

Corner Man
an original short screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL AMERICA - DUSK

Dusk hangs across a darkening expanse of rural Americana. A trail of headlights inch along the two lane blacktop.

ON PICKUP TRUCK: The window descends as an orange-vested parking attendant takes a five spot from the driver. The pickup pulls forward with a pop of gravel, revealing...

AN IMMENSE GYMNASIUM. It's aluminum walls do little to conceal the THUNDERING BASS of an 80's hair band. A roadside light board reads: 'Fight Tonight'.

SUPER TITLE: 'THIRTY YEARS AGO'

EXT. GYMNASIUM/DUMPSTERS - CONTINUOUS

ON CASH. Counted out.

A clandestine exchange between two silhouettes. Headlights sweep the men, revealing VICTOR (34). He tips his cowboy hat, shading his eyes from the passing headlights. He pockets the money. Swaggers toward a rear entrance, whipping it open as he spits into the dirt.

The ROCK MUSIC escapes through the open door, BRIDGING TO...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

ON HANDS. Being wrapped in white tape.

CLAYTON (28) studies his hands as a CORNERMAN wraps them. Clay is distant. Focused.

Vincent steps into the locker room. Checks himself in a mirror, picking tobacco from his grin. He crosses toward Clay and leans against the cinder block wall. Smiles.

VINCENT

How you doin', champ? You ready to give 'em a show?

The cornerman finishes wrapping Clay's hands. Pats his shoulder. Crosses to his kit.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

...Clayton.

Clay looks up at Vincent. Eyes set.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

I said, you ready to give 'em a show?

Clayton glares. There is something broken in his look. He reluctantly nods, eyes downcast.

DING. DING. DING. The BELL transitions to...

INT. GYMNASIUM/BOXING RING - MOMENTS LATER

BAM! A fist smashes into Clay's face. Then another. He stumbles. World tilting. Steadies himself. He clumsily wipes blood from his nose, eyes swimming.

CORNERMAN

Protect your face!

Clay scans the onlookers SHOUTING ringside, focusing...

ON VINCENT. Grinning. He shouts into the ear of a WELL TAILORED FAT MAN beside him. The fat man daubs sweat beads from his brow, watching Clayton with anticipation. Vincent swivels back toward the ring, popping a toothpick into his mouth. His eyes level at Clayton.

Clayton's eyes narrow. He blocks a punch with his forearm. Staggers. Throws an ill-timed side swipe. THOMP! His opponent lands a fist in Clayton's stomach. Clayton doubles. An uppercut sends him sprawling. He crashes to the mat.

The REFREE swoops in, begins the count...

REFREE

One...two...

ON CLAYTON'S EYES: Dazed. Anxious. They scan the bright lights over the ring, like a patient anticipating surgery. He closes his eyes, a drip of tear streams down his cheek.

SERIES OF SHOTS: X-RAYS showing a skull fracture.

REFREE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...three...four...

SERIES OF SHOTS: MRI's showing an embolism.

REFREE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...five...six...seven...

EXT. COURTYARD MARRIOTT/2019 - DAWN

ON CLAYTON'S EYES. Closed. Aged. A tear escapes, tracing a tributary of wrinkles down his cheek. His eyes open.

Clay (58) sits atop the street curb. Disheveled. Stubble faced. Pudgy.

REFREE (O.S.)
 ...eight...nine...ten.

Clay is thirty-years older and wears regret like a hangover. He nurses his hand in his lap. The breeze pushes an errant plastic bag past, adding to his portrait of despair.

DING DING. The sound of a bell o.s.

SUPER TITLE: 'THE CORNER MAN'

EXT. KNOXVILLE/HIGHWAY - DAWN

Pre-dawn blues brighten the dingy cityscape, strings of pulsing tail lights and twinkling headlights mark the morning commute.

A beat up SERVICE VAN creeps along, sidewalls displaying the scuffed decal of a cartoon plum holding a plunger: 'Professor Plumb'. But it looks more like a poop emoji than a plum.

INT. SERVICE VAN/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Clay yawns. Slurps a cup of coffee. Flinches. Too hot. He places the coffee in a cup holder. Checks the dash clock: 6:45.

Despite the early hour, he seems put together. Clean shaven. Pressed collared shirt. He settles back in the driver's seat.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Midday heat ripples upon the pavement. Clay hurries from the gas station, balancing a cup of coffee in one hand. Teeth tearing open a *Little Debbie* snack in the other.

A car HONKS. Clay stops. Put off. He shoots an exaggerated glare as the car passes. Then hurries to his SERVICE VAN.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The SERVICE VAN speeds along a rural highway, patchwork fields blurring past. Flatlands. Prairie.

INT. SERVICE VAN/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Clay seems content. He swallows the last bite of a fast food cheeseburger. Crumples the wrapper. Dusts bread crumbs off his belly. He checks the dashboard clock: 1:00.

RING. RING. Clayton reaches for his flip phone mobile. Frowns at the caller ID, tossing the phone onto the passenger seat.

CLAY (V.O.)
 At least one hour.

EXT. REST STOP - DUSK

Clay pumps gas, speaking on his mobile.

CLAY

No. It's one hour.

(beat)

Because they can bump you if you're not checked in at least one hour before. That's why. Remind me the flight number.

Clay checks his digital watch.

CLAY (CONT'D)

809. Eight o'clock. Okay. And you've got your passport. Right?

The gas pump SNAPS. Clay removes the nozzle from the van.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Christ. Okay. Okay, I'm sorry. Just make sure you're there an hour before. Okay?

Clay replaces the pump.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Alright. Fly safe.

INT. SERVICE VAN/MOVING - NIGHT

Clay ducks to see a passing road sign: AIRPORT NEXT EXIT. He hits his turn signal. CLICK CLICK CLICK.

The mobile RINGS. He frowns. Silences it.

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

The SERVICE VAN parks. Clay climbs out, stiff from the long drive. He lets out an exaggerated MOAN. Then hobbles toward the airport entrance, stretching out the kink in his back.

The mobile RINGS again. He fishes it from his pocket. Checks the caller ID.

CLAY

God damn it.

Clay collects himself. Flips open the phone.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hello, Phillis.

INT. CLAYTON AND PHILLIS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

PHILLIS (62) stares from behind the third story apartment window, watching rowdy teenagers vaping on the street corner below.

PHILLIS
Where are you? Those kids are back.

CLAY
Did you call the cops?

PHILLIS
I'm not going to call the cops. Where are you?

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - CONTINUOUS

Clay tries to shield the mouthpiece from the BLAST of a PLANE'S DISTANT ENGINES.

CLAY
Upstate. At my mother's.

PHILLIS (O.S.)
What's wrong with your mother?

CLAY
Nothing. Just thought I should pop in and check on her. She had that cold last week.

PHILLIS (O.S.)
Jesus Christ, Clayton. You went. Didn't you? After I told you not to. I bet you weren't even on call last night, were you?

Clay stops in his tracks.

CLAY
Phillis.

INT. CLAYTON AND PHILLIS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Phillis turns from the window, marching into the shadows of the modest apartment.

PHILLIS
Don't you Phillis me, Clayton. Where are you getting the money?

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - CONTINUOUS

Guilt twitches across Clayton's face.

CLAY

I've been putting some back.

PHILLIS (O.S.)

I swear to God. If you withdrew from savings...

CLAY

Why can't you just be supportive, Phillis?

PHILLIS (O.S.)

Enough is enough. This kid is not going to stick with you. He's gonna screw you the minute he has a chance.

CLAY

Don't say that.

PHILLIS (O.S.)

It's true. And you know it.

CLAY

Don't say that!

(softening)

Come on, honey. We've got a real chance this time. The kid is a phenom. He's like a ballet dancer in the ring.

(beat)

Phillis?

INT. CLAYTON AND PHILLIS' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Phillis glares out the window at the kids on the street corner.

PHILLIS

Don't expect your key to work when you get back.

Phillis slams the phone into its cradle.

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE - CONTINUOUS

Clay looks like he's taken a punch to the gut.

CLAY

Phillis? PHILLIS?

The line is dead. Clay erupts, smashing his phone on the pavement. His chest heaves with anger.

A BUSINESS WOMAN turns the corner, pulling her roll aboard. She freezes. Startled. She quickly redirects to another airport entrance.

Embarrassed, Clay calls out.

CLAY (CONT'D)
 Sorry! Miss?

He squats to the ground, attempting to reassemble the pieces of his phone. The flip portion of the phone still works but hangs precariously.

CLAY (CONT'D)
 God damn it.

Clay closes the phone and pockets it. Hurries into the airport.

INT. AIRPORT/RENTAL CAR COUNTER - NIGHT

Clay stands at the counter opposite a middle aged woman with a bun in her hair. He studies a digital contract through his reading glasses.

RENTAL CLERK
 I'm sorry we're out of four doors...
 I can do a Cadillac Escalade.

CLAY
 How much?

RENTAL CLERK
 Two hundred a day. Plus gas.

Clay flips through a roll of cash. He doesn't look pleased.

CLAY
 Yeah. Okay.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL/BATHROOM - LATER

Clay changes clothes in a toilet stall. It's too small for him to navigate. He keeps bumping into the door as he tries to replace his jeans with gray dress slacks. The toilet paper roll sticks to his shoe, winding around his leg.

CLAY
 Damn it.

He bends over to remove the toilet paper and his reading glasses fall out of his shirt pocket and into the toilet.

Clay stares into the toilet bowl. He frowns, reluctantly rolling up his sleeve.

TOILET BOWL POV - Clay reaches into the bowl.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

Clay stands at the security checkpoint, scanning the herd of arriving travelers. He's dressed in a gray suit, hair coifed, clean shaven. He looks good. His eyes brighten as he locates...

DMITRI (28). 6' 5" and all muscle. He wears a hoodie, rapidly thumbing text messages, ear pods humming with music. He steps off the escalator and scans the waiting masses. Clayton waves, jogging up to Dmitri. Dmitri notices him, but doesn't acknowledge. He just keeps walking, thumbing his smart phone.

CLAY

Dee! How was the flight? Good flight?

DMITRI

It wasn't first class.

CLAY

Yeah. Business class though. Right?
I mean, far cry better than driving
two days.

Dmitri shoots a sideways look.

CLAY (CONT'D)

You have any bags?

DMITRI

Three.

CLAY

Three. You're kidding right?

Dmitri grins at his smart phone. Stops abruptly. Poses. Flashes a selfie. A business traveller swerves, barely missing Dmitri.

BUSINESS TRAVELLER

(sotto)

Asshole.

Dmitri does a slow burn at the business traveller.

DMITRI

Not kidding.

CLAY

Jesus Christ. You're worse than my
wife.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

Clay struggles out of the airport exit, two rolling suitcases trailing behind him, another gym bag slung around his neck. Dmitri remains transfixed on his phone.

Clay meanders across the crosswalk, fighting the pull of the rolling luggage. A car HONKS at him.

CLAY
Back off, Jack!

Dmitri walks ahead paying no attention to Clay's plight.

INT. AIRPORT PARKING STRUCTURE - MOMENTS LATER

Clay drags the luggage onto the elevator. Dmitri follows.

CLAY
Fourth floor.

One of the bags gets caught on the door. Clayton wrestles the bag. Angry. He tugs the bag in on its side. Looks at the elevator buttons. Dmitri keeps thumbing his phone.

CLAY (CONT'D)
(sarcasm)
No. No. I got it.

Clay presses the button with his foot. Shoots a glare at Dmitri. The door closes as he seethes.

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING STRUCTURE - MOMENTS LATER

Clayton fights the bags, one meandering wildly upon a bad wheel. He marches across the parking structure toward his service van. Dmitri slows, a look of disgust on his face.

DMITRI
Your shit van? We're not taking that.

Clayton passes the service van. Drops the bags, fishing a key fob from his pocket. He raises the fob ceremoniously and presses a button. BEEP BEEP. A BLACK ESCALADE's gate lifts. Dmitri nods approval. Clayton smiles. Proud.

Dmitri slips into the rear passenger seat. Clayton heaves the bags into the trunk, like a garbage man throwing trash. He wipes sweat from his brow. Tries to close the trunk. WHACK. The door bounces back. A bag blocking it. Clay GROWLS. He pushes the bag. Slams the trunk closed. He leans against the Escalade's truck catching his breath. He collects himself. Deep breath. Then rounds the Escalade, climbing into the driver's seat.

INT. ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

Clayton closes the door behind him. He checks Dmitri in the rearview, still breathing heavy, out of shape.

CLAY

There's uh...there's some Pellegrino water back there. Chilled. Should still...be cold.

Clay reaches around the back of his seat, passing Dmitri a Pellegrino. Dmitri doesn't acknowledge, still interacting with his phone. Clay turns around, unscrews the lid. The carbonated contents EXPLODE in Clayton's lap, drenching his lap in water. Dmitri starts laughing.

DMITRI

Ha Ha Ha Ha. Such a klutz, Clayton.

CLAY

Har Har Har, Dmitri. Hardee-fucking-har.

Clay frowns. Slams the bottle into the cup holder. Scans the dash for something to wipe himself off with. Finding nothing, he uses his hands. He puts the Escalade in reverse and backs out. Dmitri continues laughing.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The ESCALADE speeds down the highway, slipping through pools of intermittent street light.

INT. ESCALADE/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Clay checks Dmitri in the rearview, like a parent struggling for some connection with his kid. Dmitri thumbs another message on his phone.

CLAY

So...weigh in is three o'clock. Got a massage set up for you at ten in the morning.

ON PHONE TEXT MESSAGE. '*...Before the fight.*' Dmitri thumbs out a response. '*Sign tomorrow. Done deal.*'

Dmitri grins. Pockets his phone.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Figure you get some extra sleep. Get limbered up. Relaxed. Ready to kick some ass.

(beat)

How does that sound?

DMITRI

Where we going?

CLAY
Hotel.

DMITRI
I'm hungry.

CLAY
It's almost midnight, big guy.

DMITRI
I want steak.

CLAY
We'll order you some room service.

DMITRI
I don't want room service.

CLAY
You were supposed to eat before you got on the plane.

DMITRI
I want steak. You get me shit seat on shit flight. I put up with it. But now you make it up.

Clay glares at Dmitri in the rearview.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
You know - maybe you're not up to this. Maybe you and me - we aren't right fit anymore, Clayton.

CLAY
Jesus Christ.

DMITRI
Why you call on Jesus Christ? He's not going to get me steak.

CLAY
Alright. Alright. Steak.

Clay hits his turn signal. Glances in the side mirror. Jerks the steering wheel.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The ESCALADE swerves across two lanes of traffic. Cars HONK.

INT. ESCALADE/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Dmitri grabs the headrest in front of him, steadying himself against shifting gravity.

He laughs at Clayton's show of emotion.

Clay shoots a look in the rearview. Dmitri grins, smug.

CLAY

You do realize I've driven twelve hours today. Right?

DMITRI

And you're really good at it. Like professional quality. Chauffeur even. Maybe this trainer/manager thing don't work out you drive people around.

Dmitri laughs. Clay smiles.

CLAY

Fuck you, kid.

Clayton checks his blindspot. Shifts lanes to an offramp.

EXT. BONES STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

A high end affair. Chiaroscuro lighting offers plenty of shadow for clandestine interludes. A place where business deals are made and mistresses wooed.

Clay hands the rental's keys to a valet. Follows Dmitri into the restaurant.

INT. BONES STEAKHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Clay checks a sign: PROPER ATTIRE REQUIRED. Dmitri scans the bar. Two twenty-something women notice him. Smile. He smiles back. Clay address the HOSTESS.

CLAY

My friend here needs a jacket.

HOSTESS

Do you have a reservation?

CLAY

Jackson.

Clay passes several twenties to the hostess.

HOSTESS

Hmmm. I see a Franklin here. But no Jackson.

Clay makes a face. He discretely counts out one hundred dollars in twenty dollar bills. Hands them palm down to the hostess.

CLAY

Right. Franklin.

The hostess grabs a loaner jacket from the coat room. Hands it to Clay. Clay taps Dmitri on the shoulder. Notices him checking out the women.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hey. Casanova. Put this on.

Dmitri slips the jacket over his hoodie. It's too small. The women laugh at him. Dmitri smiles back.

HOSTESS

Right this way.

The hostess leads them across the restaurant. Dmitri lingers for a moment, mugging for the women. Clay taps him.

CLAY

Come on.

INT. BONES STEAKHOUSE - LATER

Dmitri digs into a rare porterhouse, eyes fixed on the two women at the bar. His eating is a performance of sorts, a display of animal sexuality, the meat a proxy for the women. Clay sips at a steaming cup of coffee, poring over a small newspaper article describing the fight.

CLAY

They're pretty favorable on this kid. Say he's a real rising star. You're gonna have to be top of your game, Dee.
(beat)
You listening?

DMITRI

Top of game. Got it.

Dmitri smiles. Clay follows Dmitri's stare. The two women steal glances.

CLAY

Don't get any ideas.

DMITRI

You said you want me to relax. Limber up.

CLAY

That's not limbering up, kid. Come on. I'll get the check. You need your beauty sleep.

DMITRI

Not tired.

Dmitri gets up, wipes his mouth with his napkin, marches toward the women like a lion approaching his prey.

CLAY

Dmitri.

He realizes it's a lost cause.

CLAY (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Son of a bitch.

Flags his waiter.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Check.

Clay watches as Dmitri steps up to the women. They swivel on their bar stools. Dmitri pulls at the opening of his jacket, emphasizing how small it is. The women laugh.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Shit.

INT. ESCALADE/MOVING - NIGHT

Clay checks the rearview. Intermittent street lights draw shape from shadow. Dmitri sits in the back seat, sandwiched by the two twenty-something women.

OLIVIA (23) dressed in a black dress, hoop earrings, snuggles up against Dmitri's arm. FRANCINE (22) wears a flower print dress. Short black hair. She seems more reserved, uncomfortable. She smiles, but maintains space between her and Dmitri.

OLIVIA

So when is the fight?

DMITRI

Two days.

OLIVIA

Are you nervous?

DMITRI

I don't get nervous.

Olivia pulls a pack of cigarettes from her purse. Removes one.

OLIVIA
You mind if I...

DMITRI
Sure.

Olivia rolls down the window. Clayton notices the cigarettes in the rearview.

CLAY
Hey. It's a rental. Sorry but - no smoking.

Dmitri takes the lighter from Olivia's hand and lights the cigarette. He turns to the rearview, glaring at Clay. Clay frowns, slumping back into his seat.

CLAY (CONT'D)
What are we doing here, Dee?

DMITRI
Just drive.

OLIVIA
How about some drinks? I know this cool place mid-town. Liquid Kitty.

DMITRI
Liquid Kitty. I like that.

CLAY
We need to be getting back, Dmitri.

DMITRI
We have time.

CLAY
You've got your weigh in tomorrow, kid.

DMITRI
(we're doing this)
We have time.
(to Olivia)
Where is this place?

Olivia leans forward, speaking to Clayton.

OLIVIA
You're going to turn right at the light.

Dmitri looks at Francine. He puts his hand on her thigh. Francine smiles at him. Unsure. She moves her leg away.

A KARAOKE rendition of ICE, ICE BABY by Dmitri and Olivia bridges to...

INT. THE PUNCH BOWL SOCIAL CLUB - NIGHT

ON BOWLING BALL. Dmitri throws the ball. It careens down the polished alley, smashing into the pins. Strike.

Olivia screams, jumping up and down. Francine grabs the next bowling ball. Stepping up to the line. She throws the ball, hitting one pin.

She returns to her seat, brushing hair from her eyes. Clayton throws a reserved smile. She smiles back.

KARAOKE SINGING continues over...

INT. THE PUNCH BOWL SOCIAL CLUB - LATER

Francine and Olivia stand on one side of a giant checker board with enormous checker pieces. Dmitri stands opposite, considering his strategy. Clayton watches from a high top table, stirring creamer into a steaming cup of coffee.

Olivia urges Francine to make a move. Francine, squats, aware of her dress. She moves it, covering her thigh. She lifts a large red checker piece, moving to another square. She laughs as it tumbles from her arms onto the board.

KARAOKE SINGING bridges to...

INT. THE PUNCH BOWL SOCIAL CLUB - LATER

Dmitri and Olivia sing *Ice, Ice Baby* inside a karaoke room with a window.

Clay sits outside of the room. Sipping coffee, staring daggers at Dmitri. Francine sits on a couch in the karaoke room. She notices Clay sitting alone. She stands and crosses out of the room.

Clay stands, pulling a chair out for Francine. She waves him off.

FRANCINE

It's okay. I've got it.

Francine sits next to Clay. She yawns.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

(re: coffee)

That looks good.

CLAY

You want one?

Francine nods. Clay periscopes for the waiter. He waves the waiter down, then raises his coffee mug, gesturing for one more. He sits back down. Francine watches Dmitri and Olivia.

FRANCINE

They seem to be really hitting it off.

CLAY

Yeah. But Jesus...he's pushing it. Kid has the fight of his life in two nights and he's out partying.

FRANCINE

What fight is it?

CLAY

Big regional thing. Big deal. I've been training the kid for it for months. This is his opportunity to make name for himself.

FRANCINE

How long have you guys known each other?

CLAY

Four years. Dmitri was a scrappy kid with zero technique when I met him. A piss poor learner. Stubborn. But a little patience on my part. A little effort on his. And here we are.

FRANCINE

Here we are.

CLAY

What about you? You and Olivia know each other for long?

FRANCINE

Room mates. Met in school. Freshman year.

CLAY

What do you do?

Olivia smiles.

FRANCINE

It's not obvious?

CLAY

Should it be?

Olivia puts her hand on top of Clay's.

FRANCINE

You're sweet.

The waiter places Olivia's coffee in front of her. She removes her hand. Clay pulls his off the table, struggling to piece together Olivia's comment.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

One of these days I'll get back to what I really love.

CLAY

What - uh - what's that?

FRANCINE

Art. Drawing mostly. I've always had this dream of being an illustrator for children's books. I've got this character I created - Fuzzball. He's like this little scribble...

She puts her hand around Clay's on his coffee cup. She lifts it, removing the coffee ringed napkin underneath. She opens her purse, removing a pen. Starts drawing on the napkin. She draws a fuzzy ball made of up scribbles with eyes, legs, arms, and an enormous grin full of cartoon teeth.

She spins the napkin around and pushes it toward Clay. He picks it up. Puts on his reading glasses. Studies it.

CLAY

Cute.

FRANCINE

Yeah. In school they never really prep you for the real world. It's all about the art. Nothing about how to get a job doing it. Biggest thing is the time it takes. You know? I mean - I'm the worst at just finishing anything. I'll start and I'll have this idea in my head about what I'm doing. And then I'll like - compare it to something else - to someone else's work - and it loses its magic. You know? Like it's not good enough.

Francine watches as Olivia cozies up with Dmitri in the karaoke room. She runs her hands up and down his chest. He stops singing and kisses her. She grabs his crotch.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

I'll have another idea that's more ...I don't know...sexy. And I'll tell myself to stick to the original thing. But this little voice tells me I'm not good enough. That I've got to do better. So it's onto the next idea...and the next. I've got a lot of ideas. Not a lot to show for them. Sometimes I wish I could just go back in time and do things differently. You know? Like maybe never pick up a pencil...so I wouldn't be tortured by being interested in something that I'll never really be great at, only good enough to keep stringing me along with this unrequited hope.

CLAY

You can't give up. Especially if you love something. How do you know today, tomorrow isn't the day that everything will break wide open for you?

FRANCINE

Yeah - but at the same time, I don't want to live the rest of my life trying to be something I'm not. I mean - when do you just give up? What is it they say? Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results is the definition of insanity? Or something like that...

CLAY

You can't give up. Look at me. There have been so many times that I've failed. That I've been knocked down. But I get back up. I keep fighting.

Clay looks at Dmitri. He and Olivia kiss, falling to the couch in the karaoke room.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I used to be a boxer. Really good. Better than the kid. I had a real shot. But things happened. And I can't fight anymore. One more hit to the head and ... WAP. I'm dead. But I can't walk away from the sport. I love it too much.

Clay studies his knuckles.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I know my place. I'm the guy behind
the guy. I'm the guy in his
corner...no matter what. I'm the guy
I wish I would've had. The guy who
believes in someone and drives them
to reach their potential.

Clay pushes the napkin sketch back toward Francine.

CLAY (CONT'D)

So don't give up.

Francine smiles. She pushes the drawing back toward Clay.

FRANCINE

You keep it. Maybe it'll be worth
something someday.

Clay smiles. He picks up the napkin and tucks it into his
shirt pocket.

Dmitri and Olivia step up to the table, Olivia hanging off of
Dmitri.

DMITRI

We're ready to go.

CLAY

Well. Finally.

Clay shoots a smile at Francine. She smiles back. He stands.

OLIVIA

We're just gonna go freshen up.

Dmitri watches the women walk away. Olivia throws a seductive
look over her shoulder at Dmitri.

DMITRI

How much money do you have?

CLAY

Couple hundred bucks. Why?

DMITRI

Need seven.

CLAY

For what?

Dmitri shoots an irritated look.

DMITRI

You think she talks to you because she likes you?

CLAY

What the fuck, Dmitri? They're pros?

DMITRI

Seven.

CLAY

No.

DMITRI

What do you mean, no?

CLAY

You have a fight in two days. You're fucking living like a gangster here. You need to be getting rest. Getting your head straight.

Dmitri pokes Clay in the chest.

DMITRI

You're shit trainer, Clayton. Shit manager. If you're not careful I'll drop you.

CLAY

You wouldn't.

DMITRI

I would. What can you do for me now? Huh? You've taken me as far as you can.

CLAY

I have fucking sacrificed everything for you, you ungrateful piece of shit.

Dmitri stares. He starts laughing.

DMITRI

Ha Ha. I got you. I really got you.

CLAY

That's not funny.

DMITRI

Oh come on. You're too serious. Relax yourself. Celebrate.

Clay nods.

CLAY

Yeah. Maybe.

DMITRI

Yeah. Definitely.

Olivia and Francine approach from the bathroom. Dmitri leans closer, whispering.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Now. We find an ATM. Seven hundred.

Clay looks uncomfortable.

EXT. CITY STREET/ATM - NIGHT

Clay stands beside the ATM. He punches in his PIN. Throws a look over his shoulder.

ON ESCALADE. Music blasts from inside. Dmitri, Olivia, and Francine sing along, bouncing up and down.

Clay checks his savings balance. \$4598. He punches in \$700. The cash dispenses. He counts and pockets it. Already regretting the decision.

He turns and hurries back toward the ESCALADE.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Dmitri crosses the lobby, arms around the women. Francine throws a look over her shoulder at Clay who...

Struggles navigating the revolving door with the luggage. He gets caught, a piece of luggage stuck in the door. He slams his face into the glass. He clenches his teeth in a rage. Tugs at the luggage, freeing it, then spills into the lobby.

He crosses to the desk. Dmitri and the girls sit in the lobby, watching. Olivia and Dmitri laugh at Clay. Francine looks serious.

Clayton rings the bell. The DESK ATTENDANT crosses from the back.

CLAY

Reservation for Bailey. Clayton
Bailey. Two rooms.

Clay looks across the lobby. Francine averts her eyes.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

DING. The doors open. Dmitri and Olivia step out. Clay jerks at the luggage. Francine stops. Turns and helps him.

FRANCINE
Here. Let me help.

CLAY
It's okay. I've got...

Francine takes a roll aboard.

FRANCINE
I've got it.

Dmitri descends the hallway, laughing loudly. He's drunk.

CLAY
(sotto)
Dmitri. Keep it down. Hey.

DMITRI
What room? What room Clayton?

CLAY
602.

Dmitri looks up and down in an exaggerated motion, finally spotting the room.

DMITRI
AH!

He points and beelines for the door. Clay fishes the door keys from his pocket. He hands them to Dmitri. He scans and opens the door. Olivia steps in. Dmitri holds the door open for Francine. She throws a sheepish look at Clayton. Enters. Dmitri stops Clay from entering.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
I'll take them.

CLAY
Oh. Now you're ready to help.

DMITRI
You sound like an old grandmother. A babushka. Bubby I'll call you.

Dmitri takes the roll aboard luggage. Clay holds the door open. Removes the gym bag from around his neck. Hands it to Dmitri. Dmitri throws it into the room. Steps back into the hallway, closing the door to a crack.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Where's the money?

Clayton makes a face. Fishes the seven hundred dollars from his pocket. He holds it in the air.

CLAY

Don't do anything stupid.

He slaps the cash into Dmitri's hand. Dmitri laughs. He slips back into the room. Clayton catches a glimpse of Francine. She sits on a chair, uncomfortably watching as the door shuts.

INT. CLAY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS: Clay unpacks his suitcase, carefully placing his clothes into the dresser. Clay hangs up his suit on hangers. Dusts off some lint. Clay pulls back his bed spread.

Now in boxers, a sleeveless teeshirt, black socks. He slips into bed. He pulls the covers up over him and puts his hands behind his head. He stares at the ceiling for a long moment.

CLAY

...Poor kid.

He turns off the bedside lamp. A beat. Then...

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Clay lies still. KNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCK. Incessant beating on the door.

CLAY (CONT'D)

God damn.

Clay flips the light back on. He crosses to the door. Checks the peep hole.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Who is it?

THROUGH PEEP HOLE: Dmitri stands with Francine and Olivia.

DMITRI

Open up, Clayton.

Clay opens the door.

CLAY

What? What is going on?

Dmitri pushes past Clay into the room. He pulls Olivia along behind him. Francine stands in the hall in a robe.

Dmitri sits onto the bed. Bounces.

DMITRI
Much better.

CLAY
What?

DMITRI
My bed is too squeaky. We'll take
your room instead.

CLAY
Are you fucking kidding me?

Dmitri gets up. He gathers Clay's luggage. Throws his suit into the open bag. Shoves it onto the dresser.

Clay steps back into the room. Francine follows. Clay quickly fills his luggage with clothes from the dresser. He pulls on a pair of shorts. Swipes his diddy bag into the luggage. And picks up a key.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Where is your key?

FRANCINE
Here.

Francine hands the key to Clay. Clay takes it. He locks eyes with Francine for a moment.

DMITRI
Go.

Clay glares at Dmitri.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
GO!

Olivia laughs. Dmitri starts to laugh. He kisses Olivia.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
(muffled)
Go.

Clay drags his suitcase out of the room.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Clay sits in the lobby. He nurses a glass of scotch. He looks miserable. Now dressed in a worn teeshirt, athletic shorts.

DING.

Francine crosses from the elevator, stepping into the women's restroom. She's barefoot. Carries her heels in her hand.

Her mascara has run down her face. As if she has been crying. Her hair is tousled. Dress shifted around her waist.

Clay goes to stand, then slumps back to a seat. He stares regretfully into his coffee cup.

The restroom door swings open. Francine steps out. Her face is washed clean of any makeup. She looks younger somehow. She crosses the lobby then stops in her tracks at the sight of Clay. She adjusts her hair. Approaches him.

FRANCINE

Do you mind if I...?

Clay nods to the seat. Francine slumps to a seat, throws her purse onto the table.

CLAY

You okay?

FRANCINE

Things got a little too intense for me in there.

She attempts to throw a smile.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

What's that?

CLAY

Scotch. Want some?

FRANCINE

Maybe just a sip of yours?

Clay pushes it across the table. Francine throws back a big gulp. She makes a face at the burn.

CLAY

Did he hurt you?

Francine shakes her head no.

FRANCINE

I've been through worse.

A beat.

CLAY

Why do you do this?

FRANCINE

Don't judge.

CLAY

I'm not. I mean - there has to be something else.

FRANCINE

I like sex. I like money. Okay? So don't. Don't judge.

Clay fishes the cash out of his pocket. He slides it across the table toward her. She quickly snatches it up, hiding it under the table.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CLAY

I want you to have that.

FRANCINE

You can't just throw a stack of bills at me in the lobby of a nice hotel, man. That's how people get arrested.

CLAY

I don't want you to have to do this.

FRANCINE

Look. I don't need to be saved. Okay? I'm not looking for someone to save me. I've made my choices. I'm doing what I need to do. Okay?

Clay stares at her, sad.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

Stop looking at me like that.

Clay keeps staring.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

You know. Fuck you, man. You think you're doing such a great job? What about you? Fucking selling yourself out for a complete asshole.

CLAY

He's alright.

FRANCINE

Ha. You have no fucking clue, do you? You put your faith in the wrong douchebag.

Francine stands. Grabs her purse, stuffing the money inside.

CLAY

What are you talking about?

Francine marches toward the exit. Clay quickly stands, giving chase.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hey. Francine. Francine!

Francine hurries out the revolving door. She fishes a cigarette out of her purse. Clay hurries out beside her. Takes her by the arm.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What are you talking about?

FRANCINE

He's signing with someone else, Clayton. As his manager. He was bragging about it all night when you weren't around. Some big name with ties to a promoter.

Clay looks like he's taken another blow the the gut. He staggers back.

CLAY

You're lying.

FRANCINE

Look at me. Why would I lie to you?
I don't even know you.

Francine takes a drag off her cigarette. She steps to the curb, waving a cab.

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

You think you've taken some high road that will pay off? Give me a break. All the effort in the world doesn't make something happen, Clayton. You can't just will it real. And you think I somehow sold out. Look at you. You're the sellout.

Francine hops into the cab. She flicks her cigarette away. It lands at Clay's feet. Sadness washes over him. She slams the taxi door, throws a fleeting look. The cab speeds off, leaving Clay standing alone.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

CRASH DOLLY toward the elevator. Clay steps into frame, leading the camera. His fists clenched. He is filled with rage. He gets on the elevator. Punches the button.

The doors don't respond. He slams the button over and over with his knuckles. The door closes.

INT. HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

DING. The door opens. But too slow for Clay. He pushes the doors open. Storms down the hallway. He stops at 602. BANGS on the door.

CLAY
Dmitri! Dmitri open up!

BANG BANG BANG.

CLAY (CONT'D)
Dmitri!

Another guests steps into the hallway. Glares at Clay. Clay digs into his pocket. Removes the room key. He swipes it. Throws open the door. The other guest watches from the hallway.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dmitri lies in bed, nude. Olivia lies next to him, tangled in sheet. Clay barges in. Throws on the lights. Dmitri blinks awake.

DMITRI
What the fuck?

CLAY
Get up!

DMITRI
What are you doing?

Clay slaps at Dmitri's foot.

CLAY
Get the fuck up.

DMITRI
Have you lost your mind?

Olivia blinks awake. Pulls a pillow up to her chest, covering her naked breasts. She blinks away sleep.

OLIVIA
What's going on?

Dmitri gets out of bed.

DMITRI
What are you fucking doing? Breaking into my room?

CLAY
 MY fucking room. MY fucking room
 that YOU stole, you asshole!

Clay pokes Dmitri in the chest. Dmitri straightens, towering over Clay. He steps toward Clay. Threatening.

DMITRI
 You better leave, Clayton.

Clay steps toward him slamming him on the chest with his open palm.

CLAY
 You signed with someone else?

Dmitri doesn't say anything.

CLAY (CONT'D)
 Did you sign with someone else?

DMITRI
 Who told you this?

CLAY
 Francine.

Dmitri rolls his eyes.

DMITRI
 (to Olivia)
 Your fucking friend.

Clay steps in-between Dmitri and Olivia.

CLAY
 Don't you look at her. Look at me.

Dmitri puts on a pair of boxer briefs.

DMITRI
 You did what you could, Clayton. But I've grown past you. You're small time. You're a small locker room corner man. That's it. That's all you're ever going to be.

Dmitri pushes Clay. He stumbles backward to the floor.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
 Now: Get the fuck out of my room!

Clay gets to his feet. He stands. Glaring at Dmitri. Fists clench. White knuckle. Clay's face shakes with anger. Dmitri steps toward him, threatening.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

I said get...

Clay throws a punch. CRACK. Dmitri spins, crashing to the dresser. He falls to the floor, pulling the ice bucket and glasses over with him. The glass shatters on the floor. Olivia GASPS. She cranes her neck to see Dmitri sprawled out on the floor. Unconscious.

Clay's chest heaves. He glares down at Dmitri.

OLIVIA

Dee?

She slumps back. Looks up at Clay. Surprised. She quickly throws on her dress. Starts toward the door. She cross back into the room. Pauses beside Clay. She carefully reaches down to the floor. Picks up her seven hundred dollars.

She slips out of the room.

EXT. HOTEL - DAWN

Pre-dawn blues paint a canvas of brightening sky. Olivia stands curbside flagging down an Uber. Clay steps out beside her. She gets into the Uber and drives off. Clay checks his knuckles.

ON KNUCKLES. Swollen. Angry. Red.

Clay nurses them. Slumping to a seat on the curb. His PHONE RINGS. Clay checks the caller ID. He flips it open. He seems dazed. Punch drunk.

CLAY

Good morning, Phillis.

PHILLIS (O.S.)

Hello, Clay.

Silence.

PHILLIS (CONT'D)

You there?

CLAY

Yes.

PHILLIS

Are you okay?

CLAY

Yes.

PHILLIS

I know how important all of this is to you. I don't - I don't understand it. I don't. But I don't want to die never having traveled, Clayton. I want us to retire. To be together. To see things. Together.

CLAY

Yes.

PHILLIS

What's happened?

CLAY

Uh...kid got knocked out.

Silence.

PHILLIS

Knocked out?

CLAY

One hit. Knocked out.

PHILLIS

Jesus Christ, Clayton. Jesus Christ.

(beat)

I wish I could say I'm sorry. But I'm not. All that money. Jesus Christ. The money. If this is how you want to spend your retirement, then fine. But not mine. No. Count me out. I'm done.

Silence.

PHILLIS (CONT'D)

Clayton.

CLAY

What do you mean?

PHILLIS

You know what I mean.

Clay considers this.

CLAY

Okay.

Silence.

PHILLIS

What do you mean okay?

CLAY

I mean...okay, Phillis. Okay.

Clay hangs up his phone. The breeze pushes an errant plastic bag past, adding to his portrait of despair. Clay's phone rings. He silences it.

Clay pulls himself to his feet with a MOAN. The phone rings again. He pauses as he passes a trash can. Takes a step back. Tosses the phone in the trash and continues toward the hotel.

INT. BONES STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

Francine sits alone at the bar. She sips a drink, scanning the patrons for a John. She throws a smile at a handsome man near the entrance. Then her eyes refocus on...

CLAY. He walks toward Francine. He's dressed in his grey suit. Wrinkled. She frowns, spinning back toward the bar.

CLAY

You mind if I...?

FRANCINE

It's your funeral.

Francine sips at her drink. The BARTENDER steps up.

BARTENDER

Get you anything?

Clay waves him off. He pulls the napkin art Francine drew from his shirt pocket. Places it on the counter in front of her.

CLAY

I did a lot of thinking. And you're right. I did sell out. But I'm not giving up. As crazy as that might seem. That would be a bigger sell out.

Clay stops the bartender.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Got a pen?

The BARTENDER retrieves a pen. Hands it to Clay.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Look. I just wanted to get your signature on this. For when it's worth something.

Clay offers the pen to Francine. She looks at him sideways.

FRANCINE

If I do will you leave me alone?

CLAY

Sure.

Francine signs the napkin. Clay takes it. Puts on his reading glasses, admiring it a second. Then removes his glasses and puts them and the napkin in his shirt pocket. He stands up. Leans close.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Don't give up. Kid. You've still got
a life full of chances. Your worth
it.

Clay turns and walks off. Francine turns back to her drink. She sips at it, contemplating the slice of orange floating on the bed of ice. Contemplating it...and so much more.

FADE OUT:

THE END