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Encore: A Story of Identity

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ENCORE

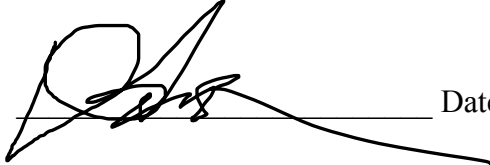
Austin Copps

A Senior Honors Thesis project submitted to the Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

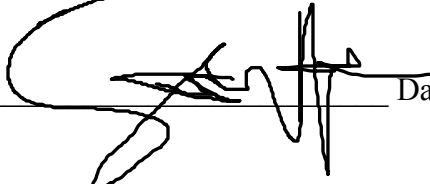
Bachelor of Fine Arts

Belmont University Honors Program

April 13th, 2021

 Date 4/6/21

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 Date 4/6/21

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 Date 4/6/21

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The Honors Program

ENCORE

written by
Austin Copps

FINAL DRAFT

13 April 2021

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FADE IN:

INT. THEATRE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A packed crowd BUZZES. Orchestra TUNES. Room is electric.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Behind closed curtains, WES (25) is center stage. He catches his breath. Taps his fingers. And then...

...Curtains part.

Symphony STRIKES into song. A *cheery holiday SONG* plays.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Stage TRANSFORMS into a magical, SNOWY LANDSCAPE. Pine trees strung with lights. Campfire ROARS. A SKI LIFT carries tourists to distant summit.

Except these props aren't...well, props. It's all real.

EXTRAS dance in head-to-toe snow gear. Some ski. Others snowboard. Others laugh by a fire.

Wes SINGS about casting aside your worries during the holiday season. He's fantastic.

He trots along a path. Bobs between trees. Settles on a log by the fire. A CAMPER passes him a mug. Wes takes an enormous swig. Casts empty mug aside.

INT. THEATRE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Audience is captivated. Lots of "OOH"s and "AHH"s.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Wes hops onto back of a passing snowmobile. He rides along while SINGING about how the troubles of life wait for you until the New Year passes.

Wes slides off snowmobile. Waves to driver. A CHILD gives Wes a present. He places it under a Christmas tree.

A BEAUTIFUL GIRL near tree. Wes peers up. He notices a strand of MISTLETOE. Wes grabs her. With a graceful spin and dip, they kiss.

Mary shrugs, gathers her coat and leaves. Crowd is impatient. Cast closes on Wes. They begin to grab him.

MUSIC FADES into WHITE NOISE. It gets LOUDER.

Wes HYPERVENTILATES.

CUT TO:

INT. PLANE CABIN - DAY

Wes awakens. He bumps SEAT BACK TABLE, covered in papers. An enormous RED BOOK falls to floor.

FEMALE PASSENGER (30) next to Wes picks it up.

FEMALE PASSENGER

Oh no, getting a divorce?

She hands textbook to Wes. He LAUGHS.

WES

I definitely don't have the time for that.

The cover reads: *Dividing Pensions in Divorce*.

WES

I'm a law student.

FEMALE PASSENGER

Studying for the bar?

WES

One more semester...

Wes opens his book to end the conversation.

FEMALE PASSENGER

So you'll be a divorce attorney?

WES

Civil law.

FEMALE PASSENGER

Why divorce law?

WES

My mom does civil law. My grandfather did too.

FEMALE PASSENGER

I just think it's so sad.

WES

Sixty percent of marriages end in divorce. As you said, that's the real world.

FEMALE PASSENGER

Not for me.

She flashes her ring. Wes smiles.

WES

How long have you been married?

FEMALE PASSENGER

Five wonderful years and counting.

WES

Have you heard of the "seven year itch?"

She shakes her head.

WES

Look it up.

PILOT

(on intercom)

Ladies and gentlemen, we've begun our descent into the great city of Providence, Rhode Island. It's a chilly one out there.

Wes scribbles on a SCRAP of PAPER, hands it to her.

PILOT

So stay bundled and have a merry holiday season. Thank you for flying with us today.

WES

Two years. By then, I'll be practicing full time. Call me.

She twists her ring, speechless.

INT. AIRPORT - BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY

Bustling airport. Decorated for Christmas. Wes rides escalator down. A particular WHISTLE rings out.

Wes perks up. An old man waves. Wes' GRANDPA (85), perched on a bench with Wes' GRANDMA (85).

They rise to meet Wes.

GRANDPA
There's the big man on campus!

WES
Hi Grandpa! Hi Grandma!

Wes drops his bags, gives them an enormous hug.

WES
Where's Mom and Katie?

GRANDPA
Katie has practice and your mother
is working.

WES
No surprise there.

GRANDMA
Besides, we needed an excuse to
turn off the Hallmark channel and
get out of the house.

GRANDPA
Can I take your bags, kid?

Wes snatches his bags before Grandpa can grab them.

GRANDMA
Rich, doctor said no heavy
lifting.

GRANDPA
I get light-headed one time and
now they won't let me pick up my
toothbrush.

GRANDMA
Who are you kidding? You barely
would before your accident!

Grandpa waves her off. Wes LAUGHS. He takes Grandma's
arm. The three head for the exit.

EXT. PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND - EVENING

CHRISTMAS MUSIC over the car radio.

Providence is a real beauty in the winter time. Wes and
his grandparents drive through downtown. We see an ICE

RINK, packed with skaters young and old, experienced and amateur.

HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGES pass their car. Roads have all been cleared, but a LIGHT SNOW dusts the ground.

Suburbs roll by. Snow everywhere. FIRE-LIT LAMPS and enormous TREES on either side of street. Picturesque.

EXT. WARNER HOME - EVENING

Car pulls into driveway. Upper, upper middle class. A GOLDEN RETRIEVER greets Wes.

WES

Hey there Max!

Wes pets Max. He grabs a nearby ball and launches it.

GRANDMA

We're so happy you're home, Wes.

Wes smiles. Grandma enters the house.

WES

Mom's not here?

GRANDPA

Should be soon. Ah!

Grandpa points. A BLACK S-CLASS MERCEDES pulls into driveway. Wes SWALLOWS hard. Straightens his shirt.

Mary swings out of car. She's dressed like she means business. Even her walk demands respect. She BARKS into a BLUETOOTH HEADSET.

MARY

No, Patricia. Do you hear what I'm saying? I suggest you walk five feet from your desk into my office and look over my schedule. You will see that meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, not Wednesday.

She struts towards house, passes Wes. Backtracks.

MARY

Patricia, hold on.

Mary takes Wes in for the first time.

MARY

Wesley, can you pick your sister up from her ballet practice? I really need to look over some files in my office. *

Wes looks to his bags. He hasn't even set them down.

MARY

And when you get back, I have a nice surprise for you.

Mary enters house before Wes can respond.

WES

Hi, mom! Welcome home, Wes! We've missed you so much around here!

GRANDPA

She's in the middle of a big case.

WES

You were always able to balance it all.

GRANDPA

Not nearly as well as you think. And your mother has expanded this firm far beyond what I ever could.

WES

Well, I'll be better.

GRANDPA

You better go pick up Katie. I'll take your bags.

He grabs them from Wes. Winks.

GRANDPA

Don't tell your grandmother.

Grandpa shuffles inside. Silence. Wes sighs.

WES

Home sweet home.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - EVENING

Wes lounges in a hallway. Doors open to jazzercise, yoga, improv acting, dance.

Wes opens a group message on his phone. "Hometown Homies."
He texts: "Anyone in town?"

One responds "In Cancun with the fam." Another replies
with "Decided to stay in Pittsburg with my girl this
break." Wes pockets his phone. Bummer.

Ballet class is dismissed. Girls pour out, all CHATTING.

KATIE

Wessie!

Wes perks up. KATIE (17) skips toward him. Her smile
lights up the room. She leaps into a hug.

WES

Katie!

KATIE

I didn't know you were going to
pick me up!

WES

Mom was busy so I thought I'd
surprise you.

KATIE

Mission accomplished.

Wes takes Katie's bag. They stroll down hall.

WES

How was practice?

KATIE

So great! I swear, ballet is all I
want to do in life.

WES

What about being a veterinarian? I
thought that was your dream.

KATIE

Eh. Being a vet was just a
placeholder until I found ballet.

WES

That placeholder definitely makes
a lot more money.

KATIE

Now you sound like mom.

WES

Well, she does have a point.

Katie nudges Wes.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Wes and Katie enter a different hallway. Neither pay attention to where it takes them.

KATIE

So after you graduate, you'll be back here?

WES

If all goes as planned, I'll be practicing full time with mom by the end of next year.

KATIE

Wow. She is going to absolutely love that.

WES

I hope so.

They slow as MUSIC pulls them to open double doors.

A POSTER by entrance. "Providence Theatrical Productions presents: *It's a Wonderful Life: The Musical!*"

KATIE

C'mon!

She leads Wes inside.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Katie slides into a seat in last row. No one else is in audience.

Wes stops in his tracks. He recognizes the auditorium.

FLASHBACK:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT - 7 YEARS AGO

High school Wes is center stage. He PERFORMS a triumphant solo song.

Wes stares into audience. He locks in on something.

Pressure suddenly barrels down on Wes. He feels every eye. They're waiting for him to mess up.

Wes GAGS. The audience GASPS.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Wes squirms in discomfort.

WES
(whispers)
I think this is a closed practice.

Katie SHUSHES him. Motions to sit. He does.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

The CAST rehearses the scene when George Bailey keeps the Bedford Falls crowd from making a run on his bank.

Except it's a musical number. George SINGS to BEDFORD FALLS MOB. The actor is good.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Wes recognizes JASON BURKE (25), a conceited asshole from high school.

FLASHBACK:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT - 7 YEARS AGO

Wes stares into crowd. The room is silent.

Jason GUFFAWS. He doubles over in LAUGHTER, pointing at Wes.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Jason SINGS with outstretched hands.

JASON
Potter wouldn't have let ya keep
it! Can't you see what's happening
here? Potter's selling, and we're--

Jason leaps off table, breaks character.

JASON
Are you kidding me, Henry?

HENRY, a clueless townsman, raises his hands.

HENRY
What'd I do?

JASON
Camille, he did it again. He
looked straight into my eyes.

He speaks out into audience. There sits CAMILLE (25),
badass woman in charge. She rubs her temples.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Katie is surprised. She glances at Wes. His mouth gapes.

FLASHBACK:

INT. STAGE - NIGHT - 7 YEARS AGO

Audience LAUGHS. Wes runs offstage. He passes Camille.
She grabs at his shirt as he passes.

CAMILLE
Wes? Wait!

He sprints out back door. Camille in shock.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Wes glances from Camille to Katie.

WES
(whispers)
We should go.

Katie isn't paying attention. She watches stage.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Camille rises.

CAMILLE

I thought you two figured this out.

HENRY

I don't get the no eye contact thing. We're actors.

JASON

No, you're an extra. I'm the actor, and it's distracting.

A daring girl steps out from offstage. She's dressed as Mary from *It's a Wonderful Life*. Her name is ERICA (24).

ERICA

It's for your own good, Henry. Otherwise, you'll turn to stone!

Cast STIFLES their LAUGHTER.

JASON

Shut up, Erica! I don't remember you being in this scene.

ERICA

You're right. I couldn't help but notice you break character. George Bailey isn't anywhere near this humble.

JASON

And Mary isn't nearly this bitchy.

CAMILLE

Okay, enough please. Let's call it a night.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Katie and Wes make eye contact. She mouths "Wow!"

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Jason notices Wes and Katie.

JASON

Hey, this is a closed rehearsal!

Everyone on stage peers into auditorium.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

WES

Told you.

Wes and Katie head to exit.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Camille recognizes Wes.

CAMILLE

Wes...?

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Wes pivots.

WES

Hey there, Camille.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Camille hops off stage and travels down aisle.

CAMILLE

What're you doing here?

WES

Just picking up Katie. But we're leaving.

Jason leaps from stage.

JASON

Yeah, it being a closed practice and all...

Jason puts his arm around Camille.

CAMILLE

Uh, Wes, you remember my boyfriend Jason.

WES

Of course. Looking good up there.

JASON

Naturally.

WES
You're directing, Camille?

CAMILLE
(nods)
First big production.

WES
And "It's a Wonderful Life", no less.

JASON
Half of Providence comes out to see this one.

CAMILLE
No pressure, right?

WES
(laughs)
Not at all.

JASON
Wes definitely knows a thing or two about pressure.

He gestures around and pretends to GAG.

KATIE
Funny, I seem to remember my brother was the leading man. What were you? Tree number three?

Jason's eyes narrow. Erica LAUGHS.

ERICA
Oh, I like her.

WES
Anyway, didn't mean to interrupt. It was nice to see you all.

Wes takes Katie's hand. Camille loosens herself from Jason. She steps towards Wes.

CAMILLE
Hey... I'm not sure if you still act, but I need a Harry Bailey. My actor dropped the other day, and we open in two weeks.

JASON
Whoah, I thought we decided--

WES

It's my future. Everything back there is high school all over again.

Katie stops at a coat rack, searches.

KATIE

I saw the way you looked at Camille.

WES

Katie, stop it.

Katie puts on her coat, grabs her scarf, and wears it like a headdress.

KATIE

(teasing)

Oh, Wes, would you please be in my play? I miss you dearly!

Wes rips scarf away.

WES

That was years ago. Besides, she's dating Jason.

KATIE

So? He's such an asshole. I couldn't stand there and let him tease you.

WES

Wouldn't be the first time I made a fool out of myself in that auditorium.

KATIE

(shrugs)

Promise me you'll go tomorrow? At least you'll know for sure.

Katie pats his arm and skips out into cold. Wes SIGHS and follows.

INT. WARNER HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Decorations abound. A Christmas RECORD spins. Wes and Grandpa decorate tree while Katie hangs stockings.

GRANDPA

Proud of ya, kid. You're going to do big things at the firm.

Wes smiles. He fidgets with ornament.

GRANDPA

Speaking of which, I think your mother still wants to talk.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Rich? If you're lifting anything in there, I'm gonna--

GRANDPA

--Oh, for Pete's sake, Dolores. I'm just passing the decorations!

Wes peeks down hall. Mary's office door is closed.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dark wood. Hundreds of books. The Christmas spirit skipped this room. Mary types a thousand miles an hour.

KNOCK at door. She straightens her glasses.

MARY

Come in.

Wes enters.

WES

Hey, Mom.

MARY

Hello, Wesley. How was your flight?

WES

Uneventful.

MARY

And school?

WES

Busy.

Mary peers up from her screen. Wes fidgets.

WES

But good.

MARY
Why don't you sit?

WES
You've got enough going on--

MARY
--Oh, please. Sit.

She rises, moves to her bar cart. Pours whiskey into two hatch rock glasses. Offers one to Wes.

WES
Thanks. So, you wanted to see me?

Mary takes a heavy sip, pours more.

MARY
Yes, the surprise.

She lowers into her chair.

MARY
I want you to work as my paralegal while you're home for break.

WES
Really?

MARY
We've got a high profile case, and it's kicking my ass. I need your help, Wesley.

WES
What do you need?

Mary displays handful of papers and folders.

MARY
I'm swamped. I need you to organize and file my legal documentation and correspondence. Maybe take on emails and billing duties. How does that sound?

WES
Uh... Good. Yeah, great.

MARY
What is it?

WES

Is there anything, I don't know...
Bigger than organization? I can do
more than that.

MARY

Hm. If you prove yourself with
these *mundane* tasks, we'll talk
about heavier duties. Can you do
that for me?

WES

Definitely. I--

FLASHBACK:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT - HOURS AGO

Cast observes closely. Camille smiles at him.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mary notices Wes' hesitation.

MARY

Wesley?

Wes snaps out of it.

WES

Sorry. Yes, I can. I just need
to... Cancel some plans.

She notices Wes' glass. Full. She pours it in hers.

MARY

Court date is two weeks from now.
Do exactly as I say, and I promise
you'll have a bigger spot waiting
for you after graduation.

WES

Bigger spot?

MARY

How does your own office sound? I
can make you an attorney at Warner
as soon as you pass your exam and
move back to Providence.

WES
That sounds amazing.

MARY
Then I need your very best,
Wesley. But I know with you, that
goes without saying. Right?

WES
Of course.

Mary sips. She moves around her desk.

MARY
We'll talk more tomorrow.

Wes stands to meet her.

WES
Thanks.

He hugs her. She smiles, doesn't hug back.

MARY
Sure thing. Now go keep Katie and
your grandparents company. They
want to be with you.

Wes exits. He peers back in.

WES
Do you want to help us finish the
decorations? For old time's sake?

MARY
Maybe later.

Wes nods and leaves. She finishes her whiskey.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - DAY

Ancient brick building. JOGGERS and CITIZENS all around,
playing and slipping in snow. Wes and Katie approach.

WES
Don't your toes hurt? I've never
understood how ballerinas wear
those slippers.

KATIE
First of all, they're pointe
shoes, not slippers. They've got
this piece called the shank--

HONK. A shiny Lexus pulls into parking lot. Brand new. Camille waves through windshield.

KATIE

Looks like someone is excited to see you!

WES

Don't you have a rehearsal, tiny dancer?

Katie bounds up icy stairs.

KATIE

I'm done at four, lover boy!

She enters building. Wes waits for Camille.

CAMILLE

You're early!

WES

Dropping off Katie.
(points to car)
That's definitely not your '04 Civic.

CAMILLE

You like?

WES

Is theatre directing a hidden goldmine?

CAMILLE

If so, I haven't found it. A gift from my dad.

They stroll up staircase to doors. Taking their time.

WES

He still runs the bed and breakfast?

CAMILLE

Busier than ever. I've been promoted from front desk to customer service manager.

WES

About time! How's your mom?

CAMILLE

I haven't seen her in a while. She and my dad separated a few months ago.

WES

I'm sorry about that.

CAMILLE

They hadn't been happy for years. My mom was a pain in the ass anyway. As soon as they finalize the split, things will be better.

A loud VROOM. Jason blasts in on a SUZUKI NIJA BIKE. He removes his helmet and stares at Wes and Camille. He REVS his engine as a greeting.

CAMILLE

I'll see you inside.

Wes watches as she glides down steps. He enters.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

CREW and CAST mingle backstage as they prep for rehearsal. Wes struggles to attach his lavalier mic.

He bumps into Erica, who notices his trouble.

ERICA

Here, let me.

She rearranges wiring.

WES

Erica, right?

ERICA

That's me. Oh, shit. Actually, call me Mary Bailey. How embarrassing.

WES

(laughs)
Method actor?

ERICA

Can't you tell? And you're Mr. Harry Bailey, about whom I've heard so much.

Wes observes Camille, in argument with Jason.

WES

Hopefully all good things.

ERICA

Heard you were all the talk back
in high school theatre.

Wes shrugs.

ERICA

And you and Camille dated.

Wes and Camille make eye contact.

Erica pats his chest and rises.

ERICA

All better.

CAMILLE (O.S.)

Okay people, let's get warm! Find
a partner and stretch out.

Cast pairs up. Henry, the berated boy from earlier,
approaches Wes.

HENRY

Hi, um, I'm Henry. Would you like--

JASON

--Sorry Henry. I want to catch up
with an old friend.

Defeated, Henry exercises on his own.

JASON

Hey pal. You remember the rib
stretch?

Wes nods. They grab each other's wrists, take a step back
and lean away, creating a balance.

JASON

Just like old times.

WES

You make it sound like another
life.

JASON

It kinda was, wasn't it?

Jason leans further, pulls Wes back up.

JASON

I was always supporting. Couldn't land a date to save my life. Never first place.

WES

Well, second isn't too bad.

JASON

Second is losing.

Jason shifts his weight, causes Wes to lose his balance.

JASON

But hey, I'm a different man now. Lead role in the city winter production. Dating the prettiest girl in town.

WES

You got life all figured out.

JASON

How about you?

They shift their weight to move positions.

WES

I'm on my way.

JASON

What more could you ask for?

CAMILLE (O.S.)

Let's switch it up. Beat downs!

JASON

You first.

Wes lays on floor, exposes his side. Jason cups his hands and thumps along Wes' ribs.

JASON

So if you're on your way, what's with the pit stop here?

WES

Camille asked, remember?

Camille glances over. Jason smiles, rubs Wes kindly.

JASON

So this is for Camille?

She looks away. Jason hits harder. Wes winces.

WES
I used to love acting.

JASON
You and the theatre had a
pretty... messy breakup.

WES
Might be different this time.

JASON
If you play your part and stay in
line, this'll be a blast. Got it?

He gives one final blow to Wes' ribcage.

WES
Ow!

Jason backs away from Wes.

WES
My turn.

JASON
Oh don't worry. I'm all stretched.

He strolls away and joins a vocal exercise. Wes grabs his side. He joins group on opposite end.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - EVENING

Katie leans against wall. Wes exits, holds an ice pack to his side. Katie joins him.

KATIE
Sheesh! Didn't realize theatre was
so intense.

WES
I didn't either.

Wes pulls out his car keys. BEEP.

INT. WARNER HOME - NIGHT

Every room is decorated. HOLIDAY MUSIC spins on a record.

INT. DINING ROOM

Warner family at a grand dinner table. Beautiful meal.

WES

Dinner is great, grandma!

KATIE

No wonder grandpa looks well fed.

She gives Grandpa a playful nudge.

GRANDPA

I'm planning for my hibernation.
It starts right after on the
living room couch.

GRANDMA

And always conveniently before I
ask for help with the dishes.

Everyone laughs, except Mary. She studies her iPad.

GRANDPA

So, anything exciting today?

KATIE

You're looking at the new first
solo in our spring recital!*

GRANDMA

How wonderful!

GRANDPA

What'd you do to the other girl?

GRANDMA

Rich!

Grandpa CHUCKLES as Katie sticks out her tongue.

GRANDPA

How about you, kid?

Wes pushes food around. Doesn't hear.

GRANDMA

Wesley?

Wes snaps back to attention.

WES

Hm? Oh, nothing worth reporting.

KATIE

Wes was busy at rehearsal, too.

Wes kicks her shin.

KATIE

Ow!

Mary peers over her glasses.

MARY

Rehearsal? What for?

Wes gives Katie death stare.

WES

Some dumb play.

MARY

Wesley, you don't have time to play pretend.

WES

I know. I decided to quit anyway.

KATIE

You can't quit! What about Camille?

WES

Katie!

MARY

Camille Fairmont?

WES

Yeah, she's the director.

GRANDPA

Isn't that the sweet theatre gal you dated back in high school?

GRANDMA

Oh, I liked her.

KATIE

I just so happen to know that she still has feelings for Wes.

WES

Katie, would you shut it?

GRANDPA

Someone's turning red!

KATIE
 (to Grandpa)
 Wes has the emotional awareness of
 a brick.

Wes chucks a breadstick at Katie's face, makes impact.
 Katie scoops a spoonful of mashed potatoes.

MARY
 That's enough.

Katie stops. Mary rises.

MARY
 Wesley, help me with dessert.

She exits into kitchen. Wes SIGHS.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Wes enters. Mary slips on oven mitts.

WES
 Mom, I can--

MARY
 --Grab the ice cream, would you?

Wes opens freezer and does so. Mary removes a pumpkin pie
 from oven, cuts into it.

WES
 Mom, I promise I was going to
 quit. I know you need me to focus--

MARY
 --I don't want you to quit.

She dishes a slice of pie onto plates.

WES
 What?

MARY
 The play would be excellent for
 you. You can act, sing, dance, and
 catch up with some old friends.
 Like old times! Give each plate a
 scoop.

Wes follows her order.

WES

But what about the firm work?

MARY

There's still plenty for you. Join me in my office after dessert and I'll have you start on some paperwork.

She places a soft hand on his shoulder.

MARY

But Wesley, you have only one semester left before the rest of your life begins. You may never have an opportunity to act again.

WES

But acting isn't my... Thing.

MARY

And you should catch up with Camille and her family. I always liked them. Would you do that for me, Wesley?

WES

Sure, Mom.

Mary pulls Wes into a quick, awkward hug.

She breaks away and grabs dessert plates.

MARY

Bring these in.

Wes grabs the plates, exits. Mary watches ice cream melt over the hot pie. She smirks, exits.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Wes studies paperwork at Mary's desk. Clock: 12:48 AM. Wes rubs his eyes and SIGHS.

THEATRE SCREENPLAY sits on another chair, untouched.

INT. AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Wes scans over his script, WHISPERING his lines.

He adjusts his lavalier mic, tangles it. A passing RED-HEADED CREW MEMBER quickly fixes mic, carries on.

WES

Thanks!

He observes stage, transformed into a train station.
Scene where Harry arrives at Bedford Falls and is greeted
by his brother George.

JASON

You ready, pal?

Jason claps Wes' back. He stands tall in full costume.

WES

Sure.

JASON

Don't be nervous.

WES

I'm not.

JASON

Hey, no one can blame you. It's
hard to get back in the saddle.

WES

I'm not nervous.

JASON

Of course you're not. Why should
you be? Everyone's so confident in
you. Especially Camille.

Wes glances at Camille in front row, giving direction.

JASON

Just don't think about last time,
and you'll be fine. Break a leg.

Jason moves onto stage.

WES

I'm not nervous. Dick.

Fingers tap. He waits for his cue.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Jason talks to Henry, who plays Uncle Billy. Train
WHISTLES.

JASON

There she blows! You know what the three most exciting sounds in the world are?

HENRY

Breakfast is served, lunch is served--

JASON

--No, no. Anchor chains, plane motors, and train whistles.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Wes inhales, closes his eyes. SUE (23), a cheerful actor playing Harry's wife, waits next to him.

SUE

Hi. Ready?

Wes nods. She takes his arm and they go.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Jason and Henry wait at train's entrance. Wes hops out, slips, and face plants. Fantastic.

JASON

Whoah, professor!

CAMILLE

Are you hurt, Wes?

WES

(mumbles)
Just my pride.

CAMILLE

Okay, let's take it from Wes and Sue's entrance.

Onstage cast resets. Wes waits.

FLASHBACK:

INT. STAGE - NIGHT - 7 YEARS AGO

Teenaged Wes HYPERVENTILATES. LAUGHTER from crowd. Jason teases. Camille watches in horror. Wes' fingers tap.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. STAGE - DAY

JASON (O.S.)

I said, there's the professor!

SUE

Wes, go!

Sue shoves him right into Jason's arms.

JASON

Well if it isn't All American
Bailey!

WES

And ol' George... Uh, ol'...

Everyone waits. Wes can't remember. Jason SIGHS.

JASON

Jesus, we might actually need a
prompter on this set now.

CAMILLE

Cool it, Jason. Let's take five.

House lights come up and cast disperses. Camille
approaches Wes.

WES

I'm sorry, Camille.

CAMILLE

It's okay. Do you feel prepared
for this scene?

WES

Honestly, I haven't had time to
study lines the past few days.

CAMILLE

Ah, busy man. Some things don't
change.

WES

What's that supposed to mean?

CAMILLE

I just know this isn't your best,
Wes. When you commit to something,
(MORE)

CAMILLE (CONT'D)
 you give it your all. You always
 have.

WES
 So what're you saying?

CAMILLE
 If your commitments lie elsewhere,
 I don't want this play to distract
 you.

WES
 I want to be here, okay?

Awkward silence stretches on forever, finally broken by
 Jason's SNICKERING.

CAMILLE
 How about we just move on and call
 it a day on your scenes? Give you
 some extra time to study.

WES
 Sure.

CAMILLE
 I'll see you tomorrow, Wes. OKAY!
 Scene eight in sixty!

She glances toward Wes, who's already gone.

EXT. WARNER LAW - EVENING

Old building decorated with wreaths and lights. Closed
 bakery on bottom, Warner Law on top. Lights on.

INT. WARNER LAW - OFFICE - EVENING

Wes works in an empty office. He SCRIBBLES on paperwork,
 then TYPES on his laptop.

MURMURING VOICES. Wes listens.

INT. WARNER LAW - MARY'S OFFICE - EVENING

Wes approaches ajar door: "Mary Warner". He peeks in.

Mary converses with a well-kept older woman. She wears a
 black suit, silver jewelry, and a frightening smile. This
 is TIFFANY FAIRMONT (53), Camille's mother.

Wes observes room. Two glasses of whiskey poured. Mary looks over paperwork while Tiffany talks.

INT. WARNER LAW - HALL - EVENING

Wes CLEARS his throat. Voices STOP. Wes KNOCKS.

WES

Mom?

MARY

Wesley, just a few minutes. We'll be right out.

Wes shuts door and exits.

INT. WARNER LAW - FOYER - EVENING

On a small couch, Wes reads from his script. Mary and Tiffany enter. Wes rises.

MARY

Wesley, you remember--

WES

--Mrs. Fairmont! Nice to see you.

MARY

Ms. Duvalski now, Wesley.

TIFFANY

Oh Mary, it's alright. My, you've grown! When would I have last seen you?

WES

Going on seven years, at least.

TIFFANY

Time flies. I understand you're working as your mother's paralegal?

WES

Yes ma'am. I'll be working as a lawyer full-time after I graduate.

TIFFANY

How wonderful! Mary, you must be so proud.

Mary nods and pats Wes' shoulder. He smiles.

TIFFANY

Your presence on my case gives me even greater reassurance.

WES

Your case?

MARY

Warner Law represents Ms. Duvalski. We're here to guarantee Ms. Duvalski secures every asset that is rightfully hers.

WES

Is... Mr. Fairmont withholding marital property?

TIFFANY

Oh, this is a conversation for another time. I've heard his name far to many times today!

Tiffany laughs, notices Wes' script.

TIFFANY

How goes my daughter's play?

WES

Camille is an amazing director.

TIFFANY

How is she doing?

WES

Fine, I think. She's dating a... Friend from high school. Very driven dude. Her car is really nice.

TIFFANY

Her car?

WES

A brand new Lexus.

Mary and Tiffany exchange a knowing look.

TIFFANY

How kind of her father.

MARY

In the midst of his divorce settlement. How responsible.

WES

Well, I'm not sure how new it is.

TIFFANY

You're an impressive young man, Wesley. I hope I can count on your acute observations more often. Goodnight!

She exits.

WES

She was very kind.

MARY

What did you expect?

WES

I don't know. She wasn't exactly pleasant back in high school. And the way Camille talked about her...

MARY

Divorce is a polarizing event. Most think it brings out the worst in people. I believe it brings out the best. Clients think of themselves as individuals instead of half of a whole. Ms. Duvalski is the happiest she's ever been.

Mary grabs her coat and purse.

MARY

The new car you mentioned is concerning.

WES

Yeah, I don't understand why.

MARY

Because our client and the defendant already agreed to the proportionate division of marital property. That includes financial assets.

WES

You think Mr. Fairmont is withholding?

MARY

I know it isn't your job, but stay vigilant. It would mean a lot to Ms. Duvalski. And to me.

WES

Uh... Sure Mom. Anything you need.

INT. WES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Small and cozy. Decorated with film posters. Law textbooks organized on a desk. Wes lays on his bed, studies his theatre script. Clock: 2:41 AM.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - DAY

Wes and Katie enter.

KATIE

Remember, Grandpa and Grandma want us home tonight for *A Christmas Story*.

WES

Bold of you to assume I have other plans.

KATIE

Just trying to make you feel popular!

WES

See you later, tiny dancer.

Katie exits. Wes removes his coat. Erica enters.

ERICA

Wes! Wesley! You should use your full name more often. It's badass.

WES

I think you might be the first person to ever say that.

ERICA

Next compliment'll cost ya.

WES

Damn, I think I forgot my wallet!

They stroll down hall towards auditorium.

ERICA

I've worked with Camille on four or five productions. Trust me, I know her. If an actor isn't bringing it, she'll let them know. Big time. But she was different with you.

WES

Why do you think that is?

ERICA

She knows what you're capable of on stage, and she hates to watch you rob yourself.

WES

I have a lot of hats to wear right now. It's hard to give her everything she wants.

ERICA

Is that why you two broke up?

Wes winces.

ERICA

You know she's the first female to ever direct the annual Providence holiday play?

WES

Are you serious?

ERICA

If she knocks it outta the park, it might get her a real job.

WES

What do you mean?

Erica glances around, then leans toward Wes.

ERICA

Can you keep a secret?

WES

Better than you'd think.

ERICA

Well, I haven't told Camille, but my aunt is a Broadway producer. She's kind of a big deal. She's in town for the holidays and I

(MORE)

ERICA (CONT'D)
convinced her to come to the show
and meet Camille.

WES
Erica, that's huge!

ERICA
So we as her actors need to bust
our balls to be the very best. You
got it in you, Wes.

Wes smiles. Erica skips ahead of him.

ERICA
You owe me five cents!

WES
Put it on my tab!

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Wes works on his lavalier mic. Jason enters, grabs mic.

JASON
How do you feel today, pal?

WES
Fantastic.

JASON
I look forward to whatever you
have in store for us today.

He fastens the mic. Wes WINCES. Jason exits.

WES
You won't be disappointed.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Wes and Sue wait behind train's entrance.

JASON (O.S.)
Anchor chains, plane motors, and
train whistles.

Wes taps his fingers, exhales. Tapping stops.

JASON (O.S.)
Here's the professor now!

Wes emerges, immersed in character. Nerves gone.

WES JASON
Well if it isn't George- Ol' professor Phi-Beta-
geographic-explorer-Bailey! Kappa...

Wes embraces Jason, grabs Henry.

WES
Uncle Billy, you haven't changed a
bit.

HENRY
Nobody ever changes here! You know
that.

Wes fires on all cylinders. He's electric. Last night's
stumbling fool is long gone.

WES
Oh! George, Uncle Billy, I want
you to meet Ruth. Ruth Deacon.

SUE
Ruth Deacon Bailey if you don't
mind!

Jason's smile drops.

WES
Well I told you I had a surprise.
Here she is! Meet the wife!

Wes, now somber, places his hand on Jason's shoulder.

WES
Now George, about that job. Ruth
spoke out of turn. I never said
I'd take it. You've been holding
the bag here for four years. I
know how hard it's been.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Camille's eyes glued to stage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Erica pumps her fists in encouragement.

INT. STAGE - DAY

WES

With Pop gone and all... You've done more than anyone could ever have asked of you. I won't let you down George. I promise.

Wes tears up. Jason is shocked. But his expression lingers. Wes looks around and smiles. He's at home again.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Rehearsal over, cast and crew disperse.

WES

See ya, Henry. Bye Hope!

CAMILLE (O.S.)

Wes!

Wes stops. Camille approaches.

CAMILLE

That was exactly what I knew you were capable of.

WES

I can't take the credit. You inspired me to give my all.

CAMILLE

Well, I'm proud of you. For a moment, I was watching little high school Wes.

WES

Hopefully with much clearer skin.

Camille laughs, slides away.

WES

Hey, would you want to grab coffee sometime?

Camille considers. Her head hangs.

CAMILLE

I would love to, but I think that might upset Jason.

WES

Not even for L'Artisan?

Camille hesitates.

CAMILLE
Your number the same?

Wes nods, flashes his cracked phone.

WES
Same phone too.

She laughs.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - NIGHT

Camille and Jason pace down the icy steps.

CAMILLE
What do you want for dinner? Take
out again?

JASON
Sure.

CAMILLE
Dine in somewhere?

JASON
I don't care.

CAMILLE
Okay. What's wrong, Jason?

JASON
You and Wes have been talking a
lot lately.

CAMILLE
I talk to all my actors.

JASON
Do you flirt with all of them too?

CAMILLE
Why have you been so weird the
past few days?

JASON
Is it so terribly wrong to get
worked up when your girlfriend's
ex suddenly waltzes back into your
life and causes trouble?

CAMILLE

He's not causing trouble! Maybe you would know that if you were nice to him.

JASON

Look, just stop talking to him. Please? It's distracting.

CAMILLE

You're not the only one on stage.

JASON

But I am the most important and I need to focus. Otherwise, I won't be very good, which would look bad for you. I don't want that.

Jason pulls Camille in, tries to kiss her.

JASON

Let's go back to my place. We can calm down, maybe have some fun--

Camille untangles herself from Jason's embrace.

CAMILLE

--Unbelievable.

JASON

Forget dinner. I'll text you tomorrow.

Jason hops on his motorcycle and speeds off.

Camille's eyes water. A BEAT. She grabs her phone, finds Wes' number. She texts:

"Coffee sounds great. Pick me up from my dad's B&B tomorrow morning @8?"

Wes responds:

"Perfect. I knew you'd come around ;)"

Camille smiles, pockets her phone.

EXT. BOB'S BED AND BREAKFAST - DAY

Peaceful farmhouse-style building. Wreaths in every window. Lights hang from the shingled rooftop. Sign reads "Bob's Bed & Breakfast - serving since 1987."

Wes pulls up in his beat up, RED 1980 CHEVY SILVERADO. He parks in a full parking lot.

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST - FOYER

Dark wooden walls and floors. A huge Christmas tree in middle. GUESTS by the fireplace. OTHERS carry luggage upstairs. Wes enters.

He spots Camille at front desk. All smiles as she converses with a OLDER GUEST. Wes approaches.

BOB

There he is! I'd recognize that strong face anywhere.

Wes hugged by an enormous teddy bear of a man. This is BOB FAIRMONT (56), Camille's father.

WES

Hey Mr. Fairmont! Far too flattering, as always.

BOB

Mr. Fairmont was my father. How've you been, son?

WES

Great! Staying busy.

BOB

I'm so glad you and Camille are working together again.

WES

She's killing it, as always.

BOB

She gets it from her old man! How's law? It's law, right?

WES

I'm almost done with school and then I'll be working full time.

BOB

Well, if ya hurry it up, maybe you can help me out!

He LAUGHS and gives Wes a playful nudge.

WES

Things not going too well?

BOB

Eh, nothing I can't handle. Long as Tiffany and your mother play nice!

WES

I'm sorry--

BOB

--Nothing I hold against you, son.

WES

Things seem to be great otherwise.

BOB

Business is better than ever! I hired a few more employees, updated all the rooms. To top it off, we're adding a whopping twenty new suites in the spring.

WES

That's wonderful, Mr. Fairmont! If you don't mind me asking, why has the B and B boomed so suddenly?

BOB

Well, I suppose in part I have to--

CAMILLE

--Dad! You're gonna scare Wes away with all your chitchat.

BOB

One of my many talents!

CAMILLE

You ready to go, Wes?

WES

Great seeing you again, Bob.

BOB

You too, son. Stop by again soon!
(kisses Camille's
cheek)
Bye, sweetie. Love you!

CAMILLE

Love you too, dad.

Wes opens door for Camille.

INT. L'ARTISAN COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Cozy cafe, every booth and table OCCUPIED. Wes and Camille relax in a booth, coffee in hand.

Camille sips. Wes' fingers tap.

WES

The B and B is kicking ass.

CAMILLE

If it keeps going like this, I think my dad could retire in the next few years.

WES

Why has business increased so much?

CAMILLE

Exposure, maybe? My mom helped with our marketing campaign.

WES

Sounds like she helped a lot.

CAMILLE

That's the most helpful thing she's ever done for this family.

WES

I'm sorry. Your Dad seems to be in high spirits.

CAMILLE

He puts on a good face.

WES

You both do.

Camille furrows her brow.

WES

Just that you have a lot going on. The play, B and B, your parent's separation. Jason can't be much help. Sorry...too far?

CAMILLE

I appreciate your honesty.

Wes smiles. He twirls a spoon in his coffee.

CAMILLE

And the jealousy is cute.

WES

I'm not--

CAMILLE

--It's okay. You're not a huge fan of my boyfriend, huh?

WES

I admire his...acting. Well, but even that...

Camille LAUGHS.

CAMILLE

You're not the only one.

WES

I'm going to continue under the assumption that you still appreciate my honesty. Why are you with him?

CAMILLE

He's passionate.

WES

About what, his bike? His looks?

CAMILLE

Jason finds the one thing he wants and doesn't stop until he has it. He's driven.

WES

He's vengeful. And he doesn't treat you right.

CAMILLE

Well, it's nice to be wanted.

WES

You're settling.

CAMILLE

Alright, easy on the honesty--

WES

--You deserve better, Camille.

CAMILLE

I deserved better from you too,
Wes.

He leans back.

CAMILLE

I--we were happy when our dreams
and aspirations were intertwined.
You had a place in mine. And I had
a place in yours. But that
changed. You decided law was your
dream, and there wasn't room for
anything else. No place for me.
Obviously that's what you wanted,
and that's fine. I've moved on.
But don't tell me what I do and
don't deserve.

She slumps.

WES

I'm sorry, Camille. I'm not proud
of who I was to you. I messed up
our relationship. I messed up our
senior year musical, too. I was
ashamed, so I tried to distance
myself from all of it. Acting,
friends, the theatre...and you.

Camille stares.

WES

But being in this play...I don't
know. It kinda feels like
something clicked. Something I
haven't felt in a long time. So
I'm sorry for everything. You're
an amazing person and you deserve
the very best.

Wes' coffee spills. He notices his trembling hand.

WES

Wow. Please excuse the word
vomiting. I think that's the first
time I've ever said any of that.

CAMILLE

It's okay.

Both take long sips.

CAMILLE

I'm glad you're enjoying the play.
I always hoped you'd pursue
acting.

WES

Just this once. I'm going to be a
lawyer.

CAMILLE

Don't you love acting?

WES

Sure, but I can love a lot of
things.

CAMILLE

Do you love law?

WES

It's what I'm meant to be.

CAMILLE

You're not meant to be anything in
life, Wes. Do you think I was
meant to be a director? Yet here I
am. Because it's what I love.
Nothing else matters.

WES

My mom would disagree.

CAMILLE

You don't think Warner Law is her
love? Maybe she's convinced
herself that it's yours too.

Wes deep in thought.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WARNER HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TV and Christmas lights. Fireplace flickers. Family
watches "A Christmas Story."

KATIE

Hot chocolate ready?

WES

I'll check.

Wes leaps off couch, exits into kitchen.

INT. WARNER HOME - KITCHEN

Wes sips hot chocolate from pot. Mary enters.

MARY

So, Katie tells me you went on a date with Camille today.

WES

Traitor.

MARY

She's just honest. Family business was never meant for her.

WES

Probably a good thing. And it wasn't a date. Just catching up.

MARY

What'd you two do?

WES

I picked her up at her dad's--

MARY

--You were there?

WES

Yes.

MARY

Did you see Mr. Fairmont?

WES

Bob? Yeah, we talked for a bit.

Wes ladles hot chocolate into five mugs. He looks up. Mary waits for him.

MARY

Did you discover anything interesting as to Mr. Fairmont's financial wellbeing?

WES

From what I saw, the business is doing very well. Tons of guests. He even talked about expanding, which is awesome!

MARY

Wonderful, yes. Anything relating to Ms. Duvalski?

WES

Camille mentioned her marketing campaign. Said it was a big help.

Mary takes a step closer.

MARY

Wesley, if the opportunity arises, do you think you could get Camille, or Mr. Fairmont for that matter, to repeat that?

WES

Probably--

MARY

--But with you recording this time?

WES

Mom, isn't recording illegal--

MARY

It's not. As long as the recording isn't made with criminal or tortious intent.

WES

Oh.

MARY

You want to help in every way possible, right?

Wes ponders. LAUGHTER in living room.

WES

This isn't law.

MARY

If you want to win in the courtroom, you've got to outsmart and outmaneuver your opponent.

WES

Funny. Wasn't ever taught that in school.

MARY

The real lessons come from experience, Wesley.

WES

As long as it doesn't hurt
Camille. She's a good person.

MARY

I promise.

WES

So what do you want from me?

MARY

If the opportunity arises, coax
Camille or Mr. Fairmont into a
discussion on their financial
assets, specifically pertaining to
Ms. Duvalski. Mr. Fairmont isn't
truthful with the divisions of his
assets.

WES

And then what?

MARY

You don't have to worry about
that.

WES

And yet--

MARY

--Wesley! Can you do that, or is
this all too much to ask of you?

WES

I'll do my best.

MARY

That isn't good enough, Wesley.
You know that. Promise me.

WES

I promise I'll get you what you
need.

MARY

We need.

WES

We need.

Good. You'd better hurry along.
Your drinks are cooling.

Defeated and in a corner, Wes grabs the mugs and flees.

INT. BED AND BREAKFAST - CAMILLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Camille in bed. Snow falls outside. She scrolls through old photos on her phone. She and Wes. Younger. Happier.

RING. Jason calls. She ignores, turns off her lamp.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Wes waits backstage, fully costumed. He rehearses lines. Jason is onstage. Crew members assemble his costume.

Camille sits next to Wes.

CAMILLE
Everything alright?

WES
Weird night at home.

CAMILLE
Sorry about that.

She hugs him. He reciprocates. Awkward at first, but they both remember the comfort of the other's embrace.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Jason watches. He advances to intervene, but a WARDROBE GIRL turns him around and throws on his blazer.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Wes and Camille break up the hug.

CAMILLE
You know what'll help? A kick ass rehearsal. C'mon.

She grabs his hand, rises. He smiles and follows.

CAMILLE
Warm ups, everyone!

Wes and Camille partner up. Jason motions for Henry.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - HALL - EVENING

After rehearsal. Camille converses with group of ACTORS. Jason exits in a hurry and grabs Camille's arm.

JASON

We need to talk.

They exit. Wes and Katie watch. They look to each other.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - EVENING

A BUNDLED-UP MOM walks down long staircase, slips, but regains her footing. Jason and Camille come outside.

CAMILLE

What?

JASON

I called you at least ten times yesterday.

CAMILLE

I was busy.

JASON

With your new boyfriend?

Camille doesn't respond. Jason LAUGHS.

JASON

He take you out to eat, huh?
What'd, you sleep with him too?

CAMILLE

That's it. We're done, Jason.

She steps down. Jason grabs her arm. She yanks back.

JASON

Don't walk away from me!

WES (O.S.)

Hey!

They turn. Wes and Katie stand by entrance.

WES

Get away from her, Jason.

JASON

There he is. Mr. Big Man himself.
Stealing all the leads from me in
(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)
high school wasn't enough, so you
had to go and steal my girl too?

WES
She was barely yours to begin
with. Maybe if you thought about
anyone other than yourself, you'd
know that.

Jason bounds up toward him.

JASON
You sure are a lot of talk. Where
has all this been the past week?

WES
Under the surface. Barely.
Frankly, I just can't stand you
anymore.

KATIE
That makes two of us.

JASON
Shut up, bitch!

Wes gets in Jason's face.

WES
Say that again. You'll regret it.

JASON
Oh yeah? You gonna do something?

Jason pushes Wes hard. He stumbles.

WES
I already live in your head rent
free. I think that makes you a
fangirl.

Jason throws a punch. Wes dodges and Jason slips. He
tumbles down the staircase and lands with a THUD.

Jason HOWLS in pain, clutches his leg. Camille CRIES out.

WES
Shit.

KATIE
Break a leg, George Bailey.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - LATER

EMT OFFICERS load Jason onto ambulance, which quickly departs. Camille sits, head buried in her hands.

Katie anxious to leave. Wes signals for her to wait. He sits next to Camille.

WES

I'm sorry.

CAMILLE

Opening night is a week away. This was it, and it's ruined. The Theatre Committee won't give me a chance like this again.

WES

Do you think Jason could play it on cru--

--Camille whips around.

WES

I guess not.

CAMILLE

My lead's gone, and I had no understudy. Goodnight, Wes.

She stands. Wes looks to Katie, who urges him on.

Wes rises.

WES

I'll play George.

CAMILLE

Who plays your part?

WES

Henry easily could.

CAMILLE

There's no way you could learn it all. I mean, the monologues, blocking, choreography, songs--

WES

--I already know half of the lines. I know how much this play means to you. To Erica, Henry, Sue, all the rest... and for me, too.

Camille ponders.

CAMILLE
It'll take a lot of work. I'm
talking unfathomable.

WES
The show must go on, right?

CAMILLE
Can you get here an hour early
tomorrow?

Wes nods.

CAMILLE
Get some rest. I'm going to go and
see how he's doing.

WES
I thought you two just, you
know...

CAMILLE
We did. But right now, he doesn't
have anyone else.

Camille leaves. Wes stares off. Rubs his head, EXHALES.

KATIE
Well, this is exciting.

INT. WES' TRUCK - NIGHT

Wes and Katie both stunned. Wes grips the steering wheel.

KATIE
You okay?

WES
Fine.

He returns his attention to the snow-dusted road.

INT. WES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wes at his desk, littered with paper. He reads his
script, silently mouths every word.

A Newton's Cradle TICKS in the corner. Clock: 2:35 AM.

Wes looks up from his reading. Notices a PICTURE FRAME. It shows Wes graduating high school, smiling with Mary.

Wes watches the metallic marbles. Back and forth.

Wes is lost. The TICKING gets LOUDER.

Wesley SCREAMS. He punches the device. It SHATTERS on the floor. He buries his face in his hands.

A KNOCK at the door.

GRANDPA (O.S.)

Hey kid, mind if I come in?

Wes kicks the broken device into the corner.

WES

Sure.

Grandpa enters.

WES

What're you doing up, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Just relieving myself. Sounds like you are too.

WES

Sorry.

Grandpa waves it off. He sits on Wes' bed.

GRANDPA

What's going on, kid?

WES

Just a long day.

GRANDPA

I think you're accustomed to those by this point.

WES

I'm being pulled by two very different things. I'm in way too deep.

GRANDPA

You're a Warner. Never been one to half-ass anything.

WES

But that means I'm going to inevitably disappoint someone.

GRANDPA

Kid, unless you're Superman, you're never going to make everyone happy. And even he has enemies. The only person you should care about disappointing is yourself.

WES

I've already done that.

GRANDPA

Where the heart goes, you should always follow. It won't ever steer you wrong.

WES

Sounds mushy coming from a great man of law like you.

GRANDPA

Mushy or not, that mentality gave me a life worth envy. Successful career, amazing wife, and a beautiful family. What more could I ask for?

WES

I don't know what my heart wants.

GRANDPA

Turn off your big brain and listen. Just listen.

WES

I'll try.

He pats Wes' leg and stands.

GRANDPA

Now get some sleep. Dream of sugar plums, fairies, and all that jazz.

Wes LAUGHS. Grandpa exits.

Wes turns off overhead light, rolls into bed. He flips on his bedside lamp and continues to read his script.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Cluttered and dark. Jason lays on his couch, watches TV. His leg in a red and green cast. KNOCK at door.

JASON

Come in.

Camille enters, carrying a large BAG. Jason returns to the screen.

JASON

Hey.

CAMILLE

How's the leg?

JASON

Fantastic. Thought I'd wear this cast for the hell of it.

CAMILLE

Ha. How long?

JASON

At least eight weeks.

CAMILLE

I'm sorry.

Camille sets bag on kitchen counter.

CAMILLE

I took the liberty of clearing your locker at the theatre.

JASON

I imagine everyone must be pretty upset. Terrible.

CAMILLE

What?

JASON

Production shut down, right?

CAMILLE

No, we're still on track.

JASON

You don't have a lead!

CAMILLE

I do, actually.

JASON

Who?

Camille heads for the door.

JASON

No. No, not him. Of all people?

CAMILLE

He volunteered.

JASON

Of course he did. I should have known this was his plan. The bastard pushed me down those stairs. When I get out--

CAMILLE

--Oh please, Jason. Don't be a dick. You busted your ass all by yourself.

JASON

You better watch out, Camille. Wes has an agenda. I know it. And you're getting sucked right in.

CAMILLE

Okay, I'm done here.

JASON

You wait! He's going to disappoint you and everyone else, like he did all those years ago. You'll see!

Camille exits. Jason punches couch. WINCES in pain.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Camille enters. Wes stretches, oblivious. She watches, INHALES and EXHALES deeply. She nods, reassuring herself.

CAMILLE

You work on the lines?

WES

Barely slept.

CAMILLE

Makes two of us. How are you feeling?

WES
Nervous, but that's to be
expected. You?

CAMILLE
Same. But also... resolute? Like
this is how it's supposed to be.

Wes LAUGHS.

CAMILLE
Is that weird?

WES
Kind of. But I'm glad to hear you
feel that way. There's no reason
this week has to be hell on earth.

Camille strides to a speaker, plugs in her phone.

CAMILLE
Let's have some fun, shall we?

CHRISTMAS MUSIC blasts. Wes smiles. Camille helps him up.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS:

--Camille demonstrates a dance. Wes follows her lead.

--They read from their scripts. She gives him direction.
He does it again, but bigger.

--They SING together.

--She explains his blocking.

--He tries it, she approaches. They do movement together.

--They flirt. She gives him a friendly push, he chases
her around.

--Both all smiles. They're lost in each other and in the
material.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

Wes and Camille rest on edge of stage.

CAMILLE
Cast and crew should be here any
minute. Do you think you could
come over to the B and B after
rehearsal? Just so we can work
(MORE)

CAMILLE (CONT'D)
 some more. There's a hot meal in
 the deal for you.

WES
 Dinner and a show? Count me in.

ERICA (O.S.)
 An extra rehearsal? Where was my
 invite?

They look up. Erica enters along with Henry and other
 ACTORS and CREW MEMBERS. Camille stands.

CAMILLE
 Don't worry, Erica. I've got
 plenty to keep you busy.

ERICA
 Aw, so Jason's gone? I'm going to
 miss him dearly.

CAMILLE
 I know. What will you do without
 your bestest friend in the whole
 wide world?

Erica and Wes LAUGH. Camille exits stage.

CAMILLE (O.S.)
 Okay, everyone! Let's have a quick
 meeting onstage in five. Oh, and
 Henry? You're our new Harry.

HENRY (O.S.)
 Wait, what?

Erica helps Wes to his feet.

ERICA
 How terrified are you on a scale
 of I can do this in my sleep to
 the will is signed and sealed?

WES
 Definitely the latter.

ERICA
 Good. Means you understand the
 gravity of the situation.

She takes a step toward him.

ERICA

Listen, I don't think I need to say this--

WES

--But you will anyway--

ERICA

--But I will anyway. I know you've got a million things racing through your head. And I hate to make it a million and one, but my aunt--

WES

--I know. Big time Broadway producer interested in Camille.

ERICA

Let me finish, hot shot. Last time I talked to her, she mentioned this super exclusive director apprenticeship program she's on the board for. The program was full, but a student dropped.

Wes glances towards Camille as she CONVERSES with Henry.

WES

Life-changing opportunity for Camille that rests almost squarely on my shoulders.

ERICA

Have fun, man! Honest to God, I'm happy Jason's gone. You're much more the leading man type. It's always been in there.

She pokes his chest and exits.

ERICA

Sorry. So cheesy!

Wes spins and CLAPS.

WES

Let's do this.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - DUSK

A CHOIR SINGS at bottom of the staircase. A CROWD has gathered to watch. Wes and Camille exit the building.

CAMILLE

What do you want for dinner?

WES

I'll eat anything put in front of me right now without hesitation.

CAMILLE

Me too. You know how to get there.

WES

Yep. See you in a few.

Camille enters her car and PEELS off. Wes watches the choir perform. He dials his phone.

WES

Hi Mom.

MARY (V.O.)

Hey Wesley.

WES

Wanted to let you know I'm going to Camille's tonight for a while. We've got some major work to get done for the play.

MARY (V.O.)

Remember what we talked about.

WES

I know.

He ends the call. He watches the choir for a moment longer, enters his car and drives away.

INT. BOB'S BED AND BREAKFAST - ENTERTAINMENT ROOM - NIGHT

Inviting warm room, connected to the empty lobby. Besides the CRACKLING FIRE, it's quiet. Wes and Camille lounge close together, empty dishes on nearby table.

WES

I felt good about today's rehearsal.

CAMILLE

Honestly, I was terrified when Jason got hurt and you volunteered. I thought this production was over.

WES

I'm sure you would've found a way.

CAMILLE

Maybe. This production has been such an uphill battle the entire time. Jason was hard to work with, the theatre committee questioned a lot of my decisions, my parents and their whole thing. It's been overwhelming.

WES

And yet here you are. Only a few days from opening night. You never gave up.

CAMILLE

I've got to knock this out of the park. Otherwise, I don't think I'll ever get out of here.

WES

Where do you want to go?

CAMILLE

Broadway.

WES

You're an incredible director. Broadway needs new faces. Why not you?

CAMILLE

We'll see if the critics think so as well. Turning this production into a big musical... not everyone agrees with my direction.

WES

You'll prove them wrong. I promise you, your dreams aren't as far off as you think.

They glance down. His hand on her knee. Closer than before. He pulls his hand away.

WES

Sorry.

CAMILLE

Don't be. How are you feeling?

WES

Better, after today. I wish I could focus only on the play.

CAMILLE

Your mom have you working?

WES

Yeah.

CAMILLE

What on?

WES

Tasks for the firm's latest case. It's important to her, so I can't mess it up.

CAMILLE

Is it important to you?

WES

Not for the same reasons.

CAMILLE

Well, I hope there's something in it for you.

WES

There is. At least, that's what she promised.

Camille leans in.

CAMILLE

Wes, I hope you know you can tell me anything. About your mom, about work, about the play. All of it. I'm here for you.

Wes smiles nervously. His fingers tap.

WES

Thank you. Where's your bathroom again?

CAMILLE

All the way down the hall on the right side.

WES

I'll be right back.

He leaps up. Camille traces where his hand was.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Wes strolls down the corridor, trying not to draw attention. At the turn for the bathroom, Wes notices an open door. He peeks in.

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Wes enters the small room, completely filled by Bob's desk and mounds of paperwork. He creeps to the desk.

Wes sifts through the paperwork. A door CREAKS out in the hall. He stops for a moment, then continues.

Wes' gaze locks on a MANILLA FOLDER labeled: ANNUAL REVENUE. He opens it. A GRAPH, charting the business' income.

The graph skyrockets over a couple of months. A LABEL reads: *Implementation of new advertising strategy.*

It indicates what Mary hypothesized: Tiffany's marketing strategy directly correlates with the revenue increase.

Wes removes his PHONE and aims it at the paperwork. He hesitates and shakes his head in disappointment.

Notices a FRAME with a picture of Bob, Tiffany, and Camille. He grabs it and smiles.

DING! Wes glances at a text from Mary: *I'm trusting you.*

WES

Shit...

BOB (O.S.)

Wes?

Wes spins around. Bob enters, dressed for bed.

WES

Mr. Fairmont-- I mean, Bob! I'm so sorry, I was looking for the bathroom and got a little lost.

BOB

It's okay, son.

(points to picture)

I've been meaning to get rid of that. But every time I try, I can't seem to do it.

With his hand behind his back, Wes presses a RED BUTTON on his phone. It records the conversation.

WES

Why?

BOB

Still hanging onto the past maybe. It's easy to get lost in the memories of what was. But eventually, you have to wake up and accept reality. It's best for us. Best for Camille.

WES

Camille seems to be much happier.

BOB

I guess I'm a softie. She and her mother... they butt heads all the time. Besides, she has an excuse to hang here at the B & B all she wants.

WES

She's always loved it here.

BOB

It's her home, just as it's mine.

He studies the room, admiring the mess.

BOB

It wasn't always pretty, but this place has always been my dream. And it feels like the universe finally cut me some slack.

WES

Do you think Tiffany's marketing campaign contributed to that? Camille told me it played a big part.

Wes winces. He's afraid that was terribly obvious. Bob doesn't notice.

BOB

I think it's only fair to say so. I didn't know how to set any of that stuff up, so Tiffany helped modernize our advertising.

WES

Do you think she contributed to your recent growth in business?

BOB

Well, according to our surveys, about seventy-five percent of guests heard about our place through the online ads. So yeah, I guess she did. As much as she hated this place. She never believed in it like Camille and I did.

WES

I'm glad you two have this place to share.

BOB

How about you and your mom? Do you share the whole law thing?

Wes remembers the recording. He turns off his phone.

WES

I'd like to think so.

BOB

Every parent wants to share what they love with their children. I was lucky enough to have Camille stick around and build this place up. But I know this isn't her dream.

WES

You're not afraid for her?

BOB

It's my job to be a little afraid. But I'm excited for her more than anything. She's only going to be happy if she pursues her dream.

Wes nods, pondering over Bob's words.

WES

Well, I guess I should get back to Camille.

BOB

Don't you need to use the bathroom?

WES
Oh, right! That way?

Bob nods and Wes exits.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Wes heads for the bathroom. He glances down at his phone. He SIGHS as he observes the hall. He's hesitant.

INT. WARNER HOUSE - MARY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Mary at her desk and Wes across, holding his phone.

BOB (V.O.)
Well, according to our surveys, about seventy-five percent of guests heard about our place through the online ads. So yeah, I guess she did. As much as she hated this place.

The recording ends. Wes glances at Mary. A thin smile spreads across her face.

MARY
Well done, Wesley.

Wes gives a half smile, but it's obvious he feels no joy.

Mary writes in her planner.

MARY
That recording should seal the deal. I'll talk to Ms. Duvalski today. We'll schedule a meeting with Mr. Fairmont and his representation as soon as possible.

WES
To revise the division of financial assets?

MARY
Yes.

WES
And your revision... It won't be too extreme, will it?

Mary stops writing.

MARY

What do you mean, Wesley?

WES

Just... Well, Mr. Fairmont is a good man. And I know Ms. Duvalski's marketing helped a lot, but he's the one who's poured his heart and soul into the business.

MARY

Ms. Duvalski is only in pursuit of what's rightfully hers.

WES

I know, I just hope it's fair.

Mary twirls the pen.

MARY

It will be. We're not going to destroy Mr. Fairmont's work.

Wes LAUGHS nervously.

WES

I hope not. That would be evil.

MARY

Careful, Wesley. There's no such thing as good and evil in our profession. Absolutes do not exist. It's our job to navigate the grays of every situation.

Wes TAPS his fingers against the chair's arm rest.

WES

I guess so.
(checks WATCH)
I should get going.

Wes rises and heads for the door.

MARY

Wesley?

WES

Yes?

MARY

I'm proud of you.

A BEAT. Wes shuts the door behind him.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - DAY

Wes meets Camille in the icy parking lot. They stroll to the entrance.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jason watches the two enter from his motorcycle. He grabs his CRUTCHES and struggles to dismount the bike.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - DAY

Jason enters. He sinks into a seat in the back row, encased in darkness.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wes, in his 40s era costume, center stage. The rest of the CAST populate the stage. Camille paces around him as she ponders a technical movement.

WES

So that's when you want me to remove my hat?

CAMILLE

Exactly. When the lights come up, I want you here. As you sing your verse, throw it stage right.

She demonstrates the movement. Wes nods.

CAMILLE

Okay? Let's run it back from that beat.

Cast resets. MUSIC begins and Wes jumps into scene. Between his blocking, Wes notices Camille answer a phone call. She retreats backstage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The CAST disperses after the song. Wes enters, searching for Camille. He spots her near a WARDROBE CART.

CAMILLE

What? She can't do that, Dad! I thought you said Mom agreed...

She listens. Wes watches.

CAMILLE

No, no Dad. You have to fight it. There's no way the judge will allow it. Keep me updated, okay? I love you. Bye.

Camille hangs up. She notices Wes.

WES

What's wrong?

CAMILLE

My Dad just found out my Mom and her lawyer backed out on their agreement.

WES

Their agreement on asset division?

CAMILLE

Apparently, my Mom has evidence supporting her new proposal.

WES

Which is?

CAMILLE

She claims the B & B would've failed without her business, so she deserves financial majority.

WES

Did he say how much?

CAMILLE

Seventy five percent of profit. Which is such bullshit!

She sits, face buried in her hands. Wes searches for an answer. He kneels.

WES

I'm so sorry, Camille.

He wants to comfort her, but doesn't know how. Anger flashes across his face as he thinks of his mother's betrayal.

WES

Let's call it lunch. We'll reset and get back into it.

Camille nods and exits. Wes lingers behind.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Cast and crew exit the auditorium. Jason has disappeared from his spot in the back row.

Wes enters the auditorium, removes his phone, and dials.

He paces, his phone to his ear.

MARY (V.O.)

Hello?

WES

Seventy five percent?

MARY

News travels fast.

WES

I just talked with Camille. She said we're coming for everything now?

MARY (V.O.)

Seventy five percent of the business gross is not everything, Wesley.

WES

I thought you said this was going to be fair?

MARY (V.O.)

This is the textbook definition of fair. It's our job to fight for our clients, Wesley. It would be no different if I represented Mr. Fairmont.

WES

These aren't just clients, Mom! I know these people. Camille means a lot to me. I didn't give up Bob's financial status so you could turn around and shaft them.

Jason is revealed, listening from around the corner. His mouth hangs open, pleasantly shocked.

MARY (V.O.)

This process does not involve her.

WES

You know that's not true. I... I can't do this, Mom. I can't help you with this anymore. It's too close.

MARY (V.O.)

Grow up, Wesley. This is a part of the job. You think this is the hardest it gets? If a case as straightforward as this turns you upside down, then there's a world of hurt coming for you.

Wes leans against the wall. He rubs his temple.

MARY (V.O.)

Now we have a meeting with Mr. Fairmont and his representation tomorrow morning. I expect you there, no excuses. Remember your priorities, Wesley.

Mary hangs up. Wes sits in silence.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - AFTERNOON

Camille rests on a bench, an unopened LUNCH beside her. She stares out into the parking lot.

JASON (O.S.)

Hey.

Jason is at the staircase, propped up by his crutches.

CAMILLE

What're you doing here?

JASON

Thought I'd stop by. I still care for this production and everyone involved, you know.

CAMILLE

Mmhmm.

JASON

Well, it's really you I still care about.

Camille SCOFFS.

JASON

Which is why you should know something about Wes.

CAMILLE

Oh God, not this again.

JASON

Do you know who represents your mom in the divorce?

CAMILLE

No. Don't really care.

JASON

You might now. Mary Warner does.

Camille ponders. She realizes and LAUGHS.

CAMILLE

No way.

JASON

That's not even the best part. Wes, the angel who couldn't ever do any wrong, is working hand-in-hand with his mom.

Camille tries to hide her reaction.

CAMILLE

He's going to be a lawyer. I'm sure he has to help his mom.

JASON

Oh trust me, he did more than that. I just heard him say he was the one who gave her your dad's financial information. Did you keep your eye on him when he was with you last night? It all makes sense.

CAMILLE

Oh my god, have you been stalking us?

JASON

This isn't about me! Would you stop defending him? He played you like a record, and you had no idea.

CAMILLE
No. You're lying.

JASON
Find out for yourself.

Camille stares at Jason, terrified.

INT. THEATRE AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Wes stretches on stage, all by himself. Camille enters.

WES
Hey, so I was thinking in scene
twelve when I--

CAMILLE
--Wes, can I ask you a question?

She approaches the stage.

WES
Sure.

CAMILLE
What do you do when you aren't
with me, working on this play?

WES
You mean in the approximately two
remaining hours after rehearsal?

He waits for a laugh. Camille remains straight faced.

WES
Okay. Well, I mostly spend it with
my family, or helping my mom with
law stuff.

CAMILLE
What kind of law stuff?

WES
Paralegal activities. I've told
you this before.

Jason enters. He settles in the shadows.

CAMILLE
Your mom work on any big cases
recently?

WES

I don't know, I guess. Camille,
what's going on?

A BEAT. Camille studies Wes, scared of the answer. The remaining cast and crew return from lunch.

CAMILLE

Have you been working with your
mom on the case between my
parents?

Wes searches for an answer. He SIGHS.

WES

I-- I have. But barely anything,
Camille. I didn't know about this
case until I got home for break.

CAMILLE

Did you give your mom private
information about my dad's
finances?

WES

Who's been telling you--

CAMILLE

--Just answer the question, Wes!

The cast and crew watch awkwardly from the wings.

WES

None of it was illegally obtained.
My mother asked me to find
information that would help with
the case.

Camille is stunned.

CAMILLE

I can't believe it.

WES

Camille, can we talk about this
somewhere more private?

He takes a gentle step toward her. She steps back.

CAMILLE

No. I don't want to hear you make
excuses for this.

WES

Camille, you have to know I didn't want to do it! But what choice did I have? It was my mom, my family's firm.

CAMILLE

So what? My dad, our business, me? I don't mean anything to you?

WES

No, Camille! I got caught up, and before I could do anything, it was too late.

Camille shakes her head in disgust.

CAMILLE

We're about to lose everything. Everything. And it's all because of you. I should've left you out of my life, Wes.

She marches toward the back of the auditorium.

WES

Camille, wait! I'm sorry!

CAMILLE

You should leave, Wes. I don't want a backstabber on my set. Even if they're the lead.

WES

Oh, come on Camille! We have two days until opening night. Who in the world would be your lead?

Jason suddenly emerges from the shadows.

JASON

I will.

ERICA

Okay, what the hell is going on?

WES

What is he doing here?

(to Jason)

You're in a full leg cast!

JASON

I'll wear pants over it.

WES

You can barely move!

JASON

I can too. Watch this!

He drops the crutches and attempts to walk. He hobbles a few steps, then gives up. Camille buries her face in her hands and GROANS.

WES

Camille, let's talk about this.
Please.

Camille faces Wes.

CAMILLE

I'm done, Wes. This time, stay out
of my life.

(to Jason)

You're the lead again. But don't
you *dare* think this changes
anything between you and I. You're
still an asshole.

ERICA

(whispers)

And this play is going to shit.

(to Wes)

Aren't you going to do something?

Jason notices Wes' empty glare. He winks at Wes.

ERICA

Wes?

Erica's voice FADES. Wes' vision grows foggy. His breath QUICKENS. He's going to be sick.

Wes jumps up and exits through the wing. Camille notices the commotion. She observes her cast and crew.

CAMILLE

Alright people, let's get back
into it. The show must go on.

INT. WES' TRUCK - SUNSET

Wes drives. His gaze is set, his knuckles white on the steering wheel. He's barely there.

His truck swerves into oncoming traffic. The car ahead of him lays on the HORN. Wes doesn't notice.

A longer, louder HORN. Wes comes to and swerves away at the last minute. His breath is UNSTEADY.

INT. WARNER HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wes enters. The rest of his family sits on the couch, watching TV. Mary is disengaged, TYPING on her computer.

KATIE

Hi Wessie!

GRANDPA

How goes it, kid?

WES

Fine.... fine.

GRANDMA

Would you like to join us? We're only a few minutes in.

WES

Thanks, but I'm okay. I think I'll turn in for the night.

They notice something's up. Mary lowers her glasses.

KATIE

Everything alright?

WES

I said I'm fine.

Wes exits up the stairs.

MARY (O.S.)

Wesley, remember we have our meeting tomorrow morning at ten.

Wes stops for a moment. He fumes, but collects himself.

WES

I know.

MARY (O.S.)

There's some paperwork on your desk. Review please!

He continues up toward his room.

INT. WARNER LAW - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Mary and Wes wait at a wide table, both dressed well.
Mary glances at a clock: 9:58 AM.

MARY

They should be here any minute.
Once Mr. Fairmont and his lawyer,
Mr. Rockmere, arrive, we'll
finalize our revision for the
division of assets.

WES

And what do you want me to do?

MARY

We'll record the conversation.
Write down anything of note.

WES

Got it.

Wes peers down at his notepad. A long BEAT.

MARY

Still angry about yesterday?

Wes doesn't answer.

MARY

Why don't you just say. I don't
have the ability to read your
mind.

WES

Camille found out about my
involvement with the case. And now
I'm out of the play.

MARY

Ah. Perhaps that's for the best.

Wes SCOFFS and shifts in his seat. Mary watches.

MARY

Wes, I have no doubt you find me
harsh and inconsiderate. But I
hope you know everything I do is
to ensure your success. You're the
future of this firm. That's always
been the plan. I won't let you
squander it when you're this
close. You'll appreciate my
actions one day.

Tiffany, Bob, and MR. ROCKMERE enter.

MARY

Hello Mr. Fairmont. Gary, how are you?

MR. ROCKMERE

Depends on this conversation.

MARY

Then let's not waste any time.

Mary gestures for the group to sit. Bob and Mr. Rockmere settle on one side, Mary and Tiffany on the other. Wes sits at the head of the table, right in the middle.

MARY

Now, I assume we're all aware of the most recent changes to the division of assets.

MR. ROCKMERE

Aware, yes. Satisfied, no.

MARY

I wouldn't expect you or your client to be satisfied with the results. But based on recent evidence, you know it's more than fair.

MR. ROCKMERE

Ah yes, and the evidence. Remind me, how was it obtained? I heard whispers of a certain paralegal of yours snooping around Mr. Fairmont's B & B?

Wes glances at Bob, who stares at him. Wes' gaze immediately shifts to the floor.

MARY

That paralegal was looking for the restroom and happened to record an exchange that happened to contain vital information. The evidence is completely legal, and I promise you it will hold up in the courtroom.

MR. ROCKMERE

Sounds like a lot of horse shit to me. I think my client has the
(MORE)

MR. ROCKMERE (CONT'D)
right to observe and review your
evidence.

MARY
Certainly. I'll have it sent your
way immediately.

Mr. Rockmere leans back and folds his arms. He SIGHS.

MR. ROCKMERE
So... This is really how you want
this to go?

Mary smiles. Bob and Tiffany are silent.

MR. ROCKMERE
You continue to surprise me, Ms.
Warner.

MARY
I trust you and your client have
agreed to the proposed division,
if all moves ahead accordingly
tomorrow morning.

MR. ROCKMERE
I see no other option.

Mr. Rockmere rises. Everyone else follows suit. He
extends a courteous hand to Mary.

MR. ROCKMERE
I would say it's been a pleasure.

MARY
You know the game, Mr. Rockmere.

MR. ROCKMERE
See you tomorrow, Ms. Warner.
(to Wes)
Mr. Warner.

He exits the room, followed by Bob.

TIFFANY
Did you see the look on their
faces? That was wonderful, Mary.
And Wesley, I don't know how you
did it, but great job. You're a
Warner, through and through.

For the first time, that statement hurts Wes.

Mary and Tiffany talk as they review documents. Wes watches the door, then exits.

INT. WARNER LAW - FOYER

Wes enters, taking a moment to collect his BREATH.

BOB (O.S.)
How does it feel, son?

Bob slips on his jacket and scarf in the office doorway.

WES
Bob, I'm so--

BOB
--Mr. Fairmont. Since it seems only formalities remain.

WES
I'm sorry. I had no idea they were going to come for you like this.

BOB
Don't sell yourself short, Wes. You're a smart man. And fully your own. This decision is yours, and yours only.

Bob takes a step toward Wes.

BOB
Is this who you are? If so, carry on. You're on the fast track to a career gift wrapped for you. But what will you have to give up for it?

Wes tries to speak, but he has no answer for Bob.

BOB
Camille saw something different. But hey, do what you need to do. You're learning from the best.

He exits. Wes is alone in the empty, dark foyer.

INT. AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

Everyone hard at work, preparing for tomorrow's opening night. Crew members piece together PAMPHLETS. The cast runs a scene on stage.

Jason is back, and more haughty than ever. He SINGS a musical number with Erica. The BACKGROUND CAST dances. He's a half step behind, hobbling around.

Jason notices his delay and stops.

JASON

Okay, stop. Stop.

The cast does. They glance between him and Camille. She slumps in a front row seat.

CAMILLE

What, Jason?

JASON

It's the dancing.

CAMILLE

What about it?

JASON

I'm a solid step behind everyone else. It's embarrassing.

Camille rubs her temples in frustration.

CAMILLE

Okay, would you like it if everyone else slowed down and completely catered to you?

JASON

That would be perfect.

CAMILLE

I was joking. Everyone else, carry on. You all are perfect. Jason, keep with the tempo of the dance. You don't have to do all the moves.

JASON

So what, just settle?

CAMILLE

(under her breath)
That's all this production is at this point.

JASON

I'm telling you Camille, if we--

CAMILLE

--Jason! I don't want to hear anymore. I gave you a solution. Adjust accordingly, and let's continue.

Jason bites his tongue and resets.

CAMILLE

From the top. And one, two, three.

The cast performs the number again. Jason has adjusted, but he pouts like a child. Camille rolls her eyes.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The cast and crew exit the auditorium. Camille greets them near the entrance.

CAMILLE

Good job, everyone! You all are amazing. Tomorrow night, our hard work pays off. Have a good night! Get some sleep.

Jason passes by. He stops to speak with Camille. She waves him on. He SIGHS and exits. Erica approaches.

CAMILLE

You feel good about tomorrow?

ERICA

I've felt better, to be honest. How about you?

CAMILLE

Ready to get it over with.

ERICA

I'm sorry, Camille. It shouldn't be like that. Boys.

Erica shakes her head. Camille LAUGHS and nods.

CAMILLE

Boys.

ERICA

All the same, I kind of wish Wes were still here. Everyone seemed happier and more excited with him.

Camille doesn't answer. Erica adjusts her bag.

ERICA

Whatever happens tomorrow, I want you to know you killed it. Honest to God, you're the best director I've ever worked with.

CAMILLE

Thank you, Erica.

ERICA

You're going to do big things, Camille. I guarantee it.

Camille smiles. They hug.

ERICA

Alright, enough of this mushy shit. I needed to be in a hot bath like an hour ago.

Erica exits. Camille is alone.

She observes the auditorium, taking it all in.

She grabs a nearby pamphlet: *PPAC presents: It's a Wonderful Life: The Musical*.

Directed by Camille Fairmont.

Camille SIGHS and relaxes her shoulders. She exits.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - EVENING

Wes' truck pulls into the parking lot. He stares at the large building. He ponders whether or not to go inside.

INT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - HALL

Wes enters and approaches a nearby doorway. He peers inside. Katie dances with her fellow classmates.

She spins on one toe, unbelievably graceful. The dance ends. She LAUGHS with her friends.

Wes strolls away. Katie catches a glimpse of his face through the door's window.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Wes peeks in. Completely empty auditorium, so he enters. He notices the pamphlet and opens one.

It reads: *George Bailey... ~~Wesley Warner...~~ Jason Burke.*

Wes replaces the pamphlet and sits.

FLASHBACK:

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Wes onstage. He faces a packed auditorium. His breathing is SHAKY. He sweats. Jason and the cast watch from the stage. Camille covers her mouth, observing from the wing.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Katie enters the room, carrying her gym bag.

KATIE

What're you doing in here?

WES

Just thinking.

KATIE

You've been doing a lot of that recently. Mom told me Camille fired you.

WES

Probably deserved it. I messed up, Katie. I always mess up.

KATIE

That's not true.

WES

You know, when you volunteered me for this play, I was scared shitless.

(bites his tongue)

Sorry.

KATIE

I won't tell.

WES

I was terrified because this is where I screwed myself over back in high school. You remember.

KATIE

Yeah, when you, uh...

Katie makes a hurling gesture. Wes CHUCKLES.

WES

I don't think I ever told anyone why that happened.

Wes glances at Katie. She waits for him to continue.

WES

Senior year, all of my friends had no idea what they wanted to do. But not me. I was going to act. I was so sure. I saved up and applied to countless acting programs across the country.

KATIE

I never knew that.

WES

I didn't tell anyone. Not you, not grandma or grandpa, definitely not Mom. She thought the theatre was just a hobby. Nothing real.

Wes rubs his hands together, deep in thought.

WES

I applied to Fordham, Emerson, DePaul, UCLA, you name it. But NYU was the dream. I wanted it so bad, I even invited an NYU scout to come see my senior musical.

KATIE

A scout was there?

Wes nods. He observes the stage as he remembers.

FLASHBACK:

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Teenaged Wes waits in the wing right off stage. He watches the scene in front of him.

WES (V.O.)

Everything was going great. After months of preparation, everyone's
(MORE)

WES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
hard work had paid off. Smooth
sailing.

Wes looks to Camille, watching from the opposite wing. He winks and blows a kiss. She smiles and catches the kiss.

Wes peers into the crowd. He notices the NYU SCOUT enter. He settles in a reserved front row seat. Wes smiles.

WES (V.O.)
The dean was there. That added a
lot of pressure, but I was excited
more than anything.

A moment after, Mary enters and sits a few rows behind. She's distracted. Wes is shocked.

WES (V.O.)
But then Mom showed up. She'd
never been to one of my shows
before.

Wes visibly nervous. His fingers fidget.

WES (V.O.)
It freaked me out. Suddenly, I
felt ashamed of being there. I
guess because I knew how much she
thought I was wasting my time.

Wes enters the stage, ready to perform. But he can't remember his line. The other CAST MEMBERS try to play it off, but all eyes on Wes.

WES (V.O.)
I felt naked up there. Like
everyone could see I was a fraud.
It came out of nowhere.

Wes PUKES.

Everyone in the auditorium GASPS. Wes peers into the crowd. Mary is stunned, but not concerned. She shrugs, as if she knew this was going to happen.

Wes turns toward the exit, but slips on his vomit. He hits the stage hard. Louder GASPS.

Wes, pure red and in tears, sprints out.

Camille tries to stop him, but can't.

WES (V.O.)

I got offstage as quick as I could. They brought on the understudy and cleaned up, but I had already ruined everything.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Wes leans forward in his chair. Katie rubs his back.

WES

I don't even know what happened with the dean. If I couldn't even keep it together for a high school play, there was no way I could act for a living. So, I said to hell with it, and gave into law. Like I was supposed to.

KATIE

I'm so sorry. If I had known, I wouldn't have ever volunteered you when Camille asked.

WES

It wasn't your fault. I could've said no, but I didn't for some reason. Thought maybe I could redeem myself. Stupid, really. This was never meant for me. I guess Mom knew best.

KATIE

Mom's the smartest person I know, but she's got issues of her own. It was wrong of her to ruin your dream. But do you think she knew acting was your dream?

Wes begins to answer, but stops.

KATIE

Mom isn't going to stop until you make her. You have to stand up for what you believe and what you want. You'll do the right thing, Wessie. I know you will.

Wes ponders. He glances back at Katie.

WES

You know, you're pretty smart.

KATIE

Oh, I know.

She exits. Wes stares at the stage and follows.

INT. WARNER HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wes watches a movie with his family. He glances at Mary, her attention divided between the TV and her phone.

He glances at his phone. He opens his text messages with Camille, prepared to type. He decides not to.

He opens his audio files instead. One recording.

INT. BOB'S BED AND BREAKFAST - ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Camille sits with Bob, who reads through a document. She opens her phone and glances at the texts with Wes. She contemplates texting him, but turns her phone off.

INT. COURTROOM - HALL - DAY

Wes and Mary enter, dressed in suits. They stroll down the long hallway.

MARY

I'm need you to forward the audio admission from Bob to me. We're going to get this over with as little pain as possible.

Wes notices a CRYING WOMAN in a nearby chair. She notices him and stares back. Wes avoids her gaze.

He glances at his NOTEBOOK, which reads: *DUVALSKI V FAIRMONT*. He stops.

WES

I can't do this, Mom.

Mary stops.

MARY

What?

WES

I'm not going to be a part of this. I'm too close to the defendant. It's not fair.

MARY

Don't be ridiculous, Wesley. Your loyalty lies with Warner Law, and therefore with Ms. Duvalski. Now, we are going into that room and finishing this. Then you can move on, since you're so disturbed.

WES

No.

MARY

Wesley, I'm not going to--

WES

--I've already decided, Mom. I'm done with this. I'm done with law. This was never my thing, and I should've told you.

Mary approaches Wes.

MARY

What're you talking about? Law is all you've pursued for the past six years.

WES

Because you wanted it. I didn't know what I wanted, but I do now.

MARY

Ah. Acting, right?

WES

Maybe.

MARY

You're going to give up an annual sixty thousand dollar salary, full time job right out of grad school for the hope of making enough money to make next month's rent.

WES

I don't know, but I'm going to figure it out. I'm taking charge of my own life, and it starts with this case. I'm not ruining Bob.

(MORE)

WES (CONT'D)

The money you and Ms. Duvalski are trying to take is rightfully his.

Mary shakes her head and SCOFFS.

MARY

You're right, maybe you are too close. Just send me the audio file and leave.

WES

I deleted it.

MARY

I really hope I misheard that.

WES

It's gone, Mom. I deleted it last night. If the money really belongs to Ms. Duvalski, the information already exists. I'm sure you'll find a way.

MARY

Wesley Samuel Warner, you--

WES

--I'm sorry, Mom, but my mind is set. I've cared far too long about what others think of me. But the only opinion that matters is my own. And I'm going to do something I'm proud of.

He turns to leave, then faces Mary.

WES

You should do the same. You're a good, fair person, Mom. This case doesn't reflect your character. Why do you want it so bad?

MARY

How do you think we live in that nice house? How do I afford sending you to one of the top law schools in the country? Or Katie's private school? All I have ever done is provide. I'm so sorry that I can't be like your grandfather, always so perfect in everything he did. This is how I make ends meet.

Her voice CRACKS. Her vulnerability surprises Wes.

WES

I... Didn't mean it like that.
Grandpa isn't why I wanted to be a
lawyer. You were.

Wes heads the opposite direction.

Mary watches, on the brink of tears. She regains her
posture, then heads for the courtroom.

INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Jason rests on the couch, leg propped up. He stares into
a nearby mirror, gently shaving his face.

A KNOCK at the door. Jason struggles to answer it. It's
Wes, hands stuffed into his pockets.

WES

Hey.

JASON

Hey. What're you doing here?

WES

I wanted to stop by and wish you
luck tonight. I've always thought
of you as the leading man type,
even when others didn't.

Jason taken aback.

JASON

Thank you.
(awkward beat)
So, about the other day...

WES

What about it?

JASON

I was the one who told Camille
about the case. I just wanted to
say I'm sorry. I was shitty.

WES

So was I. And honestly, I'm glad
you did. I needed a wake-up call.

JASON

You're not on the case anymore?

Wes shakes his head.

JASON

Ah. So what now?

WES

Not sure. But I wanted to make things right with some people first, including you.

JASON

Camille too?

WES

Have to figure out how. I messed up big time.

JASON

Turns out I didn't know her as well as I thought I did. But I do know one thing. She cares for you a lot. I think the truth would go a long way.

Wes nods and extends his hand. Jason takes it.

WES

Break a--
(realizes)
Sorry.

JASON

Beat you too it.

Wes exits. Jason smiles and hobbles back to the couch.

INT. COURTROOM - HALL - AFTERNOON

Mary and Tiffany wait on a bench. She watches as a MOTHER exits the courtroom and greets her family. She embraces her two YOUNG CHILDREN.

Mary winces, grabbing at the folds of her blazer.

EXT. PROVIDENCE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER - SUNSET

Light snow as the sun dips below the horizon. A steady stream of THEATRE-GOERS enter the building.

INT. AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Henry peeks through the curtains. The auditorium fills. CHATTER grows louder.

HENRY

Wow.

The cast and crew gather, all holding hands.

CAMILLE

Alright everyone, here we are. I'm so proud of everyone in this circle. It's been an honor leading you all, through all the ups and downs. I hope you've all had as much fun as I have. I love you all.

They all embrace. Camille sticks her hand in the middle. Everyone else follows suit.

CAMILLE

Buffalo gals won't you come out tonight and...

CAST & CREW

... We'll dance by the light of the moon!

Everyone CHEERS and disperses. Camille remains, glancing over her clipboard.

WES (O.S.)

Hey, Camille.

Camille whips around. Wes waits near the entrance. Other cast and crew members notice his arrival.

CAMILLE

Wes... What're you doing here?

WES

I'm here to apologize.

CAMILLE

You've already done that.

WES

I ditched the case. I scrapped all the evidence, too.

Shocked, Camille shifts, but doesn't speak.

WES

I messed up, Camille. I was so scared to turn away my Mom and the future she laid out for me. I lost sight of what was right. I was

(MORE)

WES (CONT'D)
blind to the good right in front
of me. This play, the friends I
made, and you.

Wes steps toward Camille.

WES
I forgot what we had, Camille.
What we still have. And I didn't
know how amazing it was until it
was gone. So, I probably don't
deserve it, but I want this back.
I want you back. Because I...

ERICA
Love you!

Cast and crew smile.

WES
Thank you, Erica.

ERICA
Sorry! You're supposed to be off
book.

WES
Well, I didn't want to steal your
moment.

LAUGHTER from the cast and crew.

WES
But yeah, what she said. I love
you, Camille.

Camille flashes a revealing smile. She notices the
onlooking group. A TECH CREW MEMBER enters.

TECH CREW MEMBER
We're on in five!

CAMILLE
Let's talk about this later.
Everyone ready?

Cast and crew nod in agreement. Jason steps forward.

JASON
Actually, I have something to say.

Erica rolls her eyes. A few audible GROANS.

CAMILLE

Yes, Jason?

Jason shuffles around to face Wes.

JASON

I've been an asshole. It took a broken leg and example of humility for me to realize that. So I'm sorry.

ERICA

Whoah.

JASON

(to Wes)
I want you to play George.

WES

What?

CAMILLE

Jason, I--

JASON

--Don't worry, I've already decided. For the benefit of the show and everyone here, I think it's best if you're the lead.

WES

What about you?

JASON

Well, I thought I could play Harry.

(to Henry)
If it's alright with you, Henry.

HENRY

Please do. Uncle Billy is much more my speed.

Wes and Jason look to Camille.

JASON

What do you think, Camille?

Camille ponders for a moment. She smiles.

CAMILLE

Let's get this show on the road.

Everyone CHEERS and kicks into high gear. Electric.

Wes and Jason shake hands again. The costume designer whisks Wes away and hands him his costume.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wes, now fully costumed, attaches his lav mic on his own. Erica approaches.

ERICA

The last minute comeback could not be cliché.

Wes LAUGHS and they embrace.

WES

I know you love it.

ERICA

Couldn't be happier to have you back. That being said, Jason scored some major points in my book.

WES

I hope I'm scoring well.

Erica peeks through the curtain. Wes does the same.

ERICA

You'll have the high score if you impress my aunt.

Wes locates Erica's relative, the BROADWAY PRODUCER.

She sits in the front row, reading over the pamphlet.

WES

The offer still stands for Camille?

Erica nods. Wes EXHALES and salutes her. She pats him.

ERICA

Thatta boy. Until scene twelve!

Erica exits. Wes peers into the packed auditorium again. He notices his family enter: Katie, Grandpa, and Grandma.

He smiles. Then he spots Mary. She follows the three and sits at the end of the aisle. No phone in sight.

Wes' BREATHING quickens. He steadies himself. Suddenly, someone pulls him from behind.

INT. BACKSTAGE - WING - CONTINUOUS

Camille pulls Wes in close. Wes is pleasantly surprised.

CAMILLE

Did you mean what you said back there?

WES

Of course. Every word.

CAMILLE

You love me?

Wes pulls her in tighter.

WES

Especially that part.

Camille kisses him. A long beat. She pulls away.

CAMILLE

I love you too, Wes Warner.

Wes smiles and peers up. Camille follows his gaze.

CAMILLE

What?

WES

I'm imagining mistletoe above us.

Camille LAUGHS and Wes kisses her again.

WES

Ready to get this show on the road?

CAMILLE

After you.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The packed crowd BUZZES. The orchestra TUNES. A TAP from the CONDUCTOR. A SILENCE falls over the room. And then--

--BAM! The curtains LIFT and a FULL SONG begins. CAST MEMBERS dance around the stage.

The scene introduces all the characters who care for George Bailey. Wes is front stage. His character George is oblivious to the prayers SUNG around him.

The crowd OOHS and AAHS. They already love it.

INT. STAGE WING

Camille observes. She's nervous, but thrilled. She glances into the crowd and spots Bob. He makes eye contact with her and blows a kiss her way.

INT. STAGE

Wes and Erica, playing Mary, onstage. They sing a LOVE SONG as they stroll along a DARK STREET.

As the scene ends and Wes departs, he winks to Erica.

INT. STAGE - LATER

Wes leans against a snowy rail, all alone. SILENT theatre.

WES

CLARENCE! Help me, Clarence! Get me back, I don't care what happens to me! Get me back to my wife and kids. PLEASE!

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Every teary eye glued to the stage. SNIFFLES scattered amongst the crowd.

The Broadway Producer nods, captivated.

Mary watches Wes' performance with complete devotion. She is impressed and moved by his presence.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wes doubles over the railing, SHIVERING.

WES

I wanna live again. I wanna live again! Please God, let me live again.

Wes STIFLES a SOB into his coat. The stage goes DARK and the audience provides a HUSHED APPLAUSE.

INT. BACKSTAGE - WING - CONTINUOUS

Wes enters and approaches Camille. A scene continues on stage. A MAKEUP ARTIST applies BLOOD to Wes' mouth.

WES

So now that we're, you know...
Official. Can I ask you out on a
date?

CAMILLE

Let's get through opening night
first. Then we'll talk..

She winks and Wes smiles. He exits in a hurry.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The final scene plays out. The entire cast is there. They SING and dance and pour out donations to Wes and Erica.

JASON

A toast to my big brother George:
the richest man in town!

The CAST and AUDIENCE all CHEER. The cast sings *Auld Lang Syne* as they dance together, arms around one another.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The orchestra BUILDS for the final triumphant note, and the curtain DROPS.

The audience stands, CHEERING and HOLLERING. The curtain PULLS back up, revealing the cast and crew.

Wes holds hands with Camille and Erica. They smile to the crowd.

Each member takes their turn and steps forward, accepting APPLAUSE. It reaches Jason, then Erica.

Then it's Wes' turn. An enormous UPROAR.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Katie leaps to her feet, CHEERING. Mary CLAPS and smiles up at Wes. The gesture is a compliment in and of itself.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wes smiles, the weight of the world off his shoulders.

Finally, Camille steps forward, accepting the biggest APPLAUSE of the night. Wes squeezes her hand tightly.

The cast and crew raise their hands together, honoring the final round of OVATION. Their hands drop, and the curtain FOLLOWS suit. The orchestra CEASES.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The theatre has cleared. Only cast and crew members remain, speaking with their families. Wes approaches his, congratulating his friends as he passes.

Katie tackles Wes in a bear hug.

KATIE

Wessie, I'm so proud of you! You were amazing!

GRANDMA

Naturally! You were so handsome and strong up there.

GRANDPA

Still not as handsome or strong as me, but pretty good!

GRANDMA

Rich!

She smacks her husband, who CHUCKLES.

MARY

Well done, Wesley.

It wasn't the first time Wes heard those words from his mother, but it was the first time they had really stuck.

WES

Thank you, Mom. Thank you all for being here. It means the world.

GRANDPA

What do you say we grab some celebratory pie from Schuster's? My treat.

WES

Sounds great!

The family heads for the exit. Mary lingers.

MARY

I thought a lot about what you said earlier. Ms. Duvalski agreed to the division we had all decided upon earlier in the process. Told her the judge wasn't going to rule with us, anyway.

WES

Was she okay with it?

MARY

I guess we'll find out. It was the right thing to do. As hard as it is to admit, I lost my integrity. You inspired me to find it again.

WES

What I told you earlier was the truth. Everything I've ever done was inspired by the example you set. More than you could know. It just--

MARY

--If this is what you want, I'll support you. Actor, lawyer, whatever. You'll be successful in whatever you do, because you're a good man.

Wes embraces Mary. She holds him tight.

WES

I love you, Mom.

MARY

I love you too, Wesley.

Wes and Mary separate.

WES

That wasn't too bad! You're a good hugger.

MARY

Oh, please. Let's go before your grandmother complains.

They head for the door. Wes notices Camille across the auditorium.

She speaks with the Broadway Producer, Erica and Bob nearby. The Producer says something, and Camille GASPS.

She shakes the Producer's hand. The Producer exits. Bob and Erica hug her and CHEER.

Wes approaches. Camille notices and embraces him.

CAMILLE

Wes, you won't believe what just happened! So turns out Erica's aunt is this big Broadway producer. And Erica, being the amazing woman she is, invited her to the show--

Wes glances at Erica, who winks. Bob smiles.

CAMILLE

--And she loved it! And so she came up to me the other second and invited me to this super prestigious director apprenticeship in New York this spring!

Wes GASPS and hugs Camille even tighter.

WES

What? Camille, that's incredible! You deserve it. This play would've been nothing without you.

ERICA

True that!

WES

It was only a matter of time before someone big noticed you and your hard work.

He kisses her forehead.

WES

I'm so proud of you.

ERICA

Bleh! That's my cue to leave.

(heads for exit)

Camille, text me! I'll see about setting you up for coffee with my aunt, okay?

CAMILLE

Okay!

Wes extends his hand to Bob.

WES

Mr. Fairmont.

Bob takes Wes' hand with both of his.

BOB

Bob to you, Wes. I voiced some choice words with you the last time we spoke. I want you to know, I couldn't have been more wrong.

WES

Well, you and Camille deserved the truth. I'm glad we were able to make things right.

BOB

You want to celebrate with us and some friends at the B & B tonight?

Wes spots his family through the auditorium doors.

WES

Thank you, Bob. But I've got plans with my family tonight.

BOB

Another time. Soon!

Wes nods. Bob hangs around for a comedic beat.

CAMILLE

Dad? Could you...

BOB

Sorry sweetie! Old man getting in the way again. Proud of you both!

He kisses Camille's cheek and exits.

CAMILLE

So... about that date.

Wes pulls Camille in tighter.

WES

The offer still stands.

CAMILLE

Then I'm all yours.

They share a romantic, climactic kiss. All is well as we

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. PARK - DAY

AMATEUR HANDHELD CAMERA P.O.V.

Wes center frame. He shivers on an icy sidewalk, a FROZEN PLAYGROUND in the background. Snow covers the park.

WES

Do we have to do this outside?

ERICA (O.S.)

I need variation between cast and crew members.

WES

So you specifically wanted to torture me?

ERICA

We're rolling, diva.

WES

So just talk about life post-play, right?

ERICA

And how the play radically changed your life for the better, yaddah yaddah.

WES

Naturally.

(CLEARS his throat)

Hi there, Wes Warner here. I play-- well, played-- George Bailey in the musical production of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The CAMERA P.O.V. ends.

Erica gestures for Wes to keep talking.

WES

Being a part of this production was a blessing. I didn't have a lot of direction going into my winter break. But the play and everyone on it gave me a whole new sense of purpose in life.

ERICA

Aw, that's sweet. Is acting your new purpose?

Wes shrugs.

WES

Maybe. I'm not entirely sure yet. But for the first time in my life, I feel free. Like, really free.

INT. WARNER HOME - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Christmas morning. The entire family opens gifts.

Katie opens a new pair of POINTE SHOES. Katie hugs Wes.

WES (V.O.)

I got to spend a lot of quality time with my family after the show. I feel closer to my Mom than I ever have, which I didn't know was possible.

Wes opens his present: FUZZY SOCKS. Mary LAUGHS as Wes throws them at her playfully.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A warm, small room. Ice frosts the windows.

Wes at a table with Camille, Jason, Erica, Henry, cast, and crew.

WES (V.O.)

I made a lot of friends on set.

Henry bashfully tells a joke. Everyone LAUGHS. He smiles.

WES (V.O.)

Some new...

He tosses a piece of CRUMBLE CAKE at Erica, who GASPS. She throws her entire CUPCAKE in return.

WES (V.O.)

Some unexpected...

Jason bursts out LAUGHING as Wes smears cupcake off his face. Wes nudges him playfully.

ERICA (V.O.)

Some *very* unexpected.

Camille wipes ICING from Wes' nose. She kisses some from Wes' lips. He smiles and pulls her in tighter.

WES (V.O.)

Yeah. I never thought my break would go the way it did. Not in a million years.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Erica peers through the EYEPiece.

From the CAMERA P.O.V.

ERICA

So... just as I said...

She gestures for him to complete her prompt. Wes LAUGHS.

WES

This play changed my life.

ERICA

Ugh! That was so cheesy! And you call yourself an actor?

Wes' eyes go wide as he smiles at Erica.

WES

Erica, if you don't edit it that part out, I will--

The camera FREEZES. Wes fills the final frame, smile big as could be.

He's happy.

FADE TO BLACK.

Austin Copps

HON 4820

13 April 2021

ENCORE: In Reflection of My Thesis

My time at Belmont University has come to a close. The ending feels so abrupt, as if I wasn't aware my education was finite. As I transition into whatever life has in store for me, I think fondly over all the memories I have made at this little college in the heart of Nashville. A fair share of these memories involve my time spent within the Honors Program and more specifically, the accumulation of time and effort I've devoted to my Honors Thesis.

Encore is a one hundred and thirteen page feature length screenplay. If any reader isn't aware of that term, it's all there in the title. A screenplay (or script) is a story written for the screen, whether the IMAX silk screen or your laptop display. My screenplay is a Christmas film. I'd like to believe it has comedic and romantic elements, but it is first and foremost a drama.

Encore tells the story of Wes Warner, a graduate law student who returns to his small home town in Rhode Island for the holiday season. While home, he unwillingly joins the cast of a local theatre play, directed by his ex-girlfriend Camille. Wes' life gets even more complicated as his mother, a cold-hearted lawyer named Mary, demands his help with a civil law case involving Camille's parents. Wes must find a way to balance his duties as actor, paralegal, son, and brother. But that's far easier said than done.

As strange as it is to say, *Encore* is vastly different than what I had planned for my honors thesis. As outlined in my prospectus, I had originally intended to write a feature length screenplay about my favorite band, The Beach Boys. In my rendition of their narrative, Brian would've been the main character and told the story of his lifelong relationships with the other

band members. The closest comparison would be the 2018 film, *Bohemian Rhapsody*. I was rather excited to write it.

But as the time to write approached, my thesis director, Will Akers, shared his doubts. The Beach Boys' story would not be easily accessible; their rights were owned by a studio, which meant only their writers could tackle it. So unless my plan was to stuff the screenplay into a box, removing it only to show family and friends once every blue moon, it wasn't worth it. And really, their story had already been told.

I immediately pivoted and came up with the idea *Encore*. But I held onto the Beach Boys' emotional core. Brian Wilson's life tells the tale of a passionate young man who struggles to find his way in a world that demands so much of him. I connected with this intrinsic human story, so I decided to write that same element into my character Wes Warner. Brian's controlling forces were his bandmates, girlfriends, and most of all, his father. Similarly, Wes struggles against the demands of the theatre cast and crew, his romantic interest Camille, and most of all, his mother Mary.

The parallels were there all along. Even when I wasn't entirely aware, I was guided by the story's heart. At least, I'd like to think so. Not all of my script may have worked, but I hope anyone who reads *Encore* feels its emotional gravitas.

As to what worked, I was fortunate to have such a willing thesis director and committee. Will was always helpful; he and I would meet over the phone weekly to discuss my pages. And every week, he would give me written notes and suggestions for redirection. With his help, I wrote and rewrote a portion of my screenplay each week throughout the fall semester.

As to my writing, I think the overall story works well. I studied a lot of foundational story literature, such as *Inside Story: The Power of the Transformational Arc* by Dara Marks. I learned

every beat a good drama must have. I knew the answer to what made a movie tick, moment by moment. I think my knowledge translated well in my writing. Based on the feedback from my committee (which included Will and two other screenwriting professors, Stephen Hauser and Jeff Phillips), *Encore* hit every beat a good movie should. The narrative wasn't clunky; there was always a good flow. Every relationship I introduced was developed well and brought to a satisfying conclusion.

I also believe my dialogue works well. I specifically intended to develop my character's voices. In the past, my characters spoke too bluntly; they ushered the narrative along, but often in an obvious manner. With *Encore*, I tried my hardest to simultaneously write ambiguous plot-driven dialogue and maintain a distinctive voice.

As to what didn't work, I can say my plot wasn't the most inventive. *Encore* is, for all intents and purposes, a Christmas story: easy to follow along, and not too demanding of the viewers. I achieved that, but sacrificed the challenge and reward of writing an inventive plot with new and exciting characters and relationships.

In the same vein, I don't think my clichés worked well. *Encore's* readers won't be surprised by many story beats. Certain elements are predictable, which is something I wish I had improved on more. That being said, I intend to continually rewrite *Encore*. Will emphasized that every first screenplay is never *amazing*. You can and should always improve your writing until you're forced to give it up.

As I wrote *Encore*, I learned more than I could ever share in one essay. I learned the value of a narrative outline. I utilized an outline before writing; plotting out all the beats I planned to achieve. But as I began to write, I realized how much more I would've benefited if

my outline had been tediously *specific*. I underestimated how much detail my outline needed to be a true lifeline. But I've adjusted accordingly, and my writing has already improved.

I also learned how to *write tighter*. As I began writing, Will gave me numerous documents, all of which taught me new grammatical choices to improve my screenplay. As a result, my writing has begun to utilize these pointers, and it's all the better for it.

One of the biggest things I learned throughout this entire process was my identity as a screenwriter and storyteller. I now understand how I write: my speed, the road bumps I face, my focus, and my drive. I recognize when my writing slows, and know how to pick it back up.

Though many secrets have now become tangible, the greatest of them all still evades me. I don't know *who I am*. I know how I write, but I don't know *what* to write. I'm on the hunt for the stories that truly matter to me; the stories only I can tell. I'm nowhere near finding it yet. But I believe if I write every day in some medium (poetry, short story, comic, screenplay, what have you), I take a step in the right direction. My story hides deep inside of me. And the only way I'm going to unlock it is by living a lot more life. So believe me when I say, I'm just getting started.

I now have an entire feature length screenplay under my belt. If one wasn't enough, I'm wrapping up my second for my Motion Pictures capstone requirement. As I graduate, I boast two feature lengths, two hour long TV pilots, a TV episode, half another feature length, and countless short stories. And I know: Quantity does not mean quality. But it does mean I'm on the way, and the journey's half the fun.

Through all my success and failure, I've led with a strong sense of belonging and an evolving notion of purpose. Thank you *Encore*, and thank you Belmont Honors. I'm grateful for every professor and faculty member I've known. It's been quite the ride.