

CONCENTRIC

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FADE IN ON:

EXT. URBAN SIDEWALK - LATE AFTERNOON

Unseen footsteps pound pavement. Ragged gasps of breath.

A young female voice cries out:

HEDY (O.S.)
You don't know what you're doing.
Stop!

Swinging a tattered briefcase, MARK (skinny, 20s in a *not* fashion forward ripped tee) runs like demons nip his heels.

If so, his demons... are nowhere to be seen.

But HEDY (20s, pretty despite the start of worry lines around her eyes and mouth) IS.

A necklace with a silver ATOM trinket glints around her neck.

Long hair flying, she races after Mark - not far behind. She reaches for his collar, nets only air.

Mark zips between sidewalk PEDESTRIANS.

Accidentally hits one. Oof! The man bristles.

PEDESTRIAN
Watch where you're going, pal!

Hedy leverages the moment to snag Mark's sleeve. Eyes wide, he swings around.

And scans the street for - who or what? We've no idea.

HEDY
Mark, it's not worth it. Give it
back.

MARK
I told you not to follow me!

Mark hitches a thumb to his left.

MARK
Go away.

HEDY
Excuse me?!?

MARK

I mean, go *that* way. I'll call later. Promise. Hope to die.

HEDY

You keep this up, I wouldn't be surprised!

Mark yanks free of Hedy, barrels on.

Spun off balance, Hedy's CELL PHONE smashes to the sidewalk. Expensive glass and plastic flies.

HEDY

Fuck!

Hedy stares at her crippled phone.

Mark's making tracks in record time. Sophie's choice - what to do? Abandoning the destroyed tech, she takes off after him in hot pursuit.

Mark darts between more PEDESTRIANS, veers right.

Towards a sign that blinks: Hotel Planck. Dead ahead.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Mark zips past a lobby desk like it's not even there. Receptionist DOBSON (30s, bookworm-bored) yawns.

DOBSON

Hey, Mar-

Mark blows by, and beelines for elevator banks.

Screeching to a halt, he smashes the "Up" button frenetically - as if extra clicks would speed things up.

Elevator lights descend. 4th Floor. 3rd. A leisurely pause.

MARK

Shit on a shingle! Come on!

The way Mark's vibrating from adrenaline, he could spontaneously combust.

Across the lobby, Hedy bursts in.

Just as the elevator doors slide open.

Zeroing in on Mark, Hedy darts past the main desk, too.

Dobson waves to her, annoyed insolence in his eyes.

DOBSON

There's a sign-in. Excuse me, Ms.?

Mark rolls his eyes, and yanks Hedy into the elevator.

A move she wasn't prepared for. Hedy trips over the metal threshold, almost falls. Mark sticks his head out the door.

MARK

She's with me, Dobson. All's cool!

Mark waves at the receptionist.

The elevator doors slide shut on Mark's forced smile; erasing the couple from Dobson's view.

On the elevator panel, buttons light up as the car rises. 1, 2, 3... All the way to the top floor, Five.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

The scuffed number on the door indicates "5E". But whatever you call it, it's a shit hole. Sears furnishings, 1973.

Then neglected every decade since.

Mark races in, the briefcase pin-balling off obstacles.

A dinged-up wall. The dresser. A hapless floor lamp gets whacked over, too.

Hedy flies in next, eyes wide.

HEDY

Mark, give it to me!

Mark slams the door. Locking the deadbolt, he spins around and cradles the briefcase like a child.

MARK

I thought you "didn't want anything to do with this."

HEDY

I don't. Neither should you!

She grabs for the briefcase again. Mark recoils.

Dumping it on the bed, he tries to open it.

MARK
Crap. It's locked?

He 180's the room, scans for tools.

Hedy looks around, wild-eyed too.

HEDY
This is where you're staying?

MARK
I told you. It's just for a while.

HEDY
Three months isn't "temporary."

MARK
I've got Craigslist open houses
scheduled for next week. You know
trying. Gimme time!

Hedy skims a finger over a food stain on the dresser. Makes a
disgusted face: ewwww.

HEDY
No wonder we've been going out
every night.

Mark runs to the nightstand.

Shoving an ALARM CLOCK aside, he yanks out a drawer, roots
around. Finds nothing useful inside.

MARK
Fuck, fuck, fuck!

HEDY
You're telling me?

Mark dumps the drawer's contents on the floor. Accumulated
junk vomits across a threadbare rug:

An old digital CAMERA. Pill BOTTLES. Art pads, pencils, pens.
A pack of CONDOMS.

Those catch Hedy's attention. She stares.

But misses the flathead SCREWDRIVER, which Mark scoops up.

MARK
There it is. Score!

He dives on the briefcase, jimmies the lock.

Hedy grabs her boyfriend from behind, tries to pull him back.

HEDY
Don't open it.

MARK
Give me one good reason why not?

HEDY
It's not a felony if you leave it closed?

MARK
(laughs)
Good thing you're not in law school. That lame ass argument would win us twenty years to life!

The screwdriver slips, scrapes Mark's palm.

MARK
Ow!

HEDY
Oh god. Let me look at that.

Bucking Hedy off, Mark leans hard against the screwdriver.

MARK
Nah. Let's look at *this* first.

CRACK! The lock snaps loose.

Mark boo-yahs. Hedy gasps.

POV FROM THE SUITCASE

Mark pops it open, stares down. A silly grin on his face.

MARK
Wow. It's... beautiful.

He turns to Hedy, musing.

MARK
How deep do you think it goes?

Reaching into the briefcase, he extracts...

BACK TO THE BEDROOM

Several crumpled HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS. Mark waves them triumphantly in Hedy's face.

MARK

See this? All our problems, solved!

HEDY

Uh, why's it loose like that?

MARK

What?

HEDY

Bankers and drug dealers-

MARK

You think that guy was *Wall Street*?
With that coat?

HEDY

No. But money from folks like
that... gets stored in stacks.

MARK

Who cares? Now it's ours!

Scooping Hedy up, Mark twirls her around. He zeroes in for a
kiss. Hedy shoves his face to the side.

HEDY

I'm not part of this.

MARK

I asked you to go left. You want
out now? There's the door!

Giggling like a kid on Christmas, Mark digs into the
briefcase for handfuls of more "presents".

MARK

This is at least a hundred
thousand. Imagine what this could
buy?

CLUNK. Mark's eager fingers hits...

Something that's so not paper. Mark stops, feels around.

Hedy squints into the briefcase.

HEDY

What's that - a false bottom?

Brushing away crumpled Benjamins, Mark exposes...

A SMALL METAL BOX.

MARK

Oh. That. I forgot.

He wraps on the cover with a curious knuckle.

MARK

Kinda like a Russian nesting doll.
Wonder what's behind Door #2?

Mark test-wiggles the latch. CLICK. Unlike its "big brother", this tiny container ISN'T locked.

Mark moves to open it. Hedy grabs his arm.

HEDY

Don't.

Mark's a pro at not listening. He pops the box open, frowns.

MARK

No stolen diamonds? What a gyp.

HEDY

Electronics. A remote control of some kind?

Mark reaches in, grabs something.

MARK

A funky Amazon Fire Stick. Who carries shit like *this* around?

The device instantly starts to BEEP.

Mark and Hedy gawk at the gadget: a rectangular hunk of plastic and metal.

Strange symbols cover multiple buttons and switches. Wires bristle from both sides.

Mark and Hedy wince at the device's high pitched whine.

MARK

Well, today's officially taken a downturn.

HEDY

You triggered an alarm!

Mark flips the gadget over, discovers a DIGITAL COUNTDOWN. The display reads: 4:53 minutes.

MARK

What the fuck. A bomb!?!?

Holding the device at arm's length, he races for the window.

It's locked. Mark fumbles on the sill for a latch. Finds it... strangely removed?

Mark yanks upward. The pane won't budge.

He rabbit punches the glass. Which proves tougher - and higher quality - than it looks.

MARK

Ow!

Hedy races to the front door. Tearing it open, she freezes at the sight of:

INT. HALLWAY

Dobson and a slim POLICE OFFICER IN UNIFORM, huddled at the far end of the hall.

Half the lights burned out long ago in this neglected corridor - so shadow hides both faces well.

Hedy gasps. The two turn towards the sound.

She reflexively ducks back into the room.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

And spins around to Mark.

HEDY

The cops are here.

MARK

Crap. Lock the door!

HEDY

Are you kidding? They can help!

MARK

You think admitting to felony theft, and handing a live bomb to a cop is cool?

Grabbing the gutted night table drawer, Mark rams it at the window. Wood splinters, but the glass isn't even scratched. The damned thing's shatterproof.

MARK

Fine. Plan B.

Mark races with the device towards the bathroom.

Hedy follows, terrified. But too curious to stay clear.

INT. BATHROOM

Mark twists the bathtub faucet. Plugs the drain. Water ROARS.

HEDY

What the fuck are you doing?

MARK

The only thing that keeps us
alive... and outta jail!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dobson and the cop stop near 5E. Dobson shakes his head...
pulls the cop further along.

INT. BATHROOM

The water quickly deepens. Hedy's panic does, too.

The counter on the device beeps ominous news. 2:08, 2:07 now.

Mark wraps the gadget in a dirty towel. Looks like laundry
hasn't been on Mark's to-do list for a long, long while.

Hedy wrinkles her nose, but reaches for the bundle.

HEDY

Let me see that first!

MARK

Baby, please. Just leave the room.

HEDY

I'm not going to let you do two
stupid things in one day. I demand
a quota. I won't leave you -

MARK

Alone? Yeah, now you really should.

Mark shoves Hedy out of the bathroom, locks the door.

As she bangs on it from the other side, Mark gulps and turns
back to the tub.

The water's nearly overflowing.

He turns off the faucet. Rusty as it is, that takes work.

The wrapped device emits muffled BEEPS. Mark cradles it like a squalling infant -

Then plunges it into the bathtub with both hands!

Electricity sparks. Mark spasms.

He pitches forward, hair smoking. His cell phone falls in and sinks, too.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Hedy bullrushes the door with her shoulder. Wood CRACKS. But not enough.

HEDY

Ooof!

Hearing Mark scream and the splash, she tries again - efforts renewed.

This time, the flimsy door loses the fight.

INT. BATHROOM

Hedy rushes in. Her eyes inventory the scene:

The towel's floated open. Nestled between its folds, the submerged device blinks.

Mark's on his knees. Face first in the water - limp.

Hedy chokes, and races over.

POV OF THE TUB

Mark doesn't seem to be breathing. Left-over bubbles float leisurely upwards - pop.

Underwater, the device BEEPS.

At the tub's surface, the faucet drips. Concentric circles spread outward from each impact. Bloop.

Hedy wails - a muffled sound to Mark's ears.

Unexpectedly, the world *tilts*...

EXT. PARK - DAY - FLASHBACK

Mark and Hedy perch on a craggy boulder, overlooking a pond.

Mark eyes a tree critically. Sketches it via an ART APP on his cell.

Hedy cradles a used textbook in her lap. She scribbles notes on a NOTEPAD - kinetic energy in every word she transcribes.

Nearby, an OLD MAN sits alone on a bench.

Wrapped in a ratty trench, he leans on a cane besides a now familiar BRIEFCASE, tosses crumbs to PIGEONS on the path.

Mark adds a few artistically placed WATER WAVES to his tree drawing. Then erases them, just as quick.

MARK

Nah. Something isn't right.

Annoyed, he chucks a pebble into the pond below. BLOOP!

Drawn by the sound, the old man looks up. He smiles strangely at the couple.

Then refocuses on his hungry, feathered friends.

Mark scowls at the old man.

MARK

Perv.

(to Hedy)

That old guy was staring at your legs.

Hedy doesn't bother to look up, or check that out.

HEDY

No, he wasn't. Maybe you were.

MARK

How would you know? Your nose never leaves that book.

HEDY

I'm positive as a proton. Not everything's about sex. Stop being so jealous all the time.

She glances quickly at the old man.

HEDY

See? Perv alert cancelled. The poor old guy's just feeding birds. Which makes him innocent. Good hearted, too.

MARK

Hope I'm never lame like that.

Mark's focus turns back to the pond.

Rings spread on the surface from pebbles he's tossed, a pattern which leaves Mark curiously entertained.

He chucks another rock. Harder: bloop!

Hedy dodges the splash-back.

HEDY

Watch it, Mark!

MARK

I am. This is cool.

HEDY

And you think feeding birds is "lame"?

Hedy glares at Mark. Then the water.

HEDY

It's just a wave. Big old whoop.

MARK

I thought waves and geeky science stuff turned you on.

HEDY

Basics like that's old school.

She nods to notes in her lap.

HEDY

Now, in this double slit quantum experiment-

MARK

(giggles)

Heh. You said "slit". I'm telling!

Hedy elbows Mark, who nearly slips off the boulder's edge.

Stabilizing - eyes still locked on the water - he selects a third stone to throw. Weighs it carefully in his hand.

Hedy scrutinizes her boyfriend. Puts two and two together.

HEDY

Are you high right now? Tell the truth.

MARK

High? Well, this rock *is* at least five foot off the ground. You're the math nerd, Heds. Crunch the numbers, lemme know.

HEDY

Don't dodge!

She leans in, stage-whispers.

HEDY

Are you stoned?

MARK

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, let the record show, Hedy said "Stoned!"

With that proclamation, Mark chucks the rock - tries to skip it across waves this time.

This splash-back drenches both Hedy's notes, and her shirt.

She yelps, dabs the paper frantically with a sleeve.

Bad move. The ink blurs. She waves the pad in the air to dry.

Mark laughs at her panic. Flipping Hedy into pissed-off mode.

HEDY

This is so not funny.

MARK

Oh, it so is.

HEDY

Ruining a semester's notes is no joke!

Mark grabs the notepad, flips through. Doesn't try to read the content, of course.

MARK

It's not like I fried an iPad.

HEDY

Like we could afford a tablet these days. Pft.

MARK

The water just got one page. Look!

Hedy grabs a corner of the notepad. Tugs.

Mark refuses to let go; leaving the pad suspended over water... a paper prisoner in a desperate tug of war.

MARK

Man. If I let go now, we'd both better pray this pad's more waterproof than it looks.

HEDY

Don't goof around, Mark!

MARK

I thought you dug my "funny side."

HEDY

Funny and sober. After the eviction, you promised -

MARK

I'm not high. You're paranoid.

(beat)

And maybe you're projecting. You know how you get on weed.

He releases the notebook.

Hedy *almost* drops it, but course corrects just in time.

Hyperventilating from the near-tragedy, she clutches the notepad to her chest. Tears glisten in her eyes.

Which kills Mark's goofy smile.

Suddenly serious, he reaches for Hedy, tries to brush a tear from her cheek.

Not buying it, Hedy scoots backward on the rock.

Mark laughs. Infinitely more tender, this time.

MARK

Afraid your face will smudge, too?

HEDY
(sniffles)
My makeup? Maybe. Jerk!

Mark ropes an arm over Hedy's shoulder, pulls her close.

MARK
This isn't really about some stupid
notebook, is it?

HEDY
It is! Well, other stuff too.

MARK
Is it about grades?
(mock-gasps)
Academic problems - you?

HEDY
Differential Equations? Please. I
owned that class from Day One.

MARK
Then what?
(mimics Hedy from before)
Tell the truth.

HEDY
I... I didn't get next year's
scholarship. Turns out, there's a
limit to how much they grant each
student. It's not like I can blame
them. They needed to give someone
else a chance, too. Funds are
limited. That's fair.

MARK
Not to you, it isn't.

He punches the rock. Cringes.

MARK
Fuck!

Hedy presses her face into Mark's chest. Her words come out
muffled, miserable.

HEDY
I've been thinking about ways
around this. I can take a year off,
work - and save up.

MARK

Work where? At Starbucks, as a barista?

(fakes a falsetto voice)

Sir, would you like to try our double slit latte? With almond milk, it's Quantum-liscous! Yum!

HEDY

Stop! There's always options.

MARK

Depends on your definition of "option". Wanna work at Walmart with me? With your skillz, that's an insult. And you're dreaming if you think that'd pay shit towards tuition. After taxes, subway fare, and rent? No way!

Mark stares around the park. Seconds ago, it resembled Eden. Now it's a hostile, barren place.

MARK

You deserve big time rest. But you shouldn't *have* to quit.

HEDY

(sighs)

Physics is studying how the world works. Turns out, it doesn't work *that* way.

MARK

For some of us. Welcome to You're-not-in-the-Big-Club.

Mark's eyes drift towards the old man on the bench. Who digs into his trench and pulls out:

A small METAL BOX.

The old man opens the briefcase, shoves it in. But not before Mark gets an eyeful of what's inside.

The old man's trench coat may scream poverty - but the briefcase is stuffed full of crumpled bills!

Mark gulps. Gripping Hedy tight, he whispers in her ear.

MARK

The world works in mysterious ways, after all.

HEDY

I'm the one studying quantum mechanics. You've no idea.

MARK

I do, babe. Just... trust me.

Mark evaluates the old man. A frail specimen, no doubt.

MARK

Hed's, let's brainstorm those "options" some more. Go get us coffee; the high-test stuff. Extra large. Time to splurge.

HEDY

Excuse me? I'm not your waitress. I'm no-one's waitress.

MARK

Yet.

As usual, bad choice of words. Hedy winces. Mark stammers.

MARK

I mean, there's a Starbucks over to the left, one block. Let's not argue. Please - go now?

Mark gauges the distance to bench and briefcase.

Eyeballs the shortest path to the street, too.

Standing up, he balances precariously on the boulder - shoots Hedy a cautious look.

MARK

Whatever happens, don't tell *anyone* you're with me.

HEDY

Why wouldn't I -

Mark blasts off the rock.

Before Hedy can process his actions, Mark snatches the old man's briefcase.

...and takes off like a bullet down the street.

Hedy races after him. Taking orders from a boyfriend's not her thing.

INT. BATHROOM - PRESENT

Peaceful, eerie silence. Mark floats in the tub, face down.

Hedy's screams mingle with beeps from the submerged device. Muffled sounds, they seem so far away.

The water's surface ripples as the faucet drips. Like it's ticking off seconds, telling time.

Until tranquility - and time - dissolves.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Leaning on the bed, Mark rummages through the briefcase. Curious, he holds up the device.

MARK

A funky Amazon Fire Stick. Who carries shit like this around?

Hedy double-takes.

HEDY

What?

Mark gawks at the device. Deja-vu spreads across his face. He drops the gadget like it's *literally* on fire.

Then falls back on the bed, out cold.

Hedy freaks. She shakes Mark, slaps him hard.

HEDY

God dammit. Damn you. Wake up!

She fumbles with CPR. For a few seconds, it's touch and go.

Until... Mark coughs into Hedy's mouth. She gags.

HEDY

Ugh.

Realizing Mark's breathing, her face lights up.

HEDY

Yes! Uh, no?

The two stare at each other. Reorienting to whatever just happened... is hard.

HEDY

Are you OK?

MARK
Where was I?

HEDY
In the tub. You almost drowned!

MARK
Did you bring me out here?

HEDY
No. I mean, I don't remember?

MARK
Neither do I. Except for water.
Lots of it. What the fuck? How
could we *both* zone out?

Awkward silence. Hedy squints at Mark's hair.

MARK
What?

Reaching out, she touches a few strands. Scrunches handfuls.

HEDY
Not even damp - how?

Hedy's shock quickly morphs to anger. She launches herself at Mark, hits him with everything she's got.

HEDY
This isn't funny!

Mark fends her off.

MARK
Do you see me laughing? I almost
got fried. Not you!

HEDY
Don't ever do shit like that to me
again!

MARK
Do what?

HEDY
(beat)
I'm not sure!

The gadget BEEPS against the bed's mattress. Mark flips it over, and reads the counter:

4:50 minutes left.

MARK

You've got to be shitting me.
Again?

Hedy and Mark turn towards the alarm clock. 5:05 PM.

HEDY

What time was it -

MARK

When we came in? I was too busy to
look. Did you?

He shakes the device experimentally. Hedy turns pale.

HEDY

Don't. It might explode!

Mark shrugs, keeps shaking. No drips. Like his hair, it's
bone-dry.

INT. BATHROOM - FLASHBACK

The device beeps at the bottom of the bathtub. Sparking.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - BACK TO PRESENT

Hedy grabs the gadget from Mark, turns it over in her hand.

HEDY

There better be a PAUSE button on
this. There *has* to be.

MARK

Who says? You and whose engineer?

HEDY

Because if it's triggered
accidentally - like now - you've
got to build in fail safes. Where
there's a start, stops exist too.
Technological ying and yang.

Hedy pokes the gadget. Bats Mark away when he tries to assert
control.

HEDY

You did your thing in the bathroom.

MARK

Excuse me? I did *what* now?

HEDY

Drowning this in the bathtub. You had your shot, now it's my turn! If anyone can figure this out without a manual, it's me.

(beat)

If only these buttons were in English. Doesn't resemble any language I know.

She grabs the alarm clock, compares the devices side by side.

HEDY

How do you set an alarm without Siri?

MARK

(sarcastic)

Depends on the brand, techno-girl. Is that *Radio Shack* or *PC Richards*? Look for a logo. There should be a sticker on the bottom, right?

HEDY

If I hold THIS button down, then flip this switch-

MARK

We could epically blow up. No thanks.

HEDY

It didn't detonate when you shook it. And after you gave it a bath-

MARK

Maybe it shorted out?

HEDY

And yet, it's working now.

MARK

Well, the *counter's* working. And is "Now" later or - uh - "before"?

Hedy freezes. She stares at Mark over the device.

HEDY

Don't even go there.

She eyes a side switch. Lightly pressing her finger against it, Hedy looks to Mark.

HEDY
Coin toss. Left or right?

MARK
(gulps)
Left, perhaps?

HEDY
Here goes. Pray for me. Us.

She flips the switch.

The device WHINES. A high pitched, craze-inducing SHRIEK.

Reflexively, Hedy drops the gadget on the bed. Picking it back up, she notices:

The countdown's accelerated.

Now just 2 minutes left.

Then 1...

Hedy grabs Mark, hugs him tight. There's no time to do more.

Time ripples. Skips.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Mark rummages through the briefcase; holds up the device.

MARK
A funky Amazon Fire Stick. Who
carries shi-

Realizing what's reoccurred, he drops the gadget.

The alarm clock's back on the night-table, flashing 5:05 PM.

MARK
Like this?

Hedy scoops up the device, and stares at the counter.

HEDY
This "shit's" deeper than you
think.

She flips the device's face to Mark.

It's still on fast forward.

5 minutes. 4. 3...

Hedy grits her teeth.

HEDY

Well, then. Right switch, it is.

She punches buttons. The counter ZEROES OUT.

Time again skips.

BEGIN MONTAGE

And so, experiments begin. In a dizzying, free-fall loop.

- Hedy tries different button combos. Nothing works.

- During one attempt, Mark grabs the device and storms to the window. It's still stuck. Despite brute force efforts, there's no way to chuck the device out.

- Another time skip. Mark darts for the exit. Hedy calls after him.

HEDY

You're not gonna leave me here?
With this?

MARK

Just temporarily.

HEDY

With you, "temporarily" means three months!

MARK

This thing's gotta have a range, right?

HEDY

Probably. So what?

MARK

If one of us breaks free, they can go for help. And there's only one way to find out!

Mark throws open the door -

And spots the police officer, still stationed in the hall.

INT. HALLWAY

Staring down at something in his hand. Though in shadow twenty feet away, it's impossible to see the officer's face.

Or tell what that *thing* is.

Mark evaluates the distance to the elevator. If he runs for it, who wins?

Behind Mark, something BEEPS.

Mark ducks back into the room, before the cop sees.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Locking the door, he whips around.

Hedy holds the device up, beams.

The counter glows, displaying a 10 minute countdown. And it's clocking at *normal* speed now.

HEDY
I did it!

MARK
(frowns)
Newsflash. It hasn't stopped.

HEDY
But I bought us time. That counts!

MOMENTS LATER

Hedy and Mark sit cross legged on the bed.

The device lies between them, pointing like a spinner in a kissing game - but with far more ominous results.

They stare at it, awestruck.

Inexorably, the gadget counts down. 8 minutes now.

HEDY
Time travel? This is nuts.

MARK
You're the science chick. Are you
sure there's no other explanation?

Hedy points at the alarm clock on the night table. Now it's flashing 5:07.

HEDY

I can't believe I'm saying this,
but - what other conclusion could
there be? Do you think I should try
different combinations?

She reaches for the device. Mark grabs her wrist.

MARK

That's an epic "no" from me!

HEDY

What've we got to lose?

MARK

Everything.

HEDY

There's got to be a kill button.

MARK

"Kill"? Bad choice of words, Heds.

HEDY

I mean, a way to turn this off. Or
extend the time we've got, at
least.

MARK

You went happy pushing buttons. Do
you even know which ones did the
trick?

HEDY

Not really.

(beat)

There wasn't time to take notes.

Awkward silence. What next? Who knows?

MARK

So, we're stuck forever - in a
hotel room? Why couldn't it be
someplace cooler than this? You
know, like Great Escape theme park?

Playfully, he spins the device like it's a game show wheel.
It rotates 180 on the bedsheets - slows.

Then stops, pointed nozzle-end at the room's door.

MARK

Maybe it's telling us something?

HEDY

If you think it's sentient, you're losing it big-time, Mark.

She stares at the door. Mental wheels turn.

HEDY

Though you *could* have been right before.

MARK

I was? Seriously? At what point?

HEDY

Maybe - in some ways - this thing functions like a mini black hole.

MARK

It's gonna crush us with gravity? Just when you think things can't get worse.

HEDY

No! But I'm guessing it's got an event horizon.

(Mark blinks, confused)

Before, you called it a "range". Remember when you started to leave? That's what we should both do. Now. Just walk away. Or better, run. Leave all of... this behind.

Excited, Hedy jumps up. Mark pulls her down.

MARK

We can't. That cop's still there. Staking us out!

HEDY

Don't be paranoid. Why?

MARK

We *did* just steal a shit ton of money. Duh.

HEDY

You did. I didn't.

MARK

I bet he followed us here. The good news: he didn't see me. He was busy tinkering with some device.

HEDY
(sarcastic)
You mean, like a cell phone or a
radio?

Mark's eyes grow wide. His voice drops to a whisper.

MARK
Maybe - somehow - that cop's
involved in all this weird stuff?

HEDY
Give me a break. You stole an old
guy's briefcase. Occam's Razor
applies.

MARK
What?

HEDY
In science and life, the simplest
explanation's usually best. Cops
and felony theft gravitate towards
each other.
(mimics Mark)
Duh.

The two lock eyes. The bickering energizes them both. Despite
the bizarre situation they're in, it's a comfy tradition
they've enjoyed many times before.

MARK
Hey, Science Girl - didja know your
theory's got a hole?

HEDY
A "black hole"?

MARK
Maybe. But "mini" ain't the word.
This one's big enough to stash this
whole hotel in!

HEDY
Really, Walmart Boy? Tell me more.

MARK
That old guy was at least seventy.
Maybe ninety. He could barely throw
bread crumbs five feet. Which makes
him a mummified wreck.

HEDY
Don't be ageist.

MARK

I'm not, just realistic. Both of us were running full tilt. There's no way he followed us here. He's got a cane!

Mark leans back on the bed, basks in an argument well won. Or so he thinks. Until:

HEDY

You stole that briefcase in plain sight. Maybe Mr. Cop saw your smash and grab routine?

MARK

You think I'm an amateur?

Hedy glares. Mark looks down.

MARK

I mean... don't get me wrong. I don't steal stuff. But I looked around first. And that uniform's impossible to miss.

HEDY

I was right behind you, remember? You were looking forward, not back.

MARK

(beat)

What if the briefcase has a tracking device?

Mark looks wildly around the room.

MARK

Where's that Occam's Razor when you need one?

HEDY

What?

The screwdriver glints on the floor, buried between pill bottles, condoms and junk.

Mark grabs it, fillets the briefcase. Rips out the lining.

Hedy grabs his arm.

HEDY

Stop - you're destroying it!

MARK

I'm "analyzing" what's inside. And
who cares about destruction now?

He nods at the device's countdown.

MARK

In a few minutes, it'll be good as
new!

A few more slashes, and the leather's shredded. Revealing:
Nothing.

Mark picks up what remains of the briefcase. He turns it
upside down, and shakes.

Loose \$100 bills fly like a green, paper blizzard.

But no tracker.

MARK

Fuck.

He turns to Hedy, bewildered.

MARK

That cop found us *somehow*.

Hedy holds up the device. It flashes 2 minutes. She smirks.

HEDY

Occam's Razor. What if the
tracker's in here?

Mark sags. Demoralized, he wanders around the room - randomly
scoops up fallen bills. Hedy watches, confused.

HEDY

Don't we have better things to do?

MARK

If we're gonna go through hell and
get arrested, I may as well make
sure we get paid.

Hedy swallows a gallow's humor grin.

HEDY

In a few minutes, the money will
pack itself back in that briefcase,
right?

(beat, grins)

HEDY (CONT'D)

And if we got arrested, we'd zap
out of our cuffs, too!

MARK

Unless the jail cell's outta range,
Houdini. In which case we're *also*
eternally fucked...

Mark reaches for another bill - wedged besides a HOTEL PHONE.
His eyes light up.

MARK

Unless -

Before Hedy can respond, time resets.

MOMENTS LATER

Sitting on the bed, Mark digs through the briefcase. Curious,
he holds up the device.

MARK

A funky Amazon Fire Stick. Who -
(beat, reorients)
Should we call? I know!

He tosses the device to Hedy, who juggles it like a hot
potato.

Digging into his jacket, Mark whips out his cell. The phone
drips water. It's completely fried.

Mark shrugs, throws it aside. Darting to the hotel landline,
he dials.

MARK

(into the phone)
Hey Dobson! My man, how's it
hanging?

He listens a few minutes.

Nearby, Hedy gestures frantically. "What are you doing"? Mark
waves her off.

MARK

(into the phone)
She's with me. Yeah, next time
we'll call ahead, reserve the
penthouse suite. What, I can't
bring girls in here? That wasn't
the contract I signed!

Mark's voice rises. Hedy gestures: "Tone it down."

Then mouths to Mark: "Speaker Phone"?

Mark complies, and aims for a less combative tone.

MARK

(into the phone)

Dobbie, I need a favor. This might sound... dicey. But I promise to make it worth your while.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

An apathetic Dobson plays a video game on his cell. He barely bothers to listen to Mark's words.

DOBSON

You clog the toilet again? Call your mommy, or a plumber. They don't pay me enough to sanitize what you call a life!

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARK'S ROOM AND RECEPTION DESK

A mortified Mark stares towards Hedy.

MARK

Hear me out. There's a cop stationed on our floor. Any clue as to why?

DOBSON

Got me. It could be any of the usual suspects. Jasmine in 5G. Or her customers, of course. Maybe the new guy in C? He looks uber sketchy, too.

(beat)

Of course, when they showed up and asked to look around, I immediately thought about how you... uh, arrived. But hey, that's your business. With me, you're a decent guy. But you do know if they bust down your door looking for stuff, you can french kiss your security deposit goodbye?

HEDY

(to Mark)

"Stuff"?

Mark kills the speaker, hisses into the phone.

MARK

My girlfriend and I need to leave unnoticed!

DOBSON

(laughs)

From what I saw, your girl's a hottie. Hold onto that attention getter, no matter how fast she runs!

MARK

Dobson, I'm not calling to shoot the shit. I need you to distract that cop - now!

Dobson raises a laconic eyebrow. Sets his game on PAUSE.

DOBSON

So, you are the culprit. What do I get for the added "room service"?

MARK

Uh, enough cash for that Playstation 5 you keep bending my ear about?

Turning away from Hedy, Mark whispers.

MARK

And some Oxy on the side.

DOBSON

The quality shit? Primo!

(frowns)

But if you're checking out, when and where does me getting paid come about?

MARK

Consider it the honor system. Look in the right side of your desk after we're gone. And sorry, but it won't be gift wrapped. Literally... we're on borrowed time.

DOBSON

It's a deal. On my way!

Mark hangs up, turns around. Finds a pissed-off Hedy in his face.

HEDY

You aren't clean, after all.

MARK

You heard that part? Oops.

HEDY

I didn't have to. I have eyes.

Hedy pouts, scoops a pill bottle off the floor.

HEDY

Lemme guess: these are Advil?

MARK

Would you believe, Motrin?

HEDY

Unless it's that time of month for you, no!

Mark races to the briefcase. Extracting a few bills, he scoops it up.

MARK

Let's talk about this later.

HEDY

Now.

MARK

(points at the device)

Before or after that thing resets?

HEDY

Why are you taking the briefcase?

MARK

Because we need the money.

HEDY

For what: drug deals?

MARK

No, for your college. In case you didn't notice, this whole situation was me - trying to help you!

HEDY

Getting arrested doesn't help anyone. And carrying that slows us down!

MARK

Talking's doing that, worse. When Dobson distracts the cop, we've got a small window of opportunity to slip down the stairs. And out of this hotel forever - before that thing pulls us back!

Mark points at the device. A sudden thought clouds his face.

Grabbing Hedy's notepad, he scribbles something - tears the page out.

HEDY

Hey!

MARK

It's water damaged, anyway.

HEDY

So much for "just one page."

MARK

Whatever. It may as well have *some* use.

Cradling the briefcase, Mark tiptoes to the door's peephole and squints out.

INT. HALLWAY

The elevator doors slide open. Looking more professional and perky than normal, Dobson strides out.

He beelines towards the Officer - over at the dark, far end.

The two chat (MOS). Dobson flashes a discrete "OK" sign towards Mark's apartment.

Mark eases the door open, careful not to make a sound.

Hedy steps in front, blocks his exit.

MARK

(whispers)

What now? It's "go" time!

HEDY

I, uh, I don't want to leave "it" behind.

MARK

Getting out of range; that's the idea, right?

HEDY

It's just... I'm never going to see anything like that again. I *need* to figure it out how it operates.

MARK

What the fuck for?

HEDY

So I can reverse engineer it. Someday?

MARK

You want to mass produce that sucker? This one's bad enough.

HEDY

I want to understand. Is that so wrong?

Mark groans, peeks out the door.

Dobson's chatting the officer up, like they're old pals.

The receptionist stares over the cop's shoulder - locks wide eyes with Mark. Dobson's silent, strung out expression screams: "What are you waiting for?"

Good question.

Mark grabs Hedy, and slips out with the briefcase.

As they reach the stairwell, Mark's shoe SQUEAKS.

The cop head-tilts. Dobson grabs his arm, voice rising.

DOBSON

You want anything to eat, drink? If you need *any* service, I'm your guy!

The cop shakes him off, turns around. And spots the stairwell's door closing.

Dobson gulps. Mouths to himself:

DOBSON

"Service"?

He face-palms.

INT. STAIRWELL

Mark and Hedy race down the stairs, panting.

HEDY
I think he saw us!

MARK
Don't stop.

HEDY
I wasn't planning on it!

MARK
No time to look, either!

Mark takes the steps, two at a time.

Hedy follows. Her heartbeat roars in her ears.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

The young couple jet out of the stairwell.

Behind them, heavier footsteps. Clearly the cop, in pursuit. Dobson's whiny, anxious voice echoes off cement walls.

DOBSON (O.S.)
Hey, see that fire extinguisher over there? You're the safety professional. Whaddya think about the sticker? Is the gear up to code? It's expired, sure. But does time *really* matter that much?

Mark races to the reception desk - stuffs a pill bottle and money in the right side drawer.

He and Hedy dart for the hotel exit.

Last second: Mark remembers something, spins around.

HEDY
Mark, they're coming. We have to go!

Fumbling in his pocket, Mark stuffs the NOTE he scribbled in the drawer, too.

On it: "Dobson, thanks for everything. Play a game or two for me. But whatever you do, don't go in Room 5E for awhile. Keep housekeeping far away, too."

Grabbing Hedy's hand, Mark races with the briefcase through the lobby.

Behind them, the cop emerges from the stairwell... though the reception desk blocks any clear view.

Spotting the couple, the officer reaches for a holstered GUN.

Mark and Hedy zip under the "Exit" sign, approach the hotel's glass double-doors.

Freedom's just inches - seconds - away.

Outside on the sidewalk: The old man hobbles into view.

And shoves his cane between the doors. No need for young muscle; the tip effectively jams them from swinging out.

Holding a withered hand against the pane, he locks eyes with Mark. Mark and Hedy screech to a halt.

Behind them, the cop aims.

MARK

Oh, shit.

HEDY

There's no escape!

BEEEEEEP. Time loops. Space does, too.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Sitting fully on the bed, Mark rummages through the briefcase. Curious, he holds up the device.

MARK

A funky Amazon Fire Stick.

The gadget's countdown starts again. Like clockwork.

Across the room, a terrified Hedy gapes.

Mark stares at the gadget in his hand. Then starts laughing.

MARK

(gasping)

Escapes don't get slicker than this!

HEDY

None of this is funny, Mark!

He pats his chest for bullet holes.

MARK

Yes it is! Guess this time remote's got more uses than we thought?

Hedy throws herself at Mark, pummels his chest.

HEDY

This is all your fault!

MARK

Calm down. We're cool.

HEDY

No. We're back to Square One!

Mark grabs her fists. Hedy struggles to break loose.

MARK

Shhhh. Let's...

(thinks quick)

Do the same thing, one more round. This time, we'll leave as *soon* as Dobson arrives. No more "discussion". That'll buy us a few important minutes.

HEDY

No, it wouldn't. Not if that man's at the door!

Mark's face falls. He lets Hedy go.

MARK

Good point.

He scans the room, desperate.

MARK

Maybe we're looking at this upside down?

HEDY

Really, Captain Obvious? We've looked at everything wrong thus far.

MARK

No! I mean, instead of us leaving this thing behind - we send IT away from us!

Grabbing a bedsheet, Mark wraps it around his hand like a boxer's bandage.

He picks up the screwdriver. Hedy pales.

HEDY
Planning on murdering another
innocent briefcase?

MARK
No. But when you've only got a
hammer - everything looks like a
nail, right?

HEDY
(dry)
That's a screwdriver, Mark.

MARK
Which is pretty poetic. Since
everything's so screwed up.
(beat)
I'm gonna get that window open
somehow. Throw this freaking time-
twister in a passing car!

He points at the window. Then stops and stares.

It's RAINING.

MARK
Huh. It wasn't doing *that* before.

Hedy checks the alarm clock. They're back to 5:06 again.

Eyes wide, Mark wanders to the window.

Looking down towards the street, he freezes at what's there.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Five stories down: the old man stands alone. An eerie dark
figure, leaning on his cane.

Opening an umbrella, he looks up.

Mark and Hedy recoil from the glass, and the old man's gaze.

HEDY
He wasn't there last time, either.

MARK
Things are... changing. Why?

HEDY

(beat)

I think I know. Each time well,
TIME loops, our actions affect the
stream - a bit. It's a theory they
call the Butterfly Effect.

Mark nods along with Hedy's words, numb.

HEDY

Wait. Do you know what that is? Or
are you "yes dearing" me, Mark?

MARK

You think I'm dumb? Occam's Razor.
Butterfly Effect. That's all easy
stuff. But-

Hedy crosses her arms.

HEDY

But what? Go on.

MARK

When time restarts, it's like
you're rebooting a video game,
right?

HEDY

You're the Gamer fanboy, not me.

MARK

No, no. That's Dobson's thing. But
when *our* "video game" resets,
everything should get wiped clean.
Back to start point, zero score.

HEDY

Not if you view time as a wave.
(on Mark's confused look)
Are you following me?

MARK

To the ends of the earth, Science
Girl. And time itself. Explain.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hedy and Mark stand over a now filled sink.

Mark holds up the DIGITAL CAMERA from the night table,
switches it on.

MARK

Thank god I never throw shit out.

Hedy twists the faucet off. It drips against the water's surface, generates ever widening rings.

She points to the outermost ring with the screwdriver.

HEDY

See?

MARK

Yeah. They're perfect. No change.

HEDY

The word's "symmetric". And yes, they are. Until you introduce a new factor, like so.

She dips the screwdriver into the ring. Metal breaks the liquid wave. More complex ripples form.

Mark shrugs, and points to new drips forming in the center.

MARK

Big deal. The new ones look fine.

HEDY

Buuuuuut - our vantage point is the wave we're riding on. When everything, uh, "resets", it's not like we jump to a new wave. Just the old one... contracts. In it's no-longer symmetric state.

Hedy grabs the camera, takes a picture. CLICK.

She shows Mark the broken wave onscreen. And zooms the picture out, slowly.

HEDY

See? It shrinks back to the same point in time. That's the center - right here. But changes in the wave remain.

Mark stares at the screen, unsure.

MARK

But not all of them. You're sure the rain outside isn't just a glitch?

HEDY
No. There've been constant variations.

MARK
Like?

HEDY
Where you are when you open the briefcase.

MARK
(beat, whispers)
Not to mention, my busted phone...

HEDY
Small things I *should* have caught earlier, if I'd been paying attention.
(beat)
Which I didn't. Yeah, I suck.

She glances at Mark, guilty.

HEDY
When the counter sped up, it stayed that way through multiple iterations.
(off Mark's confused look)
I mean, during each repeat. Why didn't I see that aberration before?

MARK
(chuckles)
What an idiot. No wonder they're making you take a year off!

Hedy slugs him hard.

MARK
Oof!

The two stare at each other over the sink. The faucet drips, creates ever widening new circles.

Their reflection wavers in the water, too.

MARK
So how do we jujitsu these little changes to help us "game the game"... as it were?

HEDY

Maybe in the next loop, things will change to give us an advantage. We just have to keep testing, nudging things along.

MARK

In what direction?

HEDY

I'm not sure.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Time loops. Experiments ensue.

- Mark tests the window. Still locked.

MARK

Fucking Dobson. Breaking fire code.

It's not raining anymore. Mark peers through the glass, down towards dry sidewalk.

The old man's still there. No umbrella... this time.

Curious, Mark knocks on the window. The old man looks up, smiles and waves.

Chickening out last second, Mark ducks from view.

- Mark lies on the bed, out of ideas. Bored, he turns on the alarm clock's radio. Plastic speakers spit static.

Out of which eventually floats: a cheesy OLDIES TUNE.

MARK

(sarcastic)

Did we jump back to the 40s now?

Hedy crosses to the door. Opening it a crack, she peeks out.

MARK

Has the Fuzz vacated?

HEDY

Nope. Hasn't budged. You'd think he'd be tired by now.

MARK

(laughs)

If he was standing all these hours, sure. But that's not how all this works. For him... or us.

Hedy watches the officer tap a screen on his gadget.

In the room, the 40s tune fades back into history. Static replaces it again, full blast.

Hedy closes the door. Dead bolting the latch, she sighs.

HEDY

Maybe he's not tired. But it feels
like I haven't slept in years.

Mark pats the mattress, coy.

MARK

Mainlining stress does that. Give
yourself a rest. Lie down!

He tries to pull Hedy onto the bed. Though weak, she resists.

HEDY

Stop!

Then paces. Mark watches, bemused.

MARK

If you wear tracks into the carpet,
the security deposit's not
refundable. Dobson's a hard ass
that way.

HEDY

We've got to take this seriously.
The worst thing to do is give up.

MARK

Who's giving up? I'm just
recharging between... uh... rounds.
Babe, we've literally got all the
time in the world. The least we can
do is have fun!

Mark dumps the briefcase out on the bed. \$100 bills fly.

Jokingly, he rolls in it. Scrubs some under his arms, too.
His antics may be goofy - but they piss Hedy off.

HEDY

I'm trapped in a room with Scrooge
McDuck? In what possible universe
is that "fun"?

Mark sits up, flashes earnest eyes.

MARK

Trapped with you? That's a plus.

Hedy groans, collapses on the bed. Mark scootches over to cuddle.

MARK

We're gonna get through this.

On the radio: the oldies tune returns for an encore.

Hedy peeks over Mark's shoulder at the noise, scowls.

HEDY

Eternity with *that* soundtrack'll
drive me nuts.

MARK

Hey, if we can change channels,
there's no reason this clock can't,
too.

Mark spins the radio dial, locates an old 80s romantic tune.

Lying back on the bed with Mark, Hedy closes her eyes. And smiles... for once.

HEDY

That's waaaaay better.

MARK

Mmmmm. You're right.

A moment of simple peace.

Mark sneak peeks at the time gadget's countdown. 5 minutes before reset. He glances at Hedy, mischievous.

MARK

Five minutes left. How's about a
quickie, hon?

Hedy bolts upright.

HEDY

You're kidding me!

MARK

Why not? You've got your pick of
condoms on the floor.

Hedy's eyes flare. That's a detail she'd ignored. She jumps out of bed, annoyed.

HEDY
Yeah. About those...

MARK
(grins)
Unlike the fire extinguishers here,
they're not expired. Wanna go?

HEDY
No! I "wanna" straight answer.

MARK
When have I lied to you?

HEDY
You mean besides the "Advil"? You
were always good at bullshitting,
but I don't have to catch you in a
lie. There are things all over this
room that... aren't right!

MARK
The time glitches again?

HEDY
No - you! You haven't invited me
here since you moved in. Three
whole months ago.

Grabbing a pack of condoms, she throws them in Mark's face.

HEDY
Are these for someone else?

MARK
Don't be ridiculous!

HEDY
You're calling *me* ridiculous? This
situation is ridiculous. Dodging my
question is, too.

MARK
You're blaming me for being
prepared?

Hedy glares.

MARK
I mean, for you!

Hedy paces. Mark watches, helpless: the moment ruined.

MARK

I'll call Dobson. He'll tell you.

HEDY

From what I've seen, Dobson will say anything. As long as he "gets paid".

MARK

I've never had anyone else up here. All I want, from now until eternity-

HEDY

Don't... use that word. We're getting out of here. Somehow.

MARK

-is you. I swear.

Mark cracks a grin, desperate to lighten the mood.

MARK

Who needs condoms anyhow? Resetting time is the ultimate birth control. You wouldn't get pregnant, right?

Hedy freezes. Wheels turn.

HEDY

You can't be sure. If biology gets involved, maybe all bets are off? What if major changes... transfer?

MARK

Or not. Hell, maybe we could even kill ourselves for shits and giggles. After time resets, we do too.

HEDY

Taking a chance like that's crazy!

Hedy breathes deep: lecture time. But before she says a word-
Time reboots.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Hovering over the bed, Mark rummages through the briefcase. He holds up the device.

This time, their argument continues - an unbroken flow.

MARK

Cut me some slack, Heds. I think out of the box more than you. That's what's needed sometimes! If we figure out how to reprogram this frigging time-vibrator, won't that be the key to eternal life?!?

He stops. Stares at the device.

MARK

Except for one small thing.

HEDY

Oh, I can't even *begin* to count all the things wrong with what you've said!

MARK

No. Wrong with this. Something's changed again.

He turns the device's counter to face her.

It's starting at 8 minutes this time.

HEDY

What?!?

She snatches the device from Mark.

HEDY

Ten minutes was short enough!

She tries a few button combinations. The device BEEPS.

Then the counter starts RANDOMIZING.

8 minutes. 3. Then just 25 seconds.

HEDY

Please. No!

Panicking, Hedy flips switches. Jiggles wires. The countdown jumps back and forth.

Mark tries to grab the gadget. Hedy shoves him off.

HEDY

Stop. You're gonna make it worse!

MARK

Worse than this - how?

3 minutes now. Then 20. The couple relaxes at the double-digit miracle.

Until it's replaced onscreen with six minutes.

Mark grabs for the device again. The two engage in a tug of war - similar to their fight over the notebook before.

HEDY

You've done enough. By stealing
this... thing. Fuck off!

Hedy twists and turns, to keep the device under her control. Making it hard to reach buttons at all.

The battle escalates.

Mark slips on a pill bottle. Nearly falls.

Hedy scoops it off the floor, and chucks it at Mark's head. He ducks.

The bottle hits a wall. Gel caps spray, bounce off the floor.

Followed by more throws and hits from Hedy. Fueled by hours of built up frustration, her anger can no longer be restrained. Bitter words punctuate each blow.

HEDY

If. You. Weren't. Getting. High.
All. The. Fucking. Time. We.
Wouldn't. Be. In. This. Hell. Now!

Mark shields himself, inches closer.

MARK

I stole it for you. Your future.

HEDY

The way things are looking, I don't
have a future anymore!

An epic yank, and she tears the device free from Mark's grip.

Hedy taps out a few more button combos. The device BEEPS, flashes. Stops randomizing.

And settles into a 7 minute countdown.

Hedy waits. Watches. Then nods: satisfied... for now.

Mark grins in triumph.

MARK

Score!

HEDY

Score?!? Seven minutes is less than ten. By all calculations, we're still screwed. What if each loop cuts off more minutes? Eventually, we'll be sucked into a temporal event horizon.

MARK

What the science loving shit does *that* mean?

HEDY

It's... consider it a "pothole" in time. One that keeps us frozen in a single spot. For eternity -

Hedy points at a pill bottle, glares.

HEDY

Were these worth *that* price to you?

Mark grabs a trashcan and sweeps bottles in.

MARK

Yeah, I'm *such* an irredeemable asshole.

HEDY

Not always. But sometimes? Yes, you are.

MARK

No, I'm not! Newsflash: we're in this mess because I want you to be free to go to school. And be everything I'm not. And it's not like I need this shit anymore!

HEDY

So why's it here?

MARK

I gotta pay rent somehow, right?

Hedy grabs one final pill bottle, and chucks it at Mark. It hits his cheek - ricochets into the trashcan. CLUNK.

MARK

(sarcastic)

Good shot.

HEDY

If I knew then what I know now, I
would've cut things off when we
met!

MARK

You've got free will. Why didn't
you?

He stomps off towards the bathroom.

Hedy glares after him.

HEDY

Where are you going?

MARK

To take a piss. If you wanna "let
me go", bathroom breaks would be an
awesome start.

HEDY

Mark-

MARK

(whirls on Hedy)
And since you have such a hard-on
for me to "tell the truth", I just
need time away from you!

Mark slams the bathroom door.

Clutching the device, Hedy's face dissolves.

INT. BATHROOM

The sink - oddly - is still full.

Mark storms to the medicine cabinet and tears it open,
revealing: a DIFFERENT bottle, with milky liquid inside.

He grabs it like he's starving.

Fishing behind the toilet, Mark retrieves the NEEDLE that
makes his kit whole.

And stares at himself in the mirror, red eyed.

MARK

You only had to hold it together
for seven minutes. With the girl
you want to spend your life with.

MARK (CONT'D)
But you spectacularly manage to
fuck it up? Face it Mark, that's
your style!

He taps his vein, injects half the needle.

Almost instantly, relief flows.

Mark contemplates the rush, then...

MARK
Fuck half-measures. Go all in.

He injects the rest. The world swims.

Calm "fuzziness" spreading, Mark stares down at the sink.

And dips a curious finger in.

He finds himself drawn siren-style to the rings that widen
across the surface - like the pond he tossed pebbles in
before.

For a moment, the patterns soothe Mark's soul.

Inspired, Mark cups his palm and attempts to scoop the rings
back towards the center.

MARK
Contracting waves? Theories gotta
be tested, right?

But no matter which angle he tries, it just makes the choppy
surface worse.

Growling, Mark yanks out the sink's stopper.

Water spirals down the drain - into a sucking, swirling void.

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK

If any coffee shop can be hipster and poor - this joint is.

Exposed brick walls. Three legged stools. Public tables with
carved graffiti and doodles centerstage.

At the table: Hedy huddles over a used textbook and scribbles
notes in a pad. It's a habit she'll perfect over the years.

A small LATTE with heart shaped foam steams her face.

Hedy stirs the liquid in a circle, spawns concentric waves.

Across from her, a few seats down: Mark chugs a large coffee and doodles in an art pad.

As if waiting for a pal, he scans the room.

Hedy's cute and studious look catches his eye. Mark stops drawing, swings his seat around.

He watches Hedy sip - then wince as heat burns her lips.

She stirs the cup again. Mark clears his throat.

MARK

Uh-oh.

Hedy looks up sharply.

HEDY

Pardon me?

Mark points at the swirling liquid.

MARK

I'm just being a good samaritan.
Heads up, girl.

HEDY

For what? Exactly?

MARK

You stir any harder, the vortex'll
suck you in!

Hedy arches an eyebrow.

HEDY

Twisters don't hang out in coffee
houses. And there's no Archimedes
Effect involved. It's just a Chai
Latte with Almond Milk.

MARK

Sounds tasty.

HEDY

That it is. Thank you very much.

Grabbing her textbook, Hedy slides away from Mark several seats. And studies her notes even more.

MARK

I'll translate *that* as a "not-
interested".

MARK (CONT'D)
(mutters)
"Thank you very much."

Mark scans the room again. No-one caught his crash and burn. Relieved, he glances down.

And starts a new sketch: the portrait of a girl. So far, just a few rough lines - but it's clearly Hedy. Mark's THAT good.

Until Hedy's voice breaks his concentration.

HEDY (O.S.)
Here, they pour lattes at 88
Celsius. Give or take two degrees -
depending how long they wait to
serve. To drink that safely, you've
got to disperse the heat. Everyone
stirs their coffee. What about *my*
technique made you look?

Mark turns to Hedy. Catching another eyeful of her beauty, he holds his breath.

MARK
Just curious. I guess?

Grabbing his things, Mark slides over - opposite Hedy.

He points at her textbook. From his seat, it's upside down.

MARK
You're studying?

HEDY
Hence the textbook. Duh. What are
you doing here, now?

MARK
Waiting for a friend. Duh.

HEDY
No. I mean, this close to me.

Mark eyeballs her textbook.

MARK
Looks like... bettering myself.
What's that you've got there, math?

HEDY
Well, yes. Physics too.

MARK
Both? Mucho impressive.

HEDY

But not surprising. Those two things are always... intimately involved.

She peers at Mark's face. And realizes he's major cute.

Suddenly embarrassed, she diverts attention to his art pad.

HEDY

I showed you mine.

MARK

You did? How'd I miss that landmark?

HEDY

ADHD, I assume. So show me yours. What's that drawing?

(points)

A girl? Someone you know?

Remembering it's a doodle of Hedy, Mark scrambles to flip the page.

Over to a fantasy tattoo of a unicorn.

HEDY

Wow, that's detailed. "Mucho impressive", too. Are you an artist?

MARK

I wanna be. The starving kind. Until fame, fortune and luck intrudes, that is?

Hedy stirs her latte, contemplates.

MARK

You're studying to be a physicist?

HEDY

The practical kind. An engineer. That's all hard work. No luck involved.

The two lock eyes over the cup.

MARK

I'm starting to suspect you're too smart for me.

HEDY

Too smart for a conversation? Nah.
To be honest, I've been here three
whole hours. I totally needed the
mental break.

MARK

A "mental break"? Then I'm your
man. Definitely!

A grin cracks Hedy's serious veneer. She extends a hand.

HEDY

I'm Hedy. Like Hedy Lamarr?

MARK

Um, who? And hi. I'm Mark.

MOMENTS LATER

Mark points out a doodle carved into the table.

MARK

I made that one two years ago. Be
gentle with the criticism. I was in
my heavy metal phase.

HEDY

(mock-gasps)

That's vandalism. You criminal!

MARK

Shhhh - don't rat me out. Here come
the feds!

A WAITRESS arrives, and serves a fresh latte to Hedy. Mark
points out the heart shaped foam on top.

MARK

Do you have a "thing" with the
barista I should know about?

HEDY

If so, she better stop sending such
mixed and tasty signals. You should
appreciate the artistry - and try
one, too. It's way better than your
jet fuel.

The waitress turns to Mark. He waves her off.

MARK

Nah. Still nursing my Grande.
Straight black's the best there is.

Hedy stirs her cup vigorously. Mark watches, intrigued.

MARK

You've got that down to a science.

HEDY

Literally.

Mark laughs. Hedy mock-frowns.

HEDY

I admit: sometimes I'm myopically
OCD... but from where I come from,
thermodynamics and centrifugal
force are no laughing matter.

MARK

Speak for yourself, "Science Girl".
For me, it so is.

HEDY

OK, Graffiti Guy - what do you take
seriously?

MARK

They call me "Mark the Artist."
Respect the title please!

He taps his notebook.

MARK

Real life is boring, you ask me.
Gimme fantasy stuff that stretches
the imagination.

Grabbing a spoon, Mark sculpts the remaining foam in Hedy's
cup. Creating: a crude PEGASUS silhouette with wings.

MARK

So you can "fly". Even if you're
not an angel.
(beat)
And double espresso, if you are.

Hedy takes the cup back. Sips, bemused.

HEDY

What else is your thing, oh "Mark
the Artist?"

MARK

Partying. Don't get me wrong,
science and work is massively
important.

HEDY

And your definition of "mass" is?

MARK

Can't I speak figuratively? Every once in awhile, it's best to dance and just... be free.

(beat)

Wanna put those books away and try that with me, sometime?

Hedy weighs her options. Nods.

HEDY

I calculate that as a "yes".

He and Hedy lock eyes. Screw physics. Chemistry's clicking now.

The moment's interrupted by a hand on Mark's shoulder. It's a rough looking HIPSTER in a hoodie.

HIPSTER

There you are. Didn't know you'd have company.

MARK

I don't.

He shoots a guilty look at Hedy.

MARK

I mean, now I do.

(to Hedy)

Can you excuse us? That's a Chai Latte with Almond Milk? I'll get you a refill. It's on me.

He and the Hipster turn and walk towards the counter.

Mark slips SOMETHING into the Hipster's vest. The Hipster slaps cash into Mark's palm.

HIPSTER

Catch ya at Gary's later?

The two fist bump. The Hipster takes his leave.

Behind Mark, Hedy sips her coffee. Smiling, she flips through his art pad, intrigued.

The drug transaction: she doesn't see.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hedy sits on the bed cross legged. Notebook open, she draws a hasty diagram of the device's buttons.

Carefully labels them A, B, C, etc... jots down which combinations have been tried.

Creeeeeeeeak.

Hedy looks up, renewed hope in her eyes.

HEDY

Mark, wait'll you hear! It didn't last. But while you were in the bathroom, I managed to pause this... twice!

Her smile dies as Mark wanders in, stoned out of his mind.

Spotting Hedy's diagram, a tiny spark lights in his eyes. He stumbles over, grabs her pen.

MARK

(slurred)

You call *that* shading? Allow me.

HEDY

Mark-

MARK

That's "Mark the Artist" to you, Dear. We may be as "intimately involved" as math and physics, but still respect the title please!

In Mark's uncoordinated fingers, the pen smears blobs of ink across Hedy's notes.

HEDY

Don't. You'll ruin everything!

She yanks the notepad away. Pen rips through paper.

HEDY

See!?!?

Mark shuffles past Hedy to the radio.

MARK

Babe, don't be so myo... uh, OCD. It's the end of the world. Time to dance and be free!

On the radio: at first, only static.

Soon replaced with a Leonard Cohen song: "*You Want It Darker*" plays. Hedy clears her throat over the intro instrumental.

HEDY

I temporarily paused the countdown.
Are you even listening?

MARK

Massively. With both ears. Dunno
when you bought the ticket, but
this hits the temporal jackpot. It
may not be heavy metal, but you -
and this tune - rocks!

Yanking Hedy off the bed, Mark forces her into a slow dance.
She struggles, but can't break free from his embrace.

Tinny though it is, the song provides perfect backdrop:

SONG

If you are the dealer, I'm out of
the game.

HEDY

Mark, what's wrong? Your eyes look
strange.

Mark doesn't answer. He holds her tighter, dances. Almost
trips over his own feet.

SONG

If you are the healer, that means
I'm broken and lame. If thine is
the glory-

MARK

(mutters)

Then mine must be the shame.

Hedy slaps Mark. Barely feeling it, he cocks his head.

SONG

You want it darker?

MARK

We kill the flame.

The word "darker" lures Mark's attention to the window.

Daylight surrenders to evening, punctuated by blurred car
lights on the street. The rain's returned, assaults glass.

Mark lets Hedy go, and wanders over: drawn like a insect to the bright lights he sees.

Looking out, he sways and murmurs - caught up in the surreal rapture of his high.

MARK

You and all your science. You can't define this. And with no definition, who can say what's real at all?

HEDY

Mark, what have you done?

MARK

Shhhh!

A beat. Mark lays a fascinated hand against the window. Tries to match his fingers to falling raindrops. Fails.

MARK'S POV

Each finger tap evokes a rainbow contrail of light. Is it real or hallucination? Who can tell, anymore?

BACK TO THE ROOM

MARK

With your equations and quantum physics stuff, you *try*. But what if-

HEDY

Mark!

MARK

My turn. Hear me out! What if we're all just stuck in a "Matrix." And this is just some... well, some program glitch.

Mesmerized, he draws circular, spiral patterns with his still damp finger against the pane.

On impulse, Mark pushes UP against the window.

This time, the pane slides!

Mark pokes his head out. And sighs at the rush of brisk, fresh air against his face.

Before Hedy can react, Mark wriggles through the opening. And perches on the hotel's decaying sill.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SILL AND ROOM

For Mark, it's like he's back on the boulder, over the pond.

He peers down at the dark, wet sidewalk - far below.

MARK

And program glitches make us gods.
If I slip now, no big. We'll
just... reboot.

Hedy reaches for him. Mark holds a hand out: stop.

MARK

Shall I test that theory? That's
what empiricism is about, right?

HEDY

No. Please. Baby, I know this all
seems real... to you. And I don't
know what you've taken - but right
now, you're really stoned.

MARK

(grins)

Exactly. Maybe we're *all* stoned.
And this is just some crazy trip
we're all gonna wake up from
tomorrow morning. Safe and sound.
I'd believe *that* over time travel.

Mark stares out at a million street lights.

MARK

Occam's Razor, right?

Behind him, Leonard croons:

SONG

A million candles burning-

MARK

For the help that never came.

Mark points out the lonely figure on the streets below:

The old man, holding the umbrella once more.

MARK

He had that thing in his briefcase.
Maybe you believe in coincidence, I
don't. He's not just some old guy
we happened to meet. This *had* to be
a set up.

MARK (CONT'D)
 Who's to blame: The Russians? CIA?
 MIB? Who do you think he is, in
 this dream?

Cement crumbles from the sill, free-falls 5 floors. Hedy's voice rises, alarmed.

HEDY
 Mark, this isn't a dream. I'm
 experiencing *everything* with you.

MARK
 (scoffs)
 That's what you'd say in a dream,
 too. And does it matter? He's not
 coming to help us. No-one is.

Mark spasms. Pitches forward.

Hedy drags him back inside, seconds before he falls.

IN THE ROOM

Mark twitches on the floor.

Hedy stuffs a pillow under Mark's head. Clears reddened foam from his lips and throat.

HEDY
 Don't leave me here alone!

She performs frantic CPR. Behind Hedy, the song crescendos.

SONG
 There's a lover in the story, but
 the story's still the same. There's
 a lullaby for suffering, and a
 paradox to blame. But it's written
 in the scriptures, and it's not
 some idle claim. You want it
 darker.

Mark stops breathing.

SONG
 We kill the flame.

Hedy screams. Wails. Compresses Mark's chest. Finds no pulse.

Running to the device, she stabs buttons, desperately attempts to reverse the flow.

HEDY
If you're ever gonna work, make it
now!

The counter zeroes out. ZAP.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Placing the briefcase on the floor, Mark rummages through.
Curious, he holds up the device. Stops.

Neither he or Hedy speak. They stare at each other. Until:

HEDY
You're alive.

MARK
Wasn't I before?

HEDY
At the end? No. But I'm a physics
student, not a doctor. How can I be
sure?

Mark pats himself down.

MARK
I'm fine now.

HEDY
(beat)
And sober. That's good, too.

MARK
Which means, I was right!

He grins at Hedy, triumphant.

MARK
Our memories transferred over,
every time. Guess our bodies do,
too. We're immortal! Wanna
experiment with a few more loops?

HEDY
No!

She glances at the device's counter. It's starting at 6
minutes this time.

HEDY
(groans)
What's the use? Might as well sleep
'til time runs out.

She sags down to the bed. Grimaces at the display: 5:45 now.

HEDY
A snooze alarm would last longer.

Mark crawls into bed beside her; sweet nostalgia, mingled with despair.

MARK
Screw the world. Nap time. Let's
regress.

MOMENTS LATER

The two cuddle in bed. The device glows, counts down on Hedy's chest.

They stare up at the ceiling - resigned. Hedy's close to drifting off.

MARK
You sure it's a good idea to let
that thing rest on your chest?
Without protection, I mean?

HEDY
You know what they say.

MARK
Uh - sure. But let's pretend I
don't?

HEDY
"Keep your friends close, your
enemies closer". This isn't a
snake, it won't bite.

MARK
But it *could* be radioactive.

HEDY
You're the one who thinks it makes
us "immortal". If I'm spooning with
Chernobyl, who gives a fuck?

MARK
I care. Especially about who or
what you sleep with. If that
thing's a ticking time bomb-

HEDY

Which, in a sense, it is -

MARK

I'd throw myself on top of it, and shield you from the blast.

He mock pounces on Hedy. She giggles, throws Mark off.

Mark side-eyes the counter.

MARK

Only three minutes left.

HEDY

Dammit. I guess I'll catch those Z's next time?

Hedy yawns, stretches. Mark leans over her, concerned.

MARK

How many loops remaining now, Science Girl?

HEDY

Approximately four. That's assuming the duration keeps compressing, and looping at the same rate. If there's a cascade effect, all bets are off. Of course.

MARK

Of course. After which, we hit that "pothole" you talked about so brilliantly?

HEDY

Mmmmmmm hnnnnnnnn. I'm trying to sleep, and you're giving me nightmares? Asshole. What's your point?

MARK

Well, after we spin our wheels in that "pothole", won't the rubber and transmission - "us" - burn out? And won't that hurt?

HEDY

(sighs)

You're taking the analogy too far. Probably, we'll be stuck in that moment for eternity, unless someone outside the loop shuts it off. But no big, ultimately.

HEDY (CONT'D)
It'd be such a brief fraction of
time, we won't even know we exist.

MARK
In limbo forever? S.L.D.D.

HEDY
Excuse me? Translate that for the
acronym impaired.

MARK
"Same limbo, different
destination." Spinning our wheels
throughout eternity, but getting
nowhere. When you stop and think
about it, that's not so different
than our lives now. Your school, my
work.

HEDY
(beat)
But this limbo would be painless!
No more drugs. No more fights.
Maybe this was all a blessing in
disguise. Still, we may not have
much time left. Best to relax with
what we've got.

MARK
But you're the one who said -

ZZZZ. Hedy's snores cut Mark off. He stares down her.

MARK
That you'd never quit.

The counter hits zero. ZAP.

Time ripples.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Mark holds up the device.

MARK
A funky Amazon Fire Stick. Who
carries shit like this around?

Zzzzzzz. Hedy's snoring interrupts.

Mark blinks, surprised. She's still sleeping.

MARK

You're not awake? What gives?

He reaches towards Hedy, determined to rouse her. But stops.

MARK

No. You earned this rest.

Rolling to the side, he examines the device. The countdown starts at 5:30 this time.

Inspiration lights up Mark's face. The device's glow does, too.

MARK

My turn to run interference.

Mark jumps to his feet. The rickety Sear's bed bounces. He turns towards Hedy, concerned.

Hedy still hasn't stirred. She's out cold.

Mark shudders. Grabbing the hotel landline, he dials.

MARK

Hey Dobson? Long time, no speak.

(mutters to himself)

For you, maybe.

(into the phone)

No man, she's with me. No offense, but this ain't no social call. I got a favor I need you to do.

He stares at the device. 5 minutes remaining.

MARK

Real quick.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The cop's position hasn't changed.

Still stationed on the dark end of the hallway, the officer's focus stays glued to the device in their hand.

Dobson approaches with a hotel waiter cart.

Fighting a stubborn wobbly wheel, he unveils a selection of coffee and snacks... smiles.

DOBSON

Are you peckish? Thought so!

Mark nods to Dobson from 5E.

Quietly, Mark slips out the door.

Dobson distracts the cop with an flurry of small talk (MOS.)

Mark's sneaker squeaks against tile. A hyperventilating Dobson blocks the officer's view.

Over the cop's shoulder, he subtly waves Mark towards the-

INT. STAIRWELL

Mark races down the stairs - even faster than before.

His footsteps echo against walls: a claustrophobic effect.

But this time, there's no police officer in pursuit.

But the beeping of the device in Mark's pocket fills him with even greater dread.

INT. LOBBY

Mark races out of the stairwell.

Zips past Dobson's now abandoned desk.

Not breaking stride, he digs the device out of his pocket... And beelines for the exit.

At the double doors, Mark screeches to a halt. Panic rising, he presses his hands against glass, looks around.

MARK

You stood outside in rain for
hours. Crazy coot, where are you
now?

A glance at the device. 3 minutes left. Two fifty-nine...

MARK

Fuck me. We're *both* screwed.

The door opens suddenly outward, throwing Mark off balance.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Pardon me for being late. I had to
make a pit stop. My bladder was
always weak. Even when I was young,
like you. And old age hasn't
helped.

The old man breaks Mark's fall towards the sidewalk.

Moving faster than one might expect from his years, the old man jabs a few buttons on the device in Mark's hand...

Resetting the timer. FIFTEEN minutes now.

MARK

How'd you DO that?

OLD MAN

(chuckles)

Practice. Time to chat.

Preceded by his cane, the old man TAPS into the hotel lobby.

Sitting down, he waves to Mark - who lingers in the doorway, stunned.

OLD MAN

What are you waiting for? Fifteen minutes is only an eternity during sex.

MOMENTS LATER

The two sit face to face in lobby chairs.

The old man peers around hotel Planck's lame attempts at decoration. Peeling wallpaper. Furniture that hasn't met a dust rag in weeks.

He points his cane towards a row of OIL PAINTINGS.

OLD MAN

I remember those...

(beat)

From somewhere. An old history book, I think?

MARK

"Starving Artists Through Millennia." Probably purchased at a yard sale, ten bucks each.

OLD MAN

Not what I'd surround myself with. But the technique's admirable, at least.

MARK

If you like classics. Not my thing.

OLD MAN
This is your residence?

MARK
Nah. Just a convenient place to
sleep.

Mark shoots the old man a let's-get-down-to-business look.

MARK
You like "observing"? I'm done with
guessing games, old man. What are
you: KGB? CIA?

OLD MAN
Ah, a conspiracy buff. What's your
next guess - MIB?

MARK
Acknowledging facts isn't
conspiracy! No matter what angle
you're playing here...

He waves the device at the Old Man.

MARK
Your gaslighting won't work. This
thing is very, very real!

OLD MAN
That's a "thing" you stole from me.
What's your angle, boy: blackmail?
If you were half as smart as you
think you are, this is the moment
you'll give it back.

He reaches for the device. Mark instinctively pulls away.

MARK
Only if you negotiate.

The old man's smile turns sinister.

OLD MAN
For what?

The elevator CHIMES, causing both to swing around.

Caught in the spotlight, Dobson cringes in the elevator car.

He rolls out the hotel cart. Slouches, keeps his head down.
The old man waves to Dobson.

OLD MAN
Bellman - over here!

Dobson arches an eyebrow: "Should I?"

The old man turns, addresses Mark.

OLD MAN
Think of your predicament as a
video game. This is the only safe
"level". Use it now.

Mark gulps. Nods.

Dobson complies.

Reaching into the cart, the old man pours himself coffee.
Chuckles as Mark shoots him a look.

OLD MAN
What? Caffeine's a healthy drug.
Plenty of anti-oxidants. Straight
black, the best there is.

Grabbing a plastic-wrapped coffee cake, the old man tosses it
to Mark.

OLD MAN
You haven't eaten for hours. Chow
down!

Mark stares at the cake, holds it up to Dobson.

MARK
I asked you to hurry. You stopped
to bake the nice officer munchies,
too?

DOBSON
That's not...
(flustered)
I got it from our vending machine,
awright? If I was gonna cause a
distraction, I figured it had to
look good!

Awkward silence. Mark and Dobson lock eyes. Neither looks
down, as...

...Mark discretely slips a NAPKIN BUNDLE off the cart.

DOBSON
Uh, if you don't mind, I'll leave
you both to your privacy.

Head low, Dobson slinks off.

He parks the cart by reception. Ducking behind the desk, he shuffles papers - anything that resembles work.

The old man sips coffee, eyes Mark.

OLD MAN

Where were we? Ah, negotiation. You were offering to give me back my property. Or rather, property left in my trust.

He nods at the glowing device in Mark's lap.

OLD MAN

Which you'd best do quick. Before time *again* runs out. It tends to do that - a lot.

MARK

If it gets low, reset it. Or better, turn it off. Do that, and I'll give you back the money. Every cent.

OLD MAN

Where's the briefcase now? With your good friend over there?

He points at Dobson, who cowers.

OLD MAN

Or in that bolt-hole you call a room, next to your sleeping beauty Gal Pal?

Mark whips the knife out of the napkin bundle, and lunges forward with a SLASH.

Almost as if he knew it were coming, the old man blocks it with his coffee cup. CLANG.

Mark feints, presses the knife to the old man's throat.

At the reception desk, Dobson yelps.

DOBSON

Mark, my man - chill! I don't give a shit if it's drugs. But whatever your beef with that geezer, calm fuckin' down!

OLD MAN
 (mutters, laughs)
 Geezer? Young man, I guarantee:
 you'll look worse at my age.

Mark growls. Despite his predicament, the old man smiles.

MARK
 I dunno why you set us up. But you
 can have your fucking time pothole.

OLD MAN
 Excuse me, what?

MARK
 Or whatever you call that temporal
 toy. The money's yours. Wake Hedy
 up!

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Hedy Zzzzs, fast asleep. Until...

The alarm clock springs to life. At first, it spits static.
 Then switches to a new Golden Oldie:

Bette Midler's "Every Road Leads Back to You."

Hedy jolts awake. Instinctively, she checks the time.

The clock reads 5:45.

Though groggy, Hedy mentally crunches numbers. Frowns.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

The counter resets. Just 6 minutes left.

BACK TO PRESENT

Hedy feels for the device in the sheets. It's missing.

HEDY
 It *couldn't* have fixed itself.

Sitting up, she calls out.

HEDY
 Mark, you did it on your own?!?
 Wow, that's great!

No response. Hedy climbs out of bed. Listens.

HEDY

Mark?

INT. BATHROOM

A check of the bathroom finds it empty. The sink full.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Hedy hunts hard for the device. It's not on the bed. Under the dresser. She searches everywhere - finds nothing.

She races to the window, looks out. The old man's MIA, too.

At the door, Hedy spots the briefcase, closed and waiting.

Hedy darts over, opens it. Mark's packed the money neatly. She feels around inside for the device. Nope.

A noise in the hallway draws her attention. Hedy's eyes drift up towards the door, where...

Mark's taped a hasty NOTE.

INSERT: "Heds, I had a crazy idea. I'm taking the temporal fire stick. Don't come out of the room until Dobson calls and says it's safe. If I don't come back, don't try to find me. Just take the money and disappear. Spend it on a life. You've earned it, babe."

HEDY

Leave without me? No way!

Grabbing the briefcase, Hedy eases the door open.

Her eyes focus down the hall, on the police officer.

Back turned, they sip Dobson's coffee and carefully monitor that device.

Hedy's face hardens.

HEDY

Mark, you're not the only one with
"ideas."

INT. LOBBY

Mark holds the table knife to the old man's throat. The man laughs, oddly unconcerned.

OLD MAN

You *do* realize that's a butter knife?

MARK

(through gritted teeth)
Dull is good. I'll make it count.
If you care about the few years
you've got left, you'll wake my
girlfriend up.

OLD MAN

You think Hedy's in some kind of
trance? This is no fairy tale.
She's fine. In fact, she's probably
up and skipping around now.

Mark relaxes his grip on the knife.

MARK

But when the loop reset, she stayed
asleep?

OLD MAN

Because she was close to the
original physical coordinates when
the event point activated. It was
touching her directly, too.

MARK

How would you know?

OLD MAN

As you said before, I "observe."
And skin's a great conductor. When
the time wave contracts, that
ensures changes get transmitted
faithfully. Or at least, that's
what I'm told.

That's way too much science for Mark. He plays along.

MARK

Oh. Yeah. Of course. Duh.

OLD MAN

Don't feel bad. I don't understand
most of it, either. My job is just
surveillance and "cat herding". The
rest I leave to science nerds.

The old man sits back. Mark grabs his lapel, pulls him close.

MARK
We're not done "negotiating."

At the reception desk, Dobson calls out.

DOBSON
Mark, don't threaten -

MARK
(hisses to the old man)
Or kill.

DOBSON
People in this lobby. One cop's bad
enough.

Dobson fumbles with his cell phone. Hands trembling, he holds it up. He types 911, but doesn't send.

DOBSON
Backup would be way worse!

INT. HALLWAY

Hedy inches towards the officer, briefcase against her leg.

The cop types something into their device. Doesn't notice Hedy's stealthy approach.

HEDY
(whispers, practicing)
We just found the briefcase, I
swear. We didn't steal it. And even
if we *did*, neither of us are
dangerous. This is all a huge
mistake.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Bette Midler's crooning stops. Static reins once more.

INT. LOBBY

Mark fidgets with the butter knife. The old man takes another sip of coffee, waves to Dobson.

OLD MAN
Put the phone down. Your friend
here's just bluster. Sure, he's got
flaws that badly need correction.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
But he's never have the nerve to
kill.

MARK
(snarls)
How would you know?

OLD MAN
Oh, I'm a terrific judge of
character. Let's see if I've got
the details right. You're willing
to give *that* treasure back-

He nods at the device. 3 minutes left. And counting.

OLD MAN
The money, too. In return for what?

MARK
You let us go. And don't press
charges.

A sly smile slides across the old man's face.

OLD MAN
What if I said I can't let you *both*
go - no matter what I prefer?
Remember that skin conduction? If I
pull you simultaneously from the
loop, that'd be - well, unstable.
And "temporally" very *not* good.

MARK
So one of us walks free. Not both?

The old man nods.

OLD MAN
To live out your life in a straight
line, with no more forced reruns.
Yes, that's what I'm offering.

MARK
But the one who gets left behind -

OLD MAN
Stays locked in limbo eternally. In
your proverbial pothole, as it
were.

MARK
That's not fair!

OLD MAN

(shrugs)

"Fair" doesn't apply to life. Or science. You triggered the event. I don't make the rules. I just describe them.

The old man points at the device, still counting down.

OLD MAN

One minute left. Decision time.

MARK

Take me. Let Hedy go.

The old man locks eyes with Mark.

OLD MAN

Are you positive?

MARK

As positive as a proton.

He drops the knife. The old man smiles.

OLD MAN

Ideal choice.

The old man gently pries the device from Mark's hand. And types in code.

INT. HALLWAY

Hedy inches closer to the officer.

Clearing her throat, she holds out the briefcase.

HEDY

I bet you're looking for this. My boyfriend Mark - you've got to help me find him. I think he's in danger-

The cop grabs her arm.

Hedy screams, recoils.

Which knocks the officer's cap off. Blonde hair flows down uniformed shoulders.

Hedy freezes, shocked.

And gazes up at a strangely familiar, female face.

INT. LOBBY

The old man finishes typing. The device beeps, glows.

Mark blinks as time ripples before him. It's a more brutal disruption than before.

OLD MAN

Be aware, this time shift will be bumpier. Your stomach may not survive the trip. As for your mind - well, tradeoffs work. For history's sake, it's best we wipe that slate clean.

Mark stands up. Sways. The vertigo is nauseating.

He reaches for the old man. His hand phases through.

The old man sits back and sips coffee. Waves to Mark.

OLD MAN

Safe travels, Walmart Boy.

Time twists. Then - ZAP.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Mark's back on the boulder, at Hedy's side.

He doubles over and vomits violently into the pond. Rings spread from the impact. DUCKS gleefully race over to feed.

Hedy groans, too. She braces her hands against rock to steady herself.

And accidentally pushes her notepad into the water.

HEDY

My notes. Fuck!!

She reaches for them, almost falls. Mark hauls Hedy back from the edge.

MARK

They're just notes. Let them go.

HEDY

A semester's worth? No way!

MARK

So what? Just rewrite them all.

Hedy blinks up at Mark. Her eyes brim with tears.

HEDY

We were having such a good time today, I didn't want to break the mood. But I didn't get next year's scholarship. The school didn't have the funds. I'm going to have to take next year off.

Mark's face hardens.

MARK

That's not fair. What are you going to do?

HEDY

I don't know. All that time. Wasted?

A WHISTLE from the park impels the couple to turn around.

Across the lawn, the old man whistles to pigeons from his bench. He scatters breadcrumbs, leans on his briefcase and cane for support.

As Mark watches, the old man pops open the case, and pulls out a NOTEBOOK.

But not before Mark gets an eyeful of what's inside.

The man's trench coat may scream poverty, but his briefcase is jam packed with crumpled \$100 bills!

The old man struggles to his feet.

Cradling his bread bag, he crosses the park path - in search of hungry pigeons he's missed.

Mark's eyes lock on the briefcase.

Before Hedy can process his actions, Mark races to the bench. Gulps down waves of nausea as he runs.

Surprised, Hedy darts after him.

Mark grabs the briefcase...

And veers towards the old man.

MARK

Hey, you forgot this!

Mark cuts the old man off and hands him his lost "goods." The old man smiles, a hint of mischief in his eyes.

OLD MAN

Silly me. I forget things so much these days. That would've been - well, quite a loss.

The old man fumbles in a pocket, and pulls out \$100 bills.

OLD MAN

You deserve a reward.

Mark ogles the money. Then eyes the old man's ratty coat. And settles on a compromise.

Handing back a \$100 bill, he keeps the rest.

MARK

My pleasure. Save the rest for your pigeons. You, too.

The man flashes the "thumbs up" sign, hobbles off. Mark raises an eyebrow, calls after him.

MARK

It's not the Great Depression anymore. Banks are cool places to keep stuff safe, you know?

Hedy giggles, elbows Mark.

HEDY

You're cute - and honest. Think I should keep you?

MARK

I suspect you should.

Eying Mark's "reward", Hedy shrugs.

HEDY

That's not paying for my tuition.

MARK

Yeah, but it'll cover security for a new place if Craigslist pans out. And our Pizza/Starbuck's bill, for a week or more!

Hedy grins... until something on the bench catches her eye. She trots over. It's the old man's notebook.

She grabs it, and looks for the old man. He's disappeared.

MARK

A replacement notebook? The world works in mysterious ways, after all.

HEDY

What good is this? It's used.

Curious, she flips through.

Every page is filled with diagrams and equations. A treasure trove of scientific scribbles.

Including: a sketch of the device - identical to the one Hedy drew in the hotel room "before".

On the cover, Hedy squints at the odd title: "Concentric Waves and Temporal Potholes, a Modest Thesis."

HEDY

Well, color me - and this - weird.

MARK

No surprise. That guy looked nuts.

Hedy turns a page, reads further.

HEDY

Maybe he's crazy, but not dumb. This stuff makes sense. If...

MARK

What's it say?

HEDY

I'm not sure. It'd take awhile to work this out.

MARK

Well, you said you're taking a year off. If anyone's got time, it's us!

Mark grabs her arm and pulls.

MARK

Let's go.

HEDY

Where?

MARK

For coffee. Those lattes don't serve themselves!

FURTHER DOWN THE PATH

The old man taps along, unsteady. His cane snags a pothole..
Almost causing him to trip.

An OLD WOMAN catches him last second.

Seen close up, it's the "police officer" from before.

Cinching up her long blonde hair in a bun, she hooks elbows
with the old man.

A necklace with a silver atom trinket glints around her neck.

The two stroll down the path together.

A TEEN with a boombox strolls by, radio blasting.

The old woman pulls the device she held as an "cop" out of
her bag. And taps a few icons:

The screen glows green. Text scrolls: "Temporal stability
achieved. Loop closed."

The boombox spits static, cycles through random channels. The
teen twists dials, confused.

Turning towards a heavy thicket, the old couple watch Mark
and Hedy take a path of their own.

Hedy's already nose-deep in the notebook, engrossed.

Glancing up at Mark, Hedy smiles. The old woman nods.

OLD WOMAN

We were fucking cute back then.
Weren't we?

OLD MAN

Well, you were. Brilliant, too.

OLD WOMAN

And you? Terribly predictable. With
a heart of gold under that...
(flicks his ratty lapel)
Rough exterior of yours.

OLD MAN

It kept you interested. Call me
flawed, but I eventually admit
mistakes. And the "bad boy" routine
always works!

As the sun sets, the two walk. The old man pulls the device from a pocket and hands it to the old woman.

OLD MAN

You'll have to type in final codes.
My memory isn't what it used to be.
And young Hedy has my crib notes.

The old woman types. The device BEEPS. Glows.

OLD WOMAN

That was one sneaky trick you
pulled with the "one of you has to
stay and protect the circuit" lie.
You could have just shut the
fucking thing off.

OLD MAN

I had to test him, dear. I mean,
me. Us.

OLD WOMAN

You were always good at
bullshitting. He didn't ask about
parallel universes?

OLD MAN

Thank goodness, no. Not *this* time
around.

As time ripples, the two vanish.

Old Hedy laughs at old Mark. Her voice echoes. Surprised
pigeons squawk at thin air.

FINAL FADEOUT: