

LOVE, RICHARD?

Written by

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FADE IN:

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER SEVEN**

INT. HALLWAY

We slowly zoom in on the bloody face of a Man, who we will come to know as RICHARD. His clothes are wet and torn.

Although this isn't Richard's best day, we can see what type of guy he is. His clothes are not fancy, his hair is nothing special, his build is average. Richard is 26, and he couldn't pick himself out of a crowd.

RICHARD (V.O.)

I heard this story once about a man  
who fell down the stairs.

Richard holds a bloody cloth to his nose as he walks to the end of a hallway.

RICHARD (V.O.)

He went to the doctor a week later  
and told him that everywhere he  
touched on his body hurt more than  
he could handle.

He reaches the end of the hall and turns left.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Interested, the doctor asked the  
man to show him.

Richard limps to apartment 36A.

RICHARD (V.O.)

With his pointer finger, the man  
showed him the tremendous pain in  
his ears, his legs, his arms, his  
stomach.

He stares at the apartment number for a long time before knocking.

RICHARD (V.O.)

The doctor looked on as the man  
probed his body, wincing every  
time.

No answer... He knocks again.

The door opens, and Richard is face-to-face with a Woman, who we will learn is WENDY.

Wendy, 24, is Richard's dream girl, an everyday woman, the kind of girl you dream about when you're twelve.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
After a few minutes, the doctor  
told the man to stop.

Wendy has nothing to say to Richard; she just looks at him.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
"What's wrong with me, Doc?" the  
Man asked.

Richard takes thirty napkins out of his pocket.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
"You have a broken finger, son," he  
responded.

Right as he begins to read what he has written down, we...

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER ONE**

FADE IN:

INT. ORNATE WEDDING HALL - DAY

TITLE CARD: 9 MONTHS EARLIER

A vase filled with roses is carried across the hall. All sound is muted.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
Dear Wendy.

As the vase moves across the hall, we can see, but not hear, that it is a wedding hall. GUESTS mingle in their finest attire, the BAND warms up their instruments, FAMILY MEMBERS catch up on old times.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
You deserve the story... The whole  
story.

The vase slips and SHATTERS on the floor. Roses scatter everywhere as hurried footsteps trample them.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
It all started on what people say  
is the best day of your life.

Noise CRASHES into Richard's world.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
What about all the other ones?

Richard stands in front of a mirror, fumbling with his tie. He undoes it. Tries again. Not perfect.

BARRY and his dog, SALLY, enter, both wearing suits. Barry makes his way to some WEDDING GUESTS, tells a joke we can't hear, then laughs outrageously. The Guests stare.

BARRY  
Hey Rich. I'm gonna find a place to leash up Sally. Then we both need a drink.

RICHARD  
Actually, Barry, I don't think I'm gonna drink.

BARRY  
Relax. I was talking about Sally.

Barry walks off. Richard's tie is still undone.

THE WEDDING PLANNER speed-walks over--one of those runs you do at the pool when the lifeguard is watching. He slips on the roses, picks some up, and throws them back down in anger.

WEDDING PLANNER  
(to the room)  
Someone clean this up now!  
(to Richard, rapid-fire)  
Alice has double the guests.  
Almost no one showed up on your side. Some idiot brought a dog that the ring bearer is allergic to. The DJ doesn't know what song to play. And you look terribly pale.

Richard opens his mouth. No time for that.

WEDDING PLANNER (CONT'D)  
Don't say a thing.

The Wedding Planner spots BILL, his assistant, walking past.

WEDDING PLANNER (CONT'D)  
BILL! Come here.

BILL  
Yeah?

## WEDDING PLANNER

I need you and the groomsmen to  
move half of the chairs from  
Richard's side to Alice's.

He hesitates a moment. Bill isn't the sharpest tool in the  
shed. Bill nods.

## WEDDING PLANNER (CONT'D)

First, bring the sick ring bearer  
to me; I have allergy pills. Tell  
the DJ to play "Bridal Chorus," and  
get some of Alice's makeup for  
Richard; he looks pale, doesn't he?  
(Bill opens his mouth, no  
time for that)  
He does.

Richard opens his mouth to protest. No time for that.

## WEDDING PLANNER (CONT'D)

Great.

The Wedding Planner hurries away. Bill desperately tries to  
remember what he was just asked to do.

Richard is back at his tie.

## INT. BANK - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wendy stands near the head of a long table, setting down  
burgers and fries at each seat. She's clearly nervous,  
compulsively adjusting her notes.

At the other end of the table, MAC holds court with three  
BANKERS, men in their 60s, old-school types in expensive  
suits.

## BANKER #1

-- and then Mac says, "If you want  
collateral, take my truck!"  
(laughing)  
This was 1985, and the truck was  
worth more than the restaurant!

## MAC

(grinning)  
Sarah made me sleep in that truck  
for a week after I said it.

The Bankers laugh warmly. Mac's in his element. This is HIS  
world, these are HIS people.

BANKER #2

How is the new location coming along, Mac?

MAC

A couple of hiccups with permits, but we're getting there.

BANKER #3

When do you break ground?

MAC

Two months ago.

Wendy looks up, surprised.

MAC (CONT'D)

(suddenly remembering)

Gentlemen, I should let my daughter take it from here. Wendy's been running BurgerLand day-to-day for the past few years. She's got all that new-age business school stuff.

Mac gestures for Wendy to take over. The Bankers turn to her politely, but there's a palpable shift. The warmth drains from the room.

WENDY

(forcing confidence)

Gentlemen, thank you for taking the time--

BANKER #1

-- Of course, of course. Mac's family is our family.

The jovial old-boys-club energy is gone.

Wendy takes a breath and CLICKS her laptop. A vintage 1980s ad fills the screen: a smiling family around a red booth.

WENDY

BurgerLand is as American as apple pie. Serving the American dream for over forty years--

BANKER #2

(gently cutting her off)

-- Wendy, we know the history. Your Mother and Father built something special.

She fumbles to the next slide. Graphs and logos flood the screen.

WENDY

As you can see, we've been profitable since our last inspection--

DING. A notification pops up in the top corner of the screen.

DANNY (TEXT)

Wendy, we need to talk.

Wendy's eyes flick to it. She quickly tries to dismiss it, but her hand slips. She clicks the wrong thing. The notification stays.

Mac notices. His jaw tightens slightly.

WENDY

(rattled)

Our profits are steadily climbing, and we expect year-over-year growth as we expand our delivery--

DING.

DANNY (TEXT)

I haven't been happy for a while.

Wendy's fingers are shaking now as she frantically clicks around her laptop.

WENDY

Sorry. Technical issue. Just... just one second.

The Bankers exchange glances. Mac shifts in his seat.

BANKER #1

(impatiently)

Take your time.

INT. ORNATE WEDDING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Richard SLAMS his hand on the table as he rips his tie off. He takes a deep breath and pulls out his vows.

A small boy, THE RING BEARER, walks up to him.

RING BEARER

These are for you.

Richard sets his vows down and takes some makeup.

The Ring Bearer sneezes. Water spills onto Richard's vows.

RING BEARER (CONT'D)  
Oh, shoot. I'm sorry.

The Wedding Planner walks over.

WEDDING PLANNER  
Remember, more is less.

He notices the spilled water.

WEDDING PLANNER (CONT'D)  
Jesus Richard! What did you do?

Richard opens his mouth to explain. No time for that.

WEDDING PLANNER (CONT'D)  
(looking around)  
BILL!

BILL  
(running over)  
What's up, boss?

WEDDING PLANNER  
Dry these! Now!

Bill peels the vows off the table. The Ring Bearer starts to cry. Sally runs over, licking the water off the ground.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WENDY  
(trying to recover)  
Q2 projections show a modest  
increase in customer retention,  
particularly in the 18-to-35  
demographic--

DING.

DANNY (TEXT)  
It's not you, it's me.

Wendy freezes. She stares at the screen.

Mac sees it too. He looks down, embarrassed for her.

BANKER #3  
 (kindly)  
 Miss Smith, perhaps you should--

WENDY  
 --I'm fine. This is... I apologize.

She starts typing furiously, on her phone, under the table, while continuing to speak.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 We anticipate... anticipate strong  
 returns as we roll out--

DING.

DANNY (TEXT)  
 I didn't plan it, it just happened.

BANKER #2  
 Maybe we should take a break--

WENDY  
 (louder than intended)  
 -- No! No, I'm fine. Really. Let me  
 just--

She's mashing buttons now. The texts keep coming. DING.

DANNY (TEXT)  
 Please don't freak out.

Mac stands abruptly, unable to watch anymore.

MAC  
 Gentlemen, if I could jump in here  
 for a--

WENDY  
 (desperate)  
 -- Dad, I've got this.

MAC  
 (firmly)  
 Wendy.

It's not a suggestion.

Mac moves to the front of the room, taking control with the ease of someone who's done this a thousand times.

MAC (CONT'D)  
 (to the Bankers)  
 Let's cut to the chase.

INT. ORNATE WEDDING HALL - BAR - CONTINUOUS

Richard wipes water off his pants.

His FAMILY arrives; they are a chaotic, loud, well-meaning clan of disasters.

RICHARD'S MOM  
Richard! For God's sake!

She straightens his tie.

RICHARD  
(fussing with his tie)  
Nothing, Mom.

RICHARD'S MOM  
You look so pale. Eat this.

Richard's Mom shoves a granola bar into Richard's face. One of those gross, bottom-of-the-purse granola bars.

RICHARD'S SISTER, a previous victim of the warm granola bar, grabs her Mother.

RICHARD'S SISTER  
Come on, Mom. Let's find our seats  
before someone else does.

Groomsmen are running around, moving chairs. Bill is in the corner with a blow-dryer pointed at the vows.

The Wedding Planner RUNS up.

WEDDING PLANNER  
Bad news. The rings are gone.

RICHARD  
What!?

WEDDING PLANNER  
Take your sister. Look for them.  
Now.

BRIDESMAID #1 rushes over.

BRIDESMAID #1  
Richard! Alice needs you!

WEDDING PLANNER  
There's no time for this!

RICHARD'S DAD walks up.

RICHARD'S DAD  
 Sorry about your Mom, Rich. She's  
 just nervous. Let me show you this  
 picture I took--

RICHARD  
 Hold on, Dad.

RICHARD'S DAD  
 It won't take long.

RICHARD'S DAD reaches into his pocket. The rings fall out.

RICHARD'S DAD  
 Oh jeez.

The Wedding Planner scoops them up.

WEDDING PLANNER  
 How did you get these!?

RICHARD'S DAD  
 I dunno. My wife says I always  
 forget stuff in my pockets. She  
 says one of these days, she's just  
 gonna sew 'em all shut.

BRIDESMAID #1  
 RICHARD! ALICE IS WAITING!

Richard looks around. The chaos is overwhelming. Everyone  
 wants something from him. Everyone is yelling.

BRIDESMAID #1 (CONT'D)  
 Here, put this on.

She tosses him a blindfold.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MAC  
 (to the Bankers)  
 The new location costs more than we  
 anticipated.

The Bankers nod. They're listening to Mac now.

MAC (CONT'D)  
 We need an additional \$150,000 to  
 finish construction and get the  
 doors open.

BANKER #1

Mac, we'd love to help, but you know how it is. The board needs collateral for a loan of that size.

MAC

What are you thinking?

BANKER #2

(carefully)

BurgerLand. The original location.

Wendy's head snaps up.

WENDY

What?

Mac doesn't look at her.

BANKER #2

It's paid off, it's profitable, it's a solid asset. If we use it as collateral, we can get you approved by the end of the week.

Wendy looks at Mac, then at the Bankers, then back at Mac.

WENDY

Dad, that's... that's Mom's restaurant.

MAC

(quietly, still not looking at her)

I know what it is.

BANKER #1

It's just a formality, Wendy. Your father makes his payments everything stays the same.

But Wendy's doing the math in her head.

WENDY

Can we talk about this? Just... just the two of us for a minute?

MAC

(to the Bankers)

Gentlemen, give us one moment.

The Bankers start to gather their things, sensing the shift.

BANKER #3  
Of course. We'll step outside.

As they stand--

DING.

DANNY (TEXT)  
I slept with Sarah. I'm so sorry.

The room freezes. Everyone sees it.

Wendy stares at the screen. Face blank.

DANNY (TEXT) (CONT'D)  
I know she was your friend. I don't  
know what happened.

Mac looks at Wendy, but she won't meet his eyes.

The Bankers quietly collect their things, trying not to  
acknowledge what they just read.

BANKER #1  
(clearing his throat)  
Mac, join us in the hall when  
you're done in here.

Mac nods as they file out quickly. The door closes behind  
them... Silence.

Mac and Wendy stand on opposite sides of the table. The text  
message still glowing on the screen behind her.

MAC  
Wendy...

Wendy doesn't respond.

MAC (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
We needed that loan.

WENDY  
(voice hollow)  
I know.

MAC  
The contractors are already two  
months in. If we don't finish--

WENDY  
-- I know, Dad.

Mac moves toward the door.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

MAC  
(not turning around)  
I'm going to try to save this.

WENDY  
Dad. We need to talk about--

But he's already gone, she can hear him greet the bankers again as the door shuts.

INT. WEDDING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Richard is blindfolded and led by the Dog through the hall.

Sally looks back at Richard. She cocks her head.

Groomsmen are now throwing chairs at one another. Bill put the blow dryer down. He's blowing on the vows with his mouth.

Richard's Mom and Dad are arguing about the rings. The Ring Bearer is sneezing up a storm. The Wedding Planner slips on the roses again.

EXT. WEDDING HALL - BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Richard steps outside, still blindfolded.

ALICE, 24, walks out. She's beautiful, everything she holds to be important is on display, from her fake blonde hair to her five-thousand dollar dress.

RICHARD  
Hey, A... What's wrong?

ALICE  
I'm sorry, Richard.

RICHARD  
Huh?

Alice starts to cry.

ALICE  
I can't do it.

RICHARD  
Do what?

ALICE  
Go through with it... I'm so sorry.

Alice hugs him.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
Did you ever feel like it was all  
too much?

RICHARD  
Can I take my blindfold off?

ALICE  
Why?

RICHARD  
I just need to see you.

ALICE  
That has nothing to do with it.

RICHARD  
It has everything to do with it!

ALICE  
Just answer me, Richard.

RICHARD  
Alright... I'm taking my blindfold  
off.

Richard pulls his blindfold off. Alice is walking inside,  
followed closely by Sally.

SPLIT SCREEN - EXT. BACK ALLEY / INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DUSK

Wendy stands alone in the conference room.

Richard stands alone in the alley.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER TWO**

FADE IN:

INT. BURGERLAND - NIGHT

Wendy slumps against the counter, chewing on the end of a  
pen.

WENDY (V.O.)

Dear, Richard. I've been thinking about the night we met as well.

Behind her, TOM, picture the nerd from *The Simpsons*, struggles to refill the napkin dispensers and ends up spilling the box across the floor.

WENDY (V.O.)

You walked in wearing a wedding suit. You never told me about your first wedding. Then again, I never asked. I guess we were never too good at that kind of talk.

DING. Richard walks into BurgerLand.

TOM

Can I still clock out if I dropped all of these?

Wendy doesn't answer.

WENDY

(looking down)  
We're closed.

Looking up, she sees Richard, still in his crumpled wedding suit. *Who is this little creature?*

WENDY (V.O.)

I guess when you build a relationship, you should start from a better place than we did.

RICHARD

Oh... Okay sorry.

Richard turns to leave.

WENDY (V.O.)

But what other choice did we have?

WENDY

Sorry... We can make an exception.

RICHARD

No it's fine. I'm just wandering. Trying to kill the rest of the night.

WENDY

Please... What do you want?

Richard sees Tom stuffing the napkins into a dispenser.

RICHARD  
That's a violation.

WENDY  
Huh?

Wendy turns around.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
TOM! Go home!

Wendy picks up the napkins, then studies Richard for a beat.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Is this one of those surprise  
inspections?

RICHARD  
No, I just can't turn it off.

WENDY  
So you are a health inspector?

RICHARD  
Monday through Friday.

WENDY  
(taking the hint)  
Sorry. We have our annual  
inspection soon.

RICHARD  
Oh.

Wendy smiles at him.

WENDY  
Could you help me out?

Richard looks at her. For a little too long.

RICHARD  
Yes. Of course.

Wendy claps her hands, Richard is trying to figure out why he  
said yes.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Do you have a clipboard?

WENDY  
Just these.

Wendy hands Richard thirty napkins and a pen.

INT. BURGERLAND - 30 MINUTES LATER

Richard flips through the stack of napkins.

RICHARD

Pretty good. Except the cooling valve in your freezer is on the fritz.

WENDY

Uh-huh.

RICHARD

Well, it's probably gonna cost you a thousand bucks to fix.

WENDY

1150.

RICHARD

What?

WENDY

We had an electrician in.

RICHARD

And they refused to fix it?

Wendy wipes down the counter.

WENDY

I refused to pay.

RICHARD

If that breaks, you go down for a couple of weeks.

WENDY

Probably more like 2 months.

Richard doesn't understand, Wendy sees.

WENDY (CONT'D)

A month for the part to come in, a couple days to fix it, then a day for the freezers to cool again, a day to move in the produce, then a week to get a health inspector back out here. So ya, like 2 months.

RICHARD

Wait...

(scribbling on a napkin)

You have a decent location... good  
foot traffic minus... taxes...  
expenses...

(looking up)

That probably means this place  
makes about 4,500 dollars a month.

WENDY

(amused)

About.

Richard is wound up, Wendy is playing with him now.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Don't forget the hit we would take  
when we got the reputation of being  
the restaurant that got shut down.

Richard physically shudders.

RICHARD

This is what we in the business  
call priority violation.

WENDY

(smiling)

Ohhh... A priority violation.

RICHARD

Wendy. Depending on who you're  
bringing in, you have a 50/50 shot  
at staying open next week.

WENDY

Would you fail me?

Richard pauses. He awkwardly clears his throat.

Richard, realizing he doesn't know her name, looks for a  
nametag.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(saving him the trouble)

Wendy.

RICHARD

I mean it, Wendy.

WENDY

You're right. Let's say tomorrow we  
close.

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

That puts us down for two months. To fully recover would probably take us six months. But we have a loyal consumer base, and a decent location. So when my Dad retires in twenty years, he won't remember what shut us down.

Richard stares at her. A mix of horror and admiration.

WENDY (CONT'D)

However, let's say I take that 1500 dollars.

RICHARD

1150.

WENDY

(smiling)

You're right, 1150. Let's say I take that 1150 and I put that into a bank account. Now, when I go to the bank, I can show them I'm good for the money.

RICHARD

You aren't.

WENDY

They don't know that.

Richard laughs.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Now, when the bank sees that I am a responsible adult, they give me a loan... I can open another BurgerLand. Now, when my Dad retires in twenty years, he can put another story on his house.

Richard takes a sip of water.

RICHARD

So who is coming in?

WENDY

Some guy named Barry.

Richard chokes on his water. Spitting it out.

WENDY (CONT'D)

What!?

RICHARD  
Not-- Nothing. Sorry.

WENDY  
Do you know him?

RICHARD  
A bit.

WENDY  
And?

RICHARD  
You were right.

Richard stands up and walks to the door.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
(one foot in one foot out)  
Did it pay off?

WENDY  
What?

RICHARD  
The risk?

WENDY  
(beat)  
If you put in a good word for me.

RICHARD  
I'll see what I can do...  
Goodnight, responsible adult Wendy.

WENDY  
Goodnight, health inspector  
Richard.

As Richard leaves, Wendy walks into the kitchen.

INT. BURGERLAND - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Wendy finishes shutting down the restaurant. She gets to the freezer and stares into it for a moment, expressionless.

She cuts the lights. She now stands in a dark kitchen lit only by the flickering freezer light.

She takes a deep breath, then the kitchen lights SNAP on...

Mac stands in the doorway. Both are surprised to see the other.

MAC

Wendy? What are you still doing here?

WENDY

Just finishing up.

Wendy notices the papers in his hands.

WENDY (CONT'D)

What did the bank decide?

Mac subtly clutches the papers closer to his chest.

MAC

What do you think?

Beat.

WENDY

That's what I thought.

Wendy walks to the door.

MAC

Your sister called about Tyler's birthday.

WENDY

Am I a guest or the help?

MAC

Don't start. Family is family. And this business keeps the family together.

Wendy huffs out on this final comment.

Mac stares at the papers for a moment before leaving himself.

He turns off the kitchen lights, leaving only the freezer bulb... Still flickering.

EXT. QUIET SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

TITLE CARD: **TWO WEEKS LATER**

A perfect suburban neighborhood. Manicured lawns. SUVs in driveways. The American dream on display.

We hear CHILDREN SCREAMING, a BOUNCE HOUSE thumping, the distant chaos of a birthday party.

Then...

CLASSICAL MUSIC. Loud. Getting louder.

A black motorcycle turns the corner, BLASTING Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture."

NEIGHBORS peek out windows. A JOGGER stops and stares.

The motorcycle pulls up to a house with balloons tied to the mailbox. The engine cuts. Silence. The classical music stops.

Wendy removes her helmet, looks at the house. Steels herself.

Then opens the motorcycle's saddlebags and starts pulling out CATERING SUPPLIES: aluminum trays, buns, condiments.

She walks toward the back gate.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Wendy walks into a Norman Rockwell painting.

CHILDREN in matching party hats run screaming. PARENTS sip wine. Other PARTY GOERS take advantage of the various bounce houses and snack tables.

At the center: MARLA (32), Wendy's older sister. Blonde, polished, directs a PHOTOGRAPHER.

MARLA  
(to photographer)  
Get one with Tyler and the cake!

TYLER (8), the birthday boy, is a miniature tyrant. He's currently screaming at another KID for touching his presents.

Nobody notices Wendy as she sets up at a folding table in the corner, the "catering station."

Mac is across the yard, talking to some DADS.

MARLA (CONT'D)  
(spotting Wendy, fake-sweet)  
Oh, Wendy! You made it! The burgers look amazing!

WENDY  
(flat)  
Thanks.

MARLA

Could you set up over there? By the fence? We don't want the food station blocking the photo backdrop.

WENDY

Sure.

Wendy moves her station further into the corner.

Then-- DANNY walks out of the house.

Danny (28) is handsome, confident, and holding a craft beer. He fits in here. He's one of them now. Wendy freezes.

MARLA

Danny! You made it! Tyler, look who's here!

Tyler runs over. Danny high-fives him.

DANNY

What's up, big guy? Eight years old! That's crazy!

Wendy stares. Mac sees Danny, and his jaw tightens.

MAC

(to the Dads)

Excuse me, gentlemen. I need to check on the food.

Mac walks toward Wendy's station. Danny sees him coming and veers away, heading toward the bounce house.

MAC (CONT'D)

(arriving at Wendy's table)

You okay?

WENDY

Why is he here?

MAC

Your sister invited him.

WENDY

Of course she did.

MAC

You want me to ask him to leave?

WENDY  
Would you?

Mac hesitates.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
(busies herself again)  
That's what I thought.

MAC  
Wendy, I can't just... it's not my  
house--

WENDY  
-- It's fine, Dad. I'm fine.

She's not fine. Mac lingers, clearly uncomfortable, then walks away. Wendy focuses on setting up the burgers.

Danny approaches like nothing happened.

DANNY  
Hey.

Wendy doesn't look up.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
Can we talk?

WENDY  
I'm working.

DANNY  
Come on, Wendy. Don't be like that.

She finally looks at him.

WENDY  
Like what? Like someone who got  
cheated on?

DANNY  
(lowering his voice)  
I texted you.

WENDY  
I was busy.

Beat. Danny shifts tactics.

DANNY  
Look. I know you're upset. But we  
still have to work together.

Wendy stares at him.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
I mean... It's going to be awkward.  
For both of us.

WENDY  
Are you firing me?

DANNY  
What? No. I'm just saying--

WENDY  
-- You're just saying it's going to  
be "awkward" if I don't come back  
to you.

DANNY  
That's not what I meant--

WENDY  
-- Yes, it is.

Danny looks caught. He tries to backpedal.

DANNY  
Wendy, you're a great writer. But  
if you can't handle being  
professional...

WENDY  
Professional? You slept with Sarah!

Some PARENTS glance over. Wendy's voice is rising.

DANNY  
(quietly, firmly)  
Lower your voice.

WENDY  
Don't tell me what to do.

DANNY  
I'm your editor--

WENDY  
-- Not anymore.

DANNY  
Wendy, think about what you're  
saying--

WENDY  
-- I quit.

Silence.

DANNY  
(genuinely surprised)  
You're quitting? Over this?

WENDY  
No. I'm quitting because you're an  
asshole.

Danny's face hardens.

DANNY  
Quit! Good luck finding an editor  
as good to you as me... I look the  
other way when you miss deadlines,  
I look the other way when the  
restaurant gets in the way of your  
real job--

WENDY  
-- The restaurant is my real job.

DANNY  
You're going to die in that  
BurgerLand!

WENDY  
Better than working for you!

DANNY  
You'll regret this.

Danny walks away.

WENDY  
(yelling after him)  
I already feel better!

MARLA storms over.

MARLA  
Wendy! What is wrong with you!?

WENDY  
Nothing... It's just that Danny is--

MARLA  
-- You're making a scene! At my  
son's birthday party!

WENDY  
Danny was--

MARLA

-- I don't care what Danny was doing! This is Tyler's day!

She gestures toward Tyler. Currently throwing his cake.

WENDY

Tyler's fine.

MARLA

You're being selfish!

WENDY

Selfish!?

MARLA

Yes! You show up here with your... your motorcycle and--

WENDY

-- You asked me to cater!

MARLA

I asked you to help! Like family helps family!

WENDY

I'm not family. I'm the help.

Silence. Some parents are definitely watching now.

MARLA

(quieter, venomous)

You could have been a guest if you weren't so... difficult.

WENDY

Difficult?

MARLA

You know what I mean. You never came to the baby showers. You didn't help with the bridal shower planning. You just... You do your own thing. And then you wonder why--

WENDY

-- Why what? Why did you invite my ex-boyfriend to your son's party?

MARLA

Tyler begged me to invite him!

Beat.

WENDY  
 (quietly)  
 Why?

MARLA  
 They've been close for a while.  
 Danny takes him to baseball games,  
 helps with homework... You'd know  
 that if you came around more.

WENDY  
 I have to work.

MARLA  
 Like always.

WENDY  
 Someone had to!

MARLA  
 What's that supposed to mean?  
 Nobody asked you to sacrifice  
 everything for that restaurant. You  
 chose that. Don't blame me for  
 moving on.

Wendy's eyes well up. She won't cry. Not here.

WENDY  
 (quietly)  
 I need to go.

MARLA  
 Fine. Leave. Like you always do.

Wendy starts packing up her catering supplies.

MAC  
 (finally approaching)  
 Wendy, wait--

WENDY  
 -- Don't, Dad.

MAC  
 Marla, that's enough--

MARLA  
 -- Stay out of this, Dad. This is  
 between her and me.

MAC  
 She's been running the restaurant  
 while you--

MARLA

-- While I what? Had a family? Got married? Moved on with my life? Is that a crime?

MAC

That's not what I meant.

WENDY

(to Mac)

Stop. Just stop.

She grabs her trays and walks toward the gate.

Tyler runs over.

TYLER

Where are the burgers going?! I WANT A BURGER!

MARLA

(to Wendy)

See? Now you're upsetting the birthday boy!

Wendy stops. Turns. Looks at Tyler. Tyler balls his hands into fists.

Wendy drops the trays on the ground before leaving.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Wendy climbs onto her motorcycle. Mac follows her out.

MAC

Wendy, don't leave like this.

WENDY

Like what?

MAC

Angry.

WENDY

I'm not angry.

Beat.

MAC

Your sister didn't mean--

WENDY

-- Yes, she did.

MAC  
She's just stressed. The party--

WENDY  
-- I don't care about the party!

She stops. Breathes.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Do you know why I didn't go to the  
baseball games, or the parties, or  
the dinners?

MAC  
You said you had to work.

WENDY  
I did... Because you needed me at  
the restaurant. Because someone had  
to be there. Because that's what  
Wendy does.

Mac looks down.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
And now Danny's invited before me.  
And Marla thinks I'm selfish. And  
you-- you stand there.

MAC  
What do you want me to do?

WENDY  
I don't know! Something!

Silence.

MAC  
(quietly)  
I'm trying, Wendy.

WENDY  
(softening slightly)  
I know.

She gets on the motorcycle.

MAC  
Where are you going?

WENDY  
(with venom)  
To work.

She puts on her helmet. Starts the engine.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
Enjoy the party.

The classical music BLASTS again... LOUD.

She drives away. Mac stands in the street, watching her go.

INT. BURGERLAND - NIGHT

Wendy is wiping down the counters in the same catering outfit as the morning.

DING. The bell on the door chimes. Richard walks in.

WENDY  
(looking up)  
Richard? Why are you soaking wet?

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER THREE**

FADE IN:

INT. BURGERLAND - KITCHEN

Here we are again. Richard, in his crumpled wedding suit.

RICHARD  
Goodnight, responsible adult Wendy.

WENDY  
Goodnight, health inspector  
Richard.

Richard exits BurgerLand with a smile.

EXT. BURGERLAND PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Richard fumbles for the van keys.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
In the coming weeks, I would go on  
five dates.

Richard finds the keys but stops in the middle of the parking lot.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 I would lose at bowling twice, get  
 bitten by a dog, cry in a bar, and  
 accidentally invite two women to  
 the same club.

Richard can't help himself; he looks back at BurgerLand.  
 Wendy is walking into the back. He smiles.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 But first...

FADE TO:

TITLE CARD: **TWO WEEKS LATER**

INT. RICHARD AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Richard sits surrounded by empty beer bottles, cereal boxes,  
 and old take-out containers. He is unshaven and unkempt.

A home improvement show plays on TV.

Barry walks in and sees Richard on his usual "throne."

BARRY  
 Jesus Rich...

Richard looks at him.

RICHARD  
 What do you think about the color  
 beige. I think it's my favorite  
 color.

BARRY  
 I think five-year-olds have  
 favorite colors, and I think the  
 world's saddest five-year-old would  
 pick beige.

Richard grunts, *You don't know what you're talking about*, and  
 stares back at the TV.

Richard reaches below him, he grabs a cereal box and a gallon  
 of milk, he pours the milk into the box before shoving his  
 hand in and mixing it.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
 That's it!

Richard looks at him, confused.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
I'm done watching you mope.

RICHARD  
I'm not moping.

Barry sits down and opens the notebook. It's filled with names, phone numbers, addresses.

BARRY  
I made you a list.

Richard looks at the notebook.

RICHARD  
Of what?

BARRY  
Every single woman I know, some I met at the gym, a few from that pottery class I took, and one woman I met at that bar on Glenoaks.  
(looking at the list)  
You know what... Don't call that one.

RICHARD  
Barry, I can't do--

BARRY  
-- Last week I saw Alice with another guy. Today I saw you make cereal in the box.

RICHARD  
What!?! Alice was with another guy!?

BARRY  
(hesitates a moment)  
I wasn't going to tell you... But you've got to get off this couch.

RICHARD  
I don't think--

BARRY  
-- I already set up three dates for you this week.

RICHARD  
You what?

BARRY

Monday: coffee with Sarah.  
Wednesday: drinks with Amanda.  
Friday: dinner with Megan.

Richard pauses for a moment, looking at the list.

RICHARD

What if I can't do it?

BARRY

What?

RICHARD

What if I can't, you know...

BARRY

You did with Alice, didn't you?

RICHARD

That was different.

BARRY

How?

RICHARD

She's the only... well, the only  
one I--

BARRY

-- Coffee first.

Barry pats Richard on the back.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Richard sits alone at a fancy restaurant. A small candle flickers on his table. He fidgets nervously with his hands.

RICHARD (V.O.)

What's the saying? Straw that broke  
the camel's back?

A woman, MEGAN, walks into the restaurant.

RICHARD (V.O.)

I was about to meet my straw.

MEGAN

Richard?

Richard looks up, scared.

RICHARD

Megan?  
(he stands)  
Please sit.

Richard pulls out her chair. A little too far; he has to scoot her a good distance before she is back at the table.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Sorry.

MEGAN

It's fine.

They sit for a long moment in silence.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

So... Barry tells me you have been friends for a long time.

RICHARD

Second grade.

MEGAN

That's sweet.

RICHARD

Yeah.

Silence. Richard looks at the menu like it might save him.

MEGAN

He also said you just got out of a relationship?

RICHARD

(uncomfortable)  
Something like that.

MEGAN

How long ago?

RICHARD

A few weeks.

Megan's face shifts.

MEGAN

Oh. So... pretty recent.

RICHARD

Yeah.

MEGAN  
(gently)  
Are you... over it?

RICHARD  
(too quickly)  
Yes. Totally. Completely over it.

MEGAN  
Okay.

Beat. Richard tries to salvage this.

RICHARD  
So, you're from Minnesota?

MEGAN  
Ya... Have you ever been?

RICHARD  
Yes, I was born there.

MEGAN  
Really?

RICHARD  
No... I don't know why I just lied.

Richard looks around the restaurant. Anyone but Megan. In the corner of his eye, he sees something... *Wendy?*

He leans over to take a closer look.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
(to the Woman)  
Wendy!?

The WOMAN turns around, not Wendy. Megan stares at him. His face goes red.

LONG AWKWARD PAUSE. Richard stands up.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
I... I think I'm going to go.

MEGAN  
(a little relieved)  
Oh...

RICHARD  
(turning to leave)  
I... I'm so sorry.

Richard walks towards the exit, but stops in his tracks when he sees the bar. He saddles up.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Rain needles down. Richard wobbles onto the lawn.

RICHARD  
ALICE! ALICE!

Dogs start to BARK as Richard repeatedly calls for Alice.

Alice walks out after a few moments.

ALICE  
Richard!?

Richard doesn't see her.

RICHARD  
ALICE!

ALICE  
You're drunk! Go home!

RICHARD  
I don't-- I don't get it. We were perfect. I love you. I-- I'll change, okay? Whatever you want.

ALICE  
It's not about you changing! It's about me not wanting that life. The house, the routines, the schedule That's not who I am.

RICHARD  
Then why didn't you just say that?

ALICE  
I did! You just never listened.

Richard scoffs, frustrated.

RICHARD  
I listened all night! Even when Barry called--

He stops mid-sentence. Alice's eyes narrow.

ALICE  
When Barry called?

RICHARD  
It's not-- It doesn't matter.

ALICE  
Richard.

RICHARD  
He said... stuff about you. And I didn't want to hear it.

ALICE  
What kind of "stuff"?

RICHARD  
Just-- Barry stuff.

ALICE  
And you defended me, right?

Silence. Alice steps off the porch, fury rising like heat.

ALICE (CONT'D)  
You didn't say anything, did you?

RICHARD  
It wouldn't have done any good--

A CHISELED MAN walks out behind Alice.

CHISELED MAN  
You need me to handle this, babe?

ALICE  
No. Let's go back inside.

The Chiseled Man and Alice turn to leave. Something snaps in Richard.

RICHARD  
At least let the deposit come back before you move on!

Alice whips around.

ALICE  
He was here for me, Richard!

RICHARD  
Proximity is all that matters!? If I knew that, I would have slept on your front porch!

ALICE  
I love him, Richard!

Richard was just punched in the face.

RICHARD

(softly)

I was there for you. After everything. After you called off the wedding, after I had to listen to your family berate me, after I had to pay all the deposits back--

ALICE

-- I paid you back.

That wasn't Richard's point. He turns to leave.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I felt stuck, Richard. I'm moving on with my life; you should too.

RICHARD

That's not fair.

ALICE

My thoughts exactly.

Alice walks back into the house.

INT. BURGERLAND - NIGHT

We're back. Wendy is wiping down the counter, in a catering uniform.

DING. Richard walks in. Drenched, disheveled, and still a little drunk.

WENDY

Richard? Why are you soaking wet?

Richard stands in the doorway. He takes a long, deep breath.

RICHARD

(all in one go)

I was engaged to a Woman a month ago. Her name was Alice, she was the only woman I ever slept with or loved. She left me at the altar.

Wendy is stunned by his honesty. Richard isn't done.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(still rambling)

I have been trying to go on dates with other women since.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I've been beaten at bowling twice, been bit by a dog, I cried in a bar, and accidentally invited two women to the same club. Tonight I thought I saw you at a restaurant. It was the first time I've been happy since Alice left me.

Richard exhales hard before finally meeting Wendy's eyes. A very long, very quiet moment passes...

Defeated, Richard turns and reaches for the door handle.

WENDY

My mom died four years ago.

Richard takes his hand off the door and turns around.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I have five older sisters, two brothers, an aunt, three grandparents, and a nephew. No one came back home to help my Dad and me.

Richard slowly walks towards the counter.

WENDY (CONT'D)

My parents opened this restaurant when I was four. Now I'm twenty-four, single, broke, lonely, and running a restaurant I can't stand to be inside of, and can't bear to walk away from.

Richard lifts the barrier between the front and back of the counter and walks towards Wendy.

WENDY (CONT'D)

My Dad doesn't trust me to run the restaurant. My boyfriend was my boss, now he's my ex and my previous employer, and I can't think about it because customers don't like it when their server cries.

Richard takes Wendy's arms into his hands.

RICHARD

I am completely and totally broken.

WENDY  
(smiling)  
Good.

They kiss.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER FOUR**

FADE IN:

INT. CAFÉ - NIGHT

Richard and Wendy sit in a dimly lit CAFÉ.

WENDY (V.O.)  
I was always attracted to anxious  
guys.

Richard folds his napkin over and over while Wendy traces her wine glass and studies the menu.

WENDY (V.O.)  
They were like kryptonite to me. My  
therapist once told me it was  
because they were the opposite of  
my father.

Richard realizes he has torn the paper napkin into forty pieces. Awkwardly, he shoves them off the table.

WENDY (V.O.)  
I just liked how you could always  
tell how hard they were trying.

WENDY  
Richard. Relax.

RICHARD  
Sorry. Bad habit.

Another awkward moment passes.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Can I ask you a question?

Wendy looks up.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
If the restaurant shut down  
tomorrow, what would you do?

WENDY  
You mean after the party?

RICHARD  
(smiling)  
Yeah... After all the celebrating,  
what would guide Wendy?

WENDY  
I'd start applying to newspapers.

RICHARD  
Can you apply to newspapers?

WENDY  
Yeah, you send in a sample.

RICHARD  
Then what?

WENDY  
They send you a rejection letter.

Beat.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
What about you?

RICHARD  
I'd buy a house and paint it beige.

WENDY  
Beige?

RICHARD  
Yeah, it's my favorite color.

WENDY  
No, it's not.

RICHARD  
Yeah, it is.

WENDY  
It's not. No one's favorite color  
is beige. Even Beige's mom prefers  
red.

RICHARD  
So, is that your favorite color?

WENDY  
I don't know? No one has asked me  
that since I was five.

RICHARD  
That's weird, isn't it?

WENDY  
The color red?

RICHARD  
No, the fact that only kids get a favorite color.

WENDY  
That's all they have. They have favorite colors, TV shows... and people...

RICHARD  
People?

WENDY  
(smiling)  
Don't change the subject.

RICHARD  
Nobody expects anything from beige. It just gets to exist.  
(beat)  
That sounds nice.

WENDY  
(smiling)  
It does.

MONTAGE BEGINS: RICHARD AND WENDY

1) Richard and Wendy walk through a park, sharing a bag of popcorn. Wendy playfully throws a piece at Richard, and he catches it in his mouth. They laugh, and Wendy high-fives him.

2) Richard stands at the library counter, holding a stack of DVDs. He hands one to Wendy, who is sitting at a table surrounded by books. She raises an eyebrow at the DVD (*Die Hard*) but takes it with a small smile. In exchange, she hands him a thick book (*Pride and Prejudice*). Richard looks at the book skeptically but tucks it under his arm.

*They sit at opposite ends of a long table, a noticeable distance between them.*

3) Richard and Wendy sit on her couch, surrounded by takeout containers. They're watching *Die Hard* on her TV.

Wendy is fully engrossed, her eyes wide as Bruce Willis crawls through an air vent. Richard glances at her, smiling softly, more interested in her reaction than the movie.

4) Wendy hands Richard *Emma*. Richard groans internally but takes it. In return, he hands her *The Godfather*. Wendy smirks, clearly amused by his determination to "educate" her.

*This time, they sit closer at the library table, with only a few books separating them.*

5) Richard lies on his couch, reading *Emma*. At first, he looks bored, but he becomes more engaged. By the end, he's sitting up, fully invested.

6) Richard and Wendy sit at the library table, surrounded by books and DVDs. They're both reading quietly, but Richard keeps glancing up at Wendy, a small smile on his face. Wendy notices and smiles back before returning to her book.

*Now, they're sitting side by side. Shoulders almost touching.*

7) Richard and Wendy cook together in her kitchen. Richard struggles to chop vegetables, and Wendy laughs, taking the knife from him to show him how to do it properly. Richard watches her, clearly impressed and a little smitten.

8) Richard and Wendy are now sitting side by side at the library table, their shoulders touching. Wendy leans her head on Richard's shoulder as they read together. Richard looks down at her, his expression soft and content.

END MONTAGE.

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wendy and Richard sit on the couch watching *Casablanca*.

WENDY

You know there's a TV in the  
bedroom.

RICHARD

(not looking away)  
Oh really?

Ingrid Bergman tells Sam to play it again.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You know that line often gets  
misquoted.

Wendy looks at him. *How much clearer can the hint be?*

After another awkward moment, Wendy takes the remote and turns off the TV.

WENDY

The TV in my room has better speakers.

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wendy takes Richard by the hand and leads him to her bedroom.

Richard sits on top of the sheets, grabs the remote, and flips to the channel the movie was on.

RICHARD

(smiling)

You were right, the sound is much better.

Wendy stands next to the bed, amazed at his idiocy.

She slips into the bathroom.

Richard sits on the bed when something crosses his mind. He looks at the TV, then at the bathroom door, then down at the bed. He slaps himself.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Idiot. Idiot. Idiot.

Wendy opens the bathroom door as Richard is slapping his face; she is wearing nothing but a towel.

Richard sits up.

TV (O.S.)

Here's looking at you, kid.

FADE TO:

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EARLY NEXT MORNING

Richard and Wendy are cuddled side by side. She softly laughs into his chest, he rests his chin on her head.

WENDY

(laughing still)

I'm serious.

RICHARD

Me too. If I'm going to punch a guy for you, I need to know how tall he is.

WENDY

Why?

RICHARD

I mean, I would feel weird punching someone shorter than me, and punching someone taller than me would be a bad idea.

WENDY

Okay, he's the same height as you.

RICHARD

Is he strong?

WENDY

I don't know. How could you tell something like that?

RICHARD

By looking at them, some guys look very strong, you know, with big arms and a tight shirt. But then there's some guys that look big, almost fat, but they are super strong, like pick you up off the ground strong. Then there's the guys like before, the ones smaller than me. Now, they might look strong, but if you're under a certain height, it doesn't matter how strong you are. There isn't enough mass behind the punch.

WENDY

Alright, he lifts things for work.

RICHARD

What kind of things?

WENDY

What? Why?

RICHARD

A bartender might lift kegs, a librarian lifts magazines. Apples and oranges here, if you think about it, there is really only one--

Wendy kisses him, more to shut him up than anything.

Wendy rolls over and checks her phone.

WENDY  
Shit. I'm late.

She hops out of bed.

RICHARD  
For what?

Quickly getting dressed.

WENDY  
I'll tell you later.

INT. BURGERLAND - KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

The BurgerLand isn't open yet. Wendy stands in the kitchen, laptop open. She gets a ZOOM call she answers it.

On the other screen comes QUINN, a 55-year-old head of HR in every way, from the sweater to the smile to the cat poster on the wall.

QUINN  
(HR smile)  
Hey Wendy!

WENDY  
Hi.

QUINN  
Thank you for being patient  
throughout this long process!

WENDY  
Of course.

QUINN  
This is the final round of  
interviews before we make our  
decisions!

WENDY  
Great.

QUINN  
As you know, the position is a  
creative one in many aspects.

WENDY

Of course.

QUINN

So the company decided to change up the questions a little bit.

WENDY

Ok.

QUINN

Great... Let's say you have a story due Tuesday at noon. On Monday, the Woman that you interviewed for the story tells you she no longer wants to be included in the piece. What do you do?

WENDY

Um... I guess I would go over my notes and see if I had enough quotes to move forward with the story anyway.

QUINN

(writing something down)

Great! Let's move to the next one. You are told of a bar fight that happened a week ago. Your boss tells you to go interview the man who started it and the man who was punched. How do you go about this?

WENDY

Which one was taller?

QUINN

Um... Why?

WENDY

Well, punching someone shorter than you is weird, and punching someone taller than you would be a bad idea. I would need to know their heights to tailor the questions I ask them.

QUINN

Okay, they're the same height.

WENDY

Are either of them particularly strong?

QUINN

I don't know... How could you tell something like that?

WENDY

By looking at them, some guys look very strong, with big arms and tight shirts. But some guys that look big, almost fat, but they are super strong, pick you up off the ground, strong. Then there's the smaller guys. They might look strong, but if you're under a certain height, it doesn't matter how strong you are. There isn't enough mass behind the punch.

QUINN

Miss Smith, I--

WENDY

-- If I find out one of them lifts things for work, let's say the man who started it was the bartender who has to lift kegs. And the other one, the man who got punched, was a librarian, lifting magazines, I would have to side with the librarian.

A long pause takes over the Zoom call.

QUINN

(less enthusiastic)

Okay... Great...

(writing something down)

And finally, what is your favorite color?

Wendy thinks for a moment.

WENDY

Beige.

QUINN

Why?

WENDY

Nobody expects anything from beige. It just gets to exist.

Quinn finishes writing before looking up.

QUINN

Well, Wendy, thank you for your time. We'll be in touch by next Friday.

WENDY

Thank you.

The call ends. Wendy sits in the empty kitchen, staring at nothing.

WENDY (V.O.)

I would be offered the job a couple weeks later.

She looks around BurgerLand -- her mother's restaurant.

WENDY (V.O.)

I wonder what my Mom would have done?

Her phone buzzes. RICHARD: "Did you make it to your thing on time???"

WENDY (V.O.)

If I could have just had one more conversation with her... who knows?

She smiles at Richard's text.

WENDY (V.O.)

All I know is she probably wouldn't have done what we did next.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER FIVE**

FADE IN:

INT. RICHARD AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - RICHARD'S ROOM - MORNING

Richard tosses and turns trying to work up the early morning courage to get out of bed.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Do you know what it feels like to drown?

He finally rouses himself enough to sit upright in bed.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 You start off floundering wildly.  
 Taking deep anxious breaths met  
 only with water.

He swings his feet off the bed.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 You can't help but frantically  
 swing your arms and legs as you  
 desperately try to fight for air.

He walks into the bathroom and starts to brush his teeth.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 As your brain starts to lose  
 oxygen, you become calm.

He continues to brush his teeth.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 You let the water take you. And for  
 a moment... just a brief moment,  
 you look up at the blue sky and  
 feel...

His phone rings in the bedroom. He rushes over to grab it,  
 expecting to see "Wendy."

RICHARD (V.O.)  
 Totally content.

Instead, he sees: *Bossman*. He hesitates a moment.

RICHARD  
 Hello?

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
 Richard?

RICHARD  
 Yeah?

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
 Do you know about this sushi place  
 inspection Barry has today?

RICHARD  
 Yeah... It's pretty standard,  
 nothing to worry about.

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
 Why aren't you involved in this?

RICHARD  
Barry and I split up the bigger inspections.

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
Since when?

RICHARD  
Last quarter... when you told us to.

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
Right... I changed my mind.

RICHARD  
Um--

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
-- You're joining him.

RICHARD  
Okay.

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
And that BurgerLand inspection Barry has.

RICHARD  
The one next Friday?

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
Now it's tomorrow. The owner called. Some nonsense about a loan application... It doesn't matter, go with Barry, make sure it's done right.

RICHARD  
Sir... I can't--

BOSSMAN (V.O.)  
-- Nine AM. Tomorrow. Don't screw it up. We're still cutting inspectors next quarter.

Bossman hangs up.

Richard stares at his phone. *What just happened?*

INT./EXT. VAN - DAY

Richard types on a tablet in the van's passenger seat. Barry turns left down a small alley.

RICHARD  
(looking up)  
What are you doing? The sushi place  
is on Verdugo.

BARRY  
We have a quick stop first.

RICHARD  
How quick?

BARRY  
Enough.

RICHARD  
In a back alley?

BARRY  
It's a restaurant under  
construction. They don't have a  
parking lot yet.

RICHARD  
That's not on the list. The Boss  
just warned me not to step out of  
line.

BARRY  
We're not stepping out of line, I'm  
just gonna do a favor.

RICHARD  
Barry, we don't do favors; we do  
inspections.

BARRY  
He cornered me at the meeting. What  
do you want me to do?

Barry pulls into the construction site.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
(stepping out)  
Don't tell him I told you about the  
meeting. It takes the anonymous out  
of the whole AA thing.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

Barry and Richard walk into the half-built restaurant.  
Shelves still to be hung lie on half-tiled floors under  
unfinished lighting.

Mac notices the two.

MAC  
(walking over)  
Barry! Thanks for coming.

Mac shakes Barry's hand.

BARRY  
Mac... Richard.

Richard and Mac shake hands.

MAC  
Really, you guys are a big help...  
This way.

Mac takes them through the site.

MAC (CONT'D)  
Grills will be installed there,  
booths there, I think the coolers  
will fit along this wall, some nice  
tiling in the main hall, some  
paintings on the far--

RICHARD  
-- That's not really our area of  
expertise.

MAC  
Right... I just got the whole thing  
built out in my head... I've been  
closing my eyes for twenty years  
and picturing this place in my  
head.

Beat.

MAC (CONT'D)  
(sensing the vibe)  
Don't listen to me, I'm old.

BARRY  
You're not old yet, Maccy Boy.  
Richard does the same thing.

They look to Richard, who hesitates a moment.

RICHARD  
When I close my eyes, I see a nice  
two-story house.  
(committing more)  
(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

With a backyard big enough to play in but small enough to still tell you you're in the city. My wife and kids are playing while I put the last coat on the wall... a nice beige.

Mac slaps Richard on the back.

MAC

A man after my own heart... a romantic.

RICHARD

Yeah well. I still live with this guy.

MAC

Ahh, he's a good enough guy.  
(hesitates a moment)  
This kinda takes the anonymous out of the equation, but Barry and I met at AA. You coulda done worse.

RICHARD

Eh.

They all laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - 30 MINUTES LATER

The three men sit in the only built booth. They laugh.

RICHARD

(calming down)  
Listen Mac... Can I ask you a question?

MAC

Shoot.

RICHARD

Why now?

MAC

I had no choice. If it were up to me, I would have retired five years ago. That two-story sounds pretty nice.

Mac sees their faces. *Who is it up to?*

MAC (CONT'D)  
Life has a way of keeping you  
young.

A long pause settles over the three men.

MAC (CONT'D)  
You know, when I was your age, I  
wanted to open a Cajun food truck  
in Alaska. Bayou Below Zero.  
(laughs to himself, then)  
(softens)  
My wife, Sarah, thought it was a  
great idea.

BARRY  
What happened?

MAC  
(choking up)  
Didn't work out.

Mac clears his throat, looking around the restaurant.

BARRY  
It worked out in the end.

MAC  
Yeah, it did.  
(beat, then right at  
Richard)  
That's the thing about life, it  
looks easier in hindsight, but when  
you're in the thick of it. When  
you're standing on the edge, it  
seems impossible, almost ethereal.  
Comfort will wait. It always does.

Mac stands up.

MAC (CONT'D)  
I gotta use the can. Through the  
kitchen on the left is the control  
panel, then you gentlemen can get  
on with your regularly scheduled  
day.

Mac exits. Richard and Barry are quiet for a beat. They start  
to walk towards the back.

BARRY  
Did he just tell you to start a  
food truck in Alaska?

Richard stares at him. *Really dude.*

INT. CONTROL PANEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

RICHARD  
It was a metaphor.

BARRY  
Oh.

Barry reads some digits on the water gauge, and Richard looks around the room. In the corner, he spots a sheet covering a large rectangular object.

Walking over, Richard pulls back the sheet. He sees a sign that reads... BurgerLand.

RICHARD  
(quiet yell)  
Barry!

Barry ignores him.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Barry!

BARRY  
What Rich?

Richard points at the sign.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
So what?

RICHARD  
You know that girl I've been  
telling you about?

BARRY  
Wendy?

RICHARD  
She works at BurgerLand.

BARRY  
(looking around)  
What does she do... tiling?

RICHARD  
No... The other one.

BARRY  
So what?

RICHARD  
She told me her family owned it.

BARRY  
And?

RICHARD  
What do you mean and? Barry, if her family owns it and Mac is the owner...

Barry starts laughing.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
It's not funny, Barry. We are inspecting the other BurgerLand on Friday. There are all sorts of conflicting interests. What if I have to fail the place?

BARRY  
Depends how comfy her couch is.

RICHARD  
This isn't a joke, Barry.

BARRY  
Calm down. This place is fine, I'm sure the other one will be fine too.

Mac walks in. He sees the sign uncovered.

MAC  
(jokingly)  
You know I have to kill you now.

BARRY  
Maccy Boy, you never told me you were a mogul.

MAC  
Do you guys know BurgerLand?

BARRY  
As a matter of fact, we are the annual inspectors this Friday?

MAC  
Yeah.  
(playfully)  
Watch out for Wendy... I hear she's a real buzz saw.

RICHARD  
(to Barry)  
Can you finish up in here?

BARRY  
(confused)  
Yeah.

Richard shakes Mac's hand and leaves.

MAC  
What's up with him?

BARRY  
Nothing a professional can't fix.

Barry finishes checking the water gauge. Mac puts the sheet back over the sign.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
This is a big construction site.  
How the hell can you afford it?

MAC  
A big construction site type loan.

BARRY  
Why do you need a loan? You own a  
burger chain?

MAC  
Eh. It's just two places. And the  
first one is collateral for this  
one. A real castle made on sand  
type situation.

Mac sees Barry's face.

MAC (CONT'D)  
Banks don't hand out six-figure  
loans on a smile and a milkshake.  
(beat)  
Don't tell Wendy I said that. She  
worries enough.

BARRY  
When do you open?

MAC  
If inspection and permits go  
smoothly? Two months.

As Mac is finishing we:

FADE TO:

INT. BURGERLAND - DAY

Richard and Barry walk into BurgerLand. Tom is at the front counter he notices them.

BARRY  
Hello?

TOM  
Hey.

BARRY  
Is Mac in?

TOM  
Not yet.

BARRY  
Do you know where the kitchen is?

TOM  
Yeah.

Nothing.

BARRY  
Could you take us to it?

TOM  
Yeah.

Nothing.

BARRY  
Now?

TOM  
Yeah.

The three men walk through the restaurant to the kitchen.

INT. BURGERLAND - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Richard and Barry follow Tom to the kitchen.

TOM  
Here it is.

BARRY

Thank you.

Tom exits as Barry and Richard get to work.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(quietly)

That guy's weird, right?

Richard nods. They start the inspection.

Richard checks temperatures, Barry examines refrigeration. Everything is pristine. Richard checks a storage closet while Barry works on the grills.

The back door opens. Wendy enters. She sees Barry.

WENDY

You must be Barry. So sorry I'm late. I was...

BARRY

Don't worry about it, Miss Smith. Tom let us in.

WENDY

God. Did we fail already?

BARRY

(laughs)

No, it's going very well.

WENDY

Do you need me to--

Richard walks out of the storage closet.

RICHARD

Barry we need to...

Richard and Wendy see each other.

WENDY

Richard?

RICHARD

Hi.

WENDY

I didn't know you were...

(to Barry)

I thought you were doing this alone.

BARRY

We're doubling up on inspections this month. New policy from the boss.

He looks between Richard and Wendy.

BARRY (CONT'D)

You know what? I should double-check those... temperature logs in the front.

Barry exits, leaving them alone.

WENDY

So, how's it looking?

RICHARD

Good. Everything's... really good, actually.

WENDY

That's because I fixed everything you flagged.

Wendy walks over to a drawer and pulls out the thirty napkins Richard wrote on the night they met.

WENDY (CONT'D)

(flipping through them)

The cooling valve is tightened, the gas on the stove has been checked, the closet is--

RICHARD

You kept them?

WENDY

(stops reading)

Of course I did.

RICHARD

When you fixed it, you could have thrown them away.

WENDY

I know.

Richard smiles. A moment passes.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Listen, I have some news.

RICHARD

Yeah?

WENDY

(hesitant, then)

I got a job offer in Boston.  
A newspaper saw some of my writing  
and... they want me to start in two  
weeks.

RICHARD

(carefully)

Wendy, that's... that's amazing.

WENDY

I didn't take it.

RICHARD

What?

WENDY

I can't. My Dad needs me here. He's  
opening a location, and if I leave  
now, he'll have to run both places  
himself. I can't just abandon him.

RICHARD

You're not abandoning anyone by  
taking a job.

WENDY

You don't understand. This  
restaurant is all he has left of my  
mom. What do you think I should do?

Richard doesn't know how to answer.

MAC (O.S.)

-- Wendy!?

Wendy's eyes go wide with panic.

WENDY

(urgent whisper)

Crap, he wasn't supposed to be in  
for another hour.

(to Mac)

Coming!

(to Richard)

Don't say anything about Boston.  
And don't... don't mention that  
we... You know.

RICHARD  
Wendy, I'm not going to--

WENDY  
-- Please, Richard. He can't know.  
Not yet.

MAC (O.S.)  
Wendy! I need you out here!

WENDY  
Coming!

She gives Richard one last pleading look, then exits.

Richard stands alone, processing. He looks around the pristine kitchen. Walks to the storage area. Checks the clipboard with their inspection notes. Everything passes.

He stares at the stack of napkins for a long moment. A flash of realization hits him. He walks to the door and looks out at the dining area. Wendy is helping Mac lift something.

Richard makes a decision. He calls out:

RICHARD  
Barry. Can you come back here?

Barry pokes his head in.

BARRY  
What's up?

RICHARD  
Close the door.

Barry enters, closing the door behind him. He sees Richard's expression.

BARRY  
Rich... what's going on?

RICHARD  
I need you to back me up on something.

BARRY  
Okay...

A long pause.

RICHARD  
I'm going to fail this restaurant.

Barry stares at him.

BARRY  
What? No. Everything's clean, I  
checked the--

RICHARD  
-- I know it's clean.

BARRY  
Then why would you--

RICHARD  
-- She got a job offer in Boston.  
And she's not going to take it  
because she thinks Mac needs her  
here.

BARRY  
Maybe he does.

RICHARD  
He's a grown man.

BARRY  
And you think failing the  
restaurant does what?

RICHARD  
It forces her to take the job in  
Boston.

Barry runs his hand through his hair, conflicted.

BARRY  
Richard, this is fraud.  
(beat)  
We could lose our jobs. Our  
licenses.

RICHARD  
I know.

They stare at each other.

BARRY  
(quieter)  
What if she hates you for this?

Richard doesn't answer.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
What do you need me to do?

RICHARD  
Watch the door.

As Barry moves to block the door, Richard rushes to the freezer and starts unscrewing the cooling valve.

BARRY  
(curious)  
What are you doing?

RICHARD  
Raising the temperature in the walk-in. I can shut them down--

WENDY  
-- What?

Barry turns around. *How did she get through the door?* Then he sees... There are two doors.

RICHARD  
Wendy!?

WENDY  
What are you doing?

RICHARD  
I... I...

WENDY  
How long would it shut us down for?

Richard freezes.

RICHARD  
Can you call Boston back?

WENDY  
Yeah... But I already told you--

RICHARD  
Two weeks tops. Just tighten this valve, and you'll pass the next inspection. Mac doesn't need you Wendy, this way you can blame it on me... Just get to Boston.

A long pause.

WENDY  
And we could reopen?

RICHARD  
Easy as righty-tighty lefty-loosey.

Wendy nods, one of those nods you couldn't see unless you were really looking for it. Richard nods. Then he unscrews the cooling valve.

Another long pause takes them over. Wendy stares at Richard, then the valve. Then she turns around and walks passed Barry out of the kitchen.

Richard writes down some numbers, his hands shaking.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER SIX**

FADE IN:

INT. BURGERLAND - KITCHEN - DAY

Mac flips through the mail as Wendy sweeps up.

WENDY (V.O.)  
I can't blame this whole thing on you.

Mac flips through the mail. Bills. Boring.

WENDY (V.O.)  
I'd like to. I tried too. But I can't.

He gets to an envelope from the Health Department.

WENDY (V.O.)  
I was in the kitchen with you, and I was too scared to go to Boston, so I used you.

Mac opens the inspection notice.

WENDY (V.O.)  
Who would have thought that two wrongs don't make a right?

MAC  
(stunned)  
We failed.

WENDY  
What?

MAC  
We failed.

WENDY  
 (fake surprised)  
 No-- that's not possible.

She reaches for the paper.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 I fixed everything. I double-  
 checked.

MAC  
 Cooling valve malfunction.

Wendy nods. She already knew that part.

WENDY  
 Okay. That's... okay. That's  
 fixable.  
 (too fast)  
 We appeal. In two weeks, we get a  
 second inspector--

MAC  
 There is no second inspection.

She freezes.

MAC (CONT'D)  
 I used this location as collateral.

WENDY  
 You...  
 (voice drops)  
 You what?

MAC  
 The bank will call any moment.  
 That's it...

Wendy sits in one of the booths.

WENDY  
 Dad... you never told me--

MAC  
 -- I know.

WENDY  
 But Mom's restaurant...

MAC  
 I took one too many risks... I'm  
 sorry, Wendy.

Wendy stares blankly at the restaurant as Mac leaves.

MONTAGE BEGINS: THE CLOSE

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

1) Construction tape blocks the entrance to the half-finished BurgerLand. Mac and Wendy stand in the parking lot.

A CONTRACTOR approaches with paperwork.

CONTRACTOR  
Mr. Smith? I need you to sign off  
on the equipment removal.

Mac takes the clipboard. He signs.

CONTRACTOR (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Mr. Smith.

Mac hands back the clipboard without a word.

CONTRACTOR (CONT'D)  
Should I schedule the equipment  
removal?

MAC  
No, I'll handle it.

INT. BURGERLAND - DAY

2) Wendy puts up closed signs, then hesitates a moment before putting up the mandated "failed inspection" sign.

INT. BANK - DAY

3) Wendy and Mac sit across from a banker. Wendy's world is completely silent. She sees the man's lips move, but all she can hear is the silent HUMMING of the HVAC System.

INT. BURGERLAND - NIGHT

4) The BurgerLand is closed. Wendy sits alone in the barely lit restaurant, she stares at the closed sign, then closes her eyes. She keeps running back the same thing in her head:

RICHARD  
Easy as righty-tighty lefty-loosey.

She opens her eyes again and stares ahead: *Failed Inspection.*

END MONTAGE.

INT. BURGERLAND - KITCHEN - DAY

Wendy arrives. Mac is boxing up kitchen equipment. Tom helps, awkwardly wrapping pots in newspaper.

WENDY

Tom, can you give us a minute?

Tom nods and exits.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Dad, I need to tell you something.

MAC

What?

Wendy takes a deep breath.

WENDY

Richard... He was in the back with the cooling valve... and...

MAC

And?

Wendy caves. She can't do it.

WENDY

-- It's Richard's fault.

Silence.

MAC

What?

WENDY

He did this. On purpose.

MAC

Wendy, you don't know that--

WENDY

-- We started dating a couple of months ago. Last week I got a job offer in Boston.

MAC

Wendy, I never...

WENDY

He knew I was going to take it. And he... he thought he could make me stay if I had to help fix the restaurant.

MAC

(softly)  
-- Wendy--

WENDY

(tearing up)  
-- And now Mom's restaurant is gone. Her dream is gone. And for what? So I could--

MAC

(softly)  
-- Wendy--

WENDY

-- So I could what? Move to Boston and write about city council meetings--

Mac pulls her into a hug. She resists at first, then collapses into him. But never stops talking or crying.

WENDY (CONT'D)

-- I failed Mom, and I failed you and I--

MAC

(firmly but softly)  
Wendy.

She finally stops talking.

MAC (CONT'D)

Remember the day we took Mom to the hospital.

Wendy looks up. She nods.

MAC (CONT'D)

She was in bad shape, and the nurse was brand new. Her hands were shaking when she tried to put the IV in.

WENDY

(wiping away tears)  
Yeah, Mom bled like crazy.

MAC

Remember what she said to the nurse?

WENDY

How's the job so far?

MAC (CONT'D)

How's the job so far?

They share a laugh. Wendy starts to wipe away more tears.

MAC (CONT'D)

This is just a building, Wendy.  
I... She would have picked you over  
BurgerLand.

They stand there. Father and daughter. Surrounded by boxes.

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wendy paces.

WENDY (V.O.)

When did it all go wrong?

A KNOCK at the door. She freezes.

WENDY (V.O.)

Was it when we failed the restaurant? Or were there signs that we didn't see?

Wendy opens the door. Richard stands there.

RICHARD

Hi.

WENDY

Come in.

He enters. And walks over to the couch.

RICHARD

Wendy, what's wrong? You sounded terrible on the phone.

WENDY

(before he can sit)  
The business is dead.

RICHARD

What?

WENDY

My dad used BurgerLand as collateral. The bank is taking it all.

Richard falls onto the couch. He is clearly doing some mental gymnastics.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Did you know?

RICHARD

What?

WENDY

When you failed the restaurant. Did you know my dad used it as collateral?

RICHARD

(quietly)

I knew he was opening a second location.

WENDY

That's not what I asked.

RICHARD

No...

(grabs her hand)

I swear, I didn't know.

WENDY

Would it have changed anything? If you did know?

Richard doesn't answer.

WENDY (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

Wendy takes her hand away from Richard's.

RICHARD

Wendy--

WENDY

-- I think this is over.

The weight of the sentence silences the room.

RICHARD  
 (standing)  
 Wendy, we already made one mistake.  
 Please let's not make two.

WENDY  
 I lied to my dad. I blamed the  
 whole thing on you.

RICHARD  
 That's fine... That's great... I...  
 I'll call my boss right now and  
 tell him it was all me, I'll tell  
 him I screwed up.

WENDY  
 You don't get it, Richard... All I  
 kept thinking was, he's gonna be so  
 mad about the restaurant, he won't  
 even care about Boston.

Richard isn't listening. He is panic-dialing Bossman.  
 He puts it on speaker phone.

RICHARD  
 Hey, Boss, it's Richard.

BOSSMAN  
 Yes?

RICHARD  
 I just wanted to let you know that  
 I falsified the last report I sent  
 you.

BOSSMAN  
 What!?

RICHARD  
 Yeah. I realized I was in love with  
 the owner of the restaurant, and I  
 faked the freezer numbers to make  
 her take--  
 (catching himself)  
 It doesn't matter. They're fake.

BOSSMAN  
 (screaming)  
 Richard, you need to--

RICHARD  
 -- Sorry, Boss, I don't have much  
 time.

(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Just make sure you send someone  
else out there to fix it. I'll be  
in tomorrow to clean out my stuff.

BOSSMAN  
Don't bother because--

Richard hangs up. Neither of them speaks.

WENDY  
How can we love each other if we  
can't live with ourselves?

RICHARD  
I've done it before.

Wendy walks to the door.

WENDY  
Goodbye Richard.

She opens it.

RICHARD  
Wendy please.

Nothing. Richard walks out.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **LETTER SEVEN**

FADE IN:

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Richard walks alone at night, his hollow footsteps echo in  
the cold night air.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
When you broke up with me, all I  
could think about was my  
anniversary with Alice.

He gets to the outside of the apartment building. He looks up  
and sees the apartment light is on. He sighs.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
It was the second anniversary of  
our first date.

INT. RICHARD AND BARRY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWAY -  
CONTINUOUS

Richard climbs the stairs to his apartment.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
We took a long walk on the beach,  
and about forty minutes in, a bird  
pooped on me.

He walks up to his door.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
When she was finished laughing and  
I was finished panicking. She told  
me not to worry, that a bird  
pooping on you is good luck.

He stares for a moment at the number on the door before  
entering.

INT. RICHARD AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barry sits on the couch, staring at his phone.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
I remember thinking that was easy  
for her to say; she had a clean  
shirt.

RICHARD  
We destroyed them.

BARRY  
What?

RICHARD  
Mac and Wendy. The restaurant. We  
destroyed it all.

Richard pulls out his laptop. Shows Barry a news article:  
"Local BurgerLand Closes After Failed Inspection."

BARRY  
Rich, you said this would help--

RICHARD  
-- I was wrong.

Richard scrolls. Another article: "Construction Halted on  
Second Location."

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
The original restaurant was  
collateral for the new one. When we  
failed them, the bank called the  
loan.

Barry sits down slowly.

BARRY  
How bad is it?

RICHARD  
They're losing everything. Both  
locations. Mac's retirement.  
Wendy's...

Silence.

BARRY  
So what do we do?

RICHARD  
I don't know.

BARRY  
We could go to the boss. Admit what  
we did--

RICHARD  
-- I already did. He fired me.

BARRY  
He said you're fired?

RICHARD  
No, but he's going to. I'll be  
lucky if I get out of this without  
a fraud charge.

BARRY  
You need to lay low. Tomorrow I'll  
go in and fix this. You'll lose  
your job, but you won't go to jail.

Richard stands up.

RICHARD  
I need to talk to Mac.

BARRY  
Richard, I just--

RICHARD  
-- Are you coming or not?

BARRY  
Just to keep you out of jail.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

The van pulls up to the half-finished second BurgerLand location. A WRECKING CREW is loading equipment onto trucks. Demolition barriers are up.

Richard and Barry get out. They spot Mac directing workers.

RICHARD  
Mac!

Mac turns. His face hardens when he sees them.

MAC  
You've got a lot of nerve showing up here.

RICHARD  
I know. I just... I wanted to explain--

MAC  
-- Explain what? How you destroyed my business? How you took away everything my wife built?

Workers slow down, sensing the tension.

RICHARD  
I didn't know about the collateral. I swear, I was just trying to--

MAC  
-- To what? Play hero? Fix my daughter's life?

Mac steps closer.

MAC (CONT'D)  
Do you know what she's been through? What she's going through?

RICHARD  
Mac, please--

MAC  
-- She turned down Boston. Did you know that? And she turned it down because she thought I needed her here.

RICHARD

That's why I did it. I thought if  
the restaurant failed, she'd have  
to leave--

Mac shoves Richard. Hard.

MAC

You thought WHAT?

BARRY

Mac, calm down--

MAC

-- Stay out of this, Barry!

Mac shoves Richard again. Richard stumbles back.

MAC (CONT'D)

You don't get to decide what's best  
for her!

RICHARD

And you do?

Mac swings. Richard takes it.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Let her go, Mac... I'll fix  
everything, just let her go.

Mac lunges at Richard. They crash into a pile of construction  
materials. Workers shout. Someone yells, "Call the cops!"

Richard tries to get up. Mac is on him, furious, throwing  
punches. Richard doesn't fight back--just covers his face.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(through the blows)  
I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

Barry finally pulls Mac off. They're both breathing hard.  
Mac's knuckles are bloody. Richard's face is worse.

CONTRACTOR

(running over)  
Police are on their way!

Mac stares at Richard, chest heaving.

MAC

I hope it was worth it.

Sirens in the distance. Mac doesn't move.

MAC (CONT'D)  
Twenty years. I've been dreaming  
about this place for twenty years.

His voice cracks.

MAC (CONT'D)  
Sarah and I... we planned it  
together. Every detail. And now...

He gestures at the wrecking equipment.

RICHARD  
Just let her leave--

MAC  
-- I AM! She stayed for you!

The sirens get louder. Two POLICE CARS pull up.

COP #1  
What's going on here?

RICHARD  
(ignoring the cop)  
She what?

The Contractor points at Mac and Richard.

CONTRACTOR  
These two were fighting.

RICHARD  
(still ignoring the cop)  
Mac, is that true?

Mac nods. Richard stares at him.

Richard lunges at Mac instead of tackling him to the ground;  
he makes sure to keep him on his feet.

The Cops, Construction Workers, and Barry try to pull them  
apart. Richard pulls Mac's head close to his and whispers so  
only he can hear him.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
I'll fix this...

Richard lets go of Mac as the Police drag him to their car.

Richard winks at Barry.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Sorry Barry. You tried to keep me  
out of jail.

Mac and Barry watch as Richard is driven away.

The BurgerLand sign lies half-covered by a tarp.

INT. POLICE STATION - JAIL CELL

Richard sits in the jail cell, head tilted back with a cloth  
to his bloody nose.

COP #1  
Richard... You're free to go.

Richard crosses the cell. He follows the cop to:

INT. POLICE STATION - MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barry is finishing up some paperwork. He sets down a pen.  
Pats Richard on the back and they walk into the parking lot.

EXT. POLICE STATION - PARKING LOT

Richard rifles through the passenger side glove box. He finds  
something... a stack of napkins.

RICHARD  
First, we need to make a quick  
stop.

INT. HALLWAY

We slowly zoom in on the bloody face of Richard; his clothes  
are wet and torn.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
I heard this story once, of a man  
who fell down the stairs.

Richard holds a bloody cloth to his nose as he walks to the  
end of a hallway.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
He went to the doctor a week later  
and told him that everywhere he  
touched on his body hurt more than  
he could handle.

He reaches the end of the hall and turns left.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
Interested, the doctor asked the  
man to show him.

Richard limps to Apartment 36A.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
With his pointer finger, the man  
showed him the great pain in his  
ears, his legs, his arms, his  
stomach.

He stares at the Apartment number before knocking.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
The doctor looked on as the man  
probed his body, wincing every  
time.

No answer... He knocks again.

The door opens, and Richard is face-to-face with Wendy.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
After a few minutes, the doctor  
told the man to stop.

Wendy has nothing to say to Richard; she just looks at him.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
"What's wrong with me, Doc?" the  
Man asked.

Richard takes thirty napkins out of his pocket.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
"You have a broken finger, son," he  
responded.

Richard takes a deep breath. As he reads, he cycles the  
napkins he gave to Wendy on the night they met. He has  
written this speech on the back of them.

RICHARD  
The average person lives twenty-  
nine thousand days. You wanna know  
what's so unfair about that?

Wendy doesn't answer.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Only a few of them matter. I mean  
really matter.

Wendy cracks the door a tiny bit wider.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Wendy... you're standing on the  
edge of one of those days. One of  
the one-percent days. The turning  
point days.

She shakes her head.

WENDY  
You think I need you to tell me  
what decision to make?

RICHARD  
No. I think everyone around you is  
scared you'll make the one that  
doesn't include them.

She grimaces.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
Everyone's imagining their twenty-  
nine thousand days... and picturing  
a chunk of them labeled "time  
without Wendy." And they're  
terrified. So they'll say anything  
to keep you exactly where they need  
you.

Wendy's jaw tightens.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
But that's the thing about days  
like this. They're the ones we look  
back at. Day twenty-eight thousand  
nine hundred and ninety-nine and  
go, "That was the day I stopped  
being scared."

Wendy's eyes water.

WENDY  
Richard... what are you saying?

RICHARD

I'm saying you're standing on the edge of the scariest, most wonderful, daunting, exciting, crazy, amazing, paralyzing days of your life. And the good news is, you are one of the few people who can look this day in the eye and tell it you've made a decision.

Silence.

WENDY

So... what? What do you think I should do?

Richard swallows. He didn't think he'd get this far. His prewritten notes are gone.

RICHARD

One morning, you're gonna wake up, and the very first thing your brain says before you're even conscious is "Boston."

Wendy's chin trembles.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

And that will be the day. The day you grab your bags, pack your boxes, and go. And you don't tell anyone. Not me. Not Mac. Not anybody.

He forces a smile he doesn't feel.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

That's the day Wendy becomes the woman she was meant to be.

Wendy breaks. Tears rising.

In the quiet, her phone RINGS. She lets it. She motions for Richard to come in, he starts to, then he sees it...

She's already made up her mind. Half-packed boxes riddle her living room floor.

Wendy notices his face drop.

WENDY

I called back. They were pissed, but...

Her phone RINGS again. Again, she lets it.

RICHARD  
(somberly)  
That's great, Wendy.

WENDY  
I have to work in the mail room to  
start, but I apprentice on  
weekends, and in a bit, I could  
have my own column.

RICHARD  
(soft)  
I'm proud of you.

She smiles as her phone RINGS again.

WENDY  
Sorry.

She walks over to silence her phone.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
(as she is walking back)  
Richard I...

But he's gone.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD ON BLACK: **P.S.**

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: **THREE MONTHS LATER**

EXT. NICE HOUSE - DAY

Richard is standing in front of a two-story house in a nice neighborhood. He is holding two buckets of beige paint.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
On December 21, 1945, General  
George S. Patton was hit by a car.  
Twelve days later, he died.

Richard sets the paint down and gets to work.

RICHARD (V.O.)

A year earlier, he was leading the Battle of the Bulge; a few months after that, he was named military governor of Bavaria.

Time passes as Richard's house gets more and more painted. He wipes sweat from his brow and continues.

RICHARD (V.O.)

He was regarded as one of the greatest Generals of all time, and he died in peacetime due to complications from a random car accident.

Richard stands back and admires his work.

RICHARD (V.O.)

You asked me, the last time we spoke, what the word life meant. I think it means just that.

EXT. BOSTON NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Wendy walks up to a tall brick building. The sign reads The Boston Daily. She smiles and walks in.

WENDY (V.O.)

I'm glad you figured that out, Richard... I really am.

INT. BOSTON NEWSPAPER OFFICE - MAIN LOBBY

She walks to the elevator and looks at the directory. She follows with her finger: 5: Newsroom down to B: Mailroom.

WENDY (V.O.)

But I can't help but think you've got it all wrong.

She clicks B and takes the elevator down.

WENDY (V.O.)

You see life as a collection of random events, each less understandable than the last.

INT. BOSTON NEWSPAPER OFFICE - BASEMENT

She packs a mail cart with mail.

WENDY (V.O.)

I see it as a string. On one end, you have birth, and on the other, death. In the middle, a colorful assortment of ideas, memories, and experiences.

INT. BOSTON NEWSPAPER OFFICE - 5TH FLOOR

Back on the 5th floor, Wendy walks from office to office delivering mail. Lingerin in front of the corkboards with story leads.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Wendy walks home.

WENDY (V.O.)

We live, and we die in the middle, not at the ends. You helped me to see that.

EXT. WENDY'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Wendy gets to her loft. She grabs her mail and begins to climb her stairs.

WENDY (V.O.)

While I am happy to see that you have grown, I am sad to see that you still cannot recognize who you are.

EXT. NICE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

A minivan pulls up behind Richard. A FAMILY steps out.

RICHARD (V.O.)

You miss my point. Life is random, yet that is what makes it life.

The FATHER hands Richard some cash, Richard packs his supplies in his ratty car and drives off.

INT. RICHARD AND BARRY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Richard stands in the kitchen sorting his mail. He gets to Wendy's letter.

INT. WENDY'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Wendy walks into her kitchen, mail in hand, and notices Richard's letter.

WENDY (V.O.)  
It can't be random; it makes too  
much sense.

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Richard opens the letter and begins reading.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
It makes so much sense because it  
is random.

INT. WENDY'S LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Wendy opens Richard's letter and begins reading.

WENDY (V.O.)  
Three months since I've seen you,  
and I can still picture how smug  
you must have been writing that  
last sentence.

INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Richard walks to his sofa with the letter in hand.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
I don't know how to end these  
anymore. So I'll just say...

INT. WENDY'S LOFT / INT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - SPLIT SCREEN -  
CONTINUOUS

Richard and Wendy get to the end, they set it down.

RICHARD (V.O.)  
Love,  
Richard?

WENDY (V.O.)  
Love,  
Wendy?

They smile.

FADE OUT.

THE END