

Grievances of the Poor:
The Upper Class

*"Everyone understands the drive.
And it's what will get us through to the end.
Hope."*

SCENE 1: The Search

EXT: City sidewalk

Crowded city street. People wrapped up in clothing. It's wintertime and it's almost Christmas. Not much snow on the ground, but cold air lingers with the sun shining in the sky.

We see people walking in groups and alone, but the jovial atmosphere stays.

There's one person with a stiff limp walking against the current. He's easily visible due to the amount of people avoiding to go near him. A well dressed man who blatantly avoids him. A woman in yellow walks briskly past the limping man.

This is all seen by a man in an office on the 7th floor. This is Patrick Colson.

Patrick is looking at the street below. A co-worker walks up from behind.

Patrick turns and sees his co-worker. Patrick looks back to the street.

Patrick (ushering to the people below)
"How can there still be poverty if we live like this?"

Co-Worker
"Because life's not fair to them."

The co-worker speaks bluntly.

Patrick
"Can't we do anything?"

Co-Worker
"No. There's a reason for everything. It's best not to change things.

(Pause)
Are you going to be ok? I know that deal was less than optimal, but you still obtained another high-paying client for the company."

Patrick
"I'll be fine."

The co-worker leaves Patrick. Patrick stays watching the crowd below. A homeless man with a limp continues to walk down the street and the woman in yellow and well dressed man ignoring him.

FADE TO:

Patrick enters his apartment. A large luxury condo overlooking the city. Large windows display the picturesque skyline of a beautiful city. Faint car horns can be heard many stories below.

Patrick

"Hello?"

Patrick calls to the room. A voice replies, 'I'm in the study'. Patrick puts his keys in a bowl by the door and hangs up his coat. He walks to the study to see his wife, Zaynab, reading. Papers are on a table, her email is open on her computer. Notes are cover her papers detailing meetings with principals of local schools. Books line the shelves of the study.

Zaynab puts her book down.

Zaynab

"How was your meeting?"

Patrick collapses into a chair across from Zaynab.

Zaynab (contin)

"Pat what's wrong.

(Pause)

Are you ok?"

Patrick sits silently. Struggling to find the words.

Patrick

"I - I don't know

(pause)

I don't know"

They sit together quietly. Zaynab knows something is wrong, but she's patient with him.

Zaynab

"Let's go to lunch. Maybe something will come to mind."

Patrick is relieved. A break is exactly what he needs.

Patrick

"Where do you want to go?"

Zaynab

"I already made a reservation at Joe Allen's for us"

SCENE 2: The Kitchen

Joe Allen's restaurant. The restaurant is hectic. It's almost Christmas. Friends and family dining together. George Gershwin's 'The Man I love' plays in the background of the afternoon chatter. Patrick & Zaynab sit at a table talking.

Patrick

"Your painting looks great. It's coming along well."

Zaynab

"Yeah, I've been trying to look from different perspectives. It's not done yet."

Patrick

"And you're writing a book and running a business. I have no idea how you manage everything."

Zaynab (laughs)

"It's stressful at times. But it's possible."

Patrick sees a waitress walking up to them.

Waitress

"Anything I can get to get you started?"

A customer yells from across the room.

Patrick and Zaynab see the waitress being stressed out from the rude customer.

Patrick

"It's ok."

Zaynab

"We'll look at the menu for now. Thank you."

Waitress

"Thank you. I'll be back when you're ready to order."

The waitress quickly walks over to the yelling customer.

Patrick

"It's tough. I know that feeling."

Zaynab noticing a shift in Patrick's tone to somber.

Zaynab (concern)

"So..what happened today at work?"

Patrick makes wavering eye contact.

Patrick

"We were making a deal with another company and investing in a new technology that's likely to make money in the long run."

Zaynab

"But what makes this one different?"

Patrick is dumbfounded at himself.

Patrick

"I don't know. Just-just something...didn't sit right."

(pause)

Like what's the point? What's the point of what I do? I-I I invest in something or partner with another company. What's the point? To make more money?"

Zaynab lets him speak. Patrick has been waiting to get this out.

Patrick

"None of that would last. When I'm gone, who will know that I was here or-or what will be different because I was here?

(pause)

I have all this money and nothing to show for it."

They sit together. The noises of the restaurant become audible. A waitress, seeing them in conversation, waits in the background to take their order. Zaynab waits to see if he has more. Patrick seems exhausted from talking but relieved that he was able to articulate his feelings.

Patrick

"These waiters and waitresses provide more value than I have done in my entire life."

Zaynab

"No one will ever make something that can withstand time. I don't think you should compare your achievements to that.

(pause)

But that doesn't mean you can't provide value. Charity is a good start but--"

Patrick

"-But it isn't sustainable. Donating money won't solve problems."

Zaynab

"If you want to make a difference, focus on sustainability."

Patrick (nods)

"The board is not going to like this."

Zaynab

"Don't worry about them. This is bigger than them. You give the orders."

The waitress returns to the table.

Waitress

"Thank you for waiting. Can I take your order?"

SCENE 3: Reconciliation

Winter has come. Snow drifts fill the streets. Children play outside on their day off of school. People trudge through the snow going home or to work. Patrick stands before the board of 5 executives.

Patrick

"By improving infrastructure and donating to the homeless, we can provide longer term aid and reduce homelessness. And we can improve public opinion. It's a win-win for everyone."

The members think about this.

Board member 1

"And how will this impact us in the future?"

Patrick

"We'll boost company morale--"

Board member 2 (to member 1)

"-we'll have to cut back on programs and reduce salaries and maybe cut some people."

Patrick (concern)

"we can't do--"

Board member 3 (to entire board)

"Layoffs might be our best bet. I've noticed a few stragglers."

Patrick

"wait--"

Board member 5 (to member 3)

"Can we make up the loss? The shareholders would riot if we didn't."

Board member 4 (to member 5)

"I can handle the shareholders. We need to decide how we're going to finance this in the long run."

The board continues their conversation ignoring Patrick. Over their conversation, Patrick shouts.

Patrick (shouting)

"HOLD ON!"

The board quiets down realizing that Patrick is still here.

Patrick

"We can't lay people off. It'll undermine the good we're trying to do."

Board Member 2

"Patrick, I don't know of another way we can make your idea feasible. Now the board--"

Patrick

"How about pay cuts for the executives? We can handle it."

The board laughs.

Board member 1 (laughing)

"We don't do pay cuts. We let people go. Simple as that."

Patrick

"But we can't let people go. We need--"

Board Member 2 (stern)

"We need money. If there's no company, your idea won't work."

And the shareholders--"

Patrick (agitated)

"I DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT THE SHAREHOLDERS.

(pause)

We need to give back so that we don't turn into them. So that we aren't another Goldman Sachs or Deutsche"

The board stays silent. They look at each other, silently communicating.

Board Member 2

"Pat, we've given you our attention. And I have to ask, what's the point?"

Patrick (out of breath)

"what?"

Patrick stupefied by the bluntness and idiocy of the question.

Board Member 3

"What's the point? You save a few birds there. Plant a tree here or give spare change to a homeless bum. What's the point? They'll all be gone anyway and probably won't thank you for it. It won't matter what we do. We can't change their situation. They are poor and we're not."

Board Member 2

"The world's already a circus show and plenty of people trying to change it. And look how far they've gotten. And how much good they've accomplished.

(pause)

Patrick, you haven't given us any reason to consider this."

Patrick (blurts without thinking)

"To give the people hope"

Some of the members laugh condescendingly.

Board member 1 (laughing)

"We can't sell hope. We're not in the hope business. We're not-thank god- a nonprofit because we're not naive. Money is the why the Earth spins. Money is the reason why -"

Patrick

"-there are rich and there are poor. I know the speech. You can't just -"

Board Member 1 (not listening)

"-I intend to be on top. So why do I care if some bum makes a buck fifty a day and has no place to sleep at night. If God made us in his image, then he's got a cruel sense of humor."

Board Member 3 (laugh)

"I hate those religous nuts. Why don't they ask God why there's disparity then I'll donate."

Board member 4 (calm, to Patrick)

"If we do this, then won't every group in need of help crawl out of the woodwork? Teachers unions, clinics, schools?"

Patrick

"I can only hope so."

The board quiets down.

Board member 4

"Thank you Patrick. We'll let you know what we choose."

Patrick leaves the boardroom. Murmurs of conversation is heard behind Patrick.

Patrick walks down the hall and waits for the elevators. Soon a board member walks to him.

Board member 4

"The board voted against you and believe you're no longer necessary to this company."

Patrick

"wait-are you"

Board member 4

"Effective immediately.

(pause)

I'm sorry Patrick."

Patrick

"No.....that's - it's ok."

The board member begins to walk away. After a few feet, the member turns around.

Board member 4

"Let me know how I can help."

The member walks away. Leaving Patrick standing alone by the elevators. The elevator door rings and Patrick walks in. The elevator has one other person.

Patrick runs through ideas in his head. 'Do I have the capital to start another company'. 'Who would I contact?'

The door opens to another man in a suit. The person in the elevator with Patrick referred to the man in the suit as Jackson.

Jackson was an inventor. Patrick took notice of it.

Patrick (V.O)

"Inventor? Initiative, creativity. Sounds like a leader that I could use."

The elevator doors open & Patrick exits.

CUT TO:

Patrick in his loft with Zaynab. He's researching who would work with him. Zaynab walks over & looks at who Patrick is researching.

Zaynab
"Who's Jackson?"

Patrick
"He's an inventor I saw in an elevator looking for a job. Thought I'd hire him."

Zaynab walks back to her work and continues writing.

Patrick continues to reach out to his contacts about starting a company, Aspire.

Patrick (V.O)
"Even the rich don't go poor like the rest. Both Jackson & I lost my job, but I still have my house and wonderful wife to help pay as well. I hope he's doing well."

Patrick looks out the window. A snowstorm rages. The snowflakes cover the ground in a blank white sheet, as if giving us another chance to start over.

Patrick (V.O)
"All this money. All these projects. And nothing to show for it. I got lucky. Lucky to have this money and life. Being fired was the best thing to ever happen to me and the worst for everyone else. Not anymore.

(pause)
Winter is often considered a dead time of year. The snow paints the ground white. A new canvass is here. We can change. I can change. I've been on the ground. I know the insatiable desire for comfort and permanence, but me and those who I work with slave away everyday making sure everyone else stays where they are. Not anymore. Everyone has the drive. Everyone understands the drive. And it's what will get us through to the end. Hope."

THE END