

KANGAROO TIME

By

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**FADE IN:**

**SUPERIMPOSE ON BLACK SCREEN:**

"A man is not complete until he has seen the baby he has made."

- Sammy Davis, Jr.

**EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY**

A dim day...

Yet a few hundred FANS parade on the sidelines. SCREAMS and CHEERS spur on each of the two soccer TEAMS.

The scoreboard indicates a 1-1 game.

Time on clock: 90:09

One team sports white shirts and a big union jack on their midriffs. They frantically defend the opposite team, in red and black striped uniforms. A forward, NUMBER 9, streaks through, latches on to a pass from NUMBER 11.

**ON THE SIDELINES**

Coach STEPHEN MARINO (49), a burly, white-pale guy with an infectious smile, that he usually hides from his players holds back the excited SUBS. Could this be the moment...

**ON THE FIELD**

At the moment NUMBER 9 sets to tap the ball into the net--

Two BRIT-PLAYERS take him out.

The REF blows his whistle, points to the penalty spot.

Bedlam pursues. Shoves and pushes. One Brit clutches his face and faints to the floor...

PLAYERS from both benches spill onto the field. DADS and assistant COACHES intervene. Pull players apart.

Coach Marino joins two PARAMEDICS as they attend to Number 9.

Some players approach... wince, look away at the terrible injury to Number 9.

Players finally calm down. A gangly player- Number 13- takes the BLACK & ORANGE ball from the Ref. This is AL MARINO, (17) bi-racial. Sports a mixture of confident swagger, boyish charm and coolness personified.

Looks over at the commotion by the stretcher.

Coach Marino pumps his fist at Al. A plastic, purple bracelet prominent on his wrist. Al just winks back.

An ambulance backs up to the other goal. Number 9 gives a thumbs up as he's stretched off.

Al turns away. Stares at the goal.

#### **ON THE SIDELINES**

A new commotion, MOMS shout for other Coaches to help.

#### **ON THE FIELD**

Al places the ball on the spot. Glances once at the GOALKEEPER. As he strides back, his concentration breaks.

#### **ON THE SIDELINES**

He stares at a 2nd ambulance arriving right behind his team's bench.

REF

Hurry up, big shot. I'm about to call the game.

The Ref blows on his whistle. Al runs up, does a slight shimmy -- Nails the ball high into the net.

GOAL. A goal to win a championship.

Teammates congratulate him. The Ref blows the whistle.

Al glances over to the opposite sideline, total deflation.

He zips his eyes between both ambulances.

He runs through the two sets of players shaking hands, stops cold as he sees Coach Marino supine on the stretcher.

He looks down to his dad's wrist, stares at the purple bracelet, then approaches.

A Paramedic pushes the stretcher up.

A second Paramedic beckons Al to jump up into the ambulance.

The first Paramedic performs CPR.

The doors shut behind.

SLAM

**EXT. CITY - DAY**

The clouds caress the big city buildings.

**SUPER: EIGHT YEARS LATER****INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

A vast, spacious room.

By the window stands KARIDA MANNING, (29), immaculate hairstyle, diamond stud earrings, Louis Vuitton bracelet and skin that sees quarterly Botox shots...and very PREGNANT.

In rushes --

Dean JOSEPH MANNING(65), a larger-than-life fellow; a confidence in his eyes that tells everyone he IS the boss.

Manning stops at one end of a long, opulent table.

MANNING

So, you dragged yourself in with  
the cat...Where the hell have you  
been for the past four months?

Karida looks at the distance between herself and Manning,  
doesn't budge.

As she turns to look outside, her belly-bump catches his  
attention.

MANNING

Oh no!

KARIDA

Yes, daddy. I'm preggers, tsk, and  
loving every minute of it.

Manning steps forward, stops as Karida places her hand gently  
onto the window.

She lets out an exasperated sigh.

Manning straightens his tie, cracks his knuckles, shuffles up  
to her.

He reaches for her shoulder, pulls his hand back. Follows her  
gaze outside, below.

MANNING

So, who's the father?

**EXT. OPEN PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS**

A bright, sunny day.

A motorbike pulls up, ANTONIO (24) - TONE for short, a lanky guy in super pressed scrubs, turns off the engine. He runs a Lysol wipe over his helmet. Stares into the mirror.

As he is about to step off the bike -- a sports car spins around him, revs a figure 8.

The motorbike collapses, with Tone pinned beneath. His helmet rolls into a bush.

The sports car SCREECHES to a halt.

Out of the passenger's side an Asian Girl rushes out. HIEN FOX, (31), short, with a face men of antiquity would have waged war over. Dressed in a sharp business suit.

She pops open the trunk, grabs a small I-Pad.

From the driver's side, out steps --

Al Marino (now 25). He beams a "Colgate-commercial" smile. All his fashion sense is focused on his styled, meticulous hair.

On his left wrist: the purple, plastic bracelet.

It reads - PERSEVERANCE.

Hien hands Al the I-Pad, tilts her head.

HIEN

My engine is still revved up...

He grabs her close, pulls her into a long, sexy kiss. Looks to the car.

HIEN

I'm too sore from this morning. Go.  
You'll be late for class.

Al shrugs his shoulders.

He glances up to the building, makes his way into the building's entrance like he owns the place.

**EXT. ENTRANCE TO CLINIC WAITING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

The entrance is marked: Signature Injury Clinic, with a heavy emphasis on the initial letters, S, I and C. It beams: SIC

**INT. HOSPITAL TRIAGE AREA - DAY**

Bedlam.

Al, now in scrubs, leaves the rest-room, struts in. Rubs his clean shaved face. Glances at the HALLOWEEN decor up on the walls. After two steps, he pauses, assesses the situation.

NURSE DEE, (44), African-American, the kind of nurse others look up to, shoves a brown patient chart into his chest.

NURSE DEE

Cutie-patutty is back. Room two.  
Then check the schedule. They need  
extra cover for tomorrow.

Al winks at her...

Opens the chart. Runs his finger down the left page. Sighs.  
Enters a

**PATIENT ROOM**

Seated next to a small desk: JENNA (19), deaf and cute as a button, with an urban, chic look about her. She could easily pass as a poster child for Lululemon or Go Jane. She and Al converse in American Sign Language (ASL).

AL

Hello again, Jenna. Nice to see  
you.

She nods.

He places the brown chart on the desk.

JENNA

So?

Al sits in the rolling stool next to her.

AL

Well young lady, the lab results  
are back and you have tested  
positive for Chlamydia.

Jenna sighs, tears fall down.

JENNA

What do I do?

AL

I'll go grab a clinician to come treat you, it's a bacterial infection so we--

JENNA

Not that bacteria, I meant the one I'm engaged to. He is screwing half the city...

AL

Oh, that one's not as easy to treat.

Jenna sits up, wipes away her tears. Nods to Al.

AL

Have you thought of leaving him? Do you have friends or family you can stay with?

JENNA

Maybe after I get my Green Card. Till then I'm stuck.

She pushes the chart away from her.

JENNA

On my copy could you change it to HIV? Maybe then he'll keep his dick away...

Al looks around the room. Rolls his chair to a cabinet, grabs at a brown small bag. He rolls back to the desk. Spills out the contents on top of the chart. Condoms.

He grabs the large, purple one. Opens it. A large, female condom dangles from his hand.

JENNA

I'm not having sex with a horse!

AL

No, silly. Look.

He shapes his left hand into an O shape. Takes the female condom in his right, twists the bottom part.

AL

You insert it here, like a tampon. This outer ring also protects your vulva. Best option to keep out any unwanted gifts he may come home with.

**INT. HOSPITAL PATIENT ROOM – CONTINUOUS**

A large group of STUDENTS, in scrubs, gather around Dean Manning, his twisted face screaming to everyone stay back and keep quiet.

Al joins the edge of the group, his eyes search next door.

Al's face lights up as he sees PRINCE (14), African-American, being wheeled to his room by an ORDERLY.

Manning straightens his tie, cracks his knuckles, shuffles up to the outside of a patient room.

MANNING

Here in Special Immunology, I would be breaking countless laws if I was to discuss a patient's diagnosis out in the open like this.

STUDENT ONE

Couldn't you whisper?

MANNING

Instead, I will ask general questions related to the slide show presentation I sent you all this morning.

The group all look at each other. Bemused.

Al shimmies from the group, enters Prince's

**PATIENT ROOM**

Where Prince rams his wheelchair into Al's leg.

AL

So... you're back.

PRINCE

Last treatment option now.

Prince wheels up to the window.

PRINCE

Promise me the day I can't go outside, you'll pull the damn plug.

Al steps next to the wheelchair. Prince leans his head against Al's arm. They both look outside at the really glorious day.

**INT. PATIENT ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Manning berates a FEMALE STUDENT.

MANNING

Rounds qualify as a class grade.  
You have to expect the unexpected.

Al slips back in between two PRETTY STUDENTS.

AL

Hey there --

MANNING

Marino. Question one. Why don't I  
expect the medical field to find a  
cure for HIV?

The whole group part like the Red Sea.

Al looks around at all the nervous, frightened faces. One  
RESIDENT bows in prayer.

AL

You did allude to the fact that  
although our bodies make non-  
neutralizing antibodies to HIV,  
there are twenty-two strains of the  
virus.

Manning lets out a sharp cough.

AL

This makes it virtually impossible  
for modern science to manufacture a  
one size fits all cure, although  
Big Pharma still pumps out --

MANNING

Let's move on to the next patient.

As the group moves, Tone joins Al. Tone looks up at Al,  
smiles with bromantic, envious charm.

AL

What happened to you?

Al looks Tone up and down. A cut on his chin, disheveled hair  
and his scrub top torn in half.

As Tone walks next to Al, his scrub bottom reveals a hole the  
size of a quarter, bright pink underwear shines through.

TONE

No idea. I went to park my bike,  
next minute I know frickin Dr.  
Davidson and three orderlies are  
pulling me from under my bike. I  
think a tornado or something blew  
in through our parking lot--

AL

...or something.

TONE

God knows where my helmet ended  
up...

Tone holds a clipboard tight to his chest.

AL

I'm famished. Boy, did I build up  
an appetite this morning.

A PRETTY BRUNETTE, JESS, (25) approaches Al. Jess sports a  
tight-fitting T-shirt of two capuchin monkeys escaping a cage  
with text: "SCREW RESEARCH."

JESS

Thanks again, Al. That paper you  
wrote for me was ace!

She leans into him, plants a wet kiss on his neck. She places  
a condom packet inside of his scrub pants pocket.

JESS

You know where the spare key is.

She rubs her fingers alongside his thigh, then mingles back  
into the group of Scrubs.

Tone practically gags.

TONE

Dude? The Ice-Queen? I've been  
panting over Jess for two months!

Al shrugs his shoulders.

TONE

I need a new strategy...

AL

What can I say? Our peers love a  
doc who knows his anatomy.

TONE

I really need to study harder...

A DARK-HAIRED GIRL rubs close to Tone. Gently beckons him to move up to the group. Flicks her hair.

Tone ignores her smile. Shimmies away.

TONE

So, after four dates I finally banged that new Freshman from Cyprus.

AL

Greek or Turkish?

TONE

I just told you, she is from Cyprus.

Tone flips up the cover sheet of the clipboard to reveal --

A crudely drawn WORLD MAP.

Three countries marked in black and two dozen in pink. Tone fills in the map of Cyprus with a black marker.

The Dark-Haired girl stares Tone down. Tone closes the map.

TONE

Watch out, dude. I'm up to four countries conquered now. Hot on your trail. The world of Club Med Students will soon be mine--

AL

Yeah right? Manute Bol in his hey-day can't keep up with me.

The cell phone in Al's scrub top blasts the ring tone from The Good, The Bad & The Ugly.

AL

(into the phone)

Huh? Tamara, suave, por favor. Que?

Al clicks the phone dead. Zombie-walks away from the group.

Tone notices someone to the side. He grabs Al by both arms.

TONE

Nice knowing you...

Tone bolts into the pack, knocks a few people down.

TONE

Nine, one, one emergency. Call one  
eight hundred four one one pain!

Al glances to the side.

From the dark doorway steps out--

Karida, with a brazen smile

Karida blocks Al's path.

Al swivels to look back as the group disappears around the  
corner.

Tone still shouts in a panic.

Karida drags Al into an

**EMPTY CONFERENCE ROOM**

KARIDA

Trick or treat?

Al cocks his head.

AL

Hey Kari. If I turn a trick, what  
treat do I...

Al finally notices her large baby-bump. He gulps.

KARI

We need to talk. I just had to tell  
my dad.

Al's face pales as his blood flow drains away.

AL

But...

He looks back at the door.

He reaches out for the wall as his knees buckle under.

AL

I just can't deal with this right  
now. I thought we agreed - FOUR  
MONTHS AGO...no bun in the oven.

**EXT. SIGNATURE INJURY CLINIC PARKING LOT - DAY**

Al, with a few day's stubble on his cheeks, scoops up the BLACK & ORANGE soccer ball with his left foot. Light snow falls.

KARIDA  
So, here's Houdini.

He smashes the ball against a wall.

AL  
Oooh, the shot just misses Manning.

She kicks off one of her high-heels.

KARIDA  
My fricking feet...Stop playing  
with your balls...we need to talk.

Al places the ball under his foot.

AL  
After options counseling you agreed  
to take care of this.

Karida struggles to put her shoe back on.

KARIDA  
I'm almost thirty. I chose the  
other option.

AL  
You planning on adoption?

KARIDA  
Oh, don't go all Juno on me.

Al twiddles with his bracelet.

KARIDA  
We have to sit and make plans. I'd  
prefer a natural birth. Just not  
here. Maybe we can find a doula.

AL  
Maybe you can find one.

Al looks her up and down.

AL  
And mas pronto.

Al looks up to the grey sky.

AL

Why did you change your mind? We both agreed this is a bad time for us to be parents.

KARIDA

I need you to show me a sense of responsibility here, Al.

AL

I've no sense of responsibility --

KARIDA

Time to go borrow some, coz we are having a baby.

AL

Look, I want to celebrate Father's Day one year, but not this one.

KARIDA

Too bad. Happy early, friggin Father's Day to ye.

Karida steps into Al's face. They stare each other down.

AL

Couldn't you have just gotten me a tie?

KARIDA

You can tie the cord!

She kicks at the ball, squirms from under Al's foot.

AL

How do I know it's mine!

KARIDA

Take a Dad Not Around test--

AL

That's not fair--

KARIDA

Neither is carrying around a bowling ball for nine months.

Karida storms off.

Al looks up to the second floor, sees Prince stare down at him. Prince offers a feeble wave.

Al doesn't wave back, buries his head into his hands.

**INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT**

STUDENTS in scrubs pack the room. A few DOCTORS in white lab coats mingle, too.

At the front of the room DOYLE ROYAL, M.D. (52), MEDICAL DIRECTOR turns on the microphone at a small podium.

He has attentive eyes, clean shaven, immaculately dressed in a shirt and tie, wears a doctor's white lab coat.

Royal strides away.

He takes a seat next to a cooler. Smiles at Al, two seats over. Royal takes out two water bottles.

Al fidgets in his seat, face down.

DOCTOR ROYAL

A few of us believe you've the best shot this year.

Doctor Royal hands Al a bottled water.

AL

Uh-huh.

Al opens the bottle, wipes the top, takes a swig.

DOCTOR ROYAL

Mrs. Manning chairs the County's Health Commission. We are lucky she supports this clinic.

AL

Yeah, I saw the family portrait on the tour years ago.

DOCTOR ROYAL

The Mannings are very, very important people. You'd do well to get on their good side.

MARCO PEREZ, (38), a tall, unassuming, muscular guy approaches, tightly hugs Royal.

Marco extends his hand out to Al.

MARCO

Hola.

DOCTOR ROYAL

Marco was recently certified as a yoga instructor.

Marco hands Al a flyer: it reads:

YOGAVATION WITH MARCO

Al feigns a smile. He sees Manning enter the room, leaves.

Al scans the room, spots the buffet table, makes his way to the far corner of the room.

He hides behind two STUDENTS.

These Students have accosted the THANKSGIVING feast laid out. Not a pretty sight...

Tone enters, approaches, fights a student for a turkey leg.

Manning taps the mic.

TONE

Clear the deck. Cornell, here I come.

AL

Only announcing the finalist today.

Within moments, like a crazed mob of kids, the students and faculty act out a rapid-fire session of musical chairs.

Everyone successfully finds a seat. Except Al.

Manning pulls out a slip of paper from an envelope.

MANNING

Upon completion of their structural change objective projects, one of our five seniors will win a residency spot at Cornell. Staff member and project number one is assigned to... Al Marino.

Al approaches the podium.

MANNING

I'll be watching you. Twenty four seven. I've ears and eyes all over this place. We will be joined at the hip for the next six months. You'll breathe first thing and I'll know what you ate for breakfast. Failure is not an option. Not an option.

**INT. HOSPITAL PATIENT ROOM – DAY**

Al shimmies into the room, ducks beneath a string of XMAS lights that dangle over the doorway.

Karida lies on a patient bench, rubs her belly bump.

KARIDA

I'm not a damn soccer ball.

Al turns away from Karida, bumps into SHERRI KLOSE, Psychologist (28), a slender, effortlessly gorgeous woman, with white-blond hair. Even through her very tired eyes he can see her eyes radiate with a dancing sparkle.

Karida struggles to sit up...gives in, plops down.

KARIDA

You're never around when I need you.

AL

One of those crazy days. My damn Bio-Ergonomics class ran late.

KARIDA

Yea, right. Probably banging some Freshman in the utility closet.

AL

...told me she was a Sophomore...

Sherri beckons Al to move closer.

SHERRI

We're not having a good day.

Al nods, turns his full attention to Karida.

AL

How you feeling, dear?

KARIDA

Go suck on razorblades!

Karida pouts.

SHERRI

She is very stressed out. You need to encourage her to get ...family support.

She opens the door, hesitates.

Pensive, she looks at Al; shakes her head, exits.

KARIDA

Tut. Checking out the Psych doc?

AL

You keep saying we're not a couple.

KARIDA

Well, I don't want you watering my rose garden or anything.

AL

If we're gonna be parents, maybe we should give us a go --

KARIDA

What are we, a skydiving tandem team? I don't think so.

AL

Glad we cleared that up then...

KARIDA

Did you at least review the list of baby names yet?

AL

Poker player all-stars?

Karida crosses her arms.

KARIDA

When these hormones kick up a few gears, I'll be calling you. Foot rubs, ice cream runs, sex --

AL

What? What!? No way. No sex. We're not a couple... remember?

At that moment, Karida's phone rings.

KARIDA

All of a sudden, my annoying step-mom wants to play nice.

AL

You need support, right?

KARIDA

Not getting much from you...

Al steps back, pulls on his plastic bracelet.

**INT. PRINCE'S PATIENT ROOM - DAY**

With fancy soccer skills, Al nudges the orange & black soccer ball onto Prince's lap.

PRINCE

No way we can sneak out. There's heavy security in the afternoons. Plus doctor Klose's coming today.

Al kneels down to fix his Crocs.

PRINCE

Pull your scrubs up, Al. Seeing your junk isn't on my bucket list.

Al pulls up his scrub bottom.

The boy, with a bit of effort, climbs into the wheelchair.

PRINCE

You know the worst thing about dying in this place?

Al

The food? Okay, seriously. What?

PRINCE

Being...Alone.

AL

Oh. Doctor Royal is searching. Give us some time.

PRINCE

That, I don't have.

Al scoots behind Prince, pushes the wheelchair out the room.

AL

We may still find your dad.

PRINCE

Screw that jerk! You should be looking for my godfather, Richy.

AL

I think it's policy we only search for next of kin.

PRINCE

When my mom went all whacko, Richy stood by me, man.

AL  
I didn't make the policy. Your  
godfather isn't next of kin --

PRINCE  
You wanna really help? Find Richy,  
not my sperm-donor-dad.

Prince coughs.

Al steps forward, but Prince waves him away.

**INT: HOSPITAL WARD - CONTINUOUS**

Prince is positioned in the door frame, ready to push off.

Ten feet from the room, in a corner of the ward, sits a  
LATINX security guard, TAMARA (60).

She views the security monitors with vigilance. Snacks on  
chips, her face contorts like a Boxer-dog chomping on a bee.

Al slides up to the desk. Tamara spins in her chair, gushes  
at Al. Al glances up to one of the monitors.

ON THE MONITOR:

Prince has yanked himself back. He's ready to go.

AL  
Te ves como si fueras de  
Sudamerica?

TAMARA  
Si, de la tierra caliente del Peru.

Al spins her chair. As Tamara whizzes around --

Prince's wheelchair flies forward.

Al bolts to the elevator. Turns around- in time to halt the  
oncoming wheelchair.

The elevator doors open. Out rush two ORDERLIES. They carry a  
demented INDIGENT on a stretcher.

An older, male security guard OFFICER ROLAND (62) approaches  
the elevator.

ROLAND  
Hey! Where in hell do you think you  
are taking him?!

The elevator door shuts.

**INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

High fives between Al and Prince.

Nurse Dee tilts her head.

NURSE DEE  
Going on a field trip, Sunshine?

Al solemnly shakes his head.

Prince tries to maneuver the wheelchair away from her. Whacks into Al as he attempts to seek refuge in a corner.

Al cocks his head to her.

AL  
It's New Year's Day. Fresh air will  
boost his white blood cells --

NURSE DEE  
Save your bullshit for those that  
give a damn. Ten minutes max.

Al bows his head.

AL  
Sure, Nurse Dee.

He pats Prince on the shoulder. Prince rubs the soccer ball.

NURSE DEE  
Then it's the maternity ward for  
you, player. With Manning Senior  
out of town, Queen K is on the  
prowl. She's bitching about you  
missing another Lamaze class.

AL  
I got a lot of reading to do.

NURSE DEE  
Well make sure you read being a dad  
for dummies, coz she looks like  
she's about to pop.

PRINCE  
Yea, Al. How did this happen? You  
say you always wear a rubber.

NURSE DEE  
I guess Trojan owes you a refund,  
then.

**INT. KARIDA'S APARTMENT - DAY**

This place smacks of money.

A young, cute LATINX girl, MONICA, (22), beckons a large, tough looking doula, ZEE (38) into the apartment.

Zee's thin T-shirt reveals her tattoos.

**INT. - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Monica follows Karida and Zee towards a HUMONGOUS Roman tub.

KARIDA

*...and then he has the audacity to say to me: and I quote that ass: I warned you. You're never gonna be truly sexy ever again. Never. Ever.*

Monica stands next to the ceramic tub. She dips a thermometer into the water.

Zee helps Karida step into the waist-level water. Zee enters the tub, opposite Karida. Zee grabs a remote, presses it.

All the lights dim. Soft music surrounds the room.

ZEE

Okay. Let's catch ourselves a baby. The water will allow for a more efficient uterine contraction and boost blood circulation.

Karida gently rocks her hips from side to side. A contraction overwhelms Karida.

KARIDA

Owww!

ZEE

Embrace the surges. I'm so excited for my first birthing experience...

As Zee looks down, sees the baby crowning--

She faints. Zee passes out, head first into the water.

SPLASH

Monica grabs a nearby phone. Frantically dials.

MONICA

Al, ayudame por favor!

**EXT. KARIDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - SAME TIME**

Al staggers away from a cab, holds an empty tequila bottle.

He trips over the curb, smacks into the side walk.

TED (71), the very old, gray-haired, should-be-retired-already doorman helps him up.

TED

Let me help you, sir.

Al shoves the bottle into Ted's grasp.

AL

Manning. Penthouse Four. I'm gonna be a dad soon, you know? But you better call nine-one-one first.

**INT. KARIDA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Al steps in, touches Monica's shoulder.

She raises her eyebrows, turns her head.

Al follows her into the

**BATHROOM**

AL

Let's get you to the hospital, Kari.

KARIDA

The baby is coming now. I don't want them to cut me open.

AL

I'm sure your dad can quickly reserve the whole West Wing.

KARIDA

Women have had natural births for centuries. Popping babies out in fields... and during wars. Ouch.

Al leans over the edge. He yanks Zee to the side. Monica runs around, helps Al prop up Zee.

KARIDA

AGH! Get this fucking baby OUT!

Al kicks off his Crocs, enters the water.

Karida straddles the edge of the tub.

AL

Monica. Apurate buscame quantes!

Al swivels to Zee. He feels for a pulse. Zee's body slips towards the water.

He kneels down in the water. Then hoists Zee up, out of the tub.

KARIDA

Remind me to cancel her last payment.

Al crouches in the water. Monica throws him a pair of bright pink washing up gloves. He comes up to grab a breath --

KARIDA

Can you grab it? Yank it out!

Al struggles to put the gloves on; a size or two too small.

AL

Not yet. Push! Keep breathing!

She slaps him across the face.

KARIDA

For being drunk.

AL

I had four shots.

She slaps him again.

KARIDA

For being late.

Al sees the baby's white, slimy head.

AL

Push! This baby needs to get out.

KARIDA

What do you know?

Al looks towards Zee passed out on the floor.

AL

A little more than your frickin birth partner.

Karida squeezes the side bars in pain.

KARIDA

How many books did you read? You're not a real doctor.

AL

You want Doctor Unconscious to go down and bob for your apple instead? Push.

KARIDA

I've changed my mind. Drive me to the hospital.

Karida SCREAMS. One more decibel, glass would shatter.

Al places his hands on the baby's head, glances towards his bracelet. With a gentle yank, Al pops out the baby.

Karida holds her hand to her mouth. She throws the baby a quick glance.

Al whips the baby from out the water, tenderly places it on Karida's bosom.

KARIDA

It's a...

AL

Girl.

Monica hands Al a towel. He partially wraps the baby in a loose swaddle.

AL

Best we keep the umbilical cord intact 'till EMS arrive.

KARIDA

Can I get dressed before they arrive?

AL

You ain't going anywhere 'till they cut and clamp you. I still need to get your placenta out, first.

Al turns his attention to the newborn, clears the mucous from the baby's eyes.

He places a bulb syringe inside the baby's nostrils with gentle, fatherly care.

He stares at the tiny, tiny baby, with a relaxed, beaming smile.

**INT. MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT**

Al steps back from the two large photos he plastered onto a wall. He glances at the empty crib.

Karida lies in bed. Al places a small cactus on the bed-side table. It sits next to a MASSIVE flower arrangement.

KARIDA

I see there's now a small prick in the room.

AL

The gift store had run out of those cool bamboo plants, and I only --

A loud KNOCK on the door. In step:

THE MANNINGS.

Dean Manning grunts at Al. Allows CATHERINE MANNING(42) into the room first. She is much younger than Manning. She is dressed to the nines and her gentle eyes give her an air of calm.

CATHERINE

I'm Karida's step-mom. Congratulations, young man. We are so grateful for you bringing our granddaughter into the world...

AL

I'm also the--

CATHERINE

I know who you are, Al. I was in NICU last night.

Neither of them approach Karida's bed.

CATHERINE

Are you resting? We brought a gift.

Catherine steps to the table, places a small jewelry box down. Sits at the chair away from the bed.

Al glances at all three of them.

Crickets.

AL

Guess I should be off then--

MANNING

Stay. We won't be long.

CATHERINE

It is a wishbone from Tiffany's,  
dear--

KARIDA

Of course it is.

Whips her head around the room.

KARIDA

Nope, wish not granted.

Al fidgets, steps closer to Kari.

CATHERINE

So, your first water-birth?

Al looks up at the baby's photos.

AL

Yea. Helped with one on a plane  
once, so if I get the next to be a  
traditional one, I can claim the  
trifecta.

Manning stands.

MANNING

You need your rest--

KARIDA

Can any of you find out when I can  
leave?

AL

Until you control that high blood  
pressure, you ain't --

KARIDA

Make yourself useful. Go see the  
baby and get used to having her  
around. I really need a vacation.

AL

I've a thousand things to deal  
with.

KARIDA

Add item a thousand and one to your  
lame list...a four pound baby.

**EXT. NICU UNIT LOBBY – DAY**

Karida stands, peers through the window to the lobby.

An ORDERLY walks by, notices she is in a hospital gown, its back open.

He stops to get a closer look at her back and butt when Sherri approaches.

After Sherri stares him down, he continues on his way.

SHERRI

Karida? What are you doing here?

Karida turns around.

Her eyes are Raging Bull swollen red, and in her one hand she holds a bunch of Kleenex. In the other, a bed pan.

KARIDA

When I was pregnant all my girlfriends asked how I was doing. Now it's all about the kid.

Sherri steps closer.

SHERRI

Now, now. Let's get you back to your room. Have you started taking those encapsulating pills yet?

KARIDA

I don't care about the kid. But everyone else does... How's the baby? When can we see the baby?

SHERRI

Come now. We'll talk once you're back in bed resting.

KARIDA

Same with guys. They want to do the stuff to make the kid, but once you have it... you're an afterthought. Just not sexy anymore.

Karida turns back to the window, raises the bed pan.

KARIDA

A fucking afterthought!

She smashes the lobby window till all the glass hits the floor.

**INT. NICU UNIT ROOM – NIGHT**

Al, in scrubs, stands next to Doctor Royal. Both inspect the boarded up, broken window.

AL  
Hurricane or tornado?

DOCTOR ROYAL  
A scorned woman. Postpartum reared  
its ugly, ugly head.

Al shrugs it off, leans down.

They peer into an incubator as they talk.

A clip board reads:

Apgar Score - 6. Baby Manning.

AL  
So, how is the little alien doing  
today?

DOCTOR ROYAL  
She's stable. Why did it take you  
so long to come visit her?

She is a really tiny thing. Her eyes are covered with a small bandage and an I.V. in her dinky arm.

AL  
I've been in recovery from that  
delivery.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
Hmm. Well, go scrub down.

Al gives him an inquisitive glance.

AL  
Gotta get back to class.

Doctor Royal beckons him to sit next to the incubator.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
So, you ready for your first date  
with your daughter?

AL  
No.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
It's okay to be nervous.

AL  
I'm not ready.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
You need to bond with her. She  
won't break.

AL  
You guys do an amazing job here in  
NICU.

Nurse Dee joins them.

NURSE DEE  
Shall I call Klose in Psych to help  
out?

Doctor Royal cracks his knuckles.

AL  
I'm beyond help, according to my  
last therapist.

NURSE DEE  
Your new life begins now.

Al rolls his eyes.

NURSE DEE  
Just man up.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
She'll go home one day, you know?

Al backs away from the incubator.

AL  
And for now she's in good hands.  
Nurse Dee? I do have a few  
questions, though.

He takes out a legal size piece of paper.

NURSE DEE  
What the Devil is that?

AL  
Twenty nine actually. Question  
number one --

NURSE DEE  
Well player, I got one for you.  
Where the hell is her momma?

**EXT. MANNING RESIDENCE STREET - DAY**

From across the building, parked on the median, Tone sits on his motor-bike, Al in the bike's side car.

Al looks at the building through binoculars.

TONE

I got to get back soon.

AL

She's got to show up at some point!

Tone passes Al a coffee cup. Al takes a swig.

AL

It's empty!

Tone grabs it back, pretends to drink.

TONE

I know, but you always see people on stake-outs drinking coffee. Bring us some donuts next time.

Al lowers the binoculars.

AL

Head on back then. Tell that idiot Davidson I'm picking up supplies or something.

Al struggles to get out of the side car. He sits on the curb, kicks at the snow.

TONE

It's been a week, dude.

AL

Six days actually. This can't be happening to me!

A town car pulls up. Ted shuffles over, opens the door. Out come the Mannings.

AL

Where the hell did Kari disappear to?

TONE

Guess we can always bring the baby out on the town... Bet the chicks will be all over us. This is awesome news, Al.

**INT. NICU WAITING ROOM - NIGHT**

In one of the corners, Al camps out at a long table. Left-overs cover half the table, textbooks on another.

The front doors open, Marco enters with trepidation.

Al pushes his laptop aside. Marco sits down opposite Al, hands him a Styrofoam cup. Al smiles as he senses the aroma.

MARCO  
How's the baby?

Marco hands over a few sugar packets.

AL  
Struggling.

MARCO  
Te gusta mi colada?

AL  
Si. When will Doctor Royal be here?

MARCO  
After he talks with Manning senior.  
Karida is apparently...

He extends his fingers, simulates a leap into the air and then a big dive.

MARCO  
Well, I see you've got a lot of  
studying ahead of you. Let me know  
if there is anything you'll need.

AL  
Thanks. I'll take this high octane  
every time you can.

MARCO  
Sure. One Cuban coffee for delivery  
tomorrow.

There's a long pause. Marco reaches into his pocket, pulls out a business card and a photo. The photo flutters to the floor. It's a large photo of Doctor Royal and Marco, waving a massive rainbow-flag.

MARCO  
I'm such a silly sugar.

Marco retrieves the photo.

AL  
Who's Barney in the purple spandex?

MARCO  
You don't recognize him?

Al reaches for the coffee, takes a sip.

MARCO  
Jerry Manning.

Al spits his coffee up.

AL  
The cousin she plays tennis with?

MARCO  
Let's just say they're not the only  
balls he likes to play with.

AL  
Small fricking world.

MARCO  
Small is not the adjective I'd use  
for Jerry... Manning senior thinks  
I turned his nephew gay, so I  
should bolt before he shows up.

AL  
Hey, Marco? Bring more sugar next  
time.

Marco leaves, holds the door open for Sherri Klose to enter.

Al pulls out a miniature tequila bottle. As he notices Sherri  
stare at him, he places it back inside his scrub pants.

AL  
Speaking of sugar...

SHERRI  
I'm stepping in as your advisor for  
your senior project.

He focuses in on her cleavage.

SHERRI  
My eyes are up here.

Al holds his stare, cocks his head.

Looks up.

SHERRI

I need you to sign a personal contract. We are really behind--

AL

You've heard why I've been camped out here for the last five weeks?

She hands him a thick envelope.

SHERRI

Read last year's reports. Here's my e-mail. Think of something pretty quick, okay?

Sherri, from her purse, removes a book, hands it to Al. The book title: "Transtheoretical Model for Behavior Change".

SHERRI

Office hours are posted on my door.

They both look over to the entrance as Dr. Royal and Marco enter.

Doctor Royal gives him a USB.

DOCTOR ROYAL

You missed my mandatory lecture yesterday.

Marco lays a plastic shopping bag on the table. Al throws him an inquisitive look, then reaches in. He pulls out three reading books and a slim tape recorder.

MARCO

You record yourself as you read books for her.

DOCTOR ROYAL

Awww. You are so thoughtful, Marco. Spreading Valentine's love...

Suddenly, Manning enters. Sports a half smile. His enthusiasm subsides as he sees Marco with Royal.

AL

Is Kari with you? I don't have a clue what to do.

MANNING

Let's not count on her for now. I'll sort things out from now on.

**INT. AL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Smacks of order. Very neat for a single guy.

TONE

Babe bait, yes.

Tone stands opposite Al.

AL

Babe bait? Seriously?

Tone straps on a mangy looking baby carrier.

TONE

You approach the babes like this.

He sticks his hand up the carrier, pops it through the front.

TONE

Ladies, look at me and my godfather  
Tone. Or...

He whips the carrier onto his back.

TONE

The surprise attack. We approach  
with our good looks and then voila -  
we even have a cute, smiling kid.

Al pushes past Tone, grabs a small sports bag.

AL

This is really stupid, even by your  
standards. Go home and check your E-  
Harmony account.

TONE

They rejected my application...

Al wrestles the carrier off him.

He kicks it into a garbage can.

AL

She's still in NICU. Listen, I...  
Don't feel you are a good fit to be  
her godfather.

Tone gathers his pride, walks to the door.

He turns to Al, desperate for a response...

It doesn't come.

**INT. NICU E.R. UNIT ROOM - NIGHT**

Al's eyes follow Nurse Dee open up an incubator. She takes off the four wires connected to a TINY BOY.

Al pays her no attention, walks over to the incubator that holds his daughter. Suddenly, lights go OFF.

AL (O.C.)

Shit.

Lights on four of the five incubators blink on. Al looks at his daughter's. NOTHING.

AL

No back up generator in here?

Nurse Dee puts the Tiny Boy back down, joins Al at the dark incubator. Al maneuvers past her, unplugs the incubator's power cord. He wheels it to a corner.

Nurse Dee gets ahead of him. Unplugs the empty incubator. Al places his daughter's incubator into the corner.

Plugs it in. He doesn't need to know it hasn't powered up. Nurse Dee's panicked face says it all.

Al, visibly upset, sits down. Undoes his gown. As he unbuttons his shirt --

NURSE DEE

What the hell are you doing? I'm sure a Neo-Doc is on their way.

AL

Pass me my daughter. I must regulate her breathing and her heart rate.

He rips off his clinic I.D. Badge.

AL

As her father, I'm telling you to pass me my baby!

Nurse Dee takes his daughter out, places the baby, with tender care, on his chest. She then takes his left hand to cradle the baby.

Al, slow and careful, pulls his shirt around her, tiny, tiny body.

NURSE DEE

Just like the pouch --

AL  
Of a kangaroo. This will help  
regulate her.

NURSE DEE  
Sure did your research daddy-o.

He looks down at the alien-looking baby under his shirt, her  
tiny eyes searching...

AL  
Oh my. She is soooo beautiful.

The baby relaxes, snuggles her head onto Al's chest.

The door BUZZES, in step two DOCTORS, followed by Doctor  
Royal.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
Everything good here?

NURSE DEE  
Yea. Daddy-o is sneaking in some  
kangaroo time before his shift  
starts. Damn power went out.

Royal scans the room. The two Doctors monitor each incubator.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
Her chart indicates no name yet.

Al raises his eyes to the ceiling.

AL  
I'm great at taking exams... and  
chasing chicks... I'm not equipped  
to look after a preemie!

DOCTOR ROYAL  
You are doing a great job.

Nurse Dee takes out her phone, snaps a picture.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
Tell me, how did you feel when you  
first saw her?

Al fiddles with his bracelet. Looks down at the child.

AL  
It was like... wow. I thought I  
heard angelic music from somewhere.  
Just like a perfect... angel. Yea.  
My daughter's name is Angelina.

**INT. BABY'S MEGASTORE – DAY**

Through the madness of a busy store, Al stands at the first aisle, with an empty cart. Angelina is strapped into the baby-carrier- her head facing outwards.

Al... rumped, unshaven, disheveled, dressed in dirty scrubs - overwhelmed.

A cute ASIAN mother (30s) of two, walks by and whispers "HI" to Al. He just ignores her, slowly moves his cart down the aisle where MALE WIMP (40s) and his PARTNER (40s) argue.

PARTNER

Forget about me pumping.

WIMP

Okay, dear.

PARTNER

Don't dear me!

WIMP

Yes, dear.

The Partner storms off.

AL

Hang in there, pal.

Wimp sighs.

WIMP

I'm just a headless praying mantis.

**INT. BABY'S MEGASTORE – HOURS LATER**

At one of the checkout lanes, a cart overloaded with baby goodies. Immediately behind it, a hand holds a baby stroller, also full of baby items.

The young CASHIER tries to stand on her toes to get a look at which customer has all this stuff.

CASHIER

Move up a little, please. Cash or credit?

Al pushes the cart a little closer.

AL

Both.

**INT. PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT**

A solemn sight. A single bed, hooked up to machines; monitors, breathing apparatus.

Prince attempts to sit up as Al waddles into the room, sports a beard. Although muffled through the ventilator, Prince speaks.

PRINCE

Student-lives-matter or what, Al?

Al decked out in full PPEs. Cradles Angelina in her buzzing seat in one arm.

AL

It 'aint riot gear. I gotta teach a class for Royal on street and community testing.

Al places Angelina's seat on the big chair by Prince.

AL

I need to find a sitter--

PRINCE

I hear Tone gets off in a mo.

Al shakes his head. Swivels to face Prince. Pats himself down.

PRINCE

Sure you're find someone from class. Chance to impress the teacher. Some fine Freshman, cuties this year.

Al places a blanket across the sleeping Angelina.

Officer Tamara enters.

Prince turns over, closes his eyes. Al blocks out Angelina from sight.

TAMARA

Mi amor?

AL

Cinco minutos, por favor?

Tamara glances at Prince, pretends he's asleep. She peeks at Angelina.

Al steps to her, gently takes Tamara's hand. With a gentleness that would melt ice, he places her hand to his chest. Glances to Angelina.

AL  
Mi bebe hace esto...

Her knees buckle. She releases her hands, touches his face.

TAMARA  
Cincuenta minutos, mi amor.

She glides out of the room.

They hear LOUD footsteps approach, look up to see Tone rush in.

TONE  
Quick. Doctor Klose's heading this way.

Tone races away.

Al fluffs up the pillows, mindful of Prince's weak body.

SHERRI  
Found this outside.

She tosses the orange and black soccer ball to Al, he catches it, places it by Prince's arm.

PRINCE  
Why you let this raggedy-student up on this floor? You're supposed to look out for me.

Sherri places a file onto the bed. Glances at Angelina.

SHERRI  
Screw policy.

Al opens it up. Sherri slowly exits.

PRINCE  
I think Klose likes you. She always asks about you.

AL  
Hang in there, dude. I got a call to make. Let's find him.

Prince feebly raises his thumb in the air.

**INT. INSIDE OF TOWN CAR - DAY**

Angelina-strapped in her seat. Catherine approaches Angelina, she squirms away.

AL

She's like an oven. She takes a while to warm up to strangers.

Al, now clean shaven, takes Catherine's hand, helps her stroke Angelina's little head and natty hair.

Catherine reaches into her coat, brings out an envelope.

CATHERINE

Perhaps we can set up a schedule?

Al surveys Angelina before he replies.

AL

Maybe. I'll pick her up around nine pm tonight?

She hands the thick envelope to Al.

CATHERINE

At least let me cover some of the expenses then.

Al declines, passes her a baby bag.

CATHERINE

My husband tells me you are one of the brightest med students ever to intern at S.I.C.

AL

Is that so?

CATHERINE

We hope you continue your studies... for Angelina's sake. We'll set it up. You. Cornell. Next semester.

He leans over, kisses Angelina.

CATHERINE

You have both our numbers?

Al nods.

Angelina plays with Catherine's gold bracelet on her wrist. Al fidgets with his plastic bracelet.

**INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

A chic place. Busy, too. In a cozy corner, sit Al and Hien. She looks quite spectacular, like a super model on break from a photo shoot. She sips on a glass of red wine.

AL

Where's our food?

HIEN

We just ordered. Anyway, I'm surprised you called. What's up?

Al's phone BUZZES. He snatches at it. Knocks over his water glass. It crashes into the next table.

A WAITER helps clean down the PATRON the water spilled on. Hien holds Al's head, turns it to face the commotion.

AL

(Into the phone)

Oh, hi Marco. Thanks for asking.  
I hate taking the bus with her.

The food arrives.

Clicks the phone off. Al has food in his mouth, going for more --

HIEN

You were saying?

AL

(In-between bites)

Looks like... I'm a shoo-in... to Cornell. So, back to my place for dessert?

HIEN

Sorry. This Memorial Day is to prep for a briefing --

AL

I have to pick her up by nine, so it'll have to be a quickie anyway.

Hien slams her fork onto her plate, pushes the plate away.

Al leans in, raises his eyebrows.

AL

Are you G.I. Jane tonight?

She slowly glances down. Al flashes a wanting smile.

HIEN

Tonight's not the night for you to find out, you damn, horny soldier.

AL

We could play Full Metal Jacket.

HIEN

Me love you long time...ain't happening tonight.

AL

It's been weeks since, you know?

HIEN

And we haven't screwed in five months. Just get the check.

Al bangs his head on the table top.

HIEN

Time to grow up, Al.

AL

So, coz I'm a dad now, we can't have fun?

Hien punches his arm. She beckons over the Waiter.

HIEN

Just get your priorities in order. And for god sake if you want to get laid, at least wine and dine me first.

AL

Red or white?

She looks up at the Waiter.

HIEN

He'll take the check and bring him a Tiramisu to go.

Al slumps back, defeated.

HIEN

The dessert will give you something warm and sweet to mull over. I don't want you going home empty handed now.

She makes a hot-tease, masturbation fist in his face.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Marco leans against a cab, it's engine running.

Al tip toes down the large steps from the Manning's building with Angelina asleep in her car seat.

Just as he reaches the bottom step -- The front door swings open. Manning heads down.

MANNING

Here. Take this. She really took to it earlier.

He hands Al a large, soft-sleeping-pillow.

AL

How was she?

MANNING

Just like her name. This was good for us. So maybe next...

He stops himself to look down at Marco.

An icy glare emanates over Manning's eyes.

MANNING

What the hell are you doing here?

Manning marches over to Marco.

AL

It's cool. He's with me.

Manning fumes.

MANNING

Told you before Marco, don't want your kind near this family.

MARCO

Is that why you haven't even told Jerry that Karida's gone AWOL? He didn't even know he was an uncle.

MANNING

Your meter's running.

Like gunslingers at the OK-Corral they each stand their ground.

Manning storms off, whips out his cell phone.

**EXT. PARK – EVENING**

A group of GUYS play soccer. Marco watches the game.

Al sits in front, on a big blanket, with Angelina.

Al grabs Angelina as she tries to crawl off the blanket.

AL

Damn creepy-crawly.

MARCO

I thought you love chasing after girls?

AL

Girls yea. Poopy diapers? Still trying to get used to that.

Al turns Angelina over, grabs a diaper.

He looks down. Hesitates.

AL

I bet when she's a teenager she'll deny I ever did this.

Al removes the dirty diaper.

Marco hands Al a new diaper from the baby-bag that hangs off the stroller's handle bars.

At that moment, a very good looking SOCCER PLAYER (30s), gets substituted out of the game.

He pulls off his shirt, sports a T-25 physique.

As he wipes his face, the Player steps closer to Al and Marco.

SOCCER PLAYER

Hey, Marco. Who's your new friend? Does he bend it like Beckham?

Al shies away.

MARCO

Why don't I sign you up? They need players? It's time you came off that one-man island and joined a proper team.

Al ignores Marco's comments.

Marco holds open the small garbage bag.

Al throws in the dirty diaper.

Al's phone vibrates.

SHERRI TEXT MESSAGE READS

I read your ideas for the project.  
Very middle of the road-- why are  
you holding back?

Al sighs.

He throws his phone into the baby-bag.

A soccer ball flies through the air.

It's about to hit Marco when Al scoots across him and chest controls the ball.

He lets it fall to his left foot, traps it.

He scoops it up with his right foot into Marco's grasp.

Marco's eyes widen as he hugs the ball.

MARCO

Oh my. I do like a guy who knows  
how to handle his balls.

They look at each other, smile.

The SOCCER PLAYERS applaud and holler.

At that moment... Tone jogs by.

TONE

You're playing on the other team?

Al grabs Tone, leads him away.

AL

Dude, I was just watching.

TONE

I'm not talking about the soccer  
team, asshole! Their team...You  
never call me. Never return my  
texts. Where the hell have you  
been, dude?

Tone wrestles away, continues his jog.

**INT. HOSPITAL TRIAGE AREA- NIGHT**

Al bangs away at a vending machine. Slides to the front-nothing.

AL  
I'm dying for a Twix.

A short, LATINX man- JUAN(38)- pops his head out from a patient room. Sports a nasty looking black - eye.

JUAN  
Oye? You wanna Snickers?

Al shoots to the doorway. Locks his eyes on the Snickers bar. Casually enters the

**PATIENT ROOM**

He sinks down on the small stool. Looks up at the Snickers bar.

AL  
Now what are the odds I can get away with doctor Klose's candy... You gonna tell?

Juan leans a little closer.

JUAN  
Depends what you gonna give me.

AL  
Half?

JUAN  
Phht. All of two inches? I don't think so.

Al scoots the stool closer to the sink area, where the candy sits.

AL  
Juan, why are you a frequent flyer?

Juan sighs. Looks over at Al with a brazen smile.

JUAN  
You gonna lecture me?

AL  
No. Figure I'll take her candy and deny it if she hassles me later.

He inches closer to the sink area.

AL

But your eye does look awful. Same  
ass or a new dude?

JUAN

You know me, I change 'em with the  
wind.

Al reaches up to the Snickers bar, but doesn't grab it.

AL

Research shows that if we delay  
instant gratification, we develop a  
better capacity for long term  
decision making that ultimately  
raises our positive energy and to a  
healthier lifestyle.

JUAN

You sound like Doctor Blondie...

AL

What I'm saying is, yeah I want  
this candy but if I delay, I can  
talk with doctor Klose without  
remorse or guilt or shame and have  
a better chance of my ultimate  
goal... to hook up with her.

#### **BACK IN THE HALLWAY**

Sherri approaches, clicks her phone off. As she goes to turn  
the door handle, she picks up on Juan talking.

JUAN (O.C.)

So how does that help me? I only  
got beat up coz I chose the wrong  
type of guy--

AL (O.C.)

So what leads you to choose the  
wrong guy? What process do you go  
through? If you delayed your  
choice, I duno, had a better  
screening process--

JUAN/AL (O.C.)

...and delayed instant  
gratification...

JUAN (O.C.)

Then maybe that extra time choosing equates to a better partner...hmmm.

AL (O.C.)

Exactly. Look, I don't use dating apps because there are too many fakes and flakes. But, trust me, we all have to be very careful out there. Now in your case...Take Things a bit slower. You never know, you may change your luck and at least not end up as a guy's punching bag.

### **BACK IN THE ROOM**

Al picks up the Snickers bar. At that moment the door flings wide open, Officer Tamara and Officer Roland storm in, pounce on Al.

SHERRI

You cannot barge in like this--

Sheri stumbles in. Al drops the Snickers bar.

AL

I wasn't going to eat it!

Al struggles to fend Officer Roland off. Officer Tamara does nothing.

ROLAND

Per the Dean. Instant dismissal.

Officer Roland shoves a letter into Al's chest.

Officer Tamara beckons Al to leave.

AL

Fine.

At the doorway- Manning. Holds the door open. His smug grin summons Al to depart.

Officer Tamara hands Sherri Al's ID badge.

Picks up the Snickers bar, hands it to Juan.

JUAN

What am I going do with just four inches?

**INT. AL'S SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Al sits on a small chair. His foot gently rests on Angelina's bouncy chair. He rocks her to sleep. In one hand he has a packet of baby-wipes, in the other a book.

AL

Round and round the garden...

Despite his efforts to stay awake, his eyes give in and peacefully close. For a few moments, Al and Angelina are in unison with their breaths.

He awakes. Places the text book to the floor. Angelina stirs, too. He clambers off the chair, undoes Angelina from the bouncy chair. She beams a big smile at him.

He lays her on the floor. With his left hand he gently holds her in place. With his right he struggles to reach the pack of diapers nearby.

The baby rolls over, faces him. Al smiles at her. Turns his head away as he catches the smell of the "gift" in her diaper. He undoes her diaper. Pulls it away, grabs two baby wipes. After he wipes her butt, he picks her up across his shoulder.

He steps to the diaper genie, opens it.

Angelina's belly rumbles, Al squats, places her back down.

He reaches for the clean diaper, the baby "sprays" him with a mustard looking jet of feces. Al is so shocked he doesn't notice it all over his right hand. When he attempts to get the clean diaper, he sees his hand.

AL

Damn! You gotta be kidding me.

He picks the baby back up again, rushes to the sink. Runs the water over her butt. He grabs a rag, cleans his hand down.

He runs to the diaper genie, pops it open, discards the rag. He picks up the dirty diaper, places that in the genie, too.

Al whirls Angelina in a circle, she giggles. They collapse onto the sofa. He looks at his wrist.

NO PURPLE BRACELET.

Panic strikes his face. Sweat beads. Scans the room.

Focuses in on the diaper genie.

**INT. AL'S SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Al's pad looks like robbers invaded.

Angelina makes funny sounds in her high-chair. Al points to himself.

AL  
Dadda. Dadda.

On her table top, next to a pile of mashed up food, are three spoons. Al shows her how to pick up a spoon. She holds it, puts it down. She digs her hand into the food, scoops it in her mouth.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

SHERRI (O.S.)  
Are you avoiding me?

Al licks the potato off the purple bracelet. He walks to the door.

AL  
Nope. Just up to my eyes in spuds.

SHERRI  
You ready for this hearing?

AL  
Not really. Manning subpoenaed me. Says I'm not stable enough to be a single father.

SHERRI  
Sorry to hear that.

AL  
It's bad enough the jerk already suspended me. Trumped up charges I was "trespassing" on the second floor. I gotta leave this student pad, too.

SHERRI  
Damn!

AL  
Gotta nix my residency next. Can't find a residency program watching a baby twenty-four seven.

SHERRI  
Have you tried finding a sitter?

**INT. DINGY APARTMENT - ANYTIME - AL'S MEMORY FLASH**

A frail looking, PREGNANT GIRL (22) slowly opens the door.

Al and Angelina are welcomed in.

Inside her home, there are two anxious COUPLES who fidget on the sofa.

On the coffee table: a stack of papers.

Suddenly, a group of FBI AGENTS burst in.

They tackle the "pregnant" girl to the ground.

Handcuffs are slapped onto both couples.

A fake belly falls on the floor.

AL (V.O.)  
Gabriella was promising 'till she  
did a belly-flop onto the carpet.

**BACK TO SCENE:**

Angelina passes out - head first into the pile of food.

SHERRI  
If you need someone for a few  
hours, my new roommate and I could  
watch her.

AL  
Oh, you have a new roommate?

SHERRI  
Yep, and she watches her adorable  
nine year old niece a few nights a  
week. That kid is so smart.

AL  
Smart enough to change a diaper?

SHERRI  
Child labor has been abolished.  
I'd like to help. Come by tonight.

AL  
Sure she won't mind?

SHERRI  
Uhuh. Not at all.

**INT. DARK, TRENDY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Sherri welcomes Al and Angelina, who is in his arms.

SHERRI

Hey, pause that-- look who's here.

A young woman pauses the game on T.V.: it's Jess, without hesitation, Jess slowly leans in to hug Al.

Al hands Angelina to Jess.

A cute girl- MADISON (9), in a hockey team PJ set, walks in.

SHERRI

Ready for your blow dry, Madison?  
Come meet Al and his baby.

MADISON

Are you gay like my dad?

Al gulps.

AL

I don't play with the rainbow team,  
I play with the pink team.

JESS

Apparently...

Jess takes Madison's hand, exits the room.

AL

First time I'm leaving her over  
night with a sitter.

SHERRI

I can tell you are not yourself.  
You've hardly looked at me.

She takes his hand, walks him to the sofa.

AL

(shakes his head)  
Lost my mojo, Sherri.

Lets out a slight smile.

AL

It's all about Angelina right now.

Sherri squeezes his hand.

SHERRI

What about her family and this hearing? Really, what do they want? This can't be good for Angelina.

AL

I don't know. Royal told me Manning's vying for my blood.

SHERRI

What about your mom and dad?

Al shifts his gaze away from Sherri.

AL

My mom's motto is to do things at seventy percent, and my dad passed away over eight years ago. If only he was still here, he never quit on anything.

SHERRI

I'm sorry.

Al gathers himself together.

AL

Maybe I should sneak out before she notices me leaving.

Madison waltzes in with Angelina.

MADISON

Angie. Oooh, Angie.

In one move they re-enter the bedroom.

SHERRI

Go get stuff done, and then concentrate on that hearing.

Al looks down at their hands, still intertwined.

AL

You know, I may need a few therapy sessions. I'll expect a discount.

SHERRI

Hmm, not sure if I have that much clout. I have an opening Tuesday at three. I'll try and work something out.

**INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Packed with files and large books. A framed picture of a chocolate brown Burmese cat on the desk.

Al holds Angelina, sits next to Marco and Doctor Royal.

Hien walks in, wears a red business suit, kicks off her heels. She makes the suit look stunning.

HIEN

Can't believe Simon dragged me in  
on this case. Of all people.

Hien kisses Al on the cheek, glances at Angelina.

AL

So, we're not gonna have an issue  
here are we?

Hien kisses the picture of the cat.

She slumps into her executive chair, puts her feet up on the desk.

HIEN

Nope. I'm all business in this  
office. Simon! Bring me the Marino,  
Manning file.

Within seconds, SIMON TEMPLE (33), African-American, with a fresh exfoliated face and excited eyes, steps in.

SIMON

You mean the Baby-Daddy-Drama-  
Where's the... Mamma file?  
(beat)  
Hmm? Red suits you.

HIEN

Give it to them straight.

SIMON

Might be a bit hard... Marco knows  
mine bends way to the left.

Doctor Royal shoots laser eyes at Marco.

Marco turns his head away.

HIEN

Actually, he's a really good  
investigator. All the partners use  
his services.

SIMON

Now, now. Don't tell all my office secrets.

Everyone pauses to look at Simon.

He misses his intro.

He is too busy checking out the UPS guy drop off a package.

SIMON

Oooh, what can Brown do for me?

Simon pulls up a chair, leans into its back.

As he talks, he whips papers, documents, paper clips and photos from the file.

After he waves them in the air for a few moments of dramatic show --

Hien grabs them from his hands. Simon takes on a professional demeanor.

SIMON

The Mannings have demanded a court hearing since the results from the paternity test you took last week.

Simon glances over at Angelina.

AL

Okay you two, I've seen more life in a morgue.

Hien slides her chair closer to Al.

HIEN

You love this little one, right?

Al hugs Angelina very close.

HIEN

Well... These are the results from your and Angelina's DNA tests. See for yourself...

(hesitates)

I'm sorry Al, but according to this paternity test, you are not a match. Angelina is not your biological daughter.

**INT. INSIDE TAXI CAB - MINUTES LATER - MOVING**

Al covers Angelina with a blanket. Then hands her to Marco.

AL  
I knew she only had white people  
hair.

Marco looks as if the Grim Reaper had entered the cab, too.  
Doctor Royal sits by the window, stares out.

Al  
I think I've always wanted to be a  
dad... now I don't know.

Angelina squirms in Marco's grasp, reaches out for Al, makes  
cute babble noises at him. Marco hands Angelina back to Al.

Al pouts, places her in the car seat.

Doctor Royal crosses his arms, moves up closer to the window.

AL  
What's with you two?

Al glances at both of them, yearning for an answer. Silence.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
You never told me you two had  
history --

MARCO  
Oh please. He's not my type. We've  
showered together --

AL  
Do I need to grab a whistle?

MARCO  
I mean... after the gym. We've  
joked about... it. Come on, silly --

AL  
I need some guidance here.

DOCTOR ROYAL  
I'm just the Cardiologist. Marco is  
the family expert.

Marco slides away from his lover. Tears well.

AL  
And what makes you the family  
expert?

MARCO

When I came out of the closet in Cuba, I was already twenty-three years old. Having my family ostracize me was a little tough, but not as bad as...

Marco sobs! Startles Al, doesn't know what to do.

AL

Why are you so upset?

MARCO

Seeing Angelina like this. It brings the worst part of my life back to me. I wasn't really into girls, but try being gay in Guanabacoa.

Doctor Royal slides closer to Marco.

MARCO

At nineteen I actually got a girl pregnant and although we didn't shack up together, we were good parents to our daughter, Madeleana.

AL

Wow! You're a frickin dad, too.

MARCO

For three years I loved being a dad. Then I meet this guy in college who persuades me to come out of the closet.

Al reaches into Angelina's baby bag, hands Marco some baby-wipes.

MARCO

Her dad thought he could punch and kick the gayness out of me. Before I fully recovered the asshole moved all his family, including her, to Miami.

For a moment, Al puts his hand on Marco's shoulder.

MARCO

He even took out Madeleana's picture from my wallet.

Marco starts to wail! This time the flood gates open.

MARCO

I was going to be a doctor in Cuba,  
but I came here looking for her.

AL

Good for you.

MARCO

Don't get me wrong, I love being  
gay. It is who I am. But I paid a  
deep price for it. I didn't see her  
for six years. Now, I'm trying to  
make up for lost time with her.

Marco puts the used baby-wipes onto the taxi seat. Without  
hesitation, Al scoops them up, places them into a small  
garbage bag he has tied to the baby-bag.

AL

Never leave home without one.

Al notices a little mucous on top of Marco's lip, leans over,  
wipes it off. Marco blushes.

AL

Shit. Six days without Angelina  
would kill me, let alone six years.

Marco wipes his eyes, blows his nose, nods.

MARCO

Two years ago, her mom died.  
Florida Social Services tracked me  
down. It's been tough but I've  
loved every minute of it. There  
truly is a special bond between a  
dad and his daughter.

DOCTOR ROYAL

She is a special one. And Marco is  
an excellent father. Just like you  
are. For all these months, Angelina  
knows you as her dad. No one else  
has that claim.

A fire flashes in Al's eyes.

AL

Screw that DNA test. What does  
science know? I am still Angelina's  
dad. I'm not quitting on her.

**INT. PRINCE'S PATIENT ROOM - DAY**

Al fluffs up Prince's pillow.

Through a ventilator, he muffles--

PRINCE

I got a mean itch down there...

Al cocks his head.

AL

In ten mins, Nurse Blair will be here for your sponge bath.

PRINCE

Is she the red head?

Al tip toes to the corner, peeks in on a sleeping Angelina.

AL

The hot blonde.

Prince's breath gets more labored, heavy.

PRINCE

Any luck at my church?

Al scoots up to the corner of the bed. Shakes his head.

Prince attempts a feeble thumbs-up.

Sherri passes by, on the outside of the smoked glass window, looks in. Gently taps on the window. Points to her watch.

AL

Visiting time is up. Sorry.

Prince struggles to move his hand. Attempts to wave Al closer.

AL

What?

PRINCE

Closer. Got something important to tell you.

Al leans up close to Prince.

PRINCE

Get your finger out. It's still itching like crazy down there.

**EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY**

A beautiful fall evening. Through the autumn foliage, the sound of a woman MOANING catches Al's attention.

Al wheels the baby stroller through the tree line to a corner of the lot, coned off.

                                  WOMAN (O.S.)  
Ooooo...

As he moves closer, more women join in.

                                  WOMEN (O.S.)  
Ooooo! Ohhhh!

This sounds SEXY!

                                  MARCO (O.S.)  
Great work out yesterday. But we barely scratched the surface. So today, I'd like to go deeper.

Al gulps. From a distance he watches as Marco bends his knees, raises his arms into the air. Within nanoseconds the rest of the class is in unison.

                                  MARCO  
Okay, gang. Let's move into salutation B...Utkatasana.

Out of downward dog, Marco moves into a more intricate pose. The class, including Sherri and Tone, follow.

                                  MARCO  
...ending with Adho Mukha Svanasana. Hold it here. Lift your buttocks high and keep those legs tight.

Marco sweeps around the group. All the participants are relaxing into the downward dog pose.

The class bring their heads up, swivel their bodies to the side and move into --

                                  MARCO  
Utthita Trikonasana. Left hand to the sky, your right to the floor...or somewhere on your feet.

Angelina awakes, smacks her lips for attention. Al salutes Marco. Nods his head. Sports a big smile.

**INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBER - DAY**

Al with Angelina, Hien and Simon sit on one side of a large conference table.

On the other side, Mister Manning, Catherine, Monica, who holds a baby's car seat, are surrounded by three Armani-Clad lawyers, led by the top-dog: HOWARD WEBB (62).

In the middle, JUDGE RICE (52) adorned with a JUDGE's robe.

MANNING

This is absurd!

JUDGE RICE

Mister Manning calm down. So, Miss Fox... he is not biologically connected to this child?

HIEN

Putting all genetics aside, all Angelina has known since she left the incubator is her dad... Al.

MANNING

But we are her family.

HIEN

Angelina doesn't know who you are. Do you have her favorite pooh bear sheets? What's her favorite pillow?

AL

Poppy. She loves the Poppy pillow.

JUDGE RICE

I see many reasons why Mister Marino is a qualified care-giver, but I see nothing that states the Mannings aren't.

Web moves his chair forward.

JUDGE RICE

Mister Webb?

WEBB

My clients would like to state for the record, if Mister Marino and his... team, will not lodge an appeal on today's judgement, he will be compensated for the last ten months of baby-sitting.

AL

No! It's not about me. It's about Angelina.

WEBB

He has no source of income, and even dropped out of med-school to--

Al shoots up from his chair.

AL

I got kicked out on some asinine charges!

WEBB

Your honor, Mister Marino cannot provide any sense of stability for the Manning's granddaughter.

JUDGE RICE

I've made my decision. The Manning's are granted temporary custody for thirty days. You'll have that time to file an appeal.

AL

Where's the holiday spirit!?

JUDGE RICE

In that time, Mister Marino, you should either adapt to letting Angelina go or find me some reason as to why the Mannings shouldn't get full custody.

Al holds Angelina close as she cries.

HIEN

We'll start on the appeal as soon as I get back to my office.

Hien slowly takes Angelina from Al.

AL

She only knows me...

As Al leaves --

Angelina fidgets, attempts to reach out for him.

Angelina SCREAMS (O.S.)

Each scream hits Al like a crushing body blow from The Terminator.

**INT. AL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Boxes and milk crates stacked near the door.

SHERRI (O.C.)  
What the hell are you doing?

Al drops a large box. On the front it reads:  
RIBBED RUBBER FRIEND.

AL  
I didn't hear you knock?

Sherri steps into the apartment, stares down Al.

Al folds some baby clothes. Places them into a milk crate.

Al bends down, picks up the box.

AL  
Do you think I should wrap it? It's  
for Marco.

SHERRI  
Why would he want a dildo?

AL  
He's letting me stay with him 'till  
I get my own place. So I thought  
he'd get a giggle out of it.

SHERRI  
So you bought him this?

She grabs the dildo box. Throws it across the room.

AL  
Did you come here for a reason?

SHERRI  
Simon says your attorney will  
reduce her fee. The battle isn't  
over.

AL  
Tell 'em not to bother. Baby's not  
mine. I'm done wasting my time and  
jeopardizing my chance of my  
residency.

SHERRI  
You're seriously gonna give up,  
just like that?

AL  
Yea, just like that.

Al snaps his fingers. Side steps Sherri. Continues to pack.

SHERRI  
Do you want to talk?

Al gives her a unconcerned tsk.

Sherri grabs his arm.

SHERRI  
Hey! I see you're in pain. I'm here  
for you.

He gently touches her palm, slowly releases it from his.

AL  
Let me get out of here. I think the  
Goon Squad are on their way.

Sherri places both her hands around Al's arm.

SHERRI  
Sure. What can I help you with?

Al looks to her hands. Smiles at her. Steps closer. Looks to her lips...

The door, half ajar, gets thrown open. In burst Officers Tamara and Roland. Manning saunters in behind.

MANNING  
Okay, primate. Lease expired five  
minutes ago.

Al shakes his head. Looks to Officer Tamara. She smiles at him.

TAMARA  
Lo siento.

She bends down, picks up two milk crates.

All their eyes lock on the dildo box.

Officer Tamara purrs. Al slumps. Manning laughs.

MANNING  
You need a moment to pack up that  
big dick of yours?

**INT. BUSY BAR – NIGHT**

Al sits at a high top table.

With no real interest, he views a Rangers' hockey game on the big T.V. screen.

The bar erupts in APPLAUSE.

A WAITRESS approaches, sets down a tray full of tequila shots.

AL

Twenty seven days...

He pauses for thought, then knocks back two of the shots.

Al looks up, sees TONE approach him.

Tone is dressed in slacks and a shirt.

On each arm he is escorted by two beautiful BLONDES (20s).

TONE

Meet Ana and Anafrida. Loaded and stunning, barely speak English. We got box seats for the Garden...

AL

Don't light up a match...

TONE

You're just not the same guy anymore.

AL

Think what you want!

TONE

Well before I start my residency up State, I need to blow off steam. So, me and the ABBA girls will be heading out then.

AL

Leave then.

TONE

What about the world tour?

AL

You'll live. Hey, maybe you'll get another three countries conquered during your residency.

TONE

When you go home tonight, on your own, be sure to mark in BLACK... Norway.

Al shakes his head, goes back to his shots.

TONE

Can't believe you'd prefer to chill with a sissy rather than me --

AL

You got it all wrong.

TONE

I've seen what I've seen. Heard what I've heard.

AL

You're such a moron.

TONE

Oh yeah? I didn't throw away my career over a sissy and a kid, not I, my friend.

AL

Whatever.

Tone notices all the shot glasses.

TONE

I heard Karida is back.

AL

So?

Tone reaches for a shot.

Al smacks his hand away.

TONE

Hey, I got what I want. Just figured you'd fight harder for what you want. Happy holidays, then?

Al knocks back a few more shots.

AL

By the way. ABBA are not from Norway, you D.A. Mark up the correct country. It begins with an S.

**INT. PRINCE'S PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT**

Dr. Royal shoos a NURSE from the room. Leads Al in.

Seated up close to the patient bed--

RICHY (48), a tall African American man. In one hand he holds Prince's weak hand...

Al freezes.

AL  
You Richy?

RICHY  
Marino? Thanks for reaching out to me. At least I got to say goodbye...

Al looks across to Prince's monitors. Set to OFF.

ROYAL  
Al, hurry. Say your goodbyes.

Al looks to Richy, then back to Prince. Motionless.

RICHY  
I got your message. We got to spend the last twenty-four hours together.

AL  
I should've been with him!

Al kneels down besides the bed. Tears well.

Slowly removes the soccer ball from next to Prince.

RICHY  
It's okay. He went peacefully. He did ramble on though about some soccer stud he'd got to know while being stuck here waiting for that lung transplant.

AL  
So the cancer treatment actually killed him by taking away his lung. So messed up --

RICHY  
He wasn't bitter. He knew it was his time.

AL

So unfair.

RICHY

Prince's life was unfair, but he rolled with the punches.

AL

You knew him how long?

Richy leans back, beams a big smile.

RICHY

About six years. Although his mom found something else to motivate her, Prince kept coming back to our small congregation.

AL

Determined little fighter...

RICHY

He asked me to be his godfather when he was eleven. I worked overseas for a year. When I got back, I heard his mom's six feet under and Prince is somewhere in foster care.

AL

Damn.

RICHY

But thanks to you, I got to see him again and tell him I love him and how proud I am of him. I thank you for allowing me those last few hours. It really meant the world to us...

Al looks up to the ceiling.

Tears stream down his cheeks.

RICHY

Oh, he did say for you to do a better job with Angelina than his dad did with him. Is Angelina your daughter?

Al rubs his eyes, nods.

**EXT. STREET – NIGHT**

An unforgiving wind attacks the city streets. It engulfs Al as he sways among people.

AL

Boy, I miss social distancing.

His phone VIBRATES.

INSERT- Cell Phone in Al's hand. The cover photo: Angelina and Al in kangaroo time.

GROUP TEXT MESSAGE READS

I'm running late. Sorry. Uber pulling in. Sherri.

A KID (11) pushes past him to get a good look into a baby store shop window.

The Kid's MOM (37) smiles at Al, joins her daughter.

The Mom signs to her daughter in American Sign Language (ASL).

MOM

Be careful. Slow down.

Al follows the Kid's eyes. On display... a big, soft and fluffy kangaroo.

KID

Mom I want it.

Al rests his head onto the glass. Glances at the Kid.

The Mom sees this, pulls her Kid away.

Al signs away in ASL.

AL

Sorry. The kangaroo reminds me of my daughter.

MOM

You Sign? Your daughter deaf?

Al doesn't answer, but tears swell.

AL

No, hearing. My mom deaf.

**INT. COFFEE SHOP – DAY**

A dim place. Void of customers. Sherri and Al slink into a booth, the soft kangaroo toy under her arm. Sherri pets the kangaroo. Al takes her other hand in his.

AL

Marco said to meet him here.

A WAITRESS swings by. She refills their coffee cups.

Sherri takes out her phone.

Snuggles up to Al, places the stuffed kangaroo up close.

Snaps a photo.

SHERRI

I'll send it to you. Hey, pass me a menu--

The front door CHIMES. Marco walks in...

with Madison. She runs over to the booth.

MADISON

Look daddy. It's the guy who plays with the pink team.

Al shoots looks between Madison and Marco. Marco sits next to Sherri, opposite Al. Madison crawls over Marco to sit on Sherri's lap.

AL

This is Madeleana?

MARCO

She prefers Madison...

Marco gulps Al's coffee.

AL

Sharing is caring.

Al takes his cup back. Takes a swig.

MARCO

Sorry I've been busy. No free time being a dad. Except for school.

MADISON

And The Rangers.

Madison sings.

MADISON

*The Rangers had a home-coming...in  
Harlem late last night.*

In dramatic fashion, Marco whips out a file.

MARCO

But...I met up with Jerry Manning.  
He gave me this. Manning senior  
leaves work early every Tuesday and  
Thursday to go here.

Marco points to a section on the paper.

AL

That's across the bridge. We had a  
tour there once. I think its a  
rehab-center or something.

MADISON

*The local cops, and SHERRI tops..ha  
ha ha ha ha.*

SHERRI

Why is he going there?

AL

Or...who is he going to see?

MARCO

It's a lead. Let's find out.

MADISON

*As we take our stand. Down in  
Jungleland.*

The three grown ups all turn to look at Madison. She strums  
her air guitar.

SHERRI

Rock on, Madison.

Sherri bangs the table in an exaggerated drum-roll.

Marco jangles his car keys.

AL

I really appreciate this. I owe  
you.

MARCO

Good. When we get back home later,  
you can wash the dishes.

**EXT. HOLISTIC CENTER GARDENS - DAY**

Al scans the surroundings. A quaint place with a manicured lawn that surrounds a small water fountain.

Al dodges past a NURSE, who minds him no attention.

Al hears a familiar voice: Manning Senior.

There on a small, park bench, his back to Al.

In front of Manning -- Karida.

A pale shadow of herself, she struggles to sit up in a lounge chair.

Karida cracks a forced smile as Manning whirls around a piece of fruit. He gently places it to her lips.

She struggles to chew, but relishes the taste.

Manning takes a napkin with his other hand. With tenderness, he wipes away the mango juice that drips down her chin.

KARIDA

After your sixtieth, I thought I'd  
be the one feeding you.

At that moment, Monica joins them... with a baby-seat.

Al is startled, but holds back.

Manning holds up Angelina with real care.

Manning tries to nuzzle the baby up to Karida.

Karida turns her head.

She waits for Manning to place Angelina on his lap.

MANNING

I see you're still not ready --

KARIDA

I may never be, dad. She's a  
beautiful baby, but I don't...

Karida bursts into tears.

Al's eyes widen.

Monica retrieves something out of the baby-bag.

She notices Al.

Instead of squealing on him, she winks his way.

She points to Angelina. Gives Al a thumbs-up.

Karida takes the tissue paper.

KARIDA

I don't know how to explain this,  
dad. I have no feelings for her.  
Once I can take care of myself,  
maybe that will change.

MANNING

Angelina needs her mom --

KARIDA

No she doesn't, dad. She needs Al,  
or you, or her psycho-pseudo  
grandmother. She needs someone who  
is capable of taking care of her.  
I'm not that person.

Manning's phone rings.

He passes Angelina to Monica.

MANNING

Excuse me.

Karida grabs his phone. Slams it shut.

KARIDA

She can wait. Please get me back to  
my room.

Manning gently holds Karida, guides her towards the quaint  
building.

The Nurse greets them. Manning says his goodbyes.

Monica picks up Angelina for Al to see one more time before  
the baby disappears into the shade of the stroller.

Al darts to the fountain. He runs up to the building.

Through a second floor window he sees Karida.

Al looks to the door. A security lock.

He shimmies up to the wall, ascends.

Little by little, his fingers inch up the trellis.

As he reaches the ledge, he pulls the big window up.

**INT. HOLISTIC CENTER- KARIDA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Al squeezes through the crack, as he lands on the floor, Karida SCREAMS.

KARIDA  
What the fuck are you doing?

Karida steps back. Her hand snakes for the alarm on the wall.

AL  
Just one question and I'll leave.

Karida's hand reaches for the big alarm knob.

KARIDA  
Make it quick.

AL  
Who else did you have sex with last year?

Karida's right hand goes to her mouth. Her left SLAMS the alarm.

KARIDA  
You asshole! Get out of here!

AL  
I'm only asking coz my damn DNA test says I'm not Angelina's father.

KARIDA  
You've no right to attack me. It's not a problem if you screw around, is it?

Two SECURITY GUARDS storm in, grab Al. As they take him to the door, Karida steps forward.

KARIDA  
For years you think you can just screw whoever you want...with no consequences. Then I drop my panties, and the same bullshit again. I'm just an afterthought. *Go take care of the pregnancy, I'm not ready to be a daddy.* You reap what you sow, Al. Your turn to suffer now.

Al gets shoved through the doors.

**INT. MARCO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Tasteful. Elegant. Could pass as a showroom.

Sherri and Al look dejected. Next to them on the love-seat lie Madison and Marco, passed out.

Sherri lovingly wraps her arms around Al. Leads him, down the hallway, to Al's

**BEDROOM**

SHERRI

Did Hien set it up?

He opens the door for her.

AL

Yea. I'll take another test in the morning. Man, I saw it in her eyes. She has a lot of hate. God I'm a stupid mess aren't I?

SHERRI

You used to be. You went into your life and shaped your Johari Window; that's a very tough thing to--

AL

Don't go all psycho-babble on me now.

She flops on top of the wrought-iron bed. Al joins her.

SHERRI

Most people just accept who they are, just accept who they think they should be... so they can bounce around in life.

AL

And get bruised along the way.

SHERRI

I'm very proud of you. Making a life change isn't easy.

AL

Weird how things work out. The only other person who helped me was Marco. Bizarre.

SHERRI

He respects you.

AL

Destiny is so weird. I don't see even the relevance of being a doctor if I lose this one fight.

SHERRI

Don't quit on her.

She nudges closer to Al.

AL

Quitting? Never heard of it. Yeah, I'm not her father, but I am her dad.

Sherri leans in --

They kiss, gently.

SHERRI

One more battle. For Angelina.

Sherri moves closer to him. They kiss with passion.

AL

Please stay the night.

SHERRI

I'm not gonna be just another one of your conquests.

AL

Of course not.

SHERRI

Hmmm. Look into my eyes...Okay, I'll stay.

AL

You sleep here. I'll jump in Marco's bed. Boy, will he be surprised if he ever wakes up and goes to his room.

Al rises, walks to a closet. Hands her a towel.

AL

Sherri? I can't control how I feel about you, but I will try and control myself around you. You are very special to me...

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Sherri lies on top of the bed.

SHERRI

Boy, you take long showers?

Al (O.S.)

I was hoping a little business in a long cold shower would help me get through the night...

Sherri slowly peels off her towel.

For a few moments, she lies on the bed in all her glory.

Al comes into the room from the bathroom.

Al throws down his towel. Stares at her.

He climbs under the covers.

Sherri slips under the covers, too.

She nestles her back up to Al. He spoons her.

AL

This is going to be difficult. How on Earth am I gonna get any sleep?

SHERRI

You'll live. When I used to visit my grandparents in Germany, their house was always freezing, so my brother and I would put on extra PJs and sleep like this.

She takes his hand, kisses it.

AL

Yea, but your brother didn't want to have sex with you... Anyway, let me think of baseball or something else that's boring.

SHERRI

Golf? Hey, Al. I could fall for you...

AL

I've already fallen.

**INT. AL'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**

Al sips a cup of coffee at his laptop. As he goes to set his mug down, he notices something.

INSERT: The World Map.

He grabs at a bright pink marker pen, takes off the cap. Places it in his mouth. He moves his finger towards Germany. Places the pen onto the map. Hesitates- spits out the cap.

He gazes across the room to the bed... Sherri fast asleep. The morning sun begins to fight its way through the blinds, beams like a spotlight on her face.

He looks down at the map; at all the countries filled out in pink. He looks at Germany, steps closer to the bed.

Al drops the marker pen to the floor, crumples up the map, tosses it into the garbage can.

**INT. AL'S BEDROOM - MORNING**

Sherri scoots out of bed.

Her eyes are drawn to a framed photo of Al and Angelina in kangaroo time. Sherri sighs.

She turns to a chair, takes the towel off it, folds the towel. She places it into a small closet. As she goes to close the door, something stops it from closing - -

A large box on the floor. Sherri places her foot against the box. She kicks it, it doesn't budge. She squats down. Drags the box out, and views: A few soccer trophies, many medals and two framed photos.

She lifts the first photo out. It is of a soccer team. A bunch of teenagers. She runs her finger to the first row of players. She giggles as she notices Al -- a gangly seventeen year old. Number 13 displayed on his shorts.

She places it back. Then takes out the second photo. She sees Al, in the same uniform. Al holds aloft a large trophy, while his dad hugs him with affection.

AL

Stephen Marino. Awesome dad. Took that picture in our Regional Finals. A week later, we played for the State championship.

He hangs his head. Let's the tears fall.

**INT. COURTROOM - DAY**

The Judge scrutinizes Hien from her chamber's chair.

JUDGE RICE

Miss Fox, I made it very clear  
thirty days ago I would need some  
hard evidence to overturn my  
initial ruling.

WEBB

Miss Fox is renowned for delay  
tactics. Time is up.

HIEN

A day was set, not a time.  
It's almost lunch, recess for  
another hour?

JUDGE RICE

Not a chance.

Angelina's bouncy chair BUZZES softly.

The doors swing open. Like members of the chain-gang, Simon,  
Marco and Doctor Royal shuffle in.

Pensive...defeat written all over their faces.

The Mannings walk in with an air of confidence, Sherri races  
in after them.

SHERRI

Think of Angelina. You can't cut Al  
out of her life. She needs him.

The Mannings shrug her off.

MANNING

Back down. You want to get fired  
next?

They sit next to Webb, smug.

WEBB

Your honor. We would like to wrap  
this up as soon as you see fit. We  
appreciate the court must be very  
busy...

The judge searches around the room.

Everyone is present...but Al.

**INT. OUTSIDE COURT ROOM LOBBY- SAME TIME**

Al has his hand on the big, brass door. Tone runs up to him.

AL  
Come to revel in my defeat?

Tone looks down to the floor.

TONE  
No, man. I came to see if you were  
alright and needed anything.

**INT. COURTROOM - SAME TIME**

Judge Rice shrugs her shoulders.

Then places her gavel in her left hand.

**INT. OUTSIDE COURTROOM LOBBY - SAME TIME**

AL  
I thought we were fiends, Tone?

TONE  
I thought so, too. But, you drifted  
away from me, man. I'm sorry, I  
wasn't thinking straight till  
Anafrida invited me to...Sweden.

**INT. COURTROOM - SAME TIME**

JUDGE RICE  
By the power vested in me...  
I hereby grant Joseph Manning  
temporary custody of said child,  
until Karida Manning is fit enough  
to claim full--

The large courtroom doors kick open. Al and Tone burst into the courtroom.

Al strides to the judge's bench.

JUDGE RICE  
Have you anything credible to say?

Al glances up to the Judge, cowers down to his seat next to Hien.

KARIDA (O.C.)  
He doesn't, but I do.

The place goes deathly quiet. Karida's footsteps overwhelm the courtroom. She reaches up, drops a large envelope in front of the judge.

JUDGE RICE

And how are you connected to this matter?

KARIDA

I'm the sad case of a mom that turned her back on her daughter. This belongs in the official record. I've made countless attempts to reach the...dad.

Manning shoots up like he touched a live wire. Catherine freezes with shock.

The courtroom doors open again --

ANAFRIDA slowly enters. Sports a baby bump, takes a seat, blows a kiss to Tone.

Al takes a few steps towards Manning, swivels, faces the judge.

AL

I took a second test, they confirm I am not the biological father.

He whips out a second envelope, hands it to the judge.

AL

Regardless of what's in there, the grandparents didn't even show an interest until they got wind I was befriended by a fabulous, gay man. My friend Marco.

Judge Rice reviews both envelopes.

JUDGE RICE

I'm allowing this evidence.

AL

So what?! Anybody can claim to be a father after having sex, that's the easy part--

KARIDA

Yea, you would know.

AL

Kari! Look, this time last year I admit I was clueless. I had no intention to change my foolish ways.

SHERRI

(quietly)  
Pre-contemplation...

AL

Judge. I've messed up. I needed something to kick me in the ass.

Doctor Royal looks over to Sherri.

DOCTOR ROYAL

Contemplation.

AL

And after delivering Angelina, I was totally prepared to give up everything for her.

SHERRI

Preparation.

AL

I'm gonna put my residency on hold. She needs me. I've changed. My whole focus is her--

JUDGE RICE

But the law--

AL

Screw the law.

He turns to Karida.

AL

I am so sorry. Let me make it up to you by helping you raise her. I don't care who the biological dad is--

KARIDA

He don't either. He shot back to Rumanislovakia or somewhere. No sooner had he finished cleaning up, all I heard was a door slam and the screech of tires.

AL

I'm here for you. For both of you.

Sherri stands, clasps her hands.

SHERRI

Action! Say yes, Karida. Give him a chance.

Al approaches the bench, but stops as he SEES Angelina squirm out of her chair. The whole room takes a sharp, deep, intake of breath!

Angelina bounces on her butt three times. She slowly waddles a few feet towards Al.

ANGELINA

Dadda! Dadda!

She staggers into his arms. Al picks her up, whizzes her around. Angelina kisses him.

Karida turns to Al, cracks a half smile. Avoids eye contact with Angelina.

KARIDA

So, you are finally snared by a young lady. How ironic it took an infant girl in a diaper to tame you...

Al scratches his chin. Chuckles. Stands up, cradles Angelina. Moves closer to Karida.

AL

Being a mom must be the toughest job in the world. Let me help.

JUDGE RICE

Are you asking this court to grant you full custody, Ms. Manning?

Karida moves past Al. Focuses her attention on her parents. The Mannings slowly rise...but stay where they are.

Al moves Angelina a tad closer to Karida. Karida sighs. Swivels back to the judge.

KARIDA

Judge. I've made my decision...

FADE TO BLACK.

The hard sound of a gavel SLAMS down.

**INT. CHURCH - DAY**

In a quaint church, a PRIEST (62) holds Angelina over the baptismal font. Everyone's dressed for the big occasion.

The Priest splashes water on Angelina's head.

PRIEST

To conclude this baptism, will the godfather please step forward.

Karida looks back to welcome -- Al.

KARIDA

So, Cornell starts next month?

Al nods.

KARIDA

Guess we'll scale back to just weekends, then?

AL

I'm cool with that...I'll Always make room for Angelina in my life. I'll breeze through my residency.

Angelina, dressed in a soccer shirt, giggles as Al takes her from the Priest.

People converge on Al and Angelina.

Hien hugs Simon, showers him with kisses. He fights her off.

Tone, with Anafrida nearby, gently pats Angelina's head. Playfully whacks Al's arm.

Royal approaches Al, bear hugs him. Marco hugs Al next.

MARCO

Congrats. And thanks for the job offer. I'm totally up for it. But on one condition... You join my friend's soccer team.

Sherri leans in to Al, looking for an answer.

ROYAL

This genius has set forth a structural change for all students and staff to have access to yoga classes at S.I.C.

AL  
I e-mailed you the proposal.

She smirks at Al. Then kisses him.

MANNING  
Fatherly truce?

Al looks down, Manning has his hand thrust out. They shake.

Karida steps to Al.

KARIDA  
I'm getting much better, so I hope  
to be home soon. Thanks for playing  
nice in the sand with them.

She glances over to the Mannings.

She digs into her jacket, carefully pulls out a small photo,  
hands it to Al. Al hesitates, then takes it.

KARIDA  
It's for Angelina. Just in case I  
never really get to know her.

AL  
Just in case.

INSERT:

In the photo, right before his eyes, he sees the image of  
Karida DISSOLVE to Karida:

As a younger WOMAN.

As a TEENAGE girl.

A SIX year old.

And finally, an INFANT, who looks just like Angelina.

Al kisses Angelina, who plays with the plastic, purple  
bracelet now on her wrist.

FADE OUT: