

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Bright sun. Blue sky. Each connected townhouse with a driveway, garage in front and a small yard with unusually green grass.

The perfect neighborhood. Peaceful. Children playing, laughing. Then a RED STATION WAGON moves into view, pulls into a driveway.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL HAPP (4), cute little guy with big cheeks, bowl-cut hair do, plays with action figures along the railing of the staircase as if he were imagining a high wire action sequence. He simulates punching and kicking sounds, just like in the movies.

Michael glances up at a window near the front door, sees the RED STATION WAGON pull into the driveway. His eyes light up. Excitement. Michael drops his action figures, quickly dashes up the stairs, O.S.

The action figures lie on the carpet of the staircase. In the background, through the window, a burly, tough and mean looking man steps out of the car - FRANK (28), Michael's father.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael runs up to a door, pounds on it continuously.

MICHAEL  
Mommy! Mommy!

No response. Only moans. A steady, rhythmic BANGING.

Michael opens the door, sees his mother ANNIE (22), in bed, pretty, her bare back to the door, hopping up and down on top of MARTIN, late twenties, dorky looking skinny guy, who lies on his back. Both naked. Bed sheets covering from the waist down.

MICHAEL  
Mommy!

Annie glances back, immediately stops, becomes quickly alarmed. She grabs some bed sheet, covers up.

ANNIE  
 Michael! What did I say about  
 knocking, God damn it!?

MICHAEL  
 Daddy's here!

Doom written across her face. Martin quickly sits up, the  
 fear of God in his eyes.

MARTIN  
 I thought he wasn't supposed to be  
 home til six!

ANNIE  
 C'mon! Hurry up!

Annie and Martin scramble around the room, a last second  
 clean up. Martin slips his underwear on, frantically picks up  
 his clothes.

Annie nearly hyperventilates as her head whips back and  
 forth, desperately in need of a plan. Michael only watches in  
 fascination.

MARTIN  
 What do we do?!

ANNIE  
 Hide! You need to hide!

Annie opens a nearby closet, peaks through her blinds, down  
 at the driveway out front. The front door opens downstairs,  
 O.S. Annie's blood turns cold. Not much time. The pressure is  
 on.

ANNIE  
 (whispers)  
 Get in the closet! Now!

Martin jumps into the closet. Annie quickly shuts the door  
 after him. She tries her best to straighten up the bed as  
 heavy footsteps move closer and closer up the stairs from  
 O.S.

Michael turns to the stairway, sees Frank reach the top.  
 Michael grins. Frank forces a grin back, but is clearly  
 exhausted.

MICHAEL  
 Hi, Daddy!

Frank, wide shoulders, tattoos on his forearms, only pats Michael's head, lumbers to the bedroom.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Annie stands there frozen. Nervous. Her attempts to act natural seem extremely labored. But Frank remains oblivious. He kisses Annie on the forehead, plops down onto the bed, onto his back.

Frank stares at the ceiling, sighs. Annie stares down at him, flashes a nervous smile.

ANNIE  
Hey, honey. You're early.

FRANK  
Rough day.  
(beat)  
They let me go.

ANNIE  
Oh.

Silence as Michael watches from the doorway. Frank raises his eyebrows at Annie.

FRANK  
Oh? That's all you got for me?

MICHAEL  
(excited)  
Daddy!

Frank rolls his eyes.

FRANK  
What?

MICHAEL  
Look in the closet!

Frank sits up, glances at Annie suspiciously, then at Michael.

FRANK  
Why?

Annie glares at Michael from across the room. Michael bites his tongue. The look of joy and excitement disappears from Michael's face.

Frank quickly catches on. He stands up, continues to eye Annie suspiciously as he approaches the closet. He places his hand on the knob, slowly opens it.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Michael runs away, crouches into a corner by the staircase. He realizes the consequences. No longer a game of hide and seek.

FRANK (O.S.)

Aw, you gotta be fucking kidding me! Really, Annie?! This is what you do when I'm at work!?

A tussle O.S. Then, like a freight train, Frank rumbles out of the bedroom into the hallway, drags Martin out by the back of his neck. Martin's face covered in blood.

Michael looks on, frightened. *What have I done?* Frank drags Martin past Michael, throws Martin down the stairs. Frank immediately follows Martin down.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUSLY

Michael sneaks down to the middle of the staircase, watches Frank throw Martin out the front door. Michael jumps a bit as Frank proceeds to stomp Martin into a bloody pulp on the front porch.

Frank rushes back into the house, up the stairs and past Michael as if he weren't even there.

Incoherent yelling and screaming upstairs, O.S. Frank comes rumbling down the stairs with an armful of clothes and shoes.

He tosses all of it out the front door, onto the driveway. Annie hurries down the stairs, watches Frank throw all of her belongings out of the house.

Michael, morose, sits down on a step, buries his face into his hands. Annie walks up to him. Michael picks up his head, his eyes wide with remorse. Annie slaps him across the face.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

SUPER: 22 Years Later...

Michael, now 26, young face, big cheeks, dimples, sits at a table covered in upscale linen, candlelit.

He stares sadly down at a glass of beer. Michael seems way under dressed for the surroundings.

MICHAEL  
 Never saw her again after that.  
 Father ended up getting custody.  
 Don't think he was too happy about  
 it, though...

FLASHBACK - INT. TOWNHOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Michael (4) tiptoes to the bedroom door, halfway open. He peaks in, sees Frank sitting on the bed, face buried into his hands, weeping.

Michael looks on with sadness.

MICHAEL  
 Daddy? Are you okay?

Frank looks up at Michael. Disdain on his face. Frank stands up, walks to the door, unable to even look Michael in the eye.

Frank slams the door in Michael's face.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Michael sips his beer, shakes his head.

MICHAEL  
 I think he blamed me for a lot. He  
 was always... sad. For a long time.  
 And, well, I guess he... he...

FLASHBACK - EXT. TOWNHOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Michael (6) lies helpless on his back in the grass. In pain, tears in his eyes. NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS look on in shock as Frank stands above Michael, belt in hand.

MICHAEL'S POV - Frank winds up with the belt, comes down with it onto Michael, buckle first. Ouch.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY

Michael sips his beer, afraid to make eye contact with whomever sits across from him.

MICHAEL  
 Guess he took it out on me.  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Haven't talked to him in, oh, I  
don't know... three, four years?

Silence. SARAH, early twenties, gorgeous in a nice dress,  
sits across from Michael, stares at him with a deadpan  
expression.

MICHAEL  
What?

SARAH  
When people go out on dates and try  
to get to know each other, they  
usually talk about their interests,  
favorite foods, hobbies... you  
know? This is a little heavy for a  
first date.

MICHAEL  
Well, I think you're a special  
girl. There's something about you  
that makes me wanna open up.

SARAH  
We literally just met 15 minutes  
ago.

Awkward silence. Michael sips his beer, purses his lips and  
grimaces.

MICHAEL  
Wish they had Pabst. This stuff,  
the taste... it feels so contrived.  
Like, "Hey, look at me. I'm from  
Germany and I have some fucked up  
name nobody can pronounce". Know  
what I mean?

Sarah stands up, picks up her purse.

MICHAEL  
Sarah? What are you doing?

SARAH  
I gotta go.

MICHAEL  
It's because you think I'm ugly,  
isn't it?

Sarah smiles ironically.

SARAH  
It was nice meeting you.

Sarah walks away.

MICHAEL  
Think we can be friends?

No response as she disappears out the front doors.

MICHAEL  
Just like the rest of them.

Michael downs the rest of his beer. A WAITER walks by and Michael stops him.

MICHAEL  
Excuse me, how much do these go for?

WAITER  
I believe they're ten each.

MICHAEL  
Wow. For a beer?  
(beat)  
All right, that's fine. I'll take another.

Waiter nods and walks away. Michael watches him closely until the coast is clear. Michael quickly scans the restaurant, jumps out of his seat and runs off.

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

A real shithole. Out of order arcade games. Street signs on the walls. Dimly lit. A trashy BARTENDER, half naked with her cleavage hanging out, slaps a can of PABST in front of Michael.

BARTENDER  
Two bucks, hun.

Michael smiles, forks over the cash. He sips his beer, savors it.

MICHAEL  
My kinda joint.

EXT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Michael leans against a wall, puffs on a cigarette. A HOMELESS MAN approaches him.

HOMELESS MAN

You got any spare change, brother?

Michael digs into his pocket, flashes a few bucks, but he doesn't hand it to the Homeless Man quite yet.

MICHAEL

How do you plan on spending this?  
If I give it to you?

HOMELESS MAN

I'm hungry.

Michael gives Homeless Man a skeptical look. Homeless Man shrugs.

HOMELESS MAN

I need a fucking drink.

Michael smiles, hands him the money.

MICHAEL

My man.

Homeless Man nods in thanks, staggers away. A STREET KID paces back and forth by Michael, eyes him curiously. Michael notices, nods at him.

STREET KID

Fucking people.

MICHAEL

Huh?

STREET KID

Asshole inside that bar called me for a fifty bag. All's he got is ten bucks. Came all the way out here for nothing.

MICHAEL

Fifty bag of what?

Street Kid sniffs his nose.

MICHAEL

I see.

(beat)

Fifty, huh? I can take that off your hands. Make your trip worth the trouble.



STREET KID

Yeah?

Michael hands him three twenties, sixty bucks. Street Kid hands him a small bag of cocaine.

MICHAEL

You got change?

STREET KID

Naw, man.

Michael thinks, shrugs.

MICHAEL

Fair enough. Keep it. Thanks.

INT. DIVE BAR - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael stands in a stall, spreads out a line across the back of the toilet. He rolls up a one dollar bill, snorts it. He grimaces at first, savors the hit.

He sniffs a few times. Suspicious expression on his face. He dips his finger into the bag, tastes the "cocaine". Anger in his eyes.

MICHAEL

That little mother fucker!

EXT. DIVE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Michael rushes out the front doors, sees the Homeless Man, who sips on a forty ounce in a paper bag.

MICHAEL

You see that kid that was out here  
like two minutes ago?

Homeless Man points to a PIZZA SHOP across the street.

INT. PIZZA SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Street Kid sits at a table, enjoys a slice of pizza as he talks on his cell phone.

Michael flies into the pizza shop, grabs the Street Kid by his collar, makes him stand up.

STREET KID

What the fuck's your problem?!

MICHAEL

Where the fuck's my money?! I want it back!

STREET KID

Snooze, you lose, bro!

Michael shows Street Kid the bag, tosses it to the floor.

MICHAEL

Salt?! What are you trying to do, raise my cholesterol?!

STREET KID

It's called a hustle, bro, and you took the bait! You fucked up! Not me!

MICHAEL

My money, or I kick your ass and eat your God damn pizza right in front of you!

Suddenly, Street Kid head butts Michael, creates separation. Michael staggers back. Street Kid punches Michael hard in the face. Blood drips down from the corner of Michael's eye, but he seems rather unfazed.

MICHAEL

That's all you got for me?

Street Kid kicks Michael right in the balls. Michael clutches his groin, drops to his knees. He vomits on the floor, lies face first in his own vomit. Defeated.

He breathes heavily, moans in agony. Street kid tosses a few bucks on the floor, runs off. Michael grabs the money as he continues to lay face first in vomit.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - THE NEXT DAY

A stereotypical Denny's type diner with the exception of a bar on the lower level, downstairs. Steady business. Not overwhelmingly busy.

Michael, black eye with a gash above it, hurries in through the front doors. JACK (45), happy go lucky demeanor, mustache, distinguished with graying hair, tosses an apron to Michael as soon as he walks in.

JACK  
You're late. Again.

Michael clocks in on a computer, adjusts his apron, gets his stuff together.

MICHAEL  
Sorry.

JACK  
What happened to your face?

MICHAEL  
I fell.

Jack and Michael stare at each other. Michael avoids eye contact.

JACK  
We gotta get you outta this slump, Mikey. I'm sensing the beginning of a downward spiral. I've had enough of them to know.

MICHAEL  
I'll do better.

JACK  
I know you will.

Jack pats him on the back.

Michael eyes the scenery, surveys the dining room, the bar. Down at the bar, he sees AARON (25), very handsome, suave in demeanor, tattoos. The stereotypical cool bartender. Ladies love him.

Aaron gives Michael a head nod. Michael reluctantly nods back. A sense of bad blood, especially from Michael's side.

Michael looks upstairs, to the dining room, sees ANDREW (31), one of the other waiters, a bit chunky, kind face, handsome in an unconventional way.

As Andrew takes an order, he nods down at Michael. Michael grins, nods back. No bad blood here. A genuine kinship.

Then Michael sees a girl in restaurant uniform next to Andrew. JESSICA (22), pretty in glasses with big frames, nice body, cute more than gorgeous, watches tentatively over Andrew's shoulder.

Michael's world stops. Love at first sight. Music in his head. He's smitten already.

MICHAEL  
(to Jack)  
Who's that?

JACK  
New girl. You were supposed to train her, but since you weren't here on time, I had to give her to Andrew.

MICHAEL  
Hm.

Jack notices the way Michael stares at her.

JACK  
Don't even think about it.

MICHAEL  
What?

JACK  
You know what.

MICHAEL  
Aw, come off it, Jack. One bad relationship and I have a reputation.

JACK  
Every coworker you've dated has quit without the courtesy of a two weeks notice.  
(beat)  
I'm tired of giving job interviews.

MICHAEL  
Fran and David are dating. Don't seem to have a problem with that.

JACK  
Rules apply differently for you. You, more than anybody, should know not to shit where you eat.

MICHAEL  
Who say's I'm gonna ask her out anyway? I can't look?

JACK

Nope.

Jack slaps him across the shoulder.

JACK

Get to work.

Michael nods, but can't help but stare at Jessica. Jessica looks at Michael for a second, but goes back to following around Andrew.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - LATER

Michael finishes taking an order from a table, enters the order into a computer. Andrew comes up from behind Michael.

ANDREW

What's good, man?

MICHAEL

Sup, Andrew? How's the new girl?

ANDREW

She'll be okay. Just a matter of memorizing the menu.

MICHAEL

What about you? How's things?

ANDREW

Besides being hung over, it's all gravy. Good thing you were late. I got the trainee doing all the work for me.

Michael finishes entering the order into the computer. Andrew just stands there and stares at him.

MICHAEL

What?

ANDREW

So, I talked to Sarah.

MICHAEL

Who?

ANDREW

The girl I set you up with last night.

(MORE)

ANDREW (cont'd)

(beat)

What happened?

Michael nods, walks past Andrew, downstairs to the kitchen.  
Andrew follows him.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Michael approaches the food line, acknowledges the COOKS.

MICHAEL

Sup, Pedro? Manuel.

PEDRO

Que pasa?

MICHAEL

Nada.

MANUEL

Late again?

MICHAEL

Mucho cervasas.

Andrew will not leave Michael alone.

ANDREW

What's your deal, man?

MICHAEL

What?

ANDREW

Sarah's super sweet, bro. And she's not exactly a prude if you catch my drift.

(beat)

How do you fuck that up?

MICHAEL

How would you know that she's not a prude?

Andrew smiles, shrugs coyly.

MICHAEL

Aw, man, you're married with kids for Christ sake. What the fuck's wrong with you? And on top of that, you're setting me up with your hand-me-down pussy?

ANDREW

Don't turn this around on me.

(beat)

You gotta get your shit together,  
man. What happened to the happy guy  
I used to know? Always joking,  
smiling...

Michael collects some appetizers from the food line.

MICHAEL

You know how normal people battle  
temporary bouts of depression?  
Well, I'm the opposite. I battle  
temporary bouts of happiness.

Michael leaves the kitchen...

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

As Michael walks through the bar, en route to the upstairs  
dining room, he stops. Something catches his eye. He sees  
MARIA (24), pretty with pigtails, fair skin, sitting at the  
bar flirting with Aaron, the bartender.

Andrew comes up from behind Michael, sees Maria and rolls his  
eyes.

ANDREW

Shit.

Michael sets his food to the side, approaches the bar.

Jessica stands by Andrew, notices him staring at Michael and  
Maria at the bar.

JESSICA

That his girlfriend?

ANDREW

Ex. Used to work here.

JESSICA

That's cool that they're still  
friends.

Andrew laughs.

ANDREW

Yeah, right. Mikey can't be friends  
with anybody he dates.

(MORE)

ANDREW (cont'd)  
That's why he's not allowed to date anybody he works with.

JESSICA  
Really? They seem to be getting along okay.

ANDREW  
She's knocked up with his kid. They sorta *have* to get along. Until the abortion.

Jessica raises her eyebrows.

JESSICA  
Oh.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - AT THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Michael and Maria sit next to each other on stools, at the bar.

MICHAEL  
I'm doing okay. Getting by. You?

Maria shrugs.

MARIA  
I'm fine.

Aaron hovers from behind the bar. Michael notices, makes it a point to look at Aaron, then Maria, back to Aaron and then Maria again.

MICHAEL  
Oh, I'm sorry, did I interrupt something?

Aaron walks away, gives them their privacy.

MICHAEL  
So, you came by to see Aaron?

MARIA  
Stop it.

MICHAEL  
Stop what?

MARIA  
He's a friend, Michael.



MICHAEL  
With benefits.

MARIA  
It was one night.  
(beat)  
Are you gonna keep acting crazy?  
Because I came by to talk to you.  
But if you're going to act like a  
lunatic --

MICHAEL  
Okay, okay, I'm sorry.

MARIA  
Are you?

MICHAEL  
No, not really.  
(beat)  
So, what'd you come by to tell me?

MARIA  
Are you coming with me tomorrow?

Michael shrugs.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Because I can have one of my  
friends come if you don't want to.  
Just thought it'd be appropriate if  
you came. After all, this was our  
decision.

MICHAEL  
Was it?

Maria rolls her eyes, stands up from her stool, grabs her  
purse.

MARIA  
I can't do this right now. Call me  
if you change your mind.

Maria walks off. Michael watches her walk away, a conflicted  
expression on his face. A million thoughts running through  
his mind.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Michael sits on his bed. A small, bare studio apartment. Minimal furniture. A small television in the corner of the room. The place a mess, laundry scattered everywhere.

As he watches television, he pours a forty ounce of malt liquor into a glass. He grabs a carton of ice cream, dumps a big spoonful on top of the beer, makes a beer float.

EXT. ABORTION CLINIC - NEXT MORNING

Michael stands outside and smokes cigarettes like a chimney. Quiet outside. Sun shines brightly. Michael remains alone, until...

A woman (PROTESTOR) approaches Michael with a kind smile on her face, hands full with paper work.

PROTESTOR

Hello.

Michael forces a grin.

MICHAEL

Hey.

Silence as Protestor only stares at him with a smile on her face. Michael becomes uncomfortable.

MICHAEL

We know each other?

She only smiles warmly at him.

PROTESTOR

You should go in there and save her.

MICHAEL

Excuse me?

PROTESTOR

Your child.

MICHAEL

Wasn't my choice.

PROTESTOR

Before it's too late.

MICHAEL

It was too late the second the  
condom broke, sister.

Protestor seems somewhat appalled, but recovers with a warm smile. She hands him some paperwork.

PROTESTOR

Some literature.

Michael rolls his eyes, pretends to look over it as he exhales smoke.

PROTESTOR (CONT'D)

The child has a heartbeat at four weeks in the womb. It's the same thing as taking a human life. Some would even perceive it as murder.

MICHAEL

Gee, thanks. As if I didn't feel guilty enough. Thanks for enlightening me.

PROTESTOR

And if you allow this to happen, it's like you're an accomplice to murder.

Michael tosses his cigarette, immediately lights another. He stares at Protestor with narrow eyes.

MICHAEL

That so? Well, now that you know about this elaborate murder plot, that makes you *also* an accomplice.

PROTESTOR

Beg your pardon?

MICHAEL

That's right. Just by associating yourself with me, that makes you just as much a part of this as me. So I guess when judgment day comes, you and I will be rotting in hell, hand in fucking hand. Unless you go in there and stop it yourself.

PROTESTOR

I... I...

MICHAEL

Well, what are you waiting for? Get in there! Before it's too late! Not only will you save a life, but you'll save yourself from an eternity of hellfire and brimstone!

Protestor, confused, thinks to herself, in a state of panic. Finally, she runs into the abortion clinic. Michael stands against the wall, smokes, shakes his head.

Moments later, Protestor is tossed onto the sidewalk by SECURITY GUARDS and stunned by a taser gun.

INT. TAXI CAB - MOVING - LATER

Michael and Maria sit in the back. Maria appears tired, exhausted. Michael stares at her with sympathy.

MICHAEL

You okay?

MARIA

I'm fine. Just a little nauseous from the anesthesia.

MICHAEL

You need something to eat?

MARIA

Maybe later.

MICHAEL

I bought you a movie. Figured you'd wanna rest, take it easy for the rest of the day.

He shows her the DVD - GHOST. She smiles.

MARIA

My favorite movie. You remembered.

Michael grins, peers out the window sadly. Then suddenly, Maria rests her head on his shoulder, catches him off guard. Surprised and unsure of how to react at first, he sighs with a sense of comfort. He rests his head against hers.

Then, out of nowhere, she takes her head off his shoulder, sticks her head out the window and vomits. Michael rubs her back as she lets it out.

EXT. MARIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Michael walks her to the front entrance. Silence as they stare at each other. A bit awkward.

MICHAEL

Well, I guess I'll get going now.

(beat)

You sure you're gonna be okay?

MARIA

Yeah.

(beat)

It would be nice if you kept me company for a little bit. If you wanted.

MICHAEL

You sure?

MARIA

Yeah. We can watch Ghost.

Michael seems touched. Reacts with a warm smile.

MICHAEL

Okay.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - LATER

A small, studio apartment. Nice and neat. Clean. Real girly. Michael and Maria lie next to each other in bed, slight distance between them, and watch television. Michael stares at the ceiling, thinks.

MICHAEL

Why Aaron?

Maria sighs.

MICHAEL

Never mind. You've had a rough day. Last thing I wanna do is kick up some shit.

Dead pause.

MARIA

It just happened, Michael.

MICHAEL

It didn't bother you that you were pregnant with my kid?

MARIA

We weren't together.

MICHAEL

But you were pregnant with my kid.

Maria sighs again, shakes her head.

MARIA

We're too much alike. I'm fucked up, you're fucked up. Two fucked up people doesn't make for a healthy relationship.

Michael thinks, sad expression on his face.

MICHAEL

I would've been a good father. I would've done anything to make it work.

Maria turns, kisses Michael on the cheek.

MARIA

I know.

A warm moment as Maria hugs her arm around Michael, rests her head on his chest.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Jessica, the new girl, chats with the beautiful hostess, ASHLEY (22). They stare at Michael as he caters to a few tables.

JESSICA

So, what's his deal?

ASHLEY

Why? You like him?

JESSICA

He hasn't said a word to me since I started. Won't even look at me.

Ashley smiles.

ASHLEY

You like him.

Jessica shrugs.

JESSICA  
I don't really know anything about  
him. Except for what people say.

ASHLEY  
What do people say?

JESSICA  
He got some girl pregnant. And he's  
not allowed to date anyone he works  
with.

ASHLEY  
Who told you that?

JESSICA  
Andrew. Aaron. Jack.

ASHLEY  
Jack told you that?

FLASHBACK - INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - JACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Jack sits behind his desk, analyzes a resume as Jessica sits  
across from him.

JACK  
Well, you have plenty of  
experience.

Jack slides something across the desk to Jessica - a photo of  
Michael.

JESSICA  
What's this?

JACK  
Be truthful, Jessica.  
(beat)  
Do you find this man attractive?

Jessica, a bit confused, looks at the photo briefly, shrugs.

JESSICA  
Not really.

Jack takes the photo back.

JACK  
Good. You're hired.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - DAY

Ashley laughs.

ASHLEY

That's how you got the job?

JESSICA

That seemed to be the clincher.

ASHLEY

Yeah, Michael's been known to make his rounds here at Caroline's.

JESSICA

Really? So, he's like a player?

ASHLEY

Not exactly. Getting laid isn't his ultimate goal. He's more of a relationship guy. But without relationship skills. He gets emotionally attached, even clingy, then gets rejected. Never ends well.

JESSICA

What is he, psychotic?

ASHLEY

I wouldn't go as far as to say that. He's a nice guy, he really is. Just as long as his feelings aren't hurt. Unfortunately, he's more sensitive than a pregnant woman.

Jessica motions her head towards the stairs. Ashley looks back, immediately puts on a fake smile as if they weren't talking about him.

ASHLEY

Hey, Mike.

MICHAEL

What's up, Ashley?

ASHLEY

Have you met Jessica yet?

Michael doesn't even look her in the eye...



MICHAEL  
Nice to meet you...

He walks right past her, leaves Jessica puzzled.

JESSICA  
Did you guys ever... you know?

ASHLEY  
No. He doesn't go after girls with  
boyfriends.

JESSICA  
So, he does have some standards.

ASHLEY  
I think it's his standards that  
drive him crazy.

EXT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - OUTDOOR CAFÉ - DAY

Michael and Maria sit at a table outside, eat lunch. Maria appears to be doing some deep thinking, barely picking at her food.

MARIA  
I think maybe we should give it  
another try.

MICHAEL  
Give what another try?

MARIA  
Us.

Michael stops chewing his food. He tries to hide a joyful smile.

MICHAEL  
Yeah?

MARIA  
I mean... the sex was really good.  
And I've been thinking lately. I've  
been getting really, I dunno...  
horny.

MICHAEL  
You want to get back together  
because you're horny?

MARIA

I mean, I've been having these weird dreams where I'm having sex and it feels really good. But it's with some really fat, ugly, disgusting man I've never met. But it doesn't matter that he's fat and disgusting. It feels good.

Michael scratches his head a bit, confused. Doesn't know what to think.

MARIA

So... do you wanna give it another try?

Michael seems a bit doubtful, but joyful at the same time. He smiles. He touches her hand from across the table. She smiles back at him.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Let's give it another shot. We'll do it right this time.

Maria nods.

MARIA

Okay.  
(beat)  
I need to go pee.

Maria stands up, disappears into the ladies room. Michael sits there, enjoys his food with a big smile on his face.

Maria returns, looks down at the floor.

MICHAEL

That was fast.

Maria breaks into tears. Michael seems rather confused. Soon, her crying becomes hysterical.

MICHAEL

(reluctant)  
Are those... tears of joy?

MARIA

(crying)  
I'm sorry Michael. We have to break up.

MICHAEL

What?!

MARIA  
I made the wrong decision.

MICHAEL  
You're breaking up with me again? I  
didn't do anything yet!

MARIA  
I gotta go...

As she continues to wipe her tears, she grabs her purse  
hurries off. Leaves Michael by himself. Confused.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - DAY

Michael, heavy bags under his eyes, looks like he's about to  
explode at any moment as he caters to tables.

FRAN (29), another waiter, attractive with short hair, stands  
near DAVID (25), the cashier, African American, at the front  
counter area. They eye Michael curiously as he walks by.

FRAN  
Hey, Mike. You okay?

MICHAEL  
(defensive)  
Why wouldn't I be okay?

FRAN  
I don't know. That's why I'm  
asking. You seem kind of kind of  
pissed about something.

MICHAEL  
That unusual to you?

Fran backs up a bit. Doesn't want to further offend Michael.

DAVID  
Dude, you don't look so hot. Is it  
a girl?

MICHAEL  
Why would you think that?

DAVID  
Because that's what it usually is.

Fran picks a hair of David's face.

FRAN

I think you had one of my hairs on you. From earlier.

A mischievous grin on both of their faces as they look each other in the eyes deeply.

DAVID

God damn you're sexy. I say we go to the bathroom right now and have an encore of this morning's performance.

FRAN

My God, you're amazing.

DAVID

Every time I look at you, it's like a Kodak moment.

FRAN

Just looking at you reminds me of how beautiful the world really is.

DAVID

I'm just so glad we work together. When we're apart, it drives me crazy.

Michael watches in disgust.

David and Fran jump each other's bones right there, kiss passionately. Maybe a bit too passionate for public.

Jack walks by, knocks on the counter.

JACK

Not at work, love birds. We don't want our customers getting sick on us, blaming the food.

David and Fran break apart, continue to look each other deep in the eye.

DAVID

Sorry, Jack. Sometimes I can't help myself.

FRAN

That's what love does.

Michael rolls his eyes, walks away. He glances down at the bar, sees Aaron tending bar, flirting with a bunch of young girls. Michael glares, storms upstairs.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Andrew stares at Michael with concern as Michael approaches.

ANDREW  
Bro, you good?

Michael doesn't respond, walks right past him. He approaches a table where a couple sits. The GUY, late thirties, wears a cowboy hat. The GAL, late thirties, wears one too. Both Southern accents.

Empty plates in front of them.

MICHAEL  
(deadpan)  
Anything else tonight?

GUY  
Yeah, buddy, I just wanna say one thing. Just a suggestion.

MICHAEL  
Problem with the food?

GUY  
Food was fine. But the next time you tend to customers, you may wanna smile. Make them feel welcome.  
(to Gal)  
Ain't that right, honey?

GAL  
A smile woulda been nice.

Michael seems almost repulsed by their comments.

MICHAEL  
You're joking, right?

GUY  
Now, I'm gonna tip you the standard 20 percent. But if you woulda smiled, at least pretended to be happy to serve us, I'd 'a tipped you at least 25. At least.

MICHAEL

Why would you make it a point to tell me that?

GUY

Just helping you out. I was a waiter once. And personality goes a long way in getting some tips.

MICHAEL

Personality, huh? How's this for personality?

Michael flashes them both an emphatic middle finger.

MICHAEL

Fuck you and fuck you. And fuck the horse you rode in on, God damn shit kickers.

GUY

Whoa, buddy, I think you need to cool your jets --

MICHAEL

You can take that 20 percent tip, ball it up in your fist and ram that shit into your wife's ass! Or should I say cousin? Doesn't matter, guess it's all the same, down where y'all are from.

Jack sees the situation escalating from the other side of the dining room, immediately makes his way over.

GAL

Well, I never!

GUY

You just crossed the damn line right there, son! Where's your manager?

Michael leaves the table, passes Jack.

MICHAEL

You've been summoned by red necks.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - JACK'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael sits at Jack's desk.

JACK  
What's going on, Mikey?

MICHAEL  
Fucking Maria.

JACK  
I know, it's hard. It's a hard thing to deal with. But this is your job. You can't bring that here, man. Leave that shit at home.

MICHAEL  
I think I'm gonna kill myself tonight.

JACK  
C'mon, Mikey, don't do that.

MICHAEL  
Why not?

JACK  
Because.

MICHAEL  
That's all you got for me, Jack?

JACK  
If you're gonna kill yourself anyway, what does it matter?

MICHAEL  
I only say it because I want someone to give me a good reason not to.

JACK  
Well, do you know why you don't want to kill yourself?

MICHAEL  
No.

JACK  
Well, think hard about it, find out why, and when you figure it out, just focus on that. Okay?  
(beat)  
Until then, I gotta take you off the floor.

Michael shrugs.

JACK  
For at least a few weeks. You'll be  
the fill-in dishwasher until Julio  
gets back from Peru.

Michael nods.

MICHAEL  
Thanks.

JACK  
For what?

MICHAEL  
For not giving up on me.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - LATER

Michael leaves, backpack strapped to his back. Andrew catches  
up with him as CUSTOMERS and STAFF watch him leave.

ANDREW  
Hey! Mikey!

Michael stops, turns around.

ANDREW  
You good?

MICHAEL  
I'm okay. I got demoted to  
dishwasher for a few weeks.

Andrew chuckles.

ANDREW  
At least you still got a job.

Michael pumps his fist ironically.

MICHAEL  
Yippee.

ANDREW  
Listen, my cousin Luke's throwing a  
party on Friday. I want you to  
come. Get your mind off shit.

MICHAEL  
(unsure)  
Eh, I don't know --



ANDREW

Lots of girls, man. Only way you don't get pussy there is if you're gay. And even then, you'd probably still get some pussy. But you gotta at least pretend to be someone fun to be around.

MICHAEL

Acting isn't my forte, Andrew. I am who I am. I'm not like you.

ANDREW

C'mon, man! Sleeping with random bitches makes me feel better!

MICHAEL

Don't tell me that! You're fucking married. It makes me feel uncomfortable.

ANDREW

Just be there.

Andrew walks away, back to work. Michael leaves the diner.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Empty beer cans everywhere. Michael, hammered, sits on his bed, talks on the phone. Disguises his voice.

MICHAEL

Hello? Aaron Smith?

AARON (V.O.)

This is him.

MICHAEL

Yes, I'm calling from Con Edison gas and electricity. We've had a few black outs in your area and we're just making sure everything's working.

AARON (V.O.)

No problems here. I'm watching television right now.

Michael holds back a few giggles.

MICHAEL

Good, good. Well, I just need you to do me a favor and check if your refrigerator's running.

AARON (V.O.)

My refrigerator?

Michael continues to giggle, can't hold it in anymore.

AARON (V.O.)

Michael?

MICHAEL

Yeah?

AARON (V.O.)

I knew it was you!

(beat)

You need to stop it with these fucking phone calls, dude. It's like two in morning.

MICHAEL

I don't know what you're talking about. I'm calling from Con Edison gas and elasticity.

(beat)

So, you gonna check your fridge or not?

More giggling.

AARON (V.O.)

I'll see you at work.

CLICK.

MICHAEL

Well, you better run after it and catch it!

Michael hangs up, satisfied smile on his face. He chugs a beer and lies down.

EXT. MARIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Michael stands outside, holds down the intercom button by the door, talks into a speaker.

MICHAEL

I got problems, Maria. I need you to help me.

MARIA (V.O.)

I got problems, too, Michael. Only one who can help you is yourself.

MICHAEL

Everyone needs support. Like a crutch. You're my crutch. I've had a rough past.

MARIA (V.O.)

I know you did. That's all you ever talk about.

MICHAEL

My mother left me when I was young. I have abandonment issues. You're only reinforcing those issues.

MARIA (V.O.)

I have my own problems, too.

MICHAEL

Maybe we can help each other.

Dead pause. No response. Michael hits the button again.

MICHAEL

It's Aaron, isn't it?  
(beat)  
Hello?

He takes his finger off the button, listens. No response. He presses the button again, pissed off.

MICHAEL

Fuck you then! I don't need you! I don't need nobody! I hope he fucks you in the ass and gives you anal warts!

Michael storms off, kicks a garbage can.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Michael curls up in bed, weeps like a girl as he watches television, takes a swig from a forty ounce of malt liquor.

On the television, the birth scene at the end of ROSEMARY'S BABY. A hideous sight.

MICHAEL  
(weeping)  
Cute little fella...

INT. COUSIN LUKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Crammed from wall to wall with PARTY GOERS. LOUD MUSIC. Everyone drunk, having a great time. Dancing and drunken banter.

Michael sits on a window sill, forty ounce of malt liquor in his hand, talks with Ashley.

MICHAEL  
(deadpan)  
It's funny how little control we have over our own lives. I know what I want in life. I know what makes me happy. Unfortunately, it all depends on other people's decisions.

He takes a swig, wipes his mouth.

MICHAEL  
I fucking hate my life. I'm better off dead. I hope I get hit by a bus on the way home.

Ashley laughs at Michael, who maintains a serious look. Her laughter eventually makes Michael grin.

MICHAEL  
(joking)  
Fuck you.

ASHLEY  
You're at a fucking party! Act like it!

Michael raises his beer into the air.

MICHAEL  
(ironically)  
Yay! I'm having so much fun!

Andrew, across the room, raises his beer to Michael. Michael, artificial smile on his face, raises his forty in return. Andrew mingles in with the crowd.

ASHLEY  
Why'd you bring your own beer?

MICHAEL  
I don't know. I don't like using  
other people's stuff.

Ashley raises her eyebrow with a peculiar smile on her face.

ASHLEY  
You are so weird.

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL  
That's news to you?

Ashley sips her beer, looks around the room. Something dawns  
on her.

ASHLEY  
Guess who has the hots for you?

MICHAEL  
Who?

ASHLEY  
The new girl.

MICHAEL  
Jessica? Yeah, right. She came with  
golden boy over there.

Ashley looks across the room, sees Aaron with Jessica in the  
middle of the crowd, chatting. She notices the scornful look  
on Michael's face.

ASHLEY  
Are you really still holding a  
grudge?

MICHAEL  
He fucked Maria!

ASHLEY  
He fucks everybody!

MICHAEL  
Well, he can go *fuck* himself!

ASHLEY  
He probably would if he could.

Ashley sighs, shakes her head.

ASHLEY

You really need to get laid, Mike. You should make a run at Jessica. I don't think she's into pretty boys like Aaron.

MICHAEL

She's into ugly, disgusting guys like me? Doubt it. If I were a beautiful woman, I wouldn't want to be with a guy like me.

ASHLEY

Who said anything about anyone being with anybody? I'm talking about relieving some stress. By ejaculating it out into something other than a paper towel.

MICHAEL

I use a sock.

ASHLEY

That's disgusting.

She pats Michael on the shoulder.

ASHLEY

I'm going to try to have fun.

She walks away, leaves Michael alone.

INT. COUSIN LUKE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - LATER

Michael stands in line for the bathroom as he finishes off his forty. Jessica gets in line behind him. Michael glances back, smiles.

Awkward silence.

JESSICA

I hear you're a psychopath.

Michael turns around, appalled.

MICHAEL

What?

JESSICA

And I heard about that altercation  
with that table the other day.  
Everyone says you're a hothead.

Michael playfully punches the wall.

MICHAEL

(joking)  
I'm not a hothead, God damn it!

Michael smiles, makes Jessica laugh.

MICHAEL

You know how annoying customers can  
get. I was just having a bad day.

JESSICA

So, how come you never talk to me  
at work?

Michael shrugs timidly.

MICHAEL

It's a busy work environment. Don't  
have time.

JESSICA

You have time to talk to everyone  
else.

MICHAEL

I'm shy. Sorry if it made me look  
stuck up or something.

JESSICA

That's okay.

Michael rocks back and forth with his hands in his pockets.  
Something on his mind.

MICHAEL

So, you came with Aaron, huh?

JESSICA

Yeah, we both got off work at the  
same time.

(beat)

He's kind of a douchebag, don't you  
think?

Michael's interest is piqued even more. He's impressed. The  
bathroom opens up.

MICHAEL

Are you going to be out here when I'm done?

JESSICA

Yeah. But I have to use the bathroom, too.

MICHAEL

Well, when you're done, you wanna talk some more?

Jessica smiles.

JESSICA

Are you going to be out here when I'm done?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

They stare at each other.

MICHAEL

All right, well, I'll be out in a sec.

He rushes into the bathroom.

EXT. COUSIN LUKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT - LATER

Michael presses Jessica against the wall as they make out. Lots of tongue. Hot and heavy.

Jessica gently pushes him back by his shoulders, holds him there. She laughs.

JESSICA

Okay. Nobody at work can know about this. It's not that I'm, like, embarrassed or anything. It's just that it's a restaurant. You know how people like to gossip?

MICHAEL

Okay.

They go at it again. Jessica pushes him back again, laughs.

JESSICA

Promise?



MICHAEL

Yeah, sure.

He goes to kiss her again, but she moves her face, laughs.

JESSICA

Pinky swear?

She shows Michael her pinky. Michael smiles, wraps his pinky around hers.

MICHAEL

Pinky swear.

More tongue wrestling ensues.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - BASEMENT - NEXT DAY

Michael washes dishes as he talks with Andrew.

MICHAEL

I'm on cloud nine right now. I don't know, man. I think I'm in love.

ANDREW

Aw, Christ.

MICHAEL

It just... it just happened. I didn't even try. One second, we're just talking. Next second, I got my tongue crammed down her throat.

ANDREW

Did you have your dick crammed down her vagina?

MICHAEL

What?

ANDREW

You fuck her?

MICHAEL

No.

Andrew stares at Michael with a deadpan expression.

ANDREW

You're not in love. I've heard this all before.

MICHAEL  
Fuck off. You're just jealous.

ANDREW  
You didn't even fuck her! How could  
you possibly be in love?

MICHAEL  
There's more to being in love than  
fucking.

Andrew thinks about it, cynical look, shrugs.

ANDREW  
Whatever.

Andrew goes to walk away, but Michael grabs his shoulder.

MICHAEL  
Yeah, just do me a favor and don't  
tell nobody?

ANDREW  
Why not?

MICHAEL  
I promised I wouldn't say anything.  
(laughs)  
We pinky swore.  
(whimsy)  
So adorable.

Andrew shakes his head and walks away.

EXT. CAROLINE'S DINER - LATER

Jessica leaves. Michael hurries out the front doors after  
her.

MICHAEL  
Jessica!

Jessica reaches a...

EXT. STREET CORNER - CONTINUOUS

She turns around. Michael catches up, breathes heavily with  
his hands on his knees. Catches his breath.

JESSICA  
You okay?

Michael holds up a finger as if saying, "One second". He finally catches his breath, straightens himself.

MICHAEL

I was wondering if you'd wanna go out some time.

An unsure expression on her face.

JESSICA

I don't know, Mike --

MICHAEL

You do like me, don't you?

JESSICA

Yeah.

Michael's expression falls a bit.

MICHAEL

Unless, you know, that night happened only because you were drunk.

JESSICA

No, not at all.

Michael's eyes light up again.

MICHAEL

So, I like you. You like me. What do two people who like each other usually do?

JESSICA

Michael --

MICHAEL

Just a date. Maybe a movie. Some drinks. No big deal. I know you're worried about people talking.

JESSICA

It's not just that. I mean, relationships complicate things. And we work together. I don't want things to be weird.

MICHAEL

It won't be weird. I promise.  
(beat)  
Pinky swear.

Michael extends his pinky, grins. Jessica smiles, wraps her pinky around his.

MICHAEL

No expectations. Just a date. Just to see how it goes. We'll take it from there.

Jessica thinks about it briefly, holds back a smile.

JESSICA

Call me.

Jessica walks away, crosses the street, leaves Michael with a big smile on his face.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

A packed house. Dark. The light from the screen shines on the AUDIENCE'S faces.

Michael sits next to Jessica, a soda and popcorn in between their arm rests. Michael seems a bit on edge. Nervous.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I wish the seats weren't so fucking far apart. I'd have to be sitting in her lap for me to get my arm around her.

A LOUD CRASH from on screen. The AUDIENCE erupts in laughter. Michael looks at Jessica, sees her laughing. Michael laughs as he stares at her.

Michael quickly stops, turns back to the screen.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

You fucking idiot. Stop looking at her every time something's funny.

Michael takes a deep breath.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Just act natural, Michael. Be yourself.

(beat)

Okay, maybe not yourself. But be cool. Let things happen naturally.

He reaches for the popcorn without taking his eyes off the screen, accidently jabs her knee. She quickly turns to him.

Michael freezes.

MICHAEL  
I was trying to reach for the  
popcorn. It's dark in here.

He grabs a handful of popcorn, tosses a few kernels in his mouth and forces a smile. She nods, turns back to the screen.

INT. POOL HALL - BAR - LATER

Michael and Jessica sit at the bar, drinks in front of them. Laughing.

JESSICA  
So, you used to be an actor?

MICHAEL  
That's what I moved up here for.

JESSICA  
Why not anymore?

MICHAEL  
Went on some auditions, didn't go  
well.  
(beat)  
I don't handle rejection well.

JESSICA  
Yeah, I heard you were sensitive.

Michael raises his eyebrows, makes a sad, baby face, over-acting.

MICHAEL  
It hurts my feelings when people  
call me that.

Jessica laughs as she chews on her straw.

JESSICA  
You know, I think we do better  
after a few drinks. You were acting  
kind of, I don't know... weird  
earlier.

MICHAEL  
(timid)  
I have a confession. I'm incredibly  
intimidated by you.

Jessica laughs.

JESSICA

Why?

MICHAEL

Because I think you're one of the most beautiful women I've ever met.

Jessica smiles, blushes a bit, but gives him a look of disbelief.

MICHAEL

I do!

JESSICA

That's ridiculous! Nobody thinks of me that way!

MICHAEL

I think *that's* ridiculous.

Jessica continues to smile, looks Michael deep into his eyes. He returns the same look.

Their lips embrace. Hot and heavy kissing. Lots of groping. They break apart for a moment.

MICHAEL

Okay. I'll tell you what. I promise not to see anybody else if, you know, you want to --

JESSICA

It would be smart to take it easy. Don't put too much into me. I'm not worth it.

MICHAEL

I apologize. You're right. We should take it slow.

(beat)

But I think you are worth it.

They continue to stare at each other passionately.

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT - LATER

Michael and Jessica go at it. His hands up her skirt. Lots of touching, fondling. All tongue.

JESSICA  
Okay, we should go.

MICHAEL  
You wanna share a cab?

Jessica smiles.

JESSICA  
Okay. But that's all. Two stops.

MICHAEL  
Yeah, that's what I meant.

JESSICA  
(ironically)  
Sure you did.  
(beat)  
We can't go home together, okay?

MICHAEL  
Okay. Two stops.

INT. JESSICA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Michael lies on top of Jessica, both topless, under the covers from the waist down. Missionary position. He thrusts his midsection into hers.

She moans. Eyes shut. She opens her eyes, sees Michael's eyes open, looking at her.

Michael breathes heavily.

MICHAEL  
This is fun and all, but don't you think we should just have sex. I mean, I haven't dry humped a girl since high school.

Jessica giggles.

JESSICA  
We can't.

MICHAEL  
Why?

JESSICA  
Because.

MICHAEL  
I have condoms.

JESSICA  
That's not what I mean.

Michael stops, just lies on top of her.

JESSICA  
Just not yet.

He stares into her eyes, a look of understanding.

MICHAEL  
Okay.

They kiss passionately.

INT. JESSICA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Michael wakes up. Groggy. Hung over. He turns to his left, sees Jessica staring at him.

MICHAEL  
Hey.

JESSICA  
Hey.  
(beat)  
You were snoring really loud.

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL  
Sorry. I do that when I drink too much.

JESSICA  
It kinda feels good waking up next to somebody.

Michael beams with pride.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
That was the first date I've been on in like two years.

MICHAEL  
Why? Because you're a prude?

Jessica punches him in the shoulder playfully.



JESSICA

Because nobody's asked me.

He kisses her on the lips. Just a peck. But a meaningful one. For the both of them. The way they look at each other is very romantic.

MICHAEL

Besides having the worst case of blue balls in the history of mankind, I'm glad we didn't have sex.

Jessica laughs.

JESSICA

Why are you glad?

MICHAEL

Because every relationship I've had sprung from sex on the first date. That's why I think they never worked out.

(beat)

Either that, or the girl would wake up the next morning, see me lying next to her, realize the terrible drunken mistake she made and then never talk to me again.

Jessica laughs again, but seems a bit uncomfortable now.

JESSICA

You want to go out, get breakfast?

MICHAEL

Fuck, yes.

INT. BREAKFAST DINER - TABLE - DAY

Michael and Jessica sit across from each other. Michael enjoys a huge meal. Jessica eats a plain salad.

MICHAEL

That's all you're eating?

JESSICA

This is a feast for me.

MICHAEL

You're kidding.

JESSICA

I had weight problems when I was younger. Used to get teased in school.

Silence as Michael thinks to himself.

JESSICA

Are you close with your family?

Michael finishes chewing, laughs with some food still in his mouth.

MICHAEL

No. Not really.

JESSICA

Why not?

Michael hesitates at first.

MICHAEL

It was sort of dysfunctional growing up.

JESSICA

I know what you mean. My parents got divorced when I was 10.

MICHAEL

Mine, too. I was four.

JESSICA

Only saw my dad every couple weeks. Actually call my stepfather, dad. Call my dad, dad too. But it was just weird growing up.

MICHAEL

Haven't spoken to my father in about four years or so.

JESSICA

Why not?

MICHAEL

He's a fucking dick.

(beat)

He had his moments, though. Wasn't all bad. Whenever he was married, he was all right.

JESSICA

Jesus. How many times has he been married?

MICHAEL

Four.

(beat)

Used to beat the fuck outta me. For stupid shit. I'd get suspended from school or something and it'd be no big deal. But God forbid I don't refill the ice tray. I still have the knuckle print on my forehead.

Jessica seems appalled.

JESSICA

That's terrible. Wow.

She analyzes him closely.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I can see that, though. I knew there was something.

(beat)

What about your mom?

Michael shrugs.

MICHAEL

Funny story...

FLASHBACK - INT. TOWNHOUSE - 22 YEARS AGO

The whole opening scene plays rapidly - like a FAST FORWARD EFFECT. Michael is 4 years old again...

- Michael on the stairs playing with action figures. His father pulls up to the driveway.

- Michael's mother hides Martin in the closet.

- Michael's father drags Martin out of the house, throws clothes and shoes out of the apartment.

Then in SLOW MOTION, Michael (4), sits on the stairs. His mother stands in front of him, winds up, about to slap him...

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. POOL HALL - BAR

SLAP! Michael claps his hands together, causes Jessica to jump.

MICHAEL  
Right in the face.

Jessica sits there in shock, her mouth open. Michael, mood a bit sad for the moment, nods, stares off into space.

MICHAEL  
Yup. That's the last time I saw her.

Silence as Jessica continues to stare at him, mouth agape.

JESSICA  
Okay. You win.

Michael forces a smile, nods.

MICHAEL  
Remember it like it was yesterday.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Michael washes dishes, very upbeat in demeanor. He WHISTLES the tune from SNOW WHITE & THE SEVEN DWARFS - Whistle While You Work.

Jack walks past him, smiles and nods. Impressed and glad that Michael is in a good mood.

JACK  
You're back on the floor tomorrow.  
Julio comes back from Peru.

Michael gives him a salute as he merrily runs dishes through the machine. Continues to whistle.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Michael lies on his bed, arms folded behind his head, stares at the ceiling with a relaxed expression on his face. Even a smile. On cloud nine.

His CELL PHONE RINGS. The caller I.D. reads MARIA. He thinks about answering. But he doesn't. He puts his ring on silent and sets his phone aside.

He relaxes again with his arms behind his head, grin on his face as he stares up at the ceiling. A look of whimsy.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DAY

Michael stands at the hostess stand, watches Jessica work in the dining room, a dreamy gaze.

MICHAEL  
I'm in love.

Ashley, behind the hostess stand, rolls her eyes.

ASHLEY  
Oh, no. You gotta fall out of love, quick. I guarantee you, this will not end well.

MICHAEL  
She's different, Ashley. She's smart. She's sweet. Intelligent. And she's not naive. Not the type to let guys take advantage of her.

ASHLEY  
If Jack finds out...

MICHAEL  
He won't find out. And it's not like we're "officially" an item.

ASHLEY  
Then why are you building it up to be like that.

MICHAEL  
Because it's gonna happen. Eventually.

Ashley shakes her head.

ASHLEY  
I just don't want you to set yourself up and get your feelings hurt.

MICHAEL  
Impossible. I feel invincible. I'm loving my life right now.

EXT. THE PARK - DAY

Bright sunshine. Perfect blue sky.

Michael and David toss a frisbee as Fran watches from a blanket on the grass. Michael looks like he's about to explode.

MICHAEL

I hate my fucking life. I don't see any reason why I shouldn't just jump off a fucking bridge.

Michael overthrows the frisbee by a mile. David just watches it sail high above his head, into a patch of bushes. He only stares at Michael with a blank expression.

DAVID

Just because I'm black don't mean I can jump high.

MICHAEL

Why the fuck won't she call?

FRAN

Why don't you call her?

MICHAEL

What?

FRAN

Maybe she's waiting for you to call her.

Michael shakes his head adamantly.

MICHAEL

Absolutely not. I don't call people. I'm not good with stuff like that.

FRAN

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

I'm really self conscious about stuff like that. I don't like bothering people.

FRAN

I don't get it.

MICHAEL

What if she's doing something  
really important and she picks up?

FRAN

So, what?

MICHAEL

Then when she tells me she's gonna  
call me back, I'm immediately gonna  
think something's wrong. Like I  
annoyed her. Well, fuck that mess.

David and Fran share a peculiarly glance, stare at Michael.

MICHAEL

(agitated)  
What?

DAVID

Don't take this the wrong way,  
Mike. But you're the most neurotic  
mother fucker I've ever met. You  
got some serious problems.

Michael shrugs as David tosses the frisbee to him.

MICHAEL

Tell me something I don't know.

Michael goes to catch the frisbee, trips over a tree branch,  
eats dirt.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - BAR AREA - NIGHT

Michael sits at the bar, enjoys a shift drink. Jack & Coke.  
Jessica stands at the end of the bar, waits for Aaron to make  
drinks for her table.

Michael smiles at her. She forces a smile. Michael senses  
some weirdness.

MICHAEL

So... you're closing tonight?

She seems as if in another world, a delayed response.

JESSICA

Yeah. You finished?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Probably going out to The Brewery after this. If you're interested.

Caroline sucks air through her teeth, not so sure.

CAROLINE

I don't know. Maybe. I'm a little hung over from last night.

Michael nods, wrinkles his brow. Being suspicious.

MICHAEL

You went out last night? With who?

CAROLINE

Friends.

Michael nods, shrugs it off.

MICHAEL

So... I'll be there.

Aaron brings over some drinks to the end of the bar. Caroline arranges them on a tray, walks away without even looking at Michael.

MICHAEL

Okay.

Michael notices Aaron ogling Jessica's ass as she walks away. Aaron looks at Michael, winks. This doesn't make Michael happy.

MICHAEL

She's hot, huh?

AARON

Oh, yeah.

Michael looks around, huddles close to Aaron as if about to reveal something top secret.

MICHAEL

Just between us, me and her have been sorta dating. But it's kind of a secret.

AARON

Really?



MICHAEL  
Yeah. Why?

Aaron shrugs.

AARON  
I'm pretty good at reading body language, and it didn't seem like she was into you. At all.

MICHAEL  
Well, like I said. Secret.

Michael does a zipper motion with his fingers over his mouth.

AARON  
Sure thing, buddy.

Aaron walks away, tends to customers.

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - NIGHT - LATER

A packed house. LOUD MUSIC. Lots of noise and scattered banter. Everyone having fun.

Michael sits at the bar by himself. Jack & Coke in front of him. SOMEONE tries sitting next to him, but he sets his hand on the stool.

MICHAEL  
I'm sorry, I'm saving this seat for somebody.

Someone nods, sits elsewhere.

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - LATER

SUPER: 12:45 A.M.

Michael sits at the bar, two empty glasses in front of him. He works on another Jack & Coke, peaks at the time on his cell phone.

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - LATER

SUPER: 1:37 A.M.

Michael sits at the bar with several empty glasses in front of him. He works on another drink, a bit on edge. His knees shakes impatiently as he continuously checks the time.

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - LATER

SUPER: 2:53 A.M.

The bar is now pretty empty.

Michael sits at the bar super hammered. Barely able to sit up straight, elbows rested on the bar. He is not happy. He checks the time on his cell phone.

He flips open his cell phone, dials a number.

JESSICA (V.O.)  
 (recording)  
 You've reached Jessica. Sorry I'm  
 unavailable to take your call. Just  
 leave a message and I'll get back  
 to you.

Michael shuts his phone, sets it on the bar. He stares at it for a moment. Finally, he opens his phone again, dials a number. Eventually...

JESSICA (V.O.)  
 (recording)  
 You've reached Jessica. Sorry I'm  
 unavailable to take you --

Michael shuts his phone emphatically, slams it on the bar.

MICHAEL  
 Fuck!

The BARTENDER walks by, seems concerned.

BARTENDER  
 You okay, pal?

Michael takes a deep breath, tries to gain his composure.

MICHAEL  
 Yeah, yeah, I'm cool.

BARTENDER  
 All right then. Last call.

MICHAEL  
 I'll take one more.

Bartender disappears to the other end of the bar, makes a drink.

Michael stares at his cell phone on the bar. Look of desperation. Urgency. He quickly grabs it off the bar, opens it and dials. Eventually...

JESSICA (V.O.)  
 (recording)  
 Just leave a message and I'll get  
 back to you.

*BEEP.*

MICHAEL  
 (slurred)  
 Hey, miss too cool for school. This  
 is Mike. I'm just wondering what  
 happened. I'm... I'm... I dunno,  
 I'm pretty bummed out you didn't  
 show. Just give me a call back.

Michael hangs up. But something continues to bother him. He opens his phone again, dials a number.

JESSICA (V.O.)  
 (recording)  
 Just leave a message and I'll get  
 back to you.

*BEEP.*

MICHAEL  
 (slurred)  
 You know what? You don't think I'm  
 worth your time? Fuck it, I don't  
 need you. Fuck everybody.  
 (beat)  
 I know. I'll do everyone a favor.  
 Nobody will ever have to worry  
 about me bothering them ever again.  
 I'm gonna kill myself. Tonight.  
 Just as long as you're happy,  
 that's all that matters. Whatever  
 makes you happy.

Michael hangs up, pounds his final drink.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWAY - LATER

Michael stumbles through the front door, staggers up the stairs. He checks his phone - no missed calls.

MICHAEL  
(mutters)  
Yup, nobody gives a shit...

Suddenly, Michael trips over a step, falls forward and smacks his chin hard into the edge of another step. Out cold.

Darkness.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWAY - MORNING

Michael lies unconscious on the stairs. Bloody drool seeping from the corner of his mouth. A puddle of blood under it.

Someone pokes at Michael's shoulder. A NEIGHBOR. Michael opens one eye, then the other. He turns his head, looks up at Neighbor.

NEIGHBOR  
You okay?

Michael looks around bewildered, picks his head off the stairs, caresses his jaw. He winces in pain.

MICHAEL  
Shit...

NEIGHBOR  
You been sleeping here the whole night?

Michael sits up, looks at his phone - two missed calls. He checks the calls - both from WORK.

MICHAEL  
Aw, fuck! I'm late for work!

Michael jumps to his feet, already in uniform from the previous night. He dashes down the stairs, leaves his Neighbor scratching his head.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DAY

Michael sprints through the front door, stops to catch his breath. Ashley sees him, immediately picks up the phone at the hostess stand, calls the office.

ASHLEY  
Hey, Jack? Michael just walked in the door.

She hangs up, stares at Michael with wide worrisome eyes. Sees Michael's grotesque, wounded jaw.

ASHLEY

Oh my God! What the fuck did you do to yourself?

Michael's speech is little slurred due to the jaw injury.

MICHAEL

I fell down some stairs.

ASHLEY

Everyone's worried about you.

MICHAEL

Why, because I'm late?

ASHLEY

No, because you told Andrew you were going to kill yourself.

Michael seems baffled.

MICHAEL

Andrew?

ASHLEY

Yeah. You left a message on his voicemail.

Michael thinks to himself, confused.

MICHAEL

I didn't call Andrew.

Andrew walks down the stairs from the dining room, eyes Michael with concern, approaches him cautiously.

ANDREW

Bro, what the fuck happened? You look like you jumped in front of a cab.

MICHAEL

Why the fuck did you tell everybody I called you and said I was gonna kill myself?

ANDREW

You were two hours late. Jack called me in to work because he wasn't sure if you were gonna be a no show or not. He was worried.

(beat)

I'm just glad you're okay.

MICHAEL

But I didn't call you.

Andrew freezes.

ANDREW

Me and Jessica closed together last night. She got the call, told me about the message.

Michael stares at Andrew suspiciously. Something's off.

MICHAEL

It was last call at the bar when I called her.

(beat)

This place closes at midnight.

ANDREW

They had the exterminator in last night, we had to stay late.

(beat)

Listen, if Jack found out you left that message on Jessica's phone, he'd fire you. So I told everyone you called me.

Tension as Michael glares at Andrew, looks him in the eye. Silence.

ASHLEY

Mike, Jack wants to see you in his office.

Michael gives Andrew another mean look, sticks his nose out and sniffs him like a dog. Andrew stands there confused.

Michael pulls his face away, nods. He holds a mean, watchful stare, then walks away, downstairs into the basement.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - JACK'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jack sits behind his desk, skeptical expression.

JACK  
You sure, you're okay?

MICHAEL  
Yeah, I was just super fucked up.  
You know how I get. I don't even  
remember calling Andrew.

JACK  
Well, I just want you to know we're  
all here for you.

MICHAEL  
I know.

JACK  
We all care.

MICHAEL  
Yeah, yeah, I know that.

JACK  
No more drinking by yourself. And  
no more falling down stairs, okay?  
You look like shit.

MICHAEL  
I actually fell *up* the stairs.

Jack shakes his head, laughs.

JACK  
Whatever. No falling.

Michael chuckles.

JACK  
Go home, put some ice on your jaw.  
You look like fucking Jay Leno with  
down syndrome.

MICHAEL  
Hardy-har.

JACK  
Come back ready to work tomorrow.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Michael sits on the toilet, takes care of business. Pants  
down by his ankles. He stares at his cell phone, flipped  
open.

INSERT - ON THE PHONE DISPLAY - Jessica's contact number right below Maria's contact number.

Michael dials Maria's phone number. It RINGS a few times...

MARIA (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Hello?

Michael immediately hangs up. He shakes his head in frustration.

His PHONE RINGS. He slumps his shoulders, answers.

MICHAEL  
Hey Maria --

JESSICA (V.O.)  
Hello?

Michael seems confused.

MICHAEL  
Jessica?

JESSICA (V.O.)  
Hey.

MICHAEL  
Uh... hi.

Dead pause.

JESSICA (V.O.)  
How are you?

MICHAEL  
I'm okay. How about you?

JESSICA (V.O.)  
I'm fine.  
(beat)  
What are you up to?

Michael freezes, tries to make something up.

MICHAEL  
I'm, uh, just watching TV.

Another pause.

JESSICA (V.O.)  
Are you mad at me?



Michael hesitates. Doesn't want to make himself look any worse. Chooses his words carefully.

MICHAEL

No.

(beat)

Listen, I was drunk when I left that message. I'm sorry.

JESSICA (V.O.)

I know you were. I was just checking to see if you were mad.

MICHAEL

I'm not mad. You didn't do anything.

JESSICA (V.O.)

You sure?

MICHAEL

(adamant)

Yes. And I apologize again. That was stupid of me. You probably think I'm a fucking lunatic.

JESSICA (V.O.)

I always thought you were a fucking lunatic.

Michael laughs.

JESSICA (V.O.)

Okay, well, I was just checking in to see if everything was good between us.

(beat)

Promise it won't be awkward at work?

Michael smiles.

MICHAEL

Pinky swear.

JESSICA (V.O.)

Okay. See you at work.

MICHAEL

Good night. Sorry.

Jessica hangs up first. Michael follows suit. He lets out a sigh of relief. At that moment a FART SOUND followed by a LOUD THUD and SPLASHING WATER.

His PHONE RINGS again. It's Maria. Michael answers.

MICHAEL

Hello?

MARIA (V.O.)

What's up? You called?

MICHAEL

Yeah, sorry about that. I was trying to call someone else.

(beat)

A girl.

MARIA (V.O.)

Oh.

(sighs)

Michael... I think we should talk.

Michael rises from the toilet seat, unspools toilet paper.

MICHAEL

Okay. You called me.

MARIA (V.O.)

You called me first.

As Michael wipes his ass, he grows upset, defensive.

MICHAEL

I wasn't trying to call you. I was trying to call somebody else. A girl.

MARIA (V.O.)

I know, you said that already.

MICHAEL

A girl I'm dating, for your information. And yeah, I've seen her naked. But that's neither here nor there. It's not really any of your business, so I don't know why you're getting mad.

Maria sighs.

MARIA (V.O.)

We should meet up and talk.

Michael looks at the mess on the toilet paper he wiped with, grimaces in disgust.

MICHAEL  
I'm busy right now.

MARIA (V.O.)  
Michael --

MICHAEL  
Bye.

*CLICK.* Michael hangs up, finishes wiping.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DAY

Business is good. Packed house. Michael stands at a computer, looks off a scratch pad and enters in a customer's order. As he does so, he glances out the front doors.

A suspicious raise of the eyebrow as he sees Jessica and Andrew cross the street together, en route to the diner, awfully chummy.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - BAR AREA - LATER

Michael waits for drinks at the end of the bar. He glances upstairs, sees Andrew walk past a busy Jessica, touch her shoulder playfully. The moment lasts forever, almost as if time were moving in slow motion.

The paranoia is impossible to hide on Michael's face. He sees Jessica and Andrew exchange a few words which he can't hear, then sees them smile warmly at each other.

Andrew makes his way downstairs, into the bar area. He approaches the bar, waits for drinks. He gives Michael a head nod.

ANDREW  
What's good, bro?

Michael tries to hide his suspicion, but acts weird. He only shrugs, takes his drinks and walks away. Leaves Andrew bewildered.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - LATER

The place is really hopping now. The dinner rush. Very loud. A nerve-wracking environment, especially for the employees, who hustle around, work hard to please the CUSTOMERS.

Jessica, face glistening with sweat, seems a bit on edge, stressed out, as she enters a customer's order into the computer.

Michael waits behind Jessica for the computer, but seizes the opportunity to do some investigative work.

MICHAEL

So, I see you and Andrew were both late to work.

Jessica maintains focus on her work.

JESSICA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Both got here at the same time.

JESSICA

I saw him on the train.

She pays Michael no eye contact. This frustrates him, makes everything she says seem insincere. Almost as if she's trying to ignore him.

MICHAEL

That's weird because you live uptown and Andrew lives downtown.

JESSICA

I was in the area.

MICHAEL

How convenient.

She glances back at him and gives him a mean look.

JESSICA

(annoyed)  
I'm really swamped right now,  
Michael.

MICHAEL

Me too. Just making conversation while I wait for the computer is all I'm doing. Sorry for bothering you.

Jessica hits enter on the computer, immediately rushes to the fountain soda machine nearby and pours a few sodas.

Michael jumps on the computer, but stares at Jessica, who continues to pay him no mind. But she can feel his stare. As she finishes preparing her sodas...

JESSICA

I thought you were swamped.

Michael smirks, enters a customer's order into the computer as Jessica sets her drinks on a tray, walks away to a customer's table.

MICHAEL

Maybe if I was married with kids, I'd be worth your time.

Jessica turns around, glares at Michael as he escapes downstairs, en route to the bar area.

As Jessica turns around... CRASH! She slams her hips into a table, spills soda all over a GENTLEMAN. A glass SHATTERS on the table. EVERYONE turns around. All attention on her.

The GENTLEMAN quickly becomes irate.

GENTLEMAN

Aw, for fuck sake!

Jessica quickly tries to wipe the GENTLEMAN down with a napkin. On the brink of panic.

JESSICA

Oh, my God! I'm so sorry!

GENTLEMAN

Sorry doesn't magically make me dry, now does it? Now I got fucking soda all over me because you got your head up your ass!

Jessica becomes emotional, starts to cry.

JESSICA

I'm so sorry...

Jessica runs away from the table.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - BAR AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Michael sneaks a shot of WHISKEY as he stands at the bar, waits for drinks. As he does so, he sees Jessica crying across the room.

Michael seems concerned. But then Andrew comes into view, gives Jessica a hug. She cries on his shoulder. Michael's concerned expression disappears. He narrows his eyes at the two, blood boiling.

As Michael glares at them, both of them look at Michael at the same time, then back at each other. Michael cannot hear what they're saying.

Aaron stands next to Michael with a big grin on his face. Sees what Michael sees.

AARON  
Someone's getting laid tonight.

Michael whips around, flashes Aaron a mean look.

MICHAEL  
Excuse me?

AARON  
I know I'm not the only one who's noticed how chummy Andrew and Jessica have been lately.  
(laughs)  
Weren't you supposedly dating her?

Michael quickly pours another shot of whiskey, takes a quick shot. Exhales.

MICHAEL  
Fuck a dog, you cocksucker.

Michael storms off.

AARON  
Fuck a dog?

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - NIGHT - LATER

The whole Caroline's Diner staff crowds the bar. The whole wait staff, front of the house as well as the KITCHEN WORKERS.

Michael sits at the bar with Ashley. They both watch Andrew and Jessica closely, who both sit at the other end of the bar.

A lot of laughing between Andrew and Jessica, slightly flirtatious touching, like playful pokes of the shoulder, etc.

ASHLEY  
Definitely looks suspect.

MICHAEL  
See, I knew I wasn't just paranoid.

ASHLEY  
But you and her aren't a couple.

MICHAEL  
Technically not. So what?

ASHLEY  
This shouldn't be a big deal to you.

MICHAEL  
Shouldn't it?

ASHLEY  
No. It has nothing to do with you.

Michael laughs ironically, chugs his beer.

MICHAEL  
It has everything to do with me.

Ashley seems a bit thrown off. She looks him over closely.

ASHLEY  
Are you hammered already?

Michael shrugs.

MICHAEL  
Had a few shift drinks.

Ashley rolls her eyes, shakes her head.

ASHLEY  
I told you this wasn't going to end well.

MICHAEL  
Who says it's ending?

Ashley gives him a kiss on the cheek, looks at him with worried eyes.

ASHLEY

Come smoke a cigarette with me  
outside.

Michael continues to stare at Andrew and Jessica.

MICHAEL

Later.

Ashley grabs Michael's shoulders, directs his attention on her.

ASHLEY

Michael, I care about you.  
Honestly. And you're losing it.  
Over a girl you don't even know.  
(beat)  
Come outside, smoke a cigarette.  
Please.

Michael feels guilty. He thinks about it, sighs.

MICHAEL

I'll meet you out there. I just  
wanna finish my drink.

Ashley nods, walks away.

As Michael downs the rest of his drink, he continues to stare at Andrew and Jessica. Andrew rises from his stool, lets a cigarette hang out of his mouth as he makes his way outside.

Michael quickly stands up, seizes the opportunity to catch Jessica alone.

MICHAEL

What's up?

Jessica forces a smile.

JESSICA

Hey.

Awkward silence.

MICHAEL

So, you and Andrew seem to be  
getting along well.



JESSICA  
(annoyed)  
Yeah. He's my friend.

MICHAEL  
Okay.

More awkward silence. Michael appears extremely tense. As if a million thoughts were running through his head and he were struggling to keep everything inside. But he can't hold it in any more...

MICHAEL  
Are you guys fucking or what?  
Because it really seems like --

JESSICA  
(appalled)  
Michael! Stop!

MICHAEL  
Stop what?

JESSICA  
Just stop. If you keep acting like this, I cannot talk to you anymore. You're putting all of this pressure on me, and I can't take it. I can't.

MICHAEL  
You haven't talked to me all day.

JESSICA  
I was busy! Working!

MICHAEL  
You weren't too busy to talk to Andrew.

Jessica lets out a frustrated grunt.

MICHAEL  
Do I not have a point?

JESSICA  
Andrew is my friend. Just like you and I are friends. We're all in the friend zone.

Michael seems bothered by the comment.

MICHAEL

What's that supposed to mean?

JESSICA

Stop it. Please, just fucking stop it. I wanna be your friend, but I can't if you keep acting like a complete psychopath.

Silence. Michael looks down at the floor, ashamed of himself.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. I'm a fucking idiot.

(beat)

You know, I never thought I had a chance with you. But then we hooked up and I felt like I had a shot. I felt like I was... floating on air. Pardon me for being cheesy. But for a second, I thought I was better than what I was. I just wanted to feel like that again.

Michael shakes his head, avoids eye contact.

MICHAEL

It felt fucking amazing and I wanted to feel that way again so badly. I got jealous, I guess. Didn't want you to make anyone else feel the way you made me feel.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

Jessica touches Michael's shoulder. Michael picks his head up.

JESSICA

You get down on yourself too much. You need to relax and not put so much emphasis into me. I can't make you happy, Michael. Only you can.

MICHAEL

I know.

They stare at each other.

JESSICA

I really want to be friends. No pressure. No expectations. And no awkwardness.

(MORE)

JESSICA (cont'd)

(beat)  
Let's just play it cool.

MICHAEL

I'll try.

JESSICA

Pinky swear?

Jessica extends her pinky to Michael. Michael grins, hooks his pinky around hers. She grins back. A moment of not-so-distant nostalgia.

EXT. THE BREWERY BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Michael stumbles a bit as he leaves the bar. He drops his pack of cigarettes. Andrew comes into view, picks up the pack of cigarettes and hands them to Michael. Michael is obviously pretty drunk right now.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

Andrew nods, but doesn't even look at him. He walks past Michael, about to go into the bar. But Michael grabs his shoulder.

MICHAEL

Wait, hang with me for a second.

Andrew stops, turns around and faces Michael.

ANDREW

What's going on?

Michael feels bad, struggles to speak his mind at first.

MICHAEL

Listen, man, I'm sorry for acting weird tonight. You know, it's been... it's been a rough couple months for me. The way I handle things...

(beat)

I'm sorry.

ANDREW

It's all right, bro. Don't sweat it.

MICHAEL

Naw, it's not all right. I feel like the biggest fucking asshole in the world right now.

ANDREW

I know, I know --

MICHAEL

I mean, you helped me move when I broke up with Amber. You were the one I went to for advice when I broke up with Maria. You're a good friend. Probably the best friend I've had since I moved here.

ANDREW

I appreciate that, bro.

(beat)

Listen, you don't gotta worry about me. I pose no threat. I got my wife, my kids. I'm not about to step on anybody's toes.

(beat)

A woman will never get between us. I won't let it happen if you won't.

They give each other a manly handshake followed by a hug. They pat each other's backs.

MICHAEL

No doubt, man. I love you. You're like a brother to me.

ANDREW

Ditto.

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL

Don't go quoting "Ghost" on me. You know I hate that fucking movie.

Andrew laughs.

ANDREW

Enjoy your cigarette. And get home safe.

Andrew slaps Michael in the shoulder, goes back into the bar.

MICHAEL

But I'm not leaving yet --

Andrew disappears into the bar already. Michael just shrugs. As he slips a cigarette into his mouth, he sees Ashley sitting at the edge of the curb smoking one.

Michael sits down next to her as he lights his cigarette.

ASHLEY

What took you so long?

MICHAEL

I was just clearing the air.  
Getting everyone's story straight.

ASHLEY

You killed the both of them, didn't  
you?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL

Fuck off. I may be psychotic, but  
I'm not homicidal. I care too much  
about what people think of me.

ASHLEY

So, everything's good now with  
everybody?

Michael curls his lip and nods in satisfaction as he exhales a large cloud of smoke.

MICHAEL

Yeah. I feel a lot better. I have a  
feeling everything is gonna be just  
fine...

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Michael stumbles in, staggers to his seat at the bar. As he does so, his eyes widen in shock. He stops for a moment.

MICHAEL'S POV - Jessica and Andrew make out at the end of the bar. Sensual and soft. His hand on her leg. Escalates into more and more tongue.

Michael's eyebrows dart into 90 degree angles. Rage in his eyes. He quickly moves towards them.

He reaches their seat, stands there with his hand resting atop the bar. He clears his throat. No effect.

A look of sheer disgust on Michael's face.

MICHAEL

Aw, c'mon! You gotta be fucking kidding me!

The kissing comes to a halt. Jessica and Andrew are still in their moment though. They look at each other and smile, then turn their attention to Michael.

MICHAEL

Really, Jessica?! Really?!

Jessica puts her head down, turns away from Michael. EVERYONE in the bar watches. Silence.

MICHAEL

You just sat here, made me feel like I was a fucking paranoid, delusional fucking asshole! Lied to my fucking face!

ANDREW

Let's take it easy, bro --

MICHAEL

Don't fucking call me bro! You back stabber! What kind of friend are you?!

ANDREW

Hey, what did we just talk about?

MICHAEL

Are you asking me that because you forgot?

(mocking Andrew)

"Don't worry about me. I pose no threat." What a fucking joke! You knew how I felt about her!

ANDREW

I knew how you *thought* you felt about her.

MICHAEL

You're a fucking scumbag! You got a wife and kids! What kind of man with a wife and kids is out at two in the morning with his tongue down some bitch's throat?!

Andrew quickly rises from his stool, points his finger at Michael.

ANDREW

Watch it, bro. She ain't a bitch.

Michael laughs ironically, a hearty chuckle.

MICHAEL

Oh, so you care about her, huh?

(shakes his head)

I adore your children, Andrew. I really do. I can only pray that they don't grow up to be as fucked up as I am. Because based on your parenting, that's the direction they're headed.

ANDREW

Hey! Don't talk about my fucking family!

MICHAEL

Why do you care? You're not home with them. You're here.

A mean stare down.

MICHAEL

Yeah, take a long, hard look. Because what you're looking at is your son 20 years from now. Fucked up in the head because his parents were fucking deadbeats.

Andrew charges at Michael, but a few BAR PATRONS hold him back.

MICHAEL

No, let him go.

(beat)

You wanna fight me, Andrew?

Ashley approaches Michael from behind.

ASHLEY

What's going on?

MICHAEL

I walk in here and see these two tongue-fucking each other! Right in front of me! Now this fucking prick who I thought was a friend wants to fight me!

The PATRONS continue to hold Andrew back.

ANDREW  
You and Jessica had something  
serious going on?

MICHAEL  
What?

ANDREW  
You had something serious?

MICHAEL  
To me, it was serious.

ANDREW  
Well, reality check, you fucking  
psycho! It wasn't serious to her!

MICHAEL  
Psycho? You're the one trying to  
fight me.

ANDREW  
You're talking shit about my  
family!

MICHAEL  
I guess the truth hurts, doesn't  
it?  
(to Patrons)  
Let him go. He wants to fight me,  
let him fight me.

Ashley grabs Michael's shirt.

ASHLEY  
Let's get outta here.

Michael takes one last look at Andrew and Jessica.

MICHAEL  
Andrew... we're not friends  
anymore. You're a fucking jerk and  
I never want to see you again.

Jessica sits there with her head down, face buried into her  
hands.

MICHAEL  
And Jessica... you aren't the  
person I thought you were. Fuck the  
both of you. I hope you're happy.

Michael turns around and leaves with Ashley.



EXT. THE BREWERY BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Michael sits at the edge of the curb and weeps heavily like a teenaged girl. Ashley comforts him, pats him on the back.

Michael's cell phone rings. He stops weeping for a second, checks the caller I.D. It's JESSICA.

Michael hurls his phone into the middle of the street. Pieces scatter across the pavement as cars whiz by.

JESSICA

Jesus, Michael. How's anyone going to get in contact with you now?

MICHAEL

I don't give a shit. I don't care because tonight, I intend on killing myself. I will not make it home alive.

JESSICA

Don't say that.

MICHAEL

I'm gonna do it.

JESSICA

People care about you, Michael.

MICHAEL

Not the people I want to care about me.

David and Fran show up, cautiously approach Michael and Ashley.

DAVID

What's going on, dude?

Michael doesn't respond. David looks to Ashley.

ASHLEY

Jessica and Andrew hooked up.

FRAN

Uh-uh! Tonight?

ASHLEY

Just now.

MICHAEL  
Right in front of me!

DAVID  
It'll be all right. A lot of fish  
in the sea.

Michael laughs as he wipes his tears.

MICHAEL  
Wow, David. Thanks for the advice.  
You come up with that all by  
yourself?

ASHLEY  
He's trying to help, Michael.

Michael stands up, looks David in the eye.

MICHAEL  
You wanna help me? Shoot me right  
between the eyes. You'll be doing  
the whole world a big favor.

FRAN  
You're not doing this whole suicide  
talk thing again, are you?

Michael stands up, wanders into the middle of the street with  
no regard for his health.

ASHLEY  
Mike! What are you doing?!

MICHAEL  
I'm just looking for the pieces of  
my phone.

A CAR SCREECHES to a halt, within inches of hitting Michael.  
Michael doesn't flinch as he bends down and picks up pieces  
of his cell phone.

HONK! The CAR beeps its horn, drives around Michael.

DRIVER  
Fucking asshole!

More CARS drive around Michael as he continues to pick up the  
pieces.

ASHLEY  
Michael! Get your fucking ass back  
here!

MICHAEL

Hold on! I just need to find the battery!

He has trouble finding the battery. Just wanders around the street recklessly. CARS continue to whiz past him, HONK their horns.

Ashley looks to David and Fran for some help.

ASHLEY

What should I do? He's totally lost it.

DAVID

I think he just wants the attention. Maybe if we just go into the bar, leave him alone for a little, he'll calm down.

ASHLEY

I don't want him to kill himself.

DAVID

He won't.

Ashley looks to Fran. Fran shrugs.

FRAN

I have to go pee.

David and Fran make their way into the bar. Ashley stands at the curb, watches Michael go through his meltdown with much concern.

Fran stops at the door, looks back at Ashley.

FRAN

Ashley?

Ashley turns around, tears in her eyes.

DAVID

Trust me. He'll be okay.

Ashley reluctantly follows the two back into the bar, glances back a few times at Michael.

INT. THE BREWERY BAR - LATER

The bar is quiet, only the faint sound of music from the Jukebox.

Ashley, Fran and David all sit at one side of the bar as Jessica and Andrew sit at the other side. The mood is somber.

Ashley glares over at Jessica and Andrew, who whisper words amongst each other.

ASHLEY  
I have to go out there.

DAVID  
Leave him alone, Ashley. He's probably in a cab home right now anyway.

Ashley's PHONE RINGS. Ashley looks at the caller I.D.

ASHLEY  
It's Mike.

Ashley answers.

ASHLEY  
(worried)  
Mike, are you okay?

Ashley listens briefly, hangs up.

ASHLEY  
He's still outside.

EXT. THE BREWERY BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Michael sits at the edge of the curb. Ashley sits beside him.

ASHLEY  
Are you feeling any better?

MICHAEL  
No.  
(beat)  
Found my battery, though.

ASHLEY  
You want me to wave you a cab?

Michael shakes his head.

MICHAEL  
There's no way I'm making it home tonight.

ASHLEY

Mike... you have a lot to live for.

Michael waves his hand into the air, dismisses the comment as ridiculous.

ASHLEY

So what are you going to do?

MICHAEL

I need help. I'm crazy. I don't belong out here around other people.

(beat)

I want to kill myself so bad. But I don't want to die like this. That alone is driving me fucking nuts.

ASHLEY

We're all here to help.

MICHAEL

Thanks. But this is beyond the type of help you can offer me.

(beat)

I called 911. An ambulance is gonna take me away shortly. I need to be put away for a long time.

ASHLEY

(sadly)

Mike...

MICHAEL

I just don't understand why. Why people do the things they do. It just doesn't make sense to me.

(beat)

Or maybe I'm just that fucked in the head. What doesn't make sense to me makes sense to everyone else.

ASHLEY

Life doesn't make sense, Mike. People do things without knowing why. They do what they do. They like who they like.

Michael stands up as an ambulance nears. Flashing lights. Ashley stands up. The two stare at each other.

MICHAEL

I just wanna be happy. That's all I want. Even with all the shit I've been through in my life, I had so much hope.

(beat)

Hope can be so cruel. So deceptive. But I guess that's the way the world is. Things are never as they appear to be.

The AMBULANCE pulls up to the curb. TWO POLICE CARS soon follow.

MICHAEL

I'm not completely delusional. I know what the world is really like. I just don't understand why. Don't think I'm capable of understanding.

(beat)

I don't understand the world and the world doesn't understand me.

A FEMALE OFFICER, accompanied by THREE OTHER OFFICERS, approach Michael. Michael walks towards them.

FEMALE OFFICER

Are you --

MICHAEL

I'm the one who called.

FEMALE OFFICER

Are you feeling hostile towards anyone?

MICHAEL

Just myself.

Meanwhile, David and Frank join Ashley, watch Michael interact with the COPS from the distance.

FRAN

What's going on?

ASHLEY

He called an ambulance.

DAVID

Jesus Christ.

Suddenly, tears pour out from Ashley's eyes. She tries to hold back tears, but can't.

FRAN  
Honey, are you okay?

Ashley wipes at her moist cheeks.

ASHLEY  
All he wants is someone to  
understand him.

Fran comforts her, hugs an arm around her shoulder.

FRAN  
He needs help.

ASHLEY  
There's nothing I can do. And it's  
killing me.

FRAN  
You did everything you could. We  
all did.

ASHLEY  
Andrew and Jessica are still in  
there?

DAVID  
Yeah.

Ashley shakes her head in disappointment. At that moment,  
Michael walks away from the COPS, approaches Ashley.

MICHAEL  
All right guys. I gotta go. I need  
to be put away for a while. You  
guys knew me for three, four years.  
You knew this was a long time  
coming.

Ashley explodes into tears, cries hysterically. Michael hugs  
her tightly.

MICHAEL  
It's not your fault. You did  
everything you could. You're a good  
friend.

He kisses her on the cheek, looks her in the eye, almost  
tears up himself. He looks to Fran and David.

MICHAEL  
Bye, guys.

Gives Fran a hug.

FRAN  
Get better, Michael.

MICHAEL  
I'll try.

David gives him a big bear hug.

DAVID  
Dude, you need anything - anything -  
you let me know.

MICHAEL  
Thanks. Appreciate it.

Michael walks over to the COPS and the EMTS. They escort him to the AMBULANCE. Michael glances back one last time as he gets in the AMBULANCE. One final wave.

David and Fran embrace Ashley, comfort her. They all wave bye.

EXT. ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL - NIGHT - LATER

A quiet night. Several AMBULANCES parked out front.

INT. ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL - PSYCHE WARD - CONTINUOUS

Michael sits in an empty waiting room. Restless. Patience thinning by the second.

A NURSE walks by.

MICHAEL  
Excuse me, miss?

She stops.

MICHAEL  
I've been waiting for a doctor for  
damn near two hours now.

NURSE  
Just a little longer. Doctor  
Williams is very backed up with  
patients.

MICHAEL  
Suicidal patients?



NURSE

Yes.

MICHAEL

I guess suicide's the popular thing these days. And I thought I was being original.

NURSE

He'll be with you in as soon as he can.

Michael sighs, slumps into his seat. He watches a CRAZY PATIENT, scruffy beard, perhaps a homeless man, approach the NURSE at the end of the hall.

NURSE

Sir, I need you to go back into your room.

CRAZY PATIENT

I need my Teddy Bear!

NURSE

Sir, return to your room first and I'll see what I can do about your Teddy Bear.

CRAZY PATIENT

I want it now!

Michael shakes his head.

MICHAEL

What the fuck am I doing here?

INT. ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Michael sits across from DOCTOR WILLIAMS, early thirties, who sits behind a desk, reads over paper work.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Have you been here before, Michael?

MICHAEL

Three or four years ago. Anxiety attack.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

How were you treated?

MICHAEL

They gave me some Adviden, sent me home.

Doctor Williams nods, continues to look over paper work.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Do you still feel like killing yourself right now?

Michael shrugs.

MICHAEL

Not really. But I don't really feel like living either.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

If you really wanted to kill yourself, you wouldn't have called. You obviously see some potential in yourself.

MICHAEL

Do I?

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Have you ever received any treatment before? Medications? Psychiatrists?

MICHAEL

I saw a few head doctors. Wasn't for me though.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Why not?

MICHAEL

I didn't like the idea of paying somebody to act like they gave a fuck about my problems.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

And what kind of medications?

MICHAEL

Paxil. Zoloft. You name it.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

How long have you been off the medication?

MICHAEL

Never really committed myself to any of them. Didn't like the way they made me feel.

Doctor Williams continues to read over some paper work.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Have you ever tried killing yourself before?

MICHAEL

Tried slitting my wrists when I was sixteen. It was more for attention than anything. Cuts weren't too severe.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Do you feel this latest episode was for attention?

MICHAEL

Yeah, probably. Seems like the only way to make people give a shit is to make noise.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Is that how you've always sought attention?

MICHAEL

Well...

FLASHBACK - INT. TOWNHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Michael (4), bangs his head repeatedly against the wall.

FRANK (O.S.)

Michael! What the hell did I say about horse play in the house!

Frank bursts into Michael's room, sees Michael banging his head repeatedly against the wall.

FRANK

Michael! What are you doing!?

Michael turns around. Frank is appalled when he sees a blood print on the wall, Michael's forehead covered in blood.

BACK TO PRESENT - INT. DOCTOR WILLIAMS OFFICE - NIGHT

Michael thinks about it as he sits across from Doctor Williams.

MICHAEL

You see, Doctor, I know what's wrong with me. I know why I am the way I am. Why I act out the way I do. I just don't know how to deal with the frustration.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Well, you seem very self aware. Maybe too self aware.

(beat)

What frustrates you the most?

MICHAEL

Besides everything?

(thinks about it)

I try to understand people. Why they act the way they act, do the things they do. But I can never find a reason. Nothing makes sense to me.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

What else frustrates you?

MICHAEL

When people don't make the slightest effort to understand why I am the way I am. It's like they don't care about me the way I care about them.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

So you force it upon them. Try to make them care.

Doctor Williams catches Michael a bit off guard for a moment. Michael thinks about it, nods.

MICHAEL

I guess so.

Doctor Williams jots down a few things on a note pad.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS

Well, Michael, we have a few options for you.

(MORE)

DOCTOR WILLIAMS (cont'd)  
 I'm going to set an appointment  
 with a therapist next week. Until  
 then, we can keep you here. Or we  
 can just keep you here over night  
 and have your emergency contact  
 pick you up and keep an eye on you  
 until your appointment.

MICHAEL  
 Emergency contact?

DOCTOR WILLIAMS  
 Your father.

Michael freezes a bit. Speechless.

DOCTOR WILLIAMS  
 So, what's it going to be? Your  
 decision.

Michael thinks about it, conflicted. Suddenly, Crazy Patient,  
 completely naked, runs past Doctor Williams' office with a  
 Teddy Bear clutched to his chest, genitals swinging to and  
 fro.

CRAZY PATIENT  
 I just want my Teddy!

TWO SECURITY GUARDS chase after Crazy Patient.

Michael gives Doctor Williams a look as if his decision was  
 pretty much made for him.

EXT. ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL - NEXT MORNING

Sunrise. Michael waits out front as a MINIVAN pulls up. It's  
 his father, Frank. The minivan parks.

Frank steps out. Now 48 years old, he looks pretty much the  
 same with the exception of gray streaks in his hair and  
 glasses.

Frank walks up to Michael cautiously, but not too obvious.  
 Frank chews gum nervously, his jaw making a CLICK sound. They  
 stare at each other.

FRANK  
 Michael.

MICHAEL  
 Dad.

FRANK  
Been a while.

MICHAEL  
Guess it has.

FRANK  
You look good.

MICHAEL  
Yeah?

Frank shrugs.

FRANK  
Considering.

Michael grins. Frank lays a big hug on him. Michael pats Frank on the back, a half-hearted hug.

INT. MINIVAN - MOVING - LATER

Dead silence. Frank repeatedly glances over at Michael as Michael gazes out the window.

Frank pulls out a pack of cigarettes, lets a cigarette hang from his mouth. He shows Michael the pack.

FRANK  
Smoke?

Michael takes one without hesitation. Frank lights Michael's cigarette, then his own. More awkward silence.

Uncomfortable with the silence, Frank turns on the radio, flips through stations. He stops at a HIP HOP STATION. Michael seems bewildered, looks at Frank and shakes his head.

MICHAEL  
We don't have to listen to this. I know you hate rap music.

Frank curls his lips, shrugs.

FRANK  
It's not so bad. I work at a prison, remember? This is all the inmates listen to.

MICHAEL  
I'm not one of your inmates.

FRANK

A lot's changed since we last spoke. You'd be surprised.

More silence as the HIP HOP MUSIC plays. Michael gazes out the window again. Frank looks at the radio a few times, at Michael.

Finally, Frank changes the station to CLASSIC ROCK.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - DAY - LATER

The minivan pulls into the driveway.

INT./EXT. MINIVAN - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Michael eyes the neighborhood as they pull up to the driveway. Everything looks the same as it did 20 years ago.

Michael becomes more and more nervous as they pull in, park. An uncomfortable nostalgia.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As soon as Michael enters the house, a surprised expression on his face, taken aback.

On the all-too-familiar staircase, he sees a little girl, TANYA (3), adorable, sitting on a step and playing with BARBIES.

Tanya looks up at Michael with wide eyes, eventually welcomes him with a cute smile.

TANYA

Hi.

Michael remains stunned.

MICHAEL

Hello.

Frank walks in after Michael, pats him on the shoulder.

FRANK

I see you've met Tanya.

(to Tanya)

Who's this, Tanya?

Tanya smiles shyly.

TANYA  
That's my big bwutha.

Michael can't help but smile.

FRANK  
She talks about you all the time.

KATHY (42), pretty with short hair, walks into the hallway with HANNAH, an infant baby, cradled in her arms. Kathy exudes a motherly quality. Something warm and comforting about her.

FRANK  
This is my wife, Kathy.

She shakes Michael's hand.

KATHY  
Nice to meet you, Michael. Your father talks about you all the time. Says you're an actor.

Michael continues to appears shocked as if he stepped into the Twilight Zone.

MICHAEL  
Who's the little one?

KATHY  
This is your baby sister, Hannah.  
(to Hannah)  
Say hi to your brother, Hannah.

Hannah giggles in her mother's arms.

KATHY  
She likes you.  
(to Frank)  
I'm going to take her upstairs, try to put her to sleep.

Frank nods. Kathy smiles at Michael as she walks upstairs with Hannah. Tanya follows after her mother and sister.

Michael watches them as they disappear upstairs. Still taken aback.

MICHAEL  
Good to know the equipment's still working.

Frank chuckles.



FRANK

Yeah. Have noticed the UPS guy  
stopping by a lot, though.

Michael laughs.

FRANK

You missed a lot. Tried sending you  
an invitation for the wedding and  
the baptisms. But you move around  
so damn much, it's hard to get a  
hold of you.

(beat)

Guess you've been busy.

Michael only responds with a shrug. Sense of guilt in his  
body language.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

A hot dish of lasagna sits at the center of the dinner table.  
Michael sits next to Tanya, across from his father and Kathy.  
Michael watches Kathy feed Hannah baby food.

Everybody eats, enjoys their meals. Frank glances over at  
Michael repeatedly, still a bit uncomfortable.

FRANK

How's the lasagna?

Michael finishes chewing.

MICHAEL

It's really good.

FRANK

I made it from scratch.

Kathy slaps Frank's shoulder playfully. Frank laughs.

KATHY

Don't listen to him, Michael. It's  
left over from Tanya's birthday  
party. My sister made it.

FRANK

He wouldn't have known that!

Kathy takes a handful of mashed potatoes, smothers it over  
Frank's face. Frank licks some of the corner of his mouth.

FRANK

You're lucky this is cold.

Kathy laughs, wipes some of Frank's face. Tanya laughs hysterically, continuously stares at Michael.

Michael can't help but laugh. Frank looks to Michael.

FRANK

See what I gotta go through?

Frank turns back to Kathy, gives her a big, fat sloppy kiss, gets mashed potatoes all over her face.

KATHY

You asshole!

Tanya laughs harder and harder as Frank and Kathy horseplay at the table. Michael looks down at Tanya, smiles, shakes his head.

MICHAEL

Your parents are crazy.

Frank and Kathy each wipe the mess from their faces, clean up. Tanya gets out of her chair, stares up at Michael.

TANYA

Michael!

MICHAEL

What?

TANYA

Guess what?

MICHAEL

What?

TANYA

I know kawate.

Michael cracks a grin.

MICHAEL

Do you?

FRANK

Tanya, finish your dinner. You can show Michael your karate later.

Tanya ignores him, does a little kick into the air. She beams proudly as Michael nods, pretends to be impressed.

MICHAEL  
Wow. That was good.

FRANK  
Tanya, no horseplay at the table.

KATHY  
I don't think we're setting a good  
example, Frank.

Frank smiles.

FRANK  
Tanya, you have to finish your  
dinner or no dessert.

Tanya crosses her arms, pouts her lips.

TANYA  
I'm not hungwy!

FRANK  
Fine. No Oreo cookie ice cream.

Tanya expresses a look of disbelief.

TANYA  
But it's my favwite!

FRANK  
You gotta finish dinner.

Tanya jumps up and down with a pouty face, stomps on the floor. Frank glares at her. This look is all too familiar to Michael.

Michael expresses some awkwardness. Afraid for his little sister.

FRANK  
(firm)  
Tanya. I will not tell you again.

Tanya only stands there, arms crossed, pouted lips, and shakes her head adamantly.

Frank quickly jumps out of his seat, hurries around the table. Michael sighs, shuts his eyes as Frank grabs Tanya.

The memories of an abusive childhood return as Michael clenches his eyes shut. But to his surprise, he hears... laughter.

Michael turns around, sees Frank tickling Tanya, who rolls around on the floor and laughs hysterically.

FRANK  
(laughs)  
I warned you!

Michael smiles, but remains bewildered. He looks back, sees Kathy smiling, looks back down at his father tickling Tanya.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael sits on the couch, watches Tanya demonstrate her karate moves. She does half of a cartwheel, punches at the air.

She waits for approval. Michael applauds, nods his head.

MICHAEL  
That was amazing!

TANYA  
Yeah, I know.

Michael laughs.

Frank enters the room.

FRANK  
Tanya still showing you her karate?

Michael nods.

MICHAEL  
She takes classes?

Frank laughs.

FRANK  
No. She just watches Power Rangers way too much.

Michael laughs. Dead pause.

FRANK  
You wanna grab a drink?

INT. STEAK HOUSE/BAR - NIGHT - LATER

A country western themed bar. Crowded. MUSIC plays loudly. A MIXED CROWD, drinkers of all ages.

Michael and Frank sit at the bar, beers in front of them. It appears as if they were having a great time. Laughing.

The laughter stops. An awkward silence as they sip their beers.

MICHAEL

You were right.

FRANK

About what?

MICHAEL

A lot's changed. You seem happy.

FRANK

I am.

Frank looks down at his beer, almost a shameful expression on his face. Sense of guilt.

FRANK

I know how you feel, Michael. Trust me. The anger... the sadness... it goes away eventually.

Michael nods.

FRANK

Wish things could've been different. I was young. I wasn't ready to be a father. And your mother, she wasn't ready to be a mother. It was one of those things. One day, you're bar hopping, having fun with your buddies, picking up girls. Next day, you find out one of those girls is pregnant.

MICHAEL

So, I was a mistake?

Frank chuckles.

FRANK

Yeah. Don't take it the wrong way, though. You'd be hard pressed to find anybody who *wasn't* a mistake. I was a mistake.

Michael smiles. Frank struggles to find words.

FRANK

I made a lot of mistakes. With you.  
I like to think I've learned from  
those mistakes. Trying to do it the  
right way this time.

(beat)

But I have my regrets. I do. I feel  
responsible for a lot. Got the  
phone call from the hospital and I  
felt like a large part of what  
happened up there in the city was  
because of me.

Dead silence. Michael nods, but doesn't say anything. Frank  
continues to struggle to express himself.

FRANK

I'm not good with stuff like this.

Michael chuckles.

MICHAEL

I know. Me neither.

FRANK

I guess what I'm trying to say  
is... it was hard.

(beat)

I just want you to know...

They stare at each other. Michael with an anticipatory  
expression.

FRANK

I know you won't forget about all  
that shit that happened back then,  
but you know...

Michael sips his beer, pats Frank on the shoulder.

MICHAEL

I accept your apology.

Frank nods in satisfaction, sips his beer. They share a  
silence.

FRANK

Have you ever tried looking for  
your mother?

Michael shakes his head.

MICHAEL

What's the point? I'm not gonna go  
looking for somebody who doesn't  
wanna be found.

Frank stares at Michael, notices a sadness in his eyes.

FRANK

You miss her?

Michael shrugs, focuses on his beer.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - STAIRWAY - THE NEXT DAY

Michael sits on the same step he sat on 22 years ago. He  
stares out the window to the driveway, looks straight ahead,  
has a quick flashback of his mother slapping him in the face.

A MINIVAN pulls into the driveway. Frank gets out of the car.  
After a few moments, the front door opens.

Frank steps in, stops, sees Michael on the stairs. Frank  
hesitates for a moment, looks down, reluctant to look Michael  
in the eye.

MICHAEL

What's up?

Frank scratches his head, finally looks Michael in the eye.

FRANK

I found your mother.

EXT. ST. MARY'S CEMETERY - BURIAL PLOT - DAY

A dreary gray sky. Rain clouds hover above. A somber mood.  
Quiet.

Michael stands at the foot of the burial. His head down. He  
picks his head up, reveals tears in his eyes. He stares at  
the tombstone.

INSERT - TOMBSTONE

*Annie May Happ, May 12, 1965 - January 5, 2007*

BACK TO SCENE

Michael shakes his head in disappointment. Sadness and anger  
combined. In the distance...

EXT. SHOULDER OF ROAD - ST. MARY'S CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Frank leans his back against the hood of the car, watches with sympathy, his arms crossed.

He uncrosses his arms, lights a cigarette, his hand shaking a bit.

EXT. ST. MARY'S CEMETERY - BURIAL PLOT - CONTINUOUS

Michael moves his lips as if he wanted to say something. But he chokes up a bit. Fights tears, face turning red from the effort.

Finally, words escape his lips...

MICHAEL

Why?

Michael wipes at his nose, clears his throat, continues to fight tears with all of his might.

MICHAEL

Why didn't you ever come back for me?

(beat)

Kept your picture in my night stand. Cried every night, wondering where you were. Would wake up, and I would hope. Hope that you would, I dunno, maybe one day show up for me. Take me out to a movie. Dinner.

Tears flood the balls of his eyes, but he wipes them before they can fall.

MICHAEL

Tell me how much you missed me... how much you loved me. Tell me it wasn't my fault.

(beat)

I missed you so much.

Michael tosses a rose on the grave, wipes at his eyes again.

MICHAEL

I always will.



EXT. SHOULDER OF ROAD - ST. MARY'S CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Frank sees Michael approach, quickly puts out his cigarette. Frank straightens his posture, seems a bit nervous. It's apparent he was never good at comforting someone emotionally.

Michael stops, only a few feet away from Frank. Michael stares down at his feet.

Frank stares at Michael in anticipation. Michael picks up his head, reveals tears in his eyes but tries hard to hide the emotion from his father.

FRANK

You okay?

Michael clears his throat again, clearly on the verge of breaking down.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Michael can't hold it in any longer. The tears flow down his cheeks. He looks away from his father, ashamed to cry.

But Frank moves towards him, hugs his arms around Michael, pats his back. Michael resists at first.

MICHAEL

I'm okay...

Frank doesn't let go, whispers in his ear...

FRANK

It wasn't your fault.

Michael's eyes become even more red. The tears flow heavily.

FRANK

It wasn't your fault.

Michael lets the tears come out at full force. He hugs his father back, buries his face into his father's burly shoulder. Cries hysterically as if 22 years of tears were coming out at this moment.

FRANK

She would've been proud of you.

(beat)

I'm proud of you.

Frank pats his back comfortingly. Tries to pull away, but can't. Michael won't let go. He clutches onto his father ever tighter.

Frank, confused at first, clutches him tightly in return. Michael's tears persist. Suddenly, a tear trickles down Frank's cheek.

FRANK

I'm sorry... I'm so sorry...

Michael picks his head off of Frank's shoulder, looks him in the eye. Sees tears in his father's eyes. He can't believe it.

MICHAEL

It wasn't your fault, either.

Frank seems stunned, fights more tears. He struggles to maintain eye contact, but looks at his son and nods.

INT./EXT. MINIVAN - MOVING - DAY

SUPER: A few days later...

New York City skyscrapers in the distance. Signs for the LINCOLN TUNNEL.

Michael sits up front with Frank, who drives. Kathy sits with Hannah and Tanya in the back, both in baby seats.

Michael looks at Tanya through the rearview. Tanya sees Michael's face in the rearview, does a cute little wave.

Michael sticks out his tongue, makes a goofy face. Tanya giggles. Frank sees the interaction and smiles. A genuine family moment.

EXT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY - LATER

The MINIVAN sits parked at the curb. The whole family says bye to Michael.

Michael lifts Tanya into the air, gives her a big hug, sets her down. Gives Kathy a kiss on the cheek.

MICHAEL

Well, it was nice meeting everybody.

KATHY

Don't be a stranger. You're welcome any time.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I'll take you up on that offer.

KATHY

Good luck with everything. I hope you feel better.

MICHAEL

I feel better already.

Michael and Frank give each other a big, manly hug.

FRANK

All right, then.

They stare at each other.

FRANK

I'm not the wisest man in the world. I've made every fuck up a man can make.

MICHAEL

(jokes)

Oh, that's where I get it from.

Frank lets out a hearty laugh.

FRANK

I was never good at giving advice. But I've been there. I know about hating life, wishing shit was different. But everything eventually falls into place.

MICHAEL

Wish I knew when.

FRANK

That's the thing. I always wondered why things happened the way they did. I spent half of my life searching for answers. And the answers come. But they come when you're not looking for them.

(beat)

Same with love. Same with happiness.

A brief moment between father and son. A moment of understanding.

FRANK

I know about failure, but even though it sucks ass, you learn more from it. Just as long as you don't keep fucking up.

(beat)

Just live your life, Michael. And do it good. If that makes any sense.

Michael pats Frank on the shoulder.

MICHAEL

Nice try.

They both laugh lightly. Silence.

MICHAEL

I'll call you.

FRANK

I'll be waiting.

Frank leads the family back to the MINIVAN. They start it up, drive off. They all wave as they drive away.

Michael waves back, watches the MINIVAN disappear into the distance.

EXT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DAY

PEOPLE walk in and out of the restaurant. A beautiful sunny day.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - JACK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Michael sits across from Jack, who sits behind his desk.

JACK

How was the therapist?

MICHAEL

It was good.

(beat)

Gotta meet up for group therapy every Wednesday, though.

JACK  
They got you on meds?

MICHAEL  
No. Apparently, I'm not crazy  
enough.

JACK  
How was the time off?

MICHAEL  
It was good. Saw my dad for the  
first time in like forever.

JACK  
How'd that go?

MICHAEL  
Good. He's married now. They seem  
happy. Met my two sisters for the  
first time. Most adorable little  
fuckers you could ever meet.

Jack nods in satisfaction.

JACK  
That's good.

Jack evaluates Michael closely.

JACK  
You seem different.

Michael shrugs.

MICHAEL  
I feel different.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - HOSTESS STAND - LATER

Michael and Ashley share a prolonged hug.

ASHLEY  
We missed you a lot.

Michael looks around, notices the whole staff staring at him  
awkwardly, whispering among themselves.

MICHAEL  
Any gossip since I was gone?

ASHLEY

Without you here, there is no  
gossip.

Michael laughs. Aaron approaches Michael, taps him on the  
shoulder. Michael turns around, surprised to see a concerned  
look on Aaron's face.

AARON

Sup?

Michael shrugs.

AARON

You doing okay?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Aaron extends his hand. Michael stares at Aaron's hand for a  
moment, confused. Eventually, they shake hands.

AARON

Good to have you back.

MICHAEL

Thanks.

Michael looks up at the dining room, notices everyone still  
staring at him - Fran, David, Andrew and Jessica.

MICHAEL

Wait, Aaron. Hang with me for a  
sec.

AARON

For what?

MICHAEL

Just follow me.

Michael walks upstairs...

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The dining room half full with customers. Aaron trails  
behind, befuddled, as Michael walks past his coworkers.  
Everyone stares at him with wide eyes, afraid to say  
anything.

Suddenly, Michael hops on top of a table at the center of the  
room, clanks a fork against a glass.

All attention on him, even the CUSTOMERS.

MICHAEL

All right. First off, to avoid any awkwardness, I just wanna say thank you to everyone for your support over the years. You guys got me through some rough patches in my life, and I can't thank you enough.

Everyone exchanges bewildered glances.

MICHAEL

As for this latest episode I had... I wanna thank everyone for dealing with me, offering me their support.

Michael points to Andrew and Jessica, who stand next to each other by the computers.

MICHAEL

I especially wanna thank you, Andrew and Jessica. All though I was hurt, it helped to make me realize what was really important in life. I lost track of that, but now I'm back. The past week has been the most enlightening week of my life. The best week I've had in a long, long time.

(beat)

I still hate your fucking guts, the both of you, but not to the point where I will let it ruin my day.

Michael makes eye contact with the both of them.

MICHAEL

I will never forget what happened. But, nonetheless, I forgive you. And most importantly, I forgive myself. For the way I've handled things, for my overall behavior.

Michael looks around at everybody. The room silent. Some awkwardness.

MICHAEL

Thank you for you time.

Michael steps down from the table, makes his way back downstairs. Andrew steps in front of Michael.

ANDREW  
Hey, bro, I just wanna say --

MICHAEL  
Eat a dick, Andrew.  
(smiles)  
I mean that with the utmost  
respect.

Michael walks downstairs, leaves Andrew scratching his head.

INT. CAROLINE'S DINER - HOSTESS STAND - CONTINUOUS

As Michael walks down, Ashley waits with the phone in her hand.

ASHLEY  
You have a phone call.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Michael sits across from a distinguished lawyer in a business suit, who sits behind a desk, reads over paperwork. The nameplate on the desk reads ADAM STEINBERG, ESQ.

ADAM  
She's a tough woman, your mother.

MICHAEL  
I wouldn't know.

ADAM  
She fought the cancer for many years. Even at times where she couldn't even stand up, she always found a way to make light of everything.

MICHAEL  
So, why am I here?

ADAM  
Your mother took out a life insurance plan a few years ago, before she was diagnosed.  
(beat)  
She made you the sole heir in her will.

Michael is almost speechless. Stunned.



MICHAEL  
I haven't seen her in over 20  
years.

Adam shrugs.

ADAM  
Well, I don't know what else to  
tell you.  
(realizes something)  
She did leave a note for you to  
read. Your eyes only. She said it  
would explain everything.

Adam slides an envelope across the desk to Michael. Michael  
picks it up, looks at it peculiarly.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY - LATER

Michael sits at a table by himself, continuously stares at  
the envelope. About to open it...

But no. He resists the urge, folds the envelope and places it  
into his pocket.

Maria comes into view, sits down across from Michael.

Tense silence. Finally...

MARIA  
Thanks for meeting up.

MICHAEL  
No problem.

MARIA  
I heard what happened.  
(beat)  
I was worried.

Michael shrugs.

MICHAEL  
Eh, shit happens.

Maria hesitates to speak, unsure of what to say.

MARIA  
So... how are you?

Michael thinks about it briefly. Finally, he grins as if he  
discovered something about himself.

MICHAEL

I'm great.

MARIA

That's good, Michael.

Maria thinks about it as she stares at him, tries to figure him out. She seems confused, caught off guard by his answer.

MARIA

Why are you great, if you don't  
mind me asking?

Michael curls his lips, shakes his head.

MICHAEL

I don't know.

FADE OUT:

THE END