

(Name of Project)

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FADE IN:

INT. BEAT UP CAR

NELSON steers with one hand and holds a flimsy set of directions with the other. Highway signs signal Reno two miles away.

Surprised to be heading in the right direction, he puts the directions aside.

His son NJ is next to him. NJ wears a pair of 1970's style sunglasses that cover a third of his face. He rolls the window up and down vacantly staring out at the road.

NELSON

OK NJ we're just two miles from the hotel, which one's up to you.

Nelson finagles the glove compartment open and takes a folder out. He places it on NJ's lap, alert to the coming exit.

NELSON

NJ? Come on now Buddy leave the window and look at the nice pictures Daddy printed out.

NJ pays Nelson nor the folder any mind. Exasperated, Nelson drives on.

Moments later, Nelson pulls into a gas station. ATTENDANT approaches the window.

NELSON

(to Attendant)

Fill it with whatever's cheapest.

Nelson rests his head back, an effort to unwind.

NELSON

Don't let the gas smell worry you. When I was your age, it smelled like candy.

Nelson glances at NJ. Though NJ continues looking out the window, on his lap are three origami shapes resting atop the folder. Pictures of the hotels appear in random places on the shapes.

NELSON

Wow these are awesome! NJ, which shape's your favorite? Could you show me?

NJ slowly focuses on the shapes. He hands Nelson a bird.

The bird wing reads RENO HOTEL & CASINO. Nelson smiles warmly at NJ as Attendant returns and points to the meter. \$15.

NELSON  
 (running a con)  
 That's cheap? Gee I don't think I-

NJ taps Nelson on the leg and hands him a very fat envelope taken from the glove compartment. Nelson grudgingly pays the Attendant.

NELSON  
 (sarcastic)  
 Well I suppose I should be glad you  
 don't have my poker face.  
 (beat)  
 Ready Pal?

Nelson pulls out of the station and heads to the hotel.

E./I. RENO HOTEL & CASINO

Nelson is at NJ's side as they step inside. The smoke and sounds have an immediate negative impact on NJ. He moans and trembles. Nelson kneels beside him.

NELSON  
 NJ, we talked about this. Dad needs  
 money to keep you in school. God  
 knows unemployment's not cutting  
 it.  
 (beat)  
 NJ, be strong for your old man.

A winning slot machine goes off. The casino is one big cacophonous frenzy. NJ screams uncontrollably.

Before Nelson can grab him, NJ bolts out. Nelson frantically gives chase as NJ runs into the busy intersection. Before tragedy strikes, Nelson swoops him up from oncoming traffic.

NELSON  
 Damn it NJ! Why can't you get we're  
 all we got? Why can't you be normal  
 for five seconds!

NJ calms down and focuses on the streetlight.

NELSON  
Then again who needs normal when  
you're stuck with me?

Nelson kisses NJ on the head and takes his hand to the car.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

NJ stands by the lamp, sunglasses on, and incessantly twirls around. Nelson peers around the ordinary room then double locks the front door.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM

Nelson finishes up his business. He peaks in on NJ.

NELSON  
I'm gonna flush so earmuffs.

NJ keeps spinning but puts his palms over his ears.

Nelson flushes watching the water spiral down the drain.

NELSON  
(loud)  
OK the bad sound is gone.

NJ takes his hands away. Nelson washes his hands and checks himself in the mirror. He appears drawn, sleep deprived.

He reaches in his back pocket pulling out the letter from NJ's school informing him of the tuition deficit. He sits on the toilet seat reviewing the amount owed, \$10,000.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

NJ quietly sits on the bed with his origami figurines. Nelson lays the cash from the fat envelope on the bed.

NELSON  
I hope the future's bright but it's  
time to cut the shades, alright?

NJ obliges Nelson.

NELSON  
Up for a little TV?

Nelson lowers the volume and flips the channels with the remote. NJ eyes the remote.

NELSON

You wanna drive? That's cool.

Nelson hands NJ the clicker. NJ stops at each new channel for three seconds. Innocently, he comes upon a porn.

NELSON

That's a big no. No to channel 10,  
OK?

NJ starts at channel 1 as Nelson resumes his cash count. NJ manually skips 10 to channel 11, the Casino Games Channel. Like Pay Per View, there is a list of games from poker to baccarat.

Nelson walks to the TV and turns it off. When he sits, NJ turns it back on.

Nelson takes a deep breath careful not to lose his temper. He carefully touches the power button on the remote.

NELSON

It's late. Let's get some sleep.

Nelson tosses the remote on his bed and opens his overnight bag. He takes out NJ's Spiderman and Superman pajamas. NJ chooses Superman. Nelson smiles and tucks him in. He turns the light off and lies over his covers. Clock reads 11:23.

Nelson doesn't sleep through the night staring at the origami bird beside the clock. As the sun shines through the dusty window curtains, Nelson glances at the clock. It reads 8:42.

NJ is sound asleep. Dressed, Nelson stuffs his cash envelope in his pocket. He takes a deep breath and gingerly sits next to his sleeping son.

NELSON

NJ, buddy wake up.

NJ stirs to semi-consciousness.

NELSON

Daddy has to go for a few hours,  
maybe less depending on my luck.  
I'm going to the casino we were at  
yesterday.

NJ puts his hands over his ears.

NELSON

(reassuring)

And that's why you're staying here.

NELSON(cont'd)

Alone. But if you're not OK with that, I won't go.

NJ points at the remote on Nelson's bed. Nelson can't fight back the Cheshire grin. Nelson hands NJ the remote. NJ surfs methodically through the channels.

The cash envelope peaks out of Nelson's pocket, which he pats down with a nervous tick. NJ changes the channels. Nelson places a pre-paid phone atop the blanket NJ is under.

NELSON  
NJ see this list?

He gestures to the list on the night stand.

NELSON  
This list has every way to reach me; by text, by phone, by casino page. You need me, you call me.

NJ stops his routine and lifts a pencil off the night stand. He writes 911 down.

NELSON  
That works, too.

NJ resumes as if he never stopped. Nelson takes a moment, kisses NJ on top of the head and leaves. NJ puts on his shades and manually selects channel 11.

There are many games options including a menu item to select to reference the hotel room number and play for real. NJ follows the directions, which include taking the game controller from behind the television.

INT. CASINO POKER TABLE

Nelson fiddles with his dwindling chips. He watches players at his table flick chips in the pot with carefree ease and confidence. His poker face is game but the flatter envelope in his pocket is not.

The DEALER deals the flop, three of spades, nine of diamonds, king of spades. Nelson's cards are face down on the table. Players fold. PLAYER #1 raises. Nelson sees the raise.

On the turn, an eight of spades falls. Neither player gives an inch. Player #1 tempts NELSON to push with a large raise. All eyes are on Nelson. Seconds pass with the sounds Nelson's chips make. Nelson inhales. He goes all in.

On the river, the Jack of Clubs falls. Nelson triumphantly throws his two jacks down. Without so much as a smile, Player #1 shows his hand, seven and Ace of spades. Nelson is in shock. Dealer swoops up Nelson's chips.

Dealer starts a new game. From Nelson's viewpoint, the movements around the table are in slow motion. Dealer glares at Nelson to fish or cut bait.

Nelson gradually gets up. He takes the envelope from his pocket and crumbles it up. It falls to the casino carpet and nothing comes out.

INT. CASINO LOBBY

Nelson aimlessly walks past rows of slot machines, past countless gaming tables. Desperate, he spots a shiny coin on the floor. Thinking it may be a quarter for a miracle slot, he discovers it is a free drink coin.

INT. CASINO BAR

The counter is aligned with virtual poker machines. Savoring his free Jack & Coke, he has an ADORABLE GRANDMOTHER to his left and HARD CORE GAMBLER to his right.

The Gambler is not fairing too well while Granny is way up. She beats the game again with a royal flush. She jumps up and down, the excitement of an innocent bettor.

Unable to take it, Nelson downs his drink, heads for the casino exit laughing and crying simultaneously.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

Nelson walks in and tosses his keys on the bed. They clang together as the door closes with a thud.

NELSON  
(instinctively)  
Sorry about the noise Buddy.

NJ sits at the head of the bed with the controller in hand. He is in the middle of a hand of video poker.

By chance, Nelson glances up at NJ then the television. NJ's position on the bed blocks Nelson's view of the virtual bank.

NELSON  
God damn it NJ! What did I tell  
you?

Nelson grabs the remote from NJ. NJ goes into a rocking fit.

NELSON  
Not only don't you listen to me but  
you charge the room! Do you think  
this is a fucking vacation? This  
isn't Disneyland NJ. You don't have  
a clue what I've been through...  
(beat)  
I'm trying to give you the best  
life I can. Me. Nobody else.  
(growing concern)  
NJ, NJ I'm an idiot buddy... What  
is it? What are you trying to say?  
NJ I'm sorry I just... you can't be  
like me.

NJ slows to a stop.

NELSON  
NJ?

Nelson is suddenly overcome with hope glancing back at the  
TV. He clicks the remote and checks the cash balance on the  
screen. \$9,473.75. His eyes bulge.

NJ  
(repeating)  
911. 911. 911.

NELSON  
(figures it out)  
911. 9 & 1 & 1 is 11. Channel 11.

NJ adjusts his shades and deals a new virtual hand.

Teary, Nelson kisses NJ on the top of his head. Nelson takes  
the bird figurine and tears a page from the hotel stationary.  
With one eye on the TV, Nelson attempts origami using the  
bird as his guide.

FADE OUT.



