LOVE IS STRANGE

by

Mauricio Zacharias & Ira Sachs
INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT, BEDROOM – EARLY MORNING

The early morning sun fights to get in the bedroom through the edges of well drawn shades.

BENJAMIN HULL (“Ben”), early 70s, is in bed awake. Next to him lies GEORGE GAREA, early 60s, turned on his side, still asleep.

Ben is still. The only movement is in his eyes, shimmering with expectation.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT, BATHROOM – DAY

George, handsome, well groomed and with an impeccable white shirt, is in front of the mirror tying the knot on his tie. He tries once and, not happy with the result, repositions the tie around his neck, and tries it again. Voices can be heard in the background.

Ben enters dressed in a suit and a bow tie – the man has style. He’s looking in the bathroom for something he might have lost. He looks on top of a pile of magazines by the toilet.

GEORGE

What?

BEN

My glasses. I can’t find my glasses.

Ben looks around the sink where George is, briefly interrupting his concentration with the tie.

GEORGE

Oh, no. Not today. Please.

Ben walks out, without his glasses. George hasn’t gotten a good knot on his tie yet.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT, LIVING ROOM – DAY (CONTINUOUS)

ZLATA, the housekeeper, Polish and in her 40’s, comes in from the kitchen bringing a big vase of flowers, which she places on the coffee table.

The living room is spacious, high ceilings, comfortable furniture. There’s a piano in the corner, art on the wall, a dining table for 6 people and an umbrella holder by the front door.

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Ben is rearranging books and objects around, while looking for his glasses. EUGENIA, early 30’s, ZLATA’s pretty younger sister, is dusting off the book shelves. She finds a pair of reading glasses - EUGENIA speaks with a heavy Polish accent.

   EUGENIA
   I find Mr. Ben.

Ben comes to look.

   BEN
   Yes! Thank you, sweetie. Where’s the list?

   EUGENIA
   (in Polish)
   Zlata, you have the list.

   ZLATA
   It’s in the kitchen.

Ben goes into the kitchen.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT, KITCHEN – DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Ben is reading a small list on a piece of paper. Zlata is cutting up more flowers by the sink.

   BEN
   I think 40 will do. Maybe Eugenia can go to the grocery for you?

Ben opens his wallet and realizes he only has a couple of single dollar bills.

   BEN (CONT’D)
   And the lasagna?

   ZLATA
   I’ve just put it in the oven.

Ben can’t resist; he goes to take a peek inside the oven.

   BEN
   Looks delicious.

George comes in, in a suit and a tie, his face and hair perfectly fresh.

   GEORGE
   Let me see.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He can’t resist and also goes to peek at the lasagna in the oven.

BEN  
(to George)  
Honey, do you have any cash?

GEORGE  
(to Zlata)  
It’s not too early to be heating this up?

ZLATA  
Close the door! I know what I’m doing.

Zlata slaps his hand. George closes the oven.

GEORGE  
So how do I look?

Zlata opens a big smile and gives George a hug and a kiss.

ZLATA  
Fabulous. Both of you.

BEN  
It’s almost eleven, George. We have to go.

GEORGE  
I’m waiting for you.

BEN  
Sure. I need some cash for Eugenia.

ZLATA  
You smell so good too.

George takes out his wallet.

GEORGE  
Thank you.

Before George can ask how much, Ben grabs two 20 dollar bills and leaves them on the counter. George is used to these kind of dynamics, and simply folds the wallet and puts it back into his pocket.

BEN  
Let’s go. Thank you Zlata.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE
We’ll be back around 1:30.

BEN
Honey said she’d stop by before the ceremony, but I don’t know where she is.

GEORGE
(laughing)
Honey and her monsters.

ZLATA
It’s okay, I’m here.

INT. BENJAMIN & GEORGE’S APT, LIVING ROOM – DAY
(CONTINUOUS)

Eugenia is still cleaning. Ben looks around, moves the vase of flowers on the table by a few inches.

BEN
Eugenia, I left some money with Zlata for the things we still need.

EUGENIA
Okay. I go to the grocery on 14th.

BEN
No. Go to the nicer one, the one on 23rd. This is a special occasion.

Ben gets the keys on the table and moves towards the door.

BEN
Do you have the papers?

GEORGE
Yes. I have them. Let’s go.

EXT. STREETS OF CHELSEA – DAY

Ben and George are on the streets trying to catch a cab. A couple of OCCUPIED ones rush by as George still tries to convince them to stop.

BEN
We should’ve left earlier.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGE
It’ll be okay.

George keeps waving as OFF DUTY or busy cabs fly by.

BEN
(impatient)
They’re full, George.

GEORGE
Let’s go to Seventh. Come on!

George starts to trot towards the Avenue.

BEN
Wait!

Ben tries to follow, but after a few fast steps, he is too tired, or too old to run. He simply walks towards the corner.

BEN
I don’t want to get all sweaty.

INT. 6BC BOTANICAL GARDEN - DAY

A lush community garden in the middle of the city, surrounded by NYC buildings. Friends and family of all ages are gathered for the ceremony, standing and sitting in a small clearing to the side. The MARRIAGE OFFICIANT, a very enthusiastic man in his 40’s, is standing in front of the audience, with George and Ben next to his side, smiling, paying attention to every word.

OFFICIANT
Welcome everybody, it’s really wonderful to have all of you here in this oasis in the middle of Manhattan. And thank you George and Ben for asking me to do this. And thank you two for allowing me to do this. I want you to know that it’s an honor for me.

George dries out a few drops of sweat on his forehead with a handkerchief.

(CONTINUED)
OFFICIANT
And for everybody who’s here, I
would like to ask you to get rid
of everything that’s in your head
about anything else, and
concentrate only on this moment,
and the ceremony, and these two
people who we’re about to join
together.

Sitting on the chairs, in the audience, are Ben’s nephew
ELLIOT and his wife KATE, in their 40s. She reaches for
his hand.

OFFICIANT (O.S.)
Try to stop thinking about your
jobs, your marriage, your
schoolwork, what you have to do
tomorrow and what you forgot to do
today. Let’s just focus all our
energies, and all our love on
these two men here: George and
Ben.

A cell phone rings, with a cutting edge rap song,
interrupting the speech. There’s laughter all around.
Kate pokes her 15 year old son JOEY, who immediately
silences his iPhone.

OFFICIANT
I’d also like to ask the audience
here to be part of this ceremony
today. You are already a part of
the community that made this love
possible. You have made this
moment possible.

Right behind them is ROBERTO, dark skin, Domenican-
American, early 40’s. Sitting next to him is his partner
TED, a good looking all American man, early 30’s. And
HONEY (late 50s), an old friend of the couple’s, in an
elegant dress, conservative but also a touch glamorous.

Roberto shoots a picture with his phone, while Ted fights
a yawn – maybe from a sleepless night.

OFFICIANT
And so I ask all of you, if you
would commit to support and honor
these two individuals in their
life, and in their love, and in
their marriage together...

(CONTINUED)
George raises his eyes up above, as if silently thanking God, as Ben, standing next to him, absorbs each word with a smile.

OFFICIANT
...through the bad times and the good times, through rain and shine, in sickness and in health...

There are a few other FRIENDS and COLLEAGUES, and last, but not least, MINDY, Ben’s nervous looking older niece, who’s already crying, next to her boyfriend JOHN, a friendly looking man her own age.

OFFICIANT
Will you make that commitment today?

Smiles all around. Honey has an enthusiastic response, while Mindy raises both arms, sending good vibes. Roberto raises his iPhone, registering the moment on filming mode.

ALL AUDIENCE
Yes!

OFFICIANT
Now, under the training that we get, there’s something I have to ask, and the answer may seem obvious but still, it is a very important question: are both of you making this decision of your own free will?

Somebody in the audience laughs, and it’s contagious. George looks at Ben, both wanting to laugh.

GEORGE
Yes.

BEN
Yes.

OFFICIANT
All right. We are gathered here in the presence of these witnesses today, with the purpose of uniting in matrimony...

George reaches for Ben, and they hold each other’s hands as they look in each other’s eyes, and smile.
OFFICIANT (O.S.)
...George Esteban Garea and Benjamin Arthur Hull. Let me remind you that the contract of marriage is not to be entered into lightly, but thoughtfully and seriously and with a deep realization of its obligations and responsibilities...

INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT - DAY

The party is going. PIANO MUSIC can be heard in the background. Honey walks around with a TRAY OF COOKIES.

HONEY
(with a deep Texas accent)
Please, take one. I made them, they’re delicious!

She goes around to the grand piano, where GUESTS are gathered around George, who is playing and singing BABY YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES.

GEORGE
(singing)
Well now it takes more than a robin to make the winter go
And it takes two lips for fire to melt away the snow
Well it takes two hearts that are cookin' to make a fie grow
And baby you've got what it takes.

Ben sits next to George, sharing the piano seat and the song - they sing very well together, very much in tune with each other. It’s a delight to see.

BEN
You know it takes alot of kissin' to make a romance sweet
Oh it takes alot of lovin' to make my life complete
Oh well it takes somebody special to knock me off my feet
And baby you've got what it takes.

There’s laughter all around. George keeps on playing, and the two sing together.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGE & BEN

I said ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

Aha ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

Because it takes alot of effort to stay away from you
And it takes more than a lifetime to prove that I’ll be true
But it takes somebody special to make me say I do
And baby you’ve got what it takes

C’mon say that again honey

You’ve got what it takes [x5]

George jazzes it up on the piano for a grand finale - he’s a true musician. The guests applaud. The dogs bark. Kate starts clinking her glass.

KATE

Guys, guys. Quiet everyone. Quiet! I just wanted to say something--

ROBERTO

(already tipsy)

Not now! Encore, guys, encore!

Ted discreetly pulls his shirt, trying to shush his partner.

ROBERTO

This better be good.

KATE

(in good spirits)

It is. It is.

Everybody has quieted down now.

KATE

When I met my husband Elliot here...

ELLIO T

Is there another one?

Laughter.

(CONTINUED)
KATE
When I met Elliot, you all know my Elliot..., but when I met him, he was walking around with a camera, making these amazing videos with people he met on the streets, creating scenes out of the most ordinary situations - I’m sure you’ve all seen them. Anyway, I was trying to finish my first novel and I immediately thought we’d be such a great pair: two independent spirits, committed to our art, but alas, he wouldn’t pay any attention to me. He had no time for romance. Actually, he had no time to eat - he was always hungry, so I started to invite him over for leftovers, which was actually food I had made specially for him... but he thought they were leftovers. One day he called and said he was starving, so I told him to come over, but this time I had no food - just a bottle of wine, and that’s when he finally started to pay attention to me.

Laughter. Zlata and Eugenia come from the kitchen.

GEORGE
Zlata, Eugenia, come here, get your glasses.

KATE
We started to go out, and one day he said he wanted me to meet his Uncle Ben. I asked why, and Elliot said since his mother had passed away, his uncle was his favorite person in his family.

MINDY
Thank you, Elliot.

KATE
Not including siblings, Mindy.

Laughter.

(CONTINUED)
KATE
I said okay, let’s meet the uncle, but I kept postponing, ‘cause I didn’t want to meet anyone: I just wanted to spend time alone with Elliot. So finally we came here one night – you guys had just moved into this apartment, and I met Ben, and George, who had made a delicious spaghetti bolognese for us, and we drank wine and sang and drank some more – it was just wonderful. When we left, Elliot said: “I wanted you to meet them, because they’ve been together for more than 20 years...”. So I understood...

Kate gets emotional, tears up.

KATE
Oh my God, I’m gonna cry.

Everybody is quiet, listening. Mindy starts to cry again, but Kate swallows her tears. Elliot comes over and puts his arm around his wife.

KATE
I understood at that moment that Elliot was proposing to me...
(to Ben and George, raising her glass)
because you guys... Your love, your dedication and your commitment to each other are an example to be followed. May this marriage, may this love, last forever and beyond. To Ben and George!

Everybody raise their glasses and toast.

EVERYBODY
To Ben and George!

BEN
And to Petra!

EVERYBODY
To Petra!

ELLIOIT
To Petra Von Kant!

(CONTINUED)
Ben and George, on the piano seat, look at each other and kiss. Some applaud, some whistle, a noisy crowd.

FADE OUT.

INT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL / AUDITORIUM - DAY

FATHER RAYMOND is sitting alone in the back of a large auditorium where a choir rehearsal is taking place. His eyes are closed, his head tilted down, as if in prayer. In the background, the voices of the chorus sing the powerful Miserere, by Allegri.

Up on stage, BOYS and GIRLS sing together, wearing their own casual clothes, under a modern sculpture of Christ on the cross. They sing in Latin; Tibi soli peccavi et malum, coram te feci: ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum judicaris (Having sinned against none other than You, having done what You regard as wrong, You are just when you pass sentence on me).

It’s a very democratic group: different ages, races and attitudes. Each face has a story, and together they give extraordinary power to the music.

In front of them, George conducts with passion for the music, moving his arms, mouthing some of the words that he knows by heart.

In the back of the auditorium, Father Raymond continues to pray, invisible to the people on stage.

INT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL / OFFICE - DAY

The small administrative office of Father Raymond. He is reading from a piece of paper, a computer in front of him.

FATHER RAYMOND
“All who serve in the Archdiocese should: believe in God, support belief in Jesus Christ, engage in prayer, respect ecclesiastical authority, possess a basic knowledge of the Catholic Church, not take a public position contrary to the Catholic Church, demonstrate a public life consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church—

George is sitting across his desk. Both men look tense.

(CONTINUED)
(interrupting)
Father. You’re not going to read me the whole Witness Statement, are you?

Father Raymond hands him the piece of paper.

FATHER RAYMOND
The Christian Witness Statement, George. You signed it when you took this job.

GEORGE
Father, how long have we known each other?

FATHER RAYMOND
I wish I didn’t have to do this, George.

GEORGE
Twelve years. Twelve years, Father.

FATHER RAYMOND
You must understand that...

GEORGE
Understand what?

FATHER RAYMOND
That day when you announced you were getting married, at the spring semester meeting?

GEORGE
You’ve all known this whole time that Ben and I have been living together.

FATHER RAYMOND
Word got out to the Archdiocese. And then someone showed the Bishop pictures of you and Ben in Petra - on Facebook, of all places.

GEORGE
I wouldn’t have done it any differently, Father.

FATHER RAYMOND
I’m not saying you should have, George. But the Bishop wasn’t happy.

(CONTINUED)
What about the students? I’ve known them since they were kids. I know their parents. They’ve been to my house, and played on my piano. They’ve sung with Ben and me.

George, you understand I signed the same Witness Statement, right? We all did it here. Believe me: I wish I didn’t have to do this, but it’s not a choice for me.

I need to talk to the students.

Of course. I could go talk to them with you; or maybe you prefer to go on your own? It’s up to you.

What about regionals next month?

Father Raymond picks up a print out email from his desk, and reluctantly shows it to George.

The decision is effective immediately.

Oh.

George takes a moment to process what’s just happened. Silence.

Let’s pray, George.

George stands up, ready to leave.

It’s important that you don’t question your faith.

Thank you, Father. I believe in Jesus Christ as my savior, and that won’t change. But at this moment, I need to pray on my own.
EXT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL - DAY

St. Grace’s Church and Catholic school in Manhattan.

The School and Church are located on a quiet street in Chelsea, lined with trees, off the main avenue. There’s barely any traffic. A small group of HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS in school uniform hang out outside, chatting and smoking cigarettes.

The door opens and out comes George, carrying a backpack and a heavy shopping bag.

He passes by the students without saying a word.

It’s hot outside. George walks down the street alone, sweating, passing the shopping bag from one hand to another. Busy New Yorkers pass by him, not noticing he has to stop for a moment, placing the heavy bag on the ground, cleaning the sweat off of his face. After a moment, he picks it up again, and continues on his way, disappearing down a busy avenue.

INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT - NIGHT

George is pacing nervously by the piano, holding a pen. He uses an old fashioned calculator that’s on top of the piano, as he scribbles something on a piece of paper.

GEORGE
Let’s not forget that the real estate agent gets a first month commission. The coop board gets one month also, and charges a 5% administration fee.

MINDY
A month?

Roberto, Ted, Honey, Mindy, Ben and Kate are sitting in the living room. Roberto and Ted are both in police uniforms. They drink soft drinks, water and beer for Roberto and Ted, but this time, it’s definitely not a party.

GEORGE
Yes.

MINDY
That’s ridiculous! Why do they have to charge an administration fee?

(CONTINUED)
ROBERTO
They just want to discourage rentals in the building.

MINDY
I hate coop’s.

HONEY
But it’s so hard to find a condo in Manhattan.

TED
Nowadays it’s not.

GEORGE
Anyway, I’m just trying to explain that renting wouldn’t help us, because...

George is still finishing his calculations.

MINDY
You’ve been to my house, right? You know how much my real estate taxes are? 3000. That’s for the whole year!

BEN
It’s Poughkeepsie, Mindy.

GEORGE
Renting would leave us owing about a thousand a month. If we can find a studio for 1,500 dollars, which isn’t easy, we’d start our month at almost 3,000. That’s including the Cobra insurance.

KATE
And you can’t afford that?

GEORGE
Well, between my private lessons and Ben’s pension…

George is interrupted by a knock on the door.

MINDY
Why did you guys have to go on such a fancy honeymoon?

Ben gets up and walks towards the door.

(CONTINUED)
BEN
Mindy!! That’s none of your business.

MINDY
Of course it is. Otherwise I wouldn’t be here.

ROBERTO
Shush, Mindy.

MINDY
I’m just saying... there’s nothing wrong with Provincetown.

Ben opens the door. It’s Elliot.

ELLiot
Sorry I’m late.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Anyway, we’d still have to pay one month’s rent to the agent and one month to the coop board right away. That’s 4,600 right there out of our pockets.

BEN
Come in. We’re all in here.

Elliot seems surprised to see everybody there. He notices the serious mood.

ELLiot
Everything okay, Uncle?

BEN
Yes, we just want to talk to you.

George stands to greet him.

GEORGE
Sit down. We just want to talk to you all. We invited you all here tonight, because you are our family.

BEN
Do you want something to drink?

Elliot goes to sit next to Kate. She gives him a kiss.

(CONTINUED)
ELLIO
Water, please. Are you going to
tell us you’re getting divorced
already?

ROBERTO
Ha! That’s what I thought also.

GEORGE
No. We have to sell the apartment.
We’ve already found a buyer, so
very soon we’ll have to move out.

Ben returns with water for Elliot. He and George sit
together on the piano seat with their backs to the
instrument. They face their guests.

GEORGE
It won’t take long for me to find
another job, and for us to find an
apartment. But in the meantime...

BEN
It’s just for this transition
phase. Probably just a week or
two.

GEORGE
We need a place to stay.

Elliot looks around at the Guests, and at Ben and George.
Nobody says anything.

ELLIO
Wait a minute. Did I miss
something?

BEN
The last weeks have been tough on
us, Elliot. Losing the job,
looking for health insurance... We
just need a breather.

GEORGE
Believe me, moving out is the last
thing we want to do.

BEN
And it’s just temporary. We’ll
find a new place very soon.

ELLIO
(angry)
Uncle Ben, how did we get here?
INT. CORRIDOR OF BEN AND GEORGE’S APT – NIGHT

Outside Ben and George’s apartment, the guests say their goodbye’s to the hosts.

ELLiot
I’m sorry if I was a bit rough, Uncle. I’ve had a bad day.

KATe
Let’s go, Elliot.

TED
Think positive, Ben.

HONEY
I love you guys. I’ll call during the week.

ROBERTO
Hey buddy, thanks for the beer.

MINDY
Good night, sweetheart.

BEN AND GEORGE (O.S.)
Good night. Good night.

The door shuts. The Guests walk down quietly towards the elevator for a moment. Roberto and Ted stop in front of another apartment, down the corridor.

ROBERTO
We’re here.

They start to say their good-byes, with hugs and kisses.

HONEY
I feel bad that I can’t help out, but you guys have seen my apartment.

MINDY
It’s okay. They can stay with me for as long as it’s necessary.

HONEY
I just had this feeling that they were hoping they’d stay with one of us, here in the city. Didn’t you guys see the look on their faces?

Yes, they saw that look on their faces. All but Mindy.

(CONTINUED)
MINDY
What are you talking about?

HONEY
I’m just saying... They don’t want to go live Upstate. George and Ben country boys, all of a sudden? I can’t see that.

MINDY
It’s temporary!

ELLIOT
Honey is right. Maybe there’s something else we can do.

MINDY
I thought we had it all figured out already!

HONEY
Shhh, Mindy. Quiet.

MINDY
Why are we even having this conversation? I’m the only one with the extra bedroom.

ELLIOT
It’s not that, Mindy. It’s Poughkeepsie.

MINDY
When was the last time you were there?

ELLIOT
Doesn’t matter. George has his private students here. Ben has his galleries.

ROBERTO
And they’ll need to look for a new apartment.

HONEY
It just doesn’t make sense that they go live 2 1/2 hours away.

MINDY
It’s an hour and a half, actually.

TED
Not by bus, it’s not.
MINDY
By car.

HONEY
They don’t drive!

MINDY
They can very well learn how to.

HONEY
Are you really serious, Mindy?!

MINDY
Shut the fuck up, Honey. You’re not even family, so you don’t get to decide anything!

They realize at this moment that they can’t let their friends go live with crazy Mindy.

TED
Pshhh... Quiet. They’re right there.

KATE
Elliot, let’s go. I still need to do some work tonight.

ROBERTO
Since we’re all here, why don’t you come inside for a minute?

Roberto puts his key on the door, opens it. Kate holds Elliot’s hand, signaling that she wants to go.

KATE
(whispers)
It’s almost 10 o’clock.

ELLIOT
Honey, we need to figure this out.

ROBERTO
Come in, please.

TED
Come in.

Reluctantly, Kate follows her husband Elliot. They all go inside.
INT. BEN AND GEORGE’S APT, KITCHEN – NIGHT

In the kitchen, Ben is washing the drinking glasses used by the guests. He washes thoroughly, slowly, taking this moment alone maybe to reflect, almost meditative.

George comes in quietly carrying two plates. He leaves the left over cheese on the counter and pours the left over crackers in the trash. He gives Ben a kiss on his cheek, then leaves.

After Ben finishes washing the last glass, he turns the water faucet off and proceeds to wrap the leftover cheese in plastic wrap, and then puts it inside a zip lock bag. He turns the water on again, and washes this last item - the plate that carried the cheese.

Ben turns the water off, finally, and looks around. All is clean.

INT. CORRIDOR OF BEN AND GEORGE’S APT – NIGHT (CONT.)

George leaves the door to his apartment ajar and walks down the corridor, carrying a full trash bag. As he passes by Roberto’s apartment, he seems to hear voices coming from inside. He continues down towards a door at the end of the corridor. He opens it and throws the bag down the chute. On his way back, he stops in front of Roberto’s apartment for a moment. He can’t make out what people are saying, but he can definitely hear voices: a woman’s voice, and then a man’s voice – an argument coming from inside the apartment. He knows it’s Kate, Elliot, Roberto. He feels sad that it’s come to this.

George goes back inside his apartment, and shuts the door behind him.

The empty, silent corridor with its cold light.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PARK SLOPE – DAY

A busy corner in Park Slope, Brooklyn. Old ethnic restaurants share the street with hip cafés. Young couples walk by with their kids, as an Older Indian couple open the doors to their store.

On the street, a couple of teenagers on skateboards rush by noisily, crossing the screen.
INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The spacious living room of this Park Slope apartment is bright, with big windows that face a tree-lined street. The apartment is just high enough so that the leaves of the trees filter the sun, and cast shadows inside the apartment in this early fall afternoon.

ELLiot (O.S.)
We have the crew, plus 4 actors and 25 extras, so you tell me how or where we are going to accommodate this crowd if we can’t close the street at 7.

Elliot is on the phone, sitting at a desk by the window, with papers scattered around: a budget sheet, a couple of actors’ 8 x 10, Polaroids of locations, a shot list.

ELLiot
(...) You told me we had the permit already!

Joey shows up at the desk.

JOEY
Dad. Dad. Can I talk to you for a second?

ELLiot
James, hold on.
(to Joey)
What’s going on, Joey?

JOEY
That geography presentation I have to do.

ELLiot
Which one?

JOEY
The one on sustainable development. I told you.

ELLiot
Oh, that one. Yeah?

JOEY
Vlad and I are doing it together, as a team. They’re painting his house, so I told him to come here.

(CONTINUED)
ELLIO T
(the phone calls his
attention)
No, no, no. It was from 7pm to
5am. That’s what I requested. Hold
on a second.

JOEY
Do you need the living room all
afternoon?

ELLIO T
Joey, I’m sorry but this is
urgent. Can you give me just a few
minutes? I’m sorry, Son.
(back on the phone)
You know as well as I do that two
hours will make all the
difference, because if we have to
wait till 9 to close the street...

Joey waits quietly for a moment next to his dad. But
soon, the BUZZER rings.

Joey opens the entrance door, and VLAD, his buddy, is
standing there. Vlad is 16, Russian, only one year older
than Joey, but more developed, bigger. Whereas Joey still
has boyish looks, Vlad already looks like the man he’ll
be one day. He comes in, carrying a backpack, and a
SKATEBOARD.

VLAD
I found the book on the Amazon
Rainforest. There’s some really
cool old pictures, with naked
natives and everything.

JOEY
Nice.

ELLIO T (O.S.)
...it means the crew won’t be
ready until 11, or 12, do you
understand? (...) No! That’s not a
possibility.

VLAD
Your dad is home.

They both look at Elliot sitting by the desk in the
living room, still busy on the phone.

JOEY
I know.

(CONTINUED)
VLAD
Let’s go to your room?

JOEY
Not yet.

VLAD
Okay. Can I get some water?

JOEY
Yeah.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS
Vlad enters, and sees Eugenia at the sink, doing dishes, pretty as ever.

VLAD
Hi there.

EUGENIA
(Surprised)
Oh hello. I’m sorry. I didn’t see you there.

VLAD
I’m Vlad.

EUGENIA
My name is Eugenia.

Vlad’s staring. He makes her a little uncomfortable.

EUGENIA (CONT’D)
I work for Mr. And Mrs. Hull.

VLAD
Are you Russian?

EUGENIA
Yes.

Vlad reaches his hand out. Eugenia dries her hands on the towel and they shake.

VLAD
(in Russian)
Very nice to meet you, Eugenia.

EUGENIA
(in Russian)
Nice to meet you too.
INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, BEDROOM – DAY

Kate is sitting on her bed, with her laptop on a pillow. The door is ajar, and Joey enters.

    JOEY
    Mom.

    KATE
    Yes?

    JOEY
    Vlad is here. We have to do our presentation on Sustainable Development today.

    KATE
    Oh wow. I can’t wait to see it.

    JOEY
    I think we’re going to the library.

    KATE
    But isn’t Vlad here?

    JOEY
    I told you, yes.

    KATE
    So why don’t you guys just stay here?

INT. JOEY’S BEDROOM – DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Joey’s bedroom is small, with a bunk bed and a small desk by the window with a computer. There’s a bookshelf full of books, photos and some quirky objects. On the wall a faux vintage poster of the Titanic (the boat, not the movie).

And there, propped up on the lower of the beds, with an open book lying on his chest, is Ben. He is shirtless, and wearing only his boxer shorts underwear. His eyes are closed, his head tilted to the side – he has fallen asleep, his reading glasses dangling from his nose.

The door opens, and Joey comes in, followed by Kate. Both take in the unexpected vision of the old man’s nearly naked body.

    KATE
    (whispering)
    Wake him gently.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOEY
You do it.

KATE
(impatient)
Oh, c’mon, Joey...

She moves gently towards the bed and gives Ben a tentative poke. He opens his heavy eye lids slowly.

KATE
Uncle Ben. Uncle Ben, hi. Sorry to wake you. Joey wants to ask you something.

JOEY
Mom!

Kate steps back and gently pushes Joey closer to Ben.

JOEY
Uncle Ben, my friend Vlad is here. We need to do a presentation for school, and there’s nowhere for us to study.

BEN
(dazed)
Who?

Vlad steps in from behind Joey, curious to finally see the old man in person.

BEN
Ah, Vlad, it’s so good to meet you. I’ve heard a lot about you.

VLAD
Hi.

BEN
I’m sorry, I guess I’ve fallen asleep.

He sits up, but still doesn’t move to get dressed.

BEN
What time is it?

VLAD
2:05.

BEN
So what is this presentation about?

(CONTINUED)
Ben looks at Joey, who’s looking at his mother, who’s looking at him. Nobody says anything.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The desk in the living room now has been taken over by Kate, and her computer. Elliot is nowhere in sight. Only a few pages of notes neatly piled up next to the computer, while Kate seems concentrated, writing away.

BEN (O.S.)
Did I tell you that my gallerist friend is a big fan of yours?

It takes Kate a moment to register that someone is talking to her.

On the other side of the room, Ben has created a make-shift studio, with an easel and a drawing pad. He has a few photos tacked to the wall beside him, and a box of charcoals that he is sketching with.

BEN (CONT’D)
Did I tell you?

KATE
A fan of mine?

BEN
She loves your book.

KATE
That’s nice.

Kate, after this brief exchange, is back to the computer, trying to finish that one sentence interrupted a moment ago.

Ben puts his charcoal back in its box.

BEN
I need some tea. Do you want some?

KATE
I’d love some, thanks.

Ben walks towards the kitchen.

BEN
You remember her, right?

Kate types the rest of the sentence before pausing again.

(CONTINUED)
KATE
Who?

BEN
Ada. My gallerist friend.

Ben goes into the kitchen

KATE
When did I met her?

BEN (O.S.)
That group show I had? She’s the owner of the gallery.

KATE
In the Lower East Side? Yes, I met her, I think.

BEN (O.S.)
Tall blonde.
(pause)
Swedish.

KATE
Yes, I met her.

BEN (O.S.)
She’s very nice.

KATE
And pretty.

BEN (O.S.)
Gorgeous, that’s the one. Last week I stopped by the gallery and she was reading your book. I screamed. I absolutely screamed.

KATE
Oh yeah?

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, KITCHEN – DAY

Ben washes a couple of dirty dishes. He cleans the kitchen top with a paper towel. He opens the top cabinet, and takes his time selecting two mugs amongst the large selection.

BEN
She had no idea you were my niece.

KATE (O.S.)
That’s funny.

(CONTINUED)
The kettle on the gas burner starts to steam. As the speed of the releasing steam increases, the vibrations become louder, whistle, and Ben turns the oven off.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kate is concentrated on her writing, typing and drinking tea.

Ben is now sitting on the couch, blowing invisible steam from his cup, carefully taking tiny sips of tea, pensive.

BEN
You know my favorite story of yours? The one about the old high school friend who shows up at the diner.

Kate keeps on typing, trying to avoid another long interruption.

BEN
She sees him, but I don’t remember why she can’t be sure it’s her friend.

Kate doesn’t take the bait. She’s still typing.

BEN
The worst thing about getting old is the memory.
(pause)
It only gets worse with time, let me tell you.

Kate can’t let this go on much longer. She stops typing once again.

KATE
She can’t see him because he’s outside and it’s snowing.

BEN
Of course! He’s in the car, right?

KATE
She’s not really sure if it’s him.

BEN
Because of the blizzard.
(pause)
And then there’s that awful hit and run at the end.

(CONTINUED)
KATE
Right.

BEN
That was shocking. I really lost my breath at that part. How she knows it’s him, her old friend, even though she never really saw him. So beautiful, Kate, really. It’s such good writing.

Ben drinks some tea and it burns his tongue.

BEN
Ouch. It’s hot.

Kate downs her tea. She glances at the computer screen, unable to actually write anything.

BEN
Which is your favorite?

KATE
I don’t have a favorite.

BEN
That’s just like me with my paintings. I don’t have a favorite either. George does. He loves that one that hangs in our bedroom. Or used to hang in our bedroom. I gave that to him--

KATE
--on his 40th birthday, I know. I love that one too...Maybe you can start a new painting soon.

BEN
That’s the hardest thing, to be honest with you, Kate. I brought all my stuff, but...

KATE
What?

BEN
Well... It’s just that... I can’t really work if there’s someone else around. I can’t concentrate.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door opens, and Elliot comes in.

(CONTINUED)
He is coming from work, with a messenger bag and some envelopes in hand. He sees Kate in bed, asleep in an awkward position with a book on top of the covers and the reading light on. He comes to pick up the book, places it on the bedside table and turns the light off.

Kate opens her eyes, awake, and sees Elliot going into the bathroom.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Elliot is washing his hands in the bathroom sink. He looks at himself in the mirror for just a brief moment, and seems disappointed at his own image. He looks down at his hands again, and washes them thoroughly, letting water run through them.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elliot comes from the bathroom wearing boxer shorts and an old T-shirt. He finds Kate reading the book in bed, pencil in hand.

   KATE
   How was it?

   ELLIOT
   Good.

   KATE
   And Jeremy?

He gets into bed, gives his wife a kiss on her cheek and turns the other way to lie down under the covers.

   ELLIOT
   Better than we could’ve ever expected.

   KATE
   See, I told you.

   ELLIOT
   I know.

   KATE
   I called to see if you were coming to dinner.

   ELLIOT
   You did?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

KATE
Left a message.

ELLIOI
I didn’t even have a moment to check my messages.

KATE
That busy?

ELLIOI
Yeah, but we got it all in the can.

KATE
That’s great.

ELLIOI
I’m exhausted.

Elliot is trying to fall asleep, while Kate keeps reading next to him. He turns around, ends up facing her but talks with his eyes closed, afraid the light would disturb his sleepiness.

ELLIOI
Sleep baby.

Kate doesn’t respond.

ELLIOI (CONT’D)
Sleep.

Kate underlines a passage on the book. Elliot finally opens his eyes, looks at her.

ELLIOI (CONT’D)
What’s going on, Kate?

KATE
Unlike you, I didn’t have a very productive day.

ELLIOI
Is it Joey?

KATE
Joey? Joey hardly said a word to me today, but if you were around more, you’d see that that’s the norm.

ELLIOI
What is it, Kate? The neighbor again?

(CONTINUED)
KATE
No, Elliot. It’s your uncle. When it’s loud music, it’s easy to tell them to turn it down. But if it’s Uncle Ben chatting away, it’s a lot harder to tell him to shut up.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

A tiny hole-in-the-wall law office. A LAWYER is sitting at his desk, typing on his computer.

LAWYER
Your mortgage was for $480,000, on a 30 year fixed rate.

George is sitting on the chair in front of him. He is holding a manila file folder with a bunch of loose papers in it.

GEORGE
Yes, but we bought it for $600,000.

LAWYER
In 2007, is that correct?

GEORGE
Yes, when it went co-op.

LAWYER
And we’re getting $750,000 now. That’s robust.

GEORGE
I thought so.

LAWYER
You’re lucky things have gone up since ‘08. Many people who bought when you did have lost money selling.

GEORGE
But that’s why I’m trying to understand why we are only seeing....

He opens his folder and looks through a few pages, searching for the number.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Why we are only seeing $17,535 in profit?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

LAWYER
Well to start with you have to take into account the closing costs, which I told you about previously.

GEORGE
Can you just remind me.

LAWYER
There’s the 1% New York City transfer tax, the .04% New York State tax, plus the 6% to me, that’s $60,000 right there.

GEORGE
I understand all that. But from my calculations...

He looks down at his paperwork.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
....that should still leave...

LAWYER
Don’t forget your co-op, also, has a flip tax of 25% on whatever profit you make, if you sell before 5 years, so that’s another...

GEORGE
But this is 5 years!

George bangs his fist on his lap.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
It’s been five years. We bought in 2007 and it’s 2013 now.

LAWYER
But Mr. Garea, you didn’t actually close until January, if you remember, so that was 2008, and they go by the calendar year, so you would actually have to sell in 2014 to avoid the flip tax.

GEORGE
This is really like Kafka.

(CONTINUED)
LAWYER
If you had been able to pay a little more of your principle, either as a down payment, or with your mortgage. As of the sale..

The broker looks at his computer screen.

LAWYER
...$12,996 is what you had paid off of your principal, Mr. Garea

GEORGE
After we paid $1,900 dollars every month to the bank?

LAWYER
That’s because of the amortization schedule. Your payments in the beginning are largely going towards the interest, and only a smaller part towards the principal. I hope someone explained that to you previously.

GEORGE
It just never sounds very fair to me.

LAWYER
Look at it this way: you’ve lived in a nice apartment for 20 years, five of that...
(he catches himself, laughing awkwardly)
...or nearly five, as an owner, and now you sold it at a profit. You’re getting...
(looking at his screen)
$17,535 dollars, which is all yours.

George looks completely at a loss, like a bag of heavy stones.

LAWYER
Listen, I won’t charge you for today, if that is any help. We’ll call it a courtesy.
ELLIOIT AND KATE’S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family is sitting at the dinner table, finishing their dinner. Elliot, Kate and Joey have their plates empty, while Ben still works on his meat, very, very slowly.

JOEY
Ours was about “mixed farming” which is when farmers manage a mix of different crops and animals.

ELLIOIT
And why is that eco-friendly?

JOEY
Nobody says eco-friendly anymore, dad.

KATE
It’s eco-efficient now.

JOEY
No, we say “sustainable”. Sustainable agriculture.

ELLIOIT
I see.

Kate looks at Ben, still cutting his meat. Elliot looks at Kate, looking at Ben, then at his own empty plate. Joey also looks at Ben’s plate, then up to the ceiling, impatience starting to boil in him.

ELLIOIT
So why is mixed farming sustainable?

JOEY
Cause that’s when crop residues are used to feed the animals and the... the excrements from animals are used as nutrients for the crop.

KATE
Eewwww. Your uncle is still eating, Joey.

JOEY
I’m sorry.

BEN
What?

(CONTINUED)
Ben wasn’t paying attention to the conversation, lost in his thoughts while cutting the fat off his meat with an obsessive focus.

JOEY
Can I be excused? I still need to study tonight.

KATE
You don’t want dessert?

ELLIO T
What do we have?

KATE
Strawberries and frozen yogurt.

JOEY
No thanks.

Joey gets up, takes his plate to the kitchen sink and leaves.

Ben takes a bite. Elliot looks at Kate, looking at Ben, chewing slowly...

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Roberto and Ted’s apartment is the same size as their ex-neighbors, but a very different decor. Where Ben and George’s was thoughtfully put together, with style and art, this one is simply functional. Where in the other one the piano commanded the space in the living room, in this one it’s the giant flat screen TV.

The TV is on, and Ted has a small control in his hand which commands the screen. He’s setting up his new Apple TV, going step by step. George is sitting next to him, eating a bowl of ice cream. Ted has a bottle of beer in front of him.

TED
It’s all through the wi-fi. This little box over there connects directly with our Netflix account, iTunes and with YouTube. Here let me show you.

Ted sips his beer, then manipulates the controls while the screen changes with different images.

TED
Have you seen this?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

A huge dragon, a slave in a leather harness, a sexy princess - a *Game of Thrones* style show on TV.

GEORGE
No, what is this?

TED
You’ve never seen this? *Game of Thrones!* It’s my favorite. Look, that’s King Baratheon and Queen Cersei. She hates him. Look, and that’s Ser Jaime, with whom she has an affair.

GEORGE
He’s sexy.

TED
He’s her twin brother and they’re lovers but it’s okay because it’s like medieval times in the future. I’m so glad you haven’t seen this, because you and I are going to watch it together.

GEORGE
Oh, are we?

TED
I have the whole first two seasons on my computer.

GEORGE
So your computer has to be on.

TED
No, not at all. It’s all sync’ed through the Cloud.

GEORGE
What’s the Cloud?

TED
The Cloud is like an imaginary hard disk. It has all your info so all your different gadgets can be synch’ed through the wi-fi.

George is not listening. He’s tired. He stares at his empty bowl.

GEORGE
Is there any more ice cream, Ted?
The door opens, and in comes Roberto in his police outfit, with his police woman buddy, DOREEN, both coming from work. He carries a bag of groceries and a six pack of beer.

ROBERTO
I’m hungry!

TED
Look, baby. I got it hooked up.

DOREEN
Hey guys!

Without ever letting go of the mini control, Ted stands up and high fives Doreen – she’s clearly one of the guys.

TED
Doreen!

ROBERTO
Hey George, you’ve met my friend Doreen, right?

George stands up to shake her hand, as she drowns herself on the couch.

DOREEN
Hi George.

ROBERTO
Babe, come help me in the kitchen?

TED
In two minutes.

Roberto disappears into the kitchen. Ted keeps playing with the remote.

George sits again, and Doreen taps him on his thigh, friendly.

DOREEN
So how are your two new daddies treating you?

GEORGE
Oh I can’t complain.

DOREEN
I’ve always liked this couch. I’ve taken good naps here.
GEORGE
It’s a good bed too.

DOREEN
If I drink too much... Maybe I’ll sleep with you here tonight.

ROBERTO (O.S.)
Adams or Corona?

DOREEN
(screams)
Whichever is colder!
(to Ted and George)
You guys?

TED
I think I’ll have wine.

GEORGE
(to Ted)
What happened to my ice cream?

TED
Did you mean to ask me if I would get you some ice cream, George?

GEORGE
Yes. I think because you’re from Manhasset, you don’t understand the subtlety.

TED
No, I understood perfectly well. I just prefer when people are direct.

A beat of silence. Doreen takes the remote control from Ted’s hands.

DOREEN
Go help Roberto. I’ll finish this for you.

TED
Do you even know how to?

DOOREN
Show me some respect, soldier.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT / KITCHEN - NIGHT
Ted takes out the groceries from the bag, while Roberto gets a heavy tupperware out of the refrigerator.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

He opens it, sniffs it out and shows it to Ted.

TED
That’s not enough. Who else is coming?

ROBERTO
Just Linda.

TED
Should I invite Marco?

ROBERTO
Sure. I’ll add some chicken to the curry, and what else?

They’re briefly interrupted by Doreen’s voice coming from the living room.

DOREEN (O.S.)
(...) your iPhoto as screen saver?

TED
(screams to the other room)
Sure!
(back to ROBERTO)
I can make the basmati with broccoli, and a big salad.

ROBERTO
Perfect.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sitting alone at the dinner table, away from everybody else for privacy, George talks on the phone. He looks on as Doreen takes her boots off and drinks beer, making herself comfortably at home.

GEORGE
(on the phone)
...it seems like they’re just starting dinner now. (...) No, tomorrow I have a student in the morning....

George keeps talking on the phone, and he sees Doreen going to open the door. From afar, he now sees Doreen hugging and kissing a newcomer: her partner LINDA, who arrives with a BABY.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
(on the phone)
Me? I’ve eaten already. (...) I stopped at the diner and had some matzo ball soup. (...) No, no grilled cheese, I swear.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben is alone by the large window in the dark living room of his nephew’s apartment. All around is quiet, the whole apartment seems to be asleep - only the light from the street outside, and a quiet conversation that Ben is having over the phone.

BEN
(on the phone)
I made beef stew tonight. (...) I think they did. They ate the whole thing, but they didn’t say anything.(...) No, they’re very nice, but sometimes when you live with people, you know them better than you care to - that’s all. (...) The large, empty and dark living room. Silence. Ben stays by the window, his profile catching the outside light.

EXT. ROOFTOP ELLIOT AND KATE’S BDG - DAY

Ben is behind his standing easel on this Park Slope outdoor rooftop. Around him, there are only tree tops and neighboring rooftops, the sun and a nice breeze. Ben, wearing his dirty painters’s apron, is sketching away with a thin paintbrush on a new canvas.

He looks up and back down to the canvas.

And in front of him, standing proud as a statue, is Vlad wearing a tank top and holding HIS SKATEBOARD, the model of Ben’s new painting.

Ben uses his fingers to blur and fix a couple of lines, rebuilding details on the canvas.

The noisy metal door to the rooftop opens with a CLANK. Ben raises his eyes above the canvas, to see that an out of breath and very surprised Joey is standing between him and his subject Vlad.

JOEY
What the fuck, Vlad!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VLAD
I’m posing for your uncle’s new masterpiece.

JOEY
(to Vlad)
That is so gay!

An awkward silence, as Ben continues to paint.

BEN
People have been modeling for painters for centuries now. All kinds of people.

Joey looks at Vlad one more time, to see that his friend continues to “pose”, enjoying his 15 minutes of fame.

VLAD
He doesn’t mean homosexual, Ben. He just means stupid.

BEN
Don’t worry Vlad. Joey and I understand each other.

Joey walks behind Ben and looks over his shoulder at the painting.

JOEY
You’re not a good artist anyway.

BEN
I know you don’t mean that, Joey.

JOEY
But I do. If you were, you wouldn’t have to crash on a bunk bed in your nephew’s house!

Joey walks away. A door in the distance CLANKS shut.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM – DAY
(CONTINUOUS)

Kate is writing at the desk in the living room. Joey comes in.

KATE
Did you find him?

JOEY
He’s on the fucking rooftop with Uncle Ben.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

KATE
Hey! Watch your language.

Joey goes into his bedroom.

Kate takes a deep breath, a sip from her tea and tries to go back to her writing. But soon Joey storms out of his room.

JOEY
I’m going out.

KATE
And Vlad?

JOEY
Uncle Ben is making him pose for a painting.

KATE
He’s what??

JOEY
You heard me.

KATE
Joey, wait a minute. I suggested to your Uncle Ben that he take his painting to the roof. It was my idea. Don’t you see? I need to work here.

JOEY
I need to go.

And he leaves.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

In the dark stairwell of the building, Ben is carrying his painting box and canvas, while Vlad comes from outside helping him with all the rest: easel, skateboard and the box of paintings. Suddenly, he stops.

BEN
You okay there?

The bottom of the easel got stuck on the door. Vlad gives it a little kick, and the door closes with a CLANK.

VLAD
We’re good.

(CONTINUED)
Ben tries a switch on the wall, but the main light doesn’t go on.

BEN

Oh well.

It’s dark, and Ben is careful step by step.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kate is concentrating on work, typing away on her computer, when Vlad comes in loaded with Ben’s easel, painting materials and his skateboard.

Kate stops writing and goes to Vlad.

KATE

Vlad, what were you doing up there?

VLAD

I was helping Ben with his painting.

KATE

Weren’t you supposed to be studying biology?

VLAD

It’s going to be all about this book on seasons and migrations, and I know the book pretty well.

KATE

But if you flunk the test tomorrow, what am I going to tell your mother when she calls and asks if you and Joey were really studying or just playing here?

VLAD

I don’t flunk.

Ben arrives, in his paint splashed apron, carrying the canvas with him.

VLAD

Ben, where should I leave this?

BEN

Just leave it there. I’ll take care of it.

(CONTINUED)
KATE
Listen, Vlad, when you’re here, you’re my responsibility.

Kate makes sure Ben is listening to this as he picks up his easel on the floor.

KATE (CONT’D)
So if you have a biology test tomorrow, you should be studying with Joey, instead of taking art lessons on the roof.

VLAD
Where is Joey?

KATE
He went to the library.

VLAD
I guess I’ll go meet him there.

KATE
I think that’s a good idea.

Vlad gets his skateboard and backpack, and heads to the door.

KATE
Do you want to take some food, some water or anything?

VLAD
I’m okay. Thank you, Mrs. Hull. Bye, Ben. I’ll see you soon.

BEN
Bye Vlad.

KATE
Okay, Bye.

Vlad leaves. Kate goes back to her desk, while Ben takes the rest of his stuff into the bedroom.

Kate is quietly typing away.

BEN (O.S.)
I didn’t know they were supposed to be studying.

Kate turns and sees, to her surprise, Ben on the couch with a book. She keeps on typing, trying to write.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

BEN
Joey got very upset. He called
Vlad “gay” in quite an offensive
fashion.

KATE
Kids have broadened the meaning of
the word “gay” far beyond sexual
orientation, so don’t get
offended.

BEN
I didn’t, really. I guess it just
means ‘stupid’ now.

KATE
I think you’re right.

BEN
I don’t know if Joey felt left
out, or what in the world was
going through his mind.

Kate stops typing, and closes her laptop and stands up,
gathering all of her things, impatient.

KATE
They’re teenagers. And is it
really appropriate to be using
Joey’s friend as a model?

She walks towards her bedroom, carrying her laptop,
notebooks and pen.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

A very steamy bathroom, one can hardly see anything
inside. Someone is quietly taking a very hot shower. The
water gets shut off, but the person still stays inside
the box for a moment, as if enjoying the last drops from
the shower - a quiet meditative moment.

Finally, the box opens, and Ben grabs a towel. He starts
to dry himself off.

INT. MINDY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

A small house with bland worn out furniture, and dog toys
scattered around the place. It’s quite dark inside, and
there are three DOGS of different breeds, each lying
lazily in his/her own cushion. They pretty much own the
place.

(CONTINUED)
The phone rings. Mindy enters. She has a slight dazed look on her face, maybe from a nap - or a couple of martinis. She has to get around one of the dogs to get to the phone, and knocks her foot onto the table.

**MINDY**

Ouch! Son of bitch. Ouch, oh!

(on the phone)

Hello? (...) Oh hi, Kate! How are you? (...)

As she listens, she sits on the couch and grabs a cigarette from a pack on the coffee table.

**MINDY (CONT’D)**

(on the phone)

Oh, I’m good. Everything is great - amazing, actually. Yes, I went to see this chromotherapist up in Kingston.

She lights the cigarette.

**MINDY (CONT’D)**

(on the phone)

Chromotherapy! (...) The guy talks to you for 15 minutes, then he floats his hand all over your body and he feels whatever type of energy you’re lacking - physical, emotional, spiritual. It’s hard to explain. But he feels the energy levels and then prescribes colored lights to restore your balance. I was just taking a nap under a greenish light he gave me. You wouldn’t believe it, but I feel like I’m a different person. I have much more energy, and (...) Hun-hun, I know. And how’s Uncle Ben? (...) Uh-hun, I know. It must be hard for him. (...) I know, I see.

**INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT - NIGHT**

Ben, in a bath robe, his hair still wet, is standing outside the closed door to Kate’s bedroom. For a moment he hears her voice, then knocks on the door.

**KATE (O.S.)**

Come in!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEN
Sorry, I didn’t want to interrupt.

KATE
Yes, Ben?

BEN
I wanted to talk about earlier.

KATE
Oh no, it’s fine.

BEN
Are you sure?

KATE
Yes, I’m talking to Mindy.
(a voice on the phone)
She wants to know when you’re going to visit her in Poughkeepsie.

BEN
Ah, send her my love. We can talk tomorrow.

KATE
Okay.

Ben shuts the door. He stands still for a moment, taking in what he’s just heard, and then walks away.

INT. WAITING ROOM / AFFORDABLE HOUSING, CITY HALL - DAY

Ben and George sit in a typically bureaucratic waiting room amongst other NEW YORKERS in search of a solution to their housing problems. The light is dim, and the mood is downcast.

Ben watches an old-fashioned TV set that hangs from the corner of the ceiling, showing a day time soap opera. George is searching through the files he has in a satchel on his lap.

A door opens and a SOCIAL WORKER, a woman in her 50s, enters.

SOCIAL WORKER (O.S.)
(to both men)
Mr. Garea?

(CONTINUED)
George pauses, quite suddenly. The Social Worker looks up from her paperwork, expectantly.

CONTINUED:

George
That’s me. This is Mr. Hull. I’d like him to come with me.

Social Worker
(cool, efficient)
Right this way.

She motions them both to follow her.

INT. Office / Affordable Housing, City Hall - Day

The Social Worker searches for and separates brochures, applications and other paperwork from piles on her messy desk.

Social Worker
These apartments are city sponsored and are currently accepting applications. Tenants are selected by a lottery, but first you need to meet the criteria for the specific development. Each one has its own.

She hands some paperwork in their general direction.

Social Worker
I only have one, I’m sorry.

Ben
We can share.

Social Worker
The city itself does not rent the apartments. If you get selected, this will be a private real estate transaction between you and the real estate developer, understand?

George is trying to. Ben less so.

Social Worker
You need to contact the developer or the marketing agent directly - you’ll see the phone numbers and other info on the list I just gave you.

George
I have a question.

George pauses, quite suddenly. The Social Worker looks up from her paperwork, expectantly.

(continued)
First time he says “married”. It feels funny to say that. George and Ben both look at the Social Worker searching for a reaction, and see no reaction at all: she’s a NYC Social Worker after all.

SOCIAL WORKER
Okay.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
So, for example:
(reads from the list)
One bedroom in Ft. Greene/Wallabout. Rent $511.00.
Minimum income $19,509, maximum income $23,240. Would that be for both tenants?

SOCIAL WORKER
Yes. Both, together. Anything you find interesting there, check to see if you meet the criteria, and if you do, you’ll need to ask for an application directly from them. Remember to include a self addressed envelope with your request.

GEORGE
Okay.

George takes a look at some of the lists she gave him. A moment of silence between them.

SOCIAL WORKER
That’s all I have for now.

BEN
Sounds like a good start.

SOCIAL WORKER
Typically demand exceeds supply for those apartments, so we suggest that you enter multiple lotteries, and use other means for pursuing housing such as classified ads, online listings, brokers, and word-of-mouth.

GEORGE
Thank you very much.
SOCIAL WORKER
Use common sense and beware of deals that sound too good to be true.

GEORGE
Thanks.

The Social Worker observes Ben getting up from his chair.

SOCIAL WORKER
Sir. Can I ask a question?

BEN
Yes?

SOCIAL WORKER
How old are you?

BEN
I’m 71.

SOCIAL WORKER
Because you might want to try the DFTA also?

GEORGE
DFTA?

She hands him yet another piece of paper.

SOCIAL WORKER
Department for the Aging.

BEN
They have a whole department just for us? Isn’t that encouraging...

George doesn’t know if he should laugh or cry.

SOCIAL WORKER
They have a list of affordable senior housing. It usually has a waiting list, but it’s worth a try.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

George comes into an almost surreal scene in front of him:

(CONTINUED)
Ted, wearing a medieval warrior hat, Roberto, Doreen, and Marco’s boyfriend, VINNIE, heavy set, with a beard, wearing a heavy metal band T-shirt, are sitting around the dinner table, which is covered with Dungeon & Dragons paraphernalia: the game’s navigation maze, miniature snakes, monsters, vampires and medieval warriors; polyhedral multicolored dices, different manuals and, of course, lots of beer, popcorn and bags of Doritos. There’s also a bottle of Tequila.

TED
Hey George, do you want some beer?

ROBERTO
Tequila?

GEORGE
I’m kind of hungry, actually.

ROBERTO
We’re still waiting for Marco.

DOREEN
Don’t you guys think George would be a great Lycanthrope?

VINNIE
A Cockatrice.

DOREEN
He’d be a perfect Lamia.

George strikes a pose as what/who he thinks Lamia is.

GEORGE
(sexy)
Lamia!

They laugh. Roberto laughs a little too much, his face flushed from the alcohol.

GEORGE
You guys seem to be having fun.

TED
Come play with us, you’ll love it.

GEORGE
It looks very complicated.

DOREEN
Have a beer and just watch – best way to learn this game.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE
I will, but I think I’ll eat a little something first.

ROBERTO
There’s curry in the fridge.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT / KITCHEN – NIGHT (CONT.)

George puts a plate in the microwave, and enters two minutes on the timer.

He picks up a paper towel and cleans the counter, waiting for his food, as he listens to chatter coming from the living room.

DOREEN (O.S.)
I’m going to roll a perception check.
   (dice rolling)
31.

TED (O.S.)
You see a door.

DOREEN (O.S.)
I got a 31! All I see is a door?

TED (O.S.)
It’s a spooky door.

ROBERTO (O.S.)
That’s fucked up.

DOREEN (O.S.)
I open the door.

TED (O.S.)
Wait! Strength check.

DOREEN (O.S.)
On a door?

TED (O.S.)
It’s a heavy door.

DOREEN (O.S.)
Is it locked?

TED (O.S.)
Yes.

(CONTINUED)
The microwave beeps next to George. He picks up a hot plate of curry.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The guys continue to play the game in full force. Vinnie jumps from his chair.

ROBERTO
I have dark vision. Can I see what’s at the end of the hallway?

DOREEN
You cannot, because...
(with excitement)
It’s a Vampire Queen.

ROBERTO
(pretends a fright)
Uh! What’s her challenge rating?

DOREEN
Her challenge rating is 18.

ROBERTO
18? That’s kind of high for a Vampire Queen, don’t you think?

DOREEN
I said 18!

ROBERTO
C’mon! Okay, you’re the DM but you can’t do that.

DOREEN
Yes I can. I’m the DM; I can do whatever I want.

ROBERTO
Bitch.

Roberto picks up a baton from the table.

ROBERTO
I’m going to use the wand of wounding.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DOREEN

No way!

Doreen is fast and takes the baton from Roberto’s hand.

ROBERTO

Give me that!

Roberto grabs Doreen, who hugs the baton tight, so Roberto can’t take it away from her. She’s laughing, but Roberto is seriously upset.

TED

Stop!

Frustrated, and drunk, Roberto ends up pushing Doreen, and grabbing the baton and cleaning out the table, effectively messing up the whole game.

TED

Oh c’mon baby!

There are boos and protests from Doreen and Vinnie.

They don’t even notice as, in the background, George crosses the room towards the door.

He opens the door and Marco is there in a camouflage raincoat. He is closing an umbrella, dripping wet.

MARCO

George! You don’t want to go out there, my friend. It’s really coming down.

George passes by him.

GEORGE

Thank you. I’ll be fine.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kate and Elliot are washing dishes, while Ben is still at the table, slowly eating his dinner.

We can hear the rain falling heavily outside.

ELLIOt

Do you think he’s old enough to enjoy the Louvre?

KATE

He’s obsessed with the French Revolution.

(CONTINUED)
ELLIO
But he doesn’t need to go to Paris to learn about the guillotine.

KATE
It’s a group of eight boys and girls, and they need two more so they can get the discount.

ELLIO
Is Vlad going?

KATE
Yes.

ELLIO
Of course.

KATE
Of course.

ELLIO
How much is it?

KATE
Eighteen hundred, hotel included.

The buzzer rings, interrupting the conversation. Kate shuts the water and looks at Elliot, confounded by the intrusion.

ELLIO
Speak of the devil.

KATE
Who?

ELLIO
(looking at his watch)
10PM. That would be Vlad.

The buzzer rings again, as Kate reaches for the intercom.

KATE
Who is it?

GEORGE (O.S.)
(through the intercom)
It’s George.
INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben opens the door, and George comes in, all wet from the rain outside.

    BEN
    What happened??

George gives him a hug, a very tight hug, and starts to cry.

    GEORGE
    I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry.

    BEN
    Stop it. Don’t be silly.

They hug each other tightly, George now crying like a baby.

Elliot observes the scene from a distance. Kate wants to step forward to help out, but Elliot stops her from moving.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, JOEY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joey is at his desk in front of the computer. Elliot comes in.

    ELLIOT
    Son, I need to ask you a favor.

    JOEY
    What is it?

    ELLIOT
    Do you mind sleeping on the couch tonight?

    JOEY
    C’mon, Dad.

    ELLIOT
    George is here. He’s upset, and it’s raining. It’s only for tonight.

    JOEY
    Why can’t he sleep on the couch?

    ELLIOT
    Because. Please, son.
INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kate reads to the light of her bedside lamp. Elliot is under the covers, asleep beside her.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The back pillows of the couch are thrown on the floor, and Joey is already asleep under a blanket.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, JOEY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben is in the bottom bunk. George is in the top. They are talking very quietly, intimately.

GEORGE
I talked to the Principal there at PS-216, who seemed very nice and smart. He really wants to bring back a music program.

BEN
Do they have the budget for it?

GEORGE
Not right now, but he seems like he might be very good at raising money. He has a very attractive personality.

BEN
That doesn’t really help us much right now, does it?

GEORGE
I haven’t finished my story. Can I finish it?

BEN
They don’t have a job for you, isn’t that the end?

GEORGE
No, it’s not. You’re such a pessimist.

BEN
I’m being realistic.

GEORGE
Let me finish!

(CONTINUED)
BEN
Okay. Go ahead.

GEORGE
Thank you. They have all kinds of kids there: lots of black and latin, but also white, a few Asians. This really cute girl, Filipino, I think she was. She played Frere Jacques for me on her flute.

BEN
George, why don’t you come down here so I can hear you better.

GEORGE
It’s a bunk bed.

BEN
So?

GEORGE
You told me Joey was already losing his patience with you. Can you imagine if you broke his bed trying to shag your husband.

BEN
I have missed having your body next to mine too much to have it denied to me for reasons of bad engineering.

George sits up, and moves to the edge of the bed. He awkwardly maneuvers himself on to the ladder and down the side.

Ben is squished as far as he can be to the wall, waiting for George with the sheets pulled back.

George gets into the bed with him.

They take each other in for a long moment.

GEORGE
Do you ever blame me for all of this?

BEN
Why would I blame you? We did it together.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE
But I knew what might happen. I knew more than you what we were risking.

BEN
All I know is that after 39 years it’s hard to fall asleep without you. This situation we’ve gotten ourselves in is really fucking with my sleeping patterns.

INT. PIANO STUDENT’S HOME – DAY

A YOUNG GIRL plays at the grand Steinway piano, in this upper middle class apartment. Even though the metronome on top of the piano is giving a certain rhythm, the Girl seems to be following no one in her interpretation of this Prelude by Chopin.

George walks around the Girl, and the piano, listening carefully. And as soon as the Girl finishes...

GEORGE
What happened?

The Girl looks at him somehow surprised at his reaction

GEORGE
What was that?! That wasn’t what we talked about last week.

GIRL
Interpretation.

GEORGE
Yes, and I insist that it is crucial to let the music take you someplace, to be surprised by it, even to allow yourself to be overwhelmed sometimes. That is as important as knowing the difference between a semitone and a half-step. But at the same time, you have to stay focused on the instrument you’re playing, and listen. Always – listen! What is the metronome telling you...

(clap his hands)
...tik – tok – tik!! You-ha-ve-to-follow! You can’t just create your own rhythm to Chopin. Let’s do it again.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The Girl is back at the Prelude. George paces back and forth for a moment, listening, then sits on a bench behind her. He sees when the Girl’s MOTHER shows up quietly, discreetly, peeking from the corridor, smiling at George and listening.

The Chopin Prelude soars. The girl plays it well. George listens with attention to the music, and seems moved by it.

GEORGE (V.O.)
Dear parents,
By now you have all heard of my joyful news, and of my sad news. To be able to finally marry my partner of almost 40 years, Benjamin Hull, in a small ceremony here at the New York City Hall was one of the happiest moments of my life. Unfortunately, later I found out that I could no longer continue to teach music at St. Grace’s.

INT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL/CLASSROOM (DOCUMENTARY STYLE) - DAY

A PRIEST drawing numbers of an equation on the blackboard, teaching math to a class.

At their desks, the UNIFORMED STUDENTS, some paying attention, some absent-mindedly looking out the window, others making notes.

The Chopin Prelude continues to play over these scenes.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT.)
Most of you, and everyone at the school, knew that I was gay and that Ben was my life-long partner. I have always had nothing but support from all of you, so I would like to thank you, and also to emphasize that I understand that what happened is not the fault of St. Grace’s and its leadership.
INT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL/HALLWAY - DAY

Students in the hallways, at their lockers, some running, while others confering with a teacher, and with each other.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT.)
Above all, I urge you to take this opportunity to have a conversation with your children about whether or not justice was served here.

INT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL/GYMNASIUM - DAY

A basketball court; the boys sweating, playing, competitive.

INT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL/AUDITORIUM - DAY

Students get ready for a dress rehearsal. They put on their gowns, and walk up the steps of the chorus.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT)
The last thing I want them to take from this is that they should hide who they are, or what they think, if they believe it will get them into trouble. Life has its obstacles, but I’ve learned early on that they will always be lessened if faced with honesty.

The students arrange themselves on the steps, playfully at first, but gradually become solemn and organized, as the new CONDUCTOR seems ready to start the music.

INT. CORRIDOR OF BEN AND GEORGE’S APT - NIGHT

George walks the same corridor of his old apartment, towards Roberto’s door.

GEORGE (V.O., CONT’D)
I believe the world is a better place if people aren’t lying. In the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: “Love does not delight in injustice, but rejoices with the truth.” Yours sincerely, George Garea.

The Chopin Prelude ends as George opens the door, and goes inside.

(CONTINUED)
INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT / JOEY’S BEDROOM- NIGHT

The entrance door opens and Ben comes in. He notices that the living room is mostly dark and quiet, except for a reading light that was left on in a corner.

He heads to his/Joey’s bedroom. The door is closed.

Ben opens the door to the bedroom. He sees Vlad and Joey sitting next to each other on his bed, with some books on their laps, which they quickly hide however they can.

JOEY
(shouting)
Can I have some private time, please?

Ben shuts the door. He realizes he’s arrived at a bad moment.

Back in the living room, Ben looks around and heads to the kitchen.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben opens the door and finds Elliot pouring some more red wine for Kate, seemingly having “a conversation.”

BEN
I’m sorry, I didn’t think...

ELLIOT
Come in.

Ben enters.

ELLIOT
Do you want some wine?

BEN
Why not.

KATE
How was your day?

Ben can feel the tension still in the air between them.

BEN
Nice. George went to church and I saw a wonderful movie.
CONTINUED:

KATE
What did you see?

BEN
The Gang’s All Here.

PELLIOT
No way!

BEN
Do you remember?

PELLIOT
(sings)
But the thing that led to love,
was her polka dot gloves,
while the band played the polka
don polka.

They laugh. It helps clear the air.

KATE
What is that?

BEN
A Busby Berkeley musical.

PELLIOT
It’s like an acid trip with Alice
Faye and Carmen Miranda. The
dancers hold these huge bananas...
(demonstrating)
...right here on their hips, like
they have huge penises.

BEN
Oh, not really. It’s not like
that.

PELLIOT
Yes it is. It’s totally phallic.

KATE
I know that scene!

BEN
They have a wonderful new print.
And I have to say Elliot, I was so
happy when they came out with VHS,
we could watch all those old
movies again, and I’m glad I
showed them to you. But watching
this in the big screen, it’s
something else. It’s not even the
same movie.

(CONTINUED)
ELLIO T
I’d love to see it!

KATE
Let’s go tomorrow night?

ELLIO T
Yes! No, shit. I can’t tomorrow.

Kate swallows her frustration with a big sip of her wine.

KATE
Well, maybe I’ll go on my own.

Ben sips his wine, looking at his nephew, and at Kate.

ELLIO T
(to Ben)
Is Joey asleep?

BEN
I think he and Vlad are still studying.

KATE
Vlad??

ELLIO T
(to Kate)
What is Vlad doing here?

KATE
Not studying.

ELLIO T
I’m going to go check.

BEN
Don’t go.

ELLIO T
What?

BEN
Last year you two were complaining that Joey didn’t have any friends. You were worried he was too antisocial, you even took him to see a therapist.

KATE
So?

BEN
Now he has a friend.

(CONTINUED)
ELLIO'T
It’s a little strange.

KATE
There’s nothing strange.

ELLIO'T
It’s his only friend, and the
guy’s a lot older.

KATE
He’s 16, he just looks older.

ELLIO'T
They’re like Yogi Bear and Boo-Boo.

Ben laughs at that, but Kate doesn’t think it’s funny.

KATE
Don’t be ridiculous.

INT. ELLIO'T AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Elliot knocks on Joey’s bedroom door, and the door opens
almost immediately. It’s Vlad, and he steps out, carrying
his backpack and skateboard.

VLAD
Good night, Mr. Hull.

Elliot watches as Vlad walks to the main door, and
leaves.

INT. JOEY’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben is in bed, tucked under the sheets with a book, only
his reading light on. After a moment, he believes he can
hear a faint lament coming from above. He puts the book
to rest on his chest.

BEN
Joey?

Joey is lying on his bed above.

JOEY
Huh?

BEN
Are you awake?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JOEY
Yes.

BEN
Can I ask you a question?

JOEY
What.

The fact that they’re not face to face, in the semi darkness, makes this easier to ask:

BEN
Have you ever been in love?

JOEY
I’m not gay!

BEN
I didn’t mean to imply that, Joey.

JOEY
So what do you mean?

BEN
Love. You know what love is.

Silence.

JOEY
There was this girl once.
(he proceeds cautiously)
I was 14. We were on vacation in Saint Croix. That’s in the Virgin Islands.

BEN
I remember when you guys went there.

JOEY
There was another family renting a house on the same beach as ours. They had a daughter, she was 16 and I used to watch her go windsurfing every morning.

BEN
Did you go windsurfing too?

JOEY
No, we had jet skis. But I used to watch her from the beach, and one day I saw her watching me too.

(CONTINUED)
BEN
On the jet skis?

JOEY
Yeah. I saw her looking at me.

BEN
Do you know her name?

A long pause. The silence is intimate between them.

JOEY
No. We never said hello to each other.

Oh.

JOEY
But I think we’ll see each other again. They’re from New York City.

BEN
And if you do, would you say hello to her this time?

JOEY
I don’t know.

BEN
I think you should.

Ben turns his reading light off. All is quiet, the room is dark.

EXT. ROOFTOP ELLIOT AND KATE’S BDG - DAY

On a used palette, full of different colored spots, some green paint is mixed with a little brown. The result is a dark green, so the brush adds a little cream, and the mix become the perfect color for the Park Slope outdoors.

Ben sits on his portable stool, painting the canvas on his easel.

The painter starts to fill up the contours of his picture with green and blue.

It is a breezy, quiet afternoon.

The Skateboarder at the center of the painting seems to be done, and the trees, rooftops and sky around him start to gain life with brush strokes of color.
EXT. ROOFTOP ELLIOT AND KATE’S BDG -- END OF DAY

The light has changed, it’s later in the day now. Ben applies subtle brush strokes to the canvas in front of him. With his finger, he rubs the fresh mix of green and brown on the painting, for effect. He takes a step back to look.

Ben looks at the sky. A wind blows, sending dead tree leaves flying through the air.

INT. STAIRWELL - END OF THE DAY

Ben opens the door from the roof to the stairwell loaded with his painting materials, carrying his canvas, a box and the easel all at once. The security door to the roof shuts and suddenly Ben can’t move. The bottom of the easel is stuck in the door.

He looks down to see the stairwell of the building looming underneath. He tries to pull the easel past the door, but it doesn’t move. Little drops of sweat start to show on his forehead.

He gives up trying to do everything at once, and places the canvas on the floor, then he kicks the door with his foot. He is now able to get the easel past the door, which closes with a loud clank.

He leaves the canvas behind, and carries the easel and the rest with him down the stairs.

It’s still a lot to carry, and the place is dark. He stops midway. A drop of sweat rolls down Ben’s forehead. He gets nervous, and takes a deep breath. His eyes get foggy, he has a hard time focusing them. The air gets rarer. Ben feels faint, and takes a deep breath. The stairs seem to move from under his feet.

First the easel drops, then the box, which opens and all the painting materials roll down the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

In the waiting room of the hospital, Roberto, in his policeman uniform, Kate and George are crowded around the DOCTOR, all ears on each word he says.

    DOCTOR
    The shoulder is a ball-and-socket joint;
    (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
the ball of the upper arm bone fits into the socket in the shoulder blade, and is kept there by the rotator cuff. He had what we call a full thickness tear, or a complete tear.

GEORGE
Can he paint?

DOCTOR
No. I don’t want him to even comb his hair for a while.

GEORGE
Poor Ben.

KATE
His legs are okay?

DOCTOR
Legs are fine.

KATE
It was so hard to get him to stand up, and move. I thought he had broken his leg, he was in so much pain.

DOCTOR
He dislocated the shoulder, which means his arm came out of the socket, and that is very painful, so any action, any movement with the body, makes it even worse.

ROBERTO
What about surgery?

DOCTOR
I wouldn’t recommend it right away. First he needs to rest. We’re going to put his arm in a sling, and he should just let it rest for a couple of months. Then we’ll try some strengthening exercises and physical therapy. Now, George, when was the last time he had a full cardiac checkup?

GEORGE
We have our regular checkup every year.
DOCTOR
You have to take him to see a cardiologist.

GEORGE
Why?

DOCTOR
It’s not okay for anyone to be having fainting spells, especially not at his age.

ROBERTO
I thought he’d just fallen down the stairs.

DOCTOR
No, he fainted.

GEORGE
He’s felt dizzy before.

DOCTOR
And shortness of breath?

GEORGE
Maybe. I think so. Did he complain to you, Kate?

KATE
No. Doctor, finish, please.

DOCTOR
A heart condition would explain the dizziness and the fainting spells, and nowadays heart surgery is so advanced... Anyway, I’m not going to speculate here. I’m an orthopedist, I’m not a cardiologist.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ben, a large band-aid above his eye, his right arm on a sling, is propped up on the couch with two pillows, reading a book.

Kate comes from the kitchen with a glass of water, and some medication.

KATE
Here. You should take this now.
CONTINUED:

BEN
Oh, thank you.

KATE
I have to leave, but there’s a plate of pasta for you in the microwave.

BEN
Thank you, Kate.

KATE
Are you sure you’re going to be okay?

BEN
Oh yes, I’m fine.

KATE
Okay, then.

Kate grabs her purse, makes sure she has everything she needs and walks to the door.

KATE
Bye bye now.

BEN
Bye.

The door closes behind her. Ben is alone in the apartment. With some difficulty, he moves on the couch to reach the medication and water. He drinks a couple of sips, and takes a deep breath before slowly returning to his previous position. He picks up the book and starts reading again.

EXT. STREETS OF BROOKLYN - DAY

Kate approaches a corner with a stop light. She waits for a couple of cars to rush by, but crosses the street right after, without waiting for the light to turn. She continues to walk fast, in a hurry to get somewhere on time.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Kate crosses the street in a hurry and rushes inside the gates of this private High School in Brooklyn - an old big building, a place that exudes tradition and solid education.
INT. HIGH SCHOOL, THE PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE – DAY

A small room with books and files everywhere. Kate is sitting on the guest chair in the Principal’s office. The Principal leans on her busy desk while talking to Kate.

PRINCIPAL
I don’t want you to worry too much, it’s not a very big deal. We deal with similar problems every day here. But it is serious.

KATE
I’m shocked. He’s such a serious kid, and such a good student. And so is Vlad.

PRINCIPAL
There’s been some rivalry between the two senior classes. It started between two students, but then it trickled down to everything from who’s the most popular to who’s the smartest. Maybe it’s something related to this, but I don’t really know. Did you notice anything different?

KATE
No. Maybe. Actually, now that I know this...

PRINCIPAL
What?

KATE
Last night he watched a DVD with me. It was my pick – a French movie, and Joey usually would never sit for the whole thing. He seemed very interested and stayed until the very end. We even had a conversation about it after. That was sort of unusual.

PRINCIPAL
Vlad has confessed that he took the books out, and gave them to Joey, but your son denies having them.

KATE
Vlad seems to have great influence on my son. Joey doesn’t have that many friends.

(CONTINUED)
PRINCIPAL
Have you noticed any new books in the house?

KATE
I haven’t paid attention. I’m trying to finish my new book. And Elliot’s Uncle Ben is staying with us, sleeping in Joey’s room. It’s a bit of a complicated situation.

PRINCIPAL
Well, I don’t understand why they would steal these books, they’re all French literature books.

KATE
I have no idea.

PRINCIPAL
Truth of the matter is that the books need to be returned to the library. You can tell your son we won’t ask any questions now. But if they’re not returned, Joey will not be able to graduate. Do I make myself clear?

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, LIVING ROOM - END OF THE DAY

Ben, with his right arm in a sling, is lying on the couch, trying to read a book; it is a hard cover French edition of Cyrano de Bergerac. He doesn’t seem comfortable, can’t concentrate.

Ben puts the book down, and raises from the couch with some difficulty.

The sunset light comes through the window of the living room. Kate’s desk is empty, neatly clean. All is quiet.

Ben goes to Kate’s desk, and punches a number on the landline telephone.

BEN
George
(...)
After the operation, I think it’s better if I go stay with Mindy.
(...)
Yes, George.
(...)
But it’s really not fair with Elliot and Kate. And poor Joey.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)

(...)
You’ll come on the weekends.
(...)
We should have an answer from
those places soon.
(...)
Why not?
(...)
Of course I trust you. But I want
us to have options.

The door suddenly opens and Kate and Joey come in. Joey
runs into his bedroom, without even saying hello, clearly
upset. The door slams shut.

Ben, still on the phone, looks on as Kate goes inside her
bedroom and shuts her door behind her.

INT. ELLIOT AND KATE’S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

A tense dinner at the Hull home tonight. The family is
sitting around the table, their plates empty after
dinner. Ben is the only one still eating. It’s only
pasta, but having his right arm on a sling and trying to
use the left hand only doesn’t help.

ELLIOT
This is the last thing I expected
from you, Joey. The last thing.
You’re not a boy anymore, you’re a
man. You’re lucky this happened in
high school, so the principal can
call your mother. In the real
world, you would’ve gone to jail.

JOEY
But I didn’t steal anything.

A cell phone rings. It’s Elliot’s, and he picks it up.

ELLIOT
(on the cell)
Hello.

KATE
Ben, some more water?

BEN
Yes, please.

Kate serves Ben water, then herself. For a long moment,
there’s silence at dinner. Ben is slowly eating his food,
Joey plays with his fork, and Kate is observing Elliot,
who listens to the caller on the other end of the line.
ELLiot
(on the cell)
No, let’s just go with what we have. I don’t want to make changes at this point.

Still more silence.

Kate
(to Elliot)
Can you do this later, please?

Elliot
(on the cell)
I can’t really talk right now, let me call you back in half an hour.

Kate
Thank you.

Elliot hangs up his cell phone, and is lost for a moment.

Elliot
Where was I?

Ben looks around, mouth full of pasta - nobody but him seems to remember. He chews and swallows.

Ben
Jail.

Elliot
Yes. You have a father and a mother who taught you all that is right and wrong. There’s no excuse for this. Look at your mom. Look at her! Do you think your mother deserves to be called in the middle of the day to hear that her son is involved in some kind of robbery? I mean, what’s going to be next, carjacking?

Joey doesn’t answer. He’s done with dinner, he’s ready to get up. But Uncle Ben’s plate is still full of pasta.

Elliot
Do you have anything else to tell me?

Joey
What do you mean?
ELLIO

If there’s something else, I’d rather hear it from you now, than later from the principal or someone else.

JOEY

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

ELLIO

When guys your age steal things, there’s usually drugs involved.

JOEY

No!

ELLIO

Is Vlad involved with drugs?

JOEY

Dad... no.

KATE

How are you feeling, Ben?

BEN

Oh, I’m fine. It’s a bit challenging to maneuver the silverware, but I’m fine.

ELLIO

(to Joey)

You don’t sound very sure. Is he?

JOEY

Not that I know of.

ELLIO

Not that you know of?? You’re together all the time! The only way I can understand why a boy like Vlad would steal a bunch of books in the French language is if he were high.

JOEY

I’m done here, can I get up please?

KATE

(to Joey)

You don’t want any dessert?

(continued)
They all want this dinner to be over. Silence at the table.

JOEY
Can I go to my room, please? I still have work to do.

ELLIOT
We haven’t finished eating.

Joey looks at Ben’s plate, the only one still eating. Ben becomes self-conscious.

BEN
It’s okay, I’m almost done. I’m sorry...

KATE
(to Joey)
Okay then. You can go.

Joey gets up and leaves.

ELLIOT
Unbelievable.
(to Kate)
You’re too nice to him.

KATE
You don’t even know.

Kate gets up and starts cleaning the table, taking the dirty plates to the sink. Elliot follows, and looks for a clean container for the leftover pasta.

Ben stops eating, and puts his fork down.

BEN
I know where the books are.

Elliot is rinsing dirty dishes in the sink, while Kate is dumping bits and pieces in the garbage.

BEN
I said, I know where the books are.

(CONTINUED)
Elliot and Kate stop what they’re doing, and turn to Ben, who looks down at his plate, not able to face them right now.

BEN
I’ve been in the house by myself, unable to work, to paint or do anything. I was looking for something to read, and I found these books under my bed, so I picked one up.

KATE
Ben! Why didn’t you say something?

BEN
I didn’t think much of it. They were just books.

ELLIOIT
Are those the books?

BEN
The one I picked up was Cyrano de Bergerac. My French is a little rusty, but I got most of it. I know the book so well...

KATE
Frankly, who cares, Ben?

ELLIOIT
Those are the books.

KATE
(angry, to Ben)
You’ve been listening here the whole time, you should’ve said something!

ELLIOIT
Calm down, Kate. He didn’t know.

KATE
You think I’m too nice to Joey?

ELLIOIT
Oh please, Kate.

KATE
Well, let me tell you: you’re too nice to your uncle, Elliot. And it’s very easy being nice when you’re not the one who’s around all day.

(CONTINUED)
Kate drops the plates in the sink, and walks out. Elliot follows her.

Ben, alone at the table can hear them knocking on Joey’s bedroom door. He can hear the door opening and then a loud BANG – the door slams shut. Kate’s and Elliot’s loud voices, muffled. And Joey’s shouting, his voice full of teenage emotion.

The rest of the food remains untouched on Ben’s plate. He feels bad, and can’t really eat anymore. He can hear the door slam open, and everybody’s voices loud and clear now.

JOEY (O.S.)
Because we’re the only ones who will ever learn French and read those books in this stupid school! Including the dumb ass teacher!

KATE (O.S.)
That is so arrogant.

ELLIO (O.S.)
Not even! It’s just plain stupid.

Suddenly, Joey bursts in the kitchen, his face red with rage, his voice trembling with anger.

JOEY
What the fuck, Uncle Ben?!!

Elliot comes right after, and grabs Joey by the arm.

ELLIO
Don’t talk like this to your uncle.

JOEY
You guys talk like this all the time!

ELLIO
Say you’re sorry.

Joey is almost crying. Kate comes in, holding some books.

ELLIO
Joey, you know you won’t graduate unless these books are returned.

JOEY
I’m sorry.

(CONTINUED)
ELLiot
The trip to Paris this summer?
Forget about it.

INT. ROBERTO AND TED’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

A party at Roberto and Ted’s. The apartment is crowded with people – men and women, friends of the couple – chatting, drinking beer, laughing and being social.

George sits on the couch, alone, with a drink in his hand, observing the scene. He sees in the corner of the room two men having what seems to be a heated conversation, which quickly turns into an argument. Some people around them look on, and they realize that this is not the place nor the time to be having this conversation. They rest their case for a moment. One of them, Ian, attractive, early 30’s, goes into the kitchen. The other one, a man in his 40s, is clearly upset. He suddenly turns around and walks out the door. George witnesses the whole scene from the couch.

Ian comes back from the kitchen with two beers, and walks around looking for his friend. He looks and looks but doesn’t find him. Disappointed, he ends up on the couch, next to George.

IAN
Would you like a beer?

George notices a countryman in Ian’s heavy British accent.

GEORGE
No, thank you.

IAN
I got an extra one for my friend, and now I can’t find him.

GEORGE
I think he left.

Ian realizes George was witness to his scene with the guy. He places one of the beers on the coffee table in front of him, and keeps the other one, drinking a sip.

IAN
We had an argument.
(pause)
I’m Ian by the way.

GEORGE
George. I’m a friend of Roberto’s.

(CONTINUED)
IAN
Who’s Roberto?

GEORGE
Well, I think this is his party.

IAN
Oh, right. I don’t know anybody here.

GEORGE
That’s Ted over there. The cute one. He’s Roberto’s boyfriend.

IAN
Yes, I met Ted. Not my type.

GEORGE
They’re both cops believe it or not.

IAN
Really? Gay cops.

GEORGE
We call them the Police Women.

Ian laughs.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Terrible, isn’t it? But they are actually both very nice. Roberto is not here yet, he’s still at work.

Pause. George has a sip of his drink. Ian looks on at the people coming and going for a moment.

GEORGE
Where are you from?

IAN
Chippenham, originally. Near Bristol.

GEORGE
South London, myself, but moved to New York when I was a teenager.

IAN
Did you come alone?

GEORGE
With my mother.

(CONTINUED)
IAN
I mean to this party tonight.

GEORGE
Ah. Yes.

IAN
Do you live in Chelsea also?

GEORGE
For the moment, yes.

IAN
I live in the Village. I was on my way to have dinner with my friend, and he said let’s stop by this party first. I said sure, and now he left, and... well, here I am.

GEORGE
You must be hungry.

IAN
What?

GEORGE
I said, you didn’t have dinner, so you must be hungry.

IAN
Starving. You?

GEORGE
Yes. Hungry as Rodolfo.

IAN
Rodolfo?

GEORGE
From La Boheme. The opera.

(pause)
Sorry, I don’t mean to be pretentious.

IAN
Rodolfo the poet, of course. He’s so hungry and poor that he burns his own manuscript for fire.

GEORGE
That’s right.

Another pause. Ian looks at George, looking at the scene in front of him.

(CONTINUED)
IAN
Should we go eat?

GEORGE
Right now?

IAN
Why not. I don’t have to stay here. Do you?

GEORGE
Well, I...

IAN
Sorry, you don’t even know me. It’s just that I hate to eat alone. Don’t you?

GEORGE
No, on the contrary. I’m never bored with myself, whereas people sometimes can drive me crazy.

Ian gives no response – does that mean George wants to be alone? He takes a sip of his beer, and George looks at him.

GEORGE
Don’t get me wrong. I love people. It’s crowds I have a problem with. I prefer to relate one on one, than to just stand there with a drink in your hand, and a smile on your face.

IAN
I know what you mean.
(pause)
Are you waiting for Roberto?

GEORGE
Not really. I don’t think Roberto will miss me when he gets here.

IAN
Oh, you’re waiting for someone else!

GEORGE
It’s not that romantic of a situation.

IAN
So what are you waiting for?

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE
I’m waiting for the orchestra to play its last note, so the curtain can fall.

IAN
Are you high?

GEORGE
Hardly. Before I started talking to you, I was about to doze off.

IAN
That’s not the best place to sleep.

GEORGE
And yet, you’re sitting on my bed.

George looks at the people coming and going, as Ian looks at him. A moment of recognition in Ian’s face.

IAN
You’re homeless!

GEORGE
(laughing)
Yes, it’s a long story. It starts with me marrying my partner of 39 years and getting fired. We’re looking for a place we can afford, but I won’t bore you with details.

IAN
Well, I happen to have, right here in my pocket, the key to a rent controlled apartment on Morton Street in the West Village, soon to be vacated.

GEORGE
How come?

IAN
It’s a long story. Should we go eat?

George, a bit reluctant, looks on to see that Ted is in the middle of a loud group, drinking and laughing. The party goes on, and they won’t miss him.

IAN
C’mon. I don’t feel like staying here, and neither do you.

(CONTINUED)
Ian gets up and walks away.

Already close to the door, Ian stops and turns. He sees that George is coming after him.

INT. APT. IN THE WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

A small but very comfortable, cozy living room of an old apartment in the West Village. The place feels well lived in, very quiet, functional, with personality. George looks around, and Ian picks up a few items that were out of place.

IAN
My uncle used to live here before me, so after he moved back to England, I got the lease from him. That was 20 years ago, and I’ve been very happy here. I love this place.

GEORGE
So why are you leaving?

IAN
Because of work. I got a job with the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City.

GEORGE
That’s an amazing place.

IAN
You’ve been there. So you know it doesn’t get much better than that for an archaeologist. Do you want something to drink?

GEORGE
Just water.

While Ian goes away to get some water, George looks at the books and pictures on the shelves along the wall. Pictures of Ian in a Mayan city in Central America, in Paris, and Ian with the older guy seen at the party, in a romantic embrace on a beach.

Ian comes back with water, sees George looking at the picture.

GEORGE
That’s the guy.

(CONTINUED)
IAN
Yes, John. We’ve been going out for about a year. I told him about Mexico tonight, and he wasn’t happy.

GEORGE
You’re a heartbreaker.

IAN
On the contrary. When I first met him, I was so in love, I didn’t want to leave his side. Unlike many gay men, I’ve never been afraid to show my feelings. So I think I scared him off a little. He never wanted to commit, really, and kept pushing me away. It’s no coincidence that I interviewed for this job in Mexico. Now he finds out that I’m leaving and he decides that I’m the man of his dreams? It’s so typical, and so disappointing, frankly.

George goes to the window, to see the view.

IAN
Do you know how much I pay here?

GEORGE
No idea.

IAN
I’m even embarrassed to say. Eleven hundred. They can’t raise the rent too much. It’s controlled by the city.

GEORGE
Bless this city.

Outside, the faint light of old lamp posts illuminate a large, beautiful internal patio - one of those old-fashioned buildings. A sense of peace fills George, and he smiles.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

A SINGER sings in Latin a beautiful, solemn piece of music. He is accompanied by a PIANIST and a few OTHER MUSICIANS on this elegant stage.

(CONTINUED)
The small theatre has an intimate feeling, the audience is composed of music lovers of all ages: MUSIC STUDENTS and OLD TIMERS mixed with NOVICES who came to listen to Durufle’s music for the first time.

Amongst them are Ben and George, dressed in jackets and ties - Ben with a bow tie, stylish even if his arm is in a sling (a dark blue sling that goes with his dark blue tie).

The music takes a romantic turn. Ben looks at George - he knows that’s his favorite part. George keeps his attention on the stage, but brings his hand down to George’s side, as they discreetly hold hands.

EXT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

A small crowd of serious CONCERTGOERS come out from the side door to the Concert Hall. Ben and George are amongst them.

They walk down the street, George is humming the music.

BEN
So what did you think?

GEORGE
Not bad, though she was milking it a little.

BEN
Did you think so?

GEORGE
With a piece as romantic as that you don’t need to embellish.

BEN
I don’t know. I loved it. I kept thinking about him and his beloved Isabella.

GEORGE
That’s not true, though. That whole he-wrote-it-to-convince-her-parents-to-let-him-marry-her, that’s a myth, you know.

BEN
I’m not like you, though. I prefer a little embellishment.
INT. JULIUS BAR - NIGHT

George and Ben are on stools at the bar. George tries to catch the BARTENDER’s attention, with no success. They are a little out of place among the mostly young and hip PATRONS.

More YOUNG PEOPLE start to arrive, chatting, flirting, moving around.

The Bartender comes to help Ben and George.

GEORGE
Finally.

BARTENDER
I’m sorry, I’m sorry. You guys look very thirsty. What can I get you?

GEORGE
Scotch on the rocks for me. Vodka tonic with half a lime and no ice for the gentleman here.

Ben smiles, George knows him well.

GIRLS flirt with GIRLS who dance with BOYS who flirt with BOYS.

The Bartender brings the two drinks.

GEORGE
How come it’s so busy here tonight?

BARTENDER
Thank God it’s Friday!

GEORGE
(to Ben)
The kids have taken over our spot.

BEN
Good for them.

BARTENDER
Are you guys new in the neighborhood?

(CONTINUED)
BEN
Are you kidding? There was a famous “sip in” that happened right here, in this bar, to challenge the New York State regulation that prohibited bars from serving homosexuals.

BARTENDER
Sure, we have a clipping from The New York Times framed here somewhere.

Ben points the finger to himself.

BEN
1966. Me and four other guys. We came here accompanied by five reporters, and when we were denied service, we denounced the State Liquor Authority.

BARTENDER
Oh my God! You’re the guy?

BEN
I’m one of the guys.

BARTENDER
Wow. This round is on me, fellows.

The Bartender goes to help other Patrons. George and Ben pick up their drinks, and turn their backs to the bar. They try to hold it in, but soon start to laugh.

GEORGE
You’re such a liar!

BEN
What?!

GEORGE
You’ll do anything for a free drink!

BEN
But I knew the guy who did the sip-in.

GEORGE
Frank?

BEN
That was his claim to fame.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

GEORGE
(raising his eyebrows)
I thought his claim to fame was something else.

BEN
Oh, that too. God bless him.

George raises his glass.

BEN
Here’s in memory of Frank.

They toast and drink up.

BEN
And to Ivan.

GEORGE
And who is that?

BEN
The angel from Chippenham who got us the apartment.

GEORGE
It’s Ian.

BEN
Ivan, Ian, doesn’t matter. I’ll drink to him, the handsome stranger.

GEORGE
Do I hear some jealousy in your voice?

BEN
I have wondered what you’ve been doing with all your free nights without me.

GEORGE
That’s not for me, Ben. You know that.

BEN
For all these years?

GEORGE
For all these years.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

BEN
Amazing. I’m sorry I can’t say the same to you, George. But at least I’ve always been honest.

GEORGE
Sometimes I think that ignorance would have been a lot easier.

BEN
I’m sorry, George.

George takes a long sip, observing the young people around them.

GEORGE
(softening)
But now that I think about it, some things you couldn’t have hidden even if you wanted to.

BEN
What are you talking about?

GEORGE
I’m talking about the time you got crabs.

BEN
Oh, thanks for reminding me.

GEORGE
And a black eye, that night in Rio.

BEN
That was a crazy motherfucker trying to rob me!

They laugh. George raises his glass.

GEORGE
To all the strangers!

BEN
Particularly the ones that bring us a rent controlled apartment in the Village. Cheers.

A toast, and the party goes on.

The CROWD drink and flirt, swaying to the beat of the music, a happy bunch.
EXT. WEST VILLAGE - NIGHT

Ben and George walk silently side by side on the quiet streets of the West Village at night.

As they’re about to cross the street, Ben stops for a moment, taking a deep breath. George notices it, and holds his arm.

GEORGE
Are you okay?

BEN
Felt a little dizzy.

GEORGE
Too much to drink.

BEN
Yes. I’m fine now.

George lets go of Ben’s arm, and they cross the street.

Side by side, they walk on a side street towards 6th Ave.

BEN
George.

GEORGE
What?

BEN
Remember we used to go to Castelli and Mary Boone, and you’d say that one day we’d go there to see my one man show?

GEORGE
And we will.

BEN
No, we won’t, George.

GEORGE
How do you know? Nowadays you read about a new “hot artist” every week.

BEN
Okay, maybe it will happen but not in my lifetime.

GEORGE
How do you know? It’s all a matter of taste, and trends.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
Some new curator might look at one of your paintings one day and think it’s the greatest thing.

BEN
I just would like to know. Is that disappointing to you?

GEORGE
Not at all. I say it because I believe it’s a real possibility, but it’s not important to me. I love your paintings, and I don’t really care what other people think.

BEN
I guess I did make a couple of good ones, didn’t I?

They arrive at the Subway Station by the Waverly Diner on 6th Avenue.

BEN (CONT’D)
We’ve had our ups and downs, George, and I know I wasn’t always the best husband to you.

GEORGE
I’d rather be your husband, Ben, than anyone else’s in the world. And if I had a chance to go back in time, I would live the same life all over again. I wouldn’t change a thing.

George takes Ben’s hand, and they walk down the Subway Station.

INT. SUBWAY STATION / 6TH AVE – NIGHT

There’s minimal traffic this time of night inside the station. Even then, maybe out of habit, George and Ben find a dark, private corner to say goodbye, next to an empty ticket booth.

It’s time for them to separate for the night. They reach out to embrace each other, made only slightly awkward by the sling on Ben’s arm.

BEN
Ouch.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGE
Sorry.

BEN
Careful with my arm.

A YOUNG COUPLE walks by, without noticing them.

They walk towards the entrance to the trains. Ben passes
though the turnstile with his card.

BEN
Good night George.

GEORGE
Night, Ben.

George watches as Ben waves and disappears down the
platform.

FADE OUT.

EXT. STREETS OF WEST VILLAGE - DAY

George walks alone on the not so crowded streets of the
West Village, crossing South on 7th Avenue.

EXT. STREETS OF WEST VILLAGE / COURTYARD BLDG. - DAY

George turns the corner into a very quiet, tree lined
street in the Village.

He arrives at the old brick building, and goes through
the gate.

EXT. COURTYARD BLDG. - DAY

The sun reflects on the freshly watered garden, which is
nicely landscaped and well taken care of. The old
building surrounding this central courtyard is low, only
5 stories high. The place is quiet, and has a sort of a
monastic feeling.

As George crosses the yard towards the entrance to the
left, he doesn’t notice a young man coming from the other
side.

   JOEY (O.S.)

   Hey, George.

It is Joey, carrying a shopping bag and a skateboard.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

GEORGE
Joey! I didn’t see you.

JOEY
I was waiting over there.

GEORGE
Let’s go up. I want you to see the new place.

INT. APT. IN THE WEST VILLAGE - DAY

The same apartment seen before, but now with George and Ben’s furniture spread around, their books and objects on the shelves, Ben’s painting on the wall, and George’s piano occupying center space in the room.

Joey is by the window, looking at the courtyard below.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Here.

George brings in two glasses of ice tea.

JOEY
This place is so nice.

GEORGE
I know, thank you. I got lucky.

JOEY
And really close to the river too. The new park is awesome.

GEORGE
It’s changed so much. When I first moved to New York, that was a no man’s land. Look at it now.

Joey drinks his ice tea, as George goes to sit on the piano seat, with his own tea cup.

They remain in silence for a few moments, an awkward intimacy between them.

JOEY
George, I’m sorry I didn’t go to the service.

GEORGE
The service?

JOEY
Uncle Ben’s service.

(CONTINUED)
GEORGE
Oh, it’s okay. Funerals can be strange. Especially for people your age.

JOEY
I wanted to remember Uncle Ben like I remember him now. I’ve never even been to a funeral before, and I was afraid that if I’d gone to his, that would always be what I remembered when I thought about him.

GEORGE
That makes a lot of sense to me, Joey. I hope you didn’t come all the way here just because you felt guilty about it.

JOEY
No. Actually, I came because I wanted to give you something.

Joey goes into the shopping bag he brought, and takes out a painting. It is The Skateboarder, the painting that Ben made of Vlad.

George walks closer to the window, where the light is brighter and he can see better the unfinished painting. As if holding a piece of Ben in his hands, his eyes tear up.

GEORGE
Wow, that’s very nice.

JOEY
I picked it up at the top of the stairs the day Uncle Ben had the accident on the roof. It was funny because everything fell down to the bottom of the stairs, including Uncle Ben, as you know, but the canvas was neatly placed on top, as if he had had the time to save it before coming down.

GEORGE
You know that’s very possible. His paintings meant everything to him. I think that when he realized he couldn’t use his arm after the operation, he gave up. The heart was just a consequence. Is that the view from your roof?
JOEY
Yes, it’s South.

GEORGE
Is that you here?

JOEY
No.

GEORGE
I didn’t think so.

JOEY
That’s my friend Vlad. He’s a friend who used to come over a lot when Uncle Ben was living with us.

GEORGE
You sure you don’t want to keep this? It’d be a nice memento.

JOEY
No, it’s his last painting, it’s unfinished. You can look at it and always imagine what he would’ve done with the colors here.

GEORGE
Nice. Very nice. Let me get a hammer, so you can help me hang it on the wall.

EXT. COURTYARD BLDG. - DAY

JOEY’S GIRLFRIEND sits on a bench in the middle of the courtyard, with a skateboard by her side, playing with her smart phone. She sees someone approaching, and gets up. Joey comes to greet her. He holds her hand, and they start to walk away, each holding their own skateboard.

INT. APT. IN THE WEST VILLAGE - DAY

George watches the young lovers from the window.

After a moment, he turns around and sees himself alone in the apartment. He walks to the Skateboarder painting, looks at it and tilts it a tiny bit, making sure it’s squared on the wall.

EXT. MORTON STREET - DAY

The quiet street is covered by an arc of trees.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Joey’s girlfriend drops her skateboard on the asphalt, jumps on board, and rolls towards the river. Joey comes surfing by, and catches up to her. They roll side by side, towards the setting sun.