LITTLE MEN

Written by

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Loud conversation, laughter, singing, and even dancing: the teacher is missing in a 7th Grade classroom. This rare absence of authority is intensely enjoyed by the crowd. It looks like it’s party time for these KIDS.

They talk and laugh, show each other photos on their phones, draw spaceships and baboons on their notebooks, and fold pieces of paper into airplanes that fly around the room.

In a corner, a GROUP OF GIRLS dance to the tune of a song they are listening to on headphones.

On the other side of the room, TWO BOYS play like in a sword fight, without swords.

Suddenly, someone turns out the lights. There’s random shouting and laughter.

An overhead projector is turned on, and a couple of the kids start to make puppet figures that are seen on the white screen.

A door opens, and a voice is heard, grave and authoritative.

MR. PLUMMER (O.S.)
What is going on here?!

The kids scramble back to their seats as the lights go on.
MR. PLUMMER, the teacher, has come in.

MR. PLUMMER
What is this mess?? Didn’t you promise me to be quiet? Can’t I even leave you alone for five minutes?? Lionel, sit down. Sit down, I said! Melissa, put your phone away. Put it away right now! I asked you to be quiet, and... look at you. What a disappointment.

Mr. Plummer wanders around the classroom, inspecting everyone. Each kid has a different reaction. Some are frightened, others think it’s funny. Some are respectful, and some others, defiant.

The teacher stops by a desk that’s covered by a VERY COLORFUL DRAWING, while the STUDENT rushes to put away his large collection of Caran d’Ache pencils neatly in the box.

MR. PLUMMER (CONT’D)
Jacob, what is this?
JACOB “JAKE” JARDINE is pale and slender, with straight black hair, a bit longer than the other kids, and deep brown eyes – pretty in a delicate way, and shy, different from the other tougher boys in the class.

JAKE
It’s the sky, Mr. Plummer.

Mr. Plummer picks up his drawing and shows it to the class.

MR. PLUMMER
A green sky with yellow stars??

JAKE
(barely audible)
It’s Camp Jupiter’s sky.

MR. PLUMMER
Watch out, Jacob: Vincent van Gogh ended up cutting off his own ear.

Some of the boys have a ball with this. Girls cover their mouths not to laugh out loud. Jake blushes, his eyes fill up with quiet, angry tears; he wasn’t even talking to anyone, he was just drawing, doing his thing. Life is so unfair.

MR. PLUMMER
Quiet!! I said quiet, everybody!
This is not a playroom. It’s not an art studio. Much less a disco, Ms. Neves. It’s a classroom. It is my classroom, and I asked you to be quiet. A simple request, and you showed me you don’t know how to behave yourselves. Was I talking to the walls? Amanda, please collect everybody’s homework, and bring them to me.

AMANDA, the teacher’s favorite, promptly goes around the class collecting homework. The individual students now listen intently to Mr. Plummer’s speech. But there are exceptions; one or two still defy his authority, swallowing a laughter that cannot contain itself.

MR. PLUMMER (O.S.)
If I had to leave the class, it is because I had something very important to do. I come back, and I see you screaming and dancing! There’s a saying, it’s an old saying, that says: “Silence is golden.” Write this down, children.

" (MORE)
Silence is golden but my eyes still see. Talking is cheap, people follow like sheep.”

Mr. Plummer writes this up on the board. Jake, instead of writing, furiously draws a wild dancing cobra on his notebook.

MR. PLUMMER
What does this mean?

Amanda raises her hand, ready to give an answer.

MR. PLUMMER
Not now, Amanda. I want you all to write down your thoughts on this: “silence is golden.”

He underlines “silence is golden” on the board.

MR. PLUMMER (CONT’D)
Every child is to write an essay on its meaning. Two pages minimum. That’s your homework for tomorrow. Don’t even come to the class if you haven’t done it! Now, let’s open our books. Page 23. Lionel, start reading from the top. Stand up, please. Stand up so we can all hear you.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE SCHOOL – DAY

Large groups of KIDS are coming out through the main gate of the school. PILAR, a Filipino woman in her 50’s, waits outside looking attentively at every kid who walks out. She sees the one she’s looking for.

In the middle of different groups and cliques, Jake comes walking alone.

PILAR
Jake! Jake! Hey, Jake! Here!

Jake sees her, then runs and gives her a big hug, longer than expected.

PILAR
Hey hey hey. Look at you.

She ruffles his hair lovingly.
JAKE
What happened?

PILAR
Your parents are going to be coming home very late tonight. Come on. Let’s go.

They begin to walk together away from the school.

JAKE
I’m thirsty.

PILAR
We can stop by Papaya King on the way home.

JAKE
Yes!

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE STREET - DAY

Jake and Pilar are walking. Jake now has a drink from Papaya King in his hand.

PILAR
Listen, Jake. It’s your grandfather Max. There have been some... developments.

JAKE
Some what?

PILAR
I mean, he got sick, and had to go to the hospital.

JAKE
Sick with what?

PILAR
I’m sure your parents will talk to you when they get home. But I’m going to make dinner for you. What do you want?

He thinks for a moment.
JAKE
I don’t know.
(pause)
What happened to Grandpa Max?

PILAR
When you’re old, things happen, Jake. C’mon, let’s make the light. We need to get to the grocery.

They cross the street and continue on.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT/JAKE’S ROOM - DAY

Jake is at his desk working on a drawing.

INT. UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT/KITCHEN & LIVING ROOM - DAY

A comfortable, but cramped, NYC apartment.

In the kitchen, Pilar is preparing a steaming pot of caldereta, Filipino beef stew.

A phone starts ringing, and Jake storms out of his bedroom.

PILAR
Hey! Did you finish your homework?

Jake grabs the phone.

JAKE
Jardine residence, good evening.

We hear the voice on the other end of the line.

STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
Good evening. And who am I talking to?

JAKE
Who is this?

STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
This is Stu Gershman, I’m an old friend of Max Jardine’s. Is this Jacob?

JAKE
Yes.
STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
Oh Jacob, last time I saw you, you were a little baby. I guess you’re all grown up now.

JAKE
Umm...

STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
Is your dad at home? Your mom?

JAKE
No, they’re not home yet.

STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
Oh well. I’m calling because... I’m very sorry to hear about your grandfather, Jacob. Max and I knew each other for so long, we met when we were about your age. You must be - what, ten now?

JAKE
Twelve.

STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
He was such a dear old friend of mine, your granddaddy was. Do you know when the service is going to be?

JAKE
What service?

STU GERSHMAN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
The funeral. I imagine there’s going to be a service soon?

Jake pauses to take this in - he has just learned that his grandfather has died.

JAKE
Hold on a second.

He goes to the kitchen and gives the phone to Pilar.

PILAR
Who is it?
JAKE
I don’t know.

EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/CASA DE MODA – DAY

LEONOR CALVELLI rolls down the metal shutters of a Brooklyn storefront. A sign above reads “CASA DE MODA”. It’s the ground floor commercial space of a two-story row house on a commercial street in Brooklyn. She pushes down the last bit of the gate with her foot to lock it up. You can still go in and out through a door space that’s open. She lights up a cigarette and leans on the gate, calmly surveying the street - a daily routine.

Leonor is in her early 50’s, dark hair and dark eyes, her beauty toughened up by a hard life. After a few puffs, she hears a car parking in front, doors open and close. Leonor recognizes someone, and throws her cigarette out. She opens the door, and calls inside the store.

LEONOR
Antonio! Antonio!

TONY (O.S.)
What?!

LEONOR
Come! Come here!*

* - Throughout the film, italics will indicate when Leonor, Tony and others speak Spanish.

She forces a smile, greeting the still unknown visitor, then she turns to inside and calls again, impatiently.

LEONOR
Antonio!!

EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/CASA DE MODA – DAY

Across the street from Leonor, Jake is helping his parents BRIAN and KATHY JARDINE get plates of food wrapped in cellophane and other catering goods from out of the car. The couple, dressed in formal dark clothes, have the youthful look of people who can afford to take a nice vacation once a year.

Jake sees when ANTONIO “TONY” CALVELLI, a handsome 13 year old boy with dark hair and eyes, comes running out from inside the store, and stops next to Leonor.
LEONOR
What were you doing?? If I say ‘come here', you have to come. Give them a hand. Go.

But Tony doesn’t move, unsure of what to do. He looks at Jake, who is looking at him.

Brian drops a plate in Jake’s hands and goes towards Leonor, with an extended hand.

BRIAN
Hello Mrs. Calvelli. Brian Jardine, we’ve met.

LEONOR
Of course, Brian. I’m so sad for what has happened. I’m so sorry.

Jake sees when Leonor, suddenly overtaken by emotion, grabs his father’s hand and pulls him closer for a hug, which makes Brian visibly uncomfortable. Leonor tries to hide her tears.

LEONOR
I’m sorry. Your father was a such a wonderful man.

BRIAN
Thank you.

LEONOR
He really was, you know.

BRIAN
I know.

LEONOR
This is my son Antonio.

Kathy approaches, carrying a plate of food.

BRIAN
I don’t think you’ve met my wife Kathy.

LEONOR
Hi. Nice to meet you. Leonor.

Kathy smiles warmly, as Brian opens the door to the house.

KATHY
So nice to meet you too. Sorry, my hands are full.
BRIAN
We’re having a little reception upstairs. Just family and a few friends.

LEONOR
Of course.

Brian and Kathy go upstairs with their bags.

Left alone by the car, Jake tries to grab a sketchbook from inside as he balances the big plate of food with his other hand and then, a bit clumsy, ends up dropping the bag.

Tony is suddenly there to help him out. He kneels down to pick up pages with drawings, pencils and stuff spilling out of the bag, immediately recognizing the first drawing he sees – a girl with red wings flying through a thundercloud.

TONY
Ella the Harpy!

JAKE
Can you hand that to me?

TONY
She’s a nerd, but I have a thing for redheads... Don’t you?

JAKE
Here, pass me that. I can carry it.

In the distance, Leonor watches, while Tony helps by pulling another set of plates and bottles out of the car, organizing a crate to be carried off.

TONY
Tyson is such a douchebag.

JAKE
Not in the end, he’s not. I just finished The Blood of Olympus.

TONY
I have the game, wanna play?

JAKE
Now? I’d like to, but... I can’t. It’s my grandfather’s--

TONY
I know. I never know what to say in these situations.
JAKE
I think you’re supposed to say, “I’m sorry for your loss.”

TONY
That’s right! I’m sorry for your loss.

JAKE
Oh, that’s okay.

Tony finds one last drawing that was left on the floor in the car.

TONY
Wait a minute: what’s this one here?

JAKE
It’s the sky.

TONY
Did you make this??

JAKE
Yeah, it’s the sky above Camp Jupiter, the day of the battle.

TONY
You’re a real artist!

JAKE
Not really.

TONY
Of course you are. This is awesome! You know you’ll really like this neighborhood.

JAKE
We don’t live here. It’s just a reception.

TONY
It’s become a very bohemian area. You know what bohemian means?

JAKE
Yeah...

TONY
Very artistic.
BRIAN (O.S.)
Got it, son?

Brian is back by the car to pick up the stuff.

BRIAN
You okay with that, Antonio?

TONY
You can call me Tony.

BRIAN
Well thank you, Tony. I appreciate the help.

The two boys follow Brian towards the house, the three of them carrying plates and bags.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/FAMILY AREA – DUSK

The apartment is old and in desperate need of a paint job. It’s a large space, crammed with the stuff of a long life. There are family photos, piles of National Geographic magazines next to faded velvety couches and solid furniture. A small, vintage color TV sits alone in the corner.

There’s a quiet reception going on, with most people wearing black, or dark colors, and talking softly to each other. Amongst the mostly older friends and relatives of the deceased are Brian’s sister AUDREY and her husband JAMES, and their teenage son, LIAM, dressed in a suit. They are sitting on a couch next to Brian, leafing through a photo album.

BRIAN
Let me see. That was our first year in the house. Look; I still had braces.

AUDREY
Dad looks so young here.

BRIAN
He was a handsome guy.

AUDREY
Listen to you.

BRIAN
What?

AUDREY
You look just like him, and you know it. Can I have this? Please?
BRIAN
Yes. I’ll let you have the photo
IF...

Brian picks up a book on the table.

BRIAN
...you let me have the first
edition of *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

AUDREY
Now, wait a minute.

6A INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/KITCHEN - DAY

In the kitchen, KATHY is re-furbishing a tray of pastries with new ones from a box from an Italian bakery. Pilar is beside her, cutting fruit for a pitcher of punch.

6B INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/FAMILY AREA - DAY

Jake is sipping some juice, like a cocktail, and looking at the art on the wall: a couple of oil paintings of Parisian streets in the wintertime of dubious quality doesn’t arouse much interest, and he ends up in front of a vintage movie poster on the wall, with ahead of its time 60s graphics - probably the best piece of art in the apartment.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Jake, come here.

Jake goes to see his father, who’s standing next to STU GERSHMAN, a well dressed gentleman in his 70’s.

BRIAN
Do you remember Grandpa’s friend
Stu Gershman?

JAKE
I don’t know.

STU GERSHMAN
Look at you, all grown up now.
How’s school?

JAKE
Okay.

STU GERSHMAN
So, what kind of sports do you like
to play?
Jake doesn’t play any sports, and it’s probably a point of contention between father and son, given the sudden uncomfortable moment of silence.

**BRIAN**
He likes to draw and paint.

Jake blushes.

**STU GERSHMAN**
So you’d like to be an illustrator when you grow up?

**JAKE**
I don’t know.

**STU GERSHMAN**
Well, come here. Come here.

He pulls Jake in uncomfortably tight.

**STU GERSHMAN**
I want to tell you a few things about your grandfather, Jake: he liked to play ball but was a horrible pitcher; he hated summer but went nuts seeing the ladies walk by in mini-skirts; and he was the most loyal friend you could have. Loyalty was his greatest quality.

**BRIAN**
Aww... Thanks, Stu. Did you hear that, Jake?

Jake is saved from Stu by a knock on the door. He runs to open it, and there she is: Leonor holding a beautiful cake. Kathy, who also heard the knock, comes to see what’s going on.

**LEONOR**
It’s a dessert we make for special occasions in my country.

She hands the cake to Kathy.

**LEONOR**
I hope you like it.

Jake watches everything.

**KATHY**
Oh my God. You didn’t have to.
LEONOR
Max loved this cake, so I thought....

KATHY
Come in. You should come in.

LEONOR
It’s okay.

KATHY
Please. I insist.

LEONOR
No, I just wanted to bring the cake.

KATHY
Sorry if we didn’t say anything earlier. Brian and I... we’re both very tired. It’s all been so fast.

LEONOR
It’s okay. I still have some paperwork to do at the store.

KATHY
Thank you so much for this. It’s very kind of you. Thank you.

Leonor leaves, and Jake shuts the door. Kathy is left with the beautiful cake on her hands. She looks across the room and sees Brian, in the middle of a crowd, holding court, being a good actor.

INT. JARDINE HOUSE/STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Brian walks down the interior stairs of the house, carrying a heavy bag full of trash. At the bottom of the stairs, he turns and walks down the dark corridor that leads to the backyard.

He finds the large metal trash containers, and throws the bags in.

Alone for the first time all day, Brian is overtaken by memories and allows himself a good cry.

INT. CASTING OFFICE - DAY

Brian is sitting at a table in a bare room, speaking in a strong Italian-American Brooklyn accent.
BRIAN
I swear B, I’m surprised at you. I sit there waiting for you to wake up, but everything’s great with you.

We see he is holding a script, next to SUZANNE, a famous actress, who’s also with a script in her hands. They are reading from Arthur Miller’s A View from the Bridge. Brian is reading the role of “Eddie” as Suzanne plays his wife, “Beatrice”.

An OPERATOR tapes Brian’s performance with a video camera on a tripod.

SUZANNE
No, everything ain’t great with me.

BRIAN
No?

SUZANNE
No. But I got other worries.

BRIAN
Why? What other worries you got?

SUZANNE
When am I gonna be a wife again, Eddie?

BRIAN
I ain’t been feeling good. They bother me since they came.

SUZANNE
It’s almost three months you don’t feel good. It’s three months, Eddie.

BRIAN
I don’t know, B. I don’t want to talk about it.

SUZANNE
Nice! Okay.

Suzanne smiles at Brian, already out of character. But Brian really would love to keep going.

BRIAN
You go “you don’t like me, heh?”
Suzanne looks for help from the audience, gently cutting Brian off.

DEBORAH (O.S.)
That’s good, Jardine.

The casting director, DEBORAH, sits with scripts and lists under a reading light, and a male ASSISTANT next to her. A DIRECTOR a PRODUCER, and a PRODUCER’S ASSISTANT sit next to him.

SUZANNE
(to the director)
Yeah, I need a break.

DEBORAH
Take a break, Suzanne.

Suzanne smiles again at Brian, and comes close to kiss him goodbye.

SUZANNE
I’m starving. I’ve been here since ten.

BRIAN
Of course.

SUZANNE
How’s Kathy?

BRIAN
She’s good.

SUZANNE
And your son?

BRIAN
Jake. He’s great. He’s in seventh grade already.

SUZANNE
Oh my God, I remember him running around backstage at The Lortel, when we did...

BRIAN
Dark Rapture?

SUZANNE
Yes! How old was he?

BRIAN
Two. Three, maybe.
SUZANNE
Time flies by.

BRIAN
It really does.

SUZANNE
Well, it was great to see you.

BRIAN
Great to see you also, Suzanne. Maybe we’ll see each other again soon.

SUZANNE
I hope so.
(to the audience)
Jamie? Do you have lunch for me?

EXT. CASTING OFFICE - DAY

ROGER, Brian’s agent, is standing outside the theater, texting on his phone. Brian comes out, and they begin to walk.

BRIAN
She fucking hates me.

ROGER
She doesn’t hate you.

BRIAN
Ever since B.U. She dropped out - I stayed and graduated. Every time we’ve seen each other since then, she always tries to prove that she’s better than me.

ROGER
You’re paranoid. You did okay there.

BRIAN
Did I?

ROGER
Yes. But it’s true that she’ll have a say in who’s cast as her husband.

BRIAN
I’m telling you. She doesn’t like me. I’m in a slump, Roger. You need to help me here.
ROGER
Listen, maybe Broadway is not the right way to go for you right now.

BRIAN
I thought that was the strategy.

ROGER
Why don’t we go have some coffee? You have options. There are a bunch of things that could pan out. Let me just finish this.

Roger goes back to his texting.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment has been completely redone. The old furniture is out, more modern - if used - furniture is in. There’s less stuff, so it looks more spacious. There are new appliances in the kitchen, and some of the art from Brian and Kathy’s old Manhattan apartment now hangs on the walls, which have been newly painted with fresh colors. Brian, Kathy and Jake have moved in, and it looks really nice.

There are still piles of plates and pans to be put away, and a few boxes on the floor by the kitchen. Pilar is taking stuff out of one of them. Plates and trays and things wrapped individually in bubble wrap and newspaper. Kathy unwraps them and looks for places in the kitchen cabinets to put them away.

While she’s putting them away, Pilar unwraps a beautiful crystal serving plate.

PILAR
I don’t remember this.

Kathy takes a looks at it, trying to remember where it came from.

KATHY
Oh my God. We took it home.

INT. CASA DE MODA/STORE - DAY

The store has women’s clothes on display on simple racks, with a few chosen pieces shown on a large table. It’s an old-fashioned store; the ambiance is simple and unsophisticated.

BIANCA, a salesgirl, is showing a dress with floral patterns to a CUSTOMER as Kathy comes in, carrying the crystal plate.
She is going to say hello to the salesgirl, but doesn’t want to interrupt and goes directly towards Leonor, who is in the back of the store behind a sewing machine, fixing the collar of a shirt.

KATHY
Leonor.

LEONOR
Hi Kathy. The boys are in my office, in the back.

KATHY
No, no. Look what I just found.

LEONOR
It’s my plate.

KATHY
I think that night we just ended up taking everything back to our apartment. And then we put things away, and I forgot. I’m so sorry.

LEONOR
No worries! Please.

KATHY
It’s a beautiful plate.

She takes it from Kathy’s hand.

LEONOR
Are you not working today?

KATHY
I don’t see patients on Monday. I need a day a week to organize my life, you know.

LEONOR
Good for you.

KATHY
The store looks cute.

LEONOR
Huh... we’re not doing so well.

KATHY
I like that dress over there. The one with the floral patterns.
LEONOR
I love that one. You should try it on.

KATHY
I have to go back-

LEONOR
Oh, c’mon. It’ll take a minute.

INT. CASA DE MODA/STORE - DAY

Kathy pulls open the curtain wearing the floral dress, and shows it to Leonor, who’s waiting outside.

LEONOR
Perfection.

Kathy walks towards the mirror wearing the floral dress.

KATHY
Are you sure? I don’t know.

Leonor comes with expert hands and pulls a pinch on the shoulder strap.

LEONOR
It looks great. All you need is a little fixing up here, maybe a tiny bit tighter here on the waist. But the dress is beautiful.

KATHY
How much is it?

LEONOR
Whatever the price, I’ll give you ten percent discount. Let me see.

Leonor looks for a tag around the cuffs.

KATHY
Did you make this?

LEONOR
No. Not this one. But everything here is handmade by the designers. This one is two hundred and fifty. It’s made by a woman named Talita - she’s from Colombia, and very talented. They probably do it in their kitchens, you know what I mean? They’re not famous. Yet.
There’s a video game on the TV. Monsters and battles, and sound effects.

And sitting in front of the TV set, taking it all in, are Jake and Tony. It’s a small space in the back of the store that has been turned into an office - just a simple desk, a TV, a chair and a couch in the corner.

Kathy comes in, dressed in the floral pattern dress. Leonor is right behind her.

KATHY
Guys, what do you think?

The boys don’t move an inch, their attention 100% on the TV screen.

KATHY
Jake? Jake, what is our deal?

She turns to Leonor.

KATHY
They’re like zombies when they start playing these games.

JAKE
(eyes still on the screen)
Mom. I’m on vacation!

KATHY
So?

JAKE
Dad said it was okay.

KATHY
We have this rule in the house; no games during the week. And no internet before five either.

LEONOR
But during vacation they have all this free time, and what are you going to do?

TONY
Shhh! Quiet!!

LEONOR
Antonio! Watch your tone of voice, por favor!

(MORE)
LEONOR (CONT'D)
(back to Kathy)
When he’s playing this stuff - I know it’s not so good, but at least he’s around, and I know where to find him.

Tony pauses the game.

TONY
(polite)
Mrs. Jardine. Maybe you will let us finish this level, please?

LEONOR
That’s better.

KATHY
Sure, you can finish. But first you have to tell me: what do you think? The dress?

TONY
Great. I actually thought it was yours.

KATHY
Jake?

JAKE
Love it. Love the flowers.

The boys will say anything to get rid of their moms, so they can continue to play their game.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/JAKE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the wall of Jake’s new bedroom is the vintage movie poster that used to belong to his grandfather. The room is painted in bright colors, with a small bed, a small desk - a young man’s cocoon.

Jake is on his bed, a sketch pad on his lap and his Caran d’Ache pencils next to him.

The door opens. Brian comes in.

BRIAN
Why don’t you come help me prepare dinner?

JAKE
Where’s Mom?
BRIAN
Your mother had an emergency with a patient. She’s going to be late tonight.

JAKE
Another suicide?

BRIAN
Jake!

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brian washes greens for the salad, as Jake enters.

JAKE
Dad, I can’t find my drawings.

BRIAN
What drawings? Help me cut these.

Brian hands Jake vegetables from the sink.

JAKE
The series I made on Percy Jackson. The sea of monsters?

BRIAN
Those old drawings?

Jake starts cutting vegetables julienne style, very carefully.

JAKE
Yes.

BRIAN
Did you look in the trunk?

JAKE
Yes, Dad. I looked. They’re not there.

BRIAN
I don’t know, Jake. Maybe they got thrown away.

JAKE
Why would you do that? They’re my drawings!

BRIAN
Why don’t you just make new ones.
JAKE
New ones are never like the old ones!

Jake wishes he could strangle his dad right now. He’s truly upset.

BRIAN
Jake. We moved. We got rid of furniture. We threw away clothes, and we gave books away. We have a new apartment.

JAKE
So?

BRIAN
Listen. Let me tell you something. It’s good to get rid of stuff. It’s hard at first, but then it feels really good. You have to learn to let go.

Jake keeps cutting the vegetables. He’s so angry, it’s hard not to chop the zucchini into a million pieces....

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/FAMILY AREA – NIGHT

Brian and Jake are having dinner.

BRIAN
I play Trigorin. He’s a celebrated writer, and the boyfriend of a famous actress, Arkadina.

JAKE
Why the weird names?

BRIAN
Can I finish? Her son Konstantin is an aspiring writer who lives with his uncle Sorin in this dacha, where they all come together one summer to see his new play.

JAKE
Finished?

BRIAN
That’s just the beginning, actually.
JAKE
What’s a dacha?

BRIAN
A dacha is like a big country estate in Russia. That’s where the whole thing takes place, and that’s why the funny names. There’s also Nina. She’s the neighbors’ daughter, who wants to be an actress. At first she seems to be in love with Konstantin but ends up having an affair with my character, Trigorin.

JAKE
Sounds complicated.

BRIAN
Well, it is complex. And unexpected. But it has a lot of humor in it too.

JAKE
What part?

The door opens, and Kathy comes in from work.

KATHY
Good. You guys are already eating.

JAKE
Hi Mom.

BRIAN
How was it?

Kathy drops her bag on a chair and goes to wash her hands before coming to join them at the table.

KATHY
Fine. She’s doing okay. The problem now is her husband.

16A
INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/BATHROOM – NIGHT

Kathy is washing her hands in the sink.

KATHY
But the last thing I want to do right now is talk about work. I’m starving.
INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/FAMILY AREA - NIGHT

They’re already having entrees, but the salad bowl is still on the table.

BRIAN
I was just telling Jake about the play.

JAKE
I thought you weren’t working with the Terrain anymore. I thought you were going to do Broadway now.

Kathy joins them and helps herself to a big plate.

BRIAN
It’s not that simple.

JAKE
You said you weren’t doing this non-profit stuff anymore. That the strategy was to reach “a wider audience”.

BRIAN
Well, things have changed.

KATHY
Jake, you should applaud your father for being adaptable. That’s what life is all about.

Kathy’s worn out. It’s been a long day.

EXT. HERBERT VON KING PARK - DAY

A tree-filled park in the middle of a quiet Brooklyn neighborhood. On a grassy lawn, a group of boys, 12 to 15 years old, are kicking a soccer ball into a goal. Two captains, UMAR and JOEY, are choosing one by one to form two teams.

Tony rushes by on his scooter, fast. He avoids bumps – he knows the area by heart. As he approaches the group of boys, one of the boys tries to stop him.

UMAR
Tony! Hey! Come play! We need one more here!
But Tony doesn’t stop, and now comes Jake behind on his ROLLER BLADES, trying to catch up. He’s surprised by a bump on the road, makes a false move, and almost falls.

JOEY
Oops! Watch out, Katy Perry!

All the boys laugh. Jake is upset but keeps going, pretending he didn’t hear anything.

17A INT. JARDINE HOUSE/STAIRWELL – DAY

The boys enter the foyer of an old NYC tenement apartment building. Tony carries his scooter, while Jake tries to take off his blades as fast as he can.

They clomp up several flights.

18 INT. LEONOR’S APARTMENT – DAY

An old apartment, functional and in need of paint job. Modest furniture dominates the space, but there are a couple of eye catching art pieces; a large modernist painting and a striking sculpture. In a corner, there’s a large bookshelf filled with books, but one corner has been turned into a bar with a few different types of glasses, and various liquor bottles.

Leonor is in the living room preparing a drink next to HERNÁN ALONSO, Latin, early 60’s, dressed in a suit and tie. He stands close to Leonor, and leans over to help her with the drink. At this very moment, Jake and Tony burst in through the door.

TONY
(out of breath)
Eight minutes and twenty three seconds!

He throws his scooter on the floor and runs to the kitchen. Jake stays by the door, polite, waiting to greet the elders, roller blades in hand.

LEONOR
Hey! Hey! Hey!

TONY
(looking at his cellphone)
A new record! Around the block and up the stairs in eight minutes and twenty three seconds!
LEONOR
Wow, I think you should call the Guinness Book.

TONY
That’s a great idea! I’ll write them an email.

Tony grabs a glass and opens the refrigerator to get some water.

JAKE
Good evening, Mrs. Calvelli.

LEONOR
Hi Jake.
(to her son)
You haven’t said hello, Mister!

TONY
Hello Hernàn. This is my friend Jacob Jardine. But we call him Jake.

HERNÀN
Hello there, Jake.

TONY
He used to live in Manhattan, but now he lives above Mami’s store. Jake, this is Hernàn.

He finishes his glass of water, and runs to his room. Jake stays alone with the adults.

HERNÀN
Ah! So you are the Grandson-

LEONOR
(cuts him off)
Yes. Max was his grandfather. His father is Brian Jardine, the one that I told you about.

JAKE
My father’s an actor. And my mom is a psychotherapist.

HERNÀN
I see. So how do you like Brooklyn so far?
JAKe
I like it a lot. It’s more peaceful than Manhattan, and we have much more space. It’s great.

HERNÀN
So Jake, are you going to be an actor, like your father?

JAKe
I don’t know.

HERNÀN
But you look like an artist yourself. With that long hair and everything.

JAKe
Maybe.

This conversation is getting too deep for Jake. Leonor sees that he’s uncomfortable, and helps him out.

LEONOR
He’ll tell us more later, right Jake? Go ahead.

Jake runs inside Tony’s room.

INT. LEONOR’S APARTMENT/TONY’S ROOM – DAY

Tony’s room is typical teenager with a small bed, a desk with computer and posters of music and movies. Tony’s on the bed, lost in thought. He’s clearly been listening in on the conversation in the other room.

TONY
Is your father any good at acting?

JAKe
I don’t know. Maybe.

TONY
I thought if he was, I might have a conversation with him, cause I’m going to be an actor when I grow up. Maybe he can give me some pointers.

JAKe
Sure, yeah. I guess. He’s not that successful or anything.
Tony jumps off his bed and pulls open the drawers of his desk.

TONY
My dream is to go to the LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts? You know that school? Nicki Minaj went there. And Al Pacino, but he flunked out.

JAKE
I think my dad applied there.

TONY
Really? It’s my dream school. I’m looking around at some theater classes, and practicing on my own, so I can audition next year for ninth grade.

He pulls out a stack of plays from his drawer.

TONY (CONT’D)
These are some of the scripts I’m working on. I’m going to need to practice a lot, and sometimes I might need a partner, okay?

JAKE
But I’m not an actor.

TONY
That’s okay. You can read, can’t you? Here look at this. This is a scene from Pariah, or the Outcast, by August Strindberg. It’s perfect for us to work on, cause it’s just two guys.

Jake takes the book tentatively, and flips through it.

TONY
And you know what, if you practice your drawing more, and get better, maybe we could both go to LaGuardia. It’s for all kinds of artists. It’s very Bohemian.

Jake puts the script down, uncommitted.

JAKE
I guess I can try.
TONY
That’s the spirit.

JAKE
Is Hernàn your mom’s boyfriend?

TONY
Hernàn? Eww, gross. No. He’s just a friend of her’s from Chile. My mom is still married to my dad. They just don’t live together much.

JAKE
I don’t understand.

TONY
Me either! My dad travels a lot, so they are never together. He’s a nurse, and he works for Doctors Without Borders, which is from what I can tell a job you get if you want free plane flights.

JAKE
Where is he now?

TONY
He’s in Angola. That’s in Africa. Until he was 20 he never left this neighborhood, and then once he left he barely ever came back. If I wasn’t here I don’t think he’d ever come back to Brooklyn.

Tony jumps up and goes to his desk.

TONY
Look what he sent me.

He pulls a box from a shelf, full of books and CDs and stuff.

JAKE
Do you miss having him around more?

TONY
At first I did. But it’s been a few years now, so I got used to it.

JAKE
Sometimes my dad goes away, if he’s shooting a movie. But it hasn’t really happened in a while.
TONY
Maybe he’s not the guy I should talk to.

JAKE
I don’t know. He’s been in a bunch of plays and stuff.

Tony is still looking... and he finally finds it.

TONY
Found it!

He picks up a big book and drops it in Tony’s lap.

TONY
My dad and I are going to go on a safari, and these are just like some of the animals we are going to see.

Jake looks through pictures of African savannahs and animals.

JAKE
Do you wish they still lived together?

TONY
Sometimes. When my dad comes to visit, he’ll cook Porcheta. It’s like roast pork butt.

JAKE
Ewww.

TONY
(matter of fact)
It’s good.
(pause)
We sit at the table just the three of us, and he tells stories about his work and the places he’s been, and stories about the different people he’s met in Africa. Then it seems like normal. But then, pretty soon they start fighting about something stupid. And I realize it’s better when he’s not around.

JAKE
Imagine if your mom goes with you on your safari, and they end up falling in love again.
TONY
I think there’s very little chance of that happening.

JAKE
But just imagine: you get an envelope one day. You open it and it’s two tickets to a safari. One for you, and one for your mom. And she decides to go, because she feels like she needs a vacation. So when you get to Africa, your dad picks you both up at the airport, and takes you to this incredible place. Like this photo here. You see lions and elephants, giraffes. And then, it’s the end of a beautiful day in the African savannah. Your dad wants to take you up this big hill to see the sunset, but you’re too tired, so you tell your parents you’re going to rest in your hotel room.

TONY
So they go the two of them alone. And when they get there, the colors of the sky are like nothing they’ve ever seen before...

JAKE
A green sky with yellow stars...

The door opens, with Leonor in an apron and a wooden spoon in hand.

LEONOR
Who wants pasta primavera?

JAKE
Yes!

Jake jumps up and goes out running. Tony stays in for a moment, imagining...

EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/BACKYARD – DAY

Jake and Tony and Audrey’s son LIAM are kicking a soccer ball and running around the freshly cut grass and new plants – the yard has visibly improved since the old days, and the swing set has been removed.

Brian prepares a grill, talking with his sister Audrey.
Tony and Jake come in from outside and run down the hall.

Leonor is sitting at her desk going through the store receipts and expenses with a calculator, taking notes on a notebook, and entering info in the computer. She is not happy doing this kind of work, the numbers make her frustrated.

Leonor goes through the same papers one more time, re-entering the same numbers in the calculator when Tony and Jake storm into the office.

    TONY
    Mami, can I stay for dinner with the Jardine’s?

    LEONOR
    Tony...

    TONY
    Please Mami. They’re having hamburgers.

    JAKE
    And hot dogs.

    LEONOR
    We have dinner at home. Besides, I can’t come and pick you up later. And I don’t like you walking home alone at night.

    JAKE
    He can sleep over.

    LEONOR
    (to Jake) Have you talked to your father about this?

    JAKE
    He won’t mind.

    LEONOR
    Are you sure?

    TONY
    Please, Mami.
EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/BACKYARD - DAY

Brian and Audrey, holding chilled glasses of white wine, continue their conversation around the grill, when Jake comes running and interrupts.

JAKE
Dad!

BRIAN
Yes, Jake?

JAKE
Can Tony sleep over tonight?

Brian now sees Leonor and Tony approaching also.

BRIAN
Well, hello Leonor.

LEONOR
Sorry to interrupt, Brian.

BRIAN
No, please, you’re not... You’ve met my sister Audrey, haven’t you?

LEONOR
Yes, of course.

AUDREY
Hi Leonor. Long time no see.

LEONOR
Jake is asking if Tony can stay for dinner-

JAKE
And a sleep-over!

LEONOR
Yes, because after dinner it would be too late for him to walk home alone.

BRIAN
Tony, do you want to have hamburgers and hot dogs with us tonight?

TONY
Yes!
BRIAN
Done deal, bro.

He shakes hands with Tony. Tony and Jake go running to play in the grass.

LEONOR
(to Brian)
I just wanted to make sure with you...

BRIAN
Please. I can’t tell you how happy I am that Jake has a new friend. He spends too much time alone. And it’s not easy for him with other boys. So it’s great that he and Tony get along so well.

Leonor doesn’t respond.

BRIAN
You’ve got a great kid, but I guess you know that.

LEONOR
Thank you.

AUDREY
Leonor, do you want some wine?

Leonor considers for a moment.

AUDREY
Brian and I wanted to have a talk with you anyway, about some things, so maybe this is a good time.

LEONOR
No, thank you. I have to go back and finish some stuff at the office.

AUDREY
We’d love a minute with you if that’s ok. Right, Brian?

The kids fall on the grass running after the ball.

AUDREY
Liam, watch out! Your cousin is smaller than you!
LEONOR
I have to go. But thank you.

BRIAN
You know, Leonor, after my father died, there was so much to do. We decided to move in, and time just flew by. You and I haven’t really had a chance to talk about the store, and all that stuff. Maybe we can have a chat this week?

LEONOR
This week is not good for me. I’m doing inventory.

BRIAN
Next week?

LEONOR
Could be.

Brian gets his iPhone out, checking his calendar.

BRIAN
Thursday I finish rehearsal early, so I could come by early afternoon.

LEONOR
Sure.

BRIAN
Great.

23
EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Dinner is served. There are garden lights, flowers on the table, chilled wine. Kathy has joined them, in her usual work clothes, as has James, Audrey’s husband.

AUDREY
Truth is, the neighborhood is changing and that’s a very old-fashioned store.

BRIAN
C’mon guys! The burgers are getting cold.

KATHY
She complained to me that business wasn’t so good.
Jake and Tony approach the table. The adults continue their conversation in a hushed tone, once the boys are at the table.

BRIAN
Of course she’s going to say that. Contract is up.

AUDREY
My guy told me that a similar space in the area is going for five thousand.

KATHY
What??

JAKE
Can I have mine with cheese, mustard and ketchup, please?

KATHY
That’s crazy.

BRIAN
Guests first. What do you want on yours, Tony?

TONY
Cheese, onions, avocado. And ketchup, please.

AUDREY
That’s in the low numbers.

TONY
And mayonnaise.

KATHY
Scary.

BRIAN
Jake, have some salad also.

JAKE
I’ll have some afterwards.

BRIAN
Tony, salad?

TONY
No thank you, Mr. J. Is that alright if I call you that?
KATHY
And what is the number now?

BRIAN
Sure, Tony. That’s fine.

AUDREY
One something. For eight years, never an increase.

BRIAN
Maybe we should talk about this later?

Kathy agrees, shaking her head.

KATHY
So Tony, I hear your dad lives in Africa.

TONY
In Angola. It’s an old Portuguese colony in Africa. I wrote a paper on it last year at school, and got an B plus, which was pretty good, cause I only spent about an hour on it. Sometimes at my school the teachers are whack cause they give you good grades for the things you don’t try hard on, and bad grades for the things you do.

Everyone is enjoying Tony, who is making himself very comfortable.

TONY
Can you pass the ketchup, Mr. J?
I’ve always liked a lot of ketchup.

The big family, eating dinner in the garden, under the hanging lights.

23A INT. JARDINE HOUSE/STAIRWELL

The boys come racing down the interior stairwell of the building, skates and scooters in hand.

24 OMITTED
Wide shot of house as Jake finishes putting on his skates, and then follows Tony on his scooter down the sidewalk.

The boys roll down the sidewalk of a busy Brooklyn shopping street.

They cross a busy intersection. Jake trips on a bump, nearly falling, but catches himself in time.

Tony and Jake come in, sweaty and out of breath, looking around, not sure of where to go. A receptionist, LINDA, sits at a table full of fliers and a computer.

LINDA
Hi, can I help you guys?

TONY
We’re here for the acting class.

LINDA
We have quite a few. Do you mean the Breakthrough Class?

TONY
Yes. That one.

LINDA
Well, it’s twenty dollars for the first class. But you can buy a package of twenty classes for three hundred.

TONY
(to Jake)
Got cash, buddy?

Jake and Tony empty their pockets. Tony counts all their money together. There’s ten dollars between them. Jake finds one more. Eleven.

TONY
Oops, sorry. Hmm. What’s your name?
LINDA
My name is Linda. What’s yours?

TONY
Tony. And this is my friend Jake.

LINDA
Hi guys.

TONY
What is your sign?

LINDA
My sign?

TONY
Of the zodiac. But no. Let me guess.

LINDA
Go ahead.

TONY
You’re a Leo.

LINDA
How did you know??

TONY
Leos are very confident. You seem very sure of yourself.

LINDA
Wow. I’m impressed.

TONY
Linda, I’m going to be honest with you. My friend and I heard this place was the best acting school in the area, and we would love to check it out. To see if we want to make the investment. Can you make us a discount?

LINDA
Like I told you. If you buy a package of twenty, you get a discount.

TONY
They also say Leos are very generous.
LINDA
Comes down to fifteen bucks a class.

TONY
Well maybe you can help with something else.

LINDA
Sure.

TONY
Maybe you can give me some directions?

LINDA
Where to?

TONY
To your heart.

The receptionist is taken by surprise by the flirtatious joke. She laughs.

LINDA
You’re too much. Go in. But only this time. And don’t tell anyone.

Tony and Jake start past her, towards the classrooms.

TONY
Thank you, Linda. You won’t regret it!

LINDA
(calling out)
Down the hall to the last door on the right.

INT. ACTING OUT TALENT ACADEMY/CLASSROOM - DAY

Two girls, JULIA (14) and SALLY(13), are standing facing each other in the middle of the room, surrounded by a dozen more kids sitting in chairs, Jake and Tony, and EVA (also 14) among them.

There is a moment of silence, and then the ACTING TEACHER starts to talk.

ACTING TEACHER
The first thing is to really look at somebody, and just talk and listen, listen and talk.

(MORE)
ACTING TEACHER (CONT'D)
Not to act. The genesis of acting is seeing. Yes? That's the first thing. The raw material of all acting is seeing, observing, understanding what makes behavior. I would say pay attention! So when we start doing the repetition exercise, that person does it to you; you just react. Whereas a lot of actors make it happen. Yes? But that’s not acting. That’s pushing, whereas you should just be relaxed.

The kids are listening, intently, taking it in.

ACTING TEACHER
Does that make sense?

No one answers.

ACTING TEACHER
Okay, let’s begin.

Julia looks at Sally. Sally returns the look.

JULIA
You’re wearing a pretty shirt.

SALLY
I’m wearing a pretty shirt.

JULIA
You’re wearing a pretty shirt.

SALLY
Do you like my shirt?

The teacher interrupts, abruptly.

ACTING TEACHER
NO! No questions. Observations. Let’s start again.

Pause as the girls re-group.

SALLY
You have a little nose.

The other kids laugh.

ACTING TEACHER
Quiet! Concentrate.
SALLY
You have a little nose.

JULIA
I have a little nose.

SALLY
You have a little nose.

JULIA
Alright, I have a little nose.

SALLY
You have a little nose.

JULIA
I have a little nose.

SALLY
You seem a little bothered.

JULIA
I seem a little bothered.

SALLY
Yes. You seem a little bothered.

JULIA
You’re getting a kick out of that.

SALLY
I’m getting a kick out of that.

JULIA
Well don’t get offended.

SALLY
I’m not getting offended.

JULIA
You are acting like a baby.

SALLY
I’m acting like a baby.

ACTING TEACHER
Ok. Ok. Stop. That was okay. It could be better. Yes? Back to your seats.

He turns and looks at Jake.

ACTING TEACHER
You. Look at me. Don’t move.
Jake squirms, as if he’s been caught.

    ACTING TEACHER
    Stand up.

Jake reluctantly stands.

    ACTING TEACHER
    We’ve got to keep the contact.
    We’ve got to keep the repetition.
    The contact comes from my behavior.
    Not just what I say, but what I do.

Jake looks for help from Tony.

    ACTING TEACHER
    Look at me. Now tell me something
    you observed on your way here today.

    JAKE
    I almost fell.

Laughter from the other kids.

    ACTING TEACHER
    You almost fell.

    JAKE
    I almost fell crossing the Parkway.

    ACTING TEACHER
    (to the class)
    You see he didn’t do it. What was I
    saying?

    JAKE
    I’m sorry I don’t understand.

    ACTING TEACHER
    You don’t need to understand.
    Acting is not understanding. It’s
    feeling. It’s reacting. Does that
    make sense? Look at me. Listen to
    me.

Jake looks at him intently, trying to do the right thing.

    ACTING TEACHER
    What did I say without words? What
    did my behavior say? Now say it
    again.
JAKE
I’m sorry, say what again?

ACTING TEACHER
That you fell.

JAKE
You want me to say again that I fell?

ACTING TEACHER
Yes.

JAKE
With words?

ACTING TEACHER
Yes, with words!

JAKE
I almost fell on my way to class today.

ACTING TEACHER
You fell on your way to class today.

JAKE
I almost fell on my way to class today.

ACTING TEACHER
You fell on your way to class today.

JAKE
You’re not listening to me.

ACTING TEACHER
I’m not listening to you.

JAKE
You’re not listening to me.

Jake is getting more and more upset. Emotional.

ACTING TEACHER
I’m not listening.

JAKE
You’re not listening.

ACTING TEACHER
I’m not listening.
JAKE
(on the verge of crying)
You’re not listening.

ACTING TEACHER
Good! That’s it. Good. Do you all see the difference? Yes?

Tony is smiling, beaming. He’s in his element.

28
EXT. HERBERT VON KING PARK/AMPHITHEATER - DAY

The group of guys and girls seen inside the acting school are now hanging out in the amphitheater of a City Park. Jake and Tony, are among them - the youngest in the group.

TONY
Hey, I know you from St. Grace, right?

JULIA
Yeah, I used to go there. I go to Humanities Prep now, in Manhattan.

TONY
Oh, la di da.

EVA
We all went to St. Grace. There were some crazy people in that school. Julia, you remember Mr. Clay?

JULIA
How could I forget Mr. Clay? That hair!

She imitates with her hand.

JULIA
Three hairs came from the bottom in the back and somehow they ended spreading like a wig in front. Does he still do it?

TONY
Yeah. Only difference is now that he’s older, he does it with two hairs, instead of three.
They laugh. The older kids are warming up to Tony.

EVA
I never even noticed his hair.

JULIA
How could you not?

EVA
Mr. Clay was the first love of my life. I was completely obsessed with him.

ALL
Eeeewww!!!

EVA
I used to fantasize about kissing him all the time.

JULIA
Gross!

Laughter. Tony laughs the loudest.

EVA
Did you ever see his body? Hello??
He used to play volleyball with us. In the summer he’d take his shirt off. He was as hairy as an ape. I loved it.

Everybody is laughing together, but Jake, who’s not quite fitting in.

JULIA
So Jake, you were pretty good in class today. That was a tough exercise.

She makes him a little nervous.

JAKE
I don’t know.

TONY
Jake’s going to be an artist when he grows up.

SALLY
Are you? What’s your medium?
JAKE
I paint, but you need to have something special to be a painter, and I’m not so sure I’ve got it.

TONY
You just need to believe in yourself a little bit. That’s all.
(to the girls)
My friend has a little problem with his confidence. But we’re working on that. Right, Jake?

He winks at Jake, as the girls look on.

TONY
Hey, who wants to do the repeat game with me? I need to practice.

SALLY
(taking the bait)
Who wants to do the repeat game with me?

TONY
(imitating the teacher)
No questions!!

Tony runs on to the stage of the ampitheater, and begins to imitate the teacher.

EVA
No questions!!

TONY
Look at me! Listen to me! Acting is not understanding! You don’t need to understand. Does that make sense? Yes? Yes? Yes?

Julia, Jake and the rest of the kids are watching, amused.

EXT. ST. GRACE’S SCHOOL/SPORTS FIELD - DAY

The sports field at St. Grace’s Catholic School, where Tony and his soccer group -- including UMAR and JOEY -- are playing soccer. They’re serious about their game, concentrated, running around, sweating and fighting for the ball. Tony is the GOALIE.
The school cafeteria at lunch time, filled with hungry BOYS and GIRLS sitting in common tables, sharing a meal. ALL THE KIDS ARE IN SCHOOL UNIFORMS.

Our SOCCER BOYS, accompanied by a couple of POPULAR GIRLS, including LIZZIE, the most popular, form a line by the food counter, getting some food.

TONY
Hey Umar, you should try that thing that the Brazilian does, Felipe Melo. You look to one player but you pass the ball to the other side.

UMAR
We could try it if you played with us more often.

TONY
I don’t know what you’re talking about.

They head to the tables with their trays.

UMAR
You didn’t show up last Saturday.

JOEY
It’s because Tony has a new boyfriend now!

The boys whistle and scream, teasingly, and the girls laugh too. Tony blushes, angry.

TONY
Yeah, ask your sister if she thinks I’m the type to have a boyfriend. She knows.

Oohss! and laughter from some other boys.

JOEY
My cousin Allen goes to 321.

TONY
So what?

JOEY
That’s his school, isn’t it?
TONY
What are you talking about?

UMAR
Roller girl.

JOEY
Little Jake. My cousin goes to his school. They say he’s a weirdo.

TONY
Shut up, Joey!

JOEY
My cousin says he draws dresses for the girls during recess.

Tony places his backpack on the floor and grabs the hamburger on Joey's plate.

JOEY
Hey! Give that back to me!

Tony licks the bun all over, before putting it back on Joey's plate.

TONY
There you are. Eat it.

Joey grabs Tony’s burrito, and swings it around in the air like an airplane.

TONY
Give that back!

He doesn’t, provoking even more, so Tony hits Joey hard with a punch. The girls scream. Joey responds with a push. Tony almost falls for a second, but he gains his strength and dives forward to punch Joey. He is held back by the other boys, while some of them shout to actually heat up the fight.

31

INT. CASA DE MODA/STORE - DAY

Bianca, the salesgirl, is standing in the front of the store, waiting for an eventual customer, when Jake comes into the store.

BIANCA
Can I help you?

JAKE
No thank you.
Jake goes directly to the back.

Leonor is sewing. Jake walks by on his way to the office.

JAKE
Hi Leonor.

LEONOR
Wait, wait. Where do you think you’re going?

JAKE
Is Tony in the office?

LEONOR
He is, and he’s staying there. He’s helping me out today.

JAKE
But we’re supposed to meet some friends.

LEONOR
Are those the same friends that beat him up?

JAKE
What??

LEONOR
That’s right. They beat him up. You should ask him why.

INT. JARDINE HOUSE/CASA DE MODA/STAIRWELL – DAY

Jake walks through the maze of rooms and hallways behind the store.

INT. CASA DE MODA/OFFICE – DAY

Tony is entering numbers in the computer, copying them from a spreadsheet next to him. He has a band-aid covering a bruise on his forehead.

Jake enters.

TONY
Hey.

JAKE
(sees the bruise)
What happened??
TONY
Nothing. I bumped into Joey at soccer.

JAKE
But your mom--

TONY
She’s so dramatic, she deserves an Academy Award. She doesn’t want me to go out so I can help her with this. Look.

He shows Jake a spreadsheet of numbers.

TONY
She’s terrible with numbers, you know. You go ahead. I’ll come find you as soon as I finish here.

INT. OFF BROADWAY THEATER - DAY

Brian and two actresses, playing the roles of NINA and ARKADINA, are rehearsing on a stage of a small theater.

For now, there’s just some old blankets and a small bench. Brian sits on the bench, “writing” something on a non-existant notebook. Nina sits on a blanket with pillows next to him.

NINA
What are you writing?

BRIAN/TRIGORIN
Nothing much, only an idea that occurred to me
(puts “book” in his pocket)
An idea for a short story. A young girl grows up on the shores of a lake, as you have.

Brian/Trigorin looks away, towards “the lake”.

BRIAN/TRIGORIN (CONT’D)
She loves the lake as the gulls do, and is as happy and free as they are. But a man sees her who happens to come that way, and he destroys her out of idleness, as this seagull here has been destroyed.

A pause. Arkadina enters, but remains at a distance.
ARKADINA
Boris! Where are you?

BRIAN/TRIGORIN
I am coming this minute.

Brian gets up and walks towards Arkadina.

BRIAN/TRIGORIN
What do you want?

ARKADINA
We are not going away, after all.

Brian/Trigorin embraces Arkadina, while Nina gets up and stands up front stage, lost in thought.

NINA
It is a dream!

A pause. It’s the end of the scene. A DIRECTOR approaches the stage from the orchestra.

DIRECTOR
Okay. Let’s try this one more time. And Brian, when you mention the dead seagull, don’t look away from Nina.

An ASSISTANT comes to give the Director a script.

BRIAN
More seductive, you mean.

DIRECTOR
Exactly. You’re very myopic. You have an obsession with the details of things, of people. And in this scene you’re fully focused on Nina. You’re like a razor beam.

EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/CASA DE MODA – NIGHT

Brian comes walking down the street, a messenger bag around his torso, coming back from rehearsal. He approaches the house, and sees something that makes him pick up speed.

Leonor is outside, smoking a cigarette.

LEONOR
Brian. I was waiting.
BRIAN
I’m so sorry. Rehearsal went later than I expected. Is this still a good time?

LEONOR
Yes. I sent the girl home early so we could talk. You want to go inside? I’m just going to finish this.

INT. CASA DE MODA/STORE - NIGHT

Brian is inside the store. He looks around, not sure where to place himself. It gets darker and a loud ‘bang’ is heard. The metal shutter has been pulled down to close the store. Leonor comes in.

BRIAN
The store looks nice.

LEONOR
Thanks. I did a lot of work here.

BRIAN
The reason why I’m here, Leonor...

LEONOR
I know.

BRIAN
Your lease has been expired for more than six months now. I guess you guys were about to renew it when my father passed?

LEONOR
Brian, why don’t you sit down.

They go towards the back of the store. Leonor sits behind her desk/sewing machine, Brian in front of her. He opens his messenger bag, and takes out a brown envelope.

BRIAN
My sister and I are working on the transfer of ownership for the house. It’s almost done; Dad left everything in order, all the taxes paid and all that. The only thing still pending is the store, which needs to have a new lease.
LEONOR
You know, your father never thought much about contracts. He was very happy to have me here. Max thought my store gave “glamour” to the neighborhood, and he was proud to be associated.

BRIAN
The situation has changed, and now we have two families owning the house; mine and Audrey’s. It’s better for us, and for you, to have things done the right way, wouldn’t you agree?

LEONOR
It depends on what the right way is for you.

BRIAN
Leonor, this neighborhood is changing very fast. The rents have gone up quite a lot in the past few years. I’m sure you’ve noticed.

LEONOR
Yes, I noticed and so did Max. But it was his desire that I stay here.

BRIAN
We don’t want you to go away. My sister Audrey has prepared a new lease for you, and we think it’s very fair. We aren’t trying to get market rate here, we know that’s not possible, but still, you can’t expect to pay the same rent you paid when you first moved in.

Brian pulls some papers out of his bag.

BRIAN
Here, why don’t you take a look.

LEONOR
Before we go any further with this conversation, I want you to take a look at this.

Leonor opens a drawer, and takes out a small pile of photographs. She hands them to Brian.
LEONOR
I am probably the last person to have photos printed, the old fashioned way. It’s completely different than seeing them on a cellphone, don’t you agree?

Brian looks through the photos. Leonor looks over his shoulder.

LEONOR
That’s me in the backyard, on July 4th. That’s me and Tony and your father at the Fair of St. Anthony’s. That’s us with my family, when they were visiting. Your father and I were very good friends. We spent a lot of time together. What you and your sister don’t understand is that Max wanted me to stay here. He thought of me as part of this house, this neighborhood.

He returns the photos to Leonor.

LEONOR
I was more his family, if you want to know, than you were.

BRIAN
That’s a ridiculous thing to say.

LEONOR
You hardly talked to each other. You never came to visit. I was the one here. I saw him everyday.

BRIAN
This is not what I came here for. Why don’t we go back to the lease. Take a look, please. It’s fair.

LEONOR
No, I don’t need to. I have an idea what you and your sister have in mind. I’ll just give this to my lawyer because, to be honest with you, Brian, I’m not sure I owe you anything. Maybe it’s the other way around.

Brian is speechless, sideswiped by Leonor’s intensity and conviction.
BRIAN
Well, I guess there’s not that much
more to be said then.

LEONOR
No.

Brian walks to the door, and out.

BRIAN
Goodnight, Leonor.

Leonor says nothing.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT
Kathy is setting the table. Brian enters and walks through
without stopping.

KATHY
Brian. Want to help me out here?

BRIAN
Sure, but just give me a moment.

KATHY
What’s wrong?

BRIAN (O.S.)
Is Jake here?

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/JAKE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT
Jake and Tony are playing a video game when Brian comes in.

JAKE
Hi Dad!

TONY
Hi, Mr. J.

BRIAN
(angry)
Jake, you know it’s a weekday. What
are you doing playing video games?!

JAKE
Can Tony stay and eat with us?

BRIAN
(harsh)
No.
They stop playing, and look at Brian with surprise.

JAKE
Why not? He wanted to ask you about your acting career.

BRIAN
That’s enough for tonight. Turn it off.

JAKE
Dad, c’mon!

BRIAN
I said no.

TONY
We’re about to finish the level.

BRIAN
Tony, you need to go home now. We can talk about acting another time.

Brian notices the boys are getting uncomfortable.

TONY
Sure, Mr. J.

BRIAN
(to Tony, softening)
I’m sorry, buddy. Your mother is waiting for you downstairs.

Brian makes a quick exit, shutting the door behind him.

The boys look at each other, unsure of what to do.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/BATHROOM – NIGHT

Water is pouring from the shower. Brian, naked inside the glass, tests the temperature with his hand carefully. He adjusts the temperature one bit more, and finally goes under the shower.

Brian takes a deep breath in, and a deep breath out as the water rains down on him, hoping it will wash off his apprehensions.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/FAMILY ROOM – NIGHT

Jake, with a backpack, and Tony are in the middle of a conversation with Kathy.
KATHY
Did you ask your mother?

TONY
She loves when Jake comes over.

JAKE
Please, Mom? Please?

KATHY
Jake I just made dinner.

JAKE
I’ll eat it tomorrow for lunch, I promise.

KATHY
Okay. But I want you back here in the morning.

JAKE
Yes! Thanks.

TONY
Thank you, Mrs. Jardine.

They run out of the apartment...

39A INT. JARDINE HOUSE/STAIRWELL - NIGHT

... and down the stairwell, and out the front door, slamming it behind them.

40 EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/CASA DE MODA - NIGHT

Outside the house, Leonor is closing the gate to her store, talking to Tony. Jake stands by watching, withdrawn by the tone of the conversation.

LEONOR
No, Antonio.

TONY
C’mon, Mami. We have spaghetti in the fridge.

LEONOR
When I say no I mean it. Don’t ask me again.
TONY
But we’re going to be super quiet! Aren’t we, Jake?

JAKE
Yes we are.

LEONOR
Antonio. No. Listen to me and don’t argue.

JAKE
It’s okay Tony. I’ll see you tomorrow.

Leonor begins to walk away.

LEONOR
Goodnight, Jake.

JAKE
Goodnight, Mrs. Calvelli.

Tony reluctantly follows his mom, then turns towards Jake.

TONY
See you tomorrow.

JAKE
Yeah, see you tomorrow.

40A  INT. JARDINE HOUSE/STAIRWELL - NIGHT
Jake enters the dark stairwell. He stands by himself for a moment to collect his thoughts, before heading up to his family’s apartment.

41  OMITTED

41A  EXT. BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT
A few shots of Brooklyn at night. The streets are quiet. A car passes. It’s that hour when anyone who’s still up maybe shouldn’t be.

42  OMITTED

43  OMITTED
Jake rolls through the park on his roller blades. He arrives at the sport’s field, and stays on the edge, observing the activity of the players.

Half the kids are without shirts, playing against the other team, with shirts. They’re running and kicking the ball, sweaty, screaming at each other, throwing themselves at the ball. Jake sees Tony, playing goalie, and walks towards him.

They talk as Tony continues to pay attention to game.

TONY
I’m not talking to my mother anymore.

JAKE
Why not?

TONY
She said you can’t come over to our place. It’s not right.

JAKE
Why doesn’t she want me over?

TONY
I don’t think your father wants me around very much anymore either. He might be too chicken to come out and say it, but I can tell.

JAKE
Why are they so mad at us?

TONY
Our parents are involved in a business matter and it’s getting ugly. So they’re taking it out on us.

JAKE
You’re right. My dad was very cold to you.

TONY
You’d think I was the enemy.

JAKE
I won’t talk to my parents either then.

The opponents head towards Tony and the goal.
TONY
Really?

JAKE
Really. Not unless they apologize.

UMAR
Tony! C’mon!! Are you playing or what?

Tony looks at Jake.

TONY
You sure you can handle it? It won’t be easy.

JAKE
Of course I can handle it.

Tony returns his focus to the game.

TONY
You’re a great friend, Jake.

JAKE
You too.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/JAKE’S BEDROOM – DAY

Jake is sitting at his desk, working on his drawings.

BRIAN
Hey.

Jake’s eyes remain glued to his drawing.

BRIAN
Did something happen with Leonor downstairs?

Jake looks at his father, but doesn’t say anything.

BRIAN
The store is closed. It’s not even five yet.

Jake shrugs his shoulders, turns his attention back to the paper.

BRIAN
Have you seen Tony?

Another shrug.
BRIAN
Jake, can you stop playing around for a second??

Jake stops.

BRIAN
Did you see if the store was open earlier when you got home?

Jake shakes his head yes.

BRIAN
Was it open?

Jake shakes his head no.

BRIAN
No? It wasn’t?

Brian’s cell phone starts ringing.

BRIAN
Talk to me Jake!

Jake looks at his dad, but doesn’t say anything. Brian, resigned, picks up his phone.

BRIAN
(on the phone)
Audrey. Hi.

Jake watches as his father walks towards the door, and out, talking on the phone.

BRIAN
(on the phone)
No, I haven’t heard from her. (...)
Today I got home early and the store was closed, it’s strange.
(...) Isn’t it better if you call her? (...)

Jake goes back to his drawing.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Dinner time at the Jardine’s; the meal in progress.

Kathy and Brian are in the midst of a discussion, as Jake takes a seat at his usual spot.
KATHY
It’s not your fault.

BRIAN
But I feel very responsible. We are responsible.

KATHY
Audrey will tell you if she thinks you owe her money. Don’t worry about it.

BRIAN
She sort of did already.

KATHY
What?

BRIAN
She told me we owe her money for the store.

KATHY
Incredible.

Kathy can’t believe this.

BRIAN
Yes, I know.

KATHY
Jake. Did you see Leonor today?

Jake, shakes his head no, and sits down at the table.

KATHY
Ah. Still not talking.

BRIAN
No.

She hands Jake the bowl of salad.

KATHY
You know, you can’t go on with this forever.

Jake starts helping himself.

KATHY
(to Brian)
Have you seen Jake’s latest artwork?
BRIAN
No.

KATHY
He’s been doing a lot of mythological stuff.

BRIAN
Is that inspired by that book I gave you?

Jake swings his head side to side: more or less.

BRIAN
The Blood of Olympus.

Jake swings his head again, more emphatically: more or less, I said.

KATHY
Truth is, if he’s really serious about applying to LaGuardia, he’s going to need to start preparing a serious portfolio, no?

BRIAN
Yes. From what I remember, only 2% of the students who apply to LaGuardia get accepted. This means two out of a hundred. Twenty out of a thousand. They’re not just looking for talent; they’re looking for serious commitment.

KATHY
And you famously flunked.

BRIAN
I didn’t “flunk”!

Kathy laughs. Jake also. Brian doesn’t find it funny.

BRIAN
I wasn’t accepted, which is different.

INT. CASA DE MODA/STORE - DAY

Bianca, the salesgirl, is rearranging clothes on the large display table up front when Kathy comes in.

KATHY
Hello.
BIANCA
Hi. Can I help you with anything?

KATHY
Thanks. I’m looking for Leonor. Oh, I see her.

Leonor is behind the sewing machine in the back of the store, fixing a pair of palazzo pants.

KATHY
Hi Leonor.

LEONOR
Hi. Just a second, let me just me finish this.

Kathy sits on a chair across from her, and waits for her to finish sewing. Leonor pulls the pants away from the machine, and breaks the thread with her teeth.

LEONOR
You’re home early.

KATHY
Monday.

LEONOR
Right. Your day off. Oh, you have to see this new dress. Bianca, show her the new dress! The green one.

Leonor puts another pair of pants on the machine, and starts sewing.

Bianca picks up a green dress from the racks. Kathy, politely, goes to check it out.

BIANCA
Remember the original wrap dress, the first one that Diane von Furstenberg made?

KATHY
Of course. Wow, that’s an original?

BIANCA
No, we found this fabric, it’s vintage fabric. And Leonor made the dress herself.
KATHY
It’s beautiful. Wow. But it’s really not my style. Thank you. I need to talk to Leonor.

Kathy approaches the back of the store again. This time Leonor keeps concentrated on her sewing job, and doesn’t stop to talk.

KATHY
Cute dress.

LEONOR
I made it. The fabric is vintage.

KATHY
Yes. I really like it, but I can’t wear anything too tight on the waist these days. I need to lose a few pounds first.

Leonor keeps sewing. Kathy looks around the store. She clearly wants to say something, but Leonor avoids any eye contact.

KATHY
Leonor, do you have a minute?

LEONOR
I have to finish this for a client tonight.

KATHY
Tony is still not talking?

LEONOR
No. Not a word to me yesterday.

KATHY
Same with Jake.

LEONOR
It’s very annoying.

KATHY
The one good thing, I have to say, is that Jake has been drawing and painting more than ever.

LEONOR
Is that good?
KATHY
Yes! If he really wants to apply to LaGuardia, he needs to prepare a portfolio. Is Tony still planning on applying also?

LEONOR
How would I know? It’s been four days and he hasn’t said a word to me.

KATHY
Listen, Leonor, you know that I’m trained in conflict resolution, so I’m hoping I can help here, help settle this problem between you and our family.

LEONOR
Oh really? Has your husband asked you to do that?

KATHY
No. And by the way, he’s been working really hard. I’m not sure you know that, but he’s rehearsing for a new play.

LEONOR
No. I haven’t seen your husband.

KATHY
I know he’s been waiting to hear from you.

Leonor doesn’t respond.

KATHY
Leonor?

Leonor continues to sew, until Kathy loses her patience, and slaps her hand on top of the piece of clothing Leonor is trying to sew.

KATHY
Can’t we talk about what is really going on here?

Leonor is startled: a completely unexpected reaction from Kathy. She looks over to Bianca, to make sure she’s not listening.

LEONOR
Shh. Not here.
Leonor smokes a cigarette in the backyard. Kathy is next to her.

KATHY
I know you think we're the rich people coming into this neighborhood, but the truth is Brian hasn't made any money in years. I've been supporting this family with my hard work.

LEONOR
That’s not my problem.

KATHY
I know it’s not. I’m just trying to talk about it.

LEONOR
You think talking is going to solve all your problems, don’t you? You think you can use some of your psychology class tricks and just wash away the dirt here? That dirt is my sweat, sweetie. It’s my life. It’s not going to be that easy.

KATHY
I know that. What I want to tell you is we will give you time, but we need this money. We need the shop to cover its rent. That's not an unfair thing to ask of a tenant.

LEONOR
But I’m not a tenant. To Max I was more than a tenant. I was family. I belong here. And before you go any further; let me ask you: do you know how much work I’ve done here? The tile floors? The marble bathroom? That office in the back? I paid for all that.

Leonor throws her cigarette out. She turns and goes back into the store, leaving KATHY alone in the yard.

EXT. ACTING OUT TALENT ACADEMY - DAY

Julia is putting on her roller blades. Tony stands beside her, trying to make conversation.
TONY
You look like you’ve been doing this acting thing forever.

JULIA
Really?

TONY
Like when you did the Emotional Recall exercise, it just seems so natural, I can’t explain.

JULIA
You know, my father was a stunt man when I was a kid. So I spent a lot of time on sets and stuff.

TONY
So you have been doing this forever.

JULIA
No, because when I was eight years old he died.

TONY
Did he die doing a stunt?

JULIA
No! He had throat cancer.

TONY
Oh.
    (stumped, thinking)
I’m sorry for your loss.

Eva comes out of the School, and joins Julia.

JULIA
(to Tony)
I’ll see you later?

TONY
I hope so.

She and Eva leave together, as Tony watches.

EXT. HERBERT VON KING PARK/AMPHITHEATER - DAY

At a table in the park, Jake is sketching the landscape in a sketchbook, with his collection of Caran d’Aches spread around him. Tony is sitting across from him.
TONY
Do you know anyone with a swimming pool?

JAKE
No, why?

TONY
I would do anything to see her in a bikini. Can you imagine?

JAKE
I never thought about that.

TONY
So what about you? Who do you like?

JAKE
They’re all very nice.

TONY
You can tell me, you know.

JAKE
Tell you what?

TONY
If you like someone.

Jake keeps sketching in his book.

JAKE
I don’t know.

TONY
That’s what you always say.

JAKE
Well I do have an idea you might like.

TONY
What?

JAKE
Eva talked about going dancing. There’s a matinee club, like after hours, for kids.

TONY
When is it?

JAKE
Sunday afternoon, in the City.
TONY
Let’s go!

JAKE
It would be fun, right?

TONY
That would be perfect. If I can just dance with her...

Tony comes closer, to check out Jake’s drawing.

TONY
Wow, that’s getting good, Jake. I’m impressed.

INT. LEONOR’S APARTMENT/TONY’S ROOM - NIGHT

Tony is on his bed, playing a video game. There’s a knock on the door, and Leonor sticks her head inside.

LEONOR
Your father.

INT. LEONOR’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

NICK CALVELLI, Tony’s Italian-American father, is making himself a drink at the bar. He’s taken by surprise when Tony enters running to give him a strong hug and a kiss.

NICK
Tony! Whoa, man, watch out buddy.

With the impact, some of the drink spills on Tony’s head. Tony wipes his head with his father’s shirt.

NICK
Wait, wait. Let me do this for you. Don’t worry. This is good luck. There you go. So tell me; what’s going on? How’s school? You still hoping for LaGuardia?

Leonor brings a cup with ice to the table.

LEONOR
C’mon, Antonio. You’re not going to talk to your father?

Tony shakes his head no, and gives his father another hug.
NICK
Did the cat get your tongue?

LEONOR
You forget he’s too old for this kind of joke.

NICK
What happened?

LEONOR
He’s mad at his mother.

NICK
What about?

LEONOR
Ask him.

Tony looks at them both; he’s not budging.

NICK
Tony, now that I’m here you’re not going to say anything to me?

Tony shrugs his shoulders. Nick looks at Leonor, questioning. She shrugs her shoulders too.

LEONOR
Go finish your homework, Antonio. We’re having dinner soon.

INT. LEONOR’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dinner is served. Leonor sits down and they start helping themselves to food. Tony, ever silent, pays attention closely to the conversation.

NICK
So what are you going to do, Leonor?

LEONOR
I don’t know yet, but Hernàn is helping me out.

NICK
Hernàn? Isn’t he a bankruptcy lawyer?

LEONOR
Yes.
NICK
Is he the best person for this?

LEONOR
He’s my friend. He knows strategy.

NICK
Are we talking about an exit strategy?

LEONOR
No. A fighting strategy.

NICK
But you should have an exit plan.

LEONOR
I intend to fight. They can’t do this to me.

Tony eats, but his ears are clearly on the conversation. He is very curious about all this.

NICK
What if they can?

LEONOR
What do you want me to say, Nick? That I’m going to open a drug store? Start making furniture?

NICK
Or look for a job?

Leonor stops eating for a moment. She can’t believe her ears.

LEONOR
You can’t be serious.

NICK
Don’t take everything so personally, Leonor. The world isn’t always stacked up against you.

LEONOR
What does this have to do with anything?

NICK
Rent goes up. That’s life in this city. These people are not doing this to you.
LEONOR
Why do you always have to disagree with me?

NICK
I’m not disagreeing with you.

LEONOR
Can’t you be on my side for once in your life?

NICK
I’m just being realistic. Life here is expensive. I think you should have a plan.

LEONOR
What do you think I’m doing? Do you think this is easy for me?

NICK
I know it’s not.

LEONOR
That store is how I have raised our son. With not much help from you, thank you very much.

NICK
That’s not true.

LEONOR
Really? Do you think that sending him a little gift at the end of the year is enough to keep him fed? To buy him clothes? To take him to a movie every so often?

NICK
Can we not talk about money now? Damn, Leonor. You spoil everything. I can’t even eat.

At this, Tony bangs his fork and knife on the table, loudly.

INT. LEONOR’S APARTMENT/TONY’S ROOM - NIGHT

Tony and Nick are playing a video game on Tony’s bed. They are both concentrated, playing and actually having fun.
Can you keep a secret? Swear? I was invited to head the mission in Kinshasa. It’s a nice big city for Africa.

(playing the game)
Oh no. No! No!! Shit.

Tony smiles. He’s winning. Nick jerks his body, tries hard, but it’s too late. He’s lost.

Not far from Angola. I’m finally going to have my own apartment. Why don’t you come and stay with me for a while? We could go on a safari. The rainforest is incredible. They’re famous for these big gorillas, hippopotamus, all kinds of animals.

Tony smiles, and gives his father a big hug.

This acting school thing. Is it serious?

Tony shakes his head yes.

How serious?

Tony shakes his head again. It’s very serious.

That’s good. There’s a lot more in this world than Brooklyn.

Tony goes to hug his father.

Listen, Tony. I know your mom can be a little rough, but she’s just worried about you. You’re not a kid anymore, and she needs you to look out for her. I need you to look out for her.

Leonor is cleaning up after dinner, drying the dishes.
Audrey and Brian sit on a bench in a concrete garden in Midtown, the plaza of a great building, drinking to-go coffees.

AUDREY
Well, Dad must have really liked her. That part I think she’s probably right about. He never raised the rent on the store. Not even once in more than eight years. And now Leonor’s lawyer is charging us for improvements she made in the store.

BRIAN
What does that mean?

AUDREY
She wants to fight. The woman is trouble, Brian. Once again, our warm, lovable, unwise father left us with a big mess, and no instructions.

They both take that in.

AUDREY
Is it terrible, Brian, that I don’t really miss him?

BRIAN
No, it’s not terrible. It’s sad, but I don’t blame you.

AUDREY
Do you miss him?

BRIAN
Sometimes. But I live in his house, so I probably think about him more than you do.

AUDREY
She’s claiming she has the right to stay paying almost nothing. I think we should start the eviction process as soon as possible.

BRIAN
I don’t want to have to do that.
AUDREY
It takes a while, you know.

BRIAN
I just don’t want this to get ugly. The boys are best friends now.

AUDREY
Remember that Dad worked very hard to leave us something. Now you have a nice big apartment, and I’m getting nothing.

BRIAN
Just give me a little more time.

AUDREY
I can’t do this without you, you know.

INT. KID’S DISCO – DAY

It’s Studio 54 for KIDS and young TEENAGERS. Jake emerges from the bathroom and discovers a dance floor packed with boys and girls dancing in groups or doing solo numbers.

Some come up with elaborate choreographies, while others just shake their bodies best they can. Many of them are in costumes, some with lights blinking, laser flash lights and other Disco toys.

In the middle of the dance floor, Julia and Tony dance with each other – no choreography here, just plain dancing and having fun. He gives it all he’s got, admiring her, while she closes her eyes, and lets the music take her away.

She opens her eyes, and sees Tony looking at her. Julia smiles at him and they have a little moment dancing. Tony feels confident.

TONY
Hey, do you want to come with me to the beach?

Julia has a hard time hearing him.

TONY
The beach! This summer! You want to come with me?

She just keeps on dancing.
TONY
Yes? No?

JULIA
No, Tony. You’re really nice and everything..., but I’m into older guys.

Tony’s legs slow down, he loses his rhythm.

TONY
Oh, okay. Thank you for being honest.

He’s moved a little farther away and she has a harder time hearing him.

JULIA
What?

TONY
(shouting)
Thank you for being honest.

A couple of GIRLS begin to dance with Julia, and Tony gradually moves away from her.

For a moment, he seems lost on the dance floor. He looks around, and only see strangers.

By the bar, Jake watches Tony on the dance floor.

57

INT/EXT. SUBWAY - DUSK

SHOTS of the city passing by at night from inside a subway train.

There’s only a few people inside the subway. Tony and Jake are on a bench together, not talking.

It’s the end of a long day.

58

EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/CASA DE MODA - NIGHT

Brian walks down the street, coming home late from rehearsal. As he approaches his house, he sees something that catches his attention. He moves closer, and takes out his phone to light a sign posted on the window of the store.

On the window, a sign: HELP WANTED - experience in retail required.
Brian comes in from the kitchen, with a bottle of wine, to join Kathy. She is on the couch with a book, and a glass of wine in front of her.

BRIAN
Do you want some more?

KATHY
Sure.

He sits next to her, and pours some wine in both glasses.

KATHY
How’d it go?

BRIAN
I think it’s going to be great. I love my part, I love the actors, the play is fantastic.

KATHY
I’ll toast to that.

They make a toast, but Brian seems tense.

KATHY
What’s going on?

BRIAN
Did you see the sign Leonor has posted in the window?

KATHY
No, I didn’t see anything.

BRIAN
She doesn’t acknowledge the new lease, she doesn’t try to negotiate and she has no plans of leaving. And now she’s actually hiring new people, can you believe it?

KATHY
I told you this wasn’t going to be easy.

BRIAN
Audrey wants to start an eviction process. She has a lawyer ready to go already.
KATHY  
Good. Then it’s decided.  

BRIAN  
Is it?  

Kathy takes a sip.  

KATHY  
Who’s going to tell Jake?  

BRIAN  
I will. It’s my problem.  

KATHY  
Well then tell him soon. Please.  

BRIAN  
He’s just being so childish lately.  

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/JAKE’S BEDROOM – NIGHT  

Jake is lying on his bed in his pajamas, with only a reading light on. He’s concentrated on his work, drawing quietly, surrounded by his colored pencils.  

INT. OFF BROADWAY THEATER – NIGHT  

The stage is set; a lawn by a lake, a dead seagull and the wall of a house in the background. Brian and the actress playing NINA are in costume and in character. It’s opening night.  

NINA  
What are you writing?  

BRIAN/TRIGORIN  
An idea for a short story. A young girl grows up on the shores of a lake, as you have.  

Brian/Trigorin looks intently into Nina’s eyes.  

BRIAN/TRIGORIN (CONT’D)  
She loves the lake as the gulls do, and is as happy and free as they are. But a man sees her who happens to come that way, and he destroys her out of idleness, and this seagull here has been destroyed.
A pause. Arkadina appears on the window of the house.

    ARKADINA
    Boris! Where are you?

    BRIAN/TRIGORIN
    I am coming this minute.

Brian/Trigorin gets up and walks towards the house. Arkadina remains at the window.

    BRIAN/TRIGORIN
    What do you want?

    ARKADINA
    We are not going away, after all.

Nina stands by herself at the front of the stage.

    NINA
    It is a dream!

The lights go out, and the audience begins to clap vigorously. Kathy sits next to Tony, who is next to Jake. Jake is clapping most vigorously of all.

61 INT. JARDINE CAR - NIGHT

Brian is driving his car through the city. Kathy is sitting in the passenger seat next to him, holding a BOUQUET OF FLOWERS. And in the back, Jake and Tony are there, sitting next to Roger, Brian’s agent.

    ROGER
    It’s in your delivery. It’s very natural. You really manage to make Trigorin feel contemporary.

    BRIAN
    Well, thank you, Roger.

    ROGER
    He’s like one of those famous artists we meet at a party, you know? You’re excited at first, but the minute you start a conversation, you’re begging not to be left alone with the guy.
BRIAN
Is that a good thing?

ROGER
Yes!

KATHY
He’s such a tormented artist. It’s wonderful.

Brian stops the car in front of Roger’s apartment building.

ROGER
And there were some really funny parts too.

BRIAN
Isn’t it! Chekhov called it a comedy in four acts.

ROGER
Act two, particularly.

BRIAN
(laughing)
It is.

Roger squeezes Brian’s shoulder, and leans over the seat to give Kathy a kiss.

ROGER
Bye Kathy. Great to see you.

KATHY
Loved seeing you, Roger. It’s been a great night.

He high fives with the boys, on his way out.

ROGER
Bye fellas. You should be very proud of this man here!

Roger steps out of the car. Brian gives a big smile, and waves goodbye to his friend.

The car starts again. Brian drives, and looks at the boys behind him in the rearview mirror.

BRIAN
So?

Jake and Tony smile.
KATHY
Jake? It’s your dad’s opening night.

BRIAN
Did you understand why Nina says she’s the seagull?

Jake shakes his head yes, Tony shakes his no.

KATHY
Brian. They’re kids. To be honest, I’m not even sure I get that part.

The boys look at each other and start laughing.

KATHY
But that doesn’t take anything away from the pleasure of the story.

Brian drives on, silent.

Suddenly, he pulls the car over, and shifts the gear to park, then turns around, and faces the boys. He’s upset.

BRIAN
Do either of you care about anyone other than yourselves?

Jake is startled, trying to figure out who to answer to, his father or his friend.

BRIAN
Jake? Say something.

Jake looks at Tony, who is shaking his head vigorously.

BRIAN
Say something!

Jake is frozen.

BRIAN
One of the hardest things to realize as a child is that your parents are people too. Can you understand that? That they care about things. That they make mistakes. That they try to do what they think is right. Does any of what I’m saying make any sense to you?

Jake shakes his head yes. Tony laughs.
**BRIAN**
What’s so funny, Tony? Why don’t you tell me, what’s funny?? You think being an actor is easy? You think you have it in you for one rejection after another? Let’s see how you react when you don’t get into LaGuardia. Let’s just see then.

**KATHY**
Brian...

**BRIAN**
God damn it!!

He turns around, and puts the gear in drive, lurching back into the street. The boys look at each other. They are a little frightened, and a little victorious.

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**INT. CASA DE MODA/STORE – DAY**

Leonor picks up a dress from a pile on the main table, and shows it to the new salesgirl, VALENTINA.

**LEONOR**
Dresses go over there, on that rack on the left. Before you hang them, make sure they have a price tag. Also, try to arrange them by color, or tone. I usually like to start with lighter colors in the front, and end with darker ones. Black goes in the back. The women here like black a lot, so if they’re looking for a little black dress, they might see a lot of other stuff before they get there.

**VALENTINA**
I see. So if they don’t know what they want, I try to keep them here in the front first, and then show them the ones in the back.

**LEONOR**
Unless they ask specifically for black.

They hear a bell RINGING, and look towards the door. Brian comes in.
VALENTINA
Hello. Can I help you?

LEONOR
It’s okay, Valentina. It’s for me. This is Brian Jardine, our neighbor. He’s a great actor.

VALENTINA
Oh really? Have I seen you in anything?

BRIAN
I doubt it.

LEONOR
He’s in a new play. What is it called?

BRIAN
The Seagull.

LEONOR
Oh. That must be very popular.

BRIAN
Can you give me five minutes alone? Please?

63   EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/BACKYARD – DAY

Leonor and Brian are standing outside. Leonor lights a cigarette.

LEONOR
The day your father died, he came by in the morning. I asked him to buy me a pack of cigarettes, and then I never saw him again.

Leonor gets emotional, and a tear rolls down her face.

LEONOR
Your father cared about me, Brian. Do you believe that? Every day we would talk, and we would share things with each other. Have you ever had a friend like that? Someone you could tell anything?
BRIAN
Only my wife. I’m a lot like Jake. I’ve never been good at having close friends.

Leonor takes another drag.

BRIAN
I hope you can understand that what’s happening is nothing personal.

LEONOR
I can’t afford to pay three times the rent I paid your father. It’s not possible. I can’t survive.

Brian doesn’t respond.

LEONOR
I thought you were in a new big play.

BRIAN
I am in a new play. But it’s not big, and it’s not a lot of money. It’s just the way it is, Leonor. I’m fortunate enough to have had a father who left me a house in Brooklyn.

LEONOR
He wanted me to stay here. He told me so.

BRIAN
Leonor. I also have a sister, and she has her own family, and we all have to decide together what to do. It’s not just up to me.

Leonor takes a moment, and then proceeds in a new direction.

LEONOR
You know your father thought your sister was the one who inherited his brains.

Brian doesn’t know how to respond.
BRIAN
They were very much alike. I’m sure he would agree with Audrey that, above everything, it’s important to take care of business.

LEONOR
No. He wouldn’t have agreed. I can promise you that.

BRIAN
Leonor, what do you want me to say? I have a family. We have bills too.

LEONOR
Do you know why your father didn’t go to your son’s birthday party, the last one?

BRIAN
He had the flu.

LEONOR
No. That’s maybe what he told you. The truth is, he was embarrassed, Brian. He was embarrassed that everything in your house was paid for by your wife. He thought you should be more of a man. He hated being around you.

Brian tries to swallow some coffee, but the cup is empty.

BRIAN
Well, he’s not around anymore, is he.

LEONOR
He certainly isn’t.

INT. CASA DE MODA/OFFICE - NIGHT

Leonor is on the couch in the office, while Hernàn, her lawyer, sits on the edge of the desk holding official court room papers. He’s very serious, and she’s clearly very upset.

HERNÀN
This Holdover clause is common in any commercial lease.

He hands her a piece of paper, which she reads.
LEONOR
What am I going to do? I can’t afford this.

Hernán comes closer and puts his hand on her shoulder. The door opens all of a sudden, and Tony storms in, frightening Leonor.

LEONOR
Jesus! I told you to knock before you come in. What do you want?

() Tony laughs at the fright he’s given Leonor.

LEONOR
I am so tired of you playing this silly game!

Tony realizes by the tone of her voice that this is serious.

HERNÁN
I’m sorry, Leonor.

He takes the paper from Leonor’s hands.

LEONOR
Where do they even get this number?

Her eyes fill up with angry tears.

HERNÁN
The penalty for overstaying may seem like a high number, and it is. That’s why it’s in the contract; to prevent that the tenant overstays paying below the market rent indefinitely.

LEONOR
Isn’t there anything else we can do?

HERNÁN
Leonor, I’ve done everything I can. It’s over now. You have a week to leave the premises.

Tony sees his mother’s eyes tear up with the news. She starts to cry, and it’s too much for him to bear. He goes and hugs his mother.
TONY
Don't worry, Mami. I'm going to help you. I promise, I'll figure out a way we can work it all out.

He holds her as her crying turns into sobs.

EXT. JARDINE HOUSE/STAIRWELL – NIGHT

The empty stairwell. The doorbell rings. Brian comes down the stairwell to the front door of the house.

The bell RINGS again, just as he OPENS the door.

Tony is there, with his mom behind him.

TONY
Hello, Mr. J. Is Jake home?

Brian takes in that Tony is talking to him for the first time in weeks.

BRIAN
Yes, he’s doing his homework.

TONY
I’d like to talk to him if I could.

BRIAN
Of course, Tony. Come in.

Leonor catches his eye.

BRIAN
Why don’t you both come in. Leonor. Please.

They walk up the stairs to the apartment.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT – NIGHT

The door to Jake’s room is closed.

Brian and Leonor sit together just outside at the dining room table.

Kathy is standing a few feet away, at the kitchen door.
They have been waiting for awhile, waiting for the boys to emerge. It’s clearly an awkward situation for everyone.

    KATHY
    You sure I can’t get you something, Leonor.

    LEONOR
    Yes, I’m fine.

Another moment of awkward silence... Until suddenly the door opens and Jake comes running out.

    JAKE
    Mom! Dad! Mom!!

    BRIAN
    He talks! Jacob talks!

    JAKE
    Mom!!!

    KATHY
    What’s going on?!

    JAKE
    Mom, Tony told me Leonor is being evacuated from the store!

    KATHY
    It’s not an evacuation. It’s an eviction.

    JAKE
    That’s worse!

    JAKE
    How could you do that? How could you do that to them? Dad??

    BRIAN
    It’s a terrible situation.

    JAKE
    The rent is too expensive! She can’t afford it, Mom. So Dad needs to give her a discount so she can!

    BRIAN
    Your mother and I wanted to talk to you, Jake, but this not talking didn’t help!
KATHY
Don’t blame this on him.

JAKE
It’s okay, I’m talking now! I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’ll never do that again. I promise. Dad, I promise.

BRIAN
Jake, calm down.

JAKE
I have a great idea.

BRIAN
Let me explain to you, Jake. Grandpa Max left this house not just for the three of us here.

JAKE
I know. He loved Leonor too. Tony told me!

BRIAN
He liked Leonor, of course, but he left the house for us, and also for Aunt Audrey.

JAKE
But I have an idea! I know how we can make it work! We go back to our old apartment, and we rent this place and give the money to Aunt Audrey. Tony and I are both going to be at the LaGuardia High School for Performing Arts in Manhattan, so I won’t need to take the subway or anything to school. I can walk. And you’ll be closer to the theater. I loved the show, Dad. I loved it. Tony did too. We both talked about it a lot afterwards. You were so good! And I thought it was really complex and everything. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you then. I’m sorry. But I loved it. I really did!

Leonor, Tony, Kathy, and Brian all look in silence as Jake goes on, trying to make this adult mess make sense again.
We see the house from the outside. The gate has not been pulled down on the storefront yet, but most of the lights are off.

Upstairs the lights are all on.

A wide shot of the city of Brooklyn, houses and trees, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in the distance.

A similar shot across Brooklyn at day, with the bridge and the water and Manhattan in the distance.

There are no clothes anymore, no decorations on the wall, the racks are bare naked. The store is completely empty.

Jake takes a look inside the store through the window. There’s a “FOR RENT” sign on the glass. Jake looks for a good long moment, and then skates off down the street.

Boys are playing a game of soccer.

Jake approaches on his roller blades, and comes to a stop at the edge of the field. He watches the game from the side. Umar and Joey are among the players, but not Tony.

Jake skates away, through the park.

Several shots of Jake skating through the neighborhood streets.
We see Jake alone for almost the first time, and he is both more vulnerable, and more confident. He passes by the Verazzano-Narrows Bridge, and then along the waterfront. He moves in silence, only the sound of the wind and the expanse of the Bay beside him.

Brian pulls up in his car, comes to a stop, and gets out. And already walking towards the car is Jake, with bandages on his right knee, being helped along by a PARK RANGER, who carries his roller blades.

PARK RANGER
Mr. Jardine?

BRIAN
How are you, Son?

JAKE
I’m sorry, Dad.

BRIAN
What happened?

JAKE
There was a bump on the path...

PARK RANGER
We got a call from a woman who saw Jake here flying through the air and landing on the asphalt. When we found him, he couldn’t move.

JAKE
I’m better now.

PARK RANGER
He is better. But he probably shouldn’t be on his own at his age.

JAKE
There was a bump, I didn’t see.

BRIAN
Are you hurt?

Jake shrugs.
PARK RANGER
He fell on his right side shoulder, and he scraped his knee.

BRIAN
Let’s go home.

The ranger helps Brian put Jake in the back, with his leg stretched out and his foot up on the seat. Brian gets in to the driver’s seat of the car.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/JAKE’S BEDROOM – NIGHT
Jake is lying down on his bed. Kathy applies antibacterial cream carefully to his scraped knee.

KATHY
Is it okay like this?

JAKE
Yeah. Go slow.

KATHY
And how’s your arm? Can you move it okay?

JAKE
It hurts when I go like this.

He moves it up and down a hair. Brian is standing behind them, in the dark.

BRIAN
Dad had a heating pad that he used to use. I can’t find it.
(to Kathy)
You know where it is?

KATHY
I think it’s in the hall closet. I’ll get it in a minute.

She finishes with the cream, then gives Jake a kiss, and steps out.

Brian takes over for her to finish the bandages.

BRIAN
Do you still have a lot to do to finish your portfolio?
JAKE
I just need to finish one painting, and then I’m done.

BRIAN
That’s what you said last week. You just had to finish one painting.

JAKE
I want them to be good.

BRIAN
Jake, do you by any chance remember that story I told you, about my friend Tina?

JAKE
The one who sold her hair in India for a train ticket?

BRIAN
No, that was Martine. Tina was a girl I knew in high school who was a dancer. Her mother was a dancer. She was literally born to be a dancer. She had a perfect ballet dancer’s body, and all of us were certain she was going to be a big success.

JAKE
Have I seen her dance?

BRIAN
No. During high school, she got into a really good conservatory, and I ran into her a couple of times after that, and she was always about to get this, or about to get that. But each time, her arm would be in a sling, or she would be on crutches. She would have a pulled ligament. Or a stress fracture in her back. The last time I saw her, I ran into her on the subway, it was clear she hadn’t danced for years. She was fat. You would have never imagined that she was the same girl.

JAKE
Gee, thanks Dad. That’s a very encouraging story.
BRIAN
Why do you think Tina didn’t go very far?

JAKE
I don’t know.

BRIAN
She trained too hard. She practiced too much. She didn’t trust her own natural abilities.

He continues to wrap the bandage.

BRIAN
Jake, you’re going to meet a lot of really talented people in your life. But they won’t all be suited to be artists, they won’t all have the brains to know when to insist, and when to stop. When to push yourself, and when to relax. Most of them won’t have that balance.

JAKE
And how do I know if I have the balance?

BRIAN
That’s why I’m telling you this, because you’ll turn in your portfolio soon, and they’re going to love it. They’re going to love you. I know they will. You’ll go to LaGuardia, and you’ll have fun, but also plenty of challenges. Soon enough you’ll find out if you have the balance.

The bandage is done.

BRIAN
There you go. Do you know if Tony got in?

JAKE
I don’t know. I don’t know what he’s doing.

Brian looks at Jake.

BRIAN
Son. I wish I’d done things differently.
JAKE
What do you mean?

BRIAN
With Tony, and his mother. I wish I had told you earlier what was going on.

JAKE
Would it have changed anything?

BRIAN
No, probably not. But still.

JAKE
Dad, would you mind if I give you some advice? Would that be okay.

BRIAN
Please.

JAKE
Don’t worry so much.

Brian waits for more.

JAKE
That’s all.

BRIAN
That’s a lot.

Brian gives Jake a kiss on the forehead, and stands up.

JAKE
Dad, would you mind if I play one of my video games? I know it’s Tuesday, and I know I should do something more productive with my time, but I’m kind of tired.

BRIAN
Of course, Son.

Brian finds the game controller, and hands it Jake.

JAKE
Will Mom be mad?

BRIAN
I don’t think so.
INT. JARDINE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Kathy stands outside the door, heating pad in her hands, listening to her husband and son. She holds back her tears.

Brian comes out of the room and closes the door. He sees Kathy, who begins to weep, as quietly as she can.

Brian wraps his arms around her and they hold each other tightly.

INT. JARDINE APARTMENT/JAKE’S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake is in bed. He can hear the sounds of his parents outside the door.

He switches on one of his video games, and let’s the noise cover everything around him.

INT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM/FOYER TO BEAUX-ARTS COURT - DAY

A small group of stylish BOYS and GIRLS are sketching some of the pieces in the foyer of a grand room in the Brooklyn Museum. By the way they dress and move, they’re clearly artistic. Among them, looking more mature, more serious and maybe gay, with a stylish scarf around his neck, is Jake. Time has gone by; maybe a year or two.

INT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM/BEAUX-ARTS COURT - DAY

Jake and his friends enter the formal and elegant Beaux Arts Court. Across the way, between arches, Jake sees a group of kids in khaki’s and red shirts -- Tony’s Catholic school uniform -- walking in the opposite direction.

They are with one AFRICAN BOY, who is not in uniform.

For a moment, he doesn’t know what to do. Until, suddenly, he makes up his mind, and moves.

INT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM/BEAUX-ARTS COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Jake walks in one direction around the courtyard.

Tony and his friends continue to walk around the other side.

Jake sees Tony and his friends exit the Court, and he follows.
76C INT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM/STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Tony and his friends walk down the interior stairwell of the Museum.

Jake follows. But at some point, he loses Tony and his friends. They have exited the stairwell without him knowing.

Jake rushes down the stairs, trying to catch up.

76D INT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM/ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jake comes out of the stairwell into the Egyptian art area. He’s out of breath.

He looks in all directions, but doesn’t see Tony anywhere.

76E INT. BROOKLYN MUSEUM/STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Jake is sitting by himself in the stairwell.

He is looking straight ahead. Not sure what to do with himself.

A pack of kids in khakis rush past him. We only see their legs.

Jake watches them go.

TONY (O.S.)
Jake! Your hair looks different.

It’s Tony.

Jake stands up to say hello.

JAKE
Yours looks different too.

TONY
I went to Africa to visit my dad.

JAKE
How was it?

TONY
Amazing.

JAKE
And how’s your mom?
TONY
She’s busy. She’s a real estate agent now.

Jake laughs at the irony of the situation. Tony laughs with him, maybe realizing it for the first time.

JAKE
You could’ve sent me an email from Africa.

TONY
You know me. I’m not much of a writer...

Jake notices a necklace of African beads around Tony’s neck.

JAKE
I love that necklace.

TONY
Thanks. They make these for tourists, they don’t really wear them there. But I like it too.

JAKE
Hey, you should come meet my buddies from school.

TONY
Did you get into LaGuardia?

JAKE
I did.

TONY
That’s awesome!

JAKE
There’s this girl in my class, her mother is on Broadway, she can act better than anyone I know.

TONY
Gee, thanks.

JAKE
We should all go out together sometime.

TONY
Sure, but I met this girl in Kinshasa, and my heart belongs to her. Do you want to see a picture?
JAKE
Sure.

Tony pulls out his phone, and shows him pictures.

TONY
She’s a really good kisser. She’s going to come to visit soon.

JAKE
Cool.

TONY
And you, have you kissed anyone yet?

JAKE
No, but I’ve met someone.
(pause)
You’ll meet him.

Tony’s face lights up, grinning from ear to ear.

TONY
You know! Finally, you know!

Jake and Tony share a knowing laughter.

TONY
I’m here with a friend from Congo. Let’s go find him. He’s teaching me French, and I help him with his English – he says “bitchful”, like... “This sculpture is so ‘bitchful’”.

They laugh even louder, and head down to find Tony’s friends.

The stairwell is empty, and white, and filled with sunlight.

IRIS TO BLACK, and the CREDITS ROLL.