

THE TALKING CURE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

DONALD WHITNEY, 52, glasses, dyed brown hair and a gentle demeanor, addresses the camera directly.

DON

Thanks for saying hello. I'm Don Whitney, author of "The Straight and Desired Path." My book and one-on-one sessions aim to find the cause of homosexuality in men and women, and empowers one to find their inner heterosexual.

EXT. FOREST HEIGHTS OFFICES - DAY

Don walks as he continues his camera address, hands in his pockets.

DON

Studies indicate that homosexuality is a learned behavior, a state of mind, often onset by sexual abuse or loveless parenting. We can, therefore, learn our way back to Christ.

(smiles falsely)

There is hope.

INT. WHITNEY FAMILY HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Don gestures the camera to follow down the corridor. They end in a large, clean, modern kitchen.

GWEN WHITNEY, Don's wife with a motherly figure and kind disposition, puts away dishes.

DON

Good morning love.

(back to camera)

Friends, my wife Gwen.

Gwen and Don lock in a kiss that lasts a little too long, followed by an awkwardly distant hug over the dishwasher.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

DAVID WHITNEY, 10, builds a Lego airplane on the floor. Don rushes in and scoops David off the floor and flies him through the air like a plane.

DON
What's goin' on in your world,
Godzilla?

David laughs, but tries to look cool in front of the camera.

DAVID
(shrugs)
Legos.

DON
Show them your muscles.

David laughs, embarrassed, and shakes his head.

DON (CONT'D)
Why? You've got the gift dude.

David rolls his eyes and presents a half hearted bicep flex. Don clutches one.

DON (CONT'D)
Holy mackerel! Cinder blocks!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Don and Gwen interview on camera.

GWEN
And it doesn't end at the office,
we counsel married couples at the
church on Sundays, help them
through the tough patches.

DON
(smiles)
Just trying to stretch that
psychology degree as far as I can.

GWEN
No, but we -
(looks to Don)
-- and you've had to come to terms
with - have you told them at all
about any of your --?

DON
(sharp)
For the, no, for the commercial
we're sticking to the psychology.

Beat. Don tries to lift the mood.

DON (CONT'D)
(laughs)
No need to unpack all my nonsense
on camera! But we should talk about
marriage.

GWEN
Mmm. 21 years. Not perfect, no
marriage is, but consistent.

DON
And we tell couples all the time,
you know - cut yourself some slack.
Especially those struggling with
their sexuality. My seminars drive
this right home.

They stand in silence for a moment.

GWEN
Change today dot com.

DON
(chuckles)
Is she the best or what?

Gwen bursts into laughter.

DON (CONT'D)
Okay, that's probably enough.

Gwen's face goes straight and she walks promptly off camera.

Don releases a long exhale and smiles meekly. It deflates as
he loosens his tie.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Don sits with Seth Clementi (16) and his mother Wendy (40). Seth is dressed in slightly-too-tight khakis and a button up, and Wendy has curly brown hair, a long sleeve top and a long, black skirt.

Seth and Wendy sit on a couch, Don sits in his usual brown chair.

DON
So let's hear it Seth, so far so good?

Wendy turns to Seth, who appears on-guard and shy.

WENDY
Baby steps sweetie, this whole thing is baby steps.

SETH
(uncertain)
I mean, yeah, this is what I want. It's already made life so hard.

WENDY
(smiles)
Good boy.

DON
(flips through notebook)
You're spot on Seth. Polls, studies, they all point to the same thing: gay people are unhappy.
(looks up)
But I can't tell you how lucky you are to have Mom. I have patients your age whose moms won't come anywhere near here.

Seth mutters.

SETH
(sarcastic)
Lucky me, only my dad won't come.

WENDY
(quietly)
They haven't spoke since Daddy saw the text messages.

DON
Well, we're gonna need him on board.

(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)
Mom, that's your homework for this week. I want him to read my book.

Wendy doesn't respond.

DON (CONT'D)
(sighs)
And tell him to call me.

WENDY
Thank you.

Wendy smiles at Seth.

Don puts away his notebook and leans back.

DON
Okay. So Seth, you read about Safe-Touch in the book?

Seth squirms.

SETH
Mhmm.

DON
So Wendy, I'm gonna swap seats with you, actually.

Don goes to the couch with Seth and Wendy sits in the brown chair.

DON (CONT'D)
And Seth, go ahead and stand up and face me.

Seth stands.

DON (CONT'D)
Now come here.

Don pulls Seth in for a big hug, and manipulates it into a cuddle.

DON (CONT'D)
Go ahead and just lie down, and just settle in for a nice, long, cuddle.

Seth privately panics.

WENDY
(at ease)
Remember honey, we read about this?

DON
 It's non-sexual, it establishes a parent/child relationship. So he didn't experience this growing up with his dad.

WENDY
 How does it feel sweetie?

Seth closes his eyes.

SETH
 (false)
 Good.

Don rubs Seth's back.

DON
 So once Seth is breathing and relaxed, this should feel safe, comforted...

Wendy smiles and nods.

Don leans back to look at Seth.

DON (CONT'D)
 So finding a comfort level with platonic intimacy - this is the healing path. And my new book, "Parenting the Gay Child" is going to examine this much closer.

Seth's eyes shift, and for a moment, lock with Don's. Don smiles. Seth looks away.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DUSK

Gwen sits with BILL, 48, short, curly gray hair, and MADDIE, 46, thin blond hair, overweight. Gwen sits on a sofa opposite to Bill and Maddie.

A clock on the wall loudly TICKS.

GWEN
 You smell fantastic Maddie, what is that?

MADDIE
 (smelling her hand)
 Just...perfume.

They all sit in awkward silence.

The clock TICKS. And TICKS.

Gwen glances at it and compares with her watch.

GWEN

Where is that Don? Five past now.

Gwen exhales and falsely looks through some notes.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(looks up)

Maybe we should just - how long
have you been married?

MADDIE

Eleven years. I was coming off a
divorce.

Gwen forces a smile, uncomfortable. More silence.

Don EXPLODES through the door, flushed and out of breath. He carries a messy stack of papers under his arm.

DON

Very sorry folks. Got held up.

Don sits down and catches his breath. He looks at Gwen and smiles.

Gwen looks his body up and down, coldly.

Don extends a hand to Maddie and Bill.

DON (CONT'D)

(to Bill)

Don Whitney.

(to Maddie)

Don Whitney, so nice to meet you.

Don sits and clutches Gwen's hand, still a little out of breath.

Gwen fidgets her hand out of Don's hold. She tidies her hair.

DON (CONT'D)

(big sigh)

So what brings you here? What are
we working on?

MADDIE

Attitudes.

BILL

Closeness.

Don laughs uncomfortably.

DON (CONT'D)
Let's just go alphabetical.

MADDIE
His attitude. The sarcasm. Crawls
up my skin.

BILL
(sarcastic)
Thanks Maddie, you're really
striking at the heart of the issue.

MADDIE
(indignant)
And there it is folks.

BILL
My sarcasm is the least of our
problems, believe me.

GWEN
But that's your communication
barrier, right Maddie? And Bill,
what's more important than
communication?

Bill looks hesitantly to Maddie. She gives him big eyes. He
turns back sharply.

BILL
How about a sex life?

MADDIE
That's not why we're here.

BILL
It's exactly why. Don, try it. Try
two years with nothing.

Don and Gwen sit in stunned silence.

MADDIE
It hasn't been NOTHING nothing.

BILL
I'd call it a whole lot of nothing.

Don and Gwen are deer in headlights.

DON
Well, you're certainly not the
first couple to have an absent sex
life.

EXT. FOREST HEIGHTS OFFICES - DAY

SAMIR ATHIAAN, a dark black man with a red shirt, cargo shorts, and backpack sits on the steps of Don's office. He reads a book.

His hand holds a place in the book. He unzips his backpack and reaches inside.

CLOSE ON

Inside the backpack: books, pens, loose papers, and: a leather-sheathed HUNTING KNIFE.

Samir pulls out a highlighter and marks a passage in the book.

Don pulls into a parking spot. He collects a binder from the back seat, locks the car, and proceeds to the entrance. He notices Samir and raises an eyebrow.

Don retrieves his keys from his pocket.

DON
Hey there, Don Whitney, waiting for
me?

Samir looks up from the book. He recognizes Don, smiles, and nods.

Don unlocks the office door and opens it.

DON (CONT'D)
Reading anything good?

Samir holds up "The Straight and Desired Path." Don smiles.

Don looks up and notices a big cardboard sign above the entrance that reads "THIS WAY TO THE EXORCIST."

DON (CONT'D)
I tell ya, kids can be vultures,
can't they? Come on in.

As Don leads Samir in, three PROTESTERS hold signs in the distance with various messages ("YOU CAN'T PRAY AWAY THE GAY", "JESUS HAD 2 DADDYS, WHY CAN'T I?", and "STRAIGHTS ARE THE ONES HAVING GAY BABIES").

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Samir continues to read Don's book as they walk through the reception area.

KRISTY the receptionist, 31, short and brunette, glances curiously at Samir.

DON
Sorry, I didn't get your name...?

Samir looks up from the book and happily extends a hand.

SAMIR
(African accent)
Samir Athiaan.

DON
Samir? How about just Sam?

Don laughs. Samir smiles politely. Don takes off his jacket.

DON (CONT'D)
Just talk to Kristy and we'll get you set up for an appointment.

SAMIR
(eager)
Today?

DON
Oh, um...

Don turns to Kristy. She shakes her head.

DON (CONT'D)
Probably not today, we book up, but later this week is no problem.

SAMIR
(amiable)
I'll wait here. No problem guy, okay?

DON
Oh, you don't --

Samir sits down with the book and reads intently. Don looks surprised and a little scared.

He walks by Kristy and they exchange looks. She passes him a post-it note that reads:

CLOSE ON POST-IT

"He was here Saturday looking for you."

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. SEMINAR ROOM - DUSK

Don gestures to the patient couch and sits in his usual brown chair.

DON
Please.

Samir sits at the edge of the couch and resumes reading the book.

Don laughs.

DON (CONT'D)
Hey, Sam, the author's right here,
let's put down the book a moment
and --

Samir points to a page on the book and reads aloud.

SAMIR
Homosexuals are at least 12 times
more likely to molest children than
heterosexuals; 40 percent of
molestation assaults were made by
those who engage in homosexuality.

Beat of silence. Don searches for words.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
(pained)
This is why the Ugandan government
expels the homosexual from this
life, to protect our children and
each other from these animals.

Another beat of silence.

DON
(maintains sincerity)
I'm sorry Sam, are you here because
you have homosexual tendencies?

Samir clenches his fist and looks Don in the eyes.

SAMIR
(intense)
Yes, I do.

Don nervously shifts his attention from Samir's intense eyes to his notes.

DON
Well, goodness, I don't think
you're an animal. I try to practice
love, and tolerance, and lead
people away from --

Samir points to God, then holds up the book.

SAMIR
You save men from this! You have a,
um...

Samir flips through the book. He breathes heavily, eagerly.

DON
Healing path?

SAMIR
I would die in Uganda. They kill me
or I kill myself.

INT. WHITNEY BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gwen lies in a king sized bed and watches television.

Don speaks from the walk-in closet.

DON
I think it speaks to the power of
the book, that's what I think.

Gwen humors Don with a hint of sarcasm.

GWEN
Good work honey, you gave him a way
out.

Don pokes his head out of the closet to look at Gwen.

DON
(smiles proud)
My message transcends culture.

Gwen's eyes remain fixed on the television. No response.

Don gets in bed with a long sleeve cotton shirt and sweat
pants.

Gwen turns off the TV, turns over in bed, and shuts her eyes,
ready to sleep.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Samir, Gwen, and Don sit in the middle section of the far left. Bill, Maddie, and Rachel sit to the far right.

Seth and Wendy sit as far to the front as possible, directly behind some of the chapel workers.

A dozen or so children, including David, sit Indian-style in front of the PASTOR.

JOHN

(laughs)

Now how about God - does God hate anyone?

CHILDREN

(shaking heads)

Nooooo.

DAVID

(raises hand)

Because Jesus taught us to love and forgive everyone.

Seth very subtly rolls his eyes.

JOHN

But what about bad guys? Does God hate them?

CHILDREN

(nodding)

Yes.

The congregation laughs.

EXT. FOREST HEIGHTS OFFICES - ESTABLISHING SHOT

Don's car sits in an empty lot. He speaks on a cell phone and walks briskly to his office door.

DON

(on phone)

So I've got, what, a half hour before we resume with Bill and Maddie?

GWEN (O.S.)

(on phone)

But try to be a little early this time.

John rushes the key into the door.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Don sits at his desk, takes a deep breath and lets out a long sigh.

He opens his middle desk drawer and lifts out some papers. He spreads them across the desk.

He loosens his belt.

The door BURSTS OPEN to reveal Samir, with his usual backpack. He repeatedly taps a page in Don's book, hard.

Don quickly but calmly places notes for "Parenting the Gay Child" on top of the spread papers.

Don tries to center his breathing.

DON
(falsely calm)
Sam, excuse me.

SAMIR
Donald, hello, I am so sorry, but I
am ready.

DON
(irritated)
Ready for what? Sam, we've got to
get back to the church by noon.

Samir shakes his head, no. He reads from the book.

Don walks briskly to Samir and tries to stop him at the door. Samir blows by, thumbing to the right page.

SAMIR
(reading)
You must come to a point where you
look inside yourself and admit to
the feelings, and perhaps even
actions, of your latent
homosexuality. No one is beyond
redemption, but your gayness must
be met head on. Discuss with a
trusted friend, parent, or
conversion therapist.

Don takes Samir by the arm, lightly, and walks toward the door.

DON
(professional)
That's good Sam, that's our next session. We also have to do some Safe-Touch...

Samir shakes Don's hold of him and sits down.

SAMIR
Donald, please, now, I am ready now.

Don looks at the desperation in Samir's eyes.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

Gwen sits across Bill and Maddie. She looks at her watch.

GWEN
We're starting.

MADDIE
Oh, Gwen, we're happy to wait --

GWEN
Bill, let's revisit the issue of your sex life.

BILL
Happily.

GWEN
Your priorities trouble me.

MADDIE
(to Bill)
Why is it so damn important?

Bill double-takes both women.

BILL
(irritated)
I'm sorry, what are we saying? I can't expect a marital sex life, is that what I'm hearing?

GWEN
God doesn't always give us what we expect.

BILL
And what if that drives me to be
unfaithful?

MADDIE
You can't put that on me!

GWEN
You can't put that on her, that
would be your sin.

Awkward silence hangs in the air. Bill is thrown.

GWEN (CONT'D)
Sex is...really, not very important
Bill. I'm sad you think it is.

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Don tries to stay engaged in Samir, but shoots anxious
glances at the pile of papers on his desk.

SAMIR
We had been best mates since grade
school. Always together.

DON
(false sincerity)
Mmm, almost like a brother?

SAMIR
Well - got me my first job, taught
me to drive. I had no father, so he
was a best friend, a big brother,
in a way, yes.

Samir catches Don glancing at the desk...and follows his
gaze.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
What?

Don quickly leans forward and re-engages Samir.

DON
No father? That's normally a major
contributing factor.

Samir looks from the desk to Don, confused. Don gestures
broadly to the desk.

DON (CONT'D)
It's...in my new book.

Samir let's out a smile.

SAMIR
I am glad.

Samir fidgets as he searches for the next words.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
Um...
(long exhale)
Last year, Gwandoya gets engaged.
Beautiful Sudanese woman. Sittina.
So, um, we drink, we laugh, talk of
old times, the future, about when
my mother was ill, and just...I
loved him. I always loved this man.

DON
Right, but Sam, I think you
confused paternal love with
romantic love.

Samir holds up his index finger to silence Don.

SAMIR
As we laid in my bed, laughing,
talking, drinking, crying, more
drinking --
(Samir laughs)
- we fall asleep.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. APARTMENT IN UGANDA - DAWN

Gwandoya and Samir sleep soundly but separately in a twin sized bed.

SAMIR (V.O.)
Sleep all night. The sun rises, we
still sleep. When I finally open my
eyes, I look down and see
Gwandoya's hand cupping mine. His
arm and leg wrapped around me.

Samir's eyes slowly open as he notices Gwandoya's body
entangled in his. He closes his eyes and scowls in distress.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Samir's eyes are glassy.

DON
And you panicked?

SAMIR
I closed my eyes and tried to go back to sleep. I thought I'd wake up and find out it was a dream. It's like when you have a dream you killed someone, you know? But I couldn't sleep. Each moment awake was like discovering...I had really killed someone.

DON
(sincere)
It's not the same thing Sam.

SAMIR
I pushed his hand away and begun to yell. He yelled back. I made him swear to never tell a soul. He promised. We stopped yelling.

Don nods, relieved.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
Then he laid back down and asked me to come back to bed.

Samir releases a long exhale.

Don remains silent and pretends to take notes.

SAMIR (CONT'D)
I broke his ribs and jaw. So he does not tell anyone.

Donald looks up from his notebook and locks eyes with Samir.

The two hang in desperate silence. Don's professional demeanor turns fearful Samir looks back, desperation and pain in his eyes.

Don's phone VIBRATES, loud. He rushes to get it out of his pocket.

DON
(fake laughs)
Oh no, that's gonna be Gwen, I'm so late.

He answers.

DON (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Honey, I'm sorry --

TOM CLEMENTI
 (on phone, loud)
 Don Whitney? This is Tom Clementi,
 Seth's dad.

Don rises to his feet. He looks over to his desk, still anxious.

DON
 (on phone)
 Mr. Clementi, pleased to speak with
 you.

TOM CLEMENTI (O.S.)
 (on phone)
 So, what, my kid's a homo and
 you're gonna fix him?

DON
 Um, yes, as a matter of fact. You'd
 be pleased to see his progress, and
 your support is crucial.

Don saunters calmly to the desk. Samir watches peripherally.

Don holds the cell phone with his shoulder and stacks all the papers together. He stacks on a few more notebooks and clipboards.

Don glances at Samir, who bites his nail. Don snaps to get his attention, holds up two fingers, and mouths, "two minutes."

TOM CLEMENTI (O.S.)
 (frantic)
 Do you think it's all the time he
 spent with his mother as a kid? I
 worked a lot of overtime, she
 must've brought him up like a girl.

Don walks calmly to the door.

DON
 That - well, that could contribute,
 certainly. Not sure if you've
 gotten a chance to pick up my book,
 "The Straight and Desired Path."

Don steps out, through the reception area.

Samir sits alone in the room. His legs twitch with nervous energy.

He looks to the desk.

He hears Don's voice distantly, muffled and hardly audible.

Samir slowly walks over, hands in his pockets. He looks at the topmost papers and sees the beginnings of a manuscript for "Parenting the Gay Child." He smiles and reads quietly to himself.

SAMIR

(muttering the words)

For the past 40 years, members of the gay rights movement have strategically indoctrinated members of society, targeting the youth.

He turns a few pages and reads more.

SAMIR (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Factors include, divorce, death of a parent, adoption, religion, and race.

He turns several more pages and sees:

A picture of two men having anal sex.

One man administering oral sex on another man.

Two men 69ing.

Samir holds the porn in his hand and frowns in confusion. He slowly walks around the desk and looks at Don outside.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The phone conversation closes.

DON

I understand that Tom. But please do consider it. And thanks so much for talking to me.

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Samir walks back to the desk and sits down, still in shock.

He stares ahead blankly. He calmly puts down the pornography and places Don's notes back on top to conceal it.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

Don walks briskly across reception and opens the door to his office.

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Don sees Samir sitting at his desk. Don's eyes dart between Samir and the top of the desk. He swallows his panic.

DON
(false humor)
Playing musical chairs?

Samir turns to Don, confused.

SAMIR
(disoriented)
What is Safe-Touch?

DON
(relieved)
Oh, you were looking at my notes?

Samir doesn't return eye contact.

SAMIR
(skeptical)
You hold your patients?

DON
(false sympathy)
Oh, Sam, it's, it's nothing like
you and your friend. It's for
healing.

Samir remains cold.

DON (CONT'D)
Come on, come to the couch with me.
(gestures to the desk)
You don't want to read this stuff
right now anyway, just ideas right
now.

Samir stays seated at the desk.

DON (CONT'D)
Seriously Sam, this is good you're asking. This is exactly what we've been talking about.

Don lightly takes Samir's hand and leads him to the couch.

Don sits on the couch.

DON (CONT'D)
I just need you to lie down with me here.

Samir's face turns pained.

DON (CONT'D)
It's okay, just breathe.

Samir reluctantly assumes the position. Don pats his back gently, as though Samir was a baby.

DON (CONT'D)
(soothing)
You never had a father to do this with. This is just, you know, two guys, comfortable with themselves, comfortable with each other.

Samir leans back and looks Don in the eyes, searching for truth.

DON (CONT'D)
Just...two heterosexuals.

Their eye contact stalemates for a full ten seconds.

SAMIR
(desperate)
Why are you doing this?

DON
Well it's important to explain --

SAMIR
Why are you doing this with men?

DON
(uncomfortable)
Like I said...your father --

Samir pushes Don away, stands up, grabs his backpack and goes to the bathroom.

The lock latches with a loud CLICK.

CUT TO BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Don softly knocks on the bathroom door.

DON
(shouting)
Sam, did you see something on my
desk?

Silence.

DON (CONT'D)
(light-hearted)
It's fine if you did, okay? I use
those pictures in sessions. We use
it as a little test.

Silence.

DON (CONT'D)
(reassuring)
Sam, I'm not gay.

Nothing. Don jiggles the door knob aggressively.

DON (CONT'D)
Sam, I need to know you're not
going to hurt yourself. Please make
some noise.

Longer beat of silence.

CUT TO BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Don sweats and breathes heavily as he POUNDS a brass doorstep
into the wooden bathroom door. He works on a worn spot above
the door knob.

The spot CRACKS open, enough to place his arm through and
unlock the door.

He SWINGS it open to find:

Samir quietly weeping, in the fetal position, on the ground. His eyes roll in the back of his head, going in and out of consciousness.

Don's breaths become panicked and short. He takes several steps forward, but hesitates when he sees the buck knife on the ground: and Samir's hands doused with blood.

CUT TO BLACK

ON BLACK

Both Don and the 911 OPERATOR'S voice sound recorded, like a police tape.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
911, what's the nature of your
emergency?

DON (V.O.)
(panic)
Attempted suicide at Forest Heights
Office Complex, Floor 2. He's
stabbed himself with a large knife.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON

Samir's face. His glassy eyes twitch. He's more unconscious than conscious.

CLOSE ON

Samir's bloody hands.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
Can you tell me how many knife
wounds the victim has?

CLOSE ON

Samir's legs. Don's hand pulls them back to reveal the major source of blood.

His pelvic region.

CUT TO BLACK

ON BLACK

A distant ambulance siren sounds.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST HEIGHTS OFFICES - DUSK

An ambulance races out of the lot.

Two police cruisers flash in the lot as the sun sets.

Don speaks with an OFFICER.

OFFICER
So this is some kind of
psychiatrics?

Don nods.

He looks across the lot to see the three protesters get out of their van and hold up their usual signs.

Don focuses on "YOU CAN'T PRAY THE GAY AWAY."

Another officer zips an evidence bag with the knife inside.

CLOSE ON KNIFE

A small gift tag dangles from the knife handle. It reads
"GWANDOYA + SAMIR."

BACK TO DON

Don continues to focus on the protesters.

One holds up his middle-finger directly at Don.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

David sits on his bed and colors in his bible coloring book.

His bedroom door is open a crack - enough to see Don climb the stairs and walk down the corridor to his own bedroom and close the door.

INT. DON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Don walks to his side of the bed. Gwen looks up at him, more concerned than usual.

GWEN
How you holding up?

Don offers a shrug and climbs in bed.

GWEN (CONT'D)
Want to talk to me about it?

Don turns over.

GWEN (CONT'D)
Oh, love. You can't save everyone.

Don speaks very softly, almost inaudibly.

DON
I can't save anyone.

Gwen places a hand on his shoulder.

GWEN
What about yourself? What about us?

Don lies in pained silence.

Gwen takes her hand back, turns off the lamp, and rolls over.

The room is dark and quiet.

GWEN (CONT'D)
(optimistic)
I think Bill and Maddie are gonna
work it out.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. WHITNEY OFFICES - DAY

Seth and Don have a one-on-one session. Seth on the couch,
Don in his usual brown chair. He is a sleepless wreck.

Don doesn't have his notebook. He speaks with delicacy and
earnestness.

DON
How's school?

SETH
Um...it's, you know.
(half-hearted smile)
Getting through.

DON
School is hard. Fact of life.
Especially high school.

Seth lets out a genuine laugh.

DON (CONT'D)
But that's just high school.

SETH
Oh, well, yeah, that's why I'm
here. Trying to meet my hetero-
potential.

Don deflates a bit.

DON
You know the Safe-Touch exercises?

SETH
(worried)
Yeah - are we doing that today?

DON
How do those make you feel?

SETH
I guess they're helping me
understand my masculinity, and --

DON
I want the truth Seth.

Seth appears worried, like he said the wrong thing.

DON (CONT'D)
How do they make you feel?

Seth takes a long, strong look at Don.

He cautiously opens his mouth to speak.

SETH
Honestly?

Don returns, for the very first time, a genuinely concerned
set of eyes.

Seth scowls.

SETH (CONT'D)

They make me hate my mom. And you.
And myself.

The two stew in understood silence. Don breaks it.

DON

So what do we do now?

CUT TO BLACK

END OF SCRIPT