

# **IS THIS THING ON?**

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**OPEN ON --**

A LION... costume. Bright red and yellow, lurid, the garish detail, the fringes: it emanates a kind of grace...

Suddenly, the lion rears up on its hind legs (as the person in the back of the costume lifts the person in front) --

It is magnificent.

We hear CHILDREN gasp as the lion leaps onto four poles, like stilts.

CLOSE ON --

The giant head of the lion. It leers at us, then twitches.

We realize we are in...

**INT. SCHOOL, GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY - DAY**

Children sit and watch, transported. Among them, JUDE (10) and FELIX (10), wave RED ENVELOPES --

PARENTS are here too, sitting on the floor and standing against the back wall...

We pick out a father, ALEX NOVAK, physically present, but emotionally nowhere in sight...

Not even the drums can rouse him.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, ENSUITE BATHROOM - NIGHT**

TESS brushes her teeth and watches in the bathroom mirror as Alex takes a shower.

Alex turns off the shower, steps out.

He reaches for a towel. She stops brushing for a moment.

TESS

We need to call it. Right?

A very long beat.

ALEX

I think so too.

She resumes brushing.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Alex, in his boxers and a T-shirt, stands in the middle of the hallway. After a moment, Tess exits their sons' bedroom. She is shocked to see him there.

ALEX  
(whispers)  
Hey.

TESS  
(whispers)  
They're sleeping.

ALEX  
(whispers)  
Do you think that... do want me to  
pack a bag and check into a hotel,  
or...?

TESS  
(whispers)  
I mean that's a little dramatic.

ALEX  
(whispers)  
I just thought... or I can make up  
a bed on the couch.

TESS  
(whispers)  
No, no. That's not necessary. Let's  
just--

ALEX  
(whispers)  
Okay. So...

The door opens and their son, Felix, steps out and buries his head into his mother.

ALEX AND TESS  
(whispers)  
Oh hey buddy! What are you doing  
up?

FELIX  
Are you guys fighting...?

Tess and Alex look at each other.

ALEX AND TESS  
No, no, no no...

ALEX  
No, actually, we're not fighting at all.

TESS  
We never fight.

FELIX  
That's true.

TESS  
Go back to bed baby. Okay?

Felix goes back into his room.

TESS  
Come here Charlie.

CHARLIE the dog scoots out of the boys' room right before she closes it.

**INT. CHRISTINE & BALLS' APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Alex and Tess open the stairwell door revealing a very industrial hallway. Arrive at a door. Tess knocks. They look at each other.

ALEX  
Our last hurrah.

TESS  
What?

ALEX  
You know, just with the...

TESS  
Yeah...

**INT. CHRISTINE AND BALLS' APARTMENT - LATER**

We are in an apartment in the city, a million miles from the suburban home of Alex and Tess... Enjoying a post dinner hang, a tight-knit coterie of very old friends --

CHRISTINE and STEPHEN and GEOFFREY.

Alex and Tess are there, doing their best to appear normal, and not at all like they have agreed to separate...

CHRISTINE  
The other day we were watching,  
like, this-- just one of those  
doomsday docs, right?  
(MORE)

## CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

You know, meteors, the earth, wars, everything, all that stuff... And so you know he had the weirdest look on his face and at the end of the doc, I look at him and I said, you know, "how do you feel about that? Does that bother you," you know, fully expecting him to be like, "Hey, what do we do about this?" -- Nothing. He's perfectly fine with the world coming to an end. He literally said, "Well, you know, I've had a good life up until now. What's there to be sad about?" -- Jalen, my 17 year old boy. First of all he's brilliant, right? He excels at everything he puts his mind to. But I just thought, what kind of mind set is that? My body does not say it, but I still feel like I'm 24 years old at best--

Stephen's about to say--

## CHRISTINE

--Shut up Stephen... But seriously though, I'm not ready for shit to end, right? Are you? No?

## STEPHEN

No.

## GEOFFREY

Well, because he lives in a world with the likelihood that we may blow ourselves up at any moment.

## TESS

What?

## STEPHEN

That's nothing new. We all grew up during the Cold War.

## TESS

Guys, it isn't that. It's not that.

## GEOFFREY

Yeah, but remember? We were scared.

## CHRISTINE

Right, and he's not.

## TESS

It's not that.

STEPHEN

What is it?

TESS

He's alive, you know? He just goes.  
He goes for it everyday. He crushes  
it, everyday.

STEPHEN

That's true.

TESS

And he's in joy because of it. How  
about joy? I mean it's beautiful.  
Not giving a fuck about trying to  
be like other people or trying to  
be a grown up... Ah, fuck!

ALEX

Wait, are you talking about me?

TESS

No, somebody alive!

CHRISTINE

Shit.

STEPHEN

Jesus.

GEOFFREY

Also dead.

TESS

I was joking... You are so alive,  
darling.

CHRISTINE

Darling?

TESS

Yes...

At that moment the door slams open, and BALLS, Christine's  
husband, comes barreling through the door OFF SCREEN.

BALLS (O.S.)

Hey I found it!

And trips on the floor panel face planting on top of the  
paper bag smashing the oat milk carton inside all over  
himself and everything around him.

EVERYONE

Oh my god / Balls, are you alright?  
/ Oh shit!

CHRISTINE

I'm sorry everyone. WHAT THE  
ABSOLUTE FUCK! Balls!

BALLS

Oh the rug! I'm so sorry.  
I'll get more. It's okay,  
it's okay. It's right around  
the corner--

TESS

Stay. It's fine.

CHRISTINE

It's like every week.

TESS

We don't need to cry over spilt oat  
milk. Okay?

CHRISTINE

(to Tess)

Yeah this is fine for you. Jesus.  
It's literally everyday.

Christine throws away what's left of the oat milk carton.  
Balls just wipes himself off, heads over to Alex.

ALEX

Are you alright?

Christine throws a roll of paper towel to Balls.

BALLS

Yeah, I'm.. just like, a little  
nervous...

He begins to soak up the spilt milk by stepping on the entire  
roll of paper towels to wipe the mess up.

ALEX

Yeah, you seem it--

BALLS

...cause one of the guys is not  
gonna be there next Saturday  
matinee so if you wanna come?

ALEX

Oh, wow, shit. You know all his  
lines?

BALLS  
His lines? Yeah I know ALL the  
disciples' lines.

ALEX  
Of Christ?

Balls nods in affirmation.

BALLS  
Yeah. I'm just so grateful I can  
grow such a hefty beard. You know  
what I mean? Do I look like a  
disciple?

CHRISTINE (O.S.)  
Babe?!

He picks up the smashed roll of paper towels.

BALLS  
Oh am I doing it wrong? I'm sorry.

CHRISTINE  
Oh my god.

BALLS  
(to everyone)  
This always happens. Half of me  
always living in the play.

Christine takes the soaking roll from him like a baby having  
picked up something dangerous.

BALLS  
It's the burden of my beautiful  
wife.

CHRISTINE  
Oh god. You got it St. Paul.

Balls sits down at the dinner table and picks at the  
leftovers.

BALLS  
Living with an artist, guys, living  
with an artist...

STEPHEN  
By the way, Oyster Bay, we call the  
primary.

BALLS  
You can't call it this far out!



STEPHEN

Yes, we just did, actually.

BALLS

What do you mean?! It's not for  
forever--

CHRISTINE

Babe, they're literally newlyweds!  
(then, to Alex and Tess)  
Plus you two always take the love  
shack attic anyway. This is  
actually perfect.

BALLS

Well I know why... Because we made  
Jalen there.

TESS

We aren't making anymore babies.

BALLS

Well you never know. Oh that's  
true, you didn't even make the  
first two that way. Right?

CHRISTINE

Okay, wow, that's enough.

BALLS

No you have to have--

CHRISTINE

Stop talking.

BALLS

No but you have to have sex.

TESS

We have sex, it's just--

CHRISTINE

(to everyone)  
You know what you guys, maybe  
we should just wrap this  
thing up.

BALLS

Wait, you did have sex to  
make--

ALEX

You know what, we gotta take the  
last train--

CHRISTINE

(trying to stop Balls)  
That's too much gardening for you.

BALLS

--no I thought they put a... No, I  
thought you create a zygote --

**IN THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Tess and Christine finish putting away the dirty dishes.

TESS

Christine, are you baking your  
cookies?

CHRISTINE

Oh, um... Why? Does it smell like  
cookies?

TESS

Yeah.

CHRISTINE

Really? I just-- no, I think my  
kitchen just always smells like  
that. And you know what, also, I  
was heating the food in the oven...  
Do you want dessert?

Tess heads for the door.

TESS

We've already called the Uber.

CHRISTINE

We have fortune cookies!

BALLS

(calling out)

Do you remember Macaulay Culkin,  
when they came back he was changed  
forever and I believed it--

CHRISTINE

Babe, let's walk them out.

**INT. NEW YORK CITY TRAIN STATION, LOBBY - NIGHT**

Alex and Tess are walking through the lobby of the train  
station.

ALEX

You asked about it specifically?

TESS  
Yes, she lied. She was hiding them  
for after we'd all gone when they  
get even higher than fuck. Right?

ALEX  
Christine when she's not high--

TESS  
--So grumpy.

ALEX  
Good thing we didn't tell them. It  
would have been too much for them  
to take.

**INT. NEW YORK CITY TRAIN STATION, TRACK - MOMENTS LATER**

Alex and Tess sit on a bench in between two train lines.

TESS  
Maybe I laid it on a little too  
thick.

ALEX  
Too thick?

TESS  
What?

ALEX  
Why, because one time you called me  
darling? That's like-- I mean, if  
that's your idea of laying it on  
too thick, I mean, that's insane--

TESS  
--Okay! Okay!

After a beat, Tess reaches into her purse. She pulls out a  
cookie. She bites into it.

ALEX  
You took one?

TESS  
Fuck yeah. When I went to the  
bathroom... I was stealing it.

Another bite.

ALEX  
It's going to make you really  
fucking high.

TESS  
That's the idea.

After one more bite, she breaks it in half and gives the rest to him.

ALEX  
(biting into it)  
Fuck it.

They both sit and eat the cookie. Then they both begin to laugh.

ALEX  
You ate more than I did.

The doors to the train open. They walk into the train.

ALEX  
Shit, that was probably really stupid.

They both continue to laugh as they find a seat and sit down.

TESS  
What are you doing?

ALEX  
Oh my god, what am I doing!

He gets up to leave before the train doors close. As the door closes and the train is about to pull away, he knocks on her window.

ALEX  
Hey...

TESS  
(through the window)  
Are you okay...?

ALEX  
(through the window)  
Are YOU going to be okay?

TESS  
I think so. But you're okay?

ALEX  
The cookie hasn't hit me yet.

The train begins to move.

ALEX  
I'll be okay. I'll be okay.

And the train leaves the station. Alex stands alone.

CUT TO:

**TITLE: IS THIS THING ON?**

**EXT. NEW YORK CITY, STREET - NIGHT**

Alex stands at the corner of a street. He's really fucking high.

ALEX  
(sotto)  
Holy shit...

He makes a turn rather aimlessly, heading towards a window he begins to look into.

**EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB (NYC) - NIGHT**

BOUNCER  
What's up?

ALEX  
Just wanna come and get a drink.

BOUNCER  
Yeah, fifteen buck cover.

ALEX  
To get a drink?

BOUNCER  
It's comedy.

Alex nods, not entirely sure what that means.

ALEX  
Is it funny...?

BOUNCER  
It's fifteen bucks, man.

ALEX  
Yeah you already said that. Look  
man I don't have any money on me,  
it's just--

BOUNCER  
Yeah, I don't know what to tell  
you.

(MORE)

BOUNCER (CONT'D)  
(then as someone walks by)  
Hey.

NINA  
Yo.

NINA heads past the two of them, without paying. Alex takes note.

BOUNCER  
Good luck.

NINA  
Thank you.

ALEX  
How come she didn't need to pay  
fifteen bucks?

BOUNCER  
She put her name down.

**INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - MOMENTS LATER**

CLOSE ON--

Alex signing his name onto the sign up sheet.

**INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex at the bar, finishing his drink.

STAGE MANAGER  
Alright, Alex Novak downstairs in  
two minutes.

He looks over at a guy on his laptop and a stack of stapled paper, referring to them both as if coordinating something. This is the STAGE MANAGER of all these venues.

ALEX  
That's me.

BARTENDER  
Well, you better head down there  
then.

ALEX  
Where?

BARTENDER  
Just straight behind you. Down the  
stairs.

The BARTENDER indicates and Alex gets up and heads to the stairs.

BARTENDER  
(re: Alex's jacket)  
Hey hey, why don't you leave that  
with the other ones?

ALEX  
Right here?

In the corner, there is a pile of coats stacked up in a booth.

BARTENDER  
Yeah, I'll watch it.

Alex tosses his atop the pile. He goes to the stairs and goes down. We begin to hear a COMIC on stage wrapping up a set. At the base, he stands with various people. DAN is there.

DAN  
What up man.

ALEX  
How's it going.

DAN  
When you see the light just get  
off, alright?

Just then, overhead the LIGHT comes on over the threshold.

DAN  
There you go. Just talk to them.  
Have fun.

The Comic on stage finishes his set to a round of applause.

KEMP (O.C.)  
(into the mic)  
That was Rolo everybody, Rolo.  
Alrighty, well, I've got a lot of  
familiar names on here, but I'm  
going to shake it up a bit... Let's  
put your hands together for Alec  
Novak? Alec Novak!

Alex heads into a cavern-like room with a SMALL CROWD sitting at tables. He sees the woman, KEMP, who called his name up on a small stage against a brick wall. A smattering of applause. Alex realizes that he is going to have to do this.

ALEX

Fuck.

KEMP

(into the mic)

Alec Novak, everybody!

On stage now, Alex faces the audience.

ALEX

(into the mic)

Um... I don't have a ton of jokes?  
And... um... Actually, my name is  
Alex Novak, for that lady. It's  
okay, my parents won't be mad.

Um... What can I tell you? I think  
I'm getting a divorce. What tipped  
me off was that I'm living in an  
apartment on my own...

(a few laughs)

Yep, and my wife and my kids don't  
live there.

(more laughs)

That was probably the biggest  
clue... I was married for 20 years,  
engaged for two years, dated for  
three. And met a year before  
that... Twenty-six years. Which  
makes sense now because my wife  
used to say that being married to  
me was like running a marathon.

(some laughs)

I don't really know what happened,  
um, to my marriage. I came home one  
day, and my... I guess still wife,  
but... Tess was her name... Her  
name is still Tess.

(laughs)

I plan on letting her keep that in  
the divorce.

(biggest laugh yet)

Um... Yeah, I came home and there  
was a conversation. I remember and  
somebody said "should we end this  
thing," and then there was an  
agreement. I'm pretty sure she said-  
- this is what she meant about not  
paying attention.

(small laugh)

She... I came home... I guess we  
both agreed it was over. Which is  
awesome that at least we agreed on  
that. It was less awesome for our  
two kids.

(MORE)



ALEX (CONT'D)

(aww)

It's okay, they're ten. They're not twins. They're Irish Twins. Which is why I pulled an Irish Goodbye when I left.

(disapproving laugh)

Oh, come on. I thought you guys told jokes, I thought this was a comedy show. Anyway, um... I think I earned my keep here. What do I say... My name's Alex.

Alex comes off stage to applause.

KEMP

(into the mic)

Alex Novak everybody!

Alex finds a passing SERVER.

ALEX

Sorry... Is there a bathroom here?

KEMP

(into the mic)

Alright let's hear it for Jill McKenzie!

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Alex washing his hands taking in what he just did.

ALEX

(sotto, singing)

*Allez, allez, allez.*

*Allez, allez, allez.*

*We've conquered all of Europe,  
we're never gonna stop.*

*Allez, allez, allez.*

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, HALLWAY - NIGHT**

As JILL's set continues, Alex now in the hallway heading back upstairs. NINA, another comic stops him.

NINA

First time?

ALEX

Yeah.

NINA

Stick around and support your fellow comics.

Alex looks on.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

A montage of various comics, Jill, Nina and Dan doing their sets. We see Alex standing, watching.

**EXT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex comes out of the Comedy Club into a group of COMICS, standing outside, smoking.

**EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT**

Alex heads down the New York street into the night.

**INT./EXT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Alex uses his keys to enter his empty apartment. Moving boxes are still half open, the walls bare. He tosses his keys on the counter. Stands there.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Alex lays in bed fully clothed, lost in thought. He looks over to the empty side of the bed.

**EXT. ALEX'S CAR, DRIVING DOWN ROAD TO SCHOOL (MOVING) - DAY**

Alex drives his two sons, FELIX, 10 and JUDE, 9, to school.

FELIX

So what happens now, between Mom  
and you...?

ALEX

What do you mean...?

FELIX

Well, you know you guys told us  
that you'd separated...

ALEX

Yeah.

FELIX

Does that mean you're going to get  
divorced...?

ALEX

I --

He stops himself.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
I don't know, it's like...  
(falters)  
Remember that dragon...?

FELIX  
What dragon...?

ALEX  
At the school assembly, the big red  
dragon.

JUDE  
You mean the lion.

ALEX  
Was it a lion? It looked like a  
dragon.

JUDE  
It only had two people in it.

ALEX  
Huh.

FELIX  
What does a dragon have to do with  
anything...?

JUDE  
It was a lion.

ALEX  
Whatever it was, lion or dragon --

JUDE  
Lion.

ALEX  
It was big and it was brave, and  
that's what I need you guys to be --

JUDE  
That's not it at all. The lion  
chews up the lettuce and that  
brings us wealth and prosperity for  
the new year.

ALEX  
Right. That's it, that's exactly  
it. Right.

FELIX  
Are you going to feed the lion,  
Dad...?

ALEX  
Me...? I don't know. Are you?

FELIX  
I fed it. Because I have goals this  
year I want to achieve.

JUDE  
Do you have goals Dad?

ALEX  
No, of course I do. I've --

FELIX & JUDE  
Dad, you should have goals.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT NYC BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Alex tucks his boys into bed. Kisses them.

ALEX  
(kissing the boys)  
Goodnight.

JUDE  
Love you.

ALEX  
Love you too. Goodnight, no  
talking, alright guys?

He eases the door shut and heads to the couch where he's made  
himself a makeshift bed.

**INT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

A modest, well-maintained home. The boys are around the  
kitchen table with snacks, playing UNO. MARILYN, Alex's  
mother, whispers to Alex from the stove.

MARILYN  
I haven't told your father.

Alex can barely hear her.

ALEX  
What?

She whispers again.

MARILYN

Entre nous.

ALEX

Mom, no, there is no 'entre nous'. We don't have any secrets. The boys know everything. You don't have to whisper.

MARILYN

You don't have to embarrass me. I just told you your father doesn't know.

FELIX

What doesn't grandpa know?

ALEX

That Mamma and I are splitting up.

JUDE

I think you should tell him Dada.

MARILYN

Yes son, that's for you, it's got nothing to do with me.

ALEX

Tell that to our marriage.

MARILYN

Oh look how you're going off, and stop being jealous of my friendship with Tess. I adore her. I love her so much. And look-- You two have always been very different.

FELIX

Dad... Dad, Dad... Dad!

ALEX

And you and dad are twins?

MARILYN

Your father is an immigrant to this country and I've always been a woman who wants the taste of the exotic. And that's what makes it work.

FELIX

Dad... Dad! Can I have some apple juice?

ALEX

Jesus, Mom. Felix, what is it?

MARILYN	FELIX
What? I'm speaking openly in front of the boys because there are no secrets. Pick a lane for crying out loud.	Can I have another apple juice?

ALEX  
(to Felix)  
I already said no, you already  
finished that?

Alex goes to the refrigerator.

ALEX  
Mom, do you have any more of those  
juice boxes?

MARILYN  
Your father drank them all.

**EXT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY**

Alex sits next to his father, JAN, who is sitting on a little camping chair, repairing an OLD MINIATURE HOUSE, which is lined up upon many other little makeshift STRUCTURES. Jan shows off his miniature trinkets. Then--

JAN  
She thinks I don't know. But I  
know. And to me, it's no big deal.

ALEX  
Well, it is kinda a big deal, Dad,  
I think that we're going to get  
divorced.

JAN  
Slow down, slow down...

**INT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

Marilyn plates the boys' lunch and then walks to the window, peering at her husband and son, sitting in the garden together.

**EXT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY**

Jan touches up the paint of one of the miniature houses with a small paintbrush.

ALEX  
That's not what's going on. Nobody  
cheated.

Jan rises and faces his son.

JAN  
Yeah, so what is the problem then...?

ALEX  
I don't know, it's complicated --

JAN  
"It's complicated." You don't have  
to tell me that...

**EXT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, NYC - NIGHT**

Alex crosses the street and makes his way into --

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

We see Alex come into his apartment from work. He sets his bag and keys down, takes off his jacket.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - LATER**

We see Alex, now changed out of his suit, taking clothes out of the hallway closet dryer and bringing them to the counter to begin folding them. Most of it is the boys' clothes. He pauses, looks at his phone. It shows the time is 7:20pm.

**INT. ALEX'S CAR (DRIVING) - NIGHT**

Alex drives out of the city.

**INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT**

Tess picks up the boys' bedroom. Their night light is on. Felix and Jude both brush their teeth with their blinking toothbrushes.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, BOYS' BEDROOM - LATER**

Felix and Jude are tucked up in their beds. Tess is saying goodnight.

JUDE  
Is Dada going to be okay...?

TESS  
Of course. What do you mean...?

JUDE  
I don't know, he's just out there  
on his own.

TESS  
But he's not alone. And he loves it  
when you guys stay with him.

FELIX  
But he sleeps on the couch.

TESS  
Huh?

JUDE  
We sleep in his bed.

FELIX  
Yeah, it's awesome.

**EXT. FAMILY HOME / ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT**

We are in a POV looking at the family home. We realize we are with Alex in his minivan, staring up at the window with the night light glowing in the distance.

ALEX  
(sotto)  
Oh for fuck's sake.

**INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT**

Alex returns to the city.

ALEX  
(to himself)  
Hey there, I'm Alex Novak... How  
you doing tonight? Once again I  
didn't want to pay the fifteen  
bucks so... Here I am. No, I'm  
joking, no, no, no, I'm joking, I  
didn't pay last time, but I was  
willing to pay this time, but I  
wanted to... Um... I wanted to have  
fun. I wanted to have fun here  
tonight. Anybody else want to have  
fun? Yeah?

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

A comic, DAVE, is in the middle of a set on stage.

Alex is at the Hallway threshold waiting to go on. MATT, the comic host stops him.

MATT (COMIC HOST)  
Bathroom is straight down, to the  
right.



ALEX

No, I think I'm next. They called my name.

MATT (COMIC HOST)

Oh...

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, ON STAGE - LATER**

Alex is in the middle of his second set.

ALEX

So a couple of months into it, they bring my folks in for, like, a parent's day. They kind of kept them up on our progress, you know, I'm a teenager at this point. And uh, so they come in, and Pete says, "Alex has been great, he's opened up, and this is what's going on, and this is how he feels about this and this dynamic that's going on at home..." My parents just kind of listen, and we're driving home a little while later and I remember this so clearly-- I was in the back seat of my mom's station wagon, but my dad was driving-- doesn't matter, if my dad was in the car, he was always driving even though it was my mom's station wagon. And I remember her being in the passenger seat and spinning around and looking at me and saying -- "How dare you tell this stranger all our family secrets!"

The crowd laughs.

ALEX (CONT'D)

And I was like, "You made me talk to the guy! You literally paid the guy to listen to the problems-- you set this up! You drove me there!" That's insane, that would be like your partner driving you to an orgy, and then saying, "I can't believe you fucked all those people!"

More laughs.

ALEX (CONT'D)

That was the point of being there in the (first place)-- "You knew where I was going... I was naked in the car!"

(white light)

Anyway, boy this is starting to actually get good and now my time is up. This is so awesome, I will see you next time! Same, place, I'm coming back, we'll meet here, we'll all meet here. Alright, I've been Alex Novak, thank you so much!

**INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE, STAIRWELL - LATER**

Alex ascends the top of the stairs, just finishing his set.

ROLO

Hey sad guy, you hanging out?  
Everyone's hanging out in the back booth, to the right.

Alex stops, considers.

ALEX

Okay, thank you.

**INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE - NIGHT**

Jill, Nina, and Dan are all sitting around the corner booth.

ALEX

Hey, cool if I sit down here?

DAN

Look who's back.

ALEX

Hey I remember you from my-- (first time).

DAN

(with a handshake)  
What up? Dan. What up?

ALEX

Alex.

DAN

Chillin'. How'd it go? I'm surprised you're back.

ALEX  
Really? Was it that bad?

DAN JILL  
I mean... It was bad.

DAN  
What do you even do?

NINA  
Just say it...

DAN  
What is it?

ALEX  
I work in finance.

NINA  
No!

DAN  
If you want to do it again, I'll  
tell you the website. Just DM me.

ALEX  
Alright.

DAN  
All the mics in the city--  
badslava.com and just keep going  
up.

Alex looks at the website on his phone.

DAN (CONT'D)  
You got to go up five or six times  
a week.

ALEX  
Five or six times?!

JILL  
No, sometimes we go five or six  
times a night. On long nights, if  
you have, like, a bit you wanna  
work out, you go five times, by the  
end of the night--

Just then, LIZ the Cellar Manager walks up to the booth.

LIZ  
(to Dan)  
You got a spot. Five minutes,  
around the corner.

ALEX  
(to Liz)  
I'm Alex.

LIZ  
(not even looking)  
Lovely.

DAN  
She's the manager. This is  
the one--

NINA  
Don't make eye contact with  
her!

DAN  
Yeah, look down!

LIZ  
Shut up.

Then, to Alex --

LIZ (CONT'D)  
(pointing to a monitor  
above the bar)  
I have four rooms, you can see  
downstairs, where you just were,  
and--

DEREK (O.S.)  
Stop showing off to your friends  
Laverne & Shirley back there!

DEREK, another comic is at the next table over with Matt.

JILL  
(to Derek)  
Fuck you!

NINA  
We got jobs!

JILL  
I'm Laverne.

MATT  
(to Alex)  
What's your name again?

ALEX  
Alex.

MATT  
Alex, C'mere!

DAN  
Hey man, that's my white slave!

DEREK  
Shut up!

Alex gets up from the booth and goes over to their table.

MATT  
Come talk to some real comedians,  
man.

DEREK  
What's up man?

ALEX  
I'm alright.

DAN  
(shouting over)  
Yo, you hold my pocket when we  
leave!

Matt and Derek bust up laughing.

MATT  
You can't treat comedy like prison,  
man! Dan!

DEREK  
He's scared straightening.

MATT   DEREK  
He's scared straight.                  He's scared white.

MATT  
(to Alex)  
You're going to be alright. How  
often you getting up?

ALEX  
I don't know man, tonight was my  
second night.

**SOME TIME LATER**

Alex is still with Matt and Derek at their table.

DEREK

My pop used to let me watch Def Jam, when I was six, but he would act like he was telling me not to watch it. "Hey, me and your step mom are watching the program, it's on HBO. Go upstairs and watch something else" and then he'd wink at me. I'd be like, oh shit!

MATT

I actually got caught by my dad-- I was trying to watch porn, you know, like the late night, Taxicab Confessions or whatever?

DEREK

Oh yeah, real sex!

MATT

I was trying to watch porn, and it was Def Comedy Jam and I saw Greer Barnes on stage doing a joke about Mike Tyson and Arnold Schwarzenegger sharing a jail cell together-- I was dying laughing and I asked my dad, I was like, "is that a job?" And he was like, "Yeah, you gotta go to college first"-- I've been doing jokes ever since.

DEREK

You gotta write everyday. Open up that diary, Anne Frank. Get to it.

Liz sits down with them.

LIZ

What, what's wrong?

ALEX

You guys just write stuff down all day?

DEREK

(to Liz)

I said to open up his diary so he can write some stuff down.

LIZ

(to Alex)

You gotta write.

DEREK  
Work on your craft.

LIZ  
You gotta write...

**EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex steps out of The Comedy Cellar and puts on his jacket.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Alex is sitting at his dining table with a cup of coffee and a cigarette. He's got a yellow folder, some papers and a pencil. He's writing.

ALEX  
(to himself)  
I was just watching CNN and they said, "It's official, according to scientists..." No. "According to science, it's official, guys get hotter with age." Big win. Then we convinced them, you know what's really hot? Dad Bods. You kidding me? We're on a roll, it's like we're playing with house money now, what else can we get away with? You know what's super hot? Being poor...

**EXT. FAMILY HOME, STREET - DAY**

Alex zips down the street in his vehicle, pulls up to the curb in front of the house and jumps out. He runs to the front door.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY**

A typical school morning. Nothing, but the sound of the boys as they eat cereal. Tess pours herself a coffee...

Suddenly, Alex barges in through the front door unannounced, greets Charlie, all as though he still lives here.

ALEX  
Hello! Good morning! Hey!

TESS  
Hey?!

ALEX  
Look who's here!

They're all surprised, the boys pleasantly, Tess less so.

JUDE  
Dad!

FELIX  
I thought Mom was taking us to school.

TESS  
Yeah, me too.

ALEX  
I know, but maybe there's a surprise outside and maybe--  
(pulling out a car key)  
THIS has something to do with it!

JUDE  
Is that a new car...?!

ALEX  
I'm not sure the term "car" does it any kind of justice. Let's go it's right outside!

The boys rush out with him.

TESS  
Woah, woah, we're eating breakfast here!

**EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY**

The boys climb into a new minivan as Alex tosses their bags into the back and turns around to grab a photo of Tess coming out of the house--

JUDE  
This is sick!

TESS  
Hold on a second.

ALEX  
Gonna immortalize the first moment that you lay eyes on this beauty!

Alex takes a few snaps with his phone as Tess walks towards them, baffled and aggravated. Alex returns back to the minivan.



TESS  
This is not how this is going to  
work.

He closes the tailgate, and turns to Tess...

ALEX  
This gives you the morning off.

He slaps the minivan as though he built it himself, then...

TESS  
From what? Morning off from what?

ALEX  
I don't know... The Olympics are  
HERE in 2 years, you never know  
what you are capable of.

Alex turns to the kids who are playing with the volume.

TESS  
What?! What did you say?!

**INT. FAMILY HOME, BEDROOM - DAY (JUST AFTER)**

Tess on her EAR BUDS is pacing back and forth from the closet  
to the bed putting on SPORTS GEAR, talking on the phone.  
Charlie on the floor.

TESS  
(into the phone)  
The fucking Olympics? Does he think  
that's funny? Fuck him. I mean,  
does he think this is about me? No,  
because it's not...no he didn't say  
it. He never says anything. I mean,  
isn't that typical? Oh my god, you  
should know, you're his mom!

**EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY**

We are with Marilyn, sitting in her car, waiting, as we see  
Tess approach from the distance, coming back from her run.

TESS  
Marilyn?

MARILYN  
I rang the doorbell... I hate the  
phone. I just wanted to see you.

Marilyn gets out of her car.

TESS  
Come inside. You're sweet.

MARILYN  
No, no, Jan doesn't even know I  
left the house. I gotta get right  
back.

TESS  
Okay...

MARILYN  
I just... You both are in shock.  
That's all.

TESS  
I know, it's okay.

MARILYN  
I just want to tell you one thing,  
well two things. One, give yourself  
the grace to feel what you feel,  
unfiltered. And number two... the  
Olympics ARE here in 2 years.

TESS  
Oh my god, Marilyn, fuck you... But  
I get it.

They embrace.

MARILYN  
You do?

TESS  
I think so.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY**

Christine and Tess are sitting around the fire alongside  
Charlie and Lucy.

CHRISTINE  
You gonna start fucking?

TESS  
Immediately.

CHRISTINE  
Yes. Good. New dick. That's what  
you need. Some new deep dickin'  
too. No pity fucks.

TESS

Maybe that's what you need.

CHRISTINE

It's like the one good thing Balls and I have left.

TESS

Really? Y'all ever fuck sober?

CHRISTINE

No. I hate him too much to be able to do that.

TESS

Well, that's a red flag.

CHRISTINE

No duh.

TESS

Hey, I'm gonna play for a club team again, and I've been reaching out to people about coaching.

CHRISTINE

I just worry...

TESS

About what?

CHRISTINE

Look. You have a full life. You're not defined by this one amazing thing you did. So I just hope that enough time has passed that you can re-enter that world without giving it too much meaning.

TESS

Yeah but I'm not going to be able to do that now that you've said that out loud.

CHRISTINE

I'm just reminding you, babe, you have tons of other amazing things --

TESS

--like?

CHRISTINE

Like being a mother. Like this house. I don't give a fuck about volleyball, you're great.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Tess snatches a pillow off the bed and flings it across the room. She plugs in her phone for the night and then she grabs another pillow and lets it fly. She gets into bed.

TESS

(patting the bed)  
Charlie, Lucy!

The dogs climb into the empty bed with her. She pets them and then turns off the light.

**EXT. NYC STREET - DAY**

Tess is walking down the street looking around for someplace.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

We are with Tess in front of a door. Felix opens it. Charlie is there to greet her along with Lucy.

FELIX

Hi Mom!

TESS

Are you lice free yet?

ALEX

I mean, I got it.

Tess comes into the apartment, Jude is in the chair, each boy with their hair held back in bright colored barrettes.

Alex makes his way back to Jude in the chair.

ALEX

(Felix)

This guy's good. I'm just checking this guy. We're probably going to have to check each other.

TESS

Do you have some more paper towels?

ALEX

I do have more paper towels, I just did a Costco run.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

There should be some more in the  
bedroom in the back.

Tess looks back towards the bedroom. There is an ARMOIRE  
against the back wall.

TESS

So... you are using our old  
armoire?

ALEX

Yeah. I took it out of storage  
until I get new furniture. Why, you  
want me to put it back?

TESS

Immediately. No, we just haven't  
talked about that kind of stuff.

ALEX

Yeah, I'm sorry I probably should  
have asked first.

TESS

It's fine.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY CLOSET - LATER**

Alex grabbing the bulk supply package of paper towels, only  
to find Tess looming down on him.

TESS

(whispering)

I think I might have lice.

Tess scratches her scalp as Alex takes a look.

TESS

Are you seeing them jump off me?  
What are you --

ALEX

Let's get you into the chair. I  
think that's what we gotta do.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY**

The boys are laughing while Tess sits in the chair with  
pieces of paper towel on each shoulder, her hair is held up  
in a scrunchy and all the barrettes that were used on the  
boys. Alex is combing through her hair, while Jude directs  
him on how exactly to check for lice by looking at an  
INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO on Alex's phone. It's still a very  
intimate act that clearly is affecting both of them.

FELIX  
Mom is pregnant!

JUDE  
You are so pregnant!

FELIX  
You hooked up with a bug!

ALEX  
Guys stop. That's enough.

FELIX  
But Dad, that's how you said you  
get lice.

ALEX  
I was making a joke because the  
video said it's baby eggs that we  
are looking for. It was a joke. Did  
you hook up with a bug?

FELIX  
No.

ALEX  
But you have lice, so ...

JUDE  
Yeah you did !! You hooked up with  
a bug.

TESS  
You promised not to tell them.

ALEX  
I just couldn't help myself.  
(to the boys)  
You know what, you guys need to  
rehearse, let's go.

He point to the back bedroom.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Let's go, get busy.

JUDE  
I already know it!

ALEX  
Keep the volume down too.

The boys rush out of the room.

FELIX & JUDE (O.S.)  
Keep the volume up? Okay!

ALEX  
No not up, keep the volume down.  
I'm serious about the volume.

FELIX (O.S.)  
Dad, do you know where the loud  
speaker is?

TESS  
So you're really not seeing  
anything? There's no little bites  
or anything?

ALEX  
I don't think so. To be honest,  
just looking, now it's making me  
itch.

TESS  
I know.

ALEX  
I must have it, will you check me?

TESS  
Sure.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Alex is now sitting in the chair while Tess combs for lice through his hair. The boys are down the hall. Felix is on the BASS while Jude is on an ELECTRIC KEYBOARD, both playing notes of what may or may not be the intro to Queen and David Bowie's UNDER PRESSURE.

TESS  
'Under Pressure'?

ALEX  
Oh, that's what that is.

TESS  
(laughs)  
You didn't recognize it?

ALEX  
No, the first forty-million times I  
didn't recognize it.

TESS

They're obsessed. It's all they talk about.

ALEX

That assembly is still so far from now. I wonder where they get their work ethic from?

TESS

Poor boys.

They are silent for a moment as Tess puts the comb down and puts her hands through his hair to move a barrette.

TESS

I may dip my toe into the coaching world.

ALEX

That why you're in the city?

TESS

No, I was in the city because you called me.

ALEX

Oh, I just figured you were already in the city because you said you would come right over.

TESS

Yeah, I wanted to see the half-way house our kids are living in part-time.

ALEX

So glad you got the vibe I'm trying to create here.

TESS

You did great.

(then)

I haven't talked with any programs yet.

ALEX

I think it's great. Any program would die to have you, I'm sure.

TESS

Yeah, I think it's great too.

They sit in silence for a moment.



TESS  
Um, I think you're good.

ALEX  
Good. Okay. Do you want to take a shower and rinse off with some of that special shampoo?

She picks up the shampoo.

ALEX  
Bathroom's just right over there to the left.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM SHOWER - SAME TIME**

Tess's head is under the pressure of the heavy shower, pounding down on her. She notices their kids' shampoo, toothbrush and toothpaste in the holder and smiles, then is touched with a bit of sadness.

She gets out of the shower to towel off. She can just hear Alex and the boys in the other room. She shakes it off.

TESS  
(to herself)  
You got this.

**INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex is walking in from the street. Another COMEDY CLUB.

OPEN MIC DOORMAN  
Can I help you?

ALEX  
Hey man, yeah, I'm here for the open mic?

OPEN MIC DOORMAN  
Right here, just write your name down there.

Alex signs his name onto the yellow legal pad.

OPEN MIC DOORMAN  
You're next.

ALEX  
I'm next?!

OPEN MIC DOORMAN  
Yep, be ready.

**INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex is at bar looking over his typed notes for his set as BOB the comedian get's the white light and wraps up his set.

ALEX  
The light, the light...

Alex makes his way to the microphone.

**EXT. NYC, STREET - NIGHT**

Alex makes his way down the street and shoves his papers into his jacket. He comes upon a falafel joint and ducks in.

**EXT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

Alex is outside eating a falafel. He turns and walks with it. Notices some familiar faces.

GABE  
Yo man. What's up?

ALEX  
I was actually hoping I could just watch and hang tonight?

GABE  
Yeah...

ALEX  
I got fifteen bucks on me.

GABE  
Nah, keep your fifteen bucks, get yourself something nice, go on in.

ALEX  
Thanks man.

Alex takes a big bite of the falafel.

GABE  
You got it, just finish that before you go in.

ALEX  
(mouth full)  
Seriously?

**INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE, BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER**

Alex crashed down at the booth with Kemp and Jill.

KEMP

Hey!

ALEX

Hey.

Alex is practically laying down at the booth next to Kemp.

KEMP

Make yourself comfortable!

ALEX

Am I okay here?

KEMP

JILL

Yeah! No one is sitting here. You're fine.

KEMP

How was your night?

ALEX

It was pretty good. I went and did a different open mic and... Yeah...

KEMP

You know, I've been doing this for 25 years, you know what I mean and I still love it. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. But what I like about you, is that you're so innocent. You're not naive, you're innocent. And that's why it works. So that's good. It comes out of your head, you put it on a piece of paper and you get up there-- It's like therapy, but people can relate to that.

ALEX

I don't know what it is, but I--

JILL

You don't know anything?

ALEX

KEMP

I just know that coming here has ended up making me feel...      Yeah, it's a safe space.

ALEX

Well, a lot better.

JILL

You are good. I mean, you're bad at stand up, but you're good... You have a good heart. You seem like a pure... Like I believe that you just found this thing and now you're in love with stand up--

ALEX

Other than the fact that I'm really insulted... thank you.

JILL

(teasing)

You're really bad.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Jill performs a set on stage, bringing down the house.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - LATER**

Alex is on stage.

ALEX

Oh, I brought my drink up.

He's at a loss of where to put it.

MATT

(from the host chair)

It's okay! Use it!

Alex puts the drink on the audience's front table, nearest the stage.

ALEX

(to the table)

Is this okay?

(then into the mic)

I'm watching it, alright, so don't... Oh please roofie me!

The audience laughs.

ALEX

Oh I'd love to get roofied tonight, please!

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Nina is on stage. We see Alex cross in the background and head into the BAR BACK AREA. He gets a drink and then comes out and watches her set.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, BAR BACK AREA - NIGHT**

Nina finishes her set and passes by Alex on way to get a drink.

NINA  
Water please?

ALEX  
Hey, is it true that you do magic?  
Is that a true story?

NINA  
Oh no, yes. That is my day job.

ALEX  
One of my kids, he's obsessed with magic.

NINA  
Oh no!

ALEX  
Yes and his birthday is coming up  
and mom did this thing and I want  
to kind of add something to it  
would you ever consider doing  
something like that? Is that--

NINA  
Uh, yeah...

ALEX  
Okay?

NINA  
Sure, I'd be down.

**EXT./INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY**

Alex has pulled up in his minivan across the street from the house. He gets out and crosses to the family home where we see RED AND GOLD BALLOONS floating from the mailbox.

ALEX  
(sotto)  
Jude doesn't even like gold. I  
should have picked the balloons.

We see the front door is closed. We can hear the sounds of kids playing and music. The dogs begin to bark. Tess opens the door. Alex stands there. They're both kind of surprised to see each other...

ALEX

Hey.

TESS

Hey. What are you doing out here?

A beat.

ALEX

Uh, no, I just... I wasn't sure what the protocol was, you know...?

TESS

Stop it. Get in here.

ALEX

Okay.

TESS

It's going so good. Will you actually help me put some more food out?

They come into the--

**INT. FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY**

A refrigerator door closes as Alex takes TRAYS OF FOOD to put out on counter. Felix comes running up to him. Alex bends down to hug him.

ALEX

Hi buddy! You having fun?

FELIX

Yeah!

ALEX

Yeah? How's the magician?

FELIX

Good!

Marilyn comes up to the counter.

MARILYN

Your father is sorry he couldn't make it. He's on one of his walks.

ALEX

Okay...

Balls comes into the kitchen from Alex's right holding Charlie the dog.

BALLS

Hey! There he is!

ALEX

Hey. Charlie doesn't like to be picked up.

BALLS

Is that his name?

ALEX

Yeah, did you really not know Charlie's name? After all this time?

BALLS

Dude you look so good.

ALEX

For real?

BALLS

Yeah, yeah, is that.. Did you lose weight? Is that a new sweater?

ALEX

No, I've had this sweater for--

Christine comes from behind him to grab something from the kitchen.

CHRISTINE

It's the guilt eating away at you I'm sure.

TESS

Christine, don't say that.

CHRISTINE

What?

ALEX

Guilt from what? What are you even talking about, Christine?  
Christine, have I done something to offend you? Because if I have, or like, upset you or something then I'm... You know what? Forget it.  
I'm not coming to Oyster Bay.

BALLS

Why not?

TESS  
(breaking the tension)  
It's a birthday party!

**INT. FAMILY HOME (BIRTHDAY PARTY/VARIOUS) - LATER**

- Tess, Alex and the boys all play games with the PARTY PLANNERS and other kids and guests.
- Alex sits with his boys in his lap as Nina performs magic tricks
- Christine and Balls are tucked away in the kitchen.

BALLS  
I think I took too much. I didn't  
know I was holding the dog.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, DINING ROOM - DAY (NOT LONG AFTER)**

Alex and Tess are alone putting candles on the cake..

TESS  
I'm not the reason you're not  
coming to Oyster Bay, am I...?

ALEX  
No. God, no, not at all.

TESS  
I mean, because we can all go. It  
doesn't have to be awkward, right?

They lapse into an awkward silence..

ALEX  
You mean like it is now?  
(off her laugh)  
Hey sorry that I just kind of lost  
it earlier. It's just, I felt  
really attacked by all those guys,  
why we are even talking about  
Oyster Bay at all? It's so far  
away.

TESS  
They're crazy.

ALEX  
They are psychos when it comes to  
planning.

Tess lights the last few candles.



TESS

All I know is we have made a couple  
of wonderful boys. Right?

ALEX

Yeah...

Tess smiles.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, DINING ROOM - DAY (NOT LONG AFTER)**

CLOSE UP on burning candles. And then they are blown out as we RACK to Jude's smiling face and Felix and their parents smiling as we start to hear music--

**INT./EXT. FAMILY HOME (BIRTHDAY PARTY) - CONTINUOUS**

Adults and kids all gather as leaf blowers start up. Tess and Christine pull out mammoth size trash bags filled with strings of paper. DRUMS blast as they begin to gather mounds of paper on top of the blowers which rocket the paper into the sky only to cascade down onto the birthday goer's creating a raining storm of colored paper.

This ignites a free-for-all paper throwing party unleashing everyone's primal instincts to dunk and slam each other with paper.

Everyone is laughing and yelling, a thunder dome of fun. Whatever plagued Alex has been extinguished as he turns into a feral animal along with everyone else. At one point, Tess jumps onto his back and they ride around. It's almost unmistakable in this moment, their connection and joy.

**EXT./INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY (LATER)**

Everyone pitching in to clean up what seems like millions of little bits of paper. Balls saddles up to Alex as they are cleaning up.

BALLS

Okay what's the deal...?

ALEX

You mean with why you still have  
that beard? Even though the play  
has been over for two months?

BALLS

I can't choose when the character  
leaves me, bro.

ALEX

Characters you mean.

BALLS

I actually feel like maybe it's providing like a new thing for casting directors, now that I'm working again. Thank you for coming by the way.

ALEX

Twice. I came twice. And you didn't even go on the second time.

BALLS

I know, that's because that asshole Paul said he was gonna be sick and showed up anyway. But I was psyched because he got St. Paul sick and I went on for two weeks straight. Which was amazing!

ALEX

That was a bonus.

BALLS

And people said that I was like... better.

ALEX

Than him?

BALLS

Yep.

ALEX

I bet.

BALLS

I got recognized on the street.

ALEX

Did you?

BALLS

Somebody literally thought I was a disciple which was great but I think maybe they were like, a Jesus-freak..

ALEX

So not a fan of the play necessarily?

BALLS

Well they saw the play a lot. I think they saw the play almost all the two weeks that I did it. So I didn't really tell them that I was the understudy. But anyway...This is about you. Don't fucking...

(quieter)

Don't fucking change the subject. So let me rephrase it: what's the deal, man...?

ALEX

Yeah, I don't know what to tell you. There is no deal.

BALLS

Okay. You don't want to tell me her name?

ALEX

Alright, if I tell you something, you promise you won't tell anybody?

BALLS

I knew it. What's her name?

ALEX

I've been doing stand up.

BALLS

Oh! I don't know who that is. That's a crazy handle. What, is she famous?

ALEX

No, no, no, I've been doing stand up comedy, on stage, downtown.

BALLS

Ok.

ALEX

What?

BALLS

Is this like a hobby?

ALEX

Well I'm not about to quit my job and go on tour.

BALLS

Ok.

ALEX

Yeah, it's just... I kind of love it. It's great, I, it's actually been kind of amazing. And it's terrifying but I love every aspect of it. And it's something I look forward to.

BALLS

Fuck.

ALEX

What?

Balls takes a deep breath.

BALLS

I knew it.

ALEX

Knew what?

BALLS

Just like, you have always been the funniest guy in the room, since forever, right? Ever since college. And now that you are actually pursuing it--

ALEX

I'm not pursuing--

BALLS

You're going to kill it. It's inevitable. And it kills me that I hate it so much because I have always gotten comfort knowing that you settled. That you are a settler. And I'm the guy, who you know, even though, is going for it, that's my thing...

ALEX

Jesus, Balls.

BALLS

Yeah, I know. It's been a lot for me to carry around.

ALEX

And for the record, so that nothing gets misconstrued, I don't have a girlfriend.

BALLS

Oh you do whatever you want.

ALEX

I don't--

BALLS

--Look, it doesn't matter.  
You don't have to justify  
yourself, I mean you're  
famous now.

ALEX

What are you talking about, man?

BALLS

Look, you don't have to justify  
yourself, listen to me, to anybody.  
Not to Tess, not to anybody, just  
like Tess doesn't have to justify  
herself to you.

ALEX

Justify what...?

BALLS

Nothing...

ALEX

Is Tess seeing someone...?

BALLS

No. I mean, is she open to it? I  
wouldn't know. I don't think so.  
But is she? Yeah, maybe.

Alex is shook by this. And moreover, surprised at himself for  
just how much that notion just hit him.

ALEX

Did Christine say something?

BALLS

Who?

ALEX

Christine?

BALLS

About what?

ALEX

About Tess seeing somebody.

BALLS

No, did she?

ALEX  
I'm asking you!

BALLS  
What did-- Did you...

ALEX  
What did you hear anything?  
What did Christine say?

BALLS  
What did she say?

ALEX  
Dude, I'm asking you!

**INT. FAMILY HOME - LATE IN THE DAY**

Alex puts the last of the trash away. He begins to head out.

TESS (O.C.)  
Hey!

Tess is upstairs continuing to clean up.

ALEX  
(calling out)  
Yeah?

Alex looks up. Tess is standing at the top of the stairs...

TESS  
Are you leaving? I was just  
finishing cleaning up...

He stays where he is. He sees Tess in a different light now...

ALEX  
Yeah, I gotta go.

He's halfway through the front door as he says this and then gone.

Tess looks on, not sure what just happened.

**INT. OTHER OPEN MIC COMEDY CLUB, STAGE - NIGHT**

Alex is on stage at another open mic club.

ALEX  
How you doing?  
(the audience cheers)  
Alright. Oh man, I'm Alex... How's  
everybody feeling tonight?  
(they cheer)  
Good! I'm feeling pretty good. I'm  
recently separated from my wife.  
(MORE)

## ALEX (CONT'D)

(aww)

Oh, thank you. And I think that maybe she's seeing someone. Yeah, I just found out the possibility that she's seeing someone and I'm handling it just fine I think. So I just made up a list of possible worst-case scenarios, which I think is really healthy. Number one: This guy is a radiologist because that would mean he's knowledgeable, he's noble and he makes a ton of money. Terrible. So that's number one. Number two: He surfs. Because surfing is so fucking cool and those guys seem like they are really cool and that they like, can do anything and they drive old trucks, you know and they don't care, they never wear shoes and they never met a jar they couldn't open, you know what I mean? And they don't need to cut their hair or do anything and they're always sun-tanned. And they look like they've got really strong forearms, which is-- thinking about someone you love, like a lady you love with a guy with really strong forearms-- look, my forearms are basically atrophied.

(the audience laughs)

No, that's not true, I actually work out a fair bit, I've got um, what I would describe as a-- and a lot of ladies would describe as a dad bod.

(he gets a laugh)

By the way, it occurs to me that we, men, have done a really good job of convincing women that dad bods are a good thing! You know, "oh he's got a dad bod!"-- It's like, okay, we all got together and conspired, you know what I mean? Anyway. So radiologist, surfer... Nightmare if he was a surfing radiologist because that would be... That would be...

(he takes a breath)

Like what, he's gonna pull up into my house with his dumb, beautiful Porsche and take her out on a date?

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)  
(he falters)  
I mean, what...

He looks up to the balcony above the stage.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Jill, this is where I got stuck.

JILL  
(from the balcony)  
Keep going?

The audience laughs.

ALEX  
Okay... This is the... What did I  
write on my thing? After... What  
did I say after I take them on a  
date? It's right there on the  
thing...

JILL  
(from the balcony)  
It says "I have a small penis"

ALEX  
It does NOT say I have a small  
penis!

The audience laughs some more.

JILL  
(from the balcony)  
It says, "I have a very small  
penis."

ALEX  
Oh, I follow them! I follow them,  
thank you very much, that's my  
friend, Jill, who is very helpful.  
By the way, if I had a small penis,  
I wouldn't need to remind myself!  
(audience laughing)  
I feel like I would...  
(to Jill)  
By the way, I don't!  
(back to his set)  
Anyway... I don't know...

The audience laughs with Alex as he continues on with his  
set.



**INT. OTHER OPEN MIC COMEDY CLUB, UPPER DECK - NIGHT**

Alex is perched at the top of this club overlooking the stage from the balcony as we see a COMEDIAN on the stage in the background. Jill is also on the upper deck next to him.

JILL

I left you a little something.

She points to Alex's yellow folder of material between them where she has written the words "SMALL PENIS" on the folder.

JILL (CONT'D)

Just for you to remember  
confidence...

Alex cracks up.

JILL

The folder is unacceptable.

ALEX

Why? This is where I keep  
everything organized!

JILL

It's just "I'm a dad coming to  
work"-- We don't do that.

(her iPhone)

We have it in here, like adults.

ALEX

I like the way you even wrote it in  
uppercase just so it looks like I  
wrote it. Like a dude wrote it.

JILL

Yeah, yeah I embossed it. I matched  
your handwriting. It's untraceable  
to me!

They share a laugh.

JILL (CONT'D)

I think we should fuck.

ALEX

You and me?

JILL

Yeah. Is that crazy? I think we  
should fuck. Is that crazy? We're  
going to fuck.

Off Alex--

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

Jill is bent over, brushing her teeth. She walks out of the bathroom and we see a figure in the distance get up and begin to walk towards us. It's Alex in his underwear. He leads us to the next room where we see that Jill is in hospital scrubs and a jacket getting her backpack and keys and water bottle to head out the apartment front door.

ALEX  
Are you a nurse?

JILL  
No, I'm a comedian. Are you a  
fucking nurse? Don't let my cat  
out.

And with that she is gone. Alex is left alone in this tiny place with a CAT. The buzzer rings.

ALEX  
(into intercom)  
Jill?

JILL  
(through intercom)  
And don't answer my buzzer!

CUT TO BLACK.

**EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY**

Afternoon band rehearsal is done, parents, children and various instruments return to cars... Alex and the boys head to the minivan.

ALEX  
You guys gonna crush this *Under*  
*Pressure* thing or what?

FELIX  
Gonna crush it Dad.

The boys slide into the back and Alex in the front.

JUDE  
Dad?

ALEX  
Yeah?

JUDE  
Are you sad?

ALEX  
No. Why? Do I look sad?

FELIX  
Tell him.

Jude pulls out Alex's yellow folder.

ALEX  
Hey! What the fuck guys? Sorry.  
Guys, where'd you find this?

FELIX  
By your bed. On one of the stands.

JUDE  
By your bed.

ALEX  
You're not supposed to touch other  
people's stuff.

FELIX  
It was right on your side table!  
How do you expect us not to see  
that?

JUDE  
It was right next to where we  
sleep!

ALEX  
I know, but when people leave stuff  
-- other people's personal  
property, that's obviously their  
property, you don't touch it, okay?  
That's just like a rule, in life.

FELIX  
Yeah but it's weird. Like really  
weird.

ALEX  
Okay, I know. But it's just a joke  
book. Okay?

JUDE  
Jokes?

ALEX  
No, more like maybe jokes that I've  
been thinking about. Well more like  
made up funny stories.

JUDE

But they aren't funny, dad.

FELIX

You write about so much weird stuff. Like a radio-olo-gist.

JUDE

And a surfer.

FELIX

What's a radio-olo-gist?

JUDE

You talk about us and mom?

ALEX

Now look, you guys are real and me and your mom are real, and the radiologist is made up, he's a kind of doctor and the surfer is made up - those are just characters, okay? And it's like I'm... it's like I'm making up stories, because a lot of stuff is changing, right? And it's kind of a way to process it all. Do you know what I mean?

Felix starts crying.

ALEX

Oh no, come on... Hey...

Alex unbuckles his seat belt and comes back into the backseat with them.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, listen, none of that stuff is real. It's all made up stuff. Okay? Come on, it's just made up. None of it's real life, really. You know sometimes you use your imagination to make up stories, you know, and games and stuff? It's like that. It's like the grown-up version of that. I'm just, I don't know what I'm doing, but you can ask me anything and I'll tell you the truth, ok?

JUDE

Ok. But it's weird dad.

ALEX  
I know...life's weird.

At that moment Alex's phone rings.

ALEX  
(into phone)  
Hey Kemp. Okay... Like an open mic  
thing? Really? Wow, uh... Okay,  
when? Tonight? As in, today-  
tonight? No, I don't know-- I don't  
know if I can really step away.

He gives the boys the thumbs up signal and when they give it  
back gets out and walks as he talks and drifts into the path  
of a car trying to get out of the lot, and the car beeps its  
horn --

ALEX  
Wait! Sorry.  
(then, into the phone)  
No, fuck it. I'll do it. I'll do  
it.

**EXT. FAMILY HOME - LATE AFTERNOON (NOT LONG AFTER)**

Tess opens the door to Alex, who's acting all casual.

ALEX  
Hey.

TESS  
(confused)  
Hey.  
(then)  
What's going on? Is everything  
okay?--

ALEX  
Yeah! Everything's great.

TESS  
Are the boys okay...?

ALEX  
Yeah, the boys are great. Hey  
listen, do you mind if I drop them  
off here for a couple hours? I know  
it's last-minute--

TESS  
What the fuck?

ALEX (CONT'D)  
No, no, listen, Tess, please--

TESS  
Listen. Don't ambush me like this  
in front of the boys as though they  
can't come home whenever they want,  
like I'm trying to keep them from  
inside. Come on... That sucks. You  
suck.

ALEX  
You suck!

He heads back to the minivan.

TESS  
Hey, where are you going?

ALEX  
You know what? I got it covered.

TESS  
No where are you going?

ALEX  
Forget it.

Lucy the dog charges out and jumps in the open minivan.

TESS  
Lucy!

ALEX  
(waving the dog in)  
Yeah, good, let's go.. Charlie!  
Let's go!

TESS  
No! Charlie stay!

ALEX  
I've got them all! Don't worry  
about it.

TESS  
You don't even have leashes!

ALEX  
I got my own leashes! I've got lots  
of leashes!

**EXT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

The all pour out of the minivan and head to the house where Marilyn is standing at the porch entrance.

ALEX

Sorry about this, I know it's last minute--

MARILYN

Oh, please, I'm so happy that you thought of us.

ALEX

Are you kidding? Who else am I going to think of...?

**INT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Jan sneaks the last of an apple juice box before Alex comes in and sees that the table's been set for five --

ALEX

Hey, no, no, no... I can't stay for dinner. I've got to get right back to the city. That's kind of the reason I came out here.

MARILYN

It's not good to run around on an empty stomach.

JAN

Read between the lines, Marilyn. He's got a hot date --

ALEX

Dad --

MARILYN

You can still stay for a quick bite.

He's flustered. Jan and Marilyn stare, not sure what to make of it...

ALEX

I can't stay for a quick bite. I've got to get back to the city. If you must know I've got to get changed and I'm going to a comedy club.

JAN

Well you can go later. You want to go later because they usually put the guys who ain't so funny at the beginning, so the pros look better later on.

ALEX

No, I can't be late, because... I'm... I'm one of the guys going up.

JAN

What?

ALEX

I've been doing open mic nights and I just got a call that one comic's MCing at the club tonight-- they agreed to give me 10 minutes on stage. I'm one of the acts, the comedy acts, on stage.

JAN

You...?

ALEX

Yeah. Me.

JAN

So what, you like... tell jokes...?

ALEX

Yeah, well, more like funny stories. About my life.

JAN

What's funny about your life...?

Marilyn, devastated, feels for a chair and sits down.

MARILYN

Oh, Alex, honey, I had no idea your life was so bad.

ALEX

No, it's not so bad.

MARILYN

This is why she threw you out!

ALEX

No, nobody threw me out! Mom, what are you doing?

(MORE)



ALEX (CONT'D)

Nobody threw me out, I left by mutual consent. Everybody knows that. And, by the way, I'm not in a bad place. I'm happy. And doing this-- it makes me feel good. You know, it helps.

MARILYN

How? How does it help to have a room full of people laughing at you...?

ALEX

No, Mom, they're not laughing at me. By the way, it's not bad to have them laugh.

JAN

Son, you know what this is? This is a mid-life crisis. That's what this is. Why don't you just get a motorcycle or a leather jacket?

Alex takes a breath. He knows this is futile.

ALEX

Mom, Dad, I love you both very much, I will see you in the morning, thank you so much.

He walks out.

JUDE

Remember to pick us up in your new motorcycle!

ALEX

Nobody's getting a motorcycle!

**INT. FAMILY HOME, CLOSET - LATE AFTERNOON**

Tess is getting dressed and on the phone.

TESS

No. It's definitely not a date. Because he has a wife and they have children. They've been together for ages. Yes, always just friends. He called because he heard I was putting out feelers about coaching.

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

Alex bursts in, tosses his keys and wallet on the counter, and heads straight to the bedroom to change out of his work clothes.

**EXT./INT. RESTAURANT (NYC), ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

Tess enters from outside into a BISTRO where she is greeted by the HOSTESS, who then leads her through to a tall man, LAIRD, who gets up to greet her in a hug.

**INT. RESTAURANT, TABLE - NIGHT**

Laird sits at a dinner table with Tess who looks great. They are both laughing.

LAIRD

'We're gonna need that hand Roche!'

TESS

Oh my God! Hahaha. I used to slam the floor so fucking hard, and pretend it didn't hurt.

LAIRD

That's what made you a champion, your singular focus, your dedication. That's why when I heard you wanted to get into coaching I had to reach out.

TESS

That's very flattering. I was really excited you reached out.

LAIRD

Half the US woman's volleyball team has come out of our program.

TESS

The truth is I've been missing it every single day since I retired. I knew coaching would be a great way back in, I guess part of me didn't want to accept that I wasn't a player anymore. So much of my identity was wrapped up in it.

LAIRD

I get that. But I'm telling you, coaching fills that void for you. It forces you to shift gears.

(MORE)

LAIRD (CONT'D)

You stop using the phrase, "Back when I played," you learn to make everyone better without comparing them to yourself.

TESS

Is it frustrating?

LAIRD

Yes! Absolutely it's frustrating. But that's just a given. I think it'll always be that way. But for me, I can't tell you how gratifying it is to be a part of a sport as it evolves despite not playing. That's what does it for me. The best part? My three daughters, they love it. They actually think their dad is cool.

TESS

Hey how's Tracy? What a beast SHE was.

LAIRD

She's good. She's in Salt Lake, doing her thing.

TESS

Oh yeah? She skiing? Or...

LAIRD

Polygamy.

TESS

Oh...

LAIRD

Look, it threw us for a loop, don't get me wrong, but... It's all worked out.

TESS

Oh, I didn't know you split.

LAIRD

Seven years now. I have to admit, being single in your mid-to-late 40's is, what's the word, interesting?

TESS

(laughs)

Oh is that the word?

LAIRD

But... I'd be lost without coaching. It saved me.

(changes the subject)

Alright, enough about me. Alex? How's he doing? And you have two boys right?

TESS

Two boys, they're great. Well, adjusting... because Alex and I decided to take a little break.

LAIRD

Oh, no, I'm sorry. I hadn't heard that.

TESS

Yeah... Wait. It's not a 'break'. We split. He moved out. It's over.

LAIRD

Wow. Ok.

TESS

Yeah it's actually good.

LAIRD

I gotta admit, I'm shocked. You two always seemed like a perfect fit to me.

TESS

Yeah me too, but I think we both just slowly grew away from each other, if that makes any sense.

LAIRD

I get that. Well, jeez Tess. I'm glad I reached out.

TESS

Yeah.

(then)

Hey, are you tired? Because I'm not.

LAIRD

I'm not tired. Absolutely not. My buddy says there's a great place right around the corner, actually.

TESS  
Oh, amazing! I'm just going to use  
the restroom. I'll be right back.

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

Now in street clothes, Alex grabs his jacket and keys,  
hurrying out the door.

**INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Tess sits on the closed toilet. She stands, meets her  
reflection, unbuttons the top of her blouse..

TESS  
Yeah, okay... fuck it.

**INT./EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

We see Tess and Laird walking down the stairs off from the  
street and are taken into the room and seated. There's  
laughter and applause. Almost like the place has been  
injected with a new jolt of energy.

LAIRD  
Sounds fun!

**INT./EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex passes the line outside and Gabe the bouncer and enters  
the club only to find it almost unrecognizable. It's PACKED.  
There is a LIVE BAND playing. He notices a familiar face in  
Kemp waiting for him at the landing.

KEMP  
Fuck, cutting it pretty close.

ALEX  
Yeah, sorry. I got held up.

KEMP  
I was starting to think you'd  
bailed on me.

ALEX  
Yeah, no, whatever.

They both walk past the band playing and all the packed  
tables to LIZ seated at a table with a laptop and papers.

KEMP  
You need a drink?

ALEX

No.

Kemp goes to the bar.

KEMP

I need a beer!

Alex heads to the booth area to put his coat down and notices it's now populated with an entirely NEW COTERIE OF COMICS. He finds an empty place to sit but is out of sorts. Kemp joins him.

LIZ

Sam Jay has the light. You have two minutes.

ALEX

Okay.

Alex looks to the monitor over the bar showing the various acts in progress.

KEMP

You're gonna be great!

Alex gets up, and heads downstairs. The stairwell is packed with patrons, he has to squeeze his way down. He checks his notes one last time as SAM JAY finishes her set.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Sam Jay leaves the stage and the MC takes the mic.

MC

Yeah! Give it up for Sam Jay! Keep that same energy. Next comedian coming up to stage-- first time on this show. Yeah, so I need you guys to give him a lot of energy, start clapping, make a lot of noise for Alex... Novak...!

With the generous applause, Tess too welcomes the new comedian to the stage and, to her utter disbelief, her husband takes the microphone...!

ALEX

Yo! How you guys doing tonight?  
Yeah, give it up for our host, he's doing great!

What the fuck...?! Tess is dumbfounded. Laird looks on, baffled too. Tess watches, not sure what parallel universe she's in, gives a face to Laird that says 'WTF, I had no idea'.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Give it up for me, I'm doing great!  
I mean, my personal life is in the  
shitter. Yeah I'm paying rent on a  
shitty apartment and a mortgage on  
a house I don't live in anymore.  
That's fine. And one of my teeth  
hurts-- I don't even know where my  
dentist is. My ex used to handle  
all that, but other than that...  
Hey, I had sex with a woman. Yeah,  
so like I said, I'm doing great.

The audience cheers and claps for him. Tess can only watch on.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I never thought I'd get applause  
for having sex with a woman. "You  
finally did it!" Yeah, no, I had  
sex with a woman, after being  
married for a number of years and  
it was scary. Yeah, but at least I  
was not very good at it. I think  
after 20 years of marriage, you  
know, you just get used to doing  
things a certain way. You know what  
I mean? Sex with your wife-- It's  
fine. It was great, you know when  
you go to an Airbnb? And you go  
into the kitchen and it kind of  
looks the same but it's just a  
little bit different like certain  
spoons are in different drawers. So  
you're kind of looking around,  
you're opening stuff up and I was  
doing that on a human body. I don't  
know, I feel like sex now has  
really changed since back when I  
was out there in the game, 20 some  
years ago. I never cheated on my  
wife, so this was the first--

Tess and Laird keep watching.

LAIRD

Are you sure you don't want to  
leave?

TESS

No. I don't want to go anywhere.

Alex continues on stage.

ALEX

It feels like now there are so many noises that she was making, it felt so animalistic. It just felt like two apes fucking! Obviously apes do not make love, right? Nobody imagines that apes are like this, staring into each-other's eyes, saying "I love you" and "let's come at the some time"-- Apes don't do that shit! Apes are doing it fucking dog-style or ape-style, whatever the fuck it is. I don't know. I gotta tell you, the whole experience, to be honest made me miss my wife. It really did. Which was surprising because we had a lot of fights. And I kind of ended up missing some of our fights, too. Yeah, our fights were psychological? Do you know what I mean? Do you know what I mean by that? All the dudes know what I mean. They're like, "every interaction is a fucking psychological mine field." You know when your wife, or your partner, gets really, really quiet and now you gotta guess what's wrong? And so you have to ask a blanket question-- keep it really general. I remember one time, my ex-wife and I were driving, coming home from a friend's place, and she is so quiet. She's so quiet, like do you remember *Jacob's Ladder*? It was like that. I'm sort of dating myself a little bit, but it was like I was questioning my own existence on the planet it was so quiet.

(MORE)



ALEX (CONT'D)

Just the two of us in the car and I'm so scared of what she's going to say, so I just go, I muster up the courage, "Honey, are you mad at me?" And she looks at me and she goes, "You know, sometimes, I just wish that you'd talk to me the way that you talk to your friends." And I go, "Okay... Dude, my wife is driving me crazy!"

The crowd eats it up and begins to clap.

ALEX

Awesome, you guys have been so great, thanks so much, I've been Alex Novak! Thanks so much, goodnight!

TESS

(to Laird)

Let's go.

We see Tess leave with Laird.

MC (O.C.)

Let's hear it for Alex Novak!

Alex comes off stage--

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, BAR BACK AREA - CONTINUOUS**

Alex comes into the bar back area where Kemp is waiting for him.

KEMP

That was fantastic! Yes! It was so good!

He gives her a hug and gets himself a glass of water.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - SAME MOMENT**

Tess and Laird have made their way to the hallway entrance. Nina is standing at the threshold. The MC stands on stage to intro the next act.

MC

Alex also does comedy at weddings.

TESS

(to Nina)

This is Laird.

NINA  
Nice to meet you.  
(to Tess)  
And good to see you!

MC  
You guys ready for this next  
comedian, say "Hell Yeah!"

The audience cheers.

TESS  
Yeah, you too, we're gonna... Yeah,  
it's a lot.

MC  
Start clapping right now for the  
legend, Mr. Dave Attell!

They walk out as the audience goes nuts.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

ALEX  
(to Nina)  
Yo! How was it?

NINA  
It's so good, I'm so proud of  
you.  
(then)  
You ballsy motherfucker.

ALEX  
Was it really good? I just  
opened for Dave Attell!

NINA  
You just did that set in front of  
your wife!

ALEX  
What are you talking about? What do  
you mean?

NINA  
I respect that. Tess.

ALEX  
What do you mean Tess?

NINA  
I just ran into her and  
Laird, nice guy. Tall?

ALEX  
What are you talking about?

NINA  
Did you not invite them?

ALEX  
No I didn't fucking invite them!

He runs out after them.

EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Alex peels off the left and Tess appears out of nowhere.

TESS

Woah!

(Stopping him)

You found a sitter...?

ALEX

No, I've got them working at the  
falafel place right here.

TESS

They're at your folks' place...?

ALEX

Yeah.

(then, to himself and to  
her)

What the fuck are you --

TESS

What the fuck?

ALEX

What the fuck me? What the fuck  
you!

TESS

You've been moving on, huh?

ALEX

Me moving on? You show up with  
fucking Laird!? Laird!! I always--

TESS

Who I just said goodbye to. What do  
you care?

ALEX

Laird of all people... how long  
have you been fucking him?

TESS

For years!

ALEX

No!

TESS

No.

They stand in silence. Alex lights a cigarette.

TESS  
How long have you been--

ALEX  
Just that one time, I swear

TESS  
...doing stand up comedy?  
to--

ALEX  
Oh. Sorry, I thought you... Stand  
up, I've been doing for a while.

TESS  
So I'm the only one who doesn't  
know you do this?

ALEX  
Actually, tonight was a big night.  
I mean it's obviously bigger now  
that... I usually only do open mic  
nights with like, half the crowd. I  
don't know why I never told you. I  
haven't even really told myself  
that it's becoming a thing.

TESS  
...It's hot.

ALEX  
Really?

Tess walks towards Alex and puts her hand out towards him.

TESS  
Give me a drag.

He gives her his cigarette. She turns away from him and takes  
a drag, exhales. He's just behind her, breathing her in.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Both just lay there, postcoital. Alex lights a cigarette.

TESS  
What's with all the smoking. I feel  
like we are in our twenties again.

ALEX  
I'm just giving myself the grace to--

TESS  
Marilyn?

ALEX  
Ya.

TESS

What the absolute fuck are we doing?

ALEX

Look, I think we're just 'gracing' the shit out of each other.

TESS

Hey, what about the boys? We can't tell anybody.

ALEX

No, of course.

TESS

We can't confuse them. I mean, yeah, cause it's confusing.

ALEX

No, of course not. And yes, it is confusing.

TESS

...I'm sleeping over.

ALEX

Okay, yeah, I have boxers and a t-shirt in the drawer right there.

She gets up, opens the drawer, grabs the clothes and heads to the bathroom. And we are left with him smiling in bed.

TESS (FROM THE BATHROOM OFF CAMERA)

Can't believe you fucked somebody!

Alex just stays silent, knowing there is no right response. She walks back in wearing his stuff.

TESS

Did you fuck her right here in front of our armoire?

ALEX

Come on, I never would have done it front of our armoire. Do you know how sick and twisted that'd be if I did it front of our 'armoire'.

TESS

That was fucking insane.

ALEX

Insane.

TESS  
You kept looking at me.

ALEX  
I always do.

**LATER**

Tess and Alex are back in bed, lights on. Alex continues to smoke.

ALEX  
Have you upped your parenting since we split?

TESS  
Out of necessity.

ALEX  
Yeah, that, but I mean, do you find that you'll like, get off your phone if the boys are around, thinking maybe they'll see you on it less than me? Being more attentive, but only because you want to be better than me? To beat me in parenting?

TESS  
Yeah, but I always do that.

ALEX  
But isn't that ridiculous?

TESS  
Yes, but I always want to win.

ALEX  
Yeah, of course.

CUT TO BLACK.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex is on stage.

ALEX  
Yeah, I knew you'd say that. Unbelievable, the passive aggressiveness. My mom said she didn't want to meddle in my marriage which is exactly what meddlers say before they meddle in your marriage.  
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

My kids, though, I know, they'd probably be happy to know that we're together, but we cannot tell them. Because what if the wheels come off this particular bus? That's what I'm worried about. But until then, I'm just enjoying this wild ride of having an affair with my ex wife.

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, HALLWAY - LATER**

Alex comes off with applause. Gabe the Bouncer has been watching him.

GABE

Hey man, I just came down on my break, I wanted to come and watch your act. You're getting better, man.

ALEX

Thanks man!

He starts to head out when --

JILL

Oh well well well.

ALEX

Hey!

JILL

I heard you crushed the other night with some 'new material.'

She lets that hang.

JILL

(teasing him)

You smoked my weed and you owe me money...

Alex laughs and heads out.

**EXT. COMEDY CELLAR - NIGHT**

Alex is out smoking cigarettes with Matt and Derek.

DEREK

Novak, so let me get this straight. Your main is your side, and your side is your main?

MATT  
The NEW main.

DEREK  
The new main.

ALEX  
Yeah...

MATT  
That's like going to Popeye's and  
getting chicken and chicken on the  
side.

DEREK  
Let me get wings, with a side of  
wings.

MATT  
My grandma used to say, "getting  
back with an ex is like taking a  
shit and trying to put back in your  
asshole."

They laugh.

ALEX  
(walking away)  
Fuck you guys.

MATT  
(calling out after him)  
Fuck you too, Novak!

DEREK  
(calling out after him)  
Love you young Novak!

**INT. VOLLEYBALL CLUB, PRACTICE - DAY**

We are looking through the net at Tess's face, sweat soaked, in complete concentration, waiting, eyes laser focused. And when the moment occurs, we see Tess jump up and smack the ball, crushing it over the net towards us with total precision, and then landing back down to the ground like a panther after it has attacked it's prey.

**EXT. VOLLEYBALL CLUB, PARKING LOT - DAY**

We see Tess walking out of the facility carrying her sport bag. She walks all the way towards us until we realize we are in Alex's minivan as she opens the door. She gets in and just can't stop smiling.



TESS  
You're nuts. What are you doing?

ALEX  
What?

TESS  
You drove all the way from the city  
just to drive me home.

ALEX  
It's only a forty-seven minute  
drive, it's not a big deal.

Silence. They look at each other.

TESS  
This is scary, but fuck it's fun.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Alex and the boys tear away brown paper from a giant framed photo. It's of a woman spiking a volleyball over the net during an Olympic match.

FELIX & JUDE  
Is that mom?!

ALEX  
Yeah, what do you think?

JUDE  
That's so cool.

FELIX  
Pretty cool! Is that from when she  
was in the Olympics?

ALEX  
Yeah! What do you think, it's  
pretty awesome, right?

**EXT. OYSTER BAY TRAIN STATION - DAY**

Balls is resting in an old Wagoneer. He wakes with a start and then gets out and mounts the stairs to the platform just as a train pulls into the station...

**EXT. OYSTER BAY TRAIN STATION - DAY (NOT LONG AFTER)**

Alex, Tess, Stephen and Geoffrey emerge, then Balls is waiting for them on the platform as they exit.

BALLS  
How are you?!

ALEX  
I'm doing great.

BALLS  
You like my 'stache?

ALEX  
What's with the look?

BALLS  
The look? I've got a 4th call back  
of a ranch hand on a western tv  
series.

ALEX  
Good! It's a strong stash.

BALLS  
Thank you! I'm just grateful!

**INT. WAGONEER (MOVING) - DAY**

Alex and Tess secretly touch hands while the others laugh and catch up.

**EXT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE - DAY**

Balls' Wagoneer pulls into driveway. A charmingly ramshackle house on the water. Christine comes out from inside the house to greet everyone. She embraces Tess. She walks everyone in with their bags.

CHRISTINE  
I put YOU in the attic, of course.

TESS  
Yeah, great, thank you.

STEPHEN  
It is so good to be here again.

CHRISTINE  
Relax. You're in the primary.

GEOFFREY  
Yes!

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY**

The group unpacks the groceries and settles in.

CHRISTINE  
Game night, tonight still? Are we  
still doing that?

ALEX  
Yes of course! For sure.

STEPHEN  
Yes, what do we play?

CHRISTINE  
Same thing we play every year.

STEPHEN  
Why don't we play Bananagrams?

EVERYONE  
What? What did you say?

BALLS  
Woah, woah, woah! We know what game  
we're playing!

STEPHEN  
I'm saying why don't we start      --No!  
with Bananagrams--

CHRISTINE  
Why would you change it?!

BALLS  
What are you talking about? It's  
the best game in the-- It's why we  
come here!

STEPHEN  
Okay!

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS**

Christine is finishing setting up a room and walking to the  
staircase.

CHRISTINE  
(calling out)  
Hey guys wait! Don't start without  
me!

She notices Alex and Tess in the other bedroom. Tess suddenly  
breaks apart as Christine enters. She immediately picks up on  
(and misinterprets) the tension, and offers a hand to Tess --

CHRISTINE  
 Come on, y'all. None of this  
 fighting shit. Come on. Fun  
 weekend. Let's go, come on honey.

She leads her away.

CHRISTINE  
 (to Alex)  
 Remember what I said.

ALEX  
 I know...

Alex is left alone...

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, FAMILY ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A raucous after-dinner game of GUESS WHO? (1987 edition) is in progress. Nominally, it's Stephen against Balls, but the others are also involved -- Alex and Christine help Balls and Tess and Geoffrey are with Stephen.

It's competitive, and they are playing house rules: no-one is allowed to use a physical description.

BALLS  
 Yeah so it's our time to ask.  
 Obviously I--  
 (seeing Stephen's  
 remaining characters)  
 Are you sure? Okay...!

STEPHEN  
 Look, I have four left.

BALLS  
 You think!

Balls looks over the board in front of him. He's thinking.

ALEX  
 God I'd love to know what this  
 process is...

They all laugh.

ALEX  
 Does your person hold on to library  
 books past their due date?

GEOFFREY  
 NO!

STEPHEN

What?!

CHRISTINE

That's a good one!

Balls, Alex and Christine flip down those cards they feel have been eliminated...

STEPHEN

You know, every year this does not end well.

ALEX

Okay we're ready to make a guess...

BALLS

Is your person...

ALEX AND CHRISTINE

Joan?

STEPHEN

JOAN!!!!

They erupt in pure elation of getting it right.

**EXT. OYSTER BAY, BACK PORCH - NIGHT**

Alex sits outside on the porch smoking a cigarette. The ocean laps in the distance somewhere out in the darkness. Then, from out of that darkness a figure emerges, Balls wrapped up in a scarf with a blunt nearly spent.

BALLS

Hey!

ALEX

Hey man.

BALLS

What are you doing?

ALEX

Just having a smoke.

BALLS

Can I sit with you?

ALEX

Yeah.

Balls sits down on the step next to him.

BALLS

It's starting to rain.

They sit in silence a moment.

BALLS

You're not going to ask me what I was doing coming out of the fucking darkness?

ALEX

I'm sorry man. What were you doing?

BALLS

I just want to say... I got to hand it to you.

ALEX

You do...?

BALLS

You look happy. Happier than you've been in a long time.

ALEX

Okay.

BALLS

If anything, you're an inspiration. Proof positive that it's never too late for a man of a certain age to turn his life around. Make a fresh start. Find out who you really are.

ALEX

Thank you man.

BALLS

Which is why I'm going to ask Christine for a divorce.

ALEX

What?!

BALLS

No, I hear you. I'm gonna do it. I'm going to take control.

ALEX

What are you talking about, man?!

BALLS

I just told you-- you've inspired me.

ALEX

No, I didn't inspire you--

BALLS

Yeah. You did. I've been unhappy for such a long time, but just too chicken shit to ever do anything about it --

ALEX

Don't do this, man--

BALLS

Why not?! Our son is going to college, and if I get this job, it shoots in Texas. I've never auditioned for something outside the city because I never wanted to be away from Jay. Well, that's over. I want to be happy.

ALEX

Okay, that's fine but that doesn't mean --

BALLS

Don't you want me to be happy...?

ALEX

No, of course I do, man.

BALLS

Give me one good reason why I shouldn't. The stash feels right. It feels feels good.

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM COUCH - NIGHT**

Alex lies on the couch he's too big for staring at the ceiling. Christine comes down the stairs heading to get something in her PJ's.

CHRISTINE

Sorry.  
(the couch)  
Kinda small, right?

She approaches Alex.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

You need more blankets?

ALEX

No, I--

CHRISTINE

Are you sure, this one's kinda old?

Christine sits down on the couch next to Alex, forcing him into a smaller space.

ALEX

No, they seem okay.

CHRISTINE

Need more pillows? Anything?

ALEX

No this is great, thank you.

CHRISTINE

Sorry, I know it's not the biggest couch in the world.

ALEX

It's going to be fine.

She stares down at him. Fierce.

CHRISTINE

Do you want to know my secret?

ALEX

Uh. Do I...?

CHRISTINE

The real reason as to why I despise you?

ALEX

I guess.

CHRISTINE

Because you remind me of myself. Surprise... I've watched you wither away all these years, just keeps reminding me of how hot you used to be, how funny you were-- just magnetic. I was even attracted to you even back in the day. And I'm not hitting on you I'm making a point... watching you disappear in front of my eyes has just been a fucking reminder to me that marriage doesn't fucking work. It didn't work for my parents. I literally watched it kill them, just like it killed you and now it's been doing the same thing me. And I wake up everyday and the first thing I feel is anger. Just fucking angry all the time.

(MORE)



CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

So yes, when I see you I see me  
and I just fucking lash out, you  
know?

(then)

I'll deny we ever had this  
conversation.

ALEX

Okay.

CHRISTINE

But I'm glad we talked. It's like  
we needed it maybe? Get some sleep.

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, STAIRWELL/ATTIC - NIGHT**

Alex makes his way slowly up the stairs and finally up the  
tiny staircase of what we only imagine is the attic.

Tess is there, waiting for him. He slips into her room and  
she closes the door.

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING**

Christine sets the table for breakfast. As she transports the  
breakfast from the stove and oven to the table, she hums and  
sings *Amazing Grace* (traditional). Soon Stephen and Geoffrey  
arrive, pour coffee and join in singing.

Alex and Tess emerge from opposite ends of the room, somewhat  
conspiratorial and settle in as this group of friends fall  
back into the comfortable ease of being together.

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, FAMILY ROOM/KITCHEN - MORNING**

The gang, all still in their pajamas have demolished  
breakfast... Stephen tings his orange juice to make a speech.

STEPHEN

I know it's been a difficult time  
for some, a lot of change, but...  
that's okay. I read a line in a  
book once, I don't remember it  
exactly, but it was like... "People  
change, but love is always the  
same."

(nothing from them)

Anybody?

CHRISTINE

Not sure how that relates exactly  
but okay.

(then)

But actually...

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

Since you brought it up, I have my own toast that I would like to make, to a very special friend of mine.

GEOFFREY

Oh, thank you.

He gets a laugh. Christine ploughs on.

CHRISTINE

Her name is Tess. As you all know, she recently returned to her life's passion, and even though she's only been at it for a short time, what like a few months?

TESS

(hesitant)

Yeah but...

CHRISTINE

No this is amazing!

(to everyone)

She's already been asked to be the assistant coach for the US women's team LA 28'!

Alex, although surprised, joins in the cheers. Tess smiles, but looks to see his reaction...

**EXT. BACKYARD, OUTSIDE OF HOUSE - DAY**

Tess and Alex come out of the house and walk towards the bluff. The house behind them.

TESS

Okay, so... It was not supposed to go down like that.

ALEX

Don't worry about it.

TESS

I'm really sorry she announced it. She happened to be at the house.

ALEX

It's totally fine, it's okay!

TESS

It's such a big deal.

ALEX  
It's great news!

TESS  
It's such a big deal to tell  
you.

ALEX  
I know!

TESS  
But it is a big deal! That they  
asked me?!

ALEX  
It's a huge deal! You deserve  
it!

TESS  
But I have no idea if I want  
to do it.

ALEX  
You should!

TESS  
It would be a lot. It would be a  
lot, you know, and the boys... I  
don't know how I feel. I don't even  
know what it would be like or what  
the commitment is.

Alex takes his phone.

ALEX  
Here look at this.

He pulls up a photo of his new apartment.

TESS  
What?

ALEX  
So funny, I just... Look at that.  
That's you.

Alex zooms into the photo to a huge hanging frame and we see  
it's the photo of Tess from the Olympics.

TESS  
Wait, where is this?

ALEX  
I found that photo of you and I  
blew it up and put it up on the  
wall of my apartment. Because I  
wanted the boys to see what a  
legend their mom is.

TESS

What? Why didn't you pick a photo of me with the kids for your wall?

ALEX

No, because I got a photo of you in the height of your power-- Look at you! Look how high you are! That is sick, I mean are you kidding, it'd be like--

Alex does his best impression of a jumping spike.

ALEX (CONT'D)

--SMASH! You know? That's unbelievable. It's their favorite thing. I love it too. That photo is awesome.

TESS

It's not me now.

ALEX

Yeah, it is.

TESS

No. It isn't.  
(handing him the phone)  
Here...

**EXT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, BACK PATIO - CONTINUOUS**

We see Christine walk onto the back patio. Balls out after her.

CHRISTINE

Do you have to sleep in till like two-fucking-thirty every day?

BALLS

Why did people wake up already?

CHRISTINE

Oh my god.

BALLS

What are you looking at?  
(seeing Alex and Tess)  
Oh!...

Christine doesn't even acknowledge him.

BACK TO:

**EXT. ROCKY BEACH OUTSIDE OF HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

ALEX

Hey, I'm not sure what's happening right now.

TESS

I'm upset. That's what's happening.

ALEX

Okay...

TESS

You can upset me. And I can upset you. Right? That's what happens in a relationship.

ALEX

I never said that we couldn't get upset. I...

TESS

I know you were trying to do a nice thing. It hurt my feelings. Let's go in.

Tess walks away to head back in leaving Alex.

ALEX

Am I-- do you still want me to come to the attic tonight?

TESS

What?!

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT**

Stephen and Geoffrey plunder the refrigerator and freezer, pulling out Tiramisu, ice cream and cool whip. They are not quiet as they dig in and pig out--

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Alex on the couch, lays wide awake as they carry on in the kitchen.

ALEX

(sotto)

Jesus christ...

He gets up.

INT. OYSTER BAY, ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT

We see the talked about attic for the first time. Tess, lying in the oval bed, reacts to a tap on the door. Music plays soft on a record. Alex comes in, then shuffles over to the bed --

ALEX

The house is busy tonight.

TESS

Did anybody see you come up?

ALEX

Everyone is kind of in their own world.

(then)

I was watching this video about a therapist talking to couples. Had them, as a healthy exercise, ask each other what they don't like about each other.

TESS

That you slept with somebody for starters.

ALEX

Well I only did because I thought you were and I was jealous.

TESS

How you never respond to photos I send you. Photos you always ask for.

ALEX

I always send a thumbs up or a heart-emoji or something.

TESS

I'm sitting there, rushing around, trying to get some perfect angle of a photo of them just so that-- you know, I just felt like a psycho. I felt like an idiot knowing you couldn't care less.

ALEX

I love getting those photos. That's not true.

TESS

How quiet you got at home. As if you were a different person than the one you are with everybody else. That drove me crazy... Well, no first--

ALEX

Jesus you're good at this game.

TESS

First it confused me. Then made me sad, then drove me crazy. As if we clearly weren't interesting enough for you. Or I wasn't. It's like you weren't even there.

ALEX

I wasn't there? You checked out.

TESS

Me?

ALEX

Just like you would after a loss. Except I wouldn't know the cause so I'm just like alone.

TESS

Well, good thing we're not together.

ALEX

Aren't we...?

TESS

Well, I don't think us hiding is us back together.

ALEX

Well, what do you care of what anyone thinks anyway?

TESS

Maybe I'm embarrassed.

ALEX

By what?

TESS

Me.

ALEX

Why?

TESS

Because I'm don't know if you even love me. You love some idea of me hanging on your wall, but not the woman you are looking at right now in front of you in this moment.

ALEX

Please don't tell me what I feel and think. That's not--

TESS

I mean, maybe I don't love you. I don't know. Maybe I fucked you because you fucked that woman or because it felt good to hear you say you missed me in front of strangers.

ALEX

Whoa whoa whoa - that was a fucking stupid thing I did and I hate myself for it.

TESS

Why? We had no responsibility to each other. Even now there is no real commitment.

ALEX

Of course there is.

TESS

To what?

ALEX

To making each other happy. Because we are doing things that make us happy as individuals now... and if we're happy, that's it! Then we make the people we love happy too.

TESS

That's it? What are you, eight years old? A real relationship is finding someone who you can also be UNHAPPY with. Somebody who has your BACK. We stopped having each other's back.

ALEX

I always tried to have your back! Are you kidding me?

(MORE)



ALEX (CONT'D)

There just wasn't enough room  
because you had to have your own  
back, there wasn't any more room  
left on your back.

TESS

Trust me, I heard, 'Alex loves it  
so much. He is always goes to  
everything, he loves it'.

ALEX

I did!

TESS

Yeah? And when I retired? When I  
let go of the thing I loved since I  
was eleven? You shut off. You say  
you felt alone? Baby you left me  
alone years ago in this  
relationship.

ALEX

Okay, you want the truth?

TESS

Yes.

ALEX

I wasn't the downer. You were.

TESS

You're right. I was a downer. After  
years of dedicating myself to a  
thing I thought I could just stop.  
And have my own children and you be  
the replacement. I did.

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, OUTSIDE ATTIC DOOR - CONTINUOUS**

In the dark of the hallway, Christine sneaks up to the attic  
door and presses her ear to the door to listen.

TESS (O.C.)

(through the door)

Never acknowledging that it was the  
end of this whole other life. Or  
where I was going to put all those  
other feelings.

BACK TO:

**INT. OYSTER BAY, ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Alex and Tess are still on the bed.

TESS (CONT'D)

And then I was doing six years of in vitro, and injecting myself full of all those chemicals whatever that was doing-- by the way, I love that challenge. But I was having trouble with you and them being the only thing fulfilling me. And you knew I was struggling. But that I was too proud to ever ask for help. You hid behind that. And I felt relieved that you never asked. Because then I could avoid it too.

BACK TO:

**INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, OUTSIDE ATTIC DOOR - CONTINUOUS**

Christine leans in further to hear more clearly.

TESS (O.C.)

(through the door)

I couldn't ask you that.

ALEX (O.C.)

(through the door)

Of course you could!

TESS (O.C.)

(through the door)

No!

BACK TO:

**INT. OYSTER BAY, ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT**

TESS

Baby! You left me alone!

ALEX

I left you alone?! You checked out! Do you think that was fun to be around?

TESS

I don't wanna go back to that... I won't.

ALEX

So what are you saying then?

TESS

What I'm saying--

And at that moment the door swings open and Christine, who was clearly behind the door listening, falls into the room.

CHRISTINE  
Fucking stupid fucking door...

ALEX  
Jesus-fucking-Christ, Christine.  
Why don't you just mind your own  
fuckin' business for once?

CHRISTINE  
Woah!

ALEX  
Maybe take care of your own shit  
first.

CHRISTINE  
What the fuck is that supposed to  
mean...?

MC (PRE-LAP)  
Everybody make some noise right  
now!

Alex pushes out of the Attic door, seamlessly taking us to--

**INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex charges out of the Bar Back area, headed for the stage.

MC (O.C.)  
My main man, the one and only, Alex  
Novak everybody!

Everyone cheers as Alex mounts the stage. He paces back and forth like a caged animal.

ALEX  
Fucking relationships suck. And I  
don't mean like, they're a downer,  
I mean they fucking suck.

A few laughs.

ALEX  
I don't think you're fucking  
hearing what I am trying to say.  
I'm telling you that relationships  
suck, like if you were in a  
relationship with somebody, they  
are literally trying to suck the  
fucking life out of you.  
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

Okay, they are fucking vampires. And the moment that you are happy... oh boy fucking look out. The moment you are happy, they see that as pure unfiltered fucking blood they will suck out of your fucking body until you are gaunt and fucking drained. And they will take every fucking morsel of it out, because you know why? Because happiness is the sun to them. Happiness is like a stake through the fucking heart. They don't want it. They don't want you to be fucking happy. And there are only two ways out of this fucking bleak, miserable existence. You either become one of them... or you fucking die. Well, I don't want it. I don't want to be a fucking vampire. Okay? I don't want it.

**EXT. COMEDY CELLAR CLUB - NIGHT**

Alex sits on the stoop outside the Cellar smoking a cigarette. Patrons leave the Cellar one by one. Alex pays them no mind, until --

ALEX

Dad?

Jan stops and turns to see his son.

ALEX

What the fuck are you doing here?

JAN

Son! I just...

Jan walks closer to his son.

JAN (CONT'D)

Came down to see what the fuss is. Jesus, you were-- you really yelled at those guys.

ALEX

Yeah, sorry. I don't really know what that was.

JAN

Well, I wouldn't say it was funny, but it was a bit dangerous.

ALEX

Dad...

JAN

Son...

ALEX

Dad listen...

JAN

Son, you're a decent man, Alex. And you can give yourself the grace to work through all of this, you know--

ALEX

Mom?

JAN

Yeah, well, we rub off on each other. That's a good thing. Your mother and I are lucky like that. It's rare. It's really rare, you understand?

Alex breaks down. Jan brings Alex in for a hug.

JAN

It's okay. Come on. There you go.

They pull apart.

ALEX

I'm sorry. I'm sorry about that --

JAN

You don't have to be sorry about anything. Life happens to us. But what we have to do is recognize where we stand and what's good about it. It's going to be okay.

Alex nods.

JAN

Yeah? You work it through.

(Comedy Cellar)

As for this? Next time... few more jokes. See you.

ALEX

See you...

(then)

I'll add "a" joke.

Jan laughs as he walks away into the New York City streets.

CUT TO BLACK.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY**

Alex is awoken by the door buzzer.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Alex opens the door to Balls with a bag and wearing a cowboy hat.

BALLS

Hey man! I've got bagels!

ALEX

Oh, for fuck's sake.

He shuts the door on Balls.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Balls is making a sandwich with one of the bagels, the photo of Tess hanging behind him. Alex preps his coffee.

BALLS

So they didn't say it like,  
outright, but my agent did tell me  
that production called them like,  
several times.

ALEX

Maybe they want their hat back.

BALLS

Will you just let me dream bro? No,  
you are probably right.

ALEX

Look man, I think it's great that  
you got the job and had a great  
experience, but now that you are  
back in town don't you think that  
maybe it's time to face reality?

BALLS

I have no delusions, okay? I know  
they killed my character. But! Just  
think about it. What if, they bring  
him back as ghost seeking revenge?

(MORE)

BALLS (CONT'D)

I sketched out this little storyline I plan to send to production, but I'm definitely going to give the hat back first. But you never know? I'm a good writer!

ALEX

I was talking about your marriage.

BALLS

Oh. What about it?

ALEX

Well, I mean, just, everything that... with Christine, and you leaving her... And all that?

BALLS

Oh, no, no, no, no... We're good.

ALEX

Really?

BALLS

Yeah. We talked it out. She said her piece, which was hard to hear. Which was good. And I said mine. And... yeah... Check this out-- She wants me to go back more than I do. Yeah, she keeps saying, "You should just write them, they need to bring back your character!" Is that crazy?

ALEX

Yeah... Hey man, is there a chance that she's... I don't know, that she wants-- I don't know, that she wants some time away from you?

BALLS

Why?

ALEX

You'll be out of town?

BALLS

She came with me to Texas.

ALEX

Really?

BALLS

Yeah.

ALEX

She did?

BALLS

Yeah. She was with me all 9 days.  
It was her idea to steal the hat.  
Yeah, she thinks I look, you know,  
really handsome.

ALEX

Wow, I'm confused.

BALLS

Yeah, well, confused is good. I'm  
confused most of the time. I just  
like being confused with her. Who  
would have thought Jalen-- I love  
that guy-- going away would  
actually be good for us.

Balls continues to devour his bagel sandwich as Alex just  
looks on.

BALLS

What is that behind me?

ALEX

That's a picture of Tess.

BALLS

Oh! Well I can't see her face?

ALEX

Yeah well, the photo was taken from  
behind.

BALLS

Yeah well you should just turn it  
around.

ALEX

Yeah, I don't think they can do  
that.

BALLS

(thinks about it)  
Someday.



**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Balls is gone. Alex studies the photo, lifts it off the wall, sets it on the floor, and stares at it. Then he turns it to face the wall.

**INT. FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY**

Tess and THREE WOMEN on her staff are all sitting around the table. There is a laptop open and a board showing various photos of players. They are in the midst of recruitment, discussing potential candidates based on their tape and skill set. The DOORBELL RINGS and we follow Tess as she heads to open it.

**EXT. FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER**

Tess opens the door to find Alex. She is immediately on her guard.

ALEX

Hey.

TESS

Hey. Is everything--

ALEX

Yeah everything is fine. I just dropped the boys off at school. I wanted to come by here before I drive back to the city.

TESS

I'm just in the middle of it with the coaching staff.

ALEX

I just wanna show you something really quick.

He takes out his phone and starts quickly scrolling to try and find something. He finds it and shows it to her--

ALEX

Look at that.

TESS

What is that Alex?

Then she realizes it's a photo of her from now-- one where she doesn't look happy at all.

ALEX

It's you.

He zooms in on the photo.

ALEX

That's you, first time you saw the minivan. Look how unhappy you are... it's my favorite thing.

Tess looks closely at the photo.

TESS

I see that.

ALEX

I realized that I was the one who was unhappy. I was unhappy 'in' our marriage. I wasn't unhappy 'with' our marriage. I want to be unhappy with you. Let's be unhappy together.

Tess reaches over and slams her hand against the porch column of the house.

TESS

Fuck!!

She gathers herself.

TESS

I'll think about it.

She heads back inside and closes the door as we prelap the beginning of '*Under Pressure*' being played--

**EXT. FAMILY HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY**

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

Tess is on a run, she comes up the street from the far distance and is making ground.

**INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DAY**

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

Alex comes in and we see a frame picture hung on the same wall of his apartment but the photo has been replaced with the photo of 'unhappy' Tess.

**INT. COMEDY CELLAR - NIGHT**

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

Alex is on stage in his element.

ALEX

And in that moment, I stood up and  
I said, "Hey! Your mom is not going  
anywhere... till she helps me open  
this jar."

**INT. SCHOOL, STAIRWELL - DAY**

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

We are tight on Tess hurrying up stairs in a rush, we can see her athletic ability even here.

**INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY - DAY**

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

Felix and Jude at their respective instruments along with their BAND MATES playing Queen and Bowie's hit. We see Alex in the same gymnasium we first saw him at the beginning of the film.

**INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY - CONTINUOUS**

Alex turns to his left and sees Tess approaching through the hallway having just come up the stairs. She walks up and stands next to him facing their kids and their band and the full assembly.

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS Alex and Tess stand together.

The entire assembly room erupts with joy and passion as the Music Teacher brings them through the final outro of the song. Alex and Tess are overcome with the music and begin to sway together and sing the words.

And as Queen and David Bowie's original version takes over Alex and Tess face one another, the words over-powering us:

*'Cause love's such an old-fashioned word  
And love dares you to care for  
The people on the edge of the night  
And love dares you to change our way of  
Caring about ourselves  
This is our last dance  
This is our last dance  
This is ourselves  
Under pressure*

Alex and Tess kiss and look out toward their kids--

*Under Pressure.*

THE END