

UNIVERSAL CABLE PRODUCTIONS

LOVE IS DEAD

Pilot

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Gaumont International Television

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CARD: “Alex and Plum.”

EXT. NYC APARTMENT ROOFTOP. SUNSET.

A party. ALEX BELL -- 28, dark hair, green eyes, good shoes -- looks around: a COUPLE talks in a corner... A FEW SINGLE WOMEN stand together laughing... An ARTY BRUNETTE sits by herself... A COOL BLONDE stares out over the roof’s edge...

Alex tries to imagine himself as the boyfriend of each of them. Not so easy. He sees a SMALL BAR set up. A drink, yes, good idea. Now he notices a young woman, PLUM, tending bar.

INT. RESTAURANT. A WEEK LATER.

Alex and Plum sit across from one another. Plum holds a MENU.

ALEX
Why didn’t you give me your number when I first asked at that party?

PLUM
I don’t know.

ALEX
But then, later, you just came up and did give to me?

She smiles/shrugs. Hard to read. She looks down at her menu.

PLUM
What’s *aoli?*

ALEX
It’s like garlic mayonnaise.
(considers, then)
Generally speaking I think people who like mayonnaise are better in bed than people who don’t. Mayonnaise is decadent, sort of sensual. Appreciating it speaks to something about a person... Not that I condone sexually profiling, or any profiling, of a person by their choice of condiments.
(beat)
Relish, though, unnerves me.

She gives him another hard to read smile. Then looks back down at her menu. Alex looks at her... He likes her.

INT. COFFEE SHOP. DAY. TWO MONTHS LATER.

Alex sits across from Plum. They are clearly together now.

ALEX
All I'm saying is that, for me, zoos are a little like concentration camps for animals.

PLUM
What? Zoos don't kill animals!

ALEX
No. Because then how would they make money? Right?

PLUM
Alex, my father is a zoologist.

ALEX
I though you said ur<u>ur</u>ologist.

She nods - NO. He feels badly, puts his hand on hers.

ALEX (CONT'D)
It's <u>much</u> more interesting to work with animals, even if they are imprisoned, than... Urine.
We should all get dinner sometime.

INT. THE SUBWAY. 6 WEEKS LATER.

Alex sits next to Plum on the subway. He stares at her.

ALEX
Is something bothering you?

PLUM
No.

ALEX
Are you sure? You can tell me.

PLUM
Nothing's bothering me.

ALEX
Good.
(then)
You're sure?

INT. PLUM'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM. TWO MONTHS LATER.

Alex stands at the sink, brushing his teeth.

PLUM (O.S.)
Are you using my tooth brush?

He turns to see her standing there.

ALEX
I thought it was okay to use because of that time we shared a spoon to eat ice cream. And because we have sex, which also involves a commingling of... Fluids.

PLUM
No, it's not the same.

She walks out. He looks at himself in the mirror.

ALEX
Why?

SMASH CUT TO

TITLE CARD: "LOVE IS DEAD."

INT. PLUM'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. ONE WEEK LATER.

C.U. on LAPTOP SCREEN: a JOBS WEBSITE.

SCROLL DOWN. A prompt to enter "College Major:" "Semiotics" is typed on-screen. Then, a beat... "Semiotics" is deleted, and "Psychology" is typed in... Then: "Psychology" is deleted, and "Business" is typed in.

SCROLL DOWN. Another prompt: "Check off the fields that interest you." Alongside an accompanying BOX to CLICK/CHECK: "Aerospace." A moment of consideration before... CLICK/CHECK. "Agriculture." Another beat, then CLICK/CHECK. "Biology." CLICK/CHECK. "Botany." CLICK/CHECK. We hear a DOORBELL.

REVERSE on Alex in front of his laptop. Heads to the door.

INT. PLUM'S APARTMENT. FRONT DOOR.

The door opens to REVEAL a large, super handsome and athletic-looking African-American man, 29, who is in a wheelchair. He is wearing an expensive suit with an electric pink shirt, "DT" cufflinks, but no tie, and has a BRIEFCASE on his lap. This is DOUBTING THOMAS.

He was an All-American wide receiver at Auburn before an accident put him in the wheelchair. He looks at Alex with a warm but business-like expression.

DOUBTING
Hi there. Alex, right?
Plum asked me to stop by.

ALEX
Plum's not here.

DOUBTING
I know.

And Doubting ROLLS HIMSELF INSIDE.

INT. PLUM'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Alex follows Doubting inside, somewhat taken aback.

ALEX
Are you a friend of Plum's?

DOUBTING
My name is Doubting Thomas.

ALEX
Like the saint?

DOUBTING
No, never played pro ball. Got hurt my senior year. Now I put the same energy and focus into this.

ALEX
Visiting people?

DOUBTING
Can I have a glass of water, Alex?

Alex nods, sure, walks into the KITCHEN, Doubting follows.

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
I work for the Horizon Agency. We specialize in something called Remote Relationship Transitioning. Plum hired us. To talk to you.

ALEX
To talk to me? About what?

Alex hands Doubting the GLASS of water.

DOUBTING
Water's actually for you, Alex.
(then)
Alex, Plum feels it's in both of your best interests to part ways as a couple. To break-up. Now, I know this isn't the way these things are usually done. But after you hear me out I think that--

ALEX
What? Plum wants to... Break up?

DOUBTING
With you. And she hired us to walk you through the process. Because she cares about you, Alex.

Alex stares back at him. *WTF?*

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
There are three principles that guide our approach to PRRiT -- that's an acronym for Professional Remote Relationship Transition, the "i" is silent. We like to call them the Three E's: Equanimity. Empathy. And Evolution... Equanimity is another word for calmness, or--

ALEX
This is a joke, right? One of those hidden camera things or...

DOUBTING
Ask yourself something, Alex. At any given time how many hidden camera pranks do you think are going on, worldwide? Two? Three?

Alex stares at him for a beat. Then:

ALEX
What's happening here? Now?

DOUBTING
Progress, Alex. The next step in the respective individual evolutions of both you <u>and</u> Plum.

Alex takes out his CELL PHONE and dials Plum's number.

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
Why don't we sit down, Alex?

As Alex hears a CHANGED NUMBER MESSAGE.

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
We can talk and there are just a few forms I'd like you to look at.

Doubting now wheels himself over to a COFFEE TABLE in the living room. Opens his briefcase on the table, and begins pulling out various AGENCY FORMS/MATERIALS.

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
Nothing legally binding, Alex, just some affirmations that you and Plum are no longer together, and--

ALEX
Get out. Now.

DOUBTING
This is Plum's apartment, isn't, Alex?

ALEX
I told her I was only crashing here until I landed a new job! Is that what this is all about?

DOUBTING
Plum acknowledges it was shortsighted on her part, Alex.

ALEX
Stop calling me, Alex!

The two men stare at each other.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Are you and Plum... *Together* now? Is that what's really going on?

DOUBTING
Please, Plum is a client, and I'm--

ALEX
In a wheelchair, right...

DOUBTING
I can still perform, sexually, if that's what you're wondering. Can and do. Can. And do.

Now Alex sits. Shakes his head. This is real.

ALEX
This is crazy. She didn't need to *hire* someone to end things. I'm not like... completely unstable.

DOUBTING
(checks paperwork)
Nope. Plum checked "Slightly unstable." Lowest level she could check. Except for "Stable."

ALEX
What do you mean "checked?" What's that you're looking at?

DOUBTING
All clients fill out an extensive pre-screening questionnaire. SOP. That's an acronym for standard--

ALEX
Let me see that.

DOUBTING
Sorry, official use only.

Alex stares at him. Genuine.

ALEX
C'mon, man. I just want to know what she said about me.
(then)
Did she say anything about the sex?

DOUBTING
Don't. You're better than that.

ALEX
Am I? Please just tell me what she said. I'll sign whatever you want.

DOUBTING
Mild. She checked "Mild."

ALEX
Mild? Like... Winter in Savannah?

DOUBTING
When your toilet is broken you call a plumber, a professional, someone with the special skills to fix it. Your relationship toilet is broken, Alex, and I'm your plumber.

ALEX
So you're going to fix my relationship?

DOUBTING
No. I'm gonna... Unclog it.

ALEX
Unclog? Or flush?

Doubting stares back at him. They both know the answer.

Alex now LUNGES at Doubting for PLUM'S FILE.

But Doubting reacts quickly and *pulls it back* before Alex can reach it. He holds up a finger. A warning.

Then he removes a few of the FORMS he mentioned, leaves them on the coffee table, and WHEELS himself toward the door -- but stops in front of Alex, turns toward him.

DOUBTING
Sugar Bowl. 2007. Cracked a rib.
Still had 11 catches, 2 touchdowns.
I played through it, Alex. *I played through it...* That's a metaphor.
But it also really happened.

Alex again LUNGES for the briefcase, this time GRABBING it. Doubting reacts -- SPINNING HIS CHAIR and executing a BADASS WHEELCHAIR MOVE/KARATE CHOP that DROPS ALEX.

He then ROLLS over Alex's hand - ALEX SCREAMS -- and TAKES the briefcase. Doubting then rolls himself -- backward, his eyes on Alex -- out the door. OFF Alex, in pain.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF FULL-SCREEN HEAD SHOTS OF ALEX'S FORMER GIRLFRIENDS FROM THE TIME HE WAS 15 THROUGH PLUM.

FIRST GIRL -- At the bottom of the screen her name and age are typed out: "Marissa, 15." Then: "Measles, immature."

ANOTHER GIRL -- "Dahlia, 18. Became Lesbian. My fault?"

ANOTHER GIRL -- "Liza, 21. Got into pottery. My fault."

MORE PHOTOS OF GIRLS/WOMEN pop up, like a slide show, along with the accompanying reasons that they broke-up with Alex.

ALEX (O.S.)
Do you know that most of the girls I've dated have broken up with me?

INT. KEN BELL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN. LATER.

Alex is sitting in front of his LAPTOP at the kitchen table. He'd been typing out the list we just saw visualized. His father, KEN, 60's, direct, difficult, is standing beside him.

KEN BELL
Can't say I'm shocked.

ALEX
What is that supposed to mean?

KEN BELL
Shocked? It means surprised. Will you still be here on Thursday?

ALEX
Like in two days?

KEN BELL
I met a lady on-line. An Oriental. Not sure what kind exactly. Lives in Vancouver but she's coming to town. We've been sexting a lot and we're going to dinner on Thursday, so...

Alex just puts his head in his hands.

KEN BELL (CONT'D)
Have you thought about suing this guy who manhandled you?

ALEX
Manhandled?

KEN BELL
Maybe kickstart the ol' Get-your-own-apartment fund?

ALEX
I don't know. The guy was in a wheelchair, so... Might be tricky.
(off Ken's look)
He was some kind of college football star, okay? Very strong.

KEN BELL
Whatever. You got manhandled by a guy who pisses in a bag.

ALEX
Who said anything about a bag?

Ken WALKS AWAY.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Sleep well, dad.

INT. THE AGENCY. RECEPTIONIST DESK/WAITING AREA. NEXT DAY.

A receptionist, REBECCA, sits behind a desk at the entrance to the agency. There is BULLPEN AREA behind her.

REBECCA
Can I help you?

REVERSE on Alex, hand now a little MORE BANDAGED.

ALEX
I'd like to speak with whoever is in charge. Please.

REBECCA
In charge of what? People have various responsibilities. It's not what I'd call hierarchal.

A stunning woman, MARISOL PARTARGAS -- 33, tall, Latina; icy but all the more sexy because of it -- ENTERS the office and walks to a desk. Alex watches her...

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Sir?

INT. THE AGENCY. LEWIS' OFFICE. LATER.

LEWIS DUNLEAVY -- early 50s, looks younger, or would if he weren't bald; contained, observant, curious in every sense. He sits at a desk, on which there is a PLAQUE with his name.

LEWIS
$7500?

REVERSE on Alex sitting in a chair in front of him.

ALEX
Yes, I think that's a fair settlement. Covers my doctor bills, and the emotional stuff. At least the most recent emotional stuff.

Behind Lewis are a PETRIFIED BEE HIVE, SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY BOOKS, and the GAUGUIN PAINTING "Tahitian Women On Beach" with the painters quote underneath it: "That word -- love. I'd like to kick whoever invented it in the teeth."

LEWIS
I see. Well, we are of course always trying to better facilitate evolutionary experiences for our--

ALEX
Honestly, I'll take $1000 less if you don't use the word facilitate again. Not just with me. Ever.

LEWIS
But I'm sorry, in this instance I don't believe any kind of settlement is called for.

ALEX
I hope that one day you are mauled by a bear. I take no joy in saying that either. But it's what I hope.

LEWIS
I was a divorce lawyer for twenty years before I started this firm. I came to realize, however, that what my clients were paying me for wasn't legal advice as much as a kind of hand-holding, a dispassionate guidance. What we do here is an extension of that, an improvement on it. Our aim is to move both parties <u>forward</u>, rationally. To be catalysts toward something new, something better.

ALEX
Are you on Yelp? Because God help you if you are. That's not a threat, that's just the power of the internet to destroy lives.
(then)
$5000 and this goes away.

LEWIS
I'm sorry to disappoint you.

So much for that. Alex stands up to leave. Then stops.

ALEX
<u>No</u>, you owe me. Not money, fine. But I was supposed to have an *evolutionary* experience, right? Well that didn't happen.
(then)
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)
This questionnaire Plum filled out about me. I want to see it.

LEWIS
Why? Inevitably there will be perceptions of you that you will disagree with. Okay. Then what?

ALEX
Then I would know.

LEWIS
Know what, exactly?

ALEX
What happened. *Why* it happened. *How* it happened. You see...
(reading name off plaque)
Lewis, I have what you might call a history of getting *transitioned*. Different girls, same ending: "I like you, but it's *just not working out*." And I nod, like I understand, but I don't understand. *What*'s not working out? How do they know? Why don't I? Well, for once I want to know, specifically, just what the hell is wrong with me.

LEWIS
What if nothing is wrong with you?

ALEX
That's sort of a fringe theory at this point.

LEWIS
Or what if it's just the world that has something wrong with it? What if it's a place far more asymmetrical than painters and poets would have us believe? What if everyone doesn't find true love?

ALEX
But some people do. I see them everywhere. Why not me?

LEWIS
Somes, yes. Hoping that what they have found in another is not what they know in themselves.

ALEX
Do you have a tatoo says that? In Chinese? On your ankle?
(then)
Listen, I may be undatable, possibly unemployable, but if there's one thing I know it's that being left by someone hurts. A lot. And it leaves you desperately asking why? If you don't understand that then maybe you'll help some people escape, but you sure as hell won't help anyone *evolve*.

Alex walks out. OFF Lewis.

INT. THE AGENCY. RECEPTIONIST DESK/WAITING AREA.

Alex waits for the elevator that opens into the office.

LEWIS (O.S.)
What makes you think you're unemployable?

Alex turns and sees Lewis.

ALEX
I majored in semiotics. At Brown.

LEWIS
You're looking for answers about things this agency traffics in every day. And it occurs to me that I should be looking to bring someone on here who thinks, who feels, the way you do. Perhaps we can help each other... Evolve?

ALEX
What are you taking about?

LEWIS
Your settlement. What you're owed.

EXT. THE AGENCY OFFICE BUILDING. MOMENTS LATER.

Alex walks out of the building. His PHONE RINGS. He looks down to see who it is, then answers.

ALEX
You're never going to believe what--

INTERCUT -- Ken Bell, on the phone, in his kitchen, furious, holding a mostly empty jar of FANCY MUSTARD.

KEN BELL
You ate all my mustard!

ALEX
What?

KEN BELL
That's very expensive mustard, Alex! It's made with real wine! If you don't come home with some replacement mustard, *the same brand*, then don't come home!

Alex looks down at the phone... His only reply:

ALEX
I got a job.

He HANGS UP. Shakes his head. Crazy - all of it. WALKS AWAY.

INT. KEN BELL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM. NEXT MORNING.

Alex in bed. Awake. Thinking.

LEWIS (V.O.)
There are three principles that guide what we do:

INT. KEN BELL'S APARTMENT. BATHROOM.

Alex unwraps a NEW TOOTHBRUSH. Progress?

LEWIS (V.O.)
Equanimity: addressing the facts of the situation rationally.

INT. NYC SUBWAY. MORNING.

Alex on the subway. Looking around at various people -- SINGLE GUYS and SINGLE WOMEN, as well as COUPLES.

LEWIS (V.O.)
Empathy: emotional as well as intellectual understanding.

INT. THE AGENCY. LEWIS' OFFICE. LATER.

Alex again sits across from Lewis.

ALEX
And evolution. Right. I've read the literature. That it's all somehow for the best. A new "Horizon."

LEWIS
Horizons are illusions, points at which the world appears to stop, but doesn't.

DOUBTING (PRE-LAP)
He's a time bomb, Lewis!

INT. THE AGENCY. BULLPEN. LATER.

Doubting talks with Lewis. Marisol is also with them.

DOUBTING
His girlfriend checked "moderately unstable," okay? Moderately. I only told him "slightly" because he seemed all kinds of "moderately," if you know what I mean.

REVEAL Alex also standing among them.

ALEX
(to Marisol)
"Slightly" more than covers it.

LEWIS
Train him.

Lewis walks away. Marisol looks at Doubting.

DOUBTING
What? No. Hell no!

She walks away.

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
Marisol! You know I only play at one speed... One speed, Marisol!

ALEX
I once had a bike that had eighteen speeds. Could handle anything.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING. DAY. LATER.

Alex and Doubting walk/roll up to and ENTER the building.

DOUBTING (V.O.)
Initial meetings with clients are called “Intakes.” They’re about asking the right questions, and doing a lot of listening.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING. MOMENTS LATER.

Alex and Doubting waiting for an ELEVATOR. The ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN and they step/roll inside. The DOORS CLOSE.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING. ELVEVATOR.

Alex stands next to Doubting.

ALEX
So weird to think about Plum doing this. With you, no less.

DOUBTING
Don’t say you’re sorry.

ALEX
I didn’t. I’m not.

MARISOL
To a client, or an SO - Significant Other. Don’t say your sorry. It’s what everyone else says to them.

DING. DOORS OPEN. Doubting BLOCKS Alex’s way.

DOUBTING
You are now in my dojo. Understand?

ALEX
Yeah, I saw “The Karate Kid.”

DOUBTING
Watch it again. Learn something. About yourself. *About life.*

Doubting rolls out. Alex follows.

INT. WREN’S APARTMENT. LATER. DAY.

On WREN GARDNER, a very sexy yoga teacher in her mid-30’s, sitting cross-legged on her couch, drinking a cup of tea. She’s upset, but moving from sadness to anger/acceptance.

WREN
I don't even know why I'm upset. Mark is an asshole.

REVERSE on Alex and Doubting sitting across from Wren, clearly they are in mid break-up with her.

DOUBTING
Mark acknowledges that.

WREN
The guy admits to everything. Gets away with it because he's gorgeous.

ALEX
It's like a license to kill.
(then)
You're going to be okay, Wren.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

DOUBTING
No touching!

Alex, startled, quickly REMOVES HIS HAND.

ALEX
Where did you meet him?

WREN
At a yoga retreat in Mexico.
(looks at Doubting)
All those lean, sweaty bodies.

DOUBTING
Not to mention all that guacamole.

ALEX
Guacacmole?

DOUBTING
Mexico is famous for it's guacamole, Alex. Plus, guac's a known aphrodisiac. So smooth. So creamy. Why some people refer to Mexico as "Sexico."

ALEX
No. People don't do that.

WREN
(to Doubting)
You're very handsome.

DOUBTING
And I love guacamole.

She and Doubting now totally eyeing each other.

DOUBTING (CONT'D)
Alex, why don't you meet me back at the office. I'm going to finish up here with Ms. Gardner.

ALEX
I'm happy to stay, Wren.

But she's focused only on Doubting.

WREN
So how disabled are you?

DOUBTING
Not. Very.

ALEX
I'll go. Not a problem.

INT. BAR. DOWNTOWN. NIGHT. LATER.

Alex's best friend, BEATRIX, 28, is playing a PINBALL MACHINE. Alex stands beside her. They talk as she plays.

BEATRIX
Wow. You're new job is <u>awesome</u>.

ALEX
Clearly you've never been dumped.

BEATRIX
Remember that cop I went out with right after I got into "The Wire?"

ALEX
Ron? Ron was the best.

BEATRIX
He dumped me because I'm gluten-free. I don't blame him.

ALEX
Whatever. I need a job. And who knows? Maybe there's something to the idea of learning from seeing what other people are doing wrong?

BEATRIX
No. You know what people learn in prison? How to be criminals.

ALEX
I think maybe I have an exaggerated fear of being raped in prison. Beyond that which is normal, is what I'm saying.

BEATRIX
Your problem is that you tend to try too hard, and when you try too hard you talk too much. You're smart, funny, and not unattractive. But your mom died when you were a kid so you're needy, and your father screams at birds.

ALEX
Just ones he thinks are "aloof."

BEATRIX
And on top of all of that you're under thirty. Honestly, I don't think guys under thirty should be allowed to dress themselves, or vote, let alone date.

ALEX
Do I dress weird?

BEATRIX
Enough. Action item: Snoop around the office and find Plum's file.

ALEX
Been looking. Nothing so far. Can't get caught, though. Need at least a few paychecks out of this. I came home last night and my dad and a woman were eating ice cream in their underwear. Could I crash at your place for a few nights?

BEATRIX
Sorry. Warren wouldn't like it.

ALEX
Why not?

BEATRIX
We were fighting and I said that you and I hooked up before we got married.

Beatrix finally loses her ball in the game. She's done.

ALEX
What? We've never hooked up.

BEATRIX
Yeah, but it's the kind of thing you have to do in a marriage to keep things fresh.

ALEX
What's wrong with you?

BEATRIX
Same stuff as everyone else.

She puts another quarter in the machine.

INT. THE AGENCY. NEXT DAY. MORNING.

Alex ENTERS. He's early. Looks around. He's the first one there. Walks over the MAIN FILE CABINET. Looks at it a moment. Then around the office again, to make sure he's alone -- looks that way -- and starts toward a specific drawer.

MARISOL (O.S.)
Morning, Alex.

Alex is startled. Marisol is behind him. She walks closer to him. Oddly close. Looks at him suspiciously.

ALEX
Marisol, good morning.

As ever, she is icy, and looks hot.

MARISOL
You'll be going out with me today.

ALEX
Okay. Great.

She smiles at him for the first time. Alex swallows hard. She has this kind of effect on guys.

MARISOL
Relax. Breathe.

ALEX
Right. Good. Thanks.

She walks away. OFF Alex.

INT. FANCY TRIBECA APARTMENT. LATER.

PHIL MEAKEN, 34, sits on a couch -- there is a TV on behind him, sound off, showing sports highlights -- talking about his girlfriend, VANESSA KERN. Alex and Marisol sit nearby.

PHIL
I don't know all the reasons why. It's just... Not working.

MARISOL
That's fine, and very common. Of course the more we know about a relationship the easier it is for us to shape a successful termination.

PHIL
Right. Well, Lord knows I want this to be easy on Vanessa. I mean, that's why I'm doing this.

Alex rolls his eyes and SIGHS loudly -- *bullshit.*

MARISOL
How long have you been with Vanessa, Phil?

PHIL
Six months.

ALEX
(to Marisol)
That's how long I was with Plum.

PHIL
We moved in together very quickly. Too quickly, I think. I'm not even really sure how it happened.

ALEX
Did you, I don't know, maybe *invite* her to move in at some point?

PHIL
She forced the issue, okay? She was living with her parents and they were driving her nuts.

ALEX
Have you ever been screamed at about mustard, Phil? Ever live through something like that?

PHIL
What?

MARISOL
Alex...

ALEX
Sorry. I'm sorry.

MARISOL
We try to understand what both parties have gone through. Alex is sort of a specialist in that.

PHIL
Look, Vanessa is a great girl. She is. But it's just not right.

ALEX
Why?

PHIL
I don't know why.
(beat)
Look, I don't mean to sound like an asshole... But then again I guess that's why people hire you guys, right? Say what you have to say to her. Oh, and she has a bunch of my sweaters. I'd like them back.

Marisol's PHONE RINGS. She looks down at the number.

MARISOL
Excuse me, I have to take this. It's my son's school.

She gives Alex a look -- *control yourself* -- and EXITS to take the call. Leaving Alex and Phil alone.

ALEX
Do you have any pictures of the sweaters? That might help.

INT. MOVING TAXI. DAY. LATER.

Alex sits in the back next to Marisol. She is clearly not happy with him. They are silent for a bit, then:

ALEX
Everything okay with your son?

MARISOL
I find it preposterous that Lewis believes it will somehow be helpful to have someone on staff so...

ALEX
C'mon, Marisol, I said I was--
(then)
Someone so what?

MARISOL
Desperate. And unrealized.

Ouch. He turns away from her. Then:

ALEX
This someone? Do I know her? Or him?

They ride in silence.

INT. BAR. DOWNTOWN. NIGHT. LATER.

Alex sits with Beatrix at the bar.

BEATRIX
I'm not even sure being married is possible, you know, long term, without gluten.

ALEX
Do you really think I'm damaged goods because of my parents?

BEATRIX
We're all damaged goods because of our parents. But I've seen worse.

What passes for Beatrix being a softy. But it's appreciated.

ALEX
Well, you're right about one thing. I should try to talk less. I can rein that in, though. It's just will power. I have will power.

BEATRIX
(cheers)
To the power of will.

ALEX
I mean, I don't masturbate as often as I could. Some people just go too far with that stuff. Not me.
(off her look)
Not you either. Wasn't my point. I have no idea what your situation with that is. I'm sure you're fine.

Beatrix WALKS AWAY. OFF Alex.

INT. THE AGENCY. LEWIS' OFFICE. MORNING.

Lewis sits behind his desk. Alex is across from him.

LEWIS
Marisol's son is ill. He's okay, but she won't be able to do the termination for Mr. Meaken scheduled for this afternoon. Do you think you can manage to make him aware of this without somehow making it about you?

ALEX
Yes. And I promise that kind of thing won't happen again.
(but)
For the record, though, I wasn't making it about me. I was thinking about Vanessa.

LEWIS
Vanessa?

ALEX
His girlfriend. For now.
(beat)
I'll call him. I'll be professional.

Alex stands to go.

ALEX (CONT'D)
She just... She has no idea this is all happening, you know? None.

Alex starts to walk out. As what he's said lands on Lewis.

LEWIS
Wait. I have a... Different idea.

INT. GEMMA RESTAURANT. DAY.

Alex sits at the long bar of an Italian restaurant, has a good view of the tables and the front door. He has a bag with him, and scans the rest of the room -- various women, alone, with friends, with dates -- before noticing an attractive woman, VANESSA KERN, 27, walk in.

INT. GEMMA RESTAURANT. VANESSA'S TABLE. MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE on Alex.

ALEX
Vanessa?

REVERSE on Vanessa at the table, looking up from a menu.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Hi. I work with Phil. How are you?

VANESSA
Oh, uh, hi. I'm good, thanks...
I'm sorry, have we met before?

Alex sits down across from her.

ALEX
No. Phil told me you'd be here.
That he was meeting you for lunch.
He wanted me to tell you he's not
going to be able to make it.

VANESSA
Is everything okay?

ALEX
Yeah. Basically. I work for a place
called the Horizon Agency. It's
called that because horizons are--

VANESSA
I thought you worked with Phil?

ALEX
I work <u>for</u> him, actually. He hired
us, me, to meet you here today. To
tell you that he...

It's harder than he thought.

VANESSA
Tell me what?

ALEX
That he wants to... Break-up. With you. It sounds impossible, I know. But... It's real. The agency is real. We get hired to break-up with people. Phil hired us.

VANESSA
What?

ALEX
I'm so sorry -- shit, no, I'm not sorry... I mean, only because this a good thing. Because there are three principles to what we do, they all start with "E" and...

VANESSA
Phil <u>hired</u> you?

ALEX
It's awful, I know. But if you just let me talk you through--

As we hear the voice of an older man and woman, who we'll soon find out are Vanessa's parents, RON and ARLENE.

ARLENE
Sorry we're a little late.

RON
Your mother should not be allowed to drive in the city.

Vanessa looks up. Sees them in the restaurant, almost at the table where she and Alex are sitting. Her face goes white.

VANESSA
My parents. I never told Phil that they were meeting us.

ALEX
You didn't? Why didn't you?

As Ron and Arlene sit down. Ron puts out his hand to Alex.

RON
Ron Kern, nice to meet you.

ARLENE
Hi. I'm Arlene.

Vanessa looks at him, pleading with him with her eyes, though for what exactly she isn't even sure. <u>Help</u>.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Hi... I'm... Phil.

RON
What? You're not Phil.

VANESSA
They've met Phil.

ALEX
Sorry, I meant I'm *a friend* of Phil's. Phil couldn't make it.

RON
What? No Phil?

ALEX
And I have to run. Right now. So...
(stands, then:)
Goodbye. Everyone.

At this Vanessa begins to SOB.

ARLENE (CONT'D)
Darling, what's wrong?

RON
Vanessa...

Alex starts to walk away. Ron GRABS HIS ARM, stopping him.

RON
What's going on here?

VANESSA
Phil and I are breaking up, dad.

RON
Breaking up? Why?

Vanessa says nothing. Ron and Arlene look at Alex.

ALEX
Phil is kind of a dick.

RON
Jesus, Vanessa, does this guy have anything to do with it?

ALEX
Tangentially. Very third party.

ARLENE
Third party?

RON
God, Van, what are you involved in? Some kind of threesome?

ARLENE
Ron!

ALEX
She's not involved in anything. I'm a friend of Vanessa's and I've been... helping her through things. Phil is... Vanessa can do better. Should do better. She'll... Evolve.

RON
Better than Phil? With someone more like you, is that it? Jesus, Van, did you leave Phil for... *This?*

ALEX
This?

VANESSA
Dad, please, just--

RON (CONT'D)
Vanessa, pumpkin, I'm just trying to stop you from making a big mistake here. Phil is a great guy. You two are incredible together.

ARLENE
Ron, stop it.

RON
Shutup, Arlene.
(to Alex)
Who the hell are you to say a god damned thing about Phil?

ALEX
Ron, you are coming in a little hot right now, okay? Not helpful.

Ron stands up. He's a big man. Gets in Alex's face.

RON
Call me Ron again. Please.

VANESSA
(to Alex)
Just go... Okay... Just go.

ALEX
Look, Vanessa...

RON
Get the hell out of here.

Alex WALKS AWAY. <u>We stay with</u> Ron, Arlene, and Vanessa.

RON
Honey, listen to me, I love you, but both of us know that you're, not stable enough to be making these kinds of decisions. Phil is--

ALEX (O.C.)
A guy who thinks...

Alex is back.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Your daughter isn't good enough for him. Who doesn't <u>care</u> about her. Not enough, at least.

RON
You are messing with the wrong marine, son!

ARLENE
You shutup, Ron! It's no wonder you and Phil got along so well. You're both pricks. And for the love of God you were never a marine.
(beat)
I'm so sorry, Vanessa.

Arlene gets up from the table, upset, walks out.

RON
(to Vanessa)
You see what you did?

Ron EXITS. Leaving Vanessa alone at the table.

ALEX
Are you okay?

She looks at Alex, shell shocked, but nods -- YES.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Vanessa... I'm sorry, too.

CUT TO:

A NATURE DOCUMENTARY ABOUT SEALS, ON TELEVISION.

INT. KEN BELL'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. SAME. NIGHT.

Ken watching the doc alone on the couch. After a moment Alex walks in. Ken nods at him, says nothing. Alex sits next to him. They both never look away from the doc on the TV.

KEN BELL
Seals are good for nothing.

ALEX
So where's your friend tonight?

KEN BELL
The Asian?

ALEX
That's her name? What are the odds?

KEN BELL
Kate. She went back to Vancouver.

ALEX
I'd like to ask you something, dad. But I'm hesitant, for a variety of what I think are obvious reasons. I'm hoping, though, that--

KEN BELL
You're gay. Big whup. You have my blessing. Who's the lucky guy?

ALEX
I'm not gay, dad. Sorry. I'm just... Out of step somehow. With women, particularly. And I'd like to get a handle on why that is... A small handle. Tea cup. You've known for me some time now, any ideas about why that might be?

KEN BELL
Your mother used to ask me stuff like that. You're a lot like her. She had a hard time figuring out... who she really was, I guess. But I think she was getting there.

ALEX
Is that why you wanted a divorce? Because she was like that?

KEN BELL
<u>She</u> wanted the divorce. Not me.

Alex looks at him. He's never heard this before.

ALEX
You both always said it was mutual.

KEN BELL
We did.

ALEX
Did she ever tell you why?

KEN BELL
She did.

But that's all he's going to say about it.

ALEX
I miss her.

KEN BELL
So do I.

INT. AGENCY. LEWIS' OFFICE. NEXT MORNING.

Alex sits in front of Lewis, who holds a CLIENT FILE.

LEWIS
I received a phone call from a Mrs. Arlene Kern this morning.

ALEX
Right. Okay, well, I want to say that I genuinely appreciate your taking a chance with me here, but I get it if you--

LEWIS
She wants to hire us to end things with her husband. She asked to work with you, specifically.

Lewis smiles. OFF Alex, confused, but now also pleased.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Well done, Alex.

INT. AGENCY. MAIN FILE CABINET. LATER. AFTERNOON.

CLOSE on FINGERS searching through files. It's Alex. Doubting rolls over and startles him.

DOUBTING
I appreciate your not mentioning anything to Lewis about our visit with the Gardner woman, yesterday.

ALEX
Yeah, well, you two seemed to... understand each other, so...

DOUBTING
If by understand you mean bodily appreciate.

ALEX
What else could I mean?

DOUBTING
Can and do, son. Can. And do.

Alex nods. Amazing. Doubting starts to ROLL AWAY. Then:

ALEX
Doubting... The way you are? Your... Confidence, I guess. Where does that come from?

DOUBTING
Australia.

ALEX
I'm not sure you understood what--

DOUBTING
It's a metaphor, Alex. But it also really happened.

Doubting rolls away. Alex goes back to searching the cabinet. OFF Doubting, now turned back around, watching Alex.

INT. ANOTHER CROWDED BAR. LATER.

Alex ENTERS. Looks around. Spots Marisol and Rebecca at a table. They see him and wave him over.

THE TABLE -- Alex approaches them.

ALEX
Hey. I got your message. Hey, Rebecca.

REBECCA
My middle name is Jasmine. But I prefer Rebecca.

ALEX
Okay. Noted.
(to Marisol)
You wanted to talk about something?

MARISOL
Sit down, Alex.

Alex sits, wary. Marisol then gives Rebecca nod, and Rebecca then reaches into her BAG and pulls out a CLIENT FILE.

MARISOL (CONT'D)
Your ex's file. Rebecca has been holding on to it for me.

She HANDS THE FILE TO MARISOL. Then STANDS.

REBECCA
Mild weather is generally considered pleasant weather.

She read it. Alex sighs. Rebecca EXITS.

MARISOL
From what I understand you did an excellent job with Meaken's SO.

ALEX
Thanks.

MARISOL
The other day, when we were in the taxi, what I said to you, about you, that was uncalled for.

ALEX
What does any of this have to do with Plum's file?

MARISOL
You can't hide things forever. At least I can't. And since it seems like you might be sticking around for a while...

She SLIDES THE FILE TO HIM.

MARISOL (CONT'D)
You don't need anyone to be happy, Alex. It only seems that way.

Alex looks down at it. Answers, finally in his hands.

MARISOL (CONT'D)
Go ahead. You earned it.

He PICKS UP THE FILE.

ALEX
It's not about needing someone. It's about wanting someone.

Back to the file. He's about to open it... Then stops.

ALEX (CONT'D)
But I think I'll skip this.

He PUTS THE FILE DOWN AND SLIDES IT BACK TO HER.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I already know the ending, so...

She looks back at him, surprised, but not quite buying it.

She picks up the folder. Nods. Okay... Then calls his bluff: and OPENS THE FOLDER AND BEGINS TO READ THE FILE.

Alex's jaw drops a bit... Finally, Marisol looks up.

MARISOL
(last chance)
What do you want to know?

He considers this, her... Then:

ALEX
Maybe just one thing?
(then)
How do you feel about mayonnaise?

SMASH TO BLACK.

THE END *