

OPPOSITE DAY

By

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FADE IN:

INT. SMOKE SHOP - DAY

Fluorescent lights HUM. Glass cases gleam, stocked with vapes, grinders, glass pipes.

A handwritten sign reads: "Be kind (or leave)"

BEN GOODE (mid-20s) stands at the counter: graphic T-shirt, flannel, messy hair. A smile that's all customer-service, no soul.

While a CUSTOMER shops around in the background, Ben absentmindedly flicks his lighter, which never sparks. A nervous tic: *flick-click, flick-click*.

STEPHEN (slightly older than Ben), a sharp-eyed coworker with a sardonic bite, stocks flavored disposable vapes.

STEPHEN

(Without looking)

I'm going to take my lunch here. Don't set the place on fire, Ben.

BEN

(Smiles, automatic)

Wouldn't dream of it.

He flicks the lighter. *Click*.

Stephen finally looks at him, studying him with mild judgment.

STEPHEN

Oh - and guess what lucky bastard gets to work with his *girlfriend* later?

Ben freezes.

BEN

(confused)

My-? I don't- what?

Stephen smirks, enjoying this.

STEPHEN

Yeah. Mia. You know, the woman you turn into a Victorian chimney sweep around because you forget how to speak and just...

(imitates Ben awkwardly)  
"Uhh yeah, Mia, I can close so you can  
leave early, no problem."

Ben turns red.

BEN  
She is NOT my girlfriend.

STEPHEN  
Sure, man. That's why you reorganize  
the whole front counter when she's  
scheduled. Very normal. Very casual.

Ben flicks the lighter a little more aggressively.

BEN  
It was ONE time and everything was  
dusty! She sneezed!

Stephen raises an eyebrow.

STEPHEN  
Right. Achoo.

Stephen chuckles dryly. He leaves and the door chimes.

A CUSTOMER knocks a heavy ashtray off a shelf. It teeters...  
and doesn't fall. Stays perfectly balanced against physics.

Ben stares. Blinks. Huh.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - LATER

A LINE at the counter. Customers of every kind: indecisive,  
clueless, overconfident. BEN puts on a smile.

BEN  
I would get one now, because we'll  
probably be out of those by noon  
today.

*Flick.* The front door swings open as STEPHEN wheels in a  
fresh case of the exact product.

STEPHEN  
Surprise Shipment! The UPS guy found  
this on the truck and drove back.

Ben's smile tightens. Interesting.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

BEN bags an order for a patient CUSTOMER. The brown paper sack crinkles as he unfolds it. STEPHEN starts to gather his personal belongings.

BEN

Alright, I got you ten percent off today. Your total is gonna be seventeen, nineteen.

STEPHEN

Later, Ben.

BEN

Yeah, I'll see you tomorrow.

Stephen manages a low-effort wave. He leaves out the front door.

BEN

(To customer)

Do you want a receipt? No?

The customer accepts the handoff, and exits the store with the bag.

BEN

(To himself)

I better do a cash drop, while I've got a minute. I fuckin' hope this drawer isn't under.

*Flick-click.*

Ben pockets the lighter and starts tapping away at the touchscreen cash register. The drawer releases and shoots open.

Stunned. Ben stares at a nearly empty cash register with only a few one and five dollar bills.

He reaches back into his pocket for his lucky lighter. Holding the lighter awkwardly, he flicks it repeatedly.

*Flick-click. Flick-click. Flick.*

BEN

No, this isn't even possible.

Ben reaches for the landline, picks it up, and sets it face

down on the glass countertop.

BEN

Alright, let's just figure this shit out. No one's coming in for at least ten minutes.

*Flick.*

Suddenly, laughing can be heard outside. *Ding.* The door chimes as three college students stumble in, sobriety in question.

Ben exhales—half laugh, half dread.

*Flick-click.*

He nervously, fidgets with the lighter some more.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - TESTING MONTAGE

BEN

We're going to have a slow day.

*Flick.*

The store overflows with customers.

CUT TO:

INT. SMOKE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Ben fidgets with his lighter some more.

BEN

This lighter won't work.

*Flick.*

The lighter flares a tall, perfect flame.

CUT TO:

INT. SMOKE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

BEN

This display is sturdy.

*Flick.*

The acrylic riser collapses, products everywhere. Ben winces

at the cacophony of broken glass and plastic. Ben's focus shifts.

BEN  
(To tip jar)  
No one's tipping today.

*Flick.*

CUT TO:

INT. SMOKE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Bills rain into the jar from consecutive CUSTOMERS.

MIA (mid-20s), a smart-mouthed coworker of Ben's, enters the store. She quickly takes notice of Ben's strange behavior.

MIA  
Well someone seems awfully cheerful today.

BEN  
(Smiling in awe)  
It's a beautiful day, I mean look.

He grabs the overflowing tip jar, lifts it up like a trophy he's extremely proud of. Dollar bills fall off the jar.

MIA  
(Shocked, concerned)  
What the fuck did you do?

BEN  
(Defensive)  
What do you mean, Mia?

MIA  
What do you mean, what do I mean? I mean... That!

She points at the jar in disbelief.

MIA  
I have been working here for three years. And I've only been tipped twice.

BEN  
Well maybe you should smile more.

MIA  
Why I oughta kick your fucking ass.

BEN  
(Laughs)  
What?! Why?

MIA  
I'm serious, nobody tips worth a crap.  
What, did you start giving shit away  
for free?

And any man who tells a woman to smile  
deserves a swift kick in the nuts.  
Didn't your mom ever teach you  
manners?

BEN  
(Nervously laughs)  
I'm sorry, I really didn't know. And  
no of course not. Stephen would have  
my ass for that.

MIA  
Well, what did you do, I'm serious.

BEN  
I wished for it.

MIA  
You wished for it?

BEN  
Well not exactly. I wished for the  
opposite to happen.

MIA  
Ohhhh! Okay!

Beat. Ben realizes she's being sarcastic when it's already  
too late.

MIA (CONT'D)  
So you just happened to wish for no  
money to be put in that jar. The jar I  
stare at every day and watch people  
drop the occasional nickel or dime  
into. You just said "Hey I sure hope  
no one tips me" and then WA-BAM!

BEN  
Crazy enough, yes.

MIA  
Fine, don't tell me.

Mia shakes her head. She walks toward the break room to clock-in.

Ben flicks his lighter even more around Mia. Something about her makes him extra nervous.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - BREAK ROOM

MIA rips a bong out the back door of the shop.

Door chime.

She exhales aggressively.

MIA  
(Groans)  
Every. Fucking. Time.

She sets the glass piece down on a filing cabinet and shuffles towards the sales floor.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - DAY

BEN struggles with maintaining his composure when a RUDE CUSTOMER (mis-30s), swaggering ego, plants himself at the counter, loudly and persistently tapping his credit card against the countertop.

MIA starts stocking the drink cooler.

RUDE CUSTOMER  
The dude just last week sold this to me for twenty.

BEN  
(Calm)  
Hey, man. Last week, my boss was out of town, and unless you're confusing Mia over there for a dude, I think you're mistaken.

Mia shoots a dirty look at Ben. Ben responds with an honest shrug and gestures his head towards the customer.

Mia's vengeful gaze shifts towards the customer.

BEN

All I'm sayin' is I was the only guy working here for two weeks.

RUDE CUSTOMER

Whatever, man. Call me a liar. You'll give it to me for twenty if you want business.

Ben's fake smile curdles. He flicks the lighter involuntarily.

BEN

Here. Twenty bucks.

He forces his smile. Still rapidly playing with the lighter. Ben stammers on his words.

BEN

I really hope... you don't... have a-

He catches himself. Eyes widen. Silence. The fluorescent HUM grows louder.

BEN

(With confidence)

I mean-get home safe.

One final *flick*.

The words hang. The store suddenly feels colder.

RUDE CUSTOMER

Yeah. Whatever

He storms out. The door chime DINGS, cheerful and final.

Ben's stomach drops. Mia eyes him.

MIA

"Get home safe?" Is that your new brand?

Ben watches the street through the window. His smile dies. The rude customer pockets his phone, not looking where he's going.

A BUS barrels through the intersection out front of the store. A horn BLARES.

WHAM.

Screams. A vape pen rolls into the gutter.

An awful echoing quiet. Ben can't move.

Mia has already stepped from behind the counter, phone in hand.

MIA  
(Soft, to herself)  
Oh my God.

Ben swallows hard, like he's trying to push a confession back down his throat.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

A cluster of PEOPLE gather. EMTs push through the RUDE CUSTOMER is alive—but ruined, moaning on the asphalt.

BEN stands on the periphery, skin pale.

A COP clocks him, then looks away, busy. MIA hangs back beside Ben.

MIA  
What the hell just happened?

Ben stares forward. He fidgets the lighter around in his fist. Mia watches EMTs lift the man. She watches Ben more.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - NIGHT

BEN and MIA work on their closing duties. Ben locks the front door before pulling the chain to the "Open" sign.

Mia stocks the shelves mechanically. The lighter sits on the countertop, the metal glistens in the fluorescent light.

MIA  
(clears throat, then softly)  
You okay?

BEN  
Yeah. Just--long day.

MIA  
(mutters softly)  
Yeah. Accidents happen.

She disappears to the back room. Ben's eyes drift to the street, then to the security camera above the counter. Silent

witness.

He fumbles with the lighter against the glass as he struggles to pick it up. Frantic, he pushes the lighter onto the floor.

Mia peeks out.

She watches him swiftly scoop up the lighter and drop it into his pocket.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Minimalist. Lifeless. Bland. The apartment is clean, because there is almost nothing in it. Nothing but a sofa and a single plant, struggling to stay alive.

And on the other wall is a modest-sized television, resting on the floor. The tv is missing its stand, so Ben has it lean against the wall.

BEN watches a muted news report:

"MAN STRUCK DOWNTOWN--CONDITION STABLE."

He relaxes a fraction. His phone buzzes; it's Stephen.

"Hey man, you good?" he writes.

Ben types back.

"Yeah. Just weird." He doesn't hit send. He lifts the lighter. Contemplates.

BEN  
(to the plant)  
You'll probably die.

*Flick.* The plant immediately perks up--leaves lifting toward the ceiling, greener, healthier.

Ben smiles. And it cost him nothing.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - DAY

There is no music playing, there are no jokes being made. Tension looms over the store.

STEPHEN sets a DONATION JAR on the counter:

"FOR MIKE'S RECOVERY" A photo of the Rude Customer, smiling.

MIA slides in behind the register. She and BEN stare at one another briefly.

MIA  
I keep thinking--what are the odds?

BEN  
(careful)  
Low.

A customer answers, NICE GUY: awkward, earnest.

NICE GUY  
Hey-was that accident near here? I  
thought I saw...

Ben's lighter clicks once in his pocket. Mia notices.

BEN  
(to Nice Guy; reflex)  
Don't worry. You're definitely not  
going to have an amazing day.

*Flick.*

Beat.

Nice Guy beams.

NICE GUY  
Ha-thanks? I'm not sure what you meant  
by that, but I feel great!

Ben cracks a smile. Mia stares, connecting red string only she can see.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - LATER

BEN takes a breath, looks at MIA, then at the donation jar.

BEN  
I'm gonna step out for a sec.

MIA  
(light, probing)  
While you're out there, don't wish for  
anything crazy...

He freezes. She smiles, but there's steel in it.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

BEN stops under the awning. He watches the current of foot traffic. The world looks... edible.

A MAN sticks out as he struggles to carry multiple coffee cups.

BEN  
(to himself)  
No one is going to ruin their coffee  
today.

*Flick.* The biodegradable drink carrier in the man's hand bends in half. Two of the drinks slip, but instead of spilling everywhere, they flip and land perfectly on a bench, not spilling one drop.

The man laughs, amazed.

A CUSTOMER approaches the door and stops when he notices Ben.

CUSTOMER  
Hey, man! I got a quick question. THC-  
A means it's legal to hit it while  
driving... right?

Ben stares at him, horrified.

BEN  
(Without thinking)  
Nothing is stopping you!

*Flick.*

The customer immediately drops his THC-A vape, and it rolls across the street and into a sewer drain. The customer yells and chases after it.

Ben looks back at the lighter in his hand.

BEN  
(murmurs)  
"Don't" equals do. "Will" equals  
won't.

He looks toward the hospital down the block.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

The rude customer, MIKE, lies unconscious in a room, leg in

cast, face stitched. A TV plays in the background.

Through the glass, BEN stands with a bouquet from the gas station. He doesn't go in.

A NURSE passes, clocking him.

NURSE

You family?

BEN

Co-community?

He stares at Mike, watching the rise-and-fall of his chest.

BEN

(under breath)

You're not going to make a full recovery any time soon.

Ben lifts the lighter. He considers for a second. Tilts his head. The opposite would be... good.

He swallows. Then walks into the room.

BEN

You will recover completely.

Instead of flicking the lighter, he sets it down on the small wooden table next to the hospital bed. He places the flowers next to it, and walks away, jaw tight.

Inside the room, Mike coughs, eyes flutter open--then he winces, reaching for water.

INT. SMOKE SHOP - NIGHT

The store is calm. MIA scrolls her phone while she waits on BEN to finish rolling a joint. Ben sighs to himself. Did he help, or did reality just... reality.

NICE GUY reappears, glowing. Ben sets the joint down on a rolling tray and walks out to help the customer.

NICE GUY

Sorry-had to come back. That "not an amazing day" thing turned out to be amazing! I-uh paid my last late bill, found twenty bucks, and my ex texted me to apologize for cheating on me with the priest who married us.

BEN  
(stunned by the last part)  
Sounds... like a great day to me.

The nice guy drops a fifty dollar bill in the donation jar.

NICE GUY  
Whoever he is-- I-uh hope he makes it.  
Thanks you guys!

Ben nods. The gift stings.

Mia waits for the customer to leave. Eyes on Ben. The door chimes.

MIA  
What did you say to him?

BEN  
"Don't have an amazing day."

MIA  
And then he did.

Beat. Ben keeps very still.

MIA (CONT'D)  
(soft)  
What did you say to the guy who got  
hit?

He doesn't answer. She looks for the lighter in his hand.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Your tick. With that fucking lighter!  
It's in every clip.

She nods toward the store laptop which is open to the security camera monitor. Ben follows her gaze.

MIA (CONT'D)  
I pulled it. I was curious.

BEN  
You think I--

MIA  
I think your words echo. That they  
bounce. And I think you know it.

Ben's mask fractures. Then reattaches.

MIA (CONT'D)  
Tell me I won't get promoted.

BEN  
You don't need me for that. It  
wouldn't mean as much if I did, when  
you already deserve the position just  
the way things are--the way you are.

Mia smiles.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Besides. I got rid of that stupid  
thing.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

BEN walks to his car after closing up the shop. He kicks a rock, reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a pre-rolled joint in a plastic tube. He reaches for a lighter, but there is none. He laughs to himself: right.

The silence is broken by a familiar voice.

MIKE  
Need a light?

Ben turns around to see MIKE holding the lucky lighter.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
I'm definitely not going to break both  
of your legs.

CUT TO BLACK.