

JESSICA'S TRASH

"Breathe"  
(PILOT)

Written by  
Tristan Thom



FAITH HILL  
BREATHE



Produced by Ryan Culshaw and Faith Hill  
Mastered by Tom Coyne and Paul  
Lester at Mastering Services  
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U2C

- 1) WHATS BEFORE ME? 2) GOT MY BABY
- 3) LOVE IS A SWEET THING 4) BREATHE
- 5) LET'S MAKE LOVE WITH THE NIGHT
- 6) YOU'LL BE ME 7) THE WAY YOU LOVE ME
- 8) I'M NOT IN LOVE 9) BRINGING OUT THE ELVES
- 10) IF MY HEART HAS WINGS
- 11) IF I SHOULD FALL BEHIND
- 12) THAT'S HOW LOVE MOVES
- 13) THERE WILL COME A DAY

INTRO

SUPER: 2019

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

The bland, beige, "recently renovated" corridor of a typical New York pre-war walkup. Empty and quiet. At the end of the hall are the stairs, and a door: Apartment 2.

From inside Apartment 2, we hear the SHUFFLE-SHUFFLE of footsteps. Then the CLICK-CLACK of heels against the floor, and the JINGLE-JANGLE of keys being picked up and twirled 'round fingers, and a nearly inaudible FUCK as something heavy-sounding is SCRAPED across the floor.

CLICK CLICK CLICK. The door wings open. A woman stands there. This is JESSICA (44). At her feet is a medium-sized cardboard box overflowing with books and CDs and DVDs and the like. That's her TRASH.

Jessica bends down and picks up the box. She struggles to get a proper grip on it at first, but eventually succeeds in hoisting it up. She steps out into the hallway.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Today was the day that Jessica  
Wilson was finally going to get  
serious about changing her life.

NB: the narrator is someone

She shifts the box over to one side to balance it between her arm and hip, and reaches to close the door with her free hand. The box begins to slip. She grabs it just in time.

JESSICA

(muttering)

Fuck...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It's not that she hadn't already  
been trying to change...

Jessica then leans back into the apartment.

JESSICA

(shouting)

I'm leaving now!

No response.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Or that these attempts hadn't been  
serious...

JESSICA  
(shouting)  
Can you get the door?

Silence.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But somehow things just hadn't  
been...

Still holding the box, Jessica hooks the edge of the door with her foot, and with a swift flicking motion, manages to pull the door shut. CLICK.

NARRATOR  
Clicking.

She SIGHS then pauses to readjust her grip on the box.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Because the sort of change that  
Jessica was seeking couldn't be  
acquired through simple shifts in  
habits, or routine, or even  
outlook. No, the kind of change she  
was after was structural change;  
foundational change; consuming,  
obliterative change that would  
leave her feeling, in the best way  
possible, like a stranger in her  
own life.  
(beat)  
But that kind of change...that  
scope and scale of change was  
proving, well...elusive.

A NEIGHBOUR GUY (early 30s) appears and walks down the hall toward Jessica. He's distracted on his phone. As he passes her, he looks up, nods in her direction, and continues down the stairs.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
No one ever talks to their  
neighbours in New York.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jessica carefully totters down the stairs, adjusting and readjusting her grip as she goes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
But today, she told herself, would  
finally be different.

She arrives at the front door of the building and once again attempts to balance the box on one side so that she can open the front door. This time she easily manages the manoeuvre, flings open the door, and steps out on to the sidewalk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Because she was finally different.

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Jessica walks toward a small mountain of trash that has started to accumulate on the curb.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Something fundamental had shifted within with her. And whatever it was, it felt somehow irrevocable in a way that it never had before. All those other times had been false starts, she could now see. But this? What she was feeling here and now? This was something different. This was something new. This was the real deal.

She pauses and scans the pile for the optimal place to leave the box.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And this Jessica – the different, new, real deal Jessica – wasn't ever going back to the way things used to be.

She sets down the box, carefully tucking it beside another, bigger box.

Then she walks off down the street, looking, indeed somehow lighter and freer than just a moment ago

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
For the first time in a long time, she felt like she could breathe...just breathe.

CLOSE ON: the box of Jessica's Trash.

Perched on top is a single CD: a scratched, dinged, worn copy of Faith Hill's 1999 country-pop magnum opus "Breathe."

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
And as for me? Ah, you'll see.

TITLE CARD: JESSICA'S TRASH

ACT ONE

SUPER: 1999

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jessica (24) sits on the couch, bathed in the blue flicker of a TV. She's curled up against a handsome, boy-ish, slightly scruffy guy: her law school boyfriend, ALEX (26). They're watching a movie: "My Best Friend's Wedding."

Alex's gaze is trained on the TV whereas Jessica's gaze flits back and forth between the TV and Alex. She looks at him with an almost painful level of adoration.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Alex and Jessica had met that autumn in law school, and they had quickly fallen into an easy, comfortable dynamic that for both of them, albeit in different ways, felt entirely unlike anything they had every experience before.

JULIA ROBERTS (O.S.)

*Michael. I love you. I've loved you for nine years, I've just been too arrogant and scared to realise it, and well, now I'm just scared, so I...*

Jessica starts to mouth along to Julia's monologue. She knows it off by heart.

JULIA ROBERTS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*I realise this comes at a very inopportune time, but I really have this gigantic favour to ask of you: Choose me! Marry me! Let me make you happy!*

Alex notices Jessica's pantomime. A bemused look passes across his face. He presses pause. This jolts Jessica out of her reverie.

JESSICA

Oh! Why'd you pause it?

ALEX

Need to pee.

Alex pushes himself up then stops behind Jessica to plant a kiss on the top of her head. He leaves the room. Jessica stares dreamily off into the distance.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Insofar as it's possible to pinpoint the beginnings of things, for Jessica, it was here and now, in this very moment. She had liked Alex immensely from the start, but something about the way he had just kissed her head right now had pushed her out of superficial infatuation and firmly into the realm of love – real love. She felt like she could be herself around him, certainly. But more than that, she felt like all her little tics and eccentricities that had proved liabilities in other relationships were here not only tolerated, but embraced. The things that she had always laboured to conceal seemed to be the very things that made Alex like her; and perhaps, hopefully, even love her.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alex rummages around in his chest of drawers looking for something in the half-light.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And insofar as it's possible to pinpoint the end of things, for Alex, it was here and now, in this very moment. Even though she never said the words out loud, much less directed them to him, he knew that on some level, Jessica actually had been saying those words to him: "Choose me! Marry me! Let me make you happy!" And somehow, he just knew that he never would: choose her. Marry her. Make her happy. So there it was, and there it would sit between them: unresolved and unacknowledged. But for now, for tonight, still in the very early days of everything, he convinced himself that the very real fondness he felt for her could expand and blossom and someday be enough.

Alex finally retrieves the thing he was looking for from the depths of the drawer: a small package wrapped in shiny Christmas paper.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alex walks back into the room. He sidles up behind Jessica and presents her with the gift.

JESSICA  
(surprised, delighted)  
What'd you do babe??

ALEX  
Just an early Christmas gift...

JESSICA  
Babe!

Jessica cranes her head back for a kiss. Then she starts to turn over the package in her hands. Alex flips a light on.

ALEX  
It's nothing. For the drive up tomorrow.

Jessica starts to unwrap the gift. when she sees what it is, she presses it against her chest appreciatively.

JESSICA  
BABE.

She finishes unwrapping the gift and holds it out to appraise: it's a copy of Faith Hill's album "Breathe."

ALEX  
Do you like it?

JESSICA  
I LOVE it!

ALEX  
Put it on.

JESSICA  
Okay!

Jessica gets up and walks over to the stereo, pulling the plastic wrap off the CD as she does.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
I thought you hated this kind of music...

ALEX  
I do. But you don't

Jessica shoots Alex a slightly wounded look.



ALEX (CONT'D)

But I'm willing to learn. And grow.  
And to have my consciousness  
expanded.

(beat)

Or contracted.

JESSICA

(playfully)

Shut up.

Jessica pops the CD into the stereo and presses play. She advances to Track 4.

MUSIC CUE: "Breathe" by Faith Hill

The soft, tinkling opening chords of the the album's title track begin to play. Jessica stares at Alex, defying him to mock it. He smiles and walks over to her, then pulls her into a loose embrace. They start to sway back and forth in time to the music: a playful, ironising version of an actual romantic moment.

ALEX

Can I tell you a secret?

JESSICA

Mmm.

ALEX

I really do love...

Jessica tenses in anticipation of the word that could follow.

ALEX (CONT'D)

...this song.

JESSICA

No you don't. But that's okay.

Jessica and Alex continue to sway back and forth. But as the song continues and starts to build to its emotional crescendo, it get the better of Alex. He pulls her in closer and gives into the moment. Whatever this moment is.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This was it. Where it had all started to go wrong. But he'd never say that, out loud, or even to himself. Because to acknowledge this moment as the beginning of the end would be to acknowledge the awful truth: that for him, she was both far too much and not nearly enough, and he had known that from the very start. But he did it all anyways.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So instead, whenever anyone asked, he'd just sigh and say something terribly opaque, and in its own way, terribly cruel. Something like: "she deserved someone who knew how to love her the way she needed to be loved."

INT. ALEX'S CAR - THE NEXT DAY

Alex is driving while Jessica is in the passenger's seat. They're headed upstate on a mostly empty rural highway. "Breathe" plays over the car stereo, continuing from the exact moment it cut in the previous scene. Jessica sways in time to the music and hum-sings along.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As the music played and Jessica sang along so softly and so sweetly, Alex could feel that they were crossing, or perhaps had already crossed some critical threshold of intimacy. This moment, right here, driving upstate together, singing a sweet song - *their* sweet song - this was the moment when everything should have been confirmed and solidified. Maybe he could have said something that would have saved them both a great deal of pain, and maybe he should have. But for now, he just tamped down his doubts with the idea that what *should* make him happy, perhaps in time *would*. And as he looked over at Jessica, he couldn't help but smile, for whatever that meant, and for whatever that was worth. Then turned his gaze to the road ahead and drove on.

END MUSIC CUE.

EXT. LESLIE'S FARMHOUSE - LATER

Jessica and Alex pull up outside a sprawling, impeccable farmhouse that belongs to the family of their law school friend Leslie. They get out of the car and marvel for a second at the house and its grounds.

The front door of the house swings open and there's LESLIE (24): an arch-WASP terror, resplendent in cashmere.

LESLIE

Hiii lovers!!!

Leslie beckons Jessica and Alex into the house.

INT. LESLIE'S FARMHOUSE - THROUGHOUT - CONTINUOUS

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
Welcome, welcome, welcome!

Leslie extends her arms expectantly. Both Jessica and Alex oblige with hugs.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
Just drop all of your shit here.  
Come, come!

JESSICA  
(marvelling)  
Leslie, this house...

LESLIE  
I know. It's fucking ridiculous  
right?

JESSICA  
(whispering to Alex)  
Can you believe this place???

Alex cocks his eyebrows ambiguously.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
In truth, Alex could very much believe this place. He came from a similar world to Leslie. Perhaps his family occupied a rung or two lower on the socio-economic ladder, but still, they occupied the same echelon, which is to say, the rich one. Where he came from, people regularly had houses like this: sprawling, meticulous, unused, scattered across the country and the world, and accumulated the same way most people buy clothing: by season, activity, preferred style, or more often than not, simply on a whim.

Leslie leads them through the entryway into an expansive living space. She gestures to the decor.

LESLIE  
(disapprovingly)  
An orgy of plaid...mum's really getting off on some ticky-tacky Americana thing these days.

Leslie runs her hand along the back of a beautiful, simple wooden rocking chair.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

The Quaker shit's chic though.

(beat)

Anyways, it *is* cozy for the holidays.

ALEX

Thanks for having us Les. Really.

LESLIE

My pleasure...what else are a bunch of Christmas orphans to do?

(to Alex)

You hate your family...my family hates me...Chris is a flaming faggot-

INT. LESLIE'S FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They arrive in the kitchen. At the mention of his name, CHRIS (28), another law school friend who's up for the holidays looks up from his post. He's busy preparing dinner.

CHRIS

My ears are burning you bitch!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Chris was indeed a flaming faggot (self described!) and came from a vastly less wealthy background than the others, apart from Jessica, whose family sat perhaps a rung or two higher on the socioeconomic ladder, but occupied the same echelon, which is to say, the poor one. He was both frequently appalled by Leslie's privilege, but they shared one very important quality that completely levelled the field between them: they were both, quite consistently, the most interesting person in the room.

LESLIE

Darling, I'd say it all to your face! And I have!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And the bitchiest.

Leslie swans over to Chris and offers an air kiss.

CHRIS

(archly)

Kiss kiss.

(beat)

Kiss kiss?

Chris extends his cheek solicitously to Jessica. She plants a kiss on it. He keeps it extended for Alex, who hesitates.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Man up and kiss me!

Alex obliges. Chris feigns being hot and bothered.

LESLIE

Meanwhile, Jessica...you actually like your family so I don't know why the fuck you're here!

JESSICA

(taken aback)

Oh...well it sounded like fun and—

LESLIE

And it will be! Come! Come come!

(to Chris)

Do you need any help darling? No?

Oh good!

(fake whispered aside)

*It's so hard to find good helps these days!*

JESSICA

Really though: can we help Chris?

CHRIS

Absolutely not. I'm a controlling bitch who refuses to delegate.

Shoo!

(beat)

I'm fine, really. Relax. Enjoy.

INT. LESLIE'S FARMHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Jessica, Alex, Leslie and Chris sit by the fire, lounging, pontificating, drinking wine. Music from the radio plays softly in the background.

LESLIE

...I'm just saying, America today is fundamentally a classist society, not a racist one!

JESSICA

Oh that is *such* horse shit!

CHRIS

Honestly, Les...you can't actually believe that?

ALEX

I think what she's trying to say, and I don't necessarily disagree, is that the structural impediments facing poor Americans have become potentially greater than those facing, well, non-white people.

CHRIS

And who pray tell are these poor people?

Chris gestures to himself.

JESSICA

Exactly! I'm sorry, but race and class are *inextricably* bound up in this country!

LESLIE

Look: *of course* certain groups are over-represented, and certain groups are under-represented in the hierarchy of things—

JESSICA

My God that's fucking glib!

CHRIS

May we all aspire to the eloquence, sensitivity, and humanity of a drunk white woman.

Chris raises his glass in a faux toast. Leslie raises her hands in capitulation.

LESLIE

Fine fine fine! Maybe I don't know what I'm talking about. Maybe I'm woefully out of touch!

CHRIS

Said the woman in one of her family's errant holiday homes...

LESLIE

But you know what the funny thing is? All of us here?

(beat)

We're already on the right side of things.

JESSICA

Huh?

LESLIE

We're all lawyers.

JESSICA

Not yet.

LESLIE

But we will be. It's a formality at this point. And more to the point, we're lawyers who went to fucking Ivy League school. And that will always mean something. That will always redound to our benefit.

CHRIS

(archly)

"Redound to" no less...

LESLIE

The point is, we've already made it.

(to Jessica and Chris)

You've both already made it. You've worked hard, you've lifted yourself up, you've done everything right. And if you continue to do everything right, in thirty years' time, your children will be exactly where I am: lecturing their poor but gifted friends about the state of the world over food and wine that you paid for!

JESSICA

We just have \$250,000 in student loans to pay off first...

Leslie leans over and takes Jessica's hand.

LESLIE

(achingly sincere)

In twenty years, you won't even remember that money. It'll all just be an abstraction. That's all money is: a beautiful, wonderful abstraction.

ALEX

True.

CHRIS

Fuck me.

Just then, Leslie suddenly perks up from her smug stupor and pulls herself up off the floor. She sprints over to the stereo.

LESLIE

I fucking LOVE this song...

She turns up the volume. It's – what else – "Breathe."

LESLIE (CONT'D)

(singing)

*I can feel the magic floating in  
the air...  
Being with you gets me that way...*

JESSICA

Oh my GOD!

CHRIS

(sighs)

It's fucking inescapable...

Leslie swans over to Jessica and scoops her up in an embrace.

LESLIE

(singing)

*...when I'm lying wrapped up in  
your arms  
The whole world just fades away  
The only thing I hear  
is the beating of your heart...*

Leslie gives Jessica a spin and a twirl and they both start singing.

LESLIE & JESSICA

(singing)

*'Cause I can feel you breathe  
It's washing over me  
And suddenly I'm melting into you  
There's nothing left to prove  
Baby all we need is just to be  
Caught up in the touch, slow and  
steady rush  
Baby isn't that the way that love's  
supposed to be...  
I can feel you breathe...*

Leslie climbs atop the coffee table and starts to run her hands seductively up and down her torso. And when the beat drops she RIPS open her cardigan...

LESLIE

(screaming/singing)

*Justtttt breatheeeee!!!!*

...and she's not wearing anything underneath. She looks down at her bare breasts, whips off the cardigan, and continues to slink and vamp across the coffee table in time to the music. Chris shrieks and claps with delight. Alex groans in secondhand embarrassment. Jessica just looks stunned. Then pissed.



INT. LESLIE'S FARMHOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Jessica and Alex lie in bed. Alex is already curled up, drifting off to sleep, but Jessica is still sitting upright and is visibly perturbed by what happened earlier.

JESSICA  
That was fucked up.

ALEX  
(groggily)  
Hmm?

JESSICA  
What Leslie did out there...

ALEX  
What? Getting her tits out?

JESSICA  
Yes, getting her tits out! I mean...I thought it was *super* inappropriate. And disrespectful.

ALEX  
Don't be so moralising, Jess. They're just boobs. Very average ones at that...

JESSICA  
That is SO not the point.  
(beat)  
Is this some weird rich person shit that I don't understand? Like, everyone gets drunk and takes their tits out in front of each other's partners??

ALEX  
(yawning)  
Maybe...

JESSICA  
I would never do that in front of my friend's boyfriend...NEVER.  
(scoffing)  
It was fucked up.  
(whispering)  
And it's kinda fucked up that you don't think it's fucked up...

ALEX  
(half-asleep)  
Maybe...

Alex reaches out a hand limply. Jessica stares at him incredulously for a moment, HUFFS, then rolls over and turns out the light,.

ACT TWO

SUPER: 2001

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jessica (26) sits on the couch, idly flipping through a magazine. She sets it down and starts to look around the room appraisingly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Jessica should have been looking for a job right now, and that's precisely what she had told Alex she would do while he was out. Strictly speaking, she should have had a job already. Graduating from an Ivy League school was supposed to render things like finding a job a mere formality - just like Leslie had said. But here she was, six-figure degree in hand, with nothing, so far, to show for it. And yet...she'd never been happier. Now that they were done with law school, it felt like life could truly begin.

(beat)

Alex had even said he wanted to talk to Jessica about something when he got back, and she was sure she knew what it was: he was going to ask her to move in with him. And why wouldn't he? They spent practically every night together as it was. She wouldn't have to make too many changes to be comfortable here; it was a nice apartment; really nice in fact.

The CLICK CLICK of the front door lock interrupts Jessica's daydreaming.

ALEX (O.S.)

Jess?

JESSICA

In here!

Alex (28) wanders into the living room. He comes over to Jessica and plants a kiss on her head.

ALEX

And?

JESSICA

And?

ALEX

Any progress?

JESSICA

Oh, uh...yeah not really?

Alex's gaze travels to the open magazine next to Jessica on the couch.

ALEX

Jess...

Jessica follows his gaze. She SIGHS.

JESSICA

It's just such a nice day...and the sun is shining, and we're finally fucking done, and I just feel like...it'll happen when it happens, you know? I'm not worried!

ALEX

(cautiously)

I'm not worried either. I just want for you to have peace of mind about the future, that's all.

JESSICA

You're very sweet. And I appreciate your concern. And I'll get on it tomorrow. I promise.

ALEX

Okay.

JESSICA

Okay.

Alex sits down on the couch beside Jessica and starts idly flipping through her magazine.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

So how was lunch? How was...Chuck, right?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Chuck was an old family friend, and an extremely powerful DC lobbyist. He was paid a lot of money by very powerful interests to advance very questionable legislation in congress. And he was always looking to hire handsome, well-bred Ivy league grads with flexible moral compasses.

Alex is already engrossed in the magazine. After a moment, he looks up.

ALEX

Yeah, Chuck. Uh...it was good!

(beat)

I mean, he's a real son of a bitch, but he definitely knows his shit, and he's always an interesting guy to talk to.

JESSICA

And did he know anyone who could help you out?

Alex blanches.

ALEX

Uhh...yeah, actually, he did.

JESSICA

Oh my God – amazing! And??

ALEX

Well, he...actually he offered me a job...at his firm.

Jessica is visibly taken aback.

JESSICA

(confused)

But...you said you'd never want to do that kind of thing...

ALEX

I never said that...

JESSICA

You *literally* said that.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He literally had said that. But youthful idealism all too often yields in the face of reality, especially when "reality" comes with six-figure signing bonuses and heavy parental pressure attached.

ALEX

Yeah, fine: I did. And I meant it, too...then. But...it's not as simple as that, you know?

JESSICA

No, I don't know.

ALEX

Well, my parents are pushing this plan, and I—

JESSICA

Have to do what mommy and daddy say?

ALEX

Fuck.

(beat)

But yes, actually, I kind of do.

JESSICA

You don't...

ALEX

(annoyed)

I do. Look around you Jess: this apartment? Grace-and-favour. The couch were sitting on. The food in the fridge. The flowers in the fucking vase. All them. And they've never asked for a single thing in return. All the want is for me to—

JESSICA

Sell your soul?

ALEX

Be successful. And happy!

JESSICA

And this job is that?

ALEX

I don't know...maybe? Or maybe not. But I'll be meeting people and learning how shit gets done, and I can figure it out from there.

Jessica sighs deeply.

JESSICA

So it sounds like you've made up your mind?

ALEX

It's a good opportunity.

JESSICA

So was being a guard at Auschwitz, for someone.

ALEX

What the fuck, Jess???

JESSICA  
(defiant)  
Well...

ALEX  
Look, in an ideal world, I could just go off and do whatever I wanted to do without my parents' input. But as it is, my parents have a stake. They just do. It's the price of being fucking privileged: you have to answer to the people who gave you everything.

JESSICA  
(sneering)  
Well, that must be really hard for you...

ALEX  
Jesus, Why are you so opposed to this? It's a just a fucking job! A good job! And it's being offered up to me on a silver platter!

JESSICA  
Exactly! You're going against everything you've ever said you wanted, and taking the path of least resistance without even trying. In the space of one afternoon, you've completely reneged on everything you've ever professed to give a shit about. Who are you??? Some rich kid who thought it would be fun to try on progressive politics and slum it with some poor girl from Brooklyn for a little while.

ALEX  
That's fucking cruel.

That shakes Jessica out of her rage slightly.

JESSICA  
Well...

Jessica takes a deep breath.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Look: we're all going to be compromised in some way; we're fucking lawyers.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I know you'll make the best of this, and maybe you're right: maybe this is just a necessary stepping stone to...something else.

ALEX

I hope so.

JESSICA

So, I guess...congratulations?

Alex laughs feebly.

ALEX

Thanks.

JESSICA

Sorry. That was a very hostile way to say congratulations.

ALEX

It's all good. And I do take your point. But I hope you take mine too.

JESSICA

I do. And I am proud of you.

ALEX

No you're not.

JESSICA

We'll see.

(beat)

So...you'll be working out of the New York offices, I guess?

ALEX

Um...so that's the other thing...they kind of need me...down in DC.

JESSICA

(shocked)

Oh. So...?

ALEX

It's the one non-negotiable thing...

JESSICA

So...you're moving to DC?

ALEX

I mean...I have to if I want to take this job...

JESSICA

And you do. So you are. Great.

(beat)

And us?

ALEX

Well...I guess we need to talk about what it would look like for me to be there and you to be here...

JESSICA

Yeah, I guess we do...

ALEX

'Cause I'm assuming you don't have any desire or...reason to be in DC?

Jessica winces at how swiftly and easily he's excised her from his future.

JESSICA

(numbly)

Nope. I guess I don't.

ALEX

I mean, people do long distance...

JESSICA

They do. But only if they have a plan of when, and how, and why they're going to be together again. And we're just...

ALEX

Not there.

JESSICA

Definitely not.

ALEX

Jess...this doesn't have to—

(beat)

We don't have to—

(beat)

We have time.

JESSICA

What? A few weeks? A month?

ALEX

Yeah; probably a month? Maybe two? I could push for two.

JESSICA

Nah. It's for the best this way. Let's not prolong it. It was a season of life. And now it's done.



ALEX

Jess...

Jessica just shrugs.

JESSICA

I'm gonna go.

ALEX

Okay...

JESSICA

I'll grab my stuff now. There's not much...

(beat)

Just my magazine...

Jessica snatches the magazine from Alex's hand then walks over to the bookcase.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And my books...

She removes a couple of books then turns around and grabs a sweater off the back of a chair.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And my sweater...

Jessica spins around, scanning the room.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

And...

Her gaze settled on the CDs stacked around the stereo

JESSICA (CONT'D)

...my CDs.

She starts to rifle through the CDs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Let's see...Sarah McLachlan...you hated that bitch. Lisa Loeb...you hated her too. Jewel...now Jewel, you probably hated most of all.

(beat)

Oh! I spoke too soon! The "City of Angels" soundtrack: that has to be your absolute worst! I'm so sorry for inflicting such dreadful, anodyne, sentimental shit on you all these years!

Jessica continues to rifle through the stack of CDs. After a moment she stops at one disc in particular.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Now this. This you fucking loathed...

(beat)

Faith Fucking Hill. "Breathe." Just breathe! Fuck.

ALEX

Jessica...

JESSICA

Well, I think that's everything.

So...I'm gonna go now.

(beat)

Good luck with DC and the job and you know, helping congressmen not go to prison for fucking teenagers or whatever your specialisation is going to be.

Jessica starts to march toward the front door, arms full of her things. Alex stands up and starts to walk after her.

ALEX

Jessica. Can I- can we-

(beat)

Can we at least hug? Say a proper goodbye?

Alex moves closer to Jessica and she jerks away. The Faith Hill CD falls off the stack of things and hits the floor, shattering the plastic case when it does.

JESSICA

(sighs)

Well that's a metaphor for something.

Jessica looks at Alex expectantly.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Can you...?

ALEX

Oh, uh, sure...

Alex bends down and picks it up and places it gingerly atop the pile of things in Jessica's arms. They stand in silence for a moment. Finally Jessica shrugs and shakes her head.

JESSICA

You know, I honestly thought you were going to come in here right now and ask me to move in with you.

Alex winces.

ALEX  
Jess...I...

JESSICA  
Yeah.

ALEX  
Yeah.

ACT THREE

SUPER: 2009

EXT. NYC OFFICE TOWER - PLAZA - MIDDAY

Jessica (34) sits on a busy, windswept plaza eating her lunch, and flicking through her BlackBerry.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In the eight years since Jessica had left law school, she had had a few different jobs, and she had found varying degrees of satisfaction and success at each. For various reasons, it had taken her almost a year to land her first - at a medium sized, medium prestige firm. And even once she was there, it always felt like she was somehow behind. Which she was. After three years there, she was passed over for an important promotion, and she moved to a slightly smaller, slightly less prestigious competing firm. And after four years there, she was unceremoniously made redundant. After that, she had landed up here: as a mid-level cog at a large corporate firm. So far, it was exactly what she had wanted and needed it to be: lower stakes; lower stress; just a job.

(beat)

So here she was: on her lunch break, eating a flavourless, colourless, assortment of dry vegetables topped with awful combinations of terrible things like shredded cheese, tuna flakes, and maybe a few grapes, all served in one of those clear plastic clamshells that somehow makes this chaotic, shameful, manifestly disgusting salad even less appetising.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Jessica?

Jessica looks up with a start. Shit: it's Alex (36). Jessica sets down her Sad Salad and springs up to greet him. They hug.

JESSICA  
 (mouth still full)  
 Alex! Oh my God! How are you?  
 (chewing)  
 Sorry.  
 (swallows)  
 What are you doing here?

ALEX  
 I'm just up for the day. The New  
 York office needed me for a  
 deposition.

Alex takes a step back to appraise her; as if he can't quite believe she's there.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
 I—I can't believe I bumped into  
 you!

JESSICA  
 (still reeling)  
 I know! It's so strange to—  
 (beat)  
 You look great by the way!

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Alex did look great. His shaggy,  
 slightly unkempt style that Jessica  
 still held in her mind's eye  
 conception of him had given way to  
 something sharper, sleeker, more  
 polished. He looked like a man now.  
 A rich man. Which he was.

ALEX  
 Oh. Thanks!  
 (beat)  
 You're also looking well!

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 She wasn't really, but he really  
 did mean it.

Jessica swats away his compliment.

JESSICA  
 (dismissively)  
 I'm getting older.

ALEX  
 We're all getting older, Jess.

An awkward silence prevails.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
 Hey listen: would you maybe wanna  
 go grab lunch?

Alex looks at Jessica's Sad Office Salad.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
If you've already eaten...

JESSICA  
Oh, no...this is...

Jessica thinks for a second.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Uh, yeah...sure!

ALEX  
Can you get away?

JESSICA  
I think so...Just let me check something...

Jessica picks up her BlackBerry and flicks through her calendar. While she's holding it, and incoming call pops up: JASON. Jessica stares at the screen for a second then declines the call and puts the phone in her purse.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I can push a couple things back!

ALEX  
Great!  
(beat)  
Hey: ask me how business is going?

JESSICA  
(slightly confused)  
Um: how's business going?

ALEX  
Good. Thanks for asking. Now this is a business lunch. Let's get wasted.

INT. POSH RESTAURANT - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Jessica and Alex sit the gleaming bar of a venerable New York power lunch spot nursing martinis.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
The lunch rush had passed, and a strange calm has settled over the nearly empty room.  
(MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The only other people left were some drunk suits, who, depending on their age were either inspired by or the inspiration for Patrick Bateman, along with a few legacy media types bleeding their very endangered expense accounts dry. Jessica and Alex were both on their third martini. Which is precisely the state and the frame of mind they both needed to be in to ask and answer a question like:

JESSICA

So how's Leslie?

Silence.

ALEX

(shifts uncomfortably)

Good! She's good. Yeah!

(beat)

She's actually on maternity leave right now...

JESSICA

Oh my God! Congratulations!

ALEX

Thanks; thanks. Another girl. Ella.

JESSICA

Aww. And your older one...she must be what? Two? Two-and-a-half?

ALEX

Three-and-a-half. Eva.

JESSICA

Wow! Right: Eva. Eva and Ella. Adorable.

ALEX

I told Leslie that she was only allowed to name one of our daughters after Hitler's mistress...

JESSICA

And if it turns out there was an Ella in the bunker...

ALEX

What can you do?

They both laugh softly and take sips of their drinks. A longish silence takes hold.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You know, even after all these years...it's still kind of weird to talk about her – about us – with you...

JESSICA

It shouldn't be. It's just one of those things...

ALEX

I know, but...

JESSICA

People break up. People get together. I was at the wedding. I gave a toast! It's–

Just then, Jessica's BlackBerry, which is on the bar, starts to buzz. She picks it up and looks at the screen: incoming call: JASON.

ALEX

Do you need to take that?

JESSICA

No; I'll call him back after.  
(beat)  
My boyfriend. Jason.

ALEX

Oh...amazing! Is this a new thing, or...

JESSICA

Um, two years? We just moved in together actually...

ALEX

Oh: congrats!

JESSICA

Thanks, yeah. We got a great spot down in the financial district.

ALEX

Nice. And is he...in finance?

JESSICA

He is.

ALEX

And he's a good guy?

JESSICA

Uh...

Jessica hesitates for just a half second too long.



JESSICA (CONT'D)

Yeah, no, he's a really good guy.  
Motivated. Hardworking. Loyal.

Jessica gestures to her phone.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Attentive.

(beat)

He's just the sort of guy who knows exactly what he wants, and he's super clear about it. There's never been any guessing, or games, or weird...disconnects between us. It's just...

ALEX

Easy?

JESSICA

Yeah. And aligned.

ALEX

That's great Jess. I'm really happy for you. Truly. You deserve that.

JESSICA

Thanks.

(beat)

You know, it's kinda weird for me too...

ALEX

What is?

JESSICA

Talking about him...with you.

ALEX

I guess it's just one of those things.

INT. JESSICA & JASON'S APARTMENT - THAT EVENING

Jessica sits in the living room of the apartment she's just moved into with Jason. It's new, spacious, tastefully appointed: a proper adult apartment. The room is full of boxes. She's drinking a glass of wine while she unpacks. She opens a new box and starts to pull out stacks of CDs. She starts to go through them one by one. She comes to one CD and pauses: a big smile spreads across her face. She walks over to the stereo and puts the CD in, then advances to Track 4. It's "Breathe."

Music Cue: "Breathe" by Faith Hill

Jessica heads back to her spot and continues unpacking, while softly humming and singing along to the song. After the first verse, there's a CLICK CLICK at the front door: Jason's home.

JESSICA  
(shouting)  
Hi babe! I'm in here!

Heavy footsteps sound out from the hallway. JASON (40) appears in the doorway.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Jason was tall, broad, conventionally handsome, well dressed and well groomed. He struck an impressive – and imposing – silhouette. On paper, he was precisely the kind of man that Jessica wanted. Or perhaps more to the point, he was precisely the kind of man that she wanted to be wanted by. Unfortunately for her, and for everyone, really, Jason was a monumental fucking asshole.

JASON  
(angry, impatient)  
Uhh, Jess??

JESSICA  
Hi!

Jessica cranes her head up for a kiss. Jason doesn't respond.

JASON  
I was calling you all fucking afternoon...where were you??

JESSICA  
Oh...sorry, yeah. I was in meetings all morning and then I had a...a lunch thing that ran a little late...

JASON  
A lunch thing? What kind of lunch thing?

JESSICA  
Uh...I just bumped into an old law school friend and he invited me to grab a bite with him.

JASON  
He did? Who?

JESSICA  
It was uh...it was...Alex.

Jason throws his hands up in the air in disbelief.

JASON

Alex. You had lunch with Alex? Your ex-boyfriend Alex??

JESSICA

Yes. I had lunch with my ex-boyfriend Alex. My friend Alex.

Jason gestures toward the stereo in exasperation.

JASON

Jesus Christ Jess: can you turn this shit off? I'm trying to have a real conversation right now, and I can't even hear you!

JESSICA

No, we're not having a conversation; you're shouting and getting really fucking intense over literally nothing.

JASON

I'm not getting "really fucking intense" and it's not fucking nothing.

JESSICA

Yes you are! And yes it is! And I've had a long day and I don't really want to deal with you when you're like this. We'll talk when you've calmed the fuck down.

This turns Jason apoplectic. He storms over to the stereo and smashes the eject button and rips out the CD and throws it across the room at Jessica.

End music cue.

JASON

(shouting)

No: we'll talk right the fuck now.

JESSICA

Jesus fucking christ!!! What the fuck's wrong with you???

Jessica retrieves the CD and tosses on top of the others.

JASON

What the fuck's wrong with you???  
Why the fuck would you go out to lunch with your ex-boyfriend, and turn your fucking phone off? What the fuck happened?

JESSICA

What do you mean "what happened?"  
Nothing happened!!! I was sitting  
on a bench eating my salad, I  
looked up, there he was, we talked  
for a minute, he asked if I wanted  
to go get lunch, I said "sure" and  
we went to get lunch.

JASON

So you were eating lunch, but then  
you went to get lunch???

JESSICA

I was eating a fucking \$5 bodega  
salad, so yes: when my old friend  
said "hey: do you want to go get a  
nice lunch, I'll expense it?" I  
said "yes, please and fucking thank  
you!!!"

JASON

And what'd you talk about at this  
nice expense account lunch?

JESSICA

Let's see...the weather? His wife  
and children? The election? The  
recession? Really intimate, erotic  
stuff, Jason: it was allllll I could  
do to not fuck him in the bathroom  
after my third martini.

JASON

(snarling)  
Fuck you.

JESSICA

Fuck you!

JASON

You know, you're really fucked up,  
Jessica. This is the guy who broke  
your fucking heart; who left you  
like it was *nothing*; who started  
fucking your best friend  
immediately after you broke up. And  
then he shows up to your place of  
work, "randomly" and instead of  
telling him to fuck right off back  
to DC you say:

(mocking Jessica's  
inflection)

"Yah! I'd love to get lunch!!!"

A long, stunned silence follows. Jessica is chastened but  
still furious.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That was the absolute worst thing about assholes: sometimes, in their own asshole-ish way, they did have a point.

Jessica takes a sip of her wine and looks up at Jason.

JESSICA

Well. I guess I now know what you think of me...

Jason just stands there shaking his head.

JASON

Whatever.

Jessica shrugs and turns her attention back to unpacking.

JESSICA

Exactly. Whatever.

ACT FOUR

SUPER: 2019

INT. JESSICA &amp; JESSE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The apartment is bright and charming if not slightly tatty. Jessica (44) stands in front of some shelves crammed haphazardly with books and CDs and DVDs and video games, appraising it all. At her feet are three empty cardboard boxes. Beside her, slumped in a chair flicking through his phone is her current boyfriend JESSE (41) who's scrawny and pale and covered in tattoos. And sitting on the floor in the corner of the room, also absent-mindedly scrolling through her phone is Jesse's daughter, EMMA (10).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Jessica and Jesse had moved into this apartment three years ago. Jesse had fallen in love with the place instantaneously. To him, it looked like the quintessential New York City apartment that you saw in films: beautiful but lived in, and filled with books and art and lovely eclectic furniture accumulated over a lifetime of travels. Jessica was less immediately enamoured. She had grown up in buildings just like this one and now tended to favour new-builds, where everything was clean, and fresh, and just worked. She was willing to sacrifice charm and character on the alter of efficiency and reliability. But when she saw how happy it made Jesse, she thought "why not try something different this time?" And indeed, that's what their whole relationship had been for Jessica: something different this time.

Jessica turns to face Jesse, and tries to get his attention, but he's still absorbed in his phone.

JESSICA

Jess!

Jesse looks up.

JESSE

Hmm?

JESSICA

Doesn't this look junky?

Jessica gestures at the shelves.

JESSE  
Uh, I guess so?

JESSICA  
It looks junky. It looks cluttered.  
It looks like were a bunch of frat  
bros just tossed their copy of...

Jessica rummages through a stack of video game cases and retrieves one at random.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
(archly)  
"Uncharted 2" into a pile with all  
the rest.

JESSE  
I know Jess. It's a mess.

JESSICA  
But it started out looking so nice!  
Remember when we first moved in, it  
was just a few nice books, and the  
vase, and the candle...

JESSE  
I do. And then you kept buying  
stuff. And putting that stuff on  
top of the books, and under the  
vase, and – well, the candle  
exploded – but I'm sure if it  
hadn't there'd be a bunch of stuff  
on it or under it or beside it too.

JESSICA  
I just want to walk into this room,  
and feel calm, and zen, and like  
everything has a place.

Jesse's attention has drifted back to his phones

JESSE  
Mmm.

Jessica shoots an annoyed look over at EMMA.

JESSICA  
Emma?

Emma barely registers Jessica.

EMMA  
Mmm?

JESSICA  
Do you wanna come and help me now?

Emma looks up from her phone.

EMMA  
(faux-bitchily)  
You're not my mother! You can't  
tell me what to do!

Jessica is taken aback.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
I'm kidding.

JESSICA  
Oh.

Emma gets up and joins Jessica in front of the shelf.

EMMA  
You're so serious.  
(beat)  
So what are we doing?

JESSICA  
So I want to clear these shelves  
out entirely. Clean slate. So you  
can just start taking off all the  
CDs and stacking them over there.  
Sound good?

EMMA  
Sounds good.

Jessica starts going through the shelf. She takes a large stack of books and puts them in the "Keep" box. She then grabs a stack of CDs and starts to put them in the "Donate" box but stops herself.

JESSICA  
Hey Jess?

Jesse is still distracted on his phone.

JESSE  
Mmm?

JESSICA  
Realistically, is anyone going to  
even want these? Like does anyone  
even listen to CDs anymore or  
should we just toss 'em?

Jesse looks up.

JESSE  
Jess, c'mon: you're not really  
throwing out all our CDs?



JESSICA

We don't use them...we don't even have a CD player...

JESSE

We do! In the—

JESSICA

In the back of the closet. And it's broken.

JESSE

But isn't it nice to have something physical? That we can see and touch?

JESSICA

And collect dust.

JESSE

Well, what about Emma then? Maybe she'll want them one day?

JESSICA

She won't.

EMMA

I won't.

JESSE

You say that, but remember how pissed you were when your parents threw out all of their old records?

JESSICA

Well that's different.

JESSE

Think about it Jess! We now entrust a handful of media conglomerates to preserve and disseminate basically all the creative output from all of human history, and we merrily pay them whatever per month for the privilege of accessing all it, any time, anywhere—

JESSICA

Yeah, it's amazing.

JESSE

It's cultural arson.

JESSICA

(sighs)

We don't use them, we don't need them, and I just want to invite in, like, a *fresh energy* you know?

JESSE  
Suit yourself...

JESSICA  
I will! I just need my external  
environment to be more of a  
reflection of my internal state.

Jess gestures around him.

JESSE  
Who says it isn't?

Jessica shoots Jesse a pissed off glare.

EMMA  
Jess?

JESSICA  
(distracted)  
Hmm?

EMMA  
What about this one?

Jessica looks up. Emma's holding a loose CD: it's "Breathe."  
A stricken look passes across Jessica's face, but she quickly  
chokes it down.

JESSICA  
Oh, uh...toss.

EMMA  
K!

Emma tosses it into the box.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
Where'd its case go?

JESSICA  
No idea.

EXT. JESSICA & JESSE'S APARTMENT - TERRACE - THAT EVENING

Jessica is sitting outside on her rooftop terrace smoking a  
cigarette and drinking a glass of wine. She has her earbuds  
in and is listening to a podcast. Her eyes flicker open and  
closed as she listens along.

PODCAST (V.O.)  
*This is a time of change.* I am  
ready to embrace what is awakening  
with me and shed the identities and  
beliefs that are no longer a part  
of who I am.

Jessica takes a sip of her wine.

PODCAST (V.O.)

*This is a time of completion.* I am ready to call all of my power back to my own field and decommission myself from any outdated entanglements.

Another sip of wine.

PODCAST (V.O.)

*This is a time of transformation and rebirth.* I am ready to anchor into the person I am becoming and remember that I am not who I once was.

More wine.

PODCAST (V.O.)

*This is a time of healing, repair, and compassion.* I am ready to tear down any walls of protection I have been holding up and allow myself to be seen and supported in new ways.

And one more sip for good measure. The glass is empty.

PODCAST (V.O.)

*This is a time of faith and renewal.* I am ready to open my heart to connection in new and exciting ways as I sink deeper into my sense of belonging in this world.

Jessica pauses the podcast and refills her glass of wine. She takes a big sip then...opens Instagram. She starts idly flicking through her feed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For Jessica, it really was a time of change, and completion, and transformation and rebirth, and healing, repair and compassion, and faith and renewal, and all the rest. Or at least she desperately wanted it to be. And she had come to believe, like so many others, that the key to meaningful personal growth was fixing in your mind exactly what it was you wanted, then behaving as though you already had it. It could all be yours. You just had to call it to you.

After a few moments of idly scrolling, Jessica pauses. Then she pulls up the search bar in Instagram and types in: "Alex Hughes."

A profile pops up. It's him. Alex. Public profile. A hundred-something followers. No posts. Her finger hovers over the 'Message' button. She thinks better of it and sets down her phone. Then she thinks better of thinking better of it and picks the phone back up. She reopens Instagram and taps the 'Message' button and starts to type.

"Hey! How are you? Was just going through some old stuff...reminded me of you. How are you and Leslie (and the kids!) doing?? Would be great to catch up soon. Jess."

She stops typing and re-reads her message. Her finger hovers over the screen for a second. Then she presses 'Send.'

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And as Jessica sat there, looking off into the distance, at everything and nothing in particular, she couldn't shake the overwhelming sense that somehow, she was now on the precipice of something; that somehow, this moment, right here, would be a moment that she would look back upon as a demising line between everything that had passed, and everything that was to come. And as she leaned back in her chair, and looked up at the night sky above, she took a deep breath in, and a deep breath out, then she started to hum an old, familiar, tune from a happier, simpler time when nothing truly bad had happened, and everything had still seemed possible.

CODA

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - THE NEXT MORNING

Jessica steps out of the front door of her apartment building and walks toward a small mountain of trash that has started to accumulate on the curb. She scans the pile for a moment, then sets down the box on the sidewalk, carefully tucking it beside another, bigger box.

Then she walks off down the street.

She stops at the corner to wait for the light to change. She notices that the Neighbour Guy is standing beside her. She shoots a furtive glance in his direction. He looks up from his phone and their gazes meet. He smiles nervously and removes his earbuds.

NEIGHBOUR GUY

Hey!

JESSICA

Hi! I don't think we've properly met yet...I'm Jessica. Apartment 2...

(beat)

Did you just move in?

NEIGHBOUR GUY

Uh, I've actually been here a few months already? Three or four?

JESSICA

Oh...

NEIGHBOUR GUY

No one ever talks to their neighbours in New York, right?

The Neighbour Guy laughs nervously.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Something about the Neighbour Guy immediately destabilised Jessica. He struck her as awkward, and a little distant. But somehow also...

NEIGHBOUR GUY

It's nice to finally meet you.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

...familiar.

The Neighbour Guy extends his hand to Jessica.

The Neighbour Guy *is* the Narrator. The Narrator *is* the Neighbour Guy. The Neighbour Guy and the Narrator are THE SAME PERSON. Who is this guy? And how does he know so much about Jessica?

CUT TO: BLACK

END OF EPISODE 1