

BISCAYNE BLVD.

"Pilot"

Written by

Jonathan Vilardi

OVER BLACK:

NICK (V.O.)  
I grew up in the cold... This sure  
as hell isn't the cold.

EXT. BEACH - WELL PAST MIDNIGHT

We sit in the surf, the sound of RUSHING WATER filling our ears - the MUDDLED GROWL OF SUB BASS somewhere in the distance.

NICK (V.O.)  
I grew up in the suburbs of  
Chicago. Single dad - Mom walked  
out when we were little. Ironic  
right? I guess. That word fucks me  
up just like everyone else.

We begin to RISE UP out of the water, revealing some sort of bright, blurry mass in the distance, that begins to come into focus as the water falls from the lens. We move toward it...

NICK (V.O.)  
For as long as I can remember, I  
was in love with color. The winters  
up North - black skin, white  
snow... fascinating shit. My dad  
got me a camera, and I started  
capturing it. Started messing  
around with our shitty old piano,  
and realized I could capture things  
even better that way. Songs and  
pictures are the kind of the same,  
I think. But only pictures bring in  
any money, for now, anyway.

EXT. MANSION POOL - CONTINUOUS

In SLOW MOTION, a beautiful, extravagant shit-show of a party is underway. A web of string lights hang above the commotion, casting their glow onto the exquisite, slippery marble floor beneath. The MUSIC is loud, but still muffled, as if the entire party is taking place underwater.

NICK (V.O.)  
It was really the stillness that  
got me. In the winters, I mean. The  
exact opposite of this sweaty,  
crazy jungle we came to after Dad  
died.

Hundreds of incredibly drunk and high COLLEGE KIDS are lost in the enchantment of their surroundings, going crazy over the performance taking place on the stage they're all facing.

NICK (V.O.)

Maybe it wouldn't feel that way anymore if I went back. But, then again, maybe it would.

ON STAGE, NICK AVERY and his brother ANDRE are clutching their MICROPHONES like they're magic wands, delivering the performance of their lives.

Nick, 21, is dressed up in a tux: sharp but imperfect. Behind his glasses is a look of uncertain fear over the confidence he's somehow displaying in front of all these people.

Andre, 25, is the opposite of understated. His all-white suit contrasts with the gold adorning his neck, wrists, and fingers. Even his mid-length dreads are tinged blonde. He dances wildly and without a second thought - fearless, feeding off the crowd's energy like it's nutrition.

NICK

Maybe I'll find out.

CLOSE on Nick's dark brown eyes, suddenly bursting into flames with some new flare of passion.

CLOSER on conflicted, light green eyes belonging to AURELIA, 21, with caramel skin graffitied by an off-white birth mark under the eye. If color were a person, it might be her.

We PULL OUT and see DANTE, a dark muscular-type decked out in clothes that you might expect to find on R. Kelly, approaching Aurelia like she's his. She looks at him, then back at Nick.

The fire in Nick's eyes is red hot. Aurelia turns toward the guy, who puts his hands on her hips.

White hot - the music begins to get clearer. Nick sings into the microphone with every last drop of energy in his body.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. ANDRE'S CAR - THE STREETS OF SOUTH BEACH - DAY

An iridescent orange MCLAREN tears down Collins Avenue, top down, its stereo blaring the now crystal clear MUSIC we were hearing. In the driver's seat is Andre, his eyes spending much more time on Nick and the radio than on the road.

ANDRE

Dude, the kick drum on this song is so tight, and his flow is so... tight! I want us to do something like this. *Just* like this. But at the same time like completely our own, ya know? Ah, today is literally beautiful with that little breeze. Like so beautiful, man!

Nick cracks a smile, looking around at his surroundings with a hint of disdain, while bobbing his head to the song.

His relatively average energy level pales in comparison to the mania Andre calls a personality.

NICK

Yeah, it's nice out, Dre. Still kinda hot, thoug--

ANDRE

Whaaat, it's perfect! Dude have you every really thought about, like *really* thought about how lucky we are to live right here in Miami now? Like dude, just picture the kids in Africa who wish they could have gorgeous sunshine like this.

NICK

I think they-- (get plenty).

The two reach a red light. A HOBO, old enough to be a living example that black does, indeed, crack, weaves between the cars, extending a CUP.

Nick reaches down, producing a DSLR CAMERA from his backpack. As subtly as he can, he SNAPS a shot of the man, who quickly hobbles over, JINGLING his cup of change.

HOBO

Fuck you doing man?! This pretty face ain't for free!

NICK

Sorry, sorry. I'm just doing this project for school and-  
(reaches for wallet)  
Look, I got you, don't sweat.

ANDRE

Nick, what are you doing, dude? You don't owe him shit.

HOBO  
I don't remember asking the  
motherfucking peanut gallery.

NICK  
Andre, chill, it's fine.

Andre speeds off, running the light, and causing a few near-accidents in the process.

NICK (CONT'D)  
What the fuck was *that*?

ANDRE  
Bro, haven't you ever listened to  
Chris Rock. There's black people,  
and there's--

NICK  
Why are you being an asshole?

ANDRE  
You shouldn't be wasting money like  
that!

NICK  
I got my own money to spend, not my  
girl's like you do, and if I wanna--  
(give it away).

Andre grabs Nick's cheap-in-comparison clothes and laughs teasingly.

ANDRE  
Your own money. It shows.

EXT. THE STREETS OF SOUTH BEACH - MUSIC VIDEO SHOOT - DAY

Slowed to the pace of a big cat stalking its prey, the McLaren crawls down a relatively deserted, weekday Ocean Drive. Andre sloppily parallel parks, turning down the radio.

He then leans across Nick, and opens the glove compartment, pulling out a pair of BINOCULARS.

NICK  
You're fuckin' with me.

ANDRE  
Nick. Dude. Do you really think  
guys like Jay-Z, like Kanye, never  
went a little CIA on the  
competition?

NICK

I don't think Jay-Z owns  
binoculars, nigga.

ANDRE

You're missing the point... Here,  
grab that notebook, I'm gonna tell  
you what to write down. Take  
pictures too!

Nick reaches in the glove compartment and pulls out a spiral bound NOTEBOOK, dramatically marked "**CONFIDENTIAL**" in bright red.

ANDRE'S POV: About 100 feet away - BREEZY, a husky Latino whose selective muteness might be mistaken as stoicism, and TWON, a freakishly tall and excessively pale whiteboy whose inability to shut up might be mistaken as confidence, stand on either side of a Dante, doing their best to look "hard" for the CAMERA in front of them - operated by an amateurish young DIRECTOR.

Off to the side is a small gaggle of GIRLS, all wearing bikinis best described as minimalistic, save for one.

EXT. LUMMUS PARK - MUSIC VIDEO SHOOT - CONTINUOUS

DIRECTOR'S POV: Dante is heatedly singing in our face in synch with a beat being played off of someone's phone, while making sure his NECKLACE receives ample visibility.

His voice is suprisingly shiny and amazing, complimenting his gangsta-meets-pretty-boy appeal.

DANTE

(singing)

Yeah girl, you know I got that  
medicine/That prescription dick to  
get your dose of melanin.

BREEZY

Damn, that was hot Dante.

TWON

Ooh, straight flames, Dante! You're  
that ni- dude, you're that dude!

INTERCUT BETWEEN NICK/ANDRE AND DANTE/CREW

ANDRE

Damn, these boys are stuntin' out  
here.

(MORE)

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Write down that they got bling...  
and they got females. Hold up, is  
that Aurelia?

Nick immediately drops down in his seat to hide.

NICK

Are you forreal? We shouldn't be  
here, dude, come on.

ANDRE

Relax bro, we're incognito.

The sun comes out from behind a cloud, it's rays glinting off  
of the McLaren's bright orange finish and the lenses of  
Andre's binoculars.

Dante and his crew continue to reset for a new take. Aurelia  
is looking in the direction of the car, discerningly, until-

DANTE

A'ight let's just go for the  
chorus. Get the bitches in here.

The girls walk over as if he'd just asked nicely, save for  
Aurelia - the clothed one of the group - who scoffs.

DANTE (CONT'D)

I meant the beautiful, strong-  
willed ladies, baby! C'mon.

Dante pulls her in and kisses her.

Andre lets out a melodramatically extended GASP.

ANDRE

Yoo... Dude... I think, maybe,  
possibly, there's a small chance  
that she's potentially with Dante  
now.

NICK

What? What do you mean?

ANDRE

She just kissed him, I mean maybe  
it's part of the video...

Nick feverishly pulls his camera up to his face, zooming in  
to see for himself.

DIRECTOR

Alright, action.

With two girls apiece draped on Breezy and Twon, and Aurelia hanging off Dante, the music kicks back in.

Suddenly, Dante lifts up the front of his shirt, flashing the HANDGUN tucked in his waistband to the camera.

Nick freezes up, his hand tensing and squeezing the shutter button with a CLICK.

AURELIA

Dante, what the fuck?!

DANTE

Yo, you're ruining the take! It's part of the look, baby! Gangsta meets pretty boy!

Aurelia pushes Dante, furious.

AURELIA

Why would you bring that around me?  
Why do you even have that?

Nick whips the car door open.

NICK

HEY!

ANDRE

Nick!

Just as everyone turns to look at him, the WAIL OF A POLICE SIREN pierces the air, sending Dante & Co. scattering - save for Aurelia, who momentarily locks eyes with Nick before tearfully running off.

A MIAMI BEACH CRUISER pulls up behind the McLaren. The COP, a walking buzzcut, steps out, oblivious to the fleeing crew.

Before he makes it up to the car, Andre throws a BAGGIE OF WEED onto Nick's lap, who panickedly throws it in his mouth.

COP

You're parked illegally, you gotta move.

ANDRE

Yooo I'm so sorry officer, we will, thanks.

NICK

(garbled)  
Thanks, officer.

COP  
 (posturing up, placing a  
 hand on his holster)  
 What's his deal?

ANDRE  
 Him? Oh, he's chilling! Really  
 loves his gum. You have a good one,  
 dude- er, officer.

The two slip away under the skeptical gaze of the cop.

INT/EXT. ANDRE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Nick fishes the bags out of his mouth, and looks at Andre in disbelief. Andre seems unfazed.

ANDRE  
 Oh yeah, thanks man, I knew you'd  
 do a better job keeping that low-  
 key than me. I'm the worst at that  
 stuff!

He grabs a bottle of HAND SANITIZER from the console and hands it to Nick.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
 If you wouldn't mind, real quick.

EXT. BISCAYNE APARTMENTS - DAY

Stretching high above street-level, wedged between Biscayne Blvd. and the Bay, stands a sleek highrise consisting of only two colors: white and the transparency of clean glass. It scrapes the now cloudy sky.

The McLaren approaches from a distance, making a sharp turn onto a corner which hides,

EXT. BISCAYNE APARTMENTS - PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Andre maneuvers the car up to the pristine, clandestine gate guarding the European cars inside. He leans dramatically out of the car, fiddling with the SECURITY PANEL.

Meanwhile Nick cycles through photos on his camera.

ANDRE  
 Dude, what's your code again?  
 Something with a 3? Is there any  
 decimal points?

A photo of Aurelia and Nick comes up, Nick blinks frustratedly, switching hastily to the next picture.

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
Broooooooooooooooooooooo.

NICK  
What?

ANDRE  
The code.

NICK  
Oh-One-Oh-Eight. The date, tomorrow. All that weed is fucking with your memory, dog.

ANDRE  
There's no such thing, I'm just bad with dates!  
(leaning back out)  
Oh-One-Oh-What?

Nick sighs.

INT. BISCAYNE APARTMENTS - PARKING GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Nick gets out of the parked car, slinging his CAMERA BAG over shoulder.

NICK  
You headin' back to your girl's castle-- I mean house?

ANDRE  
Nah, I'll be up in a sec.

With the WEED that was in the baggie from Nick's mouth, he starts packing a BOWL in his lap, before cranking the volume again, and taking a hit. Talking through the smoke,

ANDRE (CONT'D)  
(motioning around)  
This is kinda my vibe zone. Just gonna try to write to this beat a little for our recording sesh later.

NICK  
A'ight... a'ight, word.

INT. BISCAYNE HIGHRISE APARTMENTS - LOBBY - DAY

Nick enters through the side door leading from the garage, finding himself instantly in a Miami wonderland. Modern, elegant, and understated, the lobby epitomizes the city with the same white and gold tones as the suit we met Andre in.

A group of GIRLS walks in through the main entrance. One or two of them might be from the video shoot, but their 'look' is so quintessential, you really can't tell.

NICOLE

Hi, Nick...

Nick smiles up sheepishly at NICOLE, the only one in the group who's prettiness looks like it would survive a make-up wipe.

NICK

What's up, Nicole?

NICOLE

Weeelll, there's this mansion party tomorrow night, and you should *definitely*-- (come).

NICK

Damn, that's sounds, uh, crazy. Yo, I mean I'd love to, but I...

NICOLE

You *have* to come, Nick!

ANOTHER GIRL

Nick, you *have* to.

NICK

That's not really my vibe.

NICOLE

Well, if you decide to stop being lame, let me know.

Time slows for a brief second, Nicole looking into Nick's eyes like a succubus, Nick looking back like a man whose heart and reproductive organs are in disagreement.

The girls make their way toward the elevators, above which hangs one gilded word: "BISCAYNE".

After a second, he follows, but just as he's about to step on, WESLEY, a security guard in his late 30's who proudly reeks of incompetence, steps in front of him, placing a halting hand on his chest.

WESLEY

Hold up, Nick.

NICK

Damn, you're making me feel like I'm at the club, Wesley.

(motioning to the closing doors)

Those are my girls right there.

WESLEY

Naw, man, it's not that. I'm in the middle of a little... investigation right now.

NICK

That sounds dangerously like you doing your job, Wes.

WESLEY

Tell me about it. Listen, a couple cars been getting broken into in the garage. What you know about that?

NICK

(leaning in, concerned)

Sounds like Yakuza, bruh.

Wesley's eyes light up.

WESLEY

You think Yakuza behind this?! That makes sense, I-- Nick are you messin' with me again?

NICK

I don't know anything about the cars, Wesley.

WESLEY

Man, this is serious! Forreal, if you hear anything, see anything, lemme know.

Wesley takes a quick look around, then pulls a BAG OF WEED out of his pocket.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

By the way, you tryin' to cop? Straight from Cali, this some OG Lifewrecker Kush. It'll make you cry, straight-up.

NICK

It's straight Wes, I'm just tryna  
go upstairs.

Nick walks past Wesley, and presses the sleek, chrome  
elevator button. The bright red numbers above begin counting  
down from 20...

DANTE (O.S.)

...and I was like fuck a deal! Bro,  
it's 2017, I'm tryna be on that  
self made shit.

TWON (O.S.)

Damn, Dante, you got me boutta call  
the Grammy's right now just so they  
can get ready for your mixtape.

Nick doesn't have to turn around to sigh at the knowledge  
that Dante, Twon, and Breezy have just walked in.

Twon puts his PHONE up to his ear.

DANTE

What? Nigga, the Grammy's? Fuck  
that fascist bullshit.

TWON

Man, you right!  
(into the phone)  
Fuck you Grammy's, Dante doesn't  
need your fast-ish bullshit!

DING. The elevator doors part, revealing a lustrous, mirrored  
interior. Nick tries to slip in unnoticed, but,

DANTE

Aye! Little Nicky! Hold that door  
bruh bruh, just a minute.

Tongue pushed into his bottom lip, Nick complies.

Dante takes his time going up to Wesley and dapping him up.  
They quickly fall into hushed tones, whispering for a few  
seconds, before each reaching into their pockets and 'shaking  
hands' once more.

WESLEY

(laughing)  
And don't let me catch ya'll  
smoking in the hallways again!

DANTE

Yo, no promises Wes, no promises.

Dante signals Twon and Breezy to follow him, and the three join Nick in the elevator. The "20" button is already lit, as the doors close and the mirrored box begins to rise.

DANTE (CONT'D)

So, Nicky, I been hearin' what you and your brother been cooking, workin' with that door closed and shit. You know, if you ever want me to hop on a track and kick that shit up a notch or twenty, all you gotta do is ask.

NICK

Forsure.

DANTE

I'm serious nigga, check it - Breezy, pull up "Sizzurp Dreams" on your phone right quick.

Breezy silently produces his IPHONE, with Dante's MUSIC spilling from the speakers shortly thereafter. Dante snatches the phone, and puts it in Nick's face.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Eight thousand plays, dog. That's the kinda power I got, Nicky.

Nick smiles meekly.

NICK

Dante, you don't even sip lean, man. You're an art major.

DANTE/TWON/BREEZY

**What???**

TWON

You think Dante don't sip fuckin' lean?! Dante the *Codeine King*, dog.

NICK

Chill, Anthony.

TWON

It's Twon, bitch! You wanna talk about "don't sip lean"...

Twon reaches into his jacket, and proudly pulls out a comically large 2L BOTTLE OF SPRITE, tinged purplish pink.

Nick looks at the bottle with an eyeroll. The number on the wall creeps closer to "20".

NICK

That shit's barely even purple, ni-

Dante rams Nick against the mirrored wall behind him, holding him by his collar. Nick's eyes cover the short distance between his and Dante's face with only a slight tinge of fear.

DANTE

You and your motherfucking mouth, Nick. You gotta shut the fuck up every now and then, or we *really* not gonna get along. I got a reputation to keep up, and I don't need your bitch ass questioning that, just because I'm all up in your hoe now.

Nick's eyes are white hot in an instant. He slams Dante against the opposing wall, igniting a struggle.

BREEZY

Hey get off him, bitch!

DANTE

(scared, through grunts)  
Yo, help!

Twon and Breezy use a fair amount of effort trying to peel Nick off of Dante, until the elevator doors open with a DING.

GASPS from the tribe of lobby-girls distracts Nick enough for Dante to push him off, and onto his ass.

NICOLE

Guys! Cut it out! What would MLK say about this?!

Dante stands up and shakes it off with a condescending stare directed down at Nick, before resummoning his confidence as effortlessly as a skilled magician summons his rabbit.

He snaps in Twon's direction, who pulls a BLUNT out of his pocket and hands it over, as Dante lights it right there in the hallway.

DANTE

Breezy, tell this hoe to shut up.

BREEZY

(mumbling)  
Shut up.

DANTE  
 (to Nick, hushed)  
 Lucky I dropped the heater off  
 before I came. Bitch nigga.

Dante & Co. push through, followed by an extra shy Nick.

Nicole suddenly grabs Nick intimately, stopping him in front of Dante's door as it's being unlocked.

NICOLE  
 We forgot to pick up blunt wraps,  
 do you want to come with?

She slips her hand in his back pocket, suggestively.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
 I feel like we don't hang out  
 enough.

The door to Dante's apartment opens, revealing Aurelia sitting on the couch. Nick looks over, and the two make eye contact through the doorway.

Nick looks back at Nicole, somewhere between conflicted and committed. He cracks a shy smirk.

NICK  
 Next time.

Pulling out a KEY, he walks up to the next door over.

EXT. JOSH AND NICK'S APARTMENT - THE BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Perched precariously in full lotus pose on the railing separating Biscayne Highrise Apartments from its namesake bay is JOSH LEWIS, 21.

KHAKI TRENCH COAT blowing in the frigid, damp breeze of an impending cold front, Josh stares out at the exquisite view in front of him from under his BLACK 5-PANEL HAT.

In his dark, ashy hand is a WIND CHIME - spitting out a medley of crystal clear notes into the breeze.

NICK (O.S.)  
 Yo, Josh, you around?

INT. JOSH AND NICK'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Josh walks back inside through the sliding glass door, sliding his wind chime into his coat pocket. Slowly and deliberately, with a voice that's booming and endearing,

JOSH

Cold weather's sneaking in, bro. I was getting some weird vibes from the chime today, like some shit's about to go dow--

NICK

What's the deal with that Nicole girl?

Nick throws his wallet and keys down, and finds his place on the couch behind a MIDI CONTROLLER, next to the glass doors.

JOSH

She just really likes black guys.

NICK

She ever come onto you?

JOSH

No, she said she didn't fuck with my coat at some party once. Pretty unforgivable.

His eyes narrow in sincerity.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Go for it though, that ass is craaaazy. And she looks like that actress.

NICK

Which one?

JOSH

The white one. And, yo it might help get your mind-state further past Aureli--

Nick's hands fall onto the black and white keys in front of him, cutting Josh off with a Minor 7th chord. He half-clumsily taps out a somber-but-jazzy tune, seemingly translating it from his own thoughts.

He finishes - looking to Josh, before looking at his feet in vulnerable shyness.

NICK  
You think you could do something  
with that?

JOSH  
Uhmmm. Lemme see, move.

Nick scoots over, as Josh hops onto the couch. Effortlessly, magically, he fleshes out Nick's sketch into something full-bodied and beautiful.

The music starts to fill the air, as does the gust of cold air blowing in through the still open balcony door. Goosebumps crop up all across Nick's arms, and on the back of his neck.

He closes his eyes, sways his head, as words and melody begin quietly surfacing on his lips. He reaches for a PEN and PAD on the table next to him, when,

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Yo, so I gotta talk to you.

NICK  
What? Man, I was grooving on that.

JOSH  
Damn, my bad - I'll try not to  
forget it.

Josh slides open the drawer on the end table next to him, pulls out a GRINDER, a NUG, and a CIGARILLO, and meticulously gets to work.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
Hol' up, alright, so... You know I  
think it's dope living with you.  
Good vibes, good energies, good  
chakras, all that. And, I know how  
it is with you running off  
scholarship, so lettin' you crash  
for free is totally chill,  
especially cause you like still  
being close to Au--.

NICK  
Josh, are you kicking me out? Cause-

JOSH  
Nooo, dude. You're family bro,  
kicking you out would be like- it'd  
make me like... Bad.

NICK  
So, what's wrong?

JOSH  
My folks disappeared again. I think they're hitting Bangladesh this time. Or Shangri La. Whichever is the real one. Anyway, whenever they travel they drop off completely, so I'm on my own 'til they come back. You think you can pick up half of the rent for a little? Sorry, man.

NICK  
Yeah. No, yeah, dude. Don't be sorry. Totally straight. How much, uh, is it, again?

JOSH  
Two.

NICK  
Oh, word, so just a grand each?

Josh chokes on the first hit off his BLUNT.

JOSH  
Nah.  
(giggles)  
Look out the window, bro. If the first rule of real estate is "location, location, location" we got all three of them bitches. Like I said man, sorry...

NICK  
Aye, it's cool. Really. One sec.

Nick hops up and moves across the room to a low, nearly hidden cabinet. He reaches in and pulls out a SMALL BOX from the corner, opening it.

His hand moves past the FAMILY PHOTOS, the CUBS MEMORABILIA, and the NOTE scrawled with airline prices and sloppy math toward a hefty STACK OF TWENTIES.

He goes back over and hands the money to Josh.

NICK (CONT'D)  
That's like nine hundred, so I'll try and scrap up the rest as soon as I--

Andre suddenly bursts through the front door, looking frantic and, well, stoned.

ANDRE

(out of breath)

YO! GUYS! I just came up with the *sickest* verse downstairs.

(pointing at the LAPTOP on the table)

Pull up- pull up ProTools, quick. Quick! I gotta track it right now!

Josh scrambles to set up the computer, while Andre begins fiddling with the MICROPHONE in the middle of the room - plucking the blunt from Josh's mouth on the way.

JOSH

Aye, Nick, maybe you could just ask your brother for a little extra help with the--

NICK

Ah. Uh, yeah, nope, nah.

Nick shoots a "shut up" look at Josh, who reciprocates with a puppy-eyed "my bad" glance.

ANDRE

What's wrong little bruh? You know I can help. Always do.

NICK

Nah, nothing. Just, uh, girl problem type shit.

ANDRE

Ha! Nigga, I know plenty about girls, nothing about girl *problems*.

Just then, Andre pops a CABLE into the bottom of the microphone with a distinct CLICK, and throws a pair of HEADPHONES over his ears.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Alright, go, dude, I'm ready! Hit record, this is going to be toooooo crazy.

Josh taps a key, as the rhythmic TICK of a digital metronome begins quietly bleeding through Andre's headphones.

Andre closes his eyes, postures up like a masterpiece is about to come out of him - all while uttering a few "Yeah"s and "Uh"s in anticipation.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

(rapping)

Yeah, you know I-- FUUUUCK I forgot  
it, dude!

Josh TAPS the spacebar again.

JOSH

Yo, Nick we gotta get to class  
anyway.

ANDRE

We're all meeting up to record  
tonight still, right? I can feeeeel  
the hits coming out of us, I can  
feel it!

Nick's distracted, tapping away hastily at his phone.

NICK

Yeah. Actually, Josh, I think I'm  
gonna skip today. There was this  
freelance thing I was about to turn  
down, but, I'ma just do that.

He slings his camera bag over his shoulder. Reaching in, he  
pops the SD CARD out and hands it to Josh, before putting a  
fresh one back in.

NICK (CONT'D)

Just print out the most recent  
picture on here in the lab and turn  
it in as my project. Tell Professor  
Onderwyser I got sick or whatever.

JOSH

Word.

NICK

And Dre, you think I can get a  
ride?

ANDRE

Yessir. See, big bro to the rescue  
again, haha.

Nick and Andre walk out.

Josh takes a second to collect his things before heading out  
the door. Wallet, phone, keys, chimes. Good to go.

With a final SLAM of the door, the apartment sits quietly,  
filling up with cold air through the open sliding glass door.

INT. THE LAVA LAMP CLUB - ENTRANCE - DAY

Nick walks through swinging doors, and looks up with raised eyebrows - we SWING AROUND to get a glimpse, but bump right into the BOUNCER, a large man of about 40, whose eyes are intently fixed on Nick. Did I mention he's large?

BOUNCER

I.D.?

NICK

Oh. I'm the photographer, Ricky called me up to--

BOUNCER

I.D.?

NICK

I don't drive, bro, so I don't have an--

BOUNCER

I.D.?

NICK

Yeah...

RICHIE (O.S.)

Hey, what's the problem?

RICHIE CHU, a late 30's Asian-American wrapped in fake designer clothing, swoops in, begrudgingly hanging up his Bluetooth.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Aha, Nate!

NICK

Nick.

RICHIE

Nick! Glad you could make it! Leon, stop giving my friend here so much trouble and get back to work.

LEON, the BOUNCER, leans in menacingly to Nick.

LEON

You makin' me look bad.

Off Leon.

RICHIE  
 Alright, Neil, here's what I'm  
 thinking.

He turns around, dramatically laying out a vision with grandiose hand gestures, as we finally get a look at the strip club we're in.

The Lava Lamp lives up to its name, with LARGE GLASS PILLARS filled with fluorescent wax casting a pale glow onto the mediocre weekday afternoon talent.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
 Think of yourself as Annie  
 Leibovitz, but with strippers.  
 Really forge a window into these  
 girls' souls, but also get lots of  
 ass shots. I really want to promote  
 the shit of our Taco Tuesday  
 special.

NICK  
 You guys serve food?

RICHIE  
 Nope.  
 (taps his Bluetooth)  
 Richie here. Talk to me.

Richie walks off without another word, leaving Nick to make his way over to,

INT. THE LAVA LAMP CLUB - MAIN STAGE

A STRIPPER ascends the pole like the most athletic kid in gym class climbs a rope, as Nick places his camera bag on the foot of the stage and begins taking out his equipment.

Right as he places his LENS on the stage momentarily, the stripper plummets back down to earth like a meteor, landing her enormous high heel shoe down upon its fragile glass with a thunderous CLACK. The lens doesn't survive.

NICK  
*Fuck.*

RAURY  
 Shit luck, man.

RAURY CARVER, 22, doesn't let his gaze leave the performance; he sits leaning forward, supporting his face with his palm, watching the girl 'dance' with the same expression as someone watching a sad movie.

NICK  
Yeah, I needed this paycheck. Damn.

RAURY  
(still not looking at  
Nick)  
I think I know you.

NICK  
I don't think I know you.

RAURY  
Figures. You've been staring at the  
ground every time I've seen you.

Nick instinctively looks toward the ground in embarrassment.

RAURY (CONT'D)  
My girl goes to school with you.  
Lives on your floor. Nicole.

NICK  
Oh. Yeah, I think I might've seen  
her aroun--

Raury finally turns to look at Nick.

RAURY  
Just don't fuck her; alright, man?

NICK  
What? Why would you think I--

RAURY  
Relax, you're not the first one  
I've had to ask. You do music  
right? I hear you working  
sometimes.

NICK  
Yeah, kinda. Me and my brother have  
been trying to get something off  
the ground. I been playing keys  
since I was little, and I rap and  
sing and stuff. Nothin' crazy.

RAURY  
Sounded good to me. What're you  
guys called?

NICK  
Oh, I mean, we haven't really  
settled on a name.

RAURY

Then what's your name?

NICK

Nick Avery.

Raury pulls out his PHONE, attacking the keyboard with his thumb, and sounding a flurry of CLICKS that sound about as long as that name.

NICK (CONT'D)

Wait, what are you doing?

Raury stands up, reaches in his pocket and hands a BUSINESS CARD to Nick.

RAURY

I gotta get outta here. This is gonna be at my place tomorrow. You and your brother should really come through. Have your best song ready to perform.

Raury then produces his wallet, and casually tosses three HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS toward the stripper, as if they were singles. He then counts another wad and hands it to Nick.

RAURY (CONT'D)

Toward a new lens - so you can take some pictures tomorrow night too.

NICK

Man, I don't need your money.

RAURY

Eh. Yeah you do. It's alright.

Nick looks on half-stunned as Raury drifts out of the club. He examines the card in his hand. It reads:

**GATSBY SERIES: #4**

**8 JANUARY 2018 - 11:59 PM**

**111 N. OCEAN LANE**

**PRIZE: \$5,000**

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. JOSH AND NICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

From the card we PAN UP to a CLOSE-UP of Andre's face, frozen in total awe.

Opposite of him, Nick and Josh sit on the couch - a few factors of ten less excited.

ANDRE

(nearly screeching)

YOU GUYS!!!! Do you know what this  
is?!?!?

JOSH

Ye-- Maybe, is it-- I-- No?

NICK

It's just an invite, Dre.

Andre lets out a hyena-like laugh. "Just an invite"...

He frantically whips around the laptop, and begins typing at breakneck speed. Turning it back, the screen now shows a Google Street View image of a massive Miami mansion.

ANDRE

This is 111 Ocean Drive.

JOSH

Whaaaaaaat.

ANDRE

Let me drop a little info on your virgin minds right now. You youngin's may have never heard of the Gatsby series, but anyone who's anyone in Miami has.

Nick and Josh exchange a glance.

NICK/JOSH

Hey...

ANDRE

Think of the insane parties that rich Gatsby nigga threw back then in the 1800's, all for one hoe! Well, some richer motherfucker around here decided to make, like, a better Jazz Age, and throws these super under-the-radar mansion parties. All the same crazy glitz and glamour, but less white people;

(MORE)



JOSH  
Something like..?

He taps out a melody.

NICK  
That's kinda cool.

ANDRE  
Yo, I'm not disagreeing with you  
dude. But that's the opposite of  
what I was saying. So maybe try  
playing, like, something as  
different as physically possible.

LATER STILL

A skeleton of a melodic loop plays on repeat through the  
haphazardly arranged SPEAKERS.

Nick and Andre are each in their respective zones, mumbling  
possible lyrics and melodies under their breath. Josh, on the  
other hand, is intently focussed on trying to solve a RUBIK'S  
CUBE that appears to only have green stickers.

Josh hits pause.

JOSH  
You know, I read that, in times of  
creative blockage, John Lennon and  
Paul McCartney would order a large  
double mushroom pizza for  
inspiration.

NICK  
Kinda weird that Lennon and  
McCartney would be getting your  
favorite kind of pizza, Josh.

JOSH  
Right? We probably shouldn't  
question it though, dude. Pass me  
the phone.

MUCH LATER

The initial creative energy has dissipated into a sleepy  
haze, marked by PIZZA BOXES scattered around the room. Andre  
lies upside down, as he scribbles on and then discards the  
pages of a notepad. Josh is asleep, hands crossed in his lap,  
with a JOINT in his mouth.

Nick stares into space.

NICK  
Josh. Yo... *Josh*.

Nick elbows Josh, jolting him with a loud JINGLE of the chimes in his coat.

JOSH  
Huh?

NICK  
What about that thing from earlier?

ANDRE  
What thing from earlier?

Josh takes a deep breath, and begins confronting the challenge of remembering 'the thing from earlier'. Grunting and temple rubbing is involved.

NICK  
Bro, don't tell me you actually forgot--

The chords suddenly start flowing, even more effortlessly than before. Melodies are expanded, themes begin to be explored...

Andre's eyes widen. Nick breaks a smile.

ANDRE  
Dude! Duuuuude! This is it! This is the song! Quick, uh, Nick, set up the mic, hit record! It's happening people!!!

Nick starts scrambling around the room. Josh's concentration remains as absolute as that of a monk.

We watch his fingers flying across the keys, as the sound of the piano, and of the room's excitement grows more and more DISTANT. A DULL RINGING - like blood rushing to your head - grows LOUDER.

NICK (V.O.)  
I didn't really tell the whole story about me and music before.

We begin to PULL BACK, away from this mess of sparked creativity, out through the sliding glass door, and into the night air - the ROAR of the wind now competing against the ringing and the dull piano.

Our perspective is now that of a bird hovering far above the pavement, peering into the apartment like a spy. FLYING LEFT, Dante's apartment slowly joins the frame.

The shared wall between the apartments now looks thin - a frail barrier between the artificial purple mood lighting of Dante's domain and Nick's moonlit studio.

NICK (V.O.)

She had a lot to do with that too.

PUSHING IN toward Dante's apartment, we see that he and Aurelia are making out on the couch in the middle of the room. Then, their rhythm changes; Aurelia looks distracted, then totally disengaged as she turns toward the balcony door.

Dante tries to her lure her back, as she stands up and walks across the room, up to the glinting sliding glass. As she reaches it, he puts a hand on her shoulder that she gently shrugs off.

With a dose of feminine effort, she gets the door open - perking her ears up without crossing the threshold to outside. She tries to hide a smile. Dante makes no effort to hide his disdain.

An especially heavy, especially cold gust of wind smacks them both in the face, just as we,

CUT TO:

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. BEACH ON KEY BISCAIYNE - LATE MORNING

Everything's bathed in some shade of gold or blue.

Nick, a couple of years younger, walks parallel to the ocean, holding a beat up UKULELE in his hands. He stops to shed his jacket, as if losing that layer will quell some sort of profound discomfort.

NICK (V.O.)

Aurelia was completely different  
when I met her. Compared to now, I  
I mean.

A GIRL in a thick jacket walks by, past Nick, and into a softly-focussed background. As he struggles with a sleeve, she stops, then turns around and walks back over. With a singular soft GIGGLE,

AURELIA  
You need help?

NICK  
What? Oh, with my jack-- no, nah, I  
got it. I mean thanks, though, I--

AURELIA  
No worries. Just looked like you  
were struggling, you know?

NICK  
Yeah.

An awkward beat - moreso for Nick than for Aurelia.

AURELIA  
You look like you wanna say  
something.

Nick laughs.

NICK  
I don't really, uh, say much...  
Especially not to, like, random  
beautiful girls on the beach at  
eight in the morning.

AURELIA  
So you think you can just go ahead  
and call me beautiful?

NICK  
(mortified)  
Oh, no, no. I'm sorry. Like I said,  
I don't really like to talk, you  
know, and--

Aurelia laughs, sweetly and loudly.

AURELIA  
I'm messing with you. You play? I  
sing sometimes.

Nick sighs, laughs, relieved.

NICK  
Yeah, kinda.

INT. NICK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Aurelia falls backwards onto Nick's bed, as he falls on top  
of her - much more confident now than at the shoreline.

They kiss like they weren't strangers a few hours ago, paw at each other like they'll never be strangers again.

NICK (V.O.)

I guess you could say she was more... spontaneous when we met. We ended up writing a song on the beach, well, spontaneously. First time I really felt good about something I wrote too. Then we started chilling.

Nick goes to take off her shirt, as they get lost and tangled up in sheets.

NICK (V.O.)

First time I really felt that good about anything, honestly.

FALLING IN AND OUT OF LOVE MONTAGE

-- AT THE BEACH: Late at night, Nick and Aurelia sit in the sand, facing a deep, dark ocean - presumably talking about anything and everything. The moon rushes through it's full cycle in the sky, a month passing by in a moment.

-- IN NICK'S ROOM: Another, later night... Nick sits on the foot of his bed, facing the dimly lit wall; his foot bounces up and down with atomic levels of nervous energy. Aurelia enters frame, sitting next to him and immediately dropping her head into her hands.

He puts a hand on her shoulder. She thrusts something into his hand - a SMALL WHITE STICK, emitting a dim blue light from it's LCD display. Nick embraces her, laying a hand over her belly. Aurelia stands up, crying and shaking her head 'no', before storming out.

-- OUTSIDE OF A CLINIC: Nick sits one more time, this time on the dirty sidewalk, against a sterile, white wall. He looks bleakly out in front of him, toward the small group of people holding signs a short distance away.

Aurelia appears at his side, the spark in her eye now seemingly absent. As he stands up, she looks for comfort in Nick's arms, but his mind is still too distant to reciprocate. She pulls back, hurt to her already vulnerable core.

We see Aurelia mouth a question. Nick replies with what must be the wrong answer. Her face becomes the vessel for pure heartbreak. TIME SLOWLY COMES TO HALT, then begins PLAYING BACK IN REVERSE, taking us rapidly through all we just saw, all the way back to,

EXT. BEACH ON BISCAYNE BAY - LATE MORNING

Nick and Aurelia sit in the shade of a palm tree, caught up in their own music, as blindly unaware of the future as anyone else on Earth.

NICK (V.O.)

The song was called "Too Fast, Too Soon", by the way. So, maybe I do understand irony.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOSH AND NICK'S APARTMENT - DEAD OF NIGHT

Nick lays flat on his back on the couch. A few feet above his head, the scene of the beach plays out - a memory physically manifested as a loose cloud of color and image that can only be seen by him and by us.

Andre is passed out on the floor, SNORING loudly. Josh stares at the laptop's screen through bloodshot eyes. With a decisive TAP of a key, Nick's cloud dissipates.

JOSH

It's done.

He grabs a small, metal FLASHDRIVE, and plugs it into the computer.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(to Nick, stoic beyond his own character)

Honest to god, I think we have something here.

NICK

We might. Dude, writing a song hasn't felt like that since-- since I don't even know.

(sighs)

Damn, what time is it?

JOSH

Almost five. I'm gonna smoke one more time and then knock out.

Nick leans back, but then seems to have his attention caught by the ENVELOPE Josh is using as a rolling tray.

NICK

What is that?

JOSH  
 Weed? Oh, this. Shit, yeah. I  
 forgot - Professor Onderwyser gave  
 me it to give to you today.

Josh picks up the envelope, SHAKES off the weed crumbs and hands it over. Nick tears it open and stares at the enclosed letter closely, his eyes slightly widen. The BLUNT is then thrust toward him. He grabs it, takes a deep hit, and, in a puff of smoke, we,

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOSH AND NICK'S APARTMENT - THE BALCONY - MORNING

Nick leans over the rail, eyes closed. The sky above is devoid of any and all clouds; the morning chill is palpable.

He sings a tune under his breath, rehearsing. Safely clutched in his hand is that envelope.

The sound of a GLASS DOOR SLIDING OPEN pierces the stillness, and forces Nick's eyes open. He looks to his right, and there's Aurelia, wearing a HEAVY ROBE and crossing her arms to stay warm.

They stare at each other for a few seconds. It isn't awkward, nor tense, nor longing, nor loving. It's just... natural.

NICK  
 Happy birthday.

AURELIA  
 Thanks.

A beat. Maybe a little tense now.

AURELIA (CONT'D)  
 Aren't you cold?

NICK  
 Not colder than I wanna be. I'm the  
 first black Eskimo, we've been over  
 this.

Aurelia cracks a smile, exhaling through her nose in the most reserved form of laughter she can muster.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Do you remember that song we made  
 up that time at the-- (beach)?

Her smile fades.

AURELIA  
Nick, stop.

NICK  
What?

AURELIA  
Just stop! Bringing things up,  
trying to--

NICK  
Trying to what? Will you relax? I  
was just asking you a question.

Aurelia shuts her eyes and take a deep breath.

AURELIA  
Don't make me cry on my birthday.  
Please. I'm going inside, I'll see  
you around.

She makes her way toward the door.

NICK  
Why Dante? Out of every nigga on  
Earth, why the fuck Dante?

Aurelia stops dead in her tracks, and looks at Nick with a  
burning expression of "How dare you". Her mouth twitches.

Nick is ready for whatever she could say, resigned to the  
consequence.

Then, she hesitates. Her face goes soft - not sad, not  
forgiving, not like she's okay - just soft.

AURELIA  
I don't know.

NICK  
He's so wrong for you, Aurelia.

AURELIA  
So are you, Nick.

Another GUST of cold wind. The ecstasy of the chill and the  
devastation of the truth wash over Nick at the same time. He  
swallows hard, then speaks like the air's been knocked out of  
him so hard it might never come back.

NICK  
You really think that?

AURELIA

I... Maybe.

NICK

Alright.

(clutching the envelope  
harder)

Listen. I don't think I'm gonna stay in Miami anymore. I have a chance to leave that I didn't think I would get, and I think I'm gonna take it.

AURELIA

You're just gonna leave m-- (me)...  
You're just gonna leave?

Nick looks out over the bay, as if giving it the chance to tell him why he shouldn't abandon it.

NICK

I guess it's like... do you know why the observable universe is the 'observable' universe?

AURELIA

What are you talking about?

NICK

Just-- I was watching this thing about photography in space. And they were talking about how space is expanding - like that's all it does, forever and ever. But the thing is, as fast as light is, it's still not as fast as space itself. Eventually, the light just can't keep up anymore, and it falls behind. So, then there's all this new space, where all that old light will never ever reach, and where any new light will be moving away too fast to ever make it back.

Nick pauses for questions. Aurelia, listening intently, has none.

NICK (CONT'D)

It feels like life is moving that fast, and all this shit that happens just can't keep up. So, all those memories are just falling further and further behind forever.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

Then you realize you're spending all your time just reaching across the universe, trying to grab onto things you used to feel, and places you used to know, and people you used to love, and... and they just keep getting dimmer and further away.

(beat)

I can't be caught up in that anymore. I'm losin' it.

AURELIA

You're not the only one who feels like that... you just explain it the weirdest.

Nick lets out a small, bittersweet laugh.

NICK

I'm not tryna ruin your birthday, but, long story short, this might, kinda, be goodbye, I guess--

DANTE (O.S.)

Aye! Aye, baby, guess what!

Dante leaps out onto the balcony, wearing only his CALVIN KLEIN BOXERS and GOLD CROSS NECKLACE. He wraps his arms around Aurelia.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Twon just hit me up, he's getting us into some crazy mansion party tonight, and I'ma get to perform! Yo, why don't you wear that one dress you got that be showin' all the goods.

Dante looks over and sees Nick standing there.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Mornin' little Nicky.

(to Aurelia)

He botherin' you out here, baby?

NICK

Just telling her happy birthday.

DANTE

(to Aurelia)

It's your birthday?

AURELIA

Yes... And I'm going out with my friends tonight, so I can't make it-

DANTE

Whoa whoa, hold up. Ain't no "I can't make it" baby, I need you on my arm for this.

Nick exhales through his lips - a sonic eyeroll.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Yo, if you got a problem I can hop over and fix it.

NICK

You such a tough guy, Dante.

AURELIA

Guys, will you *please*--

Andre tumbles out onto the balcony.

ANDRE

Nicknicknick. We're gonna have a little morning pow-wow to establish the vibes for tonight. C'mon, Josh made Mickey Mouse waffles.

DANTE

'Vibes for tonight'... So you guys are the competition, huh? Guess I shoulda kept a closer eye.

ANDRE

Hm, yeah. Hindsight is 20/20. Especially with binoculars.

Dante looks at him with a twisted expression of confusion.

DANTE

Sounds like I'll see you weird niggas tonight then.

(to Aurelia)

Let's go, I got your birthday present waiting inside. Matter of fact, it's right here in these Calvins.

The two start heading inside.

ANDRE

Oh, Aurelia! Your sister told me to tell you to call her!

She hears him, but cuts off any chance of a reply with a sliding pane of glass.

INT. JOSH AND NICK'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Nick follows Andre back inside, then plops down at the table, where a stack of MICKEY MOUSE PANCAKES Andre and Josh join him, and they all eat.

ANDRE

What're your guys' plans for the day? How you gonna get the vibes flowin'?

NICK

I figured we'd like, you know, practice and shit.

ANDRE

(through a full mouth)  
Mm-mm. No. Gotta keep it spontaneous, dude, forsure. We'll be fine, trust me.

NICK

Alright... then I'm probably just gonna go to campus later and try to borrow a lens. Josh you down?

Josh nods. Andre hops up, throws a SHIRT ON, and stuffs an OUNCE OF WEED and the flashdrive into his backpack.

NICK (CONT'D)

You're not gonna finish?

ANDRE

Nah, I'm headed to Sierra's. Gonna show her the song, and smoke up a little. Peace!

Andre leaves. Josh grabs the remainder of Andre's food with a giant grin.

JOSH

Ohhh, it's lit.

Nick laughs.

EXT. ART INSTITUTE OF MIAMI - DAY

Nick and Josh walk down the street toward a massive modern art project being branded as a college.

JOSH

What do you think he's going to say about the letter?

NICK

I don't know. Oh shit, by the way, here.

He reaches in his pocket, and produces the wad of charity Raury gave him at the club.

NICK (CONT'D)

Random little windfall. Toward the rent.

HOBO (O.S.)

Ain't that a coincidence?! I got AIDS just like those niggas in "Rent"!

Not far away is the Hobo from earlier, standing on the corner. If we didn't notice his oddly perfect posture before, we do now.

HOBO (CONT'D)

Maybe I should get those bills.

(cackles)

Wait, hold on, hold on, now.

(to Nick)

You. You're that cocksucka mothafucka shit-eating nut-tucker that took my picture and sped off! Square up, lil nigga!

NICK

Whoa, whoa, listen, that's not how it went down, man.

The Hobo quickly and athletically jumps into a boxing pose. Nick freezes, while Josh's hand instinctively gravitates to the NUNCHUCKS hidden in one of his many coat pockets.

Not willing to be outarmed, the hobo reaches into his raggedy pocket and produces two THROWING STARS. Nick looks on like he just saw a ghost... even though this shit is way weirder.

NICK (CONT'D)

What the fuck kind of Kill Bill shit is going on right now? Josh, guys, just put your absurd-ass weapons down, and--

The Hobo brandishes his stars, dextrously juggling them between his hands.

Josh reciprocates, whipping the nunchucks out of his pocket and around his body like Bruce Lee himself, JINGLING his ever-present wind chime in the process.

HOBO  
(eyes narrowing)  
Do- do that again.

Josh obliges, eliciting another JINGLE.

HOBO (CONT'D)  
What you got in your pocket, kid?

JOSH  
How do I know this ain't just a  
trick for you to throw one of those  
things into my eye?

The Hobo tosses his weapons gingerly to Nick, who flinches as he catches them. Once disarmed, the hobo puts his hands in the air, his face drained of hostility.

Still cautious, Josh pulls out his wind chime and holds it up.

JOSH (CONT'D)  
It's just my chimes, dog. I always  
keep 'em with me.

The Hobo walks up to him slowly, and inspects the chimes with great respect, touching them only with his eyes.

HOBO  
Son, where'd you get this?

JOSH  
My parents travel. They brought it  
back from, uh, I think... Vietnam?

HOBO  
I'll be goddamned. I knew 'em when  
I heard 'em. See, I served in that  
ass-backwards war over there - as a  
medic, thank god. Kept hearing  
whispers about some special fucking  
wind chime from some special  
fucking village. Mystical's what  
they called it. Thought it was a  
buncha jive hippie bullshit, until  
I saw one with my own eyes. But  
that's a whoooole other story...

JOSH  
You want it?

HOBO

Hell no. That shit's yours, son.  
Don't ever be giving it to nobody.

(to Nick)

Take a lesson from your friend here  
though. I coulda been Jesus  
Motherfucking Christ in disguise  
for all you know, and at least he  
woulda passed the test. Now get  
outta here both of you, can't you  
see I'm busy?

Nick carefully hands the throwing stars back, before he and  
Josh scamper off.

EXT. ART INSTITUTE OF MIAMI - PHOTOGRAPHY 'CLASSROOM' - DAY

There are desks, there's a whiteboard, but no 'room' to speak  
of. Instead, we're in a small, repurposed, Eden-eque garden -  
a living photograph tucked in the shadow of a large academic  
building.

Nick and Josh float in through the foliage and a butterfly or  
two.

NICK

Professor Onderwyser? You around?

ONDERWYSER (O.S.)

Yes.

NICK

A'ight... and where might that be?

The answer comes in the form of a THUD, as ONDERWYSER slips  
out of a nearby tree, smashing into the ground while  
instinctively protecting the CAMERA around his neck.

JOSH

Daaamn.

Onderwyser, 44, slowly sits up and brushes the dust off of  
his well-tailored BLUE OXFORD SHIRT, its sleeves rolled well-  
above his tan, toned forearms.

He speaks with a South African accent, the first of many  
mysteries someone just meeting him has to decode.

ONDERWYSER

Tricky motherfucking birds... What  
can I do for you boys?

NICK

Well, first, I was wondering if you had a lens I could borrow.

ONDERWYSER

The hell's wrong with yours?

NICK

A stripper crushed it with her foot.

ONDERWYSER

Christ, Nick. Couldn't you find a cheaper fetish like getting 'em to crush a Kodak or something?

NICK

So, can I--?

ONDERWYSER

Grab one out of my bag - the shittiest one. If it comes back shittier than that we've got problems.

Nick goes over to the CAMERA BAG and starts shuffling through.

NICK

Listen, the other thing--

ONDERWYSER

Right. Josh could you step outside and give us a minute?

JOSH

Aren't we-- we are outside.

A dangerous glance from Onderwyser sends Josh on his way.

NICK

That letter.

ONDERWYSER

Are you going?

NICK

I don't-- I mean...

(sighs)

Why's it gotta be in Chicago? Why you gotta actually put the chance to go back home in my hands like I know what to do with it?

ONDERWYSER

I don't follow... Nick, do you understand what I'm recommending you for? The immense amount of faith I'm putting in you--

NICK

Man, I don't give a shit about your faith in me. Going back home was supposed to stay a daydream, Onderwyser. Now I actually got the choice to leave here and never come back. What the hell am I supposed to do with that?

Onderwyser stares hard at Nick, who's now staring at the ground - surprised at his own outburst.

ONDERWYSER

I'm here to teach you photography, yeah? And, how'd I define photography when you first walked in here two years ago?

NICK

"Photography is inseparable from life itself. It's just how it looked when you pressed a button".

ONDERWYSER

Right, so understand that I'm qualified to give you a fuckin' life lesson. Tonight is going to be the most important night of your life, Nick.

NICK

What d'you know about tonight?

ONDERWYSER

C'mon, I'm the coolest professor at a cool art school. I hear things. Look, we like to think that major changes in life are the result of so much careful planning that they couldn't be anything other than the right choice. But, that's bullshit. It inevitably comes down to one immeasurable instant. Just like--

NICK

A photograph...

ONDERWYSER

See, you're not that dumb. A lot of things are all crashing into each other at one time for you, man. Two passions. Two places. Two girls.

NICK

Whoa, what? What other girl?

ONDERWYSER

I see how you and Nicole flirt in class. I was twenty once.

NICK

That's not--

ONDERWYSER

Anyway... You've got a choice. If you want to stay in Miami, fine. It's an incredible program up there, but I have other talented students I could send. If it's going to be you going to Chicago, though, I need to know tomorrow.

NICK

Tomorrow? Are you just fucking with me on purpose now?

ONDERWYSER

No, I'm helping you. If something's going to happen to make it clear for you, it's gonna be tonight, not next fuckin' Tuesday. Yeah?

Nick nods, then walks off. Onderwyser strolls over to his desk, shuffles through some things, and pulls out a LARGE PHOTO PRINT that he looks at with admiration.

ONDERWYSER (CONT'D)

Kid's got talent.

We see the photo. A pristine shot of its subjects: Dante, gun in his waistband, and Aurelia yelling at him with fear in her eyes. The product of Nick's finger slipping... the most recent photo on his camera.

CLOSE on the gun, as we,

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - THE BALCONY - NIGHT

Nick fidgets uncomfortably in the comfort of the cold night air. He practices delivering the lyrics he's reading off of his phone, it's dim glow lighting his nervous face.

After a sobering shake of his head, Nick calls to Josh, who's carefully primping himself in the mirror, in the dark.

NICK

Josh! You heard from Andre yet? We gotta leave soon as hell, man.

JOSH

Nah. Call him.

Nick sighs, begins to dial. Many RINGS later,

ANDRE (ON THE PHONE)

Yoooo, what's good Nick?

NICK

Where are you?

INT./EXT. ANDRE'S CAR - SAME TIME

Andre speeds viciously down Biscayne Boulevard. His girlfriend - SIERRA, 23, pretty like a Nightshade - sits in the passenger seat, enjoying the wind messing up her long black hair more than most girlfriends would.

ANDRE

Super close, dude.  
(to Sierra)  
Baby, joint me.

She grabs Andre's backpack from under her feet, digging through the treasure trove of marijuana inside to produce one JOINT. She puts it in his mouth and lights it for him.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Just hold tight!

INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nick walks inside, and over to Josh. He claps a hand down on Josh's shoulder, then hangs his head.

JOSH

You good, bruh? You been extra jumpy ever since that long ass talk with Onderwyser. He didn't diddle you, did he?

Nick laughs.

NICK

Nah, man, no funny business. Just his deep life shit.

JOSH

Oohh. Those are worse than getting diddled, that's like getting molested in your brain.

Suddenly, he looks Nick right in the eyes, a blazing glint of sincerity taking the place of the usual goofy sheen.

JOSH (CONT'D)

You're that nigga, Nick. Fuck Dante, fuck Aurelia, and fuck anybody else at this rich-ass party who don't believe that. I know you got that insecurity shit going on, but tonight you're gonna be a motherfuckin' rockstar, 'ight? And once your rockstar ass wins us those five stacks, rent can wait, we're turning up, boy!

Nick laughs again in a way it seems only Josh can elicit. He grabs Josh's right hand with his and hugs him with his left.

NICK

Thanks for-- thanks for just being you, bro... Now let's fuckin' get it.

Right on cue Andre BURSTS through the door, panting like a Greyhound. Not far behind is Sierra, high heels in hand.

ANDRE

Aye! Alright, boys, it's time to-- Wait, what are you wearing??

Nick and Josh look down at their clothes, unsure of the problem. Then, they notice Andre's WHITE AND GOLD SUIT, and Sierra's ELABORATE DRESS, and it becomes clear.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

Nigga, it's 'The Great Gatsby', not  
'Animal House'! Shit, uh, Sierra  
how long would it take you?

SIERRA

Five minutes.

ANDRE

Perfect. Guys, just stay still.  
She'll take care of the rest.

Before he can finish the sentence, Sierra is bouncing between the closet and the boys, previewing outfits and adjusting hair simultaneously. She grabs Josh's coat, his hand immediately snapping into place and guarding it.

JOSH

Not the coat, baby.

INT. BISCAYNE HIGHRISE APARTMENTS - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

The McLaren sits dormant in the hushed garage. Suddenly, the sly PATTTERING of feet on concrete breaks the silence.

Dante, Twon, and Breezy appear out of the shadows - bandits in the night dressed to the nines.

BREEZY

Dante, dog, they're prolly coming.

TWON

Yeah, I mean we just popped that  
one hoe's Benz, don't you think we  
oughta chill with the car--

DANTE

Man, shut the fuck up and hurry.

They run up to the McLaren. Breezy and Twon nervously post up as guards, while Dante hops into the convertible. He quickly locates Andre's bag and, removing his own, nearly identical RED SUPREME BACKPACK, begins rifling through it.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Where the fuck's this flashdrive? I  
need this beat, nigga, I need it.  
These bitches don't deserve this  
fire. I'm gonna sound like  
motherfuckin' Usher over this shi--

The beam of a flashlight suddenly pierces the darkness. Dante flinches hard, dropping both backpacks.

WESLEY (O.S.)

FREEZE! Uh, um,  
 (in Chinese, subtitled)  
*I will not buy your dog.* That means  
 "Keep your damn asses still", you  
 Yakuza motherf-- wait, Dante?

DANTE

Wes, Wes, relax, homie. I was just  
 grabbing something for Nick.

WESLEY

Goddamn it. You, Dante? Really, man?  
 Nah, bro, this is fucked up. I  
 gotta call the cops.

Dante's eyes widen in fear. He hastily grabs one of the  
 backpacks and throws it over his back, then jumps out of the  
 car and walks toward Wes, laughing amicably.

DANTE

Wes, listen. You know me, nigga.  
 And I know you! Let's just keep  
 this between us, word? Man,  
 otherwise, I think the building  
 owner's gonna wanna hear about how  
 you're slinging dope to half his  
 tenants. I mean, after all, he is  
 my pops.

Wes's jaw drops. Dante smiles a huge, snake-like grin, and  
 puts his hand on Wes's shoulder.

DANTE (CONT'D)

Aye, you the man, Wes.

Dante signals Breezy and Twon with his hand, and the three  
 run off, with Wes still standing there, in disbelief.

Just then, Andre, Nick, Josh, and Sierra run into the garage  
 from the staircase. Nick and Josh, now in TUXES, raise their  
 hands and shout over,

NICK/JOSH

Whaddup, Wes!/Wesleyyyyyy!

WESLEY

Yo what's good, ya'll. Hey, hol'  
 up.

They stop in their tracks and pause impatiently. Wesley opens  
 his mouth to speak, but the words won't come out. He sighs.

WESLEY (CONT'D)  
Be safe out there, a'ight?

The crew smiles and gives thumbs up, before hopping in the McLaren and speeding out of the garage, into the night. Wesley stands in the empty garage, cursing himself.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Two giant panes of decorative glass, each looking to be the size of a "2001: A Space Odyssey" Monolith, act as 'doors'. On either side is a statue of a lion. Looking more vicious than either, standing between them is Leon, the bouncer.

The four walk up, joining a line of other elegant, young partygoers.

NICK  
Shit. I know that guy, he hates me.

JOSH  
*Him?* How'd you manage to piss of a Silverback Gorilla?

As they make it up to Leon, he doesn't so much as look at them. Andre takes the lead.

ANDRE  
Good evening, sir. My lovely lady, my brother, my friend Josh here, and I are here for the soirée. We'll be performing as we--

LEON  
Name.

Nick meekly steps forward and eeks out,

NICK  
Nick Avery.

Leon glances down at him. The side of his mouth curls up.

LEON  
Not on the list.

ANDRE  
What? Bruh, check it again!

Like a stone golem, Leon harshly turns his gaze to Andre.

NICK

Yo, chill. Uh, there must be a mistake.

SIERRA

Boys, please.

An air of seduction washes over her at will, as she turns her gaze to Leon, trying to break him.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

Sir, listen...

She runs her finger across his chest. Leon looks down at her puppy eyes, stares for a moment. Then, he quickly brushes her hand off his chest as if it were a bug.

LEON

Ya'll need to get out my sight.

Suddenly, the doors open just slightly enough for Raury to squeeze out through them. Tonight, he's oozing every ounce of class and mystique that Jay Gatsby himself possessed.

RAURY

Leon, is she here ye-- Nick what's up? Leon, why are they waiting out here? Guys, come on in.

The four follow Raury, filing past Leon with mixed expressions of pride and embarrassment. Every bit like a portal into another world, the glass door transports them into,

INT. RAURY'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

A party unlike any you've ever been to. Unlike any that have ever been thrown. Every inch of the massive home is bathed in soft shades of various colored lights, with every extravagant decoration hanging from the ceiling or second floor railing reflecting it like starlight.

Everybody is dressed immaculately, like they're in a movie; yet, they party like they don't have to worry about anybody watching them. At the back of the room, a massive glass wall serves as a membrane through which people filter in and out between the house and the beach-adjacent pool.

JOSH

Ho-ly. Sheeiiiiit.

RAURY

Right? The trench coat/tux combo is bold, I like it.

Josh smiles proudly. Raury stops a waiter carrying a platter full of DRINKS, grabs two in each hand, and gives one to each of them.

RAURY (CONT'D)

Enjoy. The music's all outside. You guys are on later. Oh,  
(winks)  
And act like you never saw me.

With that, Raury catches someone's attention across the room and vanishes into the crowd.

ANDRE

Sierra, you heard him baby, let's go mingle!  
(to Nick and Josh)  
We'll link back up in a few, don't get too crazy, boys!

NICK

Where are we gonna...

Andre and Sierra vanish into the crowd like two people being swept up by a river.

NICK (CONT'D)

...meet.

JOSH

I say we dive in head first.

Nick takes a deep breath, surveys the multi-million dollar sensory overload in front of him. He drains his drink.

NICK

I'm Greg Louganis, baby.

JOSH

Get the first bad joke out of the way before we talk to females. Good idea.

Nick punches Josh on the arm. They both straighten their bow-ties, run a hand through their hair, and with a mutual nod, enter the fray...

"WE'RE THE SHIT" MONTAGE

The music here should reflect two things: 1) This event is a celebration. 2) That being said, it's primarily a distraction, and has a dark side.

"This Could Be Us" by Rae Sremmurd should work nicely. SLOW MOTION should be applied liberally.

-- Nick and Josh cross the floor, taking in new sights... Pretty girls, million dollar paintings, and more pretty girls. The intoxication of their surroundings sets in. The additional drinks they snatch from passing waiters help too.

-- Soon enough, they're as comfortable as can be - dancing, drinking, and talking up a storm.

One girl after another ends up at the receiving ends of their pick up lines. Most flirt back, but at least one slaps Josh across the face. He straightens out his trench coat and shakes it off.

-- By the time we hear the chorus hit, they've become the life of the party. People gather around them as if they've come across street performers, and laugh like they're watching comedy.

-- At some point, Josh signals for everyone to hold on, as he runs off and turns a corner. Then, in no time at all, he's back with TWO BOTTLES OF DOM PERIGNON. He hands one to Nick, and they each pop their respective cork. The crowd goes wild - girls line up to have champagne poured in their mouths.

Nick and Josh look at each other. They shake their heads "no". Instead, the decision is made to place their thumbs over the mouths of the bottles, and shake the hell out of them like they just won the Daytona 500. The crowd goes wilder, as the champagne sprays all over our LENS.

END MONTAGE

INT. RAURY'S MANSION - LATER

Tucked under the privacy of a staircase, Nick and Josh take a deep whiff of whatever it is being offered to them on a SMALL MIRROR. They thank the GENEROUS INDIVIDUAL with a sniff, and re-enter the party, understandably reinvigorated.

JOSH

Bro, pace yourself, you still gotta perform tonight.

NICK

(laughs)

I'm good, I'm good. Yo, let's check things out by the pool, I could go for some of that cold night air.

Just then, he sees Aurelia across the room with Dante. Every emotion, responsibility, and decision he put aside for the last hour crashes down on him all at once.

NICK (CONT'D)

Fuck. If there was ever an antidote for coke, it'd be seeing the girl you want wearing her sexiest dress for another dude.

JOSH

Nick, nah, what'd I say! Get that shit outta your head. Comeon, let's-

NICOLE (O.S.)

Oh my god, Nick! Niiiick!

Nicole runs up from behind and grabs Nick. As he turns around, she kisses him, and laughs wildly.

NICK

Ok, wow, hi.

JOSH

You know what, this is perfect actually. I'ma make another round, I'll catch you two later.

Before Nick can grab hold of his sleeve, Josh is gone.

NICOLE

Come on, I wanna show you something.

ACROSS THE ROOM, Aurelia watches as Nicole grabs Nick's hand and pulls him upstairs, deaf to the conversation around her.

DANTE

Baby. Baby, hellooooo?

Dante waves his hand in front of her face.

AURELIA

What?

DANTE

Ain't you been listening? Tell 'em  
bout how dope the song I'ma be  
doing tonight is. Anyway, it's  
called "Sizzurp Dreams", off my new  
mixtape, "Pretty Boy Gangsta."

Aurelia smiles a thin smile, as Dante hands out his MIXTAPE  
to uninterested partygoers.

INT. RAURY'S MANSION - MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Steam fills the marble and gold room, diffusing the moonlight  
streaming in through the windows. The shower is spitting out  
hot water from heads on every side, and onto Nick and Nicole,  
as she shows him the 'thing' she wanted to show him.

NICOLE

(between moans)

You know... he throws these parties  
just for me.

Nick's put off a little, but the heat of the moment and his  
relatively intoxicated mind insist he continue.

NICK

Huh? What do you mean?

NICOLE

Raury. He wants me for himself. But  
he can't have me for himself. So he  
puts on these crazy parties to try  
and... haven't you seen the Gatsby  
movie?

Nick slows to a stop.

NICK

I read the book in high...(school).  
Look, maybe we shouldn't be doing  
this.

NICOLE

Why not?! Nick, we've been  
neighbors for so long, this is sooo  
hot, I--

The harsh glow of artificial light suddenly floods the room,  
as the door opens. Raury walks in and, over the course of a  
few seconds, registers what's going on.

Nick nervously gets out of the shower, covering himself with  
his pile of clothes.

RAURY  
What the fuck, man?

NICK  
Yo, Raury, I'm sorry. I--

Raury grabs the SOAP DISPENSER off of the vanity, and LAUNCHES it into the mirror, shattering it completely. Nicole SCREAMS.

With his CLOTHES in a bundle, Nick pushes open the window, and looks down. He takes his chances and jumps.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA - SAME TIME

The party rages on. At the center of it all, the enormous phosphorescent pool glows like a gemstone, as the colored light hidden under the grotto moves through its cycle.

The grotto is so large that it's serving as a stage, it's stone surface packed with speakers, microphones, and a DJ. A PERFORMER is mid-song, as we find Aurelia and Dante in the crowd.

DANTE  
Aha, this nigga sucks! I'ma go find Twon and Breezy so we can roast em.

Aurelia opens her mouth to speak, but Dante's gone in an instant. Suddenly, Andre and Sierra appear, with Andre looking frantic.

ANDRE  
Aurelia! Hey! Listenlisten, there's kind of an emergency. I can't figure out where the flash drive with our song on it is, and I need to find Josh, but I don't know where he is. Do you know where he is?

AURELIA  
No, I haven't seen hi--

Andre bolts off like a sprinter, leaving Sierra and Aurelia together. There's a clear, immediate tension between the two.

SIERRA  
I haven't heard from you. Neither have Mom and Dad.

Aurelia just nods.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

You know, they'll let you come back home if you just apologize.

AURELIA

Apologize for *what*?

SIERRA

(scoffs)

For being a slut. Having an abortion? What else do you--

Aurelia's shocked and hurt.

AURELIA

Why should I--

SIERRA

Your new boyfriend looks nice. When are you going to have his baby?

AURELIA

(through tears)

What the fuck is wrong with you?

Aurelia storms off, pushing through the crowd toward the beach.

INT. RAURY'S MANSION - SAME TIME

Josh is deep in conversation with a CUTE GIRL, who appears interested. Once again, the trench coat appears to be the topic of interest.

Andre storms over and grabs Josh.

ANDRE

Josh, yes, thank god!

JOSH

Aye, Dre, can't you see I'm busy?

ANDRE

I know I know, this is more important though. Listen, I must've left the drive with the song on it at the apartment. We go on last, after Dante, so I need you to hurry up and take my car to go get it and then hurry back, ok??

Andre shoves a VALET TICKET into Josh's hand.

JOSH

Nigga, why me? I been drinking and shit, why can't you go?

ANDRE

Dude, I've been drinking more! And like, no offense, honestly, but you're just the producer - so I need to stay here in case we get called up sooner and have to improvise, ok? You'll be fine!

Andre rushes off again. Josh bids a sorrowful goodbye to the cute girl.

EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME

An almost jarring dose of SILENCE, as the party momentarily becomes a bright memory in the background.

Nick is in the sand, struggling to finish putting his clothes back on. Once they somewhat resemble neat, he pulls his phone out with an EXASPERATED SIGH and dials. After several RINGS, it goes to voicemail with a familiar BEEP.

NICK

Onderwyser. Listen, it's Nick. I know you gave me 'til tomorrow to make up my mind about Chicago but, fuck it, I'm going. Alright? Fuck it. And, you know what? All that crazy shit you said about life, and photography has nothing to do with it. Neither does being some great photographer, I -- you know what, I just realized I forgot to bring my fucking camera!

Nick laughs for only him and the ocean to hear.

NICK (CONT'D)

Shows how much I care. Man, I just like music better. Way better. But it always makes me think about her.

His mood darkens again. He SNIFFLES.

NICK (CONT'D)

I don't got a Dad to tell anymore, so I'll just tell you, Onderwyser. It's all 'cause of her her. A hundred percent.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

I'm supposed to be a grown man, and here I am with my heart all fuckin' broke, ready to move a thousand miles cause of a girl...

Dull SOBBING pierces the air. Nick stops, putting his phone away. The sound gets louder, but it's too dark to see anyone. He listens...

NICK (CONT'D)

Aurelia?

The sobbing stops.

AURELIA

Nick?

Nick rushes toward her voice, and finds her sitting in the ground, make up running down her face.

NICK

Whoa, whoa, what happened? Are you ok? Did Dante--

Aurelia breaks down crying again and shakes her head, "no".

AURELIA

My family hates me.

Nick sits down in the sand next to her as she cries into her hands.

CUT TO:

INT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA - LATER

A ROUND OF CHEERS rings out as a RAPPER descends the stage at the end of his performance.

DJ

Remember, you all are gonna choose the winner tonight for the \$5,000 prize. Only two more left, so help me welcome Dante to the stage.

MORE APPLAUSE as Dante works his way toward the stage. Meanwhile, Andre approaches the DJ.

ANDRE

Hey, uh--

DJ

You're next, I need your beat. Now or never.

ANDRE

I-- ok, ok. It's on its way, I swear, lemme call and see how much--

As Andre pulls his phone out of his coat pocket, something falls out onto the ground. The FLASHDRIVE.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

YO! Oh my god, no way! HA! Yes, here take it. Alright we're good, I just need Nick and... wait where's Nick. NICK! Shit, I'll be right back, don't skip us!

Andre hops off the stage. Dante grabs the mic, and speaks into it.

DANTE

What's wrong with *that* nigga... Whatever, my name's Dante, this your new favorite song. It's called "Sizzurp Dreams". Shoutout my boys, Breezy and Twon.

Breezy and Twon CHEER for themselves, by themselves.

EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME

Nick and Aurelia sit talking where we left them, how we left them. It's a full moon.

AURELIA

I knew what my family would say, we never got along. But you? I came out of that clinic, thinking you'd be the one person on Earth who would understand, and tell me I did nothing wrong, and make me feel better. But, when I asked you, "Did I make a mistake?", you said, "I don't know, maybe"...

NICK

I--

AURELIA

That's the moment when we crossed your weird little boundary in space that we can never cross back.

(MORE)

AURELIA (CONT'D)

When we started moving away from each other at the speed of whatever for eternity. So, if that means you have to go back somewhere cold to find what you're looking for, or just to get away from me, then go.

A long beat of hard silence, punctuated only by Aurelia's sniffles.

NICK

When I was sitting there waiting for you that day, I started thinking about what it would be like for a kid to have a mom like you, instead of what I went through, not knowing mine. And, these images of our imaginary family together played in my head. Really vivid - like home movies that just never got shot in real life. It was so perfect in my head that anything else felt like a mistake. So I forgot all about the fact that we were completely unprepared and irresponsible, and I told you the hardest decision of your life might've been a mistake because of a daydream.

(beat)

I was always afraid that the girl who would get my jokes, and hate all the shit I do, and love art, and worry about little things with me would just never show up. But she walked right up to me on the beach.

Nick stands up, his eyes heavy with the sort of self-loathing you try to blink away in the mirror.

NICK (CONT'D)

That's the only mistake you made since I've known you.

He turns and walks back toward the house. Aurelia stays where she is, her hand over her mouth to suppress a new wave of sobs.

ANDRE (O.S.)

NICK! NIIIIICK! Where are you!?!?

Like a homing missile on speed, Andre manages to SLAM into Nick in the darkness, knocking the wind out of both of them.

NICK  
Jesus Christ, what?

ANDRE  
We're on. We're on right now, come on.

NICK  
I can't go back in there, I'll get my ass kicked.

ANDRE  
Whatever, we'll figure it out, come onnnnnnn, dude!

NICK  
Man, I don't even feel like per-

Andre's heard enough, he grabs Nick's arm and drags him toward the party.

Aurelia watches, wiping the last few tears from her eyes.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA - GROTTO STAGE

Dante wraps up his song to a TEPID REACTION from the crowd.

DJ  
Ooh, alright. Let's try to end on a high note, then.

Dante's face twists into a snarl, as he drops the mic with a painful BOOM. The crowd BOOS, he flips them two birds. Twon and Breezy meet him as he climbs down the stage steps.

TWON  
Dante, you were--

DANTE  
*SHUT.* The fuck up. If you dumb bitches weren't blind as shit, I coulda snatched the right bag, with the right beat, and I woulda killed it out here.

Right as they storm off, Andre and Nick burst up the steps onto the stage. The DJ hands them each a MIC.

DJ  
We're running outta time, just introduce yourselves.

NICK  
Dre, where's Josh?

ANDRE  
Oh. I thought I left the  
flashdrive, so I told him to get  
it. But I had it.

NICK  
Did you call him and tell him that?

ANDRE  
Uh. Not yet, I will.  
(into the mic)  
What's up party people?!

He gets a resounding CHEER.

NICK  
Man, we can't do this without--

ANDRE  
Too late, dude! We'll catch him  
after.  
(to DJ)  
Run it.

The MUSIC fades in, Josh's now-familiar KEYS serving as the intro. Toward the back of the crowd, Raury stands with Leon, and points out Nick. Leon begins pushing toward the stage.

All at once, Nick registers his nerves and has to overcome them at the same time. With a hard GULP,

NICK  
(into the mic)  
Hey, hey, listen. Before we start I  
just wanna say -- don't kick me out  
yet. Please. Just lemme do this  
first, it's for a girl, and it's  
her birthday, and, it's just  
important. Then I'll bounce.

Andre rallies up a chant of "LET HIM STAY", that the crowd drunkenly takes to. Leon looks back to Raury, who stares Nick down long and hard. Finally, he waves his hand, calling Leon off.

Nick taps his fist to his heart as a "Thank you".

NICK (CONT'D)  
This one's called... well you'll  
figure it out.

## 'THE SONG' MONTAGE

How do you type out the climactic love song meant to win the girl and the night? I think the closest you can come is by giving the reader the real song that inspired the idea:

**So, use "Aurelia (Demo)" by Tom Tripp as a jumping-off point, imagining it injected with the flares and personalities of Nick and Andre.**

They dive right into the song, with Nick up first. The look of uncertain fear we first met him with commands his presence, but does nothing to hinder his performance, as is reaffirmed by the impressed faces in the crowd.

Andre hops in. His voice is rougher, but his charisma is what starts winning everyone over. He jumps around the stage like a mad man, always in rhythm. People start moving - girls dance on their guys, feet tap on the marble.

And then, the chorus hits. It's a fireworks show without the fireworks: a spectacle that needs no prior context to bring up a nebulous feeling of awe in those watching. The crowd EXPLODES, their night has just turned into a memory. Chills shoot up Nick's spine as he takes it all in; he shares a look of pure "Holy shit" with Andre, before scanning the crowd. No sign of Aurelia - no moment is perfect.

The song floats on. Their chemistry on-stage strengthens by the moment, as does the excitement and wonderment of everyone at the party. A few men who look a touch fancier and more important than everyone else furiously type away on their PHONES, even holding them up toward the stage, a la "Back To The Future".

One last chorus. The song, the night, and the feeling are all drawing to an end. CLOSE on Nick's eyes, as they suddenly ignite... we're back where we started.

He spots Aurelia in the crowd, and looks into her tear-stained green eyes. Then, he sees Dante, moving toward her through the crowd, closer and closer. Aurelia looks at Dante, then back to Nick. The fire in Nick's eyes is red hot, his voice is ready to give, as Aurelia turns to Dante, who puts his hands on her hips.

The song is peaking. Nick sings like it's his last chance.

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT. BISCAYNE BLVD - SAME TIME

Josh leans way back in the driver's seat, wearing a pissed off and markedly tipsy look on his face. The McLaren swerves in its lane ever so slightly.

JOSH

Nigga had me drive all the way back. Look all over... and there ain't no motherfuckin' flash drive.

Josh picks up his PHONE and calls Andre. No answer. Josh frustratedly chucks the phone into the backseat. Suddenly a SIREN blares from the car behind him, as the red and blue lights on top of it spring to life.

JOSH (CONT'D)

Shiiiiiiiiit.

Josh pulls the car over.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA - SAME TIME

The song is over. Andre raises his hands in victory with a bellowing SCREAM.

Nick stands calmly, breathing heavily, watching the crowd, where Aurelia and Dante face each other, talking heatedly.

DJ

Goddamn. Ladies and gentlemen, we clearly have a winner.

ANDRE

NICK! BROOOOOOO! WE DID IT, DUDE!

Andre hugs his brother as hard as he can. Nick hugs back.

NICK

We did it. Call Josh, man. Tell 'em we won. And tell 'em I got that money for him - he can have all of mine.

Nick jumps off the stage, into the crowd. Andre brings his phone to his ear.

EXT. BISCAYNE BLVD. - SAME TIME

Josh sits nervously as the COP walks up to the car. He hears his phone BUZZ in the back seat.

On the sidewalk, the Hobo lies against a wall, watching quietly from a distance. The cop approaches Josh - the same walking buzzcut who told Andre to move his car.

COP

I saw you swerving back there, have you been drinking tonight?

JOSH

Nope. No, sir.

The cop scans the car, front to back, recognizing it.

COP

This your car?

JOSH

Yeah... I mean, nah, not exactly. It's my boy's car, I just had to--

COP

Alright, I'm gonna need to see license and registration.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA - SAME TIME

Dante and Aurelia are still in the midst of an argument next to the pool, inaudible amongst the party's ROAR.

Suddenly, Nick bursts through. Aurelia turns to look at him, surprised.

He puts a hand on each of her cheeks, and kisses her like they just said "I do". She wraps her arms around him... another fireworks show without the fireworks.

Dante steps back, watching in total disbelief as Twon and Breezy run to his side. The crowd is losing their minds.

EXT. BISCAYNE BLVD. - SAME TIME

Josh rifles through the glove compartment, his hands now shaking with nerves.

JOSH

Damn, uhm. Maybe he keeps it--

Josh grabs the backpack under the passenger seat. The cop tenses up. The Hobo looks on with vested interest, now.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA - SAME TIME

They hold the kiss another few seconds, before pulling away to even more CHEERS. Nick and Aurelia both have a look in their eyes we haven't seen yet. He leans in close,

NICK

I want you to come to Chicago with me. You can leave behind Dante, and your sister, and your family, and, and all of this. And we can try it again. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry for what I did. But, I love you. Let's try one more time, ok?

Aurelia looks at him with increasingly damp eyes. Then, she looks to her side. Leon is coming toward them; Nick curses under his breath.

But then, a hand reaches out in front of Leon's chest, blocking his way. Dante's. He ignores the shocked looks of everyone around him - Leon included - and glares at Nick.

Dante slowly walks toward Nick, who turns to face him.

EXT. BISCAYNE BLVD. - SAME TIME

Josh nervously unzips the bag's main compartment, and sees something strange that he doesn't recognize, pulling it out to see what it is.

Dante's handgun.

COP

GUN! DROP YOUR WEAPON!

IN SLOW MOTION,

The cop draws, points his GLOCK 19 at Josh's chest. Josh barely has time to turn his head.

BANG.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL AREA

Still in SLO-MO, Dante's fist lands square on Nick's jaw. Nick's eyes roll up in his head, as he lifelessly falls backward.

The crowd erupts into warped yells, ooh's, and even a "WORLDSTAR!". Aurelia screams. Dante aggressively grabs her wrist, and leads them out.

Nick's unconscious body hit the surface of the deeply purple-lit pool with a,

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BISCAYNE BLVD.

BANG.

A second shot rings out, hitting Josh again, as the shock begins to catch up to his face. The Hobo stands up, adrenaline coursing through him, as if in a PTSD flashback.

We accelerate out of slow motion, and into the chaos.

COP  
 (screaming into his radio)  
 131, shots fired, shots fired!  
 Suspect is down, I need ambulance  
 and back up right now!

The Hobo runs over and jumps into the passenger seat of the car. He begins tending to Josh, who's breathing laboredly.

The cop is shaken, his composure gone.

COP (CONT'D)  
 Sir! Sir, get away from him! Now!

HOBO  
 Shoot me too if you have to,  
 motherfucker, this boy ain't dying!

The cop's jaw shakes, he doesn't know what to do.

HOBO (CONT'D)  
 (mumbling)  
 Motherfuckin' Vietnam all over  
 again.

He pulls off his shirt to help stop the bleeding, as he pulls away Josh's trench coat to assess the damage. Two bullet wounds in his chest, each looking like they were headed straight for his heart, and turned at the last second.

The Hobo examines, then reaches into Josh's coat pocket, and pulls out his wind chime. He holds it up in front of his face... the marks of two separate bullets marring the metal tubes.

HOBO (CONT'D)  
Oh, you lucky motherfucker.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - POOL - UNDERWATER - SAME TIME

DULLED SILENCE. Nick floats limply down toward the bottom of the pool, suspended in a glowing sea of purple.

A single, electronic BEEP rings out.

NICK (V.O)  
That water was freezing cold.

The peaceful stillness of the water is destroyed by a huge SPLASH. Andre swims down toward his brother, and wraps his arm around his hip. The two rise up out of sight.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

More dulled silence, save for the sound of the ocean under the full moon.

Another BEEP rings out.

NICK (V.O)  
Again with the irony, right? Or  
maybe I'm getting it wrong again.

EXT. RAURY'S MANSION - NIGHT

Dark and empty, cold and quiet. Almost unrecognizable from what we saw. Raury sits alone on the stage, now just a grotto, looking out pensively over the empty space.

The BEEP's start coming in rhythm, spaced five to ten seconds apart. A heart monitor.

NICK (V.O.)  
So, Chicago had to wait.

Raury stands up and walks away, disappearing.

NICK (V.O.)  
I thought that night was the  
craziest thing I'd ever experience.  
But after that...

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A full world of sound again; the beeps cease.

Nick walks in the direction of the ER, holding a CLOTH over his mouth, clearly in pain. On either side of him is Sierra and Andre, who's excitedly staring at his phone.

ANDRE

Dude, we are poppin'!! Labels are hitting me up, asking if we wanna sign, can you believe this shit?!?

NICK

Did you talk to Josh?

ANDRE

Nah, he won't pick up his phone. He musta got back and just passed out in the apartment.

The CRY of a siren gradually gets louder, as an ambulance races past them, and pulls to the curb right in front of them. The doors swing open, and two PARAMEDICS inside jump out, pulling an occupied STRETCHER down.

Nick, Andre and Sierra stop short as the paramedics hastily wheel the stretcher right past them. TIME SLOWS one more time, as Nick looks down to see Josh, his face obscured by an oxygen mask.

Nick blinks, then blinks harder. Josh gets whisked away, as Nick's face drops.

Sound grows DISTANT, a DULL RINGING taking it's place - like blood rushing to your head.

BEEP.

BEEP.

BEEP.

Nick screams a single word on top of his lungs. We can't hear him, but we know it's "Josh". He turns to Andre, who just looks confused, and screams something to him too.

BEEP.

BEEP.

The same look of terror overcomes his face, as the two turn and start sprinting after the stretcher, the air giving as much resistance as water.

NICK (V.O.)

After that, shit just started getting crazier.

BEEP.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END