

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, JERROLD WI

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 appears accurate. He puts the counter back on his belt and begins to walk in place again. He take 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.

MAGGIE

I think so. I think we do.

MITCH

Because I don't see any here.

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. I'm real sorry about that, Sir. 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 the room. Eight-Oh-One.

MAGGIE

Sure.

MITCH

Are they closing up breakfast?

MAGGIE

Just about.

MITCH

Can they 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

Hey.

MAGGIE

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

Eight-Oh-One.

MAGGIE

Sure thing.

MITCH
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
I think two adult breakfasts will cover it.

IVAN
Are you sure? These kids can eat.

MAGGIE
It's fine.

MITCH
Put it all on Eight-Oh-One. Six adult breakfasts.

MAGGIE
Oh. Sure thing, Sir.

MITCH
Six adults.

MAGGIE
No problem.

MAGGIE exits.

IVAN
Baby's not on solids, you know?

MITCH
Client's a big multi-national. More we expense, more they think they bought.

IVAN
If that's cool.

MITCH
It's cool.

*

*

*

*

IVAN
 Alright. Hey, Mitchie!

Ivan gives Mitch a big hug. Kisses Mitch on the cheeks. Mitch doesn't love being hugged.

MITCH
 You're late.

IVAN
 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.

MITCH
 Yeah.

IVAN
 I try to be like, "You just peed, no more water until dinner," but that doesn't matter. I think they suck it out of the air through their little kid gills.

MITCH
 You should have flown. That's what an advance is for. *

IVAN
 The girls would've cried for days. They love their Winnebago.

MITCH
 (looking Ivan up-and-down)
 If you say so. Where'd you get that shirt?

IVAN
 (terror)
 TJ Maxx. "White collared shirt." That's what you said. *

MITCH
 It looks like it just came out of the package. *

Mitch checks his watch. *

MITCH (CONT'D) *
 You've got time to steam it before our eleven o'clock. Just *
 turn the hot water on in the shower and hang it up in there. *

IVAN *
 What's at eleven? *

MITCH *
 We're going to meet someone on the other side. *

Mitch hands Ivan a new smartphone. *

IVAN
 (excited)
 "The other side."
 *

MITCH
 I always do a face-to-face with the other side's numbers
 person. Talk to them long enough, follow their lead, more
 often than not, they'll give you something that spins into
 something. You're my extra set of ears this week. So, keep
 them open.
 *

IVAN
 Got it.

MITCH
 Phone's unlimited. Call whoever you want.
 *

IVAN
 Cool.
 *

MITCH
 Let me see your socks.

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.

IVAN
 French.

MITCH
 Plastic.

Mitch takes off his suit jacket.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 Take off your jacket.

Maggie returns with coffee.

MAGGIE
 Here's your coffee.

IVAN
 Thanks.

Ivan takes off his jacket.

MITCH

Eight-Oh-One.

MAGGIE

Eight-Oh-One. Anything else?

MITCH

No.

MAGGIE

(to Ivan)

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.

MITCH (CONT'D)

Put your jacket back on.

Ivan complies. Mitch fixes Ivan's tie. Mitch takes him in.

MITCH (CONT'D)

You look good.

He puts the plastic cufflinks in his own cuffs.

IVAN

I hope these guys aren't expecting me to be you.

MITCH

You can do this job in your sleep.

IVAN

I don't know.

MITCH

You know how bad Americans are at math? You grew up in the Soviet Union. You were doing this shit in kindergarten.

IVAN

Yeah.

*

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 hate it when I do that!

MITCH

You're going to be fine. The gig's yours. I vouched for you.

IVAN

Thanks. This is awesome. /Thanks.

*

MITCH

/Hey, I'm making them a lot of money.

*

IVAN

No doubt, no doubt.

*

MITCH

So ...

IVAN

So.

MITCH

You run those numbers for me?

IVAN

Oh. Right. Yeah.

MITCH

I'm meeting Mike Ramos tomorrow. Want to be able to talk about baselines. You got my email?

IVAN

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Lisa drove so I could do it.

Ivan produces several stacks of papers.

MITCH

Lisa drives the Winnebago?

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

*

IVAN

Yeah. She can even parallel park it.

MITCH

(still looking at the papers, won't look up until he's finished with them)

*

*

*

Wow.

*

IVAN

She's like a limo driver with that thing.

*

*

MITCH

That's awesome.

*

*

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 called up. 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?

No response.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Never got fat. Still looks good in a uniform. Yeah. I, ah ...
I downloaded that program that your boss wrote to run the
numbers.

*

MITCH

Mm-hm.

IVAN

That made it pretty straightforward.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

Painfully long SILENCE.

IVAN

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 be dragging four kids around Double A in a Winnebago much longer, right? *

MITCH

Mm-hm. Lisa must be thrilled. *

IVAN

Well, she's always been okay, as long as we're all together.

Beat.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

SILENCE. Mitch finishes his corrections.

He puts his pen down. *

MITCH (CONT'D)

Yeah, (as in "brace yourself") ... okay-

IVAN

Okay.

MITCH

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

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

(throw away "bad babies")

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

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

That's impossible.

IVAN

Okay.

MITCH

Right now, average life expectancy in the U.S. is only 78.7. It says here that one of these babies has a parent and a grandparent who's left-handed. I can turn left-handedness into five years off the top, easy. Maybe seven. *

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

And I'll bet that you're going to find metabolic syndrome in a lot of these families. I've got a guy who can probably get us systolic and diastolic for the families of everyone on the plane. You've got to account for that.

*
*
*

IVAN

Sorry.

*

MITCH

It's okay. The life worth of a baby is really hard to model. But, bottom line: these lives are not worth this much.

*
*

IVAN

Right.

MITCH

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

Beat.

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.

IVAN

I know.

MITCH

Everyone dies.

*

IVAN

Uh ... n-not everyone-

MITCH

Uhm, yes, everyone.

IVAN

No. Not in a plane crash because the airline was skipping maintenance checks, right?!

*
*

Pause.

MITCH

I got the girls a Wii. Did I tell you that?

IVAN

Oh.

*

MITCH

And this cool Butterfly Garden thing. Like they send you caterpillars in the mail. They came in today. Have the hotel set it all up for them.

IVAN

You didn't have to do that.

MITCH

It's been like three Christmases since they got presents from Uncle Mitch, right?

IVAN

Whatever.

MITCH

Fuck whatever.

He hands Ivan a plastic hotel key.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'm in room Eight-Oh-One. It's in the closet.

IVAN

Thanks.

Pause.

MITCH

The world doesn't go away 'cause someone died. We've still got a job to do.

IVAN

Sure.

MITCH

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

IVAN

Right. Hank Baylor.

MITCH

Mr. Sixty-Third Richest Man in America. You know what that means?

IVAN

I mean, I guess it /means-

MITCH

/The other side is trying to get a payout of billions. So, it means that if we don't find a way to push the value of his life down, the whole airline goes bye-bye.

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

The airline goes bye-bye.

IVAN

Okay.

MITCH

Maybe even the insurance company goes bye-bye and we're out of a job. *

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

Look, you told me yourself once, nobody can really hit a fastball, right? The ball gets to the plate faster than it takes the brain to know what it is. *

IVAN

Yeah. *

MITCH

You're guessing. You're guessing at what pattern the seams of the ball are spinning in; you're guessing at everything you know about this pitcher, about his manager; you're guessing at everything you know about the game; you're guessing at everything you've learned, what's stored in your mind since the first time you ever stepped in there to hit a baseball in Little League. You try to make contact with your guess. *

IVAN

Mitch- *

MITCH

Okay. Imagine you can see how every molecule of air in the stadium is going to affect that ball. Imagine you can see how every gene in that pitcher's body affects his mechanics. I'm doing that with math here, and every piece of information we discover feeds into the model. They've never had anyone like me who could do this kind of thing before. So just think of it as collecting all the numbers so I can take a swing; the most educated, truest swing. (Beat.) I make contact, Ivan. I'm good at this. Contact is contact. *

Ivan rubs his face.

IVAN

Yeah.

*

SILENCE.

MITCH

You know what? Take a minute. Turn the hot water on in the shower and steam that shirt for like ten minutes. Just give it ten minutes. You think you can do that?

Beat.

IVAN

Yeah. Yeah, I can do that.

MITCH

Good. (Beat.) These New York guys are picky about clothes. It's like all they talk about.

IVAN

Insurance guys?

MITCH

"Senior Vice Presidents" and the lawyers. Who knows who you're going to meet going down in the elevator?

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.

MICHAEL
Good.

IDA
(a joke?)
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.

Beat.

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?

IDA
What? Me? With me?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

She tidies up some of her papers.

IDA

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

MICHAEL

(trying to be charming)

I don't know, I had that bad trip in Santa Fe? I never mess with quatum dots anymore.

It kind of works. He's pretty charming. *

IDA

Nevermind.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

IDA

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

MICHAEL

Cool.

IDA

Cool.

Beat.

MICHAEL

Good.

IDA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Girls say you've been at work a lot.

IDA

It's this thing, you know?

MICHAEL

Hank Baylor, still.

IDA

There's just so much to sort out.

MICHAEL

Sure. Who you meeting with today?

IDA

Forensics economist from the other side.

MICHAEL

A who?

IDA

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

MICHAEL

Why?

IDA

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

MICHAEL

Serious?

IDA

Yeah. Sometimes it's other beneficiaries.

MICHAEL

Can you believe what the world is coming to?

IDA

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

MICHAEL

Probably, 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

They use 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 right 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. He's like the master of that.

MICHAEL

Sounds like a great guy.

IDA

It's more complicated than that.

MICHAEL

If you say so.

IDA

The guy's a genius.

MICHAEL

That's cool.

IDA

Seriously. He's like a real genius.

MICHAEL

Alright.

IDA

You know what "chance" means in math?

MICHAEL

(He does.)

Sure-

IDA

It means random.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

IDA

Right. (Beat,) Well there's a whole field of math that says there is no such thing as random; there is no such thing as chance. The only reason why things look random is because we can't see the whole big thing. So this guy I'm meeting, he can see the whole system. He takes the little-est thing, and he can see where it fits in the system, he sees patterns where no one else sees them and inconsistencies where no one else sees them. Does that make sense?

Like Seurat. MICHAEL

Ah ... right. IDA

Pointilism. Look close, step back, look close. MICHAEL

Beat.

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

Always. MICHAEL
(a smile)

Beat.

Yeah. So that's, you know, so that's Ramsey Theory
blahblahblah. IDA
(suddenly nervous)

Blahblahblah. And you're going mano-a-mano with him fighting
for Hank Baylor's billions? MICHAEL *

Something like that. IDA

That's really something. MICHAEL

Mr. Baylor was ... he was worth a lot to us. I'm going to do
what has to be done. IDA

Yeah. I know you will. MICHAEL

Beat.

That's right. IDA

Beat.

Want to do me? MICHAEL

Michael sits down.

What? IDA

Do mine. My evaluation. MICHAEL

Pause.

Oh. Okay. Really, Michael? IDA

Sure. Come on. MICHAEL

He flashes that irresistible smile.

Michael. IDA

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

Okay. IDA

She begins to write.

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

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.

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

Oh. Sure. Go ahead. MICHAEL

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? (correcting himself as in "I should have said 'anyway' instead of 'right?') Anyway.

IDA

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

MICHAEL

Sure thing. I, ah ... I just need the keys?

IDA

Oh, right. To the new place. Right.

Ida takes some keys off her key-ring.

IDA (CONT'D)

Square ones for the front door. Circle one's for the garage.

MICHAEL

Okay. Great.

Michael takes the keys and gets ready to go. He hands her a postcard. There is a picture of a painting on it.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Did the girls tell you I got a new show?

IDA

Yeah. They mentioned something.

MICHAEL

You think you might want to come? It's a real gallery and everything. Jane, uh, set it up.

IDA

That's wonderful.

MICHAEL

It's a really good gallery. It's on South Kinnickinnic and everything.

IDA

Uhm ... that ... uh ...

MICHAEL

I know Milwaukee's a hike from here.

IDA

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

MICHAEL

And you're busy. But, it's all new stuff.

IDA

I'll try.

Beat.

MICHAEL

Okay. Okay. I'll see you then, okay? I'll text you when we get to your place.

IDA

Thanks, Michael. Thanks again.

Beat.

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.

IDA (CONT'D)

Mr. Bloom?

MITCH

Yes.

IDA

Ida Watkins.

MITCH
Yes, that's right. Hi.

Ida approaches and shakes his hand.

IDA
Nice to meet you.

MITCH
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!

IVAN
Yeah.

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

IDA
(re: the cases, genuine)
So sad.

MITCH
I'm sorry?

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

MITCH
Oh. Well, tough's our specialty.

IDA
Yeah.

She holds out a business card to Ivan.

IDA (CONT'D)
Here's my card. Call if you need anything. I'm only handling Mr. Baylor's end, but who knows, right?

Ivan takes it.

IVAN
Thank you.

IDA

If I'm not there, you can ask for my assistant: Kim. Maybe there's some information we have that can be useful. She's whip-smart and totally on top of everything.

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.

IVAN

Thanks anyway though.

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. We just ... phone calls between our assistants is above all our pay-grades, don't you think?

IDA

Sure.

MITCH

You can always call me directly if you need anything.

He hands her a business card.

IDA

Thank you. Thanks. (to Ivan) She's right outside.

Thanks. IVAN

Good. Thanks. MITCH

Nice to meet you. IVAN

Same to you. IDA

MITCH
(to Ivan)
Just load up the car, and I'll meet you.

Got it. IVAN

He exits.

Working with your cousin? That's fun. IDA

Yeah. MITCH

Were you two close as kids? IDA

Pretty close. Yeah. MITCH

I was really close to my cousins. We all worked on the family farm together. IDA

That sounds nice. MITCH

We raised silkie chickens for the 4-H. IDA

Nice. MITCH

Have a seat. IDA

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

That's right. 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? That's what we're looking to agree on.

MITCH

Sounds reasonable. Your lawyers don't want me to talk to you.

IDA

Makes sense.

MITCH

Why?

IDA

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

MITCH

I agree. I think 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.

MITCH

You put this together?

IDA

That's right. Your cousin's getting the supporting documents now.

MITCH

What did you do for Mr. Baylor?

IDA

I was the actuary for Lansingville Savings and Loan.

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

That's it, Mr. Bloom.

MITCH

I see.

IDA

It's a fair number.

MITCH

Maybe for the gross national product of Paraguay.

IDA

That's less than the GDP of Paraguay.

MITCH

Barely. I was kidding. But, barely.

IDA

It's what he's worth. The sixty-third richest man in the world died on that plane, Mr. Bloom. You can't get around that.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

IDA

It's what he's worth to this town and all the towns around it. He was making a lot of smart and profitable investments in the community.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

IDA

It's true.

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

You don't have to take my word for it. Come with me and I'll show you.

MITCH

Go with you where?

IDA

Who says you've got to negotiate at a table? Come on, Mr. Bloom. I'll show you what Hank Baylor was really worth.

Beat.

IDA (CONT'D)

We can take my car. Tell your cousin I'll drop you off later.

Beat.

MITCH

Okay. Let's go.

IDA

Okay.

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.

IDA

(a bit breathless as well)

Yeah?

MITCH

Yeah.

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, Mitch.

MITCH

Yeah right. I'm sucking wind.

IDA

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 in Boston?

MITCH

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

IDA

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

MITCH

How often would you guys do this?

IDA

Well, let's see, my father took one of those crazy walk across Scotland vacations every Spring.

(MORE)

IDA (CONT'D)

I guess he'd start training for them the winter before and we'd walk up here once a day? I don't know, every day for about four months?

MITCH

And it was singing all the way?

IDA

Cardio, Mitch. Cardio. And this view at the top.

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)

You can see everyone you met today. 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.

MITCH

Yeah.

IDA

And that's just one instance of how Mr. Baylor was helping people around here. And it wasn't just big projects. It was all the little things that add up to the whole town.

MITCH

I think that's great.

IDA

I'm glad you think /so.

MITCH

/But, I don't know what you want it to mean for me.

IDA

If we're fighting over his life, I thought you should see what that was.

MITCH

I'm not fighting.

IDA

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

MITCH

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. *

MITCH

/Well, it's not like I'm the chairman /of the- *

IDA

/Because they're brilliant. I mean, they're wrong, but, your valuations ... are brilliant. *

MITCH

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? They can only be responsible for the value that is lost to his beneficiaries.

IDA

Yes, but, if life's a big equation, you've got to include all the variables right?

MITCH

Or have a reason to exclude the variables that you exclude.

Beat.

IDA

Right. (Beat.) I don't know about you, but I'm starving. I've been smelling these in my bag. A duck fat french fry is a thing of beauty.

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

God, I'm imagining what you were like as a little kid.

MITCH

If Peggy O's gets franchised as planned, I'm going to valueate him as a public menace.

IDA

At least have some of their cheesecake. I mean, this is Wisconsin. We're geniuses with cheese. You East Coasters have never really had a cheesecake. I don't care what they say in New York.

MITCH

No thank you.

IDA

Don't tell me you're falling for your own, "life on paper" bullshit. That's like paying a toll for a bridge you just sold somebody.

No response.

IDA (CONT'D)

I hear that's an occupational hazzard for you guys, with your little pedometers and your red wine for breakfast.

Mitch takes one of the cheesecakes and eats it.

MITCH

Mm. Good.

IDA

It's better with fries.

Mitch eats a french fry. It's pretty good too.

IDA (CONT'D)

And organic microbrew made by some old ladies who got together when the mop factory closed down.

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

MITCH

To Hank Baylor.

IDA

Yeah.

They clink bottles.

They eat in SILENCE and look at the view. He doesn't eat much, but he drinks the beer.

IDA (CONT'D)

You know they did a study with worms. These scientists took these worms that live for like two days and they fed them like an impossibly low calorie diet and they found that the low calorie worms lived like four days.

MITCH

Life choices make a difference.

*

IDA

That's like a person living to 150, right?

MITCH

Yeah.

IDA

But, you know what else? Those worms moved really, really slow. Miserably slow. We haven't even talked about hedonistic damages, you know?

MITCH

(eye roll)

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.

IDA

You haven't accounted for the gap between your paper valuation and the valuation that Mr. Baylor might place on the pleasures of his own life. 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.

Beat.

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

Then why are we up here?

Beat.

The View. IDA

SILENCE.

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

Thanks. IDA

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

Thanks. IDA

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.

No. IDA

They like you. MITCH

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 multi-marketing companies, you know? And my car broke down and I came to the Savings and Loan for a ... 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. Knowing numbers is 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.

Yeah. IDA *

MITCH

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. But, then you start realizing that they go out to infinity; then 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, "Instead of trapping it, 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 ... false order in an orderless world, and then ... uh oh ...

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*

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

I'm sorry.

IDA

It's okay.

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 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. It's gotten so complicated. Truthfully, it's not even the way we really naturally understand numbers. (mocking) *Infinity*.

He shakes his head.

IDA

What does that mean?

MITCH

Well ... when you're born ... uhm, 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, and in the end, I guess, all we really need to know is the difference between "none" "some" and "lots." But, we made it so complicated no one can understand any of it.

IDA

Why don't you give me a shot?

To what? MITCH

Be utterly confused by you and your contorted genius. IDA *

Beat.

Like my proof? MITCH *

Hit me. IDA

Serious? MITCH

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

Okay. 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, 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 will occur is impossible because right now, the distribution pretty much looks like chance. You with me? MITCH

Beat.

They're random. IDA

Yeah. But, how can the universe be ordered if the most important numbers appear randomly?! That can't be true, can it? Today, we still can't predict when a prime number will show up. Hundreds of years ago, this mathematician, Riemann, was asking the same questions, 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? MITCH *

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

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

IDA

How many have they tried?

MITCH

Hundreds of billions. Trillions.

IDA

And that's not good enough?

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 Riemann zeta function included imaginary numbers, and that made it hard to see things. But, the idea was if you could somehow translate math theory to real life, to physics, you could prove the theorem for all of infinity, because physics is governed by real numbers. It's like that coat of infinite numbers that we wear, that skin that we wear everywhere. If something doesn't apply for infinity, it doesn't exist in the world. So, where in the world do we see something like the zeta function? Well, it turns out that the zeta function fits almost perfectly with formulas in quantum mechanics -- quantum chaotic systems, actually. Like chaos theory.

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IDA

The butterfly thing.

MITCH

Yeah. Butterfly in China, hurricane in Cuba. So, there are algorithms that find order in huge complex chaotic systems and contain them inside something called a quantum dot. So the idea was to create a model for how a quantum system would look if the Riemann hypothesis were true /and-

IDA

And then you try to make it happen it in real life ... right?

MITCH

Yeah. Well, in the lab. Yeah.

IDA

Yeah. (Beat.) That's cool. I love that.

*

MITCH

And if we could replicate that system in the lab, it would prove that the hypothesis was true.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

The problem is that there's a lot of different things to look at because the systems are so big and complex. 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 perfect quantum dot.

IDA

So what happened?

MITCH

I picked the wrong one. 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.

IDA

Wo/w.

MITCH

/I had my speech all planned out too. "I don't care about money. I don't care about fame.

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

I don't want to be your animal in your zoo." 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?

MITCH

It was broken. They were right.

IDA

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.

Beat.

IDA

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

MITCH

Where else do I have to go?

IDA

Are you serious?

MITCH

I mean, I sold out, right? I'm wearing a suit, I got a house, a wife.

IDA

Oh.

MITCH

All the things that you get to have when you sell out, but then before I knew it, it was all just ... too many holes in it, I guess. Should have seen it coming ... I just can't ever pick the right dot.

IDA

You're divorced.

*

MITCH

A year-and-a-half now.

IDA

What happened?

MITCH

I don't know. Doesn't seem like I had much of a say in it when we got married, and it doesn't seem like I had much say when it was over. So, hey.

IDA

You have kids?

MITCH

No. Just a giant lawn that I go mow on weekends when I'm back in Charlotte.

IDA

You fertilize?

MITCH

I used to.

IDA

Got to fertilize.

MITCH

No, 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? But, I get to be there four like five hours when I push. 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?

Beat.

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 are you doing?

IDA

I've got to go. I'm sorry.

MITCH

What time is it?

IDA

Gotta 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

I'm sorry I woke you up. 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?

IDA

I've got to get going.

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

MITCH

Why?

IDA

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

MITCH

What?

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

You have kids?

IDA

I'm sorry. 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

What time does school start? It's four in the morning.

It's a huge process. IDA

Yeah. MITCH

Breakfast. School. IDA

Yeah. MITCH

Checking their homework. IDA

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

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

No. MITCH

Sorry. They freak out if they don't have the right answer on every problem. Like they cry if they get one wrong. IDA

Okay. MITCH

I know, it's crazy. Usually my husband takes care of everything in the morning, but- IDA

Your husband? MITCH

Uh, yeah. IDA
(genuinely surprised by the question)

Are you serious? MITCH

Yeah. IDA

What is this?! MITCH

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

Bullshit! 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

That's right, it serves you right. I think you should get out of here.

IDA

What the Hell is wrong with you?!

MITCH

You're married! You're on the other side!

IDA

So what?

MITCH

Don't act like you weren't trying to game me. That's all that's going on when the two sides meet.

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

What?!

MITCH

Hey. I'm ... 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?!

Beat.

MITCH

Do you want me check under the bed?

Beat.

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.

Beat.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I found them!

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

MITCH (CONT'D)

I found them.

He holds it out to her. She takes it.

IDA

Thanks.

He turns around.

MITCH

Yeah.

Thanks. IDA

I'm sorry. I over-reacted. MITCH

Yeah. IDA

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. IDA

She puts on her shoes. IDA

Yeah. MITCH

I'm sorry. I was ... IDA

You were mean. Like gross mean. MITCH

Yeah. Yeah. I was. IDA

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!

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

And to let you see that a whole community's future is riding on whatever gets decided. The beneficiary of Hank Baylor's estate is a trust at Lansingville Savings and Loan, that's in his will, and that capital will keep everyone around here going in this economy. 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-!

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

'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.

Beat.

IDA

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

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

I came over because ...

MITCH

Okay.

IDA

(tumbles out of her mouth)

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.

MITCH

Hey ...

IDA

Such a cliché, right?

MITCH

I don't know.

IDA

God, with a whole town of women just waiting for this to happen, why did he have to find someone so ... amazing?

*

MITCH

A whole town of women?

IDA

He's beautiful. He really is. He's a painter ... was a painter. Michael is a beautiful, beautiful painter actually. When I married him, there were all these galleries in New York that were interested in showing his work. And we decided that I was going to work and he was going to focus on painting and really push his way through. But, you know, somehow that didn't work out and we thought it was just a little bit more time, just hang on a little longer ... a little longer became a little longer. Then, I don't know. I started to work for Mr. Baylor and Michael stayed with our girls. But, he stopped painting, blamed it on staying home, and we had bills and finally 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!" ... well, you know how well that one worked out.

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

Hey, I don't know if you noticed but you're pretty gorgeous yourself.

IDA

Yeah.

MITCH

Like, not quite human gorgeous.

IDA

"Not quite human" is right. I look like a mama kangaroo with the lights on.

MITCH

You're beautiful.

Beat.

*

IDA

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.

MITCH

Sounds good.

IDA

But, when he finally gave up ... I couldn't look at him anymore.

MITCH

I'm sorry.

IDA

I couldn't look at us. (Beat.) I saw some of the new things he's doing. New paintings.

MITCH

How are they?

IDA

They suck, Mitch. They totally suck. And he's so proud of them. It's all ... they don't say anything anymore. Like it's shameful to even try. 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. 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

I'm not asking you to go crazy. The estimate I gave you yesterday was ... you know.

MITCH

Insane.

IDA

Fine, but, 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

I'm sorry. It's not.

IDA

Why?

MITCH

The numbers say what they say.

IDA

No they don't.

MITCH

Ida-

IDA

Are you really so arrogant that you can't acknowledge that regardless of how brilliant you are, what you see when you look into chaos is what you want to see, what you need to see? You said it yourself. The math is just a trick we made up to find order in a chaotic world. (Beat.) I'm going to use that. I'm going to use that kids and the jelly beans thing.

*
*
*
*

MITCH

Ida-

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?

IDA
In the bathroom?

MITCH
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-

MITCH
No.

IDA
You guys are going to lose.

MITCH
What?

She kisses him.

Beat.

IDA
You're going to lose. If I tell you something, you've got to swear you're not going to use it.

Another knock on the door.

IVAN (OFF STAGE)
Mishka, (in Russian) it's Ivan.

*

MITCH
What?

IDA
Promise.

MITCH
Okay.

IDA
I'm trusting you.

Another knock.

*

IVAN
(in Russian)
I'm going to come in, okay?

*

*

*

MITCH
Okay.

IDA
Hank Baylor's birth certificate is wrong. He's younger than his birth certificate says.

MITCH
Are you serious?

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.

MITCH
Two years.

IDA
That's right. And those two years are going to put him on-

MITCH
Page 43 on the "future earning" table. Ida ... this could actually work-

*

*

The sound of the door unlocking. It opens. Ivan steps in. He's wearing pajamas. He sees Ida.

Oh. IVAN

Hi. IDA

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

MITCH
Yeah. Did you pick up the Wii?

IVAN
Girls loved it. (to Ida) Hey.

Hi. IDA

MITCH
We've been ...

IVAN
Yeah.

IDA
Yeah.

MITCH
Jesus, Ivan, why are you up at four in the morning?

IVAN
Have you looked at your phone?

Ida looks at her phone.

IVAN (CONT'D)
The after hours trading is going crazy. London's going crazy.
The lawyers are going ... crazy.

IDA
Oh my God.

IVAN
The case is over. Hank Baylor made a bad investment before he died. A really bad investment.

MITCH
What investment?

IVAN
It was a secret. He used a lot of off-shore accounts.
Caymans. Switzerland.

Oh my God.

IDA

*
*

And uh ... He shorted a penny stock and it just went through the roof. He bought it at four dollars twenty-three cents and now it's ah ...

IVAN

*

What?

IDA

A hundred and twenty-five.

IVAN

How many shares did he buy?

IDA

Beat.

Eight million. He bankrupted everyone. The way it's going to work out, his life's worth practically nothing.

IVAN

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 mine for data: financial data, health records, other information. Once I get it, I take that information, and I apply high-order mathematics using super-computers to find patterns that are very difficult to see. These patterns then create predictive models for the monetized value of /a person's life.

IDA

/My job was to assess risks /based on a variety of factors as determine by each case.

MITCH

/This number is used to help determine compensation packages for next-of-kin and beneficiaries.

IDA

This is my first life valuation case.

MITCH

I have been providing these valuations for about four years now ...

(MORE)

MITCH (CONT'D)

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 the 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.

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

/This is not the way we intuitively understand numbers. The whole system is invalid.

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

MITCH

... Yes. Catastrophically.

*

IDA

I'm a mother. ... Two girls. ... 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.

MITCH

/He bankrupted himself and his company, Lansingville Savings and Loan, by "short selling" a stock that increased exponentially /in value following his untimely death.

IDA

Two is twice one. Research shows that all young children are like this.

MITCH

I'm not an expert in finance.

IDA

But, if you show her one hundred pennies and then one hundred and one pennies, she will tell you that there are the same number of pennies in both piles. This is what's called a "logarithmic" understanding of numbers, and it's what we're all born with.

Mitch clears his throat. Drinks some water.

MITCH

But, for my purposes, this loss places Mr. Baylor in a different potential income category ... which looks like zero.

IDA

It's what we're all born with. At some point, all there is to understand is that there is no distinction between great vastness. Think for a moment.

MITCH

Well, essentially zero, because when the value begins so low, it changes all the numbers, and you have to start to think about what it will take to change that.

IDA

Do you really understand the difference between a billion and a trillion? Or is it just vastness? Mr. Bloom would of course, like to reduce these numbers so that it can appear that lives can be differentiated, but we all know that at some point, lives can only be understood as great vastness. You ask my six year old, just a few years older than her sister, what the difference is /between one hundred and one hundred and one pennies, she'll understand one oh one is one more than a hundred.

*
*
*

MITCH

/In my opinion. Based on his medical records, there is no chance Mr. Baylor, despite his past success, would have been able /to make that money back. No. No chance. If Mr. Baylor lived, what kind of capital would he be left with? What would be the cost to his professional reputation? Who would trust him? He would not be who he was before.

IDA

/She's figured out the mental trick that we call mathematics, but she's had to leave behind the essential understanding of how things are ordered. She's left great vastness behind. That is the cost of entry to the world that we live in. The world that we've made-

*

MITCH

Look there's a lot of noise out there in chaos. (Beat.) It takes an expert to see through the noise. ... Ms. Watkins?

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

MITCH (CONT'D)

Well, I would say that she's desperate. She's desperate to make things different here given recent events, and I can appreciate that, but (Beat.) it was only a few days ago when she was bringing me Hank Baylor's birth certificate to try to show me how a discrepancy in Mr. Baylor's age, on paper, was going to change his life valuation. (Beat.) I have my notes ... they have been verified. I have a copy of that birth certificate. She was completely comfortable with this system of life valuation at that time.

*
*
*

IDA

(looking at Mitch)

But, it's hard to determine the impact of that cost. We'd have to change the way we see everything. And, as someone once told me, you'd have to start to wonder if numbers are just some trick that we invented to create some kind of false order in an orderless world.

MITCH

No. I do not have faith in her estimation.

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

MITCH (CONT'D)

... Do I know why Hank Baylor did what he did? ... No. ... No. ... This method isn't interested in "Why." ... This method is interested in ... "What." There are other factors to consider- There are other things that make a person- Yes, I would say that those kinds of things are nearly impossible to monetize. Because, well, simply, they're not about money. ... No. Well, I would say to those people that this may not be a perfect way to judge a person's life, but Yes, yes ... I believe that this is the most effectively methodology for the world that we live in. ... How much is my life worth?

Pause.

MITCH (CONT'D)

I'm happy to say that I haven't thought about that in a very long time.

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. He looks 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.

IVAN

Alright, alright. Boy's night out.

He breaks out some vodka and pickles.

MITCH

Yeah, this is great.

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 telling you, I'm sure my kids are all tone deaf.

MITCH

They can't be that bad.

IVAN

Even the baby knows it. Her eyes glaze over and she looks at me like, "Poppy, my skull hasn't even fused yet. They're doing some kind of permanent damage here."

MITCH

Julie Andrews was hot.

IVAN

I like the baroness.

MITCH

The baroness?

IVAN

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

MITCH

Oh. (Beat.) Really?

IVAN

Yeah. (as in "she was so pleasant and kind") She was so nice!

MITCH

Okay. But, hotter than Julie Andrews?

IVAN

What about that scene where 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?"

MITCH

You've definitely seen this movie too many times.

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

IVAN

Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew. So hot, right?

MITCH

Uhm-

IVAN

I'm telling you, it's hot.

MITCH

I only really remember Julie Andrews.

IVAN

Yeah, she's totally hot too. With the short hair.

MITCH

Right?

IVAN

Hey, I heard that there's a movie where she's topless.

MITCH

(genuine disbelief)

What?! No. Mary Poppins? No.

IVAN

There is. You should Google that shit.

MITCH

I see someone already has.

IVAN

Me? No way. I'm not going to Google that. I've got kids.

MITCH

So I'm supposed to?

IVAN

You're single.

MITCH

That makes no sense.

IVAN

My kids watch that movie like once a week! They'll know.

MITCH

What? That you looked up Julie Andrews's tits on the internet?

IVAN

That I saw her tits on the internet. It'll change my DNA. When they're twenty years old, they'll think back and say, "Why wasn't dad ever the same after that week in Wisconsin?"

MITCH

So sad.

IVAN

Yeah. Remember how much my mom liked Julie Andrews when we first got here?

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

(Russian accent)

"How does she have such white teeth? How do they get their teeth so white?"

*

MITCH

Take a cold shower and watch the game.

IVAN

Fuck that shit.

He turns the TV off.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Let's get shit-faced and pretend to go speed dating.

MITCH

What?!

IVAN

I saw. They're doing speed-dating at the hotel tonight. Boy's night out! We'll be like cousins from Nebraska. We'll be like feed salesmen. Tractor salesmen!

MITCH

Lisa would kill us.

IVAN

She told me to get you laid. I bet she's doing shots right now to try to kill the pain. That old nun is probably singing "Climb Every Mountain" right about now. Speed dating. 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. No good for speed dating. Don't let me drink more than two.

MITCH

Since when do you like pickles and vodka?

IVAN

Come on, *Mishka Blumenthal*. Got to remember your roots.

MITCH

I remember we always thought vodka and pickles were gross.

IVAN

Mm. Tastes change. They really do. I know something you'll like.

Ivan goes to the kitchenette and brings back some pastries.

IVAN (CONT'D)

How long's it been since you've had tea ball cookies?

MITCH

Whoa, where did you get those?

IVAN

Tyotyа Vanesa.

MITCH

Tyotyа Vanesa!

IVAN

These are the real shit. I told her I was going to see you.
She sent them.

MITCH

No way.

IVAN

Yes way. Your favorite, right?

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

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

MITCH

Thanks.

Beat.

IVAN

Well, aren't you going to eat one?

MITCH

Better not.

IVAN

What?!

MITCH

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

IVAN

Kittens and baby seals. Who cares?

MITCH

I need to lose a little weight.

IVAN

From where?

MITCH

Okay. Whatever.

IVAN

Get a haircut. Stop using so much gel. You've got more to
lose there. Come on. Your eyes got this big when I brought
these out.

MITCH

I'm okay, really.

IVAN
Okay? Are you kidding?

MITCH
Nobody's Kate Moss over here, alright?

IVAN
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
So, that was better?

IVAN
Kind of.

MITCH
I was a mess.

IVAN
Well-

MITCH
I was gross. I was living in my car.

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

MITCH
Nothing.

IVAN
Come on.

Beat.

MITCH
My blood pressure's too high.

IVAN
Seriously?

MITCH
Yeah. I can't get it down. Messes all my numbers up.

IVAN
What numbers?

MITCH
Nevermind.

IVAN
Your life on paper numbers?

MITCH
Look, I'm fine.

IVAN
That's on paper.

MITCH
Yeah, yeah, I know.

Beat.

IVAN
You feeling okay?

MITCH
Yeah. I guess.

IVAN
Mitch-

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

What was there to do? I didn't have to do anything. Hank Baylor 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 going to get twenty-five million for him. That's still a shit ton of money.

Beat.

MITCH

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

IVAN

I guess not.

MITCH

Yeah. This is how it goes.

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

We're getting a bonus though.

IVAN

Yeah?

MITCH

Came in way below our number. Company's thrilled.

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.

MITCH

Not too bad, huh?

IVAN

This is a little crazy.

MITCH

You did a nice job. Looks like the rest of the families are settling too. Baylor lost so big. They're scared.

IVAN

Guess we did our jobs then.

MITCH

Did you find Ida?

IVAN

Yeah, I called her assistant. She left town to go to Milwaukee? The assistant said I could track her down there. You should give her the check yourself, you know?

MITCH

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

IVAN

Still-

MITCH

No. Let's just deliver that check and get out of here.

Beat.

IVAN

Sure. I'll go up there tomorrow. (Beat.) So ... you two.

MITCH

I don't know. It was stupid.

IVAN

She was hot.

Beat.

MITCH

I guess.

IVAN

Way too hot for you.

MITCH

I know.

IVAN

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

MITCH
I don't know.

IVAN
What's her story?

MITCH
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.

IVAN
Yeah?

MITCH
Yeah. The client has got all kinds of things lined up for us next month.

IVAN
Great.

MITCH
Should only take another week to sort things out around here. 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
You've got a job now.

He looks around the Winnebago.

MITCH (CONT'D)

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

Oh. Oh, that's cool. You're going to go back to Boston?

IVAN

Not right now.

MITCH

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

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

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

IVAN

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

MITCH

Oh.

IVAN

Yeah.

MITCH

Okay.

IVAN

I'm sorry.

MITCH

No. It's fine.

IVAN

I got a call from Forest Jackson. The new coach?

MITCH

Oh, yeah.

IVAN

He actually knew who I was, can you believe that?

MITCH

Great.

IVAN

He's a Sabermetrics guy. So, he likes the little things I can do.

MITCH

Of course.

IVAN

Wants me to play pretty steady for him this season. I got to go back.

MITCH

Ah.

IVAN

Who knows how long I can be doing this, right? The window's closing.

MITCH

Yeah. Yeah.

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 huge.

Yeah. MITCH

That's everything. IVAN

Okay. MITCH

I'm flying back to Corpus Christi on Friday. IVAN

Friday? MITCH

Yeah, he needs me right away. IVAN

That's great. MITCH

Lisa's going to drive down after me. IVAN

Great. MITCH

What? What? IVAN

You really think you're going to make it to the majors? MITCH

Beat.

I don't know. It's possible. IVAN

No, it's not. If you were going to make it, you would have done it by now. MITCH

Double A is still the pros. IVAN

You're not making anything. A week ago you're calling me because you're dead broke. MITCH

I know. That was before- IVAN

Before what?! MITCH

IVAN

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

MITCH

You don't make anything! You've got four kids! No savings! No assets! What are you doing? Zero times a hundred is still zero! Don't you want your life to be worth something?! Don't you want the girls to be worth something? When all is said and done?

Pause.

IVAN

Yeah. I do.

MITCH

Well, it doesn't look like it's going to be much at this point. Do you ever even try to look ten years down the road?

IVAN

Yeah.

Pause.

MITCH

Alright then. Sorry-

IVAN

You call every baby a "Bad Baby," right?

MITCH

What?

IVAN

They're not bad babies.

MITCH

Mike Ramos is the one who says that!

IVAN

I heard you say it.

Beat.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Bad babies, Mishka. 'cause it's so hard to guess what a baby's going to be, 'cause there's nothing to go on, right? Look, I didn't want to say it, but you know, how you said you're like swinging at a baseball? Well, nobody is good at hitting a baseball fair, you know? Even people making twenty-five million a year, they mostly guess wrong. Contact doesn't count; you've got to be fair ...

(MORE)

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

IVAN (CONT'D)
 like "maiden fair," not "life's not fair." Yeah? (Beat.)
 Nobody can say that they're good at it.

*
 *

He yawns and rubs his eyes.

*

Beat.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 I'm really glad I saw you. You think you're ever going to
 talk to anyone back home again?

MITCH
 Yeah. Someday.

IVAN
 'cause, you know, everyone is always asking about you.

MITCH
 I know.

IVAN
 Nobody cares about your proof.

MITCH
 Hm.

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

Beat.

MITCH
 I do.

IVAN
 Well, that's you.

MITCH
 And that is me.

Beat.

MITCH (CONT'D)
 I bet my dad loves it.

IVAN
 What?

MITCH
 That it didn't come through.

IVAN
 That's a shit thing to say.

MITCH

It's true. He was always looking for me to fail.

IVAN

I don't know how you could possibly be thinking that.

MITCH

I didn't do what he told me to do.

IVAN

He just wanted what's best for you. That's what everyone wants.

MITCH

Not if it means that I go my own way. The proof was what I wanted to work on even if he didn't think it was worth anything.

IVAN

You don't know. You never saw. He was a big deal in Russia.

MITCH

So, why did he come here?

IVAN

It was crazy over there.

MITCH

You told me you didn't even notice.

IVAN

I was a kid. I didn't know. But, my parents knew. Your parents knew. He's Boris Blumenthal and he comes to America and he's driving a cab, you know? That's not easy.

MITCH

(heard this a hundred times)

I know, I know.

IVAN

I know you know. They had big dreams for us. We were going to be engineers or something, build on what they built coming over here. But, then I go off to play ball and you're like 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.

MITCH

More like five hundred million notes.

IVAN

Okay.

MITCH

I can name that universe in five hundred million 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

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

IVAN

Well, that's a tragedy. I used to think I had to hit .300, had to make it to the bigs, had to show everyone back home, 'cause I thought no one was rooting for me, you know? But, then I realized, everyone's got their own shit they're dealing with. Who's rooting for them? And now my parents are old, all they care about is they've got grandkids now. *

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

Yeah. I fucking love baseball, Mitch. I love it.

MITCH

I know.

IVAN

It's so good. It's so good, Mitch and I'm ... not that good.

Beat.

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 couldn't believe how much work they are tonight.

IVAN

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

Beat.

MITCH

Yeah, Ivan. 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.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Hey.

MITCH

What?

IVAN

You feel bad?

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

Beat.

You feel bad. IVAN

What are you even talking about? MITCH

Nice town. Nice people here. IVAN

Yeah. MITCH

You feel bad for Ida. IVAN

It is what it is. MITCH

"Sitting in a tree." IVAN

Beat.

IVAN (CONT'D)

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

MITCH

Right.

IVAN

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

MITCH

Who knows? Bad decision.

IVAN

Bad decision like he's never made before? When you short, you make money by betting the stock will go down, right?

MITCH

Right.

IVAN

You lose if the price goes the other way. Bigger it gets, the more your lose.

MITCH

Mm-hm.

IVAN

You could just go on losing forever, right? That's what happened. (Beat.) Why didn't he set it up to automatically sell it all if the price went up too high?

*
*

MITCH

Didn't have time. Died before he could do it.

IVAN

Or he was sure that Express-Ion would go down. I looked at his trades. The only time he didn't use "stop-loss" was when he got a at least two hundred percent profit on investment. I mean, this was one of the best investors in the world. Never did anything like this before ... well, never did anything like this before and lost. What if he was sure? 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

Seriously?

IVAN

Seriously.

Beat.

MITCH

Yeah.

IVAN

Remember, we went to vacation and we begged our parents to take us to the pool and they said, "No, it's too cold." And we said, "We don't care." And our dads took us to the pool and it was freezing. But, you went in anyway. Such a little badass. And I could hear my dad say, "That boy is a real Russian. He was born to live somewhere else, not here."

MITCH

I don't remember that.

IVAN

You were little. (Beat.) I do.

Pause.

IVAN (CONT'D)

(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.

Beat.

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

Lights fade.

End of scene.

SCENE I: 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
 Hey, hey. Look what the cat dragged in kicking and screaming. *

IDA
 Hi, Michael.

MICHAEL
 I didn't know you were coming.

IDA
 Sorry. I should have called.

MICHAEL
 No, it's better this way. I would have been a nervous wreck if I knew that you were coming.

IDA
 That's crazy.

MICHAEL
 Hey, you were always ... well, you know.

IDA
 Thanks. That means a lot.

MICHAEL
 Yeah. Drink?

Sure.

IDA

Michael hands her a champagne flute.
She sips.

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? *

MICHAEL

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

IDA

I can see that.

MICHAEL

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

IDA

That's really great.

MICHAEL

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

IDA

Yeah, the girls told me about that. Little bit of vindication for me.

MICHAEL

You were right.

IDA

You are welcome. *

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 ... 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 the person in your life is ... uh ... yeah, shit. I'm sorry, Ida. Seriously.

IDA

(a mantra she learned in
couples counseling)

Okay. 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.

That sucks. MICHAEL

Yeah. IDA

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

Yeah. IDA

He releases her.

Like I said. I'm happy to be here. I'm ... so happy to be here, Michael. IDA (CONT'D)

Yeah. Like old times. MICHAEL

Yeah. So who is she? IDA

Her? MICHAEL
(pointing)

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. IDA

No. MICHAEL

Who is she? IDA

It's her. MICHAEL

Hm? IDA

The girl. MICHAEL

Ah. IDA
(still not sure)

MICHAEL

It's the Romanian girl that 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, while I was waiting, 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 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, a really different reason.

IDA

What did you do?

MICHAEL

I took her to the train station, and asked the attendant to show her how to get where she wanted to go.

IDA

Michael!

MICHAEL

It was so weird. Everybody kept saying "Talk to the person wearing a red jacket." An information person. We ran around the airport 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, but what if I was wrong, and they arrested her or something, got a lot of different people involved, you know? Sent her back to what she was already running away from. I thought about giving her my phone number or something, but, you know, what if she got busted and, "Oh, Officer, you see I gave this girl my phone number just in case she would want to call me if something bad was happening to her," blahblahblah, you know? Plus, you were pregnant, I didn't want there to be any trouble with anyone coming looking for me or anything. I don't know. Crazy thoughts. So I just took her to the find the lady in the red jacket, and we sent her on her way.

IDA

Just like that.

MICHAEL

She was gone from me. Gone from ... gone from me.

IDA

Wow.

MICHAEL

But, I thought about her every day, Ida. Think about her.

IDA

Really?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

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.

Beat.

MICHAEL
I'm sure I did.

IDA
You never told me this story.

MICHAEL
I did, Sweetheart.

IDA
Really?

MICHAEL
I think so.

IDA
God.

MICHAEL
Yeah. (Beat.) So I told Jane about it one night, how I always wonder what happened to her and Jane had this idea: that I would draw as many picture of that girl from my memory, like sixty, a hundred a day, and by the time I got to, like, three hundred thousand, we would take that picture that's been distilled throughout my mind for a year, and eventually we'll go into the police records for human trafficking and see if we could match that girl.

IDA
Wow.

MICHAEL
What do you think?

IDA
Pretty cool.

MICHAEL
Pretty cool, right? After I talked to you I thought maybe I should work with a mathematician who could, like, break down the image, and find the average of all my drawings, average eyes, average lips, average mole placement, I don't know, and that will be like my, I don't know, that will probably be the image of the girl that's closest to the real thing, you know?

IDA
Hm.

MICHAEL

I talked to a mathematician down in Madison who says maybe we can do something like that. What do you think about that?

IDA

I think that sounds really great.

MICHAEL

What?

IDA

It sounds really great.

MICHAEL

You don't like it?

IDA

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

MICHAEL

Okay.

IDA

Yeah.

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
 This is why I stopped talking to you about your work.

MICHAEL
 Thanks, Ida.

IDA
 Look, I'm not an expert.

MICHAEL
 You don't have to be an expert to appreciate this!

IDA
 Okay.

MICHAEL
 What's wrong with it?! Seriously.

IDA
 I don't know.

MICHAEL
 Tell me.

IDA
 I don't know.

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.

(MORE)

IDA (CONT'D)

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

It's really clever.

MICHAEL

But ...

IDA

But, it's just a process for you to end up with an image with at the end. Maybe it'll look just like her. But, I don't know what that means yet. From all these drawings, I don't even know why you couldn't do anything to help her. I'm interested in that.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

IDA

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. No one gives a crap about the way I see things. You're looking at the big loser over here, Michael.

MICHAEL

Don't say that.

IDA

Yeah.

Pause.

IDA (CONT'D)

Thanks for signing the papers.

MICHAEL

(means it)

Thanks for ten years of marriage.

IDA

I am really happy for you.

MICHAEL

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?

IDA

No.

MICHAEL

No.

IDA

But, it's not like that.

MICHAEL

What's it like?

IDA

I think Jane's trying to get your attention.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Ida gives a small wave.

IDA

Probably got you a show in New York or something.

Michael takes her hand.

MICHAEL

Where are you staying?

IDA

Michael.

MICHAEL

Ida. You know, 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 up here, and we'd forget about any of this. (Beat.) You say the word and I'll never pick up a brush again.

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.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Be here when we close tonight. Please.

IDA

Okay.

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

Don't worry. 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

It's fine.

IVAN

Thanks.

IDA

(observing Ivan's daughter)

Look at that. They're looking so carefully.

IVAN

Yeah. They like it.

IDA

Are they drinking champagne?

IVAN

It's apple juice.

IDA

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

IVAN

It's a great age.

IDA

I should have brought them.

IVAN

So, this is like your ex-husband's show?

IDA

Something like that.

IVAN

It's really ... I love it.

IDA

Yeah?

IVAN

(genuine)

Yeah.

Beat.

IDA

Thanks.

IVAN
I love it. 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
I know.

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, 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
No. He just promised me that he'd never pick up a brush again
if I wouldn't divorce him. *

SILENCE.

Ida wipes her eyes.

IDA (CONT'D)
(brightly)
So, you've got a big check in a little envelope for me, hm?

IVAN
Not exactly. It's not from the company. It's from Mitch.

Beat.

IDA
What is it?

IVAN
He's hoping you'll see him.

He points at something on the envelope.

IVAN (CONT'D)
He'll be at the hotel at that time. You can pick up the check
then. But, he wants you to see something. Could you? 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 he crazy?! Is this real?

He looks at all the pictures.

IVAN
It's real. Will you see him?

IDA
He's crazy.

IVAN

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

IDA

What?

IVAN

The repetitive motion.

IDA

I'm sorry.

IVAN

Did Mitchie ever tell you what I was doing before I came to work on this case?

IDA

No.

IVAN

I was playing minor league baseball in Texas.

IDA

Oh, right.

IVAN

Repetitive motion. The best players are the ones who can do something the same way over and over again. Your ex-husband's 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.

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, Eight-Oh-One.

MITCH
Good morning.

MAGGIE
Okay, breakfast buffet, glass of red wine, green tea.

MITCH
How about a cup of coffee?

MAGGIE
Instead?

MITCH
Yeah. Breakfast buffet and coffee. How's the coffee?

MAGGIE
I don't know. Normal I guess.

MITCH
Sounds good.

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
Is that Margaret?

MAGGIE
No, just Maggie.

MITCH
Cool. I'm Mitch. Nice to meet you.

MAGGIE
You've been here a good long time.

MITCH

Yeah. I've been working on the Hank Baylor case.

MAGGIE

Yeah. That's what I heard.

MITCH

Did you know him?

MAGGIE

Not really. He never came in here. Heard his life turned out to not be worth that much.

MITCH

Something like that. Sorry.

Maggie shrugs.

MAGGIE

Life goes on. Hope you liked your room. *

MITCH *

Yeah. I usually stay in Two-Fifty-Seven. *

MAGGIE *

Been here a lot, huh? *

MITCH *

No. I mean, wherever I go. I usually stay in Two-Fifty-Seven. *
It's a Fermat prime ... like a really special number. I mean, *
Eight-Oh-One, that's a cool number, it's like seven factorial *
times eight factorial times nine factorial times ten *
factorial divided by seven times eight times nine times ten. *

MAGGIE *

Yeah. *

MITCH *

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

MAGGIE *

Sure. *

MITCH *

I asked them for Two-Fifty-Seven 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. MITCH *

Hm. MAGGIE *

There's no view. How long have you been working here? MITCH *

I don't know, 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

Is this a kind of dayjob? MITCH

Something like that. Twenty questions! MAGGIE

Sorry. What else do you do? MITCH

Beat.

I guess I'd say playing music. Some. MAGGIE

You're a musician. MITCH

Like a singer songwriter kind of yeah. MAGGIE

Seriously? MITCH

Yeah. I play the piano a little. Sing. MAGGIE

MITCH
Can I hear one of your songs?

MAGGIE
Uhm, I don't know-

MITCH
I'm the only one here.

MAGGIE
Yeah.

MITCH
You want me to ask your manager if it's cool?

MAGGIE
No, he doesn't care. It's Tuesday.

MITCH
Oh. So, let me hear one.

MAGGIE
Like right now?

MITCH
I mean, do you have a demo or something? I'll listen to that.

MAGGIE
No. I'm saving for that kind of thing.

MITCH
You have a website or something?

MAGGIE
Saving for that too.

MITCH
Oh.

MAGGIE
Yeah.

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.
(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

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.

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.

Pause.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

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. I loved it.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

MITCH

How did you get the ideas to write that? Like the music part.

MITCH

I liked it.

IDA

Yeah. She plays at a coffee shop sometimes. The In Between down on Chestnut. She's good. She's got better ones.

MITCH

Think maybe you want to sit? *

IDA *

I don't know. *

She doesn't sit. *

MITCH

Thanks for coming. We missed you at the judgement.

IDA

I had the girls this past week.

MITCH

How was that? *

IDA

It hurts. I don't know.

MITCH

Ivan left. *

IDA *

Yeah. He mentioned that. *

MITCH

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

IDA *

What position does he play? *

MITCH

I actually don't know. I hate baseball. *

IDA *

I love baseball. Going to miss him? *

MITCH

It was ... nice for me to have him around. Ida, I'm so /sorry- *

IDA

/So, I had the them to myself all week this week. Gretchen the little one cries for Michael, 'cause I don't know the secret tricks. So that was hard. I didn't know when her show would be on, and she missed it, and wanted to know what happened from last week. *

(MORE) *

IDA (CONT'D)

Did you know that that kind of thing can even happen anymore?
I told her we could watch it online, but she just screamed.

She laughs. *

Beat. *

MITCH

I've got the check. It's here. *

He hands a check over. Ida takes it.

IDA

Thanks.

MITCH

I'm sor/ry. *

IDA

/It's okay. *

MITCH

No. I promised I wouldn't use what you told me.

Beat. *

IDA

What difference did it make? The case was over.

MITCH

Then why did I use it?

IDA

I don't know. (Beat.) But, the case was over. *

MITCH

I'm sorry. I was scared. *

Pause. *

IDA

Yeah. *

MITCH

Did Ivan show you-?

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

IDA

Look, I don't know if you think this is some kind of penance,
or something, but-

MITCH

I was wrong.

IDA

(regarding the envelope)

I ... don't quite understand this.

MITCH

It's my life savings.

IDA

Okay.

MITCH

Everything that I've earned on this job.

IDA

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

MITCH

And I quit.

IDA

Why would you do that?!

MITCH

The numbers didn't add up.

IDA

What numbers?!

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

So what are you going to do?

MITCH

I'm going to bide my time. I'm going to have faith in the probabilities. And then we're going to start over. 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 on Express-Ion is 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 ... you're going to give it all away?

MITCH

I'm going to invest it. It's a beautiful town. If you see it up from this giant hill. It's a beautiful dream. As good a place as any to draw a line to infinity. Do it with me. Let's draw that line. And if that's not the right one, we'll draw another one. And we'll never give up.

*
*
*

IDA

Mitch ...

MITCH

And another one. And another one. We won't give up.

*

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

Yeah. Look-

*
*

MITCH

I'm going to help Maggie make a demo.

*
*

IDA

Okay, okay, don't get ahead of yourself. You don't even have the money yet.

MITCH

Still, you heard her, she's good.

IDA

Okay, but there are other people that are much closer to breaking out. I got like ten people ahead of her. Do they even make demos anymore?

MITCH

It's just a demo.

IDA

Ida sits down.

*

IDA

I'm talking about total economic impact-

MITCH

What if Maggie goes platinum?

IDA

After she moves to New York. I'm talking about local industry.

MITCH

She might stay here.

IDA

Hey, you can't bring me on if you're not going to listen to me!

MITCH

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 go in a different direction.

Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

Okay, here you go. Two coffees.

MITCH

Thanks.

MAGGIE

I brought you guys some pie too.

IDA

That's sweet.

MAGGIE

What are you guy's talking about? You're thick as thieves over here.

MITCH

The future.

MAGGIE

Who's future?

MITCH

Yours.

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?

Beat.

MAGGIE

Okay.

MITCH

You got it?

Beat.

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

Mitch, name that tune.

MITCH

(to Maggie)

Ready?

She goes to the piano.

MITCH (CONT'D)

No, just sing it.

IDA

But no words.

MAGGIE
Right. So just on like a "la?"

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.