

**DATING GIDEON**

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INT. BEDROOM- DAY

GIDEON- a wiry, shoddily-dressed 20-something- glances at the PHOTO of an EX-GIRLFRIEND. He set it down and goes back to playing video games. The door opens. His friends, TOM and CLAIRE, walk through.

TOM

Hey buddy, how's it going?

GIDEON

Fine. How about you guys?

CLAIRE

We're doing fine. Listen could we talk?

GIDEON pauses the game.

GIDEON

Okay guys, I get it. I'm sorry for being so good looking. I can't help it. It's a curse.

TOM

(not laughing)

Gideon, we know it's not been easy for you... since the breakup, but you know, stuff happens. Life goes on. You've got to go on.

CLAIRE

It's been weeks now. The least you could do is put on some fresh clothes.

GIDEON

I'll keep that under advisement.

GIDEON refreshes his game.

TOM

Gideon, man, let me put this another way: This isn't a house call. It's an intervention.

CLAIRE

Right. We're your friends, and we can't just sit by and watch you waste your life away.

GIDEON

Gotcha. I'll start living up to my potential as soon as this boss dies. Promise.

TOM turns off the game.

TOM

We've taken steps to get you out there again. It's for your own good.

GIDEON

(crossing his arms over his chest)

Steps? Like what, exactly?

CLAIRE

We've signed you up for an internet dating site. Your first date is tomorrow.

TOM

(with a wink)

I chose her for you. You'll like her.

GIDEON glares at his FRIENDS for a moment, then busts up laughing.

GIDEON

Good one. Now, really, can I get back to my game now?

CLAIRE

We're serious, Gid. You really have a date tomorrow, and you're really going.

TOM

Everyone needs a little feminine companionship, even the loners and geeks of this world.

GIDEON

(wryly)

Thanks for the compliment.

TOM

No problem.

GIDEON

I don't like dressing up.

TOM

That's what's great about this date: you don't have to! All you need is a set of gym clothes and a prayer.

GIDEON

(glancing at the filth around him)

Gym clothes? Man, how long has it been since I've been in those? I don't even know where I last put them.

TOM throws GIDEON some gym clothes. GIDEON absently catches them.

TOM

What else you got?

GIDEON

Nothing. I've got nothing. That's what I'm afraid of.

CLAIRE

You'll do fine, Gid. Trust us-

TOM

We're your friends.

GIDEON

(rolling his eyes)

So you say.

GIDEON holds up the unfamiliar GYM CLOTHES up to the light.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

You know, in the right light, I'd look like Richard Simmons in this.

TOM

(with a chuckle)

I know. It's pretty fantastic.

GIDEON

And you're sure I have to do this?

CLAIRE

Tom and I will agree to take up your part of the rent for this month, if you do.

GIDEON

Make it two months, and consider it done.

TOM

You drive a hard bargain, sir.

GIDEON

Beware the fury of a cheap man.

CLAIRE

(interjecting)

Consider it done!

GIDEON

Nice doing business with you.

I/E. GYM- DAY

GIDEON tugs self-consciously at his clothes as he steps towards the GYM.

GIDEON

I can't believe they got me into this stupid thing. That girl better be pretty..

GIDEON sees an attractive, athletic WOMAN standing by the front door. She waits for someone. He grins stupidly.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Special.

The ATHLETIC WOMAN sees him, and smiles back.

RACHEL

Hi. Are you Gideon?

GIDEON

Yeah, uh, that's me. Gideon. In person.

They approach each other. When close enough, they go in initially for a hug, but switch to a handshake, and eventually compromise with a HIGH FIVE.

RACHEL

Glad to meet you. I'm Rachel.

GIDEON

Pleasure. So, do you come here often?

RACHEL

All the time. Really get the body going, makes you feel alive.

GIDEON

Yeah, I could see how it could be quite therapeutic, too.

RACHEL

Totally. How about you? How do you let off

steam?

GIDEON

I usually blow people's head's off... er, in games. Video games. I'm a gamer. Do you... game?

RACHEL

Not really. I think all those screens will rot your brain, and I'm all about staying healthy. Mentally, physically, spiritually: the whole package.

GIDEON

Cool. Props to you. I'm totally for health... and stuff. So, uh, when should we go in?

RACHEL

Like now! Have you ever sparred before?

GIDEON

In "Defenders of Zion"...

RACHEL

What?

GIDEON

Nothing. Game. I'm pretty green. Maybe you could lend me a few pointers as we go along?

RACHEL

You got it. Let's do this!

She punches his forearm. He winces. They go in.

INT. GYM- DAY

GIDEON and RACHEL stand in a sparring ring, now suited up in protective pads and headgear.

RACHEL

You sure you're ready? You look kinda nervous.

GIDEON flashes her a "thumb's up."

GIDEON

I'm good. I just don't want to hurt you, you know.

RACHEL

Don't worry. You won't. Come at me.

GIDEON

Pardon?

RACHEL

Come. At. Me. I want to see what you've got.

GIDEON

O-kay. You sure?

RACHEL

Yes. Show me how it's done in the video game world.

GIDEON

Fine. You asked for it. Be prepared for a smack down.

RACHEL gestures him forward. GIDEON charges, and throws a few weak jabs, which she blocks. She returns jab for jab. He blocks, flinching every time. He responds with a few more jabs.

RACHEL

Stop holding back. I can take it. I promise.

GIDEON

All right. All right. Can't say I didn't

warn you.

GIDEON throws a series of UPPER CUTS, followed by a WILD, LEFT HOOK, which sets him slightly off balance. RACHEL effortlessly ducks under the HOOK and plants a strong JAB, right in his bread basket. GIDEON reels back.

RACHEL

You okay?

GIDEON

Fine. Good punch.

RACHEL

Thank you.

GIDEON

You give up?

RACHEL laughs.

RACHEL

No! There's a lot more where that came from. So, quit stalling. Bring it on already!

GIDEON charges forward, throwing a random series of hooks and jabs, cut with a few SIDE KICKS for good measure. RACHEL wipes the sweat off her brow.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

There you go. You may not be so dull after all. I think I'm even starting to sweat.

GIDEON

(wryly)

Don't you mean "glisten?"

RACHEL

No. I mean "sweat," and I earn every last bead of it, thank you very much.

RACHEL goes on the attack, jabbing quickly and undercutting

even quicker. GIDEON tries his best to brace himself, but he cannot escape the pummeling, nor does he even notice the SIDE SWEEP of her right leg coming his way. In short time, GIDEON is knocked off his feet and crashes onto the floor.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

That's point. Game?

GIDEON struggles to rise.

GIDEON

Not yet.

RACHEL

Listen, I get it. You want to impress me. Bravo! You've proven your point. The gamer can take a punch. So, we can go eat now. Really. Ice down your pride... I mean, wounds. And let's get out of here.

GIDEON

No. I think I got this. One more round. Please.

GIDEON steadies himself and rises.

RACHEL

I'm down if you are.

GIDEON

Time's a wasting.

GIDEON charges. His knees and fists go flying. She chuckles as she fights the human tornado, even when he lands a punch on her jaw. He stops.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh! Are you all right?

RACHEL

(Massaging her jaw)

I'm great! This might not be such a bad date after all. Play on, Nerd!

GIDEON grins cockily, and attacks. He swings and kicks, but his focus wanders gradually from the battle and to the BATTLING BEAUTY. As he gets lost in her BEAUTY, RACHEL goes on the offensive. He snaps out of his daydream too late, loses his balance, and clumsily backpedals. Before he can regain his balance, RACHEL lands a roundhouse kick into his face. GIDEON goes down. His DATE throws her hands victoriously into the air.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

That's two! But well played, Gideon. I just might let you buy me dinner tonight.

GIDEON does not stir from his place on the floor.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You hear me, Gideon? Gideon? Pal? Everything okay?

She taps him with her shoe, and leans over to check his pulse.

RACHEL

Oh, dear.

EXT. GYM- LATER

GIDEON and RACHEL sit outside the sparring ring. GIDEON holds a cold beer over the side of his face.

RACHEL

Sorry, man. That's probably gonna leave a mark.

GIDEON

It's okay. Scars are just memories etched into your skin, right?

RACHEL

Right on! Glad you're cool about it. Other guys would flip if they got their butt handed to them by a woman.

The GUYS in the next table chuckle amongst themselves.

GIDEON

Well, I'm not like other guys.

RACHEL

That's good. Stay that way.

RACHEL snatches the beer from his hands, takes a gulp, and returns it to its place.

GIDEON

So, what are we eating today?

RACHEL

(reaching behind her back)

Ready for it?

RACHEL pulls out two MASSIVE burritos.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Mega burritos!

RACHEL hands him one. He stares at it, mildly intimidated.

GIDEON

Whoa! Look at the size of that thing.

RACHEL

I know. Isn't it great? Dig in!

RACHEL tears the foil off her meal, and digs in.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I tell you, Gid. After a good workout, there isn't anything like these burritos in the whole world. The whole world.

GIDEON cautiously unwraps his burrito and takes a bite.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Delicious, right?

GIDEON's eyes start to water.

GIDEON

Spicy.

RACHEL

Well, duh! Is there any other way? You know, as a kid, my dad used to feed me hot sauce- just a dab here and there, enough to pique the appetite.

GIDEON

Some kids just have hot cocoa.

RACHEL

Some kids are boring.

GIDEON

I guess that's a matter of opinion.

RACHEL

Totally. The right one versus everything else.

(playfully elbowing him)

Kidding. So, what do you, Gideon? I know you play video games. Are you one of those guys who gets paid to do that?

GIDEON

I wish. No, I work for a record label.

RACHEL

No way! Do you play?

GIDEON

A little. A lot more when I was younger. Most of my work is just fetching coffee, taking calls, and get yelled at.

RACHEL

Oh. Bummer. Well, I guess, somebody has to do it. No fun though... I could totally see

you as one of those band geeks, though- the one who doesn't say a word but just rips at electric guitar.

GIDEON

I was a band geek, as a matter of fact. I played the tuba.

RACHEL chortles.

RACHEL

And you wore one of those stupid outfits too, I bet?

GIDEON

Yep.

RACHEL

Please tell me you still have a picture.

GIDEON

No, I think I burned all the evidence.

RACHEL

But now your secret is out.

GIDEON

Unfortunately so. I guess I have to kill you.

RACHEL

Not if I take you down first. I think I got you halfway there already.

GIDEON

(coddling his beer)

I noticed. How about you? What's your deal?

RACHEL

(proudly)

I am a fitness instructor.

GIDEON

Makes sense. What's that like?

RACHEL

Busy. Everyone with a gym outfit wants to be an instructor nowadays, or push some workout deal. Before it was real estate, now everyone's all about fitness.

GIDEON

Man, running around all day sounds exhausting, not gonna lie.

RACHEL

It can be.

GIDEON

Any horror stories?

RACHEL

Well, there was this one guy who took me out on a date and I totally, accidentally, knocked him unconscious.

GIDEON

(with a grin)

Worst things have happened.

RACHEL

I hear you. Um, but seriously, lots of bad pickup lines from sweaty men... some sweaty women too. I'm not as much offended by their lines as their bad gym workouts. You'd be surprised how many guys lift weights all wrong. I mean, it's their body, so they can do with it as they want,

but still...

GIDEON

See, I don't work out at all. So, I never have that problem.

RACHEL

But I'm sure you've got your share of bad lines. Every guy does.

GIDEON

Oh, I am a connoisseur of bad puns.

RACHEL

Cool. Try me. Give me your worst.

GIDEON

All right. Um... "hey, are you Jamaican? Cuz you Jamaican me crazy."

RACHEL

That was horrendous.

GIDEON

Thank you. How about the best line you've ever heard? Any that actually work?

RACHEL

(musingly)

Well, that just depends on the guy, but my favorite is an oldie but a goodie.

GIDEON

And that is?

RACHEL

Ready?

GIDEON

Ready.

RACHEL

"Hi."

GIDEON

Hi?

RACHEL

Yeah, "hi. How you doing? My name is..." such and such. For me, it tops all the other ones. Everyone is always rushing to the punch line. Guys especially. Rush, rush, rush. In everything.

Everything! But girls, we like to be finessed, even when we know there's a scam waiting on the other side. If you men would just slow the heck down, you might just get what you want... of course, then, I'd be out of a job, but still, the thought remains.

GIDEON claps his hands together.

GIDEON

You're in luck, my dear. You see, I don't rush into anything ever. Some would call me slow, even.

RACHEL

Mentally?

GIDEON laughs.

GIDEON

Exactly.

GIDEON sets his burrito down.

GIDEON

Phew. I'm getting full.

RACHEL

(eating away)

Figured you would. For most guys, these

burritos are a bit much the first time around; but the keepers always come back for more.

GIDEON

How do you do it? I mean, eat like that and look like... you.

RACHEL

Easy. Today, you see, is my cheat day.

GIDEON

Which is?

RACHEL

Oh. Sorry. Gym speak.

The other six days you behave, diet right, be health conscious, but one day per week, you just go crazy. It wakes your body up, and makes you happy. You can't live life just obeying rules. Sometimes, you just have to let go. It's the only way to live.

GIDEON

Well, you do seem like a very lively person.

RACHEL

I know, right? I'm the most alive person I know.

GIDEON

And humble, too.

RACHEL shrugs.

RACHEL

Eh, nobody's perfect, though we try.

GIDEON

Some more than others.

RACHEL

What can I say? I raise the bar. It's what I'm here for. You could too, if you wanted. You don't have to watch your life pass by on a computer screen. You could take charge of it, really take the bull by the horns.

GIDEON

I've never been much a fan of livestock.

RACHEL

Funny. That burrito's got every farm animal in the book, probably ones of the books as well.

GIDEON

E-i-e-i-oh.

She chuckles.

RACHEL

You're a screwball, you know that?

You get your ass handed you twice today and you keep on going, with all those cheap jokes and stuff. I like that. Most guys try so hard to keep it serious, but not you. You just don't care.

GIDEON

Well, I learned a long time ago that I'm stuck with me, so I've learned to deal.

RACHEL

There you go! Well, keep it up. Your unfortunate self may just have a second date in store.

GIDEON

Why thank you, ma'am.

RACHEL

What can I say? I like to help out the little guys.

INT. BEDROOM- LATER

GIDEON sits on his old, familiar BEAN BAG CHAIR. A MASSIVE CONTUSION mars the side of his face. He holds a BEER in one hand and TUMS in the other. TOM and CLAIRE stand sympathetically beside him.

TOM

So, how did it go?

GIDEON

Oh, she was a knockout all right- a real one-two punch.

TOM

Yeah, look like things got a little intense.

CLAIRE

Was it a nice date, though? Before the...

GIDEON

Yeah. It was nice.

TOM

Sweet! So, you gonna go out with her again?

GIDEON

Maybe.

TOM

Maybe? C'mon. You gotta know. Sounds like she could be a winner..

GIDEON

(shifting in his seat)

Listen, Tom, I really appreciate your concern over my emotional, social, and procreative well-being, but I'm just in a place where I should be dating. Okay?

CLAIRE

That's a shame..

GIDEON

Sorry to disappoint.

CLAIRE

It really is. I mean, because I found this girl..

GIDEON

(rolling his eyes)

Oh, here it comes.

CLAIRE

(playing dumb)

What? Here what comes?

GIDEON

You've got another date lined up, don't you?

CLAIRE

Me? No. Okay. Maybe.

GIDEON

Who is she?

CLAIRE

She looks like a sweet woman, smart, sophisticated. You'll just love her.

GIDEON

Just tell me: where do I need to be, and when do I need to be there.

CLAIRE

Uptown. Next Tuesday. At seven.

GIDEON groans.

GIDEON

Uptown?! Blech.

CLAIRE

What? What's wrong with uptown?

GIDEON

Me! I'm the problem. I mean, look at me! I'm not exactly uptown material.

CLAIRE

(with a shrug)

You never know. I'm sure Cinderella thought the same way..

GIDEON curtsseys.

GIDEON

Oh, then let me get my ball gown and magic pumpkin, Fairy Godmother.

CLAIRE

You may mock me, but you have admit it's at least a possibility. She's a woman of exquisite tastes. She may see right past your plebian exterior-

GIDEON

And see my plebian wallet.

TOM

Listen, dude, you don't have to go, if you

that makes you happy.

CLAIRE

Yeah, you just sit here in your filth if you want to.

GIDEON glances at the trash and food particles around him and blushes.

GIDEON

All right. You have a point. I'll go on your little date.

CLAIRE applauds.

TOM

That a boy!

GIDEON

Could you do me a favor first?

CLAIRE

Anything you wish, my liege.

GIDEON

Grab me an ice pack from the mini-fridge.

CLAIRE

Coming right up.

CLAIRE grabs him a new ICE PACK. GIDEON swaps it out for the old one and applies it to his skin.

GIDEON

Thanks.

TOM

Don't mention it.

GIDEON

I will have to admit this date actually comes at a very good time.

CLAIRE

Oh? How's that?

GIDEON

Well, with the way my face is looking, I could use a cold shoulder about now.

INT. CONDO- DAY

GIDEON stands, dressed up, outside an uptown condo with a bouquet of DIME STORE FLOWERS. He rings the doorbell. An ELEGANT WOMAN, draped in PRADA and PEARLS, answers.

GIDEON

Hello.

DEBBIE

Hi.

GIDEON

I'm Gideon. These are for you.

He hands her the FLOWERS, which she takes.

DEBBIE

Roses. How quaint! Thank you. Please do come inside.

DEBBIE disappears into the interior. GIDEON follows.

A SMALL DINNER PARTY gathers inside.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

You don't mind a little company, do you?

GIDEON

No. Not at all.

DEBBIE

Excellent.

DEBBIE turns to her guests.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Hi, everyone, George is here!

GIDEON

It's Gideon.

DEBBIE

Of course it is, sweetheart. Didn't I just say that?

She wanders into the KITCHEN and retrieves a CRYSTAL VASE. She takes her time arranging the flowers inside. While she does this, one of her DINNER GUESTS moves in GIDEON'S direction.

MALE GUEST

And you are?

GIDEON

Gideon, but you can call me Mud.

Another nearby GUEST steps forward toward them.

FEMALE GUEST

Mud has many architectural and medicinal qualities to it, you know. From the adobe bricks of Mexico to the mud baths of Beverly Hills. It's really quite amazing when you think about it.

GIDEON

(sarcastically)

Really? Wow! I just thought it made a great projectile. I guess that's why Mom never used to let me track it through the house.

The JOKE falls flat. DEBBIE brings over a plate of d'oeuvres.

DEBBIE

Chicken tartare?

GIDEON

Might want to stick that in a few more minutes. It doesn't look quite finished yet.

DEBBIE

It's supposed to be served raw.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Oh. Then, in that case, I would love some.

He swallows some of the slimy snack down. DEBBIE sets down the tray and hands him a glass of RED WINE.

DEBBIE

Something to wash it down with.

GIDEON winces as he drinks.

GIDEON

Thanks.

MALE GUEST

A nice choice on the wine, Deb. It has a wonderfully oaky texture to it.

FEMALE GUEST

With soft chocolate notes. Where ever did you get it?

DEBBIE

Barcelona. It was funny really. We were on our way back from a two week holiday there and one of our traveling companions had mistakenly ordered too many bottles. He offered one to me in exchange for helping get his load back to the States. Who could resist an offer like that?

MALE GUEST

Quite fortuitous, I'd say.

FEMALE GUEST

Huzzah.

They toast.

MALE GUEST

What did you think of the wine, George?

GIDEON winces.

GIDEON

Gideon. It's a great wine. Like you said, "oaky... Chocolaty." Very red... Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to run to the restroom.

DEBBIE

Of course. It's right down the hall. First door to your left.

GIDEON

Great. Um, be back in a second.

GIDEON steps away. He makes his way down the hall, shaped by minimalistic, modern architecture and decorated with classical and world art. GIDEON barely notices the door to the restroom, and has to circle back before he finds it.

Upon entering, he sets his wine down and splashes water on his face.

GIDEON

Pull it together, Gideon. You can do this.

DEBBIE knocks on the door behind him. GIDEON turns, and is quite surprised to see his DATE standing in the doorway.

DEBBIE

Gideon. It really is a nice name. Taken from the Holy Bible, right?

GIDEON

Book of Judges, so I'm told.

DEBBIE

Wasn't he the one hiding out in the wine thresher so no one would bother him?

GIDEON

Sure? My Biblical literacy is a bit lacking.

DEBBIE

No worries, and you don't have to be so nervous, you know. We're really just like you.

GIDEON

Perhaps, just with a lot more money.

DEBBIE

We're all blessed in different ways. In my world, it's more about what you can fake, then what you've actually got. If you can convince someone you're anything, you are. It's wonderful really.

GIDEON

Couldn't they just call you out on your bluff?

DEBBIE

Sure, but they usually don't. If you speak with enough bravado, they usually won't, and if they do, say something obscure in response, and the victory is yours.

GIDEON

Sounds like a lot of smoke and mirrors to me.

DEBBIE

Exactly! Trust me, in this game, we all fall far short of perfection, but that doesn't mean everyone else has to know.

GIDEON

So you lie?

DEBBIE

We aspire. For example, Bill back there just lost his job. I know it. He knows it. We all know it, yet we parade around like he's still on the top of the world. It's not because we're stupid, or ignorant, or anything like that. It's just that life's too short to concentrate on the sob stories and negative thing. In fact, even the negative has something positive waiting to be brought out of it, if you're willing to look.

(holding up the wine)

Take this wine for example. It could be just wine, like you were saying back there. Or it could be the best wine in the world, more unique and wonderful than any other wine, with its own aroma, character, and story. Suddenly, the region it was grown in matters, as do the hands that cultivated it. As does the company you share it with. Perspective changes everything. So, what's in your glass?

GIDEON

You... are a very complicated woman.

DEBBIE sets a hand on his cheek.

DEBBIE

All women are complicated, sweetheart. We're made that way. It beautiful really, because men are so dumb by comparison, but even that is by design. We're like Rubik's Cubes. Gifts tied up in knots. Any man with the patience and fortitude to undo the knots, well, he gets the whole package, if you know what I mean.

GIDEON

Yes, I understand. Euphemisms.

DEBBIE tips her glass to GIDEON.

DEBBIE

Exactly. To euphemisms.

GIDEON

Cheers.

He takes a sip and chuckles.

DEBBIE

What?

GIDEON

It's funny: all this talk about perspective. I thought you were gonna label me as dirt the moment you saw me.

DEBBIE

Why? Because I'm rich?

GIDEON

Because I'm dirt! I'll admit it.

DEBBIE

But we're all children of dirt, my friend. Even those bedecked in gold. Your Bible tells me so. Isn't that right?

GIDEON

God and I haven't exactly been on speaking terms lately.

DEBBIE

You want to talk to God? Just open your mouth, and there He is.

She steps towards the door.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Perspective, my friend. It's all about perspective.

INT. CONDO- LATER

The GUESTS file out towards the front door. Everyone is in a chipper, slightly smashed mood.

GIDEON

And then the girl cow says, "Not right now, honey. I'm simply not in the mood."

The JOKE elicits a chuckle from his captive audience.

MALE GUEST

Good one, Gideon. I must admit your dry humor is starting to rub off on me.

GIDEON

I blame the wine.

The GUESTS chuckle again.

FEMALE GUEST

I'll drink to that!

They reach the door.

MALE

Well, this was a riveting party, Deb. Always a pleasure.

DEBBIE

Oh, the pleasure is all mine.

MALE GUEST

(pointing towards GIDEON)

And kudos to you, my friend. I had my doubts, but you really came to the fore as the party wore on.

FEMALE GUEST

Do join us next time.

GIDEON

Thanks. Thanks, you guys. I will.

FEMALE GUEST

Marvelous. You two have a great night.

GIDEON

You do the same.

DEBBIE closes the door behind them.

DEBBIE

See? What'd I tell you? Perspective.

GIDEON

You were right. Always right.

She breezes past him, running a finger delicately over his arm as she goes.

DEBBIE

Let me put something on.

She wanders over to the stereo and changes CD's. JAZZ begins pumping through the speakers.

GIDEON

Cute.

DEBBIE

You know what I love about jazz? It's for everyone. Sure, now, it seems like something just for the elite. The sophisticated. Demure. But it didn't start that way. No, it started on the streets, in the heart of it all. In gutters and crack pipes. It covers everything, every strata of humanity. Like love.

DEBBIE moves into GIDEON's arms. They begin to dance.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Have you ever been in love before, Gideon?

GIDEON

Yes.

DEBBIE

What happened?

GIDEON

I don't want to talk about it.

DEBBIE waits.

DEBBIE

She left you, didn't she? A guy like you? That's too bad. Do you still love her?

GIDEON

I guess so. I mean, it still hurts to talk about it.

DEBBIE

Was she your first? You never forget your first.

GIDEON sets DEBBIE into a spin, and brings her back to him again.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Mine was named Parker. Like the Saxophone player. Maybe that's why I loved him so much. His name certainly didn't hurt.

GIDEON

What happened?

DEBBIE

He moved on. Life's so fluid like that. You think you have something, and it just slips away- hence, my philosophy about perspective. Pretend something is the way

it is, even when it isn't, and who knows, maybe it will be that way sometime soon.

GIDEON

But, do you really enjoy life for what it is that way?

DEBBIE

Possibly not. But what is life anyway? A glass of wine. A bite of food. An intimate encounter. Then "poof" we're gone. So, what does it matter if "now" that we imagine and the "now" that actually is don't match up?

GIDEON takes hold of her.

GIDEON

Because now is this: this conversation, this dance, this proximity. It must count for something. Even if nothing else does. We're here, in space and time. Existing in all due glory.

DEBBIE

Yeah. I suppose that counts for something.

They dance.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

Dip me, and don't let me fall.

GIDEON dips. She holds tightly onto him as he brings her down and lifts her up again under the shadow of a NEON CITY.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

You know what I see when I look at you?

GIDEON

I'm scared to find out... What?

DEBBIE

(unflinchingly)

Potential.

GIDEON

Thanks.

DEBBIE

But you know what the problem with potential is? It only counts when you let it out.

GIDEON

I'll keep that in mind.

DEBBIE

How about me?

She wanders from his hands and into the center of the room.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

When you look at me, what do you see?

GIDEON

A key.

DEBBIE

A key?

GIDEON

To unlocking my potential.

She draws near to him again.

DEBBIE

Excellent.

INT. APARTMENT- DAY

GIDEON sits in his beanbag chair, playing video games with a BOTTLE OF WINE resting beside him. TOM and CLAIRE enter.

CLAIRE

Are you drinking wine?

GIDEON

(taking a sip)

Cabernet Sauvignon, to be exact.

CLAIRE

You never struck me as a lush before.

GIDEON

Love will do that to you.

TOM

So the date went well?

GIDEON

Well enough.

CLAIRE

So, you're going to see her again?

GIDEON fails to respond.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You clicked, didn't you?

GIDEON

Yes. We clicked.

CLAIRE

So, you're going to go out with her again?

GIDEON

I'm still not ready.

TOM

You seem pretty ready to me.

GIDEON waves him off.

TOM

Woah, dude. No need to get defensive.

GIDEON

Who's getting defensive?

CLAIRE

If he says, "he's not ready," we'll go with that.

GIDEON

Thank you, Claire. So, are we done guys?

TOM

(bitterly)

Yeah. We're done.

CLAIRE glares at TOM.

CLAIRE

Unless, of course, you'd like to try again.

TOM

Yeah. One more try. Maybe you'll actually be ready this time.

GIDEON

Can I choose the next victim?

CLAIRE

Anything you want.

GIDEON

Show me the site.

CLAIRE eagerly brings up the site on her PHONE. He continues looking forward and playing his GAME.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Is it open?

CLAIRE

Yeah. Take your pick.

Without looking, GIDEON reaches over and taps her phone.

GIDEON

I'll take... her.

CLAIRE

Her?

GIDEON

Yeah. Her. Set up a date and I'll go.

CLAIRE

Don't you want to see her first?

GIDEON

What's the difference? You guys surprised me before. Now, I get the chance to surprise myself.

CLAIRE

All right, if you're sure about this.

GIDEON

I'm sure. It will be fun. Yay!

CLAIRE

Okay. Consider it done.

TOM and CLAIRE retreat into a corner of the room.

TOM

(softly)

Can't we be done? I mean, I think he's just messing with us now.

CLAIRE

(softly)

No, I think he's starting to get into it. We're on the right track. I know it. You'll see.

GIDEON

(loudly)

If you're gonna talk about me, come closer so I can join in the conversation.

CLAIRE

(softly)

It's only a matter of time.

TOM

(softly)

I hope you're right.

GIDEON

I'm over here!

CLAIRE

We'll talk about this later...

(to GIDEON)

All right. Let's get you ready for this date.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO- DAY

GIDEON wanders into the WAITING ROOM of a photo studio. He looks around but sees no one there.

GIDEON

Hello?

A LITTLE GIRL sits at the RECEPTIONIST'S DESK. She is hidden behind schedule books and other notes, and draws in a coloring book when GIDEON calls.

GIRL

Do you have an appointment?

GIDEON

(startled)

Uh, hi. What's your name?

GIRL

It's Star. Star Rose Sinclair.

GIDEON

Pleased to meet you. Tell me, is Susan is in?

The LITTLE GIRL looks confusedly at him.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Or your Mom? I would take your Mom, and I'm sure she can find SUSAN for me.

GIRL

And your name is...?

GIDEON

Gideon. G-I-D-E-O-N.

The LITTLE GIRL looks him over, then turns to her coloring book and scribbles something into it.

GIRL

Gideon. Yes. We've been expecting you. Wait right here.

The LITTLE GIRL looks him over, giggles, and disappears into the main office. Soon, a WOMAN with a camera bag comes out with STAR in tow.

SUSAN

Gideon?

GIDEON

Yes?

They shake hands.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm late.

SUSAN

It's okay. I can deal.

GIDEON

Great. Well, shall we be off?

SUSAN brings the little girl close to herself.

SUSAN

Is it okay if I bring my daughter along? The babysitter bailed last minute. I'm sorry. It may not be what you're expecting, but you'd be doing me a huge favor.

GIDEON

No. Sure. It's cool. In fact, know just where we can go.

SUSAN

Perfect! Thank you. She'll be an angel, won't you, Star?

STAR poses daintily for her mother.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Now, that that's settled, let's breeze.

INT. CAR- LATER

GIDEON drives. SUSAN sits with her DAUGHTER, who noisily plays on her phone.

INT. POTTERY SHOP- LATER

GIDEON and SUSAN spend time meticulously painting designs

onto small clay pots. STAR draws freely over hers.

DAUGHTER

I finished, Mommy. Do you like it?

SUSAN leans over and looks.

SUSAN

(to her DAUGHTER)

I love it. You did such a great job.

(to GIDEON)

How're you doing?

GIDEON

Good, good. Just trying to get the illustration just right.

SUSAN

What'cha drawing?

GIDEON holds up his POT.

GIDEON

The dragon from "Defenders of Zion."

SUSAN

The video game?

GIDEON

It's stupid, I know, but it's what I do.

SUSAN

It's nice.

SUSAN holds up hers.

SUSAN

I drew a goose.

GIDEON

Awesome.

GIDEON continues working.

SUSAN

So, Gideon, how do you feel about kids?

GIDEON looks over. STAR stares intensely at him, eager to hear his response.

GIDEON

They're... fantastic. One day, I'd like plenty of my own.

SUSAN

It's a nice quality in a man. That's the problem with so many men nowadays: so non-committal.

GIDEON

(to SUSAN)

A shame, really. So, Star...

STAR

Yes?

GIDEON

What's your favorite thing to do?

STAR

(matter-of-factly)

Hanging out with Mommy.

GIDEON

That's a good thing to do. What else?

STAR shrugs as she admires her clay masterpiece.

SUSAN

Star is good at a lot of things. She's a

very gifted child.

GIDEON

Seems like it. She's quite the girl.

SUSAN

Oh, she is.

GIDEON concentrates on decorating his pot.

GIDEON

And how about Mommy? What does Mommy like to do for fun?

SUSAN

Mommy liked to do a lot of things, but who has time for them anymore? In fact, right now, Mommy is happy just being Mommy.

STAR

Love you, Mommy.

SUSAN

Love you too, baby.

STAR sets her completed mug on the table.

STAR

Can we go now? I'm bored.

SUSAN looks apologetically over at GIDEON.

SUSAN

In a minute, baby, in a minute.

EXT. PARKING LOT- LATER

The THREE of them walk towards the car. GIDEON's design is not yet finished. They get into GIDEON's car. SUSAN sits in the passenger seat.

STAR

Mommy, sit by me. Sit by me.

SUSAN

I'm gonna sit by Mr. Gideon for a little while, okay? You just be a good girl and sit pretty in the back.

STAR

(glumly)

Okay.

SUSAN leans over to GIDEON.

SUSAN

(whispering)

Just drive for a while. If you do that, she's fall asleep and we can hang out. She's a very deep sleeper, I promise.

GIDEON puts his keys in the ignition.

GIDEON

A long drive sounds good.

SUSAN

Thanks again for playing along. I'll make it up to you later.

GIDEON

Don't worry about it. Really. I never know what to expect anymore.

STAR

Are we going home now, Mommy?

SUSAN

Soon, baby. We're going to take a little drive first.

STAR

Awww, but drives always make me so sleepy.

SUSAN takes hold of GIDEON's hand, as he presses on the

gas.

EXT. SCENIC VIEW- LATER

GIDEON parks his car on a lot beside the BEACH. STAR is fast asleep in the back.

GIDEON

This looks like a good place.

SUSAN

Yeah. Very nice.

SUSAN reaches into her purse and retrieves a small bottle of SOUTHERN COMFORT.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Do you drink?

GIDEON

A lot more than I used to.

SUSAN

I know the feeling.

She brings out a couple DIXIE CUPS and hands one to GIDEON.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

She's a sweet girl. She just gets weird around men. Her father...

GIDEON

Not a winner?

SUSAN

No.

She takes a shot.

GIDEON

A good man is hard to find.

SUSAN

A good person, really.

GIDEON

(raising his CUP)

Here's to the good people, wherever and whoever they are.

SUSAN

May we never meet.

GIDEON

Right. We'd make them look bad.

SUSAN

(with a smirk)

Exactly.

GIDEON takes a shot.

GIDEON

So, SUSAN, what did you wanna be when you grew up?

SUSAN

A mermaid. Ha! I mean, who doesn't want to be a mermaid? Most of the ocean has yet to be explored. They could be out there.

GIDEON

I've heard articles that argue that they're feral.

SUSAN

No! No, not them. They're too pretty to be dangerous.

GIDEON

(pointing to his dissipating bruise)

Some would say the same thing about women, but I have evidence to the contrary.

SUSAN

I was wondering about that. Rub someone the wrong way?

GIDEON

Just got over my head.

SUSAN

Ah, that happens to me a lot too.

She glances down at her cup and sees that it is EMPTY.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I'm dry. You want a touchup too?

GIDEON

Hit me.

SUSAN retrieves the bottle and refills their cups. They down them quickly.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

It's a good burn.

SUSAN

Definitely. How about you? What did you want to be when you grew up?

GIDEON

An astronaut, I guess. I always wanted to know what it was like to live up there.

SUSAN

Man, the 60's, that must've been the time to live. You could be anyone and still

have the chance to go to the moon. Now that the space program is over, space flight is left only to the rich.

GIDEON

And Kate Upton.

SUSAN

Right. And Kate Upton. God bless her.

GIDEON

Amen.

The TWO of them stare into the waves, as they endlessly ebb and flow. SUSAN chuckles.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What?

SUSAN

Nothing, it's just... you wanted to fly, I wanted to dive. Both of us wanted to explore the deepest, uncharted regions of the universe, and we both ended up here, in this beat up car, in our dead-end jobs, utterly stuck.

GIDEON

Man, that's heavy stuff.

SUSAN

But, it's true, right?!

GIDEON

I suppose.

SUSAN busts up laughing.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

SUSAN

You. People like you, like me. We never see it coming until it's too late. And now there's no escaping it.

She opens the door.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

(distantly)

Or is there?

GIDEON

Going somewhere?

SUSAN

You bet I am!

She gets out of the car.

GIDEON

Wait! Your daughter.

SUSAN

She'll be fine. Like me. She's independent, a survivor I can tell. She's fine. We're all just fine.

She gestures him forward. He glances nervously back and forth between SUSAN and her DAUGHTER.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You coming?

GIDEON

You go ahead. I'd feel better if I stayed.

SUSAN

You're too young to be a parent. Come on!

When GIDEON hesitates, SUSAN sprints towards the water. She splashes around, having the time of her life. GIDEON watches her for a moment more, then follows suit. The

moment he hits the water, he shivers.

GIDEON

It's freezing in here!

SUSAN

I know. Isn't it great?!

She splashes him. He shivers more. He splashes back. They begin to play in the water.

He looks back to the CAR in order to check on the sleeping GIRL. SUSAN seizes the opportunity to tackle him. They come up, gasping for air. GIDEON launches the water around him into the air, and laughs and laughs, and laughs.

GIDEON

I'm alive! Woo!

Suddenly, STAR appears at the edge of the shore, staring confusedly at the riotous adults.

STAR

Mommy, I want to go home. Can we just go home?

SUSAN and GIDEON stop playing. The water around them falls back into the churning tide.

SUSAN

Of course, baby. Of course.

(whispering)

I'm sorry. I guess we got a little carried away.

GIDEON

We've all got to. Get carried away. Sometimes. You know?

SUSAN winks at him.

The TWO ADULTS get out of the water. STAR takes her MOM's hand, and leads her back to the car. GIDEON and SUSAN quietly pull their sopping forms onto the upholstery.

GIDEON starts the car. They leave the beach.

INT. BEDROOM- DAY

GIDEON sits in his bean bag chair and stares at a blank wall.

TOM

Didn't go well, huh?

GIDEON

Not exactly.

CLAIRE

Maybe one more time?

GIDEON

No. I'm done.

TOM

C'mon, Gid.

GIDEON

No. No! Why do you suddenly care so much?! Why does what I'm doing matter at all?

TOM and CLAIRE look at each other. CLAIRE nods.

TOM

The thing is, Claire and I are pregnant. We're gonna need this place. For the baby.

GIDEON

What?! Really? When did you find out this important bit of information?

CLAIRE

A couple weeks back. During the breakup. We didn't know how to tell you. You had so much going on.

GIDEON

So, what you were just going to do... I guess it doesn't matter. This was all a setup. I'm such a chump!

TOM

Sorry we didn't tell you. We didn't want to pressure you. You had enough on your plate.

GIDEON

Whatever, man. It doesn't make a difference. You don't have to explain yourself to the spare tire.

TOM

That's not true, Gid! You know we care about you. You're more than just furniture.

GIDEON gets up and storms off.

CLAIRE

Gideon.

CLAIRE goes to catch up to him, but TOM stops her. GIDEON disappears from sight. He comes back only long enough to grab his BEAN BAG and carry it away.

EXT. PARK- DAY

GIDEON plops himself down on a park bench, and plows his fingers into his hair.

RUTH

You doing okay?

GIDEON looks up. A WOMAN with knitting needles sits right next to him.

GIDEON

Yeah. Fine.

RUTH

You don't look fine.

GIDEON

Looks can be deceiving.

RUTH

(continuing to knit)

Anything I can help with?

GIDEON

Make me understand the universe and my place in it, and you're on the right track.

RUTH

Sounds like quite the existential crisis.

GIDEON

Yeah.

RUTH

I'm sorry.

GIDEON glances beside him. A SOCK PUPPET dangles from her purse.

GIDEON

What's that?

RUTH

That? Oh, just something I made up. I call him Mr. Grumples.

GIDEON

You're not on something, are you?

RUTH

Oh, no. I don't partake, and besides, I don't really care for the taste.

GIDEON

You're a weird bird, you know that?

RUTH

I'm not the one moping on a bench in the middle of the day.

GIDEON

You have a point. So, you want to hear my sob story?

RUTH

(sarcastically)

Not really... Kidding. Please, tell me your woeful tale.

GIDEON

Okay. I'll spin you a yarn.

RUTH

Ha! That was punny.

GIDEON

Thank you. I try. Anyway, here it is... It's pretty short, actually. My friends got pregnant and needed me out to make room for their kid, so they set me on a series of blind dates to get me otherwise attached.

RUTH

Oh. Anyone you would see again?

GIDEON

They were all very nice.

RUTH

But none worth a second round?

GIDEON

Actually, they were all worth it. The problem is me. I don't think I did all that well, or deserved a second go.

RUTH

The wonderful thing about that is that it's not your call to make. It's theirs. Did they have a good time?

GIDEON

(with a shrug)

They didn't hate it.

RUTH

So they might be interested?

GIDEON

I hope so.

RUTH

Sounds like a pretty good deal to me.

GIDEON

Yeah. It's just... I don't know.

RUTH

You'll never know unless you try.

GIDEON

The thing is...

RUTH

Let me guess: you don't like change.

GIDEON

Precisely.

RUTH

Who does?

GIDEON

True. Maybe I just need a sign.

RUTH gets out the PUPPET.

PUPPET

Move on.

GIDEON

Man, even the puppets are against me.

RUTH

(setting the PUPPET down)

Or maybe we're all for you and you just won't admit it.

GIDEON

So I'm the bad guy, the stubborn, old man brazenly shaking his cane at the universe? Is that it?

RUTH

(shaking her head)

No. Don't be so overly dramatic. It's not an attractive quality in anyone. You see, you're just a guy- not a hero, not a villain, just a plain, ordinary guy who needs to make a decision.

GIDEON

I'm horribly indecisive.

RUTH

Life is hard, but I think you're up for the challenge.

GIDEON

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

RUTH

Anytime. My name is Ruth, by the way.

GIDEON

Gideon.

RUTH

Best wishes, Gideon.

GIDEON

Sew well.

RUTH

Ha! Another pun. You're on a roll.

GIDEON

More like a baguette.

RUTH

Bye Gideon.

GIDEON

Bye.

EXT. FOREST- DAY

RACHEL and GIDEON marches up a steep incline.

RACHEL

Don't give up. We're almost there.

GIDEON

(exhausted)

Why anyone would go to this much trouble to see the top of a hill is beside me.

RACHEL

For bragging rights. To say you did it. Besides, it builds character.

GIDEON

So much character.

RACHEL and GIDEON close in on the top.

RACHEL

So what made you decide to call me again?

GIDEON

What can I say? You bring out the best in me. And the worst. And multiple bodily fluids all at once. So, there you go.

RACHEL

I do have that power. Well, here we are.

They reach the top. GIDEON collapses onto a nearby rock. RACHEL strays over to the edge of a scenic bluff. She looks out onto the majestic panorama below.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Isn't it beautiful?

GIDEON

Amazing. Rachel?

RACHEL

Gideon?

GIDEON

Would you ever consider being my girlfriend?

She pauses.

RACHEL

Oh, geez. I've never really believed in labels, too constricting. I'm all about tearing down barriers, not constructing them.

GIDEON

But labels can be a good thing. They help us process reality, let us know who we are and where we're at.

RACHEL

But what if you wanted to be every place, always?

GIDEON

Then you'd be trying to do the impossible. We've got limits. You've got limits. Everyone in the world has got them too.

RACHEL

Not me. I'm a dreamer. Born and bred. You could be too.

GIDEON

Naw, I'm too square for that.

RACHEL

That's a shame. You would make a great one.

GIDEON

Maybe so. One day...

RACHEL turns back to the horizon.

RACHEL

Look at that skyline. Isn't it something? It just goes on and on and on...

GIDEON

Yeah. Incredible. Really.

INT. MUSEUM- DAY

DEBBIE and GIDEON wander through a hall full of modern art.

DEBBIE

(gesturing to various paintings)

I like this one. I like what it's trying to say.

GIDEON

I think it says, "I am a triangle with a few polka dots dripped onto it."

DEBBIE

Oh, but it says so much more. It really conveys the time and place and the emotion going on in the artist's head.

GIDEON

Okay, then what does it say to you?

DEBBIE

It says, "I am more than what you see, and if you look, you will find me."

GIDEON

I still see a triangle with some polka dots.

DEBBIE

That's why you continue to be blind.

GIDEON

I guess so.

INT. AQUARIUM- DAY

SUSAN and GIDEON sit in front of a glass wall, behind which many sea animals travel.

SUSAN

I used to be a swimsuit model, you know? Before I took up photography, before Star. In fact, I was dating my manager when I got pregnant. Don't do that, by the way:

date your manager. It doesn't turn out well.

GIDEON

I could imagine. Never mix business and pleasure.

SUSAN

Exactly, but, I must say, it was nice living life large for a while. The girls were so jealous, and the boys- oh, the boys..

GIDEON

Would you trade it back again? Go to the way things used to be.

SUSAN

My previous life for this one? I suppose not. But, there's always a cost- a cost to stay, a cost to leave. You can't escape it. You have to pay. The trick is to pay the cost that's worth it.

GIDEON

But did you have trouble paying it when you did? I mean, you knew how to be a model. You didn't know how to be a Mom. What made you decide that the unknown was the way to go?

SUSAN

I didn't. Life was kind of forced on me. But that's okay. Sometimes you have to take risks, even when your hand is handed to you. Otherwise...

GIDEON

Otherwise?

SUSAN

Otherwise, what's the point?

GIDEON

Yeah. I hear you.

EXT. BEACH- MORNING

GIDEONS sits in his car, listening to jazz and pounding on his steering wheel. He continues on for a while, then he turns on the car and drives away.

EXT. PARK- DAY

RUTH sits at the park bench. GIDEON approaches her, dragging his BEAN BAG CHAIR with him.

GIDEON

What does Mr. Grumples say about my situation?

She looks own at the PUPPET.

RUTH

Mr. Grumples thinks you're being silly.

(turning attention to the BAG)

Especially while carting that bean bag chair in tow.

GIDEON

Oh, leave the chair alone. It and I go way back.

RUTH

Why don't you just stash it in your house or something?

GIDEON

Can't.

RUTH

Why not?

GIDEON

Don't have one. My roommates and I kinda had a falling out.

RUTH

Oh. That's a shame. What happened?

GIDEON

I overstayed my welcome.

RUTH

I see. Can't you patch things up. Apologize?

GIDEON

Why does it matter? I couldn't go back, even if I wanted to.

RUTH

(concentrating on her knitting)

Sometimes it's worth it just to get rid of loose ends, find closure.

GIDEON

Point taken. Ok. I'll give it a shot.

INT. BEDROOM- DAY

GIDEON sits on the cold cement floor of TOM and CLAIRE's garage. They tower over him.

GIDEON

So... things might have gotten a little out of hand.

TOM

(coldly)

A little?

GIDEON

Sorry about that.

TOM

You're forgiven.

GIDEON

I'm really happy for you guys. Honestly, I am.

CLAIRE

And that's the thing: we want you to be happy too. It hurts us to see you go miserable. Sure, we had ulterior motives when we set you up, but it was for your benefit too. Man wasn't meant to be alone.

GIDEON

I know, but tell me: how do you know you found love? I mean, your true love could be anybody. How do you know when you found "The One?"

TOM

Trial and error.

CLAIRE

And the grace of God.

GIDEON

That's it? Love is a cosmic crap shoot?

CLAIRE

More like a series of open doors all leading to empty rooms. What you bring to the room, how you decorate, how you remodel and expand, that's what makes a lasting love. Is every room the Ritz? No. Should it be? Certainly not! It's just about finding where you fit, and squatting there until you die.

TOM

Forever and ever...

GIDEON

And ever... All right. Gotcha. Thanks for the advice.

TOM

So, you ready to find your room yet?

GIDEON

(holding up his bean bag)

Maybe. Either way, I've got my bag handy for when I do.

A soft forgiving silence passes between them.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Thanks for everything. I meant it.

TOM

No problem.

GIDEON heads out.

CLAIRE

Love you.

GIDEON

Love you too.

EXT. PARK- DAY

GIDEON parks his bag beside RUTH again.

RUTH

Well, did you do it?

GIDEON

Yeah, I did.

RUTH

And how did it feel?

GIDEON

Amazing.

RUTH

Good. So where do we go from here?

GIDEON

Go out with me.

RUTH

I could do that.

GIDEON

Good. Looking forward to it.

RUTH

I could spin you a yarn of my own.