

Sparring with God

by: Eugene Avakyan

FADE IN:

EXT. NIGHT

Title Sequence: Ben is walking energetically along a downtown street in a seedy part of the city. He is wearing loose black jeans, a white t-shirt, red checkered flannel shirt, loose all around, a black leather jacket, and a black fedora perched strangely on top of his head. His shoes are beat. Neon lights illuminate him periodically. He makes several stops to talk to bum, a prostitute, and a beat cop. Cut between long lens shots along sidewalk at oncoming Ben and across-the-street P.O.V. of him.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT

Living room of George's house. His wife and kids are watching a tape of Young Einstein. George walks in with a tub of popcorn during the insane asylum scene. He sits down and everyone laughs at the caricature of the asylum. Cut from laughing family to close-up of screen.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT

Bedroom in George's house. Woman sleeping in bed. Clock next to bed reads 8:15 pm. Sounds coming in from adjoining bathroom - someone is brushing their teeth, obviously getting ready for bed.

Bathroom lights and the water are turned off and George enters the bedroom. He walks to his side of the bed, gets under the covers, turns off bedstand light, and gets comfortable.

GEORGE

Good night honey.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT

Bedroom in George's house. George and wife are sleeping. Bedstand clock reads 2:30 am, and the phone on George's side of the bed rings. He stirs from his sleep and picks it up.

GEORGE

(groggily)

Mom? What's the matter? What happened? ... Calm down, tell me everything.

George is visibly shaken by what he hears. He is listening to a long explanation by the other party on the line, and looks distraught at what he hears.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
So what is he on now? ... How long?

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I will take care of everything.
Don't worry. Just like always. Try
to get some sleep.

George hangs up the phone, quietly gets up from bed and walks to his study where he picks a large tome from the shelf and begins to read.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY

George's wife and two kids are eating breakfast in the kitchen. George walks in full of thought.

GEORGE
(Concerned)
I have some news - I need to go out
of town for a few days.

Wife and children are surprised and assault him with questions.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I know it's sudden.
(To kids.)
You remember uncle Ben? Well he
needs a little help.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY

At the airport, George checks in to a flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY

Inside the airliner, in his coach class seat, George has several books out and is studying them intently. The books have titles such as "Clinical Psychopharmacology", "Bipolar Disorder - A Family Guide", and "Abnormal Psychology".

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY

San Francisco airport. George walks out of terminal and walks to the rental counter.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY

George is driving into San Francisco. Show some colorful street scenes. He drives up to Ben's building, parks, and walks up to the building - looks it over and walks in.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY

Ben's front door. George rings the bell halfheartedly, not really expecting anyone to be there, then walks back downstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY

Manager's apartment. George rings bell. Manager opens door.

GEORGE

Hi Ted! Do you remember me? It's been a while I think.

MANAGER

(confused)

Is that ... George? Ben's brother!

(smiling)

How are you? We haven't seen you here in quite a while. Not since the last time, but you know...

(gestures upstairs)

GEORGE

Yes, that's what I am here for, actually. I heard Ben got himself into some trouble, and I think he needs help again. Something like last time.

MANAGER

I know. That's what I guessed too, but I tried to avoid thinking of that. What can I do?

GEORGE

For now, I would like to get into his flat, hopefully he left some info behind or there is a message on his machine, or something. Is that OK?

MANAGER

Sure, I remember we had Ben sign a release trusting you with a spare key the last time you were in town.

(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Let me get the key and I will be right out.

GEORGE

Thanks.

George waits on staircase while manager gets key and comes out.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY

Ben's apartment. George walks slowly around the apartment, looking at the mess of clothes on the floor, both clean and dirty, the writing desk full of scribbled-on papers, and the bathroom with the lights still on. There is one paper on the desk that catches George's interest, and it reads, simply "Israel", then "sparring".

George picks up phone and dials a number.

GEORGE

Hello, can I speak with Dr. Hunsacker? Thank you I'll hold.
(concerned)

Dr. Hunsacker? This is George, Ben's brother. ... I know you really can't speak with me, but I am calling to fill you in on the details, I don't want to compromise your position in all this. ... What I know is that George got in some trouble day before yesterday, landed in jail, and today he is nowhere to be found. We are all worried, and I have flown out here to San Francisco to look for him and to get him help. ... OK, fine ... well if you speak to him, could you at least tell him to contact me? Great - take down my cell number - 310-555-3894. Thank you doctor. If I do find him, I think he needs to be under supervision for some time. Can I bring him to you? Then to which hospital? OK. Thank you. Goodbye.

Day turns into night. George is still in the apartment, sitting idly and looking at the phone.

Telephone rings.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Hello? ... Ben? I've been worried.
(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)
... Yes Yes ... Where are you? ...
OK - don't move, I'll be right there.
(hangs up hurriedly)

George grabs a jacket and rushes out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT

Entrance to a bar down the street from Ben's apartment. Ben is standing in the doorway, smoking and looking around nervously. George approaches him. Ben notices him and stiffens.

BEN
Hi brother.

GEORGE
Ben! You know you had me worried.
You had us all worried.

BEN
Why? I'm okay. I bet mom worries too. She doesn't need to know about the details.

GEORGE
You know she is beside herself. We want to help, you know that.

BEN
Are you sure you want to help? You're not just jerking me off, are you?

GEORGE
No Ben, I want to help. We need to talk to someone - let's go together.

BEN
My cell phone is not working, the one you told me to get is junk. Call them and have them fix it now!

GEORGE
It's OK Ben, it will be alright. Let's go inside and sit down.

They walk into the bar and sit down at a booth.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Have you called customer service to fix the cell phone?

BEN

Are you going to help me or not?
Figures, when I really need your
help you drop out. Just make it
work, don't ask stupid questions.

GEORGE

I've never let you down, have I?
What have you been doing in the last
few days?

BEN

Those assholes at the company. You
know they want to fire me? I have
to see them first thing in the
morning. I fell a week ago in their
parking lot, went on disability
after that. They'd never fire a man
on disability! I'll take them to
the cleaners in court.

FINAL SCENE:

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. NIGHT

George is watching the film *Quills* late at night, all alone.
He is somber, and towards the end of the film, on the scenes
of the insane acting out all their desires (scene where
Madeleine dies) he starts weeping uncontrollably.

FADE OUT:

The End.