

IS THIS THING ON?

**Screenplay by
Bradley Cooper
and
Will Arnett & Mark Chappell**

**Story by
Will Arnett & Mark Chappell
& John Bishop**

OPEN ON --

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

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

It is magnificent.

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

CLOSE ON --

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

We realize we are in...

INT. SCHOOL, GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY - DAY

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

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

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

Not even the drums can rouse him.

INT. FAMILY HOME, ENSUITE BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

Alex turns off the shower, steps out.

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

TESS

We need to call it. Right?

A very long beat.

ALEX

I think so too.

She resumes brushing.

INT. FAMILY HOME, HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

ALEX
(whispers)
Hey.

TESS
(whispers)
They're sleeping.

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

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

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

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

ALEX
(whispers)
Okay. So...

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

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

FELIX
Are you guys fighting...?

Tess and Alex look at each other.

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

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

TESS
We never fight.

FELIX
That's true.

TESS
Go back to bed baby. Okay?

Felix goes back into his room.

TESS
Come here Charlie.

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

INT. CHRISTINE & BALLS' APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

ALEX
Our last hurrah.

TESS
What?

ALEX
You know, just with the...

TESS
Yeah...

INT. CHRISTINE AND BALLS' APARTMENT - LATER

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

CHRISTINE and STEPHEN and GEOFFREY.

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

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

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

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

Stephen's about to say--

CHRISTINE

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

STEPHEN

No.

GEOFFREY

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

TESS

What?

STEPHEN

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

TESS

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

GEOFFREY

Yeah, but remember? We were scared.

CHRISTINE

Right, and he's not.

TESS

It's not that.

STEPHEN

What is it?

TESS

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

STEPHEN

That's true.

TESS

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

ALEX

Wait, are you talking about me?

TESS

No, somebody alive!

CHRISTINE

Shit.

STEPHEN

Jesus.

GEOFFREY

Also dead.

TESS

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

CHRISTINE

Darling?

TESS

Yes...

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

BALLS (O.S.)

Hey I found it!

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

EVERYONE

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

CHRISTINE

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

BALLS

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

TESS

Stay. It's fine.

CHRISTINE

It's like every week.

TESS

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

CHRISTINE

(to Tess)

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

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

ALEX

Are you alright?

Christine throws a roll of paper towel to Balls.

BALLS

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

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

ALEX

Yeah, you seem it--

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

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

ALEX
Of Christ?

Balls nods in affirmation.

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

CHRISTINE (O.S.)
Babe?!

He picks up the smashed roll of paper towels.

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

CHRISTINE
Oh my god.

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

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

BALLS
It's the burden of my beautiful
wife.

CHRISTINE
Oh god. You got it St. Paul.

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

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

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

BALLS
You can't call it this far out!

STEPHEN

Yes, we just did, actually.

BALLS

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

CHRISTINE

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

BALLS

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

TESS

We aren't making anymore babies.

BALLS

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

CHRISTINE

Okay, wow, that's enough.

BALLS

No you have to have--

CHRISTINE

Stop talking.

BALLS

No but you have to have sex.

TESS

We have sex, it's just--

CHRISTINE

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

BALLS

Wait, you did have sex to
make--

ALEX

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

CHRISTINE

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

BALLS

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

IN THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Tess and Christine finish putting away the dirty dishes.

TESS

Christine, are you baking your
cookies?

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

Yeah.

CHRISTINE

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

Tess heads for the door.

TESS

We've already called the Uber.

CHRISTINE

We have fortune cookies!

BALLS

(calling out)

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

CHRISTINE

Babe, let's walk them out.

INT. NEW YORK CITY TRAIN STATION, LOBBY - NIGHT

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

ALEX

You asked about it specifically?

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

ALEX
Christine when she's not high--

TESS
--So grumpy.

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

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

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

TESS
Maybe I laid it on a little too
thick.

ALEX
Too thick?

TESS
What?

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

TESS
--Okay! Okay!

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

ALEX
You took one?

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

Another bite.

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

TESS
That's the idea.

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

ALEX
(biting into it)
Fuck it.

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

ALEX
You ate more than I did.

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

ALEX
Shit, that was probably really stupid.

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

TESS
What are you doing?

ALEX
Oh my god, what am I doing!

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

ALEX
Hey...

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

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

TESS
I think so. But you're okay?

ALEX
The cookie hasn't hit me yet.

The train begins to move.

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

And the train leaves the station. Alex stands alone.

CUT TO:

TITLE: IS THIS THING ON?

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, STREET - NIGHT

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

ALEX
(sotto)
Holy shit...

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

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

BOUNCER
What's up?

ALEX
Just wanna come and get a drink.

BOUNCER
Yeah, fifteen buck cover.

ALEX
To get a drink?

BOUNCER
It's comedy.

Alex nods, not entirely sure what that means.

ALEX
Is it funny...?

BOUNCER
It's fifteen bucks, man.

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

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

(MORE)

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

NINA
Yo.

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

BOUNCER
Good luck.

NINA
Thank you.

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

BOUNCER
She put her name down.

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

CLOSE ON--

Alex signing his name onto the sign up sheet.

INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Alex at the bar, finishing his drink.

STAGE MANAGER
Alright, Alex Novak downstairs in
two minutes.

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

ALEX
That's me.

BARTENDER
Well, you better head down there
then.

ALEX
Where?

BARTENDER
Just straight behind you. Down the
stairs.

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

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

ALEX
Right here?

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

BARTENDER
Yeah, I'll watch it.

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

DAN
What up man.

ALEX
How's it going.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALEX

Fuck.

KEMP

(into the mic)

Alec Novak, everybody!

On stage now, Alex faces the audience.

ALEX

(into the mic)

Um... I don't have a ton of jokes?
And... um... Actually, my name is
Alex Novak, for that lady. It's
okay, my parents won't be mad.
Um... What can I tell you? I think
I'm getting a divorce. What tipped
me off was that I'm living in an
apartment on my own...

(a few laughs)

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

(more laughs)

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

(some laughs)

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

(laughs)

I plan on letting her keep that in
the divorce.

(biggest laugh yet)

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

(small laugh)

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

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

(aww)

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

(disapproving laugh)

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

Alex comes off stage to applause.

KEMP

(into the mic)

Alex Novak everybody!

Alex finds a passing SERVER.

ALEX

Sorry... Is there a bathroom here?

KEMP

(into the mic)

Alright let's hear it for Jill McKenzie!

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alex washing his hands taking in what he just did.

ALEX

(sotto, singing)

Allez, allez, allez.

Allez, allez, allez.

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

Allez, allez, allez.

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, HALLWAY - NIGHT

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

NINA

First time?

ALEX

Yeah.

NINA

Stick around and support your fellow comics.

Alex looks on.

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

EXT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

EXT. NYC STREET - NIGHT

Alex heads down the New York street into the night.

INT./EXT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

FELIX

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

ALEX

What do you mean...?

FELIX

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

ALEX

Yeah.

FELIX

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

ALEX

I --

He stops himself.

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

FELIX
What dragon...?

ALEX
At the school assembly, the big red
dragon.

JUDE
You mean the lion.

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

JUDE
It only had two people in it.

ALEX
Huh.

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

JUDE
It was a lion.

ALEX
Whatever it was, lion or dragon --

JUDE
Lion.

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

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

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

FELIX

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

ALEX

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

FELIX

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

JUDE

Do you have goals Dad?

ALEX

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

FELIX & JUDE

Dad, you should have goals.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT NYC BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex tucks his boys into bed. Kisses them.

ALEX

(kissing the boys)
Goodnight.

JUDE

Love you.

ALEX

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

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

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

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

MARILYN

I haven't told your father.

Alex can barely hear her.

ALEX

What?

She whispers again.

MARILYN

Entre nous.

ALEX

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

MARILYN

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

FELIX

What doesn't grandpa know?

ALEX

That Mamma and I are splitting up.

JUDE

I think you should tell him Dada.

MARILYN

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

ALEX

Tell that to our marriage.

MARILYN

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

FELIX

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

ALEX

And you and dad are twins?

MARILYN

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

FELIX

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

ALEX

Jesus, Mom. Felix, what is it?

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

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

Alex goes to the refrigerator.

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

MARILYN
Your father drank them all.

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

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

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

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

JAN
Slow down, slow down...

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

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

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

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

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

Jan rises and faces his son.

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

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

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

EXT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, NYC - NIGHT

Alex crosses the street and makes his way into --

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - LATER

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

INT. ALEX'S CAR (DRIVING) - NIGHT

Alex drives out of the city.

INT. FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

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

INT. FAMILY HOME, BOYS' BEDROOM - LATER

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

JUDE
Is Dada going to be okay...?

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

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

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

FELIX
But he sleeps on the couch.

TESS
Huh?

JUDE
We sleep in his bed.

FELIX
Yeah, it's awesome.

EXT. FAMILY HOME / ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

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

ALEX
(sotto)
Oh for fuck's sake.

INT. ALEX'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Alex returns to the city.

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

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

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

ALEX

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

MATT (COMIC HOST)

Oh...

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, ON STAGE - LATER

Alex is in the middle of his second set.

ALEX

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

The crowd laughs.

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

More laughs.

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

(white light)

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

INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE, STAIRWELL - LATER

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

ROLO

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

Alex stops, considers.

ALEX

Okay, thank you.

INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE - NIGHT

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

ALEX

Hey, cool if I sit down here?

DAN

Look who's back.

ALEX

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

DAN

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

ALEX

Alex.

DAN

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

ALEX
Really? Was it that bad?

DAN JILL
I mean... It was bad.

DAN
What do you even do?

NINA
Just say it...

DAN
What is it?

ALEX
I work in finance.

NINA
No!

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

ALEX
Alright.

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

Alex looks at the website on his phone.

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

ALEX
Five or six times?!

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

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

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

ALEX
(to Liz)
I'm Alex.

LIZ
(not even looking)
Lovely.

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

NINA
Don't make eye contact with
her!

DAN
Yeah, look down!

LIZ
Shut up.

Then, to Alex --

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

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

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

JILL
(to Derek)
Fuck you!

NINA
We got jobs!

JILL
I'm Laverne.

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

ALEX
Alex.

MATT
Alex, C'mere!

DAN
Hey man, that's my white slave!

DEREK
Shut up!

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

MATT
Come talk to some real comedians,
man.

DEREK
What's up man?

ALEX
I'm alright.

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

Matt and Derek bust up laughing.

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

DEREK
He's scared straightening.

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

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

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

SOME TIME LATER

Alex is still with Matt and Derek at their table.

DEREK

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

MATT

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

DEREK

Oh yeah, real sex!

MATT

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

DEREK

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

Liz sits down with them.

LIZ

What, what's wrong?

ALEX

You guys just write stuff down all day?

DEREK

(to Liz)

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

LIZ

(to Alex)

You gotta write.

DEREK
Work on your craft.

LIZ
You gotta write...

EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

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

EXT. FAMILY HOME, STREET - DAY

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

INT. FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

ALEX
Hello! Good morning! Hey!

TESS
Hey?!

ALEX
Look who's here!

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

JUDE
Dad!

FELIX
I thought Mom was taking us to school.

TESS
Yeah, me too.

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

JUDE
Is that a new car...?!

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

The boys rush out with him.

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

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

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

JUDE
This is sick!

TESS
Hold on a second.

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

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

TESS
This is not how this is going to
work.

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

ALEX
This gives you the morning off.

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

TESS
From what? Morning off from what?

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

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

TESS
What?! What did you say?!

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

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

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

EXT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

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

TESS
Marilyn?

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

Marilyn gets out of her car.

TESS
Come inside. You're sweet.

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

TESS
Okay...

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

TESS
I know, it's okay.

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

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

They embrace.

MARILYN
You do?

TESS
I think so.

INT. FAMILY HOME, FAMILY ROOM - DAY

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

CHRISTINE
You gonna start fucking?

TESS
Immediately.

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

TESS

Maybe that's what you need.

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

Really? Y'all ever fuck sober?

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

Well, that's a red flag.

CHRISTINE

No duh.

TESS

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

CHRISTINE

I just worry...

TESS

About what?

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

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

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

--like?

CHRISTINE

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

INT. FAMILY HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

TESS

(patting the bed)
Charlie, Lucy!

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

EXT. NYC STREET - DAY

Tess is walking down the street looking around for someplace.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

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

FELIX

Hi Mom!

TESS

Are you lice free yet?

ALEX

I mean, I got it.

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

Alex makes his way back to Jude in the chair.

ALEX

(Felix)

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

TESS

Do you have some more paper towels?

ALEX

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

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

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

TESS

So... you are using our old
armoire?

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

It's fine.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY CLOSET - LATER

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

TESS

(whispering)

I think I might have lice.

Tess scratches her scalp as Alex takes a look.

TESS

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

ALEX

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

FELIX
Mom is pregnant!

JUDE
You are so pregnant!

FELIX
You hooked up with a bug!

ALEX
Guys stop. That's enough.

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

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

FELIX
No.

ALEX
But you have lice, so ...

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

TESS
You promised not to tell them.

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

He point to the back bedroom.

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

JUDE
I already know it!

ALEX
Keep the volume down too.

The boys rush out of the room.

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

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

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

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

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

TESS
I know.

ALEX
I must have it, will you check me?

TESS
Sure.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

TESS
'Under Pressure'?

ALEX
Oh, that's what that is.

TESS
(laughs)
You didn't recognize it?

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

Poor boys.

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

TESS

I may dip my toe into the coaching world.

ALEX

That why you're in the city?

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

You did great.

(then)

I haven't talked with any programs yet.

ALEX

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

TESS

Yeah, I think it's great too.

They sit in silence for a moment.

TESS
Um, I think you're good.

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

She picks up the shampoo.

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

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

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

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

TESS
(to herself)
You got this.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

OPEN MIC DOORMAN
Can I help you?

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

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

Alex signs his name onto the yellow legal pad.

OPEN MIC DOORMAN
You're next.

ALEX
I'm next?!

OPEN MIC DOORMAN
Yep, be ready.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

ALEX
The light, the light...

Alex makes his way to the microphone.

EXT. NYC, STREET - NIGHT

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

EXT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, STREET - MOMENTS LATER

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

GABE
Yo man. What's up?

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

GABE
Yeah...

ALEX
I got fifteen bucks on me.

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

ALEX
Thanks man.

Alex takes a big bite of the falafel.

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

ALEX
(mouth full)
Seriously?

INT. OLIVE TREE CAFE, BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

Alex crashed down at the booth with Kemp and Jill.

KEMP

Hey!

ALEX

Hey.

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

KEMP

Make yourself comfortable!

ALEX

Am I okay here?

KEMP

JILL

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

KEMP

How was your night?

ALEX

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

KEMP

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

ALEX

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

JILL

You don't know anything?

ALEX

KEMP

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

ALEX

Well, a lot better.

JILL

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

ALEX

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

JILL

(teasing)

You're really bad.

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - LATER

Alex is on stage.

ALEX

Oh, I brought my drink up.

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

MATT

(from the host chair)

It's okay! Use it!

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

ALEX

(to the table)

Is this okay?

(then into the mic)

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

The audience laughs.

ALEX

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, BAR BACK AREA - NIGHT

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

NINA
Water please?

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

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

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

NINA
Oh no!

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

NINA
Uh, yeah...

ALEX
Okay?

NINA
Sure, I'd be down.

EXT./INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY

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

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

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

ALEX

Hey.

TESS

Hey. What are you doing out here?

A beat.

ALEX

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

TESS

Stop it. Get in here.

ALEX

Okay.

TESS

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

They come into the--

INT. FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

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

ALEX

Hi buddy! You having fun?

FELIX

Yeah!

ALEX

Yeah? How's the magician?

FELIX

Good!

Marilyn comes up to the counter.

MARILYN

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

ALEX

Okay...

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

BALLS

Hey! There he is!

ALEX

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

BALLS

Is that his name?

ALEX

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

BALLS

Dude you look so good.

ALEX

For real?

BALLS

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

ALEX

No, I've had this sweater for--

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

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

Christine, don't say that.

CHRISTINE

What?

ALEX

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

BALLS

Why not?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALEX
No. God, no, not at all.

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

They lapse into an awkward silence..

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

TESS
They're crazy.

ALEX
They are psychos when it comes to
planning.

Tess lights the last few candles.

TESS

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

ALEX

Yeah...

Tess smiles.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BALLS

Okay what's the deal...?

ALEX

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

BALLS

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

ALEX

Characters you mean.

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

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

ALEX

That was a bonus.

BALLS

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

ALEX

Than him?

BALLS

Yep.

ALEX

I bet.

BALLS

I got recognized on the street.

ALEX

Did you?

BALLS

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

ALEX

So not a fan of the play necessarily?

BALLS

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

(quieter)

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

I knew it. What's her name?

ALEX

I've been doing stand up.

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

Ok.

ALEX

What?

BALLS

Is this like a hobby?

ALEX

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

BALLS

Ok.

ALEX

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

BALLS

Fuck.

ALEX

What?

Balls takes a deep breath.

BALLS

I knew it.

ALEX

Knew what?

BALLS

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

ALEX

I'm not pursuing--

BALLS

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

ALEX

Jesus, Balls.

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

Oh you do whatever you want.

ALEX

I don't--

BALLS

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

ALEX

What are you talking about, man?

BALLS

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

ALEX

Justify what...?

BALLS

Nothing...

ALEX

Is Tess seeing someone...?

BALLS

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

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

ALEX

Did Christine say something?

BALLS

Who?

ALEX

Christine?

BALLS

About what?

ALEX

About Tess seeing somebody.

BALLS

No, did she?

ALEX
I'm asking you!

BALLS
What did-- Did you...

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

BALLS
What did she say?

ALEX
Dude, I'm asking you!

INT. FAMILY HOME - LATE IN THE DAY

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

TESS (O.C.)
Hey!

Tess is upstairs continuing to clean up.

ALEX
(calling out)
Yeah?

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

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

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

ALEX
Yeah, I gotta go.

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

Tess looks on, not sure what just happened.

INT. OTHER OPEN MIC COMEDY CLUB, STAGE - NIGHT

Alex is on stage at another open mic club.

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

ALEX (CONT'D)

(aww)

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

(the audience laughs)

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

(he gets a laugh)

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

(he takes a breath)

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

(MORE)

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

He looks up to the balcony above the stage.

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

JILL
(from the balcony)
Keep going?

The audience laughs.

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

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

ALEX
It does NOT say I have a small
penis!

The audience laughs some more.

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

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

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

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

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

JILL

I left you a little something.

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

JILL (CONT'D)

Just for you to remember
confidence...

Alex cracks up.

JILL

The folder is unacceptable.

ALEX

Why? This is where I keep
everything organized!

JILL

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

(her iPhone)

We have it in here, like adults.

ALEX

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

JILL

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

They share a laugh.

JILL (CONT'D)

I think we should fuck.

ALEX

You and me?

JILL

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

Off Alex--

INT. JILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

ALEX
Are you a nurse?

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

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

ALEX
(into intercom)
Jill?

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

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

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

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

FELIX
Gonna crush it Dad.

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

JUDE
Dad?

ALEX
Yeah?

Are you sad?

ALEX
No. Why? Do I look sad?

Tell him. FELIX

Jude pulls out Alex's yellow folder.

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

FELIX JUDE

By your bed. On one of the By your bed.
stands.

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

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

JUDE
It was right next to where we
sleep!

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

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

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

Jokes? JUDE

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

JUDE

But they aren't funny, dad.

FELIX

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

JUDE

And a surfer.

FELIX

What's a radio-olo-gist?

JUDE

You talk about us and mom?

ALEX

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

Felix starts crying.

ALEX

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

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

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

JUDE

Ok. But it's weird dad.

ALEX
I know...life's weird.

At that moment Alex's phone rings.

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

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

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

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

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

ALEX
Hey.

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

ALEX
Yeah! Everything's great.

TESS
Are the boys okay...?

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

TESS
What the fuck?

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

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

ALEX
You suck!

He heads back to the minivan.

TESS
Hey, where are you going?

ALEX
You know what? I got it covered.

TESS
No where are you going?

ALEX
Forget it.

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

TESS
Lucy!

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

TESS
No! Charlie stay!

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

TESS
You don't even have leashes!

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

EXT. ALEX'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

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

ALEX

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

MARILYN

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

ALEX

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

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

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

ALEX

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

MARILYN

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

JAN

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

ALEX

Dad --

MARILYN

You can still stay for a quick bite.

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

ALEX

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

JAN

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

ALEX

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

JAN

What?

ALEX

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

JAN

You...?

ALEX

Yeah. Me.

JAN

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

ALEX

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

JAN

What's funny about your life...?

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

MARILYN

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

ALEX

No, it's not so bad.

MARILYN

This is why she threw you out!

ALEX

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

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

MARILYN

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

ALEX

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

JAN

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

Alex takes a breath. He knows this is futile.

ALEX

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

He walks out.

JUDE

Remember to pick us up in your new motorcycle!

ALEX

Nobody's getting a motorcycle!

INT. FAMILY HOME, CLOSET - LATE AFTERNOON

Tess is getting dressed and on the phone.

TESS

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

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

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

INT. RESTAURANT, TABLE - NIGHT

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

LAIRD

'We're gonna need that hand Roche!'

TESS

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

LAIRD

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

TESS

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

LAIRD

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

TESS

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

LAIRD

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

(MORE)

LAIRD (CONT'D)

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

TESS

Is it frustrating?

LAIRD

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

TESS

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

LAIRD

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

TESS

Oh yeah? She skiing? Or...

LAIRD

Polygamy.

TESS

Oh...

LAIRD

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

TESS

Oh, I didn't know you split.

LAIRD

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

TESS

(laughs)

Oh is that the word?

LAIRD

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

(changes the subject)

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

TESS

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

LAIRD

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

TESS

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

LAIRD

Wow. Ok.

TESS

Yeah it's actually good.

LAIRD

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

TESS

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

LAIRD

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

TESS

Yeah.

(then)

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

LAIRD

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

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

INT. RESTAURANT, BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

TESS
Yeah, okay... fuck it.

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

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

LAIRD
Sounds fun!

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

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

KEMP
Fuck, cutting it pretty close.

ALEX
Yeah, sorry. I got held up.

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

ALEX
Yeah, no, whatever.

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

KEMP
You need a drink?

ALEX

No.

Kemp goes to the bar.

KEMP

I need a beer!

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

LIZ

Sam Jay has the light. You have two minutes.

ALEX

Okay.

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

KEMP

You're gonna be great!

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

MC

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

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

ALEX

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

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

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

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

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

Tess and Laird keep watching.

LAIRD

Are you sure you don't want to
leave?

TESS

No. I don't want to go anywhere.

Alex continues on stage.

ALEX

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

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

The crowd eats it up and begins to clap.

ALEX

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

TESS

(to Laird)

Let's go.

We see Tess leave with Laird.

MC (O.C.)

Let's hear it for Alex Novak!

Alex comes off stage--

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, BAR BACK AREA - CONTINUOUS

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

KEMP

That was fantastic! Yes! It was so good!

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - SAME MOMENT

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

MC

Alex also does comedy at weddings.

TESS

(to Nina)

This is Laird.

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

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

The audience cheers.

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

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

They walk out as the audience goes nuts.

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

ALEX
(to Nina)
Yo! How was it?

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

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

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

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

NINA
I respect that. Tess.

ALEX
What do you mean Tess?

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

ALEX
What are you talking about?

NINA
Did you not invite them?

ALEX
No I didn't fucking invite them!

He runs out after them.

EXT. OLIVE TREE CAFE/CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - CONTINUOUS

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

TESS

Woah!

(Stopping him)

You found a sitter...?

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

Yeah.

(then, to himself and to
her)

What the fuck are you --

TESS

What the fuck?

ALEX

What the fuck me? What the fuck
you!

TESS

You've been moving on, huh?

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

For years!

ALEX

No!

TESS

No.

They stand in silence. Alex lights a cigarette.

TESS
How long have you been--

ALEX
Just that one time, I swear to--

TESS
...doing stand up comedy?

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

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

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

TESS
...It's hot.

ALEX
Really?

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

TESS
Give me a drag.

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

TESS
Marilyn?

ALEX
Ya.

TESS

What the absolute fuck are we doing?

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

No, of course.

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

...I'm sleeping over.

ALEX

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

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

TESS (FROM THE BATHROOM OFF CAMERA)

Can't believe you fucked somebody!

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

That was fucking insane.

ALEX

Insane.

TESS
You kept looking at me.

ALEX
I always do.

LATER

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

ALEX
Have you upped your parenting since we split?

TESS
Out of necessity.

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

TESS
Yeah, but I always do that.

ALEX
But isn't that ridiculous?

TESS
Yes, but I always want to win.

ALEX
Yeah, of course.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Alex is on stage.

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

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB, HALLWAY - LATER

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

GABE

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

ALEX

Thanks man!

He starts to head out when --

JILL

Oh well well well.

ALEX

Hey!

JILL

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

She lets that hang.

JILL

(teasing him)

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

Alex laughs and heads out.

EXT. COMEDY CELLAR - NIGHT

Alex is out smoking cigarettes with Matt and Derek.

DEREK

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

MATT
The NEW main.

DEREK
The new main.

ALEX
Yeah...

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

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

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

They laugh.

ALEX
(walking away)
Fuck you guys.

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

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

INT. VOLLEYBALL CLUB, PRACTICE - DAY

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

EXT. VOLLEYBALL CLUB, PARKING LOT - DAY

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

TESS
You're nuts. What are you doing?

ALEX
What?

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

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

Silence. They look at each other.

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

FELIX & JUDE
Is that mom?!

ALEX
Yeah, what do you think?

JUDE
That's so cool.

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

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

EXT. OYSTER BAY TRAIN STATION - DAY

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

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

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

BALLS
How are you?!

ALEX
I'm doing great.

BALLS
You like my 'stache?

ALEX
What's with the look?

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

ALEX
Good! It's a strong stash.

BALLS
Thank you! I'm just grateful!

INT. WAGONEER (MOVING) - DAY

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

EXT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE - DAY

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

CHRISTINE
I put YOU in the attic, of course.

TESS
Yeah, great, thank you.

STEPHEN
It is so good to be here again.

CHRISTINE
Relax. You're in the primary.

GEOFFREY
Yes!

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

The group unpacks the groceries and settles in.

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

ALEX
Yes of course! For sure.

STEPHEN
Yes, what do we play?

CHRISTINE
Same thing we play every year.

STEPHEN
Why don't we play Bananagrams?

EVERYONE
What? What did you say?

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

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

CHRISTINE
Why would you change it?!

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

STEPHEN
Okay!

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

She leads her away.

CHRISTINE
 (to Alex)
 Remember what I said.

ALEX
 I know...

Alex is left alone...

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

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

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

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

STEPHEN
 Look, I have four left.

BALLS
 You think!

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

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

They all laugh.

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

GEOFFREY
 NO!

STEPHEN

What?!

CHRISTINE

That's a good one!

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

STEPHEN

You know, every year this does not end well.

ALEX

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

BALLS

Is your person...

ALEX AND CHRISTINE

Joan?

STEPHEN

JOAN!!!!

They erupt in pure elation of getting it right.

EXT. OYSTER BAY, BACK PORCH - NIGHT

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

BALLS

Hey!

ALEX

Hey man.

BALLS

What are you doing?

ALEX

Just having a smoke.

BALLS

Can I sit with you?

ALEX

Yeah.

Balls sits down on the step next to him.

BALLS

It's starting to rain.

They sit in silence a moment.

BALLS

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

ALEX

I'm sorry man. What were you doing?

BALLS

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

ALEX

You do...?

BALLS

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

ALEX

Okay.

BALLS

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

ALEX

Thank you man.

BALLS

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

ALEX

What?!

BALLS

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

ALEX

What are you talking about, man?!

BALLS

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

ALEX

No, I didn't inspire you--

BALLS

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

ALEX

Don't do this, man--

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

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

ALEX

No, of course I do, man.

BALLS

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

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM COUCH - NIGHT

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

CHRISTINE

Sorry.
(the couch)
Kinda small, right?

She approaches Alex.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

You need more blankets?

ALEX

No, I--

CHRISTINE

Are you sure, this one's kinda old?

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

ALEX

No, they seem okay.

CHRISTINE

Need more pillows? Anything?

ALEX

No this is great, thank you.

CHRISTINE

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

ALEX

It's going to be fine.

She stares down at him. Fierce.

CHRISTINE

Do you want to know my secret?

ALEX

Uh. Do I...?

CHRISTINE

The real reason as to why I despise you?

ALEX

I guess.

CHRISTINE

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

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

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

(then)

I'll deny we ever had this
conversation.

ALEX

Okay.

CHRISTINE

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

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, STAIRWELL/ATTIC - NIGHT

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

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

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, KITCHEN - MORNING

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

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

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

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

STEPHEN

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

(nothing from them)

Anybody?

CHRISTINE

Not sure how that relates exactly
but okay.

(then)

But actually...

(MORE)

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

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

GEOFFREY

Oh, thank you.

He gets a laugh. Christine ploughs on.

CHRISTINE

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

TESS

(hesitant)

Yeah but...

CHRISTINE

No this is amazing!

(to everyone)

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

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

EXT. BACKYARD, OUTSIDE OF HOUSE - DAY

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

TESS

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

ALEX

Don't worry about it.

TESS

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

ALEX

It's totally fine, it's okay!

TESS

It's such a big deal.

ALEX
It's great news!

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

ALEX
I know!

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

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

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

ALEX
You should!

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

Alex takes his phone.

ALEX
Here look at this.

He pulls up a photo of his new apartment.

TESS
What?

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

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

TESS
Wait, where is this?

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

Alex does his best impression of a jumping spike.

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

TESS

It's not me now.

ALEX

Yeah, it is.

TESS

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

EXT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, BACK PATIO - CONTINUOUS

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

CHRISTINE

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

BALLS

Why did people wake up already?

CHRISTINE

Oh my god.

BALLS

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

Christine doesn't even acknowledge him.

BACK TO:

EXT. ROCKY BEACH OUTSIDE OF HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

Okay...

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

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

Tess walks away to head back in leaving Alex.

ALEX

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

TESS

What?!

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

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

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

ALEX

(sotto)

Jesus christ...

He gets up.

INT. OYSTER BAY, ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

ALEX

The house is busy tonight.

TESS

Did anybody see you come up?

ALEX

Everyone is kind of in their own world.

(then)

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

TESS

That you slept with somebody for starters.

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

Jesus you're good at this game.

TESS

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

ALEX

I wasn't there? You checked out.

TESS

Me?

ALEX

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

TESS

Well, good thing we're not together.

ALEX

Aren't we...?

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

Maybe I'm embarrassed.

ALEX

By what?

TESS

Me.

ALEX

Why?

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

Of course there is.

TESS

To what?

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

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

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

TESS

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

ALEX

I did!

TESS

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

ALEX

Okay, you want the truth?

TESS

Yes.

ALEX

I wasn't the downer. You were.

TESS

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

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, OUTSIDE ATTIC DOOR - CONTINUOUS

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

TESS (O.C.)

(through the door)

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

BACK TO:

INT. OYSTER BAY, ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex and Tess are still on the bed.

TESS (CONT'D)

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

BACK TO:

INT. OYSTER BAY HOUSE, OUTSIDE ATTIC DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Christine leans in further to hear more clearly.

TESS (O.C.)

(through the door)

I couldn't ask you that.

ALEX (O.C.)

(through the door)

Of course you could!

TESS (O.C.)

(through the door)

No!

BACK TO:

INT. OYSTER BAY, ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT

TESS

Baby! You left me alone!

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

So what are you saying then?

TESS

What I'm saying--

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

CHRISTINE
Fucking stupid fucking door...

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

CHRISTINE
Woah!

ALEX
Maybe take care of your own shit
first.

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

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

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

INT. CELLAR COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

A few laughs.

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

ALEX (CONT'D)

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

EXT. COMEDY CELLAR CLUB - NIGHT

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

ALEX

Dad?

Jan stops and turns to see his son.

ALEX

What the fuck are you doing here?

JAN

Son! I just...

Jan walks closer to his son.

JAN (CONT'D)

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

ALEX

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

JAN

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

ALEX

Dad...

JAN

Son...

ALEX

Dad listen...

JAN

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

ALEX

Mom?

JAN

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

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

JAN

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

They pull apart.

ALEX

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

JAN

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

Alex nods.

JAN

Yeah? You work it through.

(Comedy Cellar)

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

ALEX

See you...

(then)

I'll add "a" joke.

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

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Alex is awoken by the door buzzer.

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

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

BALLS
Hey man! I've got bagels!

ALEX
Oh, for fuck's sake.

He shuts the door on Balls.

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

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

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

ALEX
Maybe they want their hat back.

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

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

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

BALLS (CONT'D)

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

ALEX

I was talking about your marriage.

BALLS

Oh. What about it?

ALEX

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

BALLS

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

ALEX

Really?

BALLS

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

ALEX

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

BALLS

Why?

ALEX

You'll be out of town?

BALLS

She came with me to Texas.

ALEX

Really?

BALLS

Yeah.

ALEX

She did?

BALLS

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

ALEX

Wow, I'm confused.

BALLS

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

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

BALLS

What is that behind me?

ALEX

That's a picture of Tess.

BALLS

Oh! Well I can't see her face?

ALEX

Yeah well, the photo was taken from
behind.

BALLS

Yeah well you should just turn it
around.

ALEX

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

BALLS

(thinks about it)
Someday.

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

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

INT. FAMILY HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

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

EXT. FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

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

ALEX

Hey.

TESS

Hey. Is everything--

ALEX

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

TESS

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

ALEX

I just wanna show you something really quick.

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

ALEX

Look at that.

TESS

What is that Alex?

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

ALEX

It's you.

He zooms in on the photo.

ALEX

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

Tess looks closely at the photo.

TESS

I see that.

ALEX

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

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

TESS

Fuck!!

She gathers herself.

TESS

I'll think about it.

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

EXT. FAMILY HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

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

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - DAY

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

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

INT. COMEDY CELLAR - NIGHT

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

Alex is on stage in his element.

ALEX

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

INT. SCHOOL, STAIRWELL - DAY

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

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

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY - DAY

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS--

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

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM, ASSEMBLY - CONTINUOUS

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

THE MUSIC CONTINUES AS Alex and Tess stand together.

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

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

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

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

Under Pressure.

THE END