

THE LOVE YOU TAKE

By

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December 10, 2012

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FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - DAY (SEPTEMBER 2012)

BRAYDEN ANDERSON, 22, sits down at a piano in the front of the room. He swallows the lump in his throat. Sweat drips down his face. He loosens his tie, then begins a sad, but powerful song. He plays the opening on the piano, then sings in a deep, beautiful baritone.

The song used is "My Immortal" by Evanescence.

BRAYDEN

"I'm so tired of being here,
suppressed by all my childish
fears/ And if you have to leave, I
wish that you would just leave/
Your presence still lingers here
and it won't leave me alone."

MONTAGE: SALVATORE'S LIFE WITH HIS FAMILY

A) EXT. ELLIS ISLAND - DAY. SALVATORE ROMERO enters the country for the first time.

B) INT. CHURCH - DAY. Sal kisses his bride at their wedding.

C) INT. POLICE STATION - DAY. Sal graduates his police officer training.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)

(singing throughout)

"These wounds won't seem to heal,
this pain is just too real/
There's just too much that time
cannot erase."

D) INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT. Sal holds one of his babies.

E) EXT. ROMERO'S RESTAURANT - DAY. Sal and his wife cut the ribbon at their new restaurant.

F) EXT. BOCCE BALL COURT - DAY. Sal teaches his daughter to play bocce ball.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)

"When you cried, I'd wipe away all
of your tears/ When you'd scream,
I'd fight away all of your fears/
And I held your hand through all of
these years/ But you still have all
of me."

G) EXT. BEACH - DAY. Sal vacations with his wife and three children.

H) INT. CHURCH - DAY. Sal walks his daughter down the aisle.

I) EXT. ROMERO YARD - DAY. Sal, now older, kicks a soccer ball around with his grandkids.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)

"You used to captivate me by your
resonating light/ Now, I'm bound by
the life you left behind/ Your face
it haunts my once pleasant dreams/
Your voice it chased away all the
sanity in me."

J) EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY. Sal drives his tractor around, pulling his grandkids in a wagon tied to the back.

K) EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - DAY. Sal hugs MATTHEW ANDERSON, his grandson, as he graduates college.

L) INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT. Sal, at the head of a long table, gives a toast as his entire family cheers.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)

"These wounds won't seem to heal,
this pain is just too real/
There's just too much that time
cannot erase."

M) EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY. Sal and Matthew shake hands as Matthew gets in his car to drive off.

N) INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT. Sal smokes a cigarette alone. His wife enters and they look out the window at their restaurant.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY (SEPTEMBER 2012)

Brayden finishes his song as the pall bearers, their faces unseen, set the casket down in the front of the room.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)

"When you cried, I'd wipe away all
of your tears/ When you'd scream,
I'd fight away all of your fears/
And I held your hand through all of
these years/ But you still have all
of me."

Brayden plays the closing notes, then walks toward the audience. His entire family stands to make room for him. They are all well-dressed, and don't make eye contact with each other.

PODIUM

MATTHEW ANDERSON, 26, steps up to the podium empty handed. He clears his throat, closes his eyes for a moment, then speaks.

MATTHEW

Hello. My name is Matthew Anderson, and that was my brother Brayden Anderson. Remember that name. He'll be famous someday with that voice.

He looks down for a moment.

MATTHEW

I stayed up all night trying to find just the right words to say. I wrote at least a dozen drafts, and obviously today I have no prepared script. Because I just don't know how I can possibly do justice to such a great man. The easiest place to start is to say that I loved my grandfather very much. He was truly one of the greatest men I've ever known, and the impact he had on my life cannot be understated.

Matthew pauses. He cannot find the words he wants to say. He begins to cry.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

SUPER: "THE LOVE YOU TAKE"

FADE IN:

INT. SOFTCO, INC. HEADQUARTERS - DAY (MAY 2012)

SUPER: "FOUR MONTHS EARLIER"

Matthew runs through a room of cubicles, in an unbuttoned suit, carrying a clipboard atop a stack of papers. He trips on his untied shoelace, but maintains his balance.

Matthew begins to lose papers but is in too much of a hurry to care. Co-workers pick them up but he is long gone before they can give them to him.

He stops at a desk outside an office. On the office door is a sign: "Matthew Anderson, Senior Sales Consultant". At the desk sits his secretary, JENNIFER.

MATTHEW
Where's that flash drive?

JENNIFER
Flash drive?

He's panting. Out of breath.

MATTHEW
The flash drive I dropped off this morning and asked you to hold onto.

She thinks for a moment.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARD ROOM - SAME TIME

A room full of SUITS sit in near silence.

BACK TO SCENE

Matthew stares angrily at Jennifer.

JENNIFER
Yes! It's in my drawer.

She does nothing.

MATTHEW
Can I have it?

She reaches in for the flash drive. She hands it to Matthew. He's twitchy, irritated.

MATTHEW

Thank you.

Jennifer smiles. Matthew turns and scurries off, rolling his eyes, and enters the same--

BOARD ROOM

From before. A pair of SUITS whisper to each other, obviously something about Matthew.

Matthew plugs in the flash drive, sets his things down, and stands at the front of the room, his back turned to the table of board members.

Matthew buttons his suit, takes a deep breath, and turns around. Suddenly, his demeanor changes. He has confidence and assertiveness.

MATTHEW

Software. What is that?

The men in suits give blank looks.

MATTHEW

Software is what people use to interact with their technology. A computer is useless without it. You can't access the internet without a browser, just like you can't hit a baseball without a bat. And that is our business.

A beat.

MATTHEW

But what if that software is inaccessible?

More blank stares.

MATTHEW

"You've got to start with the customer experience and work back toward the technology - not the other way around." You know who said that? Steve Jobs, at the World Wide Developers Conference in 1997. And truer words have never been spoken.

He cues up a slideshow on a monitor behind him. Graphs and charts.

MATTHEW

Over the last four months, I've led a comprehensive study of user interaction with our website. We've measured page hits, the time it takes customers to browse and order our products, tracked errors, and collected hundreds of customer satisfaction surveys.

He drops the stack of papers he was carrying - the surveys - onto the long table.

MATTHEW

What we found is that customers have been remarkably dissatisfied with our website. Online sales, on the surface, have been good. They accounted for more than 60 percent of our revenue this quarter. Yet, only four percent of people who accessed our site ended up making a purchase.

He now has the attention of the room.

MATTHEW

Ninety-six percent of all people who come to the Softco.com leave without spending a dime.

The men in suits look stunned. The presentation changes to a full-screen beta version of the new website.

MATTHEW

A team of programmers and designers have been working with me around the clock for the past few weeks to develop a brand new, beautiful, sleek, and modern website. It revolutionizes the shopping experience for our customers, streamlining our catalog and bringing the store into the home.

The suits are impressed. An executive passes around folders with information on the new website.

INT. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew walks into the office of his boss, GREG. Greg motions for him to sit down.

GREG
Sit. Can I get you a drink?

MATTHEW
No, Mr. Stafford. Thank you, sir.

Matthew sits down hesitantly.

GREG
Matthew, please. You've been here almost five years now. You can call me Greg.

Matthew nods.

GREG
The board loved your new website. I have to give you a lot of credit.
(beat)
As you know, we're opening a new branch in downtown Chicago next week. And, we'd like you to run it.

MATTHEW
I, uh...I'm honored.

GREG
Don't be. You are our brightest young executive. In fact, if all goes well in Chicago, I think you'll be up for a promotion.

Matthew raises his eyebrows.

GREG
I don't know if you've heard, but the company wants to hire three new Vice Presidents.

INT. MINNEAPOLIS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The interior of a fancy restaurant. The walls are lined with Minnesota Vikings jerseys and apparel. Matthew is sitting across a candlelit table from ASHLEY WANDO COOPER, his girlfriend. She is beautiful in an obvious way. They are midway through their meal, evident by the emptying plates.

ASHLEY
So, are you gonna tell me what this
big news is yet?

MATTHEW
Hold on. Waiter!

The waiter walks over.

WAITER
Yes, sir?

MATTHEW
A fine champagne, please.

WAITER
Right away.

The waiter leaves.

ASHLEY
Seriously, what is all this?

MATTHEW
Greg Stafford called me into his
office today. I was freaking out,
as you might expect.

ASHLEY
And?

MATTHEW
Good news and bad news. The good
news is, he wants me to manage our
new branch, and if all goes well I
could be promoted to Vice
President.

ASHLEY
That's wonderful! I'm so proud of
you!
(beat)
But, wait.....What's the bad news?

MATTHEW
The bad news is that the new branch
is downtown Chicago, and I start
Monday.

Ashley's excitement disappears. She sinks back into her
chair.

MATTHEW

But, I'll spend all my weekends in
Minneapolis.

The waiter returns with champagne and fills two glasses.

MATTHEW

And there's more. I want you to
move in with me. This is a huge
step in my career and I want to be
able to share it with the woman I
love.

ASHLEY

I don't know what to say.

MATTHEW

Ashley Wando Cooper, will you be my
roommate?

ASHLEY

Yes!

They drink the champagne.

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matthew walks into his living room in a bath robe. The apartment is spacious and luxurious. It's well decorated, has a patio overlooking Minneapolis, and a huge flat-screen TV on the wall.

The phone rings. Matthew checks the caller ID but lets it go. His mom leaves a message.

MONICA (V.O.)

Matthew, it's me, your
mother. Please call me back when
you get this. I need to talk to
you.

Matthew, unfazed by the message, opens the fridge to look for breakfast.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew sits at his desk. He's looking at his--

COMPUTER SCREEN

Hotel websites for an extended stay in downtown Chicago.

BACK TO SCENE

Matthew's phone rings and he answers the call.

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Matthew helps Ashley unpack from several boxes stacked up in the master bedroom.

ASHLEY

Where should I put these dresses? They need to hang up or they'll be ruined.

Matthew looks around the room.

MATTHEW

Just put them in the closet for now. There should be room. You can rearrange everything while I'm gone this week.

Ashley hangs up dresses in the closet. Matthew pulls a bag out from a box, examines what is inside, unsure what it is, and puts the bag back. He sits down on the bed and exhales.

MATTHEW

I'm exhausted, babe. How about we finish this tomorrow?

Ashley sits down next to him. Matthew lays down, and she does, too.

ASHLEY

How tired are you?

MATTHEW

Very....

Ashley begins to unbutton her top. Matthew stops talking. She kisses him and they proceed to have sex on the bed.

MOMENTS LATER

The lights are off and Matthew and Ashley lay under the covers. Matthew's phone vibrates on the night stand. He looks over and sees "MOM" with a picture on the ID and rolls back over to look at Ashley, who has fallen asleep.

INT. MATTHEW'S KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning. Matthew walks out of the bedroom.

MATTHEW
Holy shit.

He looks up and sees Ashley in the kitchen making breakfast. She's wearing an apron over her lingerie.

ASHLEY
Good morning, sunshine.

MATTHEW
What is all this?

ASHLEY
I thought we could celebrate our first official day as roommates with breakfast. I made eggs, sausage, toast, muffins, bacon. The works.

Matthew grabs a banana out of the fruit bowl.

MATTHEW
And fruit!

ASHLEY
No, that was already there.

MATTHEW
Oh.

Ashley is disappointed in his lack of enthusiasm.

ASHLEY
You always this unenthused in the morning?

MATTHEW
I'm not much of a morning person. Forgive me. Thank you for breakfast though.

He sits down at the counter and Ashley makes him a plate.

ASHLEY
Who called you late last night?

MATTHEW
What?

ASHLEY
Your phone vibrated when we were in bed.

MATTHEW
Oh, my mom. She called in the morning too.

ASHLEY
Why don't you call her back?

He shrugs his shoulders.

ASHLEY
You should call her.

He gets up and starts to walk away.

MATTHEW
I gotta get ready for work.

ASHLEY
What about breakfast?

MATTHEW
I told you, thanks. But I'm just not a morning person.

INT. MATTHEW'S CAR - DAY

Matthew is driving to work. His phone rings. He presses a button on his car dash, and the voice on the other end is heard through the car speakers.

It is Mathew's angry mother, Monica.

MONICA (V.O.)
(angry)
Geez. It's about time.

MATTHEW
Sorry, I've been busy.

MONICA (V.O.)
Too busy to answer the damn phone when your mom calls? Or too busy

MONICA (V.O.)
to remember that you have a family
at all?

MATTHEW
I said, I'm sorry.

MONICA (V.O.)
When was the last time we talked,
Matthew?

MATTHEW
I don't know, a couple weeks ago?

MONICA (V.O.)
Uh, nope. Try five months.

Neither of them speaks.

MONICA (V.O.)
(calmer, less anger)
Well, since you clearly don't want
anything to do with me, I'll tell
you why I called. Your grandfather
is very sick, Matthew. I just
thought you should know.

MATTHEW
What do you mean, sick?

MONICA (V.O.)
Nonno has four months to live.

Cut the sound. Matthew pulls the car over and to a stop on
the side of the road. He looks off into the distance,
dumbstruck.

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Matthew walks in the front door. Ashley is cooking in the
kitchen but Matthew walks past her, his face frozen on a
blank stare.

He leaves his coat and shoes on and goes straight for a
la-z-boy in the living room.

Ashley turns down a burner on the stove and walks over to
Matthew.

ASHLEY
What's wrong?

He doesn't hear her at first.

ASHLEY

Matt.

MATTHEW

Oh, sorry. How was your day?

ASHLEY

What happened? You look awful.

MATTHEW

I finally called my mom back.

(off her look)

My grandpa has cancer.

Ashley sits down beside him.

ASHLEY

What did they....

MATTHEW

(interrupting)

Four months.

ASHLEY

Were you close?

Matthew is lost again and doesn't hear her.

ASHLEY

Matthew, honey?

MATTHEW

I'm sorry. What were you saying again?

ASHLEY

I was just asking if you were very close. I mean, you never really talk about your family much.

MATTHEW

I lived with him for awhile back in middle school, and other than that I was always next door.

Matthew is reluctant to say more. He cuts himself off and looks away to distract himself.

ASHLEY

Well, at least you'll get to see him when you're there right?

MATTHEW

They live on the other side of the city from where the new store is. It's an hour and a half in traffic so even if I do get there it wouldn't be for long.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ashley unpacks her things into drawers. Matthew is lying in bed, watching sports highlights on TV. Ashley opens a new drawer and finds it is full of junk.

ASHLEY

I thought you said these were all empty?

MATTHEW

Oh, just toss it all away.

Ashley throws the contents of the drawer in the trash, but stops when she pulls out an old spiral notebook. She opens it up and sees pages upon pages of handwritten notes.

ASHLEY

Hey, what's this?

Matthew looks over and sees the notebook. He jumps out of the bed.

MATTHEW

(yelling)

Don't touch that!

Ashley, frightened, drops the notebook. Matthew runs over to retrieve it as Ashley backs away.

ASHLEY

What the fuck?

MATTHEW

Don't go through my things.

ASHLEY

You said this was trash!

MATTHEW

You....

He realizes he has no argument, picks up the notebook, and takes it with him back to the bed.

ASHLEY

Matt, what the hell is wrong with you?

MATTHEW

I used to keep a journal in high school and college. I'm very protective of it.

ASHLEY

You turned into the Hulk over a journal?

MATTHEW

It's very important to me.

ASHLEY

I never pictured you as the writer type.

MATTHEW

I was editor of the newspaper in high school and college.

Ashley looks confused, but Matthew speaks before she has a chance.

MATTHEW

I'm sorry. How about I make dinner tomorrow to apologize?

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Matthew walks with Ashley out of the bedroom, his hands over her eyes.

MATTHEW

You ready?

ASHLEY

Yes! Let me look you idiot!

Matthew moves his hands, revealing the dining room table, candle-lit, with a platter of pasta on it and two empty plates, plus bottles of wine.

ASHLEY

Oh, wow! Look at you, you little homemaker.

MATTHEW
My specialty, fettucine alfredo.

Ashley looks at Matthew, confused.

MATTHEW
What?

ASHLEY
You're kidding.

MATTHEW
No.

ASHLEY
Matthew, I'm lactose-intolerant.

Matthew's energy is drained instantly. He lays down on his back on the kitchen counter. Ashley sits down at the table.

ASHLEY
It looks great, though.

A beat.

MATTHEW
Are we rushing into this?

ASHLEY
Where did that come from?

MATTHEW
We know nothing about each other. That doesn't worry you?

ASHLEY
No, it doesn't. I know that I love you and I like living with you.

Matthew sighs and closes his eyes.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ashley sleeps in bed, and Matthew is sitting up next to her, unable to sleep. He flicks on a lamp and pulls his journal out of an end table drawer.

He flips through pages, skimming through his notes and smiling occasionally.

Matthew pauses, looks up toward his closet. He stands up and walks to the closet and rummages through, before pulling out a shoebox.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In his living room, Matthew flips through old photo albums of him as a boy with his family, and comes across a picture of him and Sal at Matthew's 14th birthday party.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Is that your grandpa?

Matthew looks over his shoulder at Ashley, in her pajamas. He looks back at the picture and smiles.

MATTHEW

Yeah, this was in 8th grade, the year I lived with him.

Ashley grabs the picture.

ASHLEY

You were really cute. And chubby!

They share a small giggle. Matthew keeps looking through photos.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Matthew and Ashley lay on the floor, wrapped in blankets and sitting on pillows. The fireplace is on and there are hundreds of photos spread across the floor.

MATTHEW

What did you want to be when you were younger?

She thinks for a moment.

ASHLEY

I always dreamed of opening up this little cafe. You know, the type of place you walk past and go, "oh that's cute!" I could try out my own recipes and get to know my customers by their first names.

MATTHEW

What stopped you from doing that?

ASHLEY

I started working as a waitress at 18 years old and I've been doing it ever since. Life got in the way I guess. Something had to pay the bills.

(beat)
 What about you? President,
 astronaut?

MATTHEW
 Novelist.

Ashley is surprised.

MATTHEW
 Yeah, I know. But then you're
 paying 50 grand a year in business
 school and it just doesn't seem
 practical anymore.

Ashley picks up a stack of photos of Matthew and Brayden,
 Matthew and Sal, Matthew and Rachel, his cousin.

ASHLEY
 You never really did tell me about
 why you never talk about your
 family.

MATTHEW
 I guess you could say life just got
 in the way.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew on the phone at his desk.

MATTHEW
 Any news?

MONICA (V.O.)
 (on the phone)
 I don't think it's really set in
 for him yet.

Jennifer peeks into the office. Matthew shoos her away.

MATTHEW
 Well, I can't imagine what he's
 going through.
 (beat)
 Listen, I'm gonna be in town on
 some business tomorrow and I want
 to come over for dinner. If you'll
 have me, that is.

MONICA (V.O.)
Don't be stupid. Of course.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Matthew bench presses, but can't find the energy to lift. He sets the bar down, sits and sulks on the bench.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew packs the last of his belongings and leaves the office, turning off the lights. A CO-WORKER walks by.

CO-WORKER
Go get 'em Matty!

MATTHEW
Thanks!

Matthew stops to see Jennifer at her desk.

MATTHEW
Jennifer, I want you to know it's
been a pleasure.

JENNIFER
Yes, I'm so sad they aren't sending
me to Chicago with you.

MATTHEW
Me too.

He turns around and rolls his eyes again. He walks away.

Matthew turns a corner and walks up to Greg's office. Greg sees him coming and walks to the doorway.

GREG
Matthew!

MATTHEW
Sir...Greg...I wanted to thank you
one more time for the opportunity.

GREG
No, Matt, thank you. Just remember
what's at stake here. We have high
hopes for you, kid.

Matthew nods and walks away.

MONTAGE: MATTHEW GOES HOME

A) EXT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - DAY. Matthew packs his car and drives away.

B) INT. CHICAGO OFFICE - DAY. Matthew unpacks in his new office and shakes hands with new employees.

C) INT. CHICAGO OFFICE - NIGHT. Matthew's office is now put together, he leaves.

D) INT/EXT. CAR ON HIGHWAY - NIGHT. Matthew is stuck in Chicago rush hour traffic.

INT. MONICA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew enters his old house. Sitting on couches in the living room watching TV are his parents, MONICA ROMERO ANDERSON and JEFF ANDERSON.

Monica is very Italian: dark hair, olive skin. Jeff is very pale, with red hair and glasses. Jeff is eccentric, while Monica, though warm, is very no-nonsense.

MATTHEW

Hi.

Jeff pops up from his chair and turns to see Matthew.

JEFF

You made it! We were beginning to worry.

MATTHEW

I said 7. What time is it now?

MONICA

It's 7:04, don't listen to him.

She stands up and walks over toward Matthew. Matthew does nothing at first, then realizes his wrongdoing and gives his mom a hug.

MONICA

I'm glad you're home, even if you never call me. I've missed you.

Matthew ignores the comment.

MATTHEW

Where's Brayden?

JEFF
 We sold him to the Asian family
 next door.

Monica hits Jeff.

JEFF
 (yelling)
 Brayden!

MONICA
 Let's eat.

DINING ROOM

The three characters sit at a round table with a very large tray of pasta in the middle, and several other side dishes: meats, vegetables, bread.

MATTHEW
 Mom, this looks amazing.

MONICA
 Thank you.

Brayden, 21, Matthew's gay younger brother, comes down the stairs, wearing skinny jeans, a hipster v-neck, and a scarf. He looks at Matthew and nods but says nothing.

JEFF
 Brayden, your brother is here.

BRAYDEN
 I can see that.

JEFF
 (sarcastically)
 I was just letting you know. I
 didn't know if you wanted to say
 hello or anything crazy like that.

BRAYDEN
 (to Matthew)
 'Sup.

MATTHEW
 How's school?

BRAYDEN
 Fine.

Brayden sits down and starts eating. Matthew waits for Brayden to say more but there is nothing.

Silence for a few moments.

MONICA
How is the job?

MATTHEW
Good. Greg...my boss...he says he
has high hopes for me.

MONICA
That's good.

They continue eating in silence.

MONICA
Brayden, tell your brother about
the convention.

BRAYDEN
The GSA at my school hosted a big
pride convention and did a parade
and stuff. It was cool, I guess.

MONICA
(to Matthew)
Your father went. I was busy with
work. He came back very upset and
we couldn't figure out why.

They all look at Jeff, who is looking sad with his head
down.

JEFF
None of the men hit on me. Not a
single one.

Matthew laughs.

MATTHEW
Why would a man hit on you?

Everyone stares at him, confused. They all look at each
other, wondering who should tell him.

MONICA
A GSA convention. Gay-straight
alliance.

MATTHEW
Oh. What were you guys doing
there?

Again, they don't know how to react.

JEFF
You're joking, right?

MONICA
Your brother is gay.

Matthew's face turns red. He's sweating. Monica's voice rises in anger.

MONICA
How the hell did you not know that your brother is gay?!?!?! It's been almost three years!

MATTHEW
I...I...

MONICA
(mocking him)
I...I...
(yelling)
Who are you? What happened to my son? What happened to my son who used to put his family first? Who used to know at least the big things like his brother being a homosexual!

Brayden runs away up the stairs.

Silence.

MONICA
Look at what you've done.

LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jeff and Matthew sit on couches opposite each other. The TV is off and nobody is talking. Then...

MATTHEW
I'm so sorry. I really messed up, didn't I?

JEFF
(sarcastically)
I think that's probably a fair statement.

More silence.

MATTHEW

How's work?

JEFF

You ever hear of this band, The Dirty Spoons?

MATTHEW

I can't say I have.

JEFF

Crazy shit these guys do. They asked me to lay down drum tracks on a few demos. They're good. But weird dudes. WEIRD frickin' dudes.

(beat)

The software business...is going well?

MATTHEW

That's part of why I came here. I never even got to tell you guys MY big news.

MONICA (O.S.)

What big news is that?

She sits down next to Jeff.

MONICA

Because WE actually do care about big news.

MATTHEW

I've got a new job. Here. In Chicago. For a few months anyway.

Monica nods along, over-emphasizing how in tune she is to what he is saying.

MATTHEW

And I was going to stay downtown, but with Nonno being sick, I was thinking of staying at the compound for the summer.

MONICA

Why not stay with us?

JEFF

It's because I'm white, isn't it?

Monica shoots Jeff a death stare. They're all white.

MATTHEW

I just want to be around him. If
it's as bad as it sounds.

Monica nods in agreement.

MATTHEW

Dinner was great by the way.
Business must be good.

MONICA

We're busy this time of year. A
lot of showers and summer weddings,
athletic banquets.

MATTHEW

A caterer never rests, right?

JEFF

Nobody ever says that.

A beat.

MONICA

Have you been over there yet?

MATTHEW

No, I told Nonna I'd stop by
tonight.

EXT. ROMERO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Matthew walks up to a large restaurant. A sign outside says
"Romero's Italian Restaurant and Banquet Facility."

INT. ROMERO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Matthew walks in. There's a counter at the front with a cash
register and a hostess ringing up a customer. To the right
is a large dining room, dimly lit, with a fireplace.

To the left is a long bar, with flatscreen TVs mounted on
the wall. The room is decorated with ivy and lattice,
pictures of soccer teams, and pizza boxes.

Matthew walks along the wall of the bar and toward another
dining room. He stops to look at old family pictures on the
wall. Someone taps his shoulder. He turns around.

CHRIS
What are you doing here?

MATTHEW
Uncle Chris!

He gives a hug to CHRIS RICHARDS, his uncle, mid-40s.

MATTHEW
I'm working in town for awhile. How are you?

CHRIS
Good, man. Busy.

MATTHEW
Where's your wife?

CHRIS
In the back. Go say hi.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

OLIVIA ROMERO RICHARDS, Monica's younger sister, is in the kitchen of the restaurant yelling at employees.

OLIVIA
Paul, I need those calzones, they've been waiting for twenty minutes! You, dipshit, go bus tables! You!...

She walks over to a cook, shoves him aside, and takes over his assembling of a dish.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
More cheese! How many times do I have to tell you?

She hits the cook and storms off toward the soda fountain and pours herself a drink. She sees Matthew walking into the room and tries to talk without swallowing, then swallows.

OLIVIA
When did you get here?

She gives him a big hug.

MATTHEW
This morning. I'm staying next door for awhile.

OLIVIA
You are? Nobody tells me nothing.

MATTHEW
It was kind of sudden. How's
business? You look stressed.

OLIVIA
Well that's what happens when both
your sisters abandon you and leave
you to run a restaurant by
yourself. And then, oh yeah, my
dad's gonna die soon! Fun shit
here, Matthew. By the way, how is
your mom? I haven't spoken to her
since she opened the catering
business.

MATTHEW
She's...

OLIVIA
That was a rhetorical question. I
really don't give a fuck anymore.
But I'm glad to see you.

She runs back to continue yelling at employees.

BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew sits at the bar, sipping a drink. SALVATORE ROMERO,
his grandfather, 78, walks in. Customers in the bar and
lobby area get up and say hello to him.

Sal is very dark, with balding gray hair and a thin, short
frame. He has a thick Italian accent and a commanding,
angry-sounding voice.

Sal turns and makes eye contact with Matthew, who waves and
smiles. Sal ignores him. Matthew looks confused and very
bothered that his grandpa doesn't recognize him.

Sal walks down the bar, passes Matthew without making eye
contact again. Matthew shakes his head in disbelief.

Sal turns around, looks at Matthew, and starts laughing.

MATTHEW
You scared the shit out of me!

SAL
I had you, didn't I?

MATTHEW
You did. I was fooled. I thought
you were getting old and couldn't
recognize me anymore.

SAL
I never get old.
(beat)
Come, Nonna wants to see you.

He motions for Matthew to walk with him.

EXT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew and Sal walk over to Sal and Sofia's house across
the restaurant parking lot. A tall, brick house with an
enormous garden, basketball and bocce courts, and trees.

SAL
How you been?

MATTHEW
Fine.

Sal looks at Matthew: "you're not fine."

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

An old, elegant interior. Antiques on shelves, a quaint
little kitchen, a long dining room, and an outdoor patio.

SOFIA ROSSI ROMERO, 70, makes tea for Sal and
Matthew. She's short, with curly brown hair and wears an
apron.

SOFIA
You never call.

MATTHEW
I know. I'm sorry.

SAL
Big shot! No time for you family!

MATTHEW
That's not true.

Sofia pours and serves the tea.

SOFIA
So, tell us about this job.

MATTHEW
My company makes computer programs,
basically. And I'm managing our new
store downtown.

SOFIA
You like it?

Matthew takes a sip of tea and nods.

MATTHEW
Yeah, sure.

SAL
Matthew, tomorrow I need help in my
garden. Weeds.

Sal motions with his hands the pulling of weeds.

MATTHEW
Yeah, I don't have to go in until
Monday, so whatever you need.

SAL
Good.

Sal gets up, pulls a cigarette from his breast pocket, and
walks to the patio in the next room.

MATTHEW
How is he?

Sofia sits down, without looking at Matthew, and shakes her
head.

SOFIA
Some days, he's good. Some days, no
good. I don't think he...I don't
think he knows what's happening
yet.

Matthew sips his tea.

SOFIA
I made your bed. In your old room,
just like before.

Matthew stands up, smiles, and kisses his grandma.

MATTHEW
Good night.

SOFIA
Buona notte.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY

The entire family meets at the house for lunch made by Sofia. A long table is set up in the dining room. Olivia and Monica sit on opposite ends of the house.

Olivia's five small children run around out of control.

OLIVIA
ALEX! KNOCK IT OFF! NOW!

SOFIA
Let them play!

Olivia rolls her eyes, covers her ears with her hands and slams her head into the table as Chris rubs her back.

SOFIA
What is the matter with you?

OLIVIA
They are out of control. And SHE is judging me right now. I know she is!

She points to Monica.

Matthew walks around the table and sits down next to Monica and Jeff.

JEFF
(whispering to Matthew)
Just like you remember, eh?

Matthew nods in agreement.

INT. CHICAGO SOFTCO - DAY

Matthew is demonstrating a computer program to a customer.

MATTHEW
If this is the sort of thing you're looking to do, Mr. Samuels, I would highly recommend this program.

CUSTOMER

I don't know.

MATTHEW

I tell you what. I'll have one of my associates help you out with the checkout. Schedule an install, we'll come out, for free, and set you up. If, after a month, your company isn't completely satisfied, we'll come back and uninstall it and you'll never have to pay a thing.

CUSTOMER

Thank you, sir. I'll take you up on that.

The customer heads over to the associate desk.

An employee, JANE, walks up to Matthew.

JANE

Sir, can I talk to you for a second?

MATTHEW

Absolutely, come with me.

They walk into--

MATTHEW'S OFFICE

Matthew holds a chair for Jane and they sit down.

MATTHEW

Jane, right?

JANE

Yes, sir.

MATTHEW

What's up?

JANE

(nervous)

Well, you see, my husband and I, we got married a few weeks ago. I was working at the Madison branch. We wanted to take a honeymoon, but the manager there said they couldn't let me go.

MATTHEW
That's terrible.

JANE
And, I don't know what your policy
is...

MATTHEW
(interrupting)
Is a week fine?

Jane is taken aback.

JANE
I was hoping for just a weekend.

MATTHEW
Put in a request for seven
days. I'll make sure it gets
approved.

JANE
Thank you, sir!

Jane gets up and starts walking out.

MATTHEW
Jane.

She turns around.

MATTHEW
Congratulations, by the way.

EXT. ROMERO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

On the outside seating of the restaurant, Brayden is sitting
alone.

Matthew walks over from the house and sees his brother.

MATTHEW
What are you doing here all alone?

BRAYDEN
It's too loud over there.

MATTHEW
Tell me about it.

Matthew climbs over the patio fence and sits down next to
Brayden, both of them facing the house.

MATTHEW
Is it always like this?

BRAYDEN
We haven't been over here in a few months. Not since mom opened up the catering business.

MATTHEW
I don't get it.

BRAYDEN
Who does?

They sit in silence for a moment.

MATTHEW
So, how is school? You never really answered me the other night.

BRAYDEN
Ahhh, school.

MATTHEW
What does that mean?

BRAYDEN
I'm stressed. A lot. This year was a tough one.

MATTHEW
Only one more, though!

BRAYDEN
That's what's stressful. I'm graduating in a year with a music degree. What good is that gonna do me?

A beat.

MATTHEW
Listen, I cannot begin to apologize.

BRAYDEN
It's fine.

MATTHEW
No it's not. What kind of a brother am I when I don't know something that big?

BRAYDEN
A pretty shitty one.

Matthew smiles.

MATTHEW
I deserved that.

Sal walks out from the restaurant behind them, wearing an apron covered in flour.

SAL
Matthew, come.

INT. ROMERO'S RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY

Sal and Matthew stand in front of the pizza ovens.

MATTHEW
I haven't done this in years.

SAL
It's easy.

Matthew helps Sal make pizzas, with Sal giving instructions, throughout the conversation. Matthew is very bad, while Sal is very good.

SAL
Put on an apron and grab a dough.

Matthew follows orders.

MATTHEW
You know, I haven't asked you...

SAL
Ask me what?

MATTHEW
How you're doing.

SAL
It's hot in here. I'm hot.

MATTHEW
I mean, with the cancer.

Sal works on a pizza. He waits to give an answer.

SAL
"Fine."

MATTHEW
I know you're not fine, though.

Sal stops what he's doing and looks at Matthew.

SAL
When you tell me how you doing, I
tell you.

Matthew stops and looks at his grandfather.

MATTHEW
When did you know you wanted to own
a restaurant?

SAL
Tomorrow.

MATTHEW
What?

SAL
I never wanted this. I did it
because I had to. Nonna and I, we
could cook, people wanted to eat.

MATTHEW
If you could, would you have done
something else?

SAL
No.

MATTHEW
Why?

SAL
Because I love it. I love it
here. My customers, they love me.

Sal keeps making pizza and Matthew joins him.

EXT. ROMERO HOUSE - LATER

Sal and Matthew carry boxes of pizza to the house. They
stop outside the door.

MATTHEW
Are you scared?

SAL
I'm going to die. Of course I'm
scared.

They enter the house.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY

Sal and Matthew return from the restaurant carrying three
pizza boxes. Sofia and Monica are sitting at the kitchen
counter talking.

MATTHEW
We made pizza!

SALVATORE
I made pizza. Matt put the cheese
on top.

SOFIA
Good we're hungry.

Monica gets up and grabs plates. They all sit down to eat,
from L-R: Sal, Matthew, Monica, and Sofia.

The front door opens. In walks LISA ROMERO WILSON, Sal and
Sofia's oldest daughter (52).

LISA
Hello?

She walks in and sees her parents, nephew, and sister eating
pizza.

MATTHEW
Aunt Lisa?

Monica gets up, hesitantly and slowly, with a bewildered
look on her face.

MONICA
What are you doing here?

LISA
I wanted to see my family.

Lisa is quiet, calm, and nervous.

Monica gives her an awkward hug.

MONICA

Well, it's good to see you. Matt
and papa just made some pizza.

LISA

Thanks.
(to Sal)
Hi dad.

She leans over and gives Sal a kiss on the cheek and he
wraps his arm around her.

SALVATORE

Hello, bella.

LISA

(to Sofia)
Hi mom.

Sofia answers, but doesn't look up from her meal.

SOFIA

Hello.

MONICA

Sit down, I'll get you a plate.

Monica gets up and gets a plate of pizza for Lisa. Lisa sits
on the end of the table next to Sal, on the opposite end
from Sofia.

MATTHEW

How long are you here?

LISA

I'm not sure yet.

MATTHEW

Where's Rachel and Uncle Dan?

LISA

They couldn't make it. Greg's away
on business and Rachel...I haven't
seen her in a few weeks.

Monica sets the plate in front of Lisa and sits back down.

MONICA

What? Oh my God! Have you called
the police?

LISA

She sent me a text message last week. Said she's fine. That was it. Where is your family?

MONICA

At home. Matt's staying here and I just came over for lunch.

LISA

Oh.

SALVATORE

Where are you staying?

LISA

Actually, I wanted to ask you about that. I was wondering if I could stay here with you for awhile.

Sofia stands up aggressively.

SOFIA

No.

She walks to the sink to put her dish away. Lisa puts her head down.

MONICA

Mom...

SOFIA

(interrupting)

No. There's no room. Matthew is already here. There's no room.

MONICA

There are two more empty rooms! What are you talking about?

SOFIA

I said no.

Sofia walks upstairs.

MONICA

I'll talk to her.

SALVATORE

No. You will not fight with your mother, Monica. Stay here and eat.

MONICA
She can't do that.

SALVATORE
My daughters are always welcome in
my home. I'll talk to her.

INT. LISA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lisa is unpacking her things. Monica walks in and sits down
next to her on the bed.

LISA
I haven't slept in this room in 35
years. Thirty-five years, Mon.

MONICA
I know. It's been a long time.

LISA
And now I'm not welcome here.

MONICA
Papa is talking to her. It'll be
fine.

Lisa starts crying.

LISA
No, Monica. It won't be fine. I've
ruined everything.

MONICA
There's time.

LISA
No there isn't. My dad is dying. I
have no relationship with my
sisters.

MONICA
You have a new life.

LISA
I stopped being invited home for
Christmas after awhile. Do you know
how much that hurts? And what makes
it worse is I know it's all my
fault.

She wipes the tears off of her face.

LISA

And it's not like I'm living the dream in North Carolina, either!

MONICA

What does that mean?

LISA

I'm miserable. I'm alone and miserable. My daughter is a whore. I have no idea where she is most of the time. And my husband is either traveling or fucking somebody else.

Monica puts her arm around Lisa.

MONICA

You should tell us these things. You never call.

LISA

I know. I know. It's all my fault. I'm a terrible mother and a terrible wife. Worst of all, I'm a terrible daughter. And a sister.

She continues to cry next to Monica.

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ashley wipes down the kitchen counter.

The door opens. Matthew enters.

MATTHEW

Hey!

Ashley turns around. She runs up, leaps into his arms, and they make out.

MATTHEW

Wow, I've only been gone a week.

ASHLEY

Wait until you see what I made for you!

DINING ROOM - LATER

Matthew and Ashley sit at a candlelit table. There's a huge turkey between them, wine, a salad.

ASHLEY
So, how is home? How's your grandpa?

MATTHEW
My grandpa is good. So far.
(beat)
Home? Home is interesting.

ASHLEY
How so?

MATTHEW
Where to begin...where to begin...my mom's long lost sister returned.

ASHLEY
She had a long lost sister?

MATTHEW
She moved away a long time ago. Oh, and apparently my brother is gay.

Ashley stops eating. Just stares at him.

MATTHEW
My thoughts exactly.

ASHLEY
Did you have any idea?

MATTHEW
Nope.

ASHLEY
Well...that's fun. My hair dresser is gay.

Matthew laughs.

MATTHEW
By the way, dinner is amazing.

ASHLEY
(seductively)
Just wait for dessert.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

The family eats.

CHRIS

So, Matty, you got a lady up there?

MATTHEW

Yeah, actually I do.

OLIVIA

Does she have a name?

MATTHEW

Ashley.

SOFIA

And where is she? Are we not good enough?

MATTHEW

No, no. That's not it. She works up there. A waitress.

SAL

And why can't she work here?

MATTHEW

I won't be here forever, and she doesn't want to lose her job. She'll visit. I promise.

MONICA

Just like you always do, right?

Awkward silence.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In his new room, Matthew opens a drawer. He pulls out his old journal, sits down at the desk, and starts to write.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Olivia's three oldest kids come running through the front door. She holds the youngest two in her arms. Matthew and Lisa sit at the counter.

Matthew gets up to grab one of the babies.

OLIVIA

Thank you.

Olivia takes her shoes off and sits down where Matthew was sitting, with one kid. Matthew sits down beside her with the other kid.

OLIVIA

(to Matthew)

Where's Nonna?

MATTHEW

Getting Nonno ready for his first day of chemo.

OLIVIA

Oh yeah that's right that's today.

LISA

Liv, I stopped in the restaurant last night. You're doing a great job.

OLIVIA

No thanks to you, I might add.

LISA

Come on...

OLIVIA

What do expect me to say?
(mocking tone)

Oh thanks that's so nice of you to say?

LISA

That's better than being a bitch about it.

OLIVIA

Are you serious? Are you...

She covers her youngest's ears.

OLIVIA

(continued)

...FUCKING kidding me?

Lisa rolls her eyes.

OLIVIA

Matthew, please, help me out here.

MATTHEW
I'd rather...

LISA
(cuts him off)
Leave the poor guy out of this.

OLIVIA
Leave yourself out of this. Just
leave, period.

Sofia and Sal enter. Matthew jumps up from the table and hands the kid to Sofia.

MATTHEW
I'll take him.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Matthew and Sal wait in the hospital lobby. A doctor comes out.

DOCTOR
Mr. Romero?

SAL
That's me.

DOCTOR
I'm Dr. Rogers, I'll be
administering your first round of
chemo today. Is this your son?

MATTHEW
His grandson, Matthew.

DOCTOR
Nice to meet you. If you two
would, follow me.

They get up and follow the doctor to the....

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Sal and Matthew sit down across from the doctor's desk.

DOCTOR
Now, in a minute, I'll take you
into the chemo room, Mr. Romero.
But first, I just wanted to let you
know of a few things. You're

DOCTOR
probably familiar with most of the
side effects: hair loss, upset
stomach, loss of appetite. It's
important that you eat regularly,
okay?

Sal nods.

DOCTOR
Now, I'm also obligated to tell you
that this isn't a guarantee. With
cancer this severe, we can try to
shrink the tumors, but often the
best we can do is just keep them
from spreading even further.

Sal just nods along.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sal is throwing up in his bathroom sink. Sofia tries to help
him but he pushes her out of the way angrily.

Matthew walks by in the background, stops in the doorway,
and peeks in. He is frightened.

LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sal sits in a la-z-boy wrapped in a blanket. Sofia is
off-screen in the kitchen.

Matthew comes out of his room.

MATTHEW
Nonno?

Sal mumbles.

SAL
Do you need anything? I just feel
like there has to be something I
can do.

Sofia enters with a cup of tea.

SOFIA
He just needs to rest.

MATTHEW

Ok. Let me know if there's anything he needs.

Matthew starts to walk away.

SAL

Aspetta. (English: "wait")

Matthew turns around.

Sal slowly opens his eyes and sits up, but he's not well.

SAL

Tomorrow, if I feel up to it, I need help in the garage.

MATTHEW

Ok. I have to go to work. But after?

SAL

Sure.

Sal rests again.

MATTHEW

Good night.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

Sal sits in a lawn chair in the driveway with the garage door open. There's a car covered in a tarp inside.

Matthew gets out of his car, dressed in his suit, carrying his briefcase.

MATTHEW

How you feeling today?

SAL

Better. You ready to work?

Matthew almost forgot.

MATTHEW

Yes.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Salvatore, his hair thinning, pulls the cover off of his car, a shiny black 1978 Chevy Corvette. Matthew watches.

SALVATORE

This is my angel, Matthew. I remember when you were little I used to pick you up from school to impress the girls.

MATTHEW

I remember. You used to play the jingle from the inside. That probably doesn't work anymore, right?

Sal sits down in the driver's seat and tries to play the music from a little keypad next to the steering wheel. He presses a few buttons but there is no noise.

SALVATORE

It's dead.

MATTHEW

When was the last time you drove the car?

SALVATORE

I don't know.

MATTHEW

Let's jump it. I'll get the Camry. Do you have cables?

SALVATORE

In the trunk of the Camry.

MATTHEW

Let's do it.

EXT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew pulls up Sal's Camry and parks it in front of the Corvette. He gets back out.

MATTHEW

I have to be honest, I've never done this without help.

SALVATORE
Psh. Piece of cake.

Sal connects the cables to the the battery of the Camry.

SALVATORE
Start the Camry.

Sal holds the other end of the cables. Matthew starts the Camry and Sal goes to plug the cables into the Corvette battery. As the first cable touches the battery, sparks flare and the crackling sound startles Salvatore, who jumps back and slowly falls to the floor.

Matthew shuts off the car, jumps out, and runs over.

MATTHEW
Nonno! You alright?

SALVATORE
I'm fine. Help me up.

He helps him up.

SALVATORE
I don't know how this shit works.

MATTHEW
I think we need to switch the
cables and leave the car off until
it's set.

Matthew unplugs the cable and re-configures it. He heads back to the Camry.

MATTHEW
Stay back.

He turns the Camry on. No sparks.

MATTHEW
(from the car)
OK! Try starting your car.

Salvatore sits down in the Corvette and turns the key. Nothing happens.

MATTHEW
Give it a second and try again.

Salvatore waits a moment, then turns the key. There's a clicking noise, but the engine doesn't start.

Matthew gets out and walks over to the Corvette.

SALVATORE

It's dead.

Sal looks defeated.

MATTHEW

No it's not. It's just been awhile.

SALVATORE

Ah, forget it. I knew it wouldn't work.

MATTHEW

Let's try it one more time. I think it just needed to warm up a little bit.

Matthew sits back down in the Camry.

MATTHEW

(quietly, to himself)

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon. Please work.

MATTHEW

(aloud)

Do it!

Sal turns the key to the Corvette, the engine starts to turn on but stalls.

MATTHEW

Give it some juice!

Sal continues to turn the key, this time pressing the gas pedal. The car starts. The engine roars with each step on the pedal.

Sal presses the music button again. A song, similar to an ice cream truck jingle, plays loudly from a speaker on the car.

Matthew, in the Camry, smiles as he watches his grandfather in his car.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sal, with Matthew riding shotgun, drives the Corvette down a long, country road. There is nothing but corn on either side of the road. The top is off of the car. Sal smiles from ear to ear.

Sal pulls the car over and stops.

SALVATORE

Your turn.

MATTHEW

My turn?

SALVATORE

You helped. You get to drive home.

MATTHEW

Why did you ask me anyway? I know nothing about cars.

SALVATORE

Everyone else is too busy fighting. That's no way to live. We should be a family.

He opens his door and steps out. Matthew does the same.

SALVATORE

So we drive away for a little bit. Relax.

EXT. LOMBARDI HOUSE - DAY

Sal is on his knees in the garden, picking weeds out. He cares for the dirt so preciously, as if it were sacred. Matthew is standing over him.

SAL

You were supposed to help me last week.

No response.

SAL

Well, you gonna take pictures or get down here?

Matthew kneels down. He begins helping, but clearly this isn't his forte.

MATTHEW

I forgot how much you cared for this garden.

SAL

It's beautiful, right? Look at these tomatoes. The best!

MATTHEW

They're great. You come out here every day and do this?

SAL

Every day. Usually before Nonna gets up, but since the chemo, I don't get up as early.

MATTHEW

Well you need your rest.

SAL

Ahh, rest is no good. Plus, the garden needs me.

They work in silence for a moment.

SAL

What do you do?

MATTHEW

What do you mean?

SAL

Me...I garden. What do you do, 'sides work.

MATTHEW

I cook. Occasionally.

SAL

You don't cook. I seen you.

MATTHEW

I....

SAL

You don't know nothing.

Matthew doesn't have an answer.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matthew writes in his journal. He taps his pencil in place a few times, stuck on a word. He closes it aggressively in frustration.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew, Sal, and Sofia drink coffee at the kitchen counter.

MATTHEW

If you don't mind me asking...

SOFIA

Mind? Mind what?

MATTHEW

How did you two meet?

Sofia looks at Sal.

SAL

I do it. I was a waiter in a restaurant, I was maybe you brother's age. No, younger maybe.

His voice drifts off.

CUT TO:

INT. NAPLES RESTAURANT - NIGHT (1956)

SUPER: "1956"

Salvatore Romero, now aged 22, is a waiter at a restaurant in his hometown. He's wearing an apron and a black dress shirt and pants.

He grabs a plate of food from the kitchen, quickly walks to the small dining room and delivers it to a customer. There are 5 tables and he is the only waiter.

He pours water for guests at another table, sets it down on a table, and begins cleaning the lone empty table in the room.

A middle-aged couple and their 15-year-old daughter, Sofia Rossi, enter the room. Sofia has short, curly brown hair and is wearing a dress. She's beautiful. Her parents are also dressed very formally.

Salvatore notices them and walks up to greet them. Sofia is standing behind her parents and Sal cannot see her.

(WRITTEN IN ENGLISH, BUT SPOKEN IN ITALIAN)

SAL (AGE 22)
 (in Italian, with subtitles)
 Hello, sir and madam. How many
 today?

MR. ROSSI
 Three.

SAL (AGE 22)
 Right with me.

MR. ROSSI
 Thank you.

Sal leads them to the table he just cleaned off and pulls out a seat for Mrs. Rossi, who sits down in it as he pushes her into the table.

MRS. ROSSI
 Thank you, young man.

Sal does the same for Sofia. They make eye contact for the first time and she smiles at him. He pauses for a second, mesmerized, then pushes her in.

INT. NAPLES RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sal brings the Rossi family their food. As he sets Sofia's dish down in front of her, he accidentally knocks over her water, which spills onto her lap.

SAL (AGE 22)
 My God! I'm so sorry, ma'am.

He grabs a napkin and starts drying off her table, then reaches to dry off her dress. She slaps his hand and he jumps back, realizing his mistake.

SAL (AGE 22)
 I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
 I'm so stupid. I am so stupid.

Sal runs to the kitchen, his face red. He stops to catch his breath and sweat drips down his face.

Sofia's parents look at her and help her dry off. Sal re-enters and the couple gives him a dirty look.

SAL (AGE 22)
 Sir and madam, from the bottom of
 my heart I am so sorry for what
 happened. I have spoken to the

SAL (AGE 22)
owner and your meal tonight is
free.

He looks, ashamed, at Sofia, then retreats to the kitchen.

INT. NAPLES RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sal is cleaning dishes, working quickly and stopping infrequently to catch his breath. He is wet and dirty.

The restaurant owner enters.

OWNER
Salvatore. You can go now.

Sal turns off the water and takes off his apron.

OWNER
Just make sure you don't start
grabbing any dresses from now on!

EXT. NAPLES STREET - NIGHT

SUPER: "ONE WEEK LATER"

Salvatore is walking through the streets in his work clothes, carrying his apron. He stops and looks off.

Sofia is sitting at a table in the town square with two other girls her age.

Sal walks up to her. She recognizes him and smiles.

SOFIA (AGE 15)
Did you come to pour pasta sauce on
my ass and try to wipe it off?

SAL (AGE 22)
I only wanted to tell you that I am
embarrassed about what happened the
other day.

SOFIA (AGE 15)
It's fine, actually. It was funny.
I went home and laughed about it,
but I couldn't let my parents know
that. They were too angry.

SAL (AGE 22)
Well, I'm glad.

SOFIA (AGE 15)
My name is Sofia. Sofia Rossi.

She extends her hand. Salvatore lifts it up and kisses the back of her hand.

SAL (AGE 22)
Salvatore Romero. It's a pleasure to meet you, Sofia.

SOFIA (AGE 15)
It is a pleasure to meet you, also. Are you on your way to work now?

SAL (AGE 22)
No. I just finished.

SOFIA (AGE 15)
Are you in a hurry?

SAL (AGE 22)
My mother is waiting for me to come home for dinner. But I have a few minutes.

SOFIA (AGE 15)
Sit down with us.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew smiles as Sal finishes the story.

MATTHEW
I never knew that.

SOFIA
He was so scared of me at first.

SAL
I knew the moment I saw her, she was my wife. And she was beautiful then, as she is now.

EXT. BOCCE BALL COURT - NIGHT

Matthew and Sal play a game of bocce ball. Sal, now completely bald from the chemo and thinner than before, tosses the first ball.

SAL

I never lose. You better watch out, boy.

MATTHEW

Whoa whoa whoa, I've been known to be quite the player.

Matthew tosses his ball. They continue to play throughout the scene. Sal coughs and smokes a cigarette as they do.

MATTHEW

So, I know you said you love the business and all that. But do you have any regrets?

SAL

Shiiiiit.

MATTHEW

Uh-oh.

SAL

When Olivia was in school, you remember that piece of shit coach, what's his name?

MATTHEW

Schmidt?

SAL

Denny Schmidt, that fuck.

MATTHEW

Yeah he named me team captain then I had one bad game and he benched me the rest of the season.

SAL

He was her teacher. She come home one day, crying...wah wah wah. "Daddy the teacher gave me a bad grade." I say 'why?' She say the guy, the piece of shit, he don't like her daddy so he didn't let her do the paper. Some shit like that.

MATTHEW

I've never heard this story. What'd you do?

SAL

He used to do football parties at the restaurant, then he decides after 15, 16 years he wants to go somewhere else, so I told him he's a fatass dumb bitch.

MATTHEW

No, I mean, what did you do about Aunt Olivia's grade?

SAL

(nonchalantly)

Oh. I go to the school, punch him in the face, spend the night in jail.

Matthew laughs.

MATTHEW

You're joking.

Sal gives him a stern look: he's not joking.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Matthew paces in the front of the room. A long table with well-dressed businessmen sitting around it watch him.

Matthew operates a slideshow with charts and data on it.

MATTHEW

As you can see, the objective is pretty clear. We need to hit 5,000 units by the end of the week to hit our goal for the month.

An EMPLOYEE raises his hand.

EMPLOYEE

How do you expect us to clear 5000 when we couldn't get three thousand last week?

MATTHEW

Last week we suffered from the Fourth of July hangover. People are back to work, back in the routine.

MATTHEW
 And I've hired two new part-time
 salesmen...well, a salesman and a
 saleswoman, to help push product.

The employee looks satisfied.

MATTHEW
 Any other questions?

Matthew's SECRETARY walks in.

SECRETARY
 Mr. Anderson, Greg is on line one
 for you.

MATTHEW
 Alright, good work today, everyone.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew on the phone with Greg.

GREG (V.O.)
 I've got good news and bad
 news. What would you like first?

MATTHEW
 Good news.

GREG (V.O.)
 (doesn't care)
 The bad news it is, then. You're
 numbers are low this month.

MATTHEW
 Yes, sir, I'm aware.

GREG (V.O.)
 I need you to get them up.

MATTHEW
 I am doing everything I can.

GREG (V.O.)
 Everything? Your secretary tells me
 you've been taking a lot of sick
 days lately.

Matthew isn't at first sure what to say.

MATTHEW

(shyly)

Sir, my grandfather has cancer, and I've been taking him to his chemotherapy.

GREG (V.O.)

Oh, well...I'm sorry to hear that.

MATTHEW

Thank you, sir. I appreciate it.

GREG (V.O.)

If you can't handle this account...

MATTHEW

(interrupting)

No, everything is under control. I'm projecting some big sales for us this week.

GREG (V.O.)

Excellent. What I like to hear. Take care.

MATTHEW

Wait, what was the good news?

GREG (V.O.)

Oh. There wasn't any.

(beat)

But I did try this great Thai place over the weekend. I'll email you their menu. Fantastic!

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matthew lays in bed. His phone rings.

ASHLEY (V.O.)

Hey stranger.

MATTHEW

Hey. How are you?

ASHLEY (V.O.)

Good. Tired.

MATTHEW

Long day?

ASHLEY (V.O.)
I worked a double. And I think I'm
coming down with something.

Matthew is lost in thought.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
When are you coming back?

MATTHEW
Actually, I was thinking I'd take
Friday off and fly up.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Everything ok? You sound
different.

MATTHEW
I'm fine. Just tired, too.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Oh.

MATTHEW
I'll see you Friday.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
Ok. Love you.

MATTHEW
You too.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

The family, minus Sal, sits around the table, about to eat.

SOFIA
Matthew, say grace.

MATTHEW
It's been so long.

MONICA
You always used to do it!

SOFIA
Just do it. You'll be fine.

Matthew bows his head and presses his hands against each other. Everyone else follows suit.

MATTHEW

Dear Lord, thank you for bringing us together this evening, and may your presence be with us tonight and forever after as we enjoy the company of each other. We ask you to bless this meal, and we thank our wonderful Nonna for preparing this wonderful...wonderful...

RACHEL (O.S.)

SHIT!

RACHEL, Lisa's daughter, is standing in the doorway, pulling a suitcase and noticing a rip in her coat caused by the door. Everyone looks up from the prayer at her.

LISA

(disbelief)

Rachel!

RACHEL

In the flesh!

Rachel is pretty, but weathered. Her voice implies immaturity unbecoming of a 29-year-old.

Matthew, Lisa, and Brayden all stand up to welcome her. Everyone else is still in shock.

MATTHEW

What are you doing here?

BRAYDEN

The better question might be: HOW did you get here?

RACHEL

I hitchiked. All the way from Utah.

Blank stares. Utter disbelief.

RACHEL

I'm joking. I flew.

She turns to Lisa.

RACHEL

Mom.

She leans in, unsure whether or not to kiss her mom. She settles on an awkward half-hug/half-pat-on-the-back.

Matthew and Brayden slip back to the table.

LISA
I'm so glad you're here.

Rachel turns very serious for a moment.

RACHEL
I had to. As soon as I heard about
Nonno I knew I had to come.

LISA
Where have you been? You've had me
worried sick?

RACHEL
I wasn't kidding about the Utah
part.

As if to avoid further questioning, she moves past Lisa into the dining room, where she greets everyone, starting with Sofia and going one-by-one around the table.

When she gets to Matthew, she leans in and whispers into his ear.

RACHEL
(whispering)
I wasn't kidding about the
hitchiking part, either.

She moves back out.

RACHEL
Where is Nonno?

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sal watches TV from his bed. A knock at the door.

SAL
It opens!

Rachel enters. She's nervous, as if hiding a secret. Sal sits up, his eyes widen and he calms down and speaks softly to her.

SAL
Mia bella! Vieni qui.

Translation: My beautiful! Come here.

Sal slides over in the bed and Rachel sits down beside him.

RACHEL
How are you?

SAL
Ehhh. Been better.

He hacks for a moment.

RACHEL
I'm so sorry if I scared you. Or
anyone. I couldn't stand another
day in North Carolina. I had to
get away.

SAL
It's alright, bella. You're here.

He puts his arm around her. Coughs.

SAL
You're shaking.

RACHEL
I need to talk to someone.

SAL
Ahhhh, and I'm not someone?

RACHEL
You are, you are, and that's why
I'm here. Part of why I'm here.

SAL
Eh, what's wrong?

RACHEL
I don't know how to say this.

SAL
Speak Italian then.

RACHEL
No, I mean...

She chokes up.

RACHEL
(in tears)
I'm pregnant.

Sal's eyes REALLY widen now.

SAL

And, uh...

He doesn't need to say the words. She knows what he's thinking.

RACHEL

That's the worst part. I don't even know. It could be one of three or four guys.

Sal pulls her in tight and kisses her forehead. This comforts her more than any words could.

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matthew walks into his apartment in Minneapolis. He looks around.

MATTHEW

Ash? Ashley?

She's not there. He sees a note on the counter.

NOTE

Boss asked me to stay late today. Lost my phone. Meet you at restaurant - Ashley

BACK TO SCENE

Matthew grabs a bottle of water from the fridge and leaves.

INT. MINNEAPOLIS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

We follow Matthew, led by a Maitre'D, to a table in a nice Minneapolis restaurant. Ashley is already seated when he gets there.

ASHLEY

Well hello. Aren't you a sight for sore eyes?

She stands up. They kiss and are seated.

MATTHEW

I missed you.

A waiter comes up.

WAITER

May I start you with something to drink?

ASHLEY

I'll just have water for now.

MATTHEW

Water, please.

WAITER

Certainly.

The waiter leaves.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Matthew and Ashley finish dinner. Matthew is in a much better mood than Ashley.

ASHLEY

I ran into Greg's wife the other day at the mall.

MATTHEW

I don't know what's more surprising: that you recognize my boss's wife or that you saw someone you know at the Mall of America.

ASHLEY

Anyway, she said to say hello.

Matthew nods along.

ASHLEY

Listen, can we talk for a sec?

MATTHEW

Absolutely.

ASHLEY

Where are we at?

MATTHEW

Michael's. We come here all the time.

ASHLEY

I'm serious. You and I. Where are we at?

Matthew becomes much more subdued.

MATTHEW

I'm not sure. I have to be real honest.

ASHLEY

And neither am I. When you took this job, you said you'd be coming home every weekend.

MATTHEW

My family needs me.

ASHLEY

What if I need you? I can't go on like this, seeing you every two, three weeks.

MATTHEW

Come back with me then.

ASHLEY

I'm working almost every day.

MATTHEW

When is your next day off?

ASHLEY

I work lunch Monday, and then Tuesday I'm off, I think.

MATTHEW

Come Tuesday then. Monday night. I'll book you a ticket.

ASHLEY

One day? What is one fucking day gonna do, really?

MATTHEW

Listen. It's a start.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew, Rachel, and Sal sit in the living room watching soccer on TV. Sal has gotten much thinner and looks almost lifeless on the couch.

MATTHEW

Naples gonna be any good this year?

Sal shows some life, albeit briefly.

SAL

Ahhhh. The coach. He know nothing.

Rachel gets up and walks toward the kitchen. A KNOCK at the door. She opens it. Ashley walks in.

RACHEL

Ashley, right?

ASHLEY

Yes.

RACHEL

I stalk Matthew's Facebook often.
Come on in.

ASHLEY

Thanks.

Matthew walks over and gives her a kiss.

MATTHEW

Did the driver find you alright?

ASHLEY

Yeah. Although it almost would have
just been quicker to drive from
home.

MATTHEW

Yeah, sorry. Greg's on my case. I
couldn't leave work early again.

Rachel is still standing next to them. She clears her throat.

MATTHEW

Oh, right. Ashley, this is my
cousin Rachel.

ASHLEY

Oh, I've heard so many stories
about you. Matt says you guys had
a lot of fun as kids.

RACHEL

I had a lot of fun. I don't know
about him, since usually my fun was
at his expense.

Sal slowly stands up. He grabs a cane leaning nearby, and walks over toward Matthew and Ashley.

MATTHEW

And this is my grandpa, Salvatore
Romero.

Sal reaches them. He gives Ashley a kiss on the cheek, but
doesn't speak.

ASHLEY

Mr. Romero, it's such an
honor. Matthew speaks so highly of
you.

Sal starts walking back to the couch.

SAL

Good.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew sits at his desk, shuffling papers. He's on his cell
phone.

MATTHEW

(on phone)

Certainly, I think we can make that
happen for you. Can I put you on
hold for one moment? Thank you.

MATTHEW

(to himself)

Shit. Shit. Shit. Diane, where are
those papers you gave me?

DIANE, his secretary, walks in.

DIANE

I don't know, sir.

He keeps looking. She leaves. His office phone rings.

MATTHEW

(on phone)

Matthew Anderson. Yes, I called
earlier about restocking some items
and I was disconnected....Yeah,
you guys are really screwing me
over, here.

An EMPLOYEE walks in holding a tablet computer.

EMPLOYEE

Mr. Anderson...can you look at these please?

Matthew shoos him away.

MATTHEW

(on phone)

I'm going to patch you through to my assistant to handle this. I have someone on the other line.

He presses a button. Diane re-enters.

DIANE

Mr. Anderson, there are customers out front asking to speak to the manager.

MATTHEW

One second.

He picks up his cell phone.

MATTHEW

(on phone)

Yes, I'm sorry, I've just mislocated a file and it'll take me just a moment to recover it....yes, yes I'm very sorry for the inconvenience.

DIANE

Sir, I think it's urgent.

He gives her an angry look: "I'm on the phone."

LATER

Matthew hits his head on his desk, closes his eyes, and rests for a moment. The work has slowed down.

MATTHEW

Diane!

She rushes in.

MATTHEW

I don't even remember what I had to ask you. I'm sorry.

DIANE
It's ok, sir.

MATTHEW
What time is it?

DIANE
4:15, sir.

Matthew checks his phone, frantic.

MATTHEW
Shit. I'm late.

He grabs his suitcase and runs toward the door.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Matthew sits in the lobby. A sign on the wall suggests this is where Sal gets his chemo.

Dr. Rogers walks by, recognizing Matthew.

DOCTOR
Matt, right?

MATTHEW
Yes?

DOCTOR
You can go in if you want. He's
alone right now.

Matthew nods, gets up, and follows the doctor into the...

CHEMO ROOM

Sal is receiving his chemotherapy. Matthew pulls up a chair next to Sal. He's half asleep, in pain, and very quiet.

SAL
I hate this shit.

Matthew pats his arm.

MATTHEW
I know.
(beat)
Me too.

They sit in silence for awhile.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew and Sal walk in the door, Sal relying heavily on his cane. The entire family is waiting inside, including Ashley.

Sofia takes Sal upstairs. Ashley walks up to Matthew.

ASHLEY
How'd it go?

Matthew just sighs. His look says it all.

Ashley puts her arm around him.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - DAY

Matthew wakes up in bed. Ashley is already dressed, her bag packed.

MATTHEW
What time is it?

ASHLEY
7. The cab is here.

Matthew sits up, rubs his eyes.

ASHLEY
(sarcastically)
Glad we got to spend some nice time together.

She walks out.

MATTHEW
Wait.

She comes back in.

MATTHEW
I'm sorry.

ASHLEY
Be there for your grandpa. Worry about me later.

EXT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY

Monica and Matthew walk through the yard.

MATTHEW

We haven't really gotten a chance
to catch up.

MONICA

Yeah.

MATTHEW

I have missed you, whether or not
you believe it.

MONICA

I know.

She doesn't sound very convincing.

They walk past many fruit plants. The grapes are diseased
and foul-looking. The pear, peach, and plum trees bear no
fruit. They stop to look at the grapes.

MONICA

I remember when these used to start
growing this time of year.

MATTHEW

Yeah, me too. Nonno used to
dedicate a branch to each of his
grandkids. Mine was right here.

He points out a branch of grape vines that, like the others,
appears lifeless.

MONICA

It's a shame, it really is. This
yard was so beautiful.

MATTHEW

It still is. It's just different.

Matthew looks around at the yard.

MATTHEW

How are you handling all of this?

MONICA

All of what?

MATTHEW

Nonno, the family. Aunt Lisa coming back. Rachel.

MONICA

Well, I think you said it best. It's different.

INT. ROMERO'S RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY

Sal is cooking with the help of GRACE, a mid-60s African-American woman who works in the kitchen. He starts coughing and sits down in a chair by the stove.

GRACE

Mr. Sal, you want me to get that for you?

He waves her off, stands back up, and keeps working on whatever he is doing.

GRACE

Matthew?!?!

Reveal: Matthew, entering through the doorway.

MATTHEW

Grace, how are you?

He gives her a hug.

GRACE

I'm good. It's been a long time!

MATTHEW

Eight years or so, yeah.

SAL

(without looking at him)
It's Friday. What are you doing?

MATTHEW

I called in sick. I thought you could use some help. The better question, though, might be what are YOU doing?

SAL

I don't want to be dead while I'm alive.

Sal, still focused on his food, grabs an apron and tosses it back to Matthew.

SAL
You wanna help? Then do something.

SERIES OF SHOTS: MATTHEW AND SAL IN THE KITCHEN

--Matthew stirs pasta sauce.
--Sal directs Matthew.
--They laugh.
--Sal starts coughing again and sits down.
--Matthew spills sauce everywhere and cleans it up.

INT. MONICA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Matthew, Monica, Brayden, and Jeff finish dinner together.

MATTHEW
That was wonderful, mom. Thank
you.

MONICA
You're welcome.

JEFF
Where's dessert?

Monica gives Jeff an evil look: "NO DESSERT FOR YOU!"

JEFF
(nervous)
It was a joke.

BRAYDEN
Actually, I've been craving ice
cream.

MONICA
Fine. You two go pick up ice cream
while Matthew and I clean.

LATER

Monica and Matthew clean up after dinner.

MATTHEW
Do you still have old pictures?
Like of me?

MONICA

Boxes.

(beat)

Why? Do you want to see them?

MATTHEW

I've been really into old pictures lately.

Monica puts down a rag she was using and leads him toward the stairs.

MONICA

I didn't have you pegged as the scrapbooking type.

INT. MONICA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Matthew looks through old pictures again, and stops at a picture of him and his parents at his first communion. He smiles. Keeps going.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY

Matthew and Sal eat lunch alone.

MATTHEW

You're looking a lot better.

SAL

Ahhhhhh.

He waves his hand at Matthew, as if to say, "not true."

MATTHEW

I went out and pulled weeds for you this morning. I could tell it needed it.

SAL

Gratzie.

Sal gets up to pour himself some wine. He seems to be slightly better. It's not a huge struggle for him to pour his own glass of wine.

He sits back down.

SAL

She's beautiful.

MATTHEW

Who?

SAL

Your girl. Beautiful.

MATTHEW

Thank you.

SAL

Why you thanking me? I never said you beautiful, I said she's beautiful.

MATTHEW

I know.

Silence for a moment.

SAL

You dummy. I'm gonna die soon and you still don't wanna talk about it.

MATTHEW

What is there to talk about?

SAL

You're 26 years old, but you got no life. You hate your job, your hate your town. The only thing you got is that girl and I can see...I can see it in your eyes that something's wrong.

A beat. Matthew doesn't know how to respond.

SAL

Talk to me.

MATTHEW

You know how you said that when you met Nonna, you knew right away that she was the one?

SAL

Yes.

MATTHEW

I've never felt that way with Ashley. Everything just kind of happened. We met, we dated, for a long time. Then five years later,

MATTHEW
 we were still together. There was
 never that moment. And I didn't
 know she was
 lactose-intolerant! We never talk
 about that kind of stuff. We just
 go through the motions.

SAL
 Then why you stay with her five
 years then?

MATTHEW
 I don't know.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY

The entire family finishes a big meal. Olivia takes Sal
 upstairs for a nap and others clear out of the dining room,
 except Matthew, Brayden, and Rachel.

RACHEL
 So, Matt. How is Minnesota?

MATTHEW
 It's good.
 (off her unsatisfied look)
 I like it there.

RACHEL
 Eight years you've been gone...you
 never call, never write. I've seen
 you, what, twice since you left?
 And all you got for me is "I like
 it?"

Matthew's look: "you're right."

MATTHEW
 I have a great job. A nice place,
 just outside the city. I've met
 some people...

RACHEL
 (interrupting)
 Blah. Blah. Blah. What's wrong with
 you and the chick?

BRAYDEN
 Something's wrong?

MATTHEW

No.

RACHEL

Bullshit. She's smokin' hot, probably the nicest person I've ever met, but something is wrong. I saw you two when she was here. It was awkward.

MATTHEW

It's none of your business.

RACHEL

Well it's gotta be somebody's fucking business!

SOFIA (O.S.)

(from the next room)

Rachel! The children!

Rachel rolls her eyes.

RACHEL

(to Brayden)

What about you? When am I gonna hear some of this great music everyone keeps talking about?

BRAYDEN

My dad and I have been in the studio working on some stuff.

RACHEL

Is it good?

BRAYDEN

I hope so.

RACHEL

You'll have to play me some of it.

BRAYDEN

I actually have a demo on my phone.

Rachel motions for him to pull it out. He does.

Brayden puts his headphones in Rachel's ears. She listens, nodding along. She likes it.

She takes out the headphones.

RACHEL
Good shit right there.

BRAYDEN
Thanks.

RACHEL
Now, I know your dumbass brother
fu...
(catching herself)
messed up his relationship. How
you doin' in that department?

BRAYDEN
It's a little bit harder for me.

RACHEL
Go to California.

Brayden laughs.

RACHEL
No, I'm serious. I spent some time
out there a couple summers
ago. Gay men practically run the
place.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mathew is in his bedroom writing in his journal. A
BANG. Then, another BANG. Matthew pauses and heads to the
door.

HALLWAY

Sal starts walking down the stairs. A tube connected to an
unseen oxygen tank is stuck to his leg.

He walks about halfway down the steps before tripping on the
tube and falling down several steps before Matthew, running,
catches him and stabilizes him.

MATTHEW
It's me, Matthew. I gotcha.

Matthew untangles the tube and throws it to the side, and
walks with Sal down the last few steps.

MATTHEW
What are you doing up?

Sal mumbles something, but it can't be understood. His eyes are bloodshot. He walks slowly into the...

LIVING ROOM

A light in the adjacent kitchen is on, and Sal is seen in the light for the first time. He is extremely thin, bald, and frail.

He sits down on the couch in the living room and rests his head for a moment.

Matthew follows him, but keeps his distance. He sits down at the kitchen counter, keeping an eye on his grandfather.

Sal takes out a pack of cigarettes and removes one cigarette. He then tries lighting the cigarette by striking it against the pack, mistaking the pack for a lighter.

Matthew watches, nervously, as if wanting Sal to figure out the mistake by himself.

Realizing eventually that Sal is too disoriented to figure it out, Matthew walks a lighter over to Sal, hands it to him, and sits back down.

Sal holds the lighter in one hand, and the pack in the other. He looks at the lighter, then at the pack, then back at the lighter. Then he starts laughing.

And laughing some more.

Sal gives Matt a look: "how could I be so foolish?" and smiles.

He lights the cigarette, as Matthew watches. When finished, he stands up and starts walking toward the stairs. Matthew gets up to help him.

SAL

I got it.

Matthew backs off and sits back down.

SAL

Good night, Matthew.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY

Matthew enters the house, dressed in sweatpants and a t-shirt, sweating, as if he went for a run.

MATTHEW
Mom, what's wrong?

Cut to Monica, sitting in the living room, holding hands with Jeff as Brayden and Stephanie sit nearby, crying.

MONICA
He hasn't woken up yet.

Matthew stands, in shock, his face expressionless.

MATTHEW
What-what does that mean?

MONICA
We're not sure. The doctor's up there now.

INT. SAL AND SOFIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sal is asleep in bed. A doctor is sitting in a chair beside the bed. Lisa, Monica, Olivia, and Sofia are all standing behind the doctor.

Olivia, Lisa and Monica are in tears. Sofia isn't crying, but looks beaten.

The doctor turns toward the family.

DOCTOR
The best way I can describe his state is a transition. It's not a coma, because his brain is still functioning. But it's a very real possibility that he might not wake up.

OLIVIA
How long will this last?

DOCTOR
There's really no telling. It could be a few hours, it could be a few days, maybe even longer. This is his body's way of shutting down. I liken it to a computer closing all it's programs and functions before shutting off.

LISA

So he probably won't wake up?

DOCTOR

I'm afraid so. But, like I said, his brain is still fully functional at this point. Families in this position usually like talking to the patients. He can still hear you, even if he can't respond.

The doctor turns to Sofia.

DOCTOR

Mrs. Romero, there's nothing more I can do right now. A nurse will be over in a few minutes, and as long as you'd like, we'll have someone here to administer his medication and run any necessary tests.

Sofia shakes her head in agreement. The doctor gets up to leave.

MONICA

Thank you doctor.

DOCTOR

It's quite alright. You'll all be in my prayers.

Olivia cries into Lisa's shoulder.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Monica and Sofia drink coffee at the table.

MONICA

Mom. I haven't seen you cry yet through all of this. I don't know how you do it.

SOFIA

I don't know why.

MONICA

I think you might just be in denial.

SOFIA

I'm not stupid. I know what is going on.

MONICA

Alright, alright. I'm just letting
you know that it's ok to cry
sometimes.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Brayden walks into the room, cautiously. Sal lies
unconscious in his bed.

Brayden grabs a chair from across the room, pulls it up next
to the bed. A beat.

BRAYDEN

Hi.

He doesn't know what to do or say. He collects his
thoughts, looking around the room at pictures.

BRAYDEN

I don't know if you remember this,
but a few years ago when I came
out...

CUT TO:

INT. ROMERO HOUSE BEDROOM - DAY (THREE YEARS EARLIER)

Brayden sits on a bed crying. He has a black eye.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - DAY (THREE YEARS EARLIER)

Jeff and Monica talk to Sal.

MONICA

The school sent Brayden and the
other kid home. He's going through
so much right now.

Sal gets up, angry, and storms toward the door.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)

I was sure you were going to come
in and yell at me, tell me to snap
out of it, to be a man. Stick up
for myself.

INT. ROMERO HOUSE BEDROOM - DAY (THREE YEARS EARLIER)

Sal storms into the room where Brayden is still crying.

BRAYDEN (V.O.)
But you didn't.

SAL
I don't wanna hear no more of this
bullshit. I don't give a fuck about
these punks. You tell them they
gotta problem with my grandson,
they gotta problem with me. I'll
beat the shit out of them.

Sal storms back out of the room, slamming the door behind
him as he does.

BACK TO SCENE

Brayden, in the chair beside Sal's bed.

BRAYDEN
You had no idea how much that meant
to me.

Brayden sits in the chair for a long moment, again unsure
what to say.

BRAYDEN
I love you, Nonno.

He grabs Sal's hand and holds it for a moment. He lets go,
stands up, and walks out. He's crying.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Monica talks to Sal in the same chair.

MONICA
Mom, she was ready to kill me. I
know she was. I don't think we had
a real conversation for over a
year. But YOU.

Monica shakes her head in disbelief.

MONICA
You were in cahoots. She'll never
know, either.

CUT TO:

INT. MONICA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Monica sits alone in her restaurant, shiny and new.

MONICA (V.O.)
 The night before I opened the
 business, I looked around, soaked
 it all in. It was all you.

BACK TO SCENE

Monica, in the chair.

MONICA
 It was all you. Everything I have
 become since leaving the restaurant
 is because of you. I'm happy. You
 knew I needed that. Had you not
 told me to leave, I don't know
 where I'd be right now.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lisa is now in the chair.

LISA
 Every little girl dreams of her
 wedding day. The dresses, the
 flowers, people. The dances.
 (beat)
 But when your family hates you....

She wipes tears off her face.

LISA
 I was so scared. Me, his family,
 his business partners. That's no
 wedding.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE: LISA'S WEDDING

INT. ROMERO KITCHEN - NIGHT (1978)

SUPER: "1978"

Sofia, 37, is on the phone.

SOFIA (AGE 37)
(yelling)

NO!

She slams the phone down. Sal, 44, walks in.

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
What was that?

SOFIA (AGE 37)
Your daughter is getting married.

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
Married? Lisa?

SOFIA (AGE 37)
To the lawyer boy!

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
And what you say?

SOFIA (AGE 37)
She wants us to come. i said no
way in hell. I will not support
this marriage. She's 18 years old!

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
Shouldn't we think about it?

SOFIA (AGE 37)
No!

INT. SAL AND SOFIA'S BEDROOM - DAY (1978)

SUPER: "FOUR MONTHS LATER"

Sal, 44, walks into the bedroom. Sofia is changing.

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
I'm going fishing for the weekend.

SOFIA (AGE 37)
What about the restaurant? There's
a big banquet tonight!

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
That's what the employees are for!

She rolls her eyes.

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
I'll be back Sunday!

SOFIA (AGE 37)
(yelling)
Fine! Go!

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
Okay!

INT. CHURCH - DAY (1978)

Lisa, 18, is sitting alone in a dressing room. She's wearing a wedding dress.

She looks up toward the door.

LISA (AGE 18)
What are you doing here?

Pan to reveal that Sal is standing in the doorway, dressed in a tuxedo.

SALVATORE (AGE 44)
I would NEVER miss an opportunity
to walk my daughter down the aisle.

Lisa runs up, crying, and hugs her dad.

INT. CHURCH - DAY (1981)

Lisa and Sal walk down the aisle at her wedding.

BACK TO SCENE

Lisa in the chair.

LISA
You...

She starts crying and cannot stop.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Jeff and Matthew are shopping for groceries. Matthew pushes the cart while Jeff checks items off a list as they are put in the cart.

JEFF

Did we get french onion dip?

MATTHEW

Yeah it's in here.

JEFF

Good.

They walk a little further in relative silence.

MATTHEW

Hey dad?

JEFF

What's up?

MATTHEW

I'm really scared.

Jeff picks up an apple and inspects it.

JEFF

We all are, Matt.

MATTHEW

Not about him dying, though. I've come to accept that. I'm afraid of what will happen to everyone else.

Jeff puts the apple down, and picks up another one.

JEFF

You know why I love apples so much?

MATTHEW

No, why?

JEFF

Apples come in many different varieties. I like Michigan apples. I don't really care for Red Delicious apples. There are green apples, too. You're mom always liked those, but I don't know why. I've tried them all. The bottom line is that I

JEFF

love apples. Even the ones I
didn't like as much I still ate all
the way through.

Matthew gives him a puzzled look.

JEFF

I've been in this family 35 years,
Matt. There are good apples and bad
apples. But at the end of the day
they're still apples and we still
love 'em. And they're still right
here in the apple bin, together.

Matthew smiles.

MATTHEW

You know, I'm not sure the
methaphor makes a lot of sense but
I'll take it. Thank you.

Jeff puts a few apples in a bag and ties it shut.

JEFF

I'm a drummer. I'm not supposed to
make sense all the time.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Olivia in the chair.

OLIVIA

Lisa...Lisa was always the pretty
one. Married the rich guy, got
whatever she wanted. Mon was the
smart one.

She rubs Sal's forehead.

OLIVIA

And I. I was the hothead. The
bitch.

(light-heartedly)

And I owe you for that.

She leans back in the chair.

OLIVIA

I remember the first time I came
home drunk. At like 15. You
grounded me for a month. But I

OLIVIA
kept sneaking out. And then one
day I cursed you out, told you I
hated you and I never wanted to see
you again.

A beat.

OLIVIA
But I knew, even then, it was just
because you loved me.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - DAY

Matthew's phone rings. He answers.

GREG (V.O.)
Good morning. How are you.

MATTHEW
I'm fine, how are you?

GREG (V.O.)
I'm gonna be straight with you,
Matt, not too good.

MATTHEW
I'm sorry to hear that sir.

GREG (V.O.)
Listen, you know I like you, right?

MATTHEW
Yes sir.

GREG (V.O.)
This isn't easy for me. I know
you're going through a rough time
right now. But when was the last
time you went to the new store?

MATTHEW
Umm..

Matthew can't recall.

GREG (V.O.)
I'm sorry. I wish it was under
different circumstances, but this
isn't working out.

MATTHEW

What can I do?

GREG (V.O.)

Well any chance you had at that promotion is out the window, at least for the foreseeable future. But you can still save your job. I need you back in Minneapolis next week.

Matthew waits with a blank look on his face. Greg hangs up.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel's turn in the chair.

RACHEL

The best part of my childhood was every Wednesday when all of us would come over to play, and you and Nonna would babysit. We used to all pick on Matthew, and play games.

She starts laughing.

RACHEL

Do you remember the time when you tied our little wagons to your tractor, and pulled us around the yard? Brayden and Matt kept telling you to go faster, faster, but I was scared. We hit a bump in the yard, and I fell out. Scraped my knee, broke my nose.

She giggles again. Her laughter then turns slowly into tears.

RACHEL

You picked me up, ran into the house. Nonna wasn't home for some reason...I can't remember. You cleaned my wounds, then we sat down on the couch. I was crying because not only was I in pain, but now I had a broken nose. The kids at school would make fun of me, I said.

(beat)

RACHEL
 You set me down on your lap, and
 said, "you'll always be my
 beautiful little princess."

Tears drip down her face.

RACHEL
 The worst part about all of this is
 that my little prince or princess
 will never hear that from you.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matthew sits in his chair, holding his head in his hands,
 stressed out. Monica enters.

MONICA
 What happened?

Matthew sits up.

MATTHEW
 I don't want to talk about it right
 now.

She sits down.

MONICA
 Have you talked to him yet?

Matthew shakes his head: "no."

MONICA
 You need to. We don't know how
 long this will last.

He nods in agreement.

INT. SAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Matthew enters the bedroom and slowly closes the door behind
 him. He walks around, looking at the pictures. He stops
 and fixates on one of him and Sal at his high school
 graduation.

He sits in the chair next to Sal's bed.

MATTHEW
 Nonno, it's me Matt.

He adjusts the chair, leans over so he's right next to Sal.

MATTHEW

I've spent the last couple of days
trying to figure out what to say.

(beat)

My mom said I should say whatever I
need to get off my chest. I know
this is probably going to be the
last time I talk to you.

He takes a breath. He speaks very slowly, stuttering and
stopping to collect himself.

MATTHEW

I want you to know that I love
you. That when I grow up I hope I
can be just like you. And I want
to thank you. For everything. And
I promise you I'll make sure this
family is taken care of when you're
gone.

He stands up, kisses his grandfather on the forehead, and
turns to leave.

Sal's eyes open, barely. He sits up just a bit. Matthew
hears him moving and turns back around.

MATTHEW

Nonno?

Sal speaks very faintly. He's almost inaudible.

SAL

Matthew.....where.....is the
nurse?

MATTHEW

Do you need her? She's downstairs,
I'll go get her.

Sal shakes his head slowly: "no."

SAL

Just.....

A beat.

SAL

Make sure she gets a pizza.

Sal's eyes close and he starts snoring. Matthew just
smiles.

INT. ROMERO KITCHEN - DAY

The following morning. Sofia is making breakfast. Monica walks in.

MONICA
Mom.

SOFIA
What?

MONICA
I think you need to go talk to talk
to him.

SOFIA
For what?

MONICA
He needs to know that it's ok to
leave.

Sofia sits down with a cup of coffee at the counter. Monica joins her.

MONICA
I know it's not easy. But he's
holding on for you.

SOFIA
I can't do it.

MONICA
You have to. It's time.

MONTAGE: SAL AND SOFIA FALL IN LOVE

A) INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT. Sal spills water on Sofia.

B) EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY. Sal and Sofia smile at each other.

C) EXT. BEACH - DAY. Sal and Sofia walk on the beach.

D) INT. ROSSI HOUSE - NIGHT. Sal blushes as Sofia introduces her to his father as her boyfriend, and his father recognizes him from the restaurant incident.

E) INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY. Sal picks out a new dress and pays for it in coins.

F) EXT. STREET MARKET - DAY. Sal and Sofia pick out apples.

G) INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT. On a date, Sal gives Sofia the dress he bought for her.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARINA - DAY (1958)

SUPER: "TWO YEARS LATER"

Sal is holding a suitcase. A boat is in the background. Sofia wears the dress he bought her.

(They speak in Italian)

SOFIA (AGE 17)
I don't want to wait!

SAL (AGE 24)
Neither do I. But it won't be long,
I promise. And I have something I
want you to keep while I'm gone.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a ring, and slides it onto her finger.

SAL (AGE 24)
I love you, Sofia Rossi. You are
the most beautiful girl I have ever
seen and when I can, I am going to
marry you. I promise.

They kiss. He turns around, lifts up his suitcase, and walks toward the boat.

Sofia starts crying. She looks at her ring.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROMERO HOUSE - DAY (2012)

Sofia stand outside her bedroom door. She reaches for the doorknob and stops when she sees her wedding ring.

INT. SAL AND SOFIA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sofia sits down in the chair beside the bed where Sal is asleep. She pulls a picture of Jesus off the nightstand and sets it next to Sal in bed.

SOFIA
 (in Italian)
 Lord, save him, or take him. Sal,
 my love, I will always love
 you. You will always be mine.

The nurse knocks on the door.

SOFIA
 Come in.

The nurse enters. Sofia moves away but remains in the room. The nurse checks Sal's heart rate and blood pressure.

HOSPICE NURSE
 I think you should get your family
 in here.

HALLWAY

Sofia walks down the hall and wakes Olivia up in a spare bedroom.

SOFIA
 Get everyone. Hurry.

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The entire family crowds around the bed. Sofia is in the chair beside the bed. The hospice nurse is on the other side of the bed, monitoring Sal's heart rate.

Sofia, for the first time, cries in the presence of her husband since his diagnosis.

OLIVIA
 I think he'd like one last drink
 with his family.

She pulls a bottle of scotch out her purse. She rubs a little on Sal's lips. The bottle is passed around, one by one, to everyone in the room except the nurse.

Matthew is last he sips and hands the bottle back to Olivia.

The entire family stands around Sal.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Matthew at the podium at the funeral. Continued from directly after where he left off in the opening scene.

MATTHEW

Very few people get to do what I did this summer. To live with and learn from their idol. My grandfather was my idol.

A beat.

MATTHEW

What he taught me the past few months... it seems so simple. Love your family. Love what you do. Love where you are. My grandpa was not a perfect man, but he lived a perfect life. He married the woman of his dreams and loved her until the day he died. He ran a successful business for four decades. He walked each of his three daughters down the aisle, held his eight grandchildren in his arms. He even gardened better than anyone I knew.

The last line elicits a few small laughs.

MATTHEW

My grandfather knew that in the end, life is what you take from it. And to love what you take.

Matthew pauses. Then continues.

MATTHEW

Just a few months ago, I thought I had my life all figured out. But I didn't. I had forgotten this truth, and I needed someone to remind me how to love my life. And I thank God for sending me home so that my grandfather could do just that.

Matthew looks at his family seated in the first row. For the next passage, he never takes his eyes off of them.

MATTHEW

But what saddens me is that as simple as it seems, not only had I

MATTHEW
strayed from this, but so, too, did
my family. And I hope that if they
take anything from this great loss,
it's the motivation to learn to
take what is great in life. To love
what you take. Like he always did.

Matthew turns, rubs his hand on the casket, and heads back
to the pews.

INT. SOFTCO, INC. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Matthew walks up to Jennifer's desk.

JENNIFER
Mr. Anderson! Good to see you
again!

She smiles.

MATTHEW
Jenny, I owe you an apology. The
last time I was here I was very
mean to you, and I even made fun of
you behind your back. You've been
nothing but kind to me and I feel
awful for it.

Her smile fades.

JENNIFER
Thank you, sir. I appreciate you
telling me this.

INT. GREG'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew sits across from Greg at Greg's desk.

GREG
Welcome back.

MATTHEW
It feels different here.

GREG
A lot has changed.

MATTHEW
That it has.

Greg grabs a bottle of water from a mini-fridge.

GREG

I'm sorry about your grandpa.

MATTHEW

I appreciate that.

GREG

And I'm sorry about the promotion not working out. But that's business, kid. You didn't get the job done.

(beat)

But, I'm glad you're back. We need you here, you're great at this job. And you still have lots of time to move up the ladder. You've already moved up this far, after all.

MATTHEW

Actually, I wanted to talk to you about that.

GREG

Fire away.

MATTHEW

I've done a lot of thinking. First, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity, and for your guidance the past few years.

GREG

I sense a "but."

Matthew sets an envelope on the desk.

MATTHEW

My resignation.

Greg picks up the envelope and opens it. He begins reading the letter.

GREG

(reading)

"A new direction."

He looks up.

GREG

What will you do?

INT. MATTHEW'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matthew enters. Ashley is sitting in the living room and is shocked to see him.

ASHLEY

You're home early. How was work?

MATTHEW

I quit.

She stands up.

ASHLEY

You quit?

MATTHEW

Yeah.

She doesn't know what to say. Matthew sits down next to her.

MATTHEW

You know, one thing my grandpa said to me before he died, was that there had to be a reason I was with you for five years. And I didn't know what that reason was. And then, I figured it out.

ASHLEY

And?

MATTHEW

I love you. And I want to start over with you. Because I can do a lot better. And quitting my job was a step towards that.

He reaches out to shake her hand. She shakes it.

MATTHEW

I'm Matthew Anderson. I like long walks on the beach, journaling, and girls named Ashley.

ASHLEY

My name is Ashley Wando Cooper. And I can't have dairy products.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

SUPER: "SOME TIME LATER"

Matthew is dressed in a tuxedo. Rachel is next to him, in a bridesmaid's dress. They are talking to someone off-screen.

MATTHEW

I'm nervous. Is it okay to be nervous?

(beat)

It's finally setting in.

RACHEL

It's a wedding. You're supposed to be nervous.

MATTHEW

I know. I'm sweating bullets under this thing.

BRAYDEN (O.S.)

Oh my God, would you chill out?

The camera reverses to reveal Brayden, adjusting the tie in his matching tuxedo.

BRAYDEN

You are the worst best man ever.

RACHEL

(laughing)

You kinda are.

BRAYDEN

Plus, you've been through this before.

MATTHEW

This is true.

A knock at the door. Ashley comes in, carrying a little girl, maybe 3 years old, who is crying.

Ashley sets the girl down. She runs up to Rachel, who picks her up. The girl stops crying.

ASHLEY

Sorry, Rach. Bethany wanted her mommy.

Ashley looks at Brayden.

ASHLEY
They're ready for you.

MATTHEW
You ready, big guy?

BRAYDEN
As ready as I'll ever be.

MATTHEW
Let's get you married.

INT. ROMERO RESTAURANT BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

KITCHEN

Olivia bursts into the kitchen.

OLIVIA
I can't handle it anymore. I have checked everything fifty times and then some and I'm still freaking out because I feel like I forgot something.

Chris runs in behind her.

CHRIS
What are you doing?

OLIVIA
Having a nervous breakdown.

CHRIS
You're not responsible for the food today, you have great people running the hall. Relax. It's your nephew's wedding, you should be out there and not in here.

Monica and Lisa enter the kitchen.

LISA
What is going on?

MONICA
We heard screaming.

OLIVIA
I'm nervous.

MONICA

What are you nervous about?

OLIVIA

I don't even know!

She starts hyperventilating. Monica and Lisa comfort her.

BANQUET HALL

Sofia takes a seat at the first table closest to the head table. At her table are Olivia, Chris, Monica, Jeff, Lisa, and Bethany in a high chair.

Olivia's five kids are at a table nearby. The head table is still empty.

SOFIA

Why are there eight seats? There's only seven of us.

OLIVIA

Look at the nametag.

Sofia looks at the nametag. It reads: "In Loving Memory of Salvatore Romero, 1934-2012"

Sofia smiles and sits down next to the vacant seat.

HALL ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

The DJ speaks into the microphone. Music is playing.

DISC JOCKEY

Ladies and gentlemen, please
welcome for the first time as a
married couple...Brayden Anderson
and James Hawkins.

Brayden enters with his husband, JAMES HAWKINS, to a standing ovation from the packed banquet hall of 350 guests. They make their way to the head table, where Matthew, Ashley, and Rachel are among those seated.

HEAD TABLE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Matthew, holding a microphone, taps his glass a few times. He speaks into the microphone.

MATTHEW

Thank you, thank you. I promise I won't take up too much of your time. But they tell me part of being best man is giving a cheesy speech at the reception. Being the writer in the family, I suppose it fits, although I still think that Brayden deserves a better best man than his idiot brother who didn't find out Brayden was gay until three years after he came out.

People laugh.

MATTHEW

All kidding aside, though, I never thought we'd be here today, for a number of reasons. But I think the best thing I can say is that I am awfully damn proud of my brother and his new partner, and that I hope for nothing less than the best for their marriage.

He raises his glass.

MATTHEW

To Nathan and James!

The entire reception cheers.

EXT. ROMERO HOUSE - NIGHT

Monica is walking in her parents' yard next door to the wedding reception.

Matthew walks up.

MATTHEW

What a night, huh?

He hands his mom a drink.

MONICA

I liked your toast.

MATTHEW

Thank you.

MONICA

I just wish my dad was here to see
how everyone is doing.

MATTHEW

He knows.

MONICA

Everything is pretty good right
now, you know?

MATTHEW

Yeah, it's all good.

He looks around the yard, and focuses on the grape vines.

MATTHEW

Just different.

Monica sees the grapes and smiles. Matthew puts his arm
around his mom.

PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew and Monica walk back into the banquet hall, past a
truck parked outside with "Monica's Restaurant - Wedding
Catering" written on the side.

DANCE FLOOR - LATER THAT NIGHT

People dance on the dance floor. A song ends.

DJ BOOTH

The DJ grabs the microphone.

DISC JOCKEY

Alright, ladies and gentlemen. How
about we get Brayden up here to
sing a song?

EVERYONE

(chanting)

Bray-den! Bray-den!

Next to the dance floor, Brayden steps up to a
microphone. Jeff is seated behind him on a drumset between
a guitar and bass player.

BRAYDEN
Love you guys. 1..2..3..!

The band play a slow, romantic song, similar to Eric Clapton's "Wonderful Tonight."

TABLE - SAME TIME

Sofia is sitting at her table, alone, next to the seat left vacant for Salvatore, smiling and nodding along to the music. Matthew walks up from behind her and extends his hand toward her.

MATTHEW
Young lady, would you give me the honor of this dance?

SOFIA
What a gentleman!

DANCE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew and Sofia dance together as Brayden and Jeff continue playing. The dance floor crowds as more and more friends and relatives join.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Matthew is taking off his dress shoes, after the wedding, sitting on the bed in a hotel room. He pulls a small framed picture of him and Salvatore out of a duffel bag and stares at it. Ashley walks up behind him.

ASHLEY
You know what?

MATTHEW
What?

She sits down beside him and puts her arm around him.

ASHLEY
I'm awfully proud to be your wife.

She looks at the picture.

ASHLEY
And I know he'd be proud of you too.

FADE TO BLACK.