

Blindsided

by

Scott Eldredge

WGA# 15765569

Scott Eldredge
PO Box 311
La Honda, CA 94020
seldredg@sbcglobal.net
650-747-9613

FADE IN:

EXT. MIKE & JESSICA'S UPSCALE HOUSE/DECK - MORNING

Deck in manicured back yard, sun filtering through a vine-covered trellis. RACHEL and JESSICA talk at table after breakfast. Rachel is thirties, an outdoorsy REI beauty with brown curly-hair, rumpled sweats. Jessica is also thirties, polished, urbane, looking sharp even in jogging clothes.

RACHEL

How do you eat like this and stay thin?

JESSICA

I hoard calories and spend them all at once. Tomorrow we have gruel. ... I have something to show you. I've been saving it. Help me clear the table.

Jessica and Rachel remove all the dishes from the table, and Jessica sweeps the tablecloth off with a flourish.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Look familiar?

Rachel studies the metal table, then leans forward and looks closely at the surface. CLOSE ON: An odd imperfection in the otherwise nice finish, like someone leaned with a forearm into a clear wet finish.

RACHEL

Is this it? Is this actually it!

JESSICA

Mike found it and had it restored.

RACHEL

Oh my god. This is the Mountain House table, isn't it. The actual table!

JESSICA

(laughs)

You were with Alex, and I was with Ben whats-his-name--Wellington, Worthington, or Burlington. Some multisyllabic "ton."

RACHEL

They went off to pee, and that football player leered at me and said--what did he say?

JESSICA

"I'm ready when you are," or something equally subtle. You were insulted. You took offense at everything back then.

RACHEL

(laughs)

I did. I gave him the finger. And when he came over and leaned on the table and got in my face, you superglued his arm to it (laughing), and then you mooned him!

JESSICA

I did not.

RACHEL

You did too!

JESSICA

A half moon maybe.

RACHEL

Only because your pants were too tight to get down! (laughs more) Oh my god! And Alex came back and looked at the guy and said, all serious, "What has six legs and no brain?"

JESSICA

(laughing)

And you poured a pitcher of beer down his pants and he chased us all out of the restaurant holding the table!

Rachel jumps up and points at the table, laughing so hard she can barely stand.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And Alex stopped and called back "Waiter, waiter, we'd like another table!" And you laughed so hard you fell down and couldn't get up.

RACHEL

Alex had to drag me away. I laughed so hard at him the guy got embarrassed and left!

They collapse in hysterics and need a minute.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

God, I haven't laughed that hard in years.

JESSICA

Me neither.

RACHEL

It's a miracle we ever graduated! ... I've forgotten Alex was like that.

JESSICA

That's why you married him.

Rachel rubs her hand across the imprint on the table.

RACHEL

Funny how relationships become memories. ... Shall we hike?

JESSICA

Yes. Let's walk off breakfast and go out for lunch.

EXT. PORSCHE SUV - MORNING

Porsche SUV drives along wooded road.

INT. PORSCHE SUV - MORNING

Jessica drives. Rachel looks around the interior.

RACHEL

(sniffs)

This smells new. What is it?
Another Toyota?

JESSICA

You are distracted. It's a Porsche, dear. Porsh-eh. It's Mike's. His nostalgia business has taken off.

RACHEL

So he figured out how to make money
by not growing up.

JESSICA

He sells memories to other people
who can't do it either. We have fun
with it. "Nostalgia. History
without the ugly."

They drive in silence. Rachel stares at passing trees.

DAYDREAM

She sees scenes from the long-ago table incident:

-Alex dragging her to her feet and them running and laughing
hand in hand.

-Alex kissing her.

BACK TO SCENE

JESSICA (CONT'D)

So, what is it? You've said nothing
loudly for two weeks.

RACHEL

What?

JESSICA

We talk every day, but you've said
nothing for two weeks.

RACHEL

And you've asked nothing in reply.
Thank you. You always know when I
need to just, process.

JESSICA

Times up. If you don't tell me,
I'll just make up something and
spread rumors.

(threatening)

I have a Facebook account.

RACHEL

A project. Another project.

JESSICA

He gets so excited when he's
creating!

RACHEL
Yes, he can be cute.

JESSICA
Another blender?

RACHEL
You mean "ultimate food processor"?
No. Something electronic.

JESSICA
What's he know about electronics?

RACHEL
NOthing, I thought. Now he's all--I
don't know. He started buying
electronic things and disappearing
into the basement. He got these
Russians things on eBay... must be
from the cold war. Hammer and
sickle, and pages of writing in
Russian, and he looked like he was
reading it.

JESSICA
(laughs)
That bad.

RACHEL
I don't know what it is. Except
it's expensive. He spends money as
if we had it.

JESSICA
Alex.

RACHEL
Oh, right. Alex. He passed through
cute to obsessed, and paranoid. ...
And single.

JESSICA
Single? You don't think he's having
an affair, do you? Alex?

Kay purses her lips.

EXT. HIKING TRAIL - MORNING

Jessica leads along a wooded trail. Rachel drags along
behind.

JESSICA

You're missing a gorgeous day. And me.

RACHEL

Shit. I am. How fucked is that?

JESSICA

What do you want?

Rachel stops.

RACHEL

I want him to be different.

JESSICA

But you married Alex.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

Middle-class house, a bit neglected-uncut grass, garden unkempt. House next door is for sale with look of foreclosure --burned out grass, dead garden, etc. Front door of Burdick's opens and out pops ALEX BURDICK in his underwear struggling into a robe as he retrieves newspaper from drive. He's thirties, boyish, shaggy brown hair, loose jointed.

ACROSS THE STREET

IVANA KOVACS, trim woman similar in size to Rachel, watering her immaculate garden, sees Alex.

BACK TO SCENE

IVANA

Good morning, Alex.

ALEX

(surprised)

Hi.

IVANA

Cut your grass.

He waves quickly and darts back inside.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/ENTRY - MORNING

Alex enters, tossing THE paper on a large pile on the floor near a table on which is a pile of unopened mail.

KITCHEN

He enters and surveys the mess on the counter. He finds a plate of mold-fuzzy toast and eggs. He picks it up and turns to the door to the basement and sees a white board calendar. He walks over and looks at it.

CLOSE ON: "Rachel back."

BACK TO SCENE: His brow furrows.

DAYDREAM: He flashes on Rachel's sad face as she walks out the front door.

BACK TO SCENE: He opens the door and heads down the stairs with the plate of disgusting food.

BASEMENT

Mad-scientist basement of sorts. Slash of light falling on workbench from a small ceiling-level window where the taped-over newspaper has come loose. On the workbench is an expensive MICROWAVE with some electronic things attached to it. Near it on the workbench are some other exotic-looking ELECTRONIC ITEMS with cables coming out of them. There is also a BLENDER with some coiled colored wires coming out of it and a CLOCK on the wall above the workbench.

At a right angle to the workbench on the wall is an old refrigerator. Scattered about are boxes, some with foreign characters on them. Nearby is a card table and folding chairs on which are some drawings and diagrams and old food containers.

Alex flips on a light as he enters the room. He puts the food down on the workbench and reseals the paper covering the window.

He looks closely at the electronic items on the workbench.

CLOSE ON: Where pieces have been bonded together with adhesive.

BACK TO SCENE: He touches the glue to see that it's set, and picks up the piece and tests the bond. Satisfied, he begins connecting cables to the back of the "microwave." Periodically during this process he pauses and looks away, as if listening to something.

On the wall behind the machine is a 220V outlet with a plug in it from the machine, and a small circuit breaker box with only one 220V GFI TYPE BREAKER in it.

Alex flips it to the on position, and the machine powers on with some glows and LEDS and the electronic HUM we know from science fiction movies.

Alex himself amps up a step.

He opens the microwave door, inserts the plate of rotting food, and quickly sets the controls. Numbers appear on the LED screen as he punches buttons.

He punches the start button, and the machine THEREMIN HUMS electronically, strangely, as it runs. (A theremin is the instrument that produces the strange electronic sounds often used in 1950s sci-fi movies.)

Alex touches the top as he leans over to look inside and watch. He YELPS and yanks his hand back.

A musical CELL PHONE RINGTONE plays and the machine finishes its cycle. Alex removes plate of fresh, hot food. He smiles and tentatively tastes it. His face lights up, and at the same time slowly relaxes a bit into a less maniacal expression. He takes another bite and chews slowly, noting the time as he does. He puts the plate down and leaves.

EXT. LEARNTECH EDUCATIONAL CORPORATION/PARKING LOT - MORNING

Alex pulls in and parks.

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - MORNING

Fidgety Alex at messy desk, looking first at one paper then another. He picks up the phone and punches two buttons.

ALEX

Hi, Nina. ... This is Alex. ...
Alex Burdick. Very funny. I'm
having trouble with the Reading
Skills for the Real World project.
Could you come over and fill me in
on a few things, maybe throw some
ideas around ... Great.

He hangs up, and in a moment NINA enters (her office is next to Alex's). Mid twenties, dressed borderline too edgy for LearnTech.

NINA

You're back. Hello stranger.

ALEX

I--haven't been gone.

NINA

Yes you have. Remember when we use to work together? We collaborated.

ALEX

I've been...busy.

NINA

I hope so. You've got deliverables this week.

ALEX

I do?

NINA

It's been a while since you picked my brain.

ALEX

Since...the vocabulary project. You knocked 'em dead with your second grade definition of "yawn."

NINA

"Big open mouth when you are tired." An award winner. So, what's the problem? I love meetings.

Nina sits down across from Alex.

ALEX

Reading Skills for the Real World. I need more reality-based reading activities for high school students.

NINA

You need a new title for starters. How about "Read Hard or Die."

ALEX

That's good. Thanks. I need a complete list of activities and I need to write a prototype chapter that Corman asked for last week. I think it was last week.

NINA

You waited until now to start! For El Presidenté?

ALEX

Apparently I did. It's due today?

Alex looks at his computer.

NINA
What's it say?

ALEX
Four weeks ago it says "Create
schedule." Then nothing.

NINA
It's due Thursday, and I need it to
start the third world version. You
need to feed Corman on time to keep
him out of your project. Even if
it's scraps.

ALEX
Not sure where the time went.

NINA
You've been out a lot. Have you
done anything when you were here?

ALEX
I need help, Nina. You can
denigrate me later.

NINA
I will. What area?

ALEX
Insurance. I need easy-to-read,
high-interest, relevant, fun
activities related to filling out
insurance forms.

NINA
Adults can't fill out insurance
forms. Why should kids have to?

ALEX
New law. No form left behind.

NINA
Insurance.

Head falls forward. SNORING sounds.

ALEX
Backing into a parking meter,
having lightning strike your nose
ring.

NINA
Getting hurt while robbing the
liquor store. And I thought you
were wasting your time.

Alex gestures "Well?"

NINA (CONT'D)
Do I have ideas? Me? En guard! How
about something involving
disability insurance and multiple
personalities.

ALEX
Hah! Got that already.

NINA
Repressed memories.

ALEX
Uh-huh.

NINA
Breast implants?

ALEX
Two. Coming and going.

DR. CORMAN, the professorial president of LearnTech, appears
in the doorway.

CORMAN
Excuse me. Hello Nina. Hangin in
there, kiddo?

NINA
Doing ok. Thanks for asking.

CORMAN
Alex, I'm leaving at three for a
meeting with the director of the
President's Council on Ignorance.
Do you have anything on the Reading
in the Real World project for me?
I'll look it over in the car.

ALEX
Nina's helping me polish the
prototype chapter now.

CORMAN
Great. Leave what you have on my
desk.

ALEX
It's on insurance forms.

CORMAN
Oh. What's the next section?

ALEX
How to read appliance warranties.

CORMAN
Anything good coming up?

ALEX
Prenuptial agreements. Next week.

CORMAN
I'll wait.

Corman starts to leave then turns around.

CORMAN (CONT'D)
The online version will be ADA
compliant, right? This is a federal
contract.

ALEX
Absolutely. We're working on an A-D-
D version that we're really excited
about. The narrative portion of
each lesson is limited to 144
characters and tweeted. The video
is processed with a shaky hand-held
filter, all served on a three-note
pounding sub-rhythm that never
ends.

CORMAN
Good. We'll need to test that.

ALEX
We will.

Corman leaves.

NINA
Have a good meeting, Dr. Corman.
(to Alex) Why do you make up shit
like that?

ALEX
Like what?

NINA

Like "we're polishing the prototype." Just say it's not done. He's not out to get you. You always pull good shit out of your butt somehow.

ALEX

You never know.

NINA

Sure I do.

ALEX

What'd he mean by "hanging in there, kiddo"?

NINA

Just Corman being Corman. He'll quit asking when he's ok with it.

ALEX

Ok with what?

NINA

(subdued)

Miles. ... Is it lunch yet?

ALEX

You wanna go out to lunch?

NINA

Sure, at lunch time. Give you time to write your prototype. And later you can help me with the export version.

INT. CAR - DAY

Alex drives silently, his face screwed up a little. Nina looks at him.

NINA

Something yanking your strings inside? You and Rachel?

ALEX

Rachel... no, well, yes, no, we're fine. I've just been working a lot.

NINA

Not at work. On what? That musical about learning objectives?

ALEX
No... another project.

NINA
Ok, if you don't want to talk about
it, we won't. I too can sit in
stony silence, and I'm not even a
man. Watch me.

Nina sits stonily. Alex can't help himself and laughs.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Alex and Nina eat.

NINA
So tell me, how's the real-world
project. Any new twists?

ALEX
The usual. Important subjects,
sharply written, edited to
lifelessness, saying little to
everyone--

NINA
--but offending no one. The prime
directive.

ALEX
Sales.

A SERVER stops by with pot of coffee.

SERVER
More coffee?

ALEX
Please.

NINA
Me too.

Server pours. Alex puts some sugar in his and gets lost
stirring it, finally looking up to see Nina staring at him.

ALEX
Oops.

NINA
It is Rachel, isn't it?

ALEX
Yes... I think we're...

NINA
Something happen?

ALEX
No. We were just having, you know,
problems, normal married problems.
You know.

NINA
I don't know. I'm young and single.
I have young single problems. What
do you have?

ALEX
I'm sure they're all online
somewhere. ... I've been working,
and I... kinda...I dunno...might
have ignored her, I guess.

NINA
What did she do?

ALEX
Accused me of ignoring her.

NINA
The bitch!

ALEX
It turned into--

NINA
--an opportunity to enrich your
relationship?

ALEX
An issue.

NINA
Well, did you work it out, or what?
Or what I guess.

ALEX
She's visiting a college friend.
Wanted to... needed some... space.
She said.

NINA
More space, the final frontier.
That could be good for both of you.
(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

A lot of relationships improve when people don't see each other.

INT. AIRPORT/ARRIVAL GATE - EVENING

Rachel flows out of tunnel, looking around. Alex isn't there. She looks pissed and continues to Baggage Claim.

BAGGAGE CLAIM

Rachel struggling, fights between two fellow travelers and with effort hauls her bag off the carousel. She extracts herself from the crowd and comes face to face with Alex.

RACHEL

(coolly)

Hi, Alex.

ALEX

(sheepishly)

Let me get that. Hi. You're back.
I'm glad you're back.

RACHEL

Really? You noticed I was gone? How nice.

Rachel begins walking.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Where are you parked?

ALEX

Somewhere in short term.

They walk.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You look rested.

Rachel stops walking and looks at him.

RACHEL

Something happened, didn't it?

ALEX

What? Something happened just because I said you look rested?

RACHEL

Exactly. You haven't seen me for months. Are you on medication now? I hope you're not self-medicating.

ALEX

Rachel. I'll explain. I know I've been...ah.. I'm not on anything. I--

RACHEL

--Not now. Let's get out of here.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Alex negotiates traffic. Rachel studies him.

RACHEL

You look tired. Are you all right?

ALEX

I've been working hard. Rachel, I've finished the unified field modulator. It's finished. Done.

RACHEL

Your project. Right. That's nice, Alex. I know how much it means to you. I used to mean that much to you. Have you been getting enough sleep?

ALEX

What do you mean "I used to mean that much to you." You still mean that much to me. You always mean that much to me.

RACHEL

How would I know? I was thinking, while I was gone. I was gone, you know, for two weeks. We used to have fun together. We used to do things. Sometimes nothing, but we laughed a lot. It all stopped when you disappeared into the basement.

ALEX

(excited)

Yes, exactly, I finished it.

RACHEL

I'm sorry. You were saying. You finished your project.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

The one that kept you in the basement for months. While I used our season tickets to the theater, alone, and made excuses for you at parties, and Miles' funeral.

ALEX

Miles? Nina's brother?

RACHEL

Yes. He died, while you were in the basement. When I came down and said it was time for the service, you said you were busy. As I remember, you had an accent that day. You missed the chance to hear him described as a humble.

ALEX

Miles? ... He's a pompous ass?

RACHEL

Not any more.

ALEX

What happened?

RACHEL

Fast-food poisoning.

ALEX

Oh. ...Shit. ... I was saying that I finished the time machine. The Timesaver. Finished it. It's done. It works.

RACHEL

Timesaver. Sounds like a banking service. So you can, like, travel in it?

ALEX

No. It's a little one.

RACHEL

A little one. So, with this little time machine, you can...put a pencil or something in it and move it to, say, next week?

Alex becomes increasingly animated as they talk.

ALEX

That's right.

RACHEL
Doesn't it disappear?

ALEX
No, it's just older. Lives at that
date, but today.

RACHEL
Why doesn't it disappear?

ALEX
I couldn't afford to build that
part of it, even in a model. And if
I did, I couldn't test it, because
the pencil would be gone. I don't
know how to retrieve anything. Yet.

RACHEL
You've done this, put something in
your machine, a spoon or pencil or
something, and moved it in time?

ALEX
Yes. I've done it.

RACHEL
And you can tell your machine works
because the pencil or whatever is
older?

Alex turns to look at her and swerves.

ALEX
Rachel, think I'm crazy if you
like. But don't think I'm stupid!

RACHEL
Watch your driving! No, no, Alex. I
didn't mean it that way. I thought,
maybe, the eraser was smaller or
something. Really.

ALEX
I'll show you.

Alex becomes stoney silence.

RACHEL
Alex? ... shit. Maybe you can put
our relationship in your machine.
It's small enough, isn't it?

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - EVENING

Car pulls into drive as garage door opens, enters garage and stops with lurch. Alex lurches from car and punches button to lower the door. He heads into house.

RACHEL

Can you help me with my bags?

Rachel exits car. Alex hurries back for bags.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/KITCHEN

Rachel enters with carry-on luggage and Alex follows with bags. The kitchen has been hurriedly cleaned--mostly messes pushed aside. Rachel notices. Alex opens the refrigerator.

RACHEL

Alex, what's the matter with you?
Calm down. You're making me nervous.

ALEX

I think the bananas are rotten!

RACHEL

Could you take my bags to the bedroom? Please. And get the one in the back seat also. If the bananas are rotten, I'm sure they can wait a few minutes more.

Alex stops, exasperated. Picks up all her bags and struggles out of the room.

Rachel makes two scotch on the rocks. Alex returns and she gives him one.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Here.

Alex takes the drink and puts it down and opens refrigerator. Looks in fridge, then gets down on knees and rummages.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Jesus, Alex! When you were building this thing you were a goddamn recluse. (takes a drink)
Now that you've finished it you're too wired to even drink. Can't you find some middle ground?

(beat)

I think its time for a pill.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Join me? They come in fruit flavors
now. I didn't use to need these,
you know.

ALEX
I'll calm down when I show you I'm
not crazy!

Rachel puts the drinks down and looks in her purse for pills.

ALEX (CONT'D)
AH-HA!!

Rachel jerks involuntarily and the contents of her purse
erupt onto the floor. The pill bottle rolls to Alex, still on
his knees, holding shriveled black banana.

ALEX (CONT'D)
It's perfect.

RACHEL
Yes, Alex. It's perfect. But I'm
not, and you're coming apart. I'm
going to lie down.

ALEX
No! Wait!

Alex scurries to Rachel and guides her to a seat at table. He
gets her drink, scoops up some pills from the floor and dumps
them in front of her. He picks up the banana and sits
opposite her.

ALEX (CONT'D)
How old would you say this banana
is?

RACHEL
I don't know. I don't care. Tell
me, how old is your banana?

ALEX
Let's see. I didn't buy them. You
must have, before you left. When
was that?

RACHEL
You don't know. What a surprise.

Alex continues to stare expectantly.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
It's a bad banana. I can see that.

ALEX

How do you like your bananas?

Rachel stares at him for a moment; determines it's a real question.

RACHEL

Slightly green on the ends. No black spots. No bruises. No more than two labels on it if possible. Organic. Dolphin safe. And I'm just playing along here. Don't think we're having a real conversation.

ALEX

Come on.

He leads her downstairs.

BASEMENT

Alex leads Rachel to the workbench where the heavily modified microwave sits.

ALEX

I'll send it back oh a week and a half, and you'll have a lovely slightly green on the ends banana.

RACHEL

Is that my new \$800 microwave with auto-defrost, speed cook, convection, and crisping!! Crisping, dammit! I waited my whole life for that microwave!

ALEX

Please, Rachel, just give me a minute to show you. You'll forget about the microwave.

Alex throws the GFI breaker to power up the machine, which HUMS softly. He puts the banana in the time machine and punches buttons to set the time, and then pushes the start button. Lights come on and the machine THEREMIN HUMS. The cycle ends with a GREEN LIGHT and a the mobile phone RINGTONE. Alex opens the door and takes out a ripe banana. He peels it and gives it to Rachel. She takes a tentative bite and chews slowly.

RACHEL

It's good!

She takes another bite and goes to fridge. She opens the door and sees some beer and wine and old takeout bags.

ALEX

Try the counter upstairs.

Rachel hurries upstairs and returns with a carton of milk and a glass.

RACHEL

Do this.

Alex pours a chunky glass of sour milk and wafts it under his nose like a fine wine, grimacing. He rejuvenates the milk, takes a drink, and passes the glass to Rachel, who sips, then drinks.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

My god, Alex! Oh my god! Do you know what you've done? It's worth a fortune. We're saved.

ALEX

It's not about money! That's all you talked about the whole time I was working on it! It was expensive. I'll make it up to you. We'll take a trip or something.

RACHEL

It's not all I said, Alex; it's all you heard! And even then you weren't listening! And we can't take a trip. We can't afford it! When you weren't in the basement, you were out spending money. Our money. All of our money.

They glare at each other, and then Rachel smiles a little, and then Alex.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

But that's all past now, isn't it. You succeeded. Are you patenting it?

ALEX

No.

RACHEL

No? Are you going to? Seems like a good idea.

ALEX

No.

RACHEL

Why not?

ALEX

There are tests. Updates. Mandatory upgrades.(urgently) Secrecy is important. Very important. You see that, don't you?

He looks at the window to make sure it's still taped over.

RACHEL

Absolutely. I'm not asking you to put it on YouTube. Microsoft use patents. Apple uses patents. I bet the Chinese are even getting their own now. I just thought we should...you know...protect it.

Alex peers at her from narrowed eyes.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

What's the matter, Alex? Did I say something? I'm sorry. Let's take our drinks upstairs, make a fire, and discuss this, celebrate a little. You're tired, I know. I'm tired. Our lives just changed completely and forever. I understand.

When Rachel gets the drinks from the workbench, she smells the milk in the carton and gags. She puts the carton in the fridge by the workbench, then gets their drinks and heads upstairs.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Come on, honey. This is so great.

Alex trips the breaker switch. The machine powers off to silence and he follows.

LIVING ROOM

Rachel flips a switch and gas logs light. Alex enters. She give him his drink and plops on couch, patting it next to her for him to sit. He sits next to her.

RACHEL

(tenderly)

To be honest, Alex, I never in a million years thought you'd make anything that did anything, let alone what you said it would do.

ALEX

It's ok. Who would. I mean, there were times...

RACHEL

Have you thought about all the things you could do with it? A big one? A full-size one?

ALEX

I could watch Egyptian engineers set the capstone on the Great Pyramid at Giza! I could invent the front-fastening velcro bra fastener before my adolescence.

RACHEL

We could get good seats for the first performance of Hamlet. Or invest without worrying if past performance is an indication of future potential.

ALEX

(suspicious)

There you go again. If we draw attention to ourselves we'll lose control--to government, business, science. They're not ready. Can you imagine what they would do with time travel? Look what happened with atomic power. Planet killing bombs and lethal garbage that lasts 10,000 years.

RACHEL

What about the benefits? We have to develop it, don't we? Can you keep the benefits from the world?

ALEX

Sure.

RACHEL

The rest of the world can't handle time travel, but you can?

ALEX

(serious)

Yes. That's the wonder of it. It's mine. Ours. Our secret. Yes?

RACHEL

(light)

Of course. It's absolutely fucking amazing, Alex. How did you do it? Tell me. I'll listen this time.

ALEX

(animated again)

You were visiting your father. I was watching TV, and this show on channeling comes on. You know, spirits talking through people. The Oracle at Delphi, Edgar Cayce, Psychic Friends, Meryl Streep.

RACHEL

Uh-huh.

ALEX

I watched it, and I woke up in the middle of the night with these voices in my head, telling me how to do this thing. Build this machine. I'd hear something, and I understood. I knew how to do it.

RACHEL

Did you know who they were?

ALEX

Tesla, and Einstein, and this alien with an unpronounceable name who worked with Spielberg on Close Encounters. That's what he said.

RACHEL

All those months you were mumbling to yourself and ignoring me, you were on a conference call in your head!

ALEX

It was hard to stop.

RACHEL

And, right now, I'm talking to?

ALEX

Me.

RACHEL

You.

ALEX

Me. Alex.

His eyes look up as he checks his mental status.

ALEX (CONT'D)

They're gone. They left. This morning after I used it for the first time.

RACHEL

I could have talked to someone who worked with Spielberg, and I'm just thinking you're becoming an asshole.

Alex frowns, then smiles. Rachel laughs, then Alex.

ALEX

It was hard to explain. I was really busy, in here. You see, time doesn't exist. Not linear time. Past, present, future. Rewind, play, fast forward.

RACHEL

Foreplay, sex, sleep.

ALEX

That's right. What we think of as time is actually an expanded present that includes the past and future. The machine changes time channels, like punching buttons on a car radio. All the radio channels are always there, in the air. You just need to tune into them. Time's the same.

RACHEL

Speaking of which, let's have some music. This is a celebration.

Rachel turns on the stereo. An old song with a dance beat plays.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Com'on. Remember Mountain House. After the table.

She pulls Alex up and they dance, awkward at first, then looser, bits of old dances, laughing.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
My God! We used to do this!

ALEX
No one felt things as deeply.

RACHEL
Or as often!

ALEX
It was fun then, wasn't it.

RACHEL
We fell in love then.

Song finishes, and next is slow. Alex and Rachel draw close.

ALEX
I remember, moments like this, with you.

RACHEL
When time didn't exist.

Alex and Rachel kiss, barely rocking to the music. Rachel sighs.

KITCHEN - MORNING

Alex enters dressed for work. Rachel is at the table, not dressed for work, going through a large stack of unopened mail. Alex kisses her and looks at the pile.

ALEX
I got behind.

RACHEL
You never started.

ALEX
Not going in today?

RACHEL
Tomorrow. The wheels of H-R can turn another day without me. I'll catch up on the mail.

ALEX
Gotta run. I overslept. Thanks for making me late.

He kisses her again and leaves. Rachel goes back to the mail, picks up an envelope, and frowns. She opens it.

INT. LEARNTECH LOBBY - MORNING

Alex enters, deep in thought, meets Dr. Corman.

CORMAN

Good morning, Alex. Lost in thought already?

ALEX

Morning. Yes, I had some ideas for activities in the shower. Want to get them down before I lose them.

CORMAN

Good, good. What activities can kids do in the shower? When I was...well, never mind.

They part. Alex, thinking of Corman, smiles to himself as he meets Nina walking and reading.

NINA

He's smiling. Something wrong?

ALEX

Hi, Nina. No, everything's fine.

NINA

She deserves it. I like Rachel. So, how did you fix everything? Give me some relationship tips, in case I decide to enslave some man.

ALEX

Superglue.

NINA

Too hard to get off.

ALEX

Start with rubber cement. It's fun to peel.

They continue. Nina goes into her office, then Alex into his.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Rachel walks up to front door.

INT. BANK - DAY

Rachel sits at a desk across from a BANKER and takes some statements out of her purse.

BANKER

Hello. My name is Jane Doe. How can I help you?

Somewhere in the room but distant another VOICE can be heard saying "Hello. I'm Jane Doe."

RACHEL

Hello...Jane. I'm Rachel Burdick. I'd like to find out what's going on with our mortgage. This statement says we're behind. I don't know how that's possible. It's deducted automatically.

BANKER

Let me bring up your account, and we'll see.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Rachel exits, looking distressed.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Alex pulls into driveway.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Alex enters from garage, puts down briefcase. Looks in living room for Rachel.

ALEX

Rachel!

RACHEL (O.S.)

In here.

DEN

Rachel is at a desk with papers spread out all over.

RACHEL

We need to talk.

ALEX

Already? Uh..sure...let's talk.

She picks up a number of bank statements.

RACHEL

I went to the bank today. We have less than no money. Alex, you spent all our money, all your money. You maxed out all your credit cards and got new ones and maxed them out. You took out two home equity loans and spent them before I even knew we had them! How could you do that without telling me!

ALEX

I was afraid you would have stopped me.

RACHEL

Damn right I would have stopped you!

ALEX

See. I was right.

RACHEL

Did it occur to you maybe there was some way to finish your machine without ruining our lives? I just paid three mortgage payments with my credit card. Do you know how much we have to pay in two weeks to stay afloat? Thirteen thousand six hundred and forty-two dollars and sixty-seven cents! Not counting whatever I don't know about.

ALEX

Wow. ... Shit... We'll think of something.

RACHEL

Oh good. It's we now. How about Einstein and Tesla and your alien friend. They got any money? Maybe you could call Spielberg.

ALEX

I can't remember the alien's name.

RACHEL

We need to make some money from the machine.

ALEX

NO! It has to be a secret! DO YOU UNDERSTAND! SECRET!

RACHEL

You're scaring me.

Alex goes to window and stares out.

ALEX

I couldn't stop, Rachel. I couldn't stop, and I couldn't tell you.

RACHEL

That's no excuse! That's how you are every time you go on one of these mental benders. Why couldn't you just write a musical or build a better blender or something cheap?

ALEX

(weakly)

Tesla, Einstein, this alien...

RACHEL

Fuck your friends. I want to put our joint checkbook in the machine. I've got an idea.

ALEX

Just get a new cover. They're free.

RACHEL

No, actually, they're not anymore. You asked me not to think you're stupid. Give me the same credit. Show me how to work that thing. Now.

BASEMENT

Alex demonstrates the machine to Rachel.

ALEX

You power it on here (flips the GFI breaker). Use the keypad to enter the time you want to go to. Month, day, and year.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

Put the item in the machine, and push this button. That's it.

Rachel puts checkbook in machine and sets it.

RACHEL

Ok. I'm ready.

ALEX

Where are you sending our checkbook? And why?

RACHEL

Back two weeks, to the day after our direct deposits went in, when we had money.

Rachel pushes the button, the machine THEREMIN HUMS, and Alex and Rachel stagger dizzily and grab each other for support. The machine stops with the sound of the RINGTONE, a different one. Alex and Rachel don't notice.

ALEX

You ok?

RACHEL

Little dizzy.

NOTE - RULES OF THE MACHINE:

1. Reality changes a little bit any time the machine is used. Not all changes are visible. Person is unaware of his/her own changes.
2. When a personal item is time-traveled, the changes are significantly more, and faintness occurs.
3. If a personal item is attached to two people, both are affected.
4. The machine overheats and smokes a little, depending on load (how far something is moved, how significant the object is).
5. Suggest always making minor adjustments to set/actor but don't draw attention to unless called for.

Rachel removes the checkbook and looks at the register, looks thoughtful. Alex looks at her. Rachel has small BIRTHMARK on her face and her HAIR is a slightly different color, and straighter.

ALEX

Rachel--

RACHEL

--Hang on. Gotta check something.

Rachel takes out her smartphone and connects to their bank account, smiles.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Close enough. We've got money.

Alex looks alarmed.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

What's wrong. Are you all right?

Alex touches her face near the birthmark.

ALEX

There's a birthmark. Here. It wasn't there before. It wasn't there a minute ago.

RACHEL

I've always had it! You know that. When I wanted to have it lasered, you said not to, you liked it. Like what's-her-name the supermodel.

ALEX

You put our checkbook in the machine. We both got dizzy, and now you have a birthmark you never had before. That's the truth. It makes as much sense as our account suddenly having money again.

RACHEL

You're not the one to be talking about what does or doesn't make sense.

Rachel heads upstairs. Alex follows.

KITCHEN

Rachel opens the door to garage and punches the opener button on the wall inside. The garage door begins to go up.

ALEX

Where are you going?

RACHEL

Shopping. We need some things.
Food. Toilet paper. Soap. Maybe a
smoke alarm for the basement. You
can start cleaning the kitchen
while I'm gone. Please.

Rachel leaves, staring just a bit at him as she turns. Alex rubs his face, exploring, finding nothing. His eyes are a different color.

BASEMENT - LATER

Alex sits at the card table, tapping his checkbook on the table. On the table is a half head of wilted lettuce and a half head of perfect lettuce, and some papers.

He picks up one and looks at it.

CLOSE ON: Mortgage paper showing both his and Rachel's names.

BACK TO SCENE: He puts the mortgage papers in the machine and runs it back 1 minute. He wobbles slightly as the machine runs.

Simultaneously the sound of TIRES SQUEALING and the SNAP of a mailbox post and a METAL MAILBOX BOUNCING ACROSS THE DRIVEWAY INTO THE GARAGE DOOR.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Car on lawn with skid marks in grass. Rachel walks unsteadily up drive with bags, stoops to pick up mail here and there. Alex exits house and takes in the scene.

ALEX

Are you all right? Did you pass
out.

RACHEL

I ... I don't know what happened.

Rachel stares at Alex. He has a mustache.

ALEX

What is it? It's me, isn't it?

RACHEL

No... no. I don't think so. Did you
get a haircut?

Rachel walks past Alex into house.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Rachel puts down bags and mail and leaves room. Alex follows, notices mail, picks up pink overdue bills. He heads down the hall.

BATHROOM

Rachel examines herself in the mirror.

ALEX

The mortgage is overdue. I thought you paid it.

RACHEL

I did.

ALEX

We've got to run the checkbook back again. What are you looking for?

RACHEL

I'll just pay them again.

Rachel leaves. Alex follows her to kitchen.

KITCHEN

ALEX

Where's your checkbook?

RACHEL

Just use yours.

ALEX

No, let's do it the same as before. To be sure.

RACHEL

Of what?

Rachel gets her checkbook from her purse and gives it to him.

BASEMENT

He puts it in the machine.

RACHEL

I'll do it.

Rachel sets machine.

ALEX

Don't do more than two weeks. I'm not sure the machine, or we, can handle it. We better sit down.

Alex begins to sit as Rachel starts it. She sways against the counter as Alex wavers and misses the chair, falling on the floor. The machine completes its cycle with a NEW RINGTONE.

Rachel helps Alex up and into the chair, noticing his bright blue eyes and light hair. Her birthmark is gone.

RACHEL

How'd you know?

ALEX

The mailbox. ... What's wrong?

RACHEL

Your eyes are blue, and your hair is light, almost blond actually.

ALEX

Yes. I'm the surfer archetype. ... After you first put your checkbook in the machine, and I operated it, you suddenly had a birthmark, which you said you'd had all your life, which is ... gone now, which I remember. And just now, after you operated the machine, you say my eyes are suddenly blue, and I assume you don't remember any different, right?

RACHEL

Your eyes changed. I never had a birthmark.

ALEX

What else?

RACHEL

You have a small scar, on your chin, and you look. I dunno. You look good. Did you cut your hair?

Alex's hand goes right to scar.

ALEX

A skateboard accident when I was twelve. I didn't have this before, to you?

RACHEL
It looks all right.

ALEX
The dizziness... it didn't happen when I did the banana, milk, or the lettuce, but it did when I did the mortgage papers. We both got dizzy.

RACHEL
Like when we signed it.

ALEX
And just now, with the checkbook again. ... When you put a...a what? ... a personal item in the ... but what difference would that make?

RACHEL
Why would we both get dizzy? And why don't we remember the same thing?

ALEX
People have never remembered the same thing. Maybe that's because they've never been in the same reality. Literally. We have a joint checking account. We're married. We're both on the mortgage. We have a multi-car discount. We share many realities...but not all.

RACHEL
That's it! "Who we are." "Reality is just who we think we are and the agreements we make."

ALEX
What is that from?

RACHEL
"Success Secrets of Self-Help Seminars."

ALEX
When did you start going to those things?

RACHEL
After you checked out, Alex. You, Yoda, and the rocket scientist. I went while you were building this thing. I play golf now too.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

And I started an Internet business.
I needed something to fill the void
where my marriage used to be.

ALEX

I'm going to take it apart ...
until I figure this thing out.

RACHEL

We just did. Think about it. What
made us dizzy is things we,
together, define ourselves with.
You know, I bet something changes
every time you run it, even with
bananas. We just don't notice.

ALEX

That's bizarre.

RACHEL

But reconstituted rotten bananas
isn't? Let's test it.

ALEX

How?

RACHEL

I don't know. We'll make up a test.

ALEX

No!

RACHEL

We can't afford to stop! Literally.
What's a little dizziness and a few
little changes compared to time
travel? We're pioneers! Besides,
what's the big deal? I'm the same
as before. Same me. You need a
drink. Go relax in the living room.
I'll bring it in.

LIVING ROOM

Rachel gives Alex a drink and sits down next to him with
hers. He takes big drink and spits it out, gasping.

ALEX

What is this!

RACHEL

(drinks)
Scotch. What do you want?

ALEX

Whiskey.

RACHEL

Whiskey. Sure. Let me check.

KITCHEN

Rachel finds another bottle, unfamiliar to her, and makes another drink.

LIVING ROOM

RACHEL

Here you go. No big deal. Where were we?

ALEX

It is a big deal! Don't you see? It's not just single malt or sour mash, the birthmark or the banana. It's bigger than that! How do we know there aren't other changes? Bigger changes. How do we know we were even married to each other before we started messing with this thing?

RACHEL

What about the Renfield's party last Christmas? You said--

ALEX

--I remember!

RACHEL

I rest my case.

ALEX

I'm going to destroy it.

RACHEL

No!

ALEX

YES! THAT'S IT! What if the birthmark becomes a hunchback becomes a heart defect? Or a brain tumor, or a third eye?

RACHEL

And what if the changes are just superficial cosmetic things. What if there aren't any changes and we just think there are? What if we miss out on the greatest invention since time began!

ALEX

I don't know what I'm doing anymore.

RACHEL

So what! You never knew what you were doing. Pretend it's your car and you're lost. You can't go back, you can't ask for directions, you can only go forward. If you'd made a time machine out of your car, you wouldn't be having any trouble!

It's clear to Rachel that Alex is coming unglued.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

We'll get help. From the FDA, the DEA, the EU. There's got to be some acronym that can help us.

ALEX

NO! You can't tell anyone! Do you understand! You don't you understand! You're not even trying to understand! Who are you?

RACHEL

(trying to calm him)

Ok, we won't get help. Good idea. It's me! Rachel. Your wife. Don't you trust me? I'm still me. I didn't become someone else. I'm not hearing voices. But don't destroy it. You'll hate yourself. I certainly will.

ALEX

What!

RACHEL

A joke, dear. Just a little joke to take the edge off. Defuse the crisis you're having.

ALEX

Crisis! Me? I'm trying to be reasonable. Why are you so hot to go on? Money? Is it just about money now? Is that what you've become? What happened to the people person?

RACHEL

I don't love money, Alex. I never have. Do we live like we love money? I love freedom. Being able to do things, go places, have fun with you. You made money a problem. I'm trying to help.

ALEX

Me? You.

RACHEL

No, you. Not me.

ALEX

I'm about ideas. Creating things.

RACHEL

Right, the creative type too sensitive to deal with the world of money.

ALEX

Since when?

RACHEL

I guess, since you spent it all.

ALEX

I'm not the problem here.

RACHEL

(building to yelling)

What I know is you've spent all our money! All of it and then some! But I'm not angry. I'm afraid. I'm afraid we're about to go under. But your machine works, so if we do something with it other than keep it your secret toy or throw it away, we'll be all right. Even better than all right. Otherwise, we're going to be the first homeless couple with their own time machine.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

We can steal electricity and turn other's people's garbage into leftovers and invite our homeless friends to eat with us under the freeway. Is that what you want!

ALEX

It's not that bad.

RACHEL

I may have exaggerated a little.

ALEX

I'm confused... and a little scared. It's just that--

RACHEL

--I know. I know. You've had a hard time, being you. Me too. Relax, finish your drink.

ALEX

I've got to think.

RACHEL

That's it. Think. It relaxes you. Think about something. I'll be back in a minute. I need to move the car. It's on the lawn.

Rachel leaves.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Rachel backs the car off the lawn and pulls it into the driveway. She picks up the mailbox and puts it out by the curb next to the broken post. A letter falls out of it and she picks it up.

CLOSE ON: Red words on envelope: "First Foreclosure Warning."

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Rachel gives the envelope to Alex.

RACHEL

I guess I wasn't exaggerating.

Rachel sits, tensely, rocking. Alex sits like a lump. Shortly Rachel has an idea.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
I have a test. It's simple.

ALEX
I said--

RACHEL
--Shut up.

BASEMENT

Rachel gives Alex a small note pad.

RACHEL
Put this in the machine. Run it
forward or back a minute, whatever.

Alex puts the notepad in the machine.

THEN

Alex takes the paper out of the machine.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
No dizziness. Now sign it. First
and last.

Alex signs sheet with RIGHT hand.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Now run it again.

THEN

Rachel supporting Alex; him a little dazed.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Great. Now--

ALEX
--Stop.

RACHEL
One more. Write "IOU Rachel Burdick
\$500" and date it today. I'm right.
You know it.

Alex does as asked, writing with his LEFT hand. Rachel signs paper also. Alex puts the paper in the machine, sets it quickly, and pushes the button. The machine runs a short cycle, finishing with a different ringtone that crackles and stops before it is finished.

Alex and Rachel sag dizzily, their heads falling forward, but they support each other and remain standing. Alex has NO MUSTACHE AND BROWN EYES, Rachel has different NOSE. They make their way to the table and sit, peering at each other.

ALEX

You ok?

RACHEL

I was right.

ALEX

(nods yes)

Your nose.

RACHEL

Same old nose. Your mustache is gone.

ALEX

Mustache? ... We have to stop.

RACHEL

Can't. This thing has to pay for itself so we can keep the house. Otherwise the bank gets everything.

ALEX

Banks with time travel. What have I done. What have we become?

Alex feels face, looks at hands. Pulls out and studies hair. Rachel takes his hands.

RACHEL

It's ok, honey. You're you. The you I love. I'm me, the same old me. We're still us, mostly, I'm sure, and we've got each other, whoever we are.

INT. LEARNTECH CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

People are filing out until only Alex is left at the table, staring into space. Nina notices and comes back.

NINA

You look like hell. Have a bad night? Alex? You hoo..

ALEX

What? Sorry.

NINA
I said you look like hell.

ALEX
Sorry.

NINA
Stop saying that. What's up? You and Rachel having normal problems again? Already.

ALEX
She's not the same. I'm not sure I am either. What would you say if I said I'd invented a time machine and it had side effects? Same non-disclosure shit as we sign here. What would you say?

Nina doesn't react.

NINA
Let's try that again. What's up?

ALEX
Time machine. You know, H.G. Wells and all. I made a little one. Assume I'm not crazy, and you'll see why I might be.

NINA
I'll just take your word for it. You're telling me you invented a time machine?

ALEX
Right.

NINA
And you're still writing children's stories about insurance forms.

ALEX
Yes. We used it, and everything's different.

NINA
Everything's always different.

ALEX
You don't believe me, do you?

NINA

I'm not supposed to, am I?... You might have gone crazy and think you're telling the truth, and you're a friend and I'm in public, so I'm playing along.

ALEX

You seem the same, Nina, so I'm going to show you. I need a disinterested party.

NINA

Why do you think that's me?

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - DAY

NINA

That's a microwave, Alex.

LATER

Alex and Nina sit at table. Nina eats a banana.

NINA (CONT'D)

You're not from the future, are you?

ALEX

I don't think so. I wasn't before. Maybe I am now. How would I know? ... Anyhow, it's good with bananas and so on, but with other things, there are changes. To me, Rachel is different. But I'm the same. And to her, I'm different, but she's the same.

NINA

You're describing relationships, not time travel. Maybe reality changes every time you run this thing. The changes just aren't perceptible if you don't care about the thing. Alex, if you had really loved this banana, you'd have been head over heels falling down when you brought it back to life. You're cold, Alex Burdick.

ALEX

Maybe you're not the person I need to talk to.

NINA

You won't know until you can love a banana. (laughs) Truly love a banana. (They both laugh.) It's a great invention, and I'd love to borrow it someday, but what's the point if you come unglued?

ALEX

Yes, that's the question. You'll keep this a secret? You have to promise. No one can know but you, as long as you stay the same.

NINA

No way. I never want to stay the same. ...Ok, sure, I promise. If the Men in Black come for you, you think they'll leave witnesses? I don't need time travel. I live in the present, and I like my job. ... But, are you sure? The way you say you're headed...when you're walking around with only a shopping cart with a time machine in it, someone is likely to find out. Like the person who steals it, thinking it's a microwave.

ALEX

How do you undo an idea?

NINA

Christ, Alex, if you had the monkey's paw, you'd run it back to get three more wishes. This alien you said helped you build it--maybe you're his experiment.

ALEX

You're no help.

NINA

Here's help. Stop using it. You're right about that. Just license it to someone for a zillion dollars. Work out the bugs on volunteers, the way the government does.

ALEX

Nina...

NINA

What?

ALEX
About Miles...

NINA
What about him?

ALEX
I'm sorry. I'm sorry I couldn't
come to the service.

NINA
That's what Rachel said. ...
Com'on. We gotta get back to work.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Alex and Nina drive off.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Black SUV pulls up and man gets out and walks up and attaches something to the front door.

CLOSE ON: Foreclosure notice.

BACK TO SCENE: The black SUV drives off. Across the street, on her knees tending her immaculate garden, Ivana has notices.

INT. RACHEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Rachel sits behind her desk. The phone RINGS.

RACHEL
Hello. ... Oh, hi, Ivana. ...
What!!

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Rachel pulls into the drive and jerks to a stop. She jumps out of car and hurries to door. She tears the notice off and goes inside.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Rachel enters in a state and gets a bottle of wine from the refrigerator. She pours herself a glass and drinks.

She stands at the sink looking out, drinking and thinking, panicked. She has an idea and goes to the wall calendar. She begins checking dates and flipping pages and marking dates.

RACHEL

... second, payday, sixteenth,
payday, thirtieth, thirteenth,
twenty seventh, twelfth... twenty
sixth...

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - DAY

Alex works at desk. BOB looks in. Bob looks somewhat like Alex and is wearing same color slacks and a blue shirt.

BOB

Hey, blue shirt day. Men are so in
tune with each other. Can I borrow
your hat?

ALEX

Help yourself.

Bob takes Detroit Tigers baseball hat off rack near door and leaves. A moment later Alex gets up and walks out reading a paper.

INT. LEARNTECH RECEPTION - DAY

Bob walks past RECEPTIONIST, out front door, to lounge area, where he sits and stretches out, pulling hat down and snoozing in the sun.

ALEX'S OFFICE

Alex's phone rings three or four times and then rolls over to...

RECEPTIONIST

Phone RINGS.

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning, LearnTech... Oh, hi,
Rachel... No, he's not in his
office. He's sacked out in front in
the sun. Thinking I think they call
it. I can see him from here... Want
me to get him...ok. By now.

ALEX'S OFFICE

Alex returns with cup of coffee and sits, looking for something else on his messy desk. He finds it and begins to rise, grabs his head, and falls back heavily into his chair.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - DAY

Rachel sagging, clutching workbench. Checking her smartphone.

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE

Alex sits, head in hands, elbows on knees, looks up, moves hands, bald.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT

Rachel, stunned, gets up from floor, goes to machine, sets next date.

INTERCUT ALEX'S OFFICE & HOUSE

-Alex calls home. a

-Rachel's phone rings in her purse on the kitchen counter.

-Alex listen to the phone ring.

-Rachel pushes the start button, falls down, dragging some things from the workbench as she goes.

-Alex sags forward into his coffee, knocking it off the desk.

-Rachel crawls across floor, pulls self up, over to machine, punches buttons.

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE

Alex collects himself, feels another one coming.

ALEX

RACHEL!

He pushes back from desk as next wave hits, causing him to flip over backward with a CRASH. After a moment, Nina comes in.

NINA

Alex! Are you all right?

She kneels by him. He moves his head groggily.

NINA (CONT'D)
What happened?

ALEX
Rachel's using the machine.

Alex struggles to the phone and calls, gets no answer.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Got to get home.

Alex staggers out. Nina blots up coffee on his desk with some of his papers.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - DAY

Rachel drunkenly crawls to machine. She reaches up and tries to reset it but is too stunned. She just sits.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alex's approaches intersection, makes left turn next to police car going straight.

INT. CAR - DAY

He's hit with a dizzy spell mid-turn.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alex's turn is widening toward the curb--he's aimed at sidewalk where a WOMAN with baby buggy at HOT DOG CART by FIE HYDRANT where CITY WORKER is working SCREAMS. Car keeps turning but slows and misses everything and slows to a nice stop by the hydrant.

Alex struggles from car, stands shakily. A police car pulls up. A POLICE OFFICER gets out and walks to Alex.

OFFICER
You ok?

ALEX
Yeah.

OFFICER
What happened?

Alex wobbles a little. Officer sits him down.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Can I see your license.

George takes his license from his wallet and hands it over.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Have you been drinking Mr. ...
Burdick.

ALEX
I'm fine. I just had a little diz--
I swerved to--ah--miss some glass.
A dog.

OFFICER
Yeah, those glass dogs. You had a
dizzy spell? That's what you were
saying, right?

ALEX
Officer, I haven't been drinking.
(breathes on officer) Really. I
just, well, had a dizzy spell. I
sorta blacked out. I'm fine now.
I'll see my doctor when I get home.
It's very important that I get home
as soon as possible.

OFFICER
You know you're parked by a
hydrant.

An AMBULANCE arrives.

ALEX
Slip of the wheel, that's all.

He faints.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Paramedics wheel Alex through double doors. Alex tries to sit
up but can't because he's strapped in.

ALEX
I feel better now. Can I go?

His eyes roll up and he passes out again.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - DAY

Disheveled Rachel with many minor differences stands by machine, which TICKS with heat, paint peeled away on top.

She looks at her pad and resets machine and pushes the button. Nothing happens. She repeats, nothing. The machine has it's normal HUM of being on, but isn't working.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alex pulls in.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rachel sits on couch. Alex enters. He is dark-eyed, thin, with thick black hair, beard, mustache--the "Rasputin" Alex.

ALEX

Hi. What's new?

RACHEL

Alex, is that you?

ALEX

It is. And is this you? Thinner, nice. Smaller up here, ok. Dumber, definitely. Did you think about me when you started fucking around with the machine?

RACHEL

I was told you were sleeping on the grass. I was willing to disturb your sleep.

ALEX

Close. I was sleeping, but just before that I was driving.

RACHEL

Oh, Alex, are you--

ALEX

--I nearly passed out while driving and then I did in front of a cop, and in the emergency room. I barely could remember where I lived!

Alex gets in her face.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Tell me, Rachel. Look at me!
What's different? Come on, you
made me. Share the new me!

RACHEL

The mustache, and the beard. And
your hair used to be lighter, and
your eyes too, I think. You lost
some weight. Looks good. That's all
I can see. It's not much.

ALEX

NOT MUCH! Goddammit Rachel! Don't
you get it? You're molding the
both of us like so much clay. Don't
you care about yourself?

RACHEL

Get a grip! Your head's running
away with you, like it always does.
You said I'm different in a bunch
of ways. Maybe I am.

ALEX

You are!

RACHEL

So I am. So what? I still feel
just like me. I'm as me as I've
ever felt. I'm me, Alex! And
you're you. How do you feel? Do
you feel different? Do you feel
like someone else? You don't, do
you?

Alex can't answer that.

ALEX

You did the checkbook again, didn't
you? How? When? Did you get enough?
Are you happy now?

RACHEL

Happy! You dumb shit. I'm trying to
survive. I came home and found a
foreclosure notice on the door.
What do you think pays for
discovery? Curiosity? Enthusiasm?
Staring out the window? Did I miss
your pledge drive? How did you
think we were going to pay for this
thing? I borrowed against the
future, like the government.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

And guess what, it worked for me too. ... For us.

ALEX

Of course. For us.

RACHEL

We were about to lose the house. You checked out, Alex. I didn't. I read the mail, take calls from bill collectors at work.

ALEX

Screw the bankers. What did you do?

RACHEL

You've got that backwards, dear. ... I ran it forward payday to payday.

ALEX

How far? I lost count.

RACHEL

Until it stopped.

ALEX

What do you mean until it stopped? What stopped?

RACHEL

The checkbook stopped changing. Or the machine wouldn't run any more. I don't know. Maybe it overheated. After five paydays. With both us that's ten paychecks. Enough to keep us going for a few more weeks. Want me to run it back again?

ALEX

(coldly)

Thank you. No. Let's stop here for now. ... Try to figure out where that is. But, Rachel, don't use it again. Don't touch it.

RACHEL

Or what?

ALEX

You don't want to know.

RACHEL
You've never talked like that to
me. Never. It's not you.

Alex sits stonily staring at Rachel. She retreats.

ALEX
So you say.

Rachel leaves the room.

KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Alex enters dressed for work in dark colors. Kay is already there, dressed for work, a cup of coffee in hand. They look at each other uncomfortably.

RACHEL
Good morning.

ALEX
Good morning, Rachel.

After a moment of nothing, he walks by and out.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alex drives by but can't in the driveway because it's filled with cars, as are both sides of the street. He continues and parks up the street.

He walks back and as he nears his house he hears PARTY NOISE, which it turns out is coming from his house.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alex stands in entry. Room crowded with loud people. TIPSY WOMAN comes over to him.

TIPSY WOMAN
Hi there. You're late. Make
yourself at home.

ALEX
It is. Who are you.

Alex pushes past without waiting, has trouble getting through the pack to the kitchen.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Excuse me... Excuse me, please.
Pardon me....Please move...Get out
of the way.

Alex is blocked by a large DRUNK MAN talking to a BORED WOMAN.

DRUNK MAN

Meditation wasn't getting me to the
inner levels I wanted to attain. I
went back to Chardonnay.

BORED WOMAN

I can see the difference.

DRUNK MAN

(to Alex)

Is there a problem?

ALEX

You.

DRUNK MAN

Me?

ALEX

Do you drive a silver SUV?

DRUNK MAN

Sure. Doesn't everyone.

ALEX

Someone just hit it. Heading west.
Look for a white pickup.

Drunk Man rushes out.

BORED WOMAN

Thank you.

ALEX

My pleasure.

Alex reaches blocked door to kitchen. PARTYMAN1 lurches out
and bumps into Alex, spilling drink on him.

PARTYMAN1

Damn! I'm sorry. How clumsy of me.
Here, let me help.

Man begins to dab at Alex's shirt with napkin. Alex stops him
with his eyes.

ALEX
Go home. Now.

Partyman1 leaves.

KITCHEN

Alex pushes into the kitchen and finds Rachel in a group, looking a bit lost.

ALEX
What's going on here?

RACHEL
They just came. Said they'd been invited months ago. I thought they were yours.

ALEX
Not mine.

RACHEL
Facebook friends?

ALEX
Maybe LinkedIn hacked your HR database. .. Everyone! Party's over!

The party stops, and everyone looks in Alex's direction. Then people go back to what they were doing.

PARTYWOMAN1
Not it's not. It's barely started. Rachel's gone to a lot of work.

ALEX
How do I know you?

PARTYWOMAN1
I work with Rachel.

Alex and Rachel look at each other.

ALEX
(to Rachel) Where do you work? No. Never mind.

RACHEL
Call the police?

ALEX

Little too soon for me to be
talking to them again.

Alex leaves the room.

BEDROOM

Alex rummages in the closet until he finds his aluminum
baseball bat. Then he stops, surprised, having seen something
else.

LIVING ROOM

Alex, with over-under shotgun, pushes into room. He climbs on
chair, drawing only a few looks.

ALEX

May I have your attention please!
The party is over! SHUT UP! ALL OF
YOU! SHUT UP NOW!

Party stops, people look at him.

PARTYWOMAN2

He's got a gun!

PARTYMAN2

Everyone's got a gun.

Crowd begins to mumble. Nervous noises. Rachel enters. Alex
waves the gun over his head.

ALEX

Thank you. I just wanted everyone's
attention. Don't worry. It's not
even loaded. See--

Alex breaks the gun open and two shells pop out onto the
floor.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'll be damned. (to Partywoman2)
Could you pick those up for me
please?

PARTYWOMAN2

I need to go now. (leaves)

ALEX

(to Partyman2) You, pick them up?

Partyman2 also leaves, and everyone else backs away.
PARTYMAN3 picks up the shells and pockets them.

PARTYMAN3
I think you should put the gun
down.

ALEX
Oh look, I have more.

Alex takes two shells from his pocket.

PARTYMAN3
Maybe the party is over.

ALEX
Maybe it is.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

People streaming out.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Only Rachel and Alex, on the chair, are left. Alex looks at her and then at the gun.

ALEX
Yours?

Rachel shakes her head. Alex is puzzled. He gets down from chair and leans the gun against the wall.

RACHEL
You scared everyone. You terrified
them.

ALEX
I was trying to.

RACHEL
You scared me too. ... I'm going to
sleep in the spare room.

BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Alex sleeps. SOFT KNOCKING at door.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Alex?... Alex?

Alex sleeps. Door opens a little and Rachel pokes head in.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Alex?

Alex wakes up.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Alex, it's me. Rachel.

He watches sleepily. She enters on eggshells.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I need some things. I'll just be a minute.

Rachel goes to closet and gets clothes. Alex watches.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You ... last night. The Alex I knew would never have done that.

Rachel gets things from dresser.

ALEX

I've thought about doing things like that. Have I changed that much?

RACHEL

I--ah--don't know ... how much you've changed. Enough, I guess, that I don't want to find out more. I'm sorry for what I did. I have to go now. I'm going away for awhile... to visit Jessica. Ok?

ALEX

Again?

Rachel looks puzzled.

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - MORNING

Alex sits pensively in his office.

CLOSE ON: Desk calendar. Days begin to change.

BACK TO SCENE: Alex sits pensively in his office.

SERIES OF SHOTS: Similar shots with his clothes changing but not much else, ending with:

Alex sits pensively in his office, looking at a wallet-sized photo.

CLOSE ON: Photo of Rachel and Alex looking happy at a party. On the back it says "Mike & Jessica's" and "April 29."

BACK TO SCENE: Nina stops in the doorway.

NINA
Hey. What's new?

ALEX
Nothing.

NINA
Really? You look different.

ALEX
I doubt it.

NINA
You look like shit again.

ALEX
Oh, that.

NINA
Yes, that. What's up.

ALEX
Rachel's on vacation again.

NINA
Again? Didn't know she'd been before.

ALEX
We're not seeing eye to eye...on a few things.

NINA
Eye to eye.

ALEX
You know, problems, normal problems. Marital problems. Money, communication, anomalous realities, shapeshifting. We're fine.

NINA
Aren't we all.

ALEX
I feel all wrong inside.

NINA

This have anything to do with
your...

ALEX

Everything. Everything, it seems,
has everything to do with
everything else.

NINA

Yeah, I know.

ALEX

How come you're so ok with all this
weirdness? Your other friends have
holodecks or something?

NINA

I'm a walk-in. Nothing's weird. ...
Look it up. Can I ask you
something? Are you sure it's your
machine that messed up your
marriage?

Alex gives the photo to Nina.

NINA (CONT'D)

It's nice.

ALEX

Look at it! What do you see? What
do you notice about it?

NINA

You're happy. You're both happy. On
some April 29th you were having a
good time. At Jessica's and Mike's.
What's it mean to you?

ALEX

Everything. Thans, Nina. I know
what to do. I know how to fix
everything!

NINA

Uh-uh. No you don't. Trust me on
this. You're a guy with a power
tool. You're a guy who's lost and
won't ask for directions.
You're...a guy.

Alex gets up.

NINA (CONT'D)

Stop. You've got testosterone poisoning. You can get help. Whatever you're thinking is wrong. You're about to do something really stupid with that machine of yours, aren't you? The machine that has caused nothing but problems.

ALEX

Well, yes.

NINA

Just go to another party, Alex. Take Rachel. Have fun. Don't do anything. Promise me.

ALEX

I...I can't. I'd be lying.

NINA

That's OK. I wasn't going to believe you. But promise me you'll talk to someone before you actually do something really stupid. You can promise that, can't you?

ALEX

Ok. I promise.

NINA

Sit.

Alex sits at his desk again.

NINA (CONT'D)

Stay.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rachel stands by trunk of cab as driver unloads bags.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/KITCHEN

Rachel enters and finds Alex at counter eating hot dog.

RACHEL

Hi, Alex. How are you?

ALEX

I'm fine. How are you?

RACHEL
I'm fine too.

They look at each other. Alex moves toward Rachel. She winces and shrinks back. He looks pained.

ALEX
Don't worry. I won't do anything.

RACHEL
Me neither.

Alex moves toward her again, and she again shrinks back, and hurries from the room.

ALEX
I'm not that different.

He paces back and forth a few times and then follows her.

BEDROOM

Kay is unpacking her suitcase on the bed.

ALEX
We can't go on this way. Am I so different?

RACHEL
Maybe not. Maybe I am.

ALEX
No, you're not. And I'm not either. Not so much. People like me always have thoughts of doing things like that. Being in control.

RACHEL
Yes, not acting on them is a big difference.

ALEX
It's not like I could have used something else. I couldn't have threatened them with a tube of superglue. "Get out, or I'll glue your cheeks together."

Rachel doesn't respond.

ALEX (CONT'D)
That was a joke.

RACHEL

Right.

Alex moves toward the closet and Rachel yelps. He stops and backs up.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I couldn't help myself.

ALEX

Christ. I'm sorry. I was going to show you it's gone.

Alex goes to the door. He stops and looks at her.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'll sleep in the spare bedroom.

He leaves.

SPARE BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Alex gets out of bed.

BEDROOM

He looks in and sees that Rachel is sleeping.

DEN

Alex turns on desk lamp. he goes to a file cabinet, opens a drawer, and takes everything out.

BASEMENT

Alex enters and puts files on the workbench. He starts looking through them and putting things in the machine.

ALEX

Birth certificate, marriage
license, house deed, mortgage
papers, car registration,
insurance, Greenpeace, Sierra Club,
Arthur Murray.

He reconsiders and removes everything, and then puts one back.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Just our marriage.

He puts another one back in.

ALEX (CONT'D)
And Arthur Murray. We'll learn to
dance again.

He powers on the machine and stands poised to set the controls, but doesn't know when. He takes out the picture he showed Nina and looks at the date on the back, then enters the date into the machine.

ALEX (CONT'D)
We were happy then. We'll be happy
now then again.

He gets a folding lawn chair and places it next to workbench, punches in dates, sits, reaches up starts it. The machine makes an ODD THEREMIN HUM and the number displays flicker and display oddly. Alex passes out.

81 BASEMENT - LATER

Alex awakens. Rasputin Alex is gone, replaced by aN Alex more like the first one.

He checks and finds nothing in the machine. He looks at the papers on the workbench and sees the mortgage papers. His eyes widen. Only his name appears.

KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM

Alex hurries in and looks around. He hurries into the living room. The house has different furnishings that say "this man is single."

ALEX
Rachel! Rachel!

There is no answer. He rushes out of the room.

BEDROOM

He looks in the closet. There are no women's clothes. He looks at his left hand. There is no ring.

GARAGE

Be bursts in from the house. Only his car is there.

KITCHEN

He picks up the phone and stabs at the keys, stopping short.

ALEX

I don't know her number. ... I
don't know where she works!

He slams the receiver down and finds himself staring at the calendar. He looks at it, his eyes widen. He flips through pages of the calendar.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Five paydays. It only went forward
five paydays! My last check
was...five paydays. My god!

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

A scream is heard from inside.

SERIES OF SCENES:

-Alex sits on the couch, staring.

-Alex drives up, gets out of car, stares at house.

-Alex at work unfocused.

-People at work looking at him with concern.

-Nina chatting up a guy.

EXT. LEARNTECH - MORNING

Alex pulls into parking lot.

INT. LEARNTECH - MORNING

Alex passes Dr. Corman talking to receptionist, smiles his way by uneasily. He stops at Nina's office. She's just sitting down with a cup of coffee.

ALEX

Gotta minute?

NINA

I'm honored. You've barely talked
to anyone for a month.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)
Still reading the obituaries for
amusement?

Alex cringes.

NINA (CONT'D)
The paper is always opened to that
page after you leave the break
room.

Alex sits.

ALEX
I did something horrible. I... I...
I didn't keep my promise.

NINA
What promise?

Alex looks confused.

NINA (CONT'D)
Want a cup of coffee?

Alex nods and takes Nina's, drinks.

NINA (CONT'D)
I think I'll join you. Be right
back.

She leaves. Alex studies his reflection in the glass of a
picture on her desk. Nina returns, puts coffee down. Alex
reaches for it.

ALEX
Thanks, Nina.

NINA
Mine! What the hell's with you?

Alex looks at cup in front of him and understands.

NINA (CONT'D)
Well?

ALEX
Nina, Rachel's gone. Vanished. I
think I killed her.

NINA
Rachel who? Friend? Lose a pet?
Your mind?

ALEX
Rachel. My wife.

NINA
You're not married. Divorced maybe.
Beyond a certain age people just
assume you're divorced if you're
not with anybody.

ALEX
I'm not married?

NINA
Consensus is you're barely dating
material, but I like your sense of
humor. Want to go out tonight?
Prove everyone wrong.

ALEX
I'm married. I've lost my wife. Try
to understand.

NINA
You can only stretch a rubber band
so far.

Alex leaves, passing Corman at Nina's door.

CORMAN
Something wrong with Alex?

NINA
He just realized he's not married.

CORMAN
Must have been a shock.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Alex walks in daze to bench and sits by OLD MAN with cane feeding birds. Old man does not acknowledge Alex. A lone pigeon approaches. Man studies Alex, then looks back at pigeon, raises cane, and there is a MUFFLED CRACK, and a cloud of feathers. The old man quickly jumps forward and stuffs the bird into a large bag he dragged from under the bench and sits down again.

OLD MAN
City pays a bounty.

Alex looks at bag under bench.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Seventeen.

ALEX

I don't think you're what they had in mind.

OLD MAN

Don't judge a man by what he kills. (Alex flinches) Ah-ha! Knocked a few off in your time, eh?

ALEX

Jumping to conclusions.

OLD MAN

Comes with the territory. When you sat on this bench, you asked for it.

ALEX

This is you life? Picking minds and offing pigeons?

OLD MAN

Like to think so, wouldn't you? No, it's an avocation. Rekindles the primal instincts--man and beast. Reading people and wasting pigeons. It's not bad, could be worse, better'n you're doing I think.

Alex stands.

ALEX

You're busy. I'll find another bench.

OLD MAN

Careful.

ALEX

Of what!

OLD MAN

Other benches. See that one over there by Accidental Life?

Old man points to bench across park, in line with Accidental Life Insurance building. A woman sits reading, occasionally glancing around.

ALEX

What does she do?

OLD MAN

Have to find out for yourself. You will, too, sooner or later. We're everywhere. Sit down. What's your name?

ALEX

Alex.

OLD MAN

Sit down, Alex. You could do worse than me. Finish what you started.

ALEX

Finish what?

Alex sits.

OLD MAN

You don't have to give me the details, but spit out something. You'll feel better.

ALEX

Wife.

OLD MAN

Well said. Had one once.

ALEX

Sorry.

OLD MAN

What for?

ALEX

You said had. I assumed she was dead.

OLD MAN

That she is. Parked in the marble orchard.

Alex looks at cane.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

No, natural causes. Wonderful woman. Pigeons are birds. People are people. Gotta draw the line somewhere.

ALEX

How... how... did you feel?

OLD MAN
Wife dead?

ALEX
No... I don't know... gone.

OLD MAN
Separation? Divorce? Hmmmph.

ALEX
Did your wife like pigeons?

OLD MAN
No. Hated them. Left them alone,
though. Said they were part of
God's plan.
(beat)
Now I'm part of God's plan. Think
I'm crazy.

ALEX
Would have yesterday.

OLD MAN
That's a start. Stop in again.

The old man proffers bag of popcorn.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Popcorn?

ALEX
Only if you'll shoot me too.

OLD MAN
On your own there.

Alex walks away. The old man throws popcorn on the ground. Alex looks over his shoulder. Three or four pigeons have gathered. Alex wrinkles his face, waiting for the shot, but it doesn't come. He looks back. The old man is eating popcorn.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - DAY

Alex stares at machine and after a moment notices among papers on workbench the "Mike & Jessica" picture. He looks at him and Rachel in it.

CLOSE ON: RACHEL in the photo.

BACK TO SCENE:

ALEX

We weren't married. We weren't married then. She's not dead!

Excited Alex takes out his phone and dials three numbers.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Breckenridge. Do you have a number for Bill Crescini. That would be William J Crescini. Yes, thank you. (dials again). ... Hello Bill, I mean, Mr. Crescini. I'm glad I caught you at home. Say, I'm trying to locate your daughter, Rachel. You do have a daughter, don't you?

INT. CRESCINI HOUSE - DAY

BILL CRESCINI is about sixty, close cropped ex-Marine type. Standing, on phone in nice study.

BILL

Who is this?

INTERCUT ALEX AND BILL

ALEX

I'm Rachel's-- We're-- Your daughter, in college. We dated. I've been wondering what happened to her.

BILL

People call you something, don't they?

ALEX

Huh?

BILL

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

ALEX

Oh, sorry, Bill. I forgot you don't know me. Alex. Alex Burdick. You do have a daughter, don't you?

BILL

I remember you. Long hair. Trashy sports car. Brought my daughter home stoned once. Never thought you'd amount to anything. Glad she dumped you.

ALEX

I'm a neurosurgeon now. With short hair.

BILL

I'm a cardiologist.

ALEX

So we're tied. Great. Is it possible for you to give me Rachel's phone number?

BILL

(pause) Give me your number.

ALEX

It's 112-555-1212. Got that. What's her number?

BILL

Can't give it to you.

ALEX

Could you call her and give her mine? Ask her to call me.

BILL

I doubt that.

ALEX

Why won't you give her my number. What's wrong with you?

BILL

She died.

ALEX

Died. ... When?

BILL

Month ago.

ALEX

A month ago. ... I'm sorry.

BILL

It happens.

Silence.

BILL (CONT'D)

Anything else?

ALEX
No. ... Why did you want my number?

BILL
So I'd know who not to call. Good
bye, Alex.

Bill hangs up.

SERIES OF SCENES

Time passes. Alex comes and goes to work, to home. Mopes.
Watches TV, etc.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Sun low in the sky. Alex sits on front porch with beer.

EXT. RACHEL AND MIKE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Upper-class house.

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN DINING AREA

Rachel from back, staring out window. Visible on the wall is
old black light poster ("Flaming Love" or "Astrological Sex
Positions") matted and framed. On the matting is written
"Mike Lamont's Nostalgia Warehouse. Light KNOCK on door and
JESSICA enters.

RACHEL
Hey, Jessica, hi.

JESSICA
Fresh coffee.

Jessica gets cup, pours, and joins Rachel at table, notices
pad on which is written "Alex Burdick 112-555-1212."

JESSICA (CONT'D)
What's this?

RACHEL
Dad got a call from Alex Burdick.
Remember him? Trying to find me for
some reason.

JESSICA
(laughs)
I remember him! Mountain House.
(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I was with Ben and you were with Alex. And that football player insulted you. You took offense at everything back then.

RACHEL

(laughs)

I did. And when he leaned on the table and got in my face, you superglued his arm to it (laughing harder), and then you mooned him.

JESSICA

I did not.

RACHEL

You did too!

JESSICA

A half moon maybe.

DISSOLVE TO:

Rachel and Jessica laughing.

RACHEL

God, I haven't laughed that hard in years.

JESSICA

Me neither. I'll have to tell Ben. He'll enjoy remembering. How's Mike?

Joke over.

RACHEL

Mike's good. Business is good. He's the envy of his men's group, the only one who's made a living out of not growing up. ... We laughed a lot back then, didn't we?

JESSICA

We did. You going to call him?

RACHEL

I don't think so.

JESSICA

Maybe he'll call you.

RACHEL

My dad said I was dead. It's how he screened my calls when he didn't like the guy calling. He still protects me.

JESSICA

You talked about marrying him once. At least look him up on Facebook.

RACHEL

I did, didn't I. I didn't think he'd amount to anything, you know, and I was special. (laughs) I was afraid I wouldn't amount to anything, so the guy had to. Mike was sure, so I didn't have to be.

JESSICA

Wonder why he called.

RACHEL

Odd. I was wondering recently what happened to him.

JESSICA

Give him a call. See what became of him.

RACHEL

No. I need to let the past go. Live in the present.

Rachel crumples the paper.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I think I wanted to marry him once.

JESSICA

Everyone knew it but you.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - LATE AFTERNOON

Nina is walking up to the entrance when her phone rings.

NINA

Hello... Oh, hi Alex. ...Nothing. Saturday shopping. ...Sure.... I'll pick up something. Bye.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Door bell rings. Alex opens door to find Nina standing there with bag.

ALEX
Hi Nina. Thanks for coming. Come in.

NINA
Hey.

KITCHEN

Alex and Nina enter. Nina puts bag down and unloads.

NINA
So, you called.

ALEX
I need to talk to someone. Someone normal.

NINA
How many calls did you make before me? I've got wine, cheese, crackers... smoked oysters, shrimp cocktail, chips, dip, sushi, and carrots. Eat, talk, listen.

LIVING ROOM

They sit on couch, tray loaded with food and bottle of wine on coffee table on front.

ALEX
How's work been this week?

NINA
Fine. Same as when you see me at work.

They drink.

ALEX
Nina, do you remember anything I've told you about a time machine?

NINA
Of course. Some parts are hazy, I'm not technical you know.
(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

I know I told you to get rid of it
and you didn't and now you're
miserable.

ALEX

And the after effects, of using it.

NINA

The alleged changes.

ALEX

Do you remember anything else?

NINA

Like what?

ALEX

Things I said about the changes.
Anything about me, personally.
Physically. Am I different?

NINA

You mentioned having different
tastes, maybe eye color or hair
color, but you seem the same to me
Alex. Tired, overwrought lately,
but the same.

ALEX

But you know the machine works.

NINA

What are you getting at?

ALEX

Nina, I'm not the same. Beard,
mustache, hair color, voting
record... I'm different in a lot of
ways. I have to be.

NINA

Ok. Be different if you want.

Alex pours himself more wine, fills Nina's glass.

ALEX

Nina. I was married.

NINA

Must've been before I met you.

ALEX

No, Nina. I was married for nine
years. Until a month ago.

NINA

Alex, I've known you for three.

ALEX

Her name was Rachel. She...we... did some crazy things with the machine--things that caused all kinds of changes in both of us. I couldn't stand it anymore... I put our marriage license in the time machine.

NINA

What for?

ALEX

To run it, us, back to when she was... we were...before we began having problems. Back to when we were happy. There was a malfunction. I opened the machine, the certificate was gone. So was Rachel.

NINA

(giggles)

That's the stupidest thing I ever heard! Try another one.

ALEX

And all her things. Any sign she ever existed. I killed her.

NINA

Alex, maybe she never existed. Maybe you--

ALEX

--Made up Rachel and the memories of nine years of marriage? Do you think I'm crazy?

Nina's eyes widen at his tone of voice.

NINA

No, I don't. I meant... I was... shit, it's just so hard. I don't have your memories. I have mine.

ALEX

It happened. But only I know.

NINA
Right, the old temporal anomaly
alibi.

ALEX
How can I make you understand? How
can I make anyone understand.

NINA
Alex, why don't you start at the
beginning. Tell me everything.
Maybe I'll remember something.
Maybe you'll forget something.
There's got to be some sense in it
somewhere.

ALEX
Part of God's plan.

LATER

They sprawl loosely on the floor, Nina leaning against chair,
Alex against couch. A second bottle of wine half gone.

NINA
... and then she ran over the
mailbox. Mail everywhere.

Nina's face cracks and she smiles, fails to suppress a
giggle.

NINA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It's just... funny.

She regains composure with difficulty. Alex serious, then
smiles.

ALEX
Yes, it is. Anyhow, she left and...

LATER

They sit next to each other along couch, wine glasses in
hand.

ALEX
I passed out at the wheel. (laughs)
You remember that day, don't you?
You came into my office.

NINA

(laughs)

You had tipped over backward in your chair, after almost drowning in your coffee!

ALEX

Did I tell you about the orderlies chasing me, and nurse Ratched?

LATER

ALEX

So I asked her if she would pick up the shotgun shells. ... She didn't say a word. Just walked out.

NINA

(laughs)

What would Miss Manners say?

ALEX

(laughs)

And they all left, all the people. ... And Rachel too. She made me, but she didn't like me. ... I was really something that night, whoever I was.

NINA

Should bring that Alex into the office some time.

LATER

Alex lies on floor next to couch, just resting head against it. Nina next to him, propped up on one elbow. Alex drinks directly from bottle and passes it to Nina.

ALEX

(choking up)

And the last Rachel was ...nothing but fear. I couldn't get near her...like a scared animal. It was horrible. My god.

NINA

Well, didn't she make the Alex that made her that way? ... Welcome to Survivor: Marriage. You're Fired!
(laughs)

Alex stares at her.

NINA (CONT'D)
Oh. You are hurting. I can see that. You're so sweet to be so concerned, about Rachel, in her parallel universe.

Nina leans over and kisses him. He doesn't respond at first, then does, tentatively, then moreso, then she pulls back.

NINA (CONT'D)
You were married.

ALEX
You remember now?

NINA
No. Your kisses. Those are rebound kisses. I know.

Alex looks away.

NINA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

ALEX
Thanks. It helps. I wish I ... we.

NINA
Don't try. Maybe later, when you've had enough time.

ALEX
I have to find out what I did.

NINA
Huh?

ALEX
I have to use it again.

NINA
Uh-uh. You might disappear. Corman would give me all your work. He doesn't know how behind you are. ... Oh oh. Stop thinking, Alex. I can see you thinking.

Alex gets up and leaves the room.

BASEMENT

Alex enters followed by Nina. She follows him to the machine and picks up a pair of WIRE CUTTERS and cuts a cable between one of the electronic items and the machine, then she cuts off the 220V plug and takes it.

ALEX
Give me that.

NINA
No way. Not until you talk to someone who might know what the hell you're doing.

ALEX
Who would that be?

NINA
I'll be back in less than an hour. Don't do anything! Nothing! Understand!

ALEX
I understand.

NINA
Right. Turn around.

ALEX
Huh?

NINA
Your collar's up.

Nina turns him around and then knocks him out with an empty wine bottle.

INT. TOWNHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Miles sits on the couch, drinking, watching a video called "Bad Project." There's a loud KNOCKING at the door. Followed by more loud KNOCKING.

NINA (O.S.)
It's me. Open up.

Miles, a rumpled academic about Alex's age, goes to the door and opens it.

MILES
Nina. Hi.

NINA
You're drinking. What happened?

MILES
Wanna drink?

NINA
No. Had too much already. I need your help. Can you get it together and come with me. I need a scientist.

MILES
Should I put on a white coat? Know what they did? God, I think I have a headache.

NINA
You don't know how to drink. I keep telling you it takes practice.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Nina drives. Miles is wearing a white coat, holding a bottle.

NINA
Why are you like this?

MILES
Bad day.

NINA
Another bad project?

MILES
Worse. A good project with no money. I waste my best efforts trying to get money. I look for loop holes instead of black holes. If I had only known.

NINA
You're a scientist. You wanted to be one, and you are. Don't worry. You'll get another bad project. Trust me. I'm writing a driver's ed manual for people without roads. How's that for hope?

Miles laughs and drinks.

MILES

I feel better. I can't stand it. I want to feel bad. I should.

NINA

You'll feel bad tomorrow.

MILES

So where are you taking me? I'm starving. I may not have eaten.

NINA

We'll stop. I'll fill you in.

INT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BASEMENT - NIGHT

Alex is just finishing wrapping electrical tape around the spliced wires to another plug when Nina and Miles walk in. Miles is carrying a bottle and BAG OF FAST FOOD. He reaches into bag and takes out some fries and eats them.

NINA

Oh, hi, you're up. How's your head. ... You fell and hit it. I went for help.

Alex looks doubtful, but he's more engaged with staring at Miles.

ALEX

Why aren't you dead?

MILES

Might as well be. Know what they did?

ALEX

Who's they?

NINA

They didn't renew your grant. Might not renew your grant. Gave your grant to someone else. Granted me the patience to be your sister. Am I close?

ALEX

Grant for what?

MILES

New particle. I found another one, smaller than anything known. Very brief. Nearly hypothetical.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

Makes a tachyon look like
yesterday's hot air balloon.

ALEX

So it's very tiny. Or might be.

MILES

You don't understand.

ALEX

Why should I?

MILES

(agitated)

This particle...could be the
building block of the universe...
the link between matter and energy,
and I found it! I think I did. I
need a grant to find out.

ALEX

I probably used it already. In my
time machine.

MILES

You?

NINA

Alex has a situation. He's invented
a small time machine, and it's made
him mad or divorced, or both. He
needs help.

Miles walks up to the machine and studies it.

MILES

(chuckles)

Really. Well done, Alex. A
microwave with options. Thanks,
Nina. Good of you to cheer me up.
Runs on house current, does it?

ALEX

Electricity, yes.

MILES

Can I see it work

ALEX

Sure.

MILES

I'll bet you're going send popcorn
into the future, aren't you.

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

Think I couldn't see that coming.
Nina, let's go.

ALEX

Can you shut up for a minute? Or is that just a theory for you?

MILES

F-U. Nothing flashy now, dimbulb. No major shifts in the time-space continuum. Just a little something to make me think you're not completely full of shit.

Alex reaches out and takes a pencil from Miles' pocket. The pencil is short and the eraser is worn to a nub.

ALEX

Hmm, no eraser. You make lots of mistakes, Miles?

MILES

Screw you.

DISSOLVE TO:

Alex handing Miles a near-new sharp pencil. Miles is unimpressed.

MILES (CONT'D)

Clever. Saw a magician in Vegas do that with a submarine once. Joke's over. Unless you can show me something real.

ALEX

Give me your driver's license.

NINA

NO!

Alex gets a fork and a container of cottage cheese from the refrigerator. He feeds Miles a bite.

ALEX

Here, this is the control. You know what a control is, don't you?

Miles gags and nearly throws up. He spits it out.

MILES

Arggh!

ALEX

That was just for data, Miles.
Remember how it tastes.

Miles drinks while Alex runs the container in the machine and removes it and takes a bite. He then gives it to Miles, who takes a small bite, then another.

Miles looks inside the machine and around the outside. He taps it here and there. He notices the burned discoloration on the side of the machine.

MILES

Seems to have an overheating
problem.

ALEX

It gets too hot.

MILES

Yes, it does. Idiot savant.
Building mindless wonders while
real scientists slave in obscurity
and boredom, groveling for
funding—

NINA

--Down boy. Down. You're here to
help. You know. Works and plays
well with others. Good citizenship.
Alex needs help with this thing.

MILES

How did you do it, Alex? Huh? What
makes it work? What's the theory of
operation? You can't answer that
can you?

ALEX

I got drunk and channeled Tesla and
Einstein.

MILES

I'm leaving.

NINA

He's telling the truth.

ALEX

I am.

MILES

That New Age stuff is all crap!

ALEX

Ok, pencilhead. I bought components from Russian cold war experiments on eBay. Is that better? What difference does it make! It works. But there are problems. Got any real ideas? Or do you just research hypothetical ones?

Miles sits at the table and takes the burger from the bag and his pencil and begins writing. He eats some fries then unwraps the burger and holds it to take a bite but doesn't.

MILES

You know, you can't get a patent if you can't explain what it does.

ALEX

I don't want a patent.

MILES

Have to take it apart and reverse engineer it to see how it works. Need to write a grant to get funding. Alex, you should write a paper for the technical journals to generate some interest, none of that channeling bullshit, though. But don't say too much either. Just hint at the possibility. Have to assemble a proposal team.

ALEX

(to Nina)

How long has he been like this?

Nina shrugs.

NINA

Happens every few years.

MILES

Write some press releases. We'll need some air-brushed renderings and conceptual animations. Get a Facebook page.

Miles puts his burger down and scribbles along. He breaks the lead on the pencil and looks up to Alex.

MILES (CONT'D)

Can you sharpen this, boy wonder?

Alex takes the pencil and sharpens it with a pencil sharpener mounted to the far end of the workbench. Gives it to Miles, who goes back to work.

ALEX
Stop.

MILES
What?

ALEX
Stop. You can't help. This is all wrong.

MILES
I can too! You have no idea what you've done.

ALEX
I feel better about that now that I've seen you at work.

Miles scowls. He picks up the hamburger again.

MILES
There's more to the scientific method than creating one-off appliance wonders!

Miles starts to take a bite and Alex grabs the burger out of his hand and crams it into the modified blender on the workbench and turns it on. The blender comes on with a flash at many thousands of RPMs too many and blows the hamburger straight up in a haze of particles.

ALEX
That is an appliance!

Alex takes back the pencil he gave Miles, breaks it back Alex to its original size, tears the eraser off, and puts it back in MILES' pocket.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Good by, Miles.

MILES
You're sick.

Miles takes his bottle and leaves.

NINA
You're going to make things worse, aren't you?

ALEX

I'm going to explore one last possibility.

NINA

You're gonna make more ghosts and then complain about being haunted. ... Sometimes what's possible comes out of what is, not what might be. ... Don't say anything. ... I'm not like you. I live in the present. Bye Alex.

Nina leaves.

ALEX

Good-by, Nina

Alex sits at the table and looks through the papers until he finds his birth certificate. He puts it in the machine and sets a date.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Before I used this for the first time.

He pushes the start button and quickly sits, where he slumps unconscious. The machine THEREMIN HUMS and SHRIEKS and begins to SMOKE and finally stops. The room lights go out. Alex is semiconscious. The machine is on fire, small but growing, filling the room with smoke.

Steps are heard coming down the stairs. An indistinct form rips the paper to let some light in, revealing the form to be female. She opens the refrigerator and finds the milk and dowses the fire. She helps Alex up the stairs.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE/BACK PATIO - LATE AFTERNOON

A nice space in the late afternoon. Alex is on a couch becoming more conscious. He sees a form sitting opposite him, a female--Ivana from across the street.

IVANA

I saw smoke coming out of your basement window.

ALEX

Smoke?

IVANA

A small fire. I put it out.

Alex looks over to the side of the house and sees some smoke drifting up from the basement windows.

ALEX

Wow, thanks, Ivana. I better see to that.

IVANA

Alex are you sure--

ALEX

--I'm fine now, really. I need to check downstairs.

IVANA

Don't drink the milk. I'll see you later.

Ivana leaves.

BASEMENT

Not the same basement. Alex surveys the machine, a thin trail of smoke still rising from it. He tears the paper off all the windows and opens them. The late afternoon sun floods in. He hears, distantly, a DOOR OPEN. He waits. Then he hears FOOTSTEPS on the stairs, coming down.

Rachel enters the room.

Alex moves toward her and stops. Rachel doesn't flinch. She looks calm. Alex notices that she is wearing a WEDDING RING. He checks his own hand. So is he. He goes to her kisses her and hugs her.

ALEX

I'm so glad you're back. Oh my god, I love you.

RACHEL

You noticed I was gone. How nice.

ALEX

Every time.

RACHEL

You're different. I guess I am too then. What did you do?

Rachel goes to the workbench and looks at the machine. She looks down and sees something and picks it up.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Looks like it broke. Is that the end of...all this?

ALEX

I tried to change me. Just me. You were gone. I didn't think there was any you any more to worry about. I didn't mean to change you. Just me.

RACHEL

Really?

ALEX

Your dad said you were dead.

RACHEL

He used to say that to any guy he thought wasn't good enough for me.

ALEX

Where have you been?

RACHEL

You don't know. Interesting. I was ... I was (looks confused) ... visiting Jessica. From school. It was a long flight. I fell asleep on the plane, and when I woke up ... something was different.

Rachel gives Alex the "Mike and Jessica's" picture.

ALEX

We weren't married yet.

RACHEL

No, not when this was taken. Jessica and I were talking, about old times, about how I married you instead of Mike Lamont. ... Is that Alex still available?

ALEX

He is. I am. I'm sorry, Rachel. I got lost in my own head, and I ignored you. I don't want to be like that, not without you. Rachel, I love you. I do.

RACHEL

So, we can make this work?

(beat)

Nothing is quite the same, is it?

ALEX

No, it's not. ... But it's new.

RACHEL

We can rediscover everything then.

EXT. BURDICK'S HOUSE - ESTABLISHING

Burdick's house is now the houses next door that formerly was for sale. The yard is well kept. A little smoke trails up from a basement windows. Burdick's former houses is now the one looking forclsoed and for sale.

FADE OUT

THE END