Rewired

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06.30.2020

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Premise: Harvard. 1959. A young Ted Kaczynski is experimented on by Dr. Henry Murray during a secret CIA psychological study that may have led to the creation of the Unabomber.

Highlight: "Would you be willing to contribute to the solution of certain psychological problems by serving as a subject in a series of experiments or taking a number of tests through the academic year?"

INT. CAMPUS POST OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON – A FADED, DISHEVELED PACKAGE.

Sloppily addressed. Aggressively taped. Just looking at it invokes a ticking sound.

It sits on a wood counter, imbuing a sense of menace.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. This isn't a bomb. It's just another package, picked up and dropped off, as –

WOMAN (O.C.)

Next.

We TILT UP to REVEAL the next person in line –

TED KACZYNSKI (17).

Brand new, ill-fitting dress jacket and cropped hair. The world will come to know him by ANOTHER NAME one day, but for now, he's just... a meek and unassuming STUDENT.

Ted approaches, laying down a letter-sized envelope.

TED

Good afternoon. I'd like to mail this, please.

RUTH (mid 50's), a postmaster attendant, looks it over, tapping the top left corner.

POSTMASTER RUTH

Want to put your return address?

TED

Is that standard?

POSTMASTER RUTH

They'd like it to be. Otherwise, if it's undeliverable, it ends up in the dead letter office.

He grabs a pen at her station, adding his address.

TED

Where's that?

POSTMASTER RUTH

I'm not quite sure. Washington DC?

Ruth notes the matching last name of the recipient.

POSTMASTER RUTH

Brother or father?

TED

Brother. Younger. I don't think he cares what it says inside. He just likes getting mail.

POSTMASTER RUTH

Four cents.

Ted digs into his pocket. Three pennies.

TED

Just a second.

He checks his other pocket. Then his jacket. Even his back pocket. Nothing.

POSTMASTER RUTH

I can make an exception this once and make change from a dollar.

TED

I brought four cents exactly.

Embarrassed, Ted checks the floor. Goes to one knee. Starting to get desperate.

As he searches around, Ted glances up to find –

The line behind him, growing agitated. Everyone is either staring down at him or at the time.

TED

Sorry. It'll just –

POSTMASTER RUTH (O.C.)

Kaczynski?

Ted bolts up, hoping she found it. But –

POSTMASTER RUTH

Come back when it turns up.

She hands him back his letter.

TED

Of course. Thank you.

He takes it, shamefully walking past the judgmental line of eyes and out the door.

***EXT. CAMPUS QUAD - DAY

Autumn leaves fall across historic brick buildings.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY, FALL 1959

Teenagers wander by in Windsor knots, swing skirts and their natural born privilege.

Ted walks against the flow of the other STUDENTS, head down, shorter and younger.

MICHAEL (O.C.)

Goddamn, I miss summer.

INT. MICHAEL'S DORM ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL EARLWOOD (18) stares out the window at the student traffic. Older and cooler than his age. Lives on charisma and attention.

MICHAEL

The warmer the weather, the shorter the skirt.

We PULL BACK to – ornate student living. School flag, fraternity paddle, baseball decor, bigger than you'd expect.

Ted sits at a desk. TIMER clicking away as he grades a quiz.

Michael spins a wooden bat over his shoulders as Ted finally finishes.

MICHAEL
How'd I do?

TED
You missed a few.

MICHAEL
How many?

TED
Nine out of ten.

MICHAEL
But... I got one?

TED
Technically, yes. But –

MICHAEL
See? That's an improvement. A few more and it'll be almost half.

TED
That's the best math you've done all day.

MICHAEL
Good news means it's time for a
break. I need to grab a few things at the student union –

Michael hustles to get ready. Ted doesn't follow suit.

TED
Michael, your parents are paying me by the hour.

MICHAEL
Trust me, they can afford it.

TED
Yes, but they won't keep me on as your tutor if you're not improving.
Now, please... let's try to work through this.

Frustrated, Michael slumps down into a chair.

MICHAEL
Fine, but at what point exactly in life am I gonna need algebra?

Ted ignores him, sliding the quiz across the desk.

TED
Simplify this expression by
combining the like terms which is the same as 5 - 2, giving us...?

MICHAEL
(beat)
Three?

TED

3X. That's right. Now we combine the constants and solve for x...

Beat. Ted waits but Michael is glancing out the window again.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. Was I supposed to
answer?

With a sigh, Ted takes back the quiz.

TED

No. That's fine. We can go over the rest next time.

As Ted starts to pack up, Michael looks him over.

MICHAEL

Don't take this the wrong way, but what do you do for fun exactly?

TED

I like to read.

MICHAEL

Cool. What about...?

TED

Math.

MICHAEL

You must get all the ladies. Get the lights real low... make them solve for X.

Ted looks sheepishly at the quiz. Feeling judged.

MICHAEL

So you don't drink or smoke or date much, do you?

TED

My grades are important. It's the best school in the world with the best minds in the world. And if I can surpass them, well...

MICHAEL

I get all that, but... this isn't just college, ya know? It's
freedom! It's the first time in our lives we get to find out who we
really are and you only do that by experimenting a little. Trying
something new. I mean, there's
gotta be a little more to life than studying, right?

Ted thinks about it, but before he answers – DING!

THE SMALL TIMER pings. Their study session is over.

TED

Time's up.

***EXT. ELIOT HOUSE - NIGHT

Ted walks back through the leaf-scattered campus. As he nears his dormitory, he passes –

AN EVENT BOARD. Covered in fliers and leaflets promoting various clubs and campus activities.

Ted slows, eyes drift across it: Chess club. Spanish Club. Future Business Leaders of America.

He stops. Looks each one over. Campus outreach. Intramurals.

Ted leans CLOSER. There's a LONGING here. But as he reaches for one of the fliers –

A GROUP OF FRATERNITY PLEDGES charge past him!

STUDENT

Heads up, kid!

Ted LEAPS out of the way, just in time, as they disappear to their next destination, singing and laughing. Assholes.

He gathers himself, steals one last look at the board and...

heads off into the night.

Alone.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Rows of students taking a test. Pensive. Frustrated.

PROFESSOR GRAZIANO (50's) paces the front of the room, monitoring their progress. Coke bottle glasses. Dusty waist coat. Every bit the cliche.

He checks the clock, about to call time, when the door OPENS

and in walks –

BARBARA MARTIN (Mid-20's). Strength and grace, mixed with natural authority. Fashion forward with fifties flare.

As the two confer, every red-blooded male student forgets their exam, checking her out from head to toe.

Everyone that is... except Ted.

He continues to check away answers, oblivious to the other horny teenagers gawking until –

THE BELL RINGS.

As the students SNAP down, feverishly penciling in the last few answers, Ted finishes. Relieved.

GRAZIANO

That's time, ladies and gentlemen.

Pencils down. And chapter six for next week.

Ted packs up and heads for the door, when –

GRAZIANO

Mr. Kaczynski.

He finally glances up to find Graziano beckoning him over.

Ted sheepishly approaches.

GRAZIANO

Ted, this is Miss... I'm sorry,

what was it again?
BARBARA
Barbara Martin.
(re: Ted)
I work in the psychology
department.
Ted shakes her hand, then realizes he hasn't said a word in reply.
TED
Um... hi.
His voice cracks. Graziano and Barbara pretend not to notice.
GRAZIANO
Ted here is one of my bright young stars – Sirius of Canius Major.
Trust me, Henry will love him.
BARBARA
I have no doubt.
TED
I'm sorry, what's this about?
As Ted looks between the two, confused...
***EXT. CAMPUS QUAD - LATER
Ted and Barbara converse along long brick walkways. Students pass by on their way to class.
BARBARA
Don't you love this campus? All the brick and wood? It's like living in a museum.
But Ted is too busy reviewing A FLIER.
TED
Would you be willing to contribute to the solution of certain
psychological problems by serving as a subject in a series of –
(beat)
Is this an experiment?
BARBARA
It's an opportunity. One I was
hoping someone as gifted as you
would recognize.
TED
I see stuff like this all the time.
Last year, they needed people to try different types of Ovaltine.
She brushes something off his shoulder. An excuse to touch him, perhaps?
BARBARA
This one's a little different. I've been tasked with finding eager,
brilliant young minds, such as
yourself, who want to know... who they are. Why they feel the way

they feel sometimes. Helping people find that is like... magic. It's why I love psychology. So if that's something you're looking for, maybe we can find it together?

But Ted PULLS AWAY, paying zero attention to the affection.

TED

I appreciate the interest, but I've got more important things on my

plate. I'm sorry. Thanks, but no thanks.

He holds out the flier. Barbara looks him over, before –

BARBARA

You know it's a minimal commitment.

An hour a week. And, for those who are accepted, there's a stipend for your time.

TED

Accepted? But I thought –

BARBARA

No, preliminary testing is Friday.

And not everyone who applies will get in. This is an invitation. If you're interested in seeing how you stack up with Harvard's elite...

here's your chance. Think it over.

Barbara heads off, leaving Ted to ponder the possibilities.

***EXT. / INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Ted ascends the marble steps, excited and unsure. Hair freshly combed. Shirt starched. Inside, he finds –

SEVENTY-TWO BUDDING MALE STUDENTS.

Potential fellow test subjects. Fitted jackets. Pleated pants. The future of corporate America.

He wanders amongst the groupings as they chat and size one another up. With Ted, we clock:

CHRISTOPHER TATE (18) finishes a soda, balancing it on the arm of a chair, before thinking better of it.

GLENN RICHARDSON (19) chews an excessive amount of gum, while rolling up a magazine to amplify a call to a familiar face.

Ted spots – BARBARA heading toward the podium on stage. As she does, A NEBBISH STUDENT waves to her awkwardly, but...

She doesn't reciprocate. All business. Ted can't help but chuckle.

BARBARA

Alright, Gentlemen, if you could all take your seats, we'll get

started.

The boys scatter into stadium rows while psychology students pass out testing booklets and answer sheets.

BARBARA

First off, I'd like to thank you all for coming today. Each of you were invited because you represent the very best that Harvard has to offer.

A few students laugh or whisper. But Ted listens intensely.

BARBARA

Please answer all the questions to the best of your abilities. After each booklet is processed,

applicants will be approved for the next round or dismissed.

The idea of not getting in straightens the students.

BARBARA

You have exactly forty-five minutes for the first section. Good luck and your time begins... now.

And in a flurry, the applicants flip open the testing booklets, pencils rapidly fill in dots. We catch GLIMPSES of the different questions:

A biker travels 5 feet in 0.5 seconds. At this exact speed, how far will the biker travel in a minute?

A) 250 feet B) 500 feet C) 600 feet D) 1200 feet Terminate is the opposite of...

A) Begin B) Lament C) Employ D) Complete FADE TO:

Barbara writes a large "15" on the stage chalkboard. A few students look nervous. Others confused... but not Ted.

He reads another question:

Rearrange the following words to form a complete sentence.

Is it true or false? 5 Pentagon A has sides

A) A sentence cannot be formed B) Unable to answer

C) False

D) True

Ted marks D. Closes the booklet. Puts his pencil down.

Barbara spots it from the stage. Interesting.

BARBARA (PRE-LAP)

Adams, Hayes, Roosevelt, and

Kennedy.

FADE TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - LATER

Only twenty-two male students remain. Barbara is at the podium, addressing the final subjects.

BARBARA

Kinsey and Oppenheimer. Morgan and Redstone. Cummings, Emerson and

Thoreau. Bold typed names of alumni worth repeating because they cement our legacy.

As they listen, psychology students hand out index-sized documents.

BARBARA

Over the course of the coming

weeks, we would like each of you to write a brief exposition of your own personal philosophy on life.

A psychology student reaches the end of a row where – TED

sits, the only one taking notes.

BARBARA

Not something you get from your

friends or the radio or television, but one that comes from your own individual experiences. It should be an affirmation of the guiding principles with which you hope to live by.

(beat)

Upon completion of the composition and a review with Dr. Murray, you will be asked to debate the merits of your philosophy with a fellow undergraduate.

A few look around at the competition. Some are UNNERVED.

BARBARA

I know this all may sound daunting, but there are no winners or losers here.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

The purpose is to utilize that data to create a unique psychological portrait of each of you.

Ted is laser-focused. As if she's speaking only to him.

BARBARA

We know it can be difficult to

really look critically at one's

self, but we hope that when this study is concluded, we will have a better understanding of you... and you will have a better

understanding of yourself.

Congratulations.

Some of the other students chuckle. But Ted heard every word.

INT. ELIOT HOUSE - COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

Ted's on a public phone, PACING as far as the cord allows.

TED

Yes, I am using the detergent.

WANDA (O.C.)

Good. And you have to separate. If you don't, your whites will never stay white.

TED

I got it, Mom. Now my turn: The

permission slip. Did you get it?

WANDA (O.C.)
Yes, we got it.
TED
Great. But it's not here yet. When did you send it back?
INTERCUT:

INT. KACZYNSKI ILLINOIS HOUSE - NIGHT

Standard suburban presentation. WANDA and THEODORE KACZYNSKI (mid 40's) share the phone on their end.

WANDA
Well, we wanted to talk to you
about that first.
(beat)
Here's your father.
Wanda hands him the phone. He wasn't ready for it, but –
THEODORE
Teddy.
TED
What's the problem, Dad?
THEODORE
We're just doing our due diligence, son. You're over a thousand miles away and –
TED
Nine hundred and seventy.
THEODORE
My mistake. We just want to make sure your focus isn't being pulled in too many directions –
TED
Focus? You mean "grades." Have they ever been a problem?
THEODORE
No, but –
TED
THEN WHY WOULD YOU –
TWO CRIMSON OARSMEN pass, regard Ted like he's foaming at the mouth. Ted stops, calms himself. Shifts away.
TED
I don't understand. Last year, the complaint was that I didn't put
myself out there enough. And now here I go. I beat out fifty
students to get into this thing.
Anybody else's parents would be
thrilled.

THEODORE

We're always proud –

But Wanda takes the phone back from her husband.

WANDA

I don't like the language in this letter. And I don't trust anybody that wants to take apart a person's brain. Remember when we owned the Studebaker?

(MORE)

WANDA (CONT'D)

It never ran the same after it was in the shop for a few days.

TED

The fact that you compared a

Harvard professor to a mechanic

means you haven't heard a word I've said.

Just then, Ted's younger brother, DAVID (10), runs in from the living room.

DAVID

Is that Ted? Can I talk to him?

WANDA

Ted, David's here –

TED

– No! Don't you dare put him on right now!

Wanda pulls the phone back, shaking her head at David.

WANDA

Okay. We're here. And we're

listening. Breathe.

He takes the suggestion. Deep breath. Considers his options.

TED

The only reason I even have to ask permission from you is because I'm the youngest here. That should be a badge of honor, not a liability.

(beat)

Now, send the damn thing back or I'll never come home.

And Ted SLAMS down the phone. A threat he's ready to back up.

INT. PSYCHOLOGY BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

CLOSE ON – THE PERMISSION SLIP.

Ted clutches it tightly as Barbara leads him down a tiled hallway. He's stiffer than normal. Nervous.

We can hear TYPING echoing off the walls as they go.

TED

Will you be joining –
BARBARA
Me? No. Just the two of you.
Paperwork?
Ted hands it over eagerly as –
They reach a frosted glass door with "H. MURRAY" stenciled across it.
BARBARA
His time is limited. Please use it appropriately. And most
importantly... be honest. Good
luck.
Ted nods. Barbara gently knocks, but the typing continues.
MURRAY (O.C.)
Come in.
Barbara opens the door. Ted squares his shoulders and with a deep breath...

INT. PSYCHOLOGY BUILDING - MURRAY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

He steps into the smoke-filled office to find –
DR. HENRY MURRAY (60's).
Seated. Back to the door, typing. Gray suit. Matching hair.
Smoking. Murray has a Machiavellian charm mixed with perpetual judgement, but... you'll see more of that later.
MURRAY
Be with you in one moment. Just
finishing this last page. Please, sit anywhere you like.
Ted straightens. Is this his first test?
He looks over his options: A COUCH and TWO LEATHER CHAIRS.
Ponders if there is a right answer before choosing... A LEATHER CHAIR.
As he gets comfortable, Ted takes in the visual academia.
Shelves of psychology texts, photographs, and artwork.
A PORCELAIN WHALE MINIATURE sits on a shelf, bookended by –
TWO MODEL SHIPS.
Below it, Murray's published work and six different hardcover Melville biographies.
MURRAY (O.C.)
You'd think after filling out so many reports, I'd be better.
Ted turns. But Murray isn't even looking at him.
TED
I'm sorry?
MURRAY

Typing. But I'm still just two
fingers, punching keys like a
monkey writing Shakespeare. But, thankfully, I am – done.
Murray hits the last key with a flourish. He rises, greeting Ted with a handshake.
MURRAY
Mr. Kaczynski. It's Theodore,
right? But you go by Ted.
TED
Yes. Hello.
Murray sits in a leather chair, but this time...
Ted moves to THE COUCH. Murray picks up TED'S FILE, glancing through it.
MURRAY
So, where are you from, Ted?
TED
Evergreen Park.
MURRAY
That's just outside Chicago, isn't it?
TED
It is. Yes.
MURRAY
I'm sure coming to Cambridge must have been a bit of a culture shock.
How was your first year?
TED
No. It was great. Harvard's been great. The teachers, the
students... I honestly couldn't be happier here.
MURRAY
That's wonderful to hear. And
you're on full academic
scholarship? Judging by your age you must have skipped a few grades.
Ted shrinks a little. Feeling like a child.
TED
Um... yes. Two actually.
MURRAY
Let me guess. Smartest kid in your school?
TED
Well, um...
He hesitates, uncomfortable with bragging, but –
MURRAY
Ted, at Harvard, we don't trust
anyone without a little ego.
Ted smiles. He catches sight of the far wall and changes the subject.
TED

How long have you been teaching
here?
Ted rises, gesturing to all of the plaques and photos.
MURRAY
Awhile. A few more years and I'm gonna need them to extend the wall.
(beat)
You know I had a friend once, math major like yourself, he could count out pi to the 27th power. Do you know any party tricks like that?
TED
I haven't been to many parties. So how do you like it here? At
Harvard, I mean.
Now it's Murray's turn to hesitate. The tables have turned.
MURRAY
They keep moving my office so it never feels quite like home. Other than that, no complaints.
(beat)(MORE)
MURRAY (CONT'D)
Your parents... how do they feel about you being so far away? It's gotta be close to a thousand miles.
TED
Nine hundred and seventy actually.
Beat. Murray smiles. Gotcha.
MURRAY
My mistake.
TED
We stay in touch. They're very...
happy that I'm taking part in this study.
(beat)
As long as I keep my grades up.
Murray closes Ted's file. Lights a cigarette. Thinks.
MURRAY
(re: his models)
Do you know what those are?
TED
The models? Um... ships of some
sort?
Murray rises, dropping the psychologist and showing his excitement.
MURRAY
That's the Essex and this is the Pequod. They're American whaling ships from "Moby Dick." I was
obsessed with it in high school.
Have you read it?

TED

No. I never got the –

MURRAY

It's the only true modern American masterpiece. You have to read it.

Here –

Murray pulls down A COPY.

TED

Oh, I don't –

MURRAY

I insist. As you can see, I have plenty.

TED

Thank you, sir.

Ted reluctantly take it. It's brand new. Never been opened.

MURRAY

You know I skipped a grade too.

TED

Really?

MURRAY

Yep. Came here at seventeen. It

sounds like you've adjusted well, but for me, that first year... a poor kid from the Bronx, it was

like... being thrown into a game where I didn't even know the rules.

Ted stares up at him, nodding without even knowing.

MURRAY

Where do you stand? Who do you talk to? You have to figure it all out for yourself. So, while everyone else was tossing footballs and

chasing girls, I was in my dorm...

building these beauties.

Murray gestures to his models with fondness. This time, Ted takes them in with more respect.

TED

My brother makes model airplanes.

Building stuff has never really

been my thing.

MURRAY

I found a "calmness" in the

isolation. Constructing something this intricate with your own two hands. The focus it requires.

Painting the lead lines. Stitching the sails. Weathering the hull in just the right places. If you look here, you can see where I etched in the teeth marks with a pocket

knife. See?

TED

Oh yeah. That must have taken
forever.
MURRAY
Both semesters. My parents thought I was depressed, but they didn't understand. People like us...
He pauses, hoping Ted will pick up where he left off and...
TED
Sometimes we prefer our own mind to the company of others.
MURRAY
I couldn't have said it better
myself.
With that Murray steps away, getting a glass of water.
MURRAY
You know everything said in here is kept in confidence?
Ted NODS. Maybe he doesn't believe it, but he wants to.
MURRAY
These sessions, this philosophy
dissertation, it's all designed to help you find... your own path.
Like the sailors on the Essex, you have to have a North Star.
TED
Yes, sir.
MURRAY
Good, because from the moment you stepped through that door, I've
sensed... a hesitation.
TED
No. I've answered all your
questions and –
MURRAY
You have. But this is a voluntary program and if you don't feel
comfortable –
TED
No. It's not that. It's just...
And Ted sits back down on the couch.
TED
My parents are concerned that
psychologists, that all they want to do is –
MURRAY
Mess with your head.
Ted nods. Exactly.
MURRAY
What do your parents do? Are they academics?
TED

No. They're both smart, but my
mother, she's just a homemaker and my father, he works at a sausage factory.
MURRAY
Well, they must derive immense
pride from their son attending
Harvard University.
Ted nods again. Can't help but like it.
MURRAY
When I was your age, I didn't know what I wanted or what I believed. I simply did what most kids my age did... I copied my parents.
(beat)
But yours. They aren't exceptional.
They're not competing in mental
gymnastics and they certainly can't see the world the way you do.
Ted BLUSHES. Uncomfortable, but flattered.
MURRAY
If I had to guess: you've spent a lot of time trying to fit in. This time: try to find a way to stand out. Take a strong position. If
you've got something to say, here's the forum to say it. I want to
understand what's going on it that head of yours. But the only way
that happens is if you decide... do you trust me enough to let me in?
Ted ponders the possibility and then finally... SMILES.

INT. PSYCHOLOGY BUILDING - MURRAY'S OFFICE - LATER

The door OPENS, Ted steps out as Murray follows.
MURRAY
Pleasure chatting with you, Ted.
And remember, if you need any help at all, my door is always open.
The two SHAKE and... Ted DEPARTS.
The door closes. Murray puts his glass back on the bar and reaches up to the CABINET above.
He opens it and inside is – A REEL-TO-REEL AUDIO RECORDER.
He stops the recording and removes –
A 7-INCH REEL OF RECORDING TAPE.
He writes A NAME across the label: "LAWFUL 001." But as he places it in a manilla envelope...
A KNOCK.
MURRAY

Enter.

Barbara steps inside. Murray hands her the envelope.

MURRAY

Transcribe. Priority. I want charts on inflection and speech patterns.

I want copies distributed to the entire group for discussion

tomorrow morning.

BARBARA

It will be ready first thing.

And Barbara is off with a recording of Ted's conversation he's completely unaware exists.

DISSOLVE TO:

***EXT. CAMPUS QUAD - DAY

Students play frisbee. Others sit on picnic blankets, chatting and reading.

Everyone is seemingly enjoying the day in idyllic bliss...

But not Ted.

The young man sits by himself at the end of long row of busy lunch tables.

Food uneaten. Dog-eared copy of Moby Dick next to him.

He's huddled over a notepad, SCRIBBLING. A few discarded wads of paper telegraph his frustration.

As we MOVE IN, we see THE PAD is cluttered with lined-out sentences, arrows and margin notes.

A few words are circled.

Melville. Class System. Exceptionalism.

Ted RIPS a page out, crumples it and adds it to his failures.

He starts again, when –

MICHAEL

Hey, Kaczynski! You okay, man?

He looks up to find – MICHAEL wandering over. Books in hand.

Eating an apple. Wearing a pair of PILOT SUNGLASSES.

TED

Hi. No, I just... um... I...

(beat)

Cool glasses.

MICHAEL

Not bad, right? My dad gave them to all his pilots this year. Ladies love a mystery man.

(re:)

What's... um... all this?

Ted instinctively starts to gather up the crumpled paper.

TED

Just working on an outside project.

MICHAEL

Cool. Listen, I'm behind on this group biology project and kinda need to cancel our next session.

TED

You don't have to cancel. If it helps, we can meet earlier or later on Friday. Or, if you'd like, this weekend –

Michael plops down across from his tutor, leaning in.

MICHAEL

Alright, here's the truth. So... Vicki Collins. You know Vicki, right? Absolutely gorgeous. Got an ass that belongs in that fancy Paris museum with the famous art.

TED

The Louvre.

MICHAEL

That sounds good, I'm gonna use that. Anyway, her parents have this cottage in Martha's Vineyard and she invited me there for the weekend, so the math has to wait.

Ted takes a deep breath.

TED

Your next Algebra quiz isn't going to wait.

MICHAEL

I'm failing that either way. And Vicki Collins wants to try on and take off her last bathing suit of the season for me? Way better deal.

TED

If you want to graduate –

MICHAEL

(laughing)

Ted, look, my dad went to Harvard.

So did my grandfather and legend has it even my great grandfather went here when it was like two buildings and an outhouse, okay?

They'll give me the piece of paper.

I'm legacy with a capital "L."

TED

I thought college is about finding out who you are. What you want to do with your life –

MICHAEL

And I already know. My father's on the board at his company. They're going to make him executive vice president next, and he'll get to pick his own team... and I won't even have to raise my hand.

TED

So it doesn't matter what you do here?
MICHAEL
No. To me, all of this is just...
summer camp until real life starts.
Ted NODS. Not exactly thrilled by Michael's honesty.
MICHAEL
But hey, if you need the money,
I'll tell my parents we're still meeting. That way neither of us
waste our time, you win, I win,
even Vicki wins –
TED
You know what? Do whatever you
want. Have a good time at the
beach.
MICHAEL
Ah, come on. Don't be mad. I –
TED
I'm not. But unlike you, I have
work to do.
Ted returns to his pad. Michael SIGHS. Shakes his head.
MICHAEL
Tell you what, I'll bring you back some sand. You can put it in an
hourglass and watch time pass you by.
As Michael wanders off, Ted scribbles away, not bothering to look up.

INT. BASEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

In the bowels of the century-old building, UNIFORMED WORKERS
measure, saw, drill, weld, and repeat.

The tiled hall is a mess of tarps, tools and boxes coming in and out of a room labeled: SUBJECT ROOM "A."

But we don't go inside. Not yet anyway.

Amid the chaos, Murray leads Barbara along, the two checking over a list of tasks.

MURRAY
Hinge.
BARBARA
Sits with you tomorrow. 11am.
MURRAY
Cringle.
BARBARA
His paper's been copied and

distro'd. The rest of the
transcriptions should be ready by tomorrow afternoon.
MURRAY
And those are from Wednesday?
BARBARA
I know they're coming in a little slow, but I'm getting budget
approval to add an extra girl.
The two STEP ASIDE as MORE WORKERS proceed past.
BARBARA
Are the workers going to be
finished in time?
MURRAY
Considering how much we're paying them... they better be.
Murray STOPS, pulling back a tarp to check the invoice on a nearby crate.
BARBARA
I was under the impression "The
Stress Factory" was ready.
MURRAY
Just making a few adjustments.
Tightening bolts and connecting
wires. Nothing major.
Barbara's attention drifts over the construction. "A few?"
BARBARA
The administration won't be happy about all the holes in their walls.
MURRAY
And that's why I'm trusting you to make sure they never see them.
And he's off again, Barbara following into –

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The heart of the project. Along one wall are bookshelves of
"Codename" binders and stacks of audio reels. Along another –
THREE TRANSCRIBERS (CAROL, REBECCA and FRANCINE, mid 20's).
Headphones on. Punching away on typewriters.
Murray proceeds to – A CORKBOARD OF TWENTY-TWO POLAROIDS.
All smiling male Anglo-Saxons. He looks them over, pieces to a puzzle only he sees.
MURRAY
(to himself)
All my means are sane, my motive and my object mad.
BARBARA
I'm sorry, what was that?

But Murray IGNORES her. Mind already focused elsewhere.

BARBARA

Doctor, before things get too far along, can we discuss “Lawful” for a moment?

Murray’s eyes drift to a corner – A POLAROID OF TED.

MURRAY

What about him?

BARBARA

I have some concerns.

MURRAY

Do you, now?

He turns and Barbara’s confidence wilts a bit under his eyes.

BARBARA

From my understanding, the

centerpiece of this study is to see how subjects respond to heightened stress levels, correct?

Murray says nothing. Barbara panics a little.

BARBARA

Our cross section of subjects share commonalities in background, age, and social function, while Lawful is younger and the most

alienated...

MURRAY

You convinced Kaczynski to join and now you want to remove him

because... he’s too young?

BARBARA

No. This isn’t personal. This is purely about maintaining clinical legitimacy.

Murray takes a deep breath, looking over the board.

MURRAY

Our sampling must also include

extremes if we want above-average results. I have identified

Kaczynski as such and weighed the consequences and decided to err on the side of compassion.

BARBARA

I don’t follow.

MURRAY

People are... poorly made. I don’t mean physically, from a design

perspective, the nervous system and opposable thumbs are impressive.

But mentally, we have an instrument capable of infinite comprehension and abstract thought. Elegant in ways I can barely articulate and yet the mechanisms of the mind are tangled in phobias and neurosis.

The subconscious swallows logic and repressed moments drag down

creativity like an anchor.

(MORE)

MURRAY (CONT'D)

But you and I have the ability to reach deep inside, sift through all the memories, personality, and ego and find their inner demons. And extract all that trauma and anger and frustration, piece by piece.

That's a gift only we can give and I want to share it with all of our subjects... especially "Lawful."

Barbara takes it all in. Inspired by his words.

MURRAY

Now, I promise we'll do everything in our power to protect him, but I don't want to discount Kaczynski simply because he may look too weak or too young.

Murray moves closer to Barbara, placing a hand on her shoulder.

MURRAY

Two dozen applicants vied for your position, all more qualified,

but... there you were, a paradox of drive and defiance. You rose to the challenge, like I knew you would.

Barbara blushes a little.

And with a nod, Murray returns to the corkboard. Wants to fit the pieces together just right.

INT. PSYCHOLOGY BUILDING - MURRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Murray reads over typed pages. Ted watches, apprehensive.

MURRAY

The higher man is distinguished from the lower by his fearlessness and his readiness to challenge misfortune. That's Nietzsche. And not even Nietzsche at his best.

TED

I think there's merit in what he's saying.

MURRAY

So do a lot of folks.

Ted is nervous. He's let Murray down. Murray presses on.

MURRAY

Human nature is simply what it is: it has its dark and its light sides. The sum of all colors is grey - light on a dark background or dark on light.

TED

Valid, don't you agree?

MURRAY

If you must plagiarize, avoid my favorites. I studied with Carl

Jung.

TED

Points for great taste?
No such luck.
MURRAY
What's going on, Ted?
TED
I don't have a life philosophy
because I haven't had a life. I've only ever known two places.
MURRAY
Then start here. The train didn't drop you off yesterday. It's your -
what - third semester? Bags
unpacked, you know which building loans out dusty hardcovers and
which serves mystery meat. What
else do you see when you look
around?
TED
Nothing worth reporting back to
you. It's barely functioning.
MURRAY
What's wrong with the algorithm?
TED
It's the students. You know what I'm talking about, right?
MURRAY
If I could see what you see, I'd be out of a job.
TED
I'm tutoring one of them now. Real dense. And I find the overwhelming majority coming in, and I assume leaving here are like him, not me.

Obsessed with the superficial, the material. Money, money, money. On a loop that I'm outside of.

MURRAY
Too bad it doesn't just appear if you say it three times fast.
TED
They're born into this. I don't
know what you call it. High
society? And they don't appreciate any of it.
MURRAY
How can you tell?
TED
Because they don't have to work for any of it, the way I do!
MURRAY
You're off making the grades and giving a shit.
TED

Yes! And when they get handed the same diploma, on the same day as me, there's will come with a fancy job. And I'll be right back at the beginning, having to prove myself all over again.

MURRAY

And you're worried you can't?

TED

No. I'm more worried for the people less up to the task. Someone like my dad.

MURRAY

And who does he have to prove
himself to?

TED

No one I guess. But it feels like he gave up. And seeing that
terrifies me.

MURRAY

Because it might happen to you?

TED

I assume at one point he had
ambition. But lately, it's like
he's fallen into that suburban trap of placing such importance into the most meaningless things.

MURRAY

Such as?

TED

After I came home freshman year I could see it so clearly. It's like he has to mention his bowling score, because he doesn't have
anything else going on. He clings to this false sense of pride. And I want to look up to him, I'm sure I did at some point, but it just
seems like he's become... a shell of himself. All hollowed out and it's... sad. And that's why I want a place like this to raise up the intelligent instead of relegate
them to the sidelines.

MURRAY

That would be refreshing.

TED

Imagine if Harvard didn't have to grade on a curve, if everyone
excelled because it was actually catered to the individual. You know a thing or two about sea-faring
vessels. Doesn't a rising tide
raise all ships or something like that?

MURRAY

I don't know Ted...
Ted's deflated. Spilled his guts, and that's all he gets?

MURRAY

...Sounds like the beginning of a philosophy to me.

Phew... Ted's relieved.

MURRAY

Stand that up at the debate, and you should be in good shape.

Ted smiles. An "Attaboy" from Dr. Murray feels like a thousand rainbows on the sunniest day of your life.

PRE-LAP sounds of TYPING.

INT. ELIOT HOUSE - DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Small and spartan. No decorations. Just a twin bed, color-coded text books and a SMITH-CORONA TYPEWRITER.

And Ted gives it a work-out. Types up a storm, his brain can't send the message through his arm and into his fingertips fast enough.

INT. CAMPUS LIBRARY - DAY

It's midday. Students linger between rows of shelves and stacks of books.

Ted finishes checking out at the counter. He slides some books into a bag, but as he heads through the door –

He almost runs right into Michael.

MICHAEL

Whoa! No need for a heist, they

give them out for free.

The usually manicured Michael looks out of sorts. Moppy hair.

Misbuttoned shirt. Something's off.

TED

I didn't realize you knew where the library was.

MICHAEL

Third time's a charm.

TED

Have a good time at the beach?

MICHAEL

It was really good actually, yeah.

But right after, not so much.

TED

Sorry to hear that.

Ted stars to wander off, but Michael follows.

MICHAEL

Yeah, my dad actually ended up in the neighborhood and stopped by

campus, I wasn't here, obviously, and it turned into a whole thing...

TED

(holding back a smile)

Oh, that's too bad.

MICHAEL

So I was wondering if maybe we

could pick back up with our

sessions? See if you can still turn me into a mean math machine?

TED

Unfortunately, my schedule's filled up a bit.

MICHAEL

Come on, man. Seriously? This is important.

Ted stops. Considers. Almost feels bad for the guy, but –

MICHAEL

How about I pay you double? Or

better yet, name your price. I can make it worth your while and it'll just be between you and –

TED

Why is your answer to everything always money?

Michael stares at Ted with bewilderment.

MICHAEL

Because it works?

TED

Not today. You can't have anything you want, whenever you want it.

Michael recoils a little under Ted's glare. Oops.

MICHAEL

I didn't mean to insult you, I just

– if my grades don't come up, he's gonna pull me out of here. I just need a little help. Please.

Ted weighs his decision, and leans in to Michael.

TED

You want help? Here's some advice.

(beat)

Leave.

MICHAEL

What?

TED

Leave Harvard. Stop taking someone else's spot. You're gonna land on your feet no matter what happens here, so go be rich and stupid

someplace else.

Michael steps back. Affronted.

MICHAEL

Fuck you, Ted.

As the two stand there, we hear the NOON BELL RINGING throughout campus.

TED

Time's up.

And with that, Ted departs, all smiles. A new energy and confidence brimming inside.

INT. BASEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Barbara hurries along, STRUGGLING with several boxes of papers. Her SCARF dangling precariously.

She passes SUBJECT ROOM "A." Locked. Secured.

The construction is finished. The workmen are gone.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Barbara ENTERS to find – Murray pacing as the Transcription Girls sit patiently at a conference table, WAITING.

BARBARA

Sorry. Still getting the hang of the Xerox. Paper jam.

She sets down the boxes, unwraps her scarf and spots AN UNFAMILIAR FACE amongst them –

PETER NOLAND (30's). Jacket and tie. Perfect hair. Untrustworthy smile.

BARBARA

Hi. I missed introductions. I'm Barbara.

PETER

Peter Noland. Nice to meet you.

As the two SHAKE, Murray wanders to the corkboard.

MURRAY

Peter's on loan from the law department.

BARBARA

Oh, that's great. It'll be nice to have someone advising us.

She begins to unstack the boxes, passing out stacks of paper.

BARBARA

Carol, Francine, if you could help with these – great. Thanks.

The girls start sorting.

BARBARA
So, now that we have all the
subject's personal philosophy
essays, I figured we'd start
pairing them with their debate
partners. I've worked up an initial list, based on some preliminary
scoring and their value systems.
Just to try and –
MURRAY
That won't be necessary.
BARBARA
I assumed you already have some
partners picked out but I wanted to provide options –
MURRAY
No. Peter will be conducting all the debates.
Peter gives her AN AWKWARD SMILE. Barbara LAUGHS, before realizing no one else is.
BARBARA
I don't understand.
MURRAY
Peter will be debating each student individually.
BARBARA
We... um... he can't do that.
But Murray ignores her. Barbara moves in.
BARBARA
We already told the students
they'll be debating their peers, not arguing... against a lawyer.
We'd be lying to them. It's
unethical.
MURRAY
Carol, show Peter to my office.
Make sure he has everything he
needs to get started.
(beat)
Francine, Rebecca, give us the
room, please.
Murray and Barbara wait as everyone exits. Once they're gone...
BARBARA
Dr. Murray, the first thing you
taught me was, you can't change the variables of a study in the middle of a study.
MURRAY
Unless that is the purpose of the study.

BARBARA
That doesn't make any...
(biting her tongue)
I don't understand where we're
trying to get to?
Murray stares at her, DISAPPOINTED. Then picks up her scarf.
BARBARA
What are you –
MURRAY
Illustrating a lesson I had to
learn once upon a time.
He SLICES her scarf in half with a LARGE PAIR OF SCISSORS.
BARBARA
Damnit! What the hell!
MURRAY
You see? You can't get an authentic reaction from someone if they know what's coming. And they won't see this coming.
Beat. Barbara thinks it over.
BARBARA
I understand, but we have a
responsibility to protect them
from... us, don't we? Otherwise, we could do... anything.
MURRAY
These young men signed up looking for results. And if you coddle
them, then you betray both their faith in you as well as the work itself. And in that version, no one gets what they want and all of this will have been for nothing.
Barbara pauses. She doesn't agree, but... has no argument.
Satisfied, Murray refocuses on – The STACK OF LIFE
PHILOSOPHY PAPERS. Most are just scribbled line paper, but one in particular is –
TYPED AND MORE SUBSTANTIAL THAN THE REST.
Murray holds it up.
MURRAY
Lawful?
BARBARA
Yes. He worked very hard on it.
MURRAY
What do you know, it's almost like I know what I'm talking about.
And Murray walks off, leafing through Ted's paper as he goes.
***EXT. CAMPUS - DAY
Overcast, cold, foreboding, students are bundled and hurried.
It's an awful day... that's only going to get worse.

INT. ELIOT HOUSE - DORM ROOM - DAY

Ted finishes getting ready. Tie straightened. Pants pleated.

Shoes freshly polished.

He feels like a million bucks.

INT. BASEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Ted sits PATIENTLY, bookended by other waiting students.

All are dressed up. And nervous.

Someone checks the clock. Another coughs. A few silently practice their 'strong position' to themselves.

It's like the waiting room for an audition. Finally...

A door OPENS and everyone STIFFENS.

Barbara EXITS followed by... GLENN RICHARDSON.

The once jovial boy is unreadable. Muscles tight. Body rigid.

Finally, Glenn cracks his neck, the sound echoing down the hall.

Everyone jolts, sharing concerned glances.

But Glenn turns, a smile on his face. As he passes, he peels a WAD OF GUM off the wall and tosses it back into his mouth.

Bizarre.

Ted watches with fascination, until –

BARBARA

Kaczynski?

And Ted's gaze LEAPS to Barbara.

She stares back with a fake smile. Ted rises and FOLLOWS her down the hall toward – SUBJECT ROOM "A."

Ted takes a deep breath and follows Barbara inside.

INT. BASEMENT - SUBJECT ROOM "A" - CONTINUOUS

Claustrophobic. Unsettling. Eerie.

The room is a cacophony of wood and wires. A bulky LIGHTING

FIXTURE hangs perilously overhead. A GIANT MIRROR lines one wall; an ELABORATE MACHINE sits on a cart in the corner.

But Ted's attention is focused on –

THE CHAIR.

Outfitted with elaborate leather straps and electrodes, it resembles a high tech electric chair.

A technophobe's nightmare.

BARBARA

Remove your jacket and have a seat.

Ted obeys. A TECH takes his coat. Ted carefully takes a seat, unsure if there will be pain on contact.

It's rigid. Uncomfortable.

He glimpses his reflection in the mirror. Fixes his hair. But then suddenly, realizes –

TED

Um, excuse me... but where's the student I'm debating?

Barbara wheels over the cart. She clicks switches and sorts wires on the HEART RATE MONITOR.

BARBARA

On the other side of that wall.

Please undo the top three buttons of your shirt.

He does so.

TED

What are those for?

BARBARA

Try and relax.

She APPLIES electrodes to his temples. She reaches through his shirt, placing one pad on his chest. Ted FLINCHES.

TED

Ah. Sorry. It's cold.

Barbara begins to strap his wrist to the chair's armrest, but Ted recoils.

TED

Um, I'm sorry. Is all this
necessary. I mean, do you need to actually strap me in?

BARBARA

Small movements can disrupt our
instruments.

Resigned, Ted places his arm back on the rest. She straps in one, then the other.

Barbara reaches behind him, strapping his back flush with the chair. He couldn't be more uncomfortable.

TED

It's a little tight.

She ignores him, wraps a coil around his index finger.

With a whirl, she turns on the machine. The instruments CALIBRATE, clicking and buzzing to life.

Ted tries to adjust his seat, but the accessories make it nearly impossible.

TED

Barbara, how long is this going to last?

She gives him a half smile, and departs.

The door CLOSES. Ted sits there, strapped in and terrified.

Nothing but the clicking of the machine. And then –

A set of BRIGHT LIGHTS BLAST ON. Ted SQUINTS, nearly blinded.

TED

Hello?

He's lost, seeing only colors and halos, until –

PETER (O.C.)

Good afternoon.

A voice BOOMS through static-filled speakers.

TED

Hi. Um... good afternoon.

He tries to locate the source but finds only his scared reflection.

PETER (O.C.)

Please state your name.

TED

Ted Kaczynski.

PETER (O.C.)

Again, please. Louder.

TED

TED KACZYNSKI.

PETER (O.C.)

How old are you?

TED

Seven–

(louder)

SEVENTEEN.

PETER (O.C.)

And do you affirm that all the
ideas presented in your thesis
today are your own?

TED

Yes, I do.

PETER (O.C.)

Not one word has been plagiarized or appropriated?

TED

No.

PETER (O.C.)
And you recorded these thoughts
under your own volition because
they are what you believe, correct?
TED
Yes. I'm sorry. Who are you?
Nothing but the static of the speakers.
PETER (O.C.)
I'd like us to begin with your
opening paragraph...

INT. BASEMENT - OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of the mirror, PETER sits before a microphone. Ted's thesis lies open, along with several other case files labeled "LAWFUL."

PETER
You state that, "An exceptional
individual can only flourish within a healthy society, one that fosters intelligence and innovation."

Behind him, MURRAY stands, the conductor of this orchestra, as each cue builds to a crescendo.

BARBARA is at a 16mm Arriflex Camera, filming Ted through a hole in the wall.

PETER
"However, within an unhealthy
society, the unexceptional will
thrive based solely on their
predetermined status and financial well-being."

And behind all of this – A MAN IN A PINSTRIPE SUIT (50's) sits in the corner. We'll call him – STRIPE. He smokes, observes, but does not participate.

PETER
A lot to unpack here, let's see if we can't break this down. You think society is broken?

INTERCUT:

Ted struggles to answer comfortably under duress. The machine scratches away, outlining Ted's emotional distress.

TED
Yes, I think it started with good intentions, but if you want to
improve, we need to stop valuing the accumulation of wealth and –
PETER

Lift up the exceptional.
TED
Exactly.
PETER
Shape the rules to favor people
like... yourself.
TED
I didn't say that.
PETER
We don't have time for modesty
today, Mr. Kaczynski. You don't
think you're special?
TED
I think my grades speak for
themselves.
PETER
Harvard is lousy with
valedictorians. Hang your hat
somewhere else, please.
On the other side of the glass, Murray gives Peter a signal.
Two more lights click on in the room. Ted squints.
Barbara zooms in tighter with the camera. Stripe smokes.
PETER
Tell me, Ted, have you done much traveling? Been outside the United States?
TED
No.
PETER
So you haven't canvassed much of society... you were talking about Harvard.
TED
Not directly, but –
PETER
But they suffer from the same
affliction?
TED
Yes.
PETER
Because you're seventeen, and home and Harvard is all you know.
TED
Dr. Murray also felt –
PETER
Dr. Murray isn't here, Mr.

Kaczynski. You're talking to me, defending your words. Because they are your words, aren't they?

TED
Yes.

PETER
I asked you three times and that's what you said.

TED
Yes. They're my words.

PETER
And you believe the most
prestigious university in the
world, one that has sired five
presidents, over three hundred
congressmen, and the heads of
nearly every fortune five-hundred company... isn't elevating the
right people? Are all those men
idiots?

TED
Obviously not. But –

PETER
But according to you, the system is broken.

TED
I never said "broken."

PETER
Yes, you did. You said it was
broken but it had good intentions –

TED
What I meant was –

PETER
Choose your words carefully.
Meaning is important here.
Ted freezes. Looks around. For someone. For anything.

TED
I – I was told I was going to
debate another student.
(MORE)
TED (CONT'D)
On my life philosophy. No one said anything about this chair or any of this?
Peter looks to Murray. The doctor gives a nod.

MURRAY
This was expected. Answer like we rehearsed.
Peter turns back on the microphone.

PETER

I'm the one who read your thesis.

And I was not impressed. While

others chose to ruminate on their feelings or muse over the road

traveled, you made an explicit

indictment. Young boy judges a

man's world. Extra, Extra! News at 6! Well I have a followup: why do you hate this school so much?

TED

I don't hate this school.

PETER

But you hate the students. The ones who have outperformed you.

TED

I don't think having wealthy

parents is a calculable trait to base performance.

PETER

You and you alone have decided they must not have any redeemable

qualities, correct? Doesn't matter what Harvard thinks.

TED

No, I – you twisted what I said –

PETER

You brought up traits, I'm curious, which ones do you actually possess?

Because in your two years here, you have no real friends. No romantic involvements. Your teachers

overlook you. You simply... exist.

Ted looks away. Ashamed. He's sweating. Getting dizzy. The heat and lights taking their toll.

Ted's eyes drupe. Head heavy. This is rough.

Murray leans in, clicks off Peter's microphone for a moment.

MURRAY

Push him harder.

Peter tightens, leans down. Firing up.

PETER

You're a child, Ted. A human

calculator. The most special thing about you is how quickly you're

forgotten when you leave a room.

You want to be important so badly, that you write this flippant,

presumptuous manifesto that

suggests Harvard must be decaying, because it has not ascended you to some great height.

TED

I never said –

PETER

You did. In a series of ignorant moves: First you committed it to paper and then you handed it in.

Everything is broken because you're not successful. Well, maybe

Harvard's exactly the way it's

supposed to be. And you're not

satisfied, because... you're the one who is broken!

TED

No. No, that's not it.

A tear travels down Ted's cheek, he buries his head into his shoulder and does his best to wipe it away.

Murray reaches into the "Lawful" folder, flips it open.

Points to something.

Barbara looks up from the camera. The two share a look. She pleads with her eyes. Don't do that.

But Murray points again, and... Peter nods.

PETER

Let that sink in. Sit and wallow in just how wrong you are.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

You wish you had used lead instead of ink, so you could erase all the bullshit and save yourself this

embarrassment.

TED

I'm not wrong.

PETER

Mistakes get made all the time.

Your acceptance to this program.

Your paper. Maybe you should have attended another school altogether.

They could have incorrectly scored your IQ test. Maybe you weren't

supposed to skip those grades and you're actually a senior in high school right now. Maybe Ma and Pa never planned to have a son. Life can be full of mistakes.

Ted shuts down, looks down, breaks eye contact from whoever's behind there.

PETER

Isn't it possible you're simply

wrong?

But Ted doesn't answer. His eyes tracing the ceiling.

PETER

Isn't it possible?

He tests the restraints, not going anywhere, so he tries to distance himself from this moment in his head.

PETER

Ted, I asked you a question.
Ted tries to hold it together. But all the light. The straps.
The machine clicking away.
Barbara and Murray share a look. Something is wrong.
Murray checks Ted's heart monitor. It's spiking violently.
PETER
(re: Murray)
What do you want me to do?
Murray ponders the situation.
MURRAY
Alright. Let's get him –
TED
(to himself)
I'm not a mistake.
Murray refocuses his team. Peter clicks on the microphone.
PETER
What was that? Speak up.
TED
That the world does not allow
people of a certain status to
ascend –
MURRAY
(re: Peter)
Go. Do it now.
PETER
– Yes. Your favorite refrain. Is this a theory you learned from
observing your father?
And Ted snaps awake. In shock.
TED
What did you say?
PETER
Your father. Average sausage maker.
Master bowler.
TED
How did – how did you know that?
PETER
Grinding it together as it grounds him down. You must know those
casings are made from intestines.
Tell me... do you help your father clean the intestines? So he feels like less of a failure?
TED
My father's not a failure.

PETER

Perhaps that is why you have such disdain for the wealthy? You and your father's hands covered in the tissues, organs, fat and bloods of the least desirable scraps of meat.

TED

That's it. I'm done!

Ted tugs at his straps, but they don't budge.

PETER

I mean, that's why there has to be some grand conspiracy holding your family down, isn't it?

TED

Let me out!!

Barbara, disgusted at this display, clocks Murray with a grin he doesn't attempt to hide.

Ted yanks harder and harder, growing more frustrated.

PETER

Otherwise you might have to

actually face the fact–

TED

–Stop. This is over!

PETER

–that... you're not "exceptional."

TED

I said, let me out!!!

Sensing what's coming, Barbara abandons the camera and exits the Observation room.

Followed by two techs, they open the door just as –

Ted wrenches his arm free from a strap.

TED

Right now!

They go to help, but he won't let him.

BARBARA

Ted, try to calm down. Ted –

TED

LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!!!

And with the lights buzzing, the techs struggling, and Ted writhing in the chair like an animal, we –

SMASH TO BLACK:

***EXT. ILLINOIS WOODS - DAY

FADE UP ON – The sun pushing down through the clouds.

Endless trees extending into forever. A moment of peace and tranquility after what we just witnessed.

As we come down through the foliage, we find –

Ted WANDERING. Worn jeans. Faded t-shirt. Shades of a beard.

A shadow of the MOUNTAIN MAN he'll one day become, but right now, despite the serenity...

He's lost in his own mind.

He walks along, shoving a tree branch aside. Interrogated.

He picks up a rock, barely inspects it, before chucking it into a tree. Ambushed.

He charges at a log, shoes kicking up dirt, and just before they collide, he LEAPS over it. Deceived.

He violently tears huckleberries from a bush. Hurt. Then –

Ted DIGS his heel into the soil, dragging a line into the ground with his leg.

He REPEATS the process three times, creating four perfect right angles, until...

He takes a step back.

We discover that Ted is standing in the middle of A PERFECT

RECTANGLE, looking down into the peaceful valley below.

It would make one hell of a view.

***EXT. KACZYNSKI ILLINOIS HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Ted and David play chess on a small table set half in the shade of a tree.

David has to squint, Ted has the better seat.

Ted has taken out more of David's pieces, mostly pawns.

David isn't that concerned, happy to spend time with his brother.

TED

We can still find Candy Land if you prefer.

DAVID

Mom gave it away to the Johnson's three years ago. And you wouldn't have played anyway.

TED

That's true.

DAVID

I know you.

TED

No strategy. Winner is determined by the arbitrary shuffle of cards.

DAVID

If you had to name the best thing about college, what would it be?

TED

I don't want to talk about school.

David takes out one of Ted's rooks.

DAVID

Okay, then what is the best thing about being away from home?

TED

Making your own schedule. Eat when you want, sleep when you want.

Spend as much time alone as you

want.
David captures Ted's second bishop.
DAVID
And do what you want?
TED
To an extent.
Ted makes another move, but his head's not in the game.
DAVID
Some friends were playing around with firecrackers. I never held one before, and they let me.
TED
Be careful.
DAVID
I know you pulled a prank or two when you were here.
TED
You don't want any part of that. Be smarter than me.
DAVID
The thing with firecrackers, is
there's no delay.
TED
Instantaneous combustion.
DAVID
Limits where you can go, what you can do.
David takes Ted's last knight off the board.
TED
Fuse lights the gunpowder.
Potassium nitrate oxidizes. Sulfur moderates the reaction.
DAVID
Right. Sulfur. We found some in my friend's garage.
TED
Yes...
DAVID
And they were thinking if you could isolate it and –
TED
That's the wrong end of the
periodic table. And a good way to lose a finger.
DAVID
I wasn't doing it.
TED
Ammonia and iodine. If they need to see a bang so badly.
DAVID
Check.

Ted frees himself. Then David pins Ted's King with his Queen.

DAVID

Actually, I think that's mate.

TED

Bullshit.

Ted confirms it.

DAVID

I told you I've been practicing.

Ted can't believe it. He CLEARS the board with a backhand.

TED

I was distracted.

DAVID

I don't know. You always kind of go with a sustained mating attack, so I tried to –

Ted JABS David in the jaw.

TED

– Shut up.

David is shocked. Doesn't cry, but is stunned. He rubs it to lessen the pain.

Ted gets up, and storms inside. Game over.

David gets off his chair and picks chess pieces out of the grass.

***EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Fallen leaves mix with snow on the pavement, as Barbara crosses to – A CAMBRIDGE BROWNSTONE.

Red-brick walls. Shuttered windows. Just one on a uniform street of buildings.

She ASCENDS the steps. KNOCKS. Waits. No sign of movement.

She knocks AGAIN. Still nothing. Finally, she checks the door. And... it's UNLOCKED.

INT. BROWNSTONE - ENTRY WAY - CONTINUOUS

Barbara SQUEAKS the door OPEN. Nothing but long dark hallways. Seemingly EMPTY, but... a TV echoes from somewhere.

BARBARA

Dr. Murray?

(beat)

It's Barbara.

(beat)

I'm going to come inside now.

No response. A moment of hesitation. Barbara LEAVES THE DOOR OPEN and... ventures INSIDE.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She moves CAUTIOUSLY. CLICKS a light switch. Nothing.
Barbara steps forward and – the remains of a lightbulb CRACKLES under foot.
BARBARA
Henry?
Along the hallway walls, she finds lines of freshly smeared BLACK PAINT.
BARBARA
Your front door's open. I tried
calling, but no one answered.

HOME OFFICE

A television casts an eerie glow. The room's in disarray.
Furniture turned over. Art clumsily REARRANGED on the walls.
Shoes organized in a pattern on the floor.
Barbara is busy looking over the chaos, when –
THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS.

HALLWAY

Barbara peaks out to find –
MURRAY. Eyes wide. Hair a mess. Paint smeared on his clothing.
BARBARA
Jesus. Henry, are you al –
MURRAY
Shhhhhhhhh.
(pointing up)
They'll hear.
She looks around. Who? And Murray wanders away into –

LIVING ROOM

He scoops a handful of paint out of the half-filled bucket.
Drags the glob along the wall, stretching it from heavy to light.
MURRAY
We should write more, don't you
think?

Barbara watches Murray from the doorway. Perplexed.

BARBARA

No, right now, we should talk about the debates. But did you... take something?

MURRAY

(draws on the wall)

Oh, but the written word is so...

personal. So simple. You can see it, and then suddenly –

(smears it away)

Gone. No prying eyes, spies, or

lies. Momentary. Like you and me.

Barbara sees that the phone cord has been pulled from the wall. The device now sits in a bowl of water.

MURRAY

Click, click! They think I don't hear it, but I do. A click, click on the line. Someone's always

listening. Wheels and reels turn and twirl. And our words sent

everywhere!

(beat)

They don't trust me anymore.

Barbara spots the likely culprit for this paint-soaked soliloquy – A RED VIAL sits open on a glass table.

She moves to it, examines the contents.

BARBARA

What is this? How much did you

take?

Murray simply stares back, EXAMINING HER.

MURRAY

I disappoint you. Holes in the

walls reveal holes in my logic.

(MORE)

MURRAY (CONT'D)

And you question more than you

experience.

BARBARA

Can you... talk forward?

MURRAY

You want to flip from input to

output prematurely and it's causing a logjam in your pathways. It's so clear to me. Stuck like permanent glue and you need an elixir to come undone. Except you think if you let down your guard, everything will crumble. But no one asked you to mind the store. You only need to mind me. The soft tissue of the

mind is malleable for a reason.

Push just right and a sea change washes over you.

Barbara stares. Losing faith in him with every sentence.

BARBARA

I think maybe you should lie down.

He gets frustrated, pacing the room.

MURRAY

I am talking about the ocean of the human mind...

He moves quickly to the table, picking up the red vial.

MURRAY

...And I have found our ship.

(beat)

One milliliter and you can smell the salt in the air, the wind at your back, and mysteries fall away before you like waves. It's

breathtaking.

(beat)

We should test its effects on a

larger group. Make a note.

BARBARA

I'm gonna get you some water.

But as she heads to the kitchen, Murray STUDIES HER. His demeanor shifts. Brow narrows.

MURRAY

Why are you here? Are you working for them?

She returns with a glass, but Murray ignores it.

MURRAY

Tell me the truth. They sent you to check up on me, didn't they?

BARBARA

Nobody sent me.

MURRAY

I'll know if you're lying –

Barbara puts down the glass.

BARBARA

Clearly this is not the time or

place to get anything done, so I'm gonna go and –

But as she steps toward the door, Murray BLOCKS her path by moving to a drink cart.

MURRAY

Who have you spoken to about our study?

He pours himself a scotch, but keeps THE BOTTLE in hand.

BARBARA

No one. Henry, listen to me. You're under the influence of something that's causing paranoia and erratic mood –

Murray advances and Barbara carefully RETREATS. Never panicking, but keeping a nearby table between them.

MURRAY

How am I supposed to ever trust you again?

BARBARA

You need to calm –

MURRAY

Don't ever tell me what I need to do.

And without meaning to – SMASH! Murray breaks the bottom of the bottle off on the table. Liquor falls on his feet, but –

Gives the bottle AN EDGE. Barbara looks at the BROKEN BOTTLE.

Murray now holds a weapon and may not know it.

BARBARA

I'm with you. And I've done
everything I can to get you
results. Just help me understand.

Barbara moves around the other side, and Murray slides again.

A game of cat and mouse.

MURRAY

All I do is help.

BARBARA

Are we helping these students? The truth. Please. Because I have

reservations about this study, the parameters which you adjust almost daily. I think we're wandering into some serious moral and ethical gray areas.

MURRAY

Yes. The gray! You're starting to understand.

BARBARA

No. I'm really not. We are
restraining children and berating them and we need to discuss
changing our strategy.

MURRAY

It is my strategy!! And you of all people will not shut me down.

Suddenly Murray LUNGES for her. She maneuvers, narrowly avoids him, and –

BARBARA

Wait a –

Murray's foot hits a paint bucket, TUMBLES to the ground.

He falls, LODGING the glass into his right palm.

Barbara backtracks toward the door, but then...

She sees: Murray sitting up, blood pours from his wound and onto the floor.

MURRAY

Oh God. I've sprung a leak.

She stops, Murray suddenly no longer a threat. Just her mentor in need.

INT. BROWNSTONE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Barbara guides an injured Murray to the sink, runs water over his injury. Blood pooling into the basin.

BARBARA
This is gonna hurt.

Her fingers PINCH – A LARGE PIECE OF GLASS –

MURRAY
(wincing)
Goddamn it.

BARBARA
I know, one, two – there!

She CATCHES the glass. It SLIDES out. Murray quickly wraps his hand in a dish towel.

MURRAY
Psychopharmacology can be...
unpredictable.

Barbara nods. And the two stand there awkwardly.

INT. BROWNSTONE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Murray solemnly escorts Barbara through the drug-induced mess that is his home.

BARBARA
Keep the pressure on until you get real first aid.

MURRAY
I'll be fine.

BARBARA
It's deep. You'll probably need
stitches.

Murray IGNORES her. He's coming down, pain spinning him into sobriety. Embarrassment sinking in.

Barbara picks the Red Vial up off the floor.

BARBARA
Who got you these drugs? Is it the man who sat in on the debates?

MURRAY
No.

BARBARA
Who is he?

MURRAY
You'd be happy if I stopped the

program, wouldn't you?

BARBARA

No. I think you're brilliant. You see the world in a way no one else can. And I want to work with you, but you can't keep pushing me away.

If we want out of this, you gotta let me in.

Murray looks the girl over. He wants to trust her, but...

MURRAY

As someone who often peers inside people's minds, let me tell you...

never let anybody know what you're really thinking. They will always use it against you.

Barbara considers Murray against the madness and paranoia.

BARBARA

Then I'm sorry. But I can't be a part of this anymore.

MURRAY

And I accept your resignation.

But as she heads for the door...

MURRAY

I hate to admit this, but we're

both soldiers here. And out there?

There are those far less trusting who will enforce your silence.

She stares back at him. Was that a warning... or a threat?

Murray places a finger over his lips.

MURRAY

Be careful... getting home.

And Barbara EXITS into the night with more questions than when she arrived.

INT. KACZYNSKI ILLINOIS HOUSE - TED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cluttered with books, academic awards and accomplishments.

Ted on the edge of his made bed. Wanda sits in a chair in front of him. Hands him a razor.

WANDA

For the whiskers. Your father can show you how to use it if you like.

Ted takes it and places it on his nightstand.

WANDA

So, you're not talking to me, is that it? Can you at least look at me when I'm speaking with you?

He doesn't oblige her.

WANDA

You owe your brother an apology. At the very least.

TED

He was mouthing off.

WANDA

So you sock him? That's not how I raised the both of you.

TED

Is it swollen?

WANDA

David will be fine. It's you I'm worried about.

He turns away from her.

WANDA

You've been so listless this whole time home –

But now he knows what he wants to say.

TED

– Why didn't we travel more?

WANDA

You love the camping trips.

TED

But I haven't seen the world. I

haven't experienced anything. It'd be nice to have that right now.

Wanda looks over her son. Confused and scared.

WANDA

What happened at school? You can tell me. It's that program... isn't it? That's why you struck David.

You certainly didn't learn violence here.

TED

I was frustrated. It won't happen again. And Dr. Murray's study isn't to blame.

WANDA

If Harvard isn't what you thought it would be. You can come back. You know that, right? You wouldn't be letting your father and I down. You can come home, to your old room, you see I haven't touched anything.

TED

No thank you.

WANDA

Find a school in Chicago that suits you. Closer to family that loves you.

TED

And admit to everyone that I

failed? There isn't a university that's better.

WANDA

Who cares? And... they aren't near Lou's Diner. Who else makes new

biscuits on the hour?

TED

That's not the metric I base my
decisions on.
WANDA
I know. I just want you to be
happy. That's all.
She gets up and returns the chair to his old desk. Turns off one of the two lights, leaves his room and closes the door.
Ted's alone in a small space. His preferred state.
***EXT. STATE PARK - DAY
Ted and Theodore reach the summit of a gentle hill, largest elevation within two hours of home.
Theodore takes out his pipe and lights it to commemorate the moment.
TED
Not as lush as summer.
THEODORE
Still easy on the old eyes.
TED
I should see what Massachusetts
terrain has to offer.
THEODORE
And report back.
TED
Mother wants me to quit school and come back.
THEODORE
You know the opportunity we think Harvard is, but you're old enough to make your own decisions.
Theodore enjoys his tobacco.
TED
I apologized to David.
THEODORE
Remember the first time we took him camping with us in Wisconsin?
TED
He pissed on the fire.
THEODORE
That's right. And who built the
fire?
TED
I did.
THEODORE
He loves you. He would never do
anything to hurt you.
TED

I know.

THEODORE

Don't forget that. A little break now and then helps you appreciate the hard work more.

TED

I wish that work could be done

somewhere like this. Remote. Maybe in a little cabin someplace. Away from everybody.

THEODORE

Maybe one day. Everything you could ever need is out there. You can

just live off the land.

TED

Why didn't you?

THEODORE

There's no place to grind sausages out in this beauty.

TED

But is that always what you wanted to do?

THEODORE

No. Course not. I was a kid too, once. But the world's not always gonna bend the way you want it to.

TED

I don't know that yet.

THEODORE

At some point, you adjust your

expectations, but I like to think I made my mark.

TED

Yeah, how's that?

THEODORE

I had you.

Theodore SMILES, taking a long drag on his pipe. Ted ponders that responsibility, before –

TED

What's your favorite thing about Lou's Diner?

Ted's father doesn't have to think long for an answer.

THEODORE

Fresh biscuits on the hour.

It's confirmed, back to Harvard. If he returns home, he could end up like his parents. Not a risk he's willing to take.

INT. OLD HOMESTEAD STEAKHOUSE - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Murray and Stripe in the corner booth, no parties seated at the tables on either side of them.

Privacy by design as they halt their conversation, when the serious mustached WAITER delivers them each a martini.

MURRAY

I'd really like to get you back to Cambridge.

STRIPE

We're a little busy now. What
happened?

Stripe notices Murray's bandage from the incident.

MURRAY

Working late. Careless.

Murray buries his hand off the table, doesn't need Stripe distracted.

MURRAY (CONT'D)

If you could prioritize our
efforts...

STRIPE

We approved everything on your
list. All the bells and whistles and yet... not a single sound.

MURRAY

A position needs to be stated,
before it can be reversed. And that takes time.

STRIPE

You don't have much left.

MURRAY

With minimal training, anyone can get a dog to sit, but man is a

different beast. The level of mind control requested is far more labor intensive and requires a delicate hand.

STRIPE

All I've seen is you critique a
bunch of kids until they start
crying. The clown at my kid's last birthday accomplished the same with less prep.

MURRAY

Where you see hysterics, I see
progress.
(beat)
What you asked for, amnesia, new programmable behavior, that's
science fiction. My project is

actually changing the brightest

minds in the country. But you don't influence a person's thoughts by simply yelling at them to do what you want, you do it by finding

something they believe in so

strongly, it's a part of who they are. Once you have that, you tear it down. Brick by brick. To reform an ideology, you strip away self-confidence and ego, until they only have you to look to for guidance.

Then and only then can you rebuild them into anything you want.

STRIPE

Empty promises. And I don't enjoy repeating myself as much as you do.

MURRAY

Come back up and see for yourself.

It will happen. I can do it. And when I'm done, they'll even think it was their idea.

(MORE)

MURRAY (CONT'D)

Use the imagination that birthed this endeavor to forecast it's

potential applications.

Stripe considers. Murray watches him, but can't read his answer on his face. He's good.

Frustrated, Murray makes one last push. The big one.

MURRAY

Nuclear power has kept the United States at the top for years. But the next wave of influence lies in people and what they think. That's real power... and that is what I can provide for you.

Stripe takes the whole martini in one long sip and gets up.

STRIPE

Stay. Have a filet on us. Old

time's sake. I have a flight to

catch.

Murray gets up to respectfully say goodbye. Stripe urges him to stay, hands over the menu, and guides him back down.

STRIPE

Sit. I insist.

Stripe leaves Murray with little hope.

Murray pushes away the martini, it's not what he came here for, unsure of how convincing his performance was.

Time will tell.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Professor Graziano is at the board, shaping young minds with his arsenal of equations and formulas.

GRAZIANO

The tricky thing about M by M

Matrixsi is the question of

inversion. We say "A" is invertible if and only AB = BA, which leads us to "the Identity Matrix."

Through the confused but attentive students, Ted sits in the back. But he isn't taking notes, instead –

He sketches A LARGE WOODEN CHAIR from multiple angles. A lot weighing on his mind. But as he continues to draw –

GRAZIANO (O.C.)

I didn't hold your attention today.

Ted looks up to find Graziano standing over him. And now –

ALL THE OTHER STUDENTS ARE GONE.

TED

Where is everyone?

GRAZIANO

They moved on. Something about

another class.

Ted catches Graziano glancing down at his sketch. He quickly stuffs it into his bag.

GRAZIANO

Is everything alright?

TED

I'm fine. Excuse me.

Ted heads for the door, but –

GRAZIANO

Know thyself, Mr. Kaczynski. It's the answer to every problem. Know thyself.

Ted returns the unsolicited advice with a look, and departs.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Ted marches along, head down. Selective with his eye contact.

WOMAN (O.C.)

Ted.

A HAND HITS HIS SHOULDER. He recoils, surprised to see –

BARBARA. Edgy. Nervous. She hasn't been sleeping.

BARBARA

I've been looking for you. Can we go somewhere and talk?

TED
No.
BARBARA
Please. It's important.

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM - LATER

Ted sits in an empty desk as Barbara waits at the closed door, looking out. A little paranoid.

BARBARA
I've spoken to the other students.
I've quit the project and – I
think you should leave too.
TED
Leave? Why?
BARBARA
Because... it's not safe for you.
For anyone. It's not what you think it is.
TED
What is it then?
BARBARA
I – I honestly don't know. I
thought I did. But whatever it
started as, it's not that anymore.
It's changed into –
(beat)
Dr. Murray is not the man I thought he was. He's deceptive. He records everything. He's paranoid and
manipulative and –
Ted stares at her, processing what she's saying.
TED
He records everything. Did he
record our sessions?
Barbara doesn't answer... which is an answer in itself.
TED
And you listened to them?
BARBARA
We all listened to them.
Ted recoils. Feeling vulnerable. Violated.
BARBARA
He lied to you, Ted. He wasn't some poor kid sitting in his dorm,

building model ships all day during college. He grew up on Fifth
Avenue, playing football.
Everything he told you was crafted to get you to trust him. To confide in him.
He finally STANDS, anger swelling up inside of him.
BARBARA
This is what he does. It's not your fault. You're young and –
TED
But you called me one of the "Best of the best." You said this study would help me understand myself
better, remember?
BARBARA
I honestly thought it would.
TED
Did you think that when you were strapping me into that chair?
Barbara hesitates. Choosing her words carefully.
BARBARA
Ted, I'm sorry for the part I
played in all this. I truly am.
(beat)
But if you go back in there, I
promise, you're not going to get what you want... and he'll get
exactly what he wants.
Ted considers her warning. Unsure of which way he'll go.
TED
Or maybe this is just another lie.
Another test. Either way, I don't trust you. I don't trust him. But I know myself: you may be able to
forget about all of this and just go back to your regular life... but not me.
And with that, Barbara watches as Ted DEPARTS, the door closing behind him.

INT. BASEMENT - SUBJECT ROOM "A" - DAY

A 16mm reel is pulled from its case and loaded onto a PROJECTOR.
HANDS open the gate, threading the film with precision.
Once that's done, the camera is wheeled in behind –
THE CHAIR.
Wired. Strapped. Ominous. Bolted seven and a half feet from the one-way mirror.
Murray steps forward, INSPECTING the room.
The camera. The chair. The instruments. Everything.
He's ready to go.

STRIPE sits in a folding chair in the corner. He made it after all. He stubs out a cigarette into the wall.

Ted is that many minutes late.

Murray and Stripe share an uncomfortable look. Murray fakes a smile. It's not reciprocated.

After a long awkward moment, the door FINALLY opens and –

Ted ENTERS. Much to Murray's visible delight.

MURRAY

There he is! The man of the hour.

Ted's dressed similarly to the way he was during the debate, but now his clothes are wrinkled. No tie. The copy of Moby Dick at his side.

MURRAY

Good to see you, son.

Murray extends for a handshake. Ted sticks the book in it.

TED

I wanted to make sure I returned this.

MURRAY

What'd you think?

TED

A crazy old man lies to everyone he knows and gets eaten for it.

(MORE)

TED (CONT'D)

I don't see what all the fuss is about.

MURRAY

Well, you know what I think, and the scores of other literary authorities, but I respect you thinking for yourself. I've grown to expect nothing less.

Murray puts the book aside, trying to lead Ted inside.

MURRAY

Shall we get started?

The room, the mirror, the chair. Ted's not sure he can be here.

TED

I'm not staying. I just came to return that.

MURRAY

Nonsense. You could have done that anytime, but chose to do so in your time slot. Which means I trust you saw what I saw in Barbara's warning.

Ted stiffens. His posture tells Murray everything.

MURRAY

Delusions, paranoia, in her parting rant to me I detected notes of envy. A shame. She will be missed.

But we must remain focused.

Ted gets right to why he really came: TED

Why did you set me up?

MURRAY

I don't follow.

TED

At the debate. Whoever was on the other side of the glass knew things about me I only told you. The whole thing was rigged.

MURRAY

Interesting. I didn't realize we experienced the event so

differently.

TED

How was I supposed to defend

myself? You set me up to fail.

MURRAY

But you didn't fail, Ted. That day went exactly how I intended. You were fantastic.

TED

Bullshit!

MURRAY

I mean, maybe there are some

rhetorical techniques you could

brush up on. We could go over those today if you like. But all and all, I thought it was a tremendous

success.

Murray acknowledges Stripe.

MURRAY

If it wasn't, I doubt my associate in the study would travel such a great distance to meet you, and

observe our work.

Stripe NODS. Ted pays him very little attention.

MURRAY

He's impressed with the strength of your convictions, and even shares some of your beliefs.

Ted takes another step into the room. He likes his ideas and really likes when someone else does.

MURRAY

Take a seat. We can discuss all of this and more. Clear up any

misunderstandings.

But he's not about to lower his guard and sit down. In that chair.

TED

Who am I debating today? And what does he have? My dental records?

MURRAY

No debate this session. Just you and I, talking. Like we always have.

TED

Except I'll be bound and blinded.

MURRAY

You don't like the lights? Here. We don't need them.

He shuts off the brighter ones angled at the chair.

MURRAY

And since there's no one on the other side, we can cover that too.

Murray pulls A PROJECTING SCREEN down over the glass.

MURRAY

Satisfied?

But Ted just stares. Unsure what to do next.

MURRAY

Ted, if you don't want to sit down, don't sit. I'm not going to force you. But you're the one who said you didn't get a chance to defend yourself. Now... no one's stopping you. I've always been interested in what you have to say. You know that. And if you still believe everything you wrote in that paper, this is your chance to prove it. If not, I don't want to waste your time. You're free to go.

Murray WAITS. Maybe it's a bluff. Maybe he means it.

Ted considers LEAVING. Not giving Murray what he wants.

Getting a small win.

But if he stays, he can beat him at his own game.

Murray swallows. Stripe smokes. Everyone waits, until –

TED SITS DOWN IN THE CHAIR.

MURRAY

Beautiful.

And Murray wheels over the instrument cart. Ted flinches.

TED

No. No machines.

MURRAY

I'm sorry, Ted. But I've collected this data from everyone in the program. It's part of the process.

If you're not up for it, well...

Murray steps back. Waits again. Finally –

Ted unbuttons some of his shirt. Rolls up his sleeve.

MURRAY

This is a standard heart rate monitor. The readout lets me see how you're physically responding to the event.

Murray attaches the wires.

MURRAY

These can be a little cold and the one on the finger pinches. Let me know if you need any adjustments.

Ted goes along. More considerate treatment this time.

But as Murray steps away, the lights go off...

And THE PROJECTOR whirls to life.

TED

Wait, I thought we were going to talk? What are we watching?

MURRAY

You. This session is all about you.

Ted stares up at THE SCREEN and finds – HIMSELF.

THE PROJECTOR: It's the film Barbara shot of TED'S DEBATE.

NOTE: This footage will be playing throughout the scene on the screen behind Dr. Murray.

MURRAY

We need to review your past
performance before we can move
forward.

But Ted is uncomfortable staring at himself.

Murray steps out from the projector, between two strapped-in Ted's. One on the screen, and one in front of him.

Stripe has a view of it all: Ted in profile, Murray, and the Ted on the screen.

MURRAY

Your thesis was Harvard's not
working and it can be fixed.

TED

Yes.

MURRAY

Do you think you were able to get your point across? Were you pleased with how you conducted yourself?

Because almost from the beginning, you seemed... rattled.

TED

Isn't that what the chair and the lights and all this are for? To
rattle me?

MURRAY

I believe we made it clear this
would be a difficult process.

That's why we gave you the time to prepare. Why we met to discuss your paper. So that you would be ready for anything...

(beat)

And yet your opponent employed

repetition as a tool that left you, how can I put this nicely...

agitated?

Murray gestures to the projected film.

TED

I found it frustrating. He wouldn't let me speak. I don't know what you expected me to do.

MURRAY

If it was so powerful, maybe try some of your own. You didn't

consider forcing an issue. Fire

with fire.

TED

No...

Murray crosses in front of the projector's light, growing more ominous by the moment.

MURRAY

You could have used anaphora at the beginning of each sentence to

create strength through patterns, like Churchill: We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields. Or maybe tricolon, short triplicate to establish

focus, like Lincoln: Government of the people, for the people, by the people. Or diacope, reusing a word with a brief pause as Roosevelt

did: The only thing we have to fear... is fear itself. Or antithesis, dual clause structures to juxtapose opposing ideas, you know this from Dickens: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Or, when all else fails.

Epizeuxis. Repeating the same damn word over and over, like the

realtor who probably sold your

folks that quaint little home in Illinois: Location! Location!

Location!

(beat)

You deployed none of these. You

didn't help yourself at all.

Instead you simply fell apart.

Ted is RATTLED. The heart monitor ticks wildly next to him.

TED

I thought you said I didn't fail.

MURRAY

That doesn't mean you succeeded.

Murray gestures to the film again. Debate Ted looks lost.

Defeated. Sad even.

MURRAY

Right here! That man called you

broken. Said you were a mistake and an idiot. And all that comes out is an unpleasant squeal.

Sweat beads form on Ted's brow. But Murray doesn't let up.

TED

I don't –

MURRAY

– Do you think you're broken? Are you a mistake?

TED

No!

MURRAY

Wonderful! That's fantastic. And what did you do to prove it?

Murray and Ted look up as we see – Debate Ted CRYING.

MURRAY

A single tear. How sweet. That shut him the fuck up. And allowed you to... what?

Murray paces as Ted watches himself cry. Stripe takes a drag of his cigarette.

MURRAY

Do nothing! Because that boy up

there. Is weak. Is scared. And he thinks the world should be handed to him on a silver platter. Why?

Because he's good with numbers.

Ted just stares at the ground.

MURRAY

You know, I actually thought we

broke you at this point. When you went quiet and wouldn't answer. I thought... it's over. We'll send him back to general population with the rest of the simpletons he

claims to loathe.

Ted looks up. Debate Ted has his head down. The two are mirrors of each other.

Murray kneels down next to Ted. Whispering.

MURRAY

I'm curious. What is he thinking?

At that moment right there.

But Ted doesn't respond. He just stares. Unfazed.

Murray and Stripe share a look. Stripe puts out his cigarette. Stiffens. Ready to leave.

MURRAY

Ted, tell me what you were

thinking. Where's the confidence from my office? Ten pounds of piss and vinegar bursting from his

bargain jacket. Who couldn't be

badgered into submission. Who was ready to shove his arrogance down anyone's throat and yank out their undivided attention. What were you really thinking? I know he's in

there. Where is he? Make me see it his way-TED
He's thinking... how much he hates you.
Stripe stops moving. Murray freezes.
Ted suddenly finds clarity in his exhaustion.
MURRAY
Good. What else?
TED
He thought you were his friend.
That you understood him and that he could trust you.
MURRAY
He can.
TED
No, no he can't. Because you're
just like everyone else here.
MURRAY
Everyone at Harvard?
TED
Yes. In it for yourself. Taking
whatever you want from the people around you.
MURRAY
But that's okay, because the man on the screen thinks Harvard can be fixed. Right? And he's here to set the record straight. For posterity.
That all it takes is –
TED
He's wrong.
MURRAY
That was you two weeks ago. You're telling me your –
TED
And he's an imbecile. Harvard is a stinking system like everything else. And when it's infected the only way forward is to blow it all up.
He exorcised a darkness and finds relief.
Murray exchanges a look with Stripe. A position stated was reversed.
Rudimentary mind control achieved. IT WORKED.
MURRAY
You really feel that way?
TED
I've never been more sure about
anything in my life.
The reel ends, the screen is blank. Murray stands center, backlit.
MURRAY
Good work, Ted.

STRIPE gets up. Impressed. His nod to Murray says "we'll be in touch" and he departs.

MURRAY

I think we're getting somewhere.

Murray turns on the lights. Begins to disconnect Ted from the machine.

MURRAY

How do you feel?

But Ted doesn't answer. Just buttons his shirt, processing.

Murray rips the heart monitor paper free.

He studies it, smiling.

MURRAY

This is the work. Right here. It's an advanced process. Not for
everyone.

Ted finishes rolling down his sleeves. Stares at Murray. And the doctor FEELS it.

Murray puts down the readout. Turns to Ted. He puts a hand on Ted's shoulder. Ted stares back, confused.

MURRAY

I'm proud of you, son. And the
progress we made today.

Murray HOLDS OUT HIS HAND. Ted stares. But will he take it?

CAROL (PRE-LAP)

Gentlemen, welcome back, it's so good to see all of you again...

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

CAROL stands at the podium. The new Barbara in action.

Rebranding the next round.

CAROL

...As you can see, we've lost a few people along the way, but for those of you who remain...

As she speaks, we pan across the remaining NINETEEN TEST
SUBJECTS. Seated. Some listen. Some don't.

CAROL

...none of this would be possible if it weren't for your trust and commitment to this process. The
data we've collected from your
essays, debates and private
sessions is very promising. On
behalf of the entire department, I'd like to extend our most sincere thank you.

Down the line, PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS hand out new index-sized documents. One holds a card out to –

Christopher Tate who downs another soda, seated next to gum enthusiast Glenn Richardson.

CAROL

We've talked a lot about personal beliefs, so for this next essay, we'd like to focus on scientific innovation and technology.

The psychology student reaches the end of a row where –

TED sits, intensely taking notes. His eyes a little more sunken. His beard a little fuller.

CAROL

What do you see? Where are we
going? And what effects might they have on the future of civilization?
Remember, there are no wrong
answers... as long as you can
defend them.

But Ted is committed. There's no question about that.

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

Barbara sits in the backseat, as CLIFF keeps his hands on the wheel at 10 and 2, driving them along.

He takes an exit off the highway and the landscape changes dramatically.

She looks out the window, tries to get lost in the scenery, but it's not working.

CLIFF

Coming or going?

BARBARA

Returning.

On a small town main street now, Cliff takes in the sights.

CLIFF

Seems like a wonderful place to
grow up.

BARBARA

It has it's charm.

CLIFF

Would you look at that. Soft serve in a waffle bowl! I've only ever seen cone or paper.

BARBARA

They're very proud of their waffle bowl.

CLIFF

I'll have to tell my wife. She'd love that. Never has enough napkins with a cone.

She did not miss the small talk...

BARBARA

Two more lights, you'll want to
make a left.
...But chose ordinary over extraordinary.
CHRISTOPHER (PRE-LAP)
My father likes that I'm here more than I do, I'm sure of that...

INT. PSYCHOLOGY BUILDING - MURRAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Murray sits quietly. Listening. Another file folder in his lap. This one marked "RELIANT."

Christopher Tate chats away on the couch: CHRISTOPHER
...best day of his life placing the Harvard car decal on that bumper.
He said it shut the neighbors up for good.
MURRAY
I've heard suburbia brings out the ugliest competitions.
Murray closes the "Reliant" file. Lights a cigarette.
CHRISTOPHER
Say what's the deal with those
ships? You sail?
Murray RISES, drops the psychologist act, to show them off.
MURRAY
No. That's the Essex and this one is the Pequod. They're American
whaling ships from "Moby Dick."
You've read it, I assume?
CHRISTOPHER
Yeah. In middle school.
MURRAY
I was obsessed in high school, my mother gave me these as a
graduation present.
CHRISTOPHER
Really?
MURRAY
Actually the last gift she ever
gave me. She passed away the next year.

Christopher STANDS, following Murray to the models. As he looks over them with a new respect...

CHRISTOPHER
My mother died last May. She never even got to see me graduate.
MURRAY

I'm sorry, Christopher. Losing a mother, it makes a boy –

CHRISTOPHER

Have to grow up pretty quickly.

MURRAY

Exactly. More water?

CHRISTOPHER

Please.

With a smile, Murray moves to the cart with the pitcher of water. And as he refills the glass, we find –

A FAMILIAR RED VIAL on the cart as well.

MURRAY

So, tell me... what else is on your mind? You have my full attention.

Murray hands him the water, and they take their respective seats once again.

INT. KACZYNSKI ILLINOIS HOUSE - DAY

Wanda closes the oven and sets a timer. Theodore comes home from work, sets down his lunch tin, and kisses his wife.

THEODORE

Hear from Ted today?

Wanda shakes her head no. Ted puts his arm on her shoulder.

David RUNS in.

DAVID

Hey Dad! Mom, what time is dinner?

Wanda points to the timer.

WANDA

When that goes off, we'll be ready to eat.

David checks the timer himself.

DAVID

Great. Plenty of time.

WANDA

For what?

DAVID

To write Ted another letter.

THEODORE

Did he respond to your last one and we missed it?

DAVID

No. But here's what I'm thinking.

Yes, Ted's a math genius and lots of subjects are easy for him. But it's a new semester and maybe he is taking a class that he's really

struggling with and he just forgot.

David heads out of the kitchen. Theodore and Wanda exchange a look, haven't heard from Ted in awhile.

Ted's withdrawn; they don't put much stock in David's theory.

INT. ELIOT HOUSE - DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Ted is hunched over his Smith-Corona.

The room is dark. Lights off. Window open. The color-coded text books piled in a corner.

Dirty, discarded dishes fester on a bookshelf.

But Ted pays no mind, typing away, until –

A KNOCK.

He stops, looks up. More feral and fidgety than normal.

Starts to type again, but –

ANOTHER KNOCK.

With a sigh, Ted stands. Screws in a lightbulb, illuminating the disheveled room.

He unlocks and inches open the door to find –

MICHAEL.

MICHAEL

Hey, Ted. How you doing?

Ted looks the boy over. What the hell is he doing here?

TED

Busy. What do you want?

MICHAEL

Can I come in?

(beat)

It'll only take a moment.

Annoyed, Ted lets Michael enter. As he does, he CRINGES, taking in the disgusting surroundings.

MICHAEL

Everything okay man? You seriously need to crack a window in here.

(beat)

Jesus, was that milk?

TED

What do you want, Michael?

Michael reaches into his jacket and removes – AN ENVELOPE.

MICHAEL

Your last check. My parents owed you for three sessions. I told them you were adamant about not taking our money, but... they insisted.

Ted reluctantly takes the envelope and tosses it next to the collection of bowls.

TED

Anything else?

MICHAEL

I took your advice. Done with

school, parents had enough. I fly off to London top of the year.

TED

I'm sure you'll land on your feet.

MICHAEL

That's the thing, I already did.

Dad wants me to learn the

transatlantic routes. Then it's off to New York, where, by my

calculations, I'll be the youngest executive in the history of

American Airlines.

(beat)

Hell, maybe I'll pop over to France to The Louvre and see if Vicki's ass deserves to be there.

Ted's had enough. He moves to the door, gesturing for Michael to leave.

TED

Thanks for stopping by.

MICHAEL

You know, when you're finally out of here, if you ever need a job...

TED

You'd do that for me? Dad's just handing out jobs like peanuts. I guess I was lucky you were dumb

enough to need my help. But

honestly, there's nothing left I can do for you. Society's in decay.

The world's spinning into apathy and you'll just be sitting there behind your big fancy desk with

everything but a clue. No, the next time you hear from me, you might very well be the one asking for

help. But considering the direction we're all heading, by then, it'll already be too late.

MICHAEL

You always tell it like it is, Ted.

Take care of yourself.

Michael DEPARTS as Ted SLAMS the door behind him.

He unscrews the bulb again, sits down at his desk and resumes typing, like nothing even happened.

***EXT. CAMPUS POST OFFICE - DAY

It's RAINING. Students dodge puddles, taking cover under awnings to smoke and chat.

The entire campus looks DEPRESSING.

INT. CAMPUS POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ted waits in line amongst a crop of drenched students. He's dressed in A SOAKED SWEATSHIRT.

In front, A MAN has a small transistor radio loudly playing a baseball game.

The man SNEEZES so Ted tries to scoot back, but...

Behind him, TWO GIRLS gossip, shooting him strange looks.

POSTMASTER RUTH

Next.

The Radio Man moves along and Ted tightens. His eyes moving across the room.

The lights above BUZZ. Puts him back in the debate chair, under the brutal halogens.

An engine from outside BACKFIRES.

The noisy world is YELLING at him.

He grows more and more uncomfortable, until –

POSTMASTER RUTH

Next.

Ted walks up patient, polite, and particular. Postmaster Ruth sits at her window as he holds out – A LETTER.

POSTMASTER RUTH

Four cents.

He hands it over with no discernible expression. Definition of apathy.

POSTMASTER RUTH

University in the Midwest. The way they route these campus addresses, you should really put a return

address on this.

TED

No thanks.

POSTMASTER RUTH

Well okay then. Can't make you do anything you don't want.

TED

I'd like it to be a surprise.

Ruth STAMPS it and TOSSES it into an outbox.

Ted moves to the door, stopping. The rain is really coming down. So, he reaches back and...

TED PULLS HIS HOOD UP OVER HIS HEAD.

He takes a moment, foreshadowing A SKETCH the world will come to remember him by, and then...

Ted heads off through the rain.

And as he goes, the following burns onto the screen: Ted Kaczynski participated in the Harvard psychological study for approximately 200 hours, verbally abused and humiliated week after week.

Dr. Henry Murray retired in 1962. He is credited with the creation of the Thematic Apperception Test, the most widely used psychological profiling tool in the world today, as well as a key contributor to the CIA research project MK-Ultra.

In 1978, Ted Kaczynski sent his first mail bomb. He would go on to kill three people and injure another twenty-three during his seventeen year reign of terror as the Unabomber.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END

The Ted K Archive

Adam Gaines & Ryan Parrott
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06.30.2020

8flix.com
This script finished on last year's Black List with 10 votes. Both of these writers have done a little TV work as well as written some indie features.

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