

KLEIN

Written by

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OVER BLACK

Dull conversation hums. Video poker and slot machines ding.

**INT. TROPICANA HOTEL & CASINO - DAY**

Big chandeliers hang above tacky carpet. Stale smoke lingers in the air.

A cocktail waitress makes her way through the dimly lit gambling hall, dropping off drinks to an uncivilized clientele made up of mostly Las Vegas locals.

MIKE KLEIN stands behind a \$5 blackjack table dealing to a couple cowboys in ten gallon hats.

COWBOY 1

Better not have an ace under there.

MIKE

(shrugs) Sorry fellas.

He flips an ace, making his blackjack. He deals another hand.

Mike's a good looking 22 year old kid, but could easily pass for 18. He's laid back, never without a smile on his face.

COWBOY 1

Know what I like about you, Mike?

MIKE

Tell me.

COWBOY 1

You got good energy.

COWBOY 2

Fuckin guy just cleaned us out.

COWBOY 1

Yeah but I still feel like we had a good time hangin out with him.

COWBOY 2

Fuck him and his good energy.

Mike laughs. An Asian dealer named LING shows up.

MIKE

Speaking of good energy. Ling's got the best energy in the house. Ain't that right, Ling?

She smiles. Mike puts his arm around her and gives her a kiss on the cheek before going on his break.

Mike checks his phone. The home screen shows six missed calls from "Ali." He calls her back.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Hey babe. Sorry I missed your --  
wait slow down. What happened?

Mike sprints across the casino floor almost colliding with a cocktail waitress. He runs through the sports book, the keno lounge, past banks of slot machines...

...and comes blasting through the double doors near the reception desk.

Outside, a group of valet parkers trying to stay cool in the hundred degree heat watch as Mike runs for his life and disappears into the parking garage.

**INT. / EXT. CAR (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike drives his old white Buick Riviera down The Strip as fast as traffic will allow, but it's bumper to bumper.

The hot Las Vegas sun bakes the asphalt. A digital thermometer above The Excalibur reads 108.

He punches the gas in an attempt to make a light, but gets stuck at the intersection of Las Vegas Blvd and Tropicana.

Mike yanks the steering wheel and takes the car up over the curb. Tourists are forced to jump out of the way as he speeds down the sidewalk.

He takes back streets the rest of the way.

Eventually, he swings the car into an empty strip mall, gets out and rushes over to his fiancé, ALI.

Ali stands next to her car. She is dishevelled. Her hair is damp with sweat. Streaks of mascara run down her cheeks.

MIKE  
(out of breath) Is he okay?

Inside the car, their 16 month old son, VINNY, is strapped into his car seat, screaming. Mike tries all four door handles.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
How did this happen?

ALI  
(chewing her fingernails) I don't  
know. I locked the keys in the car.

MIKE  
It's a hundred and ten fuckin  
degrees, Ali.

No other options. Mike cocks his arm back, and smashes the passenger side window with the point of his elbow.

His white dress shirt rips and blood drips down his forearm. He unlocks the back door and lifts his crying son from the hot car.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
(soothing) It's okay, baby. Daddy's  
got you. You're okay.

Mike cradles his son's head in his hands. The whole time Ali just stares at the ground.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
What were you even doing on this  
side of town? Ali, look at me.

She picks up her head to meet Mike's gaze. Her eyes are glazed over and bloodshot.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Are you high?

Mike studies her for a very long beat.

Then he grabs her purse off the hood of the car. Inside, he finds a little baggie of white pills.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
I don't believe this.

He throws the purse on the ground, and the pills spill out. Ali drops to her knees to gather them up.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Look at you.

ALI  
I only left him alone for five  
minutes.

Mike pulls out his phone.

ALI (CONT'D)  
Who are you calling?

MIKE  
The police.

ALI  
Mike, please don't. It was just  
five minutes. I'm sorry.

He dials 9-1-1.

OPERATOR (O.S.)  
9-1-1. What's your emergency?  
(beat) What's your emergency?

But he just can't bring himself to do it. He hangs up.

MIKE  
Listen to me. I'm calling that  
place. You're getting help.

Mike walks over to his car, straps Vinny into the car seat  
and drives away without saying another word.

**INT. MIKE AND ALI'S HOUSE - MIDNIGHT**

Mike sleeps alone in his bed.

In the kitchen, Ali is at the counter writing a note with one  
hand and smoking a cigarette with the other.

She walks over to the baby's room and takes one last look at  
Vinny, sleeping soundly in his crib. Tears fill her eyes.

She crosses back into the kitchen, picks up a small suitcase  
and walks out the door.

We hold on her goodbye note. It's short and to the point:

**"I can't do this to you anymore. I'm sorry."**

On top of the note rests Ali's engagement ring.

**INT. MIKE AND ALI'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING**

Mike wakes to the sound of Vinny on the baby monitor. He  
rolls out of bed, walks into Vinny's room and lifts him out  
of the crib. He sniffs his diaper, kisses him.

MIKE  
There's my little homie. Morning.

Mike carries Vinny into the kitchen and sets him in a high chair. As he's grabbing a bottle from the fridge, something catches his eye. Ali's note.

He picks it up and starts to read it.

DISSOLVE TO:

**SUPER: SIX YEARS LATER**

**INT. MIKE AND ALI'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Just out of the shower, MIKE, now 28, gets ready for work. He throws on a black vest over a white dress shirt and clips on a bow-tie. He stares at himself in the mirror.

He's traded in the short on the sides look for a nest of long stringy hair that he tucks behind his ears. Still has the baby face though, only now it's hidden underneath a ratty beard.

In the hallway, he sees VINNY, now 8, carrying a large alto saxophone.

MIKE

Vin, what are you doing?

VINNY

I'm helping Uncle Frankie and Uncle Gus get ready for their gig.

Vinny continues into the kitchen and hands the saxophone over to FRANKIE, a big black dude with a Kangol hat on his head and a joint in his mouth. He takes a hit and passes it to...

...GUS (short for Gustavo), a skinny Latino hipster who takes a break from packing up his drum kit to hit the joint.

FRANKIE

Yo, Vinny. Uncle Frankie's trying to get some big tiddies in his face tonight. (points to the Kangol) You thinkin hat or no hat?

GUS

Hat. No hat. Don't matter. Your fat ass ain't getting laid tonight.

FRANKIE

He tryin to say I'm too fat to get some big tiddies in my face?

VINNY  
Yeah, I think so.

Frankie plays a few licks on the saxophone.

FRANKIE  
Good thing I can play this thing  
like a mother fucker. Chicks dig  
musicians, Vin. Don't forget that.

MIKE (O.S.)  
Yeah but do they dig fat musicians?

No one realized Mike was in the doorway. Gus laughs.

FRANKIE  
Is every mother fucker who lives in  
this house gonna dog me about my  
weight tonight?

GUS  
All we're saying is that if some  
jazz groupie is looking to bang one  
of the dudes in the band tonight,  
it's probably gonna be me, you  
know, the one who's in shape.

FRANKIE  
Bro, you ain't in shape. You're  
just skinny. And nine out of ten  
bitches prefer fat and black over  
skinny and Mexican. Trust me.

GUS  
Settle this for us, Vin. Who's got  
a better shot at getting laid  
tonight? Your good lookin Uncle Gus  
with his 5% body fat? Or your big  
fat black Uncle Frankie with his  
stupid fuckin Kangol hat?

Vinny studies them both, taking the question seriously.

VINNY  
I like underdogs, so I'm gonna go  
with Uncle Frankie.

FRANKIE  
My nigga.

He gives Vinny a pound, and passes the joint to Mike.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)  
You're working tonight?

MIKE

(takes a hit) They just called me in last minute. Can you guys watch him tonight? Bring him to the show?

FRANKIE

They ain't gonna let him in. We're playing the Double Down.

MIKE

Thought that was like a punk rock bar or some shit?

FRANKIE

They're doing jazz night every Tuesday now. (beat) Want me to call my mom, see if she can babysit?

MIKE

Nah, fuck it. I'll just bring him with me. (beat) Vinny, pack a bag.

Vinny rushes off into his room and grabs a set of pajamas, some fresh underwear, his toothbrush. Stuffs it all into a backpack.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR (MOVING) - LATER**

Mike smokes a cigarette as he drives west on the I-15. Vinny rides shotgun. In the distance, the Las Vegas Strip twinkles against the dark desert sky.

They fly past all the casinos - Caesars, Bellagio, MGM - until eventually arriving in a lesser known part of town. Downtown Vegas. Fremont Street.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - LATER**

Place is packed with low-lives gambling away their paychecks and cheap prostitutes winding down after a night's work.

A cocktail waitress makes the rounds, delivering drinks. Eventually her tray has just one final beverage left on it. A mug of hot chocolate, whipped cream, cherry on top.

She jogs up a tiny flight of stairs that leads to the...

**INT. COFFEE SHOP, FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - CONTINUOUS**

Mike takes the last drag of his cigarette and lights a new one off the old one.

Vinny sits across from him doing his homework, reading from his iPhone and taking notes.

MIKE  
What are you working on?

VINNY  
Some homework assignment. They want us to research the origin of my last name.

MIKE  
And?

VINNY  
It's German for small.

MIKE  
Seriously?

VINNY  
(reading from phone) "In Germany, Klein was a nickname for a person of small stature, which then came to be used as a surname."

Just then, the cocktail waitress with the hot chocolate shows up.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS  
Alright, Vinny. Here it comes. Your usual. With extra whipped cream.

She lays down a napkin and the mug of hot chocolate. As she's leaning over Vinny, her cleavage is just inches away from his head.

Vinny gives his dad a big thumbs up and a wink. Mike smiles.

VINNY  
Thanks, Kathleen.

She ruffles Vinny's hair and leaves. Vinny looks back, making sure she's out of ear shot.

VINNY (CONT'D)  
You see those things? They're bigger than my head.

MIKE  
They are pretty big aren't they?

VINNY

They're like fluffy pillows, I just wanna go to sleep on them.

MIKE

Alright. Relax you little sicko.

VINNY

What happened with you guys, how come she stopped coming over?

MIKE

Cocktail waitresses are crazy.

VINNY

Well, what about Olivia? She wasn't a cocktail waitress. Neither was Brittany. What happened with them? Why'd they stop coming over?

MIKE

The thing with women is. And you'll learn this once you get older... they're all fuckin crazy.

VINNY

All of them?

MIKE

All of them.

Vinny thinks about this for a minute.

VINNY

You're not gay are you dad?

MIKE

(laughs) Sometimes I think it'd probably be easier if I was.

Mike snubs out his cigarette into the ash tray.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Come on, my shift's about to start, let's get you to bed.

Mike lays some money down on the table, and they leave.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike and Vinny walk through the casino and approach reception. The OLD GUY behind the desk smiles.

RECEPTION DESK GUY  
Yo Vinny, you got my money?

VINNY  
What money?

RECEPTION DESK GUY  
You took the Celtics.

VINNY  
Yeah, the Celtics won. You owe ME  
money.

RECEPTION DESK GUY  
Nice try. The line was six. You  
shoulda took the points.

Vinny looks to his dad for some support.

MIKE  
What? You lost. Pay up.

Vinny pulls a wad of dollar bills from his pocket. Peels off  
two singles, hands them over.

VINNY  
Fine, here's your two dollars. Hope  
you're proud, taking money from an  
eight year old.

The reception guy laughs. As he's pocketing Vinny's money, he  
slides Mike a key card.

RECEPTION DESK GUY  
504 is open.

Mike nods. This feels routine, like they do it often.

**INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike and Vinny ride the elevator. A BELL HOP, pushing a  
luggage cart, gets on and says hello to the guys.

BELL HOP  
How's school, Vinny?

VINNY  
Sucks.

BELL HOP  
(laughs) You got a girlfriend?

VINNY

Nah.

BELL HOP

Why not?

VINNY

Women are fuckin crazy.

BELL HOP

You're god damn right they are. So you just gotta find the one that's the least crazy. Marry that one. Your dad teach you about the big purse theory yet?

Vinny shakes his head. Bell Hop whacks Mike on the shoulder.

BELL HOP (CONT'D)

Come on, dude. This is your son. He's gotta know this shit.

VINNY

What's the big purse theory dad?

MIKE

Best way to tell if a girl is crazy is by looking at her purse. The crazier the girl, the bigger the purse.

BELL HOP

It's legit. I happen to be married to the craziest broad in Vegas. You should see her fuckin purse. Giant.

The bell rings and Mike and Vinny get off the elevator.

**INT. FIFTH FLOOR, FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike and Vinny get out of the elevator and line up like two sprinters. Mike counts down - *ready, set, go* - and they race down the long corridor.

Vinny wins and throws his hands up...

...but Mike tackles him to the ground and starts tickling him. Vinny laughs hysterically.

## INT. HOTEL ROOM - LITTLE LATER

Vinny comes out of the bathroom in little Superman pajamas. Mike tucks him into bed. Vinny grabs the remote, powers on the TV and finds a channel showing NHL hockey highlights.

They watch for a moment.

VINNY

Dad, will you rub my legs?

MIKE

They hurting again?

Vinny nods. Mike starts to massage his legs and Vinny winces in pain. Mike tries to hide the worry on his face.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Listen to me, we're gonna get this checked out soon as I'm full time again and the health benefits kick back in. I promise.

Mike sits with Vinny, rubbing his legs until the pain cools.

VINNY

Hey, dad. Was my mom crazy? Is that why she died?

MIKE

Your mom definitely wasn't crazy. Know why? Cause she loved you. She loved you very much.

VINNY

What else did she love?

MIKE

Slurpees.

VINNY

(smiles) Really?

VINNY (CONT'D)

She used to mix coke and blueberry. Drank em everyday.

He kisses Vinny on the forehead.

MIKE

Ok, I'll be back to check on you later. Sleep good. I love you.

VINNY  
I love you too, dad.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - LATER**

Mike deals blackjack.

Later, when he goes on break, he spots his PIT BOSS, a Korean American guy in an ill-fitting suit.

MIKE  
Hey boss, how's it going? Listen.  
Graveyard's no good for me.

PIT BOSS  
You're on the extra board. You come  
in when we need you.

MIKE  
Any chance I can get my regular day  
shift back?

PIT BOSS  
You lost that shift when you got  
loaded at work.

MIKE  
I wasn't technically at work. I was  
off the clock, remember?

PIT BOSS  
You were in your uniform drinking  
at the bar with your buddies.  
Employees aren't allowed to do  
that. I shoulda fired you.

MIKE  
I know. But that was like two  
months ago. I've learned my lesson.  
I got a kid and when I have to pay  
for overnight childcare the cost  
offsets the money I make here. May  
as well not even come to work.

PIT BOSS  
Good. Don't come to work. I'll  
replace your ass with one of the  
million chinks in this city that  
want to deal blackjack on the  
graveyard shift. And guess what?  
None of them chinks will complain  
about it. Know why? Cause they  
don't speak any fuckin English.

The Pit Boss walks away.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING**

An alarm rings at 6am. Vinny rolls out of bed.

As he's brushing his teeth he hears the mechanical unlocking of the door. It's Mike, just off his shift.

**INT. CAR (MOVING) - LATER**

Mike and Vinny ride home on the empty freeway, admiring the rising sun just peeking its head over Mount Charleston.

**INT. THE HOUSE - LATER**

Vinny, dressed for school, is eating cereal on the couch next to Mike. A girl moaning is heard from one of the bedrooms.

MIKE

Five to two says that's Uncle Gus.

VINNY

I'll take that bet.

They shake on it. Mike gets up, rinses his bowl in the sink.

MIKE

Grab your backpack, we gotta go.

Vinny groans and walks off down the hallway.

Just then, Frankie emerges from his room, out of breath and completely naked except for that Kangol hat on his head.

Frankie and Vinny make eye contact. Frankie covers himself with the Kangol.

FRANKIE

Told you chicks dig musicians.

VINNY

Dad you owe me money!

**EXT. LEWIS E. ROWE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LATER**

Mike drops Vinny off at school.

**INT. CAFETERIA, LEWIS E. ROWE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LATER**

Vinny carries his lunch tray and sits down at a table full of kids.

KID

Sorry that seat is saved.

VINNY

For who?

KID

Other people.

VINNY

What about those ones?

KID

Those are saved too.

Vinny gets up, slowly walks up and down the rows of lunch tables, trying to make eye contact with someone, with anyone he might be able to sit with. But no one looks at him.

Eventually, he just sits alone at an empty table in the back.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - DAY**

Mike deals blackjack.

Later, he sits in the break room smoking a cigarette. His phone buzzes. An unknown number. He picks it up and hears a soft voice from the other end.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Mike?

But this isn't just any voice. It's a voice Mike hasn't heard in many years, and it sends a chill through his body.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mike, hi, it's --

MIKE

Ali?

ALI (O.S.)

I'm surprised you recognized my voice. It's been a while.

MIKE

What are you calling for?

ALI

I moved back to town and was  
wondering if you'd be willing to  
get together with me for coffee or  
something. I could meet you --

Mike ends the call, hanging up on her mid-sentence.

**EXT. THE HOUSE - LATER**

Mike pulls into the driveway where Frankie, Gus and Vinny are  
in a heated game of street hockey. Mike gets out of the car.

MIKE

House meeting. Now. Vinny, I need  
to talk to your uncles about some  
grown up stuff. Hang out here for a  
little.

Frankie and Gus follow Mike into the house.

**INT. THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike has caught them up to speed.

FRANKIE

What do you mean she's back?

MIKE

I don't know, man. She said she  
moved back to town and asked if I  
would see her.

FRANKIE

Fuck. What did you say?

MIKE

I fuckin panicked and just hung up.  
(beat) This is fucked.

FRANKIE

It's not ideal. But we knew at some  
point the day was gonna come where  
you had to tell Vinny the truth.

Mike puts his head in his hands.

MIKE

Did I misplay this?

GUS

Oh yeah, big time.

Frankie gives Gus a look like, *shut the fuck up.*

GUS (CONT'D)

What? I'm just saying. Telling your son his mom's dead when really she's just a druggie who went off the deep end and left town? Not exactly the smartest move.

FRANKIE

Just shut the fuck up, ok?

GUS

I'm just stating facts.

FRANKIE

Well stop stating fuckin facts!

MIKE

No, he's right. How could I be so stupid?

FRANKIE

You weren't stupid. You were a kid left to raise a kid all by yourself. You did what you thought was right at the time.

GUS

(sotto) Just cause he was young doesn't make it any less stupid.

Frankie smacks Gus in the head.

**INT. MIKE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Mike lies on top of his bed staring up at the ceiling and smoking. Thinking.

There's a cardboard box next to him, filled with old memories. Mike looks at a photo of him and Ali in the hospital the day Vinny was born. He takes a deep breath.

**INT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

Mike sits across from Ali staring at her with no emotion. Somehow in the 6 years she's been gone, she aged well. Her skin looks healthy. Her hair is in a tight pony tail.

ALI

So. How are you?

MIKE  
I'm fine, Ali.

ALI  
That's good. You look different.  
Your hair is so long.

MIKE  
Where have you been?

ALI  
I was in Arizona for a while.  
Couple years. Then Missouri. My mom  
moved there, so I was living with  
her for a little. But that didn't  
last long. You know how she is.  
Then Utah. That's where I've been  
for the past three years.

MIKE  
And now you're back in Vegas.

ALI  
Yeah. What about you? Tell me about-

MIKE  
Why did you come back?

Ali nervously fiddles with her coffee cup. She's got a few  
visible tattoos. She also wears one of those feather earrings  
which gives her a new-agey kind of look.

ALI  
My boyfriend took a job here.

MIKE  
What does he do?

ALI  
He works at a hospital. He's --

MIKE  
You know what, fuck this.

Mike gets up to leave, but Ali grabs him by the arm.

ALI  
Don't go. Please. Just talk to me.

MIKE  
You're not even going to ask about  
your son? You know the one whose  
life you disappeared from?

ALI

Come on, Mike. Of course he's the first thing I wanted to ask you about. But I guess I wanted to let it come up a little more naturally. I wanted to be respectful.

MIKE

And your way of doing that is sitting here bragging about your new life?

ALI

I'm not bragging. You asked. Truth is, things got very bad for me. And now they're better. I promised myself I would stay out of your lives until I trusted myself enough to come back. That took a long time and I'm sorry. So can we please catch up, you and me?

MIKE

That's not how this works.

ALI

Yes it is. When two people that haven't seen each other in years see each other for the first time, they catch up. So please, tell me what you've been up to.

Mike sits back down.

MIKE

I've just been working.

ALI

Where?

MIKE

I'm dealing at the Four Queens.

ALI

Where do you and Vinny live?

MIKE

Same place.

ALI

You still live in our old house?

MIKE

Yeah. With Frankie and Gus.

ALI

(confused) What do you mean? Like, you and Vinny are roommates with Frankie and Gus?

MIKE

You moved out. Correction, you snuck out, and Frankie and Gus moved in. Someone had to step up and help me raise our son.

Long pause.

ALI

When can I see him, Mike?

MIKE

I don't think I'm ready for that.

ALI

Yeah, but maybe he's ready for that.

**INT. LEWIS E. ROWE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY**

Mike waits outside an administrative office at Vinny's school. He stands up when the door opens and THE PRINCIPAL steps out.

PRINCIPAL

Mike. Sorry to keep you waiting.

They shake hands and Mike follows him into his office.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming. Wanted to get you in here, in person, to talk about Vinny. He's a great kid.

MIKE

But...

PRINCIPAL

But he's got ten unexcused absences this month alone. He's in danger of being truant. If you don't mind me asking, is everything okay at home?

MIKE

(annoyed) I do mind you asking.

The principal knows he struck a nerve, doesn't want to push.

PRINCIPAL

Of course. Just thought I'd ask.

MIKE

Everything's fine at home. Jesus.

PRINCIPAL

Great. So we can work together to tackle this attendance issue. And once we do that, I suspect the other issues will clear up on their own.

MIKE

What other issues? What are you talking about?

PRINCIPAL

Vinny seems to be...having a hard time connecting with other kids.

MIKE

Like, he doesn't have any friends?

PRINCIPAL

He's a bit of a loner.

Mike stands up.

MIKE

Okay. First of all, no he's not. Second, I don't have time for this, I have to work. Are we done here?

PRINCIPAL

We're all done. Thanks for coming.

Mike turns to leave.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Oh, Mike.

All the sudden Mike gets agitated. He swings back around.

MIKE

What!?

The principal is holding out an iPhone.

PRINCIPAL

I think you forgot your phone.

## INT. SPORTS BOOK AT THE PALACE STATION CASINO - NIGHT

The sports book. Fifty screens with everything from horse racing to women's college basketball.

Mike and Vinny are at the ATM. Mike checks his balance on the BofA app: **\$317.65**. He winces and withdraws three hundred. The receipt shows his available funds at **\$15.65**.

Mike and Vinny sit down with Frankie and Gus. At least 15 empty beer bottles are littered across the table.

FRANKIE

Who you like tonight, Vin?

VINNY

Ole Miss plus four. Baylor minus six and a half. And Notre Dame on the moneyline.

GUS

Notre Dame's quarterback is a fuckin bum.

VINNY

Yeah, but he's good on the road.

Mike hands Vinny one hundred dollars.

MIKE

Ok. This is it till I get paid. We lose, we're fucked. You're positive?

VINNY

It's basically free money, dad.

MIKE

Go with Uncle Gus and put it in.

Gus gets up, brings Vinny to the CLERK at the betting window.

GUS

Go ahead, Vin. Tell the gentleman what we want.

VINNY

Yeah, lemme do a hundred dollar three team parlay. Ole Miss, I'll take the points. Baylor minus six and a half. Notre Dame. Moneyline.

The clerk laughs.

VINNY (CONT'D)  
What's so funny? You don't like the  
Notre Dame bet?

BACK OVER at the table with Mike and Frankie.

FRANKIE  
How you feeling about the Ali shit?

MIKE  
Fine. It's all good.

It's obvious he doesn't want to talk about it.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Yo, let me get that heat. I'm  
fading pretty hard.

FRANKIE  
Yeah, cause you're pulling  
graveyards and not sleeping. That  
shit ain't healthy, bro.

MIKE  
What are you, my fuckin mother?  
Gimme the coke.

Frankie goes into his pocket and slides a little baggie of blow across the table.

**INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike does a key bump in one of the stalls. He exits and checks his nostrils in the mirror.

**INT. SPORTS BOOK AT THE PALACE STATION CASINO - LATER**

Mike returns to the table with a basket of chicken fingers for Vinny. Vinny pops one in his mouth.

Mike cranes his neck in order to check out a table of girls. One of them catches his eye.

MIKE  
Vinny, see the one in the middle?  
Wanna go talk to her for your old  
man?

Without hesitation, Vinny gets up and approaches them. He speaks directly to the girl in the middle, KATE.

VINNY

Hi. What's your name?

Kate looks over her shoulder, just to make sure this little boy isn't talking to someone else.

KATE

(smiling) Kate. What's your name?

VINNY

I'm Vinny. Pleasure to meet you ladies. I was wondering if you'd like to go on a date with my dad?

Kate's friends laugh.

KATE

Which one is your dad?

VINNY

The fat black guy on the left.

Vinny gives her a look.

VINNY (CONT'D)

Come on, Kate. Which one do you think is my dad?

KATE

(laughs) Sorry, Vinny. He's cute, but I have a boyfriend.

**INT. SPORTS BOOK AT THE PALACE STATION CASINO - LATER**

Mike, Vinny, Frankie and Gus have their eyes glued to the last few seconds of the game.

MIKE

(to Vinny) We win this game you don't have to go to school tomorrow.

Quarterback drops back and throws a 50 yard TD as time expires for the win. Frankie puts Vinny up on his shoulders.

The boys hit their parlay and they are going nuts.

From a distance, Kate watches their wild celebration.

**INT. SPORTS BOOK AT THE PALACE STATION CASINO - LATER**

Mike approaches the betting window, hands the clerk his ticket, and the guy slides him a little over six hundred dollars.

As he's counting the money, Kate approaches.

KATE

Whore'ing your son out to get you dates? That's low. Also, shouldn't he be asleep? It's almost 11, what kind of dad are you?

MIKE

(smiling) That little guy's my age. He has some kind of growth deficiency thing, that's why he's so short.

KATE

(smiling) So that's not your son?

MIKE

Nope. Old high school friend. It's just a bit we do.

KATE

That's a shame cause if that was your kid I was going to agree to go out with you. Single dad using his son to help him get a date? Now that's fucking cute. But sending over your 30 year old friend who's a midget? That's just creepy, man.

Mike laughs.

MIKE

I thought you had a boyfriend?

KATE

Gimme your phone.

She grabs Mike's phone and punches in her number. Mike watches her walk away.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

Mike and Vinny play street hockey, passing an orange puck back and forth.

MIKE  
Top left.

Vinny fires a wrist shot into the top left of the net.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Vin, I need to talk to you about  
something. It's about your mom.

VINNY  
What about her?

Mike takes a second, not sure the best way to go with this.  
Vinny shoots another puck into the net.

MIKE  
Well. Okay. See, this is very  
complicated. Adult shit. I can tell  
you more about it when you're older  
maybe. I don't know.

Sensing that his dad is fumbling...

VINNY  
Dad, what is it?

MIKE  
Your mom isn't dead. She's alive.  
She wants to see you. Would that be  
okay with you?

**INT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

Ali sits in a booth, sipping an iced tea and nervously  
chewing on the straw. Mike and Vinny approach.

MIKE  
Vinny. This is... Ali.

She gets up, unsure if she should hug Vinny, or kiss him, or  
shake his hand. She settles with a meek...

ALI  
Hi.

Then she hugs him, but Vinny doesn't exactly hug her back.

ALI (CONT'D)  
I know you probably don't remember  
me very much. But I want you to  
know that I remember you.

Vinny offers an uncomfortable smile. They sit down.

ALI (CONT'D)

It's really cool to see how much  
you've grown up. You must be in,  
what, fourth grade?

VINNY

Third.

ALI

You go to the same school your dad  
and I went to, did you know that?  
(Vinny doesn't answer) Do you like  
school?

VINNY

It's okay.

Ali looks down at her menu. Vinny watches her.

VINNY (CONT'D)

What am I supposed to call you?

ALI

Whatever feels right for you.

VINNY

Well you don't feel like my mom.

ALI

I know. I'm hoping that will change  
though once we get to know each  
other a little better.

VINNY

Where have you been?

ALI

I lived a lot of different places.

VINNY

Why did you leave?

MIKE

Remember dude, it's really  
complicated and you're just a  
little too young --

VINNY

Yeah, I know you said that. But it  
doesn't make sense. Why am I too  
young to know why my mom's not dead  
anymore?

Ali makes eye contact with Mike, then reaches for Vinny's hand.

ALI  
I promise one day I'll explain  
everything to you.

Vinny pulls his hand away from her and holds Mike's hand instead. Mike senses his son's discomfort.

MIKE  
You wanna play some keno, bud?

Vinny nods and grabs a keno ticket from the plastic box at the table.

ALI  
You play keno?

VINNY  
I know most people don't like it  
but me and my dad do. Our numbers  
are two, four, and forty two. We've  
hit it a few times. Right dad?

MIKE  
Sure have.

Ali smiles watching Vinny fill out the ticket with the black keno crayon, putting an X through 2, 4 and 42.

Just then, a Four Queens valet parker passes by the table.

VALET PARKER  
(gives Vinny a pound) Sup Vinny.

VINNY  
Hey Paulie. Good to see you.

Ali watches the guy as he walks through the restaurant.

ALI  
Who was that?

VINNY  
Paulie. He's a valet parker. But  
get this, he got a DUI so his  
driver's license is suspended. So  
technically everyday he comes to  
work he's breaking the law. He told  
me that in confidence, so keep it  
under your hat if you can help it.

ALI  
(smiles) His secret's safe with me.

VINNY  
There's another guy, Arvin. I think he's from Pakistan or something. He's got epilepsy. And he was parking a car one time. Had a seizure and side swiped some rich guy's Mercedes. That's why my dad says you should never valet your car in Vegas. Always self park. Right, dad?

MIKE  
That's right.

ALI  
You're dad's a pretty smart guy.

TIME CUT TO:

**INT. RESTAURANT - ONE HOUR LATER**

Lunch is finishing up, the waitress drops off the check. Ali grabs it.

ALI  
I got this.

Mike pulls the check from her hands.

MIKE  
No you don't.

VINNY  
Dad, I'm gonna go to the bathroom.

Mike nods. Vinny gets up, and walks to the restroom.

ALI  
You told him I've been dead all these years.

MIKE  
Would you rather I told him the truth? That you abandoned us. Let him grow up wondering whether or not it was his fault?

She takes a short, shallow breath and when the air is released from her lungs, it's as if she's trying to expel years worth of guilt in one long exhale.

ALI

I'm so ashamed that I put you in a position where you had to make that decision. I'm sorry.

MIKE

Whatever. It's done.

ALI

Do you think maybe I can have a day alone with him this weekend?

MIKE

No.

ALI

Please. Spending time with him. Getting to know him. It's the only way I'm going to be able to make things right.

MIKE

Ali. You're out of your fuckin mind if you think I'm gonna leave you alone with my son.

Mike gets up, lays a few bills on the table.

MIKE (CONT'D)

That should cover me and Vinny.

Ali watches Mike walk away.

**INT. ALI'S CAR - LATER**

Ali's car sits in the parking lot of an unassuming Presbyterian church. Her makeup is messy from crying. She takes a deep breath, gets out and approaches the church.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - LITTLE LATER**

Mike pulls into the driveway of their house and kills the engine.

VINNY

Dad. Did my mom do something bad?

MIKE

It's a long story. Listen, I can't imagine how hard that was for you. I'm sorry. I want you to know we don't ever have to do that again.

VINNY

No, I'd like to see her again.

MIKE

Oh. Okay. Are you sure?

VINNY

Yeah, she seemed nice. Maybe she can come over sometime and see where I live.

Mike doesn't say anything.

**INT. NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING - LATER**

Ali sits in a circle surrounded by fellow men and women in recovery. We HOLD on Ali's face as the group recites the Serenity Prayer together.

ALI

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

**EXT. THE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Mike, Vinny, Frankie and Gus are in the midst of an intense street hockey battle when an SUV pulls up.

Ali and her boyfriend BRIAN get out and watch for a moment. Mike knocks Gus to the ground, passes the puck to Vinny who scores. They celebrate like they won the Stanley Cup.

Eventually Mike notices Ali and Brian. He skates over.

MIKE

Time musta got away from us. Sorry.

Mike gives Brian the once over. He's a pretty regular looking dude. Receding hair line, probably in his early forties.

BRIAN

(very friendly) Mike. I'm Brian.  
Good to meet you.

Mike takes off his hockey glove, and they shake hands.

**INT. VINNY'S ROOM - LATER**

Vinny gets dressed for dinner. Steps into a pair of khaki pants. Puts on a little jacket and bow-tie. Combs his hair.

**INT. THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Everyone is milling about in the living room. Vinny enters, holding a 7-11 Slurpee.

MIKE

Dude, what're you wearing? That my bow-tie?

VINNY

I wanted to dress up.

Mike makes a face, thinks this is weird.

ALI

Aw Vinny, you look so cute.

VINNY

(re: Slurpee) My dad told me you used to drink Slurpees all the time. He said coke mixed with blueberry was your favorite, so...

He hands Ali the Slurpee and this simple gesture of accepting a gift from the son she disappeared on immediately reminds her of how horrible she is.

Tears of guilt well up. Ali starts to cry.

VINNY (CONT'D)

Sorry it's a little melted.

Ali wipes the tears, regains composure.

ALI

That's okay. We'll pop it in the freezer and have it for dessert. They're better frozen anyway.

**INT. KITCHEN - LATER**

Everyone is at the table, eating Chinese take out. Vinny looks at Ali's plate.

VINNY

Ali, would you like more rice?

ALI  
That would be great.

He passes her the box of rice.

ALI (CONT'D)  
Thank you, Vinny. (beat) So  
Frankie, you still playing music?

FRANKIE  
Yeah. I got a full time thing at  
the Excalibur. And I put together a  
little quartet on the side. Pick up  
shows here and there.

GUS  
No. WE put together a little  
quartet. I helped you start the  
fuckin band, remember?

FRANKIE  
It's my band, you're just in it. I  
write all the songs. It's called  
The Frankie Williams Quartet.

GUS  
Cause you're an egomaniac and had  
to name the band after yourself.  
Dude does one semester at Berklee  
and thinks he's the second coming.

ALI  
(smiles) Glad to see you guys  
haven't changed one bit.

BRIAN  
The Berklee School of Music? In  
Boston? That's impressive.

ALI  
Yeah, it was a big deal our senior  
year when he got accepted. But  
wait, how come you didn't finish?

FRANKIE  
I didn't like Boston. Too cold.

GUS  
No, he realized he wasn't as good  
at that horn as he thought he was,  
dropped out and came home with his  
tail between his legs.

FRANKIE

Enough about me. (to Ali and Brian)  
Where'd you guys meet?

BRIAN

On the operating table.

ALI

I had to get re-constructive  
surgery on my leg, and Brian was on  
the team that operated on me.

BRIAN

I asked her out before the  
anesthesia had a chance to wear  
off.

FRANKIE

Oh, so you're a doctor?

BRIAN

I'm a nurse.

VINNY

My dad's a blackjack dealer.

BRIAN

I heard. That's a cool job.

VINNY

Yeah. That's what I'm gonna be when  
I grow up too.

MIKE

How'd you break your leg, Ali?

ALI

I got into a pretty bad car  
accident.

MIKE

Drunk driver?

ALI

Yeah, something like that.

Mike, Frankie and Gus share a look. A long, awkward pause.

GUS

I'm gonna get a beer.

As Gus goes to the fridge, he sees Ali's purse sitting on the counter. He looks back to make sure no one is watching and starts rifling through it.

FRANKIE

So Ali, what're you doing for work  
now that you're back?

ALI

Nothing at the moment. Brian's  
sister-in-law is head of HR at MGM  
corporate though and she's gonna  
set me up with something when I'm  
ready.

FRANKIE

That's a good hook up. Them Strip  
jobs are hard to come by these  
days. (points to Mike) Why you  
think this fool is still working at  
the Four Queens?

MIKE

I like the Four Queens, that's why.  
(to Ali) You want to go back to  
working at a casino?

ALI

I don't know, I'm considering it.  
We'll see what my NA group has to  
say about that. But I feel like  
being around all those sad people,  
drinking and gambling all day might  
actually help. Remind me what I  
don't what to be, you know?

IN THE KITCHEN: Gus finds a sleeve of little white pills in  
Ali's purse.

GUS

Hey, Frankie. Come in here, help me  
out with something.

Frankie gets up, walks over to Gus.

GUS (CONT'D)

(whispering) Sober my fuckin ass.  
Look what I found in her purse. I  
knew it.

FRANKIE

(whispering) Those are birth  
control pills you fuckin moron. Put  
them back.

BACK AT THE TABLE:

BRIAN

Mike, I know you said you're happy where you are. But if anything changes and you decide you want to look for something on the Strip, let me know and I'll see if my sister-in-law can help.

MIKE

Appreciate that.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - NIGHT**

Mike and Vinny approach that same old guy at reception. He slides Mike a room key.

Mike takes Vinny up to the room and puts him to bed.

Later, Mike deals blackjack.

On his break, Mike goes back up to the room and pops his head in to check on Vinny.

Back downstairs on the casino floor, Mike's Pit Boss calls him over.

PIT BOSS

Hey, Mike. Walk with me.

They walk through the casino.

PIT BOSS (CONT'D)

Look around, Mike. What do you see?

Mike looks around. His Pit Boss stops walking and points to an Asian dealer.

PIT BOSS (CONT'D)

Chinaman. (points to another Asian dealer) Chinaman. (and another) Chinaman. If it were up to me, all the dealers would be Asian. Know why?

Mike shrugs.

PIT BOSS (CONT'D)

Cause none of them bring their fuckin kids to work.

Mike tries to hide it, but he knows he's busted.

PIT BOSS (CONT'D)  
You gotta be the dumbest mother  
fucker that I've ever met.

MIKE  
I think there's been a  
misunderstanding or something.

PIT BOSS  
We got you on the cameras fucko.  
Seen you bringing him up to 402.

MIKE  
Look, it was just a one time thing.

PIT BOSS  
No. It's been going on for a few  
months. I had security go through  
the archives.

MIKE  
Please don't fire me.

PIT BOSS  
What's going on, man? You okay?

MIKE  
Just some personal shit.

PIT BOSS  
Look. I'm divorced and I got kids,  
so I can relate. I commend the  
ingenuity of sneaking your son into  
vacant hotel rooms. I do. But this  
ain't a fuckin day care.

MIKE  
I know. I'm sorry. After tonight,  
this will never happen again.

PIT BOSS  
You better get that kid out of that  
room in the next 15 minutes or  
you're fired. That's two strikes.  
Consider this your last favor.

**INT. JAZZ CLUB - LITTLE LATER**

Frankie is on stage backed by his quartet. Gus on drums. A  
stand up bass player. Dude on piano.

Frankie is completely in the pocket, really laying into his horn. Despite the club being mostly empty, the music is filling the place with an intense energy.

They finish the song to tepid applause.

FRANKIE  
(into the mic) Thank you. We're the  
Frankie Williams Quartet. Gonna  
take a quick break.

Frankie - out of breath - walks over to the bar, orders a drink. His phone vibrates. It's Mike calling from work.

**INTERCUT AS NECESSARY**

FRANKIE (CONT'D)  
Yo.

MIKE  
Can you come grab Vinny?

FRANKIE  
I can't, man. We still got another  
set to play. What happened?

MIKE  
Nothing. Don't worry about it.

The call ends. Frankie leans on the bar, sipping his drink.

His face lights up when an old jazz guy in his late sixties approaches. This is DOC WOODS.

DOC WOODS  
Your sound is improving.

FRANKIE  
Doc Woods!? Holy shit. Been a  
while, man.

They embrace.

DOC WOODS  
That's cause you never come see me  
no more.

FRANKIE  
You still teaching?

DOC WOODS  
Yeah, but I left Chaparrall. I'm  
teaching music theory at UNLV now.

FRANKIE

Nice. So you're ramming Coltrane  
down college kid's throats now  
instead of high school?

DOC WOODS

You know you're wasting your time  
playing here right?

FRANKIE

You just said I sounded good.

DOC WOODS

You need to get out of Vegas. Hit  
the road. Tour. At real jazz clubs  
playing in front of people who care  
about jazz music, not these fools.

FRANKIE

Vegas is the best music city in the  
world. All the greats come here to  
play. I happen to have been born  
here. Why would I leave?

DOC WOODS

Lemme explain something to you. All  
the greats you're talking about.  
They became great on the road.  
Playing the Blue Note. Playing the  
Vanguard. The Lighthouse. Not this  
shit hole.

FRANKIE

I'm making a good living working on  
the Strip, Doc. If I go on tour,  
I'll be broke, eating peanut butter  
sandwiches in a van. No thanks.

DOC WOODS

Where on the Strip you working?

FRANKIE

I'm in the house band for one of  
the shows at the Excalibur.

DOC WOODS

Which one?

FRANKIE

(embarrassed) Thunder Down Under.

DOC WOODS

The male stripper show? The one on  
all the billboards?

Frankie doesn't even have to answer the question.

DOC WOODS (CONT'D)  
Well. You ever change your mind,  
call me. I'll put you in touch with  
a friend. He books bands.

Doc Woods hands Frankie his business card.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Mike waits while Vinny gets dressed.

MIKE  
Are you sure you're okay with this?  
Cause if you're not, we'll just go  
home right now.

VINNY  
I'm okay with it, dad.

MIKE  
You're just going to sleep there  
tonight. I'm really, really sorry.

VINNY  
Dad, I don't mind.

MIKE  
Come on, she's waiting downstairs.

They walk out of the room.

**EXT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike loads Vinny into the front seat of Ali's car.

MIKE  
Okay, buddy. Put your seat belt on.  
I'll see you first thing in the  
morning. I love you.

Mike shuts the door. Ali, still in her robe, approaches.

ALI  
How often are you bringing him to  
work with you? Don't you have a  
babysitter or something?

Mike grits his teeth.

MIKE  
Thanks for doing this.

ALI  
Of course.

Mike watches Ali get in the car and drive away.

**INT. ALI AND BRIAN'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING**

Vinny wakes up in the guest room and notices that there's a damp circle in the middle of the mattress and his underwear are soaked.

Vinny hears a knock on the door, and quickly covers himself with the blanket. Ali pops her head in.

ALI  
Morning. Want to come down and have some breakfast?

VINNY  
Ok.

She waits for Vinny to get out of bed, but he doesn't move.

ALI  
Is everything ok?

VINNY  
(embarrassed) I pee'd the bed.

Vinny slides the sheets down to show Ali what happened.

VINNY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

ALI  
There is nothing to be sorry about.

She helps Vinny out of bed, kneels down in front of him and starts to remove his underwear.

ALI (CONT'D)  
This isn't a big deal. We'll just get you out of these.

Vinny stops her.

VINNY  
But I didn't bring any clean clothes.

ALI  
Oh yeah. Um...

Ali spots Vinny's jeans on the dresser, grabs them.

ALI (CONT'D)  
Guess you'll have to go commando  
for a little bit. (smiles) Brian  
does that all the time.

VINNY  
Ali. Can you not tell him about  
this?

ALI  
Won't say a word.

Ali gives Vinny some privacy to slip out of his underwear and  
into his jeans, then she brings him downstairs.

Brian sits at the kitchen island reading the paper.

BRIAN  
There he is! How'd you sleep?

VINNY  
Pretty good.

Vinny sits down next to Brian and grabs the sports section.  
He flips through, reading a few pages.

VINNY (CONT'D)  
The sharks lost last night. That's  
good for us. Means we got a shot at  
the playoffs.

ALI  
Vinny, can I get you something to  
drink? Water? Orange juice?

VINNY  
Orange juice please.

Ali pours a cup, sets it in front of him, then watches as he  
reads the newspaper, casually sipping his juice.

BRIAN  
You like the Golden Knights, huh?

VINNY  
I love them.

BRIAN

Guy I work with at the hospital  
offered me free tickets for  
tonight's game against The Blues.  
Would you like to go?

VINNY

Seriously? Yes.

ALI

Text your dad, see if he's okay  
with it.

Vinny starts typing out a text.

**EXT. FREMONT STREET - LATER**

Mike and Kate are on their first date, going for a leisurely  
stroll underneath the canopy on Fremont Street.

MIKE

Do you have a boyfriend?

KATE

What? No. What kind of person do  
you think I am?

MIKE

Hey, you're the one that said you  
did.

KATE

I use that line anytime children  
approach me at casinos asking if I  
want to go out with their dad.

MIKE

So you absolutely 100% don't have a  
boyfriend?

KATE

Fine. It's complicated.

MIKE

See, I knew it.

KATE

We dated all four years of college.  
We were one of those couples that  
breaks up and gets back together a  
hundred times.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

It finally ended for good when I got accepted into the MFA program at UNLV and moved to Vegas. So I thought. He followed me out here and we've been on and off ever since. Currently, we're off.

MIKE

Followed you out here? Wonder if he's following us right now?

KATE

Wouldn't put it past him. Wait, there he is!

A bearded drunk homeless guy in a dress stumbles toward them.

MIKE

Rick! What's up, man? How you been?

KATE

(whispers) You know him?

MIKE

He comes into the casino all the time. Rick, this is Kate.

HOMELESS GUY

Gimme some money.

Mike pulls out his wallet, hands the guy a five.

HOMELESS GUY (CONT'D)

That's it?

MIKE

That's it. First date. Pretty sure I gotta pay for dinner tonight.

KATE

(nods) He does.

HOMELESS GUY

You gonna get some pussy?

MIKE

Don't ask me, ask her.

HOMELESS GUY

(to Kate) Is he???

KATE

On the first date! Are you crazy?

HOMELESS GUY

Yes.

KATE

He's not getting any tonight.

HOMELESS GUY

Why?

KATE

Cause if I sleep with him tonight, he'd never call me again. That's how it works. In order for me to keep him interested, I have to string him along for as long as possible.

MIKE

(nods) She does.

**EXT. THE GOLD SPIKE - LITTLE LATER**

Mike and Kate are hanging out on the open air patio, drinking beers and playing corn-hole.

MIKE

So what's an MFA?

KATE

Master of Fine Arts.

MIKE

Sounds fancy.

KATE

It's a three year creative writing program that UNLV offers. Not to brag or anything, but it's pretty prestigious. They only let five writers in a year.

Kate tosses and misses three bean bags in a row.

MIKE

Hopefully you're a better writer than you are corn-hole player. What kind of stuff do you write? Like novels?

KATE

Poetry actually?

Mike holds up a bean bag.

MIKE

Okay. If I make this shot, you have to write me a poem.

Kate nods, you got a deal. He shoots and sinks it.

**EXT. T-MOBILE ARENA - CONTINUOUS**

Ali, Brian and Vinny are amongst the thousands of hockey fans pouring into the shining golden oval shaped arena.

BRIAN

So, Vinny. Next time you can bring a friend if you want.

VINNY

Cool. Maybe I'll bring Uncle Gus.

BRIAN

Or a friend from school. Up to you.

VINNY

I don't really have any friends at school.

ALI

What do you mean?

VINNY

Kids don't like me.

ALI

(concerned) What?

VINNY

Don't worry. I'm not getting bullied or anything like that. It's more just like, I get treated like I don't exist.

ALI

Vinny, that's awful.

VINNY

Nah. It's okay. Third graders are so boring anyway.

BRIAN

You play any sports? Being on a team is a great way to make friends.

VINNY

I really wanna play ice hockey but the equipment alone costs like a million dollars. My dad says it's only for rich kids.

Ali and Brian share a look.

**INT. T-MOBILE ARENA - LATER**

Vinny, Ali and Brian are in a box suite watching the game.

ALI

Wait. Why did the referee just blow the whistle?

VINNY

They were off-sides.

ALI

What's that?

VINNY

The puck has to cross the blue line before the team on offense, or --

Just then, the Golden Knights score, and the crowd goes nuts. Vinny and his mom high five each other.

**INT. / EXT. MIKE'S CAR (MOVING) - LATER**

Mike pulls up in front of Kate's apartment. They both get out.

KATE

Thanks for tonight. It was fun.

Mike leans in for a kiss, but she pulls away.

MIKE

Really?

Kate laughs.

KATE

I told you, I'm gonna string you along for as long as possible.

She pulls out a pen and napkin from her purse and starts writing something. She hands it to Mike.

**"Roses are red. Violets are blue. Next time we hang out. I'll probably make out with you."**

Kate gives him a peck on the cheek and walks away.

**INT. ALI AND BRIAN'S HOUSE - MORNING**

Vinny is sitting on the couch in the living room, looking at his phone. Ali pops her head in.

ALI  
Hey, your dad's on his way. I know it's not your birthday or anything, but I got you a present.

Vinny sees she's holding a big box that's been gift wrapped.

ALI (CONT'D)  
Go ahead, open it.

She watches as Vinny tears into the package and opens up a brand new pair of ice hockey skates.

Vinny can't believe it. He smiles.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike pulls up to the curb and honks. A moment later, Vinny exits Ali's house and comes walking down the driveway carrying a large box.

MIKE  
(sotto) The fuck is that?

Vinny gets in the car and shows Mike the hockey skates.

VINNY  
Ali got these for me.

MIKE  
She did? (beat) Hang here for just one second. I'll be right back.

Mike storms up the driveway toward Ali's house.

**INT. ALI AND BRIAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike and Ali are in an argument.

MIKE  
What do you think you're doing?

ALI

He told me he wanted to play ice  
hockey. I thought this could be a  
good first step to making that  
happen.

MIKE

Yeah, well it's not your place to  
make things happen. You've already  
made enough happen, trust me.

ALI

Ok, but I just thought --

MIKE

He's not playing hockey. I can't  
afford it. And you never should've  
put it in his head that it could be  
a realistic possibility.

ALI

You're right. I'm sorry. I  
shouldn't have done that without  
asking you first. But what if Brian  
and I paid for everything?

MIKE

(laughs) No. Fuck no.

ALI

Why not?

MIKE

Cause you feel guilty and you're  
trying to make up for it by buying  
his love. And in the process you're  
making me look bad.

ALI

This isn't about you or me. It's  
about Vinny. I promise. Playing a  
sport will be good for him.

MIKE

What, you read that on some  
parenting blog?

ALI

He said he doesn't have a single  
friend in school. Did you know  
that?

MIKE

He's just being dramatic.

ALI

Is he? He told me kids treat him like he's invisible.

MIKE

I talked to the Principal. It's fine. He's just having a hard time connecting with kids his age.

ALI

Maybe that's because he hangs out at casinos all night gambling with you and your buddies. You should've seen how happy he was when he told me you guys hit a three team parlay the other night. How's he supposed to have any idea how to connect with a third grader when the majority of his relationships are with degenerate Las Vegas lifers at these casinos.

MIKE

Degenerate Las Vegas lifers? Listen to you. You hook up with some nurse. He dresses you up, throws a couple band-aids on your wounds and now YOU'RE fuckin calling ME a degenerate?

ALI

That's not what I meant.

MIKE

You almost killed our son.

ALI

I know.

MIKE

That means you're the loser. Not me. You fucking junkie.

This cuts her pretty good.

ALI

I'm not a junkie.

MIKE

Look. I don't care what you are. All I know is that I'm not gonna sit here and take parenting advice from literally the worst mother of all time.

Ali gets tears in her eyes.

ALI

What else? If there's anything else  
you've been waiting to say to me.  
Say it.

MIKE

You destroyed my fuckin life.

She let's that hang for a moment.

ALI

Then maybe you should stop hiding  
behind your tragedy and do  
something about it.

MIKE

Oh, here we go. What, you do a  
couple sessions of therapy in rehab  
and now you're gonna psycho-analyze  
my life? Hiding behind my tragedy?

ALI

Yeah. Think about it. Your dad  
drank himself to death. Your mom  
killed herself. Then you start a  
family of your own and that  
disintegrates too. Your life has  
been decorated with one horrible  
tragedy after the next and you're  
using it as evidence for why it's  
ok to give up.

MIKE

(raising his voice) You don't know  
what the fuck you're talking about.

ALI

Well, I know that you're making  
your son sleep in abandoned Fremont  
Street hotel rooms while you deal  
blackjack.

Mike wants to respond, but can't seem to locate the words.

Just then, he notices Brian walking down the steps. Mike  
points up at him.

MIKE

Go back in your fuckin room, or  
I'll kick your fuckin ass.

ALI

Ok, I think it's time for you to leave now.

MIKE

Good. Fuck this.

Mike walks out, slamming the door.

**INT. SONNY'S SALOON - AFTERNOON**

Gus has an apron on and is wiping down the bar in this dark, windowless locals only restaurant.

Mike and Frankie are playing the video poker machines that are built into the bar. Gus pops open two beers and slides them over.

MIKE

I'm good.

Mike slides his beer back.

Just then, *Black Magic Woman* comes on the jukebox. Frankie slams his hand down, startling everyone in the bar.

FRANKIE

Come on Gus! Fuckin Santana?

GUS

Just cause I'm a spic doesn't mean I put on Santana. I don't control the music. It's a jukebox.

Frankie looks around, spots a Mexican guy silently drinking alone at the end of the bar.

FRANKIE

Rigoberto, you put this shit on?  
(shakes his head) Listen up everyone. Whoever put Santana on, don't do that anymore. You wanna listen to Mexican butt rock, you can head over to Mandalay Bay. He's got a residency there. I fuckin hate Santana!

This whole time Mike hasn't really said a word. He's just sitting there smoking, thinking about something.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Let's get the fuck outta here, go shoot some dice. Gus when you off?

GUS  
I'm here all night.

FRANKIE  
Mike?

MIKE  
Can't. I'm busy.

FRANKIE  
What do you mean you're busy?

MIKE  
I'm hanging out with that chick.

FRANKIE  
Lemme get this straight. You're passing on craps to hang out with some girl? (Mike nods) Wow.

MIKE  
Can you grab Vinny from school?

FRANKIE  
Yeah, but I'm at the Excalibur tonight. 8 o'clock call time.

MIKE  
You mind bringing him? (Frankie nods) Just keep him out of the front row. I don't want any cocks hitting him in the face or anything.

**EXT. UNIVERSITY OF LAS VEGAS NEVADA - NIGHT**

Mike walks through the dark, empty campus, and approaches an auditorium.

**INT. THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF LAS VEGAS NEVADA - NIGHT**

Mike sits in a dimly lit theatre watching a male grad student do spoken word poetry. He finishes and the MC takes the mic.

MC  
Thank you Sean, that was beautiful.  
Our next poet is Kate McKinley.

Kate walks on stage, leans into the microphone.

KATE  
I will be reading a poem entitled  
"Wanda."

Kate clears her throat and begins reading from a piece of paper.

KATE (CONT'D)  
It's not that I'm stupid. It's not like I actually think I'm getting away with something. Sitting up here smoking cigarettes in the only bathroom in this tiny little house. The house where I raised one son and four daughters. The house that one of those daughters, the 42 year old one with three kids of her own, just moved back into. They all know I'm up here in the bathroom smoking cigarettes. How do they know? Cause they're not stupid. They can smell the smoke. They think that I think I'm getting away with something, sitting up here smoking cigarettes in the only bathroom in this tiny little house. But I'm not stupid. I just don't give a shit anymore. My husband left me, ran off with his secretary. My kids left me too. So I'll smoke wherever the fuck I please.

Kate looks up from the page. Applause.

**EXT. THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF LAS VEGAS NEVADA - LATER**

Kate exits the theatre with a few other poets. She sees Mike waiting beside a lamppost, smiling.

MIKE  
I thought poems were supposed to rhyme?

KATE  
You didn't like it?

MIKE  
I loved it. Oh, speaking of poems.  
Before I forgot.

Mike goes into his pocket and pulls out the poem Kate wrote for him.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
You promised.

KATE  
(smiles) If you play your cards  
right.

Mike leans in and kisses her. When Kate opens her eyes it's clear she hasn't been kissed like that in a while.

KATE (CONT'D)  
Wow. That was nice.

She links her arm through Mike's arm and they walk across the dark UNLV campus.

**INT. EXCALIBUR HOTEL & CASINO - LATER**

Frankie and Vinny walk through the casino.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Frankie Williams! I thought that  
was you!

A good looking guy with long hair, tight jeans and a leather jacket walks towards them. This is SERGE STANTON.

FRANKIE  
Holy shit, Serge? I haven't seen  
you in a minute.

They hug. Frankie points to Vinny.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)  
Yo, this is Vinny. Mike's kid.

SERGE  
What?? (to Vinny) Dude, I met you  
when you were like two.

Serge gives Vinny a pound.

FRANKIE  
What are you doing in town?

SERGE  
Got two shows before our Australia  
tour. Woulda hit you up, but I been  
away so much and needed to put in  
some QT with the wife and kids.  
They're over there in the arcade.

FRANKIE

I saw you guys on Kimmel the other night. Pretty fuckin cool, man. You sounded great.

SERGE

You really think so?

FRANKIE

Big time.

SERGE

Means a lot coming from the legend.

FRANKIE

The legend. Get outta here with that shit.

SERGE

Where you playing these days?

FRANKIE

I got a little four piece with Gus. We pick up shows here and there.

Serge motions to Frankie's saxophone case.

SERGE

You guys playing in the lounge or something tonight?

FRANKIE

Nah.

SERGE

Alright man, I gotta get back. Good seeing you. Let me know if you want to come to one of the shows. I'll put you guys on the list.

**INT. THE PINBALL HALL OF FAME - LATER**

Mike and Kate are playing neighboring pinball machines.

KATE

How old are you?

MIKE

(laughs) Don't be so transparent.

KATE

What's that supposed to mean?

MIKE  
I'm 28 and I know exactly why  
you're wondering.

KATE  
Oh yeah, why's that?

MIKE  
You never thought you'd be on a  
date with a guy your age who has an  
eight year old son.

KATE  
No. I never thought I'd be on a  
date at a pinball arcade with a guy  
my age. I just wanted to make sure  
you were over 18.

MIKE  
Admit it. You're a little freaked  
out that I have a kid.

KATE  
I'm actually not.

Mike gives her a sideways glance like he doesn't believe her.

KATE (CONT'D)  
Where is he tonight?

MIKE  
With his Uncle Frankie.

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT. THUNDER DOWN UNDER AT THE EXCALIBUR - CONTINUOUS**

Vinny is front row for Vegas's most popular male strip show. Off to the side, in the shadows, Frankie belts out a cabaret number on his saxophone while 12 men gyrate their chiseled, oiled-up bodies on stage.

**INT. THE PINBALL HALL OF FAME - CONTINUOUS**

Back with Mike and Kate.

KATE  
How many other siblings you have?

MIKE  
None. I'm an only child.

KATE

Oh, Uncle Frankie isn't an uncle in the literal sense.

MIKE

No. Uncle in the sense that I've known him my entire life and he baby-sat Vinny a lot after me and Vinny's mom split up.

KATE

You and your ex-wife on good terms?

MIKE

We were never actually married. But things are ok with us, I guess.

KATE

That's good. My dad cheated on my mom and in an attempt to get back at him, she told me every single detail about his affair. Like every detail. I was ten years old.

MIKE

Jesus.

KATE

Yeah. So it's nice to know when some people have their kid's best interest at heart and can separate like mature adults.

Mike doesn't say anything.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - NIGHT**

Mike stands behind the blackjack table with his arms behind his back waiting for gamblers to play his table.

From out of nowhere, Ali shows up.

ALI

Hey.

MIKE

Hi.

Ali sits down at the empty table.

ALI

Sorry about the other day.

MIKE

I'm the one that should be sorry.

ALI

I thought a lot about what I said. And I realized I had no right to say any of it. I'm in no position to pass judgment on your life. You're right, I never should've bought Vinny the skates. I think I just got ahead of myself. So I'm gonna take a step back and let you determine how this goes from here on out. I want to be in his life, but I also want to make sure it feels right for both of you.

MIKE

I've actually been thinking about what you said too. Playing a sport could be good for him.

Ali smiles, appreciative of the olive branch Mike just extended.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm about to get off. You wanna get something to eat?

**INT. RESTAURANT - LATER**

Post dinner. Mike and Ali share a dessert.

MIKE

So "Nurse Brian."

ALI

Why do you say it like that? You don't like him?

MIKE

Seems like a nice enough guy. He fixed you right up, huh?

ALI

It was a compound fracture of the femur. They had to screw a metal pole into my bone. There was three surgeons. So, fixing me up was a team effort.

MIKE

No I just mean, like, it kind of  
seems like he swooped in and saved  
the day and helped you get sober.

ALI

I helped me get sober.

MIKE

How did you do it?

ALI

I learned to love myself enough  
that I no longer needed to take  
drugs or drink.

MIKE

So how's it work? You have a  
sponsor?

ALI

I'm currently... in between  
sponsors.

MIKE

What happened to the old one?

ALI

I started dating him.

MIKE

(surprised) Brian?

Ali shrugs and makes a face like, *it just kind of happened, what do you want me to do?*

MIKE (CONT'D)

What was he in for? Meth?

Ali smiles and rolls her eyes.

After a brief interval of silence, Ali leans down and pulls up her pant leg, revealing a long scar down her thigh.

ALI

I can't go through airport security  
without getting stopped.

MIKE

You know, I should've seen this  
coming.

ALI

What do you mean?

MIKE

You were unhappy and clearly self-medicating for a while. I just thought it was a phase. I was too fucking stupid to see that you were begging for my help.

ALI

I was broken back then, Mike.

MIKE

Yeah, and I should've been able to put you back together.

They sit in silence for a moment.

ALI

What about you? Any new scars since I've been gone?

Mike lifts up both pant legs.

MIKE

I've been pretty careful.

ALI

No serious relationships?

MIKE

Women aren't exactly lining up to get together with a dude who has a kid you know? I'm damaged goods.

ALI

My bad.

Mike laughs.

MIKE

Tell you what. Come shoot craps with me and we'll call it even.

ALI

I can't gamble.

MIKE

How come?

ALI

Just not supposed to. It has something to do with the high you get from it, I don't know.

MIKE

So we can't do any of the fun stuff  
we used to do together. Too bad.

ALI

You know what, fuck that. Let's go  
shoot some dice.

**INT. CASINO - LATER**

Mike and Ali are huddled around a crowded craps table.  
Everyone is making bets, tossing chips to the croupier.

ALI

Let me get 22 on the inside. Five  
on hard eight. Five on hard four.

The dice are slid to Ali. Before shooting, she begins an  
elaborately superstitious dice adjustment ritual.

When she's finally ready, she pinches the dice between her  
thumb and index finger. She traces a circle on the felt and  
in one fluid motion releases the dice in a perfect arc.

MIKE

Hard eight!

Ali does a little dance and high fives Mike.

ALI

(clapping her hands) Now we're  
gambling!

More chips are tossed to the craps dealer and the dice are  
slid back to Ali. She gets situated, ready for another roll.

MIKE

Ali. I need you to hit this point.

She winks at him, *comin right up.*

Ali sends the dice airborne. They ricochet off the bumper at  
the other end of the table. Everyone explodes in celebration.

Mike screams. He lifts Ali up off the ground and spins her  
around in a circle.

He sets her down, their faces just inches apart. It's a  
charged moment. Two people that used to be in love, staring  
into each other's eyes.

They start kissing.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - LITTLE LATER**

Ali digs her fingernails into Mike's back as he fucks her on the cheap hotel bed.

The headboard bangs against the wall.

Each thrust intensifies, culminating with one long groan of exhaustion.

Mike rolls off of Ali. She locates her underwear in the tangle of sheets and slides them on.

They both lie there on their backs, out of breath and staring up at the ceiling.

**INT. DESERT SPRINGS MEDICAL CENTER - DAY**

Vinny lies on a physician's table. Brian stands over him pressing on specific areas of his legs, testing for pain.

BRIAN

What about now? (Vinny shakes his head, no) Good. Going to bend your ankle slightly, this one may hurt.

Mike sits in a nearby chair watching Brian slowly turn Vinny's ankle to the left, then the right.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Any pain?

Vinny shakes his head again, still nothing.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Good.

Just then, a woman in scrubs enters the room.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Alright, Vinny. Samantha's going to take you back and run a few quick x-rays. Just take a minute.

Vinny hops off the table and follows her out of the room, leaving Mike and Brian alone.

MIKE

Thanks for doing this. Been meaning  
to take him for a while, but --

BRIAN

It's my pleasure. No worries. He's  
a good kid.

MIKE

Thanks. When you met Ali, did you  
know she had a son?

BRIAN

Not at first. It took a long time  
before she opened up and told me  
about what happened.

MIKE

She told you everything?

BRIAN

Yeah, I know how bad it got.

MIKE

And Knowing all that didn't scare  
you off?

BRIAN

People make mistakes, you know?  
She's a good person, Mike. You  
should get to know her again.

Vinny and the woman return. She hands Brian the x-rays.

He looks them over for a moment.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

So, basically, what's happening  
here is the growth rate of the  
bones in Vinny's legs are exceeding  
the ability of the muscle-tendon  
unit to stretch sufficiently. This  
increases tension at the attachment  
site and triggers pain. It's  
nothing to worry about.

MIKE

But he can barely walk some nights.  
He wakes up crying cause the pain  
is so bad.

BRIAN

I know. But they're just growing  
pains. It's totally normal.

MIKE  
Growing pains? That's it?

Brian walks Mike and Vinny out of the examination room.

BRIAN  
That's it. Next time those legs  
start to hurt, give him a few  
Tylenol. You could even throw a  
heating pad on it if you want.  
Otherwise...

He gives Vinny a high-five.

BRIAN (CONT'D)  
...you're all good, dude.

Mike shakes Brian's hand and thanks him again. Just before  
he's out the door, Mike stops.

MIKE  
You mentioned you know someone that  
works in corporate at ---

Brian cuts him off, doesn't even make Mike ask for the favor.

BRIAN  
- at MGM. Yeah. Let me make a call.

**INT. SUV - DAY**

Ali drives. Mike is in the passenger seat. Vinny in back.

ALI  
Okay, Vinny you get three guesses.

VINNY  
Uhh, Wet n' Wild?

MIKE  
It's February, dude. Water parks  
are closed till summer. Come on.  
Guess again.

VINNY  
I hope it's not the rollercoaster  
at New York New York, cause that  
thing is lame.

MIKE  
Nope. Not that either.

VINNY

There's a million different places  
you guys could be taking me. At  
least give me a hint.

MIKE

It's something you've always wanted  
to do.

Before Vinny can answer Ali pulls the car into the parking  
lot of a strip mall.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(to Ali) You want to tell him, or  
should I?

Ali nods, *you do the honors.*

MIKE (CONT'D)

Today is the day that you take your  
first step toward becoming the next  
Sidney Crosby.

Mike points to a sporting goods store.

**INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - MOMENTS LATER**

Vinny, Mike and Ali enter and are greeted by a young guy  
behind the counter.

EMPLOYEE

Can I help you guys with anything?

ALI

Our son starts playing hockey next  
week, but he doesn't have any of  
the equipment he needs.

MIKE

Well, he's got the skates.

Mike gives Ali a sideways glance.

ALI

He's got skates, but nothing else.  
So, we were wondering if you could  
help him pick out everything.

VINNY

What do you mean I start playing  
hockey next week? Is this a joke?

MIKE

Your mom and I signed you up.  
You're on the Las Vegas Junior  
Golden Knights. Congratulations.  
You're officially a hockey player.

VINNY

Are you guys kidding me?

MIKE

Nope. But you better hurry up and  
figure out what you want cause you  
have your first ice skating lesson  
in an hour.

VINNY

Ho-ly. Fuck.

Vinny rushes off with the employee.

**INT. ICE RINK - LATER**

Mike and Ali sit next to each other in the bleachers watching  
Vinny's one-on-one skating lesson.

Mike looks over at Ali.

MIKE

The other night kind of got away  
from us, huh?

ALI

That's one way to put it. We should  
probably talk about that.

MIKE

Yeah, probably. Felt like it kind  
of needed to happen.

ALI

I agree. But is it ok if we keep it  
as a secret one time thing we did?

MIKE

For sake of closure.

ALI

Exactly. Cause things are really  
good with me and Brian, and --

MIKE

I know they are. (beat) I'm  
actually kind of seeing someone too  
by the way.

ALI

You are? I didn't know that.

MIKE

Yep.

ALI

That's great. Do you like her?

MIKE

Yeah. She's cool.

**INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Mike and Kate lie in bed. They're clothed, but clearly post-coital. Mike lights a cigarette.

KATE

You smoke more than anyone I've  
ever met.

MIKE

Thanks.

Kate watches him take a deep drag then blow the smoke out of his nostrils.

KATE

You're lucky you look so fucking  
hot doing it. Otherwise I'd tell  
you, you should get a Juul or  
something.

MIKE

You want to be the girl having sex  
with a dude who smokes a Juul?

KATE

Better than being the girl having  
sex with the dude with cancer.

Kate grabs the pack of cigarettes and lights her own.

MIKE

YOU should get a Juul.

KATE

I'll get one if you get one.

Mike sets his cigarette down on the ash tray, then crawls on top of Kate. He kisses her neck, but Kate pretends to be uninterested.

KATE (CONT'D)

Not until you promise to get a Juul.

Before Mike can answer, his phone buzzes. He gets out of bed, and checks it. It's a Facetime from Vinny. He answers.

MIKE

Hey bud. What's up?

VINNY (ON SCREEN)

I just beat Uncle Frankie and Uncle Gus at Monopoly.

Vinny flips the screen around, so Mike can see Frankie and Gus sitting around a Monopoly board.

MIKE

Nice job, pal. Did Uncle Gus try to cheat?

VINNY (ON SCREEN)

Yeah, a little. He kept pretending his chance and community chest cards were good when really they were bad. But I caught him.

Kate smiles, watching Mike talk to Vinny.

MIKE

What'd you have for dinner?

VINNY (ON SCREEN)

Pizza.

MIKE

Nice. Homework?

VINNY (ON SCREEN)

Finished it. What are you doing?

MIKE

Nothing. Just hanging out. Say hello to Kate.

Mike flips the screen around so Vinny can see Kate. She waves.

## INT. THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Kate has been invited over for Monopoly night with Mike and the guys. Classic rock is coming from the speakers. Couple pizza boxes and empty beers cans are everywhere.

Kate rolls the dice, and moves her piece along the board.

VINNY

I hate to do it, Kate. But Mississippi Avenue is mine. With a hotel. That'll be \$850.

Kate hands Vinny the Monopoly money.

GUS

I don't want Vinny being the banker anymore.

MIKE

What do you care who the banker is?

GUS

Cause he's cheating, I know it. Look, the little slum lord owns the whole fuckin board. I got nothing except Baltic and Mediterranean.

FRANKIE

Don't blame the eight year old cause you still haven't figured out how to play this game.

GUS

I got just as many wins as you do, don't I? You fuck boy.

MIKE

No you don't.

Mike points to a chalkboard on the wall with years worth of Monopoly tallies. Gus is clearly in last place.

KATE

You guys weren't kidding when you said you took Monopoly seriously.

FRANKIE

It's no joke. You're the first outsider to ever be let into the game, Kate.

KATE

Well, I'm honored.

VINNY

Hey Kate. Can I ask you a question?

KATE

You can ask me anything, Vinny.

VINNY

How big is your purse?

MIKE

You don't have to answer that.  
Vinny, knock it off.

KATE

My purse?

Kate tries to show the dimensions of her purse with her hands.

KATE (CONT'D)

Like this big. Normal size.

Vinny gives Mike a big thumbs up.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh! That reminds me. Ok, I know  
your birthday's not until next  
month but...

She opens her purse and hands Mike a brand new Juul.

KATE (CONT'D)

...consider it an early gift.

Mike smiles and rolls his eyes. Frankie and Gus laugh.

VINNY

What is that?

KATE

It's gonna help your dad not smoke  
so much.

VINNY

Cool.

Frankie gets up and walks over to the turntable and a shelf of vinyl. He thumbs through records.

FRANKIE

Any requests?

Mike whispers something into Kate's ear.

KATE

Frankie, do you have any Santana?

Frankie looks back, with an angry look on his face, then realizes that Mike put her up to that.

FRANKIE

That shit's not funny, Kate. I woulda had to kick your ass outta here if you were serious. This is a strictly no Santana household.

KATE

What's wrong with Santana?

MIKE

He's got some vendetta against him for no reason.

FRANKIE

Not true. I got my reasons.

KATE

Well what are they?

Frankie sits down.

FRANKIE

Alright, look. Only reason I'm gonna tell you all this is cause Kate's here and I like her and I don't want her thinking I go around hating on people for no reason.

(beat) Now, I never told no one this before, but remember when my grandma died, and we all had to help box up her house? Most of the shit went to Goodwill, but I kept this one box for myself. So one night, this is probably like our senior year, I'm kinda missing Grandma and I start going through the box, and I come across this little journal with my mom's name on it. It felt too weird to read personal shit about my mom, so I tossed the book back in the box. But it just so happened to land open and I see a concert ticket taped to one of the pages. I look and it's from a Santana show from like 74 or some shit. So now I'm intrigued and I start reading her little journal entry.

(MORE)

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

(beat) So after the show, my mom  
and her friends ended up backstage,  
hanging out with the band and...

Frankie is quiet for a long beat.

MIKE

What? And what???

FRANKIE

Nevermind, I can't say it. It's too  
fucked up.

KATE

You can't back out of this story  
now. And what???

FRANKIE

And... my mom fucked Carlos  
Santana. On his tour bus. And a  
bunch of other places that night.

MIKE & GUS

What!?

FRANKIE

And she wrote down every last nasty  
ass detail in that little journal.  
And I read every word. (beat) That  
nigga Santana is a freak! I never  
could look at my mom the same  
again.

MIKE

How have you never told us about  
this?

FRANKIE

Now you know why I get heated every  
time Europa comes on.

Mike and Gus laugh.

Gus walks over and sits down at the wooden piano in the  
living room. He starts playing Santana's "Smooth" featuring  
Rob Thomas. Frankie runs over and puts him in a head lock.

GUS

Sorry, I had to.

Gus changes it up and plays the opening chords of "Whipping  
Post" by The Allman Brothers.

MIKE

Yes!

Frankie puts down his beer, picks up his saxophone and joins in, playing the melody.

GUS

(singing) "I've been run down. I've been lied to. And I don't know why, I let that mean woman make me a fool."

Mike and Vinny sit down next to Gus at the piano and join in.

MIKE &amp; VINNY &amp; GUS

(singing) "She took all my money!"

Kate sits down on the couch for a front row seat of the impromptu jam session.

MIKE &amp; VINNY &amp; GUS (CONT'D)

(singing) "Wrecked my new car. Now she's with one of my good time buddies. They're drinking in some crosstown bar. Sometimes I feel."

Now Frankie is really laying into it, playing the song's guitar solo but on the saxophone.

MIKE &amp; VINNY &amp; GUS (CONT'D)

(singing) "SOMETIMES I FEEL."

Mike puts his arm around Vinny.

MIKE &amp; VINNY &amp; GUS (CONT'D)

(singing) "Like I been tied to the whipping post. Tied to the whipping post. Tied to the whipping post. Good lord I feel like I'm dying."

To Kate it looks like they're having the best night of their lives, and her heart melts a little.

**INT. / EXT. MIKE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY**

Mike drives. Frankie is shotgun. Vinny and Gus are in the backseat. He pulls into parking lot of the Fiesta Casino.

Everyone gets out except Vinny.

MIKE

What's wrong, bud?

VINNY

I don't want to play anymore, dad.  
Let's just forget this whole thing  
and go home.

MIKE

Dude, this is your first real  
hockey practice. You've been  
waiting for this day your entire  
life.

VINNY

What if I suck?

MIKE

You're not gonna suck.

VINNY

But what if I do and all the other  
kids think I'm a joke?

Mike sits down in the backseat next to Vinny. Puts his arm  
around him.

MIKE

You know it took your Uncle Frankie  
two years before he could even kind  
of play the saxophone? Ask him.

FRANKIE

It's true, bro. I was the worst.

MIKE

Point is, if you suck, then you'll  
practice really hard until you  
don't suck. Or, you can quit, pick  
a new sport.

Vinny gets out of the car feeling better about everything.

GUS

Yo Vinny. Don't take any shit from  
anyone on the ice, okay?

Vinny smiles.

FRANKIE

He's right. You're a hockey player  
now, so you're allowed to put a  
beat down on anyone you want. Kids.  
Coaches. Parents. If they fuck with  
you, you take off those little  
gloves, and whoop their ass.

Gus hands Vinny his hockey bag and hockey stick. They walk through the parking lot.

**INT. FIESTA HOTEL & CASINO - CONTINUOUS**

The guys cut through a bank of video poker machines and make their way into the ice rink that's attached to the casino.

**INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER**

With his hockey bag slung over his shoulder, Vinny enters to find a room full of kids his age.

He looks for a spot on the bench, but there's no room.

Then, a KID slides down, makes space for Vinny.

HOCKEY KID  
You can sit here. I'm Mikey  
Respoli.

He extends his hand to Vinny. They shake.

VINNY  
I'm Vinny.

Vinny sits down and starts getting ready for practice.

**INT. MGM CORPORATE OFFICES - WEEK LATER**

Mike - in a pair of khakis and a button down - is being interviewed by a guy in a suit.

The interview is just coming to an end.

INTERVIEWER  
Alright, well it was good meeting you, Mike. As I said earlier, your resume was at the top of the stack. Clearly you got the right people in your corner, so this was just a preliminary thing really. A formality. Normally I'd be able to fit you in at one of our casinos, no problem. You'd have a job in the next week or so. Unfortunately, I don't have any dealer positions available at the moment.

MIKE  
Oh.

INTERVIEWER

But. We are actually looking to fill an opening in guest services and client relations at our Bellagio location. It would be much more interpersonal than what you're doing now. It's more on the hospitality side of the business. But there's potential for upward mobility. The hours are steady and you'd be on salary, so the pay is better. Two weeks paid vacation. That kind of thing. What do you think?

MIKE

I think that sounds great.

INTERVIEWER

Cool. I will say, however, that it's a considerable more amount of work than dealing blackjack. We need someone who is accountable and dependable and willing to go the extra step for clients. So, if you still think you're up for it...

MIKE

Yes. I'm totally up for it.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, great. Let me do my thing and someone will contact you to schedule a time to do the next round of meetings. They'll be a little more intense than this one was. There will be a background check. You'll have to pass a drug test of course.

Mike shifts in his seat a little.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

But yeah, I think you'd be great for the position. Thanks for coming in.

They stand up and shake hands.

**EXT. BACKYARD - DAY**

A pre-season hockey banquet is underway. Mike and Ali stand around the pool, mingling with other parents.

Vinny sits in a circle with the rest of his teammates, while the COACH hands out hockey jerseys to each player.

COACH  
And last but not least, number 99.  
Vinny Klein.

Everyone claps as Vinny gets up and accepts his jersey.

COACH (CONT'D)  
So, that's it. First game is just a couple weeks away. Appreciate everyone coming out for this nice little team bonding session. (holds up his beer) Here's to a great season.

LITTLE LATER: the music's going and the coach is on the grill, flipping hotdogs and hamburgers.

Vinny is in the pool on the shoulders of one of his teammates, playing chicken against two other boys.

Mike and Ali are nearby, standing underneath the patio.

ALI  
How's everything going with your girlfriend?

MIKE  
She's not my girlfriend.

ALI  
(smiles) Has Vinny met her?

MIKE  
Yeah, a few times.

ALI  
And?

MIKE  
He likes her. But don't read into that. He likes everyone.

They watch Vinny splashing around in the pool. Ali smiles.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
I'm proud of us.

ALI  
Me too.

Mike holds Ali's hand.

ALI (CONT'D)  
This is kind of awkward so I'm just  
going to come out and say it.

Mike looks at her.

ALI (CONT'D)  
I'm pregnant.

MIKE  
(eyes wide) From...

ALI  
No. I'm eight weeks pregnant.

Mike does the math in his head.

MIKE  
Wait. So you... did you know when  
we...?

ALI  
No. (beat) I don't know. Maybe.

MIKE  
Maybe? And you fucked me?

ALI  
I'm sorry. I suspected it, but I  
was too scared to find out for  
sure, so I didn't take the test  
until a few days ago.

A couple of the other parents start to sense that something  
is wrong. Ali takes this as a cue, and cuts through the back  
gate to the front yard. Mike follows her out.

MIKE  
So you knew you were pregnant. And  
you still fucked me? What the fuck  
is wrong with you?

ALI  
I don't know. Every time I look at  
you. And every time I look at Vinny  
I'm reminded about what I did.

Ali sits down on the curb and puts her head in her hands.

**INT. SPORTS BOOK AT THE PALACE STATION CASINO - DAY**

Mike, Frankie and Gus are watching a basketball game. A  
cocktail waitress comes over, hands Mike a shot and a beer.

Mike downs the shot and slugs the beer.

MIKE

Yo, on my way here I saw Serge  
Stanton's band on a billboard.

FRANKIE

Yeah, I ran into him. They got a  
couple shows in Vegas coming up. He  
invited us.

MIKE

You wanna go?

FRANKIE

Nah. Fuck that.

Gus gets up and walks over to the window to place a bet.

Mike lights a cigarette, he stands up, approaches Frankie.

MIKE

Yo, lemme get that bag.

FRANKIE

That's a joke right? You're trying  
to be funny?

MIKE

What are you talking about?

FRANKIE

Don't you have that job interview  
coming up?

MIKE

Yeah, so?

FRANKIE

What are you fuckin stupid? They're  
gonna drug test you.

MIKE

The interview is in like five days.  
Just gimme the fuckin coke.

FRANKIE

No. Fuck outta here.

MIKE

I'm serious. Give it to me.

FRANKIE

I'm not giving it to you.

MIKE

I don't need you fuckin monitoring  
me like you're my dad or something.  
(forceful) Give it to me.

Mike holds out his hand.

FRANKIE

Fine. Here. (under his breath)  
Fuckin loser.

MIKE

What was that?

FRANKIE

Nothing.

Frankie throws the bag of coke on the ground. Mike bends down to pick it up.

MIKE

Oh, I'm the loser?

FRANKIE

You sure look like one to me.

MIKE

What about you? You're the definition of loser.

FRANKIE

Oh yeah? Define it for me then, big guy. Can't wait to hear this one.

MIKE

Someone who's too scared to go to an old friend's concert because their band is famous.

FRANKIE

There you go. Flip it. Turn it on me, so you don't have to examine your own life.

Mike taunts Frankie by dumping a little mound of coke on the back of his hand and quickly snorting it up his nose.

Frankie gives Mike a thumbs up.

When Mike turns to leave, a SECURITY GUARD is standing there.

SECURITY GUARD

Mike. Come on man, what the fuck.

MIKE

What? You think I'm the only one in  
here doing coke? Please.

Mike points to the room full of gamblers, watching baseball  
and screaming at horse races.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Look at all these losers. Go bother  
them. Leave me alone.

SECURITY GUARD

I gotta kick you out. You can't do  
that shit in here. Sorry.

MIKE

I'm not leaving.

SECURITY GUARD

You have to.

MIKE

Make me, you fuckin rent-a-cop.

SECURITY GUARD

(into walkie talkie) I got a 212  
and a disorderly perp in the sports  
book.

Mike turns to leave. Gus returns just as Mike is seeing  
himself out. Gus makes a face and Frankie just shrugs.

**INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - MORNING**

Mike and Kate are lying in bed. Kate has her head on Mike's  
shoulder.

KATE

I haven't felt this comfortable in  
a long time.

MIKE

If you think my boney ass shoulder  
is comfortable, you should try a  
pillow.

KATE

You know what I mean. This. Us...  
feels really good.

She kisses him.

KATE (CONT'D)  
You're not seeing anyone else are  
you?

MIKE  
No.

KATE  
Just wanted to make sure. Cause I'm  
not either.

Mike says nothing.

KATE (CONT'D)  
You got quiet. Mike? Do you plan on  
seeing anyone else?

MIKE  
I don't know.

KATE  
You don't know?

MIKE  
Yeah, I don't know.

KATE  
Can you try to think about it? It's  
kind of a serious question.

MIKE  
Actually it's kind of an insane  
question.

KATE  
Insane?

MIKE  
Yeah. Asking me if I plan on seeing  
other people? When? Like a year  
from now? Two years? I don't know,  
yeah sure. I'll probably see  
someone other than you at some  
point in my life.

KATE  
I'm so confused.

MIKE  
Why, because I'm being honest?

KATE  
No. Because I thought there was  
something special going on here.

MIKE

So what if there is? Then what?  
Were you expecting to fall in love  
and get married and live happily  
ever after? Waking up in the  
mornings, making Vinny breakfast  
and dropping him off at school?

KATE

I don't know what I was expecting.  
All I was saying was that I want to  
give this a shot and that I'm open  
to letting it go wherever it goes.

MIKE

This whole time, I thought you were  
normal. But it turns out you're  
crazy just like the rest of them.

KATE

Fuck you. At least I'm not a pussy.

MIKE

Get the fuck out of here.

KATE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

MIKE

Go. I'm serious.

KATE

(angry) No, I'm not leaving until  
you tell me what's going on.

MIKE

You want to know what's going on?  
This whole thing is bullshit.

KATE

No it's not.

She grabs Mike's arm, but he pulls away.

MIKE

Yes it fuckin is! You're using me.  
And that's bullshit.

KATE

How am I using you?

MIKE

You think I'm stupid? You think I don't know you're just killing time with me, waiting for your little on again off again boyfriend to decide he's ready to settle down? Please. Just do us both a favor and leave.

Kate says nothing. The tears are coming.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Just go.

Mike just sits there, watching her cry and put on her clothes.

**INT. THE HOUSE - LATER**

Mike lies on his bed smoking a cigarette.

In the living room, Frankie and Gus are on the couch watching TV.

There's a knock on the door. Gus answers, it's Ali.

ALI

Is Mike here? He was supposed to drop Vinny off so I can take him to practice.

Just then, Mike comes out from his bedroom.

MIKE

He's not going. He's sick.

ALI

Are you sure? Cause I was literally just texting with him and --

MIKE

He's not going, ok! This is over.

ALI

What's over?

MIKE

This whole co-parenting thing. It's not working for me anymore.

This gets Frankie and Gus's attention.

ALI

Can we talk about this later  
tonight? After practice? He's gonna  
be late. Vinny? Honey? Let's go.

Vinny comes out from his room.

VINNY

But my dad said practice got  
cancelled.

ALI

It didn't. Go grab your bag, so  
we're not late.

VINNY

Cool.

Vinny runs off into the garage. Re-appears with his hockey  
bag and stick.

MIKE

Hey Vinny. Lemme ask you something.  
Do you trust your mom?

VINNY

(confused) Yeah.

MIKE

You sure about that? Oh wait.  
That's right. She never told you  
about what happened when you were  
just a little baby, did she?

Vinny looks at his dad.

FRANKIE

Mike.

MIKE

Stay out of this, Frank. I want to  
make sure my son knows how  
dangerous it could be to get in the  
car with his mom.

Ali looks at Mike with pleading eyes.

ALI

Mike, please. Don't.

MIKE

Go ahead. Tell him what happened.

Frankie gets up from the couch.

FRANKIE

Don't do this, bro.

MIKE

No. He needs to know. Tell our son  
why you left, Ali.

FRANKIE

Vinny, go with your mom. You're  
gonna be late for practice.

Frankie gets in Mike's face. Mike shoves him.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I'm fuckin warning you. Stop this.

MIKE

Fine, I'll tell him. Vinny, your  
mom --

Boom. Frankie throws all his weight into Mike and takes him  
to the ground.

Mike thrashes. Elbows Frankie in the jaw.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Get the fuck off me.

Ali and Gus are frozen, watching the tangled up mess of arms  
and legs rolling around on the ground.

In the chaos, no one notices Vinny run out of the house until  
the front door slams behind him.

From the window, Ali sees Vinny get behind the wheel of  
Mike's car. He fires up the engine and awkwardly backs it out  
of the driveway, taking out the mailbox in his path.

ALI

Vinny!

Ali runs out of the house, but doesn't get there in time.

Mike comes flying out of the house just as Vinny straightens  
the car out and goes speeding away toward the busy  
intersection at the end of the street.

MIKE

Vinny!

He takes off running after the car.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Vinny can't see over the steering wheel, but he watches the speedometer as it climbs to 15, 20, 25 miles per hour.

He presses down on the gas a little harder and sends the car barreling through the intersection.

Honking cars skid out of the way, somehow avoiding a head on collision.

**EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS**

Mike runs down the sidewalk.

As he approaches the top of the street, he watches as Vinny just narrowly makes it through the intersection, before the car careens into a ditch.

Mike's vision blurs and his heart sinks into his stomach.

He sprints across the street.

He approaches the car. It's gone head first into the ditch. Smoke wafts out from the hood.

Mike inches closer to the car and sees Vinny sitting, totally still, in the drivers seat.

MIKE  
Vinny.

No response.

Mike starts to panic. He tries the handle, but the door is locked. He tries them all, but they're all locked.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Vinny!

Finally, Vinny turns his head and makes eye contact with his dad. Miraculously, he's totally fine.

VINNY  
Leave me alone!

MIKE  
Vinny, tell me you're okay. Unlock  
the doors.

Vinny cups the palms of his hands over his ears.

VINNY

I don't want to hear anything bad about my mom. I don't want to hear anything bad about my mom.

MIKE

I'm not going to say anything bad about your mom. I promise. Please, just come out of the car.

VINNY

No.

MIKE

I really need you to unlock the doors, bud. I just want to make sure you're not hurt.

VINNY

Go away! I hate you!

Just then, Ali arrives, out of breath. She looks at Mike.

MIKE

He's okay. But he won't come out.

Ali approaches the car.

ALI

Honey. Can you do us a favor and please come out?

She places the palm of her hand on the window and smiles.

Vinny unlocks the doors and gets out of the car.

Ali hugs him tighter than she's ever hugged anyone in her life.

**INT. THE HOUSE - LATER**

Mike lies in his bed, staring up at the ceiling.

Later, he showers. He wipes the steam from the glass. Looks at himself.

He gets ready for work.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - LATER**

Mike sits in his car smoking. All of a sudden he snaps. He punches the steering wheel repeatedly until his knuckles are raw and he's out of breath.

**INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - LITTLE LATER**

Mike knocks on Kate's door. He waits, standing there in his work clothes, but no one answers.

He knocks again. Eventually a GUY in mesh shorts and a tank top answers. Mike knows right away this is Kate's ex.

KATE'S EX BOYFRIEND  
Dude. Stop calling and stop texting  
her. She doesn't want to fucking  
see you, okay?

Mike turns around and walks away.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR (MOVING) - LATER**

Mike drives the freeway, windows down, wind blowing in his hair.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - LATER**

Mike deals blackjack.

He is relieved by an incoming dealer, and on his way to the break room, he sees Frankie waiting for him.

FRANKIE  
Hey.

MIKE  
Hey. Sorry about earlier.

FRANKIE  
Yeah, me too.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike and Frankie are sitting on two of the leather seats in the keno lounge.

FRANKIE

Yo. Been meaning to ask you. What's up with you and Kate? Where she been?

MIKE

We're done.

FRANKIE

What you mean?

MIKE

We broke up.

FRANKIE

Fuck. That sucks, bro. I'm sorry. What happened?

MIKE

She got back with her ex or something. Whatever, I'm not worried about it. It's all good.

FRANKIE

It's all good? You liked her, didn't you? (Mike nods) So how the fuck is that all good?

MIKE

You know what I mean.

FRANKIE

Yeah. Unfortunately I do know what you mean.

Long beat. Frankie stares at Mike.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

The week after your mom died. It was the night you were moving in with me and my mom. I remember you were in my room, unpacking. I came in while you were putting your clothes in those two little drawers I gave you at the bottom of my dresser. And I asked how you were doing. You looked at me. And do you remember what you said?

MIKE

No.

FRANKIE

You said it's all good. I'll never forget that. Your mom wasn't dead two minutes. You were officially an orphan, all alone in the world. And you had no tears. You weren't mad. You weren't sad. It was just all good. You said the same thing to me and Gus that day we came over after Ali left. You spent your entire life telling yourself it was all good. And it finally caught up to you. It ain't all good, bro. It's never been all good. So stop pretending like it is.

MIKE

I know.

FRANKIE

If you know, then fix shit with Kate. I'm serious. Go get in your car right now and drive over to her house and tell her you're sorry. That's what you should do.

MIKE

Yeah I *should* do a lot of things. I should probably quit smoking too. I should stop gambling. I should get a girlfriend. I know I *should* do all that.

FRANKIE

Then why aren't you doing it?

MIKE

Cause shit always winds up the same for me. So there's no point.

FRANKIE

You know what the point is. Your son. Vinny. That's the fuckin point.

MIKE

Yeah, Vinny's always come first, and look where that got me. It was me and him against the world. Nothing could ever break us apart, right? Wrong. She comes waltzing back in and the whole thing comes crashing down, turns to shit, just like it always does.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Now I'm the bad guy. He told me he hated me. He's my best friend. And he told me he hated me.

FRANKIE

Maybe he doesn't need a best friend anymore. Maybe it's about time he got a father.

Mike gets quiet. Let's that sink in.

**INT. ALI AND BRIAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Vinny is on the couch alone watching a hockey game. Ali comes into the living room, sits next to him.

ALI

Are you doing okay, honey? (Vinny nods) Today scared you, didn't it?

Vinny thinks for a moment. He nods.

ALI (CONT'D)

You're not used to seeing your dad act that way, and that was confusing. Sometimes, when you get confused, it's scary. So what you were feeling was normal, I want you to know that. I also want you to know that your dad has been going through a lot lately. And he never meant for you to see any of that stuff. He loves you very much.

VINNY

What happened between you and my dad?

ALI

When I was younger the world was a very confusing place for me. I didn't have parents who knew how to help me through that. So I always felt like I was alone and that scared me.

VINNY

You left because you were scared?

ALI

Yes. But I always knew I would be back.

(MORE)

ALI (CONT'D)

And I knew that while I was gone, you would always be okay with your dad because he's the strongest and best man I've ever met. You're very lucky to have him as your father.

VINNY

I know.

Vinny hugs Ali.

**INT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - NIGHT**

Mike is behind the blackjack table, dealing to two women who don't really know how to play.

He deals the first woman an ace and a king.

WOMAN 1

Blackjack!

She high fives her friend. The other woman has an ace and a six. She stares at her cards for a long beat.

MIKE

Soft seventeen. What do you wanna do?

WOMAN 2

Soft what? Sorry this is my first time.

MIKE

(smiles) That's okay. The ace can either be an eleven or a one. So since your hand can be seen as having seventeen or seven, we call that a soft seventeen.

WOMAN 2

Got it. So what should I do?

MIKE

Well I'm showing an eight and you always assume the dealer's card you can't see is a ten. In which case, I'd have 18 and your hand would be smaller than mine and you'd lose.

WOMAN 2

But what if you don't have a ten under there and my seventeen could win?

MIKE

That's why the choice of whether or not to hit or stay is difficult.

WOMAN 2

Shit. Okay, so I can stay small. Or take a chance for a bigger hand?

MIKE

That's right.

WOMAN 2

What would you do if you were me?

MIKE

I'd hit.

The woman gives her friend a look, smiles.

WOMAN 2

Okay. Hit me!

Mike pulls a card from the shoe and flips it over. It's a four.

WOMAN 2 (CONT'D)

Twenty one! I did it.

Mike flips his card, and just like he said, he has 18. He pays the woman.

**EXT. FOUR QUEENS HOTEL & CASINO - NEXT MORNING**

Mike gets off work and drives to Ali's house.

**EXT. ALI AND BRIAN'S HOUSE - LATER**

Mike pulls into the driveway and waits for Vinny. Instead, Ali comes out and approaches Mike's car.

ALI

Vinny and Brian ran to the store. They'll be back any minute. You want to come in and wait for them? I just made coffee.

**INT. ALI AND BRIAN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Ali pours Mike a cup of coffee. He notices a picture of Ali's ultrasound on the kitchen island. He picks it up.

MIKE  
Congratulations.

ALI  
Hopefully I can get it right this time around.

MIKE  
You will. I'm happy for you, Ali.

ALI  
How could you be? After everything I've put you through.

MIKE  
For some bizarre reason, I used to think I had my shit together. But it took you coming back into my life in order for me to realize I didn't. You helped me realize people can change.

ALI  
Mike, I still have so far to go.

MIKE  
Yeah, you do. But you're not the same person that walked out on us. And that's the person I was comparing myself to. I told myself, I just had to make sure I was doing a better job than you, the mother who locked her son in the car that day. I set the bar so low that I never had to examine whether or not I was doing a good job as a parent. As long as I wasn't almost killing Vinny, I was doing ok. But then you showed up and it forced me to look at what I had become.

A beat. Ali studies Mike.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
I'm not a good father.

Mike's eyes start to shine with tears.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
I thought I was, but I'm not.

The dam bursts, and all the sadness that Mike has been holding back - a lifetime's worth of sorrow - is released.

ALI  
I'm so sorry.

Ali hugs him.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - LATER**

Mike is about to pull out of Ali's driveway. Vinny is in the passenger seat.

MIKE  
You mad at me? It's okay if you are.

VINNY  
I was. But now I'm not anymore.

MIKE  
You wanna come with me to get a haircut?

VINNY  
Sure.

Mike backs out.

**INT. BARBER SHOP - LATER**

Clippers buzz. Clumps of hair fall to the floor. Mike and Vinny sit side by side, getting their hair cut.

Mike's long stringy hair has been chopped off, reduced to a stylish short on the sides look.

VINNY  
Hey dad, one of my friends on my team. Mikey Respoli. He told me his older brother plays hockey at some fancy boarding school in Connecticut and he just found out that he got a scholarship to a college. Do you know what a scholarship is?

MIKE  
(laughs) Yes.

VINNY  
It's when you don't have to pay for college because you're so good at a sport. I'm gonna get a scholarship one day.

Mike smiles at Vinny. The barber hands Mike the mirror to check out the back. He nods, happy with what he sees.

BARBER  
What about the beard?

Mike looks at his face in the mirror.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - LATER**

Mike and Vinny get in. Mike looks like a totally different person with short hair and no beard.

VINNY  
You look younger than me.

Mike checks himself out in the rearview.

MIKE  
I know. Weird.

VINNY  
Oh, dad. That kid Mikey Respoli I was telling you about. With the brother. He's having a bunch of kids from the team sleep over his house tonight. Can I go?

MIKE  
Of course.

Mike puts the key in the ignition, but doesn't turn it on.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Vinny. You're going to be moving in with your mom and Brian for a little bit.

VINNY  
What are you talking about?

MIKE  
Your mom and I talked this morning and decided it's what's best for you.

VINNY  
I don't want to live with them. I want to live with you. And Uncle Frankie and Uncle Gus.

MIKE

I know you do. And I want you to live with us too. It's just not a normal thing. To be 8 years old living with your dad and his high school buddies.

VINNY

Yes it is.

MIKE

No it isn't.

VINNY

Please don't make me. I want to stay with you.

Vinny looks like he might cry.

MIKE

This isn't permanent. It's not gonna be forever. Just until I can get my shit together a little bit. We'll still see each other all the time, I promise. This is for the best. I love you and I want to be a better dad for you.

VINNY

But you don't need to be a better dad.

Mike leans over and hugs Vinny.

**EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY**

Mike is going for a jog through the neighborhood. Earphones in. Shirt is soaked with sweat.

As he approaches his house, he sprints as fast as his body will allow.

**INT. THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Mike enters the house out of breath after his run to find Frankie and Gus waiting for him. They have a present wrapped up, bow on top.

GUS

You thought we forgot, didn't you?

FRANKIE

Happy birthday, bro. Open it up.

Mike unwraps the gift and looks down into the box. His brow furrows.

MIKE

The fuck am I supposed to do with this thing?

Mike pulls out a small colostomy bag attached to a catheter.

GUS

You're supposed fill that up with clean piss, strap it to your body and smuggle it into your interview today.

Mike laughs.

FRANKIE

You go in there and fail the drug test, technically I'd be responsible. I can't have that on my conscience.

Mike thinks for a moment.

MIKE

Thanks. But where am I supposed to get the clean urine? Not from either of you two fucks that's for sure.

Gus walks over to the fridge and pulls out a plastic laboratory cup filled with amber liquid.

GUS

Happy birthday.

MIKE

Where the fuck did you get this?

Frankie motions to the window. Outside Vinny is skating around on his rollerblades, playing street hockey.

FRANKIE

We told him all the kids on his hockey team are required to take a piss test to make sure no one's using performance enhancements.

GUS

And he bought it. Fuckin idiot.

MIKE

You guys are insane.

FRANKIE

Happy 29, bro.

Frankie gives Mike a hug.

GUS

There's something else we want to talk to you about. (off Mike's look) Frankie?

FRANKIE

We're hitting the road.

MIKE

What do you mean?

FRANKIE

I just got off the phone with a booking agent. He heard some of my stuff --

GUS

Our stuff.

FRANKIE

He's gonna book us in a bunch of clubs all over the west coast.

MIKE

No shit?

FRANKIE

Yep. Then we're gonna work our way east and end in New York. Just a little three month tour. Nothing too serious. See what happens from there.

MIKE

Wow. I'm proud of you guys.

FADE OUT:

**INT. / EXT. THE HOUSE - MONTH LATER**

Mike enters the house. It's been completely cleared out except for one cardboard box. He picks it up and surveys the house he's lived in for the past eight years.

He loads the box into a moving truck parked in the driveway. Vinny's in the back.

MIKE  
Last one.

Vinny uses all his weight to slide the box all the way to the back, then hops out of the truck.

Next to the moving truck is a long, navy blue church van. Frankie and Gus are packing it up with everything they'll need on tour.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Alright. That's everything.

Gus tosses Frankie the keys. Frankie tosses them back.

FRANKIE  
Fuck that. You're driving.

GUS  
No, I'm drinking.

Gus reaches into the van, grabs a can of Budweiser.

GUS (CONT'D)  
And if things go according to plan  
I'll be blacked out by the time we  
get to Barstow.

He cracks the beer, foam spills down the side. He takes a sip.

FRANKIE  
So this is it.

The guys stand in a line, staring at the house, collectively taking stock of the many memories shared.

MIKE  
End of an era.

Frankie bends down and gives Vinny a hug.

FRANKIE  
I'm gonna miss you, Vin.

VINNY  
I love you Uncle Frankie.

FRANKIE  
I love you too.

Gus gets a little choked up watching this. He bends down and hugs Vinny.

GUS  
See you in a couple months.

VINNY  
You'll be back for playoffs right?

GUS  
We wouldn't miss it.

Frankie and Gus hop in the van.

MIKE  
Good luck, fellas.

Mike and Vinny wave, watching the van pull away.

They hop in the uHaul and drive to Mike's new apartment.

QUICK SHOTS of Mike and Vinny setting up his new place.

**INT. BELLAGIO HOTEL & CASINO - DAY**

Mike - in a suit and tie - finishes up a shift at his new job.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY**

Mike pulls into Ali's driveway, honks the horn. Ali walks down the driveway, her stomach shows the first signs of pregnancy.

Vinny runs out of the house and hops in the car. Ali leans into the window.

ALI  
Nice suit. How's work going?

MIKE  
Beats dealing blackjack.

ALI  
You're off on Tuesday and Wednesday next week, right? (Mike nods) Me and Brian have to go to Utah to visit his parents. Vinny can stay with you?

MIKE  
Of course.

They say their good-byes and Mike pulls out of the driveway.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
You hungry?

Vinny nods.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Me too. We gotta make a quick stop  
first though.

**INT. MIKE'S CAR - LATER**

Vinny looks at Mike.

MIKE  
You got this?

Vinny nods and gets out of the car. He approaches the door of an apartment and knocks. After a moment, Kate answers the door. She smiles when she sees Vinny.

VINNY  
Would you be interested in going on  
a date with my dad?

Kate looks over Vinny's shoulder and sees Mike, clean cut and in a suit, leaning on the hood of his car.

Mike pulls out his Juul and takes a puff.

**THE END**