

The American Dream

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ACT 1 SCENE 1

THE STAGE IS BARE, A SINGLE SPOTLIGHT SHINNING AT THE CENTER OF THE STAGE. EDDIE IS STANDING UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT, HANDS IN HIS POCKETS AS HE LOOKS OVER THE AUDIENCE. THE FAINT SOUNDS OF NEW YORK CITY TRAIN FLOODS THE STAGE, LOUD ENOUGH TO HEAR BUT SILENT ENOUGH TO ALLOW EDDIE TO SPEAK WITH CLARITY.

EDDIE

This is 42nd street, Times Square
Transfer to the Q, R, 1, 2, 3, 7....
I ask myself if it was worth it...
To trade my constellations
For the artificial stars of NYC
I look up to see an immigrant
His flame brilliant among dead eyes
How do I know?
There's a look in our eyes, one we all carry
The wonder and amazement we wear
So openly on the heart of our sleeves
His glows in his iris
Brighter than Times Square lights
In that moment I ache to warn him
The only admirable thing about this country
Is its power to manipulate us
To chew us until we've lost our flavor
Only to have us beg to be chewed again
Because it is now all that we know to feel
My mouth begs to open and tell him to go back
We come closer to each other
I say nothing and I lose sight of his face
I've lost my only chance to warn him
I regret that soon he will know what I do
I let myself mourn the look in his eyes
The same one I once proudly wore.

Blackout.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

THE STAGE IS SET AS A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM. THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF DESKS LINED UP IN EVEN ROWS FACING AN OLD CHALKBOARD. POSTERS WITH QUOTES FROM FAMOUS POETS AND WRITERS INDICATE THAT THIS IS A LITERATURE CLASSROOM. THE SIMPLE TEACHERS DESK BESIDE THE CHALKBOARD IS SLIGHTLY MESSY. BOOKS ARE STACKED ON TOP ON EACH OTHER, ALONG WITH BINDERS AND UNGRADED PAPERS.

Ms. Cruz is sitting at her desk, looking through a stack of papers in front of her as the bell rings and students walk in.

Lexy's heeled boots click loudly as she walks, Alissa beside her. She's texting away on her phone and flipping through her platinum blonde hair.

Chris whistles his approval of her outfit as he walks by her.

CHRIS

(winking)

Lookin' good Lexy.

LEXY

(rolling her eyes)

Fuck off, Chris.

Chris bites his fist as she flips him off and walks away in disgust.

They sit at their desks.

Jonny walks in with a smug look on his face.

CHRIS

Yo, Jonny!

Jonny flashes up his acceptance letters.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Holy shit, you lucky son of a bitch.

Jonny slaps his letters down on Chris' desk.

JONNY

(smugly)

Berkeley, NYU, Cornell, Columbia, UM. Who did you think your boy was?

They high five each other.

CHRIS

Heard anything from MIT yet?

JONNY

Not yet but I'm waiting on it.

Jonathan is still smiling as he sits down on the desk next to Chris.

Ms. Cruz begins to write something on her board.

Denise walks in and quietly sneaks herself past everyone to get to her desk in the back row, iced coffee in hand.

Jonny nods at her and she nods back. Bags cover her eyes and her hair is messy. She rests her head once she sits at her seat.

Ms. Cruz turns around to look at her classroom as everyone settles down.

MS. CRUZ

Ok, so a raise of hands on who did the reading for today?

The classroom looks around quietly at each other. Even Jonny says nothing, choosing to text on his phone subtly under his desk.

Ms. Cruz sighs.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)

The least you guys can do is try. Now I know we have little of the semester left before you all graduate but don't clock out on me this early.

Everyone groans.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)

Now, the remainder of this semester we'll be focusing on poetry, especially epic and narrative poetry. We'll start off with the basic definitions to refresh your memories a bit and I'll be assigning you to a partner by the end of the-

There's the sound of a knock and Eddie walks in on stage. He stands a bit awkwardly.

EDDIE

(nervously)

Sorry, I'm Eddie. I was told this is where my first class should be. Poetry, right?

Eddie extends his hand to Ms. Cruz

MS. CRUZ
(shaking Eddie's hand)
Yes, you must be the new transfer. I'm Ms. Cruz.

She faces the classroom.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)
This is our new transfer student, Eduardo-

EDDIE
Eddie, I go by Eddie.

MS. CRUZ
My apologies. This is Eddie Vega. He will be apart of my advisory as well as a apart of this class starting today.

Ms. Cruz turns to Eddie.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)
Would you like to share a couple of things about yourself to the class?

Eddie looks uncomfortable as he speaks.

EDDIE
Uh, I'm Eddie obviously. I'm a senior like the rest of you guys.

Chris turns to Jonny. He keeps his voice low.

CHRIS
Poor kid must have it rough changing schools the last semester of high school. Talk about a fucking blow.

Jonny's looks straight at Eddie. His brows furrow and he looks deep in thought.

JONNY
Does he look familiar to you?

CHRIS
Not anyone I'd know. The kids obviously a total mook.

EDDIE
I moved here from Chicago. I used to live in New York but I haven't been back here in ten years so things kinda look a bit different. Uh, my family is from Ecuador and we run a convenience store by 117th and Madison if anyone's ever been around there.

Awkward silence.

MS. CRUZ
Is that all?

EDDIE

Uh, yeah.

MS. CRUZ

Welcome to HSMSE. You can go take a seat now.

Eddie walks to the back to the only seat left available in the classroom, next to Denise.

Denise is sleeping at her desk, head burred in her arms.

Ms. Cruz hands out stapled packets of papers.

MS. CRUZ

So who wants to read the first paragraph?

The class groans again.

Lights fade out.

ACT 1 SCENE 3

DENISE AND JONNY ARE SITTING AT A TABLE STAGE RIGHT OF THE RESTAURANT HAPPINESS. A HANDFUL OF THE OTHER STUDENTS FROM THEIR SCHOOL ARE SITTING AT DIFFERENT TABLES AS WELL. THE RESTAURANT APPEARS COZY YET WELL MAINTAINED. THE WALLS ARE AUTUMN COLORED BRICKS. MURALS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE DECORATE PARTS OF THE WALL. THERE ARE CINNAMON COLORED BOOTHS THAT FURNISH STAGE RIGHT OF THE RESTAURANT. A SMALL BAR AREA SITS STAGE LEFT. THE BARTENDER IS FIXING UP SOME DRINKS FOR A PAIR OF COLLEGE GIRLS.

Denise steals some fries off Jonny's plate as he eats the remaining food on his plate. She looks refreshed compared to earlier.

She eyes Chris as he makes a poor attempt to hit on one of the college girls sitting at the bar. She takes a long sip of her milkshake before turning to Jonny.

DENISE

God, how long do you think it'll take him to realize he doesn't stand a chance?

Jonny takes a pause from his food to look over his shoulder towards Chris.

JONNY

(shaking his head)

You know how he is.

Denise laughs.

JONNY (CONT'D)

So do you wanna talk about the way you passed out this morning?

DENISE

I was so tired. I literally only slept like two hours last night. I just want to graduate at this point.

JONNY

(laughing)

No shit. I can't believe you slept all through class. I thought you were building a new pool built with all that drool you were piling u-

Denise smacks his arm before he can continue. She looks embarrassed as she hides her face in her hands.

DENISE

Oh my god. At least tell me I didn't miss anything important.

JONNY

Relax, it was just the usual. We just went over poetry format and shit.

Denise eats some more of Jonny's fries.

DENISE

Good.

JONNY

Oh yeah, we got this new kid in our class too.

DENISE

New kid?

Lexy walks in with her best friend Alissa. Jonny watches her as the sounds of her heels click over the floor. Her long dyed blonde hair flows behind her.

ALISSA

Ugh, I'm so glad your uncle owns the place. The discounts are literally saving my life and my mom is so close to taking away my credit cards after I went off shopping last week.

LEXY

(texting on her phone)

Anything for you, baby girl.

ALISSA

(whining)

I'm starving.

JONNY

(distracted)

Uh, yeah.

Chris notices Lexy as well and starts making his way towards her.

Alissa notices Chris approaching them.

ALISSA

(rolling her eyes)

Oh god.

CHRIS

(flirting)

Woow! what a surprise seeing you guys here.

LEXY

Everyone from our school comes here.

Lexy and Alissa walk right past Chris, towards the table at the center of the stage.

CHRIS
You'll change your mind eventually.

LEXY
(without looking back)
Not even in your dreams asshole.

Chris walks over to Jonny and grabs a chair from the table over to sit down.

CHRIS
(shaking his head)
It's like abs and a sexy face doesn't do it anymore.

DENISE
This isn't an episode of Jersey Shore.

Chris grabs a handful of Jonny's fries.

CHRIS
(while chewing)
But I'm the perfect gentleman.

JONNY
So is everyone gunna eat my fries but me?

*Chris and Denise ignore him as they grab more fries.
Jonny sighs in defeat.*

JONNY (CONT'D)
(getting up)
Screw you guys. I'm getting more and you guys can't have any.

Jonny disappears off stage to get more fries.

Chris and Denise get into a heated argument over how to properly hit on girls.

DENISE
No girl wants to be looked at like they're a piece of meat.

CHRIS
Then how else will they know they're a snack?

Chris eats the rest of Jonny's fries.

DENISE
You're such a lost cause.

Eddie walks into the restaurant. He stands around, looking as if he's searching for something. He walks over to the bartender.

They chat before he takes a couple of forms out his bag and hands them over to him. They both laugh at something the audience can't hear.

Denise stares at Eddie.

Jonny walks over with a new basket of fries. He notices Denise looking past him and he turns around to the awkward Eddie talking to the bartender.

JONNY

Hey, it's that new kid, Eddie.

DENISE

Eddie...

Chris grabs a chunk of Jonny's fries.

JONNY

What the hell Chris?!

Jonny's outburst catches the eyes of a couple people, including Eddie.

Denise catches Eddie's eye, they stare at each other in familiarity. She shoots up from her chair.

DENISE

Eduardo?

Eddie smiles as a look of recognition crosses his face.

EDDIE

Holy shit.

Eddie strides over to their table and Denise meets him half way. He lifts her up into a hug and she laughs.

DENISE

Oh my god! I can't believe it's you. It's been so long...

Jonny and Chris look back and forth between Eddie and Denise.

EDDIE

(grinning)

So it was you who was drooling all over the floor first period, huh?

Denise looks embarrassed.

DENISE

I can't believe you're the new kid we got this semester. You got so much taller!

(touching Eddie's hair.)

Your hair grew out too.

EDDIE

You haven't grown an inch. Then again, how could you've grown when your only source of nutrition was twinkies back in the day?

Denise slaps his arm as he laughs.

DENISE

I thought your-

JONNY

Am I the only one missing something here?

Denise and Eddie turn back to Jonny who is staring at them.

Chris looks interested as he eats Jonny's second basket of fries as if it were popcorn. Jonny doesn't notice.

DENISE

You don't remember him? Eduardo from third grade?

Chris' eyes go wide.

CHRIS

You're that weird kid from Ecuador. Awe shit, I thought Jonny was tripping when he said he recognized you from somewhere!

Eddie looks uncomfortable.

EDDIE

It's Eddie. I go by Eddie now.

CHRIS

Hey, I get it. I'd hate the name Eduardo too, wayyy too long.

Jonny slaps his forehead as if he's forgotten something obvious.

JONNY

How could I forget? You cried like a fucking baby when Chris took your books and flung them over that fence. Ahhh good times.

Chris and Jonny laugh.

CHRIS

You gotta admit, that was funny as hell until Ms. Chatwin showed up.

JONNY

Don't forget that time Leo kept mocking his accent during English and showed up to class in a sombrero! Classic!

CHRIS

Dude, His dad's accent was wayyy worse. Remember how he couldn't even pronounce McDonald's right?

Eddie appears to get even more uncomfortable by the second as Jonny and Chris' laughter increases. Denise looks at him with pity.

DENISE

Ignore them, they're total assholes.

EDDIE

(bitterly)

Yeah, I see that hasn't changed.

CHRIS

Ouch!

Jonny laughs again.

JONNY

It was all in good fun. We didn't mean to upset you.

EDDIE

Almost didn't recognize you guys with the all the muscle.

Chris lifts his shirt up to show off his physique. He pats his stomach.

CHRIS

Gotta keep it up for baseball. Gym is always life.

EDDIE

Guess the only one you don't train is your brain.

Chris frowns and Jonny gives Eddie's chest a small shove.

JONNY

What's your fucking deal?

Denise puts her hand on his shoulder and tries to pull him back but it's barely working.

CHRIS

Chill, Jonny, he's obviously joking.

EDDIE

I obviously wasn't.

Chris scoffs as he eats the last of Jonny's fries before standing up and facing Eddie. He's taller so he looms over Eddie who obviously isn't going to back down.

Denise moves herself between Chris and Eddie. She puts her hand on Chris' chest.

DENISE

Take a walk.

Chris doesn't budge. His eyes are still on Eddie, ready to fight.

DENISE (CONT'D)
(in a harsher tone)

Take a walk.

JONNY

Let's get out of here, bro. He's not even worth it. My mom texted me saying she had something really important to talk to me about so I was leaving anyway.

Jonny takes his wallet out as Chris moves Denise's hand off him in annoyance.

Jonny leaves a couple of bills on the table. He turns to Denise who has sat down at the table again.

JONNY (CONT'D)
(to Denise)

You coming? I'll drive you home.

DENISE

You guys obviously need to cool off and I haven't even finished my milkshake yet so...

Denise sips her milkshake as if to emphasize the importance it has to her.

Jonny looks between Denise and Eddie.

JONNY
(rolling his eyes)

Have fun with the loser.

Chris snickers and they exit the stage, leaving Denise alone with Eddie.

Denise pushes the chair in front of her out, gesturing for Eddie to sit down with her.

Eddie hesitates for a moment before sitting down.

EDDIE

I'm sorry if I caused any trouble but damn I can't believe you still hang out with those guys.

DENISE

I swear they're not always like that. They're super cool dudes it's just that sometimes...

EDDIE

They're assholes.

Denise twirls the remainder of her milkshake with her straw.

DENISE

...I don't know. They have trouble controlling their temper, not that you were helping either.

EDDIE

I'm not gunna apologize for what I said. They were being total dicks.

DENISE

I know. I'll talk to them but please be nice to them. They're my best friends and they've been there for me through a lot. They're honestly not as bad as they seem. Please? I'm sorry they were being dicks to you.

Eddie goes silent for a moment. Denise sips her milkshake nervously.

EDDIE

You shouldn't be the one apologizing for them but fine.

Awkward silence.

DENISE

So... uh what are you doing here? You don't look like you came here for the food.

EDDIE

I talked to the manager last week about a job opening they have here.

DENISE

(interested)

Oh, really? For what?

EDDIE

They're short on servers and I'm short on cash so it seemed like a good idea.

DENISE

So we'll probably be seeing you a lot around here, huh?

Eddie groans.

EDDIE

I really wish I knew beforehand that this place was such a hotspot for people at our school but no one else is even looking to hire right now.

Denise laughs.

DENISE

What did you expect? Our school is so close to this place plus Lexy's uncle owns the place and she has a lot of... friends so almost everyone comes here?

EDDIE

Lexy?

DENISE

Tall, super blonde, always wearing heels, almost always with her little minion.

EDDIE

Are you talking about the really hot girl in our class?

DENISE

Ugh, of course she'd be your type.

EDDIE

(laughing)

I'm just stating simple facts. And she doesn't seem all that... nice.

DENISE

Because she's a total snob. Point is it wouldn't be all that bad working here. If you make a lot of friends it'll almost be like you're being paid to hang out. And a lot of Lexy's friends come here to spend so you'll be making a lot of money.

Eddie smiles.

EDDIE

Yeah, I guess it won't be all that bad.

Denise nods approvingly.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

So Lexy's uncle owns the place?

DENISE

He's a family friend from what my mom said but she calls him uncle but I swear she might as well be his daughter at this point with the way he spoils her.

EDDIE

Must be nice.

DENISE

I can't believe you've been here a week already. It's wierd I haven't seen you around.

EDDIE

I live way on the east side so I'm not really around the neighborhood.

DENISE

How are your parents? It's been so long.

EDDIE

My dad's doing great. He loves his new job way better than the old one. I guess my moms doing pretty ok too. Her brothers live close by to us so she's kinda happy to be back.

Denise looks like she's about to say something but then her phone rings. She digs through her pockets to fish it out.

DENISE

Shit. Hey! Yeah, I was hanging out with the guys and I lost track of time. Yeah... I know. I'll be there in a bit.

Denise turns to Eddie.

EDDIE

Everything ok?

DENISE

Yeah, I forgot I had plans with some friends today.

Denise takes out a couple of bills from her backpack and puts them on the table.

EDDIE

I think Jonathan left more than enough for the table.

DENISE

It's a tip. I just feel so bad for the guys causing a scene.

EDDIE

(smiling)

Hardly but you always were the nice one.

Denise looks embarrassed by his compliment.

DENISE

I'm sorry but I really gotta go. Ugh, I can't believe I forgot about today.

EDDIE

No worries, I'll walk out with you.

Eddie follows Denise off stage.

Alissa is staring at herself on her phone's camera.

ALISSA

So who was that kid Chris looked ready to fuck up?

LEXY

(uninterested)

That lame new kid in our class. You'd know if you actually paid any attention in class. Who cares anyway? Chris is always picking fights.

Alissa takes a bite of her food.

ALISSA

(still chewing)

Chris would be a perfect 10 if he wasn't so.. Chris.

LEXY

You did not just say that.

ALISSA

Just hear me out.

LEXY

God no. By the way have you heard anything from the colleges you applied to?

ALISSA

I heard back from a couple but I'm aiming for UCLA and they're taking forever to get back to me.

LEXY

Same here. I'm literally gunna throw myself off the empire if I don't get into NYU.

ALISSA

I heard Jonny got his acceptance letter from them this morning. See, I do pay attention.

Lexy freezes as if she can't believe what she just heard.

LEXY

What? There's no way he got his letter before me. That's total bullshit. I worked my ass off to get on their radar.

ALISSA

I hear he's gunning for MIT or Columbia though. No doubt he'll get in, he totally kicks ass in the engineering class.

Lexy groans.

ALISSA (CONT'D)

Chill, they're probably taking their time getting back to people.

LEXY

Jonny is in the same advisory as me and we all applied early so there's just no way.

Alissa puts her hand over Lexy's.

ALISSA

Relax, you're super smart. A bitch but a smart one.

Lexy scoffs but visibly relaxes.

LEXY

I know... I just really wanna go to NYU like my uncle did. Get my business degree and take over this stupid concrete island.

ALISSA

We get it, hun. You'll get in for sure.

LEXY

(smiling)

Thanks Alissa. I really mean it.

Lexy takes a bite of her food.

ALISSA

Omg I just got a text from James.

LEXY

The college candy you're talking to?

ALISSA

Yeah. Him and his bros are throwing a party this Friday.

LEXY

First party of the season? Count me in.

ALISSA

I'm texting him back now. Ugh, I really wish the iPhone 5s would just come out already. This phone keeps getting slower and slower.

LEXY

Or maybe it's the 20,000 photos you have on it.

Alissa sticks her tongue out at her.

ALISSA

The warm weathers been holding up so we should definitely dress up.

LEXY

Time to put all those new clothes you bought to use.

Alissa claps her hands in excitement.

MADISON

Yay! Ok, so we should invite the girls and link up around seven and get ready at my place. Mom's on a mini vacay with her friends and Dad's off with Uncle Dan so we should be cool to hang out and pregame.

LEXY

Is it cool if I crash at your place too? My mom is going to KILL me if I go home smelling like alcohol.

ALLISON

Sure, I'll have the guest room ready for you when you get there.

Alissa gets up, leaving a fifty dollar bill on the table.

ALISSA

Later, I have to go plan my outfit.

LEXY

Alissa, it's Monday.

ALISSA

Exactly.

Alissa blows her a kiss goodbye before walking off.

LEXY

So you're just gunna leave me here?

ALISSA

Have fun.

Alissa is gone.

LEXY

She's impossible.

The lights fade out.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

THE STAGE IS BARE, A SINGLE SPOTLIGHT SHINNING AT THE CENTER OF THE STAGE. JONATHAN IS STANDING UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT, APPEARING ASHAMED AS HE LOOKS OVER THE AUDIENCE. HE PULLS HIS SLEEVES OVER HIS HANDS NERVOUSLY. HE LOOKS DOWN AND TAKES A DEEP BREATH BEFORE LOOKING BACK UP.

JONATHAN/JONNY

The sounds of running feet
 And playground games
 A new kid with a heavy accent
 An untainted mind
 A cultured soul
 A curiosity for the simplest things
 I've ruined this
 We've all ruined this
 To watch the innocence leave his eyes
 When we made fun of his hand stitched clothes
 The giggles we've give
 At his struggle to pronounce our native tongue
 But his Spanish more fluent than water
 His father came to visit once
 And we were merciless
 Mocking his shared accent with his son
 We ruined this
 We felt nothing to watch this boy cry
 To see him lose his pride
 As he begged to be taken back to Ecuador
 A home where he was not belittled
 For the lack of materialistic things
 Only Americans know how to love
 Looking back now
 His lack of knowledge in video games and MP3 players
 It was beautiful
 To see him choose a good book over these things
 But I did not know and I did not regret
 To see this boy cry
 He deserved to keep the innocence we stole
 To let it survive a little bit longer
 In a world that does not love
 Those who bring wonder and vibrant tongues
 Into the whites of our dull American flag
 If we could only see that color
 Is what we lack the most in our American lives
 Little did I know...

The lights fade out on "is what we lack...".

ACT 1 SCENE 5

THE BELL RINGS AND STUDENTS COME POURING IN. CHRIS WALKS IN, FLIRTING WITH A FELLOW CLASSMATE WHO IS FLIRTING RIGHT BACK. LEXY WALKS IN WITH ALISSA WHO COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT BEING THERE.

Jonny walks in looking as if he's been through hell. His expression is distraught and his eyes appear tired and bloodshot as if he's been crying. He sits next to Chris who takes a good look at him. He blows a low whistle.

CHRIS

Dude you look like total crap.

JONNY

Not now Chris, I'm not in the mood.

CHRIS

Lucky for you I know how to fix that right up for you.

Chris takes his phone out and shows it to Jonny.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You remember my buddy James who graduated last year?

Jonny is distant as he talks.

JONNY

Soccer player, right? What about him?

CHRIS

Well look, dumbass. He's throwing a party this Friday. Hot college girls, free liqs, good vibes. You see where I'm going with this?

JONNY

I don't know, man... this just really isn't the right week for this...

CHRIS

Why? You've never turned down a good party before

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh c'mon. We deserve a little taste of the life we'll be living once we graduate from this place.

Jonny's expression sours.

JONNY

We'll see.

CHRIS

I'm not really giving you a choice here.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm taking that as a yes.

Denise walks into class with Eddie beside her. She laughs at something he says and they smile at each other.

DENISE

Sit with us.

EDDIE

Nah, I like being in the front.

DENISE

Ok, I'll see you during lunch.

EDDIE

Count on it.

Denise walks over to Jonny and Chris.

CHRIS

(rolling his eyes)

You're seriously hanging out with that lowlife?

DENISE

Shut up, Chris. He's way nicer than you assholes and you'd know that if you got your head out of your ass and actually got to know him for a change.

Jonny tries to hold in his laughter, pressing his fist over his his mouth, but fails.

Chris shoves Jonny but not hard enough to seem aggressive.

CHRIS

You must've missed the part where she called you an asshole too.

JONNY

Hey, I'm not the one picking fights.

CHRIS

Whatever, if Denise wants to hang out with the lames now then that's on her.

DENISE

Oh screw you Chris.

Chris winks.

CHRIS

Anytime.

Denise huffs before sitting down.

Chris still looks pissed but he stays quite.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

(to Jonny)

I thought you'd have my back there. What the hell was that?

JONNY

I told you I'm not in the mood today.

CHRIS

Does it have to do with the fact that you look like someone spit in your cereal this morning? For real, what happened?

JONNY

I... I had a talk with my mom yesterday and... she told me something and-

MS. CRUZ

Ok, class settle down.

As if broken out of a trance, Jonny goes silent as Chris waits for more.

JONNY

It's nothing. My mom's just worried about all the college stuff...

CHRIS

For what? You're top of the class, you can go anywhere you want.

JONNY

(sadly)

Yeah...

Chris moves on.

CHRIS

(to Denise)

Did you hear James is throwing a party on Friday?

DENISE

Yeah, everyone and their mother must know about it by now. God knows I could use a brake. Senioritis has been hitting me pretty hard lately.

CHRIS

Let's meet up at your place.

DENISE

Sure, but don't expect me to babysit you if you get trashed. I need a night to relax.

CHRIS

Deal. I'll bring sad face over here too. I think he needs it more than we do.

JONNY

Fuck it, I'll go.

MS. CRUZ

So you guys have a big project coming up. You guys will be writing a poem of any style on any theme of your choice but make it a bit personal. You'll be working in pairs for this project.

The class hums in excitement for a moment. Friends among the class look at each other, already silently picking their partners.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)

Now, considering how the last assignment went I'll be assigning your partners for you. I didn't get a chance to assign you guys last class so today will have to do.

Sighs of disappointment echoes the classroom.

Ms. Cruz looks down at her binder and begins to call out the partner pairings.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)

Jamie you'll be paired with Peter. Jackson you'll be with Lorena.

CHRIS

(To Jonny and Denise)

This fucking blows. I was hoping to work with one of you guys. A study and beer pong session kind of vibe, feel me?

DENISE

I wonder everyday how you got into this school.

JONNY

He'd be nothing without that sports scholarship to CalU.

Denise and Jonny smile.

DENISE

He's gunna sink without us.

Chris flips them off.

MS. CRUZ

Alissa you'll be working with Chris.

Alissa frowns and turns back to find Chris giving her a flirty wave and wink.

CHRIS

Maybe this won't be so bad.

MS. CRUZ

Denise you're with Eddie.

Denise and Eddie practically beam at each other.

MS. CRUZ (CONT'D)

Jonny your partner is Lexy.

Jonny groans.

JONNY

No, I can't handle any more bullshit this week.

CHRIS

Dude you literally hit a gold mine.

JONNY

(rubbing his neck)

She's a know-it-all pain in the ass.

CHRIS

I won't argue there. I'm not looking so bad as a partner now, am I?

Ms. Cruz paces around the classroom as she explains the project assignment.

MS. CRUZ

Now, I want you guys to sit with your partners and talk. This is where the twist comes in: your partner will decide the theme that you'll be writing about. Don't think of this as limiting because you'll still be in control of what kind of story you tell. Really get to know your partner on something beyond the external. I'll give you guys the remainder of class to discuss.

(she walks over to sit at her desk)

I expect you guys to choose a theme for each other by next week.

Everyone gets up to go sit with their partners. Denise and Eddie immediately begin to chat with each other. Chris doesn't hesitate to hit on Alissa who looks miserable as she ignores him.

Jonny walks over to a pissed off Lexy who's made her way to Ms. Cruz's desk.

LEXY

Can't I just switch with someone else?

MS. CRUZ

Lexy, You're not special. If you're going to survive adulthood then you have to learn to work well with all kinds of people. I actually think you two could offer each other unique perspectives.

LEXY

Ugh.

MS. CRUZ

I'm not changing my mind Lexy.

Lexy turns around to find Jonny waiting.

JONNY

I don't exactly want to work with you either, princess.

LEXY

Let's just get this over with.

Lexy marches to a desk and Jonny follows.

JONNY

What exactly is your problem with me anyway?

LEXY

You're just another airhead.

JONNY

Funny, I could say the same thing about you.

LEXY

I actually work hard for everything I have, ok.

JONNY

So do I.

LEXY

You only participate when you have to. You're athletic, good looking. People like you without you even having to try. I worked my ass off in ways you'll never understand but somehow you got into my dream school and it's not even your first choice.

JONNY

Your dream school?

Lexy fumes as she sits down in silence. She takes out her notebook and begins to write something down.

Jonny stares at her for a couple of moments before sitting down in front of her.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Which school?

Lexy looks up at him.

LEXY

NYU. It's the school my uncle went to.

JONNY

Is that the reason you wanna go?

LEXY

Maybe.

JONNY

Listen, It's not like I'm hogging all the spots. If you get in, you get in. If you don't, you don't. Just feel lucky they don't take personalities into consideration or you'd never get in.

Lexy gives him a hard stare.

LEXY

(dryly)

Lucky me.

JONNY

Also, you don't know shit about me or what I go through. I may not share your story but I sure as hell had to work hard to get to where I am and it's only getting harder...

Jonny has a faraway look. He looks almost sad. Lexy frowns.

LEXY

Are you ok? Do you need... like space or something?

Jonny snaps out of his state.

JONNY

So the princess can care about someone other than herself? I'm touched.

LEXY

If you're going to be an asshole then forget I asked.

JONNY

I'm good, just thinking about how we're gonna do this stupid project.

LEXY

Are you free tomorrow?

JONNY

Can't , baseball practice tomorrow. How about Thursday?

LEXY

I promised to go shopping with Allison.

JONNY

This coming from the girl who just accused me of not caring enough about school? You're such a model student.

LEXY

(frowning)

Did I ask for your opinion?

Jonny laughs.

JONNY

Hey, you do you but remember we need a topic or whatever by next week.

Lexy looks deep in thought.

LEXY

How about today after classes?

Jonny takes a moment to think about it.

JONNY

Yeah, that should work.

LEXY

Good, I could drive us to Happiness after school.

JONNY

Sounds like a plan.

Chris walks over to them. He pulls a chair from another desk and sits next to Jonny.

CHRIS

I just got a text from Dalton that coach wants our help moving some equipment after school.

JONNY

He'll be fine without me. I got stuff to do after school.

CHRIS

Dude, are you sure you wanna do that? You know how he is.

JONNY

Yeah but-

LEXY

(rolling her eyes)

Just go, I'll just skip ahead without you. Just text me when you're on the way. I don't want to have to spend more time with you on this than I have too.

The bell rings and Lexy doesn't skip a beat to get out of there as quickly as she can.

CHRIS

Talk about extra.

JONNY

Wanna trade?

CHRIS

I got my hands full with another princess.

Alissa gives Chris the stink eye as she walks past them and out of class.

Jonny rubs his forehead in frustration.

JONNY

Working with a self centered brat is the last thing I need on my plate.

Chris and Jonny get up to leave class. Before exiting Jonny stops and turns back.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Go on without me, I need to talk to Ms. Cruz real quick.

CHRIS

Catch you later.

They bump fists as the last of the students leave the classroom.

Jonny takes a deep breath.

Ms. Cruz is sifting through papers when Jonny stands in front of her. She looks up.

MS. CRUZ

If this about your partner I already told Lexy-

JONNY

No, that's not it.

MS. CRUZ

Then what can I help you with? Is everything ok? You seemed a bit out of it in class today.

JONNY

I got into all these great schools.

Ms. Cruz smiles.

MS. CRUZ

Yes, I know. I'm your advisor, remember? I'm really proud of you, Jonathan. Though it's no surprise to me.

JONNY

But...

MS. CRUZ

(confused)

But?

Jonny rubs his face with both hands. He looks as if he's about to start crying but he holds himself back. He takes a deep breath.

JONNY

You're my advisor...

MS. CRUZ

Yes, I know. What is this all about?

JONNY

I've lived all my life believing I was... I just found out that I'm not... legal? Documented? I don't know what to do and I don't know who to go for help because this changes everything and...

(his words rush out in
escalating desperation)

Ms. Cruz... can I still go to MIT? I haven't got the acceptance letter yet but I know I will, I have to.

(he blinks to hold tears back
but they escape anyway)

Can I still make it? Can I still go if I wanted to? Is there anything I can even do about it? I don't know who else to go to. I don't know anyone else like me...

Ms. Cruz's face turns serious.

MS. CRUZ

Take a seat and let's start from the beginning.

Lights fade out.

ACT 1 SCENE 6

WE ARE AT THE RESTAURANT. IT'S A WEEKDAY SO IT'S RATHER DEAD. THE ATMOSPHERE IS CHILL. DENISE IS SITTING AT THE BAR, CHATTING WITH EDDIE WHO IS WORKING AS A BAR BACK BEHIND THE COUNTER. HE CUTS LIMES SKILLFULLY, NOT EVEN LOOKING DOWN AS HE TALKS TO HER. LEXY'S UNCLE, NICOLAS IS GIVING ARTURO, LEXY'S FATHER, A BIG LONG BEAR HUG. THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR SOCIAL STATUS IS APPARENT. NICOLAS IS IN A RATHER CASUAL BUT ELEGANT SUIT. HIS NAILS APPEAR MANICURED AND HE'S OBVIOUSLY HAD A RECENT HAIRCUT. ARTURO IS IN MORE CASUAL CLOTHES, A T-SHIRT AND PLAIN JEANS. THEY HUG AS IF THEY HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER IN YEARS, THEY HAVEN'T.

Nicolas speaks with a heavy New York accent.

NICOLAS

(laughing happily)

I just can't believe you're back for good.

Arturo has a light Hispanic accent as he speaks.

ARTURO

I have a hard time believing it myself.

Nicolas guides them to an empty table. They sit.

NICOLAS

(grinning)

Does Cassandra know you're back.

ARTURO

Of course, I can't go seeing you before my wife, can I now?

NICOLAS

It's been too long. Take a seat with me. Wow, I didn't expect to see you until later this month.

They take a seat at table in the middle of the stage.

ARTURO

I didn't either but things sped up a lot faster than I thought. You should've seen the look on Cassandra's face when I knocked on her door.

Eddie walks over to bring them glasses of water.

EDDIE

Nice to finally meet you Mr. Schulz. I'm the newbie, Eddie.

Eddie extends his hand and Nicolas takes it.

NICOLAS

Eddie now is it? Where's Cole?

EDDIE

He's running a bit late so I'll be taking care of you for now.

Nicolas turns to introduce Arturo.

NICOLAS

This is my good old friend Arturo Silva. Be nice to him, he's basically family to me.

Nicolas gives Arturo a slap on the back.

Arturo smiles kindly at Eddie.

ARTURO

I'm the only reason Nicolas made it this far. This one was a lot of trouble when we were younger.

EDDIE

Silva? Are you Lexy's father by any chance?

ARTURO

That would be me. Do you know her?

EDDIE

She's in my class, I just transferred here not so long ago so I'm still getting used to names.

ARTURO

I hope she's said nothing but good things.

EDDIE

(shyly)

She doesn't really talk to me but I've heard you two were quite the duo back in the day. The staff told me all the stories and I saw the pictures in the office.

NICOLAS

Back in the day?? The day's not over, boy. We'll be back at it once Arturo here settles down.

EDDIE

That's good to hear boss. So what can I get you guys?

Nicolas turns to Arturo.

NICOLAS

You want anything?

ARTURO

I'm fine for now.

NICOLAS

We're just gunna catch up on lost time, kid.

EDDIE

Ok, let me know if you change your mind.

Eddie leaves them alone to chat.

Arturo takes a good look around the restaurant.

ARTURO

You've really done good for yourself.

Nicolas grins.

NICOLAS

Who would've thought?

ARTURO

Awe, I always had faith in you.

NICOLAS

(sincerely)

Thank you. I couldn't have done it without you.

ARTURO

I didn't do a damn thing, this was all you.

NICOLAS

If it weren't for you I would've never gotten my shit together. You know more than anyone how much trouble I used to get into back in the day.

ARTURO

I thought the day wasn't over?

NICOLAS

(chuckling)

Not by a long shot but even you gotta admit we're getting old, Arturo. I can't risk it all the way I used to.

ARTURO

(shaking his head)

If I had a dime for every time I had to save you from doing something stupid...

NICOLAS

And if I had one for every time I did something stupid anyway...

They laugh as they reminisce.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

I can never thank you enough for all the times you've been there for me...

ARTURO

And I can't thank you enough for how much you've helped my family over the years after I left. Cassandra is always telling me how good you are to my girls. They admire you so much.

NICOLAS

I only did what you would've done for me.

ARTURO

You did a lot more than that, a lot more than I could've done.

NICOLAS

You're giving me too much credit.

ARTURO

How is Lexy by the way?

NICOLAS

Well it's been ten years. A lot has happened since then but Lexy is a tough one. She's doing great in school, a boss in the making. She plans to go to NYU just like me.

ARTURO

Cassandra told me something like that. It's amazing, she's always been so brilliant.

NICOLAS

She can tell you all about it tonight. Come over to my place later so we can all celebrate as a family. Kelly will be so happy to see you again.

ARTURO

She was, I saw her right before I came to see you.

Nicolas shakes his head.

NICOLAS

So I'm the only one left in the dark?

ARTURO

I thought you'd be home. She's been waiting a long time to find an excuse to get you out of your office and into the real world.

They both laugh.

Silence falls between them.

Arturo's voice is colored with sadness.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

I don't think Lexy will ever forgive me for leaving her behind.

More silence.

NICOLAS

You don't know that.

ARTURO

I do know. She always gives Cassandra an excuse not to talk to me when I call.

NICOLAS

She's young, a teenager no less. Give her time. No girl can ever hate her father.

ARTURO

But it's been years. She never even said goodbye when I left.

NICOLAS

As I said, give her time. You had no choice, Arturo. Your mother was really sick and we both know she had no one else to look after her the way you did. God bless her heart in heaven.

Arturo grows visibly sad and upset.

ARTURO

I wish I would've tried harder. I knew the consequences of leaving with an expired visa. I knew about the ten year ban if I left. I should've -

NICOLAS

Bullshit. You're too hard on yourself, brother. If anyone is to blame it's this bullshit system. Who does that to a father?! With kids no less!?

Nicolas throws his hands in the air.

NICOLAS (CONT'D)

It's. Not. Your. Fault. No one in your position should have been forced to make the sacrifices that you did. You shouldn't have been punished for doing what had to be done. You're not guilty of anything but being human.

ARTURO

I just can't stop thinking about how things could've been if they were different. It feels foolish to think about it even after all these years.

NICOLAS

Did Lexy know you were coming back?

ARTURO

I thought I'd make a surprise out of it but now that just sounds like a cowards excuse.

NICOLAS

You can't change the decisions that were made in the past, you can only move forward and do the best you can.

Arturo leans back in his chair.

ARTURO

You really made a name for yourself, Nicolas. I'm so proud of you

NICOLAS

If only you'd been here in person. This was our dream after all.

ARTURO

Awe, you know how much I hate the business side of things, you've always been the one who's good with people. I've always preferred working where I don't have to deal with any.

NICOLAS

You dealt with me.

ARTURO

And trust me that was only because I knew you'd end up stuck in a ditch somewhere ,hungover out of your mind, if I didn't.

NICOLAS

(sarcastically)

And you Arturo were such a saint. Always just staying put making something new in the kitchen.

ARTURO

Damn right I was and we both know it.

NICOLAS

You still cook?

ARTURO

It was the only way I was able to stay sane in a small town with nothing to do.

NICOLAS

Why don't you work for us?

ARTURO

What?

NICOLAS

Why don't you work for us? Here at the restaurant?

ARTURO

I told you business isn't my-

NICOLAS

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know. I was talking about being our chef.

*Arturo rubs the back of his neck, thinking over
Nicolas' words.*

ARTURO

I don't know, I already have a job set up in the Bronx...

NICOLAS

Doing what? Something you probably don't even like making miserable money.

ARTURO

The moneys... ok.

NICOLAS

C'mon we both know you'd be a great asset here.

ARTURO

I don't want to feel like I'm taking advantage of you. I appreciate everything you've done up to this point but I just can't.

NICOLAS

(exasperated)

Stop looking at it that way. Listen, we've been looking for a new chef who really knows his way around the kitchen. I've interviewed half the city at this point but you know how much I don't trust just anybody. You'd be a great help if you joined.

ARTURO

I don't know how I'd feel about you being my boss.

NICOLAS

In a way you'd be your own damn boss. The guys in the kitchen would love you and I talk about you so much it's like they know you already. What do you say?

ARTURO

Hmmmmmm.

NICOLAS

Don't hmmmme me. So are you taking the job or not?

ARTURO

Sure, but on one condition.

NICOLAS

Name it.

ARTURO

I never have to call you "boss" in my life.

Nicolas bursts out laughing.

NICOLAS

Fine, fine, I figured as much. I'll get you that paperwork later.

Eddie is drying some glasses now while Denise munches on some fries.

DENISE

When is your break again?

EDDIE

About ten minutes or now. It's a kind of a go-with-the-flow kind of thing in restaurants. You never really know when you'll get a break.

DENISE

I thought this would be more fun like I'd get to see you flip around cocktail shakers like those cool bartenders in Vegas.

EDDIE

A. I'm a bar back and well B. I told you we could've just met up on Saturday.

DENISE

And I told you that I tutor those days. Your girl over here has gotta make money too, you know?

EDDIE

Yeah, whatever.

DENISE

So what exactly do you do then?

EDDIE

Just all the dirty work that bartenders don't do.

DENISE

Soooo does that mean "no" to free drinks?

EDDIE

And here I thought you came to keep me company. Ouch.

DENISE

(in a matter of fact tone)
You'd be asking too if you were in my position.

Lexy strolls right in, the click of her heels ringing.

She spots her uncle right away but doesn't recognize her father, his back facing her.

Lexy begins to walk over to their table.

EDDIE

Actually, I wouldn't. I'm not really big on drinking.

DENISE

You really are such a buzzkill. Hurry up so we can get started on this project.

Eddie rolls his eyes and resumes drying the glasses.

Nicolas spots Lexy and gets up to give her a big hug.

Lexy smiles and laughs in glee.

LEXY

I'm so glad you're here. I could really use some cheering up, today has been the worst and-

Lexy's father stands up and turns to face them both.

She freezes.

Arturo doesn't notice and smiles at her.

ARTURO

Alexandra, it's me. Wow, you look so grown. It's so amazing to finally see you after all this time.

He walks over to give Lexy a hug as well but she cringes away.

LEXY

I don't know you.

Arturo's smile fades a bit.

ARTURO

It's me, your father.

Lexy's voice trembles but it remains cold.

LEXY

I lost my father the day he left me.

Lexy turns to her uncle accusingly.

LEXY (CONT'D)

(hurt)

Did you know he was back?

NICOLAS

I'm as surprised as you are but I-

Lexy begins to walk away from them.

Arturo grabs her arm and she rips it away from him aggressively.

LEXY

Do not touch me!

Customers turn around to see what the commotion is.

Eddie pauses from cleaning glasses and Denise turns around to see what's going on.

NICOLAS

Lexy!!

LEXY

(to Nicolas)

And don't you defend him. You know what he did.

ARTURO

(hurt)

Lexy, please. I just want to talk.

LEXY

And I don't. YOU ARE NOT MY FATHER and you haven't been for the last ten fucking years, ok?!

(her eyes whelm up)

You have no idea what it's been like for me, what it's been like for mom! Uncle Nicolas has been more of a father to me then you will ever be.

ARTURO

I...

LEXY

Does mom even know you're back?

ARTURO

(softly)

Yes, she's known I'd be back for a while. We wanted to tell you but-

LEXY

You should've stayed where you were. I didn't need you then and I don't need you now.

Lexy stalks away from them, wiping tears away from her face.

Arturo calls out to her.

ARTURO

Lexy!!

Nicolas puts a hand on his shoulder to hold him back.

NICOLAS

Let her blow off some steam. She'll come around, just you see. Come to my office so we can get you that paperwork.

Arturo looks defeated and reluctant to move but he follows Nicolas to the opposite direction.

Before Lexy exits the stage she bumps into Jonny entering it.

JONNY

(panting)

Sorry, I'm late. The guys started screwing around and-

Jonny notices Lexy's red eyes and puffy face.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Hey, are you ok?

LEXY

Not now, I don't have time for this bullshit.

Lexy shoves past him and leaves.

JONNY

But our project-

Lexy is gone and Jonny puts both hands on his head in frustration.

Eddie lets out a low whistle as he watches Lexy leave.

DENISE

Whoa, what was that? Was that her dad?

(She watches Arturo and

Nicolas disappear from sight)

So even the perfect Lexy has family drama. I almost feel bad for her.

Eddie takes out two shot glasses and slyly fills them both with tequila.

He pushes one forward to Denise.

She raises an eyebrow.

EDDIE

What? You were the one practically begging me to give you one. I think we deserve a shot after having to see all that drama go down.

DENISE

Are you even allowed to do that?

Eddie shrugs and takes the shot in a quick, smooth motion.

Denise is about to take the shot but Jonny walks up from behind her and grabs it before she can touch it.

JONNY

Don't mind if I do.

He sits on the stool next to Denise and takes the shot before either of them could say anything.

DENISE

Hey!!

EDDIE

That wasn't for you.

JONNY

(rubbing his temples)

Fuck off.

Eddie scolds him.

EDDIE

Screw you.

Eddie walks away to resume his work.

DENISE

(to Jonny)

What bit you in the ass today? And could it kill you to be nice?

JONNY

Lexy just totally ditched me.

DENISE

(teasing)

Her rejection was that bad?

JONNY

This whole damn week has been that bad. What's her fucking deal anyway? I thought we were having a breakthrough in class earlier. Did I do something?

DENISE

Lexy just had a Kardashian level meltdown. You should've seen her yelling at her dad.

JONNY

The tall blonde guy?

DENISE

That's like her fake uncle. You really just don't pay attention, do you?

Eddie walks back wearing a regular T-shirt.

EDDIE

(scoffing)

As much as that princesa acts like a guera even I can see she isn't. Those colored eyes y pelo rubio can only hide so much. Shame though, I bet she'd be way sexier with dark hair too.

JONNY

No doubt about it.

Eddie and Jonny smile at each other, momentarily forgetting their dislike for each other.

DENISE

Pigs.

Denise eyes Eddies regular clothes.

DENISE (CONT'D)

They cut you loose?

Eddie joins them, sitting on a stool next to Denise.

EDDIE

Yeah, there's not much going on for the rest of the night.

JONNY

Denise said you worked here. So what? Are you are bartender or something?

EDDIE

Bar back.

JONNY

Are you guys hiring?

Denise and Eddie look at Jonny in surprise.

DENISE

I thought the only working you said you'd do until college is "working out"?

EDDIE

I gotta say I'm kinda surprised too.

Jonny laughs to cover his seriousness. He almost covers it well.

JONNY

I'm gunna need extra cash if I want to live it up next semester at MIT.

DENISE

(excited)

You got in?

JONNY

Not yet but no doubt I will. I'm just trying to think ahead.

EDDIE

Cocky as ever.

JONNY

Don't you have some tables to mop down?

Eddie points between him and Denise.

EDDIE

We actually have a project to get started.

JONNY

The shots sure as hell said otherwise.

DENISE

Can you guys be nice to each other and put all that beef from the past behind?

Eddie and Jonny go silent for a moment.

Jonny sighs.

JONNY

About that, I've been meaning to apologize for last time. I've thoughta bout it and that was uncool of me and I'm sorry.

Eddie looks stunned. He hesitates too.

EDDIE

It's whatever, we were all kids. I'm past it anyway.

JONNY

I've been meaning to ask you if you wanted to tag along with us to a party this Friday?

EDDIE

A party?

DENISE

That's a great idea! One of Chris' buddies, James, from the college is throwing it.

JONNY

And his parties aren't exactly something anyone can say no to.

DENISE

Think of it as a way to make friends, you are new here after all.

JONNY

Definitely show up with liquor, beer or whatever.

DENISE

Just don't show up with wine?

EDDIE

Why not?

DENISE

James calls it house wife's juice.

EDDIE

Sounds like... fun. I got work on Friday night tho.

DENISE

I thought you were just a trainee for now.

EDDIE

Yeah but still. I don't know if parties are really my scene anyway.

DENISE

They're not my scene either but it's a college party. You basically have to go.

Eddie looks like he's thinking about it.

Jonny's phone dings with a text.

JONNY

That better be Lexy with an apology.

He looks down at his phone and frowns.

He gets up, running his hand through his hair.

JONNY (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

DENISE

What's up?

JONNY

Chris just texted me. He needs a ride to pick some stuff up for the party. I'll catch you guys whenever.

He points to Eddie.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Better see you there, bro. You won't regret it.

Jonny leaves.

Eddie looks at Denise.

EDDIE

So I upgraded to Bro? Hmmm.

They both smile at each other.

DENISE

You're coming on Friday, it's not up for debate.

Lights fade.

Erasing its color of rich soil
Making it as white
As the blank slate you have forced me to be
I avoid the sun like the plague
And we all convince ourselves that I'd rather be you
The garden that is my hair aches
To cut the weeds that is now my platinum hair
My skin weeps to soak in the rays of the sun
I ignore the callings of my culture
Trade in my mother's tamales for some meatloaf
And Selena for Frank Sinatra
Because how can I survive in a country full of girls like
you?

Blackout.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

THE STAGE IS EMPTY, BARE, BUT WE DON'T SEE THAT YET. COLORFUL LIGHTS BEGIN TO PULSATE INTO A SLOW RHYTHM AND PICK UP AS A POPULAR TECHNO SONG IS INTRODUCED. THE STAGE FLOODS WITH TEENS DRESSED UP, READY TO PARTY. BODIES SWAY AND MOVE TO THE SOUND OF THE MUSIC AS THEY HOLD ONTO THEIR RED SOLO CUPS AND HALF EMPTY BOTTLES OF LIQUOR.

Lexy and Alissa dance with each other, taking sips of the beers in their hands.

Denise, Chris and Jonny walk in. Eddie wastes no time in joining a group currently cheering on a random girl drinking from a beer funnel.

Denise and Jonny walk over to a table lined up with different kinds of alcohol from beer to wine to hard liquor. They each grab beers from a bucket of ice.

Jonny cracks his beer open and takes a long chug.

DENISE

Whoa, slow down over there.

Jonny continues until he's finished it and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

JONNY

God, I needed that.

Chris is now taking his turn with the funnel, cheers flooding the stage.

Eddie enters, looking around awkwardly and out of place. He spots Denise and walks over to them.

DENISE

Hey, you're right on time.

JONNY

What's up, man?

Jonny gives Eddie a slap on the back.

EDDIE

A bit tired from work but I'll live.

Eddie raises an eyebrow at Chris who's still drinking from the funnel.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You guys sure know how to party.

Denise and Jonny smile at each other.

JONNY

We can always count on Chris to be the life of the party.

DENISE

Damn right.

Chris finishes drinking from the funnel and walks over to the table to grab solo cups and a bottle of vodka. He walks over to them.

CHRIS

Miss me?

DENISE

We were just talking shit about you.

CHRIS

You're hilarious.

Chris eyes Eddie and looks over to Jonny who nods at him as if saying "be nice".

He hands Denise and Jonny a solo cup. He tries to hand one to Eddie but he shakes his head.

EDDIE

I got something way better.

Eddie reaches into his bag and pulls out a bottle of tequila much stronger than the bottle of vodka that Chris is holding.

Chris and Jonny let out a low whistle.

CHRIS

Screw the vodka and swing me some of that.

Eddie opens the bottle and pours a generous amount into Chris, Jonny and Denise's cups.

Eddie takes a long shot straight from the bottle.

Denise coughs a bit.

DENISE

That's strong.

Jonny and Chris make faces indicating they also taste how strong the liquor is. Eddie stays unfazed.

CHRIS

Shit.

Eddie laughs.

EDDIE

You can thank my dad for the bottle, didn't even notice it went missing.

JONNY

I gotta say I definitely didn't think you had it in you.

Denise takes a sip from her beer in attempt to get rid of the taste in her mouth.

Eddie lifts the bottle, offering another round of shots.

DENISE

Do not even think about giving me another shot of that liquid death.

Eddie laughs.

EDDIE

Fair enough.

Alissa strolls over to them.

CHRIS

(sarcastically)

Finally ready to talk about our project?

ALISSA

Ugh, it's Friday night. The last thing I want to do right now is think about how you're going to fail us.

JONNY

Ouch.

DENISE

She's not wrong about that.

CHRIS

Whatever. What do you want?

ALISSA

James wants your help setting up a beer pong table in the other room.

CHRIS

Say less.

Chris turns to the others.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'll catch you guys later.

Chris walks off with Alissa.

Denise sighs.

DENISE

I'm going after him to make sure he doesn't do anything stupid. I'll be right back.

Jonny nods and she leaves them alone in the crowd.

Jonny and Eddie look at each other.

EDDIE

How about another shot?

JONNY

You read my mind.

They pass the bottle back and forth, taking shot after shot.

It's not long before they begin dancing with the rest of the crowd. They fist pump to the music, clearly past tipsy. A couple of girls giggle as they join them in their dance as the music gets louder and more hypnotic.

Across the "dancefloor" Alissa and Lexy are still dancing with each other.

Lexy tugs at the neck of her glittering top and fans herself with her hand. She whispers something we can't hear into Alissa's ear before walking over to the alcohol table. She looks over her options.

Eddie has now joined the group that has been passing around the beer funnel. Jonny is pouring beer into it and Eddie chugs. The people around them cheer.

JONNY (CONT'D)

WHOOOOA, now that's what I'm talking about.

Eddie stands up and throws his arms in the air, cheering with the rest of the crowd. He laughs. One of the girls who were cheering flirtatiously grabs his arms and pulls him away from Jonny to dance with her.

Jonny smiles and doesn't pay attention as he backs up and bumps into Lexy.

LEXY

Watch it, idiot.

Lexy frowns and looks up, surprised to see that it's Jonny.

JONNY

So you ditch me and now you insult me... nice.

Lexy puts a hand to her forehead and sighs.

LEXY

Listen I have a lot going on and-

JONNY

Don't care. I'm not in a mood to deal with your bitchy attitude right now.

Lexy looks stung as Jonny walks away to join Eddie and the girls.

They resume to passing the bottle back and forth. Jonny's actions turn sloppy as he dances. He reaches for the bottle from Eddie but Eddie immediately swings it away from him.

EDDIE

You're wasted as hell.

JONNY

(slurring)

You're wasted.

Eddie laughs.

EDDIE

Unlike you, I can actually handle my liquor.

Jonny reaches for the bottle again and Eddie leans away.

JONNY

(slurring)

Screw you, I'll just get more from over there.

He begins to walk over the table when he stumbles. Eddie catches him just in time.

EDDIE

Yeah, we're talking a walk outside.

Eddie grabs a struggling Jonny and drags him offstage and away from the crowd.

Lights fade.

ACT 2 SCENE 3

FAINT FARAWAY SOUNDS OF THE MUSIC FROM THE PARTY FLOOD THE STAGE. OTHERWISE, THE STAGE IS BARREN.

Eddie is trying his best to keeping a drunken Jonny from falling over as he enters the stage but he becomes too heavy by the time they get to the middle. Jonny slips from his grip and falls over.

EDDIE
(muttering)

Shit.

Eddie tries to lift Jonny up but he stubbornly slaps his hands away.

JONNY
I think I need to lie down.

EDDIE
Yeah, well the concrete isn't exactly the best place to do that right now.

Jonny turns over until he's lying flat on his back.

JONNY
(clearly drunk)
Has there always been two moons?

Eddie plops down on the floor next to him.

EDDIE
You're lucky it's too late for anyone to be around to see you like this. I'm texting Denise to take you home.

JONNY
Relaxxx. I'm ok, I just need a moment to nap.

EDDIE
Shit, Jonny, I'm lit too right now. I'm not in the right mind to do this.

Eddie is texting on his phone. Jonny turns his face enough to look at him.

JONNY
Eddie?

EDDIE
Yeah?

JONNY

Do you hate me?

EDDIE

Hates a pretty strong word.

JONNY

(more sternly)

Do you hate me?

Eddie looks at him seriously.

EDDIE

I don't know how you expect me to answer that question when I barely know who you are now.

Moment of silence.

JONNY

I'm sorry.

EDDIE

Everyone has their drunk moments it's no big deal.

Jonny sobers up a bit.

JONNY

I wasn't talking about that.

EDDIE

...

JONNY

I'm talking about all that crap we did to you when we were kids...

Eddie goes silent for another moment.

He takes a swing from the bottle of liquor he somehow still managed to bring along. Jonny eyes the bottle as if he wants some as well.

EDDIE

(bitter and aggressively)

I told you it's all in the past.

JONNY

I get it now.

Eddie snorts.

EDDIE

How could you possibly get it?

Jonny struggles as he uses one of his arms to prop himself up in order to face him.

JONNY

I'm undocumented.

Eddie bursts out in a harsh laugh.

EDDIE

(standing up)

You're drunk and a dickhead. I should've known you only invited me here to make fun of me.

Eddie begins to walk away when Jonny grabs his arm.

Eddie turns around to look at him, fuming.

JONNY

I'm serious.

They look at each other. Jonny let's go of his arm.

EDDIE

You're not lying?

Jonny looks away in shame.

JONNY

I spent my whole life believing that I was born here. My life is so screwed now. I'm terrified I won't eve be able to go to MIT or anywhere if I can't afford it. I'm sorry for how I treated you when I had no idea what it felt like to be in your shoes.

Eddie scoffs.

EDDIE

So that's why? That's why you've been so nice to me lately.

Eddie walks away and Jonny reaches for his arm again. Eddie isn't so friendly this time and he shoves Jonny hard. He almost falls but manages to stay upright.

JONNY

(angrily)

I'm just trying to apologize.

EDDIE

Screw you, asshole. What you want is for someone to feel bad for you. You're not apologizing for me, you're doing it for yourself.

JONNY

I'm trying to tell you that we're not so different and that I understand what it's like to be like you.

Eddie jabs his finger to Jonny's chest.

EDDIE

Oh, really? So do you know what it's like to miss a home that you forget more about with each passing day? To come to a country so different than the one you came from. You're taken away by the city lights and sky scrapers, you're in a whole other world and you have hope that you'll make it your new home. You're so excited to make new friends but you don't even get the chance because the first person you meet there makes fun of your accent.

JONNY

I didn't know any better...

EDDIE

And that person is someone everyone is friends with so they follow along. They treat you like shit just for being who you are. You know what that's like?

Eddie takes steps closer to Jonny who takes a step back with each step he makes. Even though Eddie lacks the same height and built as Jonny he appears more intimidating than him in this moment.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

People fight so hard for so little, you at least got to live with the allusion of a privileged American brat. I wish all I knew of this country were the stories they would tell us: "The land of opportunity", "The american dream". But for people like me it's a capitalist wasteland where you're forced to settle for scraps.

(with a hard shove)

We are not the same.

Jonny's eye whelm with tears but he doesn't cry. Instinctively he shoves Eddie right back and they begin to fight.

Eddie throws a punch that fazes Jonny enough due to his being drunk but he refuses to back down. He hits Eddie hard on the shoulder and they both fall onto the ground.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(hurt and angry)

We were kids!

JONNY

We were both kids.

(Shoving Eddie off him)

I didn't know any better.

Eddie lands another hit.

EDDIE

You laughed! You watched! You joined! You don't know shit about what it's like to have been in my shoes. You've lived with knowing who you are for two seconds, I've lived with it my entire life. I felt ashamed because of you!

Another shove.

JONNY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

A this point Jonny gives up and let's Eddie hurt him.

Eddie throws hit after hit, beginning to cry as he does so.

EDDIE

It took so long for me to get over it, so long for me to feel good about myself again and realize how much of better person I am than you. You're ten years too late for your bullshit apology.

Denise and Lexy run onstage.

DENISE

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

Denise and Lexy pull Eddie off Jonny who is laying on the floor.

Eddie tries to find his way back to Jonny and Denise uses all her strength to hold him back.

EDDIE

Get off me!

Lexy kneels over Jonny and touches his face carefully. She looks at Eddie with anger.

LEXY

What the hell is wrong with you?

DENISE

God, you're stronger than you look.

LEXY

Take him inside.

DENISE

I'm not leaving you here alone with my best friends literally bleeding all over the sidewalk.

LEXY

(harshly)

Well I don't think you're friend over there is going to calm down anytime soon and playing bouncer isn't really my thing.

DENISE

Fine, whatever. I'll take Eddie home if you promise to take Jonny home.

LEXY

Ugh, consider this the one and only favor you're getting from me.

(looking at Jonny)

I owe him one anyway.

DENISE

C'mon.

Denise drags a struggling Eddie away but not before he throws a final insult at Jonny who's lazily trying to sit up.

EDDIE

And I came here legally you son of a bitch!!

Denise and Eddie are gone.

Lexy puts a hand on Jonny's shoulder.

LEXY

You shouldn't be moving.

He swats her hand away.

JONNY

I'll be fine. Fuck, my head hurts.

LEXY

(frowning)

He really put a number on you but I guess it could be worse.

She tenderly touches his face but he pulls away.

LEXY (CONT'D)

Right now isn't the time to be mad at me.

JONNY

What are you even doing here?

LEXY

Would you have preferred if I let that psycho hit you some more?

Jonny refuses to look Lexy in the eye.

LEXY (CONT'D)

Denise's phone died and she was looking everywhere for you. I told her I saw you guys coming out here and well we heard you guys screaming at each other.

JONNY

(softly)

Thanks...

LEXY

Do I even want to know what that fight was about?

JONNY

Just know I deserved it.

LEXY

(pointing to Jonny's face)

I don't think anyone deserves that kind of damage to their face.

JONNY

Why do you even care?

LEXY

I said I was sorry about before and I meant it.

JONNY

Yeah, well I'm learning tonight that apologies don't really mean shit.

LEXY

Hate me all you want but we should really get something for your face.

She tries to get him to stand up but he stays firmly sat down.

JONNY

Give me a moment.

Lexy says nothing for a while, letting Jonny sulk as he looks at his feet.

Lexy reaches into her purse and hands him a bundle of napkins.

Jonny presses the bundle to his lip.

LEXY

Do you want to talk about it?

JONNY

It's nothing.

LEXY

I doubt that. Listen, I know I've been a bitch but I'm trying really hard to be nice over here.

Jonny looks at Lexy as if debating whether it's a wise decision to tell her what happened.

JONNY

I was apologizing to Eddie for all the bullying me and Chris did to him in third grade. He said I was ten years too late for my bullshit apology and he's right. I'm a piece of shit for what I've done.

LEXY

So that's what this was all about? Some grudge he was holding on to? You guys were kids, how would you know right from wrong?

JONNY

If we would've known how much it'd hurt him would we have really changed the way we treated him just because he wasn't like the rest of us?

LEXY

I don't know... but he still shouldn't have hit you like that. You probably weren't the only one to blame.

JONNY

I might as well be. I made fun of him, encouraged it in the others. We made fun of everything we could: his accent, clothes, his looks...

LEXY

Stop blaming yourself for something that's in the past.

Jonny looks at Lexy with a kind of intensity that makes her look away in embarrassment.

LEXY (CONT'D)

We all have it rough. I think it's been a shitty week for all of us.

JONNY

(distracted)

Tell me about it.

LEXY

What's wrong? Is there something else?

JONNY

I-I found out some really bad news earlier this week. I haven't really told anyone about it besides Eddie but I think it just made things worse between us.

LEXY

What do you mean by that?

JONNY

Every time I say it out loud it just makes it feel that much more real. Plus It's not like I'm dying to tell you about my secrets.

LEXY

Try me. I won't tell anyone.

Again, Jonny looks like he's debating whether to tell Lexy the truth or not.

JONNY

I was actually born in Argentina. I've lived eighteen years of my life believing I was American when I'm actually... not. And my own parents never even bothered to fucking tell me we're undocumented until recently.

LEXY

(at a loss for words)

Oh...

JONNY

I keep thinking maybe this is Karma's way of settling the score between me and Eddie. Maybe if I did things differently back then it wouldn't have turned out this way. This would all be some joke and I wouldn't have to be worrying about how the hell I'll be paying for college when I don't even qualify for any aid or scholarships anymore. I feel like I don't know who I am anymore or who I'm supposed to be.

LEXY

Oh...

JONNY

I don't know why I just told you all that.

LEXY

Because even though we spent four years in the same classes, we might as well be strangers to each other. It's always easier to talk to a stranger about your problems, that's why psychologists make a killer living.

JONNY

Or I'm just an idiot.

LEXY

I didn't know you were going through all of this, you could've told me.

JONNY

Tell you? Lexy, no offense but we're not really friends and you're not exactly known for your compassion.

LEXY

You don't know me, Jonathan.

JONNY

I know enough.

LEXY

(harshly)

You don't.

Jonny looks at her with that intensity again.

LEXY (CONT'D)

I know what's like to live in a mask, pretending to be something you're not. You have to wipe away a part of you just to fit in. We all have to adapt in one way or another if we want to make our lives a little less miserable.

JONNY

Not being able to find the right kind of hair dye doesn't count as misery.

LEXY

My father... his visa expired around the same time my grandmother got sick. He had two choices: wait until he got a new one and leave his mother on her own or leave us and risk never being able to come back here. He chose the later.

JONNY

I'm sorry, I never knew that.

LEXY

No one does, not even Alissa. I know he probably felt like he had no choice but now we'll never know and that's what infuriates me. He knew what he had to leave behind but he did it anyway and the States punished him for it. Usually you'd only have to wait for three years to re-enter the country but he had to wait for ten..

JONNY

No one could have predicted that was going to happen. You honestly can't blame him for leaving.

LEXY

Do you know what the worst part is? It didn't even matter. My grandmother didn't make it.

She died only three months after he went to take care of her. I spent ten years without a father because of his choices. I blamed him for being who he was, for not being able to have the privilege to come back.

JONNY

How could they do that to you guys?

LEXY

We moved away a year after my uncle opened his new restaurant. He payed for me to go to private school. Kids are so mean, you know? They treated me like shit just because I was different, because I wasn't white. I get how Eddie must've felt but the difference is that I'm not weak. I made the sacrifices I had to in order to become someone who has a place on the stage, to have a voice people listen to.

Jonny tenderly grabs a strand of Lexy's hair.

JONNY

No, it sounds like what you did was do everything it took to become white.

Lexy gives Jonny a sad smile.

LEXY

And you tell me, which group of people are always given the better roles? Who gets to stand on the grander stage? This place wasn't meant for people like us.

JONNY

(standing up)

You may be standing on the bigger stage but you have nothing real to say. Everything about you is as washed out as your hair. Eddie knew who he was and he was proud of it and maybe I was jealous of that confidence he had before I knocked it down. He bounced back even after everything we did to him. He's not weak, you are. You know less of who you are than I do.

LEXY

Are you really defending him after what he did to you?

JONNY

Say all you want but I know I deserved it.

He starts to walk away.

LEXY

You're not any different from me. You're playing pretend too.

Jonny whips around.

JONNY

Thank you for making me realize something just now. Our situations are different. I was never "pretending" to be something I wasn't so don't even think about comparing us. And you know what? I may have realized that I don't have as many opportunities or advantages as I thought I did, that my stage isn't as big as I thought it was because of my status, but I'll never pimp myself out to a white America just to be play an extra. Step up and confront who you really are.

Lexy is speechless as Jonny leaves without saying another word.

ACT 2 SCENE 4

WE ARE AT THE RESTAURANT. THERE ARE SOME HIGH SCHOOLERS LOUNGING AROUND, EATING AND TALKING.

Lexy is sitting with Alissa at a table with her laptop. Alissa has a hoodie on with the hood up, a rare sight, as she picks at her food with a fork. There are fading bags under her eyes and her skin looks paler than usual. She is very hungover.

ALISSA

It's been two days, why am I still feeling like this?

LEXY

No one told you to to play 12 rounds of beer pong.

ALISSA

That idiot James was practically begging me to play with him because I'm his "lucky charm." God, I'm never drinking again.

Lexy ignores her as she continues typing.

ALISSA (CONT'D)

You've been awfully quite since the party. I thought you sleeping over for the weekend would be more fun than this.

LEXY

I just have a lot on my mind, Alissa.

Jonny and Chris enter. They have gym bags with baseball gear poking out over their shoulders.

Jonny's face is blotching with blue and purple bruises. Though no longer bleeding, his injuries still looked pretty bad. His lip was patched up but still a bit swollen.

ALISSA

Did something happen? You know you can tell me, right?

LEXY

Nothing happened.

Lexy eyes Jonny as he walks alongside with Chris. She turns away quickly but not fast enough for Alissa not to notice.

ALISSA

Oh my god, did something happen between you and Jonny?

LEXY

Shut up.

ALISSA

Did you guys hook up or something?

LEXY

I said shut up, you're being loud.

Indeed, a handful of people were staring at them. Jonny catches her eye but he turns away as if he doesn't notice her.

LEXY (CONT'D)

Nothing happened. We got into an argument and he was being a dick.

ALISSA

Ugh, why are all men such assholes?

LEXY

Whatever, I don't care.

Lexy resumes her typing and Alissa continues scowling at her food.

CHRIS

I swear I'm going to kill him if I see him today.

JONNY

Just drop it. I don't care anymore.

CHRIS

I can barely recognize you right now and you say you're ok with that?! He's been picking a fight with us since day one.

JONNY

C'mon I don't want any more trouble and I don't blame him.

CHRIS

You must've been drunk as fuck if you actually let him get a punch in.

They sit down at a table far away from Lexy and Alissa.

JONNY

You were the one who was black out drunk. How are you even alive?

CHRIS

Fucking James thought he could out best me in beer pong and we got carried away. I can't believe I missed everything that went down.

JONNY

You were passed out.

Jonny takes not so subtle glances at Lexy.

CHRIS

How did you even get home? James said you were banged up pretty bad.

JONNY

Well only one of my eyes were swollen shut so I made the best out of it.

Chris stares at Jonny who is still glancing over at Lexy. He appears nervous.

CHRIS

So did anything else happen that I missed?

Jonny looks a bit panicked but regains his composure.

JONNY

Not really.

CHRIS

So then why do you keep staring over at the princess' table?

Jonny opens his mouth as if to offer an explanation but ultimately decides against it.

JONNY

It's not like that.

CHRIS

Then why is she staring at you too?

Jonny frustratingly runs his hand through his hair.

JONNY

She was there when they found us fighting. Denise left her with me to drag Eddie's ass home.

CHRIS

So what's the problem? She's grilling at you like she's gonna stab you.

JONNY

We started talking about a bunch of real life shit and I kinda said some fucked up shit about her.

Chris laughed.

CHRIS

How bad was it?

JONNY

I basically called her a cowardly phony bitch.

CHRIS

And you're wondering how I'm alive? Dude, you have to say sorry. No chicks gunna forgive you unless you're the first one to apologize.

Jonny groans.

JONNY

I don't even know how. Everything I've been saying in my head sounds fake. I should've just kept my mouth shut but I was so pissed off.

CHRIS

She's your partner and she's low key evil. Get it out of the way now or she might hire someone to kill you.

JONNY

She's not that scary.

CHRIS

(standing up)

If she's anything like Alissa then I'm convinced she's the devil.

Jonny looks over at Lexy before he takes a deep breath and stands up.

JONNY

I'm just gunna get it over with.

Chris gives a small clap.

CHRIS

I support you.

JONNY

You're coming with me.

CHRIS

Why do I have to go with you? It's your screw up.

JONNY

I need someone to get Alissa away from her for a few moments. It's already embarrassing enough and I don't need her there to hear all our business.

Chris gets up and follows him to the girls' table.

CHRIS

You're asking for the impossible but let's just get it over with.

ALISSA

Don't look yet but guess who's walking over to our table.

Lexy looks up just as the boys reach their table.

JONNY
(awkwardly)

Hey...

Lexy and Jonny look at each other uncomfortably.

ALISSA
She doesn't want to talk you.

LEXY
(hissing)
Alissa.

CHRIS
(to Alissa)
I don't think he was talking to you.

ALISSA
Wow I'm surprised you're not still passed out.

CHRIS
I'm wondering the same about you.

LEXY
What do you guys want?

JONNY
I need to talk to you for a bit. Our project proposal is due this week and we've been too busy to get started.

The girls look at each other.

CHRIS
And I need to borrow Alissa to talk about the epic graduation party I'm hoping to throw at her place.

ALISSA
We have a hot minute before we graduate.

CHRIS
Better to start planning early?

ALISSA
You guys aren't subtle but I'm interested in this party.

Alissa gets up to walk away with Chris.

Jonny sits down.

JONNY
I just want to apologize.

LEXY

Oh, really? Weren't you the one who said apologies don't mean shit?

JONNY

I shouldn't have said what I said, I didn't mean any of it.

LEXY

It sure as hell sounded like you did.

JONNY

I... I'm sorry. I was angry at all the things going on with me lately and I let it out on you.

LEXY

I get it, ok, but I told you some real personal shit about me too and you spit it back in my face. You say you didn't mean it but you did.

JONNY

I don't know your story and I'm not going to pretend that I do.

LEXY

Is that all?

JONNY

If you don't want my apology then at least accept my thank you for being there for me that night. You didn't have to share all that personal stuff with me but you did and I really appreciate that.

Arturo enters the scene. He's wiping his hands with a clean rag. He's in a chef's apron. He notices Lexy and makes his way over to her table.

LEXY

You were drunk and it looked like you really needed someone. I accept your thanks but I can't forget what you said.

JONNY

I-

ARTURO

Alexandra?

Jonny looks up to Lexy's father.

LEXY

What do you want?

ARTURO

You haven't been back home for the past three nights, I worry.

LEXY

I told mom that I was staying with Alissa.

ARTURO

You can't go in and out of the house like you own the place.

JONNY

Maybe I should go...

LEXY

No.

(to her father)

We have work to do so we're really busy right now.

Arturo turns to Jonny, extending his hand.

ARTURO

I don't believe we've ever met. My name is Arturo, I'm Alexandra's father.

JONNY

(extending his hand)

Names Jonathan.

ARTURO

Nice to meet you, Jonathan. I know you two are very busy but can you give me a few moments with my daughter?

Jonny looks at Lexy apologetically before getting up and taking his leave.

He walks off to find Chris.

JONNY

I'll see you around.

Arturo takes over the seat Jonny left empty.

ARTURO

You've barely been home, you didn't bother to show up to Nicolas' dinner and you decided on your own to go to some party with god knows who-

LEXY

I told you I was with Alissa and how did you even kn-

ARTURO

Don't interrupt me.

Lexy looks shocked by her father's harsh tone but she obeys and let's him finish.

ARTURO (CONT'D)

Your mother told you me all about how you and your little friends like to party around. Your hatred towards me doesn't change the fact that I'm still your father. You think you're the only one who's been suffering for the past ten years? I left my daughter, my wife, the life I spent over 20 years building here. I've tried giving you space and time to finally talk to me but I'm tired of waiting. When will you realize that I care about you?

Lexy's voice trembles as she speaks, clearly biting back tears.

LEXY

Are you done?

Arturo opens his mouth to say something but never gets the chance.

LEXY (CONT'D)

Because you don't know what it was like for me. You made a grown up decision but I was a child. If uncle Nicolas wasn't around then I don't know where I'd be right now.

ARTURO

I called time and time again but you never wanted to talk. I tried.

LEXY

You think a five minute conversation three times a month was going to make up for the fact that you were never there?

ARTURO

I-

LEXY

If there's one thing that moms know how to do is gossip and spread rumors. Mom would never admit it but she couldn't take the pity anymore. Kids in my class would say you left on purpose.

ARTURO

It wasn't like that. I-

LEXY

NO. I gave you time to speak so hear me out. Mom broke down and I had no one, no one. My whole world fell apart when you left. I was so lonely all the time. I had no friends when we moved to our new place. I had to completely change myself just so the kids in my class could like me. What would you have been able to do about it when you were 3,000 miles away?

Arturo begins to cry silently and it's not long before Lexy does to.

ARTURO

I didn't know it would be like this.

LEXY

I missed you every day and I kept waiting for you to come back. The most important years of my childhood went by and you weren't there. You think you can just pop up and make up for all of that?

ARTURO

I'm trying the best I can.

LEXY

I understand why you did it but I... sometimes I wish you would've taken us with you but you didn't and that hurt. You didn't even ask us to go with you.

Arturo takes Lexy's hands in his as they both cry.

ARTURO

How could I ask that from you guys when your life is here. I came here to give my future children, you, a better opportunity than the ones I had in my country. I wanted more for you and look at you now. You're doing so amazing and I know you'll get into such a good school with that brain of yours. I'm not worth more than the future you deserve.

LEXY

You don't get to decide that.

Lexy sobs and Arturo reaches over to hug her.

ARTURO

I'm so sorry I hurt you. I'm sorry I missed so many important moments but I'm here now and I don't want to miss any more of them. I want to be there when you graduate, when you go off to college, I want to meet all the friends you make and bring up embarrassing stories about you as a kid.

Lexy laughs through her tears.

LEXY

God, please don't do that.

ARTURO

I just want to be a part of your life again.

LEXY

I missed you so much, dad.

They hug as they both calm down from their crying.

Alissa, Chris and Jonny look over at them.

Alissa smiles softly at the sight of Lexy and her father.

ALISSA

I'll wait for her to tell me all about it later.

JONNY

You know about her dad?

ALISSA

I know more than you think, asshole.

Alissa leaves, not looking back.

Lexy and her dad are laughing, eyes still red from their drying tears. They get up and leave together, recalling the old days.

Lexy gives the most real smile she's ever given as she gives a small wave goodbye to Jonny.

Denise walks in with Eddie by her side just as Lexy and Arturo leave.

Unlike Jonny, Eddie appears unharmed.

CHRIS

That son of a ...

Chris reaches for Eddie but Jonny holds him back.

Eddie backs away, barely dodging Chris' hands.

JONNY

Chris, I told you to chill and forget about it.

Eddie looks ashamed as he takes in the bruises on Jonny's face.

EDDIE

I'm so sorry Jonny....

CHRIS

You're about to be sorry when I-

Denise slaps Chris.

DENISE

We are not doing this right now, ok?

All the boys look stunned.

CHRIS

You're a feather hitting a rock.

DENISE

Shut up.

CHRIS

Or you'll hit me with your baby hands?

Denise turns to Jonny.

DENISE

Does he know? Did you tell him?

JONNY

What are you talking abo-

DENISE

Don't bullshit me Jonny. Eddie told me everything when he was drunk out of his mind that night. Where you even planning to tell us about what's been going on?

Jonny scowls at Eddie.

EDDIE

I didn't mean to tell her. I was so drunk and angry and I kept babbling off.

Jonny lets go of Chris and runs his hands through his hair.

CHRIS

What is she talking about? And what does Eddie know that I don't.

Eddie sees this as his escape and he quickly leaves them alone to argue.

DENISE

Do you want to tell him or should I because apparently finding out from someone else is the only way.

JONNY

Denise, please, I can't deal with this right now.

CHRIS

Can someone please tell me what's going on?

DENISE

Are you even planning to go to college?

CHRIS

Whoa, whoa, whoa, what?!

JONNY

Denise this isn't the time-

DENISE

Jonny's been worried he can't pay for college because he's illegal.

CHRIS

Huh?

Jonny sighs.

JONNY

I didn't want to say anything until I understood what I'm going through. And... I didn't know how you guys would take it. I didn't want you guys to look at me differently.

CHRIS

Illegal? As in like "alien"?

JONNY

Oh, fuck off Chris. Even I know that term is fucked up.

CHRIS

I'm trying to process what's going on right now.

DENISE

Your everyday life.

Chris snaps at Denise.

CHRIS

Sorry that I'm reacting the way anyone would if they just heard their best friend is illegal and shit.

DENISE

How do you think I feel??

Chris snaps to Jonny.

CHRIS

And you've been keeping this from us?

JONNY

I'm barely dealing it with it myself and it's not like I've known for that long.

CHRIS

How did you not know?

JONNY

I just didn't, I never had to until now.

Chris looks hurt.

CHRIS

You can't be...

JONNY

I don't know how else to put but I am, Chris.

CHRIS

(hurt)

How could you tell that loser but not me? We're your best friends, Jonny.

JONNY

That's why. You're calling Eddie a loser but why? Why did we ever start calling him that? Because he was different from us? What if you knew I was different too back then? Would we even be friends?

CHRIS

You're nothing like Eddie.

JONNY

(exasperated)

That's not the point. I didn't want to tell you guys because I was scared. I'm still scared.

DENISE

We would never switch up on you just because of what's going on now, you should know this already. We love you for who you are not from where you came from.

CHRIS

I don't care if you're illegal or American or whatever. You belong here and no one can change my mind about that. You're you and that's all that matters.

DENISE

Chris is right for once. We're here for you whether you like it or not.

CHRIS

For once? I'm not dumb.

DENISE

(rolling her eyes)

Yeah, ok.

Jonny looks emotional but he laughs.

JONNY

I have to agree, I think that's the deepest thing I've ever heard you say.

CHRIS

I was trying to be a friend but screw you. Good luck trying to find a better friend than me.

Jonny puts his arms around Chris and Denise.

JONNY

I love you guys, I mean it.

Denise tears up.

DENISE

I hate you guys. I feel like a stressed out mom.

CHRIS

Man, is the rest of life going to be this emotional?

JONNY

It better not. I'm already a mess with all this shit I have to figure out.

DENISE

(seriously)

Are you going to college?

JONNY

I... I'm working on it but yeah. It was never an option not to go. I'm gunna do everything I can.

DENISE

Good because I'll actually kill you if you give up on yourself.

JONNY

I've been talking to Ms. Cruz about it and she's doing research with me, it's not over yet and I don't plan to give up that easily. I'm not gunna lie those hits Eddie threw was an eye opener.

CHRIS

I'll still get him back for that but
(Chris and Denise pull Jonny
into a group hug)

This is good enough for now.

Lights fade.

ACT 2 SCENE 5

THE RESTAURANT IS DECORATED WITH GRADUATION BALLOONS AND THERE'S CONFETTI ON THE FLOOR. DENISE, JONNY, EDDIE, CHRIS, LEXY, ALISSA, AND A COUPLE OTHERS ARE DRESSED IN THEIR GRADUATION GOWNS. JONNY WEARS HIS VALEDICTORIAN SASH PROUDLY. THEY'RE ALL TALKING , CELEBRATING THEIR DAY. ARTURO AND NICOLAS ARE LAUGHING AND TALKING.

DENISE

I can't believe it's all over.

CHRIS

God, I can't wait to party all summer.

JONNY

We got two months of sweet freedom before it's back to papers and no sleep.

EDDIE

Says who? We have work all summer.

JONNY

I have weekends off so best believe I'm taking advantage of that.

DENISE

Count me in on that.

They laugh.

Jonny looks over at Lexy who's taking pictures with Alissa.

JONNY

I'll be right back.

He walks over to them.

Alissa spots him first and walks away to let them talk.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Hey...

Lexy looks up at him.

LEXY

Hey.

JONNY

I heard you finally got that letter from NYU.

LEXY

Yeah, but I'm not going.

JONNY

I thought it was your "dream school".

LEXY

It thought it was but I think it's time to move on from New York.

JONNY

So where are you going?

LEXY

Berkeley. My dad really misses the sun and honestly I'm not a fan of winters here so it seemed like the best choice. I saw pictures of our new place and everything. What about you?

JONNY

USC, Chris is so hyped we're going to the same school. He's a party animal in Manhattan so I can't even imagine the trouble he'll get us into somewhere where it's always summer.

LEXY

Seems like I'll see you around then.

JONNY

Yeah, I guess so.

Jonny walks away.

Lexy grabs his arm.

LEXY

Wait.

JONNY

What is it?

LEXY

Thank you, for making me realize a lot of things about myself.

JONNY

I'll see you around Lexy.

Jonny walks back to his waiting friends.

Chris slips a bottle of champagne out of his gown.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Why am I not surprised?

Eddie shakes his head.

EDDIE

We should've seen this coming.

CHRIS

Don't front like you're not going to drink any of this.
Someone pass me cups.

Denise returns with cups.

Lexy and Alissa walk over to join them.

LEXY

You're lucky my uncle is being so cool about this.

Chris pops the bottle open.

He pours everyone a cup.

He raises the bottle.

CHRIS

Now I think we all deserve yet another speech from our
valedictorian over here.

*Everyone claps and whistles at Jonny who appears
embarrassed.*

JONNY

Last time, I'll keep it brief.

*(he raises his glass and so
does everyone else)*

High school has been a lot of things for all of us but to if
I could leave with just saying one thing it's fuck you. Fuck
high school because god damn we made it and we're going to
college.

Everyone cheers.

Lights fade.