

7

six feet under

(pilot)

written by Alan Ball

INT. COMMERCIAL SET - DAY (BLACK & WHITE)

PERKY COMMERCIAL MUSIC plays as an attractive, June Cleaver-type MODEL gestures toward a shiny black HEARSE on a pedestal. We're in what seems to be a TV COMMERCIAL from the early 1960s (even though the hearse itself is the latest contemporary model.)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Presenting the new Millennium Edition XL-500 Funeral Carriage! Sized to accommodate even the largest caskets, the XL-500 offers your loved one the very latest in style and comfort--

The commercial ends abruptly, as if someone switched the TV off. MUSIC ENDS and the SCREEN GOES BLACK.

We HEAR Bing Crosby singing "I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS."

FADE IN:

EXT. PASADENA STREET - AFTERNOON

LOOKING DOWN on a quaint, two-lane street lined with small businesses. CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS on lamp posts, in store windows. A SALVATION ARMY SANTA stands on the sidewalk, RINGING his BELL. A shiny black HEARSE, just like the one in the commercial, glides beneath us.

INT. HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

NATHANIEL HITCHCOCK (56) drives, smoking a CIGARETTE. A somewhat severe face, but too weary to be menacing. Bing Crosby sings "I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS" on the RADIO.

NATHANIEL

(sings along)

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRIST--MAS... YOU CAN  
PLAN ON ME...

A CELL PHONE RINGS.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

(answers phone, businesslike).

Nathaniel Hitchcock.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

We're MOVING slowly past a large, slightly fanciful TWO-STORY TUDOR HOME that's been around for a while. WREATHS on the doors and electric CANDLES in the windows. REVEAL an artfully lit SIGN that reads:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HITCHCOCK AND SONS  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS  
dignified service since 1944

We MOVE around the building to an empty PARKING LOT. MOVING toward AN ILLUMINATED WINDOW on the second floor:

RUTH (O.C.)

Nathaniel, it's Ruth. Did you take your blood pressure medication today?

NATHANIEL (O.C.)

(over phone line)

Yes.

RUTH (O.C.)

Don't lie to me.

NATHANIEL (O.C.)

I took it. What do you want me to do, O.D. on it?

RUTH (O.C.)

Oh, and I just realized we don't have any of that soy stuff Nate drinks--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on a WOMAN'S HANDS: slicing vegetables, grating cheese, pounding steak, with alarming ferocity and speed.

RUTH (O.C.)

You know, since he gave up milk? I don't know what it's called.

NATHANIEL (O.C.)

(over phone line)

Why not just cut some milk with tap water? He'll never know the difference.

We PAN up to RUTH HITCHCOCK (55), hunched over the kitchen counter, holding the phone up to her ear with her shoulder. Dressed conservatively, but there's a certain earthiness underneath.

RUTH

(not funny)

Look, if you don't want to go, I'll go. It's not as if I don't have enough to do already.

INT. HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

NATHANIEL

I'm kidding. I'll get some. But it'll have to be after I pick Nate up at the airport, I'm running late already...

He takes a drag off his cigarette.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ruth stops slicing and stands up straight.

RUTH

(into phone)

Nathaniel, are you smoking?... Yes, you are, I heard you... Look, forget you'll give yourself cancer and die a slow and horrible death. You should not be stinking up that new hearse.

DAVID HITCHCOCK (31) sits at the kitchen table. Equal parts stuffy and intense, he wears a tie. He looks up from the magazine he's reading: Modern Mortuary.

DAVID

I told you not to let him take it.

RUTH

Like I could've stopped him. He's every bit as proud of that thing as your fool brother was of that damn motorcycle he had in high school. And who still has a pin in his foot?

(into phone)

Nathaniel, people want things to be nice when there's a funeral. They don't want their loved ones riding around in something that smells like an ashtray.

INT. HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

NATHANIEL

All right, I'm quitting right now, I promise.

(he doesn't)

See you tonight.

Nathaniel hangs up. He sings along to the RADIO, his cigarette dangling between his lips. THROUGH THE DRIVER'S WINDOW we see a BUS approaching at HIGH SPEED, as Nathaniel pulls into an intersection. He never even sees it coming.

EXT. PASADENA STREET - CONTINUOUS

The BUS SLAMS into the driver's side of the hearse. TIRES SQUEAL, GLASS SHATTERS, there's a sickening CRUNCH of METAL BENDING, and then...

Nothing but the SOUND of Bing Crosby SINGING.

BING CROSBY

(on radio)

...I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRIST--MAS... IF ONLY IN MY DREAMS.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ruth, still chopping food, nicks her finger. She examines the cut, frowning.

DAVID

(throws down his magazine)

That new hearse was a total waste of money. Does Dad really think people choose a funeral home based on who has the coolest wheels?

RUTH

I think your father's having some sort of mid-life crisis.

DAVID

There was nothing wrong with the old one. That money would have been so much better spent re-paneling the chapel, or adding coffee bars to the slumber rooms--

RUTH

I'd much rather he buy himself a fancy new hearse than leave me for a younger woman. Or a woman my age, for that matter. Or, heaven forbid, a man, like my cousin Hannah's husband did.

(shakes her head)

God sure has dealt that poor woman some blows in this life.

David smiles faintly, gets up and crosses to her.

DAVID

Mom, can I do anything to help?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH

No, no, honey, I'm fine. Besides, don't you have a viewing tonight? You should probably be getting ready.

DAVID

Right.

He kisses her on the cheek and exits.

EXT. LAX - A SHORT TIME LATER

It's just turning dark.

INT. AIRPORT GATE - A SHORT TIME LATER

MOVING through disembarking passengers, we DISCOVER NATE HITCHCOCK (35), walking next to BRENDA CHENOWITH (32), an attractive woman dressed in clothing with a vaguely hippie-ish feel. Nate is athletic, charming, and a total scamp. Brenda picks up on this but doesn't seem to care.

NATE

So, I enjoyed talking to you about that whole Shiatsu thing, I really hope that pans out for you.

BRENDA

(smiles)

You should let me work on you sometime.

NATE

(already has his card out)

Here's my cell number. I'll be here until the 29th.

She takes his card and studies it.

NATE (cont'd)

(looks around)

Huh. My Dad was supposed to meet me here.

BRENDA

I could give you a ride.

NATE

Oh... thanks, but I'm sure he'll be here soon enough.

BRENDA

I wasn't talking about that kind of ride.

Nate's a little taken aback, then he grins.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - LATER

The parking lot is half-filled with cars. Black-clad MOURNERS file in the front door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME/SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An sweet-looking, DECEASED WOMAN lies in state in an expensive white CASKET. Mourners file past, chat quietly in groups, etc. We FIND DAVID, wearing a suit, a carnation in his lapel, overseeing. An ELDERLY MAN approaches him.

ELDERLY MAN

You've done a nice job. She looks so peaceful.

DAVID

(comforting)

Well, she is at peace now.

ELDERLY MAN

If there's any justice in the universe, she's shoveling shit in hell.

He shuffles away, MUTTERING. David's CELL PHONE RINGS. He pulls the phone from inside his jacket and moves away from the mourners to answer it.

DAVID

David Hitchcock.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLAIRE HITCHCOCK (17) drives. The Jesus and Mary Chain's "REVERENCE" BLASTS from the STEREO. She shouts into a CELL PHONE.

CLAIRE

David, it's Claire. Is Nate there yet?

INTERCUT WITH DAVID IN THE SLUMBER ROOM:

DAVID

Nope.

CLAIRE

I thought he was coming in tonight, so we could do that whole forced Christmas Eve family thing.

DAVID

Well--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

Because there are some really excellent parties that I could be going to.

DAVID

No, it's tonight. Dad's gone to the airport to pick Nate up. And Mom's in the kitchen making something really complicated and resenting it.

CLAIRE

Damn. Okay, I might be a little late--

DAVID

Claire. It's one of the few times a year we're together.

BACK INSIDE CLAIRE'S CAR:

CLAIRE

All right, don't get all Norman Rockwell on me. I'll be there. I just have to drop some stuff off at a friend's house before I head over. Bye.

She hangs up.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Fucking boy scout.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Claire's car, an older model CADILLAC HEARSE painted bright green, ROARS down the street.

INT. AIRPORT - A SHORT TIME LATER

Holiday travelers cross back in forth in front of us as we slowly PUSH IN ON A DOOR marked "UTILITY." We begin to HEAR muffled GROANS from within.

INT. UTILITY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

His pants down around his ankles, Nate is fucking Brenda as she braces herself against a janitor's sink.

BRENDA

(breathy)

This is--really--kinda disgusting--

NATE

(ditto)

Disgusting---good or--disgusting--bad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRENDA

Oh, disgusting--very good--

NATE

I know--you're so fucking hot--

BRENDA

That's so--sweet--

NATE

I'm a--sweet guy--

BRENDA

Fuck me--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ruth takes a POT ROAST out of the oven and places it on the counter, wiping her brow. The PHONE RINGS.

RUTH

(answers)

Hello?... This is Ruth Hitchcock... Yes,  
I'm his wife. What is this about?

PUSHING IN ON HER as she gets the news:

RUTH (CONT'D)

(confused)

What?

She hurls the phone away from her. She stands completely still for a moment, then pushes the pot roast off the counter onto the floor. She kicks it savagely, then starts throwing pots and pans across the room.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mourners stand at the casket, gazing solemnly at the woman inside, then suddenly look up, alarmed, as we HEAR Ruth's RACKET from the living quarters upstairs.

David smiles nervously, quickly leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

David enters.

DAVID

Mom, what the hell is...?

He stops abruptly when he sees:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIS POV: Ruth is slumped in the corner amidst various cooking implements and the pot roast, staring at the floor.

RUTH

There's been an accident. The new hearse is totaled. Your father is dead.

David leans against the counter, stunned.

RUTH (cont'd)

Your father is dead and my pot roast is ruined.

DAVID

Oh my God.  
(then)  
What about... was Nate...?

Ruth stares at him in horror, then scrambles for the phone.

RUTH

They didn't say anything about him. Oh God, no, not my baby--

INT. UTILITY CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Nate and Brenda are locked in a sweaty, breathless, post-coital embrace. His pants are still down around his ankles.

BRENDA

(grabs his ass)  
You carry a lot of tension in your lower back.

NATE

(grins)  
Not as much as twenty minutes ago.

BRENDA

Just so you know, I never do this.

NATE

Oh, yeah, me neither.

They kiss.

NATE (cont'd)

So... are you ever going to tell me your name?

BRENDA

(studying him)  
Probably not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE

What? Why not?

BRENDA

(not unfriendly)

Because I'm a realist.

He stares at her, unsure of how to respond. A CELL PHONE RINGS; Nate pulls it from inside his coat.

NATE

Probably my dad, looking for me.

(into phone)

Hey, Dad... Oh, Dave. Merry Christmas!...

Of course I'm okay.

(smiles at Brenda)

Couldn't be better, in fact...

(suddenly stricken)

What?

INT. DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Claire sits with some college students, all a couple of years older than she is. Happy Mondays' "LOOSE FIT" plays on a STEREO. A seductive young man named JORDAN lights a PIPE. Claire watches him warily.

CLAIRE

This is just speed, right? Promise me it isn't crack. Because I've got to spend tonight having Christmas dinner with my demented family and it's going to be weird enough without me being high on crack.

Another student LAUGHS. Jordan shakes his head as he inhales.

JORDAN

(holding it in)

It's crystal meth. Makes everything burn just a little bit brighter, that's all.

(exhaling)

And it makes sex like, totally primal.

He smiles at Claire and passes her the pipe. A beat, then she takes it and inhales.

CLAIRE

Oh, well. Too late now.

A CELL PHONE RINGS. Almost all of the students reach for their bags.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
It's mine.  
(into phone)  
Hello?...  
(overly bright)  
David, hi!

Jordan starts to kiss her neck. She pushes him away.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
So is Nate there yet?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ruth sits at the table, catatonic. David speaks into a phone as he cleans up the mess she caused.

DAVID  
No. He's still at the airport. Claire,  
I've got bad news...

He closes his eyes. This sudden, unexpected responsibility is taking its toll on him.

INT. DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN ON CLAIRE'S FACE as the news sinks in. Around her, the other students pass the pipe.

CLAIRE  
Yeah, sure. Okay. I'm on my way.

She hangs up, numb. The other students continue LAUGHING and talking among themselves, unaware. Claire stands.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
I have to go.

JORDAN  
No fucking way!  
(sexy)  
You're coming back, aren't you?

CLAIRE  
(kind of giddy)  
I don't think so. My father just got hit  
by a truck and broke his neck. He's dead.  
I have to go pick up my mom and take her  
to the hospital to identify his body.

A beat. A couple of other students LAUGH, as if this were a joke. Claire stares at them, then she LAUGHS too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
I'm not kidding. This is really  
happening.

The other kids STOP LAUGHING.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
(a little hysterical)  
And now I'm high on crack!

JORDAN  
Crystal.

CLAIRE  
Whatever! So I guess this whole hellish  
experience I'm about to go through is  
going to burn just a little bit brighter  
now, right? Oh, good! Thank you!

She grabs her coat and exits angrily. A beat.

JORDAN  
(re: pipe)  
Hey, if she freaks out, nobody knows  
where she got this, right?

EXT. HIGHWAY - A SHORT TIME LATER

An older, banged-up JEEP CHEROKEE ROARS by beneath us.

NATE (O.C.)  
You really didn't have to do this... I  
could have just rented a car.

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE - CONTINUOUS

Brenda is driving. Nate's in the passenger seat, staring  
blankly in front of him.

BRENDA  
It's okay. Something tells me you're in  
no shape to drive. And frankly, I'm in no  
hurry to get to my family's annual  
Christmas Eve massacre.

(off his look, rattles off)  
Parents who stayed together for "the  
children," but really because they love  
tormenting each other so much. Manic-  
depressive brother who always chooses the  
holidays to go off his medication.  
Insanely competitive sister-in-law who  
has to pick a fight with me every chance  
she gets.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRENDA (cont'd)

Oh, and an ancient springer spaniel who's completely blind and deaf and incontinent.

(cheerful)

What about you?

NATE

Actually, we're pretty normal. My mom's a control freak. My brother, well, he's a control freak, too. My sister... well, I left home right after she was born, I never really knew her that well. She's kind of wild. Like I was.

BRENDA

(teasing)

Was?

Nate smiles faintly.

NATE

My dad really rode my ass when I was a kid. I couldn't go rafting because he'd just buried some girl that drowned. He buries this dipshit loser who OD'd at a Flock of Seagulls concert, suddenly I'm not allowed to go to concerts for a year.

BRENDA

Your father worked in a cemetery?

NATE

Then I purposefully disobey him and get a motorcycle, and what happens? I wipe out, the first day. Total the bike and my leg. And my Dad couldn't be any more smug.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT (1982)

NATHANIEL HITCHCOCK (at 38), in a black suit, stands looking down at us. We're in a hospital bed; we can see our RIGHT LEG IN TRACTION.

NATHANIEL

(Nate's VOICE)

"Don't you know how dangerous life is?"

INT. JEEP CHEROKEE - PRESENT DAY - CONTINUOUS

ON NATE:

NATE

"Any one of us could go at any minute."  
(suddenly angry)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE (cont'd)

How could a man who was so fucking scared of everything--who never had an accident or even a speeding ticket in his entire fucking life--how could he have a car wreck? Stupid son of a bitch!

A beat.

BRENDA

Are you mad at him, or the fact that we're all going to die?

NATE

(stares at her, with distaste)  
Are you a shrink?

BRENDA

(laughs)  
No...God, no.  
(then, weary)  
Both my parents are.

They drive along in silence for a while.

BRENDA (cont'd)

(cheerful)  
Well, what else do you want to talk about? The weather? The fact we both just fucked a total stranger? And that we both lied when we said we never did that?

A beat. Nate turns THE RADIO ON.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mourners pack the room. We HEAR snippets of conversations:  
"...such a shame she didn't have one last Christmas with her grandchildren" "...certainly has ruined the holidays for her family..." We MOVE through the mourners to DISCOVER DAVID. PUSH IN ON HIM slowly, as he chats sympathetically, fighting to keep his feelings inside. Suddenly he SCREAMS as loud as he can. People stare at him, shocked, but he just keeps SCREAMING...

SMASH CUT TO:

PUSH IN ON DAVID, once again smiling and chatting with mourners; what we just saw was what's going on inside of him.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Claire's bright green CADILLAC HEARSE speeds down the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH

Did you know that before you were born,  
funeral homes ran the ambulance business?

INT. GREEN HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

Claire drives, chewing gum furiously. Ruth sits in the  
passenger seat, staring listlessly out the window.

CLAIRE

Uh... no.

RUTH

Hearsees were the only vehicles that could  
transport people lying down. There was no  
medical assistance inside, either, they  
were just like taxis.

CLAIRE

(at a loss)

Wow.

RUTH

Your father used to joke about that.

(distant)

"Just drive him around the block a few  
more times and we won't need to stop at  
the hospital."

CLAIRE

Uh... you're kind of freaking me out.

RUTH

Claire, are you having sex?

CLAIRE

What?

RUTH

Or doing drugs?

CLAIRE

(freaking)

Why are you asking me this now?

RUTH

Your father is dead. I can't even  
remember the last time you and I talked  
about anything important. I need to know  
you're okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

(chewing gum really hard)

Oh yeah. Yeah. Believe me, I'm okay. You know, considering.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We HEAR LIGHT CLASSICAL MUSIC. Mourners converse, comfort each other. David stands to the side, trying to contain himself. A perky JUNIOR-LEAGUER approaches him.

JUNIOR-LEAGUER

Do you work here?

DAVID

Yes.

JUNIOR-LEAGUER

I wanted to complement you on the music.

David smiles at her benevolently. She smiles back.

JUNIOR-LEAGUER (cont'd)

(flirting)

I've been to three other funerals this year--cancer, stroke, pediatric leukemia--and the music is always that same sad organ music, it reminds me of the soap operas my mom used to watch before I started kindergarten, God, you're probably too young to remember that--

DAVID'S POV, as she speaks to us directly:

JUNIOR-LEAGUER (cont'd)

--anyway, I so prefer this light classical, you know, chamber orchestra stuff, it's still spiritual, but doesn't seem so dated, or depressing...

What we HEAR her say is suddenly OUT OF SYNCH with her mouth moving; it's as if she's been badly dubbed:

JUNIOR-LEAGUER (cont'd)

Your father is dead. Checked out. Toast. Six feet under. You know what that means, don't you?

ON DAVID, confused.

BACK ON HIS POV of the Junior-Leaguer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUNIOR-LEAGUER (cont'd)  
(still OUT OF SYNCH)  
You're in charge. This is no longer just  
a job. This is your life.

This time, David actually does SCREAM. The Junior-Leaguer  
steps back from him, unnerved.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Christmas MUZAK plays in the distance. Nate rounds a corner,  
carrying his luggage; Brenda is right behind him. Nate spots:

Ruth and Claire seated against a wall. Ruth looks dazed;  
Claire is chewing gum furiously and fidgeting.

NATE

Mom!

Ruth and Claire stare up at him blankly. Nate drops his bags  
and kneels beside his mother.

NATE (cont'd)

Mom, I'm so sorry.

RUTH

(staring at Brenda)  
Who's she?

NATE

(stands)  
Oh! This is... uh...  
(scrambling)  
A friend.

BRENDA

Brenda Chenoweth.

NATE

Brenda. Chenoweth.  
(then)  
Brenda, this is my mom, Ruth Hitchcock,  
and my sister Claire.

CLAIRE

Nate, can I talk to you?

NATE

Yeah, yeah, just a second--  
(to Ruth, delicate)  
Mom, have you already done the...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH

I can't. I've seen too many dead people in my life. They're work. I won't see your father that way. I need you to do it.

NATE

Oh.

CLAIRE

Nate, I have to talk to you, please. Now. It's urgent.

She pulls him around the corner. Ruth stares up at Brenda.

RUTH

So how did you and my son meet?

BRENDA

(without missing a beat)  
In cooking class.

AROUND THE CORNER, Claire backs Nate up against a wall.

CLAIRE

(whispers urgently)  
I have to tell somebody. I'm tweeking.

NATE

Yeah, we're all upset--

CLAIRE

No, I'm high on crystal. I smoked some with some friends before I got the call.

NATE

(aghast)  
You did what!?

CLAIRE

Don't worry, it's the first time. But I'm having a really bad experience, I can't tell if it's the crystal or Dad being dead, but... I'm really scared.

Nate stares at her, then grabs her by the shoulders.

NATE

You cannot do this to me right now.

CLAIRE

Don't be such a narc, we smoked pot together at Thanksgiving--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATE

Look! I have to go identify our dead father's body! I'm sorry you're having a bad drug experience! But deal with it!

Nate walks away, leaving her shaken. She starts tapping her front teeth with her fingernails.

INT. MORGUE - MOMENTS LATER

Fluorescent lights, a bank of refrigerated BODY LOCKERS, etc. An ATTENDANT in a white lab coat enters, followed by a nervous-looking Nate. The Attendant opens a locker, pulls out a SLAB on which lies a dead body covered by a SHEET, which the Attendant pulls back. Nate tries to be strong, but there's a sharp intake of breath.

HIS POV: NATHANIEL HITCHCOCK lies on the gurney, his neck broken, multiple lacerations on his face. Suddenly HIS EYES POP OPEN. He smiles at us.

NATHANIEL

Well, well. The prodigal returns.

ON NATE, stunned.

BACK ON NATHANIEL, seeming to really enjoy this.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

This is what you've been running away from your whole life, buddy boy. Scared the crap out of you when you were growing up, didn't it? And you thought you could escape, by not going into the business, but guess what? Nobody escapes.

CLOSE ON NATE, terrified.

The Attendant stands over Nathaniel as he really is: dead.

ATTENDANT

Well?

NATE

(a whisper)  
Yeah. That's him.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ruth is still slumped in her chair. Claire paces manically. Brenda leans against the wall, wondering what the hell she's doing here. A shaken Nate rounds the corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE

Okay, let's get out of here.

RUTH

How'd he look?

NATE

Dead.

RUTH

Will there need to be a lot of reconstruction? David's not that skilled at the really hard stuff. Federico usually does that, he's quite gifted--

(alarmed)

You don't think we'll have to have a closed casket, do you? Oh dear. I would hate to send that message...

NATE

What message?

RUTH

That we're not equipped to handle a major restoration, or that we're not proud of our work...

CLAIRE

(nervously)

Mom! Can we talk about this later? We should get Nate home, he's gotta be exhausted. Let's go.

She grabs Ruth's hand and pulls her away down the corridor. Nate turns to Brenda. He suddenly is exhausted.

NATE

Thank-you. You did not have to do this.

BRENDA

Please. I'm just avoiding my own hell. I'm a big coward.

NATE

Me too. I don't know if I can handle it.

BRENDA

Well, you're about to find out.

She studies him for a moment. Finally:

BRENDA (cont'd)

I wish you the best, Nate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She kisses his cheek, then exits. He watches her go.

EXT. STREETS - A SHORT TIME LATER

Claire's green hearse speeds down the streets.

INT. GREEN HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

Claire drives, Nate is by the window. Ruth sits between them.

NATE

Claire, you're driving too fast.

CLAIRE

This isn't fast. You wanna see fast?

She speeds up significantly.

NATE

(with surprising force)

Pull over!

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The green hearse SKIDS to a stop on the side of the road. As Claire and Nate get out and cross around behind the vehicle to change sides, he grabs her.

NATE

Listen, do you do a lot of drugs?

CLAIRE

What? No. And it's none of your business.

NATE

Yes, it is my business. You were driving like a maniac, you could have gotten us all killed.

CLAIRE

What the hell is this? You are not my father.

NATE

I'm worried about you.

CLAIRE

(scoffs)

Oh, yeah. Right.

(angry)

You split as soon as you could. You don't even know me. So don't think you can start telling me what to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She throws the keys at him and crosses around to the passenger side.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - FOYER - A SHORT TIME LATER

The viewing is over. David sits on the stairs, still in his suit, ruminating. We HEAR FOOTSTEPS outside the front door. David immediately stands, buttoning his jacket, oddly formal. Ruth and Claire enter, followed by Nate with his luggage.

DAVID

Nate.

NATE

Hey, buddy.

A beat.

DAVID

So where's Dad? Downstairs already?

NATE

No, he's still in the morgue.

DAVID

(disbelief)

You didn't bring him back with you?

RUTH

Oh, dear. That didn't even cross my mind. We should have taken the van so we could bring him home. I'm sorry, that was very stupid of me.

She heads up the stairs, exhausted.

NATE

Nice going, Dave. Like she doesn't have enough to feel bad about right now.

DAVID

(as if to a child)

Things have to be done. Federico is downstairs, ready to start. Every second we wait will only make Dad's restoration more difficult. But you wouldn't know about that, would you? Bag boy?

NATE

(stung)

I am assistant manager of organic produce at the highest volume food co-op in Seattle!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

(rolls her eyes)

Jesus. Just pull your dicks out and measure them and get this over with.

She heads up the stairs.

NATE

(to David)

What were we supposed to do, just throw Dad in the back of Claire's car?

DAVID

It is a hearse!

(into phone)

Yeah, I need to schedule a removal... Hitchcock, William Nathaniel. Male. Caucasian. I'll bring the paperwork.

He disappears toward the back of the building. Nate stands there, angry and helpless. He suddenly spots:

HIS POV: The open white casket in the adjoining Slumber Room. A beat, then Nate starts toward it.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FROM INSIDE THE CASKET: Nate looks down at us, troubled.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON A TV SCREEN: Some cheesy CHRISTMAS VARIETY SPECIAL.

Claire sits on her bed, her knees up under her chin, hugging herself as if cold. She watches the TV, her face blank, numb. Ruth enters, carrying a sandwich on a plate.

RUTH

I made you a bite to eat.

CLAIRE

I'm not hungry.

RUTH

We have to eat, Claire. We didn't die.

She puts the plate on the bed and exits. Claire's eyes never leave the TV.

INT. MORGUE - LATER

The AUDIO from the Christmas Special CONTINUES as the morgue Attendant enters, followed by David, rolling a collapsible STRETCHER with a zippered BODY BAG on it. The Attendant opens the locker, pulls out the slab with Nathaniel on it, and exits. David hesitates, then removes the sheet from his father's body. Trying not to look at his face, he pulls the stretcher next to the slab and UNZIPS the body bag. He pulls a couple of LATEX GLOVES from his pocket, puts them on and goes about the work of getting his father's body into the bag and onto the stretcher.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COMMERCIAL SET - DAY (BLACK & WHITE)

PERKY COMMERCIAL MUSIC. The same MODEL from the beginning gestures toward several industrial-looking PLASTIC CONTAINERS OF EMBALMING FLUID, artfully arranged on a display.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Introducing new DynaTone, the choice of top embalmers! DynaTone is guaranteed to leave skin texture bouncy and flexible, resulting in the velvety look and feel of actual living tissue--

The commercial ends abruptly, as if someone switched the TV off. MUSIC ENDS and the SCREEN GOES BLACK.

We HEAR ETHEREAL, slightly OMINOUS MUSIC.

FADE IN:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PREP ROOM - NIGHT

MUSIC CONTINUES as we MOVE SLOWLY (from a LOW ANGLE) down a white-tiled HALLWAY, starkly lit by harsh FLUORESCENT LIGHT, toward a DOOR on which is stenciled:

PREPARATION ROOM  
Authorized Personnel Only

As we MOVE CLOSER to the door, we INTERCUT with FLASHES of:

INT. PREP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on a MAN'S HANDS, pulling on LATEX GLOVES.

CLOSE on the GLOVED HANDS as they arrange gleaming, surgical instruments on a tray.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE on a GLOVED HAND holding a SCALPEL as it MOVES along the raised, rounded edge of a fiberglass PREPARATION TABLE, upon which lies a male CORPSE. We can't see his face, but his hair and coloring is the same as Nathaniel Hitchcock's.

CLOSE on a DRAIN between the corpse's FEET: within a steady FLOW OF WATER we see the diluted yet unmistakable crimson of human BLOOD reach the drain.

CLOSE on the GLOVED HANDS, massaging the body to stimulate circulation, artificial as it is.

CLOSE on the GLOVED HANDS preparing a CLEAR PLASTIC TUBE with a frighteningly LONG NEEDLE for insertion into the corpse.

CLOSE on the GLOVED HANDS as they flick a SWITCH on some sort of INDUSTRIAL PUMP. We HEAR MACHINERY REVVING UP.

CLOSE on the CLEAR PLASTIC TUBE, MOVING with the YELLOWISH EMBALMING FLUID that's pumping through it.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PREP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

STILL MOVING toward the DOOR, which OPENS to reveal:

IN SLOW MOTION: NATHANIEL HITCHCOCK (at 29) stands at the preparation table, wearing casual early-seventies clothing and a porkpie hat. He lights a CIGARETTE, settles into a chair with a magazine, propping his feet up on the table right next to the corpse's feet. A RECORD PLAYER is on a cart next to the table. Nathaniel spots us and smiles.

A WIDER ANGLE (REAL TIME): EIGHT-YEAR-OLD NATE stands at the door, solemnly watching his father work. The ETHEREAL, OMINOUS MUSIC has been abruptly replaced by Sarah Vaughn SINGING "NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT."

NATHANIEL

Hey there, buddy boy. Come on in.

Nate doesn't move.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Come on. Say hello to Mr. Bloomberg.

Nate approaches the preparation table tentatively.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Nothing to be afraid of, Nate. Mr. Bloomberg's dead. I'm getting him ready so his family can see him one last time, and say goodbye to him. It'll make them feel better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nate isn't listening, he's staring at Mr. Bloomberg's OPEN EYES. An exuberant FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAVID suddenly rushes in, holding a naked G.I. JOE, pointing it like a gun.

DAVID

Bang!

NATHANIEL

(clutches chest)

Oh! You got me!

David LAUGHS gleefully, points the G.I. Joe at Nate.

DAVID

Bang! Nate! Bang!

But Nate just keeps staring at Mr. Bloomberg. Impatient, David runs over to him. Too short to see over the edge of the table, he stares at Nate, wondering what his brother finds so fascinating. He starts JUMPING up and down to get a better look. Nathaniel offers a LATEX GLOVE to Nate.

NATHANIEL

You can touch him if your wear one of these. Believe me, he won't care.

Nate stares at his father, turns and runs out of the room. David watches him go, mystified. Nathaniel just CHUCKLES quietly and takes a drag off his cigarette.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PREP ROOM - PRESENT DAY

CLOSE ON ADULT NATE, expressionless, looking down at:

NATHANIEL'S FACE, dead. He's lying on A NEWER PREPARATION TABLE, tubes inserted, embalming fluid pumping in. HIP HOP MUSIC plays on a BOOMBOX nearby.

A WIDER ANGLE. Nate stands in the doorway, staring at his dead father's face, uncomfortable. A diminutive MAN enters from an adjoining room, wearing a white lab coat over hip clothes, latex gloves, a surgical mask, and a Plexiglas face shield. He's carrying a POLAROID CAMERA, which he focuses on Nathaniel's face and snaps a shot. As he pulls the undeveloped picture out, he notices Nate standing there.

MAN

Nate!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Man removes the face shield and pulls down his surgical mask. This is **FEDERICO** (mid 20s), Hispanic and constantly cheerful. He grabs Nate's hand and shakes it vigorously.

NATE

Hey, Rico.

FEDERICO

Really sorry about your dad. But when your time's up, it's up. Right?

David enters, with a clipboard, in work mode.

DAVID

(re: Nathaniel)

How's he doing?

FEDERICO

Took him a while to drain. I just started juicing him. So far so good.

DAVID

I really appreciate your coming in on Christmas Eve, Federico.

Federico starts massaging Nathaniel's limbs.

FEDERICO

Hey. It's the least I could do for Mister H., after everything he did for me. And I'm going to be up all night anyway, putting together all the useless crap Santa Claus is bringing my kid.

David pulls on some latex gloves and massages Nathaniel's limbs along with Federico. Nate watches, uncomfortable.

DAVID

(to Nate)

You need something?

NATE

Uh, no. I just--

David's CELL PHONE RINGS.

DAVID

(answers)

David Hitchcock... Hold just a second, please.

He quickly moves past Nate into the corridor and shuts the door behind him.

INT. KEITH'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A cluttered but tasteful apartment. A table set for two. KEITH CHARLES (30s), African American, is on the phone. He wears sweaty athletic clothes, having just worked out.

KEITH

Just want to remind you, don't eat too much with your family tonight, 'cause I'm making something special for dessert...

INTERCUT WITH DAVID IN THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE PREP ROOM:

DAVID

Keith, I'm sorry. I can't make it.

KEITH

(not happy about this)  
Why not?

DAVID

Because my father was just killed in a car accident.

KEITH

Oh, man. Shit. Okay, what can I do?

DAVID

Nothing, thanks... but I have to stay here--

KEITH

Of course. David, I'm so sorry. Listen, if you need anything, anything, do not hesitate to call me--

DAVID

Sure.

KEITH

I mean it. Don't pull this "I-can-carry-the-whole-world-on-my-shoulders" thing. You need people. You have people. You do not have to go through this alone.

DAVID

I gotta go.

He hangs up, but just stands there.

INT. PREP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON a TILED WALL, MOVING over POLAROIDs, taped to the wall in PAIRS. Shots of CORPSES' FACES, BEFORE and AFTER restoration. A GLOVED HAND indicates two pairs of Polaroids, both with particularly gruesome BEFORE SHOTS.

FEDERICO (O.C.)

This is the one I'm most proud of. The husband got fired, flipped out, shot the wife point blank in the head, then shot himself in the mouth.

(indicates "after" shots)

And look at this, huh? Like the bride and groom on top of a cake.

Nate stares, skeeved. Federico chatters on, oblivious.

FEDERICO (cont'd)

Buried 'em in the same casket, too.

(spots something)

Actually this is my best work...

ON THE WALL: Above the Polaroids of corpses is a FRAMED DEPARTMENT STORE PORTRAIT of a pretty Hispanic WOMAN in her 20s, holding a TODDLER. Federico's GLOVED HAND reaches in...

Nate stands with Federico as he takes the portrait off the wall, relieved to be focusing on less gruesome fare.

NATE

Wait a minute. This kid was just born like last month.

FEDERICO

He'll be four fucking years old in April, can you believe it? Oh, and Vanessa's pregnant again.

NATE

You stud.

David watches from the doorway.

FEDERICO

(laughs)

It wasn't planned, but you know what?

(re: portrait)

Neither was this one, and he's the best thing that ever happened to me.

DAVID'S POV: Federico brings the portrait up to his lips and kisses it tenderly, then hangs it back on the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID  
(sternly)  
Federico, keep an eye on those chemicals,  
we don't want him to burn.

Federico hastens over to the table to check on Nathaniel.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Claire paces, scratching her scalp. Nate enters.

NATE  
Where's Mom?

CLAIRE  
She went to bed.

NATE  
Was she feeling any better?

CLAIRE  
Yeah, Nate, she was on top of the goddamn  
world.

She suddenly starts to cry. Nate awkwardly puts his arm  
around her. She quickly shakes it off.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
Don't.  
(then)  
Where's David?

NATE  
He's downstairs. Working.

CLAIRE  
(skeeved)  
On Dad?

NATE  
No, Rico's doing that, but David's  
keeping an eye on him. Then he's going  
over all the pre-arrangements Dad made.  
He said not to wait up for him, we should  
just go to bed.

CLAIRE  
As if that were a viable option.

Nate notices a POST-IT on the fridge, leans in to read it.

CLOSE on the POST-IT. In tiny, meticulous writing:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OJ  
cantaloupe  
half & half  
Soy stuff for Nate

NATE  
Want to go to the grocery store?

CLAIRE  
(already grabbing her keys)  
Anything to get out of here.

EXT. STREETS - A SHORT TIME LATER

We HEAR Sheep on Drugs' "MOTORBIKE" as the GREEN HEARSE moves slowly down the near-empty street.

NATE (O.C.)  
Is this the best music to listen to when you're having a bad drug experience?

INT. GREEN HEARSE - CONTINUOUS

CLAIRE  
I'm not having a bad drug experience. I'm having a psychotic break. Why are you driving like a grandmother?

NATE  
Uh, maybe because I'm feeling a little extra cautious, seeing how our dad just got mangled in a car accident?

Nate turns the MUSIC OFF. A beat.

CLAIRE  
How long is it going to be like this?

NATE  
I have no idea, I've never done crystal.

CLAIRE  
I'm not talking about the crystal. How long is it going to be like this? It's like everything has been replaced by like, some weird, empty version of itself. I feel like I'm in the holographic museum of my life.

NATE  
It's called shock. It protects us from what we're really feeling.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE (cont'd)  
(off her terrified look)  
Sorry.

CLAIRE  
Oh my God, what if this is what's real,  
this hollow, nothing version of reality?  
And what if what we think is reality,  
where everything does seem real, is  
really just an illusion?

(then)  
Or what if we're like, in hell? And part  
of the whole deal is that you don't know  
you're in hell?

(then, spiraling)  
But if they find out you know, they just  
crank up the intensity?

NATE  
(stares at her)  
Remind me to never do drugs ever again.

INT. GROCERY STORE - A SHORT TIME LATER

We HEAR CHRISTMAS MUZAK. PANNING PAST AISLES, we see a gangly teenage CLERK wearing a Santa hat as he restocks shelves; in the next aisle, Claire tosses bottles of GATORADE into a shopping cart. In the produce section, Nate is thumping canteloupes when his CELL PHONE RINGS.

NATE  
(answers)  
Hello?

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOME - CONTINUOUS

A contemporary home, obviously quite expensive. A stylish WREATH hangs on the front door. Brenda paces in front of it, sipping from a glass of wine, speaking into her CELL PHONE. From inside the house, we HEAR people ARGUING.

BRENDA  
How are your coping skills?

NATE (O.C.)  
(over phone line, pleased)  
Hey! God, I'm glad you called.

BRENDA  
Why?

INTERCUT WITH NATE AT THE GROCERY STORE:

NATE

Because... I don't know. You, uh... you have a... calming effect on me.

BRENDA

Uh-huh. Are you familiar with the psychological term "projection?"

NATE

Are you familiar with the psychological term "blow me?"

Brenda LAUGHS.

NATE (cont'd)

(seductive)

Come on. You grew up with all that psychobabble, you rebelled against it every chance you got. Still do. And that includes having sex with strangers in closets at airports.

BRENDA

Oh, you think you're not easy to read? Coasting by on your looks and charm isn't working like it used to, but you have no idea what else to do, because you've never had to learn. Any woman with half a brain looks at a guy like you and thinks, good for a hot fuck, but believe me. That's it.

She switches off the phone, angry, then immediately regrets it.

AT THE SUPERMARKET, Nate stands there, deflated. A shaky Claire approaches.

CLAIRE

Can we leave? I really need to take a shower.

NATE

(snaps)

Jesus Christ. Am I not allowed to have even a single moment to myself?

Rage flashes across Claire's face. She grabs a canteloupe and hurls it onto the floor, then just stands there, shaking. She's in trouble, and Nate sees it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE (cont'd)  
Okay. What can I do?

CLAIRE  
(losing it)  
Nothing. Nobody can do anything.

She starts to cry, which only makes her angrier. Nate stands there, waiting. Finally, she hugs him, and allows him to comfort her. The Clerk approaches.

STORE MANAGER  
You'll have to pay for that canteloupe.

CLAIRE  
(through tears)  
Fuck off.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COMMERCIAL SET - DAY (BLACK & WHITE)

PERKY COMMERCIAL MUSIC. The MODEL gestures toward hundreds of ROUND METAL TINS stacked in a pyramid.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Introducing new Wound Filler Deluxe multi-purpose cosmetic molding putty, now faster-setting and self-sealing, to help make masking unsightly wounds a breeze--

The commercial ends abruptly, as if someone switched the TV off. MUSIC ENDS and the SCREEN GOES BLACK.

We HEAR SOUL COUGHING's "SCREENWRITER'S BLUES."

SOUL COUGHING  
(on radio)  
IT'S FIVE A.M.... AND YOU ARE LISTENING  
TO LOS ANGELES...

FADE IN:

INT. CAR - EARLY MORNING

DRIVER'S POV: We're on a deserted FREEWAY at dawn, MOVING UNNATURALLY SLOW. A CAR in an adjacent lane SPEEDS past us, then another. In the distance, a BUS appears, DRIVING the wrong way, STRAIGHT TOWARD US, its HEADLIGHTS ON.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. NATE'S OLD ROOM - EARLY MORNING

FROM OVERHEAD: Nate lies sleeping, then his eyes pop open. "SCREENWRITER'S BLUES" plays on an ALARM CLOCK RADIO on the nightstand. He hits a button on it and the MUSIC ENDS. He just lies there. From another room, we HEAR:

RUTH (O.C.)  
You want some more coffee?

CLAIRE (O.C.)  
(quickly)  
No!

Nate SIGHS and gets out of bed.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Claire sits at the table, picking at her breakfast. Ruth is washing dishes at the sink.

CLAIRE  
Mom, remember that stuffed dog I used to have, and I dragged it around until its ears wore off, and you made new ears out of a dish towel, and I hated that dog after that, and I threw it up on the roof?

RUTH  
No.

Nate enters, groggy.

CLAIRE  
And then I wanted it back and begged Dad to go get it, and he said no, if I really wanted it I never should have thrown it up there in the first place.

RUTH  
Your father did so many wonderful things for you, and that's all you can think of right now?

CLAIRE  
What? I just remembered it.

RUTH  
(yells)  
He was a good man!

Embarrassed, she wipes her hands and leaves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE  
I'm going running.

INT. PREP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on a ROUND METAL TIN marked "WOUND FILLER." A MAN'S HAND in surgical gloves open the tin, and, using a plastic applicator, scoop out a bit of flesh-colored, waxy goo. We FOLLOW THE HAND to the now-embalmed Nathaniel Hitchcock's nearly colorless face, as the hand works the cosmetic wax into the lacerations on his cheek.

NATHANIEL (O.C.)  
Oh, no. You're doing me?

David sits next to the prep table, wearing a white lab coat, latex gloves, a surgical mask, and a Plexiglas face shield. He's working on the face of his father's corpse, which lays on the prep table. Oddly, a fully dressed Nathaniel also stands behind David, looking over his shoulder.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)  
You're the worst one we've got.

DAVID  
(drily)  
Thanks, Dad.

NATHANIEL  
Where's Federico?

DAVID  
It's Christmas morning. He's with his wife and kids. He'll be in later.

NATHANIEL  
Couldn't this wait? I don't want you ruining my face.

DAVID  
Little late for that.

NATHANIEL  
Not funny.

DAVID  
I need to stay busy right now.

NATHANIEL  
So reorganize some files. Come up with a new bookkeeping program. That's what you're good at. You were never really cut out for this stuff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

I know. And what did I do with my life? I went to school to learn exactly how to do this stuff. Other kids my age were going to frat parties, I was draining corpses and refashioning severed ears out of wax.

NATHANIEL

Thank God I didn't lose an ear. I can only imagine what you'd come up with.

DAVID

And I did it all for you. Because I knew how much it hurt you when Nate refused to go into the business.

Federico enters, unnoticed by David.

FEDERICO'S POV: David sits, working on a very dead Nathaniel. There is no other Nathaniel anywhere in sight.

DAVID (cont'd)

I did it to make you happy, you ungrateful son of a bitch.

A beat.

FEDERICO

Uhm, Dave?

David looks up.

FEDERICO (cont'd)

Just wanted to let you know I was here.

EXT. CEMETERY - A SHORT TIME LATER

MOVING past row after row of HEADSTONES. Nate comes into view, running fast and hard.

CLOSE ON NATE, his face red and sweaty.

EXT. PASADENA STREET - LATER

We're on the same street lined with small businesses we saw at the very beginning. Exhausted, Nate walks along the deserted sidewalk. He glances down the street at:

NATE'S POV: A BUS heads toward us, at high speed.

Nate starts running in place, watching the bus as it approaches... then he suddenly steps out into the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bus's TIRES SQUEAL, but it's going too fast and it SLAMS INTO NATE, then SKIDS to a stop. Nate crumples to the ground. Horrified, the Driver disembarks and approaches Nate.

HIS POV: Nate lies beneath us on the pavement, BLOOD slowly spreading around his head.

NATE'S POV: The Driver stands above us, but we FLOAT past him toward the sky.. We HEAR WIND RUSHING as we're sucked into a DARK TUNNEL. A PATCH OF LIGHT appears in the distance. We MOVE toward it steadily, suddenly much FASTER, and before we know it, we're in...

INT. MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

All the body lockers are open. A naked Nathaniel sits with a few other naked DEAD PEOPLE. They're playing cards. He looks over at us and smiles.

NATHANIEL

We'll deal you in next hand.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PASADENA STREET - CONTINUOUS

Nate stands on the sidewalk, looking down the street. There's no bus in sight. Nate pulls his CELL PHONE from inside his windbreaker.

CLOSE on the cell phone, as he PUSHES the BUTTONS \*, 6, 9.

Nate holds the phone to his ear. We HEAR:

RECORDED VOICE

(over phone line)

Your custom calling service is working.  
However, this feature cannot be used with  
the number you are trying to reach--

Nate sighs and switches the phone off. He looks up at the sky. We HEAR LIGHT CLASSICAL MUSIC.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - THE FOLLOWING DAY

We're looking up at a CEILING painted to resemble a blue SKY, dotted with fluffy white CLOUDS. PAN DOWN to Nathaniel lying in his casket, looking pink and well-rested. Family and friends file by to pay their respects. DAVID stands to the side, overseeing. He greets people kindly, professionally.

DAVID

Thank you for coming... thank you so much  
for the beautiful flowers...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARGE WOMAN

He looks just like he's sleeping.

DAVID

Yes, he does, doesn't he?

LARGE WOMAN

Your father performed miracles on my aunt Shirley. Took ten years off her.

(re: Nathaniel)

He looks his age though.

ON NATE AND CLAIRE, seated on a couch.

CLAIRE

I'm about to jump out of my skin.

NATE

Don't, because I'm just barely holding it together. Are you still high?

CLAIRE

I can't tell. Am I sweating?

NATE

I know I am.

CLAIRE

This is too fucking weird. It's been three days, and I'm still trapped in zombie world.

NATE

Yeah, this is all happening to you.

CLAIRE

(stung)

Fuck off.

NATE

Sorry, but you're not the only one who wasn't prepared for this. I came home, expecting to sleep late and chow down on mom's cooking for six days. And now I find myself feeling like I'm not even a part of this family. Or any family...

(genuine)

My life is totally fucked up, Claire.

CLAIRE

At least you got out of here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NATE

I live in a shitty apartment, which was supposed to be temporary. I work at a job which was also supposed to be temporary, until I figured out what I really wanted to do with my life, which apparently is nothing. I have lots of sex but I've never had a relationship last more than a couple of months. I don't even have the self-discipline to floss daily. I've had four root canals. Four! I'm going to one of those losers who ends up on his deathbed saying, "Where'd my life go?"

CLAIRE

(softly)

No you won't.

(then)

You'll be saying, "Where the hell is the morphine?"

(off his look)

Just trying to cheer you up.

NATE

I've spent my whole fucking life being cheerful.

The LARGE WOMAN who spoke to David earlier approaches them.

LARGE WOMAN

I'm sorry about your father... but he's in a much better place now.

NATE

You are so right about that.

INT. RUTH AND NATHANIEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruth stands, looking at herself in a MIRROR over her dresser, buttoning up a black dress. She glances down at a pair of CUFFLINKS on the dresser's surface. She picks up one of the cufflinks and stares at it, her face blank. IN THE MIRROR we see Nathaniel sitting on the edge of the bed, watching her.

NATHANIEL

I know, Ruth.

Ruth glances at his reflection, uneasy. She puts the cufflink down.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

I see what I couldn't see when I was alive. Or didn't want to.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruth shuts her eyes.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)  
I know everything.

Ruth opens her eyes. Nathaniel still watches her, smiling.

RUTH  
(on the verge of tears)  
God damn it.

She turns and leaves the room.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

David oversees the viewing, his face a mask of benevolence and understanding, until something catches his eye:

DAVID'S POV: Keith Charles walks toward us, wearing a POLICEMAN'S UNIFORM.

David is not happy to see him.

KEITH  
Hey, buddy--

DAVID  
(hushed)  
What are you doing here?

KEITH  
I just got off duty, I came to pay my respects to your father.

DAVID  
(an edge)  
You've never even met my father.

Keith stares at him.

KEITH  
(an edge of his own)  
Exactly. And you've met my parents how many times now? Christ, we spent the weekend at their house--

David pulls Keith aside.

DAVID  
Don't do this to me, Keith. This is not your high school reunion, this is not the time to be political--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEITH

You think that's why I'm here? To be political?

DAVID

Keep your voice down!

KEITH

What is this? You can fuck me, but I can't be a shoulder for you to cry on?

DAVID

I'm not crying.

KEITH

So all that talk about wanting a relationship, and kids--this is just sex to you? Because I want more than that. And I thought you did too.

DAVID

Jesus, do we really have to have this conversation now?

(then)

Shit, here comes my mother.

Ruth approaches them.

RUTH

I'm so tired.

DAVID

I know, mom. It's exhausting.

An awkward pause. Ruth eyes Keith in his policeman's uniform.

RUTH

Is something wrong?

DAVID

No! Nothing's wrong. This is Keith Charles. He's a friend of mine. He came to pay his respects to Dad.

KEITH

I'm glad to finally meet you, Mrs. Hitchcock. I just wish it wasn't under these circumstances.

RUTH

(to David)

You're friends with a cop?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

We play racquetball together.

RUTH

Oh.

(to Keith)

Nice to meet you.

(to David)

Take me over to your father now.

David offers Ruth his arm and leads her over to the casket.

ON NATE AND CLAIRE across the room.

CLAIRE

Who's that cop?

NATE

This is so weird. You know, North America is the only place in the world where they do this whole open casket thing.

CLAIRE

(stares at him)

Huh. Today's fun fact.

ON DAVID AND RUTH, standing at the casket. She holds on to David tightly as she looks down at Nathaniel. Her face crumples and she starts to cry. David gently guides her off through a drape, into a another room.

ON NATE AND CLAIRE, watching.

NATE

What, she's sad, so he has to get her out of sight?

CLAIRE

They always do that. The minute somebody starts to lose it, they take them off into that room. It makes all the other people uncomfortable, I guess.

NATE

(angry)

This is not about the other people!

CLAIRE

Volume.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NATE

When I went backpacking through Europe, after I quit school, I went to this island off the coast of Sicily called Stromboli. And on the boat over, there was this pine box, somebody who had died who was being returned to the island to be buried there.

EXT. STROMBOLI BEACH - DAY (1987)

A stretch of BLACK SAND. A handful of OLD SICILIAN MEN AND WOMEN, all dressed in black, stand looking out to sea.

NATE (V.O.)

The beaches were black, because the island was a volcano. It was kind of weird, but... beautiful.

A moderate-sized cabin cruiser is moored a couple of hundred feet off the beach. A couple of men are rowing a rowboat with the COFFIN in it toward the beach.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

And these old Sicilians were waiting there...

CLOSE ON THE SICILIANS, their ancient faces like crinkled paper lined with age and experience.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

...dressed all in black, on that black beach, and I remember thinking, "Wow, this is so cinematic..."

The rowboat reaches the beach and the rowers drag the coffin onto the sand. The old Sicilian women hurl themselves onto it and start CRYING and SCREAMING. The old Sicilian men look on, stone-faced.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

And when they got the coffin to the beach, those women just went apeshit. Screaming, throwing themselves on it, beating their chests, tearing at their hair, making animal noises. It was so...

22-YEAR-OLD NATE watches from the deck of the cabin cruiser.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)

...so real. I mean, I'd been around funerals my whole life, but I had never seen such... grief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE'S POV: Across the water, on the beach, the women continue carrying on.

NATE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
And at the time, it really made me uncomfortable. But now I think it was probably so much more healthy than...

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Nate and Claire, on the couch, in the midst of the viewing.

NATE  
(gestures)  
...this.

A beat.

CLAIRE  
(oblivious)  
That cop is cute.

Nate gets up.

INT. SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ruth sits on a couch, crying. David sits next to her, holding a box of Kleenex.

RUTH  
Oh, David. David.

DAVID  
I know, Mom. It's going to be okay, it just takes time.

RUTH  
I've done a terrible, terrible thing.

DAVID  
What?

RUTH  
I've done a terrible thing.

Nate enters.

NATE  
How's she doing?

DAVID  
She's fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH  
(breaking down)  
I'm not fine! I'm a whore! I was  
unfaithful to your father! For years!

A beat. Nate and David are speechless.

RUTH (cont'd)  
And now he knows! He knows!

NATE  
Uh...

RUTH  
(the floodgates open)  
I met a man at church, once when your  
father didn't come with me...

NATE  
Mom, it's okay.

RUTH  
And he invited me for coffee, and he said  
he liked my hair--he's a hairdresser, a  
widower, well, they divorced before she  
died, so technically I guess he's  
divorced--

DAVID  
This is really not the time--

NATE  
Maybe she needs to just get this out.

RUTH  
--and he invited me to accompany him on a  
hike, I didn't even have the right shoes,  
I wore sandals--

DAVID  
(to Nate, overlapping)  
Yeah, well, I don't want to hear it.

RUTH  
--I used to love hiking when I was  
younger, and being outdoors--I always  
wanted to take you kids camping but your  
father would never leave the business...

NATE  
(to David)  
Go back out. I'll stay here with her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID  
(an edge)  
What are you, a priest?

RUTH  
Well, I can tell you, I went camping with  
this man from church. Several times. Told  
your father I was visiting my sister,  
which, if he'd ever thought to call--

DAVID  
(to Ruth)  
Can you even begin to fathom the  
impropriety of this? Your husband is  
lying in a casket out there!

NATE  
(angry)  
David, she's grief-stricken, okay? Fuck  
propriety!

DAVID  
(angrier)  
Fuck propriety? Fuck you!

He storms out. Ruth breaks down again. Nate comforts her.

INT. SLUMBER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Claire stands, watching:

HER POV: Keith stands at the casket, studying Nathaniel's  
face.

Claire takes a breath, approaches him.

CLAIRE  
Did you know him?

KEITH  
No... you?

CLAIRE  
He's my father.

KEITH  
You're Claire?

CLAIRE  
(thrown)  
Uh... yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEITH

Keith Charles. I'm a friend of your brother's.

CLAIRE

Of Nate's?

KEITH

No. David.

CLAIRE

(baffled)

David is friends with a cop?

A beat.

KEITH

We play racquetball together.

CLAIRE

David plays racquetball together.

David suddenly approaches, agitated.

DAVID

(to Claire)

Excuse us.

He pulls Keith aside.

DAVID (cont'd)

You want me to cry on your shoulder?  
Fine. My mother just confessed she was having an affair.

KEITH

Wow.

DAVID

Yeah, with some hairdresser! Who likes to hike! And now fucking Nate is in there, playing Mister Sensitive with her, while her dead husband lies in the next room.

KEITH

Okay, just breathe. You're going to survive this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVID

Damn straight I'm going to survive this. I'll be the strong one, the stable one, the dependable one, because that's what I do. And everybody around me will fall apart, because that's what they do.

KEITH

(after a beat)

Don't you get exhausted, being so hard on everybody? And yourself?

DAVID

Oh, shut up. She met him at church!

KEITH

(smiles)

You met me at church.

David stares at Keith, unable to think of a response.

ON CLAIRE, watching them.

HER POV: David finally smiles, even starts to laugh. Keith smiles too, puts his hand on David's shoulder and leans into him. It's a comfortable, intimate moment.

ON CLAIRE, getting it.

INT. SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nate sits next to Ruth, his arm around her as she cries.

RUTH

These last few years, your father has been so, so distant, you know how he retreats inside himself sometimes? Well, it's like he was living there twenty-four hours a day.

NATE

Yeah...

RUTH

I didn't even realize how lonely I was... Or how long it had been since a man touched me like that...

NATE

(uncomfortable)

Well, loneliness is a terrible thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUTH

And now your father sees me, like God sees me, and he knows everything. I'm so ashamed.

NATE

You didn't do it to hurt anybody. You were lonely. I'm sure Dad forgives you.

She looks up at him, stricken.

RUTH

And God doesn't?

NATE

Oh, yeah, I'm sure he forgives you too.

She starts crying again. He wraps his arms around her and rocks her.

NATE (cont'd)

It's okay. Everybody forgives everybody. For everything.

His CELL PHONE RINGS. He attempts to loosen his embrace, but Ruth clings to him. He hugs her even tighter, as his CELL PHONE continues to ring.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOME - CONTINUOUS

A state-of-the-art designer kitchen. In another room, we HEAR people ARGUING. Brenda leans against the center island, eating gourmet olives out of a plastic tub, her cell phone to her ear.

BRENDA

Fuck.

She hangs up, looks pensive. Her BROTHER enters, weeping, and goes to the fridge. He rummages around inside, starts to get upset when he can't seem to find what he's looking for.

BRENDA (cont'd)

If you're looking for the olives, they're right here.

She hands him the tub. He exits, still weeping.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COMMERCIAL SET - DAY (BLACK & WHITE)

PERKY COMMERCIAL MUSIC plays as the same MODEL gestures toward a display of what seem to be COMMERCIAL CHEF'S SALT-SHAKERS.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Ashes to ashes and dust to dust? Easy as pie with the new Franklin Leak-Resistant Earth Dispenser! Say goodbye to soiled fingers! Effortless, refined, attractive, and respectful--

The commercial ends abruptly, as if someone switched the TV off. MUSIC ENDS and the SCREEN GOES BLACK.

PRIEST (O.C.)

In the midst of life, we are in death.

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - THE NEXT DAY

CLOSE ON NATE, listening. He's tired, troubled.

PRIEST (O.C.)

Of whom may we seek for succor, but of thee, O Lord? Who for our sins art justly displeased?

PAN from Nate to the other members of his family: RUTH, guilt-stricken...

PRIEST (O.C.) (cont'd)

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts.

...CLAIRE, looking like she hasn't slept in days...

PRIEST (O.C.) (cont'd)

Shut not thy merciful ear to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty.

...and DAVID, stoic.      ••

PRIEST (O.C.) (cont'd)

O holy and merciful Savior, thou most worthy Judge eternal.

An Episcopal PRIEST reads from The Book of Common Prayer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRIEST (cont'd)

Suffer us not, at our last hour, through  
any pains of death, to fall from thee.

LONG SHOT of the typical American funeral, as Nathaniel's casket is lowered into the ground. Tent, flowers, funeral grass, the whole nine yards. In the foreground, a MAN watches, his back to us. He wears a Hawaiian shirt and a porkpie hat.

REVERSE ANGLE: It's Nathaniel, seated atop the hearse he was driving at the beginning. He lights a cigarette, then sips through a straw from a frothy tropical drink.

The Priest retrieves the Franklin Earth Dispenser we saw in the commercial and holds it over the grave, shaking dust out.

PRIEST (cont'd)

In sure and certain hope of the  
resurrection to eternal life through our  
Lord Jesus Christ...

ON NATE, watching, frowning.

PRIEST (O.C.) (cont'd)

...we commend to Almighty God our brother  
Nathaniel Samuel Hitchcock; and we commit  
his body to the ground.

NATE

(under his breath)

He looks like he's salting popcorn.

David glares at him, but Nate pays no attention.

The Priest gives the Earth Dispenser to Ruth. As she shakes it over the grave, followed by Claire and then David:

PRIEST

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to  
dust. The Lord bless him and keep him,  
the Lord make his face to shine upon him  
and be gracious unto him...

Claire hands the dispenser to Nate.

PRIEST (cont'd)

The Lord lift up his countenance upon him  
and give him peace...

The Priest trails off, waiting for Nate to follow his turn, but he doesn't. David starts to look concerned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ON NATHANIEL, watching, as Brenda's JEEP CHEROKEE PULLS INTO FRAME behind the hearse. She gets out and crosses toward us to watch as well. Unseen by her, Nathaniel checks her out.

Nate crosses to the mound of earth beside the grave, kneels down and plunges his hand in. He stands, holding a fistful of dirt, the sleeve of his suit jacket soiled.

Everyone stares, concerned, baffled, and in David's case, angry. He crosses to Nate and attempts to pull him back. Nate shakes him off, roughly.

NATE

No. This is real. This is as real as it gets. And I refuse to sanitize it any more.

DAVID

This is how it's done--

NATE

Yeah, well, it's whacked. What is all this stuff, anyway? This stupid saltshaker, this, this hermetically sealed box, this phony astroturf around the grave. Jesus, it's like surgery. Clean. Antiseptic. Business.

(angry)

He was our father.

DAVID

(quietly)

Please don't do this.

NATE

(overlapping)

You can pump him full of chemicals, and put makeup on him, and prop him up for a (air quotes)

"nap" in the "slumber room," but the fact remains: The only father we will ever have is dead. And that sucks, but it's a goddamn part of life and you can't really accept it without getting your hands dirty. Well, I do accept it, and I intend to honor the old bastard by letting the world see just how fucked up and shitty I feel that he's dead.

And he angrily throws his fistful of dirt into the grave.

NATE (cont'd)

God damn it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

An awkward beat.

PRIEST

Uh... Amen.

RUTH

Wait.

Nate and David watch apprehensively as Ruth crosses to the mound of earth, grabs a fistful and throws it into the grave. She grabs another... then another... throwing them all into the grave, losing control, GROWLING like an animal. Unnerved, David starts toward her, but Nate holds him back.

NATE

Let her.

Mourners look on, a little stunned, as Ruth continues flinging dirt wildly into the grave. Suddenly she stops and SCREAMS, a primal, animalistic scream.

RUTH

Aaaaarrrrrrggggghhhhh!

Ruth screams until she's spent, then just stands there, gasping for breath. Nate crosses to his mother and wraps his arms around her. She clings to him, too exhausted to cry.

David is seething. An awkward beat.

PRIEST

(quickly)

The Lord be with you.

MOURNERS

And with they spirit.

PRIEST

Let us pray...

PRIEST/MOURNERS

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed  
be thy name...

Brenda watches, smiling. Behind her, Nathaniel is also smiling.

NATHANIEL

(clapping)

Woo-hoo!

ON CLAIRE, watching him, her face blank.

EXT. CEMETERY - A SHORT TIME LATER

The funeral is over. Nate walks an exhausted Ruth to a car. David approaches with Federico.

DAVID

Mom, Rico's going to drive you back, okay? I just want to go over some details with Nate. We'll be right behind you.

FEDERICO

(offers his arm)  
Put her there, Mrs. H.

RUTH

(loopy from exhaustion)  
You have such delicate hands, Rico. Like a statue. Or an illustration in an antique book. Or one of those little ceramic hands they use to display children's gloves...

Ruth and Federico cross off. David turns to Nate, glaring.

DAVID

You want to be the alpha dog, Nate? Is that it? Coasting toward mid-life with nothing to show for it and now you want to come back and be the rock for this family to lean on? Fuck you.

NATE

(stung)  
I'm not--

DAVID

(on a roll)  
There's a reason behind what we do here. We provide people with a very important and sacred service at the darkest time in their lives--

NATE

Yeah, as long as there's no real feelings expressed! Well, what do you think happens to those feelings? They don't just go away.

DAVID

Oh yeah, you tell me about going away. You abandoned us. You abandoned me. You had a responsibility to this family and you ran from it and left it all to me--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE

Whoa. Don't blame me if you're not living the life you want, that's nobody's fault but your own.

A beat. David studies him coolly.

DAVID

Fine. Just do me a favor, okay? You got out. Stay out.

We FOLLOW DAVID as he storms off. An officious young BUSINESSMAN CROSSES INTO FRAME and hurries after David.

BUSINESSMAN

Excuse me, Mr. Hitchcock? Sir? If I could have just a moment of your time...

DAVID

(still walking)  
What.

BUSINESSMAN

I'm from the Global Service Corporation. I'd like to talk to you about the advantages of joining our family of death care facilities--

DAVID

I cannot believe this. Get the fuck out of here.

BUSINESSMAN

Sir, if you'd just hear me out--

DAVID

No. We're not selling. People in this community know us. They trust us.

BUSINESSMAN

We wouldn't change the name of the business. And of course, we would retain you as a salaried manager--

David stops and turns to him.

DAVID

Look. I really want to hit somebody right now, and it might as well be you.

The Businessman steps back from him. David resumes walking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BUSINESSMAN

(calls after)

I'll call you when you've had some time  
to recover from your loss.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Nate stands with his back to us. Over his shoulder, in the distance, we see a CEMETERY WORKER in overalls shoveling dirt into Nathaniel's grave. We CIRCLE AROUND NATE until we're on his troubled face. Brenda walks up behind him.

BRENDA

Hi.

He turns to her, surprised.

NATE

Wow. I never expected to see you again.

BRENDA

Life's full of surprises.

NATE

You're telling me. How'd you--

BRENDA

Funeral notices, in the paper. It's not that hard.

They start to walk.

NATE

(awkward)

So how's life?

BRENDA

Well, after spending the holidays with my family, I'm ready for shock therapy, which is actually gaining respectability these days.

(then)

How's life with you?

NATE

Oh, great. My father's dead, my mom's been having an affair with a hiking hairdresser, my brother holds me responsible for everything he hates about his life, and my sister's dabbling in crack-smoking. I think I win.

Brenda smiles. They walk along in silence for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATE (cont'd)

You know, four days ago, I was a relatively happy guy, and now... it's like I don't even know who that guy was.

His grin fades; he's suddenly too tired to turn on the charm. He stops walking.

NATE (cont'd)

I'm a fucking mess, if you want to know the truth. But I think you're already aware of that.

Brenda studies him, reaches inside her purse, grabs a scrap of paper and scribbles her number on it.

BRENDA

Well, here's my number. If you ever want to... I don't know, have a real date? You know, where you buy me dinner before I put out.

Nate takes the number, looks at her quizzically.

BRENDA (cont'd)

(shrugs)

Maybe I'm one of those women who meets a man who seems emotionally conflicted and has no relationship skills and I figure, hey, that's for me.

NATE

Uh... You know I don't even live here, right? I live in Seattle.

BRENDA

See, that just makes you more attractive.

They continue to walk.

NATE

I'm also a serial rapist and I have ten nurses buried under my house.

BRENDA

You're making me wet.

NATE

Oh, and I'm a Scientologist.

BRENDA

Marry me.

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON AN ORNATE TOMBSTONE. PAN DOWN to Nathaniel, in a swimsuit and sunglasses, lying on a beach recliner under the tombstone, holding his coconut drink.

Claire leans against an adjacent tombstone, smoking.

CLAIRE

You're really lucky, you know?

NATHANIEL

Oh, I know. It was all over, in a second. I didn't have to be afraid of it, I didn't even have to think about it.

CLAIRE

No more bullshit.

NATHANIEL

No more responsibility.

CLAIRE

No more pain.

NATHANIEL

No more boredom.

A beat.

CLAIRE

No more waiting to die.

Nathaniel smiles and raises his drink as if in a toast.

INT. KEITH'S APARTMENT - THAT EVENING

Keith is sprawled on the couch, reading. His DOORBELL RINGS. He gets up and opens the door to reveal David, who embraces Keith and buries his face in his shoulder.

KEITH

(softly)

Hey... it's okay...

David looks up at him, his eyes filled with a vulnerability we haven't seen from him, then they kiss. It's a soft, romantic kiss that quickly grows in intensity on David's part. He starts to unbutton Keith's shirt.

KEITH (cont'd)

Whoa, whoa...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVID

(urgent)

I need to feel alive. Please.

Keith gives in, and the two men kiss again. The passion builds, and they start to rip off each other's clothes.

FADE TO BLACK.

HICKEY

Well, this shouldn't take too long...

FADE IN:

EXT. PASADENA STREET - DAY

An unbelievably sunny day. PEDESTRIANS and BUSINESSPEOPLE crowd the sidewalks of the same street from the beginning. A SIGN in one of the windows reads:

HAYES, HICKEY & SILVERMAN  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

HICKEY (O.C.)

I, William Nathaniel Hitchcock, a resident of Los Angeles County, California...

INT. LAW OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Attorney STUART HICKEY sits at his desk, reading a document. He's in his fifties, formidable.

HICKEY

...declare this to be my Last Will and revoke all former Wills and Codicils. First: To my wife Ruth, I leave all cash, bank accounts, stocks and bonds, and real property that are in my name.

ON NATE, DAVID, RUTH & CLAIRE, seated across from Hickey.

HICKEY (cont'd)

Second: I bequeath the company Hitchcock and Sons Incorporated and all business interests attached, as follows... Fifty percent to my son David James Hitchcock...

Nate glances at Ruth. David remains ambivalent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HICKEY (cont'd)

And fifty percent to my son William  
Nathaniel Hitchcock Junior.

NATE

What?!

Everyone is flabbergasted, but nobody more so than Nate.  
David looks at him coolly.

NATE (cont'd)

This is insane. Why would he do that?

RUTH

He loved you.

David suddenly stands and exits angrily.

NATE

Dave--

Nate follows him out. An awkward beat.

CLAIRE

Wow. I guess I don't even rate.

EXT. LAW OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

David comes out of the law offices, followed by Nate.

NATE

David, wait--

David turns to him, seething.

DAVID

What?

NATE

Look, I don't want it.

DAVID

Well. Excuse me while I go contemplate  
the irony of that.

He storms down the sidewalk. Nate stands there, still bowled  
over. He glances across the street at...

HIS POV: A scattering of people stand at a BUS STOP. Among  
them is Nathaniel, in his suit and porkpie hat, chatting  
amiably.

ON NATE, watching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIS POV: A BUS pulls up to the stop. Nathaniel boards along with the others, and takes a seat next to the window. Just before the bus takes off, he smiles and waves to us.

ON NATE, suddenly stricken. We start to HEAR The Devlins' "WAITING." Nate looks around at:

HIS POV: On the sidewalk and across the street, PEOPLE of all ages carry on their business of living their lives.

IN SLOW MOTION: A succession of their FACES, each of them glancing at us...

MUSIC CONTINUES as Nate stands there, watching. He starts to cry... for his father, for himself, for all of us.

FADE TO BLACK.