

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

TENDERLOIN (Original Working Title: “Lothario”)

A thesis screenplay in fulfillment of the requirements  
For the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting

By

Aaron Louis Korn Warner

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The thesis screenplay of Aaron Warner is approved.

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Date

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## ABSTRACT

TENDERLOIN (Original Working Title: “Lothario”)

A FEATURE-LENGTH SCREENPLAY

By

Aaron Louis Korn Warner

Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting

Based on the real-life “Pick-Up Artist” and “Men’s Rights Activist” subcultures, *Tenderloin* is a dark, comedo/dramatic exploration of male anger, and latent misogyny in contemporary American culture. Craig Schevel, a divorced father and a self-styled seduction guru, is forced to face the dark underbelly of his trade when he takes on a new protégé; Andrew. The young son of a wealthy political family, Andrew’s sociopathy and dangerously relentless ambition take Craig into dark new territory, forcing Craig to wrestle for control of his empire, as Andrew recruits an ever-expanding clique of devoted, angry young men.

TENDERLOIN

Written by  
Aaron Warner

FADE IN:

INT. HOLLYWOOD CHOP HOUSE - NIGHT

A western-themed bar/grill turned into a weekend nightclub. Hordes of FEMALE PATRONS in postage-stamp-sized skirts and MALE PATRONS (20s-30s) with gel-slicked hair mingle.

Rotating, multicolored lights flash off hokey cowboy decor, in time to the thumping DANCE MUSIC shaking the room.

A jowled SCHLUB (30s) approaches two petite, chatty female FASHION STUDENTS (20s) at a tall pub table.

A few yards off, CRAIG SCHEVEL (32) looks up from his drink. He's tall, lean, with some designer stubble over a face that's just a bit too angular. Beside him is MATTHEW "BROCK" LENTZ (35), muscular, long-haired, spray-tanned.

Craig watches the Schlub hover near his targets.

CRAIG  
Eight o'clock.

Brock looks.

BROCK  
How far you think he's gonna get?

CRAIG  
Fat Don Knotts? He's all full of steam. He's not even gonna make A1.

BROCK  
Ah shit. He'll shut 'em down for the whole night.

CRAIG  
Wait...

They watch between the weaving members of the crowd. The Fashion Students continue their rapid-fire gossip.

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
... No, because, I was like, in at 10:06 instead of ten. And she had this snotty-ass tone...

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
Oh God, I hate that!

The Schlub approaches.

SCHLUB  
Hey! You girls seem cool. Can I buy you a--

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
(venomous)  
We're talking!

The Schlub recoils and storms off.

SCHLUB  
Jesus! Fuck it!

Craig watches for him to disappear. They turn back to the girls, effortlessly sliding back into their conversation.

BROCK  
Bitch shields are up.

CRAIG  
These two? They're Fashion  
Institute; they already forgot him.  
(beat)  
I'm gonna drop Spaceman.

BROCK  
Oh dude, fuck Spaceman!

But Craig's already taken off. Brock sighs, exasperated.

Craig migrates toward the girls, keeping them only in his peripheral vision. He cranes his neck, pretending to look for someone.

CRAIG  
(calling)  
Major? Hey, Major!

He seems to suddenly notice the girls. He talks to them over his shoulder, as if about to take off at any moment.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Excuse me, have you seen a tall,  
built guy? Dark hair, pretty good-  
looking?  
(beat, nonchalant)  
Aside from me?

The girls share a look: trepidation and curiosity mixed.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
What's he wearing?

CRAIG  
Uh... He may have been wearing his  
NASA jacket.

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
What, is he an astronaut?

CRAIG  
We both are.

He turns and extends his hand.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Sorry. Captain Finesse.

The girls pause, then take turns shaking.

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
Captain of what?

CRAIG  
Hubble 12. First human landing on  
Mercury.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
Isn't it super hot there?

CRAIG  
I had to wear titanium sunglasses  
so my eyes wouldn't boil out of my  
head.

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
How would you see?

CRAIG  
Oh, that close to the sun, the  
light vibrates through the metal.

The girls turn towards each other, as if asking for  
permission to believe him.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
(chuckling)  
Are you for real?

Craig holds out his arm.

CRAIG  
Touch it. See if your hand goes  
through.

The Blonde obliges. Their eyes meet and Craig shines his  
custom, precision-engineered smile. It's playful, doesn't  
impose too much or too little. It leads, it teases. After a  
second he swiftly withdraws the arm.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Okay, okay! Don't leave a mark!

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
I had no clue we were sending guys  
to Mercury.

CRAIG  
It wasn't on the news? Oh shit...

Brock walks up to Craig, reading his mock-shocked face.

BROCK  
Something wrong, Cap'n?

CRAIG  
Major Brock, I think I just leaked  
a classified mission.

BROCK  
Oh, God.  
(to girls)  
Sector 23's gonna have his ass for  
this. I'll prep a P-38.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
What's a P-38?

CRAIG  
Standard-issue memory wipe.

BROCK  
A round of shots.

Brock heads for the bar. Craig pulls up a stool.

CRAIG  
So, you two work out here?

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
Kinda. We're students.

CRAIG  
Where at?

TALL FASHION STUDENT  
Fashion Institute.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
Fashion Institute.

Craig grins like he just struck gold.

INT. BLONDE'S APARTMENT / BEDROOM - DAWN

Navy blue sky, sun almost rising. Craig's eyes open with a start. He's in a tossed salad of bedsheets next to the soundly-sleeping, totally-disrobed Blonde Fashion Student.

He raises his arm, checks his watch, a flashy digital chronometer. His face contorts, unease washes over him.

He slithers out of the bed and collects his clothes from the floor, his motions dainty, measured, and silent like a tree-climbing snake. He slides his phone out of his pants pocket and writes a text message, recipient: BROCK. It reads:

"Crashed bad. Need pick-up NOW."

Once it's marked SENT, he slips back into his clothes. A sudden RUSTLING comes from the bed, and his eyes whip around. The Blonde rolls over, still asleep. Craig slowly stands and pulls his pants up with him, his belt slides a bit and the hefty, garish buckle THUMPS to the floor. He freezes.

The Blonde rouses, her eyes open.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
(groggy)  
What time is it?

CRAIG  
Uh... Five-thirty.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
Come back to bed.

He continues dressing, his speech grows awkward, unsure.

CRAIG  
I really gotta go.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
It's Saturday. Stay with me.

CRAIG  
I would, I just got this big mission debriefing, and--

She lets out a long, loud, exhausted SIGH.

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
God, you must think I'm so stupid...

CRAIG  
Huh?

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
Just get the fuck out of here.

CRAIG  
I-- I'm sorry--

BLONDE FASHION STUDENT  
No, you're not.

She rolls over, turns away from him. She draws herself into a ball and shuts her eyes tight. Craig stares. Gingerly, he lifts his chunky leather boots off the floor and carries them out the door.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS:

The SUN beats down on streets crowded with CORPULENT TOURISTS and STREET PERFORMERS in grimy, awkwardly off-model costumes.

The NEON SIGNS on every tourist-trap attraction and night club blink incessantly, dulled by the sandy tones of daylight.

Huge AD POSTERS for alcohol, movies, local plastic surgeons and nearby clubs (some strip) all feature homogenized, FEMALE MODELS with the same practiced sultry gazes, many hanging demurely on the arms of MALE MODELS.

The posters fill the upper story windows of high-rises and billboard frames; the overhanging Word of God, some defaced by gang graffiti.

EXT. SUV ON 101 FREEWAY - DAY

MATTE BLACK paint job, the car slices south, the KNICKERBOCKER and the LOFTS at Hollywood and Vine buildings visible through the passenger window. Brock drives. Craig rides shotgun, sipping his drive-thru coffee.

BROCK

We're gonna be late. 101's gonna be fucked on the way back.

Craig scowls and rubs the fatigue out of his eyes, as the massive neon PATRÓN sign atop the Lofts building FLASHES. He pulls an orange prescription bottle from the center console. He pops a single large tablet and washes it down.

BROCK (CONT'D)

You're getting sloppy, man. You're dropping silly-ass routines, you're popping that shit before you sarge...

CRAIG

You try pulling girls when you walk like Captain Ahab.

BROCK

You wouldn't be limping if you stopped squatting 315. Who're you trying to impress, anyway? No chick gives a shit about your quads.

CRAIG

Just... Cool it. We closed, did we not?

BROCK

Don't you even... I'm not dumb, Craig. You run Spaceman because you hope it won't work. You have the

gayest nickname in the Game, and you seriously slap Captain in front of it?

CRAIG  
(firm)  
Did Scott check us in yet?

BROCK  
Yeah. And Duane just got there.

CRAIG  
Good. You know, he pulled a decent nine Latin chick at Azteca.

BROCK  
You put a lasso 'round it for him?

Craig shakes his head dismissively, turns back to the window.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. Brock stands at the sound control table, barking into a microphone. A lanky kid with curly hair, SCOTT DESMOND (24) stands next to him, fading up DRAMATIC, CANNED MUSIC.

BROCK  
Gentlemen, please welcome: Master of the Aphroditic Arts...

A several-hundred-strong all-male AUDIENCE CLAPS.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
FINESSE!

Craig emerges from behind a curtain, sweeps into the spotlight on a makeshift stage, holding his arms out, Christ-like. The Audience CHEERS; standing ovation.

He's clad in his trademark costume: foil-printed dress shirt, acid-washed jeans, and those chunky boots that give him a few extra inches in height.

Atop his head, a garish thin-brimmed fedora with an intricately-stitched fleur-de-lis design. His voice rings out loud and proud via his headset mic.

CRAIG  
Hello, Fullerton!

The CHEERING builds and BUILDS. Craig motions for his Auds to sit. As they do, he struts around, owning the stage.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

God, I love you OC guys! I can tell  
you'd all pull tens your first  
night in H-Wood.

A collective CHUCKLE rings out. Scott hits a button on a remote, lowering a SCREEN behind Craig, a projector fills it with a photo of a thin manual:

"THE NEW KINGS PLAYBOOK: A Three-Step Procedure to Seduce Any Woman".

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
You laugh! But I used to be where  
you're sitting now. I heard it all:  
"You're just not my type."  
(beat)  
"I'm not available right now."  
(beat)  
Or how about "Oh, you're just too  
nice!"

Craig rolls his eyes, lets loose an exaggerated GROAN. The Crowd LAUGHS again.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Oh, hey! Show of hands if you heard  
this one... "I think we're better  
off just friends."

He makes a "jerk-off" motion with his hand. The Audience goes wild.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
I heard everything! I practically  
had a doctor diagnose me with  
terminal Blue Balls. Until... I got  
a message from God.

He smirks coyly, the Audience SNICKERS in anticipation.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
I heard the God of Men call down to  
me and say...  
(cartoony "God" voice)  
"My Son, I want you, to build an  
ARC."

Scott hits a button on a laptop set at the tech table. The slide on the screen changes to show the breakdown of Craig's "ARC Theory".

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
A. R. C. Approach, Reel, and Close.  
Your Approach starts before you  
even go out Sarging. It's how you  
dress, how you talk, it's the  
character you play out in the  
Field...

INT. GYM / WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

Spacious, upscale, and packed. Craig readies himself by a squat rack. Brock stands nearby, admiring himself in the mirror as he hammers through an endless set of bicep curls.

CRAIG (V.O.)  
(continuing)  
You build that character. You live  
that character.

Craig slips a red foam SUPPORT SLEEVE over his right knee and takes his place under the barbell. He hauls the bar off the rack by his shoulders, INHALES deeply, and squats, his face already turning red.

INT. GYM / MEN'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Craig SLAMS against the lockers, sweat-drenched, his face flushed and gaunt. He winces as he tugs the support sleeve off his knee.

He tries to put his weight on his right leg, the effort pulls an involuntary MOAN out of him. VEINS bulge and his jaw locks in pain.

CRAIG  
(sotto)  
Ah, shit--! Shit!

Sliding the sleeve back on, he limps to his locker and pulls the orange prescription bottle from it.

CRAIG (V.O.)  
Then, you take that character out  
and present it.

He pops a tablet and takes slow, deep breaths. He holds his hand over his chest, letting his heartbeat slow.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Craig, now dressed in a polo and jeans stands on the sidewalk island between the parking lot and the front of the campus. His body language is nervous. He's barely recognizable as the costumed club jester we first met.

He watches a gaggle of KINDERGARTNERS playing in their fenced-off section of the school. CALLIE (4) a girl with piercing, intelligent eyes hops around, wearing a backpack in the shape of a turtle shell. Craig perks up at the sight of her.

A burly YARD DUTY (60s) saunters up to him. His tone already brusque.

YARD DUTY  
Can I help you?

CUT TO:

EXT. CRAIG'S CAR ON FREEWAY - DAY - TRAVELLING

Black. Leather interior. Immaculately clean. The Hollywood skyline glistens around the windows. Craig's gliding, as if he's too cool for traffic.

He talks to his cell phone, on speaker as it sits in his center console. The voice of TARA (30) finishes her voicemail message.

TARA (V.O.)  
Hi, you've reached Tara Bradshaw.  
I'm sorry I missed your call--

CRAIG  
(sotto)  
Sure you are.

TARA (V.O.)  
But if you please give me your  
name, number, and a brief message,  
I'll get back to you shortly.  
Thanks!

A BEEP. Craig barely stifles his ire towards the phone.

CRAIG  
So, I got to Callie's new school  
early, and it turns out they don't  
have my name. So they can't legally  
release her to me.  
(beat)  
This is bullshit, Tara.

He hangs up, fumes. He glances in his rearview mirror at his backseat, a child's car seat goes unoccupied.

CRAIG (V.O.)  
It's hard out there. Every move you  
make, somebody: your girl, your  
boss, your parents are telling you  
"Not good enough!" They refuse to  
see the value in you. Of course you  
can't see it either...

INT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB / MEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Craig, now in his clubbing garb, makes pointed eye contact with DUANE (44): African American, portly, balancing out a bald spot with a thick Van Dyke. His shoulders, sunken; his gaze, downcast, leaning against the wall.

Notably, Craig's missing his hat, his hair pomade-laden.

CRAIG  
(continuing)  
But I do. I wouldn't be here if I  
didn't see something totally great  
in you, Duane.

Duane sighs.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Don't go dark on me, man.

DUANE  
I can't pull in there, man. I got  
twenty years on everybody in there.

CRAIG  
First: more like ten. Second:  
that's actually a plus. Makes you  
stand out, gives you status.  
(beat)  
What's really going on?

Duane shifts, his hands awkwardly search for his pockets.  
He's in a meager polo and some slightly-shiny slacks.

DUANE  
I think this was a mistake. I  
should probably just call it a  
night. I won't ask for a refund or  
anything...

CRAIG  
Duane...

Craig slips out his wallet, printed with a foil dollar sign,  
and flips out a THICK STACK OF BILLS, he holds it in front  
of Duane.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Take it. Just please, finish the  
night.

DUANE  
What?

CRAIG  
If I was focused on the money, I  
wouldn't do one-on-ones. I'd just  
run group workshops and get my  
regular rate from nine guys at  
once. I want to see you succeed.  
You deserve it.

Duane puts his hand up, pushes the money away.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

You don't even have to say it. Jen call you...? The lawyer call you...?

DUANE  
Curtis. The lawyer.

CRAIG  
Either way, three years, now? She doesn't deserve to steal any more of your time. And you know what? What you have here--

He places a finger dead center of Duane's chest.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Nobody can take away.

Duane takes a long breath, pushes his back off the wall.

DUANE  
I lost my set.

CRAIG  
That's okay! I got a set still open, and it is cherry. Where's your drink?

DUANE  
I finished it.

CRAIG  
Okay. You're gonna order for both of us, call me to get my own drink, because you are not my errand boy-- I'll do a Cred Intro, merge you in, run a Fake Search as I grab my drink, give you time to hold court-- Find another set to merge in, we get some Social Proof running-- Bing, Bang, Boom: You Close!  
(beat)  
And I swear to God, you will feel like a new man tomorrow. I believe in you.

Duane looks at Craig with a combination of amusement and awe.

DUANE  
I don't know anybody like you, Fin.

CRAIG  
No nom de guerre. As of right now, we're friends. Craig.

He extends his hand to Duane. They shake, Craig patting Duane's shoulder.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Let's go fishing.

They make for the door, Craig stopping for a mirror-check as they pass the sinks and the proper-looking ATTENDANT (50s). He helps himself to a squirt of mouthwash, and leaves an ample tip in the jar on his way out.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

Craig now sits next to Duane on-stage, both with their own mics in-hand.

CRAIG  
And did you Close?

Duane chuckles, bashful.

DUANE  
Few times...

CRAIG  
My man! Give it up for Duane, guys!

Craig throws out his hand for the high-five, hauls Duane to his feet and gives him a congratulatory post-game hug. The Audience APPLAUDS and Craig lets Duane take a reluctant bow, then retake his seat in the crowd.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

The Audience Members are now formed in two thick lines in front of a FOLDING TABLE, where sit Craig and Scott. Craig signs autographs and shakes hands with his fans, while Scott sells copies of the "New Kings Playbook" from a hefty stack.

Craig's pleasant, all smiles and encouragement. He bids a devotee goodbye. Next in line is ANDREW WALTIGAN (26). He's pudgy, with unkempt curly hair and wisps for a neck-dwelling beard.

His mouth contorts, crawling into a grin and then suddenly dropping it, as if it's a wholly new exercise.

ANDREW  
Hi.

CRAIG  
Hey. Who'm I making this out to?

ANDREW  
I want to talk to you, Craig.

CRAIG  
Woah, gotta buy me dinner before we get that familiar.

Craig chuckles at his own joke. Andrew stays silent.

ANDREW  
Uh, I'm Andrew. My dad's Brad  
Waltigan.

CRAIG  
Governor?

ANDREW  
Yeah-- well, like, former. I wanna  
do a one-on-one workshop.

CRAIG  
Sure. Application's on the website,  
I read them all directly, and if I  
think the one-on-one will suit  
you...

ANDREW  
I know, but I don't wanna wait.  
Like, name a price.

CRAIG  
That's just not how I work.

ANDREW  
That's how I work. And I'm the one  
paying...

Craig smirks, checks over Andrew's shoulder at the line.

CRAIG  
We'll talk.

INT. HOTEL CAFE - DAY

Craig carries his order from the coffee bar and joins Andrew  
at a table. His hat is missing again and he sports a pair of  
sunglasses, playing incognito.

CRAIG  
First, this isn't a cash grab for  
me. I've helped de-virginate guys,  
get them over their exes, whatever.  
But none of them try to run Game on  
me.

He checks his watch, glances at his cell phone screen.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
So, Cliffs Notes: What do you want  
out of this? 'Cause I can tell it's  
not just getting laid.

ANDREW  
Well, I wanna do what you do.

CRAIG  
You wanna teach Pick-Up?

ANDREW  
Yeah. I mean, who wouldn't want to  
get laid for a living?

Craig cocks his head. Even in talking dour he sounds smooth.

CRAIG  
Well, a few reasons: If you're  
good, you're known. That means  
you're gonna be hated. Every little  
Women's Studies chick is gonna try  
and out you if she sees you at a  
club. And if--

ANDREW  
You ever bang chicks like that?

CRAIG  
Not as often as guys like to think.

He sips from his coffee.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Every few months, your current  
spot's gonna fill with guys aping  
your style, your lines, and chicks  
hearing from their girlfriends how  
you pump-and-dumped them. You're  
gonna have to keep rotating venues.  
New clubs open up every week in  
L.A., but out here...

ANDREW  
I got a place in Culver City.

CRAIG  
Fair enough. You know, you're  
young. You're not gonna find a  
girlfriend doing this. Anyone who  
wants to go Wifey is gonna be  
clingy, or wanting to turn you over  
to Jesus, or she'll be calling you  
saying she's gonna kill herself if  
you don't--

ANDREW  
Crazy doesn't bother me. I'm half-  
nuts, myself.

CRAIG  
I notice you're interrupting me.

ANDREW

Indirect Neg. Tells the Mark that what you have to say is more important than what they do.

CRAIG  
You're all read-up.

Andrew shrugs, shifts in his seat.

ANDREW  
I grew up under a Big-Fucking-Deal for a dad, and my brother's just shaping up to be his sequel. I'm done being the runt of the litter. Everybody at school says set your goals, and follow them to the end.

Andrew leans back, but his voice grows stronger.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I'd guess that you're trying to see if you can scare me off. Maybe as a test. But it sounds to me, like you want out as much as I want in.

Craig grips onto his poker face.

CRAIG  
Let's see what you got.

INT. NEW KINGS PRESS OFFICES - DAY

Smallish, clearly meant for a company run by three people, but with a lavish budget for decor and furniture. Filled with copies of the Playbook and promo materials.

Scott sits at a computer with Brock making an impassioned phone call behind him. In the...

MEETING ROOM

Craig stands in front of a note-filled whiteboard. Andrew sits taking his own notes on a legal pad. He's already shaved his neck, and started adopting hints of Craig's style of dress.

CRAIG  
Since you're so up on the Playbook, give me Dirk's Plague Story. I wanna hear your delivery.

Without going schticky, Craig speaks in a voice that makes it clear he's rehearsing as the girl.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I don't know, this moving really fast. I just met you! I never would do something like this.

ANDREW

You're right, we should stop. You know, stop me if you've heard this one, but I once heard this story about a guy, who was walking on the street one day, and saw this just... Gorgeous girl. And they decided to stop and talk... And it was just natural and spontaneous...

Craig studies him, doesn't give away his reaction to Andrew's strategic pauses or precisely-maintained tone.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

And they just... clicked. It felt like fate. It was like this flame that grew warmer and brighter when they were together. But they decided to test it. They went their separate ways and figured, that if it was really destiny, they'd find each other again.

A beat. Andrew looks down, as if remembering an actual tragedy.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

But there was a plague that hit the city where they lived, and a lot of people died. And it wasn't until years later, that there was this guy walking in that town, and a beautiful girl walking towards him. And they passed by each other, just remembering some small, faint flicker of having seen that person before. But they kept walking...

Craig betrays the hint of a smile.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Does the story really work?

CRAIG

Well, it's like salt. Use it sparingly. But you get some Last-Minute Resistance... Dirk made a killing with that story.

ANDREW

Dirk the guy who taught you?

CRAIG

Yeah. His game was infomercials.  
He'd sell a VHS course in sets of  
twenty. He learned from Flash  
Turner, did tear-out ads in  
magazines.

ANDREW

What, every few years, there's a  
new guy?

CRAIG

You eventually retire and live off  
royalties. Next guys update the  
look, get a new sales strategy, and  
keep the whole thing alive.

Andrew affects a laugh of disbelief.

ANDREW

Why retire?

CRAIG

(shrugs)

This is a young man's game.  
Speaking of which, I need to see  
you in the Field.

INT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Somewhere Downtown. An aged movie theater converted into a  
massive club, with Aztec-inspired decor and a bustling  
clientele.

The screen has been removed, its platform turned into a  
stage for the DJ, surrounded by JUMBO MONITORS displaying  
color-shifting video loops of a JELLYFISH swimming, timed to  
pulse with the MUSIC.

Craig's in the middle of teasing a pair of AMATEUR MODEL-  
types, edging away from them and cutting a few stacked lines  
of conversation short.

CRAIG

Ladies, I really gotta get back to  
my friend.

AMATEUR MODEL #1

Tell him to come here!

CRAIG

Or how about you come with me?

The first girl turns to her friend, they share a considering  
look.

AMATEUR MODEL #2

Sure!

They follow Craig across the floor, slipping through the crowd.

From a few yards ahead, Craig spots Andrew talking to two leggy SISTERS, just too far away to be audible over the MUSIC and CHATTER.

His face is earnest, he leans in to the conversation. The Sisters start turning away from him, Andrew turns to keep them engaged, but it's far from working. One of the Sisters blatantly puts her hand up, like a cop signalling him to halt.

Andrew's face sours. He spits out one last word and leaves, the Sisters look at each other, sharing a face of mutual disgust. Andrew stomps away, spotting Craig and making to join him. He is pure, concentrated vitriol.

ANDREW  
Fucking bitches, man!

Craig goes wide-eyed, he turns and sees the two Models already breaking away.

INT. NEW KINGS PRESS OFFICES / MEETING ROOM - DAY

Craig paces the floor, arms crossed. Andrews sits with his shoulders hunched.

ANDREW  
(shrugs)  
Tough crowd.

CRAIG  
Don't put it on the girls, man.  
Better men than you probably pulled  
them last weekend without breaking  
a sweat. You blew up.

ANDREW  
I may have gotten a little  
flustered...

CRAIG  
Kid, you had straight-up War Face  
going on. I hope your Day Game  
isn't like that.

Andrew's head slumps down.

ANDREW  
I'm sorry.

CRAIG  
It's okay, just-- Jesus, take it  
easy...

ANDREW

I just figured that if they weren't gonna play nice, why should I?

CRAIG

Listen, because of my experience, I've got a way better reason to wanna "rage against" the female race than all the other guys who try to play that angle. But I don't. It sure as hell doesn't help you pull. You wanna teach Game, you have to be infallible at it.

An alarm BEEPS on Craig's phone. He slips it out of his pocket to deactivate it.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Alright, I gotta go.

ANDREW

Picking up your kid?

CRAIG

(harsh)  
Excuse me?

ANDREW

I'm sorry, I heard you had a kid.

CRAIG

You heard online "Finesse has a kid"?

ANDREW

Do you?

A long beat, then...

CRAIG

No. Come on.

He gestures for Andrew to rise and follow him out the door.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Have Scott give you the DVD on Day Game. And no more questions about my personal life, capisce?

ANDREW

Yeah, got it.

Craig affirmatively pats Andrew's shoulder.

CRAIG

'Til next week.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Hyper-modern decor, everything cast in chrome, or bold black, white, and red. The perfect Platonic Form of a "pad". Craig enters and beelines to...

CRAIG'S BEDROOM

Huge amounts of attention have gone into its design: The Maserati of beds, the Rolex of dressers, and a MIRRORED CEILING. Craig strips off his vestments, exchanging them for a similar outfit to what he wore at the school.

Once changed, he exits back into the...

LIVING ROOM

Where he grabs a shopping bag from the nearby couch. He carries it down the hall and produces a KEY, and unlocks the door to...

CALLIE'S BEDROOM

Just as lavish. Brightly painted, with a cartoonish jungle theme, the centerpiece being an odd structure effecting a playhouse/bunk bed hybrid. Almost as if Craig ripped the whole interior out of some catalog.

He pulls a brand new night light out of the bag, and replaces it in the outlet where another, unimpressive-looking one stood.

He hits the light switch and tests the new light: it simulates light filtering through a dense forest canopy all over the room.

CRAIG  
(sotto)  
Okay...

EXT. TARA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Worn, cracked stucco. Fading mint green paint stained by a few streaks of rust.

Craig, in his fatherly wardrobe knocks on the door of Apartment D. A wiry, horse-faced BOYFRIEND (45) in a baggy shirt pops his head out, all smiles as soon as he sees Craig.

BOYFRIEND  
Hi, Fin--Craig?

CRAIG  
Yeah.

The Boyfriend extends his hand.

BOYFRIEND

Ah, cool! I'm--

CRAIG

I'm not gonna remember your name.  
Sorry. I don't remember last week's  
name, either.

The Boyfriend's face drops. Tara appears in the doorway. Petite, blonde, with familiar almond-shaped eyes with excessive eyeliner. Her voice cool, detached.

TARA

She's getting ready.

The Boyfriend wordlessly slips away, leaving silence between Tara and Craig.

TARA (CONT'D)

You two make friends?

CRAIG

I already don't like this one.

TARA

Of course you don't. I called the  
school. Go to the office next time  
and show them ID.

Craig doesn't even nod. Tara's voice grows barbs.

TARA (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

Callie reaches the doorway, backpack on and pulling a little pink, wheeled suitcase. She stops by Tara. Her voice is almost resigned.

CALLIE

Bye, mommy.

Tara stoops next to her for a maternal kiss.

TARA

Good bye, sweetheart. I love you.

CALLIE

I love you too.

Callie slips past Craig and starts for the cement stairs leading down from the building. Craig turns to Tara, gesturing back inside the apartment.

CRAIG

I don't want this guy around my  
kid.

TARA

(re: Craig)  
I don't really want this guy around  
mine.

Craig starts after Callie, throwing the last word over his  
shoulder.

CRAIG  
He's one of my fans.

Tara's brow furrows.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Craig sits on a bench, guarding Callie's backpack, watching  
her run around a plastic playground with several other KIDS.  
He looks the most content he's ever been.

A few yards off, a group of SUBURBAN MOMS sit under a  
gazebo, casting occasional eyes at Craig, but chatting  
amongst themselves.

Craig's phone RINGS, souring his mood. He answers.

CRAIG  
(into phone)  
Yep?

SCOTT (V.O.)  
(over phone, filtered)  
Hey, sorry. Just got a booking  
offer. Big one.

CRAIG  
Who for?

SCOTT (V.O.)  
They're called the Alpha Chapter.

CRAIG  
Alpha Chapter of what?

SCOTT (V.O.)  
That's it. They're not a frat, but  
they're kinda like a Future  
Business Leaders of America, I  
guess? Anyway, Brock got them for  
twelve grand. You wanna book?

Craig looks back to the playground, his eyes find Callie  
again.

CRAIG  
No calls after this, okay? Set it  
for the soonest free weekend.

SCOTT (V.O.)

Got it.

Craig hangs up. A bicycle-riding cop rolls by, BRENDA (34). Tan, athletic, with her hair pulled back tight and triangular sunglasses. She stops her bike beside Craig's bench.

BRENDA  
Afternoon.

CRAIG  
(inquisitive)  
Hi.

BRENDA  
Can I ask you what brings you here today?

CRAIG  
Uh... Court order?

Brenda stares, humorless.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
I'm with my kid. It's my weekend with her.

BRENDA  
That's fine.  
(re: playground)  
Can you tell me which one she is?

Craig points to Callie, now crawling backwards up one of the plastic slides.

CRAIG  
Brown hair, green shirt, climbing the slide.

Craig nods towards the Moms under the gazebo.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
What, you don't get too many men here? The Stepford Wives tell you I was ogling their kids? Some McMartin Trial shit?

BRENDA  
I'm just doing my patrol, sir.

CRAIG  
Sure.

Craig stands, lifts Callie's backpack. Callie stops what she's doing and stares at her agitated father and the dark-clad Brenda.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Well, it was fun, but now I gotta  
find somewhere my daughter and I  
won't be harassed, so...

CALLIE

Daddy?

Brenda looks to the girl, takes off her sunglasses.

BRENDA

(to Craig)

What's her name?

CRAIG

Callie.

Brenda sits on her haunches, facing Callie.

BRENDA

It's okay, Callie. I just have to  
talk to your dad for a second.

Callie toddles over to stand behind Craig's legs, peeking  
out at Brenda. She stays squatting, looks to Craig, then to  
the girl.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

How old are you, sweetheart?

Callie holds up four fingers.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Four?

She nods.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Are you going to preschool?

CRAIG

She's in kindergarten.

CALLIE

Kindergarten.

BRENDA

Wow, smart girl.

(to Craig)

She get that from you?

CRAIG

Hope not.

Brenda smirks, pushes herself up to standing, faces Craig,  
nods towards the gazebo.

BRENDA

I'll make sure they know  
everything's copacetic.

She fishes a card out of her shirt pocket and hands it over.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
In case there's any trouble.

Craig takes it wordlessly. Brenda remounts her bike.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
You two have a good day. Bye,  
Callie.

She pedals off, Callie waves.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / CALLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Craig zips up Callie's suitcase while she sits on her bed,  
dangling her legs. Craig crosses to her and ties her shoes  
on for her.

CRAIG  
You have a good time?

CALLIE  
Mm-hm. I don't wanna go back with  
Mommy.

Craig finishes the first shoe, stops for a moment.

CRAIG  
No?

CALLIE  
I want Mommy to come here.

Craig sighs, at a loss for a response. He ties the other  
shoe.

CRAIG  
Come on, kiddo.

He lifts her off the bed with a swing. She giggles.

INT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Friday night. Packed. Andrew lounges at a few tables with  
his new entourage. Two artsy-looking girls (20s): one a  
REDHEAD, the other dainty, with a PIXIE CUT.

Craig strolls in. Andrew grabs a full lowball from a table,  
lets his hand rest on top of it for a brief moment, then  
swishes it around. Something CLOUDY swirls around in the  
drink, then clears up.

He meets Craig, extending the glass. Craig nonchalantly takes the drink, samples it.

CRAIG  
What's the status?

ANDREW  
I don't know. I'm trying to set up a Jealousy Subplot, but I'm getting a weird vibe.

CRAIG  
(shakes his head)  
Jealousy Subplots don't work with girls who know each other.

ANDREW  
I thought chicks always fought with their girlfriends over guys.

CRAIG  
Don't believe all you read on Pick-Up boards. Most of it's virgins indulging in wishful thinking.

Craig sips, his face goes sour for a moment.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
What's in this?

Andrew rolls his eyes.

ANDREW  
It's all cheap shit, here.

Craig gulps some more of the drink, washing it past his tongue. Andrew tries not to stare.

CRAIG  
So, has the redhead indicated interest yet?

ANDREW  
I-- uh...

CRAIG  
If you don't know, then No. So, the pixie cut's your Mark.

ANDREW  
But I want the redhead.

CRAIG  
The redhead's gonna run interference. You've landed your Approach with the pixie girl. You don't move into Rapport-building now, you'll lose the whole set.

ANDREW

Guys from my frat say chicks with short hair are all damaged goods.

CRAIG

If the guys from your frat knew shit, they wouldn't be proud for pulling state school chicks. You let me game the redhead, I can turn that into a vouch and a DHV for you. Okay?

Andrew shines just a glimmer of his "War Face" from earlier, aimed spitefully at Craig.

ANDREW

Okay. How's about... Tattoo Interview routine?

CRAIG

Try it.

He sends Andrew back into the fray, he follows after a beat, sipping from the glass.

CUT TO:

INT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - LATER

Craig stares ahead, just barely paying attention as the Redhead chats with him. He glances around and spies Andrew animatedly talking with the Pixie Cut girl by the nearest bar.

Andrew surreptitiously makes eye contact with Craig, who gives a small, directional hand signal. Andrew nods while the Pixie Cut girl hails a BARTENDER.

Craig blinks. He's bleary-eyed.

POV CRAIG ON ROOM

Blurry. Intermittently, he can see the room in focus, and understand an odd word from the Redhead. But mostly it's fuzzy lights and muffled MUSIC THUMPING.

REDHEAD

Fin? Are you okay?

BACK TO SCENE

His mouth moves lazily, he seems heavily drunk but he's still trying to play cool.

CRAIG

Yeah. Hey, let's put a pin in that. I'll be right back.

He rises to his feet and starts crossing the floor, his knee BANGS against a table covered in empty glasses he didn't notice. He grits his teeth and stumbles.

He blinks, the room growing ever darker and blurrier around him.

FADE THROUGH  
BLACK:

EXT. CAB ON FREEWAY - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Craig's eyes peel open. He pulls himself off the window and to his right sees SILHOUETTES, their voices WARPED and unintelligible, interrupted by unnerving LAUGHTER.

FADE THROUGH  
BLACK:

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Craig staggers into the KITCHEN, inky blackness all around him. He finds the Redhead lying on her side on the linoleum. She's DISHEVELED, her eyes are WATERY, her nose is BLEEDING.

If it weren't for the rise and fall of her chest as she breathes, she'd look dead. Craig stares. He looks pretty damn sober now. He staggers backwards and FALLS.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Tranquil. SUNLIGHT streaks through the blinds, casting razor blades of light on Craig, lying passed-out on the couch. His bloodshot eyes slip open, he rouses.

He slips off the couch, the first thing touching the ground: his bad knee.

CRAIG  
(shocked, pained)  
God damn it!

Pulling himself up to sitting on the couch, he looks around. All alone, still in his clothes from last night. He drags himself up to the...

BATHROOM

And rinses off his face. Andrew steps into the doorway.

ANDREW  
Hey.

Craig GASPS in surprise, turns.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I tried calling you, wanted to make  
sure you were okay.

Craig pulls his PHONE out of his pocket, sees nothing but a  
blank screen.

CRAIG  
Battery died.

ANDREW  
I figured. You were pretty fucked-  
up.

CRAIG  
Oh, Jesus...

ANDREW  
What?

CRAIG  
You see me take a white pill at any  
point last night?

ANDREW  
I don't know, maybe.

CRAIG  
Well, if I misjudged my timing, and  
popped one too close to when we  
were drinking...  
(sotto)  
Stupid...

Craig strolls out to the...

LIVING ROOM, and slides back onto the couch.

ANDREW  
Well, you should be okay. She was  
just as fucked-up as you were. I  
doubt she remembers anything.

CRAIG  
Who was?

ANDREW  
The ginger chick, man. You closed  
with her, alright.

CRAIG  
Did I?

Andrew scoffs, amused.

ANDREW

Wow, you really don't remember.

CRAIG  
I guess not.

ANDREW  
Well, it's all good, it's not like she'd remember enough to report you.

CRAIG  
"Report" me? What the fuck for?

Silence, then Andrew SNICKERS, his face twisting into an unnerving grin.

ANDREW  
Uh... Rape, man. Probably rape.

Craig's face goes white. He stands and speaks forcefully, edging in close to Andrew.

CRAIG  
What happened to her? Tell me, you creepy little shit--!

ANDREW  
I'll tell you what--

Andrew pulls out his own cell phone, presses a few buttons across the touch-activated screen.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
We got a cab from the club, all hung out here for a while. Before you passed out, I got this...

Andrew holds up the phone, plays a VIDEO:

DARK, BLURRY FOOTAGE.

The REDHEAD, heavily intoxicated, fighting a pair of MALE HANDS on her, a DARK TORSO shoves her to the floor. Sounds of STRUGGLE, a SCREAM.

Andrew SNICKERS again, turning off the video and pocketing his phone.

Craig sweats, sick with terror.

CRAIG  
That's not me.

ANDREW  
You sure? I was holding the camera.

CRAIG

Bullshit. This is some fucking  
joke.

ANDREW  
That's real good, Craig. Tell the  
cops it was a joke; you fucked her  
ironically.

Andrew beams.

CRAIG  
Where is she now?

ANDREW  
Sent her home in a cab. She won't  
be up in time to have a kit run. No  
DNA or anything.

He pats the pocket where he stowed his phone.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I'm the only one who can prove  
anything either way.

CRAIG  
Give me that phone.

ANDREW  
I got a backup. Fuck it, I got more  
phones, too.

CRAIG  
That was you. You fucked her.

ANDREW  
I'm a Poli Sci major from a nice  
family. You're President of Sleezy  
Fuckers Anonymous. Who're they  
gonna believe?

Andrew watches Craig's fists ball up.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I'd chill with that. Shit, you'd  
have to kill me. You'd get busted  
either way, and your kid won't be  
seeing much of you after that.

CRAIG  
What do you want from me?

ANDREW  
Hey, I'm not trying to be mean,  
man. I just got some things I want  
to accomplish, and I need you  
handy.  
(beat)

I think you'll end up liking me,  
Craig. We got so much in common,  
you know? We're both Alpha males.  
Sometimes we just play a little  
rough with each other.

Andrew smiles pleasantly, puts his hands congenially on  
Craig's shoulders.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Come on, let's go out again  
tonight. Drinks can be on me, if  
you really want.

Craig tries to push past him, stumbles. Andrew puts his arms  
out to steady him. Craig tears away down the hall.

INT. CRAIG'S CAR IN PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Craig turns the ignition, plugs his phone into his car  
charger. A VERY LOW BATTERY icon shows, Craig fiddles with  
the buttons, trying to bring the thing back to life before  
dropping it in a huff.

CRAIG  
Fuck!

He throws the car in gear and backs out of his parking  
space.

INT. RENTED STUDIO - DAY (SCREEN VIEW)

A BLACK BACKDROP: Craig and Brock sit beside each other in a  
pair of armchairs, facing an unseen audience, looking like  
co-hosts on a budget talk show.

CRAIG  
(continuing)  
When your Game starts improving,  
and you get more in-touch with your  
Alpha male qualities, people  
notice. Especially female friends.

BROCK  
(to Audience)  
You guys should all be taking  
notes.

CRAIG  
The classic line is "You used to be  
so nice". Which means "You used to  
be weak; I used to have a handle on  
you". You don't want to be "nice".

BROCK  
Never be nice. Nice is limpdick.

Craig motions between him and Brock, smirks.

CRAIG  
We're not nice guys.

BROCK  
Hell, in the... "traditional" sense  
of the term, we're not even good  
people.

They CHUCKLE.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

INT. NEW KINGS PRESS OFFICES - DAY

Alone, Scott watches the previous scene as a VIDEO on his  
COMPUTER SCREEN, his back to the window where CRAIG can be  
seen, storming the door while fighting with his limping leg.

In front of Scott, another window looks into BROCK'S OFFICE,  
where Brock paces the floor in the middle of an animated  
phone call.

CRAIG  
Scott!

Scott pulls out his headphones currently carrying the  
footage's audio, and turns.

SCOTT  
Hey, just doing a quality check.  
Didn't know you were coming in  
today.

Craig bristles. His mouth cracks open, at a loss.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
You okay, man?

CRAIG  
Yeah. Fine. Listen, I gotta check  
my company card.

SCOTT  
Uh, sure...

A few keystrokes and Scott replaces the video with a  
spreadsheet of credit card transactions. Craig juts his face  
towards the screen, all but shoving Scott out of the way.

His lips quiver, muttering silently to himself as he reads.

CRAIG  
Okay... bar... the cab...

Craig palms Scott's mouse, scrolls up and down, searching.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
(muttering)  
Come on... Come on...

His finger on the scroll wheel picks up speed, as do his scanning eyes. His face becomes strained, desperate.

SCOTT  
You looking for something?

He breaks away from the screen.

CRAIG  
Nah. Nah, it's fine.  
(sotto)  
I got nothing.

SCOTT  
Something wrong with the card?

CRAIG  
No. All good. I-I gotta jet.

Scott's tone is transparent: he can tell Craig's panicked, but confused as to why.

SCOTT  
Alright, see ya...

CRAIG  
Scott?

SCOTT  
Yeah?

CRAIG  
How well would you say you know me?

SCOTT  
Um... I don't know, Craig. About as well as anyone else, I suppose.

CRAIG  
What does that mean?

SCOTT  
Well, I don't know... You gotta understand, I was working here six months before I even learned your real name. But that's the nature of the business, I guess. Brand image and all that.

Craig half-nods rethinks his line of questioning.

CRAIG

You think you could attest to my  
character pretty well?

Scott cocks his head.

SCOTT  
Is this a Tara thing?

CRAIG  
What? No, no-- Well, sorta. Yeah.  
Don't worry about it. Nothing  
major.

He makes for the door. Scott looks up to his shared window  
with Brock. Still holding the phone, Brock gestures  
inquisitively: "What was that about?". Scott replies with a  
shrug.

EXT. CRAIG'S CAR ON FREEWAY - DAY

Stop-and-go traffic, each lurch forward seems to make  
Craig's heart pound a beat faster. He looks sickly, drained.  
Having to switch between gas and brake is taking a toll on  
his bad knee. He grips it, trying to squeeze the building  
pain away.

His charging cell phone, now with a big enough sliver of  
battery life, begins to RING.

Craig stares at the screen. Caller ID says it's Andrew.

The RINGING continues, then reaches the end. Call goes to  
voicemail.

Craig sighs a tiny bit.

The RINGING begins again. Craig grits his teeth, answers.

CRAIG  
(into phone)  
Yeah?

ANDREW (V.O.)  
(over speaker phone,  
filtered)  
So...

CRAIG  
So?

ANDREW  
Your place at seven?

CRAIG  
How about yours? At eight?

Quiet WHITE NOISE over the phone. Andrew's silent for a beat.

ANDREW  
That give us enough time?

CRAIG  
We'll run a bounce.

ANDREW  
A bounce?

CRAIG  
Yeah. Keep changing venues once we've hooked a set. Makes the ARC take less time. Sound good?

Another long break on Andrew's end. Craig tries to stifle his own nervous breathing.

ANDREW  
See you then.

He HANGS UP. Craig sighs, he spies his PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE sitting in his center console. Rather than grab for it, he puts it in another compartment in the console and shuts the lid over it.

CRAIG  
(anxious)  
Fuck.

INT. HISTORIA TAVERN - NIGHT

Rustic decor, wallpaper made of reprinted 19th Century lithographs of the New York skyline. Craig strides up to the bar and flags down the BARTENDER.

CRAIG  
Just a water.

BARTENDER  
We only have bottled.

Craig reaches for his wallet.

CRAIG  
Fine.

BARTENDER  
You want Dasani, Voss, Pellegrino...?

CRAIG  
Just whatever, man.

He slaps a few bills on the bar, cracks into the bottle he gets in response. He gazes across the room, seeing Andrew placidly chatting with a pair of mid-20's SILVERLAKE GIRLS, one with a BLACK BOB, the other a WAIFISH sandy blonde.

The one with the Bob approaches Craig, who slides back into his long-rehearsed display of total ease.

BLACK BOB GIRL  
(re: water bottle)  
Thirsty?

CRAIG  
Yeah, usually.

She smirks.

BLACK BOB GIRL  
You know, my friend thinks you're cute...

CRAIG  
Yeah? Well, let her know I don't hold it against her.

She scoffs, more amused than offended.

BLACK BOB GIRL  
God, you're such a dick!

CRAIG  
Woah now, aren't we acting a little too familiar?

BLACK BOB GIRL  
Well, you're acting like you're ignoring her.

CRAIG  
I'm playing hard-to-get.

He takes a punctuated swig from his water. She rolls her eyes.

BLACK BOB GIRL  
You guys are ridiculous.

Craig looks over her shoulder and sees Andrew locking eyes with him, winking. Andrew's mouth tugs into a half-smile; knowing and intimidating. Craig looks slightly queasy, sips from his water.

CRAIG  
That's one word for it.

INT. ALL-NIGHT DINER - NIGHT

Craig, Andrew, and the two Silverlake Girls sit in a booth in front of mostly-empty plates. The conversation between Andrew and the Girls is MUFFLED, fading behind an intense, anxiety-generated TINNITUS ringing in Craig's ears.

A late-40's Hispanic SERVER refills Craig's mug of black coffee. Craig uses his fork to dredge out some ice cubes from his glass of water and drop them in the mug. He stirs until the steam subsides, then swills the contents.

The tinnitus fades, as the WAIFISH girl speaks up, her voice demure, just shy of cracking.

WAIFISH GIRL

So where are we going after this?

CRAIG

(to Andrew)

Your place. Remember?

Andrew cocks his head.

ANDREW

Yeah. Well, you guys are all welcome to stay for a little bit, sample some of LA's finest tap water, but I gotta be up early.

BLACK BOB GIRL

Oh bullshit, you do!

ANDREW

(playful)

Jesus, this one's got a mouth on her!

CRAIG

Didn't anybody teach you how to act in polite company?

BLACK BOB GIRL

(snickers)

You guys are not polite company.

ANDREW

I think we might surprise you.

(to Craig)

Right?

Craig tilts his head, shrugs as he sips from his coffee.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Sparsely-decorated and dimly-lit. Living room is home to a large, black faux-leather couch. Not partaking, Andrew watches as the two Silverlake girls pass a blown glass pipe between them. The Waifish girl takes a hit, COUGHS heartily.

WAIFISH GIRL  
Woah... Jesus...

The Black Bob Girl chuckles.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Craig stands over the toilet, the TRICKLE dies down. Craig finishes, ZIPS up. His face is grave. Stone sober.

BLACK BOB GIRL (O.S.)  
(giggles)  
"Gotta cough to get off."

He hits the lever, the toilet FLUSHES. Craig swings open the door and sees--

THE WAIFISH GIRL

Eyes cast up to his, open, expectant.

Over her shoulder, Craig spies a LAPTOP sitting on a desk beyond another doorway, its few lights glowing.

WAIFISH GIRL  
Hey...

She tiptoes towards him.

CRAIG  
Hey.

His eyes jump between the laptop and her. She edges closer, closes the bathroom door behind him. Her hair falls across her face, a little sloppily.

She's trying her damndest to be seductive, but the insecurity shines through. Craig looks uneasy, as if she were just a kid approaching him. Her hands travel up to his shoulders, she stands on her toes to touch her mouth to his.

Her eyes hold shut, he keeps one of his watching the doorway, and the laptop. He interrupts the kiss, pulls his head back. Her eyes go wide.

WAIFISH GIRL  
Is-- Is something wrong?

CRAIG  
No, I just--

WAIFISH GIRL  
(jittery)  
I'm sorry. I don't usually-- You know, it's not-- I--

He puts a finger to her lips. His tone is gentle, calming.

CRAIG  
Shhhh... We'll pick this up later,  
okay?

He turns on the patented smile. She lights up a bit.

WAIFISH GIRL  
Okay.

Craig gestures back toward the living room; Andrew and the other Girl.

CRAIG  
I'll meet up with you in a sec.

She nods, leaves. As soon as she's out of sight, Craig's mask drops. He pokes his gaze into the hallway. Coast clear, he slips into...

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Craig crosses to the desk and stands over the laptop. He shakes his fingers on the track pad. The screen lights up--

THE DESKTOP, no password protection. Craig starts skimming through Andrew's data, looking for any video files.

A HAND clamps tightly over Craig's mouth just as a FOOT stomps on his bad knee. Craig buckles, falls, his cry of pain muffled by the hand. Andrew leans in over his shoulder, holding tightly over Craig's mouth, snickering.

ANDREW  
(hushed)  
Ha ha! Almost, man! Real fucking  
sneaky! But let's play nice, yeah?

Andrew pulls his hand way. Craig MOANS softly his voice cracking.

CRAIG  
(pained)  
Fuck... My leg--!

ANDREW  
Come on, Craig. Let's not be like  
this. We still gotta Close.

CRAIG  
(sputtering)  
I'm not doing shit for you.

Andrew scowls, rises. He lets Craig slump to the floor and gives another kick into Craig's knee. Craig jolts, GROANS through gritted teeth. Andrew picks up the laptop.

ANDREW

This doesn't even have a copy on  
it, yet.

He exits, shutting the door and leaving Craig in the  
darkness behind him. He walks back to...

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The Silverlake Girls look up from the couch to the entering  
Andrew.

WAIFISH GIRL

Where's Fin?

ANDREW

He's not feeling so hot. Had to lie  
down.

WAIFISH GIRL

Is he okay?

ANDREW

Yeah, he'll be good in the morning.

The Girls share a series of pointed looks. The Waifish one  
sharing an uneasy suspicion, her dark-haired friend  
challenging, prying to stay. The Waifish girl holds firm,  
and her friend acquiesces. She SIGHS.

Andrew stares, confused by the wordless interchange.

BLACK BOB GIRL

Well, we should go.

WAIFISH GIRL

Yeah...

BLACK BOB GIRL

We've really had fun, but we  
actually gotta be up early, too.

They stand, start collecting shoes and purses. Andrew's face  
turns stern. He goes for broke.

ANDREW

I'm not gonna pay for a cab back if  
you two leave.

The Girls take immediate umbrage.

BLACK BOB GIRL

Did we ask?

The Black Bob girl leads her friend out the door, barely  
looking at Andrew as they split.

BLACK BOB GIRL (CONT'D)

(icy)  
Good night.

The door shuts. Andrew stands in the silence, bristling.

ANDREW  
(spits, sotto)  
Cunts!

He stomps towards the bedroom door. As soon as it opens, Craig's FIST connects near his nose, flinging his head back.

Andrew staggers back.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Fuck!

He doubles over, almost immediately bursting into strained LAUGHTER.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
You motherfucker!

Craig limps into the hall, but keeps his distance from the cackling Andrew. Blood starts to spurt from Andrew's nose, then drips steadily. Andrew throws his hands up to block it. His laughter breaks for just a moment.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Oh shit!

He breaks away to the Bathroom. Craig stands, dumbfounded as he hears the SINK start running.

ANDREW (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
You're being a really shitty friend, you know that?

CRAIG  
What is wrong with you?

ANDREW (O.S.)  
Oh, you're making me out to be the bad guy? It's social dynamics, man. You wrote the fucking book on it! Your name's at least on the cover!

Craig approaches the door, slowly, compensating for his limp and trying to be as silent as possible.

The SINK shuts off, the last of the water GURGLES down the drain. Craig's hand reaches for the doorknob, just as Andrew emerges from the bathroom with a wad of bloodied toilet paper pressed against his nose.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I'm just trying to-- Hey!

Craig slips through the door, SLAMMING it shut behind him.

INT. ANDREW'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Craig awkwardly tears down the unpainted hallway, dragging his bad leg behind him.

EXT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - DAY

Craig KNOCKS on the front door, tries to peer around into the darkened, obscured windows into the club. He KNOCKS again on the front door. A youngish, white-shirted HOST finally pokes his head through the door.

HOST  
(flat)  
We're closed.

CRAIG  
I know. Listen, uh, were any of your staff here right now working on Friday night?

HOST  
I was.

CRAIG  
Okay. I know this is a long shot, but I need to know if you saw a specific person that night.

HOST  
Who were they?

CRAIG  
Uh, redhead girl, maybe about twenty-five, twenty-six--

HOST  
(incredulous)  
Do you have a name? Was she with a private party?

CRAIG  
I don't know.

The Host rolls his eyes, makes a show of his annoyance.

HOST  
Do you know how many people come through here on--

Craig cuts him off, already starts leaving.

CRAIG  
Thanks. Forget it.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GAS STATION - DAY

Dingy. Craig shoves the nozzle into his gas tank and locks the handle. He slumps against the side of his car, letting it support his weight.

A few pumps away he sees the BLONDE FASHION STUDENT exit the cashier station and enter her sporty little Asian-made sedan. Craig drops his head, tries to obscure his face until she's driven off.

His cell RINGS. He checks the screen deliberately: SCOTT.

CRAIG  
(into phone)  
Yeah?

SCOTT  
(over phone, filtered)  
Hey, man. Those Alpha Chapter guys  
wanna get a confirmation.

CRAIG  
(sotto)  
Christ...

He rubs his forehead, straining.

SCOTT  
Craig?

CRAIG  
Yeah, confirm.

SCOTT  
You sure?

The gas pump handle pops out of its locked position with a metallic CLUNK.

CRAIG  
Yeah. What the hell else can I do?

He yanks the nozzle out of his car and forces it back into the rack.

INT. MOOSE LODGE / HALLWAY - DAY

Off-white paint and linoleum losing their luster. Fading photos adorn the walls.

Craig leads Scott and Brock toward a door. Scott holds his cell phone to his ear.

SCOTT  
No messages on the office line.

CRAIG  
You sure?

BROCK  
Yeah, maybe "You have no new messages" was a suggestion...

Craig cocks his head toward Brock, stern.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
Relax, man.

CRAIG  
I'm fine.

He passes through the door into...

INT. MOOSE LODGE / MEETING ROOM - DAY

Thirty-some YOUNG MEN all sit in folding chairs. All in their twenties, none of them outright ugly, but all distinctly unhandsome. Forward-slung necks. Weak chins. Acne scars. Too scrawny, or too fat, or too short.

Craig walks the aisle, slowing as his gaze scans them all. Bad posture, poor grooming, ill-picked clothes. The terminally uncool. All watch Craig with awe, and hope for rescue.

ZACH, 24, a blonde kid with just enough dynamism to be clearly in the upper-crust of these misfits, speaks from the stand.

ZACH  
Well, here's our guest of honor! So men, let's welcome Finesse!

Reverent applause. Zach indicates a chair for Craig to take.

ZACH (CONT'D)  
So, why don't you tell us a bit about yourself; how you got started...

Craig slides into his persona. He scans the crowd from his new vantage point.

CRAIG  
You know, I tend not to delve too into the "how", because it's not really important when it comes right down to it. What I want to know is how I can help you.

He gestures out to the crowd, then his eyes catch something he couldn't see from the aisle.

ANDREW

Sits tucked in the corner of a back row, locking eyes with him, beaming. Next to him is the slick-looking MARCUS (30).

His clothes have grown darker, hipper, edgier. He's branding himself better, his posture's taller and more confident.

Craig turns to Zach, shakes off the furrow in his brow.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

So just, give me an idea of who you are.

ZACH

Well, I'm Zach, Andrew--over there-- and I started this club to be a sort of safe space for guys to get together and-- Jimmy, why don't you just read the Charter?

JIMMY (21) a sweaty, hefty kid in cargo shorts sits in front with his laptop out; the de facto Secretary. He opens up another document and reads.

JIMMY

The Alpha Chapter is an off-campus, unofficial, intercollegiate club of young men concerned with the preservation of masculine and traditional values, and activism in favor of Men's Rights everywhere.

CRAIG

"Men's Rights"?

Jimmy's free hand balls into a meaty, expressive fist that pounds the air like a gavel as his reading picks up fervor.

JIMMY

We hold that sex roles and traditional values evolved and/or were instilled by God to benefit and preserve the human race.

Craig looks over the crowd. Blank looks of affirmation. Smiles. Nods. They're getting juiced by this.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

We oppose all forms of Socialism, Feminism, Cultural Marxism, and Political Correctness, and hold that these forces destroy the family unit, decrease the fertility rate, and cause overall societal decline.

YOUNG MEN

(calling, various)  
Yeah! Here, here!

JIMMY  
We seek an end to the ongoing War  
on Manhood, and the cultural  
terrorism that is attempting to  
feminize the world and destroy the  
supremacy of male-lead society.

A few sparse bouts of CLAPPING, Jimmy and the crowd look  
eagerly to Craig.

CRAIG  
(hesitant)  
Well, that was rousing.

The crowd CHUCKLES.

INT. MOOSE LODGE / HALLWAY - DAY - LATER

Andrew steps outside with Marcus, CRAIG'S VOICE still  
seeping through the door.

ANDREW  
So?

MARCUS  
Yeah, he's good. But I don't know  
if I'm seeing it.

ANDREW  
"Not seeing" what?

MARCUS  
Like, I get him. He's an easy sell.  
He's got the brand and the  
following and all that. But what I  
don't get is you. Where do you come  
into this?

Andrew smiles. He holds up an index finger: "Just wait", and  
turns for the door.

INT. MOOSE LODGE / MEETING ROOM - DAY

Andrew leads Marcus back in discretely, hugging the wall.  
Craig stands on the stage, scratching his head as he wraps  
up his answer to a previous question posed by a still-  
standing SCRAWNY YOUNG MAN in the crowd.

CRAIG  
(continuing)  
I mean, everyone gets gun-shy. But  
to say guys are being "shamed" out  
of going after girls? I don't

know... You guys are making it  
sound like an organized front.

He just nods blankly and retakes his seat. It wasn't the  
answer he wanted to hear, but he doesn't have the spine to  
challenge it. As soon as he sits, hands raise.

Jimmy immediately stands up, nervously fiddling with the  
contents of his pockets.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Yes...?

JIMMY  
You know, it's really hard to get  
rejected a lot, and think that  
there's something wrong with you. I  
mean, how do you even deal with  
that?

Craig's expression softens, relieved to get a familiar  
question, without the politicking. Andrew speaks before he  
can, already making for the stage.

ANDREW  
I actually think I can answer that.  
You know, the great thing about  
Finesse is that he doesn't even  
know what it's like to lose.

CRAIG  
I wouldn't say that.

ANDREW  
I mean, you're the expert. When was  
the last time you really got shot  
down?

Andrew stands beside Craig, as though the two were a duo.  
Craig looks from Andrew, to the Young Men in the crowd.

Andrew flashes a grin to Marcus, then begins his own  
patented strut, owning the stage.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Studying with Fin's taught me a  
lot. Some of it, I don't even think  
he knew he was teaching me. Like,  
think about this: we base our value  
on our resources, our character,  
our intellect. Right?

CRAIG  
Sure.

ANDREW  
Right, that's us men. Women, their  
value is based on their

attractiveness. "She's hot; she's not". "She's a nine, she's a six". Right?

Much of the crowd speaks out in unison.

YOUNG MEN

Right!

Craig looks to Scott and Brock, sitting off to the side. Brock shrugs and gestures to the crowd. He can't deny, they're responding to Andrew.

ANDREW

But who decides that? I do. You do. A hot girl who doesn't give it up to you has no value. You're looking for the bird in the hand, not the one in the bush.

Brock audibly SNORTS in amusement.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Yeah, pun not intended.

Getting the joke, the crowd CHUCKLES en masse.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

You're the man. You make the call as to how much this chick's worth. She says "No" to you, that mean's she's flunked, not you. So really, "No" means nothing!

The crowd CLAPS, sporadic shouts of "Yeah!" and other affirmations. Andrew glances at Marcus, who starts to clap, himself.

Andrew turns to Craig, flashes his grin again. Craig just looks into the grin. His own face shows a nagging, building dread, as if looking over a ridge and finding a hole with no bottom.

Marcus pulls out his cell phone and starts typing.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Oh shit yes; this is saleable.

CUT TO:

INT. NEW KINGS PRESS OFFICES - DAY

Craig, flanked by Scott and Brock, face the parading Marcus. Marcus is in his selling mode. His voice rings out thick, meaty, and full of affected, rapid-fire enthusiasm.

Andrew leans nearby, glowing with pride. Craig tries to shake the paralyzing dread off and come back to the present.

CRAIG  
I'm sorry, what's your company's name again?

MARCUS  
Premium Flow Entertainment. You know *Deadliest Catch*? That was almost ours.

BROCK  
Love that show.

MARCUS  
But screw it! This is better!  
"Pussy: the Real *Deadliest Catch*," right?

He snickers at his own quip. Brock matches the snicker by half. Marcus grabs a high-back office chair and spins it around, sits straddling it, gesticulating over the backrest.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
Look, it's basically *The Biggest Loser*, but for virgins instead of lardasses. Get a bunch of guys saying they can't get laid.

Marcus looks from Craig, to Brock, to Andrew with each line item.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
You teach them the lines, the style, the... attitude. They fuck up: they get eliminated. Last man standing is crowned the King of Cunt, or whatever.

BROCK  
(smirks)  
They win a flat screen.

MARCUS  
(laughs)  
Yeah, right? Look, my bosses want new product, and I know this is in their wheelhouse. I can, at the very least get them to let us do a sizzle reel. You guys down?

A beat.

SCOTT  
What's the title gonna be?

CRAIG

(stoic)  
I don't think "King of Cunt" is  
gonna fly.

MARCUS  
I don't know if you guys have any  
experience in Development, but it's  
a lot of moving deck chairs. We're  
gonna go through twenty titles  
before the thing is anywhere close  
to airing.

Andrew finally speaks up. His words come out measured, with  
weight.

ANDREW  
So what first?

MARCUS  
Well, like any other intellectual  
property, I need owner's permission  
to shop this around.

All eyes turn to Craig.

CRAIG  
I don't own the Playbook.

MARCUS  
It's not the book, Fin. It's you.

Craig waits a beat, wets his lips.

CRAIG  
Marcus, could I get a word? Alone?

Brock and Scott rise. Though dragging his feet, Andrew  
follows as they file out.

Craig waits for the latch of the door to CLICK shut.

He gets up, steps closes to Marcus, his voice hushed.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
So, how well do you know Andrew?

MARCUS  
Honestly? Not terribly well. Same  
neighborhood, his dad knows my dad.  
(shrugs)  
He knows I work in reality TV and  
told me he thought he had something  
that could be a hit.

CRAIG  
And you think this could be a hit?

MARCUS

You kidding me? A show about making cakes was a hit. This one's about the two most important things to most people: being cool, and getting laid.

Craig's voice drops in volume and octave, becomes grave.

CRAIG  
Alright, full disclosure? If I had the option, I wouldn't be anywhere near him. I don't trust him, and I definitely wouldn't do business with him.

Marcus's edifice shatters for a brief moment. His ever-present verve is gone, and he speaks like a man being hunted.

MARCUS  
I don't have a choice. And let's get real; you don't either.

CRAIG  
Nobody gets over on me.

MARCUS  
He already did. Keep him happy, and it won't get worse.

A KNOCK on the door, and Andrew pokes his head in.

ANDREW  
Everything alright, guys?

Marcus sheds the gravity, re-assumes his slickness and pep.

MARCUS  
All good, man! Hashing out some incidentals.

Andrew nods, satisfied. Craig steels himself, holds his utter rancor at bay, but behind his eyes his mind's racing. Andrew holds his gaze on Craig, trying to read him.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DUSK

DAYS LATER

CRAIG'S CAR

Sits still in its reserved spot, Craig in the driver's seat, his cell phone to his ear.

CALLIE (V.O.)  
(over phone, filtered)  
I wanna stay with you again.

CRAIG  
(into phone)  
I know, Cal. Real soon, okay?

CALLIE (V.O.)  
I don't like it when you're too  
busy.

CRAIG  
Yeah, me neither.

TARA (V.O.)  
(filtered, distant)  
Say goodbye, Callie.

CALLIE (V.O.)  
Mommy need the phone.

Craig sighs, truncated. His face seems to have grown a few new lines.

CRAIG  
Okay. I love you, Callie.

CALLIE (V.O.)  
Me too.

Craig smiles, laughs weakly. A beat, and Tara's voice replaces Callie's.

TARA (V.O.)  
You can't keep doing this to her.  
We all have to rearrange our  
schedules to fit you, but suddenly  
you're too busy? And I've got to  
pick up the pieces after you keep  
disappointing her?

CRAIG  
You're right. I'm sorry.

He's genuine. That gives her pause.

TARA (V.O.)  
Well that was new.

INT. NEW KINGS PRESS OFFICES / MEETING ROOM - DUSK

Aided by Scott, a small VIDEO CREW operates a simple camcorder setup, filming the room as Andrew leads the proceedings.

Brock and Craig stand by Andrew, addressing a crowd of the same Young Men from the Alpha Chapter meeting, with a few new faces. It's a tight fit to seat them all in the room.

Andrew talks to the crowd sharply, forcefully, like he's taking some cues from a recent viewing of *Patton*.

ANDREW

Gentlemen, you're all here to be vetted. Soon, you'll all have to prove yourself in the field. Most of you will crash and burn your first night out. I say this not to scare you, but to motivate you. Tonight's lesson is about Presentation. Fin, take it away.

Andrew steps back, conceding the floor to Craig. Craig looks over the crowd, takes in the odd uniformity of their expressions, like a herd of sheep.

CRAIG

I think Andrew--

Andrew correctively clears his throat.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry-- Power-- I think he's a great resource for you guys. He's more your age than Brock or me, but he's the fastest learner when it comes to Game that I've ever seen.

The homogenous face the Young Men all wear turns a shade more eager. Craig glances towards Andrew, sees the kid almost shocked to be so complimented. Craig hold his hand out toward him.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

This is your model.

INT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Andrew, his costume having grown even more gaudy and elaborate, strides confidently by a PUNKISH GIRL (20s) near the periphery of the dance floor. He engages her over his shoulder.

ANDREW

Hey, do you believe in ESP?

She lets out a long, exasperated GROAN.

PUNKISH GIRL

No, I don't believe in ESP! And I don't know what 80's singer your friend should name his dog after! And I definitely don't give a shit about the fight you say you just saw outside, which was apparently also going on just last week, too!

Andrew blinks, instantly angry, but at a total loss for a response.

PUNKISH GIRL (CONT'D)  
I've heard it. All of it. I don't care. I'm not buying. Okay?

ANDREW  
(terse)  
Yeah.

PUNKISH GIRL  
Good. Pass the word to your friends.

She gestures around the club as she turns her back on Andrew. He looks around.

#### ALL AROUND THE CLUB

Men dressed just like him; some his Alpha Chapter underlings, some recognizable from Craig's earlier seminar, and some just previously-unseen POSEURS swooping in on the fad.

The crowd of PATRONS, (both women and the few men who haven't jumped on the bandwagon) churns around, all trying to avoid Andrew's devotees and wannabes polka-dotting the room.

#### PRIVATE BOOTH

Zach sits, dejected, with three other post-Alpha Chapter Young Men. A bottle service set of vodka, mixers, and glasses occupies their table, untouched.

The Scrawny Young Man from earlier speaks up.

SCRAWNY YOUNG MAN  
I told you this wouldn't work.

ZACH  
Don't.

SCRAWNY YOUNG MAN  
We paid twelve-hundred dollars...  
to sit down.

#### MANAGER'S OFFICE

A portly, Hispanic AZTECA MANAGER (40s) sits behind his desk. Comfortable room, mostly-quiet. The door opens, letting the DANCE MUSIC from the rest of the club flood in for a moment.

A burly BOUNCER (30s) steps in.

BOUNCER  
You needed something?

AZTECA MANAGER  
Yeah! Can we get the Gay Caballero  
Mafia out of here?

INT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - MOMENTS LATER

All around the club, the BOUNCERS disperse, clicking small lanyard-hung flashlights in the eyes of everyone dressed like Andrew, ushering them to the doors.

Female Patrons look on as the extractions are carried out. Some clap.

SMALL BAR

One of the few tucked-away corners of the club. Craig stares into his glass, distant. A HAND grips his shoulder and turns Craig to face a seething Andrew.

ANDREW  
Good fucking going! You totally  
poisoned the water!

CRAIG  
Come again?

ANDREW  
I'm not dumb, man. I know you did  
this on purpose. Now nobody can  
pull sluts in here, but you. Some  
teacher you are. Shit, some friend!

Craig goes wide-eyed.

CRAIG  
Hey, Fifty-one Fifty! We're not  
friends!

Andrew throws Craig's incredulous tone right back.

ANDREW  
Not anymore. I can't believe you.  
You never even wanted to help me,  
did you? You're horrible.

CRAIG  
Can you explain to me what kind of-  
- mutant species of Wrong is with  
you?

A Bouncer with a blinking flashlight cuts them off.

BOUNCER  
Gentlemen, time to go!

Andrew gives Craig a threatening glare. They yield to the Bouncer and head for the exit.

EXT. AZTECA NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Jimmy, dressed in his own plus-size version of Andrew's uniform, stands in the back of a long line of CLUB GOERS being slowly let in.

He watches as Andrew's other clones start spilling out of the front door. Craig storms out among them Andrew himself not far behind.

ANDREW  
You know, what I've got on you, if  
it spilled, Craig--

CRAIG  
(interrupts)  
Then spill it! If I'm so bad, if  
I'm so guilty, report me. Let the  
world know!

Craig sweeps his hand, indicates the Young Men swarming outside the club.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
I can't seem to get rid of you. But  
at least there'd be one less like  
you, right?

Andrew doesn't respond, just holds his glare. Craig turns on his heel and marches away, across the middle of the street.

INT. NEW KINGS PRESS OFFICES / BROCK'S OFFICE - DAY

Brock and Craig. Doors shut. Brock standing with his arms folded.

BROCK  
There's been some complaints.

CRAIG  
Yeah?

BROCK  
Yeah. Nobody's happy about what  
happened at Azteca. The word  
"subterfuge" is getting thrown  
around.

Craig glances through the window into the adjoining office.

JIMMY

Sits at what used to be Scott's desk, typing on his computer.

CRAIG  
Where's Scott?

BROCK  
Scott left. Got a new job. I told you this.

CRAIG  
You didn't.

BROCK  
Well, somebody had to. And that's another thing...

Brock takes a pregnant pause.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
What's with your pills?

CRAIG  
Nothing's "with" them. I take them as needed. Which hasn't been for a while.

BROCK  
Well, I'm getting complaints of you blacking out, getting belligerent...

CRAIG  
Are you shitting me? I'm the least belligerent piece of this whole enterprise, these days. I mean, Christ, don't you see what's up with these kids? Andrew's got them all hopped up on some kind of-- worldwide vendetta.

BROCK  
That's a pretty big charge. Yeah, the kid's intense, but--

CRAIG  
The kid's psychotic.

Brock holds his hand out flat, as if ordering the room to steady.

BROCK  
This isn't about Andrew. This is about you, Craig. I'm concerned about you.

CRAIG  
There's a laugh.

BROCK

Look, just sort your shit out, man! See a shrink, rehab, something. But I can't have you sink this show, or drag all of our prospects down with you. I'm putting my foot down. Take a sabbatical.

Craig breathes, rises for the door.

CRAIG

It's been real, Brock.

BROCK

Yeah.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

Craig crosses the floor towards his car, bright daylight pouring in from the ramp out of the lot. He shuts himself inside of his car, leaning back into his seat and finally feeling an all-around calm take him over.

A KNOCK on the window. Andrew. Grinning.

Craig opens the door.

CRAIG

I'm out. I'm gone. You got what you wanted.

ANDREW

This isn't what I wanted.

CRAIG

Then what is?

ANDREW

I wanted us to be partners, man. I wanted us to be friends.

CRAIG

Andrew, you don't know what that word means. I don't think you have the capacity to.

ANDREW

You should like me. I'm everything the Playbook says to be.

(beat)

You're jealous, aren't you? You know I'm the better man.

CRAIG

Oh, Jesus...

Craig motions to pull his door shut, Andrew puts his arm in the pathway, holds it open.

ANDREW

Admit it. I want to hear you admit it.

CRAIG

Or what? You're not gonna bust me. You need my name and my brand to sell your dog-and-pony show. I get popped, the bad press would kill you.

Craig shakes his head, then looks up at Andrew, his face like steel.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

If I knew who the girl was, I'd probably report it myself. Maybe they'd find out what actually happened.

There's deathly serious, and there's homicidally serious. Andrew turns the latter.

ANDREW

You better not.

CRAIG

I got a cop's business card in my wallet.

Andrew snaps into a fury, tears the door wide open, and STOMPS repeatedly on Craig's bad knee.

The pain overtakes Craig, he throws himself out of the car door, falling into Andrew, grabbing near his waist in a grappling hold.

They both fall to the concrete, hard. Andrew flails and kicks his legs, trying to break Craig's grip on him. Craig grapples as Andrew twists around. Now on top of Andrew, pressing him face-down into the ground, Craig's arms locking his in place.

Andrew's eye locks with Craig's, his spit spreads across the floor as he tries to breathe with his nose and lips mashed into the ground. All hate, all rage.

Craig raises an open palm and heavily SLAPS Andrew's ear. Andrew sputters, groans, thrashes. Craig shoves himself off the kid and pulls himself back into the car, closing and locking the door as swift as he can.

Andrew struggles to his feet, wobbling and disoriented, hand over his aching ear. He watches Craig start the ignition and

throw his car in gear, backing out and tearing out of the parking structure, no intention of looking back.

Andrew looks down. Craig's hat, fallen off in the scuffle, sits dented on the ground.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / BATHROOM - DAY

Shower running. Craig fights to keep himself standing under the water, all of his weight on his good leg. A tenuous sense of relief starts to creep in.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Craig crosses out of the bathroom. Fresh, dressed, his support sleeve now holding his knee, keeping him somewhat steady.

A BOOKSHELF

Against the far wall holds a few comp copies of the New Kings Playbook sitting conspicuously on the bottom shelf. He grabs them all in one thick handful and lobs them into the nearest trash can.

He exhales sharply, a twinge of catharsis.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / CRAIG'S BEDROOM - DAY

DARKNESS, then--

Craig swings open the doors of his wardrobe, surveys the contents. He pulls a foil-printed shirt off a hanger and throws it over his shoulder. Then another shirt. Then a pair of designer jeans.

Soon enough, he's vigorously ripped out all of his "Finesse" costume pieces and strewn them across the floor behind him. He takes a step back, slipping on a shirt and falling back--

He lands sitting on the bed, safely, painlessly, glancing up toward the mirrored portion of his ceiling. He locks eyes with his reflection, makes a face.

Craig pulls to his feet and exits, re-entering a moment later, whipping a big, black GARBAGE BAG in the air to puff it open.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

SUPER: THREE WEEKS LATER.

Callie bounces from the edge of the campus to Craig, standing on the concrete island.

CALLIE  
(calling)  
Daddy!

Craig stoops as she meets his arms, stands up and lets her swing in the air for a moment before setting her down.

CRAIG  
Hey, kiddo.

She giggles, gleeful. He takes her hand and leads her to the car.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Craig busies himself over the stove, fixing dinner. Callie sits at the table, dragging a pencil across a printed worksheet, then finishing.

CALLIE  
Done!

He turns.

CRAIG  
Yeah?

She presents a sheet of recurring capital and lowercase 'G's, the first row traced, the second and third redone freehand. Rough, but properly-shaped by all accounts.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Woah. Nicely done.

She grins and turns the sheet over to its blank side.

CALLIE  
I gotta draw something that starts with 'G'.

Glancing around the kitchen, Craig reaches for the fridge, producing a bottle of juice, grapes drawn on the label. He holds it in front of Callie.

CALLIE (CONT'D)  
That doesn't start with 'G'.

CRAIG  
Yes, it does.

CALLIE  
Nuh-uh. "Juice" is a "juh" sound.  
'J'.

CRAIG  
Wanna bet?

She hits some sudden realization. Craig nods, taps his finger on the label, pointing at both the grapes and the word "Grape".

She turns around and gets to drawing without a word.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
What? I help you out and no "Thank you"?

CALLIE  
Do you want a trophy?

He scoffs, can't help but laugh.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Callie slips down a spiraling slide, touching bottom and immediately starting her climb back to the top.

Craig leans back on the bench, tasting the air. He looks toward the...

GAZEBO

Where one of the Suburban Moms catches eyes with him and returns a look of neutral acknowledgment.

The WHIR of bicycle wheels grabs Craig's attention. Brenda rolls by and brakes, planting a foot. Her tone bright, easy.

CRAIG  
Hey.

BRENDA  
Hey. So where've you been keeping yourself?

CRAIG  
On ice, mostly. Finally got a break from work.

BRENDA  
Oh yeah? Paid?

Craig smirks, turns his head to keep his attention evenly split between engaging Brenda and watching Callie.

CRAIG  
Honestly? I won't know until a check posts. Or doesn't. Been trying to focus on other things.

Brenda follows his eyeline to Callie, she glances at Brenda as she clambers around the playground, exchanges a short wave.

BRENDA  
How's she doing?

CRAIG  
You know, I wanna say "Good", but I'm afraid of presuming too much.

Brenda flips the kickstand on her bike, unstraddles it.

BRENDA  
Where is Mom, if you don't mind me asking?

CRAIG  
Valley Village. Unless she moves in with this new guy of hers.

BRENDA  
Not a fan?

He shrugs.

CRAIG  
I can't talk; don't even know him.

BRENDA  
I meant of Mom.

Craig looks to Callie, following her as she darts and weaves and jumps around.

CRAIG  
Seeing what I got out of the deal, I can't complain. Besides, I wouldn't insult Callie by proxy.

BRENDA  
You know--Granted, there wasn't a kid in the mix--But I wish my ex was even interested in not making things... adversarial.

CRAIG  
I'll take that as a compliment.

Brenda smiles, steps closer. She steals a glance at her watch.

BRENDA  
I may not be around anymore.

CRAIG  
Oh? Getting transferred?

BRENDA  
Yeah, I've got my interview soon.  
May move up to Det I.

CRAIG  
You're gonna have to translate that  
for me.

BRENDA  
Detective. Class I.

CRAIG  
Jesus, wow... Well, good luck.

BRENDA  
Thanks.

A beat. They hold a look at each other.

CRAIG  
Can I ask you something? As a  
private citizen, not in a law-  
enforcement capacity?

BRENDA  
You still have my card?

CRAIG  
Yeah.

She steps back and remounts her bike. Still pleasant and  
receptive.

BRENDA  
Call me. Ask me then. Been too much  
of a private citizen already.

She waves and pedals off.

EXT. TARA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Craig knocks on the door, Callie and her luggage beside him.  
Tara opens the door, already far more at-ease towards him  
than last we saw her.

TARA  
Hey.

CRAIG  
Hey.

Callie steps in for a hug with her mom. Craig stoops to pick  
up her bag. As he rises, he's faced with ROD (30s), dressed  
in the full regalia of an Andrew disciple, including the  
cocksure smirk.

TARA

Oh, Craig, this is Rod.

CRAIG  
"Rod".

ROD  
'Sup.

Rod takes Callie's back from Craig's hand and noncommittally places it on the floor inside the apartment.

Everything's an unspoken pissing match with Rod; he stands and moves like the doorway was some threshold he owns, and that Craig can't cross.

Callie looks from Rod, back to her dad, trying to read Craig's face. She detects some discomfort. She hugs Craig.

CALLIE  
Bye, Daddy.

CRAIG  
Bye.

A peck on the cheek from her, and she slips inside the apartment. As soon as she's passed in, Rod lets his palm come to a rest on Tara's ass, like the arm of a gate closing.

Tara's cowed, resigned. Craig sees Callie slow her roll deeper into the apartment. She sees it. He sees it. They each see that the other sees it.

Callie drips to her bedroom, closes the door. Craig keeps his voice down.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
What the hell is this?

Tara's eyes stay aimed at the floor.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
What the hell is this?

She slips out of Rod's hand.

ROD  
(to Craig)  
Something wrong, bro?

CRAIG  
Yeah. You don't do that shit in front of my kid.

Rod smirks, chuckles.

ROD

Hey, she's gonna have to learn  
sometime, man.

CRAIG  
Learn what? She's four.  
(beat)  
Learn what?

ROD  
(to Tara)  
Give us a sec, will you, babe?

He pats Tara again on the ass, sends her from the door. He steps out of the apartment, leaving the door open, speaking in hushed tones.

ROD (CONT'D)  
Honestly, bro, sounds like you need  
this more than I do...

He reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a small, well-worn booklet, folded in half. He hands it to Craig.

ROD (CONT'D)  
Here. This thing turned my life  
around, man.

"THE NEW KING'S PLAYBOOK: VERSION 2.0" heads the front cover. An attached sticker promises this new edition to be "BIGGER, LONGER, and STRONGER".

Centered, a composite of photos of Andrew and Craig, in their respective costumes, doctored to place them standing side-by-side, arms proudly crossed in front of their puffed-out chests, like longtime partners.

Craig looks at his own face on the cover, his own shit-eating smirk staring him down.

CRAIG  
Are you serious?

ROD  
What?

CRAIG  
Are you fucking kidding me?

Craig folds the booklet along the crease Rod's made to fit it in his pocket, holding his portion of the cover right next to his face.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Look!

Rod's grin fades into flabbergasted recognition. Tara looks from the interior and sees what Rod seed. There's Finesse on the cover, and there's Craig in the flesh.

ROD  
(stammers)  
Oh... Wait...

Craig swings the booklet and bats Rod's garish hat off his head, revealing a premature bald spot. The hat tumbles to the floor.

ROD (CONT'D)  
Hey--!

TARA  
Craig!

CRAIG  
The hell's wrong with you? Grow up!

He breaks his gaze with Rod, looks past him and locks eyes with Tara. She's surprised, but there's no anger. She relaxes for a beat, a moment of realization.

Craig tears away, in a huff. He stares at the booklet in his hands, and stuffs it into his jacket pocket.

EXT. CRAIG'S CAR ON DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Craig stews, chews his thoughts as he crawls through late-day traffic. Bumper MUSIC and a TALK SHOW HOST (late 30s) announcing the return from a commercial break over the stereo.

TALK SHOW HOST (V.O.)  
(over radio, filtered)  
...And we're back! Joining us today; Date Guru, Love Doctor, author of "The New King's Playbook"...

Craig's eyes bulge.

TALK SHOW HOST (V.O.)  
...Power, the Pick-Up Artist!  
Power, thanks for joining us.

ANDREW (V.O.)  
(bright)  
Thanks for having me.

TALK SHOW HOST (V.O.)  
Our open forum topic: "How do Selfies impact your self-image?"

ANDREW (V.O.)  
Am I with a girl in them?

TALK SHOW HOST (V.O.)  
(chuckles)

You may be. Let's go to the phones-

-

Craig jabs the power button. All goes silent, just the RUMBLE of road noise, and the FUMING of his own breath.

He rolls down the window, and looks OUTSIDE--

THE BLOCK lined with the occasional BAR or CLUB, with costumed ANDREW DISCIPLES (20s-30s) milling around outside.

Craig's jaw hangs.

EXT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT BALCONY - NIGHT

Craig leans against the balcony railing, from a small patio table, he grabs a colorfully-decorated plastic cup that clearly belongs to Callie, and takes a sip.

He looks down, and for the first time we see Craig's apartment isn't terribly high off...

THE GROUND

Where he can see one local CLUB swamped with Andrew's Disciples. Still, they look small, toylike from Craig's vantage point.

CRAIG

Sets the cup back down. Looks to his other hand, where he's been absentmindedly twirling Brenda's card.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / CRAIG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Craig opens his wardrobe, sees just how little's left since he ditched his Finesse costume bits.

He screws his face.

INT. BELLA CUCINA - NIGHT

Modest, to say the least. A hair on the tacky side. A WAITER lights a candle on one of many identical round tables, sitting next to a plastic vase holding a polyester flower.

Paintings that belong in dentists' offices, wallpaper that belongs in a Best Western. A PIANO PLAYER (40s) in a sequined dress sits at a minipiano, playing drippy, sedating music.

Craig leans by the end of the bar, his elbow resting next to a wicker basket full of fake grapes. Decent shirt. Decent



I should probably admit, I just went hunting for somewhere with decent reviews. I've never been here before.

Brenda sees the married couple, smiles.

BRENDA  
Really? You seemed like such a *Matlock* fan to me.

CRAIG  
(chuckles)  
These aren't *Matlock* fans.

BRENDA  
No?

CRAIG  
No, these are Columbo fans.

She laughs. He relaxes.

INT. BELLA CUCINA - LATER

Craig and Brenda occupy a table, splitting bread.

BRENDA  
(continuing)  
Grew up mostly in Arleta. Family moved to Van Nuys when I was thirteen-- Not much of a difference.

CRAIG  
So, Valley Girl.

BRENDA  
God, don't ever call me that.

CRAIG  
Fair enough. Let me guess: You were the oldest.

BRENDA  
Not even. Three older brothers. One little sister.

CRAIG  
You were the oldest girl.

BRENDA  
Nice try.

CRAIG  
I figured you came from a big family.

She shrugs.

BRENDA  
Yeah? Well, Dad got around.

His hands pause for a beat.

CRAIG  
Just Dad?

BRENDA  
Yeah. Two of those brothers are halves.

Craig grabs for the cocktail napkin near his drink.

CRAIG  
Wait, wait-- I'm gonna need a pen... I think if I crunch the numbers, I'll be right.

She rolls her eyes, keeps an amused smile at bay.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

Craig and Brenda stroll abreast, yellow sodium lamps and the neon of different restaurant and bar fronts shining on them. Craig continues an ongoing game of "Either-Or" questions.

CRAIG  
Pepsi or Coke?

BRENDA  
You know, I'm not big into soda. I'll do a Jarritos every now and then.

CRAIG  
Stallone or Schwarzenegger?

BRENDA  
Hmm...  
(grins)  
Robert Mitchum.

CRAIG  
You can't keep doing that! This is a binary, here.

BRENDA  
Alright, alright. I'll be good!

CRAIG  
Okay. Valley or Downtown.

BRENDA  
What, like I can never leave?

CRAIG  
No, you just gotta live there.  
Let's say rent's the same. Anywhere  
in the Valley, or anywhere in LA  
proper.

She slows, thinks. They hover outside a trendy COFFEE SHOP  
where they can see a small BAND playing through the front  
window.

BRENDA  
I'd go with LA.

CRAIG  
Yeah?

BRENDA  
Yeah. You know, the city's gets a  
bad rap, and it's... mostly  
deserved...

CRAIG  
I'm not offended.

BRENDA  
Well, you know how it is. Hell, the  
most expensive gas I ever bought  
was at a Chevron right by Skid Row.

CRAIG  
Shameless.

BRENDA  
Yeah. LA's just shallow like that.  
Totally oblivious, obsessed with  
image. It's like the whole city's  
one giant, horribly insecure kid.

CRAIG  
And this is a draw?

BRENDA  
Well, there's a "but...". Just like  
a giant, horribly insecure kid,  
LA's only fake when it's playing to  
a crowd.

CRAIG  
As opposed to one-on-one?

BRENDA  
Yeah, in a way. You stand at just  
the right distance, at just the  
right time of night, Downtown's  
beautiful.  
(beat)  
There's this one bend, where the 10  
meets the 110, that passes through

the bottoms of all those high-rises. And when there's no traffic, you're almost flying through all these lights. And it's almost like catching the town when it's calm, and not trying to impress anybody.

She looks to Craig, trying to read if he's going to interrupt. He looks back, entreats her to continue.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

You know, I have to be able to see the worst in everything, for the job. So, I'd want to come home to somewhere I can look out the window late at night, and just see what I see on that bend.

Craig blinks, suddenly taken by the little glints of reflected light in her eyes. It only lasts a moment, withdrawn before Brenda can recognize his gaze.

CRAIG

You sure you're a cop?

BRENDA

Why?

CRAIG

Because you're-- Name a poet.

BRENDA

Uh... Edgar Allen Poe.

CRAIG

Different poet.

BRENDA

Eliot? T.S. Eliot?

CRAIG

Sure. You're the T.S. Eliot of cops.

BRENDA

(chuckles)

Thanks.

They share a smile for a beat. Craig starts to notice the music, and looks up through the window and

INSIDE THE COFFEE SHOP

A jazz trio on the bandstand. On bass: DUANE.

CRAIG

Oh, shit!

BRENDA  
What?

CRAIG  
(Re: Duane)  
I know him. He's a-- old friend.

BRENDA  
You wanna go say hi?

Craig studies Duane. He's at total ease, walking his bass with none of the demureness that used to weigh him down.

CRAIG  
Sure.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Duane, a lanky PIANIST (40s) and a stocky DRUMMER (50s) play for a modest crowd. Craig and Brenda enter, hovering by the counter rather than venturing deeper.

Duane starts a SOLO, his hand flying between plucking the strings and percussively CLACKING against the body of the bass. As he finishes, APPLAUSE breaks out.

Craig looks around the room. Clapping for Duane, sitting alone at a small table: NICOLE, the REDHEAD.

Craig instantly looks ill. There's no mistaking her.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Craig stands over Nicole. She's lying on her side on the linoleum. She's DISHEVELED, her eyes are WATERY, her nose is BLEEDING.

APPLAUSE still sounds off.

Brenda stands next to Craig. She's still seeing the Coffee Shop, where Craig's seeing his apartment.

BRENDA  
You okay?

Craig blinks.

END FLASHBACK.

Craig recovers, sees the Coffee Shop again. The applause dies down, the band launches back into the melody and finishes.

CRAIG  
Yeah. Fine.

The band steps down, Duane catching Craig in his eyes. He walks over. Nicole stands, steps beside Duane. Their fingers lace.

DUANE  
Craig!

CRAIG  
Hey, Duane.

DUANE  
Been a while, man! Nicole, this is  
Craig, and...

Brenda extends her hand to Duane, then Nicole.

BRENDA  
Brenda.

Introductions exchanged all around, the Pianist flags Duane over to another TABLE, where sit a few JAZZ HEADS.

DUANE  
Be right back.

He drops a light peck on Nicole's cheek, and breaks away. Craig and Brenda pull up spare chairs at Nicole's table.

NICOLE  
He'll just be a sec. Talking to his  
band friends. So, how do you know  
Duane?

CRAIG  
Uhm... I'm sorry, have-- Have we  
met before?

NICOLE  
I don't think so. Have we?

CRAIG  
You sure?

NICOLE  
(chuckles)  
Uh... Pretty sure, yeah.

Duane reappears for a beat.

DUANE  
You guys want anything?

NICOLE  
Yeah, I'll go for one of the lemon  
bars.

DUANE  
Sure.

(to Brenda, Craig)  
Anything?

Craig rises.

CRAIG  
I'll case the menu with you.

BRENDA  
Hey, they have any of those little  
French sandwich cookies, here?

NICOLE  
Macarons?

BRENDA  
Yeah.

CRAIG  
I'll see what they got.

MOMENTS LATER, BY THE COUNTER

Craig leans against the glass case of baked goods. Modest pickings, this late at night. Duane stands nearby, skimming the overhanging blackboard menu.

Duane's voice goes hushed.

DUANE  
Had to get out, man. Once you  
split, things got ugly with that  
Andrew kid, fast.

CRAIG  
Yeah?

DUANE  
Yeah. He started bringing in all  
these young guys, and they all had  
all this anger... They started  
getting into taking trophies.  
Mostly cell phone pictures, but  
this one guy rolled up with a bunch  
of panties he said he'd stolen from  
every girl he closed with.

CRAIG  
(grimaces)  
Christ...

DUANE  
Yeah. Wish you'd told me you were  
getting out.

CRAIG  
I'm sorry, Duane.

DUANE

Hey, maybe it's better I found out myself.

He glances over to NICOLE and BRENDA. They're laughing, chatting amicably, as if it were the easiest thing in the world for them.

DUANE (CONT'D)

She's in med school. She's quiet, but get her going, and she's smart. Scary smart.

CRAIG

She's a detective. Gonna be, anyway.

DUANE

(smirks)

Better not try and pull any shit past her.

CRAIG

Shit, man, we're so out of our depth...

DUANE

Nah. Just means we gotta tread water a little harder, is all. You know, I don't worry about Jen anymore.

Craig lights up, he's earnest.

CRAIG

That's great, Duane.

DUANE

Better late than never, right? You know, it's crazy... I remember being a kid, and even when I was eight years old, it's like someone was always telling me, that the most important thing, was how well you could get women.

CRAIG

"Get", as in...?

DUANE

As in "Pull".

CRAIG

As in "Fuck".

Duane nods. A BARISTA behind the counter puts a plate holding a lemon bar on top of the glass case. Duane takes it, stands expecting the next bit of his order.

DUANE

Yeah. Everybody wants you to fuck women, but nobody seems to care whether or not you like them.

(beat)

It's almost like they prefer if you don't.

Craig pauses, thinks.

TABLE, LATER

Empty cups, dishes strewn with crumbs. Laughter. Brenda launches into a story, the group on a tangent about their of funny Dad stories.

BRENDA

If the poverty line was the roof of a house, my dad grew up in the basement. So, even though we could totally afford to turn on the A/C, he wouldn't, just because it was so instilled in him to pinch pennies whenever he could. And we lived in the hottest part of the Valley.

DUANE

Oh, man!

BRENDA

So I start my freshman year of high school in late August. So, hottest part of town, hottest part of summer, and the guy would just sweat all day.

Nicole snickers in anticipation.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

And he worked nights. So as the days would get hotter, I'd keep coming home from school and finding him in progressively less clothes. And I love my dad, but he is ninety percent gut.

CRAIG

Beer gut?

BRENDA

See the thing is, he doesn't even drink. So it's just this half-dome bulge on him. He's literally shaped like a pregnant man.

They all sputter, laugh.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

So it goes from shirt and shorts,  
to wifebeater and shorts, to  
wifebeater and boxers, and I come  
home with three of my girlfriends,  
on the day he'd lost the  
wifebeater.

Bigger laughter.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
...And switched to briefs. Just a  
six-foot-four pregnant man in  
tighty-whities, asking where the  
remote was.

NICOLE  
At least it wasn't a day later!

The laughter reaches a small crescendo, then subsides. Eyes  
go to Craig: his turn.

CRAIG  
Okay, let's see... My dad was  
very... status-oriented-- I'll put  
it that way. And I was probably  
about five or six, and my dad had  
this huge party going on for all  
his work friends, and clients and  
everything, and my mom was really  
sick at the time.

BRENDA  
With what?

CRAIG  
Uh, cancer. Yeah. Breast cancer.  
So, I was walking around the house,  
trying to find my mom. And she--  
You know this must've been after  
her...

He searches for the word, makes a knifelike motion with the  
side of his hand near his chest.

NICOLE  
Mastectomy?

CRAIG  
Yeah. Leave it to the med student,  
right? So, my dad wasn't really  
around her all that often.

Craig's speech slows, he starts to realize what he's saying,  
and how it all sounds.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
So I go into her bedroom, where  
she's sleeping. And before I can

talk to her, my dad pulls me out,  
because he didn't want to draw  
anybody's attention to her, lying  
sick upstairs.

An awkward beat.

DUANE  
Jesus, I'm sorry...

CRAIG  
What? No, I-- God, I'm sorry, guys.  
I didn't want to kill the mood.

BRENDA  
No, it's fine, it's fine.

DUANE  
How's your mom now?

CRAIG  
She... She went pretty fast, after  
that.

Brenda's hand moves to touch his. He locks eyes with her.

EXT. BRENDA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Craig and Brenda make toward the stoop. She stops, turns to  
face him. A checkpoint for whether the night will continue  
or not.

BRENDA  
Did you wanna come up?

CRAIG  
Come up? Up to your place?

BRENDA  
Yeah.

CRAIG  
You sure? We don't--really--know  
each other.

BRENDA  
Yeah, but I trust you. You're a  
good guy...

Craig suddenly looks pained.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Unless there's something you're not  
telling me, here...

CRAIG  
Like what?

BRENDA  
Like you're not a good guy.

He smirks. Thinks for a beat.

CRAIG  
Lead the way.

They enter.

INT. BRENDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Usually tidy, but situationally mistrewn. Lots of photos of friends, family. A yoga mat sits unfurled between the coffee table and the TV.

Craig and Brenda enter, she flicks on the lights.

CRAIG  
(re: mat)  
Yoga?

BRENDA  
Trying it. I don't think it's for me.

He lowers himself into lying on the mat.

CRAIG  
Let's see if I can still...

He hoists his body up into a neck bridge; his feet and the top of his head forming a tripod supporting his elevated torso. He holds it.

BRENDA  
Impressive. Gymnast?

CRAIG  
I wrestled. In high school.

BRENDA  
Yeah?

CRAIG  
Yeah. I had a full scholarship to Brown from it. Tore my ACL.

BRENDA  
Oh, Jesus.

CRAIG  
Well, tearing it wasn't that bad. What really sucked was re-tearng it.

BRENDA  
How'd that happen?

He lowers himself back down, lies supine.

CRAIG  
Got stupid. When I was in PT I started panicking about losing my edge. Tried to train at home... Second time around, I was lucky to still be able to walk.

He rises to his feet.

BRENDA  
You don't go easy on yourself, do you?

He snickers. She steps closer to him.

CRAIG  
Guess not.

She steps closer. Now within spitting distance. Craig breathes like he's dragging on a cigarette.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
Has this all just been a ploy to get me up here?

She rolls her eyes, but still moves closer.

BRENDA  
Don't flatter yourself.

Her lips meet his. They hold for a moment, then he breaks away.

CRAIG  
Wait...

BRENDA  
What?

CRAIG  
I'm sorry. I'm not a good guy.

BRENDA  
Oh?

CRAIG  
I-- I teach guys how to trick women into sleeping with them. That's what I do. For work. Or--I used to.

She drifts back about a half-step.

BRENDA

Why're you telling me this now?

CRAIG  
Because I think I'd rather be, you  
know, decent, for a change.

BRENDA  
Do you usually trick girls into  
sleeping with you?

CRAIG  
I don't know...

BRENDA  
Is this how you thought you knew  
Nicole?

He's silent. Her voice gets a tiny bit harsher.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
What do you mean by "trick",  
anyway?

He sighs, resigned. He pulls the Playbook 2.0 from the deep  
end of the pocket he stuffed it in and hands it to her.

She flips through a few pages, her brow furrowing.

CRAIG  
I couldn't stand living with my  
dad. I moved out, didn't have a  
plan, got a job as a bar-back while  
I was taking some acting classes.  
Met this guy who was selling this  
book--He got me in on it. Slapped  
my face on the cover after he  
retired, and I was selling it ever  
since.

She turns the cover toward him, points to Andrew.

BRENDA  
Who's your friend?

CRAIG  
The Antichrist, as far as I know. I  
think...  
(beat, tense)  
I think he raped Nicole. And tried  
to pin it on me.

She goes silent. Her eyes widen.

BRENDA  
You "think"?

CRAIG  
I can't remember.

BRENDA  
What the fuck do you mean, you  
can't remember?

CRAIG  
You don't believe me.

BRENDA  
Can you blame me? You just told me  
you teach manipulation,  
professionally. Craig, do you know  
what "Mandated Reporter" means? I  
can't have this...

She forces the book back into Craig's hands.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
You say any more to me, and  
legally, I have to report it. And  
despite whatever you may, or may  
not have done-- Your name is the  
one I have to report.

CRAIG  
Brenda...

BRENDA  
I'm sorry. You should go now.

He stares. Tries to search for something to say, and comes  
up empty. He turns for the door.

CRAIG  
For what it's worth, I still had a  
good time tonight.

He looks to her. Her face softens a bit as he closes the  
door.

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Craig stands before the balcony window, cell phone to his  
ear.

ANDREW (V.O.)  
(over phone, filtered)  
I have fucking missed you, man! How  
you been?

CRAIG  
(into phone)  
We need to talk.

ANDREW (V.O.)  
Oh, totally! Totally, man! You  
should come to the new office!

CRAIG  
Where's that?

Andrew CACKLES. His voice seems to have become faster, harsher, and raised a tiny mark in pitch.

ANDREW (V.O.)  
(singing)  
"Bright light city, gonna set my  
soul-- Gonna set my soul on fire!"

EXT. CRAIG'S CAR ON I-15 - DUSK

JUST OUTSIDE BAKER, CA

Craig grips his steering wheel, speeds along the straight shot of freeway as dark orange light fills the sky.

ANDREW (V.O.)  
(singing)  
Vivaaa! Vivaaaaa!

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Neon shining down. Craig walks the block, stiff-legged after the six hour drive.

PROMOTERS on either side of him hand out glossy cards for strip clubs, call girls. Eventually he has to put his hand up to awkwardly signal a pass to one that juts a card at him with increased fervor.

INT. TOWER HOTEL / LOBBY - NIGHT

Glass and marble molded into ultra-modern opulence. Craig enters, walking a long corridor to an expansive room, where a large, circular front desk stands in the center, manned by a trio of CONCIERGES.

A group of four men, recognizable as some of Andrew's DEVOTEES walks in. Craig watches them cross to the elevators, and follows. In the--

ELEVATOR

He stands in the far corner, the Devotees casting odd glances towards his clothes. He doesn't look like one of them, but he's not asking for them to hit the button for any other floor. They ride up.

INT. TOWER HOTEL / PENTHOUSE LEVEL - NIGHT

The elevator opens, instantly, DANCE MUSIC blares and thumps from behind a single-doored wall.

Craig walks behind Andrew's Devotees as they meet a bulky, black-suited BOUNCER (30s), and a HOSTESS (20s) reading off the guest list.

Their speech is muffled by the music. One of the Devotees holds up four fingers, asserting the size of their party. The Bouncer lets them pass, and through the door, Craig just barely catches a glimpse of multicolored flashing lights.

The Hostess addresses Craig. Her makeup's gaudy, bits of her anatomy stand out as clearly after-market additions. She's a local. She speaks loudly, over the music.

HOSTESS

Name?

Craig thinks for a beat. Another one of Andrew's Devotees, one from another group, stumbles out of the door and to the elevator, a flash of noise and light behind him as the door swings.

CRAIG

Try Schevel, Craig.

She searches.

HOSTESS

Not here.

Another Devotee steps out to follow his friend. The door slowly swings back to its closed position.

CRAIG

How about "Finesse"?

He spells it out for her.

HOSTESS

I'm afraid not.

The Bouncer steps a bit closer.

ZACH

Finesse!

Zach pokes his head out from the door.

ZACH (CONT'D)

Hey, I thought that was you! Come on, man!

Zach looks to the Bouncer and the Hostess, nods: "He's cool". The Bouncer steps aside.

HOSTESS

(half-hearted)  
Enjoy.

Zach leads Craig into...

INT. TOWER HOTEL / ANDREW'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Retrofitted into his own private club. Lights everywhere, a projector hooked up to a DJ booth. And true to form, awash in a massive crowd.

All DEVOTEES, some in the standard costume, some dressed in less trademark fare, apparently new additions to the fold. They don't dance, though. They mill around, casting eyes towards the DANCERS, WAITRESSES, and other assorted CLUB GIRLS (20s) all placed there like stocked fish in a man-made creek.

ZACH  
Come on, I'll take you to Power!

Zach leads the way through the crowd, toward a far wall LINED WITH MIRRORS. Craig glances around.

A DEVOTEE reaches into his jacket pocket. He makes eyes with the nearest BOUNCER, who turns around so the Devotee can produce a small bag of coke and cut out a line, with plausible deniability.

A WAITRESS in a skintight faux-leather dress serves drinks to a pair of FRAT BOY-TYPES (20s), who have a vaguely un-bathed look about them, despite the flashy clothing. They make no effort to hide their gaze zeroed-in on her cleavage.

A pair of YOUNG EXECUTIVES (30s) stand near one of the bars, surreptitiously exchanging between them a wad of bills for some small, white pills.

Craig's eyes narrow. He reacquires Zach, keeps following. Another look around and he sees the Devotees making increasingly physical, line-toeing advances towards the Girls.

The club-goer Girls, the ones who were simply promised a party and not there working-- keep looking smaller, more fragile, younger.

One of the girls, a BRUNETTE (20) tries to recoil, as a DEVOTEE (late 30s) leans in toward her, cornering her by a bar, and lets his hand ride on her hip. She glances around the room, as if for help.

And for a tiny fraction of a second, her eyes meet Craig's. She looks like Callie. Her looks of unease becomes his.

INT. PENTHOUSE / ANDREW'S OFFICE FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Zach leads Craig to a set of couches and bid him to sit.

ZACH  
Let me go grab him.

Zach disappears past the next door. All's quiet for a beat, just the THUMPING and RUMBLING of the bass leaking in from the main room.

Zach reappears, waves Craig in.

INT. PENTHOUSE / ANDREW'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Andrew. His hat's bigger. His jacket bulkier and denser. His jewelry bigger and gaudier, with an edgy aesthetic that makes him look like a Goth version of Mr. T.

His look hasn't gotten more refined or better-crafted, just bigger and louder. His face glistens a tiny bit, as if constantly with a fine layer of sweat over him.

He smokes from a massive hookah sitting next to him, behind his desk. A leggy WAITRESS (30s) comes by to adjust the hot coals with a pair of tongs, before making for the door.

Brock sits at one of the couches, thick cigar in his mouth.

Craig stands a few feet from the door. The Waitress leaves with Zach.

Andrew takes a long, dramatized drag off his hookah, then pops to his feet. His smile is wide, toothy. He spreads his arms as he walks to Craig.

ANDREW  
My man!

He wraps his arms around Craig, who stands loosely, awkwardly. Andrew squeezes, then suddenly retracts.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Alright, alright! Sheesh! Any longer and people'd get the wrong idea about me!

He turns to Brock and CACKLES at his own joke, signalling Brock to join. Craig stays stonefaced. Andrew steps back, spreads his arms again.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
What do you think?

CRAIG  
Your dad's place?

ANDREW

For now. Good guess! I'm gonna make him an offer to take it off his hands. Grown really attached to the place. But that's not what I meant.

Andrew gestures again, this time more clearly toward his torso.

CRAIG  
What?

ANDREW  
I'm down like, seven percent body fat! Gotta look the part, right? Check it out!

Andrew skips over to his desk and pulls an unmarked pill bottle out of a drawer. He rattles it in his hand, showing off a cache of yellow caplets.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
DNP! I got a guy who hooks it up now. Gets me Tren and Test, too.

CRAIG  
He sets you up with roids?

ANDREW  
I get dudes laid for a living, Craig. I can pretty much get my hands on anything, these days.

He reaches for another drawer.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
You want some coke?

CRAIG  
I'm good.

ANDREW  
Ya' sure?

Craig's silent.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Suit yourself! So...

CRAIG  
I want to talk business.

ANDREW  
What business, Craig? I'm the business.

Craig speaks forcefully.

CRAIG

The Redhead business. The blackmail business.

Andrew swallows.

ANDREW  
Brock, blow.

Brock nonchalantly puffs some more on his cigar, then rises for the door. He shoulder-checks Craig as he walks out. Andrew resumes, once the two have their privacy.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
What do you want to bring that up for? I've been quiet. Just like I promised. Nobody knows about the Ginger chick...

CRAIG  
Her name's Nicole. She's gonna be a doctor.

ANDREW  
Cool story, bro.

CRAIG  
You never had anything on me.

ANDREW  
Oh? You didn't sound so sure of that before...

CRAIG  
Which means that was you in your little video, you twisted, depraved little grub.

Andrew's brow furrows. He stares defiantly.

ANDREW  
You know, you should like me.

CRAIG  
I don't.

He nods to the door, to the noise and the Bacchanalia behind it.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
And neither do they. You're obvious, Andrew. I don't care how many people buy what you hawk, I don't care how much you dress yourself up as somebody else's character. Everyone knows what you are.

Andrew scowls, at a loss for a comeback.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

So since that's out there, here's my deal: You want the company It's yours. I'll sign everything to you. Your name on every relevant scrap of paper. You get to start convincing people that you invented all this, instead of stole it.

(beat)

But you erase me. You don't get to sell my name or my likeness. You strip me from every copy of the book, the website, everything. It's all yours, and I was never here.

Andrew's breath gets heavier, more aggressive.

A KNOCK. Zach pokes his head in again.

ZACH

Mr. Waltigan, Power.

ANDREW

Good!

Andrew rises. Zach opens the door and lets in BRADLEY WALTIGAN (60s), gray-haired, almost carved out of granite. Trailing him is the doughy, tweed-clad FLEISCHER (50s), toting a brief case.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Dad! Sit down! You want a drink?

WALTIGAN

(stony)

I'm going home, Andrew.

ANDREW

Huh? Oh, sure. What'd you think, though?

Waltigan sighs.

WALTIGAN

This is shit.

Andrew's face doesn't drop. It tilts, confused.

WALTIGAN (CONT'D)

It's shit, boy. I'm not signing the house over so you can do more of this garbage. You've got guys snorting dope in plain sight, grabbing on the girls-- This is a Goddamn embarrassment. I'm going home, and this better all be gone in the morning.

Andrew's silent, shocked. Waltigan turns and makes for the door, his head hangs a bit, he rubs his forehead as he leaves, weary. Fleischer follows. Andrew's "War face" flashes.

ANDREW  
Fleischer?

Waltigan disappears beyond the door. Fleischer turns. Andrew glances to Craig.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
While you're still here, can you  
put together a... Transfer of  
Title-type thing? I'll double your  
retainer.

Fleischer steps back toward Andrew, undoing a latch on his case.

ANDREW'S OFFICE, LATER

Craig looks thumbs through the end of a contract. Finally, he sets it down on the coffee table near the couches, and signs. Fleischer snatches the contract up, and locks it into his briefcase. He nods and exits.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Satisfied?

CRAIG  
Not really. Present company, you  
know?

ANDREW  
You should like me.

Andrew steps around Craig, eyeing him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I'm everything you said to be. If  
I'm so fucking bad, Craig, you're  
just as bad--you're the same kind  
of bad--as me.

CRAIG  
You roofied me.

ANDREW  
And it wasn't fucking cheap,  
getting that shit from those frat  
guys. And I spiked both of you. But  
I didn't just hear you mentioning  
the girl now, did I? Didn't care  
about her just then, huh? Nice  
moral fucking high ground.

Andrew crosses to a few large windows, (the other side of the previously-seen MIRRORS) and draws the blinds. The whole of the dance floor space opens up to him. He gestures grandiosely.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

But that's always the last refuge of somebody who's been trumped. Look! Look at them all! I've got them all armed, man! I've given them what they all want! You played it so it was always about you. I serve them. You gave them the self-help bullshit. I gave them high-octane access to top-shelf pussy.

He paces, wipes the sweat from his brow. He vigorously jabs his index finger toward himself. He gets emphatic, overly enunciative.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

The show's going through, gonna be on national television. I took your Tony Robbins-ass lemonade stand, and turned it into Starbucks. It's gonna be on every street corner! Did you get it there, Craig? No, I did. I made it, where you failed. I'm the fucking better man, I am the Twenty-First Century! I'm the fucking Scarface of cool!

CRAIG

Yeah? How'd that end up for Scarface?

ANDREW

(mocking, in total unison)

How'd that end up for Scarface?

Andrew grins.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Gotcha!

Craig stares.

CRAIG

I'm leaving, Andrew.

ANDREW

Bullshit. You're gonna admit it, or you're going nowhere. I'm the better man.

CRAIG

I don't know what the hell you are,  
Andrew. I'm not even convinced  
you're human, at this point. But  
you're definitely not a "man".

Andrew frowns, he strolls over to his desk, and hovers over  
the computer. He makes a few clicks, then spins the monitor  
around to face Craig.

ANDREW  
You see this? This is my proof.

ON SCREEN: A full library of VIDEO FILES, all showing single  
still-frame previews of their contents:

VARIOUS GIRLS, in different stages of undress, many with  
fresh BRUISES, BLOODY NOSES and MOUTHS, TEARS.

ANDREW'S HANDS, and more, grip them, BASH THEM, invade  
them. A growing homemade porn collection of varying levels  
of violence.

Andrew grins. Craig turns pale.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
Half don't remember. The other half  
remember that I'm not to be fucked  
with.

He cocks his head.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
It's good to be the king. Remember  
that.

Andrew steps away from the screen, standing awkwardly, as if  
he wants to take a bow. After a beat, he turns away to  
resume his seat behind the desk. He hits an intercom button  
on the phone set.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
(into intercom)  
Getting bored here. Bring me  
something.

DEVOTEE (V.O.)  
(over intercom, filtered)  
White meat or dark meat?

ANDREW  
(into intercom)  
Two white. For now.  
(to Craig)  
Don't let the door hit you in the  
ass, Craig.

Craig makes for the door, gritting his teeth.

INT. TOWER HOTEL / ANDREW'S PENTHOUSE - LATER

Craig's already about halfway for the door, when his pace slows. He wants nothing more than to leave, but he can't. He stands awkwardly in the middle of the room, then crosses over to slump down in one of the couches.

He lets his head sit in his hands. A VOICE grabs his concentration.

A two SCRAWNY DEVOTEES (20s) occupy the immediately adjacent couches, their conversation loud enough for Craig to hear. They're strategizing, thumbing through their own copy of the Playbook.

SCRAWNY DEVOTEE 1  
Nah, dude, Marty's doing a DHV for us, so we can grab another set and merge them forward and get some Jealousy Subplots going. These tourist bitches always fall for it! Power's guys stock this place good.

A light goes off behind Craig's eyes. He cranes his neck over.

CRAIG  
Excuse me.

SCRAWNY DEVOTEE 1  
Yeah?

CRAIG  
Which one's of your boys' Marty?

They nod toward a TALL SCRAWNY DEVOTEE (20s) holding court with a few PETITE GIRLS (20s), all seemingly taken by his stature.

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
You guys got your Marks?

SCRAWNY DEVOTEE 2  
Of course. What, we look like noobs to you?

SCRAWNY DEVOTEE 1  
We got the chick in the green, and the blonde one with the big ass.

CRAIG  
Well, your boy Marty was going tactile with them both a little while earlier.

Their eyes bulge.

SCRAWNY DEVOTEE 2

You bullshitting?

CRAIG

No, man. He bet the blonde that he could fit her ass in his hand. She seemed impressed. Dude's got big hands.

The first Scrawny Devotee glances at his own, rather diminutive hands. He screws his face.

SCRAWNY DEVOTEE 1

That son of a bitch!

They both rise and head back across the floor. Craig stands and sets off in a different direction.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

The night goes on, more drinking, cavorting. Craig slips through the crowd, stopping every so often to throw in a small aside into a DEVOTEE's ear. The MUSIC blares, covering up the dialogue.

A) One of the FRAT BOYS from earlier crosses the floor with a new beer in hand. Craig seemingly says half a sentence as he passes, the Frat Boy stops in his tracks, then glares ahead at an off-screen acquaintance.

B) Two of the YOUNG EXECUTIVES lean by the far wall, chatting with a pair of YOUNGISH GIRLS. Craig slips by, pointing vaguely over his shoulder and asking some question. The Executives glance at each other with some common shock.

C) The two Scrawny Devotees corner their taller friend, tear him away from the girls, start aggressively interrogating him, punctuating their questions with shoves.

D) One Frat Boy is already sharing loud, harsh words with his friend. The GIRLS they were presumably targeting awkwardly back away.

E) The two Executives corner Brock, in the middle of trying to close on two Girls of his own. They stare daggers at him, and Brock looks back, oblivious.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE

Andrew stands over a DRUGGED GIRL (20s) lying on the couch. Her dress disheveled, her purse lying on the floor, its contents, including a vibrating CELL PHONE strewn all around.

Andrew kicks the cell phone to the side, steps ever closer to the Girl, his hands drifting toward his belt buckle.

A sudden loud CRUNCH of glass breaks his concentration.

ANDREW  
What the fuck?!

A spiderweb of CRACKS has appeared on his one-way mirror window, a GLASS having flown. Andrew steps to the window and looks out--

IN THE MAIN SECTION of the penthouse...

Pandemonium. Across the floor, shoving matches, lapel-grabbing, brutally unrelenting drunken fistfights-- the Bouncers try to break up Andrew's savage devotees where they can, but their numbers, and their influence are limited.

The Girls try to stand clear of the chaos, many rushing for the exit. Zach stands by, shocked.

Bock's meanwhile in the middle of choking out one of the Executives in a headlock, while the other comes up from behind and bashes Brock with the bottom of a pilsner glass.

Andrew steps out of his office, hollering at the top of his lungs, but barely audible. He flags down Zach and a Bouncer, and storms across the floor.

Craig slips into the office, out of Andrew's sight.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE

Craig enters, finding the Drugged Girl trying to fight her way to her feet. He grabs the cell phone off the floor, hits the answer button, and holds it for the Drugged Girl.

FEMALE VOICE  
(over phone, filtered)  
Katie? Katie? Where are you?

The Drugged Girl MUMBLES INCOHERENTLY. Craig puts the phone to his own ear. Speaks up over the NOISE from the main room coming over the line.

CRAIG  
In the office. Hurry.

He grabs all of the personal effects from the floor and stuffs them back into the Girl's purse. Her female CLUBBING FRIEND (20s) staggers in on impossible heels. Craig hands her the purse.

CLUBBING FRIEND  
Katie? Come on, girl.

DRUGGED GIRL  
(slurring)  
I'm comin'.

Craig shoulders the Drugged Girl's arm, hoists her up. She can stand, somewhat. He helps her Friend support her and lead her back out.

CRAIG  
Get her to a hospital.

CLUBBING PARTNER  
She's not that drunk.

CRAIG  
Yeah, she's worse.

The two girls drag their way back out.

Through the WINDOW

Craig sees them hug the far wall, making a clean break to the exit. Andrew meanwhile viciously berates the closet Bouncers.

A BURLY DEVOTEE (30s) takes a drunken swing at one Bouncer, and soon enough a dogpile swarms around him, wrestling him to the floor.

Craig turns to ANDREW'S DESK.

He steps to the computer, starts searching through the drawers: coke, assorted pills, handcuffs, a few knives, some totally-disorganized papers and office supplies, even five still boxed models of the exact same smart phone.

Finally, Craig finds something sufficient: a small USB FLASH DRIVE. He inserts it into Andrew's computer, then searches for the folder of video files.

He finds it, dumps the whole contents into the USB drive.

ON SCREEN: a LOADING BAR, reading "Copying..."

Another CRUNCH. Craig ducks behind the desk, PANTING nervously.

He looks to the window: another bunch of CRACKS from another thrown glass. Craig looks back to the SCREEN.

In the grid of video files, he sees NICOLE.

He stares.

Then, nervously, he CLICKS.

ON SCREEN:

INT. CRAIG'S APARTMENT / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

From the view of Andrew's cell phone camera:

Andrew places the camera's lens with a blurry, dark view of the apartment. Craig's hands suddenly fly up, momentarily blocking the view.

CRAIG  
(slurring)  
What's goin' on?

ANDREW  
(hushed)  
Shut up! Stay still, man!

Craig's hands drop. He's sitting on the couch. The camera's in his shirt pocket. Andrew steps out, his body out of view of the camera. He pivots Craig to face downward, the camera's gaze hanging over the drugged NICOLE, lying on the ground.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
(sotto)  
Okay...

Andrew's hand's move in, start assailing Nicole.

CRAIG  
(slurring)  
Wha...?

BACK TO SCENE: ANDREW'S OFFICE

Craig stares at the screen, wide-eyed. A sudden sound of STRUGGLE from Nicole, and his hand jabs for the MUTE button. He continues to watch, growing ever more pained as he watches.

His hand clamps over his mouth, shocked. He starts to sob. He tries to hold it back, but that quickly proves futile. The chaos rages on in the main space of the penthouse, and Craig's face reddens with the strain.

ON SCREEN: Andrew, his business finished, pulls the camera out of Craig's pocket, turns it to face him.

THE VIDEO GOES DARK.

The loading bar fills, COMPLETED.

Craig gasps, collects himself. He snatches the USB drive out of the computer.

INT. TOWER HOTEL / ANDREW'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

A small squad of Las Vegas police, METROS (30s-40s) swarm into the penthouse, shining flashlights and blowing

whistles. A pair storm for the DJ table to cut off the music.

Craig steps out of the office, hand over his pocket, holding the USB drive tight in there.

He walks through the room, as if climbing out of the layers of Hell.

First, the dead center of the scrap, Andrew hollering as Brock bashes one of the Executive's heads into the floor.

Then, a few Bouncers tangling with the Frat Boys and other, burlier members of he clique.

Then, the outer core, where the Scrawny Devotees and the younger and softer members of Andrew's cult have it out.

Then, a layer of more Bouncers just coming into the fray.

The Metros on the outer Bouncers' heels, unholstering pepper spray and batons.

Past them: the Women, the Hostesses and Waitresses and hired Dancers and the Club Girls--who this whole debacle was supposed to all be about. Craig bolts among them for the door.

INT. TOWER HOTEL / PENTHOUSE LEVEL - NIGHT

Craig and a few Dancers BURST out of the door into the level just outside of the penthouse proper. Craig pauses, catches his breath, as ever more of the Girls, and some of Andrew's followers spill out.

The elevators taking too long to respond, most head for the stairwell, Craig turns, and follows, his limp coming back by a half-measure.

EXT. CRAIG'S CAR ON I-15 - NIGHT

DESERT. Craig speeds along, seeing more STARS over his car than he ever has before.

INT. BRENDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

A KNOCK. Brenda opens the door to find a slightly-haggard Craig. He holds up the USB drive.

CRAIG  
Got you something to report.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COUNTY COURTROOM - DAY

Trial in full swing. Andrew sits fidgeting next to Fleischer on the defense, in an ill-fitting powder-blue suit.

Craig and Brenda sit in the gallery, alongside Duane, Nicole, and a few interspersed YOUNG WOMEN with nervous, saddened looks all pointedly avoiding Andrew.

The DA (50s) stands from behind his table.

DA  
Calling Mr. Craig Schevel.

Brenda, trying to be subtle, squeezes Craig's hand. He stands, crosses the bar to the witness stand. BALIFF swears him in. The DA steps into the well.

DA (CONT'D)  
Please state your name.

Craig leans forward. For an instant, he makes contact with Andrew's twitching gaze.

CRAIG  
Craig Schevel.

DA  
And what is your occupation, Mr. Schevel?

Craig glances to Brenda.

INSERT SHOTS:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

The STAGE where we first saw Craig's speech. Empty chairs. Craig's boots step into frame.

CRAIG (V.O.)  
I'm...

EXT. PARK - DAY

The playground where Craig took Callie, empty. A SWING shifts in the wind.

CRAIG (V.O.)  
I'm...

BACK TO SCENE.

Craig searches his mind.

DA  
Mr. Schevel?

INSERT SHOT:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The school. Full of kids. Callie jogs up to Craig, who swoops her up in his arms. A brief moment of absolute, uninhibited joy.

BACK TO SCENE.

Craig looks up.

CRAIG  
I'm a father.

CUT TO BLACK.