

TOXIC

Pilot: The Dog

EXT. MCMANSION - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

A beat-up sedan sits in front of a lavish, mid-century home.

INT. TED'S CAR

TED (25) campy, awkward, and, at this moment, very anxious, sits in the driver's seat.

He spies the house with great determination. All the lights are on with no one visible inside. Ted squirms in his seat.

FINALLY, Ted spots something. A mid-forties professional lady LEANNE parks a BMW in the driveway, steps out. Ted watches her intently, as if she is an enemy.

She walks to the front door. Ted watches her greet a man inside, MORGAN (mid-40s) handsome.

Finally, with a deep breath, a shaky Ted gets out of his car.

EXT. MCMANSION - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Ted rings the doorbell, then paces. Leanne answers. She doesn't recognize Ted.

LEANNE

Yes?

TED

Um, yeah, is John home?

LEANNE

I don't know a John.

Morgan appears in the foyer, behind Leanne.

MORGAN

Ted?

TED

John. I've been trying to get in touch with you.

LEANNE

Morgan, why is this kid calling you "John"?

TED

John, why is she calling you "Morgan"?

Morgan sighs.

MORGAN
Ted, you have to go. You can't come here.

LEANNE
Who is this guy?

TED
Can I come in?

MORGAN
No.

She interrupts.

LEANNE
Tell me what's going on, Morgan.

A BABY wails somewhere in the house. Unsure, Leanne peers at Ted and Morgan and then walks off to check on the baby.

LEANNE
I'll be back.

Ted comes inside.

INT. FOYER

Ted steps into the fancy, expansive house.

MORGAN
Oh, god, please just leave.

TED
Tell me why you won't contact me.

MORGAN
(whispering)
Because I don't want to! *I don't have to!*

TED
But I love you.

Morgan is flabbergasted.

MORGAN
You can't possibly love me. We had sex twice. I told you a fake name. I mean, "John"?

Leanne returns, a young BABY in her arms, falling asleep. She sighs, staring at Ted.

LEANNE

Morgan, I talked to you about this.

TED

Can I get a glass of water? I've been sweating a lot.

MORGAN

It's only like fifty degrees out.

LEANNE

Of course. The kitchen is --

Ted walks off. He knows where the kitchen is.

INT. FANCY KITCHEN

Ted pours a glass of filtered cucumber water from a fancy contraption. Barely audible arguing can be heard.

Ted stares at a family portrait on the wall for a LONG TIME.

INT. FOYER

Ted returns to the argument in process. Leanne turns to Ted, more understanding. She smiles at him, as if he is delicate.

LEANNE

Ted, Morgan and I have an open relationship.

Morgan stares at his feet, ashamed.

TED

So you don't care?

LEANNE

He doesn't tell me about his, I don't tell him about mine. We have a deal.

TED

John --

MORGAN

Morgan --

TED

You told me you were gay.

LEANNE

Morgan's sexuality is fluid. The whole family is fluid.

TED

Even the baby?

MORGAN

Ted, just go.

TED

You told me you were going to leave *her*.

MORGAN

(to his wife)

Babe, he's crazy. I didn't say that.

TED

You didn't say it with words!

MORGAN

How did I possibly say it?

TED

With your... I don't know!

MORGAN

Having sex with you was a mistake.

TED

Because of your marriage?

MORGAN

No. Having sex with *you*, specifically, was a mistake.

Ted stares at Morgan.

TED

Well...

Ted hands Leanne his empty glass. She tries to hold the glass and the baby simultaneously.

TED

Thanks for the fancy water.

EXT. MCMANSION - NIGHT

Ted walks back to his car. The couple watches him leave from the front doorway, cautiously. Ted turns to wave. They don't wave back.

INT. TED'S CAR

Ted sits in his car and watches as the front door to the house closes. He frantically opens his phone, drafts an SMS.

INSERT SMS TEXT: Hey, John. Please don't block me.

Ted immediately receives a response:

INSERT SMS TEXT: Drive away **right now**.

INT./EXT. TED'S CAR - NIGHT

Ted drives and stops at a set of lights in the suburban area. He seems serene, but then -- TED SCREAMS AS LOUD AS HE CAN.

BLACK SCREEN

The soothing voice of a professional woman.

SUSAN (V.O)

Ted, I'm willing to share this with you, because I think it will be helpful. Okay? Borderline personality disorder. Dependent personality disorder. They are often co-morbid.

INT. TRENDY COFFEE SHOP

Ted sits across from SIERRA (25), a woman of color, slim, and natural hair. She wears yoga pant. They both sip lattes.

SIERRA

What does "co-morbid" mean?

TED

It means they, like, go together.

SIERRA

Well, I mean... that's good, right?
It means you have an answer.

Ted nods, not convinced.

TED

I've been Googling.

Sierra firmly shakes her head to say "that was a bad move".

TED

It doesn't seem good.

Sierra sighs. She reaches out to touch Ted's hand tenderly.

SIERRA

Ted. You're just you.

TED

Okay.

SIERRA

Those are just words. Go to work. Go home. I think you'll find things will be right where you left them.

INT./EXT. ALICIA'S CAR - DAY

ALICIA (mid-20s), thin, energetic, wearing a heap of makeup to cover up a horrible hangover, approaches the order speaker at a drive-thru coffee-shop.

COFFEE SHOP GUY (V.O.)

May I take your order?

ALICIA

I want it large and Black.

Alicia smiles to herself at the stupid, stupid joke.

LATER

Still sitting in her car in the drive-thru line, waiting to pay, Alicia scrolls through her phone, distracted.

She watches the Snapchat/Insta story of someone named "AbbyGirl1994".

THE STORY FEATURES A SERIES OF PHOTOS AND SHORT VIDEOS of a wild night out, most them featuring Alicia herself: drunk, drugged, and wild. Not flattering.

Alicia cringes at the photos. She is startled by a HONK.

GUY IN CAR BEHIND HER (O.S)

Get off your fucking phone, lady!
The line's moving!

Alicia drives forward sheepishly.

INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - TED'S CUBICLE

Ted sits at his desk, feigning work over a spreadsheet. CO-WORKERS pass by, he switches tabs to Google: he searches "*borderline personality disorder*".

Alicia, looking horribly hungover, approaches Ted's desk.

ALICIA
Are you Ted?

Ted spins around in his chair and lifts his chin..

ALICIA
The Q.A. guy?

TED
That's me.

Alicia places her fingers on her temples, cringing.

ALICIA
Ugh, nevermind. I have to talk to you later about that project.

TED
(flatly)
Great.

Alicia walks off.

INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - BREAK ROOM

Alone in the break room, because everyone is working, Alicia talks on her phone, in a serious, whispered conversation.

ALICIA
Abby, you need to take it down.

ABBY (V.O)
Don't worry, it expires in a day.

ALICIA
I don't want it up for a whole day!
(whisper)
There's a Boomerang of us doing coke!

ABBY (V.O)
I know, it's awesome! Just untag yourself if it bothers you.

ALICIA
It's still me!

ABBY (V.O)
Look, babe, I'm not letting you
dictate my social media anymore.

ALICIA
When have I ever done this before?

ABBY (V.O)
You're being super not chill. I have
a killer hangover.

ALICIA
Abby, I... you're just toxic. I
can't stand you sometimes.

ABBY (V.O)
I'm toxic? What about you?

ALICIA
Think of all the shit you put me
through. I drove you four hours to a
detox centre *last month*.

ABBY (V.O)
You know my Dad's insurance is real
specific.

Alicia loudly sighs.

ABBY (V.O)
Fine. If I'm so toxic, stop hanging
out with me. I have other friends.

ALICIA
Fine. Me too. Tons...

ABBY (V.O)
Do *you*?

INT. OFFICE TOILETS - STALL

Ted sits on the closed toilet seat. Outside the stall are the
mid-boring-conversation voices of his CO-WORKERS.

The HAND DRIERS blow loudly. The door opens and closes.

Upon the silence, Ted pulls down his pants to his knees,
revealing his bare legs and underwear. From a shirt pocket,
he produces a BOX-CUTTER.

Ted makes methodical, deep, cuts on his bare leg flesh, which is covered in existing scars. He sits, leg bloody, and waits to feel better, it's not working today.

EXT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - DAY

Alicia smokes a cigarette right by the front entrance to the building. A few CO-WORKERS glare at her as they enter, having to inhale her smoke. She flashes a sarcastic smile to them. She brings her phone to her mouth.

ALICIA

Siri, where does an adult woman find friends?

SIRI (V.O)

Let me help you with that, Alicia.

Alicia scrolls through Siri's results - adultfriendfinder.com, meetup.com, Tinder, etc.

ALICIA

Online dating? Shoot me, Siri.

SIRI (V.O)

Let me help you with that, Alicia.

With a determined look, Ted power walks out of the building. Alicia tries to get his attention.

ALICIA

Q.A. Guy! Hey!

Ted ignores her, waling on.

ALICIA

The project? Ted!

He doesn't respond, and leaves the lot. Alicia throws the cigarette butt on the ground, re-enters the building.

EXT. ARTERIAL ROAD - DAY

Ted stands on the median of a busy road right by his office. Traffic rushes on both sides of him. Ted takes a deep breath and, looking determined --

PURPOSEFULLY STEPS INTO TRAFFIC.

END COLD OPEN

ACT 1:**BLACK SCREEN**

The sound of a camera shutter.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

DONALD NGUYEN (mid-20s) handsome, Vietnamese, stands before a beautiful young married couple (HANK and ELIZA) holding a BABY In their arms. The couple poses in front of a scrim.

DONALD

One more...

SNAP. He takes another photo.

DONALD

Okay. Relax now.

The couple immediately stops smiling, leaving their photo faces behind. Hank places the baby in a carrier, waves to Donald as he walks off scene. Eliza stops to talk to Donald.

ELIZA

Thanks for fitting us in.

DONALD

I'm really not that busy.

ELIZA

And I know this is old fashioned. I know people don't do this anymore.

DONALD

They do. Or my parents wouldn't be in business.

ELIZA

That's true.

She smiles and nods. There's a beat. Donald nods back.

ELIZA

My cousin. You don't know her. She was talking about, it's kinda dorky, but she's having a baby, and wants photos, like, right in the hospital.

DONALD

(almost laughs)

That *is* a little dorky.

ELIZA

It's her first one; I told her,
it'll be gross, you'll be all doped
up, but there's no convincing her.

Donald laughs.

DONALD

Have her talk to my dad.

ELIZA

It'll be hard to schedule, she's due
soon. Dunno when it'll be.

DONALD

He'll sort it out.

ELIZA

Okay. And it's good to see you,
Donald. I had been wondering what
you'd been up to since school.

DONALD

Still here.

ELIZA

You must love it.

DONALD

Yeah.

INT. STUDIO - DARK ROOM

Donald and his father DO VAN NGUYEN (50s) pore over
developing photos in the red-lit room.

DONALD

Did Eliza talk to you about booking
for her cousin; the hospital photos?

Do Van ignores Donald as he holds a negative up to the light.

DO VAN

(in Vietnamese, subtitled)
Donald, look at the light here.

DONALD

Hmm?

DO VAN

Do you see what happens with the
negative?

DONALD

I know how to develop them, *cha*.

There is a beat.

DO VAN

Are you coming to your sister's
tonight?

DONALD

No. I have plans.

DO VAN

Doing what?

INT. GAY CLUB, BOOTH - NIGHT

Donald and TREVOR (20s) a flamboyant, tweaking young guy, sip drinks in a booth surrounded by the music and club nightlife.

TREVOR

You could be a club photographer?

DONALD

Nah.

TREVOR

You see that, like, *dossier*, that got leaked by a photo guy at this club? The "standards" they have for photos?

DONALD

No, what are you talking about?

TREVOR

Heat used to be really strict about who their club photographers took photos of. No twinks, no Asians, no Bears, gotta project a particular image for their social media page, I guess.

Donald laughs.

DONALD

We wouldn't ever get in a photo.

TREVOR

Why? I mean, you're Asian, obviously, but are you saying I'm an uggo?

DONALD
Shut up, loser.

TREVOR
Drink more.

DONALD
I'm driving.

TREVOR
You're about three drinks past
driving, my boy.

Trevor "subtly" points out a YOUNG GUY, dancing with his friends across the club, who appears to be looking at Donald.

DONALD
Is he looking at you or me?

TREVOR
I dunno. Quick, stand up.

Donald stands "subtly". The Guy's eyes follow him.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Donald sits in the driver's seat of his car, parked on some dank street in the city night.

The Guy performs fellatio on him.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - NIGHT

Donald offers an empty fast-food cup to The Guy, who promptly spits in it. He looks up at Donald from crotch level.

THE GUY
What are you doing later tonight?

Donald drunkenly yawns and answers with some slurred speech.

DONALD
I have a pretty big night planned.

INT. MINDFUL YOGA STUDIO - THE NEXT MORNING

It's a small studio. Wood floors with mirrors on three of the walls and abstract art on the other wall.

A small GROUP, mostly women, sit in the lotus position. Sierra slowly paces the room and speaks calmly to the group:

SIERRA

This is a time to let go of all your
nuisance thoughts.

She whispers to an older woman, RUTH, as she strolls by.

SIERRA

Ruth, sit up straight.

Ruth sits as upright as possible. Sierra's phone vibrates.

SIERRA

All the clutter in your head
dissolves away.

She ignores it as she walks to the front of the room and sits facing everyone.

It stops vibrating. She sits in the lotus position and closes her eyes. Her phone vibrates again.

INT. DONALD'S CAR - DAY

As sunlight streams in, Donald awakes in his car alone on the same street, which is now filled as COMMUTERS walk to work.

SIERRA (V.O.)

We might not always end up where we
want to be but in this moment we are
in our peaceful place.

EXT. DONALD'S CAR - DAY

A gruff COP knocks on the window, waking Donald.

COP

Buddy, you can't sleep here.

SIERRA (V.O.)

The stress of work and life just
melts away as we breathe in and
breathe out.

Hungover and still groggy, Donald politely waves and starts the car, pulling into traffic.

INT./EXT. DONALD'S CAR

Donald checks his phone, stopped at a red light. A series of texts from Trevor: *"I'm going home if ure looking for me."*

SIERRA (V.O.)

The world is in a constant state of renewal. And we are changing the world from the inside by looking within and changing ourselves.

Another from "Dad", more recent: "*Come hospital now. Baby being born - bring the Canon*", followed by a series of inscrutable emojis.

SIERRA (V.O.)

We remain present, not up or down but neutral. We accept everything that comes our way. Every thought as we breathe and let it all pass.

Donald sighs.

INT. MINDFUL YOGA STUDIO - DAY

Sierra scans the room, everyone seems at peace. She nods, closes her eyes and thinks to herself. She takes a deep breath.

Sierra turns her back to the meditating CROWD as they all close their eyes.

She opens her phone. Scrolls through a flowery app of POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS: "*You are doing right. You fit where you fit. You can only do so much.*". Sierra legitimately breathes these affirmations in, before noticing - "One new voicemail".

Sierra, still not facing the meditators, listens to the voicemail. We don't hear the message, but Sierra is suddenly taken with shock and an urgent need to leave. She frantically turns back to her crowd, addressing them.

SIERRA

(a little panicked)

Now it's time to...

She clears her throat and quickly gathers herself.

SIERRA

Uh... time to focus on your mantras.
I guess. Silently.

Sierra leans down and whispers to MARY (20s), her young assistant, seated up front. She hops to her feet as Sierra whispers again.

SIERRA
It's Ted. Emergency.

MARY
(rolling eyes)
Of course...

Mary stands in Sierra's spot as Sierra tries to exit "mindfully".

SIERRA
(to the class)
Stay in your breathing, ignore the outside world. Something came up and Mary is going to guide the rest of the session. I'm truly sorry.

She rushes to gather her things while trying to remain calm.

SIERRA
Continue breathing in and out.

Mary nods. Sierra rushes out. Ruth peeks out of the corner of her eyes, seeing Sierra leave. She slinks down with slumped shoulders again.

BLACK SCREEN

DR. MORSE (V.O)
You're lucky your regular psychologist Susan, has some sway, or you'd be on a mental health hold for two days.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Ted, in a gown, sits on a hospital bed with Sierra by his side. DOCTOR MORSE (60s) stands near the door with a sea of INTERNS around him.

DR. MORSE
I am going to suggest a change in medication, starting today.

TED
Can I get changed into my clothes?

DR. MORSE
Ted, I've reviewed your files. Precipitating family factors, childhood trauma. I'd be very worried about seeing you here again.

TED
I won't be back.

DR. MORSE
Unless you're dead.

Sierra wipes a tear from her eye. Dr. Morse softens.

DR. MORSE
I'm sorry. What is your
relationship?

SIERRA
Best friends. We live together. I'm
Sierra.

DR. MORSE
So you don't live alone?

Ted shakes his head.

DR. MORSE
Good. I'd like to talk to you alone
if that's okay, Sierra.

TED
Talk to her alone?

DR. MORSE
You need someone to keep an eye out
for you. No subterfuge here, I
promise.

Ted stands. Grabs his clothes.

TED
(gruffly)
Can I get some privacy?

Sierra leaves with the doctor. The Interns follow.

INT. MATERNITY SUITE

Donald SNAPS a photo of a semi-anesthetized SILVIA (20s) her
equally tired HUSBAND, and their NEWBORN, red and screaming.

SILVIA
How does it look?

Donald looks at the preview on the camera. Silvia's eyes are
barely open, her husband is looking away, and the baby is red
as a tomato and completely unremarkable.

DONALD
Maybe one more?

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Ted sits at a bench in a busy hallway. He watches as Sierra speaks to Dr. Morse down the hall, inaudible from here.

Camera in hand, Donald approaches, takes a seat. He unhappily cycles through photos on his camera. Ted turns to Donald.

TED
What are you doing?

Donald doesn't look up.

DONALD
I'm trying to find a photo... that doesn't look like a mortuary portrait.

TED
Are you a hospital photographer? Is that a thing?

DONALD
No. And I don't think so.

TED
Oh.

Donald realizes he's being rude.

DONALD
Mostly family stuff, portraits. I had clients who wanted photos after birth.

TED
(disgusted)
Of the *after-birth*?

Donald chuckles.

DONALD
No. Like, smiling, holding the baby.

TED
You're young for a photographer.

DONALD
It's my family's business.

TED

It's cool you have a creative job.

Donald smiles politely. Ted anxiously looks up.

Dr. Morse and Sierra still talk. He tries to distract himself further.

TED

I'm Ted.

DONALD

I'm Donald.

TED

Aren't you interested as to why I'm here?

DONALD

I'm assuming it's personal.

TED

It is, but I'm on a lot of sedatives and I'm thinking we won't speak again.

DONALD

Okay.

TED

Yesterday, I ran into traffic.

DONALD

Oh my god.

TED

I'm fine. I didn't get hit or nothing.

DONALD

Then why are you at the hospital?

TED

I did it on purpose.

Donald looks confused, then realizes.

DONALD

Oh.

TED

I was on Wellington Road. Do you know how busy that road is?

TED (CONT'D)

How much of a fuck-up do you have to be to *fail* at that?

Donald smiles.

DONALD

Well, I'm sure everyone's glad you're okay.

Ted gestures to Sierra and the Doctor.

TED

That's my roommate and the doctor. Talking about me. He's telling her, like, don't let me out of her sight, hide the knives, whatever. I feel like I'm sitting outside the principal's office.

DONALD

(smiling)
You kind of are.

Ted stares at Donald, intrigued.

TED

You're unflappable, aren't you?

DONALD

Huh?

TED

Here I am, trying to make you uncomfortable, and you're laughing.

DONALD

Sorry. I don't mean to --

TED

I quite like it.

Donald nods.

TED

Can I have your number?

DONALD

I thought we wouldn't speak again.

Ted shrugs.

INT. HOSPITAL - MAIN RECEPTION

Sierra and Ted slowly walk toward the exit. Sierra warmly rubs Ted on the back.

ALICIA (O.S)

Ted?

Ted stares at Alicia, who's just walked into the hospital.

TED

(groggy)

Why is a work person here?

He looks at Sierra. She shrugs.

ALICIA

You jumped into traffic right by the office.

TED

Oh god, I hadn't even thought --

SIERRA

Um, hi, you work with Ted? Is this really the right time to do this?

ALICIA

Right. Of course. It's just... I think I was the last person you spoke to before you, well, you know. And if you'd been successful... just... wow. I mean I think that *means* something.

Ted sits down on a bench, mortified.

TED

Oh god... *work*. How can I ever show my face there again? I'm sure management wants me gone.

SIERRA

Let's not worry about that right --

Alicia interrupts, in her own world.

ALICIA

It got me thinking, am I worthy of something like this? Should I be the last person anyone sees before they die? That's deep, right?

Ted groans in deep shame, not listening. Sierra watches Alicia having an epiphany of sorts whilst Ted melts down, and both are ignoring her.

ALICIA

The answer is: no. I'm not worthy of such a thing. Thank god you weren't flattened by a bus or anything.

TED

Uh huh. Great. Thank you, random work person.

ALICIA

I know how to handle work. I'll call H.R pretend I'm a compliance officer and remind her how important it is to look after employees mental health and well-being. As a suicidal, heavily medicated employee, you have rights, you know.

SIERRA

You don't need to do that right now. Or ever, possibly.

ALICIA

(dials as she talks)

I did this in the midst of a rough pain pill addiction. They had a meeting and management was very sensitive to everyone for a bit.

TED

Ugh. I hated that meeting.

ALICIA

(to Sierra)

Shit, quick. Lookup the... E.E.O.C Mental Health Protections.

Sierra just shrugs, Googling on her phone.

A MAN in an arm cast walks by, a penny drops from his hand.

ALICIA

(in her phone, fake voice)

Yes, this is...

(looks at the man)

Penny Cast, I'm a Compliance Officer with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. We've been getting some complaints from employees of tax and accounting firms lately. There's a lot of stress and pressure with all the new, um, *tax regulations*. We want to make sure you're well aware that...

She motions to Sierra for her phone. Sierra gives Alicia the phone. Alicia reads from it as she talks.

ALICIA

Depression, PTSD, and MANY other mental health conditions are protected against discrimination and harassment in the workplace. There are expectations to give reasonable accommodations to help those employees that are struggling.

Ted looks to Sierra.

TED

Isn't it a crime to impersonate a government employee?

INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

BELINDA, fat, uptight, listens and nods like she thinks someone is watching her.

ALICIA (V.O.)

Just calling as a reminder and to ask confidentially if there are any issues in your workplace that you feel could potentially be in a sort of a gray area, or a violation?

She pulls her mouth away from the phone to clear her throat.

BELINDA

Absolutely not.

ALICIA (V.O.)

This is just sort of a heads up that your industry may come under the microscope if some of the reports we're getting are true.

INT. HOSPITAL - MAIN RECEPTION

As before. Alicia hands Sierra back her phone, smiling.

ALICIA

There. All fixed.

Ted looks to Sierra and speaks quietly.

TED

And now I'm an accomplice to felony impersonation.

ALICIA

So, where are we off to now?

TED

Um...

Ted looks to Sierra. His eyes widen, as if to say "get her away from me, now". Sierra pulls Alicia aside, away from Ted.

SIERRA

Ted is in a bad place right now. The Doctors want him to just rest up and be around people he knows and trust.

ALICIA

You know what I was saying, right? Maybe there was a reason he walked by me before he wanted to become human roadkill, right?

SIERRA

Well, everything does happen for a -

ALICIA

Oh my god, I use to tell this guy in high school to go play in traffic any time he tried to talk to me. Maybe I should call him?

She looks to Sierra, who doesn't know how to respond.

ALICIA

I need to clear my head.

She manically searches her pockets.

ALICIA

Shit. And I'm out of cigarettes...

SIERRA

Well, actually, if you need to clear your head...

ALICIA

Oh, score. You have benzos?

SIERRA

No. I just opened a yoga studio. Mindful Yoga. We also have guided meditation sessions and classes.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

There are all kinds of spiritual events and good vibes going around at all times.

Sierra gives Alicia a business card, warmly rubs her arm.

TED (O.S)

SIERRA. I WANNNA GOO HOOOME.

Sierra ignores him. Alicia puts her phone to her mouth.

ALICIA

Siri, find me the nearest lawyer specializing in discrimination in the workplace.

SIERRA

Huh? What's going on?

ALICIA

Oh, I'm just going to leave a brief vague message on their webpage here asking to call the office back.

Sierra caught off guard as Alicia hugs her, whilst typing the message on her phone and reading Sierra's business card.

ALICIA

(re: business card)

Thank you. I always thought this stuff was for weirdos. But I'm going to check this out with an open mind. I'm all about the good vibes, ya know? Yeah.

Alicia turns and marches away, proud. Sierra turns to Ted.

TED

Do not befriend her.

Sierra squints to him in confusion.

TED

It's weird. She works with me. It's like your parents becoming friends with your... teachers.

SIERRA

That's not weird, either?

TED

Ugh.

END ACT 1

ACT 2**INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - MANAGER'S OFFICE**

Belinda sits with MARCUS (50s) the head accounting manager, in his spacious office (it's the only room with a window).

MARCUS

I feel like attempted suicide on the job should be a fire-able offense. You're telling me we have to accommodate him?

Belinda starts to speak, when Marcus's desk phone RINGS. He picks it up.

MANAGER

(to Belinda)
He abandoned his post, you know?
(in the phone)
Hello, this is --

POLISHED MALE VOICE (V.O.)

This is Ernie Shapiro, from *Shapiro, Shapiro, and Shapiro Law*. I received your online inquiry.

Marcus looks confused, panicky, and speaks loudly.

MARCUS

Lawyer?

He looks desperately at Belinda, she mouths "speaker". He puts it on speakerphone.

POLISHED MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Ernie Shapiro, I specialize in employee disputes and workplace discrimination.

Belinda shrugs, then just whispers "hang up!".

MARCUS

(into phone)
Um...

Marcus hangs up.

BLACK SCREEN

SIERRA (V.O)

I don't think you should text him.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ted and Sierra sit on the couch, watching a streaming show on a laptop between them. Ted smokes from a vape pen.

TED

Why not?

Ted offers the vape to Sierra.

TED

You want the pen? Guy said it's *indica*. Apparently that's the good one.

SIERRA

I don't think you should be smoking that.

TED

Why? Did *the doctor* tell you it's a bad idea?

SIERRA

Don't be bitter. If I didn't live with you, you'd be in the hospital.

TED

No one said that.

Sierra takes the pen, takes a drag, and exhales vapor.

SIERRA

I think if you text him...

TED

You think what?

Sierra sighs.

SIERRA

It's not good for you. I think you should take some time off.

TED

Why? Might as well go there and get it out of the way. Just rip it off, like a band-aid. What else am I doing?

SIERRA

I want you to think about what happened yesterday.

TED
It had nothing to do with Morgan
slash John.

SIERRA
Wait, what?

INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - MANAGER'S OFFICE

Marcus sits on the edge of his desk. He picks up the phone and goes to dial but then looks over to Belinda.

MARCUS
(to Belinda)
This is so awkward. I'm horrible at
this stuff. H.R should do it. It
feels like it should be a woman
talking to him.

He stops himself as his face gets a little more serious.

MARCUS
Is that sexist?

Belinda rolls her eyes. Marcus sighs and dials the phone.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM

Ted holds his ringing phone and lets out an exasperated sigh.

TED
It's work.

He reaches a finger out indecisively to answer the call and then pulls away.

SIERRA
Ted. Answer it. Tell them you need
some time off.

TED
Oh my god. No way.

SIERRA
What about the band-aid?

He reaches out a finger again, indecisively.

INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - MANAGER'S OFFICE

The phone at ear, Marcus speaks quietly to himself.

MARCUS

Please don't answer, please don't answer...

He looks to the Belinda with a smile.

MARCUS

Got his voice mail.

He clears his throat to sound as concerned as possible. He shakes his head like Ted is there to see his fake sympathy.

MARCUS

Ted, it's Marcus, from work. I'm sorry I missed you. I really wanted to speak to you to just say we... respect you and your whole *deal*.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM

Ted and Sierra both listen to the voicemail, on speaker.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Please take a week off. We don't care about any doctors notes or discussions you're not comfortable with. Just take a good week... a business week, five days. And if you need anytime after, that's fine, but with, um. You'll then need a doctor's note. We're all on your side buddy. No pressure here. Take care, Pal.

Sierra looks to Ted with a satisfied nod.

SIERRA

See?

TED

Yeah, good vibes. Whatever. I know.

Sierra slouches back in the couch.

SIERRA

I think you should come to my mindfulness group this week.

Ted sits up. Lightbulb moment!

TED

You know what? I'm gonna do it.

SIERRA
Really? You'll come to the studio?

TED
What? Ew. No. Not that.

Sierra frowns.

TED
That guy. That guy at the hospital.
The Chinese one. Like you say.
"Everything happens for a reason" -
I wouldn't have met him, got his
number if I hadn't --

SIERRA
You really shouldn't follow that
thought to it's logical conclusion.

BLACK SCREEN

DONALD (V.O)
He texted me!

EXT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - BALCONY

Trevor and Donald sit in chairs, overlooking a city view.
They sip drinks.

TREVOR
Crazy boy?

DONALD
I forgot his name. What should I
save him in my phone as?

TREVOR
"Crazy boy" is very fitting.

Donald starts drafting a text.

TREVOR
Wait, you're replying?

DONALD
I mean, he was cute.

TREVOR
He is a psychiatric patient.

DONALD

He was very clear with me that he was *not* a patient at the time.

They both laugh.

TREVOR

You can certainly do better, Donald.

DONALD

I'm not like you.

TREVOR

What happened with the guy at *Heat*?

DONALD

I didn't enjoy that at all.

Trevor finishes his drink and stands.

TREVOR

You're so repressed. You have no idea what you want.

INT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - HALLWAY

Alicia and two CO-WORKERS trudge down the hall towards a meeting room.

COWORKER 1

I bet this is about Ted. I kept saying this place is going to make someone go crazy one day.

COWORKER 2

I hate these types of meetings.

COWORKER 1

Is it crazier that he ran in traffic or that we haven't yet? Have we just accepted our a slow mundane relatively painless death?

ALICIA

I need a cigarette.

MEETING ROOM

The EMPLOYEES and Alicia sit at the back of the room. Marcus and Belinda hold up some generic depression hotline poster.

Belinda speaks in a disingenuously nice tone. Every few seconds Marcus gives an overdone sympathetic nod.

BELINDA

These guidelines are posted in the break room as well as all of those hotline numbers. And, please my door is always open for anyone who wants to discuss anything.

MARCUS

Nothing is more valuable than all of you. Any questions or concerns?

Alicia raises her hand.

ALICIA

Ted is a good friend and that morning I was the last person he talked to before... you know.

Marcus solemnly nods and Belinda is about to speak, but --

ALICIA

It's had a pretty big effect on me. We didn't even really get to talk before he... *you know*. I feel because there's so much pressure her. I was too busy focused on my cigarette since we only get that one smoke break that I didn't even notice how hurt my friend and co-worker was.

MARCUS

We hear you, Alicia.

ALICIA

What if he succeeded in... you know? That would've eaten me up inside. Would it have driven me to suicide, too? Probably not. All I'm saying is I don't think it's right that we only get one smoke break per eight-hour shift. The question I pose to you is, could an extra smoke break have prevented not just one but maybe *two* potential suicide attempts?

Alicia looks around the room and then to management. Marcus and Belinda are lost for words.

EXT. TAX/ACCOUNTING OFFICE - SMOKER AREA

Alicia, along with four other SMOKING STAFF MEMBERS, take drags of their cigarettes at a designated area outdoors.

ALICIA

If I knew this was all it took to get an extra smoke break I would've swan dived into traffic when I first started.

Alicia smiles. She looks to them for a reaction, no one even makes eye contact with her, let alone responds.

INT. DONALD'S BEDROOM

Donald lays in bed, texting. This is his childhood bed, in his childhood room - *Arctic Monkeys* posters, a (barely) double bed, etc.

INSERT: Donald writing a text "How about tomorrow night?"

A KNOCK at the door.

DONALD

Come in.

Donald's adorable mother, KIEU NGUYEN (50s) enters.

KIUE

(in Vietnamese, subtitled)

You missed your sister's yesterday.

Donald sits up. Kiue sits next to him on the bed.

DONALD

I know. Sorry.

KIUE

She had news. She wants to tell you herself, but I just...

Kiue smiles.

DONALD

She's pregnant?

Kiue nods, grinning widely.

KIUE

Don't tell her I said anything.

Donald nods.

DONALD

You're going to be *bà n?i!*

She hugs him. Donald reacts with surprise, this is rare.

KIUE

Donald, your father and I love you.

DONALD

I know. I love you, too.

KIUE

College didn't work out. Okay. Job didn't work. That's okay, too.

DONALD

Ngu?i m?...

KIUE

You can't live here forever... But I'm not asking you to leave.

DONALD

What are you asking?

KIUE

I'm asking you to start your life.

Kiue looks at Donald. She touches him on the shoulder, smiles uncomfortably, then departs.

Donald sits on the bed, in thought.

INT. TED'S BEDROOM

Ted, dressed casual but nice, straightens and makes his bed. He looks at himself in the mirror. There is a KNOCK.

TED

Yeah?

Sierra enters.

SIERRA

We're heading out to the studio --

TED

(flatly)

Oh wow, that's great.

Sierra does not respond to the rudeness.

SIERRA
So... he's coming over?

TED
Yeah, we're gonna get UberEats.

SIERRA
You're not going out for dinner?

TED
His idea.

Mary enters Ted's room, behind Sierra.

MARY
Hi, Ted. Are you sure you don't
wanna come with us? Hang out at the
studio?

TED
Thanks, but I'm busy tonight.

Mary smiles politely, then steps towards Ted. She limply
places a hand on Ted's arm.

MARY
I, um... I heard what happened. I'm
sorry. I know we aren't close, but,
y'know, I know a little bit about
depression. When I was in college...
You can always talk to me.

TED
(coldly)
Thanks.

Sierra turns to Mary. Mary and Sierra wave and leave.

Ted sits cross-legged on the ground, before the full-length
mirror of his closet, staring at his reflection. He SLAPS
himself, hard, across the face.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM

Ted and Donald sit on the couch. They share family-style Thai
take-out and watch a cheesy movie on the TV.

TED
I don't even *make* the spreadsheets,
I just Q.A. them.

DONALD
Uh-huh.

TED

I check for mistakes, in content, in formula, etcetera. That's all. That's my whole job. Every single cell on every single sheet.

DONALD

That sounds...

TED

Mind-numbing.

Donald shrugs.

DONALD

Well, I work for my parents. What do I know?

TED

Yeah, but you get to *make* something. Who cares if you gotta spend some time with your parents?

DONALD

I live with them, too.

TED

Oh.

Donald nods.

TED

I couldn't live with my parents. Would drive me nuts.

DONALD

It's not that odd in my culture. I'm unmarried. Childless. They'll probably come and live with me when they get older. Well, more likely, with my sister.

TED

You have a sister?

DONALD

Yeah, just the one. You?

TED

No, no siblings. I have a cousin who I was close with, lived with us for a while in high school.

DONALD
Oh, cool. Do you stay in touch?

TED
(firmly)
No.

There is a long silence.

TED
You said earlier... "married"?

DONALD
Yeah.

TED
Are you *out*?

DONALD
To my parents?

Donald emphatically shakes his head.

DONALD
No way.

TED
That's okay.

DONALD
It would be, it just wouldn't work.

TED
I understand.
(beat)
I'm going to get some more wine. Do
you want some?

Donald shakes his head. Ted stands. He returns with a glass of white wine.

On the TV, a DOG is shown doing something or other on the show. Donald desperately looks for something to talk about:

DONALD
Aw, I love dogs.

TED
(too quickly)
Oh, me too. I've been thinking about
getting one.

DONALD
But you live in an apartment.

TED
Like, a small one.

A long silence.

DONALD
I always wanted a dog growing up but
my parents, their culture. We did
have a cat.

TED
I'm allergic.

DONALD
If you're allergic to cats, wouldn't
you also be allergic to dogs?

TED
No, I don't think that's right.

EXT. MINDFUL YOGA STUDIO

Sierra talks with Ruth by the studio's front door, mid-conversation.

SIERRA
Yes, Jenny and I are good friends.
I've been meaning to visit her.

RUTH
It has Tibetan Bamboo wood floors,
brand new gorgeous marble bathrooms,
a fake fireplace...

SIERRA
I'm sure she spared no expense.
That's Motel 9 money.

Ruth tils her head, confused.

SIERRA
Her family founded Motel 9. In any
sketchy part of town anywhere you'll
find one of their motels.

Ruth nods off to the side.

RUTH
There's a vagrant in the alley going
number two.

SIERRA
So there is. I'll see you inside.

A loud voice startles Ruth as she turns to walk away. Alicia approaches the entrance.

ALICIA

I'm here to get my meditation on. Oh yeah.

Alicia motions like she's turning some turntables.

ALICIA

I have no idea why I'm pretending I'm a DJ.

SIERRA

I'm glad you made it.

Alicia looks through the doors, into the Studio.

ALICIA

Looks like a decent sized crew coming here already.

SIERRA

Yeah, I use Meet-up dot com. It's helped some.

ALICIA

Oh, that's so cool. A friend of mine suggested for me to try that but ya know... maybe I'm not comfortable enough with myself for that yet.

SIERRA

Well, were about to start in a bit. Want to head inside.

ALICIA

Imma have a smoke first. I'm honestly a little nervous, never meditated before.

SIERRA

You have time. And don't worry about it. There's no judgment here. Just love and light.

Alicia nods as she lights her cigarette.

ALICIA

Love and light.

SIERRA

It can change your life. If you want to manifest positivity and the world you desire, you can't put any negativity or judgement out there.

ALICIA

You don't judge anyone or anything?

Sierra confidently nods with a smile. Alicia points O.S.

ALICIA

There's a crusty homeless dude power-dumping right next to your studio.

INT. MINDFUL YOGA STUDIO

Alicia mingles among the people before class. She looks at the artwork on the walls. She comes to a quote:

'All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone' - Blaise Pascal, 1662.

Alicia loudly coughs. She tries to clear the phlegm in her throat. She rushes to the front door, opens it and hocks a gross big loogie into the street.

She turns back around -- nearly everyone stares at her.

At that moment, Sierra gathers the class.

SIERRA

I think it's time to get started.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Alicia loudly clears her throat as she takes a seat. She looks around to everyone and tries to mimic the way they sit.

-- Sierra talks as Alicia squirms around on the mat changing positions to try and get comfortable. Her neighbors do their best to ignore her.

-- The class starts with some yoga stretches. Alicia falls sideways next to her neighbor attempting a stretch.

-- The lights go off, everyone shuts their eyes to meditate. It's peaceful for a beat. Alicia is BREATHING THROUGH HER MOUTH just slightly too loud, and it's obviously bothersome.

INT. TED'S BEDROOM

The lights are dim. On the bed, Ted takes off Donald's pants and his own shirt. They kiss.

TED
I'm a top.

DONALD
Yeah, okay. That works.

Ted fumbles for a condom. He struggles to tear the package.

It's very dark, and it's hard to see what's going on exactly. A squirt of lubricant.

A QUICK INSERT:

- A very rapid shot of childhood memories: an older teen holding YOUNG TED down on a bed. Whispering something with hostility.

END INSERT

Ted pulls himself away from Donald with a grimace.

DONALD
What's up?

TED
I, uh --

Ted sits up. This is over.

DONALD
That's okay. It's fine.

Donald starts putting his pants on.

TED
You can still stay?

DONALD
Nah. My parents will... there'll be questions.

TED
Sure.

Donald stands.

DONALD
Sorry I didn't get to meet your roommate.

TED

Next time.

Donald smiles and nods.

TED

There will be a next time?

DONALD

Of course.

Donald turns to leave. Then, with a smile:

DONALD

Let me know when you get that dog.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE

Ted sits in a sofa chair before his young psychologist, SUSAN. Her's is the voice we heard diagnosing Ted in V.O, in the cold open. Her office is bland and uninviting.

SUSAN

I'm interested in your comment about the dog.

TED

Oh?

SUSAN

You've never mentioned wanting a dog to me before.

TED

I guess I don't.

SUSAN

So why did you lie?

TED

I didn't know what else to say.

SUSAN

Let's reflect. A man you like tells you he likes dogs. You immediately talk of fictional plans to own one.

TED

I'm not going to get a dog, Susan.

SUSAN

You're misunderstanding me. I think if this Donald had said he liked... boats, you'd say you're a yachtsman.

TED

That's a broad assumption to make about me.

SUSAN

You become whatever it is the person you desire would like.

(beat)

Tell me I'm wrong, Ted

INT. DONALD'S FAMILY ROOM

Donald and his whole family: Kiue, Do Van, plus his sister JANET (30s) sit around the family room in eager Vietnamese chatter. Kiue pours everyone tea from a kettle.

KIUE

(in Vietnamese, subtitled)

I told Donald the good news, Janet.

JANET

I knew you would.

Donald and Janet smile at each other.

DONALD

Congratulations. It's great.

DO VAN

(in Vietnamese, subtitled)

Your mother cannot keep a secret.

Donald laughs.

JANET

Like I said, no surprise. I expected you to last a little longer than one night, though, *the me*.

KIUE

(in English)

You keep bad news secret, good news you tell everyone.

Janet and Donald laugh together.

LATER

Janet and Donald sit on the sofa alone, still sipping tea.

JANET

Really, what could you have been expecting? You met him at the hospital.

DONALD

I guess I admired his honesty?

JANET

Was it really that bad?

DONALD

We watched TV, actual network television... for an hour, and then he got drunk and took me to his room. And even then, he couldn't do anything.

Janet laughs.

DONALD

And then he like, guilted me, into seeing him again.

JANET

Will you?

DONALD

No. I'm ghosting.

JANET

No, that's mean. You have to tell him.

DONALD

Eugh. Maybe.

Donald finishes his tea.

JANET

You know, I feel bad for you.

DONALD

It was one date. I'll get over it.

JANET

No, I mean I met Bradley through church, through Mom, we got married, that was that. You've gotta...

DONALD

Please, Janet.

JANET

You've got to keep all this in.
Until when? They die?

DONALD

I don't want to think about it.

Janet hands Donald her empty cup of tea.

JANET

Eventually, you have to.

EXT. MINDFUL YOGA STUDIO - DAY

Sierra greets PASSERBY in front of her studio, and farewells some REGULARS as they exit.

ALICIA (O.S.)

What's up, C? You mind if I call you
C?

Alicia approaches lighting a cigarette.

SIERRA

My name begins with an S.

ALICIA

Oh, I know, I said Si, the Spanish
word.

SIERRA

"Yes?"

(beat)

It's good to see you back, Alicia. I
thought maybe --

KELLY (O.S)

Sierra? Is that you?

Sierra and Alicia turn to see KELLY (24) blonde, with a resting bitch face, but she's pretty so it's still cool. She wears expensive designer everything.

KELLY

I finally found it. It took me a
minute. I knew it was near a tattoo
shop but there's a couple around her
and all of these buildings look the
same.

SIERRA

Kelly, so nice to see you.

Kelly walks to the Yoga Studio front window as Sierra talks. Kelly quickly peeks in and then turns around and hugs Sierra.

KELLY
Congrats, the place looks so...
yeah. I'm proud of you.

SIERRA
Thank you. I --

KELLY
I was on my way to make my pad
donation to the homeless shelter and
I thought of you. You did it, girl.

Alicia interrupts.

ALICIA
I'm sorry. "Pad donations"?

Kelly quickly loads up a photo on her own Instagram, uploaded minutes ago, shoving it in Alicia's face.

It shows Kelly, in a tank top, pass a milk crate full of (conspicuously branded) sanitary pads to a SHELTER WORKER (whose face is cropped from the photo). It has a million likes and hundreds of thousands of comments.

KELLY
Homeless women get their period too,
friendo.

Alicia nods, exhaling smoke. She passes Kelly's phone back.

KELLY
It feels good to give back. And I'm
just so proud of you!

SIERRA
Thanks. And... you opened your own
Mindful yoga and meditation studio
two and half weeks ago. You never
mentioned anything when I first told
you my plan, goal, and investment
budget six months ago.

KELLY
Oh. My thing's not *just* some yoga
studio, it's a spiritual center. Not
long after you told me your idea,
during a lunch meditation session...

She makes an exaggerated motion with both hands in the middle of her forehead.

KELLY

Right into my third eye came this vision of imported Tibetan bamboo wood floors. It was like Buddha was speaking directly to me, saying, "Kelly, make a spiritual center."

Alicia blows smoke right in Kelly's face, but it only seems to make Kelly seem MORE mystical, ethereal.

ALICIA

Nice dress.

SIERRA

(playfully)
Seriously, that looks more expensive than my studio.

KELLY

(dead serious)
It probably is. It's a Fendi.

Alicia frowns and Sierra forces a smile.

SIERRA

Do you want to come in --

Kelly hugs Sierra again.

KELLY

Well, I have to be going. You should check out my *spiritual center* sometime.

SIERRA

I had already planned on it.

Kelly turns and walks into another cloud of Alicia's cigarette smoke as she walks away.

ALICIA

You *do not* like her. I don't blame you. I'm pretty sure Buddha himself doesn't like her.

SIERRA

I don't hate her. I like everyone.

ALICIA

I didn't say "hate", you said "hate". It's okay to hate her, Sierra. I hate her and I've only known her for two minutes.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

She's among the worst people I ever met, and I have pretty low standards.

SIERRA

I don't spend any of my time on hate or negative emotions. I'm above all that. Remember? No judgements.

ALICIA

It seemed like the bitch totally copycatted your idea, but --

SIERRA

It does, doesn't it? And she's set for life. Her family is the Motel version of the Hilton family.

ALICIA

See, it's okay to judge people sometimes. I actually have so much more respect for you now that I think I can get a good meditation going this time.

Alicia turns and walks to the door. Sierra follows.

SIERRA

Not judging, just stating facts.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM

Ted browses Facebook on his phone as he paces anxiously.

He searches on his phone: "*Donald Nyugen*". Scrolls a few results. Searches again: "*Nyugen Photography*". A business page pops up. It has an address listed.

SIERRA (O.S.)

Hey, babe.

He looks up and UNLEASHES upon Sierra as she enters.

TED

Why didn't you stop me?

SIERRA

Be more specific.

TED

Donald!

Before she can respond he points to himself, dramatically.

TED

Look at me! I'm all sweaty, and he won't text me --

SIERRA

I warned you, Ted. I warned you very specifically.

TED

Whatever. You're supposed to --

SIERRA

What am I supposed to do? I don't control you!

Sierra throws her purse by the door.

TED

Whatever. You're a shitty friend, you know that?

SIERRA

(raises her voice)

I'm not in the mood for your negativity right now.

Sierra storms to her room, closes the door. Ted follows her.

INT. SIERRA'S ROOM

Sierra takes off her bra from under her blouse and is interrupted by Ted's entry.

SIERRA

Ted, get out.

TED

You know, I've been thinking.

SIERRA

I don't believe you.

TED

I think you should move out. I can afford this place on my own.

SIERRA

I think you need to take some time to calm down.

TED

No. I'm thinking clearly.

SIERRA
You *just* said --

TED
I don't need you.

SIERRA
The Doctor thinks --

TED
Fuck the Doctor! Get out!

Sierra sits down on the bed.

SIERRA
You know what? Fine. Mary said I can
move in with her anyway.

TED
(a little deflated)
She did?

SIERRA
Her and Nick broke up, she's paying
full rent. Makes sense.

Things have calmed. Ted sits down on the bed next to Sierra.

TED
I don't really want you to move out.

SIERRA
I know.

Sierra puts her arm around Ted, around his shoulders.

SIERRA
Ew. You really are quite sweaty.

TED
It's involuntary.

Sierra sighs, quickly hugging Ted.

SIERRA
Wanna watch some Golden Girls?

TED
Sadly... I do.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM

Ted and Sierra share the laptop between them. On his phone, Ted re-opens Facebook. The business ad is still there.

END ACT 2

ACT 3**INT. PET STORE**

Ted approaches the pens of various dogs for sale, blankly.

Ted stares at a glass-walled pen full of spritely, energetic, and very cute puppies. A STORE PERSON approaches.

STORE PERSON

Can I help you with something?

TED

Yeah, I want one of these yellow ones.

STORE PERSON

The Golden Retrievers?

TED

Sure.

STORE PERSON

Is this your first pet?

TED

Yeah.

STORE PERSON

Okay, so I can't really sell you one of these guys without discussing something with you.

TED

Like?

STORE PERSON

Goldens are beautiful, loyal, dogs. But these are puppies. They need special kibble, lots of space, attention, and exercise, or they'll become bored and destructive. Do you have a job?

TED

I think so.

STORE PERSON

Well, you can't leave a puppy like this for a whole work day.

TED

My roommate might help.

STORE PERSON

Do they work, too?

TED

Yeah.

STORE PERSON

Are you sure it's the right time in your life for you to get a puppy?

TED

(scratches his head)

Where can I get an old dog?

EXT. SPIRITUAL CENTER - DAY

Sierra walks in a trendy neighborhood. Up ahead, Kelly talks to a few beautiful 30-SOMETHINGS. Kelly smiles to Sierra.

KELLY

Sierra, I'm so glad you dropped by.

They hug.

SIERRA

I thought I'd check out the place, not just the outside. And maybe, uh take one of your sessions, see what it's like.

Kelly touches her heart.

KELLY

I am so honored.

They stand there quietly for a beat.

SIERRA

So, do you wanna head inside give me a tour?

KELLY

I'd love to! But we're actually about to start level two of my mindful meditation and inner engineering program.

SIERRA

Oh cool, I'll come in and check it out, participate.

Kelly gently touches her.

KELLY

I'm sorry. Now is a bad time.

SIERRA

What do you mean?

KELLY

You can't join this class because it's the second level course and it wouldn't be fair to those here who paid and completed the first level.

Sierra gives a playful smile but Kelly looks very serious.

SIERRA

Kelly, I'm the one that got you into meditation freshman year. We've learned under the same yogi's... took the same courses...

Kelly scrunches her face up, disingenuously regretful.

KELLY

I'm sorry, I can't do it. It just wouldn't be fair to the four people that already paid and completed the first level.

SIERRA

So, like Scientology?

KELLY

Maybe! What does that mean? I'll see you later!

Kelly and her clients head inside.

EXT. PET RESCUE CENTER - DAY

Ted triumphantly exits an ASPCA-like rescue center, with a VERY OLD, thin, greyhound dog on a leash next to him. The dog's name is GOEBBELS.

INT. SIERRA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sierra sits in the lotus position on her bed, mid-meditation.

SIERRA (V.O.)

There are no judgments. You are present and ready for everything that comes your way.

HALLWAY

Sierra exits the bedroom and pulls out her phone as she walks down the hall.

LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sierra texts. She looks up and sees Goebbels on the couch. Startled, she screams and tosses her phone in the air.

SIERRA

What the...

Goebbels slowly turns his head to her and then slowly rests it back on the couch. He is just too old to care.

She takes a deep breath and closes her eyes to compose herself and then marches down the hall.

SIERRA

Ted?!

HALLWAY

She whispers to herself as she marches.

SIERRA

(to herself)

You are in control of the situation.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ted and Sierra stare at the dog, who is asleep on their sofa.

SIERRA

What's his name?

TED

The last owners named him Goebbels.

SIERRA

Well, change it.

TED

It's the only thing he responds to.

SIERRA

Is it gonna die?

TED

One day, like us all. He's not sick,
just old. You're acting like you've
never seen a dog before.

SIERRA

Where's it gonna stay?

TED

In my room. Or the laundry. I
haven't decided.

SIERRA

I'm not paying two hundred a week to
share with you and a Nazi dog.

TED

Fine, I'll reduce your rent.

She puts her hands on her hips.

SIERRA

Ted, I put up with a lot and I want
to be here for you...

TED

I know that look. What else?

SIERRA

You have to come to one of my
meditation class...

He groans before she can finish.

TED

It's just not my thing. I can't just
sit quietly and chant or whatever. I
told you I'd rather kill my --

Sierra playfully cringes to him. Ted considers his thoughts.

SIERRA

My evening mindful meditation class
doesn't interfere with any of your
Susan appointments...

She enthusiastically eyes him. Ted sighs.

TED

I'll try it one time... in the near
future... just for you.

She hugs him.

TED

Wait. What about Goebbels? He can't be left here alone.

SIERRA

My friend Amy is a dog walker...
(to herself)
She's Jewish.

Sierra rubs her forehead while Ted causally shrugs.

TED

Well, it's not going to work out. Like you always say, everything happens for a reason.

SIERRA

Fine, your senile Nazi dog can chill in the studio's break room.

Ted looks at his phone. Has a realization.

TED

I gotta go for a minute. Can you keep an eye on Goebbels?

Ted puts on a pair of shoes and exits. Gingerly, Sierra leans in, holds her hand under its snout to check it's breathing.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - RECEPTION

Donald sits at the reception desk in his family's modest studio. A CHIME as the door opens. Donald looks up. It's Ted.

DONALD

Oh.

TED

Hey, before you say anything --

DONALD

How are you here?

TED

You said the name of the business at one point.

DONALD

Look, you can't be here. My Dad's in the dark room.

TED

I just have to talk to you.

EXT. CITY STREET - LANEWAY

Donald leads Ted to a quiet lane-way by the studio.

DONALD
What did you want?

TED
Why won't you text me?

DONALD
Seriously?

TED
Seriously!

DONALD
Did you really think we had a good
time?

TED
(sighs)
No, not really.

DONALD
Well, there you go.

TED
But I don't think that's it.

DONALD
You don't?

TED
I asked you if you wanted to see me
again and you said yes.

DONALD
That's just a thing people say!

Ted looks hurt.

TED
I know that. But I just felt...

DONALD
I think you felt something I didn't.

Ted considers this.

TED
I do tend to do that.

Donald nods.

DONALD

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

TED

When do you finish work today?

DONALD

Five. Why?

TED

Do you wanna walk my dog with me tonight? In the park?

DONALD

You got a dog?

TED

Yeah.

Donald looks around.

DONALD

Fine. I'll text you.

INT. ALICIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

It's small and almost gives off a hoarder vibe. Alicia, glass of red in hand, listens to a voicemail on her cell. It's a very playful, stoned female voice.

ABBY (V.O)

Leesh, where you been? It's party time. You better call me.

Alicia snickers and then calls her back. It goes straight to voicemail. She lights a joint before she speaks.

ALICIA

Guess what? I'm actually having a great time without you. Yep.

She sets the phone down, talks while she pours another glass of wine.

ALICIA

I got us a second smoke break at work, learned to meditate, made fun of blonde skinny trust fund bitch. I'm like a meditation master, talk shit now.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - EVENING

The sun is setting. Donald and Ted walk a struggling Goebbels through the busy park grounds.

ALICIA (V.O.)
Everything is all good here.

DONALD
He's kind of cute.

TED
I thought greyhounds liked to run,
but this is the fastest I've seen
him go.

Donald kneels down to pet Goebbels, smiling.

DONALD
He's an old boy. I like him.

Donald stands and they keep walking.

TED
Yeah, he's alright.

DONALD
So, you gonna walk him every day?

TED
If he can manage. I'm worried about
the cold weather.

DONALD
Maybe he needs a sweater?

TED
Maybe you could join me again...

DONALD
Yeah. For sure.

Donald flashes a warm smile. Beat.

TED
Donald, I have to tell you.

Donald stops, turns to him. Ted stops.

TED
There's something wrong with me.

DONALD
I figured, when we met.

TED
No, I know, but... I like you.

DONALD
I appreciate that.

TED
It's hard for me. When I'm not well,
and I like someone, it's like... I
become this person. And I do things
that aren't really healthy. And it's
not an excuse.

Donald nods. Ted continues to walk. As does Donald.

TED
I don't expect you to say you like
me back. But as long as we keep
walking Goebbels together --

DONALD
Goebbels?

TED
Oh, yeah. That's his name, I forgot
to tell you.
(beat)
As long as we're doing that, I want
you to get to know me without all
the... unhealthy stuff.

Donald considers this.

DONALD
I think I'd like that.

Ted smiles.

DONALD
I have to admit something, too.

TED
Oh?

DONALD
I totally forgot your name. What do
I save you in my phone as?

TED
Ted. It's Ted.

Ted reaches out to shake hands. Donald smiles.

DONALD
It's nice to meet you, Ted.

INT. ALICIA'S APARTMENT

A knock at the door.

ABBY (O.S.)
Bitch, it's me. Open up!

Alicia walks to the door.

ALICIA
(through the door)
Oh, my former friend?

ABBY (O.S.)
I'm sorry Alicia! Open the door.

Alicia opens the door.

ALICIA
If we're so toxic --

ABBY (25) well-dressed, well-spoken, of Chinese descent, hugs her before she can finish.

ABBY
You know I love you, girl. Plus, I gotta pee and you live nearby my stop.

Alicia smiles, shaking her head. Abby reaches in her purse.

ABBY
I got some weed. I got some coke. Benzos for tomorrow. Let's get fucked up... in one second.

Abby pushes past Alicia to the bathroom.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Alicia and Abby smoke a joint.
- They make silly faces to each other and laugh hysterically.

INT. DONALD'S LIVING ROOM

Donald warmly hugs his parents, both with their eyes glued to Fox News as loud as the TV goes. They wave him off wordlessly as he heads to his childhood bedroom to sleep.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ted and Sierra watch Golden Girls, passing the vape between them. Goebbels lays, in deep sleep on the floor next to them.

INT. ALICIA'S APARTMENT

-- Abby lays out a few lines of coke. Her and Alicia snort them.

-- Abby is on the phone.

ABBY

Are you guys downtown tonight?
Where?

-- Abby and Alicia sharing Alicia's bathroom mirror to apply makeup, both laughing, TOTALLY FRIED.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - BATHROOM

A wildly drunk Alicia is led into the men's bathroom by some gross FINANCE DUDE, still in his suit from work.

IN THE STALL

Alicia giggles, plays with his tie. Finance Dude is straight to business, pulling Alicia's pants and underwear down. He spins her around, wordlessly and expressionlessly, bending her over the toilet.

ALICIA

Oh. Okay.

FADE OUT.