

PLAYING THE CHANGES

Written by

George Edward Collins

Based on a novel by the author

George@gmcollins.net
Rimska 10
120 00 Prague 2
Czech Republic
+420 602 36 36 88

FADE IN:

INT. STARK HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: "Brookline, Massachusetts"

The room is pitch black. A young girl's muffled WAILS, WHIMPERS and MOANS can be heard O.S. Pounding FOOTSTEPS charge up the hall, getting closer.

The bedroom door bursts open. A woman's hand slaps the light switch, illuminating the space.

CATHY STARK (mid-thirties) stands trembling in the doorway.

CATHY

Ray! Ray, wake up! It's Mo!

RAY STARK (late-forties) bolts upright in bed. Yanks off his eyeshade. Disoriented, he instinctively grabs the phone on his nightstand. Glares at the screen. Blank.

RAY

Calm down. What's going on?

CATHY

Just listen, Ray!

Ray pauses for a moment. The pathetic WAILS and WHIMPERS continue rising and falling O.S.

CATHY (CONT'D)

What's happening --

RAY

-- Relapse. Just what I need now.

(louder, to his wife)

OK, let's go.

Ray jumps out from his side of the bed. Fit and trim, with closely cropped hair, he radiates drive and intensity.

Ray brushes past Cathy, dutiful and devoted, who sprints down the hallway after her husband.

They pause at the entrance of their daughter's

BEDROOM

and peer inside.

MAUREEN ("MO"), ten years old with dimples and long curly hair, lies atop her pink bed sheets. Eyes closed, glistening with sweat, she pounds the mattress with both fists.

MO
Make it stop! Owwww, it hurts!

Cathy raises her hands to her face. Ray clenches his jaw.

RAY
Start your car. Now!

Cathy disappears down the hall. Ray turns to Mo.

MO
I'm burning up! Make it stop!

Ray steps toward his stricken daughter. He crouches down beside her bed, gently slides his arms under the sheets, and slowly lifts the girl to his chest. Mo falls quiet.

Ray sets off down the hallway at a brisk but measured pace. Mo's eyes slit open as they approach the stairway.

MO (CONT'D)
Daddy?

Ray swallows hard as he takes the first few stairs at speed.

RAY
Yes, darling. Daddy's here.
Everything's going to be OK.

Mo sighs and wraps her arms tighter around Ray's neck.

Still clutching the bedsheet-wrapped Mo, Ray charges into the

GARAGE

Cathy sits behind the wheel of her idling Volvo SUV. Ray approaches the driver's side door.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'll drive.

Cathy slips out of the front seat without a word. Once she is positioned in the back seat, Ray unclasps Mo's arms from around his neck and delivers the precious bundle to his wife.

RAY (CONT'D)
Keep her as still as possible.
She's in a lot of pain.

CATHY
You don't need to tell me that.

Ray shrugs "Whatever" as he climbs into the driver's seat.

EXT./INT. CATHY'S SUV - MOMENTS LATER

Ray shoots down the long driveway. Tires SQUEAL as the SUV races through the sleeping suburban neighborhood.

Ray grabs the phone from his pocket. Hits the speed dial.

MASS GENERAL RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Yes, Doctor Stark, how can I help?

RAY
Mo's had a relapse -- it's bad.

He keeps one eye on the road rushing by. Mo's moans escalate.

RAY (CONT'D)
We'll be there in ten minutes. I'll need a blood test and a morphine sulfate drip immediately. Round up her oncology team. Make sure they know it's Doctor Stark's daughter, and I'm keeping score.

INT. MASS GENERAL - ELLISON BUILDING - MO'S ROOM - DAY

SUPER: "Two Weeks Later"

Mo, her head now shaved, sits in her bed, propped up by massive pillows. A pale, thin little girl in a pale, thin hospital gown, she nevertheless evinces a plucky enthusiasm.

Cathy sits in a rickety chair facing her daughter.

MO
Mommy, when I get better again, can I get a horse?

CATHY
A horse? Where did this come from?

Mo fumbles through a stack of magazines on her nightstand.

MO
Here. There's a story about horses and jumping, see?

Mo points to a picture of a horse and young woman rider clearing a jump in perfect unison.

MO (CONT'D)
She was sick like me when she was little, then she got better and started riding. And now she's going to the Olympics!

CATHY

What about your field hockey?

Mo makes a scrunchy face.

MO

Doctor Ternamian said I have to take it easy on my legs after the marrow transplant. With a horse, I can just sit on his back and steer.

Mo bounces excitedly on her bed. Winces a bit.

MO (CONT'D)

Pleeeeeease?

Cathy hands back the magazine and smiles reassuringly.

CATHY

I'll have to discuss it with your father, but I don't see why not.

Mo settles back into her pillows and closes her eyes.

MO

Thank you, Mommy.

After a few moments she perks up again.

MO (CONT'D)

When is Daddy coming to see me? I miss him.

Cathy catches her breath.

CATHY

You know he's very busy, but I'm sure he'll see you soon.

(mutters)

He'd better.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGERY OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Ray, suited up in his blue linen scrubs, face mask, bonnet and matching booties, strides confidently into the OR holding his freshly washed hands high in the air.

A team of doctors, nurses and technicians prep the OR. A trumpet and saxophone DUEL on the overhead sound system.

Ray stops and stares at the ceiling. Although clearly in distress, he cannot help tapping his feet.

RAY

Can someone kill that music?

TECHNICIAN

It's Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie! I see you tapping your foot there.

RAY

I know who it is. It's a distraction.

TECHNICIAN

It's just music...

RAY

I'm about to cut open a man's brain. Would you like to be the one to tell his family he didn't make it because his doctor had "Bloomdido" blasting in his ear?

The technician mumbles an apology.

Silence restored, Ray pivots toward one of the nurses. She quickly dries and gloves his hands and secures his gown.

Ray strides over to the lighted wall to study the MRI and CT scans one last time. Spins around and waves his team into a circle around the operating table like a quarterback leading a huddle. Or maybe more like a drill sergeant at lineup.

RAY (CONT'D)

Everybody ready?

Ray collects a round of silent nods.

RAY (CONT'D)

OK, let's go.

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Ray sits at the table, head buried in The Sunday Globe.

Cathy sets a plate of buttered English muffins in the middle of the table and sits facing Ray -- or rather, the newspaper.

CATHY

Mo wants a horse.

No response.

CATHY (CONT'D)

I told her I'd discuss it with you.

Still no response from Ray.

CATHY (CONT'D)
So, shall we discuss?

Deafening silence.

CATHY (CONT'D)
Just listen, Ray!

With a sigh, Ray lets the paper fall to the table.

RAY
Fine. Let's discuss. Where did this
crazy idea come from?

CATHY
She wants to ride in the Olympics.

RAY
Wow, even crazier than I thought.

CATHY
She's ten years old -- she's
allowed to have crazy dreams!

Ray starts drumming his fingers on the placemat.

RAY
Do you have any idea how much --

CATHY
-- Come off it, Ray. It's her dream
-- that's all she's got right now,
and she deserves it.

Ray glares over Cathy's shoulder through the bay window, to the extensive gardens beyond the terrace, avoiding her gaze.

Cathy fixes her stare on her husband.

Finally, Ray's eyes retreat from the back yard.

RAY
All right, look into it, but --

CATHY
-- I'll tell her Daddy said yes.
You're welcome.

Ray takes another sip and dives back into the newspaper.

CATHY (CONT'D)
 So when are you getting in to visit her? She keeps asking.

Ray lets the paper fall again. He frowns.

RAY
 I know, I've been meaning to, but the relapse happened so suddenly, and at the worst possible time.

CATHY
 Would there have been a better time, more convenient for you?

RAY
 You know what I mean.

CATHY
 It's been this way ever since Mo got sick. Even before --

RAY
 -- Leading the Residents Program is going to be important when the Board chooses the next Chief --

CATHY
 -- Is that all you --

RAY
 -- Don't know where the time goes.

CATHY
I know where the time goes. I'm the one who had to quit my job, who had to drive Mo back and forth to the hospital every day, who --

Ray waves his hand as if swatting an annoying fly.

CATHY (CONT'D)
 You get your hair trimmed every two weeks but have no time to visit your own daughter!

RAY
 I've got to look professional --

CATHY
 -- Forget about your damn patients for once -- think of your family!

RAY

All right! I promise I'll go see Mo before the operation, OK?

CATHY

It's a bit late for that.

RAY

I may not be perfect, but I'm doing better than my asshole old man --

CATHY

-- that's a pretty low bar.

As if remembering something important, Ray jumps up from his chair and seizes a briefcase from the kitchen counter.

RAY

Got to run. The new Residents Program kicks off next week. Maynard's counting on me, and Bergen's watching me like a hawk.

Ray bolts across the kitchen and out the door to the garage.

Cathy sighs and shakes her head. Picks up the plate of cold muffins and tosses them into the garbage can.

INT. HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL - ETHER DOME ROOM - DAY

The steeply-tiered amphitheater is half full with around 30 or 40 neurosurgeons, residents and interns.

Ray enters, takes a seat on the left side of the front row.

DAVID BERGEN (mid-forties), Ray's scrappy arch-rival, slips by and takes up position on the opposite side of the front row. Gives Ray a perfunctory nod. Their enmity is mutual.

A moment later, RANDALL DILLON MAYNARD III (60-ish), the patrician Chief of the Neurosurgery Department, strolls in.

Maynard takes a seat on the bench in the center of the front row, halfway between Ray and Bergen.

After a few moments, Maynard turns to the CHIEF RESIDENT, who is loading a computer in the third row. Taps his watch.

A screen drops, showing a disoriented elderly man. That image is replaced by a series of brain scans. The doctors quietly confer with each other.

CHIEF RESIDENT (O.S.)

The MRI revealed a massive hematoma in the basal ganglia. Shortly after the exam, the patient slipped into a GCS Level 5 coma.

BERGEN

(turns to Ray)

Ray, this was your case, wasn't it? What did you decide to do and why?

RAY

I know what I did and why, Dave.

BERGEN

It's David.

RAY

So I assume you'd just leave him there in his coma, Dave?

BERGEN

It's David, I told you for the umpteenth time.

(turns to the audience)

The data show that the odds of the patient recovering from a coma this profound are statistically indistinct from zero.

RAY

Who are you to decide his life is not worth living?

BERGEN

Whatever it was that made this man a recognizable human being is gone!

RAY

And yet, instead of throwing in the towel and pulling his plug, I decided to operate. Why? Because as a physician, my job is to save the patient's life, not to decide whether or not he deserves a chance to live it.

BERGEN

At what point are we just playing God here?

RAY

We do that every time we pick up the knife. Or pull the plug.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

No matter what we decide, we're playing God. This is the life we chose.

(to residents)

Welcome to the Neurosurgery Residents Program. Choose wisely.

EXT. - STARK HOME - BACK YARD - DAY

Cathy, surrounded by garden tools, sits trimming daffodils.

JANET SALVATORE (mid-thirties), Cathy's sexy, spirited next door neighbor, bounces into the extensive back yard flashing a radiant Pepsodent smile. She sports tight cutoffs and a polo shirt two sizes too small, showing off her curves.

Cathy rises. Janet leans toward her and kisses both cheeks with a certain studied panache -- she loves to flaunt her Italian heritage as well as her amazing body.

JANET

Ciao.

The neighbors walk slowly along the garden path.

JANET (CONT'D)

So tomorrow's the big day?

CATHY

Ray says there's nothing to worry about, but I asked Father Mahoney to say a Mass for Mo's operation.

JANET

Sounds like you've got your bases covered! And how's Ray doing?

CATHY

Same as ever.

JANET

That bad, huh?

CATHY

(shakes her head)

I used to think he was dedicated, but he's certifiably insane.

JANET

You know what they say about surgeons being sociopaths.

Cathy buries her face in her hands.

Janet gives Cathy a hug, pats her on the back.

JANET (CONT'D)
Now, now, don't cry.

Cathy pulls back and dabs her eyes. Attempts to smile.

JANET (CONT'D)
Come on, hon. You think you're the
only one with an absentee,
insensitive jerk for a husband?

CATHY
How do you handle it?

Janet gives Cathy an exaggerated wink.

JANET
I do what I have to do to get my
needs met. Especially those needs.

CATHY
You mean like...
(whispers unnecessarily)
...an affair?

JANET
Actually a few, but only one at a
time, I swear.
(grins wickedly)
Right now, I have this personal
trainer. Hard as a rock, in all the
right places.

CATHY
But... adultery?

Janet gapes at Cathy as if she is crazy.

JANET
Only one was married, and that was
on the rocks anyway.

CATHY
Wow. Janet... I never...

JANET
Sorry if I've disappointed, but
don't knock it till you try it.

CATHY
(blushes)
You've got to be kidding.

JANET

Why not? You know Ray deserves it.
Haven't you ever been tempted --

CATHY

-- I don't do all the things I'm
tempted to do!

JANET

Never too late to start!

INT. MASS GENERAL - ELLISON BUILDING - NIGHT

The Night Nurse leads Ray to a closed door.

NIGHT NURSE

(whispers)

Do not wake her up under any
circumstances. Fifteen minutes.

RAY

(whispers in return)

Thank you very, very much.

Ray nudges the door open and steps into

MO'S ROOM

He eases the door closed. Several red LEDs flash along the
wall. After a moment Ray makes out Mo's bed under the window.

Ray strides toward it and kicks a chair, almost knocking over
the adjacent IV stand.

RAY (CONT'D)

(hisses)

Shit!

A soft moan rises from the pillows.

Ray freezes. After a moment he resumes feeling his way across
the floor. Reaches for the chair and lowers himself onto it.

Mo's pale scalp is reflected in the faint moonlight like an
oversized cue ball. Ray gasps. He draws a deep breath and
shifts in the uncomfortable chair.

Ray contemplates his daughter's slender presence among the
ruffled sheets, lost in thought.

After a few minutes, Ray slowly rises. Clutching his dangling
ID to keep it from brushing Mo's cheek, he leans over and
touches his lips to his daughter's forehead. Mo stirs awake.

MO
Daddy?

RAY
(whispers)
Yes, darling, Daddy's here.

MO
Mommy said you would come see me,
and you did!

She holds our her arms for a hug. They embrace.

RAY
Hang in there, Mo. Everything's
going to be OK.
(forces a smile)
We'll get you that horse... I'm
going to do better, I promise...

MO
I love you, Daddy.

Her soft breath mingles with his for a moment as his face hovers over hers in the darkness. He blinks back tears.

RAY
I love you more than you'll ever
know.

Ray straightens up. Steps slowly away from Mo's bed and tiptoes back toward the door. Turns for one last look.

Mo's profile is silhouetted in the moonlight shining through the window as she waves goodbye.

He blows her a kiss, then silently turns the knob and lets himself out.

INT. STARK HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Cathy lies in the empty bed and stares at the ceiling.

CATHY
Dear God, help Mo-Mo get through
this, and I'll never ask for
anything for the rest of my life.

She closes her eyes but the morning silence is shattered by the piercing RING of her alarm. The clock reads "6:00."

With a sigh, she pulls herself out of bed.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGERY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Ray, suited up and scrubbing in for his next operation, hears his pager BUZZ in his pocket. He dries his hands on his surgical gown, pulls out the device. Glares at the screen.

The pager reads: "COME TO WANG CENTER IMMEDIATELY."

Ray frowns, confused. The pager BUZZES again.

The pager reads: "URGENT."

Ray frowns again. Then the light bulb goes off.

RAY

Mo!

Ray bolts out of the scrub room. Still suited up, he races through the crowded, sprawling hospital complex.

INT. MASS GENERAL - WANG BUILDING - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Ray sprints in and scans the large, overflowing room.

Cathy slumps on a couch in the far corner, face in her hands.

DOCTOR TERNAMIAN (mid-sixties), still in his surgical scrubs, huddles beside her, shaking his head emphatically as he tells Cathy something she obviously does not want to hear.

Ray drags himself across the room.

Doctor Ternamian sees Ray and stands up. He approaches Ray, a grave expression on his deeply-lined face. Extends his hand. Ray, in a daze, takes it automatically.

DOCTOR TERNAMIAN

Ray, I'm sorry...

Ray sees the room spinning in otherworldly SLOW MOTION as he mindlessly pumps the other doctor's hand. As he gradually recovers his senses, his shoulders sag and his arm goes limp.

Ternamian puts his hand on Ray's shoulder. Ray purses his lips and stares vacantly at the wall.

DOCTOR TERNAMIAN (CONT'D)

I cannot tell you how badly I feel.

Ternamian glances at Cathy weeping into her handkerchief.

DOCTOR TERNAMIAN (CONT'D)

Go be with your wife. Call me
whenever you want to discuss this.

Ternamian withdraws.

Ray settles on the sofa next to Cathy and takes her hand. A moment later his pager BUZZES. He sneaks a peek.

The pager reads: "OPERATION COMMENCING. WHERE ARE YOU?"

Ray shoves the device back in his pocket. Stares blankly into space as Cathy buries her face in his neck.

CATHY

This can't... Our little girl...

Ray continues staring across the reception area. Struggles to maintain his composure. After a few moments, he pats Cathy's hand and places it gently in her lap.

The pager BUZZES again.

RAY

Shit.

He gets up to leave.

CATHY

Where --

RAY

-- I have to operate now. They need me. I'll call you when I'm done.

Ray stands up, then bends over to peck Cathy on the cheek.

RAY (CONT'D)

Be strong.

Ray turns and sets off briskly for the elevators. Stands with his back to Cathy as he waits for the elevator to arrive.

The elevator doors finally open. Ray slinks inside the cabin. He peeks over his shoulder, sees Cathy staring at him and bursting into tears just as the metallic doors close.

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ray enters the kitchen, slaps on the light. Sets his briefcase down on the counter.

RAY

Cathy?

Sees dozens of wadded up tissues scattered around the kitchen table.

Scoops up a handful and takes them to the garbage can under the kitchen sink -- which is overflowing with empty Kleenex boxes and more used tissues.

Shakes his head in amazement.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY - DAY

Ray and Cathy stand at the graveside along with a large group of mourners led by FATHER MAHONEY (mid-60s), who officiates the ceremony in his thick Boston Irish brogue.

The priest sprinkles the casket with holy water.

FATHER MAHONEY

We commend our sister Maureen to
the Lord: May the Lord receive her
into His peace and raise up her
body on the last day.

As the casket disappears, Ray stares grimly straight ahead while Cathy dabs her eyes continuously.

Ray and Cathy stand together by the grave as the departing mourners pass by and offer condolences one by one. The mourners gone, Ray and Cathy plod toward their car.

Father Mahoney approaches and gives Cathy a hug. After a few moments he steps away and turns to Ray, extending his hand.

Ray glares at the priest. Keeps his arms by his side.

FATHER MAHONEY (CONT'D)

I will pray that you may understand
life's sacred mysteries --

RAY

-- Mysteries? There's life and
death and genes and cells and
organs. My daughter suffered heart
failure on the operating table and
now she's dead. What more is there
to understand?

FATHER MAHONEY

Ray, you can't reason away your
pain. We need to think beyond --

RAY

(holds up his hand)
-- I want nothing to do with your
fairy tales.

Cathy recoils as if she has been gut shot.

Leaving the priest standing there with his arm outstretched, Ray seizes her hand and yanks her toward his black Lexxus.

RAY (CONT'D)
OK, let's go.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGERY DEPARTMENT - DAY

Ray hurries down the corridor toward the scrub room. He is surprised to see Maynard approaching. The Chief steps in front of Ray, bringing him up short.

Maynard places a hand on Ray's shoulder and studies him closely, like a kindly pediatrician examining a five-year-old's face for signs of measles.

MAYNARD
Ray, what are you doing here? We can do without you for a few days.

Ray looks up at Maynard. Meets the Chief's searching gaze.

RAY
Thanks, Randall, but it's OK. There's no point sitting at home when my patients need me. Plus I've got the residents to look after, and that conference coming up.

MAYNARD
Ah, yes, the Dandy Award. It's a feather in your cap, but some things are more important.

RAY
If you want to help me, let me work. Every minute I spend idle is a minute alone with... what happened.

Maynard scrutinizes Ray for a few more seconds before releasing his grip, patting Ray's shoulder as he does so.

MAYNARD
All right, but if you need some time, take it.

INT. STARK HOME - DAY

Cathy packs up Ray's suits, clothes, shoes and toiletries and carries them down the hall to the guest suite.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGERY OPERATING ROOM - DAY (MOS)

Ray perches on the dentist's chair, performing a delicate procedure with his usual skill and dexterity.

EXT. STARK HOME - BACK YARD - DAY

Cathy sits alone in her extensive garden, listlessly weeding and spraying and tending to her beloved flowers.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGERY CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (MOS)

Ray sits around a large conference table with Maynard, Bergen and other neurosurgeons discussing the department budget.

INT. BOSTON - TRINITY CHURCH PARISH HOUSE - NIGHT (MOS)

Cathy sits in a meeting room with around twenty other bereaved parents at the monthly gathering of The Compassionate Friends. She is the only one without a spouse or partner. The group shares stories, tears and hugs.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGRY DEPARTMENT - DAY (MOS)

Ray marches a team of residents down the corridor, hammering them with questions and eviscerating them with his criticism.

INT. STARK HOME - MO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cathy tearfully packs up Mo's bedroom, tearing down posters, clearing out drawers, ransacking a closet full of school uniforms, pulling books and trophies down from the shelves.

She stuffs everything into large plastic bags.

Cathy confronts Mo's artwork tacked on a cork board. A colorful drawing of a radiant angel is titled "Mommy," while a companion piece titled "Daddy" is a blank sheet of paper.

She reaches up to rip down the sheets but stops herself.

Picks up Mo's pastels and drawing pad, sets them aside.

EXT. STARK HOME - FRONT YARD - DAY

Cathy drags ten large trash bags out to the street. Collapses on the curb, sobbing in despair.

INT. MASS GENERAL - RAY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ray sits at his desk reviewing a stack of scans for his upcoming procedures. His phone BUZZES. Index finger hovers briefly over the Ignore button but he changes his mind.

RAY

Yes?

CATHY (V.O.)

Ray, I'm glad I caught you. My parents invited us to visit them for Thanksgiving and --

RAY

-- That's out of the question.

CATHY (V.O.)

But Ray, I think we really need to get away for a little while and talk about what hap --

RAY

-- I said it's out of the question. Too much going on. Gotta run, 'bye.

Ray clicks off.

INT. BROOKLINE - ST. MARY'S CHURCH - DAY

Father Mahoney stands in the vestibule greeting parishioners following Sunday Mass. He taps Cathy's arm as she attempts to slip by. She turns to the priest, obviously embarrassed.

FATHER MAHONEY

It's nice to see you again, Cathy.
(an uncomfortable pause)
You haven't been as regular in your attendance as you used to be.

CATHY

(frowns)
I... well, I... I don't... Father, do you ever doubt your faith?

The priest stares at the ground for a moment, then looks seriously at Cathy.

FATHER MAHONEY

My child, everyone does at times.

INT. NEW ORLEANS HILTON - CONFERENCE CENTER - DAY

Ray sits at the dais in a conference hall overflowing with several hundred neurosurgeons. A large banner announcing "The 75th Annual Meeting of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons" hangs overhead, next to a gigantic screen.

Ray shuffles his papers as another SPEAKER nears the podium.

The screen displays the title of the next presentation: "New Developments in the Treatment of Adolescent Brain Tumors."

The Speaker commences a monotonous speech as Ray continues skimming through his papers. He yawns. Peeks at his watch.

The screen now shows an enormous photo of the face of a ten-year-old girl who bears a striking resemblance to Mo.

Ray glances up at the girl's face and gasps. Reeling, he shudders and spins around. Tries to catch his breath.

He tips back cautiously and gapes again at the girl's face, at least fifteen feet tall, gazing straight down at him.

He swivels around and stares at the tablecloth as the Speaker drones on. Starts sweating and hyper-ventilating. Loosens his tie and closes his eyes to make the room stop SPINNING.

The Speaker concludes his presentation and a polite round of applause ripples through the auditorium.

A few seconds later the CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN pokes Ray.

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

(whispers)

Ray, you're up. Your speech?

Ray opens his eyes and, still in a daze, surveys a sea of suits. Seven hundred eyeballs focused solely on him.

Ray tries to stand but fails. He motions for the mic. Puzzled, the Chairman unclips it from the podium and hands it to him. A low murmur spreads through the room.

Ray holds the mic and scans the sheets in front of him.

RAY'S HALLUCINATION

Ray's papers show: Indecipherable symbols fluttering in and out of focus.

BACK TO SCENE

Ray sets his notes down and draws a deep breath.

RAY

(shakily)

I'm deeply honored. Thank you.

Ray hands the mic back to the Chairman. Pockets of tentative clapping yield to a rumble of scattered mumbling that gathers momentum as it ricochets around the room.

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

(cocks an eyebrow at Ray)
 Doctor Stark knows that brevity is
 the soul of wit. Especially right
 before lunchtime. Thank you all,
 we'll resume at 1:30.

Ray hauls himself up after several attempts. Wobbles.

Maynard stands several rows away, shell-shocked. Bergen, next
 to him, points at Ray and nods emphatically.

Ray fumbles for his briefcase and stumbles out the side door.

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Cathy, still in her bathrobe, sits at the table, staring off
 into space. Bluesy jazz music PLAYS softly overhead.

Janet enters the kitchen, slipping a key into her pocket.

Cathy points to the coffee machine on the counter with a cup
 next to it. Janet fills the cup and joins Cathy at the table.

JANET

What's this music? I feel like I'm
 on Mad Men.

CATHY

Miles Davis, "Kind of Blue." Kind
 of an understatement...

JANET

I never knew you were into... this
 is jazz, right?

CATHY

I loved jazz, but Ray won't let me
 play it when he's around.

JANET

That must be a rough couple hours a
 month.

CATHY

I wish you were wrong.
 (shakes her head)
 I thought I had it bad before, when
 he made me feel invisible. Now,
 it's like I'm radioactive. I don't
 know how much longer I can take it.

JANET

So don't. That man is never going to change. You don't have to take this kind of *merda* from him.

CATHY

I was so young when I married Ray. I thought I'd found the love of my life. Maybe I was just afraid of ending up alone.

JANET

That's what happened anyway.

CATHY

When we were dating, I thought my love was helping him, I thought my love would be enough --

JANET

-- Love is never enough.

CATHY

Then what am I supposed to do?

Janet plants her elbows on the table.

JANET

Cut him loose! It's time to make your move. I'll tell you what we do. Pack your bags.

CATHY

But the Pope still frowns on --

JANET

-- Who cares what the Pope thinks? Call up Boston Health and tell your old boss you want to return.

CATHY

But where --

JANET

-- I know a great agent who can set you up with a cute little place in South End. You go see you family, and when you come back you go straight downtown and everything will be ready. *Euala! La nuova vita! Senza Raymondo!*

CATHY

But I can't leave Ray. He needs me.

JANET
That asshole doesn't need anybody.

CATHY
He'll implode without me. I know.

JANET
So what? He deserves it!
(waits for a reply)
No more objections? I rest my case.

CATHY
You make it sound so easy.

JANET
It is easy. You've been doing the
hard part for twelve years.

INT. MASS GENERAL - RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray sits at his desk reading medical journals. After some hesitation, he reaches for his phone.

REMINGTON ARMS RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Good afternoon, The Remington Arms.
Happy Thanksgiving.

RAY
Hello, this is Doctor Raymond
Stark. Do you have any tables
available this evening?

REMINGTON ARMS RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
We have a table for two at our
second seating at six.

RAY
Great, I'll take it.

Ray clicks off and immediately presses Cathy's number.

CATHY (V.O.)
You have reached the voice mail of
Cathy Stark --

Ray frowns and sets his phone down.

The clock MORPHS from "3:23" to "4:15." He hangs up the
phone. The clock MORPHS to "5:05." Hangs up the phone again.

Frustrated, Ray grabs his coat and switches off the light.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ray flicks on the light. The clock on the wall reads "5:40."

He sets his briefcase down on the kitchen counter.

RAY

Cathy?

Ray spies a yellow legal pad on the kitchen table. Picks it up. Several paragraphs are written in Cathy's neat script.

Ray sits down to read the note. And again. And then again.

LATER

Ray still sits at the table, staring blankly into space.

INT. MASS GENERAL - RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray sits at his desk, unshaven and disheveled, mindlessly shuffling papers. A loud KNOCK on the door surprises him.

RAY

Come in!

Maynard enters.

RAY (CONT'D)

(with mock levity)

Randall! What brings you here on Black Friday?

MAYNARD

I might ask you the same. May I?

Ray waves toward the chair opposite his desk. Maynard sits.

Ray squirms under his mentor's perceptive gaze.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)

You look terrible, Ray. I've known you since... Is everything all right at home? How's Cathy?

RAY

(shifts uneasily)

She's fine.

MAYNARD

I know you've been under a lot of stress lately --

RAY

Who told you that? Bergen?

MAYNARD

Yes, but he didn't need to. He says he's worried about you, thinks you need counseling --

RAY

-- Bergen? Worried about me? That's a joke, right?

MAYNARD

Ray. Stop worrying about Bergen. The only way he gets that job over you is if you let him. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Ray pivots in his chair and stares out the window.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)

Just promise me you'll start taking better care of yourself. I don't have time to groom a new successor.

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Cathy carefully opens the door from the garage into the kitchen. Peers around cautiously, like a thief casing a joint. Once confident that Ray is not at home, she enters.

She places a number of pots and pans into a large box on the kitchen table. Rummages through her spice rack and pantry and fills up another box with cooking essentials.

EXT. STARK HOME - BACK YARD - DAY

Cathy steps onto the terrace. Gazes at the extensive gardens, now brown and lifeless after the autumn frosts. Shivers.

INT. STARK HOME - UTILITY ROOM - DAY

Cathy grabs a large suitcase and a garment bag from a row of luggage lined up along the wall. Sees a black hard shell case under an old Stanford pennant. Curious, she cracks it open.

She stares at a beautiful saxophone nestled in blue velvet. Totally confused and perplexed, she pulls out a sheet of music from one of the compartments. Soft jazz FADES IN.

Cathy hums a few bars of the melody. Shaking her head in disbelief, she replaces the sheet and snaps the case shut.

INT. STARK HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Cathy layers her clothes into the suitcase lying on the bed and a garment bag hanging on the door of her walk-in closet.

As she scoops up underwear from her top dresser drawer, she confronts a large framed photo directly in front of her. The photo shows Cathy and Ray beaming on their wedding day.

Cathy gazes at the photo. She dabs a tear from her eye, then in a burst of rage she smashes the photo repeatedly against the dresser. Tosses the twisted silver frame, shards of broken glass and scraps of shredded photo onto the floor.

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ray flicks on the light and sets his briefcase down on the counter. Sees a black hard shell case on the kitchen table.

RAY

Cathy?

Steps toward the table and peels off a Post-it note from the side of the case.

The Post-it note reads: "What's this?"

Ray stares at the note and the case. Gulps noticeably.

INT. MASS GENERAL - RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Bergen steps into Ray's office.

BERGEN

(smarmy-cheery)

Happy New Year, Ray.

Ray hands Bergen a set of scans.

RAY

Thanks. Here, take a look at these.

BERGEN

(whistles)

Wow, that's a monster -- I've never seen an AVM as tangled as that.

RAY

Me neither.

BERGEN

Especially in a ten year-old girl.

Ray gulps noticeably.

BERGEN (CONT'D)
 Something wrong?

RAY
 No.
 (picks up another scan)
 Your major task will be to seal off
 the blood vessels feeding the AVM
 while I dissect it. No objections?

BERGEN
 As long as you're sure you're up --

RAY
 -- And why wouldn't I be?

BERGEN
 (snotty demure)
 No reason. I'll be there if you --

RAY
 -- Most importantly, no surprises.

BERGEN
 (laughs)
 I hate surprises as much as you do.

INT. MASS GENERAL - NEUROSURGERY OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Ray sits at the operating microscope and peers into the eyepiece. A dozen or so doctors, nurses, and technicians assist around the operating table.

Bergen stands beside him, watching Ray's every move.

Ray pulls back and glances at the young patient.

BERGEN
 Something wrong?

RAY
 Just needed some air.

Ray swallows hard. Resumes peering through the eyepiece. His hands make a series of micromovements.

RAY (CONT'D)
 Shit!

BERGEN
 Ray --

RAY
 -- Cauterize it.

Bergen steps forward with the electrocauter, which CLICKS and HISSES with the sound of burning flesh.

RAY (CONT'D)
Spongostan.

A nurse hands him a pair of tweezers grasping a small white cube. Ray inserts the cube into the wound, then pulls back.

BERGEN
Are you sure you're okay to be
doing this? There's no margin here.

RAY
(too loud)
I'm fine!
(mumbles)
OK, let's go.

All eyes in the OR are focused on Ray. He exhales heavily and resumes peering through the eyepiece.

The time on the clock MORPHS from "9:45" to "10:50."

RAY'S HALLUCINATION - THROUGH THE OPERATING MICROSCOPE

The operating field appears in 3-D, arteries like tree trunks and tiny perforators a dense network of tapering branches.

The images of the patient's brain blur and slowly slip out of focus, gradually MORPHING into Mo's dimpled, angelic face.

BACK TO SCENE

Suddenly, pandemonium breaks out in the OR.

RAY (CONT'D)
Dammit!

Ray jerks back from the microscope. Blood spurts from the wound. He freezes, utterly dumbfounded.

BERGEN
Ray! What are you doing?!

Ray stares, immobilized, as blood fills the brain cavity.

BERGEN (CONT'D)
Move! Nurse, I need clips and
spongostan! Now!

Bergen pulls Ray out of the dentist's chair and shoves him aside. Sits and issues calm and direct commands to the team.

Immediately, several pairs of gloved hands move seamlessly around the operating table. Within a few moments, the bleeding is stanchd and the patient stabilized.

Ray stands in the corner, watching them correct his blunder. Once the situation is in hand, Bergen glances over at him.

BERGEN (CONT'D)
Go scrub out, Ray.

Numb and in a state of shock, Ray does as he is told.

INT. MASS GENERAL - RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray, back in his street clothes, sits at his desk, staring blankly into space. His pager BUZZES.

The pager reads: "COME TO MY OFFICE IMMEDIATELY."

Ray sighs and stands up.

INT. MASS GENERAL - MAYNARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray draws a deep breath and steps tentatively into the room.

The Chief sits brooding behind an enormous desk. He points to the opposite chair. Ray sits.

MAYNARD
Ray, I heard about what happened
this morning.

RAY
It was a mistake, Randall. Mistakes
happen. The patient is stable --

Maynard raises his hand: Stop. Ray slumps in his seat.

MAYNARD
It's obvious that recent events
have affected you more than either
of us wanted to admit. I've been
standing up for you, but it has
reached the point where I cannot do
that anymore.

Ray tries to interject but Maynard cuts him off again.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Under the current circumstances, it
would be unethical to allow you to
continue to operate.

(MORE)

MAYNARD (CONT'D)

Bergen is threatening to raise this with the Board of Registration, and he says he'll put both of us in the dock if I keep covering for you.

RAY

The bastard's blackmailing you.

MAYNARD

Perhaps, but he is well within his rights to do so. It's not in anyone's best interest for you to be in the O.R. at this moment.

RAY

Especially not Bergen's.

MAYNARD

The bottom line is that this cannot continue. I cannot put you, me, our patients or the department at risk.

RAY

Can you just fire me and spare me the lecture?

MAYNARD

No one's getting fired. I want you to take a leave of absence. You can do research, travel, whatever you need to get things sorted. In six months, maybe twelve, you come back refreshed, with at least another year before I step down.

(off Ray's shocked expression)

Assuming all goes well, you can still count on my recommendation to succeed me.

RAY

Do I have a choice?

MAYNARD

No.

(leans forward)

Look, Ray, you're the best that's ever come up through this program. That's why I fought to keep you after you completed your residency, why I'm pushing for you to take over after I retire. You're like the son I never had.

RAY
(softly)
You're the father I wish I'd had.

Maynard nods solemnly.

MAYNARD
It kills me to see you like this.
This hospital needs you to get
better, and so do I.

They lock eyes for a long moment.

EXT. AROUND BOSTON - DAY

Ray storms out of the hospital. The wind GUSTS and he pulls his cashmere overcoat tightly over his chest. A Nor'easter.

LATER

Hailstones pelt Ray. He scurries down a side street and ducks into a stairwell that leads down to a red wooden door. Three brass numbers at eye level read: "3 2 3." A sign below announces: "Open 7 Days 3:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m."

Ray glances at his watch: "3:23." Bingo. He smiles grimly.

INT. CLUB 323 - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ray pauses on the landing to acclimate to the dim expanse below. The room, a cellar really, is about forty feet wide and maybe twice that long. A club of some sort.

Framed black-and-white photographs and posters adorn the exposed brick walls. A long bar along one side, a couple dozen tables in the middle, a compact stage at the far end.

Jazz music PLAYS in the background.

Ray shakes the hailstones off his coat. Stamps his shoes on the black rubber mat and starts down the stairs.

MAX, a tall young man built like a linebacker, stands behind the bar polishing rows of liquor bottles.

He wears earbuds and sways to the rhythms of whatever he's listening to, occasionally tapping bottles with a pair of spoons as he works, oblivious to Ray's presence.

Ray waves for Max's attention but the young man, totally absorbed, fails to notice Ray's gesticulations and shouting face reflected in the mirror behind the bar.

Finally, Max spins around and spots Ray. The young man smiles sheepishly, pulls the buds out of his ears.

MAX
Sorry, dude, didn't hear you.

Ray nods.

Max picks up a towel and pats down the bar where Ray's dripping hair has left a small puddle.

MAX (CONT'D)
Guess I got a little carried away.
Gene Krupa always does that to me.

Ray nods again.

Max hands Ray a fistful of napkins. Ray swabs his face and hair. Hands the rumpled paper back to the bartender, who grins as he tosses the soggy mass into the trash.

MAX (CONT'D)
Now, what can I get you?

RAY
I'm not sure what I want...

MAX
The kitchen doesn't open till six,
and even then it's like, pretty
basic. People don't really come
here for the food.

RAY
So what --

The bartender waves toward the posters on the walls.

MAX
-- The music! Live jazz seven
nights a week since 1947. No cover,
no bougie Regattabar bullshit.

RAY
And no food.

MAX
Just chips, pretzels, and plenty to
wash it down with!

The bartender sweeps his long, muscular arm to show off the rows of brown, green and blue bottles glittering behind him.

RAY
I haven't had a drink in the
afternoon since I was in college...

MAX
You've got some catching up to do!

RAY
(hesitates)
Then I'll have a bag of chips and a
Scotch. What do you recommend?

MAX
I change my mind every week, but my
current favorite is Macallan.

RAY
All right, set it up.

MAX
10, 12, 18 or 25 year-old?

RAY
Damn! Can I just get my drink?

MAX
Dude, each one is totally
different. Tell you what. We'll
start with the 10-year-old and work
our way up. If you think I'm
bullshitting it's on the house.

RAY
Deal.

The bartender pours a generous measure in a tumbler and
places it in front of Ray, who peers at it doubtfully.

Ray takes a long sip and shudders. He takes another and nods
slowly with satisfaction. A third sip and now he's smiling.

MAX
Well, what do you think?

RAY
Good. Don't know how to describe --

MAX
-- Cool. I'm Max, by the way.

Max extends his hand over the bar. Ray clasps it.

RAY
Doctor Raymond Stark.

MAX

Glad to meet you, Doctor.

RAY

No, no, please call me Ray. Sorry.

Ray takes another sip. Studies the crowded shelves of bottles reaching almost to the ceiling.

RAY (CONT'D)

How do you know so much about --

MAX

-- Comes with the territory. I study percussion at Berklee and play in a couple of bands and work here to pay the bills -- though I'd probably do it for free.

RAY

UC Berkeley? I went to Stanford --

MAX

-- No, Berk-lee. It's a college for jazz musicians, here in Boston.

RAY

A college for jazz musicians?

MAX

Freal.

RAY

I always wanted to study music...

Ray shakes his head and sips his whiskey.

MAX

No shame in changing plans. My studio professor always says a degree in jazz performance is an investment in poverty.

RAY

Or in your soul.

MAX

Maybe it goes hand in hand. Ready for the 12-year-old?

RAY

Better make it a double.

Max produces a new tumbler and pours another measure.

Ray smiles, takes a sip, then swivels around on his barstool. Gazes at the posters and photos of numerous jazz legends.

Ray crosses the room and stands in awe before an enormous poster of John Coltrane. He reaches up and places his hands over Trane's in silent communion. Returns to his barstool.

MAX

You OK, Ray?

RAY

Yeah, fine, it's just...

Max grins and reaches for a new bottle.

An upbeat tune kicks off with a jaunty piano MELODY over a swinging beat. Then a saxophone PLAYS, smooth and light, skipping off into an airy improvisation.

RAY (CONT'D)

What song is this, Max? Turn it up a little bit, I think I've --

MAX

-- That's Lester Young blowing with Count Basie, "Lady Be Good." It's a Gershwin tune, a classic.

RAY

Yeah, that's it. One of the first solos I learned note-for-note.

MAX

You played sax?

RAY

Tenor.

(sips his whiskey)

Actually, I started on alto in third grade, then moved up to tenor. I quit in college, when my father died and I had to get serious about my studies...

(takes another sip)

Put my sax away and haven't touched it in over twenty-five years...

Ray sighs as Max pours a measure of the Macallan 25-year-old into a brandy snifter.

MAX

Dude, this whiskey was barreled around the same time you put away your sax. Tell me what you think.

RAY
What, about the whiskey or the sax?

MAX
Either one. Or both.

Ray whirls the whiskey around in the snifter and contemplates the swirling, syrupy liquid. Takes a deep sniff, then a sip.

RAY
I guess a lot can happen in twenty-five years.
(frowns)
Or nothing at all.

Ray takes a few sips, gazes wistfully at the empty snifter.

Max pours another generous measure of the 25-year-old.

MAX
Dude, have another drink. You've passed your tutorial with flying colors. This one's on the house.

Max holds his fist in front of Ray's face. Startled and more than a bit tipsy, Ray looks up in confusion.

MAX (CONT'D)
Just tap your fist to mine. It's called a fist bump. Kinda like a high five.

Somewhat perplexed, Ray does as he's told.

MAX (CONT'D)
Don't worry, Ray, we'll get you sorted out.

EXT./INT. TAXI - NIGHT

A taxi pulls into Ray's long driveway and stops. Ray is passed out in the back seat.

TAXI DRIVER
This is the place, right?

Ray snaps awake. Fumbles for his wallet, hands the driver a hundred dollar bill. Waves away the change.

EXT. STARK HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ray staggers out of the cab into the driveway. Wobbles as he watches the taxi reverse and speed off back downtown.

He turns to face his dark, empty mansion. Shivers violently.

INT. STARK HOME - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Ray stumbles through the kitchen and lurches down the wooden stairs to the basement. Tumbles forward on the landing and face presses the paneled wall, falling back in a heap.

Trips his way past the pool table and into the utility room.

Ray races over to the corner. Kneels down before the black hard shell case, kisses it. Palpitating with excitement, he grabs the handle and exultantly carries the case to the

HOME ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

in the next room and sets it on the low table.

Ray cranks up all the lights. Sinks into one of the low slung sofas and stares at the shiny black object before him.

Holding his breath, Ray leans forward and unsnaps the latches. He hesitates, then musters his courage and raises the lid, revealing the golden-hued saxophone nestled in its bed of dark blue velvet.

Ray traces the flowery patterns engraved on the lacquered brass. Caresses the mother-of-pearl keys.

Ray nervously gathers the saxophone from its case. He picks up the mouthpiece and fits it with difficulty onto the neck, then inserts the neck into the body of the horn.

Ray flutters his fingers over the keys, smiling rapturously.

He pulls out a box of reeds and inserts one into the mouthpiece. Raises the horn to his lips and blows -- produces only a series of HISSES and HONKS. Doesn't care.

LATER

Ray wakes up on the couch, saxophone clutched to his chest. He sports a purple shiner under his left eye. From his prone position he glances around the basement, thoroughly confused.

After several attempts, Ray manages to pull himself up. He crouches on the edge of the sofa, saxophone in his lap. Gingerly rubs his temples, groaning all the while.

A few moments later he gently disassembles the saxophone. Carefully places the different parts into their contour fitted compartments. Snaps the case shut.

INT. STARK HOME - GUEST BEDROOM - DAY

Ray rolls over and grabs the clock on the nightstand. It reads "12:30." He drops the clock on the floor. Gently pats his bruised cheek, leans back into his pillow, and groans.

INT. WASHBURN'S MUSIC STORE - DAY

Ray gazes in wonder at the horns and wind instruments shining under the bright spotlights. He navigates toward a counter in the back. Sets his saxophone case on the thick glass.

The CLERK does a double-take at Ray's puffy, purple cheek.

MARTY (WASHBURN'S CLERK)
Hi, I'm Marty, how can I help you?

RAY
I've got a sax that needs a tune up. Hasn't been played in a while.

MARTY
How long?

RAY
Twenty-five years, give or take.

MARTY
(chuckles)
Yeah, that's a while. Well, let's see what kind of shape she's in.

Ray opens the case. The clerk's eyes light up.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Wow, a vintage Selmer Mark VI. I know some guys who'd give their left nut for a horn like that.

RAY
1963. My mother gave it to me for my fifteenth birthday.

MARTY
Your parents must have been wonderful people.

RAY
My mother was a mean, manipulative drunk who only bought it to spite my workaholic bully father because he hated music -- and me.

MARTY

Oh...

RAY

Sorry, that was unnecessary.

MARTY

(nods and points to sax)
May I?

RAY

Of course.

The clerk picks up the horn and rotates it slowly, noting its particulars with a practiced eye.

MARTY

This is an amazing sax. Don't worry, we'll take good care of it.

He gently places the Mark VI back in its case and starts writing an order slip.

RAY

How long will it take?

MARTY

Monday afternoon. Here you go.

RAY

(pockets his copy)
Super. I'd also like to take some lessons. Whom do you recommend?

MARTY

You've got Berklee down the block and New England Conservatory across the street. This stretch of Huntington Avenue, throw a rock, and you'll hit a music teacher.

RAY

But who's the best?

WASHBURN'S CLERK

(strokes his chin)
You might see if Ozzie will take you on.

RAY

Ozzie?

MARTY

Clement Oswald. Absolute monster.
Played with all the big names in
the sixties -- Coltrane, Miles, you
name it.

RAY

What's he doing in Boston?

MARTY

He's been teaching part-time over
at Berklee for a while now, but
he's getting pretty old and I don't
know if he's taking on any more
students. Still, it's worth a try.

INT. BOSTON T - MASS AVENUE STATION - DAY

Cathy stands solemnly near the edge of the platform. A crowd
forms around her as the next train approaches.

The platform RUMBLES as the mob prepares for the next rush,
nudging Cathy even closer to the edge. She doesn't resist.

Cathy stares at the tracks below. Lifts one foot into space.

A wall of air blows past Cathy as the train thunders into the
far end of the station, knocking her backwards.

A piercing whistle BLASTS down the tracks and ECHOES through
the cavernous station. Cathy slaps her hands over her ears as
the train roars by, just inches from her face.

Cathy shivers uncontrollably as the train shudders to a stop.

The doors HISS open and a horde of passengers surge out of
the train. Cathy closes her eyes and allows herself to be
carried by the crowd to the back side of the platform.

The doors SLAM shut. Cathy opens her eyes in time to see the
tail lights of the departing train disappear into the tunnel.

She stands panting and trembling, close to collapse.

INT. MASS GENERAL - RAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray pulls down numerous diplomas, certificates, awards and
testimonials from the wall. Places them in a box on his desk.

He notices a framed photo lying at the bottom of a desk
drawer. Picks it up and stares. The photo shows Cathy and Mo
hugging on the beach. Mo proudly holds up a periwinkle.

Ray holds the photo to his lips and kisses it twice.

Ray slips the photo on top of the other items in the box. Heaves it up and slips out of his empty, dark office.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - DAY

Ray carries his saxophone case down a corridor and stops in front of a closed door. It bursts open and six tattooed twenty-somethings file out, laughing and joking.

Ray wipes his sweaty palms on his slacks and peers inside.

CLEMENT "OZZIE" OSWALD sits facing a semi-circle of chairs and music stands. The elderly Black man wears a brightly colored Madiba shirt. Thick salt and pepper hair accents a deeply lined forehead. His goatee is pure white.

Ozzie cradles a saxophone as he studies a lead sheet on the stand before him. He is oblivious to Ray's presence.

The old man raises his sax and blows a rapid fire riff.

Ray appears stunned by the powerful burst of music. As Ozzie continues his furious solo, Ray nods in appreciation.

The old man finishes and places his horn in its stand. Slips the sheet music into a weather-beaten leather satchel.

Ray RAPS on the door. Ozzie looks up quizzically.

RAY

Mr. Oswald?

The old man stares hard at Ray's shiner.

OZZIE

You been in a fight or somethin'?

RAY

I guess you could say that, um, Clement?

The old man shakes his head ruefully.

OZZIE

Man, ain't nobody called me Clement since my dear ol' Mama passed away. Call me Ozzie -- everybody else does. How can I help you?

RAY

My name is Ray. I'm looking for a sax teacher.

OZZIE

Well, there's plenty of 'em around.

RAY

Marty at Washburn's said you're the best.

OZZIE

(scowls)

The best. Now what the hell is that supposed to mean?

RAY

I mean, I'm looking for a teacher who's very, very good. Private lessons. I'll pay top dollar.

OZZIE

That how you think this works? Does that plaque on my door say "saxophone mercenary"?

RAY

I meant no disrespect.

OZZIE

Then instead of comin' at me with how much you gonna pay, maybe start by tellin' me why you're worth my --

RAY

-- You wouldn't be starting from scratch. I played all through grade school and high school and the first couple years of college. Not much since then.

OZZIE

How much is not much?

RAY

None at all, to be honest.

OZZIE

And what you been doin' while you been playin' none at all?

RAY

I'm a -- was a -- neurosurgeon over at Mass General.

OZZIE

And what you want me to do?

RAY

I want you to teach me to play like I did before -- and even better.

OZZIE

So let me get this straight. You want me to take a middle-aged brain surgeon who ain't touched a horn in twenty-five years and make him play like John Coltrane. Is that what you're askin' me to do?

RAY

Something like that, yes.

OZZIE

Man, you are out of your mind.

RAY

I know it sounds strange, but I'm dead serious.

OZZIE

I don't care how serious you are -- it ain't gonna happen.

Ozzie waves his hand and resumes studying the lead sheets.

Ray stands in disbelief, indignant. Draws a deep breath, sidles into the classroom to get Ozzie's attention again.

RAY

Just give me a chance. I almost went pro, way back when. Had a record deal lined up --

OZZIE

-- Don't mean shit.

RAY

Was gigging all the time --

OZZIE

-- Man, there is no way. Don't waste your breath or my time.

RAY

(swallows hard)
I don't want any other... Please.

Ozzie strokes his chin as he scrutinizes Ray.

OZZIE

So why'd you quit?

RAY
 (chokes up)
 Don't really know... Hard to
 explain... My father died and I...

The seconds drag by. Finally, the old man's scowl softens.

OZZIE
 All right, come back in a month.
 Take you that long just to get your
 embouchure back. Limber up your
 fingers, practice your scales, and
 let your horn tell me why I should
 take you on.

Ray steps forward and extends his hand.

RAY
 Deal. Thank you very, very much --

Ozzie rebuffs him and zips up his satchel. He points to Ray's saxophone case near the door.

OZZIE
 -- Don't forget your axe, man. Now
 get outta here and get on it.

INT. KUBISTRO - DAY

Cathy and Janet sit in the front window table of a trendy South End cafe, sipping glasses of white wine.

JANET
 You can't just sit around feeling
 sorry for yourself. You've got to
 get out, start dating, god forbid
 get laid once in a while.

CATHY
 Oh, Jesus...

Cathy blushes as the waitress sets down their salads.

CATHY (CONT'D)
 But I am getting out. Two days a
 week at the office is all I can
 handle for now. Weekends at the
 Children's Center, and the meetings
 of the Compassionate Friends --

JANET
 -- Give it up and get back to work
 full time. You don't need those
 orphans or the grief junkies.

CATHY
What about Ray?

JANET
What about Ray? You've made a clean
break, so keep moving forward.

CATHY
We are still married.

JANET
He's part of the problem, not the
solution. Don't look back.

CATHY
I've been ignoring his calls like
you said, but --

JANET
-- Good!

CATHY
But he left a voice mail inviting
me to dinner on Valentine's Day.

JANET
Don't fall for it. When was the
last time you and Ray got it on?

CATHY
Janet!

JANET
You didn't answer my question.

CATHY
I don't remember...

JANET
I rest my case.

Cathy continues picking at her salad.

CATHY
Maybe you're right. We'll see...

JANET
Don't be a fool!

INT. STARK HOME - RAY'S REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Ray has converted the home entertainment center in the
basement into his private rehearsal studio.

The photo of Cathy and Mo on the beach stands on the low table directly in front of him.

Ray stares into a full-length mirror, making faces, puckering his lips, then grinning as wide as he can, repeating many times. His shiner is still slightly visible.

He massages his jaw, chin and larynx over and over.

Ray lays down on the floor and places a heavy medical textbook on his chest to practice abdominal breathing.

Ray sits in the chair. Picks up the photo in one hand and his sax in the other, cradles them both.

He sets down the photo and tries to play a few notes. Produces only pitiful, tortured HONKS and SQUEALS. He winces and shakes his head.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

SUPER: "Four Weeks Later"

Ray, his hair slightly longer and with three days of stubble on his shiner-free face, nervously assembles his saxophone.

Ozzie glances at Ray's Selmer Mark VI. He unzips his satchel and pulls out a lead sheet. Places it on the stand.

OZZIE

Welcome back, Doctor Ray. You had a month, man. Get on it.

Ozzie snaps his fingers to set a fast tempo.

Ray studies the chart for a second. Puts the sax to his lips and starts blowing. Fluffs a few notes along the way but finishes the short exercise without too many mistakes. Sets his horn down with a smile of satisfaction.

Ozzie, stone faced, resumes ruffling through his satchel. He produces another sheet and places it on Ray's stand.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Not bad, not great. Try this one.

Ray scans the sheet. His eyes widen and his jaw drops.

Ozzie sets a brisk pace with a series of rapid finger snaps.

Ray gamely struggles through the exercise, far more difficult than the first. As he stumbles to the end of the short piece, Ozzie jumps up and heads for the door.

OZZIE (CONT'D)
I'm outta here, man!

Ray, still clutching his sax, chases Ozzie down the
CORRIDOR

RAY
Ozzie, wait! Please!

Ozzie turns around and shakes his head.

OZZIE
That was shit, man. Your tone was
muddled, your timin' was off, and
your phrasin' was terrible. A
musician you are not.

Ray grimaces and stares at his shoes.

OZZIE (CONT'D)
I may not live long enough to turn
you into a saxophone player.
(smiles enigmatically)
But it might be worth a try.

RAY
Really?

OZZIE
I knew that second piece would be
too hard for you. I was just tryin'
to see what your weaknesses are.

RAY
And what are they?

OZZIE
(laughs uproariously)
Pretty much everythin' man!
(catches his breath)
I also gave you that second piece
to knock you down a peg or two.

RAY
(bristles)
Excuse me?

OZZIE
Man, last month you came bargain' in
here like you was gonna be the next
Coltrane. Press a few buttons, pay
the man, and presto, change-o, it's
done.

(MORE)

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Instant gratification, overnight sensation.

(wags his index finger)

Look, any fool with a little bit of dough can buy a fancy axe like that Selmer. Being worthy of it is a different question. You might be the world's greatest brain surgeon, but as far as saxophone is concerned, you're startin' at square one. And the first thing you gotta learn is a little humility. You got that?

Ray drops his eyes to his tassel loafers.

RAY

Yes, Ozzie, I do.

Ozzie nods as the two men walk slowly back to the

CUBICLE

OZZIE

All right, so when you wanna start? I got free time on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, take your pick.

RAY

Can we do both? I've got a lot of ground to make up.

OZZIE

Man, you gotta have enough time between lessons to practice, otherwise it's a waste.

RAY

Practicing is pretty much all I do.

Ozzie peers skeptically at Ray.

OZZIE

OK, we'll give it a try and see how it goes. If you're not keepin' up, I'll cut you down to once a week. And I reserve the right to cut you out completely whenever I want. Just remember: payin' me for my time don't give you the right to waste it.

RAY

So I'll see you tomorrow afternoon?

OZZIE

No, we'll start on Friday.
Patience, man!

(picks up the lead sheet)

That second piece is the one I give
all my new students. No one gets it
right the first time. About half
get it right the second. The rest
don't get a third time. Understood?

RAY

Yes, sir.

Ray nods and slips the sheet into his case.

OZZIE

Take your pretty sax and get on it!

INT. THE REMINGTON ARMS - NIGHT

Ray sits alone at a banquet table in the back corner of a
nearly deserted Colonial-themed restaurant, which is
decorated with Valentine's Day hearts throughout.

He stands up as Cathy approaches, almost knocking over his
water glass as he slides out of the banquet and gets
tangled up in the flowing white tablecloth.

Cathy does a double-take, noticing Ray's slightly longer hair
and beginner sideburns.

Ray leans toward her for a kiss on the lips. Cathy offers her
cheek instead. Ray hesitates, pecks the side of her face.
Sits down, thoroughly discombobulated.

Recovering his poise, Ray scoots over to make room for Cathy.
She positions herself on the opposite side of the large round
table. Drops her purse on the bench between them and steeples
her fingers, as if preparing for a tough negotiation.

Ray fixates on her bare fingers in pained confusion.

RAY

Happy Valentine's Day.

CATHY

You look very well. Relaxed.

RAY

Been an interesting... Let's order
and I'll tell you all about it.

Ray takes a roll and then passes the bread basket to Cathy.
His wedding band flashes as he picks up his menu.

Cathy glances at her menu. Sets it down almost immediately.

The waiter, smartly attired in his Colonial costume, appears tableside. Orders given, he melts away again.

CATHY

I heard you're on leave.

RAY

How --

CATHY

-- Word travels fast in the
healthcare community.

RAY

If only you knew the real story --

CATHY

-- So what are you doing with --

RAY

-- Getting back into the saxophone.

Cathy's eyes widen in disbelief.

CATHY

I never knew you played.

RAY

I put it away long before we met.

CATHY

Why didn't you ever tell me? I
thought you hated jazz.

RAY

My Dad...

CATHY

Oh.

RAY

Yeah. Hurt like hell to give it up
-- I never knew if I'd made the --

CATHY

-- And you don't do self-doubt.

RAY

So I just blocked it out --

CATHY

-- Like everything else...

RAY

I found a great teacher, a living jazz legend. So I've been practicing like crazy, trying to get my chops back.

Ray reaches across the table for Cathy's hand.

RAY (CONT'D)

Listen, I never wanted to talk about any of this before, but --

Cathy jerks her hand back, much to Ray's surprise.

RAY (CONT'D)

Seriously, I'm down in the basement practicing six, eight hours a day, sometimes more. I go whole days without even thinking about the hospital. Whenever I feel --

CATHY

-- Ray, you're just channeling your fanatical nature into a new area, replacing one obsession with another. That's who you are.

Ray slumps back against the bench, crestfallen.

Cathy grabs her purse and stands up.

CATHY (CONT'D)

I should go.

Cathy holds out her hand, which Ray shakes weakly. She spins around and sets off through the empty dining room.

Ray sits alone and dazed as the appetizers arrive.

EXT./INT. CATHY'S CAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Cathy opens the door of her car in The Remington Arms parking lot. Collapses into the driver's seat. Grips the dashboard and sobs, her freezing breath fogging the windshield, her heaving chest pressed against the ice cold steering wheel.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ray unsnaps his case as Ozzie produces a portable CD player.

OZZIE

I want you to take out the chart for "Lady Be Good." Let's listen to Count Basie play it while you follow along with Pres's solo. Pay attention to the changes, man. The tune is by Gershwin -- cat knew a thing or two 'bout harmony.

Ozzie hits the Play button.

Ray smiles as the tune kicks off with Basie's swinging piano INTRO. Taps his feet and follows along with the transcription as Lester Young's lilting sax SOLO joins the piano.

The tune finishes. Ozzie presses Play again. And again. And then again. Ozzie reaches to press Play for the fifth time.

RAY

Ozzie, I got it. Back in school I learned this solo note-for-note. I knew it by heart.

OZZIE

(scowls)

You may have played it, man, but you didn't know it. You don't know a tune like this. You gotta get it deep in your bones, make it part of you, like your DNA. You got that?

RAY

I guess so.

OZZIE

No guessin'!

Ozzie raps the sheet with his index finger.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

I want you to sing this solo now.

RAY

Trust me, you don't want to hear --

OZZIE

-- Maybe I don't, but it doesn't matter, 'cause you gonna do it. This is how all young musicians are trained in Europe.

RAY

What's the point, if they're not vocalists?

OZZIE

Because singing is the most primal way of making music. The human voice is the original instrument. Learn to play that, you learn to feel the music in your body.

RAY

When did you live in Europe?

OZZIE

Long time ago, man. Don't change the subject.

Ozzie resets the CD player. Turns to face Ray.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

See, music is what emotions sound like, man. And emotions come from within -- the instrument is just the mechanics.

RAY

I never thought of it that way.

OZZIE

Well, that's why you're payin' me the big bucks! Now sing it.

RAY

Can I just hum along to start?

OZZIE

You wanna pacifier too?

Ozzie presses Play.

Ray attempts to sing along with the solo, humming at first.

Ozzie sits like a statue with his arms folded across his chest as Ray stumbles from one missed note to another. Halfway through the solo, the old man grimaces and cups his fingers over the back of his head.

Ray hesitates for a moment, then stops.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

(wincing)

Ahh!

RAY

Is my singing that bad?

OZZIE

It didn't help, but I got a wicked dome dinger all of a sudden. Blood pressure actin' up today, I guess.

RAY

(concerned doctor mode)
Is the pain localized, or all over?
On a scale of one to ten --

OZZIE

-- I got my own doctors, man.

RAY

I'm just trying to rule out --

OZZIE

-- Worry 'bout yourself. You gotta lotta work to do before you can sing that solo, let alone try it on your horn. How you ever gonna get a nice sound outta your axe when your throat's closed up tight as a drum?

RAY

I understand.

OZZIE

Stop understandin' -- understandin' is the booby prize. Start feelin'. Get it down in your goolies.

(looks intently at Ray)

You know the word "inspiration"? It means "breath." The breath of God, givin' life to Adam. That's what we're tryin' to do here, man. Give it life, make it inspired.

(picks up the sheet)

If you hold your breath too long, you die. You gotta take it in and give it back. So breathe!

Ray stares at his shoes.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

You still think you know this solo?

RAY

No, Ozzie, I don't know it at all.

OZZIE

All right, man, next time I want you singin' this tune like a bird.

(MORE)

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Then worry 'bout gettin' it down on
the sax. That's the easy part.
(hands Ray the sheet)
You can leave the Selmer at home
for a while. Now get on it.

INT. BOSTON HEALTH HEADQUARTERS - CATHY'S CUBICLE

Cathy sits at her desk, frantically revising a presentation,
while the CEO, BARBARA (mid-50s) paces behind her.

BARBARA

Come on, Cathy -- they're waiting
for us in the conference room!

CATHY

Last few changes... Done!

INT. STARK HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Ray hesitates, turns the doorknob and enters the Master
Bedroom for the first time in months. He is stunned to see
the wreckage of the wedding photo scattered on the floor.
Hangs his head in shame.

After a few moments of reflection, he gingerly picks up the
pieces, places them on a towel and carries them out.

INT. STARK HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Ray sits at the table in the breakfast nook, surrounded by
surgical instruments and the wreckage of the wedding photo.

With infinite skill and patience, he stitches the shredded
photo back together, straightens and re-connects the twisted
silver frame, and deftly glues the shards of broken glass
until the wedding photo looks almost as good as new.

INT. CLUB 323 - NIGHT

The bar is festooned with shamrocks and leprechauns for the
upcoming Saint Patrick's Day blowout.

Max grins and extends both hands as Ray approaches -- his
right open for Ray to shake, the left offering a tumbler.

MAX

Dude! Happy birthday!

RAY

Thanks, Max. What have we got here?

Ray holds the tumbler up to his nose and inhales deeply.

RAY (CONT'D)
Damn! That's something else!

MAX
Ardbeg Thirty Year Old. I've been
saving it for a special occasion.

RAY
What, my birthday or the Joshua
Redman concert?

MAX
Both!

RAY
Better make it a double, then.

Max laughs as Ray settles onto a stool at the end of the bar. Moments later, The Joshua Redman Quartet takes the stage. Ray studies the youthful saxophonist and shakes his head in amazement as Redman's fingers fly gracefully over the keys.

Ray orders another whiskey and glances at his phone. No messages. Slips into a funk as Redman kicks off a ballad.

INT. SOUTH END - CATHY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Cathy sits up in bed reading Anna Karenina, a glass of red wine on the nightstand beside her. Jazz music PLAYS softly in the background. The clock reads "10:35." She closes her eyes for a moment and sways gently to the music.

She refills her glass and takes a long sip.

Cathy hesitates, then picks up her phone and types a message.

The text reads: "Happy Birthday, Ray."

She stares at the screen for a moment. Shakes her head. Deletes the message unsent.

INT. CLUB 323 - LATER

Ray sits at the bar sipping his third and fourth whiskeys. Glances continually at his phone as Redman plays on.

Ray peeks at his phone one last time. Still no messages. He beckons to Max as the saxophonist announces a short break.

MAX
Dude, what's wrong?

RAY
Just a little tired.

MAX

But Redman's about to start again!
You're gonna flake out on that, on
your own birthday?

RAY

I was hoping for...

MAX

Cathy...

Ray shrugs and opens his wallet. Counts out five twenties and slips them across the bar as Max nods in understanding.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ozzie places several sheets of music in front of Ray.

OZZIE

Coleman Hawkins recorded "Body and Soul" in 1939. He'd been livin' in Europe for five years, returned to the States just before the war broke out. Seems a lotta folks forgot 'bout him, everybody's talkin' 'bout Pres. So he goes into the studio, lays down this track, and bam! He's back!

RAY

Why did you move over to Europe?

OZZIE

(hesitates)

I went to Paris in 1970, a few years after Trane died. My career was stallin' and my marriage was fallin' apart. I needed to make a new start, pull myself together. And say what you will about the French, but at least they didn't have rent-a-cops followin' me 'round every grocery store. I was sippin' Pinot in Paris while back here in Boston, they was throwin' rocks at Black kids for gettin' on the school bus. Man could get used to being treated like a human being in France. Anyway, at first I thought it would be six months or so. Turned out to be six years.

RAY

Why so long?

OZZIE

I wanted to come back sooner, but my wife wouldn't let me. Said I wasn't ready to get back together.

RAY

Why not?

OZZIE

(shoots Ray a dark look)
That was between us, man.

RAY

Did it work out in the end?

OZZIE

Yes and no. I finally came back and we hooked up again. The time apart had done us good, and I was a totally changed man. We had a beautiful baby girl. I was the happiest man on earth.

(chokes up)

Then five years later, she got the diagnosis... Ovarian...

RAY

I'm sorry, Ozzie.

OZZIE

(clears his throat)

I'd give all my years in Europe for one more day with her.

(wipes away a tear)

But I wasted a lotta time, man, time I can't ever get back. I should have been ready sooner, should have made myself ready.

(stares intently at Ray)

If you gotta spend time apart, make sure you use that time wisely, so there's no regrets down the road. Make yourself ready now.

RAY

How do you know --

OZZIE

(points to the sheets)

-- All right, man, back to the music. Make you a player of the heart, not just a player of notes. Maybe that will help get her back.

INT. STARK HOME - RAY'S REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

The restored wedding photo now sits on the low table next to the photo of Mo and Cathy at the beach.

Ray blows a bluesy, soulful riff over and over, gradually building in power and passion.

His phone BUZZES. Maynard calling.

Ray presses the Ignore button and resumes practicing.

A moment later the phone BUZZES again. Ray picks it up.

The screen reads: "Reminder: Mo's Birthday."

Ray gazes wistfully at the photos. He places his saxophone in its stand, sighs and stands up.

INT. STARK HOME - MO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ray hesitates, turns the doorknob and enters Mo's room. He is stunned to see it has been cleaned out, except for two drawings on the corkboard: Mommy depicted as a beatific Angel, Daddy as a blank sheet of paper.

He reels as if the wind has been knocked out of him.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY - DAY

Ray's Lexus passes through the black wrought iron gates and inches up the hill. Parks on the side of the gravel driveway.

He steps out of the car and pulls on his overcoat. Notices fresh footprints on the thick wet grass and follows them to a plot at the end of the row. A bouquet of white lilies rests against the granite headstone.

Ray picks up the vase, holds the flowers to his nose and inhales deeply, as if it were a tumbler of Scotch. Pulls the vase away from his face. His eyes dart around the cemetery.

RAY

Cathy...?

Ray sets down the vase. Takes a few steps back and studies the headstone, which reads:

"Maureen Regan Stark

April 28, 2015 - July 8, 2025

'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

A strong breeze picks up. Black storm clouds roll over the horizon, moving rapidly.

Ray pulls his overcoat closer. He shivers uncontrollably, stamps his feet.

Ray stares grimly at the headstone. Starts choking up.

RAY (V.O.)

We'll get you that horse... I'm going to do better, I promise.

CATHY (V.O.)

It's a bit late for that.

Heavy raindrops hesitantly SPLATTER the headstones, then fall steadily, then in thick sheets buffeted by gale force winds.

Ray remains motionless at the foot of his daughter's grave, fixated on her name, jaw clenched, refusing to breathe. Tears well in his eyes. He fights to hold them back.

OZZIE (V.O.)

If you hold your breath too long, you die. You gotta take it in and give it back. So breathe!

Ray's lips tremble, then explode in a desperate gasp for air. He breaks down and weeps, tears streaming down his cheeks and fusing with the raindrops smacking his face.

Ray drops to his knees and hugs the gravestone, shoulders heaving. His saturated overcoat sweeps over Mo's monument and the soaking wet grass.

INT. BOSTON HEALTH HEADQUARTERS - CEO'S OFFICE - DAY

Cathy taps on the door and enters tentatively. Barbara looks up from a stack of papers.

BARBARA

Close the door, and have a seat.

Cathy does as she is told.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I have good news. Remember the Marsden account? The presentation you made last month?

Barbara hands Cathy a letter on Marsden company letterhead.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(excitedly)

Well, we got it -- or, I should say, you got it for us. This could be the start of something big, Cathy, and we owe it all to you.

Cathy skims the letter and hands it back to the CEO.

CATHY

That's great news. Congratulations.

BARBARA

No, the congratulations are for you. I'm making you a Senior Vice President and putting you in charge of the Marsden account.

Cathy recoils in surprise.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

The new position will come with a significant raise, an expense account and a large private office. There will be some travel as well.

Cathy grips the arms of her chair and draws a deep breath.

CATHY

I-I-I-I don't know what to say...

Barbara throws up her arms and laughs.

BARBARA

Just say yes! It's time to make your move!

Cathy reaches over the desk and shakes Barbara's hand.

CATHY

All right, I'll do it!

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ray stumbles through "Body and Soul" as Ozzie shakes his head in exasperation.

OZZIE

Man, you spent the last twenty five years livin' inside your head and the heads of other folks. "Body" and "Soul" are two things you ain't got yet.

(MORE)

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Don't matter how much you practice medicine or music -- don't mean shit if you ain't livin' in the real world. You gotta put your horn down sometimes and get your hands dirty!

Ray nods and stares at his shoes.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Now get outta here and get on it!

EXT. STARK HOME - BACK YARD - DAY

Ray crouches in the extensive gardens on a beautiful spring day, surrounded by tools, manuals, and bags of seeds, topsoil and fertilizer. He glances around, thoroughly bewildered.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ray enters as Ozzie produces a stack of sheet music.

Ozzie places the music on the stand in front of Ray. The cover sheet reads: "'A Love Supreme' by John Coltrane."

OZZIE

Trane was the kindest and most generous man I ever met. He had a lotta young cats hangin' on him in the early sixties, and I was one of the lucky ones he took under his wing. This is his signature piece.

Ozzie taps the sheets.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

I want you to listen to it twenty, thirty times at least. You got somethin' else to do this weekend?

RAY

Actually, a friend of mine put together a little combo to play a few tunes at the open mic at Club 323 on Sunday night, and he invited me to join them. What do you think?

OZZIE

You're not ready. Put the ego on hold till you're really feelin' the music on the inside.

RAY
It's just one or two tunes, Ozzie.
I think it'll be fun.

OZZIE
Suit yourself, man.

INT. CLUB 323 - NIGHT

Ray steps into the club, surprisingly full for a Sunday, wearing a polo shirt, pressed slacks, and tassel loafers.

A septet plays hot Latin jazz on the small stage.

Max approaches with a grin and gives Ray a fist bump.

MAX
Dude! Ready for the big debut?

RAY
(with false bravado)
Definitely!

Max waves at a threesome of pierced, tattooed twenty-somethings sitting near the stage. Definitely musicians.

MAX
There's the rest of the band. Come on, I'll introduce you.

Max and Ray thread their way through a maze of tables.

MAX (CONT'D)
(leans into Ray's ear)
That's Wendy, on piano. Roberto, on bass. And there's Luis, on trumpet.

WENDY, ROBERTO and LUIS stare at Ray as if he's a creature from outer space. They finally nod in acknowledgment.

MAX (CONT'D)
We've put a small set together, just three tunes.

RAY
I really only know one. But I've been practicing it all day for the last month.

MAX
That's cool. What's the song?

RAY
"Giant Steps."

"YIKES" WALLA from the band.

ROBERTO

That's... That's a hell of a choice
for your first tune, Ray. Those
changes...

RAY

Go big or go home, right?

MAX

Hey, we're down if you are. We'll
open with it, then you can lay out
and we'll continue as a quartet.
Everybody cool with "Giant Steps"?

WENDY

Sure. We'll play it same as
Coltrane. Ray can take the first
solo, then me, then Luis.

MAX

Dope!

The septet onstage finish playing. Max, Ray and the others
rise from the table to set up their gear. As Ray nears the
stage, he does a double-take: Ozzie is parked at the corner
table with a few other older gentlemen. Ray gulps noticeably.

Onstage, Ray opens his case and removes his saxophone, which
gleams brilliantly in the bank of lights overhead.

LUIS

That's a beautiful horn, Ray. It
must be a pleasure to play.

RAY

I sure hope so.

Max strolls over and wraps a long arm around Ray's shoulder.

MAX

Dude, relax. It's an open mic.
We're not here to impress, just to
make music and have fun. Right?

RAY

(swallows heavily)
Right.

Max pats Ray on the back and takes his seat behind the drums.

Ray stands at the center of the small stage under the hot spotlights. He turns and faces the crowd. Blinks into the harsh glare, sweat beading on his forehead.

Max counts off a brisk tempo. On four the band launches into "Giant Steps" with an eruption of sound.

Ray plays the simple opening phrases with no problem. But as the tune switches gears into the high octane saxophone solo, he muffs the transitional phrase. Grimaces. His tone quickly degenerates into a series of SQUEAKS, HONKS and SQUEALS.

In a panic, Ray gawks at Wendy. She wags her head to the side of the stage. After a moment's confusion, Ray gets the none-too-subtle hint. He lowers his horn and steps aside as Wendy embarks on a dazzling, forceful solo.

Ray stands on the side of the stage with his head down. Pulls out his handkerchief and pretends to mop sweat from his forehead, dabbing the tears in his eyes with the same motion.

Ray peeks over to the corner table to gauge Ozzie's reaction, but his teacher is gone.

INT. STARK HOME - RAY'S REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Ray packs up his music books and drops them into a large box with a THUMP. Grabs a stack of CDs and dumps them as well.

He folds up his music stand and saxophone stand and carries them, along with the saxophone case, into the utility room.

Ray picks up the box of medical memorabilia, carries it to his studio and sets it on the floor. Pulls out his diplomas and awards and lays them on the table, gazing wistfully.

He starts to dial Maynard's number but cancels the call.

Ditto with Cathy.

Ray leans back into the sofa. Sips a whiskey as he stares vacantly at the photos of Cathy and Mo on the table.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ozzie looks up as Ray enters the room.

OZZIE

You gotta learn to listen, man!

RAY

I know, Ozzie, I should have listened to you.

OZZIE

No, man! You're a big boy, I don't give a damn if you take my advice --
(gives Ray a double-take)
-- Where's your horn?

RAY

Home. I only came down to tell you I'm done. Going back to the hospital. Do you know anyone who wants to buy a nice used sax?

OZZIE

Bullshit, man. You ain't sellin' nothin', you ain't goin' nowhere.

RAY

But you saw me Sunday night --

OZZIE

-- No "but"! Just listen, Ray!

RAY

Yes, sir.

OZZIE

Let me ask you somethin'. When you was cuttin' people's heads open and pokin' 'round their brains, didn't you know exactly where you were?

RAY

Of course. These days we've got 3-D technology so we always know exactly where we are and avoid surprises in the operating theater. Neurosurgeons hate surprises.

OZZIE

When you're part of a band, you gotta know exactly where you are, and the only way is by listenin' to the other cats so you know where they are too. But ain't nobody invented no jazz MRI -- all you got is the ears you were born with. So you gotta learn to listen, man!

RAY

But I worked on "Giant Steps" for weeks! I thought I had it down.

OZZIE

You can't think your way into feelin', man. I'm talkin' 'bout listenin' with the heart. You gotta learn to live and breathe inside of it. You feel me?

RAY

I think so...

OZZIE

What -- you think?!

RAY

Yes, I feel you!

OZZIE

Good! And for your first effort, maybe choose a tune with slightly more sensible chord changes. There's a reason Trane didn't call it "Baby Steps." Now go home, give yourself a break, and let that all soak in, because I never wanna hear you talk about quittin' like that again. Aight?

RAY

Yeah. Aight.

OZZIE

And by the way, one of the differences between jazz and brain surgery is that we like surprises!

INT. STARK HOME - RAY'S REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Ray picks up his diplomas and awards from the table, packs them in their box and carries it back to the utility room.

He grabs his saxophone case and carries it out to the studio. Makes several return trips to retrieve his music gear. Sets up everything as before.

Sitting on the sofa, Ray cradles his sax while gazing at the photos before him.

He plays the solo from "Giant Steps" at half speed, working his way through phrase by phrase, still making many mistakes.

EXT. BAYSIDE BISTRO - DAY

A corporate cocktail party at a swanky bistro overlooking a yacht-filled marina at Boston Harbor. A jazz trio plays in the corner of the outdoor deck.

Cathy wears business attire; Janet flaunts her curves with tight red mini-skirt. The ladies stand near the railing, sipping cocktails and enjoying the music and the view.

JANET
(tugs Cathy's sleeve)
Check out this guy.

CATHY
Janet, can you please stop with the
Tinder guys?

JANET
Not on my phone. Over there, by the
boat slips.

CATHY
(lukewarm)
Handsome.

JANET
Rich too. And as luck would have
it, your best friend already knows
him. C'mon!

Cathy allows Janet to steer her through the crowd.

JANET (CONT'D)
Lose the wedding ring.

CATHY
I only wear it in the office --

JANET
-- You're not in the office now.

Cathy slips her ring into an inside pocket of her purse.

JANET (CONT'D)
(sotto)
I met him a few years ago. Brad
Armstrong. Lowell Bradford
Armstrong the Third, to be precise.
Bradford as in William Bradford,
from the Mayflower. Andover,
Dartmouth, Harvard Law. Name
partner at a white-shoe law firm
that does work for Frank.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

Old money, and lots of it. Real Boston Brahmins like this are hard to come by these days, and this one's recently divorced, and looking to mingle.

CATHY

If he's so great, why are you hawking him like a used Subaru?

JANET

You'll thank me later.

Raucous LAUGHTER drifts over the water O.S. as Janet and Cathy reach the top of the stairs. Janet waves toward a boisterous group on the lower deck overlooking the yachts.

BRAD ARMSTRONG (40-ish), an overgrown, extroverted preppie, flutters his arms as he embellishes a story, keeping his small circle in stitches.

JANET (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Brad? Brad Armstrong?

CATHY

(sotto)

Janet!

Brad breaks off his story and, recognizing Janet, blows her a kiss. The raconteur makes an "I'll be right back" gesture to his audience and bounds toward the new arrivals with a grin.

He holds out his arms for a hug, which Janet duly obliges.

BRAD

Janet Salvatore! I haven't seen you in a rat's age! How have you been? And how's Frank?

Janet steadies herself after Brad's full-bodied embrace.

JANET

He's fine. Brad, I'd like you to meet a friend of mine, Cathy Regan.

Cathy glances at Janet in surprise.

Brad makes a slight bow. Taking advantage of Cathy's distraction, he takes her hand and gives it a gentle squeeze.

BRAD

Delighted.
(releases Cathy's hand)
(MORE)

BRAD (CONT'D)
And what brings the two of you down
here on such a lovely evening?

JANET
The host is a client of Frank's.
"Shockingly," he couldn't make it,
so Cathy's my plus one tonight.

Janet waves at a row of towers overlooking the waterfront.

BRAD
I'm so pleased you did. Nothing
against Frank, but that's a last
minute change I can get behind.

Cathy blushes as Brad's eyes dart over her body.

Brad lets out a deep belly laugh as he knocks back the last
of his vodka and lime.

BRAD (CONT'D)
I'm going up to the bar. Can I
bring you ladies back a refresher?

CATHY
No, thanks.

JANET
Two Gin and Tonics!

Brad winks and disappears into the crowd.

JANET (CONT'D)
So what do you think?

CATHY
Let me guess: he has a Chocolate
Lab, an uncle named Kip, and a
closet full of those awful pink
pants.

JANET
They're called Nantucket Reds. He
only wears them on his yacht, and
don't knock them till you've seen
them draped over his ass.

CATHY
Spent a lot of time on his yacht,
have you?

JANET
Cathy! I resent your implication.
(then)
Okay, I tried. His ex-wife ran a
tight zone defense.

(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)

But now she's out of the picture,
and he's liquored up and ripe for
the --

CATHY

-- Yeah, I noticed.

JANET

So? What's stopping you?

CATHY

And what's with using my maiden
name? I'm still married, you know.

JANET

He doesn't need to know that! Not
like he cares anyway.

(then)

Come on. Give him a chance when
he's sober. One date. Just for
practice, if nothing else.

CATHY

Just for practice.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY - DAY

Ray sits on a gravestone near Mo's on a fine summer day,
animatedly telling a story. He jumps up and pantomimes his
recent panic attack onstage, breaks up in laughter.

RAY

(gasps for breath)

I can laugh about it now, but at
the time I was the only one in the
club who was not laughing!

Blows a kiss toward Mo's grave as he waves and walks away
smiling.

INT. CICALA - NIGHT

Cathy steps into an elegant Italian restaurant. ALDO, the
debonair Maitre d', looks up from his reservation book.

ALDO

Ahh, you're here to meet Mr.
Armstrong? Please come with me.

They round the corner. Cathy gasps at the waterfront views.
The Maitre d' steps into an alcove bar and emerges with Brad
a moment later. Brad grins and caresses her arm as they pass
a pianist, also formally dressed, playing cocktail jazz.

They follow Aldo across the dining room to the corner table.

CATHY
This place is gorgeous.

BRAD
A shoo-in for a Michelin Star.

CATHY
And you got the best table --

BRAD
(shrugs and smiles)
-- They know me by now, and they
take good care of me.

A waiter pulls a bottle of Prosecco from the silver ice bucket behind their table and fills their crystal flutes.

CATHY
You seem to be adapting well to the
single life.

BRAD
If only I'd known earlier. How's it
treating you?

CATHY
I'm not... I mean not officially,
not yet. Separated.
(explaining)
Catholic.

BRAD
In that case, I look forward to
welcoming you to the club. So let's
forget about last names. Tell me
about Cathy.

CATHY
Didn't Janet tell you anything --

BRAD
-- Not much. Said I'd have to find
out for myself.

CATHY
I don't even know where to begin.

Brad picks up his Prosecco and taps the rim of Cathy's flute.

BRAD
(winks)
I have an idea.
(MORE)

BRAD (CONT'D)

Start at the beginning, and when you get to the end, stop. I'm all ears.

Cathy gapes at Brad in amazement.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ray enters as Ozzie swallows a handful of pills.

RAY

That's a lot of pills for "just a headache."

OZZIE

Mind your own business, man.

Ray shrugs. Wearing a t-shirt and jeans, he sets up his horn as Ozzie pulls fumbled through his satchel. His hair is now well over his ears and almost reaches his shoulders. Long sideburns are complemented with the outline of a goatee.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

See, some cats think spontaneity is just goin' wherever the breeze takes you. It ain't that simple, man. Takes a lotta hard work to play the changes properly.

(pulls out a sheet)

You can only be truly spontaneous when you're well prepared. But you gotta be willin' to lose it all.

Ray stares at the floor.

RAY

(softly)
I already have.

OZZIE

Then risk losin' it all again.

(points to the sheet)

So if you're gonna improvise, you gotta be vulnerable, like a child.

RAY

My childhood was miserable. The only thing that saved me was my saxophone -- the only thing that made me feel happy and free, till I met Cathy. And now she's gone.

OZZIE

Maybe it can save you again.

Ray continues staring at his shoes.

Ozzie taps the sheet music on the stand. Ray looks up. The sheet reads: "'Resolution' by John Coltrane."

OZZIE (CONT'D)
(chuckles)
Salvation through saxophone, man.

INT. BOSTON BEAN COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Ray sits at a small table, alternately studying sheet music and glancing anxiously out the window. Jazz music PLAYS on the overhead speakers.

He sees an FTD delivery man passing by, carrying a dozen red roses wrapped in green tissue paper. The delivery man enters the office building across the street.

INT. BOSTON HEALTH HEADQUARTERS - CATHY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Cathy sits at her computer reviewing a presentation. The phone on her desk RINGS.

CATHY
Yes?

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Delivery for you.

CATHY
What is it?

RECEPTIONIST
There's flowers, and a card, and...
let's just say you got yourself a
keeper. Either that, or someone's
in the doghouse.

She stands up and walks to the door of her corner office. The FTD delivery man winds his way through a maze of cubicles.

Cathy's cheeks crimson as her colleagues clap -- lots of "Oooohs" and "Ahhhhhs."

Cathy signs for the flowers. Glances at the unsigned "Happy Birthday" card.

She returns to her desk. Sets the bouquet down next to a framed photo of her and Brad sipping champagne at an elegant soiree. Picks up her cell phone.

BRAD (V.O.)
Hiya, Babe, what's up?

CATHY

Thank you for the roses. They're beautiful. I haven't received flowers on my birthday in years.

BRAD (V.O.)

You never told me it was your birthday.

CATHY

Then who...? Oh.

BRAD (V.O.)

Your soon-to-be-ex didn't get the memo?

CATHY

Yeah, but Brad --

BRAD (V.O.)

-- No worries. Just means I need to step up my game. Cicala tonight?

CATHY

There's really no need --

BRAD (V.O.)

-- I'll pick you up at eight. Happy birthday, Babe!

CATHY

... Thanks.

She HANGS UP.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Damn it, Ray.

INT. BOSTON BEAN COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Through the window, Ray watches the FTD delivery man exit the office building and disappear down the sidewalk. He glances anxiously at his phone. The clock on the wall reads "10:45."

The clock on the wall MORPHS from "10:45" to "11:50" as Ray's eyes dart between the window, the sheet music and his phone.

Between sips of coffee and bottled water, he nibbles half-heartedly at a sandwich. The clock MORPHS from "11:50" to "1:15" to "2:45" before Ray finally picks up his phone and sheet music and slumps out.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ozzie looks up as Ray enters and sets down his case.

RAY

I made myself vulnerable, like you said. Didn't work.

OZZIE

Bein' vulnerable ain't somethin' you try once or twice, man. Stayin' open's gotta be a way of life.

Ray stares at his shoes, unconvinced.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Hey, I gotta get a band together, man. Can you help me out? Joe Lovano's comin' to Boston after Labor Day to gig at Club 323. Asked if I wanna play a warm-up set.

RAY

That's awesome!

(frowns)

But the only other musicians I know are the ones I played with...

OZZIE

Yeah, they were pretty tight.

RAY

I'll put you in touch with Max.

OZZIE

Cool. And by the way, I may be lookin' for an extra sax player.

RAY

After how I choked two months ago?

OZZIE

You come a long way. If I think you're ready I'd be happy for you to join us for a coupl'a tunes.

RAY

(exhales heavily)

I'll do my very best.

OZZIE

Now let's make you worthy of that wonderful horn you got.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - CORRIDOR - LATER

Visibly excited after Ozzie's invitation, Ray plops down in a chair and pulls out his phone.

CATHY (V.O.)
 You have reached the voice mail of
 Cathy Regan. Please leave --

Stunned, Ray cancels the call. He slumps in dazed disbelief.

RAY
 Regan...?

INT. BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS - DAY

Cathy takes a seat in front of Gaugin's "Where Do We Come From, Where Are We Going?" Opens Mo's box of pastels and drawing pad and begins to sketch the painting.

She frowns at her childish efforts. Every attempt to erase a line or enhance the drawing only makes a bigger, smeary mess.

Cathy shakes her head. Flips to a new page and starts over.

INT. STOP AND SHOP - NIGHT

Ray wanders the aisles with a basket. He spies Father Mahoney, eyes fixed on a shopping list, bearing down on him.

Ray dives out of the way but the corner of the priest's cart clips the plastic container in his left hand.

The two men laugh nervously as Ray steadies his basket.

FATHER MAHONEY
 I'm sorry about that, Ray. I should
 have been paying attention.
 (points to the cart)
 I'm not used to operating heavy
 machinery like this.

RAY
 Don't worry about it, Father.
 (frowns)
 Actually, I'm the one who owes you
 an apology.

FATHER MAHONEY
 Oh, come now. This was clearly --

RAY
 -- Mo's funeral.

The priest's smiling face grows serious.

RAY (CONT'D)

(struggles)

Look, Father, I've never been a religious man, and I don't see that changing, but that didn't give me the right to lash out at you the way I did. Especially knowing how much you were helping Cathy with her grief, while I...

Ray extends his hand, which the cleric clasps.

FATHER MAHONEY

Thank you, Ray.

(withdraws his hand)

How is Cathy? Any news?

RAY

(long pause)

Not really, Father. I don't hear much from her. She's living downtown, seems to be happy.

FATHER MAHONEY

I haven't seen her in quite a while. I'm afraid I've lost her.

RAY

We're in the same boat, Father.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ozzie nods as Ray enters. Ray's hair is even longer, his goatee now filled in.

OZZIE

Time for some Bird. Charlie Parker embodied the blues at the heart of jazz. Amazin' technique, but every one of those rapid-fire notes is driven by feelin'. You can play flatted fifths till the cows come home, but if you ain't feelin' the blues inside, don't mean shit, man.

RAY

Did you ever meet Bird?

OZZIE

The junk took him from us long before my time -- or his.

(MORE)

OZZIE (CONT'D)

Tragic, man. So much smack goin'
'round, miracle anyone survived.

Ozzie places several sheets onto the music stand.

RAY

How did you manage to stay clean?

OZZIE

I didn't.

(brief hesitation, then)

After my wife died, my life fell
apart again. Tried to kill my pain
with booze and any other shit I
could get my hands on.

(shakes his head)

I was drinkin' cognac with my
coffee in the morning, mainlinin'
in the afternoon, and fuckin' up my
gigs at night. Never admitted I had
a problem till I got busted.

RAY

That must have been terrible.

OZZIE

Best thing that ever happened to
me. I'd have been dead within a
year. Probably what I was goin'
for, to be honest.

RAY

I'm so sorry.

OZZIE

Spent five years in Sing Sing. They
took my little girl and sent her to
live with her aunt. Didn't see her
again for years -- still hardly
know her. Broke my heart, but what
could they do? I was that girl's
father, and the only good thing I
ever did for her was sign that
paper to let 'em take her away.
How's that for world's worst dad?

RAY

You've got some competition there.

OZZIE

Spent three more years on parole
pushin' a mop 'round a Shop-Rite in
Poughkeepsie. Had to sell my axe to
pay rent.

(MORE)

OZZIE (CONT'D)

I was at the end of my rope when an old buddy from Berklee called. They was willin' to take a chance on me, offered me a gig as a part-time instructor if I stayed clean. Saved my life, man. I'll always be grateful.

(clears his throat)

Second chances don't come along too often, man. Grab 'em whenever you can, and hold on like hell.

Ray stares at the floor, contemplating.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

You understand, now, why I took you on as a student?

RAY

I'm not sure...

OZZIE

I know about your daughter, Ray. Your wife, too. I read up on you during that first month while you was in your basement workin' out your jaw. Also found a few clippin's 'bout your old band, but that's beside the point. I get all kinda rich dilettantes wanderin' into my studio, hittin' me up for lessons. Some of 'em even have talent. But when I tell 'em no, they shrug their shoulders and go back to their lives. Maybe they find another teacher, maybe they quit and move on to somethin' else. But I saw you didn't have that option. You needed the music, the same way I do. It's the rope we cling to, danglin' over the abyss we dug for ourselves.

RAY

I don't know what to say...

OZZIE

Well, don't thank me. My reasons were as selfish as every other damn thing I've done in my life. I wanted a legacy, and you... Well, I knew you couldn't say no. I knew your pain, and I took advantage of it anyway.

Ray looks up in astonishment.

RAY
What do you mean, a legacy?

OZZIE
My daughter's a stranger to me. The Berklee students come and go. Don't know how much more time I have... I been testin' you for months, and you've earned my respect -- which ain't easy... You willin'?

RAY
(softly)
I'm willing -- just hope I'm able.

Ozzie nods solemnly and taps on the lead sheets.

OZZIE
'Nuff talk for now. Get on it.

INT. STARK HOME - RAY'S REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Ray plays the solo from "Giant Steps" at three-quarter speed, making fewer mistakes than before. Pulls out his phone.

CATHY (V.O.)
Cathy Regan.

Ray is stunned that he actually got through this time.

RAY
Hi Cathy, you have a minute?

CATHY (V.O.)
Just a minute. What's up?

RAY
Well, I realized that next week is our anniversary, so I wanted to invite you to dinner.

CATHY (V.O.)
(long pause)
Our anniversary. I'm not sure that's a good idea.

RAY
Don't call it our anniversary, then. Just dinner.

CATHY
Remington Arms, I suppose? Remember
what happened last time.

RAY
Wherever you want, whenever works.
I have some news to share.

CATHY (V.O.)
(another long pause)
All right. And I've got some news
for you too. Gotta run, 'bye.

Cathy clicks off. Ray sits staring at his phone, mystified.

INT. CICALA - NIGHT

Cathy arrives at the Maitre d' stand to find Ray anxiously waiting for her. She does a double-take at Ray's hirsute appearance but quickly recovers.

CATHY
Sorry I'm late.

RAY
No worries. Sorry I'm underdressed.

Cathy turns to Aldo, perfectly coiffed and dazzling in his black tie.

CATHY
Good evening, Aldo.

ALDO
Good evening, Ms. Regan. Your usual
table?

CATHY
Yes, please.

She turns to follow the Maitre d', who stops and gives Ray a look of haughty disdain.

ALDO
May I help you, *signore*?

CATHY
It's all right, he's with me.

The Maitre d' nods and continues leading them to a corner table, barely concealing his contempt for the casually dressed stranger behind him carrying a plastic shopping bag.

Once seated, Ray surveys the elegant surroundings.

RAY
Nice place.

CATHY
My new favorite. They know me here.

RAY
(annoyed)
Is that so?

Ray passes the pannier to Cathy, then takes a piece of bread.

He sets the basket down and pulls a small bouquet of freshly cut flowers from the shopping bag. Blushes as he hands them to Cathy over the rows of glittering crystal.

RAY (CONT'D)
For you. From our garden.

CATHY
Our garden?

RAY
(grins)
I've been spending a lot of time
out there this summer. You should
see it -- it's beautiful.

Cathy, nonplussed, drops the bouquet next to her purse.

CATHY
Thank you.

They gaze at each other in awkward silence as a waiter rushes over with a silver vase and sets the flowers on the table.

RAY
That's a beautiful new dress.

CATHY
It's not new.

RAY
It's new since I saw you last.

CATHY
Many things are.

Ray's face clouds over as the waiter sets down two Proseccos, each garnished with a fat, luscious strawberry.

RAY
Congratulations on your promotion.

CATHY

How --

RAY

(laughs)

-- I still have a few contacts in the healthcare industry!

He tips his Prosecco glass to hers.

RAY (CONT'D)

How did you like the roses?

Cathy crimsons and looks away in embarrassment.

CATHY

They were lovely, thank you. But why now? You haven't sent me flowers since... You haven't even remembered my birthday in years.

Ray smiles and shrugs as he dips a small piece of bread into a ramekin of olive oil.

RAY

And how is the apartment? Is there anything you need from home?

CATHY

The apartment is fine. And no, I don't need anything from the house. It's not my home, by the way -- my home is downtown.

Ray grimaces.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Sorry. That was unnecessary.

Ray nods. They study their menus and place their orders.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Have you gone back to work yet?

RAY

Maynard's been calling and begging me to come back after Labor Day. I told him I'd think about it, but --

CATHY

-- Isn't that what you want?

RAY

-- It's hard to explain --

CATHY

-- You still fooling around with
that saxophone thing?

Ray winces. Takes a sip of water to regain his composure.

RAY

That's a part of it, but it goes to
something more fundamental --

CATHY

-- Such as?

RAY

(long pause)

I've been doing a lot of soul
searching, Cathy... my life... our
life... how things went wrong...
and how I want to put it right... I
made a lot of mistakes... caused a
lot of pain... and I'm sorry.

CATHY

We both did. And now you want a
chance to fix your mistakes, so
you're asking me to repeat mine.

RAY

I've been through some pretty
serious changes --

CATHY

-- I've been through a few, too.

RAY

Yes, I can see that. We're both...
But I'm sure we'd be better... in
spite of everything... like Mo...

CATHY

(softly)

Like Mo.

They sit in silence for several moments, eyes lowered.

RAY

By the way, I've been going to the
cemetery quite a bit lately. I've
been having these long chats with
Mo that I never managed to have
when she was alive.

Cathy stares at Ray in amazement.

RAY (CONT'D)
 But it's not too late. We're still
 young. We can have more children.

CATHY
 We'll never be able to replace Mo!

RAY
 (throws up his hands)
 Of course not! Having more children
 doesn't mean we love Mo any less.

Ray leans forward and places his elbows on the table.

RAY (CONT'D)
 We had something beautiful once,
 something special. We can get it
 back, I know --

CATHY
 -- That was only during your
 fellowship, when we were dating.
 How could twelve good months
 possibly offset twelve bad years?

Ray slumps back in his seat.

CATHY (CONT'D)
 It's time to move on. We should
 start seeing other people. In fact,
 I already have. I'm talking with a
 lawyer. You should too.

Ray stares back at her with watering eyes, shaking his head.

RAY
 Don't say that. We can make it --

CATHY
 -- We had twelve years to make it
 work, and you didn't start trying
 until you no longer had a choice.

RAY
 (voice breaking)
 It's never too late to change...

The waiter arrives to clear space for the appetizers.

CATHY
 Ray, I hope you have changed.
 Truly, I do. But if you still don't
 understand why I can't take your
 word for it, I have my doubts.

RAY
I'm not asking you to take my word
for it! Let me show --

CATHY
-- Tell Aldo to put the Prosecco on
my tab.

She leaves.

INT. BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC - OZZIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Ozzie nods as Ray enters. He continues shuffling papers in
his satchel as Ray absentmindedly set up his sax.

OZZIE
What's wrong, man?

RAY
It's just not happening, no matter
how hard I work...

OZZIE
But you're comin' along great --

RAY
-- Cathy...

OZZIE
She'll come 'round -- once she sees
you playin' the changes with
feelin' she'll know you're a
totally changed man, like I was
when I came back from Paris and my
wife let me in again. Now take a
lookee here.

Ozzie places a chart on the stand.

Ray's eyes widen as he reads: "'Scrapple from the Apple' by
Charlie Parker."

RAY
(shakes his head)
No way I can play this. Too hard.

OZZIE
When you're onstage, everythin's
comin' at you fast. It's all 'bout
trust, trustin' your instincts.
Just play the changes -- you'll
know what to do. Now get on it.

Ray shrugs. Scans his eyes over the sheet, raises the mouthpiece to his lips, and begins to blow. He gradually loses himself in Bird's graceful, gorgeous melody.

Ray sets his horn down, smiling in satisfaction.

OZZIE (CONT'D)

See, that wasn't so bad, was it?
After all your bellyachin'?

RAY

(laughs)
No, I guess not.

OZZIE

You just had to trust yourself, man. That's the last step in becomin' a complete player. Now don't let it go to your head, but I'd love for you help me warm up for Joe Lovano in two weeks.

RAY

You sure about that?

OZZIE

Like I said, it's all 'bout trust. That's the flip side of vulnerability, the antidote.

RAY

But what if I screw it up again?

OZZIE

Ain't gonna happen, man. You're ready now, you've earned a second chance. Trust me. And more important, trust yourself.

EXT. BAYSIDE BISTRO - DAY

The terrace is packed for Friday Happy Hour. Jazz music PLAYS on the outdoor speakers.

Janet stands at the railing, checking her messages. Her phone reads: "Reel her in. After busting up my marriage, you owe me one. B"

Janet slips the phone into her purse.

Cathy, seated at a small corner table, smiles with amusement as Janet, wearing a tight white mini-skirt and oversized sunglasses, wiggles and weaves her way through the crowded terrace, seemingly oblivious to the attention she attracts.

Janet finally arrives at the table as a waiter delivers two cocktails. She leans over and kisses Cathy on both cheeks.

JANET

Ciao, bella. Come va?

CATHY

Look at you, all bronzed. Where have you been -- Jamaica?

JANET

I wish! Poor old Frank. No imagination at all. Same cottage in Harwichport, same two weeks in the middle of August. How boring!

Janet snickers as she stirs her mojito.

JANET (CONT'D)

Speaking of the losers we married, what news from Ray?

CATHY

Don't speak that way about Ray.

JANET

Sorry.

(takes a long sip)

Anyway, I never got to hear about your groveling session at the restaurant. How'd that go?

CATHY

For someone who keeps telling me to forget Ray, you sure have a lot of questions about him.

JANET

I'm just curious! Can't I take a little vicarious pleasure?

CATHY

He's been leaving voicemails almost every day. Must be used to my outgoing message by now.

JANET

There's a lot of things he'd better get used to.

CATHY

I don't know what he thinks he's going to accomplish.

(MORE)

CATHY (CONT'D)

I've heard more of his voice in the last week than I did over twelve years of marriage.

JANET

He's trying to wear you down. What is he even saying?

CATHY

He's playing some gig next week and wants me to come.

JANET

You should. Bring Brad.

CATHY

That just seems cruel.

JANET

It's the only humane thing to do. You screwed up by agreeing to dinner. Before that, he was pathetic, but at least thinking with his brain. Then he sees you in person, looking all hot, and now his balls are driving the car -- he's just too horny to take a hint.

CATHY

Are you saying I'm leading him on?

JANET

No, but it might help for him to see for himself he's been replaced.

Janet knocks back the last of her Mojito. Waves to the waiter for another round, which arrives momentarily.

JANET (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, how are things with his replacement?

CATHY

You mean Brad?

JANET

Of course I mean Brad! What's the view like underneath those Nantucket Reds?

CATHY

How should I know?

JANET

Oh my god, Cathy. You seriously haven't slept with him yet?

CATHY

So what if I haven't?

JANET

Not to knock your conversation skills, but there's only one way to set the hook.

CATHY

You know, to be honest, I'm not totally sure about Brad. I learned a little more about his nasty divorce from his sons when I was out on his sailboat last weekend, but it still doesn't add up. I feel like there's something he's not telling me.

Cathy stares at her reflection in Janet's coffee-colored sunglasses, which block any hint of a reaction.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Is there something you're not telling me?

JANET

(suddenly shaken)

Me?

(then)

All I know is he really likes you.

CATHY

How do you know?

JANET

He told me.

Cathy studies Janet's owlish face for several seconds.

Janet sits perfectly still, betraying no emotion.

CATHY

Anyway, that's all from my end. How's your love life these days?

Janet scowls and grabs her straw, bending and twisting it into grotesque shapes.

JANET

Not so good.

Janet removes her sunglasses. Quickly dabs her puffy, bloodshot eyes with a cocktail napkin before slipping her designer camouflage back on.

JANET (CONT'D)

My trainer dumped me. Said he couldn't see a future...

CATHY

I didn't realize that was ever on the table.

JANET

It wasn't! But he didn't know that!

Janet knocks back the rest of her drink with a gulp, waves to the waiter for yet another round. Cathy places her hand, palm down, over her half-full gin and tonic.

CATHY

I'm OK, thanks.

JANET

Well, I'm not. Make mine a double.

The waiter sets off. Janet turns back to Cathy.

CATHY

Ray was saying some pretty bizarre things at dinner last week -- he seemed different somehow. I'm half inclined to check out his gig and see if it's for real, but I'm not much for nightclubs, and this whole saxophone thing --

JANET

-- *Ridicolo*, if you ask me.

CATHY

He already tricked me once, when we got married --

JANET

-- And then abandoned you.

CATHY

I'm just so afraid of making that mistake a second time. After what I went through for twelve years, it would kill me --

JANET

-- You can't take that risk.
There's no need to. There's Brad.

Janet leans forward.

JANET (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what we do. You go to
Brad's place next weekend. Have a
good time. Hump his brains out.

Cathy blushes as the waiter returns with Janet's *mojito*.

JANET (CONT'D)

We're having a Labor Day cookout.
We'll invite Ray and while Frank is
grilling the burgers I'll grill Ray
and suss out what he's been up to.

CATHY

That seems pretty sneaky.

JANET

Look, you need some accurate, up to
the minute intelligence.

Cathy contemplates her empty glass, still not convinced.

JANET (CONT'D)

Trust me.

INT. CATHY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Cathy sets her phone on the nightstand next to a photo of her
and Brad to check her messages while she packs.

RAY (V.O.)

Hi Cathy, me again.

Cathy shakes her head as she stuffs clothes into her bag.

RAY (V.O.)

I finally figured it out -- my Dad,
saxophone, medicine, me, you, Mo...
why I could never express my
feelings except through my music...

Cathy pauses, looks over at the phone in surprise.

RAY (V.O.)

It's hard to explain... but I know the only times in my life when I've been happy were playing my saxophone and falling in love with you... they're connected somehow... I threw both those things away like a fool... And now I know I need both in my life.

Cathy walks over to the counter and gapes at the phone.

RAY (V.O.)

I've spent the last nine months getting one of them back. I may not deserve the other yet, but I will work as long and hard as it takes to be worthy of your love again.

Cathy picks up her phone. Stares at it, incredulous.

RAY (V.O.)

(voice breaking)

I love you more than you'll ever know... Please come to my show next week and let me prove it to you.

A car horn HONKS O.S. Cathy sets down her phone and races to the window. Sees Brad double-parked down in the street in a classic red Mercedes convertible, waving up at her.

She zips up her bag, grabs her phone and dashes out the door.

EXT. STARK BACK YARD - DAY

Ray steps through the sliding glass door onto the terrace. His shoulder-length hair almost obscures his bushy lambchops.

He wanders along winding footpaths through the extensive gardens, admiring the colorful blossoms that bob and sway.

VOICES and LAUGHTER drift from over the high hedge O.S.

Ray cuts across the grass in the direction of the sounds.

EXT. SALVATORES' BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Ray turns into his neighbors' driveway and peeks around the corner of their garage.

Eight or maybe ten couples chat on the large deck, while twenty or so boys and girls of various ages race around the grass, playing tag and soccer and shrieking with laughter.

Ray spies Janet's husband Frank wreathed in a cloud of smoke. He paces behind a Weber grill as big as a minivan, tongs in one hand while checking his phone with the other.

Ray hesitates, then steps around the corner.

Janet breaks away from the crowd and sashays up to Ray with a frosty bottle of Sam Adams and a warm smile.

Her white halter top accents her deep tan. Ray tries not to ogle her as she approaches. Simply stunning.

JANET

Howdy, neighbor! Happy Labor Day!
Have a beer!

Ray grasps the bottle in his left hand and extends his right to Janet. She holds up her cheek, which Ray swiftly pecks.

RAY

Thanks.

Ray takes a swig, then waves toward the other guests.

RAY (CONT'D)

So who are all these people?

Janet sidles next to Ray and scans the guests. Ray, clearly uncomfortable, immediately steps aside.

JANET

Some are Frank's colleagues.
Others are neighbors you never
bothered to meet over the years.

RAY

(laughs)
Well, I've been busy.

JANET

Everybody's busy, Ray. But what
exactly are you doing with yourself
these days? I understand you're on
leave from the hospital.

RAY

I guess you could say that.

JANET

When are you going back?

RAY

I'm not sure when or if. We've had
some discussions.

JANET

And what are you doing with yourself in the meantime, other than growing a goatee?

RAY

What is this, a cookout or a game of Twenty Questions?

JANET

Just curious. We don't get to see you very often, especially since...

Ray sips his beer as his eyes follow the children chasing a soccer ball across the back yard. Looks back at Janet.

RAY

I've been playing the changes.

JANET

Playing the what?

RAY

Well, if you must know, apart from a little gardening, I've been spending most of my time in the basement practicing saxophone. Didn't Cathy tell you?

JANET

Not that I remember.

RAY

(tries not to sound hurt)
I think it saved my life, after Cathy left. It was either that or shoot myself.

JANET

So Cathy's leaving...

Ray frowns and shakes his head. He takes a final swig of his beer. Studies the label on his empty bottle.

JANET (CONT'D)

Let's get you another beer.

Janet leads Ray across the driveway toward the deck. He does his best not to stare at Janet's perfect ass, her tight denim cutoffs leaving little to the imagination.

Janet takes the two steps up to the deck in one long stride and bends over to open a large cooler.

Ray, following close behind, slams into her. For a split second his pelvis is flush with her heart-shaped butt raised high in the air.

Janet jerks around and gapes at Ray in astonishment. She grins and gives Ray a naughty, knowing look.

RAY
(stammers)
Sorry about that...

Janet bends over again and retrieves an icy bottle of Sam Adams from the cooler. Hands it to Ray.

JANET
(laughs)
No worries. Here, enjoy yourself.

Janet gives Ray a salacious wink. She turns toward the grill and busies herself preparing plates of food for the kids.

Ray glances around the deck at the strangers chatting among themselves. Sets down his full bottle of beer and slips away.

INT. MARTHA'S VINEYARD - BRAD'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cathy sits at the far end of the large sofa in front of a large TV, watching a movie. Brad wobbles before a well stocked liquor cabinet, chooses a bottle of cognac.

Brad weaves his way toward the sofa and, ignoring the hint, nestles next to Cathy, cradling his brandy snifter with one hand while draping her shoulders with his other arm.

Cathy stiffens. Brad nuzzles Cathy's neck and pokes his tongue in her ear. Slides his hand across her breast. She flings his arm off her shoulder and leaps from the couch.

CATHY
What do you think you're doing?

BRAD
(slurs)
Just a harmless kiss, Babe.

CATHY
I am not your "Babe," so keep your paws off me. I'm going to bed now. And I'd appreciate it if you found another place to sleep tonight.

BRAD
Another place? This is my house. In my house we play by my rules.

CATHY

I play by my own rules, wherever I
am. Good night.

Cathy spins around and marches down the hall.

LATER

Cathy tiptoes into the living room with her overnight bag.
Sees Brad passed out on the sofa, snoring like a chainsaw,
brandy snifter clutched to his cognac-stained polo shirt.

She shakes her head. Tiptoes past the sofa, gently eases the
front door open and makes her escape.

INT. STARK HOME - RAY'S REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Ray places his sax in its stand and picks up his phone.

CATHY (V.O.)

You have reached the voicemail of
Cathy Regan --

Ray slams his phone down. He picks up his sax and furiously
runs through scales, faster and louder than ever before.

Ray pauses to adjust his mouthpiece. His ears perk up as he
hears soft FOOTSTEPS pad across the kitchen floor overhead.

The basement door SQUEAKS open and a woman's low, husky voice
drifts down the stairs.

JANET (O.S.)

Ray?

Ray, thoroughly confused, sets down his saxophone. Crosses
the basement and pauses at the bottom of the stairs.

Janet stands at the top of the landing, wearing a light blue
bathrobe. Her nipples poke up firmly through the thin fabric.

RAY

Janet? How did you get in?

Janet JINGLES A KEY in her right hand.

JANET

(laughs)

Cathy gave it to me a long time
ago. Never asked for it back.

RAY

Why didn't you call?

JANET

I had a hunch where I'd find you.
 (smiles enigmatically)
 Ray, I need your help. I was trying
 to hang a picture, but when I was
 screwing it in the wall, it fell
 behind a dresser. Now it's stuck
 there, and the damn thing's so
 heavy I can't get it to budge.
 Definitely a man's job.

RAY

What about Frank?

JANET

Off working as usual. And besides,
 have you ever seen that man lift
 anything? Let's just say I didn't
 marry him for his body.
 (then, sexy baby voice)
 Pwetty pwееееase?

Ray gazes up at Janet. The sheer bathrobe belted across her
 belly falls open to expose her long brown legs and the tan
 lines across the top of her breasts. Damn, she's hot.

Janet's face bears an almost pleading expression.

RAY

All right, but just for a minute.
 I've got a lot of work to do here.

JANET

Thanks, Ray! Follow me.

Janet beams as Ray, trying desperately not to leer at his
 neighbor's amazing body, ascends the stairs.

EXT. STARK BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Janet leads the way across the wet grass in bare feet. Ray's
 eyes are fixed on her smooth butt, almost visible through the
 light cotton bathrobe. No panties, obviously.

INT. SALVATORE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Janet leads Ray up the stairs, her perfect ass taunting him
 all the way. Halfway up, she whirls around and flashes Ray a
 wicked smile and a peek at her breasts. Ray stands bug-eyed.

Janet leads him down the hallway to the

MASTER BEDROOM

She passes the king size bed and points to a low dresser along the opposite wall. A small hammer and an assortment of screws lie scattered among the family photographs.

JANET

Think you can brute force it?

RAY

I'll try my very best.

JANET

My knight in shining armor. Cathy must be crazy, kicking a guy like you to the curb.

RAY

Please don't talk about Cathy.

JANET

Suit yourself. I'll be over here on the bed if you need me.

Ray kneels on the plush carpet. Janet perches on the bottom of the bed, dangling her long dusky legs almost to the floor.

Ray puts his shoulder to the back corner of the dresser. Grips both sides, finally succeeds in pushing the squat piece of furniture far enough from the wall to enable him to retrieve a glossy 8x10 mounted in a light wooden frame.

RAY

I think I got it!

The photo shows Janet frolicking in the surf with her two children. Ray stares at the photo, which is almost identical to the one of Cathy and Mo on the beach. He gulps noticeably.

Ray sets the photo on top of the dresser. Leans back heavily on his haunches. He wipes his brow and looks up.

JANET

Turn around and show me.

Janet lies back on her elbows, her robe thrown open and her legs spread wide.

Ray's jaw drops.

RAY

Whoa!

JANET

Like what you see?

Ray almost topples over as he stares at Janet's stunning, fully exposed body. He struggles to his feet, a noticeable bulge in his trousers.

JANET (CONT'D)
 You know there's always been an unspoken attraction between us...

Ray stands speechless. Janet wiggles her eyebrows.

RAY
 Janet, you're a very... very attractive woman, but...

Janet glances at his wedding ring and scoffs.

JANET
 Don't worry about Cathy. This will be our little secret -- she'll never know.

At the mention of his wife's name, the spell is broken. Ray swallows hard and shakes his head.

RAY
 (exhales heavily)
 But I'll know.

Janet grabs both ends of her bathrobe and covers herself.

JANET
Impotente?

Ray shakes his head again. Gives Janet a look of pity.

RAY
 I'd better go now.

Ray turns toward the bedroom door, leaving a totally humiliated Janet alone on the bed. He snatches the spare key from the nightstand and slips it into his pocket.

JANET
 (calls after him)
 She's never coming back to you, Ray! She tells me everything! She spent the weekend on Martha's Vineyard, getting railed by a thirtysomething ex-lacrosse captain with more money than you and the biggest cock I've ever seen! That stuck-up Miss Goody Two-Shoes doesn't deserve you!

INT. CLUB 323 - DAY

Ray enters the club carrying his saxophone case. He wears a black t-shirt, black jeans and black Chuck Taylor hi-tops.

Ozzie is onstage with Max and the other members of the band.

Another saxophonist plays alongside Ozzie, a beefy man with a bushy salt and pepper goatee, beret and granny sunglasses.

Ray recognizes JOE LOVANO (early 70s), one of the giants of the modern tenor sax. Ray stands transfixed as the two saxophonists trade off one limpid, lucid line after the next.

Gathering his nerve, Ray approaches the stage. Waits at the foot of the stairs until the musicians finish.

Ozzie waves him up. Ray takes the steps two at a time. Ozzie steers Ray toward Lovano as the big man places his horn back in its case. Lovano looks up as Ozzie and Ray approach.

OZZIE

Joe, this is my protege, Ray Stark.
He'll be sittin' in with me tonight
for a few tunes, so you'll get to
hear him for yourself.

Ray stifles a laugh as Lovano extends his hand.

LOVANO

Pleased to meet you, Ray. Ozzie,
I'll be back around eight. Don't
steal my audience!

Lovano crosses the tiny nightclub, disappears out the door.

Ozzie turns to Ray.

OZZIE

You know the rest of the band?

A very uncomfortable pause.

ROBERTO

Yeah, we've met.

Wendy and Luis exchange knowing glances, while Max sits enthroned behind the drums with his ever-present smile.

RAY

Look, I know I bombed out last
time, but I spent my whole summer
in the woodshed, and tonight it's
going to be different. I promise.

The trio stare hard at Ray, unconvinced.

Ozzie steps forward and breaks the awkward silence.

OZZIE

All right, let's play some tunes.

The group runs through a number of songs, with Ozzie and Ray trading off solos. Ray beams with delight to be playing onstage with his mentor and holding his own, more or less.

The band launches into Sonny Rollins's "Oleo," with Ozzie taking the lead. Ray lays out, watches Ozzie's fingerings like a hawk as the solo climaxes on a piercing high note.

Suddenly Ozzie winces and loses his balance.

Ray springs toward Ozzie as the older man pulls the horn from his mouth and wobbles across the threadbare carpet, eyes blinking in confusion. Ray grabs Ozzie by both shoulders.

RAY

Ozzie, are you all right?

OZZIE

Yeah... headchuck, that's all...

Ozzie grimaces and clutches the back of his skull. Without warning, he lurches forward and vomits, splattering his saxophone and the stage with foamy cream-colored liquid.

Ray cringes as he dodges the spray.

RAY

Ozzie, you've got to lie down!

The old man stares glassy-eyed at Ray. A long string of drool swings from the corner of his gaping mouth. Luis grabs the soiled sax while Ray lowers Ozzie gently to the floor.

Ray kneels beside his teacher and feels for a pulse. Alarmed, he scrambles for his case and slides it under Ozzie's feet.

Wendy sprints over with a stack of cocktail napkins doused in cool water. She wipes Ozzie's sweat-drenched forehead as the old man groans and loses consciousness.

MAX

Dude, anything we can do?

Ray shakes his head. Pulls out his phone.

MASS GENERAL RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Yes, Doctor Stark, how can I help?

RAY

(calmly, matter-of-fact)
I need an ambulance at 323 Harman Street. Patient indicating acute subarachnoid hemorrhage. I'll need a CT angio taken immediately. Have the ER on standby.

MASS GENERAL RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

Yes, Doctor, right away.

Ray and the others huddle around Ozzie for what seems an eternity. Ray checks his watch. It reads "4:10."

Finally, a siren WAILS O.S.

Paramedics POUND on the door. They quickly have Ozzie strapped onto a stretcher and up the stairs.

EXT. CLUB 323 - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ray climbs into the back of the ambulance as Max and the others spill out onto the sidewalk.

RAY

I'll call you! Pray!

EXT./INT. AROUND BOSTON - AMBULANCE - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Ray massages Ozzie's hand as the ambulance navigates through Friday evening rush hour traffic toward Mass General.

RAY

Hang in there, Ozzie. Everything's going to be OK.

Ray gazes at Ozzie's still features.

RAY (CONT'D)

Stay with me. Stay with me, please.

The ambulance, siren BLARING, advances in fits and starts, finally coming to a complete halt.

Ray RAPS on the Plexiglass partition.

RAY (CONT'D)

What's going on up there?

AMBULANCE DRIVER (O.S.)

I'm sorry, Doctor, but it's bumper to bumper. We're stuck!

RAY
 Dammit, drive in the opposite lane,
 or on the sidewalk if you have to.
 There's a man dying back here!

A few seconds later the traffic thins out. The vehicle
 threads through the cars pulled over to the side of the road.

Ray checks his watch. It reads "5:05." He grabs his phone.

BERGEN (V.O.)
 Ray?

RAY
 David, hello. Sorry, no time for
 catching up. I'm in an ambulance.
 Someone I love very much has just
 suffered an acute SAH.

BERGEN (V.O.)
 Oh no! Cathy?

RAY
 No, my saxophone teacher.

BERGEN (V.O.)
 Your what?

RAY
 No time to explain. African-
 American male, eighty-ish. History
 of hypertension. Thunderclap
 headache, vomiting, arrhythmia.
 He's unconscious, pulse dropping.

BERGEN (V.O.)
 Sounds bad. What can I do?

RAY
 We'll be at the ER in five minutes.
 I'd like you to check him in and do
 everything you can to save him.
 (swallows hard)
 You're the best, David. That's what
 he needs.

BERGEN (V.O.)
 (long pause)
 I'm just leaving for the weekend,
 halfway to the parking lot. But
 yes, I'll do whatever I can.

RAY
 Thank you, David. I owe you.

Ray presses Ozzie's hand once more. No response. He leans forward and kisses Ozzie's forehead.

RAY (CONT'D)
 (whispers)
 Thank you.
 (chokes up)
 I love you more than you'll ever
 know.

EXT. MASS GENERAL - EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - DAY

The ambulance roars up the ramp. Bergen and the ER team race out to meet them. The paramedics hustle the stretcher inside.

Bergen turns, quickly hides his surprise at Ray's new image.

BERGEN
 Ray, do you want to scrub in and
 join me? As an observer, of course.

RAY
 No thanks, David. I'll wait here.

Bergen nods and dashes inside.

INT. MASS GENERAL - EMERGENCY ROOM RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Ray paces the room like a caged panther. The clock on the wall reads "5:20." As Ray strides back and forth the reading on the clock MORPHS to "7:15."

Ray stops and looks up as Bergen approaches, still in his bloody scrubs. The surgeon wears a grim expression.

Ray gasps. Bergen extends his hand, which Ray clasps.

BERGEN
 I'm sorry, Ray. I did everything I
 could. There was no chance.

Ray bows his head.

RAY
 I know...

Ray struggles for a moment to catch his breath. Lifts his eyes from the floor.

RAY (CONT'D)
 Thank you, David.

Bergen nods solemnly, then withdraws toward the elevators.

A moment later, a haggard-looking Maynard rushes into the reception area. Seizes Ray on both shoulders.

MAYNARD

Ray, I've only just heard. I'm terribly, terribly sorry.

Maynard steps back and gives Ray a double-take.

RAY

Thanks, Randall.

MAYNARD

This isn't the time or place to discuss this, but will you come see me next week to talk about your return to the department?

Ray stares up at Maynard impassively.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)

We need you.
(intensely)
I need you.

RAY

(long pause)
I'll call you. Have a nice weekend.

INT. KUBISTRO - NIGHT

Janet sits alone with a glass of wine, checking her messages. Her phone reads: "Good luck -- I'm counting on you! B"

As Janet slips her phone away, Cathy enters and plops down across the table. Light jazz PLAYS overhead.

CATHY

It's all over between me and Brad.

JANET

Seriously? What happened?

CATHY

Apart from him getting totally smashed, groping me and then passing out? Janet, the guy's a creep. You could have warned me.

JANET

Whoa!

CATHY

He's a lush and a lecher, just like his sons said.

JANET

I'm sure it was just a misunderstanding.

CATHY

Now I have two men blowing up my phone, begging for forgiveness.

JANET

I think you should give Brad another chance. He's a great catch.

CATHY

Aren't you listening? He's used up a lifetime of second chances.

Cathy's phone RINGS. She presses Ignore immediately.

CATHY (CONT'D)

Brad.

JANET

Che cazzo stai facendo? Are you fucking crazy?

Cathy tosses her phone into her purse.

CATHY

Enough about him. Tell me about Ray. He's been leaving me voice mails all week too, trying to get me down to this gig tonight. What did you learn at the cookout?

JANET

Well, I've got some news for you, but you're not going to like it.

CATHY

What do you mean?

Janet's phone RINGS. She frowns and presses Ignore.

JANET

This whole sax thing is a scam.

CATHY

Really? I saw an old sax down in the basement once --

JANET

-- Ever hear him play it?

CATHY

No.

JANET

I rest my case. Anyway, he's going back to the hospital.

CATHY

Really? That's not what he told me... Said he was still deciding --

JANET

-- He's decided now. And living alone has not been good for him.

CATHY

Why do you --

JANET

-- Brace yourself.
(leans forward)
Ray tried to seduce me!

CATHY

That's impossible. Not Ray.

JANET

Yes, Ray. He couldn't keep his eyes off me at the cookout. I could tell he was mentally undressing me --

CATHY

-- Staring isn't seduction.

JANET

Wait, it gets worse.

Cathy studies Janet closely.

JANET (CONT'D)

I bent over on the deck and he deliberately ran into me -- like he was going to fuck me up the ass.

CATHY

(shakes her head)
That doesn't sound like Ray.

Janet's phone VIBRATES. She glances at the screen.

JANET

It's all true, I swear. But you'll never believe what happened a few days later --

CATHY

-- I probably won't, but tell me --

JANET

-- He dropped by on Wednesday morning, rang the back doorbell after the kids had left for school. Said he'd run out of sugar and asked if he could borrow some --

CATHY

-- Ray drinks his coffee black.

JANET

I don't know what he wanted it for. Anyway, we went to the kitchen and as I reached into the pantry he was all over me, pawing and drooling --

CATHY

-- Drooling? Literally drooling?

JANET

Yes!

CATHY

Didn't he even ask about me?

JANET

Nada. I hate to say it, but I don't think he gives a damn about you.

Cathy sits dazed, breathing heavily, her cheeks flushed.

Janet's phone VIBRATES again. She presses Ignore. Reaches across the table and taps Cathy on the arm.

JANET (CONT'D)

You all right?

Cathy shakes her head, fighting to hold back tears.

JANET (CONT'D)

I'm going to the ladies' room. Order me another *vino*, and one for yourself. My treat. And when I come back, I want to hear you call Brad and accept his dinner invitation. You need to fix things up with him.

Janet grabs her phone and slips around the corner.

Cathy wipes her eyes once more. Exhales heavily. She straightens up, a look of determination on her face.

Cathy folds her napkin and sets it on the edge of the table. Opens her purse, counts out three crisp ten dollar bills. She pushes back her chair and stands up.

EXT. KUBISTRO - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Cathy strides out the door onto the sidewalk. Hails an approaching taxi.

INT. KUBISTRO - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Janet rounds the corner. Sees the deserted table with two empty glasses and thirty dollars on a neatly folded napkin. Heaves her purse into Cathy's chair, knocking it backwards.

JANET

Merda!

INT. CLUB 323 - NIGHT

The club is packed -- standing room only. Max and the others huddle at the end of the bar, nursing drinks. They look up with foreboding as Ray approaches.

RAY

(blinking back tears)
Ozzie's gone.

His band mates let out a collective gasp. Max leans over the bar, grabs a stack of cocktail napkins, and passes them around. They stand silently dabbing their tears.

WENDY

What should we do, Ray?

RAY

(struggles)
I'll take Ozzie's parts.

Max casts Ray a knowing look.

RAY (CONT'D)

And we can't let Joe down either.
He's going to be devastated.
(points to the stage)
Let's get ready.

Ray turns to Max.

RAY (CONT'D)
Is everything set?

MAX
Her name is on the guest list --

RAY
-- Which name?

MAX
Just Cathy. Your usual stool at the
end of the bar is reserved for her.

Ray gives Max a fist bump.

RAY
Great, thanks man.

MAX
(smiles conspiratorially)
The show must go on, eh?

Ray spots Lovano at a corner table with his quartet. Fighting
back his emotions, he maneuvers through the crowd.

Lovano looks up with a smile that vanishes when he sees Ray's
grave expression.

RAY
Mr. Lo-- Joe?

LOVANO
Hey, Ray, right? You seen Ozzie?

RAY
Joe, I'm afraid I've got terrible
news. Ozzie suffered a massive
brain hemorrhage after you left. He
didn't make it.

Lovano's eyes widen in disbelief.

LOVANO
No! He seemed fine just a few...

The big man bursts into tears and strokes his goatee. He
removes his glasses and wipes his glistening cheeks on his
sleeve. Seeing the unrestrained emotion, Ray chokes up again.

RAY
We're still planning to play our
set. I'm sure that's what Ozzie
would want us to do.

Lovano reaches out and clasps Ray's hands between his own. Gives them a gentle squeeze, as if bestowing a blessing.

LOVANO
Absolutely. Break a leg.

Ray reluctantly leaves Lovano's table and scans the bar. No sign of Cathy. Damn.

Onstage, Ray and the others tune up and check the monitors. The multi-colored lights beat down from overhead. Tiny beads of sweat spring up on Ray's scalp.

Silently running his fingers over the keys of his saxophone, Ray steps to the side of the stage, out of the glare, and surveys the crowd once again. Still no Cathy.

Ray canvasses the other band members one by one.

RAY
Everybody ready?

They nod in unison. Max grins and raises his drumsticks.

RAY (CONT'D)
But she's not here yet...

MAX
Dude, everybody's waiting.

RAY
OK, let's go.

The sound system is switched off. The audience falls silent as Ray strides to the front of the stage.

He unclips the mic from its stand at waist height and raises it to his lips. The spotlights shine full on his face. He squints into the brilliant multi-colored kaleidoscope.

RAY (CONT'D)
Good evening. Welcome to Club 323
and tonight's featured concert, the
Joe Lovano Quartet.

Ray pauses for a moment to allow the applause to die down.

RAY (CONT'D)
Before they come onstage my friends
and I are going to play a few tunes
to help you get in the mood.

A little less clapping this time.

RAY (CONT'D)
(struggles for breath)
Tonight we lost a great friend and
great tenor saxophonist, one of the
finest in jazz, Clement Oswald.
Most of you fans here will know
him. We dedicate this set to Ozzie.

A low murmur runs through the crowd. Ray replaces the mic and turns to Max with a nod.

The drummer grins. Clicks his sticks to count off a fast tempo. Ray raises the saxophone to his lips. A second later, the band launches into the opening salvo of "Giant Steps."

After the introductory phrase and repeat, Ray moves seamlessly into a soaring, dynamic solo. He stands at the front of the stage, knees bent, eyes closed, sweat streaming down his blissful face.

As the tune hurtles forward, Ray continues soloing at a furious pace, playing the changes as they rush by in an exhilarating swirl of sound.

CATHY

bursts into Club 323, accidentally hitting several patrons on the landing as she thrusts the door open. She apologizes and twists her way to the top of the stairs.

A man with a clipboard asks for her name, shouting over the exuberant music bouncing around them from all directions.

Cathy shouts back. He nods and crosses her name off the list. Points to an empty stool at the end of the bar. She scans

CLUB 323

and squints across the tightly packed tables through the dazzling glare of the spotlights.

She sees Ray, in black t-shirt and jeans, crouching in front of a microphone with a horn strapped around his neck, blowing an incredible solo and beaming rapturously. Unbelievable.

CATHY

fighters her way down the stairs. Plunges into the mob standing three deep along the bar.

Clutching her purse, she pushes forward, trying not to knock over any drinks as she weaves her way through the heaving mass of bodies. Finally reaches the empty stool.

She stares wide-eyed as Ray, ten feet away, sweat pouring down his face, finishes his amazing solo.

The crowd roars its approval.

RAY

smiles in acknowledgment and retires to the side of the stage as the trumpet player steps forward for his turn.

CATHY

gazes in wonder as Ray stands with his eyes closed and head bowed, tapping his foot and cradling his saxophone.

RAY

steps forward to join the coda. The band sustains the final chord while Ray plays a rapid closing cadenza. A crescendo drum roll brings the rollicking tune to a joyous end.

The crowd erupts as the band members smile at each other.

Ray raises his arms over his head and laughs out loud.

He squints into the spotlights again. Sees nothing. His arms fall to his side. So much for his moment of triumph.

Ray steps out of the spotlight to mop his brow with his handkerchief. Scans the crowd once more, hoping against hope.

He spots Lovano and his bandmates standing at their corner table, cheering and whistling and giving thumbs up. Ray nods their way and allows himself a brief smile.

One last time he glances at the bar. Finally spots Cathy perched on a stool, eyes fixed on him, clapping and smiling.

Ray gazes at Cathy as if he's never seen anything so beautiful. Tears spring to his eyes.

He strides back into the spotlight. Wipes the sweat and tears streaming down his face. The crowd quiets down.

Ray bends over to speak into the mic. Although blinded by the lights blasting into his eyes, he turns and squints toward the end of the bar. He knows she is there.

RAY (CONT'D)

Thank you. This next song goes out
to my wife, Cathy.

He steps aside as Wendy plays the opening to "Body and Soul."

After the spare, understated introduction, Ray steps forward and embarks on his solo, weaving an intricate melody of lyrical grace and warmth and sublime tenderness.

CATHY

fumbles in her purse, eyes fixed on Ray. She unzips the inside pocket of her purse and slips on her wedding ring.

RAY

continues soloing, his melody building up in power and passion. His solo climaxes in a series of soulful phrases stretching to the upper limit of the saxophone's range.

The tender notes fade to silence. Ray lets his horn fall to his side as the audience bursts in rapturous applause.

He cups his hands against the blinding spotlights but cannot see Cathy over the crowd giving him a standing ovation.

OZZIE (V.O.)

Second chances don't come along too often, man. Grab 'em whenever you can, and hold on like hell.

Clutching his sax in one hand, Ray jumps off the stage and dives into the throng. Fights his way through the mob to the end of the bar, where Cathy waits with her arms outstretched.

Ray and Cathy embrace, Ray's saxophone bouncing off his hip as the teary-eyed couple slowly rock back and forth amid the cheering crowd.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END