

Square love in a round hole.

written by

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FADE IN

INT. HOUSE - DAY

JAMES SOUTHPORT, 41, tall athletic build, wearing an urban planning themed t-shirt. Stares while biting finger nails. Holds a mailed letter addressed to him.

MANTLE PIECE

Photos of James with an attractive brunette. Happier days.

JAMES

Stands in a bare and empty lounge. A couple of moving boxes nearby with scissors and packing tape on top. All boxes are perfectly labelled.

He stuffs letter in his pocket. He picks up a bin next to him and walks to the mantle piece. With one sweeping motion he slides his arm along the mantle and pushes all the photos into the bin. He ties up the bin bag.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

James very neatly places moving boxes in his SUV. On the way back to house he slams the garbage bag of photos in the outside bin. He stands at front door, puts key in lock and pauses. Looks at garbage bin and then slowly locks door. He turns around, yells and drops key.

JAMES

Shit! Geez Nick. Freak me out. Way to give a guy a heart attack.

NICK MATSY, 35, unkept. Nick holds beer bottles in his hand.

NICK

One for the road friend. I'll miss solving the worlds problems over the back fence.

James gets the key and sits on porch. Nick sits too.

JAMES

Cheers Nick.

They open beers and drink.

NICK

I thought you were all talk James.

JAMES

It's been over a year. I need this. Monica said I should move on. Try something spontaneous. Take risks. Try something new.

NICK

So try a new beer. You don't have to leave. And who listens to their ex wife anyway?

JAMES

I'm listening to the qualified counsellor part, not the evil bitch that's impossible to please part.

NICK

You're gonna die professionally. There's nothing there. It's not for a city mouse like you.

JAMES

I'm not making a difference here anymore. The new park at the old bus depot was the last real thing I did. Time to get out of the chair and give someone else a crack.

NICK

Just can't believe you're going. You don't do anything without a list or a gant chant. Your pantry is practically in barcode order.

JAMES

I know it's a shock. I still haven't even found a place to live yet. I'm just gonna wing it. It's exciting. I can see why people live like this.

NICK

You know wherever you go James, you're there too.

James blankly looks at Nick.

JAMES

Thank you Nick. I'll try and remember that.

James clinks his bottle on Nicks.

INT. CAR - DAY

James drives through the city. Soaks it in for one last time. He slows past a building that reads *Granville City Council*. James give a salute and continues driving.

EXT. PARK - DAY

James on car bonnet. Stares out at a beautiful park with playground equipment being enjoyed by people and families. An old bus is set up a display as reminder of the old depot. There is a lake and a bike track that meanders around. To the side are modern townhouses.

James takes off his sunglasses and smiles.

JAMES
(to himself)
and they said it wouldn't work.

EXT. CAR - DAY

We see James drive out of the city and through country side as sunsets.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

James finishes an energy drink and neatly lines it up on passenger seat with the rest of the empty cans and turns up music.

EXT. PETROL STATION - DAY

James sits on car bonnet in carpark and eats hamburger. He's unshaven, a bit disheveled. He people watches as he eats. He walks to the bin and places his rubbish in it but then spends several minutes picking up all the rubbish laying around on the ground and puts that in the bin too.

The cashier inside the petrol station notices and places her hands together in the prayer shape and mouths thank you to him. James looks up and smile at her.

EXT. CAR - DAY

James drives past the '*Welcome to Mansfield*' sign.

EXT./INT CAR - DAY

James slowly drives through the town. He looks dismayed. It's a hard looking town with lots of concrete little greenery. Bins are broken and occasional shop empty or boarded up. People walk around but there is no vibrancy about the place.

James turns down another street. There's a fountain feature in the town square area which could be a really nice place but it's lacking love and looks twenty years out of date.

EXT. PETROL STATION - DAY

James fills his car up. He notices a flyer taped to bowser. He takes off his sunglasses.

Save Potter Street playground! Council want to sell the playground land. Don't let them. Community meeting Wednesday night, 7.30pm - Community Hall.

He looks up and notices a beautiful but run down old church across the road that is fenced off. The grounds are overgrown with long weeds and grass.

INT. PETROL STATION - DAY

A woman in her 60s behind counter. James gives her the cash and puts the change in the charity box.

PETROL STATION CASHIER
You look like you need the money.

JAMES
(rubbing his unshaven
face)
Three day drive. How long has that
church been shut?

PETROL STATION CASHIER
Maybe five years. Why? You need to
confess some sins?

JAMES
It'll make a great cafe or gallery
or something. Don't you think?

PETROL STATION CASHIER
There's one in Horseshoe Bay.

JAMES
Oh. I am actually going there now.
Looking at a house there.

PETROL STATION CASHIER
Well la-di-da.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

James stands in a large empty lounge room of a modern townhouse. He juggles a set of keys in his hand. A very attractive Real Estate Agent is with him.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
So what do think? You'd be the first tenant. Not far from the ocean. Modern. Clean. New -

JAMES
- Pricey.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
Well I can always find you something in Mansfield. You'd be closer to work but you'd be.. well in Mansfield. You'd struggle to find anything like this there.

JAMES
It's def a bit of me. Ok, the Removal guys have been hanging onto my things for a few days now. I'll give them the address.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
I'll get the papers from the car.

She steps in a bit closer.

REAL ESTATE AGENT (CONT'D)
You know, I love how at night you can hear the ocean. I love laying in bed and listening to that. Maybe you can let me know when your bed arrives?

JAMES
It's a single.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
Really?

JAMES
No. I was just trying to politely turn down your offer.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

James open cupboards. He's wearing a suit and shaven. The fridge and walls are adorned with posters ranging from social club events to upcoming training, staff Christmas show photos and reminders to wash your dishes.

MILLIE HARKETT, 35, walks in wearing classy office attire and holding her lunch. A uniquely attractive Kate Winslet type brunette with large eyes and flowing hair. She probably wouldn't be the first choice for a lot of guys when they scan a room but there is something about her.

MILLIE

Looking for something?

JAMES

Oh hey. Hi. I'm the new town planner. James Southport. Um... The HR Manager -

MILLIE

Carol. Her name is Carol.

JAMES

Right Carol. She told me to get a coffee and she'd meet me here to begin my induction and onboarding. But I can't find the coffee. This jar's empty. Guess I failed the first task hey.

No reaction. Other staff walk through kitchen and put lunches in fridge.

MILLIE

Leanne does a kitchen stocktake every Monday. She'll be here shortly and make the necessary purchases.

Millie puts her lunch in fridge. James tries to say something but more staff flow into the kitchen. When they clear. Millie has left.

CAROL SHUTE, 55, shoulder length grey hair with glasses enters. She has several gold bangles on her wrist and big hooped earrings.

CAROL

Good you found the kitchen James. Follow me, we'll start with meeting some big wigs, some staff, then your team.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

I've got a heap of papers for you to sign and we need to get you up to speed on our IT and oh, I'll also show you where you'll be working. Right follow me.

INT. HALLWAY - OFFICE

A long hallway of glazed office partitions. Phones ring. People talk.

Carol points behind them.

CAROL

That's one of three photocopy stations. You'll need an approval to print in color. No homers. Understand. Print your kids photos or restaurant menus on your own damn printer. Ok, first up the CEO Andrew.

ANDREW'S OFFICE

Boring out of date office with dying indoor plants. Large maps, charts and whiteboard on the wall. James and Carol sit at ANDREW DOLSONOV'S desk. It has numerous paper trays, computer, and a name plaque that reads "CEO".

Andrew, 63, receding hair, bushy eyebrows, rotund face. Cheap suit with no tie.

CAROL

One of the other things that stood out in the interview is his creative approach to some of our planning issues. I think James has a lot of tools in the tool box we can use.

ANDREW

We look forward to that. Some of these planning issue are fast becoming problem children and we've been down a senior planner for sometime.

Swivels in chair and looks at James.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

It's not often we have someone from the city come to little old Mansfield Council. It's usually the reverse. What's the deal?

JAMES

Just time for a change. I was getting bogged down in endless policy reviews and meetings the more I climbed the ladder.

James perks up in chair

JAMES (CONT'D)

Plus I really see planning as..... ministry for want of a better word. It's ministry to the community. To be able to provide a liveable and vibrant place and give people parks and schools and walking tracks and business and tourism opportunities. I think -

ANDREW

- Well we definitely need more factories and industries to return. This place was booming in the mid 70s. We gotta get back to that. More jobs right. There'll be time for parks and making things pretty later.

JAMES

Umm, Right. Well maybe some new technologies and clean emerging industries.

ANDREW

I've got Doug our Economic Development Manager and local Chamber of Commerce President travelling everywhere trying to sell this place. A few government grants, some pressure on the Councilors to give some rate relief and we'll have the three shift factories back in no time. That's where I need you to give Doug and his team your full support with all the land rezones and we need fast approval turnarounds for these ventures. I don't mind if you... how do I say this...

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 overlook some minor matters in your
 assessment to get an approval in
 the interest of jobs.

James looks at Carol.

JAMES
 Right.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

People walk past. Carol looks sheepish.

JAMES
 (whispering)
 You're kidding me right.

CAROL
 I know what you're thinking. I've
 just sold up my whole life and a
 great paying job to come here and
 I've been sold a lie. I assure you
 that's not the case. We need
 someone like you here. Desperately.
 There's plenty of other like minded
 people here too. They just may not
 be so open about it to start with.

JAMES
 Look I can see this town has some
 potential. I mean sure, the place
 needs some love but why are we
 going back to a fordist dinosaur
 era? You said I'd be working on
 town improvements, new housing sub-
 divisions, bike lanes, positive
 rezones, new civic buildings,
 tourism, street renewals, new parks
 -

CAROL (WHSIPERING)
 - Sssh...You will. There's just a
 few... ideology differences up top
 in this place at the moment. But
 you can help change that.

James lets out frustrating sigh. Shake his head a bit.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 Look we're all kinda hoping he's
 going to retire soon. What are you
 worried about anyway?
 (MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

Do you really think anything he wants will ever get any traction? Seriously? So just let him waffle. What does it hurt? He's not a bad guy, he's just an old calendar.

James does not look happy.

CAROL (CONT'D)

You said in the interview you wanted to make a difference right?

JAMES

Yeah.

CAROL

Help turn the ship around.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Small room. Staff desks are close together and filing cabinets and storage shelves eat up the left over real estate. Messy and chaotic feel.

There's a long front customer service counter to the side.

CAROL

Good Morning everyone. I'd like to introduce you to our new Senior Town Planner James. This is the engine room James. This team do all the customer service, phone calls, records management and everything in between. This is DAVID FRASER

David, 30s, chubby, untucked business shirt with no tie and unkept hairstyle. God, does anyone take any pride here? Comes out from behind his messy desk which houses empty Diet Coke cans. David and James shake hands.

DAVID

Welcome aboard.

JAMES

Thanks.

DAVID

Nice threads. Where you from?

JAMES

Granville.

DAVID
Big smoke. Running from the law?

JAMES
Country air, more beach walks and
less time stuck in traffic appealed
to me.

CAROL
This is REBECCA ROMLENO.

23, blonde with bright red lipstick and finger nails. More
influencer than receptionist. She waves and gives a big
smile.

REBECCA
Hi James. Welcome. I'll probably be
the one putting calls to you so
I'll guess we'll be speaking to
each other a lot in the future.

Rebecca gives a playful smile.

JAMES
Right.

CAROL
SAMANTHA TROVE

SAMANTHA
I'll shake your hand.

Samantha, 45, short, glasses and serious looking like a
school principal. She leans over her desk with hand extended.
James shake her hand.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Nice to meet you James. My son is a
James so no excuses if I forget
your name.

JAMES
I know I'm going to forget a lot of
names.

SAMANTHA
You'll be fine. In a week you'll
know everyone. You'll probably be
asked to join every sports club and
buy every school fundraiser cake or
chocolate. I'm the team leader of
this group, if you have any
questions then let me know.

JAMES

Thanks Samantha. Good to know.

SAMANTHA

Sam is fine too.

CAROL

Lastly is Millie Harkett.

Millie turns around from her computer. She gives a forced but beautiful smile. She is definitely best dressed in the building.

JAMES

We met in the kitchen. I just didn't catch your name before.

CAROL

Millie only works Monday and Tuesdays. She job shares with her friend TAMEKA who'll you'll meet later in the week.

JAMES

Oh, you work somewhere else?

MILLIE

Teacher's aid. Primary school.

Millie stares at David.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

So I'm constantly surrounded by children.

David lets out a jovial laugh.

DAVID

Oh you love it.

JAMES

So you must be busy with two -

CAROL

Ok Let's go meet your team James. I've got meetings shortly - gosh my life is just meetings - so we can continue meeting the other staff after lunch and getting your IT sorted. Meanwhile you can start building your desk.

JAMES

My desk?

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James and Carol stand over a cardboard box on the floor.

CAROL

It was supposed to arrive last week
and be set up for you. But... you
know. Leave you to it.

Carol exits the room. Two other staff stare at him from their desks. SIMON TOFFMORE, 22 a skinny wiry guy with side burns wearing a carton themed tie, white business shirt and jeans. MELISSA AGOSTINI, 25, fit, pretty, ponytail and wearing business pants with active wear top.

JAMES

You must be my team. Simon and
Melissa I'm guessing.

SIMON

Hey

MELISSA

Welcome

JAMES (CONT'D)

Good to meet you both. Naturally
you have expectations about your
boss and I have expectations about
my team so once I'm settled in how
about we get a coffee or do a lunch
and start on the right foot hey.
Set some standards. We can talk
about what's on your plate and you
can bring me up to speed on things.

SIMON

It's great to finally get a senior.
I'm just a graduate dude, I mean
man, James. This is my first job.
They didn't teach me about half the
stuff I do here everyday. I'm
flying blind here man. I've...I've
just been parking stuff, hoping no-
one asks...I got so many
applications... and how do I start
these sub-divisions...I..I'm

JAMES

Hey Settle. We'll get to it all.
Just chill. We'll step our way
through the backlog ok. We're
planners.

James sees the area is neat and minimalist with pot plants
along window wall.

Simon and Melissa's desks are very neatly organized. All the shelves and paper trays have labels. Everything where it should be.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You guys are definitely planners.

MELISSA

What do you want us do?

JAMES

Just exactly what you've been doing for now. I'll build my desk and then we can maybe get that coffee. Secondly, lose the active wear. It's an office.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James on his back screwing desk panels together. A small tool box and instructions lay next to him. His tie is loose and sleeves up. He has some screws in his mouth.

JAMES POV

A set of female legs arrive.

He gets up from under the desk. Millie stand holding a lot of files.

MILLIE

You're still not finished?

JAMES

I'm a planner, not a handyman.

MILLIE

You don't say.

JAMES

As long as I don't have to build my own computer.

James chuckles. Nothing from Millie. No response. Millie drops the files from shoulder height on the desk with a thud. Desk wobbles.

MILLIE

I just hope you built it correctly. There's plenty more coming.

EXT. COUNCIL BUILDING - DAY

Tired 1980s type building complete with flag poles. It's set next to a bare but manicured large grassed reserve with ever green trees along the perimeter. Staff leave for their cars.

COUNCIL CARPARK

James walks to his car. He frustratingly loosens his tie, unlocks the car and harshly throws his laptop bag on the passenger seat.

INT. CAR - DAY

James starts the car and checks rear vision mirror.

REAR VISION MIRROR

Millie leaves the building and walks through carpark.

James stops himself from watching.

EXT. CAR - DAY

James drives through beautiful farm areas and enters Horseshoe Bay as the sun sets.

It's an upmarket coastal town nice amenities, parks, a lovely beachside promenade with cafes, shops and long jetty. James drives down the promenade and turns down a street to a row of very nice architectural two storey townhouses.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

James lays on couch drinking beer. A lamp on the floor provides basic lighting. Unopened boxes around the lounge and no furnishings or details in the room. He stares at ceiling. He runs his hands through his hair and lets out a long 'oh boy' breathe.

He reaches over and takes mailed letter that sits on top of a box. He twirls it around his hands.

BACK OF ENVELOPE

Sender: Monica Talbot.

He opens the envelope. Something drops from it onto his lap. He opens the letter inside.

ON LETTER

Good luck James. You might now be my "was-bund" but I wish you all the best. Love Monica.

James picks up the item from his lap. It's a bookmark. One one side is a picture of beautiful flower blossoming in the desert. On the other side it reads '*Bloom where you're planted.*'

JAMES
(to himself)
Yeah be spontaneous James. Fuck you
Monica. Fuck me.

He rolls over and goes to sleep.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James types on computer. Wears a nice suit and tie. Desk is neatly organized. Andrew walks past.

ANDREW
You look like you've settled in
well. Got through your first week
ok?

JAMES
Fine thanks. We're starting to
catch up on the housing
applications so that's good. Making
some people happy.

ANDREW
There's a Council meeting on
tonight and I'd like you to come
along and meet the Councillors and
Mayor. It starts at seven.

James' phone rings. Moves to answer it.

JAMES
Sure. I'll finish here around 5.30,
get some dinner here in town and
I'll be there at 6.50.

ANDREW
Spoken like a true planner.

INT. COUNCIL ENTRANCE FOYER AREA - DAY

TRAVIS VETI, 35, large rough looking man with scruffy beard, flannelette shirt and dirty cap walks to front counter. He repeatedly presses bell and looks over counter.

TRAVIS

Who do I have to screw to get some service around here?

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Millie, dressed smartly, sheepishly stands up and walks to counter.

TRAVIS

(to the staff in office)

Good thing I'm already screwing this one hey.

COUNTER

MILLIE

What are you doing here?

TRAVIS

Living the dream. You gotta find your own way home tonight. Gonna do the arvo shift as well.

MILLIE

Afternoon shift. Again.

TRAVIS

Hey I don't like it either but we gotta pay for your car repairs somehow and who knows how much longer before they take a shift away.

MILLIE

There's other factories.

TRAVIS

(raised voice)

You think I like doin' this factory shit? We can't all have our dream job you know.

Other staff look on with interest.

MILLIE

Keep it down. When do I see you? It's not just another shift Travis, there's always something. The other night was Ronald -

TRAVIS

- Hey Ronald needed his car fixed.

MILLIE

And last weekend you went out with
Dion and your friends and got
wasted.

TRAVIS

Why are you still pissed about
that? So I can't have friends?
What's your problem Millie?

MILLIE

Nothing.

TRAVIS

Look I'll make it up to you.
Promise. We'll have the crew around
for shed drinks and we can have
some fun together then. Oh, that
reminds me. Can you pick up some
beers.

MILLIE

Sure.

TRAVIS

I'll see ya back home whenever ok
and I'll drive ya to work tomorrow.

MILLIE

Whatever.

TRAVIS

Fine. Whatever.

Travis leaves in a huff.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Millie walks quickly back to her desk and starts typing hard.

SAMANTHA

Everything ok with Travis?

MILLIE

Fine.

SAMANTHA

You must be coming up to your
anniversary of being together soon.
Must be like 17 or 18 years. I
remember because it's always around
my husband's birthday.

MILLIE
It was last weekend.

James enters carrying files.

REBECCA
Hey James. You look good today.

JAMES
Ummm, thanks Rebecca. How are you?

DAVID
Hey 'big smoke'. I hear you're renting one of those fancy townhouses on the golf course down at Horseshoe Bay. They must be paying you more than they're paying me.

JAMES
Well there was nothing much available in Mansfield.

DAVID
Not much available for you or not much good enough for you?

James looks unimpressed.

JAMES
I like the half hour or so drive. Good thinking time. Be good on the motorbike.

REBECCA
Cool you've got a motorbike. You'll have to take me out on it. Please. Please James. Just once.

JAMES
Umm... Well... I'll think about it.

DAVID
You know that developer was gunna build that golf resort here.

JAMES
Really?

DAVID
Councillors voted it down. Horseshoe Bay jumped at the chance for some revitalisation and told the developer he was welcome there.

JAMES

It's not over for this place yet.
You should come down for a beer one
time. Come see how the other half
live.

James gives a cheeky smile and walks to Millie's desk.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Good Morning Millie.

She doesn't look up.

MILLIE

James.

James slams the files on desk with a thud as she did to him.

JAMES

Question. I've gone through these
property files but these last two
files make reference to some land
contamination and refer to files
called...

James quickly flicks through a file.

JAMES (CONT'D)

... ER/2021-44 and ER/2021-58...
but I can't find these "ER" files
anywhere. I went to records room
but no luck.

Millie abruptly stands and crashes into James. They awkwardly
'dance' as she tries to push past. James looks amused. Millie
is unimpressed.

MILLIE

Follow me.

HALLWAY

JAMES

How was your weekend?

MILLIE

'ER files' are environment report
files and usually done by third
party like the EPA or a consultant.
For whatever reason they're not
kept in the property file.

(MORE)

MILLIE (CONT'D)

They were kept in the records room until about there months ago when we needed more space and they moved here.

Millie and James stop in front of a door labelled '*Archives Compactus*'

COMPACTUS ROOM

A large white room with filing compactus cabinets on rails that run the length of the room.

MILLIE

All these files need to be scanned into our new digital system. Someone's job one day. Not mine.

JAMES

My weekend was good. Thanks for asking.

Millie glares at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Man, lots of files here.

MILLIE

They're really old and more for historical value than anything else. They're not working files. Those are in the general library or in the digital records system. But once a file reaches its end date, it legally has to be archived and stored here.

Millie walks to a small desk with a computer.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You type in the file number or keywords, it will tell you which compactus it's stored in.

Millie motions to James.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

I'm not your Personal Assistant.

James starts typing.

JAMES

So have you worked here long?

A pause.

MILLIE
Twelve years.

JAMES
And at the school?

MILLIE
Same.

JAMES
Which do you like best? I mean if either place offered you a full time job what would you choose?

MILLIE
You know no-one's ever asked me a question like that before? I like both jobs for different reasons.

JAMES
Ok, it says compactus seven.

They walk to the compactus cabinets.

MILLIE
Just slide the compactuses across to get to the row you need. They're pretty heavy. I usually just move them one at-

James grabs a handle and pushes six compactness all at one to the end of the rail.

JAMES
There. Compactus seven.

Millie looks surprised but impressed.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Muscles are like cleavage. You just get them out when you need them.

Millie gives a shy but friendly smile and rolls her eyes.

MILLIE
So now you just need the box number that the computer gave you as well.

James walks into the compactus to find the box.

JAMES
But you've lived here your whole
life right?

MILLIE
Except for going away for
university.

JAMES
Most people don't come back when
they leave a small town.

James pulls down a box.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm sure people are very happy you
came back though. Big people and
those little people.

James carries box to the table.

JAMES (CONT'D)
So why primary school?

MILLIE
I think you've asked enough
questions.

James looks through the archive box. Millie's watches on.

MILLIE (CONT'D)
You know most people don't move to
a small town. They leave them.

James pulls out a file and precisely places the lid back on
the box. Checks it over.

JAMES
I was just spinning my wheels where
I was professionally and personally
for that matter. I had just
recently got -

A female staff member walks in.

STAFF MEMBER
Oh hey, I just need a file.

JAMES
All good. We're done here I think.

James taps the box.

RECEPTION AREA

Millie walks in and promptly sits back at her desk. Straight back into typing.

REBECCA

So Millie, what do ya think?

SAMANTHA

Bec. No.

REBECCA

I'm just saying he seems nice. Quick before David gets back, what did you and James talk about?

MILLIE

Nothing.

REBECCA

That's all? You didn't find out anything? He seems interesting. Sam don't you think he's interesting?

MILLIE

Then you get to know him.

REBECCA

I'm not saying you should trade in Travis, I'm just saying -

MILLIE

- You don't know what you're saying Bec.

SAMANTHA

Hey c'mon. Back to work ladies. But I agree, it's nice to have someone half alright to look at it and who can articulate a sentence. Let's hope he stays. Don't scare him off Bec.

KITCHEN

James washes his lunch dishes in sink. He dries his hands and looks at his watch.

TOM WOOLSTON (O.C.)

It's a bad sign when you're count'n down the hours to home time.

James looks up to see Tom, 54, a very tall muscular man with an infectious smile and tattooed arms.

TOM

Hey, I'm Tom Woolston. How are you?

James shakes Tom's hand.

JAMES

James Southport.

TOM

I didn't get to meet you last week

Tom makes himself a coffee.

JAMES

So Tom, umm, what do you do here?

TOM

Oh I work in contracts and procurement. I buy all the graders and tractors and trucks and computers and God knows what else for this place.

Tom opens the fridge.

TOM (CONT'D)

For fucks sake.

Slams fridge door shut.

TOM (CONT'D)

Unfortunately milk is not one of the things I purchase.

Tom turns to face James.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm used to buying missiles and helicopters. I was in the Navy for twenty plus years doing procurement. Been here the past ten but I grew up here. So if you need to know any dirt on anyone, I'm your man.

Tom throws his coffee down the sink and slaps James on the side of the arm.

TOM (CONT'D)

Okay, cafe coffee it is then. Good to meet you.

JAMES
Yeah you too.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Car clock says 6.50. He opens car door and enters the rain.

CARPARK

James runs in the rain and notices Travis in a rough pick up truck drinking beer.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Noisy and crowded with people standing and talking in small groups. The room is large with wood paneling walls displaying photos of past Mayors and Councillors.

A large u-shaped table arrangement with leather chairs dominates the room. Behind one leather chair are nation flags draped on the wall and other regal insignia. Rows of plain looking plastic chairs fill one end of the room.

James walks in. He stops and scans the room. Through the crowd he sees Millie and walks over to her.

JAMES
Hey. How are you?

MILLIE
Good.

James motions his hand forward in a hinting gesture for Millie to ask how he is.

JAMES
You don't bounce the ball back much do you? Though when you do it's more of a throw.

MILLIE
I throw a mean softball.

JAMES
Really. So what are you doing here?

MILLIE
The administration team are on a roster to take minutes. Tonight it's me.

Some people push past them.

JAMES

What else you gonna do on a Tuesday night hey.

Each look around the room. Awkward silence.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Kinda feels like a high school dance.

MILLIE

I wouldn't know.

Millie walks away.

James spots Andrew talking to some official looking people. One is HELEN FOX, permed and obviously dyed hair, 60s, glasses and in business attire. The other is ROMAN PETROSKI, late 50s, obese man with stern look in suit and tie.

ANDREW

Ah James. Good you made it. This is Councilor Fox and Councilor Petroski.

James shakes their hands.

JAMES

Good to met you both.

HELEN

You too James. How are you settling in?

JAMES

Just fine thanks.

ROMAN

You'll be very busy soon son if we can get some of these overseas investors over the line. Get some manufacturing. I'll be very keen to talk to you about how quick you can approve some of these projects.

JAMES

Well let's not put too much hope in the past. You have an amazing town and region and I'm sure there are lots of opportunities to revitalize the place.

Roman is taken back.

HELEN

Have you always worked in planning
Mr. Southport?

JAMES

You can call me James and yes most
of my working life in fact.

HELEN

(talking loudly over room
noise)

And what about your family?

JAMES

Sorry?

HELEN

Family. Did you move here with your
family.

JAMES

No, it's just me. I'm single. Why
do you know someone?

CUT TO

People sit in the public gallery and listen as Councilors
talk. Ten Councilors sit around the u-shaped table. Eight men
and two women. They all look in their 60s. Typical white
protestant town Councilors.

Mayor GRAHAM MALTESE, 67, a bespectacled skinny man with a
weathered face. He wears his regal robes. Millie sits at
table off to the side with a laptop.

Graham bangs the gavel.

GRAHAM

Next item on the agenda is the
bicycle issue at the library. As
you know, we have had complaints
for the past few months from the
public, many of whom are even here
in attendance tonight, regarding
kids leaving their bicycles laying
all around the library entrance.

HELEN

It's near impossible to get in and
out. My friend Jenny nearly broke
her leg stepping over them. It's so
disrespectful. These kids just
don't care.

ROMAN

I motion we ban bikes from the library grounds.

Cheers of 'here here' from other Councilors. James watches on in disbelief. A male member of the public stands upon from the gallery.

PUBLIC MEMBER

Don't just ban them. Fine the little shits.

The public gallery make noise of approval. Graham bangs on the gavel numerous times.

GRAHAM

Order, Order. Ok thank you. I think a ban is a sensible approach. We can put some signs up to that effect as well. Does anyone else have anything to say on this matter? Councilors?

JAMES (O.C.)

Why don't you just build them a bike rack?

James stands up. People turn around to see.

MILLIE

She looks up from her laptop with interest.

GRAHAM

It looks like our new Senior Planning Officer has something to say on this matter.

JAMES

Kids will never stop riding their bikes and kids will never stop coming to your library. Both of those are good things. Many of them come from homes where there are no books or maybe they can't afford internet or have their own space to quietly do their homework. And you want to deny them going to the library?

MILLIE

Her eyes light up with excitement as she listens.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wouldn't it make much more sense to just build a bike rack where they can park their bikes away from the main entrance.

ROMAN

A bike rack will just encourage more kids to ride there.

JAMES

So? What, because they don't own a house and pay rates they are not entitled to use the library? You'll put in twenty more carparks without questioning the cost at the library if needed. For the sake of a few thousand dollars put in a nice bike rack.

Millie looks at James with a big smile of approval.

EXT. COUNCIL BUILDING - NIGHT

James walks back to his car. The rain still drizzling.

CAR

James starts motor and turns heaters on and blows into his hands and rubs them. He checks his phone. Missed call from Monica.

He is about to drive away but hears some raised voices. James looks out his drivers side window.

CARPARK

Millie talks with Travis in front of his rough looking ute. He holds a beer can.

CAR

James rolls down window to hear better. Turns motor off.

CARPARK

TRAVIS

You said these things finish around nine-thirty. It's fucking nearly ten.

MILLIE

It went a bit late Travis. These meetings usually do. I told you that.

Travis throws his beer can on ground.

TRAVIS

I'm the one who has to start at six tomorrow. You know, the one with the real job. Not picking out fucking story books all day for some teacher.

MILLIE

I didn't ask you to come tonight. You said you were happy to wait in the car.

TRAVIS

You think I'm just gonna let you drive my truck into town by yourself cos your car is in the shop. No way. It's my truck. I pay the fucking bills on it. Last thing I need is you crashing it like you did with yours. Now I gotta chauffeur you around all damn week. Get in the truck, we're going home.

MILLIE

How much have you had?

CAR

Hearing that, James open his door and gets ready to go over.

TRAVIS (O.C)

Don't start your shit Millie. You're doing the driving. I've still got a few cans left to finish. Now get in.

James pauses. Stays in the car. He sits in the darkness and watches the truck slowly drive off.

INT. OFFICE HALL - DAY

Millie is about to enter Andrew's office with files but stops when she hears raised voices through the door. She moves to one side and listens.

ANDREW (O.C.)

These Councilors have been running this town for a very very long time

-

JAMES (O.C.)

- And that's part of the problem. They're happy to spend two hundred thousand sealing some back road that's used by two farmers but they wont spend twenty five hundred on a bike rack that benefits the community. You know I'm right.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - DAY

James stands while Andrew sits behind his desk. Andrew throws pen on desk.

ANDREW

There's a time and a place to be right. You spoke out of turn. The media was there for God's sake. We were all caught off guard. You have ideas, you run them past me first.

JAMES

What else was I supposed to do? Banning bikes? Really? Is this Footloose town? And what's this I hear about selling off a playground?

ANDREW

It's run down and no-one seems to use it any more.

JAMES

Local Government 101. Let something run down on purpose so no-one uses it and then say it'll cost too much to replace so we'll just take it away. Get it off the books. Sell the land.

ANDREW

Don't start your politics at me and throwing your city weight around here. You don't know shit about this place. We don't need you coming in here to save the day. I know this town. I know what it needs.

James looks at whiteboard with all the plans and notes about potential factory projects and locations.

JAMES

Am I employed to plan or just approve?

James stares sharply at Andrew.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You and these councilors needs to stop looking to the past and start looking to the future. And it starts with something as simple as a bike rack.

ANDREW

You just remember your place around here or you'll be on your bike. Understand.

INT. OFFICE HALL - DAY

James storms out of office, knocking files from Millie's hand.

JAMES

Shit. Sorry.

MILLIE

It's ok.

James helps Millie with the files.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You know James, what you said last night -

A group of staff walk past and interrupt.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

I better get these files to him.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

James bangs coffee cup down hard and rips off coffee jar lid and throws it on bench. Millie and TAMEKA EVANS walk in with a cake and bags of other foods. Tameka, 35, but looks older. She's weathered and brash with personality to match.

Tameka nearly knocks over James' coffee as she pushes through with food bags and places them on bench.

JAMES

Hang on Tameka. I'll get out of your way.

TAMEKA

Please do.

JAMES

It's not your usual day?

TAMEKA

No shit. I'm just here for morning tea for Samantha's birthday.

JAMES

You do morning tea for people's birthdays here?

TAMEKA

That's why we're all so pudgy in this place. Seems every third day is someone's birthday.

JAMES

If I stick around I better offset this place with a gym membership then. I'm guessing this town has a gym right or was it shutdown cos someone parked their bicycle out the front.

TAMEKA

I'm goin' for a smoke.

Tameka walks off. James and Millie have awkward silence.

JAMES

Right, back to work. These development applications won't get themselves approved.

James walks away.

MILLIE

James. James. Hey, I really liked your idea of a bike rack.

He turns around and leans on counter.

JAMES

Thanks. It's not just a bike rack though Millie. It's so much more than that. If we can't get something as simple as a bike rack happening than what hope do we have of getting bigger and better things and moving this place forward hey? If I can't get a win with something as small as this, there's no point me being here.

MILLIE

I think we need you so don't go.

James looks at Millie. Millie looks back. James looks around.

JAMES

(in lowered voice)

You know I've been wanting to ask you something about last night. I can't stop thinking about it. Even this morning I -

Tom enters.

TOM

How come you two are always the best dressed in this place hey?

JAMES

I actually have a theory on that.

MILLIE

I not interested in hearing your theories.

Millie pushes past Tom.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Tom.

TOM

Millie.

(to James)

TOM (CONT'D)

Well congratulations on ruffling the councillors feathers. One meeting. Usually takes people three or four.

James is about to drink from his mug.

JAMES

Cute Tom.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James sits at big table with Melissa. They look at a land division plan. James twirls a pen.

JAMES

Thoughts?

MELISSA

I'd get them to sacrifice an allotment. Create some open space.

JAMES

Good.

James draws on the plan.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And move the entrance to here.
Better line of sight for traffic.

A fire alarm sounds. They look up and around. Carol walks past with safety hat, stopwatch and megaphone.

CAROL

Go people. I want a better time than last month. Go! Let's go!

EXT. CARPARK - DAY

50-60 staff stand on a grass reserve at the end of the carpark. They talk and mingle. Some staff wear safety hats and vests and walk around with clipboards. James looks through the crowd. Spots Millie talking with Samantha.

MILLIE AND SAMANTHA

MILLIE

How much longer? I've got so much to do today. I'll miss softball training tonight the way I'm going.

SAMANTHA

At least it's not raining this time. Hey when do you get your car back?

MILLIE

End of the week. Thankfully.

SAMANTHA

I thought you and Travis would enjoy a week driving around together. Kinda romantic being dropped off and picked up. Maybe I'll hit a deer too and spend sometime with my husband.

MILLIE

I'll just be happy to be in my car. Why did they pick morning tea time?

James stands next to Millie. Holds up two muesli bars.

JAMES

I grabbed these from my desk.

Millie reluctantly takes one.

MILLIE

Thanks.

They open their wrappers. James notices her hair blowing in the wind into her face. She brushes it away.

JAMES

So softball training tonight. You been playing for a while?

MILLIE

It's always been my main sport.

JAMES

I never would have guessed you for softball. I was thinking you were more like... curling.

Millie laughs.

MILLIE

Curling. Right, down at our local ice rink.

ON TOM

He's talking with staff. He sees James and Millie talking and laughing through the crowd.

JAMES AND MILLIE

JAMES

Though you do come across as
someone who'd be pretty deadly
swinging a bat. Lot of attitude.

MILLIE

Do I now.

JAMES

I'll have to come and watch one
day. You know meet some people,
have a beer.

Carol appears in front of everyone with a megaphone.

CAROL

Thank you for your patience.
Everyone is accounted for so just a
few more minutes for the fire guys
to reset the alarms and you'll be
allowed back inside and back to
work.

Some workers in the crowd moan.

JAMES

What about coffee?

Millie snaps a look of surprise at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

No, umm, not us, I mean, where's
the best place for coffee here.
Surely you know the all the good
spots. Got a fave?

Everyone walks back to the building. James and Millie follow.

MILLIE

I like Bells and Whistles.

JAMES

Bells and Whistles. I'll give them
a go. I'll tell them you sent me.

Awkward silence as they walk back to office. James purposely
walks slow. He looks around, ensuring no-one is to close.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey listen. The other night... I'm
guessing that's your boyfriend?

MILLIE

Travis.

JAMES

Is everything ok with you and him?

They stop walking.

MILLIE

James -

JAMES

- It's just -

MILLIE

- It's just what it is James. Don't go worrying yourself. I'm not in any danger.

JAMES

I'm not implying you're in danger, I was just making sure -

MILLIE

I'm fine. Leave it.

JAMES

Does everyone else know it's like that?

MILLIE

Just quit with the questions. Talking with you is more like an interview than a conversation. And you know what? I have a theory on that too.

CAROL (O.C)

(through megaphone)

Hey slow pokes, I'm not holding the door all day.

MILLIE

Thanks for the muesli bar.

Millie turns and walks off.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A nice beach promenade with a mixture of paved and grassed areas. Norfolk pine trees line the foreshore and long wooden jetty leads out to the beautiful ocean. People are fishing from it.

Families are out enjoying the sun, people are walking dogs and jogging along the beach and promenade. Cafes are busy.

James sits on artistic style bench wearing jeans and a motorbike motif t-shirt and drinks a coffee. He has ear buds in. He stares at the ocean. Breaks into smile as he sees young kids trying to do handstands on the sand.

A cyclist in full bright green lycra rides past James. The bike SCREECHES to a halt and it backs up in front of James. The rider takes off his sunglasses.

TOM

I thought that was you James.

James takes out his ear buds.

JAMES

Tommy boy. I didn't know you ride.

TOM

I love it. I usually try and come down on a Saturday and do a coast ride. Get some fresh air. Get away from the kids.

JAMES

Yeah. I can imagine it's a good mental health ride as well as a physical one.

TOM

Don't get me wrong, they're my world but some days a sixty-five kilometer ride in a thirty kilometer head wind is more appealing. You live here don't you? In one those of nice resort townhouses back there?

JAMES

How did you know?

TOM

Small town. Give it about another four weeks and people will know your browsing history.

JAMES

Well, it must be time to move on to a beer.

James throws empty cup in a near by bin.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nice modern Scandinavian styled kitchen. Mixture of open and unpacked boxes throughout the kitchen. Some dishes and take away containers litter the sink. Tom sits at the breakfast bar and takes off his helmet. James pulls beers from the fridge, finds bottle opener, opens them and gives one to Tom. They clink bottles.

JAMES

Cheers.

TOM

And unto you.

Tom drinks and looks around James's house. Boxes, very little furnishings or personalization. Only the basics have been set up - tv, couch, stereo.

TOM (CONT'D)

How long you been with us now?

JAMES

This will be week five.

TOM

Right.

JAMES

I figure I won't unpack and set up properly until my probation period is finished. Might decide it's not for me.

TOM

Mmmm. Like to keep your bags packed just in case kinda guy hey. They call that commitment issues.

Tom drinks his beer from the bottle in one hit.

TOM (CONT'D)

But I think we both know you're not going anywhere my friend.

Tom walks around to fridge and grabs another beer and sits back on stool at breakfast bar.

TOM (CONT'D)

Millie.

James throws bottle opener to him. Tom opens bottle.

TOM (CONT'D)

Don't worry, your secret is safe with me. Though not sure why Millie. I mean she's nice in a Dana Scully kind of way, but we do have some real hotties in our office who actually say hello and aren't such a *snegurochka*.

JAMES

A *sneg* what?

TOM

Snegurochka. It's Russian for ice queen or snow maiden. I just mean James, you've picked the hardest nut to crack when there is much more lower hanging fruit man, better hanging fruit, more fun hanging fruit if that's what you're after.

JAMES

Not really my style.

TOM

I guess the heart wants what it wants hey.

JAMES

You said if I ever wanted to know anything about anyone I should ask you.

TOM

She was born here. Doesn't seem big on pleasantries, likes heavy metal music and pizza. For some reason always likes to dress very smartly, I heard she likes -

JAMES

- Not her Tom. I'd rather learn about her first hand thanks. Travis.

TOM

Travis, well.

Tom drinks from bottle.

TOM (CONT'D)

You got some food in this place?

James opens pantry and finds some chips while Tom talks.

TOM (CONT'D)

What a dick. They were high school sweethearts. He was the popular one. You know, the total jock. Absolute dick. Did I already say that? Anyway she was the nice girl but way too good for him. My wife used to teach them and I know she said at the end of year dance he was so wasted and causing fights in the carpark on arrival.

JAMES

She never made it to the dance.

TOM

He was going to join the defence force to be a mechanic or soldier or some shit. He got in too and wasn't far from leaving here. Anyway, he was being a tool on a motorbike and showing off at some party when he crashed it. Busted his knee and some back injuries so no defence force for him.

Tom eats some chips from the packet.

TOM (CONT'D)

Now he just works at whatever factory is hiring and basically spends his time drinking and being a dickhead with his other dickhead mates who think time stopped at seventeen.

JAMES

So what does she see in him? She's not like that at all.

TOM

Maybe he's secretly rich with a big penis.

James chokes on chips.

TOM (CONT'D)

She quit university and came back for him though. Back to this place.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Nothing wrong with coming back but most people when they're young and get a chance to get out are gone for a while. Know what I mean?

JAMES

Interesting.

TOM

You thinking of taking him on? I can give you some pointers from my navy days.

James walks to a box in lounge. Opens it up and rummages through it and grabs two photo frames. Walks back to kitchen.

JAMES

I'm pretty rusty these days though.

James puts one photo on breakfast bar. Tom holds it up. It's a younger James in an amateur boxing match.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And no, I'm not looking to take anyone on or break anyone up. I'm just... curious that's all. There's something about her.

James gives Tom the second photo frame. It's a photo of James on his wedding day with Monica.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Eleven years. Separated for a year or so. Just signed divorce papers. That's kinda why I took this job. Needed everything to be new. New town, new job, new challenges, new cafes, new walks, new places, new bank and internet provider. Heck even new beer. Everything had to be new. Does that make sense or I am just crazy?

Tom holds up his beer.

TOM

Well then. Here's to new.

INT. CAFE - DAY

James reads newspaper at table near large front window that overlooks the street. The cafe has a travel theme to it. Black and white photos of famous landmarks adorn walls.

One wall is labelled 'where we've been' and has random photos and postcards of local residents travel adventures.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A pick up truck hastily parks in front of the cafe. Loud music blasting from it.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Through window James sees Millie and Travis in the vehicle and can hear a muffled argument. Millie storms out of car and slams door shut. Travis speeds off.

Millie enters cafe. James keeps head down and reads newspaper while half listening.

MILLIE (O.C.)
Hey Annette.

ANNETTE (O.C.)
Millie. How are you? How's the softball team this year? How's Travis?

MILLIE (O.C.)
Good. Both good. Ummm, I'll just get a latte.

ANNETTE (O.C.)
Take away?

MILLIE (O.C.)
Actually I've got about three hours to kill so I'll have it here and read for a while.

Millie turns around and sees James at his table reading the newspaper. Without looking up, James pushes the other chair out with his feet.

TABLE

Millie sits down. James puts newspaper aside.

MILLIE (CONT'D)
What are you doing here?

JAMES
You said this place was the best.

MILLIE

There's nice cafes on the beach where you live. I can't believe you drove back here on a weekend when you're here nearly every day for work.

JAMES

I've tried all the cafes near me. Besides, this is like a work trip. I was planning to walk around the town. I haven't really done it yet and thought it would be good to do. You know, get a feel for the place and what it needs. See how people interact with the town.

James drinks his coffee.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And you're right. The coffee here is good. But more importantly what are you doing here? I'm guessing your Uber driving is only getting one star from you?

Millie is annoyed. A waitress brings her coffee.

WAITRESS

Here you go.

MILLIE

Thanks.

Millie takes a sip.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

My car has been at the crash repairers as I hit an animal the other week. Travis has been my Uber driver as you delicately put it. Anyway they rang yesterday to say my car was ready and I could pick it up Monday but I want it back now so they said they'd help out and I could come today to get it. Except just as we got there they messaged to say they would be a few hours late.

JAMES

And Travis wasn't too happy about that.

MILLIE

He didn't want to hang around and wait. He starts afternoon shift shortly and he's got things to do today.

JAMES

Things. Right. Sounds like killing time and having a coffee with you is more of an inconvenience to him than an opportunity.

MILLIE

Look I don't wanna talk about Travis. Especially with you.

JAMES

Deal. It's a taboo topic.

Millie takes the newspaper and starts glancing through it. James finishes his coffee.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I get the feeling though that I've asked more about your situation in a few short weeks than people who have known you for a lot longer.

MILLIE

You still here? You've finished your coffee.

JAMES

Three hours to kill hey. You know I could go another coffee.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

MONATGE

James and Millie walk down street and talk with takeaway coffees.

James and Millie stand in front of a park. James points out features, teaching Millie about town planning.

James and Millie laugh while walking along a street.

James and Millie sit on bench. Millie stares at James, lost in his words as he talks.

James and Millie lean over a small foot bridge, staring out over creek.

James and Millie walk through an old abandoned industrial warehouse area.

James and Millie walk down an old run down rail corridor. James uses his hands to describe his vision.

Millie leans against a wall, hands in jeans pockets while talking. James leans side on into wall and listens with admiration.

END MONTAGE

EXT. TOWN CENTRE - DAY

They walk past the town fountain. Millie has a milkshake. She gives it to James and jumps up on the fountain rim. She precariously balances and walks along the fountain edge.

James takes a photo of her with his phone. He watches her walk all the way around. She comes back to James and nearly falls but James catches her and helps her down.

MILLIE

We used to do that all the time as kids.

EXT. PARK - DAY

James and Millie sit on old rusty swings. Millie holds milkshake.

JAMES

That photo wall at the cafe, you know of people's travel and adventures. I didn't see one of you.

MILLIE

Were you expecting one? I've never travelled. I'm guessing you have.

JAMES

Just been lucky I guess. I've seen a bit of the world. Not the backpacking free as the wind type travel though.

MILLIE

Yeah I can't exactly imagine you hitchhiking in a tie-dye shirt not knowing where you're going next or what you'll be doing there.

JAMES

Where would you go?

MILLIE

Rome. I'd love to go to Rome. Ride a vespas.

JAMES

Will you put your hand in the mouth of truth?

MILLIE

You know Roman Holiday! Who are you?

STREET

James points to an old metal bin that is dented with paint missing and a broken lid.

JAMES

See? This is what I'm talking about. Every bin or chair we've seen today is broken, old or in the wrong spot. Even the playground equipment is a joke. They just don't seem interested in any social planning.

MILLIE

I'm not sure how you can improve a bin. It's just a bin.

JAMES

Oh no. It doesn't just have to be a bin. It can be art or messaging or branding. The bins could have some theme that represents the town or maybe they can double as... I don't know... street light of some sort or a dog water bowl -

MILLIE

- You get really excited about this stuff don't you.

JAMES

It's who I am. I mean how have we gotten to and from all the places?

MILLIE

We've walked. My feet are killing me.

JAMES

Yeah, the long way round. We've had to go all the way to the end of the streets and then make a left or right to get to the next place.

James takes Millie's milkshake. Pours it on the ground while Millie looks on with interest.

MILKSHAKE

The milk flows across the ground in multiple directions.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's called permeability. See how it flows in multiple directions. There should be more than one path you can take to get where you want go or need to be.

James and Millie look at each other. Millie looks amazed. James looks back down at the milk flows.

JAMES (CONT'D)

This is how the town should be laid out. Multiple ways to walk through all the main streets. Knock out some old run down shops, create interesting laneways and make it easy for people to move about.

MILLIE

And make the laneways have some feature to attract people.

JAMES

You'll make a planner yet.

Millie laughs as they walk off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

James and Millie now walk closer together than before. Shoulders briefly touching.

Millie stops to look at dress in shop window.

JAMES

I know why you do it too? The whole dressing good thing.

Millie looks at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's a façade. If everything looks good on the outside, no-one is going to probe too much are they? Plus add being short and distant and you got the perfect armour.

Millie ignores James and walks on. James catches up with her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's a bit like some of these buildings. Some fresh paint and fancy façade panels and nobody's the wiser to the issues underneath.

MILLIE

This is your stupid theory? You don't know what you're talking about.

JAMES

Yeah I do. Because I'm no different. I dress nice, I live in a nice place. Drive a nice car. It lets everyone know I'm ok and keeps them at arms length. We just do it for different reasons that's all. We're hiding different things. At least I'm honest about it.

MILLIE

And what are you hiding?

JAMES

We're not talking about me.

Millie stops walking.

MILLIE

That's the problem. We never do. You just get people talking, ask lots of questions, leave no gaps in the conversation. It's called deflection. That's my theory on you James.

JAMES

It's called getting to know people Millie. You know, taking an interest -

MILLIE

- You think it's that James but it's not. It's avoidance. It's control. It shuts people out.

JAMES

Shuts them out? I engage with them. What about you? You're just cold and clinical with everyone. You're a female Special Agent Gibbs. It's only been today that you've let your guard down.

Pause. James looks intently at Millie.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I saw some beautiful glimpses of you today. The real you I think. I've burned in my mind that image of you walking along that fountain looking so free. You looked so happy.

Millie softly laughs.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hearing your stories about your childhood, your drunken adventure uni days, your dreams. At least I'm amicable and I give people the chance to talk about themselves, that's all I'm saying.

MILLIE

Yeah at the expense of anyone asking about you.

FOOTPATH ACROSS ROAD

Tameka walks her Doberman puppy. She looks up to see Millie and James talking. Tameka stops. She gets phone out and takes a picture.

JAMES AND MILLIE

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Look I've had a great time with you. I think I needed it. You've made me laugh, you've... taken my mind off things, you even asked some nice questions about me. No-one's ever asked those kind of questions.

(MORE)

MILLIE (CONT'D)

And I've learned plenty about town planning but I've learned nothing about you in nearly three hours.

JAMES

What do you want to know?

MILLIE

I don't know... well, firstly how about -

Millie's mobile phone beeps.

Millie looks at phone.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

My car's ready.

JAMES

You need a lift?

MILLIE

I'll keep walking. It's not far. I guess I'll see you at work.

Millie walks away. Stops and turns.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You know you should take the Councillor's on a town walk and show them what you've showed me.

Millie turns and walks away.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

A small supermarket with specials written on blackboards mounted on walls. An A-Frame sign out front says 'Jamison's Independent Grocers.' People walk in and out. Tameka's puppy is tied to a pole outside. A car arrives. Millie exits the vehicle.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Millie holds a shopping basket containing milk and bread. She looks at pasta. Tameka walks towards her also carrying a basket.

TAMEKA

I didn't know it was date day? Just it wasn't with Travis was it?

MILLIE

What are you on about?

TAMEKA

I saw you and James.

MILLIE

It's not what you think. I needed to pick my car up and bumped into him at the cafe. It was just a walk.

TAMEKA

Right.

MILLIE

He's just interesting that's all. Plus he doesn't really know anyone yet.

TAMEKA

Please don't go entertaining something Mill. You're my best friend, I've known you since primary school so I'm telling you, keep away from this guy. You've got a good thing here hey. You got me, two great jobs, a good routine. Our partners are even best friends for Christ's sake.

MILLIE

How could I possibly forget our shed sessions.

TAMEKA

Don't be like that. We're your friends Millie. We're family Ok. Why ruin the good thing we got?

MILLIE

There's nothing going on.

TAMEKA

Better not be. You tried the uni thing but that doesn't make you better than us. You chose to come back remember. For him.

Tameka puts products in her basket.

TAMEKA (CONT'D)

Just keep it professional with James. See you Friday night.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James looks at plans. Melissa is on the phone and Simon at his desk. Tameka walks in and hands out flyers to Simon and Melissa. She walks past James's and throws a flyer at him.

TAMEKA

Don't even think about making
Millie your plus one.

She walks off. James grabs the flyer.

ON FLYER

The details of the staff Christmas show.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

James exits toilet and walks around corner and bumps into Millie. Millie's hand lingers on his chest.

MILLIE

Oh, ummm sorry.

Millie snaps hand back. They 'dance' as they try to get past each other but this time, they laugh and have fun with it.

James walks on and sees David standing in hallway reading a file but staring into the office area. James sneaks up beside him and looks where he is looking.

DAVID'S POV

AKARA TANAKA, 28, typing at her desk in the far corner of the room. Japanese descent, dark black long straight hair, wearing a v-neck top.

JAMES

(whispering)
Really?

David jumps and drops file. James and David bend down to pick up them up.

DAVID

Big Smoke. You idiot. What are you
doing?

JAMES

You like Araka Tanaka hey.

DAVID

Ssshh. Yeah she's awesome.

JAMES
You talk to her?

DAVID
No way.

JAMES
You should ask her to be your plus
one at the Christmas show.

They stand up.

DAVID
I mean look at her. I don't stand a
chance.

ON AKARA
She turns off computer and stands up. She grabs her handbag
and waves good bye to a fellow staff member and walks towards
hallway where James and David are standing.

HALLWAY

James and David watch her walk towards them. David stands
tall and motions to talk to her.

AKARA
Goodnight James.

Akara walks past them both.

JAMES
See you Akara.

David looks dejected. James looks at David's disheveled state
and untucked white business shirt and messy hair.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You doing anything after work?

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James stares at his phone.

ON PHONE

Picture of Millie walking along the fountain from their walk.

James grabs his keys, puts on his jacket and leaves.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

Akara walks into the kitchen. She sees the back of the sharply dressed man unloading the dishwasher.

ARAKA
Good Morning James...

The man turns around. It's David in a nice suit and tie and jacket with a fresh haircut.

AKARA
David. Wow. You look amazing.

DAVID
James took me shopping.

Akara is stunned. She looks him up and down and smiles.

AKARA
He's done a great job.

David takes a nervous deep breathe and starts talking Japanese. Akara's eyes light up.

AKARA (CONT'D)
I am well thank you. Yes I would like a coffee thank you David.

David says something else in Japanese. Akara looks at him weirdly.

AKARA (CONT'D)
Ok that's a little creepy. You said you like my bra today.

David puts his hand to his mouth in embarrassment. They both smile and laugh together.

DAVID
I meant hair. I swear.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Beautifully decorated with a Christmas theme. Dozens of round tables full of people talking and laughing. To one side is a dance floor. A band quietly plays.

MILLIE'S TABLE

Millie and Travis are on a table with Tameka and Dion and several other staff and their partners. Millie and Tameka wear nice dresses but Dion wears jeans and a heavy metal band t-shirt and Travis has jeans and checkered flannelette shirt.

JAMES' TABLE

James sits on a table next to Melissa and her partner and David and Arkara. He sees Rebecca standing at bar in a very revealing and tacky outfit. She waves at him. James waves back shyly. Simon arrives and gives James a beer.

SIMON

Merry Christmas boss. Cheers.

They clink beers. The band stops playing.

LEAD SINGER

Welcome everyone. Merry Christmas.
We're 'Exhibit A'.

Claps and cheers.

LEAD SINGER (CONT'D)

We've got some nice tunes picked
out for you while you eat but don't
worry, after dessert we're gonna
get you lot rock'n.

TRAVIS (O.C.)

Just play some fuck'n Korn.

MILLIE'S TABLE

Travis and Dion laugh. Millie puts her hand on Travis'.

MILLIE

Hey. You promised.

Millie looks up and her eyes meet James'. She looks away.

LATER - BAR

James pushes his way through the people.

JAMES

Another beer thanks.

James grabs his beer and turns around. He faces Millie.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey. Merry Christmas.

MILLIE

Same to you.

JAMES

What are you doing for it?

MILLIE

I think we're hosting parents this year.

James makes motion with his hands to suggest she talk.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Yes, alright. What are you doing?

JAMES

Might do a church service then I'll open presents family have sent me and make some calls then a nice motorbike bike ride and make a beautiful dinner for one.

MILLIE'S TABLE

Travis looks across the room. Some people part his view and he sees Millie and James talking. He nudges Dion next to him.

BAR

JAMES (CONT'D)

You look great. The dress is amazing.

MILLIE

Thanks.

JAMES

I'm pretty sure you'd rock a pair of trackies though.

Some people walk between them to get to the bar.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I see Travis is in fine form tonight. What are you doing with him?

MILLIE

Not here James. Please.

JAMES

Even with all this alcohol everyone is still too polite to tell it to you straight. Or maybe it's just a small town ostrich thing. He doesn't deserve you.

A tipsy woman bumps into James and spills a colorful cocktail over his shirt.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Shit. I gotta get this out.

BATHROOM

James stands in front of sink and mirror and is dabbing paper towel at his now stained shirt.

The entrance door CREAKS open.

He lifts up shirt and bends over and smells it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(to himself)
What the hell was in it?

He lifts his head up. In the mirror are Travis and DION MESSENGER, 30s, beard and Tatts. James slowly turns around.

TRAVIS
So you're this new planner guy who won't leave my girl alone. Well I wanna have a word with you.

Travis drinks from his can and throws it at James who moves as it hits mirror.

DION
Yeah! You tell him Stingray. You fucked with wrong guy city boy.

Travis hold up his phone. On phone is picture Tameka took of James and Millie together.

TRAVIS
I don't know how much further it's gone with you both but it's not going any fuck'n further. You hear me? You keep the fuck away from her.

JAMES
If it's not me. It'll be someone else. It's only a matter of time. You have no idea.

TRAVIS
I'm about to give you some ideas.

DION
Bet you didn't plan this did ya planner boy.

Dion grabs James with intent to hold him while Travis beats him. James pivots and right uppercuts Dion in the stomach followed by a seriously powerful left to the ribs and Dion drops.

Travis looks surprised. He then lunges forward, throwing wild drunk punches but James ducks and weaves all of them. James then pushes Travis off balance who staggers and falls hard into the urinal trough.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

James exits toilets and bumps into Tom coming the other way.

JAMES

Err... I wouldn't go in there if I was you.

TOM

Geez it's that bad. Thanks for the heads up. You're a good friend. I'll wait.

Tom walks away.

MILLIE'S TABLE

Travis walks up to the table holding Dion whose clutching his ribs.

TRAVIS

You can find your own way home.

Look of shock on Millie's face as the guys walk away. Tameka grabs her purse and chases them.

TAMEKA

Dion. Dion, what happened?

LATER

The crowd has shrunk. People saying goodbye, lots of hugging and tipsy walks. A small group dance on the dance floor which is now partially covered in confetti and streamers.

James and Akara are dancing next to David and Samantha. The The song finishes. Everyone claps each other.

LEAD SINGER

Ok, you guys have been great but we gotta start winding up.

Crowd yells some jovial boos.

LEAD SINGER (CONT'D)

One more.

James gives Akara back to David. He motions to Samantha if she wants to dance.

SAMANTHA

Bathroom break for me.

Samantha walks off. James turns around looking for a partner. They're all taken. Dance floor filling fast. Through crowd he sees Millie sitting at the table.

James walks over to the table.

JAMES

I know you never got your high school dance.

James grabs her hand and leads her to the dance floor. The lights darken even more.

DANCE FLOOR

MILLIE

I can't dance.

JAMES

Anyone can do the slow drunken waltz. We just kinda stand close and move side to side out of time with the music like everyone else.

They begin dancing.

MILLIE

What happened?

JAMES

With what?

MILLIE

You know what. Did you hit Travis?

JAMES

I never touched him.

MILLIE

Did he threaten you?

JAMES

I just tried to help him see what he's got. Which is the most amazing beautiful, hidden girl.

Millie softly puts her head against his chest. They softly dance to the song for a while.

MILLIE

This is so confusing.

JAMES

I want to make it more confusing.

She looks up and they lock eyes. They move forward to kiss. The song ends and the lights come on. A startled James and Millie quickly separate.

Everyone claps each other and James and Millie sheepishly start clapping too.

MILLIE

That was my first ever slow drunk dance waltz. Thanks. I better get a lift home.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Long rectangular table. On a projector screen is map with some conceptual buildings overlaid on it. Simon stands next to screen with pointer in hand.

SIMON

So that's our thinking. Don't get too fixed on the building design. They're just conceptual.

At the table are Councillor Roman and Andrew who look uncomfortable.

ROMAN

I'm not sure this is economic development. When you called this meeting I thought you had some good news about that factory I told you about.

JAMES

Forget the factories.

ROMAN

Forget the factories?

JAMES

Forget them.

ANDREW

They'll create a lot of jobs.

JAMES

No they won't.

James pours a glass of water.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How many industries and factories have started and fallen over in this region in the past ten years? It's the same story as always. They promises a hundred jobs, they then get up and running with a honeymoon period of free land rates or some other subsidy, they only employ fifteen people in reality and then when the honeymoon is over, they go broke or just go offshore and they leave us with a contaminated eyesore that sits abandoned for years.

ANDREW

I didn't know our new planner was so anti industry and jobs.

JAMES

Hey I grew up in a factory town. My Mum worked in one, my grandparents were Welsh coal miners who worked hard in factories their whole lives. I get where you're coming from. I really do. Jobs are important.

Drinks water.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But I've seen what happens to those towns who think the good old days are coming back and idling sit by waiting. Lets get industries here by all means, but lets get the right ones, the emerging ones and for God's sake put them in the right places.

Points to map on projector screen.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Not there.

ROMAN

And you think a private high school is the answer to our woes?

JAMES

Heck yeah. Think about it. Simon. How many kids go to the primary school here? The private one.

Simon opens laptop.

SIMON

One hundred and eighty three enrolled this year.

JAMES

And where is the nearest private high school if those parents want to send their kids there and continue the whole private school thing.

SIMON

About ninety minutes away. And it costs thousands of dollars a year for a family to send a child on the bus to get to that high school. That's just for one child.

JAMES

So wouldn't it make more economic development sense gentleman to get a private school to build a high school here? You would need teachers, a principal, ground staff, support staff - there's your employment. And you're attracting skilled people to the town who may have families themselves. Then their kids and partners bolster the dwindling sporting club numbers, they shop and buy fuel and food, go to church, volunteer, support local businesses. Even start businesses.

SIMON

Not to mention families saving on bus fees or time to drive them to the school. Good social outcomes.

Andrew and Roman don't look convinced.

JAMES

That land parcel is perfect too. Good proximity to the township, plenty of parking and all the services run past.

ANDREW

Councillor Roman and I have that land marked for a timber post treatment facility. We've been working with this company for months to get them here. I specifically told you to do a land report up for that.

JAMES

Let them go to another town and fuck that place up. Not this town. Not anymore.

ANDREW

You watch yourself. I've already warned you.

JAMES

Sorry you miss out on your ribbon cutting photo but you employed me for my expertise, well here it is. You can't just push me and my team in the corner to approve houses and sheds and pressure us to approve shit developments while the town goes to hell. We're town planners. Let us plan.

ANDREW

Alright then. I'll give you a shot. You got three months to show us what you can do, what strategic plans and ideas for the town you can come up with and to secure a private high school for that land. If you can't, and I'll be honest, you wont because your idea is a joke, then you're fired and you can take your grandiose ideas to another place.

Andrew and Roman leave.

SIMON

Well that didn't go well.

JAMES

Can you get a socio-economic report together on this? We need to start pitching to the private schools and see whose interested.

SIMON

(pointing to the door)
What about them? Your job.

JAMES

Planning is a science and an art. You work on the science. Let's show the Councillors it's a slam dunk obvious choice from the facts and figures perspective. I'll take care the of art side of things.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Millie walks to her car with groceries. She stops.

Next to her car is James with his motorbike. He puts a small bag of groceries in his motorbike panniers. She smiles and admires him.

James is just about to put his helmet on when the car next to him beeps and flashes. He looks around.

MILLIE

Hey.

JAMES

Hey. How are you? I mean it's been a crazy start to the year with work, I haven't had much chance to say hi and hear how you've been. I thought it might be good to you know, talk about that dance.

MILLIE

Don't worry about it. I think we both just got carried away. That's why it's called the silly season right.

JAMES

Right.

Awkward silence. Millie looks at the bike.

MILLIE

Nice day for it.

JAMES

Good way to start the weekend.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How was your week at the school?

MILLIE

Hectic and stressful.

JAMES

You know the best cure for that?

James opens the top box on back of bike to reveal another helmet.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You can wear my jacket.

MILLIE

Umm.....no thanks. I mean I want to
but... I don't know. I've never
ridden one. Maybe another time.

JAMES

Yeah sure no dramas.

Millie puts her groceries in the car. The motorbike starts. She watches as James wheels it back and cheekily revs it at her.

MILLIE

(yelling)
Wait!

EXT. TOWN - DAY

MONTAGE of James and Millie riding:

Through the town

Past the local sports oval.

Over a bridge that crosses a wide river.

Out on highway past some paddocks. Millie points at some
lambs running along.

Past a vineyard.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

They are back at Millie's car. They get off and take off their helmets.

MILLIE

Oh my God that felt amazing. I loved it.

JAMES

I'm glad. My stomach is not so sure though. You've got a pretty tight grip. Might be time to clip your nails too.

MILLIE

Everything just seems so... so more real. The colors are brighter, the sounds, the smells.

James sniff his armpits. Millie laughs.

She takes off her jacket and gives it back to James. Their hands touch, it catches them off guard.

JAMES

Ummm... You know you might be able to help me with a project.

MILLIE

Really?

JAMES

Yeah. Bring some comfy shoes to work tomorrow.

MILLIE

Are we going somewhere?

JAMES

Yeah site visit. Should be a nice day for it too.

EXT. VACANT LAND - DAY

Raining lightly. Thunder. A council work vehicle arrives. James and Millie exit wearing work clothes with hi-vis rain jackets over the top. James carries survey gear and drone.

JAMES

Well I never knew I was working with such a criminal mastermind.

MILLIE

And the amount of times I've seen Sergeant Fernando in the supermarket since, I just want to hide.

JAMES

We were all seventeen once.

MILLIE

Have you got a criminal record?

JAMES

Maybe. Maybe I'm not the real James. Maybe it's a Mr. Schneebly situation.

Millie laughs.

MILLIE

I loved School of Rock.

JAMES

Ok, first car?

MILLIE

Volkswagen Beetle. I bought it for three hundred. It lasted a whole week. You?

JAMES

Camry. Very boring I know. I bought it from my Grandfather. Ummm, first film at a cinema?

MILLIE

Oh, I think it was Shaun of the Dead. I was in the city visiting my cousins and we snuck in. We told our parents we were going to watch Princess Diaries Two. You?

JAMES

Turner and Hooch. I was like eight I think. Everything seemed huge, The cinema chairs, the popcorn box, the screen, the sound -

MILLIE

- The dog.

JAMES

Ha, yeah Hooch was gigantic.

They walk into the vacant land. James starts taking some photos.

MILLIE

I could see a school here. Not sure why I am here though.

JAMES

Well you work in a school, I figure you might have some contacts in the education department I could talk to.

MILLIE

And I needed to come out in the rain for that?

JAMES

Andrew said I could have access to whatever resources I needed plus I needed someone to help with the survey gear. I just need some basic photos and measurements to include in a proposal package.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LAND - DAY

James takes a measurement with survey equipment. Millie stands next to him.

JAMES

Done. That's it.

MILLIE

Good this rain is getting heavier and I'm getting cold.

James packs up the equipment.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You know what -

JAMES

So why Tra -

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You go first.

JAMES

No you. I talk too much as it is. I think I annoy you.

MILLIE

You do. I was just going to say I think you're making a difference at work. Everyone likes you. Your passion comes across. It's not just a job to you.

JAMES

It's not quite what I thought it was going to be. I nearly bailed after the first two days. To be honest, I went against my better instincts and rushed into taking this job without researching the place or doing any real -

MILLIE

- Planning.

JAMES

Yeah exactly. Planning. A plumber's house always leaks I guess. I like planning though. I'm good at it.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I just wasn't planning on you Millie.

MILLIE

James, please don't. Whenever I spend time with you, it always starts off so nice and ends with me so mad at you. Can we just be friends?

JAMES

Friends?

MILLIE

Surface friends.

JAMES

Right.

James walks off back to car. Thunder claps.

EXT. LIBRARY - DAY

Grand opening of new bike racks. Local media and small crowd present. Kids park their bikes in rack and smile for cameras. Applause. Andrew and Roman glare at each other.

MONTAGE

Council workers removing old broken bins.

James, Melissa and Simon looking at a street discussing options.

Grassed area being rolled out near the town fountain.

New modern style bins being installed.

Seating and shade sails being installed on grassed area.

Street trees being planted.

Street art being unveiled.

James talks to a man outside the rundown church. The man's shirt reads *"Wiltshire Whisky distillery and restaurant"*.

Mural being painted on old building wall.

James delivers presentation to Councillors. On screen is conceptual drawings for skatepark and swimming pool centre and new park and playgrounds. Nods of approval.

New grassed and seating area new fountain is finished. People and families sit and enjoy it.

END MONTAGE

EXT. COUNCIL BUILDING - DAY

Cloudy and windy day. Trees displaying autumn leaves. People walk wearing warm jackets.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James, Simon and Melissa at their desk. Millie enters and put files on James' desk.

JAMES

Hey.

MILLIE

Hey.

Millie exits but returns. She makes sure no-one is listening.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Please don't punish me James. This has been going for too long now.

JAMES

Just staying on the surface. Isn't that what you wanted. For me to be a ship and not a submarine.

MILLIE

I didn't mean our conversations had to be limited to 'Hey'. It's all or nothing with you isn't it.

Millie takes pen and paper from desk and writes.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

My number. If you ever want to leave the harbour.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

James in lounge room. Moving boxes open. Photos on wall. Plants and lamps in place. Room is sparse but modestly furnished.

James' drags a bookcase along the wall. Steps back and looks. Pulls out a tape measure and measures distance from bookcase to window. Moves bookcases closer. Steps back again and looks. Drinks from beer bottle on a coffee table and picks up empty boxes.

GARAGE

Super neat and tidy garage with organised labelled tool bench. Very clean car and motorcycle parked. James neatly stacks the moving boxes in corner. He picks up a boxing bag and hangs it on the chain hanging from ceiling. He gives it a few punches.

LOUNGE

James on couch with beer. Looks at photo on phone of Millie.

INT. MILLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Millie on couch. Travis lays on couch with is feet on her, drinking a beer and enjoying a bad b-grade action movie. Her phone beeps.

ON PHONE

Picture of her on the fountain with the caption '*Very Roman Holiday!*' She secretly smiles.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

His phone beeps.

ON PHONE

Thanks. But I'm no Hepburn. See you Monday.

INT. MILLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ON PHONE

Sorry for not handling us well this past month or so. I hope we can find a happy medium.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

Dismantled car and motorbike on one side with tool benches and topless girl posters on wall. The shed is full of cigarette smoke haze. Heavy metal music blaring. On the other side of the shed is a pool table with several rough looking guys playing pool with beers and smokes in hand. A dart board is on the wall and there is a homemade bar with hanging lights and music posters.

A group of women sit around some wine barrels with drinks. Empty bottles and chip packets litter the wine barrel. Among them is Millie. One of the women is Tameka, smoke in hand. The women are talking and laughing over the top of the music. Millie is not really engaged and forces a smile.

POOL TABLE

Dion sinks a ball with a trick shot. The men cheer and carry on.

BAR

Behind the bar Travis, wearing a tank top, holds up a bottle of spirits.

TRAVIS

Fuck Yeah! Good shot Dion. That's what I'm talk'n about.

Dion raises his fist in the air in agreement.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Hey Millie. Be a babe and get some ice from the house.

Millie struggles to hear him over the music.

MILLIE

What?

TRAVIS

Ice. We need some ice. Geez.

Millie angrily walks off.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A late 1990s dated kitchen. Millie opens freezer and pulls out ice trays. Shuts the freezer door and stares.

ON FREEZER DOOR

Photos of her and Travis. She looks at one from when they were teenagers. They are smiling and happy. Millie turns to put ice trays on bench and is startled by Tameka.

MILLIE

Shit. You scared me. Geez Tam.

TAMEKA

Sorry. Just seeing if you're ok.

MILLIE

Ice isn't that heavy. I can make it back to the shed.

TAMEKA

You know what I mean. He didn't need to speak to you like that. You know he loves you right?

Millie finds a plastic bowl from a cupboard and slams it down on bench and violently bangs the ice trays into it.

Outside is cheering and laughing. A bottle breaks.

TRAVIS (O.C.)

You dumb mother fucker ha ha ha

MILLIE

I didn't know it was going to end up like this. That we would end up like this.

TAMEKA

And what's wrong with this? We go to work. We earn money. We hang out with our friends and have a laugh. We're all together.

(MORE)

TAMEKA (CONT'D)

That's what we we said wanted in school. That's what counts.

MILLIE

Nothing is wrong with that. It's just that -

TAMEKA

- That you've let that James idiot in your head with all his fanciful ideas. City ideas shit.

Tameka leans in close over the counter.

TAMEKA (CONT'D)

You know what. I think he reminds you of all those uni type guys you used to know when you went to the city. Heck you probably banged a dozen of them.

MILLIE

Fuck you.

TAMEKA

I hope that's the drink talk'n missy.

MILLIE

Is it such a crime to want improvements. In places? In people? You know this town is not only thing that needs to move forward.

TAMEKA

Oh come off it Millie. Get off your high horse.

Millie stores past her. Stops and turns around.

MILLIE

You know what I've just realised? I am actually your only friend Tameka. And that's what scares you.

SHED

Travis is playing air guitar with pool stick while people cheer him on. Millie walks up to him.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Travis.

He's oblivious.

MILLIE (CONT'D)
 (yelling over music)
 Travis. Trav.

Millie throws handful of ice at him.

TRAVIS
 What the fuck?

She walks back past the women smoking and drinking at the wine barrel and dumps the bowl of ice down on the barrel and walks out.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
 Millie. Millie where you going?
 Wait. Millie. Millie.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

The lounge has finally been organised. The place looks minimalist but homely with classy items, books in bookcase, a rug on the floor, desk set up with computer and some plants and photos frames dotted around the room. An electronic drumkit sits in corner.

KITCHEN

James makes bowl of ice-cream. Hums to music playing.

KNOCK on the door.

James walks through lounge, turns off music and grabs a quick mouthful of beer from bottle on table. He opens door.

JAMES
 Millie? What are you doing here?

MILLIE
 Hey. Took four goes but got the right place eventually.

JAMES
 Umm... come in... I wasn't really expecting anyone, especially you.

LOUNGE

JAMES (CONT'D)
 You want a beer or something.

MILLIE
 Sure.

James disappears into the kitchen. Millie looks at photos on the wall. There's holiday photos of James in Red Square eating an ice cream, one in Singapore, one on a tropical beach and one of him and some young boys and girls standing around his motorbike.

JAMES

My nephews and nieces.

James give Millie a beer.

MILLIE

And this one?

ON PHOTO

James and beautiful brunette standing together, smiling, drinks in hand on a rooftop bar.

JAMES

Ummm... that's Monica. My ex-wife. We still get along ok... in small doses.

MILLIE

I didn't even know you were married. What happened?

JAMES

You like this beer? It's new.

MILLIE

James.

JAMES

Well we married young. We were idealistic and it was just a big adventure really. No jobs, no money, no qualifications. We had all these dreams you know. Maybe community development overseas or something. Then we both got an education and careers and before you knew it, we just weren't on the same page anymore. Especially her. Truth is, I had our lives planned. I thought I knew what was best for us and where we were going to end up and all the steps we needed to take to get there. Turns out I forgot to ask her. I just assumed she wanted these things too.

James take a drink from bottle.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It was quite a shock the day we had it out. It all just came to the surface really. We were no longer two railway tracks, you know, running parallel and no matter what we tried, we couldn't figure it out. We were both secretly miserable behind all our politeness and platitudes and we both knew we were in real danger of drifting into arms of others. And to be honest, one of us did.

Millie looks at James with surprise but also care.

MILLIE

James.

JAMES

It was a just a foolish moment. Should never have happened. One of those rare times I didn't plan. It just went south from there.

MILLIE

Planning is safety for you isn't it?

James drinks from bottle.

JAMES

Anyway I told her about it. Anger eventually turned to grief and loss and so we just thought it was best to set each other free. There's no regrets about the season we had, but we couldn't go on like we were. We both wanted different things for the next part of lives.

MILLIE

And what do you want?

James sits on the couch arm and drinks his beer.

JAMES

Why are you here Millie? It's like nine o'clock.

MILLIE

You're doing it again. You're like Captain America with your big deflection shield.

JAMES

Why haven't they remade The Greatest American Hero. Now there's a superhero. William Katt.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Can't you say what you think for once.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Millie, I always say what I'm thinking.

MILLIE

That's not what I meant. What do you want James?

JAMES

I don't know. I just don't know. I'm still figuring that out. I just don't want to be stagnate. I see what happens to places and communities that are. I guess I'm hoping to clock up experience, make money and then go work in some developing country or something.

MILLIE

You don't have to go overseas to some village to be fulfilled and make a difference. You don't need to go that far.

JAMES

Thanks. Oh, I also want to go and get a coffee on the foreshore before they shut. That's what I really want. You're welcome to join me.

MILLIE

Maybe.

Millie takes a drink from her bottle and walks around lounge. Looks at his bookcase. Books on urban planning, anthropology, travel, spy thriller novels, classic novels, romance novels, motorbikes.

JAMES

Why are you here?

MILLIE

I just didn't want to be where I was. You play the drums?

JAMES

Badly. Just an hobby.

James puts beer on table and sits at drumkit. Turns it on. Turns on amp, grabs sticks and thrashes out an impressive loud drum solo. Millie smiles as she blocks her ears.

MILLIE

When's your first lesson booked?

JAMES

Did you just make a joke? Millie makes jokes?

James then plays something softer. He starts singing 'Message to my girl' by Split Enz.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(singing)

*I don't want to say I want you.
Even though I want you so much.
It's wrapped up in conversation.
It's whispered in a hush.*

Millie stares at James. She looks taken back.

JAMES (CONT'D)

*Though I'm frightened by the words,
I think it's time I made it heard.
So I'll sing it to the world, a
simple message to my girl. No more
empty self obsession. Vision swept
under the mat. It's no New Years
resolution, it's more than that.
For there's nothing quite as real.
As the touch of your sweet hand. I
can't spend the rest of my life
buried in the sand.*

Millie is chocked up but smiles through it. James stops.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm not very good. Don't expect me under your bedroom window anytime soon. Ever played drums?

MILLIE

No.

JAMES

It's easy. Can you count to four?

James stands up and moves out of way.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Sit down, give it a go.

Millie puts beer down. Nervously takes a seat behind drumkit.
James gives her the sticks and stands behind her.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Ok. So with the right hand just hit
this cymbal here and count one,
two, three, four.

Millie hits the cymbal and together they count one, two,
three, four.

JAMES (CONT'D)
That's the best counting to four
I've seen since my niece.

Millie laughs.

JAMES (CONT'D)
This time, when you count one and
three, you need to press you leg on
the peddle to hit the bass drum.

Millie does it a few times.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Good. Now on the two and four hit
the snare drum.

Millie smiles as she does it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You're a natural. Ok, this time we
will do the same thing with the
snare and bass but we will count
one *and* two *and* three *and* four. So
it's double the cymbal hits but
this time, move your hand to the
crash cymbal.

James taps the crash cymbal.

Millie has a go.

MILLIE
One and two and - oh wait stuffed
it up.

She tries again.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

One and two and three - wait I can do it.

James grabs Millie's hand. Entwines his fingers with hers. He bring himself in closer to her.

JAMES

Just slow it down a bit.

He moves her hand to the cymbal and starts playing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

One and two and three and four and one and two and three and four.

Millie leans her head back into James's chest. Closes her eyes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

One and two and three and four.

James keeps counting and playing the cymbal as he bring his face closer to her. Breathes deep and smells her hair. He stops counting and playing. James and Millie nuzzle each other, breath deep in frustration.

MILLIE

We should probably go get that coffee.

EXT. JETTY - NIGHT

James and Millie are halfway down the jetty. They lean over the railing and drink their coffee. Millie has an iced-coffee with a towering whip cream on top. She spills some of it on her top.

JAMES

You had to get something messy again.

MILLIE

You said I could have what ever I wanted.

JAMES

And so what do you want Millie? Your turn.

MILLIE

I guess I've just wanted Travis to be the guy I've always wanted.

(MORE)

MILLIE (CONT'D)

The guy he was supposed to be. I know you see him and think the worst but he wasn't always like this. I mean he was always kinda out there and full of life and fun and kinda crazy but in a good way. I loved it. He was so generous with his time and money. He'd always be taking people out water skiing or camping or fixing some car for free for someone doing it tough. We had the best times. Lots of spontaneous adventures. You probably won't believe this but he used to write me the sweetest letters in high school. We had dreams and plans too you know.

JAMES

Such as?

MILLIE

I was going to be a teacher, he was going to join the Army. We figured I'd be able to get work wherever he got posted. We could travel, get out of Mansfield. And he did get in but before he was due to leave he had a motorbike accident and it was over.

JAMES

But you still went off to university?

MILLIE

I loved it. I loved the city life, my new friends, the opportunities, the places, the culture.

JAMES

But you're here.

MILLIE

People were saying he was spiraling down. Friends, family, they all said I should come back. So I did. I never got to finish my degree but I thought it wasn't important. I thought that we could still have a life together but just a different life.

JAMES

Do you love him?

MILLIE

Yes. No. I still see glimpses of the old Travis and that's who I love. There are days when I feel what I felt when we were younger. When he's the fun adventurous Travis who can conquer the world and I know he would do anything for me. But those days are getting rarer and rarer.

JAMES

Places change Millie. Not people. You either accept them and the trade offs and just love them or you don't. You can't put your life aside on some fairy hope that they will one day change. It's just some sick manipulation guerrilla warfare where all that happens is two people are taken out.

MILLIE

It's like instead of reinventing himself after the accident he just gave up. On life, on himself. On us.

Millie cries.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

I've had to keep this image up that we're ok. That I'm ok. That the high school sweethearts have got it all together. That I'm happy I came back. But I'm not. I feel so robbed James. Robbed of everything. My dreams, my years and I'm tired of pretending. Tired of waiting.

James wipes tears from her face. Brushes her hair aside.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

And then you come along. And you're like this torch shining into my life. Into me. And it scares me. I'm scared of what I'm seeing. What I've been shown.

James put his coffee on the rail. Places Millie's on the rail. Leans in and they softly and nervously lightly kiss. They look down. He looks up and brushes her hair aside. They lightly kiss again. They both look unsure but kiss more passionately. He kisses her neck.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

No James. I can't... I... I don't know.

JAMES

(Kissing her neck)
Stay with me tonight.

MILLIE

No James I can't. Gosh I want to but I cant.

JAMES

I just cant help how I feel. I'm so drawn to you Millie.

MILLIE

I know. I just can't right now. I just need some space. I, I... I should go. I'm sorry James.

Millie goes to walk off. James grabs her arm gently.

JAMES

Hey it's ok. I don't know what to do either but I'll figure something out. That's what I do.

Millie kisses him on the cheek and walks back down the jetty.

INT. MILLIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Millie walks in. Travis passed out on couch. A bottle lays on the floor. TV plays an old late night movie. She turns TV off and looks around the messy room.

SHOWER

Millie cries.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

James lays on the bed and stares at the ceiling. He grabs his phone. Thinks about messaging. Puts phone back on bedside table.

INT. MILLIE'S BED - NIGHT

Millie in stares at ceiling. Hugs her pillow and cries.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

James makes a coffee. Tameka walks in.

JAMES

Tameka. How are you?

TAMEKA

Fine. How's the home wrecker going?

JAMES

Sounds like it was pretty wrecked already.

TAMEKA

You don't know shit James. Everything was fine until you came along. Just leave her alone. Stop trying to take her away from us. I know her better than you ever could. I know what she needs and it's not you.

JAMES

And it's not an anchor.

TAMEKA

Just let her be.

Tameka leaves the room.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Millie packs up a classroom as primary school kids exit for the day. A female teacher cleans the whiteboard. Millie's phone beeps.

ON PHONE

Just one day. One date. Saturday. 10am. Bells and Whistles.

Millie contemplates.

Millie replies *'Ok. Travis is working and then going fishing with friends.'*

INT. CAFE - DAY

Millie walks in. She's wearing Jeans, a white top and nice cardigan. James is at a table in a nice shirt and black leather jacket.

JAMES

10.17. This might put us behind schedule.

MILLIE

Really?

JAMES

I ordered our coffees for ten, but I got them to keep the warm. Let's go. My car.

EXT. SPORTS OVAL - DAY

James and Millie walk onto a sport oval. James carries big long black bag.

MILLIE

What are we doing?

JAMES

Your thing.

They stop and James opens the bag and pulls out a softball bat and gloves and balls.

CUT TO:

OVAL

Millie pitches and James lightly bunts back to her. They are talking and laughing.

JAMES

So I couldn't get the stupid filter off no matter how hard I tried and I ended up doing the whole skype interview with a pirate hat on.

MILLIE

Hence you ended up here and not at that other place.

JAMES

Well I wouldn't be here hitting softballs with you if I got that job.

James hits a ball to her and she catches it. James looks at his watch.

JAMES (CONT'D)
One more then the next thing.

James swings and misses. He walks over to the big black backpack and pulls out a picnic rug and a wine bottle, chocolate and some glasses.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Rocky road. Your fave.

MILLIE
Mmmm. Not a healthy brunch though.

A car arrives at the oval and toots the horn. A young man runs out with a picnic basket to them.

DELIVERY DRIVER
Man, that's the longest delivery ever.

James gives him cash and says thanks and he runs off again. James pulls out some salad wraps and a fruit platter.

JAMES
From Horseshoe Bay's finest cafe.

LATER

James and Millie lay on the blanket facing each other. James brushes hair out of her face. She moves in closer and snuggles in. She kisses him.

MILLIE
I know I shouldn't do that. I'm sorry. This is just so confusing. Can we just stay here all day?

JAMES
For another sixteen minutes then we gotta go.

MILLIE
Do you ever switch off?

JAMES
I just want to give you a good day. It might be my only day with you.

MILLIE
You've done that already. We don't need to do anymore. Seriously.

INT. MUSIC SHOP - DAY

A typical second hand music shop. Posters on wall, bohemian feel, the shop has wooden floorboards and peeling plaster. Trendy alternate staff in the shop.

James is looking through cds. Millie walks over.

JAMES

Told you this place was good. What ya find?

MILLIE

Some early Pantera, Skid Row and Secrets. You?

JAMES

Paper Kites, The Jezebels and A-ha

MILLIE

Gosh we are so different.

JAMES

But I'll let you control the cd player in the car.

INT. CAR - DAY

James and Millie drive through countryside. They share some candy from a bag. Millie has feet up on dash.

MILLIE

It's such beautiful country out here. I really need to get out more. I can't believe you had that candy shop have my favorite candy all bagged up and ready for me.

JAMES

We were lucky. They were just about to close.

MILLIE

How did you know what I liked?

JAMES

I might have had some inside intel.

Millie throws head back and laughs.

MILLIE

Ah, David. You've done wonders for him. He's never been happier. And never looked as good.

Millie sees a sign for a waterfall walk and quickly sits up.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Hey Cartwright Falls. I haven't been there since school. Can we?

JAMES

Another time. I got us booked in for a movie and dinner and we're really pushing it.

MILLIE

But it's such a nice day for it. Please. We can do a movie anytime.

JAMES

Another time.

Millie takes feet off the dash and puts candy bag in the centre console and stares out window.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

They both get out of car and walk to Millie's car which is parked in front.

JAMES

9.20. You'll be back in time for Travis. Man, that was a good dinner. You enjoyed it?

MILLIE

It was ok.

JAMES

I hope you had a nice day. I really enjoyed it.

Millie looks down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What?

MILLIE

It was nice James. But I think it was more your day than mine.

JAMES

What do you mean? I planned all things you liked.

MILLIE

I really wanted to do that waterfall walk with you. I really like you James. I do. I just wish you were more -

JAMES

-like Travis.

MILLIE

I just hope next time there's not a travel agent itinerary that goes with it. That's all I'm saying.

JAMES

So there will be a next time?

MILLIE

I don't know. I just don't know what all this means. I'm sorry. Thanks for a nice day.

EXT. SPORTS OVAL - DAY

A softball game is being played. It's between the Mansfield Magpies and the Horseshoe Bay Hawks. Millie stands on second base. A small crowd of friends and family watch. It's your typical weekend amateurs sports match.

SPORTS STAND

James sits a few rows back in the stands. Shorts, t-shirt sunglasses with a three day growth. He read a newspaper. People next him to cheer and clap. He looks up to see the batter has hit a big one and bringing people home.

OVAL

One of the players summons Millie to the pitching mound.

SPORTS STAND

TRAVIS (O.C.)

About time Captain. Jesus.

James turns to see Travis, beer in hand, standing right up at the sidelines.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Yeah Get em Mill. Kill em. You can
do it. C'mon now.

OVAL

Millie has a look of wanting the ground to swallow her as the next batter arrives. Millie throws and strike. Claps and cheers from James and others.

ON TRAVIS

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Yeah nice work. Woo hoo! That's my
girl.

He bangs his hands against advertising signage on the fence.

OVAL

An umpire motions to him to tone it down.

Millie pitches. It's a hit along the ground, she fields it and throws it in to first base.

FIRST BASE

Player slides in as ball is caught.

UMPIRE
Safe!

Cheers and claps from opposition in the crowd. Travis yells and makes known his disagreement with the umpire decision.

OVAL

Millie pitches again and it's a strike.

ON JAMES

James claps with everyone else.

ON MILLIE

She catches the ball and gets ready for another pitch. She sees James in the crowd and gives a shy wave.

ON TRAVIS

Travis notices and looks around to see James. He storms off through the stands towards him.

ON FIELD

Millie pitches. Another strike.

SPORTS STANDS

Travis approaches James and stands over him. James moves head to try and watch the game.

TRAVIS

Hey why don't you just piss off.
I'm here.

JAMES

Yes we all know. I'm trying to
watch the game if you don't mind.

OVAL

The captain sends Millie to short stop and brings in another pitcher.

SPORTS STANDS

TRAVIS

I'm not drunk this time. I'll drop
you here and now. Leave her alone.
Get out of her head and stop trying
to get in her pants or I'll swear
the next plan you should be looking
at is a hospital one.

James stands up quickly and confronts Travis.

OVAL

Millie is watching James and Travis. She's not watching the game.

BAM! WHACK!

The hitter smashes the ball straight into Millie's head and she goes down.

STANDS

Huge gasps from the crowd and cries of 'oh my God' and 'get an ambulance.'

James and Travis turn to see Millie on the ground unconscious. Players and officials rushing to her.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Millie. No. Millie.

ON TRAVIS

Travis races the stands. For a big guy out of shape, he's moving awfully quick. He pushes through people going to the sidelines to see what's going on. He jumps the sideline fence and runs on field screaming.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Millie. Millie.

He pushes past players that have formed a ring around her and drops to the ground.

Millie has a severe head wound. Blood pours from her head, nose, mouth and ears.

Travis holds her and is crying.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Millie. Millie. No. Millie.

STANDS

James watches in horror and disbelief. Hands on his face.

JAMES
(to himself)
Oh my gosh. Millie. No.

OVAL

TRAVIS
Where's that fuck'n ambulance?
Someone get some help. Please.
Millie no. Millie.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Millie has her head covered in bandages. She is hooked up to machines and computers. A respirator tube down her throat. Travis stands at the end of the bed. His eyes are red. The silence is broken by the heart monitor beeps.

Travis rubs Millie's foot.

TRAVIS
Please wake up. Remember when I
used to massage your feet on the
couch? You used to love it. I'll do
it again I promise. Just come back.

INT. HOSPITAL FOYER - DAY

Large waiting room. People wait in chairs, watching tv or reading magazines.

James talks to a nurse off to the side.

JAMES

Look I'm not family but can I see her please. Just for a minute.

NURSE

Sorry. Family only at this stage.

JAMES

I just want to know how she is. I was there when it happened.

NURSE

She's in an induced coma. When she gains consciousness and is out the woods, she can see friends.

JAMES

Will she be ok? Honestly?

NURSE

She's not in a good way. The next forty-eight hours will be crucial. You should go home and pray.

EXT. HOSPITAL CARPARK - DAY

James walks through the carpark, pulls out his keys and 'beeps' his car as he approaches it.

Whack!

James is violently pushed hard into side of his car. So hard the window breaks. He drops his keys. He is punched to the body by Travis.

TRAVIS

This is all your fault.

Travis hits James in the face and goes for another body shot but James assumes boxing guard and drops his arm and successfully blocks the punch and counters with jab and cross to the face that sends Travis back.

JAMES

My fault? You're the one who had to be a big hot shot and come and start something and distract her.

TRAVIS

You shouldn't of even been at the fucking game. I told you to keep away from her.

Travis throws a hook but James ducks it and punches Travis.

Travis grabs James and rams him onto the car bonnet and hits him. He throws again but James moves his head and Travis hits the bonnet hard with his fist, screaming in pain.

James pushes him off and spins around so James now has Travis against the car. He lays body shots.

Travis pushes him with all his big frame and they both crash into a car on the other side of the carpark. Travis knees James in the stomach which doubles him over and then hits him in the side of face. James drops to the ground.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

You couldn't just leave her alone could you.

Travis starts kicking him on the ground. Travis is starting to cry.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Why? Why do you have to change everything around here.

James grabs his legs and trips him. Travis falls hard on the ground. James stands over him and is ready is to punch him in the face and end the fight.

Travis is sobbing. James realizes the fight's over. He grabs Travis by the scruff of neck and sits him up. James slumps on the ground next to him. They are bloodied and exhausted.

JAMES

You wanna know what your problem is Travis? Stingray?

Travis takes away his hand from back of his head to check for blood.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You've never had to win a girl over. Win her over.

Travis looks confused.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You just got together in your teens in high school and that's it. You never had to try, never had to... improve yourself. Never had to step up, change, make an impression, make sacrifices, fight for her, pursue her. Nothing. Heck, even David spent an entire day at my house learning Japanese. You won't even have a goddamn shave and put on a clean shirt.

James stands up over Travis.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What is she to you anyway? What's her favorite chocolate hey? Her dream place to visit one day? What song cheers her up? What superpower does she wish she could have? Yeah you don't even know her.

James walks away. Travis holds his nose. James snaps around.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh, and don't give me this shit about how you didn't get your dream. What about her dreams? Her life? So you didn't get what you wanted. Big fucking deal. Welcome to the real world. You could have found new direction or...

TRAVIS

Direction? Here? Doing what? What could I possibly offer except standing on some fucking conveyor line.

JAMES

There's nothing wrong with that. Just do it with a good attitude and some self respect and dignity. But no, you've spent the last God knows how many years sulking like a child, feeling sorry for yourself and then you emotionally blackmailed her back here like some sort of security blanket.

A couple walk past to their car. James waves them past.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Just keep moving please.

They almost run past.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She puts on the act that's it all
ok but she wishes she never came
back for you but she doesn't want
anyone to know. Your life is ruined
Travis, you've ruined hers and now
you've probably ended it too. I
hope you're proud.

Travis starts to get up.

JAMES (CONT'D)
If she pulls through this, it's
over. I'm taking her away and
giving her the life she's been
missing out on.

James walks away. Travis wipes tears from his eyes.

JAMES (O.C.) (CONT'D)
You should probably get to a
hospital.

INT. JAMES' DESK - DAY

James is on the phone.

JAMES
So better but still not awake?...
It's been four weeks.... How is
that normal?... You'll let me know
right? Ok Thanks.

David and Akara walk in.

DAVID
No news?

JAMES
She's still not awake.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - DAY

James lays on couch spinning drumsticks in hand. He stares at
photo on wall of Millie on the fountain. He gets up and
slowly walks to kitchen. Opens fridge, lets out a long breath
and closes it.

GARAGE

James throws punches at boxing bag but he's not focussed. Stops. Walks to tool bench and opens drawer. He pulls out a perfectly folded polishing rag and polishes motorcycle but again stops. Throws rag back onto bench and leans on bike, rubs his face.

EXT. JETTY - DAY

James watches ocean as he carves a love heart into railing with pocket knife. His phone beeps. He reads message. Instantly he drops knife and sprints down the jetty.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

James walks quickly down a corridor. He has flowers and a box of rocky road chocolate in hand. He looks at the room numbers, counting to himself. He is about to walk into Millie's room but stops and hides against wall.

JAMES POV

Travis sits alongside Millie's bed. Millie is sitting up and their hands are entwined. However, the big shock is Travis is clean shaven and wearing a clean white t-shirt and nice jacket and jeans.

ON JAMES

He leans back against wall and looks up at ceiling.

HOSPITAL ROOM

Millie rubs her hand on Travis's face. Tears in her eyes.

MILLIE

I've missed this face. This man.

Travis kisses her hand.

TRAVIS

Things are going to be different Mil. Real different. I've been such a jerk for so long... I just... I just don't want to lose you and in some ways I have. I have so much to say. So much to apologize for. I want -

MILLIE

- Hey. We can do this later.

ON JAMES

He rolls his eyes in disbelief. Listens intently.

TRAVIS (O.C.)

I know the Doctor said you gotta eat well and get your strength back, but I brought your fave chocolate.

MILLIE (O.C.)

Rocky road. I didn't think you knew.

James walks across the hall and dumps his rocky road chocolate and flowers in the bin.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

James at table with is lunch. Tameka walks in and puts empty cup in dishwasher.

TAMEKA

Looks like your little plan backfired. What a shame. You're not going to break us all up after all.

JAMES

Rocky road. No surprises who he asked to find that out.

TAMEKA

Maybe you should spend more time working on yourself instead of seeing everyone as a problem to fix.

JAMES

I'm not the one with the problems around here.

TAMEKA

Really James. You know I don't think I've ever met anyone so... removed, so self absorbed.

JAMES

Are you kidding me? This coming from the world's most selfish friend who chains her best friend down like an elephant to a peg.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

But guess what, the elephant is starting to realise her own strength and you, my little peg, won't be able to stop it.

TAMEKA

This is all just one big game of sim city to you isn't. You just wanna sit back like some little God and pull the strings and watch us all dance. It's all about control and your little hero complex. You don't really care about any of us.

JAMES

You think I don't care?

TAMEKA

You know, I've always found it interesting James, even disturbing, that for someone so passionate about fixing this place and helping the community and improving the town; that you don't even live among us.

James is taken back. Tameka walks out. Returns.

TAMEKA (CONT'D)

Though it's good to see the old Travis back. So... thanks. For whatever you did. She asked about you too.

Tameka exits.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Travis and Millie sit at table near the window. Empty plates and cups on table. Millie is dressed very casual and Travis wears a nice shirt and jacket. Their hands are entwined.

TRAVIS

We need to start doin' this more often. It's nice to just... be and talk.

MILLIE

I'd like that. I love hearing you talk. Really talk.

Travis pulls something out of his jacket and puts it on the table. It's a travel snow dome of Rome.

TRAVIS

I want to get our photo on that wall. I know you've always wanted to go and you love that old movie, so this is a down payment on that dream. I want to take you. I'm going to take you.

EXT. STREET - DAY

James leads the councillors. They have tablets in their hands. They stop in front of old shop that has a faded 'for sale' sign in window with the other window boarded up.

JAMES

Ok. So as we were talking about earlier, part of the problem with this town is it's linkages. We have some great features and points of interest in this town, but they're not linked up -

James stops and stares.

JAMES POV

Millie and Travis in the cafe across the road. Millie leans forward and kisses Travis.

JAMES

JAMES (CONT'D)

Ummm... yeah so you could demolish this place and make a laneway. Let's keep moving hey, we got a lot to see today.

EXT. COUNCIL CARPARK - DAY

James exits on his motorbike and rides through a few streets. He sees Millie and Travis walking and holding hands. He nearly runs into the back a slower vehicle ahead.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

James takes off motorbike jacket and neatly hangs it up, ensuring it's hung evenly. He walks into the kitchen and opens fridge. Closes the fridge. Takes out his phone.

JAMES

Hey it's James. You need a beer?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Giant copper vats line the warehouse red brick walls. James and Tom sit at table.

TOM

You know he bought her a puppy?

JAMES

A puppy. You're fuckin' kidding me. A British Bulldog I bet. She always wanted one of those.

TOM

And I swear I saw him at the gym. On a Friday night of all nights. Maybe this whole thing really shook him up. I don't know what's got into him.

JAMES

Me. We kinda had it out at the hospital. I told him what I thought of him and how he's never actually won Millie over or words to that effect.

TOM

What? Woah, let me get this straight. You told the guy who treats his girlfriend, who you want to be your girlfriend, like total crap and who was probably on the verge of losing her to you; what he needed to do to save the relationship?

JAMES

I've never heard it said like that. But yeah.

TOM

Well bravo Einstein. No wonder he's on a mission.

JAMES

I didn't know he was gonna get all empowered and have some sort of epiphany.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

I thought he'd just keep being a dick and Millie would spend one day out of hospital with him and, you know.

TOM

So what are you gonna do? Make it some sort of competition with her as the prize. Take Travis on at the All Valley Championship.

JAMES

Not funny.

TOM

Seriously though James. It sounds like you want her to make a choice. Is that what you want?

JAMES

Yes. No. I don't want her to have to choose, I just was hoping that it would happen naturally, organically. That she would gravitate to me and I wouldn't have to do anything. That love would run it's course.

TOM

Maybe it has. Are you prepared for that?

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Cool day. James exits the cafe on promenade with two coffees in hand. He's wearing jeans, grey t-shirt and a warm winter jacket. He walks to a bench and sits down. He places one coffee on bench and sips the other. It burns his mouth.

JAMES

(to himself)

Shit that's hot.

Millie appears. James stands up. She has her hair styled straight today with a fringe. She's wearing a grey jumper that makes her look huggable and warm.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Hey. Good timing. Thanks for coming. It's good to see you.

They hug.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I wasn't sure you'd even come. You look good. I don't think I've seen your hair like that before.

MILLIE

Just trying something different. Besides, it just helps hide some of this.

Millie pushes some of her fringe away to show the marks from the surgeries.

JAMES

Ouch. That'll go in time though. So are you ok, I mean -

MILLIE

You mean any brain damage? No, I'm fine. I just need to take it easy for a bit.

James gives her a coffee and they walk.

JAMES

Skinny milk latte right? When are you back at work?

MILLIE

Ummm... I'm allowed back in a week but about that. Look James I'm thinking -

JAMES

- You gave us all a scare. If it wasn't for me and Travis, mainly Travis, it wouldn't of happened. So I just wanted to say sorry for my part. I wanted to say sorry in person.

James goes to hold her hand it but she breaks it off.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I've missed you Millie.

MILLIE

James... I thought... about us a lot. Before this. After.

JAMES

Me too. I have a plan.

MILLIE

Complete with a gant chart? I'm not one of your projects James.

James stops walking. Grabs Millie's hand.

Hey hang on. I just want the best for you that's all. When you were in that hospital all I could think about was what if you died. What if you never got the life you wanted? What if Travis was the pinnacle of your life?

Millie breaks off and they start walking again.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You know he's changed.

JAMES

Changed? You're kidding me right?

MILLIE

He's really trying but it's not just that, he wants to change. For him. For us.

JAMES

So he's learned how to use a razor. Big deal. That just makes him one of those seals that does tricks for a reward. I've seen it since I was five years old Millie. An endless stream of guys who promised to change. Every month my Mother introduced me to another winner.

MILLIE

You don't get it, it's like he-

JAMES

- Wants to win you over.

MILLIE

Exactly. It's kinda like we're starting again.

James kicks a can on the footpath.

JAMES

And what about us? Did we ever start? Are we finished? What was this catch up to you?

MILLIE

James. Stop it. I don't need the police interrogation. Can't you understand that this is really hard for me. You're amazing. You have been such a wonderful surprise to me. I never thought anyone would ever see me in that way again. I care about you. I really do. I thought you were what I wanted... what I needed... but now with Travis it's... I just don't know.

JAMES

I thought you felt what I feel.

MILLIE

I do. It's just... I didn't plan on

-

JAMES

- Plan? There's only one planner here Millie. Only one person whose given any thought to this. But I think there's definitely one player here.

MILLIE

You think I've played you?

JAMES

You tell me. Last time we were here we were kissing on that jetty and you were telling me how much you resented him. Now you're walking hand in hand with him and telling me how much great it is to be with your first love again like I'm one of your girlfriends. Maybe you should get an extra scan or two.

Millie pushes her coffee back into James hard. Most of it spills out on him. She storms off.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Millie. Millie.

INT. WORK FUNCTION ROOM - DAY

Tables set up in the middle full of plates of food. Staff mingling. James walks in. He holds a small rectangle present.

DAVID

Was wondering where you were.

JAMES

Had to quickly wrap this.

James hold up a square wrapped present.

Andrew walks up onto a small stage. Millie stands to one side. A banner on wall reads 'welcome back Millie.'

ANDREW

Ok everyone. A quick speech from me and then from our guest of honor and then we can get into that food.

Some small laughs from crowd.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

We were all so shocked and sad when we heard what happened to you Millie. You were greatly missed and all of us had you in our thoughts and prayers. You're a great person and a real asset to this place which is why you're going to be missed even more.

Some looks of shock in the crowd. James is stunned.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Yes I know, it's a shock to me too. But yesterday Millie informed us she was not returning. She's going back to the city to finish her teaching degree. I'll best let her talk.

Andrew moves out of the way. Millie steps up.

MILLIE

Thanks. Firstly thanks to everyone for their cards and support. I'm not one for words, but I appreciated yours. Umm... It's been a tough few weeks. This incident has made realize a lot of things. Made me understand what's important. So sadly this is now a farewell morning tea. Enrollment is next week. I've very excited.

Millie sees James and they lock eyes.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

A friend once explained to me about permeability. How there should be more than one path to get to your destination. I think I truly understand that now. Thank you everyone. I'll miss you. Thanks.

James starts to walk to the stage area when he sees Travis handing out plates with cake to everyone.

INT. JAMES' HOUSE - NIGHT

James is on his drumkit. Headphones on. He's in a white singlet. James is thrashing it out hard. Frustrated. Angry. He closes his eyes as he plays.

He opens his eyes. Standing before him is Millie. James takes off his headphones.

MILLIE

I knocked. The door was open.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

James and Millie sit on the rock retaining wall overlooking the ocean. Gentle waves crash below.

JAMES

Does he know you're here?

MILLIE

He knows I need to say goodbye and thank you. He told me you spoke to him. That you're the reason why all this has happened. He will probably never thank you personally but he told me to tell you this.

Millie unfolds some paper and reads from it.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

James, you hit like a girl. But your words hit hard. Thanks.

Millie folds paper back up and puts in her pocket.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

He's moving with me soon to the city.

JAMES

Right.

MILLIE

He's thinking of studying landscape architecture or even furniture making or even a park ranger. He's not really sure but he's excited by the possibilities. I've never seen him so excited.

JAMES

Why are you telling me this?

MILLIE

He said it's my time now. That for too long he's made it about him.

James throws a rock down into the waves.

JAMES

Well it looks like you guys have got it all planned out.

MILLIE

Maybe everything happens for a reason. You don't know how long I have longed for him to change. How many wishes, how many prayers. How many nights staring at the ceiling. How many fights. I couldn't change him. His friends certainly couldn't or wouldn't. But it took you. James look at me.

James looks at Millie.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

I know this is hard. I know this is not what you wanted. What you planned.

Millie cries.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

I don't know how to thank you. You gave me back my first love. The thing that was most important to me. What I've wanted so badly for so long. And now I can see he loves me. I feel he loves me.

JAMES

But I love you Millie. Cant you see that? I love you.

MILLIE

I know you do. But it's the way you love. Love isn't just Q and A and facts and figures to me. It's beautiful that you remember every detail about me. About my favorite things or how I like my coffee. It's beautiful. But it's... clinical. It's still love but... you're such a great guy James. You need to find someone who appreciates that kind of love. And you will. But it's not me.

They are both choked with emotion. Millie puts her hand on James's hand.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

You will always have a place in my heart. You saved Travis's life. You've saved my life. Just like you're saving the town.

Millie leans in and kisses James gently on the cheek. They push their heads together and sob.

MILLIE (CONT'D)

Goodbye James.

James pulls out his present.

JAMES

It's a mixed tape. Actually it's a CD.

Millie smiles and lightly chuckles. She wipes her tears. She kisses James softly on the lips.

MILLIE

It's the most beautiful present ever. Thank you.

Millie walks away as James stares at ocean. He looks down.

In between the rocks, in a very unhospitable place, is a small flower blooming.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

Clock on wall says it's 9.31am. James stares at computer.

ON SCREEN

An email to Andrew. The subject is '*resignation.*' The body says '*Andrew, Please accept my resignation. I feel...*

He leans forward and begins typing fast.

INT. CAR - DAY

British Bulldog in passenger seat. Millie unwraps James's present.

ON PRESENT

The CD cover has a picture of her on the fountain with 80s font words '*Mansfield Holiday*' on top and '*Millie's mixed tape.*' at bottom.

Millie smiles.

INT. JAMES' WORK AREA - DAY

James finishes typing. Simon races in.

SIMON

James. James. You won't believe this. The private schools. One requested a meeting. They're keen to talk.

JAMES

Nice one. Good work. But, I'm just about to hit send on my resig-

SIMON

So what do I say to them?

James notices a pot plant in the front corner of the room, away from the light and the other plants.

SIMON (CONT'D)

- James are you listening?

James walks to the pot plant. A tiny green stem with a small flower bud protrudes.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Ummm James? James?

James walks back to his desk. Leans in chair. In thought.

SIMON (CONT'D)

So what do I tell him?

JAMES

Tell them I'm ringing my real estate agent to find me a place to live here. In this town.

SIMON

What?

JAMES

Tell them we want to meet ASAP. We've got a town to turnaround.

James hits delete his resignation email.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Millie's drives out of Mansfield. Music plays.

FADE OUT