

TRIP

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INT SUBWAY CAR DAY

Subway doors WHOOSH open on STEVE BAKER, late thirties, nice haircut, nice suit, nice necktie choking the life out of him. He steps onto the train, the uptown C.

It's crowded, commuter hour, but miraculously there's one seat left. Steve snags it, digs in his backpack and pulls out his Walkman. He slips on the headphones, hits play, and sits back, letting the music fill his ears and drown everybody out. He pulls a *New Yorker* from his backpack, opens it up, fills his eyes with that. He adjusts his glasses and starts to read.

Whoops. An OLD LADY. Steve gets up, doesn't sigh or anything. She takes the seat, not that she says thank you.

Steve grabs a pole, folds his magazine in half. Still, it's a nice chunk of space for 6:30 on a Friday.

THE DOORS WHOOSH OPEN

at Canal and NINE PEOPLE climb on. Nobody gets off. A NEW GUY grabs hold of the pole, Steve's pole. Steve moves his hand up a few inches. Goes back to the magazine.

THE DOORS WHOOSH OPEN

at West 4th and a DOZEN PEOPLE climb on. Erode Steve's space. He turns a page in his magazine, folds it again.

But to turn the page, he had to take his hand off the pole, and when he goes to put it back, two more hands have taken his space.

He reaches out for the top bar, over the seat, but to hold that one he has to sort of arch his arm over a REALLY SHORT LADY.

The train lurches away. Steve goes back to the magazine.

THE DOORS WHOOSH OPEN

at 23rd Street, and this is not going to be pretty. Four people want to get off, but THIRTEEN more *will* get on that train.

Steve's no dummy, he snags a good spot on the pole again, but now the teeming masses are swarming all around him. Forget about the magazine, breathing is going to be an issue.

Steve has a flair for the dramatic, he rests his head against the pole in woeful fashion.

CONTINUED:

Which is when the train lurches out of the station, bouncing him back and forward, DOINGING his skull off the pole.

Ow. Steve rubs his head, looks around. Nobody saw, except Really Short Lady, who thinks it was kinda funny.

Steve smiles, yeah, hilarious, you monster. He rides out the next stop, the train GROANS to a halt, Steve turns around to face the doors, dread in his face, because this is 34th Street, Penn Station --

-- and A MASS OF HUMANITY wants on that train *now*. Steve gives up on the pole, won't be needing it anymore, human beings will support each other now, just wedged in there like a bunch of asparagus.

Steve closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT CENTRAL PARK DAY

A dog sniffs around for a place to crap in Central Park. She's fussy. Following the leash back, we find the owner at the other end of it, REBECCA BAKER, around the same age as Steve.

She's impatient. The dog sniffs and declines a few more spots. Rebecca's face -- can it *possibly* make any difference?

The dog chooses, starts to squat.

Rebecca's face again -- thank God. She fishes in the pocket of her coat, comes up with a couple empty Gristede's bags.

Rebecca bends down, bag over her hand, and looks the other way as she picks up the shit.

She walks away across the park, leading the dog, holding the now-sagging plastic bag at arm's length.

EXT CENTRAL PARK WEST DAY

Rebecca comes out of the park, leading the dog. She finds herself across the street from the Unitarian Church in the West Seventies. She stops, noticing it this time, for some reason.

She looks around, to see if there's anybody she knows nearby.

She laughs at herself. What am I, kidding?

But she looks back at the church.

IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH,

the dog is now leashed to a parking meter, staring mournfully at the church. It BARKS at the open front door.

INT CHURCH DAY

Rebecca walks down the big aisle of the empty church. At the front, a MINISTER in a black cassock is lighting a row of candles.

Rebecca slumps into a pew in the middle, sits there, arms folded across her chest, staring straight ahead.

She looks down, sees the kneeler in front of her.

She looks over her shoulder again, makes sure nobody's watching.

She slithers forward, her knees hit the kneeler.

She watches the Minister at the front. He moves from candle to candle. Light blooms.

Rebecca raises her arms, elbows on the pew in front of her. She looks like she's about to pray, but instead she just buries her face in her hands.

From outside, the dog BARKS. Several times, evenly spaced.

Rebecca's shoulders start to shake.

CUT TO:

INT APARTMENT DAY

An apartment door opens and it's like opening a door marked "NOISE." The door SMACKS into a ten speed bike and Steve has to snake his way in. He chucks his briefcase into a chair, rips that tie off his neck.

Two boys are immediately upon him, TEDDY and SAM, twins, seven years old. They do not stop moving. They do not stop talking. We never make out a word they say, although a few cries of "Daddy!" and "Chase me!" break through. The apartment is nice, but small, too small for all this.

Rebecca walks past in her underwear, carrying clothes from the laundry, no sign of her earlier distress. Teddy climbs up on a table behind Steve.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

(to Rebecca)
Your bike.

REBECCA

We're so late.

She leaps nimbly over ANNA, a three year old, who is chased by KENDRA, a youngish baby-sitter.

STEVE

Ride it or sell it.

Teddy, the boy who climbed the table, leaps and lands on Steve's back. Steve GROANS, wasn't expecting it, almost drops the kid.

STEVE (cont'd)

That hurts me, I told you that. Why do you do that, when you know it hurts me?

REBECCA

Ahem.

STEVE

(to Teddy)
Hey, you deaf? Or you just don't care, or what? Get off me!

REBECCA

The eagle has landed.

Steve looks at her. Gently pulls Teddy off his back.

STEVE

I gotta hang with Mom for a minute.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM/BATHROOM DAY

Steve closes the bedroom door and locks it. Rebecca stands in the doorway to their bathroom, dangling a Ziploc bag of pot in a most seductive manner.

REBECCA

Say you love me.

He sighs in relief, reaches for the bag. But she pulls it away.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Say you love me.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

I love you. You scored. What?

But she keeps holding it away, looking at him. He moves closer, slides his hands across her skin, reaching for the bag, which she still holds away.

He looks at her, their faces close. There's an awkward hesitation.

STEVE (cont'd)

You all right?

She shakes her head no. But she might be kidding.

He leans forward, to kiss her, but she turns a little.

REBECCA

Eh.

He stops. Looks at her. His hands move down to her hips and push her gently against the bathroom counter.

She looks at him, her face either empty or encouraging, it's hard to tell.

He hooks two fingers in the edges of her underwear.

She looks at him, defiant.

His fingers start to tug down her panties.

She turns her head away.

Steve's knees lower into frame as they settle on the tile floor.

Back up on the counter, Rebecca turns back as Steve's head disappears out of sight. She moves herself back slightly onto the counter, opens herself.

She closes her eyes.

On the bathroom floor, the bag of pot drops to the tile next to Steve's knee.

THROUGH THE DOORWAY,

we see a half-obscured image as he kneels in front of her.

CUT TO:

INT BEDROOM DAY

Steve's practiced hands roll a joint. A few minutes later. He's still in his business suit, sitting in the window.

STEVE

So I say fine, but *I'm* not gonna be there. *You guys* have a meeting, meet all day if you want, take two meetings before lunch, they're small, but if you think I'm gonna sit through your little cluster fuck you're outta your mind, I got actual work to do.

He lights the joint, takes a hit and holds it in.

STEVE (cont'd)

So when you're done, pick a guy, *one guy*, and have him call me, and I swear to God we'll be finished with the whole thing in an hour.

He leans down, puts his mouth in the open window, and blows the smoke outside. Fans the rest, get outta here.

IN THE BATHROOM,

Rebecca carefully applies makeup. Makes flickering eye contact with herself, doesn't hold it.

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They wonder why nothing ever gets done. Nothing can *possibly* get done, they're all tied up in meetings. This smells good, where'd you get it?

She comes out of the bathroom, buttoning up. She takes the joint from him, takes a hit herself.

REBECCA

That guy Katie knows.

STEVE

What guy?

REBECCA

A guy, you call him up, I'm a friend of so-and-so.

STEVE

Did I come in all like a dick before?

CONTINUED:

REBECCA
(imitating him)
"Ride it or sell it."

STEVE
What time are we supposed to be there?

He takes another hit.

REBECCA
Whatever, he doesn't care. Relax.

STEVE
You nervous?

REBECCA
No reason to be.

STEVE
I'm a little.

REBECCA
Don't be, it'll make it weird.

STEVE
Couldn't stop thinking about the kids
last time.

REBECCA
We get a night off. That's reasonable.

He takes a deep breath. Seems much calmer.

STEVE
I *did* come in all like a dick.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Teddy is playing Nintendo. Steve sits down beside him. Calmer now, jeans and a shirt and squinty-eyed. Teddy keeps playing, Smash Brothers, doesn't look at Steve.

STEVE
Can I play?

Teddy still doesn't look at him, but reaches out and pushes the reset button on the Nintendo, holds up a control pad. Steve takes it.

CONTINUED:

TEDDY
I got Captain Falcon.

STEVE
I'll be... Samus.

TEDDY
No, you're Jiggly Puff.

STEVE
Jiggly Puff is a wuss.

TEDDY
You're Jiggly Puff.

Steve looks at him. Teddy's still mad.

ON SCREEN,

the chooser switches over to a big pink, balloony character and selects it.

GAME VOICE
Jiggly Puff!

IN THE LIVING ROOM,

Teddy smiles, but still won't look at him.

STEVE
Makes me be Jiggly Puff...

They start playing. Just the sounds of the game for a moment, then, still looking at the screen:

STEVE (cont'd)
I'm sorry I was crabby before.

TEDDY
Jiggly Puff can evolve.

STEVE
Huh?

TEDDY
Into Wiggly Tuff.

But he still won't look at Steve.

STEVE
Ah. So there's hope.

INT BATHROOM DAY

A big fat eyedrop squeezes out of a bottle of Visine and settles in Rebecca's bloodshot right eye. She blinks, repeats for the left. She closes her eyes, blots the excess from her cheeks with a Kleenex.

One last check in the mirror, this time she catches eyes with herself a moment longer, a moment --

-- that is broken when she slips on a pair of sunglasses. She stares for a moment, and as she does one rogue eyedrop slithers out from under the glasses and rolls down her cheek.

But that's easy to wipe away.

CUT TO:

INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Front door open, Mom and Dad trying to get out of there. Rebecca, still in sunglasses, is in the hall already, Steve is headed that way. Kids are clingy, Kendra trying to scrape them off. Steve is holding Sam.

STEVE

I don't know, late.

SAM

How late?

STEVE

Very late. All-night late.

SAM

(scandalized)

WHAT?!

STEVE

Probably.

SAM

So we're gonna be *alone*?!

REBECCA

Of course you're not going to be alone, Kendra's staying over tonight.

There is much SCREAMING and excitement at this shocking turn of events, of which they were fully aware.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

(to Kendra)

They can stay up till ten.

REBECCA

She knows.

STEVE

Half an hour of Nintendo.

REBECCA

She *knows*.

STEVE

So, you know.

KENDRA

I know.

Steve grabs his cell phone from the charger on the entry table as Rebecca drags him into the hall.

IN THE HALLWAY,

The door closes on the kids. Rebecca looks at Steve.

REBECCA

We don't *have* to do this.

STEVE

Oh yes we do.

CUT TO:

A DOOR OPENS

and BOBBY, mid-thirties, looks at us.

BOBBY

Welcome to my underground lair.

INT BOBBY'S LOFT NIGHT

A small aluminum foil package is unwrapped on a kitchen counter, revealing a few ounces of freeze-dried mushroom caps and stems. Steve and Rebecca are in the kitchen with Bobby. They're in a loft in a converted building downtown.

Bobby starts chopping up the mushrooms with a kitchen knife.

CONTINUED:

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STEVE

Where'd you get 'em?

REBECCA

He always has to know where.

BOBBY

From that guy Colin knows in L.A. Last time I was out there.

STEVE

You took them on the plane?

REBECCA

Put 'em in the coffee grinder, then you don't have to chew 'em as much.

BOBBY

But the powder's worse.

STEVE

So from Colin?

BOBBY

Yeah, from Colin.

STEVE

And you did 'em before?

BOBBY

These?

STEVE

Uh huh.

BOBBY

If you're asking have I eaten these exact same mushrooms, then somehow regurgitated and reformed them in order for us to pleasure ourselves with them this evening, then, no, Steven, the answer to your question is no.

STEVE

Okay, I'd like you to go ahead and die now.

BOBBY

Well, come on...

CONTINUED: (2)

REBECCA

This batch, he means.

BOBBY

Yes I have, they were great. Aimee Mann is much too whiny right now, can you put on something else? We can't have depressing, you don't want to wrong-foot the whole thing.

Steve goes to the stereo, searches through the CDs. He looks back, over his shoulder, to the kitchen, sees Bobby and Rebecca dumping the mushrooms into a coffee grinder.

Steve takes a breath, tries to shake off the heebie-jeebies. He's wrong-footing it, no question.

REEEEEE! The coffee grinder roars to life.

A SHORT TIME LATER,

we're looking straight down on the countertop in the kitchen. Three exactly equal piles of gray mushroom dust lie side by side. There's a plate of cupcakes next to them, thick frosting on top.

BOBBY

Beverage of choice?

STEVE

Snapple Kiwi Strawberry.

BOBBY

How did I know?

He pulls one from the fridge.

REBECCA

Anything without bubbles. It foams up with bubbles, it's disgusting.

He gives her a Snapple lemonade.

BOBBY

Wanna smoke a joint first, settle our stomachs?

REBECCA

Already did. You go ahead.

CONTINUED:

BOBBY

Maybe later.

REBECCA

All right, students, you may now open
your exam.

They all reach out, take a handful of mushroom dust, shove it
deep into the frosting on the cupcakes, and shove them in their
mouths. Through mouthfuls:

STEVE

Oh.

REBECCA

God.

The taste is horrific. They chew for a while, wincing, moaning,
gagging, complaining.

BOBBY

(through a mouthful)

You think this is what cremation dust
tastes like?

REBECCA

(also)

Hard to fuckin' say, Bob.

Steve swallows first, washes it down with a big dose of Snapple.

STEVE

I'm almost forty years old.

Bobby laughs, spits frosting.

BOBBY

Shut up.

Steve shoves a huge bite of mushroom-laced cupcake into his
mouth, talks right through it, spitting crumbs everywhere.

STEVE

I'm the senior vice-president in charge
of east coast marketing and
distribution.

Rebecca laughs too, hits him.

REBECCA

Shut up!

CONTINUED: (2)

She gags. Regains.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Ew.

BOBBY

Finish! Finish! Finish!

They regroup, attack the counter again. Shove the last bits of cupcake and mushroom dust into their mouths, choke it down with a few swallows of juice.

They stand there, breathing heavily, keeping a hold on the contents of their stomachs. Barely.

STEVE

That was too horrible to express.

REBECCA

But now it's over and we can enjoy ourselves. See, we're a Western culture, we like our pain *before* our pleasure. In the East, it's the other way around, pleasure comes before pain.

BOBBY

I'm used to pain first, then a little bit more pain, then just a crushing load of suffering.

REBECCA

I think I want to throw up in the sink.

STEVE

I don't think you do.

REBECCA

Well, I don't *want* to throw up in the sink, it just seems kind of inevitable.

Steve puts his arm around her tenderly.

STEVE

Don't worry, honey. I'll hold your hair while you peuk.

BOBBY

See, now *that's* a marriage.

CUT TO:

INT BOBBY'S APARTMENT NIGHT

ZZZZZIP! Steve rolls across the wood floor of the loft in an office chair, comes to a stop in front of the couch where Bobby and Rebecca are sitting, feet up on the coffee table.

STEVE

Is there something funny with the light?

BOBBY

I don't think so.

STEVE

There is. There's a serious problem with the light supply to your home. Some sort of... irregularity... a certain... sneaky inconsistency.

BOBBY

Um hm. Say, this is just a shot in the dark... do you think it could have anything to do with the hallucinogens?

STEVE

(gazing around at the lights)
I will be keeping my eye on this, I can assure you.

REBECCA

You're high *already*?

STEVE

No, no. No, no, no, no, no. No. No. Yes.

REBECCA

It's only been twenty minutes.

STEVE

That's what *you* say. That's *your* story.

REBECCA

It takes me at least an hour. I'm always the last one.

Bobby laughs, suddenly, and hard. Rebecca sighs.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Aaaaaaaas I will be tonight.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

This is too fast.

Bobby continues to laugh.

REBECCA

Did you go jogging this morning?

STEVE

Yeah?

REBECCA

So your metabolism's up.

Bobby continues to laugh.

STEVE

This is way too fast.

A SHORT TIME LATER,

Bobby isn't laughing anymore. He's pacing, back and forth in front of the couch, playing with a Slinky. Now Steve's taking a turn in the office chair, rolling back and forth in front of the couch.

But we're looking at Rebecca, who's sitting on the couch, silent, unnoticed as they pass in front of her. Steve and Bobby are talking, babbling really, doesn't much matter what they're saying. Happy, funny, silly.

At first, Rebecca watches them. Smiles at the nonsense. Then she looks away. Looks down. Sits forward. Feeling something, and it's not necessarily good.

She looks up. Notices something behind us. She gets up, walks across the loft. We pull back with her, stay in close to her face. She passes between Steve and Bobby, they don't really notice.

She stops, staring at something just behind us. She looks, for a long time. Her eyebrows arch.

Finally, we see what she sees. It's a painting, of a woman, slightly expressionistic, maybe we're seeing the woman through a window streaked with rain.

Rebecca watches the painting. Her eyes fill with sadness. It disturbs her.

She shakes herself out of it, forcibly turns away.

IN THE BATHROOM,

Rebecca stands up from the sink, water dripping from her face. In the mirror, we can see the guys in the room behind her, through the open door to the bathroom.

She dries her face with a towel, catches sight of her own reflection. She looks at it sideways, points a warning finger at it.

REBECCA

Don't. Start.

IN THE LOFT,

Steve is at the CD player, flipping through discs, trying to find something, he knows not what.

Rebecca comes up behind him. The look on her face is fearful. She puts her arms around his neck, whispers in his ear, and there's true horror in her tone.

REBECCA

The kids...

Steve turns, puts her arms around his neck.

STEVE

Yeah?

REBECCA

Where are they?

STEVE

Home. They're fine.

In the background, Bobby whips past in the chair, spinning, laughing. Rebecca looks at Steve intensely, searches his eyes for any sign of weakness. Still whispering:

REBECCA

Do you promise?

STEVE

I do.

REBECCA

Do you swear to me?

STEVE

I swear.

CONTINUED:

She pulls him close, we see her head over his shoulder.

REBECCA

I'm afraid.

STEVE

Don't be.

REBECCA

I'm afraid.

The chair slides into view between them. Bobby.

BOBBY

What up?

STEVE

Just a little fear and loathing. It'll pass.

BOBBY

You okay, Lady?

He puts a hand on Rebecca's shoulder. She looks up at him, just manages to shake her head no.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Perhaps you need to see *this*.

He spins around once in the chair. Gets no laugh whatsoever.

BOBBY (cont'd)

See, that strikes me hilarious.

He starts giggling again. Steve reaches out and pushes the chair, which rolls obediently out of frame.

STEVE

(to Rebecca)

It's okay. The bad man is gone.

At that, she smiles. Sort of.

A SHORT TIME LATER,

the three of them are laughing, hysterically, uncontrollably, splayed out over the couch. Could be a minute later, could be an hour, we can't tell.

IN THE BEDROOM,

it's suddenly quiet again. These abrupt shifts are disconcerting.

Rebecca stands at the window in the darkened bedroom area. She's staring out the big factory-like windows. Across the street, there's another loft-type building, she can see six apartments, all at once.

PEOPLE move in the windows, like on TV screens. Making a late dinner. Brushing their teeth. Making out. Putting a kid to bed.

Rebecca hugs her arms in tight around herself, staring. In the doorway behind, Bobby watches her. Concerned.

IN THE LOFT,

Steve is staring at something he holds in his hand. It's a tiny figurine, a human skeleton, down on its knees, its head thrown back in a position of anguish, hands clutching the sides of its head.

He stares at it, turns it over and over in his hands.

Bobby is watching him, too. Steve notices him.

STEVE

Why do you keep this here?

BOBBY

Huh?

STEVE

Why do you have this?

BOBBY

I bought it in Peru. I like it.

STEVE

I hate it.

BOBBY

So put it down, Dude.

STEVE

This isn't you.

BOBBY

On a bad day, sure it is.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

No, I mean it isn't you anymore. It was you, in your twenties, you were into that morbid shit. But not anymore.

BOBBY

So it's an artifact.

STEVE

Get rid of it. You change, you get rid of things. Something doesn't fit anymore, you just leave it out on the sidewalk, right? I mean, that's what you're supposed to do, isn't it?

BOBBY

I'm just a tiny bit concerned here.
(about you)

STEVE

Isn't that what you're supposed to do?

BOBBY

Steve. Put the freaky skeleton down.

STEVE

I say that, but I don't do it, I will not do it, I refuse to do it.

Bobby takes the skeleton from him and puts it back down on a table with a dozen other figurines.

BOBBY

This is not what you should be looking at right now.

Steve turns, looks at him. He shakes his whole body, rapidly, his head flipping from side to side, like a dog shaking off when it comes out of a lake.

He looks at Bobby and laughs, a hard, staccato laugh that ends like a bark.

STEVE

That was a close one.

IN THE BEDROOM,

Rebecca has curled up on the bed in the darkened bedroom and is sobbing into her hands, which cover her face.

CONTINUED:

Steve stands in the doorway, silhouetted.

STEVE

Hey.

She doesn't answer. He comes over to her, in a shaft of light from the living room. He sits on the bed next to her, deeply worried.

STEVE (cont'd)

What's the matter?

She can't answer. Her shoulders twitch as she cries into her hands.

STEVE (cont'd)

Babe, you're freaking me out.

He pulls her to a sitting position, forces her hands away from her face. She manages to swallow her sobs, but there's panic all over her.

STEVE (cont'd)

Tell me... tell me...

REBECCA

The kids...

STEVE

Yeah?

REBECCA

I don't know where they are.

STEVE

They're home. They're with Kendra.
They're fine.

REBECCA

I don't want them to see me like this.

STEVE

They're not going to.

REBECCA

I don't want them to know.

STEVE

They won't.

CONTINUED: (2)

REBECCA

I don't want them to suffer.

STEVE

What are you talking about?

REBECCA

I don't want them to die.

STEVE

Stop it! They're not going to die,
they're not going to suffer, they're
not going to know.

REBECCA

Why did we do this? What did we do?

STEVE

No, no, no, no, don't, don't, stop it,
stop it...

REBECCA

What did we do?

Bobby comes in and flicks the switch, bathing the bedroom in
light. They wince, turn toward him, genuinely frightened.

BOBBY

What are you guys, insane? You may *not*
sit in a darkened room and freak out
about your kids, please, come on, get
out of here, come in the living room,
I'll change the music, come on, up, up,
up.

Steve helps Rebecca up.

IN THE LOFT,

Steve helps Rebecca out of the bedroom, Bobby close behind.

STEVE

He's right, come on, splash some water
on your face...

She realizes he's leading her toward the bathroom and she pulls
back, sharply.

REBECCA

No bathroom. No mirrors. Very cunning
little fuckers.

CONTINUED:

She laughs, hearing herself. Steve laughs. The tension eases a little.

REBECCA (cont'd)

I'm okay. I'm okay.

BOBBY

Okay, look, I think it's safe to say you guys are both letting things get a little bit away from you, here. This is what I think we should do...

STEVE

There's something in 'em.

REBECCA

(suddenly turning on Bobby)
That painting is of *me*, isn't it?

STEVE

In the 'shrooms, they're different, we've done this a dozen times, it's never been anything like this.

REBECCA

Who made it? Why did they paint me? What are you trying to say?

STEVE

It hit me way too fast, I can't control it, there was something weird in 'em...

BOBBY

That's ridiculous, I've *had* these mushrooms, they-

STEVE

You haven't had *these* mushrooms! They're not prescription drugs, pal, there's nobody watching when they make this shit! Some sweaty hillbilly cooked this shit up in his mother's basement, if they can't find real mushrooms they just drip acid over 'em, *there was something in these*.

BOBBY

SHUT UP!

He shouted that, and it got their attention. Silence for a moment.

CONTINUED: (2)

BOBBY (cont'd)

There was nothing. In them. Okay?
And I bought the fucking painting at a
flea market. Jesus *God*, you people.

He puts his arms around both of them, pulls them in close.

BOBBY (cont'd)

I took them too. I feel fine. They're
strong, but we're not in any danger.
We're all okay. Right?

REBECCA .

Right.

STEVE

Okay.

A SHORT TIME LATER,

Steve and Rebecca sit on the couch, close to one another.
They're reassured, but far from normal. Across the room, Bobby
is searching through the CDs.

BOBBY

Come on, come on, come on, Jackson
Browne, Van Morrison, some shit like
that...

On the sofa, Steve and Rebecca turn and look at each other.
This is probably a mistake. They hold the look for a long time.

Finally, she whispers:

REBECCA

I'm so sorry.

Steve sits back, keeps looking at her. She has just passed
beyond his power to comfort.

REBECCA (cont'd)

But I think I'm going to die.

Steve pulls away from her, sits forward on the couch, buries his
head in his hands. Knocks his eyeglasses right off his face,
doesn't seem to notice.

Then he keeps sliding, forward, to the floor. He lays down, on
his side, hands clutched between his knees. Bobby, in the
background, is still at the stereo, doesn't see this unfortunate
development.

CONTINUED:

We creep in close to Steve, very close, right up into his face, which is half smushed against the floor.

A MOMENT LATER,

BAM! Bobby SMACKS the phone down on the coffee table in front of himself and snatches up the handset. Steve is still on his feet, agitated, Rebecca is nowhere to be seen.

BOBBY

Okay, your brother. He'll make you feel better, right? What's his number?

STEVE

I don't know.

BOBBY

You talk to him every day.

STEVE

I don't know, I don't know his number, it's not in here anymore.

He goes to the door to the bathroom and POUNDS on it.

STEVE (cont'd)

Rebecca? Are you okay?

A MUFFLED ANSWER from inside and a discouraging THUMP against the door.

BOBBY

Colin! I'll call Colin, you can talk to him, does that sound good?

STEVE

Open the door, Rebecca.

BOBBY

I'm calling Colin.

He starts dialing a number.

IN THE BATHROOM,

Rebecca is sitting on the edge of the tub, rocking back and forth.

REBECCA

What am I gonna do, what am I gonna do, what am I gonna do...

CONTINUED:

More POUNDING at the door.

STEVE

Please, open up, Rebecca, come on, it's me, open up!

She reaches out, twists the knob to unlock it. Steve comes in, bends down in front of her. He drops to his knees, takes her face in his hands. She looks at him, tears streaming down her face.

REBECCA

They're going to be all alone.

In the background, we can see Bobby in the living room, phone in hand.

BOBBY

Colin! It's Bob. Okay, well, got a little situation here, your name came up.

He wanders off screen, deep in the background.

Steve puts his forehead against Rebecca's.

STEVE

Do you want to go to the hospital?

BANG! Bobby is suddenly there, in the doorway, right between them, holding the phone out. Steve jumps a foot. There's no way Bobby could have moved from as far away as he was to this close in a matter of two seconds. Things are getting screwy.

BOBBY

He wants to talk to you.

IN THE LOFT,

Steve is walking, phone in hand.

STEVE

Not so good, Colin. No, Colin. I don't think so. No. Go to the hospital. I don't care. I don't care. I don't care what he thinks. Okay, you tell me -- if Rebecca and me die, who's gonna take care of the kids? Who? Who, Colin? *Who, Colin?*

He hangs up the phone.

CONTINUED:

BOBBY
Why'd you do that?!

STEVE
Colin has no answer.

Rebecca comes out of the bathroom.

STEVE (cont'd)
I want to call 911.

BOBBY
No, you don't.

STEVE
I absolutely do.

He starts to dial. Bobby reaches in, takes the phone away from him.

BOBBY
Wait a minute, think about this. 911 means a hospital, stomach pumping, police reports, rehab, social services talking to your children... you do *not* want to call 911.

STEVE
One of us has to live.

He takes the phone back.

BOBBY
Rebecca, will you please give me a hand here?

REBECCA
I think I feel better.

The phone rings. Steve answers it --

STEVE
Who, Colin?

-- and hangs it up again. Bobby can't help it, he laughs.

REBECCA
Maybe some orange juice.

She seems to be regaining herself.

CONTINUED: (2)

BOBBY

Finally, words of wisdom and caution.
Yes, of course, juice, juice for
everyone, juice.

They head toward the kitchen. Steve is left behind, standing in the middle of the floor. He watches them in the kitchen. Rebecca actually laughs. Her panic seems to be easing.

But Steve is another case. His breathing is rapid. He looks around, trying to orient himself, can't.

He looks behind him. Sees the front door. He looks back to the kitchen. Bobby and Rebecca are looking into the refrigerator, their view of him blocked by the open door.

He looks back to the front door.

IN THE KITCHEN,

Bobby and Rebecca hear the phone start to RING again. And again.

BOBBY (cont'd)

(calling out to Steve)

You gonna get that or what?

No answer. Phone keeps ringing. Rebecca closes the refrigerator door, comes back into the living room. She sees the phone, still ringing, lying on the floor.

She sees the open front door. Steve is gone.

REBECCA

Oh *shit*!

BOBBY

What?!

REBECCA

He split.

BOBBY

What?!

They both take off, across the apartment floor, and come out the open door.

IN THE HALLWAY,

they race to the elevator, look up at the buttons. They're already dropping, headed to the street. They jam on the elevator button.

Behind them, the phone is still ringing.

CUT TO:

INT STAIRWELL NIGHT

Steve's not in the elevator, he's in the stairwell, taking the steps as fast as he can, a man on a mission.

INT LOBBY NIGHT

Steve BANGS through the lobby door and heads down a long corridor toward the door to the outside. He shoves through one door, comes into the vestibule, SHOVES through another --

EXT SOHO NIGHT

-- and comes out in SoHo on a Friday night. People, lights, buildings, noise.

Let's rephrase that -- *PEOPLE! LIGHTS! BUILDINGS! NOISE!*

Steve winces but doesn't break pace, he turns and heads north, squinting, without his eyeglasses. Just ahead of him, a car is double parked, its hood up, steam coming from the engine.

A JAMAICAN GUY is standing next to the car, ranting and raving at a COP, who is in the process of writing out a ticket. We can't really understand anything the Jamaican Guy says.

The Cop RIPS the ticket out of the book and shoves it at him.

The Jamaican Guy protests even more vociferously, the Cop tries to cut him off.

COP

Hey! Hey! Hey, you're *gettin'* this ticket, pal! And don't be puttin' none of that *voodoo* shit on me!

Steve registers this, cuts a wide semi-circle around the voodoo guy, and keeps chugging down the sidewalk. We hear a faint RINGING sound. So does Steve. He looks over his shoulder, can't place where it's coming from.

CONTINUED:

He walks faster, to get away from it. It comes again. He stops, thinks it's coming from ahead of him now, so he crosses the street, fast.

Up ahead, he sees a cab with its light lit, he books for it.

The RINGING follows, chasing him.

INT CAB NIGHT

Steve yanks open the rear door of the cab and leaps inside.

STEVE

Seventy-seventh between Park and Lex.

The DRIVER drops the car in gear and lurches forward.

The RINGING sound continues. It's coming from inside the cab. Steve looks behind him. Turns around again. The Driver is staring at him in the rear view mirror.

Still, the ringing.

DRIVER

It ain't for me.

Steve is confused, then understands. He digs in his pocket, comes up with his cell phone. Pushes a button.

STEVE

Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)

(through a phone filter)

Major Tom, is that you?

STEVE

(paranoid)

Who said that?

VOICE (O.S.)

Who do you think? The asshole you just hung up on.

But that last line sounded close, very close, no phone filter, as if it were coming from inside the cab. Steve turns. COLIN, mid-thirties, British, marched against Thatcher, is sitting in the cab next to him, wearing pajama pants and a tee-shirt, looking rumpled.

CONTINUED:

We're surprised, but Steve takes it completely in stride. He lowers the cell phone, addresses Colin directly. Pleasantly, even. (Despite the apparent physical proximity, the tone of the conversation is still that of a phone call.)

STEVE

Hey, Col. :

COLIN

Where you headed, Sport?

STEVE

Lenox Hill Hospital. I am going to die.

COLIN

I see. You know you left some pretty worried people behind at Bobby's.

STEVE

One of us has to live.

COLIN

Well, sure, yeah, that's true. Ideally, all three of you.

STEVE

I can't talk to you, Colin.

COLIN

Where are you right now?

STEVE

In a cab.

COLIN

If you took the tube you'd die about ten bucks richer.

STEVE

I don't really appreciate your tone.

COLIN

Sorry about that. Been in your position myself, it's no day at the beach, don't mean to make fun of it.

STEVE

I really am going to die this time, Colin.

CONTINUED: (2)

COLIN

But you really aren't, is the thing.

STEVE

How do you know?

COLIN

Hang on, I gotta get a cigarette, it's four in the morning over here.

STEVE

You can't smoke in a cab.

COLIN

No, you sure can't. Then again, with me being in bed in my own apartment, that's not gonna be an issue.

STEVE

I gotta go.

COLIN

Wait wait wait wait wait.

(lights up a smoke)

Obviously you're in the grip of some powerful shit that you took. I'm not sure what it is yet, I'm gonna try to find out for you, but at the moment the most important thing for you to do is turn around, get back to Bobby's, and get with your wife and your friend, who are worried sick about you.

STEVE

Kids, Colin, kids, three kids.

COLIN

Each one cuter than the last.

STEVE

I am going to the hospital because Rebecca won't and one of us has to live in order to raise the kids. That's it. One of us must survive. That's the prime directive.

In the front seat, the Driver SIGHS heavily.

COLIN

Can I say something?

CONTINUED: (3)

STEVE

Not if you want me to violate the prime directive. If you try to induce me to violate the prime directive, I will hang up on you.

COLIN

Okay, now look, right there, you just made a Star Trek reference, *and* you said it in a way that sounded suspiciously like a joke. Do you think that's something a dying man would do? Somewhere deep in the back of your brain, your sense of humor, which has always been your only real redeeming feature, by the way, is telling you to relax, you're going to be okay.

STEVE

Colin, are you telling me I don't need to go to the hospital?

COLIN

That's exactly what I'm telling you.

Changing angles suddenly, we see Steve is alone in the back seat of the car, there is no cigarette smoke, and he is once again holding the cell phone to his ear. But not for long, as he pulls it down and pushes a button, hanging it up.

STEVE

I warned him.

He leans forward, addresses the Driver urgently.

STEVE (cont'd)

Excuse me. Could you tell me how much longer it's gonna be?

DRIVER

I don't know. Fifteen, twenty minutes. Friday night.

STEVE

It's just, I have a problem here.

DRIVER

Is that right?

CONTINUED: (4)

STEVE

I really do apologize, but if you don't get me to the hospital in about five minutes, it looks pretty definite that I will die here in the back of your cab.

They reach a red light. The Driver turns, looks at him through the partition.

STEVE (cont'd)

I'm just saying.

CUT TO:

EXT PARK AVENUE NIGHT

Steve barely gets his legs out the back door of the taxi before it SQUEALS away up Park, the door BANGING shut on its own.

STEVE

HEY!

He steps out into the street, SHOUTS after the fleeing cab:

STEVE (cont'd)

I WAS JUST TRYING TO BE HONEST WITH YOU!

A truck swerves and ROARS past him, not six inches from his nose. Steve freezes, stands there blinking, frozen, watching as the truck heads away up Park. Possibly, he realizes how close to death he just came.

His phone RINGS again. He answers it.

STEVE (cont'd)

Hello.

COLIN (O.S.)

Are you almost there?

STEVE

I got kicked out of the cab.

COLIN (O.S.)

What did you do?

CONTINUED:

STEVE

I told the truth. Apparently in our society that's some sort of horrible faux pas.

COLIN (O.S.)

Where are you now?

Jumping back, we see where he is:

STEVE

Standing in the middle of Park Avenue.

HORNS HONK as the light changes and cars veer around him.

COLIN (O.S.)

Well, get your ass over to the sidewalk! Jesus Christ...

Steve hurries across the street, picking his way through the traffic, and reaches the opposite side.

COLIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You gonna remember to breathe, or do I have to tell you to do that too?

Steve stops in his tracks, looking up at the Credit Suisse building. It's a huge, fortress-like building, surrounded by menacing steel gates.

STEVE

This building is inherently evil.

COLIN (O.S.)

Say again?

STEVE

I must leave this place and never return.

He turns and looks up at the street signs -- he's at Park and 26th.

We hear his phone, RINGING again. Steve looks down, sees the phone in his hand, his arm hanging at his side.

He's confused. Wasn't he just talking on the phone? He looks back up, at the street signs.

He's at Madison and 32nd. Huh?

CONTINUED: (2)

He answers the phone again.

STEVE (cont'd)

Hello?

Changing angles, we see Colin standing beside him.

COLIN

Quit hanging up on me, I'm your spirit guide.

STEVE

I hung up again?

COLIN

Your phone was just busy for fifteen minutes. Who were you talking to?

STEVE

I... don't remember.

A bus ROARS past him, headed across town.

STEVE (cont'd)

Bus.

He starts walking up Madison, toward a bus stop. Colin falls in beside him.

COLIN

Okay, if you won't go back to where Rebecca is, there are three rules you absolutely, positively must follow until she catches up to you. Are you listening?

STEVE

Gotta lot to do, gotta lot to do.

COLIN

Rule one. Be very, very careful when you cross streets. Those beautiful shiny lights can kill you.

STEVE

Picked that one up already.

COLIN

Two. Even though it seems like they do, strangers will *not* understand you, especially strangers wearing uniforms.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

COLIN (cont'd)

You must fight the urge to find someone to confess to. And three, and this is the most important rule of all...

STEVE

How do you know when a bus is really a bus?

COLIN

You may not, under any circumstances, no matter how good an idea it seems at the time, call any of your old girlfriends. You got it?

STEVE

Do you think I made a mistake?

COLIN

Hell yes, you made a mistake! Go back, find your wife!

STEVE

I mean moving to New York.

COLIN

(pause)

I'd say it's worked out pretty well for you, Steve.

Steve stops, turns, really looks at Colin.

STEVE

Are you pissed off for the way things came down back then?

A Madison Avenue bus suddenly appears in front of Steve, its doors WHOOSHING open. Steve turns and looks at it, and the phone is back at his ear.

COLIN (O.S.)

(phone filter again)

Long conversation, Buddy. Sure you wanna get into it?

STEVE

Yes. Right after I get my stomach pumped.

He hangs up the phone and jumps onto the bus.

INT BUS NIGHT

Steve bounds up the steps of the bus and stands there, staring at the Driver. He hadn't really thought much past this.

DRIVER

Well?

STEVE

Oh.

He feels around in his pockets, comes up with nothing.

STEVE (cont'd)

I lost my wallet.

DRIVER

You don't have the fare, get off the bus.

Steve touches his face.

STEVE

I lost my glasses too.

DRIVER

You don't have the fare --

STEVE

One question? Very quick, I swear.

DRIVER

What?

STEVE

Where, within a few blocks of here, can I get my stomach pumped?

DRIVER

Get off the damn bus.

STEVE

It's just that I'm dying, and all.

The Driver starts to stand up. He's a big guy, that Driver. Steve looks up at him, no idea what to do, when a voice speaks up behind him.

VOICE (O.S.)

I'll pay.

CONTINUED:

AN AFRICAN WOMAN dips her Metrocard in the slot twice, once for herself and once for Steve. The Driver sits.

Truly and deeply grateful, Steve turns to thank the African Woman, but she's already past him, headed for a seat in the middle of the nearly empty bus.

STEVE

Thanks!

She looks back over her shoulder, nods.

The bus lurches away from the curb and Steve falls on his ass. He gets up, sees the Driver in the rear view, smirking at him.

Steve heads toward the back of the bus. There are a lot of empty seats but he sits right across the aisle from the African Woman. Looking at her. Smiling. He likes her.

She smiles back. Looks away.

Steve feels the need to share.

STEVE (cont'd)

A couple hours ago I ate a bunch of hallucinogenic mushrooms. Bobby got them from the guy Colin knows in L.A. and he said they're okay but I think they were laced with acid or something and I'm probably dying, so I have to get to Lenox Hill because Rebecca and I have three kids.

The African Woman just SIGHS. She rides the bus a lot.

STEVE (cont'd)

We got married in July of 1990. It was over a hundred degrees. We were Catholic. It was a loooooong ceremony.

In his pocket, his phone RINGS. Steve looks down at it, then back up at the African Woman.

STEVE (cont'd)

They're looking for me. But I'm starting to think I'm on a voyage of self-discovery and maybe this is a trip I'm supposed to take by myself.

She nods. Desperately wants out of this conversation.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE (cont'd)

What's your name?

AFRICAN WOMAN

(please leave me alone)

I have a long day.

STEVE

Really? What do you do?

AFRICAN WOMAN

I clean house.

STEVE

I keep losing whole chunks of time.

AFRICAN WOMAN

So do I.

She takes out a magazine, begins to read it. Steve can take a hint. He looks away, then back again, as if starting the conversation for the first time.

STEVE

See, because I ate these hallucinogenic mushrooms? Bobby got them from-

AFRICAN WOMAN

Sir, I do you a kindness. Why you want to treat me this way?

STEVE

What do you mean?

AFRICAN WOMAN

You frighten me.

STEVE

I do?

He can't hide the fact that he's pleased.

AFRICAN WOMAN

That makes you happy? To frighten a woman?

STEVE

No, no... shit, *no*. Shoot, I mean, no, heck no. It's just I'm a little scared myself. And if I talk to somebody, I can pretend I'm not.

CONTINUED: (3)

She turns, looks over her shoulder. There's a CREEPY GUY a few rows back.

AFRICAN WOMAN

You could talk to him.

He looks, then turns back to her, horrified.

STEVE

He'd hurt me a *lot*. What's it like, cleaning houses?

AFRICAN WOMAN

Depends.

STEVE

On the house?

AFRICAN WOMAN

On the people in it.

STEVE

How much do they pay you?

AFRICAN WOMAN

Four hundred dollars a week, plus Metrocard. How much do they pay you?

STEVE

I make a hundred and sixty-five thousand a year.

AFRICAN WOMAN

I'm very happy for you.

STEVE

I probably work half as hard as you. That doesn't seem fair.

She looks at him. Closes her magazine.

AFRICAN WOMAN

I come from Rwanda. About five years ago, the Hutu people in my country get very angry, they start to kill the Tutsis. People like me. A man from the government, he come on the radio, tell all Tutsis to go to the churches, hide there, be safe there. We go to the church, but it's a trick. The soldiers come, they lock the doors.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

AFRICAN WOMAN (cont'd)

Men with machetes come inside, start to kill everybody. But it's hard work, kill a man with a machete, they got to take breaks, eat their lunch. So they slice our Achilles tendons, that way we don't run away before they finish. They kill my husband, my two sons while I watch. I hide under the bodies, nobody knows, I'm okay. But I got to listen while my family get chopped up into pieces. I earn four hundred dollars a week plus Metrocard. I don't think about fair.

Steve looks at her. And for a long time, she looks back at him.

Then she opens her magazine and starts to read again.

Steve has to say something, *wants* to say something. Finally:

STEVE

I... I wish that never happened to you.

AFRICAN WOMAN

(not looking up)

Um hm.

And she doesn't want to talk about it any more. Steve turns, looks out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT DOWNTOWN STREET NIGHT

CLOSE ON two words on a cell phone -- "NO SIGNAL."

REBECCA

Shit!

Rebecca and Bobby are on a downtown streetcorner. Bobby is at the curb hailing a cab, but forget about it.

BOBBY

Come on, over here, anybody, come on, Jesus Christ...

Rebecca's trying to get a signal on her cell phone, but can't. She looks around, seems to notice where she is. She looks up at a nearby street sign. She thinks. Then shrugs.

REBECCA

Good a time as any.

CONTINUED:

She turns, orienting herself, points off in a certain direction, and starts walking that way, as if drawn.

Behind her, a cab with his light on pulls to the curb in front of Bobby. He reaches for the handle of the rear door and turns around to tell Rebecca --

BOBBY

First place we should-

-- but she isn't there any more.

BOBBY (cont'd)

Rebecca?

He looks around, can't find her at first, but then spots her, just rounding the corner a half a block away.

EXT AROUND THE CORNER NIGHT

Rebecca is walking with purpose. Bobby hurries up and falls into stride beside her.

BOBBY

What are you doing?

REBECCA

(what a ridiculous question)
Walking.

BOBBY

I had a cab back there.

REBECCA

That's great.

BOBBY

I thought we wanted to go uptown.

REBECCA

We did want to go uptown. Now we want to go someplace else.

BOBBY

Where?

REBECCA

Don't be so nosey.

BOBBY

What about Steve?

CONTINUED:

REBECCA

Steve is fine. We're not dying, he's not dying. Worst that happens is he'll walk home.

Abruptly, she cuts across the street and rounds

ANOTHER CORNER,

where she slows to a stop across the street from a downtown apartment building. She studies the entrance to the building, checks her watch, looks up and down the street in both directions.

Bobby comes to a stop beside her, looks at the building, tries to figure out what she's doing.

BOBBY

I give up. What is it?

Rebecca sits down on the sidewalk, facing the building across the street. Waiting.

Bobby stands there for a moment, then sits down next to her. He stares at the building too.

She looks at her watch again. Bobby checks his. After a moment:

BOBBY (cont'd)

What are we waiting for?

REBECCA

Shhhhhh.

Huh. Okay. They wait.

CUT TO:

EXT BUS NIGHT

Through the window of a city bus, we see Steve's face, his forehead resting against the glass, staring out the window as if he's never seen this city before in his life.

OUT THE WINDOW,

the bus rolls through Manhattan, headed up Madison.

PEOPLE walk down the street. They go home. They go out. They fight and kiss. The bus slows, comes to a stop.

CONTINUED:

AN OLD MAN stands on the corner, waiting for something, waiting for somebody. Steve makes eye contact with him.

The Old Man stares back. And gives Steve a little salute.

The Old Man's face changes, becomes a KOREAN WOMAN of forty-two. The bus starts to roll. The Korean Woman turns into a HINDU BOY, the Hindu Boy turns into a SIXTY YEAR OLD ONCOLOGIST, the faces start to blur by, all moving, all wildly different, all looking up at Steve in the window, all making eye contact.

At one corner, Steve sees a BEAUTIFUL DARK-HAIRED WOMAN, about thirty, in a business suit. She looks up at him, smiles. Provocatively.

And now, in between every three or four faces, Steve sees the Dark-Haired Woman, standing on the street corner, looking right back up at him. The shots are flickers at first, then longer and longer until the final shot holds, Steve cranes his neck to watch her as the bus pulls away --

-- and she gives him a little salute.

CUT TO:

EXT APARTMENT BUILDING NIGHT

Bobby and Rebecca are still sitting on the sidewalk across from that apartment building, waiting for God knows what.

BOBBY

See? See how flexible and
unquestioning I am?

REBECCA

(distracted)

You're a perfect human being.

Rebecca, who was resting her chin on her hands, drops her arms and sits forward suddenly, staring at the entrance to the building.

Bobby turns, follows her gaze to the building.

A woman has come out and is crossing the street diagonally, headed toward their side and uptown. Rebecca freezes, watching her, frozen.

As the woman reaches their side and walks away from them, Rebecca thinks.

CONTINUED:

REBECCA (cont'd)

Oh, man.

UP AHEAD,

the woman (whose name is LESLIE) is around thirty, taut, severe in that I'm busy don't bother me way. She's still walking down the street. We drift back, behind her, where we find Rebecca and Bobby, now walking about twenty yards behind her. Bobby looks at Rebecca, at Leslie, back at Rebecca.

They pass an ATM. Rebecca tosses a sidelong glance as Leslie drifts back through their shot and stops to get money.

Rebecca slows, drifts to a stop ten yards further on. Bobby, game, stops beside her. He leans over, lowers his voice.

BOBBY

Why are we following her?

REBECCA

We're not.

BOBBY

Okay. But why are we?

REBECCA

Oh, can't you see I know what I'm doing?

BOBBY

What are you doing?

REBECCA

(innocently)
Nothing.

BOBBY

Like talking to a five year old.

Rebecca leans against the wall of a building, pretending to search for something in her purse, but she's really watching Leslie, who's still at the ATM.

Leslie gets her cash, shoves it in her purse, and walks right past them.

Rebecca waits, then follows her again. Bobby can't take it anymore.

CONTINUED:

BOBBY (cont'd)

I give up, what the *fuck* are we supposed to be-

REBECCA

Run.

She grabs his hand and races out into the street, dragging him along with her.

IN THE STREET,

they run, Rebecca in the lead. They reach the far side, keep running toward the corner, then stop in the middle of the next block and cross the street *back*, the way they came.

There, they pause between two parked cars and lurk for a moment, looking down the block.

BOBBY

Will you please-

REBECCA

Pretend it's many years ago, back when you were fun and adventurous and up for anything. Many, *many* years ago. Can you do that? For me? Okay?

BOBBY

Okay, okay. Fine.

REBECCA

Catch your breath.

BOBBY

I'm trying.

REBECCA

Let's go.

They step back onto the sidewalk and stroll back down toward us, affecting a posture of great casualness.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Pull yourself together.

BOBBY

Shut up.

REBECCA

Don't be a pussy.

CONTINUED:

BOBBY

Shut up!

From behind them, we see their target -- Leslie, who they have darted ahead of, is now approaching them. She passes them, Bobby and Rebecca slow, and Rebecca turns around to face us.

REBECCA

Leslie?

Leslie stops and turns around.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Leslie Krueger?

Leslie squints at them and takes a few tentative steps forward, a semi-polite half smile on her face.

LESLIE

Yes?

REBECCA

I *thought* that was you!

LESLIE

(no idea)

Hi!

REBECCA

Well, hi! Do you live around here?

LESLIE

(playing for time to try to
remember)

Yeah! I do. How about you?

REBECCA

It's Sue! Susan. Susan Roberts?

LESLIE

Yeah... yeah... No. I don't know you.

REBECCA

Oh, don't worry about it, I have one of those faces. I was in the layout department at In Style. I mean, I was only there about six months, and I was only *in* the layout department at In Style, as opposed to *being* the layout department at In Style.

(to Bobby)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

REBECCA (cont'd)

Leslie's the head of the layout
department at In Style.

BOBBY

I'm picking that up.

REBECCA

I'm sorry, this is my husband Richard.

LESLIE

Hi. How are you. Well. Good to see
you.

REBECCA

You know, I never mentioned this to you
when I was there, I don't know, you
seemed kind of... unapproachable, plus
I didn't think I was going to stay in
magazines, but when I was there I
admired you so much. I used to look at
you and think, now *there* is a woman
who has it all together, that is
someone I could aspire to be.

LESLIE

Wow, thank you. That's... thank you.
(uninterested)
So where are you now?

REBECCA

(without a split-second pause)
I went back to school and got my
veterinary license. I have a practice
on 87th and Columbus with two partners.

Bobby turns slowly and just stares at her.

LESLIE

That's fantastic. Congratulations.

REBECCA

Thank you. I'm very happy.

LESLIE

You're lucky.

REBECCA

You're not?

LESLIE

Lucky?

CONTINUED: (3)

REBECCA

Happy.

LESLIE

Oh, I don't... you know, I ought to get going. It was great seeing you. Nice to meet you, Robert.

REBECCA

Would you like to have a drink with us?

LESLIE

Oh, thank you, but I should... I have to get home.

REBECCA

(abruptly, to Bobby)
Should we tell her?

BOBBY

You tell her, Sue.

REBECCA

I'm embarrassed.

BOBBY

Oh, go ahead.

LESLIE

(intrigued)
What? Tell me what?

REBECCA

(thinking as fast as she can)
Well, the truth is... the absolute truth is...

(can't get it)
This is so embarrassing, this...
(got it)
This is our anniversary.

LESLIE

Congratulations!

REBECCA

And we have this sort of tradition, this sort of stupid, thing, God, we started doing it eleven years ago, ack, I'm so old!

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

REBECCA (cont'd)

Anyway, on our anniversary, we always ask a stranger to have a drink with us, and, I don't know, this is so much better than a stranger, we'll buy a bottle of champagne and it'll be one of those New York stories you'll tell and we'd just be really honored if you'd be our stranger this year, I mean --

(to Bobby)

-- if you don't mind breaking the rules a little bit, honey.

BOBBY

(flat, to Leslie)

Do say yes.

LESLIE

That's quite... adorable.

REBECCA

So you'll come?

LESLIE

Well, I have to meet my husband in an hour...

Rebecca affects a crestfallen expression.

LESLIE (cont'd)

But for a quick one, sure, why not. There's a place up here on the corner...

She starts off ahead of them, eager to get this over with. Rebecca puts an arm through Bobby's and looks at him approvingly.

REBECCA

You should be in movies.

BOBBY

You should be in a straitjacket.

They follow Leslie, this time authorized.

CUT TO:

INT BUS NIGHT

A red sign BINGS and flashes at the front of a bus:

STOP REQUESTED

CONTINUED:

Steve turns away from the window. He looks across the aisle, at the seat where the African Woman was, but she's gone.

He looks down, at the seat next to him. There's a slip of paper on it, folded in half. He picks it up. Neat block letters are printed on the page:

GO HOME TO YOUR FAMILY.

He unfolds the paper. A yellow Metrocard is tucked inside it.

STEVE

Wow.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Hey.

Steve looks toward the front of the bus. The Driver is half out of his seat, turned around, staring toward the rear of the bus.

Steve looks behind him. Nobody back there. The Driver is talking to him.

DRIVER (cont'd)

207th Street.

STEVE

Where am I?!

DRIVER

207th, end of the line. You still wanna die, you gotta do it on Inwood Avenue.

Steve jumps out of his seat, hurries to the front of the bus, and leaps out the door. He turns back, just before the Driver closes the door.

STEVE

I don't *want* to die. It just seems kind of inevitable.

The door closes and the bus ROARS away. Steve turns, looks around. He's so far north it might as well be Massachusetts. Completely foreign to him.

He looks away down the block, sees a subway sign. He takes off toward it.

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly, things start happening very fast, images pounding by at just about exactly the rate of our ability to comprehend them.

THE SUBWAY SIGN -- the camera racing across it until it finds the word "DOWNTOWN," then racing in on that.

EXT SUBWAY STOP NIGHT

Steve's feet fly down the stairs.

INT SUBWAY STATION NIGHT

The yellow Metrocard zips through the scanner.

The turnstile spins.

Steve's lips gently kiss the Metrocard.

A light approaches on the tracks.

Subway doors WHOOSH open.

Steve's hand wraps around the pole.

Those took about nine seconds. Suddenly, the pace slows back down to normal, but just for a moment, long enough for Steve to turn to THREE PRIESTS who are on the subway car and say:

STEVE

In fifth grade, they started to let the nuns wear pants.

(confidentially)

That's when all hell broke loose.

And then we're off to the races again, the shots picking up their previous pace. Priests disappear, FREAKY TEENAGERS appear.

Teenagers disappear, LOVERS make out.

Subway stops flash by:

181st Street.

157th Street.

145th Street.

CONTINUED:

We slow down again, now *extremely* slow, looking out the window of the subway train with Steve as they pull even with another car, on the next track over, the express track. This car, for some reason, is *packed*, maybe the Yankee game just let out. The mass of humanity glides past, and Steve notices that somebody is looking out the window.

Looking at *him*.

It's the Beautiful Dark-Haired Woman, the one he saw from the bus. Steve makes guilty eye contact with her... holds it until she sinks out of sight as the train glides down into a tunnel underneath us.

And we're off again, triple time now, practically subliminal -- 125th, 116th, 110th, 103rd, 96th, 86th, and finally, 77th Street.

The doors WHOOSH open.

INT SUBWAY STATION NIGHT

Steve's hips BANG through the turnstile.

Steve's feet pound up the stairs.

Steve's pocket RINGS as he nears the top of the stairs, somebody's been trying to call this whole time.

EXT STREET NIGHT

Steve rises up out of the subway like a breath-holder coming out of the ocean, and takes a deep gulp of the night air. He reaches the corner, swivels his head in all directions. No idea which way to go.

He grabs a PASSER-BY, both hands on the man's arms.

STEVE

Hospital.

The Passer-By looks at him, not much more than a raised eyebrow.

PASSER-BY

No hands.

STEVE

Of course not.

He drops his arms to his sides obediently. The Passer-By raises one hand, points off down a side street.

CONTINUED:

PASSER-BY

Hospital.

STEVE

Nice work.

He marches off in that direction, walking as fast as he can.

His phone RINGS. It hasn't really stopped ringing all that much, we've heard it faintly in the background, on and off, throughout most of his scenes. But this ring cuts through the haze.

STEVE (cont'd)

Hello?

We leap behind him as he stops in his tracks, right in front of an angry woman of about thirty, standing in the middle of the sidewalk with her hands on her hips (CAROLINE).

CAROLINE

What the fuck did you say to Rob?!

Steve lowers the phone, continues the conversation (it's another one of those).

STEVE

Caroline?

CAROLINE

Whatever it was, you pissed him off royally, he went storming out of here about fifteen minutes ago and hasn't come back since.

STEVE

I didn't say a thing, I haven't talked to Rob for weeks!

CAROLINE

Bullshit, Steve, I answered the phone, remember?

STEVE

Oh.

He stops, leans against a wall.

CAROLINE

Hello?

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE

That explains something.

Steve puts a hand to his head -- what have I done? Caroline, gone from this new shot, speaks as through a phone filter again.

CAROLINE (O.S.)

Hang on, he just walked back in.

(muffled arguing on her end,
then back into phone)

He wants to talk to you.

STEVE

O-key dokey.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello?

STEVE

Hi, Rob.

We pull back a few feet from the wall, widen just enough to make it a two shot, and see ROB, thirtyish, leaning against the wall next to Steve, hands shoved in his pockets.

ROB

Yeah.

STEVE

Look, before you say anything, I gotta tell you, I took a whole shitload of mushrooms a couple hours ago, or a couple minutes ago, I'm not sure which, I don't know, I may have told you this already, or maybe not, but the point is if I said something to offend you, I'm really sorry, it's not what I meant, if, in fact, I said anything at all.

ROB

Okay.

STEVE

What was it, again?

ROB

Doesn't matter.

STEVE

Yeah, it does.

CONTINUED: (3)

ROB

I can drop it.

STEVE

Come on, man, please, gimme a break,
what did I say?

ROB

Told me you thought I was an alcoholic.

Steve turns, puts his head against the wall, and starts to bang
it against the brick.

ROB (cont'd)

Like you think I don't know that. Like
I haven't been working on that for,
what, two years.

Bang. Bang. Bang.

ROB (cont'd)

Like it hasn't been the central fucking
preoccupation of me and your sister's
lives for the last eight months.

Steve turns, starts walking again. Faster. The old fear is
back. Rob follows, enraged, shouting at him in the street.

ROB (cont'd)

And now that I know *why* you said it,
how you managed to finally work up the
guts to say it, *now*, when I'm already
dealing with it, instead of two *years*
ago, when you were buying me fucking
tequila shots, now I gotta ask you,
man, don't you think you have an
unbelievable amount of *GALL* to tell me
I have a God damn *DRINKING* problem when
YOU'RE in the middle of a mother
fucking *ACID TRIP*?!

CLICK. Rob hangs up on him and vanishes from the shot.

Oh, wow. Wow, wow. Steve bangs his head against the wall
again, on every other word:

STEVE

Fucking up my life, fucking up my life,
fucking up my wife...

CUT TO:

INT JAZZ CLUB NIGHT

A small, crowded basement jazz club downtown. The band is playing "To Hell With Love," so loud it's impossible to hear anything else. A WAITER walks past the band, shimmering across the room with a bottle of expensive champagne.

He reaches an ice bucket on the far side of the room, pulls a dead bottle from it, and gives it to a passing BUSBOY. He unwraps the fresh bottle and pops the cork, just as the song ends and the TINY CROWD bursts into applause.

Bobby, Rebecca, and Leslie are at a table in the back corner, tipsy. Leslie, laughing, holds out her glass, to be the first for more champagne.

LESLIE

I gotta get home.

REBECCA

Says the woman who ordered the third bottle.

LESLIE

Oh, what the fuck.

She downs her fresh glass. There's an edge to her. Leslie is an unpleasant drunk.

LESLIE (cont'd)

Let him wonder.

REBECCA

Your husband?

LESLIE

What is it, midnight? The prick's not even be home yet. Never is on Fridays, it's deadline. And then I think he sticks around to get loaded. They used to give us free booze after the magazine closed, when I was over in editorial. That's how I met him, drunk from the Friday afters, leaning against the wall in the elevator.

REBECCA

In the elevator. Huh. Cute.

CONTINUED:

LESLIE

Yes, there's nothing cuter than a drunken grope. Still, at least he had a fucking pulse. This was before he revealed his inner stiff. I wish he could see you two, I really do, with your nauseating little anniversary tradition, don't take that nauseating thing the wrong way. He's just so... fucking... *glacial*. Sometimes I let a silence just play out, you know, see how big it'll grow. I finally have to yell "*Talk!*" just to get a reaction. Any fucking nerve twitch at all, just to make sure he hasn't gone chemically fucking inert. *Fuck*.

BOBBY

You're obsessed with that word. It's ugly.

LESLIE

Fuck you.

Rebecca and Leslie laugh.

LESLIE (cont'd)

I *really* ought to get going.

BOBBY

(eagerly)
Thank you *so* much for coming.

REBECCA

Why don't you ask your husband to join us?

Bobby looks at her.

LESLIE

What are you, a saboteur? We're having a good time.

REBECCA

Sounds like he could use it.

Leslie looks at them, thinking.

LESLIE

What the hell.
(to Bobby)
What the fuck, right?

CONTINUED: (2)

BOBBY

Good one.

LESLIE

I'll call the fucker.

She grabs her bag and digs for her cell phone.

LESLIE (cont'd)

Fuck, fuck, fuckity fuck-fuck.

She staggers away from the table, punching in a number. Bobby turns to Rebecca.

BOBBY

Let's leave and stick her with the check.

REBECCA

Not yet.

BOBBY

I look at her and see only teeth.

REBECCA

(sharply)

Leave her alone.

She drinks.

CUT TO:

EXT STREET NIGHT

Through a bouncing, jerky point-of-view, we can see the lights of Lenox Hill Hospital and the bright red word "EMERGENCY." Steve is staggering now, lurching toward the double doors that lead to the emergency room. He keeps moving, stumbling toward them, a marathoner in the last fifty feet.

He crosses the street, gets HONKED at by a cab, steps onto the mats in front of the electronic double doors. They sweep open and he blunders into the emergency room.

INT EMERGENCY ROOM NIGHT

Which is very crowded, yet curiously silent. Like, *dead* silent. VICTIMS with injuries are slouched on the plastic chairs, waiting their turn. LOVED ONES waiting for those already being treated slump on those same chairs, sitting out the endless wait.

CONTINUED:

Steve's cell phone RINGS, shattering the silence. He whips it out and shuts it off as fast as he can.

Steve walks through the waiting room and reaches the big double doors that lead back to the treatment area. He roars right up to them, ready to just bull through and demand attention, but he stops, peers through the little windows first.

THROUGH THE WINDOWS,

he can see straight into the treatment rooms, where it looks, swear to God, like an amputation is in progress.

IN THE WAITING AREA,

Steve spins away from the door as fast as he possibly can, comes eye to eye with a POLICEMAN.

Steve swallows. The Policeman doesn't say anything, just points over to a thick glass window with a metal grate in the middle of it.

Steve, getting into the silent vibe of the place, raises his eyebrows in a question mark, points to the glass window with the thick metal grate too -- go over there, you mean?

The Cop just points again, firmly. Yeah, *go over there*.

Steve walks over to the window, stands outside it. It's opaque, very dark on the other side, he can't see through it. He looks around for a button or door handle or something like that. Nothing.

He knocks. No response.

He leans forward, cups his hands around his face, tries to peer through the glass.

The metal grate BUZZES, HISSES, and CRACKLES. A HUMAN VOICE (sort of) seems to emanate from within it. It says something, but it's like listening to the drive-thru speaker at a fast food place.

STEVE

I'm... I'm sorry?

No response. Steve looks around the waiting room for a little help, but no one will make eye contact with him.

He leans forward, tries his luck again with the metal grate, this time speaking into it.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE (cont'd)

Excuse me, what did you-

The metal grate SPEAKS again, indecipherable words, then suddenly Steve OOFs and doubles over. He has been hit in the groin by a metal drawer which has suddenly shot out from the bottom of the window.

He looks down. It's one of those slidey retractable drawers, like you use to pay at some gas station that gets robbed a lot. Inside the drawer is a clipboard with a form on it and a pen on a chain.

Steve looks down. He picks up the clipboard and the drawer rockets shut, practically taking his fingers with it.

He scans the form. A thousand questions, but it's the spot at the top that bothers him the most, and it's only one word:

NAME

Steve leans against the wall, dawdling, thinking. He writes the letter S. He looks up.

The Cop is looking at him.

He scratches out the S.

He thinks. Gets a great idea. Switches the pen to his left hand and awkwardly writes:

LEONARD MAAS, JR.

It looks like it was written by a first grader.

Suddenly, a door opens on the far side of the room. An ADMITTING NURSE steps out, picks up the next clipboard from a row of ten that are hanging on the wall beside the door, and looks at it quickly.

NURSE

Cartwright?

Nobody moves.

NURSE (cont'd)

Cartwright?

Nobody moves.

CONTINUED: (3)

NURSE (cont'd)

Cartwright?

Nobody moves.

NURSE (cont'd)

Cartwright?

You get the idea.

NURSE (cont'd)

Cartwright?

Steve looks down, spots a trash can right next to him.

NURSE (cont'd)

Cartwright?

CLUNK! Steve's clipboard drops into the trash can.

NURSE (cont'd)

Cartwright?

STEVE

Cartwright!

He starts to walk across the waiting room to the Admitting Nurse. Now, all eyes are on him, including the Cop's. Inexplicably, halfway there, Steve begins to limp. Really dragging that leg, trying to sell his "injury" to the Cop.

The Admitting Nurse goes back into her office, gesturing for Steve to follow.

INT ADMITTING OFFICE NIGHT

The office is tiny. A metal desk, a plastic chair beside it. Windowless walls, covered with dusty memoranda. Flickering fluorescents overhead.

The Admitting Nurse sits at her desk, next to her half-eaten turkey sandwich and coffee.

NURSE

Sorry for the wait. Friday night.

STEVE

Didn't seem that long.

She pulls Cartwright's form around to face her, studies it.

CONTINUED:

NURSE

When did you first notice the pustules?

Steve looks at her, no idea how to respond. He leans over, slowly, ostensibly to look at the form, but really just playing for time while he thinks of an answer.

STEVE

I didn't mean to write that.

NURSE

Then why did you?

STEVE

(thinks)
Fever delirium?

NURSE

You have no suppurating pustules on your abdomen and groin?

STEVE

Happily, no.

She scribbles it out, giving him a look. She glances over at her half-eaten turkey sandwich. What she wouldn't give for a bite, and instead she's talking about pustules.

NURSE

Have you contacted all your recent sexual partners?

STEVE

Colin said not to.

Another look. This time, she really studies him. Looks down at his leg, remembers his limp.

NURSE

What seems to be the trouble with your leg?

STEVE

It's fine.

She sets down her pen.

NURSE

Then what's bothering you?

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE

Wow. Good question. Nobody's asked me that for a long time.

(thinks)

Should I answer it honestly?

She sighs. Another lunatic, but he seems harmless. She sits back, picks up her sandwich.

NURSE

You don't mind if I eat.

It wasn't a question. She takes a bite.

STEVE

I can't sleep sometimes. Work still buzzing around my brain, I don't know. So I'm lying there in the dark, and I'll hear this sound. At first I think it's from outside, a cat or something, I don't know, but that only lasts a split-second, because if there's one sound you can pick out pretty quick, it's the sound of your wife crying. So I sit up and I look at her and in the light from the hallway I see her, sitting up on the bed, just *sobbing*. And I hold her and I try to talk to her, but she's not awake, she's still asleep even though her eyes are open. And she's looking around like she's never *seen* this place before, never set foot on this *planet*, and it's scaring the living shit out of her. It doesn't matter what I say, she won't wake up, she *can't* wake up, and she won't remember it in the morning. So I lay her down and lie there next to her and stroke her hair until she calms down and goes back to sleep. And the truth is, as much as it tears me apart to see her suffer, the thing of it is, in that moment that I calm her down and get her back to sleep, in *those moments* -- I've never been happier.

The Nurse finishes her sandwich, wipes her hands on her napkin. Takes a fresh form from her stack.

NURSE

How long ago did you do the drugs?

CONTINUED: (3)

STEVE

Right after it got dark.

NURSE

Psychoactive?

STEVE

Mushrooms.

NURSE

How much?

STEVE

An ounce or two. But look, what I said, what I just told you. What does it mean? I want my family to suffer so I can comfort them?

NURSE

It means you're needed. Hang onto it, it doesn't last.

STEVE

What do I do now? Are they gonna pump my stomach?

NURSE

Why don't you just go home.

STEVE

I'm afraid I'm going to die.

NURSE

You are.

STEVE

Tonight.

NURSE

Not from an ounce of mushrooms.

STEVE

You're very beautiful.

NURSE

Go home, Cartwright. Sin no more. Growing up isn't an affliction, it's a privilege.

He looks at her, that statement hitting him with incredible force.

CONTINUED: (4)

STEVE

Oh, my God. Did you just make that up?

NURSE

It's... occurred to me over the years.

STEVE

I'd like to kiss you.

NURSE

You're welcome.

STEVE

No, *actually* kiss you.

NURSE

That is not a service we offer.

STEVE

It wouldn't be sexual.

NURSE

(points to his ring)
What about that?

STEVE

I don't think I love her anymore.

NURSE

Why not?

STEVE

Because she doesn't love me.

NURSE

Kissing me will change that?

STEVE

Maybe. It seems important.

NURSE

Don't lower my opinion of you.

STEVE

I won't.

She looks at him. Is actually thinking about it. He stays seated, doesn't move toward her. She glances up, at the tiny window in the door of her office.

She laughs. Can't believe she's considering it.

CONTINUED: (5)

Looks back at him. She rolls forward on her chair. He stays where he is, frozen, as her face glides in toward his.

Slowly, gently, she lays her lips on his in the greatest no-tongue kiss of all time. After, she pulls her lips away, but stays close. She whispers.

NURSE

They need you at home.

CUT TO:

EXT JAZZ CLUB NIGHT

FIRE EXPLODES from a match head and fills the frame with billowing orange and blue heat. The flame touches the end of a cigarette, the tobacco burns with that delicious dry CRACKLE.

DEAN KRUEGER, late thirties, nice suit, loose tie, white shirt with a sweat-stained collar, stands in front of the jazz club, not going in yet. Dean's not that handsome, but he's one of those guys; there's something about him. He changes his grip on the cigarette to a serious-business clutch and pulls hard.

The cigarette doesn't stand a chance. He exhales a vast cumulonimbus cloud of smoke. Smoke still spewing from his nostrils, he pops a mint in his mouth and heads into the club. We go with him (one shot so far, it continues inside).

INT JAZZ CLUB NIGHT

Dean makes his way across the crowded club, scanning the faces. In the booth in the far corner, he sees Leslie, sitting at a table for four with one empty chair. She's facing him, raises a hand in a tight wave. Dean nods tersely, CRUNCHES his mint and heads over. He draws close, bends down toward Leslie to give her a kiss on the cheek.

As they draw together, the shot (same shot we started on the match) slows down, draws right in close to her cheek as Dean's lips barely brush it with a dry peck.

And in that split-second that they're close, we notice Leslie's nose, right next to her husband's cheek, as she gives him a barely perceptible little --

-- sniff.

As they pull apart, Leslie's face wrinkles in unspoken disapproval.

CONTINUED:

LESLIE

Dean, this is Richard and Susan,
Richard and Susan, my husband Dean,
Dean, Susan, Susan, Richard, Richard,
Susan, Dean, Dean.

BOBBY

Lather, rinse, repeat.

Dean turns to them, smiling, holds out his hand, shakes with
Bobby --

DEAN

Hey, how are you.

-- and as his eyes turn to Rebecca, there's a slight but
noticeable hesitation and momentary freeze in his smile. But it
vanishes quickly as he takes her hand.

DEAN (cont'd)

Nice to meet you.

REBECCA

Nice to meet you too, Dean.

He sits down.

DEAN

Well. What a surprise.

LESLIE

Susan used to work at In Style.

DEAN

Is that right?

He grabs the champagne bottle, looks around for a glass for
himself, doesn't find one.

LESLIE

Yeah, in the layout department too, but
I didn't know her.

DEAN

(looking around testily for the
waiter)
My God, that's so funny.

REBECCA

Isn't it?

CONTINUED: (2)

BOBBY

Have you ever noticed that people usually say "that's so funny" when they actually don't think is funny at all?

DEAN

I haven't noticed that. I say that's so funny when I think something's amusing.

Realizing that came out harsher than he intended, he tries to soften it with a laugh.

BOBBY

Or, or then.

Giving up on the waiter, Dean borrows Leslie's glass and fills it.

Rebecca is just staring at him. Leslie, picking up the weird vibe, looks at Dean curiously. Then at Rebecca, who is looking at Dean.

Bobby looks at Leslie, who is looking at Rebecca, who is looking at Dean. He looks down at Rebecca's hands, which are in her lap. And trembling.

A kind of panic seeps into Bobby's face.

DEAN

So... what did I miss?

REBECCA

Well, uh, I guess, uh, things are just about to get started.

LESLIE

They are?

BOBBY

I think I'd like to go.

REBECCA

Not yet, Bob.

DEAN

Well, if you have to go...

LESLIE

Bob?

CONTINUED: (3)

BOBBY

I'm starting to feel sick.

LESLIE

Did you say Bob?

REBECCA

This'll only take a minute.

DEAN

You think you're going to throw up? If you think you're going to throw up, you should go outside and get some air. I'll go with you, if you like.

LESLIE

What will only take a minute?

DEAN

(standing)
Come on. Up.

Bobby stands, sort of hauled to his feet by Dean.

REBECCA

Sit down, Dean.

DEAN

I'm trying to help the guy.

REBECCA

Sit down and be quiet.

An awkward tension. Dean laughs, sharp and forced.

DEAN

Okay. Okay.

He sits. Leslie is staring at him.

DEAN (cont'd)

You guys have a hell of a head start on me, don't you?

A long, awkward silence. Dean refills his glass. Wipes some sweat from his forehead.

Finally:

LESLIE

What am I, the asshole?

CONTINUED: (4)

DEAN

(heard perfectly well)
What?

LESLIE

There is obviously some sort of *thing* here, some *scenario* in which I am the asshole, so could someone please fix that for me please?

DEAN

(to Rebecca)
You were at In Style, did you say?

His hand fumbles in his pocket, comes out with his pack of cigarettes, starts shaking one out.

LESLIE

(noticing the cigarettes)
Dean?

He looks at her and his eyes pop wide, realizing he is now holding a pack of cigarettes in front of the one person from whom he had concealed his smoking.

DEAN

Oh, shit. What? I don't... well, oh, *shit*, Leslie...

This guy is about to crack.

REBECCA

I'm having a lot of problems with the truth.

BOBBY

Home, maybe if we just went *home*...

REBECCA

(to Leslie)
It's been going on for about a year and a half.

DEAN

(lighting one)
What? *What?*

BOBBY

Shit.

CONTINUED: (5)

REBECCA

Ours also started in the elevator.
Elevator works for you, doesn't it,
Dean?

LESLIE

Stop that.

DEAN

This isn't happening...

REBECCA

We've tried to break it off a half a dozen times, we've tried to stop it since before it started and we can't, we meet to say goodbye and end up getting a room. I went to your apartment building tonight, I was going to wait for him and tell him once and for all, but then I saw *you* and-

DEAN

You're sick. You're sociopathic. I feel sorry for you, I do, I *pity* you.

REBECCA

I can't live with this and I can't stop and this is the only way I can think of to make it go away, drop a bomb on it, blow it up in front of you and him and everybody. I'm sorry, but he never would have told you and you have a right to know. He's not a bad guy, except for the compulsive lying. I'm not Susan, I'm Rebecca, there is something very, very wrong with me, please forgive me, I don't want to sleep with your husband ever again.

Dean exhales a huge cloud of smoke.

DEAN

This is your idea of morality? Of, of, of, of *kindness*? Of a decent way out? How can you stand yourself, you, you, you fucking-

BOBBY

Hey, come on, let's please not make a bad situation-

CONTINUED: (6)

DEAN

(shouting)

I am *TALKING* to fucking *BLONDIE*, okay?!

Heads turn.

DEAN (cont'd)

(still on Bobby)

Who the fuck are you, anyway? You're not her husband. You're a fuckin' rubber-necker, you're slowing down at the accident. You gettin' a good look, you gettin' an eyeful?

BOBBY

-worse, make a bad situation worse, is what I was trying to say.

DEAN

Who the fuck cares *what* you say, Liberace?

BOBBY

(to Rebecca)

You *slept* with this asshole?

DEAN

Take a hike, Queenie.

Without hesitation, Bobby picks up his drink and throws it in Dean's face. Dean turns and looks at him, champagne dripping off his nose. He blinks.

DEAN (cont'd)

That's once.

REBECCA

(to Leslie, who is staring into space)

Please say something.

DEAN

You only get one.

REBECCA

Would you like me to leave?

LESLIE

I would like you to have never existed.

Rebecca looks down.

CONTINUED: (7)

LESLIE (cont'd)

But you do. And I had adjusted to that.

She covers her face with one hand. Rebecca looks up, uncomprehending. Dean looks at her, shaking his head, as one looks at a child who has broken a lamp.

LESLIE (cont'd)

I just never dreamed anyone would do something so...

REBECCA

You knew?

DEAN

Of course she did.

LESLIE

Unspeakable. That's what this is.

REBECCA

You told her?

DEAN

Of *course* I didn't.

LESLIE

To bring me here... to make of me a...

REBECCA

(to Dean)

How?

DEAN

(impatient)

Because you know.

LESLIE

(to Rebecca)

You are... indecent.

DEAN

Because there's no fucking secrets, because everybody knows everything and everybody knows you *don't... talk about it*.

Leslie picks up her drink and throws it in Rebecca's face. Rebecca GASPS, champagne dripping from her nose.

CONTINUED: (8)

LESLIE

Bitch!

She sweeps all the glasses off the table with one swipe of her arm. They SMASH together in front of Bobby, sending glass flying up into his face, some of it breaking on his forehead, opening up a cut above his eyebrow.

BOBBY

Fuck!

His hands shoot up to his face just as Leslie lunges across the table, all fingernails and teeth all of a sudden, SLAMMING into Rebecca with full force and fury, the twisted tabletop the only thing holding her back at all.

Rebecca recoils, nearly falling backwards out of her chair, Dean leaps up and grabs at Leslie, PATRONS simultaneously lunge toward them and away from them, creating a surging froth around them.

Dean finally gets a hold of Leslie and hauls her off Rebecca, but Leslie twists away from him and flees the club.

Bobby pulls his hands from his face and finds them covered in blood.

Dean moves to follow Leslie, then hesitates, looking down at Rebecca like he would enjoy belting her.

DEAN

You got a hell of a mean streak, did
you know that?

And he's gone.

Rebecca turns and looks at Bobby, whose forehead is bleeding. She hands him a napkin and he holds it to the cut.

BOBBY

I swear to the infant Jesus, I will
never go out with you lunatics again.

CUT TO:

EXT HOSPITAL NIGHT

Back uptown, Steve comes out of the emergency room and turns left on 77th, headed west with renewed determination. He digs his cell phone out of his pocket, turns it on again.

CONTINUED:

It BEEPS almost immediately and he checks its screen.

13 missed calls

STEVE

Busy, busy, busy, busy, busy.

The phone RINGS. He answers it.

STEVE (cont'd)

Hello, you're on the air.

Colin picks him up at a corner, appearing from behind a building and falling into step with him.

COLIN

And you've been out of touch. We were worried about you.

STEVE

Busy night. Very busy night for me.

COLIN

Are you at the hospital yet?

STEVE

Been there, movin' on.

COLIN

No, go back, I told Rebecca and Bobby where you're going, they were gonna come get you, go back.

STEVE

Can't do that, Colin.

Mindlessly crossing Park Avenue, Steve is nearly hit by a car, which BLARES its horn at him. Colin, who is of course not there at all, doesn't react. But he hears the horn.

COLIN

What are you, in the street again?

STEVE

Home, gotta go home. Word on the street says "Go home, Steve."

COLIN

How are you doing on the rules?
Remember the three rules?

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE

(thinks)

I haven't called any old girlfriends.

COLIN

That's something.

STEVE

Although it does appear I'm now feuding
with my sister's husband.

COLIN

What did you do?

STEVE

I told him he had a drinking problem.

COLIN

Okay, so you've got some broken plates
to sweep up tomorrow.

STEVE

Lotta people unhappy with me.

(pause)

You one of 'em?

COLIN

Look, I told you, I was never mad at
you about that...

STEVE

I maneuvered. I played strategy, I sat
at home and planned it with Rebecca...

COLIN

So did I.

STEVE

You were my best friend, you were ahead
of me in line, and I did everything I
could to take the job away from you.

COLIN

Because I let you.

STEVE

Bullshit.

CONTINUED: (3)

COLIN

No, really. I mean, I *tried* to get the job, I thought I wanted it, but after I lost it and came back to London, I started to realize that what I really wanted, what I really *needed* was to get the hell out of that life completely. Otherwise you never would have slipped past me.

STEVE

I don't believe you.

COLIN

No, you don't, and *that's* what's insulting. That's your problem. You can't *conceive* of a world where corporate advancement isn't universally and indisputably regarded as a goal worth attaining. I didn't realize it while I was living there, it wasn't until I'd spent a year or so in a pleasant shithole in East London, making five hundred quid a week freelance, *actually happier* -- but that's the way success is, it's parasitic, it's a tick.

STEVE

I'll Ed McMahon you, how is success like a tick, Colin?

COLIN

When a tick buries its head in your skin, its saliva gives off an anaesthetic, it numbs your skin, you don't feel the irritation, you don't feel the itch as the tick starts to suck away at your bloodstream. Corporate America does the same thing -- it makes you comfortable, it makes you numb, it pays you well, it sends you fruit baskets, puts you in first class, says don't mind me as it slowly sucks the brains out the roof of your skull. If anything has pissed me off about you since then, it's the fact that you feel *sorry* for me, that you think you *won* something and I lost.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

COLIN (cont'd)

But five years from now, when you're lying on your bathroom floor in the middle of the night with a bleeding prostate and a sudden and shocking realization that you have willingly subjugated yourself to a value system that bears no relation to what you used to believe; in that moment when you finally wake up and realize that you have *changed*, and not intentionally, that you are *no longer you*, and that you were a willing and enthusiastic participant in your own eradication -- hey, who do you think will have won then?

STEVE

I have to think about that before I respond. I'll get back to you in ten years.

COLIN

Take your time, it's only your life.

STEVE

I kissed the admitting nurse.

COLIN

That is a story I long to hear. I'm going to bed. I advise you to take a cab.

STEVE

No money, plus I got the walkies. I know a shortcut.

Colin stops on the far side of Fifth Avenue, but Steve continues across. Colin's voice starts to CRACKLE, fade in and out.

COLIN

You're... cut... park are you?

STEVE

Losin' you, Col.

COLIN

I DON'T... BEST WAY... GO!

Circling around behind Steve and rising up, we see him step off of Fifth Avenue and onto the dimly lit footpaths of Central Park.

CUT TO:

EXT CENTRAL PARK NIGHT

Steve wanders down the footpath from the 76th Street entrance, marveling at the natural beauty of Central Park at night.

But once you get past the DOG WALKERS at the fringes, let's face it, it's fucking creepy. Steve walks along a path. At the far end, FIVE OR SIX TEENAGERS on dirt bikes glide past, noisily, fast, full of youth and power.

Steve keeps walking.

A moment later, those same Teenagers (or different ones?) cross the path again, this time *behind* him.

Steve continues on, starting to question the wisdom of his shortcut. He turns down another path, narrower.

He sees a figure coming toward him. As he gets closer, he sees it's a COUPLE, huddled together, hurrying out of the park.

As Steve approaches them, he sees the Man put his hand firmly on the Woman's arm, he sees her duck her head, sees the Man resolutely avert his eyes from Steve's.

As they pass:

STEVE

Hiya.

That came out louder than he meant and was probably intended to reassure them, but it has the opposite effect. The Woman lets out a half-muted SCREAM, the Man *yanks* her closer to him, and they break into a run.

Steve stops, smiling, thrilled once again that *he* is the scary guy tonight.

EXT CENTRAL PARK - THE RAMBLE NIGHT

Steve wanders deeper, darker into the park. He's approaching the Ramble, the wild, hilly tangle of rocks and trees with narrow paths snaking through it.

He reaches a point at which his path forks, rather precisely leading off to the left and the right at forty-five degree angles. He stops, right at the crotch of the V, looking from path to path.

STEVE

I've read about this.

CONTINUED:

He picks the left fork. Our feeling is he should have gone right.

CUT TO:

EXT SIXTH AVENUE NIGHT

Working their way north, Rebecca and Bobby walk slowly up Sixth Avenue. He has his arm around her. They reach a corner and he stops as she continues into the street. She turns, looks at him. He points to the street sign.

BOBBY

Fourteenth. This is as far north as I go.

REBECCA

The hell with that, you little coward. You're coming with me.

BOBBY

Noooooo. You're on your own, Columbus.

REBECCA

What do I do now?

BOBBY

You already know.

REBECCA

Tell him.

BOBBY

You could.

REBECCA

I have to.

BOBBY

For who?

REBECCA

For him.

BOBBY

Bullshit.

REBECCA

For truth.

CONTINUED:

BOBBY

Fuck the truth, it's overrated. You will feel better, you will feel relieved and remorseful. He will feel a thousand times worse, for ten times as long. There's only one question you have to answer -- do you still love him? If you do, you're gonna bury this in your back yard. You're gonna go home and decide not to take a sledgehammer to your life. You're going to give the people you love the most incredible gift that they will never even know about. And you're gonna have bad nights, a lot of 'em, which you will deserve. But they'll get better, or at least farther apart. And you will join the very long line of people whose lives are not exactly what they'd hoped they would be.

REBECCA

People can't live a lie.

BOBBY

That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard you say.

REBECCA

If it's all a lie, what do you have?

BOBBY

A marriage.

He turns and walks away into the crowd, waving over his shoulder.

Rebecca starts the long walk uptown.

CUT TO:

EXT CENTRAL PARK - THE RAMBLE NIGHT

Steve walks in Central Park, in the thick of the dark ramble. Ahead of him, an animal RUSTLES in the bushes, impossibly large, too big for the middle of Manhattan.

He stops, puzzled, and then hears a distinctive MOAN come from the bushes. It is an animal, a *human* animal. Two of them, in fact, humping.

CONTINUED:

Steve takes a right turn off the path, clambers up a short hillside, comes out on top of a rock.

ATOP THE ROCK,

Steve pulls himself to a standing position and draws his breath in sharply, stunned. Coming around behind him, we see it too.

One of the most stunning views of New York we've ever seen.

Central Park South is lit up like a thousand Christmas trees, the buildings of Fifth Avenue and Central Park West framing it, a full moon nestled over the top, cradled by the buildings, a cherry on a magnificent sundae.

Steve holds his arms out, to embrace it all.

STEVE

Oh, God... until tonight... I didn't know... I had no idea... Thank you... thank you for my life.

VOICE (O.S.)

You're welcome.

Steve turns, nearly falls off the rock. A TEENAGER is standing on another rock, right across from him. Sixteen years old, shaved head, living the pierced lifestyle.

Steve laughs, embarrassed.

STEVE

Sorry. Little private moment there.

TEENAGER

That your rock?

STEVE

Huh?

TEENAGER

That rock. Is it yours?

STEVE

No.

TEENAGER

Then it must be mine. So what the fuck are you standing on my rock for?

Steve sighs. There will be no reasoning with this.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

Terrible mistake. Enjoy your rock.

He turns to climb down. The Teenager runs, jumps over a narrow crevasse, and lands nimbly on Steve's rock, in his path. Steve stops. Alarmed now. The Teenager is smaller than he is but thicker, muscular. Wild, wild eyes.

TEENAGER

You piss on it?

STEVE

Say *what*?

TEENAGER

Did you piss on my rock.

STEVE

No, I didn't.

TEENAGER

Piss on it.

STEVE

I said I didn't.

TEENAGER

No, I *want* you to. Piss on my rock.

STEVE

Excuse me.

He tries to step around the Teenager, who cuts him off.

TEENAGER

Piss on my rock.

STEVE

Do you struggle with your mental health?

TEENAGER

Take your wrinkly little dick out of your pants and piss on my mother fucking rock *right now*.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE

Okay, look, this is obviously one of those infuriating adolescent tricks where if I *don't* piss on your rock, you pick a fight because I wouldn't do what you said and if I *do* piss on your rock you're gonna pick a fight because I pissed on your rock, so *I'm not gonna piss on your rock*, okay?!

Suddenly, Steve jumps back, because a sound like falling water is coming from below. He wipes at the front of his pants, where the Teenager has pissed on him.

STEVE (cont'd)

Jesus Christ!

TEENAGER

(zipping back up)
I offered. "Piss on my rock," I said.
You had your chance.

STEVE

You need fucking help, Kid.

TEENAGER

(friendly, as if a great idea
just occurred to him)
Hey! Gimme your wallet.

STEVE

No. No, I will not give you my wallet. Because you know what? You don't scare me. And if you want somebody's wallet, *your* part of the deal is, rule one is, you must scare them. I mean, what are you gonna do, you wanna fight? Okay. I've been in fights. You think you can kick my ass, I don't think you can. You got a gun, you got a knife? I'll bet money you don't, because a kid like you, that would have come out first. That would have been your whole fucking world, and no way in hell you bury *that* lead. And the *main* reason I'm not gonna give you my wallet is because as scary as you think you are, I've been in this town a lot longer than you have and *I've seen worse*.

He turns, starts climbing down the rock.

CONTINUED: (3)

TEENAGER

So, what, *fuck* me?

STEVE

You got it.

He leaps off the rock --

ON A FOOTPATH,

-- lands on another path, and walks quickly away. The Teenager comes up to the top of the rock, watches him go.

EXT THE RAMBLE - FURTHER ON NIGHT

Steve walks, a certain urgency in his step that wasn't there before. But at least he's alone again.

Up ahead, he can see the lights of the apartment buildings on Central Park West through the branches of the trees. Home.

He steps up his pace even more --

-- and then stops in his tracks.

SIX MORE TEENAGERS are blocking the path. All white, all around sixteen, all wannabe OG. The First Teenager (FOUR-D), the one he just encountered on the rock, now looms on another rock, above him.

FOUR-D

I scare you now? I keep up my end of the deal?

Another teenager (MONKEY) steps forward.

MONKEY

Four-D, what up widdis, yo?

At the risk of repeating, they're all white.

FOUR-D

Get his fuckin' wallet.

The Teenagers close around Steve, who circles, trying if possible to show only a small percentage of how terrified he is. Monkey walks right up into Steve's face, reaches around behind him, and gropes in his back pocket.

Steve allows it, even raises his arms slightly.

CONTINUED:

STEVE

You're too late.

MONKEY

He don't got one.

Four-D leaps off the rock, comes up to Steve, and pats him down. It's true, no wallet. Steve, strangely, starts to calm.

STEVE

I already lost it.

FOUR-D

Show me your pockets.

Steve complies, turning his pockets inside out. Empty, except for a set of keys.

FOUR-D (cont'd)

Okay, your watch, then.

Steve holds both arms out, to show two empty wrists.

STEVE

Stopped wearing one about six months ago. It's great, you should try it. Musta lost twenty points off my blood pressure.

MONKEY

(to Four-D)

What you wanna do now?

FOUR-D

Shut the fuck up, Monkey.

MONKEY

Well, what we gonna do?

Steve starts to walk away. Four-D cuts him off, shoves him back into the middle of the group. Steve sighs.

FOUR-D

Okay, I'll tell you what we gonna do. This is what we gonna do. This is exactly how it's gonna be. We gonna walk outta this park and we goin' to your apartment, and we gonna take a look and see what you got *there*, motherfucker.

CONTINUED: (2)

Steve thinks about it.

STEVE

Nah.

FOUR-D

What?

STEVE

Too complicated.

FOUR-D

What?

STEVE

And what kind of idiot do you think I am? There is no earthly way I am taking you to my apartment, that is the most inane idea I've ever heard in my life. What else do you want me to do, wait until my bank opens on Monday and take you there too? Co-sign a car loan? Buy you a house? Jesus Christ, I mean, come *on*.

One of the Teenagers LAUGHS. A couple others follow suit, to the great displeasure of Four-D. He turns, zeroes in on the first one who laughed, slightly younger than the others, maybe fifteen at the most.

FOUR-D

You think he's funny, Batshit?

The Teenager who laughed (BATSHIT) shrugs.

BATSHIT

I don't know.

STEVE

You gotta be kidding me.

They look at him.

STEVE (cont'd)

No offense, but these are the names you guys *picked* for yourselves? "Monkey," "Four-D," and "Batshit?" I would get *fired* for writing crap like that.

CONTINUED: (3)

Without hesitation, Four-D SPITS in Steve's face. The tone, which was easing into ridiculousness just a moment ago, becomes severe again.

Steve wipes it away, just looks at him. Four-D doesn't look away. Neither does Steve.

Then --

-- Four-D SLAPS Steve across the face, a move so quick Steve has no chance to defend himself. His head snaps to the side, he GASPS in surprise.

The sudden violence snaps a wire that was holding them all back, they HOOT and SHOUT, bounce off one another, somebody picks up a stick and CRACKS it across the back of Steve's legs. He falls to his knees in pain.

Somebody else kicks him in the side of the head, he falls over, then brings himself back up to his knees.

As he looks up, he just sees belts and hands. He sees one hand push a jacket up, showing the handle of a gun tucked into somebody's belt.

Another hand reaches in and takes it out, the hand with the gun in it now walks over to Steve, the barrel tucks up under his chin and pushes up, tilting Steve's head back.

Steve is now looking up at Four-D, who's the one holding the gun.

FOUR-D

Looky dis. I got the whole world in my hand.

Steve stares up at him, terrified now.

FOUR-D (cont'd)

Say somethin' funny.

Steve says nothing.

FOUR-D (cont'd)

Say somethin' funny.

STEVE

I don't have anything.

FOUR-D

Oh yes you do.

CONTINUED: (4)

STEVE

I have nothing that you want.

FOUR-D

You got somethin'. You got somethin'
Monkey wants, all right.

The others WHOOP again, shove Monkey, who smiles shyly.

FOUR-D (cont'd)

There's these two explorers, and they get caught in Africa by this tribe of cannibals. And they tie up the two explorers, and the Chief says to the first guy, "Yo, you got two choices. Death, or Booly-Booly." And the first guy says, fuck, that ain't no choice at all. "I'll take Booly-Booly." And the Chief says "Booly-Booly!" and the whole tribe starts yellin' "Booly-Booly!" and they line up and they all fuck him in the ass. And when they're done the Chief turns to the second guy and says "You got two choices. Death, or Booly-Booly." And the second guy, yo, he *seen* Booly Booly and he ain't up for that shit, so he says "I'll take death." And the Chief says "Okay, death. *By Booly-Booly!*"

The Teenagers laugh. The humor escapes Steve at the moment. Four-D leans in even closer.

FOUR-D (cont'd)

Now, you seem to me like the kind of motherfucker don't wanna die. So we can just skip the two choices part.

(turns)

Booly-Booly!

More HOOTING, chanting of "Booly-Booly!"

FOUR-D (cont'd)

How 'bout it, Monkey?

The chanting shifts -- "Mon-key! Mon-key! Mon-key!" They shove him toward Steve.

But Monkey resists. Four-D looks back at Steve.

CONTINUED: (5)

FOUR-D (cont'd)

I guess Monkey ain't in the mood. You
are one breathin'-easy motherfucker,
ain't you?

(sighs)

So now I gotta think of somethin'
else. A door number *three*, in a manner
of speaking.

Very slowly --

-- Steve stands up.

STEVE

I'm leaving now.

He turns and takes a step forward. Nothing happens, so he takes
another, down the path, turning his back on them.

Ahead, he sees the lights of Central Park West, getting closer.
He starts to breathe faster.

And then he hears steps behind him, two or three quick ones
closing the distance fast, and something is WHISTLING past his
ear, and something goes CRUNCH into the side of his head and the
image shakes, and suddenly those lights are flying through the
air and he's falling, falling onto his back, and looking
straight up into the night sky.

There is a flash of black, and when the image returns it's an
image of hands, all closing over him, many hands all at once,
jostling him, moving him.

Another flash of black and the image is on its side, now looking
sideways at the lights of Central Park West, which are moving
away from him, back, back, into the trees again as he is dragged
back into the park. His eyes close and everything turns black.

CUT TO:

EXT RESIDENTIAL STREET - WEST FORTIES NIGHT

Still working her way west and north, Rebecca turns down a side
street in the West Forties. She is the only pedestrian on the
entire block.

She walks briskly. Pulls her coat in around her, it's getting
chilly. Up ahead, she sees a shape on the sidewalk. She slows.
Can't quite tell what it is. She keeps walking toward it,
moving slower and slower.

CONTINUED:

It's a person, lying face down, dressed in a bathrobe and pajamas, the robe flipped up over his or her head.

Rebecca stops just short. The person is lying in front of the entrance to an apartment building, no doorman.

REBECCA

Hello?

No answer.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Are you...

She was going to say "okay?," but it seems like a stupid question.

She looks around. Still nobody on the block.

She bends down, gives the person a nudge. No movement whatsoever. As she's debating what to do, she notices movement out of the corner of her eye. It's coming from under the edge of the bathrobe, which is draped over the person's head and shoulders.

It's blood.

Rebecca GASPS.

She reaches out and carefully pulls the bathrobe back, to reveal the person's head.

It's a WOMAN, fifty or sixty, it's hard to tell -- her head has been crushed and is lying in a pool of spreading blood.

Rebecca looks at her, how could this have happened? Above her, a FLAPPING sound draws her attention and she looks up.

She's directly underneath an awning. Through it she can see the night sky, as a large hole has been torn in the awning's canvas, directly over the woman's body. The ragged flaps LUFF in the night wind.

Rebecca looks back down at the woman. At the jumper.

Rebecca stands, her face full of sympathy. And curiosity. Why?

From a few blocks away, the faint sound of SIRENS.

Rebecca takes a step back from the body. But now, with the robe down, she notices something she couldn't see before.

CONTINUED: (2)

It's a white piece of paper, neatly folded and tucked into the pocket of the woman's bathrobe.

Rebecca looks around. Still nobody coming, but those SIRENS are getting louder.

She bends down. Reaches out and slips the note out of the pocket. Holding it by the edges, she opens it with one fingernail.

Whatever she reads, it only takes a second, and it is not what she expected.

The SIREN are getting louder, and now the sound of VOICES and FOOTSTEPS can be heard on both sides. Quickly, she folds the note and slips it back into the pocket of the bathrobe.

REBECCA (cont'd)

That about sums it up.

She straightens and hurries away across the street.

But we stay where we are. Although the SIRENS and VOICES and FOOTSTEPS seem to grow louder, they fade away to us, replaced by music.

We float down slowly, toward the woman's pocket, where the note still peeks out. PEOPLE pass in front of us, COPS and PARAMEDICS and so forth, waist high, then, still dropping, just their feet.

A HAND at the end of a uniformed sleeve reaches in and slides the note out of the pocket, lifts it up to where a COP can read it. We stay with the hand, staring at the note.

He unfolds it. It's on a nice piece of stationery. He flips it over, twice.

The page is blank.

CUT TO:

EXT CENTRAL PARK BAND SHELL NIGHT

Steve's eyes open and he finds himself staring at a large, curved stone arch. He blinks, what is that and where am I?

He drags himself up to a sitting position, rubs the side of his head. Blood is caked around his ear. He's facing a curved stone wall, very tall, that seems to wrap around him. He turns, looks out and sees the expanse of an audience seating area.

CONTINUED:

Jumping back, we see where he is -- on the stage of the Central Park band shell, deserted at this hour. Whatever the hell this hour is.

Out where the audience would sit, Steve can see the group of Teenagers, now ten or twelve strong, twenty yards away. They're arguing. One of them notices him, points, and the arguing intensifies.

One of the group is given something, he turns and walks slowly toward the band shell, never looking up.

Steve manages to stand, chest heaving. Now what?

Batshit, the younger kid in the group, the one who laughed at Steve's jokes, climbs up and walks across the stage to face Steve, from about twenty feet away.

Steve looks out at the Teenagers, who are still the same distance away. He looks to the left, to the right. There's no way to get past them.

He looks back at Batshit, who's staring at the ground.

STEVE

Well?

(no reply)

What's it gonna be?

Batshit lets one arm drop to his side. He's holding a knife. Steve looks at the knife, looks back up at the kid.

STEVE (cont'd)

You're supposed to kill me?

Batshit shakes his head no.

STEVE (cont'd)

Then what?

BATSHIT

Stick you.

STEVE

Stab me?

BATSHIT

That's right.

STEVE

Why?

CONTINUED: (2)

Batshit shrugs.

STEVE (cont'd)

Why?

BATSHIT

Yo, why you walkin' in the park at two in the fuckin' morning? Why you don't got a wallet when you supposed to? Why you gotta make Four-D look like shit in front of his boys?

STEVE

I was fucked up. I didn't know what I was doing.

BATSHIT

Well, you know now.

He takes a step toward Steve. The Teenagers CHEER, CLAP.

Steve takes a step back.

STEVE

Wait.

Batshit stops. The Teenagers BOO. Tough crowd.

STEVE (cont'd)

You don't have to do this.

BATSHIT

The fuck I don't.

STEVE

You can just walk away.

BATSHIT

The fuck I can.

He takes another two steps toward Steve, more determined this time.

STEVE

My name is Steven Baker.

Batshit stops again.

BATSHIT

Yo, what you wanna tell me that for?

CONTINUED: (3)

STEVE

Why do you think? What's your name?

BATSHIT

Uh uh.

STEVE

I have a wife and three little kids.

BATSHIT

That's bullshit, man, you gonna hide behind them 'cause you afraid of a little stick?

STEVE

It's not a little stick, you want to fucking stab me with a *knife*, you insane little shit!

Batshit closes the distance fast, is on Steve in a second, Steve starts to resist, but Batshit gets a hand around the back of his head and pulls him in close, the knife right in between them.

Steve freezes, GASPS, and Batshit WHISPERS fiercely in his ear.

BATSHIT

I'm *saving* your life, you stupid motherfucker!

Steve turns, looks at him.

BATSHIT (cont'd)

Four-D wanna do you, like he did that old dude last year, did him with a razor and dumped him in the pond, sliced his guts out first so he sunk and they didn't find him for a week -- yeah, you fuckin' read about *that* in the New York Times on your way to work, didn't you?

He shoves Steve back, against the wall of the bandshell.

BATSHIT (cont'd)

And you *still* came into the fuckin' park at two o'clock on a Saturday night. You people, man, you don't fuckin' get it, they's *animals* in the park, that is what it is fuckin' *there* for, so they can be somethin' *wild* in the middle of the city;

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

BATSHIT (cont'd)

that's the way it's got to be because that's the way people *like* it. You like it. You wanted it, you came lookin' for it, and you found it. Four-D says you get stuck, you off the hook. That's a good deal. What you gonna do, fight past me, get yourself off this stage? You gonna have a slug in the base of your skull before you count to three, so let's get this over with, where you want it?

He flips the knife over once.

STEVE

You don't have to do what he says.

BATSHIT

Don't even fuckin' start that shit. I don't do this, Four-D's gonna do you, and he's gonna do me. Maybe not tonight, but some day when I need it he ain't gonna have my back and I'm gonna get done. So you and me, we in this together. "Steve."

Pause.

BATSHIT (cont'd)

Where you want it?

Steve looks at him for a long moment. Finally:

STEVE

Across the chest.

BATSHIT

No cuts. Gotta be a stick. And I bring the dime back with your blood on it.

Another long moment.

BATSHIT (cont'd)

Well?

STEVE

I'm *thinking*.

BATSHIT

I don't got all night.

CONTINUED: (5)

STEVE

This hasn't come up for me before.

SHOUTS and TAUNTS from the audience.

BATSHIT

You don't got all night.

STEVE

Where do you usually do it?

BATSHIT

Don't you *fuckin'* insult me, I never did this shit before.

(thinks)

How 'bout the leg?

STEVE

No, fuck no, your aorta goes up your leg, you stab me in the leg and I'll bleed to death in five minutes. What the hell's the matter with you?

BATSHIT

Sorry.

STEVE

I thought you didn't want to kill me?!

BATSHIT

Yeah, well, keep talkin' and I'm not so fuckin' sure. Arm?

STEVE

No! No extremities, unless it's like a toe or something.

BATSHIT

I am not fucking stabbing you in the toe, okay? That ain't gonna fly.

STEVE

I didn't mean it literally.

BATSHIT

Steve. Baker. This is real.

The comic tone vanishes.

BATSHIT (cont'd)

Now's the time we don't talk no more.

CONTINUED: (6)

Steve just looks at him. He doesn't say another word.

Batshit walks toward him. Reaches him.

Pushes Steve back firmly against the wall of the band shell.
Puts one arm on Steve's shoulder, to steady him.

He looks up, into Steve's eyes. They hold the look for a moment.

Steve GASPS.

He looks down. The blade of the knife is pinning his shirt into his flesh on his left side, just above the hip.

The audience CHEERS.

Steve looks back up at Batshit, who holds the eye contact.

Steve looks back down.

Slowly, the knife blade pushes further and further into his flesh, a full three or four inches.

Steve's face drains of color. He tries to mouth words, but they come out as just a puff of breath.

He and Batshit look at each other one last time, and there are tears rolling down the kid's cheeks.

And all at once --

-- he pulls the blade out --

-- Steve drops to his knees, clutching his side --

-- and the kid is gone, bounding across the stage and leaping back down to the ground to the welcoming CHEERS of his friends.

The group turns and lopes off across the park, laughing and high fiving.

On the stage, Steve pulls a hand away from his side. It's covered in blood.

He tries to stand, fails, falls to a knee again.

He gives in to it, lays himself down, rolls over on his back on the stage floor and stares up at the sky.

CUT TO:

EXT CENTRAL PARK WEST NIGHT

Rebecca walks slowly down Central Park West, now up in the 80s. She is about to turn a corner when she slows, noticing something across the street. She sees a figure, a person emerging from the trees and bushes and clambering awkwardly over the wall that borders the park.

She looks away, then looks back. Something familiar about that figure.

The figure tumbles over the wall, falls, and stands up again. It's Steve, and the way he's moving, he is obviously injured.

She hurries across the deserted street.

ACROSS THE STREET,

Steve looks up, smiles, and gives her an absurd little wave, holding one hand to his side.

STEVE

Hey honey! Let's drop some blotter
next weekend.

REBECCA

Don't you ever disappear like-

STEVE

I'm sorry.

REBECCA

Is that *blood*?!

Steve pulls his hand away from his side. His shirt is soaked in blood.

REBECCA (cont'd)

What happened?!

STEVE

It was Batshit. He had to do it or
Four-D was gonna not get his back
someday. We don't understand his life
at *all*.

REBECCA

What are you talking about?!

STEVE

Punch line, I got stabbed.

CONTINUED:

REBECCA

Oh, my God.

She turns immediately to the corner and hails a cab.

REBECCA (cont'd)

We're going to Lenox Hill.

Steve bites his lip.

STEVE

Uhhhh... I'm thinking maybe St.
Vincent's would be better.

REBECCA

Lenox Hill's closer.

STEVE

O-kay...

A TAXI LIGHT

flashes off as a Driver picks them up.

INT CAB NIGHT

The taxi drives across town. Steve and Rebecca ride in silence in the back, lost in very separate thoughts.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT APARTMENT - ANNA'S ROOM DAWN

As the first gray light of dawn creeps around window shades, we see a child -- Anna, the three year old, asleep in her bed in the corner of her tiny bedroom. A widening shaft of light falls over the girl as Steve comes into the room. He's wearing a clean shirt and moves stiffly.

He leans down into frame, gives her a soft kiss on the cheek.

STEVE

I am so sorry.

INT BOYS' ROOM DAWN

Another sleeping child -- Sam, one of the twins. Rebecca leans into frame, kisses him.

CONTINUED:

She turns to the other bed, where Teddy is asleep. She kisses him too, pulls the covers up around him. But Teddy wakes, rolls over, blinks at her.

TEDDY

I thought you went out.

REBECCA

We did.

TEDDY

Is it morning?

REBECCA

Almost. Go back to sleep.

TEDDY

Why do you go out so much?

Rebecca sits on the edge of his bed.

REBECCA

We don't go out *so much*.

TEDDY

But you go out.

REBECCA

Have to.

TEDDY

Why?

REBECCA

Because otherwise we'd go c-c-c-razy.

TEDDY

When you go out, I feel a little bit scareder than usual. And not as safe.

REBECCA

But you are. You really are.

TEDDY

(considering)
Okay.

He rolls over, to go back to sleep. Rebecca starts to stand.

CONTINUED: (2)

TEDDY (cont'd)

Just make sure you don't go anyplace
stupid.

She sits again, looks at him -- what do you mean?

TEDDY (cont'd)

Like someplace so, so far away that you
can't come back.

REBECCA

(pause)
I promise.

CUT TO:

INT SHOWER DAWN

Rebecca, in the shower, scrubs hard. Very hard.

CUT TO:

INT KITCHEN SUNRISE

From across the room, we see Rebecca sitting at the table in the kitchen. We draw closer slowly as she stares out the tiny, barred window, watching the first sunlight come up over the city. She's in fresh clothes, jeans and a tee shirt, barefoot. Her hair is wet, combed back. No makeup.

We move all the way in on her, just her face fills the frame when the SCRAPE of a chair startles us.

Steve has sat down across from her. She looks at him. Can't even force a smile. He's in boxer shorts and a tee shirt, rumpled hair.

STEVE

Sleep is a joke.

She doesn't react.

Steve looks at her. Can't help but notice the intense mood that darkens her face. She looks out the window again.

STEVE (cont'd)

What?

REBECCA

I think the world is round so we can't
see too far ahead.

CONTINUED:

He laughs, but cuts it short. Was that supposed to be funny?

REBECCA (cont'd)
(remembering)

Oh.

She pulls her purse across the table to her, fishes in it, comes up with his wallet and eyeglasses, which he left back in the loft. She gestures to him to lean in, which he does.

She opens the glasses and places them back on his face.

STEVE

Thanks.

He looks at her, seeing her in focus now as she turns and looks out the window again. He fully catches her seriousness, and it frightens him.

He hesitates, then in a soft, shaking voice:

STEVE (cont'd)

Where are you?

She's still staring out the window as tears start rolling down her cheeks.

REBECCA

It's possible that we could be okay,
Steve.

STEVE

I know.

REBECCA

All of us.

STEVE

Okay?

REBECCA

You won't be able to see it for a long time, you'll hate me too much, but I promise, eventually, I think so, I do think so.

STEVE

There's something I want to ask you.

REBECCA

You don't know how to ask it.

CONTINUED: (2)

STEVE

Help me, then.

Nothing from her. Finally:

STEVE (cont'd)

I already know.

REBECCA

Yeah.

She finally turns and looks at him, sheer terror in her eyes.

REBECCA (cont'd)

Everybody knows everything.

They stare at each other across the kitchen table.

FADE OUT.