

TAKE IT LIKE A MAN

Pilot Episode

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EXT. THE GARDEN OF A WHITE PAINTED SUBURBAN HOUSE

BRAD HICKEY, a tall, athletic college student, about 20 years old, is throwing a tennis ball at a tree, diving to catch it as it flies off at crazy angles.

The door opens and MARIA HICKEY, his mother, pokes her head round. She's carefully stylish, attractive, dressed to flatter her good points, although she has an apron on.

MARIA

Brad! I called you twice already!

BRAD

I'm just testing my reflexes.

MARIA

I'll test your reflexes. See if you can catch your breakfast before it hits the bin...

BRAD

Mom...

MARIA

Now.

INT. THE DINING AREA

A clean, well-ordered kitchen/dining area. Maria puts two plates on the table.

MARIA

What are you worried about your reflexes for? You're not likely to lose your place in the team.

BRAD

No-one's place is safe. You never know when that kind of skill will come in useful.

MARIA

And do you know how hard it is to get grass stains out? I should make you pay for your own laundry.

BRAD

When are you going to treat me like an adult? I'm twenty, y'know? It's like you won't let me be grow up and be a man.

MARIA

You have to choose, honey, you can't do both. Eat your waffles.

Brad eats thoughtfully for a few seconds.

BRAD

What have you got against men, mom?

MARIA

As little as possible, honey. Have you smelled one recently?

BRAD

Sometimes I think you wish I'd been born a girl.

MARIA

Aww, honey... Don't get me wrong. I'm proud of you. You're handsome, strong, clever... well, cleverish. You're decent and honest. You don't leave pregnant women stranded at the altar.

BRAD

Mom, enough about dad. Not all men are like that, you know.

MARIA

Well, you're better off without that loser in your life.

BRAD

So what was he really like?

MARIA

He was a loser.

BRAD

No, I mean, inside.

MARIA

A loser.

BRAD

But you must have loved him once.

MARIA

Once. That was all it took. What a loser.

Brad carries on eating with furrowed brow.

BRAD

So what...

MARIA

(interrupting)
Loser

BRAD

I was going to say, so what time are you getting back today?

MARIA

Sorry... late. I've got to complete the Riverside estate sale. It could get tricky.

LILY BURLOWSKY enters. She's a short ball of sarcastic energy, aged about 70. Dressed outrageously, with her hair immaculately styled, she likes to speak as she sees.

LILY

Hey Maria, hey kid. Say, who was that bimbo you were out with last night? If her breasts were her brains, she'd be a genius.

MARIA

Hi, Lily. How did you get in?

LILY

The door was open.

BRAD

No it wasn't.

LILY

It was after I opened it, kid. Don't get clever, your brain cell gets tired easy. So who was Little Miss Pneumatic? Isn't that the third girlfriend this month?

BRAD

That was Jessica. She's really smart.

LILY

So how come she's dating you?

MARIA

Hey, Brad's pretty smart. He's passed all his grades this year.

BRAD

Well, not maths or science...

LILY

Listen, kid, you want my advice?

MARIA

You're going to get it anyway...

LILY

Never go out with a girl with boobs bigger than her head.

BRAD

We see eye to eye on a lot of things.

LILY

You should see a doctor. That's not where her eyes are.

MARIA

Brad's just weighing up his options. There are a lot of nice girls out there. And I want him to make the right choice and commit to it. Not like his dad.

BRAD

Mom...

MARIA

And I've got to go. That property isn't going to sell itself.

LILY

Good luck! Don't forget a fairy dies every time you tell a lie...

Lily leaves the house, cackling, and Maria takes off her apron, puts on her jacket and checks her reflection.

MARIA

(to Brad)

Would you buy a second hand home from this old lady?

BRAD

You look great, mom. What makes you think you're getting old?

MARIA

You know what? Scented candles. Everyone buys me scented candles. Only older women get those.

BRAD

Note to self. No scented candles for your birthday.

MARIA

(kissing Brad on the head)

It's different when you do it. Catch you later.

BRAD

Later, Mom.

He watches her leave and shrugs his shoulders, tosses up the ball to himself and leaves the room by the other door.

INT. BRAD'S BEDROOM

Brad enters. Stood in the half-light, in heroic pose with arms crossed and legs akimbo is SUPERMANLYMAN. He's a fantasy character, Brad's perception of what it is to be a man; he's actually Brad himself, dressed in superhero costume.

BRAD

Hi, SuperManlyMan. Have a seat.

SUPERMANLYMAN

I can't, I'm a hero, a legend. The man you want to be.

BRAD

Apart from the underpants and tights combination.

SUPERMANLYMAN

It drives the girls crazy. Trust me. By the time they realise the bulge is just a bunch of socks, it's too late. Say, have you managed to track down your father?

BRAD

The detective agency sent an email yesterday. I still haven't opened it. How would mom feel if she knew?

SUPERMANLYMAN

This matters to you, Brad. Get some nuts. You're a man.

Brad sighs and turns to the computer. When he looks back over his shoulder, SuperManlyMan has disappeared. Brad opens the email, smiles in shock, then calls from his cellphone.

BRAD

Lara? Hi. Can you meet me in 5?
Amazing news. Sure... bye.

EXT. THE GARDEN

Brad and LARA PURFLEET meet over the picket fence that divides their houses. Lara is about Brad's age, with a vibrant smile and a sunny energy. Her house is next to Brad's, on the other side from Lily. Brad is throwing the ball distractedly against the tree as he talks.

BRAD

I don't know what to do, Lara. They've tracked down my dad! And guess where? In this city.

LARA

But that's great news! Are you going to see him?

BRAD

I don't know. Perhaps I should write first. Suppose he doesn't want to see me?

(SuperManlyMan appears and looks frustrated)

No, nuts to this. Let's do it.

Lily appears over her garden fence.

LARA

Hey, Lily, Brad's found his dad!

LILY

Oy vay... your mother's going to be delighted.

Brad stops throwing the ball.

BRAD

You think there'll be a scene?

LILY

No... just an explosion that will cause the earth to tilt a few degrees off its axis. A meltdown that will change the geography of most of the western seaboard. Nothing major, I'd say.

BRAD

Well, I'm still going to go and see him. I can do it; I'm a man now.

LILY

For now. By the time your mom's finished with you, you'll be wearing your gonads as a bow tie.

BRAD

(to Lara)

Will you come with me?

LILY

Good idea, Brad. You need someone with some balls.

SuperManlyMan appears behind Lily. He shrugs.

INT. A GARAGE WITH A 'SENSIBLE', SLIGHTLY OLD CAR

JEFF TANNERBY is stood by the car, with his partner TONY MARTELLO in the driving seat.

Jeff, around 50 years old, is dressed ostentatiously; bright colours, slim, fit. He clearly uses his gym membership for toning, not muscle. Tony is in his late 20s, buttoned up, sharp creases in his chinos, clean loafers, a symphony in beige. An odd couple.

Tony tries to start the engine. It splutters but won't fire.

JEFF

I haven't heard a car that sick since Wacky Races went off our screens. Time to let it go, Tony.

TONY

That's bad for the environment, Jeff. Besides, we've already used 58% of our logistics budget for this quarter. Watch the cents, save the dollars.

JEFF

But this car is a heap of rust!

TONY

There's no rust! The metalwork might be a little distressed...

JEFF

That's not distressed, that's traumatised! I turn up to a network meeting in this crock and they expect to see Oliver Hardy riding shotgun.

Tony gets out of the car and strokes Jeff's arm.

TONY

Aww, baby. Listen, they love you at the network. You don't need to worry about your image.

JEFF

Honey, image is all I've got. Take away the showbiz and the glitz and all you're left with is a receipt from who the hell was that dot com.

TONY

OK... I'll look at our finances again. Perhaps I can reconcile some budget reassignments.

JEFF

Be still, my beating heart...

Tony throws him a look and stomps off into the house. Jeff strokes the bonnet of the car then looks at his hand. He pulls a face and looks for something to wipe his hands on.

EXT. A CAR PULLS UP OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Lara and Brad pull up. She's driving a convertible sports car; it's a car that spells fun. She's dressed in a strappy t-shirt and a summer skirt, he's dressed as if for an interview; button up shirt, smart slacks.

INT. LARA'S CAR

Brad's a bit cramped in Lara's car. He chews on his lip and throws his tennis ball to himself nervously.

BRAD

The agency gave me this address...

LARA

This is so exciting...

In the back of the car is SuperManlyMan, incredibly cramped.

SUPERMANLYMAN

This is it, Brad. The moment of destiny. Just try not to think of him naked with your mother.

He clambers out of the car. It's a struggle and he tumbles to the ground. He dusts himself off and checks his cape.

SUPERMANLYMAN (CONT'D)

Jesus. This cape is dry clean only. I gotta stitch it now.

He disappears.

LARA

Good luck Brad. Don't be nervous.

She pats his leg and gives him a kiss on the cheek.

INT. JEFF AND TONY'S DINING ROOM

Jeff and Tony's house is casually immaculate. The décor is a combination of old-fashioned classical art - landscapes, objets d'arts, collectibles - and posters from movies and musicals. Jeff sits at the table, sullen and grumpy.

Tony comes in with his laptop. Wordlessly he picks up an item of clothing from one of the chairs, looks at it with disgust and hands it to Jeff with the tips of his fingers.

TONY

Your underpants end up on the dining room chairs how, exactly?

JEFF

I was dancing and I got hot.

TONY

You danced naked in our dining room? Did you close the curtains? Did you sit on any of these chairs?
(gets up hurriedly and inspects the chair he's sitting on)
Eurgh... OK. Let's get on with it.

He rubs his hands and opens the laptop. Jeff sinks back in his chair and looks away.

TONY (CONT'D)

Well, we could look at transferring some of the entertainment budget over to the logistics column...

JEFF

(suddenly interested)
We have an entertainment budget? Look, is this going to take long? I have an actor turning up today for a casting consultation.

TONY

Again? Why here?

JEFF

The agency just won't recognise that this isn't my working address. I'm sorry.

TONY

You should get another agency. Now look, concentrate. If we reassign the décor allocation, we could afford a nice little hatchback.

JEFF

Décor allocation...? I don't want a nice little hatchback. I want a penis substitute. A bonnet that goes on forever and a throaty engine that oozes sexuality.

TONY

If you're looking for your penis substitute, I'll find a car that needs a hand crank to get started in the morning.

JEFF

I'm 50. Give me a break. Think of it as a manual throttle.

Jeff wanders over to the window. He looks out and sees Brad walking up to the house.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Hey, that must be the actor now.
Nice body... mmm...

TONY
(joining him)
He looks like trouble. Never trust
a man with muscles where there
shouldn't even be body.

The doorbell rings.

JEFF
Answer the door... you know it
makes me look more important...

TONY
You are so shallow. I've known
holograms with more depth.

The doorbell rings again. Tony opens the door.

BRAD
Hi. Jeff Tannerby?

TONY
No, I'm his partner. Are you from
the agency?

BRAD
You know about the agency?

TONY
Of course - there's always someone
from the agency coming round.

BRAD
I'm not the only one? What are we
talking - two? Three?

TONY
(laughs)
Dozens. Jeff likes to try out all
the options.

BRAD
(angrily)
Options? These are women, not
options.

TONY
What do you mean, women? Jeff
doesn't discriminate. He might be
interested in you.

BRAD
In me? That's disgusting...

JEFF
 (interrupting, trying to
 calm him down)
 Hey, big fella... there's nothing
 to get worked up about. I might be
 able to use you...

BRAD
 Use me?

JEFF
 Sure. Muscles like that, good
 figure, a bit of wo-ho-ho... what
 sort of position would you like?

BRAD
 I can't believe you'd talk like
 that to your own son.

There's a sudden silence of confusion.

JEFF
 My son?

BRAD
 Your son. Isn't that what the
 agency told you?

The three look at each other blankly.

TONY
 Could you wait there a second?

He shuts the door gently in Brad's face.

INT. BEHIND THE CLOSED DOOR

TONY
 Your son? You never told me you had
 a son.

JEFF
 You never asked me.

TONY
 You're gay! I'm gay! Gay men don't
 procreate! It's part of the deal!

JEFF
 But... oh, OK. Fair point.

Tony opens the door, suspiciously. Jeff hovers over his
 shoulder.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DOOR

JEFF

Did you say... son?

BRAD

Can I come in... Dad?

Tony and Jeff look at each other. Brad looks back at the car. Lara puts both thumbs up and smiles.

EXT. MARIA'S HOUSE

Maria's car pulls up and she goes into her house.

INT. THE DINING AREA

Maria fusses around making tea. She takes a scented candle from her bag and puts it on the table. Lily walks in.

MARIA

Oh hi, Lily. You want tea?

LILY

Sure. You're back early. The sale went well?

MARIA

Like a dream.

LILY

You ran down the street naked then fell out of a plane?

MARIA

Not that kind of dream. They were so grateful they gave me this...

LILY

A scented candle?

MARIA

'Thanks for all my hard work. Now feel twenty years older.' Nice.

Lily gets out a hip flask and adds a slug to her tea.

LILY

Some people add milk... I say, what's the cow ever done to you?

MARIA

Lily... did it ever bother you, growing old?

LILY
It's better than the alternative.

MARIA
Yeah, but... who wants to be 71?

LILY
Everyone who's 70, kid.

MARIA
I wonder what Brad thinks. He's a good boy, you know? A woman could do a lot worse than Brad. He's just been unlucky in love.

LILY
A parade of busty blondes want to rip his clothes off and test his bedsprings to destruction, and that's unlucky? I should get me another dictionary.

MARIA
There's more to a relationship than hassle-free sex.

LILY
It's not a bad place to start.

MARIA
I just don't want him falling in with the wrong crowd...

INT. JEFF AND TONY'S DINING ROOM

Brad, Jeff and Tony are sitting round a table in awkward silence. Tension crackles. SuperManlyMan wanders around serving drinks, nibbles, rearranging furniture etc.

SUPERMANLYMAN
I love a party with an atmosphere.
Shall I line up the Dead March to lift the mood?

JEFF
So... how is Mary?

BRAD
Maria.

JEFF
Maria, of course, Maria. I haven't seen her in... err...

BRAD
Twenty years. I'm twenty.

TONY

Most people would remember having a son. Having sex with a woman might stick in the memory of most gay man.

JEFF

I'd put it behind me. She meant nothing to me.

BRAD

Hey, she's my mom. You were going to marry her, remember?

TONY

You were going to marry her?!

JEFF

I was never going to marry her. I admit, I allowed things to go a little further than I'd intended. I wanted to pull out.

TONY

It's a pity you didn't think of that 20 years and 9 months ago.

More awkward silence.

SUPERMANLYMAN

Impose yourself, Brad. Say all of the things you've always wanted to say. Get it off your chest!

BRAD

I like your posters.

SUPERMANLYMAN

Way to go, kid.

JEFF

Thanks. I like your car.

BRAD

Oh, that's not mine, it belongs to my friend Lara. She drove me here.

JEFF

Bring her in! She looks sweet.

BRAD

Really? Sure...

He gets up and leaves the room. Tony turns to Jeff.

TONY

I don't know what to think now. Can I even trust you with women? You seem very keen to meet Lara.

JEFF

Listen, I'm gay! I'm queer! I like Donna Summer! I'm not going to change my life for some flashy model with big bumpers and the wrong make of engine.

TONY

So she's like a sexy sports car? Well, maybe you're a convertible.

JEFF

Convertible? That's my air of mystery. I like people to think I drive both sides of the road.

Brad and Lara come back in.

BRAD

Lara, this is Tony... and my dad.

LARA

A pleasure to meet you both.

JEFF

(standing)

The pleasure's all mine. Sorry we kept you waiting out there all this time. Can I get you a drink?

LARA

Just a glass of water, thank you.

Jeff goes out to the kitchen. Tony is sitting with a fixed expression and his arms folded.

LARA (CONT'D)

So, you're Tony?

TONY

Yes, I'm Tony.

Silence.

LARA

You're Jeff's partner?

TONY

Yes, I am. He's taken.

More silence, broken by Jeff coming back in with a glass.

JEFF
America's finest H2O, for your very
own beverage delight.

He starts to put the drink down on the table.

TONY
You'll mark the table! Get a mat.

Jeff turns to get a mat, but can't see any.

JEFF
Where are the mats?

TONY
In the bureau.

As Tony gesticulates to the bureau, Jeff turns back towards him. Tony's arm catches the glass and it spills over Lara's t-shirt. She shrieks - she's soaked.

JEFF
I'm so sorry...

He gets a handkerchief from his pocket and makes to mop her down. She puts up polite but shocked resistance.

TONY
Get your hands off her! At least
pretend you're not interested!

LARA
I'm fine, I'm fine...

BRAD
Here, wear this instead.

Brad strips his shirt off and hands it to her. SuperManlyMan appears and gives Brad a double thumbs-up.

LARA
Thanks. I'll just... err... I'll
get changed in the bathroom.

Tony and Jeff are both staring at Brad's muscular physique.

TONY AND JEFF
(together, not looking in
her direction,
distractedly)
Through the door, first left.

JEFF
(to Tony, quietly)
It's OK. I'm definitely gay.

TONY

Why don't you pour some water over her skirt as well? Who knows what he could take off next.

JEFF

That's a beautiful thought.
(suddenly aware)
Hey, do you mind? That's my son we're talking about.

Lara comes back with Brad's shirt on, knotted at the side.

LARA

Problem solved. Are you OK without a shirt on, Brad?

BRAD

Sure. As long as it doesn't bother you guys?

TONY AND JEFF

No, no, no, no... Don't mind us.

BRAD

(to Lara)
Dad was just admiring your car.

LARA

Oh, thanks, Jeff. I guess you must have a pretty smart car?

JEFF

It's a personality-deficient, non-functioning heap of junk.

TONY

It's an effective people mover that gets 48 miles to the gallon.

JEFF

It gets like a gazillion miles to the gallon while it won't start.

LARA

It won't start? What's wrong?

JEFF

Well, I don't know. It... well, it won't start. What more is there?

LARA

Can I take a look at it? I'm pretty good with engines.

Tony and Jeff look at each other and shrug.

INT. MARIA'S DINING AREA

Lily and Maria are still sat at the table.

MARIA

So where's Brad? Did you see him go out?

LILY

He went out with Lara. So, you've got some free time this evening. Why don't you be kind to yourself? Go and find some hot'n'horny man?

MARIA

And who said romance was dead?

LILY

You're in the prime of life, kid. Go out. Make some mistakes. What have you got to lose?

MARIA

The respect of my son. Where else will he meet a woman who can stand up for herself in a man's world?

INT. THE GARAGE

Lara is lifting the hood of the car. She stares into it.

LARA

You have any tools? I need a socket set and a screwdriver.

TONY

I have no idea what she means.

JEFF

Didn't your uncle give us a toolkit as a moving in present?

TONY

That's a toolkit?

Tony reaches it down and Lara bends over the engine.

POV: THREE MEN WATCHING HER BACKSIDE

She looks over her shoulder and attempts to pull her skirt lower.

TONY (CONT'D)

Don't mind us, we're gay.

Jeff spreads his hands innocently.

JEFF
It's like, you're gasoline and
we're both run on diesel.

TONY
(pointedly)
Or possibly hybrid in your case.

BRAD
I'll err... I'll go round the other
side.

TONY
Jeff might be joining you shortly.

Jeff snorts and Brad goes to the other side of the car.

POV: FROM BEHIND LARA

Brad and SuperManlyMan are staring, adjusting their view to
get a good look down her cleavage.

POV: FROM BEHIND BRAD

Lara's breasts wobble as she works the wrench.

BRAD
You OK there?

LARA
Sure. It would help if I had the
right equipment.

Tony looks at Jeff, who shrugs his shoulders.

JEFF
(to Tony, looking at
Lara's butt)
The bodywork's attractive, but I
just don't understand what's going
on under the hood.

TONY
You're still talking about the car,
right?

JEFF
Right. Of course, right.

Lara sits in the driver's seat of the car and turns the
engine; it fires, but runs a little erratically.

LARA
It'll do for now, but the
carburettor really needs cleaning.
(MORE)

LARA (CONT'D)

On a newer car this would all be done automatically.

JEFF

(to Tony)

She said newer. Automatically.

TONY

This car is functional and value for money.

JEFF

You say that like it's a good thing.

LARA

But the timing belt's due to go soon. That's serious. You could end up blowing your head gasket.

JEFF

(to Tony)

You could end up blowing your head gasket, she said.

TONY

You could end up blowing...

Jeff puts his finger to Tony's lips.

JEFF

Uh-huh. There are women and children present.

BRAD

(changing the subject hurriedly)

Dad, it would really make me happy if you could visit. You and mom should make up. I'm sure she's big enough to make a fresh start.

INT. MARIA'S DINING AREA

MARIA

I've had to do everything for myself since that slimeball piece of dogdirt nearly ruined my life. If I ever met him, I'd... Well, I don't know what I'd do, but he'd never have any more children.

LILY

So what happens if Brad bumps into his dad one day?

MARIA

America's a big place. They're not likely to bump into each other, are they? Where did he go today?

LILY

He went... err... he went with Lara to... I can't remember.

MARIA

(suspiciously)

You remember everything. You remember things that haven't even happened. What are you hiding?

LILY

I'm hiding nothing! I wouldn't know a lie if it bit me on the butt.

MARIA

That's because you wear stainless steel panties.

(sudden realisation)

He's gone to see his dad, hasn't he? That rat. That boy is in trouble.

She stares at Lily for a second.

MARIA (CONT'D)

You have any of that Jack left?

LILY

(passing the hip flask)

Help yourself.

EXT. MARIA'S HOUSE

Lara and Brad pull up in Lara's car.

INT. THE LOBBY OF MARIA'S HOUSE

Brad steps through the door.

BRAD

Hi Mom!

He ducks as a plate flies over his head and crashes against the wall.

MARIA

Don't you 'Mom' me. Where have you been? Don't lie to me.

BRAD

I went to see my dad.

MARIA
Your dad? You traitor!

She throws another plate.

BRAD
I've invited him round tomorrow.

MARIA
Tomorrow?

Lara comes in behind Brad as another plate flies.

BRAD
Dad and his boyfriend. For drinks.

MARIA
Boyfriend? Drinks?

She reaches for another plate.

BRAD
Mom, we need the plates.

LILY
Sister, you made a sale today. You can afford plates.

BRAD
You're not helping!

MARIA
What's cheaper than a plate?

LILY
(passing a cup)
These cups look good to go.

MARIA
Thanks, Lily.

Maria throws the cup at Brad, who ducks.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Pass me another...

LARA
Stop! Stop! Please stop!

She stands in the middle of the room, breathing deeply.

LARA (CONT'D)
Mrs Hickey... he's Brad's dad. He's made mistakes, he's not perfect, but part of him is in Brad. Brad will always hear his Dad's voice in his own.

MARIA
 (sitting suddenly,
 shocked)
 For twenty years I've ignored that
 sound. Jeff's voice, every time
 Brad speaks.

A pause while everyone looks sympathetic, until;

LILY
 Look on the bright side. If you'd
 been married for the last twenty
 years, you'd have more wrinkles
 than a rabbi's scrotum.

MARIA
 You're really not here to help, are
 you?

LARA
 Look, I'm sure Jeff is as nervous
 as any of us.

INT. JEFF AND TONY'S DINING ROOM

Jeff is dancing around the room in his underpants, singing
 along with The Miracles' 'Love Machine'. He has a large glass
 of wine. Tony is sitting with pursed lips.

TONY
 I really don't think you get the
 enormity of what's about to happen.

JEFF
 Wooahh, I'm just a love machine. Be
 happy for me! I have a son. I'm a
 real man.

TONY
 You're dancing to The Miracles in
 your underpants.

JEFF
 Because real men break the rules. I
 am so macho. Hey... who sang 'so
 macho'? I must have that...

TONY
 No real man owns a Sinitta track.

He stands up suddenly, strides over to the sound system and
 switches it off.

TONY (CONT'D)

You are drunk. Bed. Now. Tomorrow
you face the woman you dumped in
the most humiliating way possible.
You need to not be hungover.

JEFF

I am the Lord of the High Church of
Having a Good Time. Worship at my
altar, unbeliever!

He refills his glass. Tony leaves the room.

INT. THE NEXT MORNING; JEFF AND TONY'S BEDROOM

The alarm goes off. Tony is sitting up in bed, arms folded.
Jeff groans and covers his face with his hands.

JEFF

Oh... who gave Satan permission to
install the cauldrons of hell in my
frontal lobes?

TONY

I'm certainly getting the stench of
sulfur. You are truly disgusting.

JEFF

Wake me when the angels have
scraped the souls of the undead
from my tongue.

Tony throws open the curtains.

TONY

We're due at Maria's in two hours.
You're getting up now.

JEFF

Maria? Oh god. If I say a prayer
now, can I just go straight to the
seventh circle of hell?

TONY

Get in that shower...

INT. TONY'S CAR

Tony is driving, Jeff is sagged and hungover.

JEFF

Hey... a gas station. Pull in...

TONY

But we don't need gas.

JEFF
I have an idea...

EXT. MARIA'S GARDEN

Brad and Lara are in the garden, practising catching the ball. Maria calls from the kitchen - she's just got back with some shopping bags. Lara and Brad go in to help unpack.

INT. MARIA'S DINING AREA

MARIA
I'm sorry for last night. I know this means so much to you today.

BRAD
Hey, mom, you bought more plates.

MARIA
Did I? Well, I thought they might come in handy...

Maria tries to look innocent. Lara whistles gently.

INT. TONY'S CAR

Jeff jumps back into the car with a medium sized bunch of flowers, in a clear plastic wrapping. They drive off.

TONY
Flowers?

JEFF
You call them flowers, I call them peace and love in a plastic wrap. Women love flowers. I found a little something extra, too.

TONY
Did I call you shallow last night? I overestimated you.

Tony brakes sharply, jerking Jeff forward. A PEDESTRIAN, tall, slow, thoughtful, has stepped out in front of the car. Jeff jumps out of the car to confront him.

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET, IN FRONT OF TONY'S CAR

JEFF
(still holding the flowers)
What the hell do you think you're doing? Are you blind?

The stranger turns, and we see that he is, indeed, blind. He speaks deeply, measuring his words with confidence.

PEDESTRIAN

I'm sorry?

JEFF

You should look... I mean...

PEDESTRIAN

(sniffing)

Flowers. You're holding flowers. Are you trying to threaten me or pollinate me?

JEFF

I mean, shouldn't you have a dog?

PEDESTRIAN

(crushing the stems of the flowers, bringing his face close to Jeff's)

My parole conditions only allow me to hurt one person a day. Don't let it be you.

Jeff grunts in frustration, looks at the damaged blooms in his hand, then gets back into the car.

INT. MARIA'S DINING AREA

Lily and Maria are sitting at the table with cups of tea.

MARIA

This is going to be so weird. Last time I saw him he was thirty years old and naked.

LILY

Give me a moment. My imagination's a little tender.

MARIA

I'd never had a man look at me like he did. I thought I had free drinks at the pleasure bar. But it was just one quick short and then a 20 year hangover.

LILY

You'll have so much to catch up on.

MARIA

So much to say...

LILY
 Make sure you're sat near the
 plates. They'll do the talking.

Maria nods.

INT. TONY'S CAR

The car chugs to a halt.

JEFF
 Two blocks from her house, it
 stops, dammit!

TONY
 Lara said it was mended. We
 should've got a proper mechanic.

JEFF
 We should've got a proper car.

They sit for a second in angry silence before Jeff gets out his phone and starts to dial.

JEFF (CONT'D)
 I have an idea... Oh hi, Brad, it's
 Jeff. Your dad...

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

Lara and Brad walk up to Tony's car. Lara has overalls on and Brad is carrying a tool kit. Tony gets out of the car. Jeff puts the flowers down on the driving seat and jumps out.

BRAD
 Hi dad, Hi Tony.

The four exchange greetings. Tony is unenthusiastic and distinctly disapproving when Jeff kisses Lara on the cheek.

TONY
 (quietly to Jeff)
 Keep it above the neckline and keep
 your hands where I can see them at
 all times.

JEFF
 She's like a daughter to me now!

TONY
 We don't need any more children!
 I've only just got used to the idea
 of being a mother!

Lara starts work on the car while Brad throws and catches a ball. Tony catches Jeff checking out her butt and stares at him. Jeff plays innocent.

LARA

That should do it. Could you try starting the engine?

Tony gets into the car and sits on the flowers.

TONY

What the hell...?

JEFF

Oh, Goddamn... the flowers...

He holds up the bouquet. Lara takes it off him.

LARA

Let me. I'll straighten them.

Tony starts up the engine.

BRAD

You guys get going, we'll meet you there.

The car drives off. Brad and Lara follow on.

EXT. MARIA'S FRONT DOOR

Jeff rings the door bell. After a few seconds the door opens.

JEFF

Maria!

Maria slams the door in his face.

INT. MARIA'S HALLWAY

MARIA

I can't do this.

LILY

It's OK. He's 50 and he's got his pants on. I checked.

Maria takes a deep breath and opens the door again.

MARIA

Jeff... how lovely to see you.

They exchange an awkward embrace.

JEFF

Can I introduce my partner, Tony?

TONY
Delighted. I'm sorry he left you.

MARIA
Never mind. My loss is your pain.

JEFF
Hey, I brought something to
brighten up your house.

He hands over the flowers; they're massacred.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(handing over a package)
And I thought you'd like a nice...

MARIA
...scented candle?

She slams the door in his face again.

MARIA (CONT'D)
(to Lily)
Can I legally kill him?

LILY
(looking at her glass)
Jack, looks like we're going to
need a bigger bottle...

The door opens again. Brad and Lara are behind Jeff and Tony.

BRAD
Hey, you've made introductions?

MARIA
Getting on like a house on fire.

LILY
If you live in a zeppelin.

INT. MARIA'S DINING AREA

Everyone is sitting round the table with drinks and snacks.

MARIA
So. You couldn't even get here
without a woman to mend your car?

JEFF
We're going to buy a new car.
Something that reflects my
personality.

MARIA
Something that automatically drives
away from problems?

JEFF

I want a stylish head turner -
whatever that costs.

MARIA AND TONY

You can't just throw money...
(they stop and look at
each other before slowly
continuing)
... at a problem...

TONY

You have to decide your
parameters...

MARIA

Set your budget...

TONY

Justify your decisions...

MARIA

There's no such thing as too much
research...

Tony looks at Maria with a new-found respect. He nods,
slowly.

JEFF

So... it's funny what sticks in the
mind, isn't it? You remember you
once threw a chair at my head?

MARIA

I never throw things.

BRAD

You threw plates at my head
yesterday.

MARIA

Only because I didn't have any
scented candles to hand.

JEFF

What's wrong with scented candles?

MARIA

You thought a scented candle was a
good idea? You want it back?

She reaches back, picks up the candle from the side table and
throws it.

SLOW MOTION POV: FROM IMMEDIATELY BEHIND THE TRAJECTORY OF THE CANDLE

The candle spins towards Jeff's head. He stares open-mouthed as it approaches.

NORMAL SPEED CLOSE UP: A HAND REACHES OUT AND GRABS THE CANDLE INCHES FROM JEFF'S FACE. IT'S BRAD.

BRAD

(angrily)

Mom! What are you doing? Dad brought this with good intentions. You should have the decency to accept that.

MARIA

You've never lost your temper with me before... you've changed.

BRAD

I've not changed. I've come alive. You did a great job of bringing me up. You've made me think, made me grow and I hope you're proud of what you've made. But I don't know how to be a man, and this camp, gay, shallow, commitment-phobic, fashion obsessed, middle aged man...

TONY

He's not wrong...

BRAD

... just happens to be my dad. He's part of my journey. I don't know where I'm going, but I want him, and I want you, to be part of that journey. The three of us together.

JEFF

(angrily, to Maria)

I came here to start again. I know I'm twenty years too late, but Brad's trying to be the bigger man. I'm proud to have him in my life.

BRAD

Thanks, dad...

JEFF

Don't mention it... son...

Maria bites her lip.

JEFF (CONT'D)
 I see I've overstayed my welcome.
 I'll be back when you're ready.

He stands up, throws his chair back and leaves, slamming the door behind him. There is an stunned silence until a knock at the door. Lara goes to the door and opens it.

JEFF (CONT'D)
 Err... Tony? You have the car keys...

TONY
 Sure, sure. Bye, everyone.

The two of them leave. Another dead silence until the door knocks again. This time Brad opens it.

TONY (CONT'D)
 Err, Lara... The car... err...

LARA
 I'll get my toolkit.

JEFF
 (poking his head round the door)
 I'd like you to know that I'm still angry.

Brad, Lara, Tony and Jeff leave, leaving Maria and Lily at the table. Lily pushes a glass towards Maria.

LILY
 Jack Daniels?

MARIA
 Do you have anything stronger?

LILY
 Double Jack?

MARIA
 Shoot me one...

INT. BRAD'S BEDROOM

It's night time. Brad is sitting on his bed talking to SuperManlyMan, who still maintains a heroic pose.

BRAD
 It was a disaster. I wanted the big emotional reunion, but mom hates dad, dad hates mom, and I hate myself for trying. What went wrong?

SUPERMANLYMAN

A real man looks at the bigger picture, Brad. You remember the soccer game last week? You were losing two-nil at half time?

BRAD

We ended up winning 4-2.

SUPERMANLYMAN

What matters more? The 2-0 half time score or the 4-2 result?

BRAD

4-2, of course.

SUPERMANLYMAN

The ending is all that matters. Check the news, you only see the score at full time.

BRAD

And we're only at half time...

SUPERMANLYMAN

Remember, the best time to plant a tree is ten years ago. The second best time is now.

BRAD

You're right. Thanks, SuperManlyMan.

(he thinks for a few seconds with furrowed brow)

You think I should plant a tree?

SUPERMANLYMAN

Go back to Facebook.

Brad turns to the computer, then turns again to talk to SuperManlyMan, who has disappeared.

BRAD

Oh, SuperManlyMan... hey, where did he go?

FADE OUT