

Back Again

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAWN

The sun attempts to peek through the clouds as rain beats down onto an empty highway. In the distance, the soft rumbling of an engine is heard. It grows louder until --

A SMALL CAR whips by, going dangerously fast.

INT. CAR - DAWN

LUCAS, 23, struggles to see out the front windshield as the windshield wipers dart back and forth fighting the rain. His hand rises to adjust the rearview mirror, reflected inside are a pair of sunken, bloodshot eyes.

We peel back to reveal the inside of the car -- a garbage heap serving as his home for the last couple days.

Somewhere, a phone RINGS.

The car SWERVES as he lets go of the steering wheel and searches for the phone. The car veers to the edge of the road. Road bumps echo through the car. Until...

He resurfaces. He grabs hold of the steering wheel as he quickly pulls away, inches away from disaster.

He glances down at the PHONE in his hand. The screen reads: "OLIVER". He blinks, fighting to stay awake.

DEALER (V.O.)
Are you in or out, sir?

INT. BLACKJACK TABLE - HOURS BEFORE

A cigarette rises into the air to meet a pair of trembling lips as they suck in the nicotine.

We push back and come to realize the lips belong to LUCAS seated at end of a crowded blackjack table, half-asleep. Seated around the table is your typical 4 A.M. crowd: a small KOREAN WOMAN, an old REDNECK, and a BLACK WOMAN with arcylic fingernails.

Lucas dozes off, the cigarette still burning in his hand.

Seated beside him is the small KOREAN WOMAN as she impatiently waits.

Not wishing to wait any longer, she gives him a forceful nudge and inadvertently knocks the cigarette from his hand.

Lucas stirs. Sensing something, he glances down at his lap and notices the cigarette burning a hole through his pants. Panicked, he JUMPS out of his chair as he frantically brushes away the ashes.

Once saved he turns back to the table, grinning with relief. He turns red as he's met with an onslaught of glaring faces. He returns to his seat, bowing his head.

DEALER (O.S.)
Are you alright sir?

Lucas glances up and notices the DEALER for the first time. A baby-faced kid wearing a vest and tie standing at the center of the table.

LUCAS
(embarrassed)
Yeah.

DEALER
Well then are you in or out sir?

Quickly, Lucas pulls himself together.

LUCAS
I'm in.

On the table beside Lucas stand a mountain of chips. He grabs HALF and slides them forward. The dealer balks, taken aback. Slowly, he counts it. A hand flies into the air.

DEALER
I need a manager!

The FLOOR MANAGER appears, wearing a suit and tie. He looks down and examines the play then turns to Lucas, incredulous.

FLOOR MANAGER
This is a five dollar table sir.
The maximum bet is one-hundred.
Perhaps you'd feel more comfortable
at our luxury tables?

LUCAS
(beat)
I like it here. Feels lucky.

Lucas nervously waits at the floor manager studies him, apprehensive. Everyone anxiously waits. Finally, he nods.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The floor manager leaves. Everyone sits up in their chairs as the dealer slaps his hand together.

DEALER

Alright ladies and gents, here we go.

The table is silent as the dealer proceeds to dish out the first wave of cards. Once complete, Lucas looks down at his cards.

A 6 & 5.

-- LUCAS (11)

He glances up at the dealer's cards:

A 6 lies face up atop another card lying face down.

-- DEALER (6??)

Lucas sighs, nervous. Across the table, the Old Redneck barks at the dealer:

OLD REDNECK

What do you say fella? Is that a ten under der'?

The dealer shrugs as the old redneck grits his teeth.

DEALER

Round two.

Silence as the dealer dishes out another wave of cards. Uncertain, Lucas looks up at the dealer for guidance.

DEALER (CONT'D)

Book says to double.

Lucas glances over at the remaining half of his mountain of chips. Beat. He slides them forward.

LUCAS

Double down.

The dealer counts the chips to make sure it's even. Nods. Lucas holds his breath as the dealer reaches for another card.

A 9.

-- LUCAS (20)

Lucas exhales, relieved. The Korean woman pats his shoulder.

KOREAN WOMAN
He bust now. You watch.

Everyone anxiously waits as the dealer turns to his pair of cards and prepares to flip over the face down card.

It's a 10.

-- DEALER (16)

The table erupts into APPLAUSE.

DEALER
Sixteen.

Shoulders relax as the last wave of cards are dished out. Everyone "stays", careful not to ruin the dealer's chance of busting.

Lucas grows distracted when he HEARS something from behind. He turns around and notices a small GROUP has gathered to watch him play. They smile and nod in encouragement.

All eyes suddenly dart to the dealer as he reaches for a another card. Lucas returns to the game, now more nervous than before.

A ACE.

-- DEALER (soft 17)

The card is met with groans and "ahhs". Silently, Lucas begins to panic. He shuts his eyes and begins to pray as the dealer reaches for one last card.

LUCAS
(soft)
Please bust, please bust, please
bust...

Everyone watches in eager anticipation. The dealer reaches for the card and everything goes mute.

Lucas opens his eyes:

A 4.

DEALER

Twenty-one.

Everyone bows their heads in disappointment as Lucas stares, silent. He rubs his eyes and counts the cards. Twice. Three times. He looks desperately around the table as heads turn away as if watching a fatal car wreck. Not knowing what else to do, he stands up. Nerves jumping, he turns and runs off. People jump aside as he bolts toward the door.

The sound of the casino floor grows louder until it becomes almost deafening. Lucas nears the door when he halts and bends over. He grabs hold of a nearby slot machine as he grips his stomach. He gags, about to puke. Suddenly, CHIPS BEGIN TO POUR OUT OF HIS MOUTH ONTO THE FLOOR.

The sound of the casino is quickly replaced by the sound a blaring horn...

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - PRESENT NIGHT

Lucas opens his eyes as a bright blur of light shines through the windshield. He squints, trying to see as the horn grows louder. Finally, he jerks the wheel to the side just as a massive SEMI-TRUCK roars by, spraying water.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car pulls off to the shoulder.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lucas hands are glued to the wheel as he stares frighteningly out the window. Slowly, he shuts off the car. A beat.

He SNAPS. A flurry of punches and kicks ensues as he thrashes around his seat, screaming. In the midst of his fit, he catches his reflection in the rearview mirror. He rips it off and throws it out the window. Then, he stops.

He pants, worn out from his fit. He stewes in silence for a moment then turns the car back on.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car pulls back onto the road.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lucas wears a look of solid determination as he continues to drive through the rain. Suddenly, his foot grows heavy on the pedal. He shuts his eyes. One hand lets go of the wheel, then the other...

CAROL

Eventually, I learned all the tricks. All the sneaky, desperate ways to get a buck...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - ONE YEAR LATER

A small group of unkempt, pale, miserable people sit together in a circle inside a dimly lit room. The air reeks of coffee and stale doughnuts. Together they all look solemnly at CAROL (50s), a frail woman with large rim glasses as she pours her heart out:

CAROL

Waiting by the ATM until eight in the morning for the withdrawal amount to reset, going to the liquor store and buying only a piece of gum so I can get a hundred dollars cash back, and even cashing a money order check because they'd give me the money despite my account being overdrawn...

Everyone listens, silent.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I always believed that if I just played again then I'd get it back... but I never did. I would chase the money into the ground and bury myself deeper and deeper until I couldn't climb out of the dirt anymore.

She breaks down, starts to CRY.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I could never win it back!

PAUL (40s), rehabilitated, sits up and clears his throat. He has a warm smile.

PAUL
 Thank you Carol
 (beat)
 This is a lifelong fight, do you know why? Because it's a fight against temptation. A temptation that makes us the thieves as well as the victims. Stealing what we have and what we don't. And we become good at it, really good, because unlike other compulsions it's imperceptible. You can't smell it on our breath or find it in our veins. Therefore, we must continue to come here to bring the enemy out into the light and see him for what he really is.

Soft grunts and nods pass throughout the room.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Now, who would like to go next?

Everyone turns away as Paul scans the room for volunteers. He looks, hopeful. His eyes rest on someone across the room.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Lucas. Would you care to share?

For the first time we notice LUCAS seated amongst the group. Asleep. His face is fuller and has more color than before. It's clear he's at least ten years younger than anyone in the room. Paul stops smiling.

Lucas is given a nudge. He stirs as everyone watches with blank disdain.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Nice of you to join us Lucas. Would you care to share now that we have you with us?

Lucas rubs his eyes and looks around the room. Clearly, he's black sheep.

LUCAS
 (beat)
 No thanks.

Paul boils, offended. He opens his mouth to say something when -- a HAND shoots into the air. It belongs to a BILL (40s), an overweight construction who sweats profusely.

PAUL
(bites tongue)
Thank you Bill. Go ahead.

Nervous drips of sweat beat down Bill's face.

BILL
Hi, my name is Bill... and I'm a
compulsive gambler.

EVERYONE
Hi Bill.

EXT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

The back door burst open as everyone pours out onto the sidewalk. Hands rush to their pockets as they rummage for a cigarette and light up. One addiction replaced with another.

Lucas exits the room wearing a hoodie over his head. He takes a moment to sniff the smoky air. Desperate to get away, he darts through the crowd.

Paul appears, close behind. He scans the crowd for Lucas but doesn't see him. He turns back, giving up when -- he SPOTS Lucas rushing down the street.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Paul hurries after Lucas.

PAUL
Lucas! Hold on a minute!

Lucas hears Paul voice and picks up the pace. Paul hastens.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Lucas! Wait a second!

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Lucas arrives at the stop and groans with defeat. He rolls his eyes and turns around. Paul stands a couple feet away, panting.

LUCAS
You alright?

PAUL
You... walk... really... fast.

Lucas waits for Paul to catch his breath.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You've been coming pretty
regularly. It's good. Shows
commitment.

LUCAS
Sure.

Paul grows nervous, clearly not having prepared for this.

PAUL
You watch sports?

Lucas rolls his eyes and turns to leave.

LUCAS
See ya Paul.

PAUL
-- Wait! I'm sorry. I just want to
ask how you were doing?

LUCAS
(turns around)
Oh you know, same old, same old.

Paul peers at Lucas, lips pursed. Lucas can sense something
is coming.

PAUL
Actually Lucas, I don't know. I
don't know because you don't share.
Ever.

Lucas shakes his head, this being exactly what he hoped to
avoid.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You've been coming here for almost
a year now and we still don't know
anything about you. Look, at your
age, if you get involved now you
can possibly help and motivate
other young people who face this
prob--

LUCAS
I understand Paul, it's just I
don't feel comfortable --

PAUL

Let me stop you right there...

(beat)

We're not strangers Lucas. We don't judge, we don't condemn, we only understand. There's nothing you can say that we haven't already heard.

Lucas nods, allowing the words to sink in. Paul relaxes, sensing a breakthrough.

LUCAS

So why talk?

PAUL

(tries to clarify)

No Lucas that's not what I meant --

Lucas's phone RINGS. He lifts up a finger for Paul to "hold on" and reaches for the phone.

LUCAS

(on phone)

Hey. Ya I'm on my way. Yes I'm coming. Okay. Okay. Bye.

He hangs up.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

I really got to go Paul.

Paul relents, disappointed.

PAUL

Of course.

Lucas turns to walk away. Paul gets an idea.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Wait a sec... how about I give you a ride?

Lucas stops, curses under his breath.

EXT. MOZZA - NIGHT

Paul's car pulls to a stop in front of a fine-dining Italian restaurant.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - NIGHT

Paul looks out the window at the restaurant as Lucas readies to leave.

LUCAS

Thanks.

PAUL

What's the occasion?

LUCAS

It's a blind date. My brother and his girlfriend set it up.

PAUL

That's nice of them.

LUCAS

Sure. It's *nice*.

Paul punches Lucas in the arm.

PAUL

(awkward)

Let's hope she didn't fall off the ugly tree right?

Paul laughs. Lucas stares at him, bewildered.

LUCAS

Uh huh.

Lucas opens the door.

PAUL

Keep you're head up and your chest out. That's what my dad always said.

Lucas forces a grin. Leaves. Paul watches him go, disappointed over they're lack of connection.

INT. MOZZA - NIGHT

The restaurant is elegant and intimate. Lucas enters. He immediately grows self-conscious as he notices everyone is dressed up except for him. He nervously approaches the front desk where a beautiful HOSTESS greets him.

LUCAS

Hi, I'm looking for my party. I'm late.

LUCAS
(furious)
What the fuck is your problem!

OLIVER
Where the fuck were you?

LUCAS
I was at a meeting! It ran late for
Christ sake!

OLIVER
Ran late? Wow I didn't know sharing
horror stories about the good old
days took so long.

LUCAS
Fuck you!

Another MAN walks in. He glances at Oliver and Lucas standing with their faces inches away from one another ready to fight. He quickly finds a stall and shuts the door.

OLIVER
(beat)
You ready?

LUCAS
For what?

OLIVER
(grins)
To meet your date.

INT. MOZZA - NIGHT

Lucas and Oliver find a table where TWO YOUNG WOMEN are patiently waiting. Oliver takes a seat beside his girlfriend EMILY, 24, sweet, smart, and beautiful. A prize. Lucas sits beside DENISE, 23. She's wholesome, innocent, the perfect girl to take home to mom.

LUCAS
Sorry I'm late.

EMILY
(waves him off)
Don't worry about it!
(then)
Lucas this is Denise. She works
with me at the hospital.

DENISE
(shy)
Hi.

LUCAS
Hi.

They awkwardly shake hands. A beat.

EMILY
You look nice Lucas.

LUCAS
Yeah I'm sorry, I didn't know it
was going to be so formal.

EMILY
That's silly. I think you look
handsome. Doesn't he Denise?

She nods, embarrassed. The WAITER arrives. He goes to Lucas
and pulls out a notepad.

WAITER
Are you ready to order sir?

LUCAS
Oh.

Lucas quickly grabs the menu, notices he's the only one.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
No one else eating?

OLIVER
We already ordered. We couldn't
wait any longer.

Lucas bites his tongue and scans the menu.

LUCAS
The prime rib.

WAITER
Wonderful choice sir. How would you
like that cooked?

LUCAS
Medium-rare.

The waiter jots it down and takes the menu. Leaves.

OLIVER

Wow. Someone hit the jackpot tonight?

Emily elbows Oliver.

LUCAS

Nothing wrong with wanting a nice meal is there?

OLIVER

No, but there might be something wrong with wanting champagne on a beer bottle budget.

Lucas glowers at Oliver ready to pounce across the table. Oliver grins, egging him on. Emily tries to intervene:

EMILY

So Lucas, how's the arm?

Both men continue to stare, eyes locked. A beat. Lucas turns away, rotates his arm.

LUCAS

(winces)
Fine.

EMILY

Denise here is a physical therapist. She may be able to help you with any pain you might be feeling.

LUCAS

(to Denise)
Oh yeah? Are you gentle or rough like the Swedes? Do I have to be sedated?

Denise laughs.

DENISE

Depends how you like it.

They smile and lock eyes. There's chemistry.

DENISE (CONT'D)

What happened to your arm?

Lucas suddenly grows nervous.

LUCAS

I got in a car accident.

DENISE
Oh my god. What happened?

LUCAS
It was stupid. I fell asleep.

DENISE
How'd you fall asleep?

OLIVER
(presses)
Ya Luke, how'd you fall asleep? I
must've forgot.

EMILY
(tries to change the
subject)
So honey, how's school going?

OLIVER
You have to say med school babe or
everyone will think it's just
ordinary.

EMILY
(rolls eyes)
Okay, how's med school?

OLIVER
It's fucking competitive. I think I
may have to start parking at mile
away to ensure no one slashes my
tires.

DENISE
That's crazy.

EMILY
He's exaggerating.

OLIVER
Bullshit I am.

He kiss her. Lucas watches with contempt.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
(beat)
Lucas, why don't you tell Denise
what is it you do?

Lucas turns red, embarrassed.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
(to Denise)
He's a waiter.

DENISE
Oh yeah? Where at?

LUCAS
Rodeo Drive.

DENISE
Whoa.

OLIVER
Ya know, where the snobby one
percent live. Lucas loves to rub
elbows with them dontcha Luke?
Thinks maybe some it will rub off.

LUCAS
Fuck off.

EMILY
(cuts in)
--Lucas went to Stanford.

DENISE
Really?

EMILY
Yup. He's going to start law school
in the spring. Right Lucas?

LUCAS
I actually still need to take the
LSAT.

Oliver snickers.

OLIVER
It was mom's big dream to have a
doctor and lawyer for sons.
(puffs out chest)
At least she got one.

The waiter REAPPEARS with the food. He carefully sets down
everyone's plate in front of them. Lucas is last.

WAITER
Prime rib. Medium-rare.

LUCAS
Thank you.

OLIVER

(beat)

Why don't you give the bill to this big spender too? He can take of it, can't ya Luke?

Lucas clenches his fist underneath the table, seething.

INT. OLIVER AND EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily enters holding up a drunk Oliver. Lucas follows, stomping his feet.

LUCAS

You completely sabotaged me back there!

OLIVER

Oh come on, I'll pay you back the money. It's all mine anyway.

LUCAS

That's not what I meant! I mean--
(shakes his head)
Forget it. Never mind.

He storms off into the kitchen. Emily gently hits Oliver.

EMILY

Be nice Oliver. Please.

OLIVER

Whatever. I'm going to bed. I have to hit the books early tomorrow.
(starts to walk away)
You coming?

EMILY

I'm still a little hungry so I think I might grab a snack.

Oliver shrugs and walks off to bed.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lucas sits at the dinner table as he flips through an AUTOTRADER magazine. The door opens and in comes Emily.

EMILY

Thinking about buying a car?

LUCAS

(sighs)
I'd love to not take the bus
anymore.

EMILY

Is it that bad?

LUCAS

It's hell on earth.

EMILY

(smirks)
Have you asked Oliver?

Lucas stares.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Okay, how about your mom?

LUCAS

After the accident I doubt it. She
probably doesn't want me behind the
wheel ever again.

Emily goes to the fridge and pulls out a yogurt. She finds a
spoon in the drawer and takes a seat at the other end of the
table.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Still hungry?

EMILY

Mozza is overrated. I prefer Milo
and Olive.

LUCAS

In Santa Monica? I love that place.

EMILY

The burrata pizza?

LUCAS

Stop it or I'm going to start
drooling.

They laugh, sharing a nice moment. A beat. Lucas suddenly
grows uneasy, he stops laughing and turns away. Emily frowns.

Silently, they eat. Emily looks at Lucas, something clearly
on her mind. She gets up and takes a seat beside him, panic-
stricken.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
What happened?

EMILY
I have to tell you something that I
don't want to tell you.

LUCAS
Then don't.

She takes a deep breath.

EMILY
I'm pregnant.

LUCAS
WHAT!?

EMILY
Shhh! Please! I don't want Oliver
to hear!

LUCAS
(lowers his voice)
He doesn't know?

She shakes her head.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Christ... Why are you telling me
then?

EMILY
Because I need your help.

LUCAS
What for? I'm sure as fuck am not
going to tell him if that's what
you want.

EMILY
No no no. I want to get rid of it
and I need someone to take me to
the clinic and pick me up.

LUCAS
(gets serious)
Oh... But you're a nurse? Don't you
have friends or co-workers who are
much better suited for that kind of
shit?

EMILY

I don't want anyone at work to know.

LUCAS

Oh come on, I'm sure if anyone understands --

EMILY

I *don't* want them to know.

Lucas backs off.

LUCAS

Well if it's any consolation I think you're doing the right thing. You guys are way too young and especially with Oliver having started med school it'll ruin --

EMILY

Everything. I know.

Emily looks down at the floor, pensive.

LUCAS

(beat)

Do you want to have a baby?

EMILY

No, not exactly. I mean I do love Oliver, more than anything, so having a son or daughter together wouldn't exactly be the end of the world.

She looks up and they lock eyes. Lucas stands up, angry.

EMILY (CONT'D)

What?

LUCAS

Nothing.

EMILY

What? Tell me.

LUCAS

I just don't understand why someone like you could be so in love with--
(shakes his head)
Never mind.

EMILY

Wait what? What are you talking about?

LUCAS

Nevermind forget it.

He dumps his bowl of cereal into the sink and marches toward the door.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Just tell me when you've made an appointment and I'll take you.

He leaves. Emily stares at the door, confused.

EXT. LUCAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lucas enters and shuts the door. The room is practically bare, furnished only with random, expensive innecessities: Norwegian florescent lamps, a large rustic chest from India, cashmere throw blankets, etc. Items selected out of GQ's "must have accessories".

Lucas flops onto bed and buries his face into a pillow. Screams. After a moment he flips over and grabs the remote. He flips through the channels, searching for a distraction. He stops. On the screen: THE WORLD SERIES OF POKER. He smiles.

INT. BUS - DAY

The bus is packed with the poor and underprivileged. Lucas leans his head against the window as Los Angeles floats by. Movie stars and the homeless share the sidewalk.

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucas is kneeled behind the television as he fumbles with the wires. SHARON, 50s, beautiful but worn down by years of stress watches Lucas in awe if looking at a magic trick.

SHARON

Thank you my love. When it comes to these things you know I'm technologically inept.

Lucas gets up, finished.

LUCAS

Done. Cable officially set up.

SHARON
Does that mean I can watch Game Of
Thrones now?

LUCAS
Yes mom.

SHARON
Hooray!

She claps her hands excitedly. Lucas takes a seat on the
couch.

LUCAS
How are you?

SHARON
I'm fine. I've been going out with
friends a lot. Museums. The beach.

LUCAS
Thanks great mom. You need to start
having fun again.

SHARON
(sad smile)
Yeah. I know.

Lucas notices a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH standing on a table beside
him. He grabs it.

LUCAS
Is this...?

Sharon moves next to him, grabs his shoulder.

SHARON
That's back when you and Oliver
were kids and we took that cruise
to the Cayman Islands.

INSERT PHOTOGRAPH: A BURLY MAN PLAYFULLY HOLDS UP A YOUNG
OLIVER AND LUCAS IN HIS ARMS.

LUCAS
(nostalgic)
I remember dad saying he'd never
seen the ocean that blue before.

SHARON
It was the best vacation I ever
took.

LUCAS
It even looks like Oliver and I
like each other.

Lucas puts down the photo. A beat.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Mom I want to ask you something?

SHARON
Yes?

LUCAS
I want to get a car. I need one.

Sharon suddenly grows worried.

SHARON
Doesn't Oliver and Emily give you
rides?

LUCAS
Sometimes, but not always. And
taking the bus in LA is hell.

SHARON
(beat)
I don't think that's a good idea.
After losing your father and what
happened to you last year...

LUCAS
Mom, what happened to dad was
different. He got hit by a drunk
driver. What happened to me was an
accident.

SHARON
I don't constitute "falling asleep
on the road" as an accident.

LUCAS
(pressing)
Please, mom I swear--

SHARON
No. I'm sorry Lucas but no way.

Lucas slumps, dejected.

SHARON (CONT'D)
You shouldn't be worried about
buying a car right now anyway. You
should be saving your money.

LUCAS

So what? I have to get used to whatever it is I have now? I can't get anything new?

SHARON

Maybe not now. Not until you pay back what you owe Oliver and I.

Lucas sighs, defeated. Sharon grabs his face.

SHARON (CONT'D)

There's no rush Lucas. You don't have to have everything right now. You're doing great.

INT. BANK - DAY

Lucas stands in line. He looks impatiently down at his watch. Standing beside him is a CUTE GIRL. She grunts, irritated.

CUTE GIRL

Unfucking believable.

LUCAS

Tell me about it.

CUTE GIRL

I swear to god life never gives you enough of what you don't want.

LUCAS

Whoa. And I thought I was cynical.

CUTE GIRL

(embarrassed)

I'm sorry! I don't actually believe that. That's something I just heard from a jaded actor once.

LUCAS

Aren't they all?

CUTE GIRL

Not me. Not yet anyway.

LUCAS

So your an actress?

CUTE GIRL

Correct.

Lucas looks at her and they make eye contact. After a moment she shyly turns away.

LUCAS

Re-financing your home?

CUTE GIRL

No. Some asshole somehow got hold of my credit info online and spent over two thousand dollars of my money. Money I don't have. He bought hotels, airfare, everything. Prick had a nice time and it was all on me. My friends told me to do it on the phone but I wanted to talk and yell at someone in person.

LUCAS

So what? You have to verify the money you spent and what he spent or something?

CUTE GIRL

Exactly.

LUCAS

Well... If your that upset about it you could always take them for more. Probably double.

CUTE GIRL

Huh?

LUCAS

The bank. You could tell them that you don't remember twice as many of the charges made and get even more money back to you.

CUTE GIRL

Wouldn't they know I was lying?

LUCAS

Depends. How convincing can you be?

CUTE GIRL

It's not the convincing I have a problem with as much as the lying.

Lucas turns red, afraid he may have said too much.

CUTE GIRL (CONT'D)

Why do you know this?

LUCAS

I don't. I've read things...
online.

CUTE GIRL

Are you trying to convince me or
are you lying to me?

LUCAS

Is there a difference?

CUTE GIRL

I hope so.

They are next in line.

CUTE GIRL (CONT'D)

Looks like I'm up.

LUCAS

It would appear so.

CUTE GIRL

Nice meeting you Mr...

LUCAS

Lucas.

CUTE GIRL

It was a pleasure Mr. Lucas.

LUCAS

Your name?

CUTE GIRL

Ms. Julia.

LUCAS

Not "Mrs"?

CUTE GIRL

Nope.

She walks away. Lucas punches himself in the leg.

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

Lucas sits across from a FINANCIAL CONSULTANT as he types
away into a computer.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT

(reading screen)

Okay, Mr. Sear... oh... oh...

this doesn't look go-- okay. Yeah,
I don't think we're going to be
able to get you a loan today.

LUCAS
(devastated)
Nothing?

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
With your credit and FICO score
being as low as it is... no.

LUCAS
Crap. Where else should I go?

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
To be quite honest sir, *no one* will
lend you a loan with your record.
Actually, if you weren't as young
as you are I would probably
recommend filing for bankruptcy --

LUCAS
Bankruptcy!

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
No. What I was about to say is that
you have time. But you need to turn
things around. Now.

Lucas buries his face in his hands.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT (CONT'D)
May I ask what the loan is for?

LUCAS
I need a car.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
Word of advice... forget about the
car. I recommend you pay off your
debt first.

LUCAS
If I pay off my debt how long would
it take for my credit score to get
up to where it needs to be?

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
It's hard to say. It could take
years.

LUCAS
(crestfallen)
Jesus.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
Look, the last thing you need is
more debt. Save your money.

LUCAS
Yeah, I know.

Lucas gets up to leave. He looks like someone just died.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT
Thanks for coming in.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Lucas exits the bank filled with rejection. Sighs.

CUTE GIRL (O.S.)
Bad news, huh?

Lucas turns to see the Cute Girl standing behind him.

LUCAS
Not great.

CUTE GIRL
Me too. It's looks like its going
to take a lot longer to get my
money back than they previously
anticipated.

LUCAS
But you're going to get it back?

CUTE GIRL
(shrugs)
I guess.

A beat.

JULIA
I didn't take the house for all
they're money if that's what your
thinking.

LUCAS
I figured.

JULIA
Do you like to steal?

LUCAS
No! I was just making conversat--

JULIA
I'm kidding! Relax.

Lucas looks away, embarrassed.

JULIA (CONT'D)
You from here?

LUCAS
Ontario. It's about an hour north.

JULIA
You've lived in southern California
all your life?

He nods.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Lucky. It's perfect weather every
day of the year here.

LUCAS
I'm actually getting the itch to
leave. Go somewhere else for a
while.

JULIA
Like where?

LUCAS
Doesn't matter.
(beat)
I take it you're not from here.

JULIA
D.C..

LUCAS
(surprised)
And you're an actress?

JULIA
It's weird I know. Everyone from
back home is either on their way to
becoming a senator or some activist
for kids with special needs or what
have you.

LUCAS
You must feel like you choose a
pretty selfish line of work.

JULIA

I feel better now that I'm in a city that considers themselves the center of the universe.

LUCAS

(laughs)
Touche.

Julia eyes Lucas up and down.

JULIA

(beat)
Do you have plans Friday night?

LUCAS

I don't think so. Why?

JULIA

My friends and I had plans to go for drinks at a bar near in Weho. Maybe you'd like to come?

LUCAS

Drinks?

JULIA

Yeah. Is that okay? I know you Californians are health freaks.

LUCAS

Ah, yeah I think I can do that.

JULIA

Invite any friends you might want to bring.

Beat.

JULIA (CONT'D)

You do have friends don't you? Please don't make me feel like I'm flirting with the shadiest guy in Los Angeles.

LUCAS

No, um... I got friends.

JULIA

Great. Take my number then.

She gives Lucas her number. Lucas smiles we've never seen him before.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - NIGHT

Lucas walks briskly past designer stores on either side as shoppers come and go. A WOMAN with big sunglasses holding a SMALL POODLE by the leash with jewels around his collar darts by, nearly knocking Lucas over.

Lucas staggers as she continues on, oblivious. As he gains his footing he looks up and sees a MANNEQUIN dressed in a stylish LEATHER JACKET. Lucas stares, envious.

Suddenly a SALESMAN appears and takes off the jacket. He hands it to a HANDSOME MAN, 40s, a brooding older man with designer clothes and a saloon style haircut. A George Clooney type.

The handsome man sees Lucas and smiles.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Lucas rushes through the restaurant hard at work. He bussess and sets tables as the everyone enjoys their meals, oblivious to his presence.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Lucas changes in the back as readies to leave. JACOB (30s), polished and uptight, enters and stares sternly at Lucas.

JACOB
Where you off too?

LUCAS
I got a meeting to go to.

JACOB
Alcoholics or Narcotics?

LUCAS
(nervous)
Neither.

JACOB
Oh, my bad. I have some experience
so I figured...

He trails off. It's obvious this is probably the longest they've ever spoken to one another.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(beat)

I just wanted to tell that you've been doing a tremendous job lately and it hasn't gone unnoticed.

LUCAS

Uh... Thank you.

JACOB

A server position may be opening soon and I'd like to nominate you. I think you have what it takes.

LUCAS

Really? Wow.

JACOB

It's a coveted position and it's a career job. Servers here tend to make eighty to hundred thousand dollars a year. You can easily feed your kids on that.

LUCAS

(blown away)

Holy shit. That's incredible, that's insane, it's --

JACOB

Life changing, yes. As of right now it's just a recommendation but if you keep up what you're doing then I don't see a reason why we wouldn't be able to start training you soon.

With that, Jacob nods and turns to leave. Lucas leans back against the locker, stunned.

INT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Lucas sits amongst the group as he leisurely plays a game on his phone. DAN (40s), a sales clerk with yellow teeth and a hair piece speaks.

DAN

I had been thinking about it for weeks now. I figured, "hey I got this under control. I beat this thing."

I can be like everyone else and just have fun." So, I drive to the reservation, take a seat at the Pai Gow table, and after an hour I'm down two grand and I realize... I ain't having any fun. I look outside and the sun's up and I've lost checking, savings, everything...

Dan's voice begins to tremble.

DAN (CONT'D)

Sometimes I wish I had just been a meth head or a drunk... at least those things can kill you.

He pauses. A blank look comes over his face.

DAN (CONT'D)

I drive over the same bridge every day to work, maybe one day a car cuts in front of me and I try to swerve out of the way, maybe I hit the railing and the car careens over the bridge... and into the water.

Everyone squirms in their seats, the image now vivid in their minds. Paul cuts in, eager to take over.

PAUL

It's not easy but lets remember that life offers second chances. All of us are given another opportunity to start all over agai--

There's a THUD at the door. Everyone turns toward the door. A beat. Paul carries on.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Another opportunity to hopefully do bet--

The door BURSTS open. Chairs SCREECH across the floor as everyone's focus is suddenly diverted. Sensing something aloof, Lucas quickly puts away his phone and follows everyone gaze toward the door. His mouth drops as he sees the HANDSOME MAN standing in the doorway, wearing Lucas's JACKET.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(frowns)

Well if it isn't Troy. Nice to see you again. It's been awhile.

TROY

Hi guys.

Troy waves to the group. He looks as out of place as one can in a place like this.

PAUL

Please, take a seat.

Troy finds a seat across the room from Lucas. Paul continues.

PAUL (CONT'D)

An opportunity to...

He balks, having lost his train of thought.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Damnit...

(beat)

Anyway, lets proceed with the serenity prayer.

Everyone holds hands and shuts their eyes except for Lucas. He blinks at Troy, as if looking at a mirage. His focus turns to the jacket and he grows jealous.

EVERYONE

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

Suddenly Troy opens his eyes. He looks up and notices Lucas glaring at him. A smile slowly creeps along his face. Lucas quickly looks away, exposed.

EVERYONE (CONT'D)

Living one day at a time; enjoying
one moment at a time; accepting
hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all
things right if I surrender to His
Will; that I may be reasonably
happy in this life and supremely
happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.

EXT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Lucas stands outside, contemplating what just happened. He turns to leave as he sees Troy exit the building followed close by Paul. They talk under their breaths as together they go around the corner and into an alleyway. Lucas watches, curious.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Lucas turns the corner and sees both Paul and Troy in the midst of a heated discussion.

TROY

Take it easy, okay. What ever happened to second chances?

PAUL

You don't want a second chance! Second chances are for people that are willing to make a change --

TROY

I've changed! I want to do better. I want to start over.

PAUL

I don't want you coming here and corrupting these poor--

TROY

I'm not going to corrupt anyone okay! I just need some help. I thought that's what these things were for. Help.

Sensing someone watching, they turn and see Lucas. Lucas drops his head and scurries off.

INT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Lucas stands, waiting for the bus. He grows impatient, looks down street for the oncoming bus, sees nothing. He grunts in frustration. As he turns back, sees something out of the corner of his eye.

A MASERATI sits parked across the street sticking out like a sore thumb in this part of town. Lucas scans the street, confused.

TROY (O.S.)

You like?

Startled, Lucas whips around. Troy stands behind him, smiling.

TROY (CONT'D)
You like the car?

LUCAS
(nervous)
Um, ah, ya... it's nice.

TROY
Why thank you. I try to take good care of it.

Troy studies Lucas. Lucas grows uneasy under his gaze.

TROY (CONT'D)
We met today, didn't we? At the store.

Lucas nods, gazing over the jacket.

TROY (CONT'D)
(realizing)
This is yours isn't it?

LUCAS
Not anymore.

TROY
I love it if it's any consolation.

LUCAS
Great.

Troy offers his hand.

TROY
I'm Troy.

LUCAS
Lucas.

They shake.

TROY
(beat)
How old are you if you don't mind me asking?

LUCAS
(hesitant)
Twenty-three.

TROY

Wow. You're just a kid.

Lucas snarls, annoyed.

TROY (CONT'D)

It's just a little unusual. I don't normally see kids your age tackle their demons this early on. It's commendable.

LUCAS

(sarcastic)

I'm honored.

Troy grins, looks up at the bus sign.

TROY

Need a ride?

LUCAS

I'm good.

TROY

You sure? I don't mind.

Lucas looks down the street for the bus. Still nothing. He turns and glances at the Maserati.

LUCAS

It's not very far from here.

TROY

Like I said I don't mind.

EXT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Paul locks up. He hears an engine ROAR to life and turns toward the street. He sees Lucas excitedly climb inside Troy's Maserati. He sighs, worried.

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Troy drives as Lucas is in the passenger seat in awe. He gazes over the car -- it looks almost better on the inside than out. He looks up at Troy. An almost cooler James Dean.

LUCAS

So how do you know Paul?

TROY

Him and I go way back. We used to play craps together back in Atlantic City.

LUCAS

Is that where you're from?

TROY

New York. Uptown.

LUCAS

And you guys were friends?

TROY

More like acquaintances. We'd catch one another at the tables, maybe share a beer, ya know.

LUCAS

Gotcha.

TROY

What was your game?

LUCAS

Huh?

TROY

Your game? The one that sent you spiraling down into oblivion or whatever the fuck have you.

LUCAS

(beat)
Blackjack.

TROY

Ah, Twenty-One. One of my all time favorites.

LUCAS

It began with poker at my buddies place then the casino. After awhile I wanted something a little less complicated. No bluffs and all that crap.

TROY

Just "hit me" or "stay", right?

Lucas nods.

LUCAS
So... how do you do it?

TROY
Do what?

LUCAS
Have all this stuff. I can't afford
a fucking jacket let alone all
this.

TROY
(smiles)
Vision.

LUCAS
Vision?

TROY
Envision how you want your life to
be and then go out and grab it.

LUCAS
Yeah but it could take forever and
sometimes I just want it --

TROY
Now? There's nothing wrong with
that.

LUCAS
It's unrealistic.

TROY
Says who?

LUCAS
Everybody.

TROY
"Where there is no vision, the
people perish."

LUCAS
What's that?

TROY
A proverb. Some people can't see
past the ceiling let alone the
stars. It's why they're destined
for the simple life. Vacations to
Catalina Island instead of Belize,
Old Navy instead of Marc Jacobs,
Hyundais instead of Ferraris--

LUCAS
Or Maseratis?

TROY
Maybe. But that's not you, is it
Luke?

Lucas pauses, thinking it over. Out the window, a gas station goes by. Troy hits the brakes and turns around.

TROY (CONT'D)
Sorry, I need to fill her up.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Troy stands by the car as he inserts the pump. He bends down and talks to Lucas through the window.

TROY
I'm gonna go get a snack. You want
anything?

LUCAS
I'm fine, thanks.

Troy turns and goes inside.

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Lucas smiles as he stares at JULIA'S NUMBER on his phone.

He quickly puts away the phone as the door swings open and Troy gets inside. Holding a bag, Troy takes out a fresh pack of cigarettes and unwraps it.

TROY
(packs it on his palm)
You want one?

LUCAS
No thanks.

TROY
Smart.

Troy opens the pack and pulls out a cigarette. Lights up.

TROY (CONT'D)
Nasty habit I picked up from the
tables.

He reaches into the same bag and pulls out two SCRATCHCARDS.
He hands one to Lucas.

TROY (CONT'D)
You play?

Lucas stares scrutinizingly at Troy.

LUCAS
(nervous)
Isn't this *cheating*?

TROY
Cheating?

LUCAS
It's gambling.

TROY
(laughs)
Christ kid lighten up! Would you
honestly consider this the same as
hitting the tables?

A beat.

LUCAS
I don't know.

TROY
It's not heroin, okay? It's just a
fucking scratchcard. Relax.

Lucas stares at the card, unsure.

TROY (CONT'D)
Sleep on it. If you still don't
want it then tear it up, alright?

Troy starts the car.

TROY (CONT'D)
Now, where am I going again?

EXT. OLIVER AND EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Maserati pulls up to the curb.

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Troy looks up at the building. Smirks.

TROY
So this is you, huh?

LUCAS
Sure is.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Thanks again.

Lucas opens the door to leave.

TROY
Hold on!

Lucas stops, turns and watches Troy take off the jacket.

LUCAS
What are you doing?

Troy hands over the jacket.

TROY
Keep it. You need it more than I do.

LUCAS
No way man. You paid for it.

TROY
I know but I want you to have it.

LUCAS
(skeptical)
Why are you doing this?

TROY
Because I think we have a lot in common.

LUCAS
Like what?

TROY
We both like nice things for one.

LUCAS
Yes but you can afford them and I can't. That's a big difference.

TROY
Well I'm a sharer. How about that?

Troy holds out the jacket.

TROY (CONT'D)
(insists)
Take it.

LUCAS
(relents)
Fine.

He takes the jacket.

TROY
(beat)
You're not like the rest of the
group are you?

LUCAS
Why? Because I'm young?

TROY
No... It's something else.

LUCAS
What?

TROY
I don't know yet. I'll let you know
when I figure it out.

LUCAS
Can't wait.

He gets out.

TROY
See ya.

INT. LUCAS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lucas enters and goes to the closet, opens it. He hangs up the jacket and steps back, smiling. He undresses. He takes off his shirt and reveals a huge SCAR spread across this arm. He proceeds to empty his pockets, finds the scratchcard. He pauses, incredulous.

In a flash he rushes to a piggy bank and takes out a coin. He frantically scratches away the card. Once finished, he takes a step back.

LUCAS
(under his breath)
Holy shit. I won twenty bucks.

His eyes light up.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Lucas and Oliver talk over breakfast. Seized with excitement, Oliver slams his fist onto the dinner table. It echoes through the house.

OLIVER
OF COURSE I'M FUCKING COMING! ARE
YOU KIDDING ME?

LUCAS
(puts a finger to his
mouth)
Calm the fuck down!
(mouths)
EMILY.

OLIVER
(realizing)
Shit.
(lowers voice)
Of course I'm coming tonight. You
have any idea how long it's been
since I've gone out?

Lucas shrugs.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Eight months. I need this.

LUCAS
Okay well can you pick me up after
work?

OLIVER
Sure whatever. Now tell me more
about these chicks.

LUCAS
Well I only met one but she's...
something else.

OLIVER
(gets excited again)
God I hope she's a hipster. I love
their fedoras, their shirts that
never fit, leggings...

LUCAS
Right. Thank you, I really didn't
want to go alone.

OLIVER

Well if you hasn't of borrowed money from every friend you had than maybe you'd have someone else to be your wingman tonight. Luckily for you -- I'm here. Like always.

Lucas scowls as Oliver gets up from the table. He leaves his dirty plate.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

You got this, right?

He walks toward the door.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Oh and you mind if I borrow some of your clothes tonight?

INT. EMILY'S CAR - DAY

Lucas drives as Emily sits in the passenger seat holding her stomach as she stares solemnly out the window. Neither says a word as they listen to the radio.

LUCAS

(beat)

Oliver should have done this.

EMILY

I know. He just has a lot on his plate right now and this would completely through him off of school.

LUCAS

That's an excuse?

EMILY

No, but I don't want to bother him.

Lucas sighs, frustrated.

LUCAS

Whatever.

EMILY

Thanks again. I know I'm not your favorite person in the world but you're very sweet.

A look of guilt crosses Lucas's face.

LUCAS
Don't mention it.

EMILY
So, how are the meetings going?

LUCAS
Okay. Being around that kind of vulnerability can get a little exhausting after awhile.

EMILY
What's it like?

LUCAS
Just a bunch of folks seated in circle crying over spilt milk.

EMILY
Spilt milk?

LUCAS
Yeah. They already made their mistakes so I don't see the use in reliving them over and over again.

EMILY
But isn't it nice you have people you can share with and find some support?

LUCAS
Support with what? Are they going to give me a loan or a job? They can't give me anything I can't find myself. As with sharing... let's just say I don't exactly feel comfortable sharing with a roomful of miserable strangers.

EMILY
Is that what they are? Miserable?

LUCAS
It sure as hell looks like it.

She shuts her eyes, growing tired.

EMILY
Well I think it's a good thing. The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem right?

LUCAS
(beat)
Right.

Emily glances up at Lucas. Beat.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
What?

EMILY
Nothing. It's just that sometimes
you look so much like Oliver.

LUCAS
We are brothers.

EMILY
I know. It's just kind of odd.

LUCAS
(bewildered)
Okay.

She shuts her eyes. Lucas continues to drive, staring out at the road.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Lucas and Oliver march up the sidewalk toward a bar bursting with rock music. Lucas wears the LEATHER JACKET. Oliver eyes it with suspicion.

OLIVER
Nice jacket. How much was it?

LUCAS
Don't worry about it.

OLIVER
Where'd you get it?

LUCAS
It's a long story.

OLIVER
Long story? Did you fall in a well?

Lucas ignores him. They get in line at the door.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I swear to god Luke if this chick
is not at least a nine then I'm
punching you in the stomach.

You have any idea how much studying
I have to do?

LUCAS
You're the one that was dying to
come!

OLIVER
Only if it's worth it. I want
babes.

LUCAS
You have Emily so what do you care?

OLIVER
It doesn't mean I don't like having
something to look at.

Lucas bites his tongue as they get to the doorman and hand
over their IDs.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The bar is packed. Hipsters with skinny jeans and grungy
haircuts fill the bar as they bob their heads to a LIVE BAND
on stage. Oliver grimaces, it's clearly not his cup of taste.

OLIVER
It taste dirty in here.

Lucas scans the bar for Julia.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Where is she?

LUCAS
I don't know.

OLIVER
Well she better be here or I'm
calling the health inspector.

Lucas spots a photobooth across the bar. Inside sits Julia as
she takes silly photos with a HOT FRIEND.

LUCAS
She's over there.

EXT. PHOTOBOOTH - NIGHT

Lucas and Oliver arrive at the photobooth as Julia and her
hot friend stand outside and giggle over their print out.

LUCAS

Hey.

Startled, Julia whips around and sees Lucas. She jumps into the air, wraps her arms around him.

JULIA

(drunk)

Oh my god you made it! What took you so long? Did you have to steal a car?

LUCAS

(turns red)

I just got off work.

JULIA

From your job as a getaway driver?

LUCAS

Christ woman how many times do I have to tell you. I'm not a thief.

OLIVER

I'm not so sure about that.

Julia lets go of Lucas and turns to Oliver.

JULIA

Hello.

Oliver takes her hand and kisses it.

OLIVER

Pleasure.

Julia gives Lucas a strange look. Lucas shakes his head.

JULIA

Nice to meet you.

Julia grabs her hot friend who's back is turn as she listens intently to the band.

JULIA (CONT'D)

This is Olivia.

OLIVIA, 20s, oozes with sex inside a skin tight outfit showcasing a perfectly sculpted body. She turns around to face them, licking her lips.

OLIVIA

Hi boys.

JULIA

Be careful with this one. She can get a little out of control.

OLIVIA

Fuck you bitch! Don't tell them that!

JULIA

What? It's true!

They bicker back and forth for a while. Oliver gazes at Olivia, practically drooling.

LUCAS

I need a drink.

OLIVIA

Yes! Shots!

Olivia runs to the bar and shouts:

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

FOUR SHOTS OF FIREBALL! POST HASTE!

Julia eyes Lucas.

JULIA

I like the jacket.

LUCAS

(grins)
What? This old thing?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Lucas and Julia rub elbows at the bar, flirting.

LUCAS

When can I see it?

JULIA

Never.

LUCAS

Why the hell not?

JULIA

Because it's the most humiliating thing I've ever done and I have to live with the shame every day of my waking life.

LUCAS

It's a commercial for IHOP. How bad could it be?

JULIA

I wear a bikini made of pancakes and waffles... and it's only from behind. Thank god.

LUCAS

(laughs)

But you got paid right?

JULIA

Not much. They really only covered my dues so I took home practically nothing.

LUCAS

At least you got to act.

JULIA

Oh sure, real deep work. My tits might be nominated for an Emmy this year.

LUCAS

I thought you said it was from behind?

JULIA

Well then my ass might get the nomination.

LUCAS

(arms open)

Living the dream.

She punches him playfully in the arm. He laughs.

JULIA

You make fun of me for chasing my dream but what's yours?

LUCAS

(grins)

To swim in my infinity pool in the Hills while the maid walks the dogs.

JULIA

That's boring. What are you passionate about?

LUCAS

I like money, I know that.

JULIA

I'm talking about something more fulfilling. What *moves* you?

LUCAS

(beat)

I studied English Literature at Stanford.

JULIA

(impressed)

You did?

LUCAS

Yes ma'am.

JULIA

Did you like it?

LUCAS

Not really. Shakespeare and Huckleberry Finn can get pretty boring after awhile.

JULIA

What did you want to be when you grew up?

LUCAS

I think Indiana Jones, but so did every kid.

JULIA

You're hilarious.

LUCAS

I thought about going to law school actually.

JULIA

And what happened?

LUCAS

(beat)

I got distracted.

JULIA

So all you want to do is make a lot of money and buy a big house?

LUCAS
Is that a crime?

JULIA
No but it's a little sad.

They lock eyes. He moves in for a kiss. She gets distracted by something at the other end of the bar.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Oh, here we go.

She signals for him to look. He turns around and his mouth drops. Oliver and Olivia are seated in a booth across the bar, making out.

JULIA (CONT'D)
How cute. Oliver and Olivia.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - NEXT DAY

Lucas and Oliver drive together wearing the same clothes from the night before. Lucas sits slumped in the passenger seat nursing a bottle of water, hungover. Oliver drives, furiously screaming at a parking ticket held in his hand.

OLIVER
SEVENTY FUCKING DOLLARS! ARE YOU
FUCKING KIDDING ME?

Lucas winces, sensitive to the noise. A beat.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
(calms down)
Oh well, it was worth it. If that
piece of ass cost me seventy bucks
then it was money well spent.

Oliver pats Lucas on the shoulder, beaming. Lucas groans.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Thank you Luke! Thank you! I needed
that. You don't understand how it's
been for me lately. I've been
feeling claustrophobic, stagnant,
fucking bored.

Lucas sits up, head swimming. He needs to get something off his chest.

LUCAS
Listen, about Em--

OLIVER

I know. It was fucked up. But look... she just couldn't be my last okay? I'm just too young. This can't be it. I'm not married yet. No kids.

Lucas glares.

LUCAS

(beat)

You're an asshole.

Oliver suddenly turns the wheel and pulls over to the shoulder.

OLIVER

(paranoid)

What's your fucking problem huh? You going to fucking tell on me or something?

LUCAS

What? No--

OLIVER

--You're going to rat me out after everything I fucking do for you! I give you a place to stay, drive you around, loan you--

LUCAS

Stop it! I'm not going to say anything okay! Christ! Who the hell do you think I am?

Oliver calms down. A beat.

OLIVER

(stares off)

I don't know Luke. I look at you sometimes and I don't know who I'm looking at. It's some stranger who got inside and talks like you and look like you but isn't you. And it scares me when I can't tell who's who.

Lucas looks down, allowing the words to sink in. Oliver grabs the wheel, pulls back onto the road.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Troy's Maserati sits parked in the same gas station from earlier.

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Lucas and Troy sit together as they excitedly scratch away a handful of SCRATCHERS. Once complete, they slump back into their chairs.

TROY
Anything?

LUCAS
Nothing.

TROY
How many did you get?

LUCAS
About thirty bucks worth but it was really only ten considering I won twenty the last time.

Troy nods as he takes out a cigarette.

TROY
So you had quite the night last night, huh?

LUCAS
The jacket was a success.

TROY
What's the girl like?

LUCAS
Smart. Funny. A real dreamer.

TROY
You sound smitten.

Lucas shrugs, blushing.

TROY (CONT'D)
She know you're broke?

LUCAS
(caught off guard)
I didn't mention it.

TROY

That's could be trouble. Girls don't like guys without money.

LUCAS

I don't think she's the type.

TROY

They're all the type. No woman wants a man who can't take them out on a nice date or two.

LUCAS

(worried)

Shit.

Troy pats Lucas on the shoulder and points to the scratchers.

TROY

So that just means you gotta hit the jackpot baby!

Lucas forces a smile.

TROY (CONT'D)

And you took your brother as a wingman. That's sweet.

LUCAS

Yeah.

TROY

You two close?

LUCAS

Not anymore. He's a real prick.

TROY

What happened?

LUCAS

He's just not the same guy anymore. Growing up we were inseparable. We did everything together: school, parties, same friends. Then after my accident he changed. He became this serious, mad, over-bearing douchebag. He used to treat me like his brother but now it's like I'm his fuck-up son.

TROY

You live together?

LUCAS
I live *with* him is more like it.

TROY
So he helps you out?

LUCAS
Yes but he never lets me forget it.
He's always reminding me how much I
owe him and how much I need him.
Sometimes I think it might be
better if I just slept in the
street. Cause' then at least I
wouldn't have to hear the "after
all I do for you" speech.

TROY
Sounds like you two have one heavy
co-dependent relationship.

LUCAS
What do you mean?

TROY
I mean you depend on him for
support and he depends on you to
owe him something.

Lucas grows troubled.

TROY (CONT'D)
(beat)
So, what should we do now?

LUCAS
Should I get more scratchers?

Troy considers it for a moment. Beat.

TROY
I got a better idea.

EXT. RACE TRACK - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The roar of the track rumbles through the lot as the stadium lights shine out into the sky. The Maserati enters and pulls into an empty parking spot.

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Troy shuts off the car as Lucas glares frighteningly out the window.

LUCAS
(angrily)
Why the fuck did you bring me
here!?

TROY
(nonchalant)
I thought it would be fun.

LUCAS
Turn around! Right now!

TROY
We just got here.

LUCAS
I'm not fucking kidding Troy! Turn
the car around!

Troy doesn't move. He stares at Lucas.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
What are you waiting for?

TROY
I thought you were different from
the rest of them.

LUCAS
What?

TROY
I thought you were better than
Catalina Island and Old Navy.

LUCAS
I never said that. You did.

TROY
Was I wrong? Don't you have vision?

LUCAS
Yeah! I envision having a savings
account! I envision not going back
to square one! I envision me
getting the fuck out of here!

TROY
Have you ever even been to a horse
race?

A beat. Lucas shakes his head.

TROY (CONT'D)

It's not the same thing. It's fun!
You're outside, the air is nice and
warm, you just sit back and enjoy.
It's a social thing. Have you ever
heard of Opening Day?

Lucas shrugs, defiant.

TROY (CONT'D)

It'll be on me okay? You don't have
to spend a dime... although I know
you probably don't even have one.

A beat.

LUCAS

What about the meetings? We can't
just stop going.

TROY

Why not? They won't miss us.

LUCAS

No way.

TROY

What do you care? You don't even
share?

LUCAS

(beat)
I just can't.

TROY

(gives in)
Whatever you say.

Lucas looks out the window at the stadium, torn.

INT. TICKET OFFICE - NIGHT

Lucas and Troy stand in the center of the crowd as they stare
up at the info screens.

TROY

Now, horse racing is a very complex
and strategic art that requires a
shit ton of research and
calculation ranging from the
statistics of the horses to the
various bets you wish to place.

However, seeing as it is your first time we will do the dumbest, stupidest, and womanliest thing we can possibly do... pick a name and bet. So go ahead.

Lucas nervously scans the lists for names.

LUCAS
I don't even know what's what.

TROY
(pointing)
That's the one with the names.

Lucas reads the list, hesitant.

LUCAS
How about "Almond Edmond"?

TROY
Who?

LUCAS
He's a designer... for shoes.

TROY
(smirks)
Well look at you.

INT. STANDS - NIGHT

Lucas and Troy take a seat as they hold a tray of beers and hot dogs. They settle in, waiting for the game to start.

LUCAS
You mind if I ask what it is you do?

TROY
Real estate.

LUCAS
(intrigued)
What kind of homes do you sell?

TROY
All kinds but mostly luxury homes... which in return affords me a couple luxuries.

LUCAS
Why'd you decide to do that?

TROY

I don't know. Maybe because it's easy and also because I can be pretty persuasive.

Troy chuckles.

TROY (CONT'D)

What do you do?

LUCAS

I work at a restaurant.

TROY

You a waiter?

LUCAS

Not yet. Might be soon though. Make a lot more money than I probably ever would with my degree.

TROY

Where do you work?

LUCAS

Rodeo Drive.

TROY

Is that what you were doing? You were on your way to work?

(laughs)

That's funny.

LUCAS

Why?

TROY

You serving tables to the people you want to be. Or at least I assume you want to be like. Kinda like peeking through a window at a life you want but don't have.

LUCAS

Isn't that generally how it goes?

TROY

I suppose.

(beat)

And how much money are we talking?

LUCAS

Eighty to a hundred thousand dollars a year.

TROY

And you'd be happy with that?

LUCAS

No shit. I'd be ecstatic.

TROY

In this day in age and in this city you really think that's a lot of money? Do you really think you can afford all the things you want on that?

LUCAS

Close, sure.

TROY

And you want to still be on the other end of the table? Taking orders instead of giving them? I don't know Luke... that sort of sounds like you're only looking at the ceiling to me. What happen to the stars?

LUCAS

Reality. That's what happened.

The lights burst onto the track signaling for the race to start. Both men sit up in eager anticipation.

TROY

Let's hope this horse of yours can run in designer shoes.

They peer down at ALMOND EDMOND: a strong, well-groomed horse paces behind the starting gate.

The bell rings. The gates fly open and the horses erupt onto the track. The crowd goes wild.

ANNOUNCER

And they're off!

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Doors slam shut as both men climb inside the car. They stare blankly out the window, silent. A tense beat.

After a moment they turn to one another and scream:

LUCAS AND TROY

AHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

They dig into their pockets and each pulls out a massive wad of cash. They toss it into the air. Adrenaline pumping, Troy grabs Lucas by the face and kisses him.

TROY

I fucking knew you were different!
I told you you handsome son of a
bitch!

He lets go. Lucas can't help but smile.

TROY (CONT'D)

And that was out of pure luck!
Imagine if we come back everyday
and play the game as it's meant to
be played.

LUCAS

Everyday? I thought we were playing
just for fun. I thought it was a
"social thing".

TROY

Yes but wouldn't it be nice to make
some real money for once?

LUCAS

Sure but--

TROY

But what?

LUCAS

I told you I don't want to go back
to square one.

Troy settles down. He moves in close.

TROY

What if I had a plan that didn't
involve us going back to square
one? What if it was plan that took
us from here...

(moves hand up then down)

...to here? We pay off this life
and buy a new one. No more debts.

LUCAS

That's what everyone tells
themselves. It doesn't happened.

TROY

Maybe not alone -- but maybe
together.

Maybe if we keep an eye each other
and stop the other from flying off
the handle.

Lucas ponders, apprehensive.

TROY (CONT'D)

Come on Luke. If we play our money
right we could stand to win a purse
that would pay in a day what you
would earn in a year. Wouldn't you
like to take this girl you met out
on a proper date? Show her a good
time. Don't you want to be free of
your brother? You won't owe him
anything anymore.

LUCAS

(beat)

And we still go to the meetings?

TROY

(victorious)

Of course.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Lucas eats breakfast at the dinner table as he eagerly flips
through another issue of the AUTOTRADER. He turns the next
page and stops, seeing something he likes.

The door opens and it's Emily. She goes to the fridge.

EMILY

Not giving up, huh?

Lucas quickly and covertly tears out a page and shoves the
magazine aside.

LUCAS

I'm just looking.

Emily takes out another yogurt and proceeds to eat it with
her fingers.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

No spoon this time? How uncivilized
of you.

She smirks and takes a seat.

EMILY

(beat)

I hear you and Oliver had quite the wild time the other night.

Lucas's stomach drops. He stops eating.

LUCAS

Hmm?

EMILY

(off Lucas)

It's no big deal. I'm just glad you two are okay. It was smart of you guys to sleep in the car rather than drive home. I just wish maybe next time you call me and let me know.

Lucas exhales, bullet dodged.

LUCAS

Right. Sorry.

EMILY

I'm actually really happy that the two of you got to spend some time together. It's been so tense between you two lately.

LUCAS

Yeah, real quality time it was.

EMILY

He loves you a lot you know.

Lucas continues to eat. No reply.

EMILY (CONT'D)

He does. I know he can be difficult I know he'd just die if something happened to you.

Lucas snaps. He throws down his fork.

LUCAS

Why do you defend him?

EMILY

Because I know deep down, past what you can see, he's a good man and I love him.

LUCAS
Are you going to tell him about
what happened?

EMILY
(beat)
I don't know.

LUCAS
He has a right to know.

EMILY
I know. I just don't want to both--

LUCAS
Stop saying that! Stop being so
fucking polite and nice and bending
over backward for him! He doesn't
fucking deserve it!

EMILY
I don't bend over backward --

LUCAS
Yes you do! You're like his trained
little monkey! You're not his
girlfriend -- your his maid. You're
so fucking whipped I can see the
lashes on your back.

Emily grows silent. Tears form in her eyes.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Stop it! That's exactly what the
fuck I'm talking about! You need to
do yourself a favor and grow a pair-

-

The door opens and Lucas shuts up. Oliver enters dressed in scrubs as he writes into a notepad. Lucas hurriedly finishes his breakfast and goes to the sink. Emily wipes her eyes.

OLIVER
(sees somethings off)
What's up?

EMILY
(sniffling)
Nothing.

LUCAS
We were just talking about how
wasted we were the other night.

OLIVER
 (nervous)
 Oh yeah?

LUCAS
 And how grateful Emily is that we
 choose to sleep in the car instead
 of drive home. Very responsible
 adults we are.

OLIVER
 Well... what kind of doctor could I
 be if I condoned drinking and
 driving.

Lucas rolls his eyes and moves to leave. Oliver grabs him by the arm, glaring. Emily watches, confused. Lucas shakes him off and exits the room.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - DAY

Lucas walks down the crowded street on his day off. He looks around and smiles; now able to enjoy it for the first time. He goes inside the nearest store.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - NIGHT

Mansions sit atop the hillside surrounded by perfectly mowed lawns.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucas and Julia lie in bed inside a large one bedroom apartment. Lucas looks around, taking it in.

LUCAS
 How do you afford this place?

JULIA
 I don't. My parents pay for it.

LUCAS
 (surprised)
 They must do pretty well.

JULIA
 They do okay.
 (beat)
 You're not going to get weird on me
 now are you?

LUCAS

Why?

JULIA

Because I'm another spoiled actress
in LA who's parents pay her rent.

LUCAS

I'm not judging. I'm sure my
parents would do they same if they
could.

JULIA

They still together?

LUCAS

No. My dad was killed by a drunk
driver a couple years ago.

JULIA

Oh my god, I'm so sorry.

LUCAS

It's kind of the reason I don't
have a car at the moment, well that
and I can't afford one...

(grows self-conscious)

Sorry that's probably too much
information.

JULIA

I get it. Life can be tough. We
just have to keep moving I guess.

Lucas reaches over for a glass of water and takes a sip.
Julia notices the SCAR.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Did it hurt?

LUCAS

It didn't tickle.

JULIA

What happened?

LUCAS

Car accident. It was raining and I
fell asleep. Almost lost the arm.

JULIA

How'd you fall asleep?

JULIA (CONT'D)
I was tired.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I know but why were you tired?

LUCAS
(beat)
I don't remember.

JULIA
You don't remember why you were
tired which almost cost you your
arm?

Lucas grows nervous. Julia waits, wanting more. Desperate to
change the subject Lucas grabs hold of Julia and flips her
onto her stomach.

JULIA (CONT'D)
What are you doing!

LUCAS
Let's play a game.

JULIA
What game?

LUCAS
I'm going to spell out a word and
you tell me what it is.

Julia hesitates, unsatisfied.

JULIA
(relents)
Fine.

Lucas slowly and gently begins to kiss her back.

JULIA (CONT'D)
P...A...N...C...A...K...E...S.
Pancakes? Is a certain someone's
tummy rumbling?

LUCAS
Actually I was more hoping you'd
put on that IHOP costume and I'll
go grab some whip cream out of the
fridge.

JULIA
You jerk!

She kicks him in the groin. He rolls over, cupping his groin. Julia rushes to his aid.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Oh my god! Are you okay?

LUCAS
You actors take everything so personally!

JULIA
Thank you. I take that as a compliment.

INT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Lucas and Troy sit on opposite ends of the room as another sad soul tells his tale of trial and tribulation. They look up and make eye contact. A smile creeps along both their faces.

EXT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Paul watches with growing trepidation as Troy and Lucas hop into the Maserati and takes off.

INT. STANDS - NIGHT

Both men jump up and scream as their horse crosses the finish line. After a moment they take a seat and drink their beers, triumphant. Troy lights another cigarette.

LUCAS
(watching)
Can I have one?

Troy smiles and hands him a cigarette.

INT. DESIGNER STORE - DAY

Lucas stands next in line with an armsful of clothes. He steps forward. A CLERK stands behind the register.

CLERK
Hello. How can I help you--

Lucas drops the pile of clothes on the counter. The clerk looks down at the clothes then up at Lucas, speechless.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Lucas stands beside a PRIEST as he examines a mint-condition MERCEDES-BENZ. He digs into his pocket and pulls the same torn-out page from the Autotrader.

FATHER

Five thousand.

LUCAS

I don't have the money quite yet
but I'm working on it. Can you hold
it for me by any chance?

FATHER

I have a couple other people coming
to take a look at it but if you
have it by Friday then it's yours
my son.

Lucas nods, determined.

INT. OLIVER AND EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's late and everyone's asleep. Lucas enters and shuts the door. He rubs his eyes as he shuffles over the couch, tired. He digs into his pocket and unsheathes another large wad of cash.

Lucas tucks in back in his pocket as the door opens once again. He watches as Oliver slinks in.

OLIVER

(sees Lucas)

What the hell are you doing up?

LUCAS

I can ask you the same thing.

OLIVER

I was studying.

LUCAS

Really? You got an exam tomorrow?
It's Christmas vacation.

OLIVER

I'm a good student.

Lucas sees Oliver's hair and clothes are disheveled.

LUCAS

You weren't with...?

OLIVER
Mind your own fucking business,
okay?

Without making eye contact, Oliver storms off to his room.
Lucas is left alone, troubled.

EXT. PANTAGES THEATER - NIGHT

Lucas and Julia exit the theater amongst the crowd after
watching "THE BOOK OF MORMON". They laugh hysterically
dressed in full suit and gown.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Lucas and Julia sit way overdressed inside a dingy old diner
as they share a mountain of cheese fries.

LUCAS
Why didn't you let me take you
somewhere nice for dinner? We're
dressed for it.

JULIA
Because I told you that stuff
doesn't matter to me. I'm perfectly
content with this heart attack
served on a plate here.

LUCAS
I have the money.

JULIA
Great, then save it.

LUCAS
If you insist.

JULIA
I do.

They silently eat.

JULIA (CONT'D)
I actually wanted to ask you. I
have a show myself coming up soon.
An improv show. It will be nothing
near the kind of production we say
tonight but it'll be fun. Would you
like to come?

LUCAS

Of course.

JULIA

Okay but you promise to laugh no matter how badly I crash and burn.

LUCAS

I promise.

JULIA

Good.

She seductively tries to eat a fry.

LUCAS

You have no idea how bad I want you right now.

She laughs and throws the fry at him.

PAUL (V.O.)

It's been six years, eight months, and twelve days since my last bet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Applause fills the room as everyone listens to Paul. Lucas is there. He looks across the room, concerned. He stares at an EMPTY SEAT where Troy should be. He bites his lip.

PAUL

It started out as a hobby at first. Slots. How much can you possibly lose on slots right? Well...

(beat)

First went the car... then the mortgage... then the kids college fund.

This grabs Lucas's attention. He sits up, somewhat engaged for the first time.

PAUL (CONT'D)

"Lost is all" doesn't even begin to describe it. If I had lost it all then I could start from scratch, right? No. It's been a long way back.

Beat.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I keep coming to these meetings because it's my medicine, my insulin. It's saved my life. After my kids cut me off I thought about killing myself almost everyday. That is until... I met all of you. Because of you all I have found the support and strength to keep going on. I don't feel alone anymore and I don't hate myself. So, now I have a new car. Honda Civic. I'm engaged. And I have plans to see my kids next summer. It's not the jackpot but it sure as hell feels like it. Thank you.

Another round of applause. Moved, Lucas joins in.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Lucas rubs his hands together for warmth as he waits for the bus. He looks anxiously down the street for Troy. Nothing.

INT. STANDS - NIGHT

Lucas is back at the track. Alone. He watches as the horses stomp their legs behind the starting gate as they wait for the race to start. Lucas looks down at his ticket. It reads: SHIRLEY LANE.

The bells rings. The horses burst onto the track once again. The crowd roars.

ANNOUNCER

And they're off.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lucas leans his head against the window, quiet. He digs into his pockets and pulls out his hands. Empty.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Lucas stares at the ATM as he debates how much to withdraw. He hesitates, apprehensive.

Outside, we HEAR tires screech to a halt as a VAN materializes through the window.

Lucas's hand hovers over the screen as TWO THUGS enter from behind wearing stockings for masks. They menacingly approach the counter as the CLERK reads a magazine, oblivious. They each dig into their pockets and pull out a GUN.

THUG #1
Wake up asshole!

Lucas spins around and watches as the two thugs raise their guns. He dives to the floor, crawls behind an aisle near the doorway. He watches as the robbery unfolds.

Gun raised and arms full of cash the thugs begin to back away. As they reach the door they fire a shoot into the ceiling. The clerk ducks as the thugs run away. Tires screech once more as the car disappears.

Frantic, the clerk reaches for a gun as he presses the alarm.

Lucas sits frozen behind the aisle, shaken. He glances down and notices a handful of money scattered across the floor. Beat.

Hurriedly, he begins to gather all the money and tucks it in his pockets. The clerk sees him.

CLERK
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?

The clerk raises the gun and aims it at Lucas. Lucas lowers his head and runs out of the store.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Lucas sprints away, adrenaline pumping. He looks back as the convenience store fades away.

After a while he slows down and looks back again. The store is gone. He stops.

He turns a corner and suddenly a POLICE CRUISER emerges from behind, shines a spotlight onto Lucas. He FREEZES.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lucas sits handcuffed to a bench as he bows his head. A OFFICER approaches.

LUCAS
(pleading)
Please! I swear I didn't do anything!

The officer doesn't say a word. Lucas stares at him, desperate. After a moment the officer uncuffs him.

OFFICER

We know. We just caught the dumb fucks who did this.

Laughs exhales, relieved.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

You know you can't just take money you find on the floor right? It's still a crime when the money's been stolen. We'd still arrest you if we thought anyone would've done different.

LUCAS

Thank you.

OFFICER

You got anyone you can call?

INT. PAYPHONE - NIGHT

Lucas dials a number into the phone as the police officer waits beside him. It begins to ring.

TROY (V.O.)

Hello. You've reached Troy. I cannot answer the phone right now but I will return --

He hangs up, frustrated.

POLICE OFFICER

Anyone else?

INT. EMILY'S CAR - NIGHT

Emily drives as Lucas stares out the window.

LUCAS

(beat)

Thank you for picking me up.

EMILY

I owe you one.

LUCAS

Does this mean you won't tell Oliver?

EMILY
Not if you don't want me to.

LUCAS
I don't.

EMILY
Then I won't.

LUCAS
Where is he now?

EMILY
I don't know.

LUCAS
(confused)
What do you mean?

EMILY
I mean I don't know. I haven't
heard from him all night.

Emily silently begins to sob.

LUCAS
What now?

EMILY
It's Oliver. He's been acting so
different lately.

LUCAS
(already knows)
Shit.

EMILY
He's just been so distant. It's
like he's doesn't even want me
around anymore.

Lucas bites his tongue, boiling underneath.

EMILY (CONT'D)
(senses something)
What?

LUCAS
Nothing.

EMILY
What is it? I've seen that look on
your face before! Please, just tell
me what it is you want to say!

LUCAS

(beat)
He doesn't deserve you.

Emily balks, taken aback.

EMILY

But... you hate me.

LUCAS

No. I just hate that you're with him.

EMILY

Why?

LUCAS

Because he doesn't deserve you.

EMILY

What are you talking about?

LUCAS

You're kind, caring, loving, and everything a guy could ask for but you decide to waste it on him.

EMILY

I love him.

LUCAS

I know and I don't get it.

EMILY

(beat)
Did anyone ever tell you what happened at the hospital when we found you?

LUCAS

No.

EMILY

You hadn't been home in a couple days and we started to get worried. We called everyone we knew-- friends, family, co-workers. No one had spoken to you in months but apparently the last they saw you you had come to them asking for money. Your mom and I thought it may be drugs and imagined every horrible scenario possible but Oliver... refused to believe it.

It didn't make sense to him. He said it wasn't like you, said you couldn't do something like that, said you were too smart--

LUCAS

He was right.

EMILY

--It wasn't until he looked through your room and found maxed out credit cards bills stashed in your room that we began to figure out what was going on...

Lucas grows tense.

EMILY (CONT'D)

We were sleeping when we got the call you were in an accident. When we got to the hospital I actually thought that it was a shame you survived because Oliver was going to kill you anyway. And then we found you... and you were covered in blood, dirt, and your arm was...

(beat)

You looked awful. That's when Oliver broke. It was like he had just been torn in half.

Lucas eyes begin to swell, moved.

EMILY (CONT'D)

It was how he cared for you after that where I fell in love with him. The way he never left your side. The way he slept beside you... Now, you might see the devil but it's not what I see.

She smiles at him. He turns away, ashamed.

INT. OLIVER AND EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucas flops on the couch as Emily takes out her phone and dials. He buries his face into a pillow, trying to forget the night.

EMILY

(listening to voicemail)

He's not here. I'm getting worried.

At that moment the door opens and in comes Oliver. He sees Lucas and Emily and stops in his tracks.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Where were you? I was calling you all night.

OLIVER
(thinking)
Ah... At the library studying.

EMILY
(looks at watch)
It's four thirty in the morning.

Oliver takes off his shoes, avoiding eye-contact.

OLIVER
That doesn't mean I get to take a break.

EMILY
Why couldn't you at least call me to let me know where you were then?

OLIVER
My phone died.

EMILY
What happened to your charger?

Lucas slowly tries to sneak out.

OLIVER
(seeing Lucas)
What the hell are you two up and dressed for anyway?

EMILY
(beat)
We went for a ride.

Oliver glares at Lucas, suspicious.

OLIVER
To where?

EMILY
(beat)
Breakfast.

OLIVER
(to Lucas)
Yeah? What did you eat?

LUCAS
What does it matter?

Beat. Oliver SLUGS Lucas in the face. He goes down.

EMILY
OLIVER!

OLIVER
You told her didn't you?

LUCAS
I didn't tell her shit you fucking
lunatic!

EMILY
Tell me what?

Oliver pounces on Lucas as he tries to crawl away.

OLIVER
(kicking him)
After everything I do for you!
After breaking my back carrying
you!

LUCAS
Fuck you! I don't want your help
anymore!

Lucas manages to elbow Oliver in the face and gets up to run. Oliver grabs him and shoves him against the wall. Emily watches in horror.

EMILY
STOP IT!

Oliver presses Lucas against the wall as he squirms.

OLIVER
You think I haven't noticed the
bags under your eyes? You think I
haven't noticed the sleep
deprivation?

LUCAS
Let me go!

Oliver punches Lucas, harder than before.

OLIVER
You think I wasn't here the first
time? I can see it from a mile away
now.

Emily grabs a hold of Oliver as she tries to pry him off of Lucas.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I'm not doing this again, okay? I
don't want to!

Emily manages to tear Oliver away. Lucas staggers toward the door, bleeding.

Oliver and Emily are almost gone when Oliver turns back, unfinished.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
You think this thing you got going
with this girl is gonna last?
You're literally worthless. You net
worth is less than zero.

EMILY
(pulling him away)
That's enough Oliver.

Oliver pushes her aside. She falls.

LUCAS
Hey!

OLIVER
Let me ask you something... What
can you honestly give her that
every other guy on the planet
can't, huh? What does she have to
gain by dating you?

A beat.

LUCAS
(turns to leave)
Fuck this, I'm out.

OLIVER
Where you gonna go, huh? You'll
fucking starve without me! You'll
die!

Lucas hangs by the door. Beat.

LUCAS
I'll take my chances.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Lucas marches down the sidewalk battered and bleeding. He has a phone to his ear.

LUCAS
 (into phone)
 Troy! Pick up man. I told my brother to fuck off and need a place to crash. I figured you probably had a nice big house with an extra room. Call me back.

He hangs up. He look down at his phone wondering who else he can call.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

There's a KNOCK at the door. Lights switch on as Julia enters the room wearing pajamas. She answers the door and gasps. Standing there is Lucas.

LUCAS
 Sorry I missed the show.

JULIA
 What the hell happened to you?

LUCAS
 I burnt myself with a curling iron.

JULIA
 Is that supposed to be a joke?

LUCAS
 Why? Is it no good?

Annoyed, Julia moves to shut the door. Lucas stops her.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 Alright, I'm sorry, okay, I'm sorry.

Julia waits for some explanation.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
 I honestly just can't go home right now. I need a place to crash.

JULIA
 That's some explanation.

LUCAS
It's a sensitive issue.

JULIA
And you don't want to tell me?

LUCAS
I'd rather not.

JULIA
But you want me to take you in?

LUCAS
(shrugs)
Well... yeah.

Julia simmers with frustration.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
(turns to leave)
You're right, I'll go. Sorry for
bothering you...

JULIA
--Wait!

Lucas stops.

JULIA (CONT'D)
Am I crazy for wondering why you've
shown up at my door in the middle
of the night looking like you just
jumped into a gang?

LUCAS
No, you're not crazy.

JULIA
I don't think it's asking too much
for wanting my boyfriend to be open
with me.

LUCAS
(taken aback)
Boyfriend?

JULIA
Don't try to change the subject.

LUCAS
I'm not! It's just... I've never
been anyone's boyfriend before.

JULIA
Well you're mine or at least I
thought so.

Lucas grins, elated.

LUCAS
You look beautiful.

JULIA
And you look like shit.

Lucas enters the doorway and tries to kiss her.

JULIA (CONT'D)
(pushes him away)
What are you doing?

LUCAS
Preparing to ravish you.

JULIA
Not yet. Not without some answers.

LUCAS
Can I just get a pass please? Just
this once?

He tries to kiss her again, wraps his arms around her. She slowly begins to relent.

JULIA
This conversation isn't over yet.

INT. JULIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Julia lies asleep in bed. She shivers, feeling cold. She turns over and puts her arm out to embrace Lucas but he's not there. She wakes up, alert.

INT. RACE TRACK - NIGHT

Lucas is back at the ticket box as he nervously hands over several hundred dollars.

EXT. STANDS - NIGHT

Lucas cringes as his horse comes in last place. He buries his face in his hands, devastated.

INT. DESIGNER STORE - DAY

Lucas drops several bags full clothes onto the counter. The clerk doesn't move, stunned.

CLERK
You want to return all this?

LUCAS
Yup.

The clerk looks at the clothes then to him, annoyed.

CLERK
(beat)
You got a receipt?

LUCAS
It's in the bag.

Beat. The clerk sighs, then begins to unload the bag.

INT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Lucas stands beside the Mercedes-Benz as he pleads with the priest.

LUCAS
Can I just get a little more time,
please?

FATHER
I'm sorry my son but I already sold
it to someone else. You're too
late.

LUCAS
Come on man!

FATHER
I'm sorry. I'm sure the lord will
send you something better.

Lucas panics, his world slowly falling apart. He loses it and KICKS the car.

FATHER (CONT'D)
What the hell are you doing you
little prick!?

LUCAS
You lied to me asshole.

Lucas turns and walks away. The priest checks for a dent.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - NIGHT

Lucas darts through the crowd late for work. He nearly knocks people over.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Lucas quickly changes into his uniform and fixes his hair. It look sloppy. He turns the corner to get out onto the floor when JACOB appears. Lucas steps back, nervous.

JACOB
You're late.

LUCAS
(pleading)
I know, I'm sorry, it's just--

JACOB
It doesn't matter. This is the third time this week. I have to suspend you.

LUCAS
What? No! I'm sorry but I need to work!

JACOB
I can't allow it.

Beat. Lucas leans against the wall, devastated.

JACOB (CONT'D)
What happened to you? What happened to the Luke that was up for a promotion?

LUCAS
Are you saying that I lost it?

JACOB
It's gone. We gave it to someone else. All I asked was that you continue to do what you were doing and you fell apart. What the hell happened?

Lucas opens his mouth to speak. Nothing.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Go home. Come back in a week.

INT. JULIA'S ROOM - DAY

Lucas lies in bed asleep. He's stirred awake as Julia turns the room upside down, panicked.

LUCAS
What are you doing?

JULIA
I'm looking for my wallet. I lost it and I had all my stuff in there including more than hundred dollars cash.

LUCAS
When's you last time you saw it?

JULIA
Last night before I went to bed.

LUCAS
What'd it look like?

JULIA
It's green. My mother gave it to me as a birthday present.

LUCAS
I'm sure it'll turn up.

Julia looks at Lucas and sighs.

JULIA
Why did you come home so late last night?

LUCAS
(beat)
I had something I had to do.

JULIA
Like what?

No response.

JULIA (CONT'D)
You still can't tell me?

LUCAS
I don't want to complicate things.

JULIA

(frustrated)

Look, I don't just take in strangers off the street. If you're going to stay with me then you're going to have to be more open with me.

LUCAS

What do you want?

JULIA

I'd like to go bed and wake up together for once.

LUCAS

You want to regulate me?

JULIA

No, but I'd like some type stability. You're either gone all day or gone all night and when you're here you're passed out.

A beat.

LUCAS

(guilty)

You're right. I'm sorry.

She shakes her head.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

How about I take us out to dinner tonight? I'll make it up to you. I promise.

JULIA

Will you tell me what's been going on?

LUCAS

(sighs)

Yes.

Julia sits down on the bed and puts on her socks.

JULIA

I have a callback tomorrow.

LUCAS

What? That's awesome! What's it for?

JULIA
Big Bang Theory.

LUCAS
Continuing the deep work I see.

JULIA
Shut up! It's good. If I book it
then that's the start I've been
looking for.

LUCAS
Well then tonight will be a
celebratory dinner.

JULIA
Okay. But can we make it sooner
than midnight please because I have
to get my beauty rest.

Lucas leans over, starts to kiss her neck.

LUCAS
You don't need it.

She stands up.

JULIA
I can't. I have to go rehearse with
my coach in an hour. But I'll see
you tonight?

LUCAS
Absolutely.

She leaves, pausing at the door.

JULIA
I want answers this time Luke. I'm
serious.

LUCAS
I know.

She goes. Lucas grows worried.

INT. LUCAS'S ROOM - DAY

Lucas stands beside his bed as he packs a duffel bag full of
clothes. He opens a drawer looking for underwear -- it's
filled with LOSING SCRATCH-CARDS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Oliver sits on the couch as he somberly watches T.V.. Lucas enters carrying the duffel bag.

OLIVER
(seeing Lucas)
What are you doing here?

LUCAS
I just came to grab a couple things.

OLIVER
Where are you staying?

LUCAS
Julia's.

OLIVER
Guess I was wrong then.

LUCAS
Guess so.

Beat.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Where's Emily?

OLIVER
Gone. After you left the other night she drilled me until I spilled to her about Brooke...
(dejected)
I fucked up.

LUCAS
Well, I wish I can say I felt sorry for you.

He moves to leave.

OLIVER
She told me about the abortion.
(Lucas stops)
Quite the secret you two decided to keep from me.

LUCAS
She didn't want me to tell you.

OLIVER
So you just let me hook up with
Brooke anyway--

LUCAS
So now it's my fault?--

OLIVER
If you hadn't asked me to be your
wingman--

LUCAS
I didn't put a gun to your head--

OLIVER
I know!
(deep breath)
I know. Things have just been
really stressful lately.

LUCAS
(recanting)
Ya with med school, I know.

OLIVER
No... with you.
(beat)
This last year hasn't been easy for
me either Luke. I haven't stopped
worrying for five minutes since
your accident that one day you
might just go back and lose
yourself again.

LUCAS
It's my business.

OLIVER
Bullshit! You're my business too
because I'm your brother. You think
I want to act like dad? Fuck that.
I want be your brother. I want
someone who I can talk to. I want
someone who I can share things with
that I can't with anyone else. I
want to know you have my back when
no one else will... because that's
what brother do.

Lucas pauses, touched.

LUCAS
What are you going to do about
Emily?

OLIVER

I don't know. What do you do after you've made the biggest mistake of your life?

LUCAS

(beat)

I wish I knew.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Lucas waits for the bus after another meeting. He wears the LEATHER JACKET. He glances down the street, still hoping to see Troy.

PAUL (O.S.)

He vanished, right?

Lucas turns around. It's Paul.

PAUL (CONT'D)

He tends to do that.

LUCAS

(beat)

Who?

PAUL

Come on Lucas, I know you and Troy are friends.

LUCAS

So?

PAUL

So that's your business and you can do whatever it is you want, but as your sponsor -- I think you should seek better company.

LUCAS

Is that so?

PAUL

Troy isn't here for the same reasons we are.

LUCAS

Why's he here then?

TROY

He's here to harness his addiction and manipulate it to his advantage.

LUCAS
And what if it works?

PAUL
The only way we can truly be free
of our compulsions is through
complete surrender.

LUCAS
What? Never gamble again?

PAUL
Never.

Beat.

LUCAS
He told me you two were friends a
while ago.

PAUL
True. We actually sought help
together, even went to a couple
meetings but after a while... he
couldn't commit. He didn't like the
idea of losing to his compulsions
and instead thought he could
control it. He tried to have me
join him but when he saw I was
devoted... he cut me off.

Lucas is taken aback.

PAUL (CONT'D)
It's not too late for you ya know.
You have time which is what a lot
of us wish we had.
(beat)
Allow this moment to be *your* rock
bottom.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lucas rides the bus as he speaks into his cellphone.

LUCAS
Hey babe. I'm on my way now. I'll
see you in probably about an hour.
Ya I can't wait either.

Hangs up.

He digs into his pocket and pulls out his wallet, opens it. It's empty. A beat. He digs into another pocket and pulls out a GREEN WALLET. He stares at it, overwhelmed with uncertainty. Outside, SOMETHING flashes by.

Lucas sits up, perturbed. He looks back out the window and sees Troy's MASERATI parked across the street. He immediately jumps up and pulls on the emergency cord.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Lucas marches across the street toward TROY as he leans against the car. Cool as a cucumber.

LUCAS
What the hell?

TROY
Still taking the bus I see.

LUCAS
Where the fuck have you been?

TROY
I thought you were thinking about buying a car.

Lucas glares, livid.

LUCAS
(beat)
It didn't work out.

TROY
No? What happened?

LUCAS
I just couldn't...

He trails off. Troy nods.

TROY
How much you down?

LUCAS
All of it.

TROY
You shouldn't have gone without me.

LUCAS
You disappeared!

TROY
And now I'm back.

Lucas sighs.

LUCAS
I have a date in an hour.

TROY
And how are you going to pay for that?

LUCAS
I don't know.

TROY
You want me to lend you the --

LUCAS
No.

TROY
Hmmm. Sounds like there's only one way then.

LUCAS
What if I don't want to go back?

TROY
Why not?

LUCAS
Because maybe I want to surrender... completely.

TROY
Surrender? Paul tell you that load of shit?

Lucas shrugs.

TROY (CONT'D)
Paul's a pussy, alright? The guy doesn't have the balls to jaywalk.

LUCAS
Seems happy to me.

TROY
Happy!? The man is *numb*. He's a sedated zombie with a smile.

LUCAS
And what makes you so much better?

TROY

Because I'm not afraid to go out there and get what I want. To go all in.

LUCAS

And if you lose?

TROY

Then you ante up again.

LUCAS

What if I'm tired of losing?

TROY

Then maybe I was wrong about you.

LUCAS

Fuck you!

TROY

You want to give up? Fine. You want to settle for being broke? Knock yourself out. Maybe one day you can save enough tips to take a weekend trip to Hawaii. I'll be watching you from my house.

Troy gives up, walks away.

LUCAS

I can't afford to lose again!

TROY

(turns back)

You really got nothing left?

LUCAS

I have something. But it's not mine.

TROY

Then I guess we have to win don't we?

LUCAS

I made plans.

TROY

So you rather show up with nothing? You rather her see how you can't afford her? Because if so then I swear to you Luke there is someone out there that can.

Troy gives a sly smile and clicks the car remote. It beeps.

INT. STANDS - NIGHT

It's cold out and the stands are nearly empty. Troy and Lucas sit side by side as they sip coffee to stay warm. Troy looks down at Lucas, eyeing the leather jacket.

TROY

That jacket always looked better on you than it did me.

A beat.

LUCAS

(anxious)

You got a cigarette? I'm out.

Troy pulls out a pack and hands him a cigarette.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

(lights up)

Thanks.

TROY

After tonight we'll be rich men.

LUCAS

How many bets you make?

TROY

Just one.

LUCAS

(shocked)

This is it?

TROY

You got to play big to win big.

LUCAS

(panicked)

What happened to playing smart?

TROY

You got the time? Because I don't.

Lucas stares worrying around the track. For first time he notices the REGULARS: wearied, lifeless, pale individuals who came to play once upon a time and now it's their home.

Once again the lights shine onto the track signaling for the race to start. Troy grabs Lucas's hand and shakes it.

TROY (CONT'D)
Good luck kid.

Lucas takes a deep breath.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lucas is at the sink as he looks himself in the mirror. His eyes are bloodshot. He blinks, tired.

Troy exits from the stall as he straighten his clothes. He stands beside Lucas and washes his hands.

TROY
That's it. I'm out.

LUCAS
That's it?

TROY
I might have some stashed away at home.
(beat)
How about you?

LUCAS
That was it. My pockets are empty.

Troy pauses, lost in thought.

TROY
You got nothing left? Nothing at home you could grab? What about your brother?

LUCAS
He has credit cards and I know his ATM number but... I don't want to do that again.

A beat. Troy PUNCHES the mirror. It breaks. He turns to Lucas, hand bleeding.

TROY
Are you fucking kidding me? I thought the guy was an asshole? Why should you feel bad taking it?

Lucas stands frozen with shock as Troy glares at him with a crazed look in his eyes. A beat. Troy calms down.

TROY (CONT'D)
(ashamed)
I'm sorry, I'm sorry. That was
uncalled for.

Troy looks nervously around the room then turns to leave.

LUCAS
I'll be right back.

Lucas watches him go, floored.

EXT. STANDS - LATER

Lucas steps out for looks anxiously around for Troy. No sign.

INT. TICKET BOX - NIGHT

Lucas scans the room for Troy. Nothing.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

He walks to where the Maserati should be. It's gone. He sighs in frustration.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lucas is back on the bus as he fidgets, nervous.

INT. JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucas quietly sneaks inside and shuts the door. He takes off his jacket and tosses it onto the couch, exhausted.

Suddenly the lights TURN ON as JULIA stands by the bedroom door.

JULIA
I hope you're not making yourself
comfortable.

LUCAS
Babe, I'm sorry --

JULIA
It's fine, really, it is. It's my
fault for trusting you.

LUCAS
I tried to come...

JULIA
But you didn't. Why?

A beat.

JULIA (CONT'D)
(shakes head)
Why'd I even bother asking?

LUCAS
I'm sorry okay? I know I fucked up.
My head was in the wrong place.
I've been preoccupied with what I
now know to be --

JULIA
What? I want answers this time or
you're leaving right now.

LUCAS
It doesn't matter. I'm done with
it. I'm free now to focus on what I
really want and that's you.

JULIA
Wow. Am I supposed to feel honored
or something? I've been trying this
whole time and now you're *free* to
give it a go. Woo hoo.
(beat)
You still haven't told me anything.

LUCAS
You don't want to know. I promise.

JULIA
Drugs?

LUCAS
No.

JULIA
Sex?

LUCAS
No I swear.

JULIA
Then what?

Lucas bites his lip. Beat.

LUCAS

It's money problems, okay? I've just been having a tough time lately and have been feeling... inadequate.

JULIA

I know that shit doesn't matter to me.

LUCAS

I know but that doesn't change how I feel. I want to be able to show you a good time.

JULIA

All I wanted was for you to be here... with me.

LUCAS

I know but if I can't even afford to take you out on a date then what kind of man --

JULIA

Stop. I don't care about going out on nice dates. I've been on nice dates. That's what they are - *nice*. I want something more than that. I want what I feel with you.

LUCAS

I want that too. I'm crazy about you. I just didn't know how to handle it. I haven't met anyone like you before and it scares me.

JULIA

It scares me too but that's why I want to be able to trust you but I don't know if I can...

LUCAS

How can I show you then? We'll go to bed together and wake up together every single day if you want. You can do with me whatever you want. I'll be your ready and willing captive.

A beat. Julia smiles.

JULIA

Captive? You're pathetic.

LUCAS

Agreed.

She begins to ease up.

JULIA

This is so unfair.

Lucas takes her in his arms.

LUCAS

Agreed.

They kiss. A beat.

JULIA

(shivers)

It's freezing out here.

LUCAS

I'll turn down the A/C.

He leaves. She waits and looks around the room. She spots the jacket on the couch.

JULIA

Don't mind if I do.

She sits down and puts it on. She tucks her hands into the pockets. She feels something.

Lucas returns. He looks down at Julia HIS HEART STOPS. She's holding her GREEN WALLET.

JULIA (CONT'D)

What's this?

LUCAS

(beat)

I found it.

JULIA

Were you planning on giving it back?

LUCAS

Of course.

JULIA

(opens it)

There's no cash in here. I had over a hundred bucks.

Julia gazes up at Lucas. She studies him as if looking at him for the first time.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Is this who you are?

LUCAS

No, I swear it's not.

JULIA

I don't understand. Were you planning to take me out with my own money?

LUCAS

(confesses)

I have a problem.

JULIA

(shakes head)

You're right. I don't want to know.

LUCAS

Please--

JULIA

I don't care! You're such a stranger to me right now I'm terrified! I don't want to understand I just want you out!

LUCAS

I'm in love with you!

JULIA

I thought I was too but I can't be in love with someone I don't know!

LUCAS

You don't get it! You're the only good thing in my life right now!

Lucas's eyes begin to swell, pleading.

JULIA

(beat)

Well I don't want that responsibility. I'm a driven person, okay? I don't have time to figure out what's going on and try to fix you. I can't.

Lucas desperately searches for something to say. Silence.

JULIA (CONT'D)

(opens door)

Go. I really do need to get my
beauty rest.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Lucas rides the bus again, dejected. He stares out the window as taco trucks and movie billboards float silently by. After a moment... a familiar look of solid determination crosses his face.

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

Lucas exits the bus and tears off down the street.

EXT. OLIVER AND EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucas runs up to the apartment and goes inside.

INT. OLIVER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Oliver lies in bed asleep. A laptop lies open beside him with a PHOTO of him and Emily kissing displayed on the screen.

The door opens and Lucas slips inside. He ignores the laptop as he makes his way toward the night-stand. He sees Oliver's keys and wallet lying there and takes them.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - NIGHT

Lucas guns it down the highway. He glances out to the side of the road where a sign reads: "INDIAN RESERVATION 20 MI."

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

Lucas marches up toward an enormous casino. A big ball of light in the middle of the desert.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Lucas enters and stops, watching as the place thrives with life. He takes it in, nostalgic.

INT. BLACKJACK TABLE - NIGHT

Lucas finds an empty seat and sits down. He digs into his pocket and pulls out several hundred dollar bills. He slides it over to the DEALER who welcomes with a smile.

Nervous, he looks around the table as the dealer counts the money. It's occupied with nearly the same 4 A.M. crowd from before. They turn and stare, eyes empty.

DEALER

Five hundred.

The dealer exchanges the money for chips and slides them back over to Lucas. Lucas takes them, brimming with excitement.

DEALER (CONT'D)

Place your bets.

Everyone quickly does as told. Lucas pushes forward all his chips. Everyone watches, stunned.

LUCAS

Go big or go home, right?

The dealer signals for a floor manager once again. The manager appears and takes another skeptical glance at Lucas. Nods.

The dealer slaps his hands together for the game to start. Suddenly, Lucas overhears something at other end of the table.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey man, you ready to go?

A FRIEND, 20s, stands behind a YOUNG MAN, 20s, who's bent over the table, anxiously waiting for the game to begin.

FRIEND

Hey man, lets go. I have class tomorrow.

The young man hardly acknowledges him.

YOUNG MAN

(fixed)
I'm not ready.

FRIEND

It's four o'clock in the morning man. I'm beat.

The young man doesn't move.

YOUNG MAN

Go ahead.

FRIEND

Are you kidding? I drove. How the hell are you gonna get home?

YOUNG MAN

Don't worry about.

The friend stares at him, confused. The young man remains still, swallowed up by the game. After a moment the friend shrugs and walks off.

FRIEND

Alright man. See you later.

Lucas watches the young man with grave trepidation. He grows uneasy.

DEALER

Here we go.

The dealer reaches for the first card.

LUCAS

--Wait!

Lucas pulls back his bet.

DEALER

The game has already begun sir!

Lucas gets up from the table, holding his chips.

LUCAS

I know, I'm sorry... I just gotta go.

Lucas turns and runs off. Everyone looks at one another, perturbed.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - NIGHT

The door opens as a strong wind blows inside. Lucas enters, panting.

Panicked, he digs into his pocket for a cigarette to calm his nerves. He rolls down the window as he lights up. As he moves to take a drag a sudden change comes over him. He studies the cigarette in his hand. Beat. He chucks it out the window.

He slumps back down into his chair as he calms down. He tired rubs his eyes as he's hit by a sudden wave of exhaustion. His head begins to droop as sleep sets in. Across the lot a pair of HEADLIGHTS flick on and off. Lucas can feel the light behind his eyes. He snaps back to life.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lucas squints his eyes as he tries to make out the car. He takes walks forward, curious. Once he nears the car he stops. Furious.

INT. MASERATI - NIGHT

Lucas climbs inside and slams the door. He turns and glares at TROY. His eyes are wet with tears and his appearance is unruly and unkempt; miles away from his usual self.

TROY
How'd it go in there? You finally
hit the jackpot?

Lucas continues to glare at him for a moment then relents. He shakes his head.

TROY (CONT'D)
Well, there's always next time.

LUCAS
You don't have to go in there.

A beat.

TROY
Have you ever heard of Howard
Schultz?

LUCAS
(bewildered)
The Starbucks CEO?

TROY
You ever heard his story of how he
never gave up?

LUCAS
Yeah, that he was blown off by two
hundred investors or something
until one finally said yes?

TROY

It was two-hundred and forty two actually but yes that's the story. Now, have you ever heard of Frederick W. Smith?

Lucas shakes his head.

TROY (CONT'D)

He's the CEO and co-founder of FedEx. Now this guy spent about four million of his own personal fortune to get this company off the ground and then raised about another ninety million. Unfortunately, after a couple years the company fell onto the verge of bankruptcy. Life's work - kaput. Now after having only about five thousand left to it's name with not even enough to cover the fueling costs for next day's delivery he did what any desperate man would do... He went to Vegas.

Lucas laughs. Troy stares at him. Embarrassed, Lucas shuts up.

TROY (CONT'D)

The next day the account had thirty-two thousand dollars which was just enough to keep them operating for a couple more days and hold them over until they found new investors. Now, that's ballsy right?

Lucas nods, engrossed.

TROY (CONT'D)

See now no one doubts Howard Shultz is a genius. The man's a visionary. But I prefer Smith's story. Because unlike Shultz he understood what it meant to almost lose it all and take a chance to win it all back. Much like you and me.

LUCAS

(shakes head)

The guy got lucky Troy! This wouldn't even be a story if he'd had lost. He'd probably be where we are now!

TROY
 (defiant)
 I can win it back.

LUCAS
 The money's gone! It doesn't belong
 to us anymore.

TROY
 There you go, sounding just like
 Paul. You both are quitters.

LUCAS
 Sometimes you have to quit if you
 know you can't win.

TROY
 I can't. Not until I have what I
 need.

LUCAS
 Don't you get it? It'll never be
 enough.

TROY
 (snaps)
NO!

Troy pants, seething. Lucas watches, afraid. After a moment
 Troy settles down.

TROY (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 I have a daughter.

Lucas's mouth hangs open, floored.

TROY (CONT'D)
 She's six. Cute. Freckles.

LUCAS
 What's her name?

TROY
 Trudy.

LUCAS
 Do you see her?

TROY
 Not yet. Not until I'm ready.

LUCAS
 Ready for what?

TROY

Ready to show up at her door and be the dad every man hopes they can be. Smart, stylish, successful. Be able to give her everything she ever wanted.

LUCAS

What if she doesn't want all that? What if having you around is enough?

TROY

It's not enough for me.

LUCAS

And it never will be. She might grow up and you'll miss it.

Troy pauses, thinking. A beat. He reaches over Lucas and opens the glove compartment. Inside is a PISTOL. He grabs it.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

(scared)

What the fuck are you doing?

TROY

I refuse to throw in the cards.

LUCAS

What are you going to do? Rob the casino? What kind of plan is that?

TROY

Maybe. Maybe I'll wait for some poor smuck to leave with heavy pockets and a smile from ear to ear.

LUCAS

Why? So you can lose his money too?

Troy is on the brink. He points the pistol at Lucas who immediately lifts his hands in resignation.

TROY

Maybe you should go.

LUCAS

(pleading)

Don't do this.

TROY

I have to.

Lucas gets fed up. He lowers his hands and stares Troy dead in the eye.

LUCAS

Do it then! You think I want to go home right now? You'd be doing be a favor!

Troy cocks the pistol. Lucas shuts his eyes. A beat. Troy begins to LAUGH.

TROY

(drops the gun)

What a fucking drama queen you are! You think you've lost a lot? Bullshit. You haven't lost a thing because you don't have anything yet to lose. You're a fucking kid.

LUCAS

(furious)

Fuck you! You don't know what I've been through!

TROY

Let me guess, you lost a couple hundred bucks, maybe a couple thousand? You maxed out a couple credit cards? Ha! Try losing a mortgage, try losing a car or better yet *cars*, try losing a kid! What you lost can be paid back. Fast.

Lucas looks down, letting the words sink in.

TROY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Get out. Go home to your brother.

Lucas opens the door and turns to leave.

LUCAS

Walk away. Please.

TROY

(big grin)

I wish I could, but us gamblers never know when to.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lucas makes his way back to his car as he fights through a harsh wind that has started.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - NIGHT

Lucas gets inside. He tries to look out the window at the Maserati across the lot but realizes the windows have frosted up. He starts the car and hits the defroster. Waits.

Once cleared he puts the car in reverse and backs out. He takes one last glance at the Maserati.

A FLASH of light erupts from inside the car. He slams on the brakes.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lucas hurries toward the car as a continuous HONK blares through the lot. He panics, overwhelmed with a sense of dread.

EXT. MASERATI - NIGHT

He covers his ears as he arrives at the car. The windows have frosted over as well. He moves to the passenger side door and tries the handle. It's locked.

Frantic, he runs around the car trying the other doors. No luck. As he nears the driver's side he sees BLOOD splattered across the window.

Not knowing what else to do, he takes off his jacket. He backs up, wrapping it around his arm. Aims.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The lot is flooded with police cruisers and ambulances. One police officer walks around the car with a roll of tape as he blocks off the scene.

A couple yards away Lucas sits inside an ambulance truck as a PARAMEDIC wraps his arm in bandages. Lucas watches as coroners zip up a body bag and slide it into a hearse.

PARAMEDIC

You cut your arm pretty good.
You're lucky you didn't hit any
arteries.

LUCAS

(beat)

That would've made the second arm I almost lost.

PARAMEDIC

A bit careless are we?

The paramedic cuts the last bandage. He reaches into the truck and grabs the now torn LEATHER JACKET.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)

Here you go. Maybe you can get it fixed.

Lucas looks at the jacket, repulsed.

LUCAS

Keep it.

PARAMEDIC

Really? It's pretty bad ass.

LUCAS

It's yours.

The paramedic lights up. He stares at Lucas, lost in thought.

PARAMEDIC

You feel alright? Would you like us to take you to the hospital?

LUCAS

I'm fine.

The paramedic gives Lucas one last look over then moves toward the front of the truck. Lucas gets up to leave.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The highway is near deserted. Oliver's car drives steadily down the road.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - NIGHT

Lucas drives.

A cell phone RINGS. He digs into his pocket. The screen reads: "OLIVER". He glances at the phone, a placid look in his eyes.

He rolls down the window and the phones goes flying out. He shuts his eyes as he allows the wind to hit his face. Suddenly, the car roars as his foot steps down on the pedal. Much like before, one hand lets go of the steering wheel, then the other. The car drifts toward the edge of the road...

INT. HIGHWAY - FLASHBACK

The car slams through a steel railing and careens down a turnpike...

EXT. TURNPIKE - FLASHBACK

Smoke rises from the car as it lies as a crumpled heap of metal surrounded by broken glass.

INT. HOSPITAL - FLASHBACK

Doctors and nurses race down the hall pushing Lucas on a stretcher covered with dirt and blood.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM -FLASHBACK

Oliver bursts through the doors and marches to the counter followed close by Emily and Lauren. He boils with rage.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - FLASHBACK

Oliver stomps past several incapacitated patients lying in bed until he arrives at the end of the room. He pulls back the curtain and sees Lucas lying there unconscious, wrapped in bandages and hooked up to an I.V..

Fuming, Oliver takes a step toward Lucas. He looks at his face. A beat. He breaks down, starts to cry. Emily comes from behind and embraces him. He sobs into her.

INT. OLIVER'S CAR - PRESENT DAY

Lucas jolts back to life. He grabs hold of the steering wheel just the car is drifting off the road, gravel kicking into the air. He hits the brakes.

INT. OLIVER AND EMILY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Oliver, Emily, and Sharon are quietly seated around the living room anxiously waiting for some word of Lucas.

Lauren sits alone in a chair with her head in her hands. Emily and Oliver sit on opposite ends of the couch, distant.

Emily glances at Oliver as he grinds his teeth. She frowns.

The door opens. It's LUCAS. Everyone stands to greet him, prepared to unload a world of shit. Shame and regret fill his face.

He sees Oliver and takes a step forward. Oliver clenches his fist as he prepares to knock him into oblivion. Lucas halts, afraid to take another step. Oliver watches, curious. Suddenly, Lucas COLLAPSES. Oliver quickly catches him, confused to what's going on. Lucas begins to sob into Oliver. Oliver looks around the room, unsure what to do. He catches eyes with Emily. She frowns. Slowly he wraps his arms around Lucas.

Never to let go.

LUCAS (V.O.)

It's been eleven months and fourteen days since I've made a bet... And I've never felt better.

INT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - ONE YEAR LATER

We're back here again. The same miserable, lifeless faces from before are crowded around in a circle as they cough and sweat. They all stare solemnly at someone in the middle of the group. It's LUCAS.

LUCAS

I'm grateful for so many things. I'm grateful to have a loving brother, mother, and sister-in-law. I'm grateful for my health and mind. But most importantly I'm grateful that I did not have the world to lose like many others that I've met. I'm grateful that I was able to start over again because I've known others who couldn't... or at least thought they couldn't. A wise man once told me...

He glances at Paul who grins.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

"Let this be you're rock bottom". Allow this moment of loss and complete self-loathing to be *it*.

It doesn't have to get any worse if you don't let it. If you stop now then there's only one way from here...

(points up)

I start law school in the spring. I'm not sure if it's what I want to do but now I know that I'm free to discover what it might be. Thank you.

A roar of applause. Paul takes over.

PAUL

Thank you Lucas for sharing with us.

(beat)

Now, who would like to go nex--

Lucas COUGHS. Everyone turns to him. He bends over, face turning red. Paul grows concerned and stands up. Lucas waves him off signaling he just needs some air.

EXT. RECREATIONAL CENTER - NIGHT

Lucas burst out of the door trying to clear his throat. He puts his hand on the wall and bends over, choking. His face turns white. He reaches into his mouth. Feels something. He pulls something out, exhales. Color comes back to his face.

He looks down at his hand, petrified. It's a POKER CHIP.

CUT TO BLACK: