

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

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INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A grand, large auditorium is crowded with people, all talking and drinking and laughing. The hall is decorated with hanging streamers and suspended signs that read:
WELCOME BACK! CLASS OF '97!

Each person wears sticky tags on their chests, all reading:
HELLO, MY NAME IS...

Near the dance floor, A YOUNG MAN sits with a few empty cups before him. This is PATRICK, black, about thirty, rough mannered, carrying thick stubbly facial hair. He has an athletes build to him.

EMILY, pale, in her late twenties, sits next to him. She's chattering on like a squirrel, restless, perhaps flirting, her hand gestures emphasizing every other sentence. Patrick sits weary.

EMILY

So you sure you didn't go to school with me?

PATRICK

(nodding politely)

I'm sure.

EMILY

But you look really familiar.
What's your name again?

PATRICK

Patrick.

EMILY

Well, Patrick, we must've met somewhere. You're face is just much too familiar.

PATRICK

(flat out)

Probably, but not likely.

EMILY

Well you're face is a lot like
Denzel Washington's, you know that
actor? He's an African American as well.

(then)

You just have his bone structure,
so toned and your skin tone is so
smooth too. Were you a model? You
could be you know. It's amazing. But,
that can't be it. Maybe we met at
a pep rally-

PATRICK

(snaps)

Look, it's not me!

EMILY

..Oh, okay.

With whatever remaining dignity, she gets up and walks off.
Leaves Patrick alone for a moment, before a figure appears
from behind..

Patrick turns, smiles.

PATRICK

Hey.

He sees BRAD, a strapping blond also in his late twenties.
Brad's less compact than Patrick, but still in great
physical shape. He's carrying drinks in hand.

BRAD

'lo there, I come bearing gifts.

He lowers them on the table.

PATRICK

Thank god.

Patrick gulps it down, nearly all gone in one swallow.

BRAD

Calm down, I'm the one who should
be nervous remember. It's *my* high
school reunion, talk about a blahh day.

PATRICK

(tense)

I am calm.

BRAD

Okay, fine. But what was with
Emily trying to get in your pants?

PATRICK

Was that her name?

BRAD

Any moment I thought her hands were
just going to rip your pants off.

PATRICK

I should've just said I was gay
and had it over with.

BRAD

God no - that big mouth of hers
would've told the world by now.

(remembering)

Ugh, like in high school we'd make up
these fake rumors, like "oh my gosh
Bobby totally just slept with Brenda"
type of thing, just to see and if it
would get around. And when it did,
we knew it came from that massive mouth.
And she had braces then, so it wasn't
pretty. Spit flying as she denied
the whole thing.

(a moment)

Too bad I didn't know you in high
school. We would've gotten along.

PATRICK

Yeah, well, you wouldn't be as deprived,
all the sex we would've had. And
at least everyone would know the truth.

BRAD

Like they'd care.

PATRICK

Why don't you say something?

BRAD

To who? Why? No one needs to know.
(beat)
And why do we have name tags? Like
everybody doesn't look the same.

PATRICK

(pointing)
Well that one guy is looking pretty old.

BRAD

That's Mrs. Robinson, my old gym teacher.

PATRICK

Oh...

Brad scans the room for a familiar face. He doesn't find one.

Until a good looking girl spies him and waves, smiling.

Brad smiles vaguely, waving back. A moment before he realizes she's waving to a guy right behind him. Brad tries to turn his wave into a maneuver, fixing his hair. Patrick sees him embarrassed.

PATRICK

You want to dance.

BRAD

Nah, not here.

PATRICK

(offended)
Why *not* here?

Brad speaks in a hushed tone.

BRAD

Listen, not everybody needs to
know about me. Especially these idiots.

PATRICK

You mean not anybody.

BRAD

Shut up -

PATRICK

Oh God, like you being gay is the most interesting thing about you. Get over it.

Brad shoots a nervous look, looks around as if somebody's heard.

BRAD

Shut up. Just shut it.

(with a heavy breath)

I can't believe I'm back in this fucking shit again. I'm surrounded by these assholes and nothing I've done even matters, ten years later and I still feel like the same loser?

PATRICK

If you thought you were going to feel that way, why'd you come?

BRAD

You practically dragged me here!

PATRICK

Because I thought you'd see how much better you were than these guys.

BRAD

Oh please.

PATRICK

You obviously don't see what I see.

Brad looks into Patrick's eyes, and his face suddenly relaxes. He smiles.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So, where's that guy?

BRAD

Who?

PATRICK
(mock-school girl)
The quote unquote *coolest* most
smartest absolute *cutest* boy alive.

BRAD
Oh, well, Scotty's not here.

PATRICK
Fuck you bitch, he is here.

BRAD
How would you know?

PATRICK
Emily.

BRAD
That bitch.

Patrick lets out a laugh.

BRAD
Whatever, there's not much worth
seeing anyway... he has a beer gut where
his six pack abs used to be. Totally
fat now. Poor guy. Poor me actually,
he completely ruined my fantasy.

PATRICK
Poor baby.

BRAD
Shut up, you're loving that my high
school fantasy boyfriend got fat and
has bloated chipmunk cheeks.

Their attention is pulled to the group behind them,
laughing hard, a little too loud. People are seizing each
other by the shoulders, hugging mightily.

PATRICK
I don't understand if he constantly
made fun of you, why'd you like
him in the first place?

BRAD

He didn't make fun of me, per se,
just stood by as his friends did.

PATRICK

Same shit.

BRAD

No, just - whenever he was involved,
it just seemed like he noticed me.

PATRICK

He should've noticed your fists.

BRAD

Just don't talk to him. Promise me.
If you see him, go the other way.
Just stay clear and watch your
surroundings.

PATRICK

You need therapy.

Patrick notices Brad's stiffening face. He looks to a crowd, and figures it out. Patrick takes the last sip of his drink.

PATRICK

Any idea what I should talk
about if I run into him, you
know, accidentally.

BRAD

I'm a joke to you, huh? Do you
even care? God, not even my
boyfriend's on my side.

PATRICK

Of course I'm on your side,
don't be stupid.

BRAD

Gee thanks.

PATRICK

I'm just teasing.

BRAD

No, you're not. You know I really do sometimes think about if you're on my side, I really do. I'm saying like if I fell off a cliff, wouldn't you be choking with tears and want to follow behind me.

Patrick starts laughing.

PATRICK

No.

BRAD

See, you're such an asshole.

PATRICK

Other than the idea of you falling off a cliff being completely ridiculous, I'm not that kind of cheese-ball romantic. You know it. But listen- I'm all for you.
(considers)

You cry. I cry. You laugh. I laugh. You jump off a cliff. I laugh even harder.

BRAD

Fuck you.

PATRICK

I love you, you idiot.

Brad softens, comes into a slight smile.

BRAD

... love you too.

His palm slips into Patrick's.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Thank you.

PATRICK

No problem, now get me some punch.

Brad loosens his grip. Pulls away.

BRAD

No, get it yourself.

PATRICK

Talking to your pathetic ass
took the energy out of me.

BRAD

Well if you're really thirsty,
somehow you'll find your
way to the punch bowl.

Patrick looks onward towards the punch bowl. His eyes widen in surprise, a grin appearing over his face.

PATRICK

Sure.

Patrick gets up and makes way for the snacks table. He stands next to a MALE ATENDEE, compact, with blonde hair and blue eyes, a compelling boyish quality about him. Patrick pretends not to notice him, just continues to pour punch into his cup.

The guy looks at him. There's something, a vibe between them.

GUY

We know each other?

PATRICK

Don't think so.

GUY

You're not part of the reunion?

PATRICK

Nope.

GUY

Good, I'm having a huge thing with
names.

PATRICK

(re: name tags)

That's why we wear these.

GUY

Right. Right. But really, we don't know each other? Not at a club?... or something?

PATRICK

I doubt that.

The guy sticks his hand out.

GUY

Name's Scotty.

PATRICK

(shakes hands)

Patrick.

SCOTTY

Who are you here with?

PATRICK

Brad Garrison, he's over there.

SCOTTY

Oh wow.

PATRICK

You remember him? No lie?

SCOTTY

Yeah, didn't even see him.

PATRICK

Stop by the table, say hi or something?

SCOTTY

Yeah I will.

Patrick begins to go, until Scotty calls out.

SCOTTY

Hey!

Patrick stops in his tracks, turns.

SCOTTY
(hesitant)
Are you - and Brad by any chance...

PATRICK
Are we what?

SCOTTY
Nah nothing.

Patrick grows irritated.

PATRICK
No, are we what?

SCOTTY
No, it's stupid. I thought I
remembered you, but I don't.

PATRICK
Was that really what you were
going to say?

Scotty tries to remain friendly.

SCOTTY
Yeah, it's nothing man, I'll see
you guys later.

PATRICK
See I just thought you were going
to ask if we were having sex?

Scotty's at a complete loss, can't believe what he's
hearing.

SCOTTY
What? No...

PATRICK
Because we do, you know. Have sex.
Lots of it. And you know what,
it's really really gay.

Scotty stands like a deer in headlights.

SCOTTY

Oh, okay.

Patrick walks on towards Brad.

PATRICK

Fucking cracker.

Patrick seizes the opportunity, takes Brad by the finger, leading him to the dance floor.

PATRICK

We're dancing.

BRAD

No, I can't.

PATRICK

Yes you can.

On the floor, the two begin to dance. And it's immediately clear Brad cannot dance. He tensely shifts himself, aware of everyone watching. But Patrick doesn't mind, just takes advantage of the moment.

A GIRL at a nearby table watches the two. Turns to her friend, says:

GIRL

Who're those guys? They're fuckin hot.

MINUTES LATER:

The dance ends, and they return to their table.

PATRICK

Hey I'm gonna go catch some air.

BRAD

You mean smoke a cig?

PATRICK

Same diff. Love you.

BRAD

You too.

Patrick kisses Brad, surprisingly. And leaves. Brad looks around, startled. But grows more confident, just lets out some air.

BRAD
(to himself)
Oh my god, is that Eric Ruby.
(intrigued)
Who's clearly had a nose job.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Brad's standing in line outside a bathroom. He's waiting, looking around the hall, until he notices Scotty walking past. Brad stiffens, waiting for him to pass. But Scotty doesn't, instead he gets in line.

Brad purposely looks away, his breathing becoming shallow. His heart drops when he hears:

SCOTTY
Brad? Brad is that you?

Brad cringes, as he turns to Scotty.

BRAD
(fake enthused)
Scotty? Oh man, hey. How are you?

SCOTTY
Almost didn't recognize you, wow.

BRAD
You look different too.

SCOTTY
Well I'm great, I'm great. But look at you, you're not frail and bony.

Brad forces out a small chuckle.

BRAD
Nope, that got old. So what's up with you?

SCOTTY
Not a whole lot, I'm an intern at the Sea Crest hospital.

BRAD

Wow, you're smart.

SCOTTY

Excuse me?

BRAD

No nothing, just saying I didn't think you'd end up - Well you weren't really... nothing.

SCOTTY

And you've made new friends. Met one guy who said he was with you.

Brad freaks a little.

BRAD

Really who?

SCOTTY

Name's slipping right off the tip of my tongue. But boy was he... angry.

BRAD

And now I know who you're talking about.

Brad takes a moment, briefly envisions the encounter the two could've had.

SCOTTY

Listen I don't have much time, pretty much have to go. But I wanted to ask you, if you aren't doing anything. Maybe we could, we *should* do something. Apologize for me being a huge dick. If you want, bring your irate friend.

Scotty hands him a sheet of small paper.

SCOTTY

That's my number. Whenever you're in the mood to relax, or hang, just call.

Scotty begins to back away. Brad's baffled, tries to think of something to say. He comes up with:

BRAD

Bathroom.

SCOTTY

What?

BRAD

Uhh, aren't you - going to use it?

SCOTTY

Line's too big.

BRAD

Oh... okay.

SCOTTY

Well give me a call.

BRAD

Will do.

SCOTTY

Can't wait.

Brad stands, somewhat tense, but proudly triumphant.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Brad's standing in a stall, pulling a small sheet of paper out from his pocket. Written on it is a number. Above the number is written: **SCOTTY**.

Brad considers, grins, then waits a moment, before dropping the number into the toilet. He flushes it, exiting the stall.

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

Patrick rests against the wall, smoking on a cigarette. Looks out into the night sky.

He stands that way for awhile, before Brad gives him a gentle push from behind.

PATRICK
You lookin' for a fight, cause
I can take you.

BRAD
You wish.

PATRICK
So what's up?

BRAD
I'm glad you got to see where
I grew up.

Patrick stares, a grin forming. They stay at a standstill,
comfortable in silence.

PATRICK
(by rote)
I'm glad you brought me along
for the ride.

Brad leans into him, and they embrace. Patrick breathes
Brad in...

BRAD
(after a moment)
C'mon, lets go home.

They part, and start down the parking lot.

PATRICK
So, how was the reunion?

BRAD
All in all, better than expected.
And your encounter with Scotty?

Patrick can't help but laugh nonstop.

PATRICK
(mocking)
Uh-mazing. But I had a problem
with his fat. It looked strikingly
similar to my muscles.

BRAD
His are slightly bigger.

PATRICK
Snap.

BRAD
Burn.

PATRICK
He into threesomes?

BRAD
I flushed his number.

PATRICK
Dumb ass.

BRAD
I know.

PATRICK
You know they didn't expect you
to be this hot.

BRAD
It's sort of comforting actually.

They continue walking along the street, into the night.

PATRICK
So we're at the place you grew up.
Met your friends, stayed in your
hometown, what's next for me?

BRAD
..You still haven't met my grandparents.

PATRICK
Fuck.

FADE OUT.