

THE LAST NIGHT

screenplay by
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based on his novel

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FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Silence. Only the slow SOUND of water dripping.

A young MAN'S HAND hangs over the edge of a bathtub, BLOOD sliding from the fingers.

The sound continues over--

INT. MUSTANG GT - VENTURA BOULEVARD - NIGHT

ED COHEN (25) drives distractedly. Normally an ambitious up-and-comer, tonight he's been through hell. So has the car. The body's covered in dirt.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

The hand drips. Then, when it appears life is about to escape, a HORN BLARES. The hand JOLTS.

INT. MUSTANG GT - NIGHT

The HONK is another car. Headlights FLASH.

Ed SWERVES out of the wrong lane. He waves an exhausted apology, then parks down a side street to compose himself.

He finally calms down when he sees a sign: "HOME OF THE CARDINALS."

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONTINUOUS

Ed navigates into the parking lot. Parks behind the backstop. Shuts off the engine.

He stands with one foot still in the car, uncertain whether to feed his curiosity. After a moment, he dares.

The infield dirt CRUNCHES beneath his shoes, the sound putting him at ease. He walks the first base line like a tightrope. Rounds first.

CHEERING FANS are HEARD as a distant echo. Ed's feet begin to hit the ground faster until he stomps second base as--

BLACK OUT.

SUPER OVER BLACK: ONE WEEK EARLIER

INT. CONSULTING FIRM BULLPEN - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

IT EMPLOYEES click away in an ocean of cubicles. The company is high tech and high class. A top ten contender, for sure.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ed, dressed in a fashionable suit and cleaned up, sits for a conference call. He's bored, but the PROJECT LEADERS are eager to please their powerful boss MR. DONOVAN.

DONOVAN

Peter, you don't want to change your entire network structure now. It's not in anybody's interest to start over.

CLIENT (PHONE)

It feels right. I saw another site--

DONOVAN

The idea isn't to copy what another company has already done. That's why you hired us. To stand out.

They begin to argue. Finally, roused from his boredom--

ED

Look, you're just describing what Amazon's already mastered. What you need to do--

CLIENT (PHONE)

Who's speaking?

Everyone's eyes panic, especially Ed's friend LUIS.

ED

Ed Cohen.

CLIENT (PHONE)

Who?

ED

Look, your company needs to do something more. If you want change something, we can work that in. But let's not scrap the whole project. Now... I have a few ideas that I think could make everyone happy.

CLIENT (PHONE)

(after a long pause)

Continue...

The room's unease settles into grins.

EXT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The team scatters.

DONOVAN

Ed. Good work today. But next time, let's talk beforehand.

ED

Sure thing, Mr. Donovan.

DONOVAN

By the time we're done, people are going to say, "Amazon, who?"

Ed laughs along to please his boss.

INT. BULLPEN - DAY

Ed types Java code at his desk until Luis, with the attitude of high roller, drums on his cubicle wall.

LUIS

You're coming up in the world.

ED

Just doing my job.

LUIS

Please. You're Donovan's golden boy.

ED

It's a joke. This client has no idea what he wants. There's no way he's going to pull this off.

LUIS
 Stop thinking so much. Not our department. Hey, so that new bar I told you about? We're in tonight.

ED
 Can't. Shannon has her performance tonight and--
 (looks at the clock)
 Shit, I'm late.

LUIS
 (calling after Ed)
 Let me know if you change your mind.

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

Seen from behind, Ed's brand new Mustang ROARS through traffic.

INT. RECITAL HALL - EVENING

Ed finds a seat in the back just in time. SHANNON, the 25-year-old violinist, takes center stage in a long, black dress.

Her poise is captivating. An inner strength certainly evident. She PLAYS Beethoven's "Violin Romance." And she's good. Really good. The song both moves and troubles Ed.

INT. RECITAL HALL LOBBY - NIGHT

SUITS surround Shannon after the show. They're important people, which is why she signals Ed to wait each time he tries for her attention.

He's a total fish out of water.

INT. ED'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A high-end, Westside apartment. On Ed's answering machine--

ED'S DAD (VOICEMAIL)
 Hey, Ed. It's Dad. Haven't heard from you in a while, so give me a call when you can. Hope you're OK.

LATER

Ed plays solitaire at the kitchen counter when Shannon enters. She lays her garment bag and violin on the couch.

ED

I really enjoyed that.

SHANNON

Geez. You scared me. I thought you'd be asleep by now.

He flips over a few more cards as she sits next to him.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I fumbled the bridge a little.

ED

That's just you being a perfectionist. No one noticed.

She smiles. Slides the two of spades onto the ace. Ed can't figure how he missed that simple move.

SHANNON

Why did you leave so quickly?

ED

You were busy talking after the show. I didn't want to interrupt.

SHANNON

Do you know who those people were? Friends of my advisor. One from the LA Phil, another from Baltimore. The Baltimore woman remembered me from my audition last month.

ED

Why don't you sound excited?

SHANNON

Because I'm wondering why you aren't.

ED

I'm just tired. Too tired even to finish this game. I'm proud of you. Really.

He kisses her forehead, returns the deck to the coffee table. He looks out the window over the city lights.

SHANNON

This could mean big things for us.
Have you thought about my question?

ED

It's just not part of my plan right now. I want to be sure I have a good job before I start a family.

SHANNON

You have a good job.

ED

Sure, it's a nice paycheck. But I'm working for a client that's going to file for bankruptcy when they fail to compete. A year's work will be for nothing. What's the point?

SHANNON

And we can figure that out. I'm not talking kids yet. I'm talking us.

She joins him. Laces her fingers between his.

ED

(savoring her touch)
I don't know what's stopping me.
But it's something. I can't ignore that.

SHANNON

(dropping his hands)
You need to get out of your head.

ED

Are you saying I should ignore reason and just say yes?

Ed's laptop CHIMES on the table. His reflex is to read the e-mail, but Shannon's glare stops him cold.

SHANNON

All I'm saying is that every choice can't perfectly match your list of bullet points. I need to know if you want to marry me.

(a standoff)

I'm not going to beg you, Ed. You either do or you don't.

(MORE)

SHANNON (CONT'D)
 I just don't know how much longer
 I'm going to wait.

She exits into the bedroom as the computer CHIMES again. "ONE NEW E-MAIL." Ed closes laptop in frustration.

Then he stops. Something caught his eye. He opens the computer again and sees an e-mail from ALEX EVERGREEN--

"last weekend of my exhibit. hope you can come. ashley left.
 --alex"

Ed reads "ashley left" again. He can't believe it, so he grabs his phone.

EXT. VOLUNTEER PARK - SEATTLE - SAME

A PHONE sits on a stone bench--the Space Needle visible in the distance. The cell lights up.

A hand wearing a BROWN LEATHER WRISTBAND slowly picks it up. This is Alex (25), an artistic type who appears oddly stoic.

ALEX

Hello.

INTERCUT ED/ALEX

ED

Alex? It's Ed. I just got your message. What happened?

ALEX

(the voice of a dying man)
 Can you come?

ED

Talk to me. Tell me what's going on.

ALEX

Can you come?

INT. ED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ed plucks shirts from the closet. Shannon, already dressed in her penguin pajamas, steps out of the bathroom to find him packing a bag. She can't speak.

ED

No. I'm not leaving you. But I have to fly out in the morning.

SHANNON

Can't someone else at the office go?

ED

The office isn't sending me anywhere. Ashley just left Alex.

Shannon's face alternates between concern and anger.

SHANNON

So you go at the drop of a hat for Alex after we haven't heard a single word from him in--what--two years?

ED

He doesn't have anybody else.

SHANNON

What about Brian? They live in the same city.

ED

I don't know. I just have to go.
(trying to help)
Maybe this time apart will be good for us.

His intention backfires. A look sparks in her eye.

SHANNON

Brian and Meghan don't have this problem.

ED

Please don't compare us to them. They're the high school sweethearts everyone fawns over at ten-year reunions.

SHANNON

And we can't have that?

ED

Look... Alex and Ashley split up after only two years of marriage. I want to be sure about us.

SHANNON

You're not seriously going
tomorrow, are you?

ED

I have to.
(serious now)
I owe him.

She knows he does, so she swallows her displeasure as best as she can. Ed brushes a hair from her face. Then--

SHANNON

You may owe him....but you're
sleeping on the couch tonight.