

A THOUSAND WORDS

by

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4th draft

2/10/07

.. Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace.

- BUDDHA

LUSH BEAUTIFUL GREEN LEAVES

At the top of a tree. We push through them to find...

EXT. SPANISH STYLE HOME - LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA - DAY

We steadily move towards and through a WINDOW of the house...

MAN'S VOICE V.O.
My name is Jack Rappaport. If you
can hear me, what you are listening
to is not the sound of my voice...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Messy. We move through the room...

JACK RAPPAPORT V.O.
... It's the sound of my inner
voice. The one inside my head...

We pass A TRASH CAN OVERFLOWING WITH BROKEN CDs. Smashed
down on top of them - A STEREO, CORDS DANGLING. Still
moving, we now see...

A PHONE ENTWINED WITH MASKING TAPE so you can't lift the
receiver. We pass that and head towards a GLASS DOOR to...

THE BACKYARD. On THE BACK OF A MAN IN A BATHROBE - USING A
GARDEN HOSE. HE'S WATERING A TALL DRIED-UP NEARLY DEAD TREE.
We can't see his face yet he seems haggard, hair unkempt.

JACK RAPPAPORT V.O. (CONT'D)
... I'd like to talk to you - but I
can't. Because if I say just one
more sentence out loud...

We hear a PHONE RING - THE MAN TURNS, DIRECTLY FACING US.
REVEAL A THICK PIECE OF MASKING TAPE COVERING HIS MOUTH.
This is JACK RAPPAPORT. QUICKLY push towards his mouth...

JACK RAPPAPORT V.O. (CONT'D)
... I'll die.

BLACK.

JACK RAPPAPORT V.O. (CONT'D)
Maybe I should explain.

ON A LARGE HEALTHY LEAF-FILLED TREE

Pull back to reveal the tree is planted in the...

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS SHOPPING DISTRICT - DAY

Briskly walking past the tree is... a now clean, healthy JACK RAPPAPORT - sharp suit, sunglasses - a player. WE STAY WITH JACK AS HE TALKS ON HIS CELL PHONE simultaneously WAVING, WINKING, and SAYING "HI" TO OCCASIONAL PASSERSBY.

JACK SPEAKS FAST & LOOSE WITH A VERBAL ALACRITY COMMON TO LAWYERS, SALESMAN AND OTHER PEOPLE YOU DON'T TRUST.

JACK

(mid-conversation)

Because you're my assistant, that's why. Your job's to do what's on my "to-do" list - otherwise I'd give you a "to-don't" list.

(to a passing guy, fast)

J.J.! K.C.'s BBQ's BYOB. Bring some J.D.. And keep it on the QT because C.J.'s in AA, okay? I.M. or C.C. me ASAP.

(back to cell)

So get my car washed, pick up my dry cleaning and call me, kapish? Triple "C" - car, clothes, call.

(to a passing girl)

Suzie! Shoes. I'm pissing myself.

(back to cell)

And confirm my Simon & Schuster meeting. Plus, call Phil's editor-

Jack continues walking and talking. Over him we hear...

JACK RAPPAPORT V.O.

I work as a book agent, which means I represent writers. But not the snotty ones they force you to read in high school. My clients are people like-

ON DR. PHIL - sitting at an outdoor cafe. Jack shmoozes him.

JACK

If it isn't my favorite client. How's the new bestseller coming?

DR. PHIL

Stop. I'm not writing it.

JACK

I'm telling you, Philly, they loved your diet book. Why wouldn't they want your beauty secrets? You shou-

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Jack and NICOLE RITCHIE are having Martinis.

JACK
Nicky, I'm not just saying this
because you're my favorite client.
I was deeply moved by your book on
teen fashion.

NICOLE
Really?

JACK
Chills, Nick. Especially that
chapter on belly shirts. I wept.

INT. LITERARY AGENCY CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Big modern building - multiple floors, CAVERNOUS LOBBY CENTER
(like the old CAA). We push in on a large conference room.

JACK V.O.
For an agent, communication is key
and I talked my way to the top.

The weekly staff meeting is in progress. Large table -
agents gathered around. Everyone's listening to a young,
slick agent, CHAD SNOW, 30. At the head, SAM RASKIN, 55.

CHAD
... the book's launch date is next
Christmas which gives us time to...

As Chad talks, we pan around the room and find Jack.

JACK V.O.
The only goal I had left was
becoming partner in the agency.
One more bestseller and the boss
would have no choice. So I did
what I do best and started a buzz.

Chad sits down.

SAM
Sounds great, Chad. Jack, ready
for your big meeting with Random
House next week?

JACK
Sam, the question is - are you
ready?

Everyone looks at each other, smiling - they know Jack.

SAM
Meaning what?

JACK
 Meaning my client, the renown
 Indian holistic healer, Dr. Sinja,
 is about to crap more bestsellers
 in the New Age book market than
 Deepok Chopra and Shirley MacLaine
 combined. But the millions we'll
 make off that aside - I've come up
 with something that's going to make
 this agency twice as rich.

Jack stands. Everyone pays closer attention.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Yours truly has persuaded Dr. Sinja
 to give us 15 percent on any
 merchandising deals I can procure
 on his behalf. So, I've procured
 my ass off. Here's a taste of the
 future - or should I say a sip.
 Say Goodbye Celestial Seasonings
 and hello...

Jack reaches under the table - HITS A BUTTON. Immediately,
 WE HEAR MUSIC - the cheesy "KYRIE" by MISTER MISTER. LIGHTS
 DIM AND A WALL SCREEN OPENS. Jack's obviously prepared.

ON THE SCREEN - A VIDEO OF THE SUN SETTING OVER THE OCEAN,
 waves rolling in - quite spiritual. Jack steps in front,
 HOLDS UP A SILVER TRAY WITH A CASHMERE THROW OVER IT - he
 whips it off to REVEAL... a BOX OF TEA - new age design.

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... Dr. Sinja's Elixirs of
 Enlightenment.

ON THE SCREEN - DR. SINJA'S FACE appears over the OCEAN. He
 looks like the famous Maharishi, long hair but beardless.
 His face is also featured on the TEA BOX.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Transcendental Tea in 20
 tantalizing flavors... Berry Bliss
 to Karmic Chamomile - each
 guaranteed to bring you a sense of
 decaffeinated inner peace.
 Speaking of peace - we get an
 additional 5 percent piece on
 Sinja's scented massage oils...

Jack clicks a button on a nearby REMOTE. THE IMAGE ONSCREEN
 NOW CHANGES TO... SEVERAL FANCY BOTTLES OF MASSAGE OILS.

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... "Introspective Incense"...

CLICK! The IMAGE CHANGES to a beauty shot of INCENSE. As he
 mentions each item - JACK CLICKS, changing images. Each item
 has Sinja's face featured on it.

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... "Serenity candles," "Yoga Mats,"
 "Metaphysical Meal Replacement
 Bars" and the piece de resistance -
 "Dr. Sinja's Mindful Mints" -
 because if you do become one with
 the Buddha, the last thing you want
 is bad breath. I've got sample
 gift bags for each of you and...

JACK starts handing out SEVERAL SMALL WRAPPED BAGS. Then
 JACK REVEALS a.. CAKE WITH SINJA'S FACE IN CREAM ON IT.

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... please enjoy a slice of Sinja's
 low-carb Kundalini Cake. Non-fat--

SAM
 JACK! Stop the Sinja Express one
 second. And kill the music.
 (Jack does, then)
 All very impressive but no one's
 buying any of your junk without a
 bestseller. Where's Sinja's book?

JACK
 Oh, the book. I'm getting it
 today. But the guy's got thousands
 of followers. It can't miss.

SAM
 So you've spent all this money and
 you haven't even read it?

JACK
 Of course, I read it, Sam. A rough
 draft. Couldn't put it down.

CHAD
 Didn't you say that a year ago?

They all snicker. Jack sneers at Chad.

JACK
 Chad, if you're so "hungry" to see
 the book - feel free to eat me.

They all chuckle - an obvious rivalry here.

SAM
 B.S. aside, you've spent half our
 discretionary budget here hyping
 Sinja. Ed Funkler at Random House
 wanted to buy his book a year ago -
 but he's losing patience. As am I.

JACK
 You can both read it tomorrow.

SAM
 Let's hope. Tomorrow everyone.

Sam exits. Meeting over. They all head out - Jack feigns confidence, smiling. He and Chad exchange nasty looks.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - A MOMENT LATER

We find Jack's harried assistant, AARON, 26, fielding phone calls at a desk outside his office.

AARON
Jack's not in right now, Emeril.
He'll have to return... Bam to you
too.

Jack quickly walks past Aaron, shouting...

JACK
Find Sinja, ASAP!

AARON
Jack, you've got three calls on
hold! Line one is--

Jack ignores him, enters his office, slams his door shut.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jack lands in his desk chair, focuses on the THREE BLINKING PHONE LIGHTS. Without hesitating, he picks up the receiver.

JACK
Is this my favorite client?... I
knew it. Can I call you back?
Love ya.
(hits another button)
Is this my favorite client?... I
knew it. Can I call you back?
Love ya.
(hits another button)
Is this my favorite client?... No,
I don't want to refinance my house.
Love ya.

He hangs up, still wired. He spins in his chair.

JACK (CONT'D)
Aaron, you find Sinja?!

AARON O.C.
Still looking!

JACK
(to himself, re: Chad)
"Didn't you say that a year ago?"
What a weasel. I gotta relax.

Jack leans back, kicks his feet up - trying to relax. He exhales, calming down. For the first time, STILL. SILENCE.

C.U. JACK - CLOSING HIS EYES. A rare quiet moment. Beat.
In his head - we hear a VERY FAINT OTHERWORLDLY WHISPER.

MALE WHISPER
... Are you there?

In response, Jack's eyes pop open. HE SHAKES OFF THE WHISPER
AND QUICKLY TURNS ON THE STEREO - LOUD ROCK - he's relieved
by the background noise. AARON enters holding a cereal bowl.

AARON
I got Sinja! He's teaching a
meditation class. Ends in 1 hour.
(re: bowl)
And I finished picking out all the
mini-marshmallows you wanted from
your Lucky Charms cereal. Here.

He hands Jack THE BOWL OF MINI-MARSHMALLOWS.

JACK
I wanted this before the meeting.
Now I don't.

Jack trashes it. Aaron's shocked. Jack's BLACKBERRY BEEPS -
he starts answering emails, ignoring Aaron.

AARON
(re: marshmallows)
Jack, that took me over an hour to--
(off Jack ignoring him)
Jack? I know it's my first week at
your desk and I appreciate the
opportunity but I've assisted other
agents here for 3 years so please
don't treat me like I just started.

JACK
Aaron, you realize you're in my
office, right? Not an MTV "Real
World" confessional booth?

AARON
I'm just saying that I'm supposed
to be an "agent trainee." So if I
can do more than separate cereal--

JACK
You think I like making you do
personal stuff? It's part of your
training. A wax on-wax off Mr.
Miyagi thing.

AARON
Dissecting cereal trains me?

JACK
It teaches you to recognize the
good from the bad - a skill our
clients depend on.

Aaron gives him a "you've got to be kidding" face.

JACK (CONT'D)
That face says you've got more
cereal in your future. I'm going
to see Sinja. Anything else?

AARON
Sharon needs you to stop by her
desk. And should I cancel your
Dwayne Wade meeting tomorrow?
You've got jury duty.

JACK
Jury duty? That's not gonna work.
Remind me to talk my way out of it.

AARON
How do you talk your way out of it?

JACK
Trust me. I've never done jury
duty. Not once.

AARON
Can't you get in trouble?

JACK
Worst case scenario they arrest me.
Maybe I'll get on the jury for my
own trial. Anything else?

AARON
Someone named Ruby keeps calling
about a... Frank?

Before he can respond - PHONE RINGS. Aaron gets it.

AARON (CONT'D)
Jack Rappaport's office... I'll see
if he's in.
(puts him on hold)
Donald Trump. 2nd call today. He
wants to know if you read his book.

JACK
Damn. I haven't and he's losing
patience faster than Terry
Schiavo's husband. I have to take
this. You want to train? Here's
your chance. Big client - likes me
to be first to read his books.
Listen and learn, young Skywalker.
(hits the speaker button)
... Is this my favorite client?

TRUMP'S VOICE
Yes or no?

JACK
No - because I'm waiting till the weekend so no one interrupts me.

TRUMP'S VOICE
You've already had it 5 days, Jack!

JACK
SIX! Do you know how pissed I am, Trumpy? I only wish I didn't respect your work so much. I'd be done by now!

TRUMP'S VOICE
Alright, calm down. I'm just anxious to see what you think.

JACK
Like I'm not. That's it. Aaron, when I hang up - it's Donald time. My assistant's a fan, right Aaron?

Jack signals for Aaron to talk. Aaron's surprised.

AARON
Uh, yeah, I've never seen your T.V. show but I like your buildings.

TRUMP'S VOICE
You don't like my show?

JACK
(quickly jumping in)
Can't read and talk, D-train. Love ya. You're my favorite client.

TRUMP'S VOICE
But why doesn't the kid like my--

Jack hangs up and SHOTS AARON A PERPLEXED ANGRY LOOK.

AARON
What? You signalled me to talk.

JACK
No, I signalled an AGENT to talk - not YOU. YOU don't exist on the phone with a client because YOU can upset them. An AGENT supports them. If a client wants someone to upset them, they marry them.

AARON
I was just being myself.

JACK
Try not to. Big mistake.

Jack quickly exits. Aaron yells after him...

AARON
SHARON!

ON JACK hearing him - Jack nods, makes a sharp right.

INT. CUBICLE - BULLPEN AREA - A MOMENT LATER

We find SHARON HALLY, 30, pretty, huge heart - on the phone. Jack enters. Seeing him, she's thrilled, but holds up a "one sec" finger so she can finish her conversation. He waits.

SHARON
... Buttering me up isn't going to help, Chad. I can't approve your expense report without the receipt.

JACK
Tell numb nuts to find his own accountant.

JACK STARTS PLAYFULLY KISSING HER NECK WHILE SHE'S TALKING.

SHARON
I need to call you back, Chad.
(hangs up, then playful)
Stop! Not in the office! And I told you Chad's just a friend.

JACK
And I'm sure he loves never having sex with his hot platonic buddy.

SHARON
Why do you call him "numb nuts?"

JACK
The day I met him "dickweed" was taken. Plus that rat's trying to steal my partnership. He knows Sam only promotes one guy every year.

SHARON
If you're done being paranoid...
(opening a nearby album)
I wanted to show you the different fonts we could use for our wedding invitations. Isn't this one great?

JACK
Sweetie, I am so excited to font it up with you but I'm late to see a client. Whatever you pick is fine.

SHARON
Jack, it's supposed to be "our" wedding not mine. How 'bout tonight I bring dinner to your place and we look at fonts?

JACK
Font night. Sounds font-tastic.

SHARON
Great. Smile!

She SNAPS A PICTURE WITH HER PHONE! FLASH! He jumps.

JACK
I hate when you do that.

SHARON
Can't help it. I need to capture your cuteness. You get the phone pictures I sent you yesterday?

JACK
I told you - I don't know how to download phone snapshots.

SHARON
Figure it out. It takes 5 seconds. So what do you want for dinner?

JACK
Don't buy me anything. I want to save room for THIS!

He playfully kisses/bites her neck, she happily squeals.

JACK (CONT'D)
... Later, beautiful.

He quickly runs off. She's totally in love.

SHARON
Call me!... cute butt.

SHE SNAPS ANOTHER PICTURE of his butt as he runs off.

EXT. DR. SINJA'S SELF-REALIZATION CENTER - LATER

Green courtyard, pond, bungalows. TWENTY STUDENTS sit in the lotus position, eyes closed - MEDITATING. SILENCE. Under a tree, leading them is... DR. SINJA, 65, Indian, a holistic healer. We recognize his face from Jack's tea boxes, etc..

Jack runs in. He quietly yanks off his shoes, loosens his tie, TIP-TOES in, SITS. He looks at his watch, bored. After a beat - SINJA starts CHANTING - the class joins in.

ENTIRE CLASS
...oooooooooooooooooooo...

They "om" chant a beat and then Sinja stops - SILENCE.

DR. SINJA
 (Indian Accent)
 Breathe in... and release.
 (they do, opens his eyes)
 Some of you have asked - why do I
 teach beneath these trees?... Are
 the trees not our closest friends?
 If we're hungry - they give fruit.
 Hot? Shade. Cold? Shelter. They
 even give us oxygen to breathe.
 Some can even teach. For over 2000
 years ago, a man was searching for
 truth. He searched and searched
 until one day he came upon a tree.
 There he decided to stop chasing
 wisdom and simply sit until wisdom
 found him. Beneath its branches,
 he waited in silence. And in
 silence came answers. Under a
 tree, the man we now know as... the
 Buddha found enlightenment. And so
 I hope do we. Namaste.

The class responds, surprised, pleased at the lesson.

REVEAL JACK SNORING. He fell asleep, missing the story.

CLASS OVER. Everyone stands - Jack wakes. Dr. Sinja walks
 off to one of the bungalows. Jack chases after him.

JACK
 Dr. Sinja!? That class kicked ass!

DR. SINJA
 I saw you come in late, Jack.

JACK
 Late? Maybe physically I was still
 in my car but mentally I was early.

Dr. Sinja enters the main bungalow - Jack follows.

INT. SINJA'S BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

They pass students in the hall stretching on mats, drinking
 tea, etc. Everyone greets/nods to Sinja. He nods back.

DR. SINJA
 You seem tense, Jack. Have you
 practiced your breathing exercises?

JACK
 Inhaling as we speak.

DR. SINJA
 How's your yoga coming?

JACK
Coming? It came. I can't stop
yoga-ing. Yog-ing? Yoga-cizing.
Whatever I'm doing - I need to get
your book today. Next week's the
big meeting with your publisher.

Dr. Sinja enters his office - Jack follows.

INT. SINJA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Holistic paintings, acupuncture body charts, LOTS OF PLANTS,
etc. Dr. Sinja walks over to a clay kettle.

DR. SINJA
Let me make you some tea.

Sinja begins tapping BOTTLED HERBS into a kettle. Jack looks
out the window at all the SINJA STUDENTS talking, stretching.

JACK
I tell ya, doc, when your book hits
stores you'll have so many
followers you'll have to open up a
dozen of these mental mini-malls.

DR. SINJA
Self-Realization Centers. Here...
(handing Jack a cup)
Green tea with Vidarikand and
Ashwangada for mind and body.

JACK
Perfect. I was jonesing for some
Ashwangada.

Jacks sips it, gives Sinja a big satisfied smile.

JACK (CONT'D)
Mmm. Yum.

SINJA TURNS. Immediately, JACK SPITS IT OUT INTO A NEARBY
PLANT, WINCING. Sinja turns back - Jack smiles again.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hit the spot. Doc, you know that I
have the utmost confidence in you
but you did finally finish the
book, right?

Sinja points to A FEW PIECES OF WHITE PAPER on a nearby
coffee table. Jack spots them, smiles.

JACK (CONT'D)
Bingo. Is that the first chapter?

DR. SINJA
No.

JACK
Don't tell me. The dedication.
You did not dedicate it to me!

DR. SINJA
No, Jack. That is my book.

JACK
Perfect. We'll need a general
summary for the cover.

DR. SINJA
Listen to me. This is my book.

Jack stares at him a beat - taking this in.

JACK
... I think we're having a
communication problem. I know
English is your second language.
(loudly)
ME WANT SEE BOOK!

DR. SINJA
Yes.

JACK
"Yes?" What am I missing? Besides
the other two hundred pages.

DR. SINJA
My book is a journey of self-
discovery. On page 5 that journey
is complete.

JACK
(beat, then big laugh)
... HAA! Almost had me, Sinjy.
Seriously, I've seen menus longer
than this. Where's the book?

Sinja just stares at him. Jack's smile disappears.

JACK (CONT'D)
... this is really your...

Sinja nods. PANIC begins to grip Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
But, but, but there has to be more.

DR. SINJA
Read it.

JACK
What for? There's no pamphlets on
the bestseller list. You promised
me! Over a year ago. I chanted,
drank dirt - every hocus pocus
thing you asked me to do, I did.

DR. SINJA
You did those things for yourself.

JACK
And THE BOOK! The book was key!
Oh my God... AN ENTIRE YEAR AND
THIS IS ALL YOU WROTE?!

DR. SINJA
Value is not measured in volume.

JACK
Well, profits are. I told my boss
he could see it. I spent his
money. I've got Cambodian kids
working overtime making yoga mats.
Now I'll never make partner.

DR. SINJA
... I see. You're using me.

JACK
(catching himself)
What? No, no. I didn't mean that.

DR. SINJA
That's the first thing you did
mean.

JACK
(trying to recover)
No, doc, it's all the breathing.
I'm dizzy, babbling. We can fix
this. I'll get you more time.

DR. SINJA
You fooled me, Jack. I thought you
believed in my work.

JACK
I do believe in you. That's why I
want 100 pages more of you.

DR. SINJA
I give you diamonds - you ask for
dirt.

JACK
50 pages then? 10? A haiku? I'll
start you off. Roses are red...
jump in anytime...

DR. SINJA
You see no possible value in my
words because you place no value in
your own. You always say you love
me...

JACK
I do but--

DR. SINJA
That I'm "the man"...

JACK
The manliest --

DR. SINJA
That I'm your favorite client.

JACK
No one favorite-er. Which is why I
think just a few more pages will--

SUDDENLY, SINJA COVERS JACK'S MOUTH WITH HIS HAND.

DR. SINJA
Shhh. Words are not limitless like
grains of sand. For one day - one
word will be your last.

JACK
... Write that down. That could be
another chapter.

Dr. Sinja grabs a WATERING CAN and exits through a back door.

JACK (CONT'D)
Wait! Doc, I need this book!

Jack runs out after him.

EXT. COURTYARD - GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Sinja begins WATERING A LARGE BODHI TREE.

JACK
I'm begging you to help me!

DR. SINJA
Over a year I've tried helping you
but you've learned nothing.

JACK
I'm just asking you to give it one
more shot. And you don't have to
do it all overnight. Start small.
Say a thousand words. Then we'll
go from there.

Dr. Sinja pauses - looks at Jack.

DR. SINJA
... A thousand words?

JACK
That's all I need for now. What do
you say?

Jack's hand brushes against the tree - he YANKS IT BACK!

JACK (CONT'D)
OW! Splinter. Stupid tree.

Jack checks his hand. Dr. Sinja looks at the tree - SMILES.

DR. SINJA
Jack, a year ago I promised to help you. I will try again. I will give you a thousand words.

JACK
SINJARINO! Thank you. You can do this. I'll drink mud, stand on my head. Whatever it takes. Now you get to work and I'll go do some damage control. Love ya, big guy!

Jack exits. Sinja turns to THE TREE, lovingly pats it.

DR. SINJA
He didn't mean to call you stupid.
Be gentle with him.

EXT. "PRESTIGE" NURSING HOME - LOBBY - LATER

Jack's car pulls up. He gets out carrying some DRY CLEANING.
He's talking on his cell phone.

JACK
... No, Sam, Dr. Sinja DID finish.
He's just having an out-of-body experience right now and won't be back for a week so I can't get the book until... No, I don't want to lose the deal... Calm down. Yes, I'll get the book. Okay, bye.
(hangs up, frustrated)
... Got to think of something.

Jack passes a SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD
Hi, Jack. She's in her room.

JACK
Thanks, Jerry.

INT. ANNIE RAPPAPORT'S ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Nicely decorated. NURSE RUBY, 41, Jamaican, presently frustrated because ANNIE, 78, half-senile/half-blind, won't get out of her chair. Annie is staring at the blank T.V..

NURSE RUBY
Annie, you have to eat something.

ANNIE
Sh! I'll miss my show.

NURSE RUBY
The T.V.'s not on. It's broken.

ANNIE
No wonder I keep missing it.

JACK enters.

JACK
Hi, Ma!

ANNIE
(excited)
Frank, is that you?

JACK
No, it's your other son, Jack. Hi,
Ruby. Got her dress fixed.

NURSE RUBY
(taking dry cleaning)
Sorry to keep calling you, Jack,
but she's getting worse. Now she
won't eat without Frank.

JACK
Ma, Frank's busy today. You're
stuck with me again. Let's go chow
down.

ANNIE
Okay. Ruby record this episode.

Ruby rolls her eyes. Jack heads out with Annie.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jack walks with his Mom. He's sweet to her - but frustrated.

JACK
How you feeling, Ma? Okay?
(no response, then)
... Hey, I got a new Jaguar. Want
to go for a ride?

ANNIE
You crashed into my garage.

JACK
20 years ago in my Civic, I know.

ANNIE
You look like a gangster.

JACK
It's a suit for work. I'm a book agent, remember? This is Armani.

ANNIE
Those pants are tight in the crotch. I'll fix it.

She grabs material near his privates. He jumps away.

JACK
MA! My crotch is fine!

ANNIE
You don't think I know what's in there? I made you!

She grabs at his pants again. He jumps back.

JACK
Do that again and you can forget grandchildren. Now let's go. I have to meet Sharon for dinner.

He points her into the dining room. They enter.

INT. NURSING HOME DINING ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Seniors eat. We see Nurse Ruby already there - waiting with a TRAY OF FOOD near a table. Jack brings Annie over.

NURSE RUBY
I got you an extra Jello, Annie.

ANNIE
I'll save it for Frank.

Annie eats. Jack's BLACKBERRY beeps. He looks at it.

JACK
Ma, Sharon says "Hi."

Annie doesn't respond at all - now focused on eating.

JACK (CONT'D)
Ma? Hello?... She doesn't even know I'm here. Bye, Ma.

Annie ignores him. Jack waves bye to Ruby. As he exits...

ANNIE O.C.
Fix your crotch!

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

Jack's car pulls into the driveway - he's on the phone.

JACK
Pneumonia, Aaron. Understand? If Funkler calls again, Dr. Sinja has pneumonia... No, don't send him a get-well card. Just reschedule the Funkler meeting, okay? Bye.

Jack hangs up. He starts to get out of his car. Suddenly an INDIAN DELIVERY MAN walks up behind him.

INDIAN DELIVERY MAN
Jack Rappaport?

Jack turns, surprised.

INDIAN DELIVERY MAN (CONT'D)
Dr. Sinja asked us to make a delivery. Where should we plant it?

JACK
Plant what?

The man points to a nearby truck w/ WORKERS. There's a... LARGE TREE in back - same one he pricked his finger on.

JACK (CONT'D)
A tree? I asked for pages. Does he expect me to make them out of wood? Okay. I guess put it there.

He waves to the center of his yard. The man nods, signals the WORKERS. They start unloading, grabbing shovels.

INDIAN DELIVERY MAN
He also wanted me to give you this.

He hands Jack a SMALL GIFT CARD and exits. Jack opens it.

C.U. DR. SINJA'S CARD - it reads...

"Better Than A Thousand Hollow Words Is One Word That Brings Peace. - BUDDHA"

JACK
Huh. Maybe it's his next book.

Jack heads inside. The workers continue unloading.

INT JACK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack walks in to find Sharon setting up the dinner table.

SHARON

Hi. I got Chinese. Who were you talking to out there?

JACK

One of my clients sent me a tree.

SHARON

A tree?

JACK

Believe it or not - that's the least crazy thing about him. You get the noodles I like?

SHARON

Do I ever forget? So on top of the fonts, I brought sample wedding menus. Isn't that exciting?

Jack's not listening, exhausted, and lays down on the couch.

JACK

You wouldn't believe the stress I'm under. Babe, can we relax tonight and not do all this wedding stuff?

Sharon pauses, looking at him - angry. Jack looks up.

JACK (CONT'D)

... What?

SHARON ANGRILY DROPS THE PLATE OF NOODLES SHE'S HOLDING, GRABS HER COAT, STARTS MARCHING OUT. Jack jumps up.

JACK (CONT'D)

Whoa, whoa! What just happened?

SHARON

Nothing, Jack. That's all that ever happens. It's like you don't ever listen to a single word I say. We "talk" about our wedding but I'm the only one who "does" anything. And every time I try to involve you - like now - you push it off. Do you realize we've been engaged for over six months and you still haven't given me a wedding date?

JACK

Because my work schedule's crazy.

SHARON

Great. We'll start a family after you retire.

JACK

Sharon, I keep telling you to just plan it without me.

SHARON

Even if I did - I can't book a caterer or band or photographer or invite anyone without a date. And all the best people are booked a year in advance so it's just... Honestly, I'm starting to feel like you don't really want to do this.

JACK

What? No, sweetie. You know I love you. You're my favorite.

SHARON

Don't talk to me like I'm one your clients. I'm leaving.

She tries to exit again. Jack stops her again.

JACK

I'm sorry! I'll go over my schedule first thing tomorrow and pick a date. I promise.

SHARON

First thing?

JACK

Wake up, pee, pick a date. I swear. I may also choose a date for some couples counseling because I don't think I can forgive you for dropping my noodles.

ON THE NOODLES - splattered. She smiles, breaking a bit.

SHARON

That's your fault.

She playfully pushes him.

JACK

Ow! Fiance abuse. Hey, I just figured out something I want on our wedding menu.

SHARON

Noodles?

JACK

No. Neck.

He playfully attacks/kisses her neck. She laughs, giggling.

SHARON

Stop! The tree guys will hear us!

He doesn't care as they fall onto the floor, fooling around.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM - LATER

BLACK. CLICKING noise - then... LIGHT. Reveal Sharon has clicked on a bedside LAMP. Jack lies there, satisfied.

JACK

Can I pick a date to do that again?

SHARON

Sure. It's late. I should go.

JACK

No. Stay over tonight.

SHARON

I can't. My exercise stuff's at home and I have an early spin class. We wouldn't have this problem, if you let me move in already.

JACK

I told you to move in months ago.

SHARON

And if you listened, I told you that I can't move in until you clear out a closet. I'm a girl. We come with stuff. Oh, should I get those concert tickets?

JACK

What tickets?

SHARON

You're kidding? Every time I leave a message on your home machine you never get it. You should buy a new one already. Van Morrison's coming to town so I thought we could--

SNORING - he fell asleep. She smiles, covers him with the blanket, kisses his head, exits.

INT. JACK'S LIVING ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Sharon enters - stopping by the old ANSWERING MACHINE.

SHARON

... bet it doesn't even work.

SHARON hits "PLAY" on the ANSWERING MACHINE.

MALE VOICE ON MACHINE

Jack. It's Frank. I'm in town so if you want to get together--

Suddenly, JACK DASHES IN! HE QUICKLY SHUTS OFF THE MACHINE.

JACK
DON'T TOUCH THAT!

SHARON
Sorry. Was that your brother?

JACK
Yeah. Frank left it before... the accident. During one of his rare appearances home to see Mom.

SHARON
But didn't he pass away like--

JACK
5 years ago. Yeah.

SHARON
... I thought you two didn't talk?

JACK
We didn't. We were brothers but so were Tupac and Biggie and they had a better relationship.

Suddenly, we hear HONKING.

JACK (CONT'D)
Oh. The tree guys must be done.

Curious, Jack opens the door to see...

THE TREE - tall, lush green leaves - now planted. ONE LAST WORKER pats down some dirt at the base. Done. He waves to Jack and jumps on the truck that's leaving. They drive off.

Jack steps outside next to the tree, WAVES GOODBYE TO THEM.

JACK (CONT'D)
THANKS!

With that one word... WE SEE ONE LEAF SLOWLY DROP DOWN OFF THE TREE. We follow it as it flutters down to Jack's feet.

Jack looks up at the tree, admiring it - smiles.

JACK (CONT'D)
Not bad.

TWO MORE LEAVES drop down. He's unaware. Sharon walks up.

SHARON
Wow. I love it. Okay, I'm going. Call me first thing with the date so I can get our show on the road.

She gives him a kiss and jumps in her car. NOW WE NOTICE -
AS JACK TALKS - A LEAF DROPS WITH EACH WORD.

JACK
Bye! I'll look into Van Morrison!

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT HIS WORDS AND THE LEAVES ARE CONNECTED.

Sharon's gone. Jack pulls out his cell, dials. HE PACES UNDER THE TREE AS HE TALKS, UNAWARE THAT LEAVES ARE DROPPING WITH EACH WORD HE SPEAKS - IN SYNC WITH THE RHYTHM OF HIS VOICE. If he pauses - leaves pause, etc...

JACK (CONT'D)
Aaron, when you get this message,
start looking over my calender. I
need to pick a wedding date. Not
the winter though. And not near my
birthday. And I hate sweating up a
tux so let's avoid the summer and--

Jack heads inside - still talking on the cell.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As he talks, Jack grabs some food off the dining room table.

JACK
-- not October - world series. I
also need to check on Sinja and
make sure he's writing. And get...

Jack SITS ON THE COUCH, CLICKS ON THE T.V., STARTS EATING.

WIDEN TO REVEAL THE TREE - SEEN THROUGH A WINDOW BEHIND JACK -
leaves still dropping with each word he speaks.

JACK (CONT'D)
... me a non-fat vanilla latte in
the morning. No, a... frappucino.
Okay. Call me in the morning.

Jack hangs up, focuses on the T.V.. He clicks around and
stops on a... JIMMY SWAGGART-TYPE PREACHER.

PREACHER
The Gospel of John says, "In the
beginning was the word and the word
was with God, and the word is God."

Jack flips channels. We see THE SCENE IN "THE MATRIX" when
KEANU'S MOUTH HORRIFYINGLY DISAPPEARS. Jack flips to...

TV LAND - the old FED-EX COMMERCIAL W/ JOHN MOSCHITTA - the
world's fastest talker.

JOHN MOSCHITTA
 I'm putting you in charge of
 Pittsburgh, Peter. I know it's
 perfect, Peter, that's why I picked
 Pittsburgh. May I call you Pete?

Jack changes stations again. It's the famous "HONEYMOONERS"
 episode where Jackie Gleason keeps screaming...

JACKIE GLEASON
 You're a BLABBERMOUTH!

As Jackie Gleason blares - JACK STARTS TO FALL ASLEEP.

Jack stops fighting his exhaustion and LIES DOWN ON THE COUCH
 AND SHUTS THE T.V.. Beat of SILENCE. Then we hear...

MALE WHISPER
 ... Are you there?

JACK IMMEDIATELY POPS UP - HE QUICKLY PUTS THE T.V. BACK ON.
 Now comforted by the background noise - he lies down again,
 falls asleep. We see the tree behind him in the moonlight.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack exits his house, showered, dressed - on his cell.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 What about January?

JACK
 Football.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 February?

JACK
 No. Valentine's and our
 anniversary will be the same month.
 Too mushy. What about March?

JACK PASSES THE TREE. Again, LEAVES DROP AS HE SPEAKS. We
 see a small LEAF PILE building under the tree.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 March is where we started. You
 said "no" because of your birthday.

JACK
 Crap. Okay. We'll go through it
 again when I get in. Did you
 reschedule the Funkler meeting?

AARON ON THE PHONE
 No. He wants to talk to you about
 it first.

(MORE)

AARON ON THE PHONE (CONT'D)
 In fact, he's called 3 times since
 I told him that fake pneumonia
 story. Also, Chad asked me if he
 can see Sinja's book.

JACK
 What an ass pimple. Tell him it's
 at the printer. And buy me some
 orange tic tacs - not lime - like
 you did last time. One's fruity -
 one's sour. Huge difference.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 I look forward to applying that
 knowledge to my work as an agent.

JACK
 And get me a roll of 2 cent stamps
 so I can use up my old ones. And
 book me that plane ticket to... ow!

Jack stops, HE STANDS STILL A MOMENT - RUBS HIS TEMPLES.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 What's wrong?

JACK
 Headache. Started last night.

As Jack rubs his head, he notices THE TREE - ONE BRANCH
 STANDS OUT AMONGST THE THICK GREEN FOLIAGE - BARREN.

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... that's strange.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 What's strange?

Jack walks up to the tree - taking a closer look.

JACK
 This new tree. One branch doesn't
 have a single...

HE PAUSES - NOTICING THE LEAVES FALLING WITH HIS WORDS.

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... leaf.

ONE MORE LEAF DROPS - he realizes the connection - can't be.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Is it windy?

THREE LEAVES DROP.

AARON ON THE PHONE
 No.

JACK
Weird.

ONE LEAF DROPS.

AARON ON THE PHONE
What's weird?

JACK
Every time I...

THREE LEAVES DROP. He pauses, then purposefully...

JACK (CONT'D)
... say...

ONE LEAF DROPS. He's amazed.

JACK (CONT'D)
How the hell...?

THREE LEAVES DROP. He can't believe it.

AARON ON THE PHONE
Something wrong, Jack?... Jack?

JACK HANGS UP ON AARON. He stares at the tree, moving closer to get a better look. He decides to experiment.

JACK
Hello?

ONE LEAF FALLS. He rubs his eyes in case he's seeing things.

JACK (CONT'D)
(quickly)
Hello, hello, hello, hello, hello.

SIX LEAVES QUICKLY FALL IN SYNC WITH THE WORDS. This can't be happening. He thinks, then SLOWLY says...

JACK (CONT'D)
(extremely drawn out)
Helll...

C.U. LEAF - SLOWLY PEELING FROM THE BRANCH AS HE FINISHES.

JACK (CONT'D)
...lllllllloooooo.

THE LEAF FINALLY FALLS. Jack is flabbergasted. He thinks. He starts singing "HELLO, I LOVE YOU" by the DOORS.

JACK (CONT'D)
HELLO I LOVE YOU, WON'T YOU...

THE LEAVES DROP IN TIME WITH THE MELODY. He stops. Then...

Bonjour. JACK (CONT'D)

ONE LEAF FALLS.

Shalom. JACK (CONT'D)

ONE LEAF FALLS.

JACK (CONT'D)
Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

ONE LEAF FALLS. He's baffled and naturally says...

Fuck! JACK (CONT'D)

ONE LEAF FALLS. He thinks and starts to SPELL OUT A WORD.

JACK (CONT'D)
F...
(nothing falls on letters)
U... C...
(long beat, then)
..... K.

ONE LEAF FALLS. He steps back, scared. SUDDENLY, HE SMILES, REALIZING THE EXPLANATION. He opens his cell, dials.

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
Hello?

JACK
You got me, Dr. Sinja! Your little
trick tree's doing it right now.
Testing - one, two. I love it!

Leaves drop in sync. Jack laughs, amused.

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
What are you talking about?

JACK
Cut it out. Every word I say - a
leaf drops. Where'd you find this?
A novelty shop? Are there strings?

Jack waves his hands around - looking for strings.

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
Did you say the leaves drop when
you talk?

JACK
I got it! Magnets, right? No...
Levers inside! Where's the panel?
(examining the tree)
There's gotta be a hinge somewhere.

Jack puts his ear up against it and TAPS THE TREE. THE
MOMENT HE TAPS - HE TURNS, AS IF SOMEONE TOUCHED HIM.

JACK (CONT'D)
... who did that?

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
Did what?

JACK
When I tapped the tree, I felt--
(rubs his temple)
Aaah, my headache's getting worse.

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
Headache? So now the talking is
making you sick?

JACK
No. Talking isn't making me sick.

JACK SUDDENLY SNEEZES.

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
Sounds like it is.

JACK
Hardee Har. It's my hay fever. In
fact, I was on my way to get a
prescription. But thanks for the
funny tree. Love ya, big guy.

DR. SINJA ON THE PHONE
That's easy for you to say - but
not for long.

He hangs up. Jack's confused a moment - but shakes it off,
gets in his car. Before he exits, he looks at the tree...

JACK
... Bye.

One leaf drops. He chuckles - then rubs his temples, exits.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Jack is on a table - A DOCTOR is taking his blood pressure.
THE DOCTOR IS LISTENING TO HIS BLOOD PRESSURE THROUGHOUT.

DOCTOR
I'm happy to give you some Allegra
but I don't think it's hay fever.

JACK
Really?

On that word - the DOCTOR suddenly reacts - listening.

DOCTOR
Whoa. What was that?

JACK
What?

DOCTOR
You just did it again! Your pressure's normal and then it momentarily jumps off the charts.

JACK
Why?

DOCTOR
Mamas pajamas! How'd you do that?

JACK
Do what? I'm not doing anything.

DOCTOR
Wow. That was a long one. Okay, quiet down. Let me listen.
(beat, listening)
... Weird. Now it's gone.

The doctor undoes the blood pressure kit. Jack coughs a bit - a little tickle in his throat - nothing bad.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Jack, have you experienced any excess stress recently?

JACK
Just work stuff. Hey, I know this sounds nuts but someone told me "talking" is making me sick.

DOCTOR
I already checked your throat.

JACK
No, I mean this new age doctor said-

Jack suddenly SNEEZES. The Doctor takes notice.

DOCTOR
You're definitely reacting to something specific. In the last 24 hours did you eat any new food or touch any exotic plants?

Off Jack's knowing reaction to "plant" we go to...

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

The tree. Dr. Sinja is under it, examining it. Jack is nearby, looking quite impatient.

DR. SINJA
Amazing. Do it again.

JACK
No.

ONE LEAF FALLS, continuing whenever Jack speaks. There is a sense of playfulness with Sinja - he's toying with Jack.

DR. SINJA
You're right. One word - one leaf.

JACK
Thank you, Captain Obvious. Doc, I need to get to work. I only called you so you'd send Team Tree over to dump this thing.

DR. SINJA
I came to explain.

JACK
I don't care how the leaf trick works. I'm getting a reaction.

DR. SINJA
You're reacting to talking.

JACK
Would you stop? I get your point. I asked you to write more, but words don't grow on trees - blah blah blah. None of this matters to your publisher. So let's put all this effort into your book and maybe we'll hit the big page six--

Jack COUGHS from talking so much.

(NOTE: THESE COUGHS ARE MINOR AT THIS POINT - ONLY UNTIL MUCH LATER, WHEN INDICATED, WOULD THEY CAUSE ANYONE CONCERN)

DR. SINJA
First time I've seen someone choke on their own bullshit.

JACK
Fine. You won't call the plant posse, I'll do it myself.

Jack exits up his driveway. Sinja turns to the tree.

DR. SINJA
... No, I can't just tell him. He needs to figure it out himself.

A moment later, Jack returns with an... AXE. THE MOMENT DR. SINJA SEES THE AXE - HE DROPS ALL PLAYFULNESS.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
Oh, no, no, no - you can't do this.

JACK
Watch me.

JACK LOOSENS UP, SWINGING THE AXE AROUND.

DR. SINJA
I told you - it's not the tree.
It's the talking!

JACK gets into a swinging position by the tree.

JACK
Right. Another case of "talkitis."
Tell you what - you start typing,
I'll shut up. But I do have one
last word...

JACK PULLS BACK THE AXE, READY TO CHOP.

JACK (CONT'D)
... TIMBERRR!

DR. SINJA COVERS HIS EYES, UNABLE TO WATCH.

JACK HITS THE TREE - THWACK! Immediately...

JACK IS PHYSICALLY THROWN SIDEWAYS ACROSS THE YARD - LIKE AN
INVISIBLE FORCE HIT HIM - ONTO THE GROUND - OOMPH! HE GRABS
HIS SIDE IN PAIN! HE ROLLS UP HIS SHIRT.

C.U. JACK'S HIP - A CRESCENT SHAPED BLACK AND BLUE MARK.

C.U. TREE - A CRESCENT SHAPED AXE MARK - THE MARKS LOOK
EXACTLY ALIKE. JACK'S IN SHOCK - TURNS TO SINJA.

DR. SINJA
Be glad you don't own a chainsaw.

TIME CUT to...

TEN MINUTES LATER - STILL IN THE YARD

Dr. Sinja is now on a ladder - COUNTING LEAVES. Jack sits on
his doorstep - a BAG OF ICE on his hip.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
... 998, 999, 1000. See? 453 on
the grass. 547 on the tree.

JACK
So?

ONE LEAF DROPS.

DR. SINJA
546. So you asked for a 1000 words. I gave them to you. The tree will keep count. Enjoy.

Sinja starts out - Jack follows.

JACK
WAIT! "The tree will keep count?"
How the hell is that possible?

DR. SINJA
I told you. One leaf drops every t-

JACK
I KNOW THAT PART! Not that it makes any sense in the world of logic. First and foremost, explain how I got hurt when I hit the tree?

DR. SINJA
Whatever happens to it - will now happen to you.

JACK
... Do you realize that you keep answering me but nothing you're saying actually means anything.

DR. SINJA
Frustrating, isn't it? I learned it from my agent.

Jack gets the point, annoyed. Sinja starts to leave again.

JACK
Stop leaving! Tell me why-
(suddenly grabs his neck)
OW! OW! OW! OW! OW!

REVEAL ON THE TREE - A WOODPECKER - PECKING. WITH EVERY PECK - JACK YELPS. Sinja shoos it away.

DR. SINJA
(examining Jack's neck)
It's fine. Just a woodpecker.

JACK
"Just a woodpecker?" I'm not trying to be "one with nature" here! I'M FEELING WHAT THE TREE'S FEELING! HOW IS THIS HAPPENING?!

DR. SINJA
These things happen. Adam and Eve had the tree of knowledge. Buddha had the Bodhi Tree. Moses got a bush. You're in good company.

Dr. Sinja starts out again:

JACK
Where do you keep going?

DR. SINJA
You told me to work on the book.

Jack SNEEZES - a big one. Sinja's getting in his PRIUS.

JACK
Hey! My reaction's getting worse.
How do I stop it?

DR. SINJA
Shut up. The more you talk, the
more leaves fall, the sicker you
get.

JACK
"Sicker I get?" What happens if
all the leaves fall off?

DR. SINJA
That usually means the tree's dead.

JACK
HOLD ON. If what happens to the
tree, happens to me...
(pausing, taking this in)
Are you saying... I could die?

DR. SINJA
Or someone will turn you into a
coffee table. Have fun.

Dr. Sinja starts up his car. Jack's not happy.

JACK
I'M DYING AND THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE
TO SAY?

DR. SINJA
No... Love ya. You're my favorite.

Dr. Sinja drives away in his PRIUS, leaving Jack alone.
JACK'S CELL PHONE RINGS - he automatically picks it up.

JACK
Hello?

Jack sees ONE LEAF FALL - he's annoyed with himself.

SHARON
Hi, sweetie. You pick a date yet?

Jack thinks, not wanting to talk...

JACK
(trying to skip words)
Me... office... soon.

SHARON
What are you, Frankenstein? Why
are you talking --

Jack starts making FAKE BAD CONNECTION SOUNDS, hangs up.

Jack gets into his car, starts it up. HIS BLACKBERRY BEEPS.

C.U. BLACKBERRY - "FROM AARON - WANT TO RETURN CALLS?"

Jack tentatively types... "NO." As he hits the button for
"O" he quickly looks up at the tree and... NOTHING FALLS.

JACK
Yes! I can write!

FOUR LEAVES FALL. He realizes he spoke.

Shit! JACK (CONT'D)

ONE LEAF FALLS. Annoyed, HE COVERS HIS OWN MOUTH - drives.

INT. JACK'S CAR - LATER

JACK stops at a RED LIGHT. A HOT GIRL pulls up next to him.
She looks over, smiles. He smiles.

HOT GIRL
How's it going?

JACK STARTS TO ANSWER, OPENING HIS MOUTH - THEN HE STOPS HIS
MOUTH FROM MOVING. He turns away to avoid conversation.

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
What? Cat got your tongue?

Jack shakes "no" - points to a nearby tree.

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
Oh, am I not good enough to talk
to, Mr. Hot Shot in your fancy car?

Jack is frustrated and just shakes "no."

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
Don't shake your head "no" at me!
I reject you too. How's that feel?

Jack shrugs, at a loss to communicate. She snaps.

HOT GIRL (CONT'D)
I am so sick of phonies like you
who can't say one nice word to
anyone. I'm going back home to
Ohio where people are real and say
"hi" to each other in their cars!

She drives off. JACK QUICKLY ROLLS HIS WINDOW UP to avoid any future conversations, drives off.

A MINUTE LATER

ON JACK DRIVING. His cell rings - "SHARON" blinks. He can't answer, shuts it. HE PUTS ON THE RADIO to distract himself.

It's DEE LITE'S "GROOVE IS IN THE HEART." WE HOLD ON JACK as he drives, listening. This song has a long bouncy build up to the chorus. We watch Jack slowly, naturally, get into it.

JACK BOPS HIS HEAD - STARTING SMALL, BUILDING, UNTIL...

JACK SHAKES HIS SHOULDERS, WIGGLING IN HIS SEAT, THEN...

JACK PLAYS DRUMS ON HIS STEERING WHEEL, REALLY INTO IT.

JACK DOES A ROBOT DANCE IN HIS SEAT AND THEN, WITHOUT THINKING, THE CHORUS HITS AND HE BURSTS OUT SINGING...

JACK
GROOVE IS IN THE HEEEEARTTT - AAAAH!

Jack COUGHS, realizing he spoke and quickly CHANGES STATIONS to Classical Music. He's beyond frustrated.

EXT. WENDY'S - DRIVE-THRU - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack pulls up to the SPEAKERBOX.

SPEAKERBOX
Welcome to Wendy's. What can I get you?

Again, Jack opens his mouth - stops, he can't talk. He tries to back up - CAR BEHIND HIM and a CAR AHEAD. HE'S STUCK. EVERYONE START HONKING! Panicking - Jack spots a MOM PUSHING A BABY STROLLER PAST HIS CAR. HE REACHES OVER AND GRABS A "WONDER WHEEL" TOY FROM THE LITTE KID, who's upset.

MOTHER
Hey!

Jack motions for them to wait one moment. They do.

SPEAKERBOX
Hello? Are you ordering or not?

Jack holds the toy up to the SPEAKERBOX, pushes a BUTTON.

TOY
(a cow)
MOOO!

SPEAKERBOX
Burger. What kind?

Jack pushes another button.

TOY
(pig snorting sounds)
OINK! OINK!

SPEAKERBOX
Baconburger.

The MOTHER GRABS THE TOY AWAY FROM JACK, ANGRY. THE LITTLE KID STICKS HIS TONGUE OUT AT HIM.

SPEAKERBOX (CONT'D)
What would you like to drink?

Jack thinks... THEN HE VIOLENTLY SHAKES THE SPEAKERBOX.

SPEAKERBOX (CONT'D)
Shake. Chocolate or Vanilla?

JACK MAKES SOME HIP-HOP HUMAN BEAT BOX SOUNDS.

SPEAKERBOX (CONT'D)
Chocolate. First window please.

Jack happily drives forward - mission accomplished.

EXT. JACK'S OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

Jack finishes his shake, tosses the cup and walks up to the lobby doors - A RANDOM PASSERBY SNEEZES.

JACK
(automatic)
God ble--

JACK STOPS HIS MOUTH before he can finish - angry with himself. He gathers his strength, turns to the lobby doors.

JACK (CONT'D)
Focus.

Jack COUGHS - realizes that he spoke again. He shakes it off, takes a deep breath - preparing himself - THEN ENTERS.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

We follow Jack as he quickly walks through the office PASSING CO-WORKERS - DOING EVERYTHING HE CAN TO AVOID TALKING. THE FOLLOWING HAPPENS FAST - ALWAYS MOVING.

CO-WORKER #1
Hey, Jack.

Jack WAVES "hi," keeps walking. Another person passes.

CO-WORKER #2
How's it going?

Jack gives a THUMBS UP. Another person passes.

CO-WORKER #3
Good to see you.

Jack POINTS and WINKS. Another person passes.

CO-WORKER #4
What's up?

Jack SHRUGS - NOTHING. Another person.

CO-WORKER #5
How you feeling?

Jack makes a "SO-SO" HAND MOTION. Another person.

CO-WORKER #6
Don't forget the meeting.

Jack playfully ROLLS HIS EYES at them. Another person.

CO-WORKER #7
How's the new car?

Jack gives the "OKAY" FINGER SIGN. Another person.

CO-WORKER #8
You see Bob around?

Jack POINTS OFF TO HIS LEFT. Another person.

CO-WORKER #9
You see Jill?

Jack POINTS TO HIS RIGHT. Another person.

CO-WORKER #10
You hear about Bob and Jill?

Jack makes a FUCKING FINGERS MOTION. Another person.

CO-WORKER #11
My daughter's selling girl scout
cookies.

Jack flashes TEN FINGERS.

CO-WORKER #11 (CONT'D)
Ten boxes what flavor?

Jack SUCKS IN HIS CHEEKS - LOOKING SKINNY.

CO-WORKER #11 (CONT'D)
Thin mints. Got it.

Jack walks on. Another person passes.

CO-WORKER #12
You read the boss's asinine memo?

Jack makes a JERK-OFF MOTION. Then the MAIL GUY WEARING A
TIE-DYE "NO WAR" SHIRT PASSES. Jack makes a PEACE SIGN.

Finally... CHAD walks by, friendly.

CHAD
Morning, Jack!

Chad passes - behind his back, JACK GIVES HIM THE FINGER.
Finally, Jack reaches his office, sees Aaron, RELIEVED.

JACK
Made it.

Jack COUGHS - realizes he talked. Aaron is on the phone.

AARON
... No, Mr. Funkler, I don't know
if Dr. Sinja still has pneumonia.

Jack hears this, signals Aaron - big thumbs up. Aaron nods.

AARON (CONT'D)
... I mean YES, Sinja's sick... No,
I'm not lying... You want to know
if Jack has the book yet?

Jack shakes "NO" - points at the nearby COMPUTER PRINTER.

AARON (CONT'D)
No, the printer is re-printing the,
uh, print... No, I'm not lying... I
said I'm not lying... Is Jack in?

Jack emphatically shakes "no" - much bigger.

AARON (CONT'D)
No, but he'll call you first thing
... I am not lying. Bye.
(hangs up)
... Jack, a million people want to
talk to you. And that was
Funkler's fourth call.

Jack nods, concerned, starts in his office.

AARON (CONT'D)
WAIT!
(hands Jack the following)
(MORE)

AARON (CONT'D)

Orange tic tacs, frappacino, stamps, I booked that plane ticket and once again plucked every mini-marshmallow from a box of Lucky Charms. And let me just say - thank God I went to college. Also, I tried to tell you this before you hung up on me - you're supposed at Jury Duty right now so you can talk your way out of it, remember?

JACK

(remembering)

SHIT!

Jack COUGHS - a bit bigger.

AARON

Ooo. You got a sore throat?

Jack thinks - NODS, GOING ALONG WITH THE IDEA - a good cover.

AARON (CONT'D)

Try not to talk. Want some tea?

Jack agrees, playing along. Aaron stops, looking at him.

AARON (CONT'D)

Hey, what's with your hair?

REVEAL JACK - for no apparent reason, in the windless office, JACK'S HAIR IS BLOWING TO ONE SIDE. WHY?

QUICK CUT TO:

THE TREE - A GUST OF WIND IS BLOWING IT TO THE SAME SIDE.

BACK TO:

JACK trying to brush his hair down as Aaron watches. Unable to control it, Jack quickly exits into his office.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

JACK GRABS SOME HAIR GEL AND SLATHERS IT ON to keep his hair down. Then behind him we hear...

SAM O.C.

Just the man I need to talk to.

Jack turns around - oh, no - his boss is at the door. Shit.

SAM

Can we chat a sec?

Jack shakes "no" - motions towards his throat.

SAM (CONT'D)
Sore throat? Please. I've got one too. This is important. Sit.

Jack's screwed - sits. Sam shuts the door.

SAM (CONT'D)
By the way, did you get Dwyane Wade to commit yet to that book? People love basketball players. If you're busy, I could put Chad on it?

Jack shakes "no" - motioning "close" with two fingers.

SAM (CONT'D)
Close. Good. Lock it up. So, Jack, I was wondering - does the work here still excite you?

Jack excitedly HIGH FIVES Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
That's what I thought. Which makes it all the more strange that I received a call from Funkler complaining about you.

Jack points to himself - "Me?"

SAM (CONT'D)
Yes, you. Said you refuse to call him back. Have anything to say?

Jack doesn't know what to do - so he grabs a nearby APPLE and starts eating, feigning "thinking" as he OCCUPIES HIS MOUTH. Sam picks up a nearby GOLF CLUB - practices putting.

SAM (CONT'D)
Well, I'll tell you what I said. I said, "Not my boy, Jack. Jack would never do that. Because Jack knows how unhappy I'd be if Sinja's deal fell through." You wouldn't want that to happen, would you?

Jack's out of apple. To avoid taking, he quickly grabs CHAPSTICK - starts covering his lips - SHAKING "NO."

SAM (CONT'D)
I didn't think so. Because if all that company time and money you invested in Sinja went to waste - it would pretty much kill any chance of you making partner. You understand that, right, Jack?

REVEAL JACK IS NOW FLOSSING HIS TEETH - NODS "YES."

SAM (CONT'D)
So then how do you explain the situation?

Back to Jack - who's finished flossing. SO JACK QUICKLY STICKS A NEARBY CIGAR IN HIS MOUTH. HE OFFERS ONE TO SAM.

SAM (CONT'D)
No thanks. And stop trying to act so confident.

SAM PULLS THE CIGAR OUT OF JACK'S MOUTH, DUMPS IT. Jack's fucked. Sam puts his arm around Jack, fatherly. He's stuck.

SAM (CONT'D)
I know you're scared, son. You put all your eggs in one basket - turns out there's a hole in the bottom. Here's what I'm going to do. Forget showing me Sinja's book today. I'll let it slide. But in return you've got to show me a little gratitude. Can you do that?

With Sam's arm still around him - ALL JACK CAN DO IS NOD.

SAM (CONT'D)
No, I need to hear you say it. How are you going to show me some gratitude?

Jack's trapped so... HE KISSES Sam on the cheek.

SAM (CONT'D)
... I appreciate that - but what I'm talking about is leading by example. That's what a partner does. You need to be a tiger. Hungry, focused. Can you do that?

JACK GROWLS LIKE A TIGER.

SAM (CONT'D)
Good. Because it's a jungle out there.

Jack makes "CA-CAW" BIRD/CHIMP JUNGLE SOUNDS - SAM STOPS HIM.

SAM (CONT'D)
JACK! I'm familiar with what a jungle is. My point is - success in this business is based on communication. And no one communicates better than Jack Rappaport. Am I right?

Jack bang his chest with his fist - acting macho.

SAM (CONT'D)
Exactly! Now I want you to repeat
after me. I WILL -

Jack quickly grabs his TEA and DRINKS - MAKING HUMMING NOISE
AS HE DRINKS AS IF HE'S REPEATING SAM.

JACK
(through the water)
Mmm Mmm --

SAM
-- CALL FUNKLER BACK.

JACK
-- Mmm Mmmmmmm Mmmmm.

SAM
That's what I want to hear!
(quickly opens the door)
Aaron, get Funkler on the phone
right now!

Aaron quickly responds. Jack is horrified.

SAM (CONT'D)
Don't let me down, Silvertongue.
And no more kissing 'til the deal's
done. Ha!

Sam exits. Jack's exasperated - what the hell can he do?

AARON
Funkler on line one!

Jack nods, shuts his door. He sits, staring at the PULSING
RED HOLD LIGHT. Jack thinks, reaches into a drawer for a...

SMALL HAND-HELD TAPE RECORDER. He hits "RECORD" and says....

JACK
You da man.

JACK WINCES FROM A HEADACHE PAIN. He shakes it off - takes a
breath - then hits SPEAKERPHONE. He whistles.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Jack? Is that you? Hello?

Jack hits "PLAY" on his recorder and holds it to the speaker.
(HE DOES THIS FOR EVERY ONE OF HIS UPCOMING LINES)

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
It is you.
(annoyed)
Thanks for finally calling me back.

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Don't try to butter me up. Look, I got your message about Sinja being sick and I'm willing to reschedule the meeting. That okay with you?

Jack's relieved, hits the button.

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Glad we're on the same page. Let's reschedule it for TODAY. I've waited long enough. Sinja doesn't need to be there. I just want the book.

This is a nightmare. Jack thinks and just plays...

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You--

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Yeah, me. Who else have you strung along for over a year?

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
--da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
What man?

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You--

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Hugh? You mean Hugh Peterman at Bantam Books? Jack, you promised me first look!

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Oh, now Hugh's the man? I don't appreciate you trying to start a bidding war before I even see it.

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You--

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Enough about Hugh! Be at the Palm with the book at one o'clock sharp - or you can forget about ever doing business with me again.

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Damn right I am.

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
Cut it out. I know you're just
doing your job. You da man too.

JACK'S RECORDED VOICE
You da man.

FUNKLER'S VOICE
No, you are! Enough already. See
you in an hour.

Jack hangs up - beyond frustrated.

JACK
Motherfu - ow!

JACK GRABS HIS SHOULDER, WHICH NOW SEEMS TO HURT - IT MUST BE
FROM THE TALKING. INTERCOM sounds.

AARON ON THE INTERCOM.
Jack, Rachel Ray's on two.

Jack thinks, makes a SNORING SOUND.

AARON ON THE INTERCOM
You want me to tell her she snorts
like a pig?

Jack does a more pronounced SLEEPING SNORTING sound.

AARON ON THE INTERCOM (CONT'D)
Oh, you overslept. Got it.

Jack's blackberry beeps. He looks at...

C.U. BLACKBERRY - "FROM SHARON - I'M WAITING..."

Jack's in trouble - RUSHES out to see Sharon, passing Aaron.

AARON
Where you going? YOU HAVE
CONFERENCE CALL AFTER LUNCH AND A
MEETING WITH DWYANE WADE LATER!

Jack's blackberry continues BEEPING as he runs down the hall.

INT. SHARON'S CUBICLE - A MOMENT LATER

Sharon's at her computer. Jack enters - his BLACKBERRY BEEPING. He shuts it off and smiles. She's angry.

SHARON

You hang up on me this morning and now you're ignoring my messages?

Jack points to his throat and makes a coughing sound.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Sick? Right. I hear "commitment-phobia" is going around. Just admit you haven't bothered to pick a date yet. That's why you're hiding from me, right?

Jack notices a SHREK DOLL on her desk. HE SQUEEZES IT.

SHREK DOLL

I LOVE YOU!

Jack tries to kiss her. She resists.

SHARON

No! No affection after you ignore me.

JACK SQUEEZES THE SHREK DOLL AGAIN.

SHREK DOLL

I'M HUNGRY!

He affectionately nibbles on her neck. She resists.

SHARON

Stop, Jack. I'm serious.

JACK SQUEEZES THE SHREK DOLL AGAIN.

SHREK DOLL

ARE WE THERE YET?

SHARON

Unfortunately we're not there yet because you refuse to help me. So what's the date?

Jack thinks, then tentatively holds up ONE FINGER.

SHARON (CONT'D)

One? You mean January?

Jack nods - just trying to please her.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Any particular day in January?

Jack thinks - FLASHES TEN FINGERS.

SHARON (CONT'D)
The tenth? Okay. You do realize
we never do anything in January
because of the football playoffs?

Jack remembers. He thinks - then motions to his watch.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Time? You want more time?

Jack nods. She sighs, turns away, disappointed. Jack sees
how upset she is - HE HUGS HER.

SHARON (CONT'D)
God, after yesterday how can you...
You know, I really think deep down -
you don't want to be married. And
if that's true then we should --
can you stop hugging me?

He pulls back, gives a big smile, trying to lighten things.

SHARON (CONT'D)
I'm glad you're happy - I'm not.
You couldn't just listen to me this
one time?

He realizes she's serious. So, he starts to answer her...

SHARON (CONT'D)
(cutting him off)
Don't defend yourself. I've heard
it. You'll say what I want to hear
- but then nothing happens. You
couldn't even find 5 minutes to
pick a date. That says everything.
Take back the ring until you're
ready.

She hands the ring to him. JACK VEHEMENTLY SHAKES "NO."

SHARON (CONT'D)
Yes, Jack. Take it. I'm serious.

She pushes it into his hand and starts to exit.

JACK
SHARON, DON'T --

HE COUGHS, which stops him from talking. She turns back.

SHARON
I have a meeting. And don't look
at me like that.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)
I'm the one who's life is being
affected. You haven't lifted a
finger since we got engaged.

Jack quickly holds up his blackberry - motions to text him.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Text you?
(off his nod)
How romantic. You really know how
to fight - I mean text for a girl.

She exits. Desperate, Jack holds up SHREK - SQUEEZES HIM.

SHREK DOLL
I LOVE YOU!

Sharon doesn't hear but a PASSING MAIL GUY does and smiles -
flattered. Jack's frustrated - HE PANTOMIMES STABBING
HIMSELF IN THE CHEST. Suddenly, Sam walks by - stops.

SAM
Jack, what are you doing here? I
just spoke to Funkler. He told me
you're meeting him in half an hour.

Jack casually nods - acts like he's on top of it. Sam walks
off. Then JACK RUNS FULL SPEED towards the exit.

EXT. AGENCY - STREET - A MOMENT LATER

Jack exits, quickly heading to his car. Suddenly, Aaron runs
out, holding up Jack's bag and the bowl of marshmallows.

AARON
Jack, wait! You forgot your stuff!

Jack takes his bag, starts getting in his car.

AARON (CONT'D)
Need anything while you're gone?

Jack pulls out a LEGAL PAD and writes - hands it to Aaron.

AARON (CONT'D)
(reading, surprised)
Research "magic trees?" Is this
for a new book?

Jack thinks - then nods, lying. Aaron's happy.

AARON (CONT'D)
Cool. I'm on it. Thanks for
including me on this. Good luck.

Aaron heads back. Jack suddenly WHISTLES LOUDLY. Aaron
turns back. Jack signals for Aaron to get in his car.

AARON (CONT'D)
You want me to come? Why?

Jack makes a "talking" motion with his hand.

AARON (CONT'D)
To talk? Oh. Uh.. well, I would
but that harassment seminar said I
should never get into a car alone
with my direct superior.
(JACK PUSHES HIM)
... at least be gentle!

Jack drives off.

INT. JACK'S CAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack is driving. Aaron's doing research on Jack's lap top.

AARON
Magic Johnson... Magic Treats...
Magic Trick... Got it. Magic Tree.
(reading)
"Fairies live in magic trees?"

Jack shakes "no." Aaron continues reading.

AARON (CONT'D)
Magic motion gel... Magic
Trampoline... Magic Bodhi Tree...

Jack signals "STOP" remembering Sinja mentioned it.

AARON (CONT'D)
Bodhi Tree? Okay...
(reading)
The Bodhi Tree is considered a tree
of enlightenment or wisdom tree.
In Sanskrit, Bodhi means awakening
or "to become aware." To some, the
tree symbolizes the self, and like
the self, it grows and-
(looks up)
- no.

Jack signals to Aaron to keep reading - interested.

AARON (CONT'D)
No, Jack! NO, NO, NO!!

Aaron points out the window. A RED LIGHT! JACK ACCIDENTALLY
DRIVES THROUGH A BUSY INTERSECTION!

HORNS BLARE, CARS SWERVE - Jack barely misses having an
accident. Suddenly, we hear A POLICE SIREN. Jack pulls
over, a POLICE CAR behind him. Crap. A cop walks up.

POLICE OFFICER
License and registration, please.

Jack hands it over. The cops walks off.

AARON
Jack, you're never going to make
this lunch. Should I call Funkler?

Jack nods. Aaron gets on the phone. The cop walks back up.

POLICE OFFICER
Driver, have you been drinking?

Jack shakes "no."

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Step out of the vehicle for a
sobriety test, please.

Crap. Jack gets out. The cop stands in front of him.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Driver, hold both arms out to your
sides, then bend your right arm and
touch the tip of your nose.

Jack does it - no problem.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Now count backwards for me starting
with the number twenty.

Jack's not sure what to do. THE COP WAITS, staring at Jack.

JACK
(FAKE GIBBERISH)
Twe... ni-se-thr-brrgll...one.

Jack smiles. The cops stares at him - not amused.

POLICE OFFICER
Driver, do you understand English?

Jack thinks - shakes "no." The cop stares a beat, then...

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Por favor, yo necesito--

Aaron sticks his head out again - interrupting.

AARON
Funkler said he'll wait! He still
wants to have lunch.

POLICE OFFICER
 Son, interrupt us again and your
 ass will be lunch at the county
 lock up!

Aaron ducks back in. The cop marches up very close to Jack.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Look, smartass. My job is to
 protect the citizens of this state
 and you're wasting my time. You're
 either drunk - an irresponsible
 driver - or a jackass who can't
 count to twenty. WHICH IS IT?!

Jack thinks - holds up 3 fingers. The cop's confused.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
 You can't count to twenty?

Jack nods, shrugs.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Get in the car.

Jack quickly gets back in. The cop leans down.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Reckless disregard for the rules of
 the road is inexcusable, so you
 listen to me and you listen good--
 (SUDDENLY NICE, GENTLE)
 ...there's help for people like us.

Jack turns to him - surprised. The cop smiles, sincere.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
 That's right. I can't count
 either. I was in remedial math
 since the 3rd grade. Or at least I
 think it was 3rd. I had number
 nightmares, tipped twice my bill, I
 was scared to high five. You can
 beat this thing. M.I.A. - math .
 illiterates anonymous. I've been
 going to meetings since I was 96
 years old. They're in the phone
 book - you know, the book of crazy
 symbols. Good luck, brother.

The cop drives off. Aaron looks at Jack, sympathetic.

AARON
 Should I read the speedometer for
 you?

JACK
 Shut up - OW!

JACK WINCES FROM HEAD PAIN. Aaron looks out his window.

AARON
Oh, look. Too bad you have to go
this lunch. That cop pulled us
over next to the courthouse. You
could've gone in for jury duty.

Jack sees the COURTHOUSE next to them. He gets an idea, and
starts getting out of the car.

AARON (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Jack?

Jack motions that he's going in.

AARON (CONT'D)
No, you can't go to Jury Duty now!
I TOLD FUNKLER WE WERE ON OUR WAY!

Jack holds up FIVE FINGERS.

AARON (CONT'D)
Five minutes for Jury Duty? You're
crazy. You can't talk your way out
of it. You'll be in there all day!

Jack runs off into the building. Aaron's frustrated.

INT. COURTROOM - A MOMENT LATER

A POOL OF JURORS await questioning. TWO TEAMS OF LAWYERS. A
RABBI sits with one team. Jack enters - filling out a card -
sits. An OLD WOMAN - JUROR #7 - is being questioned.

JUDGE
Juror #7, the only reason they need
to know if you've ever been audited
is that Rabbi Zimmelman is being
accused of tax evasion.

JUROR #7
My taxes are my business.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
It's fine, your honor. Juror #7
have you had any bad experiences
with the I.R.S. or U.S. government?

JUROR #7
No.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
Great. We accept Juror #7.

JUDGE
Step down for processing. Is Juror
#8 here?

JACK STANDS - hands the Bailiff his card - takes the stand.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
Juror #8, have you ever been
accused of a crime or audited?

Jack shakes "no."

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
Have you or a member of your family
ever been arrested?

Jack shakes "no."

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
Have you ever had any negative
experiences with the government?

JACK GIVES HIM THE FINGER! Everyone looks at each other.

JUDGE
Juror #8, are you saying you
dislike the U.S. government?

Jack turns to the U.S. FLAG - GIVES IT 2 FINGERS - PUMPING
AWAY - BOTH HANDS. HE SLAPS HIS ASS AT THE FLAG.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
We get the point, Juror #8.
Considering your strong feelings,
are you an active member of any
radical political group?

JACK QUICKLY DOES A HEIL HITLER SALUTE. Immediately, THE
RABBI WHISPERS INTO HIS LAWYER'S EAR. His lawyer stands.

DEFENSE LAWYER
Move to dismiss.

Agreed. PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

JUDGE
You're dismissed.

Jack happily runs out, stopping to GIVE THE RABBI A KISS.

EXT. PALM RESTAURANT - LATER

Jack's car pulls up. He gives his keys to a VALET. THEN
JACK TURNS TO AARON - MOTIONS FOR AARON TO FOLLOW HIM INSIDE.

AARON
You want me to come in? Really?
(off Jack's nod)
Cool. I really appreciate you
letting me sit in. And don't
worry. I will not say a word.

Jack shakes "no," motioning to his throat, INDICATING THAT AARON NEEDS TO TALK FOR HIM. Aaron's confused.

AARON (CONT'D)
 What? I know your throat's...
 (sudden realization)
 TALK FOR YOU? Oh, no, no, no. Are
 you nuts? I'm not ready for that.
 This a huge meeting.

Jack insists again, angrily waving for Aaron to follow.

AARON (CONT'D)
 No, Jack, I really don't think I
 can handle it. I'm not--

Jack signals to be confident, encouraging him.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Maybe you're right. How bad can it
 be? I'm smart. Okay, I'll try.
 If all else fails, I'll just repeat
 what you say. LET'S DO IT!

Psyched, Aaron heads in. Jack, a little unsure, follows.

INT. PALM RESTAURANT - LATER

Table in the back. We find ED FUNKLER, 55, stout - eating.
 TWO OTHER EXECUTIVES are with him, 40s. Jack, Aaron walk up.

FUNKLER
 Look who finally showed. You're
 really batting a thousand, Jack.

Jack makes a CAR HORN SOUND.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 Bad traffic, sure. Jack, this is
 Random House's head of research,
 Todd Lewis, and my marketing man,
 Phil McGill. Who's your friend?

Jack signals Aaron to TALK. AARON ACTS INCREDIBLY CONFIDENT
 and grabs Mr. Funkler's hand, enthusiastically shaking it.

AARON
 Damn glad to meet you, Funkler.
 I'm Jack's agent-trainee, Aaron.
 We spoke on the phone.

FUNKLER
 Oh, right. The kid who lied to me.

AARON FREEZES - SCARED OUT OF HIS MIND. He turns to Jack.

AARON
 ... I'll wait in the car.

AARON QUICKLY RUNS OUT - JACK TRIES TO PULL HIM BACK - BUT AARON EXITS. Jack's screwed. Funkler motions for Jack to sit. Jack puts on a fake smile, sits. A WAITER approaches.

WAITER
Welcome. What can I get you?

Jack picks up a menu - points.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Ribeye. How would you like it?

Jack tilts his hand side to side - middle motion.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Medium. To drink?

Jack nods.

WAITER (CONT'D)
You will drink? Congratulations.
Anything specific or should I bring
a random selection of liquids?

JACK HOLDS DOWN ONE NOSTRIL - SNIFFS IN HARD WITH THE OTHER.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Coke. Very good.

The waiter exits. A HOT GIRL walks by. The guys turn, watch her ass. Jack quietly makes A HOT GIRL WHISTLE SOUND.

FUNKLER
You can say that again. So, how's
Sinja? Still sick?

Jack nods, makes a "throwing up" motion.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
Sorry to hear that. But Todd's got
some good news.

TODD
My research team says the timing
for Dr. Sinja's book couldn't be
better. All the popular holistic
gurus are on their fifth or sixth
books and the public's beyond
bored. They want something new.

FUNKLER
Think Sinja's our man?

Jack confidently nods.

PHIL

Jack, I've designed a three-tier promotional campaign starting with book signings building up to talk show appearances and infomercials.

FUNKLER

And we're ready to set all that in motion - assuming the book's as good as you promised. So, let's take a look.

They stare at Jack. Jack thinks - searches his jacket pocket like he's getting it, then under his seat, under the bread.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)

Stop kidding. Where's the book?

Jack thinks - points towards the window.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)

In the car? Brilliant move. We'll get it on the way out. But give us an overview. Tell us about it.

Again, Jack's in trouble. He grabs A BREADSTICK - CHEWS A PIECE - LIKE HE'S IN DEEP THOUGHT. Then...

Jack starts CHUCKLING.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)

It's funny?

TODD

Funny's good. Our research says people like to laugh.

Jack laughs harder.

FUNKLER

That funny? I've never read a funny meditation book before.

FUNKLER STARTS LAUGHING, UNSURE HOW TO REACT. His guys follow. JACK LAUGHS - THEY LAUGH. Back and forth, growing.

TODD

What's so funny?

PHIL

No idea.

Suddenly, JACK STARTS SQUIRMING IN HIS SEAT, GIGGLING AND SCRATCHING HIS BODY - AS IF HE'S BEING TICKLED. WHY?

CUT TO:

THE TREE - we see TWO SQUIRRELS SCURRYING AROUND - CAUSING HIS LAUGHING, tickling Jack. They finally run off the tree.

BACK TO:

JACK calming down. FUNKLER SUDDENLY STOPS LAUGHING.

FUNKLER
Wait a second. You're laughing at us, not with us, aren't you? Is there a problem with the book here?

Jack shakes "NO" - THEN STARTS UNINTENTIONALLY NODDING.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
No or yes? What is it?

JACK'S NODDING GETS MORE PRONOUNCED - OUT OF CONTROL. HE GRABS HIS HEAD, TRYING TO STOP NODDING - BUT CAN'T. Why?

CUT TO:

THE TREE VIBRATING UP AND DOWN. Why? REVEAL A HUGE MOVING TRUCK ROARING DOWN THE STREET behind it.

BACK TO:

JACK VIBRATING, grabs the table to steady himself - PLATES, SILVERWEAR VIBRATE. The publishing guys look at each other.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
Stop shaking like you're nervous! I'm onto you, Jack. Fellas, let me explain. Jack's not here to talk about the book. He's here to talk money, isn't that right, Jack?

The shaking stops - Jack's relieved.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
See how relieved he is? Good to get the deception out in the open, isn't it, you snake?

Jack shakes "no."

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
Don't deny it! Boys, you're sitting with the most cutthroat agent in the business. This is one of his famous negotiating tactics. He gives you the silent treatment until you give him what he wants.

Jack vehemently shakes "no." Funkler points at him.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 AND PRETENDING HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT
 I'M TALKING ABOUT IS PART OF THE
 ACT! But I'm not playing along.
 You're going to tell me what you
 want clearly right now or no deal!

Jack's dumbfounded - unsure what to do. Funkler waits,
 looking like he's about to burst. After a silent beat...

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 Fine! You win round one. I'll go
 first. 100 grand up front. It's
 his first book. He's lucky to get
 it.

Jack is shocked, still obviously unable to talk.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 ... No response? Make it 200.
 What do you have to say to that?

Jack's incredulous, just sitting there.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 Still no reaction? You cocky
 S.O.B.. Fine. 300!

Jack can't believe it - still silent. Funkler's annoyed.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 Not even a thank you? You son of
 a... 350!... 400!... 450!

Funkler keeps misinterpreting Jack's silence and movements -
 offering more and more, trying to get a response.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 The balls on this guy, you
 greedy... 500 grand! Final offer.

Jack's flabbergasted - but still doesn't talk.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 Not a peep. Half a mill and I get
 nothing. 550! Try ignoring that.

Jack motions towards his mouth - trying to explain.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
 Not even worth talking about? To
 hell with you. Consider our
 relationship over!

Funkler starts exiting. Before Jack can do anything -
 FUNKLER WHIPS AROUND.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
DAMN, YOU'RE A TOUGH NEGOTIATOR!
You're just going to let me walk
and not say a word!?

Jack shrugs.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
This book must be incredible. You
win. 600 grand but push me once
more and the deal really is off.

JACK QUICKLY HOLDS OUT HIS HAND - FUNKLER SHAKES IT, SMILES.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
HA! I love this guy! Gentlemen,
you've just seen a master at work.
I'm speechless. Let's make a
toast!

All the guys raise their beers.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
To the -- No, Jack, you make it.

Jack playfully waves him off, acting embarrassed.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
Fine. I'll do it.
(raises his glass again)
To our future bestseller and to
Jack - the best bullshitter in the
business.

They all laugh. Jack gives FUNKLER the famous "Sammy Sosa
heart tap & point." FUNKLER does it back. They drink.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
Man, it's fun shooting the shit
with you, Jack. Since we're on
solid ground now - you can hold off
giving us Sinja's book until he's
feeling better. Out of respect.
If that's okay with you?

Jack feigns thinking about it - then nods. HE'S IN THE
CLEAR. They happily drink. Suddenly... DR. SINJA enters.

DR. SINJA
Jack. Sam called me about the
meeting today. I brought my book.

Jack is in shock - Sinja starts handing out copies of the
FIVE SHEETS OF PAPER. Jack is thrown, unable to stop him.

FUNKLER
Dr. Sinja? I thought you were ill.

DR. SINJA
No.

Funkler's angry, gives Jack the evil eye, annoyed.

PHIL
I've only got up to page five.

DR. SINJA
It's only five pages.

They all look at Jack. Jack smiles.

TODD
Well, people like short books.

FUNKLER
Not that short. Deal's off.

Funkler starts to exit. Jack panics and runs after him. He grabs Funkler - FUNKLER TURNS AROUND, LOOKS AT JACK. Jack looks like he's about to say something - but stops, doesn't.

FUNKLER (CONT'D)
That's a new one. Jack Rappaport
can't think of anything to say.

Funkler exits. JACK ANGRILY TURNS TO SINJA, MOTIONS "WHY?"

DR. SINJA
Why? Because the greatest
deception men can suffer is from
themselves. The right person will
publish my book, Jack.

Sinja starts out. Unable to contain himself - JACK SCREAMS!

JACK
YOU RUINED MY DEAL! AND MY CAREER
AND MY RELATIONSHIP! WHAT ELSE DO
YOU WANT?

Jack COUGHS from talking. Sinja smiles.

DR. SINJA
Very good, Jack. Those words came
from your heart. That's the first
step.

Dr. Sinja exits. Jack rolls his eyes, annoyed at this "mysterious" answer. The waiter walks up to Jack with his steak. Jack looks at it and BARKS.

WAITER
Doggie bag. No problem.

The waiter exits.

EXT. PALM RESTAURANT - A MOMENT LATER

Jack exits. He walks up to the VALET STAND. Jack looks in his pocket for his ticket - he can't find it.

FRENCH VALET
Ticket? Pouvoir je vous aide?

Jack shakes "no," motions that he wants his car.

FRENCH VALET (CONT'D)
I no understand. Parlez-vous le
français? Français?

Jack shakes "no," grabs paper - writes out "I NEED MY CAR."

FRENCH VALET (CONT'D)
No. No read English. Je ne peux
pas lire l'anglais.

Jack turns the paper over - HE DRAWS A PICTURE OF A CAR.

FRENCH VALET (CONT'D)
Un chien? Dog? I don't have a dog
for you.

Jack's frustrated, points again. The Valet looks again.

FRENCH VALET (CONT'D)
Ah! A house! Maison. I cannot
afford to buy this house.

Jack's frustrated. JACK PULLS ANOTHER VALET over, shows him.

ANOTHER FRENCH VALET
You want a cheese sandwich?

MORE VALETS come over - looking at the picture. EVERYONE IS
ARGUING OVER THE PICTURE. Jack keeps pointing at it.

ARGUING FRENCH VALETS
Polar Bear? We have no bears... A
shoe?... Frisbee!... Britney
Spears! We have no Britney.

Jack's at wit's end. Finally, we hear HONKING. Jack
turns. AARON'S in the car across the street. Jack walks over.

INT. JACK'S CAR - A MOMENT LATER

We see Aaron, waiting. Jack gets in, slams the door.

AARON
Those French guys made me move the
car. Meeting go well?

Jack SNEERS at him, angry. He punches the dashboard, pissed.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Sorry. Want to pick out a wedding date?

Jack angrily motions - ZIP YOUR MOUTH SHUT, frustrated.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Got ya. Oh, I didn't know how long you'd be so I cleared the schedule. Except for the Dwyane Wade meeting. Sam said that had to happen.

Jack looks out the window, fuming, barely responding.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Jack, I hope you're not upset that I fell apart in there. That's why I wanted to work for you. To learn to be more confident. I heard whatever the problem is - Jack can handle it. Jack can beat anything. He's the best. Guess I was hoping you'd rub off on me.

This hits Jack - he turns to Aaron, MAYBE HE CAN BEAT IT. Jack gives Aaron a big pat on the back. He's inspired.

AARON (CONT'D)
 What?... You're excited?... Great. Yeah, let's go kick some ass! WOO!
 ... By the way, I have no idea what's going on.

Jack drives off.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

A BIG CHALKBOARD. Jack is focused, busy writing some math equations. Nearby is Aaron, desperately trying to keep up.

AARON
 Jack, slow down. You lost me again. Start over.

Jack impatiently nods - he points the number "80."

(NOTE: JACK POINTS TO ALL THE CORRESPONDING NUMBERS)

AARON (CONT'D)
 80 is the average person's lifespan... And you're 39. So you have... 41 years left. Got it.

Jack nods - points to the number "376."

AARON (CONT'D)
376 is the number of leaves that I
just counted on the tree outside.

Jack nods - points to some more equations.

AARON (CONT'D)
376 divided by 41 equals 9.1 leaves
for each year left of your life.

Jack happily nods - circles 9.1. He looks satisfied.

AARON (CONT'D)
Cool. I didn't know you were so
into the environment.

Jack looks at him, annoyed - points to the LEGAL PAD.

AARON (CONT'D)
Yes, I read what you wrote on pad.
Each leaf is one word and you're
talking to death... I once thought
my hair could breathe when I took
acid. If you just lay down a while-

FED UP - JACK PULLS AARON OUTSIDE TO THE...

EXT. FRONT YARD - TREE - CONTINUOUS

Jack motions for Aaron to watch the tree - he does.

JACK
Pancake.

One leaf drops. Aaron's surprised, but not convinced.

AARON
Coincidence.

JACK
NO, IT'S NOT, YOU IDIOT!

Five leaves drop.

AARON
(sarcastic)
Careful. You just wasted six
months worth of words.

Jack looks like he wants to kill him.

AARON (CONT'D)
Calm down. If you need me to go
along on this magic carpet ride, I
will. What do I know? I separate
cereal for a living. So, how can I
assist you? You want to practice
living on nine "leaf-words" a year?

Jack thinks, nods. Good idea. Why not?

AARON (CONT'D)
 Okay. Let's have a conversation...
 Hello. What's your name?

Jack looks at him - STUMPED, unsure what to do.

AARON (CONT'D)
 ... Dude, you suck at this. I know
 I said you could handle anything
 but you need words like Batman
 needs a utility belt.

Jack, angry, kisses his hand, pats his butt - "KISS MY ASS."

AARON (CONT'D)
 That I get. Look, I'm only being
 honest. Maybe you can learn sign
 language. Or I can buy you and
 your clients Morse code machines.

Jack's CELL RINGS. He looks down and sees "SAM" FLASHING.
 He turns the ringer off, frustrated. Aaron notices.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Sam keeps calling me too. You
 really need to start talking again.
 Look, if you believe Sinja did this
 - what about his book? Is there
 anything in there that can help?

Good idea. Jack searches his pockets. He finds SINJA'S
 PAGES, then suddenly... A WIND GUST! THE PAGES - STAPLED
TOGETHER - FLY AWAY! Crap. Jack chases them, exiting.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Can I use your bathroom now!? Want
 me to count blades of grass next?

Aaron runs off to the bathroom.

EXT. STREET - A MOMENT LATER

The PAGES blow across the street. Jack runs after them but
 suddenly - a U.P.S. TRUCK cuts him off, blocking him.

DELIVERY DRIVER
 Hey, I'm looking for a... Jack
 Rappaport's house?

Jack points to himself - then notices down the street...

A LITTLE 8 YR. OLD GIRL PICKED UP THE PAGES. They're safe.
 He turns back to the DELIVERY DRIVER.

DELIVERY DRIVER (CONT'D)
Sign here. You expecting two boxes
from a Yoga Mat factory?

Jack nods - more Sinja stuff. He signs. The DRIVER hands
him TWO LARGE BOXES. JACK HOLDS ONE BOX IN EACH HAND.

DELIVERY DRIVER (CONT'D)
Can you tell me how to get to Main
Street from here?

JACK TRIES TO POINT, BUT HIS ARMS ARE FULL SO HE THINKS...

JACK LIFTS HIS LEG AND POINTS DOWN THE STREET WITH HIS FOOT.

DELIVERY DRIVER (CONT'D)
Go straight. Then what?

Jack points right with his FOOT, LEFT, then HILLY MOTIONS.

DELIVERY DRIVER (CONT'D)
(following Jack)
Right... left... then over the
hill. And where does that get me?

Jack thinks - starts DOING CHORUS LINE KICKS, TAP DANCING.

DELIVERY DRIVER (CONT'D)
Broadway. And take that to what?

Jack thinks, CROSSES HIS LEGS - VERY TIGHT by the crotch.

DELIVERY DRIVER (CONT'D)
Virgin Megastore. Got it. I know
my way from there. Thanks.

The driver exits. Jack quickly tosses the boxes into his
driveway. HE RUNS OFF TO GET THE PAGES FROM THE GIRL!

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

We see the LITTLE GIRL holding Dr. Sinja's pages. Jack runs
up to her and motions that the pages belong to him.

The girl resists - pulling them back. SHE STARTS CRYING.

Jack doesn't know what to do. He spots a little DANDELION
FLOWER growing in the grass. Jack picks it.

JACK OFFERS HER THE FLOWER for an exchange - SHE SHAKES "NO,"
now CRYING LOUDER.

JACK'S SURPRISED, wanting to calm her down. So...

JACK SNIFFS THE FLOWER - ENTERTAINING HER, POSING, TRYING TO
MAKE IT LOOK ENTICING. She stops crying, watching him.

JACK ACTS AS IF THE AROMA IS INTOXICATING. HE CONTINUES SNIFFING AND IT'S SO GOOD... HE BITES THE HEAD OF THE FLOWER OFF! CHEWING! YUM YUM! HE RUBS HIS STOMACH!

THE GIRL LAUGHS. THEN JACK MOTIONS TO GIVE HIM THE PAGES - AGAIN, SHE PULLS AWAY, starts CRYING AGAIN.

Frustrated again, Jack thinks. He spots a HALF-FULL WATER BOTTLE LYING IN THE STREET. HE PICKS IT UP.

JACK PULLS A PEN OUT AND DRAWS A FACE ON THE BOTTLE... EYES, NOSE AND A MOUTH. THEN HE POKES A HOLE INTO THE MOUTH.

HE SHOWS THE BOTTLE TO THE GIRL - WHO SHRUGS - "SO WHAT?"

SO JACK STARTS MAKING BELIEVE HE'S TALKING TO THE BOTTLE.

HE TURNS THE BOTTLE AWAY AS IF THE BOTTLE'S NOT LISTENING.

JACK TRIES TO GET THE BOTTLE'S ATTENTION - IT WON'T LISTEN.

FINALLY - THE BOTTLE TURNS AROUND. JACK SMILES AT THE BOTTLE, WAVES "HI." SUDDENLY...

WATER SHOOTS OUT OF THE BOTTLE'S "MOUTH" - HITTING JACK. (HE OBVIOUSLY SQUEEZED IT) HE ACTS SHOCKED. THE GIRL LAUGHS.

NOW JACK ACTS "ANGRY" AT THE BOTTLE. AGAIN, THE BOTTLE SPITS HIM IN THE FACE. THE GIRL IS OVERJOYED, LOVING IT.

FURIOUS, JACK CHOKES THE BOTTLE... CAUSING TONS OF WATER TO SHOOT OUT AT HIM. THE GIRL IS LAUGHING HARDER THEN EVER.

Finally, SHE OFFERS HIM THE PAGES FOR THE BOTTLE. Just as he's about to grab the pages... The girl's MOTHER enters, quickly picks her up, PULLING THE PAGES AWAY WITH HER.

MOTHER

DIOS MIO! Teresa! A donde vas?

The mom - on a cell phone - immediately exits with the girl, getting into a car. Jack tries to get the mother's attention - but she's distracted, rapidly speaking Spanish. Just as they're about to drive off... JACK BANGS ON THE WINDOW. She turns to him. He motions towards the girl, the pages.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(broken english)

Oh, mi hija? Si, senor, gracias for watching her. From my heart.

They drive off. Jack watches them go - THE GIRL WAVING BYE WITH SINJA'S PAGES. Jack's frustrated - THE BOOK IS GONE.

Then we see A LIGHTBULB GO OFF IN JACK'S HEAD.

JACK
(EPIPHANY)
... "Heart?" That's it!

Jack quickly RUNS OFF.

EXT. JACK'S FRONT YARD - A MOMENT LATER

Aaron is standing in front of the tree - on the phone.

AARON
Yes, Sam, I'll tell Jack...

Jack runs in - EXCITED. He grabs Aaron's legal pad, writes.

AARON MOUTHS THE WORD "SAM" to Jack and points at the phone -
Jack waves Aaron off, doesn't want to talk to Sam.

AARON (CONT'D)
... I understand, Sam. I'll give
him the message. Bye.
(hangs up, then)
Sam wants me to tell you that he's
giving you one last chance with the
Dwayne Wade meeting so don't screw
it up. That's in less than one
hour. We better go.

Jack ignores Aaron - hands him the legal pad. Aaron reads.

AARON (CONT'D)
"Sinja said the first step was
speaking from my heart." I see.
So the drugs haven't worn off?

Jack is annoyed - points to the pad.

AARON (CONT'D)
What? "Speaking from the heart?"
What's that supposed to mean? He
wants you to say nice things?

JACK
EXACTLY! Sinja doesn't think I
have a heart because I was a jerk.
To stop this I just need to say
nice stuff! OW!
(grabs his ears)
How can earlobes hurt?

AARON
Can you be nice on the way to the
Dwyane Wade? Maybe you can save
yourself from the dreaded leaf
dropping tree before we get there.

Jack ignores the sarcasm - motions the following...

AARON (CONT'D)
 Stay?... And call if leaves fall?
 Seriously? Wow. Never thought I'd
 miss the marshmallows. Okay.

Jack heads to his car. Aaron stays by the tree.

AARON (CONT'D)
 ... Good luck saying nice things!

Jack drives off. Aaron is amazed. He looks at the tree.

AARON (CONT'D)
 ... Pancake.
 (nothing happens, then)
 French toast?

INT. JACK'S CAR - LATER

Jack drives. SUDDENLY, HE GRABS HIS ARM (tricep) AS IF IT
 HURTS. Jack rolls up his sleeve...

REVEAL THE IMAGE OF A HANDPRINT ON HIS ARM. Why?

CUT TO:

THE TREE - AARON IS LEANING AGAINST IT WITH ONE HAND, bored.
 The pressure of his hand - causing the handprint. Aaron's
 blackberry beeps. He opens it. We read his message...

C.U. MESSAGE - "GET OFF THE TREE, JACKASS! - JACK"

Aaron immediately moves off the tree.

AARON
 "Jackass?" That's not a nice thing
 to say. Hey, how'd he know... ?
 Maybe I'm on acid.

INT. JACK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

We see THE HANDPRINT ON JACK'S ARM FADE AWAY. Suddenly...

A BIG BELLIED CONSTRUCTION WORKER HOLDING A STOP SIGN walks
 in front of his car, stopping traffic. A TRUCK is passing.

Jack can't believe it. He looks at his watch - waits. THEN
 JACK GETS A THOUGHT - puts it in park, gets out of the car.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jack approaches the CONSTRUCTION WORKER.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Back off, buddy. I'm only doing my
job here so take the attitude back
to your dick-mobile.

Jack looks pissed and ANGRILY retorts...

JACK
NO, YOU LISTEN TO ME. THANKS FOR
WORKING SO HARD! I APPRECIATE IT!

The construction guy's confused since Jack yelled nice stuff.
JACK'S CELL RINGS - Aaron. He picks up.

AARON ON THE PHONE
Thirteen leaves just fell.

Jack's annoyed. He turns back to the construction worker.

JACK
DID I MENTION YOU LOOK FANTASTIC!
EXTREMELY HANDSOME!

Jack quickly picks up the phone again. The guy's confused.

AARON ON THE PHONE
Eight more down. And a rock moved.

DAMN! Jack hangs up, heads back to his car. As he walks...

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
(still confused)
Same to you!... I think.

INT. NURSING HOME - ANNIE RAPPAPORT'S ROOM - LATER

We see ANNIE SLEEPING in front of the broken television.

Jack quietly enters - now he's got TWO DOZEN ROSES, A BOX OF
CANDY. He's really trying to be nice. He walks up to his
mom, looks at her gently sleeping. He smiles, then shouts...

JACK
MOM, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME LIFE!

Startled - ANNIE WAKES UP, IN SHOCK, SEES THE FLOWERS.

ANNIE
Am I Ms. America?

Jack's phone immediately rings - he picks it up.

AARON ON THE PHONE
Seven more hit the ground.

JACK
Shit!

AARON ON THE PHONE
That's eight. Whatever you're
saying, it's not nice enough.
You've got twenty minutes to get to
Dwyane Wade. Be extra nice.

Jack hangs up - thinks - what else can he do?

INT. STAPLES CENTER - LATER

BASKETBALL PRACTICE - empty stands, PLAYERS shooting around.
Jack enters the arena, looks around. He spots...

DWAYNE WADE shooting. Jack takes a deep breathe, focusing.
He has to be EXTRA NICE. He puts on a big smile, heads over.

ON DWAYNE - Jack walks up, waves, they shake hands.

DWAYNE WADE
Hey, Jack. What's up!

JACK
(very sincere)
I'd like to apologize for slavery,
Jim Crow, segregation, reparation
delays, Jimmy the Greek, Kramer-

DWAYNE IS CONFUSED. Jack's cell rings.

AARON ON THE PHONE
It's Niagara Falls over here.

Jack hangs up, frustrated. It's not working. Suddenly...

CHAD
Dwayne!

They turn - CHAD is there. What the fuck? Jack's shocked.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Chad Snow. I work with Jack.
Jack, Sam said you had some trouble
today so I came by just in case.

Jack fake smiles, slaps Chad in the back - A LITTLE TOO HARD.

DWAYNE WADE
Thanks for coming by, guys. Jack,
I just wanted to tell you, I'm
thinking about writing a kid's
book. You got kids?

Jack shakes "no" - indicates he has NO WEDDING RING.

DWAYNE WADE (CONT'D)
Not even married yet?

CHAD
That hasn't stopped half the guys
in the NBA, right, Dwyane? Ha!

DWAYNE DOESN'T LAUGH. So, Chad quickly stops laughing.

DWAYNE WADE
Jack, you want to apologize for him
too?

ONE OF THE BASKETBALL PLAYERS SHOUTS from across the court.

BASKETBALL PLAYER #1
Dwyane! Your guys want to shoot?

Jack emphatically shakes "no."

CHAD
Yeah! Two on two!

Jack wants to kill Chad. Jack doesn't want to play.

DWAYNE WADE
Come on, Jack. If you want my book
- you're playing.

Jack reluctantly takes off his jacket, heads over.

BASKETBALL COURT - Chad pairs up with BASKETBALL PLAYER #1.

DWAYNE WADE (CONT'D)
Jack's with me. We'll take it out.

Dwyane passes it to Jack. Jack dribbles. CHAD DEFENDS JACK
and starts TRASH TALKING him.

CHAD
Come on, Jack. You got nothing. I
hear your momma's so ugly she put
the boogeyman out of business.

JACK STOPS - PUSHES CHAD, OFFENDED. DWAYNE PULLS JACK AWAY.

CHAD (CONT'D)
I'm kidding. It's just trash talk.

DWAYNE WADE
TIME! Jack, Chad's just trying to
rattle you. Everybody trash talks.
If it bothers you, just insult his
momma back.

Jack nods, then realizes he can't say bad stuff, shakes "no."

DWAYNE WADE
Stop being so nice. Trust me.
Just say something about Chad's
mom.

DWYANE takes the ball out again - passes it to Jack. And again, CHAD starts TRASH TALKING as he defends Jack.

CHAD
Competition getting to you, Jack?
Come on. Your momma's so fat she
can't even jump to a conclusion.

JACK
Oh, yeah? YOUR MOMMA IS SO...
NICE, EVERYONE LIKES HER!

CHAD'S CONFUSED as are the other players. Chad tries again.

CHAD
Your momma's so stupid it took her
two hours to watch sixty minutes.

JACK
YOUR MOTHER IS SO SMART SHE'S THE
ENVY OF ALL HER FRIENDS.

Chad pauses - beyond confused. JACK TAKES ADVANTAGE AND SPEEDS IN FOR A LAY UP - HE SCORES! JACK'S THRILLED!

DWYANE
(high fives Jack)
Nice one! I think Chad's worried
you're gonna ask his mother out.

Jack's cell rings - picks up.

AARON ON THE PHONE
Twenty-two big ones bit the dust.

Jack hangs up - annoyed as hell. We hear a WHISTLE BLOW - a coach waves the players in.

DWYANE WADE
Gotta go, fellas. I'll work on
that kids book. Thanks for
hanging. Chad, you my nigga now.

CHAD
You my nigga, Dwyane.

JACK
Dwyane, you my...
(trying to be nice)
... handsome successful African
American friend.

Dwayne's confused and takes off. CHAD WALKS WITH DWYANE and CONTINUES TALKING. Jack watches them talk - incredibly irritated, wishing he could follow. FRUSTRATED, he exits.

INT. JACK'S CAR - A MINUTE LATER

Parked. Jack gets in, angry at his predicament. He's exhausted and leans back in his seat a moment, trying to collect himself. He closes his eyes. BEAT OF SILENCE.

MALE WHISPER
... Are you there?

Jack quickly opens his eyes, shakes it off. Then he catches sight of himself in the mirror - DARK CIRCLES UNDER HIS EYES.

Looking closer at his eyes, JACK INADVERTENTLY RUNS HIS FINGERS THROUGH HIS HAIR. Suddenly, he notices...

A CLUMP OF HAIR IN HIS HAND - it's FALLING OUT! Jack's shocked, frightened. He's falling apart.

JACK
Holy... Okay. YOU WANT ME TO BE
NICE? I'LL BE NICE!

JACK QUICKLY STARTS UP THE CAR AND DRIVES OFF IN A PANIC.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jack runs up to a door, KNOCKS. It opens - SHARON.

JACK
TODAY!

He holds out the RING. SHARON isn't amused.

SHARON
Is that supposed to be the wedding
date I wanted? Today?

Jack nods. She sighs, annoyed...

SHARON (CONT'D)
Actually, I was hoping to catch
American Idol tonight. How's
tomorrow?

Jack nods - sure.

SHARON (CONT'D)
I'm kidding. This isn't funny,
Jack. You're just panicked about
losing me. Come back when you're
actually ready and if I'm still
available, we'll talk.

Jack stamps his foot, angry.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Oh, you're serious? You want to marry me tomorrow?

Jack nods. Sharon sarcastically goes along.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Okay. I'll call my mom right now and tell her to pack the relatives in the mini-van. And I'm sure the caterer and band I've kept on hold for months will be available in less than a day's notice. And to hell with a cake. I'll go to 7-11 and pick up Twinkies and Yoo-hoo.

Jack gets on his knee, begs.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Stop, Jack. I know you don't really mean this.

Jack takes her hand, rubs it, PUTS IT ON HIS HEART. He looks incredibly sincere. She starts to break.

SHARON (CONT'D)
... this is so unfair... you know how much I love you. You can't just... tomorrow?

He nods. She's moved.

SHARON (CONT'D)
(tearing up)
You seriously... ?

Jack crosses his heart and makes the Boy scout pledge sign.

SHARON (CONT'D)
... But we can't just...

Jack nods "yes, we can" and gently KISSES HER HAND.

SHARON (CONT'D)
... how am I going to plan... Oh, who cares? Okay. Yes, YES!

SHE HUGS HIM. IT'S A SWEET MOMENT. As they hug, he quickly takes out his cell phone and dials. We hear...

AARON ON THE PHONE
Leaf patrol. No leaves falling.

JACK
(jumping for joy)
I DID IT!

SHARON
YES YOU DID! We're getting
married!

They hug again - for different reasons - but all is well.

SHARON (CONT'D)
This is so much better than all the
overdone stuff I was planning.
We'll just go for it!... Wait. My
mom really does have to pack
everyone in the van. I better call
right now.

She runs in. Jack's cell rings - he happily gets it.

JACK
Hello?

AARON ON THE PHONE
Oops. I was wrong. Leaves are
falling on the other side of the
tree. And another one just fell
when you said "hello."

Jack staggers, the wind knocked out of his sails. SHARON
runs back - TAKES HIS PICTURE WITH THE CELL PHONE! FLASH!

SHARON
Tomorrow's gonna be amazing! Oh my
God! I gotta get a dress!

She runs off. HE'S MISERABLE.

INT. JOHNNIE ROCKET'S DINER - LATER

Dr. Sinja in a booth, eating a salad. A WAITRESS passes by.

DR. SINJA
Miss? Is Mr. Rocket aware that his
salad has no Jarwana root?

WAITRESS
Must have ran out.

Jack slowly enters - defeated, haggard - with his legal pad.
He spots Sinja, sits at the booth. Sinja smiles.

DR. SINJA
So, why did you want to meet me?

JACK SNEERS, WRITES ON HIS PAD - PUSHES IT TO SINJA.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
"I give up."... You give what up?

Jack, losing patience, writes - slides it over.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
You're getting married because of
me? I don't remember asking you.

Sinja smiles. Jack doesn't. He writes again - Sinja reads.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
"Cut the crap. What do I have to
say to stop the leaves?"...
(thinks, whispers)
... These are the magic words.
Passed down from the great mystics.
(leans over to Jack)
... abra-cadabra.

DR. SINJA BURSTS OUT LAUGHING at his own joke. Jack's mad.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
Where's your sense of humor?

JACK PULLS SOME HAIR OFF HIS HEAD - PUTS IT IN SINJA'S SALAD.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
I see. Okay. Jack, the problem is
you're acting as if the tree is
trying to kill you. Have you
considered that it might be doing
just the opposite?
(off Jack's confusion)
I'll explain. See that butterfly?

Sinja points outside - Jack sees a BUTTERFLY by the window.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
She will lay an egg. That egg will
become a caterpillar. That
caterpillar - a butterfly. So...
should we have a funeral for the
caterpillar?

Jack thinks, as if he's processing a great lesson then...
JACK LUNGES FORWARD AND GRABS HIM BY THE THROAT!!

JACK
UNHOOK ME FROM THAT GODDAMN TREE OR
I'LL KILL YOU!

DR. SINJA
Excellent, Jack! I am finally
talking to the real you!

Jack coughs - letting go of Sinja, too weak. FRUSTRATED,
JACK BANGS HIS HAND ON THE TABLE. Feeling for him, Sinja
reaches over, puts his hand on Jack's hand, CALMING HIM.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
Shh. You must embrace the silence.
For in silence, we find ourselves.

Jack rolls his eyes. He writes on the pad - Sinja reads.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
 "Just tell me what the- " very bad
 word "-you mean?"
 (pause, then leaning over
 intensely in Jack's face)
 No. YOU tell me what YOU mean.

Jack's surprised by Sinja's intensity.

DR. SINJA (CONT'D)
 That's right. What does it mean to
 be you, Jack? The meaning of YOUR
 life. Figure out who you are and
 your words will have substance and
 never blow away like leaves in the
 wind.
 (gets up to exit, pauses)
 Enjoy the wedding - if you make it.

Sinja exits. The waitress unhappily picks up the HAIR SALAD.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Aaron is sitting under the tree, listening to an IPOD.
 Jack's car pulls up, he gets out, heads inside. Aaron waves.

AARON
 Leaf boy on duty. 287!

Jack nods, enters the house.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack enters, sits on the couch, looks at his pad.

C.U. PAD - "MEANING OF MY LIFE?"

Jack takes a PHOTO ALBUM OFF A SHELF. He peruses - we see
 BOYHOOD PHOTOS OF JACK, HIS MOM, and... HIS BROTHER - FRANK.

JACK PAUSES - LOOKING AT FRANK who's 2 years older, taller.
 Jack closes the album - pulls a VIDEO off a shelf, PLAYS IT.

C.U. TELEVISION - 1976 HOME MOVIE taken by MOM. TWO LITTLE
 BOYS in Halloween costumes, BOTH DRESSED AS SUPERMAN.

ANNIE O.C.
 Okay, guys. Let's practice.
 Ready? One, two, three.

FRANK AND JACK
 Trick or treat!

ANNIE O.C.
 Very good. Frankie, tell us who
 you are.

FRANK
I'm Superman!

ANNIE O.C.
And Jackie, who are you?

JACK
I'm Superman too.

ANNIE O.C.
And why didn't you let me buy you a
different costume, Jackie?

JACK
Cause I want to be like Frankie. I
love Frankie!

JACK LOVINGLY HUGS FRANK, KISSES HIM. Frank pushes him away.

FRANK
Stop it, copycat. Mom!

Jack keeps jumping on Frank, hugging him - Frankie struggles.

JACK
I love Frankie!

Suddenly, WE HEAR AN O.C. KNOCK. JACK PAUSES THE TAPE and
turns to see AARON POKING HIS HEAD IN THE FRONT DOOR.

AARON O.C.
Hey. Need another bathroom break.

Jack nods. Aaron heads in. Then Jack gets an idea - stops
him - HE SHOWS HIM THE LEGAL PAD. AARON READS IT.

AARON
Meaning of your life? Well, I can
see why you came to me with this.
(off Jack's look)
Sorry. I didn't check my calender.
Is today Batshit Thursday?
(off Jack's impatience)
Relax, I'll play along. Meaning of
your... You help people? Clients.
Helping people must mean something.

Jack nods, struck by this - good idea - quickly runs out.

AARON (CONT'D)
Where you going? I was about to
explain the time space continuum!

INT. JACK'S CAR - LATER

He drives along and suddenly spots...

A SIGN - "HELP" - with a NUN collecting money. Jack pulls over. He gets out, approaches the stand. The NUN smiles. Jack pulls out a wad of CASH - hands it to her. She smiles.

Jack quickly pulls out his cell - dials. Aaron answers.

JACK
Leaf?

AARON ON THE PHONE
Falling as we speak.

Frustrated, he takes off his WATCH - hands it to the Nun.

JACK
Now?

AARON ON THE PHONE
Now another is falling. OH MY GOD,
ALL THE LEAVES JUST FELL OFF!

JACK
WHAT?!

AARON ON THE PHONE
Kidding. Although another one just
fell. You still there?

Jack hangs up, frustrated. He looks across the street at....

EXT. BARNES & NOBLE - CONTINUOUS

Jack heads over to the bookstore.

INT. BARNES & NOBLE - CONTINUOUS

Jack enters, spots an INFORMATION DESK w/ a bookworm-type
SNOTTY KID behind it. He hands the legal pad to the kid.

SNOTTY KID
"Meaning of your life?" Easy.
Philosophy section.

The Snotty Kid heads down an aisle - Jack follows.

SNOTTY KID (CONT'D)
You lose your voice or something?

Jack nods.

SNOTTY KID (CONT'D)
 Well, thanks for not talking. I
 can't tell you how many colds I
 contract from customers asking me
 questions at an uncomfortably close
 range - not to mention re-shelving
 books handled by their streptococci
 incrustated fingers. Here we go...
 (stops, pulls out a book)
 Heidegger. Existentialist. Thinks
 we're randomly thrown into the
 world and life has no meaning.

Jack shakes "no."

SNOTTY KID (CONT'D)
 Rejected. A familiar feeling.
 (he continues looking)
 I'll skip Nietzsche and nihilism.
 You know how depressing that is.

Jack nods as if he knows - which he doesn't. The kid pulls
 out another book.

SNOTTY KID (CONT'D)
 William James. Pragmatism. He
 thinks the meaning of life can be
 found in those events which cause
 you to value it.

Jack's confused, makes NEGATIVE BUZZER SOUND w/ THUMBS DOWN.

SNOTTY KID (CONT'D)
 ... not interested. You and every
 girl online. What else...
 (pulls another book)
 Charles Darwin. He says the
 meaning of life is simply to
 reproduce more life... that's a
 good pick-up line.

Jack eyes light up - HE GETS AN IDEA.

INT. SPERM BANK - LOBBY - LATER

Over a DESK is a sign - "CRYO-BANK." Behind it - a TROUBLED
 RECEPTIONIST yelling to someone O.C..

TROUBLED RECEPTIONIST
 Sir? You can't do that.

REVEAL A WAITING AREA WITH SEVERAL WOMEN - we find JACK
 walking up to each and HANDING THEM A SHEET OF PAPER. The
 receptionist enters. Jack hands her a paper. She reads it.

TROUBLED RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
 Sir, you can't hand out resumes at
 a sperm bank. Donors are anonymous
 and there's a long screening proce-

Jack hands her his resume - pointing at it.

TROUBLED RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
 I see. You're athletic, don't
 smoke, no moles and --
 (suddenly impressed)
 ... Business degree from Penn
 State? That is impressive.
 (suddenly annoyed)
 Oh, how generous. It says you're
 running a "2 for 1 special" today.
 I'll have to ask you to leave.

A WAITING WOMAN walks up, holding one of his resumes.

WAITING WOMAN
 Do you mind if I check your teeth?

Jack opens his mouth. The woman starts examining him.

TROUBLED RECEPTIONIST
 SECURITY!

TWO BURLY SECURITY GUARDS enter and grab Jack. Jack resists.

TROUBLED RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
 God help you.

At the word "God" - Jack's eyes light up.

INT. CHURCH - CONFESSION BOOTH - LATER

We see Jack enter the church, walk into a confessional.

ON A PRIEST, 60, sitting inside, patiently waiting.

PRIEST
 Ready to receive your confession,
 my son.

Suddenly, we hear PAPER BEING CRUMPLED. The PRIEST sees a
 LEGAL PAD PAPER being shoved through the holes. He reads.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
 I see. You can't talk and you want
 to find the meaning of your life.
 Okay. Well, the search for life's
 meaning is usually a symptom of a
 greater doubt that God is watching--

Again, we hear JACK'S PAPER. The priest grabs it, reads.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
 "Get to the point." Okay - the
 short version. Some find meaning
 in life by serving God. If you're
 interested, knock once for yes, two
 for no.

ON JACK considering it - why not? He knocks once.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Good. First thing you can do is
repent. Especially for rushing me.
Say 3 Hail Mary's, 2 Our Fathers.

Jack knocks twice. The Priest is confused.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
"No?" No one ever said "no."
(remembering)
Oh, you can't talk. Well, silent
prayer is just as effective as-

Suddenly, JACK'S PHONE RINGS.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Do I hear ringing? I thought we
were knocking?

ON JACK looking at his phone - "SHARON" flashes. He turns
away from the wall for a second and ANSWERS THE PHONE.

JACK
(meaning "hello")
Mm hm?

SHARON ON THE PHONE
Hi! I know we're keeping the
wedding small, but I figured I'd
plan a little lunch for whoever
shows up. I'll try not let it get
out of control. Do you mind?

JACK
(meaning "no")
Mm mm.

SHARON ON THE PHONE
Good. What do you think of prime
rib as a main course?

JACK
(meaning "delicious")
Mmmmm.

SHARON ON THE PHONE
And I really want a strawberry
cake. Is that okay?

JACK
(meaning "eh")
Mm.

SHARON ON THE PHONE
Fine. Chocolate. I also found a
small band. They wanted to know--

CUT TO:

THE TREE - A GARDENER sprays PESTICIDE on it. A MIST.

SHARON ON THE PHONE (CONT'D)
-- what our favorite song is?

BACK TO:

JACK NOW LOOKING STONED, SMILING. He starts HUMMING the FAMOUS OPENING CHORDS TO DEEP PURPLE'S "SMOKE ON THE WATER."

SHARON
Really? I thought "Someone Like You" by Van Morrison. Also, anyone special you want to invite?

JACK
Hmm...
(as if reciting a list)
Mmmmm, Mmmmm, mmmmm, mmmmm, mmm mmm--

SHARON ON THE PHONE
Jack? I'm getting a weird humming.
If you can hear me - keep your phone on if I need to talk to you!

JACK SHUTS HIS PHONE OFF - worried about talking to Sharon.

PRIEST O.C.
... You win. How 'bout 2 Hail Mary's and just 1 Our Father?

Jack exits.

PRIEST O.C. (CONT'D)
... 1 Hail Mary?

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jack's car pulls up, parks. He's worn out - a tooth seems to bug him. He reaches into his mouth and... PULLS OUT A BACK TOOTH. Shocked, he tosses it in a cup holder. He's in bad shape. JACK SIGHS, STARTS WRITING ON HIS LEGAL PAD. Beat.

We hear a TAPPING ON HIS WINDOW - he turns. It's Aaron.

AARON
That's right. Almost midnight and I'm still here!

Jack gets out of the car. He looks at the TREE - pretty thin leaf count. Maybe a scattered hundred and change. Not good.

AARON (CONT'D)
I tried calling and emailing but you shut it all off, didn't you?

Jack nods. Aaron is furious.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Considerate as usual. Look, I know
 I have to eat crap before getting
 promoted but I'm a little stuffed!

Jack motions for him to calm down.

AARON (CONT'D)
 No, I won't calm down. I'm a good
 assistant, Jack, and today you
 abused me. You made me sit by a
 tree and watch leaves fall for six
 hours. I pray this is somehow part
 of my training because you have
 redefined my concept of crazy. I
 might as well work for Farrah
 Fawcett at this point!

Jack can't deal, turns his back, starts heading inside.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Hey! Listen to me! Jack! If you
 don't listen to me, I'll rip every
 damn leaf off your precious little
 tree just to see if you actually do
 keel over! Starting right now!

Aaron grabs a branch! JACK FEELS IT ON HIS ARM - WINCING -
 HE RUNS BACK TO AARON! JACK OFFERS HIM MONEY!

AARON (CONT'D)
 What are...? You're serious? You
 actually believe...

Jack nods - now handing Aaron his credit cards.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Platinum American Express? Wow.
 You really do think you're dying.
 I've never been in this position -
 boss gone insane. Okay. Agents
 negotiate so... I want a raise.

AARON GRABS A LEAF - THREATENING TO PULL. JACK QUICKLY NODS.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Holy... Okay, good, from now on...
 you pick out your own marshmallows.

Jack quickly gives a thumbs up. AARON'S THRILLED.

AARON (CONT'D)
 AARON IN THE HIZ-OUSE! I mean -
 triz-ee.
 (becoming real cocky)
 Okay. It's time I finally get what
 I deserve. I want to be an agent.

Jack gives him a "Don't be ridiculous" look.

AARON (CONT'D)
Don't give me attitude. I'm ready.

Jack sighs - fed up - not in the mood for this at all.

AARON (CONT'D)
I can do it, Jack. Maybe I screwed up lunch, but I can basically do everything that you can do.

JACK
... What do I do?!

Jack coughs. Leaves fall. Aaron notices.

AARON
Hey, four leaves just--

JACK
I DON'T CARE! I CAN'T STOP IT!
TELL ME WHAT I DO, AARON! I'VE
BEEN TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT ALL
DAY!

Jack's obviously at the end of his rope - losing control.

AARON
... Like I said - you help people.

JACK
Please. I tell people what they want to hear for a living. I mirror them.

AARON
"Mirror?"

JACK
Haven't you caught on yet? If they're excited - I am. Sad - so am I. That's what an agent does.

AARON
So I have to be phoney and never say what I mean?

JACK
No, just never mean what you say. And I'm the best, right? I'm so good - clients think I'm more into their lives than my own. Sad thing is they're right. Because today I realized, I've been ignoring myself so long... I can't even remember what my life means anymore.

JACK COUGHS - BAD HACKING FROM THE LUNGS. It sounds pretty serious. Aaron lets go of the branch - sympathizing.

AARON
 Stop talking, Jack. I'm sorry. I
 tasted a little power and suddenly
 I'm Smeagol from Lord of the Rings.
 Look, whatever's going on - I'm
 here for you. How 'bout I take you
 to a hospital - or a plant nursery?

Jack shakes "no" - pulls out his legal pad - turns to a back
 page and hands it to Aaron, pointing.

AARON (CONT'D)
 (reads)
 You want me to call Sharon?
 (off Jack's nod, then)
 And all these other people?

Jack nods. Jack writes on the pad - Aaron reads.

AARON (CONT'D)
 "Conference room. Tomorrow?"
 (turning pages in the pad)
 Is this a seating chart?

Jack heads inside, broken.

INT. AGENCY CONFERENCE ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Dark. LIT EMPTY PODIUM and about A SMALL AUDIENCE GATHERED.
 Aaron is helping people to their seats.

AARON
 No, Mr. Panero, you're in Section
 "A". It's important you sit in the
 right section.

JACK enters. Crowd quiets. He takes out his pad. He sounds
 fragile, COUGHING/ACHING THROUGHOUT. He speaks carefully.

JACK
 Friends... goodbye. I've
 realized... I haven't been...

HE PULLS OUT A THESAURUS - considers some words, then says...

JACK (CONT'D)
 ... genuine. I wish I could talk
 to you each but let me just say...
 (QUICK TURN TO HIS LEFT,
 SUDDENLY MATTER-OF-FACT)
 To Section "A" - I'll miss you.
 (TO A DIFFERENT AREA)
 Section "B" - Sorry.
 (TO A DIFFERENT AREA)
 "C" - I didn't know she was your
 girlfriend. "D" - I did know.
 Sorry. "E" - It was me. Try
 Penicillin. And most important to
 Sharon. I wish I could marry you
 but I'm dying so--

Suddenly, Aaron interrupts, running up to him.

AARON
Jack! Sharon's not here.

Jack's surprised - what happened?

AARON (CONT'D)
I called her, like you said, but she wouldn't listen. She said she didn't have time for your jokes.

JACK CAN'T BELIEVE IT AND LOOKS AT HIS WATCH. DAMN! He starts running off. Aaron stops him.

AARON (CONT'D)
Jack, wait! Be careful. You just used up most of your words.

Jack nods, runs off.

INT. SMALL CHURCH - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

A SMALL NUMBER OF WEDDING GUESTS assembled for this last minute affair. In the back, looking beautiful in a wedding gown, is SHARON - pacing - on her cell.

SHARON
No, Lorenzo, pink tablecloths - not baby blue so get those rags off my tables now. Same goes for the centerpieces. I said roses - I meant roses. I booked this wedding yesterday but I wasn't born then.

Jack enters, out of breath. She sees him - hangs up.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Jack! Where have you been? I--
(noticing his suit)
Where's your tux? And where's your Mom? We can't wait, Jack! The restaurant expects us in one hour!

HE MAKES A CUTTING OFF HIS HEAD MOTION. She relaxes.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Sorry. I am losing my head. I don't know what's wrong with me. I promised I'd keep today small and under control but suddenly I'm Rosie O'Donnell on The View.

Jack hands her his pad - motions for her to read it.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Read your pad? Right now?

Jack nods. She takes it - THEN SUDDENLY REMEMBERS...

SHARON (CONT'D)
 ... MOTHERFUCK-ME! The restaurant
 charges double if we're late! I
 can't read it now. Later.
 (turning to musicians)
 HARP LADY! Pluck it! Cello boy!
 Stroke it! I want to feel magic,
 people!

Scared, they start playing "The Wedding March." Jack can't
 get her to read. Sharon pulls him over to an OLDER COUPLE.

SHARON (CONT'D)
 Mom, Dad, time to give me away.
 Jack, wait here until you get my
 signal.

SHARON'S DAD
 Hey, Jack, good to see you aga--

SHARON
 (separating them)
 We're on the clock, people! YO!
 (signalling the priest)
 God's ready. Smile everyone.

THEY ALL SMILE. SHARON AND HER FOLKS WALK DOWN THE AISLE.
 Despite SHARON'S intensity - she looks incredible. She
 reaches the end, turns back to Jack and mouths - "WALK."

ON JACK - he has no choice, starts walking down the aisle.

CUT TO:

THE TREE - A DOG IS GOING TO THE BATHROOM ON IT.

BACK TO:

JACK walking. AS HE PASSES EACH GUEST, EACH SMILING FACE
URNS TO A WINCE AS THEY SMELL HIM. He reaches SHARON. She
 smiles, then smells - wincing. They turn to the PRIEST.

PRIEST
 Dearly beloved, we are gathered
 here today to bring together this
 man and this woman in holy --

The Priest pauses - sniffing the odor.

SHARON
 (forced smile)
 Ignore it, please.

PRIEST
 -- matrimony. I understand our
 lovely couple has written their own
 vows.

Jack's shocked - "VOWS?" Sharon turns, heartfelt, sincere.

SHARON

Jack, this has been a long time coming... but I can't imagine standing here with anyone else. You are my dream come true. I choose you today to be my husband and my partner in life. I'll cherish you and try to love you more each day than I did the day before. And even if I never spoke these words - you'd hear them. Because what's in here...
 (she touches his heart)
 ... speaks the loudest. I give you my heart and my hand...
 (she holds his hand)
 For as long as we both shall live.

JACK IS TOUCHED - TRULY TAKEN WITH HER IN THIS MOMENT. There's an audible "Awww" from guests. Everyone is moved.

Caught up in the moment - Jack tries to kiss her.

PRIEST

(stopping Jack)
 Not yet, tiger. First, the groom needs to say his vows.

Jack snaps out of his reverie, realizing everyone's looking at him - including Sharon. What the hell is he going to do?

Jack gets an idea. HE POINTS AT SHARON - THEN GIVES HER A BIG THUMBS UP. He turns back to the Priest, nods - done.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Economical. Moving on-

SHARON

Wait. Seriously. Say your vows.

Jack is in a pickle. He thinks and...

JACK POINTS TO HIS HEART - THEN PUMPS HIS HANDS OVER IT - AS IF HIS HEART IS BEATING. SHARON's confused a beat.

Suddenly, WE HEAR A VOICE SHOUT OUT FROM BEHIND THEM...

FAT WOMAN IN THE PEWS

That means his heart beats for you!

JACK TURNS TO THE FAT WOMAN, NODDING, POINTING AT HER - THEN TOUCHING HIS NOSE LIKE SHE GOT THE RIGHT ANSWER IN CHARADES.

FAT WOMAN IN THE PEWS (CONT'D)

Yes! I got it!

SHARON is annoyed by the interaction but gives him a chance.

JACK CONTINUES DOING HIS "VOWS" THROUGH CHARADES. HE LOOKS AT THE FAT WOMAN AND PULLS HIS EARLOBE.

FAT WOMAN IN THE PEWS (CONT'D)
 Sounds like?
 (to her neighbor)
 I love this game.

JACK PANTOMIMES PEELING A BANANA. An older UNCLE shouts...

UNCLE
 Banana!

JACK SHAKES "NO" and then... DRAMATICALLY PEELS THE BANANA.

UNCLE (CONT'D)
 A gigantic banana!
 (off Jack's annoyed look)
 What? You're the one peeling it.

Hearing "PEEL" - JACK LIGHTS UP, TOUCHES HIS NOSE!

AUNT
 Peel! Sounds like "peel."

Jack nods - correct. Then JACK STARTS MASSAGING HIS BODY - MAKING "MMM" SOUNDS, ORGASMIC FACES, QUIVERING TO HIS TOUCH.

TEENAGE GIRL
 Deal?

ANCIENT MAN
 Meal!

Jack shakes "no." He keeps massaging himself.

WEIRD COUSIN
 Return of the Jedi!

Jack looks at him askew - shakes it off. Continues miming.

VARIOUS CROWD MEMBERS
 Steal! Kneel! Veal! Heal!

FAT WOMAN IN THE PEWS
 (with a hard "G")
 Geel!

Jack stops - BAFFLED at "Geel?"

FAT WOMAN IN THE PEWS (CONT'D)
 Is "geel" not a word? I'm sorry.
 (sudden realization)
 Oh, FEEL! He feels love for you.

JACK, THRILLED, POINTS TO HIS NOSE.

FAT WOMAN IN THE PEWS (CONT'D)
YES! I'M BACK!

SHARON O.C.
Jack?

Jack turns to Sharon - who we see is quite upset, hurt.

SHARON
... What are you doing?

Jack starts peeling a banana again.

SHARON (CONT'D)
STOP IT!

SHARON is dead serious. Jack stops, realizing his mistake.

SHARON (CONT'D)
I just opened up my heart to you
and... I killed myself trying to
make today special and... you're
humiliating me.

Jack, unsure what to do - turns to the priest and nods.

PRIEST
Jack Rappaport, do you take this
woman to be your wife, to love and
to honor-

SHARON
(interrupting, epiphany)
Oh my God. Jack... you don't love
me, do you? I just realized... You
couldn't love me and do what you
just did. You...

Tears in her eyes. Jack wants to answer but he can't.
SHARON falls apart crying and runs away down the aisle...
Jack runs after her and grabs her shoulder.

JACK
Shar--

SHARON
(pulling away)
DON'T! Please. Every time you
talk... you disappoint me.

SHARON runs out. Her family, guests, Priest run after her.
Jack stands there a beat... alone... in the now empty church.

JACK
... I do.

EXT. STREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

We see Jack slowly walking along - depressed, lost. People bump into him, shout at him, but he doesn't notice a thing - completely withdrawn. He finally stops as he comes upon...

AN ELECTRONICS STORE WINDOW - DOZENS OF TELEVISIONS. Jack notices BILL O'REILLY YELLING, on another JUDGE JUDY yelling, DENIS LEARY, A MUSLIM FANATIC, REGIS, JERRY STILLER and on and on - mouth after mouth - faster, faster until all the VOICES MERGE INTO ONE LOUD CACOPHONY OF TALKING. Jack's overwhelmed and runs off.

EXT. PARK - LATER

QUIET. Jack sits alone on a bench, depressed. After a beat, he notices A WHITE-FACED MIME. The mime tries to cheer up Jack - climbing an imaginary ladder, fake running, etc.. Nothing works. So THE MIME DOES AN IMPRESSION OF JACK, SITTING ON HIS BENCH, FROWNING. Jack is annoyed.

JACK
... shut up.

The mime exits. Then Jack notices TWO LOVERS WALKING BY, hand in hand. He feels his loss. But then...

He sees THE YOUNG LOVERS start to ARGUE but not yelling - they're SIGNING. WE REALIZE THEY'RE DEAF. Jack watches.

The man is trying to explain something - she won't listen. She turns away. HE TRIES TO TURN HER BACK - SHE REFUSES. The man doesn't know what to do - then HE NOTICES A NEARBY... BUTTERFLY on flower. THE MAN GENTLY CUPS THE BUTTERFLY IN HIS HANDS and shows his GIRLFRIEND. She sees it - AMAZED. SUDDENLY, IT FLIES OFF - THEY WATCH IT GO. She turns to him - he smiles. She smiles. They hug. Back to...

Jack - smiling. He watches the BUTTERFLY flutter past him. This reminds him of Sinja. Then Jack suddenly HEARS...

A BIRD CHIRP. He listens. Next, he hears the sound of RUNNING WATER IN A STREAM, then the WIND BLOWING GRASS.

Then Jack hears ONE DRUM BEAT. He turns to see...

A YOUNG BUCKET DRUMMER trying to make a few dollars in the park. The kid looks at Jack. He smiles, bangs his BUCKET.

In response, Jack PICKS UP A STICK - taps his bench.

Again, the BUCKET KID bangs his bucket - matching the note. In response, Jack taps his bench - DISCOVERING THAT DIFFERENT PIECE OF WOOD MAKES DIFFERENT NOTES. The kid keeps responding, playing the same notes. They start "communicating" - matching note combinations - going faster. Then they both STOP as they hear a...

HIGH PITCH sound - they turn to see a HOMELESS OLD LADY RUBBING THE TOPS OF SEVERAL BEER BOTTLES with her finger. EACH BOTTLE MAKES A DIFFERENT TONE. She smiles at them.

Suddenly, JACK, THE BUCKET KID, THE OLD LADY begin to COMMUNICATE with sounds. They "jam" and THEIR SONG GROWS - a hip hop beat and rhythmic.

THEN THE BUCKET KID points to CRYING BABY and incorporates that sound into their song like a NEW INSTRUMENT. They each point to different sounds until it becomes an ORCHESTRA of...

BIRD CHIRPS, CAR HONKS, SKATEBOARDS, WIND BASKETBALL BOUNCING, WATER DRIPS, SNEAKER SQUEEKS, DOG BARKS, etc.

IT'S WORLD SOUND SYMPHONY and IT TOTALLY ROCKS. Jack's excited as the SONG GROWS FASTER, INTENSE and then JACK SUDDENLY STOPS. Everyone stops. SILENCE. JACK SEEMS TO BE LISTENING TO SOMETHING. And in this silence we hear...

THE FLUTTERING OF PAPER PAGES IN THE WIND

JACK quickly TURNS AROUND and spots...

DR. SINJA'S PAGES fluttering, sticking out of the knapsack of THE LITTLE GIRL FROM THE DAY BEFORE. JACK'S THRILLED. She's playing with some nearby kids. Jack runs over...

The little girl recognizes him, HUGS HIM. Jack points to the pages. SHE NODS, HANDS JACK... DR. SINJA'S BOOK.

Jack looks at the pages - beyond relieved. Suddenly, water hits his face. Reveal the little girl squirted him with Jack's water bottle man. She laughs and runs away. Jack smiles, sits on a swing and finally... READS SINJA'S BOOK.

DISSOLVE TO:

CHANGE MONTAGE to a tune like BRIAN WILSON'S "LOVE & MERCY."

INT. ANNIE RAPPAPORT'S ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Annie is sleeping in her chair, remote in her hand. Jack enters - he smiles at the sight of his sleeping mom. HE LOOKS AT THE BROKEN T.V. IN FRONT OF HER AND PULLS IT OFF THE SHELF. IN ITS PLACE - HE PUTS IN A BRAND NEW T.V. WITH A RED BOW AROUND IT. He kisses her forehead, exits.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Aaron at his desk, answering phones. Next to him, a BOX OF CEREAL. Jack sneaks in behind him, GRABS THE BOX - REPLACING IT WITH A DIFFERENT ONE. Aaron hangs up - picks up the box and POURS IT OUT INTO A BOWL - IT'S ALL MARSHMALLOWS. Aaron's happily surprised.

EXT. NUN DONATION STAND - DAY

Jack walks up. The Nun smiles, recognizing him. Instead of donating - he sits next to her and helps, holding out a cup for donations. She's happy to have company.

EXT. JACK'S CAR - DAY

Jack pulls up to a stop light. The HOT GIRL pulls up next to him - her car filled with SUITCASES. Jack waves "HI" - she gives him the finger. He writes on his pad - holds it up - "SORRY." He motions for her to follow.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

The Snotty Kid's working. Jack enters w/ the Hot girl. Of course, the snotty kid is happy to meet her. They talk - both happy to find a friend. Jack smiles at the match.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Jack walks up, holding a SMALL ICE COOLER. He knocks at the door. THE WOMAN FROM THE SPERM BANK WHO EXAMINED HIS TEETH answers the door with her FEMALE PARTNER. She's happy to see him. He hands her the cooler. The girls are thrilled.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jack is working on his home computer.

C.U. COMPUTER SCREEN - we see SEVERAL EMAILS that all say...

"FROM SHARON - PHONE PICTURES." Jack hits a final key and...

A SLIDE-SHOW BEGINS - to the tune of Van Morrison's "Someone Like You" - WE SEE ALL THE PHONE SNAPSHOTS THAT SHARON TOOK, RECOGNIZING SOME, LOTS OF THEM KISSING. Jack watches, missing her tremendously. END MONTAGE...

EXT. SHARON'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Jack carries a BOUQUET OF FLOWERS towards her door. Just as he is about to knock... HE HEARS A MAN'S VOICE. Surprised, JACK QUICKLY HIDES IN A NEARBY VESTIBULE and watches...

SHARON'S DOOR OPEN and... CHAD STEPS OUT. Jack's shocked.

CHAD
Hope you feel better, Sharon.

SHARON
Me too, Chad. Thanks for stopping
by. I appreciate it.

He waves bye. She shuts the door. Chad starts off. Then...

JACK steps out. Chad's surprised.

CHAD
Jack? What are you--

JACK GRABS CHAD AND THROWS HIM UP AGAINST THE WALL, FURIOUS.

CHAD (CONT'D)
We were only talking! We're
friends, Jack. I heard she was
upset after the wedding.

Jack loosens his grip - Chad pulls away.

CHAD (CONT'D)
And what do you care anyway? You
had plenty of time to make her
happy. Give her a break. If you
can't be there for her the way she
deserves - let her move on.

This hits Jack hard. Jack exits - tossing his flowers away.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

THE TREE'S ALMOST BARREN - LESS THAN 100 LEAVES LEFT. Aaron
drives up, walks to the door with a GROCERY BAG. Knocks.

AARON
Jack? I picked up the six-packs
you wanted. Another proud
achievement for the resume. JACK!

Then Aaron notices A FOOT STICKING OUT NEAR THE GARBAGE CANS
IN THE DRIVEWAY. He walks over. REVEAL...

JACK ON THE GROUND, DRUNK, PASSED OUT - in one hand - a half-
empty BOTTLE OF JACK DANIELS. He's lying in a puddle of
crushed beer cans, alcohol bottles - incredibly pathetic.

AARON (CONT'D)
... At least you still have your
dignity. Let's get you to bed
before you drunk dial Section D.

Aaron bends down, lifts Jack up off the ground. Jack is in
pain as he stands. He can hardly walk, each step painful.

JACK
Sharon--
(winces from pain)
Ow!

AARON
SHHH! Don't talk. Walk.
(noticing, looking down)
... Hey, what's with your feet? Is
that moss?

C.U. JACK'S FEET - we see a little GREEN MOSS NEAR HIS ANKLE.

JACK SEES IT, IN SHOCK - HE LOOKS OVER AT THE TREE.

C.U. TREE ROOTS - WE SEE THE SAME EXACT GREEN MOSS.

JACK
(to the tree)
You... IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!

SUDDENLY, JACK RUNS AT THE TREE! HE SMASHES A BOTTLE ON IT!
Immediately, JACK REACTS AS IF THE BOTTLE BREAKS ON HIS HEAD!

JACK (CONT'D)
OW!!!!

Reveal A FRESH BLACK & BLUE MARK ON JACK'S HEAD.

JACK (CONT'D)
FREAKING WEED!

Two leaves drop. Aaron tries to pull Jack away.

AARON
Jack, stop talking! Come here.

JACK
(to the tree)
YOU KNOW, FERTILIZER IS CRAP! YOU
EAT SHIT! I HOPE YOUR MOM GETS DRY
ROT AND YOUR DAD GETS TERMITES!

Twenty leaves drop. Aaron keeps trying to pull Jack away.

C.U. TREE TRUNK - A LITTLE SALAMANDER CLIMBS ON IT. THE
LIZARD FINDS A SMALL HOLE IN THE TRUNK AND ENTERS, WRIGGLING.

C.U. JACK - EYES GOING WIDE - HE SUDDENLY STANDS STRAIGHT UP.

JACK QUICKLY REACHES BACK TO HIS BUTT WITH BOTH HANDS - AS IF
SOMETHING JUST WRIGGLED UP INSIDE IT. He starts to QUIVER.

JACK (CONT'D)
AaaaaAAAAAHHHH!

JACK'S SHAKING. Aaron is mystified. Finally...

C.U. TREE - the lizard exits the hole and scampers away.

ON JACK relieved. He catches his breath.

JACK (CONT'D)
That's it!

Two leaves drop. Jack runs inside. Aaron follows.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack is putting a CD in his stereo. Aaron enters.

AARON
What are you doing?

JACK
Ending it.

Jack hits play - we hear REM's "THE END OF THE WORLD." JACK SINGS ALONG. (The song is A FAST, LONG LIST OF NAMES - HENCE THE JOKE). JACK SINGS WITH PASSION, trying to kill himself.

JACK (CONT'D)
Leonard Bernstein. Leonid Breshnev,
Lenny Bruce and Lester Bangs. Bir-

AARON
NOOOO!

AARON PANICS AND TACKLES JACK - KNOCKING JACK BACK, OFF BALANCE! In the background, we hear...

REM ON THE STEREO
It's the end of the world --

JACK FALLS! AARON FALLS ON TOP OF HIM! THEY SMASH INTO A...

BOOKCASE - tipping it over, sending books, photos and THE ANSWERING MACHINE FLYING - SMASH! CRASH! Furniture flies!

JACK & AARON FALL - WHOMP! The dust settles - AARON IS ON TOP OF JACK, who is now PASSED OUT. He looks at Jack.

AARON
... Thank God.

AARON STANDS - SHUTS OFF THE STEREO.

AARON (CONT'D)
And just in case...

AARON GRABS JACK'S CD COLLECTION AND DUMPS THEM IN THE TRASH! Then he RIPS THE STEREO OUT OF THE WALL! HE DUMPS THE SOUND SYSTEM DOWN ON TOP OF THE BROKEN CDS IN THE GARBAGE.

(Note: We recognize this image from the first scene)

Then... JACK'S LIVING ROOM PHONE RINGS. It rouses Jack, who reaches to get it. Aaron leaps across the room and YANKS THE PHONE AWAY! JACK FALLS BACK - UNCONSCIOUS AGAIN.

Aaron spots A THICK ROLL OF MASKING TAPE. He grabs it and STARTS ENTWINING THE PHONE WITH TAPE - SO JACK CAN'T LIFT UP THE RECEIVER. HE FINISHES.

AARON (CONT'D)
Try answering that.

Jack stirs again. HE BEGINS TALKING IN HIS SLEEP.

JACK
... Sharon...

AARON QUICKLY RIPS OFF ANOTHER PIECE AND SLAPS IT ON JACK'S MOUTH - COVERING IT! Jack settles back down, sleeping.

AARON
Man... I think I've had enough
agent training for one day, Jack.
You're on your own.

AARON GRABS THE SIX PACK and exits. We see Jack lying there, passed out in the middle of his destroyed living room, still.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Everything is quiet - the star-filled sky above the house.

ON THE TREE - DRIED UP, NEARLY DEAD except for...

C.U. TREE BRANCH - FOUR LEAVES still left. Behind them...

THE BRIGHT MOON... THE FOUR LEAVES IN SILHOUETTE. Hold on the leaves as TIME PASSES. NIGHT TURNS INTO DAY.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jack is still lying on the floor. SILENCE. Then we hear...

MALE WHISPER
... Are you there?...

Jack's eyes flutter open. He sits up and grabs his ACHING HEAD, then his ACHING SHOULDER, then his ACHING ASS, etc..

Jack stands, painfully walks over to the window to see...

THE FOUR LEAVES left on the tree. ONLY FOUR WORDS. Shit.

JACK CATCHES SIGHT OF HIMSELF IN A WALL MIRROR. He sees he has TAPE ON HIS MOUTH - pulls it off, puts it in his pocket.

He walks over to the FALLEN BOOKCASE and LIFTS IT BACK UP. He starts re-shelving photos, books, then spots...

THE DAMAGED ANSWERING MACHINE. HE'S SHOCKED - DID HE LOSE FRANK'S MESSAGE? Jack quickly tries to play it - nothing. Again - nothing. Again, again, more desperate and finally...

FRANK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Jack. It's Frank. I'm in town so
if you want to get together--

JACK'S RELIEVED. THE RECORDING CONTINUES - WE DIDN'T HEAR THIS PART THE FIRST TIME IT PLAYED...

FRANK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE (CONT'D)
--I'd really like to see you and
Mom. Sorry I haven't been around--

We now hear THE RECORDED VOICE OF JACK PICKING UP THE PHONE.
Jack listens to himself talking to his brother, years ago.

JACK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Is this my favorite brother?

FRANK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Jackie!

JACK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
I knew it! You da man, buddy. Can
I call you back?

FRANK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Uh, sure, but I just wanted to say--

JACK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Gotta go, bro. I'm swamped. Later-

FRANK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Jack, wait! Can we talk a sec?

JACK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Wish I could but I am knee deep in
meetings here so I'll catch you nex-

FRANK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Jack, listen to me! I know you're
angry at me.

JACK'S VOICE ON THE MACHINE
Water under the bridge, big guy.

FRANK
Can you cut the b.s. and talk to
me, Jack? I know you're upset that
I left you alone with mom all these
years and I'm sorry. I want to
make it up to you... I love you,
Jack... You there?... Talk to me,
Jack... Are you there?... You there?

C.U. JACK as he listens...

FRANK VOICE ON THE MACHINE
... Are you there?

WE REALIZE THAT THIS IS THE "WHISPER" THAT'S BEEN HAUNTING
JACK IN THE SILENCE - HIS BROTHER.

And then we hear a... DIAL TONE.

Jack hung up. Message over. Jack stands there a beat,
remembering, puts the machine down. Then...

JACK OPENS A DESK DRAWER and pulls out CRAZY GLUE. He exits.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jack approaches the tree. HE PICKS UP ONE FALLEN LEAF.

JACK TRIES TO GLUE THE LEAF BACK ON - IT WON'T STAY. He
tries again, again, again and finally... JACK ANGRILY WHIPS
THE GLUE AWAY! Upset and overwhelmed by it all...

JACK BEGINS TO SOB. He drops to his knees, crying at the
tree's base. As he weeps in the hot sun...

THE TREE SLIGHTLY - MAGICALLY - MOVES SOME OF IT'S BARREN
BRANCHES TO... SHADE JACK - AS IF IT CARES FOR HIM.

C.U. JACK'S CHEEK - WE FOLLOW A TEAR ROLL DOWN and...

THE TEAR DROPS ONTO THE TREE TRUNK. The moment it hits...

JACK REACTS - smacking his lips - HE TASTED THE TEAR.

Intrigued, JACK RUBS THE SPOT WHERE THE TEAR HIT THE TREE.

C.U. JACK'S HAIR - we see INVISIBLE FINGER INDENTATIONS
RUBBING HIS SCALP. He feels his own hand touching the tree.

JACK SMILES, REALIZING THE CONNECTION. He gets into it -
giving himself a scalp massage. WE SEE THE HAND INDENTATION
IN HIS HAIR. He enjoys a rare, fleeting moment of pleasure.

JACK NOW RUBS THE SIDES OF THE TREE - WE SEE HANDPRINTS RUN
UP THE SIDES OF HIS BATHROBE, BODY. As Jack gets into it...

AN OLD LADY WALKS BY WITH A DOG. She pauses, watching Jack
get off on his tree. She and her dog stare - perplexed.

OLD LADY
Maybe I should start a garden.

Hearing her, JACK STOPS, EMBARRASSED. She smiles. He
smiles. Suddenly, the OLD LADY SNEEZES. She looks at him.

OLD LADY (CONT'D)
 Would it kill you to say "God Bless
 you, M'am?"

JACK COUNTS THE WORDS ON HIS FINGERS - FOUR WORDS. HE NODS - it would kill him. The woman exits, annoyed.

As extra insurance - JACK PULLS OUT THE TAPE AND SLAPS IT BACK OVER HIS MOUTH. He picks up a nearby GARDEN HOSE, starts watering the tree. JACK ENJOYS THE WATER FOR A BEAT, THEN TURNS HIS BACK TO US. WE HOLD ON HIS BACK, REALIZING...

THIS IS THE MOMENT WE FIRST MET JACK but now we go to a...

C.U. OF JACK - HE CLOSES HIS EYES. WE HEAR HIS THOUGHTS.

JACK V.O.
 (gently, softly)
 Tree? Can you hear me? Tree?

Jack is trying to MENTALLY COMMUNICATE with the tree.

JACK V.O. (CONT'D)
 We're dying, tree. Tell me what to do. Please. It's me...
 (beat, then)
 My name is Jack Rappaport. If you can hear me, what you are listening to is not the sound of my voice. It's the sound of my inner voice. The one inside my head...

AND THIS SPEECH IS WHERE OUR STORY BEGAN - EXCEPT NOW WE UNDERSTAND IT'S ACTUAL PURPOSE. Instead of listening again, we quickly pan away from Jack and push into the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The camera settles on THE PHONE WRAPPED IN TAPE - IT RINGS.

ON JACK TURNING AROUND in response. It rings again.

Jack enters the house, walks up to the RINGING PHONE. He rips off the tape and LIFTS THE RECEIVER. He listens.

NURSE RUBY
 Jack? If you're there, it's Ruby.
 Your mom's asking for Frank again.

As Jack processes this, we go to...

INT. ANNIE RAPPAPORT'S ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Annie is alone, in front of her new T.V., still wrapped in the red bow. JACK APPEARS AT THE DOOR. HE KNOCKS.

ANNIE
Frank? Is that you?

ON JACK looking at his mom with empathy. Again, she asks...

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Frank? Is that you?

JACK
... Yes.

ANNIE'S FACE LIGHTS UP!

QUICK CUT TO:

THE TREE - ONE LEAF blows away. THREE LEAVES left.

BACK TO:

ANNIE - THRILLED! SHE HAPPILY HUGS/KISSES JACK.

ANNIE
Frankie! I missed you so much,
baby. Sit. Tell me what you've
been doing.

Jack brings her hand up to his mouth. Shakes "no."

ANNIE (CONT'D)
What? You can't talk. Your
throat?

Jack nods.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Rest then, Frankie. There's so
much I want to tell you. Did you
meet Ruby? I told her all about
you. Oh, I'm so glad you came,
Frank. No one ever comes to visit.

Jack's annoyed - considering he's always there.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
You like my room? It's so nice.
I've got all my things here... But
sometimes... I get lonely, Frank.
I get... But then I can always
count on Jack.

This catches Jack by surprise.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Jack always comes. He brings me
flowers. Helps me. When we go for
walks all the ladies are jealous
because he's so handsome and... I'm
just so proud of him, Frank. So
proud.

Jack is moved, amazed at her cognizance.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Jack doesn't know it but... he
 means the world to me, Frank.
 Jack's my only reason to live.

Jack's brought to tears - hugging her. She's surprised.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 Aw, Frankie. I know you miss your
 brother. You tried to call him and
 patch things up like I asked,
 right, sweetie?

Jack's surprised - he had no idea his mother was behind it.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 He'll call you back. You'll see.
 He loves you. I told him to tell
 you. He'll say, "I love you," one
 day. You'll see. He'll say it.

Jack nods - realizing he has to say it. Beat. Then Annie suddenly shouts...

ANNIE (CONT'D)
 CAN YOU HEAR ME OVER THE T.V.!!!?

Of course, the T.V. isn't on. JACK SMILES - TAKES THE BOW
 OFF AND SIMPLY... TURNS THE T.V. "ON." Annie immediately
 responds, happy. She watches T.V. - now oblivious to him
 being in the room. Jack kisses her head exits.

EXT. CEMETARY - LATER

We pan across the headstones, past a few MOURNERS, past some
 WORKING GRAVEDIGGERS, until we find... JACK STANDING IN FRONT
 OF A HEADSTONE.

C.U. HEADSTONE - "FRANK RAPPAPORT" - his brother.

JACK touches Frank's name.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE THREE LEAVES LEFT ON THE TREE.

BACK TO:

JACK. Deep breath. He closes his eyes. He opens his mouth
 and begins to say "I LOVE YOU" when suddenly...

A SHOVELFUL OF DIRT HITS JACK IN THE FACE! He spits up the
 dirt, shocked, turning to some nearby GRAVEDIGGERS.

They unknowingly hit him with soil. Again, the gravediggers accidentally shovel on him. Jack spits out more dirt, angry.

JACK
(knee-jerk reaction)
Watch it, asshole!

BOOM! LIGHTNING CRACKLES IN THE SKY! THE SKY DARKENS!

ON JACK - SHOCKED, shaking his head "no", REALIZING HE USED UP HIS LAST 3 WORDS!

QUICK CUT TO:

THE TREE - THE WIND BLOWS... THE LAST THREE LEAVES FLY AWAY!

BACK TO:

MORE LIGHTNING as JACK TRIES TO SPEAK the last words - BUT HE CAN'T. THEN HE GRABS HIS CHEST - LOOKS LIKE A HEART ATTACK!

JACK COLLAPSES! A frail pathetic heap.

The sky suddenly calms - starts to lightly RAIN. Mourners and gravediggers run for cover. We see...

JACK ALONE, LYING ON FRANK'S GRAVE, RAIN FALLING ON HIM. Suddenly, resting on the ground next to Jack, we hear his...

CELL PHONE - RING. And RING. And RING.

ON JACK'S HAND - coming to life, trembling, INCHING IT'S WAY TO THE CELL. HE BRINGS IT TO HIS EAR...

AARON ON THE PHONE
Jack? You there? Jack?...

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We find AARON out front, staring at something O.C. - shocked.

AARON
You're not going to believe this.

REVEAL - THE TREE - COVERED IN THOUSANDS OF FLOWERS AND LEAVES - more breathtakingly beautiful than we've ever seen.

EXT. DR. SINJA'S SELF-REALIZATION CENTER - DAY

Dr. Sinja is watering plants in his garden. We hear...

JACK O.C.
I LOVE YOU!

REVEAL JACK - HEALTHY again, standing nearby, happy.

DR. SINJA
I know, Jack. You've told me six times.

JACK
BUT NOW I REALLY MEAN IT, YOU BIG
TRANSCENDENTAL TEDDY BEAR!
(hugs him)
Explain to me why I'm not dead again?

DR. SINJA
The PHONY you died. He used up the leaves. But the real you now speaks from the heart.

JACK
Wait a second. That was in your book, wasn't it? I should've read it earlier. Could've avoided this whole thing. It's only 5 pages.

DR. SINJA
That's what I hear.

SAM O.C.
JACK!

Jack turns - sees his boss approaching.

JACK
Oh, no. Sam's been trying to find me since I blew your deal.

SAM
Dr. Sinja, excuse the intrusion but apparently Jack doesn't answer his phone anymore.

JACK
Honestly, Sam, I couldn't talk.

SAM
Well, you did quite a number on Funkler. The man hasn't left me alone.

JACK
Look, I know this isn't what you want to hear but I couldn't care less about Funkler. I believe in Dr. Sinja so it's his loss.

SAM
That's perfect! You're ready.

JACK
Ready?

SAM
For Funkler. You finally broke him
down. I came to warn you. Look.

Sam points. They turn to see FUNKLER approaching.

FUNKLER
ONE MILLION DOLLARS! That's my
final offer!

JACK
...You still think I'm negotiating?

FUNKLER
Look at him - playing dumb. Fine -
one point one. Sam, this kid's the
best I've ever seen. I even did
the "walk out" to him and still -
not one word from the rat.

JACK
But you said the book's too short?

FUNKLER
Actually, can you make it shorter?

JACK
SHORTER?!

FUNKLER
Starbuck's is looking to print
something on their frappacino cups
this summer. They love it.

JACK
Oh, no, no, no. Dr. Sinja's work
deserves more respect than the side
of coffee cup!

DR. SINJA
I'll take it.

JACK
WHAT?

DR. SINJA
What's important is that I reach
people. Plus, the money rocks.
And I want my picture on every cup.

SAM
Did I mention Starbuck's agreed to
carry his Tea Line and chant CDs?
It's a home run, partner.

JACK
Partner?
(quickly to Funkler)
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
Sorry I had to play hard ball,
Funkler. I'll give you a break
this time. Deal.

They shake - excited. EVERYONE'S HAPPY.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE - LATER

Jack enters holding a SMALL POTTED PLANT with a GIFT RIBBON.
He walks up to Aaron. Aaron looks up. Jack starts to talk.

JACK
AARON --

AARON
SHH! Stop trying to kill yourself!

Jack smiles at his trusty assistant and holds up ONE FINGER.

AARON (CONT'D)
Fine. Say one word but that's it.

JACK
Promotion.

AARON
... say again?

JACK
It's over, buddy. I can yap away.
Not that I will. The more I talk,
the less people listen. Including
me. Why are you still making that
face?

AARON
"Promotion?"

JACK
You earned it. Plus if I don't,
you'll tell everyone what really
happened. And scratching each
others backs is really how this
business works. Final lesson.

AARON
YOU DA MAN!

JACK
Don't start that again. Although I
like the confidence. Oh, do me a
favor...
(hands Aaron the plant)
This is from my tree. Could you
deliver it to Chad?

Aaron happily walks off with it. Jack yells...

JACK (CONT'D)
Everything ready?

AARON
All set. Good luck.

Aaron exits. Jack takes a deep breath, walks off.

INT. SHARON'S CUBICLE - BULLPEN AREA - A MOMENT LATER
SHARON is at her desk. Jack walks up.

JACK
Today.

SHARON
Go away. You're an insensitive
ass. Or as you would say...

Sharon squeezes her SHREK DOLL at him.

SHREK DOLL
DONKEY!

JACK
True many times - not now. You
asked for a date. Today.

SHARON
Don't ever speak to me again.

JACK
Then I'll talk to someone else.

JACK STANDS ON HER DESK.

JACK (CONT'D)
CAN I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE!

SHARON
Jack, stop!

Everyone in the office turns.

JACK
YESTERDAY, I HUMILIATED THIS WOMAN!
AND I HUMILIATED MYSELF BECAUSE NOT
ONLY IS SHARON THE BEST THING
THAT'S EVER HAPPENED TO ME - SHE'S
THE BEST THING THAT EVER COULD
HAPPEN. Sharon, I'm sorry.

SHARON
I can't believe you still think a
few of your meaningless words can
fix anything.

JACK
They're not meaningless.

SHARON
Yes they are! So try listening for
once in your life because I want
you to leave me alone!

JACK
I've listened to you, Sharon.

SHARON
No, you haven't. Not once. Ever.

JACK
... Then why is it Strawberry?

SHARON
... What?

JACK
If I never listened - how did I
know you wanted Strawberry?

Jack turns. Reveal a GORGEOUS WEDDING CAKE. She's confused.

SHARON
What is...?

JACK
And how did I know you wanted pink
tablecloths? And roses on table?

Jack points downstairs - Sharon looks over the railing into
the HUGE OPEN CENTER LOBBY FLOOR. REVEAL...

SHARON'S DREAM WEDDING SET UP - pink tables and all.

JACK (CONT'D)
I even got those concert tickets.

Reveal... VAN MORRISON playing "SOMEONE LIKE YOU."

SHARON
Is that Van Morrison?

JACK
DAN Morrison. Tribute band. Best
I can do on short notice.

Sharon sees her family, Annie, Priest - she's OVERWHELMED.

JACK (CONT'D)
I've listened to every word you've
ever said and did nothing. Today
I'm doing something.
(takes out the ring)
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
I want to spend the rest of my life
with you and I've never meant any
words more in my entire --

Sharon covers his mouth, mid-sentence.

SHARON
Enough talk.

JACK
I couldn't agree more.

They kiss. Beat. Then Sharon pulls back...

SHARON
You do realize there's not a chance
in hell I'm getting married in our
office lobby?

JACK
Can we call it the rehearsal
dinner?

SHARON
Sure. Right after I change the
tablecloths.

They kiss again. Balloons, sparkle fall. Credits roll as we
hear Meatloaf's "YOU TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY MOUTH."

THE END