

White Elephant

By

Screenplay by:

Chris Ryves and Colin Jackson Nickell

Screen Story by:

Chris Ryves, Colin Jackson Nickell, and Augie Petaja

INT. AIDEN'S CAR - MORNING

AIDEN'S (24) dead-tired and slightly buzzed face illuminates as he sparks a joint. He inhales deeply, then breathes out, letting the smoke encompass his face. In the rear view he gazes longingly at his guitar case set on the backseat. Then down at his "R U Hungry" work shirt.

He hums along pensively. He pauses, pulls the key out, and heads outside towards his home. The weed smoke hangs on the dash like an ominous fog.

SUPER OVER BLACK: WHITE ELEPHANT

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

The side door swings open to reveal A MODEST AND WELL LIVED IN HOME. Aiden places his keys on a SIDE TABLE and ambles towards down the hallway.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Aiden sits on the bed, the frame creaks, and his girlfriend, OLIVIA (23) stirs as he lays back on the pillow.

OLIVIA
Didn't think I'd see you today.

AIDEN
Yeah, Parker and I grabbed some drinks at his place after work, guess the night got away from us...

OLIVIA
Yeah.. You ready to call them?

Aiden turns over, exhausted from work.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
You know how your parents are.

Aiden sighs. She reaches over him and grabs his phone on the nightstand.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Please... for us.

Reluctantly he takes the phone. He sits up and lets it hang heavy in his hand for a second. Then dials a number and clicks send.

INT. HELEN AND GERARD'S HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING -
CONTINUOUS

A phone rings in this upper-middle class kitchen. Every part of it is clean and crisp with an air of sophistication. UNCLE TOMMY (mid 50's), a bathrobe-wearing man aged well past his years and fully out of place in this setting snatches the phone up.

UNCLE TOMMY
(groggily)
Whadya want?

AIDEN (ON THE PHONE)
Uncle Tommy? Mom or dad around?

He spies HELEN (50's) who enters the room. He thrust the phone towards her.

UNCLE TOMMY
It's your boy. I think he's in
jail.

Helen hesitantly puts the phone to her ear.

INT. OLIVIA AND AIDEN'S HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING -
CONTINUOUS

Olivia sits up behind Aiden and drapes her arms around him. He looks down at her right hand.

AIDEN
Hey mom, we're still on for dinner
tonight, right?

We SPLIT SCREEN between the two settings as Uncle Tommy opens the refrigerator and grabs himself a swig of OJ.

In Aiden and Olivia's place we slowly pull back from them to reveal a small and littered room with clothes, papers, and other objects scattered about.

HELEN
Tonight?

AIDEN
Yeah, dinner at our place.

HELEN
We didn't think you were serious.
Your dad and I already made plans.

(CONTINUED)

AIDEN

Mom, we agreed to this over a week ago.

HELEN

I'll have to double check with your father...

AIDEN

This is really important.

Aiden clasps his fingers around Olivia's.

HELEN

What's wrong?

AIDEN

Nothing's wrong, we just really want you two over.

HELEN

(under her breath)

That's a first.

AIDEN

What was that?

HELEN

Uh yeah, alright, what time do you want us to come by?

AIDEN

Seven-thirty work?

HELEN

We'd much prefer seven, but we'll manage.

She hangs up before Aiden gets a chance to say goodbye. He takes a second before placing the phone down.

FADE TO:

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - BATHROOM - MORNING

Water fills a glass as Aiden opens the cabinet mirror and grabs Olivia's bottle of Xanax. As he does, he catches as Olivia walks into the reflection. She pauses for a moment to watch him, her fingers brush her stomach.

(CONTINUED)

OLIVIA
Thought you said you were getting
your own.

He pops her pills and she sighs and walks on.

FADE TO:

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Aiden and Olivia enter their kitchen. The place is a pigsty. Dishes are wildly stacked in the sink. The counters are covered in a layer of filth.

OLIVIA
Jesus, you promised you were gonna
clean this place up.

Aiden moves towards the counter.

AIDEN
Didn't realize it was this bad.
(beat)
That kibble?

He scoops up gunk from the counter.

AIDEN (CONT'D)
How the fuck do we have kibble?

He steps back, overwhelmed.

OLIVIA
Life's mysteries, I guess.

Suddenly his phone rings.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Who's that?

He looks at the caller: JENNY.

AIDEN
Jenny?

OLIVIA
As in Parker's Jenny? Didn't they..

Aiden holds up his finger in a silencing motion and quickly answers. Much to Olivia's annoyance.

(CONTINUED)

AIDEN

Hey, I uh.

JENNY (ON THE PHONE)

He's been here all night.

Aiden looks over to Olivia, who motions for him to "hurry off the phone."

AIDEN

Isn't there anyone else you can call?

JENNY (ON THE PHONE)

Like who?

AIDEN

I dunno, call another one of his friends.

JENNY (ON THE PHONE)

You're the only one he listens too.

AIDEN

Can't it wait?

JENNY (ON THE PHONE)

Please hurry.

(Yelling at Parker)

Not the pants!

She hangs up. Aiden starts to head out of the kitchen. Olivia looks over and groans.

OLIVIA

You're not stranding me here with all this.

She motions to the mess that needs to be cleaned up.

AIDEN

It's urgent. I'll be back before you know it, I promise.

OLIVIA

You owe me.

AIDEN

I love you.

Olivia, still a little off put lets a smile slip.

OLIVIA

I know.

She watches him grab his keys and head out the door.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Olivia sets down the dish she was carrying and slowly moves away from the counter. Overwhelmed, she looks over the mess.

CHANTAL (O.S)

Liv, you in here?

OLIVIA

Yeah, I'm in the kitchen... bring a backhoe.

(re: herself)

It's gonna be OK...

Chantal stops when she sees the state of the place.

CHANTAL

Whoa shit, you weren't kidding.

OLIVIA

(unamused)

Yeah...

(beat)

You want to lend me a hand and grab some of those dishes?

CHANTAL

Sure nothing will grab me back?

Olivia rolls her eyes.

CHANTAL (CONT'D)

All right. Shouldn't Aiden be pitching in? I'm sure most of this is his mess. Where is he?

OLIVIA

Out.

CHANTAL

Are you guys OK? You know...

OLIVIA

Cause of the baby?

An uneasy pause, Olivia picks her phone up off the counter.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS -
A BIT LATER

The two pick at the mess, Olivia pauses to check her phone.
Disappointed, she sets it back down.

OLIVIA
You know he proposed.

CHANTAL
You say yes?

Olivia hesitates, her eyes drift back towards her phone.

OLIVIA
I didn't say no... exactly.

CHANTAL
Ouch.

OLIVIA
It's not that bad, is it?

CHANTAL
Not bad, just.

OLIVIA
I want him to propose because he
loves me not because he feels
obligated.

CHANTAL
I mean, aren't kids kind of an
obligation?

OLIVIA
No and it's not that... but you
grew up with just your mom.

An uneasy pause.

Olivia and Chantal clean in uneasy silence. Chantal wants to
speak up but is unsure what to say. She looks over to
Olivia, who scrubs another plate.

Chantal takes a breath. Olivia continues to scour and the
plate slips. It clatters in the sink.

OLIVIA
Fuck!

(CONTINUED)

CHANTAL

You OK?

Olivia hesitates. Chantal bites her lip, then speaks up.

CHANTAL (CONT'D)

I know it's a stupid question, but really

Olivia sets down the plate in the sink. The water runs over it.

OLIVIA

I keep having this dream. I'm cleaning the kitchen of my childhood home. I can hear a party in the other room, can't really make out what their saying, but I can tell it's them. My dad's voice booming off key to the music, my friends all carrying on. Aiden's faint laugh. All I can do is clean while holding onto to our sleeping child hoping the others don't wake him. Everyone else gets to have fun...

(beat)

I'm just left to clean up the mess.

Olivia turns off the water. She trails off. Noticeably uncomfortable, Chantal purses her lips.

CHANTAL

I'm here, aren't I?

Chantal runs her finger on the counter, she's careful to choose her words.

CHANTAL

If you've been having doubts why'd you stay this long?

A pause.

OLIVIA

I mean because the sex is so good.

CHANTAL

Yeah?

OLIVIA

Well, you know how he can be so attentive and considerate?

(CONTINUED)

(beat)
It translates.

FADE TO:

INT. OLIVIA AND AIDEN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Aiden stumbles in, furious and exhausted. Olivia hands him a bottle of wine.

OLIVIA
To class things up.

He looks at the bottle and frowns.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
You don't like it, do you?

AIDEN
It's, well, it's not that the
thought isn't nice... it's just to
recent.

He sets it down on the counter.

OLIVIA
So? Your parents probably won't
notice. Just put it in a nice glass
and be done with it.

AIDEN
Trust me, they'll notice.

OLIVIA
Aiden please, don't do this right
now. The wine's fine.

A pensive pause. Aiden sets the bottle down and heads out the door.

FADE TO:

EXT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - PORCH - AFTERNOON

Aiden sits on his porch. He takes a generous swig of the cheap wine. Chantal's door opens and she steps out.

CHANTAL
Drowning your sorrows?

He pulls the bottle away.

(CONTINUED)

AIDEN

I wish, this shit's just juice.

She grabs the wine, takes a swig, and hands it back.

CHANTAL

That's a shame, so what's the special occasion?

AIDEN

No occasion, just having my parents over.

CHANTAL

Your parents?

AIDEN

Yeah?

CHANTAL

This about the thing with you and Olivia? You know, the thing I'm not suppose to know?

AIDEN

I dunno what you're talking about.

CHANTAL

You know Liv and I talk.

Aiden says nothing.

CHANTAL (CONT'D)

I'm sure it's scary...

AIDEN

Yeah, none of my friends are taking it seriously or seem to care.

CHANTAL

They care.

AIDEN

Parker told me to blow off tonight to eat mushrooms.

CHANTAL

You're surprised?

Aiden nods and she rolls her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CHANTAL (CONT'D)

Jesus.

(beat)

He knows how important this is to
you, right?

An uneasy pause. Olivia opens the front door. Chantal gives her a worried look and Olivia feigns back a smile.

OLIVIA

Hey Chantal!

(re: Aiden)

Babe, can you help me in here?

AIDEN

Sure, hon.

He gets up and says his goodbye to Chantal before going inside.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - DINING AREA - EVENING

Olivia looks out onto an unset table. Aiden walks in and looks at it. After a moment, Olivia speaks up.

OLIVIA

So what're you hoping for? A boy or
a girl.

No response, she presses.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Oh come on.

AIDEN

Alright, I guess... a girl.

Olivia looks at his, slightly incredulous.

AIDEN (CONT'D)

What? I was a little shit. I
wouldn't want to have to deal with
me as a kid.

OLIVIA

You think I was perfect?

AIDEN

You probably were better than me,
seriously, I was a fucking piece of
shit, I -

(CONTINUED)

Suddenly his phone rings. He reaches into his pocket and pulls it out. He sighs and answers it.

AIDEN

Hey, hello? Mom? Sorry, I can't hear you.

He heads out down the hallway.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - HALLWAY - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Aiden paces as Olivia watches from the dining area as he talks.

AIDEN

OK, so you say you're about a few minutes away? Uh huh. So you'll be here in about ten or so? Thanks for the heads up. Yeah, Olivia and I are doing well... Yeah, yeah it's not a problem. Can't wait to see you. OK, love you. Bye.

He pockets the phone and lets out an exasperated sigh then goes back into the dining area.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - DINING AREA - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Olivia wraps her arms around him, comforting him. She kisses him.

OLIVIA

Remember how scared shitless you were to tell my parents?

(beat)

That didn't go horribly, did it?

Aiden ponders.

INT. OLIVIA'S PARENTS HOME - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Aiden holds Olivia close as OLIVIA'S DAD, a large jovial man extends his hand and shakes. Her mother smiles slightly.

OLIVIA'S DAD

Welcome to the family.

(subtitled)

Don't fuck it up.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - DINING AREA - EVENING -
PRESENT

Aiden sighs.

AIDEN

I'm just anticipating the eventual
letdown. Yeah, I've been dating
this girl for eight months, sure we
love each other, and hey guess what
in nine months she'll be having
your grandchild.

Olivia pauses.

OLIVIA

You make it sound like your parents
won't think I'm good enough.

AIDEN

No, they do. Hell, they probably
think you're stupid for dating me.

She teases, trying to alleviate the situation.

OLIVIA

Well I am.

He frowns, unamused. His phone rings again.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Your mom again?

He checks his phone and then shakes his head, yes. Olivia
watches as he heads towards the balcony.

AIDEN

Hey, mom... yeah your reception's
really bad. Hold on.

He slides open the door and heads outside to the patio.
Olivia continues to prep as Aiden talks to his mom. She
observes him for a moment, then goes about setting the
table. Silverware, glasses, napkins, and a candle center
piece.

EXT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - PATIO - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Aiden smokes a cigarette. He turns around when he hears the
door slide open. Olivia steps outside. She frowns and waves
her hand to dissipate any smoke around her.

(CONTINUED)

OLIVIA

I thought you quit.

He takes a defeated drag. She moves away, uneasy.

AIDEN

You know, I always hated dinner as a kid. I'd just sit there in this forced awkward silence. My days had always been "fine", my nights were never not "OK", and I never thought anything more than "not much" at any given time. And we did this, night after night, just pretending that this monotony made for some kind of "quality family time," and they weren't really asking because they cared, but because it continued this mundane routine. And now here I am cooking dinner and I'm suppose to expect any kind of honesty now? Fuck this!

Olivia bites her lip as she tries to keep her composure.

OLIVIA

You never know, you could try.

Aiden doesn't notice as he continues his spiel. His gaze focused on his beat up car, the R U HUNGRY top sign still adorned to it.

AIDEN

But what the fuck do I have to show? A half-finished degree, a late night job, what kind of parent am I gonna be? And to top it all off, I get to look forward to a night where my parents go back and forth asking me where I'm going and then telling me I'm headed the wrong way. I bet I'll hear about how my brother just got into grad school again.

(beat)

And my most recent accomplishment is I gave up smoking.

He takes one last puff before flicking it off into the night. She tries to avoid the smoke.

(CONTINUED)

OLIVIA
Great going on that, by the way.

AIDEN
Thanks.

They stand there in silence as the last remnants of smoke vanishes into the night sky. Olivia looks over to her wreck of a boyfriend, her face softens as she moves closer and grabs his hand. His hand tightens around hers.

She guides him back inside.

INT. AIDEN AND OLIVIA'S HOME - DINING AREA - EVENING -
CONTINUOUS

Olivia pulls Aiden close as they look out at the set table.

AIDEN
It's almost like we're actual
functional adults.

OLIVIA
At least one of us is.

A pause. He pulls away.

AIDEN
We can't tell them yet. Please,
let's just wait. Let them think
it's just my life I'm fucking up a
little while longer.

She pulls him closer, holding his hand tight as every inch of him trembles as his nerves scream.

OLIVIA
No, we have to tell them tonight.

Aiden gulps. She doesn't let go.

AIDEN
Alright... tonight.