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American Fruitcake

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American Fruitcake

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Dyson College of Arts & Sciences

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Empathy, Wolf of Wall Street, and Corsicana--A Brief Discourse

Why do already-wealthy CEOs steal millions of dollars, destroying lives in the process? And furthermore, why do they do it in such foolish ways? We have all heard stories about executives like Jordan Belfort, or the people running Enron. We usually chalk it up to a combination of greed and stupidity. But those executives got rich in the first place by being greedy and smart, and many donate untold riches to charity. So, what happened? And why does it keep happening? In order to understand the brains of criminals, we first need to understand our own brains. Fortunately, we have well-developed tools to do so.

Empathy is built into human biology. Several studies by the Keysers group have demonstrated that humans' observational and experiential neural networks are closely connected. In one study (published in 2008), they observed brain activity in participants as they performed a simple activity and observed someone else doing said activity. They were looking for shared voxels (nodes of activity in the brain--sVx for short). sVx were repeatedly recorded in the ventral premotor inferior parietal cortex, dorsal premotor, supplementary motor, middle cingulate, somatosensory, superior parietal, middle temporal cortex and cerebellum--all areas key to the execution of the actions being observed (Gazzola, Keysers--"The Observation and Execution..."). As these participants watched someone else, they unconsciously imagined themselves doing the same thing.

These "embodied cognitions" are emotional, too. The Keysers group conducted a fascinating study with rats that demonstrated the neurological components of emotional empathy. The human anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) lights up with activity when observing pain in other people, or when feeling pain in the self. Essentially, this study investigated an analogous area in

rats, and found that it contained “mirror-like neurons responding to pain and observation” (Carillo et al). When a rat was shocked, these neurons showed a flurry of activity, and when a rat saw another rat get shocked, those same neurons lit up, and the witnessing rat would freeze. Interestingly, these mirror neurons did not light up when the rat heard a sound that it had been trained to associate with pain/fear, and the inhibition of these neurons caused the rats to stop freezing when witnessing another get shocked (Carillo et al).

That response is even more drastic when an individual is the cause of another’s pain. In 1964, several researchers published a study they had conducted with rhesus monkeys (Masserman). The monkeys were trained to pull a chain when they wanted food, and were given two chains to choose from. Once they had been trained, researchers added a twist; one of the chains would cause an electric shock to be administered, immediately, to a monkey in plain view of the one pulling the chain. The majority of the monkeys almost immediately switched to the non-shock chain, and one monkey even refused to pull either chain for 12 days. He literally starved himself out of fear of hurting another (Masserman).

This raises a key question--how do white-collar criminals overcome these built-in empathy circuits? They can’t *all* be psychopaths. For many years, it’s been assumed that the draw for money simply overwhelmed the potential for harm. White-collar criminals were cold, rational, and selfish, prioritizing their personal gain over the harm it would cause. But recent research shows that it might not be quite so simple.

The trolley problem has existed in one form or another since 1905 (Chapman) , but the version most people know was created in 1967 (Foot). You are the driver of a trolley car. You see that 5 people are on the tracks, and cannot be moved or warned in time to save them.

However, just before those 5 people, there is a fork in the tracks. Down the only alternate track, there is only one person. Do you choose to do nothing, and run down the 5 people, or throw the switch, and run down the one? There have been many versions of the study, including one using VR, and over and over again, approximately 90% of people choose to throw the switch (Cloud). The second question, however, is much more troubling for people. In the second question, you are no longer the driver. You are, instead, a bystander crossing a bridge over the trolley tracks. You see 5 people who will unavoidably be killed if the trolley continues in its course. There is no alternate track--instead, there is a fat man sitting on the edge of the bridge. If you push him over, his weight will cause the trolley car to stop, saving the 5, but killing the one. Again, almost 90% of participants have the same response. This time, it is to do nothing. 90% of people choose to let the 5 die, rather than kill the one (Soltes). It is the same decision, mathematically--1 for 5. But physically, it's incredibly different. Brain scans reveal something fascinating and illuminating; in answering the first question, participants engage the parts of the brain engaged in controlled reasoning, but in answering the second question, they engaged the parts of the brain associated with emotions. The directness and proximity of the pushing action make the decision-making process physically different (Soltes).

The story of Steven Garfinkel provides a real-world example, albeit a much less dramatic one. Garfinkel was the CFO for a medical equipment financing company, and was eventually sentenced to 26 months in jail for fraudulent activities as CFO. Initially, Garfinkel merely falsified documents. In interviews with Eugene Soltes (Soltes), he says that this deception did not truly feel like lying. It was "distinctly unemotional" (Soltes). However, he did come clean about his actions, in the end. Several Goldman Sachs bankers, during a routine meeting, asked

Garfinkel if there was any other information they should have about his company's financial standings. Faced with the prospect of lying directly to another person, Garfinkel came to his senses and told the bankers the truth. For Garfinkel, the act of falsifying some documents was completely different than lying to someone's face. Even though the end result was the same, the actual mechanics of each action made all the difference.

Culture and surroundings also have a profound effect on conceptions of morality. A classic example of this is the Stanford Prison experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo, but there are many studies confronting this kind of question, ranging from the grand to the mundane. One such experiment concerned New York City parking violations. U.N. diplomats are immune to parking violations in the city, but fortunately, the violations still get logged. One might assume that there would be a relatively equal distribution of violations among member countries, as it's a pretty useful perk in a city like New York. However, a study done of the violations found that there were dramatic differences in which ambassadors racked up the bulk of fines, and those differences could be predicted based upon their country of origin (Fisman, Miguel). Diplomats from "high-corruption countries" (Chad, Pakistan, Bulgaria--Fisman) had the highest number of violations, while diplomats from countries with lower rates of corruption (Norway, Canada--Fisman) had significantly lower rates (Fisman, Miguel). Even though there were literally zero consequences, the diplomats were behaving in ways that accorded with their own culture's moral systems.

Another famous example is the Milgram experiment. In this experiment, participants were told, by a doctor, to press a button that would deliver an electric shock to another person. This person was not visible but was supposedly able to communicate. This person was actually

an actor, as was the “doctor.” The electrical shocks were supposedly part of an experiment in learning. The shocks would gradually escalate to higher and higher levels, and the person giving the shocks would hear gradually escalating noise and pleas for release from the other room--and then, at the highest voltages, silence (McLeod). One might assume that most people would cease giving the shocks after hearing the other person seem to be in physical distress--but 65% completed the full range of shocks (450 volts), and all participants reached at least 300 volts (McLeod). The presence of an authority figure, commanding them to continue, caused them to take actions they otherwise would likely never have considered.

If executives are distant from those they're affecting, in a culture that tells them not to be concerned with personal outcomes nearly as much as the bottom line, that explains why they would commit crimes in the first place. What it doesn't explain is why they commit the kinds of crimes they do. Although some white-collar crime is quite devious, a great deal of it is simply unsustainable. Once a company starts cooking the books, it quickly becomes nearly impossible to stop, unless the company somehow actually makes the money. And, if a company is losing enough money that accountants are willing to commit fraud, it's unlikely to pull out of that tailspin anytime soon . Eugene Soltes, who's interviewed countless executives in lockup for their crimes, was struck by the unthinking nature of many of their actions, as it does not comply with the accepted notions of white-collar psychology.

Since Adam Smith, it has been a commonly accepted premise of economics that humans will tend to act rationally, in their own self-interest. There were odd market blips, to be sure, like the tulip mania of the 17th century, but these could be partially explained--once the market started valuing tulips, it made perfect sense for everyone to get in on the action. Still, the rational

actor model didn't quite add up. It took a seminal series of studies in the late 20th century to start seriously challenging this way of thinking.

Daniel Kahneman was a cognitive psychologist who became fascinated by the quirks of human decision-making. He partnered with Amos Tversky and released a series of papers that would eventually earn Kahneman a Nobel prize in Economics. Kahneman's work demonstrated that, far from being rational thinkers occasionally overcome by emotion, humans make an enormous number of decisions based primarily on intuitions--intuitions which are incredibly prone to mistakes.

If a bat and a ball together cost \$1.10, and the bat costs \$1 more than the ball, how much does the ball cost? Over 50% of students at such prestigious universities as Princeton, Harvard, and MIT would answer 10 cents--and over 50% of students at these universities would be wrong (Kahneman, 44-45). The answer is 5 cents. A majority of college students also endorse the following syllogism as true;

All roses are flowers. Some flowers fade quickly. Therefore some roses fade quickly

(Kahneman, 44-45).

Again, a majority of college students are incorrect--roses might be among the flowers that do not fade quickly. In both cases, the correct answer is easily within reach, but responders typically accept the first answer that springs to mind. These are the same kinds of flaws in decision-making that many executives make when embezzling. The key mistake is in failing to take the time to fully consider the question. If they did stop to fully analyze the ramifications of their behavior, they would make an entirely different series of decisions. Instead, they get an intuitive answer that satisfies their preconceived notions, and move right along.

Another important discovery Kahneman and Tversky made was in the utility of wealth. In the mid-1700s, Daniel Bernoulli, a Swiss mathematician and physicist, made a brilliant series of conjectures about human wealth and risk-taking (Kahneman 274). He theorized that the way people value money in a gamble is not absolute, but proportionate, which explains why people will make totally different decisions regarding the same amounts of money. Bernoulli's insight explains why people will take a sure gain over a potential one, even if the potential gain is significantly larger. Say you have 1 million dollars. You have a 50% chance of winning 6 million dollars, or a 100% chance of winning 3 million dollars. Statistically, the choices have the same value--3 million dollars. However, the "psychological utility" (Kahneman 274) of the choices is entirely different. The increase of 1 to 4 million, proportionally, is much more dramatic than the increase from 4 to 7 million.

Unfortunately, this is where Bernoulli's reasoning stopped, and thus, where human foibles can enter to destroy his perfect theory. Kahneman proposes the following counter-arguments. Consider this gamble--equal chances to end up owning 1 million or 4 million, or 100% chance of owning 2 million. Now consider the following 2 people--Anthony, who has 1 million, and Betty, who has 4 million. The statistical worth of the gamble is 2.5 million. Under Bernoulli's system, we would expect them to make the same choice, because the utility proportions of the wealth remain the same--an increase of 1 to 2 million, versus an increase of 2 to 4 million. But Bernoulli's system fails to take into account for their current standings--for Anthony, the worst case scenario results in no change. For Betty, the worst case scenario results in the loss of $\frac{3}{4}$ of her wealth. And that difference is huge. In life,

overwhelmingly, Betty will take the gamble. Humans may be risk-averse, but they are even more loss-averse (Kahneman 276).

Kahneman and Tversky came up with another two problems.

1. In addition to whatever you own, you have been given 1,000 dollars. You are now asked to choose one of these options; 50% chance to win 1000\$, or get 500\$ for sure.
2. In addition to whatever you own, you have been given 2000\$. You are now asked to choose one of these options; 50% chance to lose 1,000 or lose 500 for sure (Kahneman 280).

In both problems, the end results are the same--you choose between being wealthier by 1500 for sure, or a gamble between 1,000 and 2,000 dollars. Bernoulli would expect the responses to the questions to be the same, as they have the same outcome. But in studies, a majority of people will take the sure thing in problem 1, and the gamble in problem 2 (Kahneman 280). This is because people are not actually thinking about the math--they are thinking about winning or losing. Losing is taxing, psychologically, and humans will go to great lengths to avoid it. This is why bankers will make insane gambles to hide losses. White-collar criminals are not masterminds brought low by their own arrogance--they are simply loss-averse humans, perfectly willing not to engage analytically, distanced from the people they are hurting, in cultures (both corporate and national) that prioritize profit above all else.

This is the story of Sandy Jenkins, as reported in the Texas Monthly (Vine). Sandy and Kay Jenkins lived in Corsicana, Texas, a small town that was, nonetheless, home to the Collins Street Bakery, maker of the most famous fruitcake in the world (Vine). Sandy worked as an

accountant at the bakery. They lived a perfectly nice lower-middle class life, with a good daughter, and a decent house in a good neighborhood. They had struggled financially in the early years of their marriage, but things were alright. Sandy was a quiet, odd fellow, who had a fantasy of owning a funeral home. Kay was loud, outgoing, and generally delightful. No one quite understood why Kay had married such a quiet man, but they had a lovely relationship.

Unfortunately, Corsicana had a limited social sphere, one defined almost entirely by class, and thus out of reach of the Jenkins. One day, Sandy realized he was the only one with real oversight of the bakery's electronic check system. So he stole some money. And some more money. And over the next few years, Sandy Jenkins embezzled over 16 million dollars from the Collins Street Bakery. He and Kay lived lavishly, and no one really understood where their money had come from--nonetheless, they were accepted into Corsicana's upper echelons. Then, in 2013, Semetric Walker, an accountant recently hired at the bakery, noticed a discrepancy in the checks, and it all came crashing down. Sandy was charged by the FBI (he really did hide all his jewelry around Town Lake in Austin), and is currently serving his sentence. Kay got off with probation (Vine). When I first began looking around for a subject for my thesis, my friend sent me the article "Just Desserts," written by Katy Vine, published in the January 2016 edition of the Texas Monthly. I was fascinated, and immediately knew I would be writing my thesis based on Sandy Jenkins and his story. That friend (Ben Dickerson, a student at University of Texas at Austin) had written several screenplays, so enlisted his assistance as a sort of consultant on the process. He would be a sounding board for ideas, and once I had completed a draft, would look at it and make notes for revisions. We talked a great deal throughout the project. We met several times in the summer of 2018 to discuss Sandy Jenkins, coming up with the core themes, tone, and focus. We watched

several movies that we knew would be useful to us, including *Wolf of Wall Street*, *Bernie*, and later, *Zodiac*. I dug through the article for useful quotes about the town and the characters. We looked for other coverage of the event, and read up on Corsicana itself. I started reading up on white-collar crime, specifically in America, as well as crime's intersection with masculinity. At one point, we even got on Facebook and dug through the mutual friends of public profile's to make sure we had everyone's names down correctly. I came up with the basic voices of each character. Using a four-act structure, and bouncing ideas off of Ben, I came up with a scene-by-scene outline of the movie. At long last, I sat down and wrote a draft, and things became vastly simpler. From that point on, it was essentially read-revise-repeat.

Wolf of Wall Street, directed by Martin Scorsese, was one of our touchstones for this piece. After all, it's a true tale of American greed, where a fraudster (Jordan Belfort) steals and lies to get the life he's always wanted, only to be brought down by incompetence and bad luck (Scorsese). And more importantly, it's quite well made. Although it clocks in at almost 3 hours, it was a critical and commercial smash, garnering 5 Oscar nominations, and becoming Scorsese's highest-grossing film ("2013 Domestic Grosses"). The beginning of the movie was an especially useful object lesson for us. It's what sells the audience on spending the next 3 hours of their lives with someone who is, objectively, the villain of their story. It does so with a few key tricks.

One is the immediate establishing of tone. The second the movie cuts from an 80s wall street ad to a little person being hurled at a bullseye at an office party, it becomes clear what kind of movie the audience is watching. Next, we meet Jordan Belfort, the narrator of his own story. He tells us where he came from, how rich he is now, and that it's not enough. In 3 sentences, over 2 still photographs and the beginning of a shot of a Ferrari, we learn all we need to know

about Jordan Belfort. For the rest of the sequence, Jordan tells us about everything he owns, all the drugs he's doing, and introduces us to the greatest drug of them all--money. Throughout, we see period-appropriate video of the things he owns, stylish long takes through mansions, a ferrari racing through traffic, cocaine-POV shots, mild slow-motion, a helicopter nearly crashing, hookers, a half-naked woman, visual references to classic films (Scorsese and otherwise)...the film immediately establishes exactly what it's about. The thesis that it will spend the next 3 hours proving comes two minutes in, and audiences are familiar enough with this kind of story to know how it ends (Jordan will go to jail, but probably not for super long). So, why watch it? Two reasons--number 1, Jordan Belfort. We understand him from the get-go, and, as played by Leonardo DiCaprio, he is immensely entertaining. Reason number 2 (the more important one)--this story is going to be told with *style*. There's enough formal experimentation going on in this opening montage to write a thesis about, and enough wealth porn (and almost actual porn) to fill several magazines. The opening sequence is so brilliant, and so compelling, because it clearly establishes tone, character, and credibility.

Another thing the movie nails is hedonistic decadence. Jordan Belfort lived a life that many people would envy, and held parties extravagant enough to drop any jaw. But, the simple facts of extravagance can't make it interesting for 3 hours. What grabs the viewer's attention immediately, and then holds it, is the character's relationship to his wealth, and the variety of colors within. We see Jordan, along with coworkers, going positively insane at an office party; we see him pridefully change the color of his ferrari; we watch him toss a glass of orange juice into a bush, simply because he can. The reason his wealth is compelling as a storytelling device is because we see Jordan being compelled by it. That was a crucial realization for us, as not all of

Sandy's extravagance is all that wild. A great deal of the reason the wealth was so important was because of the access it afforded him. In order for an audience to be invested emotionally in Sandy's wealth, we didn't need to ramp it up to make it more entertaining--we simply needed to show how emotionally invested Sandy was.

The film uses a ton of montages, particularly of Jordan's incomprehensibly wealthy lifestyle. These could quickly become tedious, but Scorsese is too smart for that. He finds variation within them by changing up the music (blues, hip-hop, jazz, brit-pop), the focus (Jordan's honeymoon sequence focuses on the aftermath, the office party focuses on everyone in a frenzy of shots), or the narrative context (Jordan's voiceover might be bragging, or musing random facts about Mozart). By keeping them formally inventive, it keeps the audience engaged in them as separate visual and auditory moments, rather than one we have seen before.

Of course, this formal cleverness isn't just for the sake of entertainment--it's a crucial part of the movie's thesis. It's all window dressing for a story that is, ultimately, sad and ugly. Just as Jordan Belfort dresses up his empty, doomed life, with hookers, drugs, and every other form of excess, the movie dresses up a story that we already know the end of. In the last sequence, Jordan goes to jail. It's notably quieter and calmer than the rest of the movie. There are no wild camera pans, no raucous blues songs. The closest thing we get is the FBI bursting into Jordan's Firm's offices to "Mrs. Robinson," mirroring an earlier sequence in the film where a marching band burst in to celebrate. It is sad, and quiet, and a little disappointing. In the final scene, Jordan is leading a seminar on sales in New Zealand. He references an earlier scene in the movie, asking audiences members to "sell [him] this pen" (Scorsese). In the scene he is referencing, a friend is able to "sell" him the pen by asking him to write his name down, thus

creating a need for the pen that did not previously exist. As Jordan repeats the phrase “sell me this pen,” the camera pans over, to the rapt audience, sitting in neat rows. They are even backlit as if to suggest the light from the projector in a movie theatre. This is Scorsese’s indictment of the depiction of wealth on film. Movies and advertising have sold wealth, and the extremes of the American dream, by telling audiences they need it--to be happy, to be “great.”

The story of Sandy Jenkins, like the story of Jordan Belfort, is not that unusual. The details of their tales are comically and entertainingly specific, but at their core, they are stories we hear all the time. With this research, and this screenplay, I have sought to understand, and elucidate, precisely why these stories are so common. The academic route explains the underlying physical processes, and the creative route communicates the emotional processes. For if we are to have any hope of dealing with these problems, we need to understand them.

White-collar crime is the result of fallible minds interacting with problematic stories.

White-collar criminals do not have to see the pain they cause, and they do not think to ask if what they are doing is harmful, or even logical. They are people who hate to lose, living in cultures that hate losers. They are inundated with the message, in work, in life, and in art, that they deserve greatness, and that the key to their greatness is wealth. They are people who made mistakes. And if we are not careful, they could be you and I.

INT. SANDY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Slightly cluttered ranch-style home, with tchotchkes of various types on the furniture. Space is lower-middle class. Personality is all from Kay. House is nice, but a bit small, a bit cluttered, a bit cheap. No broken windows, but the furniture has condensation ring stains, that sort of thing. "Don't Rain on My Parade" starts playing, from some big recognizable part of the song, but the sound is tinny, coming through an old alarm clock. We see Sandy turn off the alarm with his hand. Sandy is a slightly overweight man in his 40s. Patton Oswalt-type. The entire intro is intercut with a fruitcake being made/packaged/mailed at the bakery. We see an overhead shot of Sandy and Kay. Kay is Sandy's wife. Also in her 40s, overweight, bursting with personality and verve. There is a moment of silence as Sandy stares at the ceiling, and Kay rolls over, waking up. She kisses him.

KAY

Good morning!

SANDY

Good morning.

KAY

How'd you sleep?

SANDY

Good, you?

KAY

Like a rock. I'll get the coffee!

SANDY

Thanks, dear.

Kay exits, closing the door behind her. With the closing of the door, "don't rain on my parade" picks up again, but now a studio version. Sandy picks up his glasses from the nightstand and cleans them, unconsciously--this happens every morning. We cut to a shot in the bathroom, where we see Kay's assortment of makeups and creams next to Sandy's basic "Dove for men" style shaving cream, razor, and colgate toothpaste. We see Sandy's hand fumble out of the shower for the shaving cream. We see a close-up of Sandy shaving, ritualistically. A shot in the mirror of Sandy combing, then shellacking his hair down. A shot of Sandy's closet of dull suits. A shot of Sandy tying his tie, in some relatively typical knot. We see Sandy downstairs eating a hearty southern breakfast with Kay (cereal, microwave sausage, eggs). They chat a little bit, but we don't really hear it. It is mostly Kay doing the talking, but we see that they care for each other. They watch GMA together. We see Sandy picking up his briefcase and a thermos of coffee

Kay has for him, then heading out the door, Kay kissing him goodbye. A shot of Sandy in his car (average, so average). He starts the car, checks the rearview mirror, and then--

KAY

Your lunch! Silly.

Kay hands Sandy a paper bag through the window.

SANDY

Oh, thanks, darlin'.

They both laugh, Kay much more heartily--one more big kiss from Kay.

KAY

Have a good day, dear!

SANDY

You too!

Sandy pulls out of the driveway and heads to work. He turns on the radio. We see shots of Sandy driving through town, establishing that this is a small, mostly middle-class Texas town. Some people wave or acknowledge Sandy as he drives, but in an offhand, uninterested way. This is intercut with shots of Kay cleaning up in the kitchen. She is energetic, bubbly, we get the impression that she is singing as she goes. Sandy, on the other hand, drives with both hands on the wheel, consistently checking his mirrors and signaling, generally having no fun at all. After a bit (not too long--should feel like a relatively normal 15-20 minute commute), Sandy pulls into a parking lot. He checks his hair in the rearview mirror before getting out, making sure to pat it down smooth. He takes his briefcase and lunch with him, and heads into The Collins Street Bakery.

INT. - COLLIN ST. BAKERY - MORNING

A sleepy office slowly filling up. Not particularly large, but relatively nice for early 2000s office-space. Office workers that are filing in are dressed in Texan office attire--jeans, button-downs, boots, polos and brown sports coats. Sandy's dull suit is a little out of place, but mainly for its lack of personality. Sandy walks through the office and puts his food in the fridge, smiling and nodding at people as he sees them, occasionally saying hello. Similar to the drive, while no one is rude to Sandy, we get the sense that he is not a special presence--he's essentially walking wallpaper. People return to their own conversations quickly after greeting him. Sandy settles in at his office, setting his briefcase in its usual spot, firing up his desktop, etc. He does some work, just boring excel spreadsheet stuff. The morning passes slowly for him. Once or twice someone pops their head in to ask a question or make a request. Unimportant stuff. Eventually he finishes everything he needs to before lunch. He glances around furtively, then--bad boy--fires up Solitaire. He seems genuinely excited to play some rounds. As the music contentedly fades out, he starts slowly playing, then BAM

SCOTT

Well howdy there, Sandy, how are you today?

SANDY

(exiting Solitaire hurriedly, pretending everything is normal). I'm fine, Scott, how are you?

SCOTT

Never better, never better. Just had the most phenomenal weekend. Me and Jolene, and Bob and Kathy, we went up--shoot, I'm already messing up the story.

(interrupting)Of course, well, Kathy's cousin owns an old ranch up by Tilden, so we drove on out there--and it's quite a drive, you know, especially right now with all the flowers in bloom--anyhow, we drove out there, and turns out he's fixin' the place up to be a wedding venue! And he wants us to let him know what we think of the amenities and such. It's a long drive just to say two little words, but that's none of my business. So, we looked at everything, and told him what we thought and all, but that's not the fun part.

SANDY

Oh?

SCOTT

Guess what the fun part was.

SANDY

I'm sure I couldn't.

SCOTT

Well, I'm sure you won't, too, but it's part of the fun, so....

SANDYS

Um...you saw a snake or something?

SCOTT

Sandy, we have got to do something about your idea of fun. No, turns out his dad used to own some batting cages in town, before he retired, and Karen's cousin had sold the place, but, he got them to let him keep one of the pitching machines, and he lugged that silly thing all the way to the ranch. Now, I couldn't figure why he'd gone to all that trouble, until he handed me a shotgun, but then I got it real quick. (expectant pause)

SANDY

...I don't get it.

SCOTT

(Excitedly) high-speed skeet shooting! He futzed the angle of the barrel so it would shoot up in the air, and he figured out how to send tennis balls through, so it'd be nice and cheap--he even filled some of the balls with paint so they'd really splatter when you hit 'em.. Boy, it was fun.

(awkward pause). You do anything fun this weekend?

SANDY

Oh, not much. It was pretty quiet.

SCOTT

(after a pause, starts to speak)

SANDY

(remembering)Kay and I went out to eat.

SCOTT

Oh, yeah? Where'd y'all go?

SANDY

Doug...no, that's not right...Derek's Kitchen, that's it. Kind of a nicer place than we usually go to. But I thought it might be a good change, so...

SCOTT

Derek's, I know that place! Bob used to go there almost every week, I think, I joined him sometimes. Uh, did y'all, uh--did y'all enjoy it? The food and everything?

SANDY

(is he trying to stunt?)Yeah, we really enjoyed it. It was very nicely cooked. Some kind of interesting ingredients, too.

SCOTT

Huh. See, I really liked it when Derek owned it, but then he sold it to some fella from San Antonio, and I swear, they must've changed the staff or something, because I just never had quite as good a time there. I mean, the whole experience, the food, the service...just went downhill, as far as I can tell. Now, Helen's, over on main street, that's a fine establishment. Class right down to the bricks.

SANDY

(trying to hide his disappointment at not impressing Scott)Oh boy, I didn't know all that about Derek's. Maybe it's gotten better since then. But that Helen's place sure does look nice.

SCOTT

Oh, it's fantastic. That's a real luxurious meal, I'd be there every night if I could afford it, but we have to stick to once a week or less.

SANDY

(unsure what to say)

SCOTT

Oh, shoot! Been blathering at you so much I damn near forgot what I came in to talk to you about. We've got that office party comin up--(Scott is interrupted by Bob. knocking on Sandy's door and poking her head in)

(Bob McNutt enters. The owner of the bakery. Bob is in his 40s, like Sandy, but aging very well. A small-town version of George Clooney. He is in a dapper but respectable sports coat, clearly but not ostentatiously expensive, a nice button-down, and clean-pressed khakis with boots. Bob is charming and well-liked. He likes Sandy fine, but like everyone else, looks through him a bit)

BOB

Well, howdy there, Sandy, I'm just checking in about that postage e-mail--oh, shoot, I'm sorry Scott

SCOTT

Oh, it's no problem, Bob, I'm just chatting Sandy's head off about our weekend, you go right ahead.

BOB

Well, we don't have to be all business--how's little Ally doing, Sandy? Still team captain?

SANDY

She still is, yeah. The coach has her playing sweeper this season, though, so she's a little frustrated.

BOB

Well, a little patience goes a long way. Se'll get it soon enough, She's a good kid, y'all should be proud. Anyhow, Sandy, did you see that e-mail I sent about postage? We've got that pageant order coming in, I just want to make sure there's enough money in the account to handle the stamps.

SANDY

I'll double-check and let you know.

SCOTT

Bob, I don't know why you hired me if you're gonna keep doing my job in front of me.

BOB

I'm sorry, Scott, I get antsy when things are going well. Keep expecting the other shoe to drop

SCOTT

Well, that's why you're the man in charge of this whole thing. That's all I had, Sandy, I'll get outta your hair. HAVE a good one.

SANDY/BOB

See ya, Scott

BOB

Oh and Sandy, we've got that office party comin up, obviously Karen and I will host, but instead of a caterer, Karen wants to try and cook everything this year. I've told her we'll just end up ordering Domino's, since she can barely make it through Thanksgiving dinner without a nervous breakdown, but it's no use-she's stubborn as a mule, and damn if I don't love it, too. So you can go ahead and move however much we budgeted for that over into somewhere we need it, probably equipment repairs or advertising.

SANDY

Will do, Bob.

BOB

Thanks, Sandy. Couldn't run this place without ya. Ya know, we really do have to get together sometime for dinner.

SANDY

Well, I think Kay and I are free this Friday, actually

BOB

Can't do Friday, Karen's got family in town. Much as I'd like to run off and hide, I think she might not approve. Well, we'll find a time. You have a nice day, now, alright? Don't work too hard.

SANDY

Okay, sure thing. Uh, you too!

Int. Sandy's Dining room.

Sandy and Kay having dinner. Their usual routine. Plates and such are old, inherited, but well-kept. As per usual, almost stylish, but not expensive. Eating a very typical hearty texas dinner. They are comfortable, happy. Kay is in the middle of a funny story.

KAY

Are you sure you like the mushrooms, darlin?

SANDY

Mm-hmm, real good.

KAY

Ya know, I really wasn't sure about them, but Allison was going on and on the other day about edamame or umami or something, and to be honest it kind of went over my head, but apparently it's a great way to make greens taste good, and mushrooms have got oodles of it, so I thought I'd give it a go. Now, where was I?

SANDY

The cinnamon buns caught on fire.

KAY

Right, yes! Nobody knows where the fire extinguisher is and everyone's running around like headless chickens, so I grab the nearest bag of flour and dump the whole thing on the buns. The fire's out, but now we have no cinnamon buns for service and I look like the holy ghost itself, if you'll pardon the phrase. I sent Ronnie to Wal-mart while we cleaned up, we put some pre-made buns in the church tupperware, and I got more compliments on my buns than if I'd been Mrs.

McNutt in a miniskirt. (laughs)

SANDY

(laughing) it's good you were there.

KAY

It always is. How was your day, hon?

SANDY

Oh, fine. Same ol.

KAY

Well, I'm sure it was good you were there, too. Certainly better you than me. I think I'd end up cross-eyed if I spent all day looking at charts and forms.

SANDY

It's not too bad.

KAY

Still, I know it's tiring. Did you mention that restaurant we went to to Bob? I bet he knows all about fancy places like that.

SANDY

Sorry, darlin, slipped my mind.

KAY

Oh, don't apologize, I just wondered what he thought of it, it's not important. Maybe I'll ask Mrs. McNutt at the party.

SANDY

Mm-hmm. Should be fun.

KAY

Oh, it'll be a smash. They always throw such fun get-togethers. You know, it's real swell of them to host, and they're always so swell about guests.

SANDY

Sure are.

KAY

You know, I must've mentioned that supper club about a thousand times to Kathy, but somehow we never end up getting invited. It almost makes you feel like she's giving me the run-around.

SANDY

I'm sure she's just forgetful.

KAY

(clearly upset). You're right, dear, I'm just being silly. You know how I get. Not near as bad as I used to be, though. Do you remember, when we were first going out, I'd just about

Flashback montage begins with the Jenkin's wedding. Sequence is without dialogue, underscored by a pop song, probably some Barbara. Kay and Sandy, younger, full of joy. Their parents are there. Wedding is small, but clearly very happy. Probably in a backyard. Their parents are there. Then a sequence of Sandy and Kay moving in to their current house. We see the lawn change as Kay and Sandy carefully bring it to life, while making the house feel like their own. Full of hope. Then we see Sandy getting let go. Then Sandy and Kay volunteering at the church. Some of the background folks in this section probably show up at the supper clubs later on. They are still happy, but times are clearly harder. More stress beneath the happiness. Kay putting up more of a facade than Sandy. Then a sequence of Sandy getting diagnosed with Manic/Depressive. Then, younger Bob hiring younger Sandy at bakery. Sandy is clearly very thankful. Maybe we see him come home and celebrate with Kay. Celebration transitions to them cleaning up, watching tv, eating dinner--a series of normal nights at home that bring us back to present-day. Each individual sequence is maybe 20 seconds.

Int Sandy's bedroom

A long shot of Sandy and Kay in bed. Kay is asleep. Sandy is staring at the ceiling, a little empty. Just the noise of the overhead fan. He starts to close his eyes, then--his alarm goes off. It's the next morning. We begin a sequence of shitty days. The normal routine, cut to emphasize the boredom and ennui of work. Waking up, putting on the grease, one of the grey suits, awkward convo with bob, solitaire, almost falling asleep, watching bob entertain employees through the window. Key is social distance and boredom, but editing should be fast/frenetic enough that "claire de lune" is strikingly still. In the middle, we get about 10 seconds of Sandy, alone in his living room playing "claire de lune" on the piano. Most of the lights are out. He's not using sheet music. He's playing well. This is where we see him striving, wanting more, seeming at least alive. Then we go back to the shitty day sequence and more of him feeling empty. Sequence builds until we hear that stupid fork on glass noise people use to get the attention at dumb parties.

Int. Bob McNutt's big ole business party.

Bob is about to give a speech. Everyone is there. This party is *nice*. Servers walking around with hors d'ouvres nice, not prostitutes painted gold nice. Everyone looks to be having a good time, it takes a second to get their attention. It's a veritable who's who of the corsicana social scene, and also it's the people who work at the bakery. Sandy looks exactly how you'd expect him to look. Bob's wife is the one getting everyone's attention.

BOB

Thanks, Bonnie, I appreciate that, darlin. Go ahead and hit me if I forget anything. Howdy, y'all, welcome to the party! (audience cheers). Now, I'd love to bore you to death with the history of the Collins Street bakery, but I can already see you eyeing the exits and the appetizers, so I'll keep this brief. My father handed this place down to me, and I intend to hand it down to my kids. It's part of our family legacy, and it's very important to me. That's why I only hire the best folks, so if you're here tonight, i think you're good people. Or you're seeing someone who I think is

good people and they wanted to impress you. (laughter). Now, because I have chosen such fine folks, the Collins Street Bakery is doing better than ever. Which is why, and I'm real excited to tell y'all this--we will be expanding to two brick-and-mortar locations! Now if your gramps forgets to order his cake in november, he can just walk right in and get one! As long as you folk haven't eaten them all, of course. So, once again, thank you for your hard work, and i am mighty excited about the future. Cheers!

Later at the party. Sandy is, for once, waxing poetic, but no one really gives a shit because he's boring.

SANDY

That's why the original is better. You could really replace Matt Damon with Sammy Davis Jr and it would only be better.

KAY

He only gets this passionate about the Rat Pack and lawn maintenance. Sometimes I think he should've just been born in the 50s.

SANDY

I just don't know why they don't make more movies like that now. They're such swell pictures..

KAY

See what I mean?

PARTY PERSON

Say, Cheryl, weren't you tellin me something earlier? That your boy's finally playing little league?

CHERYL (RANDO PARTIER)

No, he finally *quit* little league. Now he's trying soccer.

Yet later in the evening. Sandy surreptitiously takes some fingers of Bob's fancy scotch. Bob, in the background, notices him do so. He comes over to chat right as Sandy takes a sip, startling him.

BOB

I can't stand that cheap stuff at the bar, either. Makes me feel like a senior in high school who doesn't know he can enjoy drinking. Pour me a finger?

SANDY

What? Oh, no, I didnt' --I was just--

BOB

Oh, I don't give a damn, just pour me a drink.

SANDY

I think you must be confused. I, uh, would never...I mean, I wouldn't even think to. So. I really didn't.

BOB

(knowing Sandy is lying). Well, I guess i must've been confused, then. Probably a trick of the light. Pour me one anyway?

SANDY

Sure thing. Yeah, light can be funny.

BOB

You're an odd bird, Sandy.

SANDY

You, too, Bob.

BOB

(pause) Well, I'd better go gladhand. Thanks for the drink. (bob peaces out and is immediately welcomed loudly into a conversation).

Slightly later at the party. Kay is trying to be a part of stuff.

KAY

What are you ladies talking about over here?

MEAN LADY 1

Oh, just something funny Jolene said at dinner last night.

JOLENE

It was about a book we're all reading.

KAY

Oh, what book? I crack one open myself every so often

JOLENE

It's called "Portrait of a Sister."

KAY

Oh, that's the one about that young Amish girl, isn't it?

MEAN LADY 1

It is, actually, how did you know?

KAY

I've got a subscription to the Southern Lady book club. Helps me keep sharp, and the audiobooks are great for traffic. Not "Portrait," mind you, that one just about put me to sleep.

MEAN LADY 1

Hmm. Well, what Jolene said last night was that she loved how slowly things happened. It really lets you get the characters. She said

JOLENE

I just hate when it feels like I'm reading "Die Hard."

KAY

Oh, that's so funny! Well, I always enjoyed that movie--Bruce Willis sure is quite the fella--but to each their own, I guess!

MEAN LADY 1

I suppose. Say, Jolene, weren't you going to show me your favorite painting here?

JOLENE

Oh, I'd almost forgotten. Well, talk to you later, Kay!

KAY

Lovely to see you ladies!

The ladies walk away. Kay is clearly heartbroken and embarrassed, but puts on a brave face.

KAY

There you are, charlie! I've been meaning to ask you about how your porch turned out!

Sandy, in the vicinity, has seen everything. He clearly wishes he could have helped.

We see Sandy surreptitiously taking more scotch, clearly starting to get a little tanked. He's not belligerent, or anything, but his carefully shellacked hair might be slightly out of place. With

underscoring, we see shots of Sandy and Kay not quite fitting in contrasted with Sandy's perspective of Bob and his wife, who are effortlessly welcomed, and proffer the appetizers they've paid for to various people. In Sandy's mind, they are flaunting their wealth and using it for acceptance. Underscoring cuts out suddenly as

SANDY

I'll be in the bathroom. Excuse me.

Sandy is in the bathroom. He pees, then sits down on toilet seat just to get a handle on it all. He spots a Vogue on the edge of the bathtub, and picks it up. He flips through to a profile with George Clooney and Brad Pitt about Ocean's 11, with some headline about pulling off a heist. He gets the idea.

knock knock knock

SANDY

Just a sec!

He looks at the magazine for a second longer, then washes up and head out. We see Kay and Sandy driving home. Kay is silently licking her emotional wounds. Sandy is lost in thought about his new options.

Int. Dreamscape.

Sandy has a dream. Likely a Ziegfeld Follies knockoff thing. Not lyrically about wealth, but using imagery and iconography that makes it clear what wealth can give you.

End of act 1

Act 2.

Int. Sandy's office.

It's the Monday after the party. It's about 2:00 in the afternoon. His blinds are closed. Sandy is staring at his computer. It's open to a game of Solitaire, but Sandy hasn't started the game. He has been staring at this screen for hours. He flicks his eyes to make sure no one is watching. He minimizes the Solitaire game, and we see what he is really thinking about--it's the office's computerized checkbook system. We have seen this many times before in Sandy's workday sequences, but today is different. He writes a single \$500 dollar check, marks it "for postage," but makes himself the beneficiary. He goes to the blinds and peers through, looks across the office, to make sure no one is watching. He sees Bob making conversation--someone is clearly complimenting his nice new suit. Sandy finalizes the check, and sits back in his chair. He clicks Solitaire back open, and stares at it. He is clearly freaking the fuck out. He loosens his tie, drums his fingers nervously, looks outside again. He takes several deep breaths to calm himself. He is nearly there when there is a loud knock at his door. He hurriedly clicks open to Solitaire as he calls, nervously--

SANDY

Who is it?

BOB

(entering)the fun police, here to arrest you for your wild exploits this past friday evening, at the home of an extraordinarily handsome bakery CEO.

SANDY

Was I annoying? I didn't mean to make any fuss.

BOB

Woah, there, fella, I'm just messin with ya. Ya probably were wilder than I've ever seen you last Friday, which would make you almost as crazy as I am sober. (laughs)

SANDY

(laughing awkwardly)I guess I was just a bit nervous. It's a real nice place.

BOB

Well, thanks, was it your first time there?

SANDY

Oh, no, I always come to the Christmas party.

BOB

I was about to say, if you'd been working here god knows how long and only just been to the house, I was gonna get mighty offended. Anyhow, your day going alright?

SANDY

Oh, sure. Slow as ever. Not too, slow. Just the right amount of slow.

BOB

"The right amount of slow." Remind me not to put you in charge of PR.

SANDY

I just mean it's normal. And I'm not busy. If you needed something. But I don't need to do anything, either.

BOB

Well, that's very good to know. I was just stopping by to double-confirm with you--I'm sure you saw the e-mail, but we're telling all our regular orders about the expansion with a handy little flier someone put together, so we'll need a little extra money in the postage budget to send 'em out. You know much better than I do how much that oughta be, so just add however much you think is right, and if you can't figure out where to get it from, we'll sit down together.

SANDY

I know where to get it. We don't' need a meeting.

BOB

Well, that's wonderful to hear. Should've known you'd have it all figured out by now. Well, I'll be on my way, let you get back to your "just the right amount of slow." Have a good one.

SANDY

You too, Bob. Let me know if you're gonna stop by again.

BOB

Well, I suppose I could, but I think I'll just plan on walking down the hall and knocking, like always, if that's alright.

SANDY

Right, right, that's great, of course.

BOB

Alright. G'bye now.

SANDY

Bye.

As Bob exits, Sandy breathes a sigh of relief.

Int. Sandy's car. We see a shot of Sandy's hands on the wheel. Classic 10 and 2. Sandy is driving home. He drums his fingers on the wheel. He is clearly still a little nervous, but not nearly as much as usual. As he is stopped at a red light, he sees a fancy watch store. We see him get an idea. Smash cut to the same shot of the wheel as earlier, but Sandy is now wearing a fancy watch on one hand. We see him turn up the radio a little.

Int. Jenkins' dining room

Sandy and Kay are eating dinner. What would be a normal night.

KAY

So of course it becomes this whole hullabaloo, and we have to call Mr. Jones, and you know how he hates that during the day--could you pass the salt, darlin'?

SANDY

(passing the salt) Sure, dear.

KAY

Thank you. So, we finally--oh my lord, that is a beautiful watch, Sandy! When did you get that?

SANDY

Today. On the way home from work.

KAY

Just up and bought it? Was there a special day I missed?

SANDY

Nope, just decided to get it. I drive past the shop every day. So today I thought I would buy it.

KAY

Now, Sandy, you know I'm happy to let you handle all the financial business, and I know how you love nice things, so I think it's wonderful that you decided to make yourself happen, and it really is quite a lovely watch but--can we afford that kind of thing?

SANDY

Work has been going pretty well. The bakery's making good money. We can definitely afford--do you want to go to Helen's this weekend?

KAY

Helen's?!? Sandy, that place is so fancy their steaks come with college degrees!

SANDY

We work hard. Why shouldn't we celebrate it?

KAY

Well, I--I suppose I can't argue with that. But we can afford it, you're sure?

SANDY

We can afford it. I think things might be looking up a little. Financially.

KAY

Well, they haven't been bleak, but I would certainly enjoy a bit more rainbows and sunshine. You know, you are such a wonderful husband, Sandy. I don't tell you often enough.

SANDY

I love you, darlin.

KAY

I love you, too. (they share a moment). Now, where was I? Mr. Jones?

SANDY

Mr. Jones.

Int. Helen's Restaurant

A fancy restaurant near the center of town. It's still Corsicana, so it's nothing too outlandish, and it's not huge, but the waiters are smartly dressed, and the patrons are in sports coats and dresses, a few children in polo shirts. Sandy and Kay are at the hostess stand.

HOSTESS

Right this way, Mr. Jenkins.

KAY

(quietly, to Sandy) Oh, I'm just so excited. I can't even remember the last time I was in a place like this.

HOSTESS

Have you dined with us before?

SANDY

No, we haven't. But, uh, we've been to similar establishments.

HOSTESS

...Wonderful. Well, we're happy to welcome you to Helen's. (a pause. Waiters have pulled out chairs for Sandy and Kay to sit in, but Sandy and Kay are waiting for them to leave). Have a seat. (Sandy and Kay look down--the chairs are not actually under them. They look back at the hostess, confused). Go ahead. They'll handle the, uh, (Sandy and Kay slowly sit down, and as they do, the waiters push the chairs under them so that they sit down into them). Yes. Still or sparkling?

SANDY

Still is fine, thank you.

HOSTESS

Wonderful. Your waiter will be with you shortly.

(After she leaves, Kay starts laughing, Sandy joins her after a moment)

KAY

Now I know why I couldn't remember the last time I was in a place this fancy--I've never been in a place this fancy!

SANDY

Yes, I--that was real confusing.

KAY

Well, at least I know which fork to use. My mother taught me that much.

SANDY

You might have to help me out.

KAY

Well, darlin, that's what a marriage is, don't ya know?

SANDY

Yes, dear.

(a waiter approaches with an amuse bouche)

KAY

Ooh, that looks tasty.

WAITER

(While setting it down) Fontina-Chive risotto lollipop fritter, with a tomato marmalade
(Sandy and Kay exchange confused looks)

KAY

Oh, I don't think--we haven't ordered yet.

WAITER

Compliments of the house, ma'am. (off of Kay's surprised look) It's an amuse bouche (off of their clear confusion). It's like a complimentary appetizer. I had no freakin clue when I started working here, either. Enjoy your meal!

KAY

(after his exit, not quite pronouncing it right) Amuse bouche? Sounds like french for something you can't do in a church

SANDY

(laughing hard) Kay!

KAY

Well, it does! No need to raise your voice!

SANDY

Oh, my goodness. You are too funny.

KAY

Well, should we try the...thing?

SANDY

After you.

KAY

I still think it sounds like a something.

Int. Sandy's bedroom

Sandy is getting ready for work, like every other day. He stares at his assortment of grey suits, deciding what to wear. He is clearly unsatisfied with his options. Suddenly, he cocks his head, and gets an idea. Smash cut to

Int. Jenkins kitchen

Kay is cooking a lil' breakfast. GMA plays on the tv. Sandy rushes in, grabs a muffin from the counter.

SANDY

I gotta get to work early today, darlin.

KAY

(he kisses her on the cheek) No good morning america?

SANDY

Sorry, gotta run.

KAY

Alrighty, have a good day--and don't forget your lunch!

Sandy is already gone

Ext. Dillard's

Sandy stands outside the entrance to a Dillard's (or some such), off to the side. He looks up at the sign, looks at his suit, steels himself, and walks in

Int. Dillard's

Sandy is staring at a sea of suits, at a loss. He is clearly very uncomfortable in this environment. He awkwardly wanders around.

DILLARD'S CUSTOMER

Excuse me

SANDY

Oh, pardon

A customer grabs a shirt off the rack Sandy happened to be in front of, checks the size, nods, and heads off to get some pants. Sandy starts to look at sizes, but has no idea what size he is in this kind of shirt. A sales associate (Darlene) comes up behind him.

DARLENE

If I could just...

SANDY

Oh, I'm so sorry.

DARLENE

(putting some pants back on a rack)Oh, you're fine, dear. (noticing his discomfort) Is there anything I can help you with?

SANDY

Oh, no, I'm--well, yes, I think--yes, that would probably be good.

DARLENE

You sure about that?

SANDY

(laughing a little, still uncomfy)Yes, I am sure.

DARLENE

Well, what're you looking for? Something like you got on?

SANDY

Oh, no. Something new. Different. New to me, I mean.

DARLENE

Well, good, it looks like you're going to the world's most boring funeral. Follow me, honey. You know what size you are?

SANDY

Uh, no ma'am. But I--

DARLENE

Oh, don't worry about it, I've got a great eye for it. And don't call me ma'am. My name is Darlene.

SANDY

Hi. My name is Sandy. Nice to meet you.

DARLENE

Of course it is, I'm a bucket of rainbows and sunshine, don'tcha know?

Int. Dressing Room

Darlene is waiting, sitting in a chair, in the men's dressing room. There is a full-length mirror, some spare dress shoes, a roll of measuring tape--the usual dressing room acoutrements. Sandy exits the little cubby where you get dressed, and comes out to meet Darlene. He looks good! The suit's fit is more flattering than his grey one. It is a deep blue, almost a navy. It's not quite as chic as a Queer eye makeover, but it has the same idea--less a transformation, and more of an upgrade. Sandy walks over to the mirror, as

DARLENE

Ooh, you look snazzy! I knew I was right about blue

SANDY

Gee, thanks. You sure about that?

DARLENE

Wait'll you see for yourself.

Sandy walks over to the mirror. When he sees himself, something in him shifts. He realizes he looks good, and he stands a little taller, shoulders a little wider. Not full Don Draper or anything, but definitely different.

SANDY

Oh. Wow.

DARLENE

Told ya.

SANDY

Darlene, this is...yes. Yes. I'll take this one. Yes.

Sandy admires it in the mirror.

DARLENE

You wanna wear it out? I can cut the tags off ya once you pay.

SANDY

(Sandy is surprised, but then immediately taken by the idea)Oh. Yeah. Yeah, I'd like that a lot.

DARLENE

Well c'mon then, hun. Let's get you checked out

Darlene exits, but Sandy stays one second longer to look at himself. He tries one of Bob's singular moves in the mirror, but immediately feels stupid and leaves, then suddenly remembers his grey suit, and goes to get it.

Int. Sandy's office

Sandy, in his new suit, is tip-tapping away. At solitaire of course. Bob stops by.

BOB

Hey, there Sandy, how's your--ooh, I like that suit.

SANDY

Thanks, Bob. It's new.

SANDY

Well, I didn't figure you'd been saving it for a Monday. Now, listen--
There is a knock at the door. Bob, confused, opens it. It's Kay, holding a brown paper bag--his lunch.

KAY

Oh, hi Mr. McNutt! I'm so sorry to interrupt, but Sandy forgot his lunch, and his lunch break isn't long enough to come all the way home and back and eat, so I thought I'd just drop by and--oh, my, Sandy, you look great!

SANDY

Thanks, dear.

KAY

Is that why you ran out early this morning? Well, as long as you don't make a habit of it, it's worth it for me. Doesn't he look snazzy, bob?

BOB

I was just telling him the same thing, Mrs. Jenkins.

KAY

You know, I really *love* that color. (pause as she takes in the suit one more time, a little shock and wonder) Well, I'll go ahead and get out of your hair, and I'm sorry again, I just didn't want him going hungry.

BOB

No apologies necessary.

Kay kisses Sandy on the cheek, quickly, then hustles and bustles out.

KAY

Y'all have a nice day now!

Sandy and Bob watch her exit, Sandy with love, Bob with slightly amused admiration.

BOB

She's a real sweetheart, huh?

SANDY

Sure is.

Time for a flashback!

knock knock knock

Int. kay's childhood home

We see a young (late high school, early college) Kay come to the door. She is basically the same as ever, just younger. Her house is modest, but nice. That sort of dying lower-middle-class look. She opens the door to see young Sandy--he, too, is about the same, only younger. Maybe a little bit skinnier, but the same basic build. The same slicked hair. No grey suit, but a clean button-down and jeans. They do not fit him very well, but it is clear he tried, and he does look put-together.

KAY

Well, howdy there! Are you Sandy?

SANDY

Yep.

KAY

Well, I'm Kay, it's a delight to meet ya. I'm just about ready, I'll just grab my snacks from the fridge.

SANDY

Okey-dokes.

Int. Sandy's old car.

Sandy is driving an era-appropriate pickup truck. It should be about five years old for the era, kept in good condition, but still clearly not accustomed to much company (flyers on the dashboard, that sort of thing). They are driving along the highway to Dallas. It is a beautiful afternoon, though hot, and they have the ac cranked.

KAY

Thanks again for letting me hitch a ride! Auntie B can usually take me, but sometimes she's just got her own business to get up to.

SANDY

No problem. I had to make the drive anyway. I thought company might be kinda swell.

KAY

Well, I'm definitely great company. "A family-size bucked of laughs," that's what my sister says. Are you an only child?

SANDY

Yeah. Just me.

KAY

Sounds lucky to me. Having brothers and sisters is nice and all, but they drive me up a wall sometimes. I bet it was much harder for you to get in fights.

SANDY

I never really fought, no.

KAY

I like that. A nice boy. Me, on the other hand, well I was fighting every other weekend. Not with strangers, mind you--only with my family, so it's alright. How'd you know Auntie B, again?

SANDY

I don't really know. She's been friends with my parents for...well, forever.

KAY

She does like to latch on to people. Runs in the family. What're you studying?

SANDY

Uh, business administration. You?

KAY

Dental hygiene. It's either boring as heck or weirdly cool, depending on my mood. Is business administration what you wanted to study?

SANDY

...What do you mean?

KAY

Well, lots of folks don't really study what they want to study, just what their parents want them to study.

SANDY

Are you? Doing that, I mean?

KAY

Oh, no, neither of us wants me to study dental hygiene. (laughs) I'm kidding, I think my parents and I are the same amount of alright with it. But what about you?

SANDY

Well...no, not really, I suppose.

KAY

Oh? So, what do you want to study?

SANDY

I don't really want to study anything.

KAY

So what is it you want to do, then?

SANDY

It's kind of weird.

KAY

Oh, that's alright, that's much more fun.

SANDY

I guess. Well, I want to be a funeral home director.

KAY

Oh, you're right, that is weird.

SANDY

Oh--well, I didn't--I mean, I won't, obviously, be--

KAY

Oh, don't worry so much, it's fun weird. So have you always wanted to be a funeral director?

SANDY

Well, kind of .

KAY

Why? Kind of a strange thing for a kid to get all excited about?

SANDY

My cousin's stepdad owns one. I always thought it was real nice.

KAY

As a kid? When i was little I only thought someplace was nice if it had sprinkles or rollercoasters

SANDY

Well, it was quiet. But it was sort of fancy, too.

KAY

You didn't feel...i don't know, uncomfortable around all that fancy stuff?

SANDY

No, i always liked fancy stuff. My mom...she likes fancy stuff. I guess I grew up with it. My dad always said "if they sold poop in a bag at Neiman's, she'd buy it."

KAY

(laughing)oh, that's a hoot! Poop at neiman's! Ooh, I like that.

SANDY

Yeah, he's a funny guy.

KAY

Alright, so how does a wannabe funeral director end up at Dallas Baptist College with a business major?

SANDY

Are you sure you want to hear all this stuff? Isn't it kind of boring?

KAY,

Oh, no, I think it's great fun. Tell me!

SANDY

I mean, it was mostly my dad. He--

The camera pulls out of the car, we get an overhead of the truck driving down the highway, dallas in the distance, as their dialogue fades out. The next shot is of the car, parked, Kay is gathering her things

KAY

I really can't thank you enough. And, you know, i had a great time!

SANDY

Oh, me too. Um...Kay, you, uh...well, do like movies?

KAY

Well, some of 'em.

SANDY

Right, me too. So, uh...Well, I dunno, would you like to, maybe, go see one? With me, I mean?

Sometime?

KAY

Oh, I think that'd be real swell. Why don't you call me tomorrow night, around 7, and we can pick which one?

SANDY

Sure. I'd like that a lot.

KAY

Well, I'll talk to you soon, then. Nice to meet you, Sandy.

SANDY

Real nice meeting you, Kay.

Int. jenkins home.

Sandy is in the living room, watching daytime tv. Kay is puttering around in the kitchen. A normal afternoon.

KAY

Sandy, darlin, we're runnin' low on milk, could you run and pick some up from the store?

SANDY

Sure thing, darlin'. Should I get anything else?

KAY

Nah, that'll be plenty.

Sandy gets up from the couch.

Ext. Jenkins home.

Sandy, keys in hand looks at his car. It's fine. But it could be a hell of a lot better. He gets an idea. Smash cut to

Ext. car dealership

Sandy pulls out of a car dealership, with those temporary plates on, in his shiny new Lexus. We cut to the inside of the car, where he puts a cd in. Barbara Streisand. He skips a few tracks in, then gets to the one he wants. He drives for a few seconds, bopping his head, then realizes the highway is pretty empty. He checks his mirrors approximately 11 times, then speeds a little bit. He slows down almost immediately, checking his mirrors and laughing. He checks his mirrors again, and then turns up the streisand and starts going a whopping 15 miles above the speed limit. We watch Sandy speed (slightly) down the highway as the Streisand song blasts on the soundtrack.

Ext. methodist church.

It is just after service the next day (Sunday). Churchgoers are milling about at a holiday potluck. Everyone is doing that weird social status check-in/maneuvering. Sandy and Kay are talking to Scott and his wife Jolene (Scott is Sandy's boss at the bakery--Sandy works, technically, for Scott, and then Bob, but Scott is more typically busy). Sandy is wearing his new duds, and Kay has on new earrings.

JOLENE

Kay, dear, I just adore those earrings you've got on!

KAY

Why, thank you for noticing. They're new--Sandy gave 'em to me yesterday. I send him out for milk and he came back with a car and new earrings. I said "honey, I love these, but if you want a bit of my bundt cake tomorrow you better get back on the road!"

Scott

Oh, I was meaning to ask you about that car, Sandy!

SANDY

It's a lexus ls430. The Es330 had a bit better mileage, but the ls has the horsepower.

Scott

Well, it sure is a beauty. I remember my first Lexus. Took me a few years to pay it off, but damn--woops, sorry hon, dang, if it wasn't worth it.

SANDY

They're real swell cars.

JOLENE

And your new suit! Doesn't he look dashing, Kay?

KAY

Well, I've always thought he was a little cutie-pie, but the suit does make him look a little more fancy. Like one of those pies with the lattice across the top. My mom could bake those, but I never had the patience. It tastes just as sweet either way!

JOLENE

Oh, Kay, I thought you only made bundt cakes!

KAY

Well, the bundts are my specialty--should've been a baseball player (laughs)--but I do admit, I have a wider range of butter-related skills. As long as you don't care so much how it looks, I'm your gal. for the pastries, too!

SANDY

Well, I think you look mighty fine.

JOLENE

Oh, he's so sweet. My goodness, Kay, you are fun! We've just got to have the two of you over sometime--maybe you could bake one of those other specialties, and the fellas could talk more about their cars. And I am just dying to know where Sandy picked up those earrings. We're having a few people over on Wednesday, would that work?

KAY

Oh, my, goodness, we would absolutely love to come. We will be there with bells on, won't we sandy dear?

SANDY

Of course.

JOLENE

Well, I'll just have Scott shoot Sandy an e-mail with the particulars, but I can't wait to see y'all.

KAY

You, too! (as they walk away) Sandy, I hope you like these earrings, because I will never be taking them off again.

Int. Jenkins bedroom.

It's the day of the supper club. Sandy and Kay prepare for battle. They suit up like superheroes or cops in an 80s movie. He slicks his hair. She does contouring. He shaves. She plucks her eyebrows. He ties his tie. She curls her hair. He shines his shoes. She irons her dress. He puts on aftershave. She puts in her earrings. Some straight-up AC/DC plays the entire time. We should expect them to walk out into a full-on gunfight.

Ext. Jolene and Scott's fancy-ass house.

Sandy and Kay park, in Sandy's new Lexus, just down the street from the house. There are 3 or 4 other cars in the driveway/right next to the street. We hear a little glimmer of Streisand before the car turns off. Sandy is wearing a new suit. Kay is wearing new earrings, and a new dress. Sandy looks over at Kay. She is staring up at the house. She is clearly nervous.

SANDY

You okay?

KAY

Of course, hon. Just--well, you know, new people, new situation. I'd hate to make a fool of myself.

SANDY

But you're great at this stuff. And I love you. For lots of reasons. There's a lot of stuff about you to love. So i'm sure everyone in there will be able to find something about you to love.

KAY

...Thank you so much, darlin. That was just what I needed to hear. I've just been wanting this for a while. Now let's get in there and charm those snooty little shits.

Jolene's door.

Jolene opens the door. She is dressed in upper-class business casual. The kind of clothes that blonde 35-year-olds wear to lay around the house in architecture magazines.

JOLENE

The Jenkins! Welcome, we've been waiting for you!

KAY

Oh, we're not late, are we?

JOLENE

Oh, no, you're right on time, everyone else just ended up early. First and last time that'll ever happen, I'm sure. Come on in!

She leads them into the house. It is large, spacious, and nice. They are not millionaires, of course, but all the furniture is well-made/built-to-last, the pictures on the wall are in nice frames, there's a big kitchen island--the kind of house a sitcom family lives in.

JOLENE

Sandy, the fellas are all hanging out in Scott's study, in there, and then we'll get back together when dinner's ready--shouldn't be more that 20 minutes

SANDY

Alright.

He walks through the kitchen and heads into the study

JOLENE

(fading out, as Sandy walks away)So Kay, I know y'all are very passionate about your gardening, do you have any tips for Scott and I?

Sandy walks into Scott's study. It is, surprise surprise, nice. It is clearly a very traditional man's space. There's probably a painting of a bald eagle, and definitely a letterman jacket. 4 husbands are scattered around the space, Scott standing and talking to one, another two admiring the books he has.

Scott

Sandy, there you are! You know Elliot from church, right?

SANDY

Yeah, I think we've met.

Scott

I was just telling Elliot about that new car of yours, the Lexus.

SANDY

It's the ls430.

ELLIOTT

I've been looking at that one, how do you like it?

SANDY

Oh, it's pretty nice. Good speakers. Comfy seats. Heck of an engine.

ELLIOTT

Yeah, that's what I hear. I like a car that's got a bit of zip in it.

SANDY

It sure does. I might have sped just a little on my way back from the dealership.

Scott

Sandy, breaking a rule? I can't even picture it!

The group, including Sandy, laughs. The ribbing, for once, feels good-natured. The laughter fades us into the next scene. Everyone is now gathered at the dinner table. Kay has just finished telling a story, which has been a big hit with the group.

KAY

I swear, every word is true!

JOLENE

There's just no way!

KAY

Possums and all!

The group laughs again.

JOLENE

Kay, I just don't know why we haven't had y'all over sooner, you are a hoot-and-a-half.

KAY

You know, my mom always used to say I shoulda been a standup comedian, but I didn't think it'd be worth the work. I'll wait around until someone makes it big as a sit-down comedian!

The group laughs again. Gosh kay is so funny.

SARAH (one of the other wives)

Oh, my goodness, I'm crying. I think my mascara's about to start running. Ya know, the clothes the car, the jokes...y'all are the whole package! I want you over every week!

KAY

Well, I'll have to check my calendar, but I'm pretty sure we're as open as a 24/7 waffle house! Kay is clearly having the time of her life.

Int. jenkins bedroom

Sandy and Kay are in bed, cuddled up.

KAY

Thanks for tonight, dear. I had just the most wonderful time.

SANDY

Me, too. I told you they'd love you.

KAY

You sure did. (pause). Sandy...all this nice stuff, the earrings, and the car--I know I already asked, but can we afford it?

SANDY

Well, the car was actually a gift from the Fishers. For all the help with their finances. And the earrings--yes. We've been good about money for a while now. And Jolene sure liked the earrings.

KAY

She sure did. Well, if you say so, I'll stop asking. I love you *smooch* goodnight.

SANDY

Love you too. G'night, dear.

Int. montage space.

Hoo boy it's time for a montage of conservative central-texas bacchanalia. We see a montage of sandy using that sweet stolen cash to upgrade his life with kay. They remodel a bit of their house. We see the clothes in their closet get replaced with fancy clothes. Sandy's one fancy watch is joined by 2, then 3, then more and more, until he has so many that he has to get some kind of fancy holder thing for them. Their car gets swapped out for a different nice car, then a different nice car, then a different nice car...we see bob at the office in a suit, then sandy in that same suit, or one very similar at a supper club function. We see bob's wife show up with a lovely little necklace, then kay show up with a bigger version of it. We see sandy and kay arriving at parties with champagne and wine, always a different bottle, until maybe they start arriving with dom perignon. They get a big flat-screen tv. They get some new furniture, a nice new couch. They are having the time of their lives. We see Sandy surprising Kay with a succession of different jewelry. We see bob, sandy, kay, and kathy, walking to their cars. Sandy and kay get in theirs, but the camera follows bob and kathy instead, as they get in their own, and start driving. A year passes.

KATHY

Thanks for driving, honey. I never mean to drink at these things, but then Jolene always shoves a glass in my hand, and I decide I'll only have one, and then she just keeps refilling it, and I don't want to be rude, and then whoops-ee-doozy I'm drunk!

BOB

(chuckles) It's no problem, darling. (after a little pause--not uncomfortable, just a normal one for an old couple) You looked real lovely tonight. You know I love that pink on ya.

KATHY

Of course I know, why do you think I wore it?

BOB

(another little chuckle. Something is clearly on his mind)

KATHY

Something on your mind, dear?

BOB

Oh, nothing. Just the bakery, like always.

KATHY

You know, you're supposed to leave work at the office.

BOB

I know, darlin, I know. Just this brain of mine. Won't leave well enough alone sometimes.

KATHY

Well, if you're goin to be thinking about it the whole way home, why not talk about it?

BOB

You're too sweet to me.

KATHY

Oh, I'm selfish. I'm just hoping you'll get it out of your system and go back to complimenting me.

BOB

Not a bad plan. It's just...we didn't make the money we thought we would.

KATHY

Is it...in trouble?

BOB

No, nothing like that. But it ain't healthy like it should be. I was worried about this brick-and-mortar expansion, but on paper, it's doing well. Inventory's moving fast, we haven't had to futz with prices much...

KATHY

So? What's the problem

BOB

Well, the problem is that, on paper, the expansion broke even. Which is minor miracle in and of itself, I figured it'd lose money for a year or two, before people really got into it. But, collins street, as a whole, lost money. And it doesn't make any sense, because the mail-order is doing fine, too.

KATHY

I'm sure you'll figure it out, dear.

BOB

Thanks. Probably something off with payroll or some such. (pause) Say, Ethan sure played hard this week. I remember when he could barely kick the ball in front of him, much less do any of that fancy dribblin stuff.

KATHY

Well, he loves winning. Got that competitive streak from me, I think.

BOB

Well, ain't nothing wrong with (conversation fades out)

Int. jenkins house.

Kay is feverishly cleaning the stove, as Sandy watches, bemused.

SANDY

How many times have you cleaned that today?

KAY

Only 3. (off of Sandy's smile). She hasn't been home in a year! I don't want her thinking we've let the place go.

SANDY

She'll just be happy to see us.

KAY

Well, I know, but that--*doorbell rings*

SANDY

I'll get--

KAY

She's early! Half an hour early!

SANDY

Shouldn't we be proud?

KAY

Oh hush and get the door.

Sandy hustles over to the door, and opens it, to see Ally, their daughter.

ALLY

Pops! YAY!

Ally drops her bag and gives him a huge hug, which he warmly returns. She pulls back partially in surprise after a moment

ALLY

Oh my god, dad, you look great--is this new? I love it! And--oh my god, the house. Oh, y'all weren't kidding--oh, it's stunning. I love it, really I do. Where's Kay bustles into the doorway, grabbing her daughter, just about in tears.

KAY

Oh, ally! Oh, ally! Oh we've missed you!

Ally and Kay embrace just as warmly as with sandy. He looks on and smiles, getting a little emotional, then goes to get her bag. We cut to the kitchen table, which the family has gathered around. Kay is wiping away tears.

KAY

Oh it's just so good to have you back home. I know you've told us everything over the phone, but tell us again!

ALLY

It's really not that interesting, mom. It's just a lot of thinking i'm going to fail and then doing fine, and then thinking i'm going to kiss some boy and then he's got a girlfriend and he's mormon or something.

KAY

Well, darlin, there's nothing wrong with being mormon. I've known a few nice--

ALLY

There's nothing wrong with it, but they're weird! And i like coffee too much.

KAY

You know, I don't know if they still do that--

ALLY

Whatever. The point is, boring, so *tell me about y'all*. I mean, the house looks incredible, it really does, and so do y'all! I mean, dad, i always knew you had taste, but this is something else.

SANDY

Well, you know, the bakery's doing well, and we'd been saving for a while. Decided it was time to spend a little.

ALLY

More than a little, it looks like. (awkward pause)okay, fine, mom, I know you've been dying to tell me, what's the gossip in town?

KAY

Alright, well, you remember little kimberly, from the soccer team?

ALLY

She wasn't on the soccer team.

KAY

What? Little kimberly? Y'all played together, I'm sure of it.

ALLY

We played tennis together. But the only kim on the soccer team was kim parcell, and she wasn't even on the team at first, because she was too young.

KAY

Well, whatever team it was, she's--

Cut to late that night. Sandy is in the kitchen, drinking some water, looking at pictures on the fridge. Ally comes into the frame. They are both in sleep clothes. She watches him for a second before speaking.

ALLY

Dad?

SANDY

Oh, I didn't hear you come in, sorry.

ALLY

I hope i didn't startle you, I just didn't want to wake mom up.

SANDY

Well, you'd probably need a jackhammer to do that. You know how she sleeps after some rose.

ALLY

(ally smiles. Then, after a pause). Thanks for taking me tonight.

SANDY

Oh, sure thing. Kay loves those supper club things. I think she wanted to show you off.

ALLY

I only made dean's list a couple times. And i haven't even graduated yet.

SANDY.

Well, she's still proud. You're studying something we don't really understand, but you seem really good at it. And you're a good kid. You're nice. And you don't do drugs or anything. You take care of things. We're, uh...we're both really proud of you.

ALLY

(clearly very touched) thanks, dad. That means a lot. (after another long pause)Dad? Do you, uh...this might sound kinda weird, but do you like those people?

SANDY

What? The people there tonight?

ALLY

I mean, I really like Bob and Kathy, and Scott seems nice...but everyone else? I don't know.

SANDY

What do you mean?

ALLY

I know they weren't mean to us or anything, but sometimes the way they talked about people...and how come they suddenly started being really friendly with you guys?

SANDY

Well, I think they just took a while to come round.

ALLY

I just think it's a little weird that they start paying attention to you and mom after you guys start dressing nicer and stuff like that.

SANDY

(after a long pause) Sometimes people just need a little help to like you. And they make your mom really happy.

ALLY

I know they do, I wasn't saying that--i don't really know what i was saying. I was just wondering, i guess. It's pretty different from when i was growing up.

SANDY

Sometimes change is good.

ALLY

Yeah, totally! And you guys are still the same, so that's kinda what matters. I'm gonna go back up to bed. G'night.

SANDY

G'night, ally.

Int. sandy's office.

Sandy's office is low-key kinda fancy now. He is solitaire-ing it up. He glances up to make sure the coast is clear, then starts to click over into the online checkbook. It's stealin' time. Then suddenly there's a knock at the door. He hurriedly clicks away and nervously calls out

SANDY

Come in!

Bobby McNutt and Scotty Hutchinsons poke their heads in the door.

BOB

Hey there, Sandy, sorry to interrupt, but Semetric's comin in for the grand tour before she starts.

SANDY

Oh, right--she starts tomorrow or wednesday?

SCOTT

Tomorrow.

SANDY

Okey-dokes, I'll be right out.

Bob and Scott nod, and head out. Sandy breathes a sigh of relief, quickly does his stealing routine, then takes a sip from a glass of water, and heads out. We move into the office proper. Sandy joins Bob and Scott by the main door. Right as he gets to them, Semetric walks in. She is an african-american woman in her late 30s, early 40s. She is strong, with a warm presence. She is smartly dressed, but not super fancy.

BOB

Howdy there, Semetric! Good to see you!

SEMETRIC

Good to see you too, bob. Thanks for bringing me aboard.

BOB

We're very excited to have you. You remember Scott and Sandy. Semetric shakes hands with scott and sandy, each offering some kind of greeting.

BOB

Well, we'll go ahead and give you the grand tour, such as it is. They start walking through the office.

BOB

This is where you'll spend most of your time, at least at first. We'll set you up with your own cubicle, laptop, I'm sure you're familiar.

SEMETRIC

I know the basic setup, yeah.

BOB

Great. Just through the doors on the left is the physical mail center, where we get the requests.

Across the street is our main bakery. Kitchen's through here--the stove works, but the pilot light's gone out, so you have to use a lighter we keep in the drawer here. Fridge has the usual rules--everything gets thrown out on saturday when the cleaners come through. Don't take anyone else's food, don't heat up any fish in the microwave...offices are over this way. Sandy's here, Scott's next to him, and I've got the big one. Scott and Sandy'll be here 9 to 5 monday through friday, and I usually will, unless I'm out talking to suppliers or some such. It'll usually say on the google calendar if i'm gonna be out. Oh, and bathrooms are in the back.

SEMETRIC

Well, that's just about everything I need to know. I'm looking forward to getting to work.

Int. first class

Sandy and Kay are in the fancy reclining bed seats in first class on an international flight to Italy. They are looking fresh and happy, despite the long hours of travel, due to the luxury of their accomadations. The pilot announces over the loudspeaker

PILOT

Ladies and gentleman, we will be landing in about 20 minutes. Please begin to return your carry-on baggage to the upright bins, or under the seat in front of you. We'll need to to return your seats to an upright position, and stow your tray tables. We look forward to welcoming you to Rome.

(as the pilot begins giving the announcement in italian, sandy to turns to kay

SANDY

Merry christmas, darlin

KAY

Merry christmas, dear.

They clink their first-class champagne glasses. We get a cute little romantic montage of them in italy, doing some touristey things, but then also fancy rich people stuff. Visiting the coliseum, but then ordering a bottle at a fancy restaurant, that kind of thing. They are tremendously happy, and tremendously in love. Many laughs, many sweet looks, oodles of sunset.

Int. bob's study.

Bob and scott are talking over scotchs. They have files strewn about. They're trying to figure out where the money is going. They have been at it a while, clearly. They are tired.

BOB

So that's it? Another year, just scraping by?

SCOTT

Bob, we've been through every option a thousand times. Payroll, pricing, cleaning services, suppliers.

BOB

It just doesn't seem to make any sense. Prices are adjusted for inflation, they're practically flying off the shelves--so why can't we afford raises for anyone? We're falling behind inflation. Before too long, folks are gonna go looking for better work, and I can't blame 'em.

SCOTT

Well, look, it's not disastrous. We're not in debt, no one's had to take a pay cut, no one's out of a job.

BOB

Sure, but I don't know how much longer we're gonna be able to keep going like this. And the money's going somewhere. We were doing fine before the expansion.

SCOTT

Look, it's somewhere. Whatever is about the expansion that's eating up money is in the numbers, because it's been doing it since the 2nd year. Something changed. We just have to figure out what.

BOB

I just don't want to be right back here next year. I'm getting mighty tired of it.

SCOTT

I know, bob, I know. We could ask Sandy about it.

BOB

No, he just writes the checks. He's got no idea about the bigger stuff. Besides, sweet as he is, I don't think he's the brightest fellow.

SCOTT

Semetric, then?

BOB

I don't know. Maybe.

SCOTT

Look, if we really want to figure this out, we've gotta change *something*. We've been looking at these numbers for the last 7 years. Let's get fresh eyes.

BOB

Alright. Alright, I'll ask Semetric if she can take a look at some of the...hell, I don't know, the everything?

SCOTT

Let's just have her double-check the last year of the expansion. She's got a few weeks before things start getting hectic.

BOB

Alright, I'll give her a call in the morning.

SCOTT

We're gonna crack this, bob.

BOB

We damn well better.

Int. sandy's office

Sandy has just returned from vacation. He types some worknot into the computer, pauses, opens a fancy watch magazine and peruses for a sec, then goes back to typing. There is a knock at the door.

SANDY

Come in!

Semetric opens the door. She is holding a print-out from the online checkbook in her hands.

SEMETRIC

Hey, sorry to bother you--do you have a sec?

SANDY

Oh, sure.

SEMETRIC

Lovely. Did y'all have a nice trip?

SANDY

Really beautiful. You should try try and get out there sometime.

SEMETRIC

Um, yeah, I sure will. Just have to scrounge up the money. So, this probably won't take long, I just found this check in the system made out to Capital One, but, the bakery doesn't have any cards or accounts with Capital One. Do you know anything about it?

SANDY

(panicked)No, that's, uh, that's very--that's very odd. I will fix that.

SEMETRIC

Oh, that's not--I'm happy to--

SANDY

No, just let me fix it. I'll handle it.

SEMETRIC

Alright, if it's no trouble. I'll just, uh, leave this here, so you can find it.

SANDY

Thanks, Semetric. Appreciate the work.

SEMETRIC

No problem. Have a nice day, Sandy.

SANDY

You, too.

We see a few shots of Sandy, stressed, in his office, then going home.

Int. dreamscape.

We get a nightmare version of the dream sequence from the end of act 1. It starts normally, with a couple odd details (background extra with a nosebleed, painting askew, etc), but gradually spirals into more and more chaos. Sandy is very much not in control. The number builds to a terrifying climax, where Sandy is 100% sure he is about to die, violently, when he gasps awake. We see him, terrified, coming back to himself in the darkness of his bedroom. After 5 or 6 breaths, he is back to normal, and lies back down.

Int. semetric's cubicle.

It is the end of the day. Most people are leaving the office. Semetric is drumming her fingers, deep in thought. She glances towards Sandy's office.

OFFICE WORKER

G'night, Semetric. Don't stay out too late.

SEMETRIC

Yeah, I'll try not to get too wild.

Semetric waits a little longer. She watches Sandy leave his office, and walk out the door. She gets to work at her computer, pulling up a screenshot of the check discrepancy. She goes looking for it in the system, and can't find it. She can no longer find that check number in the system, either. She starts looking for other Capital One expenses. Boy, does she find them. So, she starts looking for other weird whatnot. We get a quick couple of shots of her compiling evidence over a few days. She stares at the full document she has compiled. She thinks, for a moment. Then she

hits print. She walks, folder in hand, to an office. We can't tell if it's Sandy's or Scott's. She knocks on the door. Scott opens it.

SEMETRIC

I found something strange.

Int. scott's office

Scott is looking at Semetric's folder. He is SHOOK.

SCOTT

I don't...how much does ths all add up to?

SEMETRIC

\$400,000

SCOTT

Jesus.

SEMETRIC

And that's just the last two years.

SCOTT

We're pulling Bob in.

We cut to essentially the same shot as the first one of Scott with the folder, only now Semetric and Scott are standing, Bob is the one reading it, and we're in bob's office.

BOB

Well, this explains a lot. How long could this have been happening for?

SEMETRIC

How long has Sandy been rich?

BOB

Christ almighty.

SCOTT

This is what we've been looking for. We just never knew where to look.

BOB

How the hell did this happen?

SEMETRIC

He covered his tracks a little, but he didn't really need to, until I came on board. He was the only one writing the checks in the system, and he only did it when expenses for an account would normally be high. He'd write himself a check, then void it, but only in the system. So he was cashing checks you had no records for, but the money was coming from places that you would expect to have high spending.

BOB

Get him in here.

Smash cut to Semetric, Bob, and Scott, behind Bob's desk. Sandy is on the other side, standing, uncomfortable, clearly aware of what's coming. Scott points at some copies of voided checks on the desk

SCOTT

Tell us what these are

SANDY

(not lying very well, after making a show of looking at them)Well, I don't know

SCOTT

(disbelief at the insanity of that response) Sandy, did you write these checks?

SANDY

(lost)...I write the checks for the bakery.

A shot of the rising anger in Scott and Bob. Semetric is just confused and judgemental of the idiocy. Smash cut to Sandy walking out of the building with a box of his things in hand.

Int. Jenkins bedroom

Sandy is zipping around stuffing their nice things in suitcases. Kay is standing there in shock. The room is a mess

KAY

I just don't understand, I thought--

SANDY

We have to go, okay? Everything will be fine. But we have to leave.

KAY

But you said the money was--

SANDY

I know. But we...I made you happy, right?

KAY

I was always happy.

SANDY

But I made you happier when we started making more.

KAY

...I might have been happier, but you always made me plenty happy.

SANDY

...I love you, darlin.

KAY

I love you, too. How long do you think we'll be gone?

SANDY

I don't know. Not too long. We'll figure it out.

KAY

Okay. What do we need?

Ext. highway

We see Sandy's car speeding down the highway, passing a sign that says "Austin--25 miles"

Int. Ally's house

Sandy and Kay hustle in the door, which Ally is holding open for them. Ally's house is cute, but smaller. There are kid's toys strewn about the place. It is the home of a lovingly chaotic family.

ALLY

I mean, of course you're welcome, but don't you think you might be comfier in a hotel?

KAY

We can't stay in a hotel right now, dear.

ALLY

Okay, well, let me help you get the bags in the guest room. I'm sorry it's not cleaner, we weren't expecting

Ally and Kay continue talking in the background as Sandy looks around the place, just taking it in. then he spots something.

SANDY

I didn't know you two had a safe.

ALLY

Oh, that thing. I don't know why we got such a big one, but we keep some bank stuff in there, and that stupid old gun gramps left me. I don't know why the hell he thought i would want it, but i feel too bad to get rid of it.

Ext. jenkins house

It is a normal day in the neighborhood. It is 1 month later. The jenkins' next-door-neighbor is mowing his lawn. Kids bike by. 1 or two ambitious moms power-walk by. Suddenly, 2 huge black SUVs pull up and park outside the house. FBI agents in the distinctive jackets get out of the cars, go to the house, open the door, and head in. Other agents start setting up a perimeter in crime tape. 2 large moving vans pull up. The agents start carrying stuff out and into the vans. The passersby are shocked. A crowd starts to gather. They are calm. The day passes, and the FBI just keeps taking insanely fancy bullshit out of the house. The people in the crowd change throughout the day. Neighbors get out lawn chairs and beers and hang out and watch the show. Some have binoculars to get a good eye on exactly what's coming out--they tell their friends, so they don't miss out.

Int. sandy's car

Sandy is waiting at a red light in downtown austin, just by the greenbelt (5th and Lamarish). A takeout lunch is in the car seat next to him. Streisand plays quietly from the speakers. He gets a sudden buzz from his phone. He looks at it quickly--it's a breaking news bulletin from the local corsicana paper--"FBI raid house of local accountant." He starts feeling panicky. The light turns green. He makes a couple of random turns, noticing a nondescript car that seems to be following him. He pulls into a parking garage, and they drive on. He breathes a sigh of relief, then looks out at Ladybird Lake. He gets an idea. We get a shot of him taking the fancy shit out of the safe, and getting back in the car.

Ext. Jenkins home.

It is late at night. The house lights are off. The FBI vans and cars have gone. Not a soul is stirring on the whole block. Sandy's car pulls into the driveway, quietly. He gets out and goes to the door. He tries to unlock the door, but his key isn't working. Confused, he uses the flashlight app on his phone--the key says house. It's the right one. We get a shot from inside the house as Sandy jimmy's the lock on the back door. He walks slowly through the space. It is empty and bare of all their fancy things. Some stuff has been left behind--all stuff that clearly wasn't bought with the fancy money. We see a shot of the front door from the inside--the fbi has put new locks on.

Ext austin greenbelt.

It is a hot austin morning. A few joggers run by, some dogwalkers, a few dads/moms with strollers. A cop is walking along, just keeping an eye on things, when he spots something glinting in a bush. Confused, he walks over and finds a super-fancy watch. He cocks his head at it, baffled. As he looks around, thinking, he notices a similar glint in the next bush. Smash cut to him walking along the road with a laundry bag of fancy watches, picking them out of random bushes and things. He is on the phone with his boss.

COP

I don't know where it came from, but it sure as hell got here on purpose. And i'd bet that someone is having a hell of a day.

Int. jenkins living room

Sandy is watching GMA, eating cereal out of the box. There is a knock at the door.

Sandy goes to answer it, first peering out the eye-hole to see two folks in suits. He opens the door partially, and one of them holds up an FBI badge.

FBI AGENT 1

Sandy Jenkins?

We see Sandy, in handcuffs, getting into their SUV.

Int. ally's house.

Kay is in the living room, on the phone. It is a little cleaner than before, but still clearly a home with young kids.

KAY

Hey, Jolene! How are you???

JOLENE

Kay! Oh, my, what a surprise! Well, I am, uh, I am doing just fine. How...how are things with you?

KAY

Well, I'm sure you've heard by now about, well, everything, so I don't want to bore you with that. I'm alright, you know, just sort of figuring everything out.

JOLENE

Mm-hmm. I can hardly imagine.

KAY

Well, you know it was just such a shock.

JOLENE

(pause) a shock?

KAY

Well, yes. I mean, I had no idea. Sandy always told me not to worry about that stuff.

JOLENE

You mean, you never...well, wasn't it strange?

KAY

Well, of course it was strange, but he seemed so sure, and it was so wonderful. HAd I known, I wouldn't have let him do it. HOnestly.

JOLENE

You just had no idea?

KAY

Of course not! I wouldn't have let him! Bob's a friend, we all know how much he cares about that bakery. I would never hurt a friend like that.

JOLENE

Well, that's...that's very good of you to say, I guess.

KAY

So, anyway, the reason I was callin is, I know it's been a big hullabaloo, but it's kind of starting to blow over now, and I know the book club was having an event this weekend, so I was just thinking it might not be so bad if I stopped by, you know, but obviously I didn't want to be an imposition, or have it be a big surprise or anything, you know, but I just thought (emotional)well, it's been a bit hard without my friends, you know, and I just think some time with y'all would really help me.

JOLENE

(long, awful pause). Ya know, Kay, I really hate to say this, but, I think, perhaps, just for the reputation, you know, the sort of, look, of it all, I really do think that, well, it might be best for you, to, uh, to just sit this one out. Just since it's so soon after, and I wouldn't want it to be awkward, you know, since Scott will be there, and, I mean, you know, you say you had no idea, and if that's what you're saying, then that's what I'm believing, you know, you know me, but, not all, not everyone might think that way, and I just really think it might affect the way, the manner, in which the book club is seen. So I really think it'd be best for you to just stay at home this time.

KAY

(shocked, betrayed, now seeing the truth of her "friendship," but putting a veneer of politeness over it all) Oh, alright! Well, I totally understand.

JOLENE

I don't want to be rude, or mean, or anything

KAY

No, of course, no, I understand. Don't even let it cross your mind again.

JOLENE

Are you sure? I feel real bad, it's just

KAY

Really and truly, do not feel bad for a second. (starting to be overwhelmed). Ya know, I think I'd better go, I think I hear my daughter calling me, but it was lovely to chat with you, and, we'll have to just figure out when it'll be right for me to come back on in.

JOLENE

(They will never be doing this) sure, hon. Have a nice day, now.

KAY

Have a nice day!

We sit with Kay for a moment as she realized that her friends are money-worshipping demons who never gave a real shit about her.

Ext. jenkins house

It's an estate sale! There are signs for it in the street, and posters on the house. There is a line snaking down the street. Everyone is very excited to get a crack at cheap fancy whatnot. There is no sense of a life destroyed. This is a party. As the camera passes along the line, we hear various brief takes on the whole debacle. "She must've known. Are you kidding me?" "Look, depending on how long he's in for, this whole thing might be worth it." "I bet he did it to get back at Bob. always jealous, that Sandy." "I heard they have another million dollars in gold, buried somewhere out along the highway." one important one; "what's crazy is that he spent it all on depreciable goods! If he'd invested that money, he could have replaced the money, taken his share, and no one would ever have known!" Bob McNutt is going down the line with a platter of sweets from the bakery, drumming up business.

BOB

You know, the real tragedy is that Corsicana's lost its most sophisticated collector of fine watches and furs. The culture's really gonna shoot down the drain. Praline tart? The camera moves inside the house, and watches people gawking at various pieces of jewelry, clothing, and furniture bits. A "frighteningly large" Hummel figurine collection is in there somewhere. Scott is talking to Bob, quietly.

SCOTT

Look at ‘em all. Like vultures picking over scraps.

BOB

As long as these vultures like fruitcakes, we might start to make some of our 17 million back.

SCOTT

It’s a real shame.

BOB

Sure is. He was an odd bird, but I always thought he was sweet. Could’ve sworn he liked me, too.

SCOTT

Just goes to show you never can tell.

Int. courtroom

Sandy’s sentencing. It’s essentially just sandy, his lawyer, kay, the prosecution, and the judge, as he plead guilty.

JUDGE

Sandy Jenkins. For your crimes of mail fraud, money laundering, and a laundry list of other minor offenses accrued in your endeavours, but in light of your guilty plea, your lack of criminal record, and your seeming recalcitrance, the court hereby sentences you to 10 years. Kay Jenkins; although this court is dubious about your actual level of ignorance, in light of your husband’s passionate testimony on your behalf, your lack of criminal record, and the general sense of impossibly optimistic incompetence surrounding this whole scheme, the court sentences you to 5 years probation, plus time served.

Gavel sound

Int. prison.

We see Sandy’s morning routine, in the prison, cut to the same Barbara song that opened the movie. We see him push down his hair, get his prison breakfast, watch GMA on the little tvs they have, drink black instant coffee. He reads in the library, does a little bit of jogging on the tennis court. He even plays some actual solitaire. Then, at the end of his monotonous day, he goes to the edge of the chain link fence around their outside area. There are walls around the prison, but it sits on the hill, so from where Sandy is, he can see the highway. He spots a Lexus zooming along. He cocks head. He smiles.

End.

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