

THE ALPHA BET

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EXT. FOOT OF BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

The shot opens facing the backs of two individuals. They are sitting on the railing that separates pavement from a wet and miserable death down below. One man, ROB, has a cigarette in his hand, but it's obvious the other guy is just along for the ride. ANDY sits upwind of his friend. Both are dressed alike in dark clothes, but body language alone tells the audience that these two couldn't be more different.

ANDY

I just don't know, man. I mean, what do I need to prove to you guys? It just seems... foolish, is all.

ROB

Look, I'm not saying it's not stupid. Hell, I'm saying just about the exact opposite. You know Johnny, though. If he's got an idea in his head, it's better to just go with it.

Rick takes a long drag from his cigarette, exhales, and then pitches the butt into the foamy murk below.

ROB (CONT'D)

Plus, it's bound to be fun and there's no way in hell we'll lose to a dude like that. He can't even talk his patients out of their clothes and he's a masseuse!

ANDY

Well, yeah... but don't you just find something about this just... misogynistic? I mean, it's a cool concept and all. 27 girls across 27 letters? But damn if I don't just feel like it's masking some deeper problems the guy must be going through.

ROB

Shut the fuck up with talk like that, man! It's called the Alpha Bet for a reason! If you go around whining like your pussy hurts, obviously Johnny's onto something. It'll do us all some good.

ANDY

Good? What good can really come from this? I'll get my dick wet and my ego boosted?

ROB

Exactly, Andy! I knew you'd figure it out! Just quit overthinking everything. Make the bet, get your dick wet, and just let bros be bros, you know?

Rob hops down from the rails, obviously done with his cigarette break. He motions to his partner in crime and begins heading back towards the heart of Brooklyn.

ANDY

Yeah, I guess you're right. Maybe I'm just thinking too hard about what life's supposed to be like, you know... after we hit thirty?

ROB

Just come on, Romeo. We don't want to be late for our shifts.

FADE OUT.

INT. HAPPENING HIPSTER BAR - NIGHT

The scene opens back up to reveal that Andy is a bartender at what could only be considered a speakeasy. It's full of idiotic memorabilia meant to "embrace the era", but somehow all the tchotchkes manage to do is pull in the fashion forward hipster generation. Rob is standing by the front door, on guard and presumably filling in as the bouncer. Both men have girls casually flirting with them.

ROB

(From a distance)
So you come here often?

The girl's response can't be heard over the noise of the bar. Camera moves to focus in on Kyle and the people gathered at the bar before him.

ANDY

Yeah, I just like how everything you say has such an exotic sound to it. Where'd you say that accent was from again?

GIRL 1
You're funny! You know I'm from
Queens!

GIRL 2
Funny AND cute, right Abby?

ANDY
Aww shucks, girls. You treat me too
well! Anything else I can do for
you, though, before I leave?

Andy notices the frowns forming on the drunk girls' faces and quickly goes to reassure them.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Come on, now... no sad faces. You
know I don't stick around for last
call. Anything you ladies want
before I go, though... that I can
do.

GIRL 1 (ABBY)
A ride home, then? Brienne brought
us here, but I don't think she's
fit to drive.

GIRL 2 (BRIENNE)
Yeah, but I'm definitely looking to
ride. Abby and I are both in
agreement there.

Andy graciously agrees to their terms by putting away their glasses and wiping down the counter before them. Hanging up his bar rag and grabbing his keys from a hook behind the counter, he moves towards both the exit and Rob, who is curiously alone now. The girls, Abby and Brienne, follow him in tow.

ANDY
Hold down the fort, bud. I'm gonna
give Abby and Brienne here a ride
home. They're some of my best
customers; can't let them go
wrapping themselves around a pole,
right?

Abby blushes at the phrasing of that last line and Rob looks on amused at his friend and his friend's "dates" for the night.

ROB
Yeah yeah, man. No need rubbin' it
in. Abby and Brienne, though, huh?
(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)

It's like you gals are looking to start an alphabet.

ANDY

Don't. It's not like that.

BRIENNE

Not like what?

Brienne hiccups and Abby giggles under her breath, still blushing. Kyle simply glares over their heads at Rob, who is blissfully unaware, he's so busy admiring the girls' tits.

BRIENNE (CONT'D)

I kinda like the idea of that, honestly. We're starting off the alphabet and maybe if we're lucky, we'll even get to "see" the D, am I right?

ANDY

Let's just get you girls home. We'll figure out the rest as it comes up.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The scene opens on a busy kitchen. The audience sees an older woman bustling about, getting a meal put together, and she seems like the quintessential grandma type. There are pots beginning to bubble and pans simmering. Biscuits are awaiting their turn in the oven and overall one wonders... who is this old woman cooking for, exactly? The house phone rings and the woman goes to answer it.

ANDY'S MOM

Hello?

Andy's mom, the woman in question, has just received a call from her son as he heads home from work.

ANDY (VOICE)

Hey mom, I might be home late. Think you can finish up the food for the church without me for a few hours? Some customers needed a designated driver.

ANDY'S MOM

Alright dear, that's fine. I understand.

(MORE)

ANDY'S MOM (CONT'D)

Just don't let those young ladies I hear talk you into doing anything God wouldn't appreciate. You hear me?

The older woman grimaces in pain as she tries to lift one of the large pots from its place on the stove. After she manages to get it moved, she shakes her head and sighs. She's getting too old, both for her son's antics and for preparing these grandiose meals.

ANDY

Come on, mom. You know I'm a good kid. Abby and Brienne are regulars. I just don't want to see them come to harm's way.

ANDY'S MOM

You're right. I'm sorry. It just worries me, is all, you being a grown man with no woman in your life. What sort of example are you setting for those hoodlums you spend all your time with?

ANDY

Mooooom... you know I'm not Dad, right? Johnny and Rob are good guys too. We're just not the type to settle for anything less than perfect. If I did bring home some floozy, I bet you'd be glad I was single.

Andy's mom apparently doesn't like the idea of that any more than she agrees that her son's friends are good kids. She knows their type and worries that her son will soon be one of them. She realizes she's pushing too hard, though, so she changes up her tune.

ANDY'S MOM

Don't even joke, Andrew. Just get home when you can. I'm no spring chicken anymore, you know. I'll just do what I can manage in the meantime.

ANDY

Alright. Love you. Just don't push yourself too hard; I'll be home soon enough, so I can take care of getting the food to the shelter.

ANDY'S MOM

Yeah, yeah. I never said I was
dead, kiddo. Just be safe. Love you
too.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PARKED CAR - NIGHT

Andy has managed to get both the girls home safely, but the hardest part of escorting a drunk to their place typically winds up being that moment when you have to peel them out of the car. These girls were no exception. Abby, having been forced into the back seat by her overly eager friend, can barely hold still. Brienne, passenger seat, is essentially trying her best at making "the bedroom eyes" in Andy's general direction.

ANDY

Sorry about that girls. Had to tell
my mom I couldn't help with the
dinner for her.

ABBY

Aww. That's so sad.

BRIENNE

Yeah, Andy. What'd you have to go
and be a good guy for?

ABBY

He is, isn't he? He-

ANDY

Girls! Come on- out of the car.

ABBY

Aww, come on, I'm goin. You don't
have to be so mean, not letting me
finish what I was-

BRIENNE

Come on, Brienne! Let's get inside.
Plus, you know that's not true.
Everyone knows nice guys finish
last.

Abby blushes and proceeds to scramble out of the car before her drunken state gave away her current thoughts. Andy just smirks and helps Abby and Brienne up to their place.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT.- APARTMENT ALLEYWAY, BROOKLYN- NIGHT

The sun has long since set over the city and Andy's mom needed to get the food over to the shelter for morning meals. She had built up a bit of a sweat in the kitchen, however, and it was a fairly cold night. She didn't think to put on a sweater, thinking the pots of food would be more than enough to keep her warm.

She was old, however. Enter scene with heart-wrenching conclusion: Andy's mom is going to have a heart attack.

ANDY'S MOM

Where is that kid? I hope he didn't get hurt on his way home...

NEIGHBOR

(holds door open for her.)
How you been, Clara? Awful cold out there. Need help with that pot you got there? Hate for you to slip.

ANDY'S MOM (CLARA)

No thank you, Roger. A woman that can't brave a New York night with a pot in tow isn't one I want to start being.

The neighbor chuckles and walks in. He is an older man with a thing for Andy's mom, so he likes to be cordial whenever possible. Andy's mom just continues to trodge along with this pot that's getting heavier by the minute. She could have used the help, but she was raised not to show weakness when one was strong enough to overcome it. Andy's mom was strong. The only problem was that her heart, with age, had grown weak.

C

Roger, having recalled something he had wanted to mention to Clara earlier, comes back out of their apartment building a couple minutes later to discover an overturned pot, a pool of soup gradually melting the snow, and his neighbor seized up, clutching at her chest.

NEIGHBOR (ROGER)

Clara!

Roger begins calling 911 on his cell phone as he runs over to Clara to check to see if she was alright. The back door of her car is open and the light spooling out helps reveal that the woman was at least alive.

ROGER

Don't worry, I'm getting help.
HELP! I'm sorry, Clara. I wish
there was something I could do
while the ambulance comes. My
jacket, at least...

CLARA

(struggling)
...my son...

ROGER

Your son?

CLARA

Andrew

Roger tries to find a cell phone around Clara, but to no avail. As witnessed inside with her house phone, Clara was of the mindset that phones should not be mobile. She did have an address book in her handbag, though, so as Roger covered her with his coat and waited for the paramedics to arrive, he also called Clara's son.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BACHELORETTE PAD, QUEENS - NIGHT

Andy lies in a sea of limbs and blankets. You distinctly see him propped up on the pillows, but it's hard to make out more than half of Brienne's body from under the sheets and Abby is little more than an excuse for where the extra hands and feet were coming from.

One can only assume what happened, based on the look he has on his face

BRIENNE

Wow. I might be a little drunk, but
damn was that an impressive show.

Abby giggles in agreement from somewhere beneath the sheets.

ANDY

Really, huh? That good?

BRIENNE

Not really, but at least you had a
decent amount to show.

ANDY

Hey!

BRIENNE

Aw, calm yourself. I'm only pulling your leg. It was decent. Semi-decent.

Andy sits there, in a brooding sort of way, and continues to brood as Brienne tries to kiss his chest.

ANDY

I still can't help but think I shouldn't have done this.

Brienne scowls, quits kissing Andy.

BRIENNE

You know, saying it beforehand was real cute and coy, but Andy... it's starting to get hurtful!

ANDY

You know I don't mean it like that. It's just, you guys were really drunk, and I'm a bartender, and there's the whole Barkeeper's Oath... it's a real thing. I just don't want to take advantage.

Abby bites Andy on the side as she comes slipping back out from under the covers. She nibbles his ear and pulls Brienne close.

ABBY

I get it, Andy, it's why we chose you. You're a good guy.

ANDY

(Getting frightened.)

Chose me? What do you mean, chose me?

BRIENNE

Haha, really? Calm it down, stud, nobody's making a birth pact. We just like to have fun, you know.

ANDY

Um, I guess? Sorry, that got a little real for a second.

Brienne laughs and is about to say something when Andy's cell phone goes off. He reaches across her and grabs it, asking her for a second with a wave. He answers the phone.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Hello?

Andy listens on the phone while Brienne and Abby playfully tug at him, trying to get him to hang up. As the conversation lengthens, though, they stop, having heard the mood change. Andy is getting frantic the more he hears.

ANDY (CONT'D)

My god... no, no, thank you for calling. I'll be there as soon as I can. Which hospital again?

Andy brushes the girls aside and begins putting his pants on. He's barely focusing on that task, he's so focused on what he's hearing, so the girls are barely even there in his mind.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I should be able to make it there before she does, I'm in the area. What happened, though?

Abby and Brienne look more than a little confused, but also a little insulted. Andy almost flew out the door the way he was headed, but they never got an explanation what was going on. They shrug it off, though, and proceed to kiss one another.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT WAITING AREA - EARLY MORNING

The hospital is overcrowded and it appears that Andy has been there for a few hours based on how he looks. His friends, Rob and Johnny, show up in a rush. Andy wasn't expecting to see them.

ANDY

What the... how did you guys find out what happened?

JOHNNY

Don't sweat that man, how's your mom doing?

ANDY

Well, she's not out of danger, but from what I hear it sounds like her neighbor managed to make it to her before any lasting damage might have occurred.

JOHNNY

Well that's good, right?

ANDY

I guess, but seriously, man... how did you guys find out? Don't get me wrong, you're like brothers and I SHOULD have calle-

ROB

Yeah, Andy, you should have. Luckily for me, I was the only one not off banging bitches-

JOHNNY

For real? High fives for the studs-

ROB

Eh-hmm... I was the only one there when those girls you ditched came back complaining.

JOHNNY

Yeah, man, from what I hear, they think you did that shit just to ditch them. Classic.

ROB

Shut up, Johnny. Anyway, yeah... how are you holding up? I still don't forgive you for not calling, but you doing alright? I know you only ever really had your moms.

ANDY

I don't know, man... I was off having some of the wildest sex in my life when I was supposed to be with my mother preparing meals for the homeless. I guess I feel pretty shitty, okay?

ROB

Yeah, I guess when you put it that way, I understand. You do a lot for her, though. You can't beat yourself up for not being there one time, can you?

JOHNNY

He can sure try.

ANDY

Shut the fuck up, Johnny. If it wasn't for your stupid bet, I might have been there last night.

JOHNNY

Woah, man... I'm going to let that one slide because i know you're hurting, but that's unfair. You and I both know you would have wound up sleeping with those-

ANDY

Now, come on, I'm not that big a playboy. You're the one tossing them to the side left and right. I don't-

JOHNNY

Don't what? Let girls know how many times we spent the night in the drunk tank together? Tell them how many girls you been with? Come off it. You just like it better this way, you got someone to blame.

ANDY

Fuck you, man

ROB

Woah guys, what the fuck... this is a fucking hospital.

JOHNNY

(muttering)
...not even your own mom's emergency contact.

ANDY

Wait, what was that?

JOHNNY

You heard me. It's not that we heard about the heart attack from some girls you were through bedding down. Rob's your mom's emergency contact, apparently. He got the call, heard you were already in route, and asked me to give him a ride.

ANDY

Is that true, Rob?

ROB

Well, I thought it might upset you.

Johnny glares at Andy, shakes his head, and looks away.

JOHNNY

You can say what you want, but
we're gonna be bros no matter what.
Just don't forget your place,
brother. We all fuck up, but at
least we're here. Now.. let's see
what we can do about getting you
back there to see her again.

Andy shakes his head, runs his hands through his hair,
whatever it takes for him to pull himself together. He sighs
and decides to push the other nonsense to the side for now.

ANDY

You're right, this is stupid. Let
me see what I can find out. Maybe
it was all some kind of false
alarm.

Andy, Rob, and Johnny head up to a nurse's station and Johnny
pulls one to the side, trying to curry favor through sex
appeal. It doesn't work out well. Of course, Rob gets in no
problem since he's the emergency contact, but the nurses feel
sorry for Andy, the dutiful son, so they let him through
anyway. Johnny has to wait outside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

The ghostly sound of breathing machines and life support
monitors fill the air. Andy's mom, Clara, sleeps peacefully
while Andy sits uncomfortably in a chair that claims to fold
out into a bed. When the doctor on staff returns to his mom's
hospital room, Andy springs out of the chair, only too eager
to have an excuse to get up and move around a little. The
doctor motions for Andy to confer with him by the door, so
Andy joins him.

DOCTOR

So, it was no false alarm, I'm
afraid.

ANDY

Are you sure? I mean, maybe it was
just indigestion.

DOCTOR

Look, when your mom's been in here
twice for suspicions of myocardial
infarctions in less than a year,
it's a little too late to st-

ANDY

Wait... twice?!

The doctor was unaware that no one had told the son about the first heart attack, so he's quick to reassure a distraught Andy, but little can help ease the young man out of the funk this news put him in. First he discovers his mother took him off her emergency contacts and now he finds out that she's had multiple heart attacks? Andy is pretty livid and more than a little scared.

DOCTOR

It's not as surprising as you might think. Initially, the patient comes in with only a suspicion of trouble. Sometimes, a patient might be in three or four times before they discover an underlying cause for these attacks. On the bright side, though, at least your mother made it here. Most people tend to ignore the signs until it's too late.

ANDY

Jesus, doc... where you'd learn your bedside manner? Kevorkian?

DOCTOR

(A little miffed being compared to Kevorkian)
Look, son... I know this is a trying time, but your mom's been lucky.

ANDY

Yeah, I see Ed McMahon walking up with our check right now.

DOCTOR

The important thing to note is that each new attack adds further strain to the heart muscle. I know it's not fun to hear, but you should probably consider an action plan for all future occurrences.

ANDY

You mean?

DOCTOR

Yes, this will happen again. I'm not saying that it's likely to be soon, but once cardiac issues present themselves it's typically a recurring nightmare in a patient's life.

ANDY

Man, doc... you're really not sugar coating it even a little.

DOCTOR

I know it's hard to hear, but better you hear it now than hear it too late.

ANDY

No, you're right, of course. Thank you for the information. We'll get this thing figured out, don't you worry.

ANDY'S MOM (CLARA)

...Andy?

ANDY

Yes, mom? I'm here.

Andy rushes to his mother's side, knowing now that she's awake. He doesn't try to tear up, but the struggle is real. Meanwhile, the overworked doctor goes over his patient's vitals before slipping out of the room as unobtrusively as possible. Andy's mom allows the doctor's absence to serve as an excuse to cry a little too. The mother and son have some things they need to talk about.

CLARA

I'm so sorry, Andy.

ANDY

Ma, don't.

CLARA

I should have told you.

ANDY

Don't.

The scene ends with a shot of Andy holding his mom's hand while they quietly discuss the seriousness of the situation. The camera pans away and out of the room.

END SCENE.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA- LUNCH

The scene opens with a shot of Andy, Rob, and Johnny sitting at a table enjoying a light snack. They are not the primary focus of the scene, however, as the audience sees that the camera pans to a young woman standing in line at the counter.

She's cute and maybe just a little eccentric, if one can assume such things based on the clothes a person might wear to the emergency room. ZOEY, the girl in question, is wearing colorful leggings and an over-sized sweater featuring cats. She picks up an orange, a bagel, and a chocolate milk from the lunch lady at the counter before she returns to the phone call she was making. Bandages cover her non-dominant hand.

ZOEY

I just don't know, Courtney. They say the burn's not too serious, but they wouldn't tell me if the toaster survived the fire.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

Well, duh, girl. They're paramedics, not Radio Shack employees.

ZOEY

Yeah yeah... anyway, have you heard from Phil? I'm sure he's curious-

COURTNEY'S VOICE

Zoey, you're a mess. Don't worry about Phillip right now. I'm sure the douche is just overcome with grief thinking about how his ex set her tenement building on fire with a poorly-timed Toaster Strudel.

ZOEY

Hey, to be fair, how was I supposed to know the icing went on after you put the pastry in?

COURTNEY'S VOICE

I don't know... directions?

ZOEY

Haha, yeah. I never did follow those too well. But seriously, Court... where am I gonna live now?

The guys sitting at the table make something of a scene, what with Johnny being Johnny. Zoey's attention is drawn to our main characters, but little can be heard of their conversation at this distance. One can only see that Andy is in opposition to whatever it is that Johnny suggests.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

Look, we'll figure something out. I'm on my way up to the hospital anyway; Some guy had his heart ripped out and Johnny asked me if I couldn't help the poor sod "feel better". Who was I to say no?

ZOEY

(laughs lightly)
Courtney, you're such a slut.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

Hey, I take offense to that.

ZOEY

Yeah, I know. You're a strong, independent woman that don't need no man.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

You're damn straight! Just listen, alright? I'm coming up to the hospital. Johnny never was good at being serious, so I'll talk to this friend of his and make the guy feel a little better, then we'll go grab drinks, okay?

ZOEY

Alright. Just remember, love, it's not even noon.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

How did I ever befriend such a judgmental bitch?

ZOEY

(laughs again)
Just lucky, I suppose.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

Yeah, anyway... I'll be there in a few. Just linger in the gift shop if you must. We'll figure this all out, don't worry.

ZOEY

Who's worried? I just set my whole life on fire, right, and my best friend's about to get herself abducted from a hospital parking garage. Typical Tuesday, if you ask me.

COURTNEY'S VOICE

Hardy har-har. Just get some rest.
I love you, doll-face.

ZOEY

Love you too, slut. See you soon.

Zoey hangs up the phone and makes her way out of the cafeteria just in time for the scene to refocus on the three friends enjoying a casual hospital lunch. Andy seems a little perturbed. Johnny, per usual, just seems aloof. Rob is trying to defuse the situation.

ROB

I'm not saying you should listen to him, Andy, but really... what could it hurt?

ANDY

There's no way, Rob. I told you guys, I'm through with that shit. My mom nearly died. Hell, she still might!

JOHNNY

Look, no one here is trying to say your mom's health isn't important, I'm just saying-

ANDY

You're just saying I should get my dick wet, right? Hakuna Matata and all that jazz?

ROB

Now, Andy... you're not being fair.

ANDY

Being fair? Johnny wants to introduce me to some tramp on the offhand chance I might get lucky, all while my mom is laid up in a hospital bed? How am I not being fair?

JOHNNY

Hey, first off, she's no tramp-

ROB

Cool, cool... she's not a tramp, Andy's not looking to get laid, and nobody's even saying anything about the alpha bet one way or another. Quick question, though...

ANDY

Yeah?

ROB

Could it really hurt to at least say hello to the girl? Maybe John's onto something.

ANDY

Yeah, onto my last nerve.

JOHNNY

Hey! That hurts.

ROB

You two bicker like you really are brothers. Just shut the hell up for a second and answer my question already. Will it hurt?

ANDY

No, I suppose not.

ROB

And is it possible you might have fun?

ANDY

Doubtful, but you're right... I could use some distracting.

ROB

And Johnny? You promise not to be a dick? You'll check in at the nurses' station and let Andy know the second something changes?

JOHNNY

Yeah yeah. I still think I got a chance with that Mediterranean chick rocking the clipboard anyway.

ROB

See? It's all settled, then.

ANDY

Yeah, but what are you planning on doing?

ROB

Well, Andrew, that is simple.

ANDY

Oh?

ROB
I intend to buy at least one more
honey bun.

FADE OUT.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE- EARLY AFTERNOON

Cars pull up, patients are dropped off, and there's a sense of frenzied movement to the world immediately surrounding the building. Meanwhile, Andy merely loiters off to the side, sneaking a cigarette while propped up against a conveniently placed no-smoking sign. He's just about to finish his cancer stick too, when COURTNEY first appears on scene.

She's wearing a denim jacket over flannel to combat the chill in the air, but she's also wearing yoga pants because it makes her legs look good. She seems to be looking for something, but when she sees Andy finishing his cigarette, she puts the search aside.

COURTNEY
Those things will kill you.

ANDY
Guess I'm fortunate to be at a
hospital then, huh?

COURTNEY
Well, yeah, but I'm pretty sure
they don't roll the corpses through
the front door.

ANDY
You got me. Heaven forbid they take
the time to wheel me around the
side.

COURTNEY
Andy, right?

ANDY
If I say yes, are you going to
write me a ticket for smoking?

COURTNEY
Pretty funny, for a fuck boy.

ANDY
Excuse me?

COURTNEY

Oh, calm down. I'm Johnny's friend Courtney. He said I could probably find you out here.

ANDY

Did he also ask you to berate me for falling back into back habits?

COURTNEY

No, that advice comes for free. My dad died from lung cancer.

ANDY

Oh... I'm sorry to hear that. Did he smoke often?

COURTNEY

No no, nothing like that. He just worked around a lot of asbestos in his youth.

ANDY

The fuck? How is that relevant, then?

COURTNEY

Do you KNOW how flammable asbestos can be? A single cigarette could burn down a whole building insulated with the stuff.

ANDY

I thought they used asbestos as insulation specifically because it wasn't flammable?

COURTNEY

God, you sound just like him. I'm sure he rested easy knowing that when he went up in smoke at the crematorium.

ANDY

Dark much?

COURTNEY

Kid, the world is full of darkness if you shut your eyes tight enough. Come on inside. Let's grab a coffee and talk.

Andy stubs out his cigarette and begrudgingly follows the girl back into the hospital. She never once looks back to see if he's following her; she's the type of girl that knows people will follow HER directions.

END SCENE.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA- LATER LUNCH

The scene opens back up on the cafeteria Andy had just got done leaving. Rob can still be seen in the distance, snacking delicately on a scone while his plate brims with various baked goods. Courtney sits across the table from Andy in another part of the room. The two appear to be deep in conversation.

ANDY

I just don't understand how you can be so flippant about it. Doesn't it still hurt?

COURTNEY

Look, eventually, we all lose the ones we love.

ANDY

Well, yeah, but I never lost anyone like that. I mean, my dad, maybe... but I never knew the guy well enough to learn to love him.

COURTNEY

Uh-huh. Well, none of that matters. You'll lose someone one day and their absence is going to leave you feeling empty inside.

Andy looks crestfallen. He had hoped to ignore such hard truths, but Johnny's friend wasn't the type to sugar coat things either. First, the dickhead doctor and now the uncensored advice of a stranger... Andy can't escape from the horrible truth.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

Don't look so sad. I never said that you'd be losing anyone anytime soon.

ANDY

It's pretty pathetic, huh?

COURTNEY

Not at all.

ANDY

Not even a little?

COURTNEY

Maybe a little endearing.

ANDY

Ha-ha. Well, don't go falling in love with me. I'm no good for anyone right now.

Johnny enters at this point with a nurse in tow. Somehow he managed to get one of them to agree to a casual dinner date. He was just on his way to see Rob in order to show off when he sees Andy talking with Courtney. Johnny and the nurse change up direction and head towards the other two.

JOHNNY

Come on, man. A girl couldn't fall in love with you even if she tried.

ANDY

Ah, Johnny. I was wondering when you were planning on stopping by. Who's your friend?

JOHNNY'S FRIEND

Hi, my name is-

JOHNNY

Her name is Erica. You know, with an E?

JOHNNY'S FRIEND (ERICA)

Funny way to say it, but yeah. And you must b-

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah. He's Andy. Anyway Andy, I see you're still just chatting away with Courtney here and I'm up to Erica by this point.

ERICA

What do you mean, up to me?

ANDY

He's an idiot. Ignore him.

JOHNNY

He's just jealous girls like me more. Andy's never even had a serious girlfriend before.

ANDY

Jeeze, shut up already. You know that's a sore subject.

COURTNEY

Hmm... I hear a story!

JOHNNY

Yeah, it's called once upon a time, this dick's got no moves.

COURTNEY

Shut up, "Jonathan". Your moves could use some work too, you know. Plus, Andy seems sweet.

ANDY

I told you, I'm not-

COURTNEY

It's cute how you think that means I want you, but I'm just not that into you.

ANDY

Uh... good?

COURTNEY

The only way you'd get me back to your place is if it's rent controlled and there are leases available.

JOHNNY

BURN!

COURTNEY

I said shut up.

JOHNNY

Aww, but I was just gonna say that Andy might be in luck after all.

ANDY

She said shut up. But wait... why am I in luck?

ERICA

Uh, guys?

Everyone continues to ignore Erica. She eventually grows tired of waiting for the prick that invited her to lunch to recognize her presence, so she leaves in a huff.

Johnny notices, but just shrugs his shoulders as he continues speaking.

JOHNNY

You just said that old guy died in down the hall, right?

COURTNEY

Wait, really?

JOHNNY

Yeah, Andy practically lives in an old folks home. I always tell him he'd have better luck with the ladies if his apartment complex could quit smelling of mothballs and bengay.

ANDY

You leave Hector's arthritis out of this. My neighbors aren't THAT old. I mean, yeah, some of them have nurses that check in on them, but that's not that weird.

JOHNNY

No, bud, it's not weird for nurses to check in on you here because it's a hospital. It's definitely weird you got nurses making house calls.

Johnny can be seen daydreaming a little at the thought.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Pretty hot, though.

Courtney checks her phone, sees the time, and realizes she's late to meet up with her friend. She seems to be really interested in this story about old people smells and vacant apartments, but there's somewhere she should be. She kisses Andy on the cheek and gives Johnny a wink as she says her goodbyes.

COURTNEY

Ask Johnny for my info, hun. I'd like to talk more, but I have someone I have to meet.

ANDY

Oh okay. It was nice talking to you anyway.

COURTNEY

Sure thing! Next time, maybe you can just invite me over to your place. I have a feeling there's more that we should discuss.

JOHNNY

My man, Andy!

COURTNEY AND ANDY

Shut up!

JOHNNY

Damn, can't ever have fun with these two. Basically give away a free "C" and people acting like I'm the bad guy...

Courtney and Andy hug as she departs. Meanwhile, Rob saunters over finally as the scene draws to a close.

ROB

Did I hear something about Freezies?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ANDY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX- LATE AFTERNOON

Scene opens with Courtney and Zoey patiently waiting outside an apartment. The sound of rattling keys makes it around the corner before the superintendent does, but not by much. For a heavier-set male, the super is actually quite spry. Zoey smiles shyly at his approach; Courtney simply taps her foot and pantomimes a time check.

SUPERINTENDENT

First month, last month, security deposit. I don't care if you stay out all hours, but we got a noise policy after hours.

COURTNEY

Hello to you too?

SUPERINTENDENT

Got pets?

ZOEY

A goldfish and sugar glider.

SUPERINTENDENT

Sugar whats-its?

ZOEY

Sugar glider. It's sort of like a flying chipmunk, they are known-

SUPERINTENDENT

Yeah, don't care. Pet deposit is fifty dollars per pound. We'll just call it an even hundred for vermin.

ZOEY

Mister Squeekers is not vermin, he's family.

COURTNEY

What she means is, she'll take it. Granted, first you might, I don't know... let us see inside?

SUPERINTENDENT

Oy, your friend will cost you another hundred a month if I have to talk to her too much, but come on. I'll give you the "grand" tour.

Courtney and Zoey aren't feeling too sure about this place Johnny described earlier. Rent control was important, sure, but this building manager wasn't much of a people person. Luckily, the apartment itself is in decent shape, so Courtney convinces Zoey to go ahead and sign. The super is all too eager to take the girl's check and disappears nearly as quick as he came.

COURTNEY

I wonder if they have pop tart protection plans you can pay extra for?

ZOEY

Oh hush. Pretty sure I saw Santa checking his mail downstairs earlier when we came in. Don't make me tell him what a naughty girl you've been.

COURTNEY

Ew. Gross. You keep the old men to yourself. Just let me know if you see a cute guy moping about.

ZOEY

Oh? Some suitor of yours?

COURTNEY

You could say that, but no. He's just this guy I know. He's real sweet, loves his mama, and is attractive enough, in a farm boy sort of way...

ZOEY

Oh yeah, sounds terrible.

COURTNEY

Girl, don't even get me started. You don't need another Phil in your life. You've had your "fill" of them.

ZOEY

I'm just trying to figure out why you're so interested, is all. Trust me, I'm not looking to be "filled" anytime soon.

COURTNEY

Uh huh. Just steer clear, you hear me? The guy's going through a rough time. You know me, I got a soft spot for the wounded orphan types.

ZOEY

I get it. Damaged merchandise, hands off. Not everyone copes poorly with loss, though, you know. Maybe he's a decent guy.

COURTNEY

Yeah, the world is just brimming over with examples.

ZOEY

You might be surprised, Court. Not all men are out to hurt you. One day, you'll see. You're going to look up and he'll have been right in front you all along.

COURTNEY

Maybe so, Zo, but I'll never get the chance to see him if you won't let me borrow your rose-colored glasses.

ZOEY

Hey, better than the beer goggles I normally catch you wearing.

Zoey makes a face at her friend. Courtney returns the gesture with a rude one brought to you courtesy of a middle finger.

COURTNEY

Home sweet home, huh?

ZOEY

Yeah, I guess it sort of is now...
isn't it?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ANDY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX- LATE AFTERNOON, NEXT DAY

Andy has returned home from the hospital, but you can tell from the way he wanders through his day that his mind is still pretty fixed on that cold room full of transforming furniture and dying mothers. He's definitely got something of a coldness to himself as well, now, so it's unsurprising that he doesn't notice the new neighbor down the hall in the slightest. She notices him, of course... How could she not?

ZOEY

(to herself)

Huh. I wonder if that's the guy
Courtney meant yesterday.

Zoey is in the middle of moving in, so she can't go introduce herself at this exact moment. She does make a note of the man's apartment number, though, that way she doesn't have to feel odd later when she just "happens" to stumble into him only to discover she bumped into the superintendent instead. Courtney had gotten Zoey curious, after all.

It was rare that her friend called a male anything more than fun. That made him an oddity in the girl's eyes and she loved a good oddity. Meanwhile...

ZOEY (CONT'D)

Yeah guys, straight in as you're
coming. Watch the corners. Uh huh.
Yep, just like that.

MOVER #1

Does anyone else smell pop tarts?

MOVER #2

You know, now that you mention it,
I coulda swore I smelled something
in the truck.

ZOEY

Pop tarts? Like, the pastry? Nah,
must just be the neighbors. I don't
eat the things. I learned my lesson
last time.

The movers make it around the tight corners of the hallways and get Zoey's few worldly possessions through the door. She thanks them for all their hard work and offers them cookies for all their hard work. They probably grumble something along the lines of how they'd prefer cash, but they accept the baked goods first and choose to grumble after the fact, as they disappear down the hall.

Zoey finishes unpacking by bringing her goldfish bowl up from the car and just as she closes the door to her new place, the audience hears another door open. Andy looks out of his apartment, swears he heard someone pass by, but thinks nothing of it when he sees no one about.

ANDY

Huh. Must have just been the ghost
of old man Stevens. Do I smell
toaster strudel, though?

END SCENE.