
No. They must be right here
somewhere.

She shines the light around at the ground. Oliver kneels
and fits the spare onto the car. He feels around in the
grass and finds two of the lug nuts.

OLIVER
Here we are.

Gretchen kneels beside him, following his hands with the
light. He lightly screws on one lug nut, then puts the
second next to it.

GRETCHEN
You should really do the opposite
one next.

Oliver starts to say something flip, then stops. He looks
at her, and seems startled to find her sitting so close to
him. He clears his throat.

OLIVER
You're right. Thank you.

He feels around in the grass for the remaining lug nuts, with no luck. Gretchen feels around in the grass, also with no luck. She either doesn't notice, or doesn't care, that her top has fallen open somewhat. Oliver notices, then pretends he didn't.

Their muddy hands touch. Oliver pulls his hand back quickly. Gretchen just looks at him curiously. A moment passes. Oliver looks away but doesn't move back. Finally he looks back. He kisses her. She kisses back.

Suddenly, Oliver pulls back and turns around. He stands up, coughs, and wipes his hands on his pants.

OLIVER
Need to find the other lugs.

He reaches out his hand and helps Gretchen to stand. He seems embarrassed. Gretchen shines the light off the road and into the grass. She starts to say something, but stops.

Oliver takes a step off the road and into the grass, slips slightly, and turns to say something to laugh it off. Just then he completely loses his balance, a combination of the slick grass and a dip in the landscape.

Gretchen loudly catches her breath and shines the light after him. There is a muffled CRACK, perhaps a human head connecting with a tree.

GRETCHEN
Oliver?

No answer.

GRETCHEN
Oliver!

FADE OUT

GRETCHEN (V.O.)
(panicked)
Hello? I need an ambulance on I-4
at Fairbanks.

FADE IN

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Gretchen sits next to Oliver's bed. Oliver appears to be sleeping. He has a small bandage on his forehead and a cast on his right arm. A soft KNOCK at the door. It is Cristal. They hug.

CRISTAL

Are you ok? You're a mess!

GRETCHEN

Yeah, well.

Cristal peers over toward the bed.

CRISTAL

He really is cute. No brain damage, right?

Gretchen bonks her lightly on the head.

GRETCHEN

Concussion. No permanent damage.

She glances at him worriedly. A cell phone RINGS. Both Cristal and Gretchen pat their pockets out of habit, then look toward Oliver's phone at his bedside. Gretchen walks over and picks it up. They look at each other. Gretchen shrugs and answers it.

GRETCHEN

Hello?

(pause)

No, he isn't-

She looks at Cristal. Cristal shrugs.

GRETCHEN

Look, are you a friend of his? His brother? Oh, Van! Thank goodness. You're probably going to want to come down here.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva is watching the screen with her hand over her mouth.
Alex looks equally shocked.

EVA
That was crazy. Didn't you think
that was crazy?

Alex nods slowly in agreement.

EVA
I don't think she's right for him.

ALEX
Oh?

EVA
Too weird. I mean, I'm sure she's
nice enough.

ALEX
I see.

EVA
Don't you think? I mean, she isn't
very attractive.

ALEX
Eva. They seem to get on quite
well.

EVA
Ok, ok! She's nice. She's cute.
Smart. Damn. Why couldn't she be
a dumb, ugly chick. This blows.

She looks up at Alex sheepishly.

EVA
Sorry, sorry. Ok, so what now?

ALEX

What we need to do now is review the end of your relationship. I'm afraid it won't be very pleasant.

Eva stands up. She shakes her head in horror.

EVA

No! Do we have to?

ALEX

We do. In many ways, Oliver is stuck in that moment in time. You need to see it from the outside.

EVA

And you're going to watch too?

Alex nods.

EVA

No way! No. Way. I can't.

Alex waits patiently. Eva paces, agitated. Finally she sits back down and nods, resigned.

EVA

Fine. Let's get it over with.

Alex aims the remote at the screen and pushes a button.

INSERT VIDEO SCREEN

7. Eva

longterm - serious

a. first date

b. moving in

c. breakup

d. supplementary material

The cursor stops at 7-c, which is highlighted briefly, and then fades out to reveal

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Oliver and Eva are finishing lunch under the shade of an umbrella on a bright day in downtown Winter Park. A waiter comes by and clears their plates. Another refills their iced tea.

Oliver is clearly happy. He reaches forward and pushes a strand of hair from Eva's forehead. Eva smiles at him, but she seems distracted.

OLIVER

You seem tired. Do you want to head home?

Before Eva can answer, a silly jingle plays as someone's cell phone at a neighboring table RINGS.

OLIVER

Hey, that reminds me. Someone called while you were in the shower this morning. English guy? He didn't leave his name.

Eva's head snaps up in surprise. She frowns imperceptibly before smiling brightly.

EVA

Probably a wrong number.

Oliver shakes his head.

OLIVER

No, he asked for you. Then Van called and I completely forgot about it.

EVA

Hmm.

OLIVER

Who do you know that's English?

Eva stands up.

EVA

I think I mentioned him once or twice. That long distance relationship?

Oliver stands. He pulls out his wallet and leaves several bills on the table, then pushes in his chair, frowning.

OLIVER

Oh.

He looks at her, expecting more information, but she doesn't offer any. They walk to the car, a black, late model sportscar, and get in.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Oliver starts up the car. He looks over at Eva, who is avoiding his eyes.

OLIVER

So. You still keep in touch with that guy?

EVA

He emailed me a couple months ago.

She leans forward and picks up a CD case from the floor, and looks through it. Oliver backs out of the parking space and onto the road.

OLIVER

So you've been emailing your ex for two months?

Eva shrugs, frowning. She looks at him quickly then looks away. She nods.

OLIVER

I see.

Oliver opens his mouth to speak again, then closes it. They drive in silence.

EXT. OLIVER AND EVA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Oliver, clearly unhappy, unlocks the door while Eva stands a few feet away, staring at her hands. He has momentary trouble fitting the key into the lock, and mutters angrily under his breath.

INT. OLIVER AND EVA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Oliver throws the keys on a small table in the entryway. The apartment is furnished sparsely in blue and black, with the occasional pink accent. One or two nature photographs are recognizable from Oliver's present-day apartment. Eva comes in behind him, pulling the door closed.

Henry, the little brown ball of fur, runs from the back of the apartment, yips happily and jumps up against Eva's knees. Eva picks him up.

A vase of pink long stemmed roses and two empty champagne glasses are arranged on the kitchen table. The kitchen ceiling has three smoke alarms, and the living room has two.

Oliver goes into the living room and begins pacing. His voice is calm and measured.

OLIVER

Evie. Please come here and explain this.

Eva walks past him and sits on the couch. She puts Henry down and shoos him away.

EVA

He just... It was out of the blue, the email.

OLIVER

So, almost three years go by and he just emails out of the blue to say hello?

EVA

Yeah, sort of. And to tell me he moved. To, um, Tampa.

Oliver backs up against a chair and sits down. He runs his hands through his hair.

OLIVER

Tampa.

He takes a deep breath.

OLIVER

And are you... Have you seen him since he moved to Tampa?

Eva spreads her hands awkwardly. She picks up a pillow and hugs it to her chest. She nods. Her voice drops to a whisper.

EVA

He drove over. A couple times.

OLIVER

He drove over a couple times.

Oliver stands up slowly. Eva shrinks back, but he doesn't move toward her. He clasps his hands above his head.

OLIVER

Did you sleep with him?

Eva does not look up, or move. Oliver drops his arms to his sides.

OLIVER

Did you sleep with him?

Eva nods once, ever so slightly.

OLIVER

How many times?

Eva shakes her head, miserable. Oliver's voice rises just a little.

OLIVER

How many times?

EVA

A couple. I don't know.

Oliver takes three strides to the kitchen table, grabs the edge with his right hand and wrenches it upward. It tips sideways and CRASHES to the floor, along with the vase of pink roses and the two empty glasses.

Henry barks. Oliver walks down the hall and disappears into a side room, slamming the door. Eva stands up. She quiets the dog, then notices the roses for the first time.

In the pool of water left on the floor, is a note. She bends down to read it.

INSERT - THE NOTE

"Evie,
Marry me.
-Oliver"

BACK TO SCENE

Eva covers her mouth with her hand. Henry whimpers and licks her foot.

EVA

(a whisper)

Olly.

OLIVER (O.S.)

Get out. And take your little dog,
too.

FADE OUT

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva and Alex sit motionless, watching the black screen. Eva is rubbing tears from her eyes, while Alex looks away, embarrassed.

EVA

I sure fucked that up.

She wipes her face again, then stands. Alex reaches out to pat her kindly on the arm. She smiles at him sadly.

EVA
I was such an idiot.

ALEX
The Brit... ?

EVA
Repulsive personal habits. Didn't last two months. I don't even know why I did it!

ALEX
Boredom?

EVA
Maybe. Maybe Oliver was too damn nice all the time. God, I'm such a-

She covers her mouth in alarm, staring up at the ceiling.

EVA
Sorry, sorry. I do that a lot, don't I?

She looks over at Alex.

ALEX
Taking some divine name in vain? Yes, you do. But she is pretty cool about it, for the most part.

EVA
Well, isn't that interesting.

ALEX
Eva. The Brit. Focus.

Eva nods. She sits back down, resting her hands on her knees.

Alex aims the remote at the screen and pushes a button.

INSERT VIDEO SCREEN

- 7. Eva
 - longterm - serious
 - a. first date
 - b. moving in
 - c. breakup
 - d. supplementary material

The cursor stops at 7-c (again), which is highlighted briefly, and then fades out to reveal

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Eva is sitting on the edge of the bed, which is neatly made. She is wearing a short black slipdress, and removing her shoes.

A man appears in the bathroom doorway, unbuttoning his shirt. He is not enormously handsome, but his gestures and the way he is looking at Eva suggest a man who is used to being in charge. He has several tattoos. He speaks with a wonderful and very charming English accent.

ENGLISHMAN

So, darling. Did you miss me?

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva yanks the remote from Alex's hand and pushes buttons until the video screen goes black. She makes a face, and squirms a bit, embarrassed.

EVA

Ok, ok! We've covered what a horrible, ungrateful witch I am.

A pause. She coughs, and smoothes her hair with both hands.

EVA

So, Alex. What are you in for, anyway?

ALEX

Oh, let's not get into that just now. This is about you.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cristal and Gretchen are standing in the hallway, whispering to themselves. Van, dressed in his signature, loud style, is reading room numbers as he approaches.

CRISTAL

Hey, Van.

VAN

Hey.

GRETCHEN

He's going to be fine, really.
Busted arm, a clean break, and mild concussion.

She gestures toward the closed door beside them. Van smiles and pats her on the shoulder. He hugs Cristal.

CRISTAL

I'm the moral support.

Just then the door to Oliver's room opens and a young, attractive man in a white coat comes out. Van looks at him appreciatively, his eyebrows rising slightly.

VAN

Hi, I'm the brother. You must be the doctor? How is he?

YOUNG MAN

He's fine, just fine. I'm Ben.

He points at his name badge.

BEN

Just the nurse.

VAN

Very good, very good. We
appreciate all your good work.

Van smiles broadly, looking past Ben at the door. He
gestures at it with his head.

VAN

So, Ben. Is it safe to go in? Is
the old boy decent?

BEN

Of course, go ahead in.

Ben turns to go, then turns back.

BEN

Nice to meet you..

Van grins and sticks out his hand again.

VAN

Van. Nice to meet you, too.

Ben nods at the women and leaves. Van turns to Gretchen.

VAN

Aside from the breakdown and the
trip to the hospital... ?

GRETCHEN

Not bad. I guess.

Van nods and opens the door to the room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An ordinary, sterile hospital room, with the requisite
pitcher and plastic cup on a small table near the bed. Van
approaches Oliver, who appears to be sleeping.

VAN

Yo. Casanova.

Oliver slowly opens one eye. He scowls at Van. He closes his eye.

OLIVER
Shut it, dorkboy.

Van grins and sits down on the side of the bed.

VAN
Good, good. Witty comeback cells still intact. Well, as much as they ever were.

OLIVER
God, Van, what a horrid night.

VAN
Oh, I don't know. Your nurse is awfully cute.

Oliver opens his eyes. He rubs the side of his head.

VAN
So your very kind date is waiting in the hall. I like her. A bit sassy, am I right?

OLIVER
Oh, god. Tell her to go home. Tell her thanks and to go home. And tell her sorry for the drama.

He pauses, wincing as his hand touches the bandage on his head.

OLIVER
God, how could I face her again? So fucking embarrassing.

VAN
Oh, I don't know, Einstein. She strikes me as the type that would take this in stride.

OLIVER

It was weird you know, dating
again. But she was kind of tough.
Pretty cool, I guess.

He shakes his head. Van stands up and walks toward the
door. Oliver shakes his head.

VAN

Oh come on, let's ask her.

Van pushes the door open and looks into the hall. He looks
both ways, then comes back in, shaking his head.

VAN

I guess they left.

OLIVER

Good.

Oliver sighs, closing his eyes.

OLIVER

Thanks for coming, bud. Drugs
kicking in. See you tomorrow?

VAN

You got it. Sleep tight.

Van reaches over to ruffle Oliver's hair. Oliver weakly
smacks his hand away. He closes his eyes.

OLIVER

Night.

Van goes out.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Van walks away and around the corner, Eva steps out of a
shadowy corner. She approaches Oliver's door, opens it,
and goes in.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eva approaches the bed quietly. She pulls a chair up to the bed and sits down. She touches Oliver's hand.

OLIVER
(mumbling)
Dammit Van, go home.

EVA
It's not Van. It's me, Olly.

Oliver struggles to open his eyes. He squints at her shakes his head, and pulls his hand away.

OLIVER
What the-

He sits up a little.

OLIVER
What are you doing here?

EVA
I heard about the accident. On the- on the news. I wanted to make sure you were ok.

OLIVER
I'm fine, hon. Fine.

He closes his eyes and smiles half-heartedly.

OLIVER
You know, if Van was still here he'd kick your ass.

He makes a sound which might be a giggle.

OLIVER
Although, I'd hate for him to do it. Such a cute little ass.

EVA

I miss you, Olly. I wish—

The door opens and Ben enters, carrying a chart. He ignores Eva and checks the chart at the end of the bed. Eva stands up.

OLIVER

I miss you too, baby. Lonely.

Ben looks at him strangely, then shakes his head, smiling. Ben puts a checkmark on the chart, replaces it, and goes back out.

Eva touches Oliver's hand again. She bends over to kiss him, pauses at his cheek, then kisses him on the lips.

EVA

I'll see you again soon, Olly.
Take care.

She goes out, tears in her eyes.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva, still dressed as she was in the hospital room, appears through the invisible door in the wall, wiping at her eyes. She is embarrassed to find Alex standing in the room. He shakes his head.

ALEX

Do you think that little display is going to help your karma any?

Eva sighs and walks over to the couch. She flops into it with a sigh.

EVA

I love him. I realize it now.

ALEX

And what? Do I need to remind you?

She looks up at him, clearly miserable.

ALEX

You're dead, Eva. Dead with bad karma. And it's not improving!

Eva lies back dramatically, and crosses her arms over her chest. Alex sits down in an armchair. Eva sits up again.

EVA

That hospital guy. How come he couldn't see me?

ALEX

You need to read the literature. Only Oliver can see you. And you need to do something besides mess with his head!

EVA

Ok, ok. I'll think of something.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Oliver, looking much better and in his clothes from the night before, straightens up his hospital bed. He isn't making much difference, as the cast makes things awkward. The bandage on his head is smaller than it was. Van comes in.

VAN

Oliver, I think they have housekeepers for that.

OLIVER

Yeah, I guess. Let's get out of here.

VAN

Your nice nurse been by this morning?

OLIVER

Nope, sorry. Got off at six.

VAN
Well damn. You gonna call
Gretchen?

OLIVER
I'd prefer not to.

VAN
I thought you liked her!

OLIVER
Too fucking embarrassing.

VAN
I think she took it very well.

Oliver sits on the edge of the bed. He scratches at the edge of his cast in frustration.

OLIVER
I guess I need to call her. She
did wipe blood off my head on our
first date. Hopefully she'll say
no and that will be the end of it.

INT. FAMILY-STYLE RESTAURANT - DAY

A waitress is just putting down large plates of breakfast food in front of Van and Oliver.

OLIVER
Thank you.

The waitress nods and leaves.

OLIVER
You won't believe who showed up
last night after you left.

He tries to cut into the monster-sized omelet with his right arm, but the cast is too awkward. He switches his fork to his left hand.

VAN
Jack and Kate?

Oliver, his mouth full, shakes his head.

VAN
Someone from work?

Oliver shakes his head.

VAN
Oliver. You don't know anyone
else.

OLIVER
Eva. Again.

VAN
How did she—

OLIVER
She said she saw it on the news.

VAN
The news? Weird. So, did you slug
her?

Van grins. He picks the bacon up from his plate with
distaste and puts it on Oliver's plate.

OLIVER
No. But I told her you would if
you were there.

VAN
Damn straight.

OLIVER
She kissed me. At least, I think
she did. I was a little out of it.

VAN
Jesus. Um. Well damn.

OLIVER
Maybe—

Van stands up, gesturing wildly with his fork.

VAN
Don't even think about it! No. No way.

He looks around the restaurant. Several people are staring. Van points at Oliver.

VAN
Sorry. He tried to take my toast.

He slides back into his seat.

VAN
No way, Oliver. That girl fucked you up bad.

OLIVER
Ok, then. I mean, you're right of course.

INT. OLIVER'S HOUSE - LATER

Van throws his keys on the table in the entryway, and carries Oliver's few things into the house. Oliver follows, scratching at his cast.

OLIVER
Thanks, man.

Van takes his cell phone out of his pocket, puts it on the coffee table and sits down. Oliver sits heavily in an armchair.

VAN
You going to be ok, tough guy?

OLIVER
Yeah, fine.

VAN
I could cut some steaks into small pieces before I-

Oliver throws a pillow at Van's head. Van's cell rings. He looks at the number, then answers.

VAN
Hello? Oh! Hi.

Oliver watches, mildly curious.

VAN
He's fine. Whoa, really?

Van looks at Oliver while he talks. Oliver mouths *what?*

VAN
No. No problem. That will be great, Mom. Oh. Oliver is, um, sleeping.

Oliver is very surprised to hear it is their mom.

VAN
Ok. Got it. Great! Bye. Love you.

Van types into his phone then sets it on the coffee table. Oliver looks at it.

VAN
Well. Did you want to talk to her?

OLIVER
No.

VAN
Ok then. Bathroom, and then I need to head over to the restaurant.

Van heads off down the hall.

OLIVER
What, no Mom lecture?

Van smiles to himself, but doesn't answer. Oliver goes to the kitchen table, sits down, and opens his laptop.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

Oliver opens his email and begins a new message.

Hi Gretchen,
I must apologize for the car fiasco and all that.
How about an early lunch next Saturday?
Oliver

BACK TO SCENE

Van enters the kitchen and finds Oliver typing. He reads over his shoulder, nods approvingly, and pats Oliver on the back. He heads out.

VAN
Get some rest man. I'll check on
you later.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva, looking bored, tries to read the Karmic Buyback instruction manual. She sighs frequently, twirls her hair, and finally rests her head on her arms atop the open binder.

Alex appears and finds her snoring softly in the same position. He taps her lightly on the shoulder.

ALEX
Eva. Why don't you nap on the
couch?

Eva raises her head groggily. When she sees him, she shakes herself and tries to pretend she's been reading.

ALEX
I'm not checking up on you. I just
wanted to tell you I'll be gone for
a while, and I think you should
watch more of the historical video
while I'm gone.

EVA

Gone? Do you have other, um,
clients, or patrons, or... whatever.

ALEX

More folks in a similar position to
yours, yes. One of them is having
rather a rough time of it.

EVA

I'm glad it's not just me.

ALEX

No. Now, will you be ok if I leave
you? Will you remain here? You
can redecorate if you like.

Eva finds this hilarious and bursts out laughing. She
stands and gives her best military salute.

EVA

You can count on me, sir.

Alex nods. Eva doesn't seem to notice that he looks
worried. She flips to the décor illustrations. Alex
leaves.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - DAY

Van and Cristal prepare the bar for the start of business.
Cristal hangs glasses while Van takes chairs down from the
tables.

Oliver with his cast, and Gretchen, come in.

GRETCHEN

Hey, guys.

CRISTAL

Hi Gretch! Nice of you to stop by
while some of us are working.

Gretchen sits in a bar stool near Cristal.

Oliver walks over to Van. With one arm, he awkwardly tries to help with the chairs.

VAN

Hey, didn't expect to see you.
Careful, you might hurt yourself.

OLIVER

Well, she didn't say no. We're
going to lunch.

VAN

Wait. You're not supposed to drive
with that thing.

OLIVER

Gretch did. She didn't seem to
mind.

VAN

That's a good sign.

OLIVER

Whatever. I'm still embarrassed as
hell and prefer to get this over
with. Oh, by the way.

He pulls a cell phone out of his pocket and holds it out to Van.

VAN

Holy crap. I've been looking all
over for that.

He takes it, flips it open and checks his messages. His mouth falls open. He checks his watch.

VAN

Shit! Mom!

OLIVER

What? Is she ok?

VAN

Her plane arrives in twenty minutes.

OLIVER

Her plane? She's coming today? What the hell-

VAN

Oliver, please, please.

At the bar, Gretchen and Cristal have turned to watch Oliver and Van. Gretchen looks questioningly at Cristal.

CRISTAL

From Africa. Been gone about six years. Talks to Van but not Oliver.

She stops talking as Van and Oliver approach the bar.

VAN

Cris, I hate to ask, but-

CRISTAL

It's fine, hon. Gretchen can wash glasses.

Gretchen scowls but reaches over and picks up a rag.

GRETCHEN

Fastest sponge in the West.

Van hops over the bar and kisses Cristal on the cheek. She holds her cheek and mock swoons. Van takes Gretchen's hand and shakes it vigorously.

VAN

Thanks so much, guys. We'll make it up to you. Come on, Ol.

OLIVER

You expect me to-

VAN
Please, Ol. We gotta jet! You can
kill me later.

Van pulls Oliver to the door. Oliver's cast bangs against
the handle on the way out.

OLIVER
OW! Dammit.

At the bar, Gretchen winces in sympathy. Cristal pats her
gently on the arm.

INT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Van rushes back in, breathless, followed by Oliver, who is
very careful around the doorway. Van stands silently for a
moment. Cristal and Gretchen, sharing washing duties with
matching aprons, watch from behind the bar. Oliver coughs.

VAN
My car won't start.

CRISTAL
Again? You need new wheels, boy.

VAN
But I love her!

Cristal shakes her head, thinking. She pulls her purse
from under the counter.

CRISTAL
If you swear not to hit any old
ladies.

VAN
Check. Only old men. Or young
ladies.

CRISTAL
The clutch can be a little sticky.

VAN
Oh shit, are you kidding? A
clutch?

CRISTAL
Of course.

Van lays his head in his arms on the end of the bar.
Gretchen pulls off her apron.

GRETCHEN
Cris, can you handle the place for
a little while?

CRISTAL
It won't be the first time.

She glances at the clock.

CRISTAL
The lunch staff will be here soon.

GRETCHEN
Then it's settled. I'll drive.

VAN
Great.

OLIVER
Oh geez, you don't have to-

GRETCHEN
Nonsense. Now let's go. Time's a
wastin'.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gretchen drives with Oliver sitting beside her in the front seat. He seems uncomfortable, both physically and mentally. Van sits in the backseat next to a large box of scuba gear. Science fiction paperbacks and various school supplies litter the floor and some of the seat.

VAN

Have you done a lot of scuba diving?

GRETCHEN

Nope, none. Hope to, though. Someone lent me that junk.

Van picks up a scuba mask and pokes at it, turning it over in his hands. A piece comes loose and clatters to the floor.

OLIVER

Van!

VAN

Olly!

GRETCHEN

Olly Olly Oxenfree.

She tries to stifle a giggle, but doesn't quite manage it. Oliver finally smiles back. Gretchen pats his knee in a kindly manner. The tension is broken.

OLIVER

Damn, Gretchen. One emergency after another with us, isn't it?

GRETCHEN

Hey, it's not boring.

OLIVER

Really, though. You've been a sport.

Van keeps his mouth shut. The car pulls up to the airport terminal.

EXT. CAR - DAY, CONTINUOUS

Gretchen pops the trunk and busies herself trying to move the scuba gear. After no luck shoving the whole box in,

she puts the box on the pavement and pulls out one piece at a time, shoving them in wherever they fit.

OLIVER

Do you see her?

VAN

I don't think so. Do you think she looks different?

OLIVER

How would I know?

Oliver moves to the back and tries to help with the scuba gear. He's not much help as his cast keeps getting in the way.

A petite woman, LILY, in a khaki shorts set, stands with a very tall African man. The woman spots Van and raises both arms above her in a gesture of triumphal recognition.

LILY

Van-cakes!

Oliver's head snaps up. He watches Van and Lily greet joyfully. Gretchen follows his eyes.

GRETCHEN

Wow, he's tall. Are they—

OLIVER

No idea.

Lily and Van talk together quietly for a moment, then Lily looks up and spots Oliver. Lily squeezes Van's arm one last time and hesitantly approaches Oliver.

LILY

Olly!

Oliver doesn't make any movement, either toward her or away. Lily runs the last few steps and hugs him fiercely. He doesn't hug her back, but pats her once, awkwardly.

LILY
Your poor arm. Does it hurt
terribly?

OLIVER
It's ok.

The African man, MOTUMBO, watches silently next to Van.

LILY
Christ, my manners. Van, Oliver,
this is Motumbo, my husband.

This news is greeted by stunned silence. Gretchen steps forward and offers her hand. Lily shakes it.

GRETCHEN
Hi, I'm Gretchen. Congratulations.

LILY
Thank you.

VAN
Yes, yes, congratulations. Wow,
what a surprise.

Oliver mumbles something that might be "nice to meet you".

VAN
Brave man.

Motumbo has a deep, joyous laugh and a French accent.

MOTUMBO
She said the same thing. It is
very nice to meet you all.

GRETCHEN
Wow, this is going to be a tight
squeeze. We didn't plan for five.

INT. CAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Motumbo sits folded up awkwardly in the front seat, and Lily sits crammed between Oliver and Van, who each have a large suitcase across their laps. Lily yawns noisily and rests her head on Van's shoulder.

VAN

How long have you been married?

Motumbo cranes his neck back.

MOTUMBO

For two months.

VAN

I see. Well, very nice.

MOTUMBO

She wanted it to be a surprise.

OLIVER

She did that, all right.

MOTUMBO

I hope you are not angry with her for this.

VAN

No, of course not. We're very happy she found a companion.

Van exchanges a look with Oliver. Oliver frowns. Gretch catches this in the rearview mirror. Lily begins to snore softly.

GRETCHEN

How did you meet, if you don't mind my asking?

MOTUMBO

I volunteer at the clinic where Lily is a nurse.

GRETCH

That's cool.

MOTUMBO

One day a ten-year old boy brought in his mother, who was dying of pneumonia. He carried her for four miles. Lily and I took turns staying with him and his mother for three days.

VAN

That's terrible. Did she make it?

MOTUMBO

No, she died.

A silence falls, broken only by Lily's snores and the hum of the engine. Oliver speaks suddenly, with an ugly snarl in his voice.

OLIVER

Was this story for my benefit?
This sad mother and son tale?

Gretchen stares at him in the rearview mirror with disbelief and barely concealed disgust. Motumbo seems surprised but remains calm.

MOTUMBO

No. It is only a story about the way Lily and I met.

VAN

Oliver, what's your problem?

OLIVER

We don't even know this guy, Van.

VAN

Exactly. We don't know him. So don't be so freaking obnoxious.

Oliver stares out the window. Lily snorts and wakes up.

LILY
What did I miss?

OLIVER
Nothing. Forget it.

Lily looks at him sadly but doesn't speak.

INT. VAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Motumbo sits in an armchair sifting through a small luggage bag. Oliver stands to one side with his arms crossed.

GRETCHEN
Bathroom?

Oliver points down the hall. Gretchen finds the bathroom. Van comes out of another door, pulling the door shut behind him.

VAN
She's out. Probably for the night.

MOTUMBO
Thank you for letting us stay here.

VAN
Of course.

OLIVER
Look, I'm sorry about what I said.
There's a lot of history with me
and Lily.

MOTUMBO
She talks about you both every day.
I hope you can mend your
differences, but it is not for me
to say.

Van looks between them, but doesn't offer his opinion.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

Gretchen sits at the empty bar with a half-empty beer and a pile of books, peeling the label off the bottle. Cristal wipes down the bar. The chairs have been stacked on the tables.

CRISTAL
I'm sorry it didn't work out.

GRETCHEN
Yeah. His brother is cool, though.

CRISTAL
Shhh. He'll hear you.

Van appears from the back.

VAN
Too late.

Cristal groans. Van hops over the bar and kisses Gretchen on the cheek.

VAN
It's too bad you don't have a
penis, missy. I dig you, too.

He sits on the stool beside her.

VAN
I completely understand your
feelings. But I'd like to tell you
a little story about Olly, if you
don't mind.

GRETCHEN
Ok.

VAN
Our dad left before I was even
born. Mom had lots of boyfriends.

Cristal continues cleaning but listens closely.

VAN

Most were nice. Some even brought us presents. Bikes, once. But a couple were... less nice.

GRETCHEN

Oh dear.

VAN

I was five and Oliver was eleven. Mom came home really late one night with Jimmy, a small, mean little man. You can probably imagine where this is going. He was drunk and enraged about something Mom said. His driving, I think.

Cristal has stopped pretending to clean and leans in to listen.

VAN

Anyway, he smacked her around and Oliver dove at him. The guy barely budged but he threw Oliver against the wall and went after Mom again. Oliver hit him in the back of the knees with a bar stool, and he finally went down, and we all ran to the neighbors.

GRETCHEN

Geez.

VAN

Yeah. And it turned out he broke his collarbone when he hit the wall, but he didn't even notice, he was so intent on protecting her.

CRISTAL

That's an amazing story. It's too bad he turned so, I don't know, inward?

VAN

Yeah. That's the real Olly, though.
Brave, smart, generous. Underneath
that crabby façade is a real catch.

GRETCH

It's too bad. Maybe he can call me
in five years when he's less of an
ass.

She covers her mouth with her hand.

VAN

No, you're right. He's been an ass
for... well, it really got bad when
Eva fucked him over.

GRETCH

When was that?

VAN

About three years ago.

Van pats her on the arm, hops back over the bar, and
disappears into the back.

CRISTAL

Maybe you could give him a chance?
He sounds like a fixer-upper.

GRETCHEN

I'm sure he is. For someone. But
not for me.

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Oliver, wearing the same clothes as the trip to the
airport, but much more rumpled, lounges on the couch
watching tv. Four or five empty beer bottles litter the
table and floor in front of him. In fact, although it is
not a pigsty, the whole place is messier than normal.
There is a KNOCK at the door.

FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Oliver checks the peephole then opens the door with his good arm. We can't see who it is yet.

OLIVER
What do you want?

EVA
Hi, Olly. Can I come in?

OLIVER
Why not.

He pushes the door further open then turns and returns to the couch.

Eva watches him for a moment then follows him in, pulling the door closed. She goes into the kitchen for two beers. She opens them and brings them to the living room, hands him one, and then she sits on the opposite end of the couch.

EVA
Whatcha watching?

OLIVER
Cowboy flick.

EVA
Hmm.

She watches for a few minutes, then starts to laugh.

EVA
Hate to break it to you Ol, but this isn't a cowboy flick. It's one of those Lifetime movies.

OLIVER
Huh?

EVA
Lifetime. Chick stuff. Holy crap
you must be wasted.

OLIVER
A bit. Mom showed up today.

EVA
No kidding.

Oliver sits up a little straighter and looks over at Eva.
She shrinks back just a little under his glare.

OLIVER
So why did you do it, Evie?

She stands up quickly, knocking over her beer. Oliver
mutes the television.

OLIVER
Come on. What's it matter now?
Did you marry the guy?

EVA
Marry him? God no.

OLIVER
Damn. You didn't even marry him.

Oliver lays back on the couch and pulls his feet up. He
scratches furiously at the edge of his cast for a moment,
then closes his eyes.

EVA
I was stupid and young and, I don't
know, scared.

OLIVER
Stupid. You got that right.

EVA
I know, I know.

She shores up her courage and sits beside him on the couch. She takes his hand in hers.

EVA

I should have stayed, Olly. Then everything would be different. If only—

OLIVER

If only. You sure missed out, baby.

She leans forward, hovers over his mouth. After a moment's hesitation, she kisses him. He does not respond. She does not give up, and gradually he begins to kiss back.

BEDROOM - LATER

Oliver lies sprawled across a queen-sized bed, half-covered by a sheet. Eva dresses quietly nearby. She watches him for a moment, smiling happily, then exits.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

Eva sits on a leather couch in a room that now looks much like Oliver's living room, but with pink accents. She watches Oliver sleep on the video screen. A doorbell onscreen CHIMES, and Eva jumps. Oliver slowly wakes up. The doorbell CHIMES again.

ALEX (O.S.)

Have you been reading like you said you would?

Eva grabs the remote and clicks off the video screen. She turns to find Alex standing behind the couch.

EVA

Well sure. And studying the subject in his natural habitat.

ALEX

Have you made any further plans of action?

EVA
Not exactly.

ALEX
Ok, well keep trying. I can't stay
long. More trouble with... others.
Are you doing ok? Need anything?

EVA
I'm fine, thank you.

ALEX
Be good.

He leaves.

INT. OLIVER'S APARTMENT - DAY

The doorbell CHIMES, and Oliver appears in a short bathrobe to answer it. He checks the peephole, sighs, and opens the door. Lily stands alone on the step.

OLIVER
Hi.

LILY
Hi. Can I come in?

OLIVER
Ok.

He steps aside to let her pass, and pulls the door closed.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

LILY
I hoped we could talk.

OLIVER
Coffee?

LILY
Great.

She takes a seat at the table while he fumbles, one-armed, with the coffee machine.

LILY
I'm so happy to see you, Olly.

Oliver grunts and noisily grinds coffee beans.

LILY
I know I wasn't the best mom.

OLIVER
You were fine.

He holds his head miserably for a moment (hangover most likely), turns on the coffee machine, then joins her at the table.

LILY
All those boyfriends. Some... bad ones.

OLIVER
You deserved a life, mom. Nobody is perfect. Besides, look how well Van turned out, the little beast.

LILY
You raised him as much as I did.

Oliver shrugs. He stands back up to get two cups of coffee.

LILY
Gretchen seems like a nice girl.

OLIVER
Maybe. It didn't work out.

LILY
Oh. I'm sorry.

OLIVER

Yeah. I've lost some of my social skills, it seems.

LILY

Can we be a family? I mean—

OLIVER

You mean, if you live halfway around the world?

LILY

I talk to Van once a week, sometimes more.

Oliver fills the cups and brings them to the table. He gets cream from the fridge as well, then sits down.

OLIVER

How could you leave him? Right after high school?

LILY

He was fine with it. Why weren't you?

OLIVER

You abandoned us!

LILY

How can you—

OLIVER

You didn't want to deal with having kids anymore. I guess that happens to people, but Van was only seventeen.

LILY

That's not true. It was you both who didn't need me anymore.

OLIVER

Yes, we did!

Lily is surprised by this. She is silent. Oliver is embarrassed.

LILY

If I thought you needed me I would have taken the first plane.

OLIVER

Maybe if you were here. Maybe if you met Eva, things would have been different.

LILY

You think she might have stayed with you? You think I could have changed that?

OLIVER

No. I don't know. I guess that's not fair.

LILY

When Van told me what happened, I bought tickets. I was going to come. You told me not to.

OLIVER

I did?

LILY

Yes Oliver, you did. That was the last time you spoke to me. I thought, he just needs space. So I left it alone.

OLIVER

So why now?

LILY

Look at you. You're a mess. I waited too long. I was going to come soon anyway, but Van told me about your accident, so we came right away.

OLIVER
You came for... that?

LILY
Of course. Why wouldn't I?

Oliver sits back to digest this information. He is surprised, embarrassed, thoughtful. Lily waits for him to speak. The doorbell CHIMES.

FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Oliver opens the door to find Van and Motumbo on the doorstep. He steps aside to let them in. Van sees Lily and waves.

VAN
I knew we'd find you here. You should have woken me.

Lily shrugs.

LILY
You found me. What shall we do now?

Van looks at Oliver, who manages a weak smile.

OLIVER
I need some time. Can we meet for dinner?

LILY
Sure, we can entertain ourselves until then.

She stands, and Oliver follows everyone to the door. He shakes Motumbo's hand, pats Van on the back, and gingerly hugs Lily on the doorstep.

Van notices a folded piece of paper sticking out of the doormat and picks it up. He starts to unfold it, but

Oliver catches him and takes it away. He reads it, without expression, then puts it in his pocket. Van looks at him questioningly.

OLIVER
Just a missed delivery. Look, I'll see you guys later.

He waits until they are out of sight to pull out the note and re-read it.

INSERT - NOTE

"Oliver,
I had a wonderful night. Sorry for leaving so suddenly. Please meet me this afternoon. How about the place we met? 2:00. Hope to see you.
Love, Eva"

Oliver looks out at the courtyard for a moment, then goes inside and shuts the door.

EXT. EMERGENCY PET HOSPITAL - DAY

Eva stands in front of the hospital in a cute yellow sundress. Behind her and behind the building is a stand of trees with a lake beyond. She jumps nervously when a woman with a large dog exits the hospital. The dog growls quietly at Eva, but the woman pulls sharply on his leash.

WOMAN
Shhhh! There is nothing there.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Oliver gets out of his car awkwardly, his cast banging into the window. He is dressed casually but very neatly. He leans down and checks his profile in the side mirror, seems satisfied, and straightens back up.

He shakes his head and goes to put the key back into the car door, changes his mind again, and slips them into his pocket. He heads toward the building.

Eva waves excitedly as he approaches. She touches her hair and smoothes the front of her dress. She runs toward him,

but he holds his good arm out. She stops short. They regard each other for a moment, then she hugs him.

EVA

I knew you'd come.

OLIVER

I didn't.

She takes this in for a moment, then shrugs it off. She leads him around to the lake behind the building.

LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Oliver stoops to pick up a stone and tries to skip it across the lake. It sinks immediately. Eva watches, standing beside a faded bench.

EVA

I had such a nice time last night.

OLIVER

I have to admit, I don't remember much.

EVA

I remember for both of us.

OLIVER

What do you expect to happen here, Evie?

EVA

I don't know. I thought, maybe you still feel something. Maybe...

Her voice trails off. Clearly, she has not thought this through.

EVA

Maybe I could make it up to you.

OLIVER

I have to admit, I'm starting to realize how much I don't like being alone.

Eva takes his hand in both of hers, looks at him, encouraging him to continue. She pulls him over to the bench, and they both sit down.

EVA

I know, it sucks. It does. I'm just so happy to see you. And I don't know what will happen but I can try to do better.

Oliver pushes a stray hair off her face, watching her thoughtfully as she speaks. He leans forward to kiss her while she is still talking, but there doesn't seem to be much feeling behind it. He pulls back, shaking his head.

OLIVER

I wish you well, Evie, I really do. People make mistakes. But you're just a girl from my past now.

He stands up.

OLIVER

And I have to go. Take care.

Eva sits motionless, stunned. Her eyes fill with tears as she watches him go.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

Oliver, Van, Lily and Motumbo sit at a comfortable booth in Van's restaurant. Each has a glass of wine.

VAN

I'm so glad you decided to keep the house. I mean, if you needed the money—

LILY

No, this way is better. We found this great pair of professors that go to Brazil two months out of the year, who will be perfect renters.

OLIVER

Then—

LILY

Yes. Then Mot and I will see you every year, for a month or more.

Motumbo pulls two envelopes out of his jacket pocket.

MOTUMBO

And I would like to offer these tickets so that you can come to Africa. Your mother would like it very much, and so would I.

Van and Oliver each take an envelope.

VAN

Wow, that's great. I'd love to. I should have gone sooner, but now maybe I have someone I can bring with me.

LILY

Really?

OLIVER

Really?

VAN

You might meet him later. He's a nurse, actually.

Oliver looks at Van in surprise.

OLIVER

My nurse?

VAN
My nurse now.

Oliver pulls the ticket out of the envelope. He is very touched by the gesture.

OLIVER
I don't know what to say. This is so generous.

MOTUMBO
Say you will come, and we will be happy.

OLIVER
Yes. Yes, I will.

INT. DREAM ENVIRONMENT

The decorating attendant is back. This time, he's carrying furniture out instead of in. Alex and Eva watch as he exits.

EVA
When—

ALEX
Any minute now.

As if on cue, a thin white binder slides out of the wall and onto the floor. Alex looks at Eva, who makes no move toward it. Alex goes over and picks it up. He brings it back to her.

ALEX
You have to read it.

EVA
You read it. Ok?

ALEX
Ok.

Alex opens the binder and reads. His face remains expressionless. He turns a page. Finally, he closes the binder and looks over at her.

EVA

Did I pass? Oh my god. Wait. Let me sit down.

She looks around, but there are no chairs left.

EVA

Oh never mind. Just tell me.

ALEX

Well. You have failed the Karmic Buyback test.

Eva covers her face with her hands.

EVA

No no no. This is terrible. I mean ok, I wasn't perfect, but who's perfect? I mean-

ALEX

But...

Eva peeks out through her fingers, hopeful.

ALEX

But so did almost everyone else.

He sighs heavily, running his hand through his hair. Eva looks at him questioningly.

ALEX

You don't want to know. Let's just say we didn't expect shotguns or grand larceny to be involved in this..

He catches himself, realizing he is probably saying more than he ought to.

ALEX

Let's just say that the system was flawed, and for that reason you can't be held accountable for your recent actions.

A pause.

EVA

You knew, didn't you, those times I went to see him?

ALEX

I knew.

EVA

Oh.

ALEX

But despite your actions, what you did probably helped Oliver. The key to the human condition still eludes us up here.

EVA

You mean you—

ALEX

Yep. I'm one of the, uh, administrators.

EVA

Geez. So, you're not going to send me back as a toad?

ALEX

No. You'll go back to a situation similar to the one you left. A second chance, if you will.

EVA

I'll do better. You'll see.

Eva hugs him. She squeezes so hard he drops the binder. He grins, and gently pushes her away.

ALEX

It seems our judgment meets with your approval. Sometimes we're like that.

INT. JACK AND KATE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: "THREE MONTHS LATER."

It is the same house as the other poker night, looking much more lived in. The classic rock posters remain, with a few more contemporary acts as well.

Oliver, Jack, Kate and Van are sitting around the kitchen table. Oliver's cast is gone. Van's loot pile is somewhat higher than the others. A fifth chair, between Jack and Van, is empty.

Several bottles of beer, some empty, litter the table, and there is also a bowl of chips and bowls of salsa. Van is smiling broadly as he pulls a large pile of coins toward him from the center of the table. Kate stands and picks up empty bottles. Oliver stands to help, but Kate waves him off.

JACK

Dammit Oliver, you said he was an easy mark.

Oliver shrugs and Van grins wider.

OLIVER

(growling)

Someone's been practicing.

The phone RINGS. Kate shrugs at Jack, her hands full of bottles. Jack stands and goes to answer the phone. Kate follows him out of the room.

VAN

So, Oliver. Any promising Webflame hits?

OLIVER
No, nothing good.

VAN
These things take time. At least
you're looking.

Jack and Kate come back into the room. Jack sits down and starts to shuffle.

KATE
That was my friend. She's on her
way.

Jack narrows his eyes suspiciously.

OLIVER
She?

KATE
Yes Oliver, she. She knows how to
play, don't worry.

She sits down.

OLIVER
That's not what I'm worried about.
If you're trying to set me up-

Jack pauses his shuffling and claps Oliver on the shoulder.

JACK
Don't be silly. Five is a good
poker number.

OLIVER
You people! Why is everyone trying
to run my life?

He is a little angry, but not blow-up angry. He sits back down. The doorbell RINGS. Van speaks through a mouthful of chips.

VAN

Someone has to, Oliver. You're doing a crappy job yourself.

Kate gets up to open the door. Oliver scowls at Van. Kate exits the room.

OLIVER

Thank you, Van, thank you very much.

VAN

Anytime, Einstein.

Offscreen, a door opens, then closes. Murmuring women's voices, as they approach the kitchen.

WOMAN (O.S.)

I'm a little rusty, Katie.

Olive's eyebrows go up. He stares at Van. Van avoids his eyes by intently stacking his coins. The two women enter the kitchen.

KATE

Oh, don't worry. We won't mind taking your money.

The woman with Kate is Gretchen. When she sees Oliver, she smiles and gives him a little wave. Kate looks at her, then at Oliver. Oliver is unsure how to react. Jack stops shuffling and looks up.

Van clears his throat. He stands up, and walks over to Gretchen.

VAN

Gretchen, hello!

GRETCHEN

Hey, Van.

Gretchen hugs Van, and then Jack. Oliver seems embarrassed, but he sneaks a look at Gretchen which suggests he is

actually happy to see her. He stands, but doesn't move from the table.

GRETCHEN

How have you been, Oliver?

OLIVER

Not bad. You?

GRETCHEN

Pretty good. Of course, I'll be much happier when I start winning big pots from all these nice people.

A short pause in the conversation.

KATE

Um, Jack, why don't you help me with the dishes. In the kitchen.

JACK

Of course.

Jack stands, and stares at Van, gesturing with his head, none too subtly.

VAN

Right. I need to use the restroom. Excuse me.

Gretchen and Oliver watch silently as they all file out.

OLIVER

So. You were in on this?

GRETCHEN

Yeah. Look, I'm sorry. If you'd prefer I left...

OLIVER

No. Stay. It's nice to see you.

Finally he takes a step forward. He hugs her, rather awkwardly. Oliver goes around to the fifth chair and pulls it out, gesturing for her to sit.

GRETCHEN

Ok.

She sits down, and Oliver pushes in her chair before returning to his own seat. Van, peeking in from the hallway, beams.

OLIVER

Did you finish that Kafka paper?

She looks at him warmly, appreciating that he remembered.

GRETCH

Yes, barely.

Oliver watches as she digs around in her purse for a bag of coins. After a moment, he stands and starts moving some of the drinks and coin piles from one seat to the next.

OLIVER

Sit next to me?

GRETCH

You got it, Mr. Oxenfree.

She stands to help him. Their hands meet over a half empty salsa dish.

FADE OUT

ROLL CREDITS

FADE IN

Oliver, neatly dressed, stands beside a plain white stove in a white room. Next to the stove is a fire extinguisher. Oliver clears his throat, looks off camera, then looks straight into it.

OLIVER
Stove and oven safety is no
laughing matter.

Van appears, dressed smartly.

VAN
Heck no.

Oliver is surprised to see him. Van leans over the stove and turns the dial to "Broil". He points dramatically at the dial, then pulls open the bottom door so that it is slightly ajar.

VAN
Always leave the door open when
broiling.

OLIVER
That's right, and-

Lily appears. She smiles at both of them. Van is not surprised to see her, but Oliver is. He thought this was his commercial. He is a little peeved.

LILY
And always be sure the stove and
oven are off before you leave the
house.

She leans over the stove and turns the dial from "Broil" to "Off".

OLIVER
Nice to see you both.

VAN
Hey.

LILY
Nice to see you, too.

FADE OUT