

RESORTS

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FADE IN:

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. BEN'S OFFICE. DAY.

There is an alarm clock on a side table. It reads 7:29.

There is a window a few yards to the left of the side table. The curtains are closed, but the office is still well-lit.

The alarm clock display changes to 7:30 and the alarm sounds.

It continues to sound.

After twenty seconds it is still sounding.

Finally, BEN slams his right hand on the snooze button and it stops.

He is lying on the sofa to the right of the side table. His suit jacket is draped over him.

BEN slowly opens his eyes and sits up.

He gets to his feet and puts on his suit jacket.

BEN turns off the alarm and picks up the bottle of water on the side table.

He takes off the cap and takes a drink.

BEN puts the bottle back and takes a deep breath.

He walks to the door of his office and exits, closing the door behind him.

He heads down the hall at a brisk pace.

BEN stops at the door to FERN's office.

There are two desks in the room.

FERN is sitting at the desk to the left working at her computer.

RAY is standing at the desk to the right flipping through some papers.

BEN knocks on the door twice and enters.

RAY

[Looks up][Quickly] Hey,
morning boss. I just looked
over the blueprints for the
resort job and I can't wait
to start putting it together.

BEN

Thanks Ray.

FERN coughs once.

BEN

But I couldn't have done it
without Fern.

FERN

[Cheerfully] Thanks Ben.

RAY

[Walking to the door]
[Quickly] Anyway, I've got
everything ready to start the
production run so as soon as
we get the go-ahead we're
set.

BEN

Okay.

RAY exits the office.

FERN

You know, sometimes I forget
he's new around here.

BEN

Actually, I think he's one of
those naturally cheerful
people.

FERN

Great. And by the way, you
don't look so good.

BEN

[Smiles] Yeah, I thought I'd double-check a few things and it took longer than I expected.

FERN

Well if you need any help I think I work here.

BEN

Thanks. I'm going out for breakfast now so can I get you anything?

FERN

I was going to pick up a muffin and a cup of coffee later, and maybe some scrambled eggs.

BEN

Okay. How do you take your coffee?

FERN

One cream two sugars.

BEN

Got it; I'll be back in twenty.

[Starts walking to the door]

FERN

Thanks Ben.

BEN

[Stopping and turning around] I was wondering, do you have any plans tonight?

FERN

You're not my type and I went to the last one.

BEN

[Sighs][Resigned] Right.

FERN grins as BEN turns and walks away.

A HOTEL BALLROOM. NIGHT.

A large group of people is milling around.

BEN is standing by a table of refreshments drinking a glass of punch. He looks bored.

CECIL walks over to him.

CECIL

Couldn't get Fern to come?

BEN

What're you talking about I love these parties.

CECIL

[Grins] Yeah, we all do. But at least the food's pretty good tonight.

BEN

Yeah, that was a nice surprise.

Have you seen the blueprints I sent over today?

CECIL

Actually I just got back this afternoon so I'm not really sure what's going on around here.

BEN

You've been out of town?

CECIL

No one told you?

BEN

Nope.

CECIL

I told my secretary to let everyone know where I was.

BEN

I never got the message.

CECIL

Figures; new secretary.

BEN

That's tough.

CECIL

Yeah. Anyway, I've been in Asia the last month and a half checking out locations and that sorta thing.

BEN

Did you see that -

CECIL

Yeah, I got a good look at it.

BEN

Now that's a nice piece of work. I don't know how they justified the price tag but I'm glad they did.

CECIL

I guess.

BEN

You don't like it?

CECIL

I don't like that I didn't build it. Not that I'm frustrated or anything; I'm just saying.

BEN

[Grins] You guys work with some decent architects;

you'll have to build something cool one of these days.

CECIL

I used to think that. Then we went and messed up that project you're workin' on.

BEN

Actually that's what the blueprints are about. I think Howard looked over all the sketches again so we're going with their original proposal.

CECIL

So you finished the blueprints for that shoebox design and then you had to go back and draw up the blueprints for the good one?

BEN

Pretty much.

CECIL

[Chuckles] No wonder you looked tired.

BEN

[Annoyed] Thanks.

CECIL

Don't mention it. And before I forget, I wanted to let you know that we picked up a few executives in the merger, and they're all accountants.

BEN

All of 'em?

CECIL

Unfortunately. Howard thinks we need to improve our

"financial discipline" and
he's the boss.

BEN

Great, more guys like Bob.
But it could be worse.

CECIL

[Annoyed] Hey.

BEN

Just kidding; lawyers are
wonderful.

CECIL

Got that right. But
seriously, these new guys
really know how to take apart
financial documents and they
don't like anomalies; you
might want to double-check
your numbers just to make
sure everything adds up.

BEN

I've got everything under
control but thanks for the
warning.

CECIL

I try to help.

BEN

So you know these guys pretty
well?

CECIL

Sort of; Howard started
working on the deal about
eight months ago and I took
care of most of the
paperwork. That's why I was
spending so much time on the
West Coast.

BEN

I was wondering what that was all about.

CECIL

[Smiles] Yeah, I probably could've finished everything a bit faster than I did but it's kinda nice out there.

BEN chuckles and takes a sip of his punch.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

BEN

I went to better parties in high school.

CECIL

Me too.

[Discreetly glances at his watch] I told my wife to get me out of here by eight fifteen but I guess she forgot.

BEN

[Discreetly glances at his watch] Either that or she's getting back at you for something.

CECIL

Probably. But even in a worst case scenario -

BEN

Heads up.

HOWARD and KATE are approaching from behind CECIL.

CECIL doesn't move until they reach him and BEN.

HOWARD

Hey Ben! I just had a look at the new plans and they look fantastic; great work.

BEN

Thanks, I never get tired of hearing that.

HOWARD

[To KATE] See, I told you he was easy to get along with.

KATE

Thanks Howard.

HOWARD

[Chuckles][To BEN] Ben, allow me to introduce our new CFO, Kate Mitchells.

BEN

Pleased to meet you.

[Shakes hands with KATE]

KATE

Likewise.

HOWARD

She's updated some of our accounting procedures so she'll be checking in with you sometime just to make sure you know what's going on. Anyway, you three chat. And try the shrimp.

HOWARD walks away.

KATE

[To BEN] So Howard tells me you've been working with this company for a few years now.

BEN

Almost three, or one office complex and a couple of skyscrapers.

KATE

That's great. And now you've got a luxury resort on the drawing board.

BEN

That's right. It's a little different but everything's going really well so far.

CECIL's cellphone starts ringing.

He takes it out of his pocket and checks the display.

CECIL

I'm really sorry but I have to take this. Excuse me.

CECIL walks away and starts talking on the phone.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

BEN

[Calmly] The design change was your idea.

KATE

[Calmly] Do you have a problem with that?

BEN

We already had a finished blueprint.

KATE

Based on a lousy design.

BEN

So you're an architect now?

KATE

I know garbage when I see it.

BEN

Stay out of this.

KATE

Be in your office tomorrow, 9
AM.

KATE casually walks away.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. A HALLWAY. DAY.

KATE quickly walks up a flight of stairs and heads down the hall
towards BEN's office.

The door is open and KATE enters without knocking.

BEN is sitting at his desk.

BEN

[Without looking up] I've had
two auditors look over the
books and they both said
everything was fine.

KATE

But if you trusted the first
then why'd you hire the
second?

BEN

Because accountants can be
unreliable.

KATE

[Taking a seat across from
BEN] What's that supposed to
mean?

BEN

Stop wasting my time.

KATE

You started this.

BEN

[Looks at KATE] What do you
want to talk about?

KATE

The budget you sent over with the blueprints yesterday isn't going to work; you'll have to make a few changes before we can approve the funds.

BEN

There's nothing wrong with it.

KATE

It's almost five percent over the original.

BEN

The original estimate was based on the original design.

KATE

If you want to quit then tell me now and I'll terminate the contract, but if you want to keep working on this you'll have to get the costs under control.

BEN

Fine, I'll go back to the original blueprints.

KATE

We're sticking with the ones you sent over yesterday.

BEN

Do you want me to quit or are you trying to prove something?

KATE

I don't need your help with this so you'd better watch your tone, and don't think I'm going to just send you a check and leave the financial

issues take care of themselves.

BEN

The façade in the new design is made up of over one thousand individual components -

KATE

All of which have to be custom built on the assembly line here, inspected, packaged, and then shipped to the construction site -

BEN

So it's a lot more complicated than putting up a concrete wall.

KATE

And that's an engineering issue and you're the engineer so deal with it.

BEN

I've already dealt with the decisions you've made so if there's a problem with anything now it's your responsibility.

KATE

You were the one who drafted the blueprints so don't blame this on me.

BEN

I didn't make any mistakes here; this design just can't be executed for the price you want and complaining about it won't change that.

KATE

I checked with some engineering consultants and they said that the fireproofing material you want to use is a lot more expensive than the spray-on type used in most buildings like this.

BEN

So you know that the paint-on chemical has better bond strength and you still don't want to use it.

KATE

It isn't required to meet government building regulations and given the budget constraints it's the best place to cut costs.

BEN

Building codes only define a minimum standard so for something like this they aren't even close to being good enough.

KATE

The width of the emergency stairwells is already well in excess of minimum requirements and the secondary support systems alone make this building a lot safer than it has to be.

BEN

But none of that matters if the spray-on foam gets dislodged because the steel structural components won't have the fire protection they're supposed to without it.

KATE

But if you apply the foam properly then that shouldn't be an issue.

BEN

Yeah, as long as you can guarantee that nothing'll happen to it during the entire life of the building.

KATE

So you've never made a design change to minimize costs?

BEN

There's a difference between efficiency and cutting corners and even if we did switch materials it still wouldn't be enough.

KATE

Then make a few more changes and put some pressure on your suppliers; it's not that complicated.

BEN

It'd be even simpler if you'd approve the budget and get out of the way.

KATE

And that's it?

BEN

That's it.

KATE

Fine. If you don't get back to the original estimate I'll find someone else to work with so give me a call when you've reconsidered.

KATE gets up and walks out of the office.

BEN watches her leave.

He sits there for a few moments, lost in thought.

BEN then picks up the telephone on his desk and makes a call.

BEN

All clear.

BEN hangs up.

He gets out of his chair and slumps down onto the sofa.

BEN takes a deep breath.

A few moments later FERN walks into the office.

FERN

You almost look kind of
worried.

BEN

Yeah.

FERN

[Taking a seat on the couch
next to BEN] So what
happened?

BEN

Last night or just now?

FERN

You mean you argued with her
in public?

BEN

Not exactly.

FERN

I don't believe this.

BEN

It wasn't that bad; we just
talked for a bit.

FERN

You mean you kept your voices
down while you traded
insults.

BEN

Sort of.

FERN

You started it didn't you?

BEN

Why would you say that?

FERN

You were tired, and when
you're tired you're grumpy.

BEN

She wasn't exactly polite
either.

FERN

So you did.

BEN

I don't recall.

FERN

Right. So what'd she say
just now?

BEN

If we don't get back to the
original estimate we're
fired.

FERN

Seriously?

BEN

Yeah.

FERN

[Pauses briefly] What do you
want to do?

BEN

If we switch fireproofing materials and make a few other changes we might be all right.

FERN

So you're going to scrap the solar and geothermal stuff?

BEN

And we'll have to forget about the atrium too.

FERN

We can't just scale it back?

BEN

It's too expensive and we can get by without it. But at least it won't take too long to update the blueprints and it'll still look nice from the outside.

FERN

Yeah, that's all that really matters.

BEN

[Smiles]

[Pauses] This is a bad idea isn't it?

FERN

I don't know, but I don't like it.

BEN

There's a lot of money involved here.

FERN

We've got other projects in the pipeline; we'll survive.

BEN

I don't want to lose this one.

FERN

Me neither.

BEN

[Looks at FERN] You're usually more decisive.

FERN

I know; it's just that the cost of these things can get out of control pretty quickly so you can't blame her for trying to get ahead of it. But then again this isn't the sort of thing you want to just throw together and then walk away from; if you're going to build it then you should build it right.

BEN

I've never "just thrown" anything together.

FERN

You know what I mean.

BEN

Yeah, I'm just tired.

FERN

I can hardly tell. But whatever you decide's all right with me; just don't let her get to you Ben.

BEN

[Pauses briefly] I should head over to Andy's and see if he's got everything sorted out.

FERN

Sure.

FERN slaps BEN on the shoulder and walks out of the office.

A SKYSCRAPER. A CONFERENCE ROOM.

HOWARD, CECIL, KATE, BOB, and several other executives are sitting around the conference table.

HOWARD

[To CECIL] So all you really have to do now is type it up and we're set?

CECIL

Yup. I spoke with some of the city officials again this morning and they're ready to sign as long as we can start construction before the end of the year.

HOWARD

Okay that's great. Tell Webber to start lining up contractors and let me know when the paperwork's done.

CECIL

No problem.

HOWARD

[Looks at his notes][To KATE] And everything with the project review looks okay so far?

KATE

For the most part. I spoke to Ben this morning but we couldn't agree on the budget and I don't think we'll be able to work it out. I'm putting together a list of other engineering firms to take over the job and I'll

have a recommendation by tomorrow.

HOWARD

[Sorts through some papers and finds the one he's looking for] It looks like the revised budget's still within the limits we set.

KATE

It is, but the consultants I checked with said that a lot of the more expensive design features he wants aren't necessary and I don't want to take any risks I don't have to.

HOWARD

Okay. It's just that everything's in order so I'd rather not terminate the contract over this.

KATE

If we go ahead with what we have now there's a chance we'll have to deal with a serious cost overrun, but if we make some adjustments to the blueprints then we shouldn't encounter anything we can't handle.

And since the modifications I want aren't too extensive switching companies shouldn't put us more than a few weeks behind schedule.

HOWARD

[Pauses briefly][Troubled]
Yeah, that's a good tradeoff.

BOB

And for anything this
expensive it usually pays to
be cautious.

CECIL

[Casually] Wow Bob, I never
thought you'd side with
another accountant.

There are a few chuckles around the table.

HOWARD

[Smiling] So I guess you
agree with Ben?

CECIL

He's one of the best
engineers we work with and so
far he's got a pretty good
track record.

KATE

I've looked at the other jobs
he's done for us but with
projects like this things can
go wrong at any time no
matter how careful you are,
and any mistakes here'll be
expensive.

CECIL

I know it's a complicated
design but the manufacturing
setup Ben's got over there is
pretty amazing; if you take a
look at it I think you'll be
okay with this.

KATE

I appreciate your advice but
the numbers are what they are
and they're going to stay
that way unless we go with a
simplified blueprint.

CECIL

The plans look really good
the way they are and if
there's anything we should
take a chance on it's this.

KATE

And I'd like to, but
objectively the risk can't be
justified and that's just the
way it is.

BOB

[To CECIL] I think this where
you say that even if we go
over budget it'll still be
worth it.

CECIL

And then you'll say that our
first priority is to make
sure we balance the books.

BOB

That's kind of what business
is about.

CECIL

Actually, it's about making
the right moves at the right
times, and sometimes that
means looking beyond the
numbers.

BOB

And then just hoping that
everything works out?

HOWARD

[To KATE] Are you sure that
Ben won't come around on
this?

KATE

I met with him at nine and
it's almost two o'clock now.

HOWARD

Yeah, that's never a good sign.

CECIL

We can afford to take a chance here and I think we should.

BOB

But projects like this are always a nightmare to manage no matter what so it's worth simplifying just to reduce our workload. And it's not like we have to make a design statement just 'cause that's what a few other companies have done.

CECIL

So we're not just looking for excuses to settle for something we shouldn't have to?

BOB

We're trying to be objective.

CECIL

We dumped a design change on him at the last minute, left him to deal with it, and he still managed to get the job done while staying on budget and on schedule but yeah, that's completely irrelevant.

BOB

We had every right to do what we did and it was the right call. The issue now is whether we want to take a bet we don't have to or exercise some caution and manage this thing the way we should.

CECIL

He wouldn't be this stubborn about it if it wasn't important to him and I think he's proven that he can handle this.

HOWARD

[To BOB] I'll have to agree with Cecil here.

[To KATE] And I'm just not comfortable conducting business like this; it doesn't look good and eventually that could complicate things for us.

But you've done a really great job with this project and I understand what you're saying, so if you want to do this then I'm all for it.

KATE

Thanks Howard.

CECIL looks at KATE with a slightly worried expression on his face while HOWARD looks over some other papers.

HOWARD

Okay, I think that's it. Same time next week and if anything changes let me know. Now get outta here.

The executives smile as they gather their papers and leave the room.

As CECIL walks down the hall to his office, KATE catches up with him.

KATE

Cecil?

CECIL

[Stopping] Yeah?

KATE

Do you really trust Ben that much or were you just putting Bob in his place?

CECIL

[Smiling] It's a little bit of both. But Howard's right: You've really turned things around and there is a lot of risk involved here. But if you change your mind I can have a word with Ben and try to sort things out.

KATE

I appreciate it but I can handle this. And if there's anything else you think I should know, try to talk to me before I talk to Howard.

CECIL

Of course.

CECIL watches KATE turn and walk away for a second and then continues to his office.

A DINER. DAY.

BEN and LENNY are sitting at a table having breakfast.

BEN

But they're allowed to use wood to build residential homes. Weird huh?

LENNY

Yeah. So you're having problems at work?

BEN

No, everything's good. You?

LENNY

Can't complain. Well I could, but that's just not me.

[Looks at BEN] You won't find a better cup of coffee anywhere else in town.

BEN
I'm not arguing with you.

LENNY
That's the ninth sip you've taken and after each one you look like you've just been slapped.

BEN
You've been counting?

LENNY
Coffee's important.

BEN
I appreciate all the trouble you go to but I hate this stuff.

LENNY
I have no brother. Have you heard from Mom?

BEN
Yeah; she left a message a few days ago.

LENNY
That's what I thought. I told you you should've gone.

BEN
I was working.

LENNY
Sure. Have you called her back yet?

BEN

No, I've been busy. She called you about it didn't she?

LENNY

No, Dad did. She's been talking to him about it nonstop.

BEN

She's that upset over one dinner?

LENNY

She wouldn't be if you went to visit once in a while.

BEN

It's only food.

LENNY

Tell that to Mom.

BEN

I will.

LENNY

No you won't.

BEN

You think I'm scared?

LENNY

I think you know you're in trouble. That's why you haven't called.

BEN

I've been busy.

LENNY

Sure.

BEN

I have.

LENNY

All right, I believe you.

BEN

Good.

LENNY

[Pauses briefly] So when are you gonna call?

BEN

Later.

LENNY

Right; I'll cover for you.

BEN

You're the best.

LENNY

Yeah.

There's a pause in the conversation as they continue eating.

BEN

Kate's back.

LENNY

You've seen her?

BEN

Yeah. She's working at one of the companies I deal with.

LENNY

Don't let her get to you.

BEN

That's what Fern said.

LENNY

It's good advice.

BEN

I know, but I don't think there's anything to worry about.

LENNY

A lot of my students think that before they have to evacuate the lab.

BEN

Thank you professor.

LENNY

Don't mention it.

BEN

So everything's good with Val and the kids?

LENNY

Well, Pete came down with the flu last week and passed it on to Jake, but they got better after a couple of days, and the best part is they hardly missed any school.

BEN

Glad to hear it.

LENNY

But then Val caught it and she took almost twice as long to recover.

BEN

Really?

LENNY

Yeah, she hardly ever gets sick but when she does it's like everything goes wrong. I've never seen so much vomit in my entire life.

BEN

You wouldn't think someone her size would have much to throw up.

LENNY

I know, and she doesn't even eat that much. The human stomach's an amazing thing.

BEN

Lucky you.

LENNY

Thanks.

BEN

But everyone's okay now?

LENNY

Yeah, they're good, but I've been feeling kinda sluggish the past few days.

BEN

Maybe you should go home and get some rest.

LENNY

Okay Mom.

BEN grins.

There is a pause in the conversation as they continue eating.

LENNY gives BEN a worried look.

BEN notices.

BEN

It was more complicated than that.

LENNY

Not all of it.

BEN

You're not exactly objective.

LENNY

I guess, but that doesn't mean I'm wrong.

BEN

Yeah.

LENNY

You've spoken with her haven't you?

BEN

A few times.

LENNY

Are you going to talk to her again?

BEN

I don't know.

LENNY

[Pauses] Whatever happens.

BEN

Thanks.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

BEN enters the complex.

RAY comes out of the shop and catches up with him as BEN continues to the stairs.

BEN

Morning Ray. Everything under control?

RAY

Yeah, I was just checkin' up on the guys. And I wanted to let you know that I can get those panels made on time so if that's what you're worried about then there's no reason to drop the resort project.

BEN

That doesn't have anything to do with it. And if I didn't think you could handle the job I wouldn't have hired you.

RAY

Thanks boss. So should I keep the test panels we made?

BEN

You want to throw them out already?

RAY

No, I think they're works of art, but we might need the space once we get going on some of our other jobs.

BEN

Okay, then keep them there for now but if they start getting in the way you can toss 'em.

RAY

Okay, great.

RAY turns and walks to another area of the complex.

BEN continues up the stairs to his office.

He glances into FERN's office as he walks past.

FERN is working at her desk.

BEN

[Without stopping] Morning Fern.

FERN

[Without looking up] Morning Ben.

BEN continues to his office.

He enters, puts his briefcase on his desk, and switches on the computer.

BEN opens his briefcase, takes out a few files, and sits down.

He flips through one of the files and skims a few pages.

BEN then starts looking at some diagrams on the computer, browsing through them in quick succession.

He pauses for a second and then picks up the phone on his desk and makes a call.

BEN

Walter, it's Ben.

Yeah. It's pretty similar to some other stuff I've done so if you're all right with using an existing design then we're pretty much good to go.

Right.

Okay that's great.

[Long pause]

Yeah, things are definitely different now but I guess that's just how it has to be.

No, just Bob.

[Chuckles] Yeah.

All right I'll talk to you later.

BEN hangs up the phone.

He shuts his briefcase and puts the files in a desk drawer.

BEN opens another desk drawer and takes out a few discs.

He walks back down the hall to FERN's office with the discs in hand.

BEN

[Knocks on the door] I just -

FERN

[Looks up] Oh good, I was just about to call you; I need you to sign a few things.

BEN

[Walking over to FERN's desk] Okay. Do I need to read them first?

FERN

No, but it wouldn't hurt.

BEN

[Puts the discs on FERN's desk][Takes the papers and starts skimming them]

I just spoke with Walter; everything's looking good so he'll need the blueprints in a couple of weeks at the latest.

FERN

Can we re-use some of the stuff from the Connecticut job?

BEN

Yeah, he doesn't mind and it's the right design for this project too.

FERN

Okay. I guess that's what the discs are about.

BEN

[Signing] Ah, yeah. Let me know when you're done?

FERN
It'll be on your desk by the end of the day.

BEN
Thanks.

[Hands the papers to FERN]

FERN
It's just not the same is it?

BEN
I guess. I'll see you later.

FERN
Yeah.

BEN turns and walks out of the office.

FERN goes back to her work.

A few seconds later RAY enters.

RAY
Are we back on the job?

FERN
[Without looking up] Nope.

RAY
[Sitting down at his desk]
That's too bad.

FERN
I know.

You talked to him about it didn't you?

RAY
[Reviewing some papers] I was just making conversation.

FERN

Right.

RAY

So you didn't say anything
about it?

FERN

I was a little more subtle.

RAY

So you did.

FERN

But I was subtle.

RAY

All right I get it. But it
was pretty cool huh?

FERN

[Looks up] Yeah.

A SMALL COFFEE SHOP. NIGHT.

KATE is walking down the street toward the coffee shop.

She looks at the storefront as she approaches.

KATE enters and gets in line at the counter.

The coffee shop is half empty.

KATE spots BEN sitting at a table by himself at the other end of
the room, finishing a cup of coffee and a slice of apple pie.

She turns away to face the front of the line.

BEN finishes his coffee and takes out his wallet.

He looks at the check and takes out a few bills.

BEN then stands up, takes his jacket from the back of his chair,
and starts walking to the exit.

He sees KATE walking to the front door with a large cup of coffee.

They meet a few yards from the door as they both continue walking.

KATE

They have a few coffee blends
you can't get in most places.

BEN

That's what Lenny said.

BEN opens the door for KATE.

They look at each other briefly as she exits.

KATE

Thanks.

BEN

You're welcome.

KATE turns to the right and heads back the way she came.

BEN turns to the left.

He walks over to his dark gold metallic Buick Enclave, opens the driver's door, and gets in.

BEN sees KATE get into her silver Corvette Z06 and pull away.

She makes a right turn down another street.

BEN pauses for several moments.

He takes out his cellphone and dials a number.

BEN activates the speakerphone function.

After two rings the person he's calling picks up.

There is a pause.

KATE

[Over the cellphone][Somber]
Why wouldn't you just make
those changes?

BEN
[Somber] I don't know.

KATE
You would've done it for
anyone else.

BEN
It would've been a mistake.

KATE
But that wouldn't have
stopped you.

There is a pause in the conversation.

KATE
I was right.

BEN
So was I.

KATE
It's been three years Ben.

BEN
That's not what this is
about.

KATE
Are you sure?

BEN
[Somber] Yeah.

KATE
Then what happened?

BEN
You looked at the situation
and assumed you knew what was
best.

KATE

And you agree with me for the most part.

BEN

But you didn't know that at the time and we don't agree on everything.

KATE

We know each other better than that, and if you'd wanted to we could've worked things out.

BEN

So nothing that happened was your responsibility.

KATE

By the time I realized what was going on there weren't a lot of options but I didn't make any mistakes.

BEN

You can say that now because we got through it, but either way you should've at least told me what you were planning.

KATE

I wasn't sure how you'd react if I did and I knew you'd be all right so there wasn't any point; I don't have anything to apologize for.

BEN

It doesn't sound like you believe that.

KATE

So this is about what happened.

BEN

[Pauses briefly] I hope everything works out.

KATE

You went out of your way to get this project but you didn't want it for the money.

BEN

A job's a job.

KATE

Not this one.

BEN

I know how it should be built and that's enough. And you've got everything you need to keep going so we're both good.

KATE

Cecil told you I was putting a contingency plan together?

BEN

He didn't have to.

KATE

[Pauses briefly] I can handle this on my own, but you already know what's going on and the people I work with have a lot of respect for you.

BEN

[Pauses briefly] Back at the party Howard said you made some changes to the accounting system.

KATE

I updated some of our internal auditing procedures, so when you've drafted the

contracts you want to place with your suppliers send us the details and we'll run it against our database. If we identify any price differentials we'll let you know and you can either renegotiate the contracts or switch to the subcontractors we recommend. But if you decide not to then let us know why and we'll try to work something out.

BEN

And then after delivery you'll want a copy of each invoice?

KATE

Yeah. If there are any changes you should let us know beforehand so we can talk things over, but as long as everything's within reason there shouldn't be any problems.

BEN

Okay. I'll have everything ready in a few days including the preliminary construction schedule.

KATE

We've lost some time so we'll take that into account. And just about everyone's surprised we're on schedule now so another day or two won't hurt.

BEN

I can meet the deadlines the way they are.

KATE

Are you sure?

BEN

Yeah; it shouldn't take too long to update the blueprints and I already know which subcontractors I want to use. But I won't start the production run or anything till you've had a chance to check everything out, and if you want to schedule a follow-up meeting with the people at your company just let me know when.

KATE

You're assuming I won't take your word for anything.

BEN

You should examine the details as closely as you can.

KATE

This isn't personal.

BEN

I know; [smiles] it's just the right way to do things.

KATE

[Cheerfully] Old habits.

BEN

Yeah.

KATE

[Pauses briefly] We'll go with the blueprints the way they are.

BEN

That's okay. I'll go through everything again and make a few changes.

KATE

You said that'd be a mistake.

BEN

There are always tradeoffs.

KATE

You mean compromises.

BEN

It'll be okay.

KATE

I made a few calls and found some companies that can get you most of the materials you'll need for a slightly better price. And if you line up multiple suppliers for certain components then you'll be able to minimize any potential cost overruns and delays without affecting the initial purchase prices.

BEN

That still won't be enough to get back to the original estimate.

KATE

[Pauses briefly] You were never over-budget; I just wanted more room for error.

BEN

You might need it.

KATE

I know.

BEN

[Pauses briefly] If it ever looks like things are about to get out of control I'll

give you as much warning as I can.

KATE

I appreciate it. I'll send you the details tomorrow.

BEN

Thanks. But -

KATE

As long as everything stays on spec, on time, and on budget, I'll stay out of your way.

BEN

Then I guess we're good.

KATE

Yeah. Take care of yourself Ben.

BEN

You too.

BEN presses a button on the cellphone to end the call.

A STREET. A CHEVROLET CORVETTE Z06.

KATE puts her cellphone back in her jacket pocket.

She takes the gearshift out of PARK.

A second later the Z06 pulls out of the parking spot and continues down the street.

A DELI. DAY.

FERN and RAY are sitting at a table having lunch.

FERN

[Smiling] I guess you could try telling him that you've always had problems with

simple arithmetic, but that could just make things worse.

RAY

I'm glad you think this is funny.

FERN

Me too.

RAY

[Frustrated sigh] I'm in a lot of trouble aren't I?

FERN

Well, let's see. You gave him an unconditional guarantee about the production run without even being asked about it, and now you have to go back on everything you said before you even start.

RAY

So that's a "yes".

FERN

Well it's not exactly a "no".

RAY

Is there any way out of this that won't get me fired?

FERN

[Slightly worried] Is it really that bad?

RAY

I need to hire three temps and I might have to assign some overtime too.

FERN

You've got it all worked out?

RAY

[Taking a notepad from his jacket pocket and handing it to FERN] Yeah.

FERN

[Takes the notepad and skims it] It doesn't look that bad.

[Hands it back to RAY]

RAY

So it'll be okay?

FERN

Yeah, it's not a big deal.

RAY

Oh, okay.

There is a brief pause in the conversation as they continue eating.

FERN

Do you want me to tell Ben?

RAY

Could you?

FERN

Sure.

RAY

Thanks, I really appreciate it. If I can ever return the favor just let me know.

FERN

Well now that you mention it, I remember you said your sister's an auto mechanic.

RAY

Yeah, she owns a garage downtown.

FERN

So if I wanted to add some aftermarket accessories to my car, and maybe upgrade the engine, she could help me out with that.

RAY

[Cheerfully] I think so. I'll give her a call tonight and set everything up.

FERN

Okay, great. I'm really glad we're working together.

RAY

Me too.

FERN looks at the front door and sees KATE enter.

FERN

[Pauses briefly] I should probably head back and tell Ben about the changes now so that he knows what's going on. Wanna come?

RAY

No thanks, I think I'll just stay here a while.

FERN

All right, then I'll see you later.

RAY

Okay.

FERN wraps up her sandwich, picks up her cup of coffee, and starts walking toward the door.

She keeps her head turned away from the front counter as she makes her way to the exit.

KATE

Fern?

FERN turns around and sees KATE holding a take-out package.

FERN

Oh, hi Kate! It's really good to see you.

KATE

You too. Are you heading back to the office?

FERN

Yeah, I've got some work to catch up on.

KATE

Great. I'm heading there now so we can talk on the way.

FERN

Great.

FERN and KATE walk out of the coffee shop.

KATE

So I guess Ben told you we sorted things out.

FERN

He didn't actually say anything but I figured that's why we started setting up for the production run again.

KATE

Yeah, I'm really sorry about that; I had some doubts about Ben and I took it out on your entire company. It was just business, but still.

FERN

That's okay; for a project like this we'll find a way to deal with just about anything.

KATE

Thanks. [Pauses briefly]
You're probably wondering why
I'm dropping by.

FERN

Well we don't get a lot of
visits from CFOs.

KATE

It's not like that. One of
the guys I work with just
told me that the
manufacturing set-up you
guys've built is really
impressive and said I should
take a look at it.

FERN

Wow, we usually don't get
that kind of respect from
developers.

KATE

Yeah, this guy sees things a
little differently. Actually
I think you know him. Do you
remember Cecil York?

FERN

Big guy, glasses, telephone
calls?

KATE

Yeah, that's him. He's kind
of condescending but he makes
a lot of sense so I thought I
should take his advice.

FERN

You don't like him?

KATE

No one does.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. THE SHOP FLOOR.

About a dozen assembly line workers are at their stations turning out finished panels of glass.

A few others are working at other machines.

FERN and KATE enter and put on hard hats and safety glasses.

KATE

So this is where it all comes from.

FERN

Yup. We're pretty good at this stuff but that design was somethin' else. Our new guy wasn't even sure we could make the panels because we'd have to bend the glass so much during manufacturing, but Ben took that into account when he worked out the basic design so we just got by.

KATE

It was that close?

FERN

If Ben hadn't already done the calculations I would've said it was impossible.

KATE

[Casually] Oh.

FERN

[Points to the right] Those are the computer controlled milling units. Once we get the schematics done we just feed in the data and they take care of the rest.

KATE

It must save a lot of labor.

FERN

That's what I've been told
but I've never actually seen
it done manually.

KATE

Really?

FERN

Yeah, this industry was
computerized a while ago.
Back in college we used to
feel sorry for the old guys
who did this stuff without
computer models, but it
must've been pretty cool to
watch a bunch of craftsmen
take some raw materials and
turn them into finished
components.

KATE

This is where Ben used to
start lecturing me about the
art and science of
engineering.

FERN

[Smiles] I guess engineers
get a little sentimental
about this stuff.

KATE

Just a little.

FERN

[Points back to the milling
unit] Watch this.

KATE looks over at a few technicians standing around a milling
unit.

The technicians shut down the unit and take out a finished
component.

KATE

Wow.

FERN

Yeah, we kinda like it.

KATE's cellphone starts ringing. She checks the display.

KATE

[Muttering] Great.

[To FERN] I'm really sorry
but I've gotta get going.

FERN

That's okay; this about
concludes the tour anyway.

KATE

Thanks, I appreciate
everything.

FERN

No problem.

FERN and KATE put the safety equipment back and exit the shop.

They start walking to the exit.

KATE

I know this is none of my
business, but how's Ben doing
these days?

FERN

He's good. I mean he still
puts in more hours than he
should sometimes, but he's
okay now.

KATE

That's good. I'll see you
around.

FERN

Yeah, drop by any time.

KATE exits the building.

FERN walks up the stairs to her office.

She enters and finds a large courier envelope on her desk.

FERN opens the envelope and quickly skims the contents.

She puts all the materials back in the envelope and walks to BEN's office.

FERN enters the office.

FERN

[Slightly startled] Oh, hi, I thought you went out for lunch.

BEN

[Working at his desk] I was going to but I wanted to finish some paperwork first. What's that?

FERN

[Handing BEN the envelope] Just a communications package from the concrete guys. I think I'll head over there and take a look around.

BEN

[Looking through the envelope] It looks like a pretty routine plant upgrade.

FERN

I know, but they said it's okay if we want to drop by and I'll feel a lot better if I check things out for myself. Concrete's pretty important you know.

BEN

Yeah. As long as you're going over there can you double-check our order?

FERN

Sure. By the way, Kate came by just now.

BEN

Really?

FERN

Yeah, she wanted to have a look around the shop so I gave her a tour.

BEN

Oh. She probably got the idea from Cecil.

FERN

I guess. And Ray wanted me to tell you that he needs to hire a few people to make sure we can deliver all the panels on time.

BEN

Okay.

FERN

[Looks at her watch] I'll probably leave in a few minutes so after I'm done at the plant I'll call it a day.

BEN

All right, I'll see you tomorrow.

FERN

Really?

BEN

You've always set your own hours.

FERN

I know, but I thought you'd be a little less lenient with this project.

BEN
We're on schedule and
everything's under control.
And I'm leaving early too.

FERN
Got plans?

BEN
Yeah.

BEN'S APARTMENT. THE DEN. NIGHT.

BEN is sitting in a recliner watching television.

He is holding a can of soda and takes a sip. His cellphone and a bowl of chips are on the coffee table.

After a few moments he finishes the soda and puts the can on the coffee table.

BEN picks up the bowl of chips.

He pauses and looks at it for a second.

BEN'S APARTMENT. THE KITCHEN.

A large steak lands in a frying pan and starts sizzling.

BEN takes a spatula and centers it in the frying pan.

There is a salad in a bowl on the counter next to him.

BEN picks up the bowl and continues eating the salad.

A SKYSCRAPER. A CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

BEN is giving a presentation to HOWARD, CECIL, KATE, BOB, and several other executives.

BEN
So to compensate for that
we're going to install a
geothermal heat pump to

augment the usual HVAC systems. According to the computer models this should reduce heating and air conditioning costs by about a third.

For hot water, the boiler system will work in conjunction with a solar thermal installation. The system we've selected uses roof-mounted panels to drive a heat exchanger connected to the water tanks in the basement, and based on projected water usage the breakeven point will be somewhere in the seven to nine year range.

Finally, we plan to reduce construction time by installing the interior a little differently.

Instead of laying down flooring and putting up drywall, we'll be using prefabricated panels that can be attached directly to the frame of the building.

These panels are manufactured with insulation built-in, and come with modules for electrical wiring, ventilation ducts, plumbing, and networking cables where applicable. Based on our past experience with this system we believe we'll be able to finish the interior faster and with fewer personnel than would otherwise be possible.

And that about sums everything up, so if you have any questions I'd be happy to answer them.

BOB

Yeah, I like the geothermal idea but I was wondering how the solar panels are going to affect the appearance of this thing from ground level.

BEN

That had us worried too, but with our roof design everything blends together seamlessly, just like in the architect's rendering.

HOWARD

And you're sure about the interior panels you want to use?

BEN

We've used them on our last five projects so we know what we're dealing with, and our clients are pretty happy with them too.

BOB

So there aren't any issues with cost or quality control.

BEN

None.

From a cost standpoint we benefit from economies of scale because they're produced on an assembly line, and the manufacturing precision is what you'd see in a luxury car so the finished product will be

exactly what the architects specified.

BOB

And supply won't be a problem?

BEN

I've lined up three different suppliers and I've worked with all of them before, and so far they've always delivered.

But in the event that any of them do fall behind schedule I have options in all of their contracts for additional units at a discount, so we'll have the supplies we need no matter what.

CECIL

[To HOWARD] That's why I trust this guy: He thinks like a lawyer.

HOWARD

[Grins] Yeah.

[To BEN] And I guess if we want to remodel the interior later on this'll make it a lot easier.

BEN

Right. All you'll have to do is rearrange the panels and modules.

HOWARD

That sounds good. What do you think Kate?

KATE

This plan looks workable from an accounting standpoint but any time you modify your assembly process you have to expect some problems to occur.

HOWARD

So you think it's a bad idea.

KATE

I think it's a risk but as long as we exercise some caution I'm not too worried about it.

HOWARD

[To BEN] That means she'll be looking over your shoulder.

There are some laughs around the table.

HOWARD

[Looking around the table]
All right, any other questions?

Okay, then I guess that's it.

[To BEN] Everything looks great so just let Kate know how things are going once in a while and I think we'll be fine. And thanks again for coming out here.

BEN

Always a pleasure.

BEN gathers up his notes and CECIL remains seated while the rest of the executives leave.

When they've all left, CECIL turns to BEN.

CECIL

Good ole Bob huh?

BEN

Yeah. And thanks for leaving me with Kate the other night and then sending her over to the shop.

CECIL

Yeah, sorry about that.

BEN

No problem, but if you're going to tell her to visit again I'd appreciate some warning.

CECIL

I told my secretary to call ahead.

BEN

I never got the message.

CECIL

[Sighs] I've been hearing that a lot lately.

BEN

It might be time to hire another new secretary.

CECIL

I did.

BEN

Oh. Well I hope the next one works out.

CECIL

Me too. Anyway, it might be a good idea for you to invite Kate over to your office once in a while to talk things over and give her an idea about what you guys're doing.

BEN

I don't think that's
necessary.

CECIL

But it wouldn't hurt, and
since she's in charge of the
money it'd be good if she
appreciates all the work
that's going into this
project.

BEN

You think she's angling for
your job.

CECIL

No I don't.

BEN

Then why're you trying to
keep her away from Howard?

CECIL

I'm not; I just want to make
sure she understands how
important this is. But if it
sounds like I'm worried it's
'cause we've already run into
a lot of avoidable problems
and with Kate's approach
there's a good chance we'll
run into trouble again if she
doesn't learn when to back
off.

BEN

She's doing all right so far
but if she does decide to try
something crazy it's not like
I can stop her.

CECIL

Actually, if she's going to
listen to anyone it's you.

BEN

So I'm the reason she signed off on the budget and the blueprints.

CECIL

I might've said a few things but none of it would've mattered if she didn't respect you.

BEN

Still; I think she'll manage just fine without me.

CECIL

[Looks at BEN] [Grins] You're afraid of her.

BEN

A little, but the point here is that she takes your advice so we're good.

CECIL

[Chuckles] All right; I'll see you around Ben.

BEN

[Leaving the office] Yeah.

A SMALL COFFEE SHOP.

BEN is standing on the street outside the coffee shop.

He sees a taxi pull up.

KATE gets out of the taxi, pays the driver, and walks over to BEN.

KATE

[Quickly] What's going on?

BEN

I wanted to say thanks for your help. And I think Cecil's having a tough time

getting used to working with
you.

KATE

[Quickly] Okay no problem.
Is that it?

BEN

Yeah, but let's go inside so
if anyone asks I can tell 'em
we discussed the project over
coffee.

KATE

You can lie.

BEN

I'd rather be honest.

KATE

You mean sort of honest.

BEN

Yeah.

KATE

[Looks into the coffee shop]
All right.

BEN opens the door for KATE and follows behind her. There's no
lineup at the counter.

KATE takes out her cellphone and starts checking her email as
they walk to the counter, so BEN orders first.

CASHIER

Hi, how may I help you?

BEN

Hi, I'll have a medium coffee
and a plain bagel.

KATE

[Without looking up] And I'll
have the same.

CASHIER

[Slightly confused] So this
is one order?

BEN

[Without looking at KATE]
Yeah.

CASHIER

[Presses some buttons on the
register] That'll be \$7.98.

BEN takes out his wallet as the CASHIER gets the order.

KATE puts away her cellphone and takes out her wallet.

The CASHIER returns, doesn't look at KATE, takes the money from
BEN, and gives him his change.

KATE glances at BEN and puts her wallet away.

CASHIER

[Handing BEN the coffees and
bagels] There you go, have a
nice day.

BEN

Thank you.

KATE immediately takes her coffee and takes a sip.

BEN

You're in a hurry.

KATE

Yeah. Um, everything looks
good so I think we're set.
Keep the bagel.

BEN

Thanks.

BEN watches KATE as she turns and walks out of the coffee shop.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. FERN'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

FERN is standing by the window talking on her cellphone. The office door is closed.

FERN

I was kind of nervous at first, but she acted like everything was fine and after a while it was like we were just hangin' out again.

But anyway, we talked about him practically the whole time and just before she left she asked me if he was all right.

A SUBURBAN HOUSE. THE MASTER BEDROOM.

VAL is lying in bed talking on the telephone. Her face is noticeably flushed. She's using the speakerphone function.

VAL

[Slightly weakly] I thought she would. And he's been thinking about her too.

FERN

[Over the telephone] You spoke with him?

VAL

No, but he said a few things to Lenny when they had breakfast the other day, and Lenny told me.

FERN

I didn't think he'd discuss this with him.

VAL

I was kind of surprised too, but I guess he wanted to know what his big brother thought about it.

FERN

He isn't happy is he?

VAL

He's kind of worried, but I think he's okay.

I meant to call and tell you earlier but I was still recovering. Or at least I thought I was.

FERN

[Chuckles] Right. Do you need anything? I can run some errands and stuff.

VAL

Thanks, but Lenny already asked Ben to come over tomorrow.

FERN

Okay, but if you need anything just call.

VAL

I'll hold you to that. So has he worked overnight since the last time you called?

FERN

I don't think so, but we put in a lot of twenty hour days to get the re-design done and now that we're getting ready for construction he's starting to work nights again.

VAL

Lenny said he looked tired but that it wasn't too bad.

FERN

Yeah, he's managing, but I'm still keeping an eye on things.

VAL

Is he skipping meals again?

FERN

He's usually pretty good about breakfast, but I've had to remind him to eat lunch a few times and I'm not sure about dinner. But it doesn't look like he's losing weight so I think he's all right as far as diet goes.

VAL

Okay. Um, did you talk about any of this with Kate?

FERN

No, but she sounded kind of worried when she asked about him so I'm pretty sure she knows what's going on.

VAL

Yeah, she was always good at reading him.

FERN

You're kind of worried about this aren't you?

VAL

I don't know. She had her reasons so I don't blame her for anything, but she didn't have to come back here so I'm not sure why she did.

FERN

Kate was practically my best friend for a while so you know I'm glad she's back, and I think she means well.

VAL

She's a good person but I'm not sure it's that simple.

FERN

Yeah, that's true. But you should've seen the look on Ben's face when I told him she came by; it was like college all over again.

VAL

Those were the days.

We had a lot of good times, the five of us.

A SUBURBAN HOUSE. THE KITCHEN.

LENNY is on the kitchen phone.

LENNY

Actually, Ben was halfway through his senior year when he met Kate, Fern graduated a year later, and then it was just me and you finishing our Ph.D's, so for the most part it was either the four, the three, or the two of us.

A SUBURBAN HOUSE. THE MASTER BEDROOM.

VAL

How long have you been eavesdropping?

LENNY

[Over the telephone] Not long. It's two teaspoons of honey with the lemon right?

VAL

Right. And feel free to make yourself a cup of coffee while you're at it.

LENNY

Thanks.

[To FERN] It's been good talking with you Fern.

FERN

Always a pleasure.

There is a click as LENNY hangs up.

FERN

I was kinda nervous for a second there.

VAL

Calculus?

FERN

Yeah.

VAL

[Smiles] It wasn't that bad was it?

FERN

I really like you guys, but math doesn't bring out the best in you.

VAL

Yeah, the boys don't like it when we help them with their homework either.

FERN

But the important thing is that you mean well. And that you get results.

VAL

'Cause otherwise it wouldn't be worth it?

FERN
Apology accepted.

VAL
[Laughs] Right. Anyway I
should let you get back to
work. I'll call you if I
hear anything.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. FERN'S OFFICE.

FERN
[Smiling] All right; I'll
talk to you later.

FERN presses a button on the cellphone to end the call.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. BEN'S OFFICE.

BEN is sitting at his desk and RAY is sitting on the other side.
A third chair is positioned at the end of the desk.

There are papers all over the desk.

BEN
And the production run's on
track?

RAY
Yeah; so far we're right
where we need to be and at
this rate I'm pretty sure we
can keep it that way.

BEN
All right. I met with Andy
the other day and he said
that their new assembly
line's operational now, but
give him a call tomorrow just
to make sure.

RAY
Okay.

FERN enters the room and walks toward the third chair.

FERN

Did I miss anything?

BEN

No, we're pretty much done here. Oh, I won't be in tomorrow so if anything happens can you take care of it?

FERN

[Sitting down] Yeah, sure. Taking a personal day?

BEN

No, Lenny and Val came down with the flu so I'm going over to help out.

FERN

Oh okay. Good luck.

BEN

Thanks.

A SUBURBAN HOUSE. THE KITCHEN. DAY.

A pot overflows and some soup spills onto the stove top.

BEN runs over to it. He's holding two bowls in his left hand, one stacked inside the other.

He quickly sets the bowls on the counter, lifts the lid up off the pot to let out the steam, and wipes up the spilled soup with a towel.

LENNY and VAL are in the den watching television.

LENNY looks over to the kitchen.

LENNY

Everything all right?

BEN
[Calling from the kitchen]
Yeah, I've got it.

LENNY turns back to the TV.

VAL looks at him.

LENNY notices and rolls his eyes.

He turns off the television.

LENNY and VAL shuffle over to the kitchen.

VAL
Listen Ben, we're really
sorry about this.

BEN
[Stirring the soup] It's
okay, I'm always happy to
help.

VAL
[Looking around the kitchen]
Thanks. So do you need a
hand with anything?

BEN
No, I've got everything under
control.

VAL
[Taking a seat] Okay. Um,
did the boys give you any
trouble this morning?

BEN
No, they were great.

VAL
[Surprised] Really?

BEN
Yeah.

LENNY

[Surprised] Really?

BEN

Yeah.

VAL

You bribed them didn't you?

BEN

[Pouring two bowls of soup] I just told them that if they were ready to leave by seven forty-five I'd take them out for waffles.

LENNY

And that's not bribery.

BEN

I was helping them help themselves.

VAL

And the fact it helped you was a coincidence.

BEN

Exactly.

VAL

So nothing happened at the restaurant?

BEN

[Setting down two bowls of soup] Everything was fine; Pete was still kind of asleep so that helped, and Jake behaved himself too. Well he tried to order coffee, but I told him it was either milk or orange juice and he didn't argue with me so it was okay.

VAL

[Glaring at LENNY] Yeah.

LENNY

[Drinking the soup] This soup's great; it's almost like Mom's.

BEN

I got the recipe from her last night.

LENNY

You called her?

BEN

Yeah, I thought I should apologize about dinner personally, but I figured as long as she was talking at me I might as well take care of this too. But thanks for calling her the other day; it helped a lot.

LENNY

I do what I can.

VAL

This is really good.

BEN

Thanks.

VAL

No, I mean it; it's really amazing.

BEN

You sound kind of surprised.

VAL

Remember that pot roast?

BEN

I didn't think it was that bad.

LENNY

But it was.

BEN

Really?

VAL

Burned on the outside, raw on the inside, and completely tasteless.

BEN

Oh yeah.

LENNY

Anyway, how much was breakfast?

BEN

It's all right I got it.

LENNY

Thanks, but we insist.

BEN

It was nothing; and I like waffles so we're good.

VAL

Are you sure?

BEN

Yeah, it's fine. But I used up a lot of vegetables for the soup so I should do some shopping. Is that the grocery list on the fridge?

VAL

Yeah, but it's okay; we really just needed someone to keep an eye on the kids.

BEN

Well as long as I'm here I might as well take care of it.

LENNY

Well if you insist.

BEN

[Taking the shopping list
from the fridge magnet] Is
this everything?

VAL

Yeah, it's all there. We
really appreciate this.

BEN

No problem; I'll be back in a
bit.

LENNY

All right.

BEN walks out of the kitchen.

A few moments later LENNY and VAL hear the front door close.

There is a pause in the conversation.

VAL

[Casually] He's okay.

LENNY

[Worried] Yeah.

A JAZZ CLUB. NIGHT.

KATE is sitting at the bar drinking a martini.

The group on stage is a quartet consisting of a male vocalist,
piano, double bass, and drums.

There is a smattering of applause as the group finishes the
song.

The singer counts in the next song and they start playing an
arrangement of Frank Sinatra's "Mr. Success".

KATE listens for about forty seconds and then puts her glass on
the bar, drops a bill next to it, and walks out of the club.

A SKYSCRAPER. KATE'S OFFICE. DAY.

KATE is sitting at her desk, lost in thought.

She takes out her cellphone and makes a call.

After a few seconds she presses a button and ends the call.

KATE pauses for a moment.

She gets up, grabs her purse, and walks out of her office.

A PATH BY THE HARBOR FRONT.

KATE parks her Corvette Z06 by the curb, gets out, and walks along the path for a while.

A few moments later she spots BEN and walks up beside him.

KATE

Hey.

BEN

[Slightly surprised] Hey.

There is a pause in the conversation.

KATE puts her hand on BEN's forehead for a second.

BEN glances at her briefly.

KATE

[Looking at the view] You should be at work.

BEN

[Looking at the view] Lenny and Val have the flu and I was over at their house yesterday.

KATE

Are they all right?

BEN

Yeah, it's nothing serious.

KATE

I guess you called Fern this morning and told her you were sick.

BEN

I didn't want to risk infecting anyone at work.

KATE

But you aren't experiencing any symptoms so as far as you know you're lying.

BEN

I don't know that I'm not.

KATE

So you only prefer to be sort of honest some of the time.

BEN

I would've explained it to Fern but I didn't want to give her a chance to start lecturing me.

KATE

She doesn't lecture; she makes subtle remarks.

BEN

Feels like I'm being lectured.

KATE

Perception doesn't change the facts.

BEN

That's not the point.

KATE

Yes it is.

BEN

No it isn't.

KATE

You know I'm right.

BEN

What're you doing here?

KATE

Trying to change the subject?

BEN

Yeah.

KATE

If there was an accounting problem I would've said something by now.

BEN

That's really considerate.

KATE

I try.

BEN

But you haven't answered the question.

KATE

Is that important?

BEN

I think it is but I can't prove it.

KATE

[Smiles slightly] Is everything still on schedule?

BEN

Yeah, but we're only two days in so I'm not sure that means much.

KATE

Still.

BEN

Yeah.

KATE

Have you had lunch?

BEN

No, I'm not hungry.

KATE

It's almost three o'clock.
Did you have a late
breakfast?

BEN

No, I'm just not hungry.

KATE

Maybe you are sick.

BEN

I'm fine.

KATE

What'd you have for dinner
last night?

BEN

Why're you so concerned about
my eating habits?

KATE

You're the lead contractor on
my company's most expensive
project.

BEN

It's nice to feel needed.

KATE

And you look awful.

BEN

I'm just tired.

KATE

Are you sure?

BEN

No one working sixteen hour
days looks good.

KATE

But most don't look that bad.

BEN

I should've gone to work.

KATE

That sounds familiar.

BEN

[Smiles] Do you want to get
lunch?

KATE

I ate on the way over. But
thanks for asking.

BEN

[Casually] You're welcome.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

KATE

I stopped by your office the
other day to take a look at
the shop, but I guess Fern
already told you that.

BEN

Yeah.

KATE

There've been a lot of
changes.

BEN

We made some upgrades, re-
organized a few things.

KATE

I didn't plan to visit, but Cecil told me it was worth a look and I had some spare time.

But that wasn't exactly consistent with the arrangement we agreed on -

BEN

Are you trying to talk like a lawyer?

KATE

I was trying to be precise.

BEN

It sounded ridiculous.

KATE

Do you really want to argue about grammar?

BEN

Not right now. And Cecil told me that your visit was his idea and then he suggested I meet with you once in a while and that's why I asked you out for coffee.

KATE

That's what I thought. And I don't like him much either.

BEN

He's a good guy; it just takes a while to figure him out.

KATE

I'll take your word for it.

[Taking a wrapped sandwich out of her purse] Anyway, I

got you this to make up for
the intrusion.

[Hands BEN the sandwich]

BEN
[Takes the sandwich] Thanks.

KATE
You're welcome. But now
we're even.

BEN
[Unwraps the sandwich] Tuna
salad on rye.

KATE
Yeah.

[Looks at her watch] If
anything happens call me.

BEN
All right.

KATE turns and starts walking back to her car.

BEN starts eating the sandwich.

He glances over his shoulder at KATE and then turns away again.

AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. THE PARKING LOT.

The sun is setting.

FERN comes out of the industrial complex parking lot door.

She locks the door behind her and turns and starts walking to
her car.

The only car in the parking lot is a black Pontiac Solstice with
19-inch alloy wheels.

FERN sees it and smiles.

She gets behind the wheel, puts on her seatbelt, puts the key in the ignition, and hits the start button.

The LS3 V8 gives its characteristic rumble.

FERN smiles.

She revs the engine twice. And then once more.

FERN checks the mirrors and sees a Buick Enclave pulling into the parking lot.

She rolls her eyes, sighs, and turns off the engine.

BEN parks a few yards away from FERN's Pontiac Solstice and gets out while FERN walks over to him.

BEN

I just came to double-check some paperwork.

FERN

Yeah, whatever. Are you feelin' okay?

BEN

Yeah, I just stayed home as a precaution.

FERN

So you aren't actually sick.

BEN

So, did I miss anything?

FERN

[Smiles] Not really.

When I got in this morning Ray was yelling at some of the guys in the shop but I took care of it.

BEN

[Worried] What happened?

FERN

There was a problem with one of the machines so he had to change a bunch of things on the production schedule while it got repaired, and I guess Ray's getting kinda stressed out and he sorta lost his temper. But I handled it and Ray managed to keep the assembly line going so everything's all right.

BEN

Are you sure?

FERN

Yeah; the malfunction was with one of the milling units but we got it fixed in less than half an hour and Ray really knows what he's doing so we're good.

And just to be on the safe side I had a talk with him and he knows he needs to stay focused, and I also shut things down fifteen minutes early to give the guys a head start on the weekend so I'm pretty sure everything'll be back to normal by Monday.

And I think I've dealt with this sort of thing before so if you want to relax a little it's probably okay.

BEN

I'm just going to check a few things -

FERN

I know, I'm just saying that everything's under control so you don't have to spend your

entire weekend here if you don't want to.

BEN
I appreciate that.

FERN
Okay. Not that it's really any of my business if that's what you wanna do -

BEN
Thanks Fern; I'll see you Monday.

[Starts walking away]

FERN
[Smiling] Yeah, take care.

[Turns and starts walking to her car]

[Stopping and turning around]
Isn't there a basketball game on tonight?

BEN
[Stops but doesn't turn around] It's tomorrow afternoon.

FERN
Oh yeah, three o'clock tip off. You know, basketball's a really great sport.

BEN takes a deep breath.

BEN'S APARTMENT. THE DEN. DAY.

BEN is sitting in a recliner watching television.

The game ends and he turns it off.

BEN pauses for a second and then picks his cellphone up off the coffee table and walks out the door.

A DOWNTOWN STREET. NIGHT.

The sun has almost set.

A taxi slows down and stops alongside a curb.

BEN gets out and pays the fare.

He starts walking down the street as the taxi pulls away.

A few moments later, BEN sees KATE just ahead of him.

She's standing outside a store looking at the front window display.

BEN walks up next to her.

KATE is slightly surprised. She glances at him briefly and then looks back at the display.

There is a brief pause.

BEN
Would you care to join me for
dinner?

KATE
If you insist.

BEN and KATE start walking down the street toward a bistro.

BEN opens the door for KATE and follows behind her.

A WAITER sees them enter.

WAITER
Table for two?

BEN
If it's not too much trouble.

WAITER
[Smiles] Right this way.

The WAITER leads BEN and KATE to a table.

BEN pulls a chair out for KATE before taking his seat.

WAITER

[Handing them each a menu]
Tonight our chef recommends
the Fettuccini Alfredo, but
he recommends that every
night so I wouldn't take him
too seriously.

KATE

[Smiling] Thank you.

The WAITER nods and walks away.

BEN and KATE start reading their menus.

There is a brief pause.

BEN

[Without looking up] Did you
take a cab here?

KATE

[Without looking up] Yeah.

BEN

Me too.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

KATE

[Without looking up] I know
how to drive.

BEN

I know.

KATE

In fact I'm a better driver
than you.

BEN

I wouldn't go that far.

KATE

Last time we raced at the track I beat you by more than two seconds.

BEN

You know that course better than I do.

KATE

You had a few practice laps.

BEN

There are other types of driving skills.

KATE

[Looks at BEN] If you hadn't gotten in the way everything would've been fine.

BEN

[Looks at KATE] I wasn't in your line of sight.

KATE

You just kept telling me the distance to the curb.

BEN

I was being helpful.

KATE

I told you it was distracting.

BEN

I don't remember that.

KATE

Do you remember what happened?

BEN

[Casually] I paid for the repairs.

KATE

Thanks a lot.

BEN

You're welcome.

KATE

Finished with the menu?

BEN

Yeah.

BEN looks over at the WAITER and he comes to the table.

WAITER

Are you ready to order?

KATE

Yes, we'll start with the antipasto salad and then the gentleman will have the lasagna Bolognese and I'll have the spaghetti Puttanesca.

And for dessert we'll both have granitas, preferably mango, but if you don't have any on hand then espresso will be fine.

WAITER

Excellent. And would you care to select a wine?

KATE

We'll go with the house white.

WAITER

An excellent choice.

The WAITER takes the menus and walks to the kitchen.

BEN looks at KATE.

BEN

In some countries it's customary to let other people make their own selections.

KATE

What were you going to order?

BEN

Something different.

KATE

And what I chose was better.

BEN

That's not the point.

KATE

You're welcome.

BEN

So you'd be all right if I ordered for you?

KATE

That's different.

BEN

That's what I thought.

KATE

No, it really is different. I can get you something you're mildly allergic to and you'll still have to eat it because of chivalry, but if you don't order exactly what I want I'm allowed to make a gigantic scene and completely humiliate you and somehow I don't think you'll take that chance.

BEN

I think you're a little confused.

KATE

You're just saying that
'cause you know I'm right.

BEN

No, I'm pretty sure you're
wrong, and even if you're not
chivalry wasn't invented to
protect women like you.

KATE

Hey, just 'cause I don't need
it doesn't mean it doesn't
apply.

BEN

I can always adopt a more
relaxed code of conduct.

KATE

Do you really want to take
that risk?

BEN

Are you threatening me?

KATE

I'm asking a question. Would
you like to give an answer?

BEN

Since I'm a gentleman there's
no point.

KATE

That's what I thought.

BEN

Who asked you?

KATE

Is that anyway to talk to a
guest?

BEN

[Trying not to smile] Forget
it.

KATE smiles and looks out the window.

There is a pause in the conversation.

The WAITER returns with two salads, cutlery, a bottle of wine, and two glasses on a tray.

WAITER

[Setting the table] Here we are. And our cook's assistant remembered to go shopping today so the mango granitas will be ready when you are.

BEN

[Giving KATE an annoyed look] We're looking forward to it.

WAITER

Our cook will be delighted to hear that.

[Pouring the wine] And there you are.

KATE

[Looking back at BEN] Thank you.

The WAITER walks away.

BEN and KATE start eating.

KATE

Do you think he remembers us?

BEN

I doubt it.

KATE

Yeah.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

BEN

But he should; I was pretty generous with the tips.

KATE

Right.

BEN

I tipped twelve percent.

KATE

That's the rate for an average level of service. The way he treated us you should've gone to fifteen.

BEN

After what happened he was lucky we came back.

KATE

That was an accident.

BEN

There were empty tables all around us but he dropped the tray on ours.

KATE

They were having problems with the new cook; everyone was a little distracted.

BEN

That was a pretty lousy excuse.

KATE

You think they were lying?

BEN

No, I remember the food.

KATE

You never complained about it.

BEN

I know, I'm just saying that a twelve percent tip was perfectly justified.

KATE

Because you didn't like the food or the service.

BEN

And other than that it was great.

KATE

This is a restaurant; what else is there?

BEN

Furniture, dishes, cutlery, and location.

KATE

And that's why you never said anything.

BEN

I guess. And the food started getting better after a couple of weeks so everything worked out.

KATE

But you kept tipping twelve percent.

BEN

I didn't want them to think I was being rude at the beginning.

KATE

[Sarcastically] Good thinking.

BEN

Thank you.

[Pauses briefly] You never said anything about this back then.

KATE

I was getting free dinners at the restaurant of my choice.

BEN

Good point.

KATE

I know.

And when he dropped the tray he spilled some wine on my dress.

BEN

Oh yeah, the blue one.

KATE

[Glances at BEN] Yeah. But the drycleaner managed to get it out so it was all right.

BEN

Otherwise we wouldn't have come back.

KATE

Pretty much.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

BEN

I'll be back at work on Monday so if you need to find me you can reach me there.

KATE

Okay. I'll be busy next week so if anything happens just leave a message.

BEN

All right. Have you had a lot of meetings lately?

KATE

Yeah, how'd you know?

BEN

Howard likes to get his executives together when things are busy to make sure everyone knows what's going on with everyone else.

KATE

Oh. You know those guys pretty well.

BEN

And I know that you don't like meetings.

KATE

It's not that bad; if I get bored I just walk out.

BEN

Really?

KATE

No, but you believed me didn't you?

BEN

Either way I answer you'll be upset.

KATE

Yeah, so which is it?

BEN

Now you're just looking for a fight.

KATE

Stressing people out gets the best out of them.

BEN

Stress and productivity
usually don't go together.

KATE

Tell that to Beethoven.

BEN

I said usually.

KATE

Bach, Handel, Mozart, Mahler,
Brahms, Tchaikovsky -

BEN

Ella, Armstrong -

KATE

Sinatra -

BEN

Billie -

KATE

You never liked her.

BEN

That doesn't mean she doesn't
count.

KATE

You've never defended her
before.

BEN

But I'm open to the
possibility that I might've
missed something.

KATE

So you know you're wrong
about her.

BEN

That's not what I said.

KATE

That wasn't the question.

BEN
So how've you been?

KATE
[Smiling] Good. You?

BEN
Can't complain.

KATE
You sound like Lenny.

BEN
Yeah, I have bad days.

KATE
Is he still at NYU?

BEN
Yup, same as Val.

KATE
That's good.

BEN
Yeah, they've got tenure so
they're happy, but I feel
kind of sorry for their
students.

KATE
They know how to teach.

BEN
They're brutal.

KATE
But they know how to teach.

BEN
Remember when they used to
help Fern with her calculus?

KATE
She learned the math.

BEN

But it was painful to watch.

KATE

It wasn't that bad and she never complained.

BEN

I guess. But still -

KATE

Yeah.

There is a brief pause in the conversation.

BEN

Did you read the review for that jazz trio?

KATE

Yeah; I went over there a few nights ago. I'm guessing you just bought the record.

BEN

There isn't a lot of parking around there.

KATE

You managed to take a cab just now.

BEN

And I've been busy.

KATE

Sure. Anyway they're on tour now and they won't be back for a while.

BEN

Here we go.

KATE

Well honestly, you had a chance to hear some pretty

good musicians live and you
just settled for a recording.

BEN

A very good recording.

KATE

It's a complement to the
concert going experience, not
a substitute.

BEN

You just don't appreciate the
technical skill required to
produce a record.

KATE

I thought I was the one -

BEN

Yeah, but now you're a
musical snob.

KATE

No I'm not. I just expected
you to show some
sophistication.

BEN

[Mockingly] Uh huh.

KATE

Don't confuse knowledge and
high standards with pretense.

BEN

Typical upper class temper
tantrum.

KATE

What do you know about the
upper class?

BEN

They've got great homes,
great cars -

KATE

And we bankrolled Beethoven.

BEN

And what've you done lately?

KATE

I tried to enlighten a slob.

BEN

There's nothing wrong with missing a concert now and then.

KATE

A few more people like you and music's history.

BEN

Just like Gibraltar. And it's a really good record.

KATE

Yeah.

BEN

By the way, do you know if Cecil's got a new secretary yet?

KATE

I saw the last one clearing out her desk but I don't know if he's hired anyone.

BEN

I always figured he was kind of demanding but this is starting to be ridiculous.

KATE

That's partly Cecil's fault; he talks a lot faster when he's in a hurry and he doesn't check to see if anyone's understood what he's said.

BEN

I never noticed that.

KATE

That's 'cause you're like that too, but most people take a while to adjust.

BEN

Oh. Have you tried the cafeteria food?

KATE

Yeah, it's pretty good.

BEN

No it's not.

KATE

I knew it: You were just setting up one of your restaurant stories.

BEN

Then why'd you go and wreck the intro?

KATE

Why d'you think?

BEN

Those stories are great.

KATE

No they're not.

BEN

Yes they are.

KATE

Then why're we arguing about it?

BEN

Because you're wrong.

KATE

Yeah, everyone likes them
except me.

BEN

That's what it looks like.

KATE

Please; everyone just
pretends they're funny
because they know how much
you like telling them.

BEN

No they don't.

KATE

So they don't change the
subject as soon as you're
done?

BEN

[Pauses briefly]
Conversations are
complicated.

KATE

Right.

BEN

And if they were really that
bad someone would've said
something by now.

KATE

All right fine; if you want
to believe that then go
ahead.

BEN

Fine.

KATE

But I'm telling you they're
really bad.

BEN

[Sarcastically] You know,
I've really missed you.

KATE

[Sarcastically] I know.
[Normal tone] And I've really
missed correcting you.

BEN

Just 'cause you disagree with
me doesn't mean I'm wrong.

KATE

The facts are always on my
side even when you're not.

BEN

According to you.

KATE

So Lenny's birthday is August
fourth, Val's allergic to
seafood, and Fern doesn't
have a minor in astronomy.

BEN

I always forget Lenny's
birthday, I'd never seen Val
eat lobster, and I thought
Fern just liked hanging out
in the computer lab. And
those are just personal
details, not that those
aren't important, but I'm
pretty good with everything
else.

KATE

For the most part.

BEN

Thank you.

And my stories aren't that
bad.

KATE

[Sarcastically] Here we go.

BEN

[Sarcastically] Well
honestly,
[normal tone] if you really
had a problem with them then
why didn't you ever say
anything?

KATE

I was being polite.

BEN

No you weren't.

KATE

I didn't know you were
telepathic.

BEN

I don't have to be 'cause if
anything annoys you you'll
complain about it.

KATE stops eating and looks at BEN.

KATE

So you think I'm some spoiled
upper class brat who whines
whenever things aren't
exactly the way I want them
to be?

BEN

[Casually] I think you're
honest and forthright and I
respect that.

KATE

Okay.

KATE continues eating.

KATE

Strong, assertive, and down-to-earth would also have been acceptable.

BEN

Who asked you?

A BUILDING ON THE NYU CAMPUS. VAL'S OFFICE. DAY.

VAL is sitting at her desk working on some equations.

She stops and looks at what she's written.

VAL crumples up the sheet of paper and tosses it into a recycling bin.

She takes a deep breath and then opens a desk drawer and takes out a package of popcorn.

VAL empties the package into the popcorn machine on her desk and puts on the lid.

She presses a button on the machine and the kernels start exploding.

VAL watches them for a while.

A few seconds later she hears a knock at the door. The door is ajar.

VAL looks over and sees KATE standing there.

VAL

[Smiles] Hey, come on in.

KATE

[Smiling] Thanks.

VAL turns off the popcorn machine as KATE enters the office and closes the door behind her.

VAL

It's really good to see you.

KATE

Thanks, it's good to be back.

VAL

[Taking a seat opposite KATE]
So how've you been?

KATE

Good; California was a nice change and everything's going pretty well right now.

VAL

I'm glad to hear it.

KATE

And everything's good with you?

VAL

Yeah; I've published a few papers and Lenny and the boys are staying out of trouble. For the most part. Popcorn?

KATE

No thanks, but don't let me stop you.

VAL

Actually I was just popping it to watch the kernels bounce around.

KATE

Physicists have way too much fun.

VAL

Yeah, but we deserve it.

KATE

So I guess you know what's going on?

VAL

[Smiles] I think I've got a pretty good idea.

KATE

When I heard about the merger I started looking for another job 'cause I wasn't sure if I wanted to come back, but when I saw some of the projects they had lined up I started looking for an apartment here instead.

VAL

Then everything's working out.

KATE

Yeah. But this was a mistake, and I did get a few job offers so I've accepted one and I'm on my way to the airport now. I was hoping that you could call Ben tomorrow and tell him I said good-bye.

VAL

Don't do this.

KATE

I've thought about this a lot and it's better for everyone if I pack up and get out of here.

VAL

I was worried when I heard you were back, but I'm okay with it now and so's Lenny. And you know that Fern feels the same way too so it's not like Ben has to choose sides, and even if he did I'm pretty sure which side he'd take.

KATE

He doesn't always make the best decisions.

VAL

But he got this one right.

KATE

It's more complicated than that.

VAL

Do you remember how much Ben's parents liked you?

KATE

Yeah.

VAL

Well when they asked him what happened he told them that he was the one who ended things, and they still give him a lot of grief about it even now but he's always stuck to that story.

KATE

There were other reasons for that.

VAL

Yeah, but it would've been a lot easier to blame you.

KATE

He should've.

VAL

[Pauses briefly] He was angry for a long time, but he knew he'd made a lot of mistakes.

KATE

[Hesitates] How bad was it?

VAL

Ben's pretty tough, and he had to be.

KATE

[Pauses briefly] He's okay now.

VAL
But he isn't the same without you.

KATE
It's best if I leave him alone.

VAL
None of us ever believed that.

KATE
I failed when it mattered and I can't let that happen again.

VAL
It was tougher for you than for the rest of us combined, and he didn't give you any reason to think that anything would ever change.

KATE
That shouldn't have made a difference.

VAL
So you honestly believe you had to stay no matter what?

KATE
He was my responsibility.

VAL
That's a really complicated argument.

KATE
I know, but it's the only one that counts.

VAL

But even then you did
everything you could.

KATE

You know that's not true.

VAL

All of us did the best we
could at the time and there's
no way we could've handled it
any better.

KATE

I knew exactly what was going
on but I didn't want to deal
with it so I just left;
that's what happened and
there's no excuse for it.

VAL

Everything happened because
of the decisions that Ben
made and that's his
responsibility, not yours.

KATE

But that doesn't change what
I did and it doesn't make it
right.

VAL

[Sighs] Perfection's a great
standard to shoot for but
sometimes it just isn't
achievable.

KATE

But that doesn't make it all
right to fail and there are
already so many things I
can't make up for.

VAL

Then there's always
forgiveness.

KATE

It's not enough.

VAL

It's why you and Ben are all right now.

KATE

Then why do I still feel guilty about it?

VAL

Why did you really come back?

KATE

[Pauses briefly] He's better off without me.

VAL

I don't think that's true and you know that Ben doesn't feel that way either.

KATE

But even if you're right I can't expect him to trust me again.

VAL

He already does.

KATE

I haven't earned it.

VAL

That's not how it works.

KATE

So you really don't think I was selfish back then?

VAL

No one could've asked you to do more.

KATE

Then you know I'm right about this.

VAL

You did the best you could.

KATE

Yeah, and it still wasn't good enough.

VAL

We got through it, and even if you did make a mistake back then it doesn't mean you have to make one now.

KATE

This isn't a good idea.

VAL

Talk to Ben.

KATE

No matter what I say it'll amount to the same thing and I want to leave on good terms this time. Then at least we'll have that.

VAL

And then everything'll be okay?

KATE

I shouldn't have come back. The best I can do now is leave before I make things worse.

VAL pauses.

KATE

I know it's a lot to ask, but I can't talk to him again and Lenny and Fern would just try to explain it or blame everything on me.

VAL

But I'll tell him what he needs to hear.

KATE

[Pauses briefly] Maybe one day you can tell him the truth, but right now he doesn't need to hear it.

VAL

Kate -

KATE

I know, and if this was just about me I'd stay, but it isn't.

VAL

[Pauses] I'll call him tomorrow.

KATE

Thank you.

VAL watches KATE leave the office.

A PATH BY THE HARBOR FRONT.

BEN is walking along. The sun is setting.

His cellphone starts ringing and he answers it.

BEN

[Walking along] Hey Cecil; what can I do for you?

[Stops walking][Casually] What do you mean?

Oh, okay.

[Chuckles] Right.

Yeah, thanks for calling.

Take it easy.

BEN ends the call.

He pauses for a second and then continues walking along the path for a while.

BEN stops by the shore and dials a number.

BEN

Hey Val, it's me. Did Kate say anything to you before she left?

[Short pause]

Yeah, a guy at the company she was working for just called. And if she left a message she wouldn't have left it with Lenny or Fern.

[Long pause]

Okay.

[Casually] No, I'm all right.

Thanks. Anyway I've got some work to do so I'll talk to you later.

Okay.

Bye.

BEN ends the call.

He looks out at the view.

After a few moments he turns and starts walking back the way he came.

He looks up and stops.

KATE is standing a few yards away from him.

There is a brief pause.

BEN

Hey.

KATE

Hey.

They look at each other for a few seconds.

BEN

Are you new around here?

KATE

[Smiles] What the heck kind of a pick-up line's that?

BEN

[Smiling] Who said I was trying to pick you up?

KATE

So you're not?

BEN

[Walking towards KATE] That's not the point.

KATE

[Walking towards BEN] [Struggling to maintain her composure] Do you want to buy me dinner or not?

BEN and KATE hug.

BEN

All right fine.

KATE

Great; there's this Italian place I want to try.

There is a pause in the conversation. They remain standing there, holding each other.

BEN

Three and a half years at
college and that was the best
line I could come up with.

KATE

You're only human.

FADE OUT