

UP IN THE AIR

screenplay by

Jason Reitman

from the novel by

Walter Kirn

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There is no "I" in team.

- Common Business Axiom

Secure your own mask before assisting others.

- Common Pre-Flight Instruction

A SPOTLIGHT reveals RYAN BINGHAM standing at a PODIUM.

RYAN

How much does your life weigh?

Ryan pauses to let us consider this.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Imagine for a second that you're carrying a backpack... I want you to feel the straps on your shoulders... You feel them?

(gives us a beat)

Now, I want you to pack it with all the stuff you have in your life. Start with the little things. The stuff in drawers and on shelves. The collectables and knick-knacks. Feel the weight as it adds up. Now, start adding the larger stuff. Your clothes, table top appliances, lamps, linens, your TV. That backpack should be getting pretty heavy at this point - Go Bigger. Your couch, your bed, your kitchen table. Stuff it all in... Your car, get it in there... Your home, whether you have a studio apartment or a two story house, I want you to stuff it into that backpack.

Ryan takes a beat to let the weight sink in.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Now try to walk.

We hear people around us chuckling. Ryan smiles. Reveal:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The kind that shifts between lower income corporate retreats and lower income weddings.

We look around the room. The few dozen people seem to be visualizing as told. Some are taking notes.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Kinda hard, isn't it? This is what we do to ourselves on a daily basis. We weigh ourselves down until we can't even move. And make no mistake - *Moving is living.*

We see nodding. People's gears turning.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Now, I'm going to set your backpack on fire. What do you want to take out of it? Photos? Photos are for people who can't remember. Drink some gingko and let the photos burn. In fact let everything burn and imagine waking up tomorrow with nothing.

(a beat of emphasis)
It's kind of exhilarating isn't it?
That is how I approach every day.

A titter through the crowd.

INT. BOEING 757 - DAY

A FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT is looking directly at us.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Do you want the cancer?

Turn to see RYAN looking back.

Handsome. Anonymous. Right now - Confused.

RYAN
Excuse me?

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(same delivery)
Do you want the cancer?

Ryan furrows - What the hell is going on here?

The flight attendant raises her hand to reveal a CAN OF SODA.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT
The can, sir?

RYAN
Oh... No. Um, no thank you.

The flight attendant moves to the next aisle. Ryan takes a beat, then returns to his work.

MOVE OUT THE WINDOW INTO AN:

ANIMATED TITLE SEQUENCE OVER CLOUDS - "UP IN THE AIR"

TRANSITION TO:

INT. REALLY SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Two words - Subordinate chic.

Seated at a tiny table is RYAN. The Grim Reaper in a suit.

Across from him sits STEVE, who has just received bad news.

STEVE
(clarifying)
I'm fired?

RYAN
No. That would imply that you had broken company policy and that of course is not the case. The position itself simply no longer exists.

STEVE
You're just *taking* my job away?

RYAN
No one's *taking* anything, Steve. There's nobody to blame. The position has just gone away. It is in the past. However, more importantly, you are still here. You are the future. And that is what you must begin to focus on, because if you cannot find fulfillment from within, there is no future.

STEVE
Who the fuck are you?

FREEZE.

RYAN (V.O.)
Excellent question. Who the fuck am I? Poor Steve has worked here for seven years.

FLASH IMAGES:

Steve at his cubicle.

RYAN (V.O.)

He's never had a meeting with me
before...

Steve in a meeting.

RYAN (V.O.)

...or passed me in the hall...

Steve passes a female coworker in the hall.

RYAN (V.O.)

... or told me a story in the break
room....

Steve laughing at a coworker's story

RYAN (V.O.)

And that's because I don't work
here. I work for another company
that lends me out to pussies like
Steve's boss...

STEVE'S BOSS - "A Big Pussy".

RYAN (V.O.)

... who don't have the balls to
sack their own employees. And in
some cases, for good reason.
Because, people do crazy shit when
they get fired.

STEVE WIPING OFF HIS BOSS'S DESK.

STEVE SHREDDING CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS.

STEVE POURING BLEACH INTO THE COMMUNAL COFFEE POT.

STEVE, UP ON THE ROOF, LOADING AN ASSAULT RIFLE.

BACK TO:

INT. SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Steve is trying to hold it together.

STEVE

So, what happens now?

RYAN

We begin a process that may take months, but by the end, will see you in a job that fulfills you.

Ryan slides Steve a PACKET.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I want you to review this packet. Take it seriously. The answers are all inside.

Steve thumbs through it with skepticism.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Anybody who ever built an empire, or changed the world, sat where you are now. And it's because they sat there that they were able to do it.

This has a profound effect on Steve.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I'm going to need your key card.

STEVE

Right...

Steve begins removing it from his wallet.

RYAN

Take the day. Put together your personal things. Talk to your co-workers. Tomorrow, go out and get some exercise. Go for a jog. Give yourself routines and pretty soon you'll find your legs.

Steve nods and gets up to leave. Just as he's about to walk out, he stops and turns back.

STEVE

Wait, how do I get in touch with you?

RYAN

Don't worry. We'll be in touch soon. This is just the beginning.

Steve nods and exits the room.

RYAN (V.O.)

I'll never see Steve again.

INT. RYAN'S ROOM - HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

The choreography of Ryan's packing is worthy of Tchaikovsky.

A coat slides off a hanger... A travel toothbrush folds closed like a switchblade... A briefcase clicks onto a roll-away bag... A hand flips a light switch without looking.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

Ryan is at the check out desk.

CHECKOUT GIRL

Do you have your Prospector's Gold Card with you?

Ryan smiles... "Do I?"

He hands it to her, close enough to camera, that we get a nice big close up of it. She runs the card and the screen pops up with information that makes her blush.

We see a DIGITAL NUMBER in the four millions that we will come to recognise. It increases by a few thousand points.

CHECKOUT GIRL

Oh my God... Do you like, live, at Homestead Suites?

Ryan nods in faux modesty.

INT. CAR RETURN, MAESTRO RENT-A-CAR - DAY

Ryan pulls up to one of the spaces marked with the DEVOTION CLUB emblem. He hops out and a uniformed man with a handheld device begins to punch in the license plate number.

Ryan pulls out his MAESTRO DEVOTION CLUB CARD and places it nice and close to lens so we can see it.

The card slides through the handheld device and we see the DIGITAL NUMBER increase by a few thousand points.

INT. MAIN CONCOURSE, ALBUQUERQUE INTL. AIRPORT - DAY

The automated GLASS DOORS slide open. Ryan enters the concourse and takes a deep breath of the temperately controlled air. He has arrived.

RYAN (V.O.)

This is where I live.

Subtitles - "Airworld"

Ryan skips the long lines and steps directly into the GREAT WEST FRONTIERSMAN PLATINUM LINE.

Glorious close-up of Ryan's PLATINUM CARD sliding through the AUTOMATED MACHINE. Were it any sexier, we'd hear a moan. Maybe we even do.

The DIGITAL NUMBER jumps again. Immediately, the AIRPORT CLERK registers and perks up.

AIRPORT CLERK

Pleasure to see you again, Mr. Bingham.

RYAN (V.O.)

When I run my card, the system automatically prompts the desk clerk to greet me with this exact statement.

We see it again...

AIRPORT CLERK

Pleasure to see you again, Mr. Bingham.

Ryan nods back to the clerk.

RYAN (V.O.)

Had my status simply been gold or God-forbid, bronze. I might have gotten a hello or a smile... Maybe.

Ryan continues to hit buttons, swiftly checking in.

RYAN (V.O.)

Loyalty is earned and rewarded with these small touches. It's these kinds of systemized friendly touches that keep my world in orbit.

A ticket begins printing. Ryan snaps it up.

INT. SECURITY - ALBUQUERQUE INTL. AIRPORT - SAME

Ryan steps up and observes his line choices. He finds a few Asian businessmen and hops in behind them.

JUMP CUT TO:

RYAN MOVING THROUGH THE SECURITY SCREENING

It's a beautiful choreographed ballet of a bag handle collapsing, shoes coming off, a laptop going in a separate tray, wallet and watch sliding into a shoe, a boarding card sliding into a back pocket... both hands always moving, performing separate actions... It really is gorgeous.

INT. COMPASS CLUB - SAME

Ryan enters and presents his COMPASS CARD CLUB. It has a hologram. The COMPASS CLUB HOSTESS immediately smiles.

COMPASS CLUB HOSTESS

Welcome back, Mr. Bingham.

Ryan walks past a stack of newspapers on the way to the buffet, the whole time framed by an enormous window overlooking the tarmac.

RYAN (V.O.)

All the things you probably hate about travelling - The recycled air. The artificial lighting. The digital juice dispensers and mini pizzas stacked to their heat lamps are the warm reminders that I am home.

With that comment, Ryan slides into a leather club seat.

He opens his briefcase and pulls out his ITINERARY. He scans it. We see a string of flights, car rentals, and stays at Homestead Suites. Then, something makes him frown. He pulls out his cell phone and dials...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ASSISTANT'S DESK, ISM - DAY

Ryan's assistant, Kevin, is not happy to be there.

KEVIN

Ryan Bingham's office.

RYAN

You have me in a Dodge Stratus in Kansas City.

KEVIN

They are completely out of all full sized sedans...

RYAN
(interrupts)
Did you?...

KEVIN
(not the first time)
Yes, I informed them of your Devotion
Club status and years in the program.
They are moving mountains to see you
in an Intrepid.

RYAN
Fair enough. Any other messages?

KEVIN
Your sister Kara called. Needs to
speak urgently about your sister's
wedding. I told her you were midair
and not even I knew your final
destination.

RYAN
Well done.

KEVIN
And you got an invitation to speak
at GoalQuest in Vegas.

Ryan pauses.

RYAN
GoalQuest twenty?

FLASH IMAGE:

RYAN SPEAKING AT A CONFERENCE

He has a POWER POINT PRESENTATION and a POWER SMILE.

RYAN (V.O.)
Every once in a while I do speaking
engagements. Motivational kind of
stuff. But GoalQuest... We're
talking major Tony Robbins shit.

INT. COMPASS CLUB - SAME

Kevin examines the invitation emblazoned with a big "XX".

KEVIN

It's got a hologram. They're calling it Dos Equis. That's some pretty major Tony Robbins shit there.

RYAN

Talk about burying the lead.
(exhales)
I'll check in when...

KEVIN

Hold on, I have Craig Gregory for you...

RYAN

I... ah, fuck...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CRAIG GREGORY'S OFFICE, CTC - DAY

Four words - Store-bought sports memorabilia.

CRAIG GREGORY

How's the road warrior?

RYAN

Twenty minutes from boarding into a world of bliss.

CRAIG GREGORY

Great numbers out of Albuquerque.

RYAN

Wait 'til the suicide report comes in over the weekend.

CRAIG GREGORY

They should be so lucky.

.....
Ryan gives a look - *What a prick.*

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

I need you back in Omaha by the end of the week. We got something big. A game changer. Hope you can handle being on home soil.

RYAN

I don't know why you ever bring me in. Wherever I go, the money follows. Let me plant seeds, they'll grow to Oaks.

Craig checks out a cute intern.

CRAIG GREGORY
I'm thinking of planting seeds
right now.

RYAN
What are we talking about here?

CRAIG GREGORY
You'll see.
(changes directions)
Today, I took my first crap in two
weeks. Hallelujah.

RYAN
That's me, applauding.

CRAIG GREGORY
That's me, passing blood.

RYAN
That's me, hanging up on you.

CRAIG GREGORY
Good. I love that sound.

INT. BOEING 767 - DAY

Ryan sits one row behind the bulkhead. Left side. Aisle.

RYAN (V.O.)
To know me is to fly with me. I'm the
aisle, you're the window - trapped.

Reveal - A man next to Ryan. Some BUSINESSMAN between cities.
He talks, drink in hand, but we don't hear him.

RYAN (V.O.)
We start chatting, impersonally at
first. Our moderate politics, our
sinking opinions on the American
service industry.

BUSINESSMAN AND RYAN MAKING SUGGESTIONS

RYAN (V.O.)
You recommend a hotel in Tulsa. I
tip you off to a rib joint in Fort
Worth.

BUSINESSMAN TELLS A JOKE. HIS HANDS GESTURE.

RYAN (V.O.)
 You tell me your best joke. I've
 heard it before, but listen anyway.

Ryan laughs out loud.

TURBULENCE. THE BUSINESSMAN TIGHTENS HIS SEAT BELT.

RYAN (V.O.)
 Nothing like turbulence to cement a
 bond. Soon you're telling me about
 family.

THE MAN SPEAKS ABOUT SOMETHING THAT OBVIOUSLY DISTURBS HIM.

RYAN (V.O.)
 Your wife just went back to work
 but you can't intervene because
 last June she read some book and
 woke up one morning a feminist.

THE MAN LEANS BACK, ARMS CROSSED, WITH A FAR OFF LOOK.

RYAN (V.O.)
 And that if your windfall ever came
 through, you'd quit and spend the
 rest of your days restoring vintage
 speedboats.
 (saying it with him)
 The water. That's where you belong.

THE PLANE LANDS

As it begins to taxi to the gate, both Ryan and the
 Businessman pull out their cards.

RYAN (V.O.)
 We exchange cards and slot them next
 to countless others.

The dull bell "dings" to let us know it's safe to stand. Ryan
 and the Businessman get up and open the overheads.

RYAN (V.O.)
 Fast friends aren't my only
 friends, but my best friends.

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Ryan and the Businessman walk next to each, now completely
 ignoring each other as if they never shared a word.

RYAN (V.O.)
 Sad? Not really. We're a busy bunch.
 I'm peaceful. I'm in my element here.
 I suppose I'm a sort of mutation, a
 new species. I live between the
 margins of my itineraries.

Ryan and the Businessman reach a point that separates -
 Rental Cars go left / Long term parking goes right.

They share an awkward smile with a nod, then head in their
 separate directions.

INT. SKYBRIDGE, AIRPORT - DAY

Ryan is riding a PEOPLE MOVER when his cell phone rings. He
 checks the I.D.- UNAVAILABLE. He weighs it for a second.

RYAN
 (picks up)
 Hello?

KARA (O.C.)
 Hi Ryan.

Ryan mouths a silent "fuck".

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KARA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kara is Ryan's sister. Her home is one of two hundred in her
 upper middle class Mid-Western gated community.

RYAN (V.O.)
 Every family has one person who is
 the glue. The one who keeps the
 genealogy in check. That's my
 sister Kara - The glue.

It just so happens that Kara is GLUING her daughter's school
 project mobile together.

RYAN
 Hey Kara.

KARA
 How are you holding up?

RYAN
 Just fine. You? The kids?

KARA
Missy's outstanding. Matthew made
varsity. How's Dallas?

RYAN
Same as every place else.

KARA
That's good. So, Ryan?

RYAN
(cautious)
Yeah?

KARA
I didn't even want to have to ask you
for this, because I know how you are
about... doing things for others...

Ryan rolls his eyes.

KARA (CONT'D)
But we're coming in on three weeks
to go for Julie's wedding and
there's something we could really
use your help on.

RYAN
Yeah.

KARA
We've been sending people these kits
so they can print out photos of Julie
and Jim on cardboard, and take photos
of them in interesting places kind of
like that gnome in the French movie.

RYAN
Why?

KARA
(sighs)
Because it's Julie's wedding... and she
thinks it's fun. Does it matter why?

RYAN
How is Julie?

KARA
Would you call her? She thinks
you've turned to butter -
Disappeared. You're awfully
isolated, the way you live.

RYAN
Isolated? I'm surrounded.

KARA
Your assistant told me you're going
to be in Vegas.

RYAN
Did he?

KARA
Can you get a photo of the cut-out
in front of the Luxor Pyramid?

RYAN
That place is a shit hole. No one
stays there.

KARA
Jesus, Ryan, I'm not asking you to check
in. Can you just take a stupid photo?

RYAN
I'm going to try my best.

KARA
Thank you for trying your best.

Ryan frowns. So does Kara.

INT. BAR LOUNGE - HOMESTEAD SUITES - EVENING

Ryan sits at one of the couch & table set-ups. He's going
over some paperwork.

Ryan notices an attractive professionally dressed woman,
ALEX, sifting through her purse. She sets a pair of car keys
with an AVIS TAG on the table.

RYAN
You're satisfied with Avis?

ALEX
I am.

RYAN
They're stingy with their miles. I
like Maestro.

ALEX
Maestro keeps its vehicles too
long. If a car's over twenty-
thousand miles, I get nervous.

RYAN
The new outfit, Colonial, isn't bad.

ALEX
No instant checkout. I like to park
and go.

RYAN
(I love you)
I'm Ryan.

ALEX
Alex.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BAR LOUNGE - HOMESTEAD SUITES - LATER THAT EVENING

Empty glasses litter the table. Ryan and Alex have taken over
a couch and have the contents of their wallets spread out -
ALL MEMBERSHIP CARDS.

RYAN
Courtyard Marriott Card? How dare
you bring that into this palace.

ALEX
Homestead Suites offers equal value
and better food - But the Marriott
gives out warm cookies at check in.

RYAN
They got you with the cookies?

ALEX
I'm a sucker for simulated
hospitality.

RYAN
There's actually an industry term
for that. It's a mixture of faux
and homey. It's faumey.

Alex grabs Ryan's MILEAGE BLACK CARD.

ALEX
Oh my God. I've heard about these,
but never seen one in person. Is
this an...?

RYAN
Onyx card. Yeah. I was pretty
excited the day that puppy came in.

ALEX
I'll say. I put up pretty
pedestrian numbers. Sixty thou a
year, domestic.

RYAN
(trying)
That's not bad.

ALEX
Don't patronize me. What's your total?

RYAN
(playful)
I hardly know you.

ALEX
Show some hubris. Impress me.
(suggestive)
I bet it's huge.

RYAN
You have no idea.

ALEX
Come on...

RYAN
Let's just say I've got a number in
mind and I haven't hit it yet.

Alex smiles - fair enough. She admires his ONYX CARD.

ALEX
This is pretty fucking sexy.

RYAN
I hope it doesn't cheapen our
relationship.

ALEX
We're two people who get turned on
by elite status. I think cheap is
our starting ground.

RYAN
There's nothing cheap about
loyalty.

Alex looks into Ryan's eyes and gives him unspoken permission
to fuck her right there and then.

INT. RYAN'S SUITE, HOMESTEAD SUITES - LATER THAT NIGHT

Everything is scattered from a marathon Fuck. Ryan and Alex are laying on the bed, sprawled out on their backs like murder victims.

RYAN

Good call on the towel rack.

ALEX

Thanks. I liked how you burritoed me in the sofa cushions.

RYAN

I was improvising.

ALEX

Too bad we didn't make it to the closet.

RYAN

We got to do this again.

JUMP CUT TO:

TWO LAPTOPS SIDE BY SIDE

RYAN

I'm in Newark on the 12th, Madesto on the 13th, Oklahoma City on the 15th.

ALEX

Any Southwest? I'm swinging through Arizona and New Mexico the week of the 16th?

RYAN

No, but I'll be in Florida by the 20th.

ALEX

Miami?

RYAN

Ft. Lauderdale.

ALEX

That's nothing.

RYAN

Forty minutes.

They simultaneously type each other into their calendars.

ALEX

I should probably go back to my room so I can wake up in my bed.

RYAN

I think that's the lady like thing to do.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ryan drops Alex off at her door. She flips the "do not disturb" on her door handle and kisses Ryan good night.

The door closes. Ryan smiles to himself.

EXT. HOMESTEAD SUITES - NEXT MORNING

Sprinklers doing their job. One's broken.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

The CLERK swipes Ryan card. We see his COMPUTER SCREEN:

The long DIGITAL NUMBER JUMPS to: 4,968,325

EXT. CAR DROP OFF - MAESTRO RENT-A-CAR - DAY

A CAR RETURN CLERK slides Ryan's card through a handheld device. The DIGITAL NUMBER JUMP to: 4,968,840

INT. CHECK IN DESK, AIRPORT - DAY

Ryan SWIPES his FREQUENT FLIER CARD through the automated machine: 4,971,230

A FEMALE DESK ASSISTANT notices the number, looks up at Ryan, and has a tiny orgasm right there.

INT. BUSINESS CLASS - DAY

Ryan looks out the first class OVAL WINDOW at the landscape of Omaha, Nebraska.

RYAN (V.O.)

Last year, I spent three hundred twenty two days on the road.

INT. KISS-N-FLY, EPPLEY AIRFIELD - DAY

Ryan wheels passed a couple that leaps into each other's arms.

RYAN (V.O.)

Which means that I had to spend
forty three miserable days at home.

EXT. RYAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, OMAHA - DAY

Ryan steps up to a converted brick building, searching for his keys at the bottom of his bag. Finally finds them and opens the front door.

INT. ELEVATOR, RYAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ryan presses his floor, when a NOSEY NEIGHBOR slides in.

NOSEY NEIGHBOR

Ryan?

RYAN

(doesn't know his name)
Hi...

NOSEY NEIGHBOR

Feels like it's been months, busy man.
We missed you at our Summer party.

RYAN

Yeah, sorry I couldn't be there.

NOSEY NEIGHBOR

We've been trying to get a vote on
the new landscaping. Can I e-mail you
the plans...? We'd love to get a
final tally.

RYAN

It's fine. Really. I'll go with the
majority.

NOSEY NEIGHBOR

Sometimes I forget that you even
live here. You could probably save
money and move into a hotel.

RYAN
(dead serious)
I looked into it, but the IRS
requires a permanent address for
employment. Otherwise, they
classify you as a vagrant.

Ding! - Ryan gets off at his floor.

NOSEY NEIGHBOR
Oh.

INT. RYAN'S LOFT, OMAHA - DAY

Ryan walks in and sets his bag down. Reveal - the place is
empty... Like *empty*, empty.

Ryan opens the fridge - Chinese take out. Pizza box. Bottle
of Vodka. Takes a whiff of something - not good.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Hey neighbor.

Ryan turns to find Dianne, a pretty woman just shy of forty.

RYAN
Hey yourself.

They hug - It's just intimate enough to know they've violated
the rules of sleeping with your neighbors.

DIANNE
(hands over a package)
I signed for this while you were gone.

RYAN
Thanks. Hope it wasn't a bother.

Ryan opens it and finds the CUT-OUT of his sister Julie and
her fiance Jim. It's an eighteen inch card stock photo of Jim
hugging Julie from behind.

DIANNE
(re: photo)
They seem happy.

RYAN
It's my sister. She's getting
married. Haven't met the guy yet.

DIANNE
Lots of luck.

RYAN
I know, right?

They share a smile. Then, Dianne goes to leave.

DIANNE
It's good to see you. Feels like a
while this time.

RYAN
Hey, you want to come over tonight.

Dianne gets a little uncomfortable.

DIANNE
Actually, I kind of started seeing
somebody.

RYAN
Oh, that's... that's great.

DIANNE
Yeah, we're having drinks tonight
if you want to come over.

RYAN
That's okay... I' think I'll settle in.

Dianne gives a smile/nod and exits. Ryan take another long
look at the CUT-OUT. He shakes his head.

EXT. CTC HEADQUARTERS, CTC - MORNING

A downtown midsize high rise.

INT. LOBBY, CTC - MORNING

Ryan walks passed a reception desk.

INT. CORRIDOR, CTC - SAME

Ryan stops at a glass window peering into the conference
room. Inside a YOUNG WOMAN in a skirt suit has a folder out
as she talks to an LCD SCREEN with a person on it.

Ryan gives a bewildered look, then continues on.

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE, CTC - MORNING

Nothing personal. Desk. Lamp. File of mail. Ryan sits down in his chair. It's uncomfortable. Kevin follows.

RYAN

Where is it?

Kevin hands him the INVITATION TO GOALQUEST XX.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Bad ass.

KEVIN

They still need you to come up with the title for your seminar.

RYAN

What do you think of... "Preparing for Nothing."

KEVIN

(misunderstands)

I like.

RYAN

No, I don't mean that you never prepare... It's about actually preparing for the absence of things.

KEVIN

(not as excited)

Oh. That's cool too.

RYAN

What's the deal with the girl in the conference room?

KEVIN

It has to do with why everyone's been pulled in. Some sort of "secret" presentation.

RYAN

Secret Presentation. What is it?

CRAIG GREGORY (O.C.)

You prepared for the future?

Reveal Craig Gregory in the doorway.

KEVIN

He's prepared for nothing.

RYAN

I... That's not... right.
Seriously, what's going on?

CRAIG GREGORY

Game changer, Ry. Hope you're
ready.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The company has piled in, standing room only. Assistants and
interns watch through the windows.

Craig addresses the group including his own superiors.

CRAIG GREGORY

Last Summer we received a young woman
by way of Cornell. She challenged us
with some big ideas. My first
reaction was, who does this kid think
she is? But when I started to give a
listen, I was pretty knocked out. So
now, with a little peek into our
future - Natalie Keener.

Natalie stands up.

NATALIE

If there's one word I want to leave
you with today, it's this...

Natalie clicks on her POWER POINT PRESENTATION.

POWER POINT SLIDE: "GLOCAL"

Everyone including Ryan attempts to pronounce it.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Glocal.

POWER POINT SLIDE: "GLOBAL ---> LOCAL"

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Our global must become local.

POWER POINT SLIDE: A slide shows PEOPLE X 250.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

This company keeps forty people on
the road, at least two hundred
fifty days a year. It's expensive
and it's inefficient.

(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)

When I came to Craig three months ago with this, he told me, and quite astutely - it's only a problem if you have a solution. Well, today I stand before you with a solution.

She turns around and fires up her monitor. Sitting in a video conference session is a young man in a suit.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You all know Ted in reception.

Various people say hello to Ted.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Today, I'm going to fire Ted.
(aside)

Sorry, Ted. I'm sure H.R. will hire you back this afternoon.

Ted smiles. People chuckle in the conference room. One guy jokes "We'll see about that."

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Ted could be any employee in any one of our client's locations worldwide. Strategy packets would be shipped in advance. Ted would be given a seat and find one of our transition specialists waiting for him.

Natalie turns to the monitor and proceeds to fire Ted. It is a pretty dry process and lacks Ryan's charm.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Laskin, the reason we're having this conversation today is your position is no longer available.

TED

(from a script)

I don't understand. I'm fired?

NATALIE

Hearing the words "You've been let go" is never easy. Change is always scary. But consider the following -
(using Ryan's line)

Anybody who ever built an empire, or changed the world, sat where you are now. And it's because they sat there that they were able to do it.

Ryan frowns and leans over to Craig.

RYAN
(quietly)
That's my fucking line.

CRAIG GREGORY
(less quietly)
We made it part of the curriculum.

TED
Well, what happens now?

NATALIE
This is the first step of a process
that will end with you in a new job
that fulfills you.

TED
Yeah, but, how does it work?

NATALIE
I want you to take that packet in
front of you.

Ted picks up the packet.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Review it. All the answers you're
looking for are inside. Start
filling out the necessary
information and before you know it,
you'll be on your way to new
opportunities.

Ted starts to peruse the packet with fake interest.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Now Ted, I'm going to need you to
go back to your desk and start
putting together your things. As a
favor to me, I'd appreciate it if
you didn't spread the news just
yet. Panic doesn't help anybody.

TED
I understand.

NATALIE
Have a good day, Mr. Laskin and
good luck with your future.

TED
Thank you.

Ted gets up and goes to leave.

NATALIE

Give it up for Ted.

People clap and tease him a little.

POWER POINT: An animation of one monitor becoming multiple monitors, all tied into a central switch board in the middle of a map of the country.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You can start the morning in Boston, stop in Dallas over lunch and finish the day in San Francisco. All for the price of a T1 line. Our inflated travel budget is eviscerated by eighty-five percent... And most importantly to you guys on the road... No more Christmases in a hotel in Tulsa... No more hours lost to weather delays... You get to come home.

Ryan is in a state of silent panic.

INT. CRAIG GREGORY'S OFFICE, CTC - MOMENTS LATER

Ryan enters and stops short.

RYAN

Tell me you're not taking this seriously.

CRAIG GREGORY

Yeah, that's why we brought the entire company in from the road - Because we're not taking this seriously.

RYAN

It doesn't make any sense. It's...
(searching)
... completely impersonal.

CRAIG GREGORY

Who am I even talking to?

RYAN

There's a methodology to what I do.
A reason why it works.

CRAIG GREGORY

Coke and IBM have been doing it for years. Just like anything, there's a few months of transition, but everyone settles in.

RYAN

Who are you taking off the road?

A beat.

CRAIG GREGORY

You don't get it. You're grounded, Ryan. Everyone is. It's done.

RYAN

Okay, what we do here is brutal and leaves people devastated, but there's a dignity to the way I do it.

CRAIG GREGORY

Stabbing people in the chest instead of the back?

Ryan rolls his eyes.

Craig's door opens and Natalie pops her head in.

NATALIE

You wanted to see me?

Craig goes to wave her off.

RYAN

Yeah, why don't you come in.

Natalie is confused but takes the chair next to Ryan.

CRAIG GREGORY

Great job in there, Nat.

NATALIE

Thank you. How's everyone taking it?

Natalie and Ryan hold a look for a second.

RYAN

(to Natalie)

Look, I appreciate your... zeal. And you have some good ideas. But you know nothing of the realities of my job. Sure, you can set up an iChat... but you don't know how people think.

NATALIE
Actually, I minored in psychology.

CRAIG GREGORY
Nice.

RYAN
(to Natalie)
Okay kiddo, fire me.

CRAIG GREGORY
Ryan, stop it.

RYAN
She's going to be doing this on a
regular basis. You don't want to
know if she can fire somebody?

CRAIG GREGORY
She just fired Ted.

RYAN
My dog could fire Ted.
(to Natalie)
Fire me.

CRAIG GREGORY
Ryan.

NATALIE
It's okay, I got this.

Ryan and Natalie turn to face each other.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Mr. Bingham, I regret to inform you
that your position is no longer
available.

RYAN
Who the hell are you?

NATALIE
My name is Miss Keener and I'm here
today to discuss your future.

RYAN
My future? I don't know you. The
only person who can fire me is
Craig Gregory.

NATALIE
Mr. Gregory hired me to handle this
for him.

RYAN

Handle what? Handle me? Mr. Gregory hired me and he's the only one who can fire me. I'm going to talk to him.

Ryan gets up. Natalie gets up too.

NATALIE

Mr. Bingham...

RYAN

You can't follow me... You're on a computer screen. Remember?

NATALIE

(frustrated)

Ryan...

Ryan sits back down.

RYAN

Try again. Fire me.

NATALIE

I just did.

RYAN

Actually, you didn't. Now, fire me.

CRAIG GREGORY

Stop it, Ryan.

NATALIE

(ignores Craig)

Mr. Bingham, I'm here today to inform you that your position is no longer available.

RYAN

I'm fired?

NATALIE

Yes, you're fired.

RYAN

(aside)

Never say fired.

NATALIE

You've been let go.

RYAN

Why?

NATALIE

(breaks the moment)

This is a mythical situation. How could I possibly know why?

RYAN

You never know why. Why doesn't matter.

NATALIE

(back on track)

It's important not to focus on the "why" and rather to spend your energy thinking about your future.

RYAN

I'm going to spend my energy on suing you if you don't give me a reason that you're firing me.

NATALIE

Mr. Bingham, the reason is not important.

RYAN

Oh, so you're firing me without grounds.

(to Craig)

Now, I really have a lawsuit.

CRAIG GREGORY

Ryan, I think we know what you're trying to say...

NATALIE

(still in character)

Don't take this personally, Mr. Bingham.

Ryan stops.

RYAN

Personally?

(quiet and calm)

This is the most personal situation you will ever enter. So before you try to revolutionize my business, I'd like to know that you actually know my business.

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE, CTC - DAY

Ryan is staring out his window watching a plane take flight.

Craig enters.

CRAIG GREGORY

Hell-of-a-way to welcome her to the team.

RYAN

Am I the only one who sees that by automating our own business, we're making ourselves irrelevant.

CRAIG GREGORY

No... We're making you irrelevant.

Ryan shoots a look.

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

Hey, don't blame me. Blame fuel costs. Blame insurance premiums. Blame technology.

(a beat)

Watch yourself, Ryan. You're too young to be a dinosaur...

RYAN

I'm not... I'm not a dinosaur.

CRAIG GREGORY

I want you to show her the ropes.

RYAN

What do I know about what happens around here? Have Ferguson do it.

CRAIG GREGORY

I'm not talking about here.

A beat as Ryan registers what Craig means: *The Road*.

RYAN

No.

CRAIG GREGORY

~~Hey, you seem pretty confident that this girl doesn't know what she's doing...~~

RYAN

Excuse me. I just don't think a MySpace page qualifies you to rewire an entire company.

CRAIG GREGORY

Great. Well, here's your chance.
Show her the magic. Take her
through the paces.

RYAN

I'm not a fucking tour guide.

Craig cups one of his hands and places a FOLDED POST-IT
between his fingers like a ship's sail.

CRAIG GREGORY

(re: his hand)

This is the boat.

Craig raises his other finger far away.

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

(re: his finger)

This is you.

A beat of Ryan taking in this ridiculous illustration.

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

Do you want to be in the boat?

RYAN

Yes. Alone.

CRAIG GREGORY

Ryan, we're ringing the bell.
Rounding everybody up. If you want
to stay out there a little longer,
you can. But you're not going to be
on your own.
(begins to leave)
Let me know.

Ryan churns.

INT. RYAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

~~Ryan is packing his ROLL-AWAY BAG. It is practiced and systematic. He's just about finished, when he notices the CUT-OUT of his sister's engagement photo.~~

He tries placing it in the open bag, but it is immediately clear that the photo is two inches too long. He tries putting it on an angle, but that doesn't help.

RYAN

Huh.

Ryan centers the cut-out again and tries to ZIP around it, but he can't get the zipper around the HEADS of the photo. For a moment, it almost seems like he's assaulting their tiny head with the zipper handle. Doesn't help.

A moment of silent frustration.

CUT TO:

THE ROLL-AWAY

Being pulled through an airport. The little heads of Ryan's sister and her fiance are poking out the top of the bag. The two zippers have been closed on either side of them as though they were tiny passengers peeking out the sunroof.

INT. EPPLEY AIRFIELD, OMAHA - MORNING

Ryan cuts right through the crowd, wheeling his carry-on towards the automatic check-in machines.

Ryan stops when he notices NATALIE saying goodbye to her BOYFRIEND - a kind of Hollister looking guy in his mid-twenties. He's not thrilled by the public affection. After a beat, they break and he exits.

Natalie sees Ryan and starts dragging her LARGE SUITCASE towards him. The SCRAPING against the terrazzo sends a shiver up Ryan's spine.

She arrives and sets the heavy bag down with a CLUNK. Ryan stares at her travel case for a beat then up to her.

NATALIE

What?

CUT TO:

A ROW OF ROLL AWAY BAGS

INT. LUGGAGE STORE IN THE AIRPORT - MORNING

Ryan pulls one out and tests the action.

NATALIE

I really like my luggage.

RYAN

That's exactly what it is. Luggage.
(off of Natalie's look)

(MORE)

RYAN (cont'd)

You know how much time you lose by checking in?

NATALIE

I don't know, maybe five minutes waiting for...

RYAN

Thirty five minutes per flight. I travel two hundred seventy days a year. That makes one hundred fifty seven hours... That's Seven Days.
(points to her luggage)
You ready to throw away a whole week on that?

INT. TERMINAL FLOOR - MORNING

Natalie is attempting to repack her new bag in the middle of the airport. Ryan helps by throwing a couple things out.

INT. SECURITY - AIRPORT - MORNING

Ryan spots various "bad lines", then sees a group of Asians.

RYAN

Bingo. Asians.

Ryan starts walking.

NATALIE

You can't be serious.

As they pass the first line - A FAMILY OF SIX.

RYAN

Never get behind people travelling with infants. I've never seen a stroller collapse in less than twenty minutes.

Second Line - AN ELDERLY COUPLE

RYAN (CONT'D)

Old people are worse. Their bodies are littered with hidden metal and they never seem to appreciate how little time they have left on Earth.

Third Line - A COUPLE MIDDLE EASTERN GUYS.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Five words. Randomly selected for additional screening.

They enter the fourth line behind the Asians.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Asians. They're light packers, treasure efficiency, and have a thing for slip-on shoes. God love'em.

NATALIE

That's ethnocentric.

RYAN

I'm like my mother. I stereotype. It's faster.

INT. SECURITY - AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Ryan is just fastening his belt, having just gone through security, when we hear a beeping go off. Natalie is trying to find the metal on her body that has set off the machine. She also has forgotten to take her laptop out of her bag. It's a mess.

INT. BOEING 777 - MID FLIGHT

Ryan is perusing the in-flight shopping guide. Natalie is working on an Excel Document on her laptop - She's a loud tapper... Hitting the keys with violent strokes. It draws Ryan's attention and a raised eyebrow.

RYAN

Are you upset at your laptop?

NATALIE

No. Why?

RYAN

Fats Domino had a lighter touch.

NATALIE

I type with purpose.

RYAN

What are you working on so furiously?

NATALIE

I'm building a work flow of firing techniques. Questions & responses. Actions & reactions.

(MORE)

NATALIE (cont'd)

A script that works kind of like a tributary, taking you through the steps of firing someone.

RYAN

Who is it for?

NATALIE

Theoretically, you could put it in the hands of anybody and they could be downsizing immediately. All they have to do is follow the steps.

RYAN

Natalie, what is it, you think we do here?

NATALIE

We prepare the newly unemployed for the emotional and physical hurdles of job hunting while... Minimizing potential legal blowback?

RYAN

That's what we're selling. But it's not what we're doing.

NATALIE

Okay, what are we doing?

RYAN

Our job is to make limbo tolerable - To ferry wounded souls across the river of dread and humiliation and self-doubt to the point at which hope's bright shore is dimly visible...

(frankly)

And then to stop the boat, shove them in the water, and make them swim while we row back to the palace of their banishment to present the employers with our bills.

NATALIE

That was really impressive. You rehearse that?

Natalie smiles and goes back to her work. Ryan goes to say something, but holds back for now.

INT. RENTAL CAR ROW, AIRPORT - DAY

Ryan zips through the wandering types as Natalie tries to keep up. Ryan's phone rings. He sees the caller ID. Smiles.

RYAN

Hey, I was hoping I'd hear from you.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Alex is on her cell phone as a junior behind her folds a portable projector screen.

ALEX

I'm in Hotlanta. I need a rib joint recommend bad.

RYAN

(smiles)

Fat Matt's. Bring a bib.

(to Natalie)

Go ahead... I'll see you at Maestro.

Ryan turns into an elevator well to talk. Natalie exits.

ALEX

You haven't called.

RYAN

You know, I didn't know what was appropriate...

Alex stops. She moves to a quieter place.

ALEX

Appropriate? Ryan, I'm not some stewardess you banged during a snow storm. You don't have to worry about these things. Next time you're worried about manners...
 Just think of me as yourself...
 only with a vagina. If you want to call - Just call.

Ryan lights up... This woman fucking rocks. Then recovers.

RYAN

When am I going to see you?

ALEX
I'm out of Hartsfield, into IAD,
then a connection at ORD into SDF.

RYAN
(compassionate)
Oh... sorry.

ALEX
Tell me about it.

RYAN
How long is your layover in O'Hare?
They've got multiples into SDF...
Think you could push?

ALEX
(smiles)
I can push.

Joy.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Ryan and Natalie ride, briefcases in hand. Natalie is swaying
back and forth. Ryan notices. Is she nervous? Excited?

Ding! - The elevator door opens.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

Ryan walks up to the DESK GIRL.

RYAN
(to desk girl)
Ryan Bingham, from CTC.

The desk girl starts looking up the name in her computer.

DESK GIRL
Who are you here to see?

RYAN
About half of your sales team.

INT. WINDOWLESS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ryan and Natalie sit next to each other at a polyurethane
conference table.

RYAN

All you have to do today is watch and listen. When I talk about the strategy packet. You hand them one of these...

Ryan points to a stack of packets. We can tell Natalie is disappointed by her lack of potential participation.

NATALIE

You ever find it strange that termination comes with a packet.

RYAN

Everything important in life comes with a packet.

BEGIN A SHORT MONTAGE OF various people being fired.

RYAN

Mr. Johnson...
 (new person)
 Mr. Zambrotta...
 (new person)
 Mrs. Chelsey...
 (new person)
 Today is your last day here.
 (new person)
 But more importantly, it is the first day of your new life.

BLACK MAN

This is because I'm black.

OLD MAN

... because I'm old.

YOUNG WOMAN

... because I wouldn't go down on Bill Francis.

Natalie wants to jump in, but holds back.

RYAN

This is not a time to look for blame. Your position simply no longer exists.

ANGRY ASIAN WOMAN

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

MIDDLE AGED MAN

What am I supposed to tell my wife?

ANOTHER MIDDLE AGED MAN
... My children?

CRYING BALD MAN
What am I supposed to do?

RYAN
I want you to take the next week to
explore this strategy packet...

Ryan nods to Natalie who we now see begrudgingly HANDING
PACKETS to all of the people we've already met.

RYAN
Fill out the skill set work
sheet... Use the hopes and dreams
diagram... And the tree of
aspirations.

We SEE the "TREE OF ASPIRATIONS" sheet.

RYAN
(with emphasis)
The answers are all in there.

We see more packets getting handed out as Ryan repeats...

RYAN
The answers are all in there.
(another person)
The answers...
(another person)
The answers...
(another person)
... are-all-in-there.

CUT TO:

BOB. Dry red eyes from tears of rage stare down the lens.

BOB
And what do you suggest I tell
them?

Bob holds up a PHOTO of his children right up to the lens.

Natalie can't hold back any longer.

NATALIE
(a suggestion)
Perhaps you're underestimating the
positive effect your career transition
may have on your children.

Ryan looks at Natalie like she's out of her mind.

BOB
Positive effect?

NATALIE
Well, tests have shown that children under moderate trauma have a tendency to apply themselves academically as a method of coping.

BOB
Go fuck yourself. That's what my kids'll think.

Natalie shrinks. Ryan immediately covers.

RYAN
Your children's admiration is important to you?

BOB
Yeah. It was.

RYAN
(frankly)
Well, I doubt they ever admired you, Bob.

Bob looks up shocked and pissed.

BOB
Hey asshole, aren't you here to console me?

RYAN
I'm not a shrink, Bob. I'm a wake up call. You know why kids love athletes?

BOB
Because they screw lingerie models.

RYAN
No, that's why we love athletes. Kids love them because they follow their dreams.

BOB
Yeah, well I can't dunk.

RYAN
But you can cook.

Natalie looks to Ryan - Where is he going with this?

BOB

What are you talking about?

Ryan picks up Bob's resume.

RYAN

Your resume says you minored in French Culinary Arts. Most students work the frier at KFC. You bussed tables at Il Picatorre to support yourself. Then you got out of college and started working here.

(looks up at Bob)

How much did they pay you to give up on your dreams?

BOB

(flat)

Twenty seven thousand a year.

RYAN

At what point were you going to stop and go back to what made you happy?

Bob simply shrugs.

RYAN

Do you believe in fate, Bob?

BOB

Fate?

RYAN

Yeah. You know, the mysterious ways in which we wind up doing the things we were meant to.

BOB

(offering)

I met my wife at a gas station.

RYAN

Exactly. Well, I think fate is telling you to do something, Bob.

Bob looks up and meets eyes with Ryan.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I see guys who work for the same company their entire lives. Clock in. Clock out.

(MORE)

RYAN (CONT'D)

Never a moment of happiness.

(pauses for effect)

Not everyone gets this kind of opportunity. The chance for rebirth. If not for yourself... Do it for your kids.

Bob's eyes begin to water again. He's a changed man.

Ryan shoots Natalie a look - *Hand over the packet.*

Natalie jumps to attention and hands Bob a packet.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - NIGHT

There's a BUSINESS WOMAN waiting in the regular line. Ryan walks right past her and gets into the ELITE LINE. They are now both first in their respective lines for the counter.

The woman looks over at Ryan and sighs. Natalie holds back, confused by Ryan's actions and wanting to avoid confrontation.

The DESK CLERK frees up and gestures for Ryan to step forward. Ryan begins wheeling his bag forward. Meanwhile, the woman lifts her hand in outrage.

BUSINESS WOMAN

I've been waiting ten minutes. He just waltzes in and gets to cut in line.

DESK CLERK

We reserve priority assistance for our elite members.

Ryan grabs a BROCHURE for ELITE MEMBERSHIP off the desk and hands it to the business woman.

RYAN

You should look into it - The promotions are great...

The woman bats it out of Ryan's hand onto the floor.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Fuck off.

Ryan looks back at the desk clerk and smiles. The desk clerk swipes his card.

Ryan's DIGITAL NUMBER bumps up another thousand points.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM, HOMESTEAD SUITES - EVENING

Natalie is washing her hands, when she stops to look at herself in the mirror. After a beat, she hears someone CRYING in one of the stalls. She goes to see if the woman is okay, then stops herself - *Maybe I fired her.*

She grabs a paper towel, dries off her hands, and leaves.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR, HOMESTEAD SUITES - EVENING

Natalie sits back down at the table a little visibly shaken.

RYAN

You okay?

NATALIE

(covers quickly)

Yeah. Fine.

Just then, their food arrives... And there's a lot of food. Natalie's eyes move back and forth trying to figure out why there seems to be three main courses and a bunch of sides.

NATALIE

Hungry, much?

RYAN

Our expense account allots for forty dollars each on dinner. I plan on grabbing every mile I can.

NATALIE

Okay, you got to fill me in on this mile business. What's that all about? Are you talking like frequent flier miles?

Ryan gives Natalie a look - *Is she ready for this information?*

RYAN

Your really want to know?

NATALIE

(mock serious)

I'm dying to know.

RYAN

I don't spend a nickel, if I can help it, unless it somehow profits my mileage account.

(MORE)

RYAN (cont'd)

I'm not talking hotel rooms and rental cars either, but internet services, music downloads, teleflorists, long distance providers. The works. I shop them according to the miles they pay and I pit them against each other for the most value.

NATALIE

So, what are you saving up for? Hawaii? South of France?

RYAN

No, it's not like that... The miles are the goal.

NATALIE

That's it? You're saving to save?

RYAN

Let's just say I've got a number in mind and haven't hit it yet.

NATALIE

Wow. Seems a little abstract. What's your target?

RYAN

I'd rather not.

NATALIE

(teasing)
It's a secret target?

RYAN

It's five million miles.

NATALIE

Huh. Isn't five million just a number?

RYAN

Pi is just a number.

NATALIE

I guess we all need a hobby.

Ryan looks back at Natalie - *Hobby?*

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Oh hey, I didn't mean to belittle your collection. I get it. Sounds cool.

RYAN

I'd be the seventh person to do it.
More people have walked on the moon.

NATALIE

Do they give you a parade or something?

RYAN

You get lifetime platinum elite
loyalty status. You get to meet the
C.E.O. And... They put your name on
the side of a plane.

NATALIE

(rolls eyes)

Men get such a hard-on from putting
their name on stuff... You guys
don't grow up - You just need to
pee on everything.

RYAN

Why do you think that is?

NANCY

Fear of mortality. It's like Yes,
you're going to die one day.

RYAN

Yeah, but why is that singular to men?

NATALIE

Simple - You don't get to have babies.

Ryan can't help but laugh a little.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

If I had that many miles, I'd just
show up at the airport, look up at
one of those big boards of
destinations, pick a place and go.

This idea sinks in for a second with both of them.

INT. RYAN'S ROOM ON THE 11TH FLOOR - NIGHT

Ryan looks out the window. Sees an airplane taking off.

ON TV: The CEO of the airline, MAYNARD FINCH, comes walking
around a 727. He's got an old time BOMBER JACKET on.

MAYNARD FINCH
Hi, I'm Maynard Finch. When I say
the word "loyalty", what do you
think of...?

Ryan looks over.

RYAN
I'm coming for you Maynard.

Ryan's cell phone RINGS. He mutes the television and picks up.

RYAN
Hello?

KARA
Did you get the package?

RYAN
Oh, Hey Kara...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KARA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Kara has bills and health insurance documents spread out on
the table. She works with the phone on her shoulder.

KARA (CONT'D)
It was signed for by a Dianne
something...? Just wanted to make
sure you got it.

RYAN
Yeah, I got it.

KARA
Who is Dianne?

RYAN
My neighbor. What do you need Kara?

KARA
Tammy Jansen. Julie's made of
honor. She's in St. Louis now. Her
car's in the shop, so she's going
to have to fly up...

RYAN
How is this of interest to me?

KARA (CONT'D)

She can't afford the fare they quoted. Twelve hundred dollars round trip. I hate these airlines! I thought maybe you could cash in some miles?

RYAN

We'll have to find another way.

KARA

This is ridiculous, Ryan. This is sad.

RYAN

Buy her a train ticket. Rent her a car.

KARA

What is with this stupid glitch of yours?

RYAN

Julie won't wear synthetics. That's who she is. You won't eat eggs. That's who you are. To apologize for my absolutes is to apologize for my very existence.

KARA

Have you taken the photo yet?

RYAN

No... I told you I would "try".

KARA

It would mean the world to her.

RYAN

Train ticket. I'll pay for it.

KARA

We're all looking forward to seeing you.

CUT TO:

RYAN IN BED THAT NIGHT

His BLACKBERRY BUZZES on the night stand. He reaches over to check it. It's a text message:

Alex: "Can't fall asleep. Keep thinking about you"

Ryan types back:

Ryan: "Me too. Just laying here."

Ryan's BLACKBERRY BUZZES again.

Alex: "You should rub one out."

Ryan laughs. Types back.

Ryan: "Thank you for the advice."

BLACKBERRY BUZZES again.

Alex: "Have sweet dreams about me."

Ryan smiles. He stares at the message for a second, then sets the blackberry down and turns off the light.

EXT. HOMESTEAD SUITES - EARLY MORNING

A gardener drives a RIDER MOWER across a tiny stretch of grass.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - EARLY MORNING

Elevator doors open, and Ryan steps out. He checks his watch and looks around the lobby... Then he hears something...

Ryan turns a corner to find Natalie talking to her computer screen with headphones on. She's having an iChat with someone, but we only hear her side of the conversation. Ryan decides to listen in for a second.

NATALIE

(talking via iChat)

Are you enjoying having the bed to yourself...?

(sighs)

The correct answer is "no". You're supposed to say the bed feels alone.

(listens)

I know you like to spread out...

Yes, I want you to be honest. I'm just saying... Well, now you can make it as cold as you like.

(listens)

No, I'm fine. Tell me something sweet.

(smiles)

That's nice. Do you miss me?

(shrugs)

I'll be back soon. Not really sure how long this whole exercise is supposed to last. He's fine...

(MORE)

NATALIE (cont'd)

It's hard for these guys to accept change, you know.

(listens, rolls eyes)

I... I'm not even going to answer that... No, I can't even think of him that way... He's old.

Ryan frowns. Checks a mirror.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

(talking via iChat)

It depends how quickly we get done. We may try to fly standby, but either way, I'll call...

(disappointed)

Okay, then we'll talk tomorrow I guess.

Natalie kisses the tips of her fingers and touches them to the little built-in camera.

As She packs up, Ryan turns the corner.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Oh hey.

RYAN

Morning.

NATALIE

Internet was slow in the room.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - MOMENTS LATER

On the way out, Natalie notices a DISPLAY WEDDING table.

NATALIE

People really have their wedding at the airport Homestead Suites?

RYAN

You could do worse.

NATALIE

Not much.

They walk outside. Natalie seems a little upset.

RYAN

You alright?

NATALIE

Yeah. Fine.

RYAN

You mind helping me with something?

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Natalie is standing with a camera in her hands, giving directions.

NATALIE

Left, left, left, left... one more inch... and stop.

Reveal: Ryan is placing the CUT-OUT of Julie and Jim.

The camera POV makes it look like Julie and Jim are standing in front of Dallas International Airport.

NATALIE

I don't get it.

RYAN

My sister is cooky. She thinks this is charming... Like the gnome thing.

NATALIE

No, I mean... why would your sister want a fake photo in front of Dallas International Airport?

RYAN

She should be so lucky to visit DFW. It's one of the biggest airports in the world - Has its own zip code.

NATALIE

(lame)

Wow. Pretty sweet.

Natalie takes the photo.

RYAN

Why she wants dozens of reminders of all the places she hasn't been is beyond me.

NATALIE

Well, I'm sure she's going to be crushed for having missed this airport.

RYAN

It has more runways than any other airport on Earth... Seven.

Natalie puts away the camera.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Looking out the window at the passing landscape.

Over the pastures and roads, we see GRAPHIC WHITE LINES AND NUMBERS denoting each mile as they click by.

Ryan hands Natalie a BROCHURE for the mileage program. She begins to fill it out.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, BOTTLING COMPANY - DAY

A SENSITIVE MAN in his mid-thirties is crying. Make that wailing. Ryan and Natalie watch, but do not respond.

Natalie looks to Ryan. She wants to say something. Ryan puts his HAND OUT in the universal "slow down" gesture. *Hold on.*

The man continues to cry. Tears. Snot. It's embarrassing.

Natalie is growing more and more impatient. She goes to say something. Ryan THROWS HIS HAND OUT again: *Just wait.*

It goes on a little while longer. Then out of nowhere, without explanation, the man just gets up and leaves.

RYAN

Sometimes, they just need a second.

NATALIE

Please, for the love of God, can I fire the next one?

Ryan gives it some thought.

CUT TO:

A professional woman in her mid thirties wearing a smart suit sits down at the conference table.

Natalie sits up.

SMART SUIT WOMAN

I'm here to be fired, right?

NATALIE

We're here to talk about your future.

SMART SUIT WOMAN

You don't have to sugar coat it. I get the drill. What are they offering?

NATALIE

Inside the packet you'll find a clearly worked out severance package.

SMART SUIT WOMAN

Give me the bullet points.

NATALIE

Three months pay. Six months medical. A full year of placement services through our company, CTC.

SMART SUIT WOMAN

Placement services? That's sweet.

NATALIE

Commonly, it takes one month of searching for every ten thousand dollars you expect to earn in salary.

SMART SUIT WOMAN

So I could be looking for a while.

NATALIE

Not necessarily...

SMART SUIT WOMAN

Oh, don't sweat it. I'm pretty confident about my plans.

NATALIE

(spirits lifted)
Oh yeah?

SMART SUIT WOMAN

Yeah. Can you tell me? Is high tide in the morning or the evening?

NATALIE

I don't know. Why?

SMART SUIT WOMAN

There's this beautiful bridge by my apartment. I need to figure out what time to jump off it.

And with that she stands and exits. Natalie begins to tremble.

EXT. COMPANY COURTYARD - DAY.

Natalie bursts out the doors and sits on a bench. She's freaked out. Ryan is five steps behind her. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

RYAN

People say these things all the time. It comes with the trade.

NATALIE

They do?

RYAN

Sure. People are always saying crazy stuff. They get worked up.

NATALIE

She was so calm.

RYAN

(not quite sure)

I think that's a good sign.

NATALIE

So they don't actually ever do it?

RYAN

No... it's just talk.

NATALIE

How do you know? Do you follow up?

RYAN

I mean, no, nothing good can come of that, but I don't think you should worry about it.

Natalie is clearly still worried.

RYAN (CONT'D)

This is the job. Taking people at their most fragile moment and setting them adrift.

CUT TO:

A PHOTO OF RYAN on a STAND. The caption reads:

Ryan Bingham - "The Backpack"

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ryan stands before a similar crowd as the opening of the film.

RYAN

Okay. This is where it gets a little difficult, but stay with me. You have a new backpack... but this time, I want you to fill it with people. Start with casual acquaintances, people around the office, friends of friends and work your way to the people you trust with your most intimate secrets. Now move into family members - cousins, aunts, and uncles. Get your sisters and your brothers and your parents. Get them all in that backpack. And finally your husband or wife or boyfriend or girlfriend. Get them in their too.

A titter through the crowd. For the first time, we see Natalie near the side, watching.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'm not going to ask you to light it on fire.

Light laughter.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Feel the weight of that bag. Make no mistake, your relationships are the heaviest components of your life. Feel the straps cutting into your shoulders. All those negotiations and arguments and secrets and compromises.

Ryan lets the weight sink in.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Now set that bag down.

You can feel the relief in the room.

RYAN (CONT'D)

You don't need to carry all that weight.

Noticeable agreement.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Some animals were meant to carry each other. To live symbiotically over a lifetime. Star-crossed lovers. Monogamous swans. We are not one of those animals.

Ryan focuses towards his conclusion.

RYAN (CONT'D)

The slower we move, the faster we die. We are not swans. We're sharks.

INT. ANNEX, HOTEL - AFTERNOON

Ryan has finished his session and is talking to eager stragglers. Ryan accepts a business card and elaborates on one of his theories.

Meanwhile, down the hall, Natalie is finishing a phone call. She looks shell shocked. She closes her phone and pockets it in silence.

INT. AIRPORT SHUTTLE - AFTERNOON

Natalie and Ryan ride back to the airport. We catch them mid-conversation as Natalie drills Ryan on his theory.

NATALIE

Never...?

Ryan smiles to the few other riders as if apologizing.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You never want to get married?
Never want kids?

RYAN

Is that so bizarre?

NATALIE

Yes. Yes it is.

RYAN

I don't see the value.

Natalie sighs.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Sell it to me.

NATALIE
What?

RYAN
Sell me marriage.

NATALIE
I... Uh... How how about love?

RYAN
Pff...

NATALIE
Okay. Stability?

RYAN
How many stable marriages do you know?

NATALIE
Someone to talk to, spend your life with?

RYAN
I'm surrounded by people to talk to. I doubt that will change.

The shuttle stops and everyone goes to grab their bags.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

Ryan and Natalie enter, still having the same conversation.

NATALIE
How about just not dying alone?

Ryan stops to address this.

RYAN
Starting when I was twelve, we moved each one of my grandparents into a nursing facility. My parents went the same way.

(a beat)

Make no mistake. We all die alone.

Ryan turns, thinks of something, then turns back.

RYAN (CONT'D)

(adding)

Those cult members down in San Diego with the white sneakers and little Dixie cups of Kool-Aid. They didn't die alone.

Natalie looks steamed.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Just saying - There's options.

Out of nowhere, Natalie starts crying.

RYAN

(almost silent)

Oh fuck.

Natalie is now balling in the middle of the lobby.

NATALIE

Brian left me.

RYAN

Oh, hey... I...

Ryan goes to hug Natalie and she simply folds into his arms - A mop of tears. Ryan looks around for a place to set her down. Instead, he finds...

ALEX - Who gives a questioning look to the young sobbing girl.

RYAN

Hi. Alex this is Natalie. Natalie, this is my... friend, Alex.

ALEX

I should give you both a moment.

Natalie attempts a recovery. It's not graceful.

NATALIE

No, it's fine. I'm fine. Just stupid emotions.

Natalie gives Alex a firm handshake.

ALEX

Maybe a drink?

Ryan goes to challenge the idea, when...

NATALIE

Now we're talking.

Natalie leads the way. Alex and Ryan exchange quick hellos.

CUT TO:

THE SCREEN OF NATALIE'S CELL PHONE

TEXT READS: "I Think it's time we c other people"

INT. BAR LOUNGE - HOMESTEAD SUITES - MOMENTS LATER

The three share a booth. Natalie is sipping a drink. She seems to have settled a little.

ALEX

He broke up with you over text message?

RYAN

(soft dig)
That's kind of like firing people over the internet.

Both Natalie and Alex shoot Ryan a look.

ALEX

(re: the ex-boyfriend)
What a weasely prick.

NATALIE

Yeah, but what does that make me?
Someone who falls for a prick?

ALEX

We all for them. Pricks are spontaneous, unpredictable, and fun. And then we're surprised when they turn out to be pricks.

NATALIE

I followed him to Omaha.

RYAN

You did?

NATALIE

I had a job waiting for me in San Fran, when he got an offer from ConAgra. He told me we could start a life together. So I followed him.

RYAN

To Omaha.

NATALIE

I look in the mirror and I just see compromise... I'm supposed to do something.

ALEX

You'll do plenty.

NATALIE

I just can't... I thought I'd be engaged by now.

(catches herself)

No offense.

ALEX

It's alright.

RYAN

None taken.

NATALIE

When I was sixteen, I thought by twenty three, I would be married, maybe have a kid... Corner office by day, entertaining at night. I was supposed to be driving a Grand Cherokee by now.

ALEX

Life can overwhelm you that way.

NATALIE

Now I have my sights on twenty nine, because thirty is just way too... apocalyptic. I mean, where did you think you'd be by...

Natalie catches herself, having no idea how old Alex is.

ALEX

It doesn't work that way.

RYAN

At a certain point, you stop with the deadlines.

ALEX

They can be a little counterproductive.

NATALIE

I don't want to say anything that's... anti-feminist. I mean, I really appreciate everything your generation did for me.

ALEX

(my generation?)

It was our pleasure.

NATALIE

But sometimes it feels like no matter how much success I have, it all won't matter until I find the right guy.

ALEX

You really thought this guy was the one.

NATALIE

Yeah, I guess. I don't know. I could have made it work. He just really fit the bill.

RYAN

The bill?

NATALIE

My type. You know, white collar. College grad. Loves dogs. Likes funny movies. Six foot one. Brown hair. Kind eyes. Works in finance but is outdoorsy, you know, *on the weekends*.

(we think she's done)

I always imagined he'd have a single syllable name like Matt or John or... Dave. In a perfect world, he drives a Four Runner and the only thing he loves more than me is his golden lab. Oh... and a nice smile.

(back to Alex and Ryan)

How about you?

This catches both Alex and Ryan off guard.

RYAN

I'm not sure if...

NATALIE

I meant Alex...

RYAN

Right.

ALEX

Huh, let me think for a sec.

(mulls it over)

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

Well, by the time you're thirty four, all the physical requirements are pretty much out the window. I mean you secretly prey he'll be taller than you.

Ryan smiles.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Not an asshole would be nice? Just someone who enjoys my company. Comes from a good family - You don't think about that when you're younger.

(thinking)

Wants kids... Likes kids... Wants kids. Healthy enough to play catch with his future son one day.

We can tell Ryan is taking a serious interest in this.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Please let him earn more than I do. That doesn't make sense now, but believe me, it will one day. Otherwise it's just a recipe for disaster.

(reaching)

Hopefully some hair on his head...? But it's not exactly a deal-breaker anymore. Nice smile... Yep, a nice smile just might do it.

Alex looks to Ryan. He has a nice smile.

NATALIE

Wow. That was depressing.

Alex and Ryan react - *It's not that bad.*

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I should just date women.

ALEX

Tried it. We're no picnic ourselves.

Natalie looks worse than when the conversation started.

NATALIE

I don't mind being married to my career, and I don't expect it to hold me in bed as I fall asleep.

(looks up)

I just don't want to settle.

ALEX

You're young. Right now you see settling as some sort of failure.

NATALIE

It is. By definition.

ALEX

Don't worry, by the time someone is right for you, it won't feel like settling... And the only person left to judge you will be the twenty four year old girl with a target on your back.

Natalie cracks a smile.

Ryan looks to Alex. They've grown closer.

INT. LOBBY LOUNGE, HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

Ryan, Alex, and Natalie wheel their ROLL-AWAYS towards the elevator.

NATALIE

So, what's the plan for this evening?

Ryan and Alex share an uncomfortable silence.

NATALIE

What...? Oh, is it illicit?

RYAN

(quickly)

No...

ALEX

It's nothing like that.

NATALIE

We are in Miami.

RYAN

... We're going to attend the closing night party for the tech conference happening in the hotel.

Natalie notices a group of SOFTWARE TYPES mingling with badges around their necks.

NATALIE

I didn't know they were open to the public.

ALEX

They're not.

NATALIE

(eyes widen)

You're going to crash it?

RYAN

I mean, I don't know if...
These guy put on a quite a party...

ALEX

More money than they know what to do with...

NATALIE

No, I get it. I'm in!

INT. SOFTWARE CONVENTION PARTY - NIGHT

Corporate color balloons. Lots of guys in LOGO POLOS. That great hip hop song from 2003 is playing over the PA.

We find Ryan, Alex, and Natalie at a stand up table. They're now wearing badges. Natalie is pretty tipsy at this point.

RYAN

(to Natalie)

You okay there?

NATALIE

Oh yeah... This was a great idea.

(to Alex)

You are so pretty. You're exactly what I want to look like in fifteen years.

ALEX

Thank you, Natalie.

A CONFERENCE LEADER steps up to an on stage MIC.

CONFERENCE LEADER

How's everyone doing out there?!

People cheer. So do Ryan, Alex, and particularly Natalie.

CONFERENCE LEADER

I'm going to need you to all put your hands together for a very special guest - YOUNG... M... C!

The opening beats of the 90's jam "Bust-A-Move" blast over the speakers and sure enough, now-40-year-old rapper, Young MC steps out and starts rapping.

YOUNG MC
THIS HERE'S A TALE FOR ALL THE
PELLAS... TRY TO DO WHAT THOSE
LADIES TELL US... GET SHOT DOWN
CAUSE YOU'RE OVERZEALOUS... PLAY
HARD TO GET, FEMALES GET JEALOUS...

Everyone goes crazy and starts dancing.

Ryan and Alex make it out to the dance floor. They're awful dancers, but they're having fun.

RYAN
Think she'll be okay?

ALEX
Look...

Natalie has already found a dancing partner, who can't believe his luck. She's all over him. Ryan smiles.

INT. SOFTWARE GEEK'S HOTEL SUITE, HOMESTEAD SUITES - NIGHT

An after party in a hotel room. Natalie is taking part in a drinking game in the corner. A few guys are dropping things from a window. One guy is hitting on a software model, still in her convention floor costume.

We find Ryan and Alex out on the BALCONY.

RYAN
I thought about you way too much
this week.

ALEX
I know, I know. Me too. I keep on
taking mental notes of all the
stupid funny things that happen so
I can tell you about them later.

RYAN
(touched)
Really?

ALEX
Yeah. Scared yet?

RYAN
No. I like your text messages.
You're a good phone flirt.

ALEX
The kids call it sex messaging.

RYAN
(makes him smile)
Is that what they call it these days?

ALEX
Great, right? Can I tell you a secret?

RYAN
Sure.

ALEX
Sometimes, during a meeting, I'll
tuck my phone in my skirt and hope
you write.

Ryan swallows.

RYAN
I... Really...?

ALEX
(notices something)
Oh no...

Alex points to Natalie in the corner. She's making out with
her dancing partner from earlier. Ryan and Alex chuckle.

A SOFTWARE DUDE runs in excited...

SOFTWARE DUDE
Hey, Steve's got a boat!

Everyone cheers and makes for the door. Ryan and Alex
exchange a look.

EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

A nice two story yacht that was obviously purchased before
the bubble popped. Inside the galley, a group is playing
karaoke. NATALIE is singing "Rhiannon".

Meanwhile, near the back, Ryan and Alex sit with their legs
hanging off the back of the hull.

ALEX

First time I ever got on a plane, I was seven years old. I got selected for some modeling search...

RYAN

Impressive.

ALEX

Not really. It was a scheme. But that's not even important. The best part was the flight. I just remember my dad taking me by the hand through the airport... and giving me my ticket... and stepping on to the plane. It was all just... kind of magical.

(a memory pops in)

I remember my dad acting different, you know? The way he spoke to strangers and flirted with the flight attendants. He ordered a Bloody Mary with lunch. I was just a kid, but I remember thinking - When you fly, you can be anyone you want.

RYAN

... or be yourself?

ALEX

Back home, I don't get to act the way I do with you.

RYAN

That's why I don't have a "back home".

ALEX

I know. You're so cool. Such a lone wolf. With your "empty back pack".

Ryan emotionally stumbles.

RYAN

You know about the back pack?

ALEX

I googled you.

RYAN

You did?

ALEX

It's what us modern girls do when we have a crush.

RYAN

Did it bother you?

ALEX

Well, that depends. Is the bag empty because you hate people or just the baggage they bring along?

RYAN

I don't hate people. I'm not exactly a hermit.

ALEX

You just don't want to be tied down? The whole responsibility thing.

RYAN

I don't think it's even that... Let me tell you about my first flight.

ALEX

Okay.

RYAN

I was sixteen.

ALEX

Sixteen?

RYAN

I was a late bloomer.

(back to story)

It was January and I had just gotten my driver's license. The lakes were frozen over, so we piled into my car and hit the ice to do donuts. When, out of nowhere, I hit a soft spot and the hood of my car tilted up and I'm sinking backwards into the water.

ALEX

Jesus...

RYAN

My door wouldn't budge and we literally started to drown. Within a few seconds, I black out. Then, I wake up in the sky. I'm in a helicopter, laying on a stretcher. This guy in a uniform is telling me I was minutes away from dying.

ALEX

Oh my God.

RYAN

Right?

(relives it for a second)

So just as we're hovering over the hospital, I sit up. And from there, I could see the whole western horizon. Snowy rivers. Bridges with sparkling tail lights.

(a beat)

My parents had lied. They'd taught me we lived in the best place in the world, but now I could see that the world was really just one place and comparing didn't make much sense.

(catches himself)

We'd been flying twenty minutes. *Twenty minutes* to reach a city I'd thought of as remote, halfway across the state... a foreign capital. And I remember thinking - Don't tell me this isn't an age of miracles. Don't tell me we can't be everywhere at once.

The idea settles in. Ryan returns to the point.

RYAN

I don't know what originally sparked the back pack. I probably needed to be alone. Recently, I've been thinking that maybe I needed to empty the bag before I knew what to put back in.

And now they kiss. It's notably different from their previous kisses. Now, when they lock lips, we are reminded why people kiss in the first place.

Then, all of a sudden, the lights go out on the boat. The motor has stopped. Ryan and Alex look back to find the software dude stepping out of the galley, drunk.

SOFTWARE DUDE

Hey... I think we're out of gas.

Ryan and Alex look out to shore... about 500 yards away. For whatever reason, they just start cracking up.

EXT. PONTOON BOAT - NIGHT

Ryan and Alex are huddled under a blanket in the corner of the rubber boat as it puttters its way to shore.

Cold, soaked, and smiling.

Natalie and David are there too... still kissing.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Everyone gets out of the boat in the cold knee deep water and splashes up to shore.

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - NIGHT

Ryan and Alex followed by Natalie and her make-out buddy, soaked from the knee down, holding their shoes, scamper into the hotel on the balls of their feet.

INT. RYAN'S HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Ryan's eyes flutter awake to see Alex getting dressed.

RYAN

Hey, you're up...

ALEX

Got to fly stand-by and make a meeting in Milwaukee.

RYAN

(disappointed)

Oh... Okay.

ALEX

(notices, teasing)

Oh, no. I made you feel cheap.

RYAN

Yeah, all right... Just leave the money on the dresser.

ALEX

(sweetly)

I'll text you later so we can swap schedules.

Alex gives him a peck. Ryan takes her wrist so she can't leave.

RYAN

I can't remember the last time I enjoyed spending time with someone as much as you.

ALEX

Neither can I.

They kiss again and he lets go. Alex leaves and the door closes. Ryan just lays in bed for a moment.

INT. CAFE - HOMESTEAD SUITES - MORNING

Ryan and Natalie have a quiet breakfast. Natalie looks pretty worse for wear. After a little silent eating...

NATALIE

Last night got a little out of hand. I said things... I don't remember everything I said. I just didn't want you to think...

RYAN

Just relax. It was nice to see you cut loose. So, did you wake him up or slip out?

NATALIE

What?

RYAN

This morning... Your new friend. Did you wake him for an awkward good bye or just slip out so he could feel like a whore.

NATALIE

(not proud)

I... just left.

RYAN

Protocol is always tricky.

NATALIE

I didn't know what was right.

RYAN

Sometimes there really is no right thing to do.

This doesn't comfort her.

EXT. OCEAN BOARDWALK, MIAMI - DAY

The walkway overlooks a large MARINA filled with giant YACHTS. Ryan and Natalie are doing the photo thing with the CUT OUT of the engagement portrait again.

NATALIE

What happened to Alex?

RYAN

Had to skip town early to make a meeting.

NATALIE

That's too bad. Where does she live?

RYAN

Chicago.

NATALIE

You thinking of going to see her?

RYAN

I don't know. We just don't have that kind of relationship.

NATALIE

What kind of relationship do you have?

RYAN

It's, you know. Casual.

NATALIE

Sounds pretty special.

RYAN

It works for us.

NATALIE

Think there's any future there?

RYAN

Never thought about it. What's going on here?

NATALIE

Really never thought about it?

RYAN

(a good lie)

No.

NATALIE

How can you not think about these things? How does it not even cross your mind that you might want to have a future with somebody?

RYAN

It's simple, you know that moment when you look into someone's eyes and you feel them looking right into your soul, and the whole world goes quiet for a second.

NATALIE

(finally, a break through)

Yes.

RYAN

Right. Well, I don't.

NATALIE

You're an asshole.

Natalie knocks over the CUT OUT and stands up.

RYAN

Oh come on, I'm just dicking around. I need your help...

NATALIE

Don't you think it's worth giving her a chance?

RYAN

A chance to what?

NATALIE

A chance at something real?

RYAN

Natalie, your definition of "real" is going to evolve as you get older...

NATALIE

Would you stop condescending for one second? Or is that one of the principles of your bullshit philosophy?

RYAN

Bullshit philosophy?

NATALIE

The isolation? The traveling? Is that supposed to be charming?

RYAN

No, it's simply a life choice.

NATALIE

It's a cocoon of self-banishment.

RYAN

Wow. Big words.

NATALIE

Screw you.

RYAN

Well, screw you too.

NATALIE

You've set up a way of life that basically makes it impossible for you to make any human connections. Now, somehow, this woman runs the gauntlet of your ridiculous "life choice" and comes out the other end with a smile - Just so you can call her casual. Jesus. I need to grow up? You're a twelve year old.

Natalie begins walking away.

RYAN

I don't have a gauntlet of...

A GUST OF WIND suddenly blows the CUTOUT across the boardwalk into the OCEAN.

RYAN

... Fuck!

Ryan goes running after the cutout. He climbs down a GANGWAY to a dock that is closest to the CUTOUT, which is beginning to sink in the filthy water.

Ryan reaches... and reaches... and just as he's got a finger tip on the photo... FALLS IN.

INT. BATHROOM, HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

Ryan, still damp from the ocean, is drying the CUTOUT with a hair dryer.

INT. GATE, MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

We're following the CUTOUT HEADS popping out of the ROLL-AWAY like earlier, only now they are slightly faded and bent from their trip in the harbor.

Ryan and Natalie enter the line to get on their flight. Standing behind them is a business guy on the phone.

GUY ON PHONE

(overwhelmed)

He said "mommy"...? I can't believe it... He spoke... He spoke...! I can't believe I missed... Here, put him on the phone... Hi, Charlie... Can you say daddy?

(all we hear is crying on the other end)

Da-d-dy... Come on Charlie, say Daddy... Say Da...

(the wife picks back up)

Wait, put him back on the line... I don't care... Just... Come on, I want to hear him talk...

The other passengers give the guy a little distance.

EXT. TARMAC, MIAMI INTERNATIONAL - DAY

We're watching Ryan through the window of the plane. He almost looks trapped.

EXT. TARMAC, DETROIT INTERNATIONAL - DAY

The plane lands amidst snow.

INT. DODGE RENTAL CAR - DAY

Ryan and Natalie drive in silence. The weather is frigid.

RYAN

These Detroit guys can be tough. Don't get distracted. Stick to the simple stuff. Get the packet in their hands and get them out the door.

INT. DETROIT COMPANY - DAY

Ryan and Natalie check in at the front desk.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, DETROIT COMPANY - DAY

The door opens. Ryan and Natalie enter, when they both see something and immediately stop short.

Sitting on the conference table is a COMPUTER set up for a VIDEO CONFERENCE.

Framed up in a WINDOW on the screen is CRAIG GREGORY.

CRAIG GREGORY
Welcome to Detroit.

Natalie and Ryan exchange a look.

RYAN
Craig, what's going on here?

CRAIG GREGORY
I've been getting in great numbers over the last few days from you guys. Thought we should nut up and give this a try.

RYAN
This is a real company, Craig. We're here to do some damage.

CRAIG GREGORY
You gotta leave the nest at some point.

Natalie, once confident, now takes pause.

INT. CRAIG GREGORY'S OFFICE, CTC - LATER

Craig is leaning back in his office chair, watching Natalie on his monitor.

INT. ALTERNATE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

An unsuspecting man in his mid fifties enters the room and takes a seat at a COMPUTER TERMINAL.

(for the remainder of the scene, we will intercut between Natalie's room and the POV of the man's iChat session.)

NATALIE
Hello, Mr. Samuels. My name is Natalie Keener.

SAMUELS
(checking out the PC)
What's going on here?

NATALIE
I wish I was here with better news,
however your position here at IGL
is no longer available.

SAMUELS
What are you talking about?

NATALIE
You've been let go.

SAMUELS
What, just like that? I can't
believe... Who are you?

NATALIE
My name is Miss Keener. I am here
to tell you about your options...

SAMUELS
I work here for seventeen years and
they send some fourth grader in here
to can me? What the fuck is this?!

Ryan fights the urge to jump in. He is sitting next to
Natalie, but just out of view of the camera.

NATALIE
It's perfectly normal to be upset.
However, the sooner you can tell
yourself that there are greater
opportunities waiting for you, the
sooner your future can begin.

Mr. Samuels is now on the verge of tears. Eyes red.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Anybody who ever built an empire,
or changed the world, sat where you
~~are now. And it's because they sat~~
there that they were able to do it.

We remain in the room with Natalie and Ryan, but we hear Mr.
Samuels crying. It's loud and embarrassing. It's coming from
the next room. He's literally on the other side of the wall.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
There's a packet in front of you.

Samuels picks up the packet and opens it.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I want you to take some time and review it.

Samuels begins to leaf through.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

All the answers you're looking for are inside those pages. The sooner you trust the process, the sooner your next step in life will unveil itself.

Samuels puts down the packet. The tears still coming slowly.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I need you to return to your office now and begin to put together your personal things.

Samuels doesn't move. He's just sitting there in a daze.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time, Mr. Samuels.

No reaction. Just more silent tears. Natalie is getting nervous.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Samuels? There's nothing else we can discuss now.
(and again)
Thank you for your time.

Ryan fights the urge to break in as Natalie continues to lose her composure.

Craig leans into his computer, watching intently.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Mr. Samuels... Mr. Samuels.... MR.
SAMUELS...

Finally, Samuels breaks from his daze. He looks up and around for a second, then gets up and leaves.

Natalie catches her breath. A second later, Samuels passes their room, visible through the conference room windows. They watch as he walks away.

RYAN

You did good.

Natalie nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)

You okay? Want me to take over.

NATALIE

No, I'm alright.

Natalie pulls out a LIST OF FORTY NAMES. The amount of people is daunting. She crosses off the first name.

INT. DODGE RENTAL CAR, DETROIT - AFTERNOON

Ryan and Natalie drive. It's raining ice outside. Ryan's CELL PHONE buzzes. He picks up. What follows is a conversation with Craig, however we only hear Ryan's side.

RYAN

Hello...? Hey Craig.

(listen)

Yeah, I thought she did good too.

Impressive under pressure.

(listens)

No, it was all her. She's a natural.

Natalie smiles a little.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I mean, I don't know. We just got out here... Yeah, I suppose, but that was just one place. I think we need to try a few more...

(listens)

Maybe there isn't a difference, but it's comforting to know we're in the next room...

(listening)

I know you don't give a shit about my comfort.

(listens)

We could just use a little more time. That's all I'm saying. I don't think we're ready.

(listens)

Right... Right.

(shakes his head)

Yeah... Okay... Uh huh, bye.

Ryan hangs up.

RYAN (CONT'D)

We're going home.

NATALIE
 (tiny celebration)
 Yeah...

They drive in silence for a second.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry about what I said about
 Alex. I was out of line.

RYAN
 It's alright. I understand.

NATALIE
 You going to be okay?

RYAN
 What do you mean?

NATALIE
 In Omaha?

RYAN
 I don't know, I...
 (thinks about it)
 I don't know much about the place.

NATALIE
 It's better than you'd think.

Ryan doubts this.

INT. HOMESTEAD SUITES, DETROIT - NIGHT

Ryan is holding the LARGE EMBOSSED ENVELOPE of his sister's
 WEDDING INVITATION. He pulls out the RESPONSE CARD.

Ryan focuses on the line left for additional guests. Thinks
 about it for a moment. Then, makes a decision.

He picks up the phone and dials.

ALEX (O.C.)
 (picks up)
 I was wondering if I'd hear from
 you today.

RYAN
 You miss me?

ALEX (O.C.)
 Yeah. I was watching Shark Week...

RYAN

Of course you thought of me.

ALEX (O.C.)

Did you know that Tiger Sharks
touch with their mouths.

RYAN

I want to touch you the way sharks do.

ALEX (O.C.)

That's sweet. I do too.

RYAN

Where are you?

ALEX (O.C.)

San Diego. Why? What were you
thinking?

RYAN

Can you meet me in Vegas.

ALEX (O.C.)

Why? Are we going to elope?

CUT TO:

EXT. LUXOR HOTEL, LAS VEGAS - DAY

Ryan and Alex are outside, setting up the CUT OUT of the
engagement photo.

ALEX

I have to admit, when you asked me to
meet you in Vegas... I thought we'd
gamble, make out in a heart shaped
jacuzzi, maybe see one of those weird
French Canadian circus shows.

RYAN

There'll be plenty of time for all that.

(directing the photo)

Can you move it to the left?

Alex obliges. She checks out the engagement photo.

ALEX

How do you feel about the wedding?

RYAN

I'm fine, I guess.

(directing)

(MORE)

RYAN (cont'd)
Just lean it towards me... Okay
great... walk away.

Ryan snaps the photo.

Alex picks up the CUT-OUT.

ALEX
They're a cute couple.

RYAN
Think so?

ALEX
Yeah, they'll make cute kids.
Hopefully look a little like you.

Alex and Ryan look at the photo together for a second.

RYAN
What are you doing next weekend?

The request quickly registers with Alex... *He's inviting me
to the wedding.*

ALEX
No...

RYAN
Why not?

ALEX
I couldn't.

RYAN
I'm serious.

ALEX
You want me to be your date?
To a wedding?

RYAN
Well... Yeah.

ALEX
Jesus, Ryan. Your sister's wedding?

RYAN
It's not like I know her that well.

ALEX
I'm just not sure if it's
appropriate for me to...

RYAN

Look. You know. I'm not the wedding type. But for the first time in my life... I want a dancing partner. I want a plus one. And if you can stomach it, I'd like it to be you.

A long thoughtful beat. Alex sighs.

ALEX

Okay.

RYAN

Really?

ALEX

Yeah, I can't believe I... Yeah, I'm in.

RYAN

I feel like we should kiss or something.

ALEX

Then kiss me.

They do.

INT. BAGGAGE CAROUSEL, MILWAUKEE AIRPORT - DAY

Ryan is standing with his roll-away and a garment bag. His itinerary in one hand. Phone in the other. Behind him is a LARGE AIRLINE ADVERTISEMENT featuring CEO MAYNARD FINCH. Bomber Jacket. Captain's hat. "We Value Your Loyalty."

RYAN

(on phone)

How long have you been my assistant?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KEVIN'S DESK, CTC - SAME

Kevin is on a headset.

KEVIN

The rooms have been blocked for months. All out-of-town guests are staying at the Best Western. The actual wedding reception is happening in the hotel.

RYAN
The Best Western point system is
one step above a Ben & Jerry's
punch card.

ALEX (O.S.)
Best Western? Really? Was the
Homeless Shelter unavailable.

Ryan turns to find Alex.

RYAN
(for shame)
I think their airline partner is
Frontier.

ALEX
What kind of airline puts woodland
creatures on the tail of their planes?

RYAN
You complete me.

INT. RENTAL KIOSK - DAY

Ryan and Alex stand at the counter of a SATELLITE KIOSK in
the middle of the lot.

CAR RENTAL ASSISTANT
Membership card?

Both Ryan and Alex snap out their cards and set them on the
counter. It's a cute awkward moment.

RYAN
(embarrassed)
Oh... I...

ALEX
You take the points...

RYAN
No, I couldn't...

INT. LOBBY, BEST WESTERN HOTEL - DAY

Ryan and Alex approach the check-in lines. Of course, there's
an elite membership line, but they can't use it.

Ryan is forced to stand in a queue of three people while a
CHECK-IN LADY just stands at her computer at the elite line.

RYAN
 (to the CHECK-IN LADY)
 Are you available?

CHECK-IN LADY
 Sorry, this line is for members of
 our Gold Crown program.

Ryan steams.

INT. CORRIDOR, BEST WESTERN - DAY

Ryan and Alex walk down the long hallway. They've been given a room at the end. Just as they're entering their room, the door across the hall opens revealing a woman in her early forties with a basket of laundry. It's Ryan's sister KARA.

KARA
 Ryan?

Ryan turns and stops. It's been a while...

RYAN
 Kara...

They hug. It's a strange hug. Awkward but heartfelt.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 This is Alex.

KARA
 Well, hello.

ALEX
 Hi.

KARA
 (quite frankly...)
 Ryan has told me nothing about you.

RYAN
 Kara, what are you doing at a hotel?

KARA
 Fuck, I was hoping I wouldn't have to... Yeah, uh, Frank and I are trying out a trial separation.

RYAN
 You're not staying at the house?

KARA

There was an extra room on hold here, so I just took it for the weekend.

RYAN

Oh, okay.

KARA

Yup. So, you guys are dating?

Ryan and Alex fumble over each other.

RYAN

Um...

ALEX

It's not exactly...

KARA

Hey, don't worry about it. We're all getting a little old to be calling someone girlfriend... I remember when mom used to call Jack her boyfriend. It drove me up the wall. Boyfriends are for kids...
(mock announcing)

And I'm just a divorcee!

An awkward beat in the corridor of the Best Western.

RYAN

So, the rehearsal dinner?

KARA

Yeah, I'll see you two there.

Kara humps the laundry basket down the hall.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BEST WESTERN - DAY

Ryan and Kara settle in. There's a cheap basket with a pink ribbon tied sloppily around some cellophane. In the basket is a packet, outlining the wedding weekend.

RYAN

There's a packet.

ALEX

What in life is worth doing that doesn't have a packet.

RYAN

Um, I love you?

Ryan is kidding, but not really. They play it off as a joke, but can't help feel the weight of this "moment".

INT. CLUB ROOM FIRESIDE LOUNGE, BEST WESTERN - EVENING

A group of tables have been slid together for the rehearsal dinner. Ryan and Alex find the dinner in full swing.

Ryan's sister JULIE, the bride, waves wildly.

JULIE

Oh my God, Ryan!

She hops up and gives him a hug.

JULIE (CONT'D)

You must be Alex. You are so beautiful. Kara was right. Did you get the basket?

ALEX

The basket was very lovely.

JULIE

Tammy wrapped all of them.

Tammy waves.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Ryan, you look so grown up.

RYAN

Me? You're the one getting married.

JULIE

I know, right? You haven't even seen my ring.

Julie shows off her ring. It's not quite balanced and seems to favor quantity over quality.

JULIE (CONT'D)

(proudly)

Jim designed it.

JIM raises a hand. This is Julie's husband-to-be and we can tell immediately that Ryan isn't thrilled.

Ryan thinks of something. He pulls out the 5X7 PHOTOS they took of the JIM & JULIE CUT OUT.

RYAN
I brought those photos you were
asking for...

JULIE
(lights up)
Oh great! They go over there.

Julie points to a table and Ryan walks over. When he gets there,
we see almost a hundred photos pinned to a map of America. It's
overwhelming. All of a sudden, his effort seems miniscule.

Ryan begins to pin his photos on the map over the cities
where they were taken. He backs away to see it as a whole and
his addition has already become invisible.

Ryan returns to the conversation with his sister and Alex.

RYAN
There were quite a few already up
there. Almost couldn't find room.

JULIE
I know, isn't it great how everyone
chipped in?

RYAN
What gave you the idea to do
something so...

ALEX
(helps)
... Substantial?

JULIE
Well, Jim has a lot of our nest egg
invested in this real estate
venture right now. So when we went
over our finances, a honeymoon just
didn't seem affordable this
second... So I thought... Hey, just
because we can't travel doesn't
mean we can't have pictures.

The idea of this lands on Ryan pretty hard.

ALEX
It was a great idea.

JULIE
Thanks.

CUT TO:

AN HOUR LATER

Ryan is stuck with Jim, talking real estate. Alex is having a chat with the brides maids about local relationship drama.

JIM

It's sixty acres up against the foothills. I subdivided the old Lazy W Ranch and took a nice slice for myself.

RYAN

Sounds nice.

Jim makes an exhale noise that means "you bet your ass".

JIM

Homes will go in the high fours.

RYAN

Must be a nice development.

JIM

(correcting)

It's a community, not a development. The concept is turn-key everything. You buy a maintenance contract with the home. We'll whack your weeds, we'll even change the light bulb. Furniture? You buy your own or choose a package. Seamless traditionalism, yet all the perks.

Ryan and Alex make eye contact. There's a joy in their connection amongst the ramblings of their company.

JIM (CONT'D)

You should really give it some thought. I can get you in somewhere in the threes. I know the unit. The view's spectacular.

RYAN

I'll bet.

JIM

Hold this house six months, you'll clear a profit. That's guaranteed. We all need a place to call our own. This is America. This is what we were promised.

RYAN

That's a nice touch.

JIM
What?

RYAN
That bit at the end about
promise... I like it.

JIM
(a little embarrassed)
Thanks.
(suddenly searching for
conversation)
So, you still renting that one-
bedroom?

RYAN
I gave it up.

JIM
(surprised)
You own now?

RYAN
No.

JIM
But you're looking?

RYAN
Not really. No.

The conversation stalls out.

INT. LOBBY, BEST WESTERN - NIGHT

Everyone is leaving. Tammy grabs Julie's hands.

TAMMY
Can you believe it's tomorrow?! How
are you going to sleep?

JULIE
I don't know!

TAMMY
You want some Xanax?

RYAN
I don't think that's for sleeping.

JULIE
No, I'm good. I'll have some warm
milk. That should do the trick.

Jim comes walking by with a box of flower arrangements from the tables inside that are going to be reused at the wedding.

JIM

One more box...

ALEX

I'll get it.

RYAN

You sure?

ALEX

Yeah, yeah...

Alex steps out and for the first time in who knows how many years, Ryan, Kara, and Julie are alone together.

RYAN

Jim seems like a good guy.

JULIE

Yeah, I know... Isn't he great?

KARA

He's going to make a great husband.

There's a moment where they just look at each other and giggle a little. Just the three of them.

RYAN

Hey, Julie, I was thinking... with dad not being... Well, I didn't know if you had someone to walk you down the aisle...

JULIE

Oh, yeah, Jim's uncle is going to do it.

KARA

(uncomfortable)

He's been really supportive.

RYAN

Oh... Oh, great. Just wanted to make sure you were covered. So I should get there at...

JULIE

Guests are arriving around 5ish. Things get going at 530. So you know, around then. It's easy. Just come down the elevator.

Alex enters with the second box. Ryan notices and grabs the flowers from her and sets them in Jim's luxury pick-up truck.

INT. CORRIDOR, BEST WESTERN - NIGHT

Ryan, Alex, and Kara arrive at their adjacent rooms. Key cards slide in simultaneously. Alex heads in. Ryan stops.

RYAN

Hey Kara?

KARA

Yeah.

RYAN

Can you believe she's getting married already? She's just a kid.

KARA

No Ryan. Actually, she's 37 years old. She's barely squeaking by.

RYAN

Oh.

KARA

Yup. Sleep tight.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BEST WESTERN - NIGHT

Ryan sits on the edge of the bed. Alex slips behind him.

RYAN

Think they'll last?

ALEX

I'd like to hope so.

RYAN

I mean, how does anyone ever know?

ALEX

I don't think you do. You go with your heart and hope you're right.

RYAN

Poor Kara. She was the one who was supposed to make it.

Alex kisses Ryan's neck.

ALEX
Only helps Julie's odds, I suppose.

RYAN
Think you could ever spend the rest
of your life with one guy?

Alex pauses.

ALEX
Yeah, well, I guess it depends on
the guy.

Ryan smiles. His phone rings... CALLER ID: Natalie. Picks up.

RYAN
Hey, kiddo, how's it going?

INT. LOBBY, HOMESTEAD SUITES - DAY

Natalie is on her cell phone.

NATALIE
I'm living the dream. Work plus
travel. Seeing America.

RYAN
What do you mean?

NATALIE
Craig sent me back out for one
cycle of implementation.

RYAN
No shit. How you holding up?

NATALIE
It's cool. Strange being out here
on my own.

RYAN
Yeah?

NATALIE
Yeah. I mean no meltdowns yet.
People are taking it pretty well.

RYAN
That's good, considering.

NATALIE

Yeah, I was in DIA yesterday and someone accidentally walked into one of those display cases they use for that crappy art they have there. And first of all, strange location for an installation piece?

RYAN

Airports always seem like an odd place to showcase art.

NATALIE

Right? Anyway, on top of that, now there's shards of glass on the ground and I'm thinking all you'd have to do to make a knife and get it on a plane is bring some duct tape with you and wrap a handle around one of those shards.

RYAN

You're not getting any ideas.

NATALIE

No I'm just saying. I've had a lot of time to think.

RYAN

You call just to tell me that?

NATALIE

Nah, I just...

(a beat)

... I need a place to eat in Dallas.

RYAN

Go to Mia's. Get the brisket tacos.

NATALIE

Got it. Cool.

RYAN

You good?

NATALIE

Yeah. Totally. Thanks for the recommend.

RYAN

Hang in there.

Hangs up. Takes a breath. He looks over at Alex. She's already gone to sleep.

CUT TO:

A TEAM PHOTO OF A HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY TEAM

A finger reaches and points to an unsure teenage face.

RYAN (O.C.)

That's me.

INT. HALLWAY, WAUPACA HIGH SCHOOL - NEXT MORNING

Ryan and Alex are huddled at the trophy case.

ALEX

You played hockey?

RYAN

Don't act so surprised.

ALEX

I didn't know you were such a jock.

EXT. LOADING DOCK, WAUPACA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Ryan and Alex walk passed a concrete ledge.

RYAN

My first fight.

ALEX

How'd it go?

RYAN

(evades the question)

Let me show you my old home room.

INT. CLASSROOM, WAUPACA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Alex and Ryan are sitting in a couple desks. Ryan points out various things in the classroom as they come to him.

INT. STAIRWELL, WAUPACA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Ryan shows an area behind the stairwell.

RYAN

Brittany Rosen. She had blonde hair and these dark brown eyebrows... And when we kissed our braces mashed together like chain link fence.

ALEX

Did they lock?

RYAN

Nah, that doesn't actually happen.

ALEX

It happened to me!

RYAN

No it didn't.

ALEX

But I was wearing a retainer, so when we separated, he had my retainer sticking out of his mouth!

They bust up laughing.

CUT TO:

RYAN AND ALEX KISSING UNDER THE STAIRWELL

EXT. BLEACHERS, WAUPACA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Alex and Ryan sit tight like teenagers.

ALEX

I'm really happy I came here.

The school soccer team takes the field for practice.

RYAN

(to the team)

Go Eagles!

Players look back at him strangely.

Ryan's phone rings.

RYAN

(checks caller ID)

It's Kara.

The first thing we hear is crying in the background.

KARA (O.C.)

Ryan, where are you? We're having a meltdown here.

RYAN

What's wrong? What happened?

KARA (O.C.)

It's Jim. Can you get back here? We need your help.

RYAN

Yeah, of course...

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Ryan's rental car pulls up in front. He hops out and Alex takes the driver's seat.

ALEX

I'll grab your tux.
(adding)
Good luck.

INT. ENTRY, CHURCH - DAY

Ryan immediately spots Julie sobbing and being consoled by her bride's maids. The groomsmen are huddled in another corner, embarrassed and confused. Kara splits from the brides maids and takes Ryan aside.

RYAN

What happened?

KARA

Jim's got cold feet.

RYAN

Today?

KARA

That's how cold feet work.

RYAN

What do you want me to do?

KARA

Talk to him.

RYAN

You want me to talk to him?

KARA

Hey, it's either you or me. You know my record. I've already struck out once.

RYAN

I haven't been to bat. I haven't been in the dugout.

KARA

Don't you talk for a living? Motivational type stuff?

RYAN

I tell people how to avoid commitment.

A beat.

KARA

What kind of fucked up message is that?

RYAN

It's a philosophy.

KARA

It's stupid.

RYAN

Hey, it might have helped you.

KARA

Fear of commitment is simply a reflection of what someone craves.

RYAN

That's so profound. Someone's been reading a major woman novelist.

KARA

Yes, I'm trying to better myself. I know that's a sin in your world.

RYAN

This is a valueless conversation.

A beat of stalemate.

KARA

Come on, Ryan. You haven't been around much. Fuck, you basically don't exist to us. I know you want to be there for her... Well here it is. This is your chance.

Ryan takes a breath.

INT. SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOM, CHURCH - DAY

Ryan quietly steps in to find Jim, half dressed in a tux reading the children's book "The Giving Tree". Jim snuffles. Ryan goes to leave, when...

JIM

Ryan?

RYAN

Oh, hey Jim.

JIM

You ever read this?

RYAN

Yeah, it's pretty powerful stuff.

JIM

I'll say.

RYAN

Kara mentioned you were having some... thoughts?

Jim puts down the book.

JIM

I don't think I can do this.

RYAN

Okay. What makes you say that today?

JIM

I was just laying there last night in bed and I couldn't sleep. I was thinking about the wedding and the ceremony and all. Us buying a house and moving in together. Having a kid... Having another kid...

(begins to snowball)

... Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break, football games, all of a sudden they're out of school, getting jobs, getting married, And then, you know... I'm a grandparent. I'm retired. Before you know it - I'm dead... and I just kept thinking... "What's the point?"

Ryan gulps. Fuck.

JIM (CONT'D)

(now asking Ryan directly)

I mean what is the point?

RYAN
The point?

JIM
Yeah, I mean, what am I starting here?

RYAN
(dancing)
It's marriage... it's the most beautiful thing on Earth... you know, what everyone aspires to...

JIM
You never got married.

RYAN
That's true...

JIM
You never even tried.

RYAN
Well, it's hard to define "try".

JIM
You seem happier than most of my married friends.

Ryan takes a beat.

RYAN
Jim, I'm not going to lie. Marriage can be a pain in the ass. And you're kind of right - All of this is just stuff on the way to your eventual demise.

CUT TO:

KARA EAVESDROPPING AT THE DOOR WITH A LOOK OF COLD FEAR

BACK TO:

RYAN (CONT'D)
We are all on running clocks that cannot be slowed down or paused and they all lead to the same place. Some guys leave marks that last beyond their own mortality. Not guys like you and me... But some. But even those footprints disappear.
(a beat)
There isn't a "point".

Jim sinks a little.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I'm not the guy you'd normally want to talk to about all this stuff... But think about it - your favorite memories. The greatest moments of your life? Were you alone?

JIM

(thinks about it)
No... I guess not.

RYAN

I don't want to sound like a Hallmark card, but... Life? It's better with company.

Jim nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Come to think of it... Last night, the night before your wedding, when all this shit was circling through your head... Weren't you two sleeping in separate rooms?

JIM

Yeah, Julie went back to the apartment and I was at the Best Western all alone in that big honeymoon suite...

Jim chuckles to himself.

RYAN

Kind of lonely?

JIM

Yeah.

RYAN

Hey. Everybody needs a copilot.

This resonates with Jim and he can't help but smile.

INT. ENTRY, CHURCH

Jim walks over to the huddle of bride's maids. They part and let him in. He kneels at Julie's feet and they fall into each other. Tears and smiles spread amongst the girls.

Kara walks over to Ryan and pats him on the shoulder.

KARA
Welcome home.

MONTAGE BEGINS AS A SERIES OF IMAGES:

- Ryan and Alex getting dressed in a little kitchen in the church. They're in a hurry and a little sloppy, but there's a crooked joy in their faces.
- Jim standing at the alter with the priest getting a pat on the back from his best man.
- Julie getting walked to the alter by Jim's uncle. They pass Ryan, who looks on proudly.
- The priest gives his blessings.
- Jim raises Julie's veil. They kiss.
- Wedding attendees file into the Best Western Banquet Hall.
- Ryan and Alex mingle with their table.

RYAN
Hi, I'm Ryan.

WEDDING GUEST
I'm your cousin... Harold.

RYAN
Oh, hey!

- Ryan and Alex dance like teenagers.
 - The band does a cheesy choreographed dance step.
 - Jim makes a speech. He is not good at public speaking, but the guests are generous with laughter.
 - Tammy has her tongue down a groomsmen's throat.
-
- Ryan pulls Kara onto the dance floor. She rests her head on his shoulder and they slow dance.
-
- Jim and Julie make their farewell and run off.
 - Ryan and Alex help pick the center pieces off the tables.
 - Ryan and Alex get into the elevator together. She's wearing his jacket. We're about to see them kiss, when the elevator door closes.

INT. MILWAUKEE AIRPORT - MORNING

Ryan and Alex stand between their gates. One sign reads OMAHA. The other sign reads CHICAGO.

ALEX

Am I ever going to see you again?

RYAN

Yeah, you just have to come visit me now.

ALEX

So settled down. You're not going to change on me, are you?

RYAN

Same guy. Just one address.

ALEX

Call me if you get lonely.

RYAN

We can iChat.

Alex smiles. They kiss.

After a beat, they pull apart and leave for their respective gates. Ryan stops for a second. He has an impulse... but he finally ignores it and gets in line for the plane going home.

CUT TO:

A PEN CLICKING

INT. OLD MARKET LOFT, OMAHA - DAY

Ryan is signing the papers to his new condo.

REALTOR

Welcome home.

RYAN

(takes a breath)

This feels right.

REALTOR

You're going to be very happy here. You know you're walking distance to the Old Market.

RYAN
(pointing)
That way?

REALTOR
(pointing the opposite way)
It's more this way...

Ryan smiles. Nods. Gets an idea.

INT. OMAHA TOURIST BUREAU - DAY

Ryan walks up to the window and pulls a PAMPHLET out of a DISPLAY. The cover art features a woman with her hands next to her face, screaming "O!" For Omaha.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

Ryan is riding on a small bus with a guide book in his hand.

TOUR GUIDE
Omaha is a river city that spreads West from the water, like a timeline. We're the birthplace of America's richest citizen Warren Buffet and our thirty eighth president, Gerald Ford.

INT. NEBRASKA FURNITURE MART - DAY

Ryan shops amongst multiple living room set-ups.

INT. RITE-AIDE - DAY

Ryan is with a clerk, holding a full sized shampoo bottle.

RYAN
You're certain you have no smaller bottles?

RITE-AID CLERK
That's the size they come in.

RYAN
I don't need to wash a mammoth. How long are these bottles supposed to last? I mean, Jesus, they're enormous.

The clerk is speechless.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

The tour bus passes the ORPHEUM THEATER.

TOUR GUIDE

On the left, you'll see the recently renovated Orpheum Theater. Many great actors come from Nebraska, including Henry Fonda, Fred Astaire, Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, and Gabrielle Union.

INT. 24 HOUR FITNESS - DAY

Ryan is being toured through the gym by a SALES REP.

GYM SALES REP

We have a nice break for you folks at CTC and it's really close enough that you could drop in on a lunch break. There may even be a workout club. You should check the community board.

EXT. OLD MARKET - DAY

Ryan steps out of a CHINESE RESTAURANT with a bag of TAKE OUT. A gust of wind hits Ryan hard, almost knocking him over. A complete stranger turns to Ryan.

OMAHA STRANGER

That wind'll just cut you in half.

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY

The tour passes the Qwest convention center.

TOUR GUIDE

People think of Omaha as an insurance town, but we're also the home of Qwest, ConAgra, and Gallop Polling... which is why we like to think we have our finger on the nation's pulse.

INT. CORRIDOR, CTC - DAY

People filter out at the conclusion of a meeting. Ryan stops Craig on his way out.

RYAN

How's Natalie doing?

CRAIG GREGORY

Just great. Must have taught her well.

(begins to exit)

Now just make sure the rest of these guys know what they're doing.

Ryan looks around at the new employees sitting at teleconference setups. They're all pretty green.

INT. RYAN'S LOFT, OMAHA - EVENING

Ryan is laying on his sofa, talking to Alex on the phone.

RYAN

Yeah, it's a real home and everything.

ALEX

Do you have the shakes?

RYAN

No, I'm settling in pretty well.

We notice Ryan is wearing a Homestead Suites robe.

ALEX

You got a real bed, right? Not like some futon.

RYAN

You'll find out Tuesday.

ALEX

(teasing)

Yeah? You going to touch me like sharks do?

EXT. RENTAL CAR COUNTER - MORNING

Ryan talks to a RENTAL ADVISOR.

RYAN

(pointing to Stratus)

I'd like to buy one of those.

RENTAL ADVISOR

We're happy to hear you had such a pleasant experience with our line.

RYAN

No, I mean it. I want to buy one.

RENTAL ADVISOR
A Dodge Stratus, sir?

RYAN
One of ~~your~~ Dodge Stratuses.

RENTAL ADVISOR
Um, they're not for sale sir.

Ryan pulls out his MEMBERSHIP CARD.

CUT TO:

RYAN DRIVING OFF THE LOT IN HIS NEW DODGE STRATUS.

INT. CTC - DAY

Ryan is walking by and notices a YOUNG CTC EMPLOYEE making a rookie mistake. He stops and walks in to help.

RYAN
Don't try to be so comforting. Our job isn't to make them feel better. We're here to bridge a transition. Instead of showing compassion, show strength... and hold onto that packet til the last second. That's your way of saying goodbye.

EXT. OLD MARKET, OMAHA - DAY

Ryan in a group of a dozen runners, rounds the corner and heads into downtown.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, CTC - ANOTHER DAY

Ryan is at the table with eight others. Craig is leading a meeting. Ryan seems focused on something on his laptop.

We see his screen: The calendar shows that Alex is arriving that day. The screen tabs over to a flight schedule. We focus on a flight that says "On Time".

Ryan smiles.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Ryan follows an older lady through the produce aisle and copies her buying habits.

EXT. FLOWER MARKET - DAY

Ryan walks out with a couple vases of flowers.

INT. RYAN'S LOFT - DAY

Ryan prepares the house.

He stocks the fridge. Lines up the beverages, label out. Fixes his sheets. Puts out flowers. Unwraps a fresh bar of soap.

INT. BAGGAGE, OMAHA AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Ryan waits at the bottom of the escalator. Women's feet keep appearing, but none of them are hers.

Finally, his cell phone rings.

RYAN
(answers)
Hey, have you landed?

ALEX
I got stuck in Chicago.

RYAN
(really disappointed)
Oh. I got the whole condo... That's a shame. What happened?

ALEX
Just work. You know how it is. This was a little easier when we were two moving objects.

RYAN
Think you'll still get out?

ALEX
I'm stuck in Chicago for another couple days. Then, I have a couple stops out West, but could be there by next week.

RYAN
Right...

ALEX
I'm just as disappointed.

RYAN
Yeah, me too.

INT. CONVENTION HALL - DAY

Ryan stands before a sea of people at GOALQUEST XX.

He pulls out a BACK PACK and sets it on a table.

RYAN

Last year, I flew three hundred
fifty thousand miles. The moon is
only two fifty.

A long beat. Uncomfortable. Ryan looks at the back pack.

RYAN

Imagine for a second that you're
carrying a backpack... I want you
to feel the straps on your
shoulders... You feel them?

Ryan isn't feeling them. He is not inspired. He isn't
believable. He's barely even there.

RYAN

Now, I want you to pack it with all
the stuff you have in your life.
Start with the little things.

Ryan is trying, but he can't find the will to do this.

RYAN

The... um... The stuff in drawers
and on shelves.

Ryan takes a beat. He just stares at the backpack and thinks
about all the things he has removed from it... And then...

RYAN

Excuse me.

And with that, Ryan leaves the stage. Handlers try to figure
out what Ryan is doing. A guy in a suit goes to the mic and
tries to reassure the audience, but we're already gone.

EXT. SKYBRIDGE, AIRPORT - EVENING

Ryan hustles until he is actually jogging.

INT. BOARDING GATE, OMAHA AIRPORT - EVENING

Ryan runs up to the flight. The last one to board.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Over Ryan's shoulder, through the window, we see Chicago below as the flight begins its descent.

INT. CORRIDOR OF LIGHT, CHICAGO O'HEARE AIRPORT - NIGHT

Ryan on the PEOPLE MOVER under the ceiling of NEON LIGHTS. Peaceful music emits from hidden speakers. Ryan walks briskly past idle riders.

EXT. RENTAL CAR SATELLITE KIOSK - NIGHT

Ryan hurriedly signs a hand-held device, hops into a SEDAN and speeds off. The RENTAL CAR ASSISTANT suddenly realizes...

RENTAL CAR ASSISTANT
Hey, you forgot to give me your
Devotion Club card!

EXT. RITE-AID - NIGHT

Ryan exits the automated door with a bag and some flowers. He pulls out a box of condoms and stuff them in his pocket and tosses the bag.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE, CHICAGO SUBURBS - EARLY EVENING

Ryan steps out of his rental car and approaches the door of the townhouse - checking the address against a piece of HOMESTEAD SUITES STATIONARY.

Ryan stops, knocks, and puts on a smile.

We hear Footsteps. The door unlocks and opens revealing ALEX. She's wearing sweatpants and glasses. She's at home. She looks different.

RYAN

Surprise.

But there's something else. Alex is in shock... She's frozen.

Something's wrong. Ryan's smile begins to melt.

A man's voice calls from inside.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Honey, who's at the door?

A couple kids run by through the background, giggling. A man chases after them.

Alex is still speechless. Her eyes are angry and apologizing all at the same time.

Ryan just stands there. Emotionally bleeding to death.

ALEX
(almost inaudible)
What are you doing here?

Ryan begins to step away. He turns and heads for his car, dropping the flowers.

Alex's husband becomes visible just as she's shutting the door.

ALEX'S HUSBAND
Who was that?

ALEX
... just some guy who was lost.

Ryan gets in his rental car and drives off.

EXT. HOMESTEAD SUITES - NIGHT

We're watching Ryan through his window from far away... almost as if looking through binoculars. He sits on his bed, tie undone, holding a glass with an inch of scotch on his knee.

INT. RYAN'S SUITE, HOMESTEAD SUITES - MORNING

We see quick glimpses of Ryan getting ready. Crappy little COFFEE MAKER crappily brewing. Crappy hotel BAR OF SOAP crappily lathering. Crappy HAIR DRYER crappily blowing.

INT. AIRPORT SHUTTLE - MORNING

Ryan is on the phone with Alex.

RYAN
How could you lie to me?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ALEX'S CAR, DOWNTOWN GARAGE - SAME

Alex sits in the car with the engine running.

ALEX

How could you just show up at my door like that?

RYAN

What do you mean? I wanted to see you. I didn't know you had a family, because you never told me.

ALEX

Come on, I thought we signed up for the same thing.

RYAN

Try to help me understand. What is it you signed up for?

ALEX

I thought our relationship was perfectly clear. It's...
(a long beat)
... an escape.

RYAN

I'm an escape?

ALEX

You know, a break from our normal lives... A parenthesis.

RYAN

I'm a parenthesis?

ALEX

Seriously, Ryan? I can't believe we're having this conversation. I mean what do you want?

Ryan stumbles on this. What does he want?

ALEX (CONT'D)

You don't even know what you want.
I'm sorry that I ruined your night...
~~But you could have seriously screwed~~
things up for me. That was my family.
That's my real life.

RYAN

I thought I was a part of your real life.

ALEX

(sighs)
Look, Ryan. I'm a grown up. I don't hold a grudge.

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)
 When you're ready to be an adult and
 have fun again, just give me a call.

Ryan can't quite believe what he's hearing. There's only one
 thing he can do. He hangs up.

EXT. SKYBRIDGE - MORNING

Ryan is walking when his phone buzzes. He checks the DISPLAY -
 CTC Calling. He presses IGNORE.

INT. TICKET DESK - CHICAGO O'HAIRE - DAY

Ryan walks up to the TICKET DESK. He is more lost than usual.
 There is something plucky about the TICKET AGENT.

PLUCKY TICKET AGENT
 Welcome back, Mr. Bingham.

RYAN
 Yeah, right, you got me in 2C?

PLUCKY TICKET AGENT
 Of course. Left side aisle, non-
 bulkhead. Just like you like it.

RYAN
 What's got you so fucking happy?

The plucky agent fades a bit, then tries to recompose.

PLUCKY TICKET AGENT
 Your boarding card, Mr. Bingham.

Ryan takes the ticket and exits.

INT. BOEING 757 - DAY

Ryan sits doing nothing. Others around him play Sudoku, read
 trashy paperbacks, work on laptops. Ryan just stares at the
 stitching on the seat in front of him. When... "Bing"

PURSER
 Ladies and gentlemen, we have a
 special announcement to make.

Passengers look up.

PURSER (CONT'D)
 Our pilot has just informed me that we
 are passing over the city of Mesa...
 (MORE)

PURSER (CONT'D)
 which might not mean much to most of
 you, but means a lot to one of our
 fliers today, because he just hit
 FIVE... MILLION... MILES...

RYAN
 Oh no...

The Gershwin theme song for the airline rains down from the
 overhead speakers. Passengers clap. Flight attendants gather
 at Ryan's seat with big smiles and champagne.

Ryan doesn't even react. He's just stunned.

The flight attendants separate just enough for a man in a
 bomber jacket to squeeze through. It's Maynard Finch, the CEO
 from the commercial.

MAYNARD FINCH
 (to Ryan)
 That seat taken?

RYAN
 I, uh... no.

Maynard gives a little salute to his flight attendants, then
 slides by Ryan to the window seat.

MAYNARD FINCH
 You're the youngest yet to hit five
 mil. Don't know where you found the
 time...
 (remembers)
 Oh right, here you go.

Maynard pulls out a MEMBERSHIP CARD. It shines as if made out
 of platinum.

MAYNARD FINCH (CONT'D)
 Seventh card we've made. Small club.

It has a pair of wings around "Member Number 7". Ryan holds
 it between his fingertips... Catches his own reflection.

MAYNARD FINCH (CONT'D)
 We really appreciate your loyalty.

RYAN
 You know how many times I've
 thought about this moment? Played
 out the conversation I'd have with
 you right here.

MAYNARD FINCH

Really? What did you want to say?

A long beat.

RYAN

You know, I... I can't remember.

MAYNARD FINCH

That's alright. Happens to all of us.

(chit chat)

So, where you from?

Ryan looks at him straight in the face.

RYAN

I'm from here.

FADE TO:

DREAM LIKE TERMINAL

Ryan's POV of a long PEOPLE MOVER extending into the distance. Gates pass on either side. There is a translucent effect on the screen. As if we're looking through glass.

And then we see why. We turn to see that Ryan is wearing a WHITE SPACESUIT. Riding the people mover. Briefcase in hand.

Spacesuit Ryan steps off the people mover and walks through the terminal. No one pays him any attention. He's merely another person lost in Airworld.

EXT. TERMINAL - NIGHT

Spacesuit Ryan stands in the taxi line, waiting for a cab.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Spacesuit Ryan rides in the back of the cab.

EXT. CTC HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

The taxi pulls up outside CTC in downtown Omaha. Spacesuit Ryan steps out. A beat later, he begins to float up.

He floats up above the cab and begins to climb up floor by floor.

He passes his own floor, peering into the empty room.

He reaches the top of the building and continues to soar into the air until he is above the entire city of Omaha...

From afar, we see his tiny white isolated spacesuit hovering above the Omaha skyline.

We move back in close. His ascent has seemed to stop. Ryan measures the world below, when a flight attendant hovers up into frame next to him. The same one from the beginning of the film.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Mr. Bingham? I'm afraid it's time to leave.

SLAM CUT TO:

RYAN WAKING UP ON A PLANE

The plane is sitting at the gate and he's the last guy on. The flight attendant stands next to him with a hand on his shoulder. He starts grabbing his things.

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE, CTC - NEXT DAY

Ryan picks up the phone at his desk. He removes his new FIVE MILLION MILE CARD and dials a number off the back.

AIRLINE OPERATOR

Hello, Mr. Bingham.

RYAN

Oh, how did you know it was me?

AIRLINE OPERATOR

This is your dedicated line. We reserve them for our most loyal and appreciated fliers.

RYAN

Oh. I'd like to transfer some of my miles. Can you open up an account under Jim and Julie Miller?

AIRLINE OPERATOR

Certainly. How many miles would you like to transfer?

RYAN

How many miles would it take to circle the globe?

AIRPORT OPERATOR

We have our "around-the-world" tickets.
They're four hundred thousand miles each.

RYAN

Sounds perfect.

Craig enters Ryan's doorway.

CRAIG GREGORY

Got a second?

RYAN

(to the airline operator)
I'm going to have to call you right back.

Craig takes a seat across from Ryan.

CRAIG GREGORY

What happened to you yesterday? I
was trying to reach you all day.

RYAN

I got tied up in... personal stuff.
What's going on?

An uncomfortable beat.

CRAIG GREGORY

Do you remember Karen Barnes?

Ryan doesn't.

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

She was part of a thirty person
reduction a few weeks back in
Wichita. Natalie fired her.

RYAN

No, I fire dozens of people a day.

CRAIG GREGORY

She killed herself. Jumped off a bridge.

RYAN

Fuck.

CRAIG GREGORY

(agrees)

Yeah.

(formality)

Do you remember anyone giving you any
signals of anything? Depression?

RYAN

They're all depressed. We're firing them.

CRAIG GREGORY

Hey, look, you know I have to ask.

RYAN

No, I don't remember anything. Of course they're upset. You never think that...

CRAIG GREGORY

Wasn't any woman who gave you any indication...? Anything?

Ryan remembers her.

RYAN

No, nothing that stands out.

(a thought)

Is Natalie alright? Is she coming in?

CRAIG GREGORY

Natalie quit.

Ryan isn't surprised.

RYAN

Just like that?

CRAIG GREGORY

Text message.

Ryan stifles a laugh.

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

Yeah, real fucking nice, right? No one has manners anymore.

RYAN

She say where she was going?

CRAIG GREGORY

Nah. She was pretty upset.

RYAN

I should give her a call.

CRAIG GREGORY

(business)

I need you back in the air.

Ryan doesn't react.

CRAIG GREGORY (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? I thought you'd be thrilled.

RYAN

I'm fine. What about video conferencing?

CRAIG GREGORY

CTC is pausing on the whole new media front for a moment. Giving it a little more thought. Getting our work horses back out doing what they do best.

RYAN

How long are you sending me out?

CRAIG GREGORY

We're going to let you sail and sail. Send us a postcard if you ever get there.

Ryan absorbs this. Nods.

INT. RYAN'S LOFT, OMAHA - DAY

Ryan packs his roll-away.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Natalie walks up the driveway, toting her ROLL-AWAY. The front door opens revealing a husband and wife in their late fifties. It's NATALIE'S MOM AND DAD. She's moving back in with her parents.

Natalie drops her head, embarrassed. They immediately hug her. For the moment, she's a kid again.

INT. OMAHA AIRPORT - DAY

Ryan walks through the automated door. He looks like he did in the opening of the film. ~~Maybe even wearing the same clothes. Something is different though.~~

RYAN (V.O.)

Tonight, most people will be welcomed home by jumping dogs and squealing kids. Their spouses will ask about their day and tonight they'll sleep.

Ryan stops and looks up at a GIANT BOARD OF DESTINATIONS. An endless list of cities around the world. A menu of new lives departing every five minutes.

RYAN (V.O.)

The stars will wheel forth from their daytime hiding places, crowning their neighborhood with lights.

We look back at Ryan. His eyes lock on one of the cities. We don't see which one. He makes a mental decision and turns in the direction of the gate. He lets go of his ROLL-AWAY.

RYAN (V.O.)

And one of those lights, slightly brighter than the rest, will be my wingtip, passing over, blessing them.

Ryan takes a step, but before his foot can land we...

CUT TO BLACK

