

Committed

an original screenplay
by Ron Sasso

contact: Ron Sasso
Tel.#(605)593-3759
e-mail: ron.sasso@yahoo.com

"COMMITTED"

FADE IN:

EXT. RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA -- DAY

A quiet suburban town nestled in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota.

It's been raining but the sun is out and everything glistens.

A SIREN WAILS in the distance.

A brick hospital building with a sign that reads "Psychiatric Unit."

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

A modern but modest facility. The nurse's station is the gathering place for staff during a shift change.

DR. BRENT STILLMAN is the center of attention and clearly the man in charge. A psychiatrist in his early 30's, he's repressed and a little flaky.

HARRY, late 40's and lacking any authority, looks at a file to appear busy. His name badge says "18 years of service" with "it feels longer" taped beneath it.

GINA, late 20's, professional and attractive, wants to impress Brent.

Brent looks at a chart.

BRENT

Any problems with Ms. Thorton?

GINA

No, she's much better. Even making plans for when she gets out.

BRENT

Good. Discharge her tomorrow.

Gina makes a note of this.

BRENT (CONT'D)

How's Bob doing today? Has he forgiven me for admitting him?

Gina laughs lightly.

GINA

He's much better since you increased his Risperadal. He even participated in group today.

Brent is impressed.

Harry snickers and shakes his head without looking up from his file.

HARRY
Won't last. Never does.

BOB, a wild-haired man in his early 20's walks quickly toward the nurse's station.

BRENT
Speak of the devil.

Two male staff tense up upon his approach. Bob stops a few feet from the desk. His demeanor is overly pleasant.

BOB
Hello, Dr. Stillman. How are you on this fine day?

BRENT
Great, thank you.
(pauses)
How are you, Bob?

BOB
(smiling)
Fine. Couldn't be better.

Bob lunges at Brent's throat! He grabs Brent's tie and holds onto it as though it's keeping him from falling off a cliff.

The male staff spring on top of Bob. Bob SCREAMS an assortment of bizarre threats at Brent as they subdue Bob, wrenching Brent's tie from his hands.

They drag Bob away, kicking and screaming more strange obscenities at Brent.

Harry still reads his file, having barely looked up during the commotion.

HARRY
Told you so.

Brent straightens his damaged tie in much the same way James Bond would after a similar encounter, then he grabs a chart.

BRENT
Looks like another med increase for you, Bob.

He makes a quick note on the chart then puts it down.

Harry finally puts the file down.

HARRY
I heard you're taking the job in New Jersey.

Brent looks Harry in the eyes and smiles.

BRENT

Sorry, Harry. Unsubstantiated gossip.
I thought about it but I like what I
do here. I'm staying put.

Brent pauses for a moment.

BRENT (CONT'D)

So where'd you hear the rumor? Or
did you start it?

HARRY

Your fiancée called earlier.

Brent looks slightly distressed by this.

BRENT

What exactly did she say?

HARRY

I didn't tape record the conversation,
but I asked and she said you were
taking the job. Are you?

Brent is even more distressed now.

BRENT

No. Definitely not.

Brent tries to change the subject.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Who else do we have that I didn't
see?

Gina grabs some paper from a fax machine. She looks it over.

GINA

Layla Blythe. Twenty-six year old
female with depression, possibly
bipolar. She's coming from E.R.

BRENT

Is she on any meds now?

GINA

Don't know. She wouldn't provide
info to the ER doc. Said she's
terminally ill but wouldn't say with
what.

At that moment the door to the unit opens and LAYLA,
disheveled but beautiful, is pulled in by a psych tech, STEVE.

Layla shakes her head, flipping her long hair in the face of
the psych tech. She looks at the staff around the desk.
None of them look remotely excited about anything.

LAYLA
(explaining herself)
You think *I'm* suicidal. Attempting
suicide is healthy self-expression
compared to blind submission to
bureaucracy!

Brent looks at Layla.

BRENT
Why don't you let Steve get you set
up with a room.

LAYLA
Probably because Steve looks like
he'd have problems finding his own
zipper.

Harry snickers from behind the desk.

Layla looks Brent up and down, sizing him up.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Looks like the blind leading the
blind.

Brent smiles and speaks in a soothing voice.

BRENT
You'll feel better after you're
settled.

LAYLA
You look like a freak who's just a
shade too normal to join the circus.

BRENT
But I'm not the one who's acting
like a clown.

INT. BRENT'S OFFICE -- DAY

Brent talks on the phone while he sits at his mostly organized
desk fidgeting with a sand sculpture toy.

BRENT
Charlene, I told you I don't want to
take it.
(pauses)
We're talking New Jersey. Do you
know how many different types of
cancer I could develop in a year in
New Jersey?

Brent listens for a moment and leans back in his chair.

He leans forward as he speaks.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 (raising his voice)
 No, I haven't told them I'm not taking
 it but that doesn't matter because I
 will!

He listens and leans back even further than before, almost precarious. He leans forward again when he speaks.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 Charlene, don't bring my parents
 into this. I need to do what I want.
 It's my career, not my parents'. I
 don't want to ride on their coattails!

He listens, leaning back much further. Until...

He falls backwards onto the floor!

Brent scrambles to regain control of the phone again.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 Nothing. Just a patient outside my
 office.
 (pauses)
 We'll talk about it when I get home.

DIAL TONE.

Charlene has hung up on him. He slams the phone down, accidentally knocking a pile of papers on the floor.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, BREAK ROOM -- DAY

Brent purchases a bottled water from a machine. As the bottle drops, JACK BURNS, 30's good looking and overly confident, enters and begins to fix himself coffee.

JACK
 I heard you're taking the job in New
 Jersey.

Brent is bothered by this, even more so hearing it from Jack.

BRENT
 No. I'm staying put for now.
 (a pause)
 I like it here.

Jack is disappointed but he fakes being happy about it.

JACK
 That's great. Jersey's too hectic,
 I wouldn't want to make that move.
 (pauses)
 How's Charlene with that?

BRENT

(lying)
She's fine. She knows it's my career
and she supports me.

JACK

That's great. She's really something.
She seems a lot like the woman I've
been seeing.

To Brent all of Jack's conquests are the same.

BRENT

Really?

JACK

Yeah, great girl. She's finally
going to give her husband the kiss-
off this weekend.

Brent forces a smile.

BRENT

Jack Burns steals yet another heart.

Jack grins.

JACK

No stealing involved, they give it
freely.

Brent raises his bottled water. He wants to throw it at
Jack but makes a toast instead. Jack raises his coffee in
return.

BRENT

Good luck.

Brent exits.

EXT. BRENT'S HOUSE -- DAY

An upscale home in an exclusive neighborhood. A Camry pulls
into the driveway and parks next to a Toyota 4-Runner with
luggage loaded inside.

Brent gets out of the Camry and looks at the 4-Runner with
confusion and concern, then he heads inside the house.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Brent enters, bewildered. He knows something's up but he's
not quite sure what.

He calls his dog.

BRENT

Sparky! Here boy! Sparky!

Brent's fiancée, CHARLENE, 30's and attractive, comes down the stairs with car keys in hand. She's annoyed.

CHARLENE
(with disdain)
Pancho called to remind you about water skiing this weekend.

Brent sniffs the air. Something smells foul.

BRENT
Did you burn dinner?

CHARLENE
No, I'm not cooking dinner. You're on your own.

BRENT
What's going on?

CHARLENE
You're the psychiatrist. You figure it out.

Brent is catching on.

BRENT
Where are you going?

CHARLENE
My mother's.

BRENT
Why? Because of the job?

CHARLENE
You should be making far more money than you make now and we should be living better than we do. I'm looking at our future together.

BRENT
Is this all about money?

CHARLENE
No. I'm tired of you settling for less than what you're capable of.

BRENT
I like what I'm doing now.

CHARLENE
But you could be doing so much more and you're selling yourself short.
(considers further)
You're selling us short.

BRENT
I don't want to work in New Jersey.
(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

The only reason I applied was you insisted it would be a good interviewing experience.

CHARLENE

But if you spent a year or two in Newark then tried for something better, I'm sure you'd get it.

BRENT

I wasn't convicted of a crime, so I sure as hell shouldn't have to be punished by spending a year or two in New Jersey.

CHARLENE

This is a great career opportunity, but you don't get it, do you?

BRENT

They'll be other opportunities.

Brent is resolved. He's not budging from his position.

Charlene stares at him, aggravated.

CHARLENE

Fine. In the meantime I'm leaving.

Charlene heads toward the door and opens it. She turns back.

BRENT

You're not taking Sparky with you.

A strange look crosses her face. It's tough to tell what it is.

CHARLENE

No, he's all yours.

(pauses)

Oh, and by the way. I was right.

BRENT

About what?

CHARLENE

Sparky's chewing problem. I knew it would eventually get him into trouble.

(pauses)

Call me when you come to your senses.

Charlene exits, SLAMMING the door behind her.

Brent stares at the door for a couple of seconds, almost expecting it to open again. It doesn't.

Disappointed, he proceeds through the house, making a mental note of what is missing and the changes.

Brent sniffs the air as he walks.

INT. BRENT'S TV ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brent enters the room and nearly trips on an extension cord. From his POV, he follows the cord as it snakes across the floor until it comes to an old blanket with a lump underneath and an erect charcoaled dog-tail sticking out the back.

Clearly chewing got Sparky into trouble.

EXT. BRENT'S HOUSE, BACKYARD -- NIGHT

Brent has a shovel and stands next to a fairly large hole. He grabs the wrapped up dog and puts it into the hole head-first. He begins filling in the hole with dirt, then he realizes the crisp tail is sticking straight up out of the ground like a tree sapling.

Brent looks at it briefly, considers digging it up again but decides he's too tired. He tosses the blanket over the erect tail, then heads inside.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, LAYLA'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Layla tosses in bed. She sits up and checks her pulse. Anxious, she gets up and walks across the mostly dark room to the window.

Layla's POV: Lightning flashes in the distance. This adds to her anxiety. She turns away from the window and notices a fire sprinkler in the ceiling.

Struck by an idea, Layla takes off her bra without taking her shirt off. She ties the bra around her neck, then pulls a chair under the sprinkler. She ties the bra to the sprinkler.

Layla is ready to hang herself. She pauses for a moment, then jumps off the chair and pulls her knees up.

The bra can't support her weight at all---it snaps instantly and she tumbles to the ground with a CRASH.

Steve enters, turning on the light as Layla slowly gets up from the floor with the bra around her neck.

LAYLA

It's a lesbian bondage thing. You wouldn't understand.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Dressed for bed, Brent sits at his desk and begins writing in a journal. A clock reads 11:35PM.

BRENT V.O.

(what he's writing)

Today was a banner day that'll be hard to top. Sparky's dead, Charlene's gone and I've got the house to myself. Emotionally exhausted, I could use some sleep but need to write a few things out. Hopefully I'll be able to clear my mind. Where to start? Perhaps the inherent problems with electrical cords...

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- LATER

The clock says 3:42AM. Brent continues writing at his desk.

BRENT V.O.

And another thing: dog food. Why isn't it just called food? If they put a picture of a dog on the bag or can most people should get the idea. In the grocery store you don't see "People Chow" on everything we eat.

Brent glances at the clock and rubs his eyes.

BRENT

(tired)

I need to get to sleep.

Brent closes his journal, turns out the light and climbs into bed.

EXT. BRENT'S PRIVATE PRACTICE OFFICE -- DAY

A Victorian house that has been converted into offices. A sign lists all the businesses within. "Brent Stillman, Psychiatrist" is featured.

INT. BRENT'S COUNSELING ROOM -- DAY

Brent looks haggard today. He obviously didn't sleep much. He's in the middle of a session with AMANDA, 20's and very attractive.

BRENT

It sounds like you really don't want to leave your husband.

Amanda considers Brent's suggestion.

AMANDA

(realizing)

Maybe I don't.

BRENT

Sometimes the grass seems greener, but most problems can be overcome.

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)
(then a personal note)
As long as your spouse is
understanding.

He hesitates for a moment.

BRENT (CONT'D)
He hasn't threatened you to move or
change jobs has he?

Amanda looks confused.

AMANDA
No, he hasn't.

BRENT
He didn't heartlessly leave your dog
lying dead in your house?

Amanda looks really confused now.

AMANDA
No, we don't have a dog.

Brent snaps out of it.

BRENT
That's right. But my point is that
he hasn't treated you poorly.

AMANDA
No. He's treated me well.

She smiles broadly, suddenly excited.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
You know what I just decided?

BRENT
(not excited)
No, what?

AMANDA
I'm not going to leave him. I'm
gonna call Jack and tell him off and
tell him you convinced me not to
ruin my life by going with him!

A sudden realization hits Brent like a ton of bricks.

BRENT
Did you say, Jack?

AMANDA
Yeah, Jack Burns. He works up at
the psych hospital. You know him?

BRENT
 (worried)
 Yes.

AMANDA
 Good. That will make telling him
 off even more meaningful.

Amanda gets up to leave.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
 Thank you Dr. Stillman!

Amanda exits.

Dazed, Brent slowly rises and trudges out of the room.

INT. BRENT'S PRIVATE PRACTICE OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

TANYA, late 20's, finishes booking another appointment for
 Amanda. Brent grabs a file off a desk and glances at it.

In the brief quiet between patients, Tanya uses the moment
 to address a concern with Brent.

TANYA
 Dr. Stillman?

Tired and staring at the file, he's oblivious to her.

TANYA (CONT'D)
 (loudly)
 Dr. Stillman!

BRENT
 (annoyed)
 What?

TANYA
 I've been here seven months and you
 promised me a raise after six months.

He really doesn't want to deal with this right now.

BRENT
 I'm sorry. Today isn't a good day.
 Can we talk about this some other
 time?

Tanya gets angry.

TANYA
 When? Next month when I've been
 here working my butt off for eight
 months!!!

Brent stands up. It seems like a monumental effort to do
 so. He stands face to face with her.

BRENT

Tanya, I'm sorry. Today is not a good day to talk about this.

TANYA

No, I think this is as good a day as any. I've got bills to pay.

Brent puts his hands on Tanya's shoulders and speaks slowly.

BRENT

Today. Is. Not. A. Good. Day.

Tanya looks at Brent's hands on her shoulders. She backs away from him flustered.

TANYA

This is sexual harassment! I'm not going to tolerate this!

Brent is trying to clear the cobwebs to respond.

BRENT

(confused)

Did I miss something?

TANYA

Would you put your hands on a male staff's shoulders to talk to him like that? I think not! You probably would have just given him a raise!

She backs away.

TANYA (CONT'D)

No, I'm not going to sleep with you to get my raise!

BRENT

I didn't ask you to.

Tanya backs away toward the door.

TANYA

I'm reporting this. I won't let you take advantage of me or anyone else this way!

She storms through the doorway.

Brent walks after her.

INT. BRENT'S WAITING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Brent walks into the waiting room just in time to see Tanya leave. A client, LEONARD, 40's and conservative, looks at Brent with concern.

Brent is getting really burnt out.

BRENT
Leonard, are you ready?

Leonard shrugs.

LEONARD
I guess so.

INT. BRENT'S COUNSELING ROOM -- DAY

Brent counsels Leonard.

BRENT
How have things been going?

Leonard hesitates slightly, then tries to sound as positive as possible.

LEONARD
Good. Good. No problems.

BRENT
(surprised/sarcastic)
None? That would be a nice change of pace.

Leonard looks apprehensive.

LEONARD
Okay, there have been some problems.

Brent doesn't say anything. He waits for more.

Leonard puts his head down.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
I'm doing it again.

Brent rolls his eyes.

BRENT
How much did you spend?

LEONARD
(apprehensive)
Well, you know that bonus check I was waiting for to pay off the money I owe you for the back sessions?

Brent is on edge.

BRENT
Yes.

LEONARD
I got it early. I thought it was supposed to come next week but it came this week.

(MORE)

LEONARD (CONT'D)
 (excitedly)
 And it was bigger than I expected---
 four thousand dollars.

Brent feels a little better, there is some hope.

BRENT
 How much do you have left for your
 obligations?

Leonard tries to make this seem positive.

LEONARD
 I know I owed you just about half of
 that. So I put the money aside and
 went shopping with the rest.

Brent is relieved.

Leonard starts unbuttoning his shirt.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
 But then I liked what I got so much
 that I had to buy more and spent all
 of it.

Leonard opens his shirt, exposing a very expensive bustier!

Brent trembles with anger.

Leonard starts to unbuckle his belt.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
 (proudly)
 You *must* see the panties.

Brent suddenly explodes and lunges across his desk at Leonard.
 As he tries to strangle Leonard, Leonard tries to speak.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
 But...don't...they...look...nice?

BRENT
 I hope they're edible, because I'm
 going to make you swallow them!

Brent grabs Leonard's paper file from his desk and begins
 thrashing Leonard over the head with it!

Leonard struggles to reach for the phone on Brent's desk.
 He finally grabs it and dials 9-1-1.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

A POLICE OFFICER escorts Brent into the unit. He's handcuffed
 and struggling.

BRENT
 I don't belong here! I work here!

POLICE OFFICER

Consider this a working vacation.

The officer holds Brent at the nurse's station.

Gina is the first to see him.

GINA

Oh my God.

Harry casually looks up from what he was trying to do and raises his eyebrows. He's seen a lot in his time but he's never seen anything like this.

HARRY

Wow.

The staff is not sure what to do. Steve moves over to Brent but is reluctant to grab hold of him.

STEVE

Uhm, Dr. Stillman. Uhm, how are you doing?

BRENT

Fine. Aside from being handcuffed.
(then yells)
I'm just fine!!!

The officer surveys the confused faces.

POLICE OFFICER

Don't you have a standard procedure you follow?

Silence for a moment. Then Gina decides to take control.

GINA

Yeah. But. Let me get Jack.

Gina presses the intercom.

GINA (CONT'D)

(into intercom)
Jack, come to the nurse's station immediately.

A moment later, Jack arrives. He too is surprised to see Dr. Stillman being admitted, however he's not unhappy about it.

Brent feels that Jack is his only hope.

BRENT

Jack, you gotta help me.

Jack smiles at him.

JACK

We will.

Jack pauses for a moment, then takes control of the situation.

JACK (CONT'D)

Steve, take Dr. Stillman to a room and help him get comfortable. Harry, start a file on Dr. Stillman including the standard release forms.

Brent is dumbfounded.

Jack smiles coolly. No one moves.

JACK (CONT'D)

Steve?

STEVE

Oh, yeah.

And suddenly everyone is in action.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, BRENT'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Layla looks in on Brent. He's less than happy to be there.

LAYLA

So, how do you like it?

Brent is particularly annoyed by her accusing tone. He decides to ignore her.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Just face reality, you're just like the rest of us. You're a freak.

He shoots her a cold look.

BRENT

I don't belong here. It's just a mix up.

LAYLA

So you're a freak in denial.

BRENT

I'm not in denial. I don't belong here.

LAYLA

As the Italians say, "De Nile ain't just a river in Egypt."

Brent takes a deep breath. He's a psychiatrist. He shouldn't need to justify himself to patients, however he finds himself in a unique situation.

BRENT

I was having a particularly rough twenty-four hours. My dog died. My fiancée left me.

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

I was threatened with sexual harassment charges. Professionally and personally my life is in an unusual amount of turmoil.

Layla is not impressed.

LAYLA

A rough day and you lose it? Someone turns up the heat and you jump in the ice box? What makes you think everyone in here doesn't have problems that are as big or bigger than yours?

Brent wants to respond but can't come up with anything.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

There are people in here who can't hold a job for more than a week. Poverty is a way of life. Most people here would consider it a blessing to have their fiancée leave them because they're stuck in an abusive relationship that never ends.

She pauses, then speaks on a much more personal level.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

And some of us are terminally ill and can't get a doctor to be honest for a minute without trying to cover it up as an anxiety disorder!

BRENT

You think doctors lie about things like that?

LAYLA

(duh!)

Yeah! Hell, you can't even be honest with yourself. What does a doctor have to gain when they know their patient needs expensive treatment and doesn't have insurance?

She pauses for a moment.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

You do much pro-bono work?

As Brent speaks, Layla does something strange with her arm. She holds it at her elbow and makes believe it's a measuring needle. As Brent talks she gradually moves her arm, as the meter measures higher.

BRENT

(lying)

Well, I always try to do some. It's always good to help people in need and we all try to do that...

LAYLA

EHHHH! I'm sorry, you broke the
bullshit meter.

Brent knows she's right but he still wants to vindicate
himself. He's on the defensive.

BRENT

Listen, I need to make a living too.
I've got bills to pay and a private
practice to run. As much as I'd
like to, I can't afford to work for
nothing.

Layla takes a certain pride in knowing she's right.

LAYLA

And that's why doctors don't tell
people who don't have insurance that
they're terminally ill.

Gina looks in the room to check on Brent and sees Layla.
She is not pleased.

GINA

Layla, back to your room. Lights
out in five minutes.

LAYLA

It only takes me ten seconds to get
back to my cell. I wanna enjoy what
little freedom I have.

GINA

(territorial)

You need to go back to your room
now.

BRENT

Yes, it's about that time.

LAYLA

On this side of the bars you don't
run the show. You're not the doctor,
you're just another freak in the
circus.

Layla smiles, then turns and leaves.

Gina waits for a moment to make sure that Layla is gone.
She feels very awkward.

GINA

Dr. Stillman, do you have any
supportive family members that we
can contact?

(she pauses)

Your fiancée?

BRENT

You can give Charlene a call but I don't think she'll care. I'd rather leave my family out of this.

Gina nods.

GINA

Jack said he'll meet with you in the morning before you see Dr. Reed.

Brent gets annoyed.

BRENT

I don't need to meet with Dr. Reed!

Gina is very direct.

GINA

You do if you want to get discharged.

BRENT

Great. Can you get me a pen and a notepad? I want to do some writing.

GINA

(slight hesitation)

Sure, I'll get you something.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, BRENT'S ROOM -- LATER

Brent sits at a small desk. He looks down at the blank notepad, then reluctantly brings a red crayon to it and begins writing.

BRENT V.O.

As I sit here with a Crayola in hand, I realize that I have redefined what constitutes a bad day. Hopefully no one will ever find out about this...

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- NIGHT

TIME LAPSE: The sun rises over the unit.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Jack stands outside of Brent's room. He gently knocks on the door.

Brent sits up in bed and looks at Jack.

JACK

Rise and shine.

Brent slowly rolls out of bed, acknowledging Jack with a wave.

JACK (CONT'D)

Let's talk. Back in five minutes.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, COURTYARD -- DAY

Brent and Jack stroll through the courtyard. There's a surrounding twelve foot fence with barbed wire at the top. Brent hasn't shaved and his clothes are wrinkled.

BRENT
 Sorry about last night. I just
 flipped out. One too many problems
 at once.

JACK
 Could happen to any of us.

Brent nods.

BRENT
 Charlene left me.

JACK
 (couldn't care less)
 I read your collateral.

There's a moment of silence as they walk.

BRENT
 I'd like to get discharged today.

JACK
 I'm with you on that, but that's
 ultimately up to Dr. Reed.

BRENT
 I understand.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack sits at his immaculate desk reviewing a file.

He looks up at DR. REED. She's in her late 30's and emotionally detached from the world.

JACK
 I visited with him this morning.
 He's unstable as a three-legged chair.
 But that's an improvement over
 yesterday. I wouldn't discharge
 him, but that's up to you.

He hands her the file.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Gina enters Brent's room.

GINA
 Dr. Reed is ready for you.

Brent tries to straighten his impossibly wrinkled shirt.

INT. DR. REED'S OFFICE -- DAY

Brent walks in and looks around the impeccably neat office. No one else is there. He decides to sit and wait.

A moment later, Dr. Reed enters.

DR. REED
Dr. Stillman, how are you today?

Brent is uncomfortable in her presence.

BRENT
Fine. Much better, thank you.

DR. REED
I visited with Jack. He said you were doing much better this morning.

Brent is visibly relieved.

DR. REED (CONT'D)
Any suicidal or homicidal ideations?

BRENT
No, no.

Dr. Reed looks at Brent, studying him for a long moment.

DR. REED
Have you ever tried Zyprexa?

Brent looks at her like she's crazy.

BRENT
No, of course not!

DR. REED
Well then, I'll start you with five milligrams.

BRENT
(agitated)
No meds.

DR. REED
It will help take the edge off.

BRENT
I don't need it. Absolutely not.

She makes a note on his chart: "Non-compliant".

DR. REED
You are familiar with commitment hearings?

BRENT
You're kidding, right?

Dr. Reed is as cold and serious as ever. She never kids.

DR. REED

No. You're here on an involuntary committal.

She pauses.

DR. REED (CONT'D)

(accusing)

I'm curious, Dr. Stillman, do you believe you are above the law?

Brent stands up.

BRENT

You belong in here!

He storms out of the office.

Dr. Reed double underlines "Non-compliant".

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, LOUNGE AREA -- DAY

One male patient reads a newspaper---upside down, another rambles to herself about the pressures put on women today, and two play checkers while Layla watches half-heartedly.

Brent storms into the lounge area, pissed off.

None of the patients notice him, except for Layla who smiles at him.

Brent looks at the other patients and quickly realizes that Layla is likely the only person who will listen to him if he decides to vent.

BRENT

This is not right.

LAYLA

What isn't?

BRENT

It's ridiculous! I'm stuck here until Monday!

LAYLA

(sarcastic)

Imagine if you were really nuts.

BRENT

(annoyed)

Never mind.

LAYLA

What do you expect? Everyone here has had stays longer than a weekend.

BRENT

Yeah, but I work here.

LAYLA

So. That shouldn't put you above
the dysfunctional system.

Gina enters.

GINA

Dr. Stillman?

Brent smiles at being addressed formally. He's hopeful
something is going to change.

GINA (CONT'D)

You have a visitor.

Charlene cautiously walks into view behind Gina. She's
apprehensive. Is Brent really crazy?

CHARLENE

Brent?

Brent walks toward Charlene. She's very unsure of him. No
hug or kiss. They walk to the side of the room like two
strangers who are about to haggle on the price of a used
car. Layla watches curiously from where she sits.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Harry called. I was worried and I
don't know...I'm sorry.

BRENT

I don't know what happened. But I'm
fine now.

Charlene relaxes at the sound of Brent's voice. She's struck
by a thought.

CHARLENE

Maybe deep down you realize you *should*
take the job in New Jersey.

She pauses for a moment hoping Brent will consider this
possibility. His expression makes her think he might, so
she charges ahead with more confidence.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

You know I'm right. You're just
nervous because it's a big step.
But I'll be with you through it.

Brent likes the sound of having Charlene back. He's not
really thinking about the job.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Have you called them?

BRENT

No.

Charlene is relieved. There's hope.

CHARLENE

Maybe you can ask for more time to consider. Once you come to your, uhm, senses, you'll realize it's the right decision.

BRENT

I don't know. Either way I'm stuck here until my commitment hearing.

CHARLENE

Brent, I want to marry you. I want you to be the person I know you can be. But if you're settling for less in a job, it makes me feel you're settling for less with me.

BRENT

No, it's not like that at all. I...

Charlene glances at her watch.

CHARLENE

(interrupting)

I'm sorry. I need to go. I have an appointment in ten minutes to get my hair done. I tried to reschedule it but Sara's going on vacation and I don't want it looking any worse than it already does.

Charlene's hair looks perfect already.

In the b.g. Layla flips her hair in a mock gesture.

Charlene gives Brent a very quick kiss on the cheek and leaves.

Layla strolls up to Brent. He's still looking off in the direction that Charlene went but she's gone.

LAYLA

That your lawyer?

Brent snaps out of it.

BRENT

No. My fiancée.

LAYLA

Oh. She seemed real crazy about you. I thought the staff was gonna have to pull you two apart and stick her in a straight jacket until she calmed down.

BRENT

It's uncomfortable for her.
 (whispering harshly)
 I'm a psychiatrist! I'm not supposed
 to be in here.

LAYLA

Don't worry, I won't tell anyone,
 especially staff. Don't want them
 thinkin' you're a couple of sandwiches
 short of a picnic. I'm sure they
 already forgot about last night's
 episode.

Brent takes a deep breath. He's very frustrated right now.

BRENT

Did you get put in here to protect
 the rest of the world?

Layla slows down her pace. She pulls up her sleeve, exposing
 a bandage wrapped around her wrist from a suicide attempt.

LAYLA

Fishing accident.

Brent calms down. He's curious.

BRENT

Why?

LAYLA

(you are crazy)
 Why?! The better question is why
 not. When I get out I'll try again.

BRENT

Do you want to tell me more about
 it?

LAYLA

You're not my shrink. Right now
 you're not anyone's so don't act
 like you're mine.

Layla turns and walks away. Brent is left with the feeling
 of deja vu.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Brent is on the telephone. It is a less than private call.

BRENT

I need some more time to consider
 the position.

INT. OFFICE (SAME) -- DAY

A plush executive office with windows and a smoggy view. VICTOR HASBIN, 50's and smartly dressed has Brent on speaker phone. DR. BRADLEY, 60's, sits with him.

VICTOR
How much? We're anxious to have you here.

INTERCUT

BRENT
A few days, maybe a week. It's a big move and my fiancée is a little nervous about it.

Victor has had that experience before.

VICTOR
I understand. She's probably nervous about moving to a big city. Newark isn't as bad as most people think.

In the hallway in the b.g. a MAN IN A SUIT hands over his wallet at gun point to someone posing as a PIZZA DELIVERY MAN. The pizza guy runs off with the wallet and the pizza box.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
It's much friendlier. It almost has an old world charm to it. Really...

Repeated SCREAMS comes from the speaker phone, breaking Victor's concentration. Dr. Bradley and Victor exchange worried glances.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION (SAME) -- DAY

A WOMAN in her sixties is screaming at Brent for no apparent reason.

A couple of psych techs try to remove her from the area.

Brent tries to apologize and cover the phone.

BRENT
Sorry about that.

The woman quiets down.

INT. OFFICE (SAME) -- DAY

Victor raises his eyebrows. He's taken aback by the episode but Brent is the man they want for the job.

VICTOR
Your wife is more scared about the move than most.

BRENT
 (covering)
 Yes, but screaming is very
 therapeutic.

Dr. Bradley nods in agreement.

Victor smiles. This unique approach is one of the reasons
 he wants Brent.

VICTOR
 I hope you can convince her, Dr.
 Stillman. We're very anxious to
 have someone of your reputation
 heading up the department.

BRENT
 Thank you, Mr. Hasbin.

VICTOR
 Give us a call in a couple days and
 let us know where you stand.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, COURTYARD -- DAY

The sun is low on the horizon and a magnificent sunset is
 immanent.

Oblivious to the beautiful sky, Bob rummages through the ash
 tray looking for a butt. Brent looks at Bob and is about to
 say something but decides against it.

Bob finds a fragment of a butt. Satisfied, he turns to Brent
 and seems friendly.

BOB
 I'd kill you, but I don't want to
 lose my smoking privileges.

Brent decides to go elsewhere. He scans the courtyard for
 other alternatives.

He sees Layla sitting on the grass leaning against a tree.

Even though he approaches her from behind she is aware of
 his presence.

LAYLA
 We get out tomorrow after the
 commitment hearing.

BRENT
 Depends on how you're doing.

Layla turns to face him.

LAYLA
 I told you, you're not my psychiatrist
 so don't act like you are.

BRENT

I know how these commitment hearings work.

Layla laughs.

LAYLA

You *think* you know how they work.

BRENT

You're suicidal. You're a danger to yourself. If staff knows you'll be here for a while.

Layla smiles at him. She can't believe how naive he can be.

LAYLA

How much do you want to bet?

BRENT

On what?

LAYLA

That I'll be discharged tomorrow.

BRENT

If you've been hiding your suicidal intentions from staff...

LAYLA

(cutting him off)

No. I'll tell them tonight with you as a witness.

This sounds like a good idea to Brent. He knows if she's in the unit she'll be safe.

BRENT

If you tell them, with me watching, I'll take that bet.

LAYLA

Okay. Take me out for ice cream after we're discharged tomorrow.

Layla sticks out her hand. Brent shakes it.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

(concerned)

You don't welsh on your bets, do you?

BRENT

(maybe)

No, I can't say that I have.

LAYLA

Do you know where Sunday Gulch is?

An odd look of recognition and surprise crosses Brent's face.

BRENT

Yeah.

LAYLA

If you welsh, that's where you can
tell the cops to find my body.

BRENT

Don't worry, I won't. But if I get
discharged and you stay in you're on
your own for ice cream.

LAYLA

Deal.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- NIGHT

Layla playfully grabs Brent by the arm and escorts him toward
the nurse's station where many staff are milling about.

Layla is very flamboyant.

LAYLA

(proudly announcing
to all)

I just want everyone to know, that I
plan on killing myself in Sunday
Gulch after I'm discharged. I plan
on doing it with a razor blade.

She mockingly acts out the suicide.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Viola!

She turns and smiles at Brent.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I like French vanilla with hot fudge.

Brent shrugs. So what. He knows he'll never need to buy
the ice cream for her.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Brent is ready to go to his commitment hearing. He is more
neatly dressed than before. He is suddenly caught off guard
by something off camera.

Brent's POV: Layla looks radiant. Her normally wild hair
seems as though it was professionally done to look more
conservative.

BRENT

(impressed)

You look very together this morning.

LAYLA

Confidence is an illusion.

INT. HOSPITAL VAN -- DAY

Steve drives the psych unit van. Brent and Layla sit in the back.

Brent closes his eyes and nods off.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Brent enters an empty court. His FOOTSTEPS ECHO on the wooden floor. He walks slowly to the table and sits down.

A BAILIFF enters.

BAILIFF

All rise for the honorable Judge
Thompson.

Brent rises.

JUDGE THOMPSON, 50's, walks in wearing stiletto high heels and an open robe exposing a lace teddy.

He enters and sits at the bench.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Dr. Reed, what freak do you have for
me today?

Dr. Reed is suddenly next to Brent with a huge pile of pills on the table in front of her.

DR. REED

Brent Stillman is the freak du' jour.
I'm not sure what to do with him.
We might release him if he'll take
this medication.
(gestures to pile)
And promises to take his dog, Sparky,
for a walk every day.

Brent looks at his hand and sees a leash in it. He follows the leash to see that it leads to a blanket where presumably a "crisp" Sparky lies.

BRENT

I can't walk him. He's dead.

DR. REED

Then *drag* him.

Jack walks in. His FOOTSTEPS ECHO in the courtroom. He heads directly for Dr. Reed and rubs his hand up her back. She appears to be suddenly under Jack's control.

JACK

Excuse me, your honor.

Jack whispers something in Dr. Reed's ear, then bites her ear lobe.

Dr. Reed smiles broadly.

Jack turns and walks out.

JACK (CONT'D)
 (to Brent)
 Later, Brent.

DR. REED
 I've reconsidered my position. I think Dr. Stillman should be permanently committed to the state hospital.

Judge Thompson puts a stocking leg up on the bench and examines a run.

JUDGE THOMPSON
 That works for me.

He SLAMS a rubber duck gavel down.

JUDGE THOMPSON (CONT'D)
 Court adjourned.

Brent is panicked.

BRENT
 Wait! This is my life!

DR. REED
 It was your life. You're a ward of the state now.

Layla enters and walks up behind Brent.

She taps him on the shoulder.

LAYLA
 Hey!

BRENT
 What?

LAYLA
 Wake up. We're here.

INT. HOSPITAL VAN -- DAY

Brent wakes up and sees Layla.

He looks out the van window.

Brent's POV: the courthouse.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

A nearly empty court. JUDGE THOMPSON, 50's and not the most patient man, presides. Brent and Dr. Reed sit at a table.

The judge grabs a sheet but doesn't look at it.

JUDGE THOMPSON
Dr. Stillman, who's your first patient?

He hesitates, not sure what to say. Dr. Reed speaks up.

DR. REED
Dr. Stillman is here as a patient.
He's my patient.

BRENT
(wry)
I didn't have any other psychiatrists to choose from.

Judge Thompson raises his eyebrows.

JUDGE THOMPSON
Dr. Reed, would you like to present?

Dr. Reed stands up and glances at her notes.

DR. REED
Dr. Stillman was admitted after he nearly strangled a patient during a session.

Brent shakes his head in disgust.

DR. REED (CONT'D)
He has so far been non-compliant and refuses to take any medications. During a session with me he became agitated and left the session.

Judge Thompson is quite interested now.

DR. REED (CONT'D)
I'm recommending that he remain hospitalized involuntarily for several more days for observation.

JUDGE THOMPSON
Dr. Stillman, do you care to comment?

Brent stands up and looks at Dr. Reed with contempt.

BRENT
Yes. I had an extremely stressful twenty-four hours leading up to the alleged incident with my client who, I might add, is *not* pressing any charges.

Dr. Reed looks at her notes.

DR. REED

I believe the client made an arrangement with Dr. Stillman for free counseling for a year.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Is this correct?

BRENT

I'm trying to increase my pro bono work. He hasn't had the means to pay.

Judge Thompson weighs this as he looks at his notes.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I'm not a danger to myself or others. I believe Dr. Reed is just trying to erode my client base by keeping me hospitalized.

Dr. Reed writes the word "Paranoid" on her note pad.

Judge Thompson takes a deep breath.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Dr. Stillman, I expect that you will seek help before it becomes mandatory in the future.

BRENT

I will. There is nothing to worry about.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Patient is to be discharged today.

Dr. Reed turns to Brent, clearly annoyed. Brent sticks his tongue out at her in a childish display of victory.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY -- DAY

Brent exits the court and smiles at Layla who is guarded by Steve.

BRENT

Be honest.

LAYLA

I always am.

Layla enters the court.

INT. COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Layla sits next to Dr. Reed.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Dr. Reed?

She stands up.

DR. REED

Layla Blythe was admitted after attempting suicide. She has indicated that she plans to kill herself after discharge. I am recommending that she be committed involuntarily until improvement is noted.

Dr. Reed sits down.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Young lady, would you like to add anything?

Layla stands up and looks very professional.

LAYLA

Yes.

She takes a deep breath to further compose herself.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

What a crock of shit! The ice queen (gestures to Dr. Reed) here is void of any clue as to what is important in life. Right now I have absolutely no freedom while living in the greatest democracy in the world. I was poor before I was admitted and with my current lack of health insurance I'm getting poorer by the minute.

She pauses for a moment.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

The only blessing is that I know I don't have the money to pay for my hospitalization. That means that taxpayers like yourself and the ice queen here will see an increase in your taxes to cover the expense of wanting to keep me hospitalized. Ironically, both of you will complain about your high taxes to your congressman and governor until they ultimately lower them, eliminating a social program that would have benefited someone who is economically challenged as myself. Ultimately, more poor people will be admitted until more social programs are cut and everyone who is poor and has a psychiatric problem will live out the rest of their forgotten lives in a 1900's style sanitarium.

Judge Thompson is impressed with Layla's tirade.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Basically, if you want your taxes to go up, by all means, commit me involuntarily. If not, the smart thing to do is discharge me so I can get on with my miserable life.

Judge Thompson ponders this for a moment.

JUDGE THOMPSON

Very well spoken Miss Blythe.
(to Dr. Reed)
Discharge her today.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack punches in a number on his phone and sits at his desk, grinning to himself. Through the speaker we hear the RINGING.

VOICE O.S.

(through speaker)
K.I.S.V. television.

JACK

Dr. Brent Stillman is being released from the psych unit in half an hour.

VOICE O.S.

(very interested)
Released? You mean he was a patient?

JACK

Yes.

VOICE O.S.

Who is this speaking?

JACK

A reliable source.

Jack hangs up, pleased with himself.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

Brent and Layla stand at the desk, waiting to be discharged. Paperwork is being checked by staff. Personal belongings are being inventoried.

Layla is very proud of herself, having proved Brent wrong.

LAYLA

You didn't think I was going to get out, did you?

BRENT

No.

LAYLA
 (a little concerned)
 We're still on for ice cream, right?

BRENT
 (wants to get out of
 it)
 Yeah, of course.

Brent is handed his things by Steve.

STEVE
 Dr. Stillman. We'll see you soon.

Steve is about to unlock the door for Brent, however Harry is coming in. He acknowledges Brent as he walks past him.

HARRY
 Tell K.I.S.V. I said hi.

BRENT
 Will do.
 (then it registers)
 What?

HARRY
 They're outside waiting for something.
 Or someone.

Brent suddenly runs to the window and looks out.

Brent's POV: He sees a K.I.S.V. television van parked outside. He looks panicked.

BRENT
 Shit.

LAYLA
 What's wrong?

BRENT
 A television crew is outside, that's
 what's wrong!

LAYLA
 Don't get too worked up or they'll
 keep you here.

Brent begins pacing.

BRENT
 That's just what I need---to be on
 the six o'clock news.

LAYLA
 So. Just tell them you freaked out
 and you're okay now. End of story.

BRENT

I'm a psychiatrist in this town. My parents are pioneers in the mental health field. Personally and professionally it would be a disaster.

LAYLA

You should stop worrying about what other people think.

Brent doesn't want her preaching to him right now, he's too busy pacing back and forth.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

(yells)
STOP PACING!

This gets Brent's attention as well as the attention of everyone on the unit. Brent has stopped in his tracks.

Layla looks at Brent with determination.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I'll cover for you.

BRENT

What do you mean?

LAYLA

Just leave two minutes after I leave.

Brent is puzzled.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Trust me. I'll keep them occupied.

Steve stands by looking at Brent and Layla while holding the key to the door.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Are you going to stand there all day wishing you had more brain cells or are you going to let me out?

Steve opens the door and Layla leaves.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Layla walks out the front door of the hospital. A camera man and reporter look disappointed as she is not who they were looking for. They resign themselves to wait.

Layla walks past them as though they aren't important, then stops and turns back to them.

LAYLA

Who are you looking for?

REPORTER

Dr. Stillman. He's in there, right?

Layla looks confused.

LAYLA
Dr. Stillman?

REPORTER
Yes. He's supposed to be a patient
in there now.

LAYLA
(feigns remembering)
Oh! Dr. Stillman! He's the one
they're taking out the back door.

The reporter goes into crisis mode.

REPORTER
Where!? Where is he going?!

Layla remains very calm and laid back.

LAYLA
I'll show you.

She waves them to follow her as she leads them around the building.

Meanwhile, Brent cautiously walks out the front door.

He looks around, sees that it's safe, then takes off running.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, REAR OF HOSPITAL -- DAY

Layla stands at a fence with the reporter and the camera man.

LAYLA
Dr. Reed should be sneaking out any
minute.

REPORTER
Dr. Stillman.

LAYLA
No, you asked about Dr. Reed. I
don't know a Dr. Stillman.
(seemingly angry)
Are you trying to play with my head?!
What's wrong with both of you!?
Stay away from me or I'll call the
police.
(she turns to the
cameraman)
Pervert!

Layla turns and walks away. She grins, pleased with herself.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Layla looks around the front of the hospital for Brent. She doesn't see him. She looks in the parking lot. No Brent.

From a distance she looks alone and small as cars move by along the street. Dejected, she trudges away.

EXT. PANCHO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Brent walks in the backyard of a nice house in the Black Hills. He walks near the creek that runs through the property. It's very serene.

It is the house of PANCHO TWO BULLS, 30's. A Native American with a straightforward, no bullshit attitude.

He approaches Brent with a glass of ice tea, ripping Brent from his thoughts.

PANCHO

Where the fuck were you? I thought we were gonna go water skiing over the weekend.

Brent takes the glass.

BRENT

It's a long story.

Pancho is a little pissed off.

PANCHO

You know, it's impossible to water ski without a fuckin' driver for the boat.

BRENT

Sorry. I freaked out.

PANCHO

You didn't go and get yourself hitched to that bitch already?

Brent and Pancho don't quite see eye to eye on Charlene.

BRENT

(warning)
Pancho.

PANCHO

(blowing it off)
Hey, I'd still be your best man even if I think she's bad for you.

They walk and drink.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

So what happened?

BRENT
I nearly strangled a client.

PANCHO
Nah.

Brent nods. Pancho begins to think Brent is serious.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
You serious?

BRENT
Yeah. Anyway, I ended up in the
unit for the weekend and just got
out.

Pancho starts laughing at him.

PANCHO
(laughing)
You mean you were in the nut house?

Brent wants to be serious about it but Pancho's laughter is
infectious. Brent smiles.

BRENT
Yeah.

Pancho thinks about this.

PANCHO
That's screwed up.

Pancho downs his ice tea.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
So what really set you off. Was it
your woman?

Brent shakes his head "no" but he's really not sure.

BRENT
You know the job in New Jersey?

PANCHO
(of course)
The one Charlene wanted you to go
for.

BRENT
They offered it to me and I told
Charlene I didn't want to take it.
Then she moved out.

Pancho smiles.

PANCHO
About time you crawled out from under
the whip.

Brent is silent. Pancho senses that's not the end of the story.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
You're not taking it, are you?

BRENT
I don't know. I've got another week to decide. Charlene stopped to see me and really wants me to take it.

Pancho cups his ear, listening for something.

PANCHO
I hear distant sounds of a whip cracking.

BRENT
(weakly protesting)
It's a good opportunity for me. I can go places with this.

Pancho laughs lightly at him again.

PANCHO
Yeah, and that's why you came back to Rapid City after you graduated. Couldn't get a job elsewhere, right?

Brent knows that wasn't the case.

BRENT
I like it here.

PANCHO
But that's not the problem, is it?

Brent picks up a rock and throws it at a tree. He misses.

BRENT
I don't know.

PANCHO
You're tryin' to follow your parents' path, when you need to find your own path.

EXT. HOMELESS SHELTER -- DAY

Ragged people lounge and wander around the perimeter of the building. It looks like the Night of the Living Dead. No one is going anywhere with purpose.

Layla walks to the parking lot to a beat up old Chevy Celebrity station wagon with faded and peeling paint. The inside is filled with everything she owns. None of it looks like it's worth anything.

Layla sadly approaches it as though she is worth less than the contents of the car.

She gets in, SLAMS a CREAKY door closed, inserts the key and turns the ignition. The STARTER SCREECHES. She tries again and the worn out ENGINE ROARS.

The car moves slowly out of the parking lot and into the traffic of the street. It looks out of place amidst the newer cars on the road.

EXT. PANCHO'S HOUSE -- DAY

Brent and Pancho play catch in the yard. They throw and talk.

BRENT

If I don't take the job I think
Charlene's gonna permanently leave
me.

PANCHO

Simple. Don't take the job.

Brent fires the ball to Pancho to punctuate his feelings.

BRENT

Why don't you like her?

PANCHO

She's the kind of woman who'd please
your parents.

Brent gives a "so what" shrug.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

She's not the kind of woman who'd
make you happy.

BRENT

And what kind of woman would do that?

PANCHO

Someone who's a little more daring
and not as worried about how things
look.

BRENT

Charlene isn't always worried about
how things look.

PANCHO

She tells you that she doesn't like
me because I use fuckin' bad language
around her.

BRENT

Yeah, that's her prerogative. You
don't have to swear around her. You
don't swear around me much.

PANCHO

I swear when I'm around her because
I know she can't stand it and she's
never asked me to stop.

Brent looks at Pancho like he's talking in a foreign language.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

She doesn't like me because I'm
Indian. I'm just given' her an out.

Brent knows that Pancho is right.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Before you marry Charlene, you should
at least go out with some more women.
Hell, even as friends. Maybe you'll
realize there's better out there.

Pancho throws the ball but Brent is gone and running off.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

What the???

BRENT

(yelling back)
I've got to get to Sunday Gulch!

PANCHO

Yeah, I gotta do my laundry too but
I don't run off mid sentence.

Pancho shakes his head. He thinks Brent has some serious
problems.

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD (MOVING) -- DAY

The road winds like a snake through the Black Hills.

Brent's Camry TIRES SQUEAL around a sharp turn. He's moving
as fast as possible.

A sign indicates that there is livestock at large.

The Camry SQUEALS around another hairpin turn.

EXT. SYLVAN LAKE -- DAY

A magnificent lake that's guarded by huge vertical boulders.

It's a tourist spot for hikers and fishermen but it's not
too busy on a weekday. Some families and couples having fun.

Layla's Chevy slowly pulls into the parking lot.

Her car parks and she gets out.

From above Layla looks small and lost amidst the families
and couples that are enjoying the day.

She slowly walks to her fateful destination.

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD -- DAY

Up ahead, a black and white cow wanders into the road. To the cow it seems like a nice place to be.

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD (MOVING) -- DAY

The Camry's ENGINE ROARS as it picks up more speed on a brief straight section of road.

It SQUEALS around a turn.

Brent's POV: The cow is in the middle of the road and getting larger by the second.

Brent slams on the brakes.

The Camry SKIDS and comes to a stop two inches from the cow!

The cow doesn't flinch. It looks up at Brent for a moment, then casually looks at something down the road.

Its tail swats at a fly.

INT. BRENT'S CAMRY -- SAME

Brent looks like his heart just started beating again.

He stares at the cow in disbelief.

BRENT
Move, or die.

Brent HONKS.

The cow doesn't move.

Brent puts his window down. He's a volcano of stress ready to blow.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Move! Now! Or you'll be filet mignon!

The cow seems to understand and decides to get off the road.

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD -- DAY

Brent's tires CHIRP as he takes off.

EXT. SYLVAN LAKE -- DAY

Layla drags her feet along a path that runs along the beautiful lake.

She lifts her heavy head to look at a sign.

The sign reads "Sunday Gulch Trailhead".

INT. BRENT'S CAMRY -- DAY

Deeply worried, Brent can't get his car to move fast enough.

BRENT
Damn, damn, damn, damn!

He spins the wheel around another sharp turn.

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD -- DAY

Brent's Camry speeds around a turn and flies down the road.

A sign reads, "One Lane Tunnel Ahead -- HONK!"

INT. BRENT'S CAMRY -- CONTINUOUS

Brent lays on his HORN as he races through the one lane rock tunnel without slowing down.

EXT. TWO LANE ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

Brent's Camry barely misses an RV that arrived at the tunnel first. The RV swerves to avoid Brent and goes off the road.

EXT. SYLVAN LAKE -- DAY

The Camry races into the lot and parks haphazardly.

Brent springs out of the car, scans the area for Layla, then bolts down the path along the lake.

At ground level his feet are flying along the path by contrast to Layla's previously dragging feet.

His feet keep moving and seem to fly further after he trips on a rock and goes sprawling face down on the path.

EXT. SUNDAY GULCH -- DAY

The gulch is a magnificent canyon with incredible granite formations.

Layla opens up her purse and begins searching for something...

EXT. SYLVAN LAKE -- DAY

Brent stands up and runs off along the path.

While running he turns to look at the sign for Sunday Gulch.

He isn't watching where he's going and accidentally knocks a couple of tourists into the water---SPLASH!

He shouts a lame apology to them as they curse him in German.

We follow Brent as he runs through a rock tunnel that is part of the path.

He leaps and bounds down the path as quickly as possible.

The path splits in two, Brent takes the less traveled path without hesitating.

EXT. SUNDAY GULCH -- DAY

Layla has an item in her hand but it's not clear what it is. She pulls her sleeve up, exposing her scarred wrist.

EXT. SUNDAY GULCH PATH -- DAY

Brent races through the magnificent gulch, oblivious to the beauty around him. Massive boulders, many the size of cars, and several the size of houses are sprawled throughout the gulch.

Brent spins his head in all directions scanning for Layla as he speeds down.

Brent's POV: He spots Layla. Her red blouse stands out among the greens and browns of nature.

Brent looks terrified.

He races up the side of the ravine toward Layla as fast as he can. Her back is turned toward him, her left arm extended with her sleeve pushed up.

Her right hand is about to come down upon her wrist, likely to slit it!

Brent is close to her.

He dives at her to save her from herself!

He tackles her and they roll on the ground.

Layla thinks she's being attacked and knees her attacker in the balls.

Brent doubles over in excruciating pain.

Layla rolls over and looks at her attacker. She's surprised.

Brent struggles to speak.

BRENT
(wincing/falsetto)
Don't do it.

LAYLA
Do what?

BRENT
Kill yourself.

Layla reaches over and picks up a bottle of suntan lotion off the ground. She rubs in the lotion that she had begun to apply to her arm.

LAYLA

I wasn't gonna do it today, it's too nice. I'll do it when it's raining.

Layla gets up off the ground. She extends a hand to Brent. He takes it and gingerly gets up.

BRENT

Thanks.

Layla gives him another swift knee to the nuts, but not nearly as harsh as the first one.

Brent doubles over in pain again.

LAYLA

That's for standing me up! I help get you out of the unit without getting on the local news and you thank me by taking off!

Brent would love to object, but he's in too much pain right now.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

It's bad enough I'm dying and depressed, but you---you add insult to injury.

BRENT

(gasping)
You added the injury.

Layla considers this and decides to call it even.

LAYLA

Fair enough.

She picks up a rock and throws it at a majestic rock wall.

BRENT

Thanks for not aiming that at me.

Layla ignores Brent's comment and looks at the splendor around them. Rock walls rise two hundred feet above them.

LAYLA

Isn't this place magnificent!

Brent stands up a little straighter. The pain is subsiding and he can actually enjoy what he's seeing.

BRENT

Yeah. I used to come here when I was a teenager.

LAYLA

Whatcha do here?

BRENT

I used to write, mostly and did some other things.

LAYLA

What kind of writing?

BRENT

Poems, stories. Part of a novel.
(dismissing)
I even won a contest once.

LAYLA

What are you doing with it now?

BRENT

Nothing really. It's not practical.
You can't make a living off writing.

Layla shakes her head in disbelief.

BRENT (CONT'D)

What?

LAYLA

That's so lame. I mean you stopped doing something you love because it's not practical.
(pauses, sarcastic)
How emotionally healthy is that?

Brent half senses that she's right but does not want her to get that satisfaction. He does what any intelligent person would do. Change the subject.

BRENT

What about your situation? You don't seem too well adjusted yourself.

Layla starts walking.

LAYLA

Come on. Let's go exploring.

Brent follows after her. Gingerly at first, then gradually walking more normally.

BRENT

Sure. We can explore and you can tell me about yourself.

They walk along the stream that runs through the gulch. The terrain is slippery, but the scenery is beautiful.

LAYLA

Not much to tell. I hate the rain. I'm twenty-seven years old, been burned in almost every relationship I've ever had, my father's an

(MORE)

LAYLA (CONT'D)

alcoholic who's stashed away in a VA hospital somewhere and my mother died suddenly when I was ten.

BRENT

What did she die of?

LAYLA

My father said the doctors never told him. Must have been the same genetic disorder I've inherited.

BRENT

What's that?

LAYLA

Don't know. Doctors won't tell me a thing. When they don't have a cure they just say it's nothing.

BRENT

That's not how it works.

Layla stops and turns to him.

LAYLA

And you knew how commitment hearings worked.

Brent realizes she has a good point.

BRENT

That was different. I still don't know how you got out.

LAYLA

It's just as easy to get out as it is to get someone in. Our system is predicated on paranoia of what a person may do even though there is an equal or greater chance that they may do nothing.

BRENT

It's based on calculated risks.

LAYLA

Once you have a history, the history becomes the future of your world. There's no changing it.

Brent is confused.

BRENT

No. That's completely wrong. The future hasn't happened so it can be changed.

LAYLA

Look at you. You don't want to be a psychiatrist but you went to school for it and you're stuck in it. Your history has become your future.

BRENT

If I wanted to quit I could. I could change my field---but I don't want to.

Layla glares at him.

LAYLA

Yeah, you could be a fertilizer salesman. You're good at selling bullshit.

Layla turns and heads toward a boulder above a precipice. Brent follows close behind.

BRENT

(uncertain)
I like what I do.

LAYLA

Yeah, so much you want to spend more time with your patients by getting committed.

BRENT

It was a learning experience.

Layla takes a step on the rock but her foot slips on old pine needles!

Falling, she desperately grasps at anything she can.

She grabs a thin branch of a pine tree as she slides off the boulder and dangles above the precipice clinging for dear life!

She hangs from the branch with a thirty foot drop below!

LAYLA

HELP!!!

Brent springs into action.

BRENT

Hold on!

He leans over, trying to pull the tree that Layla hangs from back toward safety.

The thin branches bend even more with the added stress. The branch CRACKS, dropping her lower. Layla SCREAMS!

LAYLA

That's not helping!

BRENT

I know that now. Hold on!

Brent's POV: He frantically looks for something he can use. He sees a fairly sturdy branch that's much thicker. It's not what he wants, but it will have to do.

He grabs the bulky branch and awkwardly maneuvers it in Layla's direction.

Brent braces the branch with all his weight as it reaches Layla.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Hang on to the tree and grab this branch! I'll try to pull you back.

Layla grabs at the branch and nearly falls! Terrified, she tries to grab it again---this time she's successful. She's got one hand on each branch.

Brent pulls Layla toward safety.

The tree branch that she grabbed when she fell BREAKS! She nearly falls! She clings to the branch that Brent has with both hands.

Brent struggles to pull her as close as he can to safety.

Layla musters all her strength and pulls herself up onto the rock.

She lays there, breathing like a fish out of water, exhausted in every meaning of the word.

Brent bolts to her side.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You okay?

LAYLA

I'll let you know when my heart starts beating again.

She manages a weak smile.

They are closer than they've ever been before. Their faces are only inches apart.

They look into each others eyes, ready to kiss, they both want it.

A long moment of silence grows uncomfortable. Then Layla breaks the spell.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

You didn't have to do that. I would've been fine if I fell.

They both get up, creating more space between them.

BRENT
It's thirty feet down! You would've
been killed!

LAYLA
(proving her point)
Exactly.

Brent is a bit agitated that Layla doesn't appreciate what he's done.

BRENT
You asked for help! You don't really
want to die.

Layla knows he may be right but she won't give him that satisfaction.

LAYLA
Obviously while dangling and in a
state of shock I wasn't thinking
clearly!

BRENT
Probably more clearly than you know.

Layla brings up her knee but stops short. Then she slaps him across the face because he made her care about him.

LAYLA
That's for saving me.

INT. PANCHO'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Brent sits on the sofa with a bag of ice on his crotch and another on his cheek. A baseball game plays on TV.

PANCHO
You left in a hurry to get your balls
kicked and the shit beat out of you?

BRENT
She's insane. I save her life and
this is the thanks I get.

PANCHO
You said she was suicidal. She had
an easy way out and you screwed it
up for her.

Brent moves the ice pack and winces.

BRENT
She's completely whacked out.

PANCHO
Is that your professional diagnosis?

Brent ponders this for a moment.

BRENT

It's about as close as it's going to get.

PANCHO

I'll say this much. She's definitely unique.

Pancho grabs a few pretzels and begins munching.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Definitely sounds like the type of woman you should be with.

BRENT

What do you know about women anyway? You're divorced.

Brent grabs a handful of pretzels.

PANCHO

I know what I don't want and that's why I'm single. You, on the other hand, don't have a clue.

BRENT

It took me a while to find Charlene. I'm committed to her and I'm happy.

PANCHO

Yeah, you're so crazy about her--- you just got out of the unit. What about the job in Jersey?

Brent considers this more seriously than before.

BRENT

I think I'm going to take it.

Pancho just shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER -- NIGHT

Layla looks through a phone book for a number and address. She smiles when she has what she wants.

She RIPS the page out.

INT. LAYLA'S CHEVY -- NIGHT

The dome light barely provides enough light for Layla to look through the mess that fills the rear of her car. She frantically searches for something, haphazardly throwing unneeded items over her shoulder.

She finally discovers what she's been looking for...a brown paper bag containing a jewelry box.

She opens the jewelry box, a miniature ballerina pops up and begins spinning to Beethoven's "Für Elise".

Layla lifts up the platform the ballerina stands on, exposing a wedding photograph of Layla and a relatively handsome man, taken at a happier time several years earlier.

The picture sits next to a man's wedding ring and a gold watch.

Layla gently touches the man's face in the picture, then removes the watch.

INT. PAWN SHOP -- NIGHT

Layla leans over the counter in a pawn shop. She haggles with an unsympathetic CLERK.

LAYLA
It's worth more than that!

CLERK
No, it's not.

LAYLA
It is too.

CLERK
No, it's not.

LAYLA
It is.

He hands her back the watch.

CLERK
Then go find someone else to buy it.

Layla hands him back the watch.

LAYLA
I don't have time to look all over for someone who's honest---you'll have to do. Can we split the difference?

The clerk considers this. What the hell.

CLERK
Okay.

He opens his register and hands Layla twenty dollars.

INT. BORDERS BOOK STORE -- NIGHT

Layla hands the CASHIER twenty dollars.

The cashier hands her a little change and a bag containing her purchase.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Charlene wraps dining plates and packs them into a box for moving while Brent boxes up some books.

BRENT

I'm nervous about the job. It's a big change.

Charlene examines a plate that appears cracked. She decides not to pack it.

CHARLENE

You're not the only one who has a big change. I've been with Anderson Accounting for six years and it's a good, comfortable job. I don't want to leave it. But I am for you.

Brent wishes she wouldn't.

He continues putting books in the box. Then he pauses to scan the remaining books on the shelf. Something is missing.

BRENT

Where's my copy of "Leaves of Grass?"

CHARLENE

(she doesn't care)
How should I know?

BRENT

You live in this house.

CHARLENE

Yeah, and I touched the book once because you insisted.

BRENT

Did you put it back?

She's not completely sure but also doesn't really care.

CHARLENE

Probably.

Brent is less than thrilled.

Angry, he puts more books in the box to the point of over-stuffing it.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Honey, you shouldn't put so many books in there.

BRENT

It's fine.

Brent picks up the box to move it out of the way. He carries it a few feet and then the box collapses, sending books THUDDING to the floor.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Crap!

The DOORBELL RINGS.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Great.

CHARLENE

I told you not to put so much in there.

BRENT

I'll make a mental note for next time.

The DOORBELL RINGS again.

CHARLENE

(impatient)

Are you going to get that?

Brent heads toward the door, annoyed.

BRENT

Yeah.

He reaches the front door, takes a breath to compose himself and opens it.

Layla stands there nervously with her hands behind her back.

LAYLA

I'm sorry about coming to your house and all. I didn't know how else to do this.

Brent curiously waits for more.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I wanted to apologize and thank you for what you were trying to do.

Brent is touched.

BRENT

Apology accepted.

LAYLA

I have a small present for you.

She hands Brent a beautifully gift wrapped book.

He's not used to receiving gifts and is uncomfortable with it.

BRENT
You don't have to do this.

LAYLA
I want to.

BRENT
No, really.

He tries to give it back to her.

LAYLA
Just take it and shut up.

Brent takes it.

In the b.g., Charlene is curious what's going on. She conspicuously observes.

BRENT
That's right, I still owe you ice cream.

LAYLA
Yeah, but that's okay.

Charlene begins SLAMMING things in boxes to make more noise.

CHARLENE
(to Brent)
I hope you don't plan on leaving all the packing up to me.

Brent is annoyed by her comment.

BRENT
(to Charlene)
No, I'll be there in a moment.

CHARLENE
(hurry up)
Take your time.

Brent moves closer to the doorway so that he is closer to Layla and less likely to receive interference from Charlene.

LAYLA
Where are you going?

BRENT
New Jersey. I'm going to head up a psychiatry group in a hospital in Newark.

Layla considers this with disdain.

LAYLA
You don't like what you do here so you figure you'll try the same thing somewhere else?

Brent hesitates as he ponders this.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Same shit, different pile.

BRENT
No. This is something I enjoy doing.

LAYLA
Life's too short to spend time at
the funeral parlor.

BRENT
What's that supposed to mean?

LAYLA
If you're doing something you don't
enjoy, you're already dying.

BRENT
What do you do for a living?

LAYLA
I don't. I stopped working when I
figured out I'm terminally ill.

BRENT
I think that's all in your head.

LAYLA
Maybe it is, maybe it's not. Either
way, next time it rains it'll be
over.

BRENT
What do you mean?

LAYLA
I hate the rain. Not like most people
hate the rain or snow. It makes me
suicidally depressed.

Brent opens his mouth to speak.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
(sharply cuts him off)
I have my reasons, so don't ask.
(casually)
Next time it rains I'm gonna kill
myself and get it over with.

BRENT
I could get you put back in the unit
for saying that.

LAYLA
So. Anyone can get anyone
hospitalized.

Brent disagrees but prefers not to argue.

BRENT
 You really don't want to kill
 yourself.

Brent consciously decides to protect his balls from another
 knee attack. Layla doesn't attack.

Layla shoots Brent a look that says she thinks he doesn't
 have a clue what he's talking about.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 Don't forget, I still owe you ice
 cream. Maybe sometime this week.

In the background Charlene makes GRUNTING sounds of
 struggling.

LAYLA
 (doubts it will happen)
 Sure.

CHARLENE O.S.
 Would be nice if I had some help!

BRENT
 I'd better get back to packing.

LAYLA
 Sure.

Layla turns to leave.

Brent stays at the door for a moment and looks down at the
 gift in his hands.

Layla turns back and returns to the door.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 I forgot something.

BRENT
 What?

Layla nervously leans in and kisses Brent on the lips.
 Surprised, he returns the favor. They both disconnect from
 the world as Charlene walks into the b.g. and stares gape-
 jawed at the two.

CHARLENE
 (shocked)
 What the hell is this?

Layla slowly pulls back from a stunned Brent. She ignores
 Charlene.

LAYLA
 About the ice cream thing. Don't
 lie. You don't have my address or
 phone number.

Brent stammers searching for a reply. He's in sensory overload right now.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
It's bad enough that you're lying to yourself about what you want.

Layla smiles at Brent.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
(to Charlene)
Take a warm bath. Maybe it'll melt the ice water in your veins.

Layla looks intensely at Brent, she smiles but it fades quickly to sadness.

She turns and walks away.

Layla glances back at Brent.

Layla's POV: Brent is still looking at her, bewildered.

Behind him, Charlene is pissed.

CHARLENE
What the hell is going on!?

Brent snaps out of his trance. He closes the door to reluctantly face Charlene's wrath.

BRENT
I have no idea.

Brent truly doesn't, but he can't get out of it that easily.

CHARLENE
You can start with who she is.

BRENT
I met her when I was in the unit, she was a patient.

CHARLENE
That was one helluva session you had with her.

BRENT
I don't know what that was about.

Charlene thinks for a moment about what she wants out of this. She knows they will be moving soon and that will put an end to it.

CHARLENE
Did you have sex with her?

BRENT
No! That was the first time she kissed me.

CHARLENE
 (means business)
 And the last.

BRENT
 (trying to convince
 himself)
 Of course. She's crazy.

CHARLENE
 Whatever the hell she gave you, throw
 it out. I don't want any trace of
 her.

EXT. BRENT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Brent walks down his driveway to the garbage can.

He lifts the lid and tosses the present on top of the garbage.
 The beauty of its wrapping looks sadly out of place.

He places the lid back on the garbage can and stands there
 for a moment. He wants to know what's in there, but leaves
 it unopened.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brent walks back in. Charlene looks at him.

CHARLENE
 That's the end of it.

She tries to be more tender, but there's still a rough edge
 to her.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)
 I'm not going to let anyone interfere
 with our life together. We have a
 fresh start on a great future. You're
 going to be successful and we'll
 both be happy together.

Brent has his doubts, but he hides them well.

Charlene moves toward Brent. She puts her arms around him
 and gives him a powerful hug. It's a genuinely tender moment.
 Charlene slowly pulls back from Brent.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)
 Let's get to work.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, KITCHEN -- DAY

It's the next morning. Packed boxes sit on the counter as
 Brent and Charlene have coffee and finish up breakfast.

The PHONE RINGS.

Brent picks it up.

BRENT

Hello?

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Victor Hasbin sits at his desk with the speaker phone on.

VICTOR

Good morning, Dr. Stillman.

BRENT O.S.

Good morning.

Victor looks at some papers on his desk.

VICTOR

The reason I'm calling you is we've had a slight change in our situation.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (SAME) -- DAY

We cut back and forth.

Brent is both hopeful and apprehensive.

BRENT

What is it?

(hopeful)

Have you decided on someone else?

VICTOR

No, Dr. Bradley has taken ill and we need you here more urgently than expected.

BRENT

I'm sorry to hear that. Is he going to be okay?

VICTOR

Sure, sure. Just some minor problems with the ticker, but he's taking it as a sign that he needs to pass the torch.

BRENT

I understand.

VICTOR

And we're willing to increase your salary an additional ten percent to help make that decision a little easier for you.

Brent is pleasantly surprised about the money, it takes the sting out of it. Charlene anxiously waits for the news.

BRENT

That's great. I'll take the position.

VICTOR

Can you be out here by next Monday?
Of course we'll pay all your moving
expenses, anything you need. You
name it.

BRENT

We started packing last night.

VICTOR

Fantastic! I know I can count on
you.

BRENT

Thank you.

Brent hangs up. Charlene waits for the news like a puppy
dog excited to see his master come home.

CHARLENE

What did they say? What did they
say?

BRENT

Dr. Bradley is ill so they're offering
me an additional ten percent on my
salary if I can start Monday.

Charlene's jaw nearly hits the floor. She's ecstatic.

CHARLENE

Do you know how much more that is?!

Brent feels good about being in demand, even though it's not
a perfect situation.

BRENT

Yeah, but it's still in New Jersey.

CHARLENE

So what. It's only temporary. This
move is already paying off for us.

Brent knows she's right. It's a good career opportunity.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Viewed from high above, Brent's Camry parks in the lot.
Brent emerges from the car and heads toward the building.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

Brent walks toward the nurse's station. He's back in charge
of his life and prepares to get things straightened out before
he leaves. He's too cheerful---so much that it's obviously
not genuine happiness.

Gina and Harry review paperwork. They look up to see Brent.

BRENT
 (overly cheerful)
 Good morning!

Gina and Harry smile in return. Both feel slightly awkward at Brent's quick return.

GINA
 How are you today?

BRENT
 Fantastic!

HARRY
 (whispers to Gina)
 Over-medicated.

Brent grabs a folder and begins looking at it.

BRENT
 Harry, I want you to be the first to know that I'm leaving.

Harry raises his eyebrows, surprised.

HARRY
 Your client pressing charges?

BRENT
 No. I'm taking the job in Jersey.

HARRY
 Oh. The one you insisted you weren't taking.

Brent hesitates for the slightest moment.

BRENT
 Yes.

HARRY
 (I knew it)
 A vehement denial of a rumor always means it's true.

Brent starts looking at the files. He's clearly looking for something but isn't finding it.

BRENT
 How's Bob doing?

GINA
 He's doing okay. As stable as he gets.

Brent continues flipping through the files.

BRENT
 Just trying to catch myself up.
 (MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)
Was there a discharge plan on Layla Blythe?

GINA
She was discharged on...

Thinking.

GINA (CONT'D)
Wasn't it the same day you got...

BRENT
Yes. Monday.

GINA
Oh. I think she agreed to do some outpatient counseling with Behavioral Adjustment Dynamics.

Jack approaches, looking as confident as ever.

JACK
(to Brent)
Back in action?

BRENT
For the moment. I'll be winding things up here. I'm taking the job in Newark.

JACK
(not disappointed)
Really? You'll be sorely missed.

Jack puts a hand on Gina's shoulder.

JACK (CONT'D)
Everything under control?

GINA
Of course.

Gina seems somewhat interested in Jack's advances.

Brent watches with a critical eye, while Harry just rolls his.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, LOUNGE AREA -- DAY

Brent makes tea in the lounge. Gina comes in and heads toward the coffee machine. She's preoccupied.

GINA
Can I ask you something?

BRENT
Sure, what?

GINA
What do you think of Jack?

Brent hesitates.

BRENT
He does a fine job.

In the hallway Jack stops outside the lounge area, listening undetected.

GINA
No, what do you think of Jack as a person? I mean in a relationship.

BRENT
(joking)
He's not my type.

Gina laughs.

GINA
No, seriously. You've known him for a while and I think he likes me, but I'm not sure if it's a good idea.

Brent likes Gina and he doesn't want to see her get hurt.

BRENT
Depends. Do you like to be used and dumped?

GINA
No! Is he really as bad as the rumors say?

BRENT
No. Worse.

Jack has fire in his eyes.

EXT. BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT DYNAMICS -- DAY

A clinic for the relatively hopeless. People in all levels of despair linger outside the building. Some are psychotic, others are terribly depressed.

Layla looks at the sky and seems nervous about storm clouds in the distance.

She looks at the building and the people surrounding it as she debates whether or not to go in.

She takes a quarter out of her pocket.

LAYLA
Heads I go in, tails I flee.

She flips the coin in the air. It CLINKS on the ground, bounces and rolls underneath a Blazer.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Shit.

She lays down on the ground and tries to reach the coin.

Her fingers can just touch the edge of the coin but can't grab it.

She squeezes her torso under the car, leaving her shapely legs sticking out. She stretches her arm as far as it will go and she reaches the coin.

She starts pulling the coin towards her, careful not to flip it by accident.

Brent's Camry pulls up and parks behind the Blazer.

Brent's POV: A nice pair of legs stick out from under the vehicle.

Brent gets out of his car and walks toward the legs, curious.

Layla pulls the coin out and slides out from under the Blazer. She looks at the coin---it's tails.

Brent is surprised to see Layla.

BRENT

Hiding?

Layla is equally surprised to see him.

LAYLA

No. Are you looking for me?

Brent hesitates. He was looking for her but didn't expect to find her.

BRENT

Uhm, I was going to check on a couple of clients. What are you doing?

LAYLA

Leaving.

BRENT

Because I showed up?

LAYLA

No. The quarter was tails.

Brent looks at her like she's psychotic. Layla decides to explain.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Whenever I have an important decision I'm not sure about I flip a coin.

BRENT
(you're crazy)
That's sound thinking.

Layla knows he doesn't get the whole idea.

LAYLA
No. When it lands if I feel good
about the decision it's fine. If my
gut reaction wants me to go for two
out of three, I know I need to do
what didn't come up.

BRENT
You lost me.

She hands him the quarter.

LAYLA
Okay. Is there something you're
debating on doing?

Brent gives her a wry smile.

BRENT
Always.

LAYLA
Pick one thing.

BRENT
Like taking you for ice cream?

LAYLA
You got it.

He really isn't sure what he wants to do.

BRENT
Heads I take you, tails I don't.

He flips the coin into the air.

In slow motion it spins as it falls.

CHINK! It bounces on the pavement several times, rolls
slightly, teetering in slow motion, seeming as though it
will be tails as it rolls.

The coin hits a pebble in its path and flips backwards,
landing on heads.

Brent and Layla look down at the coin. A realization hits
Brent. This is the decision he wanted.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Let's go.

LAYLA
Where to?

BRENT
It's a surprise.

Layla suddenly realizes something as she looks at the clinic.

LAYLA
Didn't you need to go in there?

BRENT
Uhm, nothing I can't do later.

Layla grins fondly at him.

EXT. MOUNT RUSHMORE NATIONAL MONUMENT -- DAY

A view of the the most famous four faces.

INT. MOUNT RUSHMORE NATIONAL MONUMENT, RESTAURANT -- DAY

The restaurant has a spectacular view of the monument.

Brent and Layla eat ice cream with the four faces behind them.

LAYLA
Good choice.

BRENT
Yeah, I like coming up here once in a while.

Layla looks out at the mountain.

LAYLA
Who's your favorite?

BRENT
Teddy Roosevelt.

LAYLA
Why?

BRENT
Mostly because he lived life to the fullest and was pretty daring for his day.
(pauses)
Who's yours?

LAYLA
Lincoln.

BRENT
Why?

LAYLA
'Cause he had a nervous breakdown.

She smiles at Brent.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Only kidding. He was fair and caring.
He dealt with a lot of adversity.

BRENT

And he overcame the nervous breakdown
and the adversity.

LAYLA

Yeah, and then he was shot.

EXT. CANYON LAKE PARK -- DAY

A beautiful city park on a beautiful day. The park is a
buzz of activity. Couples walking hand in hand, people
fishing, people riding bikes.

Layla and Brent walk along a path in the park.

They are both relaxed by the scenery.

LAYLA

It must suck to have people envy
your life. A good career, nice house,
nice car, a beautiful fiancée.

Brent shrugs. So.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I think it's sad for people to envy
something that's not that good. I'm
suicidally depressed but I still
wouldn't want to be you.

BRENT

Why not?

LAYLA

You make believe you're happy. I
can't do that. It's tough enough to
fake when I want out of the psych
unit.

Layla pauses.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

You live the illusion.

Brent knows she's hitting a sore spot with him.

BRENT

So. Maybe I'm not doing the things
I really love. Most people don't.
Sometimes you have to settle for
your second choice.

LAYLA

Once you settle for second, it gets
easier to settle for less and less.

Brent tries to deflect the conversation.

BRENT

Your life isn't happy. I don't see you prancing around with a happiness medal around your neck. Did you pass up your second and third choices waiting for a first choice that doesn't exist?

Layla considers this. She looks teary-eyed for a moment. She stops and faces Brent.

LAYLA

No. I had my first choice.

Layla turns and storms off.

Brent runs to catch up to her.

BRENT

Wait!

Brent gently grabs her from behind and turns her toward him. He looks into her eyes.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.
(pauses)
What happened?

Layla takes a deep breath.

A couple of boys with water pistols run by squirting each other. One accidentally squirts Layla in the forehead.

BOY

Sorry!

They continue running while squirting each other.

Layla closes her eyes as the water drips down her face. She seems far away, thinking of another time...

EXT. ROADSIDE (RAINING) -- NIGHT

Layla is a few years younger. She stands in the pouring rain with her face up to the sky. Water drips down her forehead. She opens her mouth, catching drops of it on her tongue. She's soaked but she couldn't be happier.

She stretches out her arms. A hand touches hers. The matching wedding rings glisten in the rain.

KEVIN, the man in the wedding photograph earlier, smiles at her and kisses her in the rain.

LAYLA V.O.

Our car had broken down.
(MORE)

LAYLA V.O. (CONT'D)
 It was an old Chevy. Always
 temperamental when it rained.

They stroll through the rain holding hands.

LAYLA V.O. (CONT'D)
 We had gone out for dinner and had
 to walk home in a torrential downpour.
 It was beautiful because it was a
 warm summer rain.

Layla sees a nerf ball lying on the side of the road. She
 picks it up and throws it at Kevin.

LAYLA V.O. (CONT'D)
 We found a ball and were playing
 catch.

LAYLA
 Catch!

He catches and gets a splash of cold water from it. He dunks
 it in a puddle and tosses it back to Layla.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 (catching the ball)
 Yuck!

She throws it back at Kevin, too high for him to reach. It
 rolls into the road.

LAYLA V.O.
 I threw it and it went into the road.

Kevin's POV: he looks into the rain to see if any vehicles
 are coming. Visibility sucks.

He runs out into the road and grabs the ball.

Kevin's POV: he sees a lone headlight coming toward him
 quickly from the center of the road. It looks like it might
 be a motorcycle.

LAYLA V.O. (CONT'D)
 My husband ran into the road to get
 it. It was raining so hard he
 couldn't see ten feet in front of
 him.

A moment later a HORN BLARES and we see it was a truck with
 one headlight out.

LAYLA V.O. (CONT'D)
 He was hit before he got back to the
 side of the road.

A HORN BLARES.

EXT. CANYON LAKE PARK -- DAY

Layla opens her eyes with a jolt.

Tears stream down her face.

She looks off to see where the sound came from.

Layla's POV: A truck just outside the park has just blown its air horn in response to some kids requesting it.

She turns and looks at Brent.

They embrace tightly.

LAYLA

After having your first choice, second best sucks.

Layla pulls away from Brent.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

You've taken me for ice cream. You don't have any more obligations.

BRENT

It wasn't an obligation.

Layla gives him a contradictory look.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Okay, it started as an obligation but I'm glad I took you.

They trek back through the park.

LAYLA

I know being a psychiatrist wasn't your first career choice, where does your fiancée rate?

The question throws him off balance.

BRENT

She's sweet, stable and cares about me. She wants me to be the best I can be.

LAYLA

That doesn't answer the question, does it?

BRENT

I don't know. I never thought about it. She's the only person I've ever asked to marry me.

LAYLA

Out of choice or desperation?

BRENT

(offended)

No. I'm not marrying because I think I'll never find someone. I'm marrying Charlene because she's special.

Layla doesn't buy into it but she's not going to argue.

LAYLA

Then you are incredibly lucky.

Brent tries to convince himself as much as her.

BRENT

You're damn right I am.

LAYLA

You must be excited having wedded bliss just waiting around the corner. How long have you been engaged?

BRENT

Eight months.

LAYLA

When are you tying the knot?

BRENT

We're waiting to get things settled with the job, then we're going to set a date.

LAYLA

(subtly sarcastic)

Two lovers heading into marriage with reckless abandon. What can be more beautiful than that?

Brent doesn't pick up on the sarcasm.

EXT. BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT DYNAMICS -- DAY

Brent's Camry pulls up next to Layla's car.

INT. BRENT'S CAMRY -- DAY

Brent and Layla struggle with an awkward goodbye.

LAYLA

Thanks for the ice cream. I had fun.

BRENT

No problem. I enjoyed your company.

An uncomfortable silence.

LAYLA

When do you leave for New Jersey?

BRENT

Saturday.

LAYLA

Supposed to rain Thursday and Friday.

BRENT

What's it supposed to do Saturday.

LAYLA

Don't know. I didn't bother listening 'cause I won't be here either.

Brent's surprised.

BRENT

Where're you going?

LAYLA

Don't know. Probably east, away from the storm. Maybe the Badlands.

She hesitates.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

The rain always gets me---it makes me---never mind.

BRENT

Bad reminder?

LAYLA

Yeah. I've been running from the rain ever since.

She lifts her arm showing that stitches from her last suicide attempt.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

It caught me this last time.

BRENT

Ever thought of staying put and getting help?

LAYLA

Yeah. Then I think, what's the point. My life's always going to be less than what it was. All the guys that are worthwhile are taken and the leftovers are worse than what I'm doing now.

BRENT

It doesn't have to be that way. There's got to be someone out there for you.

Layla feigns a smile.

LAYLA

Maybe I'll find him at my next stop.

Layla opens the door to get out. She gives Brent a quick kiss on the cheek.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Brent doesn't want her to go, but he doesn't know what else to say or do.

BRENT

You too.

She's about to close the door.

BRENT (CONT'D)

(quickly)

What are you doing Wednesday?

LAYLA

Don't know. I might head out to stay ahead of the storm.

She pauses.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

What did you have in mind?

BRENT

If you want, maybe we could...I don't know, maybe go somewhere.

Layla perks up a bit but is cautious.

LAYLA

Sure.

BRENT

I'll meet you here on Wednesday at noon. How's that sound?

LAYLA

Like a plan.

Layla closes the door and watches Brent drive away.

EXT. RANCH AMUSEMENT PARK -- DAY

A go-cart buzzes past.

Brent and Pancho wait in line to go on race car-like go carts. A half dozen people who are teenagers or younger wait in line as well.

Brent and Pancho bicker as they wait.

PANCHO

I'm not surprised you got the job.

BRENT

You think my resume is that good?

PANCHO

No. Your parents' reputation is what got you it.

Brent doesn't want to hear this.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Let's face it. You've got some experience in a small community psych unit and now you're going to be heading up a program at one of the largest facilities in the country.

He pauses.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Without your parent's name you don't get that job.

Brent knows he's right but doesn't want to admit it.

BRENT

I'm just trying to make it on my own. I don't want charity.

(as an afterthought)

If I was gonna get charity, it could at least be somewhere other than New Jersey.

PANCHO

Like it or not, you're trapped in your parent's footsteps.

BRENT

I don't want to be.

It's now their turn to get on the cars. They climb in their respective vehicles as they continue talking.

PANCHO

You should've thought about that before you decided to go to school to become a shrink.

Pancho adjusts his seat belt.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

If you went to school for auto mechanics we wouldn't be having this conversation.

Then as an afterthought.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

And you wouldn't be marrying Charlene or moving to Newark.

BRENT

I might not be moving to Jersey, but
I'd probably still be with Char.

They begin to rev their engines. They both look too big to
be in the cars.

PANCHO

Yeah, I could see that now. You're
comin' home from Jiffy Lube and
Charlene's doting on you like a king.
Keep dreaming, Brent.

An ATTENDANT waves a green flag. The engines ROAR and they
take off on the track.

EXT. RANCH AMUSEMENT PARK, RACETRACK (MOVING) -- DAY

Brent trails Pancho as they SQUEAL around the sharp turns of
the course. They need to shout to hear each other.

BRENT

Sometimes I think you're just jealous.

PANCHO

I might not mind a night or two with
Charlene but it would get old fast.
She makes you old.

Brent cuts off a TEN YEAR OLD RIDER behind him.

BRENT

No, it's just time for me to grow
up.

Brent cuts off the rider behind him again.

BRENT (CONT'D)

We're not kids anymore.

PANCHO

Speak for yourself.

A brief pause as they maneuver around a series of turns.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

What do you wanna do after this?

BRENT

Golf.

EXT. RANCH AMUSEMENT PARK, MINIATURE GOLF -- DAY

Close on Brent and Pancho. Each are holding a golf club.

PANCHO

Think you can par it?

BRENT

You better believe it.

As the shot widens it becomes clear they are playing miniature golf.

Brent takes a shot and it barely reaches the cup and falls in. He's overly excited.

BRENT (CONT'D)
Tiger Woods eat your heart out.

Pancho lines up to shoot from the tee.

PANCHO
So you're taking this Layla woman out again?

BRENT
It's not a date. I'm just trying to help her.

PANCHO
Is this a patient-psychiatrist thing where you can get in trouble?

BRENT
No. She's not my client.

PANCHO
That's right, you were in the loony bin together as patients.

Pancho shoots and the ball drops into the cup for a hole in one.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
Hey Tiger, you're still two strokes behind.

BRENT
That's the story of my life.

They pick up their balls and head to the next hole.

PANCHO
What did Charlene say about her?

BRENT
As long as it's over, she doesn't care.

PANCHO
Most women in love would have a fit if another woman kissed their man in their house.

He pauses.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Clearly Charlene isn't like most women in love.

Brent sets up his ball to shoot. The hole has a rollercoaster-like loop that the ball must go through.

BRENT

She trusts me. She knows nothing's going on. Besides, we're moving. It's a moot point. Char loves me enough not to worry.

Brent shoots, but his ball doesn't make it up a loop. It rolls back to the tee area.

PANCHO

She know you're seeing her again?

Brent hadn't really thought about this. He suddenly seems concerned.

BRENT

No. Maybe I shouldn't.

Pancho rolls his eyes.

PANCHO

You said you're not doing anything with this woman, right?

BRENT

Yeah?

PANCHO

If Charlene didn't mind you kissing her in your house, she sure as hell wouldn't mind you trying to help her get straightened out.

Brent considers this. He's not sure if Pancho is using this logic because he doesn't like Charlene, but it makes sense to him.

BRENT

You're probably right. Besides, nothing's going to happen.

Brent takes his shot and makes it through the loop this time.

PANCHO

Don't close off your options. You're not married yet.

Pancho tees up.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

So what was the gift she gave you?

Brent is caught off guard by the question.

BRENT

I don't know. I threw it out.

Pancho shoots, he gets it through the loop on the first try.

PANCHO
You didn't even open it?

BRENT
No.

PANCHO
Hell, I'd be curious what kind of
taste she has.

Brent considers this.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
I don't even like it when my sister
tells me she got me something but
won't tell me what it is. You got
some willpower.

Then as a barb and an afterthought.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
Guess that's how you managed to stay
with Charlene.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Brent and Charlene are packing. They're wrapping up fragile items with old newspaper, dishes and knickknacks---all business. An uncomfortable silence.

The CRINKLING of the newspaper sounds unnaturally loud.

Brent stops wrapping for a moment to look at an old article that catches his eye.

BRENT
George Summers.

No response from Charlene.

BRENT (CONT'D)
George Summers won the Northern Plains
Writing Contest.

Charlene looks up, less than interested.

CHARLENE
Should I care about that? Who's
George Summers?

BRENT
He's someone I went to college with.

CHARLENE
Oh.

Charlene realizes it's nothing that she should care about. Boring old college buddy story coming. She continues wrapping.

BRENT

Yeah, the dean of the English Department had told me that George was one of the best writers he had come across...

(as a throw away)
aside from me.

CHARLENE

Yeah. You're probably the best psychiatrist he's ever come across too.

Brent stares at the paper a little longer while Charlene continues wrapping. More silence except for the CRINKLING newspaper.

Charlene looks at Brent reading the article.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Are you going to sit and read or are you going to help pack?

Brent unhappily uses the newspaper to wrap up a ceramic gnome. It's one of Charlene's items. What a waste of good newspaper.

BRENT

Do you ever wonder if you've taken the wrong path?

She doesn't have a clue what he means.

CHARLENE

What?

BRENT

Maybe things were supposed to be different in life. Maybe I should have been a writer instead.

CHARLENE

No. Most writers struggle just to make ends meet.

(she pauses)

You've got a good career as a psychiatrist, and you'll be making good money so you must be on the right path.

BRENT

Maybe there's more to life than that.

CHARLENE

At twenty there is, but when you're thirty-three and have a good career, you're on the right path. That's what life's all about.

Charlene leaves the room to get more newspaper. Undeniably the end of the discussion.

Brent stares at another gnome that he needs to wrap. This can't be what life's all about.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom is used for more than one purpose. A cluttered antique writing desk as well as bookshelves with books on almost every different literary subject grace the room.

The nightstands are very different. Brent's side is cluttered with some books of psychiatry, a Bible, a poetry anthology and a writing book.

Charlene's side is very bare. A box of tissues, a bottle of perfume, a nail file and some nail polish.

Brent packs odds and ends into a box.

He checks under the bed for stray objects. He finds the remains of a chew toy.

Brent's POV: He sees something underneath Charlene's side of the bed.

Brent walks around the bed and reaches under. He pulls out a mutilated copy of Walt Whitman's "Leaves Of Grass", clearly Sparky had found the forgotten book.

Brent shakes his head, annoyed.

He tosses the book in an overflowing wastepaper basket. The mutilated copy sits there on top of the heap.

Brent opens a drawer to a desk. He pulls out a framed writing award. He looks at it fondly, then packs it into the box.

His eye catches the view of "Leaves of Grass" in the garbage can. He wants to ignore it but can't.

Brent opts to take out the garbage so he won't have to see it anymore.

EXT. BRENT'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Brent reluctantly lugs the garbage out to the garbage can. He lifts the lid and glances inside.

Brent's POV: Layla's wrapped present sits on top of the garbage with a lone black banana peel on top of it.

He reaches in and gingerly pulls off the banana peel, then picks up the present.

Brent turns it over in his hands, curious. Then he TEARS the wrapping paper off of it, revealing...

A beautiful leather bound copy of Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass".

Brent considers the book for a moment. He is touched by the perfect gift. It would be a sin to throw out a book of such importance.

He heads inside with the book.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Brent sits down at the desk with the book in front of him. He opens it and looks at the inside cover. An inscription.

LAYLA V.O.

Dear Brent, this book is the embodiment of living life to the fullest. Though I know you meant well when you saved my life, you should focus on saving your own.

(she pauses)

To quote Walt Whitman, "Has anyone supposed it lucky to be born? I hasten to inform him or her that it is just as lucky to die." Take care, Layla.

Brent looks up from the book, disturbed.

INT. BRENT'S HOUSE, KITCHEN -- DAY

Brent, dressed business casual, his shirt slightly untucked in the back. He downs the last of a paper cup of orange juice. The majority of the kitchen is packed up. Paper and plastic remnants lie on the table.

Charlene approaches Brent and puts her arms around him. She tucks his shirt in. It's not quite the warm gesture that it seemed.

CHARLENE

What do you think, Chinese tonight?

BRENT

Sure.

She gives him a quick kiss on the cheek, then moves on to another task.

EXT. BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT DYNAMICS -- DAY

Brent's Camry pulls up to the curb where Layla stands waiting for him. She looks beautiful.

Layla hops in.

INT. BRENT'S CAMRY -- CONTINUOUS

LAYLA

Hi! Where to?

He puts the car in gear.

BRENT

You don't have a problem with
reptiles, do you?

Layla thinks it's an odd question, so she returns the volley.

LAYLA

No. Do you have a problem with
rodents?

BRENT

No, but Mickey Mouse's voice can get
on my nerves.

She smiles at him.

INT. REPTILE GARDENS, DOME -- DAY

Brent and Layla walk through what seems to be a tropical
forest.

As the camera pulls back, it becomes clear that they are in
a tropical, domed room in a zoo.

A sun conure flits past them and lands on a nearby perch.

A Gecko lizard scurries across a rock.

A Burmese python hangs down from a branch attached to the
wall.

Layla is in awe.

LAYLA

This is amazing! I could live in
this room.

She spins around admiring the view.

Brent points to a beautiful macaw on a perch.

BRENT

What do you think of that?

LAYLA

I want one.

Layla moves closer to the bird.

BRENT

They're magnificent birds but they
can take off your finger with their
beak.

She stops.

LAYLA

(not sure)
Really?

BRENT

Yeah.

Layla shrugs her shoulders and moves back to Brent's side. She puts an arm around him. Brent nearly falls over.

LAYLA

Sorry, I didn't mean to...

BRENT

No, that's okay. I just lost my balance.

LAYLA

I already knew you're unstable.

Brent grins at her quick wit.

An announcement comes on over the PA system.

VOICE O.S.

(through PA system)

The alligator show will be starting in five minutes in the grandstand area.

BRENT

We don't want to miss that.

EXT. REPTILE GARDENS, GENERAL GROUNDS -- DAY

Brent and Layla walk through the grounds of the zoo.

LAYLA

Have you considered a change of career?

BRENT

(unsure)

I like what I do. I have an opportunity that's almost too good to pass up.

(then more sure)

I really enjoy writing but I know there isn't much chance for a career.

LAYLA

It's like the coin toss. You have to gamble a little to find out what you really want.

A beat.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

You may lose some money in the process, but it's better than living a life you don't enjoy.

Brent considers this, then turns on Layla.

BRENT

(sharply)

What about you? You keep talking about suicide. Why don't you just give it up and get on with living.

Tears of anger and frustration begin to well in Layla's eyes.

LAYLA

What do you think I have? My life is shit! I have nothing! I've got a car that barely runs, no home, and no one to go home to if I had a home.

BRENT

You don't want to kill yourself. If you did, you would've done it by now.

LAYLA

(you're so wrong)

Yeah.

(deep sigh)

When my husband died I wanted to kill myself, but I thought maybe there's still magic out there. Maybe lightning can strike twice.

(pauses)

But after three years of nothing but more pain, I've used up all the time I can waiting for lightning to strike. I'm done.

(pauses again)

I'm just waiting for the rain. And maybe in some cosmic sense I can be with Kevin. If the same rain hits me that hit him when he died.

Silence for a moment.

BRENT

I could put you back in the unit for what you've said.

LAYLA

Whoopdee do! I don't care! They won't keep me and I'll get out and do it then.

(pauses)

But you'll still be living *your* miserable life.

Brent is at a loss for words.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I thought you were different. I don't know what I see in you. Maybe I see something that I wish was there. I'm crazy about you and I don't know why because you're too far gone to see it or care about it or yourself.

Brent is reeling. He didn't expect this.

BRENT

I'm engaged...I want to help you.
You're a unique, wonderful person
and maybe if I met you at a different
time in life things would be
different...

LAYLA

Doesn't timing suck? Two seconds in
the rain changed my life.

Though Layla sounds strong, tears stream down her face.

BRENT

I don't know what to say.

They are now just outside the alligator pit. In the background, a lone ALLIGATOR WRANGLER, a healthy young man no more than twenty, stands in the middle of two dozen alligators and crocodiles. Seemingly paranoid about what he is doing, he constantly makes sure the alligators aren't sneaking up behind him.

The alligator wrangler begins addressing the crowd.

ALLIGATOR WRANGLER

Hi! Welcome to our alligator show.
By the time my presentation is done,
you should all be able to tell the
difference between alligators,
crocodiles and caimans.

(pauses)

One way you can tell the difference
is by their teeth.

(joking)

Later in the show I will be looking
for volunteers to help with holding
a croc's mouth open so we can all
see their teeth.

Brent and Layla continue talking as the alligator show continues in the background.

LAYLA

If you don't have anything to say,
we should say goodbye.

BRENT

I don't want to say goodbye.

(pauses)

I'd like to stay in touch with you
after I move.

Layla laughs a hollow laugh.

LAYLA

Yeah, I'll give you my phone number and address.

(fakes remembering)

Oh, that's right, I don't have a phone. Oh, I don't have an address either. You want my license plate number?

BRENT

You can call me collect.

LAYLA

Whatever.

Brent grabs her and looks into her eyes. He isn't sure what he's feeling.

BRENT

I care about you.

LAYLA

But that's not enough, is it? As long as you stick to what you've got now, it's not enough. It's gonna rain in a couple of days.

She thinks about this.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

This isn't about you. If I hadn't met you I'd still be planning this.

She looks him dead in the eye.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

(very sincere)

Do not feel one shred of guilt about me. This is my choice. It isn't yours and there's nothing you can do to stop me from making it.

The tears are driving now but she sounds strong.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

This about me having nothing and knowing that's all I'll ever have. And I'd rather be dead than live the rest of my life with nothing or some distant second or third choice.

BRENT

You can get a job and make something of yourself.

LAYLA

It's not the lack of money that bothers me.

(MORE)

LAYLA (CONT'D)

It's about living a life that is less than what I want, selling out my dreams and burying my passion. I can't do that. It's not living.

(pauses)

That's what you've been doing with your life.

BRENT

I think you don't want to die. You keep talking about waiting for the rain. There must be some hope still alive in you.

Layla's tears are slowing now.

LAYLA

No.

She leans over and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Thanks for all that you've done and tried to do. I appreciate it, but I think it's better if you leave and go home.

BRENT

But you need a ride.

LAYLA

I can take care of myself. It's better this way.

Brent doesn't want to leave but he sadly knows it wouldn't change anything if he stayed.

BRENT

Call me. Please.

LAYLA

(a weak smile)

Yeah.

Brent turns and walks away.

Layla gets a determined look on her face.

Layla's POV: She sees Brent glance back as he walks through the exit door and disappear.

Layla's POV: She shifts her gaze toward the alligator pit and sees the alligator wrangler wrestling an alligator.

Layla stands there for a moment, contemplating.

INT. REPTILE GARDENS, GIFT SHOP -- DAY

Brent browses in the gift shop. He's not sure if he should've left Layla. He spies some stuffed animals: snakes, lizards and alligators. He picks up a cute and cuddly stuffed alligator.

EXT. REPTILE GARDENS, ALLIGATOR PIT -- DAY

Layla looks toward the alligator pit. Two small fences surround the pit.

Layla's POV: Several crocodiles and alligators have their mouths open and look extremely menacing.

Suddenly Layla bolts toward the alligator pit!

She reaches the chain link fence surrounding the pit and hops it easily. She quickly hops the second, smaller fence.

She's in with the alligators!

The CROWD at first begins cheering, thinking it's part of the show.

Outside the pit, Brent wanders up with the stuffed alligator in his hand, looking for Layla. Unexpectedly he sees her inside the alligator pit.

Crocs and alligators are making their way toward her!

Brent races toward the alligator pit with the stuffed alligator in hand!

Brent quickly hops the fences and tries to make his way toward Layla.

The hungry alligators move toward their human targets.

The crowd still thinks this is somehow part of the show, but murmurs of skepticism begin to ripple through the crowd.

The young alligator wrangler has not been trained for this.

ALLIGATOR WRANGLER

(very unsure)

Uhm, you're not supposed to be in here.

Brent tries to get to Layla while worrying about losing a leg in the process.

BRENT

Get her out!!!

ALLIGATOR WRANGLER

I didn't put her in here.

(as an afterthought)

And you shouldn't be in here either!

The wrangler pulls a walkie talkie off his belt. The commotion in the background continues as he talks.

ALLIGATOR WRANGLER (CONT'D)
 (into walkie talkie)
 I need help in the alligator pit!
 I've got two nut cases who thought
 they'd join the show.

VOICE O.S.
 (through walkie talkie)
 Mike and me are on break.

ALLIGATOR WRANGLER
 I don't give a shit! Call the police
 and get over here now!

Layla stands still. She's obviously scared even though she went into the pit on her own. She doesn't look as determined to die as she did before she hopped the fence.

Brent carefully tries to move closer to her, but the alligators advance on him!

Brent leaps over the back of a caiman that snaps at him and barely misses! The only thing between him and Layla is a crocodile.

Layla looks behind her and sees the crocodile with its mouth open at her heels, she looks around---she's surrounded on all sides!

Brent grabs the croc by the tail and drags it away.

LAYLA
 Watch out!

Brent pulls it far enough away from Layla to create an escape route for her.

He lets go and bounds over to where she stands scared as hell.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 Get me out of here!

BRENT
 I leave you for five minutes and
 this is where you end up?

Brent begins trying to fend them off with the stuffed alligator that he still has in his hand.

BRENT (CONT'D)
 Couldn't you have gone to use the
 bathroom instead?

Brent thrusts the friendly looking stuffed animal at an approaching alligator and makes GROWLING SOUNDS as he does.

LAYLA

It made sense to me at the time.

BRENT

Impulsive decisions always make sense at the time, until you end up surrounded by alligators.

LAYLA

I should've flipped a coin.

BRENT

You definitely flipped!

LAYLA

You didn't have to come in here. I was doing fine.

BRENT

And you would've made a fine lunch.

Brent glances around at the menacing crocs and alligators.

Brent uses the stuffed alligator on an approaching crocodile. He growls as it moves in but the real alligator isn't fooled.

BRENT (CONT'D)

Keep an eye out for more.

Layla turns around to survey the area.

LAYLA

There's one coming up behind us!

Brent spins around with the stuffed alligator. He hits the real alligator over the head with it.

The alligator bites the stuffed animal and begins trying to whip it around while Brent holds on to it.

BRENT

You're nuts, you know that?

LAYLA

I'm not the one playing with a stuffed animal.

The alligator wrangler has grabbed a bucket and begins BANGING on it. This gets the attention of many of the beasts. He throws chunks of meat out for the alligators and crocs to eat to distract them from the fresh food.

Several alligators still prefer fresh meat.

Brent struggles to hang on to the stuffed animal. Stuffing floats out like snow flakes as it's ripped in half by the alligator.

Brent realizes he's only holding half a stuffed animal.

Brent and Layla look at the shredded stuffed animal---that could be them!

A crocodile moves toward Layla as she backs up to Brent, pressing herself against him. She's panicked.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
This one's coming fast!

Layla turns and jumps on wrapping her arms and legs around him as best she can to keep herself off the ground.

She gives him a quick kiss.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here!

Brent looks and sees an opening among the reptiles. He runs as quickly as he can while carrying Layla.

A croc tries to block his way.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
(gesturing)
That way!

Brent bolts in that direction and reaches the fence just when several REPTILE GARDENS STAFF members and a POLICE OFFICER arrive. One staff member finishes up a sandwich as he hops the first fence.

They help Brent and Layla out of the pit. Then they go to round up the gators.

The police officer, who is a no nonsense by-the-books hard-ass, is left with Brent and Layla.

Out of breath from the excitement, Brent and Layla are giddy and grateful to be alive.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Wow! That was wild!

BRENT
Only one ride to a customer.
(to the officer)
Hey, thanks.

The officer immediately handcuffs Brent and just as quickly handcuffs Layla.

NO-NONSENSE POLICE OFFICER
You're welcome.

BRENT
What are you doing?!

NO-NONSENSE POLICE OFFICER
This isn't a petting zoo. Let's go.

INT. POLICE CAR (MOVING) -- DAY

Brent and Layla sit in the back of the car, hands cuffed behind their backs.

BRENT
This is crazy. I leave this weekend to go to New Jersey.

LAYLA
If you play it cool, you should be discharged by then.

BRENT
That's comforting.

Layla lightens the mood.

LAYLA
(kidding him)
You looked like a real lunatic trying to fend off alligators with a stuffed animal.

Brent smiles. They both lighten up.

BRENT
What about you? You go in there on a suicide mission and end up clinging to me for dear life.

LAYLA
So I'm a little conflicted.

BRENT
(a little more serious)
You're not the only one.

Brent looks at Layla. She's full of life and joy and beauty.

He turns to kiss her, but it's difficult with his hands cuffed behind his back.

She leans toward him with the same difficulty. Finally Brent leans a little further and they connect. The result is an awkward but passionate kiss.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- CONTINUOUS

The police car pulls up to the hospital.

INT. POLICE CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Brent and Layla break the kiss as the police car parks.

Layla grins at Brent, she's ecstatic about the situation and filled with genuine hope for the first time in years.

LAYLA
It's great to be alive!

BRENT

Yes.

An uncomfortable look crosses Brent's face. He's still not sure of what he is doing.

Layla sees this and recoils. Her blissful smile wilts like a flower in a desert.

At that moment the police officer opens the car door.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

Handcuffed, Brent and Layla are brought in by the police officer.

Steve moves to assist the officer.

Jack, Gina and Harry work at the station.

Jack quietly jokes with Gina.

JACK

Looks like Dr. Stillman is trying to get frequent flier miles.

Jack turns to Harry.

JACK (CONT'D)

(rudely)

Do the admit file.

HARRY

(sarcastic)

I live for paperwork.

JACK

(referring to Brent)

Don't think we can trust much of what comes out of his mouth at this point.

Jack puts on a smile and moves to direct Steve for the admission.

HARRY

(quietly to Gina)

He may be crazy, but at least he's not a thankless asshole like Jack.

Across the room at the entryway, Jack greets Brent and Layla.

JACK

Good to see you, Dr. Stillman.

Brent rolls his eyes. Jack's bullshit is wearing on him.

JACK (CONT'D)

You'll be in the same room as last time. Steve will help you get comfortable.

Brent feels very honest.

BRENT

Let's cut to the chase. I'm not a danger to myself or others so there's no need for me to be here.

JACK

Jumping into an alligator pit is not the safest thing to do. Most people would say that's suicidal behavior.
(couldn't care less)
I'm just glad you got out of it alive.

Brent is particularly irritated by Jack.

BRENT

I bet you are.

LAYLA

(to Jack)
You're so sincere. Do you sell used cars too?

Jack smiles at Layla, a seemingly warm smile but clearly there is a hint of contempt underneath.

Slowly Jack's expression changes as though he is relieved to be looking at the last piece of a puzzle. He turns to Brent with the faintest hint of being devious.

JACK

Dr. Stillman, I'd like to visit with you after you get settled.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack sits behind his desk looking over a report as Brent walks in.

JACK

Have a seat.

Brent sits.

JACK (CONT'D)

I heard your secretary, Tanya, quit.

BRENT

Yeah. She's a little high strung. She just quit smoking.

JACK

If you excuse the pun, I know her quitting is a touchy subject.

Brent's not sure what Jack is up to.

JACK (CONT'D)

The young woman you came in with was here before as a patient.

BRENT

I know. I was in as a patient at the same time.

Jack looks at the file in front of him.

JACK

I know that, but you also signed off on her admit paperwork as her doctor.

A look of concern crosses Brent's face. He's catching wind of what Jack is trying to do.

JACK (CONT'D)

According to the police report it seems you two were involved.

Brent shakes his head.

BRENT

No, it's not like that. She's suicidal. I was trying to help her.

Jack is calm and pointed in his remarks.

JACK

The ethics board would be very interested in how you were helping her on your personal time. And how the two of you ended up in an alligator pit together.

BRENT

I don't think you want to get into an ethical battle with me. I've got enough dirt on you to fill in Lake Michigan.

Jack smiles coldly.

JACK

No one would believe you.

BRENT

Hell they wouldn't.

JACK

You're over-estimating your credibility. You're a patient with a history that includes two admits in the past week.

Jack smiles again. Brent would love to break his face. He takes a deep breath to keep his composure.

BRENT
So what do you want?

JACK
To expose you for what you are. A
sexist opportunist.

Brent is tongue tied for a moment. He has difficulty coming up with a response to such a slanderous comment.

BRENT
You're insane.

JACK
I think the deck is stacked against
you on that one.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, LOUNGE AREA -- DAY

Brent staggers into the lounge area. He looks up and sees Layla sitting in a chair by the window. Outside a stormy sky begins brewing on the horizon.

Brent trudges up to Layla. She doesn't notice him until he taps her on the shoulder.

Layla startles at his touch, torn from her thoughts.

Relieved to see Brent, she smiles.

LAYLA
Hey!

Layla's joy quickly disappears when she reads the troubled expression on Brent's face.

BRENT
We need to talk.

LAYLA
About what?

BRENT
People may ask you about what happened
between us.

Layla is very apprehensive.

LAYLA
And?

BRENT
Jack wants to get the board to hit
me with an ethics violation.

LAYLA
What for?

BRENT
For being with you. I had signed
you in as a patient.

LAYLA
(managing a smile)
Yeah, well I don't hold that against
you anymore.

Stressed, Brent's life-long career hangs in the balance. He
doesn't return the smile.

BRENT
Listen, if anyone asks, nothing
happened between us. We bumped into
each other at Reptile Gardens and I
tried to save you. Nothing more.

LAYLA
And in the back of the police car,
that was an accident?

Right now he wants to forget everything that happened.

BRENT
I don't want to do this. This is my
career. This is my life's work at
stake.

Layla gets the picture. She doesn't like it at all but she's
too used to disappointment to object. She stares off out
the window at the clouds in the distance.

LAYLA
(emotionless)
I understand. Nothing happened.

BRENT
I'm sorry to do this right now.
I'll explain after we're discharged.

Layla feels the crushing blow but hides her pain as best she
can.

LAYLA
That's okay. I understand. Your
job is really important.

BRENT
It's probably best if we make believe
we don't know each other.

LAYLA
(emotionless)
Sure.

BRENT
Thanks.

Brent quietly slinks away, realizing this was harder for him than he expected.

Layla continues to stare out the window. A lone tear rolls down her cheek.

In spite of himself, Brent turns back to look at Layla.

Brent's POV: He sees the back of Layla's head as she looks out the window.

He looks away, fighting himself to ignore her.

Layla turns back to glance at Brent.

Layla's POV: She see's his back as he walks away, seemingly indifferent.

INT. DR. REED'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Layla sits staring out the window at the coming night. She seems emotionally detached from her surroundings.

Dr. Reed sits at her desk looking over Layla's file.

DR. REED
How do you feel?

Layla continues looking out the window.

LAYLA
Fine. It was a momentary lapse.

DR. REED
Were you with Dr. Stillman at the time?

LAYLA
Who?

DR. REED
Dr. Stillman. He's the psychiatrist who signed you in for your last hospitalization.

LAYLA
No, I wasn't with him. I try not to associate with doctors.
(a beat)
It's bad for my health.

A beat. Layla turns to face Dr. Reed.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
Can I be discharged from this freak show?

DR. REED
I'd like to make a medication adjustment.

LAYLA

Then write the script and discharge me.

(pauses)

Unless you'd rather have me embarrass you at another hearing?

Dr. Reed falters momentarily.

DR. REED

I think a medication adjustment is all you need. We can have you on your way tomorrow.

LAYLA

Fine. Do it.

Layla returns to looking out the window.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- NIGHT

Jack reviews a file at the station. Brent would rather talk to anyone else, but he knows who's calling the shots now.

BRENT

I'd like to see Dr. Reed tonight.

JACK

I know you would.

(smiling)

Unfortunately her schedule is extremely busy being the only psychiatrist on call.

Brent bites his tongue. He'd love to call Jack every name in the book right now.

BRENT

I'm entitled to see a psychiatrist within twenty-four hours of admit.

JACK

I know and you will. She'll be able to see you late tomorrow morning.

Brent walks away frustrated.

Meanwhile Layla walks out from Dr. Reed's office down the hall and trudges past the nurse's station without acknowledging Brent. They are aware of each other's presence.

An awkward moment for both of them.

Dr. Reed walks to the nurse's station. She turns to Jack.

DR. REED

Anyone else to see?

Brent overhears this and speaks up.

BRENT

Yes, me.

Jack expertly pulls Dr. Reed aside and speaks to her quietly.

JACK

It might be better to see Dr. Stillman in the morning. We'd like to observe him.

DR. REED

That will be fine.

Their conference breaks up.

DR. REED (CONT'D)

I'll be back in the morning to meet with you, Dr. Stillman. This will give me the opportunity to give you the time you deserve. Good night.

Brent feels powerless in a world where he once held so much sway.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, LOUNGE/NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

It's the next morning.

Brent sits in a chair at the edge of the lounge near the nurse's station. He makes believe he's falling asleep.

Steve, Gina and Harry review files at the nurse's station. They look over and see Brent asleep. The three of them decide to quietly talk about Brent.

GINA

I can't believe Dr. Stillman was with that patient.

STEVE

Maybe she's a nymphomaniac.

GINA

We didn't see that.

STEVE

But that doesn't mean she can't be one. Dr. Stillman seemed normal and look at him now.

They all glance over to make sure he's still sleeping.

HARRY

That's just your wishful thinking, Steve.

STEVE

Jack said she told him she had sex with Dr. Stillman.

GINA

I can't believe he'd do that.

A beat. Gina turns to Harry.

GINA (CONT'D)

What do you think?

HARRY

Unfortunately I've been here long enough to know when to keep my mouth shut. Jack's running this show now.

(a thought)

Probably a good thing Dr. Stillman has a new job. He can get started there and be working long enough to deflect this bullshit when it finds its way to Newark.

Brent's body shifts slightly on hearing this. He knows it's probably the only answer to save his career.

Layla approaches the nurse's station. The conversation about Brent stops abruptly. Layla's dressed and ready to go.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Layla, you ready to go out and conquer the world?

At the sound of Layla's name Brent's eyes pop open. He listens in.

LAYLA

I think so.

HARRY

Any plans on where you're going?

LAYLA

Storm's coming. I'm going to head east. Maybe see the Badlands before it rains.

(then, pun intended)

The rain kills everything.

A BUZZER sounds.

Steve goes over to the locked door and opens it. Charlene stands there.

CHARLENE

I'm here to see Dr. Stillman.

Brent fakes waking up.

He stands up and turns to see both Charlene and Layla standing side by side at the nurse's station. Brent is filled with anxiety.

Charlene suddenly recognizes Layla.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)
 (accusingly)
 You again?

Feeling melancholy, Layla reacts calmly.

LAYLA
 Get over yourself. He's all yours,
 but I guess you'll find that out for
 yourself.

CHARLENE
 Stay away from him.

LAYLA
 You wanna pee on his leg to mark
 your territory? I'm gone. You can
 finish freezing his heart.

A beat.

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 Now if you'd excuse me, I need to
 finish signing some papers.

Charlene looks at her funny. What papers?

LAYLA (CONT'D)
 I'm closing on a house. We're doing
 the loan papers here.

Charlene opts to move on. She sees Brent and goes to him,
 apprehensively as she had before.

CHARLENE
 You okay?

BRENT
 Yeah.

Brent looks at Charlene, almost studying her.

CHARLENE
 I called before and they said you
 can probably get discharged today if
 you're coming home with me.

BRENT
 (worn out)
 Hopefully. It depends on Dr. Reed.

A beat.

CHARLENE
 (bitter)
 You shouldn't have tried to save
 her. I don't think the world would
 miss someone like her. Might even
 be a little better off.

Charlene's bitterness catches Brent off guard.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

She could have jeopardized your career---
your future. Our future.

Brent considers this. There's a long moment of silence.

From Brent's POV: Charlene's face. Pretty but relatively emotionless. Over her shoulder Layla can be seen filling out paperwork. She's joking with staff and smiles briefly. She is beautiful in every sense.

BRENT

Why do you love me?

CHARLENE

What kind of question is that?

BRENT

An important one.

Charlene struggles with an answer.

CHARLENE

Well...you're kind and intelligent.
You're going places...

BRENT

What if I wasn't?

CHARLENE

But you are. It's a stupid question.

Brent extends his arms and puts them on Charlene's shoulders pulling her slightly closer to him. It's critically important that she understand what he is saying.

Layla's POV: She sees Brent pulling Charlene closer to him. It looks like they're getting ready to kiss.

Layla's done with the paperwork. She takes it and turns away without looking at Brent.

BRENT

What if I wasn't a psychiatrist
anymore? What if I was a writer, or
a waiter? Would you love me?

Charlene hesitates again.

CHARLENE

But you're not.

BRENT

But what if?

CHARLENE

I don't know. It depends, you'd be
different.

BRENT

No. I'd be the same person I am now, but I wouldn't be the person you want me to be.

In the b.g. Steve escorts Layla to the door. She looks crushed but controls her emotions. She takes one last look back at Brent and Charlene.

Layla's POV: Brent and Charlene look as though they may have just ended a kiss. Brent's hands are still on Charlene.

Layla doesn't need to see anything else. She knows it is over for her.

Steve opens up the door and Layla exits, head down.

BRENT (CONT'D)

You love something you want me to be, not who I am.

CHARLENE

(getting louder)

You are a psychiatrist! That's who you are!

The volume gets the attention of some psychotic clients who begin gathering around the two of them to watch the exchange.

BRENT

I'm a person who works as a psychiatrist. I'm not defined by my job. What if I was a janitor? Or a garbage man?

CHARLENE

I probably wouldn't have met you if you were something else.

BRENT

No, you would've met me but wouldn't want to know me.

CHARLENE

(yelling)

What's wrong with that?! What's wrong with wanting some security?! What's wrong with wanting some stability in a relationship?!

BRENT

(yelling loudly back)

If you haven't noticed, I'm not that stable!!! You should be looking for someone else!!!

CHARLENE

I'm just trying to get you straightened out and get us on our way!

BRENT

(calmly)
You can get on your way.

CHARLENE

What? Are you giving up everything?

BRENT

No, just you. I'm not what you need or want and you're not what I want. I'd rather lay it out now than be married for forty years with each of us living separate lives, holding silent contempt for each other. That's not what marriage is supposed to be.

Charlene thinks about this for a moment. She seems okay with it. She's always been a little emotionally detached.

CHARLENE

You're absolutely right. Thank you.

Brent is greatly relieved.

Charlene knees Brent in the nuts. He doubles over in pain.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

You're nuts, you know that?

BRENT

(gasping/falsetto)
Yes, and they hurt.

Charlene turns and storms off.

A PATIENT in her early 70's turns to Brent. She's very excited.

PATIENT

I made her leave! I melded her mind!

BRENT

Next time do it sooner, please.

Brent hobbles to the window and looks out.

Brent's POV: Three stories down, Layla leaves the hospital looking sad and determined. She glances up at the foreboding sky. A storm is imminent.

Brent waves out the window, hoping to catch her eye, but she puts her head down and trudges on.

Brent moves away from the hospital window.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Layla walks away from the hospital. She stops and looks back at a third story window.

Layla's POV: The same window that Brent was looking out just seconds before, now empty. Once again, they miss each other by seconds.

Layla turns away and continues on her mission.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

Gina looks at Brent.

GINA

Dr. Reed is ready to see you.

INT. DR. REED'S OFFICE -- DAY

Brent enters. He's surprised to see Jack in the office with Dr. Reed. Brent is so anxious to get discharged that he doesn't even sit down.

BRENT

I'm ready to be discharged.

Dr. Reed and Jack look at Brent critically.

JACK

Have a seat.

(Brent sits)

I was just telling Dr. Reed that I don't think you're ready.

DR. REED

I agree with Jack.

(pauses)

This is your second admit to the hospital in less than two weeks. In that time you have not only shown you aren't cured, you've actually appeared to be deteriorating.

(considering this)

Jumping into an alligator pit is clearly suicidal behavior.

BRENT

(interrupting)

No, that's not what...

JACK

(cutting him off)

Listen when you're being spoken to.

Brent is silenced for the moment.

DR. REED

I'm also concerned about allegations you were involved with a patient.

BRENT

This is such bullshit!

JACK

I doubt the ethics committee will
feel the same way.

Brent glances at a clock.

BRENT

What's it going to take to get
discharged?

DR. REED

We want to know you will be safe,
and the public will be safe.

JACK

(with disdain)

And that you will not try to use
your position as a psychiatrist to
take advantage of women.

BRENT

(urgently)

Listen, I don't have much time.

DR. REED

(placating)

Do you believe you have a secret
meeting with a government official?

Brent is really ticked off now.

BRENT

No! I'm not delusional, I'm not
psychotic, and I'm not a danger to
myself or others!

JACK

Your actions say otherwise.

BRENT

I'll sign anything you want, just
discharge me!

DR. REED

I will not discharge you without a
plan. I will not put *my* reputation
on the line.

(angry)

And I'm concerned about your ethical
violations.

Brent wants to explode.

BRENT

You want to talk about ethical
violations? The young woman that
I'm accused of being with should not
have been discharged because she
plans to kill herself!

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

Just because she doesn't have insurance or because she talks a good game doesn't give you the right to look the other way rather than spending your time without getting paid!

Brent stands up. He's pissed.

BRENT (CONT'D)

The sad thing is that when she's found dead no one will care, no one here will shed a tear, and yet she's a better person than either of you!

He puts his hands on the desk and leans in toward Dr. Reed.

Dr. Reed's POV: Brent's face is inches away from her.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I WANT TO BE DISCHARGED NOW!

Dr. Reed looks void of emotion.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I won't kill myself or harm anyone else. I never worked with her.

JACK

You signed her in.

BRENT

And that was it.

Both Jack and Dr. Reed sit silently, unmoved.

JACK

We'll schedule a hearing tomorrow.

Brent realizes he needs to surrender all to be released.

BRENT

I don't care if you or Jack pursue ethics charges against me. I'm done. I'm sick of this bullshit. A career isn't what life is about.

(glancing out the window, ranting more)

If you discharge me today, I'll confess to sleeping with every client I ever had! Take my license! You can even take my damned nameplate and shove it up your ass! I don't care, I just want to be discharged. NOW!

This gets their attention.

JACK

You're serious about giving up your practice?

BRENT

I'm serious and I've never been more sane.

Dr. Reed sits impassively.

BRENT (CONT'D)

(calmly, selling her)

Do you realize what that means for your career? You get all my clients, doubling your practice *and* nail me on an ethics violation? You could get Psychiatrist of the Year. You could go anywhere in the country with that reputation.

Dr. Reed thinks about this seriously. She looks at Jack, he nods and smiles. She begins writing on a small notepad.

DR. REED

I'm prescribing five milligrams of Zyprexa daily. Take it at bedtime.

Brent bites his tongue. He wants to tell her to put the medication with his nameplate, but thinks better of it.

DR. REED (CONT'D)

I'll agree to discharge you today as long as you have someone who will sign for you. I know you don't have family out here.

A beat.

JACK

What about your fiancée, Charlene?

Brent swallows. That clearly won't work.

BRENT

She's probably not the best choice.

A BUZZER SOUNDS.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

The BUZZER is for the door. Steve goes there and opens it, letting Pancho in.

Brent turns to Steve.

BRENT

I'd like to borrow the conference room for a minute.

STEVE

Sure.

Pancho looks at Brent oddly. He suspects something is up.
Steve opens a nearby door and lets them in.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT, CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Brent and Pancho wait until the door closes.

PANCHO

What the hell is going on? What are we doing in here? I thought we were going out for lunch?

Brent hesitates.

BRENT

Change of plans.

Pancho just stares at him.

BRENT (CONT'D)

I need you to sign for me.

PANCHO

Sign for you? For what?

BRENT

To get me out. Discharged.

Pancho's torn between wanting to laugh hysterically and wanting to wring Brent's neck.

PANCHO

You mean you're not *working* today?

BRENT

No.

PANCHO

You're a patient again?

Brent nods.

Pancho finally laughs, he can't help himself.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

You must be nuts. What happened?

BRENT

I don't have much time. I'll tell you after I get out of here.

Brent wants to escort Pancho out of the room. Pancho holds him back.

PANCHO

Wait a minute. What's that mean
I'm signing you out?

BRENT

It's just saying you'll take
responsibility for me.

PANCHO

Why don't you have Charlene do it?

BRENT

Because I broke up with her an hour
ago.

Pancho smiles. It's the best argument for Brent's regained
sanity.

PANCHO

About time you came to your senses.
(grinning)
Where do I sign?

EXT. BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT DYNAMICS -- DAY

Layla walks quickly, glancing up at the ominous sky and the
coming storm. She reaches her car and climbs in, pushing
garbage aside.

INT. LAYLA'S CHEVY -- CONTINUOUS

She opens the glove compartment and checks the contents.

She focuses on a razor blade that sits next to another
photograph of her dead husband.

Satisfied, she shuts the glove box and starts the car.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC UNIT -- DAY

Brent and Pancho exit the front door. Pancho reads the
discharge paperwork as they walk.

PANCHO

You need to take your medication
before bedtime. Your environment
should be as structured as possible.

Brent tries to ignore Pancho as he lectures him.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Stressful situations should be
avoided. You need to remain calm.

Pancho looks at the rest of the paperwork then folds it up.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

Screw this. You just need to get
rip-roarin' drunk and get laid.

Lost in thought, Brent fails to respond. They reach Pancho's brand new electric blue Corvette convertible. The sticker is still on the window.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
Think I could be a shrink?

BRENT
I need to borrow your car.

Pancho looks at Brent as though he's speaking a foreign language.

PANCHO
What???

BRENT
(urgent)
I need to borrow your car.

PANCHO
I heard you but I'm thinkin' that you need to get your ass back inside the loony bin 'cause you're clearly out of touch with reality.

BRENT
It's a matter of life and death.

PANCHO
I don't care. I haven't even made the first payment!

BRENT
It's Layla. She's heading to the Badlands and plans to kill herself. I've got to get to her---fast.

Pancho shakes his head no.

BRENT (CONT'D)
My car's on the other side of town.
(urgent)
Please. I'll give you anything! My entire '78 Yankees' baseball card collection.

Pancho considers this a serious proposal.

PANCHO
And your Whitey Ford rookie card.

Brent looks at him. He can't be serious.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
No deal, then.

Brent quickly reconsiders.

BRENT
Okay. Gimme the keys.

Pancho tosses the keys to Brent. He moves quickly to get in.

PANCHO
I haven't even broke in the engine yet, so go easy on it.

Brent ignores the comment.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
Not a scratch!

BRENT
Don't worry, it'll be fine.

Pancho looks at the sky and the coming storm.

PANCHO
It's gonna rain. Make sure you put the top up.

Brent starts the engine and takes off far too quickly for Pancho's liking.

PANCHO (CONT'D)
(shouting after him)
I don't want one drop of water on the leather seats!

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

A cow grazes inside a fence near the road. All is quiet. Empty road stretches to the horizon.

A sudden ROARING of an engine can be heard. In the b.g. a blue streak flies by on the highway, clearly moving at well over a hundred.

The cow continues grazing without looking up.

Pancho's Corvette races down the mostly deserted highway lined by rolling prairie.

The sky above looks more ominous than before, the storm is quickly closing in.

INT. LAYLA'S CHEVY -- DAY

Layla drives down the highway. She fidgets and appears nervous but determined.

No radio, just the wailing of the old engine.

EXT. BADLANDS -- CONTINUOUS

From above, the Badlands are magnificent yet barren. A good place as any for a person to die quietly among the desolation.

Layla's Chevy comes into view, the engine running rough, it continues along the road.

INT. LAYLA'S CHEVY -- CONTINUOUS

The engine COUGHS as the first drops from the storm begin to hit the windshield.

Layla looks at her gas gauge, it's empty.

The car SPATTERS then stalls. Layla guides it to the side of the road and parks.

She looks at the few random drops hitting her windshield.

Layla opens the glove compartment, grabs the photograph and stares at it for a moment.

LAYLA

Almost thought there was someone out there like you.

She shakes her head, trying to clear conflicting thoughts from her mind.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Gave me enough hope to be disillusioned.

She manages a weak smile.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

No more chickening out. I'll see you soon.

Layla puts the photograph back in the glove box, then takes out the razor blade.

INT./EXT. PANCHO'S CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE/HIGHWAY -- DAY

Brent flies down the highway. Raindrops hit the windshield like large bugs going SPLAT.

He briefly glances down at the speedometer---120mph.

Brent's POV: A wall of rain approaches with the storm.

The drops start to SPLAT more quickly.

EXT. BADLANDS -- DAY

Layla climbs out of her car, razor blade in hand.

She looks around.

Layla's POV: The Badlands are beautiful and desolate. No one around.

She knows she can easily bleed to death before anyone finds her, and even if she is found, she's an hour away from the nearest medical attention.

INT./EXT. PANCHO'S CORVETTE CONVERTIBLE/HIGHWAY -- DAY

The rain falls harder. The interior of Pancho's car is getting soaked.

Brent strains to see through the rain.

Brent's POV: It's tough to tell, but something may be ahead, but it could just be the color in the Badlands.

He wipes some rain drops from his face and strains harder to see in the distance.

Brent's POV: A shape emerges in the distance. It looks like a car on the side of the road.

Brent wipes away more rain from his face.

EXT. BADLANDS -- DAY

Layla feels the rain coming down. A tear rolls down her cheek, mixing with the rain.

It feels right.

She raises the razor blade to strike down on her wrist.

Unseen by Layla, the Corvette approaches her from behind far too quickly...

Brent's foot slams on the brake!

The Corvette SCREECHES---skidding and sliding on the wet pavement...

The Corvette fish tails and slides sideways.

The razor blade just inches from Layla's wrist, about to do irreparable damage...

A THUNDEROUS CRASH!!! The Corvette slides into Layla's Chevy!

Layla is ripped from her trance just before the blade pierces her skin. She turns to see the wreck behind her.

The vehicle slides to a stop.

The Corvette door CREAKS as Brent opens it. He hobbles out of the wrecked car.

BRENT

Sorry about that.

LAYLA

That's okay. I'm out of gas. I wasn't going to drive it again.

Brent stands there, still a little dazed from the accident.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

Can you go somewhere else?

Brent glances around. There's nothing for miles.

BRENT

Only if you come with me.

LAYLA

(annoyed)

I'm not looking for an audience, so why don't you go home to your fiancée.

Brent moves slowly toward Layla.

BRENT

She's not my fiancée anymore.

LAYLA

Did you two get married in the unit?

BRENT

No, I broke up with her.

Layla's body language changes slightly.

LAYLA

That's good. You deserve better. I'm sure you'll find someone else. Now if you don't mind...

BRENT

I do mind.

Layla feels the razor blade in her hands. She looks up at the sky, the rain falling down on her face.

LAYLA

Please. This isn't easy for me.

BRENT

That's good. That means you really don't want to die.

(pauses)

You've got too much life left in you.

LAYLA

No, I've been dying a little each day for the last three years. I'm sick of wanting to die each time it rains. I'm sick of wishing it was me instead of him. I'm sick of thinking if I hadn't thrown the damn ball over his head he'd be here today. Or if I hadn't even bothered picking it up in the first place.

(MORE)

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I'm sick of everything.

(pauses)

Maybe you can live with mistakes,
but I can't.

BRENT

Yeah, I can live with mistakes.
I've lived my whole life making
mistakes. A week ago I thought I
knew who I was and what I'm supposed
to do and I was content to live a
life of mediocrity. But I don't
want that anymore. I don't want to
live with my second or third or fourth
choice.

(pauses)

I want the best there is.

(pauses again)

And I don't know if it's you but I
know I've got to find out if you are
my first choice. If I don't get
that chance, that chance to at least
try, you might as well give me the
razor blade because I don't want to
live with that regret. Life's too
short to spend it with someone you
don't love or doing something you
don't enjoy.

(passionately)

I love you and I enjoy you and I
want to be with you to see where
this can go.

Layla stares at Brent through the slowing rain.

LAYLA

Why? I'm nothing special. I'm no
one.

BRENT

I just gave up a two year relationship
and my career and I don't feel an
ounce of loss. I've made my share
of mistakes and letting you disappear
from my life is one mistake I can't
live with because I'll always wonder
if the best I can do is only mediocre
compared to you.

(pauses)

You are someone. You moved me and
you changed the way I view the world
and I wish I could do the same for
you. I wish I could give you back a
piece of the hope you gave me.

Layla looks at Brent and smiles. She's moved. It's tough to
tell at first with the rain, but she's crying tears of joy.

LAYLA

You just did.

They embrace in the rain and melt together in a wet passionate kiss.

As they part Layla looks at Brent, her eyes full of hope. For the first time his face reflects that same hope for the future.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

I think I could grow to love the rain.

They kiss again, getting lost in each other and the moment.

When they part they walk hand in hand toward the Corvette as the sky begins to lighten.

LAYLA (CONT'D)

This your car too?

BRENT

No, it's a friend's.

Brent tries to open the passenger side door so Layla can get in. The door CREAKS a bit but it's too damaged to open.

LAYLA

Hope he's a really good friend.

Brent lifts up Layla. She gives him a kiss as he puts her over the door and lets her down in the passenger seat.

BRENT

Yeah.

Brent walks around and opens the other CREAKY door and gets in.

He turns to Layla. She smiles. Another kiss.

The sun breaks through the clouds, framing them in a magnificent rainbow.

They finally part.

Brent starts the car, the engine ROARS to life. He puts it in gear and they drive off. From high above the car seems lost in the beauty of the Badlands.

Everything glistens in the sunlight.

FADE OUT.