

NOTHING NEFARIOUS

Written by

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INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Dirt, leaves, and weeds cover an L-shaped desk and leather chair. Vines hang from the ceiling, draped across the office.

The voice of DAVE (30), speaks genuinely, in a professional, educated manner.

DAVE (V.O.)

Have you ever set something down,
neglected to put it away, then
continued to neglect it, looking at
it every day until eventually you
stopped seeing it?

A few vines droop down, stopping just over the desk.

DAVE (V.O.)

My grandfather always used to say,
in his thick Chinese accent:
(in the accent)
"The most dangerous person is the
one who listens, thinks, and
observes."

A few bugs crawl out of a dirt clod on the desk.

DAVE (V.O.)

I'm just kidding. My grandfather
didn't sound like that. That was
Bruce Lee. But I do wish that
described me...before things got so
out of hand.

The drooping, leafy vines collapse with a THUD on the desk.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - NIGHT

Dave, a handsome, fit man, of Chinese descent, wearing a conservative business suit, snatches a large bouquet of flowers from the SHOP OWNER (50s), a woman in a green apron.

DAVE

Thank you for staying open late for
me. You probably saved my marriage.
Well, my future marriage, anyway.

SHOP OWNER

Deadbeat men are our bread and
butter, honey.

Dave is surprised by the comment, but has no response.

The woman rings up a card that says "SORRY" on the front, and hands it to him.

SHOP OWNER (CONT'D)
You'll need one of these, too.

DAVE
I guess it's never too early into a marriage to learn to say 'sorry.'

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Dave walks quickly down a mostly empty street, looks down at his fancy gold watch, and enters an apartment building.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dave stands at a plain door in a long hallway. He clenches the bouquet of flowers close to his chest, staring at the door with eyebrows raised in worry.

LYDIA (30), throws open the door and stares at him with eyebrows raised in judgement.

She is beautiful, with her hair styled and makeup done, but is in a fluffy robe and slippers, holding a TV remote.

DAVE
I moved our reservations back a bit, so we can still grab dinner.

LYDIA
A bit?

They stare at each other awkwardly for a moment.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
The reservation was two hours ago, Dave. I already ate.

DAVE
Well...you always say French food isn't very filling.
(encouragingly)
I'm sure you could go for a second dinner.

LYDIA
That's what I ate.

DAVE
You had French food?

LYDIA

Oh, yes. I kept our reservation. I ate both of our plates and a few appetizers, so I'm quite full now.

DAVE

You ate without-?

LYDIA

And I told the waiter to put it on your tab.

Dave is confused. He answers defensively, and pronounces the name of the restaurant in a snooty French accent.

DAVE

La Vie est Savoureuse doesn't keep tabs.

LYDIA

(proudly)

They made an exception. They know you're good for it. And I gave them your address and phone number. So, I suggest you go down there and settle it, while I get back to my movie.

DAVE

Lydia...

(sighs)

It's this new deal with a Chinese investment banking firm, and it could be the deal of my life. They're twelve hours ahead of us, in Beijing, and I had to stay to-

Dave cuts himself off, as Lydia's eyes well up with tears. He extends the flowers to her.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'm really, really sorry.

LYDIA

This week it's a Chinese firm. Last week it was Chicago. But the result is still the same.

Lydia removes her engagement ring, takes the flowers from Dave's hand, and replaces them with the ring.

DAVE

(panicky)

No...we can work this out.

Lydia smells the flowers, breathing in deeply with her eyes closed, then looks up at Dave, lovingly.

LYDIA

I hope some day you can love a woman as much as you love your job. Maybe even a little bit more.

DAVE

I do love you.

LYDIA

I know this may be futile, but I'm going to say it anyway.
(sincerely)
Have a nice life, Dave.

Lydia shuts the door. Dave stares at the number "3" on the door, devastated.

FADE TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

SUPER: 3 MONTHS LATER

A tall office building sits in the center of a complex of slightly smaller buildings. A large parking lot is in the front, and a forest is in the back.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave sits at his desk, casually leaning back, looking over a thick, stapled printout of charts with a cheerful smile.

Behind Dave's desk is a large bookcase with a few awards on display, and across from his desk sits two chairs. The office also contains a small table, surrounded by chairs.

The receptionist, ANNE (20s) enters with a toothy smile, carrying a mug of coffee and a stack of thick folders.

ANNE

Good morning, Dave.

She sets the coffee and documents on the desk in front of him, and holds her arms open, as if presenting an award.

ANNE (CONT'D)

The two most important things you will need today.

DAVE

You're always on point Anne. The team could learn from you.

Anne shrugs her shoulders, with an acknowledging smile.

Dave stands up, enjoys a long sip of coffee, then enthusiastically grabs the stack of files.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Let's kick this pig.

Anne instantly responds with genuine worry.

ANNE

Kick...a pig?

DAVE

(surprised and defensive)
Oh, no. I would never harm an animal. It's from a movie, um...it's a football thing.

Anne is still confused.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Kick, as in a kickoff.

Anne squints at him, more confused.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You kick the pigskin, cuz before they switched to leather, they-
(shakes his head)
Never mind.

Dave looks down at his watch, then smiles at Anne.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Let's get in there.

Anne's toothy smile returns as she watches Dave leave.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dave enters the room with a big smile.

DAVE

Good morning, team. It's a big day-

Dave's smile fades as he sees NONA (40s), sitting alone at the long conference table in the middle of the room, with a pleasant smile, a notebook open, and pen in hand.

NONA
It's a fabulous morning, Dave.

Dave looks at the empty room.

DAVE
Hey, Nona. Where is everyone?

NONA
I never know where they are this early in the day.

TREVOR (25), a handsome, youthful man, tanned, with an athletic build, walks in with his head down, avoiding eye contact, and sits at the table away from Nona.

DAVE
Good morning, Trevor. Are the others-?

TREVOR
(snippy)
They're close behind.

SELINA (35), of Latin-American descent, charges into the office, annoyed. CHARLIE (20s), of Chinese descent, follows.

CHARLIE
(defensively)
Sorry, Selina. I won't ask about dog kennels again. I didn't know it was such a sore subject.

Selina sits in the furthest chair away from everyone, and Charlie sits at the front, near Dave.

DAVE
Morning, Charlie, Selina. You okay?

Selina glares angrily at Charlie, and he recoils, fearfully.

Dave grabs a folder from the pile for himself, then sets the stack in front of Charlie. He takes one and passes them down.

DAVE (CONT'D)
We really need to pull together as a team today. It's going to be a long one, but it's essential that we go over the final details of the Huang and Leung merger, so we can close the deal on Monday. This is a milestone deal for our firm.
(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)

China may be the ticket to a bigger expansion throughout the region, and this gets our foot in the door.

Except Nona, everyone looks exhausted and miserable.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Cheer up, team. There is big money in this for the firm, which means big bonuses for us, but only if we cross the finish line.

Dave holds a forced smile as he looks at the unchanging negative attitudes in the faces of his team members.

DAVE (CONT'D)

And when the day is done, you all get to enjoy a nice, relaxing weekend at a luxurious lake resort, comped by the firm.

TREVOR

Can we just get started, boss?

DAVE

Sure, Trevor. And it's team leader, not boss, alright? We're a team, and...

(sighs)

Okay, everyone open up your folders to page three.

MONTAGE - TIME LAPSE

The team conducts a marathon meeting in the conference room.

-- Dave directs the team through their folders. They follow along, half paying attention, and struggle to stay awake.

-- Anne brings Dave coffee multiple times.

-- Each team member presents something. Anne brings an easel and poster boards with charts for each presentation.

-- Anne brings water bottles, lunch, and dinner.

-- The sky turns dark as the meeting progresses.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Few lights shine through the windows, mostly toward the top.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

MONTAGE - EMPLOYEES LEAVING THEIR OFFICES FOR THE DAY

-- Nona zips up a flowery bag and smiles as she reads a motivational poster on her wall that says: "Put the world in your pocket, and if it won't fit, get bigger pockets."

-- Trevor angrily slams his laptop shut and looks at a framed picture of himself with an arm around a beautiful woman at the beach. He grumbles and tips the picture over.

-- Selina, with a tear rolling down her cheek, picks up a small stuffed dog, puts its nose to her face to dry her tear with licking motions, then stuffs it into her purse. Her desk is covered with photos of her pets.

-- Charlie smiles as he locks his door. He adjusts his glasses, trips over his own feet. When he recovers his balance, he looks around to see if anyone saw him. Relieved to be alone, he continues walking.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dave is deeply focused on his computer screen, and taking notes on a legal pad.

Charlie enters and sits across from Dave.

Nona stops in the doorway with a beaming smile.

NONA

This means more to me than when I was voted 'Most Likely to Change the World' by my Delta Gammas.

Dave snaps out of his daze and looks up.

Nona holds up a pamphlet of a cabin resort.

NONA (CONT'D)

The retreat! Thank you so much for selecting me. It's going to be a blast. You're the best boss.

Dave sits back in his chair and smiles.

DAVE

You've earned it, Nona. And please don't think of me as a boss, but as a team leader. We're a team, Nona, and you're a valued team member.

NONA
That's so sweet.

DAVE
Have a great time. We'll see you
Monday, ready to go, okay?

NONA
Absolutely.

Nona nearly skips away with joy.

CHARLIE
She's excited, the little suck-up.

Trevor walks briskly past the door. Dave shouts after him.

DAVE
Have a great weekend away, Trevor!
I know you'll learn a lot!

Trevor stops, backs up a step, and looks angrily at Dave.

TREVOR
Sure, boss.

DAVE
(kindly)
I'm not your boss, I'm more of your-

TREVOR
Team leader. I remember.
(sarcastically)
Thanks for sending me to the middle
of nowhere over a sunny weekend.

Trevor stomps off. Dave is wide-eyed in surprise.

CHARLIE
It's an all-expenses-paid trip. I'm
sure we'll "kumbaya" a little bit,
but it can't be all bad.

DAVE
The Chairman swears by it.

CHARLIE
Haven't you been?

Dave shakes his head, no.

DAVE
They say this will give us the
extra boost we need.

Selina speeds past the door. Dave calls out to her.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Have a great trip, Selina!

SELINA
Shut up, boss.

DAVE
Don't think of me as a-

Selina is gone before Dave can finish his correction.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Selina's great. She's just had a
tough week. She's stressed.

CHARLIE
She hates everyone and everything,
all the time.

DAVE
She's not that bad.

CHARLIE
And you gotta stop doing that 'team
leader' bit. It just makes them
want to call you 'boss' more.

DAVE
They'll get the hang of it.

CHARLIE
I don't get why I'm going to this.
I'm the youngest in the office.

DAVE
Everyone sees a lot of potential in
you, Charlie. Not because you're my
brother. My boss-
(shakes his head)
-my team leader, has noticed your
hard work on the big partnership.

CHARLIE
I just hope we don't spend a lot of
time in the woods. I always hated
when Mom and Dad took us camping.

DAVE
(laughs)
Me, too. I'm sure whatever happens,
you'll be a better person for it.

CHARLIE

You better not spend your whole weekend in that chair.
(picks up a folder)
You know this stuff inside and out.

DAVE

I can't slack off, especially not this weekend. My boss said that if this deal falls through, I'm out on the street.

CHARLIE

He did not say that.

DAVE

Okay, maybe not in those exact words, but I got the message.

CHARLIE

You should call that ScarJo chick you went out with a few times.

DAVE

Who?

CHARLIE

That blonde girl you met at the dry cleaner, or some nerdy place. She totally looked like Scarlett Johansson, right?

DAVE

I guess she did a little bit.

CHARLIE

Call her.

DAVE

Maybe.

Dave looks at a photo of Lydia taped to his computer monitor.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(sadly)
Probably not, though. I can't take any chances with Monday's meeting.

CHARLIE

(disappointed)
Do what you think is best.
(quickly leaves)
See you Monday, then.

Dave goes back to his work. HANK (60s), with tie loosened and perched on top of his pot belly, leans in the doorway.

HANK

He's right. You need to get some rest, meet a girl.

Dave answers with a smirk, without looking up.

DAVE

Hypocrite.

HANK

My third wife left me years ago, and I haven't had much of a reason to leave the office since then. And I'm too old to go cruising for chicks anymore.

Dave looks up at Hank, raising an eyebrow in curiosity.

DAVE

Cruising for chicks? Is that when you rev up your V-8 Chevy, with the top down, offer to take any girl in a mini-skirt out for a chocolate malt and a drive-in movie, or maybe to the sock-hop for some jitterbug?

HANK

I think you may have your decades a little mixed up, but it sounds like a good time to me.

DAVE

I think 'cruising for chicks' today means opening up an online dating account and clicking through photoshopped pictures, hoping the one you choose didn't used to be a man. It's decidedly less fun.

HANK

You gotta get over the fiancée.

Dave peels a small photo of Lydia off his monitor, leaving old tape residue behind, and looks at it fondly.

DAVE

You're probably right.

HANK

Most men who are successful in this business sacrifice a woman or two.

Dave throws the picture down in frustration, and looks up.

DAVE

So why wasn't I selected for the retreat?

HANK

The retreat isn't for everyone.

DAVE

Who decided it wasn't for me?

HANK

You'll get what you deserve. You close this deal and you'll be a real power player. Then you can write whatever ticket you want.

EXT. LOG CABIN - NIGHT

IRIS (50s), a muscular man with graying hair in a ponytail, and a well-groomed beard, stands at the entrance to a large log cabin with windows covering its façade.

The lobby can be seen through large windows. It is decorated with elegant furniture and crystal chandeliers.

The cabin is surrounded by thick, green forest. A large lake glistens in the moonlight.

Selina, Nona, and Charlie are each greeted with a handshake from Iris as he directs them inside.

Trevor follows a bit behind.

IRIS

You must be Trevor.

(extends his hand)

It's a pleasure. I'm Iris, and I believe you're special.

Trevor rejects the handshake.

TREVOR

Iris, huh? Did you beat the hell out of your dad for that one?

Iris withdraws his handshake and laughs genuinely.

IRIS

Actually, John is my Christian name.

(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)

They call me Iris, because I can see things in others that they can't see themselves.

TREVOR

Who is 'they,' and why do you think I'm special?

Iris is silent for a moment as he looks Trevor over, then squints into Trevor's eyes, leaning in.

IRIS

Are you a gummy bear or a gummy worm kind of a guy?

Trevor lets out a short, uncontrollable burst of laughter.

TREVOR

What? Are we picking our movie-theater treats before we check in?

IRIS

It's a serious question.

TREVOR

There's nothing serious about that question, and absolutely no difference between the two. They're made of the same thing.

Trevor holds out his hand and smirks at Iris.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I'll take either one you've got.

Iris shakes his head with disappointment.

IRIS

The difference between them determines your whole experience. If you have bears, each bite is predetermined for you. If you have worms, you get to choose how much you bite off.

Iris puts a hand on Trevor's shoulder.

IRIS (CONT'D)

See if you can be a worm guy this weekend.

Trevor looks at Iris in humility as they walk inside.

INT. DAVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dave tiredly slumps through the front door of his large, modern studio apartment, drops his computer bag on the couch, and walks into the adjoining kitchen.

KITCHEN

Dave opens his freezer and stares disappointedly at an assortment of frozen dinners. He reaches for one, recoils at it, and removes another.

He tears open the box, and tosses the tray in the microwave with contempt. He stops himself before pressing 'start.'

After a moment of reflection, he removes his phone from his pocket and dials.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

A beautiful woman (20s), the SCARJO CHICK that Charlie mentioned, is dancing in a crowded club with a handsome guy.

She stops dancing when she hears her phone ring. Annoyed, she removes it from a small bag hanging across her body.

She looks at the phone, puzzled, and walks toward the bar.

SCARJO CHICK
(concerned)
Are you okay, Dave?

DAVE
Of course, why wouldn't I be?

SCARJO CHICK
Cuz you called, and didn't text.

DAVE
(confused)
Can't I use my phone as a phone?

SCARJO CHICK
If it's not an emergency, just text like normal people.

DAVE
Would you like me to hang up and text you?

SCARJO CHICK
Don't be stupid, we might as well finish what we started.

DAVE

I thought we could grab some dinner together.

She looks down, sadly.

Dave waits a moment for an answer, and grows concerned.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Are you still there?

SCARJO CHICK

I'm out with someone.

DAVE

Oh. Another time, then.

SCARJO CHICK

We haven't gone out in three weeks. I've moved on. I'm sorry.

DAVE

Wow. I didn't realize it had been that long.

SCARJO CHICK

Listen, Dave. You need to move on, too. Go spend your weekend meeting people, and not in the office.

DAVE

I wish I could, but I have a lot to do to prepare for a meeting on Monday with this Chinese company-

SCARJO CHICK

Dave, this is the most boring phone conversation I've ever had.

DAVE

Sorry to further sour you against using your phone as a phone.

SCARJO CHICK

(annoyed)

I'm sorry that you haven't bought into texting, which is a major development in human evolution.

DAVE

You better get back to your date.

SCARJO CHICK
 (angrily)
 Have a nice life, Dave.

She hangs up. Dave throws his hands in the air, frustrated.

DAVE
 I have a nice life!

Dave takes a deep breath, calms down, then stares at the microwave with sadness, and smashes the button.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Iris, Trevor, Selina, Nona, and Charlie sit on logs around a campfire, near the lake.

IRIS
 None of you are indentured
 servants. You are strong
 individuals who have power to say
 'no' to a weekend like this. So why
 are you here?

NONA
 (excitedly)
 To build up our team!

IRIS
 The team will certainly benefit
 from your experiences, but we are
 not here to focus on teamwork. We
 do not engage in 'trust-falls' or
 'group obstacle courses' or...
 (rolls his eyes)
 'kumbaya' or any such thing.

The group chuckles.

CHARLIE
 We're...uh...so we're here for
 ourselves? For personal
 development?

IRIS
 Your bosses wouldn't pay me what
 they pay me for something as simple
 as personal development, but you're
 on the right track.

Selina fidgets in her seat and wipes a tear that is welling up in her eye with her stuffed dog, then squeezes it tightly.

SELINA

You don't have to be so cryptic.
We're all adults here, and we have
lives to get back to.

IRIS

That's fair, Selina. I'll be as
transparent as I can. You are all
here to achieve transformation.

The group looks at Iris skeptically.

CHARLIE

Are we all so undesirable that we
need to undergo a transformation?

Charlie looks around his head with paranoia, swatting at bugs
that aren't there.

SELINA

(to Iris, angrily)
And who are you to judge?

NONA

Relax, everyone! Personal progress
is good, and we're all here to
support each other.

Nona sits up straight, with a big smile, and turns to Iris
with great attention and glee.

IRIS

Thank you, Nona. Personal progress
is essential to the development of
our species. We cannot be afraid of
transforming ourselves. However,
you are not here to support each
other this weekend.

TREVOR

Why would the firm send us here as
a team...to not support each other?

IRIS

This weekend is about individual
transformation, but once you return
to your employer, you will be a
stronger team. But you will never
achieve any degree of greatness
until you are absolutely
unassailable on your own.

SELINA

As an only child, I think being alone is overrated.

IRIS

Standing alone is difficult. But we will ensure that each of you build a strong enough foundation, so that you won't need anyone else to catch you, because you won't fall.

TREVOR

Sounds promising.

IRIS

Step two of the program requires an incredible amount of mental resilience, so it is vital that you take step one very seriously, and master it.

CHARLIE

We've moved from cryptic to ominous.

Watching for a bug, Charlie slaps his forehead, winces at the pain, then looks down at his hand in disappointment.

Iris ignores the remark, takes a deep breath, and sits up straight, rolling his powerful shoulders back.

IRIS

I want you all to think of the last time in your life that you were truly happy.

Each member of the group loses their current demeanor, slumps their shoulders, and falls into a sad contemplation.

Selina grips her stuffed dog tighter, and her face reddens with rage. She stands, holding the toy dog high in the air.

SELINA

I miss my fu--my fu--my fluffing dogs!

Selina throws her stuffed dog into the fire and sits back down, her head in her hands, sobbing. The toy rolls to the edge of the pit, and slowly catches fire.

Everyone stares at her in shock, except for Iris and Trevor. Iris remains stoic and thoughtful. Trevor holds a clear grin through his surprise.

TREVOR

Fluffing? Did you seriously just say-?

IRIS

Let her express herself.

Iris stares at the burning stuffed dog, grabs a fire poker at his side, and fiddles with the toy, picking it up.

He raises it out of the fire, holds it a moment, then dumps it back into the center of the flames.

IRIS (CONT'D)

That is an excellent starting point, Selina.

Iris stabs his poker into the ground in front of him.

IRIS (CONT'D)

The rest of you had better unleash yourselves, as well, or step two will destroy you.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The sun is just up over the horizon, shining through the trees behind the building.

SUPER: MONDAY

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave stares out his window into the parking lot below, in a tired trance, slouching with his hand on his hips.

Anne enters, carrying a mug of coffee and a scone on a small tray, smiling proudly.

ANNE

Big day today. I thought you might need some extra carbs with your usual coffee, so I got you one of those scones that Lydia use to--I mean, that you like.

DAVE

Uh, huh. Thanks.

ANNE

Everyone from Huang and Leung has responded to the meeting invite for the 9 P.M. And the I.T. guy said he'll be here an hour early to make sure the video chat is working.

DAVE

Great, Anne. You're the best.

ANNE

I guess there will be more long days ahead of us after we marry this company.

Dave laughs, but doesn't quite come out of his trance.

DAVE

I've never heard it put that way, but we'll be together through sickness and health, through many long days, to be sure.

ANNE

It's hard to believe you can put in any more hours than you do now.

Anne looks at Dave with concern.

ANNE (CONT'D)

And don't you dare let that coffee get cold. It's my best batch, yet.

As Anne leaves, Dave finally perks up at something outside.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Four cars pull into the mostly empty parking lot, in a tight single-file line.

The cars break from their formation, parking in unison. Trevor, Selina, Nona and Charlie exit their vehicles.

Trevor reaches back into his car for a bright, short sleeve Hawaiian shirt. He puts it on over his white shirt and tie.

He slings a rustic leather satchel over his shoulder, puts on a straw hat and sunglasses, and struts toward the entrance.

Selina is wearing mismatching clothes, with each item featuring a different animal print pattern.

She opens her trunk, removes a furniture dolly and three small wooden crates, and happily wheels them to the entrance.

Nona is wearing a conservative pantsuit, a stern expression, and carries a large cardboard box.

Charlie, in a white shirt, tie, and khakis, puts on a large camping backpack, and joins the others.

The four team members walk together, side by side, in a line, toward the entrance of the building.

Just as they approach the few concrete steps that lead to the sliding glass doors, Charlie breaks into a sprint along the side of the building, and disappears into the woods.

The other team members stare for a short moment, and then casually continue through the entrance.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dave stares out the window in shock.

DAVE

Charlie?

Dave backs up, still watching out the window. He reaches for his phone, and spills his coffee across his desk.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No, no, no...

He grabs some papers, barely saving them from the creeping coffee spill. The brown liquid covers the picture of Lydia.

Dave tosses the papers aside, and picks up the phone. Hank enters, and interrupts him as he begins to dial.

HANK

You need to deal with this yourself, Dave.

Still holding the phone, Dave looks up at Hank in a panic.

DAVE

Something is off. Charlie just-

HANK

Never show weakness to your superiors.

Dave stares at Hank for a moment, and then continues to dial. Hank shakes his head and leaves.

Dave breathes nervously as he waits for the answer.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

DAVE'S BOSS (50s) answers, very curtly, in a staccato rhythm. He stands at a large desk in a very large corner office.

The CHAIRMAN (70s) enters with a few BOARD MEMBERS, who shake hands and chat.

DAVE'S BOSS

The chairman just walked in.

Dave matches the urgency and economy of his boss's pace.

DAVE

All four of them drove in at the exact same time. They were prompt, even a bit early, but-

DAVE'S BOSS

What four?

DAVE

The four we sent to the retreat.

DAVE'S BOSS

That's great to hear, but certainly not urgent.

DAVE

I'm not sure it's great. It's strange, they're different, but-

DAVE'S BOSS

The retreat would have been a waste of time if they didn't come back different.

DAVE

Right, I just thought-

DAVE'S BOSS

I would be shocked if there wasn't a dramatic increase in productivity today. Perfect to prepare for the meeting with the Chinese.

DAVE

I guess that's-

DAVE'S BOSS

Be happy about it.

Dave's boss hangs up. Dave slowly lowers his phone into the receiver as Anne enters.

ANNE

I noticed you just got off the ph-

She notices the coffee spill and becomes almost hysterical.

ANNE (CONT'D)

Your coffee! I'll get you another one, right away.

Dave grabs his notebook and pen, and hurries to the door.

DAVE

Don't. I'm not in the mood.

ANNE

But you have to-

Dave scurries down the hall.

INT. TREVOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Trevor, with sunglasses and straw hat on, his Hawaiian shirt hanging open, leans back in his chair, at his computer.

He is casually clicking a mouse with one arm, and the other hangs limp to his side.

Dave pushes the cracked door open and leans in the doorway.

DAVE

Hey, Trevor. So...

He looks Trevor up and down, his eyes wide with curiosity.

DAVE (CONT'D)

How was the retreat?

TREVOR

Relaxing.

DAVE

That's good...I guess. You do seem more relaxed than usual.

TREVOR

Definitely. I'm still stoked.

DAVE

(confused)

You're stoked?

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)

Ok...maybe I don't understand that word...anyway, how's your morning going?

TREVOR

Never better, Dave.

DAVE

(nervously)
Excellent. So...um...

TREVOR

Just let it flow, man.

DAVE

I was just wondering...uh...how your relationship building is going with the Huang and Leung guys.

TREVOR

Smooth sailing, bruh. Ghengis Khan himself couldn't break up this deal. Millions in the making. After the conference call tonight, I think I'm going to convince Yao and his team to fly down here to catch some surf and sand with me.

DAVE

I don't think they need to fly around the world for beaches.

TREVOR

You ever seen pictures of those Chinese beaches?

DAVE

No, are they nice?

TREVOR

Couldn't tell ya. All you can see is people. No way you could set a towel or chair down on the sand, or swim two or three feet without bumping skin with someone.

DAVE

Oh, that does not sound nice.

TREVOR

Not nice at all, Dave. Not nice at all.

Dave pauses for a moment, looking Trevor up and down again.

DAVE
So...I was also wondering.

TREVOR
Hit me with it, bruh.

DAVE
I was wondering why you're wearing
that hat.

Trevor cracks a smile, but doesn't turn his head.

TREVOR
And the sunglasses?

DAVE
Right...and the sunglasses.

Trevor finally turns his chair toward Dave.

TREVOR
Well, I was sitting here this
morning, staring at my screen like
usual, and I was straining my eyes,
like usual, and I was like: "Why
are you straining your eyes, bruh?"
And so I put my sunglasses back on,
and it was much better.

He turns his chair back away, and continues working.

DAVE
Ok. I guess that makes sense.

TREVOR
Totally.

DAVE
And...and the hat?

TREVOR
It just felt right.

DAVE
Ok. It's fine to wear it in your
office, but for Nona's
meeting...please leave it behind.

Trevor just keeps clicking away at his computer.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Alright. See you at the meeting.

TREVOR
Lookin' forward to it.

Dave turns around and excitedly heads toward Nona's office.

INT. NONA'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave stands in the doorway. Nona is focused on her computer. Her cardboard box is sitting on her desk, unopened.

DAVE
Good morning, Nona. How's my most
positive team member on this
beautiful Monday?

Nona doesn't acknowledge him.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Everything ok?

No answer.

DAVE (CONT'D)
So...what's in the box?

Nona looks up at him with fury in her eyes.

NONA
Don't ask me what's in the box.
It's a surprise for the meeting.

She looks back at her computer.

NONA (CONT'D)
It's very important. The meeting is
very important. I'm very important.
My feelings are very important.

Nona trails off and continues to mouth her words silently to herself. Dave slowly backs out into the hallway.

DAVE
Yes. It's all very important. I'm
sure the meeting will be great.

'Ooo' and 'Aaah' are heard down the hall. Dave takes off to investigate.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

A small crowd of employees are gathered at Selina's doorway.

Hank watches with intrigue as Dave hurries down the hall.

INT. SELINA'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave pushes his way through the crowd in the doorway.

DAVE

What's going on in-?

He gasps as he sees Selina at her desk, a puppy in her arms, two more on top of newspaper on the floor, a litter of kittens in a box, and a parakeet in a small cage on her desk.

SELINA

Dave! Aren't they wonderful?

The parakeet CHIRPS loudly. Selina looks up at it, annoyed.

SELINA (CONT'D)

Quiet, you. We're talking.

DAVE

Uh...they sure are cute, but-

SELINA

I know! They're just the best and cutest and sweetest. It's exactly what our office needed.

The parakeet CHIRPS loudly again. She gives it a dirty look.

DAVE

Umm...actually, It's very much against corporate policy. And not everyone likes-

SELINA

(angrily)

You don't like puppies?

DAVE

No, no, no! I like puppies fine, it's just that the policy-

SELINA

(increasingly angry)

Who doesn't like them? Did somebody say something?

(stands up)

Who is it? Who doesn't like puppies?

The crowd is silent. They turn toward Dave with angry, judging faces. As he backs up, everyone's eyes follow him, watching in hostility.

DAVE

(nervously)

We'll, uh...talk about this later.
Just make sure you're at the
meeting. Nona needs our support.
She's not really herself this morn-

SELINA

(suddenly cheerful and
ominously creepy)

Oh, Dave. Nona is absolutely
herself. You'll see.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave bursts into his office, grabs a bottle of water from the small conference table, and chugs it, nervously.

He sets the water down on his desk, wipes his mouth and forehead, and reaches for the phone.

Hank walks in and puts his hand on top of the receiver.

HANK

(firmly)

Do not call again. You have to
handle this yourself.

DAVE

We need to postpone the meeting
with Huang and Leung. My team is in
no shape to-

HANK

That would be very unwise. If you
let this deal fall through, there
will not be another.

DAVE

That's why we need to postpone.

HANK

At least see how Nona's meeting
goes. Just don't be too rash.

Dave relaxes his shoulders and takes his hand off the phone.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Team members are sitting around the conference table, and along the walls. The room is full, with a few people still getting settled.

Nona stands at the head of the table, with her cardboard box in front of her, forcing a constant smile.

Dave enters and addresses the room in a cheery voice.

DAVE

Good morning. Do we have everyone?

Dave scans the room.

His countenance falls as he sees Trevor wearing his hat and sunglasses, and Selina holding a puppy.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Wait, where's Charlie?

Charlie skulks silently, low to the ground, past the conference room door, carrying a long walking stick. He's naked, except for a loin cloth, fashioned out of his white shirt. No one notices him.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Has anyone seen him since he...?

Everyone looks at Dave blankly, and he reacts by snapping quickly into a professional demeanor to conduct the meeting.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'm sure he's on his way. Please give Nona your close attention as she-

PETE (40s), enters with a cocky swagger, unabashedly interrupting the meeting.

PETE

Oh, good, I didn't miss anything.
(creepily flirtatious)
I love a good Nona meeting.

He settles into the chair closest to the front, with a thump. Nona squirms as she watches him.

PETE (CONT'D)

I'm just bummed I wasn't invited to the cabin over the weekend. We could've made some good memories.

BILL (60s), a meek, overweight man, slumped in his chair, across from Pete, commiserates with a quiet, sad voice.

BILL
More than two decades with the
firm, and I've never been invited.

DAVE
(annoyed)
Hey, Pete. Glad you could make it.

Dave regains his composure, and Nona again forces her smile.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I know everyone has been working
hard on the Huang and Leung
partnership, and Nona is no
exception. Today is our big day,
and you all deserve a big round of
applause.

Dave leads everyone in applause.

INT. ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

A skinny, NERDY ACCOUNTANT in a suit and glasses with an adjoining wall to the conference room, sits at his desk, with piles of documents surrounding him.

He looks longingly at the wall, listening to the cheers on the other side.

He droops his head, sadly.

NERDY ACCOUNTANT
They never invite me to their
meetings.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DAVE
Nona, take it away.

Trevor gets up from his chair, climbs on the table and lies down, his hands resting on his chest.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(confused)
Trevor?

TREVOR

Just settling in, bruh. I'm listening and super stoked for the presentation. I'm going to my happy place, but no worries. You're all coming with me.

Nona opens her mouth to begin, but Pete rudely interrupts.

PETE

So, Nona-belle, what's in the box?

NONA

Pete, I'm so glad you asked.
(opens the box)
Since this is such a special day, I wanted to show my sincere appreciation for everyone with a personalized gift.

"Awww's" are heard around the room.

NONA (CONT'D)

(to Pete)

I would love to start with you.

Pete perks up in his chair, pleased. Nona slides a small gift-wrapped box across the table. Pete eagerly tears it open.

PETE

You're such a sweetheart, Nona.

He removes the lid from the box and freezes, staring inside.

He gags, puts his hand to his mouth, drops the box, stoops over and vomits on the floor.

The employees around Pete back up, disgusted, but Trevor and Selina do not react.

Dave rushes over to Pete.

DAVE

Pete! What happened, what's in...?

Dave looks to the floor, reacts with disgust, and retreats back to Nona.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(upset)

Nona! How could you...what did you...why?

Nona whispers something into Dave's ear, and he reacts with shock, and then back to disgust. He turns to Pete with anger.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No! Come on, Pete!
 You...you...deserved...no...just...
 (to Nona)
 But, Nona, that was excessive. I
 can't believe you would...

Bill perks up with great interest.

BILL

So, what about the rest of us?
 Who's next?

NONA

(cheerfully)
 Oh, Bill. You can be-

DAVE

(frustrated)
 No! No one is next!
 (addresses the room)
 Everyone go back to your offices.
 We'll reconvene...later.

NONA

They're not all like that. Some of
 them are quite nice.
 (to Bill)
 Yours is nice, Bill.

BILL

Yeah. I want mine.

Others mutter approval and settle back into their chairs.

DAVE

What is wrong with you people? This
 meeting is adjourned.

Dave rushes off first. Everyone but Trevor follows, with Nona leaving last, taking her box with her.

With everyone gone, Trevor sits up, plugs his phone into a conferencing device in the center of the table, plays some upbeat reggae music, and dances on top of the table.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave arches his back, his hands on his face, lets out a loud groan, then nearly collapses over his desk in frustration.

He picks up his office phone, and before he can dial, Anne enters with a new cup of coffee and scone.

DAVE

I am quite awake, Anne. No need for coffee, thank you.

ANNE

Well, maybe it will calm you down.

DAVE

(bewildered)

How will coffee calm me down?

ANNE

Umm...there's something to be said about routine.

DAVE

What is with everyone? Of all days?

Anne looks at him, cluelessly.

ANNE

What do you mean?

DAVE

Everyone who went to the retreat is acting insane, like someone about to quit and burn the building down on the way out.

Anne studies Dave's face with deep concern.

ANNE

Did...something happen in the meeting?

Dave lets out a submissive sigh and looks helplessly at Anne.

DAVE

Nothing you can fix. You can go.

ANNE

I'll just set this here, in case you change your mind. And I really hope you do.

Anne sets the coffee on the conference table, and leaves.

As he begins to dial the phone, Hank enters the doorway, but Dave gestures for him to stop.

DAVE
Not a word, Hank!

Surprised, Hank leaves without protest.

Dave calls his boss.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

DAVE'S BOSS
Twice in a morning isn't good.

DAVE
We have to postpone the meeting
tonight.

DAVE'S BOSS
Impossible.

DAVE
My key team members have lost their
minds. What did that retreat do to
them?

DAVE'S BOSS
We don't send our people there to
not change, and the retreat
guarantees transformation.

DAVE
I understand that, but they aren't-

DAVE'S BOSS
There's nothing nefarious going on.
Stop worrying about your team
members and start worrying about
the team. And the team's concern is
the meeting with the Chinese.

DAVE
We are not ready for-

DAVE'S BOSS
I hope you're smart enough to know
that if this deal falls through,
you're out on the street.

DAVE
I-

DAVE'S BOSS
Do what needs to be done, and stop
calling me. Leverage your Chinese
heritage. They'll love that.

DAVE
But they don't-

Dave's boss hangs up.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Know that I'm Chinese.

He slams the receiver down, and mutters to himself.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I'm American.

Dave closes his eyes and breathes deeply, calming himself down. When he opens his eyes, he sees the photo of Lydia floating in the coffee spill.

He looks longingly at it, and dials the phone.

LYDIA (V.O.)
Dave? Is everything ok?

DAVE
Lydia, can you meet me for an early lunch, or late breakfast, or whatever, downstairs?

LYDIA (V.O.)
Since when do you take breaks for meals?

Dave lets out an audible sigh, hanging his head in sadness. Neither speaks for an awkward moment.

LYDIA (V.O.)
Ok. Meet me at the café downstairs in ten minutes.

DAVE
I'm sorry I never-

LYDIA (V.O.)
I could use a break, too.

INT. SELINA'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave walks quickly down the hall and glances in Selina's office as he passes.

The parakeet CHIRPS loudly as she takes it out of its cage. Dave shakes his head in disgust.

After he walks away, Selina grabs the bird tightly in her hand and puts the bird's head in her mouth.

INT. NONA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dave continues down the hallway, passing Bill, who nods hello to him, and enters Nona's office.

Nona greets Bill with a warm smile, and immediately reaches into her box for his wrapped gift.

Bill beams with delight as she hands him the small gift.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dave passes by Anne's desk without acknowledging her, and hits the elevator button.

ANNE
Where are you going?

DAVE
To the café.

Anne stands up in a rage.

ANNE
But I just made you more coffee!

Surprised at the outburst, Dave becomes defensive.

DAVE
Know your place, Anne. How dare you
speak to me that way?

Both turn from anger to guilt and stare at each other.

The elevator door opens, and Dave slowly enters.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I'll be back shortly. Call me if
there's a homicide.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Dave sits alone at a table for two, nervously looking around the café. A busy hostess guides guests to their tables.

A plate of eggs and bacon, and a plate with a sandwich sit in front of him. The same two dishes sit at the place across the table.

Lydia, in a short business skirt and stylish blouse, glides past the hostess, waving at Dave, and quickly seats herself.

LYDIA

Wow, I see you already ordered.

DAVE

I wasn't sure you wanted breakfast or lunch.

LYDIA

But you remembered how indecisive I can be.

DAVE

You're hard to forget.

Lydia looks at him, slightly embarrassed.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Your quirks, I mean. I just thought-

LYDIA

It was sweet.

She looks back and forth at her two plates, then opens her sandwich, clears everything off the bread, and replaces them with her eggs and bacon.

Dave watches her, adoringly. Lydia picks up her newly constructed sandwich with a proud grin.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

The best of both.
(takes a bite)
Now spill it.

Dave stares at her in a happy, punch-drunk trance.

DAVE

I spilled my coffee this morning.

Lydia laughs, covering her full mouth with one hand.

LYDIA

I meant, tell me why we're here.

DAVE

(still dazed)
Huh?

LYDIA

(quizzically)
Dave?

Dave snaps out of his trance and into depression.

DAVE

Oh, right.

He picks up a piece of bacon, and nervously breaks it into pieces.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I think I need to find a good psychiatrist.

LYDIA

I've said that before.

DAVE

Not for me. It's my team. They've gone nuts.

(hysterically)

The office is full of puppies and presents and vomit, and Charlie's missing, and there's no way we're closing the deal with Huang and Leung, and that means I'll be jobless and homeless and-

LYDIA

Slow down. How are puppies and Charlie going to get you fired?

Dave lets out a breath, takes a bite of bacon, and wipes the grease from his hands on his cloth napkin.

DAVE

I just needed to see you, ok. I don't know why, I just hoped you would calm me down. Maybe give me some advice to right the ship.

LYDIA

I seriously doubt that you need my advice in business. I'm the lowly paralegal and you're the M.B.A. with ambition and vision.

DAVE

I've put in...who knows how many hours? And I've tirelessly supported and encouraged my team. But we're-

LYDIA

(annoyed)

I remember those countless hours,
and I can only imagine the tireless
support you gave your team, since I
never saw any of that.

DAVE

Easy!

LYDIA

Go easy? I went easy on you for two
years, waiting for you to
prioritize us the way you
prioritized them.

Dave stands up and throws his greasy napkin into his eggs.

DAVE

I came here for help, and...

He stops himself, and calms down, looking around to see if he
has made a scene. Relieved to see that no one is watching, he
reaches into his pocket and throws some cash onto the table.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I won't call you, again.

Dave walks away, frustrated. Lydia watches him leave, shaking
her head, then continues eating.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

Dave exits the elevator, head low, staring at the floor, and
approaches Anne's desk. She looks at him quizzically.

DAVE

Were there any homicides?

ANNE

The day is still young.

Anne points across the room. Dave follows her finger, to see
a goat tied to a side table next to a sofa.

Dave and the goat stare at each other for a moment.

DAVE

A sheep?

ANNE

It's a goat.

Dave looks back at Anne, dazed.

ANNE (CONT'D)
That's much worse.

A tearing sound prompts Dave and Anne to turn their heads simultaneously, and watch the goat rip a bite out of the sofa, and chew it contentedly.

DAVE
(calmly)
At least we don't have to feed it.

They watch in awe for a moment, and then Dave yells down the hall.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Selina!

Selina pops her head out of her office with a big smile, sees Dave, and nearly skips with excitement toward him.

As she approaches, Dave points at the goat.

DAVE (CONT'D)
A farm animal now?

SELINA
(cheerfully)
He's motivational.

Dave squints back, skeptically. Selina responds in a matter-of-fact tone.

SELINA (CONT'D)
Because he's a goat.

DAVE
That's a fact, not an explanation.

SELINA
Alright, I'll literally spell it out for you. It's a goat. You know, as in G-O-A-T, Greatest of All Time.

DAVE
(unimpressed)
Is that thing really the greatest animal of all time?

SELINA

He is adorable, for sure, but it's because our team is the greatest. It's motivational.

DAVE

That thing is ugly, and eating a couch. It's kind of demotivating.

SELINA

(angry)

So you're against animals that you think are ugly? Are they not welcome in the office because they aren't cute enough for you?

DAVE

(frustrated)

The cute ones aren't welcome here, either. I told you it was against policy. You need to take them back where you found them.

SELINA

Oh, they aren't going back. No way. They're my commuter pets now.

DAVE

Commuter pets?

SELINA

Yeah, I think I can more than qualify for the carpool lane now.

DAVE

That's not how that works. And how did that goat get here, anyway?

SELINA

I had it delivered.

DAVE

The policy specifically states that animals are not welcome!

SELINA

(sassy)

Then all of us had better evacuate immediately.

Dave storms off down the hall, angrily.

DAVE

Get rid of them all, now!

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Dave rubs his temples as he walks. He stops as he notices several clods of dirt along the carpet.

DAVE
(under his breath)
Where did that come from?

Bill approaches, holding his gift from Nona, with wrapping partially covering it, with just the top ripped open.

BILL
Boss, I have to show you what Nona just gave me, it's just...there aren't words. We have to talk. Can we go to your office?

DAVE
The focus for today is really on-

BILL
It relates to the meeting tonight.

DAVE
I guess I can take a few minutes.

Dave is startled by the sound of women shouting "wooo!" from the conference room.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Sorry, Bill. I have to see what's going on in there.

Bill watches sadly as Dave walks away.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Trevor is still dancing on the table to reggae music, but now has three young, attractive INTERNS (20s) dancing with him.

INT. ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

The Nerdy Accountant bobs his head to the muted music he can hear through the wall. He turns his head toward the noise with a sad expression.

NERDY ACCOUNTANT
They never invite me to their parties, either. I should quit.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DAVE

Trevor, who are these girls?

Trevor and the girls continue dancing.

TREVOR

They're interns.

DAVE

We don't have interns.

TREVOR

That doesn't mean they're not interns, bossman.

DAVE

If they're not ours, they don't belong here. I shouldn't have to point that out.

A digital telephone ring interrupts the music and dancing.

Trevor picks up a remote control, points it at a large TV on the wall, and EDDIE (20s), a Chinese man in a suit, appears on the screen in a video call.

TREVOR

Eddie! Bro! Welcome to the party!

DAVE

This isn't a party!

EDDIE

Trevor! I brought interns, too!

Four young, attractive CHINESE INTERNS enter Eddie's screen, waving and smiling.

TREVOR

You one-upped me, bruh. I only brought three.

Trevor, Eddie, and the girls all laugh.

EDDIE

And I booked my flight and hotel on the beach.

TREVOR

You are going to love our beaches, bruh.

DAVE
Who is Eddie?

TREVOR
He's our twenty-four-seven. He works the night shift over there, in case we need anything here.

DAVE
(scolding)
And do Eddie's girls, and his beach vacation plans constitute a need?

TREVOR
You put me in charge of partner relations, bossman, so I'm relating.

Trevor puts the reggae music back on, prompting everyone on the table and everyone on the video call to dance.

Dave looks at them incredulously, then everyone stops what they're doing to the screams of horror from down the hall.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

The goat lays in a puddle of blood, with a primitively crafted spear in the side of its chest, sticking straight up.

Anne is backed into a corner, screaming and crying. Several other employees gather as Dave enters the reception area.

ANNE
It was Charlie! He, he came charging down the hall, and he...

Selina runs to the goat, collapsing on top of it, embracing its neck, crying.

Dave kneels next to Selina and puts a hand on her shoulder.

DAVE
It's terrible. I'm so sorry this happened. Um...uh, I'll...um...
(unsure)
...get you another one?

Selina slowly turns her eyes toward Dave, with rage building.

SELINA
You. Will. Get. Me. Another.
(screams)
One?!

DAVE

Yeah, if that would make you feel-

SELINA

You think you can just replace this goat like you would replace any one of us if we quit, or were fired? Just substitute one big hunk of biological mass with a heartbeat for another, huh? And then everything goes back to normal?

DAVE

Please, calm down.

SELINA

Then you have corporate replace the carpet where this precious animal bled to death, we sign with the Chinese, and everything is just...just copacetic?

DAVE

We will definitely replace this carpet, but we're not copacetic.

SELINA

(to Anne)

Where is he? Where is Charlie?

ANNE

He ran down the hall. To his office, I think.

Selina leaps into a sprint.

SELINA

I'll make him suffer for this!

Dave catches her with his arms around her waist, from behind.

DAVE

I'll take care of this. Please, don't escalate the problem. Just go make sure your other pets are okay.

Selina collapses back onto the goat, crying again.

SELINA

(to the dead goat)

I didn't even get to know you.

She looks up at the bites out of the sofa.

SELINA (CONT'D)
And you didn't even get to finish
eating this sofa.

Dave walks toward Charlie's office, and addresses the crowd.

DAVE
Everyone go back to your offices,
and...and...and I don't know what,
just stay there and out of trouble.

Bill approaches Selina, and stares at the goat in horror.

BILL
Is that goat missing a leg?

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave approaches Charlie's door with caution, observing
splotches of mud and blood around the doorknob.

He slowly pushes the door open enough to put his face through
the crack into the dark office.

DAVE
Charlie? Are you in here?

Vines and leaves are strewn around the room. The furniture is
covered in dirt, and a pile of leaves are formed into the
shape of a bed in the corner.

DAVE (CONT'D)
There aren't any problems we can't
fix. It's just an animal.

Dave pushes the door open until the vertical crack of light
shines on Charlie, who is crouching on top of his desk.

His mostly naked body is covered in dirt, and his face is
striped with red war paint. He is gnawing on the goat's leg.

Dave stifles a gasp and tries to keep calm.

DAVE (CONT'D)
What happened at the retreat?

Charlie looks up at him with an evil sneer.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I'm here to help, not to get you in
trouble. Whatever happened there
can be reversed.

Charlie bares his teeth in anger and throws the goat leg at Dave. Dave shuts the door quickly, and the leg slams into it.

Dave's eyes widen as his breathing quickens pace.

Shuffling and grunting noises are heard inside the room for a moment, followed by something breaking, and then it's quiet.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dave turns around to see Trevor with his arms around his interns, down the hall.

TREVOR

Nature really did a number on Charlie.

Dave walks toward Trevor, his face growing angry.

DAVE

Nature didn't do this. Something or someone did. Who was at that camp? Who got to him, and all of you?

TREVOR

Whoa, bossman. Pick up a history book, bruh. Nature has always done this to man. Charlie's in his natural state.

(looks around)

It's these gray walls and these fluorescent lights that aren't natural.

Dave stops inches from Trevor's face. He drops his arms down as his girls slowly back away.

DAVE

This is a place of business, not a hunting ground or an animal shelter.

(raises his voice)

Or a dance club. So tell your lady-friends to please go back to their places of business, and-

Charlie bursts from his office, sprinting down the hall, shouting a war cry, and holding a broken leg from a wooden table in each of his hands, up in the air, like weapons.

Trevor puts his arms in front of the girls, pushing them behind him. Dave freezes for a moment, watching in shock.

As Charlie closes in on them, Dave looks at a metal filing cabinet next to him.

Just as Charlie approaches, he jams his hands in the space between the cabinet and the wall, and pulls it over onto Charlie, who collapses underneath it, knocked out cold.

Trevor and Dave stare at each other with equal surprise. Dave pulls the cabinet off of Charlie, and shakes his shoulder, with no response.

Selina approaches with blood on her blouse, and a smile on her face, talking on her cellphone.

SELINA

That would be wonderful. Our little furry ones deserve the best.

She hangs up and addresses the group with excitement.

SELINA (CONT'D)

My friend's animal-assisted therapist just got in touch with someone who has reserved a special burial spot on this hill on a free-range farm for my goat. It's a bit expensive, but he's worth it.

Nona enters the hallway and hugs Selina.

NONA

That sounds lovely, Selina. I'm so happy for you both.

TREVOR

Free-range. Nice.

Dave blows up in rage.

DAVE

That's what you take away from all of that? Selina has a guy, three people removed that does goat burials, and you're impressed that it's on a free-range farm?

TREVOR

It's more ethical, bruh.

DAVE

You people have lost your minds! This is the most important day of our entire careers, and this is how you choose to spend it?

The group stares at Dave, blankly.

TREVOR
Iris would understand.

DAVE
Iris? Is that the demon-spawn who
did this to you?

Trevor, Selina, and Nona all seethe with rage, and turn their
bodies toward Dave, clenching their fists.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Oh, now I have your attention. Now
that you can see that the fun is
over, and I've had enough of your
insubordination?

NONA
Fun is fleeting, Dave. We're not
here to have fun. Iris didn't-

DAVE
Did you all go with Iris in a time
machine to converse with Socrates?
Please, talk like normal human
beings.

SELINA
Like human beings? That's a pretty
low standard, boss.

DAVE
It's team leader! I know you know
that.

TREVOR
You don't know what the function of
a team is, or what leadership looks
like, bossman. Iris showed us-

DAVE
I have news for you all. Iris broke
you. He turned you into maniacs
with no self control. If I could
get five minutes alone with that
man, I'd-

Iris' voice interrupts Dave.

IRIS
Not a fan of Socrates, Dave?

The team members turn around and back up. Their expressions turn to calm reverence.

Iris is standing in the reception area, with his hands behind his back. He walks slowly toward them.

IRIS (CONT'D)

What philosophers do you follow?

Dave stares in anger.

IRIS (CONT'D)

The enlightened scribe who chiseled your corporate policy, I suppose? Or whatever executive poet composed the latest memo in your inbox?

DAVE

Our team spent months vetting Huang and Leung, cultivating relationships, negotiating terms, balancing the books. And in one weekend, you've destroyed it all. You need to reverse what you've done to them, or we won't have jobs after today, let alone a team.

The team members turn to Dave with rage again, and take menacing steps toward him.

IRIS

Stop, everyone. We need to handle this situation with reason, to find a peaceable solution.

The group backs off, calming instantly, turning back to Iris.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Dave, you said you would like five minutes alone with me. Let's take that opportunity in your office, and see how we can manage what problems you perceive.

DAVE

What I perceive? Look around you.

Iris looks down at Charlie, still unconscious on the floor.

IRIS

Yes, I see that things have not gone as smoothly as would be ideal.

Iris looks at each person in the hallway, and stops at Trevor.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Trevor, please tend to Charlie while Dave and I chat. See that he knows that we care about his wellbeing...but also see that he is no longer a threat to anyone.

Iris turns toward Dave's office, and beckons him.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Come, Dave. I've looked forward to this for months.

Dave follows, and sees Hank down the intersecting hallway, appearing concerned. Dave waves him off, denying his help.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Dave sits at his desk, hands folded on the edge of it, staring sternly at Iris, who is sitting calmly with a slight grin across from him.

Both stare at each other in silence, waiting for the other to begin.

IRIS

Well, what would you like to know?

DAVE

What's wrong with your parents for naming you Iris?

Iris laughs and shifts in his chair.

IRIS

Is that really the most burning question you have?

DAVE

Are you going to answer all my questions with a question? That's a bit cliché for a philosopher of your reputation.

IRIS

It's a nickname.

DAVE

From hippy, stoner, summer-camp?

IRIS
The Army, actually.

DAVE
The Soviet Army?

IRIS
I didn't come here to ask for your respect, Dave. So you can speak to me in any way you feel comfortable. But wisdom has never been gained through sarcasm.

Dave leans closer.

DAVE
What kind of drugs did you put them on to make them act this way?

Iris perks up.

IRIS
Ah, now that's an interesting question. What makes you think I drugged them?

DAVE
Another answer with a question?

IRIS
I do apologize. I'm just so intrigued that you would lead with that. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. Most doctors and psychologists simply medicate their patients' problems away, as if that's all there is to it.

DAVE
Then what did you do?

IRIS
You're a salesman.

DAVE
I've spent time in sales.

IRIS
Then you know that you never make a sale by leading with the solution. You focus far more conversation on the problem, so there's more 'buy-in' when you're ready to pitch.

DAVE

Where are you going with this?

IRIS

Sometimes the customer doesn't know he has a problem, so you have to point it out.

Dave sits back a bit, intrigued.

DAVE

Sure.

IRIS

Your team members, as you call them, are full of problems they didn't realize they had.

DAVE

So you unleashed those problems, and sent them back to us, when they should have been outfitted with straight jackets and sent away.

IRIS

The things you have seen in your team today, you perceived as problems, when they are actually their greatest strengths.

DAVE

There is a dead goat in reception.

IRIS

If you can't value their individual strengths, you can't manage them.

Dave starts to dial his phone.

DAVE

I've had enough of your brain-twisters.

Hank enters the doorway.

HANK

This is the third time you've tried to call your boss, you have to-

DAVE

Enough, Hank. It's time he takes some responsibility for unleashing this madman on us.

Dave dials, putting the phone on speaker. Iris looks at the doorway, narrowing his eyes with concern, and looks back.

DAVE'S BOSS' RECEPTIONIST answers.

DAVE'S BOSS' RECEPTIONIST
Good afternoon, Dave. How can I-?

DAVE
Put me through to him now, please.

DAVE'S BOSS' RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
He took the Chairman out to lunch.
May I take a mess-

DAVE
(assertively)
Forward me to his cell, then.

DAVE'S BOSS' RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)
I don't think he would like-

DAVE
(impatiently)
Do it!

The receptionist transfers the number, and it rings twice. Dave stares confidently at Iris while they wait.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Dave's Boss and the Chairman sit at a fancy bar, eating steak and drinking wine.

DAVE'S BOSS
Yes?

DAVE
It's Dave.

DAVE'S BOSS
You had better be under attack.

DAVE
Iris is here.

Silence.

DAVE'S BOSS
What do you mean, here?

DAVE
He's hippy-ing up my office as we speak.

IRIS
Kumbaya, friend.

DAVE'S BOSS
I'll be right there.

Dave's boss hangs up.

IRIS
Who were you talking to before you
made that call?

DAVE
He's not important. You're going to
be held accountable for all this.

IRIS
Who isn't important?

DAVE
It's just Hank. He's an old man who
refuses to retire, and insists on
mentoring me.

Iris leans forward and wipes a finger across the mostly dried
coffee spill on Dave's desk.

IRIS
You haven't had your coffee today.

DAVE
Why is it so important to everyone
that I drink my coffee? My nerves
really do not need any caffeine.

Iris sits back in his chair, with a worried expression.

A woman's scream is heard from the reception area. Dave
stands up, annoyed, and quickly walks out.

DAVE (CONT'D)
That better be the last scream I
hear today.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

Lydia is leaning against the wall next to the elevator,
holding her chest with a hand, breathing heavily, as Dave
approaches.

Lydia points at the dead goat, struggling to speak.

LYDIA
What in the world is...?

DAVE
That? That is a dead goat.

LYDIA
(hysterically)
What is a dead goat doing there?

DAVE
Nothing. It's dead.

LYDIA
It's missing a leg!

DAVE
Well, yes, it is.
(chuckles nervously)
But I do know where it is.

LYDIA
Are you seriously making a joke
about this?

DAVE
I'm sorry, I really wasn't
expecting to have to explain this
to you.

LYDIA
I'm glad you were able to get that
first try out of the way before you
have to explain it to the police.

DAVE
The police? It's not exactly a
murder scene. Although, I would
like to see the chalk outline.

LYDIA
A normal person would be concerned
by your response right now, but you
never let serious moments stay
serious when we were together,
either.

Dave grabs the handle of the spear that's stuck in the goat,
and leans on it. Lydia watches in disgust.

DAVE
What are you doing here, anyway?

LYDIA
Stop touching that!

Dave throws the spear out of his hand like a hot potato.

DAVE
Ugh, I didn't realize I-

LYDIA
I came because I didn't like how
our lunch ended, and I knew you had
to be in some kind of trouble,
since you haven't talked to me in
months.
(points at the goat)
Is this why you-?

DAVE
Oh, no. This happened while I was
out with you, but this is only part
of the story of my day.

Dave and Lydia stare at each other, with sad longing.

DAVE (CONT'D)
I did call you because I'm in
trouble. I don't think I'll have a
job by the end of the day.

Lydia runs to Dave, gives him a tight hug, and her eyes begin
to swell up with tears, but they don't fall.

LYDIA
How can I help?

DAVE
You wouldn't happen to know a guy
who can get rid of a goat, do you?

Lydia laughs, releases her hug, and wipes her eyes.

LYDIA
No, Dave. I don't have a guy for
that sort of thing.

Dave perks up, as if struck by an idea.

DAVE
Doesn't your cousin George eat
roadkill?

Lydia rolls her eyes, and gags.

LYDIA

That's pretty much all he posts
about online.

DAVE

Can you get him to take this away?

Lydia hesitates.

LYDIA

You owe me big for this one.

DAVE

Thanks. I don't know what the
sentence is for aiding and abetting
a farm animal murder within the
city limits, but I'm not excited to
find out.

Dave looks at the goat again, scratches his head, and removes
the tablecloth from the coffee table.

DAVE (CONT'D)

My boss is on his way down here.
Could be any minute.

He drapes the tablecloth over the goat.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Please let me know when George gets
here, so I can-

LYDIA

I'll escort him here myself, and
make sure he doesn't talk to
anyone.

Lydia hits the elevator button, and smiles at Dave.

DAVE

You're a mindreader.

LYDIA

Just with you.

The elevator arrives. Lydia turns to enter and nearly bumps
into Dave's Boss and the Chairman.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Excuse me, gentlemen.

DAVE'S BOSS

Lydia, so nice to see you, again.
Are you two back to-?

LYDIA

No, I just stopped by to say hello,
but I have to run. Fifteen minute
breaks usually mean fifteen more
boxes of files for me to sort.

Lydia slips into the elevator.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Lovely to see you all.

The elevator door shuts, and Dave's Boss turns to Dave with
an approving smile.

DAVE'S BOSS

You really should try to get that
girl back, or at least bring her to
the next corporate gathering. She
was excellent arm candy.

The Chairman nods in approval, remaining silent and serious.

DAVE

I agree, sir. I'll keep that in
mind.

Dave's Boss walks past him, removing his overcoat, and
draping it over his arm.

DAVE'S BOSS

Now, where is Iris?

Dave's Boss looks down at the goat, covered completely by the
tablecloth, and stops.

DAVE'S BOSS (CONT'D)

And what is that?

DAVE

Oh, uh...that's, well...
(jokingly)
It's a dead goat.

DAVE'S BOSS

Ha! Always a kidder.

Dave's boss begins to reach toward the tablecloth.

DAVE'S BOSS (CONT'D)

But seriously, what's-?

Dave steps in the way of his boss' reach.

DAVE

It's actually just a...it's clothes we've been collecting for the needy, and they haven't been washed, yet.

DAVE'S BOSS

Oh, that's great thinking, Dave. The firm can always use some improvement in our public image.

Dave's Boss holds his overcoat up for closer inspection.

DAVE'S BOSS (CONT'D)

You know, I've been considering a new overcoat anyway, and this thing is looking a bit worn.

He tosses the heavy overcoat on top of the tablecloth, landing with a thud. Dave watches with disgust, but quickly turns a smile back on.

DAVE

It will be much appreciated.

DAVE'S BOSS

Now, take us to him.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Dave's Boss leads Dave and the Chairman down the hall to Dave's office, and stops in Selina's open doorway.

Selina is sitting in the corner, on the floor, holding her puppies and kittens. She licks a kitten's forehead.

Dave's boss is a bit startled, but remains calm. He speaks to her in an exaggerated, sweet voice.

DAVE'S BOSS

Well, don't those precious little things brighten up the office.

Selina looks up, sadly, but tries to cheer up. She rubs the kitten's wet forehead with her thumb, as if cleaning it.

SELINA

They...they are sweet. I just love having them here. My heart aches whenever I'm away from my pets.

DAVE'S BOSS

Now, normally it would be against the rules to have animals in the office, but I think we should make an exception because they're just so darn cute.

Selina lights up with joy.

SELINA

You mean it?

DAVE'S BOSS

What do you think, Dave?

DAVE

I...I guess if you say-

DAVE'S BOSS

Wonderful. It's settled.

Dave's Boss looks at the empty birdcage with curiosity.

DAVE'S BOSS (CONT'D)

Where is, uh, whatever lives in that cage?

SELINA

You're such a kind man. We need you around here more often.

Dave's Boss smiles at Selina, then walks on, as Dave and the Chairman follow. His demeanor becomes stern.

DAVE'S BOSS

Dave, I want those animals out of this office immediately.

DAVE

But you said-

DAVE'S BOSS

I get to be the nice one. You must maintain order.

Nona approaches, ignoring everyone, and speaks to Selina.

NONA

I was feeling a bit lonely in my office, and hoped I could borrow a kitten for the afternoon.

Selina lights up, and immediately hands her a kitten.

SELINA

Of course. And if you two hit it off, I think you should consider adopting a few from this breeder I know, who uses a feline mid-wife for every litter.

Dave erupts at Selina.

DAVE

This has gone far enough. You need to get rid of all your animals, immediately. I don't care how you get rid of them, but do it now.

Selina bursts into tears.

Trevor walks out of his office, shaking his head at Dave, and still wearing his straw hat and sunglasses.

TREVOR

Way harsh, soul-crusher. You learn that tact in business school? You're killing the stoke, bruh.

DAVE

I told you to keep that ugly, deserted island hobo-hat in your own office.

Trevor drops his jaw, as if his mind has been blown.

TREVOR

Whoa! I never thought of that before, but I guess if a dude was stranded on a desert island, he would be considered a hobo.

Dave angrily storms off toward his office, and his boss and the Chairman follow.

DAVE

Back to work, everyone.

Selina cries louder. Trevor scowls at Dave as he walks away.

TREVOR

You are killing the stoke.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Iris holds his arms open, welcoming Dave, his Boss, and the Chairman.

IRIS

Gentlemen, it's been far too long since we've met in person.

DAVE'S BOSS

You're never supposed to come here.

IRIS

I couldn't stay away forever. This is where all the real magic happens, where the money is made.

DAVE'S BOSS

You mock, but you've been happily taking our money for years.

IRIS

I don't hate money. I very much appreciate its power, but it's not the only power, or even the most powerful.

DAVE'S BOSS

I'm here to inform you that if you don't fix whatever you've broken here, then we're coming after every dollar you have. We'll burn down your little camp before this is over, and then we'll see how much power you have.

IRIS

Your anger is understandable, but there is no need for threats. I have never meant any harm, and never will. I heal, not hurt.

DAVE

I do not see healing in your acolytes out there.

Iris nods, showing concern, then walks to the small conference table, surrounded by four chairs, on the other end of Dave's office, and beckons the others.

IRIS

Come. Sit with me, and we can talk as gentlemen.

Everyone sits at the table. Iris is relaxed, while the others are on edge.

DAVE'S BOSS

Alright, let me see you pretend to be a gentleman.

IRIS

Please allow me the opportunity to show you that I'm not the enemy.

DAVE

This office can't function after what you've done.
(to his boss)
And you hired this madman to do it?

The Chairman clears his throat, leans forward, and everyone gives him reverent respect. He has a gruff, weathered voice.

CHAIRMAN

Iris changed everything for us, long ago, and I've never known him to be a madman.

The Chairman looks each of the others in the eye while loosening his tie, and unbuttoning the top of his shirt.

IRIS

And I never intend any harm.

DAVE

They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

The Chairman reaches for a cigar and lighter from the inside pocket of his jacket, and lights it up.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Would you please not-?

The Chairman gives him a dirty look as he blows a smoke ring.

CHAIRMAN

We spent a fortune on our Human Resources department for years, at the behest of our lawyers, who were struggling to keep whiny young college graduates' complaints from getting in the way of the real work that needed to be done.

The Chairman grabs a coaster from the middle of the table, and taps a clump of ashes onto it.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Firing people became nearly impossible.

(huffs)

It was practically illegal. And the cost of turnover became a huge drain on our capital, at a time when we couldn't spare any.

DAVE

Isn't that just part of running a business?

CHAIRMAN

I swear all the people from H.R. write the textbooks that are taught in business school these days.

He blows another smoke ring and puts the cigar out on a coaster.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Business used to be just about making money. It was simple. Then one day, all our employees cared about was feeling good about their work. A paycheck wasn't good enough anymore.

The Chairman leans back in his chair and folds his arms.

DAVE

(to Iris, accusatory)

Then you swooped in and brought everything back to normal again?

IRIS

Normal is a dirty word, Dave. Use it carefully.

DAVE

Is this how you do it? How you manipulate people? He who controls the language controls the masses?

IRIS

Just because you can vaguely misquote Orwell, doesn't mean you begin to understand how the human mind works, or how I work. But I want you to understand.

Iris waives his hand in the air as he speaks in an exaggerated oratory voice.

IRIS (CONT'D)

As Orwell once said, "If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself." Everyone has a secret, Dave. I'd be happy to help you find yours.

DAVE'S BOSS

(sarcastically)

Well, I'm sure you have given Dave plenty to think about. And we need some time alone with Iris to...review our agreement.

Dave's boss stands, and Iris and Chairman follow.

DAVE'S BOSS (CONT'D)

We can continue this in the conference room. Excuse us, Dave.

Dave's phone buzzes. He looks at it, and quickly stands, motioning everyone to stay.

DAVE

No, no, gentlemen. I have something I need to tend to, so you all can stay here.

DAVE'S BOSS

It's really no trouble to-

DAVE

(increasingly desperate)

Really. I have to check on...several things. I won't need my office for quite some time.

DAVE'S BOSS

Alright. That'll be fine.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

Dave sees Lydia standing at the end of the hallway, by the elevator, mouthing the words, "I'm sorry" to him.

As Dave approaches the reception area, he sees GEORGE (30s), with messy hair and a week old beard, putting on the coat his boss left on top of the dead goat.

GEORGE

It's better than Christmas. A free goat and this gorgeous coat.

DAVE

And a rhyme, too. What a day.

GEORGE

I'm a natural poet, Dave.

George spins around to show off the coat. Underneath, he is wearing a ratty shirt and dirty jeans.

DAVE

Can you just get this out of here,
George? Quickly? My boss sees this
and I'm deader than Billy here.

George abruptly stops spinning and looks Dave in the eye, speaking seriously.

GEORGE

You can't be deader than dead,
Dave. And you named it? It's
dangerous to name an animal. It
messes with your emotions.

DAVE

I didn't...you know the old story,
'The Billy Goats Gruff?'

GEORGE

No. No, I do not. But all goats are
gruffy.

DAVE

It's not important.

George breaks into laughter, and slaps Dave on the back.

GEORGE

Of course I know all about the
Billygoats Gruff.
(exaggerates a southern
accent)
I wasn't raised in no barn.

LYDIA

George, please. The goat really has
to go.

George lifts part of the tablecloth up and smiles.

GEORGE

He's a meaty one.
(concerned)
But he's missing a leg.

LYDIA
(jokingly)
Yeah, but Dave knows where it is.

GEORGE
That right, Dave? You hiding the
best part for yourself?

DAVE
Please just get it out of here. I
really appreciate it. And no more
questions, ok?

GEORGE
I hear you loud and clear. I'd be a
liar if I said I've never been in a
pinch with an accidental dead
animal.

George walks toward Lydia, who is standing next to a metal shopping cart filled with garbage bags and various tools. He pushes the cart over to the goat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
These things are great. Can't find
anything better for this type of
job at the hardware store.

DAVE
Better than a wheelbarrow?

GEORGE
You want to put one of God's
creatures in a wheelbarrow, Dave?
That's disrespectful.

Dave rubs his temples to ease his stress.

DAVE
I'm so confused right now.

GEORGE
(cackles)
I'm messing with you. I'll take
care of this in a jiffy, although
there's nothing I can do about the
carpet.

DAVE
Just cover it up with the
tablecloth when you're done.
That'll have to do until I can get
it replaced.

Dave walks back down the hall, and Lydia catches up to him, stopping him with a hand on his shoulder.

LYDIA

You don't look well. Can't you reschedule your afternoon and take the rest of the day off? You have to take care of yourself, or you're of no use to anyone.

DAVE

If I do that, I lose my job.

LYDIA

Maybe that wouldn't be as bad as you think.

DAVE

To lose my job?

LYDIA

There are plenty of other things you could do that wouldn't take this kind of toll on you.

DAVE

Like breaking my back with some shovel-ready job? Work is called work for a reason. It's supposed to be tough.

LYDIA

You might break your back, but you would save your soul. It's not a zero-sum trade.

DAVE

Thanks for bringing George by.

Dave turns to walk away. Lydia watches in sadness.

LYDIA

Call me if you need anything. You're still important to me.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Before Dave reaches his office, Bill approaches, holding Nona's gift, still in its box.

BILL

Dave, I really need to talk, and I won't take 'no' for an answer this time.

DAVE

Sure, Bill. Should we step into the conference room? My office is-

BILL

I don't think I'll be long. I've been here far too long already.

DAVE

Have you been waiting for me here long?

BILL

What I meant is that I know it's proper to give two weeks notice, but under the circumstances...I'd like to leave now.

DAVE

Under the circumstances?

Bill holds up his gift box, but doesn't reveal what's inside.

BILL

Nona's gift. It made me realize I've been here too long. I've had too many vending machine lunches. There's more out there for me. I'm an empty-nester, and my wife left me years ago, mostly because I never made enough time for her. I don't need a lot of money to support myself anymore, and...I just can't stay, is all.

DAVE

What exactly did she give you?

BILL

It's personal.
(apologetically)
No offense, though. It's not only the gift, it's what she said, or how she said it, or something. It's hard to explain.

DAVE

Try, Bill. I need to understand something that's happened today.

BILL

It's like she could remember every conversation we've ever had in the office, in the break room, in the parking lot...everything. I never thought she was listening, to be honest. Most people don't listen to me when I prattle on. But today...she gets me.

DAVE

Did you ever go on the retreat?

BILL

I did. Long ago. I don't remember much. There was some camping, a fire...the usual stuff. But I don't-

Bill stops and his face lights up as he has a revelation.

BILL (CONT'D)

Yes, I do. I do remember. I was about to quit the firm then.

Bill shakes his head with sadness, then spins around, waving his arms around in frustration and anger.

BILL (CONT'D)

But after the retreat...they made me stay, Dave!

DAVE

(skeptically)

So they convinced you to keep your job? That doesn't sound-

BILL

I wasted years here, and ruined my personal life. I should have left then, and I need to leave now.

Bill pushes past Dave toward the elevator.

DAVE

Wait, Bill. You should never make big decisions when strong emotions are in control.

Bill spins around and stops.

BILL

I've been here for...I actually want to forget how long.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

But you're young. Don't let yourself get to a point where you can't quit.

DAVE

No one is going to force me to stay here. In fact, if I don't turn this day around, I won't get another.

BILL

If you get thrown out of a bar, you can just go to another, but the night always ends, regardless of your choices. Just remember that there's no bartender in here to shout out 'last call.'

DAVE

What about your personal affects? Do you need a box? Help packing up?

BILL

Keep it, or throw it away. Your choice. I have enough memories of this place.

Dave watches mournfully as Bill leaves.

INT. NONA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nona is typing at her laptop with a smile as Dave enters.

DAVE

You're working? I appreciate that. You seem to be the only one.

NONA

Huang and Leung are important to me, Dave. They're good people.

DAVE

What happened at the retreat?

Nona stops working, and looks up, sympathetically.

NONA

I was an intern at an office like this, one summer during college. I applied because my boyfriend did.

(chuckles)

I didn't realize they were only offering one position.

DAVE

Ouch. How did he feel about you getting it over him?

NONA

I'm not sure. We broke up before I found out that I got the job.

DAVE

Why are you telling me this?

NONA

I met my ex-husband there, and that was the last time I can remember being truly happy.

DAVE

That was a long time ago.

NONA

There wasn't much for me to do in the office. I ended up playing more solitaire than I did making copies or filing papers, at least in the beginning. Eventually, I was tired of feeling useless, bored and unhappy, so I started doing nice things for people in the office.

DAVE

That's great initiative.

NONA

Try not to sound too much like a robot while I finish my story, Dave.

DAVE

Um...ok.

NONA

I remember learning everything I could about all my co-workers, and then giving them gifts that would be personal and meaningful.

DAVE

Wow, so that's why you-

NONA

I did that for a few years into my career, and always enjoyed it.

DAVE
Why did you stop?

NONA
I wasn't sure until Iris opened up
my eyes. He made me remember
things.
(ominously)
All things.

DAVE
What do you-?

NONA
Ayahuasca.

DAVE
Aya-what?

NONA
He challenged us to remember the
last time we were happy, and then
we all drank this...stuff. It was a
nightmare, then a revelation.

DAVE
You lost me.

NONA
I vomited. A lot. I saw things come
out of me that I can't describe.

DAVE
That's disgusting. Were you drunk?

NONA
What came out of me was not
anything I ate. They were...like
memories, or from memories.

DAVE
Did Iris drug you?

NONA
When I woke up with the sunrise, I
felt a closeness to everyone we
work with that I hadn't experienced
since that summer internship. I
could remember obscure
conversations, quirks, passions...
the good and the bad.

DAVE

If Iris drugged everyone, I need to know.

NONA

No one did anything against their will.

DAVE

I find that hard to believe. He gives off Charles Manson vibes.

Nona stands up and takes a gift from her box.

NONA

I've been waiting for the right time to give you yours. You seem humble enough now.

Dave hesitates, staring into Nona's sincere eyes, then takes the gift from her, and tears it open.

After removing the lid to the box, he stares into it with wide eyes, and fights back tears.

DAVE

Where did you find this? How did you know about...?

NONA

You're hiding a good person inside. And I know you act with good intentions, even when it hurts others.

DAVE

I'm not hiding anything.

NONA

When you meet someone new, what's the first thing you tell someone about yourself?

DAVE

I don't socialize much.

NONA

Think about it. What do you reveal?

DAVE

I guess I tell them about my job.

NONA

Most people do, but why? What are they hiding? What are you hiding?

Glass shatters in the hallway, and Dave runs to investigate.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Selina is standing near a broken window, surrounded by her pets. She is about to throw a puppy out the window.

SELINA

If I can't have you, no one will.

Dave sprints down the hallway toward her, as everyone within earshot pokes their head out into the hallway.

DAVE

Selina, stop!

Selina doesn't hear him, and thrusts the puppy through the gaping hole in the glass.

The onlookers gasp and scream.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No! Selina! What have you done?!

Selina stares back at Dave in horror, then out the window, then back at Dave. Speechless and horrified at her actions, she curls up into a ball in the corner, crying.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I never said you had to get rid of your animals forever. They just can't stay here in the office.

Dave addresses the crowd that has gathered in the hallway.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'm a reasonable man!

Iris pushes his way through the crowd.

IRIS

Selina, talk to me. What are you feeling?

DAVE

She's on drugs, Iris. What did you expect? Were you hoping for perfect submission to your will?

Dave points to Selina, who is staring at the floor and rocking back and forth.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Is this your will?

IRIS
(calmly)
It certainly has its side effects.

DAVE
Side effects? That's what you call this?

Dave's boss approaches Selina, shooing the rubbernecking employees out of his way, but they don't leave the hallway.

DAVE'S BOSS
This team member came to work today on drugs, Dave? And you haven't removed her from the premises?

Hank approaches Dave with great concern.

HANK
How have you not fired this woman, Dave? You need to get control of your people. Your deal is going to fall through unless you-

DAVE
Back off, Hank! Stay out of this!
(to his boss)
Please don't insult me by pretending to be ignorant of this. She didn't drug herself. Iris-

DAVE'S BOSS
I know nothing of the sort.

DAVE
Iris, we need to have a few words.

DAVE'S BOSS
Iris isn't your concern anymore, Dave. You need to get everyone on track for your meeting tonight. You are running out of time.

Selina looks up at Dave and shouts.

SELINA
Quinceañera!

DAVE

What?

SELINA

Quinceañera. The last time I was happy. There was a big celebration. Animals everywhere. I got a puppy, and it was beautiful, but...

DAVE

Go ahead. What happened?

SELINA

It died of ringworm a few weeks later. I never got another one. My father said I had become a woman, and dealing with loss was part of being an adult.

DAVE

(calls out)

Nona!

Nona quickly paces down the hall.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(to Nona)

Please take Selina to reception and lay her down on the sofa. Do not leave her side until I get there.

Nona grabs Selina's hand and leads her away.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(to his boss)

Take the Chairman to the conference room, and I'll be there to brief you on our progress soon.

DAVE'S BOSS

You don't give me orders.

DAVE

(quietly)

Please, distract the Chairman while I...while I do something about all this chaos.

Dave's Boss walks away, taking the Chairman with him.

Dave walks a few steps down the hall, shooing everyone away.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Back to your offices, people.

Once Dave is alone, he rubs his eyes with exhaustion.

With a burst of anger, he punches toward the wall, but stops himself before impact.

He takes a deep breath, turns toward the broken window, and slowly walks to it, fear taking over his face.

He places both his hands on the windowsill, slowly sticks his head outside, and looks down the many flights below.

He searches the concrete for the lost puppy, or the crowd gathered around its remains, but sees neither.

His attention turns to a truck with a flatbed full of mulch, and a small crowd of people gathered around it.

A man climbs up the back of the truck, stumbles up the steep pile of mulch, and retrieves the puppy, who appears unharmed.

Dave backs out of the window, takes a couple steps backward, and sits down hard in the middle of the hallway, with relief.

Trevor enters the hallway.

TREVOR

Bossman. Charlie's waking up.

Iris is leaning against a wall at the end of the hallway.

DAVE

Iris, come with us.

INT. TREVOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlie stirs in his chair, and watches Dave with hostility as he walks in, but calms as Iris and Trevor enter.

Iris squats down to Charlie's level, and speaks with concern.

IRIS

Oh, my, Charlie. The memory exercise was supposed to help you realize who you are, and break through your corporate restraints, but this can't be the solution. Let me help you.

DAVE

Memory exercise?

CHARLIE

They're my private memories, and I think I've successfully broken those restraints.

Trevor's cell phone rings, and he answers, listening quietly.

TREVOR

(on the phone)

Yo. This is Trevor.

(his eyes widen)

Iris? Yeah, he's here.

Dave and Iris turn to Trevor.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Yeah. I might be able to make that happen. When? Yeah, ok. Sure, I'm sure. Does a bear crap in the woods?

CHARLIE

(chuckling)

It sure does. Makes them easy to track.

DAVE

(to Charlie)

Ok, mountain man. One weekend away and you can track bear droppings?

Charlie's face straightens up, and he looks at Dave with dead eyes, responding with ominous confidence.

CHARLIE

It was an educational weekend.

Trevor hangs up the phone, removes his sunglasses, and slowly looks at each person in the room, with worried glances.

DAVE

Spit it out,

(with sarcastic emphasis)

bro.

TREVOR

That was our twenty-four-seven. He says he got an urgent message from his boss, who's on his way to the office. He wants a conference call with us, right away.

DAVE

And?

Trevor relaxes again and smiles.

TREVOR

And he wants Iris on the call. He said his boss is anxious to finally speak with him.

DAVE

Iris?

Iris innocently raises his eyebrows.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Why would Huang and Leung ask about you?

Iris tilts his head forward, with his smile widening.

IRIS

I'm part of the deal, Dave.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The sun is nearly over the horizon, and Dave is in a fit of rage, pacing behind his desk. Iris sits calmly, watching him.

DAVE

You will not be part of this call, Iris. You are not part of the team.

IRIS

This deal won't go through without me. I was a major bargaining chip. Me and my retreat, that is.

DAVE

How is that possible? I didn't know you existed until today.

IRIS

You're a bright young man. I'm sure you can figure out how and why you were kept out of this until now.

DAVE

But what value could you possibly add to this deal?

IRIS

I think you've seen what my skillset can offer.

DAVE
(incredulously)
Who wants a workplace like this on purpose?

IRIS
Today was a bit of an experiment, I admit. And not without its hiccups.

DAVE
Hiccups? You're insane.

Iris watches Dave melt down with exasperation, and begins to chuckle softly to himself.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Only an insane person would find this situation to be funny.

IRIS
You haven't figured out whether you're in a comedy or a tragedy, yet, have you?

DAVE
Tell me what you did to everyone.

IRIS
For everyone.

DAVE
That's not what I said.

IRIS
I did nothing 'to' anyone, only 'for.'

Dave reaches for his phone, picks up the receiver and shakes it menacingly.

DAVE
I'm going to call the cops. I'm sure they would love to hear about your ayahuasca sleepover.

IRIS
I'd love to tell you every detail, Dave, with or without the threats.

DAVE
With the threats.

IRIS
 (laughs)
 Noted.

Dave puts the phone down, slowly breathes out, and sits.

IRIS (CONT'D)
 After some important self-
 discovery, each of your teammates
 discovered the last moment they
 were truly happy. And none of their
 memories involved this place, Dave.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Iris, Trevor, Charlie, Selina, and Nona are sitting around a campfire, holding a wooden stein. A green, frothy liquid bubbles above the brim.

IRIS
 Hold on dearly to your memory as
 you drink.

TREVOR
 How much do we...? And how quickly?

IRIS
 This is a personal journey. Feel it
 out.

The group looks nervously at each other, waiting for someone else to take the first sip.

Trevor looks into his cup, pulls out a small leaf, and holds it up, curiously. The others look on with hesitation.

TREVOR
 (to himself)
 Alright, just go for it.

Trevor takes a sip, and holds it in his mouth, waiting for the taste to settle in.

Everyone leans forward a bit, watching him closer.

Trevor swallows, smacks his lips, and repeatedly squishes his tongue against the roof of his mouth, testing its texture.

He nods approvingly. The others' faces relax. They raise their cups to their mouths, but stop as Trevor lets out an uncontrollable dry heave, as if coughing up a hairball.

Trevor recovers his bearing, and takes a larger swig.

The others follow with varying sipping speeds. All except for Nona, who is chugging her drink as quickly as possible.

Charlie finishes next. Half of his face nearly collapses into his cheek, making a clicking sound, turning his head sharply.

Charlie drops his cup to the ground, stands up quickly, rips off his shirt, and runs into the woods.

THE WOODS

Charlie sprints around the tightly gathered, very long tree trunks, and trips, falling hard on his face.

He pulls himself to his hands and knees, looks around the dark forest, sees a long, sturdy stick, and picks it up.

He inspects the stick, tests its durability, swings and stabs with it a few times, then keels over, vomiting.

BACK TO THE CAMPFIRE

Iris watches calmly as everyone reacts to the taste of their drink, which each has finished.

Trevor stands up, puts headphones on, and walks calmly down the path to the lake, playing relaxing reggae music.

EXT. LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Trevor stares into the sparkling blue lake, which glistens from the reflection of the stars. He is entranced with it, and walks, zombie-like down the path.

When he approaches the water, he takes a turn down the thin, sandy beach. After walking a short distance, he finds a wide open space of sand, and sits cross-legged.

He stares into the water again, bobbing his head to the slow reggae beats. He closes his eyes.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - DAYDREAM

On a sunny, cloudless day, Trevor and a beautiful SURFER GIRL jog from the sand into the whitewater waves crashing onto the shore, carrying surfboards, and smiling at each other.

The two surfers jump onto their boards, on their stomachs, and paddle out to sea, looking forward into the oncoming waves, and back to each other, with euphoric smiles.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Trevor opens his eyes, picks up his phone, and changes the music to fast, heavy-metal. He closes his eyes again.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - DAYDREAM

Trevor and the surfer girl sit upright on their boards, bobbing up and down, facing each other, with loving eyes.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Trevor, with eyes still closed, continues to bob his head, calmly, as he relaxes to the crunching sounds of the distorted guitar and pounding drums.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - BACK TO THE PRESENT

Dave leans over his desk toward Iris, angrily.

DAVE

Knock it off.

IRIS

(innocently)

What?

DAVE

You're romanticizing a psychedelic trip. It's pathetic. It's like when my burned out, moronic professors in college used to pine for the Haight-Ashbury days of the great 'Summer of Love.'

IRIS

We all have different memories that call us back to better times.

DAVE

Except that none of the professors would include their brushes with itchy, crusty STDs, or ever admit to palling around with the Manson 'family.' It's all peace and perfection in their minds, without the chaos and complete lack of personal hygiene.

IRIS

That's quite judgmental.

DAVE

Oh, wake up, Iris. I've read about the giant mud pit that Woodstock was, and how a bunch of socialist flower children spent a weekend they'll never remember, listening to a bunch of filthy rich musicians lie to them about their futures.

Iris looks on with interest, and slowly smiles.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Tell me what really happened, and why everyone came into work today, completely out of their minds.

IRIS

Alright. I won't spare your sensibilities, one bit.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A large well-kept barn sits apart from the retreat's cabin, separated by a small dirt driveway containing a tractor.

IRIS (V.O.)

Selina had wandered off and found the barn. It was mostly full of horses that we use to entertain our guests, but there were a few other useful animals. Some chickens, a donkey, and a goat.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Selina happily brushes a horse's hair, in a trance.

IRIS (V.O.)

I don't think she was ever in any danger.

A goat makes an awful bleating sound, which causes Selina to cringe, and turn away from her horse.

She stares angrily at the goat, as it bleats again. She cringes again, and turns back to her horse. She brushes its hair again, trying to ignore the continued bleating.

Her anger doesn't subside, and after another cringe, she notices a pitchfork leaning against the wall near her.

Selina grabs the pitchfork and charges toward the goat, with a hateful expression.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Dave stares at Iris in shock.

DAVE

I thought she liked goats.

Iris shifts uncomfortably in his chair, and answers with guilt in his voice.

IRIS

We had a long talk about that incident, and her tolerance of...less adorable creatures.

Dave looks away for a moment, thinking, and then looks back at Iris, with realization.

DAVE

I'm not sure your talk had the desired effect. She was irritated with her bird this morning, and it's no longer in its cage.

IRIS

I do not practice mind control. I'm a strong believer in free will, and free choice. In fact, I like to give our premium guests room to...discover themselves. And they are free to make...less-than-desirable choices.

DAVE

Your 'premium guests?' You're sick.

IRIS

I think you need to reserve your judgment until you fully understand.

DAVE

Nona told me she had a pretty rough time with the drugs.

IRIS

Herbs, Dave. Herbs. I don't cook meth or LSD. It's a traditional South American herbal brew, used in spiritual ceremonies.

Dave raises his eyebrows with further skepticism.

IRIS (CONT'D)
But Nona certainly did struggle
more than the others.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Nona is sitting on a log by the fire, bent over, holding her stomach, with a contorted expression on her face. Iris is the only other person still in the circle.

Iris moves to sit next to her. He puts his hand on her back to comfort her.

IRIS (V.O.)
I think she had deeper issues than
the others. I truly hurt for her.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dave leans back in his chair with a sympathetic expression.

IRIS
Her joyful memories were more
intertwined with others than anyone
else. I think she feels a
tremendous amount of empathy for
the pain that everyone is
experiencing here.

Dave leans back toward Iris with concern.

DAVE
She told me about her memories. I
had no idea...

IRIS
Sometimes you work alongside people
for so long, you forget they're
people. And one day you simply
think of them as 'team members,'
because that's what H.R. told you
to call them.

DAVE
I don't think I'm that heartless.

IRIS
No. Just a bit...removed.

Dave nods his head with humble agreement.

IRIS (CONT'D)

She said she wanted to give everyone something special, something they deserved. I thought it was sweet.

DAVE

Did you think it was all going to be sweet? That she meant everyone deserved something good?

IRIS

No. No I did not.

DAVE

Well, it wasn't all sweet. We sent you good employees, and you sent us back a bunch of monsters.

IRIS

Who were you yelling at in the hallway earlier? Was it Hank again?

DAVE

I told you, he's a harmless old man who gets in the way a bit too much.

IRIS

Come with me.

Iris walks out of the office, beckoning Dave to follow.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Iris leads Dave up a dark stairwell, only lit by small emergency lights in the ceiling.

At the top of the stairway is a metal door with a keypad. Iris enters the code, and leads Dave onto the rooftop.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The rooftop is adorned with lounge furniture, and lit with strings of small electric lanterns. In the corner sits a tiki bar, with a grass-hut style roof.

Iris walks straight to the bar, and Dave spins around, taking everything in with awe.

DAVE
How do you have access to this?

IRIS
I founded this firm, alongside your
Chairman.

Iris grabs a few bottles, two glasses, and mixes cocktails.

IRIS (CONT'D)
This place was my idea. It allows
us a place to meet without my being
seen by anyone. As you have likely
guessed, I'm more of a background
partner here, but don't fall under
any delusion that I don't know
what's going on at all times.

Iris carries two cocktails over to where Dave is standing,
still taking in the atmosphere. He offers Dave a drink.

DAVE
Please don't take offense, but I'm
pretty sure I can't trust anything
a hippie ayahuasca drug dealer
offers me.

Iris puts the drink down on a coffee table and chuckles.

IRIS
I have a confession to make, Dave.

DAVE
That cocktail really was drugged?

IRIS
No. But I did lie...slightly, just
a moment ago.

DAVE
(sarcastically)
Now I wish I had taken the drink,
so I could spit it out in surprise.

IRIS
I said that I always know what's
going on at all times, but I
realized today, that's not true.

DAVE
You did miss a few things today.

IRIS
I didn't know about Hank.

DAVE
You didn't know he worked for us?

IRIS
He doesn't work here.

DAVE
He's been my mentor for years.

IRIS
I noticed the coffee spill on your desk.

DAVE
So?

IRIS
And I'm guessing that in all the chaos today that you didn't have a refill.

DAVE
My adrenaline was running pretty high.

IRIS
I think your secretary has been spiking your coffee with ayahuasca for some time.

Dave takes a hostile step toward Iris, who flinches.

DAVE
What are you saying?

IRIS
Dave, Hank was a suggestion, introduced to your subconscious as a way to...influence you.

Dave takes another step. Iris backs away, spilling his drink.

DAVE
I hallucinated him?

IRIS
It will take some effort on your part to make him completely go away, now that he's a regular part of your subconscious mind. But you have already become rather hostile to the idea of him, since stopping your treatments.

Dave grabs Iris by his collar, and shoves him backwards, to the edge of the rooftop, slamming him into the short wall.

Iris bends back, slightly over the edge, glancing behind him, struck with fear as he gazes at the long way down.

DAVE

You drugged me without my consent?!
You have yet to see me hostile.

Dave pushes him harder against the wall, bending him back further. Iris lets out a small yelp of fear.

IRIS

It was the Chairman. I've never
experimented outside the controls
of my retreat.

Dave looks at Iris with pain in his eyes.

IRIS (CONT'D)

You've been betrayed. So have I.
It's gotten out of control. That's
why I did what I did to your team.

DAVE

You were the one who sent them out
of control.

IRIS

The deal with the Chinese cannot
materialize.

Dave lets go of Iris and backs up.

DAVE

It's everything I've been working
toward.

IRIS

No. It's everything they've been
working toward. And the Chinese
don't want your partnership, they
want mine.

DAVE

It's a sizable investment. Why
would they only want you?

IRIS

They've seen what I can do to
manipulate, and I can't let it get
out.

(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)

I've walked a dangerous ethical line for a long time, but they won't walk it. They have no line. The Chinese government is obsessed with manipulation, it-

DAVE

The Chinese government? Huang and Leung is a private firm, with no government contracts.

IRIS

You're like the groom who's still convinced he's only marrying the girl, and not her family, too.

Dave droops his head and lets out a deep, sad breath. Iris watches with sympathy.

IRIS (CONT'D)

No Chinese corporation has complete autonomy, and neither does any citizen. And I don't want to help further their control.

After a moment, Dave seems to rally his emotions, and looks up at Iris with confidence.

DAVE

We're calling this meeting. Gather everyone and meet me in the hallway outside the conference room.

Iris looks at him with surprise.

IRIS

Sure.

Dave walks toward the stairwell door.

DAVE

I'll meet you there with Charlie in ten minutes. I've got to have a brother-to-brother chat.

INT. TREVOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Charlie sits slumped over in his chair, still tied down.

Dave walks in, slides a chair close to Charlie, and sits down. Charlie looks up at him with subdued anger.

DAVE

I've been distracted today. I'm sorry I didn't come to you sooner.

CHARLIE

You've been distracted for years. Why should today have been different?

DAVE

If there's one truth I can bank on for sure, it's that today has been different.

CHARLIE

I've been tied up here for hours.

DAVE

You ran off into the woods, then turned your office into a jungle and attacked your co-workers.

Charlie lowers his eyes.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You've always hated the woods since we were kids. I know all those camping trips that Dad dragged us on ruined it for you. So, what made you run there today?

Charlie stays still and doesn't answer for a moment. When he does, he continues to stare at the floor.

CHARLIE

Dad wouldn't be proud of the work we do, or what we've become.

Dave reacts with concern, but remains calm and empathetic.

DAVE

What makes you think that?

CHARLIE

I always thought those camping trips were meant to build character by making us suffer, but...I think Dad was trying to make us use our hands to...

Charlie looks Dave in the eye.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

To create. Not just to build character, but to build things. Tents, fires, rafts, traps...all the things we hated doing, and resisted all those years. We were always just counting down the minutes until we could get home to the great indoors.

DAVE

We were kids. We wanted to do anything but hard work. But that changed as we got older.

CHARLIE

We joined the corporate rat race to guarantee a good paycheck that would never cause a callous. We never had to create, or be our own men. Dad would be disappointed.

DAVE

But now you're covered in mud, half naked, and tied to a chair because you're a threat to the safety of the office. Is that a step in the right direction?

Charlie hangs his head in shame.

CHARLIE

When Iris asked us to think of the last time we were truly happy, those camping trips invaded my mind. Even though it wasn't my favorite thing, we were with family...with Dad.

DAVE

I miss Dad, too, but if you were so unhappy here, you could have walked away at any time.

Charlie quickly sits up straight, with conviction.

CHARLIE

We were fitted with golden handcuffs a long time ago. We can't leave. We have too much to lose.

Dave stands up and looks Charlie in the eye.

DAVE

There's always a way out, and what you have to lose may be worth losing.

Dave walks behind Charlie and unties him.

DAVE (CONT'D)

We'll never know for sure what Dad would think of us right now if he could see us, but you'll never be happy trying to become what you think he would respect.

Charlie stays seated, and rubs his sore wrists.

DAVE (CONT'D)

If working here doesn't make you a better man, then I'll do everything I can to help you find what does.

Dave holds out his hand to help him up.

DAVE (CONT'D)

We have an important conference call to attend.

CHARLIE

Can I change clothes, first?

DAVE

No. Come as you are.

Charlie accepts Dave's hand, with a smile.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Dave's Boss and the Chairman are sitting at the conference table, and both shoot Dave an impatient glare as he walks in.

Charlie follows close behind, and the two bosses erupt with anger as they watch him casually enter, still wearing his collared shirt, fashioned into a loin cloth.

DAVE'S BOSS

This is outrageous, Dave! How dare you bring this half-naked psychopath into this conference room! Get him out of here at once!

Dave ignores the order, and gestures to Charlie to stand near his boss and the Chairman.

Iris enters with Nona, Selina, and Trevor in tow. Nona is holding a gift box, and Selina's arm, guiding her in. Selina is in a daze, with her hair and clothes disheveled.

Trevor is in his Hawaiian shirt, straw hat, and sunglasses.

DAVE

Excellent. We're all here. Trevor, please get Huang and Leung on video, and let them know we're ready to start the meeting.

Trevor dials on his cellphone and turns away to speak privately.

DAVE'S BOSS

We can't conduct the meeting with these people here.

Dave responds with authority in his voice.

DAVE

The only way we conduct this meeting, is with my team.

Eddie, the team's 24/7, greets everyone on video conference.

EDDIE

Good evening to you, Trevor. We are pleased to gather with you.

TREVOR

Good morning to you, Eddie. We're stoked to meet with your bros.

EDDIE

Indeed. Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to turn the floor over to our team leader, Yao.

YAO, a middle-aged Chinese business man in a suit pops onto the large TV on the wall. He is standing at the end of a long conference table, surrounded by men in suits.

Yao is graying, with more wrinkles on his face than a man his age should have, but he greets the team with youthful vigor.

YAO

Trevor! I'm looking forward to that beach trip after we seal this deal.

(laughs)

And it looks like you are already ready. Outstanding. A kind gesture, which is much appreciated.

INT. ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

The accountant sits in his desk, depressed, with more papers stacked up around him.

He looks over at the wall, longingly, as he hears Trevor's excited voice on the other side.

TREVOR (V.O.)

Yao! I'm stoked, too. Sand, surf,
and sun are in our future.

The accountant hangs his head in sadness.

NERDY ACCOUNTANT

Of course I wouldn't be invited to
the big meeting, either. I only
handle the money. It's no big deal.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trevor directs Yao's attention to Dave, who is now standing in the center of the room.

TREVOR

This is our team leader, Dave. I
know you've spoken over the phone
several times, but haven't met face
to face, yet.

DAVE

Hello, Yao. It's been a pleasure
working with you, and I'm glad to
have made it to this point. All of
our hard work is certainly about to
come to...an exciting conclusion.

YAO

Dave! It has been a great pleasure
for us, as well.
(displays a beaming smile)
And you are Chinese? That's
wonderful.

DAVE

Well...my ancestors were Chinese,
but I'm six generations American.

Yao reacts with disappointment.

Dave's Boss stands up and steps in front of Charlie, doing his best to shield him from Yao's view.

DAVE'S BOSS

Yao, it's nice to finally speak with you. All that is left to complete this deal are formalities. We are fully and completely dedicated to this partnership.

YAO

That's fantastic news. I assume the weekend was a success, and Iris is there with you as well?

DAVE'S BOSS

Iris is here, yes.

Dave's Boss beckons Iris to come closer.

DAVE'S BOSS (CONT'D)

And he's delighted to be a part of the team.

YAO

Iris, tell me about the retreat this past weekend. I'm eager to hear of your success, and meet the rest of the new and improved team.

IRIS

The retreat was everything I hoped it would be, and more.

YAO

Ah, my bosses will be as relieved as I am to hear-

Charlie peaks around Dave's Boss, and Yao notices.

YAO (CONT'D)

Why is that man not wearing proper clothing?

Charlie makes eye contact with Dave, and Dave nods his head. Charlie grins, and then leaps onto the table, crouching in a savage, Tarzan-like attack pose.

YAO (CONT'D)

(disgusted)

Who is that?

Dave makes eye contact with Nona, and nods his head. Nona whispers something into Selina's ear, causing her to burst out into hysterical tears.

SELINA
My puppy! Oh, what did I do?!

Yao grows increasingly concerned.

YAO
What is going on there?!

IRIS
Yao, I am pleased to introduce you
to our team.

YAO
(astounded)
We were told you produced ideal
employees, guaranteed. Your team is
clearly out of control.

IRIS
I guess I've lost my magic.

NONA
And I have a special gift for you.

Nona sets her box on the table, and removes a wooden clock.

YAO
(offended)
A clock?! Perhaps you are correct.
Our time is running out.

There is a loud commotion in Chinese amongst Yao's team. Some
of them point at Dave's team, and yell.

DAVE
Ouch, Yao. I may not be straight
from the homeland, but I've studied
enough Chinese to know that those
are quite offensive words.

Yao shakes his head in disgust, picks up a remote control,
aims it at the screen, and the TV goes black.

Dave and Iris exchange satisfied smiles, as Dave's Boss and
the Chairman watch them with horror.

The Chairman leaps out of his seat and pulls a .38 snub-nose
revolver from his jacket, and aims it at Iris.

CHAIRMAN
We've laid our legacy and fortune
on the line for this deal, and I
cannot let you get away with
sabotaging everything!
(MORE)

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)

Do you realize how many Chinese officials we had to bribe to get approval for this merger?! And United States Congressmen we had to buy?

Everyone takes a step back, and puts their hands up.

INT. ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

The accountant stares at the wall, stunned with fear.

DAVE'S BOSS (V.O.)

Are you insane?! Why do you have a gun?

The accountant grabs his phone and fumbles with the receiver.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CHAIRMAN

I'm old-school. You never used to come to an important business meeting without one.

DAVE'S BOSS

(stupefied)

No! That's not a thing! That's never been a thing!

The Chairman waves his gun around the room. Everyone takes another step back. The Chairman returns his aim back to Iris.

CHAIRMAN

Well, it's a thing today. You ruined everything, Iris, you dirty hippie scum.

The Chairman fires a shot at Iris, hitting him in the chest, and knocking him backward to the floor.

Dave grabs the Chairman's arm with both hands, struggling to gain control of the gun. The Chairman fires three more shots into the wall.

INT. ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

NERDY ACCOUNTANT

(on the phone)

Yes! There's a man with a gun, and-

The three bullets rip through the wall and sail over the accountant's head. He drops the phone and runs out the door.

NERDY ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
I take it all back! I don't want to
be invited to anything anymore!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Chairman is laying on the floor, on his stomach, with Dave kneeling on top of him, and Nona and Trevor helping to hold him down. The revolver is on the floor a few feet away.

DAVE
(to Nona and Trevor)
Hold him tight.

Dave climbs off the Chairman, picks up the gun, puts it in his jacket pocket, and attends to Iris, who is moaning on the floor, holding his chest-wound.

Dave moves Iris' hand off his chest, and inspects the wound. Iris is in shock, and his eyes start to roll back.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Iris, can you hear me?

Dave looks to Trevor.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Hand me your shirt.

Trevor quickly removes his Hawaiian shirt from over his collared shirt, and tosses it to Dave.

Dave applies pressure to Iris' wound with the shirt.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Iris?

Iris answers in a weak voice.

IRIS
I'm glad my final act was this.

DAVE
Iris, it's-

IRIS
Listen. Don't let them salvage this
deal.

DAVE
You're going to be-

IRIS
There's no time. Severance, Dave.
Negotiate severance.

DAVE
Iris, the bullet hit you just below
your collar bone. You're going to
be fine.

Dave looks up at his team.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Did anyone call nine-one-one, yet?

The accountant runs past the door, yelling.

NERDY ACCOUNTANT
I did! They're on their way!

Sirens scream outside, as the accountant disappears.

CHARLIE
Who was that?

Dave looks at Charlie, incredulously.

Iris is relieved, and he quickly recovers his demeanor.

IRIS
Good, good. That's a relief.

DAVE
(laughs)
Yeah. I can hear the ambulance now.

IRIS
Great. As I was saying.
(points to Dave's boss)
Negotiate strong severance packages
for your team with this sad excuse
for a man, so your people can get a
fresh start on life. They deserve
it after all we put them through.

DAVE
Absolutely.
(pats his jacket pocket)
I'll negotiate at gun-point if I
have to.

DAVE'S BOSS
 (with fear)
 That won't be necessary, Dave.

DAVE
 I'm kidding. But you will pay
 through the nose, and never work in
 this business again.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dave sits at his desk, leaning back, exhausted. He watches as the last two POLICE OFFICERS head toward the lobby. They wave goodbye to Dave, and he waves back.

Dave leans forward over his desk and picks up the coffee-stained picture of Lydia, which sits next to Nona's gift.

He stares at the picture for a moment, then sets it back down, and removes the lid from the gift box.

He reaches inside the box, and takes out a metal sign with cursive lettering on it, about three by twelve inches. The sign reads 'L'Italia Restaurante.'

Dave looks longingly at the sign, and dials his desk phone.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

Lydia, still dressed in her work clothes, sits at a small round table in her kitchen, eating Chinese food out of a styrofoam container.

Her cell phone buzzes on the table. She picks it up, and reacts with concerned excitement.

LYDIA
 Dave! I heard there was some sort
 of incident in your office, and the
 police and paramedics were there.
 Are you alright?

DAVE
 Everyone's going to be ok. The last
 cop just left.

LYDIA
 You have to tell me everything.

DAVE
 I don't know if I'm legally
 supposed to-

LYDIA

I disposed of a dead goat for you today.

Dave laughs, holds the restaurant sign up, rubbing some dirt off with his thumb.

DAVE

Ok. Meet me at L'Italia and I'll tell you everything.

Lydia scoffs.

LYDIA

That place was torn down last year.

DAVE

I know, but I never paid my respects.

LYDIA

(sarcastically)

You want me to bring some lilies?

DAVE

(laughs)

Just bring that sense of humor. I need it after my day.

Lydia twirls her fork in her noodles, and makes Dave wait for her answer.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You still there?

LYDIA

I can be there in twenty.

DAVE

Perfect.

Lydia hangs up and takes another bite, smiling.

EXT. STOREFRONT - NIGHT

Dave stands outside a retail storefront that appears to be in the latter stages of construction, at the end of an old-fashioned main street, filled with shops.

Dave paces, nervously, with his hands in his pockets.

Lydia approaches, stops a few feet away from him, and looks up at the building next to them.

Dave looks up as well, and they both laugh at the sign on the door that reads: 'Coming Soon! "Everything Hemp!"'

DAVE

I'm going to miss getting my usual chicken parmesan, but at least I'll be able to buy some solid rope, or a really cool belt.

LYDIA

Oh, the food here was never very good, and I'm sure the world is in more need of some high quality hemp-fabric sandals than generic pasta.

DAVE

You didn't like the food?

LYDIA

I always packed more to go than I ever ate at our table.

DAVE

I just thought you filled up fast.

LYDIA

I usually made myself a sandwich when I got home.

DAVE

Wow. My reality is crashing down on me as we speak. I thought we both loved that place.

LYDIA

I didn't have to love the food to love the place.

Dave and Lydia exchange affectionate smiles for a moment, then Lydia's smile fades as she looks down at the sidewalk.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

This place was torn down for three months while we were still together, before you noticed.

Dave's face saddens.

DAVE

My nights at the office just kept getting later and later. And in the back of my mind I knew I was losing you, but for some reason, I couldn't...

LYDIA

That's how addictions work, Dave.

Dave pulls the 'L'Italia' sign from his pocket and holds it out to Lydia. She comes closer, and takes it from him.

DAVE

A friend gave this to me today.

LYDIA

This was above the door, with the street number.

DAVE

The first time I met you here, you were standing underneath it. I can always recall that moment, and this sign is always there.

Lydia's eyes well up, and she wipes a tear.

LYDIA

You were late.

DAVE

My priorities were way off, and I have nothing to show for it. I lost you, and probably the job I lost you for.

Dave moves in closer to Lydia, and takes her hands in his.

DAVE (CONT'D)

You were always there for me, even when I didn't deserve it. Even today, you didn't hesitate.

Lydia looks up at him, through loving eyes, and lets out a short laugh.

LYDIA

It's because you're so helpless.

DAVE

And I need your help. I shouldn't be addicted to my ridiculous job. I should be addicted to you.

Lydia rolls her eyes, but can't control her smile.

LYDIA

That was really cheesy.

DAVE
But you loved it.

Lydia throws her arms around Dave's neck, and kisses him.

After a moment, Dave opens one of his eyes to see Hank watching, with his hands on his hips and an approving smile.

Dave ends the kiss with a jolt.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Oh, no. He's still...

LYDIA
What is it?

Lydia turns her head to see what startled him, but sees nothing.

Hank gives Dave a quick salute and slowly walks away.

Dave turns back to Lydia with concern.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Today really messed with your head.
Are you going to be alright?

DAVE
It wasn't just today, but...

Dave looks back up to see that Hank has disappeared, and is visibly relieved.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Yes, I'm going to be alright.

Dave puts an arm around Lydia, pulls her close, and they both turn to look up at the hemp store and smile.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Hemp, huh? I bet they're into ayahuasca.

Lydia looks up at him.

LYDIA
Aya-what?

FADE OUT.