

Gentlemen of Kentucky

By Thomas Daniel Valls

CHARACTERS

Kenny, 25

Greg, 26

Roger, 27

Time is now.

Setting is told on the next page.

// means there is an overlap and that screaming over one another is totally fine.

At RISE:

A one bed, one bath apartment that's been packed up in boxes. It used to be sleek, minimalist, and sexy as hell.

Someone's dressed up the place for a birthday party; streamers, banners, balloons, even a piñata standing on a tall pile of boxes. Dreamy, music plays; probably Lana del Rey.

The oven timer goes off.

KEN enters, from the bedroom, in an apron. He takes some racks of food out of the oven. Hot. Fresh. Good? Probably not, no.

Then, a knock at the door.

GREG (O.S.)

Let me in!

He plates them onto a collective dish. He's the Picasso of piggies in a blanket.

KEN

It's open!

GREG enters in gym gear. Sweaty. KEN waits for the moment!

... *Surprise!* Don't you love it?

GREG

...Are you guys going for some sort of minimalist, 'cardboard-meets-what-the-fuck-is-going-on', aesthetic?

KEN

Happy Birthday, my sweaty, bougie *mountain* man.

GREG

These are a lot of boxes.

KEN

Come, try this; I added espresso to the thyme rub, shit's magnetic; it'd attract polar bears into the ocean the way I lapped it over the flatbreads.

GREG

I'm fine.

KEN

You had a workout smoothie after training, didn't you (?) // I told you to come hungry!

GREG

// I sequenced my thigh boot camp to two hours of Rihanna remixes, of course I was gonna have my work out smoothie, what are you *talking* about?

KEN

// Then have some croquettes, // I only fried them once.

GREG

// I don't like these boxes in here, Kenny.

KEN

It's only a tiny little space crunch, Greg.

GREG

I don't *want* a space crunch, I want an anti-crunch, // an anti-box space, and anti-*this*!

KEN

// Well Roger didn't tell me in advance that he'd have our entire apartment packed up by the time you and I got back from camping, so we're just gonna have to deal with it.

GREG

A couple of my boot camp students are coming tonight, they're expecting fucking, like, candelabras!

KEN

No, they're expecting pilates pseudo-dungeon sex machines.

GREG

They're expecting the standards I hold their bodies too.

KEN

Shouldn't it just be *your* body you're holding expectations to?

GREG

I'm teaching fitness boot camps to change lives.

KEN

Hm, well, comparably to last year's birthday party-

GREG

-That didn't count, it lasted a whole five minutes-!

KEN

- It only *lasted* an hour and a half and *only* lasted that long because someone decided he was gonna buy thirty bottles of red wine from Trader J's for a party of twelve.

GREG

I'm no longer an excessive person.

KEN

It wasn't even Eleven o' clock and you were about as shitfaced as Matthew Broderick every time he plugs himself up to a zinfandel IV drip. You don't remember vomiting on the stoop of some, beautiful-ass apartment building on the upper-Lower East Side?

GREG

Not really.

KEN

From barfing Chicken-Tikka-sauvignon all over my corduroy chinos, no?

GREG

No.

KEN

And you went into the fitness bootcamp business because you wanted to change *other* people's lives?

GREG

That birthday was the day I realized I needed a change, well, the *morning* after. I realized.

KEN

Yes, '*A dramatic shift away from alcohol and poorly-priced Indian fare*'!

GREG

Not, that, // I...

KEN

// You know, I always felt as if something went down after that party though. Like, after we sat with you on the stoop, and after Roger got a cab for you both and you guys set off.

GREG

Nothing happened.

KEN

Yeah, right, that's what I figured. He just, you know, *dropped* you off.

GREG

That *is* what happened.

KEN

I didn't see you for two weeks after, two weeks after and you came to me and you looked fucking tragic, like a bottle beat the crap out of your eye.

GREG

There'd been a fight; like, why do you even *care* at this point?

KEN

I dunno, maybe I'm just a bit irked you haven't complemented a damn thing about all the fucking labor I've gone through to set up this party for your birthday, so I'm rehashing moments that have always felt the *same*.

GREG

I was excessive at the time.

KEN

Why do I have the feeling that 'excessive's the word of your life?

GREG

'Word of my life'?

KEN

Yeah, 'word of your life'; the word you match yourself up to, you: 'excessive', me: 'debutant'.

GREG

'*DEBUTANT*'?

KEN

Were you and Roger ever a thing?

GREG

No.

KEN

You ever fucked?

GREG

Nope.

KEN

I mean except from the time he invited you over for a threesome to try and get it up?

GREG

Why do you suddenly *CARE*?

KEN

Because he'll *be* here tonight.

GREG

Well no fucking *shit*, Kenny, this is his apartment, I've been with the fucking both of you, *AT* the same time, *ALL* of the time, even *BEFORE*!

KEN

- Before *what*?

GREG

I'm sorry. I meant to thank you. It looks... awesome. This places does. It's just the fucking *boxes*, you know, I'm thinking he caught something. I'm thinking maybe he saw something one of us must've left in the bed one morning, a condom, a silly bit of nylon rope, *something*!

KEN

We always pick up the nylon rope.

GREG

Then maybe something about us gone camping.

KEN

He approved of the idea, he even help me pack.

GREG

Guess he wanted you out of the apartment as quickly as possible.

KEN

Baby. He doesn't know shit. He just assumes. Believes, that we went hiking to get away from the city, so that for your twenty-sixth birthday, you would be *rejuvenated*. This is true. This is *what* happened.

GREG

Yeah, we *rejuvenated* really well. Goddamn it, I hate. I hate these boxes, I hate my fucking birthday; these don't fucking *belong* here, I deserve to be the center of attention goddamn it, for a single fucking night, not some, fucking, storage boxes, where everybody'll be wondering, 'what's inside'!

KEN

Ugh, *GOD*, excuse me while I fucking gouge my eyes out with your self-*pity*. Do something about it, about it always sucking, even for just tonight, just pretend there isn't an entire apartment's worth of my stuff packed away into boxes I didn't even *packed*.

GREG

I *can't*.

KEN

Then *RELAX*; think about the weekend we *just* had!

GREG

I want to go back.

KEN

The White Mountains; river-crossing and scrambling and twilight blowjobs in down compressible sleeping bags!

GREG

Did you tell Roger we slept in separate tents?

KEN

I said we shared and split everything like survivalists, saliva too.

GREG

Whatever it took to keep us warm.

KEN

Keep the blood flowing.

GREG

Pumping.

KEN

Pounding.

They get close.

GREG

You don't think he intends to move out of the City, do you?

KEN

Oh, JESUS.

GREG

Because if he was, you'd be staying, right?

KEN

I don't think he wants to move out of the City, Greg.

GREG

I need a drink.

KEN

Oh?

GREG

Just one.

KEN

To let loose?

GREG

Sure.

KEN

That's why we went to the mountains.

GREG

It's my birthday.

KEN

You want one because it's your birthday, not because of the uncertainty, of the boxes, of the fucking *UNKNOWN*.

GREG

No.

KEN

No'.

GREG

NO.

KEN

Fine, it's your life; you're just the one, has *been* the one, who's been real fucking adamant about not having a swig of shit; condemning me when I did to the point that I'd be entirely, always, completely *wrong* if I had anything to drink without *you* around to make sure I wasn't *poisoning* myself.

GREG

Giving up something's meant to be a joint effort.

KEN

Not if another person doesn't wanna give it up.

GREG

Then have one with me.

KEN

No.

GREG

Oh, *fuck* you, come on, have a fucking beer with me; a shot and a beer.

KEN

No.

GREG

Fuck you. This is a treat that *I* am giving myself, right now. It's my fucking *birthday*.

*GREG goes to the bar, gets two shot glasses and a bottle of whiskey.
He pours a shot for himself.*

GREG shoots the whiskey.

He cracks open a beer and drinks.

GREG

...You *sure* you don't know // where he wants to go?

KEN

// You said it was *NOT* because of // the boxes, Greg!

GREG

// It's kinda engraved in my mind right now and twenty years from now when I'm forty-three, (holy *SHIT* in seventeen years I'll be forty), when I'm *FORTY-THREE* and I look back on tonight, I'll remember these boxes and then remember if you'd lied to me or not about moving away from New York City!

KEN

I. DO NOT. KNOW. // WHERE HE-

GREG

// I just find that a bit unlikely and all that because you would've told me about them as soon as you'd seen the boxes in the first place, which I'm figuring was pretty fucking early, *considering* how much 'time' you spent working in the kitchen.

KEN

Are you *actually* accusing me spending ample time preparing for your birthday?

GREG

And not telling me of this box-fortress situation (?) // *Absolutely*.

KEN

// I didn't want to tell you about this until you *GOT here*, jackass!

GREG

Because you *LOVE* surprises.

KEN

Because I spent a lot of time preparing for this party tonight, and you've known that, and you've seen that, and the idea of it at all being ruined by a bunch a fucking boxes irritates and destroys me as much as it like, *annihilates* the very core of your little, birthday-charm-spirit, and so I figured I'd spare the both of us and let you have your little moonlight prance down sixth avenue jamming to *Midnight City* the way you always do and just be entirely devastated when you walked into my apartment... but only for a moment, because I'd be right here, right where I am, right now, to tell you, that it's going to be incredible because I am going to make sure that it is. Think of it like a surprise party, that's gone, like, really, really, not at all, like the way you've wanted. He wouldn't dare try taking me out of this city.

GREG

I'm really fucking scared, Kenny.

KEN

I know you become a berating, cross-fitted asshole when you're scared, and on the pseudo-Kinsey scale I refurbished for measuring the sporadically-glorified-objectified-attitude you dump out at me *when* you're scared, I'd say you were at a solid eight right now. You like squeezing my balls when you're trembling and it fucking hurts more than it tickles.

GREG

And you don't ever stop thinking about him.

KEN

That's not true.

GREG

If you don't give a shit about him, you'd just, like, tell him the truth then. If he wasn't on your mind all the fucking, you wouldn't give a flying fuck. But you breathe him. You live him. You *saturate* with him; as much as you fucking fight the idea of not wanting to think about him, you trying to forget him means that you are really, really, really, reaffirming his place in your fucking head.

KEN

I can't risk telling him.

GREG

Why not, you can't risk losing him? Or me? Or me fucking you the way you told me you wanted to be handled-?

KENNY

-When did I ever tell you that-?

GREG

-Like a LAWNMOWER', you said to me, and so I *DO* that and I John Deere your rectal chasm until you're tired *just enough* to make it back home, to *here*, to your coffee-vlog-n'-blog-n' motherfucker of a douche boyfriend.

KENNY

He's an author now, he writes books.

GREG

About *coffee beans*. E-Books about Coffee beans.

KENNY

I don't want us to stop being together.

GREG

No, you just me to plateau. Even though you keep your ass available like a Wendy's drive-through, for him, Frosties and all... even though all he'll ever be is nothing but an overcompensating deflation... you don't think you're ever gonna want anything more out of *this*?

KENNY

No.

GREG

What If I just told him for you, then? What would happen then?

KEN

I'd rip your fucking kneecaps out of your cross-fitted legs and use em' to play castanets with your testicles. You get me going man, you really fucking do, I just wanna fucking break you as I kiss you, or ram your fucking ass till your spleen makes a mold out of my cock and turns into a miniature-sized Panama Canal, *some* SHIT, but this energy, this *CHARGE*, I need to make it good with you Greg or else it's gonna be something *bad*!

GREG

-WHAT'LL MAKE IT GOOD, KENNY!?

KEN

I DUNNO- ACCEPT ME- I mean (that sounds so fucking *GAY*), I JUST WANT YOU TO TRY SOME OF MY FUCKING *CANAPES*!

GREG snatches an appetizer from the counter and stuffs in his mouth.

GREG

FINE. LOOK. Look. Okay, this is *really good*, Kenny.

KEN

You always sound *SO* astounded that I'm good at this shit!

GREG

'What's in this?'

KEN

Meat.

GREG

'I wanna know what kind.'

KEN

'Then that'll be a Espresso-thyme-n'-lime rub, // Chef Ramsey.

GREG

'// It's like a pseudo-combo of *Kenyan meets Mexican*, // isn't it?'

KEN

// It's just espresso and thyme.

GREG takes a bite out of another.

GREG

'And uh, tell me more about *this* one.'

KEN

Well, the uh, dough is baked with a bit // of rosemary and garlic and Cajun spice pack kinda just like, poured on top, and then, like, to the side, we got uh, well, in the meat-

GREG

'// Uh-uh... dough... baked... into *bread*...garlic... what's this- more espresso and thyme?'

KEN

Espresso and *rosemary*.

GREG

'It's *very* delicious.'

KEN

You *don't* mean that, though.

GREG

Because it's fucking RIDICULOUS that everything here tastes like coffee.

KEN

Coffee's a *spice*.

GREG

'A complicated one, // '*full of subtlety*'?

KEN

// You *love* the shit.

GREG

I like coffee in my *cup*. // Not in my fucking food.

KEN

// There's a ton of people who like coffee in their food, Greg.

GREG

Who the hell wants their food tasting like coffee?

KEN

Certain coffees taste like bark and chocolate chunks, people like their coffee tasting like food just as much as people like their food tasting like coffee! People go in-between!

GREG

There's isn't like a fucking *spectrum* to this shit, Kenny, so fucking ADMIT IT; It all just reminds you of him.

KEN

He is good to me.

GREG

So am I, do you wanna know how? By fucking you. Nonstop. *FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK* *FUCK*. You don't have the courtesy to think that, oh, I dunno, 'maybe he would like *some* shit without tasting like coffee. I dunno, maybe I would tell Greg that I appreciate him'?

KEN

I do appreciate you!

GREG

Aside from clutching the bedpost and saying so.

KEN

Okay.

GREG

It's the only time I feel you actually give a shit.

KEN

OKAY.

GREG

And then after that it's all like, 'oh, let's play cum constellations and fantasize about all the blackberries we'll put in our frozen yogurt...'

KEN

You love frozen yogurt.

GREG

I'm *disposable*. *DISPOSABLE DISCHARGE* - you're waiting until you get to fuck him *FIRST*.

KEN

I never said that.

GREG

Twenty hours ago when I fucked your brains out (?), *no*, but before (?), in the past (?), 'No' too, I guess; but you were definitely alluding to it.

KEN

He got to me first.

GREG

And I am *pining* for you to have me like there's nobody else.

KEN

I thought we had an understanding.

GREG

I wanted to have something more.

KEN

Like *what?*

GREG

RECIPROCATION. The way you applaud my God-Given gift to weave a canyon out of your asshole, in full, *blatant* comparison to your boyfriend who apparently doesn't even take his *shirt* off when he attempts to slip it into your ass.

KEN

Wanting more suggests you aren't satisfied-!

GREG

And saying there's nothing else you want out of me *TELLS ME* that you are. I want you to want more of me, the more of me I'm BEGGING you to let me carve out of my own chest!

KEN

WHY!?

GREG

BECAUSE I LOVE YOU YOU FUCKING----- You get me going *SO* – FUCKING – hardcore. I *get* what you're about, you know, you'd rather scratch and peel than let a scab form all on it's own, and it's tragic and cute as *shit*, in your apron... I wanna be the guy for you that like, puts the Band-Aid on but there's another guy reaching for the same first aid kit, only he's on rollerblades... I mean, I got *SHIT* too. I *am* a fucking scab, I'm trying to crust over and let some new flesh fester up inside of me and I can *get* how that's nowhere near as appealing as some bougie-coffee-sipping-*chode* who's got his life together because he went to Sarah Lawrence and came to New York City to write about coffee roasting. If you need me to step out... tell me now, or something, before that love that I have for you turns into something deeper and stronger, and I am in a position where I am no longer know what to do with myself. I'm coming after you.

KEN goes to the fridge. He takes out a massive chocolate cake.

HEY! You *hear* me? Do *YOU* hear me!?

KENNY

You know, there was a time that like, a lot of people thought my food was shit.

GREG

...*No*, really...

KENNY

And for a while I let that govern everything. Guessing, second-guessing; guessing till I burned shit all over the place. Till I realized that I started burning shit when I started doubting what I was all about. Then today, I burned both of my hands baking this. Cause I couldn't stand the very idea of not having you anywhere near me. If you were to leave me now any other option for me would be so fucking simple and that's like, the very definition of being terrified for me. This is the best way I know how to go about doing this... and I'm not backing away. Neither should you. There's only one way you're gonna get what you want.

GREG

When was the last time you baked a cake?

KENNY

A couple hours before I burned down half of Crown Heights.

GREG

Is there any bit of Coffee in that cake?

KENNY

No.

GREG

You're really something.

KEN

I'm staying right here until I know what I want. I know I gotta have a solid want, because this shit, this back and forth, I *need* out. I don't know how to get there, though. So long as I'm staying here. I'm not leaving this apartment until I fight to know what I'm fighting for. And you better do the same.

GREG

For you?

KEN

For yourself.

GREG

Then it's still for you.

The door unlocks. They separate. ROGER enters.

ROGER

Hello, HELLO!

GREG

// Hi!

KEN

// HI! Hi... there you are... how's it going... *etc...*

ROGER

// Look who's back from the big ol' mountains!

GREG

// It was great-!

KEN

// Really something.

ROGER

Good. Good. Goddamn it I need a drink; a DRINK! Kenny? Wanna make us a drink?

ROGER hugs GREG. KEN goes to the fridge to take out three beers.

How's the cross-fit business?

GREG

Kicking.