The Inanimates

by

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FADE IN:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

This is FRED. This is Fred’s stuff.

Fred is in his early 20’s. Not attractive but not unattractive. Two days worth of facial hair lay unkempt on his face.

He sits at the kitchen table eating cereal. We hear the clock ticking, to his right is the local free newspaper which may or may not be opened to the classified section. To his right is a laptop, up and on, but fully ignored.

He hears a slight shuffle. He looks around. He goes back to eating. Another slight shuffle. He stops and looks again. He goes back to eating.

As the next shuffle starts he whips around. No one is there. He leaves the room suspiciously.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

IT’S THE NEXT MORNING. Fred is in different pajamas, same kitchen, same table, same cereal. He hears another shuffle.

He looks at the coffee table behind him in the den. He goes back to eating. He hears the shuffle.

He gets up and grabs a sharpie and makes a mark on the floor by the leg of the coffee table.

He grabs his cereal and washes his bowl at the sink while eyeing the coffee table suspiciously.

He leaves the room... 5 seconds, 10 seconds.
He runs back into the room, stops at the coffee table, close up of his horrified face, close up of table leg now a couple of inches away from the mark.

He slowly backs into the hallway, gives the room one last suspicious eye and runs frantically out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HALL - THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS - CONTINUOUS

The treasurer is at the podium speaking about something boring.

TREASURER
So if the count is off one more time we’re going to have to abandon the honor system and implement some...

Fred runs in and knocks the treasurer aside.

FRED
They’re coming!!! They’re coming to kill us all!!!!!!!

The crowd is silent, staring ahead in confusion.

FRED (CONT’D)
We need to do something!!! Or we’re all gonna die!

Two large older men tackle and restrain FRED.

FRED (CONT’D)
You need to listen to me!!!! They’re coming!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. - RUBBER ROOM

Fred is in a strait jacket, looking spaced out.

The door opens and an orderly motions for him to come.
INT. VISITING ROOM

Fred is seated in a steel chair, he looks across the table and rolls his eyes, the person at the other end of the table is Fred’s father STAN, late 50’s, the type of guy who seems like he even wears a suit to bed.

STAN
Come on, Fred, please talk to me. I can help you... Will you let me help you? Just tell me what happened...

Silence.

STAN (CONT’D)
Look... I’m not angry...

He looks frustrated at least.

STAN (CONT’D)
But did it have to be MY Knights of Columbus Hall? Now I can never show my face there again... I’ll either be ostracized or worse... whispered about... No, I can’t go back, I’d be too ashamed... not of you, though, Fred, I’m not ashamed of you. I’m just ashamed of what you did... and how it makes me look... but not you... just what you did... do you understand?

Silence.

STAN (CONT’D)
Well I hope you understand anyway. So if you want to talk about this, you know where to find me... and where NOT to find me.

Stan gets up to leave.
STAN (CONT’D)
And I suggest you do it soon because I don’t know how long I can keep your mother away.

Stan exits.

CUT TO:

INT. - RUBBER ROOM
Fred is back in his room.
The door opens. The orderly motions for him.

CUT TO:

INT. VISITING ROOM
Fred enters and is seated in the same steel chair, he looks across the table and rolls his eyes, the person at the other end of the table is Fred’s mother, JANINE, early 50’s, she looks like a mom. Picture a mom. That’s what she looks like.

JANINE
Freddie, how are you? Are they treating you well? Your father didn’t want me to come, but I couldn’t take it anymore! They tell me you’re not eating, you’re not sleeping, you haven’t said a word since you got here! Don’t you know you’re not the only person affected by your actions? The neighbors are talking. They’re asking me questions! How is FRED? I don’t know what to say!

Janine taps her foot impatiently.

JANINE (CONT’D)
Will you say something to me? Please! I’m your mother! Forget about the people here at this... place... talk to your mother...
Her toe-tapping grows louder.

    JANINE (CONT’D)
    Talk to your mother!!!

    FRED
    (mumbles inaudibly)

    JANINE
    (low gasp)
    What?

    FRED
    (mumbles inaudibly)

Janine’s face lights up, he talked to HER!

    JANINE
    What is it Freddie, you can
    tell me! You can tell me any-
    thing!

    FRED
    (mumbling)
    HMMPH in my amphmphment

    JANINE
    What? I can’t hear you, Freddie!!!

    FRED
    LOOK IN MY APARTMENT!!!!!!!!

    CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT

The door opens, Janine walks in and looks around. Every-
thing seems to be fine.

    JANINE
    I don’t understand!
INT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE

Fred is in the office with a psychiatrist and the Chief Doctor of the hospital

FRED
Yes, of course I made it all up, I don’t know what I was thinking, I’ve been stressed out lately. My mother... and my father... and my childhood and... my sexuality and... I know I caused a lot of trouble, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.

The first doctor looks at the Chief Doctor, The Chief Doctor shrugs, then nods.

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens, Fred runs in. Everything looks pretty much how he left it. He looks at the mark on the floor. The couch is back next to it. He picks up the phone and dials.

JANINE (V.O.)
Hello?

FRED
Mom? it’s me...

JANINE (V.O.)
Oh, Freddie! You’re home! You’re talking again, you’re back to.... (mouth away from receiver) He’s back to normal!!!!

FRED
Mom listen...
INT. JANINE & STAN’S SUBURBAN HOME – DAY

JANINE
(on the phone)
I went over to your apartment like you asked but I don’t understand, everything looked normal to me.

INTERCUT with Fred’s apartment.

FRED
Did you move anything?

JANINE
I don’t think so...

FRED
Did you sit down?

JANINE
Did I sit down? Freddie, I’m your mother of course I sat down... why would I drive across town to my son’s apartment and not sit down? Was I not supposed to sit down?

FRED
Did you notice anything... off?

Close up on Fred as he gets more and more perturbed as his mother begins talking to someone else, mouth away from the receiver.

JANINE (V.O.)
He wanted to know if I sat down in his apartment, why would he ask that? I tell ya, those places... You’re more crazy when ya come out than when ya go in...

Janine turns her attention back to Fred.

JANINE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Freddie? Freddie? Are you still there?

FRED
Yes.
JANINE
So the answer is yes, I sat down in your apartment, you can send me the bill...

Fred huffs.

JANINE (CONT’D)
But you shouldn’t worry so much, everything seemed fine, and just in case I even filed a report, you just need to check if there are any items missing before the detective can finalize it, but he said there was no sign of forced entry or anyth....

FRED
MOM!

JANINE
Freddie, why are you yelling?

FRED
You let a detective into my apartment?

JANINE
Well sure, you seemed worried, you said “Look In My Apartment” all mysteriously, what was I supposed to think?

FRED
Mom...

JANINE
They put you in one of those... places... I figured something serious had happened or else my Freddie wouldn’t act that way... you knocked down a senior citizen!

FRED
You let a detective... into my apartment.
JANINE
Don’t worry, Freddie, I found your illegal substances and disposed of them before he got there... and Freddie, I’m okay with you experimenting, it’s part of being young, your father not so much, but I understand...

FRED
What did the detective say?

JANINE
uh... well, uh...

FRED
MOM!!! You need to tell me exactly what the detective said.

JANINE
Freddie, what did they do to you in that place I don’t like your tone

FRED
Mom please, this is important.

JANINE
(getting emotional)
Well... he said ok, this is a little out of the ordinary, I can’t make a robbery report without knowing if anything was stolen, have your son check to see if anything is missing and get back to me, I don’t know why you’re treating your mother like this...

FRED
Okay, it’s okay mom, I’m sorry... he said to get back to him? What was his name again?
EXT. SUBURBAN TWO STORY HOME

Fred checks a piece of paper as he walks up to the front door and rings the bell.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

DETECTIVE CHUCK STRATTON, robbery division, early to mid 50’s, about 65% of the way to fully grizzled cop, answers the door.

FRED
Detective Stratton?

CHUCK
Yes.

Fred pushes his way into the house, knocking Chuck to the ground.

His wife, SARAH STRATTON, late 40’s, blonde, looks fading but still pretty, stands at the kitchen sink. She screams and grabs their son, TIMMY, 10 years old, from the kitchen table.

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
You can take anything you want, just please don’t hurt us!

FRED
What do you know?

SARAH
Oh my God Oh my God Oh My God

CHUCK
Quiet, Sarah
SARAH
How can I be quiet?? We’re being home-invaded! Get out! Rapist!

TIMMY
(panicky)
Dad, what’s going on?

CHUCK
No one is getting raped, Sarah, please, you’re scaring our son.

FRED
What do you know?

SARAH
Is this a work thing, Chuck, because you promised you would never take your job home again!

CHUCK
I don’t know if it’s a work thing, and I’m not taking work home anymore!

SARAH
Well what if it follows you?

CHUCK
I can’t help it if it follows me!

TIMMY
Are you being followed dad?

CHUCK
No, Timmy, I’ll handle this, I’m sure it’s just a misunderstanding.

FRED
What do you know?

SARAH
Tell him what you know, Chuck, your family is in danger.

CHUCK
Will you let me handle this Sarah?
SARAH
Handle it! Handle it!

TIMMY
Mommy, he knows all our names now.

SARAH
Quiet Timmy, he doesn’t know your name.

Fred has not taken his eyes off of Chuck.

FRED
What do you know?

SARAH
What are you waiting for? Tell him!

CHUCK
I said let me handle this!

He turns back to Fred.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Now look, this is obviously between you and me so just let them go.

SARAH
Let us go, rapist!

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
Is that a yes? Are you consenting to my request to let my wife and son go?

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
Honey, I’m going to assume that this man is allowing you two to go, so I need you to go next door and...
SARAH
I’m not leaving you!

CHUCK
For Christ’s sake, Sarah, leave me! Go! Take Timmy and go next door!

TIMMY
We’re leaving, dad.

CHUCK
I know, Timmy, don’t worry, I’ve got this.

Sarah takes Timmy out the door. They are both sobbing and hobbling as they clutch each other.

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
Ok. It’s just us now, so we can talk, nice and calm now... you’re not holding a gun.

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
You’re not holding any weapons at all, are you? Are you? Can you at least tell me if there’s a bomb strapped to you or anything? Just so I know what I’m dealing with here?

Fred looks around, grabs a candlestick, Chuck sighs

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
Ok. Ok. I’ll tell you what I know. But you have to tell me what this is about.

FRED
You know what this is about!
CHUCK
Honestly, I don’t... I, uh, I didn’t catch your name but...

FRED
YOU KNOW MY NAME!!!!

CHUCK
No, I honestly don’t, I’d like to so I can know what to call you but...

FRED
What do you know?

CHUCK
I told you, I’d be happy to tell you what I know but first you’ve got to tell me what this is about.

FRED
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!!!!!

CHUCK
(exasperated)
I, uh, I guess you’re just gonna have to hit me with that thing because.... ya know I really wish I knew your name so I could.....

FRED
YOU KNOW MY NAME!

The cops arrive, grab Fred and pull him out of the house.

EXT. CHUCK’S SUBURBAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

FRED
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?? WHAT DO YOU KNOW?????

CHUCK
(yelling)
What do I know about what???

Fred is being cuffed and placed in the police car.
FRED
THE INANIMATES!!!!!! THE INANIMATES!!!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. RUBBER ROOM

Fred is on a bench, in a strait jacket, looking spaced out. The door opens and an orderly motions for him to come.

INT. VISITING ROOM

Fred enters and is seated in that steel chair. He looks up and rolls his eyes, Chuck is at the table across from him.

FRED
(calm, almost bored)
Never thought I’d see you again. Except maybe in court.

CHUCK
Don’t worry, Fred, I’m not pressing charges.

FRED
Why not?

CHUCK
That’s not a question you’re in any position to be asking right now...

FRED
Then why are you here?

CHUCK
I’ve done some research on you and it turns out I was at your apartment just a couple of days ago. I met your mother, very nice lady.

FRED
So...
CHUCK
So I gotta admit to you, it’s driving me crazy, why show up at the home of the cop who responded to a burglary call at your house? What is it that you think I know about? Why were you screaming about “Inanimates” as you were being taken away? It doesn’t make sense to me, help me make it make sense.

FRED
Do you think I’m an idiot?

CHUCK
It’s off the record, I’m here on my own time, this is just between you and me, you have my word.

FRED
What’s the use, you’re not gonna believe me, it’s impossible.

CHUCK
Let me tell you something, Fred, I’ve been through enough shit in my life to know that there’s no such thing as impossible. Ya wanna know what’s impossible? You and me sitting here talking to each other. That’s impossible. Do you know how many 1 in a million coincidences had to happen just to get you sitting there across from me right now?

FRED
A hundred?

CHUCK
Something like that.

Chuck studies Fred’s face. He can’t get a read on him.
CHUCK (CONT’D)
Come on, whaddya have to lose,
even if I don’t believe you I’ll
just be one more person who
doesn’t believe you.

Pause.

FRED
Ok... but I’m still not convinced
you’re not in on it. That you’re
not here to find out how much I
know.

CHUCK
Fair enough.

Fred takes a deep breath, then exhales slowly.

FRED
Ok... Inanimate objects are plot-
ting to take over the world.

Long pause. Chuck sits back in his chair... he stares in-
credulously at Fred.

CHUCK
MM HMMM...

After a moment, Chuck stands abruptly.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Well thanks for your time, Fred,
you’ve made me feel a whole lot
better.

Fred grunts as Chuck walks out.

INT. CHUCK’S HOUSE

Chuck arrives home, Timmy is at the kitchen table, Sarah is
in the living room.
SARAH
Hey honey, I talked to the security company, their coming to install the new system on Friday around 4. Timmy’s got a soccer tournament, so we don’t know how long we’ll be out there, can you be here?

CHUCK
(distant)
Uh, no. I have to work.

Sarah stops what she’s doing to give Chuck her full attention.

SARAH
Chuck.... I know how proud you are and that putting on a brave face is your coping mechanism, but we just went through an incredibly traumatic event, can’t you take at least a couple days off of work?

Chuck looks at the pots on the stove unenthusiastically.

SARAH (CONT’D)
Chuck?

CHUCK
Hmm?

SARAH
I get it honey, when you’re hurting you just immerse yourself deeper in your job, I knew what I was getting into when I married you. But can you PLEASE just do this.... do it for me.... take some time off.... we need it.

CHUCK
Hm, hmm??? Oh, okay okay

SARAH
Thank you.
She touches his shoulders and looks him right in the eyes.

SARAH (CONT’D)
Ya know sometimes it’s okay to let your guard down... cry a little.

CHUCK
(still distant)
Yes yes I know.

SARAH
You say that. But I see you... you’re not letting it out.

CHUCK
Okay okay, I’ll let it out.

SARAH
Let it out, Chuck.

CHUCK
What, right now?

SARAH
Look at me. I’m here for you.

CHUCK
Um. Ok thanks, hey when’s dinner I really need a shower.

SARAH
(sighing)
about an hour

Chuck starts up the stairs.

CHUCK
Ok.

SARAH
Don’t be late my strong man, I’m making lasagna, your favorite!
INT. CHUCK’S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Chuck is in pajamas, staring at his old ass in the mirror, looking miserable. From offscreen SARAH hands him a toothbrush. He wets it and begins to brush.

She hands him toothpaste. He applies it and continues to brush. He rinses, spits. She hands him floss. He looks at her, begins flossing.

INT. CHUCK’S BEDROOM - LATER

Chuck is in bed asleep. A slight thump awakens him. He is motionless, but his eyes are darting. After a moment, he closes his eyes again.

Another slight thump and his eyes open and dart. This time he lifts his head.

    SARAH (O.S.)
    Honey?

    CHUCK
    It’s nothing, nothing darling, go back to sleep.

Chuck doesn’t move. He looks around the room.

    SARAH (O.S.)
    Well if it’s nothing then why are you still sitting up?

Chuck sighs and lays back down. 5 seconds pass.

Another thump, Chuck jumps out of bed and looks around. Now Sarah is up too.

    SARAH
    What is it, Chuck, you’re scaring me! Is there someone in the house? Timmy!!!! Timmy!!!! Evasive Maneuvers!!

    CHUCK
    No no no, nothing like that, it’s ok Timmy don’t...
A window shatters nearby.

    CHUCK (CONT’D)
    Shit.

INT. TIMMY’S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chuck and Sarah enter and look out the broken window. Timmy is standing on the ground outside.

    TIMMY
    It’s ok mom and dad I’m safe!!! It worked!!! It totally worked!!!

    CHUCK
    Ya know, Sarah, we could have put it in the escape plan for him to open the window first.

    SARAH
    No time for that, we just had an incredibly traumatic event happen to us and every second counts. Those few extra moments it takes to open the window could mean the difference between escaping and being torn to pieces. I’m not taking any chances with our safety.

    CHUCK
    But the window...

    SARAH
    Windows can be replaced. People can’t.

    CHUCK
    But...

    SARAH
    Honey, I know how much you have to worry about so let me worry about this, ok?

    CHUCK
    But I don’t think...
SARAH
Timmy! False alarm! But at least now we know the system works! Come on back inside!

TIMMY
Are you sure?

SARAH
Yes I’m sure, your father was just being nervous.

TIMMY
Have you checked the closets?

SARAH
Timmy get back up here right now!

Chuck begins to leave.

SARAH (CONT’D)
It’s ok, Chuck, Friday we’ll have a new security system in place so there will be fewer false alarms to worry about... you need to relax, honey, you’re so jumpy... honestly, we’ve all been frightened enough for one week.

CHUCK
Yeah.

Chuck begins to leave again.

SARAH
Can you call the window man some time tomorrow, never mind I’ll do it, you just get some shoes on and help me clean this glass up.

Chuck finally successfully leaves.
INT. CHUCK’S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Chuck searches his closet for shoes.

TIMMY (O.S.)
Instead of false alarm can we call it an invasion drill?

SARAH (O.S.)
Call it whatever you want just don’t step on any glass... get up... get up in your bed with those bare feet... Chuck! I’m almost finished, aren’t you gonna help me?

CHUCK
Yeah, I’ll be in in a second...

Chuck’s eyes dart back and forth between a pair of soft night slippers and a pair of golf cleats. The clock ticks faintly in the background.

SARAH (O.S.)
Timmy, for the last time, stay on the bed in your bare feet...

TIMMY (O.S.)
I’m just trying to help.

SARAH (O.S.)
Well you can help me by saving me a trip to the doctor tomorrow, stay in your bed...

Chuck chooses the slippers. The faint thump happens again. Chuck whirls around and looks at the recliner in the corner. He walks toward it and examines the front legs.

He walks out of the room and returns with a roll of masking tape. He places the tape at the foot of the chair leg. As this happens.....

SARAH (O.S.)
CHUCK! What is the holdup? SHIT! I cut my finger. Uh, Darn I cut my...
TIMMY (O.S.)
Mom I’m 10 I know what shit means.

SARAH (O.S.)
Timothy Charles Stratton watch your mouth, there will be no cursing in my house.

TIMMY (O.S.)
But you just cursed.

SARAH (O.S.)
I know I just cursed, I just cut my...

TIMMY (O.S.)
Mom you’re bleeding...

SARAH (O.S.)
I know I’m bleeding.

TIMMY (O.S.)
All over my rug...

SARAH (O.S.)
All over your rug? Your mother has a laceration and your worried about the rug?

TIMMY (O.S.)
That’s not what I meant, mom.

SARAH (O.S.)
Well, you better think about what you meant before your father... Chuck!!!! Chuck!!!! Where are you?

INT. TIMMY’S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Chuck enters the room.

CHUCK
I’m here I’m here, go put a band aid on that finger, honey, I’ll finish up.

SARAH
Okay...
TIMMY
Dad, I broke the glass with the globe this time, mom said to use the chair but the globe was way easier to handle... I thought of that myself.....

Pause.

TIMMY (CONT’D)
Dad?

SARAH
Chuck, your son is talking to you.

CHUCK
Huh? Oh! Good work, junior, good work.

Sarah is applying the band aid. She notices her husband’s shoe selection and huffs.

SARAH
Are those your night slippers? Honey, that’s soft material, glass will go right through that.

CHUCK
It’s fine, I’ll be careful...

SARAH
I don’t want you cutting your foot, Chuck, please, put on your penny loafers... You’re always so brave! I don’t want you to hurt yourself!

CHUCK
(exasperated)
Okay.

Chuck exits the room to enter his bedroom.
INT. CHUCK’S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Chuck enters and walks toward the closet, he stops as he notices the chair is a few centimeters farther away from the tape.

He looks puzzled. His face brightens a little. Something different. Sarah enters with a beat up pair of shoes.

SARAH
Here are your old penny loafers, I wouldn’t want you to scuff up your new ones, you should use these..... CHUCK?

CUT TO:

INT. VISITING ROOM

Fred sits on a steel chair and rolls his eyes, the person at the other end of the table is Chuck again.

FRED
You’re back. I didn’t see that one coming. The way you ran out of here after I told you my “crazy” story.

Chuck stares at Fred with a mixture of fascination and desperation.

CHUCK
Well now I’m ready to hear more...

INT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE

Fred is in the office with a psychiatrist and the Chief Doctor.

FRED
Yes, of course I made it all up, I don’t know what I was thinking, I’ve been stressed out lately. My mother.... and.... and my father

(MORE)
FRED (CONT’D)
and..... and my childhood and.....
my sexuality and...... I know I
caused a lot of trouble, I’m
sorry, I’m so sorry.

The Psychiatrist looks at the Chief Doctor. The Chief Doc-
tor shrugs and nods.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is messy again, the door opens and Chuck and
Fred enter.

FRED
...So after I marked the floor, I
noticed that...

Fred freezes. Looks around.

CHUCK
What? What is it?

FRED
Does something seem... off to you?

CHUCK
I’ve only been here once before...
I don’t think that’s enough times
to know...

Fred thinks... he shakes his head.

FRED
This isn’t right...

CHUCK
Have you checked the mark on the
floor?

FRED
Good idea

CHUCK
Elementary, my dear...
Fred is already on the floor in the other room...

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Wats... okay.

FRED
Last time I was here, it was back in place, so... look at this...
look at this.

Chuck hurries into the room.

CHUCK
What?

FRED
It’s moved again!

Chuck looks at the mark, it’s only 2 or 3 inches away from the table leg.

CHUCK
It’s only an inch or two away, it could have...

FRED
It could have what? Magically moved one or two inches?

Pause. Chuck is half in awe and half amused by the idea.

CHUCK
Well it’s only one or two in...

FRED
Are you familiar with Newton’s First Law Of Motion?

CHUCK
Uh... sure......... no.

FRED
Stuff doesn’t move, even one or two inches, unless it’s moved by something, I’m paraphrasing of course.
CHUCK
So your neighbor thumped the wall, 
or played some loud music... 
caused vibrations.

FRED
Highly unlikely...

CHUCK
(half-smiling)
A really strong mouse?

FRED
Did you come here just to make fun 
of me?

CHUCK
No! I’m intrigued... believe me... 
but you’ve got to understand this 
whole thing is a bit farfetched.

FRED
Yeah, it would take at least a 
hundred 1 in a million coinci-
dences for it to be true, huh?

Pause.

CHUCK
Okay man, ya got me, so you’re 
saying the absolute most likely 
scenario to explain all this is...

FRED
The Inanimates

CHUCK
It could ONLY be inanimate objects 
moving themselves, that’s the ONLY 
explanation?

FRED
The only one that makes sense... 
given all the evidence.
CHUCK
Okay... So then answer me this, even if you’re right, and all the chairs, tables, beds and things really are sentient...

FRED
Senti- what?

CHUCK
Sentient. Ya know, self aware, in control of ones own thoughts and actions... You mean to tell me you know Newton’s First Law of Mechanics...

FRED
Motion.

CHUCK
Whatever, and you don’t know what “sentient” means?

FRED
Yeah, sue me, I know science better than English... in 100 years we’ll all be speaking “inanamese” anyway...

CHUCK
Inanamese?

FRED
The language of the Inanimates.

CHUCK
They have a LANGUAGE?

FRED
Yeah. How else could they communicate?

CHUCK
You’ve really got all this figured out, dontcha?
FRED
I’ve been monitoring their activities for just over 8 months now. Last week was the first time they slipped up.

CHUCK
By moving a quarter of an inch.

FRED
By EXPOSING themselves... and it was AT LEAST two inches.

CHUCK
Ok ok you’re the expert... so how do we know they wanna take over the world...

FRED
Ya want the long version or the short version?

CHUCK
The shortest possible without leaving out anything super important.

FRED
Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S BEDROOM - LATER

It’s obvious by the posters on the walls that Fred likes old science fiction movies.

INSERT - array of images that go along with the story. Fred sleeping in his bed, waking up scared. Distorted images of tables and chairs. A stuffed animal lies motionless, but appears to be staring maniacally at us, etc.

FRED (V.O.)
Ever since I moved into this place, I’ve been having these strange dreams, at least I thought

(MORE)
FRED (V.O.) (CONT’D)
they were dreams... but in the
dream, I’m sleeping, but I can
hear voices in the other rooms,
and sometimes voices in my room.
Sometimes it sounds like they’re
right next to me.

CHUCK
Like in your bed...

FRED
LIKE MY BED! They talk about
things. Deep things... philosophy,
ancient architecture, bloodlet-
ting...

CHUCK
Bloodletting?

FRED
I’m telling you, crazy shit! But
then every once in a while, their
voices get soft, like, REAL
soft... like a quiet, little whis-
per type thing...

Long Pause.

CHUCK
So when they whisper they...

FRED
Are talking about taking over the
world!!! They gotta be!!!

CHUCK
They gotta be?

FRED
Cuz if couches and tables and beds
are that smart... to know about
history and art and stuff... then
they’ve gotta have been senti-,
senti-...

CHUCK
Sentient?
FRED
Thank you... for a long time, long enough to learn all that stuff... they gotta be able to read and write and shit... so they gotta know we can’t hear them!!! So if they’re gonna whisper even when they know we can’t hear them... those whispers have to be about, like, the most super secret thing in the whole cosmos...

CHUCK
And the most super secret thing in the cosmos is....

FRED
Taking over a planet, it’s gotta be!!!

CHUCK
It’s gotta be...

FRED
It’s GOTTA BE...

CHUCK
It’s gotta be the tables and chairs and lamps...

FRED
And beds... I think they’re the leaders.

CHUCK
And beds...

Pause.

CHUCK
And it’s all the Inanimates in the world, not just the ones in this apartment...

FRED
I don’t know, alright? I don’t have it all figured out.
CHUCK
You’re gonna have to do better than that.

FRED
Listen man, I don’t blame you, if I were you I wouldn’t believe me either... of course you don’t believe me... but...

Pause.

CHUCK
But what?

FRED
But you ARE still here.

The two share a knowing look.

CHUCK
Yes I am. So what now?

FRED
Well you’re the detective so...

CHUCK
So...

FRED
So detect...

CHUCK
Hey I detect robbers, people who steal things... I don’t know how to detect THINGS. You’re the one with the theories, what do you think we should do?

They look at each other.

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The lights are off. Fred and Chuck stand on the floor. Fred has a bat, Chuck has a flashlight. They are both in positions of readiness as if they might be attacked at any moment.
Silence. 5 seconds. 10 seconds.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

Chuck and Fred are in the same positions as if they haven’t moved at all. 5 seconds.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They remain in their positions. A dog howls in the background.

CHUCK
Why are we on the floor again?

FRED
Because the couch is an inanimate object, it can’t be trusted.

Pause.

CHUCK
The floor is an inanimate object.

Longer Pause.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - STILL NIGHT

They are now standing on plastic stools. 5 seconds.

CHUCK
But these are...

FRED
The bed is the leader, the other pieces of furniture are the lieutenants. These stools are weak. Minions. The Jerry’s Kids of the inanimate world.
INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

Same positions. 5 seconds.

CHUCK
Why are we holding weapons?

FRED
In case the Inanimates try to mount a sneak attack. Now that they know we’re onto them.

CHUCK
But aren’t our weapons inanimate too?

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - STILL DAY

Same scene, but now Fred has an electric fan and Chuck has a yo yo.

FRED
So if they come at you... just... fling it.

CHUCK
Fling it?

Pause.

FRED
Fling it.

They get into their ready positions.

CHUCK
What’s the rule on inanimate objects?

FRED
Whaddya mean?
CHUCK
If they move, but not on their own, are they still inanimate?

FRED
I’m not sure...

CHUCK
I could pick up a bed and move it. I could move a clock. And I’m moving this yo yo. Batteries are helping that fan go. Only a living thing can move itself without help, right?

FRED
I don’t know.

CHUCK
Wouldn’t anything non-living technically be inanimate?

Pregnant pause.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT – STILL DAY

Same scene. Except now they are holding birds. 5 seconds.

CHUCK
Are these beaks really that sharp?

FRED
They’ll have to do until we can fashion a weapon using only organic material... my mom has a lot of rose bushes in her garden... maybe we can make a weapon from thorns...

Pause.

CHUCK
What are the rules on objects that are alive... but still inanimate... like plants and trees?
FRED
(sigh)
They appear inanimate, but on a microscopic level they’re going through cell division and photosynthesis and...

CHUCK
What about the dead plants and trees, are they...

FRED
You can’t BECOME inanimate. So even if you’re inanimate now, if you used to be animate then your not an Inanimate, got it?

CHUCK
Yeah.

Pause.

CHUCK
So if wood comes from a tree... then wood used to be animate... so anything made of wood would...

FRED
(exasperated)
NO! When you use materials from formerly living things to make a NEW thing then that NEW thing is a NEW thing and CAN be... a new thing. Get it?

CHUCK
I think so.

Longer Pause.

CHUCK
Are the Inanimates under any actual obligation to follow our rules for them?

FRED
Oh Jesus...
FRED walks out and slams the door.

EXT. JANINE AND STAN’S SUBURBAN GARDEN - DAY

The garden is meticulous and immaculate. Every kind of flower is represented.

Chuck and Fred are clipping thorns off the rose bushes.

JANINE
Are you sure I can’t get you anything to drink, Detective Stratton?

CHUCK
No, no thank you.

JANINE
It’s nice to see you again.

CHUCK
Yes... for me too.

JANINE
Even under these odd circumstances.

CHUCK
Yes ma’am.

JANINE
Did the robbers steal something plant-related from your apartment, Freddie?

FRED
No mom. Nothing was stolen.

JANINE
Oh... it’s just that if nothing was stolen I don’t understand why you and Detective Stratton are out here together going through my...

FRED
I told you, mom, I’m helping him with something.
JANINE
Involving rose bushes? Is there a band of plant-robbers on the loose in the town? Should I cover up my garden?

FRED
Mom!

CHUCK
No ma’am, no bands of plant rob-bers around here.

JANINE
Well why can’t you tell me? Is it top secret?

FRED
Mom we’re trying to work here... please!

JANINE
Of course, I’m sorry.

Janine continues to stand there in silence

JANINE
It’s just that it’s natural to wonder why you’re going through my rose bushes with a police offi-cer...

FRED
MOM!!!!!

CHUCK
On second thought I believe I will have that drink, Mrs. Kirkland, thank you.

JANINE
Well.... ok.... I’ll be right back.

She exits... Chuck notices Fred is annoyed.
CHUCK
When I was a kid I used to pick roses with the thorns still on them then give them to the neighborhood girls. At first I thought it was hilarious when their faces changed from grateful to angry. Then I realized it was a lot quicker to just let ‘em stay grateful.

FRED
Are you trying to relate to me?

CHUCK
Just telling you a s...

FRED
Make sure you get the sharpest ones. It doesn’t matter if they’re big as long as they’re sharp. The biggest ones aren’t always the sharpest.

Janine returns with the drinks.

JANINE
Here ya go, detective.

CHUCK
Thanks so much.

JANINE
And here, Freddie, water no lemon, I know how much you hate when your water tastes lemony...

FRED
Mom, I didn’t ask for a dr...

JANINE
It’s hot out here, Freddie, take a sip.

Fred hesitates.
JANINE
What, you’ve been living on your own for less than a year and your already too big to listen to your mother? Go on, take a sip.

Fred rolls his eyes, takes a sip.

CHUCK
Thank you, Mrs. Kirkland, and thank you for letting us prune your rose bushes.

JANINE
Letting you? My goodness, when Freddie was younger I would BEG him to do this and now you’ve got him asking my permission, Detective Stratton, you might just be the father he never had...

Awkward pause. Fred looks at his mother.

JANINE
Don’t get me wrong, Stan is a good man, he never beat me, he spanked Freddie a little but never left marks or anything...

FRED
Mom...

JANINE
I guess the grass is always greener on the other side, though, ya know, you just always wonder what might have been...

Awkward pause #2.

JANINE
He’s standing right behind me, isn’t he?

CHUCK
No.
JANINE
OH! Good! That’s a relief... I can be so paranoid sometimes!

FRED
MOM, please stop talking...

Awkward pause #3

JANINE
No need to embarrass me in front of company, Freddie.

FRED
Mom, I didn’t mean to embarrass you, but...

CHUCK
It’s fine, really, Mrs. Kirkland, You strike me as a good mother... refreshingly honest.

JANINE
Thank you for noticing, Detective, it seems that so many women these days get married, move out to the suburbs, and feel like they need to hide the cracks and imperfections in their lives.

CHUCK
I couldn’t agree more.

JANINE
But as far as I’m concerned...

FRED
Mom...

JANINE
It’s those imperfections that make us beautiful...

CHUCK
Very well put, Mrs. Kirkland.

JANINE
Thank you, Detective, see that, Freddie, somebody appreciates me.
FRED
I appreciate you, mom.

JANINE
I know you do, Freddie, I just need to hear it sometimes... you were never as expressive as I hoped you would be, but I loved you all the same...

CHUCK
You should be very proud, you’ve got a good boy here.

JANINE
Proud... yes, of course we’re proud, we always told him, Freddie, it’s okay to make mistakes, as long as you learn from them, there’s nothing you can do that’s so bad that it can’t be undone... ya know, aside from murder I guess...

3 seconds.

JANINE
And rape...

3 more seconds.

JANINE
And nasty words to a parent...

FRED
Mom!!!!

JANINE
So when he ended up at that... institution, we never stopped loving him... disappointed? Of course... but we Kirkland’s practice what we preach... so we always loved our Freddie.

CHUCK
That’s the way to do it.
FRED
Okay, I think we’ve got enough, detective, thanks mom.

He kisses his mom and starts to leave

JANINE
Oh, Freddie, can I talk to you for just a quick sec before you go...

FRED
We’re kind of in a hurry mom...

CHUCK
Oh no, it’s fine, I’ll be in the car.

Chuck exits. Janine motions for Fred to follow her into the garage...

INT. JANINE & STAN’S SUBURBAN GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

JANINE
Freddie, you know I don’t like to pry into your personal affairs.

FRED
Never...

JANINE
But I don’t understand. If nothing was stolen from your apartment then why are you spending all this time with the detective?

FRED
It’s.... follow-up stuff.

JANINE
And why is he here helping you do chores, I don’t understand, does this have to do with why you were at the... institu...

FRED
No, mom, I promise, it’s fine, you worry too much.
JANINE
You’re my only son, it’s my job to worry.

FRED
Well stop... I’m fine, just growing pains, ya know.

Fred walks out toward the street. Janine follows.

EXT. JANINE & STAN’S SUBURBAN DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

JANINE
Ok. Well you be good.

FRED
(turning around)
I promise.

Fred exits. Slowly we turn our attention to the mailbox. Creepy music swells. Close up on the mailbox.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S EMPTY APARTMENT - DAY

Creepy music continues. Close up of the couch, the coffee table, and finally the bed.

CUT TO:

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chuck and Fred are back on the plastic stools, now holding a weapon of multiple tree branches with thorns on them woven together into a rotund thornstick with a smoothed out handle.

The two birds are now sharing a cage in the corner, randomly making noises.

5 - 10 seconds pass.
INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - DAY

The next morning. Chuck and Fred are in the same positions. 5 seconds. Chuck unceremoniously breaks and steps off the stool.

CHUCK
Okay. I guess we’ll pick up here tomorrow.

FRED
Whaddya mean pick up here tomorrow? Ya think the Inanimates are going to wait for you to make their move?

CHUCK
(still slightly amused)
Fred, I have a wife who notices when I’m gone... She thinks I took an extra few shifts before my time off... but now I gotta go home... I have responsibilities.

FRED
What about your responsibilities to save the planet?

CHUCK
Look, we’ve been here for 2 days and we haven’t seen anything, maybe they’re waiting for us to leave or something... if they’re so smart, ya think they’re just gonna start running around right in front of us?

FRED
I’m beginning to question your devotion to this mission, Detective.
CHUCK
Oh really? Well that’s some top-notch observing there, buddy, you should just be grateful that I’m indulging your little fantasy at all!

FRED
Fantasy?

CHUCK
You know the risk I’m taking even being here? You just broke into my house and scared the piss out of my family! If I’m caught within 2 miles of you I have a hell of a lot of explaining to do!

FRED
(sarcastic)
Well gee, thank you for being so kind as to lower yourself to risk being seen with me.

CHUCK
Hey I’m the only reason you’re not in jail right now

FRED
And thank you again for finding it in your heart to grant me my freedom when THE FATE OF THE WHOLE WORLD IS AT RISK!!!!!!!

Chuck feels his phone vibrate, he pulls it out and looks.

CHUCK
If you’ll excuse me... that’s my real life now... Hello?

SARAH (V.O.)
Hi Chuck.... it’s your wife.

CHUCK
I know.
SARAH (V.O.)
Listen, are you almost home? TIMMY’s soccer jersey turned pink in the wash so I’m gonna have to leave a little early...

CHUCK
Yeah... coming around the corner.

SARAH (V.O.)
Okay... hurry up... the window guy can’t make it in the afternoon so he should be here pretty soon... and don’t forget the alarm guy’s coming around 4 so... just remember all that.

CHUCK
Okay.

SARAH (V.O.)
And I know you’ve been working so you’ll probably want a nap so just make sure to set your alarm clock, I know how deep you sleep and I don’t want you to sleep through the doorbell...

CHUCK
Okay.

SARAH (V.O.)
Use the one I gave you for your birthday.

CHUCK
Okay.

SARAH (V.O.)
The one that makes you do the math problem before you can shut it off.

CHUCK
Okay.

SARAH (V.O.)
And remember the window guy will be here soon...
Got it.

And the alarm guy around 4.

Yes.

So see ya soon.

Yeah.

Okay.

Buh-bye.

Are you still there?

Yeah.

Oh. Okay I didn’t know whether to hang up or not because you didn’t say bye.

Oh. Sorry. Bye

Bye.

Anyway... I’ve gotta go.

Yeah, from the sound of that conversation you better hurry or you’ll miss out on all the f...
CHUCK
Ya know not everything in life brings immediate gratification, some things you do because it’s what you’re supposed to do... not everybody can afford to be shiftless!

FRED
Shiftless!!!!

CHUCK
I think that’s the perfect word for it.

Chuck exits and slams the door.

FRED
Great! Just leave your partner to fight an army of furniture all by himself!

INT. CHUCK’S HOUSE - DAY
Sarah is running around frantically as Chuck enters the house.

SARAH
Chuck! Where were you? I thought you said you were coming around the corner!!!

CHUCK
Sorry. Got a call on the radio. Big emergency...

SARAH
Honestly, honey, I know you like to help, but your police friends know what they’re doing, they can survive a couple days without you... and look, now Timmy has to play soccer in a pink uniform.

Sarah huffs... then stops and puts her hand on Chuck’s shoulders, looking him in the eyes.
SARAH
You’re so kind, you’ll help anyone who asks, I know, it’s one of the reasons why I married you. And I have to accept the negative implications of that along with the positive, but honestly Chuck, look at your son...

Timmy is in a pink soccer uniform crying quietly.

SARAH
(whispering)
You should probably say something... fatherly.

Chuck looks at Timmy and prepares to be a dad, which takes some effort.

CHUCK
(kneeling down to Timmy’s eye level)
Uh... son... ya know there’s nothing wrong with the color pink. Pink can be a very... masculine color when brandished with the proper amount of... aplomb. It’s all about the attitude with which you wear it.

Timmy stops crying and stares blankly at his father. Chuck gives up.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Go get in the car.

Timmy sulks off.

SARAH
So the window guy is upstairs, remember the alarm guy is coming around 4, I know you’ve been working so if you want to take a nap that’s fine but please don’t make the WINDOW MAN shake you when it’s time for him to get paid.
CHUCK

Uh... yeah, okay.

SARAH

And if you sleep through the doorbell and the alarm guy leaves I don’t know when he’ll be able to come back... so PLEASE... make sure you set your alarm, you know how deep you sleep...

CHUCK

Okay.

SARAH

Use the alarm clock that I gave you for your birthday...

CHUCK

Okay.

SARAH

The one that makes you do the ma...

CHUCK

Yes yes I know which one.

TIMMY (O.S.)

MOM!

SARAH

I’m coming Timmy!!! Bye honey! Oh, and if you get hungry I left some Healthy Choice dinners in the fridge for ya, I know how you hate to wait for them to thaw out all the way. Ok, bye!

Timmy and Sarah exit.

Chuck sits on the couch, silence, he hears a noise upstairs, becomes wide eyed. He darts upstairs to find...


INT. TIMMY’S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The WINDOW MAN is at work fixing the window.
CHUCK
Oh! yes, I forgot you were supposed to be here now.

WINDOW MAN
Scared ya, huh? Thought I was a cat burglar or somethin’. Well then I bet you were pretty relieved to find nobody but little old me up here.

CHUCK
Yes. You have no idea.

WINDOW MAN
I tell ya, if I had a nickel for every time somebody got me out to their house, then promptly forgot I was there, well I’d have a pretty sizable savings account right now.

CHUCK
Oh yeah?

WINDOW MAN
Yes sir! I guess it’s on account of how quiet I work... you know... the perils of being an efficient artisan! But anyway, no worries, as you can see I am the opposite of a burglar, I come to your house... and put stuff in it!

Pause.

WINDOW MAN (CONT’D)
Instead of taking things out, ya know?

CHUCK
Yeah, uh, I’ll be downstairs. Just let me know when you’re finished.

WINDOW MAN
Okay then

Chuck starts to leave.
WINDOW MAN
And remember, if you hear an occasional thump or anything... it’s just little old me no need to worry! I can’t be quiet ALL the time, ya know?

CHUCK
Ok. Thanks.

INT. CHUCK’S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chuck sits on his downstairs couch. Silent. Thinking. He hears a thump. He ignores it. He hears another thump. And then another. 5 seconds.

He hears a very loud thump followed by a succession of smaller ones. He runs upstairs.

INT. TIMMY’S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Window Man is on the floor.

WINDOW MAN
Sorry about that, sir, I coulda’ sworn I left my little footstool by the window here.

As the Window Man continues, Chuck looks at the top of the staircase.

INT. CHUCK’S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

There’s the footstool near the top of the stairs.

WINDOW MAN (O.S.)
...but I guess not, and next thing I know I’m lying here on the floor... I tell you...

Chuck, confused but energized, looks back at the Window Man.
INT. TIMMY’S ROOM – CONTINUOUS

WINDOW MAN
(going back to work)
I woulda sworn in a court of law
that I left my footstool right
here under the window... I gotta
be more careful, this time it’s a
floor, but next time it could be
OUT the window... And that would
be a lot less pleasant... Anyway
no permanent damage, (he turns
around to look at CHUCK) so.....
Sir????

The Window Man turns to look out the window and sees CHUCK
sprint past his car down the street, arms flailing wildly.

INT. FRED’S APARTMENT – DAY

Fred is dangling precariously from the two plastic foot-
stools, trying to sleep with his head on one, his feet on
the other, and his body suspended in mid-air. Chuck enters
in a panic.

CHUCK
The footstools!

He sees Fred asleep on the two footstools. He runs over to
Fred and pushes him awkwardly off the stools.

FRED
Hey! What the fuck?? What the
fuck, man!!!!

CHUCK
The footstools! They’re not
Jerry’s Kids!!!

They stare at each other.
INT. FRED'S APARTMENT - DAY

The two sit on the floor of the apartment. The birds are now flying through the room.

The two plastic footstools are in the large birdcage, which is now resting on the floor directly in front of them.

FRED
So you experienced it too.

CHUCK
Yeah.

FRED
Twice now.

CHUCK
Yeah.

FRED
And you didn’t tell me.

CHUCK
Well I didn’t know what I was experiencing... the mind is a powerful thing, ya know? I couldn’t eliminate the possibility that it was just my overactive imagination.

FRED
So the first time...

CHUCK
My recliner.

FRED
And then...

CHUCK
The footstool...

FRED
It’s a message.
CHUCK
A message?

FRED
They want us to know that they know... that we know... and they want us to know that they’re still in control... A footstool huh?

CHUCK
Yes.

FRED
At your house...

CHUCK
Yes.

Pause.

FRED
I think you’re right... I underestimated the footstools... they’re higher up on the totem pole than we thought.

CHUCK
So what now?

FRED
Now? Now we need to get some answers...

Fred looks at the plastic stools. He opens the cage and takes one out, leaving the other in as he shuts the door. He pulls out his thornstick and addresses the stool.

FRED
Let’s cut the crap... we all know you can hear us... now you better start talking if you ever want to see your partner here in one piece again...

Silence.

FRED
You think I’m bluffing? (to Chuck)
He thinks I’m bluffing.
CHUCK
Fred, this might not be the best way to...

FRED
You callin’ my bluff? (to Chuck)
He’s calling my bluff...

CHUCK
This doesn’t feel like the right...

FRED
I tell ya what... I’m gonna count to 3... and if I don’t get some answers, well, I think you know the rest...

CHUCK
I don’t know about this...

FRED
One.

CHUCK
Fred don’t...

FRED
Two.

CHUCK
Fred...

Long pause.

FRED
2 and a half...

CHUCK
I think he called your bluff.

FRED
These guys are good... they don’t break easy.

CHUCK
It makes ya wonder...
FRED
What else do we not know?

Chuck considers his next question carefully.

CHUCK
Hey, should we talk about what happened before?

FRED
What? With the footstools?

CHUCK
No, the... argument.

FRED
Hey man... we’re at war... people say things.

CHUCK
Oh... ok... so we’re good?

FRED
Let’s not let our emotions cloud our judgment... in war, emotion is a weakness, and it’s a weakness that the inanimates don’t suffer from, so let’s get it together because there’s no telling when the next strike will b...

A sudden LOUD thump. They both freeze for a moment. Then they scurry back and forth, hurriedly searching the apartment.

Chuck finds a roll of masking tape and Fred pulls out his Sharpie. They furiously tape and mark the floor.

Then they grab their thornsticks and jump back on top of the plastic stools. 5 seconds.

FRED
What was that?

CHUCK
(sensibly)
It could have been anything...
FRED
We can’t take any chances... see, that’s what happens when we let our emotions come into play.

CHUCK
Aren’t our emotions what separate us from the... lower species?

FRED
I thought that was our opposable thumbs.

CHUCK
Orangutans have opposable thumbs on their hands AND feet.

FRED
Couches and chairs don’t...

CHUCK
Well... there’s plenty of things that separate us from couches and chairs.

FRED
And we have to use them if we’re gonna achieve victory. We have to exploit our advantages and overcome our disadvantages.

CHUCK
Got it... so yes to opposable thumbs and no to emotions.

FRED
Yes... and we must remain in a constant state of alertness... ready to act at a moment’s notice... but we’ve also gotta be smart... we can’t fly off the handle at the slightest m........

The apartment landline rings and Chuck and Fred freak out screaming, wildly thornsticking every inanimate object in the apartment.

This goes on for at least 10 seconds.
INT. FRED’S APARTMENT - LATER

Chuck and Fred sit on the now-destroyed couch. The rest of the furniture is in complete shambles as well.

Chuck tries to stuff some stuffing back into the couch. It doesn’t work.

CHUCK
Well if these guys were in on it... they’re not now.

FRED
I should probably find a new place.

Pause.

CHUCK
Did the phone ring?

FRED
I think so. Like an hour ago.

Fred leans over and pushes the button to play his voice mail message. The pair sits, expressionless, listening.

VOICEMAIL LADY (V.O.)
You have... 1 new message and 1 saved message... 1st message... from... today... at... 12... twenty... two... pm...

MR. SANDERSON (V.O.)
Fred, it’s Bob Sanderson from over at the warehouse... listen, you’re a good kid, but you’ve missed about 3 days straight now, and I’m hearing rumors about you in some sort of... home... twice or some-thing, listen, I like you, but I’m gonna have to let you go, sorry, call me back if you want to talk about it.
Beep.

VOICEMAIL LADY (V.O.)
End of new messages... 1st saved message... from... Wednesday... at... 9... thirty... 1... am...

MR. TOWNSEND (V.O.)
Fred, it's Jim Townsend... you may not remember me, so allow me to re-introduce myself... I'm 47, male, about 6 feet tall, bit of a beard, and I'm currently employed as YOUR LANDLORD! I think I've lost count as to how far behind you are on your rent, let's just call it 3 months... so, I don't care how many favors I owe your dad, and I don't wanna hear anymore excuses about a goddamn loony bin, if I don't have the rent by tomorrow, I'm showing up in a van and removing you myself!!! Oh yeah... and I'm keeping your de-posit!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. JANINE AND STAN'S SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Fred sits alone on his parents' leather couch. His father enters.

STAN
Now Fred, your mother told me about your job... I want you to know... I'm not angry, me and Jimmy Townsend go way back, and if anything I'm angry at him... I had no idea he had such an antiquated attitude toward the mentally ill... I'm sorry you had to go through that, son... anyway, you can stay here until you get back on your feet.... or until the 20th... whichever comes first.
Stan exits, 5 seconds pass, Janine enters.

JANINE
Fred, I told your father about the job, I think he might be angry but don’t worry it’ll blow over, you can stay here as long as you need to. It’ll be just like old times...

FRED
Great.

JANINE
I made lasagna... want some?

Fred’s face brightens a little. He turns around.

FRED
Sure, thanks mom.

INT. FRED’S OLD ROOM - DAY

Fred sits on his old twin bed silently, he hears voices in the hall.

JANINE (O.S.)
Is that the last box?

CHUCK (O.S.)
This is the only box.

JANINE (O.S.)
Okay, you can put it in here. This is Freddie’s old room... well I guess it’s his new room too now, his little league trophies are still in there if you want to take a look.

CHUCK (O.S.)
Yes ma’am. Thank you.
JANINE (O.S.)
(hushed but still audible)
Detective???

CHUCK (O.S.)
Yes ma’am.

JANINE (O.S.)
Freddie’s a good boy... he’s not in any kind of trouble, is he?

CHUCK (O.S.)
No ma’am, actually Fred has been assisting us on... something...

JANINE (O.S.)
Oh....... so he’s not in trouble?

CHUCK (O.S.)
No, Mrs. Kirkland, he’s not in any trouble.

JANINE (O.S.)
He’s helping?

CHUCK (O.S.)
He’s been a big help.

JANINE (O.S.)
Is it some kind of sting operation? That’s it isn’t it? You’re investigating corruption at the mental institution and he’s been going in undercover... OH!!! He wasn’t even really sick, was he? It was all part of the mission!

CHUCK (O.S.)
Uh... Nothing like that really... just helping... in.... well...

JANINE (O.S.)
I understand... you could tell me but then you’d have to kill me.

Pause.
CHUCK (O.S.)
No! I think you have the wrong...

JANINE (O.S.)
Don't worry, detective, I get it,
ZIP!!!!

The door opens and Chuck enters. He looks around, Fred offers no guidance, so he drops the box in the middle of the floor.

CHUCK
Hey Fred, thanks for letting me bring in your box.

Pause.

CHUCK
So, I still have a little time before the alarm guy shows up. I called the window guy and he said not to hurry back, I can drop off the check tomorrow, which still gives us a little time for a little.... Hey, you're sitting on their leader...

FRED
Shhhhhhh.... Not here....

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. FRED'S OLD ROOM - LATER

Only a few seconds have passed. Fred is still staring at Chuck.

FRED
Mom, can I borrow the car?
EXT. LARGE EMPTY FIELD, NO INANIMATES FOR MILES - DAY

FRED
From now on, we only talk about the Inanimates out here, where they can’t hear us... no more taking chances.

CHUCK
But what about the car?

FRED
Cars are just transportation... like the bus drivers of the inanimate world... they’re not a threat.

CHUCK
Isn’t that what you said about the footstools?

FRED
The footstools are professionals, the Navy Seals of the inanimate world, believe me, I’m as surprised as you are that they were able to fool me.

CHUCK
But how do you know the cars aren’t fooling you, too?

FRED
(a little snippy)
Look I just do, okay?

CHUCK
(getting annoyed)
You just do, that’s it?

FRED
Do you wanna hear the next step or not?
CHUCK
(leery)
Go ahead.

FRED
Okay. Well I figure eventually we gotta take out their leadership. Ya know, take off the head and the body can’t survive.

CHUCK
(skeptical)
Right.

FRED
So I’ve been paying some under-cover visits to Furniture Frenzy over on Delta St. and there’s this one king-sized bed... I swear... it’s been eyeing me... I think it may be the alpha...

CHUCK
Okay...

FRED
So I figure we break into Furniture Frenzy tonight...

CHUCK
What?

FRED
We take back the element of surprise... we go in in the dead of night and take out the alpha...

CHUCK
Uh....

FRED
What?

Pause.

FRED (CONT’D)
Come on man, what is it?
CHUCK
I mean are we really talking about this for real?

FRED
I think it’s the next logical move.

CHUCK
Breaking and entering... Fred, I’m a police officer.

FRED
Yes... you are a police officer, so you’re job is to protect and to serve and I can’t think of a better way you can do that than to eliminate the greatest danger mankind is facing right now.

CHUCK
But I can’t...

FRED
The lives of everyone we’ve ever known are at stake here...

CHUCK
(annoyance growing)
How do you know that? You seem to know a lot about this considering how little you actually know about this...

FRED
This is a test of our resolve.

CHUCK
So I’m just supposed to believe the car’s not a threat and that their top leader is in some furniture store because YOU say so!

FRED
Hey I didn’t ask you to get in on this with me... I seem to remember you volunteering!
CHUCK
(trying to stay calm)
Look... Fred... it was fun destroying your apartment, it was fun building the thornsticks, but... I think I may have taken this too far...

FRED
I can’t believe what I’m hearing... you’re acting like this whole thing is just a game.

CHUCK
Well don’t you think that’s probably the most likely scenario...

Fred gasps.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
A couple of noises and a slightly out of place recliner... I’m sorry I don’t share your certainty.

Pause.

FRED
What about the footstool?

CHUCK
He could have forgot to put his footstool under the window before he climbed...

FRED
We both know that’s not the answer!

CHUCK
There is such a thing as a coincidence, Fred.

FRED
Every day tragedies happen! And people act surprised! They think a tragedy just swoops by in the dead of night... descends upon them (MORE)
FRED (CONT’D)
from the shadows... But what they
don’t know is... they’re ignoring
all the signs! They passed it off
as coincidence... their imagina-
tions... CHUCK... the footstool
was a sign!!!

Pause.

CHUCK
All I’m saying is we need to take
a step back and THINK before we do
something stupid.

FRED
Oh my God. This IS a game for
you... you never took this seri-
ously at all, did you?

CHUCK
Really, Fred, can you look me in
the eyes and tell me that all this
time... you’ve been COMPLETELY se-
rious about this?

Pause.

FRED
I heard the whispers.

CHUCK
(giving in to the anger)
Oh yeah, the whispers, they’re
whispering when no one can hear
them anyway so they MUST be plan-
ning a global coup... that’s a lot
to go on, Fred, for all you know
they coulda been planning a sur-
prise birthday party for you...

FRED
It was a mistake bringing you in
on this. You know what you’ve seen
and you know the truth... too bad
you’re too afraid to admit it...
even to yourself...
CHUCK
Hey... don’t try to head shrink me, I think we both know who needs the shrink!

FRED
Fuck you, man, fuck you...

Fred leaves Chuck standing alone in the field, we hear a car start and speed off.

CHUCK
Well how am I supposed to get back to town???? Great.

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY

The Furniture Frenzy sign and logo. Through the window business seems to be doing quite well today.

In the back of the store, there’s a king-sized bed. Menacing music.

A kid runs and jumps on the bed. The kid’s parent pulls the kid off the merchandise. The music swells.

CUT TO:

INT. JANE & STAN’S SUBURBAN CAR – DAY

Fred drives down the street, perplexed, angry. He passes in front of the furniture store. He sees the king-sized bed. The Alpha. He glares.

FRED
 Fucking Inanimates.

He rolls into his parents’ driveway, gets out of the car and stomps into the house.

INT. JANE & STAN’S SUBURBAN HOME – CONTINUOUS

Fred walks through his parents kitchen and living room, he’s not happy.
INT. FRED’S OLD ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Fred sits down in his old room, on his old bed, his rage grows.

FRED
Fucking Inanimates.

He paces the length of the room, rage growing stronger.

FRED
Fucking Inanimates!

Finally, he pulls the thornstick from under his bed and raises it above his head, prepared to strike his bed. Janine suddenly appears in the doorway.

JANINE
Freddie!!!! What are you doing? What is that thing? Is that from my garden? Is that why you...

The thornstick remains above Fred’s head. Prone for battle.

FRED
Mom, I need you to listen to me... if I’ve ever needed you to listen to me... it’s right now... I need to...

JANINE
I’m always ready to listen to you, Freddie, you know that...

FRED
Good. I need to...

JANINE
It’s just that I get worried about you when I see you playing with weapons inside the house... do you want me to worry about you?

FRED
No mom, I just...
JANINE
Before you were born, your father used to keep a gun in the drawer by our bed, one night he heard something, a “sound” of some kind, he grabs the gun and runs like all hell into the living room and all I hear is a BLAM!!!!

FRED
Mom...

JANINE
I walk into the living room to find your father has just shot a hole in our brand new sofa...

Fred gulps. He finally lowers his thornstick.

FRED
In the sofa?

JANINE
I said “Stanley Kirkland, I am with child, I will not allow you to run around shooting up our furniture whenever you hear a noise…”

FRED
He heard a noise...

JANINE
I made him get rid of that thing right then and there.

FRED
He heard a noise… and all he saw when he came out… was the sofa.

JANINE
The point is that weapons are only going to lead to death and violence and I will not have them in my home.

FRED
But mom… it was the sofa that…
JANINE
Now please, Freddie, I will be happy to continue this heart to heart dialogue... but only after you take that thing outside of this house...

FRED
But mom...

JANINE
Right now. This instant.

FRED
the sofa...

JANINE
Take it outside!!!!

FRED
MOM!!!

JANINE
FREDERICK!!!!

Fred goes outside with the thornstick, rage growing, more pacing in the front yard...

FRED
Fucking inanimates!

He runs with the stick up the street...

EXT. FURNITURE STORE - CONTINUOUS
Fred runs in...

FRED
Fucking inanimates!!!!!!!!!!

INT. FURNITURE STORE - CONTINUOUS
Fred lays waste to the furniture store, taking extra time to pulverize the alpha...

FRED
FUCKING INANIMATES!!!!!!!!!!!!!
The employees are confused, the customers are frozen... pandemonium for a couple of seconds...

CUT TO:

INT. RUBBER ROOM

Fred is in a strait jacket, looking spaced out.

The door opens and an orderly motions for him to come.

CUT TO:

INT. VISITING ROOM

Fred enters and is seated in a steel chair. He looks across the table and rolls his eyes.

FRED
I know why you’re here... you’re here to gloat...

We now see that the other chair is empty.

FRED (CONT’D)
Well, I’ve got news for you... I don’t care... if you know... that I know! I WANT you to know... that I know! And I want YOU to know... that I don’t care if no one else... in the entire world believes me... I’ll bring you down by myself if I have to...

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The other side of a two-way mirror. Fred is on one side. The Doctors are on the other. The Chief Doctor enters.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Three times in one month...
OTHER DOCTOR
We brought him right in for obser-
vation...

FRED (CONT’D)
(through the mirror)
And I don’t care if it’s a bad
strategy to tell you... I don’t
care if I’ve ruined the element of
surprise... you’re going down
motherfucker... you’re going
down!!!!!

INT. FRED’S OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FRED (CONT’D)
Now I don’t know how yet, another
thing I probably shouldn’t have
admitted, but I know it... and I
want you to know it... and I want
YOU to know... that I know it...
you’re going down.

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF DOCTOR
What’s he doing?

OTHER DOCTOR
We’re not exactly sure, we sat him
down in the room, I went to get my
notepad, then it appears as if he
started talking... to the chair.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Or an invisible person. A halluci-
nation.

OTHER DOCTOR
We’re pretty sure it’s the chair.
INT. FRED’S OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FRED (CONT’D)
You think you’re so smart with your special language that none of us can hear... and your super secret plans.... but even the best plan in the history of plans doesn’t change the fact... that humans... move faster... than chairs!

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE MIRROR - CONTINUOUS

CHIEF DOCTOR
Okay, I guess it’s the chair

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Chuck arrives on foot in front of his house hours later. He has obviously been walking a long time. He is sweaty, pit-stained, and tired.

A patrol car is parked out front. OFFICER WIDMORE, young and fresh out of the academy, is at the wheel.

WIDMORE
Detective Stratton? Detective Stratton!

CHUCK
Yeah?

WIDMORE
Where have you been? The entire department’s been looking for you! You’ve been officially missing for 6 hours...

CHUCK
Missing? I’ve been out... why am I missing?

Sarah appears at the door.
SARAH
Chuck? Chuck? Oh my God!!! CHUCK!
Thank God! Are you okay?

CHUCK
I’m fine.

SARAH
We thought you were kidnapped!

Sarah hugs him, smells him.

SARAH
You were kidnapped, weren’t you?

CHUCK
No, I was just...

Timmy appears at the door.

TIMMY
Daddy where were you?? The police
were here...

CHUCK
I see that, why are...

SARAH
We thought you were kidnapped!

WIDMORE
Were you kidnapped, Detective
Stratton?

SARAH
Of course he was kidnapped, look
at him.

CHUCK
No, no... I wasn’t...

WIDMORE
(into CB radio)
Yes... he’s here... he looks a
little dazed... but he appears to
be okay.

SARAH
It’s awful, Chuck, just awful!!!
CHUCK
What’s awful?

SARAH
The alarm guy called me out at the tournament and said no one was there how was he supposed to get in...

CHUCK
I know, I can explain that.

SARAH
... then he asked if we were just moving in because he didn’t get the impression that we were just moving in...

TIMMY
The alarm guy came and you weren’t here daddy!

CHUCK
Thank you, Timmy, Sarah what are you getting at?

SARAH
I asked the alarm guy why would he ask if we just moved in and he said cuz the house is empty and I said don’t be silly and he said...... Chuck where are you going?

Chuck makes his way toward the front door. Everyone follows.

WIDMORE
We need you to tell us what happened, Detective.

SARAH
We know what happened! He was kidnapped!
WIDMORE
(grabbing Chuck’s arm)
Detective we need to talk before
you...

Chuck angrily shakes free of Widmore’s grip.

CHUCK
Get your hands off me, can someone
just tell me what hap...

SARAH
Did you get a good look at the
kidnappers’ faces?

TIMMY
What did the kidnappers look like,
Dad?

CHUCK
I wasn’t kidnapped!

SARAH
Of course you were kidnapped!

TIMMY
I thought you were kidnapped, Dad!

CHUCK
I wasn’t kidnapped!!!!

SARAH
Then what happened?? Why weren’t
you here when the alarm guy got
here?

CHUCK
I can explain that.

TIMMY
Why weren’t you here, Dad?

WIDMORE
We need you to tell us what hap-
pened, Detective Stratton.

CHUCK
Well I need someone to tell ME
what’s happening right now!
INT. CHUCK’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chuck looks around the house. It is completely empty. No furniture, no nothing.

SARAH
Everything’s gone Chuck! Was it the rapist? Did he come back? Did the rapist come back to kidnap you?

WIDMORE
Have you been raped, Detective Stratton?

CHUCK
NOOO!!!!!!!!!!!

TIMMY
What happened, dad?

Quick close up on Chuck. An epiphany.

CHUCK
What happened? Don’t you see what happened? Can’t you see?????

SARAH
No, Chuck, tell us!

CHUCK
(gradually becoming more maniacal)
Can’t you see???

TIMMY
Daddy, what are you talking about?

CHUCK
CAN’T YOU SEE????????????

WIDMORE
See what, Detective Strat...

CHUCK
They’re after me... It’s true! It’s all true!!!!!!!
SARAH
What’s true, Chuck, you’re scaring me!

WIDMORE
Who is after you, Detective Stratton?

CHUCK
THE INANIMATES!!!!! THE INANIMATES!!!!!

TIMMY
The imamimates, daddy?

CHUCK
THE INANIMATES!!!!! THEY’RE TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!!!!!!

Chuck wildly waves his fists at the walls and the floor.

SARAH
CHUCK?

TIMMY
Daddy?

WIDMORE
Detective, I’m going to have to ask that you stop...

CHUCK
DIE YOU INANIMATE SCUM!!!!!!!!!

Chuck screams and flails wildly as the other cops who have now returned all convene to restrain him.

Chuck continues to scream and flail.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBBER ROOM

Chuck is seated, not in a strait jacket, but looking spaced out.

The door opens and an orderly motions for him to come.
INT. VISITING ROOM

Chuck enters and is seated on a steel chair. He looks across the table and rolls his eyes.

CHUCK’S POV

Sarah looks at Chuck with compassion, her words are slightly distorted by Chuck’s haziness.

SARAH
Hey honey... I’m not angry.... I know there’s been a lot of pressure on you lately, frankly I blame myself for not seeing it sooner... I should have realized that that traumatic event from last week had affected you more than you let on... but honey... you don’t always have to be the strong one.... me and Timmy love you unconditionally... it’s okay to let us in..... now we’re going to get you all the help you need.... you just remember everything we do is out of love...

Chuck stares blankly.

INT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE

Fred is in the office with a psychiatrist and the Chief Doctor of the hospital.

FRED
Yes, of course I made it all up, I don’t know what I was thinking, I’ve been stressed out lately. My mother... and my father... and my childhood and... my sexuality and... I know I caused a lot of trouble, I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.

The Psychiatrist looks at the Chief Doctor.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Why were you talking to the chair?
INT. CHUCK'S HOSPITAL ROOM

He lays on the bed. He looks around. At the chair. At the bed. He listens to the creaking of the mattress.

He listens for noises that don’t come. He listens to the quiet. He lies back and relaxes. He smiles...

CHUCK
Hmmmmmm........

INT. JANINE & STAN’S SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Stan sits on the couch in the den, reading the newspaper with the news on the television.

STAN
(shouting)
Janine!

JANINE (O.S.)
Yes?

STAN
The nut house called... Fred is there again...

JANINE (O.S.)
Oh, so that’s where he’s been all week... I figured he was at a girlfriend’s house or something.

STAN
Should we be worried?

JANINE (O.S.)
No... we should be proud of our boy.

STAN
I know, we’re always proud of our boy but should we also be worried?

JANINE (O.S.)
No, not at all.
STAN
Why not?

JANINE (O.S.)
Well... I could tell you... but then I’d have to kill you.

Stan is confused. But not for long. He changes the channel.

INT. DOCTOR’S OFFICE
Fred sits alone. The Chief Doctor eventually enters and grabs a file off of his desk.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Ok, where were we? We left off with... the...

The Chief Doctor looks down at the file and reads.

CHIEF DOCTOR (CONT’D)
...hierarchy of furniture in their plan for world domination... so the bed is at the top, followed by the tables and chairs... at first you thought footstools were... Jerry something, but you came to realize that they are actually... evil henchmen of some sort... do I have this right so far?

FRED
(sigh)
You don’t have to patronize me, I know you think I’m insane

CHIEF DOCTOR
I prefer to avoid words like “insane”, they have such a negative conn....

FRED
You don’t believe me, do you?

CHIEF DOCTOR
Well, I think our goal here should be to...
FRED
Then we have nothing else to discuss.

Pause.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Fred, ya know this is your third time here in a very short time. Now somehow the Knights of Columbus and the family that you terrorized decided to have mercy on you, but that furniture store won’t be so forgiving. The judge is going to ask my personal opinion about your mental well-being, and depending on what I tell him... it could mean jail time for you.

FRED
Is that a threat?

CHIEF DOCTOR
I’m telling you your options, I always give an honest opinion about my patients, so no, I’m not threatening you. I’m just saying that your commitment to recovery is a very important factor... for your freedom and your personal well-being.

Pause.

FRED
Have you seen The Terminator?

CHIEF DOCTOR
Um, yeah I think so....

FRED
The first one, not the sequels or the TV show or any of that... that very first one... with the cheesy 80’s music and everything.
CHIEF DOCTOR
Yeah, I know what your talking about.

FRED
They didn’t believe that guy either. They didn’t believe him all the way up to the very, very end.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Are you suggesting that we are mere moments away from furniture busting into this facility and killing everyone here?

FRED
Not literally, no.

CHIEF DOCTOR
Because that was just a movie, Fred. And may I remind you that in real life, the doctors and the police in that situation... they would have been right.

Fred contemplates that claim for a second.

INT. INSTITUTION RECREATION AREA - DAY

Chuck sits in a chair silently, thinking, he looks... different than we’ve seen him before. More content.

A door opens and Fred enters and slowly walks across the room. He stops right next to Chuck’s chair.

He looks left, then right... he finally notices Chuck. He’s puzzled for a second, but then gets excited.

FRED
Hey... hey! Hey man! You’re in here!

CHUCK
Yes. I suppose I am.

FRED
Something happened, didn’t it?
CHUCK
Something?

FRED
You saw something that changed your mind... all the stuff you said before... it’s different now... I can tell... you wouldn’t be in here if it wasn’t!

CHUCK
Something like that.

FRED
It’s not just a game now, is it?

CHUCK
No... it isn’t.

FRED
That’s great!!! That’s (lowering his voice) fucking great... because there have been some new developments... it appears that the inanimates have been senti.....

CHUCK
Sentient.

FRED
Thank you... for much longer than we’ve ever imagined. My dad shot one in my house when I was a kid... I think it was after me... Even then they knew I was their main adversary.

Pause.

FRED (CONT’D)
You don’t seem very excited about this huge development.

Fred shifts his weight, grows impatient.

FRED (CONT’D)
Detective Stratton?
CHUCK
Well, Fred, I’ve been doing a lot of thinking...

FRED
Yeah?

CHUCK
And I’ve decided I no longer trust your judgment.

FRED
But you just said something happened... it’s not a game... how can you not believe me now?

CHUCK
I didn’t say I don’t believe you... I said I don’t trust your judgement. Ya see I’ve been thinking that maybe the Inanimates aren’t really trying to take over the world...

FRED
That’s... that’s crazy! Why are you talking like that?

CHUCK
That day in the field, I’m not even sure how long ago it was, it feels like forever, I went home after that to find that all the inanimates had fled my house. They were gone. At first I was angry. Scared... but then I realized, what right do I have to force them into servitude... What if my couch didn’t WANT to be sat on?

FRED
(at 1st yelling then lowering his voice to avoid a scene)
What if he didn’t want to be sat on?? That’s his purpose!!!!
CHUCK
It all goes back to the question I asked you that first time we were at your place... How do you know? Now I realize, the way you answered that question was all I needed to know about you. Do you remember what you said?

FRED
I don’t know, why don’t you tell m...

CHUCK
You said they GOTTA BE.

FRED
Yeah, based on the evi...

CHUCK
(staring off at nothing in particular)
See the more I think about it the more I realize that if you come across something you don’t understand... you have 2 options... Option One, to react with distrust and open hostility... I certainly understand that reaction... we humans by nature are more comfortable with what is familiar to us... but the natural choice isn’t necessarily the correct choice.

When you react with hostility it’s also natural for that hostility to be returned... you can’t really blame the Indians for fighting the Pilgrims can you? But from the white man’s perspective, they were the aggressors, so naturally they were the evil ones.

So that leaves Option 2... to wait, be open... to listen... I admit that is an entirely unnatural option to us... alien to our (MORE)
CHUCK (CONT'D)
baser instincts... but an option that I believe is the right option... after all the entire history of human existence has been us fighting against the natural way... building order from chaos... erecting buildings and statues out of dirt and stone and clay... when the dirt and stone and clay's natural inclination is to while away eternity as an unspectacular mound. Waiting on the ground for nothing in particular. So I choose option 2...

Chuck turns and looks right at Fred.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
... Fred, I choose to be open. Because no, they DON'T gotta be.

FRED
It sounds like you're choosing to be one of them... to assimilate.

CHUCK
That's the narrow-minded way of looking at it. I look at it as giving the Inanimates a chance to state their case. After all, we've had quite a few centuries as the ones in charge and look at what we've done... maybe the Inanimates have a better way... if not... I'll fight them then.

FRED
After they've already taken over.

CHUCK
Maybe.

Fred balls up his fists, not in anger as much as in frustration.
FRED
How does it feel to be the one responsible for single-handedly ending the world?

Pause.

CHUCK
I don’t know yet.

INT. VISITING ROOM - DAY
Sarah sits and waits. Chuck walks in and sits across from her. He smiles.

CHUCK
Hello.

SARAH
Hello.

CHUCK
I wasn’t talking to you.

Pause.

SARAH
Uh.... okay, Chuck, great news...

Sarah finally notices her husband’s changed demeanor.

SARAH
You look well...

CHUCK
I feel well.

SARAH
Well that’s great. Ya see, honey, I kept telling you all you needed was a little break to get your head together, isn’t that what I kept telling you? Isn’t it.

CHUCK
Yes, it is.
SARAH
And now look at you. Well that’s great. Maybe now you’ll listen to me more often, I’ve only got your best interest in mind... See at first I asked “Why Lord? Why me?”

Chuck rolls his eyes.

SARAH
“Why did I have to be the one with the husband who has episodes? But now I see! This was a GOOD thing!”

CHUCK
I think so too.

SARAH
You needed this! Wow. The Lord works in mysterious ways.

CHUCK
Indeed.

SARAH
And it keeps getting better, listen to this... Since you have no history of previous issues and with your stellar work record, it looks like as long as you consent to regular visits to a therapist, you can keep your job!

Pause.

SARAH
Honey, you can keep your job. You can come home in the morning...

CHUCK
No.

SARAH
No? No, you can! I talked to the d...

CHUCK
I’m not coming home tomorrow
SARAH
What? Why not?

CHUCK
Because I don’t want to.

Sarah approaches Chuck. She touches his shoulders, looks into his eyes and talks slowly.

SARAH
Charles Anthony Stratton... You. Are not crazy. You. Are normal. You had a nervous breakdown... it happens all the time... you needed some time to decompress and you got it. So now... you can come home.

CHUCK
I’m not coming home. The furniture is nice here.

SARAH
The furniture? You want to stay here for the furniture? We can get new furniture for the house.

CHUCK
NO! No two pieces of furniture are alike. And I like THIS furniture!

SARAH
(wide-eyed)
Is this about that “inanimate” stuff you were yelling about before? The doctor said it was just a part of your episode and that now you are connected with reality once again.

CHUCK
No. I’m connected with reality for the first time... ever.
SARAH
Chuck you’re talking crazy... this is crazy talk... is this another nervous breakdown? What kind of medication are they giving you? I’m gonna talk to that doctor right n...

CHUCK
Before you go I’d like you to meet a friend of mine.

SARAH
This is serious, honey, I don’t have time to...

CHUCK
It’ll just take a second...

Chuck walks out the door.

INT. HOSPITAL RECREATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Sarah follows him out.

SARAH
I don’t know what has gotten into y...

CHUCK
Fred! Hey Fred!

Fred looks up.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Come here!

Fred approaches.

FRED
I hope you’re about to tell me you’ve changed your m....

Fred stops as he sees Sarah. Sarah stops as well. The quiet terror of recognition slowly creeps over her face.

Silence.
CHUCK
Sarah, this is Fred... I think you
two have met before...

Sarah freezes as her strong suspicion has now been con-

firmed.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Fred and I have become friends re-
cently... isn’t that right Fred?

Pause.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Isn’t that right Fred?

FRED
Uh... yeah

CHUCK
Ya see Fred here is the one who
discovered the truth about the In-
animates. He paid a visit to the
house recently to ask me what I
know... and at the time I was be-
ing completely honest when I said
I didn’t know anything... but now
that’s changed... now I know a
great deal.

Sarah can’t hide the hurt and fear in her face or in her
voice. Her hands tremble.

SARAH
You..... I don’t...... why are
you... Chuck...........

She walks hurriedly to the front desk.

SARAH
(to desk clerk)
Get me out of here. GET ME OUT OF
HERE!!!!

She wipes the tears from her eyes as she exits.

FRED
That was pretty fucked up man.
Pause.

CHUCK

Yeah.

FADE TO BLACK:

TITLE CARD: 1 YEAR LATER

FADE IN:

INT. CHUCK’S APARTMENT – DAY

Chuck’s apartment is garishly decorated. The TV is on, he saunters barefoot through the TV room with a beer. He stops behind the couch, looks at the screen. He leans against the back of the couch, sips the beer and runs his hand back and forth along the back of the couch matter-of-factly, but just a fraction longer than we’re comfortable with.

The two birds are perched in their cage, quietly tweeting in the background. The doorbell rings. He gets up and gets the door. It’s Fred.

CHUCK

Hey.

FRED

Hey...

Awkward pause.

FRED

My mom told me she ran into you at the grocery store a month or two ago... I figured I should come apologize for whatever she said to you.

Chuck laughs nervously.

CHUCK

So you’re out.
FRED
Yeah... I gotta see a guy twice a week, stay on my meds, but as long as I stay out of trouble I’m good.

CHUCK
How are you doing?

FRED
Day to day... but overall... better... looks like you’re doing ok.

CHUCK
Can’t complain...

FRED
Yeah.

Pause.

CHUCK
You got a place to stay?

FRED
I’m back at my parents for now. Just til I can get a job, get back on my feet...

Fred notices the birds.

FRED
(to birds)
Hey little guys. (to Chuck) So you kept ‘em...

CHUCK
Yeah. They needed a home and I needed some friends.

FRED
They don’t keep you up at night?

CHUCK
Oh no... they’re surprisingly low maintenance. Calming even.

Pause.

CHUCK
So the world is still here.
FRED
Yeah.

CHUCK
What’s that mean for your plans?

FRED
Uh... I don’t know... I haven’t really thought about it too much lately.

CHUCK
Oh.

Pause.

CHUCK
Well I’m being rude come in, come in.

FRED
I’ve got some errands...

CHUCK
Come on, just for a second.

Fred looks around... it’s garishly decorated. He moves to sit but Chuck’s body language subtly suggests that he should stand.

CHUCK
This is my palace.

FRED
It’s nice.

CHUCK
Thank you.

Pause and a half.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Well the kitchen is this way...

FRED
Hey I’m glad to see you’re doing ok... but I’m gonna be late...
CHUCK
Oh sure... it was good seeing you, though.

Fred turns toward the door. He steps outside but then stops and whirls around.

FRED
Ya know it might notta seemed like it at the time... but before... I kinda envied you.

The tension lifts from Chuck’s face. He grins, relieved that Fred finally said what he came here to say. And even more relieved that it’s something so benign.

CHUCK
(half-jokingly)
Are you trying to relate to me, Fred?

Fred contemplates for a moment, then he shrugs and moves toward the exit again.

FRED
Well... see ya ‘round...

Fred exits. Chuck stands there for a second. Serious.

Silence. No music. No nothing. Slowly pull back to CLOSE-UP of Chuck’s couch. It is motionless, expressionless. Chuck is still blurry in the background. He shrugs and walks off.

FADE OUT:

THE END