

APPREV

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EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING

A modern white van with 'DEPT. OF FAMILY ORGANISATION' on the side pulls up at a suburban house. TWO WOMEN (30s) dressed in sheriff-style uniforms and with neat hair get out of the front and walk around to slide open the side door.

A 13 YEAR OLD BOY, clutching a backpack, gets out and is slowly escorted to the front door of the house they have pulled up at. Next door...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Opening his eyes slowly, THOMAS (late 20s, dark hair and fashionable stubble) wakes to see his wife ILONA (late 20s, pretty, with short blonde hair) staring at him. The pair lie in bed, and she has been waiting for him to wake up for a while.

She immediately pounces on him.

ILONA
Happy anniversary!

THOMAS
(still half asleep)
Happy anniversary.

ILONA
Do you want your present?

Dazed, Thomas doesn't answer, so Ilona bounces on him a bit.

ILONA (cont'd)
I said -- Do you want your present?

THOMAS
Yes.

Reaching down beside the bed, Ilona brings up a small box and passes it to Thomas, who sits up and removes the lid.

He pulls out a small leather whip.

ILONA
Third anniversary.

THOMAS
Leather?

ILONA
Yes sir! I think you can call me,
Mistress Ilona, from now on.

THOMAS
Okay Mistress Ilona. May I get you
your present?

She gives him a playful whip.

ILONA
May I get you your present, Ma'am!

THOMAS
May I get you your present, Ma'am?

ILONA
You may.

Thomas reaches down beside his side of the bed and brings up
a white paper bag - straight from the store.

ILONA (cont'd)
Oooh, wrapped to perfection.

In it, Ilona finds an expensive handbag.

ILONA (cont'd)
So, you can take a hint!

THOMAS
You've only been talking about it for
three months.

They kiss.

ILONA
Actually, I forgot to give you your
card.

She gives him a card. Out of it falls a folded piece of
paper. Thomas opens it, revealing an appointment card with
an 'Approved Reversal Consultant'.

ILONA (cont'd)
(excited)
Third anniversary.

INT. WORKPLACE - DAY

A white collar worker, Thomas talks with his work colleague TREVOR (mid 40s, shirt and tie with the collar undone) at the coffee machine in the work lunchroom. Another couple of colleagues sit just out of earshot.

TREVOR

You've gotta be happy with that?

THOMAS

Yeah. I mean, I am happy. We talked about it about six months ago. She's a pretty big call, though.

TREVOR

Mate, it's nothing. Apprevs have come down to an overnight stay now. I reckon Ilona is worth it!

THOMAS

Overnight?

TREVOR

You're biggest thing is going to be the financials. I don't know how you're sitting, but I know how much this place pays. I'd say, you'll get approval for a single.

(beat)

I only got a single first time around.

THOMAS

But you've got three.

TREVOR

Yeah, we got a double the second time. I think they felt sorry for me. You know, we didn't even get approval for our single on the first try. I had to go back twice.

(beat)

Have you made an appointment yet?

THOMAS

For the Apprev?

TREVOR

Yeah.

THOMAS

Yeah. Tuesday after work. Ilona
booked it in already.

TREVOR

Well mate, nothing to worry about.
You'll romp it in.

THOMAS

The whole thing just seems so
bloody -- convoluted.

TREVOR

Not your fault, mate.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

In front of her bedroom mirror, Ilona stands and turns,
looking to see that her dress fits properly in all the right
places. She hears a car pull up.

EXT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas switches off his car radio as he pulls up into the
driveway. He checks his teeth in the car mirror and exits,
making his way for the front door.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Walking and taking off his tie at the same time so as to not
waste any time, Thomas sniffs under his arm to ascertain if
he also needs deodorant.

THOMAS

(yells)

Illy?

A faint reply comes from the distance.

ILONA (O.S.)

In the bedroom.

THOMAS

(yells)

You ready?

ILONA (O.S.)

Yes. Two minutes.

With a raised eyebrow, Thomas checks his teeth again in the hallway mirror. As time passes, he gets out his phone and has a quick scroll of social media.

THOMAS

Do you know how many are going tonight?

ILONA

No. Maybe 20 or so.

Ilona has joined Thomas now, as they make their way for the front door.

THOMAS

You know what's going to happen, don't you?

(beat)

With The Op. She's gonna get me to talk to Donnie.

ILONA

You are the closest thing that he's got to a male role model. Which is something that you should be honored about.

THOMAS

(feigns talking to his nephew)

"Yeah Donnie, they get your balls in one hand and go to town with a razor in the other. And then you won't be able to walk for a week."

ILONA

Really!

THOMAS

(continues with voice)

"And then everyone in your family will talk about how well The Op went. Oh the fun you'll have!"

ILONA

Get in the car.

The pair make for the front door, Ilona carrying a wrapped present.

EXT. SISTER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Cars are parked in the driveway and nature strip, as balloons tied to the letterbox denote that this is place of the party. Thomas and Ilona walk up to the front door, Ilona still with the present in tow.

INT. SISTER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Ilona's sister ANNE (36) let's Thomas and Ilona in, to the background hum of about 15 people revelling at Donnie's party.

ANNE

I love you guys! Thanks for coming.

ILONA

Hey princess.

All three share a group hug, with DONNIE (13 today) running up to all three and joining in.

DONNIE

Uncle Thomas and Auntie Ilona!

THOMAS

Hey mate.

DONNIE

Thanks for coming! Can I get you a beer?

THOMAS

Ha ha! That's alright, I'll grab one.

ILONA

13! Do you feel older?

DONNIE

No.

ANNE

Donnie, why don't you show Auntie Ilona the mega Lego spaceship that Craig got you?

DONNIE

(excited)

Yeah! Come and have a look at this! 900 pieces. It's not all together yet.

ILONA
Ooooooh! 900 pieces?

Taking her cue, Ilona follows a running Donnie into the lounge room. Anne turns her gaze to Thomas.

ANNE
Can you do it?

THOMAS
I knew this was coming.

ANNE
Well, can you? I think that it should come from a man. And you're the best guy that I know.

THOMAS
Yeah, okay.

ANNE
I don't know, I mean, I would do it --

THOMAS
No, it's no problem.

ANNE
I hear that maybe you'll be having the talk one day? With your own.

THOMAS
Yeah, we're going to apply. We're just getting all of the paperwork together now.

ANNE
Ah, you'll be a shoe in. Phillip got approved for a double.

THOMAS
And now look at him! 13. Phillip would have been so proud. Of course, it's my honour to have the chat with Donnie.

Holding back a tear, Anne lunges at Thomas and hugs him with all her might.

INT. SISTER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the lounge room, Donnie kneels before a big bunch of wrapped presents, surrounded by a group of around a dozen adults - mostly family types, all with a drink in hand and talking among themselves. Modest birthday party paraphernalia also fills the room.

A MAN IN A SUIT (mid 40s) talks with Anne's FEMALE WORK COLLEAGUE (mid 30s).

MAN IN SUIT

It's not really a problem. 97% of Ops are trouble-free anyway.

FEMALE WORK COLLEAGUE

No, I understand that the risks are low. I mean, the physical risks are low.

The pair take a sip each from their drinks.

FEMALE WORK COLLEAGUE (cont'd)

I don't think that there has been enough research into what it does, to the brain -- emotionally.

MAN IN SUIT

Well, I turned out okay.

Their conversation is interrupted by Anne, yelling to the room. She stands on a chair so everyone can see her.

ANNE

Hey all!

The murmur in the room comes to a stop. Someone stops the music playing in the background.

ANNE (cont'd)

Hey. I'd just like to thank everyone coming for Donnie's 13th birthday. Auntie Jill, thanks for coming from Newcastle. Peter and Margot, thank you for making the journey all the way from Brisbane.

Applause from the crowd.

ANNE (cont'd)

Let's get the young man himself up here for a few words.

(MORE)

ANNE (cont'd)
 And to thank everyone for this mega haul of presents!

Anne steps down from the chair. Donnie reluctantly steps up.

DONNIE
 Thanks Mum. Thanks to everyone for coming. I really like the Lego stuff and also the footy boots from Auntie Ilona and Uncle Thomas.

Guffaws as the crowd knows what a kid values.

DONNIE (cont'd)
 But also, to everyone who has come a long way to be here. Turning 13 is a big part of a boy's life. I'm glad that you guys all love me and Mum enough to come.

Cheers from the crowd turn into a SERIES OF SHOTS, music playing over the top.

Donnie blowing out the candles on his cake.

The group all eating cake.

Donnie opening some more presents.

Random members of the group talking with each other.

Ilona having a quiet word to Thomas, who listens intently and then looks for Donnie.

Thomas going up to Donnie and the pair walking off to the kitchen.

Thomas and Donnie having a quiet talk.

INT. SISTER'S HOUSE - LATER

With everyone gone, Anne and Donnie are tidying up some stuff off the floor and putting it in the rubbish bin.

DONNIE
 Thanks for everything, Mum.

ANNE
 You're such a fine young man. Wow, 13.

(MORE)

ANNE (cont'd)

(beat)

Did Uncle Thomas have a chat with you?

DONNIE

Yeah. Poor guy. You know, we have sex ed at school. I know all about The Op and Apprevs.

ANNE

Well? I've got a brochure about it anyway. We've got three months to book it all in.

DONNIE

I sort of don't get why we even need it. I mean, it's my body. I'm in charge of it.

ANNE

(avoiding)

It can all be done online, and you're even back in one day. And then it's a week off school!

EXT. APPREV CONSULTANT - DAY

The Apprev building is in a group of commercial shops, with 'JANE SCARLETT - APPROVED REVERSAL CONSULTANT' written on the glass door.

INT. APPREV CONSULTANT - DAY

Seated, Thomas briefly looks at some of the books behind JANE SCARLETT (40s, dressed for business). The room is modern and straightforward. Jane reads through some of Thomas's paperwork which he has given her in a folder.

JANE

Well, you've definitely done your homework. Have you got your financials in here?

THOMAS

Ah, yes. Copies of tax returns for the last two years.

She looks through the folder and finds them.

JANE

Ooh. You're just on the income threshold. How long have you been at your current employer?

THOMAS

Four years.

JANE

Okay.

Putting down the paperwork, Jane chooses her words carefully.

JANE (cont'd)

So, I think that we can probably move forward. It would help if you brought in a bit more on the income front, but you're a good, solid candidate.

THOMAS

So, what's the story with things like singles, doubles and all that?

JANE

We don't have to worry about that just yet. The main thing is you tick as many boxes as you can. Financially, you're okay. You've got a clean civic compliance record. We just need a medical sign-off and I think that we can file next week.

INT. SUPERMARKET - EVENING

In a reasonably desolate supermarket, Thomas and Ilona walk slowly behind a trolley, picking up the occasional grocery item and putting it in.

THOMAS

The worst part is, she didn't say if it would be a double, or a single, or whatever.

ILONA

It's just so exciting!

THOMAS

Yeah but, if it's a single, it means I need The Op again.

ILONA

Hey, we'll take whatever we can! If the Apprev girl said we're a chance.

THOMAS

She didn't sound that confident, if I'm totally honest.

ILONA

What did she say? I mean, we meet all the criteria based on the website. Why are they going to put the checklist up and then deny us?

THOMAS

I'm just on the minimum threshold, income-wise.

ILONA

Ah, that's only to weed out the crap. We are family material, baby!

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

An overcast day with consulting rooms in a hospital high rise.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DOCTOR STEPHANIE THOMPSON (40s) sits and studies Thomas's medical history. Thomas sits opposite, quietly spying some of the certificates on her wall. One reads 'Government Certified Vas Deferens Silencing Specialist'.

DR. THOMPSON

This is the funniest thing --

THOMAS

What's that?

DR. THOMPSON

Your vas deferens silencing was conducted by my old professor.

THOMAS

Yeah?

DR. THOMPSON

I know! What a coincidence. Well, Dr. Reynolds was a good man with a near perfect strike rate. I don't think you'll have a problem.

THOMAS

Well, if there's one thing that I hope a guy is good at --

DR. THOMPSON

Ha ha. Would you like take off your trousers and jump up onto the bed please?

Thomas does as instructed.

DR. THOMPSON (cont'd)

Have you had any sexual performance issues?

THOMAS

You mean, like, lately, or ever?

DR. THOMPSON

Well, ever?

THOMAS

No. No complaints.

The doctor handles Thomas's genitals.

DR. THOMPSON

Have you ever experienced any pain when you ejaculate?

THOMAS

Well, I screw my face up.

No laugh from the doctor.

THOMAS (cont'd)

No. Never any pain.

DR. THOMPSON

You can hop down and put your pants back on.

The pair rejoin each other at the table. Dr. Frankstein washes her hands with sanitiser.

DR. THOMPSON (cont'd)
Based on the sample that you
supplied, I can tell you that you're
in good shape for a reversal.

THOMAS
Great!

DR. THOMPSON
Having said that, it is also my duty
to inform you of some of the risks
involved. There is, of course, the
risk of infection with any procedure.
(beat)
With the vas deferens silencing
having taken place over 10 years ago,
pressure has built up in the area
where your sperm lives. As a result,
you may have a whole heap of swimmers
but they need to learn how to swim
again.

THOMAS
That wasn't in the brochure!

DR. THOMPSON
It's nothing to panic about. It
normally gets better over time.

THOMAS
(worried)
But what if the board rejects me. We
can't apply for another three years.
What happens then? Does it get worse?

DR. THOMPSON
Everything's going to be okay. Like I
said, Dr. Reynolds is a professional.
No scar tissue at all, from what I
can see.

She opens up her folder again, and starts to scribble
something in doctor writing.

DR. THOMPSON (cont'd)
I'm recommending you for the Apprev.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - EVENING

As they cook dinner, Thomas and Ilona move around the
kitchen with utensils, pans and the like. Ilona is excited,
Thomas is on chopping duty.

ILONA

I just, really can't wait. It's so exciting.

THOMAS

She said that even after the reversal, there could be some problems.

ILONA

What sort of problems?

THOMAS

My swimmers may have forgotten how to swim.

ILONA

(laughing)

So, do we need to go and get them some floaties?

Thomas smirks, but doesn't laugh.

ILONA (cont'd)

Maybe a kickboard?

Not seeing the funny side, Thomas lashes out, turning around and putting down his knife.

THOMAS

The whole process is bullshit. I've got to get approval to get something reversed that I didn't want done in the first place. From a board of women who probably haven't seen a dick for decades. I just got my balls fondled, checking for scar tissue, like there's any way that you can check by grabbing a handful of scrotum.

ILONA

(interrupts slightly)

Look, I know. But we've got each other. And we're going to get approved; I just know it.

THOMAS

It's just crap. And if I only get the Apprev for a single, it's all back and we're going through the same shit again next time.

ILONA

Hey, it's not easy. But the law is the law. The fact that we have a chance for even a single is a blessing that we have to take -- with both hands.

THOMAS

It's alright for you. I'm the one that they're asking all of the questions. "How much do you earn? Have you ever committed a crime? Do your balls have any scars?"

He starts to break down. Ilona hugs him.

ILONA

Hey, hey. There's really nothing to be worried about. This is us. This is going to be our family.

THOMAS

(still embracing)
I love you so much.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Establishing of the hospital.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Thompson sits at her desk again, with Donnie and Anne sitting opposite. Anne still has a few flyers in her hand, whilst Donnie sits with his arms crossed. In the background is a cutaway of the male reproductive system.

Dr. Thompson tries to speak consolingly with Donnie.

DR. THOMPSON

So there's no real issue, it's mainly about resting during the recovery period so that you can be back on your feet again without any hiccups.

ANNE

And, I think you're allowed to have a full five days off school, as well.

DR. THOMPSON

That's right. If we book it in for a Friday, you'll get the whole of the next week off school. You won't have any problems.

Donnie still isn't sold on the idea, not knowing that The Op is happening whether he agrees to it or not. He looks down as he speaks.

DONNIE

Dylan Haskell said that his brother had to have The Op done three times. Like, he got tested and had to have it again.

DR. THOMPSON

Well, sometimes that does happen. It is rare, but it does occur. I can guarantee you that we are going to take every precaution to ensure that you don't have any problems.

DONNIE

What about footy? I mean, I don't want to miss any matches.

ANNE

You may have to miss maybe one game.
(to Dr. Thompson)
That's right, isn't it?

DR. THOMPSON

Yes, just one week out. And when you return, your legs will be better rested so you'll even have an advantage.

Donnie slowly comes around.

DONNIE

Well, I suppose that if I have to, we may as well get it done.

Anne and Dr. Thompson smile in relief.

DONNIE (cont'd)

So, what is the test that I have to take to make sure that I don't need to have The Op again?

EXT - APPROVED REVERSAL SUITABILITY BOARD BUILDING - DAY

The Approved Reversal Suitability Board convenes in something akin to a courthouse, full of activity. Groups of three walk into and out of it, some with smiles and some with frowns.

Jane stands on her own out the front, armed with her briefcase and some folders. Up to her walks Thomas and Ilona, who are hand in hand. Thomas has some folders of his own.

JANE

Thomas, Ilona.

ILONA

Hey Jane.

JANE

We've got this.

The three turn and make their way towards the building.

INT. APPROVED REVERSAL SUITABILITY BOARD FOYER - DAY

Thomas, Ilona, and Jane all sit patiently and look around the room at some of the other Apprev candidates. There are three couples, all with consultants. All look like they are in the same boat as Thomas and Ilona.

As they sit and ponder, a CLERK opens a door from the main room and calls out.

CLERK

Thomas Bratten.

Thomas stands immediately, Jane follows. Ilona remains seated, and holds out her hand. Thomas grabs it and squeezes while they share a special look with each other.

INT. APPROVED REVERSAL SUITABILITY BOARD MAIN ROOM - DAY

Vast, the main room of the ARSB is also desolate. At one end, five women sit at a bench, imposing, dressed conservatively, and all in a line. About 10 metres away, is a second, much smaller table, with two seats. There is nobody else in the room.

Jane leads Thomas to the table. Their footsteps echo as they walk.

Central on the main bench sits JUSTICE O'BRIEN (50s). The four other Justices - JUSTICE HART, JUSTICE DELGADO, JUSTICE ELLIOTT and JUSTICE GOODE are all mirrors of Justice O'Brien and flank her sides.

Justice O'Brien opens the 'BRATTEN' file.

JUSTICE O'BRIEN
Thomas Bratten?

THOMAS
Yes.

JUSTICE O'BRIEN
And who is representing you today?

JANE
Ah, Jane Scarlett, Madam Justice.
A.R.S.V.

JUSTICE O'BRIEN
Thank you Ms. Scarlett.
(beat)
Mr. Bratten, I am Justice O'Brien. I am the Chief Justice of the Approved Reversal Suitability Board. With me today, are Justices Hart, Delgado, Elliott and Goode. We will be going through your submission for an Approved Reversal to your mandatory vas deremens silencing, and making a decision today based on our findings.
(beat)
Do you have any questions about the process to determine your suitability?

THOMAS
No -- Madam Justice.

JUSTICE O'BRIEN
Okay, well let's get started. I see that you have been given a clean bill of health by Dr. Thompson. That's always a good thing to get out of the way.

THOMAS
Ahh, yes. Madam Justice.

JUSTICE GOODE

We note that your current earnings are 107.5% of the minimum annual earning threshold. Are you confident that these earnings will increase over time?

Anxious as you can get, Thomas continues.

THOMAS

Yes.

(interrupts himself)

Madam Justice!

JUSTICE GOODE

Would you care to elaborate?

THOMAS

Well, okay. I mean, my regional manager has said that he has been very happy with what I've been doing, so I'm not getting the sack any time soon.

This is not what the Justices want to hear, and they aren't impressed.

THOMAS (cont'd)

But, really, I've been there four years and now I am training others so yes, things are definitely going to increase.

JUSTICE DELGADO

I ask this of all possible candidates. Mr. Bratten, what makes you so certain that you are going to be a good father?

Caught off guard, Thomas flounders. He looks at Jane, who just looks at him back. They hadn't prepared for this.

THOMAS

My Dad was a good father, I suppose.

JUSTICE DELGADO

(condescending)

Your Dad was a good father?

THOMAS

You know, I don't know. But being a good father isn't -- look, I'm going to be in a good family.

(MORE)

THOMAS (cont'd)
My wife Ilona is the best woman in
the world, and I love her. And we're
going to have the best family.

JUSTICE DELGADO
The best family?

THOMAS
Well, I already do -- have the best
family.
(beat)
We're going to add to the best
family.

JUSTICE DELGADO
Okay.

JUSTICE HART
Has there ever been any family
violence, when you were a child?

THOMAS
No. Madam Justice.

JUSTICE HART
Would you characterise your
upbringing as loving?

THOMAS
Yes.

JUSTICE HART
From your father?

THOMAS
Yes.

There is a pause, whilst Justice Hart ponders his answer.
Nervous, Thomas thinks he's in trouble.

THOMAS (cont'd)
Madam Justice.

Justice Hart smiles.

INT. APPROVED REVERSAL SUITABILITY BOARD FOYER - DAY

Thomas, Ilona, and Jane all sit in a row, apprehensive.
Silent.

The clerk opens the door from the main room, and looks to
summon them. Thomas looks back.

INT. APPROVED REVERSAL SUITABILITY BOARD MAIN ROOM - LATER

Standing before the board, Thomas and Jane can only wait for the verdict. Justice O'Brien talks on the board's behalf.

JUSTICE O'BRIEN

Mr. Bratten, it is the belief of the Approved Reversal Suitability Board that you are a worthy candidate, and we wish you and Mrs. Bratten all the best for your future as you start your family.

Justice O'Brien stamps 'SINGLE' on the official paperwork.

INT. SISTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Donnie plays with the Lego from his birthday, whilst Anne is on the phone in another room.

The doorbell rings, and Donnie runs up to answer it. He is greeted by the two Department of Family Organisation officers from the first scene.