"Happiness"

A pilot

by

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The Characters and Setting

Sean -- A "Sean Hayes" type. Only this Sean married early-- before he came out-- had a daughter, and then divorced. He previously shared custody with his ex-wife, but recently his ex moved out of town, and he's now a full-time dad. Sean is filled with life and energy and is a good person, jumping in to help people whether at work or at home, and at times whether they want it or not. At work, he's in charge of the staff, who have come to see him as more of a friend than a boss.

Ellie -- (14) Sean's daughter. Ellie is cool, calm, and quick-witted. She does well in school, even though most subjects are "things I don't care about." She loves her dad but is at an age where she's asserting her independence, so she isn't shy about pushing back against Sean's input. Since she's new to living with her dad, she sees her primary role as teaching him how to parent her.

Lorna -- (late 60s, early 70s) Sean's mother, Ellie's grandmother. Lorna is tough, assertive, at times unreasonable, and always longed for her son to have those same qualities. While quick to be offended, Lorna either doesn't care or isn't aware when she's offending others.

Liz -- (mid 30s) Sean's friend with whom he also works. Liz is a former therapist who quit because she had too many opinions and couldn't listen to people talk about their problems without telling them what to do. A long time, loyal friend to Sean. Single.

Morgan -- (mid 20s) Morgan also works with Sean. Socially afraid, Morgan wanted to be an elementary school teacher but froze when she went into a classroom and 25 kids stared at her. Single.

Hunter -- (mid 20s) Another office worker, Hunter is very passionate. About everything. If something's wrong, it's very wrong. If it's right, it's perfect. In his spare time, Hunter's a musician, artist, photographer, poet, whatever. He doesn't do any of these things particularly well, but no matter. His passion and confidence transcend his talent. He has a girlfriend.

Max -- (late 40s, early 50s) The new owner of the online retail company where Sean works. Max is blunt, gruff and seemingly fine with not being liked.

The Setting: Sean works for an online retail company called "Flashmob," which sells designer quality products. (i.e. Gilt.com, OneKingsLane.com, etc) To further establish this, there will be interstitials between scenes showing the Flashmob home page with a cursor pointing and clicking on various products.

ACT ONE

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. SEAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN AREA - MORNING
(SEAN, ELLIE, LORNA)

A FLURRY OF WEEKDAY MORNING ACTIVITY AS SEAN AND HIS FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, ELLIE, PREPARE BREAKFAST AND LUNCHES. (**SEE CHARACTER PAGE FOR ELLIE AND ALL OTHER DESCRIPTIONS**)

SEAN

Did you finish your homework?

ELLIE

Yes.

SEAN

Did you rehearse all your "West Side Story" songs?

ELLIE

Sí.

SEAN

How's ninth grade? You need advice about boys? You are a smart, strong young woman, so screw boys. (THEN) Just so we're clear, I'm not saying "screw boys," like, "go, do that." I'm saying--

ELLIE

What's happening right now?

SEAN

(PROUDLY) I'm single parenting! I read a book last night. Some of it.

ELLIE

Don't read things, Dad, don't do that.

SEAN

Good, we're communicating. You don't like it when people read. I didn't know that. Is there anything about me you'd like to know?

ELLIE

How do I get you to stop this?

SEAN

SEAN (CONT'D)

The book disagrees.

ELLIE

Okay, fine. There is something I want to know.

SEAN

Excellent. Anything. Let's talk it out.

ELLIE

If you're gay, how did you and Mom have sex?

SEAN

Yeah, that book is stupid.

ELLIE

Okay, I see how this works.

REJECTED, ELLIE TURNS BACK TO FIXING HER LUNCH. SEAN LOOKS AT HER, RECONSIDERS.

SEAN

All right, it was a long time ago, but here's what happened: Gay. Tried not to be. Was. Was again. Was one more time because it was not unpleasant. Am.

ELLIE

So, was "was," and all the other "was-es," with one guy, or--

SEAN

First of all, there wasn't that much was-ing. Although, one was-ing was with a bear. Who had no hair. So it wasn't a very fuzzy was-ing, was it? Still, we made do.

ELLIE SMILES.

SFX: DOORBELL.

SEAN (CONT'D)

That's Grandma. She's taking you to school.

SEAN LOOKS INTO ELLIE'S EYES, SPEAKS MEANINGFULLY.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Listen to me. I am going to work today, but I promise you I will be home for dinner.

ELLIE

Are you going to work as a Navy SEAL?

SEAN

I'm saying, I took the week off to help you get settled, but I love our dinners together, and we're going to keep doing that. You will always have a home that's supportive and loving--

SFX: THE DOORBELL RINGS OVER AND OVER.

SEAN (CONT'D)

(YELLING TOWARD THE DOOR) Calm down, you maniac, I'm parenting!

SEAN'S MOTHER, LORNA, YELLS BACK AS SEAN CROSSES.

LORNA (O.S.)

The good ones can do it and open a door at the same time.

SEAN TAKES A BREATH, PREPARING HIMSELF, THEN OPENS THE DOOR, REVEALING LORNA.

LORNA (CONT'D)

Is it still Monday? Because I've been out here since Monday.

SEAN

Hi, Mom. Thank you for helping this morning.

LORNA COMES IN.

LORNA

Of course. How's my baby?

SEAN

I'm okay. Going from "fun weekend parent" to "responsible full-time parent" is daunting, and frankly--

LORNA

Not you. Ellie. Poor girl. Her mother abandons her-- now she has no one. No one.

SEAN

Jill didn't abandon her. She took a job, and Ellie chose to live here so she could stay at school with her friends. And wait, I just remembered someone she has. Me. I remembered me. What a relief, now we can cancel that Ellie-Has-No-One telethon.

LORNA

Of course she has you. But you have a lot on your plate. A teenage daughter; that fantastic, gorgeous man you finally found who dumped you; a terrible new boss. I just don't see how this is going to work.

SEAN

Are you aware that sometimes you're negative?

LORNA

Listen to how you tear into me.

ELLIE COMES OVER, READY TO GO.

ELLIE

Hi, Grandma. Are you communicating with your son? That's super important for a child.

LORNA

I'm trying, sweetheart, but he doesn't make it easy.

ELLIE

I know. Plus, he kept you waiting outside for, like, a day.

SEAN

Okay, both of you, off you go. (TO ELLIE) Don't be late; we're having dinner.

ELLIE

And look how bossy he is.

AS SEAN USHERS LORNA AND ELLIE OUT THE DOOR, WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE B

INT. SEAN'S OFFICE - THAT MORNING
(SEAN, LIZ, MORGAN, HUNTER, MAX VOICE (V.O.))

SEAN IS AT HIS DESK, LOOKING AT SOME PAPERWORK, AS LIZ ENTERS.

LIZ

I hate the new owner. He's mean; he knows nothing about online retail--

why are you shaking your head?

A VOICE COMES FROM THE SPEAKERPHONE.

MAX (THROUGH SPEAKERPHONE)

Because he's on the phone with the new owner.

LIZ IS HORRIFIED. SEAN SMILES, INTRIGUED BY HER SUDDEN SITUATION.

LIZ

(COVERING) Ohhhh, not you, Max. You're great. I was talking about the new owner of... (STUCK)

SEAN

That deli down the street?

LIZ

Yeah, that guy. He knows nothing about online retail.

SEAN

Which is a subject Liz cares deeply about.

LIZ

And so I hate him.

MAX (THROUGH SPEAKERPHONE)

Not buyin' it. Sean, pull those numbers, I'll look at them when I get in. I'll see you later, too, Liz.

LIZ

Sounds good, Max. Love you.

SEAN CLICKS OFF.

SEAN

You love him? That's confusing.

LIZ

I overcompensated! You have to help me. I can't lose this job and go back to being a therapist, with people always doing dumb things then asking me to help them.

SEAN

I'll fix it. But maybe you shouldn't just walk into rooms talking.

LIZ

How was I supposed to know you were on the speakerphone?

MORGAN ENTERS. SHE STANDS QUIETLY A MOMENT.

SEAN

Yes?

MORGAN

I was waiting to see if you were on the speakerphone.

LIZ

Seriously? That's something people do?

MORGAN

Careful people. (TRYING TO BE POSITIVE) Guess who I'm meeting with later. The new owner. What fun! The way he makes everyone feel bad, like we're idiots and don't work hard enough. (TO SEAN) Do you have any Ativan? I left mine at home.

SEAN

Morgan, Ativan is a prescription medication. It would be against the law--

MORGAN

I can't function!

SEAN

There is, however, no law against saying where I keep mine: in my left drawer.

(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

And whether I think you should help yourself when I'm not here: I do.

HUNTER ENTERS HOLDING A STEPLADDER.

HUNTER

Have you seen these new stepladders Max wants us to sell? They're unworthy.

HUNTER OPENS IT, IT'S RICKETY.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

So, are we going from a place that sells quality designer products to one that sells garbage? Because I will not stand for that! I will if I have to. But it is <u>not</u> okay! Unless that's the drill. I don't want there to be any confusion: I need this job. My band is not making the kind of money I'd hoped. Plus, I think our bass player is ripping us off.

SEAN

Okay, I think we all agree, you do need a more honest bass player. And things have not been easy with Max.

MORGAN

(TO SEAN) Everybody's freaking out.

HUNTER

You need to do something.

LIZ

And make sure Max doesn't think that I hate him, because I don't... want him to think that I do, which I do.

SEAN

(STANDING) All right. I will saddle up and go save the day.

SEAN HEADS FOR THE DOOR WITH THE OTHERS IN TOW.

LIZ

"Saddle up?" That's new.

SEAN

I tried reading a parenting book last night but ended up watching a Western instead.

AS THEY CONTINUE OUT THE DOOR, WE:

RESET TO:

SCENE C

INT. BULLPEN AREA - CONTINUOUS
(SEAN, LIZ, MORGAN, HUNTER, HOWARD, MAX, OTHER OFFICE WORKERS)

IT'S AN OPEN SPACE WHERE ABOUT EIGHT PEOPLE WORK AT DESKS. SEAN, LIZ, MORGAN AND HUNTER ENTER FROM SEAN'S OFFICE.

SEAN

Can I get everyone's attention? I want to talk to you about Max.

A MAN, HOWARD, SPEAKS.

HOWARD

Did he quit?

SEAN

No, Howard, he's the owner. Owners don't quit their jobs owning things.

LIZ

But Sean's going to talk to him and get him to stop being such a tyrant!

THE GROUP CHEERS.

GROUP

Yay, Sean!

MORGAN

And maybe to smile more and not go like this (STAMPS HER FOOT) to people he thinks are afraid of him.

THE GROUP CHEERS.

HUNTER

And to stop selling inferior merchandise. And give us more time for lunch. Enough so we can write music, or poetry, or make love.

THE GROUP CHEERS.

SEAN

I'm not going to talk to him about any of those things.

THEY FALL SILENT, SAVE FOR LIZ.

LIZ

Boooo.

SEAN

Max only bought this place a few weeks ago. We need to give him some time. Let him see how good we are, how well things run. He'll calm down.

HOWARD RAISES HIS HAND.

HOWARD

I've been reading about ants.

SEAN

I know, Howard, we talked about them yesterday. My takeaway: how ants do things is not always relevant.

HOWARD

Ants sacrifice themselves for their communities, Sean. Okay?

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

They're heroes. Maybe we should sacrifice someone-- get Max to focus all his cruelty on one person, thereby leaving the rest of us alone.

SEAN

No. Because we are not ants. We're people, and people stick together-- not sacrifice each other like insects, which are tiny, gross, and for some reason, like, angry all the time.

MAX ENTERS. HE'S IN A SOUR MOOD.

MAX

What's going on? Why's everyone standing around?

HOWARD POINTS AT SOMEONE.

HOWARD

It's Greg's fault! And so we sacrifice him!

MAX

Greg... I knew he was a problem.

SEAN

It's not Greg, and there's no problem. We were just getting psyched up, so (MOTIVATING TEAM) we can be the best online retail company in America! (CHANTING) I say "online," you say "retail." "Online!"--

MAX

Yeah, let's do that later. Maybe during your lunch. By the way, starting today, everyone's going to be working a few hours later every evening.

SEAN

Because...?

MAX

I said so?

SEAN

And...?

MAX

That should be enough?

SEAN

Only...

MORGAN

It's not? Sorry. Sometimes I like seeing if I can tell what people are about to say.

MAX

Our competition killed us with those throw pillows last week. We need to <u>own</u> "Home and Kitchen." If working late's a problem for you people, for a bowl of noodles, I could get a billion Chinese in here. Hey, Liz. Love you.

MAX EXITS TO HIS OFFICE.

LIZ

Love you, too. (RE: MAX) I guess that's going to be our thing. (THEN) Well, this sucks.

SEAN

(TO GROUP) It'll be fine. We just have to show him we'll do whatever he needs and stay as late as he wants. (THEN, TO LIZ) Although, there's no way I can stay as late as he wants.

LIZ

I know, none of us--

SEAN

No, I promised Ellie we'd have dinner, and the book was very clear: "Never make promises you can't keep." Or maybe that was the Western. Either way, it seemed important.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE D

FADE IN:

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - THAT AFTERNOON
(SEAN, MAX)

MAX SITS AT HIS DESK AS SEAN ENTERS WITH PAPERWORK.

SEAN

(HANDING IT TO HIM) Here are those numbers you wanted, buddy.

MAX

Buddy? No.

SEAN

Just finding the parameters. So, that Liz thing on the phone this morning--

MAX

When she said she hates the new owner?

SEAN

Yeah, only it turns out what she actually said was, "I ain't the new owner," like: "You can say what you want, but I ain't the new owner... girlfriend."

MAX

Why would she suddenly start talking like that?

SEAN

I don't know. Maybe it was an attempt to be less formal. More folksy. I'm not saying it was successful, I don't think it was. I'm just clearing it up. Which I think I've done.

MAX CONTINUES LOOKING OVER THE PAPERWORK SEAN GAVE HIM.

SEAN (CONT'D)

So, my daughter, Ellie-- she's fourteen, not an easy age, right? (NO RESPONSE) No, it is not. Her mom and I divorced right after she was born and now I'm raising her on my own-- which, is going to be a challenge... (SOBER) an exciting challenge. Anyway, consistency's important-- all the books and Westerns say so-- so I promised I'd make us dinner tonight. Chicken Parmesan. Although, if I'm home early enough maybe I'll roast a duck. So, menu: undecided.

MAX LOOKS UP FROM THE PAPERWORK.

MAX

Sean, one of the reasons I bought this company is because of you.

SEAN

Really? Go on. My thing can wait.

MAX

You have good taste; you've picked great products for this place to sell. That Foroni desk lamp you liked? I thought it looked like a toothbrush stuck in a turd. But you were right, it was a hit.

SEAN

(MODESTLY) Yeah, it was.

MAX

You're also a good manager.

SEAN

I try to be.

MAX

You set an example for everyone.

SEAN

I really do.

MAX

So you can't leave early today.

SEAN

What?

MAX

If I let you go just to have dinner with your daughter, everyone's going to want to go have dinner with their stupid families.

SEAN

Okay, forget the duck. Who makes duck on a weekday? What if I just left early enough for a simple soup?

MAX

Soup is better.

SEAN

I think so.

MAX

When you get home. Which will be after dinner.

CUT TO:

SCENE E

INT. SEAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER
(SEAN, ELLIE)

SEAN ENTERS TO FIND ELLIE WAITING FOR HIM.

SEAN

Ellie. Is everything all right?

ELLIE

Everything's fine. I was on my way home from school and felt like saying hello. I'm so glad I'm living with you.

SHE SNUGGLES UP TO HIM.

SEAN

Awww. That's nice. I like this part. (THEN) You don't have an agenda, do you?

ELLIE

No, you paranoid man. By the way, Liz said you guys are kind of busy, and I've got a lot going on, so it's okay if we can't have dinner tonight.

SEAN

Really? That'd be great because I'm supposed to work late.

ELLIE

Cool. Then I'll just see you when I get home.

SEAN

Cool. (THEN) Wait. You mean, you'll see me when I get home.

ELLIE

We'll both see each other at home. That's what's important.

SEAN

No. Because saying you'll see me when you get home implies that you're going out.

ELLIE

Huh. I'm not seeing that.

SEAN

Why didn't you want to have dinner with me tonight?

ELLIE

Because you can't.

SEAN

No, that's why I didn't want to.

ELLIE

Right. So we'll do it another time.

SEAN

Ellie.

ELLIE

Okay, I made plans.

SEAN

Ah-ha! An agenda!

ELLIE

You can't have dinner anyway.

SEAN

Which you didn't know when you made plans.

ELLIE

Right. So, it all works out.

SEAN

I don't think so. What plans did you make, knowing we were having dinner?

ELLIE

Cash, the guy who plays Tony to my Maria, invited me to his house so we can rehearse and stuff.

SEAN

And stuff?

ELLIE

--And do homework. So I can keep doing well in things I don't care about, which in my experience is how you're going to judge your parenting.

SEAN

I'm sorry. No "stuff" with a guy named "Cash." We made plans and we are having dinner tonight.

ELLIE

But you're working!

SEAN

No, I'm not. And if you keep this up, you may never get a duck.

CUT TO:

SCENE H

INT. SEAN'S OFFICE - END OF DAY
(SEAN, MORGAN, HUNTER)

MORGAN AND HUNTER ARE WORKING AS SEAN PACES NERVOUSLY. MORGAN STUDIES A PAIR OF SIDE TABLES AS SHE PITCHES IDEAS.

MORGAN

What about: these eye-catching side tables add an elegance to any room--

SEAN

It's six o'clock. I have to go.

HUNTER

Then go.

SEAN

I can't go. Max won't let me.

HUNTER

Then stay.

SEAN

I can't stay.

HUNTER

Then stay.

SEAN

You mean, go.

HUNTER

You said you can't go.

SEAN

I can't.

HUNTER

So go!

SEAN

You mean, stay.

HUNTER

You can't stay!

MORGAN

Don't stop. You almost have it figured out. (THEN) Just cancel Ellie. It's a good life lesson: people let you down; you're on your own. Find a medication that works for you, and keep it in your purse.

HUNTER

Don't cancel Ellie. Be bold. Sneak out the bathroom window and flee.

SEAN

I'm not sneaking out the bathroom window.

HUNTER

But the rear door's alarmed, and it's the only one that opens. Think, Sean.

SEAN

I'm just going to tell Max I'm leaving. I'm not afraid of him.

MORGAN

Really? What's that like?

SEAN

I don't know. It must be great.

SEAN HEADS OUT OF HIS OFFICE.

RESET TO:

SCENE J

INT. BULLPEN AREA - CONTINUOUS
(SEAN, MAX)

MAX IS NEAR THE FRONT DOOR LOOKING AT SOME PAPERS. SEAN MARCHES UP TO HIM PURPOSEFULLY.

MAX

What.

SEAN SPEAKS WITH CONFIDENCE.

SEAN

Love the new side tables.

SEAN TURNS AND HEADS BACK TO HIS OFFICE.

CUT TO:

SCENE K

INT. SEAN'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER
(SEAN, MORGAN, HUNTER)

HUNTER AND MORGAN ARE WHERE WE LEFT THEM, AS SEAN ENTERS.

MORGAN

How'd it go? I'm thinking not great.

HUNTER

Just climb out the bathroom window like a normal person.

SEAN

I'm not climbing out a window. I'm just gonna tell him. (PRACTICING) "Max, I'm going home." "Max, I'm going home." "Max, I am outta here..."

SEAN CONFIDENTLY WALKS OUT.

CUT TO:

SCENE L

INT. BULLPEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER
(SEAN, MAX)

SEAN MARCHES UP TO MAX.

SEAN

Max--

MAX

If this is about you leaving early,

you can't.

SEAN

That's fine with me.

SEAN TURNS AND WALKS AWAY.

CUT TO:

SCENE M

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER
(SEAN)

SEAN, ALONE, STUDIES A SMALL SLIDING HORIZONTAL WINDOW HIGH ON THE WALL, THE UPPER WINDOW FRAME BORDERING THE CEILING. HE LOOKS AROUND. SEVERAL STEPLADDERS, THE TYPE WE SAW HUNTER WITH PREVIOUSLY, ARE STACKED NEARBY. SEAN TAKES ONE AND OPENS IT UP. HE DRAGS OVER A WOODEN CRATE, PUTS THE STEPLADDER ON IT, AND STARTS TO CLIMB. THE STEPLADDER IS AS RICKETY AS HUNTER HAD SAID. WITH EACH STEP, SEAN WOBBLES A LITTLE MORE UNTIL FINALLY HE RETREATS BACK DOWN.

CUT TO:

SCENE P

INT. SEAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER
(MORGAN, HUNTER, SEAN)

MORGAN AND HUNTER ARE WHERE WE LEFT THEM. SEAN STORMS IN.

SEAN

Everything's great. (THEN) Side tables, you're coming with me! (THEN) See how tough I can be?

AS SEAN GRABS THE SIDE TABLES AND HEADS BACK OUT, WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE R

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER
(SEAN)

SEAN PLACES THE TWO SIDE TABLES (SEE PICTURE) ON THE CRATE BENEATH THE WINDOW. HE STEPS ON THE CRATE, PUTS ONE LEG ON EACH TABLE AND STANDS, TAKING A SECOND TO GET HIS BALANCE. THE WINDOW IS A LITTLE ABOVE HIM. STRETCHING, HE SLIDES IT OPEN.

WITH HIS HANDS ON THE SILL, HE HOISTS HIMSELF UP. SPRINGING WITH TOO MUCH FORCE, HOWEVER, HE HITS HIS HEAD ON THE CEILING AND DROPS BACK DOWN. THE WEIGHT OF HIS LANDING CAUSES EACH FOOT TO GO THROUGH THE CENTER OF EACH TABLE AND THROUGH THE SMALL SQUARE SUPPORTS, TRAPPING HIM.

NOW WEARING THE TABLES, ONE ON EACH LEG, HE STRUGGLES TO GET FREE. HE CAN'T. AS HE STARTS TO FALL OFF THE CRATE, WE:

CUT TO:



SCENE S

INT. BULLPEN AREA/BATHROOM - SAME
(SEAN, LIZ, HUNTER)

LIZ AND HUNTER ARE WALKING BY THE BATHROOM. THEY HEAR A CRASH AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER. AFTER A BEAT, THE BATHROOM DOOR SLOWLY OPENS AND SEAN SPEAKS QUIETLY.

SEAN (O.S.)

I could use some help.

LIZ AND HUNTER ENTER THE BATHROOM TO FIND SEAN STANDING WITH ONE LEG IN EACH TABLE.

LIZ

Why are you wearing tables on your legs?

SEAN

I'm trying to find ways to make walking more difficult. This one's the winner.

HUNTER

You were sneaking out. Good for you, being bold.

SEAN

Yeah, I'm feeling really good about myself. Just get these off me.

SEAN LIES ON HIS BACK AND LIZ AND HUNTER PULL THE SIDE TABLES FROM HIS LEGS. SEAN STANDS, CROSSES TO THE WINDOW, AND MOVES THE CRATE.

SEAN (CONT'D)

All right, hoist me up.

LIZ

Why don't you just tell Max--

SEAN

I'm so past that now.

LIZ AND HUNTER EACH LACE THEIR FINGERS TOGETHER. SEAN STEPS UP, ONE FOOT IN EACH SET OF HIS FRIENDS' HANDS, AND THEY STRUGGLE TO LIFT HIM TOWARD THE WINDOW.

LIZ

At least all those stupid teamwork

seminars are finally paying off.

AS SEAN STARTS TO CRAWL THROUGH THE WINDOW, WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE T

INT. SEAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - LATER

(SEAN, ELLIE)

SEAN HAPPILY PREPARES DINNER AS ELLIE SITS AT THE PIANO SLOWLY PICKING HER WAY THROUGH THE SONG "TONIGHT" FROM "WEST SIDE STORY."

SEAN

Do you like tomatoes in your salad?

ELLIE

I don't care.

SEAN

Okay, I know you're mad.

ELLIE

I don't care.

SEAN

You wanted to be with your Tony tonight, and I'm making you stick to your own kind.

ELLIE STOPS PLAYING.

ELLIE

We didn't have to have dinner together. I realize Mom's not around.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

She left-- thank you, Mom-- but that doesn't mean I need your help "adjusting" or "settling in" or with boys, or anything.

ELLIE GOES BACK TO PICKING AT THE SONG, BADLY. SEAN WEIGHS WHAT TO DO, CROSSES TO HIS DAUGHTER AND SITS NEXT TO HER.

SEAN

I know you don't want to get all communication-y, but that "thank you, Mom" thing seems worth exploring.

ELLIE

I'm fine.

SEAN

I think we should talk about her leaving. You. Leaving you.

ELLIE

No. I could've gone with her if I wanted to. I didn't want to.

SEAN

Still... she left.

ELLIE

And that's fine. (WITH ATTITUDE) I don't need my mommy. And I don't need you always trying to help me.

THEY SIT IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT AS ELLIE CONTINUES POKING AT THE PIANO.

SEAN

Okay, you don't want my help. I understand. But you're butchering this song, so I'm helping it, not you.

SEAN STARTS TO PLAY. PERFECTLY. (IT'S THE REPRISE OF "TONIGHT" WITH FIVE DIFFERENT ROLES - TONY, MARIA, ANITA, JETS AND SHARKS AND CAN BE FOUND HERE: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=QPAS2V-R7CE STARTING AT 1:35.)

SEAN (CONT'D)

Watch. Take Tony, lead me in.

ELLIE GRUDGINGLY STARTS TO SING THE "TONY" PART.

ELLIE

(AS TONY, SINGING) "*Tonight, tonight, I'll see my love tonight, and for us stars will stop where they are.*"

SEAN COMES IN, SHOWING HER HOW TO SING THE MARIA ROLE.

SEAN

(AS MARIA, SINGING) "*Today the minutes seem like hours. The hours go so slowly, and still the sky is light. Oh, moon, grow bright and make this endless day endless night.*"

SEAN POUNDS OUT THE BRIDGE, THEN:

SEAN (CONT'D)

Aaand Sharks! (SINGING) "*The Jets are comin' out on top tonight. We're gonna watch Bernardo drop tonight.*

(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

That Puerto Rican punk'll go down, and when he's hollered uncle we'll tear up the town..." (THEN) Now take Maria!

ELLIE JUMPS IN, NOW FULLY COMMITTED. SEAN TAKES ALL THE ROLES THAT AREN'T MARIA AS HE AND HIS DAUGHTER HARMONIZE THIS FAMOUSLY BEAUTIFUL SONG.

ELLIE

(AS MARIA, SINGING)

"*Tonight, tonight, won't be just any night. Tonight there will be no morning star. Tonight, tonight, I'll see my love tonight, and for us stars will stop where they are. Today, the minutes seem like hours. The hours go so slowly. And still the sky is light. Oh moon, grow bright and make this endless day endless night. Tonight!*"

SEAN

(JETS/SHARKS/TONY, SINGING)

"*We'll be in back of you boy. Right. You're gonna flatten him good. Right. We're gonna rock it tonight. We're gonna jazz it tonight. We're gonna mix it tonight.* (AS TONY) *Today, the minutes seem like hours. The hours go so slowly. And still the sky is light. Oh moon, grow bright and make this endless day endless night. Tonight!*"

A HUGE FINISH AS THEY SHARE THIS GREAT MOMENT. THEY SMILE, ENERGIZED. SUDDENLY, SEAN'S CELLPHONE RINGS.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Probably the Leonard Bernstein estate with some suggestions. (ON PHONE) Hello? (INSTANTLY ALARMED) Max! Yeah... I just-- No, I-- Yeah, I'll be right over.

HE HANGS UP, TURNS TO ELLIE. DURING THE FOLLOWING, ELLIE BECOMES INCREASINGLY ALARMED.

SEAN (CONT'D)

That was my boss. He wants to see me.

ELLIE

Now? Why?

SEAN

I kind of snuck out to get home, and my friends who were going to cover for me, I guess, you know, failed totally to do that.

ELLIE

You snuck out?

SEAN

Not literally. I just left early... through a window.

ELLIE

(WORRIED) Oh, God. Are you going to get fired?

SEAN

(FALSE BRAVADO) No.

ELLIE

You are.

SEAN

He just wants me to run over to The Jupiter and talk to him.

ELLIE

The Jupiter? Is that a strip club?

SEAN

It's a hotel. He's only been here a few weeks and doesn't have a place yet.

ELLIE

You're lying. He's a bad man. Liz said. He's going to take you into a back room at a strip joint and beat you with a golf club. I've seen movies.

SEAN

What kind of business do you think I'm in?

ELLIE

I told you we didn't have to have dinner. I told you!

ELLIE RUNS OUT.

SEAN

(CALLING AFTER HER) Ellie, it's going to be fine. (THEN) God, I hope The Jupiter's a hotel.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SCENE W

FADE IN:

INT. SEAN'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER
(SEAN, LORNA)

SEAN IS GETTING READY TO LEAVE. THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HE OPENS IT TO LORNA.

LORNA

Sure, when you need something, the door opens right away.

SEAN

Well, yeah. (THEN) Thanks for watching Ellie. She's in her room. Mad at me.

LORNA

Kids are tough. You were a pain in the ass.

SEAN

Thank you.

LORNA

A real pain in the ass.

SEAN

I get it.

LORNA

Don't get me started.

SEAN

I'm trying not to.

LORNA

So, why's Ellie mad?

SEAN TAKES A BREATH, IS FORCED TO ADMIT:

SEAN

Because I don't know what I'm doing! She wanted to hang out with a boy instead of having dinner. Should I have let her? Maybe. I didn't. Was that right? I don't know. And now she knows I'm in trouble with work. Should I have told her? I don't know. Because what do I know about parenting?!

LORNA

Nothing.

SEAN

Exactly. Oh, wait, that's not helpful.

LORNA

None of us know anything. It's all a mess. It has been forever.

SEAN

Still not helpful.

LORNA

All you can do is keep trying. Stay in it. Don't let her push you away.

SEAN

Okay, that's a little helpful. (THEN) I'm just scared I'm going to blow it. She's a good girl. She deserves a good dad.

LORNA

She has a good dad.

SEAN TAKES THIS IN. THEN, GRABBING HIS COAT;

SEAN

I gotta go. I should be home soon. If I'm not back by midnight, I've been murdered with a golf club.

LORNA

Then what?

SEAN

I don't know, mourn me?

LORNA

What's that gonna do?

SEAN

Again, not helpful.

AS SEAN EXITS, WE:

CUT TO:

SCENE X

INT. ELLIE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER
(ELLIE, LORNA)

ELLIE LIES ON HER BED PLAYING WITH HER IPHONE. LORNA KNOCK AND ENTERS.

LORNA

Hello, dear. Can I get you anything?

ELLIE

Hi, Grandma. No, thanks.

LORNA LOOKS AT HER A BEAT, THEN:

LORNA

Your father's terrified.

ELLIE

Of losing his job? I told him--

LORNA

No. Not of losing his job.

ELLIE

Is it because he's been watching that zombie show? Zombies freak him out, he knew that going in.

LORNA SMILES.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Dammit, it has something to do with me, right?

CUT TO:

SCENE Y

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER THAT EVENING
(SEAN, ELLIE, MAX)

SEAN WALKS UP TO MAX'S HOTEL ROOM DOOR. HE STOPS AND PRACTICES WHAT HE'S GOING TO SAY.

SEAN

"Sir, I was wrong. I hope you'll accept my apology and (PULLING IT OUT) this twenty dollar coffee gift card."

Ugh, that barista was right. Now twenty doesn't seem like enough.

SEAN KNOCKS ON THE DOOR. SUDDENLY, ELLIE APPEARS FROM AROUND THE CORNER AND STANDS NEXT TO HIM.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Ellie! What are you doing?

ELLIE

You're in trouble because you wanted to be with me. Now I want to be with you.

SEAN

No, no, no. I mean, that's sweet, thank you, but go home.

ELLIE DOESN'T MOVE.

SEAN (CONT'D)

(RE: MAX) You're not going to like him. He's very scary.

ELLIE

Like a zombie?

SEAN SHUDDERS.

SEAN

Ew. Hate zombies. It's like all they care about is eating people. Give it a break, have some juice or something.

MAX OPENS THE DOOR, SURPRISED TO SEE ELLIE.

MAX

Hey. You brought your daughter?

SEAN

Yes. She's interested in business. So bringing her is completely normal.

AS SEAN AND ELLIE ENTER, WE:

RESET TO:

SCENE Z

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS
(SEAN, MAX, ELLIE)

SEAN AND ELLIE ENTER. THEY NOTICE A COCKATIEL SITTING ON THE ARM OF A COUCH. MAX SITS AND PUTS THE BIRD ON HIS SHOULDER. HE OCCASIONALLY FEEDS IT SUNFLOWER SEEDS THROUGHOUT.

SEAN

Oh, you have a cockatoo.

MAX

Tiel. Cockatiel. A cockatoo would be five times Hector's size.

SEAN

I don't know birds. I knew it was a bird. Anyway, this is Ellie. (INTRODUCING) Ellie, Max and Hector.

ELLIE

Hello, sir. Bird.

MAX

Hello, sweetheart. Okay, Sean, why don't you start with the best apology you can muster, and let's see where that takes us.

SEAN LOOKS AT MAX, THEN TO ELLIE, WHO WATCHES HIM EXPECTANTLY. HE TURNS BACK TO MAX.

SEAN

No.

MAX

No?

SEAN

(TO MAX) Who are you to make me choose between my job and my daughter?

MAX

Your boss.

SEAN

Okay. True. Still, I'm not going to apologize for wanting to be with my daughter. This girl is the center of my universe. And her world's been turned upside down (POINTEDLY, FOR ELLIE) whether she realizes that or not. And I'm going to be there for her (FOR ELLIE) whether she wants me there or not. So, I <u>will</u> be having dinner with her. (BACKING OFF) For now. We'll see how things go, I'm always open to more dialogue. (PULLING IT OUT) And I got you a coffee card. The first of two.

MAX

Sean, we all have families. I don't. But I can imagine. The thing is, work is important, and--

SUDDENLY, ELLIE SPEAKS UP, DRAMATICALLY, STARTLING BOTH MAX AND SEAN.

ELLIE

My mom abandoned me!

MAX

What?

SEAN

(TO ELLIE) What?

ELLIE

(TO MAX) My mom. She left. She moved away. I didn't want to go, and I thought she wouldn't leave without me. But she did. And that sucks. She sucks. And now all I have is my dad, and we don't have the same shorthand, and who knows how it's gonna work, but I need him. (THEN) And I'd really also like him to keep having a job, if possible. And I love birds. I used to have one. Louie. Great guy.

MAX LOOKS AT HER A BEAT, THEN TO SEAN.

MAX

Hmm. Clever bringing the girl.

SMASH CUT TO:

SCENE AA

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER
(SEAN, ELLIE)

SEAN AND ELLIE HAVE JUST EXITED THE HOTEL ROOM. SEAN CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND THEM, TURNS TO ELLIE.

SEAN

Oh, my God.

ELLIE

What? It worked.

SEAN

I knew you felt abandoned!

ELLIE

That was for his benefit.

SEAN

No, there's something there. "Your mom sucks"? That's real anger. We are so going to explore that.

ELLIE

We just did.

THEY START DOWN THE HALL.

SEAN

Not enough.

ELLIE

Then why don't we explore your stuff? Grandma says you're terrified of me.

SEAN

Not of <u>you</u>. Of parenting, you Bozo.

ELLIE

You're not supposed to call me names.

SEAN

See? I don't know what I'm doing!

CUT TO BLACK.

<u>END OF SHOW</u>