

AGORAPHOBIA

Act I

Written by

Raphael Cantor

OVER BLACK:

THUD. THUD. THUD. Things are being thrown.

FADE IN:

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Over a BOX: A framed picture of BEN (then 26) and KRISTEN (then 25), posed and smiling, lays in a cardboard box. A SHAKE WEIGHT is tossed in, cracking the frame.

From the side, the box reads, "KRISTEN'S SHIT." The "KRISTEN" has been crossed out, with "JUDAS" underneath. A DRESS is tossed into frame, landing outside of the box.

BEN BIRNBAUM (now 28) holds a clump of clothing in his vanilla bedroom. He tries to toss it in, but misses. At the door, Ben's roommate, DAVE FONTAINE (28), eats cereal.

DAVE

Air ball!

Ben looks up and spots Dave.

BEN

Leave me alone, dude.

DAVE

Nope. I'm not leaving you alone, Ben. Dr. Phil says to never leave people in the grieving process alone.

BEN

Dr. Phil?

DAVE

What? I work nights, I get lonely during the day, he knows some things.

Ben sighs and keeps packing up Kristen's shit.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Aw, buddy, cheer up.

BEN

Dave, my girlfriend of two years has been cheating on me for three months so can you give me one week to fucking hate myself?

DAVE

Nope. I want you to bury those feelings. You know what makes you forget about women?

(off Ben's look)

Other women!

BEN

Did Dr. Phil tell you that?

DAVE

No, that's a Dave Fontaine original.

(snaps his fingers)

You know what you need to do? You need to ask out Sloan Summers.

BEN

Not a chance.

DAVE

Why not?

BEN

One: I've been single for sixteen hours. Two: she's my co-worker. Three: I've only called her Sloan around you. How do you know her last name?

DAVE

I facejerked her.

BEN

What?

DAVE

I jerked off to her Facebook photos. She's really hot dude, you should go for it.

BEN

Now I don't think I can. Plus I just told you, she's my coworker and I really like my job.

DAVE

(shrugs)

I sleep with my coworkers all the time.

BEN

Comedians don't have an HR department, Dave.

DAVE  
That's how you know my profession  
is still pure.  
(moving closer)  
Listen to me, dude.

Dave puts his bowl down and puts his hands on Ben's  
shoulders. Ben grimaces in anticipation.

BEN  
Oh don't give me a speech right--

DAVE  
Benjamin Birnbaum. Your life is  
going to be a series of low points  
that ends in you dying. Now, you  
can't change the dying part, but  
you can make the stuff before it  
fun. So, ask Sloan out. If not for  
you, for me. So I can live  
vicariously through your dick.

BEN  
If you wanna fuck her so bad, why  
don't you just do it?

Dave puts a hand to Ben's cheek.

DAVE  
Because you're my friend.  
(turns away)  
And I may also have something that  
followed me home from Tijuana in my  
nether regions. I'm gonna go to the  
free clinic right now.

BEN  
What happened to not leaving me  
alone?

Dave undoes his belt buckle.

DAVE  
If you wanna examine my situation,  
be my guest.

BEN  
(shielding his eyes)  
NO! STOP!

Dave buckles back up.

DAVE

That's what I thought. Will you be here when I get back?

BEN

No, I'm going home for dinner.

DAVE

Ben, stop calling your parents' house home. This is your home.

Dave exits.

EXT. BEN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Ben floats in his parents' pool, still wearing a shirt, aimlessly staring at the sky. Ben's mom, RACHEL (late 50s), emerges from the house.

RACHEL

Honey, dinner is almost ready, get out and get changed.

She goes back in the house. Ben huffs and complies.

INT. BEN'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits at the table. Rachel brings out food while Ben's father, JACOB (late 50s), sits.

JACOB

Is Kristen coming?

BEN

No.

RACHEL

How come? I invited her like always.

BEN

Uh... she had work.

RACHEL

That poor girl. Such a hard worker.

Ben shrinks.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You know, last time I talked to her, she said that now that she's been a judge's clerk for two years, she should be hired as a prosecutor any day now.

JACOB

That's a big pay raise.

BEN

(attitude)

Sure is.

JACOB

How much are you making as an insurance adjuster, son?

BEN

That's a personal question.

RACHEL

You know what was personal? When Doctor Goldman had his hand up my *shmundie* to pull you into this world.

BEN

Mom!

JACOB

You know it's not too late to go back to school and become a psychologist like you always wanted.

BEN

Like you always wanted, Dad.

JACOB

I'm just saying, what upward mobility is there in the insurance world?

BEN

I could make VP of Sales soon.

RACHEL

Oy, you? A salesman? Do you remember when you put a lemonade stand on the corner and I had to buy ten dollars worth because no one came?

BEN  
That was more of a location  
problem, if anything...

JACOB  
You don't have that alpha  
personality a salesman needs, Ben.

BEN  
What is this, a fucking roast?

At this point, Rachel and Jacob are arguing with each other.

RACHEL  
I told you we should have put him  
in private school, but no, you had  
to--

JACOB  
I went to public school, and so did  
my father before me.

BEN  
(quietly)  
Guys...

RACHEL  
Eisenhower was president then, for  
Christ's sake, I--

BEN  
(yells)  
Kristen and I broke up!

Silence. Ben's parents stare at him for a moment.

RACHEL  
Well why would you do that,  
Ben! She was the one.

JACOB  
Studies show this is the  
optimal age for couples to  
get married.

Ben silently gets up from the table.

RACHEL  
Where are you going, sweetie? We  
just want to talk to you.

Ben grabs his things and walks out. As he does:

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
It's only because we love you!

The door shuts.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
Were we too harsh?

Jacob shrugs.

EXT. MEGA INSURANCE BUILDING - DAY

The next day, Ben pulls up to work in his Honda Accord. As he walks in, he passes a sign that reads: "MEGA INSURANCE - SIZE MATTERS."

INT. MEGA INSURANCE OFFICE FLOOR - DAY

Ben sits in his cubicle, a tree in the forest. On his computer screen, Ben reads a psychology website. The article title reads, "ABANDONMENT ISSUES." There's a KNOCK.

Ben turns to find JEB and CARLY, two meth heads standing at the entrance.

BEN  
Mr. and Mrs. Johnson?

CARLY  
Who's asking?

BEN  
Me? I'm Ben? We spoke over the phone.

JEB  
Calm down, Carly.  
(extends hand)  
I'm Jeb. Nice to meet ya.

BEN  
Please, come sit.

Ben sanitizes his hand as they sit.

JEB  
So did you review our claim?

BEN  
Yeah, I did, that's why I brought you in here.

CARLY  
This is where they steal our money, Jeb!

JEB

Shut up!

(to Ben)

Don't listen to her, she seems to think insurance is out to get everyone.

BEN

Right... let's just go over your claim. First of all, you've only had insurance for eight days. Second of all, you purchased two pallets of firewood and put them in the bed of your truck, drove it to a deserted parking lot, where it happened to catch fire. Am I getting that all?

JEB

You got it, mister.

BEN

Right... so as an adjuster, I'm currently unable to approve your claim.

CARLY

See!

JEB

Why the hell not?

BEN (CONT'D)

It's uh, it's due to...

SLOAN

(O.C.)

You need an SR-22.

Everyone turns to see SLOAN SUMMERS (28, effortlessly cute) at the entry of the cubicle.

SLOAN (CONT'D)

An SR-22 is a form you get from the court saying you're financially responsible for the car. Once you get it, we can verify your claim.

Ben smiles at Sloan and turns to the meth heads.

BEN

Getting the SR-22 is super easy, unless you have any outstanding warrants. Drug charges, arson, or the like.

CARLY  
So no money!

Jeb SPITS on Ben.

JEB  
Hey fuck you, man!  
(to Sloan)  
You too lady!

Jeb and Carly rush out. Sloan is dying of laughter as Ben wipes his face.

INT. MEGA INSURANCE BUILDING - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Ben and Sloan walk into the break room. Ben gets paper towels to clean his face. Sloan looks through the fridge.

SLOAN  
Didn't realize you were in the splash zone, did ya?

BEN  
Who does that?

SLOAN  
People on drugs.

BEN  
Touché.

Beat. Sloan still stares into the fridge.

SLOAN  
You know when there's a ton of food in the fridge but still nothing to eat?

BEN  
Well, that's other people's food.

Sloan turns.

SLOAN  
Yeah I eat it all the time. You're not going to tell on me, are you?

They share a smile. Ben gets some courage.

BEN  
Hey, I just want to say, thanks for helping me with those meth heads today.

SLOAN

I happened to walk by and hear what was going on. It was nothing, really.

BEN

Yeah, but... you were like, really good at it.

Beat. Cringe.

SLOAN

Okay... thanks.

She turns back to the fridge and grabs a yogurt with "KEVIN" written across the side. She opens it and eats.

BEN

What are you doing tonight?

SLOAN

Dunno... why?

BEN

I was wondering if... you and I could...

SLOAN

(not getting it)  
What?

BEN

I just wanted to ask you, if you would wanna...  
(gives up)  
Give me a ride home tonight? My car is... you know.

Sloan nods, not getting it.

I/E. SLOAN'S CAR/VENTURA BLVD - NIGHT - MOVING

Sloan drives her Prius on Studio City side streets as Ben sits in the passenger seat. Ben has his hands in his face.

SLOAN

Hey, how's your girlfriend? What was her name, Kristen?

BEN

We, um, broke up.

SLOAN  
Oh. Sorry to hear that.

BEN  
Yeah, me too.

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sloan pulls up to Ben's apartment. Ben gets out and leans in.

BEN  
Thanks again for the ride.

SLOAN  
No problem, I'll see you tomorrow.

She leaves. Ben runs his hands through his hair and groans.

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben enters. Dave is sitting on the couch, drinking beer and watching Monday Night Football.

DAVE  
What's up, working boy?

BEN  
Sloan gave me a ride home.

Dave jumps up, excited.

DAVE  
Oh shit! Did you boink her?

BEN  
No. Actually like the opposite.

DAVE  
Wait, so where's your car?

BEN  
At work still.  
(off Dave's look)  
I didn't know what else to do.

Dave cracks up and moves for the kitchen.

DAVE  
Ha! Fucking brutal, man. Sit down,  
you could use a beer.

Ben does as he's told.

DAVE (CONT'D)

So what are you doing tonight,  
then?

BEN

I don't know. Nothing I guess.

Dave gives Ben a beer.

DAVE

You're coming to my show.

BEN

No dude, I'm tired, I've seen you  
perform a thousand times.

DAVE

Ben, there are so many babes coming  
into the Comedy Cave nowadays. And  
I got all new material. I've got a  
Jared from Subway joke.

BEN

I'm not going.

DAVE

(sighs)

Fine, fine. Why don't I at least  
take you to get your car?

Ben thinks on it for a moment.

I/E. DAVE'S CAR/101 FREEWAY - NIGHT - MOVING

Dave's muscly car drives bullets down the freeway. Ben sits  
with his feet up on the dashboard.

BEN

Maybe it was my fault.

DAVE

What are you talking about?

BEN

I don't know. My parents were  
grilling me last night about my  
job. My dad still has this fantasy  
I'm gonna become a psychologist  
like him. He doesn't think I'm  
"alpha" enough to be a salesman.

DAVE

What? That Freudian fucktard. Don't listen to him. You're the second most confident guy I know.

BEN

Who's the first?

DAVE

Watch.

Dave's car makes a sudden swerve to exit on Sunset.

BEN

Oh, fuck you!

DAVE

Yeah! Comedy Cave here we come!

The car bullets down Sunset.

INT. COMEDY CAVE - NIGHT

A modest room, seating somewhere around 100 people. Waitresses serve drinks, people chat. Dave and Ben sit at a table. Dave has his back turned, talking to familiar faces.

Ben drinks by himself. He's catching a good buzz now. The host comes on stage.

HOST

Thanks for coming out to the Comedy Cave guys! How we doing tonight?

Smattered cheers.

BEN

(to himself)  
Shitty.

HOST

Well you guys are going to love our first comic. She's a good friend of mine, please welcome Michelle Willows!

Louder cheers now. Ben looks up from his drink to see that Dave has now left him ALONE. Ben orders another drink and turns to the stage.

MICHELLE WILLOWS (27) wears a somewhat conservative dress. She's tall, cute, and her smile lights up the room.

MICHELLE

Give it up for your host, guys.

Smattered applause again. Michelle has Ben's full attention.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Mothers' Day is coming up... in ten months. So...

(laughter)

Mothers' Day is a tricky holiday for me because I was adopted, but I also know who my birth mother is. So, I don't really know what to get her. I asked my friend for advice and she said every year, she gives her mother something that's reminiscent of their time together. Isn't that sweet? So I think I'm gonna get my mom a garbage bag.

(laughter)

"Hey Mom, you remember when you put me out on the street? I'm giving you this so we can remember that together!"

Everyone, especially Ben, is laughing.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Is anyone here adopted?

Silence. She looks right at Ben.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Come on, sir. You must be adopted.

BEN

No, I'm not.

MICHELLE

Between us two, you look like the one that should have been left in the dumpster.

That brings the house down. Dave laughs the hardest, pointing at Ben. Ben winces, but Michelle winks at him. Ben smiles.

INT. COMEDY CAVE - BAR - NIGHT

Later, Ben drinks at the bar, talking to a couple people. Michelle enters the bar and spots Ben. She takes the empty seat next to him. She's taller than him.

MICHELLE

Hey.

Ben turns around. He's happy to see her.

BEN

Hey you!

MICHELLE

I'm sorry, have we met before?

BEN

(drunk)

What no, I'm just... no we haven't.

MICHELLE

Well, I just wanna say thanks for being such a good sport in there. I've had drinks thrown at me before, and you were cool about it.

BEN

As long as you don't actually think I'm ugly, we're cool.

MICHELLE

Woah, let's not get carried away.

She smiles at Ben, who lightens up.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Let me buy you a drink.

BEN

Oh, stop, you really don't have to.

MICHELLE

I was being nice, I get free drinks here.

(to bartender)

Let me get a couple of shots!

They take them. It bites Ben, but Michelle doesn't flinch.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

So what brings a working man like yourself to drinking with a mope like me on a Monday night?

BEN

Long version or the short version?

MICHELLE

I want the full experience.

BEN

I was born on April 6th--

Michelle hits Ben on the arm.

MICHELLE

Come on!

BEN

Well, my girlfriend of two years has been cheating on me with her skydiving instructor and I found out two days ago, I'm a walking disappointment to my father, and I live with a comic who thinks he knows how I should live my life so he dragged me here and then some asshole comic told me I looked ugly.

MICHELLE

Holy shit, dude. That's heavy, I'm sorry... Which comic do you live with?

BEN

The love doctor over there.

Ben points at Dave, making out with a GIRL in the corner.

MICHELLE

Dave Fontaine? Wow, I really am sorry.

BEN

You know him?

MICHELLE

We all know each other. Some a little better than others.

BEN

What does that--

MICHELLE

What was the short version?

BEN

What?

MICHELLE

I asked you to tell me how you end up here drinking with me and you gave me the long version. What was the short version?

BEN

I'm lonely and I think you're cute.

They stare at each other.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben and Michelle are having violent sex in her studio apartment. Ben still wears his shirt. They're drunk, but there's a passion there. Michelle slips out a MOAN.

MICHELLE

What was that?

BEN

I think you moaned.

MICHELLE

That wasn't supposed to...

(beat)

Just keep going.

Beat. The bed creaks. Michelle starts breathing heavily.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

What is... Do you do this a lot?

BEN

I don't know, do you?

MICHELLE

Why does that matter?

BEN

It doesn't, that's just a weird thing to ask in the middle of this.

MICHELLE

I know, you're just, really good.

Ben stops and kisses down her body as he moves his head between her legs. Michelle arches her back.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's good too.

They continue.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

They're passed out, Michelle is asleep on Ben's chest. BUZZ. Ben's alarm goes off. It's 7:30. Ben's eyes open.

BEN

Oh, shit.

Ben quickly gets up and starts finding his clothes. He's sure to keep his back away from Michelle's eye line. Michelle slowly wakes.

MICHELLE

What time is it?

BEN

Seven thirty.

MICHELLE

Why are we awake?

BEN

I have to go to work.

MICHELLE

What are you, a fucking farmer?

BEN

Close, insurance adjuster.

MICHELLE

(sarcastic)

Oh, no wonder you're dynamite in the sack.

Ben reaches for his keys. Remembers he doesn't have his car. Michelle recognizes this.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I'll call you an uber.

BEN

No, you really don't--

MICHELLE

I insist. That way, you'll owe me a favor I can get back some other time.

BEN

Some other time?

Michelle shrugs and smiles at him.

MICHELLE

It's going to be here in two minutes, get the fuck out of my apartment.

Ben smiles and backs towards the door. He steps out for a moment, then rushes back in. He pats the nightstand. Nothing.

BEN

I forgot my wallet.

MICHELLE

No you didn't.

Ben leans over to Michelle and kisses her. He smiles as he closes the door behind him.

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben walks in the front door. Dave sits on the couch, drinking a beer, just like last night. Ben has a toothy grin. His jacket is slung over his hand, hiding something.

DAVE

Look who it is! I haven't seen you in twenty four hours so you either scored some good drugs or you have a present for me.

BEN

What do you think?

Ben tosses his jacket to reveal a picture frame. Within lies a piece of paper reading, "YOU WERE RIGHT. -BEN BIRNBAUM"  
Dave CHEERS and gets off the couch to hug Ben.

DAVE

What did I tell you, bro? I knew you would have a good night. How was it?

BEN

It was actually really good.

DAVE

Come on, give me the play-by-play.

They move to the couch.

BEN

I talked to her at the bar, went back to her place, we, you know, and she called me an uber in the morning.

DAVE

She called you an uber?

BEN

Yeah, she said she wanted me to owe her a favor I could repay her later.

DAVE

Holy shit, this girl wants you!

BEN

Yeah, and I think I want her too. I'm gonna ask her out on a date.

DAVE

What's her name?

BEN

Michelle.

DAVE

(cool as a surfer)  
Michelle...  
(realizing)  
Wait. Michelle Willows?

BEN

Uh, I think so. Why?

DAVE

Oh. I see. Ben, you should sit down for this.

Ben is sitting already. Dave stands.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Michelle is a female comic. Female comics are weirdos. All of them. I mean, what kind of woman would stand in front of a bunch of strangers and talk about their genitals?

BEN

You do that.

DAVE  
Yeah, but, I'm a guy.

BEN  
So?

DAVE  
It's different!

Ben rolls his eyes.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
I heard they do really weird shit  
in bed.

BEN  
Like what?

DAVE  
I don't know, something that  
involved three-ways, and dildos,  
and...  
(makes fisting motion)  
Weird shit, man.

BEN  
Why do you care so much?

Dave thinks for a second. Choosing his words.

DAVE  
You and Kristen broke up so  
recently and... I just don't want  
to see you get hurt.

BEN  
We've literally slept together one  
time.

DAVE  
I know, I know.  
(beat)  
Just don't say I didn't warn you.

Dave exits. Ben is perplexed, but whips out his phone and  
texts Michelle.

**TEXT MESSAGE:**

BEN  
What are you doing Friday? I have  
the day off.

MICHELLE  
 Hanging out with you. Beach? Pick  
 me up at 1?

**END TEXT.**

Ben thinks on it for a minute, then sends back a sunshine and thumbs up emoji.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - DAY

Ben and Michelle walk along the beach. Michelle wears a bikini with a t-shirt, Ben in a t-shirt and swim trunks.

BEN  
 When's the last time you went to  
 the beach?

MICHELLE  
 Jeez, I feel like such an ass.  
 Probably two years ago.

BEN  
 Why do you feel like an ass?

MICHELLE  
 I don't know.

Ben motions to the scene in front of them. It's picturesque.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
 It's always right here. And most of  
 the city couldn't give a shit. When  
 I moved here, I thought people went  
 to the beach every fucking day.

BEN  
 Two years is nothing, dude. I grew  
 up here and I haven't been... since  
 college, probably.

MICHELLE  
 Wow... you are an ass.

They laugh.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
 You feeling hot?

BEN  
 What?

Michelle shoves Ben into the sand. She peels off her shirt and runs into the water. Ben follows with his shirt still on.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Ben chases Michelle out to sea. They get out deep, and tread water. They catch their breath and face each other.

MICHELLE  
I'm fucking out of shape.

BEN  
Me too.

Not knowing what else to do, Ben KISSES Michelle. She smiles. Ben grimaces.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Ow, do you have sharp toenails?

MICHELLE  
What? No.

BEN  
Something is really itching me.

Ben reaches down to his leg. He pulls up a JELLYFISH. They both SCREAM.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - PARKING LOT - DAY

Next to Ben's car, Ben sits against the door. Michelle holds up a towel to around them for privacy. Ben is in PAIN.

BEN  
OW OW OW OW.

MICHELLE  
Hold still, I have to do this!

Suddenly, the sound of PEEING breaks the silence. Liquid trickles onto the asphalt from beneath the towel. Relief comes over Ben's face.

BEN  
Okay, that worked. You can stop now.

MICHELLE  
You can't just stop peeing! Strap in, dude!

Ben looks away, closing his eyes.

BEN

This is such a weird first date.

Liquid continues coming off of Ben's leg.

EXT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ben and Michelle pull up. Ben walks her to the front door. He kisses her. Michelle opens the door, and just as it appears she's going to close it, she grabs Ben and pulls him inside.

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Dave watch a movie. Ben gets a text from Michelle.

**TEXT MESSAGE:**

MICHELLE

Dinner tomorrow?

BEN

I'm gonna start owing you too many favors.

MICHELLE

Oh, you're paying ;).

**END TEXT MESSAGE.**

Ben smiles and sends back a thumbs up emoji. Dave notices Ben's grin.

DAVE

Is that her?

BEN

Yeah, we're going out to dinner tomorrow.

DAVE

You think you're going to get serious with her?

BEN

I know, I know. But, I don't think I care. I really like her, dude.

DAVE  
That's quick, man.  
(makes fisting motion)  
Just be careful.

Ben shifts, annoyed.

BEN  
Dave, what the hell. Can't you just  
be happy for me?

DAVE  
You're right. I'm happy.

Ben rolls his eyes and goes into his room.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A trendy bistro with outdoor seating. Ben and Michelle sit at  
a table mid-meal, chuckling.

MICHELLE  
I have to ask. Why didn't you take  
your shirt off at the beach  
yesterday?

Ben takes a sip of his drink.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
What? This is like our third night  
together, you can tell me. I mean,  
you're not fat or anything. You  
don't have a weird growth--

BEN  
I have a hairy back.

Michelle laughs.

MICHELLE  
So? That's not weird at all.

BEN  
There's a back story.

MICHELLE  
Great pun.

She high fives him. But Ben's serious. He sighs.

BEN  
When I was seventeen, I dated a  
girl in high school.  
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I was sure I was in love with her. She took my virginity, you know what that's like. The day after we had sex, we went to a pool party at our friend's house. I took off my shirt, and she saw my back and told me that hairy backs were like her biggest turn off. She broke up with me on the spot. I've never taken my shirt off in public ever since.

Michelle takes this in.

MICHELLE

Damn, dude... You had a hairy back when you were seventeen?

Ben kicks Michelle's shin underneath the table.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I want you to be comfortable around me. I don't think that's weird at all.

Ben thinks.

BEN

What about you? You got any kind of fucked up skeletons in your closet?

Michelle shifts. She's serious. Ben tries to joke.

BEN (CONT'D)

Should I be scared? Because I'm scared now.

She doesn't lighten up. Ben IS scared now.

MICHELLE

I'm in an open relationship right now with my boyfriend.

Ben stares at Michelle. Then, Ben lets out a big laugh.

BEN

You are a good comic. I've never heard that one before.

MICHELLE

Ben, I'm serious. His name is Fage.

Ben laughs harder. People look at their table.

BEN  
Like the yogurt?

MICHELLE  
F-A-G-E.

BEN  
That is like the yogurt! Holy shit!

Michelle isn't laughing. Ben takes a deep breath and calms. Notices Michelle.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Wait, wait, wait. Are you serious?

Michelle nods. This is no joke.

BEN (CONT'D)  
There's no way, you wouldn't do...  
you're sure?

Michelle doesn't budge. Ben gets it. He's internally collapsing. Ben gets up and walks out of the restaurant.

MICHELLE  
Ben! Wait!

She chases him out.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben walks towards his car. Michelle chases him in tow.

MICHELLE  
Ben! Please! I can explain!

Ben whips around to Michelle, almost scaring her.

BEN  
What the fuck is your problem?

MICHELLE  
I was waiting for the right time to  
tell you, I--

BEN  
You knew I just got cheated on.  
You'd have to be an idiot to know I  
don't really like you.

Michelle puts a hand on Ben's chest.

MICHELLE  
I really like you, too.

Ben swats her hand away.

BEN  
Is this all some big joke to you?

MICHELLE  
Ben, listen to me. None of this is  
fake. This--

She touches his face and hers. She touches all over his chest  
and shoulders rapidly, then kisses him.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
This is all real. I really like  
you. And that situation has no  
bearing on what we have.

BEN  
Are you hearing yourself? I was  
going to ask you to be my  
girlfriend tonight. I must have  
been the one that was delusional.  
Have a nice life.

Ben gets in his car. Michelle leans in the window.

MICHELLE  
If you still feel anything for me,  
come hang out with us tomorrow at  
noon.

BEN  
You and him?

MICHELLE  
Yes. You'll really like him.

She kisses him.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
When I say it won't change anything  
between us, I mean it.

Ben starts the car and Michelle backs away. Ben drives off.

INT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

**MUSIC CUE:** "All The Time" by Bahamas

Ben drives down the freeway. His eyes are puffy, cheeks damp.

INT. UBER - NIGHT - MOVING

Michelle takes an uber home. The DRIVER (30s) is talking to her, but she's not listening. She looks out the window, eyes puffy as well.

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits on the couch. He makes a strong Jack and Coke and flips through the channels. On screen, "FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF" appears. Ben kicks back.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Michelle lays in her bed, a bottle of whiskey next to her and an empty glass next to her. She channel surfs and lands on the same movie.

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - RESUMING

Ben lays on the couch, drink in his hand. He nods off, the drink spilling. He passes out.

**END MUSIC.**

FADE TO BLACK.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

FADE IN:

INT. BEN'S STUDIO CITY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Ben opens his eyes, still on the couch, to see Dave hammering into the wall. It's his framed picture that reads "YOU WERE RIGHT. -BEN BIRNBAUM." Dave notices Ben awake.

DAVE  
Morning, princess.

BEN  
What time is it?

DAVE  
Like eleven thirty. You fell off  
the wagon hard by the looks of it.

Ben looks down to see the drink from last night spilled.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
Everything alright?

Ben wakes himself up and tries to piece together what to say.

BEN  
Yeah. I mean no. I don't know.

DAVE  
Something with Michelle?

BEN  
Uh huh.

Dave tosses a towel to Ben.

DAVE  
Why don't you clean yourself up,  
first? I'm gonna go to the store,  
I'll get you my famed hangover  
cure, and we can talk about it.

BEN  
Thanks, dude.

DAVE  
(moving to door)  
No problem, buddy. I'm sorry for  
your pain. Fucking female comics.

Dave exits. Ben mops up the drink with the towel. He looks up to see the picture frame on the wall. "YOU WERE RIGHT." His own words staring at him.

He mops up the rest of the drink and takes his phone out.

**TEXT MESSAGE:**

BEN  
Where should I meet you?

MICHELLE  
:)  
(then)  
1030 N. Alvarado Street. Apartment  
#6. Through the alley behind the  
vegan doctor's office.

**END TEXT.**

Ben grabs his keys and heads out.