

ANTHONY

Written by

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TITLE CARD: JUST A WEDNESDAY

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

ANTHONY - a 33 year-old Black male with a shaved head and goatee, athletic build - leans back from a monitor. On screen is a very cool poster design for an upcoming movie. JOHN, 40s but in decent shape, claps Anthony on the shoulder and looks at his graphic.

JOHN

Great work as always, Anthony. I'm liking what you've done here.

ANTHONY

Thanks, John. I tried a few different angles, but I think this one is what's gonna "Wow" the client.

Anthony leans over to his computer and clicks the mouse a few times, then turns back to John.

JOHN

Wow, indeed, Anthony. Listen, we're doing Happy Hour over at the Tav-

Anthony cuts him off abruptly.

ANTHONY

Oh man, what time is it?

JOHN

It's 4:45, so Happy Hour doesn't start for -

Anthony leaps out of his seat, turning off his table light and shutting down his computer.

ANTHONY

DAMN! Gonna be late! Lost track of time!! John, I gotta go! Have a great night!

JOHN

All right, Anthony-

Anthony pats John on the shoulder as he grabs his jacket and heads straight out the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)

...later.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Anthony's 4 door sedan battles the gridlocked traffic. Snails move faster than this traffic.

INT. ANTHONY'S SEDAN - AFTERNOON

Anthony taps on the steering wheel anxiously. He looks at the clock in the dashboard - 5:30 - and exhales. He looks out the window at the traffic and sees the reason for the traffic jam - a family of geese started to cross the highway but stopped moving. Anthony rolls his eyes. The lead goose seems to give Anthony a distinct "F You" stare. Anthony glares back.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD, MRS. RICHTER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Anthony's sedan pulls into a driveway of a comfortable home, warm and inviting and in a lovely neighborhood. The front door opens as Anthony opens his car door. MRS. RICHTER, 50s and matronly, stands in the house's doorway.

ANTHONY

Sorry I'm late Mrs. Richter, work ran-

Mrs. Richter raises her hand to stop him. She smiles and steps onto the doorstep.

MRS. RICHTER

I keep telling you not to worry about it. I know it's tough, and I'm not going to kick them out on the street if you don't get here exactly at 6-

Two small boys, XANDER (5) and ASHTON (3), push past her, cutting her off.

BOYS

(in unison) Daddy!!

Anthony leans down to meet them. He scoops them up and hugs them tight.

ANTHONY

Xander! Ashton! How was your day?

XANDER

Good! Today we learned about telling time, and we read a story about firefighters!

ASHTON

I had a good day too, Daddy!

Anthony smiles and rubs them both on the head. He leads them toward the car. Mrs. Richter follows, carrying their backpacks.

ANTHONY

Thanks, Mrs. Richter. We'll see you in the morning.

Anthony secures each boy in his own car seat - previously unnoticed in the back seat - and closes the door behind them. Mrs. Richter hands over the bags.

MRS. RICHTER

You're doing a good job with those boys. I know it's been tough, but you keep hanging in there, ok? How long's it been? A year?

Anthony musters a smile and nods.

MRS. RICHTER (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Well, it gets easier with time. You just keep going strong. I know Renee's smiling down on you all every day.

ANTHONY

Thanks, Mrs. Richter. See you tomorrow.

Anthony gets in the car and starts the engine.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Anthony stands at the stove stirring pasta in one pot and sauce in another while talking on his cell phone. In the living room, the boys play with their race cars and watch TV.

ANTHONY (ON PHONE)  
Calm down. It's gonna be ok. Just  
tell me what happened.

CUT TO:

INT. POSH APARTMENT - EVENING

A beautiful woman - JACQUELINE (32) - sits on an immaculate white couch. She's wearing a terrycloth robe and her long hair is pinned up in a bun. Even though her makeup's running, it's clear she'd stop traffic.

JACQUELINE  
I think he's gone. I found a...  
(sobs) ...a thong that wasn't mine,  
and when I confronted him he just  
screamed at me and left. It's over,  
I just know it. What am I going to  
do?

Jacqueline stands and paces the well decorated apartment. She leans against a wall and slides down it into a sitting position and cries.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
It's gonna be all right. (A beat.)  
OK...look, I'll make some  
arrangements for the boys and I'll  
come over so we can talk.

Jacqueline smiles through her tears.

JACQUELINE  
You're the best Anthony. Thank you.

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - KIDS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boys are in their pajamas sitting on their beds. Anthony sits on Xander's bed.

ANTHONY  
OK, bedtime.

Both boys climb into their beds.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Good night, boys. Daddy loves you.

Anthony turns out the light and starts for the door.

XANDER  
Daddy, I miss Mommy.

A beat. Anthony exhales, feeling the words Xander spoke.

ANTHONY  
Me too, kiddo. But you know, she  
loved you more than anyone or  
anything in this world. She'd be so  
proud of you guys.

Xander snuggles under the covers and smiles.

XANDER  
Daddy, I love you.

ANTHONY  
Love you too. Pleasant dreams  
kiddo.

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anthony opens the door to his home. Mrs. Richter enters and takes off her coat as Anthony puts on his.

ANTHONY  
Thanks again for coming. My friend  
is going through some-

Mrs. Richter holds up her hand to stop him.

MRS. RICHTER  
Go do what you need to do. I'll be  
here when you get back.

She smiles. Anthony hugs her quickly and heads out into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. POSH APARTMENT - NIGHT

Anthony sits on the couch as Jacqueline lays her head on his chest, sobbing. He puts his arm around her.

ANTHONY  
This is probably for the best, you  
know? You've been talking about  
breaking up with him for months  
now.

Jacqueline sobs into Anthony's chest. She looks up into his eyes. On Anthony's shirt is a massive makeup stain where she'd buried her face.

JACQUELINE

I guess. I just...I just love him,  
that's all. But you're right, he's  
just an asshole and I just know  
he's cheated on me and it... really...  
sucks...

Jacqueline breaks down and cries again. Anthony comforts her in his embrace.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

Why couldn't he... be more like ...you?

Anthony strokes her hair out of her face. She lowers her head and leans back against him, settling down.

CUT TO:

INT. POSH APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jacqueline's head lays on Anthony's lap. She's calm and content watching "Real Housewives of Baltimore" on television. Anthony calms her by gently stroking her forehead. Things seem good - too good - when Jacqueline's cell phone rings to the tune of Notorious B.I.G.'s "Big Poppa". She jerks upright.

JACQUELINE

It's him.

Jacqueline stands, nervously looking at the phone. Anthony grabs her hand and looks into her eyes.

ANTHONY

Tell him. Stand up for yourself.  
You're better than how he treats  
you, and any good man can see that.

The phone ringtone continues.

JACQUELINE

Right. Thanks. You're the best.

Anthony steps into the adjacent kitchen where he can still see her and hear her side of the conversation.

JACQUELINE (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)

WHAT?

Anthony smiles and gives her a thumbs up. She nods back.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 No. That's not going to work this  
 time. You can't just sweet talk me  
 and you can't treat me like I don't-

Jacqueline stops in midsentence to listen. She opens her mouth to speak but says nothing for a few seconds.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)  
 But that's bull- (A beat.) Yes,  
 but...

Anthony - from his vantage point - shakes his head in disgust. He already sees where this is going. He gestures wildly - swinging his arms in a fighting motion - for her to give him hell. She turns away from him.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)  
 Fine... fine. Just for a little while  
 - and only to talk.

Anthony facepalms in defeat. Jacqueline ends the call and walks to him.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)  
 Anthony, I -

ANTHONY  
 I hope you know what you're doing.  
 This is a spectacularly bad idea,  
 but if that's what's gonna make you  
 happy, who am I to stop you?

Jacqueline hugs him.

JACQUELINE  
 You're the best, Anthony. Thank you  
 for being such a good friend.

She walks him to the door and opens it, then notices Anthony's shirt - a messy wet stain of tears and makeup.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)  
 Oh, look at that mess I made. Can I  
 get you a towel or something?

Anthony shakes his head negatively.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 OK. Thanks again. Give those babies  
 a kiss from me?

Before Anthony can respond, she closes the door in his face. Anthony glares at the stain on his shirt and shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. Richter lies asleep on the couch in front of the TV. Anthony gently wakes her.

MRS. RICHTER

Oh, Anthony, I didn't hear you come in. Is everyth--- dear god what is that on your shirt?

Anthony sighs.

ANTHONY

Let's just say that I was... an emotional tampon.

Mrs. Richter grimaces at the metaphor.

MRS. RICHTER

That's quite the image, Anthony, but I guess it does put things in perspective. Are YOU all right?

Anthony nods as Mrs. Richter puts on her coat.

MRS. RICHTER (CONT'D)

Well, hopefully you'll find someone who will do for you what you do for them.

Mrs. Richter opens the door and looks back at Anthony.

ANTHONY

Thank you, Mrs. Richter. I owe you-

MRS. RICHTER

No, it's my pleasure. You just keep doing right by those boys. That's enough for me.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anthony sits on his bed leaning over his laptop. MatchUp.com is open but he's not seeing anyone he likes.

He closes the window and opens up his Facespace.com page. He's got a message from RAYMOND.

ANTHONY (IN A BAD ENGLISH ACCENT)  
'Ello, what's this then?

He reads.

RAYMOND (V.O.)  
"Hey man, been a minute since we got together. We gotta get a few rounds in soon! By the way, not trying to play matchmaker or anything, but I've got this lady friend I think you should meet. I think you two might hit it off. She's got a kid, about the same age as your oldest. I know you haven't dated since Renee passed, so at least you'll be able to get out. Let me know and I'll hook it up."

Anthony exhales and runs his hand across his clean shaven head. He looks around the room considering.

ANTHONY  
(sarcastic) Because I cleaaaaarly have sooooo many options right now.

Anthony types a response.

FADE TO:

TITLE CARD: SWEET THURSDAY

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Anthony stands in the doorway as the boys put their bags down. Mrs. Richter smiles at the boys as they walk past to other kids from the neighborhood that Mrs. Richter takes to school.

ANTHONY  
Have a great day at school boys.  
Daddy's got something to do after work so Grandma will pick you up.

BOYS  
Yayyyy!! Grandma!! Thank you Daddy!

Mrs. Richter smiles, almost knowingly.

MRS. RICHTER

You have a great day today as well,  
Anthony, and hopefully an even  
better night.

Anthony laughs nervously.

ANTHONY

Probably won't be anything to write  
home about, but thanks for the good  
vibes.

TITLE CARD: THAT NIGHT

INT. MING'S MERCILESS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Anthony is waiting patiently at a table for two. He's obviously been waiting for quite a while as the bread basket is almost empty. He reaches for yet another piece of bread when ALLISON (29, very slim and extremely toned) finally arrives.

ALLISON

(in a thick southern accent) Yew  
must be Anthony. Raymond described  
yew perfectly.

Anthony stands and shakes her hand. Their eyes meet and there seems to be a moment.

ANTHONY

Here, let me take your coat.

She turns around and Anthony removes her coat revealing very slender but muscular shoulders and arms. She clearly works out - probably obsessively. She sits as Anthony hangs her coat and joins her.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

So, how do you know Raymond?

ALLISON

(thick southern accent) Oh, Ah used  
to work for him. Ah was his  
assistant. Ah helped him set  
appointments and managed his books  
and helped him with his beels.

ANTHONY

I'm sorry, his what?

ALLISON

Ah helped him pay his beels.  
Telephone beels, light beels,  
insurance beels...

Anthony hides a smirk under his hand.

ANTHONY

Oh, BILLS. Got it. That's a...um,  
interesting accent you've got  
there. Where are you from?

Allison smiles.

ALLISON

Oh, yew noticed that? Ah'm from  
Alabama, but Ah been here for a few  
years now. How'd yew and Raymond  
meet?

ANTHONY

We met a few years back when we  
were pregnant with our second son.  
He was the new youth minister at  
the church we were going to and he  
and his wife came to meet us. We  
kind of hit it off. After someone  
accused him - wrongly, I think - of  
some scandalous behavior, he left  
for another church but we stayed  
friends.

ALLISON

Oh, Ah see. Raymond told me about  
your wife. Ah'm real sorry to hear  
about that. Can you talk about it?

ANTHONY

Yeah, I guess I can. Renee had  
sickle cell, and over time her  
organs started shutting down. We  
were in and out of the hospital  
during the time we were together,  
and then one day...that was it. It  
was shortly after our second son  
was born.

Allison shifts in her seat, then takes a sip of water from  
her glass.

ALLISON

That sounds really tough. How old  
are your boys now?

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY

They're 5 and 3. And completely  
crazy. Not their fault though,  
since they get it from me.

They laugh.

ALLISON

Ah know what you mean. My boy is 5  
too. Wild age, ain't it? All the  
questions, thinking they know it  
all...

A beat.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

So who looks after your boys when  
you date?

ANTHONY

Actually...I really don't get to date  
much at all. But to answer your  
question, they're with their  
grandma. I've got a lady in the  
neighborhood who watches them after  
school for me too, so that helps.

ALLISON

Oh that's good, that helps. Mine's  
with his Daddy. We split custody,  
but because of my time in the  
military he's got him most of the  
time.

Anthony considers this as the server approaches with menus.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Anthony walks Allison to her car.

ALLISON

Ah had a wonderful time, thank you.

ANTHONY

Me too. I'd like to see you again.

Allison steps closer and puts her hands on his chest.

ALLISON  
Doesn't have to end right now...

ANTHONY  
Nice as that sounds, I really need  
to get back to the boys. They've  
probably got grandma tied to some  
railroad tracks or something.

They laugh.

ALLISON  
Well, all right, if you're sure.

Anthony leans in tentatively, and they kiss.

ANTHONY  
I hate being responsible sometimes.  
We'll talk soon though.

He opens her car door.

ALLISON  
Good night, Anthony.

He closes her door and watches as she drives away.

FADE TO:

TITLE CARD - 4 MONTHS LATER, LAZY SUNDAY AFTERNOON

EXT. PARK - DAY

Xander, Ashton, and SHAWN (6) run around the park's play area while Anthony and Allison sit together on a park bench. She's leaning against him with his arm around her.

ANTHONY  
I like this.

ALLISON  
What's that?

ANTHONY  
Sitting here, watching our kids,  
just kind of chilling together...it's  
nice. Could get used to it, you  
know?

ALLISON  
Yeah...

Anthony seems contented as Allison looks away toward the sky. The boys continue to run and scream, clearly having the time of their lives.

TITLE CARD - 5 MONTHS LATER, EVERYTHING'S TUESDAY

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Anthony and RAYMOND (36, Black with long locks and a very solid build) sit on the couch playing an old school fighting game, Marvel vs. Capcom. The boys are playing with their action figures on the floor.

ANTHONY

So.

Raymond mashes the buttons on the controller.

RAYMOND

So?

ANTHONY

How're things with the wife?

Raymond shifts in his seat.

RAYMOND

Cool, cool. We're working things out, you know. She's always suspicious that something's going on with me and other women, but you know, it's whatever.

Anthony lands a devastating combo on Raymond's character.

ANTHONY

Well, it's not like she doesn't have good reason, you know? You've told me many of your...adventures. I really think you need to give that up.

Raymond scoffs.

RAYMOND

It's cool, man. She doesn't know what I've done and I'm turning over a new leaf. I swear.

A beat.

RAYMOND (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
So.

ANTHONY  
So?

RAYMOND  
How are things with Allison?

Anthony lands a crushing blow to Raymond's character on the game.

ANTHONY  
Fine, I guess. She seems a bit...distant, lately. Not sure why.

The button mashing continues as more battle sounds emanate from the speakers. The characters scream their battle cries as each performs his signature move.

RAYMOND  
She hasn't said anything to you?

ANTHONY  
No. It's been all, 'I'm fine, I'm just tired,' and 'I just don't feel like it,' and 'I'm PMSing.' But how can you be PMSing 22 days of the month?

RAYMOND  
Hmm. That's weird. Not sure what to tell you, man. I wouldn't worry about it too much. She's probably just having some issues or something.

Raymond smirks as he mashes the buttons furiously.

RAYMOND (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Heh, maybe she's got a side dude...

KO! Raymond's character manages to knock out Anthony's. Anthony looks over at Raymond, who is reveling in his victory.

RAYMOND (CONT'D)  
Yeah, it's the Juggernaut, bitch!

ANTHONY  
Man of the cloth, my ass.

Anthony looks to Raymond who's doing a celebratory dance in his seat.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You think she's got another dude?  
Really?

RAYMOND

Huh? Naw, bro, I'm sure it's all  
good. Probably just like she said,  
you know. Don't be paranoid. I'm  
sure she's just, like, worn out.

Raymond laughs. Anthony tries to cheer up but he gets a sudden chill down his spine.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anthony stands in his room. He looks at his cell then paces around the bed before finally picking it up and calling -

INT. ALLISON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Allison - laying on her bed - looks at the vibrating phone and sighs.

ALLISON

Anthony...

She rolls over to get it, but her hand is stopped by -

RAYMOND

He can wait. I can't.

Raymond smiles slyly and climbs on top of Allison. They kiss.

ALLISON

Oooh, Ah love it when yew take  
charge, big Daddeh...

Raymond kisses her passionately. His cell rings. He pulls it from his pocket and looks at the display.

RAYMOND

It's the wife... (sighs) I'll call  
her back in the morning. Far as she  
knows, I'm fast asleep. That's how  
I do on my "business trips". After  
all, I work soooo hard...

Allison runs her finger up his chest and smiles slyly.

ALLISON  
Mmm, I want you to work hard  
tonight...

They kiss as we -

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anthony stares at his phone. Allison's number rings and rings and finally goes to voicemail. He tries again, and this time it goes directly to voicemail. He texts her.

ANTHONY  
Where ARE you?

Anthony finally decides to go to sleep.

TITLE CARD: RESOLUTION WEDNESDAY

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MIDDAY

Anthony is working at his computer when his cell phone rings. He looks at the display and sees Allison's name. He answers anxiously.

ANTHONY  
Hello?

ALLISON (O.S.)  
Hey.

Anthony leans back in his chair.

ANTHONY  
Hey...everything ok? I was worried  
about you last night.

INT. ALLISON'S CAR (IN MOTION) - MIDDAY

Allison drives through a shopping district. Her son, Shawn, plays quietly in the back seat. She adjusts her sunglasses in the rearview mirror.

ALLISON  
Ah'm fine. Just...had something else  
to do, that's all.

A beat.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
 Something else, huh? Is there  
 something I should know?

ALLISON  
 Like?

Another beat.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
 Like...you've been acting strangely.  
 Distant. Is there...someone else?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - MIDDAY

The pause seems infinite. Anthony already knows the answer just from that lengthy silence.

ALLISON (O.S.)  
 (sighs) Yes. A few weeks, now.

Anthony slumps down in his chair.

ANTHONY  
 Why? Who? What the hell?!

Suddenly something clicks. Anthony hears Raymond's voice in his head.

RAYMOND (V.O.)  
 Maybe she's got some other dude on  
 the side...I'm sure she's just, like,  
 worn out...

Anthony hears Raymond's laughter as it ultimately hits home.

ANTHONY  
 ...It's Raymond, isn't it?

INT. ALLISON'S CAR - MIDDAY

Allison sighs heavily. Behind her, Shawn plays with a toy.

ALLISON  
 Ah'm sorry Anthony. Ah...didn't want  
 you to get hurt. It just sort  
 of...happened. And then we liked it.  
 And then it happened again. And  
 again. And-

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
OK. OK. I get it.

ALLISON  
Ah just... Ah just needed some excitement. We were cool in the beginning, yew and me, but yew went and got all serious. Ah'm just not ready for family life. (ASIDE)  
SHAWN! Stop squirming in your seat and be quiet!

INT. OFFICE - MIDDAY

Anthony exhales and pushes in his chair. He's hurt but says nothing. The silence is deafening.

ALLISON (O.S.)  
Say somethin'. Anythang. Call me a bitch, tell me to go eff myself, say somethin'.

ANTHONY  
No.

Anthony ends the call. He immediately goes into his contacts and deletes her name and number, and then calls-

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Raymond.

INT. GYM - MIDDAY

Raymond - drenched in sweat and sitting on one of the exercise machines - holds up the phone. A pair of attractive women walks past. Raymond grins at them and they smile and giggle in return.

RAYMOND  
Ant! Man, you should be here to see the ladies in this gym! What's up, man?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - MIDDAY

ANTHONY  
Yeah. Got a question for you. You know I'm really feeling Allison but I gotta ask you something.

A beat.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Have you guys ever...had a thing?

RAYMOND (O.S.)  
Huh?

ANTHONY  
You know, you guys ever been more  
than friends? Slept together?  
Anything like that?

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - MIDDAY

For a split second Raymond is a deer in the headlights, but he regains his cool.

RAYMOND  
Naw, man. We're just cool.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
Really?

RAYMOND  
Yeah man, nothing going on there.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
You wouldn't lie to me, would you?

RAYMOND  
No way, man, we're too cool for  
that.

Raymond paces the gym floor, then grabs his bag and heads for the door. He pauses before he exits.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
I see. And you're sure you NEVER  
did anything with her? Ever?

RAYMOND  
I said I didn't, didn't I? No, we  
never did anything. We're just  
cool, all right?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - MIDDAY

Anthony stares ahead in disbelief, his jaw slack and his eyes wide.

ANTHONY  
Ok. Thanks. Later.

He ends the call and collapses in his seat. He leans back in his chair and spins around a few times, coming to a stop in front of his table. His hand clenches into a fist and his eye twitches. Seconds later, his phone vibrates. No surprise, it's Raymond.

ANTHONY (SARCASTICALLY HAPPY) (CONT'D)  
Helloooo, Raymond.

Anthony sits up in his seat. His face is grim.

RAYMOND (O.S.)  
So, yeah. I...just got off the phone with Allison and, it looks like I...well, I lied to you.

Anthony SNAPS. He SPRINGS out of his seat, his hand nearly crushing the phone in his grip.

ANTHONY  
YOU'RE GODDAMN RIGHT YOU LIED TO ME  
MUTHERFUCKER! FIVE TIMES! AT LEAST  
SHE HAD THE DECENCY TO BE HONEST  
ABOUT FUCKING AROUND ON ME. FUCK  
YOU!

RAYMOND (O.S.)  
I'm...yeah...that was fucked up. I  
understand why you're mad, man, and  
I'm sorry-

Anthony exhales sharply.

ANTHONY  
You're damn right you're sorry.  
You're SUPPOSED to be my boy! How  
long we known each other? How many  
times I've covered for your ass  
with your WIFE? Do you know how  
much DIRT I have on you? You got  
some fuckin' nerve, man.

RAYMOND  
Dude, man, I'm really sorry. I  
couldn't help myself. It just  
happened and...

Anthony's demeanor changes to ice cold. There's an edge in his voice that would freeze a polar bear. He cuts Raymond off.

ANTHONY

You're lucky you're not in front of me right now because I would beat you senseless. I don't give a fuck how big you are, or how strong you are, pray you don't run into me again, MINISTER.

He ends the call, seething. Outside of his office, a small crowd of coworkers stares in horrified disbelief. Anthony senses the eyes on his back and turns to face them.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

WHAT?

The crowd quickly disperses as we-

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 3 (LONG) MONTHS LATER, WEDNESDAY JAM

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Anthony arrives to pick up the boys. Mrs. Richter helps them put on their bookbags and gives them the macaroni crafts they made.

MRS. RICHTER

The boys are a joy as always, Anthony.

ANTHONY

Thank you Mrs. Richter. I hope you know how much I appreciate what you're doing for us. I couldn't do this without you.

Mrs. Richter smiles and puts her hand on Anthony's shoulder.

MRS. RICHTER

I know you do, Anthony. Can I ask you something, you know, personal?

ANTHONY

Sure.

MRS. RICHTER

Have you dated since...you know?

Anthony shifts slightly uncomfortably.

ANTHONY

No...Haven't met anyone else yet, I guess.

MRS. RICHTER

Well, you should be. I can't imagine it'd be that hard for you. You've got so much going for you.

Anthony smiles shyly, then leads the boys to the door.

MRS. RICHTER (CONT'D)

I just like to see good people happy, that's all. Especially ones that are trying to do the right thing.

ANTHONY

Thank you, Mrs. Richter. We'll see you tomorrow.

TITLE CARD: MR. FRIDAY NIGHT

INT. OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Anthony sits in a meeting with several other employees. He's completely uninterested in what's being said. Instead, he draws intricate cartoons on the pad where he should be taking notes.

JOHN

...and that means our profit shares will increase threefold in the next two years if the trends continue in the current direction. Any questions?

Anthony's phone vibrates - A text from THOMAS (29, Anthony's cousin and close friend): "OMFG. Lost job thanks to downsizing. Any suggestions are appreciated. WTF!!" Anthony looks up at John.

ANTHONY

Well...with this increase in business, will that mean more new hires?

John nods emphatically.

JOHN

Actually yes, we're going to be interviewing today for some new account managers in a few of our other divisions.

Anthony smiles and begins texting Thomas.

INT. OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

THOMAS (29, slim and athletic black male, with a charming personality) enters dressed for an interview and carrying a briefcase. John and Anthony stand and shake his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Thomas and Anthony are sitting at the bar. The bartender places their drinks - a Jack Daniels and Coke, and a Rum and Coke respectively - in front of them.

THOMAS

To the best cousin on the planet!

They clink glasses.

ANTHONY

My pleasure, man. It just worked out. Divine Intervention and all that, I guess.

THOMAS

Seriously though, when I sent you that text, it was more out of, like, agitation. I mean, they fired me for doing TOO good of a job? You ever heard any shit like that before?

Anthony sips his drink and shakes his head negatively.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I mean, really, I was supposed to be off today. They called me in to help train a new guy. So I get into work and AFTER I train the guy, they said, 'You've done excellent work, and we're grateful for all you've done. We're downsizing upper management positions, so this is your last day. Thanks.' What?

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Like that song says, 'Where they do that at?'

ANTHONY

That's some bullshit. (snickers)  
You sound like Craig from "Friday".  
'How you gonna get fired...on your day off?' Oh shit, and it IS Friday, too!

Anthony laughs as Thomas sips his drink and looks around the room.

THOMAS

That ain't funny. (laughs) Alright, it is, but only because you saved my ass. Great looking out. I'll do you proud, I promise. The only thing that'd be even better is finding a lovely lady to hang out with...

Anthony downs the rest of his drink. He looks around the room, unimpressed.

ANTHONY

You know, I've never really gotten the hang of picking up someone in a bar. I mean, if they're here, they're probably going home with *someone*. If it's not me, it's some other random dude. Seriously, what's the quality of girls that get picked up in bars?

Thomas stares at Anthony.

THOMAS

You realize that YOU'RE here, right? You're allegedly a decent guy, right? And you're here. In a bar. You never know who's in a bar or why, and you never know when an opportunity's gonna present itself. Don't be such a narrow-minded, self-righteous dick, bro.

Anthony is shocked. He realizes his cousin is absolutely right, smirks and claps Thomas on his shoulder.

ANTHONY

Damn. You're right. I apologize. Old head thinking, I guess.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

When did you grow up and get all mature and shit? (a beat) Be right back, gotta check on the boys.

He pulls out his cell phone as he walks to a quieter section of the bar and calls the boys' grandmother.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hi. How's it going?

INT. GRANDMA HOPE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The boys are mixing cake batter - messily - as GRANDMA HOPE (58, matronly with a very kind face) talks on her phone to Anthony.

GRANDMA HOPE

It's going good. The little ones are helping me bake a cake. They're having a blast, trust me.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

OK, Hope. Thanks for keeping them for me tonight.

The boys start tasting the batter. Of course they LOVE it.

GRANDMA HOPE

Oh! Oh dear, I've got to stop them before they eat all the batter! See you tomorrow, ok! (to the boys) That's enough, boys! Save some for the cake!

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Anthony puts his phone in his pocket. He returns to Thomas to find him surrounded by three girls - CHRISTINA (26, dark skinned and statuesque), ROCHELLE (27, beautiful face, heavy set build) and DANIELLE (27, half Asian, half black, all thick).

ANTHONY

(to himself) Amazing.

THOMAS

Hey, there he is. This is Anthony, best guy you'll ever meet. This is Danielle, Rochelle, and Christina.

Danielle and Rochelle smile. Christina has clearly taken an interest in Thomas and barely acknowledges Anthony. Thomas is taken by her as well - as though the rest of the world has ceased to exist. Rochelle opens her mouth to speak when a large man built like a linebacker approaches her. They go into their own conversation.

DANIELLE

And then there were two...

Anthony laughs. They both sit facing each other at the bar.

ANTHONY

Indeed. So...what do you do?

Danielle continues to sip her drink - a Buttery Nipple - and gestures for another from the bartender.

DANIELLE

I'm a legal aide. Just moved here a few months ago to start this new job. Left all my family and friends back home in Indiana. I'm still meeting people, but it's been great. Definitely like the atmosphere though, y'know?

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY

I do. It's a great city. I'm impressed that you came here without knowing anyone. That's a gutsy move.

Danielle downs her first drink, then starts in on the second. She motions for the bartender to cue up another.

DANIELLE

Oh yeah, I mean, I did know my boyfriend. We moved in together. But, you know, you can never know too many people. Never know when you're gonna need a friend or a shoulder to cry on or something.

Anthony stares blankly.

TITLE CARD: 30 MINUTES LATER

Danielle's gotten progressively drunker but won't stop talking.

Anthony - bored - looks over at Thomas and Christina, now engaged in an intense conversation as though they've found the only other person in the world who understands.

ANTHONY

Of course.

Seeing that, though, he can't help but smirk as Danielle tries to get his attention back on her.

TITLE CARD: 2 EXCRUTIATING HOURS LATER

Thomas and Christina are off in a corner chatting as though no one else exists. Clearly it's love at first sight. Danielle continues to talk AT Anthony - who's doing the absolute minimum to stay politely invested in the conversation.

DANIELLE

I wish my boyfriend was as good of a listener as you. That reminds me, I need to call his ass to come get me. I'm soooo crunk right now...  
(giggles) Cruuuunk. Crazy plush druuuunk. (belches) 'Scuse me.  
(giggles)

Anthony rolls his eyes. Thomas and Christina finally return - holding hands as though they've known each other for years. As Danielle passes, Christina whispers something in Danielle's ear. Danielle giggles. Thomas leans over to Anthony.

THOMAS

So yeah...we're gonna get out of here. Go grab some breakfast and talk in a more personal environment, y'know? You kids gonna be OK on your own?

ANTHONY

Oh, we'll be fine. Her live-in boyfriend's coming to pick her up in a bit.

THOMAS

Aww, shit man. Sorry. You want me to stick around? I can send Christine on home if you need me to-

ANTHONY

No, go on. You two crazy kids have a good night. I'll holla at ya on Monday.

Thomas smiles broadly and gives Anthony dap and a man-hug.

THOMAS

Thanks. I was hoping you'd say that. I don't know why, but I've got a good feeling about this one.

ANTHONY

I can tell...get going.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Anthony leaves the bar. Behind him, Danielle stumbles into her BOYFRIEND'S (30s, white, average build, great hair) arms, then pukes as he tries to load her into his car. He manages to step aside just in time. Anthony can hear the exchange as he walks away.

DANIELLE

You got ta lisshen more!! I lisshen to you...sometimes. I...oh god...gon' be sick again. Damn you, Patronnnnnn!

She holds her hands up to the sky in defiant anger of the tequila gods, and then throws up on her boyfriend's shoes. The audible splatter makes Anthony cringe.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

I loves ya dough, even if you don' lisshen ta me... ya take good care of me.

BOYFRIEND

I love your crazy drunk ass too. Let's go. Try not to puke on the upholstery.

DANIELLE

Cruuuuunnnk.

Anthony rounds the corner, leaving them to their drama.

INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anthony sits at his laptop. He's reviewing his list of "Potential Matches" on MatchUp.com. He scrolls through the list when there's a very soft, very small knock on his door.

ANTHONY

Come in.

Anthony closes his laptop as Ashton comes in, rubbing his eyes.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hey buddy, what's the matter?

ASHTON

I had a bad dream, Daddy. I dreamed that there was a big lion and he roared at me. It was scary.

Anthony hugs Ashton and picks him up.

INT. BOYS ROOM - SECONDS LATER

He carries Ashton back to bed and lays him down. He covers Ashton up with his covers.

ANTHONY

One sec, ok?

Anthony leaves the room and returns with something behind his back

ASHTON

What's that Daddy?

Anthony produces a spray bottle from behind his back.

ANTHONY

This is my super-secret Anti-Bad-Dream Spray. One spray of this makes all the scary dreams go bye bye.

Anthony holds it up so Ashton can see it. Mercifully, Ashton can't read or he'd see that it says "Febreeze" on the front. Anthony sprays it into the room.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

There you go, kiddo. Now there won't be any more bad dreams. Get some sleep buddy, it's late.

Anthony kisses Ashton on the forehead as he snuggles in and happily goes to sleep.

TITLE CARD: WEDNESDAY MAYDAY

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Anthony is helping the boys get their belongings together when Mrs. Richter's phone rings. She steps out of the room to answer it.

XANDER

So Daddy, I was good all day today.  
I did so good that they let me lead  
the line to lunch and I got an  
extra ice cream sandwich!

Anthony zips up Xander's coat.

ANTHONY

Excellent! Well done, kiddo!

Not to be outdone, Ashton jumps in front of Xander.

ASHTON

I did good too Daddy! I got a  
sticker that says "Good job!"

Anthony zips up Ashton's coat too and opens his mouth to speak when an elated Mrs. Richter returns.

MRS. RICHTER

OK, boys, I had fun with you as  
always! I'll see you tomorrow, and  
guess what?

The boys turn to pay attention.

MRS. RICHTER (CONT'D)

My niece is coming over to visit,  
so we're gonna have an extra person  
to play with! Doesn't that sound  
fun?

The boys cheer. Anthony nods to Mrs. Richter.

ANTHONY

Thanks again, as always. Have a  
great night, and I'm sure the boys  
are gonna have a blast with your  
niece. See you tomorrow.

MRS. RICHTER

Looking forward to it as always,  
Anthony!

TITLE CARD: THURSDAY'S CHILD

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - MIDDAY

Anthony, Thomas, LEROY (36, Black, 6'4, 240 lbs.) and RON (34, Black, Athletic build and impeccably dressed) are seated at the restaurant eating their meal.

RON

So, Leroy, what happened to that chick you were seeing last week? I know she was staying over but-

LEROY

That chick pissed on my floor.

Ron nearly spits his drink out as the others recoil in horror.

ALL

What?!

LEROY

Yeah, man...she was drunk off her ass that night. Seems that she got up during the night to go to the bathroom, got maybe halfway there, said fuck it and pissed right there on the floor. In front of my 65 inch tv.

RON

That's messed up man. That's "crossing the streams" bad.

Leroy takes a huge bite of steak as the others lean in to hear more.

LEROY

(chewing) Yeah, it is. So the next morning, I wake up and find this mysterious puddle on the floor. First, I checked to see if it was the cat.

Anthony laughs, then has a realization.

ANTHONY

Wait, wait...does that mean you did the smell test?

LEROY

Sho'nuff did.

They all laugh hysterically.

THOMAS

Oh that's too funny, I can't see  
your big ass leaning down like,  
SNIFF, SNIFF, nope, that ain't cat  
pee!

More laughter.

LEROY

Yeah, I'm not ready to laugh about  
this yet.

A beat.

LEROY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

So yeah, after I established it  
wasn't the cat, I waited a few  
minutes to calm down. Listened to a  
few songs on YouTube, drank some  
herbal tea, then walked in the room  
and woke her ass up.

Ron and Thomas continue to eat. Anthony sips his coffee with  
a smirk on his face.

LEROY (CONT'D)

So I wake her up, and I'm like,  
'So, I've got some news.' Funny  
thing was, she had no idea. So she  
cozies up to me like we're gonna  
cuddle or something. I stroked her  
hair, leaned in close to her ear,  
and whispered, 'It seems you've had  
an accident.'

The table bursts into laughter - except Leroy, who's deadly  
serious.

LEROY (CONT'D)

She looks around, confused, right?  
And she looks at the covers but  
doesn't see anything. She looks  
under the covers, doesn't see  
anything. I said, the good news is,  
it wasn't in the bed, or you  
would've noticed by now. Then I  
pointed to the puddle in the middle  
of the floor. She looked around,  
then tried to blame it on the cat.

Anthony has a hard time containing his laughter, his eyes  
welling up with tears of hilarity.

LEROY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 I was like, 'Woman, the cat is the  
 size of my Timberland boot. Ain't  
 that much fluid in a cat!'

The table roars with laughter.

THOMAS  
 Well, sorry that didn't work out  
 man. Things are going REALLY well  
 with me and Christine.

LEROY  
 Not that anybody asked you. Damn  
 happy lovey-dovey bastard.

Thomas rolls his eyes.

THOMAS  
 I dunno, man, we just...click. She's  
 different than me. Easy going, fun,  
 you know, whereas I'm really  
 structured-

ANTHONY  
 Anal.

THOMAS  
 Tomato, toe-mah-toe. Point is,  
 we're different, but I think that's  
 what makes us work. We appreciate  
 our differences, you know?

Leroy begins a slow clap.

LEROY  
 Thank you, Oprah.

The table laughs.

THOMAS  
 Laugh it up, man, but she might be  
 the one. When you know, you know.  
 Ron, tell them. You've been married  
 for how long?

RON  
 Years. Since high school. And yeah,  
 the differences are what balance us  
 out. Plus, she doesn't take any  
 crap, and neither do I. We respect  
 each other. We also drive each  
 other nuts.

The server approaches with the bill.

ANTHONY  
4 way split?

The others nod and pull out their wallets.

RON  
What about you, Ant? Any luck since  
"She who will not be named"?

ANTHONY  
Nope. Not a drop. I'm in a drought,  
apparently. Plus, it's not like I  
get out that much to find anybody  
either.

The table nods.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
I don't like to pawn the kids off  
on the sitter or their grandma too  
often, you know? Last thing I need  
is for someone to think I was  
shirking my responsibilities.

Leroy nods in agreement.

RON  
Please. You're the LAST person  
anyone would say that about. A lot  
of dudes would've made a run for it  
a long time ago. Dropped off the  
kids at grandma's and went straight  
to the strip club. (a beat) How are  
the boys, anyway?

Anthony leans back with a smile. He pulls out his phone and shows a photo of the boys. They pass it around.

LEROY  
They're getting big, man!

Anthony puts the phone away.

ANTHONY  
Yeah, pretty soon they'll be  
borrowing the car and asking for  
money for dates...Shoot, at this rate  
they'll be dating before I am!

The server returns with receipts, everyone signs and stands to leave.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

All right, gentlemen, it's been a pleasure as always. Next week?

They hug and dap as they say their goodbyes before parting ways.

EXT. MRS. RICHTER'S HOME - EVENING

Anthony pulls up in the driveway. Before he can get to the front door, it opens. Someone new - a WOMAN, (CAROLYN, 30, very attractive, athletic but curvy) leans in the doorway. She smiles as he approaches the front door.

CAROLYN

Hello, you must be Anthony.

Anthony is surprised - albeit pleasantly - and approaches her.

ANTHONY

I am...and you are?

CAROLYN

Carolyn. I'm Mrs. Richter's niece.

Anthony raises his eyebrows and steps back.

ANTHONY

Her niece? I thought...oh man. The way she was talking, it sounded like you would be a small child like my kids...I'm sorry, I-

Carolyn smiles.

CAROLYN

Don't worry about it. To her I'll always be a little girl, even when I am 80. Anyway, the boys are inside. Auntie was in the bathr-  
...um, indisposed and told me to keep an eye out for you.

The boys run to the front door.

BOYS

Daddy! Daddy!

Anthony hugs them as Carolyn looks on with a smile.

ANTHONY

Hey boys, I missed you today. How'd it go?

XANDER

GREAT! We had the BEST time with Miss Carolyn! She is so much fun!

ASHTON

Yeah!! We made cookies!

XANDER

And played games...but then she made us do our homework and stuff.

ANTHONY

Sounds like a great time, guys!

Anthony smiles at Carolyn - now joined by Mrs. Richter, who hands him the boys bags.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Looks like you've got a couple of fans!

MRS. RICHTER

Not surprising. Carolyn's a pediatrician, and she's been helping take care of her nephew down in Florida.

ANTHONY

I see...so, how long are you in town?

CAROLYN

I'm here for at least the next three or four months. I just finished getting my doctorate, so now I'm deciding where to go from here.

Xander pulls on Anthony's arm.

XANDER

Daddy, can we go now? I'm hungry...

Anthony smiles at Carolyn and Mrs. Richter as he starts to help the boys get their belongings.

ANTHONY

It was a pleasure meeting you, Carolyn. Mrs. Richter, I guess we'll see you tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony hits play on Netflix and reclines on the couch. The Netflix sound echoes as his cell vibrates. He grabs it and answers.

ANTHONY

Hello?

LEROY (O.S.)

Yo, yo. (a beat as the music plays)  
Wait. What is that song in the  
background?

Anthony scrambles for the remote to try and turn it down as Ally McBeal's theme song blares from the speakers.

LEROY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Yo! Ally McBeal! I love that show!

Anthony stops scrambling - in disbelief.

ANTHONY

Wait, what?

LEROY (O.S.)

It was good, man. Well written.  
Plus, Lisa Nicole Carson and Lucy  
Liu were hot.

Anthony can't believe that this isn't perceived as less than manly behavior.

ANTHONY

Yeah, I don't get to admit to many  
people that I like this show. I  
mean, really, it's not something  
you say to your homeboys. 'Yo dawg,  
did you see Ally McBeal last night?  
That shit tugged on my  
heartstrings, fam. I'm like, so  
touched cause she can't find a good  
dude and shit.'

They laugh.

LEROY (O.S.)

Right, right...anyway, I was calling because I wanted to see if you felt like coming to this album release party my boy is having this weekend. Lots of single ladies should be there.

Anthony considers for a second.

ANTHONY

If I can swing babysitting, then yeah, why not?

LEROY

Sweet. Lemme know. I'll put you on the list right now, just in case. Enjoy your show, man.

Anthony ends the call and turns the volume back up on the show. On the tv, the dancing baby shakes his money maker.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 10:15 SATURDAY NIGHT

EXT. CLUB RED - NIGHT

Anthony stands outside of Club Red. The music pulses and thumps as 20 and 30somethings all anxiously await entry. Leroy meets Anthony at the door.

ANTHONY

Lemme guess, Thomas is -

RON

Bunned up with Christine, yes. And Ron, of course, is with his better half, which is probably for the best.

They go inside. The club is decorated exactly as the name implies, with red lights trimming the walls and red accents on everything from the glasses to the dancers. Leroy heads into the crowd to mingle with some of the dancers he knows.

ANTHONY

Why am I here again?

Leroy returns with a lady on each arm and a Cheshire Cat sized grin on his face. Anthony salutes him as he heads off into the crowded dance floor.

TITLE CARD: 1 HOUR LATER

Anthony prepares to head out the door when a fight breaks out in the middle of the dance floor. Leroy is at the center of it.

ANTHONY

You've got to be kidding me.

Anthony pushes through the crowd to find a pair of thuggish dudes trying to fight Leroy over the girls he'd been dancing with. Anthony steps in to intervene and POW! One of the girls punches him directly in the eye.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

OW! WHAT THE FU-

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB RED - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Anthony sits on a couch in the back room with a cold beer pressed against his eye. The girl that punched him, DIEDRE (24, short, slender, goth style) is leaning down, tending to him. Leroy opens the door.

LEROY

(to someone outside of the door)  
And tell those punks to stay out!

Leroy turns to Anthony.

LEROY (CONT'D)

How bad is it?

Anthony lowers the beer to show off his shiner.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Oh. Oh man. That...is an improvement.

Anthony smirks as Leroy sits across from him.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way, Anthony, Diedre.  
Diedre, Anthony.

ANTHONY

Charmed, I'm sure.

DIEDRE

Ditto. Really, I'm sorry that  
happened.

(MORE)

DIEDRE (CONT'D)

I thought you were trying to start more trouble and I just reacted.

ANTHONY

I'll definitely stay on your good side. Quite a left hook you've got there.

DIEDRE

What can I say, I'm a southpaw. They never see it coming.

Anthony raises his eyebrow. Leroy's cell vibrates. He steps away to take the call.

ANTHONY

Boxing fan?

DIEDRE

Born and raised. Not just a fan, either, I'm ranked 2nd in the region.

ANTHONY

I'm impressed.

Diedre curtseys in a very ladylike and refined fashion.

DIEDRE

Thank you, thank you. My fiancé thinks I could be number one if I'd start being more brutal with my opponents instead of trying to be sporting. She's right, of course.

ANTHONY

Fiancé. Brutal. Right.

Leroy returns from his call.

LEROY

Hey Ant, listen, I'm about to roll out. If you want to stick around, I can catch up with you tomorrow.

Anthony stands.

ANTHONY

No, I should get going. Diedre, a pleasure. Kick plenty of ass in the foreseeable future.

Diedre salutes him as Leroy and Anthony make their exit.

TITLE CARD: COLD SHOWER TUESDAYS

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Anthony stares at his computer screen, but no inspiration is coming. He accesses his personal email. A new message from MatchUp.com! He opens it.

ANTHONY

This oughta be good...

The email is from MINA and includes her picture (unknown age as photo is **heavily** filtered) - taken from a downward angle, mostly of her face.

MINA (V.O.)

Hello, Anthony, I read your profile and you sound like someone who's right up my alley. I think we should meet and test the waters.

Anthony considers the picture. He squints at it, but can't tell if the filter is hiding something or not.

MINA (V.O. CONT'D)

I'm curvy in ALL the right ways, love the Lord, and fun to be around. Let's see how we fit together?

The email concludes with the obligatory smiley face emoticon:  
#

ANTHONY

What the hell...gotta try new things, right?

He types a response and sends it, then leans back in his chair.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER

INT. ART MUSEUM - AFTERNOON

Anthony stands in the lobby of the art museum. He looks at his watch and sighs.

ANTHONY

Five more minutes and I'm out of-

A woman's hand touches his shoulder.

MINA

Are you...Anthony?

Anthony turns around to see MINA, 50ish and busty, wearing spandex pink and green striped leggings and a leopard/tiger-mix print top. She's a Technicolor nightmare. Her hair stands at least 10 inches high in a bizarre and ornate style, and her nails are cartoonishly long and painted with a myriad of colors.

ANTHONY

You...must...be...Mina?

Anthony musters a polite smile as Mina grabs him and hugs him into her ample bosom.

MINA

Oh thank God! I was afraid you'd already be gone! I said to myself, Mina, don't you be late for this man because he might just be the one that has been set aside for you! But I couldn't help it! I just had to look good! First impressions is everything!

Anthony stares blankly then blinks twice.

MINA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

How do I look? Don't you like my outfit? It's sexy right? You can say it's sexy, I don't mind. Go on. Say it.

A beat. Anthony takes a deep breath.

ANTHONY

It's...something. It definitely shows you...um...like who you are. Confident! Yes, that's it. Confident. That's always good. And bold. Very bold.

Anthony smiles more at his quick thinking and mastery of diplomacy rather than at her.

MINA

Hallelujah! (to God, apparently)  
Thank YOU Lord for sending me a man who knows how to give a compliment! He's a little scrawny for my tastes, but I know Lord that You know what I need. Mmm hmm.

ANTHONY  
(nervously) God is good...

MINA  
ALL THE TIME! Let me tell you, I'm  
in church 6 nights a week and three  
times on Sunday prayin'. Prayin'  
HARD. For a MAN. Like this:

Mina folds her hands and bows her head-

MINA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
GOOD LAWD UP ABOVE. I need me a  
MAN. ANY man. Looking back, I  
prob'ly shoulda been more pacific-

- Anthony winces at what should have been "specific" -

MINA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
-but hey, you gotta start  
somewhere. So then I said to the  
Big Man, I need to quench this fire  
inside of me before I BURST! I got  
all this lovin' to give! And then  
He says, 'I hear you, chile. I hear  
you. Goeth thou on the innanet.'  
So, I did and here we is!

Mina's cell phone rings to the tone of Eazy-E's "Eazy Does It." She answers. Loudly.

MINA (CONT'D)  
HAY GURRRRL!! Imma have to talk to  
you later. I'm out on a date. (A  
pause) YES, WITH A MAN.

She rolls her eyes and ends the call dragging Anthony into the museum.

INT. MUSEUM - DAY

Anthony looks exhausted and irritated. They finally stop in front of a painting by one of the old Masters, Caravaggio.

MINA  
...so that's why I got these bumps on  
the tops of my shoes. These corns  
be killing me! Like little kernels  
that need poppin'! But maybe...if I  
put some butter on 'em you might  
add the HEAT...

She licks her lips seductively. Anthony stares blankly.

A beat.

He opts to ignore that last statement and decides to amuse himself instead-

ANTHONY

So, yeah. I studied art in college and learned about the great Masters and how they affected modern society with their innovations. Almost any advertisement or film that you see has their influence, even if it's not readily detectable. Caravaggio, for example, is a master of light and shadow, and basically invented the style called chiaroscuro while showing incredibly dark scenes depicting murder. Fun fact, he was, himself, a murderer.

Mina stares at him for a moment.

MINA

I like waffles.

ANTHONY

I - What?

MINA

Waffles. I like them. I love when there's blueberries on top and the syrup just OOZES off of the top, and then with some whipped cream and butter to get it all full of sugary goodness... I think waffles're great. Don't you?

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anthony stares at the screen on his laptop. He deletes his MatchUp.com account.

TITLE CARD: TWO WEEKS LATER, JERSEY THURSDAY

INT. ANTHONY'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

Anthony sits with Xander at the dining room table helping him with his homework. Ashton sits opposite them drawing scribbles on a piece of paper.

ANTHONY

...and then you carry the 1 to the top and add them together.

Xander nods excitedly in agreement.

XANDER

Ohhhh, I get it now Daddy!

Ashton holds up his masterpiece.

ASHTON

Do you see what it is, Daddy?

Anthony looks over the scribble with a discriminating eye.

ANTHONY

Of course I do, but I want to hear YOU tell me what it is.

ASHTON

It's a race! And all the cars are driving around the whole world!

Anthony smiles and opens his mouth to respond when his cell vibrates.

ANTHONY

Hold that thought, kiddo.

Anthony looks at the display. Jacqueline. He answers the call.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. BMW (IN MOTION) - EVENING

Jacqueline drives through the night streets. She's clearly upset. The call is on the car's speaker.

JACQUELINE

I think...he's cheating on me again.

She lights a cigarette and takes a long draw.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

I...wow. I assumed everything must've been all right since I hadn't heard from you in a few weeks...I'm sorry to hear that.

Jacqueline wipes her tears away and takes another long drag.

JACQUELINE

I can't be alone right now. I'm not sure what I'll do. I know you've got the kids and everything so...can I come over?

Jacqueline turns down a residential street.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Yeah. Yeah, come on by. The kids are still up but we'll talk after they go to bed.

JACQUELINE

Good. I'll be right in.

ANTHONY

Wait, wha--

Jacqueline ends the call as she pulls the car in front of Anthony's house.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Anthony closes the door to the boys' room and returns to the living room. Jacqueline sits on the couch.

JACQUELINE

Those boys of yours are beautiful. I love their spirits. They're so...happy.

Anthony sits next to her. She leans against him and snuggles in close. Anthony looks down at her.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

I don't know what happened. Where I went wrong. I feel like I did everything right. Why won't he love me? Why won't he be what I need him to be?

ANTHONY

Some people just don't get it. They take what they can from people and ignore the needs of others.

Jacqueline nods and exhales as Anthony begins to stroke her hair.

JACQUELINE

You're right. I just wish someone would see me-

ANTHONY

...for who you really are, and not just as a pretty face?

Jacqueline pats him on the chest.

JACQUELINE

Exactly! Why don't men get it?

Anthony rolls his eyes.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

I mean, you get it, but you don't count. You're my friend. And you know, just so we're clear, I'd hate for anything to mess up this friendship we have. It means so much to me.

Jacqueline lays her head in his lap. Anthony tries to get up but she holds him down.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Just once I'd like a guy that I was interested in to see me...really see me, you know? I swear, if I could put you and...him...together, I'd have the perfect man.

Anthony exhales deeply at her assertion and stops stroking her hair. This is getting really old.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

Why'd you stop?

Anthony looks down at her. She doesn't look back, but grabs his hand to make him continue stroking her hair. She smiles happily as he starts again. Anthony stares off into space.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: EARLY ON TUESDAY

INT. OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Another board meeting where Anthony is completely bored. He sketches frantically with his #2 pencil to keep himself awake. His doodles - caricatures of himself being crushed by Mina's giant endowments - fill the page. He tunes in to the meeting to hear -

JOHN

...to welcome our newest employee,  
Arianna.

Everyone applauds as ARIANNA (32, voluptuous but toned, with long black hair) stands and waves shyly.

ARIANNA

Hi everyone! You're all so kind.  
I'm looking forward to meeting all  
of you!

JOHN

Arianna will be the sales liaison  
to our Illustration Department.

Anthony snaps his pencil in half.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

Thomas runs to catch up with Anthony after the meeting.

THOMAS

Hold up!

Anthony turns as Thomas claps him on the shoulder.

ANTHONY

Hey, what's up-

THOMAS

Did you see the new hire? Oh my  
god, she's ridiculous! You've GOT  
to talk to her.

Anthony stops walking and faces Thomas. His face is grim.

ANTHONY

First of all, there's an old  
saying.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

"Never shit where you eat." You NEVER date someone in your office because if it fails, you've got to look at them every day until one of you quits.

Thomas scoffs.

THOMAS

You do if they look like that.

ANTHONY

Second, I guarantee you that every single guy in the office is thinking the same thing, and they will ALL attack her and basically alienate her. I'm not gonna be one of those guys.

Thomas smacks Anthony in the chest repeatedly as he looks past him.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What? What the entire he-

Thomas turns Anthony to face Arianna.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

--ellllllo.

ARIANNA

Hi! John told me I'd be working with you quite a bit.

ANTHONY

He did?

ARIANNA

I thought maybe we should go get some lunch and get to know each other better.

ANTHONY

You did?

ARIANNA

I'm ready whenever you are.

ANTHONY

You are? I mean, ok. Let's go.

Thomas stares in disbelief as Anthony follows Arianna to the elevator. Anthony turns back toward Thomas and shrugs.

THOMAS

Of course.

CUT TO:

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

The server takes Arianna's order - a cheeseburger with extra onions. Anthony raises an eyebrow, but dismisses it and orders Eggplant Parmesan.

ARIANNA

Everyone seems really nice here.  
Hopefully that's not because  
they're all trying to fuck me.

Anthony blinks a few times and then smirks.

ANTHONY

Your candor's refreshing, if a  
little bit surprising.

ARIANNA

What can I say, I call it like I  
see it. Call a spade a muthafuckin'  
spade, you know?

Anthony tries to hold his face together as this is escalating quickly.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: 10 MINUTES LATER

Anthony's face is a mix of shock and horror as he stares ahead. Their food has arrived, but Anthony has barely touched his. Arianna, meanwhile, is demolishing her burger like there's no tomorrow. Onions, tomato and cheese spew forth from her mouth as she continues to talk.

ARIANNA

...and that's when I told the  
muthafucka to suck my dick! You  
can't call yourself a fuckin'  
mechanic and try to charge my ass  
twice what the fuck somethin' is  
worth! You better lick this clit  
and then suck a pair of balls,  
asshole!! Sheeeit...you don't know  
who you fuckin' wit...

Anthony is completely speechless as he wipes a chunk of onion projectile from his cheek.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Anthony sits at his computer. His monitor is off, but he continues staring blankly at the screen. He sees Thomas' reflection as he approaches.

ANTHONY

Don't. Ask.

Thomas spins Anthony around to face him, then sits in the opposite chair.

THOMAS

You know I spied on you, right?

ANTHONY

What?

THOMAS

I had to see what happened so I watched through the window. She must've said something really shocking because your jaw literally fell open. Talk!

Anthony exhales a long breath.

ANTHONY

It's not what she said, it's how she said it. I need a cigarette.

THOMAS

You don't smoke...

ANTHONY

After that lunch, I'm thinking about starting. She had the mouth and eating habits of a Marine who'd been out to sea for the last 3 years.

Thomas shakes his head in disbelief.

THOMAS

No, no, no, no, no! Say it ain't so! She seems so-

ANTHONY

Polished, professional? Yeah, no. Not so much.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I don't know where she came from,  
but wherever it is will make your  
ears bleed.

THOMAS

Wow...that's ugly. I mean, wow.  
That's just...wow. Thank God I met  
Christine and don't have to deal  
with THAT stuff any more.

ANTHONY

Yeah, rub it in, loverboy.

THOMAS

You joke, but yo, for real...I told  
her I love her last night...and there  
wasn't even sex involved. She loves  
me too!

Anthony smiles genuinely.

ANTHONY

Man, that's cool. I'm happy for  
you! Let's hope she doesn't pull  
the crazy card on you.

Anthony leans to the side and looks past Thomas into the  
hallway.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

One of those dudes out there is  
about to be her bitch and doesn't  
even know it.

They both turn to see Arianna surrounded by five guys  
anxiously trying to get her number.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Thank God it's not me...

Anthony shudders as he hears an echo from a recent memory-

MINA (O.S.)

Yes, LAWD! Hallelujah!

INT. ANTHONY'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Anthony finishes cooking dinner for the boys while Ashton and  
Xander watch Doc McStuffins in the living room. Anthony's  
cell vibrates - a text from Jacqueline: "We made up! He says  
he loves me! I'm so HAPPY! xoxo" Anthony rolls his eyes and  
starts serving dinner.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The family sits at the table eating. It's quiet for a moment, only the sounds of forks scraping the plates and food being consumed is heard until Ashton speaks up.

ASHTON  
Daddy?

ANTHONY  
Yes?

ASHTON  
What was Mommy like?

Anthony takes a deep breath.

ANTHONY  
You were too young to remember, but your mommy loved you boys more than anything in this world.

XANDER  
Anything? Even cookies and milk?

Xander and Ashton lick their lips at the thought.

ANTHONY  
Yep, even more than cookies and milk. She was very pretty, and very kind. She used to tell you boys stories and she was so proud of you. She'd take you places and just smile so big because you were her boys...

Anthony pauses and looks at the boys. They smile, food falling out of their mouths.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, she wanted to do everything for you and tried to give you guys the best start in life that she could. And I know what she'd say if she were here right now...

The boys lean in, curious.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
She'd say, I love you soooo much...But you still have to eat your veggies.

The boys groan.

BOYS  
Daddyyyyyyy...

Xander takes another bite, then pauses. Ashton keeps eating.

XANDER  
How'd you meet Mommy, anyway?

Anthony leans back in his chair.

ANTHONY  
I met your mommy through some  
mutual friends. Then we became  
friends and started talking more  
and more-

Xander and Ashton's attention begins to drift with boredom.  
Anthony realizes he needs to step up the story.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
-but one day, she got kidnapped by  
some bad guys-

Xander and Ashton both snap to attention.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
-and I had to go rescue her. I had  
to fight a hundred ninjas and leap  
over big fiery vats of molten lava  
- it was a lava factory -

The boys stare in awe.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
-and when I finally reached the top  
of the factory, there was a giant  
two headed dragon that breathed  
fire from one head and ice from the  
other. I had to make them breathe  
on each other and then I chopped  
off their heads! Then the lead bad  
guy-

Xander shakes his head.

XANDER  
That didn't really happen, did it  
Daddy?

Anthony rubs Xander and Ashton on the head as he stands.

ANTHONY  
I'll let you guys figure that out  
while you finish eating.

The boys giggle. Anthony's phone vibrates. He takes the call in the living room.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON (CALIFORNIA)

JEANETTE, (33, Caribbean accent, dark complexion and exotic look) reclines in her leather chair.

JEANETTE

Hey there, Antonio. How've you been?

ANTHONY (O.S.)

I was wondering when I'd hear from you. I'm doing well. Still taking over the world?

Jeanette sips a glass of white wine. Her apartment is immaculate, decorated in the finest of finery.

JEANETTE

I am, I am. You know me. Ever on the go.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Indeed, indeed. What are you, CEO now?

JEANETTE

Actually, yeah. Youngest CEO the company's had thus far. But I try not to let it go to my head.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Quite the accomplishment! Congratulations! I'm really proud of you.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Anthony - still on the phone - sits on the couch. The boys run past him to their room to go play.

JEANETTE (O.S.)

Thank you, thank you. I'm sure you can picture me curtseying (laughs).

ANTHONY

Absolutely. You always were the most driven person I'd ever met. Of course you know, the next question is, you find someone to settle down with yet?

JEANETTE (O.S.)

You know I don't have time for that right now. Career first, then relationship. Gotta follow the plan, y'know?

ANTHONY

I do. That's one thing I always respected about you, even back in college. You know exactly what you want and when you want it.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON (CALIFORNIA)

Jeanette - still on the phone - smiles, putting her now empty glass down on the end table next to her seat with her free hand.

JEANETTE

Of course! That's the only way to get where you want to go in life! Truth be told, though, I do have a few suitors lining up at the door so you know, we'll see how it all pans out.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Some things never change, I see. Let's see, it's probably some foreign prince, or leader of industry or some such...

JEANETTE

(laughs) What can I say? It's mahhhvelous being me, dahling...

They laugh.

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
Remind me again why we never hooked  
up?

JEANETTE  
I was too cool for you.

Anthony laughs. Jeanette does not.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

ANTHONY  
Wait, you're serious? Damn.

JEANETTE (O.S.)  
(finally laughs) No, no. I'm  
kidding. We...never quite had that  
spark. I admit I thought about it  
once or twice. Logically, we  
would've made a good couple, but  
honestly, we just didn't have that..

ANTHONY  
Chemistry.

JEANETTE (O.S.)  
Exactly. We always worked better as  
really good friends. Family, even.

Anthony nods, knowing it to be truth.

ANTHONY  
Yeah, you're right. Honestly, I  
don't regret it. But, if you start  
calling me 'girlfriend', we're  
gonna have a problem.

CUT TO:

INT. JEANETTE'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Jeanette laughs as she looks at the clock.

JEANETTE  
Oh shoot! I'm so sorry, I've got to  
go get ready for an event tonight.  
Completely slipped my mind. We'll  
finish catching up soon, ok?

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
 Sounds good. You take care of  
 yourself.

Jeanette smiles warmly.

JEANETTE  
 You too, hun. You too.

Jeanette ends the call and strides into her bedroom.

TITLE CARD: THE TALE OF THE MAGIC THURSDAY

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Carolyn lets Anthony into the house.

CAROLYN  
 Sorry, the boys got a little...well,  
 a LOT dirty today, so Mrs.  
 Richter's got them taking a bath.  
 You'll have to bring a new set of  
 spare clothes for them.

Anthony nods.

CAROLYN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Take a load off, I bet it's been a  
 long day.

Anthony sits and Carolyn joins him.

ANTHONY  
 Thanks, Carolyn...it has, actually.  
 (A beat.) How goes the job hunt?

CAROLYN  
 It's going well. I got a few  
 interviews coming up, but nothing  
 for sure yet. It's still kind of up  
 in the air.

Anthony leans back on the couch and cracks his neck.

ANTHONY  
 Yeah, I get that. Times are rough  
 all around, but I'm sure something  
 good's coming your way. You've done  
 the work and you seem like a really  
 positive person. It'll work out.

CAROLYN  
Thanks, Anthony. I appreciate that.

ANTHONY  
No problem. Have you-

Anthony's interrupted by the boys who bound down the stairs loudly.

BOYS  
Daddy! Miss Carolyn! We're all  
clean!

Carolyn scoops up Ashton and rubs Xander's hair.

CAROLYN  
Yay! You boys smell much better,  
that's for sure!

Carolyn tickles the boys who giggle wildly. Anthony joins in by grabbing Xander and turning him upside down. He squeals with delight as Anthony tickles him.

XANDER  
Put me DOWN DADDY!!

Anthony finally complies as he smiles at the scene. Mrs. Richter comes downstairs feigning annoyance.

MRS. RICHTER  
What's all the noise?

ASHTON  
Miss Carolyn and Daddy tickled us!

Mrs. Richter looks back and forth between them and smiles.

MRS. RICHTER  
I see...well, they both are being  
naughty. Your daddy better take you  
boys home before I punish them.

Anthony smiles as the boys pull him toward the door. Carolyn waves to them as they head out.

CAROLYN  
See you later guys!

TITLE CARD: A FEW DAYS LATER, WAITING FOR WEDNESDAY

INT. GROCERY STORE - AFTERNOON

Anthony pushes the shopping cart through the aisles. Ashton sits in the cart and Xander assists Anthony with pushing. The boys are curious but well behaved.

ASHTON  
What's that, Daddy?

Anthony picks up the piece of fruit.

ANTHONY  
That's a kiwi. It's kind of fuzzy on the outside but there's sweet fruit on the inside.

XANDER  
Mmm, sweet! What about that one?

Anthony grabs another piece of fruit.

ANTHONY  
That's an Asian Pear. It's...sort of like a cross between a pear and an apple. It's one of my favorites.

MELANIE (O.S.)  
Mine too.

Anthony and the boys turn to see an attractive woman, MELANIE (33, medium complexion, curvy) standing next to them. She's wearing sweats and her hair is pulled back in a ponytail.

XANDER  
You like the same fruit as my Daddy? Wowww...

Anthony smiles at her.

MELANIE  
Your boys are adorable.

ANTHONY  
Thank you. They're for sale if you're interested.

She laughs.

MELANIE  
Ahhh, I don't think I can afford them.

Anthony smirks. Ashton and Xander begin picking up items already in the cart.

ANTHONY

Yeah, you're right. The upfront cost is cheap, but the maintenance is a killer.

Xander drops the item in his hand in shock.

XANDER

You can't sell us, Daddy!

ANTHONY

I'm just kidding, kiddo. I'd never do that. Just playing around with the nice lady is all.

XANDER

Oh, OK, Daddy. (to the woman) You should come over and play with us! We're a lot of fun!

She smiles genuinely and looks to Anthony - who is completely dumbfounded (and impressed) with his son's forwardness.

ANTHONY

I didn't tell him to say that, I swear.

MELANIE

(To Anthony) Mmm hmm. (To Xander) I'm sure you are, but you know, I'm not supposed to talk to strangers, and I bet you're not either.

XANDER

Well, nobody is stranger than my daddy, so I think it's ok.

She laughs - a real, appreciative laugh - and looks to Anthony. He offers his hand and she shakes it.

ANTHONY

I'm sorry, I'm Anthony, and these are my boys, Xander and Ashton.

ASHTON

Hi lady!

MELANIE

I'm Melanie. It's a pleasure to meet all of you.

Melanie's cell rings. The ringtone is Cyprus Hill's "Insane in the Membrane". She removes it from its holster and looks at the display. She sighs.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I've got to take this.  
It was really nice meeting you.  
Maybe we'll meet again sometime.

Anthony watches as she walks away. Anthony turns his attention back to the boys who are looking at him.

ANTHONY

What?

He playfully pushes the boys' heads and continues to push the cart down the aisle. They turn a corner and Melanie cuts them off.

MELANIE

You know what? I think what the little one said is right. We should get together sometime. Here's my number.

Anthony is all smiles as he pushes the cart toward the checkout line.

TITLE CARD: SATURDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT FOR FIGHTING

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Anthony waits outside of the ticket box for Melanie. He's already purchased the tickets for a 9pm show. He turns to see, for once, the woman he's waiting for is punctual. Anthony's already optimistic.

MELANIE

Hey!

ANTHONY

Hey, you made it! Good to see you.

They embrace. Melanie looks slightly flustered, however.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You ok? You look a little...disturbed.

MELANIE

It's nothing. Let's go on inside, ok?

She forces a smile. They start to head towards the door when-

JOE (O.S.)

Melanie! I know that's you!! Don't you walk away when I'm trying to conversationalize at you!

ANTHONY

Friend of yours?

Anthony turns toward the angry man, JOE (27, 5'2, Latino and pissed) storming towards them. He shoves people out his way to clear a path toward Anthony and Melanie. One clear sign that he's crazy is the fact that he's wearing cargo shorts and an open winter coat in less than 30 degree weather.

MELANIE

Joe, don't start anything, ok? It's nothing. I'm just out with my friend. NO big deal.

ANTHONY

(to himself) Oh hell, here we go.  
(to her) Silly me...I guess I should've asked if you HAD a man already...

Joe shoves Anthony and stares at him menacingly.

JOE

It doesn't matter what you shoulda did, cuz what you shoulda NOT done did is NOT tried to be conversationalizing to my girl in the first place already, ya heard?

ANTHONY

Look, I... Wait, what?

Anthony looks confused, trying to sort out the jumble of words Joe just spewed forth.

JOE

And don't try that "she didn't tell me she had a man" bullshit, I heard that crap over and over before again and again!

Anthony glares at Melanie, who is looking away.

ANTHONY

Look here, Joe-the-Cool-Eskimo -

Joe flexes his pecs under his coat. Anthony continues unfazed.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

- I'm not trying to step on any toes or start any trouble. That's your girl, no problem. Just a misunderstanding. She's all yours.

Joe now looks confused. He cocks his head to one side like a Rottweiler.

JOE

Wait, you ain't trying to fight me for her or anything? (To Melanie) You see that baby? He ain't even think you worth fightin' over.

Anthony steps aside.

ANTHONY

Why? She's yours, clearly. I'm not trying to cause any more grief, man. In fact, here. Take my ticket. Go see a show, on me. I'm done here.

Joe watches as Anthony walks away. Melanie starts to speak but thinks better of it. Instead, she pulls Joe to her and kisses him.

MELANIE

I'm sorry baby. I was mad at you for looking at those girls in that magazine the other day. You know I get crazy. You forgive me?

JOE

Yeah, I do. You just remember you're always my girl all the time, even on Leap Year Sundays.

A beat.

JOE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Joe, The Cool Eskimo. I kinda dig that...

Anthony shakes his head as he rounds the corner.

TITLE CARD: TELL ME ON A SUNDAY

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Anthony sits on the edge of his bed and presses the call button on his cell. After three rings, a WOMAN answers.

WOMAN

Hello?

ANTHONY

Hi, Mom!

INT. MOTHER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Anthony's MOTHER (50s but looks 40s, think Claire Huxtable) sits on the couch.

MOTHER

How are you? Is everything ok?

ANTHONY (O.S.)

We're fine, Mom. Everyone's fine, we're all ok.

MOTHER

Ok, good. I can relax now.

ANTHONY

How are you?

Anthony's Mother leans back on the couch. She takes a bite of a slice of avocado.

MOTHER

I'm good. Tired, but good. The sixth graders are trying to kill me, but you know me, I keep them in check. Anyway, what's new with you?

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anthony - still on the phone - powers up his laptop.

ANTHONY

Well...now that you mention it, I was wondering, are all women crazy? Present company excluded, of course.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Of course.

ANTHONY

I mean, almost every one I've met since...has been nuts. And the ones that aren't obviously crazy seem to just be hiding it well.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTHER'S LIVING ROOM

Anthony's Mother leans forward, putting her plate down on the coffee table.

MOTHER

To answer your question, yes. They are.

A beat.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

So are all the men. Everyone's crazy in their own way. You're crazy, I'm crazy...The trick is to find a crazy that you can deal with. One man's crazy is another man's endearing, you know?

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anthony - still on the phone - smiles as he opens his email.

ANTHONY

I do. That makes a lot of sense. I love you, Mom.

MOTHER (O.S.)

I love you more than air, Manchild.

Anthony ends the call and lays back on his bed.

ANTHONY

Maybe I should become a nun.

Anthony closes his eyes.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The sun is shining incredibly brightly. The sky is blue and perfect, with rolling clouds over head.

Anthony is laying on his back in the grass feeling quite content. He inhales a deep breath and exhales - only to have someone knee drop into his testicles!

ANTHONY  
AUGGGHHH!!!! WHAT THE FU-

He rolls aside, still clutching his injured jewels to find himself face to face with Allison. The sky has turned dark and stormy overhead. Thunder rolls in the distance.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
You...what the hell do you want?

Allison smiles an evil grin. Behind her, Raymond steps into view. He laughs maniacally.

ALLISON  
What I want...is what we ALL want...

Anthony turns to see all the bad dates of the last few months surrounding him. They all have weapons and sinister expressions.

MINA  
Oh yes Lawd, Hallelujah, AMEN!  
Sweet vengeance is mines!!

Arianna steps from behind Mina and throws up a middle finger.

ARIANNA  
Let's fuckin' gut this goofy  
muthafuckah! Cut his balls off!

They all charge him in unison. Anthony puts up his guard to try and fight but they dog pile on top of him. Anthony manages to get a hand free and struggles...but fails. His hand collapses and he-

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

--wakes up screaming and falls out of his bed, flailing wildly. He picks himself up off the ground and looks at the clock. 4:39AM. He sits on the edge of the bed and exhales.

ANTHONY  
I give up...

TITLE CARD: MANIC MONDAY

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Anthony pushes his mouse around but isn't doing anything. He's off in another world. He doesn't even notice Thomas approaching him from behind.

THOMAS

Cousin. You look like hell. Rough night?

Anthony turns toward him. His face is grim and his eyes are dark from lack of sleep.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Ok. Worse than hell. Sick kids?

ANTHONY

Naw, kids are great. Can't complain about them at all.

THOMAS

Work?

Anthony stands up, rubbing his eyes. He crosses the room to glance out the window.

ANTHONY

Nope. Ever since you came on board, you've gotten a boatload of new accounts. We're busy and there's plenty to do. I can't complain about that either.

Thomas leans against Anthony's desk.

THOMAS

What then?

ANTHONY

Dating. Dating sucks. Trying to date. Meeting people. It's all bullshit, you know? Feels like a failure waiting to happen.

Thomas nods.

THOMAS

I used to feel like that too. Then I met Christina. It wasn't the way I expected to meet someone, or the plan I had in mind, but it just clicked.

Anthony puts up his hand.

ANTHONY

I know how it goes. Fact is, I thought I had this marriage thing handled. Then poof. All gone. And now, here I am, trying to figure all of this out, and for what? A bunch of crazy-

John clears his throat from the doorway behind Thomas.

JOHN

I couldn't help overhearing. I've known you for a long time, Anthony, and if there's one thing I do know about you, it's that you don't quit. I don't think you know the meaning of the word.

Anthony sits down at his desk facing John. Thomas crosses to the window. John leans against the doorframe.

JOHN (CONT'D)

My grandmother used to say, "How do you know what you want? By learning what it is you don't want." Sometimes we meet people who are exactly what we don't want so we can recognize those traits later. You're going through a lot of "don't wants" because what you DO want is probably right around the corner.

Anthony rolls his eyes and scoffs.

ANTHONY

All right, all right. Don't give up, blah blah blah. I hear you. But I tell you this, the next bad date I have, you guys are reimbursing me.

TITLE CARD: TUESDAY'S GONE

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - MIDDAY

Anthony sits at a table set for two. He watches the door intently until his guest arrives. He stands and waves.

ANTHONY

Dad!

Anthony's FATHER (51 but looks 40ish, 5'9 - basically an older version of Anthony) approaches the table. They hug.

FATHER

Hey. You look like hell. How are you?

They sit. Anthony's Father picks up a menu. The MALE SERVER approaches.

MALE SERVER

Ah, the other member of your party has arrived.

The server looks at Anthony, then at his father, then back at Anthony.

MALE SERVER (CONT'D)

Is this your...friend?

Anthony and his father look at each other. Anthony suddenly gets it.

ANTHONY

NO. That's my DAD.

The server smiles and touches Anthony's arm.

MALE SERVER

Oh, but he looks so YOUNG...

Anthony and his Father look at each other.

MALE SERVER (CONT'D)

Well, take your time and let me know when you know what you want...

He smiles slyly as he walks away.

FATHER

Did that really just happen?

Anthony rubs his forehead.

ANTHONY

I got nothin. I mean, ya do look younnng.

They laugh. Anthony's Father opens the menu and scans the entrees.

FATHER

Anyway, to what do I owe this pleasure?

ANTHONY

I have to have a reason to want to hang out with my Dad?

FATHER

Yes.

Anthony smirks and nods.

ANTHONY

Don't worry, I just wanted some advice. I've had a string of really, really ridiculously bad dates lately. Seems like I'm finding all of the crazies.

FATHER

I see.

ANTHONY

Yeah. So, I'm trying to figure out what I'm supposed to do differently.

The server returns.

SERVER

So, have we decided on what we want?

Anthony's Father nods.

FATHER

Chicken parmesan over pasta and a sweet tea for me.

The server takes note.

SERVER

And for you sir?

Anthony puts his menu down on top of his father's.

ANTHONY

Chicken fettuccine, please.

SERVER

Excellent choices, sirs. I'll be right back with that quicker than two shakes of a lamb's tail.

The server walks off.

FATHER  
Seriously, Anthony, this is-

ANTHONY  
Ok, Dad, I get it. We'll do Hooters  
next time, promise.

FATHER  
I'm just saying.

A beat.

FATHER (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
As for your problem, it's very  
simple. You know the definition of  
insanity is doing the same thing  
over and over again. So, figure out  
what the common denominator is in  
these women, and do something about  
it.

ANTHONY  
Oh, that's easy. They're all nuts.

FATHER  
So, find a brand of 'nuts' that you  
can deal with.

Anthony stares for a moment, then sips some water.

ANTHONY  
That's the same thing Mom said.

FATHER  
That doesn't surprise me. She  
always was wise, and we always  
understood each other, even though  
things didn't work out.

A beat.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
Anyway, it's good advice. Keep  
looking. You found it once, you'll  
find it again.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anthony lays in bed watching "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia". His phone - lying next to him - chimes with a text from Ron: "Ant. Got one for you. Wife says she's a winner." Anthony calls him.

ANTHONY

What ARE you talking about?

RON (O.S.)

My wife thinks that you should be as happy as we are, and she's got a girlfriend who can't seem to find a good man, so...

ANTHONY

So it's a match made in heaven.

RON (O.S.)

Exactly. You game?

Anthony stands and paces around the bed.

RON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hello?

Anthony stops and exhales.

ANTHONY

All right. But this really is the last one. After this, I'm gonna become a eunuch.

Ron laughs.

RON (O.S.)

You mean you're not one already?

ANTHONY

(laughs) You'd think so, right?

A beat.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Tell the Mrs. to set it up and get back to me with the details.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: PROBABLY ON THURSDAY

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Yet another boring business meeting where Anthony sits at the conference table doodling a "Mortal Kombat" style sketch of several of the women he's run into performing various finishing moves on him. Thomas - seated next to him - glances over at the drawing and snickers. John - oblivious - conducts the meeting.

JOHN

...has fourth quarter projections all well above expected returns for this time of year. Overall, we're doing far better than we could have expected, especially in this financial climate. And that's all due to your efforts. Give yourselves a round of applause.

Everyone applauds. Anthony looks up and joins them hoping not to seem out of place.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Thank you, everyone. Have a great rest of your day.

The staff gathers their belongings and heads for the exits. Thomas stays behind with Anthony.

THOMAS

You've been kind of out of it lately. You all right?

ANTHONY

I'll live. It's nothing serious, really. Just a lot of bad dating experiences lately and no good ones to balance it out.

Thomas pulls something out of his pocket.

THOMAS

So I guess this is a terrible time to mention this...

He opens his hand. It's a ring box. He opens it and there's a sparkling diamond ring. Anthony's cell vibrates with a new text. He ignores it.

ANTHONY

Things are bad...but they're not THAT bad, dude.

THOMAS

(laughs) No, dumbass, I'm proposing to Christine. She's the one. No doubt about it, and I want you to be my best man.

Anthony smiles, genuinely.

ANTHONY

I'd be honored, man. Thank you. You're sure about this - Christina, I mean. She seems great, don't get me wrong. I just have to ask. Marriage isn't to be taken lightly, you know.

Thomas smiles and puts his hand on Anthony's shoulder.

THOMAS

Ant, we've talked every day, several times a day. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, several points in between. I don't want to live my life without her, and I've never been more sure of anything in my life.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S CAR - EVENING

Anthony starts the car, then remembers and reads the text he'd received: Ron - Wife says it's on. Saturday night? Anthony scrolls through his contacts and calls-

INT. GRANDMA HOPE'S KITCHEN

Grandma Hope puts a pan into the oven and picks up her kitchen phone after looking at the caller ID.

GRANDMA HOPE

Helloooo! I was afraid it was a telemarketer. How are the boys? Everything ok?

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S CAR - EVENING

Anthony drives home as the boys play in the back seat.

ANTHONY

Fine, fine. I'm not gonna hold you up, just wanted to see if you're available to babysi-

Grandma Hope cuts him off enthusiastically.

GRANDMA HOPE (O.S.)

Yes, yes, of course! I was actually going to call you to see if they could come over anyway. I wanted to buy them some new pajamas. Bring them over!

ANTHONY

Thank you. Saving the day as always, Hope.

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The boys run inside and toss their jackets and shoes on the floor.

ANTHONY

Boys! You know better than that. Pick them up and put them where they belong.

The boys comply and run off to play. Anthony hangs his coat and pulls out his phone. He responds to the earlier text: Sounds good. Looking forward to it.

Anthony's cell vibrates again with a new text. This time it's from Thomas: SHE SAID YES!

Anthony smiles broadly.

TITLE CARD: ON A FRIDAY

EXT. MRS. RICHTER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Anthony and the boys arrive at Mrs. Richter's. Carolyn opens the door. She looks like she's been up for a minute. Though it's early and she's not wearing makeup or done her hair, she still looks very attractive.

XANDER

G'morning Miss Carolyn!

Ashton waves. Carolyn smiles and rubs the boys' heads as they pass by her to go inside. Anthony looks at his watch.

ANTHONY

Not sure how we did it, but we got  
off to an early start this morning.  
That's a first...

Carolyn leans against the doorway.

CAROLYN

Well, I just made some coffee,  
would you like a cup before you  
head off to work?

Anthony is dumbfounded.

ANTHONY

I...actually would love some. Thank  
you.

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Mrs. Richter is already pouring the cups when Anthony and  
Carolyn get to the kitchen. Mrs. Richter puts the cups on the  
table and takes the boys by the hand.

MRS. RICHTER

It's a nice morning out. I think  
I'll go ahead and take the boys to  
the bus stop. Why don't you two  
have a seat and chat for a bit?

Mrs. Richter and the boys leave as Anthony and Carolyn sit at  
the table. Anthony begins adding an obscene amount of sugar  
to his coffee. Carolyn stares in horror.

CAROLYN

You're not seriously gonna drink  
that, are you?

Anthony pauses pouring the sugar.

ANTHONY

What?

CAROLYN

You're trying to kill yourself  
right there in front of me!

ANTHONY

I like my coffee sweet-

Carolyn shakes her head in disgust and holds up her hand,  
cutting him off.

CAROLYN  
Your funeral, pal.

Anthony laughs leans back in his chair.

ANTHONY  
Ok, ok, Doc. I'll ease up. (a beat)  
So, tell me, what's your plan?

Carolyn sips her coffee slowly, considering the question.

CAROLYN  
My plan...

ANTHONY  
Yeah, what are you going to do?

Carolyn smirks and raises an eyebrow.

CAROLYN  
The same thing we do every night,  
Pinky-

BOTH  
TRY TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!

They laugh hysterically.

CAROLYN  
Animaniacs was my show! I loved  
that! It's rare that people get  
that reference.

Anthony nods, sipping his coffee.

ANTHONY  
Oh, I know what you mean. I'm a pop  
culture junkie...especially when it  
comes to cartoons.

Carolyn sits at the table. There's a Post-It note and a pen.  
She starts to doodle as they talk.

CAROLYN  
Nice! Anyway, to answer your  
question, I'm interviewed for a  
position here, and I did phone  
interviews for Florida, and  
Pennsylvania. But ultimately, I  
plan to open my own pediatric  
practice.

ANTHONY

Wow, ambitious, I see. You know cartoons AND you have high aspirations...impressive. Why hasn't some smart dude scooped you up yet?

Anthony raises an eyebrow.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

...Or has he?

Carolyn finishes her doodle. She stands and clears the table.

CAROLYN

Well, not recently, about 6 months ago or so, I guess, I was in something serious. We even talked about getting married, but in the end we wanted different things.

A beat.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

And by different things, I mean he wanted to have his cake and eat it too...and by cake I mean other women. I was too much of a prude to go along with *that* particular program.

Anthony shakes his head as she puts the cups in the dishwasher.

ANTHONY

Well, better that you figured that out sooner rather than later.

Carolyn closes the dishwasher and stands straight.

CAROLYN

Yeah, you're right. Besides, these choices have made me who I am today. And I like who I am, even if nobody else gets me.

ANTHONY

I feel you on that. And so far, I like who you are too.

Carolyn smiles and looks out the window to see the boys getting on the bus at the bus stop. Anthony suddenly realizes he's been hanging out for more than a few minutes.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Sadly, I have to run. Work summons.  
Thank you for the coffee. It was  
cool chatting with you.

CAROLYN

Yeah, it was. We'll have to do this  
again sometime.

Anthony nods in agreement as she smiles and walks him to the door.

CAROLYN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Have a great day, ok? In fact, wait  
a sec.

She runs back to the kitchen then returns with the Post-It doodle.

CAROLYN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Here, this is for you. Something to  
make you smile when you need it.

Anthony looks at the doodle, It's her favorite character from Animaniacs, Dot Warner.

ANTHONY

Wow, this is hands down the most  
thoughtful gift anyone's given me  
in quite a while. Thank you  
Carolyn.

Carolyn smiles. Anthony awkwardly moves toward her for a hug, but second guesses himself at the last minute. He ends up shaking her hand. She rolls her eyes as he turns and runs out the door.

CAROLYN

(to herself) That was sooooo  
romantic.

She can't help but snicker at the awkward moment, though.

TITLE CARD: THAT NIGHT

INT. THAI TERRA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Anthony waits outside of the restaurant and checks his texts. The message - sent from Ron - has a picture attached of LARA (31, brown skinned) and reads: Good luck! He lowers the phone to see Lara in front of him, exactly as pictured.

LARA  
 Hope you haven't been waiting long.

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY  
 No, not at all, and you're clearly  
 worth the wait.

Lara smoothes her hair aside and starts toward the door.  
 Anthony steps in front of her and opens it.

LARA  
 I can open my own door, thank you.

Anthony doesn't see that she rolls her eyes as she walks past  
 him. The hostess pulls two menus and turns to Anthony. Lara  
 steps in front of him.

LARA (CONT'D)  
 Table for two, yes. Thank you.

Anthony is a bit confused. He tries to take it in stride. The  
 HOSTESS places their menus on the table and starts to walk  
 away.

LARA (CONT'D)  
 Excuse me, bring me an iced tea,  
 won't you?

The HOSTESS catches an attitude for a split second, but  
 regains her composure.

HOSTESS  
 I'm the hostess. Your SERVER will  
 be by in a moment. Enjoy your meal.

The hostess looks pityingly at Anthony as though she already  
 knows what's about to happen. Lara catches her look. Anthony,  
 of course, is oblivious. Lara sucks her teeth.

ANTHONY  
 Take your coat?

LARA  
 Take it where?

Anthony raises an eyebrow.

ANTHONY  
 I mean, can I help you with your  
 coat?

LARA

No.

She removes her own coat, draping it over the seat. She sits and picks up her menu. Anthony joins her.

ANTHONY

Have you ever been here before?

LARA

No, I haven't. Seems nice though.

ANTHONY

It is. If you like, I could suggest some things I've liked-

LARA

No. I've got it. The menu's in plain English. I don't need you to baby me.

Anthony's getting a bit frustrated, but again, he's taking it in stride. The SERVER arrives to take their drink order.

SERVER

Can I get you guys a drink?

Anthony opens his mouth to speak but Lara cuts him off.

LARA

Iced Tea. Unsweetened. Lemon. Crushed ice, not cubes. CLEAN glass.

The server stares at her for a moment, then moves to Anthony.

SERVER

For you, sir?

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY

I'd like a Thai Iced Tea, please.

The server smiles back at Anthony, then rolls her eyes at Lara.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

So, Lara, what do you do?

Lara rolls her eyes.

LARA

You just gonna pretend that didn't happen, aren't you?

ANTHONY

I'm sorry?

LARA

You should be. Flirting with the server when we're supposed to be on a date.

Anthony stares blankly.

ANTHONY

What did I-

Lara puts up her hand.

LARA

What's done is done. Let's just move on, and try to keep your wandering eyes to yourself.

Anthony - baffled - is unsure what to say.

LARA (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm a partner at one of the larger law firms in the area. I won't tell you which one just yet, in case you turn out to be a stalker. I own my own home, paid for my car in cash and have quite a bit of liquid income.

Anthony nods. His Thai Iced Tea has arrived.

ANTHONY

That's impress-

LARA

Damn right. I have no children, no baby daddy drama, and no qualms about saying what's on my mind. Most men can't handle my independence. I've yet to meet a man who can deal...let alone match...me for who and what I have made myself into.

Anthony stares blankly. Before he can respond, the server returns.

SERVER

Are you all ready to order?

Lara snaps her neck and glares at the server.

LARA

Did I CALL you over here? Stop trying to flirt with my man and wait until we need you.

The server backs up, then storms off.

ANTHONY

Was that really necessary? She's just doing her j-

LARA

You taking up for her? That's nice. Real nice. Instead of looking out for your alleged date, you want to talk to some little server girl. Seriously, that's what's wrong with you...men.

She says the last word with such disgust and disdain, Anthony's trying hard to keep his cool. This woman is seriously pushing every possible button.

LARA (CONT'D)

So, I hear you have children. How many?

Anthony exhales and relaxes - or at least, attempts to.

ANTHONY

Two boys. Six and four. They're great.

Lara glares at him.

LARA

By the same woman?

Anthony grimaces.

ANTHONY

Yes. I'm guessing Ron didn't get to tell you much-

LARA

I don't talk to Ron at all, and when Tina said that Ron's friend was available, I figured why not?

(MORE)

LARA (CONT'D)

Can't be any sorrier than the last few men I've dealt with.

Anthony's face is dark. He's really had enough.

LARA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

So, you see them on weekends or something? More baby momma drama, I bet. Probably got child support issues too. You DO work, don't you?

Anthony stands, counts out enough money to pay the bill, tosses it onto the table, and turns. He walks away from the table toward the door. Lara jumps up and grabs his arm.

LARA (CONT'D)

Whoa! Where do you think you're going? I didn't say you could go. We're not done till I say we're done.

The entire restaurant goes silent and all eyes are on them. Anthony stares deep into her eyes - seemingly into her soul. She takes a step back but does not release her grip.

ANTHONY

I've been more than patient and more than kind with you. I don't know who did you wrong in your life and honestly I don't give a damn. The fact is your attitude and twisted view of people is what drives people away.

Lara's eyes widen in furious anger.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

No one is afraid of your success. They might be afraid that you'll bite their head off for trying to help you, or at least do something for you. The whole point of a relationship is you're supposed to get ahead together.

Anthony returns to the table and takes a final sip of his drink.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

But see, you want to be all tough and hard and think men are useless and not worthy. Nobody WANTS to deal with you because you're a b-

- Lara smirks, waiting for the word. Anthony catches her smirk and continues -

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 - broken, wounded, pitiful  
 individual who never bothered to  
 try and heal after she got hurt.  
 You take all that baggage and just  
 keep adding to it.

Lara rolls her eyes and cranes her neck in defiance.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Oh, and one more thing. Don't ever  
 assume anything about a man's  
 relationship with his children. I  
 don't care what you think the  
 circumstances are, do that again...  
 (a beat) On second thought, you're  
 not worth any more of my energy.

Anthony heads straight out of the door. Lara stands in the aftermath, irritated. The restaurant murmurs quietly.

INT. ANTHONY'S CAR (IN MOTION) - NIGHT

Anthony activates the speakerphone in his car as he drives the night streets.

RON (O.S.)  
 Hey, man...I didn't think I'd be  
 hearing from you this early. How'd  
 it-

ANTHONY  
 Unmitigated disaster. Unspeakable  
 horrors. Need I say more?

Anthony runs his hand over his head.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Seriously, what the hell was your  
 wife thinking when she set that one  
 up?

RON (O.S.)  
 (laughs) It couldn't have been that  
 bad, could it?

ANTHONY

She was all, 'I don't need a man, don't help me, don't even breathe in my general direction you evil useless man you.' Had the nerve to talk shit about my relationship with my kids, too. Child support insinuations, all of it. Every bad stereotype, ever.

Ron bursts into laughter.

RON (O.S.)

You gotta be kidding me. I think my wife was thinking that you could show her a good time. She hasn't had a date - well, a good one - in a pretty long while.

Anthony scoffs.

ANTHONY

Can't imagine why. I'm not one to use the B word, but...if there was one occasion where I felt the desire, this was it.

RON (O.S.)

Man. I'm sorry...

ANTHONY

I finally had to tell her about herself. (exhales) I'm done. Seriously, I'm done. I gave it the old college try, but this is ridiculous. No more setups, no more dates. I'm done.

RON (O.S.)

Don't say that, man, there's-

ANTHONY

Don't wanna hear it. I'll talk to you later bro. And tell your wife I'm mad at her.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Anthony concentrates on a logo design on his computer. As he manipulates the text and colors, a chill comes over him.

LARA (O.S.)

Anthony.

Anthony whirls around in his chair to find Lara standing in front of him.

ANTHONY

Aw, shit.

Lara - dressed in a smart and sexy business suit - leans down to face him.

LARA

You know, no one's ever spoken to me like that before. It's all I can think about now.

Anthony is completely baffled.

LARA (CONT'D)

Someone finally put me in my place...and I like that.

ANTHONY

You...do?

Lara smiles seductively and caresses his face. Anthony is in complete disbelief. She slides her hand behind her back with her left hand as her fingers slide down his face to his chest. Her hand slides inside his shirt as she leans in, closer and closer, closing her eyes and pursing her lips for a kiss.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You've got to be kidding-

She suddenly jerks away from him! Her other hand flashes from behind her back producing a Desert Eagle handgun that she points right in his face. Anthony leans back as far as he can in his chair.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Yeah, that tracks.

Lara smiles sinisterly, still pointing the gun. Her hand is steady and her demeanor is cold.

LARA

Nobody makes a fool of me in public. Especially not some self righteous...MAN. You think you're SO good, don't you? Well, you're just a bad one waiting to happen, like a wolf in cheap clothing.

ANTHONY  
 (pauses) ...Wolf in SHEEP's clothing.  
 Sheep.

LARA  
 Sheep don't wear clothes, asshole.  
 And hello, I have a gun.

Lara glares at him as she waves it.

ANTHONY  
 Sorry.

LARA  
 Sorry. Yeah, you're sorry. You're  
 sorry and tired like every other  
 man. That's ok though, I don't need  
 a man, and I don't...need...you.

Lara points the gun. Anthony -in slow motion- tries to go for  
 it but Lara pulls the trigger and--

ANTHONY  
 NO!!

Anthony snaps awake and falls out of his chair onto the  
 floor. He gasps for air, regaining his composure, grateful to  
 be back in reality.

TITLE CARD: BLUE MONDAY

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Anthony drops off the boys at Mrs. Richter's as usual. He  
 hugs them goodbye and turns toward the door. Carolyn is  
 coming down the stairs.

CAROLYN  
 Hey, Anthony! How are you today?

Anthony musters a weak smile.

ANTHONY  
 I'm ok. You?

Carolyn sees the expression on Anthony's face and smiles.

CAROLYN  
 You're not a very good liar.

ANTHONY

You're right. Maybe I'll tell you about it some time.

CAROLYN

Why don't you tell me over dinner? I could stand to get out too. What do you say?

He looks at her, noticing her natural beauty, but shakes his head.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

(sighs) You know, I appreciate that, but I don't think that's such a good idea. I'm just not...in a good place right now.

Carolyn sighs.

CAROLYN

That's really too bad. I wish you were up to it. (a beat) I've got to pack.

Anthony stops in his tracks.

ANTHONY

What do you mean?

CAROLYN

I've got a job interview in Florida. I've got to leave later today. That's what I wanted to tell you.

Anthony looks dejected for a moment. He hardens his face and stiffens up - hiding his disappointment.

ANTHONY

Well, you do what you gotta do then. Hope it goes well for you.

Carolyn stares at him - hurt.

CAROLYN

Gee, thanks. I'll miss you too.

Anthony shakes off his attitude.

ANTHONY

I'm sorry, I just...ugh. When will you be back?

CAROLYN

Don't bother. You're clearly not in the mood and I don't feel like trying to talk to someone who doesn't want to be talked to. Maybe I'll see you in a few weeks.

Carolyn turns her back. Anthony opens his mouth to speak, but no words come. Anthony opens the door and walks to his car without looking back. Behind him, Carolyn turns and watches him - clearly disappointed - as he gets in the car.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Bye.

Carolyn watches as he drives off.

TITLE CARD: TWO WEEKS LATER, CALL IT STORMY MONDAY

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony slumps on the couch. He flips through the channels aimlessly. He's clearly sad. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a small folded piece of paper. It's the sketch Carolyn did of her favorite Animaniac, Dot. He smiles at it, then grows sad again. He's clearly missing her.

ANTHONY

Can't believe I never got her number. I can't believe I'm going through...withdrawal or something. I can't believe I'm talking to myself.

Across the room his phone vibrates. He leaps to his feet and grabs it. It's not Carolyn, it's -

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Jacqueline.

He reluctantly answers.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hello?

There's a long pause.

JACQUELINE

Anthony...I need you. We got in a huge fight. Can I come over? The boys are asleep, right?

Anthony sighs audibly.

ANTHONY  
Sure. Come on over.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony opens the door for Jacqueline. Her makeup is smudged and her eyes are wet. She immediately buries her face in Anthony's shoulder and sobs. He pats her on the head.

ANTHONY (HALF HEARTED)  
There, there. It'll be ok.

Jacqueline continues to sob into his chest. Anthony looks skyward for some sort of divine intervention. He leads her to the couch where they sit down.

JACQUELINE  
We had a big fight. I was jealous because I caught him looking at some bitch in the grocery store line. When I told him I didn't like it, he got mad and...and...

She breaks into tears again. Anthony looks completely disinterested but goes through the motions of calming her.

ANTHONY  
...and he left, right? And you don't know what you're gonna do? That about right?

Jacqueline nods. Anthony looks for the TV remote as she sobs into his shirt - yet again. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the little doodle again.

JACQUELINE  
I mean, why does this keep happening? I don't get it...why's he like this?

Anthony looks at her.

ANTHONY  
(under his breath) Maybe he's not the problem.

Jacqueline ignores him.

JACQUELINE

He just doesn't get it. Why can't he be easy, and simple, like you? If it weren't for how good he is in bed, I'd really be done with his ass, you know?

Anthony rolls his eyes up to the ceiling.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

I just...I'm just glad I've got you to call when things go wrong.

Anthony looks longingly at the doodle again over Jacqueline's shoulder.

TITLE CARD: TWO MORE WEEKS LATER, THE TALE OF THE MAGIC THURSDAY

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Anthony walks slowly to the front door. Before he can knock, Carolyn opens it. Their eyes meet and for the first time in a month, Anthony looks genuinely happy. Behind them, Mrs. Richter and the boys are playing with toys on the living room floor.

CAROLYN

Hey, Anthony! It's nice to see you!

ANTHONY

It's really good to see you, too...

Carolyn hugs him. He's not sure how to react at first, but it's nice. He hugs her back. They seem to have trouble letting each other go.

CAROLYN

I thought you might've needed that. I know I did.

Anthony smiles, genuinely touched.

ANTHONY

I did, actually. Thank you...I'm sorry about when you left, I-

Carolyn waves him off.

CAROLYN

I have a soft spot for wounded animals too, so don't go getting a big head about it.

Anthony laughs. Mrs. Richter watches the exchange with a smirk.

MRS. RICHTER

So, Anthony, now that Carolyn's back, I think you guys need to get caught up. I heard about this great place that has an open mic poetry night on Wednesdays. Why don't you two go check it out?

Carolyn and Anthony both stare at Mrs. Richter.

ANTHONY

Well, I...uh...

Carolyn looks at Anthony, then back at Mrs. Richter who winks at her.

MRS. RICHTER

Come on, Anthony. I'll watch the boys, and you show Carolyn a nice night. Do it as a favor for me. This poor child's been away for the last several weeks with nothing to do but look for work.

Carolyn puts up her hands to stop her.

CAROLYN

Actually, Auntie, I asked Anthony to join me for dinner before I left but he turned me down.

Anthony - embarrassed - starts to speak but Mrs. Richter cuts him off.

MRS. RICHTER

Well that's just mean, Anthony, you turned down this lovely lady? You should be ashamed.

Anthony sees that all eyes - even his kids - are now on him.

ANTHONY

I was just...I was off to a bad start that morning. I'm really sorry about that, Carolyn.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

It wasn't anything against you at all, and I'd be honored to take you out.

He exhales and smiles awkwardly. Carolyn looks to Mrs. Richter.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

It'd be more than a pleasure, Carolyn...honestly.

Mrs. Richter claps her hands and stands to get the boys' belongings.

MRS. RICHTER

Excellent! Wednesday after work, go home and clean yourself up, then come pick up Carolyn by 7:30. Show starts at 8 and you'll want to get good seats.

Anthony looks to Carolyn. She's rather amused.

CAROLYN

I like seeing you squirm.

ANTHONY

Clearly.

He smirks at her.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

But don't go getting a big head about it or anything.

She punches him in the arm. She's stronger than he expected.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Ow!

They laugh as Mrs. Richter returns with the boys.

MRS. RICHTER

All right boys. Have a great night, and Anthony, don't forget. Wednesday night. Be on time, please.

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony sits in the center of his bed. His laptop is open in front of him to his facespace.com page.

He's scrolling through status updates and videos when his cell phone vibrates. He grabs the phone without looking at it and answers.

ANTHONY

Hello?

JEANETTE (O.S.)

Good evening, sir.

ANTHONY

Heyyyy, what's up?

CUT TO:

INT. JEANETTE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jeanette is dressed in her robe and some fuzzy bunny slippers. She's standing at the window looking out over the city's skyline.

JEANETTE

I was just calling to continue our conversation from a few weeks ago. Things've just been mad busy.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

No problemo. I actually wasn't expecting a call back so soon. To what do I owe this pleasure?

Jeanette paces her apartment.

JEANETTE

I really just wanted to check on you. You sounded a bit...distracted last time we spoke. Bringing up the past and everything, just seemed out of the ordinary.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony reclines on his bed. He strokes his goatee as he considers Jeanette's words.

ANTHONY

I think I just had a lot of bad experiences...A lot of dates that ended in nothing short of disaster.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
I guess I just wanted to make sure  
I wasn't missing an opportunity.

JEANETTE (O.S.)  
I see.

Anthony smiles warmly.

ANTHONY  
But you know, I realized after our  
conversation that some people, like  
us, really just work better as  
friends. I'm glad we're friends,  
Jeanette.

CUT TO:

INT. JEANETTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jeanette lays on her plush couch and puts her feet up.

JEANETTE  
Me too, Antonio. Me too.

A beat.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)  
So tell me what's new in your  
world?

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
(pauses) Well, I've got this...date  
coming up. Sort of a setup by my  
kids' sitter with her niece.

Jeanette laughs as she gets more comfortable.

JEANETTE  
So what, is she like, 12 or  
something?

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony laughs.

ANTHONY  
If that were the case, I'd have  
Chris Hansen from 'To Catch a  
Predator' pop up during the date.  
(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
 'Why don't you have a seat? Right  
 over there.'

Jeanette bursts into laughter over the phone.

JEANETTE (O.S.)  
 Hilarious!

Anthony sits on the edge of his bed.

ANTHONY  
 It's just that I've had nothing but  
 bad dates for the last year  
 since...she who will not be named...and  
 it's really been discouraging, to  
 say the least.

CUT TO:

INT. JEANETTE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jeanette is very comfortable on her couch now, curled up in a  
 warm looking little ball with a blanket pulled over her.

JEANETTE  
 I understand. It's really easy to  
 get discouraged when it seems like  
 everyone else is insane. But you've  
 got something over the rest of us.  
 You actually did find someone you  
 wanted to spend the rest of your  
 life with - and vice versa.

She reaches over and picks up a glass of wine, sips it, and  
 returns it to the table.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)  
 Even though it ended the way that  
 it did, as unfortunate as that is,  
 you've already experienced  
 something most of us search the  
 world to find. You actually know  
 for a fact that it exists. Isn't  
 that worth going through as many  
 bad dates as you have to so that  
 you can find that again?

ANTHONY (O.S.)  
 I hate it when you make sense. Go  
 back to being all corporate and  
 stuff, will you?

She smiles.

JEANETTE

Well, now that I've solved your problem, I'm going to sleep. I've got a bunch of boring conference calls in the morning I'd rather not sleep through. Good night, Antonio.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTHONY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Anthony ends the call. He exhales deeply as he closes his laptop and stretches. He undresses and puts on his sweatpants and climbs into bed. He closes his eyes. Suddenly he's aware there's someone in bed with him.

RENEE (O.S.)

So. This is your new bedroom. Nicer than I expected.

Anthony opens his eyes and looks over at her. She's leaning back against the headboard with her legs under the covers as though she belongs there. It's RENEE (33, beautiful, with really long hair), his deceased wife.

ANTHONY

Renee? How are you here? You...died..

RENEE

Yeah, well, you needed someone to give you some guidance. Your track record as of late is...well, sad.

Anthony stares at her for a moment, then smirks.

ANTHONY

Even from beyond the grave, you still gotta give me a hard time, huh?

Renee smiles.

RENEE

It's part of why you fell in love with me. Now, as for these last several dates you've been on...seriously, you can do better.

ANTHONY

It's not my fault all they're all crazy.

RENEE

Isn't it, though? Maybe all the women you've dated recently have had some severe issues, but the real common denominator is you.

Anthony sits up and looks at her.

ANTHONY

Meaning?

RENEE

Meaning, instead of being so focused on just finding SOMEBODY, maybe you should focus on finding the RIGHT somebody. And you can't find that Ms. Right without being Mr. Right yourself. You're a good man, Anthony, but you've got some issues too.

Anthony exhales.

RENEE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

You've gotta figure out what you really want...what's best for you and what's best for our boys.

ANTHONY

I see your point. Fact is, nobody's perfect. And nobody can replace you.

Renee smiles.

RENEE

Nobody said you had to replace me. And furthermore, you can't. But what I am saying is that you deserve to be happy. Nobody's perfect - not even me - but there is such a thing as perfect for you. Try not to make the same mistakes with the next one, ok?

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY

I love you Renee. I miss you so much. And the boys do too.

RENEE

I know. I love you too, but it's OK to move on.

(MORE)

RENEE (CONT'D)

Just don't be an ass about it. And for fuck's sake, do better than that last chick. That was just embarrassing.

Anthony laughs, closing his eyes, then she's gone.

ANTHONY

Where-

Anthony suddenly jerks awake. He smiles at his epiphany.

TITLE CARD: WEDNESDAY

EXT. MRS. RICHTER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Anthony pulls up in front of Mrs. Richter's house. His cell vibrates just as he gets out of the car. It's Jacquelyn. Anthony rolls his eyes and hesitantly answers.

ANTHONY

Hello?

A beat.

JACQUELYN (O.S.)

Anthony...I...he left again. My life is over. I need you. Come over.

Anthony looks up at the sky. He paces back and forth.

JACQUELYN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? I said I need you...

Anthony looks to Mrs. Richter's house. He shakes his head.

ANTHONY

Not this time, Jacquelyn. You're the one that keeps making the decision to stay with this loser, you need to sort it out on your own.

A beat.

ANTHONY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I mean, come on, really, I only hear from you when things've gone wrong with your man.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

THEN you call me crying and sobbing, I come over to help because I genuinely care, you get to feel all warm and fuzzy, and then you go back to his triflin' ass.

JACQUELYN (O.S.)

This is how you treat a friend?

ANTHONY

No. But you haven't exactly been a friend to me either. And let's face it, saying that you'd have the perfect man if you put my personality together with your current man...that's just wrong. Maybe you'll get it one day. Till then, don't call looking to emotionally ejaculate on me any more.

Anthony ends the call. He exhales and looks skyward. A smile crosses his face. His phone vibrates - Jacquelyn again - and he ignores it. He walks to the front door and knocks. Mrs. Richter answers.

MRS. RICHTER

Anthony! I like that you're on time. Come on in.

INT. MRS. RICHTER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Mrs. Richter leads Anthony into the living room. The boys are watching television and barely notice him. He waves his hand in front of their faces.

ANTHONY

Boys...hellooooo?

They finally snap out of their television induced daze.

XANDER

Hey Daddy! Mrs. Richter says we can stay the night!

Ashton gives Anthony a hug around his leg.

ASHTON

Can we Daddy? Pleaaase?

Anthony smiles at the boys.

ANTHONY

OK, boys, I guess so. But you have to promise to be on your BEST behavior. No tying her to chairs or swinging from the chandelier, ok?

The boys literally jump for joy. Mrs. Richter's attention is diverted to the stairs. It's Carolyn. She's quite the vision - meriting a slow motion entrance.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Helloooooo, Nurse.

Carolyn smiles, flattered and getting the reference.

CAROLYN

Cute. Hope I didn't keep you waiting long.

Anthony nods.

ANTHONY

Ages. Been waiting ages.

Mrs. Richter smiles at their moment. She puts her hands on the boys' shoulders.

MRS. RICHTER

It's gonna be a good night, boys. A good night indeed.

Mrs. Richter clears her throat, getting their attention back.

MRS. RICHTER (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

OK, you two. Have a good time tonight, and don't worry about the little ones. I've got them covered.

Anthony extends his arm and Carolyn takes it. He escorts her out the door.

MRS. RICHTER (CONT'D)

A good night indeed.

Mrs. Richter watches through the window as the car pulls away.

CUT TO:

INT. BUSBOYS AND POETS - NIGHT

Anthony and Carolyn sit down at a table with a good view of the mic. They've arrived just before the last minute rush.

CAROLYN

I absolutely LOVE poetry nights. I really like watching people bare their souls, you know? It's almost like they're...exposing themselves to the world.

ANTHONY

(smirks) How very naughty of you to say.

Carolyn laughs and punches him in the arm.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Ow! I'm gonna have to work out a lot more if you're gonna keep doing that.

CAROLYN

Wait, wait, it's starting.

The MC stands at the mic. The audience roars to life with applause.

MC

How ya'll doin' tonight?

The crowd cheers.

MC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I said, how ya'll doin' tonight?

Again, the crowd cheers, louder. Anthony and Carolyn cheer and yell.

MC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

All right, all right. We've got a great lineup for you tonight, some new up-and-comers that I know you're gonna love. First up, Malcolm from District Heights.

The crowd applauds. Anthony and Carolyn settle in for the first performer. MALCOLM, 30something, tall and gangly with long locks steps to the mic. The audience snaps.

MALCOLM

Thank you, thank you. This piece is entitled, "Why?"

Anthony looks over at Carolyn, who is excited at the prospect of hearing good poetry. He smiles at the prospect of a potentially good date.

MALCOLM (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 (screams) WHYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY? I ask myself as I - drive home from - work with my - locks all dish-ev-eled. I - get in the car and - I call my wife - but there's - no answer. I speed home - I know - there's something - wrong. I step through the - dooooooor - a ringadingdong - and I hear - a noise. Is it a robber? I ask - myself. I get my - baseball - America's pastime - bat - a Louisville Slugger that my - deadbeat daddy gave me on a birthday many years ago and I asked myself WHYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY aren't you here for me any more Papa and why do you call yourself a man when you can't even come home to my momma and take care of your baby at home  
 -

He inhales deeply. The audience snaps. Anthony looks baffled at their response. He looks to Carolyn who looks like she's about to burst with laughter. Malcolm exhales sharply and inhales again.

MALCOLM (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 But. I. Di. Gress. My bat in my hand, I step into the - hallway. More. Noises. Louder. Is my wife hurt? Is someone attacking her? I creep up on - the door - and I push it open - slowly - and there she is. THERE SHE IS. FREAKING SOME DUDE I AIN'T NEVER SEEN BEFORE AND LOVING IT AND I DON'T BELIEVE MY EYES BUT I GO - out of the door. And leave. My house. And get in my car. And. I. Drive. A. Way. From. The. Scene. WHYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY? I CRY. Thank you.

The audience snaps its approval. Anthony and Carolyn both look at each other and laugh.

CAROLYN  
 What the hell was that?

ANTHONY  
 Therapy?

They both laugh. The MC returns to the mic.

MC

All right, all right. Thank you for that...rousing...piece. Next up, Serena from - as she puts it - around the way.

SERENA (40s, average build) steps up to the mic. The audience snaps.

SERENA

This is called, My Haiku.

Serena pauses, stretches skyward as though to invoke the spirits above, then downward to the floor, then her arms extend outward. She raises one hand and counts each syllable as she says it -

SERENA (CONT'D)

This is my haiku. You don't like it, go to school. Kiss MY ass, suckas.

She drops the mic and walks away. Feedback echoes through the speakers. The audience - dumbfounded - finally snaps out of respect for the craft rather than appreciation for her...unique...poem.

MC

Yeahhh. Thanks for that. Next up, Lara from Uptown.

Yes, it's THAT Lara. She steps to the mic and looks out into the audience. Mercifully she doesn't see Anthony.

LARA

Thank you. This is titled, No Man.

Anthony looks nervous but tries to keep his cool. Lara inhales deeply.

LARA (CONT'D)

I don't NEED a man for ANYTHING. I don't need him to cut my grass, pay for my class, give me no sass, or spank my ass. I don't NEED a man to order my food, improve my mood, I don't need you, dude.

Anthony shakes his head in anticipation of the male-bashing that's about to occur.

LARA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I am just fine by myself, you useless little elf;

(MORE)

LARA (CONT'D)

I've got my health, I've got my wealth, and that's ALL I need. Man, you just make my pockets bleed. It's that sort of thing that makes my anger seethe. Especially since your salary's like chicken feed.

Carolyn leans over to Anthony.

CAROLYN

(whispers) This girl's got issues.

Anthony snickers.

LARA (CONT'D)

I don't need your sperm, your messy little worms. You make me squirm with your nasty, nasty germs. I don't need you for pleasure, I got something against which you can't begin to measure...

CAROLYN

(whispers) Please, PLEASE don't let her pull anything naughty out of her purse...

Anthony stifles a laugh.

LARA

...So back up off me, with your X and your Y, take your damn hands off of my thigh and get to steppin', 'fore you get punched in your eye. I don't need you, man, you're not part of the plan.

Lara drops the mic. Feedback echoes through the room. The room remains silent, save for a few women - her GIRLFRIENDS - who shout in support.

GIRLFRIENDS

That's right girl! You GO! Tell 'em, sista! EFF these MEN!

The MC returns to the mic.

MC

I'm not touching that one with a ten foot pole. Thank you for...that. Next up...

CUT TO:

INT. BUSBOYS AND POETS - NIGHT

Anthony and Carolyn are enjoying a glass of wine. They're clearly enjoying each other's company.

CAROLYN

You know, that angry chick gives  
the rest of us a bad name.

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY

You weren't a fan?

Carolyn laughs.

CAROLYN

Uh, NO. Somebody screwed that girl  
up for good. I mean, I'm all for  
being independent and taking care  
of yours, but there's a difference  
between being independent and  
hating men. THAT is a man-hater.

Anthony nods and sips his wine.

ANTHONY

You have no idea. That was just a  
taste of how deep her disdain for  
men goes. I actually went on a date  
with her once.

Carolyn nearly spits out her wine.

CAROLYN

You've got to be kidding me. I  
thought you had better taste than  
that.

Anthony smirks.

ANTHONY

It was a setup, smartypants. I  
wound up telling her about herself.  
I don't think she appreciated it.

CAROLYN

I bet she didn't...I'm surprised  
you're still in one - oh shit.

Anthony sees Carolyn's expression as she stares over his shoulder.

ANTHONY

She's right behind me, isn't she?

Carolyn nods. Anthony turns around in his seat to face Lara.

LARA

So. Found yourself some little hoochie that would give in to your little manly desires, eh?

Anthony stands up.

ANTHONY

Watch your mouth, Lara. Nobody said or did any-

Lara puts her hand in Anthony's face and turns to Carolyn. Lara cranes her neck around and sucks her teeth.

LARA

Yeah, you think you cute, don't you?

Carolyn stands up.

CAROLYN

Excuse me?

LARA

Excuse YOU. You can just sit back down little girl. I don't know why you gettin' up to defend some sorry man.

Carolyn stares at her.

CAROLYN

Are you for real?

Lara looks her up and down. She sucks her teeth and crosses her arms.

LARA

How much did he pay you for toni-

Anthony steps towards Lara - but isn't faster than Carolyn - who delivers a BEAUTIFUL right hook that drops Lara to the floor. She's out cold.

MC (FROM THE STAGE)

DAAAAAAAAMMMMMMMNNNNNNNNNNNN!!!!

The audience gasps in shock and horror. Lara's girlfriends step toward Carolyn, but thinking better of it, they tend to Lara. Anthony grins as he leads Carolyn out the door.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Anthony and Carolyn walk slowly down the night streets and through a (well lit) park. They're holding hands and very comfortable with each other. It's cold enough to see one's breath. Anthony removes his overcoat and wraps it around Carolyn. They finally sit on a park bench.

CAROLYN

Quite a night...

ANTHONY

You said it. I'm really amazed at how tonight's gone.

Carolyn sits up and looks at Anthony.

CAROLYN

You know, I have to be honest. I'm really sorry about how that whole thing went. She just pushed my buttons, you know? I hate it when women like that try to speak for the rest of us.

Anthony looks into her eyes. She's clearly bothered by her reaction to Lara and breaks his gaze.

CAROLYN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I really wanted you to have a good time tonight and-

Anthony squeezes her hand. He puts his hand to her cheek, bringing her eyes to meet his.

ANTHONY

Stop. Please. This is, without any exaggeration or BS, the absolute best date I've had in ages. And you...you're something special. You're not crazy. Or at least, you're a crazy matches nicely with mine.

Carolyn smiles shyly.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Plus, I think you gave her exactly what she deserved.

(MORE)

## ANTHONY (CONT'D)

On behalf of all the men she's ever dealt with, including me, thank you.

She laughs. Anthony leans in for the kiss. Closer. Closer. Their eyes close and - they miss. Their teeth kind of collide and it's a little awkward, but they both laugh and try again. This time, it's magic. Anthony puts his arm around Carolyn as they snuggle closer and enjoy the peace of the night.

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD: THREE MONTHS LATER, PREACHER ON A SUNDAY MORNING

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A HUGE wedding is concluding. The bride and groom kiss! Everyone cheers and applauds as the new couple steps down from the stage and walks down the aisle as they're announced by the MINISTER (50s) -

MINISTER

Presenting for the first time MR.  
AND MRS. THOMAS AND CHRISTINA  
SLOAN!

Following them is best man Anthony and Christina's Maid-of-Honor, and the rest of the bridal party.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION HALL - DAY

Anthony sits at a table with Ron, Leroy and the other members of the bridal party and their dates. The seat next to him is empty.

ANTHONY

That was a great ceremony. Not too long. Short and to the point, thankfully.

Someone takes the seat next to him. He looks over to see Carolyn joining him. They kiss.

CAROLYN

Hey, sweetie. Bathroom line was ridiculous...But whatever. You looked good up there.

She smiles warmly. Anthony nearly blushes.

ANTHONY

Thanks Hunny Bunny. Trying to impress you, that's all that is.

She laughs and rubs his shoulder.

CAROLYN

You continue to impress me daily.

ANTHONY

Oh, wait, here we go...

Anthony points as Leroy grabs the mic.

LEROY

This is a song of my own composition that I'm dedicating to the happy couple. It's called, "Becoming You".

The ladies in the audience coo in anticipation of the ballad.

LEROY (CONT'D)

(singing his best Luther Vandross impression) Youuuu...and I, together as one, you'll always beeee, my sweet honeyyyy bun, the milk in my coffee, my sweet sweet toffee. You...and I...we're so hiiiiigh...

Ron grabs the mic away from Leroy and everyone applauds. Music begins to play in the background. It's that timeless classic "The Electric Slide", obligatory to EVERY wedding. Everyone rushes the dance floor and lines up. Carolyn grabs Anthony's hand.

ANTHONY

Come on, really? EVERY wedding I go to...

Carolyn pulls him out of his chair. Anthony goes - grudgingly - but Carolyn cheers him up.

CAROLYN

Come onnnnn! Stop being a stick in the mud and dance with me!

They embrace and kiss as the bride and groom jump into the line. Thomas pats Anthony on the shoulder as he passes. Anthony and Carolyn fall in line and join the crowd dancing as we

FADE OUT.

THE END.