

FATHER OF INVENTION

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EXT. FEDERAL PRISON - DAY

A steel door opens releasing ROBERT AXLE, 50ish, long hair, beard, worn out double breasted suit, unbuttoned, tie undone.

AXLE (O.S.)

All things are intrinsically connected regardless of how different they seem.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. INFOMERCIAL SET (1995) - DAY

Axle, late 30s, short hair, clean shaven, charges across the stage larger than life. Same suit, tie on, fully buttoned.

AXLE

As a fabricator, I bring together existing, often disparate items, maximizing their atomic and molecular potential, making ordinary inventions infinitely more prolific.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. LONG EMPTY ROAD - DAY

An EIGHTEEN-WHEEL TRUCK screams past Axle, his thumb out for a ride. He slips, regains balance then falls.

AXLE (O.S.)

The "Robert Axle Coffee-Grill" was the first in a long line of life changing Robert Axle Fabrications.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. INFOMERCIAL SET (1995) - DAY

Axle enters a mocked up KITCHEN SET, where CLAIRE, 12, braces, gawky but plenty cute passes him coffee and a panini.

AXLE

Part coffee pot and part panini press. It brought balance and harmony to our kitchens.

CLAIRE

Thus bringing balance and harmony to our lives.

Applause. Claire curtseys. The audience loves her.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. TRANSIT BUS - LATER

Axle seated on an overcrowded bus. Next to him a YOUNG MOM tends to her crying baby, trying to change his diaper with no room to maneuver. Axle's knees become an extension of her changing table. He smiles, wishing he was anywhere but here.

FLASHBACK TO:**INT. MANSION (1995) - DAY**

More of a shrine to Axle, than a home. Axle's best-selling inventions in dramatically lit glass encasements. Live broadcasts of the infomercial on monitors in every room.

AXLE (ON TV)

The "Robert Axle Shower-Oakie" brought singing in the shower to a whole new level combining a handheld shower head with a water proof karaoke machine.

LORRAINE AXLE, late 30s, bitter, trying to teach herself how to inhale a cigarette. Anything to escape Axle's face.

INT. INFOMERCIAL SET - CONTINUOUS

Claire aims a bulky digital camera at a fake mugger, shoots a stream of mace in his eye.

AXLE

The "Robert Axle Mace-Cam" empowered us to defend ourselves and photograph our assailants simultaneously.

She ejects a floppy disk. The crowd roars.

BACK TO PRESENT:**INT. REST STOP, GENERAL STORE - LATER**

Waiting in line with fellow BUS PASSENGERS, Axle holds copies of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Fortune Magazine*. He notices the CLERK working the register is MISSING HIS MIDDLE FINGER AND THUMB. He steps out of line, puts his magazines back and heads out.

FLASHBACK TO:**INT. INFOMERCIAL SET (1995) - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

AXLE (O.S.)

These are just a few of the many life changing products you've come to expect from Robert Axle.

Graphics from dozens of "ROBERT AXLE FABRICATIONS" circle through on the big screen culminating in...

AXLE

And now, my most inspired fabrication to date the "Robert Axle Gripper-Clicker."

Claire fits Axle with a spring-loaded, mechanical glove. Part squeeze resistance training device, part TV remote control.

AXLE

A revolutionary device that strengthens your grip each time you adjust channels or volume on your TV.

Each time he squeezes the glove the channel changes.

AXLE

Thus improving the firmness of our handshakes...

CLAIRE

And the impressions we make on the important people in our lives.

The crowd erupts. Axle drinks up the adoration. Cameras cut. Axle retreats to his nearby office, cell phone in his ear. Claire watches his office door close.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. TRUCK STOP - LATER

Axle, empty handed, attempts to re-board the bus when the three-fingered Clerk appears from nowhere, yanks him to the ground and punches him over and over in the Adam's apple.

CLERK

STUPID--GRIPPER--FREAKIN'--CLICKER!!!

INT. SEEDY DONUT SHOP - DAY

Axle, rubbing his injured throat, sits across from his PAROLE OFFICER, 30s, kind-hearted, nauseatingly empathetic.

PAROLE OFFICER

"Depraved Indifference to Human Life." What does that even mean?

AXLE

It means I had lousy lawyers. That, and I slightly underestimated the extensive television habits of the losers that buy my products.

PAROLE OFFICER
(head in the file)
Claire Elizabeth Axle, your daughter?

AXLE
Yes.

PAROLE OFFICER
And she knows you're going to be
staying with her?

AXLE
Yes. And it's Claire Elizabeth now.

PAROLE OFFICER
Smart. She dropped the last name.
Nobody needs that baggage.

Axle picks up his cold soda can, puts it to his throat.

PAROLE OFFICER
This has got to be tough. Sitting
here in a donut store trying to
figure out how to pick up the pieces
of your broken life.

Axle is a bit thrown by the P.O.'s candor.

PAROLE OFFICER
The good news is Familymart has one
of the top felon reform programs in
the nation. Assistant GM over at the
Fulton store is Troy Coangelo.

He hands Axle a pamphlet on discount retailer Familymart.

PAROLE OFFICER
Troy's expecting you 9 a.m. tomorrow.

AXLE
Are you aware that I built a 1.6
billion dollar company from scratch?

PAROLE OFFICER
You're a felon now.

AXLE
A felon who had eleven years of
nothing but time to brainstorm new
ideas. All it takes is one.

PAROLE OFFICER
62% of all ex-cons end up back in
prison within five years.

AXLE

Are you a parole officer or a
professional buzz kill?

P.O. hands Axle a sealed envelope, deadpan.

PAROLE OFFICER

\$120. If you budget properly it will
last until your first paycheck.

Axle accepts the money. A cold dose of reality.

INT. TAXI (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

The taxi cruises an impoverished urban neighborhood. Axle,
alone in the back, checks to make sure his door is locked.

EXT. CENTER FOR WOMEN - MOMENTS LATER

Axle pays the driver, waits for change. Takes in the exterior
of the CENTER FOR WOMEN. A bright spot in an otherwise tired
city street.

INT. CENTER FOR WOMEN - MOMENTS LATER

A smattering of down on their luck women wait in the lobby.

Axle enters, discretely folding his remaining cash in a way
that makes the wad seem as big as possible.

He looks up, unprepared for the impressive architecture, art
and furniture. Medical care, food and wardrobe assistance,
computers and career counseling... this place is vibrant and
surprisingly high end.

In the distance he sees CLAIRE, now mid 20s, dark eyeliner, a
few well placed tattoos, vintage look, strong sense of style.
She moves gracefully connecting with everyone in her path.
Warm. Selfless. Nothing like her father.

Overwhelmed, Axle slips out, unnoticed.

INT. MANSION, LIVING ROOM - SAME

Lorraine, now 50, all the makeovers money can buy, on the
floor in "plank position" doing core exercises. Cheating
plenty. The DOORBELL rings --

LORRAINE

Jerry!!!

No response. Lorraine, annoyed, lazily gets up.

EXT. MANSION, FRONT DOOR - SAME

LORRAINE

Why are you here?

AXLE

What do you mean why am I here. It's my house.

LORRAINE

(lighting a cigarette)

Was your house.

AXLE

When did you start smoking?

LORRAINE

Around the time you turned into a total self absorbed prick, which explains why you never noticed.

Axle peaks around her and looks at the new decor.

AXLE

You feel good about this, sucking off the Robert Axle teat?

LORRAINE

The fact that I severed our marriage before you started severing fingers was a stroke of genius.

AXLE

Stroke yes. Genius no.

LORRAINE

What do you want Axe-hole?

AXLE

My things.

LORRAINE

I gave them away.

AXLE

Gave them away! To who?

LORRAINE

Various organizations. Salvation Army, Good Will. Mostly the Department of Sanitation.

AXLE

You had no right, Lorraine.

LORRAINE

If you think Jerry and I owe you one bit of consideration after all you did and did not do--

AXLE

Hold it. Who the hell's Jerry?

JERRY KING, African-American, full of life and love.

JERRY

Jerry King. Lorraine's new husband. And a big fan of yours.

Jerry flashes a frequent shopper card with Axle's logo on it.

AXLE

"Axle's Army?"

JERRY

No doubt.

Axle puts his arm around Jerry, saunters inside.

AXLE

Good to know you Jerry.

INT. MANSION, LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

LORRAINE

(catching up)

Jerry's a forest ranger. He cares for the land and serves the people.

AXLE

What a coincidence. I made forty mil off the "Robert Axle Trim-Wedge."

JERRY

Part tree trimmer. Part sand wedge.

AXLE & JERRY

(simultaneously)

Now you can trim foliage and trim shots off your short game with the same device.

AXLE

Well, Ranger Jerry, man of the house and card carrying member of Axle's Army, what are the odds you'll let me crash here a couple nights?

Lorraine shakes her head no.

JERRY

Not good.

AXLE

I'll just take my car then and be on my way. Where's the Benz? Let me guess. Jerry's now.

Jerry looks away, shamed. Lorraine grins.

INT. JERRY'S '54 BENZ (MOVING) - DAY

Jerry drives Axle back into town.

JERRY

'54 Mercedes 300 SL Gullwing Coupe. Voted sports car of the Century in 1999. ...I love this sweet bitch.

Salt on Axle's wound.

AXLE

How does she make the leap from Robert Axle to Yogi Bear?

JERRY

Yogi was the bear. Ranger Smith was the guy you're thinking of.

AXLE

Who was the little cocksucker that used to get in all the trouble?

JERRY

Boo-Boo.

AXLE

I liked Boo-Boo.

Jerry's trying to take a key off the key chain while driving.

AXLE

Is that something we have to do now?

JERRY

Your boy got you a little mini storage unit on 5th and Plymouth. Prototypes, Axle memorabilia, personal effects and the like.

AXLE

And Lorraine's okay with this?

JERRY

Doesn't know about it.

AXLE

You live in my house, drive my car
and hump my ex-wife yet you risk life
and limb to save my memorabilia?

JERRY

You know why most people hate
buzzards, Axle?

Axle shakes his head no.

JERRY

Cause they feed on carcass, a fact
that often brings blame for a killing
for which it was not responsible. The
buzzard is unjustly persecuted.

Axle's gives this some serious thought. Until.... THE BENZ
VEERS OFF THE ROAD! Jerry gets control in the nick of time.

JERRY

(delayed outburst)

SHIT!

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

A cozy, stylish pad, full of charm and handmade touches, all
done on a budget. Claire's behind a sewing machine hemming a
pair of women's pants.

CLAIRE

You think we can get away with beer
and wine or do we need liquor?

PHOEBE, 35, a hater, in dark jeans and a vintage Metallica
shirt, stands over a large fish tank feeding her exotic fish.

PHOEBE

I'll make a deal with you, if I put
real thought into this dilemma can I
bail on the actual event?

DONNA crosses on her way to the KITCHEN, 20s, naive, in a
summer dress, bristling with optimism.

DONNA

You can't bail. Claire needs us.

PHOEBE

No philanthropist wants to see the
dike roommate put on a dress and make
small talk. Not that I own a dress.

Donna pops a straw into her juice box.

DONNA

I have so many dresses. Just go through my closet, pick whatever you want.

PHOEBE

Don't take this the wrong way but I'd rather kill myself.

THE BUZZER SOUNDS - Donna goes to the door, unphased.

CLAIRE

(mildly amused)

What did she ever do to you?

PHOEBE

Breaking Donna's balls is the only thing I truly enjoy in life. You want to take that away from me?

DONNA (O.S.)

Awww... there's a homeless person at the door.

Phoebe kicks into survival mode, grabs her golf club.

DONNA

All I have is a twenty and two ones. Should I just give him the twenty?

PHOEBE

Screw that. Two is plenty. It's not our fault he's homeless.

Donna slides one dollar under the door. Waits a beat. The BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN. This time more choppy and impatient.

DONNA

Oh God!

Phoebe stands on a chair behind the door, golf club cocked.

PHOEBE

(mouths the words)

Let him in.

CLAIRE

Everybody relax. Just because he's homeless doesn't mean he's dangerous.

Claire peeks through the peep hole. Sees her father, double breasted suit buttoned, his best foot forward.

CLAIRE

I take that back.

INT. CLAIRE'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Claire's arms folded. Axle struggles to make eye contact.

AXLE

You look great.

CLAIRE

You look... interesting.

AXLE

Easier if people don't recognize me.

No response from Claire.

AXLE

I read about your Girl's Center.

CLAIRE

Center for Women.

AXLE

I'm proud of you.

CLAIRE

Where are you staying?

AXLE

At a shelter.

Nodding nervously, as if he's fine with this.

CLAIRE

Shelter or halfway house?

AXLE

Uh, both. It's kind of a hybrid.

CLAIRE

Must be Fulton on 6th. It's a good place. They got new cots last year.

AXLE

They said something about new cots in the brochure. Any chance I could stay here, not long. Til I get on my feet.

CLAIRE

Yeah, no. I don't think so. I've got roommates, the place isn't that big.

AXLE

It's my building Claire.

CLAIRE

It was your building and I really don't think you want to be playing the "it's my building" card with me.

AXLE

You know what, you're right. You've built a life and a career and home all by yourself. The last thing you need is your ole man coming back and--

CLAIRE

Wait here...

Claire disappears, door half open. Axle waits, hopeful.

Next to the door is an orchid in a small flower pot. He can't help himself, he searches for the intrinsic connection between the flower pot and the doorbell.

Twisting and turning, he accidently drops the pot, breaking it and snapping the flower off the top of the orchid stem. In a panic, he pieces the pot back together and tries to balance the decapitated flower on its stem.

He looks up, sees Claire's been watching. He plays it off.

She offers him a PINK RAINCOAT.

CLAIRE

Take this. It's the rainy season.

AXLE

Claire, I don't need a--

CLAIRE

Just take it!

Axle accepts the coat.

AXLE

What would you call this, light purple?

CLAIRE

Lavender.

She closes the door.

AXLE

Long as it's not pink.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Claire crosses the room. Donna and Phoebe weigh in.

DONNA

He's sweet and definitely loves you.

PHOEBE

He's a loser and he's totally using you. Or at least trying to.

Claire returns to her sewing machine, not willing to discuss.

Donna and Phoebe hurry to the window to get a better look.

Axle's now on the street corner putting the raincoat on even though it's not raining.

DONNA

Definitely loves her.

PHOEBE

Definitely a loser.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Thumping club music. Axle, raincoat tied around his waist, works his way through a sea of young beautiful people.

None of the four BARTENDERS are in any hurry to serve the "old guy." He cannot make eye contact with any of them.

Realizing this is all wrong, he turns to leave and BAM! Two scantily clad SUPERMODEL TYPES, 20s, spill drinks on him.

SUPERMODEL #1

Sorry...

AXLE

It's all good ladies. Do people still say "it's all good?"

The girls look at each other, giggling! And with that, the Bartender acknowledges him.

AXLE

Three tequilas please.

The Bartender pours. Axle focuses on the ladies.

AXLE

I'm Robert Axle. Call me Axle.

They don't know who that is. Nor do they give up their names. Axle knocks his shot back. The girls only take partial sips.

SUPERMODEL #1

So, what do you do Mister Axle?

AXLE

I'm a fabricator.

SUPERMODEL #2

A liar?

AXLE

According to Noah Webster, liar is the fourth definition of fabricator. The first being "one who constructs by combining or assembling diverse, usually standardized parts."

The girls migrate away. Axle nods, it's all good.

BARTENDER

Eight-four for the shots.

Axle hides massive sticker shock. Scrounges up eighty-five dollars. The Bartender stuffs the extra dollar in his jar and rings a bell as if he just got a big tip.

FLASHBACK TO:**EXT. ONE BEDROOM HOUSE (1990) LATE NIGHT**

Axle, early 30s, jeans, sweat-shirt, barefoot, bouncing ecstatically on the fold out sofa bed.

LORRAINE

Honey, please. You're gonna break the bed.

Lorraine, early 30s, nurse's uniform, takes the corded phone out of his hand and puts it on the coffee table.

AXLE

(still jumping)

Nobody asks for a second meeting unless they want to make a deal.

He hops down, twirls her like a ballroom dancer. She lets her guard down. This is the man she fell in love with. He stops.

AXLE

I need a suit. I can't go to a meeting like this without a suit.

Axle grabs a stack of mail. Goes through it like a mad man.

LORRAINE

What are you...

Now he's riffling through a drawer. He shows her a pre-approved VISA application. Junk mail.

LORRAINE

Robert. Stop. You don't need a suit.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Who was that on the phone?

Claire, 7, precocious, emerges from her room, bleary eyed.

Axle looks to Lorraine for permission to share his news. She shakes her head no. Too late...

AXLE

Somebody wants to invest in Daddy's coffee-grill.

Claire thinks for a beat, processing. Then runs across the room, jumps into his arms.

Still in the hug, Axle shares a look with Lorraine, a tear of joy in her eye. She finally believes!

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. FULTON HOUSE - HOMELESS SHELTER - LATER

Dozens of WHITE COTS occupied by junkies, mental patients, and street people; mumbling, bickering, laughing, snoring...

Axle lies on his bed wide awake, still like a corpse, pink raincoat draped over him for warmth.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

One month.

He looks up and sees Claire, all business.

CLAIRE

I don't want rent money. I don't want grocery money. You get a job, a real job. That's not code for you on my couch quote unquote brainstorming. I think we've all had enough Robert Axle Fabrications for one lifetime.

AXLE

Got it.

CLAIRE

You get that job, you keep it and save every nickel. Because at the end of the month you're on your own. My moral obligation to you will have been met.

Axle stands, goes to hug her. She steps back.

CLAIRE

One last thing. ...My job.

AXLE

The "Center for Women."

Claire is rattled by the fact that Axle got it right now.

CLAIRE

Under no circumstances are you
allowed near that building or to tell
me how to make things more efficient
or how to maximize their full atomic
and molecular potential.

He then extends his hand. She shakes, reluctantly.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Claire riding her bike. Axle hustles to keep up. She rides
just fast enough to make him work his ass off.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Claire unlocks the dead bolt. Axle follows, noting a massive
fish tank, beside it a large painting leans against the wall.

AXLE

Nice fish.

CLAIRE

The fish are off limits too.

AXLE

I'm not much of a "fish guy" anyway.

She heads down the hallway. He follows, presuming he's
getting the grand tour.

AXLE

Claire, I'm sorry for everything, how
it all went down. Anyway, just wanted
to get that part out of the way.

CLAIRE

(detached)

Okay.

She hands him a pillow and blanket then retires to her room.

Axle looks back at his new bed, a curvy modern sofa. The kind
that looks cool in a magazine but is a nightmare to sleep on.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - SUNRISE

AXLE'S POV: Blazing SUNLIGHT through naked windows. His eyes try to adjust. Donna extends her hand, thrilled to meet him.

DONNA

I'm Donna. Claire and I have been roommates since Northwestern. Both psych majors. I switched to finance.

Axle smiles politely, turns to Phoebe to get her story.

PHOEBE

Phoebe. Not happy you are here. Prefer that you would go.

AXLE

The pleasure's all mine.

DONNA

Finance wasn't really my thing so I got a teaching degree thinking I could teach finance classes but I couldn't find a job so I started working with Claire at the Center but since that is sort of not happening anymore, Dad's making me apply to law school. We found Phoebe on Craig's list.

PHOEBE

Back when they wanted a roommate. Now, not so much.

DONNA

She's a lesbian.

AXLE

(sarcastic)

Really? I wouldn't have guessed that.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Phoebe and Donna are parked on two of three bar stools eating omelettes, made to order by Claire. Axle stands with his.

AXLE

What line of work are you in Phoebe's?

DONNA

She's a gym teacher.

AXLE

That's original. Ya don't meet many lesbians who coach PE.

PHOEBE

And how often do you meet the world's
preeminent infomercial douche--

CLAIRE

Enough!

Axle and Phoebe seem like two kids busted by their mom.

AXLE

Love to stay and chat but the world's
preeminent infomercial douche doesn't
want to be late for his first day on
the job.

CLAIRE

You have a job?

AXLE

Familymart. One of the largest
discount consumer product retailers
in the nation.

PHOEBE

What do they have you doing, mopping
floors or cleaning toilets?

AXLE

Ten grand says I'll be running the
store within three months and the
whole company within three years.

PHOEBE

A. You don't have ten grand. B. Why
would anyone allow an ex-con to take
over a big company like that?

AXLE

Because if they don't I'll start my
own big company and put them out of
business.

DONNA

That just gave me goose bumps.

Phoebe rolls her eyes. Claire pretends she wasn't listening.

INT. CITY BUS (MOVING) - DAY

Axle, in his suit, stands in the middle aisle holding the
ceiling rail. His mind working a million miles an hour.
Noticing every person, place and thing he sees. It's like
tunnel vision as he searches for connections and new ideas.

The Bus stops. A few passengers let out. Axle's too preoccupied to realize this is his stop. At the last second darts toward the door and (BAM) the door closes in his face, knocks him off his feet.

EXT. BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

The doors reopen, Axle spills out holding his face. The bus charges on revealing Familymart, a discount consumer products retailer (in the vain of a "Dollar General").

INT. FAMILYMART - MOMENTS LATER

Close on a row of top selling "As Seen On TV" products. Towards the bottom is a row of Axle's more famous Fabrications only now the name "Robert Axle" has been removed and the prices have been gashed.

Axle looks demoralized.

TROY (O.S.)

Robert Axle. As I live and breathe.

Assistant GM, TROY COANGELO, 30s, star struck.

AXLE

And you must be Troy Coangelo.

TROY

Guilty as charged.

Troy shakes Axle's hand with a big frozen smile.

TROY

Hey, I can also rig the time stamp on the punch-in clock so you can get credit for a full shift.

AXLE

Excuse me?

TROY

The time. You were 19 minutes late.

Troy hands Axle a bright blue Familymart vest. Then makes an AXLE name badge out of a hand held label maker.

TROY

And help yourself to some note pads and pens from aisle four, take them in the break room. I'm sure you'd like some time to brainstorm, work up your next big idea.

Axle starts to realize he is being mocked.

AXLE

Sorry I was late. Won't happen again.

TROY

(stone cold)

Oh it will. And when it does, it will bring me enormous satisfaction to send you on your merry way.

AXLE

I thought this was a "felon reform" program.

TROY

Do you know what "felon reform" means?

AXLE

Apparently not.

TROY

It means you represent a monumental risk to my company. It also means if you show up late, give me lip or so much as breathe at the wrong time, I have full authority to terminate your ass. No warning. No cause. No pink slip. Just sayonara Kemo Sabe.

INT. CENTER FOR WOMEN, CLAIRE'S OFFICE - DAY

MARIA, 30s, urban, bitter, trying on interview attire. She models the pants Claire hemmed earlier at the apartment.

MARIA

I hope he gets hit by a bus and he don't die but both his ankles get broke. Or I'll kill him myself.

CLAIRE

Maybe tomorrow we will kill him but today we have an interview. You look nice by the way.

MARIA

How'm I supposed to be professional when I got to worry every day about this cheap-ass bitch paying child support. And he's intercoursin' my best friend.

Claire helps her get buttoned up and proper.

CLAIRE

You're a strong woman. With self-esteem, a son that loves you and the tools to deal with your anger.

Maria takes Claire in.

MARIA

Your folks done something right.

Maria tries to give her a hug. Claire reciprocates but in a half guarded, stiff way. Claire's cell phone vibrates. She answers, still in the hug. Maria won't let go.

CLAIRE

Donna I'm kinda busy right n--

Donna's so loud that Maria can hear every word.

DONNA (O.S.)

(through the phone)

Oh my God. I just Googled your dad. Did you know three thousand six hundred fourteen people were maimed by this "gripper" thingy?

Maria pulls out of the hug.

MARIA

Robert Axle. That's your daddy!

DONNA (O.S.)

How did it cut off a birdie finger and a thumb at the same time?

MARIA

It was like an Edward Scissorhand with blades and shit.

CLAIRE

It was a faulty lever that worked its way off the spring after extensive use. There were no blades.

Maria tries not to laugh. It's not easy.

EXT. FAMILYMART, BATHROOM - DAY

Axle, on his knees cleaning toilets, doing a decent job. He feels a presence behind him, looks up, it's Troy.

TROY

I don't mind if you stay late but you've got to clock out first.

AXLE
Stay late, on my own dime?

TROY
Your call.

AXLE
Yeah, that's not gonna happen.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - THAT AFTERNOON

Claire enters, parks her bike. She stops when she notices her oversized painting that had been leaning against the wall has now been hung. Axle, looks particularly pleased with himself.

CLAIRE
Tell me you didn't get fired.

AXLE
Claire, if I got fired I would tell you. What do you think of the painting?

CLAIRE
Too high.

AXLE
Really? I thought it was too low.

CLAIRE
It's too high because it's hung. And we didn't want it hung.

AXLE
I can always take it down.

CLAIRE
If you want a giant hole in the wall that can't be patched and painted because they don't make this paint color anymore.

AXLE
Really? All you have to do is take a paint chip in and--

CLAIRE
Where's the mail?

AXLE
Next to the trash can. Now you can drop envelope scraps directly into the garbage without having to walk across the room. Thus eliminating wasted steps and maximizing--

Claire grabs the stack of mail and walks toward her bedroom.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Axle follows, cautiously.

AXLE

You're right. It's more enjoyable to relax in the comfort of your own room while you open mail.

He steals a glimpse of her room. Tons of photos. None of him.

AXLE

I can bring the trash can in here. Recycling bin too.

CLAIRE

Why are you doing this?

AXLE

Doing what?

CLAIRE

Trying to be "Joe Dad."

Claire closes her door. Keeps Axle out.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

AXLE

Claire, nobody is trying to be "Joe --

KA-TOOSH! A carbon monoxide detector falls from the ceiling.

AXLE

I installed a carbon monoxide detector in the hallway.

DONNA (O.S.)

WHAT WAS THAT?

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Our new carbon monoxide detector!

Axle had no idea Donna was home. He taps on her door, gently.

AXLE

Tell me you are not staying in your room because I'm here?

INT. DONNA & PHOEBE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Donna opens the door, plenty hospitable.

DONNA

It's not you, it's me. Actually it's Dad. He's not comfortable with me being alone with criminals.

Axle takes in the room. Half meticulously decorated with stuffed animals, unicorns and dreams. The other half void of color. Mattress on the floor, bed unmade, clothes everywhere.

AXLE

Donna, I'm not exactly Ted Bundy. No one could predict those grippers were going to crap out after nineteen consecutive hours of use.

DONNA

I don't know who Ted Mundy is but I do know the circumstances under which "Depraved Indifference to Human Life" occurs expressly states that recklessness is the element of mental culpability required.

Axle storms off, trying not to lose it.

DONNA (O.S.)

Thanks for the monoxide thingy?

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He steps up on a chair, takes the giant painting down then pulls the nail out leaving a small divot in the wall.

Knowing this will never fly with Claire he tries to put a nail back in an inch to the right, this just makes the divot bigger. Now it's the size of a baseball.

He moves two inches up, taps it in gently. Somehow the nail stays. He covers the hole with the painting.

A beat as Axle admires his handy work. The chair tips. He falls! Axle gracefully avoids the tank but knocks an entire container of fish food into the water!!!

He races to retrieve the container of food before the fish eat themselves to death. He plunges his entire arm into the tank, water lops over the edge, one of the fish scatters across the floor, stopping at the feet of...

PHOEBE

Where do you want it?

Axle hides the fish food behind his back, tucks it away.

AXLE

Where do I want what?

She picks her fish up and puts it back in the tank.

PHOEBE

You violated my fish. I get a free shot. Now where do you want it, in the face or the nuts?

AXLE

I didn't violate your fi--

PHOEBE

FACE OR NUTS!

AXLE

Okay, okay, the face.

Axle close his eyes, tightens up his face. (BAM) She kicks him in the nuts. He drops to his knees. She calmly takes the fish food from his back and places it back on the ledge.

INT. FAMILYMART - MOMENTS LATER

Axle mopping. Clearly he's never had lessons, not adept at squeezing superfluous water before the mop hits the floor.

He's distracted by his great weakness, consumer products. Rows upon rows of brilliant ideas he wishes he came up with -- tongue dissolving vitamin strips, upside down Heinz ketchup, pedometer, the rabbit wine opener, etc.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me. Where's the restroom?

AXLE

(ignoring the question)

Let me ask you something. If Familymart put out a device that combined your e-mail with your cellular telephone, would that be something you'd be interested in?

The customer pulls out his Blackberry.

CUSTOMER

Like a Blackberry?

AXLE

(scrambling)

Yes, like a Blackberry only with a camera welded or somehow joined to the outer encasing so you could --

CHA-KEESH! The guy snaps a digital photo of Axle mid rant, shows it to him.

TROY (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Axle looks up and sees Troy about to lose it.

AXLE
Troy, we've got to start selling
Blueberries. These things are unreal.

TROY
We? There's no "we." There's us the
third most profitable Familymart in
the city and you the felon who is not
allowed to talk to customers.

Troy sees Axle's abandoned mop bucket and sopping wet floor. A hapless LITTLE OLD LADY is walking toward the wet spot.

Troy rushes to save her! In doing so, he slips, catching his foot on a crack in the floor, compound fracturing his leg!

The OLD LADY walks through the wet floor, clueless. Troy, trembles in some form of silent shock. Axle hustles over to help. He sees the exposed bone!!!

AXLE
(turning away)
Holy shit.

Axle regains composure, reaches to help. Troy can no longer speak. All he can mutter is a high pitched shrieking sound.

AXLE
(trying to translate)
Your friend? Of course I'm your
friend.

Troy shakes his head no, points to the door.

TROY
You're fired.

Axle quietly walks away. Troy's random shrieks continue.

EXT. CITY PARK, KIDS PLAYGROUND - MOMENTS LATER

A smattering of YOUNG KIDS playing on swings, slides, ropes. MOMS and NANNIES nearby, barely paying attention.

Axle, still in the blue vest, is on a bench sketching new ideas on a small pad. Nothing good, completely blocked.

BOY (O.S.)

Axle!

Axle snaps out of it, sees a BOY, 7, standing over him.

AXLE

You know who I am?

The boy points to his Familymart name badge. Axle nods.

BOY

I draw wolves. Wolves and pterodactyls.

Axle smiles. This kid has a creative spark, like he once had.

AXLE

Ever try putting them together, make a wolf-a-dactyl? Nobody's ever seen a wolf-a-dactyl before.

BOY

That's stupid.

Axle sits with this. Truer words have never been spoken.

(FZZZZZZZ) A stream of COLD WATER smacks Axle in the nose. The boy drops his SUPER SOAKER water gun and tears off.

Axle picks up the soaker and gives chase, ducking under a swing, climbing up the slide, laughing the whole way. The boy leads him into a nest of OTHER KIDS, all with super soakers.

The kids fire their weapons! Axle reverses his field. The whole playground is now chasing him. He slips... the kids pile on! Tickle torturing. One by one he overpowers and peels them off. Everyone laughing hysterically.

Out of breath, he sits up, coming face to face with a Spanish-speaking NANNY who lets out an inaudible yelp/scream as she sprays him with a vintage ROBERT AXLE MACE CAM!

She ejects the floppy disk as Axle runs away, eyes burning. He nearly smacks into a tree, redirects and gets away.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Axle's head comes up from the sink where he has been washing the mace out of his eyes. He looks into the mirror at the man he has become. Not a pretty sight.

He riffles through the medicine cabinet and drawers until he finds a pair of scissors.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Donna lounges on the sofa studying. Phoebe stands across from the TV, with headphones on, contracting and contorting as she shreds on GUITAR HERO via X-BOX 360.

Axle emerges, hair much shorter, scruffy beard downsized to a soul patch accented with well groomed chin scruff.

DONNA

Check out the new Axle!

PHOEBE

You know what would go good with that mid-life crisis? An earring. Maybe a Mazda Miata.

AXLE

You know what would go good with that winning personality? A therapist. Maybe a whole army of them.

DONNA

I think he looks distinguished. Like a college professor. Oh my God, Axle! You should totally go to law school with me. You wouldn't even have to be a lawyer. You could just be a consultant, like me.

CLAIRE

He can't go to law school. He never went to college, or finished high school for that matter.

DONNA

Really, I thought he was some kind of fancy engineer genius guy.

AXLE

I am, sans the fancy degree.

Donna hangs on his every word.

AXLE

I was never a big fan of school. Didn't have time for it. Didn't see the point.

Claire crosses with laundry, in no mood for this speech.

CLAIRE

I'm going to my Mom's. Does anybody have darks or mediums.

Claire heads out. Without taking her eyes off the screen, Phoebe rips off her sweat shirt, and tosses it to Claire.

PHOEBE

Hit that with some ZOUT will ya. Had a little nacho incident at lunch.

Claire's gone. Phoebe dials up Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Freebird" on Guitar Hero - Expert Level. She plays with it note for note.

AXLE

You do realize that's a plastic guitar.

Phoebe pauses the game.

PHOEBE

What did you say?

DONNA

He said do you realize--

PHOEBE

I heard what he said.

She shoves the plastic guitar at Axle.

PHOEBE

One song. Easy level. I win, you get rid of that weak-ass banker suit.

AXLE

I win, you and Donna move out here for the rest of my month. I get your room.

DONNA

Hold it, I'm not giving up my--

PHOEBE

(ignoring Donna)

It is on old man. It is so on.

INT. MANSION, KITCHEN - EVENING

Claire folds clothes on the kitchen table.

CLAIRE

I'm in the business of helping people. It's what I do.

Lorraine stands over a blender making a wheatgrass smoothie.

LORRAINE

And he's in the business of hurting people. It's what he does.

CLAIRE

It's his building.

LORRAINE

It was his building. It's mine now.

CLAIRE

I have bigger problems than Robert Axle sleeping on my sofa. Trust me.

Lorraine adds cookie dough ice cream to the blender.

CLAIRE

Did you just add cookie dough ice cream to your wheatgrass smoothie?

LORRAINE

Don't change the subject. This is about you not me.

CLAIRE

Really? Cause it feels like you're jealous that he's back in my life and not yours.

LORRAINE

Me wanting Axle back when I have Jerry is like wanting Herpes back when you have a clean bill of health.

CLAIRE

I thought Herpes was incurable?

LORRAINE

My point exactly.

CLAIRE

Was he always a self-absorbed prick?

No response from Lorraine. Her silence speaks volumes.

LORRAINE

Right now your focus should be on saving your Center not your father. Let me write you a check.

CLAIRE

No.

LORRAINE

Numbnuts rolls back into town and suddenly my money's not good enough?

CLAIRE

It has nothing to do with Numbnuts.

LORRAINE

Then what? I'd like to know why --

CLAIRE

You're filing for bankruptcy Mom.

LORRAINE

I took your father for 362 million. Why would I be filing for --

CLAIRE

Because you're broke. Jerry told me.

LORRAINE

Sweetheart, no disrespect to Jerry but he's a park ranger. You want to know what berries are poisonous ask Jerry. You want an update on our finances ask me.

CLAIRE

I'm not surprised. You spend money like water. Was it really necessary to spend thirty two grand on one set of salt and pepper shakers?

LORRAINE

I like nice things, that doesn't exactly make me frivolous.

CLAIRE

You hired Sting to play at book club.

Lorraine gets a stiff back, then surrenders.

LORRAINE

You're right. Your mother is an imbecile.

Lorraine scurries away, shamed.

CLAIRE

Mom...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - SAME

HEART's "Barracuda" reverberates throughout the room. Axle and Phoebe are so intensely involved in Guitar Hero they do not blink, they do not move, they are barely breathing.

Donna's painting her toenails, starved for attention.

DONNA

If you want, you can borrow my bike.
It's a little on the feminine side
but it beats walking and public
transportation, albeit eco-friendly,
is very depressing.

PHOEBE

Quiet!

DONNA

I'm trying to distract him Phoebe!

PHOEBE

Oh, KISS MY ASS!!!!!!

The battle is over. Phoebe lost the bet.

AXLE

That was a lot easier than I thought.
And I'm not even a music guy.

PHOEBE

Best two out of three. Expert level.
None of this "easy" bullshit.

AXLE

Why would I do that. I already--

PHOEBE

You win, you get the room and I
suspend breaking your balls for the
remainder of this godforsaken month.

DONNA

His balls, how 'bout you stop
breaking my balls?

AXLE

(ignoring Donna)
It's on old lady. It is so on!

PHOEBE

Two seconds.

Phoebe sits. Out of nowhere appears a foot-long BONG.

AXLE

A gym teacher smoking grass.

PHOEBE

A. We haven't called it grass since the sixties. B. I smoke half as much weed as my students do.

She takes a hit, passes to Donna who hesitates then surrenders. She takes a hit and passes to Axle.

AXLE

No thanks. I'm on parole.

PHOEBE

If by parole you mean "too old."

Axle, emasculated, starts toward the bong then pulls back.

AXLE

Did you know 62% of ex-cons go back to prison within five years. Seriously. It's a fact!

Phoebe busts out laughing. Donna joins in.

Axle grabs the bong and takes a MONSTER HIT. He wants to cough but holds it in. The girls can't stop laughing.

INT. MANSION, MASTER SUITE- SAME TIME

Claire and Jerry hover outside of Lorraine's locked closet.

CLAIRE

Mom... are you okay?

No answer. Jerry knocks lightly on the closet door.

JERRY

Lorraine...

LORRAINE (O.S.)

I'm fine. Go away.

Claire whispers to Jerry.

CLAIRE

Are there any guns in there?

JERRY

Just one, my pellet gun. She can't hurt herself with that.

OFF CAMERA they hear Lorraine pumping the pellet gun riffle.

JERRY

Baby you're scaring us.

LORRAINE (O.S.)

My daughter finally needs me again
and I'm useless.

CLAIRE

I don't need you mom.

Silence... then more pellet gun pumping.

CLAIRE

Mom, I love you. I appreciate all
your donations to the Center but at
some point this has to end.

Pumping stops.

CLAIRE

It's time for me to "man up" and find
someone other than you who believes
in me.

JERRY

See it all the time out in the
forest. Baby Bird wants to leave the
nest. Mama Bird starts gettin' antsy.
Pacing. Pecking. Doesn't think Baby
Bird can fly.

CLAIRE

And she flies, right Jerry?

JERRY

Nah. Lotta times she dive bombs into
the ground, beak first.

LORRAINE (O.S.)

Jerry, this analogy makes me want to
blow my brains out.

JERRY

Point is... Baby bird can't stay in
the nest forever. Sooner or later
she's gotta start trying to fly.

Claire smiles to herself. The door opens. Lorraine emerges
from a cloud of smoke, a cigarette dangling from her lips.

LORRAINE

Just keep that nimrod father of yours
away from this event.

CLAIRE
 (waving the smoke away)
 I know.

LORRAINE
 He'll make the whole thing about him.

CLAIRE
 Mom...

LORRAINE
 Nobody wants to underwrite a non-
 profit that's affiliated with --

Lorraine waves her hand with middle finger and thumb bent down, mocking one of Axle's victims.

CLAIRE
 Mom! ...I know.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LITTLE LATER

AXLE'S POV: Donna asleep on the floor.

AXLE
 Check her pulse!

PHOEBE
 This is officially a forfeit.

AXLE
 Oh my God. She's dead.

PHOEBE
 Bob. Look at me. Donna's not dead.

Phoebe kicks Donna who rolls to her side, giggling.

PHOEBE
 (referring to Axle)
 You want to know why people shouldn't
 smoke? This is why.

Axle, leaning next to the large painting he hung earlier.

AXLE
 Eleven years of isolation. Nothing to
 do but think. I come up with nothing.

Phoebe sobers a bit. This is heavy. Axle slides down the wall into a sitting position.

AXLE
 You want to know why I can't go back?
 That's why.

The painting falls, hits him on the back of the head. Axle tips like a falling tree, face landing on the floor.

PHOEBE (O.S.)

I got fake tits when I turned 30.

Axle winces. This can't be true.

PHOEBE

Had'em yanked four months later.
I looked like a cartoon character.

They lock eyes, mutual respect.

AXLE

I got fired from Familymart.

PHOEBE

Seriously?

Axle nods. Both fall back to the floor LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

AXLE'S POV: Blinding sunlight again. His eyes adjust. Claire, in sweats and UGG boots, quietly stepping past him.

AXLE

You okay?

CLAIRE

I'm fine.

AXLE

Where are you going?

CLAIRE

To grab some coffee, read the paper.
Go back to sleep.

AXLE

I'll go with you.

Before Claire has a chance to protest, Axle is up. He takes two steps and stops. Major HEAD RUSH.

AXLE

Oh boy. Got up too fast.

INT. CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Claire and Axle, riding BICYCLES. Axle, trailing behind on Donna's little girl bike with basket and horn. He wobbles like he hasn't been on a bike in twenty-five years.

CLAIRE
Everything okay?

AXLE
Fine.

CLAIRE
You sure? I don't need Donna freaking
because you wrecked her bike.

Axle's now trying to put the raincoat on while he rides.

AXLE
I seriously doubt she would freak. It
was her idea, me taking the bike.

CLAIRE
Trust me, she would. Her dad gave her
that bike for her eleventh birthday.

Axle loses balance, nearly crashes, catches himself but the
horn snaps off. He hides it in his pocket.

AXLE
So she actually likes her father?

CLAIRE
Adores him.

AXLE
Let me guess... Charming. Accessible.
Owns a couple of hardware stores.
Wears a lot of sweaters.

CLAIRE
Change hardware for sporting goods
and you pretty much nailed it.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAKERY/CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Claire and Axle sit opposite each other. Claire's head buried
in the paper. Axle watches her.

AXLE
When did you learn to sew?

CLAIRE
About six years ago, when I started
the Center.

AXLE
It's nice, the sewing. Are you gay?

CLAIRE
What kind of a question is that?

AXLE

If you are, it's cool with me. I just want you to be happy.

CLAIRE

Just because my life isn't bogged down by some man child who wants to have a say in everything I do, who I do it with and when it gets done? ...No I'm not gay. I wish it were that simple.

AXLE

Well none of you girls seem to date and I find it a little bit odd.

CLAIRE

Donna has been engaged to three different men and never gone through with it. No man will ever measure up to her father. Phoebe dates but doesn't bring girls home to meet us because she thinks we would judge her and I am very much looking forward to falling in love but not until I get my shit together.

AXLE

See there, three things I've learned about Claire Axle: started sewing six years ago, doesn't have time for men and loves the paper.

Claire puts the paper down to address her father directly.

CLAIRE

Two more things: My last name is not Axle and I'm fond of boundaries. Hence our thirty day agreement. Which I refuse to budge on.

He takes a section of newspaper. Tries to give her space.

CLAIRE

And I do have time for men, just not love. I've been having, rabid, erotic sex with men since I was twelve.

Axle is stunned silent. She lets him suffer then --

CLAIRE

Kidding. I was seventeen.

He breathes a sigh of relief.

CLAIRE

The guy was thirty nine.

Axle sits up straight. This is killing him.

CLAIRE

Kidding about that too. He was sixteen. ...We did it in your office.

His head drops to the table, THUNK, like he's dead.

CLAIRE

On the desk.

He bangs his head again. She grins, loving this.

CLAIRE

(softening)

My first memory as a human being was the house on Inverness Court. You used to sit on the floor with me, trying to get me to understand how my stuffed animals and Barbies were all linked together by atoms and molecules.

AXLE

Your mom thought I was crazy. I knew you were smart enough to know what I was talking about.

CLAIRE

I had no clue. I was just glad you were on the floor with me.

She goes back to her paper. Axle reflects.

INT. AXLE'S STORAGE UNIT - MOMENTS LATER

The door comes up revealing an AXLE SHRINE. All his best selling products along with every half baked prototype he ever came up with. Pre-autographed copies of his book, "Fabrication." Him on the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Fortune*.

Axle keeps his distance for a beat then sheer love of the game kicks in.

He picks up every gadget in sight, starts hearing clips from his old pitches and infomercials playing back in his head. He flips through old sketch books, prototypes, marketing materials...

Suddenly it all comes to a grinding halt.

Axle comes upon a loose, HALF SHEET OF PAPER that had been stashed away in one of his old sketch pads. He picks it up, touches it with his finger tips, overcome by guilt.

[NOTE: We don't see what's on the paper. Only his reaction.]

INT. SCHOOL GYM - MOMENTS LATER

A large unenthusiastic group of STUDENTS attempt to hit golf balls off turf mats. Phoebe trolls behind with a five iron.

PHOEBE

Slight shift with the hips, drop the hands, fire through the ball.

Phoebe looks up and sees Axle with a shit eating grin.

AXLE

Really? You're a golf coach???
That's a whole other level of cliché.

PHOEBE

This from the good hearted ex-convict, trying to go legit, struggling to make ends meet.

Axle nods, knowing he can't compete with her razor sharp wit.

AXLE

You may have a point about my weak-ass banker suit.

PHOEBE

Keep it. You'll need it for job interviews.

AXLE

Not for the weak-ass jobs I'm officially in the market for.

One of the GOLFERS drilling a wiffle ball.

PHOEBE

That's it Julie, "pour the water out of the shaft."

(then to Axle)

I have fourth period off. Wait over there. And try not to lift anyone's wallet.

INT. TRADE AND SHOP, THRIFT STORE - DAY

A cute SHOP GIRL, 20s, pixieish, at the trade-in counter reading a magazine. Phoebe and Axle both seem taken by her.

In the distance a MOTHER holds what appears to be a DOG HARNESS/LEASH, frantically searching for her lost child.

MOTHER

Billy! ...BILLY!

AXLE

What's wrong?!

MOTHER

I can't find my son!

AXLE

Your son is a human?

MOTHER

BILLY!

Phoebe points to a five-year-old boy around the corner, headphones on, watching cartoons on his iPod.

PHOEBE

Is that him?

The mother grabs him and puts the leash back on him.

MOTHER

Billy! You gave me a heart attack.

The mother and son walk away without thanking Phoebe.

PHOEBE

A simple "thanks" would suffice.

But Axle can't hear Phoebe, or anyone for that matter. His wheels are turning, heart racing with inspiration.

INT. ECLECTIC OUTDOOR MALL - CONTINUOUS

Axle walks faster and faster. Looking for a specific store. He's now up to a jog, weaving around pedestrians.

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - CONTINUOUS

Axle riffles through MP3 players, video Games, PDAs, then abandons them and turns to a display of wireless devices.

Phoebe realizes something special is happening.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

STEVEN LESLIE, 48, CEO material, whips his 2009 Mercedes-Benz CL65 into a space with his name on it. He hops out. Stops.

Axle, in full thrift store garb, stands in front of him.

LESLIE

You are aware that legally I am not allowed to speak to you?

AXLE

And I'm not allowed to come within five hundred feet of the building I designed and paid for.

The two men size each other up. No love lost. KA-TOOSH!
Donna's pink bike falls over. Axle plays it off.

INT. FABRICATION HQ (FORMERLY AXLE'S BUILDING) - MOMENTS LATER

Axle and Leslie travel up the GLASS ELEVATOR. He passes an indoor waterfall, hanging sculptures and herds of employees.

AXLE

What's it like, running my 1.6 billion dollar company?

LESLIE

It's two point seven now.

AXLE

And you feel good about that? Sucking off the Robert Axle teat.

LESLIE

Your name on the product. You take the fall when it disfigures people.

AXLE

My name was the product. We could have put bird shit in a plastic box and moved three million units as long as it was a Robert Axle Fabrication.

LESLIE

Are you here to reminisce or do you have something for me?

AXLE

Depends, you haven't so much as offered me a cup of coffee yet.

LESLIE

You have sixty seconds before I call--

AXLE

We live in a society so paranoid about losing their children that they are willing to tie them to a leash.

Leslie looks completely disinterested.

AXLE

Imagine if we made that leash wireless, so the kid doesn't feel like a dog. The instant he or she wanders outside a certain range the parent gets a vibration on the receiver.

INT. LESLIE'S OFFICE (FORMERLY AXLE'S) - CONTINUOUS

Axle takes a look around. Everything has changed.

LESLIE

Wireless child leashes have been around for a while. Frankly they're not big sellers.

AXLE

Because they're not marketed to kids.

Leslie sits at his desks, starts returning e-mails.

AXLE

What if we buried the technology inside a kid's watch. Not just any watch, the coolest gadget watch ever. It plays music, video games, takes pictures, e-mails, the works.

Leslie keeps e-mailing, as if he hadn't heard a thing.

AXLE

We do this right and every kid in the world will be begging their parents to buy it for them. And parents will be happy to do it because of--

LESLIE

...the child security aspect.

Axle smacks his hands together, Bingo! Leslie gets it.

AXLE

(selling past the close)
All things are intrinsically connected regardless of how different they--

Leslie gives him the hand. Axle zips it.

LESLIE

I'll give you thirty grand for the idea. Presuming you walk away.

AXLE

I don't have to have my name on this one. I just want to be apart of it.

LESLIE

Do you know how hard it was to distance ourselves from you?

This stings Axle, even though he knows it to be true.

AXLE

Do you know how hard it is for me to distance myself from me?

Leslie considers his point.

LESLIE

I can't get back into the Robert Axle business. I have board members to answer to. Shareholders. It's not going to happen. I don't care how good the idea is.

Axle maintains his dignity, heads out walking past the infomercial stage he once made his fortune on.

He pauses. Looks back. Sees Leslie close the office door.

EXT. PAY PHONE, OUTSIDE LESLIE'S BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

JUMP CUT SEQUENCE: Call after call. Axle soliciting all of Leslie's competitors. Pitching his heart out. Failing miserably. Unable to get past the receptionist. Every time they hear the name "ROBERT AXLE" they giggle or hang up. Finally...

SHEILA (O.S.)

(through the phone)

What did you say your name is?

AXLE

My name is Ro...

He stops himself.

AXLE

My name is Troy Coangelo.

SHEILA (O.S.)

How do you spell that?

AXLE

T-R-O-Y.

SHEILA (O.S.)
I got that part.

AXLE
Uh... C-O-A-N-G-L-O.

SHEILA (O.S.)
Really, no E after the G.

AXLE
Nope.

SHEILA (O.S.)
You do have a working prototype?

AXLE
Wouldn't be calling if I didn't.

SHEILA (O.S.)
This is just not a good time. We
leave for Dubai on Wednesday.

Axle deflates.

SHEILA (O.S.)
So we'd better squeeze you in
Tuesday. How's nine-thirty?

Axle silently pounds the phone booth wall, celebrating!

INT. FAMILYMART - DAY

Troy, on crutches, bossing a new STOCK BOY around. His leg in a cast, eyes glassy from the pain killers.

TROY
You're walking down the houseware
aisle and you come upon a box of
WHEAT THINS. What do you do?

STOCK BOY
Pick them up.

TROY
And?

STOCK BOY
Put them back?

TROY
"Put them back." I know put them
back. Put them back where, genius?

STOCK BOY
Aisle fourteen: snacks & cookies.

Troy nods, sizing the kid up, like he's got real potential.

TROY
I like that. I like that a lot.

CLAIRE (O.S.)
Excuse me...

Troy looks up. It's Claire. In her hand is an INVITATION.

CLAIRE
I'm looking for Robert Axle.

TROY
(taken by her)
He's not here.

CLAIRE
When he gets back could you give him something for me. It's important that he gets it before tonight.

TROY
Yeah. Probably not going to happen. I had to let him go.

CLAIRE
You fired him?

TROY
Sadly, yes.

CLAIRE
On what grounds?

TROY
On the grounds that he's not exactly "Familymart material."

Claire takes Troy in.

CLAIRE
I'd make sure to get fired too if I worked for a twat like you.

Troy looks to redeem himself. Too late. She's gone.

EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY

Axle pulls up on Donna's bike. Parked out front are an OLD MAN & OLD LADY, 80s, both wheelchair bound, smoking.

OLD MAN
Hello Leonard.

AXLE

Hello.

OLD LADY

You're the fella on TV.

Axle cracks a tiny smile.

OLD LADY

"Showtime Rotisserie: Set it and Forget it!"

AXLE

Uh, no ma'am. That's Ron Popeil.

OLD LADY

Who are you, Ginsu Knife?

AXLE

Different guy.

OLD LADY

Bowflex?

Axle keeps walking.

INT. NURSING HOME, RECEPTION DESK - CONTINUOUS

Axle approaches a RECEPTIONIST, 40s, a Christian woman immersed in the Bible.

AXLE

Hi. I'm looking for Sam Bergman.

RECEPTIONIST

The Lord told me he would send one of his servants to minister to Sam. And here you are!

Off Axle, a little freaked out.

INT. NURSING HOME, SAM BERGMAN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is cluttered with electronics in various states of repair. SAM BERGMAN, 80s, tinkers with an old TV.

AXLE

Seems like a nice place.

Sam takes his glasses off, sees Axle across the way.

SAM

It sucks.

AXLE

Try prison.

SAM

Prison is avoidable. Senility is not.

AXLE

You were my best engineer.

SAM

I was your best "licensed" engineer.
You were your best engineer.

Axle is taken back. Coming from Sam, this is huge.

SAM

Why the hell didn't you listen to me?
I told you that goddamn gripper-
clicker was shit.

AXLE

You didn't tell me it was shit. You
told me you wanted more testing.

SAM

What the hell's the difference?

AXLE

The difference is if you don't get a
product on the market before the
holidays you lose your ass.

SAM

And how did that work for you,
getting your gripper out before the
holidays?

No response from Axle.

SAM

You should have listened to me.

AXLE

That's the thing about success. The
more you have the less you feel you
need to listen to people.

Sam stops fixing his TV, this is not the Axle he remembers.

INT. NURSING HOME, DINING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Axle eats jello while Sam sketches prototypes. His fingers
move like the wind, alive with inspiration.

AXLE

Parents' need for security. Kids' need for entertainment. It's all interconnected Sam. We just have to get out of the way and let the molecules and atoms--

SAM

I get it. Just let me think.

Axle waits, impatiently.

AXLE

I don't have a lot of money.

SAM

Good. Fast. Cheap. Any combination of two can be achieved but never all three.

AXLE

It's gotta be all three, Sam.

SAM

Five grand.

AXLE

Done.

Sam smiles to himself.

AXLE

Wow. That was easy.

SAM

Provided you actually have five grand. And that I can actually build something good in less than a week.

Axle smiles, hiding anxiety.

INT. BANK - DAY

NEIL, 30s, small business loan officer, rock solid.

NEIL

Brilliant concept. I can't believe someone else hasn't done it yet.

Axle contains his excitement as Neil sails through his loan application, almost rubber stamping it.

NEIL

And it's not like you're asking for a lot of money. Five grand is nothing when it comes to prototypes.

Axle looks at the name plate on his desk.

AXLE

Neil, you have no idea how relieved I am to hear you--

NEIL

You know how people always blow out the candles on birthday cake then expect everyone to want to eat it after it's covered in all their germs?

Neil gets sidetracked, digs in his desk drawer, pulls out a small AIR FILTER PROTOTYPE, the size of a cigarette butt.

NEIL

Introducing: "The Neilster."
Attaches to any drinking straw. I could have Bronchitis and still be blowing on your cake.

He blows in Axle's face. Axle closes his eyes. Endures it.

NEIL

Good, right? I showed my boss the business plan. He signed off a "deuce" that afternoon.

AXLE

A deuce?

NEIL

That's loan officer for 20K. You know what "K" means right?

AXLE

I don't have a business plan.

NEIL

YOU DON'T HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN!

AXLE

Shhhhhh! ...My business plan is the 1.6 billion dollar empire I built from scratch.

Neil makes a note of this in the margin. Word for word.

AXLE
Don't write that!

He whites out on his note, drawing more attention to it.

NEIL
Anything else I should know before I
run this up the flagpole?

AXLE
Nope. That's it.

NEIL
Good, my boss hates surprises.

AXLE
I'm a convicted felon.

NEIL
I don't think we make loans to felons
without business plans.
(beat)
But I have a gut feeling about you
and my boss is big on gut feelings.
Give me a minute.

AXLE
Thank you! That's all I'm looking
for. A little open-mindedness.

Neil scurries away to talk to his SUPERIOR. Axle waits.

AXLE'S POV: Neil makes an impassioned plea to his SUPERIOR,
50s, Armani suit. The Superior reaches for Axle's file,
revealing a hand with only THREE FINGERS.

Axle realizes he's totally screwed, gets up and leaves.

EXT. NATIONAL FOREST - AFTERNOON

Axle pedaling Donna's bike up a steep dirt road, surrounded
by massive trees. He stops.

AXLE
Jerry...ry...ry...ry!

Nothing but echo. Maybe a few birds chirping.

AXLE
JERRY...RY...RY...RY!

Jerry emerges over the hill, driving a golf cart with his
knee. He's in full Forest Ranger garb, pumping a PELLET GUN
AIR RIFFLE, chasing a band of DELINQUENT TEENAGERS.

JERRY

PUNKS!

Jerry sees Axle and stops. The kids scurry off to safety.

JERRY

Upsetting my Fritillary Butterflies.
That's an endangered species Axle.

FEOW! Jerry accidentally pulls the trigger. A pellet bounces off three trees. Both men duck for cover.

JERRY

SHIT!

AXLE

(dusting himself off)

I need to borrow five grand. Sorry to put you on the spot. You can say no if you want to. But this is life or death for me.

WIDE SHOT two men standing in the middle of nowhere.

JERRY

Axle, you're my boy. I'd hook you up on principle alone. But me and Lo are a little strapped at the moment.

AXLE

Strapped! That's impossible. Nobody can blow 362 million in eleven years.

JERRY

It's easier than you think. Philanthropy. Day trading. Bidding wars on Ebay. Trips. Did you know it costs 86K a day to rent your own island in the South Pacific?

Axle is speechless.

JERRY

We'll be fine. Just gotta liquidate, get out from under this bitch. And don't worry about your storage space. I prepaid for three years.

AXLE

Tell me you're not selling my house.

JERRY

House and the Benz.

Axle paces.

JERRY

It's breaking my heart. Believe me.

AXLE

(to himself)

I should just take the thirty Gs and be done with it.

JERRY

Axle you're not hearin' me baby. I don't have thirty to give.

AXLE

Not from you. From Leslie.

JERRY

Leslie?! The same cat that jacked your company?

(checking his watch)

Damn! Got to get my tux and get to the Aquarium before Lorraine goes ballistic on my ass.

AXLE

See that's why you're broke. How many times a week are you guys getting roped into some black tie event for some a cause that you don't care anything about. Who's it for? Let me guess. The National Conservatory For Green Peace And Needy Kids In Africa With Lung Cancer Who Work On Subsidized Farms And Need Mosquito Nets Foundation.

JERRY

It's Claire's event Axle.

Axle plays it off as if he knew.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Daddy... Daddy...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT./INT. MANSION, CORRIDOR (1995) - MORNING

Claire, 12, running through the sprawling estate looking for her father. Opening doors. Flipping on lights. ecstatic.

CLAIRE

DADDY... DADDY...!

INT. MANSION, AXLE'S CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

She finds him in his palatial closet, half dressed. He discretely hides the cell phone he's been talking on. Sixty of his signature double breasted suits surround him.

AXLE

Hey, you.

CLAIRE

Hey.

AXLE

Claire I'm kinda in the middle of...

CLAIRE

I just want to thank you for my pony.
Daddy he's so beautiful.

AXLE

You're welcome.
(kissing her forehead)
Happy Birthday baby.

Claire scurries away, high on life. Axle starts back on the cell phone, ripping into one of his executives.

LORRAINE (O.S.)

What color is it?

He sees Lorraine in the mirror, across the master bedroom.

AXLE

(covering the phone)
What color is what?

LORRAINE

The horse you bought your daughter
for her birthday. What color is it?

AXLE

Brown.

Lorraine holds her stare.

AXLE

Jesus Christ Lorraine. I got her a
fucking horse!

Then slams the door.

Axle looks out the window, sees Claire grooming a white horse as an instructor helps her tack up.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. AQUARIUM - NIGHT

Black ties. Spectacular gowns. Taste makers and would be donors hob nob around a magnificent four wall Aquarium.

Donna, glowing. Phoebe, feeling out of place, mows on hors d'oeuvres. Jerry and Lorraine are the only ones dancing.

Claire schmoozes philanthropists, JACK & GAIL WALTHER, her best foot forward.

CLAIRE

Part of it is providing the basic resources. Things that enable a recovering addict or homeless person to get back on their feet. Computers. Clothes, food, education, access to technology. The other part is presenting those resources in a way that really impacts their self esteem. Letting them know that somebody cares enough to prepare their food with high end organic ingredients or giving them brand new, name brand clothes that actually fit and don't have stains on them.

JACK

The fact that you have been able to raise enough money to sustain this year after year is truly amazing.

GAIL

This city, these women... they're lucky to have you.

Gail offers a hug. Claire obliges. Something distracts Gail.

ANGLE ON AXLE

having just entered the party, sticking out like a sore thumb in skinny jeans/hoodie. His presence sends a buzz through the event like a brush fire.

Lorraine starts over, ready to rip his head off. Jerry pulls her back discretely.

HOWARD & PENNY CAMP, 50s, suburbanites, approach Axle.

HOWARD

Howard Camp. Camp Sporting Goods.

AXLE

Right, Donna's dad.

HOWARD

This is my wife Penny.

PENNY

It's so nice to meet you Axle.

HOWARD

We just redid our kitchen. Granite this. Viking that. I'll be damned if we didn't keep the "Robert Axle: Coffee-Grill." Doesn't matter how old it is. It just brings the whole room into balance.

AXLE

Well thank you. Thank you both.
That's nice to hear.

Axle sees a custom printed napkin, further evidence that this is a major event in Claire's life and he was not invited.

PENNY

This aquarium... I just love it.

Axle gathers himself, then kicks into gear.

AXLE

Penny, what do you love?

PENNY

We just love the whole thing.

AXLE

Not we. You Penny. And focus on one thing. Anything...

PENNY

All the pretty fish, I suppose.

AXLE

Not all the pretty fish. Pick one.
One specific fish Penny Camp.

Guests slowly gather. Axle is holding court.

PENNY

The nemo fish?

AXLE

Great. What else?

PENNY

The shark... The eel... The coral...

Axle notices the SECURITY GUARD watching him like a hawk.

AXLE

From Nemo to Jaws to the plants, crustaceans the algae they don't want you to see under the glass that the crew works so hard to keep you from seeing. It's all one living organism, completely interdependent.

Claire finally sees what's going on.

AXLE

Can each survive on its own. Yes. But together they thrive. A living breathing aquatic symphony where $1+1=7$. And that my friends is what tonight is all about.

Axle and Claire share a glance. She is overcome by guilt.

AXLE

So get your checkbooks out and do what needs to be done, because without you we cannot achieve our full potential.

AWKWARD SILENCE.

Axle waves off security, leaves under his own power. Claire makes her way through a room full of cynical guests who are more amused by Axle's spectacle than inspired.

EXT. AQUARIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Axle outside, unlocking Donna's bike.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

What was I supposed to do?

He looks up, sees Claire.

AXLE

You're my daughter. If you needed money. You could have told me.

CLAIRE

You're my father. If you got fired from Familymart. You could have told me.

A beat as he realizes they are an ocean apart.

AXLE

There will come a day when people won't snicker when I enter a room.

And that day may be sooner than you think.

CLAIRE

You know what. Screw these people. You're coming back inside with me. If they can't handle the fact that you're my father I don't want their money.

AXLE

Tonight's not about me, Claire.

He rides away on the bike. She lets him go, fighting tears.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LIVING-ROOM - LATER

Axle on the sofa wide awake. The front door unlocks. He closes his eyes, pretends to be asleep.

DONNA (O.S.)

Oh my God, Axle! Are you okay?

Donna appears. Versace dress, holding her shoes, stone sober.

AXLE

I'm fine, Donna. Just trying to get some rest.

DONNA

I told Claire she should have told you about the Gala. Actually I didn't but if I could do it all over again, I definitely would have said something.

No response from Axle. Hoping she gets the hint.

DONNA

Keep trying.

Axle turns, sees hope in her eyes.

DONNA

90% of being a good parent is wanting the job. At least that's what Dad says.

AXLE

"Dad" tells you why he's a good parent?

DONNA

No, but it's in his book.

AXLE

He wrote a book on parenting!

DONNA

Uh-huh. Two of them.

She saunters away, high on life. Axle smiles to himself.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Axle's with a newfound hop in his step, cooking pancakes for the girls. Claire enters, walking on eggshells.

AXLE

How'd we do last night?

CLAIRE

Good. I'll get the full tally later
but we did pretty good.

Claire heads for the coffee pot. Axle beats her to it. Pours her a cup, and adds the hazelnut cream she likes.

DONNA (O.S.)

Hey Axle...

Donna and Phoebe enter, also tired and hung over.

AXLE

Donna. Phoebe... Glad you're all
here. I'd like to say a few words, if
you don't mind.

He puts a plate of pancakes in the center of the table.

AXLE

First I want to thank each of you for
taking me in. I know this hasn't been
easy. And I've been very careful to
live by your rules.

PHOEBE

You're moving out!

AXLE

No. But since I have a few weeks
remaining on my 30 day contract, I do
have some requests.

He puts the syrup on the table. Sits and helps himself.

AXLE

One, I need curtains. That sun is
killing me. Two, I need an umbrella,
preferably a black one.

The lavender coat is not happening anymore. And three, I'd like to be allowed to feed the fish. Not every day but maybe on Fridays.

DONNA

Claire said you weren't a fish guy.

AXLE

I've recently reconsidered my position.

The girls look to Claire for an answer. She looks away.

PHOEBE

I can live with Fridays.

DONNA

What? You never let me feed the fish!

CLAIRE

As long as we are making requests...

AXLE

Let me guess, you want me to shave the goatee?

DONNA

Really? I like the goatee.

PHOEBE

Dude, he looks like a younger less cool version of Colonel Sanders.

Axle turns to Phoebe, exhausted by her never ending barbs.

CLAIRE

The goatee can stay.

AXLE

Then what? What's the request? I'm dying to hear this one.

CLAIRE

I want to hear your new idea.

No response from Axle.

CLAIRE

Com'on Dad. I know you have something. Let's hear it. Pitch it.

Axle hears the word "Dad." He puts his fork down.

AXLE

(inspired)

Did you know, on average, 800,000
kids are reported missing each year?

Donna looks fascinated. Phoebe roles her eyes.

AXLE

At the same time, children's gadgets
are the fastest growing sector of the
consumer electronics industry.

Claire sits back. Watches her father's passion take over.

EXT./INT. SEEDY DONUT SHOP - THAT MORNING

Parole Officer watches Axle comes in from the rain, soaked.
No rain coat. His new black umbrella collapsed from wind.

PAROLE OFFICER

How's your love life, Axle?

AXLE

Excuse me?

PAROLE OFFICER

Most ex-cons struggle to meet women.

Axle looks at him with very little patience.

PAROLE OFFICER

Let's change the subject. How are
things with your daughter?

AXLE

So far so good.

PAROLE OFFICER

Good. How's Familymart going?

AXLE

What can I tell you. Familymart is
Familymart.

PAROLE OFFICER

Troy told me he had to let you go.

Axle nods, as if that's what he meant.

PAROLE OFFICER

Holding down a job is a big part of
the program. Sixty-seven percent of
convicted felons return to --

AXLE

I thought it was sixty-two percent!

PAROLE OFFICER

They just came out with a new report.
Numbers went up.

Axle, uneasy, takes a bite of a donut.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - THAT DAY

Empty living room. In the background Phoebe's shower runs. Axle enters, breezes through the KITCHEN grabs a bottled water and without pause returns to the sofa.

No X-Box 360. No Guitar Hero.

AXLE

Phoebe... PHOEBE!

She comes running out in a towel, sopping wet.

AXLE

Where's the GH?

Phoebe's eyes whip to the TV. Her worst fears confirmed.

PHOEBE

Son of a --

INT. DONNA & PHOEBE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phoebe, on a rampage, getting dressed as fast as she can.

AXLE

What happened?

PHOEBE

What happened is my Ex. That bitch
stole my shit.

AXLE

You chicks get nasty in a break-up.

PHOEBE

It's about to get real nasty. Get
your pink coat Tonto. You're coming
with me.

INT. BANK - SAME

Claire waits at the counter as the BANK TELLER, 50s, friendly mothering type, enters deposits from the Gala. Most in the \$500 to \$1000 range. TOTAL DEPOSIT \$37,520.

BANK TELLER

Such a great thing, that Center. I told my sister about it. She wants to send you some money. Just twenty dollars. She's on a fixed income.

CLAIRE

Thank you. That's so sweet. Wow, you totally made my day.

The Bank Teller returns a check from Lorraine for \$25,000.

BANK TELLER

This one's not gonna clear hun. Insufficient funds.

CLAIRE

Oh, okay...

BANK TELLER

Do you want us to call Mrs. Jerry King?

CLAIRE

(hiding devastation)

No. It's fine. I'll take care of it.

BANK TELLER

Have you applied for any grants? I heard there are a lot of grants for people that do what you do.

Claire smiles politely. Well aware of the whole grant thing.

BANK TELLER

What about corporate sponsors? Have you looked into that?

CLAIRE

(losing it)

Do you know how many non profits are out there looking for money!

Claire stops, realizes everyone in the bank is staring.

INT. PHOEBE'S SUBARU WAGON - SAME

Phoebe driving like a bat out of hell.

AXLE

Can you slow down. You're making me nauseous.

PHOEBE

Quiet, I'm thinking.

Axle puts his head down toward his lap.

AXLE

About what?

PHOEBE

How you're going to break in.

AXLE

Me!

PHOEBE

I can't do it. The bitch knows what I look like.

AXLE

I'm on parole!

PHOEBE

If by "parole" you mean "you're a pansy," then yes, you are on parole.

INT. THE EX'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

In a modest suburban home -- THREE DUDES surround a sixty inch flat panel TV playing Guitar Hero. A sliver of Axle's face appears through a sliding glass door.

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS

Axle hustles back to Phoebe's car, trips on a sprinkler head, tries to make a somewhat manly recovery.

AXLE

She's not there. Just three dudes.

PHOEBE

She's a he.

AXLE

Your Ex is a he!

PHOEBE

Did they have my shit or not?

AXLE

Yes.

PHOEBE

So what's the problem?

AXLE

I don't feel like getting my ass kicked by three dudes!

PHOEBE

The one with the gut is my Ex. His back is shot. He can't fight. The tall skinny dude is his cousin Rory. He's 36 and lives with his mom. He definitely can't fight. And was the other guy Asian?

AXLE

Yeah, I think so.

PHOEBE

Don't worry about him. He has M.S.

AXLE

I can't fight a guy with M.S.!

PHOEBE

Fine. I'll do it.

Phoebe storms toward the house. Axle hustles after her.

INT. THE EX'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Axle and Phoebe's faces appear in the glass door. No one is playing Guitar Hero. The room is empty. Phoebe opens the door, darts behind the TV, unhooking wires.

EXT. THE EX'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Axle and Phoebe scamper across the lawn, arms full of electronics, adrenaline pumping.

Phoebe's Ex dives off the low hanging roof and knocks them both to the ground, spilling electronics across the driveway.

All three are shook up. Rory and Asian scurry from the bushes like scavengers.

EX-HUSBAND

I worked two jobs to pay for those tits. You get 'em yanked three months later. Then you become a rug-muncher!

Axle crawls toward the game parts, fast.

PHOEBE

It was four months and I was born a rug-muncher but if I wasn't you would have turned me into one!

Just as he reaches for the guitar the Asian with MS appears. He circles Axle like a roman gladiator.

AXLE

Dude I know about the MS.

The Asian goes Bruce Lee on him. -- WHAP, WHAP, WHAP -- Axle collapses face down. The Asian picks him up by the scruff of the neck and lets Rory use Axle's own arms to finish him off.

RORY

(taunting Axle)

Why are you hitting yourself... Why are you hitting yourself!

Axle falls again. This time backward, belly up.

The threesome take their reclaimed gear and strut back toward the house, re-enacting every delicious moment of the ambush.

SECONDS LATER -- The SUBARU skids across the lawn. Phoebe driving, one arm hanging out the window using her golf club like a polo stick.

She drills her ex-husband in the small of the back. He falls. The other two drop everything and scatter.

Phoebe slams on the brakes and pops the hatch back.

Axle jumps out of the sliding car, grabs all the gear, tosses it in the HATCH BACK and dives face first after it! Phoebe guns it, fish tails and peels out down the street.

INT. PHOEBE'S SUBARU WAGON (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Phoebe driving like a bat out of hell, heart racing. Axle climbs from the hatch to the back seat.

He and Phoebe LOCK EYES via the rear view mirror.

INT. PHOEBE'S SUBARU WAGON (PARKED)- SECONDS LATER

Phoebe's on top of Axle, kissing his neck, ripping his shirt off, placing his hand on her breast. Then it happens...

A soft, intimate kiss. Pure magic.

They both look at each other, horrified.

Phoebe moves back to the driver's seat. Buckles her seat belt. Axle does the same. The two drive away in silence.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Claire enters with an unopened bottle of JACK DANIELS, puts her bike away. She turns to see...

Phoebe and Axle on opposite ends of the sofa. Guitar Hero is up. Nobody is playing.

PHOEBE

Hi Claire. How was your day?

CLAIRE

People want people to serve the community but they don't want to pony up. I'm so over everyone.

Not a peep from Axle.

THE BUZZER RINGS -- Claire goes to get it.

PHOEBE

(smacking Axle)

Get it together, man!

AXLE

I didn't say anything.

PHOEBE

Exactly!

Claire returns with Troy Coangelo who is on crutches and looks to be in serious pain.

AXLE

(to himself)

What the...

Troy extends his crutch to Phoebe as if it's a hand shake.

TROY

Troy Coangelo, Assistant GM over at Familymart. Third most profitable store in the city. ...Thought I'd bring by Axle's check.

Troy passes it to Axle eyeing Claire the whole way. Phoebe looks at the amount.

PHOEBE

Forty six dollars and nine cents. Way to bring home the bacon Bob.

Axle slaps Phoebe with a pillow. Claire notes all of this. Now she's really starting to get jealous.

CLAIRE

Troy, you got any plans tonight?

Axle watches. This is odd.

CLAIRE

How bout me and you get shit-faced,
then see where the night takes us.

Troy nearly faints. He needs to sit. Donna enters. Dressed
and ready to go out for the evening.

DONNA

I'll see you guys later. I'm going to
your mom's for dinner. Maybe a game
or two after.

CLAIRE

You're going to my mom's house for
dinner and games?

DONNA

Lorraine invited me. She didn't want
me to be alone tonight.

Donna keeps walking, as if nothing's odd about this.

CLAIRE

Did I miss something?

Donna pauses at the door to look at her bike.

AXLE

I already fixed the horn and that
kickstand was broke when I got it.

DONNA

It's a bike Axle. Who cares?

CLAIRE

Are you okay?

DONNA

My parents are getting a divorce.
But it's fine. Things happen.

CLAIRE

Divorced! Since when?

DONNA

Since he started banging my mom's
friend Janet.

PHOEBE

The one with the collagen lips?

CLAIRE

Oh my God Donna. I'm so sorry.

PHOEBE
Men are pigs. All of them.

DONNA
Phoebe, back off!

Claire puts her bottle down, rushes to Donna's side.

CLAIRE
If you're going to my mom's house,
we're all going to my mom's house.

Axle looks horrified.

CLAIRE
Oh get over yourself. It's not like
you have something better to do.

Axle snaps into shape.

DONNA
Claire I appreciate what you are
trying to do but it's not necessary.
I'm fine. Seriously.

INT. MANSION, FAMILY ROOM - LATER

Dice roll across a game board called WOULD YOU RATHER.

DONNA
(trashed)
Would you rather lick a public toilet
seat -- OR -- chew gum from the floor
of a New York City subway.

Donna laugh/snorts. Slaps Troy on the knee, not realizing
it's his bad leg.

TROY
Mother of God.

Lorraine discretely moves Donna's whiskey glass out of reach.

LORRAINE
Gum. I don't care how disgusting it
is, it's better than a toilet seat.

JERRY
I'm with Lorraine. You see some nasty
port-o-potties in my line of work.

Jerry kisses Lorraine, lovey-dovey.

TROY

As a matter of policy we make sure our toilets are cleaned once every three hours.

CLAIRE

I'm with Troy. Toilet. Axle, that means you're the tie breaker...

AXLE

I gotta go with the gum. Robert Axle does not sit on public toilets let alone lick them.

Donna reveals her answer. She had written GUM on the pad, thus properly guessing the group consensus.

DONNA

Yes! I go again. Thank you very much.

Donna rolls. Claire holds out a hand for Donna to high five. She misses. Nearly falls over. Everyone is laughing. Lorraine helps Donna up, mothering her.

AXLE

Here's one. Would you rather grow up knowing your dad is scum or spend your entire life thinking he hung the moon and find out twenty four years later that he's a total prick!

Donna starts laugh snorting again. In fact, they all find this amusing. All except Claire.

PHOEBE (O.S.)

Everyone this is my "friend" Steak.

Phoebe enters trailed by STEAK, 30s, an uber butch lesbian. Steak waves. Axle starts coughing, loving this.

AXLE

(offering his plate)
Some wings Steak?

STEAK

Nah dude. I'm a vegetarian.

Axle smiles to himself.

AXLE

Well if you'll all excuse me, I need to make a phone call. Classy corporate babe. Loves ex-cons.

Claire tracks the tension between Phoebe and Axle.

INT. JERRY'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Axle sits at a lavish desk, dialing a number from the Yellow Pages "Nursing Home" section.

AXLE
 (into the phone)
 Sam Bergman, please.

Axle admires Jerry's decor.

INT. NURSING HOME - RECEPTIONIST DESK - SAME

RECEPTIONIST
 Sam went to be with the Lord early
 this morning.

The Bible-toting Receptionist tries to stay strong.

AXLE
 HE'S DEAD!

RECEPTIONIST
 Far as we could see, he was in no
 pain. The Lord just took him.

Sam Bergman, very much alive, snatches the phone.

SAM
 Axle?

AXLE
 SAM!

SAM
 There's nine residents named Sam. She
 gets mixed up. You have my money?

AXLE
 Absolutely. You have my prototype?

SAM
 I do.

AXLE
 Is it good?

SAM
 It's better than good. It's inspired.

Axle lights up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Steak is break-dancing. Part of a Would You Rather CHALLENGE.

GROUP

Go STE-AKE...GO, GO... GO STE-AKE...

Jerry is keeping the clock.

JERRY

10 seconds.... 5 seconds... And done.

Steak rolls again. Takes a card.

STEAK

Would you rather jump out of a car going 35 mph-- OR -- be put into a cage with a slightly sedated lion?

JERRY

Definitely the car. There's nothing more unpredictable than a slightly sedated beast.

AXLE

I'm back, what's the question?

CLAIRE

Too late. You missed your turn.

AXLE

Missed my turn? It's group consensus. I'm part of the group.

CLAIRE

Whatever. You can't just reinsert yourself whenever you want.

DONNA

He can have my turn. I hate this game.

Donna storms off. Claire lets her go. Locks eyes with Axle, like two prize fighters.

AXLE

I'm sorry you didn't raise more money at your event but it's not my fault.

LORRAINE

I'm not sure about that.

JERRY

For what it's worth, I liked the fish speech. That was moving shit.

AXLE

I'm no expert on Centers For Women but it seems to me maybe you have too much overhead. Do you really need all those fancy computers. What's wrong with looking for jobs out of the want ads?

PHOEBE

(to herself)

Bad idea.

CLAIRE

Maybe you're right. Maybe designing a center where underprivileged women don't actually feel underprivileged was shortsighted.

AXLE

Claire...

CLAIRE

Maybe you should have introduced your vision for the Center during that stirring aquatic symphony speech.

LORRAINE

Claire...

CLAIRE

And maybe, just maybe, you should have had a spunky ten year old girl as your sidekick while giving said speech.

AXLE

Don't pin that on me. Being my sidekick was your idea!

CLAIRE

I wanted to be in your life not your stupid infomercials.

Axle looks around the room, all eyes on him. He takes a moment, gathers himself.

AXLE

It's getting late... Jerry, Lorraine thank you for a lovely evening. Steak, it was a pleasure meeting you.

JERRY

Can I call you a cab, brother?

Axle gives pause. He hadn't thought this all the way through.

AXLE

That would be great, Jerry. I'll just wait outside. Get some fresh air.

LORRAINE

(whispering to Jerry)

Give him some money.

AXLE

I'm good. Thank you Lorraine. Thank you everyone. And again, good night.

He leaves. Claire intercepts him at the door, guilt-ridden.

CLAIRE

Are we okay?

AXLE

Of course we're okay.

She gives him a peck on the cheek and stuffs cab money in his pocket. He acts like he didn't notice.

EXT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Axle tries to be Zen. Then loses it, throwing a silent fit in the garden. Punching the thin air. Kicking a statue.

OFF SCREEN a cell phone vibrates. Axle turns to see Donna seated on the lawn across the way, head between her knees.

Axle heads over, sees the Caller ID reads, "DAD."

AXLE

90% of being a good dad is wanting the job.

She gives him an icy stare. He retreats.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HIGH RISE OFFICE BUILDING (1990) - AFTERNOON

Waiting across the street in the family BUICK are Lorraine, 30s, nurse's uniform, eyes peeled for Axle. Claire, 7, in the back seat with crayons making a card.

Axle, 30s, short hair, clean shaven, new Armani suit, exits lugging the prototype for his Coffee Grill. He makes subtle eye contact with Lorraine, shakes his head "no."

She closes her eyes in defeat. Claire, not picking up on his disappointment, jumps out of the car, races up the steps and presents him with the art project she's been working on.

A PICTURE OF A FATHER AND DAUGHTER HOLDING HANDS IN THE AIR CELEBRATING VICTORY. Behind it is a rainbow, a sun, birds and all the details you'd expect from a little girl's pure heart and imagination.

Axle tucks the picture away and kneels to her level.

AXLE

Sweetheart, today didn't go so well.

Claire glances at his clunky looking prototype, confused.

AXLE

It's time Daddy gets a real job. Like all the other Daddies.

CLAIRE

But you already have a real job.
...You're a fabricator.

Axle gives her the biggest hug he's ever given her.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. MAILBOXES ETC. - NIGHT

Axle parks Donna's bike and beelines toward the entrance.

He types in his four digit pass code and enters MAILBOXES ETC. after hours. The code doesn't work. Or at least what he thinks is the code doesn't work. He can't remember.

A fellow mail PATRON appears behind him, 6'7", well built.

PATRON

May I?

AXLE

Please.

The Patron takes off his glove and punches in his access code using a THREE FINGER HAND. He reaches for the door handle and his OTHER HAND is disfigured as well!

INT. MAILBOXES ETC. - CONTINUOUS

PATRON

Don't sweat it. Everybody stares.

Axle nods, keeps his head down, enters. He opens his mailbox and finds the envelope he's been waiting for.

EXT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

Axle pulls Donna's bike up to the "home."

OLD MAN

Leonard!

Axle blows past him, zero patience.

OLD LADY

You're the guy that wears the
question mark suit?

AXLE

Nope.

OLD LADY (O.S.)

The Flowbee?

INT. NURSING HOME, RECEPTION DESK - CONTINUOUS

He approaches the CHRISTIAN RECEPTIONIST. She has a Danish on her desk, back turned on the phone yapping away. Axle grabs the Danish and keeps walking, unnoticed.

INT. NURSING HOME, LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

He finds Sam playing Yuker with a bevy of SENILE RESIDENTS.

SAM

You brought me a check, right?

Axle opens his wallet, fishes out a VISA CHECK for \$5,000.

SAM

Had to go into my own pocket on this one. You know how many watches, iPods and Gameboys I tore apart before I figured this sucker out? Not to mention the plastics guy I had working around the clock.

AXLE

Sam, five grand is all I have.

SAM

Don't worry about it.

AXLE

Jesus, Sam.

SAM

Axle, it was my pleasure. I'm telling you. It felt good to be needed again.

Sam leads a skeptical Axle into his room.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On a tray, behind various electronics and urostomy supplies, are three of the coolest looking KIDS WATCHES imaginable.

SAM

All new molds. I researched every kid's watch on the market and found our own signature style.

Axle picks up one of them. He is blown away.

SAM

MP3, Games, E-mail, Bluetooth... The whole mess.

AXLE

Do they work?

SAM

Tested them all night. Rock solid. Plus they have compasses built in. In case the kid wanders off he can find his way home.

AXLE

Do kids use compasses?

SAM

Sure they do.

AXLE

Seems a like overkill, since we have the wireless leash technology.

SAM

A wireless leash! Now that's an idea. That way if the kid wanders off, the parents would get a buzz or something.

AXLE

Sam!

SAM

I did good right?

Axle collects himself, realizing Sam's not all there anymore.

AXLE

You did an amazing job.

Sam beams with pride.

INT. OUTDOOR TRAIL - DAY

Phoebe and Claire hiking side-by-side up a steep path.

PHOEBE

Tell me you're not into Familymart
boy?

CLAIRE

No way. Besides, he's a text-stalker.

CLAIRE

What about Steak?

PHOEBE

Not so much.

CLAIRE

(smiling)

This is the first time we've gone
hiking since Axle moved in.

PHOEBE

Is that my fault?

CLAIRE

Why are you getting defensive?

PHOEBE

I'm not.

CLAIRE

Kind of.

PHOEBE

Not really.

CLAIRE

Feels defensive.

PHOEBE

Are your thighs burning?

CLAIRE

Are you and my father friends?

PHOEBE

What do you mean?

CLAIRE

Nothing. Forget it.

PHOEBE

Do you have PMS?

CLAIRE

No. Do you?

PHOEBE

Dude, what did I do?

CLAIRE

Did I say you did anything?

EXT. FAMILYMART, WAREHOUSE LOADING DOCK - DAY

Troy on crutches, trying to get a dolly under a huge case of liquid detergent. Gallon jugs. This thing weighs a ton.

AXLE (O.S.)

Legally you can't fire me without "cause."

Troy lowers the case, nearly throwing his back out.

TROY

I have four titanium rods in my tibia. That's cause!

AXLE

Isn't there someone that can help you with that?

TROY

And do it right, no.

He gets the box up on the shelf, grimacing in pain.

AXLE

What if I told you I have something that will make you feel better?

TROY

I'd tell you don't bother. I'm gassed up on more pain pills than Elvis.

AXLE

I'm sitting on another billion dollar idea Troy. But I can't do it alone. I need a partner. A partner like you Troy Coangelo.

AXLE

I make thirty two seven a year plus the kind of four-oh-one-k people give their left nut for. I drive a Celica, okay. And not a used one with french fries under the seat. It's new Axle.

Axle looks confused.

TROY

You're barking up the wrong tree.

AXLE

All I need is access to your repair center and some of your electronics. Tonight, after hours.

Troy, standing on the dock, favoring the bad leg.

TROY

All you need me to do is assist in breaking, entering and stealing Familymart property. What's the catch?

AXLE

The catch is you are stalking my daughter.

TROY

A few well timed text messages does not a stalker make.

AXLE

I'm talking about serious money Troy. The kind of money that would enable you to impress a girl like Claire.

Troy pops a pain pill, swallows with no water.

TROY

Get the hell out of here before I call your parole officer.

EXT. FAMILYMART PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Axle struggles to get Donna's bike unlocked from the rack. Just as the combination clicks...

Troy appears from nowhere, scares Axle half to death.

TROY

I blew my knee out on their nickel.

Troy looks as if he's on the verge of a nervous breakdown. That, or a spiritual awakening --

TROY

Not a card. Not so much as a "hey Troy, how's the leg?" I've been the "Assistant GM" for three years. Guess what, "There's no GM!" I'm the guy.

They just don't want to give me the title because then they'd have to shell out an extra \$1,631 a year!

AXLE

Where ya goin' with this Troy?

TROY

Shame on you.

AXLE

Shame on me?

TROY

Not you, Familymart.

AXLE

I'm confused. Are you going to help me or call my P.O.?

TROY

Oh I'm going to help you but not for the money. Not for the ladies or the bling bling. This is for principle. They don't deserve me Axle.

A brief stare down. Troy's high, trying to act sober.

AXLE

How's midnight sound?

TROY

Sounds good. Sounds real good.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - THAT AFTERNOON

Axle sits on this, thinking he's alone, closes his eyes and finds the meditative calm he used to rely on in prison.

PHOEBE (O.S.)

Why did you do it?

Axle almost jumps out of his skin. He flips a secondary lamp on and reveals Phoebe, stone cold sober.

AXLE

Do what?

PHOEBE

Kiss me. Why did you do it?

AXLE

If I remember correctly it was you who kissed me.

They share an intimate look. But cooler heads prevail.

PHOEBE

You felt my tits, how were they?

AXLE

Can you stop using that word!

PHOEBE

Tits?

AXLE

Yes!

PHOEBE

What's wrong with tits?

AXLE

You're an intelligent, witty,
attractive young woman. The tough guy
talk... it sells you short.

For the first time, Phoebe is at a loss for words.

AXLE

But for the record, they felt nice.
Not too big. Not too small. Right
where you wanna be.

INT. CENTER FOR WOMEN - DUSK

Patients move in and out of the different treatment rooms.
Not women who know one another but there is an unspoken bond
between them. Claire leans against the wall, disconnected,
realizing this is all coming to an end.

INT. FAMILYMART, WAREHOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Axle combs through boxes of "returns." Behind him a bevy of
electronics, tools and diagnostic equipment.

AXLE

You want something done right you
gotta do it yourself, Troy.

Troy looks stressed out of his mind.

AXLE

Just because I don't have some fancy
engineering degree, doesn't mean I
can't mock up a prototype. I used to
do all my prototypes back in the day.

TROY

When I first got promoted to Assistant GM I used to wash the parking lot with a pressure hose every Sunday morning.

AXLE

Didn't you have people who would do that for you?

TROY

Not the way I like it done.

AXLE

You really love Familymart don't you?

Troy looks away, sore subject.

AXLE

Troy there's something I need you to do for me.

Troy stands at attention.

AXLE

I need you to blow off work tomorrow and come to this pitch meeting with me. And you have to take the lead.

Troy's frozen with fear.

AXLE

Nobody's going to buy something from the guy that hacks people's fingers off. But Troy Coangelo, that's a different story.

Axle begins dissecting one of the off brand, wireless child leash systems.

TROY

I was a copier salesman before I got this job. Lasted six days.

AXLE

You were fired?

TROY

Threw up on one of the machines. I get nervous in meetings.

AXLE

That's not going to happen this time. All you have to do is explain, from your point of view as Assistant GM of the third most profitable Familymart in the city, how often kids get separated from their parents and how a fabrication like this would help.

TROY

Doesn't fabrication mean lie?

AXLE

Fine. Don't use that word.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - 4 AM

Axle enters, bleary eyed, puts Donna's bike away. Around the corner he hears the sound of Claire's sewing machine.

AXLE

Hey you.

She's reattaching the lining of a vintage men's sport coat.

CLAIRE

It's a 44 Regular but we can make it work.

AXLE

Make it work for who?

CLAIRE

I can't have my father looking gender neutral at the biggest meeting of his life.

She puts the jacket on him. A little big but he looks great.

AXLE

Am I supposed to wear the pink rain coat with this.

She marks where the buttons go.

CLAIRE

Yeah, no. Sorry about that.

Axle fights back tears.

AXLE

It's my fault the fund raiser bombed.

CLAIRE

We were never going to raise enough
to keep the Center open.

AXLE

You deserve better.

CLAIRE

The girls at the Center deserve
better. I have plenty.

Claire takes his coat off, returns to the sewing table.

AXLE

Even before we had money, I was still
a lousy father.

CLAIRE

I have a few good memories.

AXLE

The brown horse?

Claire's now focused on button sewing. Axle sits on the foot
of the bed, his back to Claire.

CLAIRE

I remember holding screws and wing
nuts when you were building things in
the garage.

AXLE

I remember wishing you would get
bored and go away so I could
concentrate.

CLAIRE

I remember you going to my dance
recitals.

AXLE

I remember asking Lorraine to sign
you up for dance so that I wouldn't
have to feel guilty for working
weekends.

CLAIRE

I'm not one of those people who
blames everything on her childhood.

AXLE

It's okay to be angry. I would be
angry too if I were you.

Claire returns with the jacket. Puts it on him, fastens the button. Her eyes welled up.

CLAIRE

All those years no one would buy any of your bullshit prototypes. I believed in you. It wasn't mom. It was me. You got famous and forgot about me. I worshipped you and you couldn't even see me. Do you know what that does to a kid!

He tries to give her a hug. She indulges him then pulls back.

CLAIRE

Yeah, I'm not really a hugger.

She returns to the sewing table.

CLAIRE

(cracking a smile)
But I appreciate the gesture.

AXLE

(smiling back)
Yet another thing I learn about Claire Elizabeth. Not a hugger.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - MORNING

Axle, looking like a million bucks in Claire's suit, helps Troy out of the driver's seat of his Celica.

AXLE

There's nothing to be nervous about. I'll do all the talking. You're just here to help get us in the door.

TROY

I'm fine. I popped a Xanax.

AXLE

Well, I'm not a big "pill guy" but considering your issues, one Xanax may not be a bad idea.

TROY

I may have taken a few pain pills too. I can't remember.

Troy's eyes flutter. Axle starts patting his cheeks.

TROY

Stop! You're hurting me.

INT. VENTURE CAPITAL FIRM - MOMENTS LATER

Axle enters and immediately feels overdressed. This is not a very professional looking place. He discretely places Troy in a folding chair near the door.

SHEILA, the Exec Assistant, 25, cute face, too heavy to be considered hot.

AXLE

Hi, we have a nine thirty with Matt James.

SHEILA

Aren't you Robert Axle?

AXLE

Uh, yes but this is my partner, Troy Co-an-glo. You spoke with him over the phone. He's actually not feeling well today.

TROY

(snapping out of it)
Just resting my eyes.

INT. MATT JAMES' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MATT JAMES, 32, jeans and sweater, well-groomed.

MATT

So you met Sheila?

AXLE

Yeah, she's great.

TROY

(arm around Matt)
You don't want your receptionist being too hot. Makes things complicated.

MATT

She's my wife.

TROY

Right.

MATT

Twelve weeks pregnant.

TROY

Which explains the girth.

Axle cringes. Matt lets this one slide.

MATT

Sorry for the mess. We just got funding two weeks ago. Been taking pitches, literally around the clock.

Axle takes in the oversized room, almost no furniture, files, paperwork and various prototypes all over the floor.

AXLE

What size is the fund?

MATT

Sixty million to start. But, knock on wood, we should close "matching funds" in Dubai next week.

Sheila enters, starts taking notes. Troy tugs at her leg.

TROY

Would you be a doll and bring me a Diet Soda.

Axle glares at Troy. Matt reaches behind him in a small fridge and passes Troy a DIET COKE.

MATT

I wrote a paper on you at Brown. Got a C+, mostly because the professor's aunt was one of your victims.

AXLE

I was never big on college or high school for that matter.

He stops himself, sensing he's losing credibility. He breaks out his ultra sleek wrist watch PROTOTYPE.

AXLE

I give you, "Watchdawg."

MATT

The latest in a long line of Robert Axle Fabrications?

AXLE

Just Watchdawg. ...It plays MP3s, video games, takes pictures and has email functionality. But here's what makes it unique--

MATT

(interrupting)
It's also a wireless child leash.

AXLE

(pushing ahead)

Kid gets five feet away you feel a vibration. Ten feet away, two shorter vibrations. Fifteen is three, so on and so on.

SHEILA

Does the prototype work?

TROY

Does a bear shit in the woods?

AXLE

Send it an e-mail.
Watchtest@watchdawg.org.

Sheila fires off a test e-mail from her iPhone.

TROY

Wait till you hear the music.

Troy digs out a pair of wireless headphones from his pocket.

AXLE

Actually we forgot to load the music.

SHEILA

E-mail just bounced back.

AXLE

But the leash part definitely works.

He hands the prototype to Troy. Shews him away.

AXLE

Troy, go down the hall. Go...

TROY

Why do I have to be the one that goes?

AXLE

I'm not saying you have to be the one that goes. I'm saying I want to demo the wireless leash for these nice folks who are being very patient.

MATT

You know what. I'm going to cut you off right there--

AXLE

I'm telling you Mike, it works.

MATT

I met with Steven Leslie two days ago. He pitched something very similar. Calls it, "Watch-Me."

Axle smiles, hiding utter devastation.

MATT

He's fast tracking it. Wants it in play for this holiday season, wants us to cofinance.

And just when it can't get any worse, Troy vomits. Axle grabs paper towels and starts cleaning up the mess. Troy studies him. How far the mighty have fallen.

MATT

He stole this from you didn't he?

No response from Axle.

MATT

Tell me you had Leslie sign something before you brought him the best idea you've had in fifteen years.

Axle ties up the plastic liner of Matt's trash, then stops.

AXLE

No. I didn't. I didn't have you sign one either. Maybe I'm naive. Maybe I'm old school. But this is my idea. It's pure. It's timely and I will get it to market with or without you. So if you want to invest in the copycat version, be my guest. But I promise you, Steven Leslie is the wrong horse and if you bet on him you will lose.

Matt stares him down for a beat the smiles.

MATT

Okay...

TROY

Okay what? What just happened?

MATT

Okay, I'm in.

Axle nods, his swagger is back. Troy tries to hug Matt, who steps back. A hand shake will do just fine.

INT. CLAIRE'S BUILDING, FREIGHT ELEVATOR - EVENING

Axle with a hop in his step, grocery bags overflowing, flowers, Champagne. All is right in his world...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

He blows past the three girls, starts unpacking his spread.

AXLE

In case anybody's wondering who got A six figure advance on the sale of a life changing invention today that would be me, Robert Axle.

Just as he pops a bottle of Champagne.

AXLE

That would be me, Robert Axle. The same Robert Axle who went to prison for maiming thousands of people. The same Robert Axle who couldn't hold down a janitor job at Familymart.

Nothing from the girls.

AXLE

Did I mention the six figure advance? There's also a major bonus that kicks in if we beat Leslie to the market which I have no doubt we will do.

Axle picks up on the heaviness in the room, pushes forward.

AXLE

I told this Matt James fella, it's not rocket science. You set the date for the product launch. A date you know he can't hit. Then you back time everything from there. Product launch is key. Gotta make a big splash.

PHOEBE

(open minded)

Somebody stole Donna's identity. Opened a credit card in her name and ran up a five thousand dollar bill.

DONNA

(accusatory)

Had the card sent to Mailboxes Etc. right around the corner, within walking distance.

Axle considers his options.

CLAIRE

I gave you thirty days to clean up your life, it only took you thirteen to mess it up for good.

AXLE

I have a check for \$125,000 in my pocket. I can pay Donna back with interest. Pay rent here. Get the Center back up and running...

Axle makes eye contact with Claire. If looks could kill.

AXLE

This is not a big deal. Trust me.

CLAIRE

I did trust you.

AXLE

Claire, the real world is not always black and white.

CLAIRE

I'm going to my mom's. If you're still here when I get home, I'm calling the police.

Claire leaves. Axle turns to the girls. Donna gives him a scathing look. Phoebe just feels sad for him.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FIVE STAR HOTEL - MONTHS LATER - DAY

Axle exits the stately front doors of his new home in jeans and a sweater. His face void of emotion. A new Mercedes Benz with personal driver awaits.

INT. MERCEDES-BENZ (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

He rides in the back looking out the window. The city alive with possibilities, yet he has no ambition left.

INT. WATCHDAWG HQ - DAY

Axle walks alone down a corridor. WATCHDOG DESIGNERS and EXECUTIVES crossing in all directions. Product, packaging and ad mock ups everywhere. A bustling operation poised for a massive product launch.

INT. WATCHDAWG, CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Matt, Sheila and a room of Executives are watching the monitor, analyzing a news interview with Steven Leslie promoting "Watch-Me" his version of the gadget watch.

LESLIE (ON TV)

We think of our customers as members of our family. The goal with "Watch-Me" was to give them the best of both worlds. A product that spoke to our children's inherent need for stimulation while addressing our need, as parents, to keep them safe.

CLOSE ON Axle, his mind racing for a solution.

LESLIE (O.S.)

We know there are similar products like this in development at a similar price point. Ultimately it comes down to the brand consumers trust will deliver a product that is safe and effective.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAKERY/CAFE - DAY

Jerry and Lorraine approach the counter.

JERRY

Let me get a no-whip Grande Frap and a wheatgrass smoothie with Reeses.

Claire appears from behind the Espresso Machine.

CLAIRE

Hey guys! You came.

LORRAINE

We're worried about you. Are you okay?

CLAIRE

It's a coffee shop. Not a chemo ward.

Lorraine looks around. This is not her kind of place.

LORRAINE

Jerry and I are headed to Tampa.

CLAIRE

For the weekend?

She pops a piece of Nicorette gum.

LORRAINE

For the foreseeable future.

(taking Jerry's hand)

Seeing your father again reminded me how lucky I am to be with a man that doesn't make me miserable. And what better place to get old and die than Florida?

JERRY

Plenty of forest. No state income tax.

CLAIRE

How can you afford to --

LORRAINE

We got an offer on the house. As is. Furniture. Cars. Everything. The only thing left is your building. Lord willing we'll sell that too.

CLAIRE

To who?

LORRAINE

To you.

CLAIRE

Mom, I can't afford to--

LORRAINE

The price is one dollar.

JERRY

Make the check payable to Jerry King.

Claire sits with this for a beat.

LORRAINE

Sweetie, I think it's adorable you working here. But you had a career. A meaningful one.

She pops another Nicorette.

LORRAINE

Now this is a great invention. Combining Nicotine with chewing gum. Why couldn't numbnuts think of this?

CLAIRE

I'll get back to saving the world. Right now I just need a break.

LORRAINE

This isn't a break. It's a cop out.

CLAIRE

Thanks mom. Thanks for "getting me."

Claire fights back tears. Lorraine sits in silence, humbled.

JERRY

Claire, your mom loves you. She just doesn't want to see you make the same mistake she did.

CLAIRE

Letting Robert Axle ruin her life?

JERRY

Not forgiving him.

Claire looks away.

LORRAINE

He asked us to invite you to the big Watchdawg launch.

JERRY

We'd go with you but we'll be in Tampa by then.

Claire gets up to leave.

CLAIRE

Celebrating the glorious return of Robert Axle is not my idea of a good time.

INT. FIVE STAR HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Axle tosses and turns on a sleek modern sofa, despite a perfectly good king sized bed behind him in the distance.

INT. CENTER FOR WOMEN - SAME

Claire sits alone in the building that used to be her Center. Still some furniture but mostly it's a ghost town. Gone is the style and energy she had worked so hard to create.

EXT. MINI WAREHOUSE FACILITY - DAY

Axle helps workers from Department of Sanitation load the contents from the storage space/Robert Axle shrine into a Garbage truck. Finally ready to say goodbye to his old life.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Phoebe times kids as they climb the rope. Axle approaches.

PHOEBE

Come on Andre. You can do it buddy!

ANDRE a chubby kid, 13, stalls out three feet above ground.

AXLE

That's a big boy. You sure that rope isn't going to snap.

Snap, the rope breaks. Andre falls to the ground.

AXLE

Told you.

ANDRE

I'm okay!

PHOEBE

What do you want Axle?

Axle hands her a small wrapped gift. Phoebe refuses it.

AXLE

I need you to give this to Claire.

PHOEBE

She won't take it.

AXLE

She's my daughter.

PHOEBE

You stole from her best friend.

They watch Andre trying, in vain, to grab the shortened rope.

AXLE

I was trying to make enough money to save The Center.

PHOEBE

You were trying to make enough money to save Robert Axle.

Phoebe looks Axle in the eyes, sees right into his soul. She heads off to tend to Andre.

Axle tosses Claire's gift in the trash on his way out.

INT. BINGO HALL - NIGHT

Claire, Phoebe, and Donna get situated in their seats in a packed Bingo Hall. The girls are the youngest by thirty years and the thinnest by seventy pounds. Phoebe's unusually quiet.

DONNA

I bombed the LSATs.

The caller starts ANNOUNCING NUMBERS. Donna's intensely focused on her bingo game. Claire is barely playing.

CLAIRE

You got your scores back?

DONNA

No, but I bombed it on purpose.

CLAIRE

Donna, I know you're mad at your Dad but I'm not sure this is the answer.

DONNA

I really don't want to be a lawyer.

Claire smiles to herself, proud of her friend.

PHOEBE

Just take it.

Phoebe slides AXLE'S GIFT towards Claire.

CLAIRE

Phoebe I said no gifts.

Claire's missing the intensity behind Phoebe's gift giving.

PHOEBE

It's from Axle.

Claire doesn't stop playing but is clearly thrown off.

PHOEBE

He came by my school today.

DONNA

Why would he come see you?

PHOEBE

He really misses you Claire.

CLAIRE

Funny. He misses me but he has feelings for you.

DONNA
He has feelings for her?

Claire and Phoebe ignore Donna.

CLAIRE
What happened Phoebe?

PHOEBE
We kissed.

DONNA
You kissed!

PHOEBE
It's not like I slept with him.

CLAIRE
Sometimes "just kissing" is more intimate than sex!

DONNA
Where have I been?

CLAIRE
I don't know!

PHOEBE
I don't know!

PHOEBE
(to Claire)
Maybe if you weren't so obsessed with being selfless you would have a boyfriend or two or seven. And at that point you would realize that "just kissing" is just kissing.

Claire storms out. Phoebe and Donna follow.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

PHOEBE
(humble)
I had a momentary lapse of reason. It was a dad crush or a friend crush. Or some shit. But it passed. I'm not even into dudes.

CLAIRE
I don't know if you know what you're into Phoebe. All I know is it's not your ex and it's not Steak!

PHOEBE
Your father is a low life. I happen to loathe him.

CLAIRE

You two hate each other and you have a stronger connection than he and I. Explain that!

DONNA

Your father was using you. That's how you explain it.

Phoebe ignores Donna. Locks eyes with Claire.

PHOEBE

He makes me feel funnier than I thought I was and less hideous looking. And he seems to like my breasts.

DONNA

That just gave me goose bumps.

CLAIRE

I've heard enough.

PHOEBE

Claire I betrayed you. I regret it and I'm sorry. But this isn't about me. This is about you and your dad.

Claire covers her face. This is too much for her to handle.

PHOEBE

And he definitely loves you.

DONNA

Hello! That's what I said months ago!

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HIGH RISE OFFICE BUILDING (1990) - AFTERNOON

[NOTE: THIS IS AN EXTENSION OF EARLIER FLASHBACK, PICKING UP AFTER 7 YEAR OLD CLAIRE, TELLS HER FATHER, "YOU DO HAVE A REAL JOB, YOU'RE A FABRICATOR."]

CLAIRE'S POV: Axle tosses her over his shoulder playfully, tickle torturing her all the way to the car. Still holding the picture she drew for him. Her laughter is infectious.

MAN (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Axle looks back. The man is STEVEN LESLIE, 30s.

LESLIE

Is this yours?

He's pointing to the coffee-grill prototype Axle left behind.

Axle puts Claire down, hustles back, introduces himself.

She watches as he connects with this total stranger, dazzling him with talk of atoms, molecules and connectivity.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. THEATER, GREENROOM - NEXT DAY

Few staffers around. All dressed to the nines. Sheila's now nine months pregnant. Troy looks calm and cool. Matt's pacing. This time he's the one with the weak stomach.

TROY

(arm on Matt's shoulder)

It's okay to be nervous. It just means you care. I used to get nervous before big meetings. It's a mind over matter thing. You just gotta--

MATT

Will somebody get him out of here.
He's killing me!

Two staffers start to usher Troy away.

AXLE

No.

Everyone looks at Axle like he's nuts.

AXLE

He's my partner. I need him.

Troy swells with pride. No one has ever vouched for him.

MATT

Need him for what? The guy's a moron!

Axle takes Matt to the opposite corner to settle him down.

AXLE

Everything is going to be fine.

MATT

I've got a lot on the line here Axle.

AXLE

Not a lot of people would have given me a second chance. You did. And that's not something I take lightly.

MATT

(calming down)

I didn't do this because I'm a good guy. I did it because I honestly believe you're about to make me one of the richest men in the world.

AXLE

Matt... You bet the right horse. I promise you that.

Matt settles. The anxiety attack passing.

MATT

I don't know what got into me.

AXLE

It's fine. We all get anxious every now and again. It comes with the territory.

MATT

It just kinda hit me a few weeks ago. It's not just me anymore. I have a son on the way. Someone that is going to need me to provide for him and protect him. I'm 36 years old. I don't have the luxury of failing.

CLOSE ON AXLE: Realizing Matt is him twenty years ago.

MATT (O.S.)

This is the time to make my mark.

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAME

Claire rides her bike home from work, sees a HOMELESS GUY asleep on the street. She stops, reaches in her bag and pulls some cash out to give to the guy.

In her bag she sees the gift that Phoebe gave her from Axle. She thinks for beat then opens. Inside is a loose half sheet of paper, the picture she made for him twenty years earlier.

A FATHER HOLDING HANDS WITH HIS LITTLE GIRL, ARMS IN THE AIR CELEBRATING.

She traces the crayon with her finger, her heart breaks.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

The murmur of great anticipation. A jam packed three story auditorium. Buyers, press, analysts, gadget junkies.

Curtains open to reveal a mammoth video projection screen. The video presentation starts; a mother being interviewed.

MOTHER

You hear the stories but never in a million years do you think it will happen to you. They live in a big city, I don't. They don't watch their kids like a hawk, I do. A good mother would never lose her own child.

(beat)

It's been two years since Joshua went missing.

The picture fades to black. Small type on screen says, "WATCH DAWG." Lights come up to reveal a somber audience.

INT. CITY STREETS - SAME

Claire racing through downtown on her bike.

INT. THEATER - SAME

Axle walks across a long stage in the suit Claire gave him. He takes his place behind the podium.

AXLE

From the moment they are conceived, our greatest fear as parents is losing our child. We do everything we can to keep them near us but sometimes they slip away.

EXT. THEATER, PARKING LOT - SAME

Claire leaves her bike unlocked, sprints inside.

INT. THEATER - SAME

AXLE

It's not always about the child wandering off. Sometimes it's the grown ups that lose their way.

A 3-D ANIMATION of the product fades up behind Axle. It looks amazing. More impressive than Leslie's version.

AXLE

Watchdawg is a fabrication.

INT. BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR - SAME

Claire sprints down a long hallway, looking for the stage.

INT. THEATER - SAME

AXLE

It's a band-aid for a bigger problem;
the ever increasing disconnect
between parents and their children.

Matt looks terrified.

INT. SIDE STAGE - SAME

Claire arrives. Axle doesn't see her.

INT. THEATER - SAME

AXLE

The last thing we need is another
slick gadget that consumes our
children so we, as parents, are free
to take our eye off the ball.

Axle locks eyes with Matt, reassures him.

AXLE

We can do better. I don't know
exactly how yet, but we can do
better.

Sam Bergman watches from the back, proud of his old friend.

AXLE

The best way to keep from losing our
children is to slow down a little. Be
more present. Make time for pancakes
and pillow fights and hugs.

INT. SIDE STAGE - SAME

Claire's eyes well up with tears.

AXLE

Our children root for us to succeed.
Deep down, they really don't care.
They just want us to see them. To
hear them. To connect.

Axle turns, sees her. Their eyes meet. Finally, connected.

INT. THEATER - SAME

Axle steps down off the stage and begins a long walk up the
aisle. Claps transition to roaring applause, then standing
ovation. Even Matt gets swept up in the excitement.

INT. COURTHOUSE - NEXT DAY

Axle stands in front of a JUDGE. Parole Officer by his side.

JUDGE

On the charges of parole violation,
identity theft, fraud and money
laundering what do you plea?

AXLE

Guilty your Honor.

JUDGE

Which brings us to the matter of
sentencing.

AXLE'S POV: the Judge flipping through a book of sentencing guidelines, she has THREE FINGERS! P.O. Gives Axle a "let me handle this" look.

PAROLE OFFICER

Your Honor, if I may, Mr. Axle did
turn himself in and has already made
reparations to the victim. At this
point, prison would be a welcomed
alternative to the humiliation and
despair he will face on the outside.

Axle gives Parole Officer a "please, shut up" look.

JUDGE

The offender will serve 12 months of
house arrest enforced with the use of
an electronic sensor ankle bracelet.
Mr. Axle listed the Four Seasons as
his address. I'm guessing that's not
happening anymore...

CLAIRE (O.S.)

He'll be staying with me your honor.

REVEAL: Claire seated at Axle's defense table.

JUDGE

And you are?

CLAIRE

His daughter, Claire Axle.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LATER THAT DAY

Claire walks her bike. Axle strolls beside her.

CLAIRE

Only fair to warn you, there may be some strange women hanging around the apartment.

AXLE

More so than normal?

CLAIRE

I'm going to start a new Center.

AXLE

Sweetheart, I've still got some of my Watchdawg money left. Whatever I have left you're welcome to.

CLAIRE

Thanks. But no. I'm going to keep it lean and mean this time. Do the whole thing out of my apartment, nights and weekends if I have to.

AXLE

Maybe I can be a receptionist or a janitor, something. I could even learn how to sew.

CLAIRE

Not sure you're going to have time.

She shows him her cell phone. "19 NEW MESSAGES."

AXLE

Troy! He's stalking you isn't he. I'll kill him. I swear to God--

CLAIRE

They're not from Troy. Actually a few are but the rest are from Matt.

AXLE

Let me guess. He wants to sue me.

CLAIRE

He wants to back you.

AXLE

For what?

CLAIRE

Ideas. Inventions. Consulting. He doesn't care. Just wants to be in business with Robert Axle.

Axle looks thrown.

CLAIRE

Your speech is all over the internet.
Millions of people saw it and they
were moved. Deeply moved.

Axle takes a long look at his daughter then...

AXLE

Claire, if there's one thing I've
learned from all of this it's that I
need to get a real job.

CLAIRE

You have a real job, Dad. You're a
fabricator.

She gives him an unexpected hug. Axle's surprised initially.
He then hugs her back not wanting to let go.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Axle follows Claire inside. Donna is on the sofa playing
guitar hero. Axle's eyes scan the room, no sign of Phoebe.

DONNA

Hey Axle. Welcome back.

AXLE

Thanks Donna. I really appreciate you
being cool with all of this.

DONNA

90% of being a good roommate is
wanting the job.

AXLE

That doesn't really make sense.

PHOEBE (O.S.)

Face or nuts.

Phoebe's behind him, in a skirt/tank, holding a golf club.

PHOEBE

Punitive damages.

AXLE

For what?

PHOEBE

For everything. FACE OR NUTS!

Axle hesitates, then closes his eyes and covers his nuts.
Then face. Then nuts. Then... SHE KISSES HIM.

He opens his eyes, sees Phoebe, guard down. Pure magic.

TROY (O.S.)
Can someone get me a blanket?

REVEAL: Troy on the kitchen floor shivering cold.

AXLE
What the...

PHOEBE
Claire told him she'd go out with him
if he kicks the pain pills.

AXLE
How's that going?

Troy lets out an high pitched squeal.

PHOEBE
It's a process.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END

END CREDITS SHARE SCREEN WITH ...

Game night at Claire's Apartment. Axle, the girls and Troy play WOULD YOU RATHER. Lorraine and Jerry pipe in from Florida, via iChat. Even Steak makes a guest appearance.