



CHEATER

aka

UNTITLED CHEATING PROJECT

by

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YOUR CHEATING HEART

AND COUPLES

sitting in dark booths...

BETH (V.O.)

... I mean to really know someone?

... move from one to the next.

ISAAC (V.O.)

I think you could know someone in
the first ten seconds of seeing
them.

They're deep in hushed conversation...

GENEVA (V.O.)

Please! Such the romantic.

(beat)

Two years minimum before the mask
comes off... then another two to
see what's behind the curtain.

... gazing into each other's eyes...

ISAAC (V.O.)

You're mixing metaphors, Sweetie.

... holding hands across the table...

GENEVA (V.O.)

I don't care. I'm drunk. Four
years.

(beat)

Beth?

... lit by soft candlelight.

BETH (V.O.)

I don't think it's a time thing.
The way I see it, you don't get to
really know someone until you've
gone through hell with them.

GENEVA (V.O.)

Like suffering through "Starlight
Express?"

Laughter... then...

BETH

Baby, what do you think?

And we land on our foursome.

Enjoying their dinner. ISAAC BACKMAN and his wife, GENEVA.
BETH DALTON and her boyfriend, RONNY VALENTINE.

Ronny's distracted... staring at the line of couples in the booths against the wall we were just panning.

We realize our opening was Ronny's POV.

BETH

Hello!

And he snaps back his attention...

BETH (V.O.)

How long do you think it takes to really know someone?

RONNY

I think you're all right.

(beat)

You can fall in love in ten seconds... but it can take years to really understand each other... and until you go through hell with someone, you'll never really see what they're made of.

They all look at him for a beat, then...

ALL THREE (AD LIB)

Nice cop out. Really? You just said nothing.

Isaac even throws a few french fries at him.

But Ronny just smiles with a shrug... "that's my answer."

After the table settles down, Isaac looks down to his steak and hands the plate to his wife who immediately starts to cut it.

ISAAC

(explaining)

She cuts it this special way.

And Geneva cuts her husband's steak into thin slices then places half of the steak on another plate while calling the WAITER over.

GENEVA

Can you please take this away?

As she hands the remaining newly cut steak back to Isaac and looks over to Beth...

GENEVA

If I don't regulate the portion right when it's laid down, he'll eat the whole thing.

Beth nods. Isaac sadly looks down at his plate.

ISAAC

That was an aggressive extraction.

As she kisses his forehead.

GENEVA

Your cholesterol is still twenty points too high baby.

This exchange makes Beth smile. She looks to Ronny but he's distracted once again... looking over the restaurant at all the perceived infidelity.

And as he does... he vacantly utters...

RONNY

The answer is never.

Now looking back at the table with...

RONNY

You can never really know someone.

EXT. CHICAGO'S ROSEHILL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

They enjoy an after dinner summer walk in this unfamiliar Northside neighborhood.

Isaac and Beth walk ahead.

ISAAC

It wasn't close to your cooking.

And Beth... in her late twenties with a natural beauty that invites more than overpowers... it's impossible not to fall in love with her when she's smiles... which is all the time.

BETH

Thank you, Isaac.

And Isaac... late thirties... cerebral, benevolent, round glasses... sweet never hot... friend never fuck.

ISAAC

Thank you so much for offering up the restaurant for my parent's anniversary dinner.

BETH

It's my pleasure. Forty years.

ISAAC

I know... crazy.

BETH

We got a great review in the Suntimes.

ISAAC
Ronny told me.

Isaac notices Beth is walking strange... staring at the ground and being very deliberate with her steps.

And she looks up, notices Isaac's confusion and explains her walk with a smile...

BETH
Mother's back.

RONNY AND GENEVA

As they walk behind them...

RONNY
How bad is the market for you? Are people still buying?

And Geneva... mid thirties... nuclear gorgeous... Nordic blond hair, crystal blue eyes... Ice Queenish chill...

GENEVA
You already asked me that.

RONNY
Huh?

And Ronny... late thirties... much better looking than Isaac... always well dressed, always well put together... a good talker, a great salesman... almost always confident... almost.

Accept when he's around...

GENEVA
At dinner when we first sat down. And last month at George Silver's party.
(beat)
In fact, Ronny... it's been your go-to question since the real estate market cratered two years ago.

Ronny nervously plays it off...

RONNY
I'm pretty sure I didn't ask you that when we sat down.

GENEVA
It used to be... "Do you think it's too late get in?"
(beat)
Ever since college you've always been so nervous around me and I can't figure out why.

RONNY
That's not true.

GENEVA
Is it because I cancelled going to
see Steely Dan with you?

RONNY
What? No!
(beat)
How do you even remember that?

GENEVA
You remember it too.

Ronny doesn't response. And they walk in silence for a
moment, until...

RONNY
I might have asked you if you
thought the market had bottomed out
which is entirely different than
how it's effecting your business.

And Geneva nods over to Beth walking up ahead...

GENEVA
When are you going to ask her to
marry you?

RONNY
What?

GENEVA
It's time. I can see it on her
face. You need to sing or get off
the stage, Ronny.

RONNY
Sing or... ?

GENEVA
There's another way to say that
which I find disgusting. But trust
me, you have a window of about a
month starting now.

RONNY
Did she say something to you?

GENEVA
She didn't need to. I'm very good
at intuiting people -- women even
better than men.
(beat)
You don't pop the question -- you
lose her.

Waving that off...

RONNY
Beth's fine... we're fine.

GENEVA
Is it because of your trust issues
you can't bring yourself to
propose?

RONNY
Trust issues? I don't have trust
issues.

GENEVA
You have huge trust issues.

RONNY
Is that what Isaac says?

GENEVA
It's what I say.
(beat)
Isaac doesn't tell me anything
about you that you wouldn't want
him to.

Ronny churns this... not so sure.

GENEVA
You're thinking I'm lying. You're
now thinking Isaac tells me
everything. See?
(sing song)
Trust issues.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

RONNY
I hate Steely Dan.

Ronny sits at his desk fuming. The Eagle's "Lyin Eyes"
quietly plays.

And From the bathroom...

BETH (O.S.)
She likes to play with you.

The walls are lined with framed black and white pictures of
classic cars... the 1970 Plymouth Hemi-Cuda... the 1966
Shelby Cobra 427 S/C... the 1969 Ford Mustang 'Boss 429' and
on.

RONNY
She's never liked me.

Beth comes out of the bathroom in a robe and plops down on
his lap. And she looks into his eyes.

BETH
Nice skirt by the way.

RONNY
What?

BETH
The way you didn't answer the question.

RONNY
I answered it.

BETH
You don't think you could ever really know someone -- do you?

RONNY
I didn't say that.

BETH
Do you think you don't know me?

RONNY
No. Of course I know you.

And he regards her...

RONNY
You're sad.

BETH
No, Ronny... I'm angry.

As she pulls away from him...

BETH
I'm angry at your father for sleeping with all those women behind your mother's back.

RONNY
Oh my God...

She lays down on the bed.

BETH
And I'm angry at your mother for not leaving him sooner.

RONNY
It was just a drunken conversation.

BETH
And I'm angry at her for laying all her pain and sadness onto a thirteen year old boy who couldn't possibly understand any of it.

Shaking his head in regret... to himself...

RONNY

We should've just talked about how addicting the first season of "The Wire" is like we always do.

BETH

And I'm angry at Jenine for cheating on you.

RONNY

Don't bring up Jenine. There's no reason to do that.

BETH

Well I'm upset.

As he slides into the bed... tries to take her into his hold. But she waves him off... upset.

RONNY

Don't be. I'm going to Detroit tomorrow morning and I hate getting on an airplane knowing you're upset.

She softens. Turns to face him. He softly kisses her, regards her... calibrating how mad she is.

RONNY

Okay?

BETH

Okay.

They kiss again,

BETH

What's the meeting in Detroit?

RONNY

Ford. It's not a big deal. Just going over some things...

She nods. And they kiss some more... their bodies intertwisting.

But Beth notices the open window and pulls away.

As she gets out of the bed...

BETH

I'm closing the window.

RONNY

But it's hot in here and you hate air conditioning.

BETH

But the window was open the night I stepped on a nail.

RONNY
One thing has nothing to do with
another.

And she stops at the window then turns to him.

BETH
Not to me. You know that.

RONNY
Okay.

As she slams the window down and locks it...

BETH
I didn't want to talk about "The
Wire" again, Ronny.

And Ronny... now fixated on that closed window.

BETH
Why do you think I brought up that
question?

EXT. DETROIT - ESTABLISHING

Motor-city. Morning.

EXT. DETROIT METRO AIRPORT/TARMAC - MORNING

As a 737 lands...

INT. 737 - MORNING

As the plane taxis to the gate, everyone checks their phones
and makes calls.

Find Ronny and Isaac sharing a row near the front. They're
both very nervous. Isaac holds a brown paper bag like he's a
seven year old walking to school.

RONNY
(re bag)
What is that?

ISAAC
My lunch.

RONNY
Geneva packs a lunch for you?

ISAAC
Yes. You know I have severe food
allergies... she knows how to make
a turkey sandwich without turkey.

Ronny just nods. They sits in silence for a beat, then...

RONNY
Are you nervous?

ISAAC
Of course. This is a huge deal.

Ronny nods. A moment, then...

ISAAC
Are you nervous?

Ronny shakes his head.

RONNY
No. I'm never nervous.

Isaac regards his best friend and realizes...

ISAAC
You are nervous.

The "safe to move around the cabin" chime rings and they stand up.

ISAAC
Why are you nervous?

And Ronny doesn't fight it. Isaac knows him too well. So he capitulates...

RONNY
Okay, here's the thing. This has to work because...

He stops short.

ISAAC
Because... ?

RONNY
I can't be broke if I'm getting married.

ISAAC
Married!

RONNY
I'm going to ask her on her birthday next month.

As they gather their carry-ons from the overhead...

ISAAC
Holy shit! How did you come to this now?

RONNY
It was something your wife said
actually. About a window and it
closing.

THE TERMINAL

And Isaac sucks in a deep breath... then stops walking and
holds out a fist. Ronny immediately puts his fist on top of
partners in ritual.

ISAAC
Who are you?

RONNY
Ronny Valentine.

ISAAC
Who am I?

RONNY
Isaac Backman.

ISAAC
Who are we?

RONNY
B & V Engine Design.

ISAAC
And what does that mean to you
right now?

Ronny thinks about it for a moment.

RONNY
Major opportunity.

ISAAC
Damn right.

RONNY
What does it mean to you right now?

ISAAC
Fearless innovation.

With that, Ronny slams his fists down on Isaac's and they
disappear down the terminal.

INT. FORD MOTOR COMPANY/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The Ford logo hangs proudly on the far wall of the conference
room. The walls are lined with pictures of classic Fords
throughout history.

Ronny and Isaac sit across from six top Ford EXECUTIVES.
The room silences and Ronny stands. All eyes are now on him.

And he clears his throat and launches in.

RONNY
Electric cars are gay.
(beat)
It's true. Not homosexual gay...
but soft gay, unmanly gay, quiet
and small gay.

He holds up a large picture of the...

RONNY
The Nissan Spit...

... it's a red tiny two-seater that looks like a European car.

RONNY
Gay.

He then holds up a large picture of the...

RONNY
The Hyundai Pomegranate...

... it's a little no-thrill box of an olive car.

RONNY
Gay.

Finally he holds up a large picture of the...

RONNY
And the Chevy Fingerprint...

... a little better but still it's small, lifeless and brown.

RONNY
Gay.

The Execs all share a smile. Dissing the competition is always a good idea.

And then Ronny holds up a large picture of...

RONNY
The 1965 Ford Thunderbird...

It's black and phallic and sexy.

RONNY
Not gay.

As he holds up a large picture of the...

RONNY
The 1967 GT.

Sporty and sexy and reminiscent of hot summer nights.

RONNY
Definitely not gay.

As he holds up a large picture of the...

RONNY
The 1955 Ford Fairlane Sunliner.
Classic and two-tones and sleek.

RONNY
Took more virginitities than Frank
Sinatra.

As he puts down the picture and starts pacing the table.

RONNY
What we're suggesting is combining
the benefits, economy and social
imperative of electric
transportation with the sexiness
and manliness of your classic
designs.
(beat)
Because if you're a real man...
unless you live in California...
you don't want an electronic car.

Ronny hands off the floor to Isaac with just a look then has
a seat. And Isaac now stands.

ISAAC
We believe we can produce the
technology to incorporate an
electronic engine into the design
and power of your classic lines.

From his seat...

RONNY
But we need your IP rights to
create the prototype.

ISAAC
That's all we need.

RONNY
And after we show you the
prototype, you can decide if you
want our proprietary technology in
order to proceed.

The executives all take a moment to digest that. The PRODUCT
DEVELOPMENT CHIEF nods over to the HEAD OF R&D.

HEAD OF R&D
Don't take this the wrong way...

And he smiles over to...

HEAD OF R&D

Isaac -- you delivered in spades on upgrading our internal-combustion engines into a two-stroke simulation.

RONNY

Saved you nine percent top-line production expenses on three of your economy lines.

HEAD OF R&D

That's right. And we appreciate it.

(beat)

But this... is...

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CHIEF

Something we've tried.

After Ronny and Isaac share a look...

RONNY

We know that.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CHIEF

Obviously, we could get the engine into the shell but it lacked torque, acceleration, feel, even the sound of engine rollover.

RONNY

We get it.

HEAD OF R&D

So what do you have that we don't?

And Ronny smiles over to his partner with confidence as he announces...

RONNY

Isaac Backman.

INT. DETROIT METRO AIRPORT/TERMINAL - DAY

As they quickly walk down the terminal... excited.

RONNY

So give me a yard line.

ISAAC

I don't know, I've worked out the initial simulation specs and chip mapping. Laying the software shouldn't be hard but then it goes from theory to practice and who knows?

Ronny's phone blares out a ringtone of "Mustang Sally."
Ronny looks at his phone and smiles.

Isaac looks over his partner's shoulder and sees a picture of a street sign on Ronny's text.

After Ronny intensely studies the picture, he makes a call.

RONNY
 (into phone)
 Baby, you can't park there. Street
 cleaning for another hour. Look,
 it says it on the little one at the
 bottom on the right
 (beat)
 I love you too.

Ronny disconnects and smiles over Isaac in explanation.

RONNY
 She's gotten a lot of tickets
 lately.

Isaac laughs. And Ronny immediately goes back to...

RONNY
 Yardline, Isaac.

ISAAC
 These things aren't exact.

RONNY
 Then make it exact!
 (beat)
 We're about to put every cent we
 have into this... we're about to
 borrow at a shit recession rate
 against our next two years profit
 for this--

ISAAC
 I'm going to take out a second
 mortgage for this.

RONNY
 You're taking out a second mortgage
 for this?

Isaac confirms.

RONNY
 Jesus, Isaac!

As they reach...

GATE 6

Ronny sits. Isaac spots a Starbucks across the way.

ISAAC
 I'm going to get a coffee.

A Muzak version of Marvin Gaye's "Heard It Through The Grapevine" plays throughout the gate.

RONNY
Just give me the yardline.

Rolling his eyes...

ISAAC
Okay -- we're on the thirty.

RONNY
Whose thirty?

ISAAC
Their thirty.

Ronny nods. Not bad. And Isaac heads on his way... but...

RONNY
Hey Isaac.

Stopping and turning...

ISAAC
What, Ronny.

RONNY
Who are they?

ISAAC
Who are who?

RONNY
You said we're on their thirty.
Who are they?

ISAAC
I don't know. The team we're
playing against in the metaphor.

And Ronny holds his best friend's look for a moment, then breaks into a smile with...

RONNY
Well... they're not going to win.

Isaac slowly nods...

ISAAC
Copy that.

INT. BISTRO 404/KITCHEN - DAY

Beth prepares for the night's rush. She's the executive chef and owner of this popular Chicago restaurant.

Ronny follows her through her tasks.

BETH
You said it wasn't a big deal.

RONNY
Look, I'm sorry.

BETH
Geneva called me today to see if I've heard anything and I didn't even know what she was talking about.

RONNY
I didn't want to worry you.

She stops and faces him.

BETH
That's exactly why I'm upset, Ronny. I want you to worry me. If you're worried then I want us to be worried.

ASSISTANT CHEFS and STEWARDS buzz around them.

BETH
Instead you keep your concerns from me and try to shield me like I'm a child.
(beat)
You lied to me. You said it wasn't a big a meeting when it was.

RONNY
Okay. I hear you. I'm sorry. I won't do it in the future.

She accepts that.

BETH
So it went good?

RONNY
It went great.

They reach the saute station and her SAUCIER, male, 20s, who feeds her a spoonful of sauce.

She takes a beat to taste it, then...

BETH
(to Saucier)
Is that brown sugar I taste?

SAUCIER
God, you're good.

As they move on...

BETH
The way Geneva put it was that your
both risking everything here. That
if Isaac doesn't bring this home--

RONNY
He's going to bring this home.

BETH
But if he doesn't...

RONNY
Look... in college he got to chose
his final project and he chose to
build an exhaust system that cut
carbon emissions in half. It was
beyond ambitious, this was 1992 and
the technology wasn't like it is
today.

They arrive at the grill station where her POISSONNIER (fish)
lifts up the fresh catches of the day... swordfish.

BETH
Those are beautiful.

Poissonnier agrees as they move on...

RONNY
And everyone was like... "he can't
do that -- that's crazy -- nobody
can do that" Even I had my doubts.

Knowing where this is going...

BETH
But he did it.

RONNY
But he did it.

And he grabs Beth... looks into her eyes.

RONNY
He didn't sleep. He didn't eat.
He gets that in that mode and it's
like... what?

Answering his own question.

RONNY
Next-level-genius-shit.

BETH
Okay, I get it.

And Ronny can sense she's hesitant. So...

RONNY
And... and Beth -- last time we
 went to Detroit on a Tuesday and I
 wore my Navy suit it worked out
 great.

She smiles.

BETH
 Stop patronizing my superstition.

Beth looks over the line and shouts over to the EXPEDITOR.

BETH
 I don't want the salad forks in the
 second bin tonight.

Off his confused look...

BETH
 The last time they were in the
 second bin we got a bad review.

EXPEDITOR
 The review mentioned what bin we
 keep the forks in?

BETH
 No.

As they move on...

RONNY
 (sing song, to himself)
 Definitely wouldn't want to
 patronize your superstition.

And she heads out of the kitchen and into the...

RESTAURANT

A beautiful room... spacious, minimally decorated. High-end.

Beth stops and takes in the room. Ronny finding her side.

As she watches the staff set the tables...

BETH
 Okay look, Ronny... it's not the
 money I'm worried about, it really
 isn't.

She slowly walks the restaurant... inspecting the
 centerpieces at each table. Ronny in tow...

And she turns back to him...

BETH
 It's the risk. You. You know.

He slowly nods... now understanding.

RONNY
Baby, I haven't made a bet in over
three years, you know that.

BETH
But is this kind of risk healthy?
It's like gambling, no?

He pulls her aside... out of earshot of the staff.

RONNY
It's entirely different. This is
our career, this is what we do. We
have control over this.
(beat)
I never had control over what some
point guard was going to do at the
buzzer or what card was going to
come out on the river.

BETH
I don't know what means... but
okay.

And he regards her.

RONNY
No.

BETH
What?

RONNY
No. It's not okay with you.
There's something else you want to
say and you're not saying it.

BETH
I want to support you.

He kisses her. Soft.

RONNY
Say it. I love you. I want to
hear it..

She sucks in a deep breath, then...

BETH
Okay. Here's the thing -- baby,
you're the salesman and Isaac is
the scientist. He can't sell the
concept and you can't create it.
It's why you work so good together.
(beat)
But what I'm trying to say is
this...

As she takes a moment to put this right...

BETH
You sold them so your part of the
job is over. And you're right --
you did control that.

(beat)
But now it's up to Isaac to
actually figure out what they
haven't.

As Ronny listens to her... slowly digesting every word...

BETH
And that, Ronny -- you don't have
any control over.

And that hangs for beat. As Ronny realizes...

RONNY
You're right.

She smiles.

RONNY
I get so frustrated with you
sometimes because you're right but
I don't want to hear it.

(beat)
What's that called?

INT. H. HORWITZ CO. JEWELERS - DAY

As Ronny admires the exquisite diamond.

VOICE (O.S.)
Love...

He looks up to the HASIDIC CLERK.

HASIDIC CLERK (CONT'D)
That's my name for that one.

RONNY
You name all your diamonds?

The clerk confirms that with a dreamy smile.

HASIDIC CLERK
We care deeply about what we do
here at H. Horwitz.

RONNY
What's the... um... return policy?

HASIDIC CLERK
You're not sure she's going to say
yes?

RONNY
 No, I'm sure.
 (beat)
 It's just... you never know what
 could happen between "yes" and "I
 do."

The Hasidic clerk loses his smile.

HASIDIC CLERK
 What could happen?

RONNY
 I don't know... anything.

HASIDIC CLERK
 But love trumps whatever that
 anything could be.

RONNY
 In a song it does. Or a poem.
 (beat)
 But in real life it might not.

The clerk just looks at him with growing disdain.

HASIDIC CLERK
 Maybe you should go to Zales.

EXT. LAKE SHORE DRIVE - DAY

As Ronny drives North on this famed stretch of road. The
 picturesque sky-line of the city behind him... the lush
 greenery of the Northern Suburbs ahead of him.

He speaks on the phone... close to shouting because he's
 riding top-down.

RONNY
 I'm going up there now to go over
 all the details.

INTERCUT WITH ISAAC

Sitting at a computer... unshaven... working away.

ISAAC
 I'm happy for you brother.

RONNY
 Yeah... it's going to be
 incredible.

And we now get a good look at Ronny's...

CLASSIC CAR

1966 Chevrolet Sting Ray L-79 Convertible... gorgeous, deep
 navy blue, in pristine condition. A dream car... as it zips
 around the curves of LSD.

RONNY

Oh by the way, I was thinking I call Louis Edwards and see if he wants to bridge some money... hedge us a bit on Ford.

ISAAC

Like angel money?

RONNY

Yeah... so if Ford doesn't happen for some reason we're not completely busted out.

(beat)

I mean you've got two mortgages riding on this thing.

Isaac thinks about it for a moment.

ISAAC

How much do you want to give him?

RONNY

Fifteen/twenty percent of the upside.

(beat)

That should bring in enough to protect us, no?

ISAAC

Yeah... it's a good idea.

RONNY

It was Beth's.

Isaac smiles.

ISAAC

(re proposal)

You're doing the right thing, Ronny.

And Ronny... wind blowing his hair back... enjoying the beautiful summer day... top down on the String Ray...

RONNY

I know.

EXT. CHICAGO'S BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY

A beautiful summer sunset frames these endless gardens of roses, waterlilies, hollyhocks, hydrangeas and many other varieties of plants and flowers.

Ronny walks with the GARDEN'S EXECUTIVE MANAGER.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER

When did you say her birthday was?

RONNY
In two weeks.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER
Oh good. We'll have the new
Pacific Calendulas in.

Having no idea what those are...

RONNY
Great. She'll love that.
(beat)
I'll be walking with her down this
path... I'll probably stop at the
rose garden to propose.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER
We can block this area off for
fifteen minutes.

RONNY
Great. That'll be great.
(beat)
So she won't really notice but
it'll be just us after this point.

And they walk over to the rose garden, Ronny takes out a
Zales jewelry box.

RONNY
I'm going to have the ring on a
little stand in-between these two
roses.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER
We can have a someone put it there
a few minutes before you arrive.

RONNY
Good.
(looking around...)
Is there a speaker system or anyway
we can have Chopin's Fantasie
Impromptu playing? It's her
favorite.

Executive Manager just looks at him blank.

RONNY
How about this? If there's a plug
somewhere in the garden, I can
bring my iPod dock.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER
I guess that could work.
(pointing)
We have outlets along those
walls... would that be too far?

Ronny looks.

RONNY

Not if we can run an extension--

And Ronny stops short. Because he sees something that catches his attention... more he sees someone...

GENEVA

Isaac's wife. And she's with someone. A man who is not Isaac.

They're holding hands... laughing... taking in the aquatic garden.

But it's too hard to tell if it's really her.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER

Yes?

Ronny steps forward... getting a better look...

RONNY

Hold on. I think I see someone I know.

Ronny intensely studies them.

RONNY

I think that's... my best friend's wife.

Staying stealth, Ronny breaks away from him and follows the couple. He can't tell for sure if it's Geneva or just someone that looks like her.

And the couple stops at the Japanese garden. Ronny sees a better viewpoint across the way and carefully heads over.

And he sneaks over a small fence... into the...

EXOTIC PLANT GARDEN

Right past a sign reading "DO NOT CROSS... EXTREMELY POISONOUS!"

He walks through the heavy brush to get a good look and finally does. And...

It's definitely Geneva.

Ronny now gets a look at the guy.

He's in his mid 20's... wears cut-off jeans and torn vintage Dead Milkmen concert-t... he has a sleeve of colorful ink... snakes intertwined with barbed wire... more ink of Chinese letter on his other arm... a nose-ring...

RONNY
 (under his breath/stunned)
 Who the hell is this guy?

And from across the way...

VOICE (O.S.)
 Sir!

Ronny looks to see a PARK EMPLOYEE.

Ronny ignores the employee and looks back over to Isaac's wife and this dangerous stranger.

Geneva says something to him which makes him laugh.

And he takes her into his strong hold... looks into her eyes...

RONNY
 (knowing what's coming)
 No...

Yes. As this guy grabs a chock-full of Geneva's hair and pulls it back, hard. Her mouth opens and they kiss... violently.

Mortified, Ronny shields his eyes.

RONNY
 Oh God.

The park employee steps forward and raises her voice...

VOICE
 You can't be in there, sir!

Louder...

VOICE
 Those plants are very dangerous!

AND GENEVA

hears that then pulls away from her kiss and looks over.

AND RONNY

dives down on the ground... getting a face full of dangerous exotic plants.

Geneva takes a moment then looks back at her man. She didn't see him. Split second stuff.

HER MAN
 You wanna get out of here?

She smiles...

GENEVA

Yeah...

They kiss again and head for the exit.

INT. EXECUTIVE MANAGER'S OFFICE - LATER

The DOCTOR looks over Ronny.

His face has broken out in hives and he looks sick as hell.

DOCTOR

You can expect diarrhea,
challenging urination with a
possible bloody discharge, fever,
dry heaving, painful swelling in
the gums, loss of feeling in the
tongue which will effect speech and
give you very bad dreams.

Ronny just nods.

And the Executive Manager comes over to him.

EXECUTIVE MANAGER

It's probably best if we don't do
the proposal here, Mr. Valentine.

Ronny just looks at him... intelligibly saying...

RONNY

Donth verryrri abouth ith. Ith's
althh a husthle anyways...

DOCTOR

It's the tongue.

As Executive Manager leans his ear to Ronny's mouth...

EXECUTIVE MANAGER

One more time.

Fighting out the words...

RONNY

Marriath... ith's a husthle.

Shaking his head in severe disappointment...

RONNY

You can'th thrust anybothy.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ronny lays on the bed. Beth holds a wet cloth to his
forehead.

BETH

Clams?

The tongue swelling has gone down... we can understand him now.

RONNY
I don't know what I was thinking.

BETH
It's very unlike you.

And he leans up and looks at her. He looks like hell.

RONNY
Okay, I saw something today. It's seriously bothering me.

BETH
Okay.

He sucks in a deep breath...

RONNY
I saw Geneva.

BETH
Geneva? Where?

RONNY
At... the restaurant. She was--

He stops short.

BETH
Yes? She was... ?

For some reason he's having trouble with this.

RONNY
With someone.

BETH
Who?

And he just looks at her for a long moment, then... inside of a defeated sigh...

RONNY
My father.

BETH
Your father's dead, Ronny.

... he couldn't do it.

RONNY
I know. And when I looked again I realized it wasn't Geneva. It was a sixty year old chinese woman.
(beat)

(MORE)

RONNY (cont'd)
And she wasn't talking to my
father. She was shouting at the
busboy.

BETH
I don't understand.

RONNY
The clams made me hallucinate it.

BETH
I see.

RONNY
Freaked me out.

Just a bit skeptical...

BETH
Um-hm...

RONNY
I have to go to the bathroom again.

He slowly gets up...

BETH
(calling out after him)
Ronny.

... and heads into the...

BATHROOM

And looks at himself in the mirror...

RONNY
Yeah...

hives all over his face... his sweaty hair brushed back off
his head...

BETH (O.S.)
What was she yelling at him for?

... and the saddest look in the world on his face.

RONNY
Huh?

BETH (O.S.)
The Chinese woman. Why was she
yelling at the busboy?

RONNY
Oh... I don't know. It was in
Chinese.

And he immediately cringes at the lameness of that answer.

BETH (O.S.)
Was he Chinese?

RONNY
No... that's what was strange about
it.

BETH
Yes, that is peculiar.

He turns to see her standing in the doorway.

BETH
I think you need to lay down some
more.

He nods. She moves to him... kisses him.

BETH
You're not making sense.

RONNY
You don't want to kiss me.

She brushes his hair back...

RONNY
I just threw up.

And she looks into his eyes... softly says...

BETH
I don't care.

AND ISAAC BACKMAN

Chews on a straw and intensely works at his computer...
Górecki's Third blares out.

We're close on him... we don't see the whole workspace.

And he notices his cellphone lighting up and he picks it up.

ISAAC
Dude, I've been calling you for two
days... how'd it go down?

INTERCUT WITH

RONNY
It didn't.

Ronny looks better... he's cleaned up and hive free.

ISAAC
It didn't? Why not?

RONNY
I'll tell you in person.

ISAAC
Jesus. Okay.

RONNY
How'd it going there?

Still typing away...

ISAAC
Working on the software lay.

RONNY
Look. I need to talk to you. It's important. I'm gonna come by later this afternoon.

And Isaac stops typing.

ISAAC
Is everything alright?

RONNY
Yes. I mean in the larger scheme of things. I mean, I don't know.
(beat)
Will you be there?

ISAAC
Where else would I be?

EXT. STARBUCKS COFFEE - DAY

As Ronny parks his beautiful String Ray in the fire lane right outside of the Starbucks.

INT. STARBUCKS COFFEE - DAY

The BARISTA, a guy in his late teens but still wearing braces, hands Ronny a...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
Tall Sumatra.

Ronny's blanking out...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
Sir!

Ronny snaps his attention back.

RONNY
(taking the coffee)
Oh... thank you.

Ronny pays him and sets to go, but...

RONNY
If you found out your friend's wife
was cheating on him would you tell
him?

BARISTA WITH BRACES
Excuse me.

RONNY
It's a hypothetical question. You
know your friend's wife is
cheating. Do you tell him?

BARISTA WITH BRACES
None of my friends are married.
(beat)
But a few have girlfriends.

RONNY
Okay, let's go with girlfriend...
would you tell them?

As the Barista thinks about it. We...

CUT TO:

THE FAT NEWSTAND GUY

Handing Ronny the Suntimes.

FAT NEWSTAND GUY
(thick Chicago accent)
Without a doubt. It's guy code.
It's completely illegal not to tell
him.

As Ronny thinks about that, we...

CUT TO:

THE METER MAID

Standing in front of Ronny's Sting Ray... writing him a
ticket...

METER MAID
Honey, most likely he forgives her
but she never forgives you.
(beat)
Then you lose your friend.

As she hands Ronny the ticket, we shuffle quickly through...

BARISTA WITH BRACES

Now taking money from another customer... Ronny off to the
side.

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 I think I would tell my friend
 because that would mean if my
 girlfriend -- I don't really have a
 girlfriend -- but if I did and if
 she were cheating on me... then
 he'd have to tell me.

Handing some coins to the customer with a smile...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 Sixty four cents is your change.

And turning right back to Ronny with...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 Unless... my girlfriend were
 cheating on me by sleeping with my
 friend.
 (beat)
 The hypothetical slut.

FAT NEWSTAND GUY

Now stacking issues of Juggs magazine... Ronny helping him.

FAT NEWSTAND GUY
 If you don't tell him -- you're
 basically banging her too.

THE METER MAID

Writing a ticket on a new car... Ronny at her side...

THE METER MAID
 You never know what people are
 doing behind closed doors. Stay
 out of their business and they'll
 stay out of yours.
 (beat)
 And don't tell me your house has no
 glass windows, babydoll.

BARISTA WITH BRACES

Now handing a coffee to yet another customer.

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 Come to think of it -- I don't
 think I would tell him.

RONNY
 But you just said...

And he immediately turns back to Ronny with...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 Because the truth is that sex is no
 big deal.

(MORE)

BARISTA WITH BRACES (cont'd)
 Everyone makes it seem like sex is
 about love and romance but it's
 not.

A customer steps up and orders.

CUSTOMER
 Grande Americana with an extra
 shot.

Barista nods, shouts the order to another Barista then looks
 right back to Ronny with...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 People have sex to gain another
 notch on their bedpost or to get
 their husband to take out the trash
 or even to get rid of a headache.
 (beat)
 Sex is the biggest nothing of them
 all, bro.

And he takes a moment, then...

BARISTA WITH BRACES
 But friendship?
 (beat)
 That's real... that's something
 worth not risking.

EXT. CHICAGO'S RIVER WEST NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

What used to be an industrial neighborhood is now home to
 cool lofts and creative businesses space.

Ronny parks the Sting Ray in his space then walks up to an
 old white building that used to be a book factory. He draws
 in a very nervous breath.

And as Ronny heads in...

INT. B & V ENGINE DESIGN/MAIN FLOOR - DAY

A large space that's part laboratory, part offices.

This is Ronny and Isaac's headquarters. A classic 1965 black
 Ford Thunderbird anchors the space. The hood is open and
 there is nothing where the engine should be.

At a huge table next to the car we find Isaac hard at work on
 an engine.

Shaggy's "It Wasn't Me" blares out from an iPod dock.

And Isaac's assistant is a 17 year old Indian named SATISH.
 Satish mouths the words to the song in perfect timing and
 wears a t-shirt that reads "Snap, Crackle and Pop made me do
 it." He's weird but also a bit of a genius.

Satish sits at a computer bank looking like he could be trading oil futures only the screens are all filled with extensive three dimensional semiconductor designs.

Chinese food containers and pizza boxes litter the tables around them. Isaac hasn't showered in days. The couch behind him has an old blanket and pillow on it... a makeshift bed.

And never to take his eyes off the engine...

ISAAC
I don't understand.
(beat)
You were in the botanical gardens... going over the arrangements.

RONNY
Right.

ISAAC
And you somehow accidently fell into some poisonous plants.

RONNY
Yes.

SATISH
That's retarded.

ISAAC
Satish, print out the specs on the generator stator audio transmissions from the last two attempts...

Satish nods and heads out of the room. Ronny looks around...

RONNY
When was the last time you were home?

ISAAC
Two days ago... Monday.

RONNY
Monday was three days ago.

ISAAC
We're under deadline, bro.

And Ronny simply regards his best friend for a beat before suggesting...

RONNY
Let's get some air.

Isaac slowly nods.

ISAAC

Okay. Just give me a second to finish this.

Ronny accepts that and steals away to collect himself.

And as Ronny heads through the offices, he walks past pictures on the wall of Ronny and Isaac through the years...

A picture of Isaac and Ronny, 19 years old, standing in front of an old car with hood opened to reveal a rusted out engine... the "before" shot. And right next it is the "after" shot... the car now looking perfect vintage and the open hood proudly displaying a new spotless built engine.

A shot of the two young men now standing outside of a small garage under the sign "Urbana Engine Pimps."

A shot at graduation... Ronny standing with his arm around GIRL we don't know and Isaac with arm around a young Geneva.

And Ronny arrives at...

SATISH'S WORKSPACE

... an area with even more computers.

Satish pulls pages out of a top-of-the-line industrial printer.

SATISH

What up, Ronny V?

RONNY

Wanna play a game? It's called hypothetical.

He's always pumped...

SATISH

Book it!

RONNY

Okay. I'll start. If you found a wallet with a thousand dollars in it... would you return it?

As Satish processes it...

SATISH

So currency lays for the taking... yet the proper owner of that legal tender doesn't realize they've parted ways with said money.

RONNY

Right.

After thinking for another moment...

SATISH
Abraham Maslow once said "The only way to repair a world absent of accountability is to... be accountable."

RONNY
So, that's a yes.

SATISH
In theory. My turn.
(beat)
You're at a party with every playmate of the year for the last ten years, right? And you could bang any one of them you want, right? But one of them is loxosceles and you don't know which one.

RONNY
Loxosceles?

SATISH
It's a condition females get in which all the mates who have sex with them die shortly after.

RONNY
And people get this?

SATISH
Yes. No. Well not people.
Spiders.
(beat)
Do you go home? Or take your chances?

Ronny just looks at him.

RONNY
I'd go home.
(beat)
My turn. You find out your best friend's wife is cheating on him... do you tell him?

Satish processes it...

SATISH
Aha. The woman of my best mate is involved in extra-pair copulation that my friend is not privy to... but somehow I am...

RONNY
You got it.

Satish thinks about that for a moment, then...

SATISH

Well, Kierkegaard constructed this obscure theory he ironically called "De omnibus dubitandum est."

(beat)

Basically it claimed that all judgement and gossip are toxic and one should never spread any information about other people's affairs even when it concerns them. It was kind of a Laissez-faire play on morality and obligation if you will.

RONNY

Meaning.

SATISH

I wouldn't tell him. You wouldn't even stay for another drink?

RONNY

What?

SATISH

At the party with the playmates?

Ronny waves that off...

RONNY

Stop with that. That's not important.

(beat)

You say you wouldn't tell him. But what about Maslow? What about being accountable?

SATISH

I don't know. I guess I prefer to go with Kierkegaard on that one.

Ronny's getting upset.

RONNY

But why? You're contradicting yourself!

SATISH

(defensive)

I don't know. They're different hypotheticals, bro.

As Ronny steps toward Satish... frustrated and angry.

RONNY

But you're not making sense, we need to do this again. Would you tell him or not?

(almost yelling)

Focus, Satish!

And a little scared... Satish takes a step back and just looks at Ronny.

SATISH

I don't think I want to play this game anymore.

EXT. CHICAGO'S RIVERWEST NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Ronny and Isaac walk along the river.

RONNY

I called Louis Edwards. He's interested. I'm having lunch with him later this week, you don't have to come.

ISAAC

Good.

And they walk some more... until Ronny sucks in a deep breath... then...

RONNY

Do you remember freshman year when Sammy Landow claimed I had a deformed dick?

ISAAC

Yeah.

RONNY

And for like three minutes there everyone in Gramercy Hall thought there was something wrong with my penis and I didn't know about it?

ISAAC

He was pissed that Laura Dunkin liked you and not him.

RONNY

I know. But that's not the point.

ISAAC

Then what's the point?

RONNY

That you told me. That you took me aside and said "... everyone thinks your dick looks like a spiked weapon from Dungeon and Dragons because Sammy Landow's a jag-off and you need to do something about it."

ISAAC

Yeah... he was a jag-off.

And Ronny stops walking...

RONNY
Isaac -- there's something I have
to tell you.

Isaac stops and turns to face him.

ISAAC
Okay.

Ronny just stands there for the longest of moments.

And he sees their building across the way... a huge mural
painted on the side of it of classic cars under the heading
"B&V Engine Design." The business they've built.

And he turns back to Isaac with...

RONNY
Jesus, I can't do this.

ISAAC
Can't do what?

He's beside himself...

RONNY
I thought I could.

He's the loneliest man in the world.

RONNY
I couldn't even tell Beth for some
reason.

ISAAC
Ronny, what is going on?

RONNY
Nothing. It's just... something I
have to figure out.

Isaac regards him... sees real distress. Ronny can only look
away.

And Isaac slowly says...

ISAAC
Okay... copy.
(beat)
But look at me.

Ronny does.

ISAAC
If you need me... for anything.
Anything at all. Screw the
project, screw the deadline, screw
Ford... I'm there for you.

And that only makes Ronny Valentine feel worse as he heads on his way.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

Depressed and confused, Ronny vacantly watches a cheesy action movie on the tv.

And from the door...

BETH
What are you watching?

She's sifting through the mail as she heads in.

RONNY
I don't know. I'm not really watching it.

As she heads into the bedroom...

BETH (O.S.)
Get dressed.

RONNY
Where are we going?

BETH (O.S.)
Geneva said Isaac's been working twenty-four/seven so she insisted we all go to Weiner Circle.

RONNY
I don't want to go.

As she heads back into the room...

BETH
It's Weiner Circle, baby. We hate it and you and Isaac love it.

RONNY
I don't care.

She sits next to him... takes his hand and looks into her eyes.

BETH
Look -- Geneva's worried about Isaac working too hard... she wants him to enjoy his favorite place with his best friend.

RONNY
(incredulous)
Is that right? Geneva's worried about Isaac, huh?

BETH
That's right.

As she pops up and moves to the mirror...

BETH
So get dressed.

Ronny sits there for a second to gather himself.

He looks to the tv... to the cheesy action film... where the VILLAIN, maybe an over-the-top John Travolta, shouts into a cell phone.

VILLAIN
(into phone)
You have four hours!
(beat)
If you don't tell Severen the
launch code -- I'm going to make
you wish you were pacing the cage!

INT. WEINER CIRCLE - NIGHT

It's a Chicago institution. A hot dog stand with a few tables that's always crowded.

It's always total chaos, there's no formalized line and the STAFF behind the counter is always yelling at the customers.

A tip jar sits on the counter with "Bitches Need Tips Too" written on it.

A COUNTER CLERK NAMED EDDIE
(getting a customer's
attention)
Hey Asshole! Yeah you -- with the
Beyonce-looking hands.
(beat)
What the hell do you want on your
hot dog?

ANOTHER COUNTER CLERK NAMED POOCHIE
(giving a customer his
change)
If you don't take those drunk
bitches home with you -- you have
even less game than I thought.

In this mess, we find Beth, Ronny, Geneva and Isaac.

Beth tries not to get spit on her... Geneva checks her phone... Ronny glares at her all the while and Isaac takes in the place... laughing.

ISAAC
I needed this, bro. Laying the
software has been harder than I
thought.

Turning to Ronny...

ISAAC
What are you going to get?

But Ronny's still distracted... glaring at Geneva like he might just bite her.

ISAAC
Ronny!

Snapping back his attention.

RONNY
Huh?

ISAAC
What are you going to get?

RONNY
I don't know... hot dog.

And one of the clerks pastes her stare on Isaac.

POOCHIE THE COUNTER CLERK
Yo! Balding! What you need?

Isaac doesn't hear her.

POOCHIE THE COUNTER CLERK
Glasses! Wally! Eugene! Hello!

Geneva nudges Isaac.

GENEVA
We're up, honey.

POOCHIE THE COUNTER CLERK
"Honey?" She's with you?
(beat)
Wow, you must be rich!

A few people laugh... including Isaac.

But not Ronny... who grows furious...

RONNY
Is that funny? A guy like this has
to rich to land her?

Everyone quiets. Ronny's snapping.

POOCHIE THE COUNTER CLERK
I'm confused now... who's dating
who here?

RONNY
He's a genius by the way.

Now Beth, Geneva and Isaac are confused.

BETH
Baby -- she was just kidding.

But Ronny's getting angrier.

RONNY
He works his ass off! She's lucky
to have him!

Suddenly, Ronny CHARGES the stand...

RONNY
You work at a god damn hot dog
stand -- who the hell are you!?

And Isaac springs into action... grabbing his best friend and holding him back.

ISAAC
Whoah... relax. Take a breath.

Poochie's stunned.

ISAAC
(Chinatown)
Forget about it, Ronny... it's just
Weiner Circle.

As Isaac walks him away from the crowd... faces him.

ISAAC
What's wrong, man? What's going
on? Talk to me.

And Ronny looks Isaac him head on.

RONNY
It's just...

Then Ronny sees over Isaac's shoulder... Geneva... watching them.

RONNY
... this Ford thing. It's a lot of
pressure.

ISAAC
I know. But don't worry. I'm on
it. I got it covered. Copy?

And Ronny slowly nods... glaring at Geneva all the while.

INT. NATHAN'S RED HOTS - NIGHT

A much quieter hot dog spot that's almost empty.
They quietly share a table in a back.

BETH
I really don't understand, Ronny.

RONNY
I don't know. I thought it was
below the belt.

Ronny's eyes are pasted on Geneva who is cutting Isaac's
turkey burger into pieces.

BETH
Last year one of them offered to
give me a gynecological exam and
you thought it was the funniest
thing in the world.

Geneva hands Isaac his approved portion of food the puts the
extra turkey burger on the next table.

RONNY
(to Geneva, with vitriol)
Is that a good portion for him?
You bringing that cholesterol down,
loving wife?

Confused, Geneva just looks at Ronny.

GENEVA
Trying my best.

RONNY
I bet you are.

Isaac's utterly confused. And so is Beth who now glares at
Ronny. Geneva seems the most unfazed as she checks her phone
then stands.

GENEVA
Excuse me...

As Ronny watches her head to the bathroom... then past it
while she lifts her phone to her ear and heads out the back
of the restaurant.

Beth regards Ronny for a moment... then...

BETH
You know -- you haven't been
yourself since you ate those clams.

ISAAC
Clam?

RONNY
Yes.

ISAAC
What clams?

RONNY
The ones that got me sick.
Remember?

ISAAC

No.
(then)
You don't eat clams.

RONNY

And now we know why.

And Ronny doesn't answer him... just stands.

RONNY

I'll be back in a second.

EXT. NATHAN'S RED HOTS/BACK PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Geneva quietly talks on her phone. Ronny storms out, immediately grabs it from hand and disconnects the call.

GENEVA

Ronny! What the hell are you doing?

RONNY

I know, Geneva.

GENEVA

You know what.

RONNY

About the dude you're doing behind Isaac's back. About Mr. Black Flag concert T.

GENEVA

I have no idea what you're talking about.

RONNY

I saw you two together. At the Botanical Gardens. Don't deny it.

And she doesn't. She just stands there.

RONNY

How can you do this to Isaac?

She takes a beat, then... slow and concise...

GENEVA

You don't know shit, Ronny.

RONNY

I know what I saw.

GENEVA

You have no idea what goes on behind the curtain of marriage. Trust me.

RONNY
You have to tell him.

GENEVA
Do I?

As she turns to go...

GENEVA
Because you're such an authority on
what goes on between a husband and
wife.

But he grabs her by the arm and turns her around.

RONNY
I'm serious.

GENEVA
Why didn't you tell him already.

RONNY
Because... it's your job. You did
the crime now do the time.

And she laughs...

GENEVA
"Did the crime now do the time"
That's what you're giving me?
Tired idioms anchored in rhyme?
(beat)
Oh Ronny -- you're going to have to
better than that.

RONNY
How about this -- if you don't tell
him... I will!

GENEVA
You have it all figured out, don't
you?

She bites her lip in frustration then looks away... not happy
about this.

And they just stand there. Until...

GENEVA
Did you know he hasn't slept with
me in nine months? Did you know
that?

A beat.

RONNY
No.

GENEVA

Did you know that every Thursday night after work, Isaac goes to a massage parlor in Pilsen and receives a hand job from a nineteen Thai girl who knows four words of English.

RONNY

That's bullshit.

GENEVA

Is it? Is it bullshit, Ronny?

As she turns back to him with...

GENEVA

Because we all have our secrets, Princess.

And Ronny holds her stone cold look... sucks in a deep breath and gathers his conviction.

RONNY

You have twenty four hours.

As he hands her phone back to her...

RONNY

If you don't tell Isaac you're sleeping with someone else -- I'm going to make you wish you were pacing the cage!

She just shakes her head in confusion.

GENEVA

I don't even know what that means.

RONNY

I'll tell him. I swear.

GENEVA

How long did you say?

RONNY

Twenty-four hours.

She checks her watch.

GENEVA

So that would be tomorrow night at four minutes after eleven?

RONNY

That's right.

GENEVA

I just make sure I'm completely clear as to the details of this ultimatum -- you know?

RONNY

Now you are!

GENEVA

Okay -- good.

RONNY

Good.

And they stand there... glaring each other down. Until Geneva breaks it with...

GENEVA

Wait two minutes before coming back.

And with that, Geneva heads back into the restaurant and Ronny exhales.

INT. B & V ENGINE DESIGN/MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Isaac sits behind the wheel of the 1965 Thunderbird with the door open.

Wearing a t-shirt depicting Pacman doing Miss Pacman from behind, Satish sits over at the computer terminal.

ISAAC

Susan Tanner's coming to town tomorrow night... she wants to have dinner with us but she wants to keep it on the DL.

RONNY

Did she say why?

ISAAC

No. But she's our biggest supporter inside of Ford so it's got to be good news.

RONNY

Good.

(beat)

I'm meeting Louis for a drink later tonight, he's definitely interested in putting in some money.

Isaac nods. Then... looking over to Satish at the computer...

ISAAC

Let's do this.

Throwing Isaac a thumbs up...

SATISH
Right on. Here we go...

And Isaac turns over the engine. As the car quietly comes to life.

ISAAC
(disappointed)
Way too quiet.

Satish reads diagnostic information off the monitor...

SATISH
No torque.

ISAAC
Still feels electric.

Ronny senses his frustration...

RONNY
What's happening?

As Isaac leaves the car and heads back over to Satish and the computer.

ISAAC
The software isn't working is
what's happening.

RONNY
Not working at all?

ISAAC
Ronny, please. Don't freak out.

RONNY
We're presenting to Ford in a
month. Louis Edwards told me
money's tight right now. We can't
afford to fail.

SATISH
Marcus Aurelius believed that
failure was just really--

RONNY
Not now, Satish!

Sheepishly...

SATISH
I'm just saying...

And Ronny steps toward Isaac... trying to remain calm.

RONNY
Are you saying it's not working at
all, Isaac?

ISAAC
 Look. You're not helping. You
 have to relax.

Typing into his keyboard...

ISAAC
 Whatever that was at the Weiner
 Circle was not healthy.

Ronny nods... pockets his panic. Then...

RONNY
 Maybe I need a massage.

Distracted... looking over the software specs on his computer
 monitors...

ISAAC
 Maybe.

RONNY
 You ever get massages. You know?
 When you're stressed?

SATISH
 Yes. There's a place on Fullerton
 where these Thai women walk on your
 back--

RONNY
 (interrupting)
 Isaac... ever get a massage?

ISAAC
 Not really.

Ronny stares at his friend intensely.

RONNY
 A massage can be a great...
release.

ISAAC
 Um... hm...
 (beat)
 Satish, go get the new inlay
 pattern fittings.

Satish nods and heads out of the room.

And Isaac waits till he's gone before he turns to Ronny
 with...

ISAAC
 Look, I think I know what's
 bothering you.

RONNY
 Oh, I don't think so.

ISAAC
Beth's birthday's coming up and
you're nervous about popping the
question.

Ronny just looks at him.

ISAAC
You're realizing that once you make
this final commitment... you're all-
in. And that is scary.
(beat)
It's scary because then you're
truly vulnerable. You both are.

And Isaac stands, pulling away from his computer...

ISAAC
But that's what love is all about.
Being exposed without a safety
net... not being safe.

... taking to a pace.

ISAAC
And whether we like to admit it or
not -- it's like the rest of life.
(beat)
No matter what we do, no matter
what control we believe we have...
the plane can suffer an explosive
decompression from a failed
turbine... or there could be a
blockage of the coronary artery
causing a rupture of
atherosclerotic plaque... or the
person you love -- the person you
have a life-long commitment with --
could simply wake up and realize
they don't love you anymore.

And Ronny Valentine... holding Isaac's look.

RONNY
God, I'm so sorry, Isaac.

ISAAC
Yeah, we all take that risk.
But it's life... and it's love.
And you need to own that, bro.

Throwing a comforting hand on Ronny's shoulder...

ISAAC
My parents anniversary luncheon
will do you some good. Forty years
can teach us all something...

And before Ronny can respond, Isaac's phone rings.
He answers.

ISAAC
Hey baby. Sure...

Pulling the phone away... to Ronny...

ISAAC
Geneva...

Ronny perks up as Isaac moves across the room to take the call in private.

And Ronny looks on as Isaac leans against the Ford Thunderbird... listening.

Isaac's face begins to drop... Ronny steps forward in anticipation.

And Isaac disconnects the call and looks strangely at the phone for a moment... something's obviously wrong.

RONNY
What'd she say?

Snapping back his attention...

ISAAC
Nothing. She cancelled dinner tomorrow night with her brother and his wife.
(beat)
It's weird. They're only in town for the night.

RONNY
Did she give a reason?

ISAAC
She said she needs some time alone with Benny.

RONNY
Benny?

ISAAC
Her designer friend.
(beat)
His boyfriend just dumped him and she needs to talk him off the ledge.

And then... with a simple shrug...

ISAAC
Just as well -- I could use the time to work on this.

Ronny can only slowly nod.

EXT. B & V ENGINE DESIGN - NIGHT

Isaac heads out of the building and starts walking toward the el tracks. After a moment, we find Ronny tailing behind him.

INT. THE EL TRAIN - NIGHT

Isaac rides the el... looking out the window. Move back to the end of the car and right through the door to find...

RONNY VALENTINE

Standing in the space in between the cars... looking through the window... eyes pasted on his best friend.

EXT. CHICAGO'S PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

As Isaac bounds down the el platform steps into this south Loop shade-cum-artist neighborhood.

And he walks with purpose... Ronny in tow.

EXT. RISING SUN MASSAGE PARLOR - NIGHT

Isaac heads into this neon-lit sketchy massage den.

Across the street, Ronny stops and pulls out his phone... stunned.

INT. RISING SUN MASSAGE PARLOR - NIGHT

Isaac has a seat in the waiting room. His phone rings. He answers.

ISAAC

Yo.

INTERCUT WITH

Ronny... across the street.

RONNY

Hey. What are you doing?

ISAAC

At home.

RONNY

Yeah? I wanted to know if you wanted to join Louis and I from drinks. You might be able to explain the engineering to him better than me.

ISAAC

(with a sigh)
Now's not good. Geneva's been angry I've been working so much.

(MORE)

ISAAC (cont'd)
And you never need me anyway, you
always have the selling covered.

Disappointed...

RONNY
Right.

ISAAC
Tell Louis I say hi.

As Isaac hangs up then smiles to the CLERK and asks...

ISAAC
Is Boon-mee working tonight?

INT. LAKE MICHIGAN/BIKE PATH - NIGHT

The lake to one side, Lake Shore Drive to the other.
A beautiful night, Geneva walks two Yorkie terriers.

GENEVA
I told you.

Ronny is beside himself.

RONNY
You're not going to tell him -- are
you?.

GENEVA
I still have an hour.

RONNY
But you're not going to. You broke
plans with him tomorrow night so
you can be with... him.

GENEVA
That's right, Ronny.

RONNY
Why won't you tell him?

GENEVA
Because things have really been
better between us lately.

RONNY
(incredulous)
Better? Things are better?
(beat)
You're having an affair and he's
buying Hank Jeffersons in Pilsen
for eighty bucks!

GENEVA
You call hand jobs Hank Jeffersons?

RONNY

No.

(beat)

I mean I used to... in college--
you have to tell him!

GENEVA

It wouldn't serve any purpose... I
think Isaac and I can get past
this.

RONNY

You're sleeping with another man.

GENEVA

What's the difference between what
I'm doing and his Howard Jacksons?

RONNY

(correcting her)

Hank Jeffersons.

GENEVA

Does it even matter as long as the
initials are H and J?

RONNY

I guess not.

She shrugs.

GENEVA

Anyway, it's all temporary. Once
you guys get this Ford contract and
Isaac works out his...

(searching for the right
word...)

... dysfunction, I'll lose Zip.

RONNY

Zip? His name is Zip?

She just nods. They walk some more. Then...

RONNY

Where did you meet him?

GENEVA

I sold him a condo.

RONNY

Do you love him?

She just laughs.

GENEVA

I love my husband, Ronny.

RONNY

How could you love him and do this?

GENEVA
It's a good question... but there
actually is an answer.

RONNY
And that is... ?

She turns to him with...

GENEVA
None of your business.

And as that hangs... they walk some more. Until...

GENEVA
You didn't tell Beth, did you?

Ronny's silence gives her answer.

GENEVA
Why didn't you?

RONNY
I don't know.

GENEVA
I do.

He just looks at her.

GENEVA
You're afraid to point out the
elephant.

RONNY
There's no elephant.

GENEVA
There's always an elephant, Ronny.
(beat)
And you have no reference of love
so you look at us. And if ours is
flawed then how can yours stand a
chance.

And he stops walking... faces her.

RONNY
I'm going to tell him, Geneva.
Tonight.

Holding his stare....

GENEVA
Go ahead.

RONNY
Okay.

GENEVA
Okay.

RONNY
I swear.

GENEVA
I believe you.

And he breaks away... heading the other way.

But...

GENEVA
Ronny?

He stops and turn.

GENEVA
I'm going to deny it.
(beat)
Then I'm going to say you made a
pass at me and that's why you're
making up these claims.

Ronny stands there. Not sure what to do.

GENEVA
You got every girl. Isaac was
sweet and cerebral -- but you got
every girl, Ronny.
(beat)
Until I came along.

RONNY
You wouldn't.

GENEVA
Oh... I would. Ronny... I will.

She just shakes her head...

GENEVA
If it were a year earlier... I
could've ended up with you.
(beat)
But my father was sick and I was
completely out of control, you
remember. And part of me knew I
needed someone who wasn't so
fucking charming. No, I needed
someone who was focused and who was
full of potential but who didn't
know it.
(beat)
I needed Isaac, Ronny. And despite
how you think it looks... I still
do.

And Ronny just looks at her... more than that... reads her.
And he realizes... she's dead serious.

GENEVA

So as I see it -- I didn't want to
see Steely Dan with you and you
just couldn't accept the fact that
someone could prefer him to you.

(beat)

After all these years... it's such
a shame you couldn't let it go.
But I guess the male ego is as
hungry for validation as it is
fragile.

With that, she turns and keeps walking...

INT. GIBSON'S - NIGHT

The Fine Young Cannibals' cover of Elvis Presley's
"Suspicious Minds" plays from the jukebox.

We find Ronny at the bar with LOUIS EDWARDS, 60s and wearing
a sweat suit.

LOUIS

We're gonna do winter this year in
Palm Springs... Annie's two best
friends now live there.

And normally Ronny would be as energetic and charming as hell
at a money raising lunch.

But not today... he's distracted, not all there.

RONNY

That'll be good.

LOUIS

Yeah, the freedom of retirement is
great but it gets boring.

(beat)

So tell me what you got for me.

RONNY

Right. Well, you now in the past,
we've never let you down.

LOUIS

We've done well together, yes. And
I read the information Isaac sent
over. It seems very interesting.

And Ronny leans forward with an excited smile...

RONNY

It's good. Ford gave us the right
to use their car and logo and
present a prototype of the car to
them.

(MORE)

RONNY (cont'd)
 We have to pay for all the R&D and
 if they don't go for it... we'll
 end up eating the whole cost which
 is substantial.

LOUIS
 So you call me.

RONNY
 So we call you. Louis, the upside
 here is insane.
 (beat)
 Because when we get the proprietary
 software locked in, then not only
 will Ford have to pay us a fee for
 each car in the line but they'll
 also have to pay us not to go to
 competitors and create electronic
 lines with their classic models.

LOUIS
 This is how I feel about it. Your
 upside is huge and Isaac's always
 come through on the R&D in the
 past...

And as Louis speaks, Ronny can overhear the conversation from
 the next booth... two MEN speaking in hushed excitement in
 the booth near them.

MAN #1 (O.S.)
 Her husband's in the next room,
 right? A sand wedge away. Could
 walk in at any moment.

MAN #2 (O.S.)
 No!

MAN # 1 (O.S.)
 Yes!

As Louis continues...

LOUIS
 ... but this old man's done his due
 diligence here . I know Ford has
 tried this... so has Chevrolet.
 And to no avail.

And Ronny begins to phase out Louis and leans to hear the
 conversation in the booth behind him better...

MAN #1 (O.S.)
 And I have her against the kitchen
 sink... she's having trouble
 breathing and clutching a
 dishrag...

MAN #2 (O.S.)
 No!

MAN #1 (O.S.)

Yes!

Ronny looks down to find the beer he's holding now shaking.
He places it down and tries to steady his hand.

LOUIS

So here's what I'm thinking. I'll--

Throwing out a warning finger...

RONNY

Shhh!

That's right, Ronny just shushed Louis.

MAN #1 (O.S.)

And I ask her... do you really want
to do this? Right here -- right
now?

MAN #2 (O.S.)

What does she say?

MAN #1 (O.S.)

You wouldn't believe it if I told
you.

LOUIS

Ronny... are you okay?

RONNY

Just a second, Louis!

MAN #2 (O.S.)

Try me.

Ronny closes his eyes in pain... but he has to hear the rest.

MAN #1 (O.S.)

Well she looks into my eyes as
serious as death then simply offers
up the dishrag and says; "put this
in my mouth."

MAN #2 (O.S.)

No!

Furious, Ronny now spins around, looks down to face the men
in the booth and explodes.

RONNY

That's someone's wife you're
talking about -- you piece of shit!

(beat)

Somebody loves her, somebody made a
commitment to her, somebody is
building a life with her!

(beat)

(MORE)

RONNY (cont'd)
 They should rip your balls off,
 shove them down your throat and
 parade you around the village as an
 example!

AND THE MEN IN THE BOOTH

Both in their early twenties, hipster artist types with round glasses and creative facial hair stare at Ronny with his pained expression and his bruised face.

And they both hold scripted pages in their hands that we now realize they were reading off.

MAN #1
 Dude, it's a play.
 (beat)
 We're just reading our play.

And Ronny... catching his breath... realizing his mistake... realizing that he's falling apart.

MAN #2
 (to his writing partner)
 But it obviously struck a chord.

He looks up to Ronny with a proud smile.

MAN #2
 It was the dishrag -- right? The
 specificity of it. Right?
 (to his partner)
 I told you!

As Ronny, a bit stunned, simply turns back to an even more stunned Louis and takes stool with an attempted smile...

RONNY
 So, you were saying?

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - MORNING

Ronny lays on the bed with an cold towel on his head.
 Stay on him the whole time.

BETH (O.S.)
 But you love Isaac's parents.

RONNY
 I don't think I can handle it.

BETH (O.S.)
 It's their fortieth wedding
 anniversary. Forty, Ronny.

RONNY
 I'm under a lot of stress.

BETH (O.S.)
 Well I have to go... because see,
 Ronny...

And she's now standing right over him... we see her shadow.

BETH (O.S.)
I'm throwing it at my restaurant
just like you asked me to.

Silence.

BETH (O.S.)
Are you really going to do this to
me?

Hold on Ronny... just laying there... cold towel over his
eyes... until...

RONNY
No.

INT. BISTRO 404 - DAY

The restaurant's closed today for this luncheon event. A
large table hosting 20 people anchoring the floor. Isaac's
parents anniversary.

HERB and SUE BACHMAN, mid 60s, their FAMILY, Isaac's two
SISTERS, a few their KIDS, some various FRIENDS, also 60s,
Isaac and Geneva and of course Ronny and Beth.

In the background... toasts are being made...

Ronny looks like total hell... a mess of a man. He stares
off into the distance.

ISAAC
How'd it go Louis Edwards?

Ronny doesn't answer...

ISAAC
Ronny!

Snapping back his attention...

RONNY
Huh?

ISAAC
Louis Edwards?

RONNY
Yeah, I don't think that's going to
happen.

Geneva quietly whispers over to Beth...

GENEVA
(re Herb and Sue)
Do you know how they met?

BETH
No. Ronny, do you?

RONNY
Saw her at the gate. Paid an Italian businessman his last thirty bucks to change seats with him to he could sit next to her.

As they all clink their glasses to the toast from the other side of the table...

ISAAC
Well, it sounds more romantic the way my father tells it.
(quietly to Ronny)
You okay, bud?

And Ronny snaps out of it and looks over to Herb and Sue... kissing.

And he comes up with an idea as he stands and clinks a fork to his glass.

RONNY
(announcing)
I'd like to make a toast.

The table quiets down, Ronny now has their attention.

RONNY
Forty years! Can you imagine?
Being married to someone for forty years. Wow!

And he now begins to pace around the table...

RONNY
Now I don't know much about marriage but I do know it couldn't all have been easy. Because people are not perfect... they make mistakes.
(beat)
But I'd have to assume what keeps a couple together for all those years is...

As he glares back at Geneva...

RONNY
... honesty.
(even more)
Honesty and honesty alone.

Herb holds up his glass and ads...

HERB
And love.

RONNY

But even more than that... honesty.

Now Sue smiles lovingly at her husband... announcing...

SUE

Don't forget about patience.

Growing frustrated...

RONNY

Nobody's forgetting about patience,
Sue -- calm down.

Once again... glaring at Geneva...

RONNY

But what I'm focusing on is
honesty.

(beat)

Unabashed... pure... naked...
honesty.

And little mousy woman, 30s, shouts out...

COUSIN BETTY

And similar interests.

RONNY

Who the hell are you?

COUSIN BETTY

Cousin Betty.

RONNY

First?

COUSIN BETTY

Second.

RONNY

Okay, Cousin Betty, this isn't a
group toast. This isn't an open
forum. I'm the one standing up
here, I'm the one holding the
glass, I'm the one talking.

(beat)

Now Herb and Sue chime in and
that's fine because it's their
night -- forty years and all that.

And it's now obvious... Ronny's losing it...

RONNY

But not you. You and your similar
interests. Nobody gave you a
speaking part... nobody cares.

Isaac's stunned. Beth's concerned. Geneva slowly covers her
eyes.

RONNY

You're a second cousin which by the way isn't even a real relative because someone could have sex with their second cousin and their kids would still be normal.

He looks over the table... which is now silent.

And Ronny takes a deep breath then once again glares right at Geneva...

RONNY

Honesty... you can't run away from it.

Geneva finally looks up to catch Ronny's gaze... as he moves from misguided toast to pure threat.

RONNY

Because believe me -- it will find you.

Collecting himself... re-raising with...

RONNY

To Sue and Herb...

Unsure, the table tentatively toasts.

And Ronny now notices Beth is glaring at him.

AND WE GO CLOSE ON A CAMERA

MAN'S VOICE

The Nikon D80, 10 million effective pixels, 2.7 Pixel density.

Pull back to be...

INT. POWELL'S CAMERA - DAY

One of the only boutique camera shops left in the world.

RONNY

Does it work from far away?

As the clerk, 30's with a beard, hands Ronny the camera.

CAMERA CLERK

Definitely. Are you going to be shooting birds?

Looking over the camera...

RONNY

Yes.

CAMERA CLERK
What kind?

As he places the camera onto the counter... he'll take it...

RONNY
... unfaithful ones.

EXT. ISAAC AND GENEVA'S LAKE SHORE DRIVE CONDO - NIGHT

BINOCULAR POV

As Geneva leaves the building and makes her way into a waiting cab.

Pull back to be with Ronny across the street at the wheel of his Sting Ray. As he brings down the binos, throws the car into drive and follows the cab.

EXT. WICKER PARK - NIGHT

As Geneva heads down the street in this hip neighborhood of cafes and boutiques. Ronny tracks her from across the street.

And there he is...

ZIP

Waiting for her outside of a Moroccan restaurant.

NIKON D80 POV

As she greets him with a kiss...

SNAP SNAP SNAP

Got the shot.

As Ronny brings the camera down with pride... a little high from his Jake Gittes routine.

EXT. MOROCCAN RESTAURANT - LATER

As they leave now holding hands. SNAP SNAP SNAP... Ronny getting it all from across the street.

And they head on foot into the neighborhood. Ronny follows them... staying a safe distance behind.

EXT. ZIP'S WICKER PARK CONDO - NIGHT

He leads her by the hand into the three-unit building.

Across the street, Ronny stops walking and sees a light turn on from the second floor. He spies a balcony that would be perfect to get the money shots... the real proof.

He slowly crosses the street, heading over to the building and taking inventory of the landscape... there's a very climbable tree right up to the balcony.

And Ronny Valentine sucks in a deep breath then throws the camera around his neck and takes to climbing the tree. But right as he gets close to the balcony he sees A WOMAN walking her dog. He stops on the dime and holds his breath. The dog notices Ronny but the woman does not.

And the dog starts to bark... Ronny puts his finger to his mouth as if that would help.

WOMAN
C'mon Giacomo!

She walks him off and Ronny exhales.

EXT. BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

As Ronny takes the pictures... permanently cringing.

RONNY
This is so messed up... this is so
messed up...

He brings down the camera... clearly got what he needed.

RONNY
... this is so messed up.

And he turns to go but notices...

THREE SKATE RATS

Teenagers. Using the curb below for a ramp.

RONNY
Shit.

They're smoking a joint and don't look like they're going anywhere. So Ronny has a seat.

EXT. ZIP'S WICKER PARK CONDO/BALCONY - LATER

Ronny waits patiently... watching the teenagers down below until the front of door of the condo opens.

ZIP (O.S.)
Out!

The teenagers throw the roach onto the driveway and scurry off.

Ronny looks down to see Zip kiss Geneva goodbye... saying something that makes her laugh then slapping her on the ass and sending her on her way.

Ronny takes a moment to watch her walk down the street before sizing up the tree he has to climb back down.

And just as Ronny sets to climb onto the tree, an ARM grabs his shoulder, turns him around and BAM.

A fist plows into his face...

AND ZIP

NAILS Ronny with another right hook and then POUNDS a SHOT into his stomach. Ronny doubles over in pain.

ZIP

You get a good show?

Zip yanks the camera strap down in order to SLAM Ronny's face into his knee. SNAP, the camera shatters to the ground while Ronny's nose SPURTS blood.

Ronny notices that Zip is only wearing a robe.

Zip steps closer to finish Ronny off... but Ronny grabs the tie on Zip's robe and uses it to pull him down.

Surprised, Zip's tries to get up but Ronny brings him tugs at the robe again... but this time the robe comes off.

Zip's now off balanced and completely naked.

As Ronny uses this window to scramble to his feet, runs the patio and jumps back onto the...

TREE

Where Ronny climbs down but loses his grip and falls the last ten feet... landing with a thud.

And Ronny lays there in pain for a long beat... until... he hears Zip's front door open and sees...

ZIP

Emerge. Buck naked and holding a baseball bat....

Ronny races for his convertible Sting Ray, reaches into his pocket and brings out his keys. But they fall to the ground.

And as Ronny bends down to pick up the keys... we see a buck naked Zip, now holding that baseball bat, emerge from the condo in a rage.

Ronny jumps into the String Ray and tries to get the key in the ignition. But as shown in countless horror movies... that's really hard to do when someone's chasing you.

Zip limps toward the Sting Ray, lifting up the bat... Ronny sees he's not going to make it so he slides over and jumps out the passenger's side.

As Zip chases Ronny around the car...

ZIP
This your car?

RONNY
No.

And SLAM. There goes the rear view mirror.

ZIP
It's beautiful.

Two OLD LADIES out for a stroll have now stopped to look on.

RONNY
(begging)
Please...

And BAM... right into the door... big dent

ZIP
Who are you?

RONNY
Please... that's a 1966 Chevrolet
Sting Ray L-79.

ZIP
Now it's in need of a Mexican.

And CRASH... the whole front window...

RONNY
Please.

Zip then SLAMS the bat onto the hood and it pops open.

As he SLAMS the bat down repeatedly on the engine...

ZIP
Who...
(BAM)
are...
(BAM)
you?

He then reaches in and starts to pull the guts of the engine... throwing them to the ground.

RONNY
Her husband's best friend.

And this makes Zip stop and look up...

ZIP
Oh... shit.

EXT. ZIP'S WICKER PARK CONDO/STOOP - NIGHT

As Zip lights up the roach the teenagers left behind...

ZIP
I don't think I would've been able
to tell him either.

And he offers the roach to Ronny... who now has black eye and
a bloody paper towel taped to his nose. Ronny declines.

RONNY
It seemed like a no-brainer at the
time but every time I tried...
(beat)
... I just couldn't do it.

ZIP
Who wants to shatter a man's life?
Right? I mean, no matter what
happens, he'll always think of you
as the douche who told him the
worst news of his life.

And Ronny regards Zip... he's older than he looks at first
blush and maybe even a little smarter.

RONNY
Did you know she was married?

ZIP
Not at first. But it didn't
surprise me when she eventually
told me.

RONNY
Why not?

With a simple shrug...

ZIP
We attract what we attract. I'm
always attracting women who are
taken, I don't know.

RONNY
That's horrible.

ZIP
Yeah, I had problems with it at
first but I realized... I'm
attracting these women for a
reason.

Sucking in another hit...

ZIP

There's something I have to work out and there's something they have to work out and the universe is going to keep sending them into my orbit until I figure my shit out.

Ronny just looks at him.

RONNY

That's a justification. The truth is that people like you are the enemy of love.

Zip flicks the roach onto the lawn with a laugh...

ZIP

Love? Who the fuck loves?

(beat)

As far as I see it -- what's your name again?

RONNY

Ronny.

ZIP

As far as I see it, Ronny, we try to do many things... we try to master and we try heal and we try to control but we don't try to love. Not anymore.

Ronny digests that for a long moment, then...

RONNY

What do you do?

ZIP

Excuse me?

RONNY

For a living... what do you do?

ZIP

Various things. I'm getting into some International importing now.

RONNY

Importing what?

ZIP

Columbite-tantalite, which is a metallic ore. They mine it in Sierra Leone. It's used as a capacitor in the batteries of laptops and cellphones and all sorts of electronics. The Chinese are hoarding the shit out of it.

Ronny just looks at him...

ZIP

For twenty-five grand, I can get fourteen metric tons and turn it around to the Germans for a hundred then go from there.

(beat)

But I don't have the twenty-five grand. Wanna invest?

RONNY

No.

And they sit in silence, until...

ZIP

Sorry about your car.

RONNY

Yeah...

ZIP

I fucked it up pretty bad.

RONNY

Par for the course this week.

Zip just nods his head... noting...

ZIP

Golf metaphor.

RONNY

I was going to ask my girlfriend to marry me... before I saw you and Geneva together at the Botanical Gardens.

(beat)

But now I'm not.

Ronny's phone rings... he checks the caller id "Isaac."
He doesn't pick it up.

ZIP

Why not?

RONNY

I don't know. It just doesn't make sense anymore.

(beat)

And then I couldn't tell her about Geneva cheating. I was afraid it would somehow make it okay for her...

And he stops short... doesn't finish the thought... just looks out to the street and shakes his head.

ZIP

Has your girlfriend been faithful to you?

RONNY
I think so.

ZIP
And have you been faithful to her?

RONNY
Yes.

ZIP
And you were going to ask her to
marry you but after you saw Geneva
and I... you decided not to?

RONNY
That's what I just said, Zip.

And Zip thinks about that for a moment, growing a bit sad.

ZIP
That's messed up.

RONNY
It is.

ZIP
Maybe I am the enemy of love.

RONNY
Enemy of my love, bro.

Zip takes that all in, then...

ZIP
What's her name?

RONNY
Beth.

As Zip slowly stands and stretches...

ZIP
Well, I'd love to meet her
sometime.

Ronny just looks up at him.

ZIP
(with a smile)
I'm fucking with you.

With that, Zip heads into his house.

And after Ronny watches Zip go in, he brings the phone to his
ear and dials...

RONNY
Hey. You just call?

ISAAC (FILTERED)
Where the hell have you been, I've
been calling you?

RONNY
Long story.

ISAAC
Meet me at 980. The roof.

RONNY
980? Really?

ISAAC
Copy.

RONNY
Okay.
(beat)
Is everything okay?

ISAAC (FILTERED)
No.

Click.

And Ronny looks down at the phone and notices eleven missed
calls from Isaac over the last two hours.

EXT. CHICAGO'S WRIGLEYVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Ronny jumps out of a cab and heads down Addison street on
foot. He gets to an old red brick building and goes...

AROUND BACK

Where Ronny immediately jumps on a dumpster, pulls down the
fire ladder and climbs up to the fire escape staircase.

EXT. 980 ADDISON/ROOF - NIGHT

A good view of North Chicago with Wrigley Field anchoring it.

Ronny emerges onto the roof to find Isaac sitting on the
edge. He's obviously in a state as he holds a bottle of
whiskey and stares to the urban landscape below.

RONNY
(to himself)
Shit.

As he slowly walks toward Isaac.

RONNY
Hey buddy.

Isaac vacantly stares straight ahead.

ISAAC
You disappeared on me.

RONNY
I know, I'm sorry.

ISAAC
I remember right out of college...
when we lived here. We would sit
up all night planning how we were
going to build the business.

RONNY
I know.

ISAAC
And we said over and over that no
matter what happened... no matter
how complicated shit got... that
the most important thing was to
have each other's backs.

RONNY
Isaac--

And Isaac finally slowly looks over to his friend...

ISAAC
What happened to your face?

Ronny just shrugs, doesn't answer. And he sucks in a deep
breath...

RONNY
So... you found out?

Isaac just nods.

ISAAC
Tonight.
(beat)
I could've used you there.

Ronny joins Isaac at the edge... grabs the bottle and takes a
swig.

RONNY
Isaac, I wanted to tell you, I
really did.

Isaac just looks at him... so sad.

ISAAC
Why didn't you?

Ronny can only shake his head.

RONNY
I thought it wasn't my place, I
thought I was protecting you.
(MORE)

RONNY (cont'd)
 Maybe I thought you'd hate me.
 (beat)
 I thought the right thing to do was
 wait for her to tell you herself.

Isaac accepts that. Then...

RONNY
 Are you going to leave her?

ISAAC
 Leave who?

RONNY
 Leave... wait. What are you
 talking about?

ISAAC
 What are you talking about?

RONNY
 I'm talking about... what you're
 talking about.

ISAAC
 Ford?

RONNY
 Yes, Ford. Of course... Ford.

ISAAC
 You missed the dinner with Susan
 Tanner. I called you like ten
 times.

RONNY
 Susan Tanner, dinner, right. I
 missed it. And I am sorry for
 that.

ISAAC
 So how did you find out?
 (beat)
 Did Susan call you before the
 dinner or something?

Going with it...

RONNY
 Emailed.

Isaac's still confused.

ISAAC
 Why did you ask if I was going to
 leave her?

RONNY
 As a friend. You know... I was
 wondering if you were going to
 leave Susan as a friend.

ISAAC
Why would I do that? She risked
her job telling us this.

RONNY
Totally. Good point. We shouldn't
leave her.
(and then)
What did she tell you exactly?

ISAAC
You know. United Design was proto-
typing that same thing we are a
week earlier.

Ronny's floored.

RONNY
United Design is prototyping the
same thing!

ISAAC
Yes.

RONNY
Wait. They're showing Ford a
Thunderbird with an electronic
engine a week before we're set to?

ISAAC
A Fairlane.

Confused...

ISAAC
Didn't you know this?

RONNY
Of course I know this. How could
this happen?

ISAAC
It's obvious. Ford figured they'd
make this a bake-off so they tipped
United Design into what we're
doing.

RONNY
Bastards!
(beat)
What'd you tell to them?

ISAAC
I said United Design couldn't hold
our socks and we'd have something
to show them next week.

RONNY
 Damn right! Screw United Design!
 (then)
 Next week?!?

ISAAC
 What else was I supposed to do?

RONNY
 No, you did the right thing.

Ronny jumps to his feet, paces the roof... completely panicked.

RONNY
 But we're screwed. I mean, Isaac,
 you took out a second mortgage for
 this... you're going to be broke!
 Now the deadline's been moved up?
 We're done.

ISAAC
 Ronny, relax.

RONNY
 Did you really say "hold our
 socks?"

ISAAC
 Yes.

RONNY
 Those exact words?

ISAAC
 Yes. Why?

RONNY
 I don't know, it's kind of soft.

Isaac doesn't disagree.

RONNY
 Don't you see? It's all falling
 apart.
 (beat)
 All we've worked for is about to go
 down the drain, United Design is
 ahead of us, you can't trust anyone
 in this world, it's impossible to
 love--

ISAAC
 Ronny!

Isaac jumps up, grabs Ronny, centers him.

ISAAC
 Get it together! It's not worth
 it.

Ronny catches his breath.

ISAAC
Look at you. You're completely
losing it.

And Isaac studies Ronny's bruised eye and bandaged nose.

ISAAC
Now tell me what happened to your
face?

Ronny just shakes his head.

RONNY
Bar fight.

ISAAC
Bar fight?

Thinking for a quick beat, then...

RONNY
Yes. After I got the email from
Susan... I was upset. So I got
drunk and ended up in a fight.

ISAAC
So that's why you didn't make it to
the dinner...

That makes sense...

RONNY
Yes! Exactly. I was drunk and
fighting.

Isaac slowly nods... worried.

ISAAC
Okay. Listen to me. I want you to
go home and go to sleep.
(beat)
We're not that far off here with
the prototype.

RONNY
We're not?

ISAAC
No.

RONNY
Yard line?

ISAAC
Ten.

RONNY
But can we get ten yards in a week?

ISAAC
We can get ten yards in one play.

RONNY
Do you have the play? Isaac, tell
me you have the play.

ISAAC
I might.

Shaking it off... collecting himself...

RONNY
Okay.

ISAAC
I'm going to back to the office to
work on it all night.

But Isaac is still finding himself regarding his best
friend...

ISAAC
I'm a bit worried about you.

RONNY
Don't.
(beat)
Just... get us into the end zone.

Concerned, Isaac looks his friend head on for a beat, then...
holds out a fist.

ISAAC
Who are you?

As Ronny slowly brings his fist out and places it on top of
Isaac's.

RONNY
Ronny Valentine.

ISAAC
Who am I?

RONNY
Isaac Backman.

ISAAC
Who are we?

RONNY
B & V Engine Design.

ISAAC
And what does that mean to you
right now?

RONNY
Up against a wall.

Isaac slowly nods...

RONNY
What does it mean to you right now?

ISAAC
United Design doesn't stand a chance.

And Ronny holds Isaac's gaze for a beat then... turns and goes.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beth and Ronny lay in bed. He tries to sleep. She lays awake on her side... just looking at him.

RONNY
Go to sleep.

BETH
A bar fight?

Without opening his eyes or looking at her...

RONNY
I'm under a lot of pressure lately. It just happened.

BETH
Is everything okay?

RONNY
Go to sleep.

BETH
Ronny -- is everything okay?

And now he opens his eyes... turning to her.

RONNY
I don't know. How am I supposed to know if everything is okay?

Jumping out of bed...

RONNY
How are any of us supposed to know that?

... and taking to a pace.

RONNY
We think everything's okay... we take inventory of our lives and we tell ourselves everything's okay.

BETH
Where are you going?

RONNY
Nowhere. I'm just pacing.

BETH
Why?

RONNY
I don't know. Because it's what I
do.
(beat)
I obviously pace now... and bar
fight.

BETH
... and toast inappropriately.

And he stops pacing and turns to her with...

RONNY
The joke is on us, Beth. Because
when the plane's about to go down
or the artery's about to clog or
when the person we love is about to
crush us... we're the last to find
out that we're not okay.

He calms.

RONNY
Like I said... a lot of stress.
I'm sorry.

BETH
Don't be sorry, Ronny.

And Beth simply gets out of the bed, takes him into her hold,
centers him and squeezes tight.

BETH
I don't need you to say
everything's okay...

And Ronny... hugging her back... eyes wide open.

RONNY
Then what do you need me to say?

BETH
What you just did.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - MORNING

Ronny awakes to the phone ringing. He picks it up.

RONNY
Yeah...

INTERCUT WITH

Isaac on the main floor of B&V Engine Design.

ISAAC
I took a shitload of Adderall last
night and didn't sleep.

RONNY
Okay...

ISAAC
You need to come down here.

INT. B & V ENGINE DESIGN - DAY

Ronny heads in to find Isaac leaning against the Thunderbird
with big smile on his face.

An excited Satish sits at the computer bank. His t-shirt
today reading "FREE TIBET... with the purchase of a Tibet of
equal value or more."

ISAAC
How'd you sleep?

RONNY
Not so good.

ISAAC
This might help.

He motions to the car...

ISAAC
Get in. Start her up.

RONNY
Really?

SATISH
Do it.

Ronny slides into the passenger seat and starts up the
Thunderbird.

And it roars to life... turning over with power and that
beautiful vintage engine purr.

RONNY
(shouts out)
Nice!

ISAAC
Give it some love...

And Ronny revs up the engine, glances at the speedometer...
the dial forecasting a mighty torque reminiscent of a 1956
Saturday night.

RONNY
Jesus!

Ronny jumps out of the car... excited.

RONNY
You did it!

ISAAC
I called Susan... they're coming
tomorrow to see it.

RONNY
That soon?

ISAAC
There's no time to lose... who
knows how close United Design is?

And Ronny takes Isaac into a hug.

RONNY
I knew you'd come through.

They break the hug. Ronny heads over and hugs Satish.

SATISH
Greatness is not of us... but
through us.

RONNY
Who said that?

SATISH
John Ruskin.

RONNY
What's it mean?

Breaking the hug...

SATISH
Have no idea.

And Isaac comes over and looks at Ronny.

ISAAC
Now look... you need to deal with
your shit. Get your life in
order... you've been in a pretty
bad place lately.

(beat)
We're going to have a lot business
to do with The Ford Motor company
and I need you healthy, copy?

RONNY
Copy that.

ISAAC
Okay.
(beat)
Now go. Get out of here.

EXT. B&V ENGINE DESIGN/LOBBY - DAY

Ronny heads out of the building... just as Geneva is coming in.

GENEVA
So he showed you?

RONNY
Yes.

GENEVA
He's showing me now.

And he turns to go, but...

GENEVA
Zip broke up with me.

Stopping and turning back to face her...

RONNY
Did he?

GENEVA
Said he was turning over a new leaf
-- which is a metaphor I never
understood.

Ronny just stands there... glaring at her.

RONNY
I don't believe you.

GENEVA
I don't care.

RONNY
I can find out you know.

GENEVA
It's over, Ronny. For all of us.
(beat)
You're going to get the Ford bid
and Zip and I are done.

RONNY
But I still know and Isaac doesn't.
(beat)
If you're even telling the truth.

Shaking his head...

RONNY
And that makes me an asshole and
him a fool.

INT. ZIP'S WICKER PARK CONDO - NIGHT

Shirtless, Zip answers the door to see...

RONNY
Did you really break up with
Geneva?

ZIP
Yeah.

RONNY
Why?

ZIP
That enemy of love shit you said
got to me.
(beat)
I need the Kharma, Mr Sandy says he
needs the twenty five grand by next
week to secure the land rights.

Off of Ronny's confusion...

ZIP
(reminding him)
Columbite-tantalite? Sierra Leone?

RONNY
Right.

ZIP
And you're sure you don't to
invest?

RONNY
Pretty sure, yes.

And they stand there in silence for beat, until...

ZIP
You gonna tell him?

RONNY
I have to.

ZIP
Why don't you just let it go?

RONNY
Because I can't. Because I
should've told him right away.

Zip accepts that.

AND FROM A POV FROM ACROSS THE STREET

We don't know whose. As Ronny heads off...

And we pull back to see whose POV we're seeing this from...

ISAAC'S

As he slowly shakes his head then sighs... disappointed.

He makes sure Ronny's gone then slowly walks across the street and rings Zip's bell.

After a moment, Zip opens the door and looks Isaac.

ZIP
Who the hell are you?

And before Isaac can answer, we...

CUT TO:

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - DAY

Ronny stares at the ceiling... churning it all.

Mustang Sally rings out from Ronny's phone. He checks it. It's a picture from Beth. He checks it... a parking sign.

And Ronny sighs in relief with a smile.

Ronny intensely studies the picture of the parking regulation sign to help her with her confusion and notices... a street sign in the corner. "Paulina Street"

RONNY
Paulina Street?

As Ronny shoots up with a freaked out start...

RONNY
Why's she in Wicker Park?

EXT. CHICAGO'S SOUTHWEST LOOP EL STATION - DAY

As Ronny heads onto the el train...

RONNY
Pick up the Goddamn phone, Beth!

AND BETH'S CAMRY

Sits on Paulina Street. Ronny pulls the Sting Ray up to it then glares over to the corner... to Zip's condo.

EXT. WICKER PARK - NIGHT

Ronny quickly rushes down the street... in a complete state. He's muttering to himself.

RONNY
All I wanted was a good place to propose... that's all I wanted.

And he sees something that makes him stop cold.

BETH

Leaving a diner and heading to her car.

And she's not alone... she's with someone... Isaac.

Ronny immediately ducks into a doorway so they don't see him.

And he looks on as they get into...

BETH'S CAR

She's very upset as she checks her phone.

BETH

He called me five times...

Isaac slowly nods... placing a comforting hand on her leg.

AND RONNY

As he slowly walks toward the car... confused as hell... watching them through the window... wondering what the fuck they're doing together.

BETH'S CAR

She shakes her head in sadness as she starts it up...

Now Ronny can be seen right outside the car... slowly walking right over... looking in... absolutely stunned...

AND ISAAC

Takes Beth into his embrace... squeezed her tightly...

AND RONNY

Now literally right at the passenger side window looking in... dumbstruck... confused... beside himself...

RONNY

No...

He pushes face up against the window... inches away from them... locked in a pained pushed-in expression.

All she has to do is glance up and she'll see Ronny.

And she does.

And Ronny dives to the ground, out of sight.

A split second close call. She didn't see him.

And Beth starts up the car and drives it off... leaving Ronny Valentine laying on the curb...

EXT. B & V ENGINE DESIGN - NIGHT

As Ronny emerges from a cab and heads for the building...

INT. B&V ENGINE DESIGN/OFFICES - NIGHT

As Ronny vacantly stands in the hallway taking in the wall of pictures... the pictures of a friendship... and of a partnership...

And Ronny just shakes his head in disappointment as he travels down the wall, finds a seat on the floor and throws his head into his hands.

It's all just too much.

EXT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

As Ronny heads for his loft...

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ronny walks in, closes the door behind him and stops cold when he sees... sitting quietly in the living room...

Isaac, Geneva, Beth, his sister DIANE, 41, Satish and a man with a GRAY BEARD.

 RONNY
What's going on?

 GRAY BEARD
Ronny, why don't you come join us?

 RONNY
Who are you?

 GRAY BEARD
My name is Dr. Rosenstone.

Beth sadly pats the open seat next to her on the couch.

 BETH
Ronny, come sit here.

Diane starts crying. Confused, Ronny slowly heads over and has a seat.

 DR. ROSENSTONE
Your family and friends are here because they love you, Ronald. And they can't stand to see you destroy yourself anymore.

RONNY
 Can't stand to... ? Wait a
 minute... is this an intervention?

DR. ROSENSTONE
 We don't see the need for labels.
 This is just a discussion.

And it dawns on Ronny...

RONNY
 Who put this together?

DR. ROSENSTONE
 It doesn't matter.

And he looks at Isaac.

RONNY
 Was it you? Did you contact
 everyone... ?

Inside of a sad shrug...

ISAAC
 I had to, man. You're gambling
 your life away.

As he pieces it together...

RONNY
 So... you contacted Beth... you met
 her somewhere... to tell her you
 were worried about me?

Isaac slowly confirms.

RONNY
 And that upset her. So maybe...
 you hugged her?

BETH
 Ronny... we need you to focus on
 what's happening here.

And Ronny's now elated. This explains it all.

RONNY
 Totally, focus on the intervention.
 I completely get it.

And there's a knock on the open door...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Am I late?

They all look to the doorway to see... entering the room...

ZIP
Shit. It's probably bad form to be late to an intervention, huh?

Geneva sits up... confused.

RONNY
What the hell are you doing here?

ISAAC
I invited him.

As Zip takes a seat...

RONNY
You invited him?

ISAAC
You've been falling apart, Ronny. The black eyes... the Weiner Circle outbursts... the abusive comments to my cousin... the lies about clams and bar fights. I knew you were gambling and I had to do something.
(beat)
So, I followed you earlier to his place.

RONNY
You followed me?

ISAAC
Yes.

RONNY
You followed me.

Geneva's now freaking out... she whips out her phone and starts to furiously type on the keyboard...

ISAAC
After you left, I talked to him.

Isaac holds up a paperback book... "Overcoming The Odds -- Defeating Gambling Addiction"

ISAAC
It says here, if possible, it's best to have all enablers present... even bookies.

Zip checks his phone.

GENEVA (V.O.)
What the fuck are you doing here?

Zip types back...

ZIP (V.O.)
Sorry babe. Need the money.

ISAAC
I paid half your debt and he agreed
to come here.

Diane cries harder...

RONNY
What?

As she takes Ronny's hand...

BETH
Twenty-five thousand dollars,
Ronny... it's a lot of money.

RONNY
Wait a minute. You gave him twelve
thousand dollars?

SATISH
(correcting him)
Actually half would be twelve
thousand five hundred...

ISAAC
I told him he'd get the other half
after he shows up here.

RONNY
But all your money is tied up?

ISAAC
I wrote the check from the company
account.

Geneva furiously types...

GENEVA (V.O.)
Get out of here! You sick prick --
how dare you do this?!

Isaac turns to his wife...

ISAAC
Honey, it's really rude to be on
your blackberry during an
intervention.

Dr. Rosenstone agrees with a soft nod.

Zip checks his phone, looks up at Geneva and just shrugs.

DR. ROSENSTONE
So, Ronny... I think everyone here
has something to say to you.
(beat)
We'll start with Diane...

Through her sobs...

DIANE
I know I was mean to you as a
child...

RONNY
(growing uncomfortable)
This is really unnecessary...

DIANE
No... it's true. I was mean and
called you names and dressed you up
as a girl--

RONNY
Really... I don't think--

DIANE
And I'm sorry.

RONNY
Okay -- good talk.

DR. ROSENSTONE
Satisfish...

And we get a good look at his t shirt... "Her Ass" written in
big words. "... the final frontier" written under it in
small print.

SATISH
"And This Too Shall Pass" King
Solomon.

Satish sadly looks away... emotional.

DR. ROSENSTONE
Geneva...

And Geneva glares at Zip.

GENEVA
You're a real prick!

It's obvious she's talking to Zip...

GENEVA
You're so damn toxic, I feel sorry
for you--

Diane cries even harder. Satish looks down at his feet.
Beth's stunned at her anger. Isaac jumps in.

ISAAC
Whoa! Honey... don't take it so
personally.

GENEVA

Do you have any self respect or
decency inside of you at all?

And at the last second she pastes her glare onto Ronny to
make it look as if it was all meant for him.

ISAAC

Really... Geneva, that was a bit
aggressive.

She just shrugs...

DR. ROSENSTONE

Okay. Zack?

ZIP

It's Zip.

DR. ROSENSTONE

Zip... ?

ZIP

No, I'm good.

DR. ROSENSTONE

Okay... Isaac... is there something
you wanna say to Ronny?

ISAAC

Yeah...

And Isaac sucks in a deep breath... then...

ISAAC

I didn't have many friends when I
got to University of Illinois. I
was shy and I was into building
model airplanes and my various
little obsessive engineering
projects that didn't go anywhere.
You know all this.

(beat)

But Ronny, what you don't know is
that when you moved across the hall
second semester... I made it a goal
of mine to become friends with you.
I literally wrote it down in the
present tense on a note card with
gratitude. "I'm so happy I'm
friends with Ronny Valentine."

DIANE

Like the secret?

ISAAC

This was before the secret. It was
in this book my mother gave me
before going to school called--
doesn't matter.

Isaac looks at Ronny.

ISAAC
 You were funny and charming and everyone liked you. And I read that note card aloud every night before I went to sleep.

Ronny's moved.

ZIP
 (under his breath)
 Creepy.

ISAAC
 And then I noticed you were driving your grandfather's old beat-up car.

And Ronny utters... fondly remembering...

RONNY
 1979 Camero Z29.

ISAAC
 A 1979 Camero Z29.

Zip rolls his eyes.

ISAAC
 And it was a piece of crap. But I saw my window. I saw my chance to become friends with Ronny Valentine.

RONNY
 You made it beautiful.

ISAAC
 And right there was the birth of B&V Engine design...
 (emotional)
 ... and the best friendship I've ever had.

ZIP
 (under his breath)
 Gay.

ISAAC
 You have everything, Ronny.

He looks at Beth.

ISAAC
 You have an amazing woman...

Then back at Ronny.

ISAAC

... a great career that you're good at. And after tomorrow you're going to have a big contract with Ford which is going to take it all to the next level.

(beat)

That's why this needs to happen now.

Jumping to his feet... pleading... emotional...

ISAAC

Because you're going to throw it away... and you don't even realize it.

And Ronny seeing real emotion in Isaac... real pain. And it kills him.

ISAAC

And I think what hurts the most is that I don't know if I can help you. I don't know if you even realize what you're doing... what you're risking.

He just shakes his head... upset and frustrated... and looks his best friend dead-on with...

ISAAC

All I can do is point out the truth to you... and let you take it from there.

And Ronny can't take anymore.

RONNY

Enough! This has gone on long enough.

Now Ronny's on his feet.

RONNY

I haven't been gambling, okay.

Knowing where this is going, Geneva now jumps to her feet with pleading eyes...

GENEVA

Sure you have. You've been gambling real bad, Ronny.

(beat)

Just admit it and make it easy on everyone.

Now looking right at Isaac... continuing...

RONNY
That's not why I was beat up and
that's not what's going on.

Shaking his head in disappointment...

DR. ROSENSTONE
Ronny, it's time for the truth now.

Over to Dr. Rosenstone...

RONNY
Exactly.

Back to Isaac...

RONNY
I hate to be the one to break this
to you, Isaac... and I should've
done it earlier. But it needs to
be said now.
(beat)
Geneva's cheating on you.

Now Zip stands up and approaches Isaac.

ZIP
So I have to go now... can I get
the other twelve thousand five
hundred?

Confused as hell, Beth stands up...

BETH
What is going on?

Standing in a fit of sobs...

DIANE
Ronny's in denial...

Also finding his feet...

SATISH
This blows A&E out of the water.

Now everyone's on their feet. It's chaos...

And anchoring it stands Isaac and Ronny.

ISAAC
Geneva's cheating on me?

Ronny confirms by nodding over to Zip.

RONNY
With him.

ISAAC
She's sleeping with your bookie?

RONNY
He's not a bookie.

ZIP
Right. I'll get the check later.

With that, Zip rushes out.

Knowing the gig is up, Geneva slump back onto the couch and simply lights up a cigarette.

Isaac takes a moment to register it all...

ISAAC
I don't understand.

RONNY
I saw them together and I didn't know how to tell you. So I told Geneva she had to.

As Beth steps forward...

BETH
What?

Continuing...

RONNY
But she made it hard on me and everything got more and more complicated.

Isaac looks over to Geneva.

ISAAC
Is this true?

And she confirms by simply drawing in a long drag off her cigarette. Isaac turns back Ronny.

ISAAC
How long did you know?

RONNY
A few days now. It's been hell.

ISAAC
I can't believe this.
(hurt)
I can't believe you didn't tell me.

And with that, Isaac simply walks out of the loft.

BETH
 Why didn't you tell me you were
 going through this?

Ronny can only shake his head... he has no answer for her.

And Geneva simply looks up to Ronny and exhales her drag
 with...

GENEVA
 Do you want to go after him or
 shall I?

EXT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ronny rushes after Isaac but the streets are empty.
 He rounds the corner... but no Isaac.

And he turns around to find himself face to face with...

GENEVA
 He's good at disappearing when he
 wants to.

Ronny just brushes past her and heads back toward the loft,
 but...

GENEVA
 My guess -- he was waiting.
 (beat)
 Until after Ford. Until, he had
 some money to give me.

Ronny stops walking, turns back to her.

RONNY
 Waiting for what?

GENEVA
 To divorce me.

RONNY
 He should. You cheated.

GENEVA
 Ronny, he decided to leave me
 before Zip.

RONNY
 What are you talking about?

GENEVA
 The fact that he fell out of love
 with me. The fact that both he and
 I knew it.
 (beat)
 I still love him. I always have.
 But he fell out of love with me,
 Ronny. Somewhere in-between "I do"
 and the hand jobs in Pilsen.

As that registers on Ronny...

GENEVA

He contacted a lawyer and everything. He just didn't want to do it while all the money was tied up. He wanted to wait until this Ford thing worked out and there'd be money for us to split.

(beat)

Because he felt guilty and because deep down... he really is a decent guy.

(and finally)

And I was acting out with Zip. I was heart broken... I still am.

She's on the verge of tears... so she takes a moment to collect herself before she says...

GENEVA

See -- it's like I told you.

(beat)

You don't know shit.

And Ronny... digesting it all... completely blown away...

RONNY

Why didn't he tell me?

As she turns...

GENEVA

Think about it, Ronny.

... and goes.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ronny heads back in to find... the loft's empty.

They're all gone... Dr. Rosenstone, Diane, Satish... and worst of all... Beth.

EXT. BISTRO 404 - MORNING

Beth heads in for the restaurant but she stops when she sees... leaning against a wall... waiting for her.

RONNY

Do you want to leave me?

BETH

Ronny. I have to work.

RONNY

Just answer the question. I couldn't sleep last night not knowing.

BETH
I didn't get to speak. At the
intervention. Everyone else did...
but not me.

RONNY
But I wasn't even gambling.

BETH
I know that now.

And she leans against the wall next to him. They're both
looking out to the traffic on Michigan avenue.

BETH
But Ronny what I was going to say
was... it wasn't the gambling that
that hurt as much as you keeping it
from me.

(beat)
Because I love you and I wanted to
help you.

He understands.

BETH
How could you go through all that
and not tell me -- what were you
afraid of, Ronny?

RONNY
I don't know.

She just shakes her head in disappointment.

BETH
Well, we need time apart now... to
figure out things.

He sadly nods... pulls away from the wall... setting to go.

BETH
Did you talk to Isaac?

As he faces her...

RONNY
He won't return my calls. I went
to his place... he wasn't there.
(beat)
We have Ford in an hour... I don't
even know if he's going to show up.

And they just stand there for a moment... on the street
outside of her restaurant... until...

RONNY
I can't pin it all on what where
the forks are kept, Beth...

(MORE)

RONNY (cont'd)
 or whether the window was open when
 something bad happened or not. You
 know? You hold so tightly onto
 your superstitions because it makes
 you feel in control... that's how
 you deal with uncertainty and
 that's fine but that's not how I do
 it.

(finally)
 I need to know for sure.

BETH
 You'll never know for sure, Ronny.
 (beat)
 Sometimes you have to take a leap
 of faith.

And with that, Ronny turns and goes...

INT. B&V ENGINE DESIGN/MAIN FLOOR - DAY

All the reps from Ford are there... Peter, Richard, Susan...
 a few others... all in suits.

They all sit on stools in front of the Thunderbird with
 waters in their hands and excited expressions on their faces.

Off to the side, Ronny stands next to Satish. They speak in
 hushed tones.

RONNY
 He's not coming.

SATISH
 Of course he is.

RONNY
 When was the last you saw him?

SATISH
 Your intervention.

And they stand there in silence. The Ford execs are getting
 restless.

SATISH
 So Geneva was... ?

RONNY
 Yeah...

SATISH
 And that hypothetical isn't really
 a game? You just wanted to know
 what I thought you should do.

Ronny nods then looks to the door.

SATISH
 Because I've been playing it with
 my friends and it's kind of fun.

RONNY
I'm gonna postpone this. He's not--

And before Ronny can finish the sentence... Isaac Backman walks in.

ISAAC
Hello...

He walks over to the Ford Execs and shakes their hands. He doesn't look at Ronny at all.

ISAAC
So you wanna see this?

PETER
We do. We're very excited.

ISAAC
Okay. Let me show exactly what we have.

And Isaac turns to Ronny.

ISAAC
Ronny, will you open the hood please...

Ronny slowly nods then heads over the Thunderbird. A few of the Ford execs gets off their stools to get a better look.

ISAAC
What we have here people is...

And Ronny opens up the trunk... to reveal... where the engine should be...

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING

It's completely empty... just a vacant chassis...

And Isaac... now with a deadly glare pasted on Ronny...

ISAAC
... B & V Engine design without the B.

And with that, Isaac breaks the look and exits as quickly as he came.

EXT. B & V ENGINE DESIGN - DAY

Ronny rushes after Isaac.

RONNY
Isaac! Isaac, please... I know you're upset.

Still walking...

ISAAC
You don't know shit.

RONNY
I know you don't love her anymore.

Isaac stops walking. Ronny speaks to his back...

RONNY
I know that when you were talking
about when the person we love wakes
up and realizes they don't love you
anymore... you were talking about
yourself.

Now Isaac turns to face him.

RONNY
And I know that you didn't want to
tell me because if you did... I
wouldn't be able to trust what I
had with Beth.

And Isaac just looks at him for the longest of moments...
until...

ISAAC
Who are you?

RONNY
What?

ISAAC
Who are you?

RONNY
Look -- I know you're mad.

ISAAC
Answer the question, Ronny!

Ronny sighs...

RONNY
I'm Ronny Valentine.

ISAAC
Who am I?

RONNY
Don't do this.
(beat)
Isaac Backman.

ISAAC
Who are we?

And Ronny... sadly playing along...

RONNY
B & V Engine Design.

ISAAC
And what does that mean to you
right now?

RONNY
I'm sorry. I really am.

ISAAC
Ask me what it means to me right
now!

RONNY
What's that mean to you right now?

Isaac just shakes his head in disappointment... just looks at
Ronny for an excruciating moment... then...

ISAAC
Nothing.

... turns and goes.

EXT. CHICAGO'S SOUTH LOOP/MILENIUM PARK - NIGHT

Under the light rain, Ronny walks into the park.

And he walks. And it rains. And he walks.

Until Ronny stops. He stops and simply stands there... and
lets the sky piss down on him.

INT. SKATE SHOP - NIGHT

Skateboards line the walls. A TEENAGE CLERK sits behind the
counter listening to his iPod.

Ronny heads in, the clerk just nods to him.

And we don't know why Ronny is in a skate shop, until... he
heads into...

THE BACK ROOM

Which is much bigger than we'd expect. It's not a storage
room, no... it's something else.

AN UNDERGROUND POKER ROOM

Smoky and bright. Three tables set up. Players fill almost
every seat. Ronny nods to the STARTER, male 40s, fat.

POKER STARTER
Haven't seen you in awhile.

RONNY
Yeah. \$10/\$20?

Nodding over to...

POKER STARTER

Spot three is open on table two.

Ronny heads over to table two, throws down a roll of hundreds and leans back. The dealer colors him a stack of chips and slides it over.

As Ronny throws in his ante...

The cards come out but Ronny doesn't even look at them... he's blank... he doesn't want to do this.

And Ronny just vacantly looks into the distance... mind churning... not even there...

INT. POKER ROOM - LATER

The cards come out and once again Ronny doesn't look at them... he just folds.

A PLAYER next to him remarks...

POKER PLAYER

You've folded every hand you've been dealt without even looking at your cards.

Ronny just nods.

POKER PLAYER

Weirdest strategy I've ever seen.

And Ronny... continuing to look off into the distance...

RONNY

I'm not supposed to be here. I'm not supposed to be gambling.

POKER PLAYER

Technically, you're not. You're donating your antes to the pot.

After a moment...

POKER PLAYER

I was in GA for three years but they asked to stop coming because I had a problem yelling at the newbies.

This sparks Ronny's interest. As he finally looks at the guy and asks...

RONNY

Why would you yell at the newbies?

POKER PLAYER
 Simple. I came down so hard on
 them for gambling because I really
 hated that part of myself.
 (beat)
 It's called projection.

And as the cards are dealt... Ronny thinks about that... and
 he suddenly comes to a conclusion.

As he stands with new conviction and moves away from the
 table...

POKER PLAYER
 Dude... your chips...

... and goes.

INT. BISTRO 404/KITCHEN - NIGHT

The typical nightly chaos consumes the kitchen... Beth at the
 center of it. Everybody shouting and barking out orders.

BETH
 (shouting out)
 Eighty six the salmon!

Other SERVERS shout it out after she does so it reverberates
 through the kitchen...

SERVERS
 Eighty-six the salmon! No more
 salmon!

And from across the way...

RONNY
 I cheated on Jenine.

She looks to see him... walking toward her...

BETH
 Ronny, what are you doing here?

RONNY
 Not keeping anything from you.
 (beat)
 I cheated on Jenine, Beth. Before
 she cheated on me... I cheated on
 her.

A SERVER steps up to the counter, Ronny barks at her.

RONNY
 Eighty-six the salmon!

The right back to a stunned Beth with...

RONNY

And I was unfaithful to Sarah before her. And I cheated on Hannah... and Renee... and Jessica... and even Kelly McCloud in eighth grade.

BETH

Kelly McCloud... ?

RONNY

With Annie Sanderson under the bleachers... under shirt, over bra.

And Beth just looks at him.

RONNY

I've cheated on every girlfriend I've ever had, Beth... until you.

Dumbfounded, she opens her mouth to speak but he keeps going.

RONNY

I've been planning on asking you to marry me on your birthday.

BETH

My birth... that's Friday.

RONNY

I know.

(beat)

I was going to take you the Botanical Gardens and ask you then. But when I went there to set it up, I saw Geneva with him and then I slowly, piece by piece... went crazy.

(beat)

I lost faith in everything... in love. I'm not sure if I even had it to begin with, but...

He just shakes his head and looks at her...

RONNY

And I stopped trusting you. Even though, from the bottom of my heart... I've always trusted you. But what I couldn't face is...

(beat)

I didn't trust myself.

Still processing this...

BETH

You cheated on every girlfriend you've ever had?

RONNY

Save for you... that's correct.

And she notices that he now holds something in hand... the engagement ring.

RONNY
Marry me?

And before Beth can respond, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. RONNY'S LOFT - DAY

Autumn has taken over the city... some time has passed.

INT. RONNY'S LOFT - DAY

Alone, Ronny lays on the couch watching the Bear Game on tv.

The game ends on a Bear receiver dropping the ball in the endzone.

RONNY
No! Catch that ball!

Frustrated, Ronny grabs the trash and heads outside.

EXT. RONNY'S LOFT - DAY

Ronny throws the trash into the dumpster.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
How bad was the drop?

And Ronny turns to see...

ISAAC
I heard it on the way over.

RONNY
Bad.

Isaac smiles.

ISAAC
Maybe next year.

Ronny nods.

ISAAC
Divorce is final. I moved into a building in River North...

RONNY
I heard.

And then...

RONNY
I finally asked Beth to marry me.
(beat)
She said no.

ISAAC
So we're both single again?

RONNY
Naw... we're in counseling.
(beat)
She said I wasn't ready and she's
right.

ISAAC
Figuring it out?

RONNY
Yeah...

ISAAC
Look... I thought about
everything... over and over.
(beat)
And there's a lot I want to say. A
real lot.

As he sucks in a deep breath, then...

ISAAC
First of all--

But Isaac stops short as he notices something across the
way...

ISAAC
What the hell happened there?

Isaac's now nodding over to Ronny's open...

GARAGE

Where Ronny's beaten-up Sting Ray sits left for dead... the
engine parts in a pile next to it.

RONNY
It got into a bar fight...

Isaac walks over... with a smile...

ISAAC
Did it?

Looking over the mess...

ISAAC
Hand me the carburetor mounting
base...

Ronny does. And Isaac turns to face Ronny... looks at him for a long moment, then...

ISAAC
And get your tools.

Ronny heads deeper into the garage while Isaac begins to collect the various engine parts and puzzle them together.

Ronny returns with the tool box and lays it down.

RONNY
So I called Chevy on a lark...
talked to Dan Jordan...

As Isaac grabs the tools and gets to work...

ISAAC
Did you?

So Isaac begins to rebuild the Sting Ray... and Ronny pitches him their next opportunity... while we...

RONNY
Yeah... asked if they were
interested in bringing back their
classic lines with fuel-efficient
twist.

... pull back.

ISAAC
And what'd he'd say?

Out of the garage and over the South Loop...

RONNY (V.O.)
He had heard United Design was
doing something similar for Ford.

As we go higher...

ISAAC (V.O.)
So what'd you say?

RONNY (V.O.)
I told him United Design couldn't
shave our nutsac and we'd beat them
to market.

ISAAC (V.O.)
You didn't say that?

The city of Chicago growing smaller...

RONNY (V.O.)
I did. Those exact words. And he
said he'd be open for a meeting.

ISAAC (V.O.)
Hmmm. So maybe... we should go to
Detroit.
(beat)
Copy?

... until we finally...

RONNY (V.O.)
Copy that.

FADE OUT.