

THE INVENTORY PEOPLE  
By  
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## THE INVENTORY PEOPLE

FADE IN:

INT. PAUL FORSTER'S HOME - DAY

Morning in the home of Paul Forster  
The home is a relatively nice single story ranch style house, just large enough for one man to be comfortable. No distinct style pervades the decoration, in fact it is almost anti-decoration, everything scattered about in an extreme state of disorder. A body lays inert in the bed and the buzzer of an alarm rings. We see very little of the occupant, just a pile of blankets and sheets. A hand shoots out and slaps the snooze button. Almost immediately the second clock on the other side of the bed begins to go off. The hand comes out again, hits the first clock, then he rolls over and hits the other. A head pokes out. This is Paul, our hero. He looks at the second clock, 7:40, concern reads on his face. He looks to the first clock to confirm the time, 7:45.

Paul

Oh no.

He flings himself out of the bed and falls on his face tangled in the sheets

Paul (cont.)

Aaaah ow.

He runs to the bathroom still wrapped in a sheet from his bed, turns on the water in the sink and splashes some on his face and in his hair. He styles his now wet hair with some gel, picks up the deodorant and slaps some on. We follow him as he runs back into the bedroom - picks up some underwear, smells them, "clean enough" and puts them on as he drops the sheet. He moves to the closet - empty except for a few hangers. He turns and looks on the floor at a pile of clothing, digs through it for a matching suit and puts it on. It is horribly wrinkled. Paul sits on the edge of bed, pulls two black socks out from underneath and holds them up, one is much longer than the other, they aren't a perfect match but he puts them on anyway. Steps into some scuffed up shoes and goes to the mirror -

Paul (cont.)

Good enough.

As he puts on his watch he looks again at the time - 7:50. Mortified, he runs into the living room, grabbing a necktie on the way.

Paul (cont.)  
 Shit. Keys. OK, where are you. Damn. Where  
 are my keys? keys, keys, keys. Aw, come on.

Paul begins digging madly through various piles of stuff.  
 Some of the papers have red stamps saying "PAST DUE". He  
 looks on the table by the door, lifts a book, turns and does  
 a replay of entering house.

Paul (cont.)  
 I came in, put my bag over here, dropped off  
 my dinner,

The remains of which are still there, take out of some kind

Paul (cont.)  
 Sat down. Shit.

Next he goes to the bathroom and looks around the counter  
 finding nothing. He returns to the main room and goes to  
 door, opens it, they are in the lock.

Paul (cont.)  
 Jeez. OK, am I forgetting anything. No. OK.

He closes the door

EXT. PAUL'S HOME - DAY

It is a brisk fall morning. He locks the door, runs towards  
 car and halfway there he stops, turns around and runs back to  
 the door slamming into it forgetting he had locked it. He  
 digs for the keys, unlocks the door and goes in.

INT. PAUL'S HOME - DAY

Paul grabs his briefcase from the kitchen table and exits  
 locking the door again.

EXT. PAUL'S HOME - DAY

He dashes to the car, starts it, turns it off and runs back.  
 He unlocks the door.

INT. PAUL'S HOME - DAY

He goes directly to the bedroom to grab his wallet from the  
 bedside table.

EXT. PAUL'S HOME - DAY

Paul runs back out the door and doesn't lock it. He nearly makes it to the car when he runs back to lock the door and returns to the car. Finally in the car he starts it, pauses, "anything else" reads on his face. He nods and backs out of driveway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Bumper to bumper traffic. Paul sticks his head out the window of his car. He looks up ahead and back behind him but there is no sign of movement. His radio is on, but everything is static. Every now and then we can catch a snippet of song. He looks at his watch again, 8:30.

Paul

Oh, come on. I'm dead. I'm dead. That's all there is to it. Dead.

Paul drops his head to the wheel and it honks. He looks up startled and yells out the window.

Paul

Sorry! Sorry!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Paul pulls into his space. He jumps out, turns around and as he reaches back in for his briefcase he hits his head on the roof of car. He runs to the building and in through the front door

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

He run's to the elevator, arrives just in time for the doors to close.

Paul

No. No, no, no, no, no.

His head drops to hit the elevator doors. He goes to the stairway and begins climbing.

INT. STAIRWELL

He arrives at his floor, 7th.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

He steps breathlessly into the hallway and walks down the hall trying to look calm as he wipes sweat from brow. At long last he arrives at the door which reads "Malden Corporation". He opens the door and snakes his way to his

desk, trying to look inconspicuous, perhaps trying a little too hard as he begins going through his papers. His desk is as organized as his house. The "in" stack is starting to get out of control, the "out" bin hasn't got much in it.

Mr. Keene

Mr. Forster.

Paul

Mr. Keene, I'm sorry I'm late. I was...

Mr. Keene

I don't want to hear any excuses. I really don't mind the occasional tardiness, as long as the work gets done, but could we try to make ourselves a little more presentable?

Paul

Yes, sir. I apologize. And the work will get done. Really.

Mr. Keene

Thank you.

Mr. Keene walks off very properly. Jerry, one of the other workers comes over.

Jerry

Got lucky guy.

Paul

Yeah. Hey, did you borrow that Halsberg file?

Jerry

No. You look like crap. Ever hear of an iron? They're really neat, see they're these cool little things that get hot and does wonders for clothes. Get's rid of wrinkles and everything. You should check one out.

Paul

(Looking for the file)  
Where the hell...?

Jerry

You really need to organize all this stuff.

Paul

It has it's own organization. I know where almost everything is. See, found it.

Jerry  
Keene wasn't too happy. Paul, if I were you  
I'd get a second alarm clock.

Paul  
I already... uh, yeah. Good idea.

Rebecca, an office secretary comes over to Paul's desk.

Jerry  
Hiya Becca.

Rebecca  
Hello Gerald. Paul, Mr. Lucas is looking for  
you.

Paul  
Shit.

Rebecca  
He's looking for your file on the Randall  
account.

Paul  
Yeah, yeah. I know.

Rebecca  
If I were you I'd find it or make myself  
scarce.

Paul  
Thanks. If you run into him, could you stall  
him for a minute.

Rebecca  
I'll try. Uh oh. Paul?

Paul  
Hmm?

Rebecca  
Too late here he comes.

Lucas  
Forster!

Paul  
I'm dead.

Jerry  
At least.

Jerry spins back to face his desk

Rebecca  
Good luck.

She slips silently away.

Lucas  
Forster! Ah, Mr. Forster.

Paul  
Mr. Lucas. What a pleasure. What can I do  
for you today.

Lucas  
The Randall account. I could be wrong, but I  
seem to recall giving you some paperwork to  
do. Have you finished it yet.

Paul  
I...I did. Yes, I took it home and finished  
it last night.

Lucas  
Really. Then it's done?

Paul  
Yes.

Lucas  
May I see it.

Paul  
See what?

Lucas  
The file.

Paul  
The Randall file.

Lucas  
Yes.

Paul  
No.

Lucas  
And why not?

Paul  
Well,...Actually,...I,...it seems... I left it

at home.

Lucas

At home.

Paul

At home. Really. You can look in my  
briefcase.

He opens his briefcase to show him and right on top we see a  
file BOLDLY marked "Randall".

Paul (cont.)

See. No file there ...

Lucas

Looks like you remembered to put it in  
here after all.

Paul

I did? Ah, yes there it, Oh! Randall! I  
thought you said... um...I thought...you know  
what, there were a few little things, some  
numbers that I wanted to double check. You  
know get into the computer and make sure the  
numbers were, you know, correct. They just  
didn't seem to be exactly right, so if I could  
just have a couple of hours to do that. That  
would be great. I know you wouldn't want to  
get any incorrect calculations. So I'll just  
get right on that and start looking at those  
numbers. Boy, good thing I remembered to  
bring that file. I was sure I'd forgotten it  
at home, but there it is... right there... on  
top.

Lucas

(overlapping as Paul trails off)

Forster. I will give you just one hour to ...  
ahem, check those numbers. One hour.  
Consider this a test, Mr. Forster. If you  
pass I'll keep this between us. If not, I'm  
sure Mr. Keene would be interested to know how  
well you keep track of your files. Is that  
clear?

Paul

Crystal clear, Mr. Lucas, Sir.

Lucas

So if I were you I would get busy.

Paul

Yes sir.

Paul turns to computer and begins typing madly. Rebecca comes over.

Rebecca

Give me some of those Randall forms. I'll do some for you Paul.

Paul

I can't let you do my work for me. I don't want you to fall behind on your own.

Rebecca

Paul, give me the work.

Paul

Thank you.

Rebecca

Don't mention it.

Jerry

She likes you.

Paul

Who?

Jerry

Who? "Who?", he says. Rebecca, who else?

Paul

Come on. She's just being helpful. I've seen her do it for lots of other people in the office.

Jerry

Really? She's never done it for me.

Paul looks at Jerry snidely

Jerry (cont.)

Oh, now I'm not that bad.

Paul looks at him the same way only more so.

Jerry (cont.)

Am I?

Paul

Mmmm.

Jerry  
Anyway, I still say she likes you. Why don't  
you ask her out?

Paul  
(thinking about it.)  
No, I couldn't. She wouldn't. I can't.

Jerry  
OK, fine. You're missing out pal.

Paul's phone rings.

Paul  
I guess so.

Answers his phone

Paul (cont.)  
Hello, this is Paul. Hi Dad. What? Oh, no.  
When was it? All right, all right. I'll send  
a card today during lunch. And? OK... and a  
gift. Yes. What should I get her? OK. Yes,  
I'll try to get my life in order. Bye.

Hangs up phone

Paul (cont.)  
Crap.

Jerry  
What's up?

Paul  
I forgot my mom's birthday.

Jerry  
Ouch. When was it?

Paul  
Last week.

Jerry  
Paul, some advice?

Paul  
What?

Jerry  
Pull it together. You are falling apart my  
friend.

Paul  
I know. I know.

Lucas walks past.

Lucas  
Hope you're putting the finishing touches on that file Forster, and not chatting the day away.

Paul  
No, sir.

Lucas  
You have forty five minutes.

Paul  
Yes sir.

Pulls out a floppy disk and gets to work.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Later that day Rebecca walks past Paul's desk and drops off a file as Lucas is walking towards it. She smiles at Mr. Lucas as Paul puts in his share of the work and hands it off to Mr. Lucas. All beautifully choreographed to go in one very smooth sequence of events.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Paul on his lunch break at an ATM. He enters his code to try to make a withdrawal. The screen shows "invalid transaction, insufficient funds." Paul drops his head to the wall with a thunk.

INT. CARD STORE - DAY

Paul writes a check for the card and a small trinket gift.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Paul at his desk eating a brown bag lunch and typing vigorously. Mr. Keene comes over.

Mr. Keene  
Mr. Forster, I would very much like to see you for a moment in my office.

Paul  
Yes, sir, Mr. Keene, sir.

Paul rises and follows Keene to the office. Jerry and Rebecca look on concerned. Paul and Keene enter the office and Keene shuts the door and then the blinds.

INT. KEENE'S OFFICE - DAY

A pristine masterpiece. Everything has a place. As Keene sits he adjusts a pen holder that is out of place. Paul is standing nervously against the wall.

Mr. Keene  
Please sit.

Paul does so.

Mr. Keene (cont.)  
Mr. Forster, Paul, I am concerned about you.

Paul  
Concerned sir?

Mr. Keene  
Yes. I'm afraid that you aren't keeping your work in order. I'm wondering where it sits on your list of priorities. The tardiness...

Paul  
Yes, that, I promise that will stop.

Mr. Keene  
It must. Your work, when accomplished, is excellent. Mr. Lucas said that the Randall file is in excellent order. Your work is not the issue here. You are.

Paul  
I see.

Mr. Keene  
Your appearance is another area of some concern. Now, I can understand an occasional mismatched tie or crumple, but really, you are absolutely, positively disheveled. It simply isn't acceptable office attire.

Paul  
I'm sorry, am I being fired sir?

Mr. Keene  
Fired? Ha ha. No, but consider this a verbal warning that if things do not improve that may

be the course of action followed. Consider yourself on probation. You are being watched very closely. Do you follow me?

Paul

I believe so.

Mr. Keene

I'm glad we had this conversation. Have a good day Mr. Forster.

Paul

Thank you.

Mr. Keene

Please, see yourself out.

Paul

Yes sir.

Mr. Keene

Oh, and Paul?

Paul

Yes?

Mr. Keene

Have a pleasant weekend.

Paul

Oh, thank you, sir. You too.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - EVENING

Paul pulling into his driveway. As he gets out of his car he looks back in and sees the box and card for his mother. He forgot to mail it.

Paul

Shit.

He grabs both and goes to the door. He opens the mailbox, takes out the mail and puts it under his arm. Unlocking the door he steps inside flipping on the light switch. The lights do not come on.

Paul (cont.)

Oh no. Oh no. No, no, no, no.

Begins going through mail in the fading light of the doorway.

Paul (cont.)

Bill, bill, bill, bill, sweepstakes. What is this? Inventory control? Bill, bill... ugh.

Opens up fridge and takes out a beer.

Paul (cont.)

Warm. Great. Just fabulous.

Popping it open he takes a swig, grimaces as he swallows and goes into living room. Pulls out a couple candles and grabs a magazine as he sits down to read.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - PAST MIDNIGHT

The candle is nearly burnt down and Paul asleep on the sofa with the magazine laying open on his chest. A breeze flutters the pages and the candle is blown out.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A fall evening. A mist is rolling in. There is a full moon. All is mysterious. Gregorian Chant plays under it all.

FADE OUT.

In the dark there is a knocking at the door.

FADE IN

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A slight sunrise orange caste to the room. Knocking continues. Paul's eyes open slowly.

Paul

Huh? Just...just a second. Just a second. I'm coming.

He rises slowly and goes to answer the door. He opens the door to reveal a somewhat overweight man with a mustache and glasses, impeccably dressed, holding a briefcase and a laptop computer. Behind him are about a dozen men and women in either tan or navy blue jumpsuits. One man directly behind the leader is wearing a flat cap and smiling broadly. The leader is deadly serious.

Paul

What the hell?

The leader pushes his way in. His first assistant, the one with the cap, steps up to Paul and with a very broad almost ceremonial sweeping gesture removes his cap and places it to

is chest. This is Garret Stock.

Garret  
Good morning.

He goes over to where the leader, Mr. Bristol, is setting up at a table he has cleared off.

Paul  
Excuse me?

The others all file in. One or two are carrying soft cases which hold their calculating devices. These are the Inventory People.

Paul  
What on earth are you doing?

Mr. Bristol  
Where would I find a plug?

Paul  
Right under there, but...

Mr. Bristol  
Thank you. Garret if you could begin to get them all set up.

Paul  
But there isn't any...

Mr. Bristol plugs in his computer and it springs to life.

Paul (cont.)  
...power?

Garret  
All right everyone. Lets get into gear.  
Looks like this is going to be a long job.

Paul  
Who are you?

Mr. Bristol  
I am Mr. Bristol. I am in charge of this operation. This is Mr. Stock. He is my first assistant. Any questions you have may be directed to us.

Garret  
You may call me Garret.

now turning back to the group of people

Garret (cont.)

Why don't you two to start in the bedroom.  
You two, the kitchen is yours, sorry.  
Basement. Nathan, could you hit the lights.

One goes over to turn on the lights. Nothing happens.

Garret (cont.)

Mr. Bristol, lights?

Mr. Bristol hits a key on his computer and all lights come springing to life.

Garret (cont.)

Thank you. You two, bathroom. You, out to the garage, and you two can start in here. Let's get to it. Try to make this as painless as possible

Paul

Get to what? What are you people doing? Hey, where are you going? You! Hey, that's my stuff! What the hell is going on here?

Mr. Bristol

You should have received a letter informing you of our arrival.

Paul

A letter?

Mr. Bristol

Mr. Stock.

Garret goes over to where Paul dropped the letter and retrieves it for Mr. Bristol.

Mr. Bristol (cont.)

Thank you. Unopened. I see you are going to be an especially difficult case.

Paul

Case? You people have invaded my house. I don't even know who you are.

Garret

May I?

Mr. Bristol

Please, I have work to do.

He goes over to his computer and begins checking information. Garret pulls Paul aside.

Garret

We are here to insure that everything in your life is in order. We will be taking counts and examining your order. Essentially, taking stock of your life. Something you seem very much in need of, Mr. Forster.

Paul

What are you? Some kind of anal retentive fanatics gone bad?

Garret

No. We're the inventory people.

Fade to black.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

The Inventory People are going through Paul's house counting things. They have keypads at their sides and are entering items as they come across them. Being very thorough and replacing everything in better condition than they found it. One girl is sitting counting socks and trying to find pairs. Another person is going through CDs, another through mail, another in the fridge opening moldy tupperware containers.

Garret is sitting across the table from Paul who has his face in his hands. Mr. Bristol is overseeing this. Garret has a pile of papers in front of him and a pencil in hand.

Garret

When was this bill last paid?

Paul

I don't know.

Garret

According to the bill, the last payment was two months ago.

Paul

Fine.

Garret

And the electricity bill?

Paul

I don't know. A while. Although it seems to be back on.

Mr. Bristol  
Temporary. I assure you.

Paul  
Oh.

Garret  
Phone?

Paul  
Two weeks ago.

Garret  
Excellent. So it's up to date.

Paul  
Well, no.

Garret  
I see.

Paul  
Why me?

Garret  
Was that rhetorical or were you asking?

Paul  
Rhetorical, but since you offered, why?

Garret  
Mr. Bristol

Mr. Bristol  
We are hired by those who are concerned.

Paul  
Mr. Keene.

Mr. Bristol  
I'm sorry but we are not at liberty to divulge our employer.

Garret  
I seem to recall a Mr. Keene. Surely he didn't hire us.

Mr. Bristol  
I suppose that is not divulging too much. No.

Mr. Keene is not our employer on this case.

Paul

He's not?

Mr. Bristol

No. Now if we could get back to work.

Garret

Yes. Let's see. We have 29 cases of oversleeping in the last 12 months. Not very good Mr. Forster.

Paul

What? How do you know that?

Garret

It's in your file.

Paul

This is unbelievable. My file?

Garret

Yes. Your file.

Paul

Where do you get this information?

Garret

I really must insist that I ask the questions from here on out.

Paul

Now hold on one god damn minute. You people come into my house and just go wherever you want. Poking your nose into my things. This is trespassing. Give me one good reason not to call the police. Look at that! Put that down! You! Yes, you, put it down! You are invading my privacy! I don't know why I've let you do this so far, but it's over. Get out of my house. Get out!

Garret and Mr. Bristol don't move.

Paul (cont.)

I'm serious. Get out of my house!

Paul goes over to one of the inventory people and grabs him and begins pushing him towards the door.

Cut to Mr. Bristol and Garret.

Mr. Bristol  
I knew this was going to be a difficult case.

Garret  
You were correct.

Mr. Bristol strikes a key on his computer. Paul opens the door.

Paul  
Get ou...what the...?

Two enormous men looking like the perfect mobster stereotype are standing in the doorway blocking the way. Paul lets go of the Inventory person who calmly returns to his calculating as the two men reach for Paul. Paul screams and then it is abruptly cut short.

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Paul lays on his back. Above him stand Mr. Bristol and Garret weaving in and out as Paul regains his vision.

Mr. Bristol  
We hate to resort to force Mr. Forster. But you forced our hand. If you would please cooperate with us from here on out.

Garret  
Please try to understand that we are doing this for your own good, Paul.

At that, Paul passes out.

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Garret is helping Paul to a sitting position. Paul's face is beaten, not badly but he is clearly hurt. An inventory person hands a glass of water to Garret to give to Paul.

Garret  
Thank you. Here you go Paul. Have some water. Has this been counted.

Inventory person 1  
Yes.

Garret  
Good.

Mr. Bristol

The first counts are coming in. I need to get back to work. Do you think you can take care of him from here on.

Garret

I don't think he'll be too much trouble now, will you Paul?

Paul sits holding his glass of water with both hands looking very much like a little child and shakes his head no.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Paul lays in his bed with Garret sitting on the edge. Paul's eyes open.

Garret

Feeling a little better.

Paul

No.

Garret

Is there anything we can get you? A drink? A cold compress?

Paul

No, thank you.

Garret

We are only doing our job.

Paul

Yeah. Some job you got. Do you have a family?

An Inventory person comes out of the bathroom.

Garret

How is everything going in the bathroom?

Inventory 2

Fine. We are running ahead of schedule.

Garret

Good. Tell Mr. Bristol I'll be right out.

Inventory 2

Yes Sir.

Paul

You didn't answer my question.

Garret  
I'll get you some fresh ice for your nose.

Paul  
I didn't ask for more ice.

Garret  
Yes, I have a family.

Paul  
You do?

Garret  
Why so surprised?

Paul  
I'm not, well, I guess I am a little.

Garret  
I have a wife and two little girls. Six and Eight.

He pulls out his wallet.

Garret (cont.)  
Here they are.

Paul  
That's good.

Garret  
Why?

Paul  
Well, for one It means you are real.

Garret  
And for another?

Paul  
And for another... for another it's just good that you have a family. I wish I had a family.

Garret  
There was nothing in your file to suggest you were an orphan. Aren't these your parents

He picks up a frame from the dresser.

Paul

Yes. No, they aren't dead. I wish I had a "family." I'm single.

Garret  
Seeing anyone?

Paul  
Heh-heh, no.

Garret  
Someone you want to see?

Paul  
I, yes, no, I don't know.

Garret  
You want to, then do it. Believe me, it's worth the risk.

Paul  
She wouldn't want to go out with me.

Garret  
Why not?

Paul  
Isn't that why you're here?

Garret  
We're here to correct your faults.

Paul  
I see.

Garret  
Trust me, when we're done with you, you'll be a new person.

Paul  
What if I don't want to be a new person?

Garret  
That isn't an option. You will be improved, and your friend will see the new you. A man in control of his life is infinitely more attractive to the opposite sex.

Paul  
Are you in control of your life?

Garret  
Of course.

Bristol (OS)  
Stock, is our patient feeling better?

Garret  
Are you feeling better.

Paul  
No.

Garret.  
Paul, please. Don't make this difficult.

Paul  
No.

Garret pauses and looks pleadingly at Paul. Seeing that he's not going to give in, Garret sighs.

Garret  
He says no, sir.

Bristol (OS)  
Mr. Stock, please persuade our friend to feel better. We need to proceed with the interview process. The day is not going to go by any slower.

Garret  
Yes sir. Paul, let's go.

Paul  
You are such a lemming. Are you in control of your life, or is he?

Garret  
Let's go, Paul.

Paul  
You don't even have a mind of your own anymore, do you?

Garret  
Paul. NOW!

Paul  
Fine, let's get this over with.

INT. PAUL'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON to EVENING

The following lines are done in a rapid fire montage

Mr. Bristol  
When is your Mother's birthday

Garret  
When is your Father's birthday

Mr. Bristol  
When is your parent's anniversary?

Garret  
What did you have for dinner last night?

Garret  
When do you put out the garbage?

Mr. Bristol  
Where did you put your keys when you came home last night?

Garret  
What was the last movie you saw?

Mr. Bristol  
What is your current bank balance?

Mr. Bristol  
When was your car's last tune up?

Garret  
Do you currently have any clothing at the dry cleaners?

Mr. Bristol  
You're Mother's maiden name?

Garret  
Social Security number?

Mr. Bristol  
When is your lease up?

INT. PAUL'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Mr. Bristol and Garret are putting the finishing touches on the file. Paul looks thoroughly exhausted.

Mr. Bristol  
That should be all for now. You are excused for the time being. We are not done, but this concludes phase one. Try to integrate what you've learned today into your life. Ladies and gentlemen, let's pack up.

Mr. Bristol leaves the table and steps over to his computer leaving Paul and Garret alone.

Garret  
That wasn't so bad, was it?

Paul  
Not bad? You came into my home, uninvited I might add. Beat me senseless. I feel like I've just gone through the Spanish Inquisition!

Garret  
I'm sorry Paul. It's all for the best. Trust me. You can't disregard the benefits, the public good, that's derived from you being an educated individual.

Paul  
Get out.

Garret  
We'll be seeing you again.

Paul  
Again?

Garret  
Again. This was only the initial rating. You will be visited...

Paul  
By three spirits until I learn the true meaning of Christmas?

Garret  
Goodbye Paul. Please, try to change.

Paul  
Say "hi" to the wife and kids for me.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Paul is in bed drifting off to sleep, he is seen through the distorted fish eye view of a surveillance camera. In the corner of the room a small device begins to hum and glow with an eerie red light. Paul stirs in his sleep, but doesn't wake up.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul's alarm goes off. His hand darts out and slaps the button just as before, but this time he immediately wakes up. He sits up, looks at the clock and looks surprised. Looks at the other clock. He is in awe that he has actually awakened up on time.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Paul holds the door open for Mr. Lucas. He looks surprised to see him there.

Lucas  
Mr. Forster. Good morning.

Paul  
Good morning Mr. Lucas.

Paul goes to his desk and looks over the pile of papers on the desk. Where to start? As he begins to work Rebecca passes his desk.

Rebecca  
Paul?

Paul  
Morning Becca.

Rebecca  
Paul, you... you look really good.

Paul  
Thanks. Just had a good night's sleep.

Rebecca  
You should do it more often.

Paul  
Ahhhh, yeah.

Jerry comes in. He is out of breath.

Rebecca  
Morning Gerald.

Paul  
Hey Jerry.

Jerry  
Paul? What's he doing here?

Paul  
I work here, remember?

Jerry  
You must have just beat me.

Paul  
No, I got here a little early today.

Jerry  
Yeah, whatever.

Mr. Keene enters the scene.

Mr. Keene  
Mr. Forster, a pleasure to see you here on time today. I hope this wasn't a fluke.

Paul  
Me too, sir.

Mr. Keene  
I'm very happy. Very happy indeed. And while we are on the subject of happy people, I just received a call from Jacob Randall himself. he sends his commendations. Kudos if you will.

Paul  
Really? Great. Glad I could be part of the team.

Mr. Keene  
Mr. Forster, really. You are far too modest. I know what goes on around here. I'm not so dense as all that.

Paul  
I didn't mean... I mean, I don't follow, sir.

Mr. Keene  
I know Mr. Lucas. He passes the buck. He is more than happy to take the credit for this project since it came out the way it did, but if things had been otherwise, the fault would be resting squarely on your shoulders.

Paul  
Oh, I don't know...

Mr. Keene  
Ahahahahahah, don't interrupt. Therefore, I have decided to place you in charge of the newly acquired Sullivan account.

Paul  
The...the Sullivan account?

Mr. Keene  
Indeed.

Paul  
But, sir. You've been trying to retain that account for months.

Mr. Keene  
I have... yes, I have. And I got it. Now you've got it.

Paul  
Sir, I appreciate the offer...

Mr. Keene  
It's not an offer.

Paul  
Then what is it?

Mr. Keene  
An assignment. I have great faith in you Paul. You have a glimmer of greatness.

Paul  
But sir. The Sullivan...

Mr. Keene  
I won't hear another word. It's yours.

Paul  
I'm not even an executive.

Mr. Keene  
You will be if this goes well. I'll have the paperwork on your desk by noon tomorrow.

Paul  
Yes Sir.

Mr. Keene  
And Paul...

Paul  
Hmmm?

Mr. Keene  
Don't fuck this up.

Paul  
(whimpers and smiles)  
OK.

Mr. Keene walks off. Rebecca and Jerry descend on Paul.

Rebecca  
Oh my god, Paul!

Jerry  
You son of a bitch! Congratulations.

Paul  
Don't break out the champagne yet guys. He's  
crazy if he thinks I can do this.

Jerry  
We already know he's crazy.

Rebecca  
I don't think so. I can't think of anyone who  
would do better.

Paul  
But you helped on the Randall account...

Rebecca  
All I did was run some numbers through the  
computer because you were short on time. You  
did all the work.

Jerry  
Face it, Keene likes you buddy.

Rebecca  
Oh Paul, I'm so happy for you.

She kisses him on the cheek and goes off to her desk.

Jerry  
When are you gonna ask her out?

Paul  
Huh?

Jerry  
"HUH?" She likes you. What do you need, sign  
language?

Paul  
Nah, she doesn't like me. Why would she like

me.

Jerry

I wish I knew. Listen, Paul, if she doesn't like you, she don't like nobody.

Paul

We're just friends.

Jerry

Let me explain something to you buddy. Women, OK, women, they'll never come right out and tell you anything. Nothing. Not even a scrap. You gotta guess. What they do is they send off signals. They have subtleties, they have vibes. They aren't gonna come right out and say, "Hey Paul, you are one heck of a guy. You're smart, you're witty, and now it looks like you're gonna be successful too. I wanna marry you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, or at the very least get to know you a little better. Could we go out on a date sometime?"

Mr. Lucas has come over just in time to hear this dedication of love.

Paul

You're nuts.

Jerry

You don't know what you're missing out on Paul.

Paul

Just let me deal with that. Oh, Mr. Lucas!

Lucas

Sorry to interrupt you boys. Congratulations Forster.

Paul

Um, You too Mr. Lucas.

Lucas

I didn't get the Sullivan account, you did.

Paul

Oh, that, well, I'm sure I'll need plenty of help... if you're interested...

Lucas

Don't patronize me. You stole that account from me you little weasel. You got lucky. You did something. I don't know what, but I'm gonna find out.

Paul

I'm sure there's another account coming your way Mr. Lucas. Mr. Keene said...

Lucas

I don't care what he told you... that account was mine. You owe me big.

Jerry

Don't let him bully you Paul.

Lucas

Stay out of this Scanlan.

Jerry holds up his hands and backs off.

Lucas (cont.)

I don't know what you did Forster, but you won't get away with it. Watch your back.

Lucas storms off.

Paul

Oh man. I don't even want the account. I'm gonna go tell Mr. Keene to give it to Lucas.

Jerry

Don't be stupid. Lucas is a jerk. Keene chose you. Go with it.

Paul

Yeah... yeah.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

It is 5:00, quitting time. People are making their way out of the office. Rebecca walks by pulling on her coat.

Rebecca

Night Paul. I'll see you tomorrow.

Paul

Thanks Becca. Have a good night.

Jerry

Hang on Rebecca, I'll walk out with you.

Rebecca

That's OK Jerry. I'll be fine.

Jerry

I think I'm gonna hit happy hour, you care to join me Paul? Celebrate a little?

Paul

Go on ahead. Maybe I'll catch up. I've got a few things to finish up here.

Jerry

OK, I'm gonna head over to "Ralph's" if you decide to come.

Paul

OK, thanks.

Paul returns to finishing up his work. The bell sounds as the elevator door closes. The doors close and several of the overhead fluorescent lights go out. Paul's desk remains lit. After a few moments The Inventory People begin to appear silently and unnoticed by Paul. This is a smaller contingent, but equally unnerving. With his trademark hat sloop, Garret approaches first.

Garret

Paul.

Paul leaps up from his seat and nearly falls to the floor

Paul

Jesus!

Garret

We told you we weren't done.

Mr. Bristol

Good evening Mr. Forster. Ready to go to work?

Paul

How did you get in here?

Garret

Look at this desk. And we thought your home was in trouble.

Mr. Bristol

Let's get started.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Paul is asleep at his now immaculate desk. Mr. Keene, Jerry, Rebecca and many other office workers stand around, Lucas is towards the back.

Rebecca

Paul. Um, Paul. Wake up.

Paul

Mmmmmm, huh?

Rebecca

Paul, are you all right?

Paul

Huh? Oh, yes, I just... I stayed late last night.

Mr. Keene

Mr. Forster, I appreciate your hard work. You are showing some real promise. Keep it up. I'll have those papers here by noon.

Mr. Keene moves off.

Jerry

Hey buddy, you already got the Sullivan account. You don't have to kiss ass any more.

Rebecca

You keep surprising me.

Lucas walks off angrily.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul is asleep. The eerie glow of the device that the Inventory People placed in his room becomes visible.

INT. PAUL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Paul washes his dishes carefully. A large pile of clean dishes are accumulating.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Paul hard at work at his still immaculate desk. Keene walks by and smiles, Lucas walks by looking worse and worse.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Repeat of earlier scene.

Paul is asleep. The eerie glow of the device that the Inventory People placed in his room becomes visible.

INT. MALDEN CORP., KEENE'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul sits leaning forward in his chair, just barely containing his nervousness as Keene stands reading a file.

Mr. Keene  
Mmm-hmmm. Ah. Yes.

He takes a pen and makes a note in the file.

Mr. Keene (cont.)  
Good. Good. Hahah! Oh. Interesting.

Paul  
Sir?

Mr. Keene  
Mmm, I see. Yes. Yes. Oh, yes, very good.

Paul  
Sir?

Mr. Keene  
Mmm, Yes?

Paul  
Is it satisfactory?

Mr. Keene  
Oh, yes. This is excellent Mr. Forster. You have really come up with some innovative strategies. I am very pleased.

He sits at his desk.

Mr. Keene (cont.)  
I'll submit this to them immediately.

Paul  
Are there any changes you would like me to make?

Mr. Keene  
Changes? No. No. You have lived up to my expectations completely. Exemplary. Well done Mr. Forster.

Paul  
Thank you, Sir!

Mr. Keene

No, thank you. I had my concerns when I assigned you to this project. I feel I can tell you this now, I knew your work was superb, but your work space and tardiness had me a tad worried. But you came through and pulled everything together. Excellent work. Trust me, you will be rewarded.

Paul

Thank you.

Mr. Keene

You are excused.

Paul

Yes sir. Thank you sir.

Mr. Keene

Oh, and Paul?

Paul

Yes sir?

Mr. Keene

Have a good weekend.

Paul

Oh, is it the weekend already?

Mr. Keene

Yes it is. I appreciate your hard work, but don't forget to relax when you need it.

Paul

No. Of course not.

Mr. Keene

Spend some time with that special someone.

Paul

Right.

Mr. Keene

And again, well done

Paul

Thank you.

Paul steps out of the office and looks over to Rebecca's desk. She is talking on the phone and hard at work. He goes

over towards his own desk staring at Rebecca the entire way, bumping into several people and desks on the way. Lucas watches this from a distance. His anger reading clearly on his face.

Jerry  
Hey, hey Paul? You OK?

Paul  
Huh? Oh, yeah.

Jerry  
Keene like the Sullivan account?

Paul  
Oh, yeah. Jer...?

Jerry  
Yup?

Paul  
I think I wanna ask Becca out.

Jerry  
So go for it.

Paul  
It's not that easy.

Jerry  
Sure it is. Go over there and ask her out.  
She likes you.

Paul  
What do I say?

Jerry  
What do you say? I don't know.

Paul  
How do you ask women out.

Jerry  
Hey, I don't ask women out, they ask me out.

Paul  
Help me out here. For once I'm actually asking you to give me advice. You know I must be desperate.

Jerry  
Paul, all you need to do is ask her if she's

busy this weekend and if she says no, then ask her out.

Paul  
What do I ask her to do.

Jerry  
I don't know. Ask her to dinner, a movie, anything. Just go ask her out.

Paul  
Maybe I should wait.

Jerry  
Go!

Paul  
I'm sure she's pretty busy.

Jerry  
Paul. Come on.

Jerry grabs Paul by the arm and brings him over to Rebecca.

Jerry (cont.)  
Rebecca. Paul has something he'd like to ask you.

Rebecca  
Oh?

Jerry  
Paul?

Paul  
Um. Hey Becca.

Rebecca  
Paul.

Jerry  
(Jabs Paul in the side and mutters)  
What're you doing this weekend?

Paul  
What're you doing this weekend?

Rebecca  
I don't think I have any plans. Let me check my schedule.

She opens her Day Runner and closes it immediately, clearly

not really looking.

Rebecca (cont.)  
Nope. No plans.

Paul  
Oh.

Rebecca  
I'm completely free. Free, free, free, free,  
free.

Paul  
Uh-huh. Me too.

Rebecca  
So, we're both free huh?

Paul  
Yep.

After a long pause as they all look at each other. Jerry is getting frustrated.

Jerry  
Hey, why don't you kids get together and do something if you don't have any plans?

They look at Jerry

Jerry (cont.)  
Just a suggestion.

Paul  
Um, Becca, you probably wouldn't be interested in having dinner tomorrow night?

Rebecca  
In general or with you?

Paul  
Um, with me?

Rebecca  
Yes. I'd love to.

Paul  
Oh. Good.

Jerry throws his hands skyward and walks away.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - AFTERNOON

The office is working smoothly. Paul is busy at his desk, Jerry talking on the phone and Rebecca is busy typing away. In the background yelling is heard.

Lucas

Dammit Julia, what the hell is this? What is this letter supposed to be? I can't send this!

Julia

I'll type it again.

Lucas

You better believe you'll type it again!

Julia

I'm sorry sir, I've been busy with some other papers for Mr. Paulson.

Lucas

What? What are you doing that for? Paulson? Paulson! You're fucking whoring for Paulson?

Julia

I was asked to take on some of his paperwork.

Lucas

By who? Who told you to do that?

Julia

I'm not sure.

Lucas

Well, think Julia. Think you fucking brainless bitch. Jesus, Paulson? Do you use the spell checker on his letters? Cause you sure as hell aren't using it on mine! Who told you to work for him.

Julia

I...

She starts to cry

Mr. Keene

That's quite enough Mr. Lucas. I asked her to pick up some of his extra work.

Lucas

What? Why? I've got one secretary. He's got one. Why the hell is he getting my time?

Mr. Keene

Would you like to take this into my office Mr. Lucas?

Lucas

No. No, I don't. Let's do this right here. I want to know why you're giving my secretary away.

Mr. Keene

You don't have a heavy work load right now.

Lucas

You haven't exactly been throwing work my way. I bust my fucking ass for you and you throw me shit? You sit back on your ass and give all the good projects to Forster?

Mr. Keene

You could learn a lot from Mr. Forster, Mr. Lucas.

Lucas

Bullshit!

Mr. Keene

Language Mr. Lucas.

Lucas

Fuck you Mr. Keene.

Mr. Keene

You are treading on terribly thin ice Mr. Lucas

Lucas

Fine. Fine. Give me back my secretary and I bet my mood will improve. I told you three times. Use the fucking spell checker!

Julia

I used it sir.

Lucas

The fuck you did.

Mr. Keene

Lucas! My office. Now.

Lucas

I've got work to do.

Mr. Keene  
No you don't. Mr. Lucas, you're fired.

Lucas  
I'm what?

Mr. Keene  
You are fired, Mr. Lucas. I want you to clear  
out your office today.

Lucas  
You can't do this.

Mr. Keene  
Can't I? Mr. Forster!

Paul and Jerry look up from their desks.

Paul  
This isn't happening.

He rises and moves a little towards Mr. Keene

Paul (cont.)  
Yes sir Mr. Keene?

Mr. Keene  
Congratulations Mr. Forster, you've been  
promoted. Goodbye Mr. Lucas.

He starts to move away, then turns back.

Mr. Keene (cont.)  
Don't make me call security.

Paul looks stunned for a moment. Jerry does nothing to  
contain his jubilation.

Jerry  
Yes!

Mr. Keene  
Show's over people. Let's get back to work.

The people scramble to return to their desks and go to work  
leaving Paul and Lucas standing across from each other. Paul  
looking apologetic and Lucas alternately crushed and enraged.  
Paul smiles lightly at Lucas who after a moment storms off to  
his office and slams the door leaving Paul standing alone.

Paul

Oh boy.

Paul walks slowly back to his desk.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - AFTERNOON

Paul sits at his new desk looking terribly small in this large new office. Lucas steps into the doorway and pauses as he sees Paul sitting in "his" chair. Paul looks up to see Lucas standing there and rises without saying a word. Lucas stands in the doorway for a moment then bitterly knocks three times on the door and without waiting for a response walks silently over to a box to the right of the desk. Lucas leans over, picks up the box and moves to leave. He stops in the doorway for a moment then turns back to Paul. They stand in silence for a few seconds staring each other down, Paul fighting a losing battle. Lucas finally breaks the silence.

Lucas  
Watch your back.

Paul  
Mr. Lucas, I didn't mean for this to happen, I really didn't.

Lucas  
I don't mean me. Watch your back for the next you.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Paul and Jerry wave goodbye to Rebecca as she drives by. A few more people come out of the building as Paul and Jerry start to walk away.

Jerry  
Well boss, I'll see you when I get back from Chicago.

Paul  
Don't call me that. What's in Chicago?

Jerry  
My ex and my kid. Gotta put in the visit. I don't get to see him enough.

Paul  
Why not ask for a transfer?

Jerry  
Ah, Keene wouldn't give it to me. Maybe with you as my boss...

Paul  
Don't call me "boss," please.

Jerry  
All right, all right. You picking up Rebecca  
or are you guys meeting somewhere?

Paul  
Picking her up at 7:00. I can't really  
believe it. An executive at Malden  
Corporation.

Paul stops and turns back to look at the building as he looks  
he notices a person standing on the edge of the roof.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

The building is viewed from a distance and a man stands on  
the edge of the roof.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Paul takes a step back toward the building.

Paul  
Jerry?

Jerry  
(overlapping)  
This is great, my friend is my boss, what  
could be better!

Paul  
Jerry, who is that?

Jerry looks at the door of the building.

Jerry  
What? You mean coming out? That's Jen in  
accounting.

Paul  
No, Jer, up there. On the roof.

Jerry  
On the roof?

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Several other employees exit the building. One looks at Paul  
and follows his line of sight to see what is holding him

transfixed. She points and another girl turns to look up.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Paul and Jerry stand transfixed, unable to move. Paul makes the connection.

Paul  
That's Lucas. Jerry. Oh my God.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Lucas' feet are at the edge of the roof.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Lucas is standing at the edge of the roof. His face is perfectly calm. His eyes are closed and he lifts up his arms as if he were standing on a diving board preparing to leap for Olympic gold.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Paul looks up at the roof.

Paul  
(quietly)  
Don't do it. Please don't.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. ROOF - EVENING

Lucas leans forward.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

A group of women are staring up at the roof.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. ROOF - EVENING

Lucas leans forward and falls.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

A woman screams.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

Paul stands shocked and looks up to the roof again.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. ROOF - EVENING

A hint of movement on the roof.

EXT. MALDEN CORP. - EVENING

A crowd of people move to where Lucas has landed.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PARKING LOT EVENING

FADE IN

Fire engines, police and several employees standing around talking. Paul shakes hands with a police officer who has just taken his statement and says goodbye to Jerry. He moves to his car and gets in.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

Paul drives home, still in shock from what he has just experienced.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul enters the apartment and tosses his keys on the table, takes a beer from the refrigerator and then sits down on the sofa.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul asleep on the sofa, several beer bottles on the coffee table and static on the TV.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

Light streams in through the window on Paul's face. He struggles against the inevitable. He wakes and looks at his watch which reads 12:10.

Paul

Ugh.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - DAY

Paul pops open a bottle of aspirin and takes two, then two more and then two more.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Paul is laying on his bed, the clock reads 1:32

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Paul is laying on his bed, the clock reads 5:53. Paul looks over at the clock and sits up slowly. He pauses.

Paul

Uh oh.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Paul's car screeches to a halt in front of the house and he leaps out slamming the car door behind him and runs up to the house. He stops at the door and fixes his tie. Once he feels ready he rings the bell. He hears the sound of movement and the door opens. Rebecca stands in the door looking radiant.

Paul

I'm so sorry I'm late! After Mr. Lucas...

Rebecca

I heard. What a tragedy.

Paul

I got home and fell asleep on the sofa...

Rebecca

Let me get my coat.

Paul

I guess I drank a few beers, after seeing Mr. Lucas... I was a little shaken up I guess...

Rebecca

I saw it on the news when I got home.

Paul

Then I got up and took some aspirin and went to bed for a while...

Rebecca

I called but I got your answering machine, I wasn't sure you would still want to get together.

They begin to walk out to the car

Paul

Then I woke up at six, so I'm really sorry I'm late.

Rebecca

Oh, don't worry about it. I understand.

Paul  
I've been looking forward to this.

Rebecca  
Me too.

Paul  
Let me get the door.

He reaches to open the door but it's locked. A car drives by, Mr. Bristol is driving. Paul doesn't notice.

Paul (cont.)  
Oh, I locked the door. Just a second.

Paul runs around the front of the car and goes to his door. It too is locked. He fumbles in his pockets for his keys. Another car drives by, also driven by Mr. Bristol. Paul looks up and sees the car, he catches a glimpse of Mr. Bristol. He pauses for a moment, then resumes digging in his pockets.

Paul (cont.)  
I ... I can't seem to find my keys. Heh, heh.

As he continues to dig in his pockets a man walks by on the sidewalk. It is Mr. Bristol again. Paul leans over and looks into the car. The keys are in the ignition. Paul drops his head against the roof of the car.

Paul  
Oh no.

Rebecca  
What is it?

Paul  
Oh, nothing.

Rebecca leans over to see the keys in the ignition.

Rebecca  
Oh.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Paul and Rebecca walk into the restaurant and step up to the Maitre'd.

Paul  
Hello. We have a reservation. Forster.

Maitre'd  
Yes. Forster... let's see. That was for two?

Paul  
Yes.

Maitre'd  
At what time?

Paul  
Seven thirty.

Maitre'd  
It's nine o'clock sir.

Paul  
I know that. We had... we had a delay. Is there a table available?

Maitre'd  
I'll have to see. Just one moment.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Paul and Rebecca sit at their table. It is a very small table off to the side.

Paul  
I'm really sorry. This didn't exactly turn out the way I hoped.

Rebecca  
I'm having a wonderful time.

Paul  
You're just saying that.

Rebecca  
No really. This is all very nice. Oh, there's the dessert tray.

Paul  
Where?

Rebecca  
There by that table.

Paul looks over to where the cart is. As the cart is pushed away it reveals Garret sitting there with his wife and children.

Paul

Oh no.

Garret and family rise and start towards the door which brings them past where Paul is sitting.

Garret  
Paul! How are you?

Paul  
Oh, I'm all right.

Garret  
I heard there was an incident at the office.

Paul  
Yeah... Mr. Lucas was fired and committed suicide.

Garret  
What a shame. Oh, this is my wife Allison and my children Kari and Kristy.

Paul  
A pleasure to meet you. This is my friend Rebecca.

Garret  
Nice to meet you. Well, I won't keep you. Enjoy your evening.

They start off.

Paul  
I'm sorry Becca, would you excuse me for a moment?

Rebecca  
Sure.

Paul catches up with Garret.

Paul  
Could I speak to you for a moment?

Garret  
Of course. I'll be right back, dear.

They move off to the coat room.

Paul  
What the hell is going on here?

Garret

What do you mean?

Paul

Are you following me? Are you keeping tabs on me? Can I have a moment of privacy without you guys tailing me? OK, so I screwed up. I don't think it's so bad to have an occasional slip up.

Garret

What are you talking about Paul? I just happened to be out for the evening with my family. This isn't a big city, there are only so many restaurants. Is it so hard to believe that we might just end up at the same restaurant?

Paul

OK. OK. I'm just a little on edge. This is my first date with her and it isn't going well.

Garret

Why?

Paul

Well, first I was late...

Garret

Paul...

Paul

I know, I know.

Garret

I thought we had taken care of that.

Paul

Then I locked the keys in the car.

Garret

Oh no. Paul this isn't good.

Paul

So we had to wait for the locksmith to come open the car and we didn't get here until an hour and a half after our reservation.

Garret

Is she enjoying your company Paul?

Paul  
She says she is.

Garret  
This is the woman you mentioned during the  
initial inventory?

Garret sneaks a peek around the corner at Rebecca

Paul  
Yes.

Garret  
So you asked her out!

Paul  
Yeah.

Garret  
And apparently she said yes.

Paul  
Yeah.

Garret  
Just be yourself. She said yes for a reason.  
Just take it easy.

Paul  
Thanks. I'll try. So you aren't keeping tabs  
on me?

Garret  
Paul, I won't lie to you. The company is  
keeping tabs on you, but no, my presence here  
is not part of that.

Paul  
All right. Sorry to have pulled you away from  
your family.

Garret  
It's all right. Take care Paul. I'll see you  
around.

Paul  
Is that a threat?

Garret  
Ha. No, Paul. It's not a threat. Now go  
enjoy your date.

Paul  
Thanks. Have a good night.

Garret  
Take care.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul and Rebecca stand on the stoop of the house in that awkward moment of wondering what to do next.

Paul  
Well, I'm sorry about this whole evening. I know it didn't really go all that well.

Rebecca  
Paul, it was exactly what I wanted, unpredictable.

Paul  
I guess I'll take that as a compliment.

Rebecca  
It is. Trust me.

Paul  
At the very least I had great company.

Rebecca  
Me too.

Paul  
Oh! Um... so...

Rebecca  
So...

Paul  
I'll see you at work on Monday.

Rebecca  
Yes. Thank you for everything. I'll see you Monday.

Paul  
OK.

Rebecca  
OK. Paul?

Paul  
Yes?

Rebecca kisses him.

Paul  
Oh. OK. All right. Well. Good night Becca.  
and um, good night.

Paul begins to back his way down to the car.

Rebecca  
Night.

Paul  
Bye.

Rebecca  
Bye.

(she laughs sweetly)

Paul  
OK then.

Rebecca  
Night Paul.

She goes in. Paul stands staring up at the house as the porch light goes off.

Paul  
Night.

Paul walks to his car and opens the door. He looks back at the house one more time. The first floor interior light goes off and he gets into his car and closes the door.

Mr. Bristol  
Your place or mine?

Paul screams.

Fade out.

INT. THE LABORATORY

An immaculately clean space. Paul is laying strapped to a table. An intense light hangs over him and several Inventory people stand around the room. Mr. Bristol enters through swinging doors dressed in a pristine white lab coat. Garret follows pushing a cart with several very technical electronic devices. Paul tries to get up.

Paul  
Please. Please, don't do this.

Mr. Bristol  
You were doing so well.

Paul  
I'll do well again. I promise.

Mr. Bristol  
I'm afraid it's time for some advanced  
methods. Mr. Stock?

Paul  
Garret? Garret, please?

Garret  
I'm sorry Paul.

Paul  
I promise I'll do better! I promise! I  
promise! No!

Mr. Bristol  
Sedate him.

FADE OUT.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE: A montage of electric stimulus that Paul is subjected to. Streams of color mixed with shots of Mr. Lucas's suicide, numbers float past. Paul undergoes full conditioning.

INT. LABORATORY HALLWAY  
Mr. Bristol and Garret stand in the hall.

Mr. Bristol  
You did know about this infraction also didn't  
you Mr. Stock?

Garret  
Yes.

Mr. Bristol  
Why didn't you report it?

Garret  
I found out on my own time. I would have  
filed a report tomorrow.

Mr. Bristol  
I'll take your word for that. But in the

future, report infractions as soon as you become aware of them. You can't become involved with these people, it could compromise your own status.

Garret  
Yes sir. I'm sorry sir.

Mr. Bristol  
Dismissed.

INT. PAUL'S CELL

Paul sits in a corner of a small padded cell. There are no windows, Fluorescent lights are the only form of light. There is the gentle hum of the lights. The only distinguishing feature is a door with a slit in it. The slit opens and a tray of food is slid through. Paul scrambles across the floor to receive his food, just as he reaches it the tray is pulled back. Paul scratches at the door. An ear piercing squeal causes Paul to cringe and curl up into a ball on the floor. It stops and the slit opens again.

Voice  
What do you say?

Paul whimpers.

Voice  
What do you say?

Paul  
Please.

Voice  
Please what?

Paul  
Please, may I eat?

Voice  
Very good.

Paul takes the food and begins to eat ravenously. The squeal starts again.

Paul  
THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

The squeal stops.

Paul

Thank you, thank you... thank you.

Voice  
Rules Paul, Rules.

INT. LABORATORY

Paul is strapped down to the chair again.

Mr. Bristol  
How do you feel Paul?

Paul  
Good, thank you for asking.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A very modern white van traveling down the highway being passed by many cars.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Speed limit sign reads "65 mph" in bold black letters.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The lit dashboard of the van. The speedometer at precisely 65 miles an hour.

EXT. PAUL'S STREET - NIGHT

The van pulls up in front of Paul's house. The door slides open smoothly and silently. Paul steps out in an almost zombielike stiffness.

Garret  
I'll see you around Paul.

Paul  
Yes. I'll look forward to seeing you again Mr. Stock.

Garret  
I'm really sorry.

The door slides shut in front of Garret. The van pulls away. Paul stands in his front yard watching as it drives slowly down the street until he finally turns and walks back into his house.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM

The alarm clock reads 6:29. Paul is asleep in his bed. The alarm clock changes to 6:30 and Paul's eyes spring open. Paul rises wide awake immediately. He crosses to the bathroom and turns on the shower.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM

Through the steam Paul steps out of the shower grabbing a towel and wraps it around his waist.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM

Paul brushes his teeth.

INT. PAUL'S KITCHEN

Paul is fully dressed and drinking a glass of orange juice. He looks at his watch which reads "7:00." He nods to himself and then washes his glass. Once ready he grabs his keys, his briefcase and his jacket and heads out the door.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE

Paul sits in his office typing on the computer, Becca comes to the open door and knocks.

Rebecca

Hi Paul.

Paul

(not looking up)

Rebecca, how are you?

Rebecca

Good. I had a wonderful time the other night.

Paul

Yes, I did too. We should do it again.

Rebecca

I'd like that.

Paul

I apologize for all the flaws in the evening, believe me it won't happen again.

Rebecca

Oh, Paul, I kind of like the flaws. It's what made it fun.

Paul

I see. Well, I'll try to arrange a flaw or

two then.

Rebecca  
You're so cute.

Paul  
Becca, could we continue this later? I have quite a bit of work to do today.

Rebecca  
Sure. You know my extension.

Paul  
Of course. Why don't you see my secretary and make an appointment for dinner later this week?

Rebecca  
Your secretary?

Paul  
Thanks. Close the door on your way out?

Rebecca  
I'm sorry?

Paul  
(looking up)  
The door?

Rebecca  
Right.

Rebecca closes the door behind her and stands there for a moment wondering what she could have done wrong.

INT. MALDEN CORP., HALLWAY

Paul walks by a gathering of people.

Peter  
Hey Paul.

Paul  
Peter. Robert. Frances.

Paul moves on.

Robert  
Man, he's really freaked out.

Frances

How would you like it if you just got a dead man's job?

INT. MALDEN CORP., RESTROOM

Paul enters the bathroom and moves to a urinal. Voices are heard in the stalls.

Man 1  
You were here?

Man 2  
Yeah, saw the whole thing.

Man 1  
Keene fired the bastard and he flipped out.

Man 2  
I knew I'd come back from vacation and everything would have gone to hell. So who's in line for Lucas' spot?

Man 1  
In line, hell, it's taken.

Man 2  
Who?

Toilet flushes.

Man 1  
Forster.

Other toilet flushes.

Man 2  
No Shit, Paul Forster?

Door to the first stall opens and Man 1 comes out and he sees Paul at the urinal.

Man 1  
Paul!

Man 2  
Why?

Man 1  
Hey, um... congrats.

Door to the second stall opens.

Man 2

What? Oh, hey Paul. Ah, sorry to hear 'bout Lucas. Um, I mean, congratulations. Sorry.

Paul

Don't worry about it.

Man 1 and Man 2 make a hasty retreat. Paul flushes the toilet. He walks over to the sinks and begins to wash his hands fastidiously.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE

Jerry sits off to the side with his feet up on the sofa

Jerry

Some pretty nice digs you got here.

Paul

Yeah, it's all right. Could you not put your feet on the sofa?

Jerry

What? Oh, yeah. Sorry boss.

Paul

So on page 21...

Jerry

Yeah.

Paul

Line 15...

Jerry

Hey, mind if I get something to drink?

Paul

What?

Jerry

A drink? Do you mind?

Paul

We have work to do.

Jerry

Yeah, yeah, it'll get done.

Paul

No, really Jerry. Sit down.

Jerry  
Buddy, you've changed.

Paul  
I've got a lot of weight on my shoulders.

Jerry  
Yeah, but ...

Paul  
Jerry, let's get to work.

Jerry  
Are you pulling rank on me already?

Paul  
I am your boss.

Jerry  
You have changed.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul comes in late from work, his shoulders slumped. He sets his briefcase down and moves to his bedroom.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul enters the bedroom and begins to undress carefully hanging his clothes as he does. He turns off the light and starts toward the bed when he notices the eerie glow from the Inventory People's device. He starts looking for the source of the light. When he finds it he picks it up and studies it. It is humming slightly and setting off that strange glow. He sits quietly for a few moments.

Fade out.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul is at his desk leaning over some paperwork. He pauses and stands. He looks out the window and closes the shades. he starts looking around the office. He is obviously searching for something. After looking in several places he finds what he is looking for. A duplicate of the first device is found. He looks around.

INT. INVENTORY SURVEILLANCE CENTER

A video screen shows Paul standing in his office holding the device and looking perplexed.

Technician  
Notify Mr. Bristol. We may have a problem.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul is still standing holding the device. His secretary buzzes him. He jumps, startled, then moves to the phone.

Paul  
Yes?

Secretary  
You have a call.

Paul  
Who is it?

Secretary  
He says it's Mr. Bristol.

Paul  
Send it through. Bristol, I just found a...

Paul's eyes glaze over. He hangs up the phone, stands and moves to replace the device, returns to his desk, and resumes his work.

INT. INVENTORY PEOPLE SURVEILLANCE CENTER

Technician  
Send out the team to his home. We need to reposition the conditioning devices.

INT. MALDEN CORP., HALLWAY

Paul is walking down the hallway. Mr. Keene approaches him.

Mr. Keene  
Paul. How is the Sullivan account coming along?

Paul  
Very well sir. Very well.

Mr. Keene  
Good. Good. You know there are a few items I'd like to discuss with you. Do you have a few moments?

Paul  
Of course sir. Would you like to go to my office?

Mr. Keene

No! Er, I thought we might get out of the office for a while. We could go get a bite to eat and discuss it over dinner.

Paul

Oh, that would be fine, let me just tell my secretary.

Mr. Keene

Already taken care of. Let's go.

Paul

Could I get a few files from my office?

Mr. Keene

I'd rather just go right now.

Paul

If you insist.

Mr. Keene

I do.

INT. BAR

Paul and Mr. Keene sit in a very very loud bar, they have to shout to be heard.

Paul

Interesting choice sir.

Mr. Keene

I come here to take my mind off work.

Paul

I see.

The waitress comes over and drops off two plates with greasy hamburgers and piles of fries.

Waitress

Anything else?

Mr. Keene

No, we're fine.

Waitress

If you need anything just give a holler.

She walks away.

Mr. Keene

Paul, I didn't come here to talk about work.

Paul

Really?

Mr. Keene

Paul, I've been watching you, and there are some very big changes going on in your life right now. And they're happening very fast.

Paul

Changes for the better I hope.

Mr. Keene

Yes and no.

Paul

I don't follow sir.

Mr. Keene

Paul, this is about the Inventory People.

Paul sits in stunned silence.

Mr. Keene

I know the signs. I've been through it. I went through conditioning with them too.

Paul

You?

Mr. Keene

They're ruthless. They won't stop until they've sapped the very essence of who you are from you. I was once an exciting person Paul. I was. I know you would never believe it, but I was. They sapped all that was "me" out of my life.

Paul

But you've become so successful.

Mr. Keene

Paul, I would give up every bit of my success to get a little bit of myself back. Even a shred of it.

Paul

Why are you telling me this?

Mr. Keene  
It's not too late for you.

Paul  
I don't understand.

Mr. Keene leans in closely.

Mr. Keene  
Fight it Paul. Fight the conditioning. Get out of this alive. It's too late for me. I'm already dead. Lucius Keene is dead, now it's only Mr. Keene. You can still be Paul. You can do it! Don't let them win! Don't let them win!

Paul  
But sir, I'm much more together now. I'm getting my work done. I'm coming in on time.

Mr. Keene  
I could care less! Come in late every day from here on out! Your work isn't any better than it ever was. Fight it Paul! Fight it! Fight it! Fight the bastards! Be yourself!

The bar has come to a stop. People are looking at Mr. Keene and Paul. The music has stopped.

Mr. Keene (cont.)  
What are you looking at? Oh God. No. They heard me. Paul, they heard me. Paul, let's get out of here.

Paul  
Yes sir.

Mr. Keene throws down some money on the table and he and Paul exit.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Paul and Mr. Keene exit the bar and walk down the street.

Mr. Keene  
That was a mistake. A very very big mistake. They heard every word.

Paul  
Who are they?

Mr. Keene

Monsters Paul. Monsters. Real monsters. They are the boogie man. They're who your mother warned you about. Paul, go home. Have a good nights sleep and think about what I said to you. Just check under your bed.

Paul

All right.

Mr. Keene

Fight them.

Paul

I'll think about what you said. Have a good weekend sir.

Mr. Keene

Is it the weekend already?

Paul

Yeah. Week flew by didn't it?

Mr. Keene

Yes. Yes it did.

Paul

Well, good night Mr. Keene.

Paul walks off. Mr. Keene watches Paul go round the corner and turns to go his way. He turns around and faces Mr. Bristol and the two mobster stereotypes.

Mr. Bristol

Oh Mr. Keene. And I thought you had come so far.

Mr. Keene

Hello Mr. Bristol.

Mr. Bristol

Let's have a little chat.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Early in the morning Paul's car pulls up into the parking lot. His is one of only two or three cars in the lot. He parks and gets out of his car placing a cup of coffee on the roof. He reaches back in for his suitcase and almost walks off without the coffee, but catches himself and takes the coffee.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Paul in through the main entrance and is greeted by a security guard.

Guard  
Morning Mr. Forster. Working on a Saturday?

Paul  
Just a few things to take care of. I'll only be here a few hours.

Guard  
Allright.

Paul goes to an open and waiting elevator. The doors close.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

The doors of the elevator open to reveal Paul. He walks into the empty office and toward his office. As he walks he glances over towards Mr. Keene's office and notices that the door is ajar and the blinds are shut. He moves toward Mr. Keene's office.

Paul  
Mr. Keene?

He looks back to see if there is anyone in the rest of the office.

Paul  
Mr. Keene? Are you here?

He approaches the door and pushes it open. Mr. Keene's limp body is swinging from a noose. Paul looks up and stumbles backward out of the office backing into Mr. Bristol.

Mr. Bristol  
You didn't see this.

Mr. Bristol puts a rag up to Paul's face and Paul begins to pass out.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE - EVE

Paul is sitting at his desk with his head on the desk. He wakes up and sees that he has accomplished quite a bit of work. He rises and pulls his things together and walks out into the main office area.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - EVE

Paul walks through the office and looks over to Mr. Keene's office. The door is closed and the shades are drawn. Paul moves to the elevator and presses the down button.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - EVE

Paul exits the elevator.

Guard  
Mr. Forster, ended up staying longer than you thought huh?

Paul  
Yes. Yes I did. Got a lot of work done though.

Guard  
Good.

Paul walks past him and pauses at the door.

Paul  
Say, nothing exciting happened today did it?

Guard  
No, not on my duty.

Paul  
I just feel like I missed something. Well, I better get home.

Guard  
Take care.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul is on the phone.

Paul  
I'm sorry, I don't know when he'll be back from vacation. He didn't really leave word with anyone, apparently it was a surprise trip for him also. Yes. Yes, of course I understand the urgency. I'll call as soon as I hear anything. Thank you.

Paul hangs up and looks up. Rebecca is standing in the doorway.

Rebecca, thank God. Did you find out where he went?

Rebecca

No. Everyone got the same Email. "Going away, will be back soon. Please direct all questions to Mr. Forster."

Paul

Why me?

Rebecca

Face it Paul, he's grooming you to replace him. He's not a young man.

Paul

But... well. All right. Ask around and find out which secretary knows the password to Mr. Keene's files.

Rebecca

You got it.

Paul

Rebecca?

Rebecca

Yeah?

Paul

Thank you.

Rebecca

Paul, you know I'm happy to help.

Paul

I know. But I don't know if I thank you enough. Hey, would you like to go out to dinner tomorrow night?

Rebecca

Throw in a movie and you're on.

Paul

A movie it is. Dinner and a movie.

Rebecca

How civilized.

INT. MALDEN CORP.

Everything seems to be running smoothly. Paul moves from desk to desk checking up on everyone's work. He gets back to his office and looks back over the whole office.

Paul  
Looks good.

Jerry comes up to him.

Jerry  
Here's the file.

Paul  
Oh, thanks Gerald.

Jerry  
You know there was a time you just called me  
Jerry.

Paul  
Well, I don't really know if it's appropriate  
for me to do that any more.

Jerry  
No. I suppose not.

Paul  
You checked that page I asked you to look over  
again?

Jerry  
Yes sir. I checked it.

Paul  
Thanks.

Paul turns and goes into his office closing the door behind  
him.

Jerry  
Yeah. Yeah. You're welcome.

INT. MALDEN CORP., PAUL'S OFFICE - EVE

There is a knock at Paul's door.

Paul  
Who is it?

Rebecca (OS)  
Me.

Paul  
Come in.

Rebecca  
So are we on for tomorrow?

Paul  
Yes.

Rebecca  
All right. Listen Paul, can I talk to you for a second?

Paul  
Well, I'm kind of busy.

Rebecca  
It's Jerry.

Paul  
What about him?

Rebecca  
Well, it's just that, he's unhappy.

Paul  
Rebecca, this is work. What does this have to do with work?

Rebecca  
You two used to be best friends.

Paul  
We still are.

Rebecca  
Well, he doesn't seem to think so.

Paul  
I don't understand why you're getting involved?

Rebecca  
Neither do I, but he's just so upset. I wish you'd talk to him.

Paul  
If it'll make you happy, sure.

Rebecca  
Paul, this isn't about me, it's...

Paul  
Was there anything else you wanted to talk about? Anything to do with work?

Rebecca

I... no.

Paul

It's past time for you to get home anyway.  
Why don't you go on ahead.

Rebecca

OK. Paul, is there something wrong?

Paul

I'm under a lot of pressure is all.

Rebecca

I know. Promise me just one thing?

Paul

I'll talk to Gerald.

Rebecca

That's not it.

Paul

What then?

Rebecca

Tomorrow night?

Paul

Oh, yes?

Rebecca

Not one word about work? We leave it behind  
us?

Paul

I can do that.

Rebecca

Can you? Night Paul.

Rebecca turns and exits closing the door behind her. Paul is left to contemplate her last comment.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - EVE

Paul pulls up in front of her house and steps out of his car. He tosses his keys into the air and catches them, satisfied that he has them in hand unlike last time. He looks at his watch and smiles as he walks up to the door and rings the bell. He hears movement behind the door.

Rebecca (OS)  
Just a moment. Just a moment. Paul, is that  
you?

Paul  
It's me.

Rebecca opens the door with a towel wrapped around her.

Rebecca  
You're early.

Paul  
I'm right on time.

Rebecca  
That's what I mean! I just need to finish  
getting ready.

Paul  
Oh. You aren't ready?

Rebecca  
Do I look ready?

Paul  
No.

Rebecca  
It'll just be a moment. Just wait here.

Paul  
Sure. Take your time.

Paul goes over to the porch swing and sits down.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - EVE

Paul looks at his watch as Rebecca comes out.

Rebecca  
Are you ready?

Paul  
We're late.

Rebecca  
Sorry.

Paul  
Well, let's go.

Rebecca  
How do I look?

Paul  
Good. You look good. Can we get going?

Rebecca stands for a moment dumbfounded.

Rebecca  
Would you have preferred I just went in the towel?

Paul  
We would have been on time.

Paul stands at the car holding her door open for her and gesturing for her to get in. A few seconds pass.

Paul  
Well.

Rebecca hesitates then moves into the car. Paul closes the door and then moves around to his door.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - EVE

Paul and Rebecca stand on line for tickets in silence. Rebecca is standing with her arms crossed. The line moves forward and they step forward.

Paul  
I'm looking forward to seeing this.

Rebecca  
I've heard it's very funny.

Paul  
Right.

They move forward again.

Paul  
Have you talked to your mother?

Rebecca  
No, I should call her.

Paul  
Mmm-hmm.

They move forward.

Paul  
Dinner was good wasn't it?

Rebecca  
The food was.

Paul  
He screwed up my order! What did you want me to do?

Rebecca  
You didn't need to make such a scene.

Paul  
We can't tolerate incompetence. If we do it will take over the world. Any slight mistake needs to be dealt with.

Rebecca  
Paul, please.

Paul  
I have vowed to strive for perfection. Why do you think Mr. Keene left me in charge at the office?

Rebecca  
You promised we wouldn't mention work.

Paul  
OK. Fine. Enough said. I'm sorry...

Rebecca  
You made a mistake.

Paul and Rebecca stop for a moment.

Man In Line  
You're next.

Paul  
I know! Two please!

The girl in the ticket booth cringes.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - EVE

Rebecca and Paul get out of the car.

Paul  
Let me show you to the door.

Rebecca  
It's not necessary.

Paul  
I'll see you at the ... Sorry, I won't mention it.

Rebecca turns as she reaches her stoop.

Rebecca  
What is going on with you?

Paul  
Nothing.

Rebecca  
Paul, you are behaving like a completely different person than the one that I used to like. I used to think of you as someone I valued, someone who was funny and quirky and, oh, I don't know, interesting. And now, now you're some kind of control freak. I don't know you anymore. You and Jerry used to be best friends. The three of us could have fun together.

Paul  
You don't like Gerald.

Rebecca  
I don't hate him! At least he's interesting. You, you've lost everything that made you you.

Paul  
I haven't lost anything. If anything I've gained control over my life.

Rebecca  
Control? Control? That's great. Control your own life, don't control everyone else's Paul. Leave my life alone. Leave Jerry's, leave the waiter's life alone. I... Paul, this is really hard. I really really really liked you. But you know what? From now on. Lets just make it friends, OK?

Paul  
What?

Rebecca  
Let's just say goodbye Paul. I'll see you at

work.

Paul  
Oh. Look, if you can't deal with me being  
successful ...

Rebecca  
Goodnight.

Fade out.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Three months later, Paul has taken over Mr. Keene's office.  
He is now in charge of the office. An employee comes running  
in to take Paul's old desk.

Jerry  
Late again buddy.

Jack  
I know, I know. Think anybody noticed?

Jerry  
Are you kidding? Forster notices everything.

Jack  
Hey, don't say anything all right?

Jerry  
You kidding? Not a word. Guy's gotta watch  
out for his friends right?

Paul comes over.

Paul  
Mr. Harrold, a little late aren't we?

Jack  
Mr. Forster, I...

Jerry  
I sent him out to my car to get something, a  
file, I left out there.

Paul  
Really?

Jerry  
Yes. Thanks Jack.

Paul

Next time get your own file Mr. Scanlan.

Jerry  
No problem.

Paul stands staring at Jerry for a moment then moves on.

Jack  
Thanks man.

Jerry  
It's OK. He and I have a history.

Jack  
I'll remember that.

Rebecca comes over.

Rebecca  
Here's that disk you wanted Jerry. What was that about.

Jerry  
Ah, nothin' I couldn't handle.

Rebecca  
Stick with Jerry, Jack. He know's all the tricks around here.

Jack  
I'm finding that out.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Jerry is walking past Paul's office.

Paul  
Mr. Scanlan, do you have a moment?

Jerry  
Sure boss. What seems to be the problem.

Paul  
Close the door.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Jack and Rebecca are going over a file and notice Jerry going into Paul's office.

Rebecca  
I don't like the look of this.

A few moments pass. Jerry comes out of the office and moves back to his desk.

Rebecca  
Well?

Jerry sits.

Jack  
What did he want?

Jerry  
I've been promoted.

Rebecca  
Oh I'm so sorr... You've been what?

Jerry  
Promoted.

Jack  
Congratulations!

Jerry  
It's not that easy.

Jack  
Why not?

Jerry  
It's to another office. He's getting rid of me without firing me.

Rebecca  
He's getting rid of you without firing you. That's cause I'd kick his ass if he fired you. I might kick his ass anyway.

Jack  
Where to?

Jerry  
Chicago.

Rebecca  
He's diabolical.

Jerry  
Pure evil.

Jack

I'll miss you man.

Rebecca  
So will I.

Jerry  
Really?

Rebecca  
Don't you dare interpret that to think I like you. I'm just used to seeing you around and hearing your annoying voice.

Jerry  
So if I want it, I go next Monday.

Jack  
You do want it don't you?

Jerry  
I need to sleep on it.

Rebecca  
And if you refuse?

Jerry  
I don't know what he'll do.

INT. PAUL'S HOME - EVE

Paul sits at his dining table eating dinner. There is a knock at the door. Paul looks at his watch and moves to open the door revealing Mr. Stock, Mr. Bristol, and the Inventory People.

Paul  
What the hell are you doing here?

Mr. Bristol  
Six month check up.

Paul  
I didn't get a letter. I know for a fact I didn't get a letter.

Mr. Bristol  
No, we didn't send one. Start setting up Mr. Stock. The six month check up is standard procedure. Nothing to worry about if you've been good. You have been good haven't you?

Paul

I think so, yes.

Mr. Bristol  
Good. Finish your dinner. We'll get started.

Garret  
Paul, how are you?

Paul  
Good. You?

Garret  
Fine. Fine. Kids are growing up too fast.  
You know how it is.

Paul  
Not really.

Garret  
How are things with that lovely girl you've  
been seeing?

Paul  
I'm not seeing her anymore.

Garret  
Really? I'm sorry. I thought things were  
going well.

Paul  
They were.

Garret  
When I ran into you on the first date...

Paul  
I'm sorry?

Garret  
The first date? Remember, you met my wife, I  
met the girl.

Paul  
I remember the date, I don't remember you.

Paul starts rubbing his head.

Garret  
Sure you do. You said you were late picking  
her up and that really bothered you. You  
thought I was following you.

Paul  
I was late... picking her...

Paul starts to express pain.

EXT. REBECCA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

FLASH BACK: The first floor interior light goes off in Rebecca's house and Paul gets into his car and closes the door.

Mr. Bristol  
Your place or mine?

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - EVE

Garret is standing over Paul

Garret  
Paul, are you all right?

INT. PAUL'S CELL

The fluorescent lights hum above him and he is sitting with his tray of food. Paul takes the food and begins to eat ravenously. An ear piercing squeal sounds.

Paul  
THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

The squeal stops.

Paul  
Thank you, thank you... thank you.

Voice  
Rules Paul, Rules.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Jerry and Paul going over a file

Jerry  
You have changed.

INT. BAR

Mr. Keene and Paul.

Mr. Keene  
Paul, I would give up every bit of my success to get a little bit of myself back. Even a

shred of it.

Paul  
Why are you telling me this?

Mr. Keene  
It's not too late for you.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Paul in the office.

Paul  
Mr. Keene? Are you here?

He approaches the door and pushes it open. Mr. Keene's limp body is swinging from a noose.

INT. MALDEN CORP. - DAY

Becca  
Oh, Paul, I kind of like the flaws.

INT. BAR

Mr. Keene  
It's not too late for you.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - EVE

Paul screams.

Mr. Bristol  
What on Earth! Mr. Stock, what happened?

Garret  
I was asking him about the girl he was seeing.  
I don't know, I was asking him about a girl,  
that's all!

Mr. Bristol  
My God, you may have broken the conditioning!

Paul screams again.

Mr. Keene (OS)  
It's not too late for you.

Paul  
You son of a bitch.

Mr. Bristol

Paul, calm down.

Mr. Bristol moves slowly toward his keyboard. Paul leaps to the laptop and smashes it.

Paul

No. No strongmen this time. Just you and me.

Garret

Paul, Paul, stop and think about what you're doing.

Paul

I'm thinking. Finally I'm actually thinking for myself. You have been thinking for me. Those things I found. You put them there. They've been controlling me haven't they?

Mr. Bristol

We've been making improvements Paul.

Paul

Improvements? Improvements? I used to have friends.

Mr. Bristol

But look how successful you are Paul. Look at the success!

Paul

I had a chance with Becca! I had a chance but you destroyed it!

Garret

Mr. Bristol, perhaps...

Mr. Bristol

Shut up Mr. Stock. You've said more than enough! Mr. Forster, let's calm down. Let's think for a moment, you were falling apart...

Paul

But I was me! I was a human being!

Mr. Bristol pulls out a gun.

Mr. Bristol

Back up Mr. Forster. Back up!

Paul

Go on! Kill me! It'll only be an improvement! Jerry hates me! Becca hates me!

My parent's don't even know me anymore! I don't know me anymore!

Mr. Bristol

Sit down Mr. Forster! We can fix this. It's not too late.

Paul

No. No! What did you do to me?

Mr. Bristol

We did things for you Mr. Forster! We got rid of your flaws. We took obstacles out of your way. We took care of Mr. Lucas for you, we ...

Paul

Mr. Lucas? Oh my God. You killed Mr. Lucas!

Mr. Bristol

He was in your way! All of our clients are very successful now! That's how we are funded. We are paid by former clients. No one hires us Mr. Forster, we seek out people in need and work for them. We worked for you! You have risen to the top. Now it's time to start making payments.

Paul

No. No, I'm not paying you! What about Mr. Keene? Was he in my way?

Mr. Bristol

That had a dual purpose. He was in your way and he was breaking his conditioning. He needed to be dealt with. Don't worry, you won't remember it again.

Paul

You bastard!

Paul rushes Mr. Bristol. Mr. Bristol fires but Garret leaps and throws Paul out of the way and is himself shot. Garret falls to the ground bleeding. The Inventory People all stop and turn.

Mr. Bristol

Stock! No!

Garret

Oh God.

Paul

Garret!

Mr. Bristol

Dammit Mr. Stock, what were you thinking?

Garret

Stop. Stop this. Please.

Paul

I'll call an ambulance.

Mr. Bristol

No. No, it's all right. We take care of our own. Men, let's get Mr. Stock out of here.

The Inventory People stand motionless.

Mr. Bristol

Help me here.

Outside a storm begins to pick up strength very quickly.

Paul

He's dead. You killed him.

Mr. Bristol

We were trying to help you!

Paul

Do me a favor, don't help me anymore.

Mr. Bristol

We've made a significant investment in you! We aren't planning on letting you go that easily.

Paul

Get out of my house.

Paul moves to the door and opens it. As he opens the door lightning strikes at his stoop throwing everyone back. Once the smoke clears and the light fades the two mobster strongmen are standing in the door.

Mr. Bristol

Good, you're here. Take Mr. Forster, we need to take him back to the conditioning center.

The strongmen move toward Mr. Bristol and take him.

Mr. Bristol

What are you doing? What are you doing? No, no, take him! It's his fault! I didn't do it, it's him!

The other Inventory People move to Garret's body and pick him up. Another one takes the laptop and leave no sign that they were ever there. Paul moves to the door and looks out into the rain once they have left and sees them receding into the downpour.

INT. HOUSE - EVE

A very large beautifully decorated home. At the end of the hallway a light spills out into the hall and we hear the voice of an older man and a younger voice giggling.

INT. CHILD'S ROOM - EVE

Grandpa

Look at this room. It's a mess. What do your parent's say?

Ben

Dad doesn't mind.

Grandpa

No, I don't suppose. You should have seen your father's room when he was growing up. Looked just like this. But you better be careful. The Inventory People will get you.

Ben

Who?

Grandpa

The Inventory People. They'll come and make you clean up your room. They'll get in your head and...

Paul

OK dad. That's enough. Don't scare Ben.

Grandpa

I'm just telling him a bedtime story.

Paul

I don't want you telling him that story.

Ben

Aw Dad, I wanna know about the Inventory People.

Paul

It's just a silly old story that your Grandpa used to scare me into cleaning my room when I was a kid. Now get ready for bed.

Rebecca

What's a silly old story?

Ben

The Inventory People, Mom!

Paul

Now see what you did, Dad?

Grandpa

I'm sorry. No more boogey man stories. Good night tiger. Don't let the bed bugs...

Paul

Dad!

Grandpa

No bed bugs, no Inventory people, how you gonna teach this kid anything!

Becca kisses Grandpa on his cheek as he starts out the door then goes to Ben and kisses him on the cheek.

Becca

Good night dear.

Ben

Night Mom.

Paul

Night Ben.

Ben

Night Dad.

Becca goes down the hall as Paul stands in the door and turns out the light. He stands in the door for a moment.

Paul

The Inventory People. Ha.

Paul goes down the hall and a strange light and the humming of the Inventory People's device starts to fill Ben's room.

Fade out.

The End.