

42.6 YEARS

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INT. SUBTLY FUTURISTIC LOOKING APARTMENT IN NEW YORK CITY

The year is not our present time but if we could ballpark it perhaps it's the 2050s?

We OPEN on BEN, mid to late 30s, open (maybe too open), and Ruthie, 30s, always withholding at first, but warm deep down.

They are sitting on Ben's couch, facing forward. The space between them feels like a chasm, and Ruthie widens it by subtly moving over a little more.

Ruthie and Ben look gobsmacked. We are joining them AFTER the big breakup talk when there is really nothing more to say.

ON BEN, who is sweating and looks perhaps a little ill. Mild concern on his face.

Silence... and then...

RUTHIE

I feel like all I do is let you down.

Pause. Ben just looks at her.

BEN

I'll miss you.

RUTHIE

Be specific.

BEN

I'll miss your face.

RUTHIE

Yeah.

She looks at Ben as if to say "Same." Ruthie caresses his cheek gently, grabs it aggressively but warmly, and shakes her head "no."

BEN

Ruthie, I love you.

Nothing from her.

BEN (CONT'D)

Even now you can't say it back?

RUTHIE

Seems like the end would be the dumbest time to say it back.

BEN
Fair point.

He looks at her and then, oddly sweet:

BEN (CONT'D)
You're too tough for me, Ruthie.

RUTHIE
You're the one breaking up with me,
Ben, not the other way around.

Ben nods and wipes some more sweat from his forehead.

BEN
You create so much distance. It makes
me fucking crazy.

RUTHIE
I'm sitting right here.

BEN
That's when the distance feels the
worst.

RUTHIE
I don't want to get into it again.

Ruthie gets up, and walks to the door. Her back is to Ben.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Door Open.

The door opens. On Ruthie's face. She is in some kind of
pain. Ben can't see her face.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry that I'm not like you.

BEN
That's not--

RUTHIE
It is. Whatever you were about to
say... it is.

Ruthie exits.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Door Slam.

The door slams shut. Ben's face reads curious...

BEN
I didn't know it could do that. Door
Open.

The door opens.

BEN (CONT'D)
Door Slam.

The door slams shut.

BEN (CONT'D)
Huh. Door Open.

The door opens.

BEN (CONT'D)
Door shut quietly... so as not to
wake anyone.

The door slowly and softly shuts.

BEN (CONT'D)
Incredible. Must have been an update
or something.

Silence. The breakup sets in. WIDE SHOT. Ben sits on his
couch. We feel how alone he is.

He's still sweating. He needs water. He rushes to the
kitchen, grabs a glass, puts it under the faucet, presses a
button above the faucet, and a video-game-like energy bar
embossed on the sink fills to green.

APARTMENT VOICE
Water Filtrated.

Ben presses a button and water comes out of the faucet and
fills the glass. Ben gulps it down. Something is wrong. He's
a little panicked. He puts the glass under the faucet. The
green bar increases...

BEN
C'mon...

And before the green bar can fill, Ben collapses. His
drinking glass shatters. The apartment lights flash a siren
red and we hear...

APARTMENT VOICE
Emergency. Emergency. Emergency.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 42.6 YEARS

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Again, subtle futuristic elements adorn the room.

Ben sits on the hospital bed. His DOCTOR, mid-40s, sits across from him, staring at him. A pause, and then:

DOCTOR

You have Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease, a rare blood disorder which has no cure and is terminal.

BEN

Fuckin' right out of the gate, huh?

DOCTOR

Should I have divided it up? First say, you have "Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease," then you ask, "What is that?" and then I tell you what it is?

BEN

I think... yeah? Divided it?

DOCTOR

Some people like directness others like the slow ease. People, huh?

BEN

So... I'm going to be killed by something with the name Dijkgraaf in it?

DOCTOR

And Kristoff. Pick your poison ya know?

BEN

You're a weird man.

DOCTOR

Uh huh.

BEN

I'm about to ask a question that I never thought I'd ever ask. But before that, can I take 10 seconds to process this news?

DOCTOR

Okay. Do you want me to stay or leave during the 10 seconds?

BEN

I actually want you to stay if that's okay?

DOCTOR

Sure.

And there is silence for 10 seconds. During this time we can see on Ben's face that the weight of what's happening is beginning to hit him. Almost a warm moment between the two.

The 10 seconds is up.

BEN

Okay, here goes: how long to do I have to live? HOLY FUCK.

And Ben gets up from the bed.

He kicks a medical tray and implements go flying to the ground. He immediately apologizes for his outburst.

BEN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

DOCTOR

It's okay.

OFFICE VOICE (V.O.)

Medical Implements Now Un-sanitized.

BEN

(looking up, to the voice)
Sorry!

Ben sits back on the table.

DOCTOR

You have about a year to live.

BEN

Got it. How long before I'm not dead, but I'm *basically* dead and I want to die?

DOCTOR

9/10 months.

BEN

Right.

DOCTOR
So you do have one option.

BEN
What?

DOCTOR
The rareness of your disease qualifies you for something called Interstellar Suborbital Cryogenic Therapy.

BEN
Oh, of course. Interstellar Suborbadablahblahbamos.

DOCTOR
It's very new. And what it means is, basically, we cryogenically freeze you and launch you into outer space. The Earth spins as it normally does, time advances on the planet as it normally does, and you stay the same age while people on Earth get older, live, and die as they normally do. At the end of your cryophase you return to Earth, and at that point, hopefully, there will be a cure to your disease.

BEN
Why do I have to go into space? Why can't you just freeze me down here?

DOCTOR
I actually don't know.

BEN
Seriously?

DOCTOR
No, I know.

BEN
The worst.

DOCTOR
The properties of zero gravity keep the body strong. When you factor in space, it's like you're in 8000 hyperbaric chambers.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Plus we launch you far enough out that you orbit just on the edge of what we believe is a black hole, where time passes more slowly. So, y'know, you don't age as fast.

BEN

How long will I have to stay up there?

DOCTOR

42.6 years. There are a lot of great scientific advances coming down the pike. Leaps in therapeutics, and honestly, I think there will be a cure for what you have in 21.8 years, but let's just be safe and set your cryo-phase to 42.6.

BEN

These numbers are so specific and dumb.

DOCTOR

That's science for ya.

BEN

Science is specific and dumb?

DOCTOR

It was something to say. If this is something you're interested in, I'd recommend doing so immediately, but please do take a few days to say goodbye to people you love.

BEN

So you have to say goodbye to the people you love when you die and even when you're trying to not die?

A beat.

DOCTOR

Never thought of it that way...
That's good!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN'S PARENT'S HOUSE

Ben pulls into the driveway. His parents meet and hug him.

BEN
Hi mom. Hi dad.

Ben's mom looks at her son for one second and can tell something isn't right.

BEN'S MOM
Oh shit, Ben.

BEN
Mom--

BEN'S MOM
I can tell by your face this is bad!

INT. BEN PARENTS' LIVING ROOM

We join them after Ben has told them everything.

BEN
...So that's what's going on. With the blood in my body... And outer space.

Pause. Ben's dad begins crying. His mom, however, doesn't avert her gaze. She just stares at her son.

EXT. A TRAIL SOMEWHERE NEAR THE HOUSE--LATER

Ben and his mom walk.

BEN'S MOM
So if you leave we're probably gonna die while you're up there.

BEN
Man! What is with people just coming right out and saying shit lately.

BEN'S MOM
Well you're terminal. Important to say what needs to be said.

BEN
Well then, I love you very much.

BEN'S MOM
I love you very much.

Silence.... they walk.

BEN

Is dad going to be okay?

BEN'S MOM

Well, considering the circumstances, he didn't hang himself immediately, so I think he's doing pretty good...

BEN

Right, but, ya know...

BEN'S MOM

He's like you. Sensitive.

BEN

Isn't everyone sensitive though?

Beat.

BEN'S MOM

How's Ruthie?

BEN

That wasn't subtle... We broke up.

BEN'S MOM

Right. You know every single night when you were five, before bed, you would come into our room and demand that me and your father scream, in unison, "I love you, Ben, goodnight."

BEN

That's just good parenting, right there.

BEN'S MOM

It's not normal childing that's for sure... Every so often I have to force myself to tell your father I love him.

BEN

What is that?

BEN'S MOM

(shrugs)

Who knows. Time? Stuff from before? Look Benny, you're a good and kind man...

BEN

I'm funny, too.

BEN'S MOM

Uh huh...

BEN

And decent looking, in a specifically Jewish way--

BEN'S MOM

But sometimes I think maybe we loved you too much.

Ben stops.

BEN

Mom. What am I supposed to do with that?

BEN'S MOM

Beats me. But you're leaving the planet so figured I should say all the later stuff now.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN'S PARENT'S HOUSE

Ben and his mom approach the house.

BEN'S MOM

Are you sure you should go?

BEN

I want to be able to, like, go to the pyramids and shit someday.

BEN'S MOM

Plenty of people have been to the pyramids and died very lonely.

BEN

Name one.

BEN'S MOM

I think your gym teacher, right?

BEN

That *is* right. Mr. Weightman did see the pyramids. And he did die alone.

They get to the front porch and meet Ben's Dad.

BEN'S DAD

Do you need any money?

BEN

To go up into space for 42.6 Years?

BEN'S DAD

Yeah, I dunno. Just felt like the right thing to ask.

BEN

Well, I mean, if you're offering, I'll take 20 bucks.

BEN'S DAD

Okay.

Ben's dad gives him his money, as he does he pulls his son into him aggressively and hugs him. As they hug, Ben's dad, through tears, talks in his ear...

BEN'S DAD (CONT'D)

Do you remember when we went to the Mets game and my friend worked with the team and he let us walk on the field?

BEN

Yes.

BEN'S DAD

Do you remember when I got you the new Playstation even when you couldn't find them anywhere by driving to that specialty import warehouse in the middle of nowhere?

BEN

Yes.

BEN'S DAD

Do you remember when we took a road trip to Salem and we thought all the spooky witch stuff was stupid?

BEN

Yes. And I ate that whole bag...

BEN'S DAD

...Of sunflower seeds. And you got so sick because you...

BEN

...ate the shells. Yes, I remember.

BEN'S DAD

Do you remember...

BEN
All of it, dad. I remember all of it.
I promise.

BEN'S DAD
Okay. Okay.

Ben hugs his mom, too, walks to his car, and turns and looks back at his parents.

BEN
I'm going to get launched into outer space now!

BEN'S MOM WE LOVE YOU, BEN, GOODNIGHT. BEN'S DAD WE LOVE YOU, BEN, GOODNIGHT.

Oof.

BEN
Goodnight.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM--The next day

Ben looks at his phone. He's on Ruthie's contact. His thumb hovers on the text message icon, and he doesn't press it.

Another person in the waiting room, RICH, a sort of burly sort, leans over to Ben.

RICH
You getting launched into space?

BEN
Yeah.

RICH
Me, too.

They shake hands.

BEN
Ben.

RICH
Rich. What do you have?

BEN
Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease.

RICH
Sounds rare and bad.

BEN
And you?

RICH
Acromegaly.

BEN
That's it? Just one word? What's it affect?

RICH
All of it.

BEN
You're in pain?

RICH
All the time.

BEN
What hurts the most?

RICH
Right now? My left arm.

BEN
Why did you decide to do this?

RICH
Well, my daughter's 3. My wife is 30. Come back in 42.6 Years, could have some valuable time with them. Also my daughter won't have to watch her dad slowly die, which would fuck up her whole childhood.

BEN
Do you think you not being around for 40 years might also fuck up her whole childhood?

RICH
Honestly, it's a great point.
(beat)
You leaving anyone behind?

A little beat.

BEN
No one, really.

LISA, late 30s, has been sitting across the room and interrupts.

LISA

Well, he's clearly just gone through a breakup.

BEN

What?

LISA

It's oozing off of you. The skin on your face is drooping in the way it only droops after a breakup.

BEN

It's that obvious?

LISA

Women can hide that shit. Compartmentalize. I've got 25 different emotions in 25 different compartments as I speak to you this very second.

RICH

Hiding stuff is bad.

LISA

Hiding stuff let's you function. I was able to brush my teeth today because I put my feelings about how much I'm going to miss my dog into it's own little compartment in the back middle part of my mind. And I will access that compartment when I'm ready to deal with it.

(to Ben)

Did you tell her you're leaving?

BEN

I didn't even tell her I'm dying.

RICH

You should tell her. It's the right thing to do.

BEN

I always do the right thing. I'm tired of it.

LISA

Wow, I wasn't your girlfriend and I'm thinking about breaking up with you. Anyway, trust me, she's thinking about you.

BEN

I doubt it.

LISA

Fuck, man, I'm thinking about my ex from 12 years ago right now. That ex is in one compartment. The ex I'm sure I was supposed to marry is in another... Henry.

(to self)

I should write him a note before I leave.

BEN

Why don't we think about what we might do when we get back... like... see the pyramids.

LISA

I don't give a fuck about the pyramids.

RICH

I could take or leave 'em.

BEN

(to Lisa)

What do you have, anyway?

LISA

Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease.

Ben points to himself as if to say, "Like Me?" And Lisa winks. A NURSE enters.

NURSE

Ben, Rich, Lisa?

They all stand. They all look at each other.

LISA

Good luck.

BEN

You, too.

LISA

I meant with the girl. Hug.

Lisa opens up her arms and Ben hugs her. She needed that and perhaps so did Ben.

LISA (CONT'D)

Rich, wanna get in on this?

Rich joins.

CUT TO:

INT. NORMAL HOSPITAL ROOM

Ben getting various shots.

INT. OPERATING TABLE

Surgeons are removing two divots of skin from Ben's chest near his pectoral muscles.

INT. MAIN POD ROOM

Ben is led into the room.

BEN

I feel like someone should have told me about the chest carving thing.

Ben is silenced by the sight of the CRYOGENIC POD, which looks cold and intimidating, and sits in the middle of the room. There is a body-shaped indentation where Ben will insert himself.

ON BEN, whose face reads, "I guess I'm doing this."

Ben gets into the pod. Two tubes are hooked into the divots in his chest.

Ben's doctor stands in front of him.

DOCTOR

One more thing I should tell you. Your body could explode in a haze of ice cubes while you're up there. It's not likely, but it's happened, and it will happen again. Possibly to you. So, again, you should know you could explode into ice cubes. You haven't had anything to eat or drink since midnight, right?

BEN

What? Yes. Yes, I have.

DOCTOR

Hm. Well, I'm sure it'll be fine.
 Anyway, last chance to say any
 goodbyes to anyone you want to say
 goodbye to. I can have a nurse get
 your phone if you'd like.

Ben thinks about it...

BEN

I'm good... What if there isn't a
 cure when I get back?

DOCTOR

Ben, there will be. Again, scientific
 advances are coming down the pike.
 There are leaps in therapeutics.
 Trust me, this will work.

BEN

Okay, just do me one favor? Don't
 freeze me when my face is in a dumb-

And with that Ben is frozen with his face in a very "Dumb
 Guy" pose.

The screen goes black. And slowly but surely, one by one, the
 screen becomes populated with twinkling stars. Ben's pod,
 floating high above Earth, comes into view. It's beautiful up
 there. The beauty is offset by Ben's dumb face, which we see
 through the pod's window.

We slowly FLOAT ONTO the pod, and we see an electronic
 counter that just says, "Years." The counter currently reads
 ".1" and then the camera focuses on Ben's face. It lingers
 there for probably longer than it should. But then we go into
 Ben's thoughts, and we can see he is having sporadic thoughts
 of RUTHIE.

And these are of happier times.

--A flash of them eating dinner at a restaurant, laughing.

--A flash of them sitting in front of a painting at THE MET,
 Edward Degas' "The Dancing Class."

--A flash of them in bed together.

We leave Ben's mind and we see The Earth from the pod. Earth
 spins slowly and then faster and faster.

The year counter in Ben's pod reads "42.5 Years" and then the
 ".5" changes to a ".6." There is a slight pause, and the pod
 ROCKETS back down to space.

INT. MAIN POD ROOM

Ben is now conscious and unthawed. His doctor, now 42.6 years older, stands directly in front of Ben in the same place he was when Ben left.

They stare at each other. Longish pause.

And then...

DOCTOR
Didn't work.

BEN
Fuck!

DOCTOR
Yeah, didn't work.

BEN
You gotta be kidding me.

DOCTOR
Nope. Thought it would work but it didn't. In fact, we're not even close.

BEN
Not even close?

DOCTOR
Nope. We are probably 23.4 years away from curing what you've got. Maybe even 24.7.

BEN
Can I go back up into space?

DOCTOR
Oh, Lord no. Body can't handle going up twice.

BEN
What about all that stuff about scientific advances coming down the pike and leaps in therapeutics?

DOCTOR
Nothing's coming down the pike. No leaps.

BEN
No advances?

DOCTOR

None. Well, there were advances. Definitely. Just not for what you have. If I'm being honest I'd say there have been more setbacks than advances.

BEN

Huh.

DOCTOR

We did cure Alzheimer's though.

BEN

Cool, I guess.

DOCTOR

Yeah, that was a big one. People were psyched.

BE

Yeah, not to be a dick, but that just makes me more mad.

DOCTOR

Totally get it. You would have thought a blood disease with a dorky-ass name would definitely get cured before the one that has confounded us for centuries, but... ya know...

Pause.

BEN

So, like, I'm gonna die?

DOCTOR

Yes.

BEN

Maybe I'm a glutton for punishment here, but are my parents...

Doctor shakes his head no.

Beat.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well this was a good idea!!!!

Ben catches a glimpse of another room. Two orderlies are sweeping up what appears to be bloodied ice cubes.

INT. HOSPITAL SOCIAL WORKER OFFICE--SAME DAY

Ben sits across from the social worker.

SOCIAL WORKER
I have an annoying question.

BEN
Is it, "How am I feeling?"

SOCIAL WORKER
Yes.

BEN
Every bad thing I could possibly feel mixed with confusion and loss. Also, I'm dying. So... I'm good.

SOCIAL WORKER
Right.

BEN
Seriously, what is preventing me from killing myself?

The social worker thinks about that for a second....

SOCIAL WORKER
Pizza is better now than it was 42 years ago. I can't explain why, but it just is. And I bet if we asked someone who was supposed to die tomorrow if they'd like another year here they'd say yes.

BEN
So I should be grateful?

SOCIAL WORKER
You know what I always say to people who ask me that? It's hard to be grateful in the moment, especially your current moment. It's only when you look back on your life... that you can finally say, "I was grateful for that life."

Beat.

BEN
That's some good social workin' right there.

SOCIAL WORKER

Thank you. Here.

The social worker gives Ben a normal manila envelope labeled Ben Herman. In it are multiple flash drives, labeled, "How Life Is Different," "Historical Moments You Should Be Familiar With," "Message From Mother."

Ben is gutted by whatever is on that "mother" flash drive. In the envelope is also Ben's OLD CELL PHONE.

BEN

(re: the phone)

Will this work?

SOCIAL WORKER

It should.

Ben turns it on. No new text messages. No missed calls. No nothing.

There is a piece of paper in the envelope. It says, "Your Name Is Ben Herman. You Live At 787 Hudson Avenue. Your Support Group Number is 3. Your First Meeting Is Tomorrow At the McBurney YMCA at 14:00."

BEN

What happened to my old apartment?

SOCIAL WORKER

Building collapsed. Earthquake.

BEN

What?

SOCIAL WORKER

There was an earthquake.

BEN

Huh... would I have died?

SOCIAL WORKER

Are you someone who is typically in his apartment at 3 a.m.?

BEN

Yeah.

SOCIAL WORKER

Then yes. So! Be grateful for that! Anyway, this new apartment is a virtual facsimile of your old one. It should look and feel nearly identical.

BEN

What's my support group?

SOCIAL WORKER

Others like you who have returned and there is no cure.

BEN

And what's 14:00.

SOCIAL WORKER

Oh, we do military time now.

BEN

Why?

SOCIAL WORKER

There was, like, a war. You know? Like a war. And, long story short, we won the war. But for reasons I can't completely explain, everyone switched to military time after the war.

BEN

So there was an Earthquake and a war.

SOCIAL WORKER

Yeah. And fires. Big ones. But also good stuff, like epic concerts and peace deals and buzzer-beating shots! You know, life.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY--CONTINUOUS

Ben walks around and observes a city that now looks slightly different to him than before. It's not insanely different, but if our film took place in slightly futuristic world at the outset, it is now just a little more futuristic.

It has changed like any city might change in a 50 year span.

However, there are a lot more trams. Ben looks up at the trams.

BEN

Lot more trams.

INT. BEN'S NEW APARTMENT--CONTINUOUS

The apartment looks nearly the same. Totally frozen in time. He walks into the kitchen and sees the GLASS that he dropped when he collapsed 42.6 Years ago.

BEN

Holy shit.

It's as if he's picking up right where he left off.

He exits the kitchen and looks at the couch-- the couch where he sat next to Ruthie at the beginning of the film. He stares at it. He sits down in the exact same spot, and gives a brief glance to the empty seat next to him.

Wide shot. The same one from the beginning of the movie. Again, right where he left off.

And suddenly, like when he was in space, his brain flashes to a quick moment of him and Ruthie laughing with one another.

After the moment there is silence. And then...

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF

Bonjour!!!

BEN

What the fuck?!?

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF

Bonjour, Ben! Voulez-vous déjeuner?
Une salade? Sandwich? Viande et
fromage?

BEN

Get out of here?!?

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF

Mais je cuisine pour toi? Vous êtes
parti depuis longtemps, vous devez
avoir faim.

BEN

GET. THE FUCK. OUT OF HERE!!!!

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF

(bummed)
Au revoir.

The hologram looks very sad and glitches and disappears.

Ben looks as if he's going to have a heart attack.

BEN

Fuckin' French guy.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPPORT GROUP SESSION--YMCA--THE NEXT DAY

The session is in full swing. Ben arrives late.

BEN

I'm sorry, I'm getting used to the military time thing...

All of them reply as mix of: "So are we," "Don't worry about it," "There was a war."

BEN (CONT'D)

This the dying people meeting?

Everyone nods.

BEN (CONT'D)

Do you all have hologram chefs?

Everyone nods.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE

All apartments come with them now. It's standard.

Ben sits down. He looks across from him and notices LISA, the woman who also had Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease.

They recognize one another. Lisa looks way more sad than the last time we saw her. Ben mouths the same words the doctor said to him when he returned: "Didn't work."

And Lisa shakes her head "Nope."

SESSION LEADER

Next.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE

Well, yeah, um, not much to say. I'm dying. Everyone I was close to when I left is gone. I am confused. I do not understand this new world.

SESSION LEADER

And how does that make you feel?

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE

Bad.

SESSION LEADER

That makes sense.

We hear laughter from the next room over.

BEN

What's going on over there?

SESSION LEADER

Oh, that's the room for people who returned from cryo cycle but their disease was cured.

BEN

They put us next to each another?

SESSION LEADER

Yeah, it's not optimal.

We hear another burst of laughter from that room.

Ben looks across at Lisa and they share a look, like, "What is life right now?"

SOCIAL WORKER

Who's next?

CUT TO:

INT. SUPPORT GROUP SESSION--A LITTLE LATER

People get up and mill around and Ben walks over to Lisa. Lisa just instinctually hugs him. She needs warmth.

LISA

It's good to see you.

BEN

Good to see you. How many compartments are currently in your brain now?

LISA

You remember the compartments! To be honest, they're all spilling out. This has been hard.

BEN

Fucking brutal.

LISA

Any word from the girl?

BEN

You remember the girl.

LISA
That's what I associate your droopy
face with. Can I get your number?

BEN
Yeah sure...

They tap their phones.

LISA
Is it okay if I actually call? I
just might need someone to--

BEN
Totally get it.

Ben sends her a text.

Lisa reads Ben's text: "This has been a very sad
conversation."

Lisa responds: "I didn't even bring up the fact that our
parents are dead."

Ben reads that and softly laughs.

CUT TO:

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT--LATER THAT NIGHT

He looks at the manila envelope the social worker gave him.
He dumps out all flash drives--the ones that say, "Historical
Moments You Should Be Familiar With," and "Message from Mom."

He picks up the one that says "Message from Mom," and figures
out how to put it into the COMPUTER/TELEVISION set.

ON THE TV He sees his mom, looking older. This video looks
like it was made only 10 years ago.

The sight of his mother deeply affects him. And Ben
immediately takes the flash drive out of the TV.

BEN
Nope.

He puts in the Flash Drive that says, "Historical Moments You
Should Be Familiar With."

ANNOUNCER (ON TV)
Hello, Returned Cryo Patient. It's
time to get to know the world you're
returning to.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (ON TV) (CONT'D)

First off, a massive hurricane flooded Florida, which no longer exists. Disneyland is in South Carolina now.

Video of Mickey Mouse waving and dancing on a map of the United States. He's standing on South Carolina holding a mason jar of sweet tea. Florida is nothing but water.

BEN

Why was that, "First off?"

He rips out that flash drive. He looks again at the "From Mom," flash drive. He sighs and puts it back in, sits on his couch, and, to his surprise, play and pause icons appear floating in front of him. He presses play. Again, He sees his mom's face on his TV.

BEN'S MOM

Hi, honey. If you're seeing this video it means I've died and your father has died. Bummer, huh?

Ben laughs.

Ben's Mom emerges from the TV, looking somewhat real, but also not real. It's shocking. She looks so real that Ben feels compelled to reach out and touch her, which he does. And weirdly, he is able to hold his mother's hand. It's totally overwhelming. But it's also sad because his mother doesn't really react to it either. It's very intimate and not intimate in a way and takes his breath away.

He and his mom are literally face to face with one another.

BEN'S MOM (CONT'D)

Honey. Sweetheart. I love you.

Ben mutters, "I love you, too."

BEN'S MOM (CONT'D)

And I can assure you that I miss you, and, while I don't believe in God, never have, I do believe there is a part of me in this universe that is present and has your back.

BEN

Fuck.

BEN'S MOM

I want you to use this remaining time that you have to live.

(MORE)

BEN'S MOM (CONT'D)

It's important. I'll be pissed off if you don't...

A pause.

BEN'S MOM (CONT'D)

Just so you know, Ruthie is alive. She's well. She still lives in New York.

Ben's Mom has his attention.

BEN'S MOM (CONT'D)

Here's her new number.

Ruthie's contact floats in the air and then an apartment voice says:

APARTMENT VOICE

Do you accept contact?

BEN

Yes.

APARTMENT VOICE

Contact accepted.

BEN'S MOM

I love you, Ben. Go live a big full life.

BEN

Mom, what do I--

BEN'S MOM

Oh, just wanted to tell you this isn't a thing where you can ask me questions and there are already logged responses. That technology *does* exist, but I had better things to do than spend one week thinking of all the questions you'd ask. So... this is it. I love you, sweetheart.

Ben's Mom glitches out and disappears. Ben is gutted and sits on his couch. The French Chef appears next to him and puts his digital arm around him.

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF

Est-ce que ça va? Voulez-vous déjeuner? Hareng en pot? gratin de pommes de terre?

BEN

I don't know what you're saying, but it seems comforting and I appreciate it... I'm gonna make a phone call so if you could (BEN MAKES A GET OUT GESTURE).

The chef glitches out. Ben takes a breath.

BEN (CONT'D)

Call Ruthie.

The phone rings, and the call goes to voicemail.

RUTHIE (V.O.)

Hi, this is Ruthie, leave a message.

Ben is immediately overwhelmed to hear that voice. It's a little different, but mostly the same.

We hear a message beep...

BEN

Ruthie, hi...you still sound like you. I guess---I guess I didn't know what you'd sound like, but you still... Um... sound like you. Did you know I went to outer space? Probably, huh? Well, I was in outer space for the last 42.6 Years. What's the length of time that you should let pass before contacting an ex? That's a funny thing to say, right? So, before I left I was diagnosed with Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease. That's a real thing. And as of this phone call, well, it turns out Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease is like, an incurable fucking menace.

A little pause.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ruthie, I gotta tell you I am... I'm not doing so hot. Um... I'm back on Earth and still dying, and I feel like I need to see you. I mean, I want to see you if that's okay. Or maybe this is a mistake. I do miss you. And while I was up there, it was weird... my brain didn't shut completely off? I think it was supposed to. And I'm like remembering things about us... clearly...

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

and uh, my dead mom gave me your new number. Is that the way I'm going to end this?--(REALIZING) This is Ben by the way. I don't think I said that up top. This is Ben. Your ex-boyfriend. If you didn't know that, this probably clears up a lot of stuff from earlier. Alright. Bye, Ruthie.

We cut to a hologram of Ben's face. It's just his contact photo. It's sort of hovering in a NEW APARTMENT.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT--CONTINUOUS

APARTMENT VOICE (V.O.)

Delete or keep message?

And we see a woman, staring at Ben's hologram face. She's in her early to mid 70s, a mixture of beauty and sturdiness.

This is Ruthie.

She takes another look at Ben's hologram:

RUTHIE

Keep message.

Ben's face goes away.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY---THE NEXT MORNING

And now we're with Ruthie, who goes about her daily routine.

She gets a coffee.

She walks down pretty streets of New York.

She notices a couple across the street holding hands.

She walks into a vintage clothing store, and looks at boots.

She sits on a bench at a skate park and watches teenagers skateboard.

She gets a second coffee.

She walks by the MET. And then something compels her to come back to the MET, and she walk up the steps and go inside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MET--CONTINUOUS

Ruthie walks a bit in the museum, which, of all the advances in the world, still looks the same. Ruthie browses, but it's as if she's fighting going to a certain room.

She enters the room where Edward Degas' "The Dancing Class" is displayed. It's the same painting Ruthie and Ben were sitting in front of when, in space, Ben had a flash of he and Ruthie together.

Ruthie sits and stares at the painting.

RUTHIE
Mother fucker.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT

Ruthie sits at a table with her friends, EMILY, ANNE, NANCY. They are all in their 70s or late 70s.

EMILY
Ruth, this halibut is gorgeous.

RUTHIE
Thank you. You know I don't cook and you know I ordered it.

EMILY
I know, but that you put it on a plate... gorgeous.

RUTHIE
I didn't want to put it on a plate.

NANCY
I made her.

RUTHIE
And I refused.

NANCY
So I put it on the plate.

ANN
(to Ruthie)
What did you do today?

RUTHIE
Pretty uneventful. My typical morning routine. Walked around, went to the MET, nothing crazy.

ANNE

Have you all seen "Lorimer"?

EMILY

That's that new show with what's his name?

ANNE

Yes, it's fantastic.

EMILY

Doesn't it also have the guy from...

NANCY

"Freedom Hall." That show sucked shit.

EMILY

Yeah... and the woman from...

ON RUTHIE who is in her own world.

ANNE

"Nanosecond."

EMILY

I didn't love "Nanosecond"

RUTHIE

(soft)

I got a message from Ben.

No one really hears it.

ANNE

You see, I thought "Nanosecond" picked up in the second season.

EMILY

Disagree. Your taste is bad.

ANNE

Excuse me?

EMILY

It's just bad. You like bad things and you don't like good things.

RUTHIE

(a little louder)

I said I got a message from Ben.

They turn.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
That's more the reaction I was
thinking would happen.

NANCY
Wait, "Ben" Ben? Space Ben?

Ruthie nods.

ANNE
He's alive?

RUTHIE
Yeah. Still dying though. According
to his message.

A collective "Huh".

NANCY
Ok, before we go any further here,
let's focus on the fact that he left
you without a single word.

EMILY
How are you doing? And don't
pussyfoot. I don't have time for you
to pussyfoot.

RUTHIE
I'm fine.

EMILY
But is that really true? Dig deep.

RUTHIE
I don't want to dig deep. I don't
like digging deep.

EMILY
I'm gonna need you to dig deep.

RUTHIE
I'm not digging deep.

EMILY
You brought it up. So dig... Deep.

Ruthie takes a second.

RUTHIE
I don't know. I suppose I'm a little
bothered that it's effecting me at
all.

EMILY

Deeper.

Pause. Ruthie hates this, but thinks, and then...

RUTHIE

I'm annoyed that a man who I haven't spoken to in 42 years has the capability of making me feel off balance. And that somewhere I was... *happy* that he called...

She stops herself.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

When I saw his number on my phone it was like all the air in my body left my head and travelled all the way down and was exhaled through my toes.

EMILY

Good imagery.

RUTHIE

Well, I'm digging deep, Emily!

Emily reaches over and grabs her hand. Ruthie takes it away.

EMILY

Oh stop it.

And Emily grabs it harder. Ruthie is more calm now.

RUTHIE

It's silly, and it's really nothing. I mean it has been so long. But... in his message he called me Ruthie. I liked being called Ruthie again.

Pause. That hangs in the air. They know what that means.

EMILY

Shit, Ruth, I'll call you Ruthie.

ANNE

I'll call you Amy. Or Kelly. What do you want to be called?

NANCY

What's so special about him anyway?

RUTHIE

What's so special about anyone? You guys aren't special.

(MORE)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

But I like you so I think you're special. Other people who don't know you or me wouldn't think we're special. If I didn't know us I'd think we were pretty run-of-the mill.

NANCY

I'm extraordinary.

ANNE

I'm one of a kind.

EMILY

I'm the most important human being alive.

RUTHIE

I think I have to see him.

ANNE

Well of course you're going to see him. You knew you were going to see him the second you heard his voice.

EMILY

So, he's like, our age, but not our age?

RUTHIE

Something like that.

ANNE

Where are you going to meet him?

RUTHIE

I haven't thought about it.

ANNE

Bullshit.

ON RUTHIE... who smirks.

EXT. TOP OF THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING--THE NEXT NIGHT

And it's here where we get the full grandeur of the city and a fuller picture of the recent-future time period we're in. Modern skyscrapers surround the Empire State Building.

Ben waits. He's holding flowers. An elevator opens. People file out. No Ruthie.

He turns.

BEN
Been here two hours cuz of fucking
military time.

A tap on his back--

BEN (CONT'D)
(scared)
Ah! Jesus!

And there's Ruthie. Standing right in front of him.

She doesn't react to the shout. She just stands there and looks at Ben.

Ben's in shock. There she is. Just as beautiful and breathtaking.

RUTHIE
Hi.

Ben's shock fades and morphs into a big smile. Ruthie smiles in turn, not big. But warmer. She's still skeptical.

Ben goes in for a hug.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
No, no. Not yet. Give me a second...
Or two.

BEN
Okay.

Pause. She keeps her distance.

RUTHIE
Are the flowers for me or someone
else?

BEN
Someone else.

She smiles.

And they stare at each other a little more. Ruthie takes a breath.

She steps into Ben and hugs him, warmly and hard.

Then, she abruptly pulls away from Ben, and PUSHES him hard to the ground. The flowers go flying.

They lock eyes again, Ben on the ground, Ruthie standing over him.

Ruthie can't believe she just did that but she did. And then she turns and walks away and back into the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING ELEVATOR--MOMENTS LATER

Ben is in the elevator with 6 other people. He's holding the bouquet of flowers, which is now an unorganized mess.

It's silent.

Beat.

Beat.

BEN
Just got shoved to the ground by my
ex-girlfriend.

No response.

BEN (CONT'D)
Haven't seen her in 42 years.

Beat.

Beat.

BEN (CONT'D)
That ever happen to anyone in here?

No response.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING--CONTINUOUS

Ben, begins walking when he hears...

RUTHIE (O.C.)
Hey!

Ruthie has been waiting across the street the entire time. She briskly crosses and launches into it.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
I didn't know how I'd feel when I saw
you, and then I saw you, and I was so
pissed off and hurt.

BEN
Why did you pick the top of Empire
State Building then?

RUTHIE

I thought it might be romantic, but I also thought it would be funny and very interesting if it wasn't romantic at all, and we fought on top of the Empire State Building. Who's ever done that?

BEN

So you thought this through?

RUTHIE

Don't be warm. Cut that shit out.

BEN

I'm sorry, I'm just very happy to see you.

RUTHIE

How's your blood? Still fucked up?

BEN

Yes.

RUTHIE

I don't care.

BEN

That's not true.

A moment, then she laces into Ben.

RUTHIE

How could you leave and not tell me?
How could you get sick and not tell me?!?

BEN

I thought it wasn't my right to bring you into my life after I broke up with you.

RUTHIE

You're lying.

BEN

I'm not.

RUTHIE

Do you have any idea how it felt to ask someone, "Hey, how's Ben?" and to hear this question back: "Oh, you don't know?" Do you know how embarrassed that made me feel?

(MORE)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

That someone was telling me news
about you. How weak I felt?

BEN

I'm sorry.

RUTHIE

We'd shared our life. You don't do
that. It's rude.

Beat.

BEN

You never let me completely in,
Ruthie.

RUTHIE

That's not true.

BEN

You never even introduced me to your
mom.

RUTHIE

What?

BEN

You never did.

RUTHIE

I didn't think that was important.

BEN

That can't be true. Now you're lying.

ON RUTHIE. Maybe she is.

RUTHIE

Well... I look older.

BEN

What?

RUTHIE

Do you care that I--Why am I asking
that? GODDAMMNIT... WELL THIS WAS A
GOOD IDEA, HUH?!? I'M LEAVING NOW.

BEN

OKAY!

RUTHIE

BUT I'M TAKING THESE!

She rips the flowers from his hands.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
They were a nice thought!

She storms off leaving Ben alone in the street.

A tram zooms by overhead.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT--LATER THAT NIGHT

Ben and the French Chef are sitting on the couch and are watching the flash drive of "Historical Moments You Should Be Familiar With."

ON THE SCREEN, we see THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...Are you familiar with Golden Gate Bridge? Well it's not there anymore! And let's just say it was not a good day for the Bay Area.

BEN
The tone of this is so weird.

A knock at the door.

BEN (CONT'D)
Door Open.

It's Ruthie. She's holding the flowers.

She looks more calm. In fact, she cuts a regal figure in the doorway. It's as if she has reached equilibrium. She enters the apartment, a virtual facsimile of the one she left 42.6 years ago. She takes it in. Bizarre.

BEN (CONT'D)
(to chef)
Can you give us a minute.

The chef doesn't move.

RUTHIE
He doesn't understand you.
(to chef)
Pouvez-vous nous laisser parler, s'il vous plaît.

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF
Oui.

He glitches out.

BEN
You speak French?

RUTHIE
Spent three years in Paris. After you
left. I had to leave, too. Escape.

BEN
I mean. I didn't escape, I was sick.
But that sounds like a nice trip.

Ruthie is skeptical of that. She walks into the kitchen. We hear water pouring. Ben just watches her as she emerges with the flowers in a vase.

RUTHIE
Even the glasses are in the same
spot.

She puts the flowers on the living room table. She looks at Ben seated on the couch. She calmly sits next to him.

Pause.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
And here we are. Back on this
couch... Actually I was where you
were when we broke up.

BEN
Should we switch?

RUTHIE
It would be narratively dark... So
sure.

They switch spots. She takes another look at the apartment.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
It's the same but different.

And we linger on a two shot of Ben and Ruthie. Same but different.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
You were right. I never completely
let you in.

BEN
Why?

RUTHIE
Because I'm...

She stops herself and shakes her head.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Ugh, this is crazy.

And then she looks at his face, and she can't help but caress his cheek.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Also the same.

BEN
So is yours.

RUTHIE
No, believe me, it's different.

BEN
It makes me feel the same.

The slightest smile from Ruthie.

RUTHIE
You always were so... nice.

BEN
Not always. You were right too. I didn't tell you that I was leaving because I wanted to hurt you. I wanted you to find out exactly the way you found out.

RUTHIE
Wow. Ok.

BEN
Before I left, I didn't want you to know that I was thinking about you. I didn't want to give you that.

RUTHIE
Why? Actually, don't answer. We don't need to relive it.

BEN
I know it sounds awful. But at the time... I just didn't want to die broken hearted. I *don't* want to die broken hearted.

RUTHIE

Yeah. Me neither. So... you're gonna die soon then?

BEN

A year.

RUTHIE

Are you in pain?

BEN

Not right now.

RUTHIE

Good. What is this thing called again?

BEN

Dijkgraaf-Kristoff Disease.

RUTHIE

That's a dumb thing to die of, Ben. If you're gonna die, die of pancreatic cancer.

BEN

They found a cure for that actually.

RUTHIE

Oh that's nice.

(then)

Ok well, it was good to see you, Ben.

She stands to leave.

BEN

Wait, that's it?

RUTHIE

What more should there be?

BEN

Can I see you again?

RUTHIE

Why? We talked, we admitted some stuff. I got to push you down, which admittedly wasn't as satisfying as I'd hoped because you're so weak physically. But, I feel like we're good here.

She walks to the door, looks back at the apartment.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
THIS IS SO WEIRD!

BEN
I know.

She looks at Ben. He tries to smile, so clearly alone.

Ruthie sighs.

RUTHIE
Would you like to get dinner at my apartment with my ex-husband and my son. We have dinner every Sunday. I don't cook, and I never will.

ON BEN, who reacts. She has an ex-husband and a son.

BEN
Okay. Sure. I feel totally cool about meeting your ex-husband. How old's your son?

RUTHIE
About your age.

BEN
Very cool.

RUTHIE
You don't have to come.

BEN
No, no. I want to.

RUTHIE
Okay then.
(to apartment)
Door Open.

The door opens.

BEN
Ruthie... how did you know my address?

RUTHIE
Your mom. Before she died.

Ruthie leaves.

Suddenly on his OLD CELL PHONE, we hear a bunch of vibrations. We see a bunch of messages and voicemails come through. They are dated from the time Ben was in space.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT--LATER THAT NIGHT

Ben talks to Lisa. The technology is such that it looks like Lisa is alive and standing in front of Ben talking to him.

BEN

I'm going to her apartment Sunday to eat dinner with her ex-husband and her son.

LISA

Wow. What time?

BEN

19:00.

LISA

What time is that?

BEN

No idea.

Ben looks super close at Lisa. It really looks like she's right there.

LISA

Get the fuck away from me.

Ben starts poking Lisa's head.

BEN

Can you feel that?

LISA

Yes!

Lucy starts poking Ben's head.

LISA (CONT'D)

Can you feel that?

BEN

Yes!

They continue to poke each other's foreheads...

BEN (CONT'D)

Interesting technology.

LISA

Yeah, I don't quite know the benefit of it.

BEN

Hey, have you gotten like hundreds of text messages and voicemails from when we were up there?

LISA

Yeah, I think the network is just catching up with your phone being back on.

BEN

Is that a real answer or are you making that up?

LISA

Made up. Sounds good though, right?

They poke a couple more times.

LISA (CONT'D)

Let me know how it goes Sunday?

BEN

Sure. You got any plans this weekend?

LISA

Nah... I'm just... not feeling...

BEN

Okay, if you need anything I'm here.

LISA

Thank you, Benny.

And Lisa glitches out.

Ben looks at his phone and sees more voicemails and texts that have come through. He notices ONE VOICEMAIL in particular.

It's from Ruthie. It's a minute long and it was sent FOUR YEARS after Ben went to space.

He presses play on the voicemail, but gets a message that says, "Network Unable to Play Voicemail." He presses play again, and gets the same message.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT

Ruthie looks through digital menus that emerge from her tablet. It's like Minority Report, but not nearly as dramatic. Casual swiping and scrolling. She's with her son, ADAM who, like she said, is about Ben's age.

RUTHIE

I know Ben likes Italian. So I'm thinking sushi so he doesn't feel too comfortable.

ADAM

Why did you invite him over for dinner?

RUTHIE

Because he's someone I once cared about and he's alone. It's the polite thing to do.

ADAM

My mother doesn't do things just to be polite.

She looks at the menus again...

RUTHIE

...Let's go with Italian... maybe...

ADAM

Will I like him?

RUTHIE

Well, you and I are very similar so I assume you will.

ADAM

So *you* like him.

Ruthie half shrugs.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Will dad like him?

HARD CUT TO:

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT-DINING ROOM--THAT NIGHT

TOM, mid to late 70s and Ruthie's ex-husband, eats sushi while staring daggers at Ben. Also at the table is Ruthie, Adam, and Adam's girlfriend Laura.

It's tense.

It's quiet. Between bites, Tom continues to size up Ben.

Ruthie notices and oddly enjoys it.

More eating.

And then:

TOM
(to Ben, brusque)
So when are you dying?

Everyone except Tom, stifles a laugh.

TOM (CONT'D)
Seriously when? A year? 6 months?
What are we talking here?

BEN
Tom, if you like my jacket, just ask.
I'll give it to you right now and you
won't even have to wait for the
funeral.

People laugh.

TOM
I think you're joking but
I don't care for the coat.

Silence. Eating continues.

BEN
This wine is fantastic. Who brought
it?

TOM
I did.

BEN
I know. I'm trying to kiss your ass.
While also reconnecting with your ex-
wife, and hoping that her son doesn't
think I'm some sort of sexual
deviant... it's a very complex dinner
for me with a lot of angles to
navigate.

People laugh and the dinner continues.

CUT TO:

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT--LIVING ROOM AFTER DINNER

It's now more casual. Ben is sitting on the ground next to Ruthie, who sits comfortably in a chair. Ben and Ruthie share an ease with one another, and Tom notices.

BEN
 (to Adam and Laura)
 How did you guys meet?

Adam hesitates to answer.

LAURA
 Dating app.

Adam sighs.

LAURA (CONT'D)
 What? It's what it was.

RUTHIE
 It's okay. I met tons of men on
 dating apps.

BEN
 I wasn't one of them.

ADAM
 Where did you guys meet?

BEN
 At the MET.

And this is a new revelation to TOM. He turns to Ruthie and stares at her. She looks back at him, "What?". Tom turns back to Adam and Laura.

TOM
 Where did you fall in love?

RUTHIE
 Tom...

TOM
 What? It's a better question. Who
 cares where people met. "I met her at
 a bar," "I met her at...the MET"

He looks at Ruthie.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Where did you fall in love? It's just
 more important. Not even when did you
 both say I love you. But when did you
 know you were truly in love. I fell
 in love with Ruthie at a place called
 La Vara. We'd been dating for a few
 months. And I was sitting at the bar
 waiting for her.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

She walked in, and she was very flustered, partly because her cabbie had been driving too fast but also because things between us were clearly getting more serious. And when she found me at the bar, she was too nervous to sit down. And she just stood next to me and started talking. And during a pause in her talking I asked...

RUTHIE

... "So are you going to sit down or what?"

TOM

That's right. And she said, "No. I do not have any current plans to sit down." So I stood up. And I said... "Well, then we'll sit when you're ready."

(to Ruthie)

I think that's when we fell in love, right?

RUTHIE

Yeah.

TOM

But it wasn't enough. Because then we fell out of love.

RUTHIE

Sweetheart.

TOM

No, no, no. I'm fine. It's just incredible, right? If you could have seen us in that moment you would have thought, these two will make it. They're perfect. But then time gets to work.

RUTHIE

Yes. It does. And there is no doubt in my mind that we did fall in love at that bar at that moment. But sustaining it... that's the tricky part, isn't it?

She glances at Ben.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

And ultimately, no matter how magical it starts, you're trying to make it work with the person who exists 2 months, or... even two minutes removed from that person at the bar.

She takes a sip of coffee.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

It's a miracle anyone can do it.

She looks at Adam and Laura.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

So, good luck!

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT--A LITTLE LATER

People are leaving. Ben and Tom are at the door, and as Tom puts on his coat he casually says:

TOM

I think you're the reason my marriage to Ruthie ended.

BEN

Right to the heart of it.

TOM

I don't like bullshit, Ben.

BEN

Who really does like bullshit, Tom? No one's ever, like, 'Man I just love bullshit.' Again, not to harp on this, but if it makes you feel any better I am dying.

TOM

It does make me feel better. In fact you dying is what's getting me through.

BEN

Tonight, or like, in life.

TOM

Life. And tonight.

(beat)

I like you. I see why Ruthie likes you.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

So I don't want you to die, really.
But the fact that you are dying... I
do like that.

BEN

Interesting.

TOM

So, I'm gonna go, and if you ever
want to go out to dinner or if you
want me to beat the shit out of you,
I'd be happy to do either.

BEN

You want to be friends with me or
kill me?

TOM

Either way is good. I'm a sucker for
a toxic relationship... Alright,
during my walk home my mind is going
to ping pong like a motherfucker.
Seeya.

Tom reaches out his hand, and when Ben goes to shake it, Tom
pulls him and hugs him. And Tom is a little teary eyed.

TOM (CONT'D)

I honestly have no idea why I'm
crying! Bye!

He leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT--A LITTLE LATER

Everyone's gone. Ben and Ruthie are hanging out, just
silently reading.

BEN

That was fun.

RUTHIE

(reading)

Mhm.

Ben looks around the room nervously, then pops a mint in his
mouth. He makes his way over to her and sits.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

(still reading)

Ben.

BEN

Yeah?

RUTHIE

Did you just put a mint in your mouth?

Long pause.

BEN

... I did.

Ruthie lowers her book.

RUTHIE

Why?

BEN

Umm...

RUTHIE

What do you think is gonna happen here exactly? You think we're gonna be together, like physically?

BEN

Is that so crazy?

RUTHIE

YES! That's pretty crazy! I mean aside from the obvious age issue, mentally and physically, you're like... a ghost. You're dead. And I don't lay with ghosts.

BEN

What if we just had bad timing?

RUTHIE

It wasn't bad timing. You left.

BEN

If I'd stayed I would have died. I was leaving one way or another.

RUTHIE

I'm just not sure what you want from me. For you it was no time at all, but I've lived a whole life. We missed our chance. I've already mourned you. I'm not gonna watch you die again, that's just masochistic.

BEN

Okay, fine. But before I leave I do feel compelled to say... That despite how crazy it may seem on the surface, I really want to be with you. I feel the same way I did before I left.

RUTHIE

You broke up with me before you left.

BEN

Yeah, but I didn't know I was dying when I did that. Now I have terminal clarity.

RUTHIE

You have no idea what you're doing. You're completely out of your depth.

BEN

Without a doubt, yeah. But maybe, who cares? All I know is, the second I saw you again I knew I'd turn the world upside down if you asked me to.

RUTHIE

Wow. Did you go to space this whole time or Juilliard?

BEN

Does Juilliard still exist?

RUTHIE

You know I don't know the answer to that.

Ben doesn't drop eye contact.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

You're serious.

Ben nods, quite serious.

She stares back at him....

And then Ruthie kisses Ben. And it is like before.

She pulls away.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Goddmannit.

BEN

Not the reaction you hope for.

RUTHIE

I don't wanna deal with this again, Ben. What am I supposed to do with you at this point?

BEN

I think, whatever you feel like? Just think of me as a welcome distraction.

She shakes her head.

RUTHIE

Okay, you have to go now.

BEN

Okay. Can I see you again?

RUTHIE

No. I mean, maybe. Probably. I don't know.

BEN

Okay. I'll call you on the future phone. Bye, Ruthie.

And he leaves.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP SESSION--THE NEXT DAY

BEN

So then she made me leave. And she was honest about why, but I also think if she wants it to work this time she has to force herself into uncomfortable situations.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 2

But why does that mean comfortable situations for you?

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE

Yeah, both of you have to feel uncomfortable for it to change.

SESSION LEADER

Sorry, I hate to interrupt, but this group session is not for relationship problems? It's, like, for people who are coming to terms with their impending death.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 2
See, that's not something I want to
talk about all the time.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3
Me neither.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 5
It makes me sad to talk about that
all the time because, overall, I
don't want to die.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 4
Yeah. Now this guy being confused and
anxious about a woman...

BEN
Ben. My name's Ben.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 4
Sure, Ben. It actually makes me feel
better because I'm *not* confused or
anxious. I'm sad and I can see and
feel the darkness approaching, but
I'm not confused and anxious. Like
Ben. Thanks, Ben.

BEN
You're welcome. Do you want me to
keep going?

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 4
Yes.

SESSION LEADER
I don't.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 2
We don't care. We've hijacked the
meeting.

SESSION LEADER
Am I bad at my job?

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3
You might be.

BEN
Okay, I sent her a text about how
nice the night was, and she didn't
respond. What is that?

Lisa (who we've seen looking irked throughout) chimes in.

LISA
Maybe she didn't want to.

BEN
Why wouldn't she want to? It's so easy.

LISA
It's easy for you. For her something like that might be hard. What did you want to hear back?

BEN
I dunno. "Same here"? "Agreed."

LISA
Is there anything about the night that wasn't nice?

BEN
No.

LISA
So is being bothered by not seeing a text that says, "Same here" her issue or yours?

BEN
Would you have sent a text that said, "Same here."

LISA
Oh, my God. I would have sent eight paragraphs. Because that's who I am. I'm worse than you.

Everyone nods.

SESSION LEADER
Ok, good observations, Lisa. Completely off topic, but good.

LISA
You know what's funny, group? Well, what I'm about to say actually isn't funny, but you know what's funny? Even if the procedure had worked would we be feeling *that* much different right now? Like, I'd still be single and alone and I'd have to figure out why.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3
 But I'd guess we'd have time to
 figure it out?

LISA
 We didn't use that time to figure it
 out when we weren't dying.

Good point.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 2
 (to session leader)
 See if that's the stuff you want to
 be talking about, I'd rather not talk
 about it.

We hear laughter from the other room.

ALL OF THEM
 (in the direction of the
 other room)
 FUCK YOU!!

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET--AFTER THE MEETING

Ben and Lisa walk...

LISA
 I found Henry.

BEN
 That's...

LISA
 The ex I should have married.

BEN
 Where did you see him?

And as Lisa relays this anecdote we see flashes of the story.

LISA
 I spied on him through a window.

BEN
 Legally?

We see Lisa outside a Brownstone, looking through a lower
 level window. Inside we see an OLDER MAN with what appears to
 be a WIFE, CHILDREN, GRAND CHILDREN. Lisa looks at them.

LISA
I think he's married with children
and grand children.

BEN
Huh...

The man, looks through the window and sees Lisa.

LISA
He saw me. He looked out the window,
and he saw me, and he recognized me.

BEN
How did you know he recognized you?

The man waves, and stares at her, maybe a little longing
between the both of them?

LISA
He waved. And he looked older, sure
but his face...

BEN
The eyes were the same.

LISA
Yeah.
(beat)
I'm jealous of you, Ben.

BEN
What? Why?

Lisa starts to cry.

LISA
Oh, God. Here I go. CRYING IN THE
FUCKING STREET! I CRY EVERYWHERE.

BEN
Whoa whoa whoa, what's up?

Ben hugs her.

LISA
(through tears)
You have something going on. It's
messy, but it's something, and I
don't have anything. I'd kill to have
something going on with... *someone*.
(beat, re: sickness)
Do you ever get just so tired?

BEN

Yes.

LISA

Sometimes it wallops me right in the afternoon. And that's the reminder that this is happening.

She pulls away from Ben.

LISA (CONT'D)

Cryo-therapy, being launched into space, dumb advances in telecommunication--it all still comes down to someone getting back to you or not getting back to you... something kinda reassuring about that, right?

Ben notices an old electronics store across the street. Hmmm.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT--THAT NIGHT

We hear a knock.

RUTHIE

Door open.

It's Ben.

BEN

Hi.

RUTHIE

Hi.

BEN

Are you ready to go on our date?

RUTHIE

I am ready to go on our date. Should we tram it?

BEN

For sure. Gotta take advantage of these trams.

INT. TRAM--CONTINUOUS

Ben and Ruthie on a tram.

BEN
Very cool that we're going to il
Buco. Great idea.

RUTHIE
Spot of our one year anniversary, I
believe.

BEN
It's very romantic, Ruthie.

RUTHIE
You sound shocked.

BEN
It's not really your style.

Ruthie just takes that in. Ruthie holds out her hand.

RUTHIE
Take it.

And they stand there holding hands. They see a younger couple
across from them holding hands, and an older couple near them
holding hands.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY--CONTINUOUS

They get off the tram, walk down some stairs, and walk a few
blocks. They arrive at where the restaurant is supposed to
be. But instead of a restaurant there is just a PLAQUE.

RUTHIE
We're here.

She points to the plaque. Ben looks at it and reads. His eyes
widen.

BEN
What the FUCK!

RUTHIE
(smirking)
Yeah.

BEN
There was a terrorist attack here?

RUTHIE
Uh huh.

BEN
You knew?

RUTHIE

Uh huh.

BEN

Why didn't you say anything.

RUTHIE

Because, *that's* my style. Ha!

BEN

Ruthie this is... horrifying... and hilarious.

RUTHIE

I know. I thought you might like it.

BEN

How many people died?

RUTHIE

Like, three.

BEN

So not a biggie.

RUTHIE

Definitely not.

BEN

Like, barely an attack.

RUTHIE

I mean, the building blew up.

BEN

Right.

RUTHIE

And people blew up with it.

BEN

Right. I mean, yeah, totally. Who did it?

RUTHIE

I dunno... some group?

BEN

Were people... devastated when it happened.

RUTHIE

Oh yeah. Big time. It was scary...
And then time passed... and it wasn't
as much. Want to go dancing?

BEN

We never danced before.

RUTHIE

Something new!

CUT TO:

INT. OLDIES DANCE PARTY

It's a bunch of 70 and 80 year olds tearing loose. And Ruthie and Ben (who is technically in his late 70s) are dancing to oldies—which, for example, is Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy."

Everyone having a great time.

Shots of Ben and Ruthie having a complete fucking blast.

Ben looks around and notices SEVERAL COUPLES LIKE HIM AND RUTHIE. A young man and older woman. An older woman and man. And older man and younger man.

He then sees another couple like he and Ruthie dancing.

It's Rich! From the hospital waiting room. While dancing, they shout at each other over the blaring music.

BEN

Rich?!?

RICH

Ben?!?

BEN

(pointing to self)
Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease!

RICH

(pointing to self)
Acromegaly!

BEN

Alright!

They high five.

BEN (CONT'D)

Still got it!?!

RICH
Nope! It worked!

BEN
Fuck you!

RICH
Yours didn't work?!?

BEN
Nope! I'm dying still!

RICH
That sucks!

BEN
Is your daughter fucked up?!?

RICH
A little bit, yeah! But not too bad!

BEN
Nice! Want to get a drink?!?

CUT TO:

INT. OLDIES DANCE PARTY--A LITTLE LATER

Ben and Rich are at a table off to the side. Ruthie dances with Rich's wife.

BEN
I'm happy for you man. You're cured.

They cheers their drinks.

RICH
(re: Ruthie)
Is that the girl you were talking about. In the waiting room?

BEN
Yeah.

RICH
I'm jealous.

BEN
Why are *you* jealous? Why is everyone jealous of me all the sudden?

RICH
(re: the woman next to
Ruthie)
That's not my wife.

BEN
Who is it?

RICH
My wife's best friend. It's her
mission to get me out of the house...
My wife and I weren't exactly getting
along before I left. But I loved her
so much... She died of a brain
aneurism. Six months after I went up.

BEN
Holy shit. I'm sorry.

RICH
Had I known that was going to happen,
I never would've... you still
thinking about seeing the pyramids?

Ben stares at Ruthie and doesn't even register that.

RICH (CONT'D)
Hey Ben?

BEN
Yeah?

RICH
I don't think you're supposed to
leave the people you're closest to.

And the woman Rich is with can see that Rich is getting sullen and beckons him to the dance floor. Rich gets up, leaving Ben alone. Ben again looks at Ruthie...

The pace slows, and Rihanna's "Stay" plays.

Ben gets off of his seat and embraces Ruthie and really holds her and looks into her eyes.

RUTHIE
You okay?

BEN
Yeah.

They hold each other close. Ben's hands slyly sneak a feel of Ruthie's ass, and they both smile.

RUTHIE
Does it feel different than it did?

BEN
Better. It feels better.

RUTHIE
Good answer.

Ruthie grabs Ben's ass.

BEN
And?

RUTHIE
(bummed)
The same. Unfortunately. You never had a good butt.

BEN
Worked on it. Tried once. Went through a weird butt phase at the gym. Never took.

She looks at him. In his eyes. It's disarming.

BEN (CONT'D)
What?

And she rolls her eyes and just puts her head to his chest.

The song ends and the music becomes faster. They begin to dance again, but it's as if Ben has run directly into a wall because he is hit with a wave of tired and nausea.

Ruthie can tell something's wrong. Ben makes a "We need to get out of here," gesture.

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE THE DANCE CLUB

Ben dry heaves in the alleyway. Ruthie stands behind him, rubbing his back.

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE THE DANCE CLUB--MOMENTS LATER

Now they're sitting on the curb outside.

RUTHIE
What's it like knowing your time's running out?

BEN
Asking for a friend?

RUTHIE
I'm asking for me.

BEN
I'm scared. A lot.

RUTHIE
You don't seem it.

BEN
Well, when you see me I'm making the most of my time.

RUTHIE
Being with me is making the most of your time?

Ben nods.

Pause.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Well, then I think we should have sex.

BEN
I agree.

INT. RUTHIE'S BEDROOM--LATER

Ben takes off his shirt, and Ruthie sees the divot-like scars near his chest. She touches them gently.

RUTHIE
Do they hurt?

Ben shakes his head.

And the two of them stand in front of one another, both vulnerable.

They take a step closer, embrace, and kiss. Ben looks at her and smiles.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
What?

BEN
I'm happy.

RUTHIE

Me, too.

INT. RUTHIE'S BEDROOM--A LITTLE LATER

They are laying in bed.

BEN

What's the coolest thing to happen to you in the last 40 years?

RUTHIE

Having Adam. No question.

BEN

What was the most horrifying thing to happen to you in the last 40 years?

RUTHIE

...getting married to Tom.

BEN

Why? Tom's amazing.

RUTHIE

He is. But I think I knew I was going to break his heart, and that he wouldn't deserve it.

(small beat)

I would have broken yours, too.

BEN

When we broke up my heart was broken.

RUTHIE

Well not to harp on it, but you broke up with me.

BEN

Unreal.

RUTHIE

But, yeah, I think I would have come back and really finished the job.

BEN

You're being too hard on yourself, there's no way to know if that's true.

RUTHIE

At some point, Ben, my brain turned into an old movie projector, and I replay clips of myself over and over. And it's crazy how I keep doing the same thing. Not *exactly* the same thing, but different iterations of the same thing. And I'm aware of it, but I can't stop myself.

(then)

So why aren't you running away from me?

BEN

Ruthie... literally everyone else I know is dead.

RUTHIE

Ha!

BEN

Plus I just got laid for the first time in like half a century.

RUTHIE

Yeah, it showed.

BEN

I was DECENT!

INT. RUTHIE'S BEDROOM--THE NEXT MORNING

Ruthie, fully clothed, watches Ben sleep.

Ben wakes up and sees Ruthie, staring at him.

BEN

You want me to get the fuck out of here don't you?

RUTHIE

No. I want to spend the day with you. Don't make a big deal out of it.

BEN

Well, I have plans today.

RUTHIE

(actually bummed)
Really?

BEN
No. But I saw that you were actually
disappointed there and I liked it.

RUTHIE
Ugh.

BEN
I saw it!

RUTHIE
Get dressed.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY--CONTINUOUS

They leave Ruthie's apartment.

BEN
So where to?

RUTHIE
First, we go get coffee.

MUSIC PLAYS throughout this sequence.

Ruthie takes Ben to all the places she went alone at the
beginning of the movie.

They get coffee.

BEN
Now what?

RUTHIE
Now we walk on pretty streets while
drinking our coffees.

BEN
Okay.

RUTHIE
Coffee will go in your right hand.
And you'll hold my right hand with
your left hand. Okay?

BEN
Got it.

They walk down very pretty New York streets. Ben drinks
coffee with his right hand, holds Ruthie's with his left.

They chat, laugh. We also see, speckled about, more couples
who look like Ben and Ruthie populating the world.

RUTHIE

Now we go to the vintage store and we look at their boots.

BEN

Okay.

RUTHIE

There is a garbage can outside the store where we can throw away our coffees.

BEN

You really have this dialed.

Inside the vintage store. Ruthie looks at the boots. She looks at a pair of scuffed up turquoise cowboy boots.

RUTHIE

Oh my God. I love these.

BEN

Yeah those are great. You want to buy them?

RUTHIE

No. I never buy them. I just look at them. I pick them up, and then I put them down. I'm ready to leave now.

BEN

You never buy them?

RUTHIE

No.

BEN

Why?

RUTHIE

I don't have to answer that.

BEN

Love it.

They exit the Boot Store.

RUTHIE

More walking and hand holding please.

More walking and hand holding. Ben and Ruthie get to an intersection. It's a perfect, cute, West Village intersection. Ruthie stops.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

We kiss here.

BEN

Yup.

They kiss. She takes it in.

RUTHIE

Now we go to the skate park.

BEN

What?

EXT. SKATE PARK

They sit on a bench and watch the SKATEBOARDERS.

BEN

You like watching teens skateboard?

RUTHIE

Yeah. I like when they land tricks. I like when they don't. I like when they try. I could watch for hours.

BEN

Huh. Do you... like to watch them fall?

RUTHIE

No. I'm neutral on that.

BEN

You don't care if they fall.

RUTHIE

Not really. But I don't care if they don't fall either.

BEN

Huh.

RUTHIE

I like the sound of the wheels on the pavement. There's a rhythm to all of it. It's relaxing.

A DUDE does a rail slide and lands perfectly.

BEN

So you felt neutral on that?

RUTHIE

Mhm. It's like a bath, you don't have specific thoughts on the individual droplets, it's more about the experience of soaking.

Ben looks at Ruthie, enamored, as she closes her eyes and breathes deeply, listening.

Another skater falls hard in the BG.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Second coffee?

BEN

Sure.

A SHOT OF THEM GETTING COFFEE.

RUTHIE

And then, if I'm feeling particularly lonesome or winsome... I go to the MET.

On BEN.

BEN

Is this one of those days?

EXT. THE MET

As the two walk up the steps our music crescendos and ends.

INT. THE MET

Silence. They sit looking at the Degas.

A little observational glance from Ruthie. How many times did she come here alone without Ben, and now here they are.

RUTHIE

Well, here we are.

They stare at it.

BEN

It is beautiful isn't it?

Ruthie nods her head, and then...

RUTHIE
Actually, again, I could take or
leave the painting.

BEN
Yeah.

RUTHIE
What I really like is this bench.

BEN
It's a great bench.

RUTHIE
The day we met, it was so hot out...

BEN
Right.

RUTHIE
And this bench was free...

BEN
And there's an air conditioning vent
right above the bench.

ON THE VENT.

RUTHIE
It's a perfect spot. I felt so lucky
to get this bench.

BEN
And then I sat next to you.

RUTHIE
And I was kind of annoyed because...
I wanted to be alone.

Beat.

BEN
You know what's interesting. You
don't feel extreme about a lot of
things. You're indifferent to the
skateboarding, you're indifferent to
the painting...

RUTHIE
Compared to you I don't feel
extremes. I think you're an emotional
maniac.

BEN

And I think you feel feelings like a beautiful corpse. And yet...

RUTHIE

And yet, we've both had the best day haven't we?

BEN

Yes. That was my point.

They both laugh.

A two shot of them sitting, looking content. Ruthie puts her head on Ben's shoulder.

FADE OUT.

EXT. GOLF COURSE--THE NEXT DAY

Ben and Tom are on the first tee. In the background, another shot of the city in all its classy future glory.

Tom steps up to his ball and is about to swing when...

BEN

I've been sleeping with your ex-wife.

Tom calmly steps off of his shot, calmly walks up to Ben, and calmly punches him in the stomach. And then he calmly steps up to his ball and hits it. It's a terrible shot.

TOM

You're up.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLF COURSE--CONTINUOUS

Tom and Ben are in a golf cart. It's silent.

BEN

I wanted to tell you at the beginning of the round because I wanted to get it out of the way so that we could either a)continue to enjoy golf or b) stop playing golf.

TOM

Well we're continuing, right?

SHOT OF TOM HITTING A SHOT. It's terrible.

BEN

Good shot.

SHOT OF BEN HITTING A SHOT. It's terrible.

TOM

GREAT SHOT!

SHOT OF TOM HITTING A PUTT. It's terrible.

BEN

AMAZING PUTT!

SHOT OF BEN HITTING A PUTT. It's terrible.

TOM

KING OF THE FLATSTICK.

TOM HITS ANOTHER BAD SHOT and walks back to the cart.

BEN

Fuck, we're amazing!

TOM

Yup.

BEN

Have you ever even played golf before?

TOM

No.

BEN

Me neither.

TOM

So it's amazing that we're SO Good.

BEN

Having fun, though?

TOM

I am.

THEY ARE ON THE 18TH HOLE. Ben steps up to the tee.

TOM (CONT'D)

I think I need to date.

Ben hits a terrible shot.

TOM (CONT'D)

Good shot.

BEN
Why do you need to date?

TOM
I don't want to die being in love
with someone who isn't in love with
me.

ON BEN. Wow.

Tom swings. Terrible shot.

EXT. PARKING LOT--AFTER THE ROUND

Ben and Tom put their clubs in their respective cars.

BEN
You know, we don't have to be friends
if it's too hard.

TOM
No, no. It's good. You being here
is... when you weren't here it's like
you hovered over our relationship--
literally I guess. It was like an
unanswered question... some answers
are hard to take, but at least
they're answers.

Beat.

TOM (CONT'D)
Golf same time next week?

BEN
Do we like golf?

TOM
No, but, ya know... at our age it's
good to get up and move around.

Ben looks at his phone. He looks at his chat with Ruthie. Unanswered texts from Ben saying, "I had a lovely night last night," and another unanswered one 8 hours later saying, "good morning".

CUT TO:

INT. OLD ELECTRONICS STORE--LATER THAT DAY

Ben and Lisa look around.

LISA

Why does this stuff make me want to cry?

BEN

Because everything makes you want to cry.

LISA

Yeah that's right.

They continue to look around. She holds up a gaming system. Ben knows it well.

LISA (CONT'D)

This costs 50 bucks? Do you remember how much it cost when it came out?

BEN

2000. My dad... he... nevermind.

LISA

No, no. Tell me. Fathers and sons. Love that shit.

BEN

It was so hard to find in stores that he drove overnight across two states to a specialty warehouse that had imported ones. On my birthday when I opened it the box was covered in Japanese writing that I couldn't read and I thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen, because it was.

LISA

That's sweet.

BEN

Yeah. He was a good dad.

LISA

I agree. Dude's are obsessed with their dads.

BEN

That's not what I said.

LISA

Isn't it though?

Ben walks up to the STORE OWNER.

BEN

Hi, I have an old cell phone, and I can't get these voicemails off of it.

STORE OWNER

Lemme see the phone.

Ben takes out his phone.

STORE OWNER (CONT'D)

This *is* old.

BEN

Yeah, I turned it on after 40 Years and all these texts and voicemails came through.

STORE OWNER

We've seen a couple of these recently.

LISA

(re: phone)

What's the big deal?

BEN

There's a one minute voicemail from Ruthie that came in four years after I went up. I'm curious what it says.

LISA

Why?

BEN

I guess I want to know what was going on in her mind.

LISA

Why not ask her?

BEN

You know what question *I* love that Ruthie hates?

LISA

No.

BEN

"What are you thinking"?

LISA

Oh, I love it too.

BEN

I crave the moment when someone asks me that question.

LISA

They don't even have to finish the word "thinking?" As soon as they hit the "th" I'm off to the races.

BEN

Hundred percent.

(beat)

I think if I asked Ruthie that question, she'd bite my face off. I still can't even get her to text me back most of the time.

STORE OWNER

Yeah, Ruthie's like that.

BEN

You know her?

STORE OWNER

Oh yeah, we dated.

BEN

Really?

STORE OWNER

No, but you've been talking about her in front of my face for the last 10 minutes. So... kinda feels like it.

They stare at each other.

BEN

(meek)

Hasn't been *that* long.

STORE OWNER

I'll try to get the voicemail but it's complicated and it won't be easy.

BEN

Why?

STORE OWNER

Well, even though everything is stored in the cloud, the OS on your old phone was so out of date that it couldn't reconcile current XLT data transmissions with the earlier LSE data terminals.

BEN

Right. Makes sense.

STORE OWNER

I made that up. Gimme the phone, and I'll see what I can do.

BEN

You got it, mean guy.

INT. RESTAURANT

Ben and Ruthie eat.

Ben stares at Ruthie.

BEN

I love you.

Ruthie thinks for a moment, and looks at Ben.

RUTHIE

What are you doing tomorrow?

Ben clocks she didn't say it back.

BEN

Hanging out with a hologram chef.

RUTHIE

Wanna hang out with me? Get out of the city?

BEN

Sure.

RUTHIE

Great. I want to take you somewhere.

CUT TO:

INT. RUTHIE'S CAR--THE NEXT DAY

Ruthie is in the driver's seat, Ben the passenger. We see the car leaving the city and heading upstate. The highway system looks sleek but not like the Jetsons or anything. Just... smooth and electric.

When the car is in less traffic, Ruthie turns on the self drive function. Ben is pretty enthralled by that.

RUTHIE
Pretty fucking cool, right?

BEN
Yes. Unequivocally yes. Where are we going, anyway?

RUTHIE
I told you, you'll see.

Ruthie leans over and kisses Ben, and lays on his lap.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
I'm going to take a nap.

BEN
Cool. I'm gonna stay awake because there's no way this driverless shit actually works and our spines aren't severed.

RUTHIE
Uh huh.

And Ruthie falls asleep.

EXT. A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY--CONTINUOUS

CAR VOICE (V.O.)
You have arrived.

Ruthie wakes up. Ben is wide awake.

BEN
We didn't die once!

RUTHIE
Good. Let's go.

Ruthie and Ben walk up to the house, and Ruthie gets out a key, opens the door, enters and says:

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Mom! We're here!

On BEN. *What?*

INT. RUTHIE'S MOM'S HOUSE

Ruthie leads him into a living room where Ruthie's mom, LUCY, close to 100, sits on her COUCH. She's doesn't get around great, but she's sharp.

RUTHIE
Mom, this is my boyfriend, Ben.

LUCY
He's 12.

RUTHIE
You know why he looks so young.

BEN
(to Lucy)
How old are you? like 190?

Beat. Lucy laughs. Hard. She likes it.

LUCY
Well, I heard you bitched about not meeting me and now you met me. Think you'll stop bitching now?

RUTHIE
Mom!

LUCY
Oh, come on, Ruthie, it's funny!

BEN
Yeah, Ruthie, it's funny!
(to Lucy)
And for the record, Ruthie's mom, I will never stop bitching. It's my passion and it defines me.

LUCY
I coulda guessed that by looking at you, sweet-cheeks.

She squeezes his face.

BEN
Ruthie, I like your mom so far.

RUTHIE
Of course you do.

LUCY
All right, let's eat.

BEN
Do you need help getting up off the
couch?

LUCY
NO! I don't need--actually yes, thank
you.

Ben helps Lucy out up off the couch. It's a very sweet moment, and Ruthie watches as Ben walks her mother to the dining room. Ben and Lucy laugh with one another. The whole tableau is very intimate.

INT. RUTHIE'S MOM'S HOUSE-BATHROOM

ON RUTHIE. Outside the bathroom, we hear Ben and Lucy laughing, having a good time--

And Ruthie looks... upset by it?

Ruthie puts some water on her face. And when she does she feels under her chin. A little sore to the touch. Ruthie composes herself and joins the two of them.

INT. LUCY'S DINING ROOM--A LITTLE LATER

The meal is close to over...

LUCY
You know what I like about Ben?

RUTHIE
What, mom?

LUCY
He dumped your ass.

RUTHIE
I prefer "broke up with." But wait, I never told you that. How did you know that?

LUCY
You always told me when a
relationship ended.
(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

But you just stopped talking when things ended with Ben. So, conclusion: He dumped you.

(beat)

Oh she was very sad. And when she found out you escaped the world she was devastated.

BEN

Again, I didn't escape, I was sick. Am sick.

LUCY

Based on how you left things with my daughter, I'd say you escaped. I like you, but I don't like that you hurt my daughter.

RUTHIE

Mom, it wasn't that simple.

LUCY

My husband escaped, too. Tom escaped. They all escape.

RUTHIE

Tom did not escape.

LUCY

Tom gave up on you. Just like your dad gave up on me.

RUTHIE

Dad died.

LUCY

But before that. He gave up.

RUTHIE

That's how you see it. Really?

LUCY

That's how I see it.

Silence. Ruthie stirs her tea. We can hear the spoon along the rim of the cup.

BEN

Well, I guess the visit has hit a wall when you can hear the spoon against the rim of the cup.

LUCY
(serious)
Don't make jokes.

Whoa.

BEN
Sorry, I...

LUCY
You escaped. Tom escaped. Noel
escaped. You're all so fucking
charming until you all escape. And
now I'm going to die alone on that
couch.

ON LUCY'S COUCH.

INT. RUTHIE'S CAR--A LITTLE LATER

They are driving back. Ruthie is clearly bothered.

BEN
I'm sorry about how that ended.

RUTHIE
Don't worry about it. She loved you.

BEN
You want to talk about it?

RUTHIE
No... not right now.

BEN
Okay.

The drive continues, but Ruthie is still bothered when:

RUTHIE
CAR STOP.

The car stops. In the middle of the highway.

BEN
Whoa! Holy shit.

An overhead shot of their stopped car on the highway as cars
race past theirs.

RUTHIE
My mom killed my father.

BEN

Like with a gun?

RUTHIE

No. Not with a gun. She broke him. He didn't escape. He was sweet, and kind, and she broke him.

BEN

I don't--

RUTHIE

She couldn't do it. She wanted to, but she couldn't. When it came down to it, she couldn't actually choose him. She couldn't choose anyone. Who knows where that came from. Wasn't loved when she was a kid, bad father, who knows. I watched my dad try so hard for her, and she just became more and more distant. Always wanted her space. And he fought and fought to fill that space, and the more he fought, the more space he created. He couldn't understand it. He *loved* her so much he couldn't take all the space. And he died. Can you imagine doing that to someone?

BEN

No.

RUTHIE

I CAN, Ben. I did it to Tom. And that scares me. Do you know the real reason you do something like that?

BEN

You're a sociopath?

RUTHIE

You're so scared someone will become too important to you, that if you lose them, *you'll* die. Self preservation. That's what love is to me. I love you so much that I'm afraid to say it. Do you understand that, Ben?

BEN

I guess...

RUTHIE

Can you at least try?

BEN

Sure... But, I guess... what could be better than someone being so important to you?

He's not getting it. He can't. Ben sees her disappointment.

BEN (CONT'D)

Why did you take me there if you hate her so much?

RUTHIE

I don't hate her. I knew meeting her was important to you. But I'm sorry, I can't do things the way you want me to. This is who I am.

BEN

That's fine. Look, I get it, your mom fucked you up. But you're not gonna scare me off, Ruthie. This is who I am. And I would happily risk you destroying me if it meant I got to have another day with you.

Ben thinks he's finally gotten it right. But Ruthie's face falls. Defeated.

RUTHIE

Car start.

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT--A LITTLE LATER

Ruthie pulls up to Ben's apartment.

BEN

Are we okay?

RUTHIE

Yes, of course.

BEN

Does the kind of person you are want the kind of person I am to come up?

Ruthie looks at Ben.

RUTHIE

No. But I promise it's okay.

BEN

Okay.

They kiss. Ben gets out of the car and Ruthie drives away.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE--THE NEXT DAY

Ruthie sits on a hospital bed. Ben's doctor enters.

DOCTOR
You have Munich's disease.

Pause...

RUTHIE
Okay, what is that?

DOCTOR
Right. It's a rare cardiovascular disorder, and it is terminal.

RUTHIE
Next time, just say: You have Munich's Disease, it's rare, and it's terminal. Don't make me ask what it is.

DOCTOR
Some people don't like when you break it up... either way, there are some treatment options.

RUTHIE
Space?

DOCTOR
Usually people your age prefer something that can prolong their life here.

RUTHIE
But space is an option?

DOCTOR
Yeah. It's an option.

Ruthie nods.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT

It's Sunday dinner. Ben, Ruthie, Tom, Adam, and Laura are having a lovely time. Ruthie moves through the evening with ease. She's enjoying herself, and Ben notices that she seems very calm.

She's even more physically affectionate toward Ben, putting her hand on his leg during dinner. For Ben, it's oddly disconcerting.

The meal ends. The family sits around the table drinking coffee.

RUTHIE

Um, I have something to say.

ADAM

I also have something to say.

RUTHIE

Oh.

ADAM

You go, mom.

RUTHIE

Okay. Um, before I say this I want you all to know, it's going to be okay. Really. I swear to God.

ADAM

I'm currently horrified.

RUTHIE

I have something called Munich's Disease. It's terminal.

Shock.

ADAM

How is this okay?

RUTHIE

Well, actually, this is going to sound crazy, but I feel fine. I do. I actually *really* do.

ON BEN... huh.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

And I am seriously considering doing the cryotherapy that Ben did, which has advanced in the last 40 years. It's even more safe.

LAURA

You actually do seem okay.

ON BEN. Laura noticed what he noticed. She does seem okay.

RUTHIE
It's life, ya know.

Pause. Everyone is still shocked.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
Adam, what were you going to say?

ADAM
Um... Laura and I are engaged.

TOM
(dead)
Congratulations.

RUTHIE
To me, or Adam?

People lightly laugh, not Ben. Ben is still silent. Ruthie gives him a glance.

INT. RUTHIE'S KITCHEN--AFTER DINNER

Everyone is now gone... Ben and Ruthie are washing dishes.

Silence, and then...

BEN
Are you in any pain?

RUTHIE
Not really.

BEN
Good. You didn't think about giving me a heads up or anything.

RUTHIE
I'm sorry, it's just, it's my life. I wanted to share it the way I wanted to share it.

BEN
So how long do you have?

RUTHIE
About a year.

BEN
Same as me.

Pause.

BEN (CONT'D)
You seem relieved.

RUTHIE
What?

BEN
The whole night, you've seemed...
relieved.

RUTHIE
I'm not relieved, Ben. I'm dying.

BEN
Why would you go up into space?

RUTHIE
What do you mean?

BEN
What's the benefit?

RUTHIE
What's the benefit? Living? I mean,
when I get back down, I'd have maybe
15 years left. Could spend time with
my grandchildren.

BEN
Grandchildren? Since when do you give
a fuck about grandchildren?

RUTHIE
I give a fuck about grandchildren.

BEN
You could give a flying fuck about
grandchildren. You've never once
talked about grandchildren... You're
relieved.

RUTHIE
You keep saying that.

BEN
The most important people in your
life are here. Now. Why do you want
to leave?

RUTHIE
Same reason you left.

BEN
I was young and stupid.

RUTHIE
You still are.

BEN
And you're so old and wise?

RUTHIE
Fuck you.

BEN
You're relieved that you have a way
out from me.

RUTHIE
That's very selfish.

BEN
I think it's true.

RUTHIE
Ben, that's ridiculous. I love you.

Eye pop. Wow.

BEN
The only time you've ever been able
to say that to me is when you're
about to escape.

RUTHIE
I said it to you in the car and you
didn't even listen to me!

BEN
You were saying how much you hate to
say it!

RUTHIE
That's not what I was saying. This is
my point, words aren't important to
me.

BEN
But they are important to me!

RUTHIE
Showing you that I love you is
important to me!

BEN
Then don't go!

Pause. Good point.

BEN (CONT'D)
Ruthie... look at me.

She doesn't.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'll make it enticing. Look at me so
I can ask you one question, and then
after I ask it I'll leave. You don't
even have to answer.

She looks at him.

BEN (CONT'D)
What are you more afraid of? Freezing
yourself and getting sent into outer
space, or being on Earth with me?

Nothing.

Then:

RUTHIE
In your message you said that when
you were up there your brain didn't
entirely shut off. What did you mean?

BEN
It was like I was asleep, but then
every so often I would wake up, and
remember us.

RUTHIE
Good times?

BEN
Yes.

RUTHIE
Well, I remember things clearly, too,
Ben. Arguments, frustration, phone
calls late at night leading to
nowhere.

We see flashes of these things. Young Ruthie frustratedly
throwing her phone down, crying across a restaurant table,
Ben sitting on the corner of their bed, clearly frustrated.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
That was our story, too. I have tried
here. I tried giving more to you this
time than last time, but...

Pause.

SESSION LEADER

Again, these sessions are not for....

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3

Can I say something? And this might not be what you want to hear.

BEN

Sure.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3

This whole thing sounds like maybe you two just aren't meant for each other.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 4

Yeah, I mean, don't they say when you find the person you're supposed to spend the rest of your life with, it's just easy and clicks.

SESSION LEADER

That's not how it is with my wife.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 4

So now you're getting in on this?

BEN

I think now we definitely let him talk.

SESSION LEADER

Thank you. Well, I'm just saying, my wife and I know we can't live without each other, but it's hard. It's a constant adjustment of expectations, but with the knowledge that there's love there.

BEN

If there is love, how hard is it to just say it. I love you guys and I don't even know your names.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE

I'm David.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 2

I'm Kelley.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3

I'm Connie.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 4

I Mark.

SESSION LEADER

I'm Steve.

BEN

Connie, huh? Never woulda thought that.

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE 3

I agree with you. I don't look like a Connie.

BEN

Hey where's Lisa?

RANDOM SESSION ATTENDEE

Who?

EXT. NEW YORK CITY--AFTER THE MEETING

Ben walks down the street. He's concerned. He's calling Lisa, and leaves a message.

BEN

Hey, Lisa, it's Ben. I've called you a couple times. You weren't at therapy today, and I'm worried about you... you know what, I'm just gonna come to your place.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT BUILDING.

Ben stands in front of Lisa's apartment door. He knocks.

BEN

Lisa. Are you there?

He knocks again.

BEN (CONT'D)

Okay, well, if you are there, and you're not letting me in, I'm gonna worry that you committed suicide, and I'm gonna think that's why you didn't let me in, and a true friend doesn't let another friend walk around thinking that friend committed suicide.

A couple beats and then...

LISA (O.C.)

Door open.

Ben walks in. Lisa is sitting on her couch. We can tell it's been a rough day. She's been crying. She's watching the "History" flash drive.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And that's when we found the rest of the Zodiac Killer's ciphers. He had murdered 1000 more people than we initially believed. Yikes, right??

BEN

Why do you watch this thing?

LISA

Cheers me up.

BEN

TV off.

He sits next to her.

LISA

Ben... I really hate Dijkgraaf-Kristoff's Disease.

BEN

You in pain?

LISA

Yeah.

BEN

Me, too. Lately.

Lisa leans over and rests her head on his shoulder.

LISA

I want to be in love before I die.

Ben hears that, and deeply understands it. He has an idea.

BEN

So... I might know someone.

LISA

Really?

BEN

Yeah. He might be great? He punched me in the stomach once.

LISA
He sounds fantastic.

BEN
The only drawback is...

LISA
He's burned all over?

BEN
No. Why would you... no, he's 75.

LISA
Ruthie's like 75. So am I, kind of.
So are you, kind of.

BEN
Yeah. Okay, so I'll fix it up.

LISA
Thank you. I got you something.

BEN
What?

LISA
It's in the closet.

Ben goes to her closet. There is a bag. Ben brings it back to the couch. Ben takes a present out of the bag.

LISA (CONT'D)
Happy birthday. It's your last one.

Ben laughs very hard at that. Lisa smiles.

Ben unwraps the present and it's a Japanese Box.

Ben is immediately overwhelmed.

BEN
Fuck you.

LISA
Open the box.

He opens up the Japanese Box and there is a miniature figurine of a Pyramid inside of it.

LISA (CONT'D)
There. You saw the pyramids. How do you feel?

BEN
I like the box more.

She laughs.

LISA
Yeah.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT

Ruthie with her friends. She's silent. Everyone is silent.
They eat.

RUTHIE
Why isn't anyone talking?

EMILY
We're not talking because when you
have something on your mind you cast
a pall on the entire room.

RUTHIE
I'm dying.

EMILY
So am I.

ANNE
Me, too.

NANCY
I am also dying.

EMILY
We're all dying. That's not why
you're upset.

Ruthie just launches into.

RUTHIE
CAN IT REALLY BE POSSIBLE THAT I AM
THE EXACT SAME PERSON I WAS 40 YEARS
AGO!?!?

EMILY
Now we're cooking.

RUTHIE
I've lived in Paris, I've been
married, I'm a mother, I've read,
ballpark, like 200 books since then.
I order takeout from much more
expensive places...
(MORE)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

I've made real friends who come over to my apartment like a normal person-- and the moment this man says I love you, I freeze just like I froze when I was thirty fucking two years old.

(to Emily)

Try to hold my hand and I'll rip it off.

Silence. They stare at her.

EMILY

We come over when you want to us to come over.

RUTHIE

What?

EMILY

And you never come over to our place.

RUTHIE

So what?

ANNE

You got married when you wanted to. You had Adam when you wanted to. It's always your decision.

NANCY

You don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable.

RUTHIE

I tried.

ANNE

(serious, direct)

TRY HARDER. If you haven't dealt with your shit at 33, you're gonna have to deal with it at 73.

EMILY

I've never been anywhere, Ruthie. I've never been to Paris. Hell, I've never even been to Los Angeles. But I worked my ass off making it work with Peter. And there were times where we wanted to leave each other. Where one of us wanted to go far away. Take space. But we stayed. We just stayed.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

And in our apartment, in that tight, enclosed space where we couldn't get away from each other, and where we fought and ate and watched TV and fought and made love, was where our lives were big and full. We made the most of the space. And when he died, I wanted to die because that space felt like death... But it was a real life.

RUTHIE

You're braver than me.

EMILY

Ruthie, I've known you a long time. And I don't think that's true.

RUTHIE

I'm going to hold *your* hand now, okay?

EMILY

Okay.

They hold hands.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT

Ben sits and watches the History Flash Drive.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And now, unfortunately, we have to talk about how electric cars gave everyone cancer.

BEN

Jesus Christ.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Jesus Christ is right.

BEN

Wait, You can hear me? I can talk to you?

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Yes.

BEN

This whole time?

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Yes. I can also change the chef's setting from French to American because I have access to your apartment's central computer. I've really enjoyed your struggle with that.

BEN

You fucking asshole. Do it, change it to American

The French Chef appears. He looks like a line cook.

HOLOGRAM FAT AMERICAN LINE COOK

Hey there, whaddaya want? Burger? Want a burger? Do a good burger.

BEN

I'm not hungry.

HOLOGRAM FAT FRENCH CHEF

I'll make you a burger.

Ben's phone rings. It's from the Old Electronics Store.

INT. OLD ELECTRONICS STORE

The STORE OWNER gives Ben his phone back.

STORE OWNER

So, I got it to work.

BEN

Really, how?

STORE OWNER

Would you understand it if I told you.

BEN

...yes.

STORE OWNER

I did a full data restore which allowed me to sync up your phone to outdated cloud centers.

BEN

Totally.

STORE OWNER

Made all of that up... That'll be 140 bucks.

Ben tries to pay with his phone.

STORE OWNER (CONT'D)

Sorry, buddy, only take cash here.

Ben goes into his wallet. He has 120 dollars in new money, and the 20 DOLLAR BILL FROM HIS FATHER. Ben looks at his old phone, and thinks, if there's any reason to use this 20...

EXT. NEW YORK CITY--CONTINUOUS

Ben looks at the old message from Ruthie. He puts in his air pods, and presses play:

The sound is muffled, street noise, some rustling.

Ben strains to hear anything meaningful. More rustling.

Then it ends.

BEN

...fuckin butt-dial?

So bummed. He looks around at nothing, then back at his phone.

There are a ton more voicemails. *Hm.*

Ben doesn't recognize the numbers. He clicks one:

UNKNOWN NUMBER VOICE (V.O.)

Hey Ben... it's Ruthie. I changed my number. But, I kept yours ha... So... my dad died yesterday. You don't know him. You never met him. That's my fault, I guess. But... he was a good man. And now he's gone. And I'm sad.

Beat.

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)

Um, I guess you'll never get this message. You've been in space for four years now. Well, four years and four months. So, I guess that means you have 38.2 years left up there. I hate that I'm keeping track. But, I'm glad you'll never know that I am.

(MORE)

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Anyways, my dad died, and I'm alone,
and the only person I want to talk to
is you. So that sucks.

Beat.

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)
Alrighty! This was surely an
emotional setback for me. Gotta go
catch a funeral!

Ben is shocked.

He looks at the phone, pushes play on the next one.

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)
Hey, it's Ruthie. It's my 36th
birthday!

BEN
Oh shit.

Ben starts walking.

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)
Yeah, I was having a fun day and then
I realized, I'm still mad at you for
leaving. ASSHOLE! And yeah, I've had
some drinks, but maybe that's a good
thing! So up yours, dingbat, because
I'm going back in the bar now with
some work acquaintences!

Ben clicks to a new message:

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)
(quiet)
Hey. I dunno, today was hard. I think
I hate my job. Not feeling great...
about life.

We go into overlapping jump cuts of Ruthie leaving messages
over the years. Fully confiding in him. It's a tidal wave of
messages...

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)
(loud music in BG)
I'm at this horrible show and I keep
thinking about how much you would
hate it and it's making me laugh!
That's all!

Ben turns a corner and keeps walking, faster now.

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)

What was the book you liked about the guy who eats all his friends and then writes a book about it, but like IN the book? I was talking about it to someone today and we couldn't find any proof that it ever existed and now I think maybe you made it up?? But that's crazy, right?

On Ben, walking and laughing.

YOUNG RUTHIE (V.O.)

Ben.... I think I'm pregnant. I haven't told him yet. The guy who made me pregnant. I never thought I would be, but now... I dunno. Like what's the worst thing that could happen, I lose my entire identity and go insane? Ugh, I don't know how to do this... I don't know if I want to do this... Anyways,... say hi to space for me.

Ben clicks on the next message.

RUTHIE (V.O.)

Well, hello there, Ben. I guess this number still works. It's Ruth. Ruthie. I'm not sure why I'm calling. It's been quite some time.

Ben's eyes widen. This time it's not Young Ruthie, it's current Ruthie. This message was not left too long ago.

RUTHIE

What to tell you, of my life? Well, my son - I have a son- Adam, went to college this month. It was hard but I'm very proud of him. I think I've been a good mother. I was certainly better than my mom. But either way, now he's off, and I am alone. Sitting here in my apartment. Alone. My husband and I divorced two years ago and we sold the house. It was the right decision, but it was also hard. He's a good man, it was just time... And I am just realizing how ridiculous it is that I'm doing this again. Leaving you messages I mean. I haven't even thought about you in years, ha. But... maybe this is my ideal setup.

(MORE)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Someone to talk to who never
responds. I'm sure we'll never know.
Anyhow, so long, Ben.

HARD CUT TO BEN standing outside Ruthie's apartment door. We
see on his phone that was the last message.

Silence.

Ben pounds on the door.

INT. RUTHIE'S APARTMENT

Ruthie walks to the living room.

RUTHIE

Who is it?

BEN

It's Ben.

No response.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ruthie...

RUTHIE

What?

BEN

Oh. Hey. Uh... actually now that I'm
here I have no idea what I'm going to
say.

On Ruthie... Pause.

RUTHIE

Yeah, but say something, anyway!

BEN

What?

RUTHIE

Figure it out! Say something!

BEN

Um... are you going to let me in?

RUTHIE

No.

BEN

Say "Door Open."

RUTHIE

Nope. "Door Stay Closed No Matter What."

BEN

Okay. Um... You're really not going to let me in?

RUTHIE

No I am not. Come on, you can do it. You're very good at this.

Ben thinks...

BEN

Okay... I think leaving a long time ago was the right choice.

RUTHIE

(disgusted)
What?

BEN

I think it's too easy to say that leaving was the wrong choice. I think it's too easy to say I escaped.

Beat. ON Ruthie.

BEN (CONT'D)

I made the choice that I was supposed to make at that moment. Because when I left I was dumb as dog shit. And I needed to leave so I could come back, and no longer be dumb as dog shit and really be with you and say this: Ruthie... who you are is far more interesting than who I want you to be.

Beat. Ruthie smiles.

BEN (CONT'D)

When you brutally dumped me at your house the other day, you said I didn't remember the bad times too, but I do remember them. I just think we weren't ready for each other then. But now we are. We were good together then, but we're great together now.

RUTHIE

You think this is the ideal version of us?

BEN

Yeah.

RUTHIE

Me in my 70's and you unfrozen back into your 40's and we're both gonna die in a year?

BEN

It does seem a bit unorthodox when you put it that way, but yes. One hundred percent. It's really quite unique!

Pause.

RUTHIE

Anything else?

BEN

No. I think that's it.

RUTHIE

Okay.

BEN

Are you gonna let me in?

RUTHIE

No.

BEN

Why?

Pause...

RUTHIE

Because, and don't take this the wrong way, I never want to look at you again.

BEN

Kinda hard not to take that the wrong way.

RUTHIE

Well I'm sorry, but you don't get to do this. Even though you're saying the perfect thing in these two minutes, we both know that we're really the people we become when I let you in this door. And I can't risk throwing away the time I have left.

(MORE)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

If I stay and it doesn't work out, then I'm just dead. If I leave now I have the hope of something normal to come back to.

BEN

Do you really believe that life would make you happier than this one?

RUTHIE

Maybe not. But I can't take that chance. Because if I screw it up, or you screw it up, it'll just end up being a shit year. And I don't have time for a shit year, Ben.

BEN

Neither do I, but I'm here.

RUTHIE

Well, I guess if you'd actually lived your life the last forty years you'd understand why you shouldn't be.

Beat. Wow.

BEN

Okay, you know what... Door Open!

RUTHIE

The door does not respond to your voice because the door is smart.

CLOSE ON BEN, who leans his head against the door.

BEN

I got your messages, Ruthie. All of them. I promised myself I wasn't gonna tell you I got them, but now I want you to know. I love you. I don't give a fuck if you don't say it back.

Silence.

BEN (CONT'D)

THIS DID NOT GO HOW I THOUGHT IT WOULD GO!

INT. THE MET--THE NEXT DAY

Ruthie sits in her usual spot, looking at the Degas. She has the bag she was packing on the ground next to her. Someone enters. It's Tom. He's dressed nice.

TOM

Adam said you were coming here before the hospital.

RUTHIE

What can I say. I'm sentimental.

She scoots over. Tom sits. Ruthie looks at him.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Why are you dressed so nice?

TOM

Date.

RUTHIE

I'm jealous.

TOM

Good.

RUTHIE

You gonna try to convince me to stay.

TOM

You know I'm not the one who can do that.

Pause.

RUTHIE

I'm sorry, Tom.

TOM

For?

RUTHIE

The way I was in our marriage. Half in, half out.

TOM

Yeah...

RUTHIE

Does it help to know that I was like that because I loved you so much.

TOM

Not really.

RUTHIE

You deserved better. And then we got divorced...

(MORE)

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

and I was never able to not have you around so I was a bad ex-wife, too.

TOM

I disagree with that. I could've left. Cut all contact with you, just focused on Adam... I knew what I was doing.

Pause.

TOM (CONT'D)

You know what the difference is between me and Ben?

RUTHIE

You're better at sex.

TOM

Thank you. You have no idea how much that means to me. But the biggest difference is, when you're feeling lost, you don't go to La Vara, you come to the MET.

Back at the painting.

RUTHIE

Ben exhausts me.

TOM

Maybe you need to be exhausted.

Off her reaction...

EXT. THE MET--CONTINUOUS

SHOT OF RUTHIE LEAVING THE MET

SHOT OF HER GETTING INTO A CAR

GOING TO THE HOSPITAL.

CHECKING IN.

INT. WAITING ROOM

It's the same waiting room Ben was in. Ruthie sits across from a MAN, mid 30s. She just stares at this man.

MAN

I feel you staring at me.

RUTHIE

I'm sorry.

MAN

It's okay. This is all so fucking weird. What do you have?

RUTHIE

Munich's Disease.

MAN

Potkul's Disease.

RUTHIE

Bad?

MAN

I'm here.

RUTHIE

Right.

MAN

How long you going up there?

RUTHIE

26.2 Years.

MAN

Same.

Beat. Ruthie just looks at him...and then...

RUTHIE

Leaving anyone behind?

MAN

...no one, really.

RUTHIE

Nice try.

MAN

Okay... I'm leaving a girl.

RUTHIE

Why?

MAN

Because she won't care that I'm gone.

RUTHIE

Do you *honestly* feel that way?

MAN
Honestly?

RUTHIE
Yes.

MAN
Sometimes I really do.

And Ruthie believes him. Understands him.

The man goes back to reading. Ruthie can't take her eyes off of him. And then:

RUTHIE
Don't go.

MAN
What?

RUTHIE
Don't go...

No response from the Man.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)
She loves you.

MAN
My heart's broken. I don't want to die heartbroken.

Ruthie sighs and nods her head. Right, of course.

MAN (CONT'D)
What?

ON RUTHIE.

ON THE MAN.

ON RUTHIE. WE PUSH IN ON HER FACE.

INT. HOSPITAL

The following sequence pretty much happens in silence.

We see Ruthie in the waiting room. She gets called.

We see the procedure Ben went through in short clips:

Ruthie getting her shots.

Ruthie going into surgery to have the divots removed from her chest.

And then Ruthie is led into the pod room.

When she sees the pod her face becomes uncertain.

The pod is positioned perfectly in the middle of the room, with two exits on either side, a middle of the road choice between two definitive ones.

The sound slowly fades away so the activity around her is completely silent. Ruthie looks at the pod.

She slowly closes her eyes as we....

CUT TO

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT

Ben watches the History Flash Drive as he eats a burger.

V.O.

And that concludes all major developments while you were frozen, but always remember, no account of history can truly be trusted and inevitably benefits whomever was in power at the time--

He clicks it off, takes a bite of a burger.

BEN

Good fucking burger.

CHEF

I do a good a burger.

BEN

Yes you do.

He takes another bite.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm so sad, and I want to die!

CHEF

Want another burger?

BEN

Yes, please!

There is a knock at the door.

BEN (CONT'D)

Door Open.

And Ruthie enters. Ben is shocked. Ruthie is holding flowers.

BEN (CONT'D)

Are you real?

RUTHIE

I didn't want to leave without saying
goodbye.

Ben notices the hospital band still on her wrist. She goes
into the kitchen.

BEN

What time do you leave?

RUTHIE (FROM KITCHEN)

Later.

Ruthie exits the kitchen with the flowers in a vase. She puts
the vase in the same spot as she did earlier in the film.

Something about the act seems very "I'm settling in."

She sits next to him on the couch.

RUTHIE (CONT'D)

Ben... It better not be a shit year.

Pause.

BEN

I mean, we are going to die.

RUTHIE

Dying stuff aside.

BEN

Sure...

He looks into her eyes.

BEN (CONT'D)

It won't be.

He reaches out his hand.

She waits.

And then takes it.

We see a TWO SHOT of them, sitting in the same spot they were in at the very beginning of the movie.

RUTHIE

I am more afraid of being with you
than being sent into outer space.

Beat.

BEN

I'll take it.

And then Ruthie moves a little closer to Ben so that there is very little space between them.

CUT TO BLACK.

And then...

The Lark Ascending plays...

And we begin to see Ben and Ruthie's last year together. In moments:

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - MORNING

Ben opens the curtains and wakes Ruthie up. The morning light streams in. She's grumpy and it makes him smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM

They drink coffee and read on the patio. It's calm and nice. They share a glance and smile.

EXT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - EVENING

They laugh and eat a meal in an outdoor garden patio. Ruthie tells a story and Ben hangs on her every word. The lights sparkle and reflect off of her earrings.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

They play golf on a double date with Tom and Lisa. All seem happy. No one can play golf for shit.

INT. BATHROOM - HOME

Ben and Ruthie line up their meds and take them together like they're doing shots, grossed out but laughing.

EXT. PARK - DAY

They take a carriage ride through the city. They both hate it.

INT. VINTAGE STORE - DAY

Ruthie buys the turquoise boots.

She wears them out of the store. They fit just right.

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - NIGHT

They play video games on the old game system Ben's dad got him as a kid.

They smoke a joint as Ben chats effusively with the hologram chef and eats the shit out of a burger.

Ruthie gets way too into the game and starts shooting everything.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

We see them in what appears to be a desert...

We spin around to reveal that they are indeed finally visiting THE PYRAMIDS.

They look around and see there are lots of trams here too. Kinda ruins the view?

Ruthie unenthusiastically snaps a picture.

INT. TRAM - LATER

They ride a tram past the tops of pyramids as the sun sets. Ruthie rests her head on Ben's shoulder and they watch them go by.

And then only we see the pyramids, getting smaller through the back window behind them.

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - DAY

Back home. They quietly and separately sit and read in the afternoon.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Ben does a treatment at the hospital. He looks shaky. Ruthie takes care of him.

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben, looking a little better, tries to get Ruthie to cook dinner with him, but she's still like 'fuck no'.

She gets a little upset for a moment. Ben says it's okay. No fights.

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - LATER

Ben cooks it by himself. He plates it and brings it out to her at the dining table.

She smiles at him, they kiss.

INT. FANCY LOOKING ROOM - DAY

Ruthie helps Adam tie a bowtie. Everyone is gussied up. She touches her son's face, so proud of him.

EXT. WEDDING HALL - DAY

Ruthie and Tom walk Adam down the aisle at his wedding.

Ben and Lisa are there.

The parents give Adam away together.

The couple reads their vows. It's beautiful and full of love.

Ruthie mother/son dances with Adam as all look on.

Tom slaps Ben on the back too hard, but then hugs him and starts crying.

LATER - Ben and Ruthie sit in the back of the room as everyone dances. They look happy but tired. Ben helps her up and they start to make their quiet exit. Ruthie looks back one more time to look at Adam.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Now Ruthie is being treated at the hospital. Ben takes care of her this time. He tries to be funny and she tries to smile at it.

INT. BATHROOM - HOME

They take their meds. Not sad, just normal for them now.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Ben and Ruthie go on a walk. Ben has to sit.

Later they walk more and Ruthie has to sit.

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - NIGHT

They do a big puzzle. Ruthie wears her readers. Ben looks at her lovingly when she doesn't notice.

INT. THEIR APARTMENT - NIGHT

They throw a big dinner. Tom, Lisa, Adam, Laura and others are there.

We can see that Ben and Ruthie are both weaker now. Thinner. But smiling. Happy to be surrounded by loved ones. They look at each other and smile.

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

Ben and Ruthie, bundled up, sit on a blanket and watch the sun set behind the ocean.

Birds soar through the sky above them, floating on the wind.

They hold each other's hand...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

We hear the sound of two heart monitors beeping, out of step.

We slowly push into the room but don't see who is lying in the two beds neatly situated side by side.

The beeping continues, changes it's rhythm slightly...

Light streams in through the open windows and the thin white curtains gently blow in the breeze.

A postcard-size print of "The Dancing Class" leans on the bedside table.

And then... the beeps sync up.

Finally, perfectly, beating as one.

End.