

LIFE ON PAPER

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MITCH BLOOM (30's), slight man of intellectual intensity.

IDA WATKINS (30's), sharp, small town girl, all grown up and taking the reins of the local savings and loan.

IVAN BLUMENTHAL (30's), athletic minor league baseball player.

MICHAEL WATKINS (30's), Ida's husband. An artist. Tall and very handsome.

MAGGIE JONES (20's), waitress at a breakfast buffet. Plays the piano.

[Note: Maggie and Michael can potentially be doubled, in which case Maggie should be CHARLIE and in his 30's.]

A "beat" is a hiccup in the flow of the dialogue.

A "Pause," suggests an inner negotiation. Something bigger to grapple with.

A "SILENCE" suggests speechlessness.

A "/" in the middle of a sentence should be said simultaneously with the "/" at the beginning of the following sentence.]

ACT ONE

SCENE I: THE BREAKFAST BUFFET AT THE OMEGA HOTEL,
LANSINGVILLE, WI

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AT RISE: The aftermath of a morning at a 4-star businessman's hotel a la Doubletree, Marriott Courtyard Suites, Crowne Plaza, etc. Copies of USA Today sit crisply unopened on the tables. Rows of cereal and juice dispensers hug the walls. There's a piano for the daily 5pm happy hour.

MITCH BLOOM (early - 30's) stands at a table. He is walking in place, subtly, and drinking a glass of red wine with his fruit salad.

He looks over some papers.

He stops walking. He plucks an electronic step-counter off of his belt and looks at it. He shakes it next to his ear. He walks deliberately around the bar counting his steps. He looks back at the counter. It's accurate. He puts the counter back on his belt and begins to walk in place again. He takes a gulp of wine and chases it with a glass of water.

MAGGIE (early - 20's), a waitress, enters and delivers a mug and a small metal pitcher full of hot water. She produces a wooden box full of tea and opens it.

MAGGIE

Here you go, Sir.

MITCH

Thanks.

Mitch flips through all of the various packets of tea.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Do you have white tea?

MAGGIE

White tea...

MITCH

Like super high in antioxidants tea.

She looks in the box and begins to flip through the teas.

MAGGIE

This is a new box, so there's supposed to have everything.

MITCH

They usually don't have it in the assortments.

MAGGIE has reached the end of the box.

MAGGIE

Looks like they don't. We got (as in "not Earl") Lady Grey. How 'bout that? People always seem surprised that we got Lady Grey.

MITCH

Green tea. Just the regular decaffeinated. No flavors.

MAGGIE hunts around.

MAGGIE

Sure. Sure. Here you go.

She hands the tea to Mitch.

MITCH

Thanks.

Mitch goes back to his papers. Maggie begins to clean up.

Mitch downs his wine, unpacks his tea and begins to steep it.

MAGGIE

That's some breakfast you got there.

MITCH

Put it on room eight-oh-one (801).

MAGGIE

Sure.

MITCH

Are you closing up the buffet?

MAGGIE

Just about.

MITCH

Can you keep it open a little longer, do you think?

MAGGIE

I mean, if you don't mind that the Sterno's dying.

Ivan BLOOM (early - 30's) enters.
Athletic and burly. He wears a button
down shirt that is so new it still has
the creases from the package. He wears
a tie and a tan off-the-rack suit. His
hair was recently wet and slicked back.
He carries a stuffed backpack, maybe
it's pink?

MITCH

(to Maggie)

Oh, there he is. Thanks. (to Ivan) Ivan!

Mitch waves at Ivan.

IVAN

(Ivan sees Mitch)

Hey.

MAGGIE

(to Ivan)

Good morning, Sir.

IVAN

Hey.

MITCH

(to MAGGIE)

So, can we keep the breakfast open for another /like-

MAGGIE

/Sure, sure. Take your /time.

MITCH

/Like another twenty minutes?

MAGGIE

That's fine. (to Ivan) Coffee?

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

801. And six more breakfasts.

MAGGIE

Six.

IVAN
 (to the MAGGIE)
 Actually, uhm, two adults. Three kids -- is ten still a kid?

MAGGIE
 Sure.

IVAN
 Cool. Three kids. And a little baby. I don't think the baby'll need anything.

MAGGIE
 Two adult breakfasts should cover it.

IVAN
 Are you sure? These kids can eat.

MITCH
 Six adult breakfasts.

MAGGIE
 Sure thing, Sir.

MITCH
 801. Six.

MAGGIE
 No problem.

MAGGIE exits.

IVAN
 You know the baby's not on solids yet, right?

MITCH
 The more we expense, the more they think they bought.

IVAN
 If that's cool.

MITCH
 It's cool.

IVAN
 Alright. Hey, Mitchie!

Ivan gives Mitch a big hug.

He kisses Mitch on both cheeks. This is not Mitch's favorite.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 Long time.

*
 *

Yeah. MITCH *

Everyone says, "Hi." IVAN *

Oh? MITCH (You saw everyone?) *

Yeah, we all went home for a little bit because Sasha's daughter was in a play. IVAN *

Right. MITCH *

I'm late. I know. IVAN *

It's fine. MITCH *

I know. I'm sorry. It's a million miles of nothing to get here and every kid had to pee like ten times and all at a different /times. IVAN

/Yeah./ MITCH

/I try to be like, "You just peed, no more water until dinner," but they suck it out of the air through their kid gills. IVAN

Taking a plane: that's what an advance is for. MITCH

Girls wouldn't leave the Winnebago. IVAN

Hm. MITCH

It was going to be mutiny. IVAN

Let's see the socks. MITCH (looking Ivan up-and-down)

Ivan lifts up a pant-leg. Black socks.

IVAN
("give me some credit")
Come on.

MITCH
Cuffs.
Ivan lifts his sleeve. French-cuffs.
Mitch examines the cufflinks.

MITCH (CONT'D)
These come with shirt?

IVAN
Well ...

MITCH
Take off your jacket.
Ivan takes off the jacket. It looks
like his shirt was just taken out of
the package.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Okay. Where'd you get the shirt?

IVAN
TJ Maxx. "White collared shirt. French cuffs."

Maggie returns with coffee.

MAGGIE
Here you go.

IVAN
Thanks.
She sets down the coffee.

MAGGIE
No problem.
Ivan takes off his jacket.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Great tie!

IVAN
Thanks.
Maggie exits.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 (as in "She liked my tie.")

See?

MITCH
 She's a waitress at a breakfast buffet.

IVAN
 I didn't hear her say shit about your tie.

Mitch takes the plastic cufflinks out of Ivan's cuffs.

MITCH
 I guess mine wasn't designed by Jerry Garcia.

He takes the cufflinks out of his own shirt and puts them in Ivan's cuff. He replaces his cufflinks with Ivan's plastic ones. He fixes Ivan's tie. He's satisfied.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 I'd take you suit shopping, but it'll take us 45 minutes just to get to a JC Penny.

He tosses Ivan a brand new iPhone.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Schedule for the whole week is in there. Phone's unlimited.

IVAN
 Bro!

Mitch looks out the window.

MITCH
 Where are they? I thought the girls were hungry.

IVAN
 Oh, I told them to wait.

MITCH
 Sterno's dying.

IVAN
 I told them we had to talk... you know, business first. 'cause, you know, when they see you, they'll be all over you.

MITCH
 Sure. Yeah. Well, I got them a Wii.

IVAN
 What?!

He gives Ivan a plastic hotel key.

MITCH

I'm in-

IVAN

801. Yeah. I got that.

MITCH

It's on the bed. I didn't wrap it.

IVAN

You didn't have to spend all that money.

MITCH

Well, it's been a lot of Christmases since I got them something.

IVAN

They don't care.

MITCH

Yeah. Well, I got it.

IVAN

You get any games? The twins like Zelda.

MITCH

I got like 10. I'm sure there's a Zelda in there. It's all on the bed.

IVAN

Awesome.

MITCH

And there's a Godiva for Lisa too.

IVAN

Awesome, Man. So... do I pass?

MITCH

I'd iron the shirt. The shirt looks like it just came out of the package.

IVAN

(trying to smooth the creases)

Oh, shit.

Mitch checks his watch.

MITCH

You've got time to steam it before our 11 o'clock. Just turn the hot water on in the shower and hang it up in there.

Ivan begins to undo his tie.

IVAN

What's at eleven?

MITCH

Face-to-face with the other side.

IVAN

All the way out in the boonies?

MITCH

Shit goes down. Everyone comes out of the woodwork. You'll see.

IVAN

Hey, I hope you're not expecting me to be you, 'cause I-

MITCH

You can do this job in your sleep.

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

You know how bad Americans are at math? You did six years of elementary school in the Soviet Union. You were doing this shit in kindergarten.

IVAN

Ha.

MITCH

If you're bad, I'll make you stand in the corner, smack you with a slide-rule, and say you're ruining the wheat harvest.

IVAN

(laughing)

I swear, it wasn't me!

MITCH

Yeah, the wheat harvest is fucked. So, you run those numbers for me? I'm meeting Mike Ramos tomorrow. Want to be able to talk about baselines.

IVAN

Sure. Lisa drove so I could do it.

Ivan produces several stacks of papers from the backpack.

MITCH

Lisa drives the Winnebago?

Mitch takes the papers and starts marking them up. Ivan takes more stacks out and sets them before Mitch.

Mitch doesn't look up from the papers until he's done.

IVAN

She parallel parks that thing like a limo driver.

MITCH

That's great.

Awkward SILENCE.

IVAN

This is a really big deal for us, Mitch.

MITCH

Yeah. It'll be great.

Beat.

IVAN

What are you going to do? I got four kids and I'm hitting two oh seven against lefties. They were cutting me for sure.

MITCH

You gave it a good shot.

IVAN

Coach got transferred to Triple-A. The new guy didn't even bother learning my name. Forest Jackson. You heard of him?

MITCH

(as in "no")

Mm-mm.

IVAN

Pretty hot-shit back in the day. Astros? Perfect swing.

No response.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Never got fat. Still looks good in a uniform. Anyway, big deal for us.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

Painfully long SILENCE.

IVAN

Still. It's kind of a ... mind fuck though, huh?

MITCH

Hm?

IVAN

I mean, that's a lot of dead people you're crunching over there.

He laughs nervously.

MITCH

(matter of fact, doesn't miss a beat)

Eighty-eight.

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

Eighty-eight out of 70,000 that die every day.

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

One day it'll be you. One day it'll be me.

IVAN

Yeah. (Beat.) You've got a Hell of a job here.

MITCH

Yours now, too.

Beat.

IVAN

God knows I couldn't keep dragging four kids around Double A in a Winnebago.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

SILENCE. Mitch finishes his corrections. He puts his pen down.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Okay. As far as baseline goes, I think you're coming in too high on like 87 percent of these. Client would never go for it.

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

According to you, nine out of nine bad babies on that plane grew up to live past 90.

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

That's impossible.

IVAN

Okay.

MITCH

Right now, average life expectancy in the U.S. is only 78.7 years. Just looking at it, it says here that one of these babies has a parent and two grandparents who are left-handed. I can turn left-handedness into five years off the top, easy. Maybe seven. And this flight took off out of kielbasa cheddar country. I'll bet that you're going to find metabolic syndrome in at least 70% of these families. You've got to account for that.

IVAN

Sure. Sorry.

MITCH

Bottom line: these lives are not worth this much.

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

I'm sorry, Ivan. They're not.

IVAN

I used the program-

MITCH

If they could just use the program, they wouldn't need us.

IVAN

Right, okay-

MITCH

First time is always weird.

IVAN

Yeah-

MITCH

But, everyone dies.

I know. IVAN

Everyone dies. MITCH

But, not everyone- IVAN

Uhm, yes, everyone. MITCH

Right. But, not in a plane crash because the airline was skipping maintenance checks, right? IVAN

Pause.

I had a billionaire flying coach on that plane, Ivan. MITCH

Right. Hank Baylor. IVAN

Mr. 63rd Richest Man in the World. You know what that means? MITCH

I mean, I guess it /means- IVAN

/The other side is trying to get a payout of billions. That's his family. That's his business partners. That's his shareholders. Hell, our 11 o'clock is the charitable trust for a freakin' savings and loan he used manage. Everyone's got their hand out. And if we give any of them an inch, it changes all the numbers top-to-bottom. Actually, if we don't find a way to push the value of his life down, the whole airline goes bye-bye. MITCH

Yeah. IVAN

The airline goes bye-bye. MITCH

Okay. IVAN

Maybe even the insurance company goes bye-bye and we're out of a job. We're out in the cold. MITCH

Shit. IVAN

You want that? MITCH

No... IVAN

Hank Baylor was a big, famous investor. Started his career at Lehman Brothers, you know? MITCH

Okay. IVAN

So, he was probably caught up in all the shit that just caused the financial crisis. MITCH

Yeah. IVAN

No one on that plane was a perfect saint. MITCH

I know. IVAN

So, we're not taking what anyone is due. We're actually getting it right. MITCH

Totally. IVAN

Mitch taps on one of the stacks of paper.

So, let's try to run these numbers one more time, okay? MITCH

Ivan nods.

Lights fade.

END OF SCENE

SCENE II: THE LANSINGVILLE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

We are in the office of IDA WATKINS (late-30's, frazzled pretty) who stands behind a desk that's covered in stacks of paper.

She is handing a child's gymnastics costume over to MICHAEL WATKINS (late-30's, easy sexy).

IDA

Thank you, Michael.

MICHAEL

Hey, no problem.

IDA

I just didn't know who else to call. My mom's sick and ... Well, it can be really hard to get a meeting with these guys, you know?

MICHAEL

Did you tell the school it's me picking them up today?

IDA

Yup. I talked to Miss Jenna. *She's* happy to see you.

Michael smiles.

IDA (CONT'D)

Right. Well, it'll be such a nice surprise for the girls. Lori's had a lot of questions about how this is going to work.

MICHAEL

Well, now we know. Dad can be here whenever they need me.

IDA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

I saw a bald eagle when I was coming down this way.

IDA

No kidding.

MICHAEL

Haven't seen one around here. That was really something.

IDA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Beat.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

So, how's it going?

What? Me? With me? IDA

Yeah. MICHAEL

She tidies up some of her papers.

Well, what do you know about the Riemann's Hypothesis and quantum dots? IDA

I don't know, since I had that bad trip in Santa Fe, I never mess with quatum dots. MICHAEL
(trying to be charming)

It kind of works. He's pretty charming.

Nevermind. IDA

Sorry. MICHAEL

It's going great. It's fine. I'm just doing a crash course in high order mathematics here. IDA

Cool. MICHAEL

Cool. IDA

Beat.

Good. MICHAEL

Yeah. IDA

Girls say you've been at work a lot. MICHAEL

It's this Hank Baylor thing, you know? There's just so much to sort out. IDA

Who you meeting with today? MICHAEL

Forensics economist. IDA

Sure. MICHAEL

IDA
"Forensics economist." They're these people who, uhm, well, someone dies, and they figure out how much their life is worth.

Why? MICHAEL

IDA
So that the ... the "wrongful party" knows how much to pay to the families.

Serious? MICHAEL

IDA
Yeah. Sometimes it's other beneficiaries.

MICHAEL
Can you believe that shit?

IDA
Well, there were 88 people on the plane with Mr. Baylor. Should the airline pay each of their families billions of dollars?

MICHAEL
Exactly.

Beat.

IDA
Uhm...?

MICHAEL
Like yeah, right? In a perfect world.

IDA
I'll visit you there.

She goes back to her papers.

MICHAEL
How do they do it?

IDA
What?

MICHAEL

Figure out how much a person's life is worth.

IDA

Algorithms, computer programs. They take all the pieces of information from your life, how much you make, how much you save, how long they think you'll live, and they run it all together and they come up with a number.

MICHAEL

Sounds up your alley.

IDA

It's pretty interesting actually.

MICHAEL

I'm sure.

IDA

The person that I'm meeting today is like an expert in how to make people's lives worth less.

MICHAEL

Sounds like a great guy.

IDA

It's more complicated than that.

MICHAEL

If you say so.

IDA

He's a genius.

MICHAEL

That's cool.

IDA

Like a real genius. Child prodigy and everything.

MICHAEL

Alright.

IDA

He sees things that no one else can see -- the whole picture from the littlest point. You tell him what your heart rate was on your wedding day, he'll tell you the month you get divorced- ... Sorry. That's an exaggeration.

MICHAEL

Like Seurat.

IDA

Ah ... right.

MICHAEL

Pointilism. Look close, step back, look close.

Beat.

IDA

Right, in this case, the canvas is ... try stepping back to infinity.

MICHAEL

(a smile)

Always.

IDA

(suddenly nervous)

Yeah. So that's, you know, so "chance" "systems" that's Ramsey Theory blah-blah-blah.

MICHAEL

"Blah-blah-blah." And you're going mano-a-mano with him fighting over Hank Baylor's billions?

IDA

No. I'm fighting him to assert that Hank Baylor's life was worth billions, so that the insurance /company-

MICHAEL

/Exactly. That's what I'm saying.

IDA

No, actually, you... right. Exactly.

MICHAEL

That's really something.

IDA

Well, Mr. Baylor promised us \$50 million for the community trust. I've got to make sure we get it.

MICHAEL

No shit.

IDA

Yeah. But, we're last in line. If I can't get his life valuation up, there might not be anything left after the vultures are done.

MICHAEL

Well, you're going to get it.

IDA

Yeah.

I know you will. MICHAEL

That's right. IDA

Beat.

Want to do me? MICHAEL

Michael sits down.

What? IDA

Do my life. MICHAEL

Oh. Okay. IDA

Sure. Come on. MICHAEL

He flashes that irresistible smile.

Really, Michael? IDA

MICHAEL
(joking, charming)
Come on, it'll be fast. My life ain't worth shit.

Okay. IDA

She begins to write.

IDA (CONT'D)
Okay. Well, I know your age.

Mm-hm. MICHAEL

Your height. Your ... did you lose weight? IDA

I don't think so. MICHAEL

Okay. And ... IDA

She stops writing. She looks at Michael. She can't get sucked into this.

IDA (CONT'D)

Well, you know, actually, I'd really need to go back and look through our tax returns, you know?

MICHAEL

Oh. Sure. Go ahead.

IDA

No, I'm mean ... it's not that simple. I can maybe work on it this weekend ... well, actually, I have the girls this weekend, so next weekend?

Beat.

MICHAEL

Sure whenever you get to it.

IDA

Sorry.

MICHAEL

It's just for shits, right?

IDA

Ha. (Beat.) So, thanks for coming down, but, I've got to get back to work here.

MICHAEL

Sure thing.

He gets up. An awkward hug (kiss?).

He hands her a postcard. There is a picture of a painting on it.

IDA

The girls told me you got a show.

MICHAEL

Jane set it up.

IDA

That's wonderful.

MICHAEL

It's a real gallery. It's on South Kinnickinnic and everything. I know Milwaukee's a hike from here, but-

IDA

I'm going to try, Michael. I really will.

MICHAEL

Okay. Okay. I'll text you when we're ... at the house.

IDA

Thanks, Michael. Thanks again.

MICHAEL

It's all new stuff.

IDA

I'll try.

Michael exits.

Ida sits down. She needs to catch her breath.

Pause.

Her phone rings. She picks up.

IDA (CONT'D)

Yes ... okay. Send him in.

She composes herself. Mitch enters with Ivan wearing what they were wearing in the previous scene. Ivan's shirt is crease-free.

IDA (CONT'D)

Mr. Bloom?

MITCH

Yes.

IDA

Ida Watkins.

Ida approaches and shakes his hand.

IDA (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you.

MITCH

Thank you. This is my, uh, associate. Ivan Blumanthal.

Ida shakes Ivan's hand.

IDA

Bloom and Blumanthal!

IVAN

We're cousins, actually.

IDA

Cousins! How nice!

MITCH

(dagger eyes to Ivan)

Ivan'll be assisting me with some of the other cases.

IDA

(re: the cases, genuine)

So sad.

MITCH

Sad?

IDA

You guys have a tough job, I'll give you that.

MITCH

Oh. Well, tough's our specialty.

She holds out a business card to Mitch
and then one to Ivan.

IDA

I'm sure. Here's my card. Call if you need anything.

Ivan takes it.

IVAN

I'll do that. Thanks.

Ivan looks over at Mitch who tries to
shake his head subtly.

IDA

I'm sorry. Was I not ...?

MITCH

Ivan's really brand new.

IDA

Oh, right.

IVAN

I just got in.

MITCH

We really like to make sure it's just senior level people
talking to each other.

IDA

Gotcha. That makes sense.

MITCH

I was told that you had some documents for us to vette?

IDA

I do. My assistant has them. Is that okay?

MITCH

Sure, Ivan can collect them from her. It's just... you can always call me directly if you need anything.

He hands her a business card.

IDA

Thank you. Thanks. (to Ivan) Well, she's right outside.

IVAN

Okay.

He looks to Mitch who nods.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you.

IDA

Same to you.

He exits.

IDA (CONT'D)

Working with your cousin? That's fun. Were you two close as kids?

MITCH

Pretty close. Yeah.

IDA

I was really close to my cousins. We raised silkie chickens for the 4-H. Have a seat.

Mitch sits down.

IDA (CONT'D)

I appreciate this. I know this is not the way this usually goes, am I right?

MITCH

Every process is different.

IDA

But, you're usually going up against some other genius-level PhD in some hyper-cerebral chess game, isn't that right?

MITCH

It's a little more like a game of Chicken. So you might actually have a leg up.

IDA

Oh, ha, that's right. That's funny.

MITCH

You worked for Mr. Baylor?

IDA

I worked for the bank he started here.

(these four walls)

I'm an employee of Lansingville Savings and Loan. But, he was a real mentor to me. And one of the lessons he gave me in a negotiation is that you have to be negotiating over the same thing right?

*
*
*

MITCH

Business Affairs for his corporation don't want me to talk to you.

IDA

Well, they're just mercenaries in from Chicago. None of them knew Mr. Baylor and their valuations are way off.

MITCH

I know. They're coming in pretty high.

IDA

No, Sir. They're coming in way low.

MITCH

How do you figure?

Ida hands Mitch a sheaf of paper.

IDA

It's all right there.

Mitch begins to thumb through the pages. There's something special in them.

MITCH

What was it you said you did for Mr. Baylor?

IDA

I'm the actuary here.

*
*

MITCH

Right. That's /right.

IDA

/I estimated risk for Mr. Baylor's various /interests.

MITCH

(looking through the pages)

/Right ... right. So, where's your estimate in all of this?

Ida flips to a page and points at something. Mitch looks at the number. He smirks.

IDA

It's a fair number.

MITCH

For the gross national product of Paraguay.

IDA

That's less than the GDP of Paraguay.

MITCH

Barely. I was kidding. But, barely.

IDA

The 94th richest man in the world died on that plane. You can't get around that.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

IDA

He was making a lot of smart and profitable investments.

MITCH

Mostly out here.

IDA

That's right.

MITCH

Who knew Jerrold, Wisconsin was such an economic engine?

IDA

Might be surprised at what you find if you actually look?

MITCH

Maybe what I'll find is actually early onset dementia. Did Hank Baylor seem himself when he got on that plane?

IDA

Ha.

MITCH

Dementia comes with a number a well established co-morbidities, as you know.

IDA

Why don't you let me show you? You came all the way out here.

MITCH

Show me.

IDA

Let's shoot straight. You're here to uncover him, right? To find the thing that makes him worthless.

MITCH

That's an over-simplification.

IDA

This is home. This is where Hank grew up. You want to know the man to set his worth? This is where you start. Only thing you're risking is that I'll show you that Hank Baylor was worth a whole lot. But, you don't have to worry about that. All you've got to do is close your mind.

Beat.

MITCH

Why not?

IDA

Good. I'll drive.

MITCH

Let's go.

IDA

After you.

Mitch and Ida head out. Ida returns for her handbag. She takes a compact out and checks her reflection. She looks closely at something. Plucks an eyelash of her cheek. Heads back out.

Lights fade.

End of scene.

SCENE III: THE SIDE OF A LARGE HILL.

Night time the same day. We are on the grassy banks of a large hill. The metal legs of a radio tower stand in the background.

IDA (CONT'D)

JOYFUL AND TRIUMPHANT!
OH COME YE-

MITCH

Okay, okay, we're joyful and triumphant.

She looks at him closely.

IDA

You look joyful and triumphant.

MITCH

It's official.

She sits down next to him. They catch their breath.

IDA

You're in pretty good shape. Most people can't make it up here. What do you think?

MITCH

I think as far as family traditions go, this is a pretty odd one.

IDA

You don't charge up giant hills singing Christmas carols where you're from?

MITCH

Can't say that's ever happened in my family.

IDA

My father took one of those crazy walk across Scotland vacations every Spring, so this was training. He'd make us carry copper pennies in our pockets for extra weight and march us up the hill.

MITCH

Sounds like a blast.

IDA

To get the full experience we should climb the radio tower. I used to sit up there for hours.

Ida looks out.

IDA (CONT'D)

Isn't that just the most beautiful view? You should see it in winter time, it's cold, but it's ... The View.

Mitch looks out. He looks at Ida. She's beautiful. He looks out.

IDA (CONT'D)

See that over there? Those are Del Martin's solar panels on all those farms. You can see the moonlight on them. I saw he got your attention today.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

IDA

He didn't even think it was worth applying for patents. Mr. Baylor convinced him to do it. Widower. Broke. Drank too much. Hank yanked him back to life by his boot-straps. Now, Del's installing his solar panels all over the state, right when Obama's talking about helping with subsidies for solar energy.

MITCH

That's not growth. That's a subsidy.

IDA

Tell that to JP Morgan. Now who's naïve? Green is green. And that's just one instance of how Mr. Baylor was helping people around here.

MITCH

I think that's great. But, I don't know what you want it to mean for me.

IDA

Your job is to shrink the value of his life; my job to assert the fullness of it, don't you think?

MITCH

My job is to make the most accurate assessment. Besides, I'm not the one who makes the judgements at the end of the day. You know that right? I just give an opinion.

IDA

An opinion that holds a lot of sway because your methodology is brilliant. I mean, it's wrong, sadly, hopelessly misguided, but, your valuations ... the way you achieve them is brilliant.

*
*
*
*

MITCH

(laughs a little)

Thank you.

IDA

And generally life mitigating.

MITCH

Sometimes things aren't worth as much as we like to think they are.

IDA

At the very least, perhaps I've impressed upon you the fact that Hank Baylor was not an anonymous figure on a spreadsheet.

MITCH

I don't use a spreadsheet.

IDA

This was a man who was connected to other people and other people felt connected to him in really profound ways.

MITCH

That's great. But, my client can't possibly be responsible for the value that Mr. Baylor had to everyone he ever met, right?

IDA

Yes, but, if life's a big equation, you've got to consider all the variables.

MITCH

And then have a reason to exclude the variables that you exclude.

IDA

I don't know about you, but I want some cheesecake.

Ida takes a take-out container from her bag.

MITCH

Does it decrease his life worth because he supported businesses that are clogging the arteries of half the county?

IDA

You should really try some. I mean, this is Wisconsin. We're geniuses with cheese. I don't care what they say about New York cheesecake.

*
*

MITCH

No thank you.

IDA

Think you're going to live forever? I hear that's an occupational hazard for you guys, with your little pedometers and your red wines for breakfast. I mean, newsflash, my friend...

*
*
*
*

Mitch takes one of the cheesecakes and tastes it.

IDA (CONT'D)

It's better with organic microbrew made by the old ladies who got together when the mop factory closed down. God, could they have loved you any more? *

She hands him a bottle of beer. He opens it and drinks. Really likes it.

MITCH

Mm. That's good.

IDA

See? We haven't even talked about hedonistic damages.

MITCH

(eye roll)

Ugh. That's 'cause no one values how much they like their life correctly.

IDA

Still, you haven't accounted for the loss of pleasure that Mr. Baylor experienced.

MITCH

Nor the loss of pain. Besides, he's dead. He's not a beneficiary.

IDA

I'm just saying, what if your whole system is wrong? What if your life-mitigation factors are precisely the things that made his life, any life worth living?

MITCH

Care to share some examples with me? Things that might not be in the file?

IDA

Not biting.

MITCH

A Cuban cigar habit nobody knows about? Crystal meth? Thai hookers?

IDA

No.

MITCH

Did he chase you around the desk? Men with more testosterone are more likely to have heart attacks and prostate cancer.

IDA

I don't appreciate that.

MITCH

Sorry. There's just nothing that you're saying to me that I don't know already.

IDA

Okay. Sorry to bore you.

MITCH

That's not it either. It's just ... you're not going to say some magical thing ... and I'm not going to give up some magical secret that your side can use. Couple of minutes from now, you're going to ask me to come up on my numbers, and then I'm going to say, "I'm sorry, but, the numbers say what they say."

IDA

That wasn't what was going to happen. The magical things part.

MITCH

I'll look at your estimates, alright? At the very least.

IDA

Thanks.

MITCH

From what I saw, you have interesting ideas in there.

IDA

Thanks.

MITCH

And the work is very ... it looks like good work. You have a good sense of the numbers. Have you always liked numbers?

Ida laughs.

IDA

No.

MITCH

They like you.

Pause. He drinks.

MITCH (CONT'D)

They do. You can see that.

IDA

When I met Mr. Baylor I was selling knives for one of those pyramid scheme companies, you know? And my car broke down and I came to the Savings and Loan for a ...

(MORE)

IDA (CONT'D)

for a loan to get it fixed, and Hank took out a pen and paper and showed me why he couldn't risk giving me a loan, that I was going to need to sell knives to millions of people to make the numbers make sense. "There aren't that many towns to drive to, Ida." I signed up for an actuarial class that Spring and I started thinking in ways I never thought of before. It was comforting. Finally knowing numbers, the thing that other people get to know, but you don't. It's comforting for a person like me, like I never had comfort before. I know, that must sound really stupid to you. Mr. *Math Prodigy* and all.

MITCH

That was a long time ago.

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

(a reminiscence)

I think I understand what you mean by "comforting." When you start out, the numbers are just the numbers and they do what they do, with or without you. That's comforting. But, then you start realizing that they go out to infinity, you realize that the number that answers every question in the world is with us all the time. It's just too big for us to understand or imagine it, but it's wrapped around us like a coat, like a skin. But then, "God, what's out there that we don't even understand, that we'll never understand?" Then it's, "Can I trap it so I can see it." Then it's, "Can I stretch myself to see to infinity?" Then once you get there it's, "Can I explain it so that someone else can see it?" And by then you've pulled and twisted it so much, you start to wonder if numbers are just some trick that we invented to create some kind of ... bullshit order in an orderless world, and then ... uh oh ...

Mitch takes a swig.

IDA

Like an artist.

MITCH

Hm?

IDA

It's like being an artist.

MITCH

Ugh. Everybody's always trying to equate artists and mathematicians.

IDA

Really? I never heard anybody say that.

MITCH

Well they do.

Ida laughs.

IDA

Well, you're a hard man to have an original idea around, Mitch Bloom.

MITCH

No. I'm sorry. It's just ... not art, it's ... math.

IDA

Well, you would know.

MITCH

I mean, people care about art.

IDA

(doesn't believe him)

Okay.

MITCH

Well, people understand it.

Ida raises an eyebrow.

MITCH (CONT'D)

They do when it's ... good. They feel it. I guess.

IDA

I guess.

MITCH

Well, there's only like a handful of people in the world that could understand the math I was doing before. Even when it was good, which ... I don't know. Truthfully, it's not even the way we really naturally understand numbers. (mocking) *Infinity*.

He shakes his head.

IDA

What? Infinity's not a real thing?

MITCH

Well, it's like the realest thing, and the unrealest thing. I mean, it's real because nothing exists if infinity doesn't exist. But, it's like not real because we ... we're so limited we can't possibly understand it. I mean, ... when you were born ... uhm, okay, like all children naturally understand the difference between one and two, maybe two and three, right?

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

But, you show them ... a picture of one hundred jelly beans and a picture of ninety-nine and they say it's the exact same thing, 'cause really, they kind of are. They're both just lots of jelly beans. In the beginning, all we really needed to know is the difference between "none" "some" and "lots." Our best, truest understanding of infinity is just lots of lots and lots. But, mathematics has made it so complicated no one can understand any of it.

IDA

Why don't you give me a shot?

MITCH

To what?

IDA

Be utterly confused by you and your contorted genius.

Beat.

MITCH

Like my proof?

IDA

Hit me.

MITCH

Serious?

IDA

I'd be happy to go through my Hank Baylor numbers with you line-by-line.

MITCH

Okay. Okay. Really?

IDA

Go.

MITCH

Okay. So I was studying prime numbers, the numbers that are only divisible by themselves and one, because they're like the building blocks of all numbers, numbers at an atomic level, the building blocks of all real things. But, it's like the universe is keeping a secret with prime numbers because trying to predict when they'll occur is impossible because right now, the distribution pretty much looks like chance. You with me?

IDA

I know what chance is.

MITCH

Yeah. But, how can the universe be ordered if the most important numbers appear randomly? That can't be true. So, hundreds of years ago, this mathematician, Riemann, was asking the same question, and he discovered the line for a function called the Riemann zeta function that extends straight up into infinity, and it looks like all prime numbers exist relative to that line. The eyes are rolling back in your head, right?

IDA

Less self conscious whining more crazy prime number line stretching to infinity.

MITCH

Okay. Well, they've done billions of calculations and no prime number they've found has ever existed unrelated to that line.

IDA

Okay. Sounds like he found it.

MITCH

No. What if it's not true for the eight hundred trillionth prime number? Then the whole theory falls apart. It's got to work forever. We have to stretch to infinity, or collapse infinity into a point. That's the nature of a proof.

IDA

So what can you do?

MITCH

Well, the problem was that the Riemann zeta function included imaginary numbers, so it was hard to understand it abstractly. So, I thought that if you could somehow translate math theory to real life, to physics, you could prove the theorem for all of infinity.

IDA

Huh.

MITCH

Because if something doesn't apply for infinity-

IDA

It doesn't exist?

Beat.

MITCH

Not in /the-

IDA

Not in the real world.

MITCH

Right. So, in the real world, it turns out that the zeta function fits almost perfectly within formulas that we use in quantum mechanics. Quantum systems are massive and deeply chaotic. So, the only way for us to try to look at these big, crazy systems is to find small order first: these algorithms of clarity called quantum dots that you can connect together to... understand. Anyway, so the idea was to create a model for how a quantum system would look if the Riemann hypothesis fit into a quantum dot /and-

IDA

And then you try to make it happen it in real life... I mean, I'm sorry, is that right?

MITCH

Well, in a real life lab. Yeah.

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

And if the lab results matched our model, it would prove that the Riemann's zeta function predicts prime numbers. When I was really hot, when I was a math star and doing all these cool things, it was because it looked like I found the right ... the right quantum dot.

IDA

So what happened?

MITCH

I had it all laid out. I even built a model that worked. I saw in my mind how everything lead to the proof. But, I missed something. Some essential thing and ... *poof* it fell apart.

IDA

That sucks!

MITCH

So, it was just years and years and years of work, looking for a needle in a haystack, building models for it once I found it and it all went right down the drain.

IDA

That's not true.

MITCH
(as in "you don't know what
you're talking about")

Okay.

IDA
Proving something is true for infinity. I don't know that I've ever met a person who tries to do that? I mean, who does that?

MITCH
Assholes.

IDA
No.

MITCH
I was an asshole. Everyone told me I was going to win the Fields Medal, the Clay Millenium Prize. That's a million dollars. But, then I submitted my paper for review and one person pointed out a hole and I rushed to plug it up. Then another person pointed out another hole and I rushed to plug it up. Then there were holes in my plugs and holes in my holes. It was like a week of activity and then it was all over.

IDA
You couldn't try again? You'll try again.

MITCH
I don't ... think so. One day, I woke up in my car. I was broke. Alone. I had nothing. I tried to work with some people out at Berkeley, but everything seemed ... well, here I am.

IDA
That's not so bad, is it?

MITCH
Nah.

IDA
Well, actually it is so bad ... what are you doing here, Mitch?

MITCH
This is me now. Wearing a suit, a house, a wife.

IDA
Oh.

MITCH
All the things that you get to have... but then before I knew it, it was all just ... too many holes in that too, I guess.

IDA

You're divorced.

MITCH

A year-and-a-half now. I don't know. Doesn't seem like I had much of a say in it when we got married, so why should I get to have a say when we're not?

IDA

You guys have kids?

MITCH

No. We have a giant lawn that I go mow on weekends when I'm back home. I mow it, then I go back to my condo.

IDA

You fertilize?

MITCH

I found that the big thing was raking. If you let that grass rot on the lawn, like those clippings, everything dies underneath.

IDA

My dad rakes the grass too.

MITCH

I should just get a sit down mower, right?

IDA

I think maybe you should tell you ex-wife to start mowing her own lawn.

MITCH

But, I get to be there four like five hours when I push the mower. Whatever. Okay, speaking of artists and mathematicians: there are lots of people who want to be artists. And some of them are really talented. But like less than one percent ever get a chance to make their living making art. Same with math. Science. That's the same. So, what's all the effort worth?

She takes his face in her hands.

IDA

I think it's worth a lot.

MITCH

Yeah.

She drops her hands.

IDA

I've got to see the top of this tower.

She goes to the metal frame and climbs up out of view.

Mitch stands at the bottom of the tower and looks up at her. He starts to climb himself.

Lights fade.

End of scene.

SCENE IV: MITCH'S HOTEL ROOM

We begin the scene in DARKNESS.

Mitch turns on a light.

LIGHTS RISE. Mitch is in bed, shirtless under the covers.

Ida is buttoning her shirt.

MITCH

What time is it?

IDA

I've got to go. You're very sweet, Mitch Bloom. This was ... this was great.

She kisses him.

Mitch looks at the clock.

MITCH

It's four in the morning.

IDA

Would you mind if I turned the other light on? I can't find my pants.

MITCH

Sure.

She turns the light on. Mitch squints. The room is well lived-in with stacks of paper everywhere. Including a stack of GQ magazines. Mitch's clothes are strewn about the floor. Ida is holding a pillow in front of her legs.

IDA

Sorry.

MITCH

No, that's alright. I'm glad you ... where are you going?

She looks around the floor for her pants. She doesn't find them.

IDA

Mitch ... I've got to take my ... uh ... I've got to take my kids to school.

MITCH

You have kids?

IDA

I should have said something earlier.

MITCH

Hey. That's ... that's okay ...

IDA

We were just, you know ... They just weren't something I wanted to talk about.

MITCH

I get it. (Beat.) How many kids do you have?

IDA

Two.

MITCH

Are they farm kids?

IDA

What?

MITCH

It's four in the morning.

IDA

No. No. It's just a huge process. Breakfast. School.

MITCH

Yeah.

IDA

Checking their homework.

MITCH

Well, you can skip that today and come back to bed.

IDA

No, they're crazy about their homework. Shit, do you see my pants over there?

MITCH

No.

IDA

They freak out if they don't have the right answer on every problem. Like they cry if they get one wrong. I know, it's crazy. Usually my husband takes care of everything in the morning, but-

MITCH

Your husband?

IDA

(genuinely surprised by the question)

Uh, yeah.

MITCH

Are you serious?

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

What is this?!

IDA

Okay, that one I'm not going to take the blame for.

MITCH

What's that supposed to mean?

She holds up her hand. There's a wedding ring. Was she wearing that yesterday?

MITCH (CONT'D)

You were not wearing that yesterday.

IDA

Like Hell I wasn't?!

MITCH

Okay, okay. /Forget it.

IDA

/Alright. Listen-

MITCH

What the Hell is going on here?

Mitch gets out of bed and pulls on his pants.

IDA

Going on?

MITCH

Are you trying to get me kicked off the case?!

IDA

Kicked off?

MITCH

Yeah. 'cause if that was your plan, this was ... really stupid of you!

IDA

Hey, I wasn't trying to do anything /like that!

MITCH

/This does nothing to affect my credibility! /Nothing!

IDA

/I'm sorry, your credibility?

MITCH

I can still nail you guys to the wall!

He puts on a shirt that he picks up off the ground.

IDA

Oh my God, I can't believe this is /happening.

MITCH

/Using a ... a personal relationship between the two of us only affects my credibility if I'm easy /on you guys.

IDA

/I can't believe this is happening.

Mitch starts to gather papers that he has in stacks around the room.

MITCH

If my valuation of Hank Baylor life worth comes in the basement, no one will care who I fucked!

Beat.

IDA

Okay.

MITCH

I think you should leave.

IDA
Why are you attacking me?

MITCH
Why didn't you tell me that you're married?

IDA
I didn't think I had to!

MITCH
I spent half the night talking about my ex-wife! Were you looking in these papers?

IDA
No.

MITCH
'cause these aren't even about the Baylor case.

IDA
No, I wasn't looking at your papers.

MITCH
God, I was so stupid, bringing you /back here.

IDA
/God, serves me right.

MITCH
I think you should get out of here!

IDA
What the Hell is wrong with you?!

MITCH
You're married!

IDA
So what?

MITCH
You're on the other side!

IDA
God.

MITCH
Don't act like you weren't trying to game me.

IDA
You act like I had something all planned out!

MITCH
That's 'cause you did!

IDA

No I didn't!

MITCH

THEN WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!!

IDA

WELL IMAGINE YOU'RE AN ACTUARY IN A SMALL TOWN, AND NO ONE HAS ANY IDEA WHAT YOU DO, AND SOMEONE TELLS YOU THAT THE SMARTEST MATHEMATICIAN YOU ARE EVER GOING TO MEET IS COMING TO TOWN!! (Beat.) Don't you think you would want to meet him?! (Beat.) Don't you think you'd want to ...-

She's upset.

IDA (CONT'D)

Well, I guess nothing like that has every happened to you.

Pause.

MITCH

Hey.

IDA

Do you see my pants over there?!

MITCH

Uh, no. I don't see them.

IDA

FUCK!!! That's great. Well, how am I supposed to "just get out" then?!

MITCH

Do you want me check under the bed?

IDA

Yes.

MITCH

Okay.

Beat.

IDA

(as in "Can you do it already?")

Okay?!

MITCH

Yeah. Okay. Okay.

Mitch gets on his hands and knees. He ducks under the covers that hang over the bed.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I found them!

Mitch emerges from underneath the covers. He has Ida's pants.

He holds them out to her. She takes them.

IDA

Thanks.

He turns around.

MITCH

I'm sorry. I over-reacted.

IDA

Yeah.

Ida puts on the pants.

IDA (CONT'D)

Michael and I are separated.

MITCH

Oh.

IDA

Yeah. For what it's worth.

MITCH

I'm sorry to hear that.

She puts on her shoes.

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

I'm sorry. I was ...

IDA

You were mean. Like gross mean. That was really disappointing.

MITCH

I'm sorry.

IDA

There was no plan.

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

No plan, other than get you to see that everything you're doing for your company is actually bullshit. But, maybe you already know that and you don't care.

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

And to let you know that we're smart. We're not going to back down and we have a strong case and we know the games your side is going to play and we know it's bullshit! And to let you see that a whole community's future is riding on whatever gets decided. Good, smart people, even if we're all fatter than you would like us to be and we're not going to back down to save some disgusting airline that killed 88 people because they can't perform standard maintenance when their flight attendants go on strike! 'Cause they can't negotiate a fair contract! And I'm going to fight you for every inch! And we're going to bring someone smarter than me to fight you if I can't make you see the light!

MITCH

I got it.

IDA

I didn't ... do this to spy on you.

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

I came over because my husband has a new girlfriend and she's awesome and I'm jealous and lonely as fuck and every guy around here has known me since the first grade. Such a cliché, right?

MITCH

I don't know.

IDA

God, there's like 50 townie cows who've been waiting for this to happen. Why did he have to find someone so ... amazing?

MITCH

Fifty cows?

IDA

He's beautiful. He's a painter. Michael is beautiful. When he got out of school, we thought about moving to New York. But, we came back home because I was pregnant and his father was sick. A little bit became a little longer. A little longer became what now? Michael stopped painting and one day I told him he should just get a job because he was becoming a ... dilettante ... I heard that word in a play once and I was like, "Ha! That's what you are!"

MITCH

Uh-oh.

IDA

Well, he never got mad. He just stopped painting and did the laundry really well everyday. Like folded everything perfect like you see in The Gap. (Beat.) I found out he's painting again. And he's got this new girlfriend and she's like an assistant at a fancy gallery in Milwaukee and she's Korean and like gorgeous.

MITCH

You're... gorgeous.

IDA

I look like a mama kangaroo with the lights on. God, when I saw Michael struggling, I used to think that maybe I was lucky to never have any dreams, any real dreams. Just, you know, get married, become a mother. Packers win the Super Bowl like six times in my life. Five. But, when he finally gave up ...

She wipes a tear from the corner of her eye.

MITCH

I'm sorry.

IDA

I saw some of the new things he's doing. New paintings.

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

They suck, Mitch. They totally suck. And he's so proud of them. It's all ... Everything's about the half-heart now. What about the full throat, you know what I mean?

MITCH

I do.

IDA

I know you do. (Beat.) I see that. (Beat.) Mitch, I do want you to just come up a little higher than normal on your Hank Baylor numbers. Just a little higher.

MITCH

There it is.

IDA

It's billions of dollars. Every little bit makes a big difference.

MITCH

Huge difference, Ida.

IDA

This town is almost back on it's feet. If Del Martin goes into production for those solar panels, you're going to see.

MITCH

It's not that easy.

IDA

Maybe it is.

MITCH

The numbers say what they say.

IDA

No they don't. Are you really so arrogant that you can't acknowledge that regardless of how brilliant you are, what you see, what any of us sees when we look into chaos is what we want to see, what we need to see? You said it yourself. We trick ourselves to see order in an orderless world.

There is a knock at the door.

IVAN (OFF STAGE)

Hey, Mitch!

More knocking. Mitch pulls Ida away from the door.

MITCH

(hushed urgency)

Shit! It's Ivan.

More knocking.

IVAN (OFF STAGE)

Mitch?! (in Russian) You in there?

MITCH

You've got to hide.

More knocking.

IVAN (OFF STAGE)

Mitch?

MITCH

Can you hide in the bathroom? Can you, like ... lie down in the tub? God.

IDA

Join our team!

MITCH

What?!

More knocking. Concerned.

IDA

Be on our team! We can't pay you as much, but... You guys are going to lose.

MITCH

Okay. Fine.

She kisses him.

IDA

Hank Baylor's birth certificate is wrong.

Another knock on the door.

IVAN (OFF STAGE)

Mishka, (in Russian) it's Ivan. I'm going to come in, okay?

IDA

His mother immigrated with him from Germany. Single mother. Couldn't afford day care, enrolled him in Kindergarten when he was only three. I have his original German birth certificate. Heiko Bergler, born in Cologne. He's two years younger.

MITCH

Two years younger.

More knocking.

IDA

That's right. That can't be fudged. And those two years are going to put him on-

MITCH

Page 43 on the "future earning" table. Ida ... this could actually work ... this could ... okay I'll do it.

Really? IDA

I'll do it. MITCH

He smiles. They embrace.

The sound of the door unlocking. It opens. Mitch and Ida separate.

Ivan steps in. He's wearing pajamas. He sees Ida.

Oh. IVAN

Hi. IDA

I was a little worried. I had the key. IVAN

Did you pick up the Wii? MITCH

Girls loved it. (to Ida) Hey. IVAN

We've been ... MITCH

Yeah. IVAN

Why are you up at four in the morning? MITCH

Have you looked at your phone? The after hours trading is going crazy. London's going crazy. Everyone's... going crazy. IVAN

Ida looks at her phone.

Oh my God. IDA

The case is over. Hank Baylor made a bad investment before he died. A really bad investment. He was using a lot of off-shore accounts. Caymans. Switzerland. IVAN

Oh my God. IDA

IVAN

He bet against this, uhm, penny stock. He shorted it and it just went through the roof. He bought it at four dollars twenty-three cents and now it's ah ...

IDA

(looking on her phone)

A hundred and twenty-five. Eight millions shares at a hundred and twenty-five.

IVAN

He bankrupted everyone. His life's worth practically nothing.

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

SCENE I: A COURTROOM

AT RISE: We don't see the rest of the court room. Mitch is dressed very neatly in a very crisp suit. He's put a lot of time into this outfit. He's groomed perfectly. He sits in a spotlight. The rest of the stage is black.

MITCH

(speaking into a microphone)

... My name is Mitch Bloom. I am a forensics economist and I've been commissioned by SunJets and Allied Insurance to provide an expert opinion about the life valuation in the wrongful death of Henry Hansel Baylor.

A spot light comes up on Ida.

IDA

My name is Ida Watkins. I am a ... yes, I'm a forensics economist /working for Lansingville Savings and Loan.

MITCH

/I have a doctorate in Mathematics ... No, no qualifier, just Mathematics.

IDA

I am trained as an actuary.

MITCH

Right, well, my job is to create predictive models for the monetized value of /a person's life.

IDA

/This is my first life valuation case.

MITCH

Testing is on-going, but, our models are predictive within half a standard deviation for approximately 88% /of the subjects.

IDA

/I'd say that Mr. Bloom's model is invalid.

MITCH

For subjects at Mr. Baylor's age, our predictive success rises to /98%.

IDA

/We know intuitively that it's invalid and not nearly accurate enough. But, we're trying to impose it and it has real consequences.

MITCH

Well, in the case of Mr. Baylor, we have one of the wealthiest people in the history of the world who catastrophically diminished /the value of his own life.

IDA

/I say this because this is not the way we intuitively understand numbers.

Pause. Mitch looks at Ida. Another question is posed to him.

MITCH

... Yes. Catastrophically.

IDA

Intuitively, we are born with what is called a "logarithmic" understanding of numbers. And that can be described as an understanding of vastness. I'm a mother of two girls. Six and three... Thank you. So, If you show my three-year-old a penny and then you show her two pennies, she will intuitively know that there is a difference there. Two is twice one.

MITCH

He bankrupted himself by borrowing 8,000,000 shares of a stock called Express Ion from various traders. He paid them a fee, upfront, for the use of the shares, and then he promised them that he would return the eight million shares on an agreed upon date. He then sold those shares immediately on the open market. At his point, Express Ion was trading at about \$4.00 a share, so he put \$32,000,000 in his pocket immediately.

Mitch snaps his fingers.

IDA

But, if you show my three year old a pile of 100 pennies and then 100 and one pennies, she will tell you that there are the same number of pennies in both piles because she can't count yet. She can't enumerate. To her, it's enough they are simply piles of equal vastness.

MITCH

This was perfectly legal. It's an investing tactic called "short-selling." It's done all the time. Just like people make money by predicting that the price of a stock will go up, short-selling is a way to make money by predicting, correctly, that the price of a stock will go down.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

If, for example, the price of Express Ion were to drop from \$4.00 to \$1.00, Mr. Baylor would have then paid \$8,000,000 for 8,000,000 shares, and his profit would have been the difference between the original \$32,000,000 he pocketed and the \$8,000,000 he paid when it came time to make those traders whole. So, \$24,000,000. But, that's not what happened.

IDA

Think for a moment. Do you really understand the difference between a billion and two billion? Or is it all just vastness?

MITCH

What happened was that the price of Express Ion went up. Theoretically speaking, the price of a stock can rise to infinity. Your losses can be infinite. Right now, a share of Express Ion is \$135 and his estate is on the hook for a \$1,080,000,000.

Murmurs from the spectators.

IDA

Mr. Bloom would of course, like to reduce things so that it can appear that lives can be differentiated, qualified and quantified. But we all know that at some point, the truth is that lives must also be understood as great vastness.

MITCH

I mean, the argument is a little inane. We put people on the moon because number are real and applicable.

IDA

No one is arguing that math can't be applied. The argument is that the way it is being applied here is so inaccurate that we'd never get to the moon. The reason why short selling is so controversial and regulated is because wealthy, powerful interests can force the value of a stock down to manipulate the market.

MITCH

This loss places Mr. Baylor in a different potential income category. Based on his medical records, there is no chance Mr. Baylor, despite his past success, would have been able to make that money back. There is no precedence, no modeling. With what capital? With what reputation? With what trust?

IDA (CONT'D)

It's overly facile to enumerate vastness! The penny trick doesn't work on my six year old. She's learned in school about the mental trick that we call mathematics, so she started counting: 1, 2, 3, 4. But she's had to leave behind an essential understanding of how things are really ordered. She's lost great vastness. And at what cost?

*

MITCH

Look there's a lot of noise out there in chaos!

IDA

Something can be enumerated and vast at the same time. Things can be defined by numbers because that's how we can understand them, but they have dimensions and truths that are beyond our comprehension and that's what we strive to grasp as we expand. That's hard. But, that's what's accurate. That's a man's life. As such, it demands more rigor.

MITCH

It takes an expert to see through the noise. ... Ms. Watkins?

Ida looks at Mitch. He can't look at her.

MITCH (CONT'D)

No. I do not have faith in her estimation. I do not have faith in her expertise.

The light FADES OUT on Ida. Mitch loosens his tie.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Well, I would say to her that this may not be a perfect way to judge a person's life, but Yes, yes ... I believe that this is the most effective method for the world that we live in. It's all we've got ... How would I determine my own life worth? ... someone more unbiased should probably weigh in, don't you think?

Seamless transition into:

SCENE II: IVAN'S WINNEBAGO

Mitch is sitting within the confines of a large, well-loved Winnebago. Every inch of it is decorated in pink. There are Twilight posters on the wall. Teddy bears and unicorns everywhere. Mitch takes his tie completely off. He takes his jacket off.

Ivan is in the kitchenette preparing some food looking Daddy schlubby. Mitch sits on a bed watching a baseball game on an impossibly small television.

Ivan comes into the space with trays of man-snacks.

He breaks out some vodka and pickles.

IVAN

We dodged a bullet, bro. "Sound of Music" movie night is something I don't need to live through again.

MITCH

I like that movie.

IVAN

I like it too. But, we got the bouncing ball version where everyone sings along and I'm no music whatever, but I'm sure my kids are tone deaf.

MITCH

Alright.

IVAN

Even the baby knows it. Her eyes glaze over and she looks at me like, "Good-bye, Poppy. My skull hasn't fused and they're doing permanent damage. I go to a better place."

MITCH

Julie Andrews...

IVAN

Hot. But, I like the baroness.

MITCH

The baroness?

IVAN

Baroness Schraeder. Georg's (pronounced GAY-ork) girlfriend?

MITCH

Hotter than Julie Andrews?

IVAN

In that scene were all the children have to come kiss her after they fall in the river and change into their dry clothes and she kisses them, but she's like ...

He makes a face like someone trying to look happy but is really grossed out.

IVAN (CONT'D)

"Ew."?

Ivan turns his cheek to be kissed by five more imaginary children.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew. So hot.

MITCH

You've definitely seen this movie too many times.

IVAN

I'm telling you, it's hot.

MITCH

I only really remember Julie Andrews.

IVAN

Yeah, with the short hair. Hey, I heard that there's a movie where she's topless.

MITCH

(genuine disbelief)

What?! No.

IVAN

Google that shit.

MITCH

Someone already has.

IVAN

Me? No way. I've got kids. It would like, change my DNA if I saw that. But, it's out there. Just so you know. Remember how much my mom liked Julie Andrews when we first got here?

MITCH

The teeth.

IVAN

(Russian accent)

"How does she have such white teeth? How do they get their teeth so white?" (Beat.) Hm. Fuck this. They're doing speed-dating at the hotel. Let's get shit-faced and go.

MITCH

What?

IVAN

We'll be like cousins from Nebraska. Feed salesman cousins. Tractor salesman!

MITCH

Lisa would kill us.

IVAN

She told me to get you laid tonight. She's taking a bullet for you, bro. Don't waste it. That nun is probably singing "Climb Every Mountain" right now. So, get ready. It's a plan. Let's fire up.

Ivan pours himself a drink and takes a big bite of the pickle and does a shot.

MITCH

Slow down.

IVAN

As long as I don't drink more than two I'll be alright. I fall asleep after two.

MITCH

Since when do you like pickles and vodka?

IVAN

Mishka Blumenthal. Got to remember your roots.

MITCH

We always thought vodka and pickles were gross.

IVAN

Mm. Tastes change. I could go for a big slice of pumpernickel bread right now, hm? I know something you'll like.

Ivan goes to the kitchenette and brings back some pastries.

MITCH

Tea ball cookies! Where did you get those?

IVAN

Tyotya Vanesa. These are the real shit. I told her I was going to see you and she sent them.

MITCH

Holy shit.

IVAN

You're lucky there's any left. It was looking bad. The girls got their little piranha faces in there, gnah-gnah-gnah-gnah, but I saved you a couple.

MITCH

Thanks.

Beat.

IVAN

Aren't you going to eat one?

MITCH

I'm ah ... you know what's in these?

IVAN

Kittens and baby seals. Your eyes got this big.

MITCH

I'm okay, really.

IVAN

You're going a little too far, don't you think? I've seen you in the hotel gym all week. You're running like-

MITCH

What?!

IVAN

Hey! Hey! Okay. I'm just saying, you never used to care so much about what you ate, or whatever, whatever-

MITCH

That was better?

IVAN

Kind of.

MITCH

I was gross. I was living in my car.

IVAN

You're not looking great now. You're ... what's going on?

MITCH

Nothing.

IVAN

Come on.

Beat.

MITCH

My blood pressure's too high. I can't get it down. Messes all my numbers up.

Beat.

IVAN

You feeling okay?

MITCH

I feel fine. It's not one of those things you can feel.

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

Maybe you're working too much.

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

Seriously.

MITCH

It's fine. I'll just take some medication to control it. It'll be fine. It's probably some genetic thing.

IVAN

Yeah?

MITCH

Yeah.

Beat.

IVAN

You did a good job in court today. Looked good in court.

MITCH

I didn't do anything. He killed his own life valuation.

IVAN

Still. You looked so official. Everyone like really cares what you think. I was proud of you.

MITCH

Yeah. Thanks.

IVAN

They're still going to get something for him.

MITCH

Not enough to keep this town and the Savings and Loan going.

IVAN

I guess not.

MITCH

We're getting a bonus though. Came in way below our number.

Mitch takes a check out of his coat pocket. He hands it to Ivan.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Here.

Ivan opens the envelope. Looks at the check.

IVAN

Wow. This is a little crazy.

MITCH

The rest of the families are settling too. Baylor lost so big. Shook them up.

IVAN

Guess we did our jobs then.

MITCH

Did you find Ida? You get her the cut for the savings and loan?

IVAN

I called over there. She's in Milwaukee tonight. You should give her the check yourself, you know?

MITCH

She hates me. Won't answer any of my calls.

IVAN

Still-

MITCH

No. Just mail it so we can get out of here tomorrow.

IVAN

Sure. So ... you two.

MITCH

I don't know. It was stupid.

IVAN

What's her story? She's got a little mystery, that one.

MITCH

I don't know. Numbers add up. They don't. They do. Who knows?

Mitch points at the check.

MITCH (CONT'D)

There's a lot more where that came from. The client has got all kinds of things lined up for next month.

IVAN

Great.

MITCH

I think we have a crane accident in Atlanta next.

IVAN

How many dead?

MITCH

Eleven.

IVAN

Okay.

MITCH

Or if you want, we could go to Las Vegas instead. That one I think is an electrical wiring thing on one of the shows.

IVAN

How many.

MITCH

Just two, I think. That one might be fun. Anyway, we're going to be busy, so I think it's time to scratch the Winnebago.

IVAN

Yeah. About that-

MITCH

I mean, as amazing as this all is ...

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

My home base is in Charlotte right now. Supposed to be good schools. Lots of people moving there. You think maybe you and Lisa might want to set up out there too? You could get a house.

IVAN

I don't think so, Mitch.

Beat.

MITCH

You guys can really base yourselves anywhere. We'll just fly you out to wherever we need to go next. We can expense it.

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

So, wherever, man. Doesn't matter to me.

IVAN

I'm sorry, but, I'm not going on to the next one.

MITCH

Oh.

IVAN

I'm sorry.

MITCH

No. It's fine.

IVAN

I got a call from Forest Jackson. The new coach? He actually knew who I was, can you believe that? He's a Sabermetrics guy. So, he likes the little things I do. Wants me to play pretty steady for him this season.

MITCH

Ah.

IVAN

You're pissed.

MITCH

No.

IVAN

This is a great job. I know it.

MITCH

That's fine.

IVAN

But I'm going to get to stay in the game.

MITCH

That's great.

IVAN

That's everything.

MITCH

Okay.

IVAN

I'm flying back to Corpus Christi on Friday.

MITCH

Friday?

IVAN

Yeah, he needs me right away. Lisa's going to drive down with the girls after. You want to go down with her?

MITCH

That's alright.

IVAN

What? What?

MITCH

You really think you're going to make it?

IVAN
It's possible.

MITCH
No, it's not.

IVAN
Double A is still the pros.

MITCH
A week ago you're calling me because you're dead broke.

IVAN
That was before-

MITCH
Before what?!

IVAN
Before I knew I had another shot. I thought they were going to cut me.

MITCH
You've got four kids! No savings! No assets! What are you doing?

IVAN
Hey, come on-

MITCH
Don't you want your life to be worth something?! Don't you want to be able to take care of your girl?!

Pause.

IVAN
Yeah. I do.

MITCH
Do you ever even try to look ten years down the road?!

IVAN
Yeah.

MITCH
Alright then. Sorry.

Beat.

IVAN
They're not bad babies.

MITCH

What?

IVAN

You call every baby a "Bad Baby."

MITCH

Mike Ramos is the one who says that!

IVAN

You say it. Bad babies. 'cause it's so hard to guess what a baby's going to be, 'cause there's nothing to go on, right? I'm never going to say that. Never. (Beat.) Anyway, I meant it. I'm proud of you.

MITCH

Thanks.

IVAN

You know, nobody back home cares about your proof.

MITCH

Hm.

IVAN

I mean, no one cares that it didn't come through.

MITCH

I do.

IVAN

Well, that's you.

MITCH

And that is me.

IVAN

Look, your dad knows... I heard him tell my mom that he should have been more supportive-

MITCH

Was that before or after he was gloating that I failed, just like he said I would.

IVAN

I haven't heard him say anything like that. Not anymore. Now, he's just sad. He was just like you. You never saw. He was going to be a big deal is Russia.

MITCH

That's what everyone says.

IVAN

It's true.

MITCH

So, why'd he come here?

IVAN

Because it was crazy over there. He's Boris Blumenthal and he comes to America and all they let him do is drive a cab, you know? The world got small and he got scared. Small and scared. And then I go off to play ball and you turn into some crazy artist doing pure math-

MITCH

It's not art!

IVAN

It is. And you know it. You're like playing "Name That Tune" with the universe. You've got to know all this stuff that's unknowable and you've got to trap it in a little space in your mind. "I can see the universe in four notes." Three, two, one. Zero. It's beautiful.

MITCH

More like five hundred trillion notes. I can name that universe in five hundred trillion notes.

IVAN

If you don't see that's beautiful you've got more than your blood pressure to worry about.

Ivan pours a drink.

IVAN (CONT'D)

And your crazy mom misses you.

MITCH

I just can't go back yet. Not like this.

IVAN

Well, that's a tragedy.

Ivan yawns and rubs his eyes.

IVAN (CONT'D)

I fucking love baseball, Mitch. I love it.

MITCH

I know.

IVAN

It's so good, Mitch, and I'm ... not that good. That's a tragedy. And a comedy.

Ivan closes his eyes.

MITCH
It's okay. You're fine. (Beat.) Speed dating. You ready?

IVAN
How many have I had?

MITCH
One.

IVAN
I was all set like five minutes ago.

MITCH
Okay, let's go.

IVAN
Seriously, I only had one?

MITCH
Like half of one.

IVAN
God, I'm a light weight now. I FUCKING HATE MYSELF!

He closes his eyes again.

Beat.

MITCH
The girls are a lot of work. I can't believe how much work they are.

IVAN
No shit. Dinner was cool, man. (Beat.) Aren't they just amazing though? My girls.

Beat.

MITCH
They are.

IVAN
Okay, let me just sit here for like ten minutes.

MITCH
Okay.

IVAN
I'll sit for ten minutes and then we'll make some coffee and go.

Ivan closes his eyes. Mitch closes his eyes too.

Hey. IVAN (CONT'D)

What? MITCH

You feel bad? IVAN

No I'm fine. MITCH

No, you feel bad about the case? IVAN

Beat.

No. MITCH

I feel bad. IVAN

Well, you like feeling bad. MITCH

You feel bad. Nice town. Nice people here. IVAN

It's just like any other town out here. MITCH

You feel bad for Ida. IVAN

It is what it is. MITCH

"Sitting in a tree." IVAN

Shut up. MITCH

You know how in that problem you were working on all that time, there are no primes that exist off that special line, right? IVAN

Mmmmm. MITCH

IVAN

Well, if you look at Hank Baylor's investments ... nothing ever jumps off the line like this penny stock. Why would he short that stock?

MITCH

Bad decision.

IVAN

Bad decision like he's never made before? Why didn't he set it up to automatically sell if the price went up too high?

MITCH

Bad decision? Died before he could do it?

IVAN

Or he was sure that the stock would go down. I looked at his trades. Whenever he traded in secret and whenever he didn't use "stop-loss" he got a at least 40% profit. I mean, this was one of the best investors in the world. Why was he so sure it would go down?

MITCH

We'll never know.

IVAN

Maybe. But, if I didn't have four kids I might take that big check you gave me and short that stock myself.

Mitch opens his eyes.

MITCH

Seriously?

IVAN

Seriously.

Beat.

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

(sleepy)

I wonder what they're doing right now.

MITCH

Who?

IVAN

What part of the movie do you think they're at?

MITCH

Don't know.

IVAN
Maybe they're at the puppet show.

MITCH
Puppet show?

Ivan holds up some invisible marionettes.

IVAN
(singing sotto voce)
High on a hill was a lonely goatherd
LAY-EE-ODL-LAY-EE-ODL-LAY-HEE-HOO
Loud was the voice of the lonely goatherd ...

He fades. He snores.

MITCH
(speaking)
lay-ee-odl-lay-ee-odl-oo

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE III: AN ART GALLERY

The clink of a few lonely wine glasses. The party is slowing down. Hardly anyone is there. Ice white walls. The walls of the gallery are covered in thousands of drawings of the same woman: pretty, huge eyes, full lips, long hair, a mole that hops around to different parts of her face depending on the image.

IDA is looking at one of the pictures on the fourth wall. She's wearing her coat. She's not sure what she sees.

Michael approaches her with a couple of glasses of champagne.

MICHAEL
Look what the cat dragged in kicking and screaming.

IDA
I should have called.

MICHAEL
No, I would have been a nervous wreck.

That's crazy. IDA

Drink? MICHAEL

Sure. IDA

Michael hands her a champagne flute.

Nice. IDA (CONT'D)

You like champagne. MICHAEL

That's right. IDA

Yeah. (referring to the room) Can you believe it? MICHAEL

Jane set this up? IDA

Uhm ... yeah. I think she started here as an intern, and you know ... she works really, really hard. MICHAEL

I can see that. IDA

She totally found me ... I mean, my portfolio because she's just always scouting, always working, you know? MICHAEL

That's really great. IDA

I wasn't even sending it out anymore. It was just up on that website you set up for me. MICHAEL

Little bit of vindication for me. IDA

You were right. MICHAEL

You are welcome. IDA

MICHAEL

Yeah, so, pretty amazing, don't you think?

IDA

It's amazing, Michael, congratulations.

MICHAEL

Thanks. I'm just really, really glad that you're here.

IDA

Yeah. (Beat.) Hey, I'm sorry, I mean, you know, I'm sorry, no big deal, I mean, well, I mean, but you're not ... smoking around the girls, are you? Are you smoking around the girls?

MICHAEL

What?

IDA

I mean, when I came in, I saw you and, uh, Jane and some other people smoking outside and-

MICHAEL

Oh.

IDA

I'm sorry. I just-

MICHAEL

Yeah, I know, I'm sorry.

IDA

No, I'm sorry. I mean, I could have brought it up some other time.

MICHAEL

No, I'm sorry.

IDA

It's just Gretchen's coat-

MICHAEL

What?

IDA

Gretchen's coat when she came back last week, it smelled like-

MICHAEL

Seriously?

IDA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

I mean, Ida, I don't know-

IDA

I asked her if you were smoking again, she said you weren't, so I thought maybe it was, I don't know.

MICHAEL

I never smoke around the girls.

IDA

I know you wouldn't.

MICHAEL

It's just been stressful.

IDA

Yeah, I know.

MICHAEL

And sometimes, it's just, you're with people, and it's fun.

IDA

Yeah, yeah.

MICHAEL

But, I don't smoke around the girls.

IDA

Yes, but it's getting on their clothes, Michael.

Beat.

MICHAEL

Right.

IDA

I mean, it gets on everything.

MICHAEL

Right.

Beat.

IDA

God, I sound like such a bitch.

MICHAEL

No.

IDA

I didn't mean for it to come out like that. I just, you know, I know you'd never smoke around them, but I wanted you to know that she ... you know ... it, uhm-

MICHAEL

Totally. It just gets on everything.

IDA

It just ... gets on things.

MICHAEL

No. Seriously, no. You're right. Jane's quitting anyway.

IDA

Okay.

MICHAEL

She's using the program that her insurance company set up and everything. I guess, I haven't been helping her.

Beat.

IDA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

I mean, like how are you going to quit when your ... uh ... yeah, shit. I'm sorry, Ida. Seriously.

IDA

(a mantra she learned in
couples counseling)

It's okay. I mean, it's just, I mentioned it to you, I see that you've heard me. I know it's important to you and uh ... Thank you. I mean, really, thanks.

MICHAEL

Okay. Okay.

IDA

Thanks.

MICHAEL

How's work?

IDA

Oh. We lost.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

IDA

They sorted it out. Not much for me to do anymore.

MICHAEL

What happened?

IDA

He made a bad investment before he died. He lost everything.

Michael hugs her. It's a wonderful hug.
She sinks in a little.

MICHAEL

That sucks.

IDA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

I'm so glad that you're here, Ida. I'm so glad that you're here.

IDA

Yeah.

He releases her.

MICHAEL

Like old times.

IDA

Yeah. So who is she?

MICHAEL

(pointing)

Her?

IDA

Yeah. I don't recognize her at all. I thought maybe it was one of the girls, like grown up, but I don't think so.

MICHAEL

No. It's her. The girl.

IDA

(still not sure)

Ah.

MICHAEL

It's that girl I met at the airport that summer. You remember.

IDA

Vaguely?

MICHAEL

I was shuttling those artists from Newark International to New Haven for that arts festival. That summer right after I got my MFA.

IDA

I was pregnant.

MICHAEL
(as in "barely")

Just.

IDA
We were getting ready to come home.

MICHAEL
Exactly. And I was sitting at the airport, waiting for these like jugglers to show up from Amsterdam. I mean, I'm sure I told you about this.

IDA
I don't know.

MICHAEL
Anyway, I was waiting and this girl comes up to me. Pretty. Couldn't be more than like sixteen, seventeen. Broken English, I could hardly understand her, but I get the gist of it: "She and some other girls from her village were coming in to America to work at a hot dog factory." That's what she said. She got separated from the group, and the guys who were supposed to pick her up just gave her a stop on the train to go to. So, right away, I mean, I wasn't born yesterday, I knew they probably had her coming for, you know, not a hot dog factory.

IDA
What did you do?

MICHAEL
I took her to the train.

IDA
Michael!

MICHAEL
It was so weird. Everybody kept saying "Talk to the person wearing a red jacket." An information person. We ran around Newark International looking for a person with a red jacket. It was like a fairy tale.

IDA
You didn't do anything else?

MICHAEL
What was I supposed to do?

IDA
I mean, I don't know-

MICHAEL
I thought about telling the police. I thought about giving her our number.

Ida arches an eyebrow.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Right? Nothing seemed like the right thing. So I just took her to the find the lady in the red jacket, and we sent her on her way.

IDA

Wow.

MICHAEL

But, I thought about her every day.

IDA

You never told me that.

MICHAEL

I did. And with two little girls, you know? ... But, what else could I have done?

IDA

You never told me about this.

MICHAEL

I did.

IDA

You never told me this story.

MICHAEL

I did, Sweetheart.

IDA

Really?

MICHAEL

I think so.

IDA

God.

MICHAEL

So I told Jane about it one night, how I always wonder what happened to the girl and Jane had this idea: that I would draw as many picture of that girl from my memory, like 60, a hundred a day, and when we got to, like, a thousand, we would take that picture and go into the police records for human trafficking and see if we could match that girl.

IDA

And?

MICHAEL

Never found her.

IDA

Oh.

MICHAEL

None of pictures that came up were her. Maybe she went home.

IDA

Oh. Okay.

MICHAEL

Or, maybe... But, anyway, after I talked to you last week I thought maybe I should work with a mathematician who could, like, find the average of all my drawings, average eyes, average lips, average mole placement, I don't know, and that will be like my, that will probably be the image of the girl that's closest to the real thing, you know?

IDA

Hm.

MICHAEL

You don't like it?

IDA

I think it's great. It's great.

MICHAEL

I know that "great."

IDA

What more can I say than, "great?"

MICHAEL

You can say what you think about it.

IDA

I think it's smart. I think you've obviously put a lot of amazing work into this. I think it's an accomplishment.

MICHAEL

But, you don't like it.

IDA

I didn't say that.

MICHAEL

Great.

IDA

I don't know what else you want me to say.

MICHAEL

What's wrong with it?

IDA
 (slight edge of sarcasm)
 Nothing. It's perfect.

MICHAEL
 Great.

IDA
 I'm not an expert.

MICHAEL
 You don't have to be an expert to appreciate this! What's wrong with it?! Seriously.

IDA
 Nothing.

MICHAEL
 What are you thinking? First impression.

IDA
 Well, first impression is: It's about you.

MICHAEL
 Okay.

IDA
 And I'm not interested in you.

MICHAEL
 Oh.

IDA
 No. I mean, from the story you told, I'm interested in her, I don't know. I want to know who that girl was. I want to know what it was about her life that would make her come here. I want to know about a world that would give her a life that would make her want to come here. And I want to really understand it when I see it.

MICHAEL
 So what do you see here?

IDA
 Clever.

MICHAEL
 But ...

IDA
 But, it's just a process for you to end up with an image. Maybe it looks just like her. But, I don't know what that means yet.

(MORE)

IDA (CONT'D)

From all these drawings, I don't even know why you couldn't do anything to help her. Not yet. I'm interested in that. (Beat.) I like it.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

IDA

I don't know what else you want me to say.

MICHAEL

Well, you've really got a great way of shitting all over things, I'll give you that.

IDA

Thanks.

MICHAEL

You know, a lot of people are able to see a lot of beauty in this. They see a lot of things.

IDA

I don't deny there's beauty in it.

MICHAEL

But ...

IDA

No "but."

MICHAEL

But, what? (Beat.) Jesus, Ida.

IDA

But, didn't it used to be about something more than just giving us something we can see a lot of things in? What do you see?

MICHAEL

I see that Jane was just able to sell the last drawing to a collector for twelve thousand dollars.

Pause.

IDA

Well, and I'm really proud of you. That's a huge accomplishment.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

IDA

Hell, don't look at me. You're looking at the big loser over here. Who cares what I think?

Don't say that. MICHAEL

Yeah. IDA

Pause.

Thanks for signing the papers. IDA (CONT'D)

Thanks for 10 years of marriage. MICHAEL
(means it)

I am really happy for you. That I am. IDA

Whatever you have going on right now, all of this work, it's all better than us being together with the girls? All of us together? MICHAEL

No. But, it's not like that. IDA

What's it like? MICHAEL

Jane's trying to get your attention. IDA

Ida gives a small wave.

Probably got you a show in New York or something. IDA (CONT'D)

Michael takes her hand.

Where are you staying? MICHAEL

Michael. IDA

I'd tear those papers up in a second if that's what you wanted. I'd walk out of this gallery and we'd go home, or you and the girls would come down here, and we'd forget about any of this. You say the word and I'll never pick up a brush again. MICHAEL

Beat. Her fingers inter-twine with Michael's.

IDA

You'd better go find out what that is.

MICHAEL

Ida-

IDA

Go.

MICHAEL

Alright. But, that's the one.

He points. They look at the same picture on the fourth wall.

He stands behind her and puts his hands on her shoulders.

She closes her eyes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

That's the important one. That's my favorite one. Just stand here and look at her for a while. Promise me that if you start to see something you'll keep looking.

He hugs her from behind. He kisses her hair.

He walks off.

Ida opens her eyes and looks at one of the drawings.

SILENCE.

The sound of young girls playing. Running. Is her mind playing tricks on her? She looks around. There are girls there.

IVAN (OFF STAGE)

No running. Say "thank you." Good. Yana, watch your sisters.

Ivan enters. He carries an envelope.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Ms. Watkins.

IDA

Ivan.

They shake hands.

IVAN
Kim told me that you'd be here.

IDA
That's right. Are those your girls?

IVAN
They won't touch anything.

IDA
No, no, that's fine.

IVAN
My oldest likes to draw, so I thought it would be nice-

IDA
Sure, sure. That's great. That's great.

IVAN
And if she wants to go somewhere, then the twins want to go.

IDA
(observing Ivan's daughter)
Look at that. They're looking so carefully. Are they drinking champagne?

IVAN
It's apple juice.

IDA
Ah. I should have brought my girls. They're about that age.

IVAN
You should have.

IDA
I should have.

IVAN
(re: the show)
It's really ... I love it.

IDA
Yeah?

IVAN
(genuine)
Yeah.

Beat.

IDA
Thanks.

IVAN
So, are you like his muse?

IDA
Me?

IVAN
Are they you?

IDA
Do they look like me?

IVAN
Sorry.

IDA
No, that's fine.

IVAN
Well, I never know, you know?

IDA
Right.

IVAN
Like, is it supposed to look like what it is?

IDA
"Looks nothing like what it is," is the new, "Looks exactly like what it is."

IVAN
Yeah! My oldest, Yana, can fill up a whole notebook of the same thing, over-and-over, and she gets so mad, and I'm like "Yana, what's the matter? My favorite ones are the ones you threw out." But, she's like, "You're only good at drawing if you can make it look like what it looks like."

IDA
Who knows?

IVAN
I don't know. I don't agree, but, I'm too easy on everything. Maybe that's why I haven't amounted to much in life.

IDA
Oh, don't say that.

IVAN
It's okay with me. Sometimes much is not so much.

Beat.

IDA
I'm definitely not his muse.

IVAN
No?

IDA
Mm-mm. He just promised me that he'd never pick up a brush again if I wouldn't divorce him.

Ida wipes her eyes. Nope. She's really going to cry.

HOLD.

Ivan takes some gum out of his pocket.

IVAN
You want some gum?

She nods and takes a piece. She chews.

Ivan chews a piece of gum himself.

They look at art.

IDA
(brightly)
So, you've got a meager little check for me, hm?

IVAN
Yeah.

He hands her the check.

IVAN (CONT'D)
And something else... It's from Mitch.

IDA
What is it?

IVAN
He's hoping you'll see him.

He points at something on the envelope.

IVAN (CONT'D)
Would you mind opening that?

Ida opens the envelope. She takes out a piece of paper. She examines it carefully.

Ivan looks closely at one of the drawings on the fourth wall.

IDA

Is this real?

He looks at all the pictures.

IVAN

It's real.

IDA

He's crazy.

IVAN

I don't know. (pointing) You know what I understand about all these?

IDA

What?

IVAN

Repetitive motion.

IDA

I'm sorry.

IVAN

I play baseball, you know?

IDA

Oh.

IVAN

Double-A. Minors. Anyway, I catch the pitchers. So I get repetitive motion. The best players are the ones who can do something the same way over and over again. This art make me think of this one guy. He threw the ball the exact same way every time. Curve, Fastball, Sink, Break. Pop! Only way to tell what it was by the sound in the glove. We all knew he was going to get called up. But, he was so strong that he broke his arm, just from throwing one day. Can you imagine having muscles so strong that they break your bones?

IDA

No.

IVAN

God. (Beat.) God.

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE III: THE BREAKFAST BUFFET AT THE OMEGA HOTEL

We're back where we started. Mitch sits at a table reading the paper. He's not in a suit. Jeans and a polo shirt.

Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

Good morning, 801.

MITCH

Good morning.

MAGGIE

Okay, six breakfast buffets, a glass of red wine and a green tea.

MITCH

How's the coffee?

MAGGIE

I don't know. Normal I guess.

MITCH

I'll have a coffee.

MAGGIE

You want milk and sugar?

MITCH

Yes, please.

MAGGIE

Okay. Be right back.

She starts to leave.

MITCH

Hey. What's your name?

MAGGIE

Maggie.

MITCH

Like for Margaret?

MAGGIE

No, like for Maggie.

MITCH

I'm Mitch.

They shake hands.

MAGGIE

You've been here a good long time.

MITCH

I've been working on the Hank Baylor case.

MAGGIE

That's what I heard.

MITCH

Did you know him?

MAGGIE

Sure. Heard his life turned out to not be worth that much.

MITCH

Sorry.

Maggie shrugs.

MAGGIE

Life goes on. Hope they gave you a good room.

MITCH

I usually stay in Two-Fifty-Seven (257).

MAGGIE

Been here a lot, huh?

MITCH

No. I mean, wherever I go. I usually stay in 257. It's a Fermat prime ... like a really special number. I mean, 801, that's a cool number, it's like seven factorial plus eight factorial plus nine factorial plus 10 factorial divided by seven times eight times nine times 10.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

MITCH

That's cool, but you know, it's not a prime. I like primes.

MAGGIE

You doesn't?

MITCH

I asked them for 257 when I got here, but, someone else had it booked.

MAGGIE

Darn.

MITCH

It opened up last week.

Nice!

MAGGIE

But I didn't take it. There's no view.

MITCH

There you go.

MAGGIE

How long have you been working here?

MITCH

About two years.

MAGGIE

Do you like it?

MITCH

Guess it's a fine job for right now.

MAGGIE

What do you wish you were doing instead?

MITCH

I don't know.

MAGGIE

So, is this a kind of dayjob?

MITCH

Something like that. Twenty questions!

MAGGIE

Sorry. Twenty-one. What else do you do?

MITCH

Beat.

MAGGIE

I guess I'd say playing music. Some.

MITCH

You're a musician.

MAGGIE

I play the piano a little. I sing.

MITCH

Can I hear one of your songs?

MAGGIE

Uhm, I don't know-

MITCH

I'm the only one here. You want me to ask your manager if it's cool?

MAGGIE

It's cool. It's Tuesday.

MITCH

Right. So, let me hear one.

MAGGIE

Like right now?

MITCH

If you have a demo or something I'll listen to that.

MAGGIE

I'm saving for that kind of thing.

MITCH

You have a website or something?

MAGGIE

Saving for that too.

MITCH

Well, I don't mean to put you on the spot...

Maggie goes to the piano and starts to sing. A really pretty song, like a sunbeam yawning before the sun sets.

MAGGIE

(singing)

ALL OF YOUR EYES,
ALL OF YOUR EYES,
IS BEING EATEN UP BY THE WORLD.

ALL OF YOUR HANDS,
ALL OF YOUR HANDS,
IS BEING EATEN UP BY THE WORLD.

ALL OF YOUR LOVE,
ALL OF YOUR LOVE,
IS BEING EATEN UP BY THE WORLD.

ALL OF YOUR WORLD,
ALL OF YOUR WORLD,
IS BEING EATEN UP BY YOUR LOVE.

YOU THINK I'M A STRANGER,
YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW DANGER,
BUT ALL I CAN TASTE IS THE WORLD.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

ALL OF YOUR LOVE,
ALL OF YOUR LOVE,
IS BEING EATEN UP BY THE WORLD.

ALL OF YOUR WORLD,
ALL OF YOUR WORLD,
IS BEING EATEN UP BY YOUR LOVE.

Yeah. So that's it.

MITCH

You wrote that?

MAGGIE

For my baby. With my baby. They're just some of his baby words. Together.

MITCH

I really liked that.

MAGGIE

Well, what are you going to say? I just sang a song for you at a breakfast buffet. Got to say something nice.

MITCH

True. But, really.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

MITCH

How did you get the ideas to write that? Like the music part. Where does that even come from?

MAGGIE

That one ... like a song is like this bit of time that has rules for how to break it into little pieces. It's very exact. It all adds up. Sometimes, that's all you need.

Ida enters. She's tired. Maggie sees her.

Mitch stands.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Hi, Ida.

IDA

Heya, Maggie. How are you doing?

MAGGIE

Just fine. You?

IDA
Just fine.

MAGGIE
You going to have a little breakfast?

IDA
Maybe just coffee.

MAGGIE
Okay. Be right back.

Maggie exits.

MITCH
You know her?

IDA
Sure.

MITCH
She's a songwriter.

IDA
Yeah. I heard a little of that. Pretty.

MITCH
I liked it.

IDA
She's got better ones.

MITCH
Nice. Think maybe you want to sit?

She doesn't sit.

MITCH (CONT'D)
Thanks for coming. We missed you at the judgement.

IDA
I said my piece.

MITCH
Ivan left. Leaving.

IDA
Yeah. He mentioned that.

MITCH
He's played for the farm team of every bird.

IDA
Going to miss him?

MITCH

It was nice for me to have him around. Someone from home.

Ida takes out the envelope that Ivan gave her at the gallery.

IDA

I ... don't understand this.

MITCH

It's my life savings.

IDA

No, I mean-

MITCH

It's everything that I've earned on this job.

IDA

And you used that to take a short position in Express Ion?

MITCH

All of it. The numbers didn't add up.

IDA

Hank Baylor just lost his fortune shorting that stock.

MITCH

We were evaluating his life based on an anomaly. Based on the total numbers, he never made bets like this unless he was sure. He just didn't live long enough to see it through, I think.

IDA

Look, Mitch, I don't know if this is supposed to be some penance, or something, but, my life is a mess, right now, you know, and-

MITCH

I bought at one forty-eight and if you go and check, you'll see that there are a bunch of other people who agree with me. The short selling is already getting loose because something isn't right. When the stock falls back to Earth we'll have more than enough to invest in this town.

IDA

Invest ... look, I hope you didn't do this for me, because-

MITCH

I didn't.

IDA

You don't even know this town.

MITCH
Sure I do.

IDA
No you don't.

MITCH
It's where I am right now. And I'm staying.

IDA
Mitch...

He steps closer to her.

MITCH
And where I am is where I'll draw a line to infinity. And then another then another.

She looks up at him.

MITCH (CONT'D)
But, I could definitely use your help. I definitely want your help.

IDA
This is crazy.

MITCH
If you knew me before. If you knew me, you'd see that this kind of thing is really more in line with my typical behavior.

IDA
Your life's savings.

MITCH
Hank Baylor saw the value here.

IDA
Hank Baylor was a drunk! (Beat.) He was a son-of-a-bitch. He was miserable. He played games with people's lives, and he wrecked everything. Everyone here hated him.

Beat.

MITCH
Let's help Maggie make a demo.

IDA
You were right. All along.

MITCH
I'm going to do it anyway.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

IDA
 Slow down.

MITCH
 You heard her, she's good.

IDA
 Do they even make demos anymore?

MITCH
 It's just a demo. Let's start with a demo. *

Ida sits down.

IDA *
 A demo. *

MITCH *
 Four songs. *

IDA *
 You know, there are other people here that are much closer to
 doing something if they had a little help. *

MITCH *
 Oh, come on. *

IDA *
 Well, I mean, let's really think about this. *

MITCH *
 Maggie might go platinum! *

IDA *
 And she'll move away. I'm talking about local industry. *

MITCH
 She might stay here.

IDA
 Hey, I can't help you if you won't listen to me.

MITCH
 You're helping me?

Ida cocks and eyebrow.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 That song was awesome.

IDA
 It needs a better chorus. Any chorus.

MITCH

It's all chorus!

IDA

Exactly. Listen, there's this farmer out in Platteville-

MITCH

Okay, if all you know is drunk farmers working out of barns we're going to have to talk.

Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

Okay, here you go. Two coffees and I brought you guys some pie too.

IDA

That's sweet.

MAGGIE

You're thick as thieves over here.

MITCH

We're talking about the future.

MAGGIE

Is it a good one?

MITCH

I think so.

(to Ida)

I'll play you for it.

IDA

What are you talking about?

MITCH

Name That Tune. Maggie, I want you to think of the best song in the world. A song that everyone knows and it's like the best song in the world. Okay?

MAGGIE

Okay.

MITCH

You got it?

MAGGIE

Yup.

MITCH

Maggie, I can name that tune in five notes.

Beat.

IDA
I can name that tune is four notes.

MITCH
I can name that tune in three notes.

Beat.

IDA
Okay. Name it.

MITCH
(to Maggie)
Ready?

MAGGIE
Right. So just like "la?" No words?

MITCH
Perfect.

MAGGIE
Okay.

Maggie sings three notes that are exactly the same.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
LA - LA - LA.

Ida and Maggie turn to Mitch who has a look of deep concentration on his face.

Beat.

A smile spreads across his face.

MITCH
Got it. I totally just got it.

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF SCENE.

END OF PLAY.