

AWARE

Written by Laura Robbins
with contribution by Diego Garzon & Jessy Brenenstahl

1. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Opening WS on Richard and Sophia eating dinner. Sophia is wearing

a vintage dress and an apron with pearl jewelry. She upholds an

image of utter perfection. The lighting is dimmed, and the energy

is tense, underlying. The essence of the room is dark and dreary

while she maintains an essence of brighter composure.

Richard

is wearing his work suit and lies a briefcase down on the table.

Sophia is cleaning the kitchen and is meticulous, meanwhile

Richard is slovenly and in a repressed rage.

MS

SOPHIA

How was work, Richard?

RICHARD

Richard scoffs

It was fine.

SOPHIA

What did you do there, sweetie?

RICHARD

The same thing I do every day, Sophia.

I sit at my desk, I type numbers into

a computer, and I watch the clock.

SOPHIA

Did you talk to anyone? Make any friends?

Your friend, your coworker?

RICHARD

You should see someone about your work

anxiety. It's not healthy to be this
invested in my day.

SOPHIA
I'm just trying to be supportive.

RICHARD
Well, don't. I don't need it.

SOPHIA
I'm sorry. I just thought...

RICHARD
You thought what? That I need you to
fix me? That I need your help?

SOPHIA
No, Richard. I just want to be here for
you. You've been so distant lately.

RICHARD
I'm just tired after work.

RICHARD
There are things about myself I
need to work on.

SOPHIA
I know. We all have things we need to
work on. I'm here if you want to talk.

RICHARD
I don't.

Richard gets up abruptly, leaving his plate half-finished.
He

walks to the bedroom, slamming the door behind him. Sophia sits

alone at the table, the perfect image beginning to crack.

2. INT. RICHARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richard stares at himself in the mirror, his face contorted with

barely contained rage. He loosens his tie aggressively.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Why can't she just leave me alone? Always

asking questions, always wanting to "help."

Like I'm some project she needs to fix.

He punches the wall beside the mirror, not hard enough to damage

it, but enough to hurt his hand. He winces, then examines his

knuckles.

RICHARD (V.O.)

The problem isn't me. It's everyone else.

They don't understand what I'm capable of.

What I deserve.

3. INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Richard sits at his desk, typing furiously. His supervisor, ROBERT

(50s, stern), approaches.

ROBERT

Richard, do you have those reports ready?

The client meeting is in an hour.

RICHARD

Almost done. They'll be perfect.

ROBERT

They don't need to be perfect. They just need to be done. And accurate.

Robert walks away. Richard glares at his back.

RICHARD (V.O.)

He doesn't appreciate my attention to detail. No one does. I'm surrounded by mediocrity.

4. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

Richard and Sophia are sitting at a table. Sophia looks concerned.

SOPHIA

You've been so quiet lately. Is everything okay at work?

RICHARD

Work is fine. Joseph is an idiot, but that's nothing new.

SOPHIA

Maybe you could talk to him? Explain your perspective?

RICHARD

My perspective doesn't matter to him. All he cares about is deadlines and keeping clients happy. Quality means nothing.

SOPHIA

I'm sure that's not true. You do excellent work, Richard.

RICHARD

At least someone notices.

Sophia reaches for his hand, but he pulls away subtly.

SOPHIA

I'm worried about you. You seem... angry all the time now.

RICHARD

I'm not angry. I'm frustrated. There's a difference.

SOPHIA

Maybe we could do something this weekend? Get away for a bit?

RICHARD

I have to work this weekend. The Johnson account is behind.

Sophia's face falls, but she tries to hide her disappointment.

5. INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard is working late. Robert approaches his desk.

ROBERT

Richard, we need to talk about your performance review.

RICHARD

My performance has been exemplary. I've been putting in extra hours, refining processes—

ROBERT

That's part of the problem. You're spending too much time "refining" and not enough time completing. Three clients have complained about delays.

RICHARD

They don't understand the level of precision required—

ROBERT

They understand deadlines. Look, I'm not saying you don't have talent. But you need to work with the team, not against them.

RICHARD

I'm not against the team. I'm just better than them.

Robert sighs deeply.

ROBERT

That attitude is exactly why I can't
approve your promotion. In fact, I'm
giving the senior position to someone else.

RICHARD

They've been here half the time I have!

ROBERT

And they've accomplished twice as much,
because they collaborate. I'm sorry,
Richard. My decision is final.

Robert walks away. Richard's face darkens with rage.

6. INT. RICHARD'S CAR - NIGHT

Richard sits in his parked car outside his apartment
building,
gripping the steering wheel until his knuckles turn white.

RICHARD (V.O.)

They'll see. They'll all see what happens
when they underestimate me. When they
choose mediocrity over excellence.
He catches his reflection in the rearview mirror and for a
moment, sees something that frightens even him. He quickly
looks away.

7. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard enters to find Sophia has prepared a special
dinner.

Candles, wine, his favorite food.

SOPHIA

Surprise! I thought you could use

something nice after your long week.

Richard stares at the setup, his face unreadable.

RICHARD

You didn't need to do this.

SOPHIA

I wanted to. Come sit down.

Richard sits reluctantly. Sophia pours wine.

SOPHIA

To us. To better days ahead.

Richard takes the glass but doesn't drink.

RICHARD

I didn't get the promotion.

SOPHIA

Oh, Richard. I'm so sorry.

RICHARD

They gave it to someone else. Someone who

takes two-hour lunches and tells jokes

instead of working.

SOPHIA

That's not fair. You work so hard.

RICHARD

Life isn't fair. You of all people

should know that.

SOPHIA

What's that supposed to mean?

RICHARD

Nothing. Forget it.

SOPHIA

No, tell me. What did you mean by that?

RICHARD

Just that you've had everything handed to you. Your parents' money, your easy job, your perfect life. You don't know what it's like to actually struggle.

Sophia's face falls. She puts down her glass.

SOPHIA

That's not true, and it's not fair.

RICHARD

Life isn't fair. I just said that.

Richard stands up abruptly.

RICHARD

I'm not hungry.

He walks out, leaving Sophia alone at the table again.

8. INT. RICHARD'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Richard stares at himself in the mirror, his reflection distorted by the steam from the hot water running in the sink.

RICHARD (V.O.)

She doesn't understand. No one does.

They all think I'm the problem. But

I see the truth. I see what they can't.

He splashes water on his face, then looks up at his
dripping

reflection. For a moment, he sees two versions of himself—
one

sneering, one afraid.

9. INT. RICHARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richard lies awake beside Sophia, who is sleeping. He
stares

at the ceiling, his mind racing.

RICHARD (V.O.)

I deserve better than this. Better than

all of them. They're holding me back.

Every single one of them.

He turns to look at Sophia, his expression a mix of longing
and resentment.

10. INT. MALL - DAY

Richard is pacing around the mall, looking agitated.
Gregory

and Robert approach from different directions.

GREGORY

Hey, man! I've been looking forward to
this all week.

RICHARD

Hey, there you are. I'm trying to get
Sophia a gift for our 3rd-year
anniversary. I need your help. What
screams, "You're my world"?
He holds out his arms to show vast expression.

GREGORY

Sighs with a gentle smile
You always do this. We had other plans.
But I'm happy to help. What about that
jewelry store? They have some nice
necklaces that aren't too expensive.

ROBERT

Arriving suddenly, slapping Richard on the back
Jewelry? Boring. Get her a vibrator. I don't
know, women like that. Or better yet, save
your money. Anniversary gifts are a scam.

GREGORY

Don't listen to him, Richard. Sophia would
appreciate something thoughtful. It doesn't
have to be expensive.

ROBERT

Oh please. Women say they want "thoughtful"
but they really want expensive. Or they want
to make you feel bad for not reading their minds.

RICHARD

Looking between them, conflicted

I don't know. Maybe Robert's right. Sophia's
been so... demanding lately. Always asking
questions, always wanting to talk about feelings.

GREGORY

That's called being in a relationship, man.

Communication is good.

ROBERT

Communication is overrated. You know what's
not overrated? Freedom. Speaking of which,
there's a new bar downtown. We should check
it out tonight. Lots of single ladies.

RICHARD

I can't tonight. Sophia's expecting me home.

ROBERT

Rolling his eyes

See what I mean? No freedom.

GREGORY

Having commitments isn't the same as having

no freedom. It's about choices.

Richard looks at a jewelry store window, then at Robert,
then

back at the window. His reflection shows a man torn between
two paths.

11. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

Richard sits with Robert, both drinking heavily. The bar is
crowded, loud.

ROBERT

So you're telling me you've never once
thought about being with someone else?
Come on, man. That's not normal.

RICHARD

Of course I've thought about it. But
thinking and doing are different things.

ROBERT

Are they, though? We're all animals at
heart. Monogamy is just a social construct.

Robert nods toward a woman at the bar, CAROLYN (late 20s,
attractive, confident).

ROBERT

Like her. Tell me you wouldn't, if you
had the chance.

Richard looks at Carolyn, who catches his eye and smiles.

RICHARD

Sophia would kill me.

ROBERT

Only if she found out. And who says she
has to? What happens in this bar stays
in this bar.

Richard continues to stare at Carolyn, his resolve
weakening
with each drink.

12. INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard is clearing out his desk, putting items in a box.
Robert stands nearby.

ROBERT

I'm sorry it came to this, Richard. But
your behavior has been increasingly erratic.
The outburst in the client meeting was the
final straw.

RICHARD

They were wrong. Their entire approach was
flawed. I was trying to save the company
from making a mistake.

ROBERT

By calling our biggest client an "incompetent
hack"? That's not saving anyone. That's your

ego talking.

RICHARD

My ego? What about yours? You've always been jealous of my abilities.

ROBERT

This is exactly what I'm talking about.

The paranoia, the grandiosity. I hope you get help, Richard. I really do.

Robert walks away. Richard throws a stapler into his box with

unnecessary force.

13. INT. RICHARD'S CAR - DAY

Richard sits in his car in the office parking lot, gripping the steering wheel. His phone rings—it's Sophia. He declines

the call. Then he sees a text message from Carolyn: "Free tonight?"

He stares at the message for a long moment, then types back:

"Yes."

14. INT. CAROLYN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard and Carolyn are in bed together. Richard stares at the

ceiling while Carolyn sleeps beside him. His phone buzzes with

texts from Sophia: "Where are you?" "Are you okay?" "Please call me."

He turns the phone face down.

RICHARD (V.O.)

I deserve this. After everything I've been through, I deserve something for myself.

Something that's just about me.

He looks at Carolyn, but there's no real connection in his eyes.

Just emptiness.

15. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard enters to find Sophia waiting up for him, worried.

SOPHIA

Where have you been? I've been calling and texting for hours.

RICHARD

I lost my job.

SOPHIA

What? Richard, I'm so sorry. What happened?

RICHARD

Joseph has always had it out for me. He finally found an excuse.

SOPHIA

That's terrible. But why didn't you call?

I've been worried sick.

RICHARD

I needed time to think. To process.

SOPHIA

You could have processed with me. That's what partners do.

RICHARD

Is it? Because lately it feels like all you do is judge me. Like you're keeping score of all my failures.

SOPHIA

That's not true! I'm on your side, Richard. Always.

RICHARD

Then why do I feel so alone even when I'm with you?

This hits Sophia hard. She reaches for him, but he steps back.

RICHARD

I need a shower.

He walks away, leaving Sophia standing there, hurt and confused.

16. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

Richard, Sophia, Gregory, and Robert are bowling. The atmosphere

is tense despite the casual setting.

ROBERT

So, unemployment. How's that treating you?

RICHARD

It's temporary. I've got leads.

GREGORY

That's great, man. Anything promising?

RICHARD

A few things. Nothing worth discussing yet.

SOPHIA

Richard had an interview yesterday that went really well.

RICHARD

Glaring at Sophia

I just said it's not worth discussing.

SOPHIA

Sorry, I thought—

RICHARD

You thought wrong.

Uncomfortable silence falls. Gregory tries to lighten the mood.

GREGORY

My turn. Watch the master at work.

Gregory bowls a strike. Robert rolls his eyes.

ROBERT

Lucky shot.

Carolyn appears, working behind the counter. Richard sees her

and freezes. She notices him and gives a small wave.

SOPHIA

Do you know her?

RICHARD

No. Just... someone from the office.

SOPHIA

I thought you might want to say hello.

RICHARD

I don't.

Richard turns away abruptly, but Sophia has caught the look that passed between them. Her face falls as realization dawns.

17. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard and Sophia are in the middle of a heated argument.

SOPHIA

Just tell me the truth! Are you seeing someone else?

RICHARD

This is insane. You're paranoid.

SOPHIA

Then explain the late nights. Explain the way you looked at that woman at the bowling alley. Explain why you flinch every time

I touch you!

RICHARD

I don't owe you explanations! You're not
my interrogator!

SOPHIA

I'm your wife, Richard! That used to mean
something!

RICHARD

Maybe it shouldn't! Maybe this whole thing
was a mistake!

Sophia steps back as if slapped.

SOPHIA

Do you really mean that?

Richard's face contorts with a mix of emotions—rage, guilt,
fear. He punches the wall, leaving a dent.

RICHARD

See what you made me do? You push and push
until I break!

SOPHIA

I didn't make you do anything. That's all you.
She grabs her purse and heads for the door.

RICHARD

Where are you going?

SOPHIA

Somewhere safe.

RICHARD

If you leave now, don't bother coming back!

SOPHIA

Is that what you want, Richard? Really?

RICHARD

Maybe it is! Or maybe...

His voice breaks, suddenly vulnerable.

RICHARD

Maybe if you leave, I'll kill myself. Is that what you want? To be responsible for that? Sophia freezes, her hand on the doorknob.

SOPHIA

That's not fair. You can't put that on me.

RICHARD

Why not? You're abandoning me when I need you most. When I've lost everything.

SOPHIA

You haven't lost everything. Not yet. But you're pushing away everyone who cares about you. She opens the door.

RICHARD

Sophia, please. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I just... I need help.

Sophia pauses, torn between self-preservation and compassion.

SOPHIA

Then get help, Richard. Real help. Not just promises.

She closes the door behind her, leaving Richard alone.

18. INT. RICHARD'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Richard stares at his reflection in the mirror, breathing heavily.

He opens the medicine cabinet and looks at the prescription bottles

inside. He takes them out one by one, considering.

His phone rings—it's Gregory. After several rings, Richard answers.

RICHARD

What?

GREGORY (V.O.)

Sophia called me. She's worried about you.

We all are.

RICHARD

I'm fine.

GREGORY (V.O.)

No, you're not. And that's okay. No one's

fine all the time. Can I come over?

Richard looks back at the pills, then at his reflection.

RICHARD

Yeah. Okay.

19. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gregory sits with Richard on the couch. Empty beer bottles on

the table.

GREGORY

You know, asking for help isn't weakness.

It's actually the hardest thing to do.

RICHARD

I don't need help. I need everyone to stop treating me like I'm broken.

GREGORY

No one thinks you're broken, man. But something's not right, and pretending otherwise isn't helping.

RICHARD

So what, I see a shrink? Tell some stranger my problems?

GREGORY

It worked for me.

Richard looks surprised.

RICHARD

You? Since when?

GREGORY

Three years now. After my divorce. Best decision I ever made.

RICHARD

I didn't know.

GREGORY

Because I didn't make it your problem. I
got help. There's no shame in it.

Richard is quiet for a long moment.

RICHARD

What if... what if there's something really
wrong with me? Something that can't be fixed?

GREGORY

Then you learn to manage it. But you don't
know until you try.

Gregory hands Richard a business card.

GREGORY

Dr. Schoffer. He's good. Just think about it.

20. INT. RICHARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richard lies awake, staring at Dr. Schoffer's card. After a
long moment, he reaches for his phone.

21. INT. DR. SCHOFFER'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard sits uncomfortably across from DR. SCHOFFER (50s,
calm, perceptive).

DR. SCHOFFER

So, what brings you here today?

RICHARD

My friend Gregory. Literally. He drove me.

DR. SCHOFFER

Smiling slightly

I meant what issues you'd like to address.

RICHARD

My wife left me. I lost my job. Take your pick.

DR. SCHOFFER

Those are events, not issues. How do you
feel about those events?

RICHARD

How do you think I feel? Angry. Betrayed.
Like the world is against me.

DR. SCHOFFER

Is that a familiar feeling for you? That
the world is against you?
Richard pauses, considering.

RICHARD

Yes. For as long as I can remember.

DR. SCHOFFER

Tell me more about that.

22. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Richard sits with Robert, who looks annoyed.

ROBERT

Therapy? Seriously? That's for weak people
who can't handle their own problems.

RICHARD

Maybe I am weak. Maybe I need help.

ROBERT

What you need is to man up. So Sophia left.

So what? There are plenty of women out there.

Carolyn seemed into you.

RICHARD

That was a mistake. I hurt Sophia. I hurt myself.

ROBERT

Oh please. Don't tell me you're buying into
all that guilt trip crap.

RICHARD

It's not a guilt trip if I actually did
something wrong.

ROBERT

Look, I've known you for years. You're not
the problem. It's everyone else who can't
handle how special you are.

Richard studies Robert's face, seeing something he hadn't
noticed before.

RICHARD

Is that what you really think? Or is that
what you tell yourself to avoid facing your
own issues?

ROBERT

Wow. One therapy session and suddenly you're Dr. Phil? I'm trying to help you, man.

RICHARD

No, you're not. You're trying to keep me exactly where I was. Because if I change, it means you might have to look at yourself. Robert stands up, angry.

ROBERT

Call me when you're done with this pity party. Robert leaves. Richard watches him go, a mix of sadness and relief on his face.

23. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

MS

Richard looks into a mirror, but pieces of broken mirror lay on the floor. Richard looks down into it.

RICHARD

What was real? Who was I? I wasn't these things and people. I wasn't even this person I see before me. Richard touches the mirror pieces and holds one up, seeing fragmented reflections of himself.

CU

RICHARD (CONT'D)

This was all so antithetical to who I
truly am. Who am I? I thought I was the nice guy, the
good husband. But I never was.

Richard examines the different fragments, each showing a
slightly
different version of his face.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I've been my own worst enemy all along.

Creating enemies where there were none.

Pushing away the people who actually cared.

He carefully puts down the fragment, avoiding cutting
himself.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

The monster wasn't out there. It was in here.

It was me.

24. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Richard sits with Gregory, looking more subdued than usual.

GREGORY

How's therapy going?

RICHARD

Hard. Really hard. Dr. Schoffer thinks I
might have narcissistic personality disorder.

GREGORY

That's... a lot to process. How do you

feel about that?

RICHARD

Scared. Relieved. Confused. All of it.

It explains so much, but it also means...

I've hurt a lot of people without even realizing it.

GREGORY

Realizing it now is what matters. What's the next step?

RICHARD

Treatment. It's not curable, exactly. But it can be managed. With work. A lot of work.

GREGORY

You can do it. I've seen you put in work before.

RICHARD

This is different. This is... admitting I'm not who I thought I was. That the story I've been telling myself was a lie.

GREGORY

That takes courage, man. Real courage. Richard nods, fighting back tears.

RICHARD

I want to talk to Sophia. To apologize.

Not to get her back—I don't deserve that.

But just so she knows... I see it now.

What I did.

GREGORY

One step at a time. Focus on your healing first.

25. INT. JOB INTERVIEW - DAY

Richard sits across from an interviewer, more humble than we've

seen him before.

INTERVIEWER

Your qualifications are impressive. But there's a gap in your employment. Can you explain that?

RICHARD

Yes. I was let go from my previous position due to behavioral issues. Issues I've since been addressing through therapy and personal development.

INTERVIEWER

That's... unusually honest.

RICHARD

I'm trying a new approach. Honesty. Accountability.

I can't promise I'll be perfect, but I can

promise I'm working on being better.

The interviewer looks impressed despite themselves.

26. INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

WS

Richard sits across from Dr. Schoffer, looking out the window at

the setting sun. Its golden light bathes the room.

DR. SCHOFFER

Hey, Richard, it's been a while since

I've seen you. How have things been?

CU

RICHARD

She left me.

DR. SCHOFFER

I'm so sorry, Richard. Would you be

comfortable talking about it?

RICHARD

I mean, yeah, that's why I'm here, right?

Richard looks up at the sunset, its beauty a stark contrast to

his inner turmoil.

RICHARD

The thing is... I understand why she left.

I wouldn't want to be with me either.

DR. SCHOFFER

That's a significant insight, Richard.

RICHARD

Doesn't make it hurt any less.

Richard continues to gaze at the sunset, watching as it slowly

disappears below the horizon.

27. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

Richard looks down at his sink as he begins shaving. The water

swirls down the drain, reminiscent of the setting sun from the

previous scene.

MS

RICHARD (V.O.)

Everything was different without her. It

wasn't even about me anymore. Part of me

really felt bad, really cared, wished I

could've done anything other than what

I did. She was good for me. Perfect,

really. Nothing will ever come close to

how much of a loss I feel.

As he shaves, Richard begins to see himself clearly for perhaps

the first time. Each stroke of the razor reveals not just skin,

but truth.

RICHARD (V.O.)

But perfect wasn't what I needed. I needed

to see myself. Really see myself. And that's

something no one else could do for me.

Flashes of Sophia and Richard happy are shown / B-roll of a happy

couple shown with him shaved, contrasted with images of their

arguments and his solitary reflection.

28. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

CU

Richard is looking into the mirror in the bathroom, perplexed.

RICHARD (V.O.)

I didn't know my duality. I didn't know

how to accept it. I didn't understand it.

But I wanted to try. Not just understand it—

I wanted to heal.

Richard shaves. This is the moment Richard decides to get his

act together, to move beyond understanding to recovery.

RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Vulnerability wasn't easy. Accepting my

faults and reflecting sometimes seemed impossible, but I was willing to try. Not just for me, but for everyone I'd hurt. For everyone I might hurt in the future if I didn't change.

As he finishes shaving, Richard looks at himself with new eyes—

not with narcissistic admiration or self-loathing, but with honest acceptance.

29. INT. DR. SCHOFFER'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard sits in a group therapy session led by Dr. Schoffer.

Other patients are present but not focused on.

DR. SCHOFFER

Would anyone like to share today?

After a moment's hesitation, Richard raises his hand.

RICHARD

My name is Richard. I have narcissistic personality disorder. And I'm here because I want to learn how to live with it without letting it control me or hurt the people around me.

DR. SCHOFFER

Thank you for sharing, Richard.

RICHARD

For a long time, I thought I was special.
Better than everyone else. But also that
no one understood me, that everyone was
against me. It was... exhausting. Living
that way. Always on guard, always needing
to be the best, always feeling attacked.
He takes a deep breath.

RICHARD

I lost my job. I lost my wife. I nearly
lost myself. But I'm starting to see that
maybe... maybe I'm not special. Maybe I'm
just human. And maybe that's enough.

30. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Richard sits alone, reading. Sophia enters, sees him, and
hesitates. After a moment, she approaches.

SOPHIA

Richard?

He looks up, surprised.

RICHARD

Sophia. Hi.

SOPHIA

Gregory told me I might find you here.

Is it okay if I sit?

RICHARD

Of course.

She sits across from him, both awkward.

SOPHIA

You look... different.

RICHARD

I feel different. I am different. Or trying
to be.

SOPHIA

Gregory mentioned you've been seeing someone.
A therapist.

RICHARD

Dr. Schoffer. He's good. He's helping me
see things I couldn't before.

SOPHIA

I'm glad.

RICHARD

Sophia, I owe you an apology. Many apologies.
For how I treated you. For Carolyn. For
everything.

SOPHIA

Thank you for saying that.

RICHARD

I don't expect forgiveness. I just wanted
you to know that I understand now. What I did.

Who I was. And I'm working to be better.

SOPHIA

That's all anyone can do, Richard. Work to be better.

A moment of understanding passes between them.

SOPHIA

I should go. But... I'm happy for you, Richard. Truly.

She stands to leave.

RICHARD

Sophia?

She pauses.

RICHARD

Thank you. For everything you tried to do.

It wasn't your fault it didn't work. It was never your responsibility to fix me.

Sophia nods, tears in her eyes, and leaves. Richard watches her

go, sad but at peace.

31. INT. RICHARD'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Richard is unpacking boxes in a smaller, simpler apartment. Gregory helps him.

GREGORY

So, new job, new place. Fresh start.

RICHARD

As fresh as it can be when you bring yourself
along.

They both laugh.

GREGORY

Seriously though, I'm proud of you, man.

This hasn't been easy.

RICHARD

No. But necessary.

Richard unpacks a framed photo of himself and Sophia. He
looks

at it for a moment, then places it on a shelf.

GREGORY

You still miss her.

RICHARD

I always will. But I understand now that
loving someone means wanting what's best
for them. Even if that's not you.

GREGORY

That's... surprisingly wise.

RICHARD

I have my moments.

They continue unpacking in companionable silence.

32. INT. RICHARD'S NEW OFFICE - DAY

Richard sits at his desk, working. Robert approaches.

ROBERT

Richard, how's the Johnson account coming?

RICHARD

On schedule. I should have the preliminary report by end of day.

ROBERT

Great. And the team meeting this afternoon?

RICHARD

I've prepared my section. And I've been working with Gregory on his presentation—he had some great ideas I thought we should incorporate.

Robert looks pleasantly surprised.

ROBERT

That's... collaborative of you.

RICHARD

I'm learning that other people have valuable perspectives. Sometimes even better than mine.

ROBERT

Well, keep it up. It's working.

He walks away. Richard returns to his work, a small smile on

his face.

33. INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richard sits at a small desk, writing in a journal.

RICHARD (V.O.)

Day 127. The urge to prove I'm better than others was strong today. Especially in the meeting when Gregory got credit for an idea we developed together. Old me would have made sure everyone knew my contribution. New me recognized that wasn't necessary. The work matters, not who gets credit.

He closes the journal and looks at a small meditation altar he's set up.

RICHARD (V.O.)

The hardest part isn't changing behaviors.

It's changing the thoughts behind them. The constant voice that says I'm either perfect or worthless. That everyone is either for me or against me. Learning to live in the gray area between extremes... that's the real work.

Richard sits in meditation, his face peaceful despite the ongoing struggle within.

34. INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

Richard sits at a table with Carolyn. They're having a civil conversation.

CAROLYN

I was surprised you wanted to meet.

RICHARD

I wanted to apologize. For using you.

For not being honest about my situation.

CAROLYN

I'm a big girl, Richard. I knew what I was getting into.

RICHARD

Maybe. But I didn't. I was running from myself, from my problems. You deserved better.

CAROLYN

We all make mistakes. The important thing is learning from them.

RICHARD

That's what I'm trying to do now. Learn. Grow. Be better.

CAROLYN

Sounds like old you and new you are pretty different people.

RICHARD

Not entirely. We share the same memories, the same scars. But new me is trying to learn from them instead of being defined by them.

CAROLYN

That's... really self-aware.

RICHARD

It's a work in progress. Some days are better than others.

CAROLYN

Isn't that true for all of us?

Richard smiles, genuinely.

RICHARD

Yes. I'm learning that too.

35. EXT. PARK - DAY

Richard walks alone, peaceful. He sees a family—mother, father,

child—playing nearby. He watches them, not with envy but with

a kind of acceptance.

His phone rings—it's Dr. Schoffer.

RICHARD

Hello?

DR. SCHOFFER (V.O.)

Richard, just checking in. We missed you at group yesterday.

RICHARD

Yeah, sorry about that. Work emergency.

But I'm still practicing the techniques.

Still journaling.

DR. SCHOFFER (V.O.)

Good to hear. How are you feeling?

Richard looks at the family again, then up at the sky.

RICHARD

Like myself. For maybe the first time ever.

Not perfect. Not terrible. Just... me.

DR. SCHOFFER (V.O.)

That's all any of us can be, Richard.

RICHARD

I know that now.

Richard continues his walk, the sun warm on his face, the path

ahead clear but not without its challenges. And for now, that's

enough.

FADE OUT.

THE END