

# 18 Months

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INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

JACKIE, 44, slumps into her house dressed in a cheap black dress. She's a fragile, needy widow, who never met a drink she didn't like.

She grabs a paper bag from her purse, and takes a swig from an unseen bottle.

CODY, 6, her son, sadly walks in behind her, wearing dress clothes. He holds a brown paper bag.

They walk through the living room, where clutter fills the place. This isn't the cleanest house in the world.

IN THE KITCHEN

Cody plops down at the table and unearths his treasure in the paper bag: comic books. He grabs one, opens it up, and starts to read, when -

JACKIE

Cody!

Cody looks up, hopeful. Jackie sits down, head in her hands.

CODY

Yeah, mom?

JACKIE

Mommy's exhausted. Get me a drink of water.

Dutifully, Cody walks toward the sink - and past it - to the liquor cabinet. Each of the bottles has a taped sign on them: Apple juice, lemonade, etc.

He grabs a huge jug of vodka with a taped sign that says WATER. He pours a glass half full.

CODY

You want water and cranberry juice?

JACKIE

No, sweetie. Straight water. Today's been a bitch.

Cody pours a glass full of vodka. He spills a little on his hand. He tastes it, and his face sours. He gives Jackie the vodka and sits next to her.

JACKIE

You were a real trooper today, you know. Daddy would've been proud.

Cody smiles slightly.

JACKIE

Now it's just going to be you and me. You're going to have to help me a little bit around here.

Cody nods in agreement.

JACKIE

Like the trash. You'll have to pick up Dad's slack there. I think a paper route is a good idea. And you have to start raking leaves so we can make some extra money.

Cody looks at Jackie, confused.

JACKIE

Don't worry. If you need to take a day off from school now and then, it's okay.

CODY

Can Eddie help me with stuff?

JACKIE

NO. You can't have anyone else help you, honey. We have to be strong enough to do this ourselves.

Cody nods, a little confused.

JACKIE

Good. Come here, give mommy a kiss.

Cody leans over and kisses her, then hugs her, stroking her hair. Jackie exhales in contentment.

JACKIE

Daddy was my superhero. You're gonna have to be my superhero now.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Cody jumps into the bathroom and sits on the toilet. He takes his brown bag out and removes THE ADVENTURES OF BANANAMAN. He opens it and starts reading.

TITLE CARD: 18 MONTHS

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY (BEGIN OPENING CREDITS)

SUPER: WINTER

CODY, now 30, sits on the toilet, reading the same, but now torn and tattered issue of THE ADVENTURES OF BANANAMAN.

Time has been good to Cody. He is unassuming, good-looking.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Cody sits on the couch, still reading the comic. He shovels down a bowl of cereal, watching TV all at the same time.

IN THE GARAGE

Cody walks outside, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. He walks with an old newspaper carrier's bag slung over his shoulder.

He gets into his car and takes off out of the garage.

ON THE ROAD

Cody smiles broadly, bopping his head to music as he drives. As he travels, all we see are retail stores and restaurants.

AT A PARKING LOT

Cody pulls in and parks in front of MEDIA-MART, a big box entertainment retailer.

He gets out of his car, slings the newspaper bag around his shoulder, and makes his way toward the store.

INT. MEDIA-MART - DAY

Cody walks inside, and a MALE CUSTOMER standing in the book section recognizes him. They wave at each other.

BEHIND THE BOOK SECTION COUNTER

Cody unslings his newspaper bag and puts it under the counter. He puts on a Media-Mart smock and a name tag that says CODY. He sits behind the counter, happy, ready for work.

END OPENING CREDITS

EDDIE, 29, crosses Cody with a stack of video game boxes. He slams them on the counter in front of Cody.

EDDIE

One hour and thirty eight minutes.

CODY

That how long you slept last night?

EDDIE

Took me that long to beat War  
Machines.

CODY

How much of your life have you  
wasted playing that game?

EDDIE

Same as you waste reading comics.

Eddie finishes stocking the last games. FRANK, a skittish,  
nervous mess, hops over to them in a suit and tie.

FRANK

Uh, hey guys. Things look good for  
the goldrush?

CODY

All the titles are out. The release  
schedule is updated. We're ready.

FRANK

Good, uh. I, um, I think we should  
redo the displays too, though.

EDDIE

Why? He spent all day yesterday  
setting them up -

Cody points to Eddie to shut up. Eddie grudgingly complies.

CODY

Frank, we're good. I stayed late to  
get ready. We're gonna sell more  
comics today than we ever have.

FRANK

Well, if you did all that, uh, I  
guess we'll be cool.

CODY

You okay? You seem more tense than  
usual.

FRANK

We have a, um, consultant coming in  
from corporate to help out. I don't  
know if, hmm, that means I'm not  
doing a good job, or what.

CODY

As a general, Frank, you're top of the line. Besides, you've got good foot soldiers under you.

FRANK

That's good. I, uh, I always say you need help to accomplish anything, um, anything great. Nobody can, um, do it by himself.

Frank smiles. Cody smiles back.

FRANK

Okay, then. I guess it'll be okay. This'll be okay. I'll be in my office, okay?

EDDIE

Okay!

Frank leaves, mumbling. Cody smiles. Eddie shakes his head.

CODY

I'll go unlock the front door.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Cody approaches, and sees DEVON, 15 and dead serious, waiting for him. He unlocks the door. Devon checks his watch.

DEVON

It's 10:02. Your customers have busy schedules, you know.

CODY

I'm sure morning cartoons will still be on when you get home.

He smiles warmly at Devon, who smiles back.

IN THE COMICS SECTION

Devon waits anxiously as Cody produces a file folder from behind the counter. Devon beams.

DEVON

Have I ever told you Wednesday is my favorite day of the week?

CODY

Every Wednesday since you turned 12.

DEVON  
Have you read them all yet?

CODY  
Not yet. I had to help my mom fix  
her bathroom yesterday.

DEVON  
Priorities, man.

CODY  
I know. Twenty eight dollars.

Devon produces the money. Cody puts it in the register. The  
phone RINGS.

CODY  
One sec. (into phone) This is Cody.

JACKIE (V.O.)  
The sink is dripping again. I don't  
know why. You need to fix it.

CODY  
Mom, I'm at work. Did you turn the  
faucet all the way to one side?

JACKIE (V.O.)  
Do you think it would help?

CODY  
Please try it.

Cody motions "one second" to Devon. He sighs.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jackie places her drink down on the sink. She turns the  
faucet all the way to one side, turning the water on.

JACKIE  
It's running full speed -

CODY (V.O.)  
The other way!

Jackie tries going the other way. It turns all the way off.  
She watches it for a moment - then turns it back a tiny bit,  
making it drip again.

JACKIE  
It's still dripping.

INT. MEDIAMART - DAY

Devon's now folding his arms. Cody's at wit's end.

CODY  
Mom, I'm sorry, I have to go.

JACKIE (V.O.)  
What, you don't like talking with  
your mother?

CODY  
I'll see you after work. Love you.

JACKIE (V.O.)  
But what about -

Cody hangs up. Devon shakes his head.

DEVON  
Mama's boy.

Cody gives him his change.

CODY  
Sorry.

Cody sees Frank walking toward him, nervous. He eyes him suspiciously.

CODY  
Everything all right, Frank?

FRANK  
Um, you, uh, and Eddie need to come  
to my office.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Cody and Eddie walk in and sit down on the couch. Behind the desk is Frank and BRUCE, 40, a smarmy suit.

FRANK  
Guys, uh, I'd like you to meet  
Bruce. He's a career transition  
counselor.

CODY AND EDDIE  
Hello.

Bruce just nods. Frank studies a sheet of paper, then takes a deep breath.

FRANK

Unfortunately, the company is going to be making some changes, and one of those changes is going to be reduced staff.

CODY

Well, that's not the end of the world. We can work a little more to make up for it.

Frank looks at Bruce. Bruce nods supportively.

BRUCE

That's okay. You can do it.

FRANK

Unfortunately, those reduced staff will be coming from department leaders.

CODY

What, us?

FRANK

Unfortunately, yes.

EDDIE

Why us? We're here all the time. This place wouldn't last five minutes without us.

BRUCE

Keep going, Frank. You're doing great.

FRANK

Unfortunately, this is the decision corporate has made. I'm very sorry.

CODY

What about us? We've been here for years!

BRUCE

(to Frank) Don't forget to read that last line.

CODY

Hey, Bruce? Are you even going to look at us?

Bruce ignores him, concentrating on Frank.

BRUCE  
You're almost there.

FRANK  
I'm sorry, uh, guys, but  
unfortunately, you're being laid  
off. Today is your last day.

Cody and Eddie slump back on the couch. Bruce smirks.

BRUCE  
Good job, Frank. Unfortunately,  
you're fired as well.

FRANK  
What?

BRUCE  
This store is closing in two weeks.  
Good job firing them, though.

Bruce gets up and walks out, smug. Everyone's in shock.

INT. MEDIA-MART - DAY

Cody run-walks toward his counter. Eddie, ahead of him, fills a trash bag with books and video games.

EDDIE  
What do we do now?

CODY  
There's two other retailers in town  
that sell comics. I'm checking both  
of them out this afternoon.

He notices Eddie's bag is getting very full.

CODY  
What's in the bag?

Eddie takes one more book and tosses it in the bag.

EDDIE  
My severance.

EXT. MEDIAMART - NIGHT

Cody walks out, Eddie following him with his stuffed trash bag. The sun is going down.

CODY

They can have you arrested for that, you know.

EDDIE

They just stole my job from me. Quid pro quo.

CODY

What are you gonna do?

EDDIE

Probably sell this stuff online to make some of my future salary back.

Cody ponders. That's not a bad idea.

They walk towards their cars. As they clear, JEAN, 25, a cheery young woman, crosses and enters the store.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cody pulls up and walks up the steps. He sees a trash bag outside the door with a note:

BRING THIS TO THE TRASH, LOVE MOM

Cody looks to his right. The trash can is only ten feet away. He sighs, picks up the bag and throws it out.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cody sits at the table. Jackie brings a huge vat of mac and cheese to him.

JACKIE

You're planning on looking for a new job tomorrow, right?

CODY

I put two applications in today.

JACKIE

Good. You can't be out of work for long. You need to find a stable job with a good salary. If the bills pile up, we won't be able to get out from underneath.

CODY

I know.

JACKIE

Be a dear and get me some water.

Cody gets a glass and goes to the sink. He fills the glass. Jackie gives him a dirty stare.

CODY

I can hear your liver screaming.

JACKIE

Don't listen so hard.

Cody shakes his head and walks to the liquor cabinet.

The same vodka bottle is in there, filled with vodka, and the same, now-tattered WATER sign is on it. He picks it up.

He stands up, but we also see other liquor bottles with old signs on them: Apple juice, lemonade, iced tea.

JACKIE

So have you seen Veronica lately?

CODY

We've been broken up two years.

JACKIE

But she was such a nice girl -

CODY

MOM. She wasn't. I broke up with her. End of story.

JACKIE

You should be with someone, Cody. Reproduction happens with a partner. Only devil worshipping pleasure happens alone.

Cody grimaces. They continue eating in silence.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Cody sees dirty dishes all over the place. He picks them up.

CODY

I bought you that dishwasher for a reason.

JACKIE (V.O.)

I was getting to it.

CODY

I think I'm gonna head home.

JACKIE (V.O.)  
Why? You just got here.

CODY  
I want to start the search early.  
I'll let you know how it goes.

Cody starts to walk out when...

JACKIE (V.O.)  
AAAAAHHHHHH!!!!

CODY  
Mom?

IN THE KITCHEN

Cody rushes in. Jackie is slumped over, holding her hand. The gas is still running. He half-laughs.

CODY  
You never turned the heater off?

JACKIE  
Don't yell at me! I'm in pain!

He takes her hand. She has a small blister. Cody smiles.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cody gets in his car and waves. Jackie waves back with her blistered hand - BANDAGED LIKE SHE BURNED HER WHOLE ARM OFF. Cody drives off.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody shuts the door. He puts his newspaper bag on the table.

IN HIS BEDROOM

Cody gets ready for bed. He sees his answering machine blinking. He plays it.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)  
Hello, Cody, this is Jack Burnham.  
We spoke a few weeks ago about your  
pulp fiction collection. I wanted  
to let you know I'm interested in  
purchasing it. Two thousand dollars  
is acceptable. Please call me back  
when you get a chance.

Cody hits stop. He nods his head, but it's bittersweet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MEDIA-MART - DAY

Cody slumps in the front door. The shelves are almost completely empty. He walks back toward Frank's office.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank rocks sadly in his chair. Cody knocks on the door, and Frank looks to him.

FRANK

I know what you're here for.

Cody nods. Frank pulls a check out and hands it to him.

CODY

I'm gonna miss it here.

FRANK

You and me both.

INT. MEDIA-MART - DAY

Cody and Frank walk back to Cody's old counter. There's almost nothing there to sell.

CODY

Where are they going?

FRANK

Whole company went belly up. They just cut their, uh, losses.

CODY

Apparently not everything.

Cody looks behind the counter. Boxes and boxes of comic.

FRANK

They'll probably, um, sell this stuff at auction to make a little money back.

Cody looks through the comics. An idea forms.

CODY

Do they have to bring it to auction? Could someone buy the stuff now?

FRANK

Who'd want it?

Cody looks at him hopefully. Frank gets it.

EXT. MEDIAMART - DAY

Cody walks to his car holding a stack of boxes so high he can't see in front of him.

FRANK

You sure you don't need help?

CODY

Nope. I need the exercise.

FRANK

You need a hernia too?

Cody doesn't answer.

FRANK

A thousand dollars is a lot of, uh, money to spend on comics.

CODY

It's no problem. I've got it coming to me.

Cody puts the boxes down and starts loading up his trunk.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eddie, Devon, DOUG, and other MEN play a role-playing game in the living room. Everyone's laughing, having a good time.

Cody comes in with a soda and sits next to Devon. The group continues playing their game.

DOUG

You killed anyone yet?

DEVON

Wizards don't harbor violent impulses. Talk to the dark elf.

He motions to Eddie, wearing a war helmet and holding a wooden sword.

EDDIE

What?

DEVON

I miss Wednesdays, Cody.

CODY

I miss working them.

EDDIE

I'm telling you, man. Game Stop is looking for another assistant manager. I can get you in.

CODY

I'd be miserable. Games are your thing. Comics are mine.

DOUG

You better find one close. That store in Waterbury is an hour away. I hate driving that far.

DEVON

We can carpool in my mom's van. But, we'll have to drop my younger brother off at soccer practice.

CODY

You should just go online to get them. I've been doing that since I got laid off.

DEVON

No way, man. There's nothing like Tuesday night, knowing your new stories are only hours away. You order them online, you have to wait another whole DAY.

CODY

What do I do, open my own store?

Eddie laughs, but everyone else at the table GASPS.

DEVON

Oh my God, you should!

DOUG

Dude, I would spend all that extra gas money at your store.

CODY

Are you guys serious?

DEVON

Totally serious! How well have you been doing selling stuff online?

CODY

Good, but not good enough to run a business off of it.

DEVON

So get a loan for it or something. You can do it for college, can't you do it for a comic book shop?

CODY

I don't know. Seems like the odds are against you for something like that.

He rolls his 20-sided die. The die comes up 20. Cody ponders.

LATER

Cody and Eddie put the game away and move the table.

CODY

You think I could pull that off?

EDDIE

A store? Forget it. You need to be working with me at Game World.

CODY

I kind of like the idea.

EDDIE

You're not going to be able to convince your mother.

CODY

What does she have to do with it?

EDDIE

You support her.

Cody stops picking up and looks at Eddie, pissed.

CODY

What, you don't think I can take care of her and run a shop?

EDDIE

I'm just saying you need to be  
aware of the people in your life.

Cody nods, curious of his meaning. Eddie picks up trash.

EXT. NEWINGTON STREETS - DAY

SUPER: Spring

Cody walks down the street, newspaper bag in hand. He  
approaches the First National Bank, and walks inside.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Cody sits in the waiting area. A TELLER approaches him.

TELLER

Hello, how can I help you?

CODY

Is Mr. Feige here?

INT. MR. FEIGE'S OFFICE - DAY

MR. FEIGE, 50 and cheerful, sits at his desk as Cody enters.  
They shake hands. Cody sits down.

MR. FEIGE

Cody! Please, come in. Now how can  
I help you?

CODY

Well, I've been thinking about  
starting up a small business, and I  
wanted to see what options I had  
available for business loans. My  
research says you guys have the  
best interest rates.

MR. FEIGE

What kind of business are you in?

CODY

I'd like to sell comic books.

The smile on Mr. Feige's face disappears a bit.

MR. FEIGE

Really. Do you mean wholesaling  
comic books to regional stores?

CODY

No, sir. I'd like to open a comic book store here in Newington.

The smile falls a little more.

MR. FEIGE

Would you like a cup of coffee?

CODY

No thanks. I'm fine.

MR. FEIGE

I would think you'd have a difficult time starting such a business here, Cody.

CODY

No, that's not true at all. I used to work at Mediamart, and we had lines out the door for new comics. Since they've left, there's a huge local market that's being unserved.

MR. FEIGE

Look, I'll be honest with you, Cody. We don't even consider lending to a business until it's been open for a while. Our minimum requirement is that you be up and running for a year and a half before we even talk to you.

CODY

That seems a little backwards.

MR. FEIGE

Not really. We need to make sure our investment will be paid back. We're in it to make money, too.

Cody nods, defeated.

MR. FEIGE

So if you decide to open on your own, keep your shop above water for a year and a half. Then I'd be happy to see what we can do for you.

CODY

Thanks.

Cody leans back, the wind out of his sails.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Cody slumps out of the office and sees the teller standing by her desk. He approaches her.

CODY  
Ma'am?

TELLER  
Yes?

CODY  
Could you tell me about your  
personal loans?

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Cody types on his computer, reading his screen intently.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

He thumbs through mailed-in offers for credit cards.

BACK IN THE COMPUTER ROOM

He flips through boxes of comics. He nods his head, confident. He writes numbers down on a notepad.

EDDIE (V.O.)  
You're out of your mind.

EXT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cody and Eddie walk down the street. Cody's excited.

CODY  
I can do it. I've got enough in  
savings, I have enough stock to  
start, and if I take out a personal  
loan for rent, that can float me  
for a year. That's enough time.

EDDIE  
You're blind, man. You have no idea  
how hard it is to run a business.

CODY  
You're right. After watching you  
earn your first billion, how silly  
of me to try and emulate you.

EDDIE

You're gonna need help. Financial,  
manpower, probably psychiatric.

CODY

I'm gonna do it.

EDDIE

Look, you're my best friend so I  
have to support all the dumb  
decisions you make, but I think you  
need to open your eyes.

Eddie shakes his head defiantly. Cody is resolute.

EDDIE

Have you at least thought of a name  
for the place?

Cody thinks for a moment, then smiles.

EXT. COMIC BOOK SHOP - DAY

Eddie and Cody stand in front of Cody's new comic book shop.  
Its name: THE EYE OPENER.

EDDIE

You are such an ass.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody welcomes Eddie in the front door. Eddie marvels at all  
the comics set up inside.

EDDIE

All these are yours?

CODY

Half of them are. I bought the  
rest. My special ones are at home.

EDDIE

And you think you can sell all this.

CODY

That's the idea.

EDDIE

When do you guys open?

Cody checks the front door. Devon stares back at him.

CODY  
Ten o'clock.

He opens the door, and Devon storms in. He hugs Cody.

DEVON  
You have restored the beauty of my  
childhood.

He beats feet for the New Releases. Eddie shakes his head.

CODY  
Not a bad start.

EDDIE  
That's one maniac teenager. You  
better find a bunch more of them,  
or you're toast.

He hears the door open behind him.

CODY  
There's number two.

He turns around to see his second customer -

IN SLOW MOTION: JEAN, 25, walks inside, with music playing,  
backlit, wind blowing through her hair. Cody starstruck.

The door shuts behind her, and the music stops abruptly.

JEAN  
Damn, it just got windy out there.

EDDIE  
(under his breath) And it just got  
hot in here.

CODY  
Hi, welcome to The Eye Opener.  
Anything I can help you with?

JEAN  
Got the new Exile to Babylon?

CODY  
Back in the corner, third shelf.

JEAN  
Great. Thanks.

She walks over to the corner. Eddie turns to Cody, mouth  
agape. Cody shakes his head.

EDDIE  
I'd totally hit that.

CODY  
She'd totally hit you if you tried.  
Don't you have a girlfriend?

EDDIE  
No man is an island, Cody. No man.

Jean approaches the counter with a comic. Eddie smiles at her, but she ignores him.

JEAN  
I'm so happy you opened this place.  
I've been going through withdrawal.  
My old store just closed.

CODY  
Media-Mart?

Jean nods.

CODY  
I was their book department  
manager.

JEAN  
What? I went there five years and  
never saw you.

CODY  
I worked days.

JEAN  
Well, my client's flight got  
cancelled, so today's my first day  
off in forever.

She gives him cash. Eddie tries to get into her line of sight, but she just keeps ignoring him.

She looks above Cody and sees a sign: EUROPEAN TITLES.

JEAN  
Comics from all over the world?  
Have you got *In the Shadow of No  
Towers*?

CODY  
Oh my God. You know that book?

JEAN  
I've been dying to read it for  
years. Have you got it?

CODY  
Well, yeah, but it's at my place. I  
could lend it to you if you want.

JEAN  
I would love that.

Eddie starts to look annoyed.

CODY  
Cool. I'll bring it in Thursday.  
We're open till eight.

JEAN  
I work till eight. Could you wait  
for me?

CODY  
Sure.

JEAN  
Thank you. I'm Jean.

CODY  
Cody.

EDDIE  
And I'm Eddie.

Jean acknowledges him quickly, then turns right back to Cody.

JEAN  
Great. So see you tomorrow.

CODY  
Okay.

Cody smiles as she leaves.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Jean walks down the steps towards her car. She finds herself  
blushing. She smirks, and gets in the car.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody and Eddie sit on opposite ends of the couch. Eddie plays  
a video game, Cody pours over paperwork.

CODY

Twenty people came in and bought stuff today. The same day last year, Media-Mart only had 16. That's a 25% increase!

EDDIE

That's good.

CODY

My last customers told me they heard it was a real good store. So I'm getting good word of mouth.

EDDIE

Fantastic.

CODY

You still think I'm gonna go broke?

EDDIE

I have no idea what you're gonna do. All I know is the cards are stacked against you.

CODY

Do you have any faith in me?

EDDIE

I'm just giving you the facts. Most small businesses fail. That's not me being a dick. That's the truth.

CODY

I can be the exception.

EDDIE

That's what everyone thinks.

Cody shakes his head.

CODY

How's Game World?

EDDIE

Pretty good. I stole this game I'm playing now.

Cody goes back to reading, disgusted.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody finishes ringing up a CUSTOMER and locks the door as they leave. The clock says 8pm.

He places *In the Shadow of No Towers* on the counter, craning his head to look out the front door.

MONTAGE: Time passing as Cody waits for Jean to arrive. He reads a comic, cleans around the store, eyes constantly darting to the clock and door.

9pm arrives and no Jean. He grabs his bag and goes outside. As he locks the door, Jean's car pulls up behind him.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Jean runs to Cody as he locks the door.

JEAN

Cody, Cody! I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Work kept me real late.

CODY

Oh, I completely forgot you were coming. But, uh, the book's inside.

Cody puts his key back in the lock and reopens. Jean smirks.

JEAN

You thought I wasn't going to show.

CODY

Well, it is 9 o'clock.

JEAN

I drove here like a madwoman. Thank you for waiting.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody and Jean talk at the counter, the copy of *In the Shadow of No Towers* between them.

CODY

Here's one I bet you haven't read. *The Lost Girls*, by Alan Moore.

JEAN

Never heard of it.

CODY  
You know Alice in Wonderland?

Jean nods.

CODY  
Wendy from Peter Pan, Dorothy from  
The Wizard of Oz?

Jean nods again.

CODY  
Ever wonder what would happen if  
they all slept together?

Jean's mouth falls open.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

They walk outside together. Cody locks the door. They make their way over to their cars.

JEAN  
Is it like comic book porn?

CODY  
More than that. It's an exploration  
of sexual awakening.

JEAN  
I should really pick it up then.

CODY  
Oh my god, you want to read it.  
Man, I can't believe a woman in the  
world likes that kind of comic.

JEAN  
I didn't know there was a guy out  
there smart enough to read them.

They share an awkward moment.

CODY  
We should continue this over dinner  
this Friday. You interested?

JEAN  
Sure. But I'm old fashioned. Don't  
expect a fairy tale orgy on the  
first date.

They smile.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody buttons up his shirt, dressed nicely. Eddie's on the couch in pajamas, playing a game.

EDDIE

You sure you should go out with her? I guess she's a little hot, but she seems like a bitch.

CODY

How hot would she be if you got her number?

Eddie scoffs. He eyes Cody's outfit.

EDDIE

You never dressed that nice for Veronica.

Cody considers the comment. He nods.

INT. JEAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jean rifles through her closet, dressed in her bra.

JEAN-PAUL, 26, sits on the bed, catching clothes she tosses. Jean-Paul is a self assured metrosexual.

Jean grabs a top and throws it, hitting Jean-Paul in the head. He holds it up; a high fashion, sheer black number.

JEAN

What do you think of that?

JEAN-PAUL

He's a comic book geek, not Donald Trump.

JEAN

I want to impress him.

JEAN-PAUL

From what you've told me, he's already impressed.

He holds up the black top.

JEAN-PAUL

And not by the goods.

Jean gets another shirt from the closet. She holds it up.

JEAN-PAUL

It's fine. They're all fine. Just go out and break bread with him.

Jean puts it on. Jean-Paul shakes his head in mock disgust.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cody swishes some mouthwash and checks himself in a mirror.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Just don't bring her home tonight, man. I'm eight minutes from the record. I want no distractions.

Cody walks into the living room and puts his shoes on. He gets ready to walk out.

CODY

No problem. I promised her no orgies tonight.

Eddie perks up at the line. But before he can respond, Cody is out the door.

EDDIE

Why?

EXT. THE HAWTHORNE INN - NIGHT

Cody waits outside the entrance. Jean drives up. They meet and hug, both nervous.

CODY

Hi.

JEAN

Hi.

CODY

Hungry?

JEAN

Famished.

CODY

Great.

They walk to the door. She holds the door for him. He walks in, confused.

CODY  
Um. Thanks.

INT. THE HAWTHORNE INN - NIGHT

Cody and Jean walk to their table and sit down. A HOST hands them menus.

HOST  
Your server will be right with you.

CODY  
So how did you like the comic?

JEAN  
I haven't been able to read it.  
Work has been real busy.

CODY  
What do you do?

JEAN  
I'm an escort.

Cody is floored.

CODY  
So you do know a little about fairy  
tale orgies?

JEAN  
No, no. A corporate escort. My  
father owns a financial services  
company, and I pick up his clients  
at the airport, drive them around  
town to meetings, stuff like that.

CODY  
Oh. That sounds a lot less racy.

JEAN  
It is. My dad would kill any client  
who tries anything with me.

CODY  
Do they know you're his daughter?

JEAN  
First thing I tell them.

Cody smiles.

CODY  
Is escorting your career choice?

JEAN  
No way. I wanna be a graphic  
designer. This is just good money.

CODY  
Escorting usually is.

They both smirk.

CODY  
So what looks good to eat?

JEAN  
Hmm.

The waiter walks over. Cody nods at him.

WAITER  
What can I get for you, sir?

CODY  
I'll have the prime rib, rare.

Jean's mouth falls open. Cody doesn't notice.

WAITER  
And for you, ma'am?

JEAN  
I, I don't eat animals.

CODY  
What do you mean?

JEAN  
I'm vegan.

Cody opens his mouth, shocked.

EXT. THE HAWTHORNE INN - NIGHT

The door opens. Cody and Jean spill out. This time, he's  
holding the door for her.

CODY  
Oh my God, I am so sorry.

JEAN  
You didn't know. And how would I  
know this place is a steak house?

CODY  
I should've asked.

JEAN  
It's okay. I'm in the minority.

CODY  
Tell me, how can I feed you?

Jean thinks for a moment.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Jean gathers food at the salad bar. Cody has a deli sandwich.

CODY  
This is so far beyond embarrassing.

JEAN  
Bigger men have screwed up more  
than you.

CODY  
I'm not sure that makes me feel  
better.

JEAN  
Know a place we can eat?

Cody thinks.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Cody and Jean kiss on Cody's couch. Eddie plays video games,  
sitting next to them.

BACK TO SUPERMARKET

Cody shakes his head.

CODY  
It's a beautiful night. Let's eat  
outside.

EXT. MILL POND PARK - NIGHT

Cody and Jean sit in the gazebo, eating their food. Ducks swim in front of them in the pond.

JEAN  
Not a bad recovery.

CODY  
I had nowhere to go but up.

JEAN  
You bring all the girls down here?

CODY  
If by all, you mean you ...

JEAN  
You don't date much?

CODY  
Not really. Work has always taken up a lot of my time. And female comic lovers are a rarity. You're like the geek holy grail.

JEAN  
I'm glad you opened your store.

She takes his hand. They both smile.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cody and Jean walk to their cars, holding hands.

CODY  
This wasn't a disaster, right?

JEAN  
You bounced back.

CODY  
Want to try it again sometime?

She leans in and kisses him.

CODY  
Wanna try that again?

Jean laughs. They kiss again. She giggles.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Cody pulls in and walks to the back door, pleased.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody enters, still smiling. Eddie lies on the couch, hidden in the dark. Cody puts his bag down. Eddie flips his cell phone on, illuminating his face.

EDDIE

11:37pm. Still gonna masturbate.

CODY

11:37pm. Dating an escort.

EDDIE

Bulllllllll shit!

CODY

I'm going to bed.

Cody walks to his bedroom. Eddie realizes something.

EDDIE

That's why you're alone, you know.  
Don't you know what they do? You  
gotta pay them to go home with you!

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody talks with Doug at the counter. Other customers browse. The store is doing pretty well.

The phone RINGS. Cody asks his customer to hold on.

CODY

Eye Opener.

JACKIE (V.O.)

Cody, this tumor won't heal!

CODY

It's a blister, mom. Put some  
bacitracin on it.

JACKIE (V.O.)

I'm telling you, I'm nervous about  
this. Take me to the doctor.

CODY

Just keep it in open air, and let it dry out. Can you call me later?

JACKIE (V.O.)

Why, are you in the middle of "running your business?"

CODY

Yes, I am. And if I don't, I can't pay your bills.

JACKIE (V.O.)

Just find a real job, please. I can't take this drama.

CODY

Bye, mom.

He hangs up the phone, shaking his head.

DOUG

I'm bringing some friends over this weekend to show them this place. You're open both days, right?

CODY

Nope. Only Saturday.

Cody smiles.

EXT. SLEEPING GIANT STATE PARK - CASTLE - DAY

Cody and Jean hold hands as they hike up the mountain.

JEAN

So, there's a castle at the top?

CODY

A small castle. But yeah.

Jean is about to speak again when Cody's phone RINGS. He looks at the phone and sighs.

CODY

I'm sorry. I have to take this.

JEAN

That's okay.

Jean looks at the food. Cody answers.

CODY

Hello? Hi, mom. I'm good, how are you? What? You went to the emergency room? It was the size of a pin prick. No, I know it hurt. Look, can I call you back? I'm out. I'm on a date.

JACKIE (V.O.)

WHAT? YOU TOLD ME YOU WEREN'T DATING ANYONE! ARE YOU HIDING HER FROM ME?

Jean turns, smirking, trying not to laugh.

CODY

It's our second date.

JACKIE (V.O.)

WELL I WANT TO MEET HER!

CODY

Okay mom, that's great, go rest your finger, talk to you later bye.

He hangs up, burying his head in his hands. Jean hugs him.

JEAN

We all have parents.

CODY

Not like this. Imagine a 90 pound child throwing a tantrum. Forever.

Jean laughs. They sit down and begin to eat.

JEAN

Isn't your dad around to help?

CODY

He died when I was six. He was everything to her. Now I am.

JEAN

I'm so sorry. You're a good person, taking care of her like that. Some people would give up if someone frustrates them that much.

CODY

Can't say I never thought about it.

JEAN

Ever told her how you feel?

CODY

She's been like this so long, she won't change. I just have to be there for her and deal with it.

They reach the castle and Jean runs up to it looking excited. Cody lays a blanket out on the green. He has a huge backpack.

Jean walks down the path near the green, in shorts and a red superhero T-shirt.

JEAN

This is awesome. How have I never been here before?

CODY

You're a lame local resident?

JEAN

I guess I am.

CODY

You like pasta salad?

JEAN

Yep. Way better than prime rib.

CODY

So, how crazy are your parents?

JEAN

They're good people. A little snobby, but good. They're not perfect, but who is?

CODY

Brothers or sisters?

JEAN

One obnoxious younger sister.

CODY

Cool.

He pauses and looks at the soccer ball.

CODY

So I went out on a limb and brought a soccer ball. Any chance you play?

JEAN

No, but I don't back down from a challenge.

CODY

Who said challenge? I just want to  
kick the ball around.

They get up and Cody plays with the ball expertly. He kicks it to Jean, and it sails right by her. She makes no attempt to get it, just shaking her head at him.

MONTAGE: They play soccer. Cody is obviously more talented than Jean, but she matches his effort level.

After playing for a while, he plays keepaway and she ends up climbing his back for the ball. They fall down.

Cody smiles. She kisses him.

Cody and Jean walks up the castle to the top. They look out at the view and hold hands.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cody dresses for work. Eddie clips his toenails on the couch.

EDDIE

You never want to clip these too  
short. I've stained many a sock  
that way.

CODY

Just don't bleed on my couch.

EDDIE

You sleep with her yet?

CODY

You've seen me come home every  
night. When would that happen?

EDDIE

I'm a fan of a quickie in the car.

CODY

I'm just playing it cool.

EDDIE

Miles Davis can play it cool. Not  
you.

CODY

I don't want to be another voice in  
the chorus, you know? I'm sure she  
gets fawnd over all the time.

INT. PAMPERED PAWS - DAY

Jean and Jean-Paul stand at the counter of PAMPERED PAWS, a dog grooming shop.

JEAN-PAUL  
He hasn't fawned over you at all?

JEAN  
I may as well be wearing a burqa.

JEAN-PAUL  
That doesn't make sense. These guys should beat down brick walls for you. You're like Princess Leia, or Xena or something.

JEAN  
Please don't compare me to Xena.

JEAN-PAUL  
Not a fan of leather?

Jean stares him down. A CASHIER approaches. Jean-Paul jumps at her, and his demeanor instantly changes.

JEAN-PAUL  
Now she gets really scared with new people, so make sure Isabelle is the one who grooms her.

CASHIER  
You already called us twice about this, sir. Isabelle has no other clients today.

JEAN-PAUL  
Good. My little girl deserves the best.

CASHIER  
Of course. You can pick Poopsie up at noon.

JEAN-PAUL  
Thank you so much.

Jean laughs to herself. She and Jean-Paul walk outside.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody reads a book at the counter. A good number of customers mill about. Jean and Jean-Paul walk in. Cody smiles.

CODY

Hi.

She walks to the counter and kisses him.

JEAN

This is my friend Jean-Paul. He's been dying to meet you.

Cody and Jean-Paul shake hands.

CODY

Great to meet you.

Jean-Paul sizes Cody up.

JEAN-PAUL

You look cooler than I imagined.

CODY

Thanks. I think.

JEAN-PAUL

Well I usually think of comic book lovers as a little under the weather popularity-wise.

CODY

She turned out okay, right?

Jean-Paul nods. Yeah, guess he's right.

CODY

I have to do some restocking, but take a look at whatever you like.

Jean-Paul walks off. Cody grabs a box of comics and checks them against an invoice. Jean leans over the counter.

JEAN

So what were you thinking for tonight?

Cody considers, smiles, then makes a phone call on speakerphone. It RINGS ...

EDDIE (V.O.)

Shut the hell up, Donny! Game Stop, this is Eddie.

Cody hangs up, very happy.

CODY

How about a movie at my place?

Jean grins.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody prepares a tray of pita, hummus and veggies.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Jean sits on the couch, reading a comic. Cody puts the tray on the table and sits next to her.

CODY

So in light of how we met, the selection for this evening is Spiderman, X-Men 2, the best one, or Road to Perdition.

JEAN

Wanna talk instead? Maybe get to a movie later?

CODY

Well I think those are pretty good adaptations ...

Jean leans over and kisses him.

CODY

Okay, movies later.

They continue kissing, more aggressively, hands start roaming. Jean stands up and takes his hand.

JEAN

Your room this way?

Cody nods like a ten-year-old. He follows her.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

SUPER: Summer

Jean watches Cody as he sleeps. He stirs and opens eyes open. Jean kisses him. Cody is taken aback, but goes with the flow. She finishes kissing him and leans over him, grinning.

CODY

(groggy) Wow, you don't care about morning breath? Will you marry me?

Jean laughs and they hug. After a moment, the apartment door OPENS. Cody looks at Jean, terrified.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Eddie enters, DRESSED FROM HEAD TO TOE LIKE A KNIGHT. He throws his bag and shoes on the floor.

EDDIE

Wake up, dickhead. You missed the best masquerade event ever. Hope that skinny tart was worth it.

He looks on the ground. He sees a pair of female shoes.

EDDIE

Hmm. Guess she was.

IN THE KITCHEN

Eddie, Cody and Jean stand in opposite corners.

CODY

Jean, you remember Eddie from the comic book store.

JEAN

Hi Eddie. Is it Halloween already?

EDDIE

It's my LARP costume. I am Nelwyn, Commanding Knight of the Army of Solitude.

CODY

Excellent. Now that we all know each other, I'm off to work. (to Jean) Can I walk you to your car?

JEAN

That would be lovely.

Cody and Jean leave the room together. Eddie watches, upset.

MONTAGE

EXT. MILL POND PARK - DAY

Cody and Jean sit outside, eating sorbet, watching the water. They taste each other's sorbet.

INT. LOCAL SHOP - DAY

Cody and Jean shop, browsing the handmade crafts and jewelry.

Jean picks up an item she particularly likes, and looks to Cody. He nods, takes it, and brings it to the counter.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody and Jean bound into the apartment. Jean carries a suitcase full of clothes. She walks from the living room to the bathroom, and puts her toothbrush in along with Cody's.

Eddie reads the paper on the couch. He lowers it, angry.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

SUPER: Fall

Jean sits behind the counter, reading. Cody puts comics up on the shelves. They're obviously happy. CUSTOMERS mill about.

JEAN

I can't believe I hadn't read this.  
It's amazing.

CODY

I told you you'd like it.

JEAN

You think love can be like comic books?

CODY

It already is. Snarky comments, betrayal and high body counts.

JEAN

You're a jerk. I mean people fighting for it, like how heros and villains fight.

CODY

I think love is about sacrifice.

JEAN

God, should I call you Peter?

He smiles and walks toward her.

CODY

Only if I can call you Mary Jane.

They lean in and kiss.

CODY

I've been wanting to talk to you about something.

JEAN

I'm not pregnant.

CODY

Okay, one down. How about instead of having a drawer or two, sharing the apartment together?

JEAN

Move in?

Cody nods sheepishly.

JEAN

How many roommates am I getting?

CODY

He won't be there all the time.

JEAN

He's never not there now.

CODY

It'll be different if you move in.

JEAN

I'm not sure about that.

CODY

I'll make sure.

JEAN

Wow. Then it looks like you've got a roomie.

CODY

But there's something we should do first. Actually, two things.

Jean looks at him, confused.

INT. CODY'S CAR - DAY

Cody drives. Jean sits shotgun with a basket of muffins.

JEAN

Nervous?

CODY  
Terrified.

JEAN  
I'm hard to shock.

CODY  
You've never met my mother.

Cody's car pulls in to Jackie's driveway. Jackie is on the porch, waving enthusiastically.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

They get out and walk to the door. Jackie embraces Jean way too hard and way too long.

JACKIE  
It's so great to meet you. I  
thought he'd be single forever.  
Come inside. Come inside.

She gestures to the trash, then to Cody. Cody is disgusted.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jean walks slowly inside and stands by the door, looking out.

JACKIE  
He'll just be a second. Come here.  
Let me have a look at you.

Jean turns to Jackie, smiling awkwardly. Jackie grabs her cheeks and turns her around. Cody walks in.

CODY  
Mom, she's not a horse.

JACKIE  
I know. But she's not one of your  
Facebook friends and you haven't  
shown me a picture. All I see are  
Eddie's distractions.

Jean giggles.

IN THE KITCHEN

All three walk in and sit down.

JACKIE

Make yourself useful and get our guest a drink. And I'll have some apple juice.

Cody shakes his head. Jackie leans toward Jean.

JACKIE

Has he talked wedding yet?

Jean gives a blank stare.

JACKIE

He's a bit of a slow mover. But you know, we're not fertile forever.

JEAN

I'm 25. I have some time.

JACKIE

Sure, honey. Then you blink your eyes, you're 45 and the closest thing to motherhood is babysitting for your spoiled younger sister.

Jean's speechless. Cody comes over with drinks.

CODY

What are you whispering about?

JACKIE

Just talking weddings.

CODY

Why, you going to one?

JACKIE

Hopefully soon.

CODY

How about some food?

IN THE LIVING ROOM

The three eat their lunches. Jean walks up to a picture of CODY'S FATHER on the mantle. She runs her fingers across it.

JEAN

Your husband's very handsome, Mrs. Jackson.

JACKIE

He was quite the looker. When I was 21, another man asked me to marry him, but Sam came right up to me after he heard about it, and told me there's no way you're marrying anyone but me. I couldn't resist. I ran off with Sam, and we got married a few weeks later.

JEAN

That's adorable. How long were you married?

JACKIE

Ten years before Mr. Too Good for a Crosswalk got hit by a Honda.

JEAN

Oooh.

JACKIE

You can bet that wake was closed casket -

CODY

Mom.

JACKIE

He's still sensitive about daddy's death. But we're doing okay by ourselves, aren't we, honey?

Jean winks. Jackie shakes her empty glass. Cody grumbles.

IN THE BATHROOM

Cody goes to the bathroom and takes a deep breath. He splashes cold water on his face.

IN THE KITCHEN

Cody fills her glass with water/vodka. Then he pours himself a glass of water. He takes a few heavy breaths to calm down.

After a moment, he trudges back into the living room.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Jackie has an ear-to-ear grin. Jean is gone.

CODY

Where is she, mom?

JACKIE  
Oh, calm down. She had to go to the  
bathroom.

CODY  
Tell me you didn't take it out.

JACKIE  
But it's beautiful!

CODY  
Jean!

JEAN  
(weakly) Yeah?

Cody turns around and goes white. Jean stands in the hallway,  
WEARING HIS MOTHER'S WEDDING DRESS.

JACKIE  
Look at her, Cody! She's ready!

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody leads Jean, in her clothes, to the car. Jean looks  
violated. Cody starts the car and leaves. Jackie runs out.

JACKIE  
Wait! I still have dessert!

INT. CODY'S CAR - DAY

Cody drives. Jean breathes heavily.

CODY  
We never have to go back there  
again if you don't want to.

JEAN  
She's your mom. There are certain  
dues I have to pay.

Cody laughs to himself.

JEAN  
Otherwise, you think I'd ever step  
into polyester?

CODY  
I'm sorry.

JEAN

It's okay. I'm sure my parents will  
be less stressful.

EXT. SILVER HOUSE - DAY

Cody and Jean arrive at Jean's parents house. Cody looks in  
awe at the cars in the driveway: Porsche, Lotus, and Mustang.

They walk up the stairs. Cody tidies himself in the window.  
Jean takes out her key and opens the door.

INT. SILVER HOUSE - DAY

MR. SILVER and MRS. SILVER greet them at the door. Mrs.  
Silver gives Jean a little hug while Cody shakes Mr. Silver's  
hand. They switch.

MRS. SILVER

So nice to meet you, Cody. We were  
beginning to think Jean simply made  
you up.

JEAN

Yes Mom, he's real.

MR. SILVER

Shall we sit down?

They all nod in agreement.

MR. SILVER

Cody, can I get you a scotch?

CODY

Oh, I actually don't drink.

MR. SILVER

How awful.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Mr. and Mrs. Silver sit on opposite ends of the large couch.  
Cody and Jean sit on the tiny love seat across from them.  
They're all awkwardly sipping their drinks. Cody drinks milk.

MR. SILVER

Cody, what is it you do?

CODY

I run a comic book shop.

JEAN

He owns it and runs it.

MRS. SILVER

Comic books? You still read those dreadful things?

Jean nods and rolls her eyes.

MRS. SILVER

I wanted to buy her Prada and she wanted that Super Spider.

JEAN

She's being silly Cody. She's read them before.

MRS. SILVER

Yes before bed, it wasn't Peter Pan or Alice in Wonderland - it was this dreadful, insolent spider.

JEAN

You'll be happy to know at Cody's store, you can get some brand new tales about Peter Pan and Alice and Wonderland.

Cody chokes on his milk. Mr. Silver continues sipping scotch.

MR. SILVER

Cody, what do your parents do?

CODY

My father passed away when I was six. My mom still lives in the house I grew up in.

Mr. Silver nods his head, judging.

CODY

You have a lovely home. It's nice to see a full family. Not many of those around anymore.

MRS. SILVER

Yes, divorce and infidelity. How nice we seem to be exempt from those kinds of troubles.

Mrs. Silver gives Mr. Silver an evil stare.

INT. CODY'S CAR - DAY

Cody and Jean both look nauseous.

JEAN

I can't believe they brought that  
up in front of a stranger.

CODY

If I knew it was that bad, I'd have  
asked you to move in months ago.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cody and Jean lug in heavy furniture and boxes inside.

Eddie sits on the couch, relaxing, looking through the boxes.  
He picks up a girl scout uniform.

EDDIE

You guys are into some kinky stuff.

Jean grabs the uniform.

JEAN

I wore that when I was I kid.

EDDIE

Right, and I watched Sailor Moon  
for the riveting storylines.

JEAN

Pedophile.

EDDIE

I'm not the one dressing up like a  
girl scout.

Jean rolls her eyes at Cody, then goes outside. Eddie matches  
the uniform to his body, seeing if it would fit him.

CODY

It wouldn't kill you to be nice.

EDDIE

That wouldn't be any fun.

CODY

She's going to be living here now.  
She's got to feel comfortable.

EDDIE

I have to change so Jean's fragile little self is comfortable?

CODY

I'm not saying that. This is big for me.

EDDIE

I hate to tell you this, but the moment she moves in here, she's going to own your ass. Forget about your own life. It belongs to her.

CODY

She's not like that.

EDDIE

They're all like that. Girls are mutants. All effed up.

CODY

Keep an open mind for me. She's actually cool and laid back.

EDDIE

If you were walking into a hive of killer bees, and I knew and didn't tell you, it would be my fault.

He points to the front door.

EDDIE

The hive has a queen.

Cody sighs. His phone rings. He answers it, moving a box into the living room.

LATER

Cody and Jean sit at the table, enjoying a candlelit dinner. Eddie plays War Machines on the couch, yelling at the screen.

Jean walks into the kitchen, holding two wine glasses. Eddie looks over at her.

EDDIE

While you're up, can you get me a soda?

Jean comes out, annoyed, holding a can of soda. Eddie scowls.

EDDIE

I want diet. Come on, a stick  
figure like you should know that.

Jean, furious, walks back into the kitchen. She returns with  
a diet soda and slams it on the table.

EDDIE

Put on a french maid outfit, and  
you're almost worth having here.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY

Jean brushes her teeth. In the mirror, she sees Eddie  
unbuttoning his pants and running towards her.

EDDIE

Out of the way! Unless you want to  
see last night's chili!

Jean spits and gets out the door. Eddie is already pulling  
his pants down. She slams the door, toothbrush in her mouth.

Ungodly NOISES come from the bathroom. Jean puts her hand  
over her face and leaves.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jean walks in. Cody sits at the dining room table eating  
grapes. Jean looks around cautiously.

JEAN

Where is Eddie?

CODY

Out.

JEAN

Huh.

She walks over to him and sits down, taking some grapes.

JEAN

I love grapes.

CODY

How much?

JEAN

(mouth full) A lot.

CODY  
A lot a lot?

JEAN  
Very possibly more than I love you.

CODY  
Oh yeah?

Cody takes a grape, bites it in half and smears it all over Jean's arm. Jean looks horrified.

Jean grabs a grape and chases him with it. She catches him and smears it on him. They continue their grapefight.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jean cleans the floor while Cody and Eddie play video games on the couch, laughing and yelling.

Enthralled in the game, Eddie knocks his glass of soda on the floor. Cody starts to stand, but Eddie pulls him back down.

EDDIE  
Dude, Jean's got it. We're in the middle of a game.

CODY  
No, I can get it -

EDDIE  
You've got a handle on it, right Jean? You're cleaning anyway.

Jean seethes.

JEAN  
Sure. Got it.

EDDIE  
Great.

They go back to playing their game. Cody looks back as Jean cleans the floor. Jean is really unhappy.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY

Cody takes a shower. Jean comes in behind him and kisses him. She washes Cody's hair. Cody suddenly gets an "uh oh" look on his face. Jean sours.

JEAN  
Did you fart?

CODY  
Ummmm.

JEAN  
Ewwwwww.

Cody hugs her and holds her in the shower while they both laugh. Jean tries to hold her breath, but it doesn't work.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eddie plays with a pizza box on the table as he tries to sleep. SOUNDS OF INTIMACY come from Cody's bedroom.

Eddie rolls over and grabs his shoe. He wings it at the wall.

EDDIE  
Get a goddamn room!

The noises stop.

IN THE BEDROOM

Jean pushes Cody off her in bed, embarrassed. She tries to head to the door. Cody holds her down.

JEAN  
Let me go!

CODY  
Calm down first.

JEAN  
I'm calm.

CODY  
Then stop struggling.

Cody pins her down and she stops squirming.

CODY  
Better?

JEAN  
No.

He rolls off her and they both look up at the ceiling.

JEAN  
You're not gonna like what I'm  
about to say.

CODY  
Then please don't say it.

JEAN  
He needs to go.

Cody sighs.

JEAN  
If you and I want a real shot at  
living together, it needs to be the  
two of us.

CODY  
He's my best friend.

JEAN  
He's a mooch.

CODY  
He has no other place to go.

JEAN  
He can live with his mother. That's  
where he is the one night he's not  
grubbing off you.

CODY  
Look. I'm doing my best to work  
with a difficult situation. But I  
can't kick him out. I need you to  
understand that.

Jean is shocked. She signs and rolls over, her back to him.  
Cody turns the other way. They both try to sleep.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jean wakes up alone. She gets up and walks to the

BATHROOM

But it's occupied by a loud, singing Eddie. She goes to bang  
on the door, then thinks better of it.

She walks stealthily to the

LIVING ROOM

And stands in front of Eddie's Playstation.

She takes out the memory card and puts it in a cup of soda on the table. She smiles viciously.

EXT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eddie SCREAMS in terror.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody handles a big line of CUSTOMERS. Devon unpacks a small box of comics, puts them on a shelf. The store's doing well.

Eddie bursts in. Some customers are startled.

DEVON

Hey Eddie.

Eddie ignores him and focuses on Cody. He storms the counter.

EDDIE

Do you know what this is?

Eddie slams the memory card on the counter.

CODY

It's a memory card.

EDDIE

Notice anything strange about it?

Cody picks it up, studies it.

CODY

Um. It's sticky?

EDDIE

Yeah, it's sticky. You know how it got sticky? Your bitch girlfriend stuck it in a cup of soda!

Customers get uncomfortable. A pair walk out, scared.

CODY

You want to calm down?

EDDIE

What did I do to deserve this?

CODY

You don't remember throwing a shoe  
at the bedroom wall?

EDDIE

What did you expect me to do? She  
was shrieking like a beached whale.

A CONSERVATIVE CUSTOMER walks in.

CODY

Well if you can't sleep at MY  
place, then go home!

Shocked, the conservative customer turns around and leaves.

EDDIE

So that's how it is? I ask for one  
night of sleep, and I deserve  
having my history ruined?

DEVON

Customers are leaving, guys. You  
two need to calm down.

EDDIE

Shut up, kid. No one asked you.

Eddie looks to Cody but Cody ignores him. Disgusted, Devon  
grabs his coat and starts walking out. Cody stops him.

CODY

Devon, please. Can you ring up  
these customers? I gotta talk to  
Eddie outside.

DEVON

I don't know how to do it.

CODY

Just take their money and give them  
change. It's real easy.

DEVON

Okay.

Cody leads Devon back to the counter. Then, he grabs Eddie  
and throws him out the front door.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody leads Eddie into the parking lot.

CODY  
Are you trying to ruin my shop?

EDDIE  
This is getting out of hand.

CODY  
What?

EDDIE  
Show some balls, man. She's  
controlled you long enough.

CODY  
No one's controlling me.

EDDIE  
Oh yeah? Why are all your figurines  
set up in the computer room now?

CODY  
We decided to move them.

Eddie is skeptical. A MAN IN A SUIT walks into the store.

CODY  
The place looks more adult now.

EDDIE  
From the mouths of babes.

CODY  
I really don't expect you to get  
what it's like to grow up.

EDDIE  
How about being a grownup and  
confronting Jean on what she did?

CODY  
Man, you had it coming. You've  
treated her like shit from the  
moment you met her.

EDDIE  
The three of us living together  
isn't working. She needs to go.

CODY  
No.

Eddie, worried, takes a deep breath and eases up.

EDDIE

You need to tell her to move back in with Mommy and Daddy. Enough of this crap. It's not worth the strain on our friendship.

CODY

You're right. It's not. You need to move out.

Eddie's jaw drops.

CODY

Today.

Cody storms back toward the store. Eddie, speechless, remains by himself in the parking lot.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody trudges inside, exhausted. He looks outside for a moment, then turns back in. The man in the suit nods at him.

CODY

Can I help you?

MR. CRONE

My name is Mr. Crone. My father was your landlord. He died last week.

CODY

Whoa. I'm sorry to hear that. I guess that makes you my new one?

MR. CRONE

Look, I don't want to waste anyone's time. My father took pity on you the way one might pity a stray dog. I don't much like animals.

CODY

I'm sorry?

MR. CRONE

Since your lease is month to month, your rent doubles next month.

CODY

What?

MR. CRONE

Due the first. My father may have taken late payments, but I do not.

Cody is outraged.

MR. CRONE

Don't worry. New businesses tend to fail within a year and a half. I'd much prefer a national chain in here. They pay on time. Good day.

Mr. Crone bows his head and exits. Cody fumes.

CODY

(to Devon) Can you run the counter for five more minutes?

Devon nods.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - BACK ROOM - DAY

Cody holds his head in one hand, his cell phone in the other.

CODY

Why did you do that?

JEAN (V.O.)

I'm sorry. He just made me so angry last night.

CODY

He's moving out.

JEAN (V.O.)

Oh. Are you okay?

CODY

It's for the best. I think.

JEAN (V.O.)

Yeah.

CODY

Are you with any clients today?

JEAN (V.O.)

No. Designing a site from home. It's really fun, actually. I want to show you. It looks incredible.

CODY

Great.

JEAN (V.O.)  
I'll make some dinner. We'll have a  
great first night alone together.

CODY  
Okay. Thanks.

Cody closes his phone. He shakes his head, frustrated.

EXT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody walks to the door, takes a deep breath. He's still  
upset. He puts the key in the door, then enters.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cody meanders in, takes off his shoes. He's in a daze.

He sees Jean smiling. The house is decorated for a party.  
Eddie's Playstation hangs from a noose off the chandelier.

JEAN  
Welcome to our very own, state of  
the art, Eddie-free apartment.

CODY  
You've got to be kidding me.

JEAN  
It's a celebration. I thought  
dinner, maybe a movie, then some  
uninterrupted time together. The  
perfect first night sans that  
misogynist freeloader.

Cody takes the Playstation off the chandelier.

JEAN  
You're upset.

He's livid.

JEAN  
I'm sorry. I'm just excited he's  
gone. It's been really hard  
settling in with him here.

CODY  
My best friend isn't speaking to  
me. I had to kick him out because  
he demanded I throw you out. You  
should both be gone.

JEAN

Eddie did everything to make my life miserable. I do one thing to retaliate when I'm at the end of my rope, and you get pissed at me?

CODY

I didn't want anyone to move out. Now he's gotta live with his mom. He hates her.

JEAN

Maybe Eddie should take care of Eddie and you should stop trying to carry people who don't want to carry themselves.

CODY

Anyone else you want to get rid of? It's your day. Who next? Mom? She's a pain in the ass. How about her?

Jean walks over and hugs him.

JEAN

I'm sorry I didn't see how much this hurt you. I love you, and I want this to work.

Cody takes a deep breath.

CODY

I'm sorry I said I should have gotten rid of both of you.

Jean kisses his cheek.

JEAN

Everything else okay?

CODY

My rent doubled. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

JEAN

Why not hire Devon? He can help you out and keep you from going crazy.

CODY

No, I can't do that.

JEAN

Why not?

CODY

It gets complicated when you involve more people.

JEAN

It's not complicated to ask for help. Besides, he'd spend all his money in the store anyway.

CODY

Hmm. I guess that's not a bad idea. All right. I'll hire him. But I can handle the rest myself.

Cody pulls away from Jean.

CODY

I've got some stuff I've got to sort through tonight. We'll spend some time tomorrow. I promise.

Jean nods, accepting. Cody approaches his prized comics and takes them out, looking them over one by one.

Sad, Jean looks to the nightstand. A CD sits on top of it.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

A sign on the door says "NOW OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK!"

INT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody sits at the counter. Devon carries a stack of boxes. There are only a few customers milling about.

CODY

Devon, can you work after school Wednesday?

DEVON

Can't do it, Cody. You know what day Wednesday is.

CODY

It's important. I gotta take a trip.

DEVON

Sorry. Any other day is cool. Why not ask Eddie?

CODY

Because it's Eddie.

DEVON

It's just one day. How bad can he  
screw the store up?

Cody smiles.

EXT. EDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody walks slowly toward a typical, middle class home. He reaches the door, takes a deep breath, and knocks.

Eddie answers the door, and laughs.

EDDIE

You've got a lot of nerve coming  
here.

CODY

I'm sorry how things went.

EDDIE

So you're here to apologize?

CODY

I need a favor. I wouldn't ask but  
it's really important.

EDDIE

Wow.

CODY

I need you to open the store  
Wednesday. I have to meet a dealer  
a few hours away to sell some  
comics. It's the only day he can do  
it and I really need the cash.

EDDIE

What's in it for me?

CODY

For the amount of favors I've done  
for you, I would hope you'd just do  
this for a good friend.

EDDIE

Save it. I'll watch the damn store.

CODY

Thanks. I really appreciate it.

EDDIE

Fine. I gotta help my mother. You know how that is.

CODY

I do. I'll leave the key above the door.

Eddie slams the door. Cody sighs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CODY'S CAR - DAY

Cody drives, cell phone in hand, with a box in the passenger seat. All that's inside it is a bank check.

JEAN (V.O.)

How'd it go?

CODY

I've got enough to spot me two months rent. Or at least the difference of what that asshat is charging me now.

JEAN (V.O.)

Great. I just finished with a client, so I'm heading home. You coming straight back or stopping by the store?

CODY

I'll be home. Eddie bailed me out.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Devon walks down the street, bookbag on his shoulder. He rounds the corner to the store -

AND SEES A LONG LINE OF ANGRY CUSTOMERS OUTSIDE.

DEVON

Oh God.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody walks in. Devon's helping a customer. Cody's confused.

CODY

Where's Eddie?

DEVON

Uh, there weren't many customers,  
so Eddie bailed when I got here.

CODY

Hmm. Okay, that's cool.

Cody walks into the back room. Devon's nervous.

AT THE DOOR

Jean walks in with a picnic basket.

JEAN

Hey Devon.

DEVON

You brought food! You're awesome.

JEAN

Actually I brought Cody food, if  
he's got a minute to eat.

DEVON

He's in the back.

IN THE BACK ROOM

Jean pops her head in. Cody's buried in paperwork.

JEAN

Hungry?

CODY

I really can't. I'm way too behind.  
Leave it here. I'll get to it  
sometime tonight.

JEAN

Oh, sure. Okay.

Jean leaves the basket on the counter. Devon dives in and  
Jean walks out, silent.

Cody walks outside, papers in his hand, flustered.

DEVON

You could at least say thank you.

CODY

You try running a store and see  
what happens with your manners.

DEVON  
What about Jean?

CODY  
She'll have to wait.

Devon takes a bite out of a sandwich in the basket.

DEVON  
Is this hummus? This is really  
freakin' good!

Cody rolls his eyes.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cody moves paper towels and cereal into the kitchen. Jackie watches him adoringly.

Cody comes back in, sits next to Jackie on the couch.

JACKIE  
Why aren't you married yet? You two  
have been living together in  
Satan's two bedroom for a while.

CODY  
We're not ready yet Mom.

JACKIE  
Well get ready. You think she's  
going to be as patient as me? How  
long have you been together?

CODY  
About a year.

JACKIE  
That means ring. Something nice.

CODY  
Fine. I'll get her one.

JACKIE  
But you can't afford a diamond, can  
you, Mr. Unstable? Maybe her snooty  
parents can bail you out.

CODY  
We're not getting married.

JACKIE  
Ever?

CODY

I gotta go.

JACKIE

Of course. You always have to go.  
You're never happy to see me. Just  
come over, take my food and leave.

CODY

Goodbye.

Cody walks out the door. Jackie's flustered.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody rings out his last customer. Devon goes through boxes of  
stock, counting inventory.

CODY

Devon, if you want to cut down on  
how much you're here, that's cool  
with me. I know you've got a life.

DEVON

Ehh, not as much as you'd think.

CODY

No, it's cool. Why don't we just  
have you come in two days a week  
now instead of four.

DEVON

Okay.

CODY

Cool. Time to lock up, kiddo.

Devon gets up and walks outside. He reaches above the door  
and gets the key. He brings the key back in to Cody.

CODY

Thanks.

He takes the key, then looks up in confusion.

CODY

Wait a minute. Where'd you get this?

DEVON

Above the - uh oh.

Devon's face goes white. He's hiding something. Cody looks at  
him quizzically.

CODY  
Devon, how did you know where the  
key was?

DEVON  
Lucky guess?

CODY  
What are you not telling me?

Devon looks queasy.

DEVON  
I was going to tell you.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Devon walks down the street, bookbag on his shoulder. He  
rounds the corner to the store -

AND SEES A LONG LINE OF ANGRY CUSTOMERS OUTSIDE.

DEVON (V.O.)  
There must have been 30 people  
outside. They were all so mad.

He runs up to the store.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Customers write notes and stick them under the door.

DEVON  
Who has a cell phone?

One customer gives him a phone. Devon pulls his wallet out  
and grabs a piece of paper from it. It says PHONE NUMBERS.

INT. EDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Eddie sits on his couch with no shirt on, playing video  
games, buried in potato chips and soda. His cell rings. He  
picks it up, and talks without sound.

DEVON (V.O.)  
I got Eddie's number when we  
started gaming, so I called and  
asked him where he was. He said he  
had a date with a girl he met on  
Snapchat, so he couldn't show up.  
He told me where the key was, so I  
opened the store.

Eddie hangs up the phone, then gets up and walks out of the room. He's wearing thong underwear.

BACK TO THE EYE OPENER

CODY

What happened after that?

DEVON

I tried to sell to the people who stayed.

CODY

How many people left?

DEVON

More than half.

CODY

That son of a bitch.

DEVON

You're not mad at me, are you?

CODY

I'm mad at Eddie. Let's go.

Devon walks outside. Cody turns the store lights off.

EXT. EDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Eddie sits on the deck, reading a video game tip book. Cody rounds the corner, incensed.

CODY

You've got some nerve.

EDDIE

Devon ran the store. Nothing lost.

CODY

Except half my customers!

EDDIE

You can't believe high school kids.

CODY

That store is my livelihood, Eddie! This isn't Media-Mart. I can't give up a day and not worry about it! If I don't get customers, I can't eat!

EDDIE

Then get a real job.

CODY

What is your problem? You don't care at all about me anymore? You're gonna let a lifetime friendship die because of a girl?

EDDIE

No, YOU are gonna let a lifetime friendship die because of a girl. Look at you, man! You're a strung out mess, and it's all because of her. Get rid of her, and you'll be able to put the time into the store that you need to put in. Keep her, and you're gonna go down the tubes.

CODY

Why didn't you do what you said you were gonna do?

Eddie stops. He tries to talk, but can't think of something.

CODY

You're a real piece of work, Eddie. Screw you.

Cody walks off, disgusted. Eddie is upset.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: SPRING

The lights are out. Cody's head is buried under a pillow.

Jean turns on the light. Cody doesn't move. She removes the pillow from his head.

JEAN

No hi? You don't even look up at me?

CODY

Can you please bitch at me tomorrow? I really need some sleep tonight.

Jean's furious.

JEAN

I don't have to bitch at all. I don't even have to live here.

She pushes the pillow into his head and gets up to leave.

CODY

What are you doing? You know I'm tired! You know I'm working!

JEAN

Working. Seeing your mom. Working some more. Absolutely no time to invest into this relationship. Do you think it's gonna survive by itself? That I'll just wait for you to stop being an asshole?

CODY

Really Jean, not tonight. I just don't think I can do this tonight.

JEAN

Right now, I'm dating myself, and you're dating the store. Jean and Cody doesn't even exist. I saw you more when Eddie lived here.

CODY

You're being so selfish! I'm working my ass off to make this store work, and you're mad I can't spend time with you? Do you know how much money I'll lose if this thing fails?

JEAN

I get it! It's important. But so is your life, Cody. So am I. And you can't balance it.

CODY

We're going to talk more about this tomorrow.

JEAN

No, Cody. We're going to talk about this now.

CODY

Okay, let's talk now. I'm so tired I can't keep my eyes open, I just found out my best friend knowingly sabotaged my business, my mother thinks I've abandoned her, and my girlfriend won't leave me alone.

Cody gets up and stares Jean down.

CODY  
I'm this close to snapping, and  
you're still pushing and pushing. I  
don't need this shit. We're done.

JEAN  
What?

CODY  
We're done! Get out of my  
apartment. Get your shit later.

Shocked, Jean backs out of the room, her hand over her face.

JEAN  
What's wrong with you, Cody?

CODY  
Get out!

Crying, Jean runs out of the apartment. Cody sits back on the  
bed, and lies down, exhausted. A CD SITS NEXT TO THE BED.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

The alarm clock BLARES. Cody slams it off He slowly pulls his  
head off the pillow. The clock says 8:00. He shakes his head  
and falls asleep again.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jean comes in, bag on her shoulder, and starts packing her  
things. She looks around.

JEAN  
Cody?

WHACK! Something SLAMS against the bedroom door. Jean  
realizes where he is.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Cody's face down on the bed. Jean slowly opens the door.

JEAN  
Are you okay?

CODY  
Fine.

JEAN  
I'm going to take some of my things  
back to my parents.

CODY  
Fine.

JEAN  
Can you please look at me?

Cody gets up from bed and sits facing her.

CODY  
Please leave me alone.

JEAN  
Cody, it's 11:00. You were supposed  
to open the store an hour ago.

CODY  
I don't care anymore.

JEAN  
You don't care? That store is your  
entire life!

CODY  
Eddie blew my whole clientele.  
Nobody's down there.

AT THE EYE OPENER

Devon stands outside, tapping his foot, arms crossed.

BACK IN CODY'S BEDROOM

JEAN  
You're running yourself into the  
ground.

CODY  
Leave me alone. Take your shit and  
go. Please.

JEAN  
Please get some help.

Jean's shocked at how far he's fallen. She leaves the room.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody shuffles inside. Customers follow behind him, concerned.  
Devon watches Cody walk like a zombie to the register.

Cody looks at a stack of boxes behind the counter. He shakes his head. Doesn't care about them anymore.

Devon walks cautiously to the counter. Cody manages a smile.

DEVON  
Are you drunk?

CODY  
You know I don't drink. I'm just tired.

DEVON  
You've never been this tired.

Cody loses the smile. He rings up Devon's order.

DEVON  
If you want, I can go back up to four days a week.

CODY  
You think I need help here?

DEVON  
I don't know how you've gone this long without help. You're gonna burn out. I don't want that.

CODY  
What do you care? You lied to me about Eddie opening this place. You don't care about me or the store.

Devon takes his comics and runs out of the store, upset. Cody just sits there, speechless.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody bursts out of the store and looks around for Devon. He sees him, getting into his mom's car.

CODY  
Devon, wait! Hold on, I'm sorry!

The car drives away. Cody watches them down the road.

He sits down in the parking lot, head between his legs. It's hit him how run down he's become.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody sits, defeated. There's no one else in the store. He gets a notebook and writes something.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody puts that piece of paper on the door:

CLOSED FOR THE WEEKEND. PERSONAL EMERGENCY.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cody sits in the center of a sea of paperwork, calculator in hand, wearing pajamas. He studies a paper and sighs deeply.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cody lies in bed, reading *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Tired, he rubs his eyes and closes the book.

He looks at his nightstand and places the book down. Next to the book is a CD marked TO CODY. Confused, he picks it up.

AT HIS COMPUTER

Cody puts the disk in and opens the file. A Web page comes up: THE EYE OPENER.COM. He looks at the page, and the site looks very professional.

He turns the computer off, affected. He covers his head with his hands, shaking his head. We hear him sniffle.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Cody showers, letting the water beat down on his face. He wipes the water out from his eyes. He leans against the wall.

EXT. DEVON'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody, nervous, approaches the front door and knocks. The mailbox slot opens. We see Devon's eyes. Cody kneels down.

DEVON

Go away.

CODY

I'm so sorry.

DEVON

I don't care.

CODY

Look, if the store is going to make it, I need you.

The mailbox slot closes, and the door opens.

DEVON

Go on.

CODY

I had no right to talk to you like that. You've been great to me, and I've been an ass.

DEVON

What do you need?

CODY

I need you to come back to work. Four days a week, like you said. If I'm going to make it four more months, I gotta be open every day. I can't do it without you.

DEVON

What about my homework? I gotta make sure I keep my grades up.

CODY

I can help. We'll help each other.

Devon sticks his hand out. They shake.

DEVON

You gonna hire anyone else?

CODY

Sorta.

EXT. EDDIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody knocks on Eddie's door. It slowly creaks open. Eddie eyes him suspiciously.

EDDIE

What brings you here?

CODY

I'm not here to yell at you. I'm here to apologize.

EDDIE

For what?

CODY

How I handled you and Jean when she moved in.

EDDIE

Yeah, you should be sorry for that!

CODY

She moved out. It didn't work.

EDDIE

I'll go pack my bag.

Cody holds his hands up.

CODY

Wait. I gotta live by myself for a little while. You can come over and hang out though. We can play some War Machines.

EDDIE

We could do that.

CODY

The store's close to going under, but I'm trying to fix it. You think you could help me there?

EDDIE

I've got some spare time.

CODY

Can I count on you?

Eddie nods.

CODY

Seriously? Like, really, you can help. You're not yessing me.

EDDIE

I'm in. I promise.

Cody hugs Eddie.

CODY

Thank you.

EDDIE

What's your mom think of all this?

Cody frowns.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody walks to the front door. A stack of filled trash bags sits beside the door.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody walks in. Jackie kisses him, then punches his arm.

JACKIE  
Where the hell have you been?

CODY  
Sit down, mom.

JACKIE  
The store is in trouble. I knew this would happen.

CODY  
It's sick, but it's not dead.

JACKIE  
Well I can't pay the medical bills.

CODY  
But you can help out. I gotta keep running for four months, and I'll be able to get a bank loan. I need you to be self-reliant that long.

JACKIE  
What's that supposed to mean?

CODY  
I can't be here to fix the faucet, take out the trash, all that stuff.

JACKIE  
What the hell did I have a kid for? Your dad is gone. Who's going to take care of me?

CODY  
You are. I know you can do it. I need you to help me by learning to help yourself. Can you do that?

Jackie looks unsure.

CODY  
Please, Mom.

JACKIE  
What's Jean doing to help?

CODY  
We broke up.

Jackie throws her hands up.

JACKIE  
You didn't propose. Didn't I tell  
you to marry that girl?

CODY  
That's not what happened.

JACKIE  
I don't care what happened. Who  
cares about keeping a store open  
when you can't even keep a  
relationship?

CODY  
Mom, please? Will you please stop?

Jackie stops. She sees how upset Cody is. He's near tears.

JACKIE  
Did you love her?

CODY  
Of course I did. I couldn't give  
her what she needed. I can't give  
anybody what they need. I need  
help. Mom, please.

JACKIE  
I can't promise anything, but I'll  
try.

CODY  
Thank you.

He hugs her.

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Cody pulls out of the driveway, relieved. Jackie looks down  
at the stack of trash bags. She sighs heavily.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody rings up a customer, tired but happy.

Devon watches as Eddie helps a cute mother and her son. Eddie ogles the mother. She crosses her arms, grabs a comic from the shelf and leaves without thanking him. Devon's horrified.

LATER

Devon and Eddie count inventory behind the shelf.

DEVON

What's not to get?

EDDIE

Why can't I look at customers' boobs?

DEVON

Women don't like it when you do that. They want to be respected as a person.

EDDIE

But what if I don't?

Devon shakes his head.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jackie stands in front of her dishwasher, confused. She squirts dish soap all over the dishes in her machine.

She squats down to the dial and clicks it into place. It starts. She looks pleased with herself.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody approaches the front door, a line of CUSTOMERS waiting as he opens. He smiles as he greets them by name.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody checks out a long line of CUSTOMERS, while Devon helps customers on the floor.

Eddie studies a piece of paper in the corner, away from the crowd. The paper says:

- 1) LOOK HER IN THE EYE.
- 2) DON'T HIT ON HER.
- 3) SAY HAVE A NICE DAY.

LATER

Cody, Devon and Eddie help CUSTOMERS. Eddie opens the register, and a good amount of money sits inside it.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - NIGHT

Cody stocks shelves. Devon sits with his school notebook.

DEVON

What should I say about *Animal Farm*?

CODY

Talk about its parallels with Soviet totalitarianism, and how Orwell used a farm to explore how Stalin came to power.

DEVON

Wait. This book is political?

Cody nods.

LATER

Cody locks the door and puts the CLOSED sign up. Devon and Eddie pass a soda back and forth like it's hard liquor.

DEVON

Dude.

EDDIE

Dude.

Devon flops on his back and groans.

DEVON

I'm so tired!

EDDIE

You've got youth on your side.  
You're doing better than us.

Eddie passes the soda to Cody.

CODY

You have no idea how grateful I am  
for the work you guys are doing.

EDDIE  
You in the black yet?

CODY  
Almost.

EDDIE  
I think you have a good shot at it.  
Cody nods happily, then takes a gulp of soda.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: FALL

Cody puts on a nice suit, fixing his tie in the mirror.  
Jackie stands behind, holding his jacket.

JACKIE  
You look just like your father.

CODY  
I look 70s in this suit?

Jackie tears up.

JACKIE  
You look perfect.

CODY  
I'm proud of you, mom.

JACKIE  
I just kept going knowing it would  
be over soon. You'll get the loan,  
then come back to me. I've had  
enough of this crap.

Cody shakes his head and turns. He kisses her goodbye.

JACKIE  
Good luck.

EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Cody pulls up, gets out of his car and walks inside.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Cody walks to the counter, calm and happy. He approaches the  
office for Mr. Feige. He takes a deep breath, then knocks.

MR. FEIGE (V.O.)  
Cody! Please, come in.

INT. MR. FEIGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Cody walks through and shakes Mr. Feige's hand. He motions for Cody to sit down, and he does.

MR. FEIGE  
Good to see you, son.

CODY  
I'm hoping today's going to be a good day.

Mr. Feige pulls a bottle of scotch out of his desk, and pours himself a drink.

MR. FEIGE  
Thirsty?

CODY  
No, thank you. I don't drink.

MR. FEIGE  
You sure?

Cody shakes his head. Mr. Feige puts the scotch away.

MR. FEIGE  
I've had a chance to look through your financials, and I did notice your profits took a nosedive about a year into the store.

CODY  
My rent doubled.

MR. FEIGE  
Why?

CODY  
Month to month lease. Just playing it safe.

MR. FEIGE  
Mm hmm. And how have things been the last few weeks?

CODY  
We're actually making more per week the past three weeks than we have the whole time we've been open.

MR. FEIGE  
So you're still not profitable?

CODY  
We're almost profitable.

MR. FEIGE  
But you're not profitable.

Cody is crestfallen.

MR. FEIGE  
You know what I'm about to say.

CODY  
I can put my stock in the store up  
as collateral, Mr. Feige -

MR. FEIGE  
It's not enough for the bank to  
feel comfortable -

CODY  
I'll take a higher interest rate,  
sir. I need this money so badly.

MR. FEIGE  
Your credit is all maxed out -

CODY  
I've put my life into this store. I  
need to keep going.

MR. FEIGE  
I'm sorry, Cody. You're too much of  
a risk.

Cody's face goes ghost white.

EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Cody walks out of the bank like he's been shot. He reaches  
his car and leans against it, speechless.

INT. CODY'S CAR - DAY

Cody drives, lost in sad thought.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jackie looks out her window, smiling. Cody slumps out of his car, defeated. Her smile falls.

Cody walks feebly to the door. Jackie rushes to meet him. She almost catches him as they hug.

IN THE KITCHEN

Jackie makes Cody a cup of coffee, adding a splash of hard liquor. She gives it to him and sits next to him.

JACKIE

That banker's a bastard.

CODY

Yeah.

JACKIE

Did he say why?

CODY

I'm not making a profit yet. Even though I'm this close.

Jackie puts her arm around him.

CODY

That's it. It's done. I'm done.

JACKIE

Don't say that, sweetie. You can still make it work.

CODY

You didn't even want me to open the place to begin with.

JACKIE

Well I've changed my mind. I'm allowed to do that, you know.

CODY

Just in time. I'm selling the store.

JACKIE

Oh sweetie, don't say that.

CODY

I'm leaving, Mom. I need to get out of here. I'm going to Seattle.

JACKIE  
Seattle?? You'll turn into some  
grungy environmentalist!

CODY  
No I won't.

JACKIE  
Just give it some time and think it  
through. Call Jean. Let her know  
what happened.

CODY  
Jean won't care.

JACKIE  
Don't make the decision right now.  
You're too emotional. Trust me, I  
know about these things.

Cody gets up.

CODY  
I gotta go.

JACKIE  
Stay and I'll make you some food.

He kisses her on the cheek, then walks out of the house.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody places a sign in the window: BUSINESS FOR SALE. Devon  
walks up as Cody stares at it. He pats Cody on the shoulder.

DEVON  
Eddie really screwed it up that  
day, didn't he?

CODY  
It's not Eddie's fault. It's no  
one's fault. It just happened.

DEVON  
I'm going to miss it.

CODY  
Me too, little buddy.

DEVON  
You don't have to move to Seattle.  
You wouldn't like it anyway. It  
rains there all the time.

CODY

I need to go there, Devon. It's like how you want to go to college. Don't you want to get away from your parents and live on your own?

Devon nods slightly.

CODY

Same thing.

DEVON

But who am I gonna hang out with? 16 year olds?

CODY

You'll be fine.

Cody puts his arm around Devon's shoulder.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody drinks a bottle of root beer behind the counter. The lights are off.

The phone RINGS. Cody answers.

CODY

Hello?

MR. GRAY (V.O.)

Is this The Eye Opener?

CODY

Yeah.

MR. GRAY (V.O.)

I'm calling on behalf of my client about your for sale sign. There was no realtor listed, so I thought I'd call directly.

CODY

Nope, no realtor yet. If your client doesn't mind, I'd just as soon go without one.

MR. GRAY (V.O.)

My client would like to put in a bid for \$80,000.

CODY

Your client is willing to do that without seeing any financials?

MR. GRAY (V.O.)

They know the area and they know the business. They are comfortable with their bid.

CODY

Wow. Okay. Then I guess you just bought a comic book shop.

MR. GRAY (V.O.)

Are you available on Wednesday?

CODY

Any other day would work.

MR. GRAY (V.O.)

Thursday? Noon? I can bring the contract for your review.

CODY

Great. See you then.

Cody hangs up. He looks around, sad.

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cody stacks cardboard boxes in the living room. His things are scattered everywhere. The front door opens. Eddie answers.

EDDIE

You don't waste a minute, do you?

CODY

I've wasted enough already.

EDDIE

So Devon wasn't kidding.

CODY

Already had a phone interview with a comic shop in the city center.

Eddie sighs.

CODY

So I'm going to want to sublet this place until I figure out if I like it out there.

EDDIE

Hmm.

CODY

Interested? I can leave furniture here, so you can move right in.

EDDIE

Do I have to pay rent?

CODY

Yes.

Eddie considers. He looks at the TV, and the video game system. He gets nostalgic.

EDDIE

Your terms are acceptable. Even if you are bailing.

Cody picks up another box. Eddie looks sheepish.

EDDIE

Listen man. I'm sorry I didn't show up that day.

CODY

Water under the bridge.

EDDIE

Really. I was a shitty friend.

CODY

You were totally a shitty friend. But I forgive you.

Cody smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CODY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Cody wakes up to the morning sun blasting through his window.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Cody reads a tourist guide to Seattle, shoveling down a bowl of cereal.

IN THE GARAGE

Cody sloughs outside. He walks with his newspaper carrier's bag slung over his shoulder.

He gets into his car and takes off out of the garage.

ON THE ROAD

Cody drives, apathetic. He passes buildings that are empty of stores, abandoned retailers and strip malls. A grungy, Seattle-sounding band WAILS on the radio.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody pulls up. He takes a long look at his store, takes a deep breath, then walks up and unlocks the door.

INT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY

Cody brings a stack of financial documents out from the back room. He places them on the counter. He looks at his watch, and waits.

After a few minutes, MR. GRAY, 50 and serious, walks inside.

MR. GRAY

Cody?

CODY

That's me. You must be Mr. Gray.

The two shake hands. Cody walks behind the counter.

MR. GRAY

My client is running late.

CODY

That's fine.

Mr. Gray places a manila envelope on the counter.

MR. GRAY

Here is our standard contract. I'm sure your counsel will look it over, but if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them. We have a second agreement, but my client wishes to discuss the contents of it with you first.

CODY

Fine.

MR. GRAY

Do you have your information ready?

CODY

Full inventory of the store, and all orders from the last six months.

Cody pulls out a neatly-packed box of paperwork.

MR. GRAY

Excellent.

CODY

I'll just give this a quick read.

Mr. Gray nods. Cody starts reading the contract, and we hear the front door OPEN. Cody points his finger at one page.

CODY

Is this your client's first shop?

JEAN (V.O.)

Well I dated a real uptight owner once. Does that count?

Cody's face goes white. He looks up - AND IT'S JEAN!

CODY

What are you doing here?

JEAN

Buying your store.

CODY

How'd you know it was for sale?

Jean smiles.

EXT. THE EYE OPENER - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Jean-Paul gets walked by POOPSIE, a giant blue Great Dane. He tries to slow her down in front of the store.

He looks at the window and sees the BUSINESS FOR SALE sign. He grabs his cell phone and dials a number.

JEAN (V.O.)

Jean-Paul left the dog shop after Poopsie's beauty parlor visit. He saw the for sale sign.

INT. SILVER HOUSE - NIGHT

Jean sits across from Mr. Silver, who has a huge bottle of gin next to him, and an empty glass in his hand.

JEAN (V.O.)

So I talked to my dad and told him I was tired of getting hit on by his old, smelly clients. I said he should take a chance on a young entrepreneur.

Mr. Silver nods. He takes out his checkbook.

BACK TO THE EYE OPENER

JEAN

So because of the generous donation of the Silver Parental Bank and Trust, I can do now what I wanted to do months ago.

Cody is confused.

JEAN

I hope I don't have to do it alone.

Jean hands Cody a second manila envelope.

JEAN

I want to buy half the store, so you and I can run it together.

CODY

You're serious.

JEAN

Serious, and without any strings. I want a partner. Not a PARTNER.

CODY

You're not mad at me?

JEAN

No, I'm totally pissed. But you're a fantastic businessman when you're not pulled in a million directions.

Cody blushes.

CODY

Would you be a silent partner?

JEAN

Have I ever been silent?

Cody smirks.

JEAN

I want to share the workload, so we can have lives as well as jobs.

CODY

Lives together?

JEAN

From 10am to 8pm six days a week. Let's see how that goes first.

CODY

Is that a maybe?

JEAN

You broke up with me, remember?

Cody smiles, shakes his head.

CODY

I just rented my place to Eddie.

JEAN

Then we're definitely not getting back together now.

CODY

Well, I should read this contract over before I sign it.

JEAN

Which one?

Cody looks at both folders. He picks up Mr. Gray's folder and throws it out. Jean smiles.

JEAN

Wanna get some coffee?

Cody nods. They smile, and start to walk outside.

JEAN

I've got some good ideas for how to get the word out about the store.

CODY

Don't even worry about it. I've got an awesome design for a Web site. I should show it to you.

Jean shakes her head. The front door closes behind them.

FADE OUT.