

A NATURAL MAN

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BRIDGE - DAWN

The towering forest, the deep ravine, the rising sun. The only thing left is to scrawl "WELCOME TO COLORADO" across the horizon in some blocky font for the perfect postcard.

The scene and silence are broken by a sporty BMW driving along the paved road. It pulls over just before a bridge and stops on the shoulder.

ROOSEVELT, early 30s, exits the car. He walks onto the bridge that spans the ravine, stops halfway across and leans over the railing. He wears the start-up founder uniform: dark-wash jeans, button-down shirt with no tie, blazer. He's clean shaven.

There's no smile on his face, nor is there alcohol on his breath. He is stoic and stable. He pulls out his smart phone, opens a voice recording app, and presses record. He slips the phone into his jacket breast pocket.

After a few moments he climbs over the railing. He turns, facing outward, still holding onto the railing behind him.

His breath quickens.

ROOSEVELT

What's the chance that gravity will
just ... stop? Even if just for a
moment? If everything just ...
pauses. No drop. No pinnacle. No
fall. No crest. And I just live in
that moment - that small, fragile
inch -

He leans forward, still holding on. His foot slips.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICES - LOBBY - DAY

Roosevelt and HARVEY sit next to each other in a luxurious office lobby.

A SECRETARY works at a nearby desk.

Roosevelt stares straight ahead confidently -- mouthing words to himself, under his breath, practicing.

Harvey's gaze wanders around the room. He meets eyes with the secretary. They exchange half smiles.

Harvey leans over to Roosevelt.

HARVEY

What're you going to do with your half?

ROOSEVELT

Really? You think now is the time for that question?

HARVEY

Yes. What are you going to do with your half?

ROOSEVELT

You mean my 51 percent?

HARVEY

(sarcastic mimicking)

You mean my 51 percent?

ROOSEVELT

I'm clearly more important than you.

HARVEY

Yet only manage to get half as much done. Seriously though.

ROOSEVELT

Spend the rest of my days snorting cocaine off high-class hookers.

HARVEY

I think you're being overly optimistic.

ROOSEVELT

About the valuation?

HARVEY

About the hookers. You want to disappoint women for the rest of your life?

ROOSEVELT

I'm hoping the money eases the frustration.

HARVEY

For the women?

ROOSEVELT

For me.

JOANNE, 62, comes out from the office. She's professional, powerful, in charge.

JOANNE

Gentlemen, come in.

She immediately turns around and heads back into her office. Roosevelt and Harvey follow.

INT. JOANNE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The huge office windows look out over the San Francisco skyline. Joanne sits at her desk and begins looking through paperwork she has.

Roosevelt and Harvey sit.

Joanne keeps her head down, reviewing the folders she has.

The men stare at each other, unsure if they should break the silence.

ROOSEVELT

Ms. Astor, based on our current valuation, as well as both short- and long-term projections, we are looking to sell 51 percent equity in our company for 1.3 million dollars.

No response. Until she finally looks up.

JOANNE

Can I get either of you a drink?

ROOSEVELT

Uh, no, no thank you.

JOANNE

One dollar.

ROOSEVELT

I'm sorry?

HARVEY

For a drink?

JOANNE

I will offer you one dollar for your company.

ROOSEVELT

Ma'am, we've--

JOANNE

Ms. Astor is fine.

ROOSEVELT

Ms. Astor, our reports and numbers show that--

JOANNE

Rose, Harvey, this isn't my first time. I have here everything I need and everything you're going to tell me. In addition to taking on all the debt that YOUR reports will most certainly downplay, and, of course the one dollar I will give you, I will allow you both to keep one percent ownership of your company.

HARVEY

So you're buying 98 percent of the company? Even in that case, one dollar--

JOANNE

I'm buying 99 percent of the company. BOTH of you will keep one percent, not each of you. However you two want to split that up makes no difference to me.

HARVEY

(under his breath)
49 cents?

JOANNE

Sure, I could give you your 1.3 million now - I mean I wouldn't, that's still too high, - but I could give you, let's say, 400 thousand - or you can take this offer, remain very silent, minority owners of what will eventually become a half-a-billion dollar business.

HARVEY

Can we have a moment to talk about this?

JOANNE

You can have as many moments as it takes for my lawyer to get here with the paperwork.

Joanne reaches for her phone. Harvey and Roosevelt stand up and walk to a side of the office.

HARVEY

One dollar?!

ROOSEVELT

She's taking on all the debt. She's taking on all the liability. And we're going to be PARTNERS with Joanne Astor!

HARVEY

But not really.

ROOSEVELT

Doesn't matter, we can tell people are. And we can say we've built a company that's worth somewhere between 400 hundred thousand and 1.3 million. That's not nothing.

HARVEY

It will feel like nothing when we cash a check for one dollar.

ROOSEVELT

Well, she's a billionaire. She's probably not going to write us a check for a dollar.

HARVEY

When we started this company, we didn't sit on our balcony in our shitty apartment, drinking shitty beer, hoping one day we'd sell it for a dollar.

ROOSEVELT

(pondering to himself)

I mean, we're talking about literal pocket change here.

HARVEY

(ranting to himself)

We didn't leave home and put everything on red just to get back one dollar.

ROOSEVELT
 She IS a billionaire though. She probably doesn't have pocket change. Maybe she WILL write us a check.

HARVEY
 We were going to make a difference. Do something that actually mattered to people.

ROOSEVELT
 Wire transfer, maybe?

HARVEY
 (to Roosevelt)
 What?

ROOSEVELT
 We WILL change the world. We will. But, you know, later.

HARVEY
 That's your pep talk?

ROOSEVELT
 A partnership with her - albeit a very one-sided one - is worth way more than any company we're ever going to start, yes or no?

The LAWYER arrives with the paperwork and hands it to Joanne. All parties go back to Joanne's desk and sit down.

JOANNE
 Harvey, these files are for you.
 Rose --
 (looking at the papers)
 Or should I say Roosevelt? These are for you.

The men take their folders. Harvey stares blankly into the distance. Roosevelt reads through the paperwork.

Joanne breaks the silence.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
 Roosevelt -- is that a family name?

ROOSEVELT
 No. My parents just REALLY loved FDR.

JOANNE

Ah, yes. Of course

The men continue to look through the documentation. After another moment, Joanne breaks the silence again.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what. Both of you - as I've said, I'm impressed with your company and with your drive. I know you have your reservations about this deal, so let me sweeten the pot.

She pulls two business cards out of her desk drawer - handing them to Harvey and Roosevelt.

JOANNE (CONT'D)

These have my personal cell phone number on them. If you agree to this deal, you are welcome to - VERY occasionally - contact me with whatever business venture you undertake next. And maybe we can continue to work together. Maybe this can be au revoir instead of adieu.

EXT. WOODED BACKROADS/HAMMOND HOME - NIGHT

Roosevelt drives through winding country backroads until he arrives at a property with "HAMMOND" painted on the mailbox. It's a sprawling farm, complete with red barn and towering grain silos. While full of character and history, these farming structures blur the line between rustic and decrepit.

Roosevelt parks his car and gets out. He's dressed in tattered jeans and a t-shirt. Has a few days of scruff on his face. He pops the trunk and pulls out a large duffel bag.

He walks up to the front door, takes a breath, and lets himself in.

INT. HAMMOND HOME - CONTINUOUS

The home is a museum to the late 70s, complete with avocado-colored appliances, laminate flooring, and wallpaper - but just the strip of wallpaper that runs all the way around the room horizontally, two-thirds of the way down the wall.

ROOSEVELT
 (yelling into the ether)
 I'm home.

Roosevelt's mother, JANE, is contagiously cheerful. She has spent her life as a homemaker, and has loved every minute of it. She perpetually has a pie that just came out of the oven - and will, of course, insist you have a piece.

JANE
 Rose?! Rosie?!

She scurries into Roosevelt's arms. She peppers him with questions only half-concerned with their answers.

JANE (CONT'D)
 What a perfect surprise! Did you drive all day? Why didn't you tell us you were coming? We just finished dinner but I've got a pie just about to come out of the oven. Have you eaten?

ROOSEVELT
 I wasn't sure whether I was going to have to stretch the drive into another day. By the time I realized I wouldn't have to, I figured I'd surprise you.

LEONARD, tall, skinny, glasses, wearing a knit cardigan ambles into the room - a folded magazine in hand which he continues to read.

LEONARD
 (not looking up)
 Roosevelt, you did it all in one day? What is that drive, 20 hours?

Leonard finally looks at Roosevelt, gives him a smile and a nod.

ROOSEVELT
 About 22 from San Francisco, but I spent last night in Salt Lake. Did it in two days. I wasn't sure if I was going to have to stretch it into three.

LEONARD
 Well yeah, two days should be plenty of time.

Roosevelt has no response. Jane breaks the silence.

JANE
 Come sit down, I'll get you
 something to eat. Did you hear that
 dad died?

Jane tries to muffle her laughter.

ROOSEVELT
 (to Leonard)
 You've died? How did that happen?

LEONARD
 (rolling his eyes)
 I'm not sure where the rumor
 started.

ROOSEVELT
 So you're just allegedly dead.

Jane finally stops trying to constrain her laughter and lets
 out a cackle.

JANE
 You know your father. The window of
 opportunity to correct people has
 passed, so it's easier to just play
 along.

LEONARD
 I'm not "playing along". Everyone
 will figure it out on Sunday at
 church.

ROOSEVELT
 Will your sermon be on the
 resurrection?

Jane and Roosevelt have a short laugh. Then there's another
 short silence, this one broken by Leonard.

LEONARD
 I sold the farm.

ROOSEVELT
 No, dad. You bought the farm.

LEONARD
 Bought what farm?

ROOSEVELT
 The proverbial farm. When someone
 dies they "bought the farm."

LEONARD
Not the proverbial farm. The
literal farm.

ROOSEVELT
You sold this farm?

Leonard looks at Jane, not quite scolding.

LEONARD
You didn't tell him?

Jane pushes herself away from the table and waves her hands,
excusing herself.

JANE
I can't remember who I've told what
to.

LEONARD
Well, someone approached me a few
months ago about buying our
property.

ROOSEVELT
So not just the farm.

LEONARD
The farm, the house, the church.
All of it.

Roosevelt is having a hard time taking it all in. It's not
that there's too much sentiment tied up in the house, it's
that no one bothered telling him.

ROOSEVELT
I don't know what to say. Who is
buying it?

LEONARD
Stella.

ROOSEVELT
Stella Hopkins? That's great. She
and I can work something out.

LEONARD
We shook on a deal last night.

ROOSEVELT
But nothing is signed yet, right?

LEONARD
No, but we shook on it.

Jane peeks her head back into the conversation and sits back down.

JANE
They shook on it.

ROOSEVELT
Let me buy it.

LEONARD
How?

ROOSEVELT
Well, I also sold the farm, as it
were ... to Joanne Astor.

Roosevelt waits for an excited reaction, which he doesn't get.

LEONARD
Who?

ROOSEVELT
Doesn't matter. Point is, I'm
moving back.

LEONARD
I didn't know you were selling your
company.

Roosevelt turns to Jane, surprised.

ROOSEVELT
You didn't tell him?

Jane pushes herself away from the table and waves her hands, excusing herself.

JANE
I can't remember who I've told what
to. And you said you were thinking
about selling. Not that it was all
done and finished.

ROOSEVELT
Well, it's still not technically
done and finished, but Harvey and I
signed the paperwork. So with what
I got from the sale, maybe I can
help decide what happens to the
house and the farm.

Mom is so proud of her little boy.

JANE

Oh, you're such a fancy business man now. Look at you. Why don't you two boys call it a night. I'll make waffles in the morning and then you two can talk business then.

ROOSEVELT

Does that sound alright to you, dad?

LEONARD

I'm fine with waffles.

ROOSEVELT

I mean me potentially buying this place.

LEONARD

It seems like a big change.

ROOSEVELT

I think I could use something big.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

DANIELLE (DANNY) MCCORMICK paces back and forth down a hallway, psyching herself up. Her brow is furrowed. She's determined. She wears jeans and a flannel shirt with the sleeves rolled up. She carries a well-worn notebook and a mechanical pencil. A pen is also clipped to the front placket of her shirt.

She pauses, rounds the corner and approaches BREWSTER, her editor. He's gray at the temples and has a short goatee. The bags under his eyes come standard with the number of years he's sat behind that editor desk. Even though he's wearing more formal clothes than Danny - slacks and an oxford, dress shoes - she looks more professional. He's also doing sudoku.

DANNY

What're you doing?

BREWSTER

Trying to avoid alzheimer's.

DANNY

Is there really any evidence of that?

BREWSTER

That I have alzheimer's?

DANNY
That those puzzles help.

BREWSTER
Would you rather I say "Distracting
myself from my slow and inevitable
march toward death"?

He puts down the puzzle.

BREWSTER (CONT'D)
What do you need?

DANNY
I'm going crazy.

BREWSTER
Try sudoku.

DANNY
I'm serious.

BREWSTER
So am I. Danny, you've been here
what, 18 months? You haven't earned
the right to be crazy yet. Doug -
Doug's been here since 1972. HE'S
fucking crazy.

DANNY
If I have to cover one more stupid
county commissioner meeting, one
more "will anyone second the
motion?" one more "any opposed?",
I'm going to throw myself out a
window.

Brewster turns back to his puzzle.

BREWSTER
There's a reason we lease a one-
story building.

DANNY
You've gotta give me something
else.

He puts the puzzle back down.

BREWSTER
Listen, you're a good reporter.
You're getting your 1A stories -
most of them you deserved.
(MORE)

BREWSTER (CONT'D)

But you have to put in your time. I can't take someone else off -

DANNY

(interrupting)

I don't need a whole different beat. I just need something else. I really think the county flack has blocked my email address.

BREWSTER

So you're doing something right.

DANNY

Just ... please. Anything.

Brewster slowly swivels in his chair and turns to his embarrassingly outdated, standard-issue newsroom computer.

BREWSTER

Well, let's see, I have another email from Anne Crickley about another pet adoption push at her no-kill shelter. And Billy - I know you know Billy - he left another voicemail about, I'm sure, another conspiracy by the police to kill us all. Either of those sound good to you?

DANNY

(sighs)

So, county commissioner meetings.

BREWSTER

(feigning excitement)

You mean COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETINGS! The annual budget should be coming up soon. There's always one or two good - well, decent - stories there.

DANNY

Decent?

BREWSTER

Well ... stories. Definitely one or two stories.

INT. STELLA'S OFFICE - LATER

Roosevelt and STELLA are already mid-conversation. Stella wears professional attire. Blazer. Pencil skirt. She sits back in her chair.

She is a little upset that what she thought was just going to be a chat with an old friend is actually turning into a business meeting.

STELLA

I don't really like how you've swooped in here in the eleventh hour.

ROOSEVELT

I just found out last night.

Stella laughs.

STELLA

Just found out? That your family has communication issues? I've known that for years.

ROOSEVELT

My own family dysfunction aside, there have also been some developments in the past 72 hours.

STELLA

What kind of developments? You finally started to have a normal human relationship with your dad?

ROOSEVELT

I'm sure that will never happen.

(beat)

Look, I haven't told a lot of people this, but I sold my company. I have a big chunk of change burning a hole in my pocket.

STELLA

How much did you sell it for?

ROOSEVELT

I can't say. But I can say I sold it to my new business PARTNER, Joanne Astor.

STELLA

Well, that's not nothing -- so what's your next big adventure, your next billion-dollar startup idea?

ROOSEVELT

I don't know that yet. But I know I'll have a better shot at it with your help.

Stella is perfectly aware Roosevelt is intentionally trying to seem meek and accommodating and flattering, which she welcomes.

STELLA

You and I have been stuck in this shit town forever, and it hasn't gotten any less shitty since we were kids. And anyone who manages to escape, always seems to make their way back.

ROOSEVELT

I can't help but feel like that I was directed toward me.

STELLA

You are just one in a long string of rejects.

ROOSEVELT

Listen, you don't want the house. You don't want the church. And I don't want the land. We would be partners. Fifty-fifty. And I'm going to be easy to convince when it comes to however you want to develop that land - because I don't care what you do with it.

STELLA

Easier than if I had no one else I had to convince?

ROOSEVELT

My family has a history here. We know people. We have old friends.

Stella is visibly uncomfortable with the implication of what Roosevelt is suggesting.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
 Nothing underhanded. Just to help grease the skids. I'm going to be able to get us - get you - the meetings you need to have to turn that land into a bowling alley or a strip mall ... or a strip club for all I care.

Stella chuckles.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
 What DO you want to build there?

STELLA
 I hadn't really given it much thought.

ROOSEVELT
 Bullshit. What do you want to build?

Stella narrows her eyes, debating whether to divulge.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
 You want me to sign an NDA?

STELLA
 An indoor beach.

ROOSEVELT
 Huh?

STELLA
 Surfing. Waves. Boardwalk. Volleyball. All of it. We've got mountains and hiking and skiing all around us. And it's beautiful. But the closet ocean is 1000 miles away. Let's bring it here. These land-locked beach resorts already exist elsewhere, and they are profitable.

Roosevelt stands up.

ROOSEVELT
 Then let's get to work on getting you some ocean-front property.

Roosevelt reaches out his hand. Stella pauses. Then they shake on it.

INT. COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETING HALL - LATER

Danny sits in the back row of a sparsely filled county building. Three COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, including LARRY GIBBONS, sit at the front of the room. All three are older, white men. COMMISSIONER GIBBONS is a barrel-chested, broad-shouldered, suspended, bald man with a gravelly voice.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1

We will now open the floor to public comment for next year's budget.

An old woman, MRS. HAYES, with a manilla folder filled with visual aids approaches the podium and microphone.

MRS. HAYES

Gentlemen, there is a pothole on my road that needs to be repaired ...

Mrs. Hayes continues to drone on in the background while Danny thumbs through a print out of the county budget. She goes page by page, seeing boring, mundane line item after boring, mundane line item. She sighs. Closes the packet.

Then stares blankly ahead.

MRS. HAYES (CONT'D)

As you can see from these photographs, there is no reason the county should not be able to address this problem in the coming budget year. Thank you.

Mrs. Hayes takes her seat.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #2

Thank you, Mrs. Hayes.

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

As a point of order, I'd like to move we amend the budget to include C.B. 623 as it currently reads.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1

We have a motion. Will anyone second the motion?

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #2

I second the motion.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1
We will now vote on adopting C.B.
623 and amending it to the annual
county budget. All in favor, say
'aye'.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
(all three in unison)
Aye

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1
Any opposed?

Silence. Danny thumbs through her packet, looking for a copy
of the mentioned amendment.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1 (CONT'D)
The amendment passes as it
currently reads. I move to vote on
passing the proposed annual county
budget. Will anyone second the
motion?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS
I second the motion.

Danny continues to look through her papers, finding nothing.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1
We will now vote on adopting the
annual budget for Grace County,
Colorado. All in favor, say 'aye'.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
(all three in unison)
Aye

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1
Any opposed?

Silence.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1 (CONT'D)
The annual budget for Grace County
hereby passes with unanimous vote.
If there is no further business, we
will adjourn until next month.

Silence.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #1 (CONT'D)
This meeting is hereby adjourned.

The county commissioners get up from their seats. Danny rushes up and approaches Commissioner Gibbons.

DANNY

Hi, Commissioner Gibbons, there's no copy of amendment C.B. 623 in my budget packet.

Gibbons is more annoyed by Danny than anything else. He has a general distrust of journalist, but he especially can't be bothered by someone as green and young as Danny.

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

Right, because it's an amendment. The printout you have is the proposed budget as of this morning. We've since amended it.

(more playful teasing than scolding/condescending)

Were you not paying attention?

DANNY

Where can I get a copy of the amendment?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

When we publish the final budget, after it gets reviewed by the state.

DANNY

When will that be?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

Typically two or three weeks.

DANNY

Well, don't you think we want to inform the county residents of what's in the budget?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

I am not at all concerned about what "we" think.

Danny scribbles notes in her notepad.

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS (CONT'D)

Is this on the record?

DANNY

You're talking to someone you know is a reporter and we're at a public meeting and you're a public official. What is the amendment for?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

Allocation of funds.

DANNY

What funds?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

County funds.

DANNY

For what purpose?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

Listen - off the record - I don't have any comment on whatever typical journalist spin you're trying to put on our run-of-the-mill, hum-drum county meeting.

DANNY

Are you saying your "no comment" comment is off the record?

COUNTY COMMISSIONER #3

Yes.

DANNY

That's not how this works.

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

I don't want to read that I declined to comment. "Commissioner Gibbons could not be reached for comment."

DANNY

So you want me to write, according to Commissioner Gibbons, quote "Commissioner Gibbons could not be reached for comment" close quote?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

Is there anything else you need?

DANNY

Besides what I've already asked for? On the record, is it common to pass last-minute budget amendments?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

It's not uncommon.

DANNY

And I can quote you on that?

COMMISSIONER GIBBONS

Knock yourself out.

INT. HAMMOND HOME - LATER

Roosevelt enters and shouts to whomever is home.

ROOSEVELT

Got it all worked out with Stella today. She's got a lawyer friend who is making some adjustments to the contract, but you'll essentially be joint partners. We'll own the buildings. She'll own the land. Fifty-fifty split.

Roosevelt goes from room to room. The house seems empty.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

You and I can work out how much of the equity you might want to keep. I know you were going to sell it all, but ...

Roosevelt continues to look around.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

I also talked to Larry about helping out, helping get it back in order. He said it shouldn't be a problem.

He walks upstairs and into his parents' bedroom. He opens the door slowly. Leonard is lying on his bed, face down.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Dad?

As Roosevelt moves closer, he realizes his dad is unconscious. He tries to wake Leonard up. He's unresponsive. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his phone and dials 911.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Yes, this is Roosevelt Hammond. At 15 James Street. My dad. He's Leonard Hammond. He's 72. He isn't moving. Please send an ambulance. I think he may be dead.

(beat)

Yes again!

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Leonard is in a hospital bed, stuck with tubes and monitors, completely unresponsive. Roosevelt and Jane sit next to him, hunched over in their respective chairs.

JANE

I spent so much time thinking about what I'd do when he died that I was totally unprepared for what I would do WHILE he died.

ROOSEVELT

I know.

JANE

I just assumed dying would be something he planned, just like everything else in his life. Even with something sudden, I would have expected a contingency.

ROOSEVELT

I know.

JANE

I would have expected a note in the mail, or a call from the attorney. I even wouldn't have been surprised if your father -

(chuckling to herself)

- if your father, after exhausting all of his other options, would have delivered the news himself, in his usual, matter-of-fact way.

(beat)

"I've died," he would say. Then he would have walked away, settled himself into his coffin, and then been whisked away off to the cemetery.

ROOSEVELT

I know.

JANE
For fuck's sake, Rose. Say
something else.

Roosevelt is a little taken back by her language. He sighs.

ROOSEVELT
Well, I can take care of a few
things to make it easier. I can
have the house landline and the
church landline forwarded to my
cell phone, and then pass along any
messages you may need.

JANE
Yes, that would be helpful.

ROOSEVELT
I'll call Sister Cindy from the
church and she and the others can
put together a few meals.

JANE
Oh, I don't want to be a bother.

ROOSEVELT
Mom, how many times have you made
meals for them? Let them have a
turn, alright? And I assume he has
a living will and more of those,
uh, types of documents?

JANE
Yeah.

ROOSEVELT
Is that in the safe deposit box?
The fire proof box at home?

JANE
I'm not sure.

ROOSEVELT
Well, that's probably the next
step.

JANE
Rosie, I have to tell you
something. Your father ...

ROOSEVELT
What ...

JANE

As put together as he was
professionally, and socially ...

ROOSEVELT

What it is mom?

JANE

(growing more rambling)

We're broke. That's why we're
selling everything. And that's why
I didn't tell you, because I didn't
want to lie to you if you asked.
But he has given away every red
cent he ever earned. His heart was
too damn big for his own good. He
just couldn't tell people 'no' and
now I don't know how we're going to
pay for any of this.

Roosevelt puts his arms around his mom to calm her down.

ROOSEVELT

Hey hey hey hey ... everything's
going to be fine. He's been a
pastor at that church for 40 years.
Is Pastor Jones still the assistant
there?

Jane nods.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

I'll give him a call. I'll let him
know what happened, that he'll have
to give the sermon tomorrow, and to
ask the congregation if they could
chip in during your time of need.
God knows dad's been there when
they've needed it.

INT. CHAPEL - MORNING

We see an empty pulpit in a full church. The room is silent.
Roosevelt comes from off screen, wearing a suit and tie, and
stands behind the pulpit, addressing the congregation.

ROOSEVELT

Pastor Jones is in Africa, I found
out last night, on his latest six-
month mission trip. But you all
already knew that.

The congregation laughs.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

My father also had a heart attack yesterday, and is still in a coma. But you all already knew that, too.

Roosevelt chuckles. The congregation does not.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

And most of you already know who I am - even though I don't yet know as many of you as I probably should. I'm Roosevelt Hammond. I'll be filling in temporarily until either Pastor Jones gets back or my father recovers, whichever comes first. And I'm confident both of them will return. Still, you all have spent much more time in this chapel than I have. And I aim to remedy all of that over the next months and years.

He sees VICTORIA, mid-30s, sneak in through the entrance and take a seat in the back. She and Roosevelt acknowledge each other by exchanging smiles.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

It's good to be back.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Brewster leans over Danny's cubicle.

BREWSTER

So you've got two options here.

DANNY

Do either of them include a mojito?

BREWSTER

Hemingway you are not, at least not yet, but--

DANNY

Martinis.

BREWSTER

What?

DANNY

Hemingway drank martinis. Very dry. Not mojitos.

BREWSTER

Anyway, your county budget story, I can run it tomorrow, as is, on page 21 where no one will see it but the 3 old ladies who, I'm convinced, read the whole paper front to back just to see if there are any typos. Or I can give you another day to find out what's actually in that amendment and maybe we can get it a little closer to the front.

DANNY

Have you ever run a front-page budget story?

BREWSTER

No.

DANNY

Have you ever run a 1B budget story?

BREWSTER

No.

DANNY

Have you ever run a county budget story that has unearthed any sort of valuable, public-empowering information?

BREWSTER

No. But I've also never seen a last-minute, non-public amendment to a county budget.

DANNY

Commissioner Gibbons said it wasn't uncommon.

BREWSTER

Yes, I saw the singular, earth-shattering quote - a double negative, by the way - you were able to glean from Larry.

DANNY

He told me to call him Lawrence.

BREWSTER

Because he doesn't like you. Which is why you'll need to look elsewhere.

DANNY
Even though it's probably nothing.

BREWSTER
Especially because
(using air quotes)
it's probably nothing.

INT. CHAPEL - LATER

ROOSEVELT
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Organ music plays in the background as the meeting ends. The congregation stands up and begins mingling. Roosevelt comes down from the pulpit and begins shaking hands. A well-dressed congregant - RUBY SUTHERLAND - an older woman with even older money, and who isn't afraid to flaunt that fact with gaudy jewelry - shakes Roosevelt's hand and slips a padded envelope into his suit pocket.

RUBY SUTHERLAND
Here are my tithes and offerings,
Pastor Hammond -- I mean -- Rose. I
hope this helps with your father.

ROOSEVELT
Well, every little bit does help.
It is very much appreciated.

As Roosevelt goes through the crowd, he sees Victoria. She's leaning against a pew with a half smile. She's in a short-sleeved, a-line dress.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
Hey Victoria.

VICTORIA
Rosie. Your charm saves the day
once again. Things just seem to ...
work out for you, don't they?

ROOSEVELT
I've been ... very blessed.

VICTORIA
Cut the crap.

ROOSEVELT
Yes ma'am.

VICTORIA
I learned long ago not to buy your
bullshit.

ROOSEVELT
Watch your language, Victoria. This
is a church.

VICTORIA
So you're back. Forever?

ROOSEVELT
Seems like it.

VICTORIA
You know what you're going to speak
on next week?

ROOSEVELT
No clue.

VICTORIA
I can't wait. I guess I'll see you
then -- next Sunday.

Victoria begins to walk away.

ROOSEVELT
(calling out to her)
Not before then?

VICTORIA
(without turning around)
Not before then.

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Roosevelt walks through the door to his dad's office and CHARLIE, a 15-year-old boy who serves as an assistant is there waiting for him.

ROOSEVELT
Hey Charlie.

CHARLIE
Hi, Pastor Hammond.

ROOSEVELT
Rose is fine.

CHARLIE
Yes, sorry, Mr. Rose, your
appointments are here.

ROOSEVELT
 Appointments?

CHARLIE
 Yeah, your dad would meet with some
 brothers and sisters, one on one
 after services each Sunday.

ROOSEVELT
 Um, okay, send the first one in? I
 guess.

An old man, MR. FORD, dressed in his Sunday best enters.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
 Come on in, Mister ...
 (he looks to Charlie)

Charlie holds up 4 fingers and mouths to word "Ford"

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
 Four? Ford! Brother Ford. Have a
 seat.

They shake hands. They both sit. Charlie leaves the room and
 closes the door behind him.

MR. FORD
 I wanted to let you know I'll be
 praying for your father.

ROOSEVELT
 Thank you.

MR. FORD
 Your dad has done a lot of good in
 this community, he had a good
 heart.

ROOSEVELT
 Well, not that good. It nearly
 killed him.

Roosevelt chuckles. Mr. Ford doesn't reciprocate.

MR. FORD
 I'm sure you'll keep doing a lot of
 good.

ROOSEVELT
 I'll do my best.

MR. FORD

Charity needs to start locally, is what I always say. We don't need those government bureaucrats in Washington telling us how to spend our money or help our poor. We can do that just fine on our own, thank you very much.

Roosevelt is unsure of how to respond to that.

ROOSEVELT

Well ... thank you for sharing.

MR. FORD

That's it.

(standing up)

I just wanted to give you my support, Rose.

ROOSEVELT

I appreciate it very much.

Rose begins to walk Mr. Ford out.

MR. FORD

You know, I've never bothered to ask you, is Rose short for something?

ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt.

MR. FORD

The president?

ROOSEVELT

Yup. Parents are big fans of Teddy.

MR. FORD

Good, strong-willed man, that Teddy was. Well thank you again. And good luck.

ROOSEVELT

Thank you.

Mr. Ford leaves.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Well, that wasn't so hard.

Roosevelt opens the door to find several people waiting in the lobby.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
(cheerfully)
Who's next?

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

We see multiple jump cuts of multiple conversations, with Roosevelt slowly slumping further and further into his chair, looking more and more overwhelmed.

CONGREGANT #1
How much masturbation is too much?

CONGREGANT #2
How do I know if God wants me to keep my job?

CONGREGANT #3
I just really feel like gluten has to be from the devil, right? Is there anything in the Bible about that?

CONGREGANT #4
We have sex three or four times a month. I want to do it more. He wants to do it less. How often do you think God wants us to have sex?

CONGREGANT #5
I mean, having two bears maul and murder little children just because they made fun of him for being bald seems like an overreaction. It does NOT sound like a merciful God to me.

CONGREGANT #6
I have sinned. So much sinning. Way to much sinning, if you ask me.

CONGREGANT #7
I just so appreciate these little talks - with your father, and now with you. It makes me feel so energized and invigorated to take on the week.

Roosevelt sees out a last congregant. He's visibly exhausted. He pokes his head outside his office and looks at Charlie.

ROOSEVELT
Charlie? Any more?

CHARLIE
No, sir, er, Rose. That's the last
of them. You're all done for the
day.

Roosevelt goes back into his office and collapses in his chair. He runs his hands through his hair. He rubs his face. He pats his suit coat and remembers the envelope from Ms. Sutherland in his pocket. He pulls it out and opens it up, dumping out the contents.

Two large stacks of \$100 bills fall out, each stack with a \$10,000 currency strap. Roosevelt is shocked. He thumbs through the money. He looks around wondering where to put it, what to do with it.

Jane enters the office with a to-go carton of homemade food.

JANE
How'd your sermon go?

ROOSEVELT
What are you doing here? Why aren't
you at the hospital?

JANE
The sisters brought me food, but I
couldn't eat it all. So I brought
some for you. I'm heading right
back, don't worry.

ROOSEVELT
How is he?

JANE
Same as yesterday, so - not worse.

Jane sees the stacks of money in Roosevelt's hands.

JANE (CONT'D)
Is that from Ms. Sutherland? Padded
envelope? Slipped into your pocket?

ROOSEVELT
What do I do with it? Wait, how did
you know that?

JANE
(pointing)
Put it in the safe.

Roosevelt puts it in the safe.

JANE (CONT'D)

Close it. Lock it. Keep the key on you at all times.

(beat)

Your dad kept meticulous records. You should too until he gets back. That money is from Sister Sutherland. Ruby Sutherland. Her husband is dead and now she's richer than God and you're going to get a couple of those a year. You have to accept them.

ROOSEVELT

Well of course I'm going to accept - wait. What do you mean? Why wouldn't I accept them?

JANE

She's going to ask for favors, Rosie. And you're going to have to be very clear with her - and very aware yourself - about where the money goes, what it is and isn't used for. Dad never gave me any details about it, but he was always wary of that woman. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. And that woman is 100 percent mammon.

She puts the food down on his desk.

JANE (CONT'D)

Bon appetit.

INT. COUNTY RECORDS - DAY

Danny sits in a sterile, non-descript, government building lobby. A sign that reads "COUNTY RECORDS" hangs from the ceiling. Even though there are several booths/cubicles, only one is currently occupied by an employee. The two of them are the only ones there. It's silent for a while.

DANNY

And you're sure there's nothing you can do to speed up this process?

COUNTY WORKER

No ma'am.

The silence returns.

DANNY
And nothing I can do?

COUNTY WORKER
No ma'am.

Silence.

DANNY
What are the odds that this FOIA
request is going to be done today?

COUNTY WORKER
I'm sorry ma'am. I can't say.

DANNY
You don't know? Or you can't say?

COUNTY WORKER
I can't say.

DANNY
Who is your manager?

COUNTY WORKER
Commissioner Gibbons.

DANNY
Lawrence?

COUNTY WORKER
Larry, yes.

More silence. Then someone from the back yells.

COUNTY WORKER #2
(loudly)
Danielle McCormick?

DANNY
Yes?

COUNTY WORKER #2
Here are the documents you
requested.

DANNY
Thank you!

Danny takes the manilla folder and opens it up to find a single piece of paper it in. There is barely any text on it either. All it says is:

At least \$25,000 out of current expenses shall be appropriated for the expansion of local social center.

DANNY (CONT'D)

This can't be right.

(turning to county
workers)

Is this it? There has to be more.
Like who wrote it? Who submitted
it? Which center? What is this
money for?

Both workers stare at her blankly. Danny yells in frustration.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Roosevelt and Harvey are in a coffee shop, which serves as their make-shift office. They are the only ones there.

HARVEY

I am 100 percent not on board with that.

ROOSEVELT

Why not? It's foolproof. We pause with Joanne, take the money from the church, bolster our numbers, and then renegotiate. We get more than one dollar and pay back the church.

HARVEY

You're the one who said we should be happy with the one dollar. That we should be glad we have this new partner.

ROOSEVELT

Now we can have both.

HARVEY

So we're taking a no-interest loan from God?

ROOSEVELT

Are you worried he's a vengeful God? A God of wrath?

HARVEY

What on earth would ever give me that idea?

ROOSEVELT

If it helps, it's a no-interest loan from my parents - well, from Ruby Sutherland, really. She won't miss it and my parents haven't given me anything since my teenage acne.

HARVEY

So this is the least they could unknowingly do.

ROOSEVELT

Now that things are up and running, here's their opportunity. And they profit from it anyway when I buy their properties from them.

HARVEY

I still don't like this at all.

ROOSEVELT

Alright, well, I'm using my veto.

HARVEY

I thought you had already used your veto.

ROOSEVELT

Probably.

Victoria enters the coffee shop.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

(loudly-ish)

Alright, well, I'm going to call Joanne Astor, let her know we won't be accepting her low-ball offer, and that she should try back in three or four months.

Harvey looks at Roosevelt with eyes that say "Really?"

HARVEY

(quietly)

I'm guessing you'd like me to leave.

ROOSEVELT

That'd be great.

Harvey grabs his coat and begins to walk out the door.

HARVEY
Hi, Vic! Bye, Vic!

Victoria stands at the counter, waiting for her drink.

ROOSEVELT
I thought you said I wouldn't see
you before next Sunday.

VICTORIA
Jacob had to wait 7 years for
Rachel, and then he didn't even get
her. I was going to see if you
could wait 7 days.

Roosevelt looks at her with narrowed eyes, confused.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
You know, if you're going to be
giving sermons each week, you
really should start reading your
Bible. You did well yesterday,
regardless.

ROOSEVELT
Well thank you.

Victoria nods her head in the direction of now-gone Harvey.

VICTORIA
Sounds like you and he have got
some important wheeling and dealing
you're doing with your investors.

ROOSEVELT
Yeah. Just trying to make sure
we're making the right business
decisions here. Crunching all the
numbers. Running the gantt charts.

VICTORIA
If you're trying to sound smart,
you're coming up a little short.
(beat)
How's your dad doing?

ROOSEVELT
The same. Not better. Not worse.

The barista hands Victoria her coffee and Victoria begins to
walk out of the shop.

VICTORIA

Well, give your mom my best. I know everyone says this, but let me know if there's anything I can do to help, really.

ROOSEVELT

Do you wanna grab some coffee some time?

Victoria hold up the coffee she just bought.

VICTORIA

You mean, like, a different coffee at a different time?

ROOSEVELT

Yeah.

VICTORIA

And you think that'll help your dad?

ROOSEVELT

Unrelated to your offer to help.

VICTORIA

I want to hear about Rachel and Leah in next Sunday's sermon.

ROOSEVELT

There's a Leah too?

VICTORIA

There's a Leah too.

ROOSEVELT

Are you using scripture as a bargaining chip for a date?

VICTORIA

I don't want to be deceived on the wedding night.

ROOSEVELT

Weddi-? I'm guess that's part of the story.

VICTORIA

You have homework to do.

INT. NEWSROOM - LATER

Danny, manilla folder in hand, marches into the newsroom, straight to Brewster's desk. She tosses down the folder.

DANNY

It's like that asshole knew I was going to FOIA him so he's trying to be ambiguous.

BREWSTER

Now, let's not devolve into name calling. It's COMMISSIONER Asshole.

(reading out loud)

"At least \$25,000 out of current expenses shall be appropriated for the expansion of local social center."

DANNY

There's nothing there! Three hours at the county office and I get one fucking sentence.

BREWSTER

A sentence with a dollar amount.

DANNY

(angry/exasperated)

But what is it for? Out of which current expenses? What constitutes "expansion"? Which local social center?

BREWSTER

You know, those would all be really great questions for your source.

DANNY

What fucking source!? No one over there will fucking talk to me!

BREWSTER

Listen, you're probably not on the brink of Watergate here. So while I appreciate the passion, let's channel that fire into whichever 400-level journalism class taught you to man the fuck up. There are assistants, deputies, assistant deputies, and all sorts of other bees in the county hive.

(MORE)

BREWSTER (CONT'D)

And there are only so many centers in the county that could possibly qualify for - and need - that kind of money. So go get a cup of coffee and a phone book and start making some phone calls.

Danny calms down a bit. Walks over to the coffee pot and fills a mug. She begins to walk off.

BREWSTER (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

DANNY

To make some phone calls.

BREWSTER

(half joking?)

The coffee was for me.

DANNY

(half joking?)

Go fuck yourself.

INT. NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny sits at her desk and starts cold calling. Montage/jump cuts of call after call after call, rejection after rejection.

DANNY

Hello, is this-- Can you tell me--
I'm calling from the-- Do you know
anything about--

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Roosevelt is in Leonard's hospital room, sitting by his side. Roosevelt wears the start-up founder uniform: dark-wash jeans, button-down shirt with no tie, blazer. He's clean shaven.

ROOSEVELT

(to Leonard)

So, that's my plan. If you're okay with all that, just lie there motionless.

Roosevelt waits.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Good talk.

Roosevelt's cell phone rings. It's a number he doesn't recognize. He answers.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Hello?

DANNY

(through the phone)

Hi, my name is Danielle McCormick with the Sharonview Transcript. I was calling to try to get in touch with whomever oversees the First Christ Center.

ROOSEVELT

From the paper? Who is this?

DANNY

Danielle McCormick from the Sharonview Transcript. Are you affiliated with the First Christ Center?

ROOSEVELT

What is this regarding?

Just then, several of the machines Leonard is plugged into start beeping. Alarms are going off. Nurses are rushing in and escorting Roosevelt out.

DANNY

I'm writing a story about the county and am trying to get in touch with someone from the First Christ Center.

ROOSEVELT

(to the nurses, not listening to the phone)

What's going on? Why is that beeping? What's happening? Can somebody tell me something?

DANNY

Hello?!

ROOSEVELT

(reeling from the chaos)

Sorry. I can't talk right now.

A nurse begins escorting Roosevelt out of the room.

DANNY
Are you affiliated with the First
Christ Center?

ROOSEVELT
I don't know.

DANNY
You don't know? Can you tell me
anything about what the center is
used for?

ROOSEVELT
I'm not sure.

DANNY
Can I call you back?

ROOSEVELT
I can't. I don't know. I can't
talk.

In the hall, as Roosevelt hangs up his phone, he (literally)
bumps into two sheriff's deputies, STEVEN BIGGS and JOHNATHAN
WEDGE.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
I'm sorr -- oh -- hey, John. Hey
Steve.

BIGGS
Are you okay, Rose?

ROOSEVELT
Yeah. Sorry. I was just -- I'm a
little --

He looks at his phone, and puts it in his pocket.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)
My dad -- uh -- something is -- uh,
nevermind. It's fine. I'm sure it's
fine. It's so thoughtful of you
guys to come by and see him.

WEDGE
Actually, we're here to talk to
you.

ROOSEVELT
I'm sorry?

BIGGS

We got a phone call earlier today
that some money has been stolen
from the church.

ROOSEVELT

Stolen?

WEDGE

Yes. A silent alarm was triggered
and we're investigating. We'd just
like to you to come down to the
office.

ROOSEVELT

Me?! You think I stole some money?
From the church? From MY father's
church?

BIGGS

We're not saying that. We just need
to come down and make a statement.

ROOSEVELT

I don't know what you guys are
talking about. I can't deal with
this right now.

Wedge gently puts his hand on Roosevelt's arm.

WEDGE

(calmly)

Come on, Rose. Let's not make this
difficult.

Roosevelt quickly pulls his arm back -- then takes a breath.
Calms himself.

ROOSEVELT

Okay. Yes. I'd be happy to come in
and talk, but can it just wait
until the morning?

Both deputies are pensive.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Dave is still the Sheriff, yes?

BIGGS

Yeah.

ROOSEVELT

Tell him you talked to me. That you
saw me.

(MORE)

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

That I just couldn't do it tonight.
And that I'll be there first thing
in the morning.

WEDGE

We were told to bring you in
immediately.

ROOSEVELT

First thing, John. First thing. You
think I'm a flight risk or
something? I will be there bright
and early. Here --

Roosevelt pulls out his phone.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Let me call Dave, I think I still
have his number.

BIGGS

That's fine, Rose. Not necessary.
Don't worry about tonight. But
first thing tomorrow.

EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Roosevelt leaves the hospital and gets into his sporty BMW
parked in the lot. He drives off.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Roosevelt drives along a winding road, pulling over just
before a bridge, stopping on the shoulder. He steps out,
walks onto the bridge and leans over the railing. He climbs
over, holding on behind him.

ROOSEVELT

... And they'll live in that moment
- that small, fragile inch -

His foot slips.

But he holds on. He regains his footing and holds the railing
more tightly. Roosevelt takes a few final deep breaths -

Before climbing back over the railing. He pulls his phone out
of his pocket and deletes the audio file he just recorded.
Then he gets in his car and drives away.

FADE TO BLACK.