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Hate Date

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Hate Date

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In
Creative Writing

by

Mike Gemme

B.A. Marist College, 2003

December, 2006

Revenge is never the answer, except when it is.

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Abstract

This is a story about a man who revenge dates women for hire because he thinks women are only out to hurt men. Bryce has something of an allergic reaction anytime he tries to talk to a woman unless it is under a completely false pretense, in which case he is a woman's worst nightmare: A charming, handsome, heartbreaker. His world gets turned upside down when Bryce, despite his affliction, falls in love with a woman and must undergo painful subterfuge techniques just to be around her. Can a relationship built on pain, survive? Will Bryce give up what he believes in for the love of a gender he's hated his whole life? Is revenge worth it?

INT. BOSTON MUSEUM OF SCIENCE - DAY

On the wall is a digital sign bearing a number in the SEVEN BILLIONS. The number counts up by one at a steady pace. Above the sign reads "EARTH'S POPULATION".

BRYCE (V.O.)

You know that sign at the Museum of Science that estimates the number of people on the planet? It increases about every second. I have a sign like that in my office that represents every time a woman has broken some poor guy's heart.

In front of the sign, BECKY, 30, red curly hair, stands screaming, at BARRY, 30, who fights back tears.

A large CROWD around them is staring at the scene.

BRYCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Guess which one counts faster?

She rips her NECKLACE off, thrusts it in his face, then throws it over the balcony.

The necklace soars across the room then lands and STICKS to a giant ELECTROMAGNET.

EXT. MUSEUM OF SCIENCE - DAY

Barry stands at a bus stop in the rain getting POURED on. PEOPLE pass by him with umbrellas, stare at him.

BRYCE (V.O.)

After all the crying and sadness, guys who have been hurt do one of two things...

INT. BUS - DAY

Outside in the rain, a large billboard nears. A RED-HEADED MODEL smiles at us.

Barry sits with his face and hand against the window of the bus, stares longingly at the billboard.

BRYCE (V.O.)

They think about how they can get their girl back...

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A modest, one story office tucked away among the big buildings of downtown Boston. The building has no identifiable characteristics save the number: 1353.

BRYCE (V.O.)
Or they think about how they can
get their girl back.

Barry stands staring at the building, angry as hell.

In his hand he holds a red, transparent, BUSINESS CARD with the number "1353" written at the top.

Next to the door is a small placard with "1353" at the top. The business card is pressed against it revealing "Hate-Date."

BRYCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The latter come to me with their
problems, and believe me, some of
the things women do to men would
blow you away.

The door BUZZES and CLICKS. Barry opens it, enters...

INT. HATE-DATE.COM OFFICE - DAY

Barry sits in a chair with a towel drying himself off. He speaks animatedly.

BARRY
She publicly humiliated me every
chance she had...

Across from him sits BRYCE HUGHESTON, 25, classically good looking, dressed casual, taking notes and nodding.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Constantly told me my gifts were
worthless, that I was worthless.

CUT TO:

SENOR BLANCO, a Spanish man in his 40s, sits in the seat previously occupied by Barry, dressed head to toe in WHITE.

SENOR BLANCO

We decorated the place together, it was perfect, until she threw me out. Now my place has beige walls.

CUT TO:

A BEARDED MAN with a mohawk, piercings.

BEARDED MAN

She let a small Malaysian family move into our home. I found her in bed with the teenage daughter.

CUT TO:

An EXTREME SPORTS GUY in a tight tank top, sports sunglasses, sweat bands on his arms, wrists, and head.

EXTREME SPORTS GUY

She was supposed to meet me in Bangor for some base-jumping, we were on separate flights and she never showed. I even got her this expensive luggage set.

CUT TO:

The Bearded Man again.

BEARDED MAN

I caught Dengue from them. I almost died.

Across from him Bryce sits in his chair, cringes.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An intensely WHITE apartment. White rugs, walls, rugs, curtains, everything. White, white, white.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Then, I mean the name says it all: we revenge date these women. We hate-date them.

Bryce stands over the couch with an empty glass.

A large grape-juice STAIN on the white couch.

Bryce shrugs-- *whoops!*

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Just inside the doorway from the kitchen sits an upside-down plate on the white carpet, pasta sauce SPLATTERED all over.

Bryce stands above the mess, shrugs-- *oops!*

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

A ridiculously white bedroom. Bedspread, walls, carpet, all white. Paintings on the wall are framed whiteness.

Bryce paces back and forth quickly, muttering to himself.

He stops, takes a deep breath, then SLICES his upper arm with a large KNIFE. He CRINGES in pain.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - LATER

There is blood on the bedspread, the carpet, the pillows, the paintings, the curtains.

Bryce stands in the middle of the room, holding his bleeding arm, shrugs-- *sorry!*

EXT. QUAIN T NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The Bearded Man and REX WALLER, 29, the hot guy every woman is attracted to, peek out from behind a pickup truck.

BRYCE (V.O.)

It started as a favor for a professor in college. My roommate thought we could turn it into a business. Now Rex and I are partners, making mid six figures.

A WOMAN, 30's, pulls LETTERS out of her mailbox.

One letter is from "Buerger Health & Associates."

She tucks the other letters under her arm, opens the one, reads... Shocked, the mail under her arm falls to the ground.

The letter reads: "Gonorrhoea: Negative. Chancroid: Negative. Dengue: Positive."

BRYCE (V.O.)
Together we devise punishments to
fit these women's crimes.

The Bearded Man smiles widely, shakes Rex's hand then turns back to the Woman, captivated.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The bathroom door swings open, a SEDUCTRESS in slinky lingerie steps out, smiles.

A eloquent, expensive, empty hotel room.

Her smile fades quickly, turns into a frown, then anger.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Bryce at the wheel, he SINGS along to the radio.

The back seat is filled with large pieces of LUGGAGE adorned with SNOW-BOARDERS and SKYDIVERS.

BRYCE (V.O.)
I handle the long-term stuff. Stuff
that takes patience and care. They
never see it coming.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A small, fancy restaurant with violin players in the corner and high-class clientele.

Bryce, at a table, holds an expensive NECKLACE, smiles.

Becky, Barry's red-head ex-girlfriend, sits across from him. She takes the gift, puts it on, loves it, smiles coyly.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Bryce and Becky thrust themselves into a stall, kissing.

He pulls her dress over her head, she is completely naked underneath.

They continue, she starts to undo his belt while they kiss.

BRYCE
(Whispers, sexy)
Turn around...

Becky puts her hands against the wall, tucks her hair to one side, smiles, looks behind her...

The stall door is open, she's alone.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An "OUT OF ORDER" sign is slapped onto the women's room door.

Bryce slings the dress over his shoulder, pulls a FIRE ALARM on the wall. BELLS ring, emergency lights FLASH.

The PEOPLE dining in the restaurant clamor and rush for the exit, Bryce blends into the crowd.

Becky peeks her head out the bathroom door.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The CROWD stands CHATTERING on the curb waiting to go back inside.

MALE VOICE
Look at that!

Through the front windows, a naked Becky is carefully pulling a tablecloth off a table, trying not to break any glassware.

HOOTING and APPLAUSE roar from the crowd.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Becky looks up, ducks behind a table.

In the back of the room the KITCHEN STAFF stands staring at her, they APPLAUD as well.

Becky quickly PULLS the tablecloth around her, plates and glasses SHATTER on the floor around her.

Through the small circular window on the kitchen door, Barry smiles, observing the scene.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Barry turns, extends his hand.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I've never met a customer that was wholly displeased with what we do for them, and we take on a lot of jobs.

Bryce shakes Barry's hand, smiles, claps him on the shoulder, then turns and exits with Becky's dress slung over his shoulder.

BRYCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's cyclical. Women hurt men, men come to me, we get them back...

Barry turns back to the window.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A small private room in a bar with a nice buffet spread, lots of MEN mingling around, watching sports on televisions, drinking. No women in sight.

Bryce leans on a wall in the back of the room sipping a beer.

BRYCE

...Then every couple months we all meet up and celebrate what we've accomplished.

LEO BUNDEGRAW, early 40's, suit and tie, stares blankly, taking it all in.

LEO

You absolutely hate women, huh?

BRYCE

I hate when women leave men ruined, unable to trust with no way to fight back.

LEO

Do you ever hate-date men?

BRYCE

Women do this to men every day without any help. It's in their blood. It's why you're here.

A group of WOMEN filter into the party with Rex.

Bryce sees, is not happy about this.

BRYCE

Excuse me a second.

Rex introduces some of the women to the men, they all mingle. He sees Bryce, walks over.

BRYCE

I thought you weren't going to do this anymore.

REX

Do what? Take care of our clients? Look, maybe you want every one of these things to be a sausage-fest but these guys have been hurt. Yeah we make them feel better about it, but I happen to believe that the only way to get over the hump is with a little humping, so go brood in the corner, get Leo to commit to something long term and let Uncle Rex handle the entertainment.

Bryce frowns, slugs his beer. Some Men come shake his hand.

INT. BAR - LATER

The Men and Women continue to mingle.

Bryce sits at the bar drinking a beer next to Teddy, 24, messy black hair, he types on his SIDEKICK. Bryce glances across the room every few seconds at...

A tall, gorgeous, BRUNETTE catches his glance, smiles.

Bryce turns away, toward Teddy. He picks up his keys, fingers his INDIANA JONES KEYCHAIN.

BRYCE

I think I'm gonna get going.

TEDDY

Already? I thought you were trying to close that Bundegraw case.

BRYCE

Well, get off that thing for five minutes and talk to me.

TEDDY

I just finished loading every file we have onto this thing. I'm trying to organize it.

BRYCE

You've got every hate date file on there?

The Brunette comes over, extends her hand to Bryce.

BRUNETTE

Hi, I'm Lynette.

Bryce takes her hand, not enthused.

BRYCE

Bryce, nice to meet you.

Teddy looks, wide-eyed, from Bryce to Lynette, and back to Bryce, as if waiting for something bad to happen.

BRUNETTE

Rex told me about you and I have to say that as much as he talked you up I had no idea you would be so incredibly sexy.

She puts her hand behind his neck, strokes his hair.

Bryce looks unnerved.

BRUNETTE (CONT'D)

Why don't you come home with me? We can see if he underestimated what you can do between the sheets.

Bryce's face FLUSHES, he tries to speak but can't, GASPS for air, COUGHS.

The Brunette is confused as his gasps and coughs grow violent.

Teddy whisks him away, leads him across the room. Bryce breaks away and SPRINTS out of the room, continues to COUGH.

Leo walks up to Teddy.

LEO

Is he okay? What happened?

TEDDY

Some girl came on to him.

LEO

So?

TEDDY

Don't let this affect your decision to hire us or not, but Bryce can't talk to real women.

LEO

What?

TEDDY

He can only talk to women under a completely false pretense. He creates these personas to distance himself from the women he hate-dates. It's what makes him so good at this, he could never date anyone he actually liked, ever.

LEO

He's never had a real girlfriend?

TEDDY

We've been doing this for four years and I've never seen him even hold hands with a girl unless it was on a hate-date.

LAUGHTER erupts across the room. Teddy and Leo turn.

Rex entertains a group of the men. He gestures a story, mimicking Bryce's problem. They burst with laughter again.

LEO

Yeah, he sounds perfect.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Bryce leans against the building, hands in his pockets, takes deep breaths.

Leo exits the bar, sees Bryce, leans with him.

LEO

So, what're we looking at here?

BRYCE

It's up to you. How bad do you want it to hurt?

LEO
Pretty bad I guess. What's the
absolute worst thing you do?

BRYCE
That'd be the L.R. The Life Ruiner.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce sits on a queen-size bed, setting the alarm clock on
the night stand, he's in his pajamas.

BRYCE (V.O.)
It takes years. But it's exactly
like a real, long term
relationship. All of her friends,
her family, they get pushed aside
in favor of her fiance...

Bryce is BLIND-SIDED by a pillow, he turns...

JULIE, 31, blonde and gorgeous kneels on the bed holding a
pillow at the ready, her large engagement ring noticeable.

BRYCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But she never gets to walk down
that aisle. She's left with a lot
of broken relationships and the
cold, lonely feeling of being
desperately alone.

Bryce dashes across the bed, tackles Julie with kisses.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Leo stares at Bryce, jaw hanging open.

LEO
Jesus Christ. How do you sleep at
night?

Bryce looks at Leo earnestly.

BRYCE
Like a baby...

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce lies sleeping in a large bed, spoons Julie.

BRYCE (V.O.)
...Because I know that what I do
means something to me. More
importantly it means something to
thousands of men out there who have
had their hearts broken by selfish
women.

Julie kisses Bryce's hand, holds him close.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

An alarm BEEPS. Curtains mechanically OPEN revealing the
Boston city-scape through picture windows, lighting the room.

Julie kneels on the bed, bouncing in tune to the beeps.

JULIE
Bryce, Bryce, Bryce, Bryce, Bryce,
Bryce, Bryce--

BRYCE groans and rolls over.

BRYCE
Alright, I'm up.

JULIE
Good, get naked.

Julie peels her shirt off.

BRYCE
Why do we even sleep with clothes
on?

JULIE
C'mon, c'mon.

She slaps his chest.

BRYCE
I've gotta get ready for work.

JULIE
Nuh-uh. I set the clocks ahead two
hours after you fell asleep.

The clock by the bed reads 7:30.

Horror and defeat befall Bryce's face.

BRYCE
I pray your sex drive decreases
once we're married.

JULIE
Are you kidding? I'm gonna ride you
on the Altar.

She kisses Bryce's chest, his stomach...

JULIE
Against the tabernacle... in the
confessional, the rectory...

Bryce puts his hands behind his head and smiles.

INT. JULIE'S BATHROOM - DAY

A lavish bathroom, clean, pristine.

Bryce opens his BRIEFCASE on the counter, puts in a wireless
EARPIECE, pushes a button on an unseen phone.

He steps into and runs the shower, a HAND-HELD, rinses.

BRYCE
Lori. Hey, baby. Yeah, I'm in the
shower. I can't wait for the game
tomorrow. Wear that Yaz jersey...

INT. JULIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bryce enters, dressed business casual, Julie sits at the
table eating cereal, in her tank and boxers.

Bryce takes a BOWL from the cabinet, pours cereal.

JULIE
I could hear you in there you know.

Bryce looks up, pays no attention to the cereal, it overflows
the bowl.

BRYCE
What?

JULIE
You can't sing worth a lick. You're
tone deaf.

BRYCE

Oh! Yeah... I'm awful. So bad.

Bryce opens the fridge, everything is in perfect order. He pulls out the MILK, shakes it, barely a drop left.

Julie gets up, goes to the sink.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Hey, can I have your--

She dumps a bowl full of milk in the sink.

JULIE

Have a good day.

She kisses him on the cheek and leaves. He looks at his dry bowl of cereal and dumps it back into the box.

EXT. JULIE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Bryce walks away from the building carrying his briefcase.

He puts his earpiece in, opens his case and pulls a phone out, dials. He dodges cars as he crosses the street.

BRYCE

I can't wait to see you either,
Hannah. We still on for lunch?

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Bryce stops outside a T Subway Station, puts his briefcase down on a wall. On the phone again...

BRYCE

Heather, not every restaurant is
reservation-only. Okay. See you
tomorrow. I love you. Heather?

He opens the briefcase revealing six CELL PHONES strapped neatly to the top half of the case.

Three phones are face down, Bryce slides his phone next to them, also face down.

The other phones are face up with LABELS. One says "Amy" the other "Tara." He picks up Amy, dials.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Amy, hey. Just wanted to say good
morning quick--.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Bryce stands doing his crossword puzzle sandwiched between
several RIDERS. Something catches his eye, he looks up.

FRAT GUY (O.S.)
Look at you with all those curves,
and me with no brakes.

A few feet down a FRAT GUY is pestering CHARLIE, a gorgeous
brunette reading a book. She looks up at...

Bryce, still watching her.

FRAT GUY (CONT'D)
Give me your name so I can carve it
above my closet door.

Bryce laughs.

It makes Charlie laugh too.

FRAT GUY (O.S.)
You can't even imagine the things
I'd do to you if you let me...

Bryce looks up again - *Is this guy for real?*

Charlie puts her book down, glares up at the Frat Guy...

CHARLIE
Your persistence surprises even me,
you give mercenaries a bad name.

BRYCE (O.S.)
Indiana Jones.

Charlie turns to Bryce, smiles, approaches.

The Frat Guy calls to Charlie, she ignores it.

CHARLIE
Thanks for the save.

BRYCE
No problem, I love those movies.

CHARLIE
Me too. Still doing those
crosswords, huh?

Bryce, surprised, looks down at his book, back up at Charlie.

BRYCE
Yeah...

He starts to cough, clears his throat.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Excuse me...

The train LURCHES to a stop, the doors open, Bryce continues
to cough.

CHARLIE
This is my stop...

Charlie, disappointed, turns and gets off the train.

Bryce collapses into a seat, gasping for breath. A WOMAN next
to him slides away.

EXT. BOSTON COMMON - DAY

Bryce exits a T station, earpiece in, clears his throat.

BRYCE
(hoarse)
I'll quit my job and you can pay
for this weekend in Bermuda. That's
what I thought. Love you, bye Tara.

He pulls his earpiece out, rubs his ear, winces.

His pace quickens, he crosses streets without looking.

Teddy, bag slung over his shoulder, leans against a wall. He
types on his sidekick. As Bryce approaches, Teddy stands up,
walks in stride with him.

BRYCE
(still hoarse)
Who are you talking to?

TEDDY
Leslie Thompson.

BRYCE
We haven't stood her up yet?

TEDDY

Thursday.

BRYCE

I just met this amazing woman on the train. She quoted Indiana Jones to this guy who was hitting on her.

TEDDY

Sounds like a dream.

BRYCE

Actually she didn't even quote Indiana Jones she quoted Belloq.

TEDDY

I don't know what that means, but I'm guessing it's why your face is all red and your voice scratchy.

Ahead of them a WOMAN stands screaming at her BOYFRIEND, waves a BOX of tampons in his face, throws it into traffic and storms off.

The Boyfriend darts out into the street, dodges CARS, grabs the box and runs back onto the sidewalk, bumping into Bryce.

BOYFRIEND

Sorry, sorry.

Bryce catches the Boyfriend from stumbling, brushes him off. The Boyfriend runs off after the Woman.

TEDDY

Let me guess. You didn't ask her out.

BRYCE

A gorgeous brunette that quotes Indiana Jones is like, tailor made for me. There's a 97.4 percent chance I fall madly in love with her and get my heart broken.

Bryce and Teddy continue walking.

TEDDY

You really think that's what will happen?

BRYCE

I know it. Just as much as I know tampon girl is going to leave her boyfriend and get hate-dated for it.

TEDDY

And how do you know that?

BRYCE

Because I slipped him a business card when I picked him up.

They stop in front of the Hate-Date office.

TEDDY

You coming up?

BRYCE

I've got some dates.

TEDDY

Don't forget, you promised to be my moral support at that speed dating thing tonight.

BRYCE

I really have to do that?

TEDDY

I hate going to those things alone. Besides, you owe me for breaking into that girl Marcy's apartment last week to steal your watch back.

Bryce walks away with a grin.

INT. ICE CREAM SHOP - DAY

Bryce sits across from HANNAH, 31, curvy blond, at a table in the busy shop, they both eat ice cream. He wears hospital scrubs and a white doctor's coat. A medical ID with his picture is clipped to it.

BRYCE

--She needed to get to surgery but we couldn't stabilize her. I ended up trache-ing her on the elevator--

Hannah stares hard at Bryce as she eats her ice cream, doesn't deviate her gaze at all.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

This guy on his way to Radiology
saw the whole thing, I'm surprised
he didn't faint.

Outside the shop two WOMEN walk up to the door. One smokes,
the other doesn't. They stand outside talking.

The Non-smoker has short, dark hair and a nose ring, she is
animated as she talks. She turns her gaze into the shop...

Bryce ducks out of her view, concealing himself behind
Hannah. He lowers his head, holds it in his hand, as if in
deep thought.

HANNAH

Baby, what's wrong?

BRYCE

You don't wanna hear about it, I
don't want to talk your ear off
about work.

HANNAH

Are you kidding? You have such an
exciting life, with intubating and
triage and saving lives.

Bryce continues to duck to keep the Non-smoker out of view.

The Smoker FLICKS her cigarette to the ground.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

What's wrong? Hey, look at me, tell
me what's bothering you.

BRYCE

I'm just thinking about this
procedure I have this afternoon.
Last time... well, we lost someone
last time we had to do it.

The door opens, Smoker and Non-Smoker walk in.

Bryce is nervous now, sweating.

HANNAH

Oh honey, you look terrified.

BRYCE

I think I'm going to go splash some
water on my face.

HANNAH

Of course, my love. Take your time.

The Non-smoker bumps into Hannah's chair as she and the Smoker walk to the counter.

INT. ICE CREAM SHOP BATHROOM - DAY

Bryce stands in front of the mirror. He begins pulling medical equipment out of his coat pockets and placing them on the counter. A STETHOSCOPE, EAR-LIGHT, PRESCRIPTION PAD, GAUZE, TAPE, GLASSES, A SURGEON'S MASK and CAP.

He pulls off his coat, revealing FAKE BLOOD splattered all over his scrubs. He unties his pants...

Strapped to his thigh is a PASSPORT, he RIPS it out.

He flips through the pages, each has a small picture of a woman's face, a name, and other information.

A page reads has a picture of the Non-smoker, "CAROLYN HAYS." Below her name, "Archeologist, UCLA, HD: false accusation-cheating."

BRYCE

Carolyn...

Bryce unlocks the door and peeks out.

Carolyn and the Smoker stand chatting with Hannah.

Bryce can't believe it.

INT. ICE CREAM SHOP - DAY

Bryce steps out of the bathroom wearing the surgeon's cap and glasses. He walks briskly toward the three women.

He touches Hannah's elbow, leans in close, obstructing the others' view of him.

BRYCE

That patient coded, I've got to go.
I'm sorry. I'll call you later.

HANNAH

Okay, are you feeling any better?

BRYCE

I'll have to, I don't really have a choice.

He kisses her melodramatically and steps away.

He smirks as he walks toward the door.

CAROLYN (O.S.)

As I was saying, I used to come in here with this archeologist I dated last year.

SMOKER (O.S.)

Oh yeah, what ever happened to that guy?

Carolyn pauses for a second, contemplates.

CAROLYN (O.S.)

Died, got mauled by coyotes in the Ozarks. He was a lousy lay anyway.

Bryce, shocked, whips his head around. As a result he bumps into a table, knocks it over.

The three women turn and look.

He is on the floor, his equipment spilled everywhere. He scrambles to pick up some of it, then runs out.

INT. HATE-DATE.COM OFFICE - DAY

Teddy sits on the couch, typing on his sidekick.

Across from him, Leo is bent over the coffee table filling out forms.

Rex enters, starts unbuttoning his shirt.

REX

Teddy, take your clothes off.

Leo looks up, *What the hell?*

TEDDY

What's wrong with what you have on?

REX

Olga, that control freak, hasn't let me out of the house in three days.

(MORE)

REX (cont'd)
I stink like Becks, bratwurst and
sex, I've got a hate-date with
Merideth Goldsmith in thirty and I
need to appear less like a Nazi
philanderer and more like a
graduate student who's not at all
petrified about attending his first
Briss.

Rex continues to undress, undoes his pants, drops them.

REX (CONT'D)
What's your story?

Leo looks up from his paperwork.

LEO
She, um, I'm pretty sure she sold
my dog to the Chinese restaurant I
eat at every Wednesday.

Teddy pulls off his shirt, he's extremely pale and misshapen.

REX
What makes you think she did that?

Rex grabs the shirt, pulls it on, it's EXTREMELY tight,
borderline ridiculous.

LEO
The dog went missing last Tuesday,
and when I got home from work the
next day, my "chow-mein" was
waiting for me with a note from
her. "Enjoy."

REX
Okay, what do you want us to do? We
can get her fired, does she like
her job? Or we could take her to
Maine and leave her there.

LEO
Oh, I don't know-- really? Just
leave her there?

REX
Depending on how long she spends
searching for you, she could be
stuck there for days. Oh, I can
give her Dengue, but I've already
been on penicillin for two days, so
you'll have to let me know quick.

Rex takes Teddy's pants from him, walks out without putting them on.

Teddy stands, in his underwear, typing on his sidekick.

Leo looks up from the papers, double takes.

LEO

Could you put some clothes on?

Teddy picks up Rex's pants with his pinky, surveys them. He cringes.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce walks down the sidewalk and comes upon a HOMELESS MAN sitting on a bench looking particularly dejected.

He looks up at Bryce, pathetically, just nods, doesn't beg.

Bryce nods and passes him. He stops, turns back. Pulls out his wallet and hands the homeless man a \$20.

HOMELESS MAN

Oh, thank you so much. I've been missing my girlfriend so bad, now I can treat her to something nice and she'll take me back!

Bryce is horrified. He snatches the twenty back, hands him a five and hurries away.

Bryce comes upon another HOMELESS MAN #2 sitting on a bench, looking equally dejected as the first. Bryce stops.

BRYCE

Do you have a girlfriend?

The Homeless Man looks at himself. He's filthy and raggedy. He holds out his arms and looks up-- *Do I look like I have a girlfriend?*

HOMELESS MAN

Are you serious?

Bryce hands the man a twenty. Claps him on the shoulder, walks on.

A horn BLASTS, Bryce stops, nods.

A fire truck pulls up to the curb, the FIREFIGHTER steering the back stands up, smiles.

FIREFIGHTER
You ready or what?

EXT. FIRE HOUSE - DAY

PAM, 27, tall, cute, stands outside the firehouse next to the open garage door. She holds a large brown bag.

The fire truck drives up.

Bryce, dressed in firefighter GEAR and covered in SOOT, jumps off the back of the truck as it pulls into the garage.

BRYCE
Sorry I'm late, we got a call.

He kisses her on the cheek, leaves a mark of soot.

INT. FIRE HOUSE - DAY

A kitchen with a large dinner table, Bryce and Pam are caddy-cornered at one end, holding hands, looking into each other's eyes. Their plates empty in front of them.

PAM
So, are you going to make me beg?

Bryce leans in, his lips centimeters from hers.

BRYCE
Maybe...

CUT TO:

Pam grabs onto the FIRE POLE, Bryce holds her up, helps her wrap her legs around it.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Not too tight now, just let yourself fall.

Bryce kisses her, lets her go. She SLIDES down, screams cutely as she goes.

Bryce watches her through the hole in the ground. The FIRE CAPTAIN walks over.

FIRE CAPTAIN
Bryce!

BRYCE
Captain, thanks again for this.
She's been asking to see the place
for weeks.

FIRE CAPTAIN
After what you did for me, anytime.

The Captain claps him on the back, smiles devilishly.

FIRE CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
So... how are you going to do it?

Bryce leans in close to the captain, whispers.

BRYCE
She left my guy when he found out
he has cancer. Her sister is real
sick, so when she goes, so do I.

FIRE CAPTAIN
Jesus Christ.

BRYCE
It's hate date, not "kinda don't
really like you right now" date.

The Captain shakes his head.

FIRE CAPTAIN
I could never do what you do.

Bryce grabs the pole. He shrugs at the Captain, slides down.

INT. DUNKIN' DONUTS - DAY

Bryce sits at the counter next to DAVE PATTEN, 34, finely
dressed, sips a COFFEE.

DAVE
You sure you don't want anything?

BRYCE
Yeah, Julie made a big breakfast.

DAVE
Julie is cooking now? Is she
finally acting like a fiance?

BRYCE
She's all gung-ho about it.

DAVE

Does it ever get to you? I mean,
don't you care about her a little?

BRYCE

I don't know. The sex is amazing,
there's definitely an attraction.

DAVE

But you don't like being with her.

BRYCE

We get along great. She's actually
the only girl I've been even
remotely honest with.

DAVE

Is that why you haven't set a date?

BRYCE

No. I just haven't-- It's just not
time yet.

DAVE

Because, if you love her--

BRYCE

Whoa, I didn't say I love her.

DAVE

If you care about the girl, really
care about her, I wouldn't mind
seeing you two together. Really
together.

BRYCE

We have a contract, Dave.

DAVE

I like to think we've become
friends over the past four years.
If you want to admit that you want
to be with her, I'd void it in a
heartbeat.

Patten takes a thick ENVELOPE out of his coat, puts it in
front of Bryce.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'll see you at the wedding.

Dave claps Bryce on the shoulder, steps away.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Oh, right. No I wont.

Bryce picks up the envelope, stares at it, turns it in his hands.

INT. JULIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julie lies, spread out on the carpet holding a glass and a bottle of wine. She pours herself some, spills a bunch. She's drunk.

Bryce enters, dressed normal. He puts his briefcase down and sits next to Julie.

BRYCE
Bad day?

JULIE
Yeah, awful. How was yours, honey?

BRYCE
Pretty long, but good.

Bryce lies back, they stare at the ceiling together.

JULIE
Do you ever miss being in the FBI?

He laughs to himself, takes a sip of her wine, hands it back.

BRYCE
Not really.

JULIE
I think that's why you're the only
guy I've ever been with that I
haven't cheated on.

BRYCE
Because I quit my job?

JULIE
Not a lot of guys would give up a
cushy government job to be a grief
counsellor. You're so caring. I
love that about you.

Bryce thinks for a second.

BRYCE
I got sick of living a lie.

JULIE

Me too.

She sits up, kisses him. Pours him a glass from the coffee table. He takes it, drinks.

BRYCE

Why are you telling me this?

JULIE

I've just always been a cheater, but with you I've never had the desire to.

BRYCE

I think that's called love?

JULIE

I've been in love. Love's got nothing to do with it.

BRYCE

What is it then, Tina Turner?

JULIE

You're just perfect. Sometimes I feel like you were put here just for me.

BRYCE

How delightfully egocentric of you.

Julie turns over, slaps Bryce's chest, lies back down.

JULIE

You just get everything about me, it's creepy sometimes. Like you've got a handbook on me.

Bryce fights back laughter again, takes another sip.

BRYCE

Like when I got you those wool socks when you had pneumonia?

JULIE

I was thinking more like when we fucked in the dressing room at Urban Outfitters, but these socks are pretty sweet.

Julie lifts her legs up, wiggles her feet, wearing the socks. He finishes his glass.

BRYCE
How about another bottle?

JULIE
How about two?

INT. BRYCE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Bryce stumbles through the kitchen to the stove. He opens it and it's empty.

JULIE (O.S.)
I didn't cook anything.

Bryce turns around and Julie is at the doorway.

BRYCE
But I'm hammered. I haven't eaten
all day. I have to meet Teddy--

Julie slides her dress off, steps to Bryce.

JULIE
Start with me, and I'll heat you up
something before you go.

She unbuttons Bryce's shirt, kisses his neck, chest.

He picks her up, spins her, places her on the top of the stove. He kisses her hard.

EXT. EMBROSIO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A cab pulls up to a fancy brick building in the north end.

The cab door opens and Bryce stumbles out, his shirt untucked, his sleeves unrolled and wrinkly.

INT. EMBROSIO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Twenty tables with two chairs each are set up in a private room, dozens of MEN and WOMEN mingle about. A banner above the scene reads "Welcome to Speed-Dating!"

Teddy hurries up to Bryce, stops when he sees his appearance.

TEDDY
Are you drunk?

BRYCE
There's a 63.7 percent chance I'm
already hung over.

INT. EMBROSIO'S RESTAURANT - LATER

Bryce is slumped in a chair at a table, starts to doze.

A loud DING jolts him awake. A hand reaches over and slaps
him on the shoulder.

A WOMAN sits down across from Teddy at the table next to
Bryce.

CRYSTAL, 29, EXTREMELY tall, tucks her skirt underneath her,
sits down across from Bryce. He slaps his face a few times.

Crystal looks up, her eyes water...

CRYSTAL
Bryce?!

BRYCE
What? Aw, shit.

Bryce stands up, undoes his pants, reaches inside.

CRYSTAL
What're you doing?

BRYCE
Trying to pull my thing out--

CRYSTAL
Excuse me?!

Teddy pulls Bryce's hand out of his pants and sits him down.

TEDDY
It's Crystal. Now sit down and play
it cool.

Bryce sits down, Crystal stands.

CRYSTAL
Who's this shrimp? And why does he
know my name? No, you know what?
Forget it. It took me over a year
to leave the house after you. Just
go fuck yourself, mister.

Crystal storms off, Teddy returns to his seat.

Bryce leans back in his seat, lifts one arm, mimics ringing a bell.

BRYCE

Ding!

INT. EMBROSIO'S RESTAURANT - LATER

Bryce leans over his table, two empty water bottles in front of him. The bell DINGS.

Charlie sits down across from him, he doesn't look up.

CHARLIE

Don't worry, first impressions aren't that important. She might still go out with you

BRYCE

I asked her to be on my basketball team and she flipped.

Bryce looks and sees Charlie across from him, he freezes.

CHARLIE

You can talk!

He laughs nervously.

CHARLIE

So, who have you given yesses to?

BRYCE

Oh, I'm just here with a friend... for moral support.

CHARLIE

What a coincidence, so am I.

Charlie leans back, points to MADISON, in a red skirt on the other side of the room.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The Brunette in the red skirt. You told her you're the backup kicker for the Patriots.

Bryce smiles, shrugs, pretends to be innocent.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What about you?

Next to Bryce, Teddy talks to Crystal, mimics typing on the table as he tells her about him. She ignores him altogether.

BRYCE
(nodding toward Teddy)
The court reporter.

CHARLIE
I'm Charlie by the way.

BRYCE
Bryce... hi.

Charlie surveys the room.

CHARLIE
Aren't these things so interesting?
Madison, my friend, she comes all
the time. Never meets anyone worth
while, but she always comes.

BRYCE
I'd be surprised if anything
meaningful ever sprouted from one
of these.

CHARLIE
See, I think that's the great thing
about it, they're trying. Being
proactive, trying to date, it takes
guts. They're a lot better off than
me, sitting at home half the time.

BRYCE
I find it hard to believe you never
get asked out.

CHARLIE
Oh, I get asked out. Like by that
cinder-block on the train.

They laugh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm just shy. I've wanted to talk
to you for weeks. Do you have any
idea how hard it is for a girl to
quote "Indiana Jones" in normal
conversation?

Bryce's face is beat-red. He holds his breath.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I saw your key-chain.

He can't hold it anymore and the coughs come, followed by wheezing and gasping for air.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Is this a normal for you?

Bryce tries to speak but can't, Charlie stares at him awkwardly while he struggles, then...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Because I have to say, you are by far the weirdest, attractive guy I've ever met.

Bryce shakes his head, looks at Teddy who is too involved with his partner to notice Bryce suffocating.

The bell DINGS, all the girls stand up and move to the next table. Charlie reluctantly stands, looks annoyed.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Okay, Bryce.

Bryce waves her on, *I'll be fine*. He coughs.

She slowly moves on, and as she sits across from Teddy, Bryce gets up, leaving his new partner at the table and walks away.

Charlie and Teddy share an awkward pause.

TEDDY
Why don't you give me your number?
For him, not me. Not that you're not pretty, just, well, nevermind--

CHARLIE
Will he be able to speak on the phone or do we need to alert a medical staff first?

Bryce leans on the doorway across the room, gasping for air.

Teddy, speechless, shrugs his shoulders.

EXT. EMBROSIO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Bryce and Teddy step outside. Bryce still looks flustered.

Charlie and Madison are stepping into a cab, they wave.

BRYCE

I'm 83.2 percent sure that I could possibly consider trying to fall in love with that girl.

Bryce and Teddy wave back.

INT. MONA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the dark a mattress JOSTLES, sheets RUSTLE. Female MOANS intensify and suddenly...

MONA

Wh-- what's wrong?

LIGHTS flick on revealing...

Average looking MONA on the bed, barely covered by a bedsheet. Rex rolls onto his back.

REX

I can't do this...

She props herself up on her side, puts a hand on Rex's chest, looks into his eyes.

MONA

What's the matter?

REX

You barely know me, Mona. I don't know if I'm ready for this.

MONA

I feel like I've known you my whole life. If I didn't know any better, I'd think we were already in love.

REX

You're just saying that because you want to "break your record."

MONA

Hello? Were you even there with me the past few weeks? I've never, ever stayed up to watch the sun rise with anyone. Falling asleep in your arms up on the roof was the most magical moment of my life.

(MORE)

MONA (cont'd)
Seeing you volunteer at the
children's hospital, watching you
with those kids-- Rex, if you asked
me to elope with you right now, I
swear I would.

REX
You mean that?

MONA
I do.

REX
Because, I-- no, it'll sound stupid
after what you just said.

MONA
No, what.

REX
I've only been in love once. And
this is stronger than that.

Mona melts into Rex, kissing him. He turns her on her back,
presses up against her.

He bites on her ear, whispers...

REX (CONT'D)
I'll be right back...

INT. MONA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rex, naked, roots through the fridge, pulls out an apple.

Rex picks up a PEN and SCRIBBLES something on a pad, peels it
off. He takes a bite of his apple.

Rex walks to the apartment door, opens it quietly, sticks the
unseen NOTE on the inside and walks out.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Rex stands naked in the elevator, bites his apple. He checks
his wrist, no watch - *fuck*.

EXT. MONA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Leo stands by the door holding a pair of SWEATPANTS, he is
shocked to see Rex naked.

Rex takes the pants, starts putting them on.

A loud, female SCREAM is heard, Rex and the Man look up.

INT. MONA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The note on the door: *You should probably get tested.*

EXT. MONA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Rex bites his apple. Pants on, he smiles slyly.

REX

Congratulations, Leo. Your ex has
been successfully hate-dated.

Leo smiles, looks at Rex, then back up at the building and
again to Rex. He hugs Rex tightly, buries his head in his
chest. Rex is super uncomfortable.

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

Teddy stands outside the fence to the ballpark. Inside, a
VENDOR passes by, close to the fence wearing all yellow.

TEDDY

Hey, peanuts.

The Vendor stops, looks over to Teddy, who beckons him over.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Wanna make a couple hundred bucks?

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - LATER

Thousands of FANS pack the stadium.

Bryce and LORI, short dark hair, early thirties, sit in a
section of the bleachers, next to the aisle.

On the field a BATTER steps to the plate, digs in.

Everyone in the section stands and throws their hands up in
unison, the wave.

LORI

I can't believe you work here! It
must be absolutely magical to walk
around this stadium every day.

BRYCE
I like it better being here with
you.

LORI
(watching the field)
Oh man, this guy hit three thirty-
eight two years ago, then hurt his
hand punching a wall in the
playoffs. He sucked last year and
is finally starting to hit again.

Bryce checks his watch, exhales deeply.

VENDOR (O.S.)
Bryce!

Bryce perks up.

The Vendor and Bryce shake hands, hug.

BRYCE
What's up, buddy?

VENDOR
I didn't know you were taking the
night off.

BRYCE
Lori loves the Sox, I wanted to
treat her.

The Vendor waves to Lori, she smiles back.

VENDOR
Nice to meet you, Bryce has told me
all about you.

FAN (O.S.)
Yo! Peanuts!

The Vendor pulls out a bag, hands it to Bryce.

VENDOR
Show her your stuff!

Bryce stands and turns around. Lori turns in her seat.

Twenty rows up a fan is signaling for the peanuts.

Bryce winds up and tosses it...

A perfect strike to the fan.

Bryce sits back down, Lori takes his hand, kisses his arm. She's giddy.

VENDOR

Okay, I've gotta get going, see you tomorrow.

They shake hands, Bryce slips him two HUNDREDS in the shake.

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - LATER

On the field, the BATTER pops the ball up and foul.

The Crowd around Bryce leaps to their feet. Bryce drifts into the aisle, fans bump him. They all reach up...

Bryce catches the ball!

On the JUMBO-TRON Bryce holds the ball up excited. He notices himself on the screen and panics slightly. He sits back down and tries to hide his face.

The crowd sits and quiets around Bryce. He sits too.

On the field the batter strikes out, the FIELDERS return to their dugout.

Bryce hands Lori his ball.

LORI

Oh man, are you sure? Once when I was eleven, I came so close--

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Bryce Hugheston!

MAGGIE, 40s, stomps up the steps carrying POPCORN.

MAGGIE

How can you show your face in this city. I called every hospital in the country. I thought you were dead, cried my eyes out for weeks and you show up on the big screen at a baseball game? How about a god-damn explanation?

Lori looks scared, Bryce's jaw hangs.

MELONY (O.S.)

Get in line!

MELONY, 30s, with a SODA, comes down the steps.

MELONY (CONT'D)
He left me stranded in Maine with
no money on a Saturday night, I had
to hitchhike home!

Maggie steps back, gestures - *Go right ahead.*

Bryce looks from Melony, to Maggie, to Lori.

MELONY (CONT'D)
Just who do you think you are?

MARNY (O.S.)
Oh, I'll tell you who he is.

MARNY, 30, wearing a baseball hat, climbs the stairs to them.

MARNY (CONT'D)
He's a piece of shit with two eyes
a nose and a mouth. He did the
same thing to me. Augusta?

MELONY
Kennebunk.

Bryce stands.

BRYCE
Look--

MARNY
No! You don't get to talk.

The entire crowd around them is quiet now, watching the scene unfold.

Lori grabs Bryce's hand.

LORI
Bryce, what's going on?

MAGGIE
(to Lori)
Wait, are you with this asshole?

LORI
I--

MELONY
Take it from us, get the hell out
of there before he does.

Lori is speechless, she looks at Bryce, sours.

MAGGIE

(to Marny)

You're right, I don't even want a
damn explanation.

Maggie throws her popcorn at Bryce, storms away. Melony dumps her soda on him, leaves as well. Marny rips off her hat, WHACKS Bryce with it three times, then runs down the steps.

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - LATER

Bryce and Lori sit in the stands, staring forward, awkward.
The crowd ERUPTS around them, they remain stoic.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bryce and Lori walk down the street. Her arms crossed, face forward. His hands in his pockets.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Bryce and Lori stand holding the same bar.
They make eye contact briefly, she turns away from him.

EXT. LORI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Bryce and Lori step to the door, she unlocks and opens it, turns to Bryce, puts her hand on his chest.

BRYCE

You don't want me to come up?

LORI

I don't really want to see you
anymore.

BRYCE

Because of the game?

LORI

Leaving girls in Maine to hitchhike
home? Disappearing? How could I
possibly expect you not to do that
to me.

BRYCE
I was a different person then--

LORI
Hurting people like that isn't
something you do. It's who you are.

Bryce's mouth hangs open. Lori enters her building.

Bryce walks away. The door OPENS behind him, he turns--
The baseball HITS him HARD in the neck.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bryce walks alone, rubbing his neck, angry.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Bryce stands watching the numbers, violently punches the wall
twice.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He gets into bed, lies on his back, Julie rolls over, throws
her arm over him. He doesn't move, glances at her.

Bryce slides his arm under her, holds her close. He stares at
the ceiling, eyes wide.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce hasn't moved. Julie's hand is around his neck. He
reaches to the night-stand, turns his ALARM CLOCK - 4:43.

He stares up at the ceiling, sighs.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Light shines on the bed, Julie lies on her side, alone, her
arm over the spot Bryce earlier occupied.

INT. JULIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

The fridge is AJAR, inside a cereal box is on its side, OPEN.

Above the stove a cabinet is wide OPEN, A bottle of MILK in between the cereal boxes.

In the trash can sits a ceramic BOWL and silver SPOON.

INT. BRYCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryce sits stoically at his desk. Muffled RINGS, dozens of them sound off from inside Bryce's briefcase.

He gets up, grabs the briefcase off the desk and throws it into the bathroom, shuts the door. He sits back down. Stares forward.

Rex sweeps into the room, sits down across from Bryce.

REX

What the hell is going on? You lost one?

BRYCE

There was no way out of it. Trust me, I'm running into exes everywhere I go these days.

REX

This has never been a problem before. Why now?

BRYCE

I don't know.

REX

Is it Julie?

BRYCE

What? Julie? Why would this have anything to do with Julie?

REX

I know we stay out of each other's hate-dates, but I had Teddy crunch the numbers. You're eighteen percent past your expiration time.

BRYCE

That's plenty of time. Keep in mind this is a four-year relationship.

REX

You haven't even set the date yet, Bryce!

(MORE)

REX (cont'd)
You hit twenty percent and we
refund the contract, that rule was
your idea, not mine.

Bryce buries his head in his hands.

BRYCE
Look, I'll take care of it. But I'm
burnt out. I don't know how much
longer I can do this.

REX
What the hell else are you going to
do? Get some regular job? What
happens when some girl at the
office likes you? You going to make
her take a CPR class? Maybe you can
learn to do it to yourself. I think
you put a chair up against your
diaphragm. Or is that the Heimlich?
I don't know.

Rex stands.

REX (CONT'D)
Either way take a few days, get
your head on straight. I'll take on
your new accounts, give you some
time off, but get this shit with
Julie wrapped up. I'm not handing
out two refunds in the same month.

He leaves. Bryce leans back, stares at the ceiling, exhales.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bryce sits on a bench in deep thought.

A PACK OF DOGS paw and sniff Bryce, he sits up and pets them.

CHARLIE
I'd sit down, but I'm afraid it'll
kill you.

BRYCE
You can sit as long as you promise
not to flirt with me. I'm not in
the mood to go into anaphylactic
shock today.

Charlie sits, Bryce continues to pet the dogs.

CHARLIE
I gave your friend my number last
week. How come you haven't called?

BRYCE
Afraid you'd kill me.

She laughs, he doesn't.

CHARLIE
What's wrong?

BRYCE
Just work stuff. I don't know if
what I want to do is what I should
be doing anymore.

CHARLIE
Field goal kicking is high-
pressured work. Maybe you should
try something else.

BRYCE
Very funny.

They sit in silence for a second.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
So this is what you do? Walk dogs?

CHARLIE
You don't have to say it like that.
It's easy and the money is good.

Charlie reaches into her bag, pulls out a CARD, hands it to
him.

The card reads: *Charlotte Walter - Dog Walker to the Stars'.*

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Dog walker to the stars? Which
star's dogs do you walk?

CHARLIE
None, I just walk all my dogs down
to the Stars Cafe on Washington.
But the card quadrupled my
business.

Bryce manages to laugh. Charlie stands.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Come on, walk with me a bit.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Bryce and Charlie walk down the street in tow of the dogs.

CHARLIE
So what do you really do?

BRYCE
I'm a--

Bryce searches his mind for a lie, then...

BRYCE
I'm a grief counsellor for men.

CHARLIE
So what's the problem?

BRYCE
I don't know if I can talk about
it.

CHARLIE
Okay.

BRYCE
It's not that I don't want to tell
you, it's just that I--

CHARLIE
Hey, you don't have to qualify
anything to me. I'll figure you out
on my own.

Bryce thinks for a second.

BRYCE
That's a really... smart way to
approach things. Thanks.

They turn a corner.

CHARLIE
I can't believe we're together and
there are no paramedics en route.

BRYCE
I'm being careful not to make eye
contact or notice your smile.

The dogs stop walking and turn around, Charlie holds them up.

Bryce looks up, they are in front of the STARS CAFE.

A T Station is next to the cafe.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
I think I'm going to catch the
train over here.

CHARLIE
Well, it was nice walking with you.
Thanks for not hyperventilating.

BRYCE
You're welcome.

They stand there for an awkward second. She hands him the leashes, and opens her purse, pulls out a pen and some paper. Starts scribbling.

She hands him the piece of paper, takes the leashes back.

CHARLIE
It's this really dark restaurant on
Comm. Ave. You'll barely be able to
see me. Meet me at eleven, they
have a great lunch menu.

Bryce looks at the paper, avoids eye contact with her.

She pushes him away.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Now go, I'm all out of Benadryl and
I don't want you dying on me before
I at least get a free lunch out of
you.

Bryce laughs as he walks away, Charlie watches him go.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A studio with a futon and a recliner. A television in the corner. Teddy sits on the futon, hunched over a laptop. He types with one hand, types on his sidekick with his other. A KNOCK on the door.

Teddy gets up, takes a crumpled TWENTY out of his pocket, opens the door.

Bryce is in the hallway with a PIZZA.

TEDDY

This is what you want to do instead of hate-date? Deliver pizza?

BRYCE

This isn't my job, idiot. Put your money away, I need some help.

Bryce barges into the room, throws the pizza on the table, opens the box, takes a slice, and sits back in the recliner.

Teddy walks over, stands above Bryce.

TEDDY

I dunno, I'm up to my ears in hate-dates right now.

BRYCE

You can do all that, I just need to brainstorm with you, like old times. I can't do this at home.

TEDDY

Why, what's up?

Teddy sits down, types more, ignores the pizza.

BRYCE

I have a date tomorrow. With Charlie.

TEDDY

You made a real date, are you crazy?

BRYCE

I saw her the other day and I was fine, but I didn't look at her or flirt with her at all. But this is a date, I'm going to have to do those things.

TEDDY

Okay, well what're you thinking?

BRYCE

Distraction. The other day I was really upset about the stuff with Julie and the baseball game, and I was able to talk to Charlie for about five minutes. So, something to take my mind off what I'm doing.

TEDDY

Like pinching yourself at the end of "A Walk to Remember" to distract you from how sad it is and keep you from crying.

BRYCE

When you say "you" do you mean you?

TEDDY

I thought I was being general.

Bryce gets up, takes a slice of pizza, paces.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Okay, How about we put jacks in your underwear?

BRYCE

I wear boxers.

TEDDY

So buy boxer briefs.

BRYCE

Next idea.

TEDDY

Okay, how about... electrodes in your pants?

Bryce stops chewing, glares at Teddy.

BRYCE

Get out of my pants!

TEDDY

How about...

BRYCE

Go work. Type. I'll take over thinking for a bit.

INT. TEDDY'S APARTMENT - LATER

The clock reads 3:32am. Teddy is asleep on the futon, Bryce is upside-down on the recliner, head on the seat, feet over the back.

Teddy jars awake--

TEDDY
Got it! I got it. Bryce!

Bryce stirs.

 BRYCE
What?

 TEDDY
An ice pack, in your underwear.

 BRYCE
Teddy, I told you--

 TEDDY
Seriously, this solves all our
problems.

Bryce turns over in the chair, sits up, rubs his eyes.

 TEDDY (CONT'D)
Think about it. It's cold, which is
distracting, but not really
painful.

 BRYCE
Okay...

 TEDDY
Plus, you can put it down there
before the date so you're not
rooting around down there in
public. When you see her, just
break the pack and bam!

Bryce thinks on it a second.

 BRYCE
Alright, that's not bad.

 TEDDY
It's genius. It's going to work.

INT. DINER - DAY

Bryce sits in a booth in the moderately busy diner, he checks his watch. He bobs his head, nervous.

Under the table he fiddles with his crotch, the ICE-PACK is a noticeable bulge across the front of his pants.

Checks his watch again, the door DINGS, he cranes his neck--

A COUPLE walk in, take a seat on the other side of the room.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Bryce, hey.

Bryce startles. Charlie comes up behind him, puts her hand on his shoulder as she passes, then sits down across from him.

BRYCE

Uh, hey. Hi, um--

Bryce tries to go on but can't. He stares at Charlie for a second, then beyond her, beckons to a WAITER.

Charlie turns around to see who he was beckoning.

Bryce violently twists below the table, it won't pop!

He takes a deep breathe and twists with all his might...

Charlie spins her head back around--

CHARLIE

So anyway--

Charlie sees Bryce twisting his hands hard below the table in his crotch... *What is he doing?!*

A loud POP is heard, the ice-pack breaking. Sounds like he popped one of his balls.

Bryce's eyes bug out, mortified.

BRYCE

That's not what it looks like... Or sounds like.

CHARLIE

Okay... Well, I brought you something.

Bryce shifts uncomfortably. Fidgets with the ice-pack.

BRYCE

Really?

Charlie reaches into her purse, pulls out a BOOK of crossword puzzles, hands it to Bryce.

CHARLIE

They're the hard ones.

BRYCE
This is really great. Thank you.

CHARLIE
It's not that great.

BRYCE
Well, it was thoughtful.

He fidgets with his crotch some more.

CHARLIE
I suppose. I'm addicted to puzzles
myself, so I know how it is.

BRYCE
Oh? What kind?

CHARLIE
I defuse bombs.

They smile at each other.

CHARLIE
So... Did you go see a hypnotist or
something?

BRYCE
What? Oh, like how I can talk to
you now? No, I, um--

Bryce messes with the ice-pack.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
I'm-- How can I say this? It's
subterfuge. Like thinking about
baseball when I'm showering with a
bunch of guys.

Charlie LAUGHS hysterically.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Like, at the gym, or when I was in
high-school...

Charlie continues to laugh.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Forget it.

CHARLIE
(laughing still)
No, it's fine.

A WAITRESS walks over, pen and paper ready.

WAITRESS
What can I get you folks?

CHARLIE
Go, I'm still thinking.

BRYCE
I'll have the shower--

Charlie BURSTS out laughing again.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Shrimp scampi, please. And a fifth
of jager, thanks.

He adjusts his ice-pack, frowns.

Charlie smiles at him and shakes her head.

INT. DINER - LATER

Bryce and Charlie sit, empty, dirty plates in front of them.

They stare at each other silent, smiling.

They laugh, break eye contact.

Bryce's throat and ears are BEET RED. He holds his breath,
trying not to cough or choke.

CHARLIE
I was just going to say, this was
going really well...

Bryce lets it out, picks up his drink, slurps on his straw--
the drink is empty.

BRYCE
I think I should--

CHARLIE
Okay, yeah. Go ahead.

Bryce gets up and freezes. The front of his pants are
completely SOAKED from the ice pack.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's fine. I don't need to know.

Bryce runs off, the bell on the door DINGS. Charlie rests her hand on her head, furrows her brow.

The door DINGS again. Bryce drops forty dollars on the table, grabs his crossword book, and runs away again.

Charlie shakes her head, chuckles to herself.

INT. BRYCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryce sits at his desk, it is completely bare. He's bored.

He swivels in his chair, stares up at...

A large POSTER, "The 7 Elements of the Hate-Date: 1. Fate Her - Show up often and unexpected. 2. Make her fight for you, at least once. 3. Believe in your persona and so will she. 4. Burn her bridges. 5. Go to her with a major problem, make her think you need her. 6. Never say "I love you" first, it's less of a leap for her. 7. Never fall for her, remember what she did."

Teddy walks in, joins him in looking at the poster.

TEDDY

Trying to get inspired?

BRYCE

Just seeing if I feel any differently about all this after being on a date. A real date.

TEDDY

You've got the best job in the world. Guys would kill to do what you do. Get your head out of your ass.

Teddy's pocket BLOOPS, he pulls the sidekick out, opens it up, walks out typing.

INT. JULIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julie sits on the couch eating SUSHI with chopsticks.

Bryce sits down next to her with a CARTON, eats with a fork.

JULIE

What do you want to do this weekend?

BRYCE

I don't know, I think we're going to be pretty swamped with all these invitations.

Bryce reaches on the side of the couch and pulls out a box of wedding invitations.

Julie's jaw drops, she's elated. She leaps onto Bryce and tackles him with a hug, knocking their dinner to the floor.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Bryce and Teddy sit at a cafe in the airport with WILL KELLY, middle aged, wearing a golf shirt and plaid pants, he watches the terminal anxiously.

Teddy and Bryce talk, pay no attention to Will. Teddy types on his sidekick while he talks.

BRYCE

The ice-pack was great, but it wore off after only forty-five minutes.

TEDDY

What if you just use more than one?

WILL

Wait! I think I see her! Man, she's been there the whole time. Look at her, pacing around! She's frantic!

BRYCE

I'll be numb down there, a second one won't help. We need to come up with something else.

WILL

They're boarding final call!

Teddy says nothing, keeps typing.

BRYCE

Can you put that down for a minute and talk to me?

TEDDY

You were never this high-strung when you were just hate-dating.

BRYCE

This is different. It doesn't have to be about work all the time.

Teddy shakes his head, puts the sidekick on the table.

TEDDY

This is one of the girls I met at speed dating. We're going out tonight.

BRYCE

Which one?

TEDDY

Madison, she had a red skirt on.

Bryce smiles knowingly.

WILL

She's freaking out!

BRYCE

Good for you, she was really cute.

TEDDY

Thanks. Don't worry, we'll come up with something.

Will slaps Bryce on the shoulder.

WILL

They closed the gate and she didn't get on! She didn't even go on the trip! Amazing!

Bryce can't help but smile.

Teddy grabs his sidekick, he and Bryce stand.

WILL (CONT'D)

You guys go, I'll take a cab back. I have to see how long she waits.

BRYCE

Okay. Do not get caught, Will.

WILL

I won't, I promise. And, thank you. So much. This was perfect. I can't say enough--

Will stands, hugs Bryce tightly, doesn't let go.

BRYCE

That's what we're here for.

Bryce finally breaks away, he and Teddy leave, Will continues staring at the gate with joy.

INT. MADISON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Teddy sits on the couch in a small living room. He nervously flips his sidekick open and closed.

Madison enters with two glasses of wine. She hands one to Teddy and sits next to him. Teddy takes a sip, nearly spits it out, disgusted.

They smile at each other awkwardly. A computer BLOOPS, she gets up, goes to it, clicks on the mouse.

MADISON

Sorry, one sec. I'm downloading some Twin Peaks episodes.

Teddy perks up.

TEDDY

What're you using?

MADISON

Just a torrent program.

TEDDY

How amazing are torrents? It took me three weeks but I finally have every episode of X-Files.

She sits back down, takes a big sip of wine.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I'm rewatching every episode starting at the end to see what it's like. Kind of like, reverse manufacturing the series.

Madison puts her wine down, throws her arms around Teddy, tackling him onto the couch. He drops his sidekick, puts his arm around her.

MADISON

I love it when you talk nerdy.

They kiss.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julie sleeps in Bryce's arms. He's wide awake, stares at the ceiling. He looks at Julie, slides out from underneath her.

He stands with his hands on his hips, surveying the room, soaking it in.

INT. JULIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bryce stands in the doorway, looking around the room, then stares hard at...

The stove, where he earlier slept with Julie.

He smiles but it fades quickly.

INT. BRYCE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The living room is like a clubhouse. Movie posters on the wall, a pool table, a large TV and entertainment center, a pinball machine, all covered by dusty sheets.

Sheets cover all the furniture. Bryce pulls one off a couch, dust flies into the air.

Teddy runs his hand over the mantle, it's caked in dust.

TEDDY

Jesus, when's the last time you used this place?

BRYCE

I honestly couldn't tell you. At least a year. Maybe longer.

TEDDY

So I went out with Madison.

BRYCE

And?

TEDDY

Not bad. I was nervous so we went to a movie, kind of relaxed me, gave us something to talk about when we went back to her place.

Bryce pulls sheets off the rest of the furniture.

BRYCE
Oooh, her place. Nice.

TEDDY
I'm freaking out though, I lost my
sidekick.

Bryce freezes.

BRYCE
What about the hate-date files?

TEDDY
I'm not worried bout them, they're
well hidden and they'll be erased
if I cancel the account.

BRYCE
So, what's the problem?

TEDDY
I'm anxious without it. I feel
naked. Plus, Rex is going to be
pissed, I doubt he'll expense me a
new one, and--

BRYCE
Speaking of new ones. We need a new
gimmick. That ice-pack was a
disaster.

Teddy shakes his head.

TEDDY
Sure, let's figure out your problem
first.

INT. BRYCE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Teddy is outside the bathroom, past the doorway, he smiles.

Bryce stands inside the bathroom holding two ELECTRODES with antennae on them.

EXT. MINIATURE GOLF COURSE - DAY

Bryce watches Charlie line up for a put, she hits it...

Hole in one! She jumps up, hugs Bryce.

His eyes BUG out.

She lets go, runs and gets her ball. Bryce SPASMS!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Teddy sits in a car with a small REMOTE CONTROL with one button, he holds the button down, laughs maliciously.

EXT. MINIATURE GOLF COURSE - DAY

Bryce and Charlie stand talking, waiting for their turn. She laughs, touches his chest. Bryce starts to COUGH and CHOKE. He gestures for Charlie to putt, she stands. Bryce SPASMS.

In the distance, Teddy waves from his car.

Bryce glares at him.

EXT. MINIATURE GOLF COURSE - LATER

Bryce stands at the bank of a small pond, reaching in for a ball. He nearly slips-- rights himself, then... he SPASMS!

Bryce trips and falls into the pond. He catches himself, only half soaked.

Charlie helps him up, starts PATTING his pants, trying to dry them. He tries to push her away, but she takes napkins from her purse, sops up water near his crotch.

He waves his hand toward the...

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Teddy pushes the button... confused, he pushes it again, and again, and again.

EXT. MINIATURE GOLF COURSE - DAY

Bryce, bent over in a coughing fit has his back patted by Charlie. He drops his club, she leads him away from the putting green.

A FAMILY stares at the bizarre couple walking away.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

A harsh BUZZ fills the room.

Bryce is bent over a table, clutching tightly, grimacing in pain. Behind him, a heavily tattooed, pierced, mohawked ARTIST has the ink gun to Bryce's ass.

The Artist is completing the *O* in *SOX* being tattooed on Bryce's right ass cheek. His left cheek already reads *RED*. The letters are stylized like on the Red Sox uniforms.

Teddy sits facing him, he does not agree with this.

TEDDY

This is ridiculous. The tattoo is permanent, the pain isn't.

BRYCE

If I play it right it could work for a long time.

The Artist continues inking Bryce's ass. He pushes hard and Bryce FLINCHES, GRUNTS.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Bryce and Charlie hold hands and walk through the park, CHILDREN and PARENTS run around, stand in lines, play games.

Charlie pulls him towards a ride, he resists. She pouts, pleads, pulls on him... he finally relents, follows her onto the...

EXT. ROLLER COASTER - DAY

Bryce and Charlie in the front seat of the car. Charlie's hands are in the air, she screams, smiling. Bryce, in tears next to her, BOUNCING up and down on the tracks. He grips the bar in front of him tightly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A horse CLOPS down the street pulling a carriage.

Bryce sits in the carriage with his arm around Charlie, they smile warmly as they observe their surroundings.

The horse turns onto a COBBLESTONE ROAD.

Charlie puts her head on Bryce's shoulder, he bounces wildly from the cobblestone, bites his lip, curses silently.

INT. BRYCE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Bryce stands with his back towards a full length mirror, unbuckling his pants.

He pulls his pants down a little revealing his ass, bright red and heavily scarred from the previous abuse.

EXT. WATER PARK - DAY

Bryce and Charlie float on inner tubes down a lazy river, they hold hands.

Bryce's butt soaks in the water, sticking out of the bottom of the tube.

A look of pure joy on Bryce's face, he turns, looks at Charlie

Charlie smiles at him.

His smile quickly turns to coughing and choking.

He lets go of her hand and sits up, he tips his tube and PLUNGES into the water. Charlie floats off without him.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

In the parking lot, Bryce shakes hand with JULIE'S DAD, Julie hugs JULIE'S MOM.

JULIE
Good night, Mom.

BRYCE
'Night, sir. I mean, Dad.

They switch. Julie hugs her Dad, Bryce Julie's Mom.

JULIE (CONT'D)
See you tomorrow, Daddy.

JULIE'S DAD
Okay, sweetie.

The Julie's Parents walk away. Bryce waves.

Julie hugs Bryce, he puts his arms around her.

JULIE

Can you believe it? Tomorrow we're going to be married. It's insane.

BRYCE

I'm insane. I think you're making a solid choice.

She hugs him, they kiss.

JULIE (CONT'D)

See you at the end of the aisle.

She kisses him again and leaves.

Bryce lingers, watches Julie leave.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce sits on his couch watching television.

The DaVinci Code is on his television. The ALBINO MONK is whipping himself, he wears a LEG VICE.

Bryce has an idea...

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bryce is wearing nothing but his boxers.

He opens the bottom drawer to his dresser, pulls out stacks of bed sheets, lays them on the floor.

He pulls out a large set of metal chains.

Bryce stands at the foot of the bed, attaches the metal chains around his thigh, pulls tightly.

He winces.

BRYCE

Shit!

Bryce holds his pants up in front of him, *How am I going to get these on?*

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Bryce laying on the bed, trying to bend his leg, restricted by the vice.

Bryce stands with the pant legs around his ankles. He bends to pull them up without bending his knee, he falls.

He lies on his back, pants around his ankles, he slowly raises his legs up in the air, the pants slide down.

Bryce rolls over, holds the pants at his waist, raises himself up using the bed for leverage, falls on the bed.

Horizontal on the bed, Bryce sits up then pushes his feet to the ground. He stands, pumps his fist. His pants fall.

Bryce on the phone.

Bryce sits on his bed staring out the window, Teddy enters.

Bryce stands in front of the mirror, Teddy, on one knee in front of him, slides Bryce's pants on.

Bryce in front of the mirror, fully dressed, Teddy at his side.

TEDDY

This is why the DaVinci code guy
wore a robe.

EXT. MARKETPLACE - NIGHT

Bryce and Charlie step out of a COMEDY CLUB ahead of a large CROWD.

They walk down the cobblestone sidewalk past VENDORS and PATRONS.

They get in a LINE at an ice cream stand. A dirty old ICE CREAM VENDOR hands a couple their ice cream.

He reaches over, grabs her hand, holds it.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bryce and Charlie walk next to each other, eating ice cream. Bryce with a slight limp.

CHARLIE

So, are you going to come up?

BRYCE

If you want me to, yeah, I am.

CHARLIE

Really? Not going to have a
conniption? Cause we're here.

She stops, Bryce takes another step before stopping.

BRYCE

Really?

CHARLIE

You going to chicken out?

BRYCE

I'm 84.9 percent sure that I'm not
going to chicken out.

She smiles.

CHARLIE

Okay.

She opens the door. Bryce, behind her, takes a deep breath.

INT. CHARLIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A small living room, just one small couch and a television.
Some paintings on the wall.

Bryce has his arm around Charlie, they sit on the couch
asleep in front of the television.

Credits scroll down the screen, "Indiana Jones" theme plays.

Bryce stirs, accidentally nudges Charlie off his shoulder,
she lands on his left leg, which has the vice around it.

He immediately writhes in pain with the rest of his body, he
bites his lip, clutches at the couch.

He quickly but carefully slides out from under Charlie, then
picks her up, carries her out of the room.

She smiles faintly in his arms.

INT. CHARLIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Light shines in from the windows on Bryce, sleeping on the
couch, it is too small for him. A phone RINGS, he stirs.

The clock on the wall reads 10:45.

He reaches under his pillow, picks up his phone.

The phone says "Dave Patten calling..."

BRYCE

Hello?

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

An extremely expensive wedding: white FLOWERS everywhere, ARCHWAYS, TENTS, the whole nine yards.

Dave stands away from the scene, his phone to his ear.

DAVE

If you want to marry her, you should.

BRYCE (O.S.)

What?

Rows and rows of PEOPLE sit fidgety and BUZZ with chatter.

A PRIEST in front of the altar aisle taps his feet and checks his watch. Rex, not fidgeting at all, stands next to him.

DAVE

People are starting to worry, but it's not too late to get down here.

INT. CHARLIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bryce gets up off the couch, steps on the leg vice, hops off in pain.

BRYCE

Ow. Shit!

He limps around the room, walking it off.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

We have a contract, Dave.

DAVE (O.S.)

So, we'll void it. If you love her and want to marry her, then do it. I don't care about the money.

BRYCE

Will you stop saying that I love her.

DAVE (O.S.)
Something is there, Bryce. It's
obvious.

Bryce looks down at his legs, the insides of his thighs are PINK and frostbitten. He has circular BRUISES from the electrodes. A giant SCAR wraps around his thigh from the leg vice.

DAVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I figure you have some major trust
issues. And I'll tell you this:
from someone who's been hurt so bad
he hired you to ruin his ex's life,
sometimes it's worth the risk.

Bryce looks at...

Charlie's bedroom door. She STIRS within.

BRYCE
I know. I gotta go.

The door opens and Charlie enters.

CHARLIE
Good morning.

Bryce pulls his blanket over him, covering up his wounds.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Dave walks down a side aisle.

He and Rex make eye contact. Dave shakes his head.

Rex touches the Priest on the arm, then walks down the center aisle away from him. The BUZZ of the crowd grows louder.

EXT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A sunny day, Bryce and Charlie stand at the door.

CHARLIE
Hey, there's something I need to
tell you.

BRYCE
What's up?

CHARLIE

There's this guy. This other guy,
that I've been kinda seeing for a
couple weeks. It's nothing serious,
but we're going out tonight, and
thought I should tell you.

Bryce is frozen, he nods slightly.

CHARLIE

Because I really like you, I just
don't know where things are going
yet, you know?

He nods again, his eyes wide.

CHARLIE

Thanks for understanding.

She kisses him on the side of the mouth.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'll call you when I get home
tonight, just to say good night.

He waits until she enters her apartment, turns and limps
away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce walks down the street, shaking his head and talking to
himself, mumbling.

He begins to cough and choke, he stops, rests on a lamppost.

He regains his composure, checks his watch.

Bryce thinks for a second, and then briskly limps away.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

The last of the attendants are milling around the reception
area. Julie's Mom and Dad shake hands and hug RELATIVES, who
give their condolences and leave.

The band plays Toni Braxton's "Unbreak My Heart."

Julie, in her wedding dress, lies in the middle of the dance
floor. Mascara all over her face from crying. She's stoic
now, stares into space, nibbles on a piece of melon-wrapped
prosciutto.

Next to her is a giant serving tray, half covered in the melon-wrapped prosciutto, the other half empty.

The band finishes the song, immediately start up with Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine." Julie's Dad walks up, quietly tries to stop them.

JULIE (O.S.)
Leave them alone!

Julie is propped up now.

JULIE (CONT'D)
You too! I told you to leave it!

The CATERERS, who had been trying to clean up, freeze, set their trays down.

JULIE
Just leave it all alone!

Julie collapses to the dance floor, sobs into her arms.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce stands on the sidewalk peering over a steel fence into the courtyard. He is sad.

EXT. COURTYARD - LATER

Julie's Dad tries to pull her up off the floor. She screams, slaps him away, cries more.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Bryce watches still.

BRYCE
Just lie there with her. That's
what she wants...

Teddy runs up, pulls Bryce away from the fence.

TEDDY
What the hell are you thinking?

INT. TEDDY'S CAR - DAY

Teddy drives with Bryce in the passenger seat, both stare straight forward. Awkward.

BRYCE
Can I at least tell you about my
night with Charlie?

Teddy cracks a faint smile.

TEDDY
That leg-vice worked?

BRYCE
Yeah, beautifully.

TEDDY
Nice. That's your stuff from
Julie's in the back.

A giant brown BOX rests on the seat.

BRYCE
Awesome, thanks.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bryce sits on the couch facing forward holding a large, thick envelope.

Teddy stands on the other side of the coffee table, unfolding a large MAP. The large box is next to him.

Bryce takes DAY PLANNER out of the envelope, flips through.

TEDDY
Have you looked at any of this
stuff since we came up with it?

BRYCE
Once, like two years ago.

TEDDY
Everything you have to do is in the
planner. Don't try and be creative.
Call when it says to call, etc.

BRYCE
Did you add anything?

TEDDY

Just small ideas I've had. A card on her mom's birthday, bumping into that cousin of hers who liked you, that sort of thing.

BRYCE

That's good. What else?

Teddy lays the map of Boston out on the table before. Much of it is colored in with red marker.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Holy shit. I can't go anywhere.

TEDDY

Yeah, it's pretty bad.

BRYCE

You couldn't help me out at all?

TEDDY

This is going off the last 6 months of hate-dates.

BRYCE

I thought we were doing a year?

TEDDY

If I did that, we'd be in a U-haul on our way to Jersey right now.

Bryce frowns, leans over the map, studies it.

BRYCE

The silver line! Where am I going to go on the silver line?

TEDDY

And the Blue line above State street. Maybe it's a good thing you're taking a break from hate-dating. You'd have nowhere to take girls anyway.

BRYCE

So, that leaves me what? The race track?

TEDDY

And the aquarium.

BRYCE
I do love those penguins.

TEDDY
Sorry, but anywhere you've ever
taken Julie in the past four years
is basically off limits.

BRYCE
Julie and I have been to the
aquarium.

TEDDY
Oh...

Teddy pulls a RED MARKER out of his pocket, bites the cap off.

He bends down and colors in an inch of SUBWAY LINE on the map.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Blue line above the Aquarium.

INT. BRYCE'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Bryce stands in a large walk-in closet, thumbtacks in his mouth, hanging up Teddy's map.

Another map is crumpled up on the floor by his feet.

The closet is filled out with a large filing cabinet, a box filled with disposable cell phones, a standing wardrobe with different uniforms hanging: military, police, fire, doctor, construction, mechanic, etc.

Bryce finishes pinning his new map, scowls at it.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce steps out of the closet, shuts the door behind him, locks it with a key.

He moves to the bed, the box Teddy brought is on it.

A FRAMED PHOTO of Bryce and Julie sits atop the contents of the box. Bryce picks it up.

He lies down on the bed on his back, he holds the photo above him with two hands, stares at it.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A phone RINGS.

Bryce is curled up on the bed with the photo, sleeping.

He wakes, notices the picture, sits up quick.

He puts it face-down on the night-stand, his clock reads 2:30am.

BRYCE

Late night...

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a phone.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Hello?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Hey, it's Charlie. I'm freaking out, are you busy?

BRYCE

No. Are you okay? Do you want me to come over there?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Can I come over your place?

BRYCE

Yeah, of course. I'll see you in a few.

Bryce hangs up. A look of realization.

INT. BRYCE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Bryce stands in front of a full length mirror in his boxers. Both of his legs are torn up from the leg vice.

BRYCE

Shit.

INT. BRYCE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bryce is bent down rooting through the cabinet under his sink.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce kneels on one knee in front of his bed, a look of dread on his face, he looks down at...

His bare foot in front of him, his toes wiggle.

He takes a deep breath, raises his hand above his.

He's holding a HAMMER.

He swings the hammer down!

CUT TO:

INT. BRYCE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. Bryce limps delicately across the kitchen.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce sits on the couch, his face blocked by the screen of a laptop. Charlie paces back and forth in front of him.

CHARLIE

I've been working on this for weeks. I was so excited, I thought I had it, and now this. I have no idea what to do...

Bryce lifts his head from behind the laptop.

BRYCE

Yeah. This looks really bad.

CHARLIE

I seriously sat there staring at it for an hour before I called you. I was practically in tears.

Charlie stops pacing, slumps onto the couch next to Bryce, cuddles up close to him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What do you think? What the hell should I do?

On the screen is a game of MINESWEEPER, the expert-size box is filled with NUMBERS and 98 BOMBS.

In the corner of the box, surrounded by bombs, are two blank boxes.

BRYCE
I think we flip a coin.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce and Charlie stand in the middle of an open space of carpet, facing one another. Bryce holds a COIN in his hand, poised ready to flip it.

BRYCE
Okay, what's what?

CHARLIE
I think heads should be the top one, tails the bottom.

BRYCE
Okay, you ready?

CHARLIE
Yeah-- no wait! Should we do best out of three?

BRYCE
I think one is enough.

Charlie nods. Bryce FLIPS the coin into the air, it falls on the carpet between them.

They both bend down, stare at the coin.

CHARLIE
Heads... okay.

BRYCE
Wait. Is heads the one we think the bomb is, or the one we click on?

CHARLIE
I thought it was the bomb.

BRYCE
I thought it was the one we're clicking....

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce and Charlie stand again facing each other, Bryce is poised, ready to flip the coin again.

BRYCE
Okay. Here goes...

Bryce flips the coin, it falls between them, they bend down to see it.

The coin is on TAILS.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce and Charlie are huddled together on the couch.

On the screen the cursor moves to the bottom right corner and the two blank boxes. It CLICKS on the bottom box...

A big RED X appears on the bottom box, a BOMB appears on the top one.

Charlie collapses into Bryce's lap, he puts his hands on his head in feigned terror.

They both LAUGH, he rubs her back, then pats her hair gently.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bryce stands at his dresser, he pulls a tank-top and a pair of boxers out of the top drawer. He turns holds them out.

Charlie approaches from the doorway, takes the clothes.

CHARLIE
Thanks, I'll take the couch this time.

BRYCE
No, absolutely not. You take the bed.

CHARLIE
Are you sure?

BRYCE
Yeah, of course.

CHARLIE
Alright, thanks.

Charlie smiles at him, kisses him on the cheek.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bryce sleeps on the couch, a small blanket pulled over him.

Charlie sits on the coffee table watching him. She is deep in contemplation.

He, sensing her there, wakes up.

CHARLIE
It's early, go back to sleep. I
just wanted to say bye.

BRYCE
Okay. Sorry about the bomb.

She rubs her hand through his hair, smiles.

CHARLIE
It's quite alright.

INT. BRYCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryce HUMS while he gathers documents together, drums on his desk, he's in a great mood.

He searches, looks around. *Something's missing.*

INT. TEDDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryce knocks, enters, the office is empty.

He walks over to the desk, starts pushing some things around, finds a stack of folders, turns to walk out, glances down...

Sticking out of the stack is a folder that says: *Charlotte Walters.*

Bryce drops the rest of the folders, they scatter across the floor at his feet. He opens the folder.

The page reads: *Charlotte "Charlie" Walters. Initiated: 7/6. Completed: TBD.* The page contains various other information, dates, and reports.

Bryce stares at the pages, he steams.

REX (O.S.)
Hey, Bryce! Can I see you a minute?

Bryce looks up with fire in his eyes.

INT. REX'S OFFICE - DAY

Bryce sits across from Rex's desk, staring bullets across the room where...

Rex runs on his treadmill, topless, sweating. He faces away from Bryce. Rex is TALKING but Bryce isn't listening.

Bryce's grips the chair tightly, his knuckles are WHITE.

Rex continues to run and talk.

Bryce face turns from anger to realization. He gets up quickly, goes behind Rex's desk, opens the top right drawer.

The drawer is filled with office supplies, Bryce shifts things around, sees a small KEY RING with three KEYS on it, picks it up.

Rex gets off the treadmill, picks up a towel, wipes his head.

REX
What do you think?

Bryce sits in the chair, looking relaxed.

BRYCE
I think it's a great idea, Rex,
perfect.

Bryce has a slight smirk on his face.

EXT. AQUARIUM - DAY

Rex and Charlie walk out of the Aquarium holding hands and laughing.

The plaza in front of the building is busy with PEOPLE and SCHOOL CHILDREN running about.

Across the street a SKYSCRAPER stretches into the afternoon sky. A WINDOW-WASHER cart hangs down the side of it.

Bryce stands on the cart watching the street below.

Way down on the street, Charlie and Rex stand at a crosswalk.
Bryce takes a CAMERA with a giant ZOOM LENS, holds it up...
Charlie laughs, brushes her hair out of her face.
Bryce snaps off a series of pictures.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Charlie and Rex sit at a table in an outside restaurant on
NEWBURY STREET.

Across the street a TOUR GROUP walks down the street. Many
have cameras and a small group in front are ASIAN.

In the group of Asians, one person is TALLER than the rest...

Bryce stands, dressed like a tourist, he has fake BLACK hair
under a bright colored hat, a fanny pack, and orange tee,
lime green shorts. He wears a pair of FAKE GLASSES with ASIAN
EYES, tiny holes cut out to see.

Bryce lifts his camera and begins snapping pictures.

Rex reaches his hand across the table, Charlie grabs it,
smiles.

Bryce lowers the camera, stews... down the street something
catches his eye...

Homeless Man #1 saunters down the street, head hung low.

Bryce lowers his glasses, raises an eyebrow...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rex and Charlie approach a black MERCEDES, he unlocks the
doors, opens the passenger door for Charlie, she gets in.

INT. REX'S CAR - DAY

Rex settles into the driver seat, shuts his door. He sticks
his key in the ignition-- POUNDING from behind them, their
heads whip around... they look at each other quizzically.

INT. REX'S TRUNK - DAY

The trunk opens, Rex and Charlie stare at...

Homeless Man #1, bound and gagged, wiggles and screams in trunk of the car.

Charlie looks at Rex in shock, turns and runs away.

Rex helplessly watches her go, stares at the Homeless Man.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Homeless Man #1 sits at the same table Rex and Charlie occupied before. Across from him is a HOMELESS WOMAN, dirty and ragged. They wave...

Bryce waves back to them from the sidewalk, struts away smiling.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce sits on the couch, bent over the coffee table, using SCISSORS to cut white PHOTO PAPER.

There are scraps EVERYWHERE, he's been at this all night.

A KNOCK on the apartment door, Bryce stops cutting, looks at a clock on the wall.

The clock says: 2:19am

He quizzically looks toward the kitchen, *Shit*.

He holds his hand out in front of him, spreads his fingers. He slowly, as if trying to convince himself to do it, opens the scissors and puts them between two fingers, as if to cut the skin between them.

He cringes, shakes his head. He's scared. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath and...

POUNDING on the door. Bryce lets his breath out, relaxes.

BRYCE
I'll risk it.

He gets up goes into the...

INT. BRYCE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bryce opens the door and Charlie steps in wearing a button down shirt and long skirt. She walks zombie-like through the room, drunk and tired.

Bryce shuts the door, locks it.

CHARLIE
I'm so tired, Bryce.

BRYCE
Oh? Did you have a date?

Bryce turns to see Charlie about to enter the living room,
Shit! He runs to catch her--

CHARLIE
We went dancing. I danced a lot.
Dranked-- drank and danced.

Too late, she's already in the...

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bryce stands in the doorway expecting the worst.

With her eyes half-closed, she walks by the table with all
the cut up photo paper, doesn't even glance at it.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie walks over to the dresser opens the top drawer.

Bryce leans against the doorway, arms crossed, watches her.

Her back to him, she takes her shirt off, then her bra. She
takes a white tank top out of the drawer, puts it on.

She pulls her skirt down, wiggles out of it.

Charlie crawls into bed, curls up in a ball.

Bryce laughs, turns to go back into the living room.

Charlie comes up behind him, takes his hand.

She leads him back to the bed, gets back in, curls up.

CHARLIE
Come on.

Bryce gets into the bed behind her, lies on his side. He
props his head up with his bottom hand, hesitates, then puts
his other arm around her.

She grabs his arm, holds it tight.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Do you have to get up early?

BRYCE
Yeah, you?

CHARLIE
No.

BRYCE
Sleep as long as you want.

CHARLIE
Thanks. Just don't look at me. In the morning I look like that Nazi from *Last Crusade* after he drank from the wrong cup of Christ.

Bryce smiles.

BRYCE
If that's the case, I'm 99.9 percent sure I wont.

INT. BRYCE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Charlie lies in Bryce's bed alone.

She wakes up, looks around, stretches.

INT. BRYCE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Charlie walks to the counter, picks up a NOTE: *Morning, There's cereal in the pantry. Your clothes are in the dryer. Call me later - Bryce.*

Charlie walks to the tall cabinet in the kitchen, opens it.

Rows and rows of cereal boxes, dozens of different kinds fill every shelf.

Charlie laughs, grabs the Corn Pops, shuts the pantry.

EXT. REX'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Rex hops down the steps with a spring in his step, dressed for a night out. He turns onto the street and walks away briskly.

Bryce peers out from behind a tree. He watches Rex leave.

Down the street Rex makes a turn out of view.

Bryce walks across the street.

In his hands he holds Rex's spare KEY-RING, he jingles them.

Bryce sticks a key into the door, opens it. He peers behind him, then enters.

INT. REX'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Rex and Charlie make out in the hallway, against a door. Rex unlocks the door while they do, they push themselves into...

INT. REX'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Charlie and Rex kiss passionately, pull each others shirts off, throwing them on the counter, the table. Completely focused on each other.

As they kiss, Rex leads Charlie deeper into the apartment.

INT. REX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlie pushes Rex onto the bed, jumps on top of him, continues to kiss him deeply.

Rex kisses back, holding the back of Charlie's head.

His eyes open slightly, then... WIDE - *Oh, fuck.*

Rex stops, Charlie moves down to his neck. He looks around the room, dumbstruck.

The walls are covered in extreme close up PHOTOS of CHARLIE. Some in color, some in black and white, but not a single square inch of bare-wall is visible.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

What the--

EXT. REX'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The door SWINGS open and Charlie rushes out. When she gets to the sidewalk she breaks into a run.

Rex exits the building, topless still, watches her run away.

Bryce, watching from behind a car, smiles.

INT. ANNA'S TAQUERIA - DAY

Charlie stands in front of Bryce in line. They move forward taking baby steps as the line inches forward.

BRYCE
How was your night last night?

CHARLIE
Not too bad, I thought it was going to be a late night but I went home early.

Bryce's smile turns to confusion.

BRYCE
Anything exciting happen?

CHARLIE
Not really.

Bryce curses silently.

BRYCE
Did you want to try and catch a movie tonight?

CHARLIE
Oh, I can't. Sorry. I'm kind of booked up this weekend.

Charlie moves up to the counter, speaks to a CHEF.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
We'll have a super-chicken and a steak plate please.

They move down the line, Bryce takes cash out of his wallet, hands it to the CASHIER who notices...

His hand has two clear THUMBTRACKS sticking into it.

Bryce smiles at her innocently.

INT. HATE-DATE OFFICE - DAY

Bryce enters from outside and walks toward his office.

He takes a corner, Teddy is in the middle of the hallway, like he's been waiting there for Bryce.

TEDDY

Rex thinks that one of his hate-date's exes is stalking them.

BRYCE

Really? That's a new one.

Bryce steps around Teddy, avoids eye contact.

TEDDY

I think it's one of the hate-date's other boyfriends.

Bryce stops, turns.

Teddy is already facing him, he knows.

BRYCE

You can't expect me to just sit there and let him hurt her.

TEDDY

Bryce someone hired him for that very reason. You as much as anyone, knows how this works.

BRYCE

This is different--

TEDDY

How is it different? She hurt somebody, we hurt her. That's how it works.

BRYCE

If you don't get it, there's no way I can explain it to you.

TEDDY

Get what Bryce, that you like this girl? You think this is you? Well, it's fucking not. It's another one of your sick personas!

Bryce turns, walks away.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

She doesn't love you! She loves this masochistic monstrosity you've created for her! It's sickening!

INT. TEDDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Teddy types at his workstation, still fuming.

His computer SCREENS are filled with MESSENGER BOXES. The computer BLOOPS continuously.

Bryce enters.

BRYCE

Look, I'm sorry about before. Just, let me tell Rex. I'll talk to him, tell him it was me, and we'll try and work something out.

TEDDY

Go for it.

BRYCE

Thanks. I need to grab the expenses for this week.

TEDDY

Don't worry about them, I'll do it. No problem. All me.

Teddy purposely avoids eye contact with Bryce.

BRYCE

That's okay. It's my job.

Teddy doesn't move, continues typing.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Teddy, the expenses.

Teddy looks at Bryce with guilty eyes. He takes a folder from his desk, looks at it, hands it to Bryce.

Bryce flips through the pages as he turns. He stops, violently flips pages back and forth.

Bryce reads the file.

BRYCE

They're in Maine? Is he leaving her there?

TEDDY

It's just a prelim.

Bryce paces back and forth.

BRYCE
You've gotta get me on a flight up
there.

TEDDY
You know I can't do that.

BRYCE
Teddy, this is my girlfriend.

TEDDY
She's Rex's girlfriend too.

BRYCE
It's a hate-date! He doesn't care
about her!

TEDDY
Maybe not, but you knew it was
going to come to this. There's
nothing you can do.

Bryce panics, looks around, runs his hand through his hair,
completely frustrated. He crumples the expenses in anger,
throws them down.

BRYCE
Fine. You're right. Fine. Fuck.
Okay, I'll figure something out.

He walks out slowly, calmly closes the door behind him.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bryce walks slowly through the lobby.

He exits through two large GLASS DOORS.

On the other side of the glass, Bryce SPRINTS down the
street.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bryce runs out into the street stopping a taxi, jumps in.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

A taxi pulls up in front of the AIRPORT, Bryce jumps out.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Bryce steps up to an airline COUNTER.

A fake-smiling CLERK stands behind the counter.

CLERK
How can I help you today?

BRYCE
I need a ticket to Maine, please.

CLERK
Okay. Will that be Bangor, Portland
or Presque Isle?

BRYCE
Portland.

The Clerk types into the computer. She peers over the counter to Bryce's feet.

CLERK
No luggage?

Bryce shakes his head.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Excellent.

She types more.

CLERK (CONT'D)
That'll be three hundred and ninety-
seven dollars.

BRYCE
Three ninety-seven? It's a forty-
five minute flight!

CLERK
Well, there's a stopover at JFK but
you'll be there by ten tonight.

BRYCE
New York City is three hundred
miles west of here, Portland is two
hundred miles north!

CLERK
We do have a car rental service if
you'd like to drive.

(MORE)

CLERK (cont'd)
But this late on a Friday, there
won't be a lot to choose from.

BRYCE
No, it's fine. I'll fly.

Bryce takes out his WALLET, gives the Clerk a CREDIT CARD.

The Clerk swipes the card and hands it back. Then hands him a
BOARDING PASS.

CLERK
Okay, you're at gate W. Have a
great trip and enjoy your flight.

BRYCE
W?

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

Out on the runway a PILOT is unloading crates from the back
of a tiny PROP-PLANE. The propellers emit a loud WHIR.

Bryce stands in front of the building, horrified.

The Pilot looks up, sees Bryce, waves.

PILOT
(Shouting over the noise)
You must be the passenger.

Bryce waves back to him.

PILOT (CONT'D)
We'll take off just as soon as I
can get these here potatoes off the
plane. If you wanna pitch in over
here we'll be gettin' goin' faster.

Bryce, horrified, points to the door.

BRYCE
I'm gonna hit the facilities before
we go.

PILOT
Sure thing. Don't wanna have to
hold nothin' up there. These props
are a little jarring to the ole
pipes!

Bryce nods, eyes wide.

BRYCE

I bet!

INT. CAR - DAY

Bryce behind the wheel of a car, a sour look on his face. He is hunched over the wheel, the car is way too small for him.

He presses his head against the window, looks up.

A SIGN hangs down, reads: *Entering Maine.*

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

A beach-front boardwalk with candy stands, carnival games and rides.

Charlie walks with Rex, her arm in his, they're laughing. She eats candy corn, he holds a giant stuffed octopus,

The octopus's tendrils trip Rex up as he carries it.

EXT. BOARDWALK - LATER

Bryce briskly weaves around people and vendors, craning his neck, searching for Rex and Charlie.

He sits on a bench, takes out his phone, dials Charlie.

The battery bar on the phone FLASHES, the phone shuts off.

Bryce leans over, holds his head in his hands, frustrated. An ice cream cone SQUISHES against his head, all in his hair, he jumps back.

A small CHILD stands LAUGHING with a cone, ice cream all over his hands and arms.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DUSK

Rex and Charlie sit eating on an outdoor patio. The octopus occupies a third seat. The octopus has an angry face.

A WAITRESS puts plates in front of them, they both ordered lobster.

Rex gets up, turns the octopus around, Charlie laughs.

EXT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Bryce sits on the same outdoor patio, alone, eating a sandwich. His eyes dart around at PASSERSBY.

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

A packed dance club, strobe lights, multiple bars, the works.

Rex and Charlie dance close to one another among a large CROWD. They sip drinks. Dance music BLARES.

INT. DANCE CLUB - LATER

Bryce pushes his way through the same CROWD, craning his neck, searching for the elusive couple.

A group of GIRLS surround him, dance and grind up on him.

He tries to push his way out but they won't let him. He tries to ignore them, continues to scan the crowd.

EXT. BOARDWALK - NIGHT

Rex and Charlie exit the club, sweaty, laughing. Charlie starts to walk down the street...

Rex grabs her, kisses her. She kisses him back.

EXT. BOARDWALK - LATER

Bryce walks down the boardwalk, soaked in SWEAT and GLITTER. He passes rides and booths. PEOPLE mill about.

He stops in front of a ring-toss game. Large stuffed octopi hang from the ceiling, he approaches the VENDOR.

BRYCE

Is there a pay phone around here?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bryce stands on the sidewalk looking down a long street. HOTEL SIGNS line both sides of the road. He holds a large piece of PAPER.

A page from a phone book, the top reads: *Hotels.*

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Bryce at the front desk holding up a PHOTO of Rex and Charlie together outside the Aquarium.

The CONCIERGE shakes his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Bryce enters the hotel. Seconds pass and Bryce exits, dejected.

CUT TO:

Bryce exits another hotel.

CUT TO:

He walks out of another hotel

CUT TO:

And another... He walks to his car, he can barely keep his eyes open.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Elevator doors open, Bryce steps out, he walks down the hall, on a mission.

Bryce stops at room 522, steps back KICKS the door down!

INT. ROOM 522 - NIGHT

Charlie is STRAPPED to the four posts of the bed, spread eagle. She wears LEATHER and CHAINS.

Rex stands next to the bed with a large CHAIN in his hands. He wears a black leather MASK and a leg VICE like Bryce's.

Rex turns to the door, then to Charlie, he winds up with the chain, rears back and whips down on her and just as it CRACKS down--

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Bryce wakes to a START, shakes his head. He fell asleep in the car.

He tries to stretch out, he SMACKS his hands on the ceiling.

He wipes his eyes, picks up the phone book page off his lap.

Many of the hotels on the page have been crossed out.

Bryce puts the page down and starts the car.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Bryce leans on the counter at the front desk, barely awake.

The CONCIERGE types furiously on his computer.

CONCIERGE

Yes, they're checked in here.

Bryce perks up immediately.

BRYCE

What room?

CONCIERGE

I can't tell you that sir. I could have them paged.

BRYCE

No! No, don't page them. It's late. I'll come back in the morning.

Bryce slaps the counter, walks INTO the hotel.

CONCIERGE

Excuse me! Sir!

Bryce turns.

BRYCE

I'm not staying here.

Bryce smiles guiltily at the Concierge.

CONCIERGE

No... You're not.

The Concierge glares at him snidely.

Bryce shrugs innocently.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Bryce walks around the hotel looking up at the windows, none have any lights on.

Around the side of the building, a Young MAN exits a side-door.

Bryce nods as he passes the Young Man, he nods back.

Once the Young Man is clear of him, Bryce sprints, catches the door before it closes.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Bryce listens at room 122 for a second, moves to the next door, listens. He continues to the next door.

CUT TO:

Bryce listens at door 235.

CUT TO:

Bryce listens at door 333. A door OPENS behind him, he turns.

A large FELLOW in a tank top and boxers stands with the ice bucket, staring at Bryce.

Bryce smiles nervously at him.

The Fellow shakes his head, moves to the vending machines.

INT. HOTEL - LATER

Bryce tiptoes down the hallway past doors 406 and 404. He stops, listens. Continues tip-toeing. He passes door 402 and 400. Listens again.

Bryce turns around, faces the long hallway he just came down.

He glances to the wall on his right, specifically a FIRE ALARM.

INT. HOTEL STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The Fire Alarm BLARES.

Dozens of PEOPLE in pajamas and robes file down the stairs
CHATTERING.

Bryce walks among the crowd.

A level below him, Charlie and Rex enter the stairwell from
the hallway.

Bryce sees them, his eyes widen, he turns and runs back up
the stairs.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The crowd filters out of the hotel.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Bryce gets to the top of the stairwell, pushes through the
door marked: *Roof*.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Rex and Charlie stand among the crowd, they continue to
CHATTER.

BRYCE (O.S.)
(Faint)
Charlie! Charlie!

EXT. HOTEL ROOF - NIGHT

Bryce stands at the edge of the roof...

BRYCE
Charlie!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A few people in the crowd point to the roof, others turn to
look.

BRYCE (O.S.)
(Louder)
Charlie!

Charlie and Rex look up.

Bryce stands atop the hotel, five stories up, looking down.

WOMAN (O.S.)

A jumper!

The crowd grows QUIET.

Rex SEETHES.

REX

You've got to be shitting me.

Charlie is completely shocked, covers her mouth.

BRYCE (O.S.)

Charlie!

A Heavy-set, middle-aged Man steps out in front of the crowd.

CHARLIE #2

What?!

Bryce is confused.

BRYCE

What? Not you! Charlotte!

Charlie steps out in front of the crowd, next to Charlie #2.

Bryce hesitates a second, *Fuck it*. He goes for it.

BRYCE

Look. I know you don't think I want to have a relationship. And I know I said we didn't have to be exclusive. But the truth of the matter is, we do. I'm sure that guy you're with...

Rex stares up at...

Bryce makes eye contact with him.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

I'm sure he's great. But you and I are great together. I don't know the last time I even thought I had the capacity to fall in love with someone, now I can't imagine not. I was so scared of getting hurt that I convinced myself a casual relationship would be less of a risk. But you're worth the risk to me. I want us to be together.

Charlie stares up at Bryce.

BRYCE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I want to click your bombs for you.

VOICE (O.S.)
He's got a bomb!

She turns to Rex, whose eyes are on fire, staring at Bryce. Rex looks down at Charlie, he nods. She turns and runs off. Rex looks back up full of rage.

Bryce looks down at Rex, nods, mouths: *thanks*. He runs away from the edge of the building

INT. HOTEL STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Bryce runs down the stairs.

Charlie runs up the stairs.

They meet at a landing, embrace, kiss. Charlie pulls away hard.

CHARLIE
You wanting to click my bombs
sounds kind of dirty.

Bryce laughs, grabs her face, kisses her again.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Bryce and Charlie walk out of the double doors of the hotel. Red and Blue lights FLASH all over the place.

A crowd of POLICE OFFICERS and FIREMEN stand blocking the couple's path, looking stern, angry.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

A Cell Door CRASHES open.

Bryce lays on the cell bed, hands behind his head, smiling.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Hugheston, visitor.

Bryce sits up. His smile fades... he stands.

Rex walks over to the cell gates, puts his hands in his pockets. He surveys the cell.

REX

At least you have your own cell.

BRYCE

It's suicide watch.

REX

Charlie's at the hotel packing up her stuff. She's gonna come pick you up. I didn't tell her anything.

BRYCE

Thanks.

REX

So that was you with the Crazy Joe Davola picture shrine?

BRYCE

And the bum in your trunk, yeah.

REX

I'd like your resignation as soon as possible and I'll have the lawyer work out a settlement, because I don't want anything to do with you anymore.

BRYCE

I know. I'll figure something out. As long as I have her I'll be okay.

REX

She walks dogs for a living.

BRYCE

I meant spiritually.

Rex turns to walk out, then back to Bryce.

REX (CONT'D)

Someone hired me to hate-date her, you know. Doesn't that bother you?

Bryce thinks, looks right into Rex's eyes.

BRYCE

Not really, no.

REX

I hope you know what you're doing because chances are it's going to be like every other relationship we've ever known. Things are great for about five minutes and before you know it she's with her girlfriends in Bora Bora banging cabana boys for free mojitos.

BRYCE

Well, I hope you're wrong.

REX

Me too, buddy.

Rex turns on a dime, leaves.

Bryce leans on the cell door, presses his head against it.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Bryce drives, Charlie sits next to him.

They hold hands.

CHARLIE

Did you bring any crosswords?

BRYCE

Check my bag.

Charlie looks in the backseat, reaches, pulls back a folded up newspaper, opens it up.

A folded white piece of PAPER falls out. She opens it. It's the hate-date CHECKLIST.

CHARLIE

What's this?

BRYCE

That's a, uh, one of those chain E-mails. How to "play" somebody.

Charlie studies the paper.

CHARLIE

This sounds like us.

Bryce laughs.

BRYCE
You think I'm playing you?

CHARLIE
Sounds more like I'm playing you.
"Show up often and unexpected," "go
to her with a problem." This is
like our relationship to a T.

She leans over, kisses him on the cheek.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You better be careful, sounds like
I'm a dangerous woman to fall for.

Bryce looks over at her, smiles, puts his hand behind the
small of her neck.

BRYCE
That's exactly why I love you.

He rubs her cheek with his thumb, looks back to the road.

He's happy to be where he is.

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER - "Eight Months Later"

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bryce hangs out the window of an ICE CREAM TRUCK, hands cones
to two CHILDREN.

His face has small cuts on it, a band-aid on his ear.

He pulls himself back into...

INT. ICE CREAM TRUCK - DAY

Bryce has on a pink and blue polo shirt. He climbs to the
front of the truck.

BRYCE
That's the last of them, can we
please go? I'm going to be late.

The driver turns around in his seat, it is the dirty, old Ice
Cream Vendor from the Marketplace earlier.

ICE CREAM VENDOR
Alright, but scrub the buckets on
the way over.

Bryce hangs his head, turns back around.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Bryce rushes in the door, begins undressing.

Teddy comes in behind him wearing a tuxedo.

TEDDY
Cutting it a little close, huh?
Thought you might be closing out
that hate-date of hers.

BRYCE
That's not funny.

Bryce takes off his shirt, revealing his bare, beaten torso.
He has fresh wounds, old wounds, deep scars, small scars,
bruises, bandages, all over his body.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
Every damn kid in Southie wanted
ice cream today. You know how
strapped I've been.

Teddy grabs a tux hanging on a doorknob, turns to Bryce,
freezes.

TEDDY
You're still doing that? You
haven't spent a single day with her
where you didn't have to hurt
yourself?

Bryce grabs the tux, starts throwing the tux on haphazardly.

BRYCE
Can we talk about this after?

Bryce turns to the mirror, buttons his shirt, concealing the
scars.

EXT. CHAPEL DAY - DAY

An outdoor wedding on a sunny day, white chairs fill the
courtyard. A small altar at the front of the scene.

Bryce stands at the altar next to Teddy, his best man.

Bryce rocks nervously on his heels.

BRYCE
Thanks for doing this.

TEDDY
It's no problem. I know you didn't
really have a lot of options.

The groom's side is barely populated. The Bride's side is
packed with PEOPLE.

TEDDY
You alright?

BRYCE
I'm good. Anxious. That's good
though. I'm excited, I really am.
I've never been more happy.

TEDDY
And you thought you'd never find
love.

Teddy smiles, turns, surveys the crowd on the Bride's side.

TEDDY
Hey, there's Madison.

BRYCE
Who?

Bryce looks.

Madison sits talking to a WOMAN next to her.

The LADY in front of Madison checks her watch, looks around
anxiously.

TEDDY (O.S.)
The girl I went out with from speed-
dating, Charlie's friend. Haven't
talked to her in a while.

Bryce can't take his eyes off the Woman.

BRYCE
Who's that girl in front of her?
Doesn't she look familiar.

TEDDY

Yeah, that's um...

All the people on the Bride's side are females, they all start to look familiar... to us.

Quick cuts of females in the crowd of women we've seen previously: Becky, Jean, Rachel, Hannah, Carolyn, Crystal, Pam, Mona, Lori, Maggie, Melony, Marny, Tara, Heather, Amy, Leslie.

TEDDY

No fucking way...

BRYCE

Wha--

The BAND strikes up "Here Comes the Bride."

Every head in the congregation turns around in anticipation.

Seconds pass, no sign of anyone...

Finally, Charlie walks out into the middle of the aisle, she wears jeans, a grey tee shirt, flip flops, she walks briskly down the aisle.

Mouths on the Groom's side hang open, GASPS and CHATTERING start, then grow louder.

Smiles from every face on the Bride's side. One girl WHOOPS, others LAUGH.

Bryce is terrified. Teddy, shocked.

Charlie stops about ten feet in front of Bryce, smiles.

CHARLIE

What's up, Bryce?

SCREAMS of joy from the Bride's side, Charlie turns, quiets them.

BRYCE

Charlie, what're you doing?

CHARLIE

You of all people should know a Life Ruiner when he sees one.

BRYCE

Wh-- Why...?

Charlie throws her head back, laughs.

CHARLIE

You need to ask why? Look at these women. You hurt all these women.

BRYCE

They broke guys hearts, they destroyed people's lives.

CHARLIE

Bryce, people's hearts get broken all the time, that's part of falling in love. Taking the risk, remember?

BRYCE

So none of it, us, was real?

CHARLIE

None of it. You're a recorder, Bryce, so fucking easy to play.

The women CHEER.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

We had you from the start. The subway, the speed-dating, bumping into you on the street. Carolyn at the ice-cream shop, the girls at the baseball game. Rex.

BRYCE

Rex?

CHARLIE

Rex, him "hate-dating" me. It was us who hired him, to ruin your friendship and your business. How's he doing by the way? Where's he sitting? Have you talked to him in oh, say the last eight months?

The women LAUGH

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You really should've seen it coming, Bryce. I followed your list to a T. Hell, that was my copy of it in the car. I pulled it out just to screw with you.

Bryce is confused-- *How?...*

Charlie reaches behind her, pulls Teddy's SIDEKICK from her back pocket, holds it up. Smiles. Tosses it to Teddy.

He catches it, horrified.

Bryce glares at him, angry.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

It's amazing how much information you fit on that thing, Teddy.

BRYCE

You really think I deserved this?

CHARLIE

I really do. 100 percent. We all do. And as good as it feels, and as much as you had it coming, it didn't change anything. You're still a sociopathic asshole who's too pussy to live his life. Only now I guess you know it.

Bryce's eyes WATER...

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Enjoy piecing your worthless life back together, sweetie.

Charlie turns on a dime, marches down the aisle, the Bride's side ERUPTS with WHOOPING and CHEERING.

The women on the Bride's side exit their seats, most follow Charlie out.

Bryce hangs his head.

A WOMAN steps up to him, she SLAPS him across the face, turns and runs away, excited.

Another woman, Crystal, tries to slap Bryce too. Teddy intervenes, tries to block her. She THROWS him to the ground.

Bryce cowers, she WHACKS him on the head twice, walks away.

Bryce rubs his head, watches the crowd leave.

EXT. CHAPEL - LATER

A bar, dance floor, and buffet are set up off to the side

Bryce sits at the bar with Teddy nursing a drink. Empty shot glasses are lined up, upside-down, in front of them.

TEDDY

I'm sorry about the sidekick--

BRYCE

It's not your fault.

TEDDY

Still. I don't think you deserved all this.

BRYCE

Doesn't really matter. It happened.

TEDDY

Yeah.

Bryce glances to his side, if he wasn't already completely miserable the look on his face now seals it..

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Fuck me...

At the altar stands Julie, holding a coat and purse in front of her. There is mascara all over her face from crying.

EXT. WEDDING SCENE - DAY

Bryce approaches Julie at the altar.

BRYCE

I take it you weren't in on this?

JULIE

In on your wedding to another woman?

BRYCE

You don't know what happened?

JULIE

I've been staying with my parents for a while. I checked my messages and someone called to tell me that you were getting married. I came to see for myself.

BRYCE

Well. There's something I need to tell you.

JULIE

Yeah, there's something I have to tell you too.

BRYCE

I think mine is bigger.

Julie lowers her coat and purse, she is about eight months pregnant.

JULIE

I doubt it.

Bryce, wide-eyed, stares at her stomach, shakes his head. He begins to speak but we hear no words.

Julie watches him speak, tears flow down her face. She buries her head in her hands, her shoulders heave.

Bryce holds her close to him, she cries into his chest.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Bryce sits drinking a coffee in a waiting room. He taps his feet nervously.

WILFREDO, late twenties, paces nervously across the room.

BRYCE

Take a seat man, relax a bit.

WILFREDO

I can't relax. I'm not ready to have this baby.

BRYCE

Well, you're having it, so chill out.

Wilfredo reluctantly sits.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Why are you so worked up?

WILFREDO

I haven't seen this girl in months. She called me up three days ago and told me she was pregnant and that it's mine. I shouldn't even be here. She should have to deal with this alone.

BRYCE
What would that solve, though?

WILFREDO
It would hurt her, a lot. I know
that much.

BRYCE
And then what? She's hurt, you're
hurt. It doesn't solve anything.
Trust me, if this were a year ago
I'd have gotten her back like that,
by running.

A NURSE pokes her head in, nods to Bryce.

He nods back. Stands.

WILFREDO
And now? You love her? You're
married?

Bryce smiles at him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Bryce stands looking through a large window into a room.

BRYCE (V.O.)
No. I just know that I want to be
here. For the first time in my
life, what I want to be doing also
happens to be the right thing.

Inside the room, Julie lies in bed, holds a small BABY
wrapped in a pink blanket. Pink balloons attached to the bed.

Julie notices Bryce, nods, holds up the Baby, smiles
slightly.

Bryce smiles, slightly too, and nods back.

FADE OUT.

THE END

Vita

Michael Gemme was born in Worcester, Massachusetts.
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