

MY BEST FRIEND IS AN ASSHOLE

by

Brian Diamond  
Brian Lee

A **TETRIS BLOCK**, L-Shaped. Makes quick rotations to fit perfectly into a row of other Tetris blocks. Old school Nintendo being played on a very new school flat screen TV.

**INT. HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Sitting, Indian style on the floor, Nintendo controller in hand: CAMERON (27). Dressed only in loosely fitting boxers. Floppy head of hair.

Miserable, like he's been practicing at it. Narrating as he plays.

CAMERON

It's a game of decision making more than anything. The ability to make tough choices on the fly. You can't over-think things. You can't think at all. As soon as you think about your options, you have no options.

He misplays one block and they stack up to the top of the screen. GAME OVER.

Sitting next to him, AXEL, 28. Always dressed a little nicer than he has to be. Something like a beard. A little on the short side. Let's say of South Asian descent.

He studies Cameron's wardrobe.

AXEL

Is there any way we could steer this conversation toward you wearing pants?

Cameron starts a new game. Not listening.

CAMERON

We were soul mates.

AXEL

You had dinner then finger banged her in the car. Is it a huge deal that she didn't text you back the next day?

CAMERON

We both love black licorice, Axel. You know how rare that is?

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Before Axel can answer, MARCUS sits between them. He's the same age, but looks 10 years younger. Lacoste shirt tucked into slacks and a "dare you to not like me" grin.

MARCUS

Guys, hate to break up the pow-wow, but the girls are kind of ready to get started.

Marcus gestures over to the DINING ROOM, which is adorned with BLUE BALLOONS, BABY RATTLES, WRAPPED PRESENTS and about 15 women ready to get their baby shower on.

CAMERON

Sure. I got it.

Cameron MUTES the TV. As if that is the solution. Stretches out his legs, flashing a healthy dose of BALL CLEAVAGE through his boxers.

One of the women, quite visibly pregnant: NATASHA (26), big doe eyes that are half amused/half pleading. She leans into Marcus who, instinctively, starts massaging her shoulders.

NATASHA

Cameron, could you please, please, pretty please get dressed and leave so we can get started?

Also coming over next to Natasha, ROSE (25), highlights of purple in her hair. Used to be punk, now all grown up. Tosses Cameron an undershirt. Forceful.

ROSE

Seriously, let's get going. I was up all night thinking of baby games and we're playing all of them.

AXEL

Aw, I didn't know that's what you were up doing. That's so cute.

Axel, mirroring Marcus, goes to give Rose a little shoulder rub, but Rose hops backwards, not expecting the contact.

ROSE

Ah! Why are your hands so cold?

AXEL

It's a circulation thing.

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KEVIN and TANYA enter from outside. Early 30s. Stylish and, in another lifetime, cool. Now, they carry signs of their kids everywhere--yogurt stains on shirts, etc.

Inevitably, the only black people in every room they enter.

TANYA

Sorry we're late. Kids are a fucking nightmare.

(noting Natasha)

And a blessing! You look amazing, Natasha.

KEVIN

Cam, you too.

CAMERON

I'm grieving. Let me grieve.

ROSE

Hope you're ready for baby games!

MARCUS

And that's our cue to leave.

Marcus hoists Cameron up. Tosses him a pair of jeans. But before he can go--

NATASHA

Marcus, you guys going to be back for cake?

MARCUS

No need. They have cake where we're going.

He blows her a kiss. Axel (again) does the same to Rose and they're out.

**INT. CRAZY HORSE GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - DAY**

Dimly lit and half-empty. A STACKED STRIPPER in panties and nothing more carries a FROSTED CAKE. On it, in blue frosting cursive: CONGRATULATIONS.

She sets the cake down at a table where our guys huddle around, polishing off beers.

STACKED STRIPPER

Congratulations, daddy.

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CONTINUED:

MARCUS

Fatherhood never sounded so dirty.

She flashes a smile as she leaves.

AXEL

So, we're not going to Cheesecake Factory?

MARCUS

This is no time for cheesecake.

AXEL

Well what do I do with these gift cards? I can't bring them back.

He holds out three Cheesecake Factory Gift Cards. Cameron snatches them out of his hand.

CAMERON

If I'm doomed to loneliness, I will need the nourishment.

KEVIN

Savor your loneliness. You know what I wouldn't give to be alone for even a week? No wife, no kids--I mean I love them, but if they ever got kidnapped, I'd let those negotiations play out for a while, you know? At least until football season is over.

AXEL

Let's add that to Kevin's file of horrifying comments.

On stage, a slightly CHUBBY STRIPPER works the pole, kind of ineptly. This is the afternoon crew after all.

KEVIN

Don't get Rose pregnant, Axel. You double down on that birth control.

AXEL

I think we've mastered the complexities of not getting pregnant, thank you.

CAMERON

Maybe I just need to get someone pregnant. It's the only way I can see myself getting a third date.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

You need to have sexual intercourse with someone before you can get them pregnant. In their vagina. You know that's how it works, right?

MARCUS

Leave Cameron alone. Today's about having fun. No negativity.

Marcus holds up his beer. They cheers. Down the hatch.

AXEL

Marcus, you're going to be a dad.

Marcus watches a Chubby Stripper letting some SLEEZY BUSINESS DUDE motor boat her. He's loving it. She's in her happy place.

MARCUS

Totally.

**INT. DINING ROOM - DAY**

Natasha sits at a round table, flanked by Rose, Tanya, and stacks of opened baby shower presents. Around the room, other women drink champagne and socialize.

ROSE

But you look great, Tash, really.

NATASHA

Rose, if you could see my nipples right now. I just didn't know they could get so big--and dark.

Tanya, finishing off a glass of champagne. Not her first.

TANYA

This is just the start of your body turning into a house of horrors. Wait until after it comes out. I had a level 3 tear. That's hole to hole.

ROSE

Oh God.

NATASHA

I'm just so constipated all the time. And every time I sneeze I pee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA

Oral sex is your friend. It's the only sex that won't feel like someone's stapling your vagina to a piece of sandpaper.

Natasha frowns. Clutches her stomach, as if bracing for something horrible.

ROSE

Well, I think it's amazing. I think you look amazing and you are going to be an amazing omm. And I'm sure Marcus will be a really...solid dad.

**INT. CRAZY HORSE/CHAMPAGNE ROOM - DAY**

Back behind the purple-ish velvet curtains, Cameron leads the boys toward a private room where the "high rollers" go to waste lots of money.

Marcus and Axel sit on sunken lounge chairs as Cameron and Kevin hand over rolls of cash to a heavily TATTOOED STRIPPER.

MARCUS

So you and Rose--things are getting serious.

AXEL

If I knew living together would be this amazing, I would have done it years ago. Of course I didn't have a girlfriend before, so that was one issue.

MARCUS

That's awesome, man.

AXEL

I don't want to get ahead of myself but this feels like it, you know? I mean, a few years from now, I can see myself in your shoes. I'm not saying kids right away, but--

MARCUS

Natasha and I are breaking up.

AXEL

Come again?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cameron comes back.

CAMERON

Okay, no touching, but anything else goes!

AXEL

What do you mean, breaking up?

The Stripper leads Kevin back to the group, holding a bottle of champagne.

TATTOOED STRIPPER

You guys ready to party?

KEVIN

Who's breaking up?

MARCUS

We're keeping it quiet until tomorrow.

KEVIN

Wait, what?

MARCUS

It's something I've been thinking about for a while now. I mean, you guys know, Natasha is great. She's my best friend and I love her, but it's just, it's not working right now.

Cameron and Kevin sit down. Catching up.

The Stripper meanwhile starts doing her thing, dancing for the guys who completely ignore her.

TATTOOED STRIPPER

Anyone want a glass of champagne?

She offers the bottle. Still ignored.

KEVIN

But she's pregnant. Super pregnant.

MARCUS

I know.

CAMERON

Super, super pregnant.

The Stripper, annoyed by the lack of attention. Drops the sexy act. Just a girl having a bad day at work now.

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CONTINUED:

TATTOOED STRIPPER

You know you pay for the champagne  
whether you drink it or not.

MARCUS

It's hard, but, deep down, we both  
know it's for the best.

**INT. DINING ROOM - DAY**

Natasha, trembling, fighting back tears. Rose holds her  
hand. Tanya, shocked, next to her. The rest of the women,  
stunned to silence.

NATASHA

It just isn't working out and he said  
it was probably for the best and  
we're gonna work really hard to--

TANYA

Honey--

Natasha breaks down. Crying. The kind of visceral crying  
where the body heaves. Tears. Snot. It isn't pretty.

NATASHA

I don't--I don't understand it. I  
don't know why. I wasn't supposed to  
tell anyone until tomorrow but--

ROSE

Fucking asshole.

NATASHA

You can't say anything. Please. We  
didn't want to make this awkward--

**INT. CRAZY HORSE/CHAMPAGNE ROOM - DAY**

Back with the guys, who are similarly confused. The Stripper  
sitting down now, half listening/half texting.

AXEL

I don't get it, man. Why now? Why at  
all?

MARCUS

Look, guys, this was the toughest  
decision of my life. But, at the end  
of the day, sometimes the unpopular  
decision is the right one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

Isn't that a Mussolini quote?

MARCUS

Things will work themselves out.

Trust me, this is for the best.

(checking his watch)

Shit, we should get back. Keep this on the down low, okay? Natasha didn't want this to ruin the shower.

He slaps Axel and Cameron on the back. Grabs a cigar from Kevin and heads out.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Natasha, sitting on a couch, working hard to act like everything is cool. Marcus next to her, shoveling Red Velvet cake into his mouth.

NATASHA

Thank you all so much for coming.

MARCUS

Seriously, it feels great to have so many amazing friends.

NATASHA

Yes.

All those amazing friends now stare at the "happy" couple, unable to formulate words.

Gobsmacked.

Axel, Kevin, and Cameron stand in the back of the room, holding paper plates with cake but not eating a thing.

Rose and Tanya stare daggers at Marcus. He's oblivious to it.

MARCUS

This cake is amazing. You guys gotta try it.

**INT. MINIVAN - NIGHT**

Kevin and Tanya get in the car. Three car seats taking up the back row of seats--empty right now.

They look at each other.

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CONTINUED:

KEVIN  
Did Natasha tell you--

TANYA  
Yes!

KEVIN  
What the fuck?

TANYA  
And then they made us stay for cake?

KEVIN  
So fucked up.

TANYA  
You know I was counting on Natasha signing an out-of-district transfer form for Zadie.

KEVIN  
Oh shit.

TANYA  
I can't ask her now. It's tacky.

KEVIN  
You know what the worst part about this shit is?

TANYA  
You getting a second job to pay for private school?

KEVIN  
There was finally gonna be another couple in our group with kids. I'm sick of getting mocked for suggesting 5:30 dinner reservations. I'm sorry but tapas at 9:30 in the p.m.? That's bullshit.

Kevin turns on the car.

TANYA  
Maybe Axel will knock Rose up and your problems will be solved.

**INT. AXEL AND ROSE'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A cluttered apartment. One large bookshelf crammed with books anchoring one end of the room, which opens into an equally crammed kitchen.

Axel and Rose sit at a small table, sipping tea. Not making eye contact.

AXEL  
Cake was good.

ROSE  
Mmmmm.

AXEL  
It was nice. A nice shower. Not that I've been to that many. Or any.

ROSE  
Uh-huh.

More silence. Axel, trying to read Rose, but she's pretty shut off.

AXEL  
Tired?

ROSE  
No.

AXEL  
You seem quiet.

ROSE  
I don't know what to tell you.

AXEL  
Are you mad at me or something?

This gets Rose's attention. She sharpens.

ROSE  
Why would I be mad at you? Have you done something horrible?

AXEL  
I had nothing to do with Marcus and Natasha.

Rose jumps up, eyes on fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

So you knew!

AXEL

He just told me today--

ROSE

What a dick! She's eight months pregnant.

AXEL

Technically, we don't know whose fault this is.

Rose arches her eyebrow.

ROSE

Eight months, Axel. She's eight months pregnant. Whose idea do you think it was?

Axel flinches. Knows he's in unsafe territory here. Attempts a tactical retreat.

AXEL

He's scared. I know he loves Natasha. He'll come to his senses. He's not gonna abandon her.

ROSE

I hope so. Because if he doesn't take care of this kid, I will hurt him.

Axel nods. Notes a block of knives right next to Natasha.

AXEL

He will. Look, it's Marcus, you know? He makes really bad decisions like dropping out of college but then he finds a good job selling metal or iron or--I'm not 100% clear what he actually does but it worked out. That's the point. It works out.

Rose frowns. Not exactly buying this.

ROSE

He's got a month until that kid pops out. It better work out soon.

**INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY**

Axel behind the telescopic lens of a Canon EOS 70D.

AXEL

That's pretty. Love the color.

Beside him, adjusting some back lighting, LIZ, just out of college and already jaded. Hot if she wanted to be (she doesn't). Working at half speed.

LIZ

He's definitely fucking someone.

AXEL

I don't think it's that.

LIZ

(ignoring this)

You are the most naive human ever. No man leaves a woman without at least a plan for where his next blowjob is coming from.

Axel snaps another few pictures.

On the opposite end of the camera set on a white table, a typical fastfood breakfast value meal: Sausage Muffin, Hash Browns and Coffee.

AXEL

Did they want OJ shots Liz or just coffee?

LIZ

Coffee. I want to meet him.

AXEL

Marcus? Not gonna happen.

Axel's phone rings. He grabs it. On the other end

MARCUS (FILTERED)

Hey man, check your email.

Axel walks over to a table loaded with the ingredients: bread, sausage patties, eggs. Grabs his laptop and pulls up his email.

AXEL

What's up?

**INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

Marcus sits on his bed, door closed. Talking quietly into the phone.

MARCUS  
It's official.

WE CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THEM

Axel, scans his email. Sees a note from Marcus.

AXEL  
(reading out loud)  
Hello friends I want to let you know that Natasha and I are breaking up. Thank you for respecting our privacy during this difficult time.  
(to Marcus)  
It sounds like you're resigning from Congress.

MARCUS  
Short and sweet. Hopefully that puts all the questions to bed.

AXEL  
What? No it doesn't.

Axel scans the long string of addresses in the "To" field.

AXEL (cont'd)  
You sent this to a lot of people. How did you get my mom's email?

MARCUS  
I have a favor to ask of you.

AXEL  
Do not ask me to raise this kid for you.

MARCUS  
Don't worry. I'm not going anywhere. But actually Natasha does want me to move out. So I need help moving. Tonight.

**EXT. MARCUS AND NATASHA'S HOUSE - DAY**

Tucked in a quaint, suburban neighborhood adorned with Eucalyptus trees.

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CONTINUED:

A rental moving van parked in the driveway. Axel, Kevin, and Cameron stand before the house. Hesitant.

CAMERON

So in the case of a split like this,  
who gets the NFL Sunday ticket?

AXEL

Is that really important right now?

CAMERON

It is for me. I haven't subscribed to  
cable in seven years. I'm a cord-  
cutter.

KEVIN

What do we say to her?

AXEL

Who?

KEVIN

Natasha.

AXEL

Wait, she's not gonna be here, is  
she?

KEVIN

Where would she be?

AXEL

If your husband was moving out, you  
wouldn't stick around to watch, would  
you?

CAMERON

I wouldn't. I'd be getting bombed.

AXEL

Exactly. She's not gonna be there.  
Right?

Kevin looks over the house. No clues.

KEVIN

Right.

**INT. MARCUS AND NATASHA'S HOUSE - DAY**

Much like when we first saw it, the home now cluttered with  
boxes in the center of the living room.

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CONTINUED:

Conspicuous gaps in the bookshelf where whole sections of books/DVDs etc. have been removed.

Marcus surveys the situation.

MARCUS

I'm guessing two hours to load, one to unload?

KEVIN

I'm not carrying anything heavier than a four-year old. That's my cap.

Natasha enters. Dressed in sweats and an oversized t-shirt. No makeup. Snotty tissue in hand. Looks like someone whose husband is abandoning her.

NATASHA

Were you going to take the second laptop?

MARCUS

Oh shit, right.

Marcus crosses over to one of the guest rooms. Leaving the guys face to face with Natasha. No one knows what to say.

NATASHA

Hey.

KEVIN

Heeeeeey.

AXEL

I'm so sorry.

CAMERON

You look great.

Axel and Kevin look to Cameron--what the fuck was that? Natasha smiles, weakly.

NATASHA

I'll let you get to it.

She retreats to another bedroom as Marcus comes back into the room, laptop under his arm.

MARCUS

Who's ready to load some boxes?

**INT. PET STORE - NIGHT**

After hours in a pet store where Cameron, apparently, works. He's busy prepping something on a counter next to a glass aquarium, inside which a PYTHON slumbers.

Kevin and Axel leaning on the other side of the counter, sipping beers from a half-empty six pack.

AXEL

It was like watching a dying puppy.  
Whose husband just left her when she  
was eight months pregnant.

KEVIN

It's only gonna get worse. Think of  
birthdays. Do you invite them both?  
And wait until that kid gets old  
enough to talk. "Why doesn't Daddy  
live with us? Why is Mommy crying in  
the bathtub with a box of wine?"

CAMERON

She did look good though, you know?  
In a kind of wrecked way.

KEVIN

This is why you're single.

CAMERON

I have a thing for damaged women.

KEVIN

Damaged, pregnant women who are  
married to your best friend?

Cameron takes a PAPER PLATE from the counter. Pops it in a MICROWAVE positioned in the back of the store.

CAMERON

You know Natasha is like a mother to  
me. But at the same time, yeah, I've  
dreamed about banging her.

KEVIN

So you think of her as a mom and  
someone you want to sleep with? We're  
on a dangerous, slippery slope.

(re: the plate)

That smells good, man. What are you  
cooking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

They're newborn rats, pinkies. The snakes won't eat them cold.

KEVIN

Oh goddammit, gross!

CAMERON

Some of them like 'em live so you just kinda bang them against the glass first to stun them.

KEVIN

You gotta get a real job.

CAMERON

How is this not a real job? I really have to work. I get paid real money.

AXEL

We have to do something about this situation. Don't we?

Cameron grabs a beer.

CAMERON

I'll just say it. It's time we had a hard, conversation with Natasha about the A-word. There's no point bringing a baby into an unhappy home.

KEVIN

Jesus, Cameron!

CAMERON

Adoption. That was the A-word I was talking about.

Cameron starts feeding the Python. The Python snaps up the warmed up rat babies like candy.

AXEL

We need to fix this. We all know Marcus and Natasha belong together. They've been together since high school. You know Marcus, he freaks out about things and is a baby, but he can't do better than Natasha.

CAMERON

It's true. I've seen the porn he likes and it isn't pretty. Left to his own devices, it could be scary.

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CONTINUED:

AXEL

I say we get them back together. Like Parent Trap style.

They look to Kevin. He's not sure.

KEVIN

I don't want to get involved.

AXEL

So you want to keep your status as the only couple with kids in our group? By the way, Rose and I were talking: next outing is going to be salsa class, followed by a midnight wine and cheese pairing.

Kevin sips his beer.

KEVIN

I'm all in.

**INT. NATASHA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Natasha sits on the sofa in front of the TV, not watching it. Looking over an empty bookshelf when Tanya and Rose enter.

ROSE

We brought ice cream!

TANYA

And bad Rom Coms.

Rose holds up a pint of Ben & Jerry's. Tanya has some miscellaneous DVDs.

They set them on the table and come beside Natasha. She rests her head on Rose's shoulder.

NATASHA

You guys are sweet.

ROSE

So he left?

She nods.

TANYA

Asshole.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATASHA

It's so weird. I've never lived alone. Ever.

ROSE

You aren't alone. You got us.

TANYA

And Ben and Jerry--

Tanya offers the ice cream.

NATASHA

Yummy.

(a beat)

I'm actually lactose intolerant.

ROSE

That's right. Me too.

They look to the movies.

TANYA

Should we...watch something?

NATASHA

You know, I don't think I actually have a DVD player.

Operation Cheer Up is off to a slow start.

ROSE

We should do something.

NATASHA

You being here is enough.

TANYA

Fuck that. Let's burn some of his shit.

ROSE

Yes! Love it!

Natasha glances at the empty shelves.

NATASHA

I think he took all of his stuff.

TANYA

Come on, I know there's something here. Something he loves.

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CONTINUED:

She picks up a book on the coffee table. THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN. Considers it for a moment. Then...

**EXT. BACK YARD - DAY**

Rose, Tanya, and Natasha stand around a Weber Grill. Huck Finn on the grill. Tanya squirts it with a bottle of lighter fluid.

NATASHA

I don't know about this.

TANYA

It's part of the healing process.

She nods at Natasha who holds a match. Natasha hesitates, then strikes the match. Tosses it on the book which BURSTS IN FLAMES.

ROSE

Ugh. I feel like a Nazi.

TANYA

Please. I burn books all the time.

ROSE

Why?

TANYA

Bacteria. Kids are nasty.

Tanya shrugs. Natasha meanwhile, watches the book burn. Dubious.

NATASHA

I think that might actually be my book. I took 19th Century American Literature sophomore year of college. That was a really great class.

Tanya gives Natasha a hug.

TANYA

This is good. We're moving on.

**INT. AXEL AND ROSE'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Rose in boxer shorts and a Black Flag t-shirt, perched on her knees on a chair at the kitchen table, studying a checkers board.

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CONTINUED:

Axel across from her.

Rose makes a move, jumping two of Axel's pieces to advance across the board.

ROSE  
King me, bitch!

AXEL  
"Kings lose their crowns, but  
teachers stay intelligent."

ROSE  
Gandhi?

AXEL  
KRS-One. I don't know what's worse:  
you thinking I quote Gandhi or you  
not knowing basic hip-hop history.

ROSE  
Forgive me for not catching your 30-  
year-old obscure pop culture  
reference.

Axel leans back in his chair, smiling.

AXEL  
I told you game night would be fun.  
Marcus and Natasha do this all the  
time.

ROSE  
"Did" not "do." Past tense.

AXEL  
For now. We're gonna talk to Marcus.  
Talk some sense into him.

ROSE  
Uh-huh.

AXEL  
You don't believe me, but I've been  
through this with Marcus. Not on this  
scale, but same thing happened before  
they got married. He freaked out. In  
the end, they are soul mates.

Rose stands up and puts the checkers board away, stashed under a shelf crammed with books.

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CONTINUED:

ROSE

Soul mates? I find your romantic idealism cute yet misguided.

AXEL

I know them. They're meant to be together. It's just--fate.

ROSE

Please. Spare me, fate.

AXEL

You're not a believer, I know. But I'm telling you, it's true.

Rose comes over. Kisses Axel on the cheek.

ROSE

You, my sweet boy, are the KRS-One of naive romance.

Axel thinks this over.

AXEL

That's actually a pretty good use of a KRS-One reference.

**INT. KEVIN AND TANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Tanya and Kevin are drinking wine at the center island of their decked out kitchen. In the background, their THREE GIRLS. We may never catch their names, but for the record they are: ZADIE (5), ZOEY (3), ZELDA (1).

Right now, they attempt to make Rice Crispy Treats, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.

TANYA

You're gonna get them back together?

KEVIN

It wasn't my idea.

TANYA

Marcus is a dick. It's black and white.

KEVIN

I would never do that to you, you know. I would never abandon you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA

Of course you wouldn't. Why would you even say that?

KEVIN

I was just saying it to say what I wasn't going to do. Like, I'm not a dick.

TANYA

Just so you know, if you ever left me, I would make it really easy for you. Nice, smooth divorce. Just smooth enough for you to let your guard down. Then, I superglue your car door locks and set fire to the car with you inside. They never find the body. Just ashes.

KEVIN

Damn, I told you to stop watching those serial killer shows. Besides, why would I want to leave all this?

Behind them, A PLUME OF BLACK SMOKE curls out of the oven. The Kids scatter from their Rice Crispy Treat cooking project.

TANYA

Uh-huh.

KEVIN

I should go. Don't wait up.

He grabs a set of keys from the kitchen, Tanya eyeballing him as he leaves.

**INT. PET STORE - NIGHT**

Cameron behind the front counter, counting the minutes until close.

On the table beside the cash register, TWO HAMSTERS in a cage vigorously screw. Cameron comments on this.

CAMERON

Sure they seem happy. Why wouldn't they be? Hump six times a day. Eat. Shit. Of course they'll be dead in 10 months. That's what they don't tell you about hamsters.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED:

CAMERON (cont'd)

You think you can count on them, but you can't. Then, right when you need them: Poof! Gone.

Opposite the front counter a DAD and his two HORRIFIED KIDS, about to purchase a completely separate Hamster.

DAD

Um, is there anyone else who can help us?

CAMERON

Doubtful.

Kevin enters the store. Nods to Cameron.

KEVIN

Stop scaring the customers. Close up and let's go.

**INT. CAR - DAY - MOVING**

Axel driving. Kevin in shotgun, Cameron in the back.

AXEL

We keep it casual, but we don't let him off the hook.

CAMERON

Agreed. No vague answers. We pin him down.

KEVIN

Just so y'all know, I'm not talking.

AXEL

What? You have to talk.

KEVIN

If Cameron doesn't talk, I'm not talking.

AXEL

Everyone talks.

KEVIN

Can't do it. I've got a history with interventions.

CAMERON

So what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

So it's not a good history. Let's just say I have a cousin who was spending too much time at the track, I spoke at his intervention, now he's in Ecuador working as a drug mule.

AXEL

This isn't an intervention. It's a conversation.

KEVIN

Wait, not a drug mule. A drug rep. He sells Cialis or something. The point is, he became an asshole.

Axel turns into the parking lot of a MODEST APARTMENT building in a slightly run-down part of town. Parks.

AXEL

It's simple. We just need to convince him this was the biggest mistake he's ever made.

**INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY**

A small space. Maybe 500 square feet. One big room which serves as the living room/bedroom. A small 26" TV perched on a dresser on one side of the room. Mini fridge, mini stove, mini everything.

A house plant in the other corner.

On the wall, a ST. PAULI GIRL poster. Dave Matthews on an IPOD MINI, as if it was 2005.

Marcus, strumming a guitar in a lounge chair as the guys enter.

MARCUS

Welcome to the pad. Welcome to Xanadu.

The guys take it all in. Kevin nodding his approval.

KEVIN

Yes. See, this is what it's about--no responsibility. Simple living.

Axel shoots him a look: stay on message.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

(re: the TV)

What are we looking at--basic,  
extended cable? Any premium channels?

Marcus grabs some beers from a fridge which contains only beer and a bowl of jello. Motions for the guys to sit on the bed. The only place there is to sit.

MARCUS

So before we go out, there's  
something I want to talk to you  
about.

AXEL

Yeah, us too. Right?

But Kevin is busy peeking out the window.

KEVIN

Looks like some college ladies across  
the way. They got nothing to worry  
about.

Marcus settles in.

MARCUS

So, I know this last week has been  
crazy. And I'm sure you're confused  
and have questions. But I also want  
to talk to you about something  
important.

CAMERON

I fucking knew it. The baby isn't  
yours. That slut.

Marcus ignores this. Plowing onward.

MARCUS

It's not that. It's been hard though.  
But there's someone I want you to  
meet tonight who has been a real help  
to me. Her name is Roxxy and she's a  
very important person to me.

The guys look to each other, confused.

AXEL

You want us to meet your new  
girlfriend?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

Not a girlfriend. Just a friend.

CAMERON

Fuck friends?

MARCUS

Regular friends. Totally platonic.

KEVIN

An important platonic friend, who none of us have ever met or heard of before tonight?

MARCUS

I work with her. I've been talking through a lot of my Natasha issues with her. I just didn't want it to be weird when you met her.

Axel, trying to process this.

AXEL

So the goal of this conversation was to make things less weird?

Marcus tosses his empty beer into a trash can in the corner of the room.

MARCUS

Give her a chance. You will love her.

He heads off to the restroom. The guys look to each other.

KEVIN

I thought that went pretty well.

**INT. BUFFALO WINGS RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Tables packed with people crowded around pitchers of beer and generic bar food. A sports bar packed with mostly guys wishing they were still in college.

Marcus leads his crew through the crowd.

MARCUS

There we are.

Ahead of them, a booth with THREE PORN STAR-LIKE WOMEN. Giant tits and skimpy tops. Plastic faces. Most likely to be mistaken for escorts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Okay. I guess we're going that way.

But Marcus leads them slightly to the right where ROXXY, allegedly late-20s but likely pushing 35, sits at a similar booth.

She's attractive-ish. Has maybe lived life a little too hard and it's starting to show.

Next to her, two friends: LINDA (bleached hair) and BROOKLIE (nose ring), both slightly less attractive versions of Roxxy.

They receive two PITCHERS OF BEER and a NACHO PLATE from a WAITRESS as the guys arrive.

ROXXY

You always show up right when the beer comes.

Roxxy stands up. Gives Marcus a hug. Holding him a beat longer than is comfortable.

MARCUS

Instinct. Guys, this is Roxxy.

ROXXY

So great to meet you. I've heard so much.

(looking them over)

You must be Kevin.

She smiles at Kevin who frowns at this. Why must he be Kevin? Is it racial?

KEVIN

Hey.

ROXXY

This is Linda and Brooklie. Sorry there's only two--you guys will have to share.

LINDA

It wouldn't be a first for me.

They laugh. The guys are uneasy.

AXEL

Would you ladies excuse us for one minute?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BY THE BAR

Axel, Cameron, and Kevin huddle. Axel, looking over at the table where Roxxy takes a healthy swig of beer, washing down some Nachos.

KEVIN  
This night took a turn.

AXEL  
What do we do?

CAMERON  
I call the nose ring girl.

AXEL  
We're not hooking up with them!

KEVIN  
So they're having sex, right? We're all clear on that?

They look back to the table. Roxxy has nacho cheese on her chin, snorting laughter to some unheard joke.

AXEL  
What are we doing here?

Marcus motions for the guys to come back to the table. Happy as a clam.

KEVIN  
Don't ask me. This was your idea.

**INT. BUFFALO WINGS RESTAURANT - NIGHT (LATER)**

Back at the table, now several pitchers of beers in.

MARCUS  
Strangest thing you've ever ate?

AXEL  
Not counting testicles?

KEVIN  
Why wouldn't you count testicles?

AXEL  
Testicles aren't even that weird. What do you think hot dogs are?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDA  
I ate cat food. I was drunk.

BROOKLIE  
Me too! But I was sober.

The girls laugh at this. Roxxy snorts again.

MARCUS  
Roxxy, you're up.

ROXXY  
Okay, um...guacamole.

A beat. Everyone taking this in.

CAMERON  
Testicle guacamole?

ROXXY  
I just don't like it. It's so mushy.

MARCUS  
You know guacamole is kind of weird  
when you think about it.

ROXXY  
I mean, it's green. Yuck.

Roxxy takes out a cigarette and lights up.

AXEL  
I don't think you can smoke in here.

ROXXY  
It's a bar. Relax.

Immediately a STERN SERVER walks by.

STERN SERVER  
You can't smoke in here.

ROXXY  
Since when can't you smoke in a bar?

The Server leans in over the table.

STERN SERVER  
Since last century. Put it out or get  
out.

Roxxy rolls her eyes and stubs out her smoke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROXXY

I hate all this PC bullshit. You can't do anything. It's like the Confederate flag bashing. So stupid.

(offhand to Kevin)

No offense.

KEVIN

It's only slavery. No biggie.

ROXXY

Let's get out of here. Our friend's throwing a party. You guys should come.

AXEL

I don't think--

KEVIN

I'm in.

CAMERON

Me too.

Axel looks to Cameron and Kevin--what the fuck?

MARCUS

Yes! Now we're talking. Let's turn this night up to an 11.

**INT. HOUSE PARTY/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Like a high school party where the average age is 35. Axel, Cameron, and Kevin stand in a corner of the room holding red cups, watching some guys with SHAVED HEADS play dominoes.

KEVIN

I think those guys are skinheads.

AXEL

I was in the bathroom and some dude tried to sell me Oxycontin.

CAMERON

Girls who didn't go to college do it for me. Is that sexist?

One of the guys with a Shaved Head looks over at Kevin. Mean mugging him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

That guy takes off his shirt,  
guarantee there's a swastika.  
Guarantee it.

AXEL

Has anyone seen Marcus and Roxxy? Are  
they even still here?

Linda and Brooklie approach the guys. Holding a paper plate  
with BROWNIES and a few CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES.

LINDA

There you guys are. Amazing party,  
right?

KEVIN

(re: skinheads)  
So you know these guys? What are  
they, German?

BROOKLIE

Super special brownie anyone?

She giggles. Everyone knows what she means by "special."  
Cameron hesitates, then grabs one.

CAMERON

Haven't done edibles in a while.

Kevin looks to Axel. Shrugs.

KEVIN

When the cat is away...

Kevin takes a bite. They turn to Axel. He's not having it.

AXEL

No thank you. I've been Cannabis free  
since Jay-Z Rock the Bells, 2008. I  
spent the entire concert crying in a  
port-o-potty because I thought  
Abraham Lincoln wasn't real.

BROOKLIE

Oh, they're not pot brownies. Betty  
Crocker. She's my hero.

Kevin and Cameron, having stuffed their faces with brownie,  
react. Suddenly less interested.

CAMERON

There are no drugs in here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDA  
Just chocolate, milk, and cake mix.

Axel meanwhile grabs a CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE off the plate.  
Takes a bite.

KEVIN  
So these are just pointless calories?

BROOKLIE  
If you want drugs, the cookies have a  
pinch of angel dust.

AXEL  
What the fuck!

Axel GAGS. Tries to scoop the cookie out of his mouth.

BROOKLIE  
Hey! You're wasting it!

AXEL  
Why would you put angel dust in a  
cookie?

LINDA  
Why would you bring cookies to a  
party if they didn't have drugs in  
them?

AXEL  
You brought brownies!

LINDA  
Because brownies are delicious.

CAMERON  
Dude, Axel, how much did you eat?

AXEL  
I'm gonna go throw up.

Axel runs off. No one moves.

KEVIN  
Should we do something? Call poison  
control or...something?

Brooklie looks Kevin up and down.

BROOKLIE  
Did you play basketball?

**INT. HOUSE PARTY/KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Kevin and Cameron playing a drinking game with Linda and Brooklie. Axel next to them, a blanket over him like a hurricane survivor.

Cameron flips over a card from a deck.

CAMERON  
Seven, everyone drink!

They all chug their beers.

KEVIN  
I don't understand this game--

LINDA  
It's easy. You drink on every card.

She flips over a card. It's a Queen

BROOKLIE  
Drink!

CAMERON  
How you feeling, Axel?

Axel shakes his head.

AXEL  
I don't know yet. How long does it take for angel dust to work?

KEVIN  
It's been three hours. I think you're safe.

LINDA  
I love that name. Axel.

AXEL  
My parents were big Beverly Hills Cop fans.

LINDA  
(missing the reference)  
That's really cool. My cousin's a police officer.

Marcus and Roxxy enter the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

There you guys are.  
(to Axel)  
You cold, buddy?

AXEL

Where have you been?

ROXXY

Bitching about our exes. Marcus is  
such a great listener.

She squeezes his arm.

MARCUS

By the way, don't eat the cookies. I  
heard there's peyote in them.

Meanwhile, Cameron and Brooklie have started making out.  
Linda snuggles up near Kevin. He flinches, uneasy.

A CLOCK in the kitchen says 1:47 AM.

KEVIN

Maybe we should go?

ROXXY

All the fun stuff happens after two.

On cue, one of the SKINHEADS (GARY) bursts in the kitchen.  
Kevin leaps up. On alert.

GARY

Get your hands off my bitch.

Brooklie retracts her tongue from Cameron's mouth.

BROOKLIE

I told you, I'm not your bitch, Gary.

GARY

That's what you always say. Until you  
come begging me to hit that at 3 am.

BROOKLIE

We were married for nine days. It's  
over. I've moved on to a real man.

CAMERON

I didn't know she was involved.

Linda turns on Cameron.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDA  
Don't be a pussy, defend her.

GARY  
He's not even a real man.

CAMERON  
That's fine. I'm good with that.

KEVIN  
Anyways, it's been fun. I got carpool  
tomorrow morning.

Gary squares up to Cameron.

GARY  
I'm gonna fuck you up, man.

Axel gets between them. Peace maker.

AXEL  
Look guys, this isn't 8th grade.  
We're adults. We've been drinking,  
let's just walk away--

SLAM!

Gary SMASHES Axel in the back of the head with a BLENDER  
from the kitchen.

Roxy SCREAMS.

Brooklie LUNGES, swinging wildly at Gary.

Axel COLLAPSES onto the kitchen floor.

The room BLACKS OUT.

**EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Marcus, Kevin, Cameron, and Axel sit on the steps of Marcus'  
apartment building. It's late. Marcus takes a hit off the  
joint and passes it to Kevin.

Axel holds an ice pack to the back of his head. Miserable.

MARCUS  
Hey, the doctor said no concussion.  
That's positive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

He said he didn't think I had a concussion, but it was hard to tell because the PCP in my bloodstream was masking the symptoms.

Cameron takes a hit. Passes the joint to Axel, who declines.

CAMERON

Funny how things work out.

MARCUS

When was the last time we went to a legit house party?

KEVIN

Becky Micon's house, senior year of college. Cameron pooped in a box of Cheerios.

CAMERON

That was a great party. I'd love to go back.

Marcus laughs. Takes a hit. Axel, somber.

AXEL

Do you miss her?

Marcus, not paying attention.

MARCUS

Becky Micon? I heard she got fat and religious.

AXEL

Not Becky.

MARCUS

(realizing)

Oh. Yeah. Of course. I mean, she's my best friend, right?

AXEL

Right.

MARCUS

Crazy times. We live in crazy times.

**INT. KEVIN AND TANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Kevin, stumbling in the door. Trying his best to be quiet. The house is dark. Sort of.

As he moves into the Living Room, he finds his Zadie watching a Juicer Infomercial on TV, eating a bowl of yogurt.

KEVIN  
You're still up?

ZADIE  
Yup. And I'm gonna be up real early. So if you think you're sleeping in, forget about it. We're gonna have a busy day.

Kevin looks at the clock. It's past 4. Sighs.

**INT. AXEL AND ROSE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Axel creeps into his bedroom. Low futon on the ground. Books scattered. Rose asleep. She stirs.

ROSE  
What time is it?

Axel slips off his shoes and pants. Gets into bed.

AXEL  
Late, go to sleep.

She takes his arm as he spoons her.

ROSE  
Have fun?

AXEL  
Uh-huh. We sat him down. Had a good, long talk. I think we really got through to him. I mean, I can tell he misses her. It's obvious.

She fidgets with something on Axel's wrist. It's his HOSPITAL BRACELET, though she can't see it.

ROSE  
What's this?

Axel retracts his arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL  
Nothing. We went to a club.

This gets Rose's attention. She sits up.

ROSE  
What club?

Rose reaches back and grabs Axel's arm. Studies the Hospital Bracelet.

AXEL  
(fooling no one)  
It's like a new club. A little trendy  
for my taste.

ROSE  
What happened? Are you okay?

AXEL  
I'm fine. I got knocked in the head  
by a blender.

ROSE  
What?

AXEL  
Marcus dragged us to this house party  
and there was an incident--he's  
losing it. I mean, I think he's on  
the verge of a breakdown.

Rose rubs Axel's head. Loving.

ROSE  
I know you care about Marcus, but I'm  
worried he's gonna drag you into  
whatever he's getting himself into.

AXEL  
No--he's just lost. Just a little  
lost.

**EXT. BATTING CAGES - DAY**

The kind of place sixth graders go for their birthday. Rows  
of cages outside with pitches of various speeds.

Cameron, yellow helmet strapped on, faces pitches of roughly  
50 MPH. Swings wildly, missing pitch after pitch.

Outside the batter's box, Axel, Marcus, and Kevin observe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

We can switch to the softball setting if this is too much for you.

CAMERON

My game is built on pure power. I swing for the fences. Like Reggie Jackson.

AXEL

I'm assuming Reggie Jackson is a guy you know who also sucks at baseball?

Cameron swings and misses again.

KEVIN

You know you can open your eyes when you swing the bat? This isn't Jedi training.

Cameron barely makes contact with a pitch. It flutters forward.

CAMERON

That's extra bases.

He takes off his helmet and heads out of the cage to join the guys.

MARCUS

So you guys are doing dinner with Tash tonight, huh?

AXEL

I guess. If that's cool? Because if it's weird at all--

MARCUS

Not at all. One thing--if she asks, I'm hanging out with you guys tomorrow night.

KEVIN

Why would she ask that?

MARCUS

If she does.

Marcus grabs the helmet.

AXEL

Where are we going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

I don't know. Improvise.

KEVIN

But it sounds like she is probably going to ask us? Because Tanya is good at telling when I'm lying.

CAMERON

You gonna be with Roxxy?

MARCUS

No.

AXEL

So, I'm sorry, why do you need an alibi?

MARCUS

It's a long story. What a tangled web we weave, right?

He steps into the batters box. First pitch: knocks it out of the park.

**INT. NATASHA'S HOUSE/DINING ROOM - DAY**

The dining room that once belonged to Marcus and Natasha. Now Natasha, Rose, and Tanya at the table eating frittatas.

ROSE

Have you heard from him?

Natasha, rubbing her stomach.

NATASHA

Not really. I have a doctor's appointment next week. He was supposed to go.

ROSE

I'll go. You aren't doing this alone.

TANYA

I got a co-worker. His girlfriend died maybe six months ago. Anyways, he's ready to date and he's hot.

ROSE

Tanya--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA

I'm not saying now. When she's ready.  
He has tickets to Taylor Swift next  
month. No pressure.

Natasha eases back into her chair.

NATASHA

It's so embarrassing. That's the  
worst part. I'm embarrassed all the  
time. I don't think tomorrow night is  
a good idea.

ROSE

You have nothing to be embarrassed  
about. And you are still coming.

Natasha frowns.

NATASHA

It might be awkward.

ROSE

It won't! Right, Tanya?

Tanya, clearly not convinced about this.

TANYA

Oh yeah. It will be fun. Totally.

**INT. TAPAS RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

A hip scene in downtown Los Angeles. Hipsters and young  
couples drink expensive cocktails and devour small plates.

At a round table, center of the room, Axel & Rose, Kevin &  
Tanya, and Natasha. Mid-meal and the conversation isn't  
exactly flowing.

The guys can't make eye contact with Natasha or anyone.  
Kevin notes one of the plates at the table.

KEVIN

These are good. Are they shrimp?

AXEL

Those are the garlic prawns.

KEVIN

Oh. Nice. Prawns.

More silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

I'm not sure what the difference is.  
Prawns. Shrimp. They're all...  
crustaceans. Is that right?

ROSE

I believe so. Yes.

More silence. Tanya looks to Kevin, as if the dead conversation is his fault. Nods to Natasha who is staring at her plate, clearly uncomfortable.

KEVIN

You want in on these prawns, Natasha?

NATASHA

I'm allergic to shellfish.

AXEL

Right. That's right because, on your  
first date, Marcus took you to Red  
Lobster and you got hives.

Natasha smiles, remembering this.

NATASHA

I was too embarrassed to tell him.

ROSE

That seems like typical Marcus.

AXEL

He didn't know.

ROSE

You don't need to defend Marcus all  
the time.

NATASHA

It's okay, Rose.

AXEL

I'm defending him in that instance--

Kevin, seeing where this is going.

KEVIN

Yikes. 8:30. Where did the time go?

TANYA

How about taking someone to Red  
Lobster on a first date? That's B-  
league.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

They were in high school!

NATASHA

You know guys, I don't really want to talk about this.

TANYA

High school or not, that's a bullshit first date.

ROSE

Which is typical. That's my point.

AXEL

My point is that it isn't typical. Overall, he's a good guy--

ROSE

Why are you still defending him?

AXEL

I'm not! But it's complicated--

Rose and Tanya pounce.

ROSE

How is it complicated?

TANYA

Bullshit!

Kevin checks out a menu on the table.

KEVIN

Anyone else thinking dessert?  
Butterscotch pudding? Count me in.

NATASHA

We can go. I know you guys are having a late night tomorrow.

Axel and Kevin jerk up. Alert.

KEVIN

Right. With Marcus. We are all going out with Marcus.

Kevin smiles at Tanya. The worst liar in the civilized world.

TANYA

Tomorrow's Sunday. You're going out on a Sunday night?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

Yes, well. Even though normally that is something I absolutely hate doing as you have correctly observed, I am making an exception, because these are exceptional times.

AXEL

I heard there might be another El Nino on the horizon. That's crazy.

The waiter comes by. Kevin gestures for the check. Desperately.

**INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT**

A few pool tables, round tables, and lots of neon Budweiser signs at a local watering hole. Axel, Kevin, and Cameron playing a game of darts. Not clear that anyone is keeping score.

KEVIN

How long do we need to stay out?

AXEL

Apparently late.

KEVIN

This is unbearable. I should be in my PJs watching 60 Minutes right now.

CAMERON

When did you turn 80?

KEVIN

Kid number three.

Axel tosses a dart, missing badly. Slumps down on a bar stool next to the jukebox.

AXEL

Is he with Roxxy? He has to be, right?

CAMERON

He said no. Then he also said "what a tangled web we weave," which possibly invalidates his previous denial.

KEVIN

He's definitely with Roxxy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cameron grabs a dart. Over confident in his approach.

CAMERON  
Only one way to find out.

He tosses the dart. Misses badly.

AXEL  
What do you mean?

CAMERON  
We go spy on him. See what he's really doing.

AXEL  
Like a stakeout?

KEVIN  
Here's what I'm saying: it's 9:45.

AXEL  
Yeah, I don't think we need to resort to spying.

CAMERON  
I guess if you trust Marcus to make good decisions, no need to interfere.

Axel considers. Frowns.

#### **INT. CAR - NIGHT**

The boys, parked across the street from Marcus' apartment complex. Kevin driving. Axel shotgun. Cameron in the back with a giant bag of Flaming Hot Cheetos.

They focus their attention on a window facing them. Curtain drawn. Looks like there's light on the inside.

CAMERON  
This is fun. I told you it would be fun.

AXEL  
He's in there.

KEVIN  
Good intel. Let's go home.

CAMERON  
Cheeto?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cameron offers the bag.

KEVIN  
Get that garbage out of my face.

CAMERON  
I thought your people loved these.

Kevin turns, about to lash out. Then restrains himself.

KEVIN  
That's...not entirely untrue. It's  
socioeconomic.

The lights in the house turn off. Axel perks up.

AXEL  
He's on the move.

They duck down. Waiting and then--

Nothing happens.

They peek back out the front window.

Marcus stands at the corner, getting a PIZZA from a PIZZA  
DELIVERY GUY.

CAMERON  
Awful lot of pizza for one person.

AXEL  
Meaning he's not alone?

CAMERON  
Maybe. We just don't know.

KEVIN  
Come on. He's ordering pizza. Pizza!  
There's nothing--

But before he can finish the thought, a mammoth clunker of a  
car--think an 82 DODGE DART pulls up. Some BEARDED DUDE  
driving.

Marcus gives the what's up and hops in the car with the  
pizza.

Axel, Kevin, and Cameron lean forward.

AXEL  
Oh my God. He's trolling for sex with  
bearded hipsters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The car drives off.

Axel and Cameron look to Kevin. Interested yet?

Kevin punches the gas.

**EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT**

Sparsely populated and mostly industrial. Stacks of lumber, machines, and boxes outside nondescript cement buildings. Kevin trails Marcus' car in the dark.

KEVIN

I don't know where we are, but  
nothing good happens in a  
neighborhood like this at night.

Marcus' car pulls over in front of some random warehouse.

CAMERON

There they go--kill the lights.

Kevin pulls over a full block back. Lights off. Only a single streetlight casts a glow over Marcus' car.

After a beat, Marcus gets out with the Bearded Man. They joke back and forth, scarfing down pizza as they walk up the road alongside a barbed wire fence.

AXEL

Drug deal. I'm calling it right now.

The Bearded Man gestures to something on the other side of the fence. Then he **TOSSES THE DUFFEL BAG** over the fence.

Marcus and the Bearded Man watch the bag clear, then start to **SCALE THE FENCE**, navigating over it and off out of view.

KEVIN

Drug deal slash B&E?

Kevin turns the car back on and inches down the block toward where Marcus parked. Where they hopped the fence, there is no sign of them.

Cameron pulls out his Cell Phone. Takes a selfie of the three guys.

CAMERON

This is amazing. Like a James Bond  
movie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

James Bond never went on a stakeout.

CAMERON

Yes he did. He definitely did.

AXEL

What movie? In what movie does James Bond sit in a car, eating Cheetos, watching an empty warehouse? Or do anything remotely like this?

Cameron considers this.

CAMERON

"A room with a...view." The one with the guy with all the teeth.

Before Axel can respond a LIGHT FLASHES from inside the Warehouse followed by BOOM! Like a thunder storm inside.

KEVIN

What was that?

AXEL

Should we call 911?

CAMERON

I don't think getting Marcus arrested will help get him back with Natasha.

KEVIN

So what do we do?

They look at the warehouse. Then at the BARBED WIRE FENCE.

**EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

Axel, Kevin, and Marcus in various stages of climbing the barbwire fence outside the warehouse.

Kevin clears the top first, followed by Cameron. They swing safely to the ground.

Axel struggles.

Down the road, CAR HEADLIGHTS. Axel freezes.

CAMERON

Come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Axel struggles to clear the top of the barbed wire but his SHIRT GETS CAUGHT on the wire at top.

He comes to the ground, shirtless.

AXEL

I'm good. I'm okay.

Kevin and Cameron motion over to the warehouse--a long, one story building. Down by the end, a DOOR PROPPED OPEN with a CINDER BLOCK.

They head over, walking through the dark, approaching the door.

CAMERON

Shhhhhhh.

KEVIN

No one is talking.

CAMERON

Radio silence from here on out.

Cameron opens the door. The hinges SCREECH as it opens. Cameron and Axel react: so much for radio silence.

They slip inside.

#### **INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

The door opens to the inside of the warehouse. Exposed pipes and a long hallway with doors on each side. This is some kind of converted office space that tech startups love.

In one of the doors down the hall, light sneaks through the cracks.

The guys approach.

They listen, trying to hear what's on the other side, but they can't hear anything.

AXEL

Do we go in?

KEVIN

Hey man, we don't know what's on the other side of that door. Could be drugs, guns, human sex trafficking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Sex trafficking is no joke. It's a tragedy. I saw a movie about it.

The door opens. The Large Bearded Man stands before them, stern. Puts his finger to his mouth.

BEARDED MAN

You with Marcus?

CAMERON

Uh. Yes?

BEARDED MAN

You come in, you stay quiet.

The Bearded Man returns to the room.

CAMERON

Gotcha. Rule number one, right? Don't talk about it.

(to Axel and Kevin as  
if it was obvious)

It's a fight club.

Cameron follows the Bearded Man. Hesitant, Kevin and Axel follow.

**INT. MUSIC STUDIO/CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT**

A basic recording studio. The door leads into the sound control section of the room--the Bearded Man and a TOM PETTY LOOKALIKE, smoking a cigarette. The Tom Petty lookalike mans the controls.

On the other side of the sound proof glass in the Live Room, Marcus, guitar over his shoulder. Singing his heart out.

MARCUS

The more you said you loved me, the less I really cared. Baby, only you're the one who's scared.

The guys freeze. Dumbfounded. Marcus looks up. Sees them. Confused he stops playing.

KEVIN

Dope studio, man!

MARCUS

(into mic)

What are you guys doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Tom Petty lookalike turns off the recording equipment.  
Hits the intercom to talk to Marcus.

TOM PETTY LOOKALIKE  
We'll pick it up at the bridge.

CAMERON  
(aside to Axel)  
I think that's Tom Petty.

Marcus walks in from the Live Room.

MARCUS  
What's going on?

The guys look to each other. They have no good answer to this.

AXEL  
We were just, you know. In the neighborhood and we saw you--

MARCUS  
You were in the neighborhood?

CAMERON  
Are you like, cutting an album?

BEARDED MAN  
This is gonna be his "Blood on the Tracks." Amazing.

KEVIN  
This is awesome. I used to play bass. Before the kids.

MARCUS  
What the fuck is this?

AXEL  
We're just concerned. You've been acting erratic.

The Tom Petty lookalike pulls out a bottle of Jack and passes it around. Rock 'n roll.

MARCUS  
You are stalking me like a crazy high school girl. Who's erratic?

BEARDED MAN  
That's sharp, man. You should work that into track eight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS  
Jealous and Judging?

BEARDED MAN  
Yeah. Maybe last verse?

Marcus nods. This makes sense. Grabs a pen and jots down the line.

AXEL  
Who are all these people? Since when do you even play guitar?

MARCUS  
I've been playing around. It's part of the grief process.  
(to Bearded Man)  
This is Dan. He's Roxxy's uncle. He's letting me use the studio. And this  
(to Tom Petty guy)  
is Tom.

Cameron reacts to this. Maybe it is Tom Petty.

KEVIN  
So you're making an album? Solid.

Marcus takes a swig from the Jack.

MARCUS  
Maybe. I mean, if not now, when? This is what I always wanted to do.

AXEL  
I've known you since High School and you've literally never talked about wanting to make an album before.

MARCUS  
Things change.

The guys consider this.

KEVIN  
So how long do you have this studio?

MARCUS  
Technically all night. Why, you want to jam?

Axel looks to the guys: hell no. But they are thinking something very different.

**INT. LIVE ROOM - NIGHT**

Axel and Kevin on guitar. Cameron playing the tambourine. Belting out a Dylan classic. More enthusiasm than precision.

MARCUS

I've been double crossed right now for the very last time, and now I'm finally free!

MARCUS / KEVIN / CAMERON

Iiiiiidiot Wind, blowing every time you move your teeth. You're an iiiidiot babe, it's a wonder that you still know how to breathe.

**INT. CONTROL BOOTH - NIGHT**

Tom Petty dude nodding his head. Bearded Man turns to Axel who looks miserable to be experiencing this.

BEARDED MAN

Raw energy. Can't bottle that shit.

AXEL

Uh-huh. How long have you been in the music business?

BEARDED MAN

I'm not. I water the plants in this building.

**INT. CAR - DAY - MOVING**

Axel driving. Rose in the passenger seat.

The car stereo blast's Too \$hort's mid-90s classic, "Cocktails." These are the tails, the freaky tails, these are the tails that I tell so well.

Axel yawns, bleary eyed.

ROSE

Late night, huh?

AXEL

It was pretty chill. Mostly hung out at Marcus' place. Played video games.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

Sounds like he's super ready to be a Dad.

AXEL

He'll come around. He's not happy without her.

ROSE

Kind of a shitty consolation prize for Natasha, but I'll take it.

AXEL

You'll see how this plays out. They're back together by the time that kid is one month.

Rose rolls her eyes, but doesn't engage.

ROSE

So were you guys in City of Industry or something?

Axel hits the breaks, stopping short of the light. Thrown. Knows he's fucked but not sure how.

AXEL

Why do you ask that?

ROSE

Cameron posted something on Facebook.  
(pulling out her  
phone)  
"Up to some James Bond shit in City of Industry."

She shows Axel the phone. A selfie of Cameron with Axel visible in the background.

AXEL

Right. We had to pick Marcus up there. Some work thing.

Axel avoids eye contact, guilty as hell, but if Rose is suspicious, she doesn't react. Casual.

ROSE

Work thing?

AXEL

Yeah, you know Marcus. His job is weird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE  
Why did he need a ride?

AXEL  
Um. His car. His car doesn't work.  
Total pain.

Meanwhile, Too \$hort is getting seriously X-Rated: "I met this freak named Naomi / Straight dick sucker worked me and my homies."

ROSE  
So he's about to be a Dad, living in a studio, playing video games and he doesn't have a working car. What--  
(just noticing the music)  
What the fuck are we listening to?

AXEL  
Too Short, Cocktails. How do you not know this stuff?

Rose flips the station.

ROSE  
This is why you have a screwed up view of relationships.

AXEL  
What? This music made me the pimp that you've come to love.

ROSE  
Oh my God. You're ridiculous.

Axel puts his hand on her knee.

AXEL  
I love you.

ROSE  
So ridiculous.

Rose kisses Axel on the cheek. Axel, happy to have made it out of the conversation, seemingly unscathed.

**INT. KEVIN AND TANYA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Kevin, plucking a Bass Guitar on the couch. In front of him a PS3 just out of the box.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tanya enters with all three daughters--a cyclone of activity. The kids immediately take off and start dismantling the house.

Tanya notes Kevin on the couch.

TANYA  
Should I even ask?

KEVIN  
Fender bass guitar. Only \$350 second hand.

TANYA  
And you bought a PlayStation.

KEVIN  
Yeah, I used to play video games all the time. Like every summer, that's all I'd do. Then I just stopped.

TANYA  
I need help getting Zoey ready for karate.

KEVIN  
Zoey is two, why is she taking karate?

Tanya takes a deep breath. Patient.

TANYA  
Because you said she needed activities. Remember? You said she needed structure.

KEVIN  
You know I'm thinking of taking a mental health day. Recharging the batteries. Can you handle it?

Tanya, staring death daggers into Kevin's soul.

TANYA  
(ice cold)  
I've been with the kids all day, but sure. I'll "handle" it. By the way, Gone Girl was on TV yesterday. Don't you love that movie?

Kevin freezes. He gets the message. Sets down the guitar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

I can do karate. No problem.

**INT. OFFICE - DAY**

Cameron on a couch, psychiatrist style. Talking to an unseen other (presumably a shrink).

CAMERON

I thought everything was going well. She dug me. She wasn't perfect, but she was cute. Kind of trashy cute. I called her four times last week. Nothing. It fell apart somehow.

Pull back to reveal we are in Axel's workspace. Rows of pictures of fast food lining the walls. Axel reviewing files on a computer at his desk.

AXEL

Maybe because she was, you know, still married.

CAMERON

But didn't it seem like she liked me?

AXEL

It seemed like she was the kind of person who put PCP in a brownie. She was nuts.

Cameron ignores this completely.

CAMERON

I have a plan. I know how to get Marcus and Natasha back together.

Axel looks at a sequence of pictures of a Cheseburger, swollen with FOUR PATTIES. Distracted by this meat monstrosity.

AXEL

Uh-huh.

CAMERON

You know Marcus has been with Natasha since high school. He missed out on all the crazy shit you do when you're single in your twenties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

Like watching Harry Potter marathons on Saturday night because you can't get a date? Cuz that's what I did.

CAMERON

Basically, he's got a build up of crazy single shit that he needs to release out of his system. He's got developmental blue balls.

Axel's co-worker Liz walks in, carrying a stack of pictures. She enters as Cameron says "blue balls" but doesn't flinch.

LIZ

You got the proofs of the double cheeseburger shoot?

AXEL

Yeah, why do they have four patties?

LIZ

Because it's a double cheeseburger.  
(to Cameron)  
This the prego wife dumper?

AXEL

No. Double means two.

LIZ

Not always.

CAMERON

(continuing his story)  
So we throw him a crazy weekend and let him just fuck all the single out of his system.

AXEL

But in this case--

CAMERON

One weekend, no rules, no questions.

LIZ

All the specs said is it was a double cheeseburger, but they didn't say double what. Four patties really gave the shot presence.

AXEL

That's brilliant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

I know!

AXEL

Not you.

LIZ

I think it works.

CAMERON

We call it a Dadchelor party!

AXEL

A Double Cheeseburger has two patties. We need to re-shoot.

LIZ

I like it.

AXEL

The alternative is being fired, so--

LIZ

The Dadchelor party. Maybe your friend does have a case of bad blue balls. It happens.

AXEL

What's a Dadchelor party?

CAMERON

We should make t-shirts, huh? I'll make some calls.

Cameron holds up his hand, ready for some high five action, but Axel refuses to engage. Instead, opens the door to his office.

AXEL

Thanks for swinging by.

**INT. HOSPITAL/WAITING ROOM - NIGHT**

Natasha, flanked by Rose and Tiffany, sitting in a waiting room stocked with Baby magazines and pregnant women. She takes a deep breath.

NATASHA

I'm ready to have this damn thing out of me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA

Spoken like a true first-time mother.  
It only gets harder.

ROSE

You aren't going to do this alone.  
Just know that.

NATASHA

I know. Marcus will be involved.  
He'll be a good dad.

ROSE

Either way, we're here for you.

NATASHA

I know you hate him right now, but  
this isn't all his fault.

Rose puts her hand on Natasha's arm.

ROSE

This is not your fault.

NATASHA

I thought he was going to come.

Natasha looks up at the empty door. Rose rubs her shoulder.

TANYA

Trust me, you don't want any guy to  
see what happens in there. Being  
penetrated has never been less sexy.

ROSE

He's an asshole.

NATASHA

Yeah. He has a reason, I'm sure.

**INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY**

Tucked in a corner of downtown Los Angeles, a small shop  
crammed with rings, mostly diamond.

Marcus and Axel stand in front of a display. Axel focused on  
the rings, Marcus watching Axel like a proud parent.

MARCUS

This is huge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

I mean. I feel like it's been a year.

MARCUS

So awesome. Getting engaged is the best. I had a blast proposing.

AXEL

Thanks for helping me out.

MARCUS

You're in good hands, my friend. Roxxy has been engaged five times.

Marcus gestures over to Roxxy, who studies a display case. Her jean shorts rolled up a little too high for comfort.

Axel, clearly not happy to see her, but trying to hide it.

AXEL

I guess it was smart of you to invite her along.

Roxxy crosses over to them.

ROXXY

Okay, brass tacks, you don't go below 1.5 carats, VS-one quality, and F color. Don't try to pull an SI-two and think that's gonna fly. That's bullshit.

MARCUS

Two words for you: family heirloom. My Great Nana may have been a Nazi sympathizer, but her diamond bracelet saved me bank.

Axel looks up to a SALES REP dressed in a dour black suit.

AXEL

So are any of these conflict free?

The Sales Rep gestures vaguely to one of the displays.

SALES REP

Oh sure. These right here--they help fund hospitals for orphans in Africa.

AXEL

Come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALES REP

Conflict gets a bad wrap. The child militias these diamonds support might bring positive reforms to the people. We just don't know.

Roxy meanwhile leans over the display case to get a better look at a corner ring, flashing a healthy amount of cleavage.

ROXXY

This is the one, Axel. Two carats, nearly flawless. This one gets you BJs for at least a month.

Marcus looks to Axel. Shrugs. As in, she has a point.

AXEL

You know I'm feeling okay with the ring shopping for the day. Don't want to burn myself out.

**EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY**

Walking through the cluttered streets of Downtown LA on a weekday. Cracked sidewalks and empty lots mixed with new, expensive lofts.

Marcus, Axel, and Roxxy walk. Marcus stuffing his face with a bacon-wrapped hot dog.

MARCUS

You gotta have a story. That's what Natasha and I never had. A good engagement story.

AXEL

So that's where it all went wrong.

MARCUS

That or when she made out with Charles Kimball at my work holiday party.

Axel stops short.

AXEL

Natasha cheated on you?

MARCUS

Nothing that dramatic--she just got drunk and--it's a long story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

I can't picture that.

Roxy rubs Marcus' shoulder. Comforting him like a good friend. Maybe more than a good friend.

They round the corner, coming face to face with NATASHA AND ROSE.

Marcus STEPS AWAY from Roxxy.

MARCUS

Hey!

NATASHA

What are you guys doing here?

MARCUS

Lunch.

(realizing)

Oh shoot, the appointment.

ROSE

We were there for her. Don't worry.

Marcus ignores this, touches Natasha's belly.

MARCUS

Everything okay with our little man.

NATASHA

He's healthy.

MARCUS

I'm such a shit. Axel called me and said he wanted to talk and you know I can't work my phone calendar--

ROSE

What did you need to talk to Marcus about?

They look at Axel.

AXEL

Sports. You know...my fantasy football lineup. I wasn't sure.

Roxy meanwhile stands awkwardly next to Axel and Marcus. Staring at Natasha.

ROXXY

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATASHA

Hi?

AXEL

Oh this is Roxxy. Roxxy is...

He looks to Marcus for help. Marcus offers nothing.

AXEL (cont'd)

A woman.

ROSE

I can see that.

Roxxy rubs Natasha's belly.

ROXXY

I love your belly. It's like a perfect circle.

Natasha squints at Roxxy--not enamored with a stranger rubbing her perfect circle of a belly.

NATASHA

Thank you? How do you know--

ROXXY

I work with--

MARCUS

Axel. She works with Axel.

AXEL

Yes. And we ran into her. At the lunch place.

Roxxy flinches at this. About to speak up, maybe but before she can the Sales Rep from the diamond store comes jogging up behind Axel, trying to flag him down.

SALES REP

Sir! Sir, you forgot your phone.

He hands Axel a cell phone as well as a BROCHURE from the store.

AXEL

(quickly)

Great, thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALES REP

I also highlighted some of the items the lady was looking at. The tennis bracelets are on sale.

ROXXY

Ooooh!

Roxy takes a look at the brochure. Rose looks to Axel. Incredulous.

ROSE

Jewelry shopping?

AXEL

Oh no. I wasn't.

MARCUS

I should probably get going. Crazy how small this city is!

ROSE

Your car working okay?

MARCUS

Far as I know, why?

Rose glares at Axel.

ROSE

Nice. I'll leave you guys to your-- sports.

She stomps off. Axel calling after her. Desperate/trying to play things cool.

AXEL

Rose, this isn't--I'll catch up with you later. No worries. Dinner with my parents tonight. I'll see you then.

Looking to Marcus, Roxxy and Natasha.

ROXXY

She's kind of a bitch, huh?

Natasha winces.

NATASHA

I should go.

MARCUS

I'll call you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She walks off. Axel hangs his head.

AXEL

Shit.

MARCUS

She'll forgive you. They always do.

**EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT**

A small backyard patio. Quaint. One table under a gazebo adorned with lights. A little fence with potted plants enclosing the area where Axel and Rose sit at opposite ends.

They barely make eye contact.

Between them, Axel's FATHER, balding with glasses. Squints when he talks. Currently attending to some Succulents with a spray bottle.

At the table, serving water from a pitcher, Axel's MOTHER. Dressed in a flowery dress, hair pulled back. Dividing her attention between a game on her phone and the conversation.

AXEL'S FATHER

So Rose, you still are writing that play? The one about that poet man?

ROSE

Yes. Ezra Pound and his lovers.

AXEL'S FATHER

I love stories about poets. They're our better selves.

ROSE

Well he was a fascist, anti-Semite and kind of an asshole, but yeah--

Axel's Mother perks up.

AXEL'S MOTHER

Speaking of assholes, how is your friend? The one with the baby he has abandoned?

AXEL

Oh yeah, he's....good.

Rose arches her eyebrows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL'S MOTHER

It's too bad about him and that lady.  
Divorce is a bad thing.

ROSE

It is pretty bad.

Axel takes a sip of water.

AXEL

Hey Dad, when did you and Mom know  
you were meant to be?

His Father laughs. An explosive, staccato laugh.

AXEL'S FATHER

It's an arranged marriage, Axel. When  
they said we are getting married,  
then it was meant to be.

AXEL

But you guys love each other.

AXEL'S FATHER

Of course.

AXEL

At first sight?

Now Axel's Mother looks up for the first time.

AXEL'S MOTHER

Ha! He pouted like a baby when the  
marriage was arranged. He wanted to  
be with--what was her name? Rita?

AXEL'S FATHER

Chaya. The love of my life.

AXEL

What?

AXEL'S MOTHER

She had ears like an elephant.

AXEL

How can you say that?

AXEL'S MOTHER

It's true. We all called her Dumbo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL'S FATHER

Well your mother was in love with that Arijit Sen. The cricket player.

AXEL'S MOTHER

He got fat.

AXEL

You guys didn't want to be together?

Axel's Mother picks back up her phone, losing interest.

AXEL'S MOTHER

We made it work, what are you complaining about?

ROSE

He has a hard time with things that are true.

AXEL

That's not fair.

ROSE

Why were you at a jewelry store today with Marcus?

AXEL

I'm not cheating on you.

Rose looks up, exasperated.

ROSE

I know you're not cheating on me. You're just lying to me because you're obsessed with your friend's relationship and you don't care about your own.

(to Axel's parents)

I'm sorry, it's been a long day, I should leave.

AXEL

Rose--

Axel stands, but Rose motions for him to sit back down.

ROSE

You stay. Maybe you should make plans this weekend.

Axel's Mother peeks up from her phone. Not saying anything. His Father, having not been paying attention adds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL'S FATHER

Chaya became a singer. Very  
successful. Wonderful voice.

**INT. BARE APARTMENT - DAY**

Cameron in an easy chair watching TV. Drinking fruit punch from a pitcher with a straw. Not much else in the room. Bachelor living in the extreme.

His phone rings and he picks it up without losing focus on the TV.

CAMERON

Uh-huh.

AXEL (FILTERED)

Hey, you still up for that Dad party thing?

Cameron lowers his punch. Ready to receive the best news he's heard in a long time.

CAMERON

Dadchelor party. And yes.

**EXT. CITY PARK - DAY**

Axel, walking amongst homeless people and unsupervised kids.

AXEL (INTO PHONE)

I need to get away this weekend. All I ask is we do something different. No Vegas Swingers, bro-stuff, okay?

**INT. BARE APARTMENT - DAY**

CAMERON

Yeah, yeah, totally. Can you hold on?

He puts Axel on hold. Dials someone else.

**INT. PRIVATE PREP SCHOOL - DAY**

A group of ten or so parents, Kevin and Tanya included, tour a posh private school. Walking past classrooms decked out with the latest and greatest in education, from iPads to interactive art walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE, serious in her approach, leads the parents through the school.

SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE  
We take the three N approach at  
Westlake Prep: Nurture, nourish, not  
neglect.

Kevin whispers to Tanya.

KEVIN  
All those words mean the exact same  
thing.

TANYA  
Shhhhhh.

KEVIN  
Did you even look at the tuition?

TANYA  
The public school just cut their  
music program to put in more metal  
detectors.

KEVIN  
Exactly--it's never been safer.

Meanwhile the School Representative motions to a classroom of 3rd Graders, sitting in a circle, engaged in some deep conversation.

SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE  
We pride ourselves on cultivating  
curious active learners. And yes, we  
value diversity.

The School Representative seems to look right at Kevin and Tanya, the only non-white people in the room as he says that.

Kevin grimaces, as his phone rings. He picks it up, skulking away from the group.

SPLIT SCREEN WITH CAMERON AND KEVIN

CAMERON (FILTERED)  
Axel's in for the Dadchelor party.

KEVIN  
Oh hell fucking yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON (FILTERED)  
Vegas baby!

KEVIN  
Vegas!

Behind Kevin, Tanya hears this. Locks eyes with Kevin. The death stare. Kevin smiles an apology her way.

THE SPLIT SCREEN TURNS TO A TRI-SCREEN WITH AXEL.

AXEL (FILTERED)  
Guys, I can hear you. We are not doing Vegas, do you understand? No go on Vegas. What about camping?

**EXT. VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT**

Vegas in all it's eye-popping, neon, gaudy glory.

The guys (Axel, Kevin, Cameron, Marcus) cruising in Kevin's car. All wearing suits, other than Axel.

MARCUS  
Such a great idea! You guys are so money and you don't even know it.

Axel rolls his eyes.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

The guys lounging in their suite. Some empty beer scattered around the room. Pre-partying before a night on the town.

CAMERON  
But I have a real job. I'm Assistant Manager.

KEVIN  
You're a college graduate, man. You're doing the same job you did in High School.

CAMERON  
I wasn't a manager in high school. I have keys now.

MARCUS  
I miss this. We gotta do this more.

Kevin holds up his beer for a toast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

Here's to a night where no one pees  
on me or makes me read The Very  
Hungry Caterpillar.

MARCUS

I only agree to half those demands.  
Come on Axel, bring it in--

Axel paces the corner of his room, cradling his phone.

AXEL

Anyways honey, just calling to say  
hello and that I love you and miss  
you and...call me, okay? Love you.

He hangs up and looks at the guys.

MARCUS

Everything cool?

AXEL

Well, Rose thinks I'm a compulsive  
liar who cares more about other  
peoples' relationships than my own  
and now she won't even return my  
calls, but other than that, sure, I'm  
aces.

CAMERON

Tell you what I see? I see a guy who  
needs to relax. With some help from  
my good friend Molly.

Cameron pulls out FOUR PILLS from his pocket. They look like  
baby Tylenol, but we all know they aren't.

KEVIN

Woah, I left my glowstick and 15-  
year-old raver girlfriend at home.

Marcus examines one of the pills. Not sure.

MARCUS

Huh. Never thought of us as the  
hardcore drug types.

CAMERON

Axel did PCP.

AXEL

By accident.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Remember eight years ago. We were going to go to Reggae on the River, but Marcus got engaged and we went to the Spaghetti Factory instead? That was a fork in the road. Now what I'm saying is, what if we took the other fork. What would our lives be like?

AXEL

Apparently in your mind we'd be going to Katy Perry concerts, doped up on MDMA, and licking each others' arms.

Cameron sets the pills on the table.

CAMERON

This is it guys. Marcus is about to be a Dad. You can't do stupid shit once you're a parent. This could be our last chance to be crazy.

KEVIN

I have three kids.

CAMERON

Not tonight you don't.

Cameron takes one of the pills. Washes it down with some beer.

MARCUS

Oh what the hell.

Marcus takes one too.

Kevin shrugs, takes one. They look to Axel. He inspects one of the pills, skeptical.

AXEL

Where'd you get this, anyways?

CAMERON

My friend is a psychologist. It's good stuff.

KEVIN

It might be good for you. You seem a little wound up.

Axel, begrudgingly, puts the pill between his teeth. Then swallows with a beer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS  
Holy shit, this is going to get  
bananas!

Marcus' phone rings. He checks it.

CAMERON  
Don't answer that.

He hits ignore.

Seconds later, Kevin's phone rings.

Then Axel's rings as well.

Axel picks up.

AXEL  
Hello?

**INT. NATASHA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Rose, cradling the phone next to Natasha, who holds her stomach, breathing heavy sitting on the living room couch. Tanya helping pack an overnight bag.

ROSE  
Where the fuck are you guys? Are you  
with Marcus?

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

AXEL  
Yeah. What's going on?

ROSE (FILTERED)  
Natasha is in labor!

AXEL  
Oh--okay--wow.

Axel flips the phone to Marcus. Marcus listens, getting the same news Axel just received.

MARCUS  
Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

**INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING**

Zooming on the Nevada highway, the strip becoming a distant blur in the background. Kevin driving. Marcus in shotgun. Axel in the back seat behind the driver. Cameron next to him.

MARCUS

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

AXEL

Everything's gonna be fine. We'll make it.

CAMERON

Hey, I'm not feeling anything. Is anyone feeling anything?

Kevin, eyes bugging out of his head. Sweating. Death gripping the steering wheel as he accelerates.

KEVIN

I'm going to die tonight.

Axel, concerned. Pats Kevin on the shoulder.

AXEL

Let's dial back the death talk, okay?

MARCUS

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

**INT. HOSPITAL/HALLWAY - NIGHT**

The girls, walking Natasha through the hallway toward the labor delivery front desk. Natasha breathing hard. Arm around Rose and Tanya.

NATASHA

It hurts.

ROSE

You're doing great honey.

TANYA

If you can articulate that it hurts, you still have a ways to go.

NATASHA

Oh no.

Rose looks at Tanya. Not helpful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA  
I'm just being honest.

NATASHA  
Marcus is coming?

ROSE  
He's on his way.

**INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING**

Zooming through the desert. Miles from everywhere. Cameron talks at about 120 words/minute.

CAMERON  
I don't feel anything. Nothing. Like I just took those multi-vitamins that they say make you feel better but you know you just piss it all out because it's like, how much Vitamin C do you need? One sailor gets scurvy and now we're mainlining Vitamin C as if that's the cure. As if, you know, as if that works. It doesn't work.

Axel, giving Kevin a (perhaps) unwanted shoulder rub.

AXEL  
It's okay. Kevin, it's okay. It's gonna be okay. You can do this.

Kevin, unable to talk. Chewing the living fuck out of a piece of gum. He looks miserable.

MARCUS  
Oh. God. God. Oh. God. Oh. God.

CAMERON  
This is bullshit, man. These kids think this is living? Popping pills that don't do anything. Nothing, man. We're in a desert. That's a fucking metaphor.

Axel leans against the window. Now stroking his own cheek.

His phone rings. He picks up.

AXEL  
Heeeeeeeey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE  
(filtered)  
Where the fuck are you guys? Natasha  
is about to pop!

Out the window a sign indicates Los Angeles is 160 miles  
away.

AXEL  
We're gonna need a few more minutes.

**INT. HOSPITAL/MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT**

Late night and the hospital is mostly quiet. Crying babies.  
Nurses making rounds.

And then the chaotic bull rush of four dudes, sprinting  
through the hospital halls, frantic.

They stampede toward the FRONT DESK where the CHARGE NURSE,  
a tired woman in her late 40s finishing the end of a 12 hour  
shift stares at them. Bleary.

MARCUS  
My wife's having a baby--

AXEL  
Technically, they're legally  
separated.  
(off Marcus' look)  
Doesn't matter.

CHARGE NURSE  
Name?

MARCUS  
Natasha. She's in labor now. They  
would wait though, right? For the  
father?

The Nurse doesn't bother responding. Hands Marcus a  
bracelet.

CHARGE NURSE  
She's in 507. End of the hall.

Marcus starts to sprint off.

AXEL  
Marcus--good luck. Don't...do dumb  
things.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marcus nods. He's got this.

Continues to sprint down the hallway, weaving around a SUPER PREGNANT WOMAN walking with her SUPPORTIVE HUSBAND.

Comes to 507 and bursts into the

**INT. LABOR AND DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT**

to find Natasha, on a hospital bed. Eating ice chips from a cup. Seemingly calm. Sedate.

Rose and Tanya curled up on the guest couch in the room.

MARCUS

I'm here!

Natasha, eyes a bit glazed, looks to him.

NATASHA

Hiiiiiiiiiii.

MARCUS

What's going on? Did I miss it?

Rose pushes herself up from the couch.

ROSE

She is 5 cm dilated. They did the epidural about an hour ago. Where were you?

MARCUS

I thought she was in labor. Where are the doctors? Why isn't she pushing?

TANYA

Oh hon, you got another, I'd say, eight, nine hours of this. Get comfy.

**INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT**

Empty, save our group: Axel, Kevin, Cameron along with Rose and Tanya. In the corner of the room, a muted TV flashes some juicer infomercial.

Cameron arranges, then rearranges, stacks of magazines, compulsively. Kevin rocks in his chair, not talking. Axel, trying to keep it together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

I can't believe you went to Vegas.

AXEL

I thought it would be good for him.  
Let him blow off some steam.

ROSE

You thought it was a good idea, with  
Natasha 2 weeks from her due date, to  
take Marcus 260 miles away so he  
could blow off some steam?

Cameron lets out a laugh. High pitched.

CAMERON

You're funny. Rose, you are so funny.  
You are so funny.

TANYA

What is wrong with you guys?

Kevin shakes his head.

KEVIN

Bad drive. Bad road.

AXEL

It's been a long night.

Rose looks at Axel, squinting.

ROSE

Your pupils are the size of quarters.  
You guys are fucking lit.

AXEL

We're not.

(stopping himself)

We did a little bit of Ecstasy, but  
it didn't even work. And it was safe,  
Cameron got it from a Psychologist.

CAMERON

School Psychologist. He confiscated  
it from some 8th graders. Can you  
believe that? 8th graders.

AXEL

Wait, you got drugs from some kid?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON  
(cracking up)  
Millennials, man. Am I right?

Tanya checks out Kevin, who stares, intently forward. Not blinking. Concerned. She touches his leg.

TANYA  
You okay, sweetie?

KEVIN  
There's nothing after death. Nothing.  
And it's forever.

Rose takes Axel's hands. Looks in his eyes.

ROSE  
What happened to my sweet, loving  
boyfriend? The one who made me listen  
to nerdy 90s hip-hop mix tapes on our  
first date and is scared of public  
transportation?

AXEL  
Not all public transportation. Just  
busses. I don't do busses.

ROSE  
You don't do drugs either.

CAMERON  
He was hospitalized for PCP so--wait,  
did you tell her about that?

Axel looks at Rose, who is exasperated.

AXEL  
That's a...story.

**INT. LABOR AND DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT**

Natasha, half-asleep in her hospital bed. Marcus beside her, watching the various monitors bleep and bloop.

NATASHA  
I wasn't a bad wife, right?

MARCUS  
No. The best.

NATASHA  
Were you unhappy, always?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

You're my best friend.

NATASHA

I made out with someone else. I ruined everything.

MARCUS

You didn't ruin anything. It's just, the truth is, it's hard. Staying in love and--you're my best friend.

He's interrupted by an loud BEEPING from one of the machines. The kind that indicates bad news.

NATASHA

What's that?

Seconds later, a NIGHT NURSE comes in. She checks the monitors. Picks up the phone.

NURSE

Call Dr. Benabi.

MARCUS

What's going on? What's wrong?

NURSE

The baby's having trouble breathing..

MARCUS

Trouble breathing? What does that mean?

A middle-aged, doctor, short with a prominent mustache enters. Presumable DR. BENABI.

Looks at the monitor and puts his hand on Natasha's belly. Noting the bleeping machines in front of him.

DR. BENABI

Okay, Natasha, here's the deal. We have a baby in there with low oxygen and we need to get him out right away.

NATASHA

But he's going to be okay?

DR. BENABI

We're gonna get you in surgery and get your baby out and safe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATASHA  
Surgery? Wait--

Natasha looks to Marcus as more NURSES come in, starting to roll Natasha out of the room. Oxygen mask over her face.

Marcus walks/jogs alongside the bed as it pushes out into the HOSPITAL HALLWAY

MARCUS  
It's gonna be okay. I'm here.

Natasha holds his hand. Blinking. Wanting to believe this as the room GOES BLACK.

**INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT**

Our crew. Kevin and Cameron passed out. Kevin still chewing a piece of gum as he sleeps. Axel holds Rose's hand. Talking over his anxiety.

AXEL  
It's not just the homeless people either. Everyone on the bus smells. I'm sorry, it's not PC to say, but it's true.

Rose squeezes Axel's hand.

ROSE  
They'll be okay.

AXEL  
Yeah. Of course.

Tanya looks at Kevin and Cameron, sleeping it off.

TANYA  
This is bullshit. Next time I'm going to Vegas. Remember when we were in college and went to Vegas and got that eight ball from that sketchy dealer outside the Tropicana who asked me to blow him? That was fun.

Rose frowns. It doesn't sound familiar.

ROSE  
I, uh, think that might have been your other friends.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marcus enters from the Labor and Delivery area. Still in surgery scrubs. Beaten down.

Tanya elbows Kevin who jerks awake. Disoriented.

KEVIN

I don't have a vacuum.

A pause as they look for some reaction from Marcus.

His grim expression says it all.

Then...a smile.

MARCUS

Someone is ready to meet you guys.

**INT. LABOR AND DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT**

Natasha on her hospital bed, cradling a NEWBORN BABY. Still hooked up to IVs and the like, totally worn down, but happy.

Marcus beside her. The rest of the gang standing in a semi-circle around them.

ROSE

Oh my God, Natasha, he is beautiful.

NATASHA

He is, right? I know babies all look the same mostly but==

TANYA

He's really cute. Name?

MARCUS

Everyone meet Falcon Mario Adams.

AXEL

Falcon?

CAMERON

No seriously, what's the kid's name?

NATASHA

I know it's unique, but we liked it.

MARCUS

We love Humphrey Bogart, you know.

Polite nods, pretending to understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

I don't get it, did Humphrey Bogart like birds or something?

ROSE

It's a...great name. Unique.

AXEL

You're gonna be the most amazing parents.

Marcus kisses Natasha on the head.

MARCUS

We are.

He smiles at Axel. Axel holds Rose and smiles back. Suddenly, everyone at peace. Happy.

**INT. BABY STORE - DAY**

Rows and rows of baby products, from cribs to toys to strollers. All of them gleaming under the store's hard light.

Kevin and Tanya check out a new UPPABABY VISTA stroller, skeptical. Their three kids running laps around the store.

KEVIN

Remote control seat recline, independent wheel suspension--there's a sucker born every minute.

TANYA

This from the man that insisted on buying diaper wipe warmers.

KEVIN

A great purchase. I use them all the time.

TANYA

On yourself. It's gross.

KEVIN

What I do in the privacy of my own car...

Tanya looks back at the kids, who are destroying aisles upon aisles of the store.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA

Let's just get this and go. They want us there by 11.

KEVIN

11 am. A sensible time for a gathering. See, it's happening--all our couple friends have babies, more brunches, less Karaoke.

A CHERUBIC SALESMAN comes over. Couldn't be a day over 19.

CHERUBIC SALESMAN

A little stroller shopping, huh? Very exciting. When is your little blessing due?

The Salesman puts his hand on Tanya's stomach, which doesn't look pregnant in any way.

Tanya JUMPS BACK, slapping the Salesman's hand away.

TANYA

I'm not pregnant!

CHERUBIC SALESMAN

Oh my God, I'm so sorry--

Kevin, trying to diffuse the situation--

KEVIN

Babe, you do not look pregnant at all. Honestly.

TANYA

I know that! Why would you think I'd think I look pregnant?

Kevin hesitates. Looks to the Salesman.

KEVIN

Let's not lose sight of the asshole here. He's the asshole.

**INT. AXEL AND ROSE'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Axel affixes a tie to his collared shirt. Smoothing it in the bedroom mirror as Rose approaches, dressed casual.

ROSE

Why are you wearing a tie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

You're not dressing up?

ROSE

It's not a wedding.

AXEL

Well I don't know. I've never been to a baby welcoming party before.

ROSE

That's because it's a made-up thing. I love Natasha, but we had three pre-baby parties and I just literally cannot bring myself to go into a baby store and buy her more crap.

Axel second guesses the tie, then shrugs. Continues adjusting it.

AXEL

Well I want to look nice. I want to make a good impression on Falcon.

ROSE

God, what a name.

Rose comes behind Axel, adjusting her hair in the mirror. Axel notes her. Smiles and holds her hand.

AXEL

Hey, I know these last couple weeks have been crazy and I haven't been myself--it was just hard for me. The breakup. It made me question--I don't know.

ROSE

I've never doubted your intentions.

AXEL

I love you. I really do. And now that Marcus and Natasha are back together, I just feel like things are normal, finally.

Rose pulls back a bit.

ROSE

Who said they were back together?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

You saw them at the hospital. They're hosting a party together. Marcus is moving back in with her--

ROSE

He's keeping his studio.

AXEL

For now. It's like they say, if your relationship is in trouble, just have a baby and it solves everything.

Axel pushes up closer to Rose. She really pulls back now, laughing.

ROSE

You keep your baby making parts away from me.

Axel settles for a kiss on the cheek.

AXEL

I'm getting Marcus. I'll see you there.

**INT. NATASHA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Cameron, plopped on the floor. Playing Tetris. As if we've come (almost) full circle.

CAMERON

So this girl last night, she seems nice and sweet. I'm rounding second base and reaching below the belt, and then she's like, "Did you wash your hands?" Like I've got hand STDs or something.

Behind him, Natasha bounces with Falcon, who lets out typical newborn cries. She is only half-listening.

NATASHA

Speaking of washing hands, you need to wash your hands before you hold the baby, okay Cameron?

CAMERON

Oh I'm not holding the baby. I've dropped the last three babies I held.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATASHA

Then I agree, you're not holding the baby.

Cameron turns and smiles at Natasha.

CAMERON

This is nice. Isn't it?

The baby spits up a bit in Natasha's hair. She grimaces and heads off to get some wipes. Calling over her shoulder as she goes.

NATASHA

Please put a shirt on before anyone gets here, okay?

**INT. MARCUS' STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY**

Axel knocks on the front door as he opens it. Peering into Marcus' studio.

AXEL

You ready, buddy?

On the floor, some packed duffel bags. Marcus putting away a stack of blue shirts.

MARCUS

How many blue shirts is too many blue shirts?

AXEL

You're at the upper threshold.

Marcus zips up his bag.

MARCUS

I can't believe I'm a dad.

AXEL

Yeah, how did that happen?

MARCUS

If you don't know that, friend, I can't help you.

Axel pulls a small RING BOX out of his pocket.

AXEL

So I'm thinking of doing something crazy today--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Before Marcus can answer, Roxxy comes out from the BATHROOM dressed in a black G-STRING and RED BRA. She inspects one of her ass cheeks as she exits.

ROXXY

You really scratched my ass. We gotta trim those nails.

Marcus, noting the ring box. Axel noting Roxxy.

MARCUS

No way, you're gonna propose?

Roxxy flashes Axel a smile. Not at all ashamed.

ROXXY

Congrats! That's amazing.

AXEL

What--

She casually grabs a shirt from the bed and puts it on. Slips on some sweats and kisses Marcus on the neck. Then heads back to the bathroom.

MARCUS

This is huge, man. Are you nervous?

Axel motions to where Roxxy went.

AXEL

What are you doing?

MARCUS

Yeah, it sort of just happened. Crazy.

AXEL

But--what about Natasha?

MARCUS

Like I said, she's my best friend.

AXEL

Does she know?

Marcus puts his hand on Axel's shoulder.

MARCUS

Probably best to keep it quiet for now. But I'm excited for you, man. Rose is a lucky girl.

**INT. NATASHA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

People enjoying hors d'oeuvres and wine. Natasha breastfeeding Falcon in the corner as Cameron, Kevin, and Marcus chat nearby.

CAMERON

I'm telling you, she had huge breasts. Like, so big and lopsided you know they were real.

He looks at Natasha as she breastfeeds. Natasha pulls away, a little uncomfortable.

Kevin meanwhile pressing Marcus.

KEVIN

It's all couples with kids, and they do activities like a Zoo Day or Brunch.

MARCUS

Right.

KEVIN

We haven't joined because some of these parents are insane. But if we both joined--

Axel heads over to a bar set up on the counter. Refills a Mimosa with mostly champagne. Rose, watching him.

ROSE

You're going big today, huh?

AXEL

Why not? It's all about having fun, right? Living for the moment. That's what you say.

ROSE

I think you're confusing me with a Nike commercial.

Tanya takes Falcon from Natasha. Cooing.

TANYA

I forget how easy these babies are when they aren't yours.

Marcus heads over to Natasha. Massages her shoulders.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

Well we aren't experts or anything,  
but a week in and we're doing okay.

NATASHA

Marcus has been so helpful. He  
changes diapers, does night feedings  
with me--

MARCUS

It's true. I am an amazing dad.

Natasha squeezes his hand.

TANYA

You guys are really cute. It's good  
to see you like this.

NATASHA

We're doing good.

CAMERON

You always made a great couple.

Axel finishes his drink.

AXEL

Well...

All eyes on Axel.

MARCUS

Well, what?

AXEL

No it's just, you're not a couple.  
Technically.

The room gets real awkward, real fast. Everyone on edge.

ROSE

Axel--

AXEL

I'm not being a dick, they aren't.  
I'm not wrong, right?

MARCUS

We're not labeling anything.

TANYA

There you go. Next conversation--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

(pushing)

But bullshit aside, not labeling things is the same as not being together. That's what being together is--a label. Boyfriend. Husband. Wife. Mistress.

KEVIN

Dude, what are you doing?

AXEL

What? We've been trying to figure this out for the last month. What's the deal? I just want the straight, truth. You're either together or you're not. And I think it's clear you're not.

Rose tries to pull Axel aside.

ROSE

Axel and Mimosas apparently don't mix that well.

NATASHA

We just want to be positive right now. So, no weird vibes, okay.

AXEL

I mean that's a very positive thing to say. Of course you're not the one fucking one of your co-workers. So you can take the high ground.

Silence. Deadly, terrible silence. Natasha, looks to Marcus. Searching for some reaction.

NATASHA

What's he talking about?

Marcus stares down Axel.

MARCUS

I think you should go.

ROSE

Yeah, you should go.

AXEL

Oh come on, it's not like it's a surprise.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL (cont'd)

Did any of us really not think he was  
fucking Roxxy when we first met her?

Tanya turns on Kevin.

TANYA

You know what he's talking about?

KEVIN

Hey, I just--I didn't see anything.

AXEL

Well you missed quite a show. She  
does have a nice ass, Marcus. Face  
isn't much to write home about. But  
yeah, I'd throw away my marriage and  
family for an ass like that.

Natasha, shaking. Marcus, staring Axel down.

MARCUS

I think this party's over.

AXEL

Right. I'm the bad guy because I  
won't cover for you like everyone has  
covered for you your whole life. You  
have this perfect relationship and  
you ruin it.

MARCUS

What do you know about perfect  
relationships, man? This is like your  
first girlfriend since college--and  
you're the expert?

AXEL

You're an asshole. You are the  
asshole.

Axel goes to grab his keys, but something else falls out of  
his pocket.

A RING BOX

It hits the ground and an AMAZING DIAMOND RING spills out on  
the floor.

TANYA

Woah.

Axel stares at it. Rose stares at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

What is that?

AXEL

Yeah, you know what, I was waiting for some perfect moment, but apparently today's life lesson is, there is no perfect. So why not?

Kevin, seeing where this is going.

KEVIN

No, buddy. No.

AXEL

Will you marry me?

Rose, stunned. Not in a good way.

ROSE

Axel...

Axel doesn't bother letting her finish. Grabs the ring off the ground.

AXEL

Excellent. Looks like you fucked quite a few of us today, Marcus.

He leaves. The slamming door stirs the baby from sleep and he lets out a cry. So it goes.

**INT. AXEL AND ROSE'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Not much light on. Axel listening to a Tribe Called Quest record. Sitting at the table, not really doing anything.

Rose walks by. She has a suitcase packed. She looks to Axel: mix of frustration and pity.

ROSE

We hadn't even talked about marriage. We've only been together for a year--

AXEL

(flat)

What's time if it's meant to be.

Rose frowns. Noting the music.

ROSE

Puff Daddy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL  
Not even close.

She smiles a little. Axel doesn't return the smile. She leaves.

**INT. LITTLE GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

A queen bed with lots of frilly pink. Hello Kitty everywhere. Tanya and Kevin sit in bed with all three of their girls. Tanya reading "One Fish, Two Fish," mostly to the benefit of the youngest two.

TANYA  
(reading)  
This one has a little car. Say, what a lot of fish there are.

KEVIN  
(to Tanya)  
I didn't know he was...you know.  
Doing what he was doing to her.

TANYA  
(still reading)  
Some are sad and some are glad. And some are very, very bad.

She looks at Kevin on this note.

**INT. PET STORE - NIGHT**

Cameron, packing up his small locker. A PIMPLY 16 YEAR-OLD watching him. Cameron hands him an ID BADGE.

PIMPLY KID  
Can't believe you're quitting. They said you'd never quit.

Cameron sighs.

CAMERON  
When the Guinea pigs are in heat, don't let them hump their water bottles.

**INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY**

Axel, back behind his camera, shooting pictures of fast food pancakes against a cardboard cut-out of a **CARTOON SMILING SUN**.

Liz next to him, monitoring the images on a computer, paying little attention to what she's doing.

LIZ

It sucks. I finally meet a nice, amazing guy and he cheats on me.

AXEL

Are these pics coming out too orange?

Axel checks the monitor.

LIZ

Bret was my soul mate. Honestly, so sweet, so hot. Other than the alcoholism and always getting arrested, he was the perfect boyfriend.

AXEL

Also, apparently, the cheating.

LIZ

Why are all the great guys assholes?

Axel looks to her.

AXEL

We should go out sometime. You know?  
Can I buy you dinner?

Liz looks him up and down, as if checking him out for the first time.

LIZ

I don't think I can do another "nice" guy after Bret. No offense.  
(considering this)  
What about your friend with the kid?  
Is he still single?

**INT. BOUNCY CASTLE - DAY**

Kevin, Axel, and Cameron bouncing--maybe giving it 25%. No one else in the bouncy house and it's unclear where they actually are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

You guys want to go out tonight or something?

KEVIN

We've got this parent group thing tonight.

CAMERON

I thought you said those people were all batshit crazy.

KEVIN

Soup plantation on a Saturday Night. 6:30 dinner reservations. That's crazy I can get on-board with.

Axel turns to Cameron.

CAMERON

Sorry. I got something.

AXEL

You quit your job, so I know you don't have to work.

CAMERON

It's...something.

AXEL

With Marcus?

CAMERON

I haven't talked with him.

KEVIN

He called me. Him and Roxxy are doing some weekend wine tasting thing.

Axel sets himself down on the bouncy house floor.

AXEL

This sucks. Being alone sucks.

CAMERON

You want to know how to get over a breakup?

AXEL

Please Cameron, I do not want to hear some disgusting--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMERON

Time.

AXEL

Oh. Well I guess that's a mature--

CAMERON

Tits In My Eye. TIME. It's the Gentleman's Club in Alhambra. I have a drink voucher.

A MUSTACHED MAN in a blue jumper outside the Bouncy House calls in to the guys.

MUSTACHED MAN

So you want to rent this thing or what, chief?

Pull back to reveal we're in a WAREHOUSE with all sorts of Inflatable Entertainment Options to demo. The guys look to Kevin.

KEVIN

I don't know. It's nice, but is it preschool graduation nice?

CAMERON

Maybe we should go.

AXEL

No one wants to do anything tonight? Come on...

He looks to Kevin and Cameron, but all they can do is shrug an apology.

**INT. CRAMPED APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Something like a college dorm room with clothes on the floor, empty pizza boxes, and beer cans.

In the center of it, on a sofa, Cameron. Pulls out a GRE STUDY GUIDE.

**INT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

All you can eat buffet. A madhouse of screaming kids and old people. Kevin, Tanya, and their girls at a long table with other parents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A HIPPY WOMAN sits opposite them, dreadlocked hair and no makeup watches as two FIRST GRADERS destroy the salad bar, grabbing food with no regard for sneeze guards.

HIPPY WOMAN

It's called detachment parenting.  
It's about letting kids find their  
own boundaries.

KEVIN

Yes! See, I knew there was a name for  
what I was doing.

TANYA

So now your negligence is a parenting  
philosophy?

KEVIN

Apparently, yes.

Kevin takes a bite of disgusting buffet pizza. Happy.

**INT. AXEL AND ROSE'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The apartment formerly belonging to Axel and Rose. Now, just Axel in bed. Alone. Staring at the ceiling. Huge empty spaces in the bookshelf.

He looks to the phone. Wants to pick it up and make a call. Reaches over and turns off the light instead.

A beat later, the light flicks back on. Axel grabs his keys.

**EXT. NATASHA'S HOME/FRONT YARD - NIGHT**

Axel appraises a window on the top floor of the home once belonging to Marcus and Natasha.

Cranes his neck to see inside.

Appraises some rocks on the sidewalk. Picks a smooth, round one up, about the size of a marble. Aims for the window.

Before he can throw it, the FRONT DOOR opens.

Rose standing in the doorway in an oversized t-shirt and pajama pants.

ROSE

There's this thing called cell  
phones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

Hey.

ROSE

I've been watching you for the last ten minutes. I was afraid you were gonna try to climb the rain gutter.

AXEL

I thought of that.

ROSE

Come inside if you want to talk.

AXEL

I love you. I want to spend my life with you.

ROSE

Why, Axel? Why do you want to spend your life with me.

AXEL

Because...I love you.

ROSE

I love you too. And I love your cute romantic idealism. You standing in the middle of the night your love-- it's cute. It's adorable. But that's not a really good reason to marry someone. I don't even know if I want to get married. We never talked about it. Ever.

AXEL

It just seemed like. I don't know what to believe in.

ROSE

Maybe you should go figure that out.

Axel looks at her. Takes the pebble and puts in his pocket. Heads back to the car.

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

**INT. KEVIN AND TANYA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY**

A whirlwind of activity in the living room. The kids in various stages of dress running about. Kevin trying to squeeze the youngest into a flower dress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TANYA

Did you get the present?

KEVIN

Who buys a one-year old a razor scooter? Might as well just book a room in the emergency room now.

TANYA

Any bets on if Axel shows up?

KEVIN

Your guess is good as mine.

**INT. AXEL'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - DAY**

Axel, stares at an invite on the fridge. "Falcon's One Year Birthday." On the invite, a picture of Natasha and Falcon. Also, a separate picture of Marcus and Falcon. One happy family.

Axel, dressed in a white undershirt and pajama pants studies the invite. Uncertain.

**EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY**

A shiny plastic play structure, surrounded by swings and perfectly manicured grass. Blue balloons decorate the scene along with a Face Painting station, a Balloon Animal guy, a Candy Bar, plus a regular bar.

A COLLEGE AGED GUY and COLLEGE AGED GIRL with bright red shirts labeled THE BABY ROCKERS play the guitar and croon children's songs.

Basically, an over-the-top one-year old birthday party.

Natasha holds little Falcon's hand as Tanya and Kevin watch. Marcus beside her.

TANYA

This is amazing.

NATASHA

You don't think it's too much?

TANYA

Oh, you know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS

It was either this or save for college so--

KEVIN

Good choice. College is overrated, but this party he'll remember for about fifteen seconds.

Cameron approaches with a bookish brunette who we will soon meet as LILY.

CAMERON

Hey gang. You remember Lily?

NATASHA

I think this is the first time you've ever brought the same girl by twice.

CAMERON

That's not true.  
(to Lily)  
It's not true.

MARCUS

How's school?

CAMERON

Hard work. But it's gonna pay off.

AXEL

You're getting an MFA in Poetry. That shit is never paying off.

The gang turns to see Axel, present under his arm. Marcus regards him--it's clearly been some time since they saw each other. Maybe since the fight.

After a beat, Marcus embraces Axel. A little bro hug.

MARCUS

Great to see you, man.

AXEL

Yeah. Congrats on keeping this guy alive.

Natasha gives Axel a hug.

NATASHA

We beat the odds, I guess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Axel smiles. A long beat as the old friends absorb the moment. Then--

MARCUS

Come on, we only have the face painter for another hour. He's legit.

**EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY**

The party now in full swing. Axel, Marcus, Cameron, and Kevin sit on a bench, faces painted with butterflies and tiger stripes and the like. Drinking some beers.

KEVIN

Good party.

MARCUS

I did nothing but show up.

CAMERON

Lily wrote this amazing prose poem on her first birthday. It's really powerful. Subversive.

The guys regard Cameron.

KEVIN

Who the fuck are you and what did you do to my friend?

AXEL

How's Roxxy doing?

Marcus takes a sip of his beer.

MARCUS

That's kind of done at this point.

AXEL

Oh. Wow, I'm sorry.

MARCUS

No you're not.

CAMERON

She cheat on you?

MARCUS

Lots of little things. She's kind of crazy. Not figuratively. There's some serious mental illness in her family. Weird shit too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

She did have a wrist tattoo.

MARCUS

Actually, Natasha and I have been talking and, nothing official, but we're kind of back together.

He looks to Axel on this note. Axel, not reacting much one way or the other.

AXEL

That's great.

But it doesn't sound like he means it.

MARCUS

I thought you'd be a little more excited.

AXEL

I am. I mean, if it's what you want-- I'm hoping for the best. You know? What else can you do? You hope for the best.

MARCUS

Well. Aren't we all becoming adults? Speaking of which, at what age do I need to get serious about porn-proofing my computer?

KEVIN

If he takes after you? Two years.

Axel looks at the park where Rose has arrived, greeting Natasha.

AXEL

Give me a sec.

He gives Marcus a playful slug in the arm. Heads down to the

**EXT. PLAYGROUND/STRUCTURE - DAY**

Where Rose sips a drink, watching Falcon chase bubbles, filled with glee. She notes Axel. Smiles, warmly.

ROSE

I was wondering if you'd show up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

It's my first one-year-old birthday party. How could I miss it?

ROSE

Did you expect a full bar and a band?

AXEL

Totally. I might start crashing these every weekend.

ROSE

How have you been?

AXEL

Good. Works good. I got promoted off burgers--I'm shooting burritos now. The big time.

ROSE

Wow, that's great. That's what you wanted, right?

AXEL

Since I was a little boy.

Axel cracks a smile.

ROSE

I'm happy for you.

AXEL

I saw your play. Last month.

ROSE

You did? You should have come backstage and said something--

AXEL

No, it was great. I mean, I think. It was about Modernism or Post-Modernism or something?

ROSE

It was about love.

AXEL

Oh. Well I missed that completely.

ROSE

Crazy about Natasha and Marcus, huh? I guess you were right. Maybe they are soul mates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AXEL

Sure. A great American love story.  
Why not?

But it's clear Axel doesn't believe this anymore. Rose picks up on this. Maybe a little impressed.

ROSE

It's good seeing you. We should grab coffee sometime. Catch up.

Axel looks to Marcus who has come over to Natasha. Holds her hand affectionately.

Cameron and Lily MAKE OUT passionately by the FACE PAINTING BOOTH.

Kevin gives his Oldest Girl a horsey ride, while Tanya watches, laughing.

AXEL

I have your number.

Rose smiles at this noncommittal response. Axel touches her on the arm and we

FADE OUT.