

Aloft

by

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Based on the novel by

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Writer's 1st Draft

EXT. SOFTBALL DIAMOND, SUBURBAN LONG ISLAND - DAY (PAST)

This is home video of a row of ten-year-old-girl-softballers sitting in a dugout. JERRY BATTLE'S VOICE plays over the picture.

JERRY (V.O.)

When Theresa was ten... a few months after her mom died... she thought she'd like to be on a softball team. So she carpooled to her first practice with the neighbor girl. I came to get her and realized I never bought her a mitt.

SOFTBALL DIAMOND - LATER (PAST)

More video plays of THERESA BATTLE, 10, at practice fielding a grounder with a plastic bucket rather than a glove.

JERRY (V.O.)

And I guess there was no extra.

The camera pans to film Theresa's gloved teammates.

JERRY (V.O.)

She was the only one with a bucket.

Later, the camera has captured Theresa and her teammates, standing in a row in the outfield taking turns catching pop ups. When it's Theresa's turn, she does it with her bucket.

JERRY (V.O.)

I just didn't make the glove/first practice connection, though someone that day mentioned a teamwide mailer that had listed necessary equipment.

This is video of Theresa walking alone across the diamond with her bucket.

JERRY (V.O.)

I guess I was preoccupied by something else then, and didn't notice it.

CUT TO:

A HOT AIR BALLOON FLOATING ACROSS THE SKY.

EXT. JERRY'S BACK YARD, LONG ISLAND - DAY (PRESENT)

The home is a small ranch house; there's a good deal of property, though - an acre of yard and tall perimeter trees that create a large, secluded space. JERRY BATTLE, 52, stands in this back yard, drinking morning coffee and looking up at the sky AT THE SAME HOT AIR BALLOON FLOATING IN THE DISTANCE. Some times passes during which Jerry just watches the balloon.

CREDITS BEGIN.

INT. DEN, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry's sits at the computer. A Bob Dylan record plays on a record player; Jerry's logged onto some sort of balloon expedition web site. Above a balloon picture there, text reads *English Balloonist Begins Trek Prep in Long Island*. Beneath the photo, text reads *Trek around the globe with us in real time as Sir Harold Clarkson-Ickes circles the earth alone*.

Jerry looks at the screen.

INT. KITCHEN, JERRY'S - LATER

Jerry washes his coffee cup; he's on the phone. CREDITS PLAY.

JERRY

Where am I with my flight hours?

TIMMY (O.S.)

You need thirty more.

JERRY

You want to catch some today?

TIMMY (O.S.)

Like when?

JERRY

Like three? I have a brunch...

(trying to think of what
to call it)

...function or something. But I can probably leave by two, without upsetting anybody.

TIMMY (O.S.)

Three's too late. I can go up at two.

JERRY

Well, then I'd have to leave at one.

TIMMY (O.S.)

That's all I got. You'll have to leave at one, bud.

Jerry weighs his desire to fly against the fact that leaving brunch early will upset somebody.

JERRY

Let me think about it.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Jerry showers as CREDITS play; after a while, his thoughts play over the picture.

JERRY (V.O.)

If I leave at twelve-ten I get to the airfield at one. That means I'm at the brunch thing for two and a half hours.

Jerry stands under the shower water for a while.

JERRY (V.O.)

That's plenty. No matter how you slice it. I should get up there. Knock those hours out. Thirty more. Then solo-piloting. Then I can go on my trip. Like Sir Harold Clarkson-Ickes. Fly all over. I'm just going to have to leave this brunch earlier than most of the other guests, but after two and a half hours which is a sufficient period of time. No matter how you slice it.

INT. KITCHEN, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry has returned to the kitchen phone, though now he's just dressed in a bath towel; he's mid phone call.

JERRY

Let's take her up.

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET - LATER

Later, Jerry dresses into a new shirt. He's looking his few sportcoats over. He reaches for a red one. It's the only bright clothing in the closet. CREDITS PLAY.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Jerry has finished dressing. He's looking in the mirror. His red blazer bears an old party ID sticker of the sort that read *HI I'M* with a blank space for a name. In the blank, Jerry has previously written something which in the reflection of the mirror is indiscernible.

The film reverse cuts to Jerry standing before the mirror. The party ID sticker is legible now; it reads *HI I'M Satisfactory*. Jerry doesn't seem to notice the sticker's there. He just stares at himself for a while. CREDITS END.

EXT. JACK BATTLE'S DRIVEWAY, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Jerry stands in the large, side driveway of an extravagantly-sized house staring down at a neat row of three functional, fully-equipped, kid-size police cruisers. They're elaborate go-carts made up as mock LAPD cars.

CLOSER ON Jerry's face showing generational confusion over the costly kid items.

As Jerry stands there looking at the mini-police-cruisers, a kid drives another one by him in the background; it's got loud, realistic sirens.

INT. FOYER, JACK BATTLE'S HOUSE - LATER

Inside, Jerry holds a conversation with exotic-looking, dark-haired, JACK BATTLE, 31; Jack's got a glass of whiskey THE ICE OF WHICH JACK SWIRLS AROUND IN A CONSPICUOUS WAY THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION. Well-dressed party guests in their early thirties hang around the foyer and the larger, well-appointed space of a study and living room in view.

JERRY

Your house is something, Jack. I haven't seen it with everything moved in.

JACK

Thanks.

JERRY

I guess business is good.

JACK
Business is great.

Jerry looks around at the party crowd; HE SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE SPECIFIC.

JERRY
Is Rita coming?

JACK
Coming today?

JERRY
Yeah.

JACK
(with some bad feelings
about it)
No, she's not.

THE NEWS IS MEANINGFUL. Jerry, though, seems to accept it with grace. Jack sees an acquaintance nearby and goes to see him. Jerry remains there amid the front room's expensive trappings.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JACK'S HOUSE

Jerry walks through the living room, past a massive, modern art wall mural he checks out.

INT. HUMIDOR

Jerry stands in a small-room-size humidor surrounded by gold-labeled cigar boxes; Jerry's looking them over.

INT. CHILDREN'S PLAYROOM

In a room full of wild kids, Jerry's off to the side, watching, for what's probably his first time, Sponge Bob Squarepants on Jack's seventy-inch flat screen.

EXT. POND, BACK YARD, JACK'S - LATER

Later in the party, Jerry stands on a little, Asian-influenced foot-bridge over a man-made landscape pond on the western edge of Jack's property. He's holding skimming stones.

JERRY (V.O.)
Why's Jack drinking? He's not a drinker. Sloshing that ice.

He looks down on a row of three ducks in the pond water beneath him. He casually tosses a stone down on a duck. It makes a hollow, wooden noise which conveys the duck is fake.

JERRY (V.O.)

I'm going to get some good drinks on my trip. Ouzo. Sangria. Possibly that spiked lemonadish beverage from Malta. Delcia. That just sounds like it tastes good. Delcia. Hell yeah. One delcia, please.

Jerry hits the decorative duck beside it in the row. It makes the same sound. Then Jerry hits the last duck in the row. It squawks and flies right at him.

JERRY

(lurching back)

Fuck...

EXT. TENNIS COURTS, BACK YARD, JACK'S - LATER

In the wide, empty space of Jack's tennis court, Jerry speaks with POP, 75. The party's still going on on the property around them. POP CONVEYS THE FOLLOWING WITH THE WEARY DETACHMENT OF A OLDER MAN WHO JUST MOMENTS AGO WAS PROBABLY CHOOSING DURING A PARTY TO STAND ALL BY HIMSELF ON AN EMPTY TENNIS COURT; Jerry doesn't seem to pick that up, though.

POP

What's the purpose of the party, Jerry?

JERRY

Theresa and Paul. For their engagement. They're home for a visit.

Then Jerry looks across the distant lawn at THE NOW-GROWN-GIRL-WITHOUT-A-MITT THERESA BATTLE, 30 and ponytailed PAUL CHEN, 31, talking. Paul's Asian, Theresa's mixed, Asian and American. In fact, Jack, who's with them, looks vaguely Asian as well. Jerry, though, is all white; he's been looking at the couple.

POP

What are you doing with yourself these days?

JERRY

Flying.

Pop and Jerry remain near the foul line.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Also... Sir Harold Clarkson-Ickes.
The English balloonist? He's
prepping here. He's going all the
way solo. I've become kind of
interested in that. I've been
following it. You know I'm planning
my trip. The long one. I'm going to
fly it. I'm just going to fly
around. For a nine month block. I'm
following his story.

POP

How's Daisy?

JERRY

(surprised he asked that)
Daisy?

POP

Rita. I'm sorry. Rita.

JERRY

I'm not seeing Rita anymore. Six
months or so.

POP

I didn't mean to say Daisy.

JERRY

I know...

POP

I think about her a lot.

Jerry doesn't say anything.

POP (CONT'D)

I went by work. In March. It's
different over there now. Jack has
an idea to deal in custom
interiors. Along with the
landscaping.

JERRY

Jack wants to change the company.
So stuff's going to change.

At this point in their conversation, a mini-police car, a
mini-ambulance and a mini-fire truck, all with their sirens
going, pass in front of the men in succession.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

Later, while the party continues, Jerry's standing before a mantelpiece, looking at framed photographs. A KID IN A SUIT walks up beside him; he stays there full scene, though they don't speak.

The photograph Jerry's looking at is a family portrait - a younger Jerry, Jack and Theresa. With them as well IS AN ASIAN WOMAN JERRY'S AGE - his then wife Daisy.

Jerry stares at Daisy.

EXT. LAWN PARTY, BAR - LATER

Later, on the lawn, Jerry gets a soda from the outside bar. THE KID IN A SUIT'S next to him.

JERRY
(to the bartender)
Thanks.

BARTENDER
No problem.

Jerry remains there a while.

JERRY (V.O.)
I smell Cheerios.

Then Jerry looks at the kid in a suit beside him.

JERRY (V.O.)
Is it this guy?

JERRY
(to the kid)
Were you just eating Cheerios?

KID IN A SUIT
The cereal?

JERRY
Is there another kind?

KID IN A SUIT
I don't know.

JERRY
Were you just eating them?

KID IN A SUIT
No.

JERRY

Then why do you smell like them?

KID IN A SUIT

I don't smell like them.

JERRY

Yes, you do.

The kid looks up at Jerry. Jerry looks down at him.

EXT. POOL, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

There's a large pool behind the house. No one's out there but Jerry. He's sitting in a poolside chair; he's looking at the water.

JERRY (V.O.)

Should I fly to Malta then Spain? I don't know which should be the first segment of that leg. Where I should fly first. I'll consider that right now. I'll give that serious thought. As I sit here by the pool.

JACK'S WIFE EUNICE, 31, has begun calling guests together around the outside bar. Jerry can witness everything from the pool.

EUNICE

Okay. Gather in. Gather in. I don't want to shout. Come on. Okay. We've all come here - Theresa's friends and Paul's friends - to welcome them back to New York from California for the holidays. But they also wanted everyone to know... we're *also* here because - I knew this last week but we can tell everyone now - we're *also* here because Paul and Theresa are getting married!

Soon, everyone begins to cheer. Paul and Theresa begin to accept personal congratulations.

Meanwhile, Jerry remains over by the pool. He's heard all this; his formal reaction to it runs along the lines of disappointment.

JERRY (V.O.)

It would be awesome if Paul had a different job. Poet? Can you even be that now? That's like Cobbler.

Jerry considers this possible difficulty in his life. After a while, HE MORE OR LESS SHRUGS IT OFF.

JERRY (V.O.)

But he's a pretty sweet dude. It could be worse. Maybe they won't have kids. So he won't have to be a Poet/Dad. Poet/Provider. That wouldn't be good.

MEANWHILE, A UNACCOMPANIED TODDLER IN A DRESS HAS JUST STEPPED DOWN INTO the pool steps at the far edge of the frame. Jerry hasn't noticed.

JERRY (V.O.)

Probably they won't. They're not a kids type. You know, maybe they're perfect for each other. She's strong-minded. He's soft. It's going to be fine. Plus, free poems. You know what? If I go to Spain first, I can watch bulls chase Spanish guys.

She keeps going down deeper step by step until she's submerged and not visible any longer. Jerry still hasn't noticed.

JERRY (V.O.)

Because that's in Jul--

MOTHER

Oh, my god! Drew! Oh, my god!

JERRY (V.O.)

What the fuck?

Once someone's noticed, people rush over in an instant, cutting off Eunice's speech, and causing a commotion at the pool side. Jerry has noticed now that there was a small girl in the pool unattended. He begins to stand to help, but many others have come around already - so it's a pretty meager gesture all the way around. The girl's now out. Her mom's carrying her away from the water.

MOTHER
(to her daughter)
Goddamnit. How did you get over
here?

Once the mother has led her daughter off, the others begin to leave the frame. Soon, Jerry's in it alone again. Some time passes.

JERRY (V.O.)
Man, I probably should have noticed
that.

After a while, Jerry sees that he's being discussed by the mother and a group of lady friends across the pool.

MOTHER
(really pissed)
What? Is he a scarecrow?

PARTY GUEST
What happened?

MOTHER
He was just goddamned standing
there. Who is that freak?

PARTY GUEST
That's Jack's father. Jack and
Theresa's. That's Jerry Battle.

MOTHER
Oh, well... I'm sorry. But Jesus
Christ. You know? Say something
Jerry. Tell her not to go in the
pool.

SECOND PARTY GUEST
I think she might have pooped in
there.

MOTHER
Great...
(about Jerry)
Asshole fucker. Fuckass.

The collection of ladies splits up soon; this newly opened space provides a view across the pool where Jerry sits by himself looking over.

JERRY (V.O.)
(puzzled, like it's an
unusual thing to be
called)

Fuckass?

Time passes. Then, in the water, a turd goes floating right by Jerry. He watches it like it's a paper boat, calmly following it with his eyes out of the frame. After further moments, Jerry stands up and walks away.

EXT. LAWN - LATER

Later, as the party continues, Jerry has joined Paul and Theresa on the lawn.

JERRY
(to Theresa)
How's your... This year you're
doing freshmen comparative
literature?

THERESA
I'm teaching two quarters. It's
good.

JERRY
(to Paul)
You're doing some different writing
I understand. You're taking a break
from the novels?

PAUL
I published a book of poetry this
year.

JERRY
I heard. Why didn't you guys send
it to me?

THERESA
We did.

Jerry becomes quiet. An awkward moment passes.

JERRY
Well, congratulations, guys. You
probably have lots of hands to
shake. I'll check back in with you
in a little while.

THERESA
(to Jerry as he goes)
I want to talk to you later. Okay?

JERRY
Great...

Jerry waves and leaves their company.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

As guests mingle in front of the modern art mural, Jerry stands off by himself with the exception of the kid in a suit who's still standing beside him for some reason.

EXT. PATIO, BACK YARD, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

Later during the party, Jerry sits at a handmade patio table with the kid in the suit. They're not talking. THERESA'S FIANCE PAUL SITS AT THE TABLE BEHIND JERRY'S CRYING QUIETLY. Jerry can't see him. Jerry's looking at Pop and Theresa holding a conversation across the lawn. Then at Jack and his wife Eunice having what looks like a restrained argument near the pool bar. Jerry doesn't seem to perceive that, though. HE CHECKS HIS WATCH.

JERRY (V.O.)
Getting there...

INT. LIVING ROOM, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

As guests mingle near the foyer, Jerry's hanging around watching the front door. He checks his watch again.

JERRY (V.O.)
That's two and half. All the way. I should probably wait for another guest to leave first, though. Maybe a non-family member will leave soon.

Jerry continues to hang around the foyer/living room waiting for one of the guests there to go. THEN A MIDDLE-AGED LADY IN A GREEN BLOUSE BREAKS OFF AND WALKS TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR.

JERRY (V.O.)
Nice. Get out there, green shirt.

She's gone out the front door. So now Jerry waits around for a really short while. Then he leaves, too.

EXT. JACK'S FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Jerry steps outside and finds the green shirt lady standing around smoking not going anywhere. He looks at her for a moment.

JERRY (V.O.)
Shit...

They make eye contact.

JERRY
Hi.

LADY
Hi.

Then Jerry stands beside her awkwardly. He's not a smoker. Time passes.

JERRY (V.O.)
Well, since I'm already out here, I
should probably just go.

The valet guy has come up.

VALET
(to Jerry)
Leaving?

JERRY
Yes.

A COUPLE has just arrived and left their car with the parking service; they walk toward the house past Jerry.

WOMAN
(recognizing him)
Jerry. Hi.

JERRY
(doesn't recognize her)
Hi...

WOMAN
How are you?

JERRY
Good...

WOMAN
Where's Rita?

JERRY
Rita and I split up. Six months ago
or so.

WOMAN
Man. I'm sorry.

JERRY
It was amicable.

Jerry considers this further.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Mostly.

WOMAN
That's good...

MAN
(to the woman)
She's moving in with Richie.
Conglio.
(to Jerry)
She's moving in with Richie
Conglio. Right?

IT'S NEWS TO JERRY AND UNSETTLES HIM.

JERRY
They were dating...

MAN
Richie said. They're moving in.

JERRY
Okay. I guess they're moving in.

The couple continues into Jack's house. The kid has taken off for Jerry's car. Jerry stays out front with the middle-aged lady smoking. A medium shot shows the *Hi I'm Satisfactory* sticker remains beside Jerry's blazer lapel. He doesn't look real good now, though. THE NEWS ABOUT RITA MOVING IN WITH SOMEONE HAS RATTLED HIM.

EXT. JERRY'S SUV, MOVING, LONG ISLAND HIGHWAY - LATER

Jerry drives his SUV north on a Long Island highway. The shot is through the driver's side window. Jerry has remained blue. There's a reflection of a hot air balloon floating through the sky visible in his window. After a while, Jerry turns slightly and notices it. Something about it heartens him; then he watches the balloon like he wants to be up there.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE, LAWN PARTY - LATER

Most of the partygoers have gone. Jerry's daughter Theresa sits outside near the pool alone; she seems like she's feeling down and considering serious things. Her fiance Paul appears in the doorway behind her.

PAUL

Are you feeling all right?

THERESA

Yeah...

PAUL

Why don't you come inside? It's getting cold.

THERESA

I'm waiting for Jerry.

PAUL

He took off.

THERESA

I told him I needed to talk to him...

PAUL

He took off.

After a moment, THERESA MAKES A FAINT, PRIVATE EXPRESSION OF DISAPPOINTMENT, LIKE JERRY TAKES OFF A LOT. Paul goes back inside. Theresa remains out there alone again. THEN THE HOT AIR BALLOON FLOATS INTO THE FRAME IN THE DISTANCE, floating slowly over Jack's neighborhood.

TIMMY (V.O.)

Do you want to take off?

JERRY (V.O.)

Am I qualified?

TIMMY (V.O.)

You're more than qualified to take off, Jerry.

JERRY (V.O.)

I'd like to take off, then.

TIMMY (V.O.)

Then take off, Jerry.

After a moment, THE SOUND OF AIRPLANE ENGINES KICKING IN begins to play over the image of Theresa sitting alone by the pool. The volume of the engines increases until it overwhelms the scene.

CUT TO:

JERRY

He's excited, holding the throttle and piloting a twin-engine plane down a runway. TIMMY, 19, sits in the copilot chair.

TIMMY

Fuck, yeah! Jerry's taking off!

JERRY

I'm taking off...

TIMMY

Look at Jerry! Taking off! Take off, Jerry!

As Jerry pulls the throttle, the rumble the plane's making changes to quiet as the plane drafts up into the air.

INT. COCKPIT, INSTRUCTIONAL PLANE, AIRBORNE - LATER

Later, they've levelled off. Jerry's flying; Timmy observes.

TIMMY

This trip?

JERRY

Yeah?

TIMMY

Your big trip? Are you flying over mountains?

JERRY

In Italy. Probably some mountains in northern France...

TIMMY

Mountains can create rougher air. Look at that.

Timmy's looking at the area they're flying over. There, in the middle of a track of Long Island houses, ONE SUBURBAN HOME BEARS A GREAT, PAINTED "X" ACROSS ITS ROOF.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
Who does that? Don't you think
that's fucked up? Paints a X on his
roof? Why?

Jerry looks down.

JERRY
Yeah...

THEN A MUTED EXPLODING SOUND COMES FROM THE REAR.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
Man...

JERRY
What..?

Timmy seems distressed. THE PLANE BEGINS TO SHAKE.

TIMMY
Man.

Then Timmy rises and leaves the cabin abruptly for the back.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
Drop three thousand feet. Right
now.

Surprised, Jerry watches him go; he's holding the stick. The plane shakes more strongly. Jerry looks out the windshield. Then the small plane drops ten feet.

JERRY
Uhh...

The cabin's shuddering roughly. The plane begins to buck like a bull. Jerry holds the controls. Then the PLANE JUST DROPS TWENTY MORE FEET.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Uhh...

Jerry's terrified. The plane rocks. Then it swings in a wide arc left to right. Jerry has taken his phone from his coat pocket. He dials some numbers. He grows more panicked as the plane shakes.

RITA (O.S.)
Hi, this is Rita. I'm unable to
come to the phone. Please leave a
message, and I'll return your call.

Jerry hears the machine BEEP as the cockpit suffers AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF VIOLENT SHUDDERS.

JERRY

Rita. Hi..... Jesus Christ. I love you. Fuck.

Timmy comes back into the cabin.

TIMMY

Hey. Grip up, Jerry. Both hands.

Jerry shuts the phone.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

What? Are you chatting, man? Come on.

Timmy sits into the pilot's chair.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

We just popped a cylinder.

Jerry listens. At that moment the plane levels off.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

The hydraulic rudder. I hand moored it. We're fine now. My dad told me to tighten it...

(a little amused at himself, laughing)
I just didn't do it.

Timmy takes the wheel and looks out at the sky.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

That's eighty bucks. He's going to cream me. Cream.

The plane smooths out. The noise has abated.

INT. AIRPORT BAR - LATER

Later, Jerry sits near the window wall of the second story airport bar. Outside, a small plane takes off. Inside, Jerry's only got golden beer froth left in his empty glass; he looks wiped out.

JERRY (V.O.)

Calling Rita? What was that?

EXT. REST STOP, HIGHWAY - LATER

Jerry has stopped at a wooded, Long Island highway rest stop on his way home. He sits at a picnic table in the grass. He's on his phone.

JERRY (V.O.)

What was that? What am I going to say?

RITA (O.S.)

(through Jerry's phone)

Hi, this is Rita. I'm unable to come to the phone. Please leave a message, and I'll return your call.

The machines beeps.

JERRY

Rita. Hi, this is Jerry. Hey, that message. I co-piloted a commuter plane that I thought had critical mechanical problems. But it was just a hydraulic rudder. I'm sorry about that. Hey, I know you're moving to Richie's, so... I don't know. Happy Moving. Okay. Bye.

Jerry folds his phone. Then he sits there for a while.

JERRY (V.O.)

(regretting his stupid message, scornful of himself)

Happy Moving. Happy Moving to you. I wish you Happy Moving. Hey, I'm moving next Tuesday. Really? Yeah. Great, hey, Happy Moving.

Jerry sits a while longer.

JERRY (V.O.)

She might change her number soon, too. If she's really moving in with Richie. I won't have the new number. I should call again and leave a good message. Before the number gets changed. Just tell her not to move, I love her. That's what that was. Call.

Jerry opens his phone again. He dials the numbers. He waits while it rings twice, then the shrill automated phone-company computer voice answers.

PHONE COMPANY COMPUTER

The number you have reached 762-9845 is no longer in service.

Jerry sits there. Then he folds his phone closed. A moment passes.

JERRY

Crap...

EXT. RICHIE CONGLIO'S PROPERTY, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Jerry has parked outside the private gates to a home even grander than Jack's. It's estate-size. Jerry can't get past the gates. But he's left his car and stands right outside them.

The gates are solid except for some artistic iron work that bears a monogram R C. The middle of the initial is done in stained blue glass. For some reason, Jerry leans down to look through it. What he sees there distresses him.

He sees two-middle-aged couples playing a tennis match on a court adjacent to the house. RITA, 45, plays on the far court matched with RICHIE CONGLIO, 52.

GATES

A reverse, close shot through the stained glass shows Jerry's face all blue and distorted but one can definitely read the sad vibe he's sending out while he watches Rita with Richie.

Blue and weird-looking through the glass, Jerry watches the game for a while.

JERRY (V.O.)

I should go in there. Win her back. It would be pretty hard though. I'd have to get past this thick blue wall. And the personal connections they've probably forged by now. That would take a full effort. No matter how you slice it. And I have so much planning left to do. For the trip.

Jerry keeps looking through the stained blue glass.

JERRY (V.O.)

I've got to really study those brochures and make some hard decisions. Groundwork's over. I've got to plow through twenty-four years of choices.

A wider shot shows that after a moment, Jerry turns away and walks off from the gate. The hot air balloon has made its way over this neighborhood. Jerry's reached his car door, but he stops to take the balloon in for a while.

INT. JERRY'S SUV, MOVING, LONG ISLAND HIGHWAY - LATER

Jerry's driving back, talking on the phone, going past other cars on the interstate.

JERRY

Did your dad cream you?

TIMMY (O.S.)

Yeah, man. I fucking got creamed for that.

JERRY

What's up? Why are you calling?

TIMMY (O.S.)

There's a Skyhawk for sale. I know the plane. Good plane. You're in the market?

JERRY

I am. I was going to wait until I got my hours to zero. You think it'll keep.

TIMMY (O.S.)

It's been up on the corkboard for a while. Check it out. It's says Aloft.

JERRY

What's that?

TIMMY (O.S.)

The flyer says Get Aloft.

Jerry considers this phrase while the phone's at his ear.

EXT. JACK'S HOUSE - DAY (MORNING)

On another day, Theresa has come out front of Jack's to make a call; she's sitting with her back against the wall beside Jack's front door, dialing a number. She seems like something heavy's on her mind; she's out there phoning because JACK'S INSIDE ARGUING WITH HIS WIFE EUNICE periodically yelling the phrase *I'm not yelling*. Then wondering whether the ottoman she bought is *stuffed with rubies*. Or *some shit*.

EXT. JERRY'S BACK YARD - SAME

Jerry has returned to the secluded space of his back yard for morning coffee. He's looking over a travel brochure - a little one-man cottage on the coast of the Scottish Highlands. Brochure text below Jerry's deeply-interested face reads *Can you hear the piper piping? The Scottish Highlands*. He's on his cell with Theresa.

THERESA (O.S.)

What are you doing, Jerry?

JERRY

Nothing much.

THERESA (O.S.)

(a little pissed)

I wanted to talk about something.

Don't you remember?

JERRY

Yeah. I didn't think you meant right then.

THERESA (O.S.)

I did.

Then Jerry makes an expression that conveys he slipped up.

JERRY

Okay. Let's do it. I'll come get you. We'll go someplace.

Jerry has lowered his brochure and goes into the house. The backyard remains empty for a little while.

CUT TO:

A VIDEO IMAGE OF EMPTY GIANTS STADIUM AT MIDDAY (PAST)

The film has changed to video again. The shot is a pan around the huge and empty football stadium.

After more panning, the video camera finds Theresa, age 10 again, dressed in her softball uniform, sitting alone in the otherwise empty bleacher seats; she's reading a Highlights kids magazine. There's no audio. Time passes.

JERRY (V.O.)

After Daisy died, that same summer... I sometimes had to take the kids to work.

The camera captures *Battle Bros Landscaping* trucks at work on the perimeters of the empty football field.

JERRY (V.O.)

Jack would bring the camera if it was Giants stadium or someplace.

The next video image is Jerry, twenty years ago, directing some of the workers where they should go; he's way across the field, sixty yards off.

JERRY (V.O.)

I was trying to keep the business going. I trusted the kids off to themselves a lot. They'd gotten pretty used to it, independent, doing their own thing. While I did mine.

This is video of Jack, age 11, working a walking landscape blower.

Later video shows the crews cleared out. Jerry's looking beat, sitting in the last work truck parked beside the players bench. He's behind the wheel, looking over a travel brochure of a Greek village.

JERRY (V.O.)

But, while I waited for checks, or customers, we'd sometimes miss games. Or camp days. Because something had to give.

Beyond Jerry reading in his truck, Theresa's still sitting reading in the empty stands; she's dressed for a ball game.

JERRY (V.O.)

I was watching some of the tapes the other day. There were a couple of Theresa waiting for games we mostly never made.

A man in a suit has come out to the field. Jerry's been waiting for him and leaves his truck to meet him.

As they settle their business matter, Theresa remains in view in the stadium section, reading.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, LONG ISLAND - LATER (PRESENT)

In the present again, Theresa walks up the middle of a quiet neighborhood street alone. Time passes. Then Jerry pulls up beside her.

JERRY
(through his open driver's
window)
Hi...

THERESA
Hi, Jerry...

JERRY
What are you doing walking?

THERESA
I got tired of waiting. I was going
to wait out on Howe for you. Where
are we going?

JERRY
This place.

THERESA
What place?

JERRY
A place I thought I'd take you. So
we can talk. And see some
ballooning.

CUT TO:

A MEDIUM SHOT OF AROUND-THE-WORLD BALLOONIST SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES, DRESSED IN HIGH-QUALITY BALLOONING GEAR, STARING RIGHT INTO THE CAMERA; HE STANDS IN A FIELD AS A COLORFUL HOT AIR BALLOON UNFURLS IN THE DISTANCE BEHIND HIM.

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES
The first hot air balloon pilots
were actually a rooster, a sheep
and a duck...

FIELD

A wider shot shows that Clarkson-Ickes is speaking with Theresa and Jerry in the large field.

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES

(laughing)

...And we balloonists like to joke
that pilot quality's gone downhill
since.

Some on-lookers and press have gathered for what appears to be a kick-off gathering for the balloon expedition. Theresa and Jerry have come along with the onlookers and have been able to speak with the expedition leader Clarkson-Ickes.

THERESA

That was like an air-readiness test
or something?

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES

The hot air balloon was invented by
French paper-makers Etienne and
Joseph Montgolfier. The farm
animals flew in the prototype and
reached three thousand feet.

THERESA

Where did they come down?

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES

I'm afraid they didn't. Landing
instrumentation, difficult-enough
now, didn't permit a descent. They
floated out of eyeshot.

They stand around a while.

JERRY

(to Clarkson-Ickes)

Is that an expression? Eyeshot? You
hear earshot. But is--

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES

(confidently)

Yes.

THERESA

So you launch in a month?

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES

The fourteenth.

THERESA

When do you come back?

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES

When the mission is complete.

THERESA
The around-the-world mission?

JERRY
(correcting her)
Solo mission.
(to Clarkson-Ickes)
Right?

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES
Yes. But behind every successful
balloon pilot, there stands a good
balloon crew.

A wider shot shows that there is in fact A BALLOON CREW
STANDING JUST BEYOND CLARKSON-ICKES waiting for him to wrap
up his conversation.

BALLOON CREW MEMBER
Sir Harold? We're going to test the
team now.

SIR HAROLD CLARKSON-ICKES
(to Jerry and Theresa)
Excuse me, folks.

EXT. FIELD - LATER

Like some of the other onlookers, Jerry and Theresa relax on
blankets way out in the field; they're watching a set of
three hot-air-balloons prepped for a launch.

THERESA
He needs three balloons?

JERRY
They can each do about 500 flight
hours. Then he trades off.

THERESA
So why does this interest you? Why
did you want to come out here?

JERRY
I'm following the story. I'm
planning something similar soon.

THERESA
Your trip?

JERRY

Yeah. It's year long. By myself.
Flying. So I got interested in this
guy.

THERESA

Year-long?

JERRY

Almost.

Jerry looks over at Theresa.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Did you notice Jack drinking? At
the brunch?

THERESA

Yeah... He's under work pressure,
or financial pressure, though,
isn't he?

JERRY

You mean the house? Work?

THERESA

Why don't you ask him about it?

JERRY

He's barely eight months into
running the business. I don't want
him to feel like I'm cutting him
down. He'll talk to me less than he
already does.

THERESA

Rita called. To say sorry for not
coming to Jack's. For the party.

JERRY

That was good of her.

THERESA

She's a good lady.

JERRY

Definitely. Yes.

THERESA

She said she couldn't be around
you? What happened?

JERRY

We split up. Plus, Richie... he spent a lot of time... wooing her I guess you'd say.

THERESA

Richie Conglio? Your lawyer?

JERRY

Yeah... I'd let it slide. Instead of getting more serious. The last couple years.

THERESA

Okay...

JERRY

They got involved. She's moved in there.

THERESA

I'd like to have seen her.

JERRY

We just... you know. Called it quits. After a long stretch. That's difficult, hon.

They become quiet for a while.

THERESA

So I'm pregnant.

Jerry looks over at Theresa.

THERESA (CONT'D)

I'm sick, too.

JERRY

What are you talking about?

THERESA

I have something, Jerry.

Jerry's become startled.

JERRY

What are you talking about?

THERESA

It's a cancer. It's non-hodgkins lymphoma.

Jerry listens. The balloons are going up before them.

THERESA (CONT'D)

It's cancer in the lymph nodes.
It's treatable. It's very
treatable.

JERRY

Why didn't you tell me this? Right
away? What is this?

THERESA

I wanted to have some information,
I guess. We went to Yale yesterday.
It's really treatable. Okay?

JERRY

What does that mean?

THERESA

Specific radiation. I'll be fine.
I'll be healthy.

JERRY

Okay.

THERESA

With the treatment, though, the
baby's not going to make it.

Jerry nods. He lets the moment carry the weight it deserves.

JERRY

You're going to make it, though.

Theresa nods. The balloons inflate in the distance. Theresa's gone quiet. Time passes. She's looking out at the balloons. Jerry notices she shifted into a bluer frame of mind. He takes her hand.

THERESA

I'm okay.

JERRY

All right.

THERESA

I'm just thinking.

After a while, she faces Jerry.

THERESA (CONT'D)
About the rooster. The sheep. And
that duck.

JERRY
Yeah.

THERESA
It's sad. Floating off.

JERRY
Yeah.

Some time passes. Jerry smiles at his daughter.

JERRY (CONT'D)
At least they had each other.

Jerry's meant this to have amused Theresa somewhat and to help her through however much that can. Theresa recognized that and smiles. They start watching the balloons instead of talking.

THERESA
I miss mom, Jerry.

JERRY
Me, too.

Beyond them the three balloons of different colors get taller and wider as they inflate; they're full enough now that one can read a phrase written on all three even from a distance: *Always Dare.*

INT. FIELD, PARKING AREA - LATER

They've left the balloon space and walk through the field where Jerry's parked; he's been dressed in his red sports jacket.

THERESA
What's with the blazer?

JERRY
I took a part time at Parade
Travel. It's required.

THERESA
Didn't you retire early?

JERRY
Yes.

THERESA
(like it doesn't make
sense)

Then you took a job?

JERRY
It puts me in the mind of travel, I
guess. Which I like. It helps with
the trip plans. But I'm not going
unless you're good. Unless things
are good around here. I'm not going
unless you're good.

Theresa looks over at him.

THERESA
I'm good...

She smiles at Jerry. They've reached his car.

EXT. TWO LANE STREET, LONG ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Beside a shaded street, in a quiet, removed part of the Long
Island neighborhood, Jerry has pulled his company SUV over in
an oak tree's shade.

A closer shot of the driver's door shows a logo and emblem
there that reads *Battle Brother's Landscaping*, but an
addition has been freshly affixed in new, bright paint: &
Custom Interiors Limited.

JERRY (V.O.)
"Brindisi Italy boasts a fishing
village and eleven kilometers of
unpopulated beaches.

INT. JERRY'S SUV - SAME

Parked here, Jerry's reading a brochure.

CLOSE ON THE BROCHURE PAGE: it's an image of Italian coast, a
beach below cliffs at sunset.

Jerry looks down at the picture with affection and longing.

INT. PARADE TRAVEL, TRAVEL AGENCY, LONG ISLAND - DAY

Later, Jerry sits at work among other travel agents; he's got
the travel brochure out. He's on the phone.

JERRY
A single room. April Fifth.

CONCIERGE (O.S.)
(an Italian accent)
Single room. April Fifth.

JERRY
I'll probably need a ride from the
airfield. I'm flying myself in from
Cyprus.

Throughout the scene, Jerry's coworker KELLY, 44, has been sitting at an adjacent desk LOOKING SO ABJECT IN SUCH A STRIKING WAY IT'S CLEAR IT'S IMPORTANT TO THE STORY; Jerry doesn't notice.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE, LONG ISLAND TOWN - LATER

Jerry takes lunch in a quaint, town-square park across the street from the travel agency. After part of his sandwich falls on his lap, he addresses a SHORT MAN LUNCHING ROMANTICALLY WITH KELLY at the bench opposite him; the man's dressed in a Midas Muffler shirt.

JERRY
Can I get a napkin? Friend?

A small collection of napkins rests beside the man's bagged lunch; he considers the question for a really long time.

SHORT MAN
I'm going to hold onto these.

It's a strange atmosphere; The man and Kelly just seem pissed Jerry's sitting in the square.

JERRY
(like he thinks that's
uncool)
Okay...

SHORT MAN
Okay, Hot shit?

JERRY
(surprised)
Hot shit.

SHORT MAN
What?

JERRY
Did you call me hot shit."

SHORT MAN
Why? Do you think that?

JERRY
Think what?

SHORT MAN
Think you're hot *shit*.

JERRY
No...

SHORT MAN
Good.

The short man and Kelly have since stood to part company after lunch. They kiss goodbye. He goes off to Midas. Kelly heads the other way to Parade Travel. But Jerry stops Kelly before she's left the square.

JERRY
What's his-? What? Because we had a fling? That was before you met him. Right? You started dating him like a month ago.

KELLY
I don't know, Jerry. Don't worry about it.

Kelly waves then heads back to Parade. Before she goes, though, Kelly glances back LIKE SHE'S GOT DEEP FEELINGS FOR JERRY. Jerry's no longer looking at her, though; she's left him alone in the square. One of the hot air balloons has floated into the horizon. Jerry's watching it.

JERRY (V.O.)
Little dildo. Twenty more flight hours, man, then I'm going to cruise over dildos. Way over.

CLOSE ON JERRY AS HE WATCHES THE BALLOON.

JERRY (V.O.)
Can I really leave for a year, though? Theresa says she's good. But Jesus. She's marrying a poet. Jack... what's he doing sloshing that ice around? Pop. Maybe I haven't given that enough consideration. Can I really leave? I better check in. In detail.
(MORE)

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
Make sure everyone has their ducks
in a row before I buy my plane.
Before I take off. Make sure the
ducks are in a row.

EXT. POND, BACK YARD, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry stands on the small, Asian-influenced foot-bridge over
the landscape pond on Jack's property.

JERRY (V.O.)
Jack's probably doing all right. He
actually has ducks. In a row.

He looks down on the row of fake ducks in the pond water.
Then Jerry looks across the yard.

JERRY (V.O.)
What's Paul doing over there?

Theresa's fiance Paul Chen sits Indian-style way out there on
Jack's three-acre-wide lawn. He's got a pad of paper.

Meanwhile, near the bridge, Jerry's son Jack has been
approaching Jerry CARRYING A HIGHBALL AND SWIRLING THE ICE
AROUND.

JACK
(to Jerry)
Hey... Eunice said you were out
here.

JERRY
Yeah...

JACK
You like the bridge?

JERRY
Are we selling these? Now?

JACK
We ordered sixty. From Singapore.
It's the real thing.

Meanwhile, Paul's still sitting out there on the lawn.

JERRY
What's Paul doing?

JACK
He said he wanted to try and work
some.

JERRY
(like it's kind of
interesting)
He's out there writing a poem?

JACK
Maybe a couple of poems. Maybe he's
having a good day. I don't know.

JERRY
I was going to drop in this week.
To the office.

JACK
Well, you don't need to. Things are
great.

JERRY
Okay. I still might. Just to say
some hellos.

Jerry looks back over at Paul writing poems.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(a little more quietly)
What do you think of Paul?

JACK
What do you mean?

JERRY
Do you think he has his ducks in a
row?

JACK
What does that mean?

JERRY
That he has his act together enough
to... you know... take the world
on. To take the knocks. The crisp
shots.

JACK
Crisp shots?

JERRY
The surprise shots.

JACK
You mean fast?

JERRY

Like... quickly delivered. Fast.
Yeah. Can he take those? I'm
wondering.

JACK

Theresa's pretty good at taking
care of herself. So don't worry.

Jerry nods to mean he agrees with Jack there. He looks back
at Paul nonetheless. Then he faces Jack who's heading off.

JERRY

I'm going to go see Pop. Want to
come?

JACK

I have to do some stuff at the
office.

Jack looks at Jerry. Then he sloshes his ice around. Jerry
looks back.

JERRY

Want some help?

JACK

Under control.

He sloshes his ice again. Then he takes a drink. Jerry stares
at him.

JERRY

Are you toasted?

JACK

Toasted?

JERRY

Are you toasted? Are you drunk?
Your skin's turning red.

JACK

I think toasted means high. I'm not
toasted. Got to go...

Jack whips his ice around a last time.

JACK (CONT'D)

Go to go pay for all this shit.

Then Jack goes. Jerry watches him for a while; he's
concerned.

JERRY (V.O.)
 (meaning why's Jack
 drinking)
 What is it? Work? Mistress? I need
 to look into this.

JACK
 (calling back)
 Tell Pop hi.

JERRY
 Yeah...

INT. LOBBY, IVY ACRES LIFE CARE CENTER REST HOME - DAY

Jerry's in a floral-patterned chair in a high-end rest home lobby. Elderly, fraternal, male twins walk by. Jerry looks at the first.

JERRY
 Daniel.

Then the second goes by.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Dennis.

Jerry stays in the flowery chair. He's been leafing through a lymphoma handbook. Jerry's father Pop has walked up to him.

JERRY
 Hey, Pop.

EXT. POOL, IVY ACRES LIFE CARE CENTER REST HOME - DAY

Jerry and Pop sit in adjacent pool chairs out by the pool. There's no one out there but them.

JERRY
 Theresa'll be okay. She's going to
 do the radiation. After, she'll
 fall back in to the general
 population's risk pool.

Pop's got the lymphoma book.

POP
 That's great.

JERRY
 Treatment lasts a month. She'll be
 all better summer. In good spirits
 again.

(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
I'm going to have her and Paul out
on one of the legs of my trip then.
Surprise them. Maybe France. They
can come stay a couple weeks.

Pop's looking across the pool.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I'm going by the office today. I'm
going to check in on some things.
Make sure Jack has his ducks in a
row over there. Workwise. I'd like
to be sure.

POP
That's my girl. Right there.

Pop has pointed out an elderly lady across the pool; She's
gardening.

Jerry looks over at her. Then he looks at his dad.

JERRY
You're doing okay here, right, Dad?

Pop makes a non-committal expression.

POP
You've been flying?

JERRY
Yeah...

POP
Well, if you're going down, see if
you can make it over here. I'm up
in the northwest corner. Looking
over the parking lot. This is where
they make the world's boredom,
Jerome. This is where they purify
it.

Then both men look straight ahead.

JERRY (V.O.)
That's not good.

No one says anything else.

JERRY (V.O.)
He's only been here four weeks,
though. There's going to be an
adjustment period.

JERRY

Are there some nice things about the place? Do you see adjusting?

POP

Sure. Bea's nice. Some others. I'm just bitching.

JERRY (V.O.)

He's going to be fine. He's okay. There's going to be an adjustment period. We have to allow for that. It's going to be fine.

Jerry rises to leave.

JERRY

Well, I'll see you, Pop.

POP

See you, Jerry.

CUT TO:

A FULL SCREEN IMAGE OF A BUNCH OF LANDSCAPE WORKERS AND THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERIORS IN A SORT OF TEAM PHOTO ARRANGEMENT, LEAPING IN UNISON AND IN SLOW MOTION.

INT. BATTLE BROTHERS LANDSCAPING OFFICES - LATER

Jerry stands in front of a reception room computer staring at a screen saver of the leaping landscape workers; they keep leaping as the saver refreshes. Jerry's staring at it like it's new to him. Beyond Jerry, a large wall emblem reads *Battle Brother's Landscaping & Custom Interiors Ltd. Established 1942.* A receptionist, MAYA, 20, enters the room.

JERRY

Hi. I'm Jerry Battle. Jack's father. I used to work here.

MAYA

Hi. I'm Maya.

JERRY

(pointing at the computer)
What's this?

MAYA

For our clients. To make use of. Jack prefers it to old magazines.

Jerry moves the mouse; the screen saver disappears but in its place the image of a soft, pasty couple fucking shows up.

JERRY

Oh, God. I'm sorry.

MAYA

That's okay. The crews mess around on it.

JERRY

But that's not appropriate. You sit right there.

MAYA

I'm a big girl. And most of the guys know that just because I tolerate that stuff doesn't mean I'm available to them.

JERRY

Most? Who doesn't? I'll talk to him.

MAYA

Someone in the office. I don't know. They're just leaving notes. Sex notes.

JERRY

Sex notes? Who's in the office these days?

MAYA

Sal. Jack.

Jerry looks across the reception lobby straight into a modern office with see-through glass wall dividers. His son Jack works there. Jerry looks to his left.

The camera pans to the office left of Jack's which is also glass dividers, but in this one, only 80-year-old SAL sits working, dressed in an actual, old-time accountant's cap.

JERRY

What kind of notes?

MAYA

I have...

(reaching for her desk)
...here's this morning's.

She hands a slip of paper to Jerry. Jerry stares at it.

JERRY (V.O.)
*I'm the one for hard fucking (or
 romantic-style). Plus drinks.*

A FULL SCREEN CLOSE UP of the scribbled words *Plus drinks*.

Jerry stares at it.

JERRY (V.O.)
 This is like... like a horny retard
 wrote this? Could my son have
 written this?

EXT. GAZEBO, REAR PROPERTY, BATTLE BROS LANDSCAPING - LATER

Jack and Jerry have come out back to a new gazebo/fountain
 area - in all, the back of Battle Brother's has been made to
 feel like a retreat.

JERRY
 This is a nice new area.

JACK
 Yeah.

JERRY
 What's the purpose?

JACK
 Eunice designed it. The plan was
 for clients to relax in a premium
 landscaping setting, then commit to
 proposals.

JERRY
 Three gazebos?

A wider shot shows that there's indeed a gazebo building at
 each point of a large triangle their gazebo is the northern
 end of. There's no one else out there.

JACK
 We're planning an on-site staff of
 three salespeople. She didn't want
 people waiting for a gazebo.

At this point, Jerry hands the paper slip to Jack. Jack looks
 at it for a while.

JACK
*I'm the one for hard fucking, or
 romantic-style.*

Jerry looks at Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)
Plus drinks.

JERRY
Did you write that? Is that your scribble.

JACK
(slightly defensive)
My scribble?

JERRY
Did you write that? What's going on?

JACK
Sal writes these.

After a moment, Jerry turns and looks back at the offices. There's a view into Sal's office where he sits in his accountant cap going over accounts.

JERRY
How do you know?

JACK
I caught him a couple times. I asked him to stop.

JERRY
How old is Sal?

JACK
Eighty four.

JERRY
That's... good. That's promising for all of us. For all of us who are getting older.

JACK
Promising how?

JERRY
(nodding at the note)
That's quite a pledge.

JACK
Plus drinks.

JERRY

Yeah...

There share a laugh. Jerry takes the occasion to press Jack on an issue.

JERRY (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you lately?

JACK

(meaning what do you mean)

What?

JERRY

You seem blue maybe. You're pounding them back.

JACK

I'm thirty-one. Come on. I'm grownup.

JERRY

Work's all right?

JACK

Yeah. The crews are out. We're busy enough. We had to spend, but we're positioning for growth. We expected red this quarter. We planned for it. We're going black in August. Then we're going to thrive. It's part of the plan.

JERRY

How's home?

JACK

The house is great.

JERRY

The people inside it, I mean. Eunice. The kids.

JACK

Everybody's okay. Things are okay.

Jack has said this not confidently, but not like he's falling apart either. Jack stands.

JACK (CONT'D)

I have an estimate. In Prince Port. So... so long.

JERRY

Okay...

Jack walks by Jerry and hands him the porno note. Then Jerry takes a long look at new furnishings of his son's company.

JERRY (V.O.)

Well, Jack has a plan. He overspends on gazebos but he's not a retarded adulterer with a crumbling home life. He's ship shape. Theresa's going to be okay. That's so goddamn awful. I think I made her feel better, though. That went about as well as it could have. Anyway... this was a pretty full few days of fathering. All the way around. I totally asked around. Things are satisfactory.

Jerry sits in the gazebo in the premium landscaping atmosphere.

JERRY (V.O.)

I guess it's just time to check those hours off and buy my plane. Because I deserve it.

EXT. TARMAC, LONG ISLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Out on the tarmac of the commuter airport, Jerry and his instructor Timmy sit in facing folding chairs. There's a Cessna plane beyond them the side of which reads *Flaherty Top Gun Flight School*; Timmy's marking a clipboard page.

TIMMY

How long were we up there?

JERRY

Two hours and forty-five minutes.

TIMMY

(looking at the clipboard)
Should I fudge this up fifteen minutes? Because that's all your short now.

JERRY

If you're comfortable with that.

TIMMY

I'm comfortable.

Timmy makes another notation.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

(smiling)

There. I'll put in for your
license.

Jerry looks back at Timmy; he's pretty pleased.

INT. GRILL RESTAURANT, LONG ISLAND AIRPORT - LATER

Inside the commuter airport's grill, Jerry's there looking up at a corkboard and a posted note that reads SKYHAWK FOR SALE. GET ALOFT. WHENEVER YOU WANT.

Jerry considers the sign.

CLOSE ON the word Aloft.

CLOSE ON Jerry staring at it.

Then Jerry pulls a phone number tab Hal from the bottom of the note. Then he looks around at the grill full of pilots and trainees. Then Jerry pulls the rest of the Hal tabs off so no one can beat him to it.

CUT TO:

THE FACE OF A PARALYZED, MIDDLE-AGED, BLACK MAN WITH SPITTLE ON HIS CHIN.

INT. LIVING ROOM, HAL'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry's having a conversation with this man in his living room. The gentleman sits in a wheel-chair, and though he can speak, he seems unable to detect his chin's wet. It has Jerry's attention, though.

HAL

Why buy now?

Jerry glances at the untidy area of Hal's mouth.

JERRY

I'm going to fly around. For a
year. Starting summer.

HAL

I can understand that

JERRY (V.O.)

Should I wipe that off? Man. What
should I do?

HAL

I can understand that.

JERRY

Your flyer got my attention. Get Aloft. I'm looking forward to that.

HAL

I follow you.

JERRY (V.O.)

I'm not going to wipe it off.
Because *that's* more respectful.

HAL

I bought the plane ten years ago.
Just after my son Donnie was
killed.

Jerry looks at Hal; his attention's returned.

JERRY

I'm sorry.

HAL

Drunk driver. Donnie was going to
start medical school at BU. Their
six-year program. Do you know that
program?

JERRY

I used to be in landscaping. One of
my customer's sons is in it. He got
a perfect score on his SATs.

HAL

Donnie did, too.

JERRY

No kidding?

HAL

Some people don't believe me when I
tell them, but you don't lie about
something like that. You can't
pretend yourself into perfection.

JERRY

I guess not.

HAL

No way.

JERRY
My wife died, Hal.

Jerry looks off for a while.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I know it's horrible to lose
someone young. Every breath stinks.
For so long. You want to do a
Robinson Crusoe. Just fucking go
away with a knife, tobacco and a
pipe or something. Don't you?

When he looks back at Hal, Jerry finds that Hal's fallen
asleep.

A wider shot shows the two men alone in the den, facing each
other, one of whom is sleeping. After some weird moments of
wondering what to do, Jerry stands up and heads for the den
door.

INT. KITCHEN, HAL'S HOUSE - LATER

Later, in Hal's kitchen, Jerry wraps things up with the
modestly-attractive white wife of Hal's.

JERRY
I should give it some
consideration, I guess.

HAL'S WIFE
Do you have the number?

JERRY
Yeah. I have... from the flyer.

Jerry's trying to take a Hal tab from his coat pocket, but
when he does so, a lot of Hal tabs fall to the floor. Hal's
wife stares at the seven or so tabs; this causes an awkward
silence.

HAL'S WIFE
Did you take all the tabs?

Jerry just stands there. A long period of time goes by.

JERRY
You know what? I'll take it.

INT. HAL'S KITCHEN - LATER

The two sit together at the kitchen table. Jerry's writing a
check.

JERRY
I'm just four streets over. On
Devine.

HAL'S WIFE
Did your taxes go up this year?

JERRY
Yeah.

HAL'S WIFE
Us, too.

Jerry keeps filling the check out.

HAL'S WIFE (CONT'D)
You're not going to bargain a
little?

JERRY
I don't know. Should I?

HAL'S WIFE
It just seems too easy. A hundred
and sixty thousand dollars? We've
been trying to sell it for half a
year.

JERRY
I think it's worth what I'm paying.

HAL'S WIFE
I guess most pilots came by, saw
Hal and figured the plane was bad
luck. He had the stroke flying.

JERRY
Is it?

HAL'S WIFE
No.

JERRY
Okay.

Jerry rips the check out.

HAL'S WIFE
You have a family?

JERRY
Son and daughter.

HAL'S WIFE
Everybody good?

JERRY
Good to getting by. No one's going
under, I guess. No emergencies.

HAL'S WIFE
Good.

He hands the check over. Time goes by.

JERRY
Shari, I wish Hal could still get
up there, above it all.

HAL'S WIFE
No argument.

EXT. DOORWAY, HAL'S HOUSE, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Hal's wife has walked Jerry out.

JERRY
Thank you.

HAL'S WIFE
Thank you, Jerry.

Then, for whatever reason, Hal's wife hugs Jerry and holds
him in an embrace. Then she draws back a little. Then she
kisses him on the mouth. Then Hal's wife straightens back.

HAL'S WIFE
I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

JERRY
Okay. No harm done.

Jerry steps back and smiles.

JERRY (CONT'D)
See.

They look at one another for a while. Then Hal's wife turns
back for her house, and Jerry heads over to his car.

EXT. LONG ISLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Out on the tarmac, Jerry has a paint scraper and has been
scraping the stripes off the Skyhawk he bought. He scrapes
for a while, removing the racing stripe. Then as a matter of
course, he comes to the plane's name - *Donnie*.

Jerry stops the scraper just before it reaches the "D." Jerry looks at the cursive name. He stands there for a while. Then Jerry passes over the name and begins to scrape at the stripe beside it. Then he takes up a small tin of paint he's kept with him.

Jerry's instructor Timmy stands near the hangars, looking over at Jerry.

Beside the plane, Jerry finishes the paint work. He's written the word *Daisy* beside *Donnie*. Jerry stands back and looks at it. Then he faces Timmy.

JERRY

Do you want to take her up with me?

TIMMY

(pointing at Jerry)

It's all you.

Timmy's coming over with some paper work.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

What's she named?

JERRY

The Donnie Daisy, I guess.

TIMMY

After?

JERRY

After my wife. Who died. And another guy's son, who did, too.

Timmy looks at Jerry for a while. Then he tries to shift the heavy vibe by proudly thrusting a pilot's license at Jerry.

TIMMY

(smiling)

Get up there, buddy.

JERRY

(taking it, pleased)

Okay.

TIMMY

You're a pilot, motherfucker.

JERRY

I am. I'm a pilot. Right, motherfucker?

TIMMY
That's right.

Then Jerry salutes Timmy. Timmy doesn't return it.

TIMMY (CONT'D)
We don't do that.

INT. COCKPIT, DONNIE DAISY - LATER

Jerry's at the controls alone; he's going over a checklist.

JERRY
(to himself)
Trims. Check. Altimeter. Check.
Flaps. Check. Some Bob.

Jerry looks at the copilot seat where a tape of *Blonde on Blonde* Bob Dylan rests next to a portable tape player.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Check.

INT. COCKPIT, DONNIE DAISY - LATER

Later, Jerry's cruising through a cloud. He looks contented. He looks down.

He's flying over the coast and ocean.

Jerry puts the Bob Dylan into his portable tape player. He presses play. The music starts. Then Jerry just sits back and cruises.

AFTER A WHILE, WE BEGIN TO HEAR A POLICE SIREN.

EXT. STREET, LONG ISLAND - SAME

The KID IN A SUIT who's not in a suit now drives the kid-size police cruiser down an actual street in Long Island for some reason. His siren's on.

EXT. SECOND STREET, LONG ISLAND - LATER

The small LAPD cruiser rounds a corner and continues at top speed which isn't that fast compared to the regular-size cars that pass it on the street. The siren continues.

INT. JERRY'S SUV, MOVING, DRIVEWAY, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry has pulled up into his driveway. He looks through his windshield at something that's caught his eye.

Jerry sees the small LAPD car parked near his front walk.

EXT. JERRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Kid in a Suit sits on the handmade bench out front of Jerry's front door. Jerry walks up there and sees him.

JERRY

Hi...

The kid doesn't respond.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Did you drive over here?

KID IN A SUIT

Yeah.

JERRY

Is everything okay, Corman?

KID IN A SUIT

My dad's moving to another house.

Jerry lets that sink in. Some time passes.

KID IN A SUIT (CONT'D)

Grandpa.

He's pointed somewhere behind Jerry. Jerry turns.

What he's pointed out is a hot air balloon, floating east a mile away.

JERRY

Yeah.

They watch for a while.

JERRY (CONT'D)

That guy's going around the world.

KID IN A SUIT

In the balloon?

JERRY

Yeah. He's doing test runs for a couple weeks.

Jerry sits down beside the kid.

KID IN A SUIT

How does a balloon work?

JERRY

It goes with the wind.

KID IN A SUIT

What if he wants to go the other way?

JERRY

Then he floats up or down to find another draft. We should go home. Okay? I'll talk to your dad.

The kid Corman looks at Jerry then nods. Then they start walking to the cop car.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You think I could get that in my car?

Jerry's reaches the go-cart. He tries to lift a corner to gauge its weight.

JERRY (CONT'D)

No...

KID IN A SUIT

(still concerned)

You're going to talk to my dad?

JERRY

Yeah...

So Corman turns the siren on. Jerry turns it off.

JERRY (CONT'D)

We don't need the siren. It's going to be okay.

Jerry touches the kid's head. Then Corman steps into the go-cart.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Jerry jogs alongside as Corman drives down the sidewalk in the police car.

EXT. JACK'S DRIVEWAY - LATER

Jack's out in his driveway, moving out, loading duffle bags in the back of his car.

JERRY (O.S.)

What's going on here?

Jerry and Corman have arrived; Corman's in the car. Jack looks at them.

JERRY
What's going on, Jack?

JACK
Just... stuff, Dad.
(to Corman)
What are you doing, Corman?

JERRY
He came to my house.

JACK
In that?
(to Corman)
You said you'd stay on the tennis court. What are you doing?

JERRY
He was upset.

JACK (CONT'D)
Corman, would you please take that around back? Come on.

At this point, Jerry's noticed Paul and Theresa entering a car beside Jack's in the driveway. Theresa's in the passenger side. Paul's getting in the driver's.

JERRY
(to Paul)
Where are you going?

PAUL
Beach...

JERRY
Aren't we supposed to be taking her for her radiation? In one hour?

PAUL
She doesn't want to go.

Jerry's surprised.

JERRY
She doesn't want to go. It's not a tennis lesson, Chen.

PAUL
Chen?

JERRY
Just skip the beach, buddy.

PAUL
(defensive)
Oh. Buddy. Okay. Buddy Chen.

JERRY
What's your problem?

PAUL
I know how you feel about me,
Jerry.

JERRY NOTICES JACK DRIVING OFF.

JERRY
(to Jack)
Stop.

Jack stops abruptly. Jerry faces Paul.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What are you talking about, Paul?

PAUL
That I don't have my ducks in a
row.

After a moment, Jerry faces Jack.

JACK
(through his open window)
Sorry. I was a little drunk.

PAUL
(to Jerry)
I can't take a shot to the jaw? Or
whatever the fuck.

Jerry's getting pulled in different directions.

JERRY
Paul... look. Let's get this
figured out.

PAUL
I'm trying, Jerry. I'm trying to
appeal to her.

Jack tries to leave again.

JERRY
(to Jack)
Stop your car.

Jack does. Then Jerry steps closer to Paul.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What's going on here?

PAUL
She doesn't know if she wants that
course of treatment. She maybe
wants to wait until after the baby.

JERRY
Can she do that? Can she wait?

PAUL
Her doctor said no.

JERRY
So if her doctor said no. Then no.

PAUL
I'm trying to appeal to her, Jerry.

JERRY
Paul...

In order to take the cruiser around back, Corman's driven it
up the driveway, but he's also turned the siren back on. No
one's talking now. THE SIREN'S GOING. Jerry looks at Theresa.

CLOSE ON Theresa looking back at Jerry from behind the
passenger window; the car's driving off.

CLOSE ON Jerry, watching his daughter go as the siren makes
noise.

Paul's car's out on the street now. Jack's stepping out of
his.

JERRY
(to Jack)
Why did you tell Paul that?

JACK
I was a little drunk.

JERRY
Since when are you a little drunk?

JACK
Come on. I'm a man.

JERRY
What are you doing here?

JACK
We're separating. Maybe.

JERRY
That's no good.

JACK
Well, it's no good. Yeah, it's no good. But we're doing it because it's the best thing.

JERRY
Are you sure it's the best thing?

JACK
What do you mean?

JERRY
I mean are you really sure it's the best thing. Of all things you could do now. Like stay. Like bear down. You're responsible for all this.

Jerry gestures to the great space of Jack's property to mean it and a lot else also.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Everything. The house. The people in your house. You're Asian, son. You can't hold your liquor. It's going to cause problems. It's causing problems. What's going on? What are you doing leaving?

Jack looks back at the house. He stands there for a while.

JACK
I'm not going anywhere. I can handle it. We just had a bad morning. I'm not going anywhere.

Jack walks to the front door where his wife Eunice stands; she's been there for a little while, observing. Jack walks past her into the house.

JACK
(to Eunice)
I'm fucking staying.

What Jack said last makes a complicated impression on Jerry; it's not good news and probably promises further bad times. Jerry knows this; he maintains awkward eye contact with Eunice from the driveway.

JERRY
Joy.

EXT. POND, JACK'S BACK YARD - LATER

Jerry stands on the little, Asian-influenced foot-bridge over the small, man-made landscape pond. He's looking at the pond and gathering his thoughts. Then the real duck rushes him again from out of frame.

JERRY
(lurching back)
Fuck!

Jerry raises his arms to protect his head from the duck.

INT. STUDY, JACK'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry sits alone in the extravagantly-sized study, holding gauze to his ear.

JERRY (V.O.)
What's the matter with everyone
with my last name? It comes to me?
Still? Come on. I've handled all
this for so long, maybe not in an
excellent way, always, but a way
that was...
(thinking about how to
describe his way)
...satisfactory enough they should
be able to shift into taking care
of themselves. At some fucking
point.

The *Hi I'm Satisfactory* sticker remains on the lapel of Jerry's red blazer. In the background out the window, on the tennis court, young Corman is visible, doing laps by himself in the squad car.

INT. EUNICE'S CAR, MOVING - LATER

Silence passes as Eunice drives Jerry home; Jerry sits in the passenger seat, holding gauze to his ear.

JERRY (V.O.)

Do I have to get a tetanus shot now? In my ear? What are you looking at?

Jerry has made eye contact with an elderly woman in the back seat of a passing sedan.

JERRY (V.O.)

She looks like that lady on those shitty apple pies. Granny Smith. There's no actual Granny Smith, though. That's a sales concept. Granny Smith apple pies. That's bullshit. You're bullshit, lady.

They maintain their awkward eye contact until the woman's car has passed too far forward.

EUNICE

Jerry?

JERRY

(tuning back in)

Yes.

EUNICE

I asked you something.

JERRY

I'm sorry.

EUNICE

Is everything okay with Jack at work?

JERRY

There's maybe some growing pains. But work's okay.

EUNICE

He just comes home real late.

JERRY

He's trying to grow the company. I just let it do what it was doing. Even that kept me late.

EUNICE

You think he's working?

JERRY

Yes.

EUNICE
He's just not home a lot. When he
is, he's unhappy.

JERRY
Well, you'll work it out.

EUNICE
Yeah...

Jerry seems content to leave it at that.

EUNICE (CONT'D)
Do you want to maybe get some
coffee and hash it out?

Jerry's been caught off guard by that.

JERRY
Now?

EUNICE
What?

JERRY
Hash it out now?

EUNICE
Yeah.

Jerry looks at Eunice.

JERRY (V.O.)
God no I don't want to get *some*
coffee and hash it out. I have no
idea how to help. And I want to get
away from these people already.

JERRY
I'd like to Eunice. And we should,
but I have a commitment to...
(trying to think of a way
to put it that sounds
good)
...an activity.

EXT. JERRY'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - LATER

Eunice has dropped Jerry off. He walks toward his house. She
calls out to Jerry from her car.

EUNICE
Bye, Jerry.

JERRY

Bye.

EUNICE

Enjoy your activity.

EXT. SKY - DAY

On a clear day, a view out Jerry's plane window shows an aerial view of Long Island and its surroundings eight thousand feet down.

INT. DONNIE DAISY SKYHAWK, FLYING - SAME

Jerry's up in his plane alone. He's flying over Long Island. He's got the tape player playing Bob Dylan. BUT HE DOESN'T LOOK SO FREE AND EASY ANYMORE. A pretty long time passes.

JERRY (V.O.)

That summer... the softball summer..

EXT. SOFTBALL DIAMOND, LONG ISLAND - DAY (PAST)

This is the home video of Theresa at softball fielding grounders with the ball bucket; the video plays in slower motion now, though.

JERRY (V.O.)

The softball didn't go so well. Theresa never really caught on with the other girls, who apparently played together the year before. That summer... that year... I just remember being tired.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY (PAST)

This is home video of swimming pool water absolutely littered with old leaves; it's pretty unclean. Ten-year-old Theresa and Jack, 11 then, swim there. This is the back yard of Jerry's, days when there was a pool there. Soon, the camera that's recording them gets placed down beside the pool, so the angle is real low. A woman's feet walk in front of the lens - the person who was working the camera.

JERRY (V.O.)

That's when Rita arrived...

She's gone to the other side of the pool where we can see her better; it's Rita. She's picked up a skimmer and begun skimming the pool and directing Theresa and Jack away from the most cluttered parts.

JERRY (V.O.)

...with the common sense and decency to see Theresa needed to connect to something and said "You're having your softball team party soon, right? Have the team party here. Have a pool party."

Meanwhile, Jack has gotten out of the pool and lifted the camera up to film, so the angle is a better one of Rita, skimming the pool and talking to Theresa.

RITA (V.O.)

"Show the other girls how fast you swim. You're a great swimmer. You're a good athlete, too. Show them. Show me now. Go."

Rita says something further to Theresa. They're smiling. Theresa starts to swim across the pool. Rita's watching her and cheering her on. Theresa reaches the end of the pool. Then she pulls herself up from the water and smiles broadly at Rita. The camera catches her in this happy expression of pleasure somebody's watching over her.

INT. DONNIE DAISY SKYHAWK, FLYING - SAME (PRESENT)

Jerry's flying over trees way down below in mainland New York state. Bob Dylan's playing in the cabin. Jerry looks pretty distracted and burdened by thoughts of his loved ones.

EXT. REST STOP, HIGHWAY, LONG ISLAND - LATER

For whatever reason, on his way home, Jerry has returned to the highway rest stop where he tried to call Rita. He's sitting at the same picnic bench, on his phone again. He's got a book with him with a jacket picture of Paul on it.

JERRY

Paul's a real good poet.

THERESA (O.S.)

Yeah...

JERRY

I didn't even know it.

THERESA (O.S.)

That's corny.

JERRY

Is your appetite strong?

THERESA (O.S.)
Pretty strong.

JERRY
Daisy's appetite, from day one,
just went through the roof with
you. You guys come stay with me,
okay? You and Paul.

THERESA (O.S.)
That's good. Thanks, Jerry. It's
sort of a bad scene at Jack's.

A few moments pass.

JERRY
It's time for you to take care of
yourself, Theresa. I don't like
this waiting.

Theresa doesn't say anything.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Would you do something with me
Sunday morning?

THERESA (O.S.)
(meaning do what)
What?

JERRY
A balloon thing.

THERESA (O.S.)
Okay.

JERRY
Bright and early. And we'll talk.
It's time to talk, right?

Theresa doesn't answer.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I'll come get you guys after work.
Move you.

THERESA (O.S.)
What work?

JERRY
Travel agency.

THERESA (O.S.)
(like that's insane)
Oh, yeah. That's weird.

JERRY
(deflecting that)
Okay. I'll see you after work.

THERESA (O.S.)
See you, Jerry.

Jerry hangs his phone up. He remains at the picnic bench.
Jerry sits for a while, then he dials some other numbers.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
What city?

JERRY
Muttontown.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
What listing?

JERRY
Richard Conglio.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
(after a moment)
There's no listing.

JERRY
Richie Conglio?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
(another moment)
No.

Jerry sits there for a while.

JERRY
Try Dick.

Jerry waits.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
No Dick.

JERRY
Thank you.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
You're welcome.

Jerry folds his phone closed.

CUT TO:

JERRY'S FACE SEEN THROUGH THE STAINED-BLUE GLASS OF RICHIE CONGLIO'S DRIVEWAY GATE.

EXT. RICHIE CONGLIO'S ESTATE, DRIVEWAY

Jerry has parked outside the gate. He's standing at it, looking in. Then he steps back and considers the buzzer beside the gate. He presses the button. Soon, a Jamaican woman answers.

JAMAICAN VOICE

Hello.

JERRY

Hi. This is Jerry Battle. Jerome Battle. For Rita Reyes. To see Rita.

The lady's gone for a while. Jerry waits by the buzzer.

JAMAICAN VOICE

Ms. Reyes doesn't care to see you.

Jerry remains by gate taking this in.

INT. PARADE TRAVEL, TRAVEL AGENCY, LONG ISLAND - LATER

CLOSE ON A TRAVEL BROCHURE of some sunny isle in the Mediterranean. Jerry's looking at it at his work station; he's on the phone again.

JERRY

(into the phone)

I'm trying to find Rita. I'd like to talk to her; Mrs. Reyes. I just wondered if she's provided you with her new number.

MRS. REYES (O.S.)

I'll call and ask if it's okay, Jerry.

THROUGHOUT THE CALL, JERRY'S CLOSELY-SITUATED DESK-MATE AND COLLEAGUE KELLY stares at Jerry open-mouthed like she's astonished he's saying this in front of her.

EXT. PARKING LOT, PARADE TRAVEL - LATER

Later, in the Parade Travel parking lot, Kelly throws a can of Diet Pepsi through Jerry's passenger side window pane.

INT. JERRY'S SUV, MOVING, LONG ISLAND STREET - LATER

Jerry's driving home. After a pretty long time, he looks to his right and notices for the first time that his passenger window is smashed.

Then Jerry notices a full can of Diet Pepsi resting on the passenger seat.

Jerry looks at the Pepsi for a while.

JERRY (V.O.)
Diet Pepsi?

INT. GUEST ROOM, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER (EVENING)

In a guest room of Jerry's, Theresa's fiance Paul sits quietly on the edge of the made up bed. His and Theresa's luggage rests nearby. Jerry enters the room. They look at one another for a while.

JERRY
Do you want to throw the ball
around?

EXT. BACK YARD, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER (EVENING)

Jerry and Paul have in fact come out to the back yard to throw a football around. Paul throws like a girl; he doesn't catch well, either.

JERRY
What's Theresa thinking?

PAUL
I don't know. She's not talking
much.

JERRY
I'm sorry about the ducks in the...
Talking about you to Jack.

PAUL
That's okay. Things are messed up.

JERRY
I just mean... maybe it's time for
you two to get more down to earth.
(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
You guys both live in pretty
abstract worlds. Writing. Poetry.
This is not an abstraction. This is
real.

PAUL
I know what it is.

JERRY
Maybe it's time for basic taking
care. Of things. Of yourselves.

Paul throws the ball weakly four feet from Jerry. Jerry must
walk to get it.

INT. KITCHEN, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

Jerry's making a sandwich; Paul's been standing behind him in
the kitchen.

PAUL
Jerry.

JERRY
(turning)
Yeah.

PAUL
Can I ask you something?

JERRY
Of course.

PAUL
I just wanted to know...

JERRY
(meaning know what)
What?

PAUL
Do you think I have what it takes
to sell Saturns?

They hold eye contact as Jerry considers the strange
question.

JERRY
Yes. Saturn is geared toward a more
laid-back sales approach. So I
think you might even be great at
selling Saturns.

Paul nods, then he heads out of the kitchen. Jerry watches him go.

INT. GUEST ROOM, JERRY'S HOUSE - BEFORE SUNRISE

It's still dark. Theresa and Paul sleep in the guest room. Jerry has come in and over to Theresa's side of the bed to wake her; he's sitting beside her.

JERRY
(whispering)
Hey...

EXT. BALLOON FIELD, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Before sunrise, Jerry and Theresa have come out to the vast field the balloon preparations take place in. In the distance, the crews are visible tending to six inflated hot air balloons. Theresa and Jerry look on from their spot on a blanket.

THERESA
There're more now.

JERRY
They're guide balloons. He's getting ready to take off this week.

THERESA
What's this morning?

JERRY
Balloon Glow it's called. Before sunrise, while it's still dark, they power up their burners without lifting off. It lights up the balloons, all their colors, like a Chinese lantern.

The balloon crews prepare for this activity farther off in the field. Jerry and Theresa remain off by themselves in the western part of it. Jerry looks at Theresa because he's about to raise his issue.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What are you doing, honey?

THERESA
I'm just getting different opinions.

JERRY

Everything I've read favors the health of the mother. You can get healthy. If you wait, you can die. Maybe you're trying to find someone who'll tell you what you're doing's okay. And you haven't yet. Maybe that's what you're doing.

THERESA

I'm getting different opinions.

JERRY

You want mine?

Theresa shrugs. That simple gesture has moved Jerry in a bad way.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Did you just shrug?

Theresa looks at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's times like this I wish you'd be more Asian. A father's advice is valued there. Not shrugged off. I made a mistake when I let you call me Jerry way back. I'm not Jerry. I'm your dad.

THERESA

When did I start doing that?

JERRY

After your mom died. I wanted to be easy on you. Because that was such shit. But I shouldn't have been. I think everything's been so loose with you, and so uncommon. You don't have a dad. You have a Jerry. And you're, forgive me, lacking some common sense right now.

Theresa listens.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You've been in school forever. The Ph.D. Teaching. I'm not sure how real anything is for you. You should know, Paul is maybe thinking about changing his line of work.

THERESA
(surprised)
Why..?

JERRY
I think Paul's trying to provide
you something more common. Maybe he
hopes common sense'll follow. So
you can use it to take care of
yourself. He wants you to be
sensible about this, see what
you're really facing and get
better. He might be trying to
help you imagine a stable future,
too. With you in it. With children
in it. Down the road. That's what
you're going to consider, honey.
Down the road. Right?

Theresa looks over at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Amen?

THERESA
(not following that)
What?

JERRY
Amen?

THERESA
What do you mean?

JERRY
That means do you agree with me.
That you'll think about that.

THERESA
Okay.

JERRY
Do you agree with me, Theresa?

THERESA
Yeah...

JERRY
Then say amen.

A moment goes by.

THERESA
 (amused by him, smiling)
 Amen.

Theresa sits quietly. The Balloon Glow event has begun. The burner's fire off.

THERESA (CONT'D)
 But what if I can do it?

JERRY
 What if you can have the baby and be okay?

THERESA
 Yeah. What if? That would be great. Imagine how much she'd love me?

JERRY
 Don't try to do something great. Do what the rest of us would and get better. We'll love you.

Jerry notices something.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Look.

It's still dark, but the colorful balloons have been illuminated and glow like Jerry said they would, like large Chinese lanterns. Theresa's watching them. Jerry is, too, then he looks back at Theresa soon. Jerry considers her for a while; the feeling he gives off is no longer hopefulness, though, but apprehension.

EXT. SATURN DEALERSHIP, LONG ISLAND - LATER (DAY)

A CUSTOMER stands midway up a long row of new Saturns for sale in the large lot of the car dealership. He's looking a red two-door over. PAUL, IN A SATURN GOLF SHIRT, HAS BEEN APPROACHING HIM from up the aisle. He reaches the guy; a conversation follows the BASIC VIBE OF WHICH, DUE TO PAUL, IS AN UNUSUALLY LAID BACK DEALER/BUYER CONVERSATION.

PAUL
 Hi.

CUSTOMER
 Hi.

Paul offers his hand.

PAUL

Paul Chen

CUSTOMER

Kev Petri.

An awkward period of time passes because Paul just doesn't continue with anything.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

I'm looking for a car. Maybe.

PAUL

That's cool.

CUSTOMER

I mean I'm not going to make a decision today.

PAUL

That's cool.

CUSTOMER

I didn't even bring my check book.

PAUL

Okay. Then I'm just going to...

Paul points back toward the office.

PAUL (CONT'D)

...I'll just stand in this area so if you have a question I can answer it.

CUSTOMER

Okay. Thanks.

PAUL

Cool...

Paul walks back five yards. He stops and stands there. The customer begins to look the car over. He walks around it completely once while Paul keeps to himself. Then, when the customer begins to examine the window sticker extras, PAUL REMAINS VISIBLE BEYOND HIM, QUIETLY BEGINNING TO CRY.

INT. SATURN, MOVING, LONG ISLAND - LATER

During the test drive, Paul rides in the passenger seat, welling up with tears.

CUSTOMER
(hasn't noticed Paul
crying really yet)
The steering seems a little slack.

PAUL
Yeah...

CUSTOMER
And your miles per gallon? On the
sticker? 49? That's bullshit.

PAUL
Probably...

CUSTOMER
This isn't the car for me.

PAUL
... no doubt.

PAUL BEGINS TO CRY AUDIBLY NOW. The customer looks over.

CUSTOMER
Are you okay?

PAUL
Yeah...

CUSTOMER
We'll look at other ones, Paul.
Come on.

The guy drives a while longer.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)
(making small talk to get
through the moment)
Is there a passenger side air bag?

PAUL
Somebody told me. But I don't
remember. Maybe.

The customer looks over at Paul. Then he looks back at the
road.

EXT. SATUN CAR LOT - LATER

Paul and the customer look at another car.

CUSTOMER
I'm going to take this.

THEN HE CHUCKS PAUL ON THE SHOULDER TO CHEER HIM UP.

EXT. GAS STATION, LONG ISLAND - SAME

Jerry pumps his gas. He's looks across the service island; HE SEES SOMETHING THAT CATCHES HIS ATTENTION.

Across the service island, JIMBO, THE SHORT MIDAS GUY WHO REFUSED JERRY A NAPKIN, fills his car up. Jimbo's staring at Jerry.

Jerry just looks over at him calmly. What follows is a series of cuts between Jerry and Jimbo as they face one another across the service station, BUT EACH TIME JIMBO'S ONSCREEN, HE OFFERS JERRY A DIFFERENT OBSCENE GESTURE. First, Jimbo presents his middle finger to Jerry.

Jerry stares back at him flatly.

Next, Jimbo offers the Italian "fuck you" arm slap.

Jerry looks on.

Next, Jimbo flicks his fingers under his chin "fongu."

Jerry looks on.

JERRY (V.O.)

He's going to run out of stuff pretty soon.

Next, Jimbo awkwardly stands there trying to come up with something else, then he gives Jerry a "thumbs down."

JERRY (V.O.)

Oh, thumbs down. I'm thumbs down.

JIMBO

Put that in your pipe.

JERRY

Why?

JIMBO

Don't worry about it.

Jimbo replaces his gas cap.

JIMBO (CONT'D)

I'm a brown belt. I'm a strong person. I can lift a lot of weight for my size, and I can really stick it to you.

(MORE)

JIMBO (CONT'D)

I'm going to frigging *stick* it to you, Jerry. If you don't stop treating people like shit.

JERRY'S MYSTIFIED.

JERRY

I don't know what you're talking about.

JIMBO

Krav Maga. Israeli martial arts. And you're really making me mad. So Just keep doing what you're doing, fucker face.

JERRY

Fucker face?

JIMBO

(correcting himself)

Fuck face. I'm agitated. Because you're doing what you're doing.

JERRY

I don't know what I'm doing.

Then Jimbo "burns rubber" as he leaves but must come to an abrupt stop because there's too much traffic to turn onto the road. Jerry's still ten feet from him.

JERRY

Nice peel out.

JIMBO

Douche.

JERRY

Okay...

Then Jimbo drives off. Jerry stands beside the gas pump watching him go. Theresa's in the passenger seat; she's been looking on the whole time.

THERESA

That was freaky.

JERRY

He's dating someone I work with. I don't know.

THERESA

You must have hurt her feelings. Or something. Did her wrong.

Jerry has gotten into the car beside Theresa.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Do you know how you hurt her
feelings?

JERRY

I honestly have no idea. We had a
fling.

Jerry starts the car. Theresa sits there for a while.

THERESA

(like there is no such
thing)

A what?

AT THIS MOMENT, JERRY APPEARS TO BEGIN TO COMPREHEND
SOMETHING: despite his wishes, "flings" are rare occurrences.
Jerry maintains this more thoughtful expression as he pulls
the car away.

CUT TO:

A TIGHT SHOT OF THE FAMILIAR HOSPITAL SIGN THAT READS
"EMERGENCY."

EXT. LONG ISLAND HOSPITAL - SAME

A Honda Accord, going 10 mph, coasts into this sign off the
hospital access road, smashing it down; the Accord, driven by
Jerry's travel co-worker Kelly, continues going 10 until it
hits a Madigan Bread truck servicing the cafeteria.

INT. DINING ROOM, JERRY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jerry, Theresa and Paul sit at dinner. A few quiet moments
pass.

PAUL

I sold a car today.

No one responds immediately.

THERESA

You don't own a car.

PAUL

A Saturn. Quad Coupe. The Ion Quad
Coupe. For Saturn.

Theresa and Jerry are both looking at Paul now.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It was pretty loaded. Leather interior. Passenger side air bag. We did all right on that one.

THERESA

We?

PAUL

Me. And Saturn. I'm on the team.

THERESA

What team?

PAUL

Team Saturn.

Paul and the others just sit there amid the odd new set of facts.

EXT. BACK PORCH, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER (EVENING)

Theresa's sitting on the lighted back porch, looking over some travel brochures Jerry's left out there. Jerry comes out to see her. Theresa looks over at him while she holds the brochures.

THERESA

(meaning the brochures)

What do you do? You still sit out here and think about what it would be like to be somewhere else?

JERRY

Yeah...

THERESA

Doesn't that cause trouble? Wanting to be somewhere else?

Jerry thinks about what Theresa's saying.

JERRY

I'm just planning a trip.

Jerry walks closer to where she's sitting.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I cleared the decks for tomorrow. In case you wanted to start your radiation. I cleared the decks.

THERESA

Paul's taking me into the city tomorrow. There's a couple book stores I want to go to. I want to read up on some things.

Jerry looks at his daughter.

JERRY

You've just... you've put yourself in jeopardy.

THERESA

Big deal.

JERRY

What are you talking about?

THERESA

What's the big deal about me? That's what I'm sitting here thinking. I'm no big deal. So what?

Jerry thinks about that; it worries him.

JERRY

Well, come inside and start thinking something else. Because you are.

THERESA

Jerry...

(meaning leave me alone)

Okay?

JERRY

What Jerry okay?

THERESA

Jerry...

(meaning I heard you, I'm not going to listen, enough)

Okay, Jerry.

Jerry waits for Theresa to say something further. She doesn't, though. She's just looking out at the yard. Then Jerry turns and heads into the house. Before he reaches the glass door, though, he stops and faces Theresa again.

JERRY

Are you coming in?

THERESA

In a minute.

Jerry lets on privately that he knows he's lost this round. Then he goes into the house alone.

INT. PARADE TRAVEL, TRAVEL AGENCY, LONG ISLAND - DAY

Jerry is dressed in his red blazer. The *I'm Satisfactory* sticker remains on the lapel. His OFFICE MANAGER KEN works nearby.

JERRY

Ken, where's Kelly?

OFFICE MANAGER

She didn't call in. I don't know.

Jerry looks over at the empty desk of his colleague Kelly; he seems newly concerned over her. Then he gets up to leave.

OFFICE MANAGER (CONT'D)

Leaving?

JERRY

There's something I don't want to miss.

EXT. FIELD - LATER

Jerry and Paul sit Indian-style in a way out field. They're all alone for a wide distance in the middle of a conversation. Jerry's in his red blazer and Paul's wearing his Team Saturn golf shirt.

JERRY

This guy, about my age, is trying to balloon around the world solo. He takes off today.

PAUL

That's stupid...

JERRY

I think it's something.

PAUL

Why?

JERRY

He's pushing the boundaries of how much he can accomplish, how much he can get through alone.

PAUL
What's the point?

JERRY
What do you mean?

PAUL
I'd rather be with my friends.

JERRY
(like it's just a fact,
not sad)
I don't have any friends.

PAUL
Doesn't that depress you?

JERRY
Well... Rita fills up that area.

PAUL
Rita lives with another guy.

JERRY
Well, yeah.

FOLLOWING THE SIMPLE COMMUNICATION OF JERRY'S ESSENTIAL
PROBLEM, there is quiet.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Did you know Rita was their nanny?
Jack and Theresa?

PAUL
Yeah.

JERRY
She came six months after their mom
died. She mothered Jack. And she
was a girlfriend for Theresa. Which
was just about what they needed.

PAUL
What did you do?

Jerry thinks about it for a while.

JERRY
I moved over. Probably too far. I
have a daughter who calls me Jerry.
I probably moved over too far. So I
beg you... could you knock some
fucking sense into your wife?
(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
If you have to. That's what I
wanted to please ask you.

PAUL
There're limits to how much control
we have over other people. I'm at
my limit. I don't know what to do.
She won't listen.

A little while goes by.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I don't know if we have that kind
of thing, Jerry. I was her teacher.
Her steady. Then she got pregnant.
I'm not sure she loves me like
that.

Soon, Jerry looks at Paul.

JERRY
How are you doing?

Paul doesn't answer.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Have you been drinking a little?
This afternoon? You look red.

PAUL
What do you mean?

JERRY
I've spent a lot of time around
people of Asian heritage. They can
turn red when they drink. You're a
little red.

Paul doesn't answer for a while.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'm losing my grip here, Jerry.

After a moment, Jerry puts his arm around Paul. They sit like
that. Then a hot air balloon passes sixty feet over them.
Jerry watches it float by slowly, but Paul is so troubled by
his personal life and Theresa's well being that the spectacle
above him doesn't hold his interest. Before long, he looks at
the ground. SO THE COLORFUL BALLOON CONTINUES IN FULL VIEW
FLOATING TWENTY YARDS ABOVE A GUY PAYING NO ATTENTION TO IT.

JERRY
(shouting out)
Godspeed, Sir Clarkson-Ickes.

INT. JERRY'S SUV, MOVING, LONG ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER
 Jerry's driving through a commercial area; he's on his cell.

JERRY
 It's Jerry, Mrs. Reyes. I wondered
 if you have that number.

He sees something that's gets his attention real fast.

JERRY'S POV

Jerry sees his son Jack leaving a roadside bar, walking to
 his car in the parking lot. JACK'S SKIN IS SO BRIGHT RED IT
 RESEMBLES A FILM EFFECT MORE THAN A HUMAN SKIN SHADE.

JERRY
 Oh my god.

Jerry looks back at the road. It's daytime.

EXT. GAZEBO AREA, BATTLE BROS LANDSCAPING OFFICES - LATER

Jerry and the old accountant Sal sit in the northernmost
 gazebo in the newly laid-out client retreat area behind the
 Battle Bros offices.

JERRY
 What's going on around here, Sal?

SAL
 Nothing good.

Jerry listens.

SAL (CONT'D)
 Jack's borrowing against the
 business. To the tune of...

Sal's thinking. Jerry's anxious for him to finish.

JERRY
 To the tune of what?

SAL
 A few hundred G's. Jer.

JERRY'S SURPRISED.

SAL (CONT'D)
 This custom interior idea. Maybe
 it's a good idea. I don't know.
 (MORE)

SAL (CONT'D)

But we're not going to last long enough to find out. Jack's just running around doing estimates. We're four hundred thousand in the hole here from renovations. We don't have our landscaping monthlies coming in. We're going to have to close in a month, Jerry. That's all.

Jerry had no notion there was a crisis.

SAL (CONT'D)

Maybe... I don't know...

JERRY

Maybe what?

SAL

Maybe if Jack can pay the house loan back. If we can stave off the suppliers we owe... because we owe the machine companies, we owe mulch... if we can hold them off for six months, divest this other stuff, and renew some landscaping contracts Jack let lapse...

JERRY

Can we get them back? Can we hold off our debt?

SAL

They're not going to do it for Jack. They don't know him. Maybe they'd do it for you. They know you.

JERRY

I'm leaving in three months. I'm flying all over the place.

SAL

I'm just saying... If you could get in here... If you could roll your sleeves up, you might manage to keep us open.

Jerry doesn't respond. Some time goes by.

SAL (CONT'D)

Well, that's what I think. That's what I think the only way is.

After a while, Sal stands up and leaves Jack there in the gazebo. A wider shot shows Sal walking back to the office, Jerry sitting in the gazebo and six guide balloons floating by in the distance with *Team Clarkson-Ickes* on their balloon skins. Jerry's sitting there, thinking.

JERRY (V.O.)

I don't want to roll my sleeves up.
I want my sleeves down. I can hear
the piper piping. I'm gone. I can
see everything from fifteen
thousand feet. It looks so good and
small. Is there really a choice?
Flying casually to exotic locales
and foreign ports of call...

CLOSE ON JERRY AS HE CONSIDERS HIS ISSUE IN THE GAZEBO.

JERRY (V.O.)

...Or mulch?

INT. PARADE TRAVEL, TRAVEL AGENCY, LONG ISLAND - DAY

CLOSE ON A TRAVEL BROCHURE: a little one-man cottage on the coast of the Scottish Highlands.

CLOSE ON Jerry sitting at his work desk, looking at the picture with longing. He sort of fondles it. Then he makes his decision.

JERRY (V.O.)

I have to go tell Pop we're closed.

INT. JERRY'S SUV, MOVING, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Jerry's deep in thought. His passenger window's still smashed. The Pepsi rests on the passenger seat.

JERRY (V.O.)

What am I going to tell my dad
about the company?

INT. LOBBY, IVY ACRES LIFE CARE CENTER REST HOME - LATER

Jerry's waiting in the floral-patterned chair in the lobby.

JERRY (V.O.)

How am I going to put this?

INT. DINING ROOM, IVY ACRES - LATER

Pop and his elderly girlfriend BEA dine with Jerry. Residents fill a few of the other tables.

POP

I prefer to have the baseball game
on in here to the music, though
it's not bad.

Jerry's not listening.

JERRY (V.O.)

I'm just going to tell him things
go in cycles. He and I rode a good
up cycle. Jack didn't.

Jerry's looking across the table at Bea. She's looking off
quietly, like she's trying to remember something maybe.

JERRY (V.O.)

Man, she ate that peach pretty
fast. What's she doing now? Just
daydreaming? That's sweet. She
looks like she's daydreaming over
there. Possibly, she's drifting
back five hundred peaches ago,
sitting on the buckboards coming
home from the peach shack or
whatever it was. The fruit shack.
With the fresh fruit. Thinking
about her first peach. How many
peaches does someone eat in their
life. Holy shit. She's choking.

Jerry's eye widen with this realization.

Across the table from him, Bea is no longer seated behind her
nautical-theme placemat.

A wide shot shows Bea has fallen to the carpet. Jerry's
rushing around the table to aid her. She's gone still and has
lapsed from consciousness.

EXT. IVY ACRES, REST HOME - LATER

Later, Pop stands in the rest home entrance breezeway looking
lonely and lost. Jerry stands beside him. There's an
ambulance loading Bea down the driveway turnaround. Pop and
Jerry look on.

JERRY (V.O.)

She's going to be fine. She'll
recover. She'll recover soon,
return and give Pop tender
dentureless head in the moonlit
corner of the dayroom. It's going
to be okay...

JERRY
Pop. Are you okay?

POP
I'm okay, Jerry.

JERRY
She seems to be in good hands.

POP
Yeah...

JERRY
If you're okay, I'm going to get
back to work.

POP
Yeah...

INT. PARADE TRAVEL, TRAVEL AGENCY, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Jerry's returned to his desk. He looks over at Kelly's empty desk space beside him. Then he faces forward and stacks some brochures.

JIMBO
Stand up.

The short man who flipped Jerry off Jimbo has walked up to Jerry's desk and addressed him.

JERRY
Kelly's not here. She hasn't been.

JIMBO
Can you please stand up?

JERRY
For what?

JIMBO
Shut your sassy mouth.

Jerry stands up. A young, black couple at another agent's desk look on.

JIMBO (CONT'D)
Do you know where Kelly is?

JERRY
I don't. Do you? I've been worried.

JIMBO
Did you try to find out?

JERRY
I asked Ken.

JIMBO
Who's Ken?

Jerry points. Ken the Office Manager's standing right there.

JIMBO (CONT'D)
She's been missing for two days.
That's the extent of it? You asked
the guy next to you? You were going
out with Kelly. You dump her then
you keep coming to work? You sit
eight inches from her? You couldn't
see her heart was broken,
douchebag?

JERRY
I didn't know that.

JIMBO
Well, she took pain pills. She got
sick and tried to drive to the
emergency room. That's where she
is.

JERRY
(concerned)
Is she okay?

JIMBO
She's okay by grace.

JERRY
Why was she taking pain pills?

JIMBO
Because you. So I have an idea for
you. Quit coming to work. You're
rich. You don't need this job.
You're just weird. Quit coming and
sitting right next to her. She's a
good lady.

Jerry considers Kelly.

JERRY
Yes. She is. We just... I thought
we had a fling. I didn't notice...
(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
my focus here is mostly the
planning of trips.

JIMBO
Well, you should have focused...
(trying to think, pointing
to Kelly's desk)
...a little to your left. Cock.

Jerry stands there for a while. He seems to have come to agree with Jimbo. He nods to show Jimbo this.

JIMBO (CONT'D)
Do you know what a Spinning Back
Fist is?

JERRY
No. I don't.

YOUNG BLACK GUY
I know what it is...

JIMBO
See you later.

Then Jimbo starts to walk away.

YOUNG BLACK GUY
(to Jerry)
Look out, man.

Jimbo's back to Jerry, then he performs a Spinning Back Fist and smashes Jerry's forehead. They start to fight which causes a great disruption among the close desks, workers and clients.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER

An orderly pushes Jerry down a hospital hallway in a wheelchair.

ORDERLY
I'll be back in a second. We'll get
you in there.

The orderly has left Jerry in his wheelchair in the hallway beside another patient left in hers.

JERRY (V.O.)
Ken shouldn't have called them. It
was just a blow to the head. I'm
going to be okay. Everything's
going to be okay.

Jerry looks over and realizes POP'S GIRLFRIEND BEA SITS IN THE WHEELCHAIR BESIDE HIS. She's in some state of catatonic paralysis - it's a horrible-looking display.

JERRY (V.O.)

Fuck.

Jerry's left there beside her. In the next room, a young woman, possibly Bea's daughter, wails over the state of her mother.

JERRY (V.O.)

She's not okay. At all. Why did I think she was? I always think this. None of it's going to be okay. She's a veg. Deep. Rita's marrying Richie. Jack's a broke, Asian drunk. Pop's company crumbled. Theresa believes she's such a little deal she can disappear, leave us. How did I let this happen to everybody? While I thought of Scottish cottages. I don't know anyone in Scotland.

(hurting)

Man...

Jerry sits there for a long moment.

JERRY (V.O.)

I'm a fuckerface... fuckass.

CLOSE ON Jerry as he considers this.

JERRY (V.O.)

I am thumbs down.

More time passes. It's like the picture's become frozen. Jerry remains there lost deep in his own head.

JERRY (V.O.)

Get up. Fix this.

Then Jerry stands up from his chair.

CUT TO:

A SHOT OF JERRY'S FACE AGAIN THROUGH THE BLUE STAINED GLASS OF RICHIE CONGLIO'S GUARD GATE.

EXT. RICHIE CONGLIO'S ESTATE

Jerry's standing at the high, closed gate. Then he pushes it gently to see if by chance it's opened. It is. Jerry looks through the open gate space, down the driveway where a bunch of cars are parked for a party.

EXT. RICHIE CONGLIO'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry stands at the door where he's been greeted by a formally-uniformed Caribbean-accented domestic worker.

JERRY

I'm a colleague of Rita Reyes.
Jerome.

DOMESTIC WORKER

You're Jerome?

JERRY

Yes.

DOMESTIC WORKER

You're for Rita?

JERRY

Yes, I am.

Beyond Jerry, a collection of sportscars is visible in an open garage.

INT. LIBRARY, RICHIE CONGLIO'S HOME - LATER

As Jerry waits in the library, the Caribbean domestic worker enters with Rita. The domestic worker makes a gesture to Jerry that has the whiff of a formal presentation.

DOMESTIC WORKER

Jerome.

Then she leaves them alone. Rita looks at Jerry for a while.

JERRY

Hi.

RITA

You should go.

JERRY

Theresa...

Rita listens.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Theresa's not good, Rita. She has a cancer that could kill her if she doesn't treat it. She won't treat it.

RICHIE

I thought it might be you, Jerry.

Richie Conglio, dressed in tennis whites, has come into the library.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

(to Jerry)

Come have some lunch.

EXT. BACK PATIO, RICHIE'S ESTATE - LATER

Richie has escorted Jerry and Rita out back where the guests mingle around a buffet table; everyone's in tennis gear.

RICHIE

(introducing Jerry)

These are some friends from the firm. William Kohls. William Keaner. Tim Richweir.

EXT. BACK PATIO - LATER

After lunch, the group's conversation has changed gears. They sit around a patio table.

RICHIE

He was a good tennis player in high school. He could have been excellent. With some application.

Richie's talking about Jerry. The guests are looking at him; Richie's sort of fucking with Jerry. Jerry has noticed.

JERRY

Were you on the team, Richie? I don't remember?

RICHIE

I wasn't then.

JERRY

You weren't then? What, are you on the high school team now?

The group has laughed despite themselves.

RICHIE

I took the game up later, I meant.
I've worked pretty hard to get
good. Would you like to volley?

All of what Richie has to say has an edge on it.

JERRY

It's been twenty years. And I just
ate.

RICHIE

So did I.

Everyone recognizes this as a challenge. So they await
Jerry's answer.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS, RICHIE'S ESTATE - LATER

With racquets now, Jerry and Richie face one another across
Richie's court. The guests look on from courtside.

RICHIE

What are you driving these days?

JERRY

Company truck. Impala. '67.

RICHIE

I'll put up my '94 Testarossa. It's
the one there by the garage. Four
hundred original miles. It's worth
at least a hundred and thirty.

JERRY

Fine by me.

RICHIE

You'll have to do better. Don't you
own a little plane?

JERRY

You don't fly, Richie.

RICHIE

I'll learn. Watch.

Jerry looks across the court at Richie. Then he looks at
Rita. She's looking back at him.

JERRY

Okay.

What the game's really about upsets her; Rita walks off.

CUT TO:

A WINE GLASS RESTS ON A COURTSIDE TABLE. TWO SETS OF KEYS ARE IN IT.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - SAME

Jerry and Richie stand on the court ready to go.

RICHIE

Any play-ending injury or other inability to continue results in immediate forfeiture and the keys to his car/plane.

JERRY

Sure.

RICHIE

Volley for serve.

Richie volleys the volley game starter gently over to Jerry's side. Jerry hits it into the net.

JERRY

(quietly)

Shit...

TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Richie aces Jerry.

TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Jerry plays the net and smashes a shot for a point.

TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Richie hits one down the line before Jerry can reach it.

EXT. COURTSIDE - LATER

Jerry rests in a wooden lawn chair during a break. Rita's approached him.

RITA

Who's winning?

JERRY

Him.

RITA
What's the score?

JERRY
He has 40. He needs one more to win
the first set.

RITA
What do you have?

JERRY
Love.

Jerry looked at Rita when he said "love" and meant to convey
in his peculiar way that he has love in his heart for her.

RITA
What do you need? To win?

JERRY
I need... I just need to ignore the
intense pain I'm feeling and
reconnect with my instinct to
really, you know, rally rather than
cheat or quit.

RITA
I was going to make coffee, but I'd
like to see that.

Time passes.

JERRY
Me rally?

RITA
Man. Yeah, Jerry.

Rita's looking at Jerry.

RITA (CONT'D)
I'd like to see you rally.

Jerry looks back at her for a while, and though it hurts, he
stands up to return to the game.

*The following sequence is meant to be in stylistic slower
motion, accompanied by score.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Midgame, Jerry and Richie volley. Rita and the guests look
on. Jerry watches a shot come over the net.

He tries to hustle toward the side line to return, but he's too beat. He sees the ball land an inch inside the line. Then he looks across the net. Richie looks back as Jerry says something. There's no audio, but Jerry's clearly said the word out. Richie clearly responds fuck you out. Jerry answers insistently it was out. Richie says in. Jerry accepts this finally and turns back to take his serve.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Jerry appears exhausted as he jogs after a corner-shot and half-asses an attempt to return it.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Later, Richie is in the foreground, out of focus, pumping his fist brazenly after a good shot. Jerry is in focus across court in the distance, staring at Richie with loathing and fatigue.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Jerry chases a shot without reaching it. Then he faces Richie, and with his hand, makes a "T" for time out.

INT. RICHIE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Alone in the kitchen, Jerry drinks a glass of water. Then he notices a personal computer in a little desk hutch nearby. He crosses over. He moves the mouse then he enters a web address.

He looks on as it loads.

On screen, the balloon expedition site appears. There's an icon reading *Trek with Sir Harold Clarkson-Ickes Around the Globe. Click Here For a Photograph of his Current Position.*

Jerry clicks. What's come up has shocked him.

It a a photograph of the Atlantic ocean. An immense, deflated balloon skin floats on the water. The words *Always Dare* are visible. Beneath the photo, text reads *Clarkson-Ickes Missing.*

EXT. GARDEN - LATER

Jerry's gone into Richie's garden to be alone. The garden's got a labyrinth feel. Jerry's protected from sight by high flower rows. He bends over, stays frozen like that for a moment, then vomits. Then he starts to make some loud, unpleasant noises, like's he retching and bawling also. All together, it's like a soundtrack of someone going to pieces.

EXT. BACK YARD, RICHIE'S ESTATE - LATER

Jerry walks out from the garden labyrinth and encounters Rita out looking for him. Jerry's face is wet; he looks unhealthy.

RITA

God. Jerry. What did you do?

JERRY

I just... let it all out.

RITA

(meaning let what out)

What?

Jerry thinks about it.

JERRY

I don't know.

RITA

Have you been crying?

JERRY

I don't know what I was doing.

RITA

What's the matter?

JERRY

I took a blow to the head earlier.
But I don't think this is part of
that.

RITA

Do you feel better?

Jerry thinks about it for a long time.

JERRY

Not much.

EXT. COURTS - LATER

Later in his break, Jerry shares a cement garden bench near the court with a young black lawyer guest of Richie's.

BLACK LAWYER

Did you notice... He can't plant
with his left. He's got a bum foot
or something.

JERRY

He stuck up for me when we were eleven against this bully Ricky Yertis. Ricky smashed his foot with an aluminum bat.

BLACK LAWYER

I was going to say you should hit short to his left. Take advantage of that bum foot. But now that you told me that story, that would be fucked up. No matter how you slice it.

JERRY

No matter how you slice it?

BLACK LAWYER

(not following that)
What?

JERRY

No matter how you slice it? It's fucked up?

BLACK LAWYER

Yeah.

JERRY

I don't know. I was just thinking about that.

BLACK LAWYER

About what?

JERRY

I was thinking maybe you can slice it in a way where it's all right. I've been thinking about that.

BLACK LAWYER

How?

JERRY

Well, most people would say he was a good kid to defend me. Right?

BLACK LAWYER

That's totally normal.

JERRY

Yeah, well I might say he was a good kid. But as a grown-up he's a prick.

Jerry looks across the court and sees Richie making the upside-down "pussy" triangle for his gathered colleagues then enjoying a round of laughter at Jerry's expense.

Back on the garden bench, the black lawyer and Jerry sit there for a while together.

BLACK LAWYER

I like the slice.

The black lawyer gets up and leaves.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Jerry has some wind back and hits it hard to his right. Richie comes up short.

TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Jerry runs to the net and just reaches a return. He gets it back over before Richie's there. He's scored again. He's real worn out, though.

TENNIS COURTS - LATER

Jerry has sprinted and hit one back that just lands in. He bends over to catch his breath.

GUEST

One set apiece. You're tied up in the third. Whoever wins next game wins.

JERRY

I'm done.

RICHIE

What?

Jerry stays bent over.

JERRY (V.O.)

I can't move.

Rita looks on.

RITA
(to Richie, upset)
Would you please stop this? He's not well.

RICHIE
What's wrong with him?

RITA
I don't know. He's not well.

RICHIE
(facing Jerry)
Are you well, Jerry?

Jerry can't answer.

RITA
Game's over. Tie.

RICHIE
Hey, if that's what he wants. I guess I'll start taking flying lessons.

RITA
You can't take his plane because of this.

RICHIE
I'd rather not. But I will. You heard the rules.

RITA
Don't be a jerk.

RICHIE
(about Jerry)
This guy can't go. I can. That's match. Jerry and I made an honest wager with clear guidelines. He'd do the same. I expect a reward for my dedication. When this guy can't go. When I can.
(to Jerry)
Hey, can you go? Can you go, Jerry? Because I can.

RITA
I can't stand this. I'm going to my house, Richie.

RICHIE
(ignoring her)
I can go, Jerry. Can you? Can you
go?

Jerry's listening; Rita's gone back to the house. They wait a while until she reaches the back door and closes it strongly behind her.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Okay, Jerry. Now that that's done
what the fuck are you going to do?

Jerry looks over. He's gone to sit on the rest bench.

RICHIE (CONT'D)
Get up now, Battle. Or quit.

Jerry remains still. His voice becomes audible again.

JERRY (V.O.)
My legs are knobby flesh logs. I
cannot move them. Now I am
cramping. Oh, my god.

Then Jerry stands and tries not to betray that he's in such pain. Then he faces the court.

JERRY (V.O.)
If I could move my legs and win
this last game, that would be
magnificent.

Jerry remains there.

JERRY (V.O.)
Wondrous it would be.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - LATER

A long shot of Richie waiting at his end of the court. There's no one on the near side. Then Jerry walks into the frame on to his side of the court. Jerry calmly walks to the service line. He stops there.

JERRY
Ball, please...

Someone tosses him a ball from the sideline. Jerry does a few of the pre-serve ball bounces.

JERRY (V.O.)
Rally, you douche. Rally.

Jerry keeps bouncing the tennis ball.

JERRY (V.O.)
Rally. Rally. Rally.

Then Jerry stops bouncing the ball. He takes a deep breath. Then he tosses the ball up in the air. The he leans back to serve; he's got his eye on the ball.

JERRY (V.O.)
(an internal scream)
Rally!

EXT. LONG ISLAND STREET - LATER

A sign's been posted in the foreground. It reads *School Zone 10 MPH*. After a couple cars go by, Jerry drives past in a Ferrari, maintaining the speed limit and moving slowly through the frame.

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE, LONG ISLAND - LATER

Jerry stands outside the door. A blow to the mid-forehead can produce discoloration around both eyes in a raccoon pattern after a few hours. This has happened to Jerry. Rita has opened the door to find Jerry there. He looks back at her with his bad eyes.

RITA
What happened to you?

JERRY
What?

RITA
Your eyes.

JERRY
(meaning what about my eyes)
What?

RITA
They're fucked up.

JERRY
Oh. This little guy taught me a lesson. Earlier. I guess the result of it's coming on now. Or something.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry's sitting in Rita's living room; she's handing him a beer. He's wearing his red work blazer.

RITA
What's the jacket?

JERRY
This job I had. That I quit.

Jerry looks around.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Why did you keep your house? What about Richie?

RITA
I'm trying this with Richie. I'm just trying it.

JERRY
What about your phone? It's off.

RITA
I didn't want you to call.

Rita looks at Jerry for a while.

RITA (CONT'D)
You don't look real good, Jerry.

JERRY
I'm not.

RITA
You don't even look satisfactory.

JERRY
I don't think I am.

The sticker remains on Jerry's lapel. He's looking at Rita.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I wanted to be alone, Rita.

RITA
So go be alone.

Jerry sits there for a while. Then he shakes his head. He keeps facing Rita in her living room.

RITA (CONT'D)

You know... the most beautiful
thing anyone's ever said to me...
I've been thinking about it for
months.

JERRY

What was it?

Rita doesn't tell him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Tell me.

RITA

Rita. Hi. Jesus Christ. I love you.
Fuck.

Jerry listens.

JERRY

I thought those might be my last
words.

RITA

I know.

JERRY

Jesus I love you. Marry me not him.

RITA

Why are we asking me now? We lived
together for twenty years.

JERRY

I thought everything was fine. Why
press it, I guess.

RITA

Press it?

Jerry looks back with his bad eyes.

JERRY

(reflecting, but not
agreeing with his old
confused thinking)

I was testing... Balloon Guy...
testing the boundaries of fucking
solo... possibilities. Getting
above. Or whatever. Away.
Something. Tobacco. Pipe. Robinson
Crusoe. I don't know.

After a moment, Jerry stares directly at Rita. Then he takes the *HI I'M Satisfactory* sticker off and tosses it in her deskside garbage can. He sits for a while. Then he holds his hand out to Rita to take if she's willing.

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - LATER

THERESA'S BEEN POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR. RITA OPENS IT; SHE'S DRESSED IN A ROBE.

THERESA
(out of breath)
Hi, Rita.

RITA
Are you okay?

THERESA
Pop's missing.

Theresa's point of view goes past Rita's living room, through an open bedroom door to a closet mirror reflection of Jerry sitting on the corner of Rita's bed naked.

THERESA (CONT'D)
Eew...

INT. IVY ACRES LIFE CARE CENTER REST HOME - LATER

Jerry and Paul run together up a rest home hallway toward the administrative offices.

PAUL
They're still searching the campus.

JERRY
What campus?

PAUL
This place.

JERRY
Oh.

INT. IVY ACRES, REST HOME, LOUNGE AREA - LATER

The Kid in A Suit Corman is in a suit again. He's sitting in a row of three seats in the lounge. Jerry's in the middle. Paul's on the other side.

PAUL
It's going to be okay, Jerry.

JERRY

Yeah...

Jerry looks at Paul.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Today's the day that Daisy died.
That's weird.

Paul looks over.

JERRY (CONT'D)

...When it happened, I thought everything else was going to fall apart. I had no idea how I was going to raise the kids and still run work. For a couple months there I couldn't get out of bed. I'd get wake-up calls from the principal's office. Then I met Rita and she saved our lives.

They go quiet.

PAUL

You're not exactly like Theresa always said you were. She always complained about you a lot.

JERRY

A lot?

PAUL

Well, less these days. Really not at all, lately. But before. How you'd run roughshod over anybody when something made you work harder than you had to. You had this supernatural ability to short-circuit dealing with the needs of others, so well people generally avoided any attempts to involve you.

Jerry takes all that in.

JERRY

She couldn't just say I was lazy?

After another moment, Jerry turns to the other side of his chair and looks at the Kid in a Suit Corman.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Why are you wearing a suit? Again?

KID IN A SUIT
Bar Mitzvah.

JERRY
Are you missing it?

Corman nods.

JERRY (CONT'D)
They're not that fun. Unless you're
the kid.

They all seem to tune in at the same time to a nature
documentary on the lounge TV.

There, a strong-looking lion kicks up savannah grass and dirt
on the dead body of a second lion.

NARRATOR
The new stud will masticate, or
chew, on the old stud's carcass to
mark it. He might spray his scent
on the older lion through urine,
also, to demonstrate his new place
in the pack. Such is life in the
animal kingdom.

The young lion pisses on the old one.

Jerry stares at the TV. Some time goes by.

JERRY
We should find Pop.

At the point Jerry notices that someone's come into the room.
He looks over. It's Rita. He smiles at her.

INT. HALLWAY, IVY ACRES - LATER

Outside the lounge, Jerry huddles with Rita, Paul and the
newly arrived Eunice.

JERRY
(to Eunice)
Do you know where your husband is?
He's not at work.

EUNICE
I don't know.

JERRY
What's his cell phone?

EUNICE
He doesn't carry it anymore. He
said I call him too much.

The Kid in a Suit Corman has come up to Jerry's side again to
be with him, but Jerry hasn't noticed yet,

JERRY
Nice. Jack's missing, too.

KID IN A SUIT
Oh my god.

Jerry notices Corman there.

JERRY
Oh, hey, Corman. He's not missing.
We just don't know where he is.

Time passes.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Do you feel better?

EXT. ENTRANCEWAY, IVY ACRES - LATER

Jerry stands with all the others - Rita, Paul, Eunice,
Theresa in the entrance breezeway of Ivy Acres.

JERRY
Pop's not on campus. Let's split
into some teams and check some
likely places.

RITA
Like where?

JERRY
The office. His pier where he
fishes. The old house.

KID IN A SUIT
I want to go with Jerry.

Jerry looks down at Corman. He has no idea why. Rita's
watching the two of them.

JERRY
Okay. Come on.

The family and extended others go off in twos. Jerry and Corman head to Jerry's SUV.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Let's find your dad first.

KID IN A SUIT
How?

INT. LEXUS, PARKED/EXT. LONG ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Jack's parked in his SUV in a real quiet stretch of roadside in a neighborhood near work. He's reading the paper and drinking a beer; HE'S EVEN REDDER THAN BEFORE. After a while, Jerry walks up to the driver's window.

A CLOSE SHOT OF JACK'S PROFILE shows just how red he is and shows Jerry with his raccoon eyes considering him with fatherly concern from eight inches away. Jerry knocks gently on the window.

Jack turns and sees him. THEN HE LOWERS THE WINDOW AN INCH. They talk to one another through the small open space.

JACK
What happened to you?

JERRY
Later. I need to talk to you.

JACK
How did you know where I was?

JERRY
This is where I went. Roughly.
Instead of going home.

A wider shot shows where they are, a neighborhood near work. It also shows the Kid in a Suit Corman waiting in the passenger seat of Jerry's car; it's parked behind Jack's in the shade.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I just used to read travel brochures though, and dream about faraway places. What are you doing?

JACK
Drinking and reading Sports.

JERRY
Pop's missing, Jack. We need some help.

Jack looks at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Let's stop drinking and reading
Sports.

JACK
All right...

JERRY
Come with us.

Jack gets out of the car.

JACK
Who?

JERRY
Corman. Me.

Jack's out of the SUV. He makes eye contact with Corman in his car.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Maybe you should leave that 40
ounce beer here. It's probably not
a great workday memory for the boy.

Jack keeps standing there holding the beer.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I sucked. Right? As Dad?

Jack thinks about it like someone's asked him what he had for dinner two nights ago.

JACK
You know what you were like?

JERRY
Like what?

JACK
Like you always gave me a quarter
in case of emergencies. And you had
no idea a phone call was fifty
cents. Like that.

After thinking it over, Jerry seems to get that. He's gone quiet. A pretty long time goes by.

JERRY
They kept changing it on me, Jack.

Jack doesn't respond. Jerry looks at him.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I talked to Sal.

JACK
We have to sell the house.

JERRY
So. Come live with me.

JACK
There's four of us.

JERRY
Big deal.

JACK
I have to tell Eunice.

JERRY
Honey. It's money.

JACK
Are you trying out for Paul's job.

JERRY
It's just money. It's not people.
Fuck it, Jack.

Jack looks at Jerry for a while. Then he hugs him. After a few moments, they finish their embrace.

JACK
How come you're the first to let
go? You're always first.

Jack looks at Jerry.

JACK (CONT'D)
When we hug.

JERRY
That's not true.

JACK
Yeah, it is, Dad.

JERRY
Let's go look for Pop. You're going
to be okay. Stay with me until your
feet are back under you. I don't
care. I don't care how long.

After listening, Jack nods like he has no choice other than that and is grateful for it. They hug again. SOMETHING A LITTLE UNUSUAL HAPPENS THIS TIME, THOUGH, BECAUSE NOW EACH MAN IS AFRAID TO BE THE FIRST TO RELEASE THE EMBRACE, SO THEY REMAIN IN IT FOR AN INORDINATELY LONG TIME. Then Jack finally releases, and they walk toward Jerry's car.

EXT. PIER, ATLANTIC COAST, LONG ISLAND - SAME

Closer to the end of the day, Pop stands by himself on the end of a pier. He's the only one around. He's looking at the water. Soon, Theresa walks up. Rita's waiting at the end of the pier for them.

THERESA

Hey, Grandpa...

Pop turns and sees her. He smiles.

POP

Hi, Theresa.

THERESA

Are you ready to go?

POP

Yeah...

She's brought a blanket to make him warmer. She puts it on him.

POP (CONT'D)

You're so beautiful.

THERESA

Thank you.

They walk back toward Rita.

CUT TO:

A CLOSE SHOT OF JERRY WITH HIS CELL PHONE TO HIS EAR; HE LOOKS RELIEVED.

JERRY

Thank fucking God.

A wider shot shows Jerry has just said this without realizing that Corman, in his suit, stands right at his side. They've come to the gazebo retreat area behind the Battle Bros office, looking for Pop. Jerry folds his phone and faces Corman.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Why are you always standing right
next to me?

KID IN A SUIT
I don't know.

They look at each other.

KID IN A SUIT (CONT'D)
Do you mind?

Jerry thinks about it.

JERRY
Not at all.

Jack rounds the corner, coming into view from the far side of
the building.

JACK
He's not here.

JERRY
We got him.

INT. RITA'S CAR, MOVING - LATER

Rita drives along the beach. The afternoon's nearly over. Pop
rides quietly on the passenger side. Theresa sleeps in the
backseat; she looks pretty worn out.

INT. DINING ROOM, JERRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family sits at dinner. Pop has joined them, so it's
Jerry, Rita, Jack, Eunice, Corman, his younger brother,
Theresa and Paul.

JACK
(amid a lot of clatter, to
Jerry)
How's your balloon guy doing?

JERRY
Not good.

JACK
What happened?

Jerry looks around at the kids before he answers. THEN HE
JUST ANSWERS JACK BY MAKING THE WHISTLE NOISE WHERE THE PITCH-
DESCENDS.

EXT. HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY - DAY

On another day, Jerry's dressed in a *Battle Brothers Landscaping* golf shirt and evaluates the state of the University's landscaping with its GROUNDS SUPERVISOR. Having returned to work, Jerry's demeanor is professional if unenthusiastic. The guy points at a hedgerow.

GROUNDS SUPERVISOR

What can we do in here?

JERRY

Mulch.

EXT. HEINEKEN IMPORTS, ADMINISTRATIVE CAMPUS - DAY

Jerry speaks with a COMPANY GROUNDSMAN outside the office complex. The guy points to a flower row.

COMPANY GROUNDSMAN

Can we buttress this with something?

JERRY

Mulch.

*What follows is a quick series of cuts of Jerry at various outdoor settings, institutions like high schools and company campuses, dealing with old customers. In each one, Jerry's facing the customer and is answering a question they've apparently just asked with just the word *mulch*.

JERRY AT A HIGH SCHOOL

Mulch.

JERRY AT A MOTOROLA CAMPUS

Mulch.

JERRY AT A PRIVATE HOME

Mulch.

JERRY ON THE FIELD AT GIANTS STADIUM

Mulch.

EXT. PRIVATE HOME, LONG ISLAND - DAY

Jerry's facing a really OLD GUY on the guy's lawn.

JERRY

Mulch.

OLD GUY

I missed that. Say again?

JERRY

Mulch.

EXT. BACK PORCH, JERRY'S HOUSE, LONG ISLAND - EVENING

Near evening, Jerry sits on his back porch with Paul. They're both in their respective work golf shirts - Battle Bros and Saturn. Theresa's out in the yard, tending to some flowers there. She's farther into her pregnancy and looks like a woman who's going to have a baby. Jerry watches her.

JERRY

How far along was Theresa when you came?

PAUL

Three months.

JERRY

(looking at Theresa)
How many months is she now?

PAUL

Five.

JERRY

I'm thinking about putting in a pool here.

PAUL

That's great. There's going to be kids around.

JERRY

Yeah. Except Daisy, she drowned in our pool.

PAUL

God, I'm sorry, Jerry. Theresa doesn't talk about it. I always thought it was the ocean. I don't know why. I'm sorry.

JERRY

No sweat. But it was our pool. She couldn't swim, but she liked to go out in floaties. She went out after midnight one night, when we were all sleeping. I don't know what happened.

PAUL

Fuck, Jerry.

JERRY

Well, I covered the pool up. It's been covered a long time. Jack's thinking we should dig one. For the kids. I think maybe it's a good idea. Is she past the point of no return?

Jerry's kept looking at Theresa.

PAUL

Theresa?

JERRY

Is she so far along the doctors can't treat her?

PAUL

She's a week away. She's following the plan her homeopath made. She feels good about it.

Jerry looks across the yard at Theresa; she's sitting down by the flowers now. Jerry keeps looking at her.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - DAY

This is a pretty close shot of Jerry's face as seen through the small counter window from inside a walk-up Dairy Queen.

JERRY

I know it's a little early. But I have a hungry daughter. Pregnant daughter. I was hoping you could fire something up early.

Two teenage male employees are inside there, preparing to open for the day.

FIRST EMPLOYEE

We're not supposed to.

JERRY

You can take my Ferrari for a spin.

The teens have been surprised by that.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It's hot shit.

EXT. OUTSIDE TABLE AREA, DAIRY QUEEN - LATER

Theresa and Jerry sit alone in the cement patio area of the way out Dairy Queen with shakes. Theresa puts hers down.

JERRY

You're not going to finish?

THERESA

No... thank you.

JERRY

How's your appetite?

THERESA

Same. Mostly.

Things go quiet for a while.

JERRY

What do you say we go get a little radiation after our shakes?

Theresa smiles.

THERESA

There's a sentence no one's probably ever said before.

THE FERRARI GOES FLYING BY ON THE ACCESS ROAD BESIDE THEM.
After it's gone. It's quiet again.

JERRY

You have some time.

THERESA

(wanting to change the subject)

How's work?

JERRY

I quit.

THERESA

Not your weird job. The company. I know you've gone back.

JERRY

We're trying to recover. I'm going to sell my plane. We have to pay off heavy debt. Then we need favors from old clients. With luck, we can stay open.

(MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)

In a couple years or so, if we can get our legs under us, Jack can take over again. How's Eunice?

THERESA

She's getting through it.

JERRY

How are you feeling?

Theresa gives Jerry an expression that doesn't say much.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm not joking about going to the hospital today.

THERESA

I want to try to make it, Jerry. What kind of mother would I be to this child. Can you lay off?

JERRY

You're my child. I need to protect you.

THERESA

Then we're both doing the same thing.

JERRY

You're a bigger deal than that baby. Okay? Don't you know that? Haven't I made you feel loved? Don't you know how you'll be missed?

THERESA

How?

JERRY (CONT'D)

We can't spare you.

Theresa looks seriously at Jerry.

THERESA

I'm going to make it. I'm going to do this for her.

JERRY

But you're going all out here--

THERESA

That's what parents do for kids. Go all out. That's love. That's what I'm going to do for her.

Though she may not have meant it, JERRY TAKES THIS IN LIKE THERESA'S SHOWING WHERE HE'S COME UP SHORT.

THERESA (CONT'D)

And I'm going to make it.

She's said this to mean her mind's well made up. Jerry stays quiet for a while, dealing with that. The Ferrari goes by again.

JERRY

I know you will. Because we can't spare you. Jack. Pop. Paul. Corman. Me. We'd be like those French animals, Theresa. The sheep. The rooster. The duck. Floating off, going off god knows where.

Some time passes. Theresa smiles back at Jerry.

THERESA

Well, at least you'll have each other.

They share some amusement over this. Then they settle into an atmosphere where Jerry's blue because he knows Theresa's decided. Then he tries to lift things up.

JERRY

So we're going to have a baby around?

THERESA

Yeah...

After a moment, Jerry offers "cheers" with his shake. Theresa does it.

JERRY

You want to come flying with me. In a few weeks? Jack can cover.

THERESA

Yeah...

JERRY

We can fly over for lobster in Maine. You can still go up, right?

THERESA

Yeah. For another month.

JERRY

Good. We can get up there and think of a name for this baby.

INT. GRILL RESTAURANT, LONG ISLAND AIRPORT - DAY

Jerry's in the airport's grill, hanging up a flyer on the community corkboard they have.

Jerry's flyer reads SKYHAWK FOR SALE. GET ALOFT. WHENEVER YOU WANT. There are a bunch of Jerry tabs underneath that with Jerry's phone number.

After posting the flyer, Jerry looks at it for a while; he doesn't seem real sad. He just looks thoughtful.

INT. HANGAR, LONG ISLAND AIRPORT - LATER

Timmy the flight instructor hands Jerry some paper work in the hanger. Theresa waits nearby.

JERRY

How's the weather?

TIMMY

Light around here. Heavier up north. There's something coming east, but you can fly this flight plan. You're a good pilot.

Jerry walks toward Theresa.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

You're selling the Donnie Daisy?

JERRY

Yeah.

TIMMY

What's up?

JERRY

I'm going to be busy, Timmy.

Jerry looks at his plane.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I don't want her sitting in a hangar waiting for me. She should be up flying.

Timmy nods.

INT. DONNIE DAISY SKYHAWK, FLYING - LATER

Jerry's flying. Theresa's looking down out the window.

THERESA

Look at that "X." Who's that guy I wonder?

Jerry looks down. Below them is the Long Island home with the X on it.

THERESA (CONT'D)

That's a weird way to see the world. To think about the world, don't you think? From way up high? Not down there where you live.

JERRY

I guess. Yeah. It's getting a little bumpy. How are you feeling?

THERESA

I'm good...

Theresa watches Jerry for a while.

THERESA (CONT'D)

You're a good pilot.

JERRY

Thanks.

THERESA

I didn't think you'd have the concentration.

JERRY

To fly?

THERESA

Yeah.

Jerry doesn't respond.

THERESA (CONT'D)

What's up with your trip?

JERRY

Postponed. Indefinitely.

THERESA
I'm sorry.

JERRY
No big deal.

Some time goes by. Then Jerry looks over at Theresa. The plane's bucking a little. He considers her for a while.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I love you.

Theresa listens. The plane hits rougher weather.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(trying to be heard over
the turbulence)
You didn't know you're a big deal?

THERESA
(can't hear him)
What?

JERRY
(raising his voice as
conditions worsen)
You don't know you're a big deal?
To me?

THERESA
(can't hear him)
What?

JERRY
(yelling)
I'm saying I love you.

Theresa has understood and smiles. She looks like she's begun to feel some pain, though. Jerry notices.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Let me change our altitude.

Jerry faces his instruments and makes a change.

INT. DONNIE DAISY SKYHAWK, FLYING - LATER

After some time spent flying quietly, the plane takes a hit of turbulence. The clouds are thick outside.

THERESA
Whoa.

JERRY

This isn't good for you. I'm going to turn around.

THERESA

I'm fine.

JERRY

We don't have long to go, but it might get rougher.

Theresa smiles and gives Jerry a thumbs up.

JERRY (CONT'D)

You're bleeding.

Theresa takes some blood off her lip with her thumb.

THERESA

I bit my lip.

Theresa looks out the windshield. Jerry checks his controls again.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Jerry, can you go to Yale? Can you fly to New Haven?

JERRY

What are you talking about? Now?

THERESA

Something's wrong.

JERRY

Something's wrong now?

THERESA

Something's wrong now. Yeah.

Jerry looks down at Theresa's lap. There's fluid all over the seat beneath her.

JERRY

Tell me that's pee.

THERESA

Jerry...

JERRY

What happened?

THERESA

I don't know. I don't feel good.
Can we go there?

The plane gets hit again.

JERRY

I have to see the charts. Yes. Give
me the chart. Then I need the
radio.

Jerry takes up his chart. He looks at it briefly but he
glances back at Theresa soon. She's gone quiet. She looks
like something's hurting her.

INT. DONNIE DAISY SKYHAWK, FLYING - LATER

Later, Jerry's on the radio. The plane's getting pushed
around by the turbulence. Theresa's eyes are closed. She's
not talking.

JERRY

(into the radio)
I can't see anything.

CONTROLLER

You're tracking fine.

JERRY

Have you called for the ambulance?

CONTROLLER

Yes.

JERRY

Is it there?

CONTROLLER

It's coming.

JERRY

How am I tracking?

CONTROLLER

You're good. I see you.

THERESA

A risk was a seizure.

JERRY

What?

THERESA

A risk was seizure. I think it's this.

Jerry looks out the window. The cloud banks come apart and Jerry can see he's pretty low, just over an airport. Then he faces Theresa again.

JERRY

We're here.

THERESA

Thanks, Jerry...

Theresa's still got her eyes closed, and what little she's said seems like all she can manage.

JERRY

Are you cold? Are you okay?

She doesn't answer him. Jerry faces forward to land the plane.

EXT. TARMAC, NEW HAVEN AIRPORT - LATER

The Donnie Daisy rests on the tarmac. Jerry's nearby speaking with a paramedic who's placed Theresa on a stretcher. The paramedic points at his ambulance.

PARAMEDIC

Dad, we're going to take Theresa in here. We have to close the door for a second. She's seizing. We need to apply her monitor. Then we're going to open it back up and let you in.

JERRY

(to Theresa)

They're going to take you in.
You're going to be fine. The baby's going to be fine.

Jerry smiles again.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Amen?

Theresa nods. She's smiling back.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Say amen.

But she's gone quiet. She doesn't ever say amen. The paramedics wheel her back to the ambulance.

PARAMEDIC

Just a minute, Dad.

Jerry watches her going off. The paramedics get her in. The doors close. Jerry stands behind the ambulance looking at the closed doors. Pretty soon, his thoughts become audible again.

JERRY (V.O.)

She's not going to be okay. Please
let the baby live.

Jerry stays there, looking on.

JERRY (V.O.)

Please hurry with that door so I
can say goodbye. Please open.

Soon, the doors open up. Jerry stares inside. Then Jerry jogs forward toward the ambulance.

INT. JACK'S CAR, MOVING, HIGHWAY - DAY

Jack's driving. Jerry rides beside him. They're passing south back to New York state. No one's saying anything.

EXT. BACK PORCH, JERRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jerry sits out back on his property on another day.

JERRY (V.O.)

That summer after Daisy died... the
softball summer.... The pool party
one...

EXT. SWIMMING POOL, BACK YARD, JERRY'S HOUSE - DAY (PAST)

This is old home video again of Theresa, 10, swimming laps in the pool in Jerry's back yard. The camera gets handed off to Jack, 11 then, who's been hanging around. Then Rita moves into the frame, jogging alongside Theresa as she swims and cheering her on.

JERRY (V.O.)

... Theresa practised for a month
or so, expecting, I guess, a race
where she could show the other
girls she could do sports, too.

INT. KITCHEN, JERRY'S HOUSE - DAY (PAST)

Ten-year-old Theresa's been recorded sitting alone at the breakfast table in a swimsuit. The sun hasn't come up yet outside the glass doors.

JERRY (V.O.)

Party day, she got up at six and dressed immediately in her swimsuit, excited, I'm sure, to show the other girls her stuff. I guess I hadn't realized all this was going on...

EXT. BACK YARD, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER (PAST)

On video still, Theresa and a bunch of other ten-year-old girls in swimsuits stand in the back yard crying because a loud, backhoe bulldozer loads further dirt into Jerry's already nearly filled-in swimming pool outback.

JERRY (V.O.)

... Because that was the day I had Lopez go over with a crew and fill in the pool...

Rita's in the frame, yelling at the equipment operator. Then she begins to yell at Jack behind the camera because he's begun to comically focus on Theresa who's standing a distance from the other girls in her swimsuit crying.

JERRY (V.O.)

...which kept Theresa from showing her stuff and belonging with the others the way she wanted...

Despite Rita's commands, Jack keeps the camera on Theresa crying near the black dirt in her swimsuit.

EXT. CEMETERY, LONG ISLAND - DAY (PRESENT)

In the present again, guests have been arranged in rows of folding chairs for a graveside service during Theresa's funeral. Jerry stands at the portable podium addressing them.

JERRY

... and I couldn't put the stop on it, because I wasn't there. I was at work maybe. Maybe sitting in my truck reading travel brochures.

Jerry becomes quiet.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, honey. I wish I had made everyone love you like your child would have loved you. I wish I had made you feel all that love.

Then Jerry looks at the guests.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I want to thank you, each of you, for joining us.

He's been taking a few pages of paper from his coat.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I was inspired to write a poem by my son-in-law, a wonderful poet, and a good young man, Paul Chen. I'd like to read it. It's entitled A Sheep, A Duck and a Rooster.

The guests look on. After a moment, Jerry continues.

JERRY (CONT'D)

A sheep, a duck and a rooster, thought they'd like to see the moon. So they all pitched in together, and rented a balloon. A storm moved in while they were sleeping, and blew them off the course that they were keeping. Then it turned them, then it tossed them, till they were headed down. The guide ropes weren't tied real tautly, because the crew was pretty motley...

Jerry really means himself, Jack, Paul, Pop, Eunice and Rita; they sit listening.

JERRY (CONT'D)

...so they sped straight for the ground. Doomed without a hero close, without a rescuer or mother...

The guests look on. Jerry continues.

JERRY (CONT'D)

...the duck looked around, then smiled and said, well, at least we have each other.

Jerry stands there a while before he continues.

EXT. CEMETERY, LONG ISLAND - LATER

After the formal service, the family members remain at the grave site. Theresa's headstone and grave rest next to DAISY BATTLE, her mom. Jerry looks on beside the others Jack, Rita, Eunice, Paul, Corman and his younger brother.

JERRY

Let's go, crew.

Jerry starts walking away. The others begin to follow soon.

EXT. BACK YARD, JERRY'S HOUSE - DAY

MIROGO CHEN, 65, talks with Jerry on the back porch of Jerry's house. In view beyond them is an older Asian woman WHO'S HOLDING A BABY GIRL A COUPLE MONTHS OLD. Other family members chat with a few guests during what seems to be a get together on Paul's parent's behalf.

EXT. BACK YARD, JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jerry's standing in the corner of the yard by himself as the party takes place in the background. He's noticed candy wrapper trash on the ground. He picks it up then throws it into the trees behind his property and hurts his shoulder.

JERRY

Ow... fuck.

Then Jerry looks down and sees that the Kid in a Suit Corman has come up to his side again and heard him say fuck.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Hello, Corman.

CORMAN

Hi, Grandpa.

JERRY

Hey, you want to see something neat?

INT. POOL PIT - LATER

Corman and Jerry sit at the bottom of really, deep, wide pit.

JERRY

This is what a pool looks like.
Before there's water in it.

Then Jack appears over the edge of the pit.

JACK
(to Jerry)
What are you doing down there by
yourself?

JERRY
(pointing to Corman)
Corman's here.

JACK
It's lunch time.

JERRY
Good.

Jerry and Corman start to climb out of the pool. Then Jerry stops.

JERRY (CONT'D)
(to Corman)
You go ahead. I'm going to stay
here for a while.

Corman heads up a ladder built nearby.

INT. JERRY'S HOUSE - LATER

The family and their guests have gathered at the table; they're beginning to serve themselves from dishes Rita's laid out. Jerry's not there.

RITA
(to Paul)
Have you seen, Jerry?

PAUL
No.

EXT. BACK PATIO - LATER

Rita's come outside. She's looking over the back yard. She doesn't see Jerry.

RITA
(calling out)
Jerry. Come on.

JERRY (O.S.)
Five more minutes.

Rita's heard his voice but can't see him. She looks at the pool construction area.

RITA

Are you in the pool?

A CRANE SHOT FROM WELL ENOUGH OVER THE ROOF shows that there's an "X" on it and that the house much discussed has all along been Jerry's. The back yard is also in view. A new pool's being dug out. Jerry's sitting calmly at the bottom of the pit.

INT. POOL PIT - SAME

Jerry answers Rita from his sitting position.

JERRY

Yes.

RITA (O.S.)

Well, come on.

JERRY

(sort of kidding)

Start without me.

RITA (O.S.)

Come on, Jerry.

Jerry remains there a while.

JERRY

Okay.

Then Jerry rises.

EXT. PATIO, JERRY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jerry approaches his house after the others have gone in for lunch. The family and guests are visible inside beyond the open, sliding-glass doors. Jerry stops before he enters. He considers all these people in his house. It's a raucous scene there filled with good cheer and Paul's parents joyously making a fuss over the child. Jerry's standing beside a piece of woodworking that's hanging near the patio doors. It looks like hieroglyphics and bears a depiction of three figures in different colored paint: a sheep, a duck and a rooster.

JACK

Dad, what are you doing?

Jack has noticed Jerry standing in the nearby doorway, looking in. The whole family's looking over.

JACK (CONT'D)
Lunch is ready. What are you
waiting for? Get in here.

Jerry smiles at them.

JERRY
Okay.

After another moment, Jerry walks into his house.

CUT TO:

BLACK. CREDITS BEGIN.