

SICK KID

A Play in Two Acts

by

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CHARACTERS:

Wainwright (Wayne) Jackson	Mid-40s. Sturdy. Rough hands. Blue collar, lower middle-class.
Janelle Jackson	Late-30s/Early-40s. Hard-working, takes care of business. Loves her kids.
Catherine Jackson	16 - 17. A runner. Smart. Does well in school.
Bobby McGuinness	17 - 18. Catherine's boyfriend. Long hair. A bit rough around the edges, but incredibly sweet.
June	Mid-60s. Janelle's mother. Retired. Lives off her deceased husbands pension and social security.
Cylus (Slice)	Late-30s/Early-40s. Janelle's cousin. Ex-convict, recently released. He's trying.
The Candidate/The Senator	Late 20s - Mid-40s. Earnest in the desire to make a change. Newer to the game of politics. <i>This role should be cast in such a way as to feel like an outsider from the family, ie if the Jackson family is white, maybe The Candidate is a Latinx woman, or if the Jackson family is Latinx, the Candidate may be a Muslim man, etc. Mix it up!</i>
Operator (voice only)	A phone operator for Trinity Care Health Insurance. <i>This role should be double cast with The Candidate/Senator.</i>

TOTAL CAST SIZE: 7

RUNNING TIME:

115 MINUTES

TIME:

The Present. Over the course of 14 months.

PLACE:

Rural west Michigan. The Jackson family home.

SCRIPT NOTES:

The symbol (/) indicates that the next line of dialogue should begin and overlap the current line of dialogue.

NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT:

I hope this play becomes completely irrelevant soon. Until then...

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

APRIL. The kitchen and living room of modest three bedroom home in the sticks. Over the sink in the kitchen, a small radio plays some tunes. WAINWRIGHT (Wayne) JACKSON (mid-forties, sturdy, rough hands) sits, bottle of Coors Light in hand, staring at the TV in the living room - the sounds of baseball game commentary underscore the action. There's a small metal fan on the shelf spitting hot air over the room. The mantel over the fireplace has a buck's head - beside it, a .348 Winchester lever-action rifle circa 1938. A train whistle can be heard in the distance somewhere. WAYNE takes a long, languid sip from the bottle. This is a home that has seen life - it is sturdy, scarred, and well cared for. It doesn't have much of a polish to it, everything seems to have functional or nostalgic value.

JANELLE JACKSON (late-thirties) enters the kitchen the screen door with and small basket of pecans - the door swings shut with a BANG - JANELLE jolts at the sound.

JANELLE

Hot damn.

JANELLE sets the pecans down on the counter - she opens the oven and checks the contents. Satisfied, she shuts it again and goes to cracking open the pecans.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Wayne?

WAYNE doesn't respond. JANELLE is finding a good rhythm with the pecans - crack, shell, toss the nut in the bowl, repeat.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Wayne?

WAYNE glances toward the kitchen but says nothing.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Wayne!

JANELLE turns around and moves to opening of the living room - WAYNE clamps his eyes shut and takes the position of a dozing man.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Wainwright!

WAYNE *"sleeps."* JANELLE marches back to the kitchen and grabs and uncracked pecan. She chucks it at WAYNE (***This may or may not hit WAYNE, depending on the actress' aim, but she's definitely aiming at him.*)

WAYNE

(**if it hits him, he drops his beer and jolts*)

JeSUS, woman! You made me drop my beer.

(**if it misses him, he "awakes" and shouts*)

Ball four! You're wasting pecans.

JANELLE

(*She hurries around the living room picking up odds and ends*)

Well, she'll be here soon and we don't have the table set, / the bathroom needs a wipe down, and I haven't made the pie yet.

WAYNE

Eddie can do that-- Catherine can do the bathroom-- You want me to make the pie?

JANELLE

I don't want you to make the pie, I want you to get up off your ass and help out a little.

WAYNE *gets up in a huff and marches to the stairs.*

WAYNE

(*calling up the stairs*)

Catherine! Eddie! Get down here and help your mother.

(*to Janelle*)

There. That better?

JANELLE

Catherine is at the track meet, and Eddie isn't feeling well. (*heading back into the kitchen*)

Come crack open these pecans for me.

WAYNE

(*following Janelle*)

You ever think that maybe Eddie isn't "feeling well" to avoid having to help out? He's not exactly a go-getter in the chores department.

JANELLE

I wonder who he gets that from.

WAYNE

I've been working all week / -- you want me to come home and clean a bathroom?

JANELLE

What do you think I do?-- Yeah, Wayne, I do. I work all week too, and cook, and clean, so I know it's possible.

WAYNE cracks the pecans aggressively.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

You're breaking the nut-- you gotta-- Christ. I'll do it.

JANELLE takes the nuts.

WAYNE

You know nuts aren't my strong suit. I don't know my own strength. They buckle under the force of my mitts.

WAYNE opens the fridge and grabs another beer.

JANELLE

A little finesse goes a long way.

WAYNE

(with a devilish grin)

Oh, I can finesse.

WAYNE turns up the tune on the radio - something slow, but sweet - or not, something that makes sense for the chemistry of these two.

WAYNE sidles up behind JANELLE, swaying to the beat of the song.

JANELLE

(swatting his arm
playfully)

You better finesse a little of that beer right here.

WAYNE

Oh, you want some this?

JANELLE

Oh yeah.

WAYNE

(carefully feeding her a
sip of his beer)

You like that?

She turns around and sways with him a bit.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

See? Finesse, babe.

JANELLE

Mm-hmm.

She kisses him tenderly.

WAYNE

Let's ditch the pie.

JANELLE

Ditch the pie? What are we gonna do with all that extra time?

WAYNE

(kisses her)

Oh, I can think of a few things.

JANELLE

(kisses him)

Oh you can?

WAYNE

(kisses her, his hands
slipping up the back of
her shirt)

Oh yeah.

JANELLE

That'll cover a good ten-minutes. What do we do with the rest of the time?

He laughs lifts her up off her feet, continuing to sway.

WAYNE

Best ten-minutes of your life.

JANELLE

No, honey, best ten-minutes of your life. You better slow down before you get yourself all hot-n-bothered.

She teases him with one last kiss before turning back to her work. He smiles at her - that same devilish grin.

Suddenly she reaches up behind her on her back, feeling for something.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(trying to clasp her bra)

Did you--? / You sneaky son of a bitch.

WAYNE

That's the ole' Wayne Jackson finesse right there. Don't you forget it. "Ten-mintues..."

WAYNE struts back into the living room with his beer.

JANELLE

Don't you sit down!-- Trying to distract me like that.

WAYNE struts back to the kitchen.

WAYNE

Alright, woman. What do you want me to do?

JANELLE

Since you are apparently completely useless in most areas, do you think you can manage to pull those peeled potatoes from the fridge in the garage?

WAYNE exits through the screen door in the kitchen - it SLAMS shut.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(startled)

Hot damn!

(calling out)

And when are you fixing this damned door?

WAYNE

(off stage)

Next weekend!

JANELLE

(calling)

That's what you said last weekend!

JANELLE continues cracking pecans in expert fashion. This continues for a moment as the only action on stage. The front door (into the living room) opens and in walks CATHERINE (sixteen, a runner.)

CATHERINE

Mom!

JANELLE

How was the meet?

CATHERINE

(unloading her bag and
kicking off her shoes)

Can Bobby stay for dinner tonight?

JANELLE

Well, I didn't plan for another--

CATHERINE

He's already here. / He's in the car out front.

JANELLE

Okay then. How was the meet?

CATHERINE

I have to take a shower, I'm totally disgusting.

JANELLE puts down the pecans and crosses into the living room.

JANELLE

How was the meet?

CATHERINE

Good.

JANELLE

Just good?

CATHERINE

Yeah.

JANELLE

How'd you do?

CATHERINE

First in the hundred, second in hurdles, and was going to win the mile but this like, giraffe of a girl went down right behind me and tripped me too. So I came in third.

JANELLE

Are you okay?

CATHERINE

Totally. Just-- Look at this.

CATHERINE holds up her elbow - it looks gnarly.

JANELLE

Put some rubbing alcohol on it.

CATHERINE

Yeah.

BOBBY (seventeen, long hair, rough around the edges but sweet) walks in through the front door.

BOBBY

Hey, Mrs. Jackson.

JANELLE

Hi, Bobby.

BOBBY
Thanks for letting me stay for dinner.

JANELLE
Sure. I'm going to put you to work though.

BOBBY
Okay, cool.

CATHERINE
Mom. He's like, a guest.

JANELLE
That doesn't mean he can't
help with the pecans.

BOBBY
It's cool, babe-- I can
definitely help with the
pecans.

CATHERINE
Uhhggh, whatever. I'm going to take a shower.

CATHERINE kisses BOBBY. JANELLE winces a little.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
(heading up the stairs)
Mom. Don't be weird or anything.

JANELLE
I won't. Come on, Bobby. Have I told you Catherine's birth
story?

CATHERINE
(off stage)

Mom!

*JANELLE leads BOBBY back to the kitchen. BOBBY sits
at the table, JANELLE sits beside him. She continues
cracking open pecans.*

BOBBY
I should probably let you know that I've never worked with
pecans before.

JANELLE
(handing him another
nutcracker)
That's okay. Just use this and try not to crush the nut
inside.

BOBBY
Okay, cool.

*BOBBY starts to awkwardly handle some pecans. It's
unclear whether he's much help.*

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Um. So you were going to tell me about...?

JANELLE
What? Oh, no, I was kidding.

BOBBY
Oh. Okay, cool.

JANELLE
You were at the meet?

BOBBY
Yeah.

JANELLE
We wanted to go, you know, it's been a crazy week. Then with my mom coming over for dinner...

BOBBY
Definitely, I get that.

JANELLE
Yeah. We've been a little behind.

BOBBY
It's cool. We all get a little behind, right?

JANELLE
Sure.

BOBBY
Like, I haven't even *started* my history paper.

JANELLE
Oh?

BOBBY
Yeah. And it's definitely due on Monday.

JANELLE
Well...Sounds like you're screwed.

BOBBY
Ha, I know, right? Catherine was super awesome though. At the meet.

JANELLE
Yeah?

BOBBY
Yeah. Like, so fast. She's like, *so fast*.

JANELLE
Don't know where she gets it. I hope you never see me run-- I don't know what to do with my arms so they flop around too much.

BOBBY chuckles. He works at picking the remains of a crushed pecan out of the shell pieces.

BOBBY
Damn. I keep crushing the nut.

JANELLE
Just...do your best.

BOBBY
Definitely.
(beat)
Where's the little man?

JANELLE
Eddie? You know, he wasn't feeling too hot, so he's taking a nap in his room.

BOBBY
I get that. Naps are my jam.

JANELLE
Your "jam," huh?

BOBBY
Yeah. I could rock a nap most any time.

WAYNE enters through the screen door - it slams shut.

JANELLE
Hot damn!

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Holy hell!

WAYNE stops when he sees BOBBY. He plops the pot of potatoes on the table.

WAYNE
Bobby.

BOBBY
What's up, Mr. Jackson?

WAYNE
The ceiling.

BOBBY
The wh--? Oh, ha, yeah. I see. Yeah. Definitely.

WAYNE
(to Janelle)
Where's Catherine?

JANELLE
Shower.

WAYNE

Great, we'll see her tomorrow.

BOBBY

Ha, yeah, tomorrow. 'Cuz she takes a while. That's a good one.

WAYNE looks at BOBBY - BOBBY ducks his gaze.

WAYNE

(to Bobby)

You want to watch the game for a minute?

BOBBY

Oh, I was helping Mrs. Jackson with the--

JANELLE

Go on. I don't think pecans are your area of expertise.

BOBBY

Ha, yeah, definitely. Okay cool.

BOBBY gets up from the table. WAYNE goes to the fridge.

WAYNE

(to Bobby)

You want a beer?

JANELLE

Wainwright!

BOBBY

Oh, no thanks, Mr. Jackson. I'm not like, of age, you know?

WAYNE

Good answer. That was a test.

BOBBY

Oh, cool. Yeah, I'm definitely a solid "o-kay" at tests.

JANELLE

Not papers though.

BOBBY

Ha, yeah, no. Not papers, I guess.

BOBBY and JANELLE share a laugh.

WAYNE

What is this? I'm not a part of this.

BOBBY stops laughing.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

(to Bobby)

The game is in there.

BOBBY

Okay, cool. Thanks, Mr. Jackson.

BOBBY slinks over to the couch in the living room.

WAYNE

(hushed)

He's staying for dinner?

JANELLE

Yes, he's staying.

WAYNE

But-- I mean-- Come on, Jenny.

JANELLE

Come on what? He's a good kid.

WAYNE

He's seventeen.

JANELLE

So what?

WAYNE

So. I know how it goes when you're seventeen.

JANELLE

Did you think it'd be different for Katy?

WAYNE

But-- but-- Hell. He's got long hair, and-- he's lanky as all hell-- / and he's got shifty eyes.

JANELLE

You've a very keen sense of observation-- he does not have "shifty eyes."

WAYNE

Does he have a *job*?

JANELLE

I don't know! Go and ask him! Make conversation, dumbass!

(looks at him pointedly)

He's not the enemy, Wayne. Take a breath-- that's right. Sip your beer... Good. See?

WAYNE starts into the room, steeling himself for interaction with the enemy.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Go be nice to your daughter's boyfriend.

WAYNE darts a fierce glance her way - she laughs. He goes and stands near the couch staring at BOBBY. BOBBY stiffens.

WAYNE

Do you have a job, son?

BOBBY

Oh, um, yeah, definitely-- Well, sometimes. I work with my dad during summers and sometimes on the weekend.

(beat)

He's a contractor.

WAYNE

That's good, son. I actually have a job for you.

BOBBY

Oh yeah?

WAYNE

Yeah. We gotta get our bathroom cleaned up before Jen's mom gets here.

BOBBY gets up and starts heading to the hall beyond the stairs.

BOBBY

Definitely, Mr. Jackson. I got you.

WAYNE

Cleaning supplies are under the sink.

BOBBY

On it!

BOBBY disappears around the corner. WAYNE struts to his chair in front of the TV and sits. He takes a satisfied sip of brew. Beat.

WAYNE

(re. the game)

Quit throwing the fat stuff, meat!

CATHERINE comes charging down the stairs - damp hair pulled up into a ponytail.

CATHERINE

Hey, dad.

WAYNE

Hey.

CATHERINE looks around the room, glances into the kitchen.

CATHERINE

Where's Bobby?

WAYNE

He offered to help get cleaned up.

CATHERINE

What?

WAYNE

Sure. Started in the bathroom.

CATHERINE

Friggin' what the hell, dad?

CATHERINE charges into the hall and out of sight. The devilish grin creeps over WAYNE'S lips. Moments later, CATHERINE reemerges with BOBBY in toe.

BOBBY

I got the toilet and sink taken care of and--

CATHERINE

(pointedly to Wayne)

Come on, Bobby.

CATHERINE takes BOBBY'S hand and starts to lead him to the stairs.

WAYNE

Where do you think you're going?

CATHERINE

Upstairs to watch Stranger Things.

BOBBY

This season is definitely epic.

WAYNE

I don't care how "epic" this season is-- You're not going upstairs, to your room, alone.

CATHERINE

Dad.

BOBBY

Oh. If you're like, worried or whatever, this isn't like a "Netflix and Chill" situation. / We're truly invested in the show right now.

WAYNE

What the hell is a "Netflix and Chill" situation?

(to Catherine)

You can watch your strange things later-- in *separate rooms*.

CATHERINE

Friggin'-- DAD! Mom, let's us--

(calling)

Mom! Dad is being legit oppressive right now.

JANELLE enters the living room.

JANELLE

What's going on?

CATHERINE

Dad is acting super weird
about me and Bobby watching
Stranger Things in my room
which you let us do like, *all*
the time, / so can you please
get him to friggin' chill?

WAYNE

You're letting them watch
strange things in her room
alone? What kind of operation
are we running here? NEW
RULE! / NO WATCHING STRANGE
THINGS ALONE WITH BOYFRIENDS!

JANELLE

Okay Okay Okay! Enough!

(JANELLE marches to the TV
and shuts it off)

I've got probably fifteen minutes until-- Shit.

*Suddenly, the front door swings open. JUNE bustles
into the room with an armful of boxes - leaving the
door open behind her.*

JUNE

Hello, babies! Give me kisses. Come on.

(handing the boxes to
WAYNE.)

You look tired, hun. /

(she has moved on to sizing
up others in the room
while she delivers the
following to WAYNE)

Why don't you go and set these boxes somewhere and sip on
something cool, huh?

WAYNE

It's been a long week and--

(he takes the boxes and
hands them to BOBBY)

Put these somewhere.

BOBBY sets the boxes on the fireplace hearth.

JUNE
 (zeroing in on CATHERINE)
 Ooooo, Catherine, baby, my baby, Katy girl, baby, kisses,
 baby, kisses.

(showering CATHERINE with
 all the kisses)
 Look at that! You have breasts, babygirl.

CATHERINE JANELLE
Nana. Oh my gosh. Seriously. MOM. You're embarrassing her.

JUNE
 What?-- I am not embarrassing her. She's -- You're coming
 into your own, you're a woman now--
 (suddenly seeing BOBBY)
 Now who is this?

*WAYNE slips into his chair and continues watching the
 game on mute while the action swirls around him.*

BOBBY
 Oh, um, I'm Bobby McGuinness.

JUNE
 Come here and let me look at you. Katy, honey, is this your
 main squeeze?

CATHERINE
 My what?

JUNE
 (to BOBBY)
 You need a haircut, honey.
 (to CATHERINE)
 Catherine, you take this young man to the barber / and make
 sure he gets a good trim--

CATHERINE
 Oh my gosh, Nana-- Stop please.

BOBBY
 No it's cool, I could definitely use like, a shortening
 operation on the ole' locks of love, you know?

*CATHERINE pulls BOBBY away from immediate danger.
 JUNE closes in on JANELLE.*

JUNE
 Hello, baby.

JANELLE
 You're early, mom.

WAYNE

(to the TV)

One strike! / Throw one friggin' strike, meat! Completely useless.

JUNE

(to JANELLE)

Oh let me help you-- You're not going to too much fuss over me now, are you?

JANELLE

(throwing WAYNE death eyes
while...)

Just working on the pie.

JUNE

Let me go powder my nose and I'll help you get that pie made right.

JUNE retreats down the hall toward the bathroom.

JANELLE

Wayne! TV. Off.

(WAYNE shuts off the TV)

Did you clean that bathroom like I asked? / Because you know if it's not clean she'll say something--

WAYNE

This kid volunteered.

BOBBY

I got your back Mrs. Jackson!

JANELLE

Thank you, Bobby. That was kind. But you are our guest. And *this* idiot should have done it *himself*.

WAYNE

(getting up and going to
the door)

One minute of peace. I can't get one minute before I'm-- And she leaves the door wide open / -- am I cooling the whole outside now?!

JANELLE

That has nothing to do with-- The A/C isn't on.

WAYNE begins to close the door, but it's stopped at the last second. In walks CYLUS(SLICE) - 40, wiry, tatted from wrist to neck, his clothes modest, but his shoes are profoundly nice - he carries a small gift bag.

SLICE

How ya doin, chief?

The room freezes, all eyes on SLICE. He slides into the center of the room. He grins.

SLICE (CONT'D)
 "Welcome home, Slice, looking good, new shoes?"
 (beat. He twirls and shows
 off his shoes.)

Nothing?

He grins, then sets the little gift bag on the coffee table. JANELLE snaps to.

JANELLE
 Of course, uh, welcome back, Cylus.

SLICE
 It's Slice, cuz.

He and JANELLE hug. SLICE notices CATHERINE.

SLICE (CONT'D)
 Holy shit, this is baby Katy?

CATHERINE squeezes up to BOBBY.

SLICE (CONT'D)
 The last time I saw you, you was just a little wiggle of kid.
 Don't remember me, huh?

JANELLE
 Catherine, this is my cousin, Cylus. He's been...um--

SLICE
 S'okay, you can say it, cuz.
 (to CATHERINE)
 I been incarcerated.
 (to JANELLE)
 And it's Slice.

JANELLE
 Slice.

WAYNE
 We didn't know you got out.

SLICE
 Good behavior.

WAYNE
 That's good.

SLICE
 Yeah.

(beat)

I know you're all looking at me like-- You don't have to worry.

(genuinely?)

The System don't work for everyone, but for me? I'm changed. God's truth.

JANELLE

Well... that's great.

WAYNE

Good for you. Real good.

SLICE

Thank you. Feels good to be, you know, among my people. I gotta say though, I'm parched.

BOBBY

Like, spiritually?

SLICE

No, like my mouth is like sandpaper.

JANELLE

Oh, sorry, yeah let's get you a drink. You want a beer?

SLICE

Ya got pop? I'm on the narrow.

JANELLE

Sure. We have pop.

JANELLE starts out toward the kitchen. SLICE hustles up behind her.

SLICE

I can get it, cuz.

JANELLE

Oh, it's not in the um-- in the kitchen.

SLICE

That old fridge in the garage?

JANELLE

Yeah.

SLICE

I know the way.

He grins. He slides by JANELLE and out the back door - it slams shut. JANELLE jolts. Then she marches into the living room.

JANELLE

Okay, gameplan, people. Wayne, you stick to Cylus like glue--

BOBBY

It's Slice.

JANELLE

Nope--

(to WAYNE)

the last time he got out after that short stint he stole our camera--

WAYNE

Believe me, I haven't forgotten.

WAYNE starts out--

JANELLE

(calling after him)

And don't let him talk prison stories in front of the kids!

WAYNE nods and walks out the kitchen door - it slams behind him, JANELLE jolts.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

--Catherine, you are not to be alone with him, or you Bobby.

CATHERINE

That won't be a problem.

BOBBY

Definitely.

JANELLE

I'm gonna kill my mother, I'm gonna-- MOM!

JANELLE starts marching to the hall just and JUNE emerges.

JUNE

That's better, isn't it?

JANELLE and JUNE exchange a look.

JANELLE

Mom. What. The hell.

JUNE

What what?

JANELLE

You brought Cylus?

JUNE

Well, he's family isn't he?

JANELLE

No, he's ex-convict.

JUNE

Babygirl, he has served his time. / It's done. He deserves a second chance.

JANELLE

There are *children* in this house, my children-- he has not *earned* / a second chance from us.

JUNE

He doesn't have anybody else!

Beat. JUNE fidgets with her outfit.

JUNE (CONT'D)

He couldn't go to his own mama's funeral. And she asked me to look out for him. He's our blood. We look out for blood.

Beat.

JANELLE

He gets one strike. You understand?

JUNE

Sure. That's generous.

(JUNE starts toward the kitchen.)

My feet are killing me.

JANELLE

Have a seat in the kitchen.

JANELLE and JUNE sit at the table. They go about shelling the pecans - they are experts, in perfect rhythm.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Katy! Come on in here and help. Bring Bobby.

CATHERINE and BOBBY sit at the table as well.

BOBBY

I'm happy to help again, but--

JANELLE

No no, Bobby, just-- sit there and keep us company.

BOBBY

Definitely.

JANELLE

Mama, Katy had a track meet today.

JUNE

Oh you did?

JANELLE
She won a bunch of stuff.

CATHERINE
There was a scout there too.

JUNE JANELLE
Oh there was? For a school? You didn't tell me that.

CATHERINE
Yeah, this one was from Hope College.

JANELLE
That's a great school.
(to JUNE)
She's really so good.

BOBBY
Like, super fast. She's so much faster than me. We totally
raced this one time and she like, left me in her dust. I was
legitimately running so fast I thought I was going to face
plant at any second, and she was like-- So fast.

*CATHERINE blushes. The kitchen door SLAMS shut behind
WAYNE and SLICE. JANELLE jolts.*

JANELLE
Hot damn.

JUNE
The boys have arrived!

*WAYNE leans against the kitchen counter, bottle of
Coors in hand. SLICE sits at the table, sipping on a
can of Coke. BOBBY stares at SLICE.*

JANELLE
(to SLICE)
We were just talking about Catherine's track-- she's very
good.

SLICE
That's good.
(he grins)
I was real fast in my day too. It's in the family, you know?

CATHERINE
Mm-hmm.

SLICE notices BOBBY'S staring.

SLICE
I got something on my face, kid?

BOBBY

Oh, sorry. I was just-- um. So you're called "Slice" now?
That's like, so cool.

SLICE grins.

SLICE

It's cooler how I got the name.

BOBBY

How'd you get the name.

WAYNE

You know, Bobby, we should give the guy some space--

SLICE

I'm all good, man.

(to BOBBY)

How'd you think?

BOBBY

Um, because you're like, good with a tomato and a kitchen
knife?

*The group laughs a bit (nervously maybe?). SLICE
grins.*

SLICE

That's good, kid. Nah, Cylus-- mix up the letters, you get
Slice.

The group thinks on this.

CATHERINE

Um, that's not actually right. That'd be Slucy. Or Slycu.
I mean, right?

*The group nods and vocally affirms Catherine's
assessment with a chorus of "yeah, yes, I mean she is
right."*

SLICE

Well, not to make blanket statements, but convicts ain't
exactly excelling in the spelling department.

(to JANELLE)

This ain't the whole party is it?

JANELLE

Hm?

JUNE

Oh! Eddie! Where's my baby boy?

SLICE

That's right, I thought you had a boy since I been gone.

JANELLE

Yes. That's Eddie. He was taking a nap but-- Katy, go and wake your brother, please.

CATHERINE gets up and marches off in a bit of a huff.

CATHERINE

(as she goes)

Friggin'-- this dude is always napping.

WAYNE assumes CATHERINE'S seat.

WAYNE

You have work?

SLICE

Oh yeah, part of my parole.

JUNE

He's working as a chef at a restaurant.

WAYNE

A chef, huh?

SLICE

Nah, just a line cook. Little dive off the 127. But, got a little coin in my pocket, making my own way. That ain't bad.

WAYNE

No, that's alright.

JANELLE

That's good. We're all just trying--

CATHERINE

(off stage, from upstairs)

Mom!

JANELLE

What?

JUNE

(throwing her pecans down)

My hands are hurting now.

CATHERINE

(off stage, from upstairs)

MOM!

JANELLE

WHAT?!

CATHERINE appears at the top of the stairs.

CATHERINE

Mom! He won't get out of bed.

(she marches back
downstairs)

I mean like, he's just being this little slug dude.

JANELLE pushes her chair back from the table and goes toward the stairs.

JANELLE

The universe is against this pie. It'll never get made.

JANELLE continues up the stairs.

CATHERINE

Dad. You totally stole my seat.

WAYNE

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't hear you call "seat check". I mean-- Did you call "seat check"?

BOBBY

Oh no, I don't think you did, babe.

WAYNE

Oh, well... I guess, rules are rules, right?

JUNE

What is a seat check?

CATHERINE

Dad, can you just like, sit in mom's seat so I can sit next to Bobby?

SLICE

When you get up from a seat, you can call "seat check" to save your seat and make sure nobody sits their ass in your seat.

WAYNE

Bobby and I like sitting next to each other-- right, Bobby?

JUNE

I never knew that. Do they do seat checks in the penitentiary?

BOBBY

Definitely.

SLICE

Seat check is a rule in all walks of life. But you don't get shanked for breaking / the rule in all walks, you know what I mean?

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Oh man, people get shanked for breaking seat check?

WAYNE
 (to Slice)
 Don't answer that.
 (to Bobby)
 Don't ask him about--

JANELLE
 (off stage, genuinely
 panicked, a shriek almost)
 WAYNE! Get up here! Get up here right now!

WAYNE gets up and moves with moderate urgency.

WAYNE
 (as he goes)
 Seat check.

*CATHERINE shoots her dad a look as he goes. Then she
 sits in the chair.*

JUNE
 My my my. So much commotion in this house. Is it always this
 chaotic?

BOBBY
 Definitely.

CATHERINE
 Shut up.

BOBBY
 I love it!

JANELLE races down the steps.

JANELLE
 (grabbing her purse and
 keys from the hook near
 the door)
 Mama, get packed up in the car, we're taking Eddie to the ER.

JANELLE charges out the front door leaving it ajar.

CATHERINE
 (getting up)
 Mom?

JUNE
 (getting up and hurrying
 toward the door)
 What's going on, hun?

WAYNE, looking ghostly white, charges down the steps, the form of a boy, wrapped in a blanket, cradled in his arms.

CATHERINE

Daddy?

WAYNE

(as he goes out the door)

Bobby, you need to move your car right fucking now.

BOBBY gets up and sprints out the door.

SLICE

(helping JUNE out the door)

Come on, Auntie. Let's hustle.

JUNE

But-- should I grab the packages?

SLICE

We get em later.

SLICE and JUNE disappear through the door. The sound of cars starting and pulling away can be heard from outside. CATHERINE stands alone in the middle of the living room. It takes a few moments for all the cars to be out of earshot. CATHERINE sits on the couch. She spots the small giftbag from SLICE - she leans over, opens it, and pulls out a new digital camera.

LIGHTS OUT

THE CANDIDATE MONOLOGUE

In an area downstage (or wherever it makes sense), THE CANDIDATE speaks to the audience - an unseen rally.

(*important casting note: this role should be cast in such a way as to feel like an outsider from the family, ie if the Jackson family is white, maybe The Candidate is a Latinx woman, or if the Jackson family is Latinx, the Candidate may be a Muslim man, etc. Mix it up!)

THE CANDIDATE

When I announced my candidacy for the United States Senate, I made a promise the good people of the state of Michigan: A promise to represent you, to put your needs first, ahead of the needs of special interest groups, lobbyists, and the career politicians who have been making backroom deals at great expense of their constituents.

Do you know that members of Congress receive *lifetime benefits*, regardless of the length of their service? How many in this room can say they receive the same from their employers? It sure looks like Congress does a fantastic job of taking care their self interests, doesn't it? I gotta say, I am one-hundred-percent jealous of the healthcare package that Congress receives-- for life, mind you-- and paid for by you. When did the people meant to serve you, start serving only themselves? It is *way past time* that we shift this dynamic of inequality - away from those who care for little more than how to line their own pockets, and *back to families like yours*. It is families like yours-- working families who want little more than the few simple assurances you promised: The promise of *life* - that you may be safe and secure in the knowledge that as a citizen of this great nation, you may have *quality* in the living of your life. That you will be not be denied the care you *need*, the medication you *need*, or the surgery you *need*, because of a broken healthcare system-- And that you may have access to these services and resources without it driving families like yours into financial ruin. The promise of *Liberty*. That you may walk the streets as a law abiding citizen, without the fear that you might be targeted by those meant to protect you, simply because your skin is the wrong color for the neighborhood. And the promise of the Pursuit of Happiness. Which is afforded to us all. It means something else though, doesn't it? And we all pursue it in different ways, don't we? As is our right. Each of us. I am here, committed to upholding the promise made to you. Committed to upholding our end of the bargain. Committed to shaping a future that is bright for *all* Americans, and not just those born into privilege.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE TWO

Late night. CATHERINE sits on the couch, curled in a blanket. The TV flickers in the darkness. In the kitchen, BOBBY talks on his cellphone...

BOBBY

(quietly, into the phone)

Um, we don't know yet... I guess they're doing tests or whatever... Yeah, ma. I know. I just kinda feel like, um, I don't know, like maybe I should stay a bit? 'Til they get back?...I'll have time to get-- I know I can't fail the class, but-- I won't stay the night, just like, a little longer. She's like, crazy worried...Okay, thanks. Love you too.

He hangs up and looks into the living room. CATHERINE doesn't acknowledge his entrance.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

So, um, I can stay for a bit longer.

CATHERINE wordlessly scoots over and leans forward - he sits into the space and she tucks in under his arm. They sit and watch TV for a few.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Do you want me to text your parents for you?

CATHERINE shakes her head "no."

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Okay, cool.

(beat)

Are you doing okay? You're kinda quiet.

CATHERINE

I'm fine. He's *fine*. I know he's fine, that's why I'm not worried or anything. Like, the little spaz probably got some infection and it's all Much Ado About Nothing--

BOBBY

What?

CATHERINE

It's a play. And a saying. You should study more.

BOBBY

Cool. You're probably right. About your brother.

CATHERINE

I know I am so let's stop talking about it.

BOBBY

Definitely. And about studying. I should do that more. You're like, so smart. It's sexy.

CATHERINE

Like, to be honest? I'm actually annoyed. As if everybody's world doesn't revolve around him enough. He does this, you know? Like, he's always faking being sick or whatever to get out of school. He's a total drama queen. So now he'll use this forever or whatever. I can totally see it and it's annoying so let's stop talking about because talking about just feeds the beast, you know?

BOBBY

Um, yeah. Sure.

CATHERINE reaches over and grabs the camera off the coffee table - it's actually a pretty nice camera.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Where'd you get this?

CATHERINE

My mom's cousin, I guess?

BOBBY

This looks pretty legit.

CATHERINE

I know, right? Here, take a picture with me.

BOBBY

What kind of picture?

CATHERINE

Sweet. To mark the night. The night we were alone and you were a gentleman and didn't make a move and just held me while we watched Stranger Things.

She kisses him - it's sweet, in the way only youth and inexperience can make a kiss sweet.

BOBBY

I can do that.

CATHERINE holds the camera out in front of them and snaps a photo.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE THREE

JULY. The sound of rain drumming against the house underscores the scene. JANELLE is wearing a restaurant uniform, tending to something on the stove, her phone tucked between her shoulder and her ear. She struggles to manage the task at the stove with the phone - she quickly switches the phone to speaker and sets it on the counter beside the stove.

From the phone, terrible on-hold music plays with the intermittent message: "Thank you for calling Trinity Care Insurance. All of our operators are currently assisting other members. Your call is important to us. Please stay on the line."

JANELLE grabs for the side of the pot and burns the shit of her hand--

JANELLE

Ow! Son of a bitch!

She grabs a washcloth and clutches it around her hand.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Goddamnit.

From upstairs, the sound of a bell RINGING. JANELLE stops and looks up for a moment - did she hear a bell? It rings again. JANELLE rushes through the living room and up the stairs. She is gone for a moment - the phone continues the on-hold music and message.

The front door opens and in walks JUNE - she shakes out an umbrella and wipes her feet on the mat.

JUNE

Jenny, baby?

No answer. JUNE takes off her coat and hangs it on the rack. JUNE bustles through the living room, quickly tidying up the coffee table and collecting odd items strewn about the room.

She works her way into the kitchen and listens to the on-hold message for a moment while she tends to the pot on the stove.

JANELLE comes down the stairs, only now she wears a Krogers grocery store uniform. She quickly tucks in the shirt as she scrambles to the kitchen.

JANELLE

(startled)

Chirst! Mom. You scared the hell out of me.

JUNE

(re. The phone)

Is it a rule with these companies? I bet there's some person getting extreme pleasure knowing how many people are dragged along for hours on-hold.

JANELLE

I've been on hold for about 40 minutes.

JUNE

You see? Shameful. I had to call the internet company and they were so rude. / Kept me on hold, then asked me if it was turned on. Can you believe that? As if I'm completely useless. But then, you'll never believe this-- It was turned off. I felt like a real bonehead. But then they just seemed so smug. I might change providers, just to spite them, you know?

JANELLE

I really just need to speak to them before I have to leave for work. You'd think an hour would be enough time for a simple call, but...

(she waits for her mother
to finish)

That must have been really challenging, mom.

JUNE

I suppose I must endure.

JANELLE hurriedly throws her necessities in her purse.

JUNE (CONT'D)

You're going already?

JANELLE

Well, my shift starts in a half an hour. Mom, here's the note with Eddie's medication instructions. I've labelled everything and laid it out for you on the bathroom counter upstairs. There's a pot next to his bed so you'll have to empty that if he throws up. If he has a seizure you'll have to drive him to the ER--

JUNE

He's having seizures?

JANELLE

No, not really, but it can happen so we have to look out for it.

JUNE

Well, I'll just call 9-1-1--

JANELLE

NO. No. You can't-- We can't-- Just drive him, alright?

(re. The song on the phone)

Christ! I hate this song! If they're going to keep me on hold this entire time they could at least make it a playlist or something. Where are my keys?

JUNE

You're asking me?

Suddenly, a bell rings from upstairs.

JANELLE

(checking her watch)

Shit. Shit. Okay.

JUNE

Is that--?

JANELLE

Yes, I'll just take care of this one.

(She hurries up the stairs.)

Will you turn off the burner on that stew, please?

JANELLE disappears up the stairs. JUNE goes to the stove and turns off the burner. She tastes the stew-- adds some salt.

Suddenly, a voice sounds off from the phone.

OPERATOR

(from the phone)

Good evening, thank you for holding. May I have your name and subscriber ID, please?

JUNE silently panics. She picks up the phone, fumbling with it.

JUNE

(shouting at the phone)

Uhhhh-- Hello? Hello?

OPERATOR

Um, Hi, hello, ma'am. I just need--

JUNE

(shouting)

This isn't my phone, let me get my daughter.

OPERATOR

I'm having a little trouble / hearing you, if I'm on speaker maybe you can--

JUNE

I'm sorry just one moment!

JUNE fumbles with the phone and then the line cuts off.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Oh dear God. Oh no.

JANELLE returns, stepping quickly down the stairs - JUNE is frozen with dread.

JANELLE

(crossing through the living room)

This stuff they have him on is brutal. I keep asking if there's something-- I don't know, something a little more gentle, you know? He's miserable and there's nothing for me to--

JANELLE stops suddenly, a silent heaving sob overcoming her. She crumples to the floor, squatting with her hands covering her face.

JUNE
(crossing to JANELLE)

Oh babygirl.

JUNE hugs JANELLE for a moment before JANELLE abruptly breaks out of the hug - she sucks back the well of emotion and steels herself.

JANELLE
I'm just tired.

JUNE
Can you maybe split your work day a little differently? Do you have to go back to back like this?

JANELLE
That's what it means to have a second job. The time has to come from somewhere.

JUNE
Maybe you could go back to school.

JANELLE
Jesus, mom. I don't have the time, energy, or money for that.

JANELLE grabs her phone and suddenly realizes it's off.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Mom...?

JUNE
Oh I'm so sorry babygirl. They answered when you went up stairs and my fat thumbs must have accidentally--

JANELLE
Jesus Christ, Mom! Goddammit!

JUNE
Janelle!

JANELLE
Now I have to wait until tomorrow.

JUNE
Well, is that so--

JANELLE
Yes. He has an appointment tomorrow and our insurance is denying coverage for his treatment. Goddammit!

JUNE
They...? They can't do that!

JANELLE
Yes, they can.

JUNE
He's a child.

JANELLE
Apparently that doesn't matter--

JUNE
Well he needs his treatment.

JANELLE
I know that! You don't think I know that? I *know that!*

Beat. JANELLE stands on the other side of the room, seething. JUNE fidgets.

JUNE
I can help. I don't have much. But I can help.

JANELLE
We're not taking your money, mom.

JUNE
Or you could move into the house.

JANELLE
Fat chance of convincing Wayne to do that.

JUNE
I'm just saying, I want to help. If babyboy needs help, gosh darn, I'm gonna help. That's all there is to it.

JANELLE
(beat)
I don't know. Let me just see what we can do.

JUNE
I'll write a letter to the senator. And the news stations. It's immoral what they're doing.

JANELLE
(nodding)
Okay, mom. Thanks for watching Eddie. I have to go.

JANELLE quickly gathers her things. She rushes to the backdoor then stops, looking down at her hand.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
I broke a nail...

She fights it back and steps out the door. JUNE listens as the car coughs to a start and pulls away. She shuffles over to the stove and puts the kettle on.

The bell rings from upstairs. JUNE looks up, then shuffles over to the stairs. The front door opens and CATHERINE emerges from the rain in her running gear - hair and jacket soaked. She hangs up her jacket.

JUNE

Oh, Katybaby. I thought you were--

CATHERINE

Bobby picked up an extra shift. He's saving for KVCC next year, so...

JUNE

Well, I'll be down in a minute. You get dry before you catch your death of cold.

JUNE holds the railing as she climbs slowly up the stairs-- the bell rings again.

CATHERINE plops onto the couch for a moment while she takes off her running shoes and socks. She crosses to the small table situated on the far wall near the kitchen and retrieves the camera. She unplugs it and turns it on.

CATHERINE drifts into the kitchen and opens the fridge - she is distinctly dissatisfied with the contents as she closes it once more. She checks the stove and wrinkles her nose at the stew.

JUNE returns wiping down her front with a towel. She joins CATHERINE in the kitchen, handing her a second towel.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I thought you'd better dry off. Are you hungry?

CATHERINE

(wearing the towel over her shoulders)

I'll eat something later. Besides, stew is like, a terrible choice for summer.

JUNE

Oh I don't know. It is raining. You were running in this weather?

CATHERINE sets her camera on the table, scrolling through the photos. JUNE retrieves two bowls from the cupboard and dishes out some stew.

CATHERINE

I gotta train for Cross Country. It starts up in like, no time. Did he puke on you?

JUNE

A little throw up never hurt anybody.

CATHERINE

Except for the person throwing up.

JUNE

I suppose you're right. Eat up.

CATHERINE

But--

JUNE

(suddenly stern)

Eat. This is what your mama made for you and she's got a heapful on her mind without worrying about whether or not you're eating. So eat, Katybaby.

CATHERINE looks momentarily shocked at the overt guilt trip, then quietly obliges, taking a small bite of the stew.

CATHERINE

...Is he okay?

JUNE

I think he might sleep now. I hope he does.

CATHERINE picks up the camera and aims it at JUNE. She snaps a photo.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Did you just...?

CATHERINE

Yeppers. You looked really, um, thoughtful? That stew must be riveting.

JUNE

You should warn a woman before taking her picture. I'm a mess today. I can never tame this hair when it's raining. It's completely out of control.

CATHERINE

If I warned you it wouldn't be candid.

JUNE

What's so special about candid?

CATHERINE

Candid captures you how you really are, not like, how you want people to see you. I think that's pretty cool. Look--

CATHERINE holds out the camera to show JUNE the picture.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

See how you're sort of absently picking at your hair. And you're frowning a little bit, like you're really thinking about something important, and you have these lines--

JUNE

(covering her face)

My wrinkles?

CATHERINE

Yeah, but in this light, they make you look even more like...um, I don't know the word for it.

JUNE

What word?

CATHERINE

For like, thoughtful. But not thoughtful.

JUNE

Pensive.

CATHERINE

Totally. You look pensive. And then there's the steam coming off the stew and-- I don't know. I just like it.

JUNE

Well, you say pensive, I say old. I forget what an old lady I am until somebody shoves a picture in my face that reminds me I'm one step away from decrepit.

CATHERINE

I don't know. You've always just kinda been, grandma, you know?

JUNE

(assessing)

How are you, Katy?

CATHERINE takes a mouthful of stew and shrugs.

JUNE (CONT'D)

So you and that boy are still getting on well?

CATHERINE nods, chewing.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Well. He needs a haircut.

They eat in silence for a moment.

CATHERINE

Mom and Dad are totally distracted right now. Like, I get it, but I may as well be invisible. I don't mean to be *whatever* about it, I just kind of feel like I'll be going to school soon and--

The bell rings from upstairs. JUNE abruptly gets up and shuffles toward the stairs. CATHERINE watches JUNE go, then takes out her camera and snaps a photo of the empty chair and the steaming stew.

LIGHTS OUT

CATHERINE MONOLOGUE

In an area downstage (or wherever it makes sense), CATHERINE turns on the camera and speaks.

CATHERINE

Hi, Eddie. So, I'm working on this little surprise for you. I know you're missing a bunch of stuff right now with all your treatments-- which, you're like, a total friggin' rockstar lil bro. I've decided that I'll keep a record for you. When this all blows over you can look back and kind of see a full picture of it, you know? But like, not to worry yourself over that now, cuz... you know, you've got bigger fish to fry or whatever. Mom's cousin, Cylus-- but he goes by the name *Slice* now which Bobby thinks is amazing and I think it pretty lame-- Anyway, mom's cousin *Slice* got this camera for us cuz he totally stole the one dad got the family like, a super long time ago. Anyway, what am I talking about? *Slice* got us this camera so I'm gonna use it to...do stuff like this!

(beat)

The house feels super empty lately. Mom and dad are working a friggin' ton so they're not here, or they're carting you around to your appointments and stuff. So I basically just train, hang out with Bobby, and eat an unreal amount of ramen which is-- the sodium content is no joke with that stuff and I'm pretty sure it's killing me, but whatever. I *did* learn to make the perfect omelet though, so I'll make one for you sometime soon. I'll make yours with ham and cheese cuz it'll be your fav.

(beat)

Um, I kind of thought my summer going into senior year would be a bit more, um...more? My friends are all basically already celebrating the end of high school and I'm like, um, dudes, we still have a year of pretty legitimate schooling before we're done, you know? Also, celebrating in general right now just feels... I don't know?

(beat)

Even though I totally know you're going to be fine, like, I know you'll be good cuz the doctors are optimistic and all that stuff-- but... Sometimes I can't help but imagine if like, you're not okay?

(small beat)

I'm gonna be a better sister to you, okay? You're so much younger than me and I pretty much never forgave you for being like, born-- not in a, whatever way, just-- I was an only child for a long time and then I had to share the spotlight with you and... I'm gonna be better, okay? Like, I'm gonna take you out to do stuff, like get ice cream or go to the movies, or like, a baseball game or something. Cuz, um, I love you. You know? I really love you, Eddie.

(beat)

So keep on keeping on, lil' bro.

SCENE FOUR

SEPTEMBER. WAYNE has the massive TV unplugged and set on the floor near the front door. BOBBY speaks on the phone. SLICE sits in the recliner sipping a soda and chewing a toothpick.

WAYNE

So, it's practically new-- bought it barely two years ago. / No problems with it. It has that 4K that's all the rage. Great for watching the game and whatnot. Its got all the hookups for the technology bits and pieces-- we don't use them but they're there.

BOBBY

(listening and relaying into the phone)
Yeah, it's basically a new TV. Works perfectly. 4K capable, excellent choice for basically anything. It has built in access to like, Netflix, and Youtube, and all the other sites and stuff.

BOBBY listens to the voice on the other line.

SLICE

(mostly to himself while he listens to the description)

Shit. That's some future TV shit right there. Be building TVs like this for some NASA type shit.

BOBBY
(nodding, then...)
He wants to know how much...

WAYNE
Well, we paid about seventeen hundred dollars for it, on sale, so...

SLICE
(mostly to himself)
Holy hell. Space TV right there.

BOBBY
(into the phone)
It's like a two-thousand dollar piece of awesome.

WAYNE
I figure we can part with it for fourteen-hundred flat

BOBBY
(into the phone)
But he'll sell it to you for fourteen-hundred flat.

WAYNE shuffles somewhat uncomfortably while BOBBY listens to the person on the phone.

SLICE
(mostly to himself)
That's a steal right there. You can believe that right there - When I tell you it's a steal, it is a motherfuckin' steal. Shit.

From upstairs, CATHERINE, comes carrying a much smaller and less impressive TV down into the living room. She sets it down at the bottom of the stairs.

CATHERINE
Thanks for the help, fellas.

No one responds to CATHERINE.

BOBBY
(listening, then...)
Um... He can't pay that much for it.

SLICE
(loudly)
Bullshit he can't pay that much!

WAYNE
What does the boy have in mind to pay?

BOBBY
 (into the phone)
 Um, how much were you thinking?

BOBBY listens. CATHERINE drifts to the couch and takes a seat.

SLICE
 (to WAYNE)
 You better not sell this piece of machinery for less than twelve-hundred. It's *sinful*.

CATHERINE
 It's a nice TV.

WAYNE
 We'll see...

BOBBY breaks away, turning his back to the group--

BOBBY
 (into the phone, hushed.)
 Dude, that's like, unreasonable... No, it's like, *insulting*, bro.

(even more hushed)
 He really needs to sell this thing... for his kid... Yeah, he's sick...

WAYNE
 What's he say?

BOBBY shakes his head at WAYNE.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
 Come on now, son. What's the boy offering?

BOBBY drops the phone by his side.

BOBBY
 He says he can't pay more than four hundred for it...

WAYNE sinks into himself for a moment.

SLICE
 (rising from his chair)
 This is some *bull-fucking-shit* right here. What the-- who does little punk this he is? / Selling it that low-- Wayne, you may as well be giving it away at that price. You gonna let this little punk push you around.

CATHERINE
 (rising from the couch)
 Like *totally*-- I mean, I'm not normally agreeing with-- but I legit agree with Cousin Slice. This dude sounds like a punk.

WAYNE
Okay okay okay-- I'm thinking...

BOBBY
(into the phone)
Hold on, dude...

WAYNE
Can he do seven-hundred?

SLICE
NO! No! That is-- Wayne, this
little punk is gonna make you
out to be a sucker. Lemme
speak with this little shit--

CATHERINE
What? No!
(to BOBBY)
Give Cousin Slice the phone
so he can--

WAYNE
(to CATHERINE and SLICE)
Shut it! Both of you.
(to BOBBY)
Ask him.

BOBBY
(into the phone)
He can bring the price down to seven-hundred...
(BOBBY listens, then he
shoulders seem to slump.
Finally, to WAYNE...)
Um. He says he can't go over four-hundred right now cuz he
just started at U of M, so he's basically strapped...

SLICE
Shit. U of M? And that fucker don't got the cash?

BOBBY
(to WAYNE and CATHERINE)
I'm just gonna tell him it's off-- Sorry, Mr. Jackson-- Katy-
- I just, sorry, I thought it'd be--

WAYNE
No. Don't--

SLICE
Wayne.

CATHERINE
Daddy.

WAYNE
I'll do it. Four-hundred.
(to SLICE)
We need the money, Cy.

*SLICE and CATHERINE sink back into their respective
seats, dumbfounded.*

WAYNE (CONT'D)
(to BOBBY)
Tell him I'll do it.

BOBBY looks at WAYNE - visibly pained.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Tell him, son.

BOBBY
Okay... Just, give me a second.

BOBBY quickly takes the call outside, leaving WAYNE, CATHERINE, and SLICE alone.

CATHERINE
Dad--

WAYNE
It ain't up to you.

CATHERINE
But, if you let me put it online maybe--

WAYNE
We don't got time for that. We need that money. We need it now.

CATHERINE
But there are sites that could like--

WAYNE
I said enough! That's enough! It ain't your call so keep your opinion to yourself. When you got a family, and a house, and kids of your own, you can do anything you damn well please. But so long as I'm the man at the head of this family, you don't get a say. Understand?

*CATHERINE turns away from WAYNE - whatever is churned up in her at hearing this, she bites it back.
Silence.*

SLICE
Look... Wainwright--

WAYNE
And the same goes to you. *Slice.*

Beat. SLICE nods and rises from his chair.

SLICE
(to CATHERINE)
You wanna pop or something?

CATHERINE shakes her head, no.

SLICE (CONT'D)

(to WAYNE)

Can I get you a beer?

WAYNE

I'll be back there in a minute and get it myself.

SLICE nods as he slips through the kitchen and out the backdoor.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

(Beat.)

Katy, I didn't mean--

CATHERINE

(still not looking at him)

It doesn't matter. I don't care.

Silence. Finally, BOBBY returns through the front door - a slight bounce in his step.

BOBBY

Well, Mr. Jackson, I have some totally awesome news. So I talked to the guy and I know he's got more bank than he's letting on, you know? So I talked to him about like, what a good deal you were offering and everything and that he shouldn't be like, um, totally cheap or whatever. There was a fair amount of back and forth, as you can probably guess, and well... I talked him into one-thousand flat.

WAYNE lets this settle in. CATHERINE stares at BOBBY.

WAYNE

You did that, huh?

BOBBY

Um, definitely. Here.

(BOBBY hands WAYNE one-thousand dollars worth of assorted bills.)

I'm gonna deliver the TV to him this weekend because I gotta go out there anyway to install this pool with my dad-- So, yeah, I'll be there anyway or whatever and he'll just reimburse me.

WAYNE holds his hand out to BOBBY-- BOBBY takes it. WAYNE grips BOBBY'S hand for a long moment, not shaking it really, just grasping it there between them-- He looks him in the eyes, as if seeing him for the first time.

WAYNE
 (breaking away)
 You did good, son. You did--
 (something catches in him)
 You did good.

WAYNE retreats toward the backdoor, pausing briefly near CATHERINE who ignores him. He exits.

CATHERINE
 (pointedly)
 What did you do?

BOBBY
 Nothing, babe. I just like, talked to him or whatever, so--

CATHERINE
 That's bullshit. I was with you at that flea market when you were practically offering to pay *more* than what they were asking. What did you do?

BOBBY
 (shrugs)
 Nothing. It doesn't matter.

CATHERINE
 Yes. It does.

BOBBY
 Um. Look, don't tell your dad. It was super cool him thinking I negotiated like a friggin' boss, you know?

CATHERINE
 Bobby... You were *saving* that money. For like, *school*.

BOBBY shrugs it off.

BOBBY
 It's for your little bro...

Beat. CATHERINE grabs her camera from the coffee table and snaps a photo of BOBBY.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
 What was that for?

CATHERINE
 'Cause I want to remember the moment I knew I loved you.

BOBBY
 For real?

CATHERINE
 Totally.

BOBBY

Me too.

CATHERINE goes to BOBBY. They kiss.

LIGHTS OUT

SLICE MONOLOGUE

Lights up on the monologue area. SLICE turns on the camera and speaks...

SLICE

I'mma break it down for you, little man-- this what my bunkie told me when I did my first stretch-- There only be two types of people: motherfuckers and bitches-- don't tell your mom I swore in this, she kill me, man, no joke-- two types of people: motherfuckers are the ones who can take the hits and keep on their feet, like they're superheroes, right? Or supervillains, too, you know? You gotta look out for those guys, man, they the scary motherfuckers. Unstoppable. They got that look in their eyes that says, "What else you got, bitch?" See a motherfucker can be mean, or not, but the bottom line is this: you don't mess with a motherfucker. It's like, I know you dig Batman-- That dude is a motherfucker. Don't fuck with a motherfucker. 'Cause even if you kill a motherfucker, they don't go down easy, and they do it with some dignity. Now there's the other types of people, right? Bitches. Bitches got nothing to do with gender, so don't think on it like that. Bitches ain't got no constitution, you feel me? Like, bitches are gonna puss' out on fights, or they're gonna Check In when the heat is on 'em. It's a broad term, covers all manner of sinful shit-- Like, not keeping your word, or snitching, or starting shit where it don't need to be startin'. At the heart of a bitch is a fear that paralyzes.

(beat)

I look at you... I see a motherfucker of the highest order. Ain't nothing stopping you. I see you taking your hits, some hard hits, but I see you shake them off like it ain't shit. You got that look in your eyes that says, "what else you got, bitch?" I recognize a motherfucker when I see one so that's hows I know...

(beat)

I'mma tell you a secret though. I ain't a motherfucker. I thought I was. Thought I was ice, you know? I--

(small beat)

I was trying to get in the Car with these dudes straight outta Detroit, but when they don't know you, shit... There was this one dude kept ducking the Detroit Car 'cuz he had a loud mouth, Dry Snitched on one of them for putting K2 on the line-- shit brought a whole Heat Wave on the Car. Dude had mouth, that's for sure. And eyes, right?

He'd see them coming a mile away and just duck out. See? That's a bitch right there. So this bitch caused a serious disruption to the Car's operation. Something had to be done. No way around it. But they needed somebody who wasn't riding yet.

(beat)

...Got that bitch Three Knee Deep. Never saw it coming. Never even saw my face. Now I was a motherfucker, right?

(beat)

A couple years later, I'm in the Detroit Car and we're running a Pay to Stay on this guy doing a dime for some white collar shit. Every week I'd roll up on him and if didn't pay, I'd start to... He never budged. Just took it. Every time. He'd look me in the eyes like, "what else you got, bitch?" The harder I hit, the more he made me a bitch. That got to me. Like a bug in my mind. Burrowed deep in there at night and made me question a lot things. So I got out the Car. Started taken them classes, and learning shit-- Straight and narrow...

(beat)

I'm trying to be a real motherfucker now. Like you. Like a little man who got more stones at nine than Slice ever had in that Car... You keep fighting, and I'll keep trying to learn how you do it. Cool?

SCENE FIVE

Late night. All the lights are off but the light over the stove and the light over the kitchen table. There are many beer bottles gathered to one side of the sink. Willie Nelson plays softly over the radio (Yesterday's Wine maybe? Feel it out, see what works...)

JANELLE sits at the table, a pile of envelopes, bills, and general mayhem in the form of paper products. She wears CVS reading glasses, calculator to one side, pen and paper to the other.

The screen door swings open as WAYNE steps in--

JANELLE

Don't let it--

WAYNE catches the door before it slams shut. He takes a long pull from his beer and settles into the chair nearest JANELLE.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Here, take a look at these.

JANELLE hands WAYNE a sizable stack of bills.

WAYNE

What is this? I'm no good with numbers.

JANELLE

Which ones do you want us to skip this month? We can't pay them all.

WAYNE reaches over and takes JANELLE'S reading glasses. He starts to look at the bills.

WAYNE

What's this? I paid this.

JANELLE

That was last month.

WAYNE

I thought it was quarterly.

JANELLE

It is. We were late on the last one. We paid the red notice.

WAYNE

(setting it aside)

Well, we'll wait on this one then.

JANELLE

(calculating)

Okay... That still leaves six-hundred-forty-three dollars and twenty-six cents.

WAYNE

Till what?

JANELLE

Until we're out of the red this month.

WAYNE

Shit.

(he drinks)

Shit. Did you count your next paycheck?

JANELLE

Of course I did, and it's already been spent-- I mean, there's a chance I could make more with tips but if I'm averaging--

WAYNE

You could also make less--

JANELLE

That's right, yes, that may be true. And what of it? What do you want me to do?

WAYNE

Nothing. You don't have to do nothing. What about the credit cards?

JANELLE

Maxed.

WAYNE

The new one?

JANELLE

Maxed.

WAYNE lumbers over to the fridge, opening it.

WAYNE

Sign up for another and transfer the balance of our oldest and then--

JANELLE

I tried that already. They won't do it no more.

WAYNE

Well, shit...

*(Removing a package of
cheese)*

We got any crackers?

JANELLE

No. You can't eat that cheese neither-- it's for the casserole on Thursday.

WAYNE tosses the cheese back in the fridge and slams it shut.

WAYNE

Fine.

JANELLE

Quit pouting.

WAYNE

I'm hungry-- Is there anything in this house that I can eat?

JANELLE

Since you're asking-- No. We gotta tighten our belts around here, and that means no more grazing--

WAYNE

I'm not *grazing*. / I'm *hungry*. Since when can't we set aside an extra buck-fifty for a goddamn bag of chips?

JANELLE

We could both stand to lose a few pounds so I think you can go without-- Since when? Since *when*? Since our son--

WAYNE

I know about Eddie, / you don't gotta come at me about that like I don't already know the goddamn whole of it--

JANELLE

Then don't ask me such stupid questions, we all gotta sacrifice here, every one of us.

WAYNE

Where's my TV? / Have you seen it around here lately? Because I could of sworn some little asshole *bought* my TV. That I sold it because we needed the money.

JANELLE

Oh, I really do hate it when you get like this about-- We paid too much for that TV to begin and I told you that but you just gotta have all your toys.

WAYNE slams the last of his beer.

WAYNE

We didn't know Eddie was sick when I bought that TV, so don't--

JANELLE

But we weren't taking him into the doctor neither.

WAYNE

We took him in--

JANELLE

He had been acting tired for months. For *months*.

WAYNE

He was staying up late playing video games all the time--

JANELLE

Are you *dense*? What's the matter with you? We're way past explaining it away now. He didn't go to the doctor earlier because you didn't want to pay for it.

Tense beat.

WAYNE

Well, I'm paying for it now, huh?

JANELLE

No. You're not. *Eddie* is. He's-- Can you pull your head out of your own ass for a minute? This ain't about you.

You think we're struggling now? What do you think is gonna happen when they need to admit him someday?

CATHERINE tiptoes down the stairs in her pajamas.

WAYNE

That may not--

JANELLE

Yeah, it very while *might* and don't tell me it might not because you're not the one taking him in for his treatments, / and you're not the one who is watching this disease beating the hell outta Eddie in that clinic.

WAYNE

No, I'm one the one working overtime and picking up extra shifts on other sites, and nearly breaking my back trying to hold us up-- I ain't had a day off in over two months and I'll be back at it tomorrow by five AM!

They notice CATHERINE standing in the opening to the kitchen. Beat.

JANELLE

What are you doing up?

CATHERINE

Um, you guys are loud.

WAYNE deposits his empty beer bottle with the others.

WAYNE

I need to get some sleep. Early morning.

WAYNE is about to go when--

CATHERINE

I could get a job. To help.

Her parents look at her, somewhat dumbfounded.

JANELLE

Not during track season.

CATHERINE

It's just cross country. I've already had plenty of scholarship offers for next year, I can go easier on training this season. I'll just like, pick the best scholarship from what's already there. I can work a couple of shifts a week or something. Or nights maybe. Could you get me a job at Kroger?

JANELLE and WAYNE look to one another.

JANELLE

I can check.

WAYNE

(to CATHERINE)

We can take care of it. We didn't mean to wake you or worry you or what have you. We can do it ourselves.

CATHERINE

You don't have to do that anymore. Like, try to protect me or whatever? I'm basically an adult anyway. And I have eyes and ears and I like, know what's happening. So, um, yeah.

(to JANELLE)

Check okay?

Silent acquiescence from the parents. CATHERINE grabs the camera from its charging station.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Get together. Just do it. Go on.

WAYNE reluctantly lumbers over to JANELLE and stands behind her.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Dad, put your hand on mom's shoulder.

He does.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Smile.

They do - it's forced and awkward.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Don't smile.

They stop smiling.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

That's good.

She snaps a photo.

LIGHTS OUT.

JANELLE MONOLOGUE

Light up on the monologue area. JANELLE turns on the camera and speaks...

JANELLE

The good news is I got you all signed up for baseball next summer. Coach Denton says he'll hold your spot on his roster so you and Andrew can still be on the same team. He even said-- you'll love this-- he said, 'Of course Eddie has a spot on our team next summer, he's the most promising pitcher on our team!' Coach Denton's company, that um, that-- oh shoot, I think he's in insurance? Anyway, they're springing for the new uniforms. You know the ones that button down the middle? Like they have in pro baseball? They're getting those ones! So. You have something to look forward to when you're feeling better.

(beat)

This is such a good idea right? Your sister really stepped up. You know, you *hope* your kids love each other-- or better that they *like* each other... The way you two go to war about the bathroom you'd think General Patton would roll through in a tank at any minute. So. I'm glad she's doing all this. Even got a job to um, to help out a little with the odds and ends.

(small beat)

We'll see if Catherine can convince your dad to do one these too.

(beat)

Do you remember the song I used to sing to you when you were just a little guy? The one my mom sang to me when I was little? Patsy Cline is one of mom's favorites and she used to sing it to me. Well, I thought I'd record it for you so you could listen to it the next time you have to do an overnight stay or something. Or not. So.

(beat. JANELLE starts to
sing the first notes--
they're off.)

Whew-- I should of warmed up. One more time...

(She sings Patsy Cline's
Always)

I'LL BE LOVING YOU ALWAYS
WITH A LOVE THAT'S TRUE ALWAYS
WHEN THE THINGS YOU PLAN
NEED A HELPING HAND,
I WILL UNDERSTAND,
ALWAYS, ALWAYS.
DAYS MAY NOT BE FAIR ALWAYS,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL BE THERE--

(it catches in her throat.
Long beat. Then,
weakly...)

ALWAYS--

(beat. She breathes.)

Um... We lived next to that highway, the I-75, right near Pontiac-- You won't remember this, you were pretty young, but-- We lived there until you were two and... I used to worry that maybe being near the highway like that was maybe dangerous for you. I mean, I could *smell* the exhaust sometimes, even with the window closed.

I'd hound your dad about moving us out of that area-- I mean we could hear the traffic just outside the window. All hours of the night. I'd lay there thinking about you breathing in all that...stuff. When your dad moved us all the way out here, I had my first good sleep since you'd been born. I knew you were safe here...

(beat)

Two years of breathing that stuff.

A bell rings from off stage.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

...Coming.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE SIX

OCTOBER. The house is mildly decorated for Halloween. Two oxygen tanks are propped against the wall by the front door. On the couch sits THE CANDIDATE.

THE CANDIDATE wears a perfectly tailored outfit, complete with American flag pin in a prominent location - this character is earnest, and honest. JUNE sits quietly on the recliner - she may be staring at THE CANDIDATE. JANELLE is bustling toward the kitchen.

JANELLE

(as she goes)

Can I get you something to drink? Tea? Coffee? Water? Pop?

THE CANDIDATE

You know, if you're offering, I'd love a cup of tea.

JANELLE

Of course! I'll put the kettle on and...you know, make some tea!

THE CANDIDATE

That sounds fantastic. Thank you.

JANELLE

Mom?

JUNE

Yes, please.

JANELLE

I'll just make a pot then.

JANELLE goes about putting a kettle on the stove.

JUNE
I've seen your commercials on the TV.

THE CANDIDATE
Is that right?

JUNE
Oh, yes. They keep popping up during Blue Bloods.

THE CANDIDATE
Well that's because we know you watch the show and we want that vote!

THE CANDIDATE laughs - it's an easy, genuine laugh.

JUNE
(suddenly serious)
Because of government surveillance?

THE CANDIDATE
No! Oh, god, no, not at all. I was-- I was joking. I-- I didn't know you watched that show.

JUNE lets out a sigh of relief. Then laughs.

JUNE
You never know. I read stuff, you know.

THE CANDIDATE
(diverting)
Can I tell you a secret? I love Blue Bloods.

JUNE
Oh, it is my favorite show. It's just riveting. I don't know how they come up with all those ideas for the show.

THE CANDIDATE
I believe they have an entire room of writers.

JUNE
They don't.

THE CANDIDATE
Yeah, I think that's how it's done. An entire team of writers all crammed into an office, mapping out each show and so forth.

JUNE
Really? I never knew that.

JANELLE reenters the room.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Jennybaby, did you know that Blue Bloods is written by an entire team of writers?

JANELLE

(to JUNE)

I think I did.

(to THE CANDIDATE)

First of all, I apologize for the um, the state / of the place. I wasn't expecting a, um, well, I wasn't expected a politician to walk to my door today so...

THE CANDIDATE

No, you have nothing to apologize for-- I should be apologizing to you. I did just drop in completely unannounced. And I hope that by the end of our conversation you can see me as more than a "politician."

JANELLE

Oh, I didn't mean to suggest--

THE CANDIDATE

No, please, I understand. I do. All most people see of us is campaigns, speeches, controversies, attack ads, kissing babies, yada yada yada.

JANELLE

Well, aren't you campaigning now?

THE CANDIDATE

Very observant. Election is about two weeks away and with a race this close, yeah... I need every vote I can get.

JANELLE

No offense, but... Well, I know most of the folks around here and who they usually go for-- I mean, you can see the signs stretching every which way along these roads...

THE CANDIDATE

So what am I doing here?

JANELLE

I think you must be very busy, and I don't think you'd like wasting time this close to things.

THE CANDIDATE

No, I don't want to waste time. So it's good fortune that this feels like an essential use of my time. I can't do my job only for the people who agree with me. I want to know the people, the lives of the people whom I may represent someday soon.

The kettle whistles.

JANELLE

(crossing to the kitchen.)

That I can get behind. We need a bit more of that I think.

THE CANDIDATE

May I give you a hand with the tea?

JANELLE

(from the kitchen)

Wouldn't be much of a hostess if I allowed that.

Beat. JUNE stares at THE CANDIDATE

JUNE

I'd expect there'd be a few more of your people with you. Some people around here can be downright hostile toward...um, folks aligned with your particular point of view.

THE CANDIDATE laughs.

THE CANDIDATE

Yes, I have experienced that. *Today*, in fact. I have a whole team of people in the cars outside. I just don't like them coming in with me. Of course they *hate* that they can't come in, but you know what? I don't care! How would that look do you think if I walked into this home with a photographer and assistants and my campaign manager and two bodyguards in tow?

JUNE

That'd be a commotion. No doubt about that.

JANELLE returns with the tea.

THE CANDIDATE

Thank you, Janelle. So, may I ask?

JANELLE

What?

THE CANDIDATE

If you're planning to vote this coming election?

JANELLE

Oh. Absolutely. Well, probably. Shit, you know, I-- to be completely frank with you, I haven't thought about the election once so...

THE CANDIDATE

I'm sure you're not alone in that. Have you heard much about my campaign?

JANELLE

Nothing useful. I mean-- I haven't heard anything other than, you know-- Like I said, you're not very popular around here.

THE CANDIDATE

No. You're absolutely right. My numbers are terrible in this district.

JANELLE

Exactly. So. That and me not having really paid much attention this time around means I don't know much of anything about you. Other than--

THE CANDIDATE

My unpopularity with your friends.

JANELLE

Right.

THE CANDIDATE

(laughing)

Thoroughly established by this point. What is it your friends say out of curiosity?

JUNE

That you're a spoiled brat from a rich neighborhood who has never had to work a day in your life and you think you're better than everybody because you went to a fancy college and that you're godless.

JANELLE

Mom.

THE CANDIDATE

Godless?

JUNE

(to JANELLE)

What?

(to THE CANDIDATE)

You asked didn't you?

THE CANDIDATE nods, then holds for a moment in silence, sipping the tea. Then gets up and crosses to the picture frames on the wall along the staircase.

THE CANDIDATE

You have kids?

JANELLE

Two.

THE CANDIDATE

How old?

JANELLE

Katy-- Catherine, she's seventeen now. And my baby, um, Eddie. He's nine. He'll be ten soon.

THE CANDIDATE

They're really lovely kids.

(re photo)

Track?

JANELLE

Oh yes. She's really something. Has scholarships all lined up and everything.

THE CANDIDATE

That's fantastic. Where is she thinking she'd like to go?

JANELLE

We're hoping she'll pick Hillsdale College or Hope because they're in state, but I think she's drawn to University of Kentucky because it's a division one school.

THE CANDIDATE

You must be so proud of her. Those are all good schools.

(to JUNE, lighthearted)

You might even say they're "fancy."

JANELLE shoots JUNE a look.

JUNE

(to THE CANDIDATE)

What? You asked!

THE CANDIDATE

It's okay. Do you mind if I take off the "politician" hat for second? The thing is, my dad had a lot of money. But, it was just me and my mom at the end of the day. He remarried and he wasn't in our lives after that. So when everybody talks about me going to a "fancy" school? I worked my ass off to get in to that school. And then? I worked two jobs-- dishwashing at Chilis and a barista at Starbucks-- while going to school full-time so I wouldn't go in to student debt, and still ended up with five-figures of it. People want to paint me as a lot of things, but I know where I came from. And I know how hard it was. And I know what it feels like to be living hand to mouth and have a flat tire become a serious impediment to my ability to pay my bills, get to work, and try to pay down my student debt. So... I don't know. Does that sound like somebody who is spoiled? Or hasn't done a single day of real work?

JANELLE shakes her head. Beat.

JUNE

For what it's worth, I didn't say I believed that, just saying what others said about you. You can believe that I'll correct them when they go slandering you now though.

THE CANDIDATE nods. *The front door bursts open and in walks WAYNE in a huff - he beelines for the rifle over the mantle.*

WAYNE

We got a whole heap of cars just waiting on our property and I don't like it one bit.

(grabs the rifle)

Since when did our driveway become a parking lot?!

WAYNE stops abruptly upon seeing THE CANDIDATE.

JANELLE

Wainwright, this is--

WAYNE

I know who it is. I seen the TV ads.

(beat)

Those your people out there?

THE CANDIDATE

They are indeed. That's a nice rifle there - what is that? Two-thirty-eight Winchester?

WAYNE nods.

THE CANDIDATE (CONT'D)

That's a classic right there.

WAYNE

(beat)

I wasn't gonna shoot anybody.

JANELLE

Jesus, Wayne.

THE CANDIDATE

I didn't imagine you would.

WAYNE

Just don't like a bunch of black cars parked on my property.

THE CANDIDATE

I completely understand that impulse.

WAYNE

So I thought I'd just hold the rifle. Let em know I mean it.

JANELLE

(to THE CANDIDATE)
Forgive him, he's an idiot.

THE CANDIDATE

That would have created quite the scene here.

WAYNE

(replaces the rifle on the wall)

I'm not an idiot-- this is my property!

THE CANDIDATE

Of course it is! You're absolutely right. I didn't mention it yet, but I love your view out this front window.

JANELLE

Thank you.

THE CANDIDATE

I was just here talking to your wife and mother about the upcoming--

WAYNE

Well I ain't voting for you, if that's what you're here about.

THE CANDIDATE

I was hoping we could discuss what you're looking for in a rep--

WAYNE

We're looking for somebody who isn't gonna be giving handouts to people who ain't working for it / cuz lord knows we're working for every penny we got and it ain't fair that there's a bunch of freeloaders living fat off the backs of others.

THE CANDIDATE

So you're interested in welfare reform?-- I understand you to be a hard working family--

WAYNE

And we're not voting for people who are going to be raising our taxes every year and taking food from our mouths.

THE CANDIDATE

I don't want to be presumptuous, Mr. Jackson, but I don't believe you'd be effected by any tax increases.

WAYNE

What's that supposed to mean?

THE CANDIDATE

I mean that most increases only effect those in the higher tax brackets.

WAYNE

Like you?

THE CANDIDATE

Yes. It would most likely effect me.

WAYNE

Bullshit you'll raise taxes on yourself. You all got your fancy way of worming out of it.

THE CANDIDATE

Some do. You can see my tax returns. They're public. I think of it as investing in my community. I want my neighbors to have good lives, I want their kids to have a good education no matter what neighborhood they're from, I want our water to be drinkable, and our air clean-- Is that so different from what you want?

WAYNE

You got no idea what I want.

THE CANDIDATE

Well, I'm going to be frank with you for a mintue-- you appear to be a man who appreciates a forthright style, am I right?

WAYNE

Sure.

THE CANDIDATE

Well, to be frank then-- I don't think you know what you want.

WAYNE

If we're being frank, then I think you can take your holier than thou attitude and shove it up your ass!

JANELLE

Wainwright! That's enough!

(to THE CANDIDATE)

I'm sorry-- I don't know what to say--

JUNE

We may not agree on some

issues but that was downright

un-Christian!

WAYNE

I got every right to speak my mind in my own goddamn home!

THE CANDIDATE

(beat)

You're right.

(to JANELLE and JUNE)

Thank you for your time.

THE CANDIDATE heads toward the door but stops upon seeing the oxygen tanks. Beat. Then...

THE CANDIDATE (CONT'D)

Is someone sick?

Beat.

JANELLE

Our son. He's very sick.

WAYNE

None of your goddamn business who's sick.

WAYNE shoots JANELLE a look.

THE CANDIDATE

I-- I'm so sorry to hear about your boy. That's every parent's nightmare.

JANELLE

...Thank you. It's been--

WAYNE

We're managing just fine.

JUNE

Bullshit you are-- Sorry.

(to THE CANDIDATE)

They're going broke.

WAYNE

First of all, you can butt the hell out of it, June. I don't need complete and total strangers knowing left from right about our personal business.

JANELLE

It's ain't no secret! Everybody knows and don't make a difference-- Our baby is still dying on us, / and turning away, and hiding, and pretending we're doing fine isn't helping anybody!

WAYNE

You shut your mouth about--

(re. THE CANDIDATE)

Can we not do this in front of--?! You can walk your ass outta here cuz it ain't none of your business and this is a family matter--

JUNE

Wainwright!

JANELLE

You're making an ass of yourself and embarrassing this family--

WAYNE smashes his fist against the picture on the wall - the frame cracks. Silence.

JANELLE stares death at WAYNE. Then...

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(to THE CANDIDATE)

I'm so sorry.

She exits. JUNE follows. WAYNE flexes his hand - it looks like he cut it up pretty bad.

He avoids looking at THE CANDIDATE throughout the duration of the following...

THE CANDIDATE

(to WAYNE)

Mr. Jackson. I would like to say one thing if you'll allow me. After that, I'll go and you never have to hear from me, or see me again. Can I say one thing?

(WAYNE nods, barely.)

I am the only candidate on the ticket who is running on a platform of healthcare reform for the state of Michigan. Real, actionable, reform. The kind that would let your son get the treatment he needs without driving families into bankruptcy and breaking them apart under the stress. It's the primary platform of my campaign. Because, I've seen the inhumanity of our current system. No one should have to go through this, and if they do, they shouldn't cost them so much. I want to help you. Sincerely. You and your family, and most of all, your little boy-- Eddie, was it?

(WAYNE nods, barely)

You can disagree with me on a lot of things. Everything. But please hear me when I tell you, my opponent is in the pocket of the healthcare companies and pharmaceutical companies - he will never fight to make care more accessible for your family. That fight? It's what got me into politics in the first place.

Beat. WAYNE starts toward the front door and opens it, still avoiding the gaze of the THE CANDIDATE.

WAYNE

That it?

THE CANDIDATE

(nods)

Thanks.

THE CANDIDATE starts out the door then--

WAYNE

You better not be bullshitting me.

THE CANDIDATE stops.

THE CANDIDATE

I swear to you, I am not "bullshitting" you.

WAYNE looks THE CANDIDATE in the eyes.

WAYNE

I would normally never vote for someone like you-- I mean, not because you're-- uh, just that--

THE CANDIDATE

Okay.

WAYNE

...Eddie is um, he's fighting real hard. And he's taking some real fucking knocks, you know?

THE CANDIDATE nods.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

It's only fair that he should have somebody fighting hard on his side. For us. You promise me that you'll fight for us well...

THE CANDIDATE

(looking him in the eyes,
sincerely)

I promise, Wayne. On my life.

WAYNE

(holding out his hand)

Alright, then...

They shake.

LIGHTS OUT.

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

THE SENATOR MONOLOGUE

Lights up in the monologue area. THE SENATOR (Formerly The Candidate) speaks to the audience - an unseen rally.

THE SENATOR

We set out to send a message to Washington, and that message has been heard loud and clear! It's a new wave crashing into the old bones of a broken system and washing it clean. Thank you, each and every one of you, who stood up and let your voice be heard on election day. We are on this journey together, and I will work tirelessly to fight for the people of Michigan, and see that your needs are represented here in Washington. As promised, I have already begun drafting legislation with partners in the House and Senate which will usher in the groundwork for Universal Healthcare, and *finally* bring this great nation in line with the majority of first world nations who made the choice that care for their citizens is more than a *right*, but an essential value of *character*. The character of our nation. A character, and a culture of *care*. Thank you for standing with me - this is only the beginning!

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE SEVEN

December. The home is decorated for Christmas. It's late. Keys at the front door - it opens and in stumbles WAYNE, drunk. SLICE slips in behind him.

WAYNE

You didn't have to drive me I was okay to drive me.
(heading toward the
backdoor)

You want a beer?

(he stops. Laughs.)

Whoops! I forgot. You don't do that no more. The straight and-- whatdyacallit?

SLICE

Narrow.

WAYNE

That's the one. You want pop then I'll get you pop then.

WAYNE continues on his way to the door.

SLICE

I'll do a beer.

WAYNE

(stopping)

You sure? Okay. One beer coming right up, buddy.

WAYNE pushes out the back door - it slams shut.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

(off stage)

Hot damn!

SLICE takes off his coat and hangs it on the rack near the front door. WAYNE comes back in a moment later with two bottles of Rolling Rock - he hands one to SLICE.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Cheers.

They drink. WAYNE lumbers over to the arm chair and slumps down.

SLICE

(takes a long sip of the
beer)

Mmm. That's real good.

WAYNE

(laughs)

I know you've been on a straight and whatdyacallit for a minute when you start thinking this horse piss is good.

SLICE

Yeah, you right about that. But I'm gonna enjoy this one here. Gotta take a second to enjoy the simple things sometimes, know what I'm saying?

WAYNE

Like horse piss beer.

SLICE

Like horse piss beer, my man.

(they drink)

Back on the inside, unless you got a line on some premo hooch, you be dreaming about all kinds of nasty shit you can only get on the outside.

WAYNE

So you dreamt of Rolling Rock horse piss beer, did you?

SLICE

Nah. Not Rolling Rock exactly. But, just stupid shit, you know? Like, I kept thinking about Lunchables. You know them--

WAYNE

Yeeeeaaaaah. Little crackers--

SLICE

Exactly! With the watery meat and cheese and shit. Like, I know that shit's nasty, but fuck if I didn't buy me a crate of that shit when I got out.

They laugh. They drink.

WAYNE

Well, welcome back to the land of piss beer and watery meat. I hope it's everything you dreamed of.

SLICE

Everything I dreamed of? Nah. But it's better than being in there. Fuck, anything is better than that.

WAYNE

What do you dream about now? Now that you're out...

SLICE

About being back in there. Get that nightmare maybe, three times a week. I'll wake up in the dream, but I'm back in my cell and everything is so real about it-- the old routines, all the details are there, like I never left. Then I start freaking out, you know? I start trying to scream for a guard, but I ain't got no voice to scream with. So I start punching things-- walls, bars, the bunk-- but my arms don't got no punch in them. Then I wake up for real. In my little room with the window by the power lines out back. But thing is? When I wake up, even though I know I'm out, it's like I never left at all. Like I'm on vacation or something. Fucks me up, man.

WAYNE

It was pretty bad in there, huh?

SLICE

(he shrugs)

It was alright... You know what's real fucked up though? I don't feel like I belong out here. Life moved on without me. Inside, for all the bullshit and the dark days, I was somebody. I knew how to get along. Out here...? I'm a linecook.

(beat. They drink.)

Used to...get this feeling sometimes though. Like I wanted to pull my own skin off.

I'd be sitting in there, smelling my bunkie's rank ass farts-- and there ain't no proper ventilation in there neither-- and I'd get so crazy staring at concrete that I'd... I'd want to pull my own fucking skin off.

WAYNE

Maybe if you could of pulled it off, the stuff could get out.

SLICE

Exactly. The *stuff*.

WAYNE

I can understand that.

SLICE

(beat.)

Yeah...

Beat. They drink. WAYNE gets up with some effort and wobbles into the kitchen. He deposits his empty beer on the counter.

WAYNE

You want another?

SLICE

Nah. I'm good with the one. Probably too good. I mean, hell, I should be heading back soon. I'm the opener in the morning.

WAYNE wanders back into the living room but trips on the way and goes down hard - he slams his head into the end table on the way down.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Shit, man, you okay?

WAYNE laughs from the floor. SLICE laughs too - he goes to WAYNE and holds out a hand.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Your head is bleeding, man.

WAYNE laughs harder.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Come on, big guy. Let's get a band-aid or some shit on your skull.

WAYNE still laughs uncontrollably - jackal like.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Glad you still got your sense of humor.

SLICE tries to lift a completely uncooperative WAYNE. WAYNE slumps back to the floor - still laughing.

SLICE (CONT'D)

(sudden shift)

Hey, buddy... You okay?

WAYNE is covering his face, the laughter has morphed into something else. SLICE tentatively goes to WAYNE - as soon as he's near enough to touch him, WAYNE jolts and rolls away from SLICE.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Shit!

WAYNE tears at his shirt, clawing at his skin beneath.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Shit, man, shit!

SLICE grabs hold of WAYNE who trashes and roars in his grip.

SLICE (CONT'D)

(while wrestling)

Don't get blood on my shoes don't get blood on my shoes!

They're on their feet now - WAYNE throws SLICE back, but the motion sends WAYNE down onto the couch. He lays there.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Don't be an asshole now. Stay there.

WAYNE remains on the couch, winded and bloody. SLICE goes into the kitchen and grabs a dish towel. He opens the freezer and retrieves a bag of frozen peas. SLICE inspects his shoe...

SLICE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

He wipes it carefully with the dishtowel. Then he makes his way back to WAYNE. He wraps the peas in the towel and tosses it to him.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Put that shit on your head.

(sitting on the other end
of the couch)

Shit, man. Your bloody head dripped on my left shoe.

WAYNE

(beat)

Don't tell Jenny about this.

SLICE

You kidding? I was just supposed to get your mind off things. She'll kill me. You don't fucking tell her about this. It'd be my ass.

WAYNE

...Life is moving in a blink right now.

SLICE

That's 'cuz you're drunk, man.

WAYNE

Blink-- I'm somewhere new. Don't know how I got here. Blink... What ever happened to yesterday.

SLICE

Maybe you should slow down.

SLICE reaches over and checks the cut on WAYNE'S head, then replaces the pea-towel on the cut.

WAYNE

Can't slow it down. It's moving so fast now. I hear the wind in my ears. Got tunnel vision. How'd I even get here?

SLICE

I drove you.

WAYNE

(beat)

What if he doesn't get better?

SLICE

(beat)

He's got a lot of fight left in him. You watch. They'll keep him in there for a couple more days, mostly just to watch him. They do that shit. Observation and shit. Three, four days. He's out. You watch.

WAYNE slowly rises off the couch.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Whoa, maybe you should--

WAYNE staggers over to the stairs, then leans against the rail for support.

WAYNE

...Been thinking...

SLICE

S'that?

WAYNE

If I gotta watch him go? It's gonna kill me. I go too.

SLICE

(beat)

He ain't gonna go.

WAYNE nods, then climbs the stairs. SLICE walks to the bottom of the steps and lingers there for a moment. Then he goes to grab his coat but stops - he hangs it back up. SLICE shuts off the light in the living room. He goes to the couch and pulls a quilt over himself as he lays down.

LIGHTS OUT

JUNE MONOLOGUE

Lights up on the monologue area. JUNE turns on the camera and speaks...

JUNE

You know what, babyboy? I'm sick of the lies. I'm up to my ears in lies and fibs and low-down bullshit. Can't turn on the TV no more without being smacked in the face with an ugly lie dressed up as the truth. Making me sick, it really is. The world is moving on all around us on a ride that we want to pretend isn't going so fast we're all one turn away from being tossed off the damn thing. And I'd say-- I know now that I was blinding myself. Can you understand that? You're just such a small child. Small child looking down a big...big ugly.

(beat)

When I married your Pawpaw-- He would of just loved you, Eddie. He played ball too, even a little bit in the minors before I met him, before he was drafted. You see, when I met him he was already working at General Motors. He had a nice job at that plant.

(beat)

We bought the house, we always had food on the table, took a vacation every year. Your mama was a hellraiser, but she was a good daughter. I'll tell you, we laughed every day. Your Pawpaw was-- he had the greatest sense of humor, he really did. And we had our *health*. Even right up to when Pawpaw died. One minute we were laughing in the living room about something or other, got up to refill my tea, and when I come out, he was already gone. Just like that. We were laughing. And then he was gone.

(beat)

I see it all around me now.

The lie of the good life, you understand? Because I was having a good life. So long as I didn't look at everybody everywhere who was suffering and struggling. Somebody would get sick, or there's a war, or all the polar bears are dying, or somebody bombs a temple, and you'd think, "oh, poor souls..." Then *put it out of your mind*. And quick. Because, you see, when you look at the ugly truth too long, you see it under everything... Maybe they're both true... Each in turn...

(beat)

Oh, babyboy. You are such brave little soldier. My brave little boy. I'm gonna tell you something that, it ain't easy, but I think--

(small beat)

If you get to hurting too much, and you want to take a long rest, there ain't nothing wrong with that. And I think maybe? Maybe your Pawpaw went when he did in case you were gonna come there before us, you see? So you won't be alone no matter what.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE EIGHT

January. Some of the Christmas decorations are still up, but the tree has been taken down. CATHERINE, BOBBY, and JUNE are sitting on the couch and huddled around a laptop. They are, all three, dressed rather nicely.

JUNE

So people just give money to this and it goes to Eddie?

CATHERINE

Yep. So there are like, tons of these sites that collect money--

BOBBY

It's called crowdfunding--

CATHERINE

Right, totally, crowdfunding.

JUNE

Because the crowd funds the--

BOBBY

Exactly. So Catherine set this up--

CATHERINE

It was Bobby's idea--

BOBBY

But she set it up and did the whole page design and everything.

CATHERINE

And we've been using all the videos that we've been making--

JUNE

The ones for Eddie?

CATHERINE

Yeah. So at first I just thought those would be for him or whatever--

BOBBY

But then we totally agreed that they were perfect for the gofundme page--

CATHERINE

Because they're super honest and reasonably well produced--

BOBBY

She's been using that camera from Slice--

CATHERINE

Which is actually super nice--

BOBBY

Definitely--

CATHERINE

So I guess you could say that Eddie's gofundme page has gone viral since it was tweeted by that senator.

Beat. JUNE stares at them a little dumbfounded.

JUNE

In most cases, when something is "viral" you should see a doctor, but you're saying it like it's a good thing so...

CATHERINE

It is. Totally good.

BOBBY

Definitely. It's raised fifteen thousand dollars so far.

JUNE

Good Christ! Praise Jesus. I can't believe-- *fifteen thousand dollars?*

CATHERINE nods excitedly.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I'm so proud of you, babygirl. What a gift you are.

JUNE pulls CATHERINE into an embrace. She holds her there for a long moment.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Well, this should be an exciting day, don't you think?

BOBBY

Are you kidding? There's like, literally nothing more exciting than Batman. I can't believe he gets to ride in the friggin' *Batmobile*, with friggin' *Batman*.

CATHERINE

I think it's the old one though.

BOBBY

Yeah, the 89' version, which is still totally amazing. And this guy's suit is legit.

CATHERINE

You saw it?

BOBBY

Are you kidding? I looked it up the minute I heard Eddie was doing this. The suit's amazing. Modeled after the Arkham Asylum game - and the guy in the suit is actually like, legit jacked all to hell. He might actually be Batman.

CATHERINE

Oh my God, you're a friggin' *nerd*.

WAYNE enters from upstairs - he wears his work boots and clothes (he's also sporting a band-aid on his mostly healed head wound). The room falls silent as he stomps through the living room and into the kitchen - he exits out the back door.

JUNE

Is your daddy not coming today?

CATHERINE

I don't know what he does anymore.

(gets up and heads to the
fridge)

Do you want a drink or something?

JUNE

No, thank you, Katybaby.

CATHERINE

Bobby?

BOBBY

I'm good.

CATHERINE
(retrieving the milk)
Really? I'm going to make some hot chocolate.

BOBBY
Then I definitely gotta pass.

CATHERINE
Right. Forgot.

BOBBY
(off JUNE'S look)
I'm notorious for burning the heck out of my mouth. I learned it's best just to avoid hot drinks altogether.

CATHERINE goes about making the hot chocolate in the kitchen.

JUNE
You seem to be a very nice young man.

BOBBY
Thanks, Mrs... Um, Nana?

JUNE
You two have been going on for a little while now.

BOBBY
Yeah, like, almost a year.

JUNE
What are you going to do if she goes to one of those out of state schools?

BOBBY
Um, we haven't really talked about it specifically-- there's been enough going on with everything going on. But between you and me, I'm hoping we keep it going, you know?

*BOBBY peaks over his shoulder into the kitchen -
CATHERINE is still busy with the hot chocolate.*

BOBBY (CONT'D)
I know that people your age-- I mean like, old-- well, you know, like, people older than me. Well, I know what it sounds like.

JUNE
What's that, child?

BOBBY

Um, how it sounds when I tell people that I met the best girl I'll ever know and I'd be a total idiot not to try and make her happy for all time. That's what I feel anyway. So... I hope we keep it going.

JUNE

Well, between you and me, I hope you do too.

JUNE pulls BOBBY over into a classic Nana hug, complete with a couple of cheek kisses - an initiation of sorts.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Now tell me, have you two gone all the way yet?

BOBBY

All the...?

(off JUNE'S look)

Um, that's-- I don't-- is this a trap?

JUNE

(laughs)

You think I was always this old? I know how it is.

BOBBY

I uh, I mean, we haven't-- there's been some talk but-- the thing is--

JUNE

You don't gotta tell me the intimate details but I'll tell you this, you two be smart about your business and don't go getting her knocked up. That would throw a wrench in all y'all's plans. Now...

(she reaches into her bag.

Conspiratorially...)

I've been wanted to give these to Katy but couldn't figure out the best way-- but since you brought it up--

BOBBY

You brought this up--

JUNE

(pulls a pack of condoms
out of her bag)

Here--

BOBBY

Oh God!

JUNE

--You take these, and no rush, but if you decide to be intimate in that way, well, now you can be prepared.

She hands the box to BOBBY. He is frozen with shock and awe. Suddenly the backdoor swings open - WAYNE enters with a beer.

WAYNE
(to CATHERINE)

What is that?

CATHERINE
Hot chocolate.

WAYNE
Did you use--? Don't use the milk, you can make those packs with water!

CATHERINE
It's not from a pack, I got the recipe online. I thought you were leaving.

WAYNE
I'll leave when I'm ready.

WAYNE stomps into the living room just as BOBBY shoves the condoms into his shirt looking 100% conspicuous. WAYNE eyes BOBBY - JUNE is the picture of propriety.

JUNE
Katygirl has herself a very nice boy here, don't you think, Wainwright?

WAYNE is about to say something when the front door swings open - SLICE walks in and nods to WAYNE who finishes his beer.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Hello, Cy-- close that door. You're letting in the wind.

SLICE
(closing the door)
Hey there, auntie. Wayne.

WAYNE
What are you doing here?

SLICE
Came for the Batman day.
(beat)
Janelle invited me.

WAYNE sets the beer on the mantle and stomps up the stairs.

CATHERINE comes in from the kitchen with her mug of hot chocolate.

CATHERINE

He's being a friggin' tyrant like, all the time now-- hey, Slice-- It's like, I'm the one who bought the milk this week, from my paycheck. But if I said that to him he'd just hulk out on everybody.

(to BOBBY)

Why are you acting weird?

BOBBY shakes out of his shock-state.

JUNE

Your daddy is trying. I ain't saying his succeeding in every way, but he's trying.

SLICE

That's right. It may look like he's mad-dogging everybody, but I seen plenty of guys like him and they usually fighting something fierce that you can't get eyes on.

CATHERINE

Um, I don't know like, anything you just said.

SLICE reaches into his coat pocket and hands her a thick envelop.

SLICE

I did a little collection with some of the guys in group. It ain't much, and I couldn't figure out how to get it on the fund page or whatever, but...

CATHERINE looks in the envelop. Then gets up and hugs SLICE.

CATHERINE

That's super sweet of you. I'll add it into the fund for you.

JANELLE suddenly bounds down the stairs, noticeable skip in her step.

JANELLE

Are you all ready to go?-- Hi, Cylus!

(noticing, to CATHERINE)

Is that hot chocolate? Is there any left?

CATHERINE

Um, yeah. There's still some in the pot on the stove. It's homemade so...

JANELLE

Thank you.

JANELLE gives CATHERINE a kiss and squeeze on her way into the kitchen.

JUNE

(following)

How's Eddie feeling today?

JANELLE

So good. He's like his old self, you know? We're still waiting on the results from his latest round of tests, but you know? I-- I feel really hopeful. He seems better, doesn't he? Like he might just leap out of his wheelchair at any second, you know?

JUNE

That's so good to hear. I think when all is said and done, this will have been a-- I think Eddie is gonna be just fine.

JANELLE nods, takes a sip of the hot chocolate.

JANELLE

Mmmm-- Katy!

(she crosses into the
living room)

This is-- and I'm not just saying it, this is the best hot chocolate I've ever had. In my life.

CATHERINE

Thanks, mom.

JUNE

(to JANELLE)

Why didn't you tell me that Katy and Bobby put together a fund page for Eddie? *Fifteen thousand dollars?* That must be a load off.

JANELLE

What an amazing thing. The generosity of our friends, family-- total strangers, in some cases. It gets me a little... just thinking about it.

(she laughs/cries)

God, I'm so happy. This will be such a special day for Eddie. I just want to sear it into my memory, you know? I mean, even Wayne was-- I walked into the room and he was holding Eddie and they were laughing-- both of them laughing-- I mean, I haven't heard either of them laugh like that in... Too long.

WAYNE lumbers down a few steps and stops abruptly - he turns away from the room, looking at the photos on the wall.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Are you coming down, honey?

WAYNE

I, uh...

(beat. Gathers.)

I'm looking at this picture. I'm coming.

WAYNE keeps looking at the picture on the wall, back to the room.

JANELLE

Have you tried Katy's hot chocolate? It's amazing.

WAYNE shakes his head - no.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Why don't you come down and have a sip?

WAYNE

(beat. Gathers.)

...I uh, I gotta get ready to head on out.

WAYNE takes a deep breath and pulls the photo off the wall. He descends into the living room briskly.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I've been wanting a picture for my truck. I'm gonna take this one for my truck. So...

JANELLE

Okay...

Beat. WAYNE seems to be waiting for something. But nothing comes.

WAYNE

I gotta go.

WAYNE brushes by the family to the kitchen. JANELLE follows.

JANELLE

Wayne. Stop for second, will you?

WAYNE stops with JANELLE in the kitchen. The group on the couch goes about looking at pictures, but they're tuned to the conversation in the kitchen.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Call in sick. You can take a day off.

WAYNE

I had to call in a favor to pick this one up. It pays double-time.

JANELLE

I understand that. But this is... It's a special day for Eddie. For all of us. Hell, Cylus is / gonna be there. You should be there.

WAYNE

I don't care what Cylus is-- You don't think I'd rather be going?

JANELLE

So *come*. We can breathe for a second. I mean, Katy's gofundme page raised over fif--

WAYNE

So that means we can sit back now? That's a *drop* in the bucket. Like putting a band-aid on severed arm!

JANELLE

Can you not today? *Today?*

WAYNE

Today ain't no different from yesterday! We're still drowning here!

JANELLE

Can you not stop and be *anything* other than a sour son of bitch for one goddamn second!

Beat. As this settles in the room...

WAYNE

Catherine...

CATHERINE

(crossing)

What?

WAYNE

Be sure to get some pictures of Eddie for me today, will you?

CATHERINE

Okay.

WAYNE

Okay.

WAYNE turns and goes - the door slams shut behind him.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE NINE

February. Middle of the night. WAYNE sits alone on the couch, blanket draped over his shoulders - he flips through a photo album, a steaming mug on the coffee table before him. He might laugh occasionally, or just quietly turn the pages.

After a moment, JANELLE descends the stairs, wrapped in a robe.

JANELLE

Wayne? You okay?

WAYNE

Hm? Yeah. Couldn't sleep.

JANELLE joins him on the couch.

JANELLE

Yeah, I heard you get up. I wasn't sleeping either. It's the strangest thing, isn't it? I feel so tired most the time it's like I might just fall over at any moment, then I get into bed and...

WAYNE

Mm-hmm. Too tired to sleep.

JANELLE

Hasn't been this bad since Pontiac. The sleep.

WAYNE

Mm-hmm.

JANELLE

Remember when his was a baby? He was a good sleeper and we thought we just got lucky, and then he was-- how old was he when he just stopped sleeping?

WAYNE

Can't remember. I was in a daze for most of that year. And then the move out here. Felt like it all happened so fast.

JANELLE

(beat)

Six months. He was about six months.

WAYNE

Sounds about right.

JANELLE

(beat)

What are you drinking?

Tea.

WAYNE

Just tea?

JANELLE

Yeah.

WAYNE

Good. It's getting a little out of hand lately...

JANELLE

(small beat)

Water's still hot if you want some.

WAYNE

Okay.

JANELLE

*WAYNE gets up and preps a cup of tea in the kitchen.
JANELLE takes the album.*

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(re photo)

I remember this. He was such a chunky little guy.

WAYNE

(returning with her mug)

Well, I wonder who he took after.

JANELLE

You better not be implying what I *think* you're implying.

WAYNE chuckles to himself. Then...

WAYNE

No. He was always just... Eddie.

JANELLE

(re photo)

Where'd we take this?

WAYNE

(looks)

Hm. That looks like... Like maybe our trip up to Mackinac that summer.

JANELLE

I think you're right. Yeah, that's right.

Long beat. They drink their tea and flip through the album together. Then JANELLE shuts the book and puts it aside.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

I'm so tired.

WAYNE

Maybe try reading. That usually helps you--

JANELLE

No... I'm just... I'm so tired.

(beat)

How much longer can we do this?

WAYNE shrugs but says nothing.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(breaks a little)

I thought he was doing better.

WAYNE

He was.

JANELLE

But it's like-- he just-- one thing after another, you know? And then he goes in for a procedure and they're optimistic so I'm optimistic, then he just-- he plummets and I fear for the worst, and it repeats itself and I can't--

Beat. JANELLE breaks. WAYNE puts his arm over her.

WAYNE

It's just an infection.

JANELLE

No, Wayne. It's not. He's so weak now. Oh God, and I'm complaining about being tired-- *what do I have to complain about?*

WAYNE

He's still-- It's not over yet.

JANELLE

I hope? I mean, I keep trying to *hope* that he could get better. But-- each time something like *this* happens, some stupid *infection*, it gets so much harder to keep *hoping*.

Beat. WAYNE pulls his arm away. They sit and sip their tea with that for a moment.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Wayne? If he doesn't make it? Do we?

(silence)

Wayne?

WAYNE

He'll bounce back. He'll bounce back.

WAYNE gets up and climbs the stairs. JANELLE sits alone.

SCENE TEN

March. CATHERINE is on the couch - her left leg is in a full brace, an ice-pack resting on her knee. She winces as she adjusts the leg. She still wears her high-school track uniform. Resting against the couch is a pair of crutches.

There's a knock at the door.

CATHERINE

You can come in.

The doorknob wobbles but the door doesn't open.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Come in!

BOBBY

(offstage)

It's locked!

CATHERINE

Shit...

(She spends a moment trying to figure out how to move, but it seems pretty painful and complicated.)

Try the back door!

BOBBY

(offstage)

Don't move! Don't do anything! I'm coming in.

There's a banging on the front window.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(offstage)

The window is locked too!

CATHERINE

The back door!

BOBBY

(offstage)

Just wait there! I'm going to try the back door!

A moment passes and suddenly BOBBY bursts through the back door - he's completely winded. He's carrying a bookbag and several CVS bags.

He drops them and stumbles into the living room but stops as soon as he sees CATHERINE. Beat.

CATHERINE

What?

BOBBY cries a little.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

It's not a big deal. Baby, it's fine.

BOBBY

Oh man.

BOBBY sinks to his knees at CATHERINE'S feet and rests his head on her good leg.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry I'm so sorry I'm so sorry--

CATHERINE

You didn't do anything-- It was stupid. I was late to the meet coming from work so I was-- I should have stretched more. It was just stupid. It's fine. Come here.

She pulls him up to her. They hold each other like that for a moment.

BOBBY

What did the doctor say?

CATHERINE

Um. I tore my ACL.

BOBBY

(pulling away)

Aw no, aw man, that's-- / are you gonna be okay? Like, to run?

CATHERINE

Don't don't-- don't do that-- I-- I don't know. I'll be... We'll see about running. I don't really know.

BOBBY

Well, what did the doctor say?

CATHERINE

They may need to do surgery-- *Don't!* It's fine. I'll be fine.

BOBBY

(nodding)

Yeah. Of course.

(suddenly)

I got stuff for you!

BOBBY rushes into the kitchen and retrieves the bags he brought in - he sets them on the coffee table. As he removes the items...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Milkduds, 'cuz they're your fav... Bone broth, 'cuz it's full of all these nutrients that are supposed to help your body heal--

CATHERINE

What do I do with it? Drink it?

BOBBY

What-- no. You don't do anything with it. I'm making you soup. That's the stuff in the other bag.

(he removes several
supplement pill bottles)

These are all supposed to be-- I don't know what they do, but the internet said this stuff was supposed to be like, *essential* for recovery or whathaveyou.

CATHERINE

Magnesium?

BOBBY

I guess?

CATHERINE reaches into the bag as he sets the bottles on the coffee table-- she pulls out a pair of baggy basketball shorts.

CATHERINE

What's this?

BOBBY

Oh. When my older brother fractured his leg in that dirt-bike accident he couldn't like, wear pants or anything, you know, over the cast. So, my mom bought him a bunch of these shorts, so...

CATHERINE winces.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Are you okay? What do you need? You want water or something?

CATHERINE

No, no-- I mean, this hurts like hell, but... I, um... I need to go to the bathroom but...

BOBBY

Oh for sure. I can help you. I can like... help you get situated or whatever.

CATHERINE nods. BOBBY gently helps lift her off the couch. They wrap arms around one another as he assists her toward the bathroom.

They disappear for a moment. The sound of some shifting and rustling about, and maybe even some laughter. Then BOBBY steps back into the hall.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Just let me know when you need me to come back in, okay?

CATHERINE

(off stage)

Okay.

BOBBY

What did you parents say?

CATHERINE

(off stage)

Um. Nothing. I mean, my mom sort of freaked out about the surgery, cuz the out of pocket costs are still like, *stupid* high.

BOBBY

Oh, man.

CATHERINE

(off stage)

And with Eddie in the hospital like, indefinitely, things are just... Well, you know.

BOBBY

Yeah.

CATHERINE

(off stage)

My dad was really great about though. Like, he said we'd figure it out, and we can afford it, 'cuz I need to run and he knows how important it is. Which was totally unexpected from him-- especially lately... I don't believe him, though. I know they can't afford this. They think I don't know but we get all these calls from creditors and the banks. Like, all the time. So...

The toilet flushes.

BOBBY

Do you need me to come in?

CATHERINE

(off stage)

Yeah.

BOBBY exits into the bathroom. The sounds of some shifting, the faucet running, etc. Then they both reappear in the hall - they head toward the couch. CATHERINE appears to be in great pain.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Wait wait wait. Just... wait.

(taking a few deep breaths)

Every jolt sends this spike of pain like, straight up my leg.

BOBBY

Did they give you anything for it?

CATHERINE

My mom wouldn't let them 'cuz of her cousin. He was a junkie and so she's super freaked out about that stuff. Okay, I'm ready.

They carefully move back to the couch - she stops him from helping her sit.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Wait. I want the basketball shorts.

BOBBY

Okay. Totally. Do you need my help?

CATHERINE

(nodding)

I think you need to cut these shorts though. There's scissors in that drawer by the fridge.

CATHERINE props herself against the couch while BOBBY rushes into the kitchen to retrieve the scissors. He returns and is about to go about helping her with the shorts when--

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna' do the surgery.

BOBBY

...What?

CATHERINE

I won't do the surgery. I asked and the doctor said that the injury has a chance it could heal on its own. I'll just be really careful and take a longer recovery.

BOBBY

But...you're running...

CATHERINE

I could run again. Maybe. I just have to see. You know, like, heal up first and then see.

(beat)

Come on. Help me with the shorts.

The following sequence happens without words, but with tremendous care. It should feel very intimate, but not particularly sexual. BOBBY cuts the track shorts free - CATHERINE braces herself against him, staying off her injured leg. BOBBY carefully slips the basketball shorts over her feet and guides them super slowly over the brace on her bad leg. Right around the time the shorts are to her waist, he realizes she's crying. BOBBY stands up and wraps CATHERINE in his arms - she sinks into him. He helps lower her to the couch - she continues to cry. He props her leg carefully onto the coffee table. He sits next to her and she tucks herself under his arm. We stay with them for a moment.

LIGHTS OUT

BOBBY MONOLOGUE

Lights up on the monologue area. BOBBY speaks - he is in distress...

BOBBY

(Barely contained)

Look, I'm just gonna-- I'm sorry I haven't been out there to see you for a minute, bud, but it's been-- I'm definitely coming to see you this weekend probably and I'll bring the new Call of Duty so we can pwn some suckahs if you're feeling--

(beat)

What the *frick* is this, man? I don't understand why any of this is a problem and I'm-- there's kids out there that get sick and they get the-- they get--friggin'-- Care. You know what I'm saying? But like, what? You're too whatever to get the-- So you're parents gotta get all screwed up trying to like, just pay for the chance that you might *maybe* be okay? It's a simple friggin' equation! Is a kid friggin' sick?! Then the kid gets some frickin' care and treatment that doesn't blow up his family! There's people out there that have the money and the friggin--whatever-- jobs that pay for shit, and they get all the stuff, the--whatever--treatments or whatever and like, they have a *chance*. You know? They didn't give you a friggin' chance and I can't sleep at night thinking about what's happening to you and your family and Catherine and I want to just frickin'--like--choke somebody. Like, where is GOD, man?! Where did he-- fuck off to while everybody just decided to not care about kids and poor people and sick people and fuck them all forever!

(he stops, breathing heavily. He breaks.)

I wish...I want to help you. And Catherine. Cuz like, I know I'm not technically your family, but I feel like I am. Like, I feel like I'm more a part of you guys than like, my own blood sometimes... I just wish I could help you.

(beat.)

I gotta delete this...

SCENE ELEVEN

April. JUNE, JANELLE, and WAYNE are seated around the table in the kitchen - SLICE lingers in the entrance to the kitchen near the living room. JANELLE is slouched over table, her face in her hands. WAYNE seethes. JUNE speaks...

JUNE

This has gone on long enough. You two have been carrying the weight of this whole thing-- and you've done, you've done so well, as well as anybody could expect under the circumstances. But--

WAYNE

We can't leave. This is our home. We-- Our whole lives are in this house, Eddie's whole-- we won't leave.

SLICE

Ain't gonna make a difference to the bank, sorry to say.

WAYNE

Will you shut your goddamn mouth? Nobody's asking for your input, Slice.

JUNE

Cousin Cylus has been nothing but supportive to this family since he got out, and you ought to know better than that, no matter the circumstances, Wainwright.

WAYNE bites it back.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I've done a lot of thinking on this since this whole foreclosure business, and I don't see another way. You and the babies are going to move in with me.

Beat. JANELLE looks up to her mom.

JANELLE

Mom, we can't-- that's too much. We can't invade your home like that.

JUNE

You're not invading! You're my baby, they're my grandbabies, and I won't leave you to fend for yourselves here.

WAYNE

The offer is generous, but I think I got a line on a rental in town that--

JUNE

You'd be out of the frying pan and into the fire that way. Quit being so damn stubborn, will you?

JANELLE

Mom, Eddie is likely gonna be--

(beat.)

He's going to be in hospice soon--

WAYNE

Janelle--

JANELLE

Stop, Wayne. Just stop. Everybody can see it. The doctors are saying he's--

Beat. JUNE goes around and hugs JANELLE from behind. WAYNE is tense - quiet.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

(finally...)

If he ends up needing hospice care after we need to vacate, you wouldn't have the room.

JUNE

Well, I thought of that, you see. Bobby and his dad have been coming over to my house on the weekends and they re-did the basement. It's not much, but it's a good room now. So, you and Wayne can move in down there, Katy can sleep on the roll-away in my room, and Eddie can have the second room. Cylus and one of the men he works with have offered to help you move a few different days over the next month, so...

(beat)

It's all done. I won't hear another word about it.

A silence settles over the room. JANELLE goes to JUNE and they embrace. SLICE watches WAYNE from the entrance.

WAYNE

Would you stop looking at me?

JUNE and JANELLE break from their embrace at this.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Everybody quit looking at me.

(rising from the table

suddenly)

I said quit looking at me!

JANELLE

Nobody's looking at you like--

WAYNE

He's looking at me right now! Looking at me all sorry-- Everybody has eyes on this whole family! I see the looks we get just walking down the street. The pity, and the judgement, and the questions! So many goddamn questions - "how's your boy, Wayne?" "Any updates on his health?" "How are you handling all this?"--

JANELLE

They're worried about Eddie, and they're--

WAYNE

If I gotta eat one more goddamn casserole from one of those church ladies I'm gonna be--

JANELLE

They want to help, all anybody wants is to help!

WAYNE

Well, I don't want their help! I don't want any handouts, or sorry looks, or casseroles, or Slice and his convict friends moving our stuff!

JANELLE

What the hell do you want then?!

WAYNE

I want a healthy son!

Beat. WAYNE trembles at this. JUNE, JANELLE, and SLICE all look at WAYNE.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

(backing away from the
table)

Stop looking at me like that!

JANELLE

Wayne, baby--

WAYNE

Stop it!

(to SLICE)

Wipe that look off your face! I don't need your goddamn pity, or sorry looks-- You want to help?! You really want to help?!--

JANELLE

Wayne!

WAYNE

(to SLICE)

--Cuz unless you can get me fifty thousand dollars, I don't need nothing from you! Why are you around all the time? / You spend you whole life fucking everything up, then come back in like you're a goddamn hero-- why are you here?!

JUNE

Wainwright, please!

SLICE

(small)

I... You're my people. I don't got no one else...

JANELLE

(to SLICE)

You're family. You have us. Don't you listen to him.

(to WAYNE)

Wayne.

WAYNE bites back whatever is boiling in him, then...

WAYNE

Cylus-- I'm not. That weren't about you. It-- It weren't about you. You-- I just don't need anything else from you.

(beat)

June? Thank you for...uh, for bringing us in.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

Silence. WAYNE shifts uncomfortably.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

No one's got anything to say anymore? I said I was sorry. Did I not just say I was sorry? I said I'm sorry! Didn't I?!

SLICE

S'okay, cuz. Maybe I should--

The front door suddenly bursts open - BOBBY enters, pulling a ski-mask off his head and quickly closing the door and locking it behind him - he is out of breath and visibly distraught. He's clutching a brown paper bag with something hefty inside.

JANELLE crosses into the living room.

JANELLE

Bobby? Catherine's not here right-- What's the matter?

BOBBY stares at JANELLE - he looks terrified.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

What's the matter, Bobby?

WAYNE steps into the room behind JANELLE.

WAYNE

What's going on?

BOBBY rushes over to WAYNE and hands over the brown paper bag - he backs away from them both.

BOBBY

I-- I-- I did what I could. I wish it was more-- Oh god. Fuck. Shit shit shit.

BOBBY trembles, beginning to cry.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

It's not fair what they did to you guys-- those motherfuckers!

JANELLE

Shh Shh Shh--Slow down a minute-- just sit down here and tell us what's going on.

WAYNE opens the bag and looks inside.

WAYNE

Jesus Christ, Bobby. What did you do?

BOBBY

That's-- It's not right what they make us do! They let him die-- They let Eddie fucking die-- He's a kid, man. He's just a fucking kid, and--and-- how can that be okay?-- It's-- can't you see what they do?!

SLICE and JUNE are drawn into the room.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Oh man oh man oh man--

BOBBY digs into his coat pocket and removes a snub nose 38 handgun.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(mostly to himself)

Stupid stupid stupid stupid.

JANELLE

Oh my god! What are you doing with that gun?

BOBBY rushes over to WAYNE.

BOBBY

I-- I wanted to help, alright? Just-- can you hide the gun? Can you just-- I gotta get ride of this--

(he shoves the gun into
WAYNE'S hands)
Just take it take it take it.

WAYNE stands with the gun and bag - dumbfounded.

WAYNE
Oh, son... Bobby...

JANELLE
What's going on? Wayne, what's in that bag?

WAYNE wordlessly hands the bag to JANELLE. She peaks
inside and drops it immediately - stacks of cash
spill from the bag.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Oh, Bobby... Oh, Bobby, no...

The sounds of distant sirens can be heard outside.
BOBBY frantically rushes to the windows pulling the
blinds closed and turning off the lights.

BOBBY
Oh, man, oh fuck. I'm so dead. I'm so fucking dead.
(He collapses onto the
floor, weeping.)
I'm freaking out, man...

WAYNE
It's-- It'll be alright. We'll just, you'll give it back and
get a slap on the wrist or--

BOBBY
(seeing the money on the
floor)
What are you doing? You gotta take this!
(stuffing the money back in
the bag)
Hide this, you gotta put this somewhere no one will look--
it's for Eddie and-- Fuck!
(collapses again)
I'm such a fuck up. My life is over. It's over.

SLICE grabs the bag of money from WAYNE, and hauls
BOBBY onto his feet.

SLICE
Look at me, kid. Stop crying, stop fucking crying and look at
me-- Look at me!

BOBBY looks at SLICE, still crying.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Did you shoot anybody? Anybody get hurt?

BOBBY shakes his head "no".

SLICE (CONT'D)

Anybody see your face? Look at me-- there ain't no time to fuck around now-- LOOK AT ME IN MY FACE, KID!

(BOBBY looks)

They see you?

BOBBY

I don't-- I don't think so...

The sirens are closer now.

WAYNE

(to SLICE)

He's not gonna get away with this-- There's sirens!

SLICE starts pulling BOBBY'S jacket off of him.

SLICE

Give me your jacket. Give it to me.

BOBBY has more or less gone limp - SLICE puts on BOBBY'S jacket.

JUNE

Cylus, what're you doing?

SLICE grabs the gun out of WAYNE'S hand.

SLICE

Give me the fucking gun.

JANELLE

Cylus-- no!

SLICE

You think he gets a slap on the wrist for armed robbery? Are you all out of your fucking heads? That ain't no slap on the wrist. I know. I know what this shit will do and he's right. It's over for him-- There ain't catching up to it. Never. It's sets you so far back you come out the otherside as a fucking linecook.

JANELLE

I'm not gonna let you do this.

SLICE

Let me?! Let me do shit. I've been a fuck up for my entire life-- Wayne's right-- but I can do this.

I can buy a kid a second chance and make sure he don't have to go through what I been through. So-- no! Shut up! All of you just shut your mouths and listen!

The room falls silent but for BOBBY'S weeping.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Look what they do... Everybody's world is coming down around them, and I can't mostly do shit about any of it. None of you is gonna say *shit* other than it was *me* that walked through that door today. You understand me?

(deadly serious)

Tell me you understand what I'm fucking saying right now.

JUNE sinks onto the chair. WAYNE and JANELLE nod.

SLICE (CONT'D)

I took the kid's car. I took the money. I came back here. That's what happened. Right?

(nods from WAYNE and
JANELLE)

Right, kid?

BOBBY nods - he opens his mouth to speak but nothing comes out.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Good.

SLICE listens to the approaching sirens and turns toward the door, resting his head against it. The weight of it all catches up to him. He breathes, whispering to himself.

JANELLE

Cylus--?

SLICE

You know I love you right?

WAYNE crosses to SLICE.

WAYNE

I know that. We know that. I'm sorry I--

SLICE

S'good...

The sirens sound like they're almost to the house. SLICE puts on the ski-mask.

JANELLE

Cylus--

The sirens are outside now - red and blue flashing lights flash through the windows.

SLICE breathes, steeling himself. For a second, it looks like he'll buckle at the knees, but he steadies himself, breathing. Then...

SLICE

Do you remember when we used to go to the lake together?

JANELLE nods.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Whenever I was with you and your mama, I always felt like I was at home. Always wished my home was yours instead of mine. I wish we could go to that lake again.

JANELLE nods.

SLICE (CONT'D)

Where was that lake?

*(he looks to the door,
breathing deeply)*

Okay. Okay... okay. okay. okay. it's okay.

WAYNE

Slice--

SLICE opens the door, arms raised high over his head - a flood of light spills into the room. He walks out of the house. JUNE cries out. JUNE, JANELLE, BOBBY and WAYNE look on for a moment. The lights flashing.

LIGHTS OUT

CATHERINE MONOLOGUE

Lights up on the monologue area. CATHERINE speaks...

CATHERINE

So I know mom and dad have been kind of avoiding telling you about cousin Slice, but I think you totally have a right to know. He going back to prison, probably for like, ever or something. I know what he did-- I know why he did what he did. He was trying to get money for the family, so we wouldn't have to move in with Nana, and so we could pay for everything for... I know why he did it? But I still feel like, what a friggin' idiot, you know? Like, nobody gets away with that kind of thing-- he should know, right? I just-- It's totally like, not at all what the family needed right now. Like I get how he thinks it was, but it isn't.

(beat)

What's weird though?

With everything happening, and with you, and with Slice, and my friggin ACL, and *all of it*? It's like my life is still moving along, you know? It's just...weird. It feels maybe like the world should have stopped. But... It just keeps going.

(beat)

I decided on Western Michigan University. It's in-State, I got a nice scholarship for academics, and if my leg heals up okay I can probably run for them. I mean, they're track and field program is Division I, so there's that. Plus, um, Bobby got in there too. Kind of by the skin of his teeth, but he's gonna go so we can be together. I know it feels super lame, I mean it *is* super lame-- Like, if one of my friends told me that she was totally in love, like the forever kind of love? I would legit laugh in her face. Which is why I don't say anything to them about it. But I feel like I kinda know, you know? Like, we could still fall apart 'cuz life is, basically completely unpredictable. But I kinda think we have as good a shot as anybody else. Better, really.)

(small beat. Then, almost giddy...)

Don't tell mom and dad, but... We totally did it. And I'm really glad we waited as long as we did 'cuz I felt super safe with him... I'm really glad you two get along too. He loves you a lot. He's the youngest in his family, so. You're kind of his little brother too.

(beat)

He's had a really hard time with all of this lately. Like, usually he kind of talks nonstop, but lately... I think he's... We both really love you so much.

(beat)

Oh, and... I decided on my major already. I'm going for pre-med. So I can be a doctor and help little dudes like you.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE TWELVE

May. Much of the furniture is gone from the house now. Boxes are stacked in the kitchen and along the stairs. Music plays on the radio. CATHERINE is dressed for prom - leg brace is still on and she's on crutches. JANELLE buzzes around CATHERINE primping and fixing. WAYNE sits quietly on one of the boxes and watches, he holds the camera and snaps a couple of pictures throughout the action.

JANELLE

(looking at her)

When do you grow up to be so beautiful?

CATHERINE smiles weakly, but breaks away.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

CATHERINE

Um. I think I just, don't really want to go.

JANELLE

You-- You should go. You need to go, Katy. You'd always regret it.

CATHERINE

But... I feel like I should be here, with Eddie.

JANELLE

We're here. He wants you to go.

CATHERINE

But like...

(beat)

I feel like, I just-- When I'm away I feel like I shouldn't be because there isn't much time left so--

CATHERINE breaks a little.

JANELLE

Oh, honey, you'll ruin your make up.

JANELLE pulls CATHERINE into a hug.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

You listen to me.

(looking at her)

It will never be enough time. That's what's so unfair about it, isn't it? No matter how much, no matter what we do, it'll never be enough time. So you can't stop living your life. Right?

CATHERINE nods.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

Okay. So, you go tonight and just dance. Forget about everything else for an hour or two, and let that young man show you a good time.

CATHERINE

Okay.

Suddenly JUNE comes down the stairs - she speaks, but as if from far away.

JUNE

There's a limo out front... that young man brought a limo with him.

*CATHERINE beams, she rushes to the window with
JANELLE - even WAYNE gets up to look.*

JANELLE

Oh, it looks new-- Wayne, doesn't it look new?

WAYNE

Mm-hmm.

JUNE

He's coming out-- He's-- oh my lord, he looks so handsome.
(something catches in her.

She gathers.)

It's good to see him looking well. Doesn't he look handsome,
Katybaby?

CATHERINE grins, and nods.

JUNE (CONT'D)

And he brought you a corsage...

JANELLE

He called me ahead of time to ask what color her dress was so
it would match. Oh, he's coming, quick! Get away from the
window.

*JANELLE and JUNE move into the center of the room
trying to look nonchalant. WAYNE steps away from the
window. Then there's a knock at the door - WAYNE
opens it.*

BOBBY steps in wearing a tuxedo - he looks good.

BOBBY

Hi.

(to CATHERINE)

Oh, man. You look so-- You're so pretty.

CATHERINE

Thanks. You look really good. Clean up pretty good.

(She kisses him)

Can't believe you got a limo.

BOBBY

Big night and whatnot. Here.

BOBBY puts the corsage on CATHERINE'S wrist.

JANELLE

(crossing to the kitchen)

Oh shoot!

(she removes the
boutonniere and rushes
back to the kids)
Katy, do you want me do it?

CATHERINE
Yeah, I think with the crutches I'd probably slip and stick
you or something.

JANELLE pins the boutonniere on BOBBY'S lapel. They share a silent moment.

JANELLE
(pointedly)
You look very handsome, Bobby.
(to JUNE)
Doesn't he look handsome?

JUNE Oh, you look very sharp in a tuxedo. Mm-hmm.

WAYNE

BOBBY
Thanks, Mrs. Jackson.

CATHERINE
So, should we start heading out soon...

JANELLE
Wait! I need some pictures first. Let me get-- Where'd I put
the--?

WAYNE hands her the camera.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
Okay, you two. Stand there in front of the fireplace.

BOBBY and CATHERINE pose in front of the fireplace while JANELLE snaps a few photos.

JANELLE (CONT'D)
(looking at one of the
pictures)
Aw. That's... You both look so... This is good. This is
really good.

(Pulling them both into a hug.)

I love you both.

CATHERINE
I love you too, Mom. Here, come here, Daddy, let's get a picture.

BOBBY steps out and takes the camera. WAYNE and JANELLE stand on either side of CATHERINE and pose for the photo. CATHERINE looks genuinely happy, JANELLE and WAYNE smile weakly.

BOBBY

Say queso.

(he snaps a few pictures)

Pretty good.

CATHERINE

Oh-- I should go say goodbye to Eddie before we leave.

WAYNE helps CATHERINE up the stairs leaving BOBBY behind with the rest of the family. Silence.

JANELLE

How are you doing?

BOBBY shrugs weakly, then sinks into the couch. JANELLE and JUNE share a look. JUNE sits next to him.

JUNE

You made the mistake of the lifetime. But you know what? You got yourself a second chance. It's a gift. A gift. And it came at a great cost. Now-- don't go getting worked up about it-- The worst thing you can do in the face of that gift is wallow, wallow in the guilt and regret and shame of it. Cylus made his choice so that you could live a full life. Now, don't you think it's important to look at yourself in the mirror, in your tuxedo, and chose to keep living?

(BOBBY nods.)

And don't you think you've got yourself the prettiest girl for thousand miles all guzzied up for you?

(BOBBY nods)

So... be with her then. Everything's already done. Just go on. Live a life. Okay?

BOBBY nods. JUNE gives him a couple of kisses on the cheek.

CATHERINE

(off stage)

Bobby! Eddie wants a picture with us!

WAYNE descends the stairs. BOBBY takes a breath and heads toward the stairs, followed by JUNE.

JUNE

I'll take it for you!

WAYNE stands before JANELLE. They listen to the soft sounds of shifting from upstairs.

There's a laugh, several laughs, coming from the upstairs room. They respond to this silently.

Then, the kids comes down the stairs.

JANELLE

You ready to go?

CATHERINE

Yep.

JANELLE

Come here.

JANELLE and CATHERINE hug. WAYNE shakes BOBBY'S hand.

WAYNE

Have a good time tonight.

BOBBY

Will do.

CATHERINE hugs WAYNE. Then in a quick flurry of goodbyes the kids have left, the door closing behind them. Beat. The house is so quiet now, but for the slow, sweet song playing softly on the radio. They listen to the quiet. They listen to the song.

JANELLE

Come here.

WAYNE drifts over to JANELLE. They dance a long, slow, hollow dance. This goes on for some time.

JANELLE (CONT'D)

We'll be alone soon.

WAYNE

Mm-hmm.

They dance.

JANELLE

...Are you ever coming back?

WAYNE

I don't know.

Their dancing slows to a stop, but they still hold each other, tightly, as if to keep from drowning. Then...

JANELLE

I know you are feeling this as much as I am, but it can't happen like this. We can't happen like this. I don't want to face a lifetime without sweetness in it. And it's all coming down on us now, and some things, most things will never be right again. But-- You left me alone with this. You left us alone with this. Your pain is so big, that you just left with it. So I gotta watch my baby...fade away, and I gotta watch you leave us too. Can't you see us anymore? Can't you see we need you here?...Baby?

WAYNE

(long beat)

It's all burnt up. I'm just the bark and limbs, but I'm burnt up inside. There ain't nothing holding me up no more. Can't hold my family up when I can't stand on my legs no more.

JANELLE pulls WAYNE'S face to hers. She kisses him and rests her forehead against his. They breathe there together for some time. Lights fade out with the song...

LIGHTS OUT

WAYNE MONOLOGUE

Lights up on the monologue area. WAYNE removes a crumpled, folded piece of paper from his pocket. He alternates between reading and speaking to the camera...

WAYNE

(clears his throat)

I'm not much good with, uh... speaking. Can never think of the right sort of thing to say. I been...just taking down a note or two when I think of them. Been thinking lately that maybe...maybe we're on the losing side of all this.

(beat. Gathers.)

Don't think too much on losing. Muhammad Ali lost to Frazier in '71 and he was the best-- just like you, so... There's a few things I thought every man should know before-- Before a man dies...he should know a few things about life.

(unfolds the paper)

[reads] A man's word is worth a piece of his soul-- keep it as best you can and don't give it if you know you can't keep it. [speaks] You're pretty good with this so... [reads] When you shake a hand, be firm about it and look the person in the eyes. -There's nothing wrong with walking away from a fight-- and there's nothing wrong with throwing a punch when you don't see another way.

-If you gotta throw a punch, you gotta drive through your first two knuckles-- the others break-- and shift through your weight, through your shoulder--[speaks] Punches don't come from the arm, lotta guys make that mistake so... [reads] Nothin' wrong with honest work and getting dirty in the process. -Always do your best. -Don't complain about things you can do something about. Do something about it. -Don't complain about things you can't do something about. [speaks, to self] Coulda' just wrote "don't complain" on that one... [reads] Liquor before beer, you're in the clear. Beer before liquor, never been sicker-- [speaks] That's just-- don't go mixing your drinks cuz some will knock you on your ass before you know it so... [reads] Steaks and burgers are medium-rare. Always. Non-negotiable. If it's overdone, send it back. [speaks] that one's pretty important. [reads] Another note on steaks: Never marinate a steak, and don't cover it with sauce. A good dry rub is okay. But salt and pepper will do just fine by a steak. -Say no when you need to. And respect no when you hear it-- especially from a girl.

(beat. He reads the next to himself...)

[speaks] This is one my dad told me... It's uh... [reads] Best way to be a good father, is to love your kid's mom...

(He nods. beat. Gathers.)

[reads] If you know nothing else in this life, I hope you know love. [speaks] I know I weren't always great at showing you, or saying it often, but you have it. You've always had it. I picked you up when you were born and it was like I didn't live in my own body anymore. Part of me was walking around outside of me. And... The thing is, son-- That word doesn't work the way it should. What I have for you is-- It reaches further than-- Can you *feel* what I'm-- What idiot thought four letters could contain what I have for you?

(Long beat.)

There's more. I just... I didn't have enough time or-- I couldn't finish the list so...

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE THIRTEEN

June. Daylight spills into the darkened house. It is mostly empty now - no furniture, only a few boxes left. One box, near the fireplace, has the antlers of the buck sticking out, though the 348 is still resting on it's hooks over the mantle. Near one wall sits the smaller TV atop another small box.

The front door creaks open - WAYNE steps slowly into the room, leaving the door open behind him.

He wears a black suit - the first button is undone, the tie loosened, his hair a mess. He looks shell-shocked as he drifts into the room - the camera dangling in his hand. WAYNE waits at the bottom of the stairs and closes his eyes, listening. Beat.

He looks around the room - watching an invisible figure move through the space. He notices the TV and turns it on. He slumps down onto the floor, listening to the TV as he flips through the photos and videos on the camera.

LIGHTS UP on the monologue area of the stage: THE SENATOR stands, delivering a speech to the crowd.

THE SENATOR

Well, yes. Yes. It was a disappointment. But I would hope that my constituents will remember that despite this set back -- and that's what this is, a set back-- that despite this set back, that I am committed to seeing meaningful healthcare reform enacted across this great nation. I wish that my colleagues across the aisle felt as I do but...

(beat. THE SENATOR listens to an unheard question)

At the end of the day, we weren't going to have the votes in the House to even bring the bill to the Senate, so we had to make the tough decision to table to bill until we know can move it through with compromising the integrity of what we're trying to bring about.

(beat. Listening to the unheard question)

I'll be addressing concerns by my constituents at my Town Hall meeting back in Lansing this very evening, yes. And while I would have hoped for more enthusiasm about my proposal, I was pleased that we were able to remove some of the more destructive parts of the current--

WAYNE turns off the TV - LIGHTS DOWN on the monologue area. Beat.

WAYNE gets up and sets the camera on top of the TV. He wanders over to the 348 on the wall and takes it down. He stares at the rifle for a moment, running his fingers along the barrel. Then he digs into the box with the antlers and removes a box of ammunition. He methodically loads the rifle. He looks to the door - cold eyes staring toward the outside.

Rifle in hand, WAYNE steps out of the house. Beat.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.