GUYS LIKE YOU

"Pilot"

by

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EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A drab residential street illuminated by a Yoshinoya Beef Bowl -- we're in the Valley.

INTO FRAME, onto the steps of a dark duplex, steps JON, mid-20's, handsome but stone-faced. He wears his hoodie pulled tight, pulls out his phone.

JON (TEXT)
Here.

He stares at the screen until the three dots appear.

818-284... (TEXT)
Coming!

Jon looks around nervously, adjusting his posture as he waits. Lowers his eyes. That "discreet" body language that only calls attention to how discreet you are.

There's a noise at the door, a lock being fidgeted.

OTHER GUY (O.S.)
(feminine voice)
Sorry, one sec.

Jon hears the voice, the lisp. And BOLTS. WE LINGER at the door as it opens and the OTHER GUY pokes his head out.

OTHER GUY (CONT'D)
Hello?

He looks around, confused. Then he hears the footfalls getting further away, and he knows.

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Jon is doubled over under a streetlight, catching his breath. He looks up and moves out of the light. He gets a text.

818-284... (TEXT)
What the fuck?

He opens his settings. BLOCK CONTACT. He heads to his car.

INT. JON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WE HEAR keys slip delicately into the lock. The place is dark. Jon enters quietly, tiptoeing towards his room, until:

NATE
(groggy)
Hey.

JON
Jesus! Fuck.

Jon's roommate NATE stirs on the couch, oblivious to the heart-attack he's just caused. He's stockier than Jon -- goofier too, when he's not half-asleep.

JON (CONT'D)
Shit. You scared me.

NATE
Sorry, dude. Didn't make it to bed. Where'd you go?

JON
I, uh... We were outta weed.

NATE
Oh, shit. Can I get some? My head's killing me.

JON
(brief pause, then)
Yeah. Yeah. Cool. I'll go roll you a joint.

NATE
Nah man, it's cool, I got a bowl right here.

Awkward beat. Jon makes a small, unintelligible noise.

NATE (CONT'D)
You. Little. Slut.

JON
(unconvincing)
What?

NATE
Don't bullshit me, dude. I know your shit. Grindr 101!

JON
Fuck you.

Jon beelines for his room. Nate yells from the couch.

NATE
No, no, it's chill, dude! Tell me! Which little twink did you give it to tonight?

Jon makes a retching noise as we follow him into--

INT. JON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He slams the door, which doesn't stop Nate from jeering.

NATE (O.S.)
Yeah that's right, I know the terms!

Jon groans and falls face first on to his mattress.

NATE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey, don't worry about the joint! I'm sure you're beat.

Jon grabs a pillow, stuffing it over his head, and we--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. RE:TOX PRESSED JUICES - DAY

Jon stares off, brutally tired, in the fluorescent hellscape of a strip mall juice bar. Two VALLEY GIRLS seem to be unaware they're first in line.

VALLEY GIRL #1
So then Kyndra told Jackie about Brantley, and I was like, does Mason know?

VALLEY GIRL #2
Okay, right? And what about Trisha?

VALLEY GIRL #1
I. Know. After I spent all of Cabo trying to help Lexi deal with Shaina?

JON
Can I help you?

They continue chatting, oblivious. Jon grows restless and checks his phone. They immediately notice.

VALLEY GIRL #1
Um, excuse me? We're waiting?

INT. RE:TOX PRESSED JUICES - LATER

Jon attacks wheatgrass stains with a tiny brush. His coworker ALANA, a stylish, sardonic African-American girl, sneaks up behind him, channeling the customers.

ALANA
The other day I woke up and I like, couldn't tell if I was alive or dead, *that's* how alienated I am from myself, do you have any juices that help with that?

JON
Hmmm. You could try auto-erotic asphyxiation? A lot of our customers love it, and it's free.

ALANA
Ohmigod, theenk you! I love that!
(ending the bit)
Hey, when are you off today?

JON
When I get all this green shit out.

ALANA
Okay great, 'cause I'm having a party later. You *will* be coming, no excuses.
(beat, excited)
I wanna play matchmaker.

JON
I mean, I could lie to you and tell you I'm going--

ALANA
No. Stop. My best friend from college just moved here: Dana. Hilarious. Gorgeous dancer. You'd totally hit it off.
(winking)
If you know what I mean.

JON
I think I do--

ALANA
In a sex way.

JON
You've... been very clear.

Jon heads for the door, clocking out.

ALANA
I'm sending you the invite right now. *So* thrilled you'll be there.

Jon exits, flipping her off. She yells through the glass.

ALANA (CONT'D)
Oh! And it's a theme party!

Jon pantomimes blowing his brains out.

INT. THE COMEDY CLINIC - NIGHT

Open mic night. CLOSE ON Nate, onstage, trying valiantly.

NATE
You know how like, when girls tell a story, there's a fuckin' cast of characters like it's *Game of Thrones* or some shit?

He pauses for a laugh that never arrives.

NATE (CONT'D)
Fellas, you know what I'm talking about. "So then Kyndra told Jackie about Brayson, and I was like, does Ally know?" I'm always like, there's gotta be an index I'm missing or something. You know like in *East of Eden* how there's a family tree at the beginning 'cause it's so complicated? I need *that*.

A single chuckle from the AUDIENCE. It's not landing. Jon stands at the back bar, biting his nails.

INT. THE COMEDY CLINIC - BACK BAR - LATER

Jon and Nate stare into empty pints of light beer.

NATE
It worked when you did it.

JON
Probably 'cause we were stoned in my room.

NATE
No, it's good stuff, man. It's just... I feel like you've gotta write me, more "me".

JON
(beat)
As opposed to you writing you more you?

NATE
No, don't get defensive, dude. I love the stuff you write. I'm just starting to think it's not really *my* voice, you know?

Jon doesn't know what to do with that. Nate's already pivoted.

NATE (CONT'D)
So? Where we headed next?

JON
Well, I was hoping to get catatonically high.

NATE
Uh, no sir. We're two virile young men. Pitch me.

JON
(after a sigh)
My coworker's having a thing. But she's trying to set me up with this girl--

NATE
Woah woah woah. What? As a joke?

Jon gives him a look, a little thrown.

JON
She thinks I'm straight. They all do.

Nate gives a short laugh, then realizes he's serious. This sends him into hysterics.

JON (CONT'D)
What?! Why is that funny to you?

NATE
Uh, no reason, man. It's awesome. It's cool that your boss employs blind people.

JON
Fuck you! I'm not that gay.
(over more laughter)
I'm not! Alana invited me 'cause her roommate is dying to meet me.

NATE
Sure, sure! Got it.

JON
'Cause I'm a big old stud.

NATE
Let's go then. Some girls are really into rimjobs.

Jon picks up his glass as if to throw it. Nate is howling.

JON
You fuckin' dick. Just wait. She's going to be throwing herself at me.

Nate grabs Jon's shoulders, shakes him playfully.

NATE
I can't wait. Can not fucking *wait*. He's goin' undercover, baby!

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Music and chatter POUR OUT as Jon and Nate approach the door. Nate catches Jon squaring his shoulders.

NATE
Nice touch. Very convincing.

JON
I swear to God...

Jon knocks on the door, but it pushes right open. He looks at Nate, shrugs, and they enter--

INT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They stand in the entryway, a little awkwardly, as various HIPSTERS pass by to the strains of Aaliyah (RIP). They're all wearing retro outfits and... cat ears?

JON
I feel like I'm missing something.

A tall, elegant guy in a FABULOUS THREE-PIECE SUIT passes by--

FABULOUS SUIT
(calling off to kitchen)
You have to try them. They're Danish!

He catches sight of Jon and Nate and stops short. A long beat.

FABULOUS SUIT (CONT'D)
What's happening here?

NATE
Great question.

FABULOUS SUIT
“Great Catsby”?

He points to the hand-drawn WHISKERS on his face. Jon goes white.

JON
Fuck. Theme party.

NATE
Duuuuude. Give your boy a heads up.
You know I crush a theme party.

JON
(to Fabulous Suit)
We’re here to see Alana. I work with her.

FABULOUS SUIT
Oh!
(beat, smiling a little)
Oh. Hey. I’m Dana.

Jon freezes. He’s speechless. Nate tries to hold it in, but it’s a losing battle.

NATE
Sorry. Just-- one minute. Need to-- bathroom.

He jogs off, still within earshot when he bursts out laughing. Loudly. Jon shuts down, silent.

DANA
(deadpan)
He seems great.

JON
Yeah. Totally. He, uh... I should go check on him.

Jon heads off. Dana gives a little smile to save face.

INT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jon enters a SEA OF PEOPLE. No one else is sporting plaid shorts. He’s immediately self-conscious. Alana yells, wasted:

ALANA
Why, if it isn’t the gentlemen caller!

She makes her way over, throws her arms around his neck.

ALANA (CONT'D)
Have I got plans for *you*.
(looking around)
Where's our lucky bachelor?

JON
No, don't-- We met.

ALANA
Ooooh! Couldn't wait. What'd you think?

JON
You didn't, um... You didn't say he's a... he's a he.

ALANA
(beat)
Oh shit. Are you not...?

JON
No, I am.

ALANA
Okay. You are.

JON
I am. I just... never told you I am.

ALANA
(beat)
Oh, honey.

Nate barges in, grabbing Jon by the shoulders.

NATE
(re: Alana)
Yo. This the friend?

Alana raises her eyebrows.

NATE (CONT'D)
You may have misinformed our buddy here. He thought Dana was a chick.

JON
He basically is.

Jon's embarrassed, toughening. Nate lets out a wolf-whistle.

NATE
Shit, dude! Savage.

Alana gives Jon a look, not liking this side of him.

ALANA
Ew. Whatever this is -- bye.

She heads off. Nate scans the room.

JON
Can we get out of here?

NATE
Hell no, bruh. We don't all get to swipe right for an instant bang sesh. Some of us gotta do this the old-fashioned way.

He pats Jon on the back as he journeys forth.

NATE (CONT'D)
Stay close. I'mma need you.

And Jon's left alone. 90's pop comes on and we lose him amidst a crowd of hyped-up FLAPPER GIRLS and BOOTLEGGERS.

INT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER

Jon stands in the pitch black garage, using his phone to illuminate the joint in his mouth. He lights it and takes a deep pull. He exhales. Enjoying the silence.

He opens the camera to see his flashlit face. Eyes hidden in shadow. Smoke billowing. He likes the mystery, and snaps a pic before--

Dana enters, flipping on the lights. Jon freezes as he rummages in the fridge. Dana smells something, turns around.

DANA
You! Sneaky, sneaky.

JON
(coughing, caught)
Sorry, man. Shoulda gone outside.

DANA
No, you shouldn't have.

Dana sets down his beer and takes the joint without asking.

DANA (CONT'D)
Then we'd have to share with your friend.

He takes a hit. Jon's thrown. But after a beat:

JON
You, uh... you just moved here, right?

DANA
Mhm. From Seattle.
(quick beat)
You're gonna ask, don't you dare.

JON
What?

DANA
"Does it rain a lot?" Yes, girl, it rains a lot. Big Weather isn't lying to you, there's no conspiracy.

Jon smiles awkwardly but doesn't respond. Dana laughs at himself, putting his face in his hands.

DANA (CONT'D)
Sorry. God. Sativa.
(small beat)
Do you ever, like... Do you ever hear the shit that comes out of your mouth and think, "Am I just a complete and utter joke to everybody? Like, am I the birthday piñata?"

Jon looks at him, and is utterly sincere.

JON
Yes.

DANA
Really?!

JON
All the time.

DANA
I'm shocked. You seem so...

He does a tough guy pose. Jon laughs, loosening up a little.

JON
Yeah, I don't know. So what do you do?

DANA
Ohhh, back to small talk, okay. I see... Well, I'm a dancer.
(quick to add)
(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)
Not go-go. Contemporary dance. Modern. The weird stuff.

JON
No shit?

DANA
No shit. You too, right?

Jon lets out a surprised laugh.

JON
What? Just cause I'm--
(bro pose again)
I can't be a dancer?

DANA
Hey, look, quickest way to prove me wrong--

JON
Oh, is this a challenge? You want a dance-off?

DANA
Yes, Miss Martha Graham, I wanna see you plié.

Jon stops short but Dana crosses his arms - go ahead. Jon tries to keep a straight face as he slowly raises one arm over his head.

DANA (CONT'D)
Lies. Fiction. Fallacies. The boy cannot dance the Riverdance!

JON
Yeah well, blame my dad for beating the shit out of me when I tried to buy tap shoes.

Silence. Not quite the joke he hoped for.

DANA
Well, that was bleak. And weirdly cute somehow.

Jon looks at him for a moment, about to blush when-- Nate barges in.

NATE
Dude. We gotta go. Heather's going Exorcist.

Nate clocks them together before Jon instinctively moves away.

JON
Who's Heather?

DANA
Oh, god. Fucking Heather.

NATE
Do you have your shit? Really don't wanna be around for clean-up.

JON
Uh, yeah. Yeah, I'm good to go.

Jon quickly extracts himself and heads to the door.

DANA
Hey!

Jon turns around.

DANA (CONT'D)
I'll, uh... get your number from Alana, I guess?

Nate's still standing there. Jon tenses up.

JON
Cool. Whatever.

And he's out of there.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nate grabs his keys as they hustle out the front door.

NATE
Dude. You and Twinkletoes?

JON
Yeah, right. Fuck off.
(beat)
Didn't stop him from trying, though.

NATE
That's what happens when you go undercover, bro. You get in too deep.

PRE-LAP a resonant vowel sound.

INT. JON'S APARTMENT - NATE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jon holds a microphone close to his mouth, making weird noises that eventually settle into a beat. He hits a LOOP PEDAL below him and the beat continues on repeat.

JON
(husky voice)
Ladies and gentlemen, it’s time to turn this thing over.

NATE
(rap emcee)
Yeah. Uh.

JON
The wizard of wordplay. The sultan of...

NATE
Synonyms.

JON
Synonyms. Yes. The one. The only--

NATE
(ala Nicki Minaj)
Yo. Yo. Yo. Twinkletoes on the track.

They both dissolve into hysterics as we CUT TO--

INT. LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

They play Mario Kart, each with a beer between their legs. Nate sneaks a sip. Jon doesn't even have to look.

JON
Can't drink and drive.

NATE
Fuuuuuuuck.

Nate drops the controller and starts chugging.

INT. KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

Nate huddles over Jon's shoulder, watching him cook.

NATE
Is it time?

JON
I think it's time.

Jon stumbles over to the fridge. He reaches for the handle, fakes out, and goes for the freezer.

NATE
And the Iron Chef goes for the freezer. Tonight's secret ingredient is...

Jon pulls out a gigantic bag of shrimp with a kung fu motion.

JON AND NATE
SHRIIIMP!

INT. JON'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Jon and Nate sit on the floor, inhaling scampi.

NATE
Delish, buddy. My little MasterChef Junior.

JON
Yeah, thank me in tips.

NATE
Oh, shit. I keep meaning to tell you. Maggie said this agent's coming in to the Clinic in a few weeks. Kinda like a talent scout thing--

JON
Holy shit. From where? Do you know?

NATE
Hey, somebody's excited. You wanna get back up there?

JON
(catching himself)
Yeah, right.

NATE
C'mon, buddy. Stage is big enough for the two of us. I ain't afraid of you.

JON
Why don't you stick to the yikkity yak and I'll stick to the clickity clack.

NATE
("big Hollywood producer")
You should see these two together, they're red hot! One's yin and the other's yang! They call 'em Mr. Heartthrob and the Gay Genius!

JON
Mr. Heartthrob might need some work. No one's gonna believe that.

Nate throws a shrimp tail at Jon.

JON (CONT'D)
More like Doobie and Faggy.

Nate freaks out, loving it.

NATE
Hoooooly shit! "Doobie and Faggy", dude?! That's gold! I am stealing that shit.

JON
Just post me up in the back, barking. Toss me a treat.

NATE
No, dude. I'm Doobie. You're Faggy. That makes me the dog.

INT. JON'S ROOM - LATER

Jon is tucked into bed, face illuminated by his laptop. He's watching an OLD YOUTUBE VIDEO of himself: "Jon Glascott Stand-Up Set - UCSD 04/11/13."

JON (ON-SCREEN)
So I was dating this girl, and she had this, uh... Zac Efron cut-out? You know, like you do. And anyway, long story short, I don't need to get into it, but an argument was had and I ended up-- well, I ended up curb-stomping him. Like actually there were pieces of Zac Efron in the storm drain the next day. And I swear to God, when she broke up with me, she said, "The lying I can forgive. But what you did to Zac?"

LAUGHS from the crowd. This is a more confident, more radiant Jon. Current-day Jon shuts the computer and lays in the dark.

INT. JON'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Jon's lower half is in the shower while his upper half hangs out, checking his phone. He's got TWO TEXTS. He reads one:

ALANA (TEXT)
Dude. You gotta come in today. Bobby got meningitis.

JON
... What?

He clicks out. He scrolls down to the other unread message, then remembers who it is. We see the preview:

206-418-9943 (TEXT)
Hi! It's Dana. This is my phone. I've heard in LA people use them to meet for kombucha, so...

Jon ignores it. He sets his phone down and pulls the curtain.

INT. RE:TOX PRESSED JUICES - DAY

Alana braces herself.

ALANA
Karma Greens for Kimber.

A FURIOUS-LOOKING WOMAN approaches.

KIMBER
I asked for extra spirulina.

ALANA
Yep. It's in there.

KIMBER
... We'll see.

Kimber grabs the juice and makes an ominous exit. After a beat, Jon appears in the kitchen door.

JON
Is she gone yet?

ALANA
She is. I promised her your fingernails for a ritual, though.

JON
Shit. I should trim.

ALANA
So, couple questions. Where to start: how you gonna just ghost my roommate for a week like I don't see your ass at work?

JON
See, this is why I don't do theme parties.

ALANA
No Jon, you don't do theme parties because you shop at Old Navy. You don't text back 'cause you're a fuckboy. This is the shit straight men pull *every single time.* You're supposed to be better than them!

JON
I didn't-- okay? I wasn't-- I'm not looking for anything.

ALANA
Right, and he's getting down on one knee.

JON
I don't want to talk about this.

ALANA
Cute, well we're going to.

The door chimes. Dana walks in. They all freeze.

DANA
... Oh. You're both working.

ALANA
Hi, pumpkin. I'm gonna go grab some bee pollen.
(to Jon, sotto)
Meningitis is scary. You can never be too careful.

She exits. Jon could kill her. Dana attempts small talk.

DANA
So. The belly of the beast.

JON
(re: the juice bar)
Oh, first time? Yeah. It's wild.
(weird beat)
Hey, I'm sorry I didn't text you back. It's just been a crazy week.

DANA
It's fine, seriously. Don't.
(breezing through)
(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)
I just came to drag Alana to this dance show I’m going to. It’s downtown in like an hour, so--

JON
Oh, I think she’s working all day--

ALANA (O.S.)
Jon’s not!

Silence.

ALANA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Jon’s off in ten!

They both can’t help but laugh, mortified.

DANA
I may actually kill her one day.
(cautiously optimistic)
Well, now that I know you’re a dance connoisseur.

JON
I don’t--

DANA
You should come.

Jon searches for an excuse, then looks at Dana. This guy’s way too nice to keep shitting on.

JON
Well. I’m not going to get it. At all.

DANA
Oh come on, it’s just dance. There’s nothing to “get”.

INT. "DAN(S)PACE" THEATER - LATER

We’re mid-show. DANCERS scurry across the stage to droning instrumentals punctuated with sharp, dissonant strings.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE (O.S.)
Body. Body. Bo-dy.

Jon and Dana are speechless. A DANCER "runs" in slow motion. The lights change color when the voice intones.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Body. Body.

Jon's phone buzzes.

206-418-9943 (TEXT)
Hey. I have something to tell you.

Jon looks over at Dana, who has his phone out, grinning.

206-418-9943 (TEXT) (CONT'D)
Body.

They both try, unsuccessfully, to stifle their laughter. Dana covers his face with his program, gasping.

DANA
(whispering)
Holy shit, that's her! That's Joyce!

JOYCE, a petite, half-Japanese dancer, runs forward, wearing a straitjacket. She moves her body parts in isolation.

JOYCE
I am my body. My body am I.

DANCERS
Lips. / Teeth! / Arms. / Legs.

JOYCE
(large thrust)
Cunt!

Dana's jaw drops.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. "DAN(S)PACE" THEATER - DAY

Dana hugs Joyce while Jon looks on.

DANA
I loved it.

JOYCE
Really?!

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - MINUTES LATER

Jon clutches the program as they walk down Spring Street.

JON
Please don't tell me this is what you do.

DANA
Oh my god, no. My stuff is way more abstract.

JON
Jesus, I need a drink.

DANA
Okay, I *do* need five as well, but... I think we should go to the beach.

JON
What?

DANA
I still haven't been.

JON
It's like two hours away.

DANA
No, it's not! Fake news. There's a train from Union Station, it's 45 minutes.

JON
A *train*?

DANA
Yes, Jon. Has the word not reached Burbank?

JON
You moved here five seconds ago --

DANA
Some of us live in an actual city.

JON
But my car's here.

DANA
You are a nightmare!

He grabs Jon and takes charge.

DANA (CONT'D)
We're getting you a Tap Card. This is vehicular addiction. You're an autoholic.

EXT. EXPO LINE - DAY

The westbound Expo Line emerges from underneath downtown and careens towards Santa Monica. From outside the car, we see Jon looking out the window. A tourist in his own city.

We see QUICK CUTS of South LA: the Natural History Museum, the Coliseum, the Ballona Creek Bike Path. And then we're BACK ON Jon, through the window, laughing as Dana tells an animated story.

EXT. WILL ROGERS STATE BEACH - DAY

Jon and Dana stretch out in the sand. They've both modestly kept their shirts on. It's not even that warm.

JON
It's not even that warm.

DANA
For February? I'm from the tundra.

Jon turns his head to see a group of RIPPED SHIRTLESS GUYS playing volleyball. He stares, transfixed. Dana doesn't notice.

DANA (CONT'D)
So is there a single good gay bar in this town? Because they're not in WeHo. That place is like a Hitler Youth rally.

JON
(still staring off)
I don't know, I've never been.

A beat. Dana sits up.

DANA
Never been to WeHo or never been to a gay bar?

JON
Both.

DANA
Oooookay, okay, okay, okay.

He rocks himself forward and prays into the sand.

DANA (CONT'D)
Lord, give me strength today.

JON
What? It's just not my thing.

DANA
Your “thing” is being a homosexual, Jon. Don’t you want to be around other homosexuals?

JON
I mean, I *have* Grindr.

DANA
That’s... so different? That’s just fucking. What about like, human interaction? Where they don’t give you the address two houses down so they can vet you through the window?

Jon looks a little guilty at that last part.

JON
I don’t know. I’ve got Nate.

DANA
(beat, narrowing his eyes)
What sign are you?

JON
Oh my god--

DANA
No, seriously! Some people only need one friend, this is super interesting.

JON
I don’t believe in that shit.

DANA
(knowingly)
Virgo.

JON
He’s not my only friend, okay? He just... gets me.

DANA
And he’s not weird about-- he’s not homophobic or anything?

JON
No. Hell no.
(beat)
The rest of the fraternity was. Y’know, when they found out. He was the one cool one. He didn’t care.

Dana looks off, still processing.

DANA
Fraternity...

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - EVENING

Jon pulls up in front of Dana's place.

DANA
You good? Happy to be back in your car?

Jon laughs awkwardly, nervous about this part.

JON
Yeah.

DANA
Good.
(beat)
I had a great time today.

JON
Yeah, dude. It was fun.

Dana raises an eyebrow. He laughs. And then, surprising himself, he leans over and kisses Jon.

Jon tenses at first, about to pull away, but closes his eyes and lets it happen. Kisses back, even. It's tender.

DANA
You wanna come in? ...Dude?

JON
Oh, I-- I can't. Promised I'd write tonight.

DANA
No way. He's a writer. We didn't even talk about that.

JON
Nate and I. Sort of a team.

Dana wants to comment, but holds his tongue.

DANA
Cool. Well. Go make some magic.

He unbuckles and gets out. Taps on the car before he goes. Off Jon, still a little dazed.

EXT. JON'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jon trudges up the stairs to #202, sunglasses still on. He's got the key in the lock before he notices SMOKE POURING OUT. He RACES into--

INT. JON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jon enters frantically, coughing, only to hear:

RUSS (O.S.)
Hey Rachael Ray, open a fuckin' window or something.

REVEAL Nate's POSSE OF BROS -- RUSS, JIMMY and LITTLE PETE -- sitting complacently on the couch as the smoke thickens.

JON
Guys, what the fuck?

RUSS
What's up, Jon.

JIMMY
What's up.

LITTLE PETE
What's up.

Off-screen, the TOILET FLUSHES. DANNY, the fourth musketeer, re-enters from the bathroom.

DANNY
What's up.

NATE (O.S.)
If one of you fuckers would help, I--

He pops out of the kitchen, holding a skillet encrusted with shells. Notices Jon.

NATE (CONT'D)
Oh. Hey, dude. I burned the shrimp.

JON
I can smell that.

NATE
You been off the grid all day, man. Ignoring my little text-a-roonies.

JON
Yeah. Got stuck at work super late.

NATE
Juice bar closes at 6, but alright.

RUSS
(his hype man)
Oh *shit*!

NATE
Nah, it's cool, he can have his secrets.
(to Jon)
Just hope you learned their names this time.

The guys don't bother to hide their grimaces. Jon reddens.

JON
We still writing tonight?

NATE
Fuuuck, fuck, fuck. Uh. Jimmy knows the bartender at this new place we were gonna check out.
(looks to the guys)
You should totally come.

They shrug. A tepid invitation.

JON
... No, that's okay. I'm good.

NATE
Cool. Well maybe, if you wanted, you could get the ball rolling without me. Just toss out a few ideas.

He's already grabbing his stuff. The guys rally, circling up by the door. Jon feels a buzz and checks his texts. A PICTURE from Dana - LA from above, all glittering headlights.

DANA (TEXT)
All those freeways - are you rock hard?

NATE
(off Jon's laughter)
What?

JON
Nothing.

EXT. ERNEST E. DEBS PARK - SIMULTANEOUS

Dana nurses a beer at the top of his hike, overlooking the east side of Los Angeles (and the 110 Freeway). He gets a text -- A PICTURE of Jon's feet, pointed, in socks.

JON (TEXT)
Toe-curling.

ALANA (O.C.)
(off Dana's laughter)
What?

Dana sighs.

DANA
Nothing.

ALANA
You making love-sighs while I'm getting ghosted by a paralegal. That's a full nightmare.

Off Dana, smiling, in his own world, as we PRE-LAP a dreamy Angel Olsen song and begin a MONTAGE--

INT. ARTS DISTRICT BREWING - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Jon and Dana play Skee Ball in a crowded brewery. Both competitive. Dana lobs one of his balls into Jon's lane.

INT. THE COMEDY CLINIC - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Nate flounders onstage. We can't hear him, but it's clear the struggle is real.

EXT. TACO TRUCK - DAY - MONTAGE

Jon and Dana sit on the curb, devouring carnitas. Dana unhinges his jaw to "shotgun" two tacos at once. Jon looks on in awe and repulsion.

INT. RE:TOX PRESSED JUICES - DAY - MONTAGE

Jon and Alana man two blenders, side-by-side. They surveil the other side of the counter nervously. REVEAL Kimber, watching them like a hawk.

INT. JON'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

Nate plays Mario Kart alone. He crosses the finish line to a jubilant celebration -- "1st Place!" He's bored, apathetic.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - BACKYARD - EVENING - MONTAGE

Dana demonstrates a damn good pirouette. Jon squeezes his eyes shut, goes on the ball of his foot, and teeters right over. Dana catches him as he staggers.

They look at each other tenderly. Dana leans in for a kiss and hangs there, teasing Jon as we JUMP CUT TO--

INT. CRUNCH FITNESS - DAY - END MONTAGE

Nate tosses a medicine ball down to Jon, who's in a crunch position. Jon throws it back. They repeat over the following:

NATE
Dude, I'm getting nervous for this show. I bombed so hard last night.

JON
C'mon, you'll be fine. Seriously.

NATE
You're not the one getting up there making a fucking fool of yourself.

There's noticeable anger in Nate's voice. Jon treads a little more delicately, still tossing back and forth.

JON
You never bomb, man. I'm sure you were great.

NATE
If you came and saw it, you'd know what I mean.

JON
Is everything-- are you good?

NATE
Where you been, man?

He throws the ball with a shove, much harder.

JON
What? Here. What do you mean?

NATE
You're never home, you don't pick up the phone, you're missing shows. Something's up with you, it's fucking weird.

JON
Nothing's up. Okay? I'm here. I wanna help.

NATE
You sure about that?
(beat)
(MORE)

NATE (CONT'D)
Whatever, man. Let’s get out of here.

He takes the ball and walks off. Off Jon, rattled.

INT. HIGHLAND PARK HOUSE - DANA’S ROOM - NIGHT

Jon and Dana make out on the bed. Jon is distant.

DANA
What’s up? You good?

JON
Yeah... Yeah, sorry.

They keep kissing. Dana pulls his shirt off. Jon distractedly opens his eyes and catches sight of--

JON (CONT’D)
What is that?

Dana looks down at the tattoo on his left ribcage.

DANA
Oh god. Now we’re never having sex.

JON
(reading it)
“Life is short”?

Dana buries his face in the comforter.

DANA
I hate it. I hate it so much. My fucking ex. He wanted to get his favorite quote from his favorite book, because he’s *so* literary.

JON
His favorite quote is “life is short”?

DANA
"Cease, cows, life is short." He took the other half. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* -- great book, shitty tattoo.

JON
So he’s walking around with “Cease, cows” on his back? You should count your blessings.

DANA
Yeah, but like... you see that tattoo and you ask, right? "What's it mean?" You see mine and you're like, "Okay, he took one yoga class."

JON
Why'd you get it?

DANA
I mean... Getting it was kinda sexy, right? We went to this grungy little place. This was back in Seattle. This place was so, so bleak. And our artist's name was *Calhoun*. So instantly I'm like, staph infection. But anyway. I laid down next to him and she kinda just... started with his shoulder. And kept going onto mine. And it hurt like a fucking knife. Really, it did. But it was hot. He'd wince or grit his teeth and I'd wanna just grab him and kiss him, but I couldn't. You know, in front of Calhoun. But I knew later... I'm pretty sure we both came like three times.
(beat)
I was so in love. Like, stage four. Terminal. You're fucked. You'd do anything.

Brief silence.

JON
That sounds scary.

DANA
It is.

JON
Why'd you guys-- why'd it end?

DANA
Because he didn't really want me. He wanted some... idea of me. And I was like the block of marble he could chisel away at. Never wanted to bring me around his friends. Always kind of--
(beat)
(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)
It doesn't feel good. Being the junk food. Tucked under the bed.

This plays on Jon. After a beat:

JON
Hey. Nate's having a show tomorrow night. We both are, I guess. You should come.

DANA
Oooooh. I'm a very good plus-one.
(sincerely)
I'd love to.

He kisses Jon. They're both happier, more secure.

INT. THE COMEDY CLINIC - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nate waits in the wings, looking petrified, as a schlubby EMCEE does his thing onstage.

EMCEE (O.S.)
Aaaaalright, round of applause for Steve Santos. Little known fact, he's actually a Make-a-Wish kid, and performing for you all was his greatest wish. Really sad if you think about it.

Nate downs a double shot of whisky. It burns. Jon sneaks through the back and beelines for him.

JON
Hey.

NATE
What the fuck. I didn't think you--

JON
C'mon.

Nate nods. He's relieved, but not over his jitters.

EMCEE (O.S.)
Now let's hope you can do the same for our next performer--

NATE
Holy shit.

JON
Hey.

Jon grabs his shoulders and looks him right in the eyes.

JON (CONT'D)
You're the Iron Chef, okay?

NATE
(vulnerable)
But I always burn the shrimp.

JON
Not tonight.

EMCEE (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for Nate Ciampi!

Jon smiles. Nate grins back. He hypes himself up and jogs out onto stage to polite APPLAUSE.

INT. THE COMEDY CLINIC - MOMENTS LATER

Nate sways a little bit, drunker than previously apparent. Jon re-enters, grabs a spot at the bar. He notices an AGENT-LOOKING TYPE at the far end. Feels a slight pang of jealousy.

NATE
Hey guys, how's it goin', I'm Nate. And I, uh, I have a confession to make. I... am straight.
(over mild laughter)
Thanks. Thank you. I am a straight, white man. Took me a while to feel comfortable saying that, but I feel like this is a pretty safe space.

Just then, Dana enters through the front. He looks around for a minute, then, spotting Jon:

DANA
(whispering)
Hey. Shit. Sorry I'm late.

JON
All good, he just started.

NATE
(beat)
No, but I do, uh, I do live with a gay guy. Yeah. You'd never know it, though, except for the fact that he's always fucking dudes.

He gets a decent response. Off this joke, Nate looks for Jon in the crowd. And he sees him-- with Dana. Confusion, and then a moment of clarity.

He starts again, a little more edge in his voice.

NATE (CONT'D)
It's cool, though. *Great* guy. Lotta common interests. He's a huge stoner, like myself. If we got ourselves a Mystery Machine they'd call us Doobie and Faggy.

The slur sends a jolt through the crowd. Some find it hilarious, but most groan. Dana raises his eyebrows.

NATE (CONT'D)
No, no, no. No, no. You don't get to do that. He's my friend, okay? I'm not the bad guy. I'm not calling him a--
(dramatic stage whisper)
"faggot," I'm just saying, if we solved crimes together, he'd be the one gettin' railed on our lunch break.

Jon winces. That was off-script.

DANA
Woah.

Nate can tell he's losing the rest of them, too.

NATE
Oh, come ooooon. Buncha snowflakes, shit. Look. He's here in the back, he's cool with it.

Heads turn in Jon's direction.

NATE (CONT'D)
(puppy voice)
Where's my little Doobie Doo? Where is he? Can he bark for me?

The crowd ZEROES IN on Jon, who's both livid and deeply ashamed. He can't even look at Dana.

NATE (CONT'D)
C'mon, buddy! Bark for a treat!

The silence is painful. Then--

DANA
Aaaaa-ooooooo!

Beat. He resume his howl, and a few other DRUNK GUYS join in. After another beat, Nate beams, getting back into it.

NATE
You know what, I just realized: I'm Doobie, and *he's* Faggy. So that makes me the dog, huh?

He starts scratching himself, hamming it up. Having pulled Jon from the wreckage, Dana walks right out the door.

Jon stands alone for a horrible beat, then follows after him. Nate notices, but keeps going with his weird canine shtick.

EXT. THE COMEDY CLINIC - MOMENTS LATER

Dana's got a headstart.

JON
Dana. C'mon, wait.

DANA
Nothing I hate more, Jon. Nothing I hate more. Being made to feel like a *crazy* person when I know better.

JON
I don't know what happened--

DANA
I was right about him! He was a dick to me the moment I met him and you said he was this sweet, sensitive, fucking frat boy with a heart of gold.

JON
It's not his fault. I wrote it. I thought it would... be funnier. I don't know.

DANA
You wrote that he should call you a faggot and then make you bark like a fucking dog?

Jon's silent for a beat too long.

DANA (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ. I was right about you too.

JON
(wounded)
What?

DANA
You know the grossest part? I was so into your whole thing. Like I was in gym class and for once the jock picked me to be on his team. But you know what, fuck gym class. I came out a long time ago, Jon, I don't need any of this.

JON
Will you just let me-- I've never done this before. I don't hang out with guys like you.

Dana scoffs, unmoved.

DANA
You might realize this one day, but just 'cause a guy calls you "bro" when he puts his dick up your ass, doesn't mean it's not a dick up your ass.

He leaves. Jon stands there with the wind knocked out of him.

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - LATER

Jon walks rapidly, anything to keep moving. He's clearly emotional. Head down, he walks right into a pack of ROVING DOUCHEBAGS by accident.

JON
Sorry.

The guys turn to gawk at him, laughing as they walk away. Jon keeps moving. Faintly at first, but getting closer, we hear the sound of uproarious LAUGHTER and a faint club beat.

He looks up to see, across the street: Cliques of MEN smoking. A neon sign that reads AKBAR. And next to it, a rainbow flag.

ONE OF THE GUYS notices Jon staring and returns his glance from across the busy street. Jon turns, panicking a little. He instinctively pulls out his phone. Sees a text:

NATE (TEXT)
What the fuck?

Jon stares at it for a beat, then puts his phone away decisively. He steps up to the curb and crosses the street.

He approaches the neon, the flag, the men and their music, getting slowly OUT OF FOCUS until we--

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT