

THE INVISIBLE NOOSE

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. 1ST CLASS SECTION OF FLYING BOEING 777-200LR - DAY

Floating castles of cumulus clouds roll through a sky of celestial beauty. Upon closer inspection, through the First Class window of a TransWorld Airlines plane, is the unclear profile of JIM BARRETT, a clean cut businessman in his mid-thirties, who takes no notice of the view outside. Instead his head is bent.

INT. PLANE (SEAT 11A) - DAY

Passing through the window and into Jim's space, from Jim's point of view he is typing a business contract on his laptop. A stock market ticket scrolls across the bottom of his screen. Out of the corner of his eye, a rolling cart and the legs of flight attendant, AMY, mid-twenties comes into view. He still types.

AMY (O.S.)
(cheerily)
Good morning, Sir. Something to drink?

JIM
(looks up)
I'll take an orange juice, please.

Amy smiles at him, pulls out the carton and begins to pour the juice.

JIM
Are you new?

AMY
(cocks her head to side)
Yeah, I am. How did you know?
(leans down & lowers voice)
Do I seem that nervous?

JIM
No, you're fine. I just take this flight all the time. Julie generally works 1st class.

AMY
Julie was nice enough to let me have this run. This way I can make it back in plenty of time to pick my daughter up from daycare. I'm Amy.

(CONTINUED)

JIM
(offers his hand)
Jim Barrett. Nice to meet you, Amy.

Amy shakes his hand and then passes him the orange juice with a side smile.

AMY
You too, Mr. Barrett.

JIM
Just "Jim" is fine. I'm sure I'll be seeing you quite a bit now. So, you just have one child?

AMY
(laughs)
That's enough for now, trust me. She's at the little hellion stage. I live for her laugh though.

JIM
I have one daughter also. Although mine's at the age when she's laughing at me and not with me. Whether it's my clothes, music selection, you name it; I don't have a clue.

Amy laughs.

JIM
Good luck today. I'm sure you'll do great.

She smiles warmly at him.

AMY
Thanks, Jim.

Amy pushes her cart on to the next passenger.

AMY (O.S.)
(faded)
Something to drink, Ma'am?

Jim opens up his internet browser and pulls wsj.com up on the screen when something catches his eye in the monitor's reflection. Puzzled, he slowly turns his head to find flames emitting from the engine furthest from him. Urgently, he twists in his seat to Amy -

(CONTINUED)

JIM

Amy!

But she wouldn't hear him as an explosion rips in their ears. Amy is thrown to the ground as passengers yell in terror. Jim looks out of the window again - 2/3 of the wing has disappeared and plane starts descending like a bullet. Amy tries to stand and get her bearings. Over the noise, Amy yells out -

AMY

(nervous)

Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten your seat belts and stow any laptops and personal belongings beneath the seat in front of you.

Jim exits the internet and then the proposal on his computer. "Do you want to save the changes to Landry Contract?" He clicks "No" and quickly opens up his email program as the intercom system comes on.

MALE PILOT (O.S.)

Flight attendants, please prepare all passengers for crash landing.

Jim creates a new message. Types the letters "rb" into the "TO" section - 'rbarrett73110@yahoo.com' automatically populates. Jim types feverishly -

ON THE MONITOR:

"Sweetheart I don't have much time. Please know that I love you with all of my heart. Kiss Samantha for me and know I will always watch over you both. Your pain will just be starting while mine will have already ended. For that I am so sorry. I'll love you both forever."

Clicks "send". A dialogue box shows the message was sent successfully. He closes the laptop as Amy comes over. She grabs hold of the seat in front of him to keep steady even as the plane continues its sharp decent.

AMY

(voice cracking)

Jim, please place the laptop under your seat and get into crash position.

Jim puts the laptop under the seat, but takes Amy by the hand as she tries to move on.

(CONTINUED)

JIM

You can stop working, Amy. We're about to die.

Amy looks at Jim in astonishment and fear. He pulls her closer.

JIM

It's okay. Just relax.

At this, a calmness slowly overtakes her face as she looks in Jim's eyes. She looks out to the rest of the passengers, but then kneels on the floor, rests her head against his shoulder and quietly sobs without another word. Moving down the aisle, prayers and sobbing accompany the high screaming of the plane's engine.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A deer walks in the woods. Her head perks up in search of something unknown. When the sound of the oncoming plane approaches, she darts away as the sound grows more deafening. The plane hits the ground, exploding on impact, digging a trench and wiping out trees in its path.

When the plane comes to its final rest, the crackling and roaring flames overcome any other sound. Large chunks of debris litter the forest. Smoke overtakes the entire area.

INT. LARGE LAW OFFICE - DAY

RITA, a pleasant looking woman with dark hair, about 35 years of age, is seated anxiously in one of two traditional looking guest chairs in front of a large traditional wood desk. Behind the desk sits TOM MORAN, a large Irish-looking, well-dressed lawyer in his early fifties.

Rita's daughter, SAMANTHA, about 14 years old, is seated on a couch which is right by the door to the office. She is wearing headphones and scrolling through her music selection paying no attention to the proceedings in the room.

RITA

I don't understand.

TOM

I'm sorry, Rita, but I double checked - it looks like Jim never completed the process with the insurance company.

(CONTINUED)

Rita wraps her arms across her belly and starts to rock a bit.

TOM

He does have a decent amount saved up in his retirement plan, and you'll qualify for Social Security. However, I'd recommend that you sell that big house of yours.

RITA

Sell? Our house?

Rita looks back at her daughter for a moment and then lowers her voice.

RITA

I can't sell the house, Tom. This is where Samantha grew up. She just lost her father - I can't have her lose her home, too.

TOM

There's still a sizable mortgage payment, Rita, and you're a stay-at-home mom. You said yourself that you don't have a degree or any real business skills to speak of since Samantha's been born.

Even if you go back to work, I can assure you, the only way you could afford it is if you work 16 hour days - then she will have lost you as well.

Rita turns to look at her daughter once more. She continues to sit on the couch listening to her music, still oblivious to the conversation.

TOM (O.S.)

(fading)

Think about it, Rita. I know a good agent who can help you. Of course, there's the other alternative we discussed this morning.

Rita stands up and shakes her head.

RITA

Don't, Tom. Don't even put the idea in my head again.

TOM

All I'm saying is you'd probably at least get a sizable settlement. Many of the other victims' families are already positioning themselves for a case.

RITA

(pacing, arms crossed)

For years I've said how ridiculous all the lawsuits are in this country.

It was a tragic accident. Those other people might be willing to drag it out and relive this misery, but I've got to put it behind me and move on with my life.

If the airline offers anything out of good faith, I'll take it and that'll be the end of it. My guess is any extra money these people get in the end, will hardly seem worth rehashing that awful day for years to come.

Tom nods his heads.

TOM

Fair enough.

Rita looks at her daughter once more.

RITA

Go ahead. Give your realtor friend a call.

Tom stands up and moves around his desk. He gives Rita a hug.

TOM

Okay, then. I'll give him a call this afternoon

She gives him a halfhearted smile.

RITA

Thank you, Tom. For everything.

She waves her hand in front of her daughter to gain her attention.

(CONTINUED)

RITA
Come on, Samantha.

Her daughter slowly rises and walks out of the room without a word.

RITA
I'm sorry. She's just not herself right now.

TOM
Don't think I would be either.

Tom follows Rita to the door.

TOM
Take care of yourself. This isn't going to be easy for the two of you.

Rita nods her head.

TOM
I'll be in touch shortly.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

SUPER: 38 YEARS EARLIER

The screams of a woman giving birth echo out into the hall. Clock in the hall says 11:59.

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
STANLEY HIGGINS had been late only once in his entire life. He was always on time...always. In fact, even when he was due to be born, his mother pushed him screaming into the world - ON TIME...

SUPER:

(O)ctober (N)inth, (T)welve (I)nstantly, (M)idnight
(E)xactly. (The first letters come together spelling 'On Time')

The clock hits midnight and the woman's screams subside and are replaced by a baby's cry in the hall.

NARRATOR
Stanley would rather be dead than late.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

SUPER: 43 YEARS LATER

Stanley, 43, is sleeping under a solid color comforter on his bed, which looks barely slept in. The electronic alarm clock sets off at 6:00. Before he has a chance to turn it off, an old-fashioned alarm clock with hammer and bells rings out for attention on his dresser.

He turns off the first alarm, gets out of bed in a v-neck t-shirt and pajama bottoms to turn off the second alarm. Before he reaches that alarm, another electronic alarm goes off - this time in the adjacent bathroom.

INT. STANLEY'S BATHROOM - DAY

Stanley turns off the alarm and turns the cold water on in the sink. He cups both hands under the running water and splashes it on his face. Stan inhales sharply and his eyes go wide with the shock. He wipes his face with a towel and turns on the shower where, naturally, there's another clock suctioned to the tile wall.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dressed in suit and tie, Stan proceeds to slip on not one, not two, but three watches: two metal linking mens watches, and the third one, more slender. He checks the time - all confirm 7:50.

INT. STANLEY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Stan grabs some change from a basket on his nearly clutter free kitchen counter. He drops the change in his pants pocket, picks up a briefcase from beside a small kitchen table for two, and heads out the door.

EXT. STREET IN SMALL CITY - DAY

The sun shines on Stanley as he walks out through the double glass doors of his brick apartment building while looking at his watches, which now read 7:55. He smiles, puts his hand in his suit pocket and jangles the change as he walks.

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.)

This has been Stanley's comfortable routine for the past 15 years - the security blanket that warms him

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)
each day. What Stanley does not
know is that his blanket is about
to be stripped away...forever.

Still jangling the change, Stan strides toward his usual bus stop. He slows upon noticing a scruffy man, HOMELESS GUY, wearing a long, dirty dark green overcoat with an airplane pin on the lapel, ripped jeans and sneakers. The dirt on his face makes his age difficult to determine - he could be 40, or just as well be 60.

Surprisingly, he's perusing the financial section of a newspaper while sitting against a building behind the bus stop's single black metal bench and large matching trash receptacle. Not surprisingly, beside him sits a brown paper bag with the open top of a liquor bottle peeking out. Stan's jangling change is immediately silenced.

Stan takes a seat on the bench in front of homeless guy. He looks as though the marriage of body odor and liquor entering his airspace is about to make him lose his breakfast. He looks at his watches: 8:03.

HOMELESS GUY
(cheerily)
Good mornin'.

Stanley makes a half-turn, enough to see the man's rotting teeth peek out from his haphazard beard. Stan turns his gaze back to the asphalt, a preferable site, before answering unenthusiastically.

STANLEY
Good morning.

Guy's newspaper rustles a bit throughout their conversation.

HOMELESS GUY
Nice day, isn't it?

STANLEY
(without looking)
Mmhmm.

HOMELESS GUY
What's your name, mister?

STANLEY
(another half turn)
I don't have any money.

Guy chuckles a bit, and then speaks slowly almost as if speaking to a child.

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS GUY
I didn't ask you for your money. I
only asked for your name.

STANLEY
(turns back)
Stanley.

He looks at his watches: 8:05.

HOMELESS GUY
Stanleeeey...?

STANLEY
Just Stanley.

HOMELESS GUY
Okay, Just Stanley. Mind if I call
you Mr. Stan? You look like a Mr.
Stan to me.

STANLEY
I don't really care what you do.

HOMELESS GUY
(beat as newspaper rustles)
Want to know my name?

Stan sighs, looks at his watches again and says nothing.

HOMELESS GUY
Of course, not. Well, it's
Guy...Homeless Guy.

Guy laughs to himself as Stanley looks down the street for
the bus - for salvation. The newspaper continues to rustle.

HOMELESS GUY
You live around here?

Stanley seems to consider for a moment whether to answer.

HOMELESS GUY
Hey.

Stanley resigns and rolls his eyes as he quickly responds.

STANLEY
Yeah, I live around here.

HOMELESS GUY
Never been down this way before.
This is a nice spot. Lot more trees
here than downtown.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

Mmhmm.

HOMELESS GUY

So Mr. Stan, what do you do for a living?

Stanley picks up his briefcase and opens it, pretending he has a report to read.

STANLEY

I'm sorry. I need to read this before a meeting I have this morning.

HOMELESS GUY

(scoffs)

Hell, you don't have to make up shit to shut me up, you know. I have more important things to do than keep your ass entertained anyway.

With this, Guy continues to manipulate his newspaper just out of view. Knowing he's been caught in a lie, Stan just puts the report back in his briefcase, snaps it shut and looks at his watches - 8:09. He looks down the street and, to his great relief, sees the bus approaching.

HOMELESS GUY

(serious)

It's only a matter of time, Mr. Stan.

Stanley stands up and furrows his brow wondering what Guy is talking about, but says nothing. Squealing brakes announce the arrival of the bus as it pulls up twenty seconds later. The bus driver is Rita, who looks just a bit older. She cranks the handle and opens the door with a smile.

RITA

Good morning, Stan.

For a moment Stan seems to have forgotten all about Homeless Guy, as he warmly returns Rita's smile.

STANLEY

Morning, Rita.

He steps up into the stairwell, then wipes out as Homeless Guy blurts...

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS GUY

Have yourself a wonderful day, Mr.
Stan!

Rita leaps out of her seat to assist Stan as he grimaces in pain.

RITA

Oh, my God.
(she gives Stan a hand)
Are you alright?

STANLEY

I'm fine.
(shoots Homeless Guy a glare)
Just fine.

Homeless Guy smiles, then puts on a sailor hat he made out of the newspaper. Stan gets up, walks up the stairs and shows Rita his bus pass.

RITA

Okay, how many times do you have to be told? You don't have to show me your pass every single day. I think I can trust you by now.

STANLEY

Habit.

Stan sits in the first row on the left side of the bus and places his briefcase on the seat beside him. There are about 15 people on the bus - typical on his daily commute. Rita closes the door and puts the bus in gear.

They begin pulling away, but Stan can't help himself from stealing another look at Homeless Guy donning his new hat. He's rewarded with another glimpse of Guy's rotting teeth and a friendly wave.

Stan quickly looks away. Rita gives Stan a curious look in the rear view mirror.

RITA

You sure you're okay?

STANLEY

Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks.

RITA

Thank God. I'd been looking forward to this day. It would have put a real damper on it if paramedics had
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RITA (cont'd)
to peel you off my stairs and haul
you off to the hospital.

STANLEY
Why? What's happening today?

RITA
(feigning surprise)
You don't know?

STANLEY
Know what?

RITA
Just like a man not to remember an
anniversary.

A mixture of confusion and nervousness takes over his face.

RITA
Relax, Stan. The anniversary means
more to me than you. Today I've
been driving this route for five
years.

Stan sighs and smiles in relief.

RITA
Which means I've been chauffeuring
you around for the past five years.

He thinks about this for a moment.

STANLEY
(disturbed)
Has it really been that long
already?

Bus pulls up to another stop where an elderly couple is
waiting.

RITA
Well, you know what they say about
time when you're having fun.

The elderly couple quickly gets on and moves to the middle
section of the bus to take their seats. Rita closes the door
and leans conspiratorially toward Stanley.

RITA
FYI...that's how you use the
stairs.

STANLEY

Thanks for the tip.

Rita laughs to herself as she pulls away.

RITA

So, after today, for five years of accident-free service, I get an extra \$75 a week.

STANLEY

Sounds like a nice deal.

RITA

Especially when you only make \$4.25 an hour. Now I can give up moonlighting as a hooker.

Stan's eyes widen and he looks out the window in horror.

RITA

Stan! I'm joking!

He again smiles in relief and looks at his watches.

RITA

So, do you remember our first day?

STANLEY

I probably didn't make a very good impression.

RITA

After you informed me that the previous driver was the best one ever, because he never made you late, or after you told me you could walk to work faster than I was driving?

STANLEY

Sorry about that. I just don't like to be late.

RITA

I know. I'm just hassling you, Stan. Punctuality is a respectable character trait. Don't think I fault you for it.

Just out of curiosity, I've been wondering - have you ever been late - for anything?

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY
(looks away out the window)
Just once.

RITA
(amazed)
Just once? In your whole life? Wow.
So, what were you late for?

STANLEY
(still stares out the window)
I'd really rather not talk about it
if you don't mind.

RITA
Sure. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to
pry or anything.

STANLEY
Don't worry about it.

He looks at his watches and stares out the window. Rita watches him in the mirror with curiosity.

EXT. STANLEY'S OFFICE BUILDING - O'NEIL ACCOUNTING - DAY

The bus pulls up with a squeal in front of the 8-story O'Neil office building. A digital clock and temperature display outside the building shows the time as 8:33. The door opens and Stan steps down the stairwell.

RITA
See you tomorrow.

STANLEY
Yup.

He steps away from the bus, walks across the wide sidewalk, and pushes through the revolving door of the building.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

An elevator door opens and Stanley walks out. He navigates through a maze of contemporary low paneled cubicles, which are nearly devoid of any employees aside from a couple of suits in one cube. Upon seeing Stan, they begin snickering as he approaches.

The one seated at the desk is GEORGE ANDERSON, mid-forties, balding and wearing a suit one size too small and a decade past its prime. The other, leaning his behind against

(CONTINUED)

George's desk with his arms folded, is BRIAN O'NEIL, mid-twenties, tailored suit, confident up-and-comer in the company. The height of his cockiness appears comparable to his seeming lack of work ethic.

BRIAN
(points to clock on wall)
Hey, Stanley, what the hell happened? You're 20 minutes late.

George tucks his head and laughs. Stanley continues to walk past and looks at the clock, which indeed reads 9:20.

STANLEY
Do you really think that one hasn't been tried before, Brian? Next time you might want to recruit a few more employees to come in and actually look busy if you want me to believe that I might actually be late.

Stan keeps walking and covertly pulls up his sleeve to sneak a peek at the time anyway, 8:38, while Brian pushes off of George's desk and begins to follow him.

BRIAN
I'll keep that in mind. Guess I keep forgetting how goddamn smart you are, Sherlock.

STANLEY
Listen, just because you're in line to take the company over in 25 years doesn't mean I have to take shit from you now.

Stan arrives at his cubicle, which is all business - displaying no personal pictures whatsoever, unlike the other cubicles. He puts his briefcase on the worksurface and turns to meet Brian's glare.

STANLEY
Don't you have some photocopies you need to take care of?

BRIAN
Hey, don't you think you should talk to me with just
(pinches thumb and forefinger together)
a little more respect?

STANLEY

I offer my respect to people who deserve it.

BRIAN

(pissed)

Wow, maybe you're not as bright as my dad thinks. You obviously don't realize I could have your ass fired in the next five minutes.

STANLEY

And you obviously give far too much credit to the belief that you're more important to this company than I am...just because your last name matches the one on the building and all the stationary around here.

Brian looks around the office to make sure no one is within earshot. He glares at Stan and lowers his voice.

BRIAN

(points at Stan)

I strongly suggest you watch your tone around me in the future. You really don't know what I'm capable of.

Brian takes his leave, heading into one of the office suites on the side and slams his door.

Stan rubs his neck and then turns on his computer. While it boots up he removes a pile of folders from his briefcase when the elevator door opens. Out steps Frank O'Neil, 60ish.

With a nicely tailored suit and close-cropped gray hair, he carries himself as the owner of the place. But the smile that he displays upon seeing Stan reveals he is not the unapproachable boss - for some, at least. As he draws near to George's cube, he loses his smile -

FRANK

Good morning, George. My son in yet?

GEORGE

Uh, yes, sir. I think he just went into his office.

FRANK

Can you tell him I'll need two extra copies of that report we

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FRANK (cont'd)
discussed for the meeting at eleven
this morning?

GEORGE
Sure, Mr. O'Neil.

George gets up and starts walking in the direction of
Brian's office while Frank proceeds to Stan's desk. Stan is
getting his paperwork organized.

FRANK
Morning, Stan.

STANLEY
(looks up)
Oh, hey, Frank. What brings you
down from the ivory tower today?

Frank leans up against Stan's desk.

FRANK
Come on now. Don't make it sound
like I'm not in touch with my
people or something. And let's not
forget, you've been invited to join
us up in said ivory tower on more
than one occasion. But you just
keep snubbing me at every turn.

STANLEY
(pulls up a spreadsheet on
computer)
I told you before, I work better
among the masses. I don't need the
hassle of worrying about people
conspiring to get my corner office
on a daily basis.

FRANK
Well, we know we've already beat
that horse to death. That's not why
I'm here.

Stan turns to Frank, leans back in his desk chair, folding
his hands on his stomach.

STANLEY
So what's up?

FRANK
Kathy wants you to come to dinner.

Stan sighs and turns away.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

Talk about beating a dead horse.

FRANK

Now hold on a second. She just wants you to meet her niece. She's a really sweet girl, late thirties and, quite frankly, if she weren't my niece -

STANLEY

Please tell Kathy 'thank you', but she's been trying to play matchmaker for me for the past ten years. I'm just not interested.

FRANK

It's been more than three years since she's tried to set you up. At least that's what I was informed of this morning as I tried eating my breakfast.

STANLEY

It's my fault what happened to Sharon, Frank - not your wife's fault. She's off the hook. Just because we were on our way to your house doesn't make you responsible.

Frank looks over to see George going back to his desk.

FRANK

(lowers voice)

Don't you think I've told her that? It doesn't change her wish to try and make it better again.

STANLEY

Is that it? I have to work on Premier's Year End.

FRANK

You won't even come for the free meal?

STANLEY

I'm a single guy, and you pay me pretty damn good. Free meals aren't on the top of my priority list, but thanks.

Resigned, Frank gets up.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Maybe I should cut your pay in half. Then you'd need a two-income household to survive.

Stan gives him a look that says he's done. Frank walks away while speaking almost to himself -

FRANK

Okay. I'm going. I should make you call Kathy to let her know.

Stan turns back to his screen and starts typing as other workers start emerging from the elevator.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Seated near the middle of the bus, Stan gazes out of the window with a bored expression. The brakes squeal as the bus comes to a stop where a band of about ten teenagers, boys and girls about 17 or 18, are hanging out outside of a convenience store.

As passengers board, Stan catches sight of two of the teens as they start making out. At first he turns his head away, but then slowly turns his gaze back at them. He can see the girl from the back, the boy's hands grace her hips. As the door to the bus closes, the boy catches Stan staring. Without a break in his lip-locking stride, he raises one hand to give Stan the bird.

Embarrassed, Stan snaps his attention away from the young couple to read one of the advertisements over the bus window - a Trojans condom ad. He instead finds refuge by turning his attention to his lap just as the bus pulls away.

INT. STANLEY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

We hear a key slip into a door lock, followed by a door opening and closing. Stan drags himself into his kitchen, puts his briefcase down and throws his keys in the basket hitting the loose change that's in it as well.

He opens the freezer to a stockpile of frozen dinners. He removes one without looking at what kind it is, rips it open and pops it in the microwave before leaving the room.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In t-shirt and boxers, Stan watches the news with his remote control in hand. A female NEWSCASTER, 30s, speaks to the audience in a serious tone.

NEWSCASTER

Though a tragic day for those involved at the Pheasant Farms Mall shooting, there are some residents in the area counting their blessings this evening.

The Giovanni family was on their way to the mall just as the shooting began.

A large MRS. GIOVANNI, about 40, is being interviewed. She stands flanked by her son and daughter, both about 8-10 years old. Behind them, yellow police tape surrounds the perimeter as several onlookers go between observing the aftermath of the shooting and checking out the television camera.

Several emergency vehicle lights flash as she speaks with a slight Italian accent, and a few tears in her eyes.

MRS. GIOVANNI

We were supposed to be here when it all happened. But the traffic was very bad, and we ended up running late.

She hugs her children with each arm and kisses them both on the head

MRS. GIOVANNI

I never thought I would be so happy because I was late.

Stan immediately shuts off the TV, leaving him mainly in the dark. He takes a deep breath, slides beneath the covers and clasps his hands behind his head. He thinks back to his ride home.

FLASHBACK:

Wrapped up in their own world, the two teenagers kiss each other passionately on the sidewalk. As we move around the couple, after about 20 seconds, the two teenagers change into Stan and Rita.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, Stan reaches over to his nightstand, slides the small drawer open and pulls out a bottle of lotion.

EXT. STANLEY'S BUS STOP - DAY

Homeless Guy is again perched against the wall of the building at Stan's bus stop - newspaper again in hand. Noticing Guy, Stan's shoulders visibly shrink, and his step slackens. He walks over to the bench and sits down.

HOMELESS GUY
 (looks over top of paper)
 Well, nice to see you again, Mr. Stan.

Stan ignores him and already starts looking at his watches.

HOMELESS GUY
 Come on, now. Not even going to acknowledge my existence? That's not very polite.

Guy places the newspaper on the ground before taking up the brown bag beside him. He makes his way over to the bench, and cranes his neck around to face Stan.

HOMELESS GUY
 This seat taken?

Without waiting for a response, Guy nearly sits on Stan's lap when he doesn't move over. Horrified at the gall of this man, Stan quickly moves out from under him. Guy offers the bag to Stan with a smile.

HOMELESS GUY
 Take a pull?

Stan looks at the bag with disgust.

STAN
 No thanks.

Guy pushes the bag closer to Stan's face.

HOMELESS GUY
 You sure?

Stan sighs, peeks at his watches again and then up the road in the direction where the bus will be coming.

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HOMELESS GUY

Did you really forget the time in that ten second spell from the last time you checked? Hell,
(points at Stan's wrist)
might as well be ticking time bombs on your wrist.

Stan catches a glance at Guy and turns away because the smell is overwhelming.

HOMELESS GUY

(chuckles)
Oh, I apologize. Don't have regular access to toiletries these days.
(gets up)
I'll move back over here - out of nose-shot. Sometimes I even catch a whiff of myself and, wow, I never knew it could get so bad.

Guy sits back down against the building and takes up his newspaper. Stan continues his silence campaign as Guy's newspaper begins to rustle.

HOMELESS GUY

I'd also like to apologize, Mr. Stan. Didn't mean to startle you in front of your girlfriend yesterday.

Stan fidgets in his struggle to keep silent, but quickly loses the battle.

STANLEY

What are you talking about?

HOMELESS GUY

The cute little brunette who drives the bus.

STANLEY

She's not my girlfriend.

The newspaper continues to rustle as Guy goes between looking down at the paper and back up at Stan.

HOMELESS GUY

Well, hell, that's your own fault. Nice looking, experienced woman like that....MmMmm. If I were still a good looking fellow like you, I'd ask her out by...

(looks at empty wrist)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS GUY (cont'd)
 about 5 minutes from now, get her
 some flowers - looks like the
 yellow Tulip type -
 (stands back up)
 pick her up by six tonight,
 (spins around)
 dance by about nine,
 (smiles & gyrates hips)
 and then have her in the sack by
 midnight.

STANLEY
 You're disgusting.

HOMELESS GUY
 No. I'm a man. Oh, wait, that's the
 same thing, ain't it?

Stan says nothing. Guy sits back down and works on his newspaper again. After a couple of thoughtful moments - the bus comes into view.

HOMELESS GUY
 No. You're right. She's a special
 one, I can tell. The respectable
 type...I'd have to wait a bit
 longer to get her in the sack -
 say, 2 am?

Bus pulls up and Stan rises from the bench.

HOMELESS GUY
 It's only a matter of time, Mr.
 Stan.

INT. STANLEY'S BUS - DAY

Rita opens the door and Stan steps up. Just as he's about to put his foot down, he notices pieces of paper on each step. On the first stair is the outline of a shoe on the right side of the paper and instructions on the left "Lift foot, place here (an arrow points to the outline), read next step". On the next step is a sheet of paper with another outline of a shoe, this time on the left, with the same instructions. Stan looks up at Rita.

RITA
 (jokingly)
 Now take it a little slower today,
 okay?

(CONTINUED)

Stan smiles, boards the bus and sits down. Rita closes the door and starts to pull away. Stan looks over to Guy, who's waving his newspaper Tulip like a metronome.

Driving along the usual route, Rita is looking in the rear view at Stan. She opens her mouth to say something, but then thinks better of it. She opens her mouth again.

RITA

Stan, can I ask you a personal question.

STANLEY

Depends on how personal, I guess.

RITA

Why don't you drive? You certainly dress like you can afford a car.

STANLEY

Why do you think I don't drive?

RITA

Did you ever?

STANLEY

Sure. I'm that guy that gives you great pleasure to flip off.

RITA

So'd you lose your license for speeding or did you become one of these earthy crunchy guys who don't want to add more greenhouses gases than necessary to good ole Mother Earth?

STANLEY

Amaxophobia.

RITA

What?

STANLEY

Amaxophobia.

RITA

What the hell is Amaxophobia?

STANLEY

It's a fear of driving in cars.

(CONTINUED)

RITA
(laughing)
Get out. You just made that up.

STANLEY
No, it's real. I assure you. I used
to drive, but I can't anymore.

RITA
Why not?

STANLEY
(looks out window)
Just can't bear the possibility of
causing others harm I guess.

Rita studies him in the rearview mirror for a moment.

RITA
Why? Did you hurt someone, Stan?
(he's still looking out
window)
You don't have to tell me...if you
don't want to.

STANLEY
(turns back to Rita)
Yes...I hurt someone.

RITA
I'm sorry.

STANLEY
Nothing for you to be sorry about.
(beat)
I've never really spoken about it -
to anyone.

Stan looks back out the window as Rita pulls up to the bus
stop. She lets on a single passenger and takes off again.

Rita goes back and forth between watching the road and
glancing at Stan before she speaks up.

RITA
An event makes you stop driving,
and you talk about it to no one?

Stan returns her look in the mirror.

STANLEY
I didn't feel like rehashing
a painful subject with people I
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY (cont'd)
knew. Or worse, with people I
didn't even know. I simply chose to
move on with my life.

RITA
You moved on? Again, an event stops
you from driving, ever again, and
you talk about it to no one?

Stan remains silent for a moment.

STANLEY
Maybe I will talk to someone about
it - someday.

RITA
So let's talk, Stan.

STANLEY
(scoffs)
I can't talk about it now.

RITA
Why not?

STANLEY
I haven't even thought about it.
I'm not ready.

RITA
Don't think. Just start talking.
(looks at him in mirror)
How long has it been?

Stan shifts in his seat and rubs his neck. After a moment he
wipes his palms on the front of his slacks and replies -

STANLEY
A long time. Sometimes it seems
like forever. And then sometimes
only like yesterday.

Someone rings the bell for the next stop. Rita pulls over to
let the passenger off. She speaks as she closes the door and
pulls away.

RITA
I'm still listening, Stan.

It takes Stan a moment to consider. He puts his arms across
his chest.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I was married once.

Rita raises her eyebrows in surprise.

RITA

You were?

STANLEY

Eight whole months...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Small, tidy bathroom. SHARON, an attractive young woman in her mid-twenties, applies her mascara in the bathroom mirror.

STANLEY (O.S.)

Come on, Sharon, or we're gonna be late.

SHARON

(relaxed)

Almost ready.

Stanley peeks his head around the doorway. He watches her face in the mirror and for a moment forgets himself.

STANLEY

You do this to me on purpose, don't you?

SHARON

I told you - I'm not arriving an hour early anymore just to sit and wait outside in a car. It won't kill you to be a little late for once.

Sharon begins to apply lipstick.

STANLEY

It might not kill me, but dinner at my boss' house is kind of a big deal. I want to make a good first impression.

Sharon finishes applying the lipstick. She turns, saunters over to Stanley and wraps her arms around his neck.

(CONTINUED)

SHARON

You've been invited to your boss' house for dinner - that means you've already made a good first impression.

They both lean in for a kiss.

STANLEY

(breaking the embrace)

Come on. We really have to get going. Supposed to be there by 7:00.

Sharon rolls her eyes a bit, picks up her watch from the side of the sink, slides it on her wrist and snaps the light off.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Stan and Sharon drive along a rural road. Houses are close enough together, but not close enough to make out someone dressing in an open window.

Stanley guns the engine. He passes by a speed limit sign which reads "40". Sharon leans over exaggeratedly to take a look at the speedometer, which is pushing 65.

SHARON

Might want to ease off the gas there a bit, Earnhardt. Speed limit's 40 here.

Stan looks at the car clock: 6:55.

STANLEY

Almost there. We might just make it.

A moment later Stan comes up fast on another car, tailgating with a vengeance. He swings the car over the dividing line a couple of times to see if the car is passable. Unable to see far enough ahead, he exclaims -

STANLEY

Come on!

SHARON

(exasperated)

Stan, will you relax, please? And slow the hell down.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

If we'd left when I asked you to, I
wouldn't be in such a goddamn rush.

SHARON

(under her breath)
If you weren't such a freak about
being on time, we wouldn't be in
such a goddamn rush.

STANLEY

(shoots her a glare)
What was that?

SHARON

Nothing. Just watch what you're
doing.

At this, Stan honks his horn at the law abiding driver and swings hard to the left to pass him around a corner. He guns the car to pass when another car flashes into view.

SHARON

(braces against the dash)
Stan!

With the car on his right, Stan has no alternative but to swing further to the left, but the cars still collide, sending Stan's car into a multiple flip off the side of the road and into the woods. Glass and metal explode in Stan's ears before the car rocks to a stop on its side.

Stan is still strapped in his seatbelt. The passenger side is smashed in, and Sharon is smashed with it. Stan's forehead is covered with blood.

STANLEY

(dazed)
Sharon?
(no answer)
Sharon, are you okay?

He lifts and turns his head with great difficulty. Sharon's lifeless eyes stare back at him - her neck is broken. The radio continues to play. Stanley looks at the clock: 7:01. Stanley passes out.

INT. BUS - DAY

RITA
 (looking upset)
 I'm so sorry.

STANLEY
 It was a long time ago.

Rita pulls up to Stan's stop. Stan grabs his briefcase with his right hand and stands up to walk toward the door, but Rita doesn't open it. He looks at her. She takes up his free hand in hers and squeezes it affectionately.

RITA
 (stares up intently in Stan's eyes)
 You're a good man, Stan. You must know that it was just an accident.

He looks at her for a moment and offers a half-hearted smile.

STANLEY
 In that case...I'm not so sure. But thanks for listening, Rita. See you tomorrow.

Rita nods her head with a sympathetic look, releases his hand and opens the door. Stan steps off and makes his way toward the building.

EXT. STANLEY'S OFFICE BUILDING - O'NEIL ACCOUNTING - DAY

Stanley walks zombie-like toward the building and through the revolving doors as the bus pulls away.

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Stanley starts walking over to the elevators where a couple of coworkers are waiting, a YOUNG WOMAN, in her late twenties, and a YOUNG MAN, about the same age. They are standing within flirting distance.

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)
 (laughing flirtatiously)
 I know. That was hysterical.

Stanley walks up and stands off to the side a bit.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN

Hey, Stan.

STANLEY

(a bit slow to respond)

Hey.

The young woman offers Stan a smile. Though she's obviously in his eyeline, he seems not to notice, so she quickly retracts the smile and looks toward the elevator door as it begins to open.

YOUNG MAN

You okay, man? You don't look so hot.

STANLEY

What? Yeah, sure. I'm fine. Excuse me.

Stanley turns and makes a beeline for the lobby restroom, his eyes reddening with every step. He slams open the restroom door.

INT. OFFICE RESTROOM - DAY

Stan rushes into the bathroom and quickly surveys beneath the stall doors to see if anyone else is in the room. When he finds the room clear, he rushes into one of the stalls and slams the door behind him. He places his briefcase on the ground and sits on the edge of the toilet. Cradling his forehead in his hands, he begins sobbing.

CUT TO:

Stan opening the stall door and looking at his watches: 8:54. He quickly turns the water on and splashes his face. His red eyes make him look like he's been drinking for hours. He grabs a couple of paper towels and swiftly dries his face before heading for the door.

INT. STANLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The elevator door opens and Stan steps out. Brian sees him come out, looks at his watch (8:58) and makes a trajectory toward Stan.

BRIAN

(walking & smiling)

Hey, Stan!

(points at watch)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN (cont'd)
Cutting it a bit close there today,
aren't ya buddy?

Stanley brushes hard into Brian's shoulder as he walks toward his desk. He sits down, opens his briefcase and starts his work.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Stanley is already sitting on the bench. Guy is doing his usual with the newspaper.

HOMELESS GUY
I notice you're a bit later than usual lately. Been going an extra round with Mary Palm in the morning?

STANLEY
I used to get a little peace and quiet here. Have to stay home to get that now.

HOMELESS GUY
I'm hurt. You don't enjoy our little chats?

STANLEY
Not particularly.

Guy manipulates his paper some more.

HOMELESS GUY
(beat)
You know, Mr. Stan, I was just like you once.

STANLEY
(scoffs)
I highly doubt that.

HOMELESS GUY
No, really, I was. Happier now, though.

STANLEY
You can't be serious.

HOMELESS GUY
(smiles)
Homelessness: don't knock it til you try it.

(CONTINUED)

He takes a pull from his liquor bottle.

HOMELESS GUY

No more life-sucking meetings,
bills, taxes, kissing up to bosses
who don't give a God damn about
your real hopes and dreams.

STANLEY

No one to love you.

HOMELESS GUY

Well now, who can you say really
loves you? Besides your mommy, I
mean.

Stan stays silent for a moment and looks at his watches.

STANLEY

Plenty of people love me.

HOMELESS GUY

Hey, I've got lots of friends too.
Being homeless doesn't make me any
less charming and lovable than I
was when I had a regular roof over
my head.

Stan turns to look over at Guy. He rewards Stan with a flash of his smile and a few bats of his eyelashes. Stan rolls his eyes and catches a glimpse the bus approaching. He gets off the bench.

HOMELESS GUY

It's only a matter of time.

STANLEY

(irritated)

Why do you keep saying that? What's
only a matter of time?

HOMELESS GUY

Why "it", of course.

STANLEY

You're infuriating.

HOMELESS GUY

That's funny. That's what my wife
used to say.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY
(under his breath)
I'm sure she did.

The bus pulls to a stop. Rita opens the door and gives Stan a curious look as he boards.

INT. BUS - DAY

Rita takes note of Stan's irritated look as he boards.

RITA
Hi Stan. Everything okay?

STANLEY
Sure. Why?

RITA
Nothing. Just checking.

Stan looks confused by Rita's comments. As he goes to sit, he sees Guy holding a large newspaper heart in front of his chest. Stan shakes his head and falls into his seat.

The bus chugs along, and just prior to reaching the next stop, the engine begins to sputter.

RITA
Oh, no. Come on, baby. Don't do
this to me now.

Rita gives the bus more gas and the engine gets worse until eventually the bus stops altogether.

STANLEY
What's wrong?

RITA
(pulls out cell phone)
Don't know. I'm calling the
terminal now to send over a new
bus.

Stan begins rubbing his neck as Rita dials.

STANLEY
You can't fix it?

Rita puts the phone up to her ear and gives Stan a crazy look.

(CONTINUED)

RITA
Do I look like a mechanic to you?
(into phone)
Oh, hey Steve. Can you send another
bus over and get mine checked out?
The thing just died on me.
(beat)
I have no idea.
(beat)
Okay, thanks.

Rita stands up and faces the passengers.

RITA
The other bus should be along soon,
everyone. If you can just sit tight
for a bit. Sorry for the
inconvenience.

Stanley squirms in his seat and continues rubbing his neck
as the time passes. Once his watches hit 8:31, he snatches
up his briefcase and stands up with urgency.

STANLEY
Open the doors please, Rita.

RITA
They really can't be much longer,
Stan. Please, just sit down and re-

STANLEY
I said open the goddamn doors.

RITA
(eyebrows furrowed)
Okay, okay.

Rita opens the doors and Stanley leaps off the stairwell
onto the sidewalk, and takes off down the street. Rita looks
out at him like she's just caught the Pope wearing a pink
tutu.

EXT. STREET IN SMALL CITY - DAY

With briefcase in hand, Stan soars down the sidewalk,
passing stores and curious onlookers. His suitcoat flaps up
in the breeze. As he passes by the other bus stops, he
shouts out to those waiting as though he's saving them from
a fire.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY
The bus is broken down!

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Stan pushes through the revolving door and looks up at the large clock in the lobby - 8:58. He runs at full speed toward the elevators, missing both as their doors close in his face. He feverishly pushes the "up" button and then looks at the display showing the light crawling up each floor slowly, painfully. Stan can't wait - he bolts for the stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Stan flies up the stairs and pushes through the door.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Stan comes through the door and finds six employees, including Brian, standing by his desk.

MALE EMPLOYEE #1
Shiiit.

BRIAN
(looks over to see Stan)
Ha. Told you he'd make it. Pay up, gentlemen.

The other employees hand \$20 each over to a very happy Brian. All, save Brian, immediately disperse to their desks as Stan walks over.

BRIAN
I almost thought hell had frozen over. I had my song all ready to go.

As he catches his breath, Stan waves for Brian to move away from his desk. Brian moves off to the side.

STANLEY
(annoyed)
And what song might that be?

BRIAN
(smirking)
Oh, no. I can't sing it now. I have to wait for the big day to arrive or it wouldn't be appropriate.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

Go ahead and just sing it, Brian.
I'm sure you're just bursting
inside to let it out, so do it.

Brian looks around the office and considers.

BRIAN

You sure you want to hear it?

STANLEY

I'm all ears.

Brian clears his throat and in his deepest baritone voice sings out loud and clear to the melody of 'Danny Boy'.

BRIAN

Oh, Stanny Boy, the clocks,
the clocks are calling.
From wrist to wrist, and
upon the office walls.
The time is gone, and all
your heart is dying.
Tis time til you must go
and you must fly.

Brian carries the last note and then stops and smirks at Stan. A couple of people start to applaud and then others join in as Brian's singing was actually surprisingly good. Stan shakes his head and asks -

STANLEY

So is that it?

BRIAN

Well, I'm still working on the
other verses. I figured I'd have a
little more time to work on it.

People get back to work and Stan sits at his desk and waits for Brian to take a hint and walk away.

BRIAN

So?

STANLEY

So, what?

BRIAN

So did you like it?

STANLEY

Don't you have any real work to do?

BRIAN

Nothing this fun.

Brian smiles and finally takes his leave. Stan watches him go into his office and shut the door. Stan rubs his neck, runs his hand through his hair and starts typing away on his computer.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Guy is shelling peanuts from a small bag. While eating the nuts, he makes three point shots with the shells into the trash can beside the bench. Guy takes a break from the nuts to take a swig from his liquor bottle. He takes up another nut, shells it and throws the shell, this time hitting Stan in the back of the head. Stan snaps around in his seat.

HOMELESS GUY

Whoops. Sorry. Aim ain't what it used to be.

Stan turns back slowly. Guy looks at Stan and seems lost in thought for a moment before placing the bag of nuts on the ground. He works on his next paper masterpiece.

HOMELESS GUY

So, you know -

STANLEY

(turns angrily)

Listen. Are you going to do this everyday?

HOMELESS GUY

(feigns innocence)

What?

STANLEY

This.

(waves hand at where Guy sits)

Sitting here everyday. Why do you need to sit right there? Out of all the places in this city - right there.

Guy looks serious for a moment and then looks as though he's going to cry before belting out his best Richard Gere impersonation -

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS GUY

I got nowhere else to go!

Stanley turns back to the street.

STANLEY

Oh, for Christ's sake. Do you take anything seriously?

HOMELESS GUY

You take enough seriously for the both of us, Mr. Stan.

Stan says nothing and looks at his watches.

HOMELESS GUY

Actually, I did want to speak to you - seriously - about something today.

STANLEY

(turns & feigns amazement)
Really??

Turns away again.

HOMELESS GUY

Well, don't patronize me now. Just 'cuz I'm homeless doesn't mean I'm an idiot.

Works on his newspaper.

HOMELESS GUY

You know, there are some people who only have a fleeting -
(pinches fingers together)
chance to meet that one special person -

STANLEY

(rolls eyes)
Oh, God. Are you giving me dating advice?

Without breaking stride, Guy continues -

HOMELESS GUY

- Decide to leave that bar just one minute too early, and Mrs. Right walks through the door with her girlfriends while you've already slipped your key in the ignition.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I don't drive.

HOMELESS GUY

Mmm, poor example. Just pay attention, Mr. Stan. You're already going home and you never even had a glimpse of the woman of your dreams - the one you would have grown old with.

You see, that's really the way it is for some people. Look all their lives...and nothing.

But you, you get to see the woman of your dreams every Monday through Friday, and you do nothing absolutely nothing about it to lasso her in.

STANLEY

I assume you're talking about Rita. I don't understand, number one, why you think Rita is some kind of soul mate for me and, two, why the hell you care?

HOMELESS GUY

Because I see the way you look at those watches each morning - just waiting.

STANLEY

I don't like to be late.

HOMELESS GUY

That or you just can't wait to see that woman open those doors for you each day.

STANLEY

Yeah, that's it.

HOMELESS GUY

You laugh, Mr. Stan, but I don't think it's funny. You know why?

STANLEY

I'm sure you'll tell me.

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS GUY

Because it's sad - that you need her, and believe it or not, she needs you, but you just can't stand the thought of someone messing with your little routine - this cocoon you wrap yourself up in every day to keep you from dealing with real life shit.

The bus is in view and Stan gets up slowly.

STANLEY

You know, this is getting ridiculous. I'm just going to ignore you from now on.

HOMELESS GUY

That won't change the facts, Jack. You need to break free. You miss 100% of the chances you don't take.

STANLEY

Let me guess...you owe your current social status to a gambling addiction.

The bus pulls up.

HOMELESS GUY

It's only a matter of time.

Stan turns to see Guy with a newspaper butterfly in hand. Stanley gets on the bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Rita gives Stan a more reserved smile than usual as he boards the bus.

STANLEY

Hello, Rita.

RITA

Stan.

Stan takes his seat and watches Rita as she closes the door and pulls away. Stan continues to study her. She's not her usual bubbly self, so Stan takes the unusual initiative to start the conversation.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

So, have a nice evening last night?

Rita doesn't appear to notice that Stan is speaking to her. A bit out of his element, he stares out the window and seems to just give up before he even starts. But he takes a deep breath and turns back to Rita again.

STANLEY

Sorry I snapped at you yesterday.

Rita snaps out of her fog and looks at Stanley in the rearview.

RITA

I'm sorry, Stan. Did you say something?

STANLEY

Nothing really. You seem a bit distracted today. You okay?

RITA

Is it that obvious?

STANLEY

I'm not sure what it is. But it certainly has your attention.

Rita pulls over to pick up a couple of passengers.

RITA

(to passengers)

Good morning, folks.

They nod and take their seats. Rita pulls away and lowers her voice to Stan.

RITA

It just happens to be the anniversary of my husband's death.

STANLEY

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to press.

RITA

You hardly pressed, Stan. I wouldn't have told you if I didn't want to.

STANLEY

How long has it been?

RITA

Six years. The longest six years of my life. I guess that means I haven't had much fun in that time.

STANLEY

I know it's not really my business - but do you mind telling me how he passed.

RITA

So long as you promise not to make a big deal out of it.

STANLEY

Why would I do that?

RITA

Because everyone does. I actually started lying about how he died to people that didn't really know me. People don't make such a big deal out of it when I say he had an everyday heart attack.

STANLEY

If you're trying to pique my curiosity, you're succeeding fabulously.

Rita pulls over again and picks up one passenger, JOE, a businessman in his late thirties.

RITA

(cheerily)

Morning, Joe.

JOE

Hello sweetheart.

Stan raises his eyebrows in curiosity at this.

RITA

What are you doing on the bus so early today?

JOE

Boss wants us all in for an early meeting with some home office big wigs that are in town today.

(CONTINUED)

RITA

Fun.

JOE

Not really.
(glances at Stan)
Guess my usual seat is taken.

Stanley actually looks a bit jealous.

RITA

Yeah, sorry. This is Stan. He's my
first run co-pilot each morning.

JOE

(offers his hand to Stan)
Nice to meet you, Stan.

STANLEY

(works up a smile)
Likewise.

JOE

I'll grab a spot in the back.

Rita shuts the door and continues down the route.

STANLEY

Seems like a nice guy.

RITA

Yeah, he is.
(lowers voice)
He actually asked me out a couple
of weeks ago.

STANLEY

Really?

Stan takes a look behind him to size Joe up a bit more.

STANLEY

So, did you guys go out?

RITA

No. I told him I don't like to date
guys who just divorced the week
before.

STANLEY

He just divorced?

(CONTINUED)

RITA

Third time too. I don't plan on trying out for wife number four.

Stanley visibly relaxes upon hearing this.

STANLEY

Maybe you're the reason he divorced number three.

RITA

Stan! You make it sound like I'm a homewrecker.

STANLEY

I meant it as a compliment. Maybe he thought he'd have a chance with you if he were single again.

RITA

(chuckles)

If he asks me out five more times and I'm still single, I might reconsider my position. That should give me another couple months to think about it.

Stanley shifts in his seat to look back at Joe once more, then turns back to Rita.

STANLEY

So, you almost got out of telling me about your husband.

Rita becomes serious again.

RITA

Do you remember the TransWorld plane crash several years ago?

STANLEY

Your husband was on that flight?

RITA

You catch on quick.

STANLEY

I'm sorry, Rita.

RITA

Well, like you said to me about your wife, it was a long time ago.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I know, but I can't imagine having the death of my wife broadcast all over the news for two weeks straight.

RITA

It's one of the more sensational ways to go, I guess. It didn't bother me too much. I made it quite clear to the press that I didn't want to be involved in their please-feel-sorry-for-me-America interviews, so they pretty much left me alone.

Shortly after the crash, though, I remember getting into an all out battle with my daughter because I refused to let her turn on the TV for a month. I just couldn't risk her seeing it on the news. She told me point blank to stop treating her like a baby.

Learning that your only child is no longer innocent shortly after losing the person you were expecting to spend the rest of your life with was a bitter pill to swallow.

Rita picks up a couple more passengers and takes off again.

STANLEY

I guess I should consider myself lucky that my wife and I didn't have any kids. It was enough trying to deal with my own emotions. I would have been too selfish to help someone else through their baggage too.

RITA

I'd have to disagree on that front. God, I would have been even more of a mess if she wasn't there to keep me grounded.

Stan gives an understanding nod, but then keeps quiet for the rest of the trip.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Stan steps out of the elevator. Brian's muffled voice can be heard down the hall. Still early, they are the only ones in the office. Stan begins heading over to his desk, but as he hears Brian laughing, he pauses for a moment and then takes a detour by his office.

INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Brian has his feet propped up on his desk with a big smile on his face.

BRIAN

If he was ever late with a report,
or anything, he'd probably grab the
nearest letter opener and commit
hari kari right on the spot.

(beat)

I'm serious. The guy's a total nut
job.

Stan knows he is talking about him as he stands by the doorway.

BRIAN

Okay, I'll see you at 7:00.
(swings feet from desk)
Love you too, Sam. Bye.

Stan quickly moves away from the door and over to his desk. Brian steps out of his office as Stan boots up his computer.

BRIAN

Hey, Stan, you're in early. Oh
wait, you're always in early,
aren't you?
(walks over to Stan's desk)
I guess it's pretty easy getting
out of bed in the morning when
there's no one in it worth staying
for.

STAN

I guess you'd know. It must be
really tough leaving your boyfriend
alone in the morning.

The comment gives Brian pause.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN

What the hell are you talking about?

STANLEY

Don't worry, Brian. Your secret's safe with me.

BRIAN

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

STANLEY

Sam - your boyfriend.

Brian gives Stan a death glare.

BRIAN

Were you just spying on me?

STANLEY

Just passing through. Can't help what my ears overhear; especially coming from a big mouth like yours. I'm sure a big mouth on a man is quite attractive to some guys though.

Stan smiles at Brian and opens his briefcase to take out some files.

BRIAN

Not that it would be any of your business, but you don't know what the hell you're talking about.

STANLEY

Like I said, Brian, your secret's safe with me. I couldn't care less.

BRIAN

(leans hands on desk)
Someday my father will find out what a real prick you are.

STANLEY

(scoffs)
Me?? Take a good look in the mirror, jackass.

Brian pushes his hands from the desk and stares at Stan, who is now typing away on his computer paying him no mind. After a few moments, Brian retreats to his office and shuts the door. Stan's mouth turns up in a grin that would make the Cheshire Cat look depressed.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Stanley sees the bus approaching from up the road a ways. Guy has his head bent, eyebrows furrowed, as he manipulates his newspaper. Stan turns to see Guy looking far more serious than usual.

STANLEY

Well, I guess I should thank you.

HOMELESS GUY

(serious)

And why's that?

STANLEY

This is the first time you've given me any peace and quiet in over two weeks.

Guy scoffs at his comment and continues his work.

STANLEY

So...why so quiet today?

HOMELESS GUY

Just thinking. A bit worried.

STANLEY

(chuckles)

You? Worried? About what? That you won't panhandle enough for a decent bottle of gin today?

Stan gets up as the bus pulls over.

HOMELESS GUY

It's -

STANLEY

(interrupts)

- only a matter of time. I know.

Just before Rita opens the door, Stan steals another glance at Guy, who is donning his newspaper Pope hat. Guy has his hands folded in prayer and looks into Stan's eyes intently. The seriousness of Guy's gaze puts Stan a bit on edge.

INT. BUS - DAY

RITA
Top of the morning.

STANLEY
To you too, Rita.

Stan sits down, the doors close, and they're off. Rita looks at Stan through the rearview mirror. He looks a bit worried as he stares out the window.

RITA
How are you doing today, Stan?

Stan snaps out of it and looks at Rita.

STANLEY
Fine. And you?

RITA
Well, since you asked, I'm doing great. My daughter called last night - she's on track for the Dean's list again with a 3.8 GPA.

STANLEY
That's great. Smart like her mom, I guess.

RITA
Oh, she's a lot smarter than me.

STANLEY
You seem like a pretty sharp lady to me.

Rita smiles at this.

RITA
Not sure you're being entirely truthful, but my ego appreciates the sentiment nonetheless.

Stan smiles and looks back out the window.

RITA
Stan, how come all of a sudden in the last couple of weeks you've finally been really talking to me?

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY
(confused)
What do you mean?

RITA
I mean, you've been sitting about five feet away from me every weekday for over five years and I don't think you knew anything about me until recently.

STANLEY
I know you have a daughter in college.

RITA
No fair. And besides, I'm the one who, again, volunteered that information.

STANLEY
It's your business. If you wanted me to know things, then you would tell me.

RITA
Come on, Stan. That's what humans do. We love to communicate: share thoughts and ideas. But each day you'd pretty much just sit there and say nothing.

STANLEY
You see all these other people each day, too.

RITA
But you're the one who sits within conversation distance.

STANLEY
Maybe I just don't feel I'm an interesting person to talk to.

RITA
(chuckles)
Oh, no. You're interesting all right. I don't know one person in this world that would rather run all the way downtown because he can't wait for another bus.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

(almost ashamed)

I was wondering when that was going to come up. I don't like to be late.

RITA

I know, Stan. But do you really believe it would be the end of the world if you were?

Stan shrugs his shoulders as Rita pulls up to the next bus stop. An older WOMAN in her sixties and a middle aged MAN with his hands stuffed in an oversize jacket get on. The man has a bit of a glazed look in his eyes. Rita gives them both a smile and shuts the door.

Rita pulls away from the curb as she watches them both take their seats. There's something about the man that puts her on edge and she watches him in the mirror. Her sixth sense kicks in as she catches him staring back at her with a menacing look. He pulls his right hand out of his pocket: it's wrapped around the butt of a gun.

RITA

(under her breath)

Shit.

The man stands up and walks toward the front of the bus with the gun poised at the floor. A couple of passengers in the back gasp in fright upon seeing the weapon. Rita starts to slow down.

MAN

(raises gun to Rita)

Don't you dare slow down, bitch. You just keep driving til I tell you to stop, understand?

She dutifully nods her head and presses the gas. The man turns his attention to the passengers.

MAN

Listen up, people! Let's make this real easy. Everyone's gonna move to the back so I can keep an eye on you. Then you're all gonna reach into your purses and wallets and start handing me all of your cash. All of it.

Just pass it up to the person in front of you until it gets to me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAN (cont'd)

And don't any of you dare fuck with me. I've used this before, and I have no problem using it on any asshole who gives me trouble.

Those closer to the front quickly get up and move toward the back as instructed. Stan looks at his watches and gets up, but not quickly enough. The robber grabs Stan's collar and pulls him past.

MAN

Let's go, dumb ass!

The passengers start pulling out their money and passing it down to the robber, who then stuffs the cash in his pockets. Rita watches from the rear view.

MAN

Come on, hurry up!
(to Stan)

What about you there? I haven't seen you make a move toward your wallet yet.

STANLEY

I don't carry cash.

MAN

Yeah, sure you don't. There's an asshole in every crowd. Hand over your wallet.

STANLEY

I'm telling the truth.

MAN

Listen, buddy, let's just make sure, okay? Hand it over or I'm going to shoot this nice lady in the leg.

He aims the gun at the woman who came on the bus with him. She starts whimpering, so Stan pulls out his wallet and hands it over. The robber begins rifling through it.

MAN

Well, shit, dumb ass, you were telling the truth.

The robber pistol whips the woman anyway, knocking her out.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY
(attending to the woman)

Hey!

She starts bleeding on the side of her forehead, making the passengers even more anxious.

MAN
(to Stan)
Remember, that was your fault. Next time, just do as you're told.

Ok! Let's finish this up, people!

Stan is furious. Rita can see it in his eyes that he's going to do something stupid. So she swings the bus hard left and right to throw the robber off balance. Stanley takes the opportunity and coldcocks him instantly. The passengers start cheering.

Stan grabs the gun from the man's limp hand and strikes him in the head with it even though he's already knocked out. The cheering stops. Rita slows the bus to a stop on the side of the road.

A YOUNG MAN #2 in the back pulls out his cell phone.

YOUNG MAN #2
I'll call the police.

STANLEY
(looks at watches)
Tell them to meet us at the O'Neil building downtown.

YOUNG MAN #2
Why? We're not even close to O'Neil.

STANLEY
(intently)
Tell them the O'Neil building.

Young Man #2 takes notice that Stan still has the gun in hand. The passengers look at each other in confusion. Stan walks back to the front of the bus.

STANLEY
Start driving.

RITA
Stan, you can't be serious.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

Please! Just start driving! I don't have time to sit around waiting for the police to show up.

Rita doesn't move. She just stares at Stan like he's a madman.

RITA

We're not going anywhere, Stan. You're gonna sit down and we're going to wait for the police to arrive. And would you mind putting that gun away.

He looks at the gun, seeming to notice it for the first time. He puts it on the seat behind Rita, but then takes her arm up, coaxing her out of the driver's seat.

RITA

What are you doing??

STANLEY

I'm sorry. I have to get to work.
You!
(pointing at Young Man #2)
Can you drive?

YOUNG MAN #2

A car.

STANLEY

Come up here.

Rita pushes Stan out of the way.

RITA

(annoyed)
I'll do it.

Rita sits in the driver's seat and pulls out into traffic. Everyone is dead silent. Young man # 2 sits on a bench and places a foot on top of the robber in case he stirs awake.

EXT. STANLEY'S OFFICE BUILDING - O'NEIL ACCOUNTING - DAY

Rita pulls up and the door opens. Stan steps off and turns around to face her.

STANLEY

Thank you, Rita. You have no i-

(CONTINUED)

RITA
 (while closing the door)
 You've got serious issues, Stanley.

Rita pulls away. Stan watches as the bus pulls off on the corner side street beside the building to get out of traffic's way. He looks at his watches and moves toward the revolving door.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Stan walks through the revolving doors and heads for the elevator. While pressing the button, he looks outside through the glass lobby and sees two police cars pull up with their lights flashing. The elevator door opens and he steps inside. He presses the button and the doors close him in.

The elevator doors open on Stan's floor. He steps out, walks over to the window and looks outside to the street below to see the police cars behind the bus. Rita and the passengers are outside the bus giving statements to a couple of officers, while another officer pulls the robber, handcuffed, out of the bus and directing him into one of the cruisers.

Stan runs a hand through his hair before walking away from the window.

LATER:

Stan is printing out about a 100 page report at his desk. He grabs the paperwork from the printer, fans through the pages to make sure everything is there and places it in the top drawer of his pedestal. Brian suddenly appears and notices as Stan locking the report away in his desk drawer.

BRIAN
 My dad wanted me to ask you if the
 Networkmaster report will be done
 by the 2:00 meeting tomorrow.

Stan gives Brian a look like he's full of shit. After a beat
 -

BRIAN
 Helllooooo. Did you hear me?

STANLEY
 When have I ever been late with a
 report? What do you want, Brian?
 Your dad didn't tell you to ask me
 anything.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN
Jesus. Don't you believe anything I
say?

Stan looks up in the air contemplating, as if trying to remember just one time he believed Brian.

BRIAN
Forget it.

Brian walks away and Stan shakes his head.

INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Brian has his laptop out and is writing on a thick stack of papers in a folder. Through the blinds to the main office area, he notices Stan get up and move toward the men's room.

Brian slams the folder shut, grabs it and shoots out of his office. He walks over to Stan desk. He takes a quick look around, then pretending to trip, he lets the lot of papers fly all over the floor by Stan's desk. Brian shouts out for effect -

BRIAN
Damn it!

No one seems to really pay attention. As Brian starts putting the papers back in the folder, he looks at the lock core on the desk and notes the number code. He startles as Stan's voice comes from behind.

STANLEY
Can I help you?

Brian holds up the last remaining papers for show and stuffs them back in the folder.

BRIAN
Just dropped these. Sorry.

Stan eyes Brian suspiciously as he gets up, walks back to his office and shuts the door.

INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Brian tosses the folder onto his desk and picks up the phone. He dials a three digit number. The phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN

Hey, Joe. It's Brian. I think I may have lost the key to my desk and I need a new one right away. How soon can you have one made?

(beat)

That's great.

(beat)

The code? Hold on, let me check.

Brian pretends to take a moment to look for the lock number as he swings his legs up onto the desk.

BRIAN

Oh, I see it. It says 145R. Is that all you need?

(beat)

Perfect. Thanks, Joe.

Brian hangs up the phone with a big grin.

BRIAN

Thank you very much.

INT. BUS - DAY

The doors open on Stan's bus. Stan's head is hung in shame for the benefit of Rita, but instead he finds DICK, 60ish, gruff, and apparently incapable of a smile - the substitute driver.

STANLEY

Oh, hi. Uh, where's Rita?

DICK

I'm Dick. Nice to meet you, too. Rita's takin' a little break after yesterday's events.

STANLEY

Is she okay?

DICK

You her boyfriend?

STANLEY

No.

DICK

Then that's probably considered confidential. I've got a schedule to keep, mister - you in or out?

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

Oh, sorry.

Stan steps up and sits down in his usual spot. Dick turns in his seat and proceeds to stare at Stan.

DICK

(eyes widen)

Do you usually ride for free?

STANLEY

(confused)

What? No.

DICK

Then you mind payin' up?

STANLEY

(fishes for wallet)

Oh, sorry.

DICK

(under his breath)

Yeah, think I heard that once before.

Stan pulls out and displays his pass. Dick accepts its authenticity, turns back in the driver's seat, and pulls away from the curb.

Stan looks around the bus and sees the regulars are on it. He's greeted with looks of disdain. He turns back and looks out the window; where Guy usually sits, there is no one. Stan furrows his brow a bit at this.

INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Stan is sitting at his desk working when he takes a look at the office clock, which reads 1:45. He takes out his keys, about to open his desk when his phone rings. He stops and picks it up on the second ring.

STANLEY

Higgins desk.

FRANK (O.S.)

Hey, Stan. Can you get that report up to me? These guys should be showing up shortly.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I was just getting ready to come up.

FRANK (O.S.)

Great. Thanks.

Stan hangs up and finishes unlocking the drawer. He slides the drawer open to find his file? Of course not.

He opens the drawer wider, bending his head to see if the file has slipped to the back. After rummaging through a couple of other files in the drawer, he opens the lower drawer - nothing. He flips through some files stacked on his desk increased intensity and panic.

He opens the top drawer again and when he finds nothing yet again, he slams the drawer shut drawing some attention from his co-workers. Stan begins rubbing his neck. His eyes then phase from confusion to revelation, to anger.

A bookwormish WOMAN, 30ish, who sits near Stan, sneezes into a tissue and says -

WOMAN

Something wrong, Stan?

As if not hearing her, he springs from his chair with fire in his eyes, making a beeline to Brian's office. The door is closed.

INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Brian is on the phone laughing with his feet perched on his desk when Stan slams the door open. Brian swings his legs off the desk.

BRIAN

Ah, hey. Can I call you right back?
Thanks.

Brian looks at Stan with curiosity.

BRIAN

What's going on Stan? You look like
-

STANLEY

Where is it, you son of a bitch??

Curious onlookers arrange themselves trying to get a view through the door.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN

Where is what?

STANLEY

The Networkmaster Report. You stole it out of my desk.

BRIAN

Once again, Stan, I have no idea what you're talking about. Have you ever considered a therapist for all these delusions you seem to be having late-

Stan charges over and starts ripping open Brian's desk drawers.

BRIAN

Hey! You want to get the hell out of my shit!

Stan gives him a death glare. Seeing the gravity in Stan's face, Brian holds up his hands, backs away and lets him continue his search. He goes through each drawer methodically, pulling out contents as he goes.

BRIAN

I don't know what you're looking for, but you won't find it in there.

Stan stops dead.

STANLEY

What's that supposed to mean? You hid it somewhere else?

Stan snaps his head around the room, then notices a credenza with a lock. He looks at Brian and holds his hand out.

STANLEY

Give me the key.

Brian laughs and pulls his keys out of his pocket.

BRIAN

Knock yourself out.

Stan opens the credenza doors and side drawers, but finds nothing. He looks at his watches, 1:50. He rubs his neck furiously. He looks over to see the large herd of co-workers scrambling to catch a glimpse of the action.

(CONTINUED)

He charges back into the main office area and begins tearing through people's desks like a tornado. There are a few slight protests, but most give him a wide berth. He gets to the desk of the woman who sits by him.

WOMAN

(wiping her nose with a tissue)

I don't think you want to look in -

He swings her desk drawer to find a multitude of waded up tissues. He backs away as if he'd just discovered a bomb in her drawer.

WOMAN

I warned you.

STANLEY

(shaking his head)

Why...oh, never mind.

He walks away, slowly rubbing his neck. He looks over to see Brian again sitting at his desk with his feet elevated. Stan stops and narrows his eyes at this. Having an epiphany, he marches back in Brian's office, waving the palm of his hand in an up direction as he goes.

STANLEY

Get up.

BRIAN

I think you already covered this area, chief.

STANLEY

I said 'get up'. It's over here, somewhere, because you would have followed me out of the room if you didn't have to protect it.

BRIAN

(scoffs)

You really are one crazy son of a bitch. You know that, don't you?

STANLEY

Get up!

At this, Brian nearly falls off his chair. He relinquishes his territory and steps away from the desk. Stan immediately plows through the desk drawers again. When he finds nothing, he rubs his neck slower, calmer. He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. Thinking.

(CONTINUED)

Brian is looking at him and then out to the workers. He gives them the finger circling around the ear and silently mouths the word "crazy".

Brian quickly ceases the hand motion when Stan opens his eyes and they are directly on him. Stan crouches down on his knees and looks on the floor under the desk and then up on the underside of it, and behold, there is the file, taped beneath the center drawer. He rips the file from the desk, stands up and waves it in front of Brian, who just stands there with a slight smirk.

STANLEY

I don't care if you're the
President of the United States'
son: you will be fired for this.

BRIAN

(serious)

Believe me, you'd be doing me the
biggest favor of my life.

Stan looks at his watches, 1:54. He hauls out of the office, pushing through a couple of onlookers camping too close to the door. He makes his way to the elevator and pushes the button feverishly. Brian steps into the threshold of his office as Stan's phone starts ringing.

BRIAN

Hey, Stan! I think that might be my
dad looking for that report. Better
hurry!

The elevator opens. Stan jumps aboard and pushes for the 8th floor. He glares at Brian, who stares back, leaning against the doorway - his hands planted comfortably in his pockets, and without a care in the world.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The elevator doors open on the 8th floor. Stan bolts to find Frank standing outside of the conference room. He shakes the hands of two gentlemen in suits, then notices as Stan walks toward them.

FRANK

Oh, here he comes now. Hey, Stan.

Stan hands Frank copies of the reports. Takes a quick look and says -

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

I'd like you to mee -

STANLEY

I need to talk to you.

FRANK

Is there something wrong with the report?

STANLEY

No. Not exactly.

FRANK

Can you excuse me for a moment, gentlemen.

(pulls Stan aside)

Is this an emergency Stan?

STANLEY

Well, not an emergency, I guess.

FRANK

It'll have to wait then. I have a plane to catch in less than two hours, so I don't have much time to go over this proposal. Is it something that can wait until I come back on Tuesday?

Takes a deep breath and looks away for a moment.

STANLEY

Fine. I guess it can wait.

Frank pats Stan on the shoulder.

FRANK

Thanks.

Frank turns back to his guests.

FRANK

Shall we get started?

The three men head inside the conference room and shut the door. Stan walks dejectedly down the hall.

MONTAGE - MISSING RITA

-- Door opens to bus and Dick is again the bus driver. Stan steps up glumly with pass in hand. He sits and looks out the window where there is no Guy to be seen. Stan has this to smile about at least.

-- Door opens again, next day. Still no Rita.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Stan drags himself to the bus stop. As he approaches, he notices Guy is back in his usual spot, with his usual morning paper. Stan is not pleased, figuring there will be numerous stories to be told regarding Guy's absence.

HOMELESS GUY

(lifting his sleeve to look at
a non-existent watch)

This is a little early, even for
you, isn't it?

Without a word, Stan takes his seat while Guy begins manipulating his newspaper.

HOMELESS GUY

So, didja miss me?

Stan continues his silence.

HOMELESS GUY

No 'Hey buddy. How are you doing?
Where've you been the last couple
days?'

STANLEY

Actually, I was more like, 'Oh God.
I thought he finally found some
other bus stop to go pestering
people first thing in the morning.'

HOMELESS GUY

Oh, I wouldn't give up this gig
here for all the whiskey in the
side desk drawers in the entire
Catholic church.

And pestering? You call imparting
all my wisdom of the ages,
pestering?

STANLEY

I'm not one to lie. Just call 'em
like I see 'em.

HOMELESS GUY

Well, I guess you should know - I
plan on 'pestering' a bit longer,
Mr. Stan.

(CONTINUED)

Stan turns, and Guy rewards him with his gap-toothed smile.

STANLEY

And why would you say that?

HOMELESS GUY

It's true. You seem like a guy who needs a little pestering, as you call it - words of wisdom, as I call it.

STANLEY

(turns back)

Wonderful.

Stan looks at his watches.

HOMELESS GUY

So where's your little bus driving girlfriend been?

Stan turns back around.

STANLEY

How did you know she hasn't been driving the last few days? You haven't even been here.

HOMELESS GUY

(scoffs)

Ever hear of body language, Mr. Stan? Walking down the street today, carrying 50 pound boulders on each shoulder, I could tell either your favorite watch broke or your little sweetheart hasn't been around to pick you up in the morning.

Stan turns back to the street.

STANLEY

It's a long story. I think I really pissed her off.

HOMELESS GUY

How do you manage that in a 20 minute bus trip?

Stan doesn't answer.

(CONTINUED)

HOMELESS GUY

You know, you're a lucky guy.

STANLEY

What makes you say that?

HOMELESS GUY

You have a great opportunity, and either you're blind and not aware of it or you just don't bother acting on it.

STANLEY

Let me guess. I should ask Rita to go out with me.

HOMELESS GUY

So you aren't blind after all.

STANLEY

I think we already had this conversation when you first moved in.

HOMELESS GUY

So why don't you just go and ask the woman out then?

Stan turns back to Guy, who quickly hides his newspaper arts and crafts project of the day.

STANLEY

Relationships are a complicated invention by society that hold people to standards that are designed to kill the human spirit.

HOMELESS GUY

Come on, I knew a lot of happy couples back in the roof-over-my-head days.

STANLEY

There is no such thing as a happy marriage. There are those who divorce and those who stay together because neither can bear the thought of the other half making love to someone else if they break up.

Guy begins laughing his ass off and takes a pull from the paper bag perched beside him.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

What's so funny?

Guy composes himself and then says more seriously -

HOMELESS GUY

That's a great speech, Mr. Stan, but I know there are two kinds of men in this world: the kind who needs to run from woman to woman, and the kind who needs to be a knight in shining armor for one woman for the rest of his life. And you're definitely the knight in shining armor type - whether you want to admit it or not.

Stan turns away from Guy.

STANLEY

You know absolutely nothing about me.

HOMELESS GUY

I know more than you realize.

Stanley is steaming at this and looks at his watch.

STANLEY

(to himself)

Never should have come early today.

HOMELESS GUY

I know that you're afraid.

STANLEY

Afraid? Afraid of what?

HOMELESS GUY

That she'll mess up your little routine. You need to stop giving all your time to those mechanical slave-drivers on your wrist and start living your life. Don't wait until you have to pay for little blue pills before you decide to start having fun again.

Stanley remains quiet for a moment, but the steam is subsiding.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I was in a relationship - a serious one - and when I lost her, I swore to God I would never put myself through that heartache again.

HOMELESS GUY

Perhaps you could think about it as mending someone else's heartache.

Stan gets up as the bus is approaching. Stan turns briefly to find Guy donning a dunce cap on his head.

HOMELESS GUY

Don't be one of these, Mr. Stan.

Stan steps to the curb as the bus door opens.

HOMELESS GUY

It's only a matter of time.

INT. BUS - DAY

Stan has his pass out as his latest routine dictates, but this time Rita is perched in the driver's seat. A slight smile crosses Stan's lips, but it quickly disappears when he sees Rita is looking straight out the windshield and not at him.

She puts the bus in gear before Stan sits down. He falls forward a bit before he can take his seat. He rights himself and sits down as the bus chugs along. Stan can't take his eyes off Rita. He begins to say something, but stops himself. After a moment he tries again.

STANLEY

Hello, Rita.

Rita prefers not to acknowledge his existence.

STANLEY

I'm sorry for the way I acted last week.

The brakes squeal as Rita brings the bus to a jerking halt by the side of the road, scaring some of the passengers. Stan's eyes widen as she slams the gear into park, stands up and sticks her finger in Stan's face.

RITA

You know what, Stan? For a moment you were a real hero to me. I thought, 'wow, look at him, putting

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RITA (cont'd)
his life on the line for all of us
- for me. And then when you started
flipping out on me,
(shaking her head, lowering
voice)
I realized you didn't give a shit
about us. You just didn't want to
be late.

Do you have any idea how that made
me feel?

He just stares at her in shock. She pokes him hard in the
chest.

RITA
Do you??

STANLEY
(sheepishly)
Yes.

She slowly straightens and begins shaking her head again.

RITA
(scoffs)
No you don't. You haven't got a
goddamn clue. And that's the
problem with you. You're lucky, you
know that?

Stan raises his eyebrows as he's been told this twice within
ten minutes.

STANLEY
(beat)
Why?

RITA
You're lucky I was able to convince
these nice people, just as the cops
were showing up, not to turn your
ass in for hijacking the bus.
(points at his chest)
Because that's exactly what you
did.

She holds her gaze for another few seconds before he breaks
eye contact. Rita turns away and sits back in her seat. She
takes a deep breath before putting the bus in gear and
drives on.

EXT. STANLEY'S OFFICE BUILDING - O'NEIL ACCOUNTING - DAY

The bus door opens and Stan steps barely out door before Rita shuts it again and takes off. He stands for a moment as he watches the bus pull away. With slumped shoulders he walks into the office.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Stan is alone in the main office. He shuts off his computer monitor and tosses some spreadsheets in his briefcase before closing it. As he puts his coat on, the elevator dings and Frank steps out with his briefcase in hand. Stan takes up his briefcase and they walk toward each other.

FRANK

Hey, Stan.

STANLEY

How was your trip?

FRANK

At least one round of golf a day and no wife monitoring my liquor intake? Take a wild guess.

They walk back toward the elevator.

STANLEY

Sounds like you had fun.

FRANK

Sorry I took off before getting together with you last week. I know you had something on your mind.

STANLEY

Can we talk tomorrow? I'm beat and I really don't feel like bringing it up right now.

FRANK

Sounds pretty serious.

STANLEY

I think so.

Stan presses the button and the doors open.

FRANK

I don't think I like the sound of that.

(CONTINUED)

Stan shrugs his shoulders and they both step in.

FRANK

Well on a good note; nice job cleaning up that mess at Fischer and Johnson. No one else would have made heads or tails of that as quickly as you did.

STANLEY

No problem. Hopefully, they'll never let the books get that backed up again.

FRANK

Don't count on it.

Stan gives a little smile.

FRANK

Listen, I wanted to give you a heads up - the company is going to present you with a little plaque tomorrow morning to commemorate your perfect attendance and on-time performance for the past 15 years.

Stan seems a bit embarrassed at this as they step out into the lobby.

STANLEY

I don't need a plaque, Frank. Really, it's no big deal.

Frank laughs and gives Stan's shoulder a friendly squeeze.

FRANK

No big deal? Quite frankly, Stan, it's unheard of. See you tomorrow -
(winks)
nine o'clock sharp.

Stan heads for the revolving door while Frank goes out a back door donning a "to garage" sign.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stan is in bed watching the end of late night news. He turns off the TV and then the lamp on his bedside table. He slides down in the sheets and shuts his eyes.

MONTAGE - STAN'S NIGHTMARE

INT. CAR - NIGHT

-- Stanley kissing his wife the night of the crash.

-- The car racing around the corner and swerving into the collision.

-- Stanley seeing his dead wife's face.

-- Wearing jeans and a t-shirt, Stanley looks dejected inside the front doorway of his and Sharon's Colonial house. He has a bandage on his head and his arm is in a sling. The other hand is on the door jamb as if he needs it to hold him up. The rain coming down matches Stanley's mood.

Stan's father-in-law, JOHN, stands just outside the threshold with a black umbrella. He's wearing a black suit.

JOHN

You have to go, son.

STANLEY

Listen, I told you - I'm not going, John. I'm sorry, but I just can't do it. I couldn't bear it - to watch all those people crying over Sharon - knowing that I was the cause of her death?

JOHN

No one blames you. Christ, she was my daughter, and I don't blame you. Accidents happen. Now I could see if you were laid up in the hospital, fine. But if you don't go today, Stan...it'll haunt you for the rest of your life.

Stan seems to consider it for a moment, but then just shakes his head as the whole house comes into view. He shuts the door and John walks away toward his Lincoln Continental. Descending into darkness, the voice of John echoes once again -

JOHN (O.S.)

It'll haunt you for the rest of your life.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Stanley's eyes shoot open as he's sprawled out on his stomach in his bed. The sheets are uncharacteristically a mess. It's raining outside his window. His clock comes into focus on his nightstand: 8:31.

Stan looks in confusion as he slowly processes this information. In sudden terror-stricken panic, he dashes out of bed and checks his other clocks, which now read 8:32, confirming his worse fear - he might be late for work.

SEQUENCE - THE MAD DASH

-- Stanley runs for his bathroom.

-- Dressed, he grabs the umbrella in the stand by the door and rushes out of the apartment.

-- Stan dashes outside through the apartment complex' front door.

-- Stan runs down the street toward the bus stop.

EXT. STREET IN SMALL CITY - DAY

Guy is dancing in the rain, heading in Stan's direction. Both of their coats flap in the breeze. Guy notices Stan and shouts out happily -

HOMELESS GUY

Hey there, Mr. Stan! Missed you
this morning!

STANLEY

I don't have time to talk!

HOMELESS GUY

(to himself, matter-of-factly)
Of course, you don't.

Just as Stan is about to cross Guy's path, Guy swings his right leg out in front of him, catching his ankle. Stan comes crashing down just off the curb and into a huge puddle - a puddle that's been collecting tar, gas, oil and all kinds of shit. And now that shit is all over Stan's light gray, newly pressed suit. He can taste mud on his lips.

HOMELESS GUY

(smiling)
It's only a matter of time.

(CONTINUED)

Stan remains prone for a few moments looking at the filth. A rage washes over his face and he turns his head to Guy with murder in his eyes as he slowly rises.

STANLEY

You have no idea what you've just done!

Guy loses his smile.

HOMELESS GUY

I'm sure I do.

Stan looks in the direction of the bus stop, seemingly contemplating going to work in spite of his current dress code problem. He takes a deep breath, but his shoulders lose a couple of inches in height as he heads back toward his apartment complex; resigned to his fate that for the second time in his life, he will be late.

HOMELESS GUY

(calling out)

Good luck, Mr. Stan! I'm sure everything will be just fine!

(to himself)

Just fine.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The elevator doors open to Stan's floor. Wearing a darker suit, Stan stands alone in the elevator. His head is hanging. For a moment it looks as though he's not going to move, but just as the doors begin to close, Stan swings his arm up to stop it.

He steps out and finally lifts his head to see a congregation of people chatting by his cubicle - including Frank. He looks at the clock on the wall: 9:38.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

There he is!

Everyone turns and watches Stan as he walks like a turtle over to the group. Frank does not look pleased. Brian, on the other hand, is trying hard not to show how ecstatic he is when his father turns toward Stan.

FRANK

(bellows)

You're late, Stan.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I'm so sorry, Frank. I, I tripped
and -

Frank throws his hand up in a stop gesture. The anger in Frank's face slowly twists into a grin.

FRANK

This has got to be the best goddamn
joke I've ever had the pleasure to
witness.

(slaps Stan on the back)

Fifteen years in the making.

Stan's co-workers start laughing, and when Frank starts clapping they all join in - all except a deflated Brian.

Stan is completely surprised by their reaction. He allows himself a slight smile - the world wasn't going to end because he was late after all. Frank throws an arm around his shoulder and gives him a warm squeeze.

FRANK

Welcome to the real world, Stan.
Where shit is sometimes out of our
control, and we just deal with it
as best we can.

Stan smiles wider and nods.

FRANK

Okay, let's get this cake cut and
get back to work.

On Stan's desk is a sheet cake with "Thank You for Your Dedication Stan", a stack of paper plates, a knife and several plastic forks. Beside the cake is a plaque reading 'In Appreciation of Stanley J. Higgins' On Time Performance and Dedication for 15 Years'. Beneath the '15 Years' is a Post-it note reading 'minus 1 day'.

Stan continues to smile as he takes up the knife and begins cutting the cake. Brian walks into his office and shuts the door.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Stan walks over to the bus stop and takes notice of the empty spot that Guy generally occupies. He chuckles. No trace of anger from the previous day's encounter resides on Stan's face. He seems lighter, happier.

He begins pacing back and forth behind the bench for a minute. He moves his lips rehearsing something, but can't be heard. The bus pulls up before he has a chance to sit down. The doors swing open and Rita looks straight ahead without taking much notice. He steps up into the bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

Stan sits in his seat. He notices the usual look of disgust from a couple of the regulars on the route.

STANLEY
(clears throat)
Rita?

Rita ignores him.

STANLEY
(louder)
Rita?

RITA
Um, hmm?

Rita pulls over to pick up a couple of passengers. They show their passes and walk by to take their seats. Rita pulls away from the curb. Stanley takes a deep breath and places his briefcase on the floor. He gets out of his seat and pulls himself up to his full height before taking up a position right beside Rita.

RITA
(glances in irritation)
Stan, please get behind the yellow
line while the bus is in motion.

He doesn't move.

RITA
Oh, great. Another bus-jacking?

The passengers look at Stan in curiosity as he crouches beside Rita.

STANLEY
Rita.

Rita glances over at him, and then back to the road.

RITA
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I can't take back what I did. I know my behavior was inexcusable.

RITA

(scoffs)

Well, you've got that right.

STANLEY

Especially to someone who means as much as you do to me.

RITA

(feigns surprise)

I mean something to you? Oh, you mean because you rely on me to get you to work on time.

STANLEY

No. Something much more than that. And until yesterday I was blind to it.

Something wonderful happened to me yesterday. Something I'd always imagined to be my worst nightmare, has freed me in a way I never thought possible. I realized that for the last five years, I've been spending each weekday morning with the woman of my dreams - but that I never had the guts to ask if she would mind spending even more of her time with me.

Rita looks over at him in surprise. A moment too long, for she nearly hits a car in front of her when it stops short. She slams on her brakes. Stan just catches himself by grabbing hold of the money collection machine.

RITA

Are you okay, Stan?!

STANLEY

I know I'm a little late, but will you go out to dinner with me tonight, Rita?

Rita is speechless before she begins to beam. She nods her head in acceptance. Stan smiles back and takes one of her hands off the wheel and kisses it. He sits back in his seat smiling like she's never seen him smile before.

(CONTINUED)

Rita pulls over to let on a couple of passengers. She watches Stan in the rearview mirror as they board. When she pulls away, she starts to laugh.

STANLEY
What's so funny?

RITA
It's funny that I'm about to date someone at O'Neil's.

STANLEY
Why is that so funny?

RITA
Because my daughter's been dating someone at your firm for a couple of months now.

STANLEY
Really? Who?

RITA
Son of the owner, actually. Brian O'Neil?

Stan starts having a coughing fit.

RITA
Are you okay?

Realizing his gaffe with Brian -

STANLEY
(to himself)
Sam...Samantha.
(to Rita)
Yes, I'm fine. Just a scratch in my throat.
(clears his throat)

RITA
So do you know him?

STANLEY
Who?

RITA
Brian, silly.

STANLEY
Oh, yeah. I see him around the office. We don't really work close together though.

Rita seems to consider her thoughts for a moment.

RITA
(lowers her voice)
Don't tell anyone...but, he's
thinking of leaving. He's miserable
there.

STANLEY
Really? Why?

RITA
Says there's some guy who's been
there for ages that his dad insists
on giving all the big projects to.
Says he never has a chance to prove
himself with this guy around.

Knowing full well who Brian is referring to, he asks -

STANLEY
(beat)
Did he happen to mention who it is?

RITA
No. I don't think he ever said the
guy's name. Not that I can remember
anyway. Did you know he graduated
top of his class?

This does catch Stan in genuine surprise.

STANLEY
Can't say I did.

RITA
(smiling)
My daughter sure can pick 'em, I
guess.

Stan looks out the window.

EXT. STANLEY'S OFFICE BUILDING - O'NEIL ACCOUNTING - DAY

The doors open to the bus and Stan steps out. With Rita
smiling, he turns to her -

STANLEY
So, 45 Longwood?

(CONTINUED)

RITA

Yup.

STANLEY

7:30 okay?

RITA

Perfect.

Stan smiles and walks away. Beaming, Rita watches him for a moment more before closing the bus doors.

As Stan walks through the revolving doors of the office, his expression grows more serious.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Stan boots up his computer when his phone rings.

STANLEY

Stan Higgins desk.

BRIAN (O.S.)

My dad said to ask you to go to his office when I saw you come in.

Stan looks over and sees Brian in his office through the half-opened blinds.

BRIAN

I saw you - told you. Done.

Brian hangs up the phone before Stan says -

STANLEY

Thanks, Brian.

Stan watches Brian pick up a large stack of papers from his desk and move to the window. He just stands there for a bit lost in thought. Stan watches him curiously as he places his briefcase under the desk. Brian is still standing at the window when Stan makes his way toward the elevator.

INT. OUTSIDE FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Stan knocks on Frank's door.

FRANK (O.S.)

Come in.

Stan walks in while Frank is scrolling his mouse and looking at his computer monitor.

(CONTINUED)

FRANK

Oh, good morning, Stan.

STANLEY

Brian says you wanted to see me.

FRANK

Yeah, just have a seat. I'll be done in a second.

Stan sits in one of the guest chairs. Still looking at the computer, Frank says -

FRANK

That was something else yesterday - you being late.

STANLEY

Uh, oh. Is this the reprimanding you really wanted to give to me yesterday?

FRANK

No, I still think it was great. Just commenting, that's all.

Frank leans back in his executive chair.

FRANK

We still haven't talked about what was on your mind. Don't want you to think I don't care, so let's talk.

Stan considers for a second when a knock comes at the door.

FRANK

It's open.

Brian comes in with the stack of papers Stan had seen him pick up from his desk. Brian gives Stan a quick glance before handing the reports to his father.

BRIAN

Here are the annual reports you wanted.

FRANK

Thanks, Brian.

Brian starts to leave.

STANLEY

Uh, Brian? Can you hold on just a sec?

Brian turns with some trepidation. And with good reason as he knows Stan has yet to rat him out about hiding the Networkmaster report.

STANLEY

Frank, what I actually wanted to talk about was the Networkmaster project.

Upon hearing this, Brian looks at his father with a bit of fear.

STANLEY

Moving forward, I think this would be the perfect job for Brian to handle.

Both O'Neil boys look at Stan in confusion.

FRANK

(surprised)
You do?

BRIAN

(a bit shocked)
You do?

STANLEY

Well, he's been around the block a few times with me now on similar projects. And he's obviously got a gift for numbers, don't you think?

Brian looks like a deer caught in headlights.

FRANK

Well, yes, but this could potentially lead to much more business - if done right. And we're on a tight deadline to get everything worked up.

STANLEY

What do you think, Brian? Can you handle it?

Brian looks slowly from Stan to his dad, and then back Stan again.

(CONTINUED)

BRIAN
Um, yeah. Sure I can.

STANLEY
(smiles)
Great. It's settled then. That is
if your father approves.

Frank hesitates for a moment, as Stan turning down work is completely foreign territory.

FRANK
Uh, yes. Yes, of course. That's
fine, so long as you know you might
have to put in a few long days this
week, Brian.

Brian finally allows himself a smile.

BRIAN
Sure, no problem, Dad.

FRANK
Okay, then. We'll meet later this
morning to go over some more files
their courier dropped off yesterday
afternoon.

BRIAN
Okay, great.
(beat - then to Stan)
Thanks, Stan.

Stan smiles at Brian, and Brian heads out the door and shuts it behind him. Stan gets up from his chair.

FRANK
Are we done? That's what you wanted
to talk about?

STANLEY
That's about it.

Stan heads for the door.

FRANK
Wow, I have to say, Stan, first
being late yesterday, and now
turning down a major project - you
must have hit your head pretty good
yesterday.

STANLEY

(smiles)

Knocked some sense into me I guess.

Stan opens the door and leaves.

INT. STANLEY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Stan is dressed in a nice pair of slacks and a V-neck sweater. He's finishing combing his hair and, being a bit out of practice, tries on a couple of smiles.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stan snaps off the bathroom light as he comes into his room. His three watches are on the top of his bureau. He puts on the first two without a beat, but he then pauses at the third - the slender one with the metal links.

He retrieves the third watch from the dresser and studies it.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Off the side of the road in the woods, Stan's overturned car wheels are still rotating.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Sharon's lifeless eyes stare back at us. Upon her limp arm is a watch: the slender watch Stanley has been wearing with the other two watches.

INT. STANLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stan opens his top drawer. He places Sharon's old watch carefully inside and then slowly shuts it in. He takes a deep breath and seems to be reconsidering. He reopens the drawer, quickly this time. But he doesn't retrieve the watch - instead he removes one of the remaining two watches from his wrist, hastily tosses it inside the bureau and slams the drawer closed. He rushes from the room and flips the light off.

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stan walks up the street to a well-kept three story house with a full front porch and small front yard. He's holding a half dozen yellow Tulips, and checks the address on a piece of scratch paper. When the number on the house confirms a match to the address on the paper, he stuffs the paper in his pants pocket, takes a deep breath and proceeds up the stairs.

There are three doorbells. Each bell has a name taped under it. He places his finger over the one marked "BARRETT", then stops. He stands back for a moment and starts rubbing his neck for about 20 seconds. He seems about to start hyperventilating, when the light in the hallway comes on and we hear footsteps bounding down the stairs. Stan snaps to attention as the door practically flies open.

RITA

So did you plan on just hanging out on my porch all night?

STANLEY

I'm a bit nervous.

RITA

I know. That's why I came down. I saw you walking up to the house, so when I didn't hear the bell at the appropriate time - I thought I'd help you out a bit.

STANLEY

(smiles)

Thanks.

RITA

And for the record, Stan...I'm nervous, too.

They exchange smiles just as Rita notices the flowers.

RITA

Oh, my God!

Rita exclaims so emphatically, she scares the crap out of Stan.

STAN

What??

(CONTINUED)

RITA
Yellow tulips! You got me yellow
Tulips??

STAN
Oh, God, what? Are you allergic or
something?

Rita sighs and seems nearly ready to cry, but smiles and looks into Stan's eyes.

RITA
(shakes her head)
No. They are my absolute favorite.
(jokingly)
Have you been stalking me??

STANLEY
(shakes head)
There may have been times I wanted
to, but no.

Rita laughs, pulls him inside by his free hand, and shuts the door.

INT. HALLWAY IN RITA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

RITA
So, listen. You're 15 minutes
early, and I'm not quite ready yet.

She pulls him up the stairs.

RITA
You mind waiting for a few minutes
while I finish up?

Stan marvels at their hands together as they walk up the stairs to the second floor. As they reach her door, Rita turns looking for an answer.

RITA
Stan?

STANLEY
(snapping out of it)
No. Of course - take all the time
you need.

Rita remains stopped in front of her door.

(CONTINUED)

RITA
(turning serious)
Stan?

STANLEY
Yes?

RITA
Before we set off on...whatever
this will turn out to be - a one
time experiment or the first day of
spending the rest of our lives
together - can I just get one thing
out of the way?

STANLEY
Sure, I guess. What is it?

Rita stands on her tiptoes, places her hand behind his head and pulls him in for a kiss. Throwing Stan offguard, he keeps the kiss bordering on polite. They both pull away after a couple of awkward seconds. Stan watches Rita as she gives him a small smile, but behind the smile is some obvious disappointment.

RITA
Thought it would be better to just
get it out of the way, so we're not
obsessing over the moment as the
end of our date approaches.

She starts to go inside the apartment when Stan pulls her back, looking intently into her eyes.

STANLEY
Can you forget about that last
twenty seconds. I'm sorry, Rita.
I'm very much out of practice.

Rita smiles, warmly now. Stan pulls her back in and puts his all into their second kiss. When they break, Rita is clearly lightheaded, making Stan quite proud of himself.

RITA
We're gonna be late for our
reservation you know.

He shrugs his shoulders.

STANLEY
Who cares.

Rita takes Stan by the hand again, leads him into the apartment and closes the door.

INT. RITA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rita walks into the kitchen wearing Stan's sweater and a pair of jeans. Stan follows behind her. He's barefoot, wearing his slacks and his v-neck t-shirt.

RITA
Can I get you a drink?

STANLEY
I think I'm already drunk.

RITA
How about some orange juice, then?

STANLEY
Sounds good.

Rita takes out two tall glasses, fills one glass all the way and the other only halfway. She hands the full glass to Stan. They both take a drink.

STANLEY
So where's Samantha tonight?

RITA
She went away for the weekend with some friends of hers.

STANLEY
Including Brian?

RITA
Probably. I didn't ask too many questions. She's an adult now, so I try not to grill her about what she does and where she goes anymore. If she wants me to know, she'll tell me. And for the most part, she does.

Rita takes another sip and sets the glass down.

RITA
Let me show you her room. She has loads of pictures in there, so you can at least see what she looks like. I can't wait for you to meet her.

INT. SAMANTHA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens in the dark.

RITA
Don't let her know I let you in
here.

Rita switches on the light.

RITA
She's not the neatest person in the
world, so she'd probably strangle
me.

STANLEY
(raising eyebrows)
I think I've felt that wrath
before.

There are several framed pictures, as well as a few posters
of various landscapes around the room. Small Origami fills
an entire wooden bookcase. In the center of the top shelf is
a picture of Samantha and her dad.

STANLEY
Wow, she's really good at Origami.

RITA
(smiles sadly)
That was actually her dad that did
all those for her. That picture
there -
(points to pic on shelf)
- was the first time he tried to
teach her how to do it.

Stan looks closely at the photo. There is a young Samantha,
about six years old, sitting on her father's lap. They are
both smiling and showing their end results. His is a tulip,
with crisp fine lines. Samantha's is an amateur attempt to
replicate her father's flower, but she's clearly proud of
it.

Stan's brow suddenly furrows. He squints and leans in to
take a closer look at the father. Rita watches Stan
curiously before speaking.

RITA
What is it, Stan? Something seems
to be bothering you.

Brow still furrowed, he shakes his head, then picks up the
photo.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

I don't know. Your husband...he seems very familiar to me.

RITA

(beat)

Well, they did show photos of the plane crash victims for quite awhile.

STANLEY

(shakes head)

I don't think that's it.

RITA

He did work downtown. Maybe you saw him there?

STANLEY

No.

He looks at the eyes and the man's smile once more - and then it hits him. Though he had to look past the missing teeth and the layers of dirt, the face was clearly that of Homeless Guy. His eyes widen and then return to confusion again. He spins to Rita.

STANLEY

Rita! Your husband. You said he died in a plane crash?

RITA

(with trepidation)

You know he did. Why?

He looks at the picture again and shakes his head in thought

STANLEY

I swear...I swear this is the guy that's been driving me crazy -
(looks at Rita)
- at the bus stop for the last few weeks. Are you sure your husband died in that crash, Rita?

She looks at Stan like he's a complete nutcase.

RITA

Jesus, Stanley. Of course I'm sure. You know, you're kind of freaking me out here.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

How do you know for sure?

RITA

(irritated)

He was identified by his dental records.

Stan looks confused again - sure that Homeless Guy is the man in the picture. He walks over to another picture of her husband and picks it up for inspection.

RITA

Which bus stop are you talking about anyway?

STANLEY

(scoffs)

The one you pick me up at every day.

RITA

You're the only one at that stop every day.

STANLEY

He doesn't get on the bus. He's just some homeless guy. He keeps sitting against the wall - behind the bench.

RITA

(irritated)

I know what you mean. And like I said, you're always the only one there, Stan. I've never noticed any homeless man there with you.

Stan picks up one more photo, this time with all three of them. Her husband's face is unmistakably Homeless Guy. Stan shakes his head.

STANLEY

I can't explain why you never saw him, but I'm not crazy, Rita. This man was the one who convinced me to ask you out. He was the one who told me to get you Tulips.

(softer)

He was the one who said I should be with you...that we both needed each other.

(CONTINUED)

Rita looks Stan in the eyes. Seeing his sincerity, she softens and begins to cry. Stan grabs her by the hand and starts walking toward the door.

STANLEY

I'm sorry, Rita. You said you have a car, right?

RITA

Yes, why?

STANLEY

We need to take a ride.

Stan shuts off the light as they head out the door.

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Stan is jogging down the porch steps with Rita in tow. Her compact car is parked on the road under a streetlight. As they reach the car, Rita walks around the front to get to the passenger side - Stan slows suddenly. Rita unlocks the door with her remote and opens the door. She gets halfway in the car when she notices Stan standing outside the passenger side.

RITA

Are you okay with this? Riding in the car?

STANLEY

(beat)

I was just perfectly fine with it until I just started thinking about it.

RITA

Remember, Stan...don't think about it - just do.

Stan still stands there for another moment.

RITA

Don't think. Just do.

Stan deeply inhales the night air. He then quickly opens the door, sits down and shuts himself in. He looks outside the window as Rita moves in beside him. She looks at him.

RITA

You okay?

Stan still looks out the window.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

First time I've been in a car in years.

He looks over at her with a crooked smile.

STANLEY

So far so good.

Rita smiles back.

RITA

Oh, good. I wasn't looking forward to cleaning up the dashboard and car mats if you got sick.

STANLEY

I'll warn you to let me get the door open if it comes to that.

RITA

Appreciate it. So where are we going?

STANLEY

Start heading downtown.

Rita puts the car in gear. The car pulls away and drives down the quiet street.

EXT. BRICK BUILDING - NIGHT

Rita's car pulls in a small parking lot. She parks and she and Stan get out. They walk over to the main entrance of the building, which has a commercial glass door with an intercom system beside it.

RITA

This is the last shelter within 10 miles. This is the last one he could conceivably go to.

STANLEY

This has got to be it then.

They ring a buzzer on an intercom system. After about 20 seconds, the male voice of the SHELTER DIRECTOR, 50s, comes over the speaker.

SHELTER DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Sorry, but you're late. We're not taking in any more residents this evening.

(CONTINUED)

Stan presses the intercom button to speak.

STANLEY

We're not looking for a place to
stay. We're looking for someone...
(looks at rita)
a relative who's missing.

After a beat.

SHELTER DIRECTOR (O.S.)

I'll be down in a sec.

Stan steps back away from the intercom and looks through the glass door.

RITA

So what if he's not here?

STANLEY

Has to be here.

Stan sees a man in corduroys and a knit sweater come into view. Stan steps away from the door a bit.

STANLEY

(to himself)

He has to be here.

The director unlocks and opens the door.

RITA

Thank you. We know it's late.

SHELTER DIRECTOR

So who is missing?

Stan glances at Rita for a moment before answering.

STANLEY

My uncle. He loses it sometimes and
takes off. You can't miss him. He's
always wearing a long green
overcoat and a pin on the collar
that looks like bird wings. He's
about six feet, has a beard and
he's obviously missed too many
dental appointments.

Shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

SHELTER DIRECTOR

Doesn't ring a bell. We have lots of guys with beards and dental issues, but no one with a coat and wing pin. Do you have a picture? That might help.

STANLEY

No, I don't.

At this the director looks at Stan with suspicion.

SHELTER DIRECTOR

You say he's a relative, and yet you don't have one photo to show me.

This stops Stan in his tracks.

RITA

We don't have any photos of him in the last ten years. He looks nothing like he did back then and he refuses to be photographed anymore.

Though still a bit suspicious, he gives Rita the benefit of the doubt.

SHELTER DIRECTOR

Look, I'm the director here, and I'm sorry, but I just haven't seen anyone fitting that description.

RITA

Okay. Thank you for your time.

Stan still stares. Rita takes him by the arm and gives him a little jab.

STANLEY

(to the director)

Yes, thank you.

The director closes and locks the door as Rita and Stan make their way back to the car. They both get in. Rita puts her key in the ignition and watches Stan as he looks out the window in confusion.

STANLEY

I didn't imagine him, Rita...he was real.

(CONTINUED)

Rita smiles at him. She leans back instead of turning on the car.

RITA

Stan, do you believe in angels?

Stan looks at her with furrowed brows.

STANLEY

I'd be lying if I said I did.

RITA

When I was eight, I lost my grandmother, who was very close to me.

A couple years later, I was riding my bike and I flew out into the road without looking. A car screeched to a stop only a couple inches away from me. I still fell because it scared the crap out of me.

The driver got out of the car and once he saw I was okay, he started yelling at me for my stupidity. While this guy was yelling, I saw my grandmother standing on the sidewalk behind him - plain as day.

She was clearly terrified, and shaking her head at me. I wasn't even listening to the driver anymore. I didn't want to take my eyes off of her, but when the man shifted his feet he blocked her from view for only a couple of seconds and she was gone.

When I told my mother that night what had happened, she said it was just my imagination: that I was scared and my grandmother always made me feel safe. But I know what I saw.

And I was convinced it was her, because it happened once more, for just a few seconds at my high school graduation. She looked much happier that time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RITA (cont'd)

When we were back in my apartment,
I started crying not because I
thought you were crazy, but because
I believed you. I believe in
angels, Stan. And if I never saw
this man with you at the bus stop,
what do you believe?

Rita holds his gaze. He's speechless. He looks out the window as Rita starts up the car and pulls away.

SUPER - ONE YEAR LATER

EXT. BANQUET FACILITY - DAY

In a wooded area, the double doors to a banquet facility fly open. People are clapping and saying goodbye to Stan and Rita as their reception comes to an end.

Frank is among the well wishes along with his wife. Brian walks out the door holding Samantha's hand. He let's go of her hand and quickly catches Stan as he makes his way over to his luxury car.

BRIAN

(offers his hand)

Have a great trip, Stan. Thanks for
having me.

Stan shakes his hand and responds lightly -

STANLEY

Don't thank me, you were sitting on
the bride's side, don't forget.

BRIAN

(laughs)

Right. But you can't blow me off
too much longer, another six months
and you'll be my father-in-law.

Frank overhears his son.

FRANK

Hey, this is supposed to be a happy
occasion for Stan, Brian. Don't
spoil it.

Frank gives Stan a hug. Kathy is beaming as she follows with a hug of her own.

(CONTINUED)

KATHY

I'm so happy for you.

STANLEY

I did this so you could concentrate on other things that didn't involve setting me up with women.

KATHY

(laughs)

I appreciate that.

STANLEY

We have to get going. Thank you for all your help with the wedding.

Frank and Kathy nod their heads.

FRANK

It was our pleasure, Stan.

Stan gets into the driver's side of a car and Rita moves into the passenger side, pulls the seatbelt over her shoulder and opens the window. Frank bends to say -

FRANK

Don't rush back.

RITA

Don't worry. I'll make sure of it.

Stan turns on the engine. As he reaches to pull on his own seatbelt, he catches a glimpse of Guy donning his long green overcoat and a smile as he stands beside one of the large trees peppering the area. Stan's eyes go wide and he loses his grip on the seatbelt as he turns to his new wife.

STANLEY

Rita!

Catching her by surprise, she responds -

RITA

What? What is it?

Stan immediately points in the direction of the tree, but Guy is nowhere to be found. Stan cranks his head around, but sees nothing.

RITA

What was it?

After another beat, Stan smiles, then looks at Rita.

(CONTINUED)

STANLEY

(shaking his head)

I don't know exactly. Thought I saw
a deer or something. It must have
taken off.

RITA

(looks at her watch)

We better take off or we're gonna
miss our flight.

STANLEY

Right.

He takes Rita's hand in his and leans over to give her a
kiss, which emits cheers from the crowd. They both smile as
they break off the kiss. Stan puts the car in gear. He waves
at the guests with his right hand, as does Rita. As they
pull off, people start going back inside the hall to collect
their belongings.

Across the way, Guy is leaning against one of the trees with
his arms folded. He watches the car drive as it
drives further away, and then finally out of sight. His lip
turns up in a crooked smile as a single tear streams down
his face.

FADE OUT