

LES COMPERES

By

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American Version

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. HENDERSON HOUSE (CONNECTICUT) - NIGHT (PRESENT)

A large, well-maintained colonial-style home in an affluent suburban neighborhood. All of the lights in the house are on. A virtual armada of battered cars is parked along the street in front and in the driveway. "Rap" MUSIC BLASTS from inside.

Somebody's having a party.

CLOSE SHOT - PAUL HENDERSON

Early forties. Handsome. Conservative but expensive suit. Razor-cut hair. The picture of the successful New York executive.

Paul stares at his house, alarmed.

NEW ANGLE

REVEALS Paul sitting behind the wheel of a Jaguar. He pulls up behind the long line of cars in the driveway and gets out. He hurries to the side door and, fumbling in agitation, finally manages to unlock it. The door slowly swings open. Paul stares in shock and dismay at:

PAUL'S POV - INT. KITCHEN (HENDERSON HOUSE) - NIGHT

Wall to wall TEENAGE boys and girls, eating and drinking. They're tough-looking kids in leather jackets and torn jeans from underprivileged backgrounds. The room has been ransacked.

PAUL

What the hell is going on?

The Teenagers see Paul and continue partying, oblivious. One of them, KING, tall, wiry, and handsome in a defiant, sleazy way, smiles broadly at Paul. He seems to find Paul's sudden appearance very amusing. To celebrate Paul's arrival, King shakes a can of beer, then opens it, spraying foam everywhere.

KING

His old man's home!!

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

jammed with Teenagers dancing and crashing into each other in beat to the RAP MUSIC. Paul pushes and shoves his way through the churning throng.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANCING TEENAGER
(laughing)
His old man's home!!

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

A Teenage couple, fully-clothed, lies enmeshed on a massive double bed, busy groping. CONNER HENDERSON, fifteen, handsome with a fine-featured intelligent face, has his eyes closed, overcome with passion. He feverishly kisses MICHELE RENFRO, seventeen, sultry and very sexy, awkwardly trying to unbutton her blouse. Michele, however, is unresponsive. Her eyes are wide open as she listens intently. Conner continues to tug at her blouse. She whispers into his ear.

MICHELE
Your old man's home.

Conner immediately stops, looking at her in shock. From downstairs, we hear:

PAUL (O.S.)
Conner!!!

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - FOYER

A few Teenagers casually stroll out the door past Paul. One Teenager carries a stereo component, its wires dangling, under his arm.

TEENAGER
(with stereo)
Hey man, great party.

Paul grabs the component from him. At first, the Teenager won't let go, but after a brief tug-of-war, Paul succeeds in wresting it from him.

PAUL
Where's my son?

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Conner staggers out of bed, buttoning his shirt.

CONNER
That asshole's supposed to be in
Chicago! Figures he'd show up
and ruin everything!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Michele, meanwhile, calmly and methodically smooths her hair and clothes. Conner turns only to come face to face with Paul who appears in the doorway.

CONNER
(ironically)
Welcome home, Dad...

Conner weaves unsteadily. It's apparent he's wrecked.

PAUL
You're drunk!

CONNER
(grinning)
I sure am.

Paul looks past Conner at the room littered with discarded clothes and beer cans, at the rumpled double bed and finally at Michele who nonchalantly lights a cigarette.

CONNER
You remember Michele, don't you,
Dad? Say hello to my fa...

Before he can finish, Paul sends Conner reeling, slapping him across the face. Startled, Conner reacts instinctively and slaps his father back.

MICHELE
(rolling her eyes)
Good move, Conner. Very cool.

Conner and Paul stare at each other, equally horrified and stunned. There's no telling what's going to happen next.

Suddenly, Conner dashes for the door. Michele slowly walks after him. More shaken than angry, Paul rubs his face where Conner hit him and watches them go.

FADE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Complete chaos. PHONES RINGING. People shouting. A string of hookers handcuffed to each other are led across the room to be booked. A junkie squirms in agony, desperate for a fix. A burly cop roughly drags a bleeding and struggling hood to a holding cell. In short, not a pretty sight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSPECTOR (O.S.)
Conner Henderson, age fifteen.
Missing since...

In one corner of the room, Paul and his wife, CHRISTINE, are seated opposite a POLICE INSPECTOR. Christine, late-thirties and pretty, wears a business suit and looks very professional. Her face is strained with worry. Paul is strangely silent and sullen.

CHRISTINE
Wednesday night.

The Inspector takes a huge bite of a sub sandwich, dribbling mustard down his shirt, then types Christine's response on a form.

INSPECTOR
(his mouth full)
That's not much time. Any
particular reason you think he's
run away?

CHRISTINE
He hasn't been home for two days.
Isn't that reason enough?

The Inspector gives her a questioning look.

CHRISTINE
Look, my husband came home
unexpectedly and discovered Conner
throwing a party. We haven't seen
him since.

INSPECTOR
Where were you?

CHRISTINE
I'm a commercial real estate
broker. I spent the night in the
city on business. My mother-in-
law has an apartment there.

INSPECTOR
(to Paul)
You said you came home unexpectedly?

Paul doesn't respond.

CHRISTINE
Yes, he was supposed to go to
Chicago, but a client suddenly
became ill and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSPECTOR

Do you often leave your son alone
at night?

CHRISTINE

(defensive)

Conner's fifteen. He's perfectly
capable of looking after himself.

INSPECTOR

So I see.

(to Paul)

Is there anything else you can
tell me, Mr. Henderson? Lots of
kids get caught throwing parties
one time or another. It doesn't
mean then run away.

Paul doesn't respond.

INSPECTOR

Did you have words? A fight of
some kind?

Again Paul doesn't respond. The Inspector looks at him
knowingly, then takes another bite of his sandwich.

INSPECTOR

(shrugging)

Alright, he's your son.

(beat)

Drugs?

CHRISTINE

Excuse me...

INSPECTOR

Does your son do drugs?

CHRISTINE

Uh... no, I don't think so...

She glances uneasily at Paul, visibly disturbed by the
Inspector's question.

INSPECTOR

Ever watch your son take a shower?

CHRISTINE

What?

INSPECTOR

To check if he has needle marks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE
(indignant)
No, I'm happy to say that I
haven't.

The Inspector takes another gigantic bite from his sandwich, and continues typing.

INSPECTOR
Is he gay?

Paul and Christine exchange a horrified look.

INSPECTOR
Hey, I've got nothing against
fags, but I have to know where
to look for him.

Paul speaks for the first time. Slowly and painfully.

PAUL
There was a girl...

INSPECTOR
Alright, now we're talking...

CHRISTINE
He met her a few weeks ago at a
rock concert...

INSPECTOR
Did she have a name?

CHRISTINE
Michele... Michele Renfro.
(distastefully)
From Atlantic City.

INSPECTOR
That's where I'm from. Great
town.

He gives Christine a look, then resumes typing.

INSPECTOR
Have you contacted her parents?

CHRISTINE
They're divorced. I did get in
touch with the father but he
hung up on me. He runs a hotel
down there called the Riviera.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSPECTOR

The Riveria. Sure, I know it.
Off Baltic Avenue. What a dump.

Christine looks at Paul, very agitated. The Inspector pulls the information sheet out of his typewriter.

INSPECTOR

Okay, we'll get this to the
juvenile squad and they'll check
it out.

CHRISTINE

What about us? What should we do?

INSPECTOR

Wait. Only thing you can do.

The Inspector pops open a Coke, spraying it everywhere, including the information sheet he just filled out.

CHRISTINE

Do you... uh... think you'll find
him?

The Inspector dries the information sheet with his sleeve.

INSPECTOR

Mrs. Henderson, kids are like
stolen cars. They always turn
up sooner or later. The question
is, when?

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE POLICE STATION - DAY

Paul and Christine emerge from the station and head toward their car, each absorbed in their own thoughts.

CHRISTINE

I just don't understand. Why
would he run away?

PAUL

He wanted to go to summer camp,
we sent him to summer camp. He
wanted a guitar, we got him
lessons...

CHRISTINE

I can't count the number of
nights I stayed up when he was
sick...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

I even went to a Little League game. Ninth inning, two outs, bases loaded and he strikes out!

CHRISTINE

How could he do this to me?

PAUL

(angrily)

What the hell else does he want from me?

INT. PAUL'S CAR - DAY

Paul drives. He and Christine sit in silence. Paul glances quickly at his watch.

PAUL

11:30. If I hurry I can drop you at your office and still make my lunch with Marshall.

Christine turns and looks at him, incredulous.

CHRISTINE

You're not actually planning to work today.

PAUL

You have any better ideas?

CHRISTINE

I think we should go down to Atlantic City and see the girl's father.

PAUL

Christine, the police...

CHRISTINE

Those bastards aren't going to do a damn thing! Conner's just another statistic to them!

PAUL

I don't care. I'm not going down after him. That's exactly what Conner wants.

CHRISTINE

What he wants? You make it sound like he's got some sort of master plan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL
(bitterly)
Maybe he does.

CHRISTINE
He's fifteen years old!

PAUL
He's old enough to try making it
on his own for a few days...

CHRISTINE
(icily)
I'm going down to see that girl's
father. Are you coming or not?

PAUL
(softening)
Christine, when I was Conner's
age, I ran away too. But once
I got a taste of what the world
was really like, I realized how
good I had it. And I came back
in a hurry. With my tail between
my legs. Conner will too.

CHRISTINE
And what if he doesn't? What then?

Paul's expression stiffens. He stops the car at a red
light.

CHRISTINE
'Kids are like stolen cars, they
always turn up...' They stole
your car once, Paul. Remember
what it looked like when you got
it back?

They glare at each other in silence which is abruptly
shattered by the sound of Paul's CAR PHONE BUZZING.
Paul glances at the phone nervously.

PAUL
I just don't see what good some
wild goose chase down to Atlantic
City's going to do!

CHRISTINE
At least we'd be doing something!

The CAR PHONE continues to BUZZ. Paul glances at it
again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Look, Marshall doesn't give a goddamn shit about my family problems. All he knows is that he's got fifty million dollars on the line. If I don't show, that's it.

CHRISTINE

Let Sweeney handle it. Our son is more important.

PAUL

Sweeney? Oh yeah, he'd love to get his grubby little hands on one of my accounts.

CHRISTINE

I'm going. Are you coming with me or not?

The CAR PHONE BUZZES again. And again. Finally, unable to control himself, Paul grabs for it.

PAUL

(into phone)

Hello.

Outraged, Christine leaps from the car, slamming her door behind her.

CHRISTINE

I'll find him myself!!!

PAUL

(into phone)

Hold on a second.

Paul lunges across the car trying to stop her.

PAUL

Christine!...

But it's too late. Christine hurries down a subway entrance, disappearing from sight.

PAUL

It's for you.

EXT. RIVIERA HOTEL (ATLANTIC CITY) - DAY

A real dump. In the heat of the red-light district. Some hookers and hustlers congregate lazily by the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Christine stares at the hotel, deeply disturbed. The very thought of her son in a place like this horrifies her. Steeling herself, she goes inside.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

RENFRO, a big, burly, tough-looking man in his forties, the kind with tattoos on his forearms, eyes Christine suspiciously from behind the reception desk as she approaches.

CHRISTINE

Mr. Renfro?

RENFRO

(growling)

Yeah.

CHRISTINE

Christine Henderson. I called this morning about my son...

Christine hurriedly takes out a photograph of Conner and shows it to him.

RENFRO

Lady, you're wasting my time...

He storms into his office behind the desk, slamming the door behind him. At first, Christine is too startled by his sudden exit to do anything. Then she follows him into the office, pushing the door open.

INT. RENFRO'S OFFICE - DAY

Overhead, several industrial-sized pipes drip water into overflowing buckets on the floor. Cursing, Renfro empties the buckets into a small sink, then replaces them. He sees Christine.

RENFRO

Can't you read? This is a private office.

CHRISTINE

Mr. Renfro, I'm very worried about my son. As a parent yourself, you can understand.

Christine shows him the photograph again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE

Please. He was seen leaving with your daughter...

RENFRO

My heart bleeds for you, lady. It really does. But I got my own problems, too. My pipes have been busted for a week and I can't get a plumber. So why don't you take a hike!!

He brushes the photograph away, then picks up the phone and starts dialing. Christine watches him, burning.

CHRISTINE

Maybe you are telling the truth, Mr. Renfro. Maybe you really can't help, but that doesn't give you the right to act like a complete asshole!

RENFRO

Lady, you're lucky you're not a man...

CHRISTINE

If I were a man, I'd knock your block off!!

Christine glares at him then turns and leaves the room.

EXT. WALL STREET - DUSK

Rush hour. Bumper to bumper traffic. Sidewalks packed tight with people pushing and shoving. A human jungle.

The CAMERA SETTLES ON the entrance to a modern skyscraper amidst the chaos.

PAUL (V.O.)

A fifty million dollar deal and she expects me to just drop everything...

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DUSK

Paul sits behind an impressive desk cluttered with a multitude of computer monitors and papers, talking on the phone. He appears very agitated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL
(into phone)
Remember the time I ran away, Mom?
I was back before you and Dad even
realized I had left. It's just
something kids do. Nothing to
get excited about...

INT. PEGGY'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Impeccably furnished with a magnificent view of the city.
PEGGY HENDERSON, Paul's mother, late-sixties, elegant and
shrewd, listens to her son on the other end of the line.

PEGGY
(into phone)
Yes, dear.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DUSK

Paul's SECRETARY pokes her head in the door.

SECRETARY
Marshall's still waiting on line
two. He sounds pissed.

Paul motions to her one second.

PAUL
(into phone)
By the way, you haven't seen
Christine, have you, Mom?

INT. PEGGY'S APARTMENT - DUSK

A WIDER ANGLE reveals that Christine is sitting opposite
Peggy at the dining table. She appears very angry.

PEGGY
(into phone)
No, dear.
(beat)
Talk some sense into her? Yes,
dear.
(beat)
Goodbye, dear.

Peggy hangs up the phone then turns to Christine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEGGY

The little shit. He never ran away from home. I only wish he had.

Christine listlessly picks at her food.

PEGGY

Where did I go wrong? Maybe I should have breast fed him.

CHRISTINE

Please, Peggy, I really don't feel like talking about Paul right now...

PEGGY

I'm sorry, Christine. You're absolutely right. It's just a hard blow for a mother to admit she's spawned a complete twit.

Christine continues to pick at her food, lost in thought.

PEGGY

I'm his mother. I didn't have a choice. But you. There must have been other boys you could have married!

Christine looks up at Peggy, startled. An idea is beginning to formulate in her head.

INT. PEGGY'S APARTMENT - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Several unpacked suitcases lie scattered around the floor, indicating Christine has moved in. Christine sits in her nightgown in bed, having just hung up the phone. Peggy enters.

PEGGY

What about a private detective?

Christine doesn't answer, lost in her own thoughts.

PEGGY

My friend Barbara uses the same one everytime she gets a divorce. If you want, I can get his number...

CHRISTINE

Peggy, I think I just did something very stupid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEGGY

What?

CHRISTINE

I called up Max... Max Lucas.

Peggy looks at her, confused. Christine explains.

CHRISTINE

You don't know him. He was an old
boyfriend of mine before Paul. A
football player...

Christine walks over to her closet and begins sorting
through her dresses.

CHRISTINE

He's a reporter now...

Christine holds up a dowdy-looking dress, shakes her
head, and puts it back in the closet.

PEGGY

Why in heaven's name did you call
him?

CHRISTINE

To ask him to help me. I'm seeing
him tomorrow.

(holding up
another dress)

You think the neckline's low
enough? Max always liked his
women sexy.

PEGGY

(horrificed)

Christine, you're not thinking
what I think you're thinking...

Christine doesn't answer, continuing to sort through the
closet.

PEGGY

After all, Paul may be a twit,
but he is my son...

CHRISTINE

Peggy, don't be ridiculous. I'm
just going to talk to him.

(holding up
another dress)

If somebody like Max had gone with
me to Atlantic City today, Conner
would be safe at home now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peggy's eyes widen.

PEGGY

How long has it been since you saw each other last?

CHRISTINE

I don't know. Maybe sixteen years.

PEGGY

Christine, I don't want to upset you, but how much help can you expect from a man you haven't seen in sixteen years? I mean why should he care about a child he doesn't even know exists?

CHRISTINE

Because I'm going to tell him it's his.

Peggy's eyes widen even wider.

PEGGY

What?

Christine holds up a very sexy, bright red dress and admires herself in the mirror, pleased with her selection.

CHRISTINE

I'm going to tell him Conner's his son.

INT. MAX'S NEWSPAPER - PRESS ROOM - DAY

MAX LUCAS, a big bear of a man, looks at Christine, wide-eyed.

MAS

(incredulous)

Oh!

They are sitting opposite one another in Max's office. Behind them, through the office windows, we can see the busy press room, filled with reporters intently going about their business. Christine, wearing her sexy red dress, goes on with her story.

CHRISTINE

His name is Conner. He's fifteen...

Max stares at her dumbfounded. She continues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE

I didn't want to tell you at the time. I kept the child and... we raised it...

MAX

But why?

The PHONE on his desk begins to RING. Max answers it.

CHRISTINE

Because I loved you and I wanted to have your child...

MAX

(into phone)
I'll call her back.
(hangs up; to
Christine)
No, why didn't you tell me?

CHRISTINE

Tell you? That's a laugh! I could never find you!

Max looks away sheepishly.

CHRISTINE

You were either staying up all night, drinking with your buddies. Or you were chasing after every pretty girl who caught your eye. Which wasn't hard to do!

MAX

Yeah, well, with you it was different...

CHRISTINE

Was it?

MAX

You were the prettiest.
(softly)
Still are.

He smiles at her. Christine feels herself blushing.

CHRISTINE

Max, I'm a married woman.

MAX

You don't have to remind me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Christine ignores him and presses on.

CHRISTINE

Can you imagine what kind of husband and father you would have been?

MAX

(begrudgingly)

Good point.

CHRISTINE

You wouldn't have been able to handle the responsibility. You would have felt trapped.

MAX

So you ditched me.

CHRISTINE

So I married Paul and he never knew it wasn't his son.

Max shakes his head. He can't get over it.

MAX

Listen, this is crazy. Do you have a picture of him?

CHRISTINE

(embarrassed)

Uh... yes, but not a very good one.

She takes out a photo of Conner and hands it to Max who examines it gingerly. He seems perplexed, lifts his eyes toward Christine then looks at the photo again. Christine speaks a little uncertainly.

CHRISTINE

Quite a resemblance, huh?

Max makes a noncommittal gesture.

CHRISTINE

He's got your nose. And what about that chin...

Max continues to stare at the photo.

CHRISTINE

You've both got the same expressions. When he smiles, it's you all over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Do you have a picture where he's smiling?

CHRISTINE

He's a very handsome boy, you know. The girls can't keep their hands off him. Just like you.

Max looks up from the photo, suddenly wary.

MAX

Why are you telling me all this now, Christine?

CHRISTINE

He's gone. Ran away two days ago. The police don't care...

MAX

What about your husband?

CHRISTINE

This doesn't concern him anymore.
(voice breaking)
Please. I just want my son back.

Distraught, Christine's eyes brim with tears. Max looks away, embarrassed.

MAX

He ran away, huh. God, that's dumb. Maybe he is my son...

CHRISTINE

He went off with a girl. She's from Atlantic City. I went there but...

Christine wipes her eyes, unable to go on.

MAX

Christine, what exactly do you expect from me?

CHRISTINE

I want you to find our son.
You're the only one who can do it.

Max slowly shakes his head in disbelief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

You're something else, you know that? You walk out on me, I don't hear from you for sixteen years, then one day, you waltz in here out of nowhere with some cock 'n' bull story that I have a child. Then three minutes after that, you tell me he's missing and you expect me to find him! What am I supposed to say?

INT. PEGGY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Peggy opens the door for Christine who walks in looking glum.

PEGGY

(guessing)

He didn't buy it?

Christine plops down on the couch.

CHRISTINE

I tired everything. Practically got on my knees and begged...

PEGGY

Well, it was a good idea anyway. Crazy but good.

CHRISTINE

(dreamily)

There's another boy I was dating then... Larry Pinsker. He was in my English class...

PEGGY

(incredulous)

You're not going to try it again?

CHRISTINE

(still dreamy)

Talk about sensitive. The man was one giant exposed nerve... Always writing me poems... Always depressed...

PEGGY

Christine, Paul called three times today. He really is worried...

CHRISTINE

I wonder what's become of him...

INT. LARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

A small apartment, modestly furnished. LARRY PINSKER sits at a typewriter on the dining room table finishing a letter.

LARRY (V.O.)
(rereading his
letter)

'I'm fed up with this life that
has brought me so little, and I'm
glad to leave it. To all those
who have slighted me, I forgive
you. Except Julie. She can rot
in hell. Farewell forever.
Larry.'

He puts the letter on the table, wipes his eyes and picks up a revolver which he places in his mouth. Suddenly, the TELEPHONE, which is also on the table, starts to RING. Startled, Larry hesitates for a moment, then answers.

LARRY
(the revolver in his
mouth)

Hello?

His face lights up.

LARRY
(the revolver in his
mouth)

Christine! It can't be.
Christine, how nice to hear from
you! It's been ages. Who me?
Oh, I'm just great... No, I'm not
eating anything...

He realizes she thinks he's eating because the gun's in his mouth. He removes the gun from his mouth and places it against his temple.

LARRY
How are you... Sure, whenever you
want... Tonight would be fine.
Six o'clock? The Bistro? Sounds
good... See you then... I could
hug you too. Until tonight,
Christine.

He hangs up, delighted. He has clearly forgotten that he is still holding the revolver to his temple. He smiles, murmuring to himself dreamily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Christine... Christine...

His nose itches. Absent-mindedly, he scratches it with the tip of the revolver, which he suddenly becomes aware of. His smile freezes.

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Larry stares in shocked disbelief.

LARRY

Me, a son?

Christine, now wearing a demure blue dress, is seated with him. She averts her eyes guiltily.

CHRISTINE

Yes, he's fifteen. His name is Conner.

LARRY

A child... You had my child and never told me?

CHRISTINE

I didn't think I should. We never really did go out on a steady basis...

LARRY

That wasn't my fault...

CHRISTINE

And when we did see each other, we were always fighting. I don't know if you can remember what it was like...

LARRY

Remember? How could I forget? Those were the best days of my life!

CHRISTINE

One big emotional scene after another. We kept leaving each other and threatening to kill ourselves...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY
(correcting her)
You left me and I threatened to
kill myself.

CHRISTINE
Yes, well, anyway, I didn't think
it was right to saddle you with
that kind of responsibility. Not
in the condition you were in.

Larry nods his head, overwhelmed.

LARRY
A son... Do you have a photo?

CHRISTINE
(embarrassed)
Uh... yes, but it isn't very good.

She takes the photo out of her purse and hands it to
Larry who examines it gingerly.

CHRISTINE
Quite a resemblance, huh?

Larry seems uncertain. He lifts his eyes toward Christine
then looks at the photo again.

CHRISTINE
It's mostly the eyes... He has
your eyes.

LARRY
But his eyes are dark and mine
are...

CHRISTINE
Yes, but... they're the same shape
... And you both have the same
coloring...

LARRY
Do you have a photograph in color?

The waiter approaches their table, puts down two cups of
coffee and walks off. Larry looks at his cup and sudden-
ly bursts into tears.

LARRY
Black coffee again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE
(surprised)
What?

LARRY
(crying)
He always forgets the cream.

CHRISTINE
That's not so terrible.

LARRY
No, it isn't terrible at all, but
I've just gone through a breakdown
and... I'm okay now but... Now and
then I start crying for absolutely
no reason. The doctor says it's
normal and I'll get over it
eventually...
(calming down)
Where's my son? Why didn't you
bring him with you?

CHRISTINE
Are you okay?

LARRY
Absolutely. Where is he?

CHRISTINE
No, I mustn't do this to you. You
have your own problems.

LARRY
Stop it! I have no problems.
Where's my son?

CHRISTINE
He ran away...

Larry's eyes widen again.

CHRISTINE
That's why I called. I thought
you could help, but now I'm not
so sure...

Larry's face erupts into an expression of pure joy.

LARRY
And you thought of me... Why
that's wonderful.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)

But that makes perfect sense.
After all, I'm the father, aren't
I? I just can't get used to the
idea. My son! Oh, Christine,
you've made me so happy. You
can't imagine! Waiter!

He lifts his arm as he calls out and hits the tray of the waiter who was walking past him. The tray and its contents clatter to the floor. Larry bursts into tears again.

LARRY

(to the waiter)

Excuse me... I'm so sorry. Can
she have the check please?

(turns to Christine
and takes her hand)

Of course, I'll help you find our
son!

He smiles at her brightly, tears streaming down his face. Christine looks at him, her misgivings mounting.

CHRISTINE

Are you sure you feel up to it?

LARRY

(in tears)

I've never felt better in my life!

CHRISTINE

You'll have to go to Atlantic
City. If it's too much of an
inconvenience...

LARRY

Not at all. Talk about luck!
I'm out of a job, my wife left me,
I live with my mother and hate it.
I have no plans, no future. My
whole life is a mess! It's
perfect!

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TRACY MILLER -- thirty, with the beautiful, wholesome looks of a model, which she happens to be -- stands in the doorway in her bathrobe, paying a delivery boy for some Chinese food. From the bedroom, we can hear a BASEBALL GAME on TV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY
(calling to the
bedroom)
Max, do you have any singles for a
tip?

BEDROOM

Max lies in bed, naked under the covers, sipping a beer, watching the Mets game. From the rumpled condition of the bed, it's clear he and Tracy have made love.

MAX
Check my wallet. Left jacket
pocket.

He winces as Daryl Strawberry strikes out. Tracy enters the room, carrying the Chinese food, and crawls into bed.

TRACY
(affectionately)
Don't get up.

MAX
Thanks, hon, I'm starving.

Tracy hands Max a carton of food and some chopsticks. Max digs in, absorbed in the game. Tracy looks at him tentatively.

TRACY
Max, who's this.

She holds up the snapshot of Conner which Christine gave Max.

MAX
Nobody.

TRACY
(playfully)
If it's nobody, what's it doing in
your wallet?

MAX
An old girl friend of mine gave it
to me. It's her son.
(motions at TV with
chopsticks)
Alright, Carter! My man!

TRACY
What old girl friend?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Christine Rawlings. Only it's
Christine Henderson now.

TRACY

Funny you've never mentioned
her before.

MAX

Why should I mention her? I
haven't seen her since college.
She showed up today out of the
blue with some crazy story.

(at TV)

Carter, you suck!

TRACY

Funny she should give you a
picture of her son.

MAX

The kid ran away. She wants me
to find him. We order any of
that Moo Shu chicken stuff?

Tracy hands him another carton.

TRACY

Why'd she come to you?

MAX

I told you. She had some lame
story. Says I'm the kid's
father.

(at TV)

C'mom Hernandez, we need a hit,
baby!

TRACY

You? A father?

MAX

Yeah, can you believe it? She
must think I'm a real dope.

Max continues to stuff himself, watching the game. Tracy
intently examines the photograph.

TRACY

I don't know. He's kinda cute.

She turns on a light on the night stand so she can get a
better look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY

He's got your nose...

MAX

My nose is broken, Tracy.

TRACY

And your chin... What if it's true?
What if you are his father?

Max turns to Tracy for the first time, annoyed.

MAX

I'm not anybody's father. She just
wants me to help her find the kid.

TRACY

And what's so wrong with being
a father?

MAX

Nothing's wrong with it. I just
don't happen to be one.

TRACY

Don't you want to be a father?

MAX

Tracy, this has nothing to do
with me wanting to be...

TRACY

No, you've got more important
things to do. Like stuffing
your face and watching a stupid
baseball game!!!

She leaps out of bed and walks to the TV, SNAPPING it OFF.

MAX

Tracy, I don't understand why
you're getting so excited about
this.

TRACY

Well, I understand your callous
attitude all too well. It's
indicative of your whole warped
philosophy about commitment,
about marriage, about kids!

MAX

Wait a second, who said anything
about marriage and kids?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY

Exactly! Exactly! That's exactly
what I'm talking about!!

MAX

Tracy...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY OUTSIDE - NIGHT

Now fully dressed, Max emerges from the apartment. Tracy appears behind him, furious, her arms full of his clothes, his toothbrush and assorted shaving articles.

MAX

Alright, Tracy, I'm going...

Tracy drops Max's clothes, toothbrush and shaving articles on the floor, then slams the door, locking it loudly behind her. Across the hallway, a little old man opens his door to check out the action.

MAX

But this time I'm not coming back.
You hear me? I'm not coming back!!
Not even if you begged me!!

He bends down to pick up his clothes, etc.

MAX

What do you have to say to that?

Tracy's door opens for a split second and a carton of Chinese food flies through the air, over Max's back, across the hallway -- right into the little old man's face.

INT. TRACY'S BUILDING - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Max wearily throws his stuff on the backseat, then climbs behind the wheel of his car, a brand new BMW sports coupe. He rummages through his jacket pocket and pulls out a pack of cigarettes -- and the photo of Conner.

Pissed off, he starts to crumple the photo when he suddenly stops himself. He holds up the photo next to his face and looks into his rearview mirror. He pushes his hair to the other side so it's parted on the same side as Conner's, then contorts his face into the identical expression Conner has in the photo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He holds the expression, and continues to stare into the mirror, comparing the photo to himself. He shakes his head. There's no way.

EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Manhattan skyline looms in the background. Max drives home.

MAX'S POV

There's a fork ahead. To the left a sign for the city. To the right, a sign indicating the way to New Jersey...

BACK TO SCENE

Max's BMW heads toward the left and the city. Then suddenly, at the last possible second, it cuts across three lanes of traffic, barely missing several cars, and takes the exit heading to New Jersey.

INT. MAX'S BMW - NIGHT

Max shakes his head. He can't believe he's actually doing this.

MAX

Shit.

MONTAGE: "ATLANTIC CITY" - NIGHT

MUSIC BEGINS:

- A. The casinos, their gaudy, neon signs, flashing on and off. So bright they practically abolish the night.
- B. Various marquees boasting the most glamorous entertainers money can buy. Frank Sinatra. Sammy Davis. Bill Cosby...
- C. Highrollers arriving in chauffeured limousines, buxom, bejeweled young babes at their side.
- D. Armies of elderly men and women disgorging from buses, the promise of easy money in their eyes.
- E. Shabby, rundown tenements, literally across the street from the glittering casinos.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

F. The boardwalk, lined with cheap-looking arcades, fast-food joints, souvenir stands and salt-water taffy stores. A motley crew of suspicious-looking characters, mostly small-time hustlers, thieves, and con artists, eye the endless parade of passers-by, looking for a quick score.

G. Max's BMW zooms past a sign which proclaims in big bold letters: "Welcome to Atlantic City!"

MUSIC ENDS:

EXT. CAESAR'S PALACE - NIGHT

Max emerges from his BMW, carrying his misshapen bundle of clothes under one arm. He hands his keys and a tip to a uniformed VALET.

MAX

I just bought this car. If I find just one nick, dink or scratch on it, I'm coming after you. Just one! Doesn't matter where you hide, I'll find you. You understand what I'm trying to say?

VALET

Perfectly, sir.

MAX

I thought you would.

The Valet gets into Max's car and begins to close the door. He sees Max watching him intently. The Valet closes the door gently, almost imperceptibly. Max smiles beatifically.

EXT. RIVIERA HOTEL - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front. Larry emerges from the taxi and, carrying a little suitcase, enters the hotel.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - NIGHT

Larry stands at the reception desk, looking the place over in horror. A procession of hookers, pimps, and drunks nonchalantly stream in and out of the hotel. The DESK CLERK, a wizened, rheumy-eyed old man, fills out the register.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESK CLERK

I can give you number 12 or
number 6...

LARRY

Is Mr. Renfro here?

DESK CLERK

The boss? Naw, he's out for
the night... Is it important?

LARRY

No, no. I can see him in the
morning.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Even more depressing than the lobby. Larry unpacks his
suitcase. Under his clothes is his photograph of Conner,
now lovingly encased in an expensive red leather frame.
Larry picks up the photo, smiling at it tenderly.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - NIGHT

We're in Conner's bedroom. It's deathly quiet. The only
sound is the soft relentless TICKING of a CLOCK in
another room. The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS the room, past
Conner's rock 'n' roll posters, his athletic trophies and
other assorted, typical teenage junk -- until it finally
settles on Paul who sits alone on Conner's bed, gazing
sadly at a football in his hands.

Suddenly, the PHONE begins to RING in the master bedroom.
Lost in thought, Paul lets it ring a few times before he
slowly stands up to get it, the football still in his
hands.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

Paul picks up the phone.

PAUL

(dully)

Hello.

(beat)

No, she's not here. Who's
calling?

INT. CAESAR'S PALACE - MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tasteless but plush. Max lies on a massive heart-shaped bed, staring thoughtfully at his half-crumpled photo of Conner.

MAX

(into phone)

Max Lucas. I'd like to leave a message.

(beat)

Tell Christine I changed my mind. I'm staying at Caesar's Palace in Atlantic City if she wants to reach me. That's it. Thanks.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul hangs up the phone, mystified. He turns around to go back to Conner's room when the PHONE RINGS again. Paul answers it.

PAUL

Hello.

(beat)

No, Christine's not here. Who's calling?

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Larry is on the other end. He continues to gaze lovingly at the framed photograph of Conner.

LARRY

(into phone)

Larry Pinsker...

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul looks at the phone, even more mystified than before.

LARRY (V.O.)

Do you have a pen? I'd like to leave a message...

PAUL

Hold on.

Completely confused, Paul reaches for a pencil and pad.

PAUL

Okay.

INT. LARRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

LARRY

Tell her I arrived safe and sound.
I'm staying at the Riviera Hotel.
It's a real dump. Wait, don't
tell her that. Just say I'm on
the case and not to worry.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul begins to jot down the message. Then it hits him.

PAUL

The Riviera Hotel! Who is this?
What's going on?

Too late. Larry has already hung up. Paul puts down the phone, perplexed. Whatever's going on, he doesn't like the smell of it.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - NIGHT

An overnight bag lies on the passenger seat. Paul picks up the car phone and dials as he blazes down the freeway.

PAUL

(into phone)

Hello, Sweeney, Paul Henderson
here. Listen, I won't be able
to make the Marshall meeting
tomorrow.

(beat)

I'm fine. Look, I was wondering
if you could cover for me.

(beat)

No, Sweeney, you're not
hallucinating.

(beat)

Yeah, I'm sure. Thanks.

Grim-faced, he hangs up the phone, rubbing his eyes to stay awake.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - MORNING

The lobby is empty. Paul, looking bleary-eyed and exhausted from staying up all night driving, approaches the office behind the reception desk. He adjusts his suit, brushes his hair with his hand, assuming his most professional manner, then knocks on the door. He hears a MUFFLED VOICE from inside the office and decides to enter.

INT. RENFRO'S OFFICE - MORNING

The slow leak in the pipes overhead hasn't been fixed and continues to drip into a profusion of buckets on the floor. Renfro talks on the phone.

RENFRO
(into phone)
In two hours, I'll be breaking
out the fucking life preservers!!
(shouting)
You suck on it!!

He slams the phone down, then sees Paul standing in the doorway.

PAUL
Mr. Renfro?

RENFRO
Yeah, what do you want?

PAUL
Paul Henderson. Fletcher,
Rozanski and Smith.

He hands a business card to Renfro who eyes it suspiciously. Paul sticks out his hand. Renfro pointedly refuses to shake it.

RENFRO
Whatever you're selling, I don't
want none.

PAUL
I'm not a salesman, Mr. Renfro,
I'm an investment banker. And a
father. Which brings me to the
matter at hand. My son.

He takes out a photograph of Conner.

PAUL
I believe my wife contacted you
yesterday about him...

RENFRO
(snarling)
The cops were here yesterday. You
send them, asshole?

PAUL
(taken aback)
I just told them what I knew.
That my son had disappeared with
your daughter...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RENFRO

Fuck off.

Renfro slaps the photo from Paul's hand onto the floor.

RENFRO

I haven't seen your son! I
haven't seen nobody!

Swallowing his pride, Paul bends down and picks up his son's photograph. He looks Renfro in the eye.

PAUL

You're lying.

Renfro just laughs scornfully.

RENFRO

Maybe I am. What are you going to
do about it, Mr. Henderson
Fletcher Rozanski and shit?

He towers over Paul.

RENFRO

Now get the hell out before I
throw you out!

They glare at each other. Finally, Paul backs to the door which he double-bolts behind him. He grabs a chair and sits down, planting himself in front of the door, staring defiantly at Renfro.

PAUL

I'm sorry, Mr. Renfro, but I'm
afraid you're stuck with me.

RENFRO

I am, am I?

Renfro advances toward Paul, a mad gleam in his eyes.

PAUL

(nervously)
Your threats don't frighten me.

RENFRO

They don't, huh?

PAUL

I'm not budging an inch until you
tell me what you know about my
son.

RENFRO

Is that so?

INT. LOBBY AREA OUTSIDE RENFRO'S OFFICE - DAY

Suddenly, Renfro's door crashes open. Paul rockets through the air and lands in a heap, unconscious, at the stunned Desk Clerk's feet. Renfro emerges right after him, grinning broadly, dusting his hands in satisfaction.

RENFRO
(to the Desk Clerk)
Throw him on the street with the
rest of the trash.

EXT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

A small crowd of onlookers watch as two attendants load Paul into an ambulance. Just as the ambulance pulls away, Max drives up in his BMW and parks in front of the Riviera. He gets out of his car, gives the crowd and the ambulance a quick, curious glance, then goes inside the hotel.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

Max taps on the office door.

RENFRO (O.S.)
Now what?

INT. RENFRO'S OFFICE - DAY

Max opens the door and enters the office. Renfro sits at his desk, intently flipping through the Yellow Pages for another plumber.

MAX
Mr. Renfro?

Renfro continues to flip through the phone book, then looks up at Max.

RENFRO
Make it snappy.

Max places his photograph of Conner on Renfro's desk.

MAX
You know this boy?

Renfro looks at the photo, then at Max.

RENFRO
You a cop? Because I already...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

I'm not a cop, Renfro. I'm the boy's father. And I happen to know he ran away with your daughter.

RENFRO

His father?

MAX

That's right. You heard from them lately?

RENFRO

I just saw the little brat's father not five minutes ago!

MAX

(a little
embarrassed)

Oh, yeah... whoever you saw isn't his father... it's just the man who raised him. I'm the real father. It's a kinda touchy situation...

He stops himself. Why is he bothering to explain things to this schmuck?

MAX

Well, what can you tell me?

RENFRO

The same thing I told the other father. Fuck off!

MAX

(softly)

Don't get mad, Renfro. Let's try and act like civilized people, okay?

RENFRO

(furious)

I already told the cops everything I know. Which is zilch. So get the fuck out of here!

A TELEPHONE starts to RING on Renfro's desk. Renfro starts to reach for it.

RENFRO

Did you hear what I said? Fuck off!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max grabs the phone just ahead of Renfro.

MAX
(into phone;
pleasantly)
Hello? Who should I say is
calling please?

RENFRO
(grabbing for the
phone)
Gimme that!

MAX
(putting his hand
over the receiver)
You're in luck. It's the
plumber...

RENFRO
Listen, buddy, I'm warning you...

MAX
(into phone)
Hang on. I'll put him on...

Suddenly, Max hits Renfro squarely in the face with the telephone. Renfro crashes to the floor behind his desk. Max talks into the phone again.

MAX
I'm sorry, but Mr. Renfro's busy
right now. Can I take a message?
... Oh, wait a second, here he
comes...

Renfro frantically crawls around the desk toward the door.

RENFRO
Help!!

Renfro staggers to his feet. Max whacks him again with the phone. Renfro collapses to the floor. Max nonchalantly returns to his phone conversation.

MAX
Oh gosh, I'm terribly sorry but
Mr. Renfro just went out again...

Renfro leaps desperately for the door. Still holding the phone, Max intercepts him, grabbing Renfro roughly by the collar and smashing him onto the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max leans over Renfro, brandishing the phone. Renfro looks up at him, bugged-eyed and scared out of his wits.

MAX

Here. Say something to make him happy...

RENFRO

(in a choked voice)

He came here...

MAX

What was that?

RENFRO

Your son... he came here...

Max hangs up the phone with his free hand, then seizes Renfro by the throat, shaking him to continue.

RENFRO

There were two other guys with him and my daughter. They stayed one night, then I kicked them out...

MAX

You asshole! Why didn't you tell the kid's mother that when she was here?

RENFRO

They'd stolen some stuff. Radios and tape recorders... Must have ripped off a store. I didn't want no trouble so I told...

MAX

Where are they now?

RENFRO

I swear I don't know...

Max slams Renfro against the desk, then reaches for the phone again. Renfro looks at the phone then at Max, gulping in horror.

RENFRO

My wife...

MAX

What about her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RENFRO

Maybe she's seen them. She runs a gas station off Ventnor, near Albany. The Chevron station...

Satisfied he's gotten everything there is to get, Max releases Renfro who slides off the desk and falls to his knees. Max leaves the office, closing the door behind him.

Renfro gets up painfully and goes to the sink where he rinses out his mouth and splashes some water on his face.

Just then, there is a KNOCK on the office door. Renfro turns around, his face dripping wet.

RENFRO

Go away!

The door opens -- it's Larry, all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

LARRY

Mr. Renfro?

Renfro wipes his face with a dingy towel.

RENFRO

What the hell do you want?

Larry walks into the room and takes out his photograph of Conner which he shows to Renfro.

LARRY

Have you seen this boy, Mr. Renfro?

Renfro glances at the photo, then looks up at Larry warily.

RENFRO

Who are you?

LARRY

His father.

Renfro sits down shakily. He's aging by the minute. Larry chatters on.

LARRY

He ran away -- and with your daughter it seems...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)
(sees Renfro's dazed
expression)
Is something wrong?

RENFRO
(in a hollow voice)
How many fathers does this kid
have?

LARRY
What?
(then it hits him)
Oh, I understand. No, the father
you saw before me isn't the real
father. The biological father,
that is, the one who conceived
the child, is me...

Renfro just stares at him, visibly shaken. The TELEPHONE
starts to RING. Renfro doesn't move. Larry looks at
him, puzzled.

LARRY
Pardon me, but I couldn't help
noticing your phone is ringing.

Still staring at Larry, Renfro slowly gets up and
cautiously reaches for the phone. Then in one swift
motion, he picks up the receiver and slams it with his
last ounce of strength into Larry's face.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Max hasn't left the hotel yet. The rheumy-eyed Desk
Clerk points to a map on the wall, intently explaining
to him how to find the gas station run by Renfro's wife.

DESK CLERK
Then you'll pass the Ship's Mate,
it's a good place, the drinks are
reasonable and the people are
friendly...

Max rolls his eyes, impatiently. Suddenly the Desk Clerk
is interrupted by the appearance of Larry who scrambles
out of Renfro's office on his hands and knees. Renfro
pursues him, waving the telephone receiver like a club.
He stops dead in his tracks, however, when he sees that
Max is still there, and quickly retreats back to his
office, slamming the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry climbs to his feet, clutching his jaw.

LARRY

That man needs a good therapist!!
And soon!!

MAX

What happened?

LARRY

Talk about hostile tendencies! I
go in there and ask a simple
question and he clubs me with the
telephone! The man should be
locked up!

He shakes his head, still groggy, and sits down on a
bench.

MAX

You okay?

LARRY

I was perfectly within my rights
as a father. My son ran away and
I merely asked the man if he'd
seen him.

(turns back to

Renfro's office)

I'm going to report him to the
police! Who does he think he is,
anyway?

MAX

You son ran away?

LARRY

That lunatic broke my jaw...

MAX

Mine ran away too.

LARRY

You're kidding.

MAX

They must be together. How old's
yours?

LARRY

Fifteen.

MAX

So's mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry stands up and extends his hand.

LARRY

Larry Pinsker...

Max takes his hand and they shake.

MAX

Max Lucas...

INT. RENFRO'S OFFICE - DAY

Renfro has finally calmed down and is painstakingly repairing his telephone with masking tape when the door to his office opens and a tough-looking MAN appears in the door. Renfro looks at the Man and starts backing away, frightened.

RENFRO

Don't tell me. You're the kid's father...

MAN

(amazed)

What?

RENFRO

(almost in tears)

Everybody's the kid's father. The whole fucking world's the kid's father!!!!

MAN

Take it easy, buddy. I'm the plumber.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Max and Larry converse over eggs and coffee.

MAX

According to Renfro, they stole some stuff from a store... radios and tape players...

Larry nods, very upset.

MAX

If you ask me, our kids are turning into a couple of delinquents...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

I don't know how I'm going to
break this to his mother!

MAX

Me neither!

LARRY

Poor Christine. She's suffered so
much already.

MAX

Her name is Christine?

LARRY

Yes.

MAX

That's funny. Mine's Christine
too.

(sadly)

Poor Christine.

Absorbed in thought, Larry doesn't pick up on this.

LARRY

The truth is, I never got involved
enough with my kid...

MAX

Yeah, same here, sad to say...

LARRY

Mine's just like me. A dreamer.
Moody, alienated -- just like I
was. But he went me one better.
He actually had the guts to run
away...

MAX

Mine's a little bruiser. Strong
as a bull. Doesn't look for a
fight but doesn't back down from
one either. And restless. Just
like I was. I never could stay
still. When I first heard he'd
run away, I thought to myself,
yup, that little asshole is
definitely my son!

Larry pulls out an antique pocket watch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

See this watch? My father gave it to me when I was eighteen. It belonged to his father and his father before that. I'm going to give it to my son...

MAX

I'm going to take mine to ballgames. Like my old man did with me. Maybe get him a job at my paper. Yeah, sure, it'll do him good. I'll take care of him. Like a father should do with his son...

LARRY

I will too.
(wistfully)
From now on, neither one of us will ever be lonely again.

INT. MAX'S BMW - DAY

Max drives. Larry leans back in his seat, enjoying the ride.

LARRY

How's your wife handling this?

MAX

(edgily)
What wife? I don't have no wife.

LARRY

(confused)
You're not married?

MAX

Oh, you mean the kid's mom. Naw, we never got spliced. She wanted to alright. But I was too quick for her. How 'bout you?

LARRY

(sadly)
I had a wife. But she left me.

MAX

Hey, take it from me, you're better off.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)

I've been a bachelor my whole life
and it's one big fiesta after
another. No worries. No
responsibilities. Your time's
your own to do with whatever the
hell you want.

LARRY

Yeah, maybe you're right.

MAX

Sure I am. Travel light, travel
fast. That's my motto.

They drive in silence for awhile. Larry tries to adjust
his headrest. He has trouble at first, but finally gets
it. He notices Max glancing at him warily.

LARRY

Great car. Is it new?

MAX

Brand new. This is the first
chance I've had to really take it
out.

LARRY

Must have cost a bundle.

MAX

(shrugging)
Nothing I can't handle.

LARRY

It's terrific.

Larry spots a smudge on the windshield and begins wiping
it off with his hand. Max gives him a dirty look and
immediately hands him a chamois cloth from the glove
compartment. Larry takes the cloth and goes right on
wiping. Finally, he's satisfied and stops. They drive
in silence for a few more beats.

LARRY

I would have taken the metallic
gray...

MAX

(glaring at him)
I wouldn't.

Max passes a street sign and curses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Damn! I was supposed to make a left there.

LARRY

What?

MAX

I missed the turn.

LARRY

(mournfully)

You missed the turn?

Larry's eyes well up with tears. Max looks at him, surprised.

MAX

Hey, no biggie. I'll just hang a 'U-ie.'

LARRY

(wiping his eyes)

No, it's not that. I had this breakdown and sometimes I start crying for no reason at all. Don't worry, I'll be done in a second.

He smiles reassuringly at an incredulous Max then reaches for the chamois cloth and begins to dry his eyes. Max grabs the cloth from Larry and hands him some Kleenex.

EXT. CHEVRON STATION - DAY

Max pulls up in front of the gas pumps and gets out of the car with Larry. MRS. RENFRO, a masculine-looking woman with a hard face, begins walking toward them from the garage.

MAX

That must be her.

She reaches them. Max hands her the car keys.

MAX

Fill her up. Unleaded. And check the oil, please.

She nods. Max gives her a once-over, quickly sizing her up, then he and Larry head for the station's convenience store.

INT. GAS STATION STORE - DAY

Max and Larry serve themselves at a coffee machine. Max peers outside at Mrs. Renfro. He seems worried.

MAX

She won't be easy.

LARRY

Really? I don't think so.

The door opens -- it's Mrs. Renfro.

MRS. RENFRO

You oil's fine. Anything else?

MAX

Are you Mrs. Renfro?

MRS. RENFRO

(suddenly suspicious)

That depends on who you are.

MAX

You mean your husband didn't phone you?

MRS. RENFRO

My husband? You friends with that bum?

MAX

He sent us here. The name's Lucas. Max Lucas. My son ran away from home.

LARRY

Larry Pinsker... So did mine.

MAX

They were at your husband's place a few days ago.

MRS. RENFRO

So what? My husband and I split up fifteen years ago.

MAX

They were with your daughter. You heard from her lately?

MRS. RENFRO

No.

MAX

I want my son back, Mrs. Renfro.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Me too.

MAX

Your daughter can help us...

Outside, a CAR HORN BEEPS. Mrs. Renfro turns toward the gas pumps where a motorist is impatiently HONKING.

MRS. RENFRO

Look, I don't know where my daughter is and I'm busy. You owe me twenty-one fifty.

Max pays her. She leaves the store. Max turns to Larry triumphantly.

MAX

What'd I tell you? Like talking to a brick wall.

LARRY

Maybe she's telling the truth.

MAX

No way. But how do we make her talk -- that's the question.

He paces the store, deep in thought, then suddenly stops, seized by a flash of inspiration.

MAX

What if you cried?

LARRY

What?

MAX

Sure. Maybe tears will soften her up.

LARRY

Let me get this straight. You want me to cry? Just like that?

MAX

Right now. This instant.

LARRY

It's not that easy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(losing his temper)
Why not? You cried when I missed
the turn for Christ sake!

LARRY
(losing his temper)
I can't cry on cue!!

MAX
Fine, have it your way. But if
you don't cry, she won't talk!
(giving up)
I'm outa here.

He heads for the door.

LARRY
Wait!

Max stops and turns around.

LARRY
Alright, I'll try...

He takes a deep breath, then furrows his brow, concentrating on crying. Max glances worriedly at the gas pumps.

MAX
Speed it up, would ya!

LARRY
You think it's so easy, why don't
you try it?
(closing his eyes)
I have to think of something sad.
Let's see...

Suddenly, he bursts into laughter. Max glares at him.

MAX
What's so funny?

LARRY
(in hysterics)
I've been crying for months.
Driving people crazy. Now when
I have to...

He sees Max's unamused expression and manages to calm down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

My father's funeral... That was really sad. Everytime I think about it, I get so depressed...

(bursting into
laughter again)

Whoops.

Max slaps him. Larry laughs even harder.

LARRY

The jerk just slapped me!

He howls in laughter. Mrs. Renfro heads back to the store, having finished with her customer.

MAX

(darkly)

Great. Here she comes. What's the use? I'm dealing with a fuckin' basket case!

LARRY

(getting serious)

I'm sorry, but I haven't felt this good in years...

He pulls out some crumpled Kleenex from his pocket and wipes his eyes. Mrs. Renfro enters the store. Her face hardens when she sees they're still there.

MRS. RENFRO

You got your gas. Now get out of here!

MAX

Come on, Pinsker.

Max walks toward the door. Larry follows him and passes Mrs. Renfro, still dabbing at his eyes. She looks at him, curious.

Suddenly, Larry gets another attack of the giggles and turns his back to hide it from her. Mrs. Renfro sees Larry's body shaking with spasms and turns to Max.

MRS. RENFRO

What's with him?

Max sees Mrs. Renfro is concerned. He decides to seize the opportunity.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Oh, nothing. He's just devastated with grief.

He goes over to Larry, who quakes with suppressed laughter, and takes him in his arms to hide his condition better. All Mrs. Renfro can see is Larry's shaking back which Max pats tenderly.

MAX

Calm down, man. Easy now...

Hidden against Max's shoulder, Larry grins broadly, biting his lip to restrain his laughter. Mrs. Renfro is moved.

MRS. RENFRO

He's crying?

MAX

Of course he's crying! Can you blame the poor guy? His son's missing, probably lying face down in a gutter somewhere, and you won't help!

Mrs. Renfro hesitates, torn between suspicion and compassion.

MRS. RENFRO

It's just that I have my daughter to think about. I don't want to get her into trouble with the cops.

MAX

We won't breathe a word to the cops. We just want our kids back.

Mrs. Renfro is still undecided. Larry is now choking with laughter which, seen from behind, looks pathetic. Finally, she gives in.

MRS. RENFRO

Do you know 'The Palace'? Off Atlantic.

Max shakes his head. She goes to the cash register.

MRS. RENFRO

It's a boarding house. Last I heard Michele had a room there. The super's name is Fleming. He'd know where she is. I'll get you the address.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She starts to write down the address on a piece of paper. Larry turns and faces her for the first time. His eyes are teary and his face is red so he looks like he's been crying.

MRS. RENFRO
(still writing)
I've probably met your kids. What
do they look like?

Larry and Max each take out their respective photos of Conner and walk toward Mrs. Renfro. Each hands her his photo without looking at the other.

Mrs. Renfro takes the two photos, looks at them and does a double-take.

MRS. RENFRO
What are they, twins?

Larry and Max realize something's wrong. They both lean over simultaneously to look at the photos.

THEIR POV

The two photos are identical.

LARRY AND MAX

look at each other, speechless. Mrs. Renfro hands them back the wrong photos. Max and Larry quickly grab their photos from each other.

INT. HENDERSON HOUSE - DAY

A PHONE RINGS in the foreground, then an ANSWERING MACHINE CLICKS ON.

ANSWERING MACHINE
(in Christine's voice)
Hello, you've reached the Hendersons.
We're not here right now...

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - STREET - DAY

Max and Larry are squeezed inside a phone booth. Max listens on the phone and grimaces.

MAX
Fuckin' wonderful! She's not home!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the other end, the ANSWERING MACHINE BEEPS, indicating they should leave a message.

MAX
(into phone)
Christine, Max. What the hell is going on? I'm standing in a phone booth with an emotional wreck named Pinsker who's walking around with a picture of my son, claiming he's the father...

Larry grabs the phone from Max.

LARRY
(into phone)
Christine, this is Larry. And I'm standing in a phone booth with the missing link himself, some throwback to prehistoric days named Lucas, who's walking around under the pathetic delusion he's the father of my son...

Max grabs the phone back from Larry. On the other end of the phone, the ANSWERING MACHINE BEEPS again, signalling the end of the message.

MAX
(hanging up; furious)
Shit!

INT. MAX'S BMW - DAY

Max drives, looking grim. Larry sits stiffly next to him. Max breaks the silence.

MAX
All I can say she's got some nerve! Says she loves me and all the time she's two-timing me with two other guys! Jesus Christ, wouldja stop that!!!

Larry, who has been playing with the electric window, opening and closing it, stops. After another silence, Max continues.

MAX
I mean who needs this shit? My life's fine just the way it is.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)

Why would I want to get involved
with some stupid, snot-nosed kid?
He sounds like a little brat
anyway.

LARRY

Fine with me. I'll take him.

Max shoots Larry a worried, hostile look. They continue
to drive in silence.

INT. "THE PALACE" - DAY

Max and Larry creep down a dingy, dark hallway, stopping
in front of a doorway marked "MANAGER." They knock on
the door in unison.

MAN (O.S.)

(from behind door)

What do ya want?

MAX

We're looking for someone. We
think maybe you could help us.

MAN (O.S.)

Fuck off.

MAX

People in this town got a real
attitude problem.

(to Larry)

I guess you'd call it prehistoric
behavior if I knocked down the
door?

LARRY

There are other ways.

MAX

Then by all means...

Larry searches through his pockets.

LARRY

Got a five? All I have is
twenties.

Max pulls out a five dollar bill which he hands to Larry,
who bends down and slips the money halfway under the door.
The money disappears. Larry stands up and waits, but the
door doesn't open. Max smiles knowingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Larry knocks again.

MAN (O.S.)

Fuck off.

MAX

Try sending him a dozen roses.

LARRY

What would you do?

MAX

This!

He kicks the door which flies open, hitting FLEMING, a little man in a dirty undershirt, in the nose. Max walks toward him with a photo of Conner.

MAX

This jerk here believes in reason and a peaceful exchange of views. Personally, I'd enjoy kicking the living shit out of you. Which will it be?

FLEMING

(instantly)

'The Space Station.' It's an arcade on Pacific. The kids always hang out there.

EXT. GHETTO STREET - DAY

Max parks his BMW, painstakingly rolls up all the windows and locks the door. He smiles smugly at Larry who fumes.

MAX

By the way, you owe me five bucks.

They walk around the corner toward "The Space Station," a shabby, rundown arcade.

INT. "THE SPACE STATION" - DAY

The noise of PINBALL MACHINES and VIDEO GAMES is deafening. It's packed with surly-looking hoods.

The OWNER of the place, a fat man with a pocked face, supervises a workman who is replacing a huge plate glass window. Max and Larry walk up to him, pulling out their respective photos of Conner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(to Larry)
Go ahead. It's your turn again.

Larry holds out his photo to the Owner.

LARRY
Excuse me, sir, but have you seen
this boy?

The Owner looks at the photo then at Larry, suspicious.

OWNER
Why you wanna know?

LARRY
We're looking for him. He ran
away.

OWNER
You guys cops?

MAX AND LARRY
(in unison)
No, he's my son.

They look at each other sheepishly. The Owner frowns.

LARRY
His mother sent us.

OWNER
You owe me two hundred bucks.

LARRY
What?

OWNER
You heard me! That little creep
and his punk friends came in here,
stoned out of their minds, and
busted my window. And now I'm
stuck with the bill!

MAX
You're positive this boy was with
them?

OWNER
He was the worst one. You know,
I have a kid, too. But I don't
let him hang out till all hours
of the night.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OWNER (CONT'D)

And I sure as hell don't let him
take drugs! And you call
yourselves fathers!

MAX

Listen, asshole, we'll raise our
kid any way we please!

Larry, the diplomat, tries to intervene.

LARRY

Gentlemen, try and remember you're
adults...

MAX

You've got some balls lecturing
me, you fat lump of shit. Kids
wouldn't stay out all night if
it weren't for your stupid games!!!

The Owner glares at Max and starts rolling up his sleeves.

OWNER

Looks like I'm going to have to
teach you a lesson to pass onto
your idiot son!

MAX

Oh yeah?

LARRY

Gentlemen, please...

OWNER

You're in deep shit, asshole.
I was Golden Gloves, boxing
champion...

Before he can finish, Max butts him with his head. The
Owner goes flying through the newly installed plate glass
WINDOW which SHATTERS into smithereens. Max turns to
Larry reassuringly.

MAX

Ten bucks says his windows are
insured...

EXT. AROUND CORNER - DAY

Led by King, a gang of toughs, the same mean-looking
teenagers we saw at the party at the Henderson house,
suddenly appear en masse from around the corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Michele is at the front of the pack. Conner trails behind, looking way out of his element.

King spots Max's shiny new BMW and heads straight for it. He leans against the side of the BMW and nonchalantly lights a joint.

Suddenly, Max's BMW erupts into a cacophony of noise. An ALARM WHINES and the HORN HONKS. The headlights flash on and off.

King leaps from the car, startled. The rest of the group laughs at him.

KING

What the fuck!

Berserk, he grabs an iron bar from the ground and begins SMASHING the WINDSHIELD, SHATTERING it. The BMW continues to DRONE loudly. King, insane with rage, continues to hit the car as hard as he can, badly denting the hood, the sides, everywhere. He heads to the trunk when he sees Conner moving up next to Michele and stops.

KING

Hey you, rich boy. Show us how they do it in the 'burbs.

He hands the bar to Conner, looking at him daringly.

CONNER

That's okay, King. You're doing fine.

KING

What's the matter? 'Fraid you won't get into college of your choice?

King sneers and looks at Michele as if to make a point. Conner sees this and impulsively takes the bar. Staring fixedly at Michele, who watches stoically, he swings the bar and pulverizes the REAR WINDOW.

INT. "THE SPACE STATION" - DAY

The sound of the PINBALL MACHINES and VIDEO GAMES drowns out Max's car alarm. The Owner of the arcade, still shaken from his fall, sits in a chair as Larry applies some ice to his forehead. Max looks at the Owner, concerned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
How's the head?

OWNER
Much better, thank you.

MAX
That's good...

Max lifts the Owner by the collar and slams him against a wall.

MAX
Now where's my son?

EXT. ARCADE - DAY

Max and Larry leave the arcade and walk down the street, back to Max's car.

LARRY
You think he's really on drugs?

MAX
If he is, I'll break his scrawny little neck...

LARRY
Oh, that'll make him want to come back...

MAX
What do you suggest? A goddamn shrink?

LARRY
Hey, if it wasn't for therapy I wouldn't be where I am today.

MAX
I rest my case!

They turn the corner. Max looks ahead and stops dead in his tracks. The color slowly drains from his face.

HIS POV

The abandoned, devastated BMW. A bashed shell.

LARRY

sees the car and shakes his head in sympathy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They walk to the car. Max gazes at it mournfully. He looks like he's about to burst into tears.

MAX

My whole life. I scrimped and saved up my whole lousy life for that car...

LARRY

Lucas, I'm sorry. I know how much it means to you...

MAX

Do you have any idea what this is going to do to my insurance? The payments were already bad enough but this...

Furious, Max opens the driver's door. The handle comes off in his hand. Max speaks very quietly, beyond rage.

MAX

If I find the guys who did this, I'll kill them.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front. Christine gets out, tossing some bills at the cabbie, and hurries inside.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Her face etched in worry, Christine follows a DOCTOR in a bloodied white frock down the crowded, bustling corridor.

DOCTOR

This way, Mrs. Henderson.

He motions to a door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

ON Christine's face as she enters. She gasps in horror at what she sees.

HER POV

Paul lies asleep in bed, a bandage wrapped around his head.

EXT. "THE MOONBEAM" - NIGHT

"The Moonbeam" is a punk roller rink and bar overlooking the ocean. Loud RAP MUSIC booms from inside, shaking the foundations. Max's wrecked BMW rattles to a stop in front. Max and Larry get out.

LARRY

Want me to lock it?

Max glowers at him. They head inside.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - NIGHT

Flashing strobe lights illuminate the scene. Packed with teenagers skating clockwise around the rink. King and a couple of his leather-jacketed buddies deliberately skate the opposite direction from everybody else, knocking people down.

On a makeshift stage at one end of the rink, a black rap artist, decked out in a sweat suit, wraparound sunglasses and a plethora of gold chains, manipulates two turntables, chanting at the same time into a microphone.

The oldest ones in the place, the only ones in suits, Max and Larry stick out like sore thumbs. They scan the room.

LARRY

I don't see him.

Michele sits along a bar adjacent to the rink, surrounded by various members of the gang. Max looks at her thoughtfully.

MAX

Check out the chick at the bar...

LARRY

Not bad. You think...?

MAX

She fits the description.

Larry looks at Michele with interest. Max studies the group surrounding her and seems worried.

MAX

Some welcoming committee.

LARRY

Them? They're just a bunch of kids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

A lot you know. This could get ugly. I'd better handle it.

LARRY

And cause another fight? There are other, more subtle ways to obtain information than breaking people's heads...

MAX

You just never learn do you?

LARRY

I used to be a teacher. Relating to kids is my specialty.

MAX

This I gotta see.

Larry starts toward the group. Concerned, Max grabs his arm.

MAX

Pinsker...

LARRY

Yeah?

MAX

They'll eat you for breakfast.

LARRY

Look, just once let me do things my way. Promise me that you won't barge in like you always do...

He stares sternly at Max.

MAX

(reluctantly)
Okay, I promise...

LARRY

Thank you.

He saunters up to Michele and her friends, giving them his most dazzling smile.

LARRY

Hiya, dudes!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max watches and winces. The kids stare back at Larry in terrifying silence. Larry continues, still smiling.

LARRY
What's happenin'?

They continue to regard him in stony silence. Larry turns to the stage and begins snapping his fingers and tapping his feet to the music.

LARRY
Awesome vibes, man! Bad too!
Real, real bad! Totally chillin'!
Hea-vy du-ty!!

Michele and her friends continue to watch Larry in silence. Larry turns to Michele.

LARRY
Pardon me, but could we rap?

From the roller rink, King sees Larry with Michele. He steps out of the rink and skates toward them.

AT OTHER END OF ROOM

Max anxiously watches as King and several other gang members glide up to Larry and grab him under the shoulders lifting him off his feet. Carrying Larry between them, King and the gang members skate toward a dark hallway in the back.

Max starts toward Larry who sees him and waves him back, indicating that everything's under control.

Max forces himself not to intervene.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

King and the gang members skate inside the bathroom and put Larry down.

LARRY
Much better. I couldn't hear
myself think back there.

King locks the door behind him. He and his buddies advance toward Larry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

I'm looking for a young man.
Maybe you know him...

King grabs Larry by the collar and gives him a little push into another kid who shoves him into another kid.

LARRY

Dudes, let's try and behave ourselves...

He's bouncing around like a pinball.

LARRY

Dudes, really now! Don't make me repeat myself...

King whips out a straight razor placing the edge on Larry's chin. Terrified, Larry backs up on his tiptoes until he finds himself trapped against the wall.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - NIGHT

Michele sits by herself at the bar. Max decides to take advantage of the gang's absence and approaches her.

MAX

Hello, Michele.

Hearing her name, Michele reflexively turns around. She glances at Max impassively, betraying no surprise, then turns away again.

MAX

Michele Renfro. That's your name, isn't it?

MICHELE

What if it is? Who the fuck are you?

Max takes out his photograph of Conner and shows it to her.

MAX

His father.

Michele looks at the photo then at Max and shakes her head.

MICHELE

Nice try. But I've seen his old man...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

It's a long story...

MICHELE

Look, I don't give two shits who you are. Just get rid of Conner...

Max looks at her, surprised.

MICHELE

If you don't, he's gonna get himself killed...

MAX

Where is he?

MICHELE

Upstairs.

She slides off her bar stool and walks toward the dark hallway in back. Max follows her.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Michele leads Max to a rickety set of stairs. They pass a door which suddenly opens. Larry emerges, gasping for breath, his suit jacket and pants sliced to ribbons.

LARRY

If these are the kind of people Conner's hanging out with, he's heading for big trouble. They're animals!! With severe personality disorders!!

Max sees Larry and shakes his head. He's not even going to ask what happened.

LARRY

And my best suit, too! My only suit!

MAX

Conner's upstairs.

He turns, following Michele up the stairs. Larry immediately stops ranting and scrambles after him.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Max and Larry cautiously venture down a dark, smelly corridor, stepping over a delirious bum who sits slumped against a wall, guzzling cheap wine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELE

In here.

She opens a door, entering a room.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Michele turns on the light, revealing a filthy cubicle littered with junk. Conner lies at the far end of the room, passed out on a sleeping bag. Max and Lucas freeze, looking intently at their "son" for the first time.

MICHELE

Little jerk can't even hold his
booze. He was trying to be a big
deal and got sick all over the
place.

(shaking her head)
He's such a baby.

MAX

What about you and him?

MICHELE

Hey, it's over. But the kid won't
let go. I don't why I started
with him in the first place.
Guess I felt bad for him or
something. He seemed so alone.

(looking at Conner)
Tell him I'm sorry.

She leaves. Max and Larry tiptoe toward Conner, careful not to wake him. They stand over him. Conner snores slightly. Larry looks down at his shredded suit, feeling miserable.

LARRY

This is awful! I can't let him
see me for the first time like
this. What will he think?

Nervous, Larry takes out a handkerchief from his breast pocket to mop his forehead. The handkerchief is in tatters too.

MAX

You can stop worrying. He's down
for the count.

Larry realizes Max is right and calms down. They stare at Conner in silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

He's not quite what I pictured/

MAX

Me neither. What do you think?

LARRY

You go first.

Max doesn't respond. He looks at Conner some more before speaking.

MAX

Not much, is he?

LARRY

(sadly)

No, not much. But then neither are we.

MAX

Speak for yourself.

(continuing to look)

He's kinda weird-looking.

LARRY

Looks a little like you.

MAX

Well, I think he looks like you.

Conner stires in his sleep and groans.

LARRY

Poor little guy. He's have a nightmare.

MAX

(reminiscing)

First time I got wrecked I was trying to impress some babe too. She was head pom-pom. I was crazy about her.

LARRY

(interested)

Really?

MAX

Stayed bombed for three weeks.

(fondly)

He did the same thing. We react alike.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Doesn't prove a thing.

MAX

I'm not trying to prove anything.
I was simply observing that we
have things in common, that's all.

LARRY

So you're both alcoholics. If
everybody who drinks was your kid,
you'd have one helluva family!

Max looks at him, bristling.

MAX

You're beginning to get on my
nerves, you know that?

LARRY

The feeling's mutual!

Conner stirs again in his sleep. Max and Larry turn to
look at him.

MAX

Guess we'd better get him out of
here.

He scoops up Conner in his arms and carries him out of
the room. One of Conner's arms is dangling. Larry
possessively takes it. United at last with their "son,"
Max and Larry, his shredded suit fluttering, walk down
the hallway.

INT. CEASAR'S PALACE - MAX'S SUITE - NIGHT

As Larry supervises, Max deposits Conner on the heart-
shaped double bed.

MAX

Heavy little sucker!

Max scrutinizes Conner while Larry busily tucks him in.

MAX

You know, he may be small, but
he's solid. Sturdy. Just like
me.

LARRY

Not at all. He's fine-boned. And
thin. Just like me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(coldly)
Well, I say he's not!

LARRY
Are you blind? Look at his
wrists!

He grabs one of Conner's wrists as evidence, showing it to Max. Larry's face stiffens, however, when he sees a scar over the veins. He quickly turns over Conner's other wrist and sees another scar. He smiles, delighted.

LARRY
You see that?
(beaming)
He tried to kill himself!

MAX
What a jerk!

LARRY
Of course an oaf like you wouldn't understand. He's sensitive and alienated. Like his father.
(fondly)
You know, I was just about his age when I first took up suicide.

MAX
You're not very good at it!

Larry is oblivious. He gazes at the sleeping Conner, and leans over him, gently brushing a lock of hair from his eyes.

LARRY
My poor tormented boy...

MAX
(annoyed)
He needs his sleep and so do we.
I don't know about you, but I'm beat.

Larry doesn't take his eyes off Conner.

LARRY
Good idea. You go to bed. I'll take care of him.

Max throws Larry a hostile look and strides toward the sitting room, grumbling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Hell if I'm staying up all night!

He disappears from the room. Larry gets up and turns off the lights so the room is dark. He pushes, with great difficulty, a heavy armchair up next to the bed. He sits down and resumes gazing at Conner, his eyes filled with tenderness.

MAX'S SUITE - SITTING ROOM

Still grumbling to himself, Max lies down on the couch. He starts to settle in for the night when he suddenly bolts upright and charges back into the bedroom.

MAX'S SUITE - BEDROOM

Larry continues to contemplate Conner, oblivious to Max, who, fuming, easily picks up another heavy armchair and loudly puts it down next to the bed. He sits down next to Larry and begins to gaze at Conner too.

MAX

When did you see her?

LARRY

What?

MAX

His mother. What day did you see her?

LARRY

Friday. So what?

Max glances at Larry, perplexed.

MAX

What time of day?

LARRY

We had dinner together.

MAX

(triumphantly)
Then I'm the father!

Larry looks at him, surprised.

LARRY

How you figure that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Because I saw her Friday morning!
That means she contacted me first.
As I wasn't available at the time,
in desperation she went to you.
It's perfectly logical.

He begins to whistle softly to himself. Larry is disturbed. But then he thinks it over and his face lights up.

LARRY

If your kid was missing, would
you pick someone like me to find
him?

MAX

What do you mean?

LARRY

You said it yourself -- I'm a
basket case. Would you pick a
basket case like me to find your
son?

MAX

Are you kidding? You're the last
guy I'd send to do anything.

LARRY

Then why did she pick me?

Max stares at him, his confidence vanishing.

LARRY

I'll tell you why. Because I'm the
father! It's perfectly logical!

He begins to whistle softly to himself. Max glares at him, then turns back to Conner.

Side by side, the two of them settle in for the night,
guarding their "son."

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Dark and still. Paul stirs in his sleep. He slowly
opens his eyes and sees Christine hovering anxiously
beside him.

PAUL

Christine...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE

I'm here, Paul...

PAUL

Christine, our son's in trouble.

CHRISTINE

We'll find him.

Relieved, Paul drifts back to sleep. Christine gently brushes his hair and kisses his forehead, then settles back in her chair for the night.

INT. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Bright daylight floods the room. Max and Larry, wrapped in blankets, are dozing in their armchairs.

Larry wakes up first, and anxiously looks over at the bed where Conner stirs. Larry smiles tenderly, then turns to Max and nudges him gently.

LARRY

(softly)

Lucas... Lucas...

MAX

(dreamily)

Tracy... Tracy...

He smiles in his sleep, then sensing someone's presence, slowly opens his eyes only to see Larry's face inches away from his.

MAX

(horrificed)

Ahhh!!!

Larry clamps his hand over Max's mouth.

LARRY

Quiet! You'll wake him!

Conner's eyes begin to flutter open. Larry, realizing he's still wearing his shredded suit from the previous night, races to the closet, and grabs one of Max's suits.

MAX

Hey, what's the big idea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

I can't let my son see me like this. He'll think I'm ridiculous.

MAX

So what? You are ridiculous.

Larry hurriedly puts on Max's suit which is ten sizes too big on him.

LARRY

(whispering;
anguished)

You think he'll like us?

MAX

(sniffing his
armpits)

Sure. What's not to like?

(wincing)

God, I need a shower.

LARRY

What do we do? What do we say?

Max ponders the question for a moment.

MAX

Nothing. We'll take him back to his mother and work the rest out later. Agreed?

LARRY

Agreed.

Conner sits up in bed, looking groggy. Both Max and Larry snap to attention.

MAX AND LARRY

Good morning!

MAX

Want some coffee?

LARRY

(to Max)

Coffee? What do you want to do? Stunt his growth?

MAX

(looming over him)

Hey, I've had a cup of coffee every morning from the time I was six! You can't tell me I stunted anything!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Yeah, what about your brain?

Conner, who is not only groggy but hung over, is baffled at the sight of these two squabbling strangers, one of them wearing an absurdly oversized suit.

CONNER

What's going on? Who are you?

Max and Larry immediately turn back to him, flashing their warmest smiles.

LARRY

I'm an old friend of your mother's, Conner. My name is Larry Pinkser. But to you, I'm Larry.

Max goes to the telephone and picks up the receiver.

MAX

And I'm another old friend of your mother's. Max Lucas. Call me Max.

(into phone;
pointedly)

Yes, this is room 301. Send up three cups of coffee right away.

LARRY

And an orange juice. He needs his vitamins. Any objections?

MAX

(into phone)

And an orange juice.

Still not understanding what's going on, Conner looks around at his plush surroundings.

LARRY

We left a message at your mother's. She should be calling any moment.

CONNER

What is this place?

MAX

It's a hotel room.

LARRY

We brought you here last night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNER

Are you with the cops?

MAX

We told you. We're old friends
of your mom.

CONNER

(alarmed)

You went to 'The Moonbeam'? You
kidnapped me?

MAX

We didn't kidnap you. You were
asleep and we didn't want to wake
you.

Conner springs to his feet and staggers to the door.

LARRY

Where you going?

The door is locked. Conner fumbles with the lock. He is
obviously beginning to panic. Max walks up to reassure
him.

MAX

There's nothing to be frightened
of, Conner. We only want to get
you back to your parents.

CONNER

Open this door!!

(banging on it)

Help!! I've been kidnapped!!!

MAX

Don't shout!!!

CONNER

(with rising panic)

If you're not cops, you can't keep
me here! Open this door right
now!! You've got no right to mess
around in my life! You've got no
right!!

MAX

Yes I do!!! I'm your father!!!!

They both shut up, each equally surprised, and look at
each other wide-eyed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Hold it right there... I don't agree. You can't say you're his father with any degree of certainty. Sorry, but I must object.

They turn toward him. He continues to speak to Max.

LARRY

Shame on you! Not five minutes ago we decided no to talk about it and now here you are saying you're his father.

MAX

I told him I'm his father because he wants to take off!

LARRY

Well then, why not tell him I'm his father? It's just as likely and it's a much more sporting thing to do.

MAX

Why should I tell him you're the father when it might be me?

LARRY

Well then, put it another way. Like, for example, 'We're your father.'

Conner has been following this exchange with ever increasing astonishment.

CONNER

What is this shit?

Max and Larry turn to him.

MAX

Hey, watch the language!

CONNER

Fuck you.

MAX

(exasperated)
Can you believe this kid?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Maybe we should tell him. He's
old enough to understand.

(to Conner)

Conner, I met your mother
seventeen years ago and I may be
your father...

MAX

But there's a slight problem. I
may also be your father.

The PHONE RINGS. Max answers it.

MAX

Hello? Who's calling?
(puts his hand over
the receiver and
turns to Larry)

It's his father...

LARRY

(to Conner)

There's also a chance that your
father is your father...

MAX

(into phone)

Yes, he's awake. I'll put him on.

There is a KNOCK on the door. Max, Larry and Conner
turn their heads as a key is turned in the lock and a
BELLHOP appears, carrying a tray.

BELLHOP

Your coffee.

Suddenly, Conner charges out the door, knocking down the
Bellhop as he goes. The tray and coffee goes flying.
Conner leaps down the stairs two at a time.

Max and Larry watch, startled. Max reacts first, drop-
ping the phone and racing after him, knocking down the
Bellhop again. Larry begins his pursuit only to trip
face-first over the shaken Bellhop.

EXT. CAESAR'S PALACE - BOARDWALK - DAY

Max and Larry race out of the hotel and grind to a halt
on the busy boardwalk, searching the crowd. Conner has
disappeared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

You have quite a son.

LARRY

(defensively)

My son? Says who?

INT. PAUL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Paul lies in bed listening on the phone. Christine sits next to him.

PAUL

Hello? Hello?

(putting down the
phone)

He hung up.

CHRISTINE

At least we know Conner's safe.

PAUL

Do we? Who are those guys anyway?

What's Conner doing with them?

Christine averts her eyes and stands up. Her back to Paul, she begins straightening the room.

CHRISTINE

(brightly)

How do you feel? Would you like
another pillow? Something to eat?

PAUL

What I'd like is a straight
answer. Who are they?

CHRISTINE

Oh, nobody. Just two boys I knew
before I met you...

PAUL

And you asked them to help you
find Conner? God, Christine,
that's really dumb!

CHRISTINE

You haven't heard anything yet.
It gets even dumber...

She laughs feebly, trying to get him to see the humor in the situation. Paul is unamused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE

You see, I was desperate and when Max wouldn't help me. Well, I sorta told him he was Conner's father...

PAUL

You sorta told him what?

CHRISTINE

You heard me.

PAUL

This is a joke, right? Tell me this is a joke, Christine.

CHRISTINE

It's no joke, Paul.

PAUL

You told him he was Conner's father?

Christine doesn't answer.

PAUL

What about the other one? What's his name? Pinski?

CHRISTINE

Pinsker. Larry Pinsker.

PAUL

Well?

Again, Christine doesn't answer. Paul stares at her, stunned.

PAUL

(weakly)
Not him too?

CHRISTINE

(weakly)
You're mad, aren't you?

PAUL

(wearily)
No, I'm not mad. It's my own fault. I should have come down with you two days ago.

Weaving unsteadily, Paul painfully climbs out of bed. Christine looks at him, alarmed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINE

What are you doing? The doctor
said...

PAUL

I know what he said.

He grabs his clothes and starts putting them on.

EXT. CEASAR'S PALACE - FRONT DRIVEWAY - DAY

Max and Larry get into Max's wrecked BMW. The same Valet
we saw before gently closes Max's door behind him,
polishing the bashed hood with his sleeve.

VALET

I took good care of it, sir. Just
like you said.

Fuming, Max STARTS the ENGINE. The car's battered wind-
shield wipers move back and forth across a non-existent
windshield. Max puts the car into gear, zooming down
the driveway and onto the street just as a taxi pulls up.
The Valet opens the door.

VALET

Checking in, sir?

Paul and Christine hurry out of the taxi and inside the
hotel.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - DAY

The roller rink is closed but the bar is open. Conner
bursts in and goes up to a group of GANG MEMBERS who are
crowded in a booth, smoking cigarettes and drinking beer.

CONNER

You guys see Michele?

GANG MEMBER

Not since last night.

He says it knowingly, smiling at the other gang members.

CONNER

What's that supposed to mean?

BIKER

Exactly what I said. I ain't seen
her since last night. Cool out,
man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Conner decides he's being paranoid. He's still dazed from his encounter with Max and Larry. He shakes his head, trying to clear it.

CONNER

Sorry, it's just that something really weird happened. I was kidnapped!

The Gang Members look at him skeptically.

CONNER

I ain't shittin'. There were these two guys, see. A big strong guy and this puny little guy. At first you know what the big guy said? He said he was my father. And then everything went crazy and the other guy said he was my father too! I'm lucky I got outa there in one piece!

The Gang Members could care less. King enters the bar, scowling when he spots Conner.

KING

What are you doing here, rich boy? I thought you was history?

CONNER

Where's Michele?

KING

You got me. She's your girl friend.

He smirks at the Gang Members, then turns to bar and motions for a beer.

CONNER

I asked you a question! Where's Michele?

King ingores him. Furious, Conner grabs him by the arm, forcing him to turn around.

CONNER

Where is she?

King's expression hardens.

KING

Touch me again, little man, and I'll rip you apart.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY

Max pulls up in front of The Moonbeam where a crowd of Gang Members and other ragged-looking teenagers are assembled in a circle, yelling and screaming.

LARRY
(worried)
What's going on?

Max doesn't answer. He swiftly parks the car and gets out, pushing his way through the crowd, Larry right behind him.

Conner and King are fighting in the center of the circle. Conner is outmatched. Larry and Max watch as King decks him.

Max doesn't react. Larry looks at him, outraged.

LARRY
Do something!

Conner struggles to his feet but is knocked down again by a kick to his stomach. Larry moves to intervene but Max grabs him, holding him back.

MAX
Leave him alone.

He watches the fight intently, following every jab and feint. He looks as if he's enjoying himself.

MAX
If he's my son, he'll do okay.

LARRY
(frantic)
If he's my son, he won't!!

Conner barely manages to get back to his feet. He staggers, still groggy. Larry squirms to get free.

LARRY
He's going to get himself killed!

Max restrains Larry.

MAX
Let him take his own lumps! You
wanna turn him into a fairy!

LARRY
Cut the macho bullshit! Let go
of me, goddamnit!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They glare at each other nose to nose. Some of the onlookers turn to watch them. Max is getting fed up.

MAX

Don't you call me macho, you
little pip-squeak!!!

Larry slips out of Max's grip and punches him in the face. It's an ineffectual blow but manages to stun Max momentarily. Larry windmills Max with a flurry of weak, wild swings. Max easily holds him off. A large number of the onlookers have turned their attention from the other fight to this new one.

Larry moves toward Conner, but Max grabs him, swivels him around. Larry lands another weak blow on Max's chin.

MAX

Alright, you asked for it!

He socks him a good one to the jaw. Larry goes flying backward right between King and Conner and accidentally takes another punch which was intended for Conner. He collapses in a heap.

Surprised by the sudden intrusion, Conner and King freeze in place. Max strides between them, headed for Larry, feeling terrible.

MAX

Pinsker, are you okay?

Conner takes advantage of this distraction and slugs King as hard as he can on the jaw. King falls to his knees.

Max turns to Conner, nodding his approval.

MAX

That was good, son. Very good.

He doesn't hear Larry sneaking up behind him. Larry hits Max over the head with the lid of a garbage can. Max lunges for him.

The onlookers are torn between the two fights. Suddenly, King, who has gotten up, hits Conner hard on the chin. Conner is thrown against the side of the building and lands hard on his arm, knocked unconscious.

KING

Next time I'll kill you!

Panic-stricken, Larry abandons his grudge match with Max and flies past King to Conner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Conner! Speak to me! Conner!

Conner's eyes flutter open. He grimaces in pain, cradling his arm.

CONNER

My arm...

EXT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

Paul and Christine's taxi pulls up in front. Paul gets out.

PAUL

(to cabbie)

Keep the meter running. This'll just take a second.

He strides toward the front door. Frantic, Christine leaps out after him and dashes to the door, blocking his path.

PAUL

Get out of my way, Christine...

CHRISTINE

Paul, I can't let you do this!

PAUL

Christine, you heard what they said at the hotel. Conner's given those two clowns the slip. We both know that bastard in there knows where he is. This is the only way.

He steps around her and enters the building.

CHRISTINE

Paul, please! He'll kill you!!

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

Paul kicks the door open to Renfro's office. Renfro sits at his desk, busy making calculations on an adding machine. His pipes no longer leak. He looks up, startled.

RENFRO

You again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul responds by lifting Renfro by the collar.

PAUL

See this bandage on my head? It means I have a severe concussion. The slightest blow, the merest touch could produce a massive cerebral hemorrhage! I could drop dead right here in your office!

RENFRO

(nervous)

Take it easy, buddy.

Paul slams Renfro against a wall. Christine bursts into the room.

CHRISTINE

Oh God, please don't hurt him!

She stops short when she sees her husband clearly in command of the situation, his hands wrapped around Renfro's throat.

PAUL

Christine, stay out of this! I know what I'm doing!

(turning to Renfro)

Take it easy? But I don't want to take it easy!! I want you to hit me!! C'mon, asshole, hit me!! Rot in jail for the rest of your miserable life!!!

Terrified, Renfro's eyes bug out at the prospect. Paul slams him against the wall again. Christine watches, incredulous.

PAUL

Now where's my son?

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Larry paces back and forth past the door to the emergency room.

MAX

(annoyed)

Would you stop pacing already! They said it wasn't serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

Hey, when it comes to my son,
everything's serious. If you
were any sort of a father, you'd
be pacing too!

The door opens and Conner emerges, guided by a nurse.
His arm is in a cast. He recoils when he sees Max and
Larry.

CONNER

No way! I don't know those guys.
I don't know them and I don't
want to go with them!

An INTERN who has followed Conner out of the emergency
room looks at them, surprised. Max walks up to Conner
and scowls.

MAX

Would you rather have your parents
get you, or the cops?

Conner hesitates, then makes up his mind.

CONNER

Okay, but I won't go back home.

INTERN

(intervening)

Excuse me, gentlemen, but are
you relatives?

LARRY

Yes, I mean maybe...

INTERN

What do you mean, maybe?

MAX

Look, we're relatives, okay?
(to Conner)
C'mon, let's go!

The Intern positions himself between Max and Conner.

INTERN

Who are you exactly?

Larry and Max exchange glances, embarrassed.

LARRY

Shall I?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

If you think it'll do any good...

LARRY

Well, Doctor, a long time ago,
when the world was a much simpler
place, there was this very pretty
girl, you see, and...

Max rolls his eyes.

MAX

I'm his uncle.

LARRY

So am I.

Perplexed, the Intern looks at Conner.

INTERN

Is that true?

CONNER

(reluctantly)

Yes.

Flanked by Max and Larry, he walks off under the puzzled
gaze of the Intern.

CONNER

(under his breath)

I don't want to see my parents.
I won't go back.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HOSPITAL - DAY

Max, Larry and Conner stop in front of Max's wrecked
BMW.

MAX

I don't know about you guys, but
I'm starving.

LARRY

Me too. Say, I've got a great
idea. Why don't we let Conner
pick a place to eat?

MAX

This is a great idea. How 'bout
it, kid? A little 'Chinese?
Italian? It's your call.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Conner stares at the BMW in amazement.

CONNER

Is this yours?

MAX

(nodding)

I know. It hurts to look at it.

(grimly)

If I ever get my hands on the
little bastards who did this,
well, it won't be pretty.

(opening the door)

You like cars?

Conner continues to stare at the BMW in disbelief.

CONNER

Not really.

Max is crestfallen. Larry smiles.

LARRY

Neither do I.

They motion for Conner to get in. Conner shakes his head.

CONNER

No way. I'm cutting out.

He walks away. Max and Larry stand motionless a moment,
then catch up with him.

LARRY

Conner, do you really think
that's a good idea? What are
you going to do all by yourself
with a broken arm?

CONNER

I'll think of something.

Max grabs Conner's shoulder, forcing him to stop.

MAX

Look, your pals don't want to
see you anymore and neither does
your girl...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNER

(stung)

That's not true! Michele and I
love each other! We're going to
live together! And nobody's
gonna stop us!

Max and Larry look at each other uneasily.

MAX

(gently)

Yeah, sure, kid.

Conner detects Max's condescending tone.

CONNER

I don't need another father!
I've already got one and he's
been a pain in the ass for
fifteen years! So don't go
trying to take over for him!

They stare at each other in silence. Max abruptly moves
toward Conner who backs up, wary. Max bends down and
ties Conner's sneaker which has come undone.

MAX

Hard to do with one hand.

He stands up again. Conner stares at him, strangely
touched by the gesture.

LARRY

We're not trying to take over for
anyone. We just thought you might
like a decent meal. Right, Max?

MAX

Nice thick steak...

LARRY

Fresh green salad...

MAX

Baked potato with sour cream...

Conner is obviously tempted. It's been a long time since
he's had a good meal.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - DAY

Max and Larry intently watch Conner as he wolfs down the
last of his food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

How's the steak?

CONNER

I've had better.

LARRY

You shouldn't eat so fast. It's bad for you.

MAX

Leave the kid alone.

Conner, meanwhile, puts down his knife and fork, and looks up at Max and Larry for the first time.

CONNER

So you guys both boffed my mom, huh?

Larry and Max, both of whom have been sipping drinks, spit and gasp in surprise. Max pounds Larry's back to stop him from choking to death.

MAX

(embarrassed)

I don't know if I'd exactly put it that way...

CONNER

Yeah, and how would you put it? Exactly?

MAX

Your mother is a wonderful person...

CONNER

A lotta people seem to think so.

LARRY

It wasn't like that!

CONNER

Then how was it?

LARRY/MAX

(in unison)

We were in love!!!

They recoil, giving each other baleful looks.

EXT. STREET - DAY

They emerge from the steakhouse. Conner turns to Larry and Max.

CONNER

I gotta go. Michele's probably wondering what's happened to me.

He holds out his good arm.

CONNER

Thanks for the meal. I was kinda hungry.

MAX/LARRY

Anytime.

Conner shakes hands with each of them.

CONNER

Well, see yeah.

He turns and starts to walk away. Max and Larry watch him go, their hearts sinking.

LARRY

Now what?

MAX

The kid's in love and wants to see his girl. There's nothing we can do.

LARRY

But she doesn't want to see him.

MAX

I know. It's like watching someone about to be run over by a Mack truck.

LARRY

The only thing more painful than being dumped yourself is seeing it happen to your kid.

MAX

Poor little guy.

LARRY

We've got to do something.

They furrow their brows, deep in concentration. Suddenly, Max gets an idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Conner, wait up!

They race after him. Conner looks at them suspiciously.

MAX

Listen, 'The Moonbeam's' all the way across town. How 'bout we give you a lift?

CONNER

I can walk.

LARRY

That could take all day. C'mon, you want to see Michele as soon as possible, don't you?

CONNER

I don't know if I trust you guys.

MAX

You'll be there in five minutes. Scout's honor.

Max walks to his car and unlocks it. Conner hesitates, then slides into the front seat next to him. Larry motions Conner to move over and sits on the other side of him.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY

Conner sits sandwiched between Larry and Max. Larry switches ON the CAR RADIO, tuning it to a classical music station.

LARRY

Oh, wow. Prokofiev's 'Lieutenant Kije Suite.' One of my all-time favorites. You like classical music, Conner?

CONNER

I think it sucks.

Larry instantly CLICKS OFF the RADIO. Max smiles smugly and turns the RADIO BACK ON, tuning it to a rock station.

MAX

I couldn't agree more. I'm a rock 'n' roll man myself. You know, I must have every album the Beach Boys ever cut. You ever listen to them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CONNER

Only when I have to.

Max instantly CLICKS OFF the RADIO.

MAX

Kids today don't appreciate
anything anymore...

LARRY

Ain't it the truth.

They lapse into silence. Max makes a turn, past a sign which says "Garden State Freeway." Conner sees the sign and turns to him, alarmed.

CONNER

Hey, you're going the wrong way!!

Max and Larry's rigid expressions tell him it's no accident.

CONNER

You bastards! I trusted you!!!

He lunges across Larry for the door. He and Larry struggle desperately, then Max reaches with one hand and grabs Conner by the back of his collar and pulls him back in place. Conner is trapped, wedged between Max and Larry. He glares at them accusingly. Max and Larry avert their eyes, feeling incredibly guilty.

LARRY

We're sorry we lied to you,
Conner, but it's for your own
good...

CONNER

You sound like my old man.

MAX

What's the use? He's too young
to understand.

LARRY

Someday you'll thank us for this.

CONNER

Thank you for what? Holding me
prisoner? Taking me from my
friends?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Bunch of small-time hoods is more like it.

CONNER

At least they're not liars!!!

He makes a sudden leap for the steering wheel.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Going sixty, Max's car swerves in and out of its lane.
HORNS HONK.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY

Max and Conner wrestle for control of the car.

CONNER

Stop the car!!

MAX

Pinsker, if you're not too busy,
I'd appreciate a little help!!

Larry grabs Conner's bad arm.

CONNER

Shit! My arm!

Larry immediately lets go.

LARRY

Sorry.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Max's car cuts across two lanes of traffic, approaching two motorcycle cops on the shoulder who are giving a motorist a ticket. Hearing the SCREECH of TIRES and a symphony of HORNS BEEPING, the cops look up and see Max's car heading straight for them. Conner leans over Max, screaming out the window.

CONNER

Help!! Help me!!!

The cops leap out of the way, just in time, as Max's car just misses them and their motorcycles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max's car swerves back onto the highway, veering right in front of a huge truck, which brakes and jackknifes, blocking several lanes of traffic.

The motorcycle cops jump on their bikes and take after them.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY

Conner has an iron grip on the steering wheel.

LARRY

Watch his arm! Watch his arm!

MAX

You watch his arm!!

Max finally succeeds in breaking Conner's grip on the wheel. Conner flails at him. Max tries to block his blows, turning away from the wheel.

MAX

Now behave yourself!!!

Suddenly, Conner stops, staring ahead, terrified. Max and Larry turn to look:

THEIR POV - TRAFFIC JAM

Only a hundred feet in front of them.

MAX

God, I hate New Jersey!!

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

He slams on the BRAKES. The car SKIDS...

Ten feet... twenty... thirty... forty... fifty... sixty
... seventy... eighty... ninety...

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY

Max, Larry and Conner close their eyes, steeling themselves for impact.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Miraculously, the car comes to a stop mere inches from the car in front of them.

INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY

Max, Larry and Conner slowly open their eyes, amazed. They break into huge smiles of relief.

MAX

Now those are brakes! This baby's
worth its fucking weight in gold!
What a car! What a car!

Suddenly, they lurch forward.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The pickup truck behind them was unable to stop in time. It goes barreling into Max's trunk, hurling the BMW into a Cadillac in front of them. Max's car is squished like an accordion.

A moment of silence as the dust settles. Then Max crawls out of his car. He examines the damage with an expression of unimagined horror. If it was bad before, it's a hundred times worse now. There's not a single inch which isn't wreck beyond any hope of repair.

MAX

(moaning)

That's it. I'm wiped out.
Ruined.

Suddenly, Conner bolts from the car and begins sprinting down the highway, weaving between stopped cars, all of which are HONKING madly.

LARRY

He's getting away!!

Larry chases after Conner. Max does too. Conner races toward a tall chain-link fence which borders the highway. He leaps onto the fence and climbs it with surprising agility for someone with the use of only one arm.

Max and Larry are right behind him. They leap for the fence and begin climbing it when they hear:

MAN (O.S.)

Freeze!!!

They stop in their tracks and turn around only to see the two motorcycle cops with their guns drawn pointed right at them. Max and Larry hold up their hands as they watch Conner race down a hill and out of sight.

INT. "THE PALACE" - DAY

Paul and Christine make their way down the dark, dingy hallway. They look at the broken windows and peeling wallpaper and shake their heads in disgust.

CHRISTINE

Home sweet home.

PAUL

Funny, isn't it? You work your ass off so your kid can have all the things he wants. Everything you never had. And he ends up in a place like this.

CHRISTINE

Some success story, huh?

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Max and Larry sit in a squalid, damp cell, packed with society's rejects. Max has his eyes closed, dejected and defeated. Next to Larry, one CRIMINAL, covered with tattoos and scars, sobs loudly, tears streaming down his face. Larry looks at him compassionately.

LARRY

You've had a breakdown, right?

CRIMINAL

(surprised)

What?

LARRY

Me too.

He sticks out his hand and introduces himself.

LARRY

Larry Pinsker.

Without thinking, the Criminal shakes his hand.

LARRY

Believe it or not, forty-eight hours ago I had a gun in my mouth...

CRIMINAL

I had a gun too. But I put it in my boss's mouth.

Max opens his eyes, watching the exchange in disbelief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

That's it. Let it out. It's good
to get things off your chest...

Max stands and grabs Larry, pulling him to the other side
of the cell.

LARRY

(to Criminal)

We'll talk more later.

He turns to Max indignantly.

LARRY

What's the matter now?

MAX

Are you crazy? That man is a
murderer!

LARRY

Hey, the man's depressed. He
needs somebody to talk to. Once
a garbage collector saved me just
as I was about to hang myself.
I needed to talk to somebody and
he came to ask for a Christmas
bonus.

MAX

He must have loved that.

Just then a guard walks down the corridor, passing the
cell.

LARRY

(to guard)

Excuse me...

The guard ignores him. Larry turns back to Max.

LARRY

How long you think we have to stay
here?

MAX

Don't tell me you want to leave?
You could start your own therapy
group. Open a practice...

LARRY

I'm worried about Conner. What if
he gets into another fight?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

That's his problem.

LARRY

You mean you're giving up?

MAX

You got it. And if you take my advice, you will too.

LARRY

I can't. Once you bring a kid into the world, he's your responsibility forever. No matter what happens. That's what being a father is. A real father.

MAX

Pinsker, you can't force the kid to love you.

Larry looks at Max a long moment before speaking.

LARRY

You may be right, but I don't care. I'm going after him. I need him. And he needs me. He just doesn't know it yet.

Max stares at him, deep in thought. Another GUARD, carrying a clipboard, approaches the cell.

GUARD

Max Lucas?

MAX

Right here.

GUARD

Your paper posted bail. You can go.

He opens the cell door.

LARRY

(to Guard)

What about me? Larry Pinsker?

The Guard refers to his clipboard.

GUARD

Pinsker? No, we called your mother and she refused to post bail.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUARD (CONT'D)
(looks at Larry
reproachfully)
She's very upset with you.

LARRY
So what else is new?

GUARD
C'mon, Lucas.

Max hesitates and turns around to look at Larry.

MAX
So long, Pinsker. I've gotta go.

LARRY
That's right. Desert me in my
hour of need.

MAX
Pinsker, I'm sure your mother will
change her mind. You'll be out of
here in no time flat.

LARRY
You don't know my mother.

Tears begin to well up in his eyes. He sniffles.

LARRY
Nobody cares about me. I'm all
alone in the world.

The Guard looks sympathetically at Larry.

GUARD
There, there now. It can't be as
bad as that.

He turns accusingly to Max who burns in embarrassment.

GUARD
I'd hate to be stuck in a foxhole
with you, buddy.

MAX
(seething)
Pinsker, don't cry.

LARRY
Why not? It's true.

The tears are really beginning to flow now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

(angrily)

Pinsker, I know what you're trying to do and it's not going to work...

LARRY

Go then! Forget about me! Forget about Conner! Worry about yourself! That's what you're good at!!

Still sniffing, Larry pointedly turns his back to Max. Max's expression stiffens. He motions to the Guard and they walk away, leaving Larry sitting forlornly in the cell.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Grim-faced, Max strides out of the police station. A beat, then Larry emerges right behind him.

LARRY

Listen, I'll pay you back with my next unemployment check. I swear!

MAX

You bet your ass you will! And I haven't forgot that five bucks you owe me either! And I want my suit back!

Max walks toward his wrecked car and unlocks it. Larry follows him.

LARRY

Well, I guess this is goodbye. Sure you won't change your mind?

MAX

Not me. I've had it. The kid's all yours.

Max gets into his car and STARTS the ENGINE.

LARRY

See ya around.

MAX

(smiling)

Not if I can help it.

They both start to laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max sticks out his hand and they shake.

MAX

Good luck, Pinsker.

LARRY

You too, Lucas.

With that, Larry turns and starts to walk across the parking lot on his way back to Conner, a tiny figure in Max's oversized suit. Max watches him in his rearview mirror then slowly drives away, heading in the opposite direction.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - NIGHT

Conner sits at the bar, nursing a beer. He's all alone and seems pretty miserable. Larry walks in and heads toward him. Conner looks disgusted when he sees him.

Larry sits down next to him and motions for a beer. After a few beats, Conner speaks in a tired voice.

CONNER

How long are you going to keep following me around?

LARRY

As long as you're unhappy. But I won't bother you. I won't even talk to you if you don't want me to. And if I'm in your way, I can wait outside.

Conner looks at him in disbelief.

CONNER

How come you're doing this?

Larry doesn't answer.

CONNER

You know that stuff about you being my father's just a joke, right?

LARRY

(calmly)

Maybe to you, but not to me...

The door opens -- it's King. He's accompanied by Michele, who sees Conner and winces, and by about ten other Gang Members.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELE

I changed my mind. Let's get out
of here...

King spots Conner. He strides right up to him.

KING

What the fuck are you doing here?
You heard what I said before.
Beat it!

CONNER

(ignoring King)
Michele, I've been looking all
over for you...

KING

You've got five seconds, then I
break your other arm.

LARRY

(intervening)
Please, no violence!

King shoves Larry, sending him crashing against some bar
stools.

KING

One... two...

Michele and the Gang Members look on, motionless. Larry
climbs to his feet and plants himself in front of Conner.

LARRY

Can't you see he's hurt? Leave
him alone.

King sees Larry in Max's oversized suit and sneers.

KING

I like your new suit. Where'd
you get it? Off a gorilla?

Larry butts him with his head, very clumsily. King backs
off a few steps, more surprised than shaken. Larry rubs
his forehead, grimacing with intense pain. King looks
at his gang incredulously.

KING

You see that? The putz tried to
butt me!

Conner is as surprised as anyone. King grabs Larry by
the collar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

Did you butt me?

Larry does it again, just as clumsily and ineffectually as before. Again he rubs his forehead in pain. King is amazed.

KING

He did it again!

He slowly takes out his straight-razor and flicks it open.

MAX (O.S.)

As usual, you've got it all wrong,
Pinsker...

Everyone turns to look at Max who stands in the doorway. He walks toward King and Larry.

MAX

(patiently)

Head-butting is a delicate art
which requires technique and
finesse...

He stops in front of Larry.

MAX

You're doing this...

(he imitates the
way Larry did it)

The power comes from your legs.
Like this...

King, who has been watching Max's lesson wide-eyed, taps him on his shoulder.

KING

Say, pops...

Max whirls around and butts his head right into King's face. King literally rockets across the room, smashing into a stack of beer crates. Max turns to Larry, his demonstration over.

MAX

See?

The Gang Members begin to murmur among themselves. Max wheels to face them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(barking)
What? What'd you say? Speak
up!

Intimidated, the gang stops talking. Max turns to Michele.

MAX
Come here, you.

Michele doesn't move.

MAX
Come here!!

Startled, Michele moves toward him. Max positions her so she faces Conner.

MAX
I think you have something to
say to him.

Michele gives Conner a long look.

MICHELE
(softly)
We're history, Conner. I'm sorry,
but that's just the way it is.
I don't want to see you anymore.

Conner looks at her, devastated. She walks toward King who is painfully struggling to his feet and helps him get up. Max turns to Conner.

MAX
(gently)
I tried to tell you, kid, but
you wouldn't listen.

LARRY
Come on, Conner, let's go.

CONNER
(softly)
Leave me alone.

Larry takes him tenderly by the arm.

CONNER
Leave me alone!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

There'll be other girls, kid,
believe me...

Conner glares at Max.

CONNER

(in a defiant voice)

I'm the one who totalled your car.

MAX

What?

CONNER

It was parked around the corner
from The Space Station.

A heavy silence falls. Everyone watches, paralyzed.

CONNER

It was beautiful, all shiny and
new and then the car alarm went
off, so we wrecked it.

LARRY

(to Max)

Don't listen to him! Can't you
see he's just trying to provoke
you?

MAX

He's doing a good job!

CONNER

First, I smashed the front
windshield...

(smiling)

Then the hood...

Max explodes, giving Conner a powerful slap across the
face which sends him flying against the bar. Frantic,
Larry throws himself on Max, trying to restrain him.

LARRY

Are you crazy? His arm is
broken! How dare you strike
him!

Max gives Larry an equally powerful blow. Larry lands in
heap next to Conner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(in a low, even
voice)
Now let's go before I really get
mad...

Larry leaps to his feet, takes a running start and butts Max with his head. This time he does it perfectly, sending Max sprawling across the room. Larry turns to Conner.

LARRY
You heard what he said. Let's
go, kid.

Conner stands then suddenly makes a dash for the door.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Larry and Max search the empty stretch of sand for Conner. The surf pounds behind them.

Max spots a lonely figure standing beneath a pier.

MAX
Over here!

They hurry to the pier. Conner sees them and turns away, trying to hide his tears.

CONNER
Go away! Leave me alone!

Larry's face softens in sympathy. Max looks away, embarrassed.

MAX
Don't cry, son. Real men don't
cry.

LARRY
Cry if you want to. It'll do you
good.

CONNER
Leave me alone, both of you! I
can't stand either one of you.
Just leave me alone, goddamnit!

Max and Larry look at each other, wondering what to do next.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Okay, you win, Conner. I give up on fatherhood. I'm tired of knocking on a door which keeps getting slammed in my face.

(turns to Larry)

It's like I said before, Pinsker. You can't force a kid to love you. But if you want to keep trying, be my guest. Just don't kid yourself, the more you knock, the less he'll want to open up.

He walks a few yards away, leaving Larry and Conner alone.

LARRY

C'mon, Conner, I'll take you home.

CONNER

Didn't you hear me? I can take care of myself. I don't need you! I don't need Michele! I don't need my parents! I don't need anybody!

LARRY

(gently)

Is that why you tried to kill yourself?

CONNER

So what if I did? I'd just be doing the world a favor. Only next time, I won't wimp out!

LARRY

Conner, you don't mean that.

CONNER

Don't I?

(breaking down)

Leave me alone! Please! I just want to be left alone!

Through his tears, he looks imploringly at Larry who pauses a beat, then turns to Max.

LARRY

(softly)

You're right, Max. It's hopeless. I can't make him want to live. Only he can do that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)

I guess it was too good to be true,
suddenly having a son. I guess you
have to do more to deserve it. So
go ahead, Conner, it's your life.
To do with whatever you want.
but before you do anything stupid,
just remember we both care about
what happens to you whether you
like it or not. C'mon, Max.

Max looks questioningly as Larry, stunned that he's
thrown in the towel too. Larry nods slightly at Max,
indicating he should follow his lead. They head back
to the car.

MAX

I hope you know what you're doing.

LARRY

You and me both.

INT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT

Max and Larry sit in silence. Finally, Max reluctantly
STARTS the ENGINE.

Suddenly, the back door opens and Conner slides into the
backseat. He doesn't say a word.

Neither do Max and Larry. They glance at each other and
smile slightly. Max puts the car into gear and pulls
out.

INT. "THE MOONBEAM" - NIGHT

King looks out the window and sees Max driving away. He
takes a long swig from a beer, then puts a quarter in a
pinball machine, nodding slightly to two other Gang
Members in what's obviously a prearranged signal.

KING

Shit!!!

He starts pounding the pinball machine and turns to AL,
the barkeep.

KING

Goddamnit, Al, I'm tired of
gettin' ripped off by your
fuckin' machines!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL

What's the matter now?

KING

The fuckin' thing's busted, man.

He continues pounding the pinball machine.

AL

Again? Lemme have a look.

Al throws down his towel and emerges from around the bar. He goes up to the pinball machine and bends down to examine it.

AL

I don't see anything wrong.

Just as he turns back to King, several Gang Members grab him. Al struggles to get free.

AL

What's the big...

King slugs him hard and Al slumps to the floor. King immediately heads for the bar and leans over it, reaching for something on a shelf beneath the cash register.

When he turns around, we see he has a pistol. King flicks open the barrel to make sure it's loaded, then flicks it shut again.

KING

Let's do it!!!

He strides for the door. The other Gang Members follow him. Horrified, Michele blocks his way.

MICHELE

King, you're wasted! You don't know what you're doing!

KING

Butt out, Michele!

She doesn't budge. King flings her to the floor.

EXT. "THE MOONBEAM" - NIGHT

King jumps behind the wheel of a souped-up old Ford. Whooping and hollering, the other Gang Members pile in with him. TIRES SQUEALING, the Ford rockets after Max in a big cloud of dust.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Paul and Christine sit in back in heavy silence, aimlessly staring out their respective windows.

PAUL'S POV

Max's bashed BMW rattles past, going the opposite direction. Conner is in the backseat.

PAUL

at first, it doesn't register. Then it hits him.

PAUL
(to cabbie)
Quick! Turn around!

Christine turns to see what's wrong and catches a glimpse of Conner.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The taxi slows down to turn around, but before it can, the Ford blazes past, obviously in pursuit of the BMW.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Paul and Christine watch in disbelief.

PAUL
What the hell...

CHRISTINE
... is going on?

INT./EXT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT

The ice has been broken. Max and Conner chatter away while Larry listens, fuming.

MAX
You can even crash at my place
until we get everything sorted
out. That is if you want to...

CONNER
Sounds great...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

I thought maybe we might take in a few Mets games. I grew up with the third base coach. He'll take us down to the locker room and you can meet the guys.

CONNER

Cool!

Larry taps Max on the shoulder.

LARRY

Stop the car!

MAX

What?

LARRY

Stop!!

Max brakes, pulling over to the side of the road.

MAX

What's wrong?

LARRY

(coldly)

Since I don't figure in your plans, I might as well just leave...

He opens the door to get out. Max grabs his arm.

MAX

Pinsker, you're acting like a baby!

LARRY

I'll act anyway I please!

He wrenches himself free and gets out.

MAX

What a nitwit!

(to Conner)

I only hope for your sake he isn't your father!

He opens his door to follow Larry. Suddenly, the ROAR of an ENGINE fills the air. The FORD SKIDS to a stop in front of the BMW, blocking the road.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Pinsker, get in the car. Conner,
stay put. I'll handle this.

King stumbles out of the Ford and staggers drunkenly
toward Max, smiling widely.

KING

Hello again. You miss me?

MAX

What do you want?

KING

A little fun, pops. And you're
the entertainment.

MAX

That's too bad. Because I'm
kinda tired and...

Before Max can finish, King clubs him on the forehead
with the butt of the pistol. Max falls to his knees. He
points the gun at Max's head.

KING

We gonna have us lots of fun,
ain't we, pops?

Conner rushes out of the car and walks toward King.

CONNER

Leave him alone, King.

King grabs Conner by the collar, thrusting the gun under
his chin.

KING

What'd you say, rich boy? I don't
think I heard you.

Larry, who has been motionless, suddenly jumps toward
King.

LARRY

Get your hands off my son!

Two of the other Gang Members intercept him. One holds
him while the other punches him hard in the stomach.
Larry collapses to the ground, writhing in pain.

KING

Such devotion... makes me wanna
puke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, Paul and Christine's TAXI SKIDS to a stop.

KING

Who the fuck is that?

Paul leaps out and runs fullspeed for King. Christine is right behind him.

CONNER

(incredulous)

Dad? Mom?

PAUL

Don't worry, Conner, I'm here!!

Paul takes a wild swing at King who ducks. The blow hits Conner and he collapses. Paul looks at Conner, horrified, giving King the opportunity to hit him across the chin. Paul falls to the ground.

KING

What the fuck is this? A family reunion?

The following occurs RAPID-FIRE.

Conner makes a desperate lunge at King, tackling him. The gun goes flying.

Larry and Max, who have regained their senses, simultaneously dive for the gun, crashing into each other. The gun squirts away.

Enraged, King lifts Conner by the hair. He whips out his straight-razor...

KING

I'm gonna gut you out,
motherfucker...

In one swift motion, Max grabs the gun and aims it at King.

MAX

Drop it!

KING

Fuck you!

Having no choice, Max SHOOTS, but just then Larry gets up and leaps toward King, and the bullet strikes him instead, sending him sprawling onto the street.

At the sound of the GUN BLAST, everybody freezes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max races to Larry who lies motionless. Conner rushes over too. An anguished Max tenderly cradles Larry in his arms.

MAX

Pinsker, are you all right? Can you hear me, Pinsker?

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA - DAY

Conner, Paul and Christine sit, their faces etched with worry. Max paces the room, chain-smoking. Paul stands and goes up to him.

PAUL

Mr. Lucas, thank you for saving my son.

MAX

(grimly)

Thank Pinsker. He did it.

He continues pacing. Paul sits back down next to Conner and Christine.

PAUL

Conner...

Christine touches his arm, seeing Conner's preoccupied state.

CHRISTINE

Later, Paul. Later...

Conner gets up and walks toward Max, looking at him with concern.

CONNER

(softly)

It wasn't your fault...

MAX

If anything happens to that little jerk...

He trails off, his voice cracking. A NURSE appears at the door. They turn to her as one.

NURSE

(reassuringly)

It's alright. They removed the bullet. He's out of danger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Thank God!

The Nurse turns to Conner.

NURSE

Are you his son?

Conner hesitates a moment and looks at Paul and Max who both nod.

CONNER

(to Nurse)

Yes, I'm his son.

NURSE

Come with me, he wants to see you.
You too, Mr. Lucas.

Paul and Christine watch as Conner and Max hurriedly leave the room.

PAUL

(bitterly)

I know this sounds terrible after what they did. But I can't help thinking I raise him for fifteen years and then they show up, the big heroes. Must be nice.

INT. LARRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Larry lies in a hospital bed with a bandaged shoulder and an I.V. tube in his arm. Conner looks at him from the doorway, moved by the sight. Larry speaks in a faint, breathless voice, like a dying man.

LARRY

Come close, my boy. Closer...
It's hard for me to talk... Stand
beside me...

Conner obeys. Max observes the scene, somewhat surprised. Larry, who is playing his deathbed scene to the hilt, points a shaky finger to the table next to his bed.

LARRY

Take that watch... It's yours...
My father gave it to me and I'm
giving it to you... Keep it in
memory of me...

Wide-eyed, Conner takes the watch. Larry smiles weakly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY

I would have liked to know you better, my son, but it couldn't be... Life plays cruel tricks on us...

He starts to cry. Conner takes his hand.

CONNER

Don't cry... Please, don't cry...

MAX

Don't worry, he cries all the time...

Suddenly, Larry's voice becomes very clear.

LARRY

I'm not talking to you!

He turns to Conner again in his deathbed voice.

LARRY

My boy, I'd like you to go see my mother in Queens... I've told her about you... She'll be alone now...

Standing behind Larry, Max starts to play an imaginary violin to reassure Conner. Again, Larry speaks to him in a clear voice.

LARRY

I can see you in the mirror!

Max sees that there is indeed a mirror and stops his antics.

MAX

I hate to spoil your big scene, Pinsker, but the nurse just warned us you're out of danger...

LARRY

(outraged)

First you shoot me, then you laugh at me! why don't you unplug the I.V. while you're at it! Finish the job!

MAX

You're right, Pinsker, and I'm sorry. Tell me how I can make it up to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A sly look crosses Larry's face.

LARRY

Oh, there's nothing you can do for me. Conner'll move in with you. Meanwhile, I'll slowly recover. Forgotten and all alone. But, hey, what's so unusual about that? ... I'm used to being alone. Like a dog...

MAX

Alone? What about your mother?

LARRY

That's worse than being alone.

Max and Conner exchange knowing looks. Conner begins to laugh, followed by Max.

LARRY

(to Conner; hurt)

And now you're laughing at me!

CONNER

(serious again)

I'd really like it if you could put me up for a while.

Larry looks at him and his face lights up.

LARRY

Well, if you insist.

EXT. HOSPITAL GARDEN - DAY

Larry, wearing hospital pajamas, his arm in a sling like Conner, is taking his first steps outside, flanked by Conner and Max.

Conner talks while Larry and Max listen attentively.

CONNER

And then I slugged him...

LARRY

You hit your father?

CONNER

I didn't mean to do it. It just sorta happened...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

No wonder you ran away. I would have too.

CONNER

I don't know why they bothered to have me in the first place. I'm not their son. I'm just another appointment to be squeezed into their busy schedules.

LARRY

Maybe they've changed. Believe it or not, parents can do that, you know.

Conner doesn't respond. They continue walking.

CONNER

You should have seen my dad the time I had my ear pierced. I thought he was going to have a heart attack...

MAX

It was the same thing with my old man. Only with me it was the time I got my head shaved...

Conner and Larry look at him with raised eyebrows.

MAX

All the guys on the football team did...

LARRY

My father and I never got along either. He wanted a doctor and got a poet. And not a very good one at that.

(laughing)

The first time he caught me trying to commit suicide, I thought he'd kill me!

CONNER

Anyway, it doesn't matter since he's not really my father...

LARRY AND MAX

(in unison)

Yes, that's true...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They glare at each other. The three of them sit down on a bench, each absorbed in his own thoughts.

LARRY

When you're small, you think your parents are so great. Invincible. Smart. Strong. Perfect...

MAX

(nodding)

I'll never forget the day I realized I was taller than my old man. You know, I was actually pissed at him.

CONNER

(intrigued)

Why?

MAX

I guess because it meant that he wasn't so special after all. That he was just a little man. Normal and flawed like everybody else. Like me.

(shaking his head)

Crazy, huh?

LARRY

(quoting)

'Children begin by loving their parents. As they grow older they judge them. Sometimes they forgive them.'

Max and Conner look at him, impressed.

MAX

Say, that's pretty good. You write that?

LARRY

I wish. I read it in a fortune cookie.

CONNER

(thoughtfully)

Did you ever forgive yours?

LARRY

(softly)

I used to write my father letters telling him how I felt.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARRY (CONT'D)

But instead of giving them to him,
I threw them in his wastebasket.
I kept hoping he'd go through his
trash and find them.

CONNER

Did he?

LARRY

No, never.

They are all quiet for a beat.

MAX

Life ain't so simple.

Conner looks up and sees Paul and Christine standing together at the other end of the garden. They look nervous and tentative.

EXT. OTHER SECTION OF HOSPITAL GARDEN - DAY

Conner approaches his parents. They look at him apprehensively. Paul breaks the silence.

PAUL

(shyly)
How's the arm?

CONNER

It's okay. How's the head?

PAUL

It's great... I mean it hurts like
hell... What I mean is...

He trails off awkwardly. Suddenly, they speak simultaneously.

CONNER

Dad...

PAUL

Conner...

They both start to laugh nervously.

PAUL

No, go ahead. You first.

CONNER

Dad, I'm sorry...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

I'm sorry too, Conner. About everything.

CHRISTINE

We both are.

A few beats then Conner walks up to Paul and awkwardly hugs him. At first, Paul is stunned, then he puts his arms around his son and they embrace tightly. Conner reaches for Christine and pulls her to them so they are all together. Finally, they separate. Paul and Christine dab at their eyes, embarrassed.

PAUL

What about Pinsker and Lucas?

CHRISTINE

Somebody has to tell them the truth. It might as well be me since I got us into this mess...

CONNER

No, I'll tell them. Promise me you won't mention anything to them.

They nod.

CONNER

I'll handle it.

ACROSS GARDEN

Max and Larry watch Conner embrace his parents. They're both grinning uncontrollably -- like a couple of idiots. The CAMERA MOVES IN TIGHT ON Max, suddenly deep in thought.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY

Max stands in the corner, talking on a pay phone.

MAX

Hello, Tracy, it's me.
(beat)

No, I'm not in town. I'm in Atlantic City with my son. That's right. My son.

(beat)

Listen, Trace, break out the Lo Mein 'cause I'm coming over tonight...

EXT. HOSPITAL GARDEN - DAY

Conner and Larry, now dressed in Max's oversized suit, stroll through the grounds, enjoying the ocean air. They're a slightly comical sight as they both have an arm in a sling.

CONNER

I spoke to my mother.

LARRY

That's good. She's a wonderful woman.

CONNER

She told me the truth. I know who my father is.

Larry stops in his tracks. He turns to Conner, staring at him breathlessly, hoping for the best, fearing the worst. After a beat, he speaks in a shaky voice.

LARRY

Who is it?

CONNER

You. She's sure of it.

Larry's face lights up. He's so overcome he can't speak.

CONNER

Should we tell Lucas? Maybe it's better to keep it a secret between us.

LARRY

(radiant)

You're right. It's much better. We mustn't hurt him.

Just then, Max calls to them from across the garden, grinning excitedly.

MAX

I just talked to my insurance company. They're only going to raise my rates a thousand bucks. Isn't that great?

He walks up to them. Larry greets him with a huge smile.

LARRY

That's fantastic! You deserve a kiss for that!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He plants an exuberant kiss on Max's forehead. Max looks at him, confused.

MAX

You okay?

LARRY

Me? I'm great! Never been better! What a nice tie. Goes with your eyes!

MAX

Thanks. You ready?

LARRY

One second. I promised the man in the bed next to me I'd leave him the number of my therapist at the front desk.

(sighing)

God, it's good to be alive!

He hurries off. Max watches him go, mystified by his cheery attitude.

MAX

Good to be alive? Is he on drugs?

CONNER

I think he's glad to be leaving.

Max shakes his head dubiously.

CONNER

I spoke to my mother. She told me who my father is.

Max stiffens, waiting anxiously.

CONNER

She's sure it's you.

Max doesn't respond. He breaks into a huge smile, his eyes filling with tears.

CONNER

I didn't want to tell Larry. He gets so depressed...

Max is still smiling manfully, but his tears are flowing now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(in a choked voice)
You did right.
(brushing his tears)
Absolutely right.

Larry rejoins them, still radiant, carrying his little suitcase.

LARRY
Let's go!

He notices Max's tears.

LARRY
(worried)
Something wrong?

MAX
No, no, everything's fine.

LARRY
Are you feeling a little depressed?

MAX
No, not at all, I feel great!
You know that money you owe me?

LARRY
Yeah?

MAX
Forget it. And keep the suit!
It looks good on you. Very handsome!

LARRY
(surprised)
Thanks. That's very nice of you.

MAX
Not at all. I really mean it.
You look terrific!

Glowing with happiness, Larry and Max, who stand on either side of Conner, put their arms around his shoulders. Together, the three of them make their way through the garden and out into the world.

CONNER
When's Father's Day?

FADE OUT.

THE END

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