

THE APPLICANT

Written by Bob Slaymaker

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EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

PETER SIMON, 60, retired, looks down at the casket of his long-time wife, DEB, which has been lowered into the grave. Their son BRAD, 35, and daughter KATE, 33, stand on either side of him. Book of Common Prayer in hand, the MINISTER picks up a palmful of dirt, tosses it on the casket.

MINISTER

...through our Lord Jesus Christ,
we commend to Almighty God our
sister, Deborah...

Peter tosses a handful of dirt on Deb's casket.

MINISTER

...earth to earth, ashes to ashes,
dust to dust...

Brad and Kate cast their handfuls of dirt on the casket. The OTHER MOURNERS follow suit.

MINISTER

...the Lord make his face to shine
upon her and be gracious unto her,
the Lord lift up his countenance
upon her and give her peace. Amen.

Two CEMETERY WORKERS shovel dirt on Deb's casket and Peter starts sobbing. Brad and Kate put their arms around him.

KATE

It's gonna be all right.

But from the look of Peter, it's not going to be.

INT. SUV - DAY

Fresh from the cemetery, Peter sits in the passenger seat. Brad drives. Kate and her husband TOM, 36, sit in the middle row, with their kids MARGARET, 7, and JACK, 6, in the back seat.

KATE

(to Peter)

I'm going to stay with you a few
days.

PETER

What about the kids?

KATE

They'll go back with Tom.

Tom nods.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Holding hands, Peter and Kate walk slowly along a path.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peter and Kate prepare dinner.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter and Kate sit on the couch, reading.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Peter pulls the car to the curb.

He pops the trunk and removes Kate's suitcase.

KATE

Make sure you call if you need
anything

(Peter nods; they hug)

You promise?

(Peter nods)

Tell me you promise to call if you
need anything?

PETER

I promise to call if I need
anything.

KATE

(kisses him)

All right. Hang in there.

Kate walks away, looks back to see him entering the car,
then continues on her way.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Looking shabbier since Deb passed, Peter eats breakfast.
Everything has been kept as if Deb still lives there.

He looks forlornly across the table at her unoccupied place
setting.

FLASHBACK

MONTAGE:

Peter and Deb sit at the kitchen table, wearing yellow
rubber gloves.

DEB
Ready to hit it?

PETER
Let's do this bad boy.

They leap into action and begin cleaning out the refrigerator.

With two brooms, they sweep the kitchen floor.

With two mops, they mop the kitchen floor.

They clean the bathroom.

They clean their office, which houses their desks, diplomas, certificates, and photos of their successful psychologist-professor (her) and controller-CFO (him) careers.

They use Pledge on the living-room furniture and shelves.

They rearrange the magazines on the coffee- and end-tables.

Finished cleaning, they plop onto the couch and remove their rubber gloves.

DEB
(perky)
You know what we should do tomorrow?

PETER
What?

DEB
Hike in Harriman.

PETER
It's supposed to rain.

DEB
I got us two sets of rain gear.

As Deb heads to the bedroom, Peter reaches for his book, and finds his place.

DEB (O.S.)
(laughing)
You remind me of that agoraphobic I treated. The guy who wouldn't leave his apartment. Remember?

PETER
(calling out)
Vaguely. Did you cure him?

DEB (O.S.)
No.

PETER
Then what makes you think you'll
cure me?

DEB (O.S.)
My new goal is to get you to go
out once a day.

PETER
Good luck with that.
(content)
Why should I go out when I've got
you here?

As Peter turns the page, Deb struts in like a model on a catwalk. She wears a new pair of rain pants, a new rain jacket, and a new poncho over her backpack. She strikes a runway pose.

DEB
(affected)
What do you think of my outfit?

PETER
Lovely.

DEB
It's stylish and it'll keep me--
and my backpack--dry in the rain.
(Peter smiles)
Pretty soon, everyone in New York
will be wearing it.
(heads toward bedroom)
C'mon, let's see if yours fits.
(Peter marks his place,
follows)

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peter looks longingly at Deb's unoccupied place setting.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Kitchen garbage bag in hand, Peter heads to the front door,
opens it.

INT. ELEVATOR BANK - DAY

Distracted by a memory of Deb, he presses the elevator button.

FLASHBACK

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clad in pajamas, Peter sits in a chair beside the bed, open children's book in hand. In flannel pj's, Deb runs in and jumps on the bed.

DEB

(kidlike)

It's my night, my night, my night!

(climbs under covers, gets comfortable)

What do we have?

PETER

Frankie the Frog.

DEB

Yay, my favorite!

PETER

(reading)

"Frankie the Frog lived all alone in Frogland. He was a fat, happy frog who got along with everyone.

DEB

(fading)

He must have been nice.

PETER

(smiles)

"One day, a tadpole named Wally swam over to Frankie...

(Deb's eyes start to close)

... 'Why are you always so happy, Frankie? Whether it rains or shines, the weather's freezing cold or boiling hot, you always have a smile on your face...'"

Deb is asleep now, looking happy and content. Peter closes the book and kisses her gently on the forehead. He quietly turns off the light, walks around to his side of the bed, and climbs in.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Still daydreaming of Deb, Peter walks aimlessly, garbage bag in hand. TITO, the super, heads to their building.

TITO
(concerned)
Mr. Simon, where you going with
that?

Peter snaps out of it. Embarrassed, he shakes his head and heads back toward their building.

TITO
(taking garbage bag)
I'm going to the basement. I'll
throw it out for you.

PETER
Thanks.

TITO
(looking back)
You okay?

PETER
Yeah. Thanks, Tito.

TITO
No problem.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter reads Frankie the Frog in bed. His eyes start to close. He shuts the book and places it on his nightstand, beside Deb's portrait. He moves her portrait to her nightstand.

He puts his arm around the body pillow lying beneath the covers where Deb used to lie. He stares at her portrait.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Finished brushing his teeth, Peter returns his blue toothbrush to its slot. He stares at Deb's pink toothbrush.

He tosses her toothbrush in the waste basket, opens the medicine cabinet, and begins throwing the rest of her toiletries in the trash. Then he stops, horrified by what he has done.

He picks up the waste basket, carefully returns each item to the cabinet.

PETER
(at wit's end)
You need to get out.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Dressed to go out, Peter exits.

EXT. CHAIN DRUG STORE - DAY

Peter enters the store.

LATER

A few items in his basket, Peter waits in line.

LATER

It's Peter's turn at the register, a long line behind him. He reads the YOUNG CASHIER's nametag.

PETER
(fatherly)
Hi, Lashawna. How are you?

LASHAWNA
(aloof)
Fine.
(loudly to Manager)
Darius, call Carmen, I need backup.

PETER
They should pay you extra for handling this long line by yourself.

LASHAWNA
(still aloof)
Six sixty-seven.
(loudly to Darius)
Darius, call her! Her break is over!

Peter swipes his card, answers the prompts, and Lashawna hands him his bagged items and receipt.

PETER
(supportive)
All right, Lashawna, hang in there.

LASHAWNA
(ignores him)
Next!

Somewhat dejected, Peter exits the store.

INT. DINER - DAY

Peter sits alone at the counter, slowly eating a bacon cheeseburger. The booths are filled and it's a busy lunch hour. The WAITSTAFF runs around trying to keep everyone happy. VALENTINE, Peter's waiter, quickly stops by.

VALENTINE
(in a rush)
Everything okay, my friend?

PETER
Did the Knicks win last night?

VALENTINE
I don't know. I find out for you.

Valentine runs around doing fifteen things at once. He asks a CO-WORKER something, then hurries back to Peter.

VALENTINE
They won.

PETER
(as Valentine rushes off)
Thanks.

LATER

Peter pays the busy CASHIER. The place is a madhouse and the Cashier has no time for chitchat.

CASHIER
Thank you--come again.

PETER
Busy today, huh?
(but the Cashier is so busy,
he hasn't heard Peter)
All right then, have a good one.

Peter exits, feeling more alone than at home.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Drugstore bag in hand, Peter enters. He tosses the bag on the chair and removes his coat.

PETER
(disappointed)
So much for that.

The phone RINGS. Peter answers it.

PETER
Hello?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brad stands, phone against his ear. Behind him BOBBY, 10,
and LISA, 8, kick a soccer ball back and forth.

BRAD
Hi, Dad. How are you doing?

INTERCUT

PETER
Fine. I'm fine.

BRAD
(to Bobby and Lisa)
Stop kicking the ball in the
house.

Bobby and Lisa stop kicking the ball.

PETER
You taking them to the park?

BRAD
Yeah. How you holding up?

PETER
I'm okay.

Bobby and Lisa resume kicking the ball, almost knocking
over a lamp.

BRAD
Give me the ball!

Lisa hands him the ball.

PETER
Go ahead--take them to the park.
I'm fine. Don't worry.

BRAD
All right. But call if you need
anything, all right?

PETER

I will.

Peter hangs up. He absentmindedly walks to the...

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHROOM - DAY

...where he studies the empty bathroom.

FLASHBACK

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Wearing rubber gloves, Peter finishes washing the dishes and starts wiping off the counter.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Deb reads a book on the couch.

DEB

(calling out)

Is it your night?

INTERCUT

PETER

(childlike glee)

Yes.

DEB

Let's do it now before I fall asleep.

Peter enthusiastically removes his gloves, and heads to the...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

...where like a kid, he enjoys a bubble bath.

DEB (O.S.)

Ready to come out?

PETER

(childlike)

Yes.

Smiling, Deb enters with a super-plush beach towel. She lets the water out. Happily Peter rises from the tub and Deb throws the towel around him. She towels him off as she would a child, and Peter plays the part.

DEB
(baby talk)
Did you have a nice bath?

PETER
(childlike)
Yes.

DEB
Did I put in too much bubble bath?

PETER
No.

DEB
There were just enough bubbles?

PETER
Yes.

She finishes drying him off and grabs a bottle of lotion from the sink ledge. She applies the lotion to his back.

PETER
(pleasure)
Aaaah.

DEB
Feels good?

PETER
Mmm-hmm.

Deb slaps his butt playfully.

PETER
(turns with mock childlike
irritation)
Hey!

Smiling, Deb finishes moisturizing him.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHROOM - DAY

Peter stands there, looking sadly at the empty bathroom.

MONTAGE:

Peter cleans out the refrigerator.

He sweeps the kitchen floor.

He mops the kitchen floor.

He cleans the bathroom.

He cleans his and Deb's office.

He carefully dusts their picture on the living room bookcase, then turns to the room's entrance.

FLASHBACK

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter sits on the couch, engrossed in his book. Deb walks in and stands there, trying to get his attention. Slightly annoyed at her interruption, he looks up and she playfully flashes her breasts, then exits. Not understanding what that was about, he goes back to his book.

A few moments later, Deb reappears, naked.

Peter looks up from his reading.

Deb holds out her hand.

DEB

Come.

Peter marks his place and stands.

PETER

So that's what you want.

Deb smiles and leads him by the hand toward the bedroom.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter stands there, looking at the empty entrance. He closes his eyes and sighs. These memories of Deb are tormenting him.

He considers something for a good while, then walks to the...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

...where he sits at his desk and powers on his computer.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Peter sits opposite DAN O'HARA, late-20's, an executive recruiter. Behind Dan are photos of his wife and five-year-old son.

DAN

We don't usually see a resume posted from someone of your caliber/experience.

PETER

I'd like to give back. Help a smaller company. Maybe one that's struggling.

DAN

(nods, looks at resume)

You've been out of the market for a bit.

PETER

My wife and I retired. But then she died. She was in perfect health. She just died in her sleep.

DAN

I'm sorry.

(beat)

Any kids?

PETER

Two. And four grandchildren. But they live pretty far away.

Dan smiles and nods.

DAN

(beat)

Can I ask a personal question?

PETER

Sure.

DAN

You've worked really high-end positions at top companies. Do you need to work, financially?

PETER

No.

DAN
Not at all?

PETER
Not at all.
(beat)
But I want to.

Dan nods.

DAN
Normally you'd be too experienced
for this position. But if you're
willing to take what they can pay,
and use your experience to help
them, they might be interested.
Let me talk to my client.

PETER
Great.

The phone RINGS and Dan answers it.

DAN
Hello?
(listens; as if to child)
Really?
(listens)
Are you all right?
(listens)
Where's Beatrice?
(listens)
Go tell her. She'll take care of
it.
(listens)
All right, pal. I'll see you
tonight. I love you.

Dan hangs up.

DAN
(to Peter)
My son. Says a giant, black and
green spider crawled through the
window and broke the vase.
(Peter smiles)
I think he's going to be a fiction
writer.

PETER
A science-fiction writer. With a
vivid imagination. And a flare for
detail.

DAN

Right.

PETER

The key to a great story is detail.

DAN

He's full of details.

PETER

(fondly)

A giant, black and green spider.

(beat)

Maybe you can enroll him in a creative writing class.

DAN

At five?

PETER

These days they teach physics in kindergarten.

DAN

When I was five I could barely tie my shoe.

PETER

At his age, my generation wasn't even walking.

Peter and Dan laugh.

INT. ELEVATOR BANK - DAY

Dan walks Peter to the elevator, both men grinning.

DAN

(hearty handshake)

Peter, thanks for coming in. I'll talk to my client, see what he says.

PETER

Great, Dan. Have a wonderful day.

Both men still smiling, Dan walks away and Peter presses the elevator button.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peter eats his breakfast and reads a book. The phone RINGS. Surprised anyone is calling him, he looks at the phone a moment, then answers it.

PETER

Hello?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Dan O'Hara sits at his desk, phone against his ear.

DAN

(enthusiastic)

Peter?

INTERCUT

PETER

Yes?

DAN

Hey, this is Dan O'Hara.

PETER

(brightening)

Oh, hi, Dan. How are you? How's our favorite science-fiction writer?

DAN

Great. No new stories yet. But I'm sure he'll come up with one soon.

PETER

(smiling)

Hey, don't rush him. Creativity takes time.

DAN

I spoke to my client, and he'd very much like to meet you.

PETER

(beat)

Oh, I appreciate that, Dan. But, you know, I thought it over, and I'm not ready to go back to work. I'm still grieving.

DAN

I understand, Pete. But you've taken the first step to moving on by meeting with me. Meeting my client would be another step forward.

PETER

I hear what you're saying, Dan. And I appreciate it. [But for now, I'm sticking with my decision.] If I change my mind, I'll call you. I'm really sorry for wasting your time.

DAN

You didn't waste my time. It was a pleasure meeting you.

PETER

Same here. Say hello to our favorite science-fiction writer.

DAN

Will do.

Peter hangs up, feeling bad about having used Dan for the human interaction.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Peter strolls along the sidewalk, looking for someone to talk to. He approaches a MAN his age.

PETER

(friendly)

Nice weather, huh?

MAN

(gruff)

I hate this fucking weather.

PETER

Sorry. What kind of weather do you like?

MAN

San Diego weather. I should be there now, but my fucking wife wanted to come up and see her fucking dying mother. I wish the old bitch would just die, so we'd be done with her.

PETER
(moving on)
All right. Good luck.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter reads a book on the couch, but can't concentrate. He puts the book down and switches on the TV. He channel-surfs. Not finding anything he likes, he switches the TV off, and without purpose he wanders to the...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

...where he sits at his desk. He surveys what's on the desk, then turns on the computer.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Peter sits opposite HR Director PAM SNEED.

PAM
Well, your resume's impressive.
I'll see if our CFO wants to meet
you.

PETER
Great.
(beat)
How have you guys fared the last
few years?

PAM
Frankly, since the clunker
program, we've been in trouble. It
was a nice shot in the arm for the
new-car industry--

PETER
But it took away your inventory.

PAM
Right.

PETER
They should've offered people the
same credit for clunkers traded in
for used cars.

PAM
Exactly. Then it would have helped
the entire auto industry,
including we used-car dealers.
(smiles at something in
Peter's resume)
My son went to Cornell.

PETER
(incredulous)
You have a college-aged son?

PAM
And daughter.

PETER
How old are you?

PAM
Forty-two.

PETER
My god, you look thirty.
(Pam blushes)
I'm serious. What's your secret?

PAM
Good genes, I guess.
(afterthought)
And eight hours of sleep just
about every night of my life.

PETER
I can't believe you're forty-two.

PAM
I didn't use to like looking
younger...

PETER
...but now you don't mind it so
much.

PAM
(laughing)
Not at all.

Peter enjoys Pam's laughter.]

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Peter lies in bed, eyes open, waiting.

CARD: THREE MONTHS LATER

The clock-radio turns on.

YOUNG RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...it's seven-ten, Monday morning,
the start of another work week.
Time for traffic and weather,
sponsored by...

Peter rises enthusiastically, quickly steps into his slippers, and marches into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Peter showers.

LATER

Robe on, Peter shaves.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dressed for an interview, Peter carries his breakfast tray and book to the table. He sits, eats, and reads.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Raring to go, Peter puts on his suit jacket. The phone RINGS and he answers it.

PETER
Hello?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

GAIL SADLICK, a young executive recruiter, sits at her desk, Peter's resume in hand.

GAIL
(on speakerphone)
Peter Simon?

INTERCUT

PETER
Who's calling, please?

GAIL
Gail Sadlick, from ExecuTalent. I was very impressed with our meeting last week. I have a better position than the one you came in for. A position more suited to a man with your credentials.

PETER
(apologetic)
I'm sorry, Gail. I'm still not
interested.

GAIL
(dramatic, subtly pleading)
I think you're perfect for this
company.

PETER
And I'm sure the company's perfect
for me. But I'm not ready to go
back to work.

GAIL
Anyone come to mind who might be
interested?

PETER
(wracks brains)
No, Gail. I'm sorry.

GAIL
Well, if you think of someone, or
if you change your mind, please
let me know.

PETER
I certainly will, Gail. I
certainly will.

Peter feels bad as he hangs up the phone. He starts to pick
up his briefcase, but the phone RINGS again.

PETER
Hello?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

HARVEY PIERSON, another young executive recruiter, studies
Peter's resume.

HARVEY
(on speakerphone)
Peter Simon?

INTERCUT

PETER
Who's calling, please?

HARVEY

This is Harvey Pierson, from Top Executive.

PETER

(brightening)

Oh, yes. Hi, Harvey.

HARVEY

Thursday at nine is fine.

PETER

(writes appointment in planner)

Oh, that's great.

HARVEY

Please bring two copies of your resume.

PETER

Of course. Absolutely.

HARVEY

I'm looking forward to meeting you.

PETER

Me, too, Harvey. I'll see you then.

Peter hangs up, grabs his briefcase, and heads out.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Peter enters the lobby.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Peter stands before a very young receptionist, BETTY, at Johnson Engineering. He checks her nameplate.

PETER

(fatherly)

How are you today, Betty?

BETTY

Good, thanks. And you?

PETER

Great. I'm Peter Simon, here to see Prima Shah.

Betty dials Shah's extension.

BETTY
Peter Simon's here.

Peter watches Betty turn the framed photo of a young man--her boyfriend or husband--face down on the desk.

PETER
Guy problems?

BETTY
Yeah, I think it's time to end it.

LATER

Peter relaxes at the receptionist's counter, still talking to Betty. The phone at the reception desk RINGS non-stop but, engrossed in her conversation with Peter, Betty doesn't hear it.

BETTY
(very appreciative)
Maybe that'll make him respect me more. I'll try it. Thanks, Mr. Simon.

The HR Director, PRIMA SHAH, 47, appears, looking somewhat distracted and down. Betty notices Prima and the RINGING phone and answers the call.

PRIMA
(offering hand)
Peter?

PETER
(shaking)
It's a pleasure to meet you, Prima.

PRIMA
Likewise. This way.

As Prima leads Peter away, Betty gives him a thumbs-up sign, and mouths the words "Good luck."

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Prima sits behind her desk, Peter in the guest chair.

PRIMA
Your background's very impressive.
Can I ask what you've been doing since your last position?

PETER

I retired. Then my wife passed.
Now I'd like to work again.

PRIMA

(softens)

I understand.

(beat)

Well, as you know, we're looking
for a controller. He or she
reports directly to our CFO.

(Peter nods)

You're obviously qualified, having
served as controller at some super
companies.

(Peter nods appreciatively)

The total compensation is probably
not what you're used to, but we
don't have much wiggle room.

PETER

I'm willing to take less if I can
help you guys succeed. I assume if
things work out, you'll take care
of me.

PRIMA

Of course.

LATER

Peter listens sympathetically.

PRIMA

He left my daughter last spring.
With two young children to care
for. Can you imagine? Thank god my
husband and I earn enough to help
her out.

(Peter nods)

I'm sorry. This is so
unprofessional.

PETER

Nonsense. Would you like some
water?

PRIMA

Sure. If it's not too much bother.

PETER

It's no bother at all, Prima.

Peter stands to get her water.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Prima and Peter stand in the reception area.

PRIMA
(extending hand)
I'll talk to our CFO. Give me a
few days.

PETER
(shaking her hand)
Take as long as you need. Thanks
for meeting me. And hang in there.
Your daughter's probably better
off without him.

Prima nods.

Peter heads to the elevator, then turns and waves to Prima,
and Betty at the desk behind Prima. Both women smile warmly
and wave back.

MONTAGE:

The clock-radio changes to 7:10 and Peter springs out of
bed.

Peter finishes doing his tie in the mirror.

Peter grabs his suit-jacket and briefcase and rushes out.

Peter and YOUNG INTERVIEWER 1 talk pleasantly.

Peter answers the phone--YOUNG INTERVIEWER 2's at the other
end--and writes in his planner the interview date and time.

Peter and YOUNG INTERVIEWER 3 laugh heartily.

YOUNG INTERVIEWER 4 listens with interest as Peter expounds
on a point.

INT. PETER'S PLACE - DAY

Peter enters, calm and happy after a morning interview. He
puts away his briefcase and coat.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Peter makes a sandwich.

LATER

Peter sits at the table, eating his sandwich, now and then
looking at the unoccupied place setting across from him.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter reads The Very Hungry Caterpillar in bed. His eyes start to close. He places the book on the nightstand, embraces the body pillow, and addresses Deb's portrait.

PETER

What I'm doing to keep afloat
without you. Unbelievable.

(sighing)

All right, sweetie, goodnight.

He turns off his light, tightens his hold on the body pillow.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

As Peter lies in bed, eyes open, the clock-radio turns on.

YOUNG RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The weekend's finally here. Hope
you have great plans. It's sunny
and forty-eight at seven-ten.
Going up to fifty-nine today...

Frowning, Peter turns off the clock-radio and unenthusiastically rolls over.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Unshaven, dressed in robe and slippers, Peter glumly pushes away the breakfast tray with his uneaten breakfast. His book lies unread. He looks longingly at the empty place setting opposite him. Behind him the clock reads eleven.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Still wearing robe and slippers, Peter lies on his unmade bed, depressed. He unhappily flips through the channels with the remote.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Peter sits on a bench. He looks at the TEENAGE BOYS playing basketball nearby. He smiles at a passing COUPLE. They smile back and walk on. Although out in the world, he is very much alone.

A young girl, JESSICA, and her MOTHER pass, holding hands. Peter smiles at Jessica, who looks at him and stops her Mother.

PETER

Hi.

JESSICA

Hi.

PETER

What's your name?

JESSICA

Jessica.

PETER

Jessica. What a pretty name.

JESSICA

We're going to a birthday party.

PETER

You are?

The Mother tugs Jessica's hand.

MOTHER

Come on, Jessica. If you stop and talk to everyone, we'll never get there.

(to Peter)

I'm trying to get her to the party before it ends.

(Peter smiles; to Jessica)

Say "goodbye," Jessica.

JESSICA

(to Peter)

Goodbye.

PETER

(waving)

Goodbye.

The Mother and Jessica walk on, leaving Peter alone on the bench. Peter closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK - DAY

Barefoot, carrying their socks and shoes, Peter and Deb stroll on the grass. Deb holds a folded blanket and does a little modern dance. Peter follows, carrying their picnic basket.

DEB

(sing-song)

It's Tues-day and no one's he-re.

PETER
(smiling)
Ah, retired life.

DEB
(playful)
You don't miss the office? The
rush-hour commute?

PETER
(sarcastic)
Right.

DEB
I got you out of the house today.

PETER
You tricked me.

They kiss. Deb spreads the blanket on a patch of shaded grass, and they set their shoes on the corners. They lie on their backs. Deb props her head on Peter's chest, and they interlace fingers.

DEB
Tired of me yet?

PETER
(kissing her hand)
Nope. Check with me in another
thirty years.

DEB
I will.

They relax, a long-married couple deeply in love.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Peter opens his eyes, still alone on the bench.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

In robe and slippers, printout of an online ad in hand, a depressed-looking Peter dials the phone.

VOICE (V.O.)

You have reached the law firm of Taylor & Feldman, LLP. If you know your party's extension, please dial it at any time. For a list of departments, please press one...

(Peter presses one)

For Accounting, press one, Human Resources, press two.

(Peter presses two)

Hello, you've reached the Human Resources Department. To speak to Marie Balco, dial 107, Latrease Jackson, 213, William Mayer, 113...

Peter writes down the three extensions and dials 107.

INT. MARIE BALCO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Large trash can on wheels behind her, a foreign-born YOUNG CLEANING WOMAN empties the wastebasket beneath Marie Balco's desk. As the Young Cleaning Woman prepares to insert a new plastic bag, Balco's phone RINGS loudly. The Young Cleaning Woman looks at the caller ID, which reads PETER AND DEBORAH SIMON.

INTERCUT

Peter frowns as he gets voicemail.

MARIE BALCO (V.O.)

Hello, you've reached Marie Balco in Human Resources. I am either away from my desk...

Peter hangs up and dials again.

VOICE (V.O.)

You have reached...

Peter dials 213.

The Young Cleaning Woman empties the wastebasket at the first of two desks outside Marie Balco's office. The phone rings beside her--she again sees PETER AND DEBORAH SIMON on the caller ID. It's as if the caller is calling wherever the Young Cleaning Woman is. She lets it RING.

LATREASE JACKSON (V.O.)

...Hi, this is Latrease Jackson. I'm not available now, but if you leave your name and number...

Peter hangs up and dials a third time.

VOICE (V.O.)

You have reached (the law firm
of)...

He dials the last extension, 113.

The Young Cleaning Woman empties the wastebasket at the second desk outside Marie Balco's office. The phone on the desk RINGS. She looks at the caller ID--PETER AND DEBORAH SIMON once again. Intrigued, she goes to answer it, hesitates, then picks up the receiver.

PETER

Hello, human resources?

YOUNG CLEANING WOMAN

(heavy accent)

No here. Tomorrow.

PETER

I'm sorry, hon, could you repeat that? I didn't understand.

YOUNG CLEANING WOMAN

I say, no one here. It Sunday.

PETER

Mmm.

YOUNG CLEANING WOMAN

Call tomorrow.

PETER

Sure, I'll call back tomorrow.

(beat)

How are you tonight?

YOUNG CLEANING WOMAN

Good. Call back tomorrow.

PETER

(not wanting to hang up)

Okay. I'll call back tomorrow.

(beat)

It was nice talking to you.

(beat)

Have a nice evening. Goodbye.

CLEANING WOMAN

Good bye.

Peter reluctantly hangs up.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Peter lies in bed, eyes closed, as the clock-radio turns on.

YOUNG RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
It's Monday morning, time to drag
your butt back to work. Hope you
had a great weekend. I did. It's
seven-ten, time for...

Peter opens his eyes reluctantly. He grudgingly steps into his slippers and trudges into the bathroom. He is tired of this routine, but it's the only thing keeping him afloat.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Peter showers without enthusiasm.

LATER

Peter shaves even less enthusiastically. He cuts himself.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dressed in suit and tie and reading a new book, Peter eats his breakfast. The phone RINGS. Peter grudgingly answers it.

PETER
Hello?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

ALAN WONG, young thirties, sits at his desk, phone in hand.

ALAN
Is this Peter Simon?

INTERCUT

PETER
Who's calling, please?

ALAN

Alan Wong, from Bernard Grant & Associates. Two months ago, you interviewed for a position--
 (picks up book on desk)
 --by the way, thanks for introducing me to John le Carré; my wife and I have now read just about all his novels. Anyway, I think your background's perfect for a CFO spot we have.

(Peter doesn't say anything)
 Peter? Are you there?

PETER

(tired of lying)
 I'm sorry, my situation's changed.

ALAN

You're working now?

PETER

No.

ALAN

I'm sorry, I don't understand. Are you still looking for a position?

PETER

(fed up with routine)
 I have to go. I'm sorry.

Peter hangs up. He looks around the room[, POUNDS the table].

PETER

I DON'T NEED A JOB! I'M JUST
 LONELY [AND PATHETIC]!

The phone RINGS and he rips the phone cord from the wall. He returns to his breakfast and book. He opens his planner, looks at the 9 AM appointment, then in disgust throws the planner across the room.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Reluctantly Peter grabs his briefcase and heads out.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Peter enters the lobby.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

On his way to the reception desk, Peter approaches UNHAPPY MAN, fiftyish, who's headed to the elevator.

PETER
(forced enthusiasm)
Hi. Lovely day, isn't it?

UNHAPPY MAN
(grumpy)
How can a workday be lovely?

Peter watches as Unhappy Man presses the elevator button repeatedly.

PETER
Why do you keep pressing the button?

UNHAPPY MAN
The more I press it, the quicker it comes, and the sooner I retire.

PETER
I hope retirement's better for you.

UNHAPPY MAN
Anything beats dragging your butt to the office five days a week.

PETER
(low)
I don't know about that.

Peter turns to FLORA, the receptionist.

PETER
Hi. Peter Simon to see Gerald Benchley.

FLORA
I'll let him know you're here.
Please, help yourself to something in the conference room.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Peter enters and is surprised to find ANNIE WILCOX, an attractive woman his age, carefully serving herself fruit salad. (Beside "Man," who Peter talked to on the sidewalk, and "Unhappy Man," Annie is the first person since Deb and the funeral mourners near his age.) It's as if he's

staring at an apparition. Annie notices Peter staring at her.

ANNIE
(cheerful)
Hello.

PETER
Hi. What position are you here
for?

ANNIE
Marketing Director. How about you?

PETER
Controller.

ANNIE
(extending hand)
I'm Annie. Nice to meet you.

PETER
(shaking)
Peter. My pleasure.

Peter lays his briefcase on the table, grabs a small plate,
and joins her around the fruit-salad bowl.

PETER
I hope I'm not being sexist and
ageist by saying this--I probably
am, but I hope you'll forgive me:
What's a lovely woman your age
doing interviewing for work?
(Annie says nothing, just
looks at him)
Why aren't you enjoying retirement
with your partner?

ANNIE
Why aren't you enjoying retirement
with your partner?

PETER
My wife died three months ago.

ANNIE
It's two years since my husband
passed.
(Peter nods respectfully;
long beat)
It's a lovely day, isn't it?

PETER
It is a lovely day.

ANNIE
It's a spectacular, gorgeous day.

Peter smiles as they carry their plates to the table. Peter pulls out the chair for her.

ANNIE
Why, thank you. You're a gentleman.

PETER
I'm a little out of practice.

ANNIE
That's okay.

They shyly pick at their fruit salad, as if on a first date.

PETER
Do you have kids?

ANNIE
Yes. A son and a daughter.

PETER
Do they live in the area?

ANNIE
No, unfortunately. My son lives in San Diego, and my daughter's in Seattle.

PETER
(sadly)
So far away.

ANNIE
Yes.
(beat)
But they're both doing wonderfully, which is what counts, right?
(Peter nods)
Do you have kids?

PETER
(nods)
Two. One in Minneapolis, another in Austin.

ANNIE
Also far away.

PETER
(sadly)
Yeah.

A few pleasant moments pass between them as they eat their fruit salad.

PETER
Can I be honest with you?

ANNIE
Why not.

PETER
(beat)
I don't need to interview.
(beat)
How about you?

After a moment, she shakes her head, a slight smile on her face.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Peter and Annie spy on Flora, waiting for her to walk away.

GERALD BENCHLEY (O.S.)
(calling from office down
hall)
Flora?

FLORA
Coming.

When Flora's down the hall, Peter grabs Annie's hand and they dash for the elevator.

Peter presses the button repeatedly and finally the elevator door opens. They rush in and Annie quickly presses the lobby button. They stand side by side, looking mischievously at each other, as the elevator doors close.