

City Island and Two Family House

Two Screenplays

(and too much information about the making
and the selling of two independent films)

Raymond De Felitta

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PRAISE FOR *CITY ISLAND*

“‘City Island’ is a treat for movie lovers everywhere—even if you’ve never heard of the community where it takes place. One could broadly describe it as a comedy—at times, it even plays like farce—but its humor doesn’t come from gags or funny lines of dialogue. It derives, instead, from the real recognizable emotions of a boisterous Italian-American family. That gives the film a solid emotional underpinning and makes watching it a rewarding experience.”

Leonard Maltin, *Maltin on Movies*

“Raymond De Felitta’s ‘City Island’ is that rare thing; a populist movie that doesn’t condescend to either its characters or the audience. ‘City Island’ is heartfelt, funny, wonderfully crafted and it swings.”

Amy Taubin, *Film Comment*

“‘City Island’ is a warmly hilarious movie about family members and their secret hearts. Writer-director Raymond De Felitta tells his story modestly, but his gift for laughs laced with charm and bristling humanity is utterly irresistible.”

Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*

“De Felitta has a great feel for New York City’s further reaches and a very sure hand with actors. He also has the discipline necessary to pull off a farce like this one, where everyone’s dirty laundry gets hung out to dry in a climactic scream-fest.”

Lou Lumenick, *New York Post*

“Another expertly written joyride through the confines of narrow-minded provincialism to cleansing self-awareness from De Felitta.”

Ronnie Scheib, *Variety*

“You needn’t have colorful Italian relatives to enjoy this boisterous and warm-hearted film, which sidesteps cliché while embracing the hope and love in loony dysfunctional families everywhere.”

Amy Biancolli, *San Francisco Chronicle*

PRAISE FOR *TWO FAMILY HOUSE*

“This rich romantic comedy, with its messages of love and tolerance and hope and its great old tunes, won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival and seems destined to capture many more fans. Experience filmgoing joy.”

Lawrence Van Gelder, *The New York Times*

“A fairy tale that presents love as a case of mutual enchantment, “Two Family House” is not only uniformly well acted, superbly designed, lovingly lit and sensitively scored, it’s as romantic as it is funny. This deft and touching urban fable is like discovering a long-lost episode of “The Honeymooners”—the best New York movie Woody Allen never made.”

J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*

“Brimming over with affection and humanity, this memory drama about the destruction of one family and the birth of another is nostalgic in a good sense: funny, bittersweet and poignant.”

Michael Wilmington, *Chicago Tribune*

“Raymond De Felitta has burst into the ranks of major movie-making talent with ‘Two Family House.’ It’s the kind of small but amazing character study (think ‘Marty’) that film lovers yearn for while griping that this type of picture no longer gets made. Turns out it does.”

Carla Meyer, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“The charm and art of De Felitta’s gentle domestic sketch expands far beyond biographical borders. The director bathes a very specific time, place, class and ethnic experience—that of working-class Italian-American New Yorkers on Staten Island in 1956—with a warm, clear light.”

Lisa Schwartzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly*

“A film of rare, delicate sensibility.”

Kevin Thomas, *Los Angeles Times*.

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For My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I hereby take the unprecedented step of thanking the producers of the two movies discussed in this book. On *City Island*, Lauren Versel, Zachary Matz, and Ged Dickersen created a wonderfully supportive working environment for us and managed to keep the extreme stress they were under a well-guarded secret—at least until the wrap party. Lauren and Zachary were both my friends before becoming my filmmaking partners, and happily, those important friendships grew stronger as a result of our collaboration. Above all, a major thank-you to my friend and “accomplice” Andy Garcia, whose belief, support, and artistry made the movie happen.

On *Two Family House*, I was blessed to have the support of Alan Klingenstein, Adam Brightman, Anne Harrison, James Kohlberg, and Bernie DeLeo. A special thanks to Adam Brightman (who was also a dear friend before becoming my valued producer) for supplying the production documents that are included at the end of the book. Thanks also to Quintana Kesler-McGrath, who, no thanks to me, pulled this book together and made it a reality.

“Nothing has ever been invented that is more cumbersome to make than the motion picture. Here are no ordinary tools, no material that keeps its shape more than a brief second. Could a fiddler play a violin that might explode? How does a sculptor use a chisel with the sharp steel facing him? And what of the painter who faced an empty canvas that arrives in a thousand shreds, each protesting fragment demanding separate treatment?”

Josef Von Sternberg
Fun In A Chinese Laundry

FROM THE FILMMAKER

This book contains the complete shooting scripts of two movies that I wrote and directed, *City Island* (2010) and *Two Family House* (2000). I've also included essays—in the case of *City Island* a rather elaborate one—on the writing, financing, making, and selling of each film, as well as stills and assorted behind-the-scenes materials (shooting schedules, budgets, call sheets, and production reports). Combined, these items will explain the process of how an independent film comes into existence, from start to finish. My hope is that the book can serve as a guide—a sort of 'roadmap to oblivion'—for aspiring filmmakers. You'll follow the creation, execution, and sale of both films, read the scripts as they existed long before being photographed, and observe the nuts-and-bolts process that occurs when, one shocking day, a film actually gets financed and the madness of production ensues.

Of the half-dozen feature-length movies I've created in my twenty-plus-year ride, *City Island* and *Two Family House* are the two narrative films of which I am most proud. Both films share a number of similarities. To begin with, both were written as "spec" scripts—i.e., at my own instigation, with nobody else urging or paying me. Both were filmed with almost no revisions made to my original final draft (though cuts were made to both films—in the case of *City Island* quite a few). Both films won the Audience Award at two excellent film festivals—*City Island* at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2009 and *Two Family House* at the Sundance Film Festival in 2000. Both films took exactly seven years to reach the screen, from the writing of the scripts to the unveiling of the finished films. Both were shot in two separate so-called outer boroughs of New York—*City Island* in the Bronx, *Two Family House* in Staten Island (and in Jersey City, New Jersey, which in my opinion qualifies as an honorary outer borough). Both took about the same amount of time to film—twenty-seven days for *City Island*, twenty-five days for *Two Family House*. Both featured some of New York's finest character actors. Both films were highly praised. Though neither one made me much money, both gave me immense satisfaction.

Most importantly, both are linked by a subject that has become increasingly important to me as I grow as a filmmaker and as a student of human behavior. That subject is the journey of the urban middle-class descendants of immigrant parents and the struggle to integrate the traditions of the past with the dreams of the future. This is a particularly sensitive and complicated journey for the first- and second-generation offspring of immigrants, whether they're Puerto Rican, Italian, Indian, or name your pick. For the newly arrived, life in America is a challenge with one simple goal: to survive. For their children, the goal is more complicated: do they continue to simply survive and stay close to the values that the family brought with them from their previous culture? Or do they grow beyond the "tribe" and find a way to live more personal, self-expressive, self-actualized lives? Is doing the latter the next natural step in the chain of progress? Or is it a rejection of their predecessors' values?

The immigrants whose stories I am most familiar with are my grandparents. My father's parents came to America from Italy in the early 1900s. Although I didn't have the opportunity to know them, I know their stories from my father and his siblings. I also saw the impact their cultural beliefs had on their children's lives,

some of it positive, some of it negative. On the plus side, genuine family warmth and unity were absolutes. On the minus, dreams of a life beyond merely working to “put bread on the table” were regarded as impractical. Above all, self-expression—becoming an artist of some sort—was considered embarrassingly indulgent.

But the artist lurking inside everyone is a difficult beast to tame. Many children of immigrants yearned to express the emotions within themselves and to do so through art—singing, acting, writing, painting, dancing. This sort of ambition was usually more a cause for shame than pride to the older generation. And so a decision had to be made by the children: to leave the tribe or to stay in the cave. In the case of my father, he left and pursued a successful career in the arts. In the case of his brother—on whom Buddy Visalo, the main character in *Two Family House*, is based—he didn’t leave, though he wanted to. It was his yearning to free himself and the boundaries that kept him confined that inspired me to write a version of his life story. Later, after I’d written but not filmed *City Island*, I realized I was telling essentially the same story, set in a different decade. It’s this quest that each of these films’ main characters share. It’s these characters’ ultimate realization that, far from removing themselves from the tribe by giving vent to their inner artist, they instead grow to understand themselves and the tribe’s experiences more deeply. In *City Island*, Vince Rizzo hides his ambition to be an actor with shame from his family only to see that by accessing the emotion within him, he makes his broken family whole again. In *Two Family House*, Buddy Visalo takes a more circuitous and bittersweet journey: the crooner who is housed inside the body of a factory worker emerges but ultimately forces him to confront the systemic racism and narrowness of those around him. Both men ultimately find peace and fulfillment in growth. The end of each movie is really the beginning of the next stage of each man’s journey.

So there it is. Take each script for what it is: a tribute to a specific and underappreciated class of urban dweller, and a blueprint for a movie that, fortunately and somewhat amazingly, I was given the opportunity to realize. Take the essays and additional materials for what they are: a journal of the method and madness of low-ish budget independent filmmaking. Each screenplay is presented as the shooting script—i.e., not a transcription of the finished, edited film. I hope the supporting materials prove to be of some worth to somebody out there. And if you haven’t seen the finished films, watch them! They’re readily available on all the usual platforms and are the ultimate manifestation of years of thinking, planning, writing, rewriting, trying, waiting, despairing, and persevering...merely another day at the office in the life of an independent filmmaker.

"CITY ISLAND"

BY

RAYMOND DE FELITTA

Fall, 2001

INT. NORTH JERSEY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAY

A dank and cheerless cellblock. Two correctional officers examine the cells, making sure all inmates are present. One of the officers is middle-aged, tough but not scary-tough. This is VINCENT RIZZO.

Vince Rizzo calls out the names of the prisoners as they pass the cells.

VINCE
Nakovny...Napperfork...Nardella...

This last name makes him pause. He stops and stares into the cell at a YOUNG INMATE who glowers back.

VINCE (V.O.)
You asked me my worst secret. My most personal secret. The secret of all my secrets. I get it.

Vince stares at the young man named Nardella and then, reluctantly, moves on.

VINCE (V.O.)
But first...I'm Vince Rizzo and I want to begin by telling you about where I live.

CREDIT SEQUENCE

1. EXT. CITY ISLAND (THE BRONX) - DAY

Boats in the harbor. Sunlight glinting off the water. Old clapboard houses set in what appears to be a genuine fishing village. All with a view of Manhattan.

VINCE (V.O.)
City Island is a fishing village, located in the Bronx, New York, a place most people associate with machetes, chop shops, the Son of Sam, gang warfare and the once-great New York Yankees.

SHOTS OF FAMILIES LEAVING THEIR HOUSES FOR WORK

VINCE (V.O.)
The Bronx is all these things. But it is also home to the families that are the infrastructure of the greatest city in the world—the firemen, the cab drivers, the sanitation workers, the secretaries, the

teachers, and the cops. And the guys who work in our local prisons. Like myself.

MORE SHOTS OF CITY ISLAND

The locals opening their shops in the morning, bidding each other a good day.

VINCE (V.O.)

Now City Island is distinct from the rest of the Bronx by virtue of being located on its own two-lane spit, right in the middle of the sound. Most people don't believe it until they see it. And within the one square mile that comprises all there is of City Island lies another distinction, that of the mussel-sucker versus the clam-digger.

SHOTS OF THE BOAT WORKERS IN THE HARBOR

VINCE (V.O.)

The mussel-sucker is an island resident who moved here from somewhere else. The clam-digger, however, was born and bred on City Island, preferably in the same house that's been handed down through the generations. Myself, I'm a clam-digger. There's quite a few of us. Houses don't go up for sale here every day. My grandparents built our house in 1924. My dad grew up here. So did I. My kids did too. And this goes to the heart of why it matters so much to a clam-digger to be what he is and not some mussel-sucker.

2. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE - DAY

The Rizzo family home at the end of the cul-de-sac, which sits on the water. Quaint, but not well kept. A Jeep and a Dodge Rambler sit on the ill-kept front lawn.

VINCE (V.O.)

Because we represent family, continuity, stability. And in the Bronx hell, in the world as we know it, these qualities are in increasingly short supply. In short, the world can be divided between clam-diggers and mussel-suckers—those who stay, and those who wander. But I digress. You asked me my worst secret. My most personal secret. The secret of all my secrets. Well...like most of us, I guess I have a few.

From an upstairs side window, we see SMOKE. Not billowing or threatening, just gently emerging from the window.

3. INT. RIZZO HOUSE - DAY

JOYCE RIZZO is getting dressed in a hurry. Great body. Savvy eyes. Men of a certain generation would call her foxy. Morning news blares from a television. The bedroom is small and unkempt.

JOYCE

Vince! You fall in or something? What are you doin' in there?

VINCE (O.S.)

Shower!

Joyce makes a jerk-off motion.

JOYCE

I need the blow-dryer.

No response. She goes to the bathroom door and bangs.

4. INT. BATHROOM

Although the shower is running, VINCE RIZZO is NOT showering. He is smoking a cigarette, leaning against the tiny window and carefully blowing the smoke out. On his face: bemusement. Joyce knocks.

VINCE

Christ.

He carefully stashes his cigarette on the ledge, grabs the blow-dryer, and opens the door a crack, offering it.

She grabs it.

5. INT. HALLWAY/BEDROOM

Joyce. As she moves down the hall, she yells-

JOYCE

Vinnie! You ready for your test today?

6. INT. VINCE JR.'s ROOM

VINCE JR., seventeen, is skinny, all elbows and angst. He surfs the web for porn. We see quick flashes of breasts, legs, asses.

VINCE JR.

Uh, yeah. Just about.

JOYCE

Go out and start my car. I'll be five minutes.

He stands up and backs away from the computer, not taking his eyes off it as he leaves his room.

7. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE

Vince Jr. exits the house, backpack slung over his shoulder, leans into Joyce's jeep, and starts it up.

Across the street an OBESE WOMAN is leaving. She's over three hundred pounds but carries herself well, even proudly. She waves at Vince Jr.

OBESE WOMAN

Morning.

He watches as she maneuvers herself into a small Honda and drives away. Vince Jr. stares as the little car disappears up the street.

8. INT. RIZZO'S BEDROOM

Joyce is almost done with her hair. Vince enters in a robe. Now we see him clearly for the first time.

Vince Rizzo is forty-ish. He is very much here and very much somewhere else simultaneously. Distraction is his mode. His face is a perfect poem of puzzlement. As he dresses—

JOYCE

Call Vivian, will ya? Find out what train she's taking.

VINCE

She staying over?

JOYCE

Spring Break. She's here all week. I thought we'd go out for Mexican tonight—

VINCE

Poker game.

JOYCE (rolls her eyes)

Your daughter's home from college, and all you can think about is—

VINCE

She's here all week! Just make an early dinner, and don't let's start.

JOYCE

And this summer, Vince? You are finishing that garage room and adding another bathroom—even if we gotta get you back on night shift to afford it!

The slamming of the door as Joyce exits ends the conversation. Vince looks at himself in the mirror.

His eyes seem to ask: is this a *bad* marriage?

9. INT. VINCE'S DODGE RAMBLER

Vince sits in traffic on the New Jersey Turnpike. He punches his cellular. A moment later—

VIVIAN (O.S.)

Hi, Dad.

VINCE

Hey sweetheart. How's our future college grad?

VIVIAN (O.S.)

'S fine. Whatever. What's up?

VINCE

Well, your mom wants to know what you want to do all week.

VIVIAN (O.S.)

All week?

VINCE

Yeah, your spring break.

VIVIAN (pause, then O.S.)

Oh. Right.

VINCE

You got other plans? D'you forget?

VIVIAN (O.S.)

No. Course not. I just have work and—

VINCE

Bring your books with you. Take the six o'clock. I'll pick you up.

VIVIAN (O.S.)
You don't have to!

He almost rear-ends a car. He slams on the breaks and loses his phone. He picks it up off the floor.

VINCE
Hello? Christ.

Vivian's gone. Vince crushes his cigarette out and lights another.

10. EXT. BRONX SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL

Joyce's car pulls up. Vince Jr. gets out. Joyce scrawls her signature on a piece of paper and hands it to him.

JOYCE
Write whatever. I don't have time.

She drives off. Vince Jr. waits a beat, watching her go. Once she's gone, he rummages through his bag again and peers in.

A pack of Marlboro Lights and a Bic at the ready. He sets his mother's "note" on fire and lights a cigarette with it.

11. INT. JOYCE'S CAR

Joyce drives into the city. She reaches into her purse. A pack of Camel Lights and a Bic at the ready! She lights up her first smoke of the day and exhales gustily.

12. *EXT. NORTH JERSEY STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Vince's Rambler pulls up to the official's gate. He parks and gets out, hustling from the car to the building, chain lighting one cigarette with the next.

13. EXT. BRONX SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL

Vince Jr. looks around and sees A chubby teenage girl sitting on the steps.

This is CHERYL. Vince Jr. walks over.

VINCE JR.
Hey, Cheryl. What's the matter?

CHERYL (not looking up)
Don't feel well. I'm going home.

VINCE JR.
What's wrong?

CHERYL
It's this new diet I'm on. Cabbage soup and lentils. My stomach is, like, exploding.
(then, looks at him sourly)
I can't believe you smoke. Gross.

VINCE JR.
Wanna do something? I'm not going to class today.

CHERYL
Like what?

VINCE JR.
I don't know. Maybe get some doughnuts?

CHERYL
Oh, nice. Just make a fat joke. Creep.

Cheryl gets up and marches away. Vince Jr. stares at her, bemused at her reaction. Then he walks the other way.

14. INT. JERSEY CORRECTIONAL - DAY

Morning roll call. Vince, in uniform, walks with another guard, MATT CRUNIFF. Vince yells out names as Matt inspects cells. After every name we hear a GRUNT.

VINCE
Hall! Hammett! Hansky! Hattford!

MATT
Morning, ladies!

VINCE
Holurud! Hunt! Innersby! Issacs!

15. INT. LAW FIRM - DAY

Joyce Rizzo works the phones. This is her gig.

JOYCE
Partrige, Amis, Pruitt, and Van Helfen—he's at lunch. Would you like voicemail?

She patches through without waiting for an answer. She takes her headset off and leaves. She hits another secretary's desk. Her name is TANYA.

JOYCE

He played poker again last night.

As she walks away, Tanya bails her station eagerly.

TANYA

Wait! Joyce, wait!

16. INT. JERSEY CORRECTIONAL - DAY

Panning the faces of the prisoners as they grunt after their names are called.

VINCE

Nadler! Nakovny! Nardella!

After this last grunt, there's a slight pause. Vince looks at the prisoner named TONY NARDELLA.

Twenty-one years of age. Dark hair. Brooding good looks. He stares sullenly back at Vince. A beat. Then Vince continues with-

VINCE

Neirhoff! Nieman! Nosotrolanos!

Nardella's eyes follow Vince warily. Then he looks away.

17. EXT. OFFICE BUILDING DAY

Joyce and Tanya smoke it up on the plaza in front of their building.

JOYCE

I checked his pockets. No money--and I figure Vince for a loser at cards. So he might really be playing poker.

TANYA

I remember my Bernie's poker game. Jamie-Lee. From Arkansas. Still hard to believe anyone other than Bill Clinton coming from Arkansas.

JOYCE

Besides, Vince isn't really the cheating type. You know? I mean, that takes energy, planning.

TANYA

You yourself told me it's been a year since you've had sex.

JOYCE (thinks, shakes her head)

Yeah, but Tanya, a year without sex in a long marriage, that's like a coffee break.

TANYA

OK. So how come the poker game is always when he's pissed off at you?

JOYCE

Good, but not positive proof. I got a theory that most guys don't bother to cheat 'cause it's too much trouble. They like the sex up here—

(she points to her head)
—more than...you know. And honestly? What's the difference? After a while, marriage is really just about running a business.

TANYA

So empowered.

JOYCE

Shut up.

TANYA

Joyce, hello? My husband sharing with somebody else what he is legally bound to only share with me? And expecting me to believe he's playing poker?

(pause, then simply)

Even if it were a better lie, I'd kill him. And her.

Tanya smokes her cigarette. Joyce looks away.

JOYCE

Is that what you did to Jamie-Lee?

TANYA

Worse. I let her keep Bernie.

18.INT. CORRECTIONS OFFICE

Vince and Matt are behind a desk in the strictly basics office they share. Vince reads a tattered paperback: BRANDO: A LIFE.

MATT
So. Playing "poker" tonight?

He makes quote signs and smiles knowingly. Vince shoots him a look.

VINCE
It's not what you think, Matt.
(back to paperwork)
Who the new guys?

MATT
Del Boga—transferred from Upstate. And, uh—
Nardella.

VINCE (pause, then)
Lemme see his sheet.

Matt tosses Vince a short stack of papers. In bold letters:

*NARDELLA, ANTHONY
Transfer—Camden State. B: 8/12/84 Camden, N.J.
COUNT THREE—GRAND THEFT AUTO DRUG FELONY
POSSESSION MAXIMUM OFFENDER Approved—board of
parole.*

Next to this is:

A MUGSHOT OF TONY NARDELLA

Facing front and profile. Vince examines it.

MATT
Grand theft auto, ounce a coke, intent to
sell. Done three of five at Southcourt. They
laid him off on us—overcrowding.

VINCE (reading)
Parole...provisional release to closest living
relative...

MATT
Coulda done thirty days on the outside if
he'd had any family to claim his sorry grand-
theft ass. Instead he's gotta wait out the
rest of his time.

VINCE

Hm. 'S tough.

MATT (shrugs)
He'll get out eventually. Then he gets to
boost another Ferrari.

VINCE (reading the sheet)
Says it was an Impala.

Vince's eyes: something odd running through his brain.

18. OMIT

19. EXT. PRISON

Vince steps outside for a smoke. He punches his cellular. A
moment later-

VIVIAN (O.S.)
Hi, Dad.

VINCE
Hey, sweetheart. How's our future college
grad?

19A. INT. LOCKER ROOM

Vivian Rizzo is opening her locker and getting what appears
to be a workout outfit out of her backpack.

VIVIAN
'S fine. Whatever. What's up?

VINCE (O.S)
Well, your mom wants to know what you want to
do all week.

VIVIAN
All week?

19B. INTERCUT VINCE AND VIVIAN

Vince is blowing the smoke away from the phone so as not to
be heard. Vivian is getting her clothes out.

VINCE
Yeah, your spring break.

VIVIAN
Oh. Right.

VINCE
You got other plans? D'you forget?

VIVIAN
No. Course not. I just have work and—

VINCE
Bring your books with you. Take the six
o'clock. I'll pick you up.

VIVIAN
You don't have to!

VINCE
I want to! Call and tell me what bus you
catch. I love you.

VIVIAN
Love you too.

Hang ups. Pull back from Vivian. The locker room is
populated by attractive young women in thongs, bras, outfits
that don't seem collegiate. A bouncer pokes his head in.

BOUNCER
Noon shift. You're on.

Vivian hustles into her "work outfit" and walks out into the

19C. INT. HELL'S HALF ACRE MAIN ROOM

Main area of a strip club. As she walks she talks with a
fellow stripper named EZMALIA, an eastern European.

EZMALIA
You look happy.

VIVIAN
I'm losing a whole weekend full of shifts.
Forgot about "spring break."

EZMALIA
What's with you and spring break? Take a
vacation like the other kids.

VIVIAN
I need the money.

As the two girls climb the stage and get to work on the
poles—

EZMALIA

You young girl—alone. How much money you need?

VIVIAN
You tried going to college in America?

EZMALIA
You tried financial aid?

VIVIAN
You tried keeping your scholarship to a Catholic University after being caught with a kilo of the sticky Hawaiian?

EZMALIA
You were a dealer?

VIVIAN
I was holding. They suspended me and cut off my funds. I can go back next semester, but I have to pay full tuition.

Ezmalia nods toward Vivian's large chest.

EZMALIA
How much for those?

VIVIAN
Welcome to America. Takes money to make money.

20. INT. PENN STATION

Sad Penn, with its pizza and doughnut dives. Vince is waiting at a gate, watching passengers pour off a train.

Finally—

VIVIAN

A bag in her hand. This is a different Vivian. Her hair is up in a bun, her clothes are conservative—khakis, sweater, and glasses. Vince's eyes: he adores his "little girl." Father and daughter hug.

VINCE
I'm double-parked on thirty-fifth street.

VIVIAN
You didn't have to come. I coulda taken the express bus.

21. INT. VINCE'S DODGE RAMBLER

Chugging up the West Side Highway, heading for the Cross Bronx. Fat Friday Traffic. 1010 WINS blares traffic reports from the car radio.

VINCE
You bring your books?

VIVIAN
Um-no.

VINCE
You don't gotta study or nothin'?

VIVIAN
'S fine. Whatever, Dad.

VINCE
I don't want you fallin' behind in-

VIVIAN
Stop, Dad.

VINCE
What? I'm only concerned-

VIVIAN (yells, pointing ahead)
STOP DAD!

She means the car. They rear-end the car in front of them.

22. EXT. RIZZO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Rambler pulls up onto the lawn, its front grill badly dented.

As Vince and Vivian get out of the car, Joyce appears in the doorway, looking at the car.

JOYCE
Great, Vince. Beautiful. Thing of beauty.

VINCE
Ah, shut up.

Vivian looks like she's ready to go back to "college."

23. INT. DINING ROOM

The four Rizzos eat. Vince Jr. stares off at a television set in the other room, playing TVLAND.

JOYCE (to Vivian)

Bloomie's is havin' a sale in Pelham. We should go tomorrow.

VIVIAN
Yeah. Sure.

JOYCE
I can take off a day or two next week. Maybe we'll go to the Botanical Gardens. Vinnie's been wanting to go.

VINCE JR. (frowns)
I what?

JOYCE
To the Botanical Gardens.

VINCE JR. (makes face)
My face, Mom. It's like: botanical gardens? Maybe a tour of the Ziploc bag factory would be more interesting.

VIVIAN
Shut up, Vince.

VINCE JR.
"Shut up, Vince." "You shut up." "No way."
"Way!"

She whacks his arm. Not hard. He recoils in fake pain.

VINCE JR.
Ahh! Christ, my heart!

VINCE
Hey, hey, enough.

VIVIAN
When's he leaving this phase of his dopey adolescence?

JOYCE
Never. He's gonna stay in high school forever 'cause he's too smart to take any of his classes seriously.

VINCE JR.
What for—to get an A? Wow, I got an A. Five more A's and I'll have a "Four point O." Letters and numbers. All so I can grow up and be another meaningless—

JOYCE (jumps in)

Prison guard like your father who didn't go to college either.

VIVIAN
Oh, Mom. Real nice.

VINCE (eats, pauses, then)
Know what else happens if you don't go to college? You wind up with a wife who answers phones for a goddamned living!

JOYCE
I went to Oneonta-

VINCE
For two years. Big deal. Not exactly a Harvard degree there, is it?

Vince Jr. is watching the mounting argument like a spectator.

JOYCE
If I hadn't gotten pregnant-

VIVIAN
Great, Mom. So I spoiled your college degree-

JOYCE
You didn't spoil anything. I only said that if I hadn't had you I woulda-

Suddenly Vince stands and throws his napkin down.

JOYCE
Where you goin'?

VINCE
Poker game.

He slams the door. Silence at the table.

24. *INT. MALAKOV ACTING STUDIO

Twenty or so people, mostly under thirty. MICHAEL MALAKOV, a bushy black-haired acting teacher clad in black, is watching an emotional scene being performed by two young actors, a MALE and FEMALE.

MALE ACTOR
...take it all. I don't want it with conditions! Take the house-

FEMALE ACTOR

Granddad's house! I want it to burn!

Sitting in the back, off to himself, is Vince. He is as out of place as he feels. He clutches a copy of *An Actor Prepares* as if holding onto a security blanket.

MALE ACTOR

Julie, dammit! Can't you understand that we can't burn the past? That it rises up from the ashes whenever we try making deals with it, creating a bizarre conflagration out of the lost chances, the missed opportunities, the human waste—

Calmly Michael Malakov interrupts.

MALAKOV

Let me stop you right there.

The actors freeze. This is not good.

MALAKOV

Indication is no substitution for articulation. I'm feeling a lot of different emotions, but not one specific choice. And too much food on the table leaves the hungry man starving with indecision. It also creates a dramatic vacuum which, once entered, is very hard to disengage from. Our favorite number? One. One premise, one emotion, one action, one result, one step at a time.

Pause. The two actors nod.

FEMALE ACTOR

Thank you.

Pause. The students applaud. When they're done—

MALAKOV

Everybody stand...stretch...thank Mr. Strasberg...

THE CLASS

Thank you, Mr. Strasberg.

MALAKOV

And before you go, here is your assignment. Stand in a row on stage. Quick, hurry!

The students jump onto the stage and form a row.

MALAKOV

Now twist into a semicircle. Keep going until you are each face to face with another of your species...and meet the person who stands across from you.

People smile and shake hands. Vince is standing across from a wondrously alluring woman named MOLLY CHARLESWORTH. She speaks with exaggerated formality.

MOLLY

Molly Charlesworth. A pleasure.

VINCE

Yeah. Vince Rizzo.

She smiles at him. He looks away uncomfortably.

MALAKOV

Your assignment for next week is: share the worst secret of your life with each other. The most personal secret. The secret of all your secrets. You can do so without fear of intimacy issues or any of that bullshit because you are, in fact, protected by the Statute of Actor Limitations to wit: actors can keep secrets like nobody else because only they have secrets that are even more damaging.

(laughter from the class)

What will you do with your new friend's secret? You will use it to find the courage to dramatize the telling of *your own worst secret*? The very thing that you right now are hiding and protecting with your very *life* will soon become a monologue for all of us to hear. I look forward to a litany of devastation next Friday, after which we'll all drink too much and applaud ourselves at the West Bank.

Class is over. Vince and Molly look at each other, wide-eyed.

MOLLY

I'd love to be drunk before we do this, but the chance of a blackout and the resulting loss of memory precludes that. Don't you think?

Vince nods, frozen, at the strange, attractive young woman.

25. INT. EMPIRE DINER

They munch way-too-big burgers. Vince's copy of *An Actor Prepares* sits on the table between them.

MOLLY

Then the day maid came into my room and said, "Your father didn't kill himself. He tried to kill your mother." Only my mother was away—and my father was so drunk he thought their wedding portrait had come to life. So the cops took him in. My brother and I were sent to live with my aunt on her plantation in Hawaii where my brother turned to opium byproducts. I was shuttled to a series of dusty and best-forgotten Swiss boarding schools, and my mother went into rehab at Silver Hill, where she met a patient who was a bricklayer and fell in love with him and married him twice.

(pause, then)

This was pre-Liz Taylor and Larry Fortensky.

Pause. She eats a pickle.

VINCE

Jesus.

(and then)

So what happened to your brother?

MOLLY (shakes her head)

No, enough of that. I don't like it for this purpose. You see, the problem is I've told that secret a million times. I audition with it, in fact.

(and then)

All right, Vincent. Your turn. I'm stuck.

VINCE

Huh.

(pause, thinks)

Is it possible that I don't have one?

MOLLY

No. That would make you too healthy to want to be an actor. Come on now. Think.

VINCE

Well. OK.

(pause, then)

Well, one thing. Right here. My wife thinks I got a poker game tonight. She don't know where I am.

MOLLY

You mean, instead of telling her you're enrolled in a night class you tell her you're out gambling? Is that better?

VINCE

Well, it's hard to explain, but...yeah. She wouldn't go for me wanting to be an actor.

MOLLY (still puzzled)

How terribly refreshing. I mean, to have a celebrity manqué in the family and to not encourage your own reality show. Shunning celebrity. How un-now.

VINCE

Yeah, I guess so.

MOLLY

So tell it to me. Like you were confessing it.

VINCE

OK.

(gamely)

I'm Vince Rizzo, and...I want to tell you my worst secret. My most personal secret. See, my wife...she thinks I got a poker game, when, in fact...

(pause)

When, in fact...

(pause)

You know what? This is bullshit.

Molly looks happily taken aback.

MOLLY

You mean, you could do worse?

VINCE (nods)

Yeah. Guess so.

MOLLY

Try me.

VINCE

Really? I mean...we don't hardly know each other.

MOLLY

I know. Isn't it lovely?

Vince's face: yes, this is the right way to look at it. So:

VINCE

I just met my son.

Molly's face: what could he mean?

MOLLY

Where?

VINCE

In, uh...the facility where I work.
(and then)
I'm a corrections officer.

MOLLY (pause, then)

You're a prison guard?

VINCE (hates this term)

Yeah, sorta.

MOLLY

And how old is your son?

VINCE

Guess he'd be...twenty-somethin' by now.
(and then)
Tony. His name's Tony.

Vince reaches into his pocket and pulls out

TONY'S MUGSHOT

He hands it to Molly, who stares at it. A long stare.

MOLLY

This is brilliant. How old were you when-

VINCE

Early twenties. Just a kid myself, really.
(pause, then uncomfortably)
His mom was older.

MOLLY

And how did you recognize him?

VINCE

His name popped out on his rap sheet.
Nardella. Which was Nan-his mom's name. Born

in Camden—that's where she lived. Not that I was there at the time.

(starkly)
I took off.

MOLLY
A child, conceived in love, but destined to a life of crime.

VINCE
He stole a car. I mean...doesn't exactly make him a criminal, right?

MOLLY
What kind of car?

VINCE (thinks)
Chevy Impala.

MOLLY
No. Anyway, what else?
(long pause, then excitedly)
You've never told your current wife about him. Or about his mother! Or about any of it!

VINCE (long pause, then)
I meant to. It was just...never the right time.

He stares off, unable to comprehend what's happened to him in the past day. Molly stares at him, fascinated.

26. INT. RIZZO HOUSE

Joyce and Vivian watch *American Idol*, glassy-eyed and bored. Vivian's cell phone rings. She answers.

VIVIAN
Hi. No. Can't talk now. Maybe Monday. Give my shift to Autumn. Bye.

JOYCE
Who was it?

VIVIAN
Work.

Joyce accepts this, trusting and disinterested.

27. INT. VINCE JR.'S ROOM

Vince Jr. is on the Internet, glassy-eyed. All kinds of sex sights are searched like: HOT HORNY BABES! BLOND BITCHES!

HOTTEST YOUNG MODELS! He stares numbly at the multiplying images of tiny-wasted, skinny, young babes.

No interest in his eyes at all. He types in: FAT CHICKS, BRONX NEW YORK. Pause. Hundreds—no, thousands—of hits.

He starts scrolling madly through the images. Pauses as he sees something strange. Clicks.

A moment later: an image appears of a woman. He stares at it, at first scared and then amazed as he sees that—

IT'S THE OBESE WOMAN FROM NEXT DOOR

Vince Jr. double-clicks, and the woman's website opens up. It's an elaborate site. The woman's name is DENISE.

DENISE (on Internet)
Hi! I'm Denise, and I'm a proud BBW. That's "big, beautiful woman," for those of you new to this. I'm five eight, three hundred and fifty pounds, and I think eating and being a big, beautiful woman is the sexiest thing in the world!

Vince Jr. is both amazed and appalled by what he's seeing and hearing. After a moment he exits the site. He stands up fast—like he's afraid of being caught!

He walks to the window and looks out at—

28. DENISE'S HOUSE

across the way. A light is on in the kitchen. He sees her large silhouette moving about the room. In his eyes: shame and fascination.

29. *EXT. 42ND STREET NIGHT

Vince and Molly, walking west. She's enjoying his secret.

MOLLY
And there stand you, ready to save—what's his name?

VINCE (little smile)
Tony. Tony Nardella.

MOLLY
Ready to save Tony Nardella from the misery of the last mile and take him into the bosom of your warm-hearted family!

VINCE
Unh-uh, no way. Don't think so.

MOLLY
Why not?

VINCE
My wife, for one thing. She'd flip.

MOLLY
She thinks you were a virgin when you met?

VINCE
Not exactly. But she don't think I was a
father either. Joyce's got pretty firm
opinions on things. It's sorta her best
quality and her worst—you know, all in one.
(pause, then-smiles)
She's one tough woman, and she'll fight like
a pit bull for you if she's on your side.

MOLLY
She sounds like...a *real dame*.

VINCE (nods)
Yeah. A real dame. Looks great too.
(pause, then)
I don't know...we ain't exactly friends
anymore. I don't know when it happened.

MOLLY (pause, then)
The reappearance of your secret love child
might well provide the solution.

VINCE
How?

They stop walking. Molly examines Vince. She can't resist touching his shoulders a little as she talks.

MOLLY
He'll provide a dangerous symbol of your own
virility. She'll be reminded of the very
things that attracted her to you to begin
with. You see, the Vincent she didn't really
know is the Vincent that she secretly wants
back.

VINCE
Does that make sense?

MOLLY

No. But women are emotionally incoherent.
 It's one of our defining characteristics.
 (sings) "One day she'll smile, next day
 she'll cry...minute to minute you'll never know
 why...roses and lollipops, lollipops and
 roses..."

Molly watching Vince's face. She can see he's considering it. She pulls out a pen and jots her phone number on the back of a card.

MOLLY (cont.)

I do some of my best work via cellular. Call me, Vincent. But only on a whim.

And she hands her number to him and disappears into the starry night. Alone, Vince smiles at her as she leaves.

30. EXT. CITY ISLAND - MORNING

The boats in the harbor. Pan across to the Rizzo house.

A plume of cigarette smoke comes out of the upstairs bathroom window. We hear Vince coughing.

Downstairs on the front porch lies Vince Jr., sleeping. One eye opens as-

DENISE EXITS HER HOUSE

She sees Vince Jr., smiles, and waves.

Vince Jr. quickly shuts his eye, pretending not to have seen. But once she walks away, he opens his eyes again and stares after her.

31. INT. BATHROOM

Vince smokes, blows it out the window. He reads a book: *An Actor Prepares*.

But his eyes wander.

32. INT. RIZZO HOUSE

Joyce and Vivian are reading the *New York Post*. Joyce is clipping coupons. Vince comes down the stairs. He pauses and looks at his wife and daughter.

JOYCE (to Vivian)

C'mon, let's get movin' before the crowd shows up.

Vince and Joyce look at each other.

VINCE

I was thinking—bein' Friday night and Vivian's here, why don't we have a nice, big, home-cooked meal tonight?

JOYCE (shrugs)

Yeah, sure, you mean like we do every Friday night?

VINCE

Yeah, but I mean...somethin' special. Like it was for a real special occasion.

Joyce and Vivian stare at him, puzzled.

JOYCE

You want balloons or somethin'?

VINCE

I'm just saying, something nice!

JOYCE

Since when don't I make somethin' nice?

VINCE

Make somethin' nicer!

JOYCE

Make it yourself!

Vince and Joyce stare at each other, filled with frustration. Vince turns and storms out.

JOYCE

The great communicator. Forget it.

33. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE

Vince steps over Vince Jr., who is still lying on the porch. As he gets into the Dodge Rambler—

VINCE

You sleep outside last night?

VINCE JR.

Actually I stayed at the Plaza Hotel and did heroin with a bunch of prostitutes. I'm thinking of becoming a pimp.

Vince nods. Starts up the car. Hasn't heard him.

VINCE (driving off)

Good. See you later.

34. INT. JERSEY CORRECTIONAL

Panning the faces of the prisoners as they grunt after their names are called.

VINCE
Nadler! Nakovny! Nardella!

After this last grunt, a slight pause. Vince looks at Tony Nardella.

Tony Nardella looks back. A beat. Vince moves on. Tony's eyes: Why does the prison guard keep staring at him?

35. INT. VISITORS STATION

Tony Nardella stands there, puzzled. Vince approaches the glass wall that separates them. Into the microphone—

VINCE
Hi, I'm Vince Rizzo. Correctional Officer
426.
(pause, then)
I see where you made provisional parole but
didn't have no family to be released to.

TONY
Yeah. That's life.

VINCE
Yeah. I guess. Uh...
(with difficulty)
Was your mother named Nan?

TONY
Yeah.

VINCE
'Bout five foot two, redhead?

TONY
Yeah.

VINCE (pause, then)
How's she doin'?

TONY
Dead.
(and then)
Four years ago.

Beat. Vince's face: a flicker of emotion at the news.

VINCE
Sorry to hear that.

TONY
You knew her?

VINCE
Uh, yeah. Yeah, I knew her.

Pause. Tony Nardella is not given to verbosity.

TONY
So. Anything else?

Beat. Vince isn't how to deliver this. Finally—

VINCE (looking away)
I spoke to Warden Amboy. And, uh...
(pause, then)
You're bein' released to me. You'll be under
my personal care for the next thirty days. I
live in the Bronx.

Tony's face: this sounds fishy, to say the least.

Music takes us through—

36. EXT. PRISON PARKING LOT

Vince escorts Tony, still wearing handcuffs but now in his street clothes—jeans, boots, leather jacket. In his eyes: a look of suspicion.

37. INT. DODGE RAMBLER

Vince driving. Tony staring ahead, frozen in fear. We see that his handcuffs are still on and chained to the door of the car.

Tony stares straight ahead, miserable and afraid.

38. EXT. CITY ISLAND AVENUE

The Dodge Rambler drives down the main drag and turns onto the Rizzos' block.

39. INT. DODGE RAMBLER

As Vince drives down his block—

VINCE

We got this little house in the back. Really a garage. You can stay there.

(musing)

In fact, I'm thinking we can do a little deal with each other—you know, I do you a favor, you do me a favor.

Tony's eyes: not good!

40. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE

Vince Jr. smokes a cigarette. Sees the Rambler. Stubs it out and runs into the house—

41. BATHROOM

Up the stairs and into the bathroom where he speed-brushes his teeth. He reaches inside a closet for a towel.

Vince's acting book falls from its hiding place. Vince Jr. stares at it. Opens it and sees the mugshot of Tony.

Vince Jr. looks puzzled.

42. INT. RAMBLER

Vince pulls up to his house and parks. Stops and looks at his son.

TONY (uncomfortably)

What?

VINCE (pause, then)

Nothin'.

Vince smiles goofily. He's with his long-lost son!

TONY

Can I ask you...like...why I'm chained to a Dodge?

VINCE

I'll unchain you in minute. Soon as you calm down. First I wanna tell you something.

(breathes, then)

See, Tony, this is my home. My home that my grandparents built and that I share with my family.

TONY

You got them chained up in the house too?

VINCE (ignores this)
You're gonna get real food and a nice place to live for the first time in three years.

TONY
And all of this is because you knew my bitch mother?

VINCE
Well, Nan was difficult, but she was also-

TONY
A drunk and a whore?

VINCE
No! Why would you say that?

TONY
She used to punish me for not boosting cases of Vodka from the liquor store where I worked by screwing my friends. Which base does "drunk and whore" not cover?

VINCE (gingerly)
Don't you have any nice memories of her?

TONY (sullenly)
At least she was around. My father left before I was born.

Pause. Then-

VINCE
That all you know about him?

TONY
He's dead.

Vince's eyes say: so that's what she told him.

VINCE
That's too bad.

TONY
Only thing that's too bad is I didn't get to visit his deathbed and dance on

his ugly face for leaving me with that bitch.

Vince's face: taking in their father/son vibe.

43. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE

Vince gets out. Unchains Tony but then rechains him to his own wrist.

TONY

Do I ever get uncuffed?

VINCE

In a minute. I don't want you running away or anything before you see what a nice setup I'm offerin' you.

TONY

Run away. Gee. Why would I do that?

They walk, chain in chain, down the side of the house.

VINCE JR.

Watches from an upstairs window. What he sees is: his father chained to a young, tough-looking guy walking him to the back of their house.

He stares at the two of the them.

44. EXT. GARAGE

A little one-car shed in the back of the house. Vince hauls the door open.

45. *INT. GARAGE

*A concrete floor, a cot and exposed plumbing.

VINCE

I started building it a couple of summers ago but got busy with other things. So this is where our little deal comes in.

(pause)

You're gonna help me build a bathroom.

TONY

'Scuse me?

VINCE

My wife's been wanting me to add a bathroom, and I saw on your sheet that your last job was as a handyman. So that's the deal. Thirty days back here, build me a bathroom, I'll pay you a fair wage, and then you get to go wherever the hell you want with a few bucks in your pocket.

Tony takes this in. Sees that Vince is for real.

TONY

How'm I supposed to build a bathroom with handcuffs on me?

VINCE

Sorry.

(as he unlocks them)

Just don't go running away. If you do I'll find you and personally toss your ass back in the cage. And they won't be kiddin'-you'll be back in for a long stretch. OK, Tony?

TONY (pause, then)

Whatever.

VINCE

Say "OK, Vince, I promise you that."

TONY (by rote)

OK, Vince, I promise you that.

VINCE

And "Thank you for getting my ass outta the cage." Come on.

TONY (reluctantly)

Thanks for getting my ass outta the cage.

VINCE

And no more talkin' shit about your mother. Maybe she wasn't perfect, but she was...she was...

TONY

A good lay?

Vince smiles. This makes Tony smile too. Vince unlocks the handcuffs. Then he pulls out a pack of cigarettes and lights one.

The sound of A CAR APPROACHING. Panic in Vince's eyes.

VINCE
Shit. My wife.

TONY
Is that what you call her? "Shit, my wife"?

Vince takes, stubs the butt out on the floor, and waves the smoke away.

VINCE
I don't smoke.

TONY
I can tell.

VINCE
And don't tell her where we met. Just say we're old friends.

TONY
We on a bowling team together?

VINCE
And my daughter's home from college, so...you know...take it easy.

TONY (honestly puzzled)
Take it easy?

VINCE
And don't mention that I knew your mom.

*
Tony eyes: what a piece of work.

46. INT. RIZZO HOUSE

Joyce and Vivian enter, arms full of Bloomie's packages.

JOYCE
Anybody home?

Vince Jr. appears at the top of the stairs.

VINCE JR.
I'm here. So's Dad. He's in the garage with some dude. They're handcuffed to each other and have been back there for quite some time.

Joyce's face: turning colors.

47. EXT. BACK OF RIZZO HOUSE

Tony sits in the garage, the door open. He's listening to a MAJOR ARGUMENT being played out a few feet away. None of it is going as planned.

VINCE AND JOYCE are in the kitchen, but the backdoor is open. We see them coming and going as the raging argument continues.

JOYCE

You bring some filthy biker into my home without even so much as asking me-

VINCE

He happens to be a nice young man, and he's working for his board.

JOYCE

Where'd you meet this guy anyway?

VINCE

He was gettin' outta jail in a month, so I told them I'd take responsibility!

JOYCE

He's a criminal? What, Vince, you just picked a con at random to bring into my house?

VINCE

I knew his mother! And since when is it your house? My grandparents built this house!

JOYCE

What do you mean you knew his mother? When? Who was she?

AT THE SIDE OF THE GARAGE

Stands Vivian Rizzo, hiding from view, smoking a cigarette. A small window into the garage is open behind her. She listens to the argument, eyes rolling.

Then she ditches the cigarette, throwing an empty pack of matches through the open window behind her.

48. INT. GARAGE

Tony sits, listening glumly. The matches hit the floor. He stares at them. On the cover: HELL'S HALF ACRE. A caricature of a curvaceous woman in red. He stares at it curiously.

VINCE (o.s.)
 Jesus, you think I never met another woman on the face of the earth aside a you? She was just a...an old friend!

As the argument goes on, Tony looks up and sees Vince Jr. in the window.

JOYCE (o.s.)
 The answer is no, Vince! NO, NO, NO. I'm not cooking for an extra person. He can't stay here. And if you don't like it-

Vince Jr. stares gravely at Tony. Then he gives him a thumbs up. Smiles at him. Tony gives him a thumbs up and smiles back.

49. INT. RIZZO DINING ROOM TABLE - DAYLIGHT (6:00 P.M.)

They eat in uncomfortable silence. Tony gobbles up the home-cooked food.

VINCE JR.
 Guess this is better than the crap they serve you in jail, huh?

Vince hits Vince Jr. on the arm.

VINCE
 Hey!

VINCE JR. (recoils in fake pain)
 Ow, my peptic ulcer!

VIVIAN
 Shut up, Vin.

VINCE JR. (mimics her)
 "Shut up, Vin." "You shut up, Vivian."
 "No way!" "Way!"

JOYCE
 Shhhh!
 (pause, then)
 Vince says he was friends with your mom.

TONY (mouth full)
 Oh yeah. Long time ago, I guess.

JOYCE
I guess so. I never heard about it.

VINCE
It was before we met, sweetie.

JOYCE
Vince says she's a nice woman.
(and then, pointedly)
Good looking, I bet.

Tony shrugs. Nervous eye contact between Joyce, Vivian, Vince, and Vince Jr.

VINCE (a statement)
What.

JOYCE
What what?

VINCE JR.
Mom, Dad's right. Why don't you just come right out and ask him if he had sex with her?

VIVIAN
Jesus!

Vivian whacks Vince Jr. in the head.

VINCE JR. (recoils in fake pain)
Aggh—my brain tumor!

Tony's eyes go wide. What the hell kind of family is this?

JOYCE
Vinnie, you apologize to me!

VINCE
Actually, sweetie, he has a point. I mean, that's what you were getting at, right? You were circling the airport a little, but—

JOYCE
I don't care if you had sex with her or not. Why're you two ganging up on me?

Vince Jr., pleased with himself for having jumpstarted the argument, watches it like a tennis match.

VINCE

Honey, please. After twenty years I know where you're headed before even you do.

JOYCE

Well, that must be real boring for you, Vince. Really. Who knew I was failing to keep you entertained all these years?

VIVIAN

Oh, Mom, he didn't mean it like-

JOYCE

Now you're on his side too, huh?

VIVIAN

Why does it have to be about "sides"? I'm just saying that Dad says things in a stupid way and-

VINCE

I'm stupid, huh? Listen, maybe you talk to your college friends like that-

JOYCE

Good, Vince. Blame her for getting a real education-

VIVIAN

Stop!

Everyone looks at their plates, privately wounded.

TONY

watches the family as they recede into their own thoughts. He continues shoveling food down. Long pause. Then-

VINCE JR.

I'm sorry, Vivian.

VIVIAN

Thank you.

VINCE JR.

Can I ask you a question?

VIVIAN

What?

VINCE JR. (pause, then)
 Are your breasts continuing to grow?
 Because, to my eye, they're much larger
 now than they used to be.

CHAOS. Everyone screaming at once. Tony can't believe what he's seeing.

VINCE (boiling over)
 How dare you speak to her like that!

JOYCE
 Upstairs! Go to your room!

VINCE JR.
 "Go to your room"? Pretty lame, Mom!

VINCE
 Don't you sass your mother! Go to your
 room right now!

Vince Jr. looks thrilled. He bolts up the stairs singing—

VINCE JR.
 Internet-ay! Libertay, egalitay,
 Internet-ay!

Pause. Temporary calm. Tony continues to eat, not making eye contact but CHECKING OUT EVERYONE SURREPTITIOUSLY. His eyes travel to Vivian's chest. Then to Vince.

Vince is also looking at his daughter's chest.

Now Joyce sees it. Tony and Joyce both stare at Vince staring at Vivian's chest. Finally Vivian sees what's going on.

VIVIAN
 What?

JOYCE
 Vince!

VINCE
 Well, he has a point. You seem a little
 larger in that area than—

VIVIAN (mortified)
 Jesus, Dad!

Vivian gets up, grabs her bag and marches out of the house. The door slams.

VINCE
 Hey! Where you goin'?

JOYCE

Goddammit, Vince! That girl spends eighteen hours a day her head in the Books, and she finally gets a little time off to spend with her family, and you gotta screw it up?

VINCE

I didn't do nothing!
 (gets up, throws napkin down)
 Oh, the hell with it. Hell with everyone!

Vince storms upstairs. Now it's just Tony and Joyce. She looks away, trying to keep herself from emotionally exploding.

Tony looks away. Then he stands and begins clearing the dishes into the kitchen. As he does so-

JOYCE

Thanks.

Tony's face: responding to her sadness, her aloneness.

50. INT. BATHROOM

Vince stands in the bathtub, smoking a cigarette (blowing the smoke out the window) and reading *An Actor Prepares*.

Vince stares, but we can tell he's not really concentrating. He stubs out his cigarette, thumbs through the book, and sees Molly Charlesworth's number written in the front of the book.

51. INT. RIZZO LIVING ROOM - DAYLIGHT

Tony putters uncomfortably in the kitchen. Joyce enters with the remains of the meal.

Vince comes downstairs. Sees the two of them in the kitchen. They see him. A beat. Then Vince turns and heads for the door.

JOYCE

Where you goin'?

VINCE

Poker game.

Vince slams out of the house. Pause.

JOYCE (yells after him)
Poker again for me, huh, Vince?

Now it's just Tony and Joyce. He looks at Joyce. A beat.

TONY
Uh...dinner was great.

Joyce nods, looks away. She's crying. Tony slowly backs away, out the kitchen door.

52. EXT. RIZZO YARD - DAYLIGHT

Tony walks to the garage. A small, broken folding chair is set up next to the garage. Tony regards it. Then he sits in the chair and stares at his surroundings.

His face: he's in a different sort of jail.

53. INT. DODGE RAMBLER DRIVING - DAYLIGHT

Vince cruising the Cross-Bronx Expressway. He dials his cell.

54. *INT. WEST BANK CAFE MANHATTAN SAME

Molly Charlesworth is in serious dish mode. She's with a handsome man, drinking Manhattans.

MOLLY
Then my brother had an affair with my stepfather, who met my mother in rehab—this was pre-Liz and Fortensky—and I was sent away to boarding school in Switzerland and—
(her cell rings. She answers)
Hello?
(pause, she smiles)
Well, hello, Vincent.

55. INT. DODGE RAMBLER

VINCE
I'm callin' you on a whim. I was thinking maybe we could work on our secrets thing. You know? Tell you the truth...
(pause, then)
I'm a little stuck. With what to do with my son and everything..

56. *INT. WEST BANK CAFE

MOLLY (into phone)
 My brother? Overdosed on heroin in the
 men's room of the diner on forty-second
 and tenth? Hold his hand and tell him
 I'm on my way! I'll be there in ten
 minutes, Vincent!
 (to her date)
 I'm sorry. You understand. We'll re-sked
 when I'm avail.

And she's off, leaving a bewildered date in her wake.

***56A EXT. WEST BANK CAFÉ**

Molly leaving the bar, on the phone, oblivious to her
 surroundings, delighted to have escaped.

* MOLLY
 Thank you so much, Vincent. It's too
 glorious a night to waste it on old
 material. Fifty-ninth and the river—the
 place with the iron horses in front of
 it.

57. INT. DODGE RAMBLER DRIVING

VINCE (confused)
 'Scuse me?

But the phone is dead. Vince's face: a slow smile as he
 realizes that she just dumped a guy to meet him.

58. *INT. HELL'S HALF ACRE DAYLIGHT

The strip club where Vivian works. She storms in, pulling
 hair out of its bun. BRUNO, the bartender, smiles at her.
 The place is packed with a drunken, boorish Saturday-night
 crowd.

BRUNO
 Spring break over?

VIVIAN
 Do me a favor? Ask Autumn if she wants
 to go home early tonight and split her
 shift with me.

BRUNO
 Highly unlikely. Asian invasion is out
 in force.

He nods with his head. Vivian looks. A table of a dozen Asian businessmen are tipping Autumn with hundred-dollar bills. She's lap-dancing three, simultaneously.

VIVIAN (bitterly)
Shit! I coulda cleaned up this weekend.

He pours her a drink. She lights a cigarette and does the drink in one big gulp.

59. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE BACKYARD - STILL DAYLIGHT

Joyce exits from the kitchen and sits on a lounge chair. She has a pack of cigarettes and a glass of wine in her hand. She sits and looks up as she sees—

TONY is sitting across the yard in the fold-out chair. He sees her. Nods a greeting.

JOYCE

Nods back. Lights a cigarette.

JOYCE (across yard)
My husband thinks I quit.

Tony's face: a private smile at his realization that Vince and Joyce are equally guilty.

TONY (yells across yard)
One good thing about the joint—they don't let you smoke anymore. I quit.

JOYCE
Bein' in prison and not bein' able to smoke? That must be like...bein' in jail.

An odd pause as Tony considers this.

60. INT. VINCE JR.'s ROOM

Vince Jr. is online. The site is: REAL CENTERFOLDS! Lots of pictures of blond, bronzed, California models. His eyes: not interested. And worried too. Then—

Vince Jr. types in "DENISEBBW.COM" and waits. A moment later, there's the fat neighbor! He stares, both fascinated and ashamed.

DENISE (on Internet)

Hi! I'm Denise and I'm a proud BBW. That's "big beautiful woman" for those of you new to this. I'm five eight, three hundred and fifty pounds, and I think eating and being a big beautiful woman is the sexiest thing in the world! If you join my club, you'll get twenty-four-hour access to a live image of my kitchen, where I spend most of my time when I'm not working.

As she continues, Vince Jr. grabs a credit card belonging to VINCENT RIZZO that he keeps displayed quite openly on his desk and enters the numbers. Hits JOIN NOW.

He waits. Energized! Digging it!

61. INT. DINER WEST 42ND STREET - NIGHT

Vince and Molly, drinking coffee, eating French fries. A copy of BACKSTAGE is on the table.

VINCE

He's a good guy. You can tell. Must have had a hell of a time with Nan. Wasn't like I was any help.

(pause, then)

Only thing is he still don't know...who I am.

MOLLY

You must tell him, Vincent. Think of the drama of the moment. On the other hand, think of the drama of not telling him. Wait! Don't think of anything, for God's sake!

(she closes her eyes, and then)

No. You must tell him. The longer he doesn't know your true identity, the greater the sense of betrayal. He's been betrayed enough.

VINCE (guiltily)

All started with me walkin' out on him.

MOLLY

No, don't succumb to self-flagellation. I mean, I understand it—it's wonderfully Catholic, but you're beyond it. You've opened up your home to a convicted felon. You've even shown him great trust by leaving him alone with your family.

VINCE (dawning)
Jesus.

MOLLY
Because he's your blood, and if you can't trust your blood, what the hell can you trust? Now you must take the final step and reveal his birthright to him.

She inhales, satisfied that the decision is correct. Smiles at Vince. A beat. He smiles back at her. One of those shared smiles that could go just about anywhere.

Vince lowers his eyes first. They fall on her copy of *Backstage* sitting on the table between them.

VINCE
What's that?

MOLLY
Ugh. It's an addiction. *Backstage*, the *Wall Street Journal* for struggling actors. You peruse it for news on open calls for parts you won't get in projects that are never made. For instance:

(as she opens it and reads)
Open call: Male, age thirty to fifty, working-class type, no agency rep. required. Monday, 9:00 a.m., Canal Street Armory.

(pause, thoughtfully)
Hm. That one might be good for you.

VINCE
What happens—how's it work?

MOLLY
You've never auditioned? Oh, Vincent, it's dreadful. You go and wait in a room crowded with people who look vaguely familiar. They march you in. They stare at you. They hate you. You sing and dance and show off all of the talent that once thrilled your mother and father. They make faces. Sometimes they ask a question—very rarely. You're dismissed. You leave feeling like a failure.

VINCE
Sounds...scary.

MOLLY

Sometimes a miracle occurs: you get called back. They haven't hated you enough yet—they have to make sure you're dreadful. And then—very very rarely—they find themselves in a jam because they've seen and hated too many people, and they can't make a decision. And they run down the names on the list, and yours pops out, and someone says, "She wasn't bad," and they hire you for scale and rush you on and off the set, and it's over, and you pay SAG huge annual dues to chase them for a residual.

(but then)

Having said that...you really should go on this one. It sounds perfect for you.

She tears out the ad and gives it to Vince who reads it, intrigued.

62. EXT. RIZZO PORCH - NIGHT

Tony and Joyce drinking wine, staring at the water and the view of the city.

JOYCE

You must think we're a bunch of—

TONY

No, no, not at all.

JOYCE

I mean, we don't always act like a bunch of—

TONY

No, forget it I...I understand.

Long pause. Then, with radical simplicity—

TONY

Families are tough.

Joyce looks at Tony. Appreciates his calm stoicism.

63. INT. VINCE JR.'S ROOM

Vince Jr. is staring at the site. A spinning umbrella. Then he hears—

DENISE (on Internet)

Welcome, my new fat-friendly fan!

Vince Jr. looks at his computer, excited.

DENISE (on Internet)
You're now an official member of my club. If you see me at a BBW function in the New York area where I live, you can tell me you're a special member by saying our secret word: *Botero*.

VINCE JR. (to himself)
Botero.

A moment later, an image of a kitchen appears.

LIVE KITCHEN IMAGE

Denise moves around the kitchen, juggling baking pans, cookie sheets, etc.

Vince Jr. gets up. Backs away from the computer, keeping his eyes on the screen, as if it might vanish. He leaves the room—

64. INT. RIZZO LIVING ROOM

—and descends the stairs. Looks. Nobody around. He leaves.

65. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE NIGHT

Vince Jr. exits, hops off the porch, and approaches Denise's house.

The windows are set rather high up. Vince Jr. gets on a concrete block and peers into—

A KITCHEN WINDOW

There she is, just like on the computer, juggling baking pans and cookie sheets. Vince Jr. stares in fascination.

66. EXT. 59TH STREET TRAMWAY - NIGHT

The tram that takes you high above Manhattan, across to Roosevelt Island. As the tram rises into the air, we see that it is indeed a starry, starry night.

67. INT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND TRAM - NIGHT

Molly and Vince are the only two on the tram. Vince looks out, a little mystified at where he is and how he got here. As she stares out at the stars—

MOLLY

The answers are all there. Don't worry, Vincent. For some reason, you're very close to God right now. I don't know why...but you can feel it in the stars.

(dawning)

Of course! Mercury's in retrograde.

VINCE

Mercury's a what?

MOLLY

Mercury—the wing-footed messenger. Represents communication and the process of life. Retrograde: traveling backward. It happens three or four times a year—and since all backward movement symbolizes a return to source, our attentions turn toward unfinished business. It can be a fine time for completing things. Reconnecting. Settling accounts.

(and then)

Letting the stars do their plentiful work.

Vince looking at her. Something about her way...

VINCE

Is it kinda strange that what you say makes sense to me?

MOLLY (shakes head no, then)

Yes. But everything's strange, Vincent. If you'd never seen a flight of stairs and someone told you walk down a flight of them, you'd think that was very strange, perhaps even impossible. Wouldn't you?

(and then)

When you think of it, acting is one of the strangest things a person could choose to do with themselves. Pretending to be another person—who was dreamed up by a third party! It's like agreeing to be a marionette.

Vince turns this around in his mind.

VINCE
Why you an actress then?

MOLLY
Oh, really. What else *could* I do? What other profession would accommodate my behavioral problems?

VINCE (smiles)
Yeah. Sort of like getting paid for being a screw-up.

MOLLY
Perfect.

They both look off at the view.

68. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD - NIGHT

Joyce and Tony.

JOYCE (resigned)
I feel like I spend my whole life trying to please everyone, and all it does is make 'em mad. My son—Jesus, what a pill he's becomin'! And Vivian. Twenty years of working for that law firm so I could put away enough for her to go to law school after she graduates. You'd think she'd at least talk to me about it. I ask her about her classes, and she just shrugs. "Whatever..." And Vince and his "poker game." Does he think I buy that crap?

TONY (a little shrug)
I grew up with a mother and no father. And my mother hated my father so much for leaving that she took it out on me 'cause I reminded her of him.

Joyce lights another cigarette. Stares off into the yard and blows smoke.

JOYCE
He started that room three years ago. Bought enough wood and junk to build a forest. That was gonna be his new career-building stuff. He was all gung-ho, and then...pffffttt.

(shrugs)

He gets discouraged when things take too long. Like more than an hour.

Tony clutches himself against the cool air. Joyce sees this.

JOYCE

Upstairs in my son's room? There's a bunch of sweaters. First door on the left.

He nods and gets up.

69. INT. RIZZO HOUSE UPSTAIRS LANDING

Tony bounds up the stairs and enters

70. VINCE JR.'s ROOM

Nobody's home. The lights are out. Only the glow of the computer is on. Tony stares at the screen.

DENISE (on Internet)

Welcome, my new fat-friendly fan! You're now an official member of my club. If you see me at a BBW function in the New York area where I live, you can tell me you're a special member by saying our secret word: *Botero*.

Tony scowls at the computer.

TONY (to himself)

Botero.

71. EXT. DENISE'S KITCHEN WINDOW

Vince Jr. watches Denise.

VINCE JR. (under)

Botero...

Then the concrete block he's on sways backward.

SUDDENLY--IT GIVES

Vince Jr. falls backward into a fence. Big noise.

DENISE looks up, frightened.

DENISE

Hey! Hello! Who's out there?

Vince Jr. scrambles to his feet, hops over a hedge, and runs into his house.

72. INT. UPSTAIRS OF RIZZO HOUSE

Vince Jr. dashes up the stairs.

73. UPSTAIRS STAIR LANDING

Tony hears the sound of Vince Jr. approaching. He backs out of the room, but suddenly—

TONY AND VINCE JR.

are jammed together, staring at each other on the tiny landing. They stare at each other as they execute a pas de deux away from each other.

74. EXT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND - NIGHT

Molly and Vince sitting on a bench looking at the glorious Manhattan view.

MOLLY

And you, Vincent. What's brought you into the studio of the great teacher and failed actor Michael Malakov?

VINCE (bashfully)

I once knew a guy, Joey Fizziola. Bartender up in Nyack. I'm watching this cop show on cable, and boom! There's Joey playin' a wiseguy. Now they got him on almost every week!

MOLLY

Recurring! The bastard.

VINCE

Guess I thought it was worth a shot. Probably stupid of me. S'why I don't tell anyone I know about...you know, about goin' to acting class.

MOLLY

You don't?

VINCE

My wife thinks I got a poker game. My buddy at work Matt covers for me. He thinks I got a girlfriend.

MOLLY

What would your wife do if she found out?

VINCE

I dunno. Laugh, I guess. She says the only thing I ever finished that I started was a roll of toilet paper.

(pause, then)

Sometimes I wonder if my wife and I are just...

He lets it trail off, like the thought of it upsets him.

MOLLY (smiles)

You and your wife have a whole second act in front of you.

VINCE

You don't even know her.

MOLLY

But I know you. You have grace, Vincent. And a man with your grace takes much of it from his wife.

Vince considers this as they sit on a bench facing the walled riverbank, the city looming in front of them.

VINCE

So. You been thinkin' any more about your "worst secret?"

MOLLY

I think about it all the time.

VINCE

You probably got so many interesting secrets—

MOLLY

Scads.

VINCE

—it's hard to tell which one's the best.

(pause, then)

I gonna get to hear it? I don't mean to press you or nothin', but we got class comin' up in a few days, and...

He lets it hang.

MOLLY
Where do you live, Vincent?

VINCE
The Bronx.

MOLLY
No thonx.

VINCE
Huh?

MOLLY
Nothing. Ogden Nash. Skip it. For all I know, the Bronx is lovely.

VINCE
Well, my part of it is. 'S called City Island. Old fishing village.

MOLLY
Really?
(this appeals to her)
City...Island. On the one hand a paradox—a peaceful island located within the world's busiest city. Further, the words stand in stark relief from each other—"city," so short and abrupt and definite, and "island"—exotic, unknowable, and with the silent S.

VINCE
I never really thought about it. It's a great spot, though—my grandparents built the house and passed it down. Once you live there you can't really think of moving anywhere else.

MOLLY
Every busy city needs an island of peace. Like every busy soul needs a place of repose. A place where we hide from our own frantic stories while they...madly, insanely, obsessively pursue us.

Pause. This last was said with a vigor that denotes to Vince another side of Molly, another angle. He looks at her, unafraid and unbashful. Molly looks him right in the eyes. Then she opens her purse and pulls out an envelope. She hands it to Vince.

MOLLY
There it is, Vincent. My secret.

He begins to open the envelope. But she stops him.

MOLLY
No. Not yet. I need it to stay mine for just a little longer. Once you know it, it's no longer truly a secret.
(mysteriously)
There'll be a moment when it's obvious. Carry it with you. The moment could come at any time.

Molly and Vince smile at each other. A beat. As they look out at the glittering view of Manhattan, they hold hands.

MOLLY
Oh, Vincent. What a wonderful time to have not disappeared.

75. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD - NIGHT

Tony comes down, putting on a sweater. He stops when he sees that Joyce is curled up in a blanket, her eyes closed. A beat. Tony steps away from the sleeping Joyce.

JOYCE (opens an eye)
G'night, Tony. Pleasant dreams.

TONY
You too, Mrs. Rizzo.

JOYCE
Joyce. Mrs. Rizzo was Vince's mom.

He smiles and heads for the garage. He stops in the door and gives Joyce one last look.

She's looking at him too.

76. INT. VINCE JR.'s ROOM

He stares at the phone. Picks it up and dials. A beat later—

CHERYL (over phone)
Hello?
(beat, he doesn't speak)
Hello?

VINCE JR.
Cheryl. It's Vinnie.

CHERYL
Oh. Hey, Vinnie.

VINCE JR.
I was wondering if you were free Monday.
It's spring break.

CHERYL
Um. To do what?

Pause. Vince Jr. thinks. Then—

VINCE JR. (as if compulsively)
I dunno. Get a bunch of pizza and ice
cream and eat a lot of doughnuts and—

CHERYL
You are so funny! Loser!

She hangs up. Vince Jr.'s face: pained at her
misunderstanding his intent.

77. EXT. ROOSEVELT ISLAND - NIGHT

Molly and Vince. The tram is arriving. As they walk toward
it—

MOLLY
Thank you for calling me. I had a
wonderful evening.

VINCE
Yeah, me too.
(sees the tram)
We should catch this one.

MOLLY
You go. I'm staying to see the sunrise.

VINCE
You sure?

MOLLY (nods, then)
Your son, Vincent. Talk to him. Reach
out. Be a dad. Spend Sunday getting to
know him. Show him you care. Make an
effort. I sound like Sally Goddamn
Struthers.
(and then)
And go on that audition, Vincent. It'll
be a good thing for you.

As the tram doors close and the trams ascends into the air—

VINCE

Hey!

(loudly, over the noise)
What if I screw it up?

MOLLY (yelling back)

Then you'll probably get the job!

They wave to each other, Vince in the air, Molly on the ground.

MONTAGE – SUNDAY AT THE RIZZOS'

78. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE – DAY

A plume of smoke emanates from the upstairs window. We hear Vince coughing.

79. VINCE JR.'s ROOM

He's asleep with his head on his desk, his computer still on Denise's website.

80. KITCHEN

Vivian comes crashing in, obviously hung over. She opens the fridge, grabs a bottle of Coke, and chugs it. Goes outside.

81. BACKYARD

Vivian passes the garage, pausing as she sees—

TONY

Already awake, doing pushups on the cement floor of the garage room. He doesn't notice her.

She glares at him, mistrust in her eyes. She walks away. Tony keeps doing pushups.

82. A TINY AREA ON THE SIDE OF THE GARAGE

Hidden from view. Vivian lights a cigarette and stands there, smoking and swigging her Coke. A small window into the garage is open behind her.

Vivian throws an empty pack of matches through the open window behind her.

83. INT. GARAGE

Tony's doing pushups as the matches hit the floor. On the cover: HELL'S HALF ACRE. A caricature of a curvaceous woman

in red. He stares at it curiously, as he continues his exercises.

84. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD LATER

Vince and Tony examining the little room, drinking coffee.

VINCE

Then I figure we run the pipe through her and tap into the main line.

(a little labored)

Feels good building something. Don't it?

Tony nods but looks off. He sees—

JOYCE

making coffee in the kitchen. She meets his eyes. Tony smiles at her. They each look away, bashfully.

85. INT. BACKYARD - LATER

Vince and Tony carrying bags of cement from the rear of the garage to the front. Tony has his shirt off. A large tattoo of a cobra is on his back.

VINCE

You know, my grandfather built this house. Way back. Before I was born.

(pause, then)

Came here from the old country and became a fish scaler.

TONY

Oh yeah?

VINCE

Yeah. Him and his brother. Couple of real mussel-suckers.

TONY (puzzled)

How's that?

VINCE

Well, here on City Island, if you come from somewhere else you're known as a mussel-sucker. But if you're born and raised here you're a clam-digger. Old City Island custom.

Tony stares at Vince like: who is this guy?

TONY
Huh.

As Tony grabs another bag, we see the expression on Vince's face: he and Tony are not connecting.

86. INT. GARAGE - LATER

Vince lights up, blowing the smoke through the tiny window. He notices Tony staring at the poster of *The Godfather*.

VINCE
If I could come back as somebody
different, it'd be him.

TONY (warily)
Don Corleone?

VINCE
No. Brando.
(and then)
Always kinda thought being an actor is
something I could do. Fact, I'm takin'
this acting class in the city. I guess
it's kind of stupid—I ain't even told my
wife. She thinks I got a poker game.

Tony's eyes: remembering Joyce's accusation of the night before.

TONY
And all you really got goin' is an
acting class?

VINCE
Shh. Don't tell no one.

He offers a cigarette to Tony, who refuses it.

TONY
I quit inside.

VINCE
Yeah, they got that rule now. Must suck.

TONY
Plenty other things that are worse.

Pause. Vince's eyes: guilty at what he knows must go on.

VINCE

We try to keep an eye on things. It's hard—so many guys, so many groups and gangs. But we see somethin' goin' on that we don't like, believe you me—

TONY (a little icy)

I took care of myself.

VINCE

Oh yeah?

TONY (shrugs)

I figured as soon as I got to Southcourt I had to act more psycho than everyone else. I mean, I was younger, so I had to watch myself.

Vince is interested in this. He peers at Tony.

VINCE

What'd you do?

TONY

I went right up to the ugliest guy I could find and said, "I think I'm pissed off with you, but I don't know why. Do I got a reason?"

VINCE (smiles)

No shit?

TONY

Yeah. I was like, "Gimme your top ten reasons you're a piece of shit, and I'll let you know when somethin' rings a bell. Just don't lie to me, and don't figure me for one of your sissy-boys who're gonna put out for you, you sadly deformed excuse for humanity posing as a piece of prison garbage."

(pause, he shrugs)

It worked. They thought I was psycho. I was just...acting.

Tony turns away. Keeps working. But Vince looks at Tony, admiration in his eyes. And yearning to connect to him.

87. INT. RIZZO HOUSE

Tony wanders over to the living room where he sees

VIVIAN

She looks up from her book.

TONY
Think it's lunchtime.

VIVIAN (an odd grunt)
Nhhff.

She buries her head in her book.

Tony stares at her for a beat. Then he leaves.

88. DINING ROOM

Brunch time. Vince, Vince Jr. Vivian and Tony sit as Joyce serves up bacon, pancakes, etc.

JOYCE
What time you get in, Vince?

VINCE
I dunno. Midnight.

JOYCE
Win any money? Playing poker?

She makes "quote" signs as she says "poker." Vince drops his fork and stares at her.

VIVIAN
OK. That was extremely provocative, Mom!

VINCE (makes quote signs)
What does this mean, huh?

As the argument continues—

TONY'S FACE

He knows the truth of Vince's whereabouts.

89. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD

Tony shovels dirt from one pile to another. He goes to the—

TINY AREA ON THE SIDE OF THE GARAGE

where he finds Vince sitting on a brick, smoking and reading the "OPEN CALL" ad. He blanches when he sees Tony, stubbing his cigarette out.

TONY
Relax. Just me.
(re: the ad)
What's that?

VINCE
Well, between you and me, OK?
(Tony nods)
I got this friend who cut this out for me.
It's an open call for some movie-tomorrow
morning. But...
(pause, smokes)
I don't think I'm gonna do it.

TONY
Why not? Isn't that what you wanna do? Try
acting?

VINCE
Yeah, but I'm no actor. Not for real.
Anyway, too much trouble. I gotta get the day
off from work-tell 'em some story. And for
what? It'll never amount to nothin'.

Tony's face: not getting Vince's lassitude.

TONY
You should do it.

He walks away. Vince stares at the ad.

90. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE FRONT PORCH LATER

Vince Jr. lies on the porch, eating sunflower seeds and spitting the shells onto the lawn. But he's looking at the house next door. He pulls a cigarette out of his pocket and thinks about lighting it when-

Vince exits, the ad and his cellphone in his hand.

Vince stashes his ad. Vince Jr. hides his cigarette. No privacy here. They regard each other with mutual frustration.

VINCE JR. (agitated)
What are you doing?

VINCE
Taking a walk.

VINCE JR.

I'd join you, Dad, but I'm waiting for a crack delivery from a group of black friends I've developed a close relationship to in school. Some might call it...
 (makes "quote" signs)
 "a business relationship."

VINCE (didn't hear him)
 Good. See you in a while, son.

He walks away, heading down the street. Vince Jr. looks relieved at his being gone and pulls out his cigarette.

91. INT. KITCHEN

Joyce looks out the window. Sees Vince walking away. She grabs her cigarettes from a drawer, steps outside and lights one.

Tony is hauling away a pile of old lumber. Hot out. His shirt's off.

Joyce stares at his muscular back. In her eyes: she's checking him out. As Tony turns and heads back to the house, the lumber in his arms-

He stops. Sees Joyce. They look at each other. SOMETHING ABOUT THIS LOOK...

TONY (nods)
 Hey.

JOYCE
 Hey yourself.

She holds his eyes. Then turns and goes back into the house. She is twenty years younger in attitude. Tony watches her. Then-

He drops the lumber.

92. INT. KITCHEN

Joyce enters, stops. Smiles to herself. She doesn't see Vivian staring at her.

JOYCE
 Oh yeah.

VIVIAN
 Oh yeah, what?

Vivian is staring at her mother, breaking her reverie.

JOYCE
Oh, relax.

Joyce walks away, blowing her daughter off.

93. EXT. RIZZO BACK YARD

Tony is bending down to pick up the lumber he dropped.

TONY'S POV

Through his knees he sees Denise, the fat neighbor, exiting her back door. Tony looks, head upside down, as she waddles through her garden.

Tony gets up. Stares at her. Mind working.

He picks up the lumber and walks to the front of the house.

94. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE FRONT PORCH

Vince Jr. is about to light his cigarette when

TONY APPEARS

He places the lumber next to the trash. Looks at Vince Jr.

A beat. Then Tony says, with a nod to Denise's house:

TONY
Botero?

Pause. Vince Jr. looks afraid, like he's been found out. BUT IF TONY KNOWS THE SECRET CODE THEN IT MUST BE OK. So-

VINCE JR. (nods)
Botero.

A door slams. They both look over as-

DENISE EXITS HER HOUSE,

heading for her car. She sees Vinnie Jr. and smiles. Vince Jr. stares at her, terrified. She looks puzzled and walks away. Vince Jr. looks to Tony, fear in his eyes.

TONY (urging him on, in a whisper)
Botero!

Should he? Shouldn't he? Can he? Will he? As she's about to disappear from view—

VINCE JR. (shouts)
BOTERO!

Denise stops. Turns. They look at each other. She smiles at him.

DENISE
I'm making Triple Braised Baby Back Ribs and deep fried potatoes au gratin!
(and then)
Want to go shopping with me?

Vince Jr. gets to his feet. Stares at her. Tony stares at him. Finally, Vince Jr. smiles as he walks over to Denise.

Tony watches, quietly pleased at his part in this little exchange.

95. EXT. CITY ISLAND MAIN STREET

Vince on the cell phone, the crumpled "open call" ad from *Backstage* in his hand, a cigarette in his mouth.

VINCE
Yeah, it's Vince Rizzo, correctional officer 426. I'm sick and need to take tomorrow off. Matt Cruniff'll cover my desk. All right?
(then)
And don't call my house for nothin'.

He hangs up. As he walks away he sees—

VINCE JR. AND DENISE

walking into the A&P together like an old married couple.

Vince's eyes: his son and the fat neighbor are friends?

96. INT. THE A&P MARKET

Vince Jr. pushes the basket as Denise fills it up with cartons of fattening food. Vince Jr. stops as he sees—

CHERYL

The chubby girl from high school, standing by the diet foods section. Vince Jr. smiles at her.

VINCE JR.

Hey, Cheryl.

She turns. His face: preening in a strange way. Cheryl turns and sees Vince Jr. with the super-sized Denise.

CHERYL
Vinnie?

Cheryl's face: despite herself, she is jealous!

97. EXT. CANAL STREET - MORNING

Vince checks the address of the ad. Walks and looks down the block. Heads for a building. Sees a line waiting to get in. He goes to the Security Man who waits at the head.

SECURITY MAN
Follow the line.

Vince nods. Looks at the guys on the line. They all look a little like him. Middle-aged, working-class types, age 30-50.

He walks down the line, expecting it to end. Guy after guy, all reading scripts, copies of *Backstage*, *Variety*, some talking on cell phones, some listening to radio headsets. He gets to the corner and sees:

THE LINE EXTENDS AND WINDS AROUND THE BLOCK

*Vince keeps walking, a little perplexed. He stops, surprised to see

MICHAEL MALAKOV

His teacher, standing on the line, glasses perched on the end of his nose, reading the *New York Post*.

Vince almost says hi. But something about the situation is too strange, too poignant. Vince continues on his way, unseen by Malakov.

Finally he reaches the end of the line. He asks the last middle-aged, working-class guy:

VINCE
Hey, uh...you know anything about this movie here?

The guy turns to Vince. With grave simplicity:

WORKING-CLASS GUY
Scorsese and De Niro.

98. INT. RIZZO HOUSE BEDROOM

Joyce is putting on sweats and a big t-shirt. She opens her secret drawer and spies her cigarettes. Smiles. Goes to the window. And sees:

FROM THE WINDOW

Tony. The garage door open. He's hauling more lumber and trash out. His clothes: jeans. Period. Bare feet and bare chest.

Joyce looks at him. Then she takes off her sweats. She stands alone, in the darkness of her bedroom in her underwear.

She goes to her drawer and pulls out a pair of black Danskins. They haven't been worn in a while. But as she puts them on, her look says she feels...*better*.

99. EXT. CANAL STREET

Huge. Vince is no longer at the back. But he has miles to go. He stands, out of place, not reading trades, not talking on the phone, not knowing anyone.

100. EXT. GARAGE RIZZO HOUSE

Tony is hauling the last of the garbage out. He sees Joyce approaching.

TONY

Almost done with the trash. What's next?

JOYCE

I don't know. Vince tell you what he wants in here?

TONY

Toilet. Walls. Shower stall. Floor. He wasn't specific. But we could go to a...you know...bathroom place and pick some stuff out. Maybe. If you feel like it.

OVER A CLOSE-UP OF JOYCE WE SEE A SUBTITLE:

He's saying we should go somewhere together. I think.

101. INT. RIZZO HOUSE

Vivian is bumming around upstairs. She goes to a window and sees—

VIVIAN'S POV

Tony and Joyce talking. Their body language is sizzling.

Vivian's face: watching the encounter with horror.

102. EXT. GARAGE

Tony and Joyce.

JOYCE

I got no plans. Took today off. You know...

(makes quote signs)

"family time."

OVER A CLOSE-UP OF TONY, WE SEE A SUBTITLE:

She's this guy's wife. He got you out of friggin' prison. She has A GREAT ASS.

TONY

Yeah, well, maybe we should ask Vince if he has any...preferences.

OVER A CLOSE-UP OF JOYCE, A SUBTITLE:

Yeah, his preference is to boff some slut on Saturday night. Poker game, my ass.

JOYCE

Preferences? For what?

OVER A CLOSE-UP OF TONY, A SUBTITLE:

The different ways in which you enjoy having sex. Lots of sex. Now. Today.

TONY

You know. Toilets and stuff.

The word "toilet" makes him laugh. She laughs with him, not knowing why.

JOYCE

That's funny. Why's that funny?

TONY

'Cause it's...you know. Toilet.

Exaggerating the word. They laugh. Look at each other.

JOYCE
Yeah. Toilet.
(pause, then)
I better call my husband.

She goes inside. Tony watches her go.

TONY (to himself)
No. No. No way.

103. INT. RIZZO KITCHEN

As Joyce dials—

JOYCE (to herself)
No. No way. Nope.

104. INT. UPSTAIRS OF RIZZO HOUSE

Vivian stares out the window, shell-shocked.

VIVIAN
No, never, not, nor, nhnfffff—

She clutches herself, shuts her eyes and shudders with anger and frustration. It's almost like a seizure. When she stops, she has another look on her eyes.

It says: I'm outta here.

105. INT. KITCHEN

Joyce dialing the phone.

JOYCE (into phone)
Officer Rizzo, please.

As she waits we hear Vivian SLAM the door. Joyce looks puzzled.

JOYCE
Vivian? Hello?

No response. Then, back into the phone—

JOYCE
Yeah, I'm holding for my husband, Vince Rizzo.

(pause, then)
He called in sick? No, no message.

She hangs up, a puzzled look on her face. Then she dials.

106. EXT. CANAL STREET

Vince standing on line. His cell rings. He answers it.

VINCE
Hello? Hi, sweetie. Uh...
(looks around)
...I'm at work. Yeah, well, I'm
out in the yards.

107. INT. RIZZO KITCHEN

Joyce's face: crunching up with anger, with sadness, at another of Vince's lies.

JOYCE
Oh. OK. No, I just was wondering if you
had any preferences about toilets.

108. EXT. CANAL STREET

Vince's eyes narrow.

VINCE
Toilets? Uh, take Tony with you. He can
probably help.

109. INT. RIZZO KITCHEN

Joyce looking out the window at the bare-chested Tony. He stops what he's doing at looks back at her.

JOYCE
Yeah. Good idea. I'll take Tony.

Over Joyce's face, one last subtitle:

**You're goddam right he can probably
help.**

110. EXT. SAW MILL RIVER PARKWAY

Joyce and Tony driving in her car.

111. INT. CAR

Joyce drives. Tony stares out at the passing scenery. Pause. Tony sees something on the floor. It's—

A PAIR OF HANDCUFFS

Joyce sees him looking at them.

JOYCE

Ug, Vince. Know how cops never leave the house without their gun? My husband swears that every car needs a good pair of handcuffs. Like he's Joe Justice!

TONY (looks out window)

What's that?

JOYCE

Orchard Beach. Ever seen it?

112. EXT. ORCHARD BEACH PARKING LOT

The jeep pulls off into a vast parking lot.

113. EXT. DENISE'S HOUSE - DAY

Vince Jr. knocks on the door. His bearing is more confident, less tentative. Denise opens the door.

DENISE (nods, smiles)

I'm making a triple Chocolate Death Cake—it's a brownie base layered in white chocolate, milk chocolate and dark chocolate fudge sauce, covered in whipped cream. Come in!

114. INT. JEEP

Tony and Joyce in the car, which is parked. Each stares straight ahead.

JOYCE

Tony? You do anything else? Besides—

TONY

Boosting a car? Just some kid stuff. Held up a gas station. Robbed a pharmacy. Couple of jewelry stores.
(he looks at her)
You afraid of me?

Long pause. Then—

JOYCE

Oh yes...

They plunge into each other, face against face, and start making out.

115. EXT. CANAL STREET

A clock on a neighboring wall reads 3:30. Vince looks bored to tears. But he's getting closer.

116. INT. DENISE'S KITCHEN

Denise cooking up a storm. On the walls hang posters of the art of Fernando Botero—delightful images of hugely voluptuous men and women.

VINCE JR.

I was thinking of killing myself. Or cutting off a vital sexual organ in defiance. Anyway, I can't tell anyone else I know.

DENISE

Oh, Vinnie. All those poor kids staring at swimsuit calendars. They don't know it, but that's as close as they're ever gonna get!

Vinnie Jr. looks at Denise. A major weight is being lifted off his adolescent shoulders.

She smiles at Vinnie Jr.

DENISE

Who was the girl in the market yesterday?

VINCE JR. (embarrassed)

Just someone from school.

DENISE (beat, then)

She's a sweetie. Invite her over.

Vince Jr.'s face: what a party.

117. INT. JEEP IN ORCHARD BEACH PARKING LOT

Tony and Joyce are hungrily kissing each other. She maneuvers herself off the driver's seat and onto his lap.

Joyce's face: it's been a long time since passion overcame her. Tony's face: it's been a long time period.

Tony jams the seat backward. Now it's a bed. The make-out continues.

118. EXT. CANAL STREET ARMORY

Vince getting closer. A CASTING ASSISTANT comes out.

CASTING ASSISTANT
We'll take the next ten inside, and that's it
for the day.

She starts counting. Gets to Ten. Number Ten is Vince! He can't believe it.

119. INT. CASTING OFFICE

Vince and the other ten guys sit. They're reading sides-pages of the scene. Vince struggles to make sense of it. Looks around at the others, who seem awfully casual about this.

The Casting Assistant appears.

CASTING ASSISTANT
Vince Rizzo?

He drops his pages in shock. Scrambles to pick them up. Collects himself. As he walks in-

CASTING ASSISTANT
Relax. Be yourself.

120. INT. CASTING OFFICE

A large, windowless room. A CASTING DIRECTOR sits behind a table at one end. At the other end of the room, a single chair is placed in the center. A camcorder sits on a tripod next to the casting director, pointed at the chair.

CASTING DIRECTOR
Have a seat.

Vince freezes.

CASTING ASSISTANT
Sir. Have a seat and slate yourself.

Vince sits down, puzzled.

VINCE
Uh...say again?

She turns the camcorder on.

CASTING ASSISTANT
Look into the camera and say your name.

VINCE

Oh. Vincent Rizzo, correctional officer
426.

121. INT. JEEP

Joyce and Tony necking passionately. He fondles her breasts.
As the make-out continues...

122. INT. CASTING OFFICE

The casting director is listening to Vince read. It's not
going well. His reading is wooden. Strangely, he is using
Marlon Brando's accent from *The Godfather*.

VINCE (reading from script)
So make no mistake, Joey. From here on
out, I'm watching you. What you do. Who
you do? Was it...no. Watch it 'cause
Frankie Grinucci has eyes in the back of
his head."

(pause-puzzled)
My head. Must mean in the back of my
head.

The Casting Assistant's eyes are on the ceiling.

CASTING ASSISTANT
Thank you, Mr. Rizzo.

VINCE (looks at her)
So that it?

She nods. As Vince stands, though, we hear a voice coming
through her computer monitor.

VOICE
Cinda. Just a moment.

She holds up a finger signaling Vince to wait.

VOICE
Are you an actor?

Vince looks around. Where is the voice coming from? He
doesn't answer

CASTING DIRECTOR
Mr. Scorsese would like to know if
you're a professional actor.

Vince's eyes narrow. He looks around the room, as if searching for where Scorsese might be. But the voice, like the voice of God, has no location.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Mr. Rizzo?

VINCE

Uh, not really. I'm a corrections officer.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

A prison guard?

VINCE

(shrugs—he hates this term)
Guess you could call it that.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Where do you work?

VINCE

North Jersey State Correctional.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

That one of those...country club prisons?

Vince can't help but be slightly offended. Perhaps this is what was intended?

VINCE

I wouldn't call it that, sir, not by a longshot. We got people in there who...lemme put it this way: if you could see inside their minds and what they're thinking, you wouldn't be thinking of no golf game.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Tell me more about what you do. What's a typical day like?

VINCE

Typical? Well...no such animal. Some days it's rote and tote—you know, roll call and work duty. Nothin' much happens. Other days...

(pause, then)

Other days there's trouble. Gangs get outta control. We gotta lock down. The boys and girls have their little bitch

spats just like in the real world only they jump some bones and try to make their mettle on the new recruits. Ugly stuff. Sometimes guys come in, and I say to myself, "Two words for you: bye-bye." 'Cause I know they ain't getting out the same as they came in, if you know what I mean.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

You know this scene we just read? Could you do it in your own words?

Vince thinks. Shrugs. What the hell.

VINCE

My own words? Well, I didn't read the whole script or nothin', but it seems like this Joey Zambooli thinks he's got the goods on the guy I play. Frankie—
(consults script)
Grinucci. Which makes this Zambooli the worst kind of creep.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Why do you say that?

VINCE

Well, like for instance, where I work? It's all about power. And guys like Zambooli come at the new guys and try to intimidate them. And if you don't get in their face fast, they'll have you on all fours sucking the cement.

(pause, then)

Pardon me.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

So what's the best way to deal with these guys?

VINCE

Well, what I would do is make it very clear from the beginning that I am more psycho than they are.

Tony's words.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Explain that to me.

VINCE

Well...I'd put my hand on this Joey Zambooli's shoulder and sorta from

nowhere I'd go, "I think I'm pissed off with you, but I don't know why. Do I got a reason?"

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Look right into the camera, as if you were talking to Zambooli.

Vince does as he's told. WE SEE THROUGH THE CAMCORDER LENS, VINCE GIVING THE FOLLOWING PERFORMANCE.

VINCE

Yeah. I'd say, "Hey, Joey Zambooli, you think I got a reason to be pissed off with you? Gimme your top ten reasons you're a piece of shit, and I'll let you know when somethin' rings a bell. Just don't lie to me, and don't figure me for one of your sissy-boys who're gonna put out for you. I got the eyes in the front, the back and the side of my head, and they all see twenty-twenty. Comprende, you sadly deformed excuse for humanity posing as a piece of prison garbage? You mess with Tony Nard-
(pause—he corrects himself)
No. You mess with Frankie Grinucci, you lose.

He stops, a little startled by what just came out of him.

SCORSESE'S VOICE

OK. Thank you.

VINCE

Yeah, you better thank me you piece of shit. You lying, two-bit, punk-ass-

SCORSESE'S VOICE

Maya?

The Casting Assistant stops Vince.

CASTING ASSISTANT

Mr. Rizzo. Thank you.

Vince looks at the casting assistant, puzzled. She smiles a plastic smile back.

123. INT. WEST BANK CAFÉ - DAYLIGHT

The theater spot for actors, employed and unemployed. Vince and Molly sit at the bar. He drinks a beer. She drinks a martini, astounded at the story he's telling.

MOLLY

You did an improv for Martin Scorsese? Vincent, that's no everyday garden variety audition. You're...why, you're in the elite corps of auditioneers.

VINCE

Yeah, it was pretty cool, all right.
(frowns)
But it was bullshit.

MOLLY

What do you mean?

VINCE

I made it sound like...you know...that's the way I talk to the guys inside.
(pause, then)
That's the way my son talks. Tony.

MOLLY

That's even better. You coopted another's experience and filtered it through your personality, and out came a performance. That's not bullshit, Vincent. That's *acting*.

Vince's cell rings. He looks at it nervously.

VINCE

Hello? Yeah, this is me.
(pause—he looks confused)
You want me to come back? Why? I forget something?

124. INT. CASTING OFFICE

The Casting Assistant is alone in the big room, on the phone.

CASTING ASSISTANT

Mr. Scorsese would like to read you again with some of the other actors who've already been cast. This would be Wednesday at two. Can you make it?

125. INT. WEST BANK CAFÉ - DAYLIGHT

Vince on the phone. Molly's eyes are bugged. She can tell what's happening.

VINCE

The other actors'll be there?

(pause)

Yeah. I gotta take off work,
but...Wednesday should be fine...

Molly is jumping up and down in her seat, mouthing the words: CALL BACK? CALL BACK?

VINCE

OK. Sounds good. I'll be there. Hey,
thank you. For everything there. And
thank him for me too. Yeah.

He hangs up.

MOLLY

They called you back?

VINCE (stunned)

I guess so.

A strange pause. We can see in Molly's face that she is both excited and disappointed.

MOLLY

Oh, Vincent. Your first time out...

VINCE

Yeah, how 'bout that.

(pause)

What's wrong?

MOLLY (pause, then)

It's an old theatrical adage. Every time
a friend succeeds, a little something in
me dies.

(shaking it off)

No. It's brilliant. It's the way it has
to be. We meet, to have coffee and tell
secrets and for me to show you the
advertisement in *Backstage* that launches
your career. After all, if I'm not
making history, I at least want to be a
part of it!

VINCE

I ain't exactly got the part yet. What
if I screw up this callback?

MOLLY

Then you'll probably get the job!

VINCE

Yeah. Then I'll probably get the job!

Molly stands on the bar rail and yells to the other patrons:

MOLLY

Hello, everyone! Listen to me! This is my friend Vincent Rizzo, and on his very first audition ever he got to improvise for Martin Scorsese, and they've already called him back to read with the other actors.

(and then)

And he's a *prison guard!*

The people at the bar all applaud. Way to go! Who says it can't happen?

Vince's face: it's the first time anyone's ever applauded for him. He can't help it. He starts to fucking cry.

126. EXT. ORCHARD BEACH PARKING LOT - DAYLIGHT

The Jeep hasn't moved.

127. INT. JEEP - DAYLIGHT

Tony and Joyce in the car. They are still kissing. He begins to unbutton his pants. She helps him. But then she stops. Looks at him. As if to convince herself-

JOYCE

S'OK, Tony. I'm not just like doin' this for revenge...

TONY

No, look, I don't care. Doesn't matter to me.

She undoes his pants. The make-out continues.

TONY (cont.)

Only lemme ask you...

(pause)

If he wasn't foolin' around on you-

JOYCE

Don't worry 'bout that. He's made his decisions. Now I'm making mine.

She looks down at his crotch. Tony's eyes are wide with anticipation. But—

TONY
OK, but what if...what if he hadn't?

JOYCE
Hadn't what?

TONY (lost now)
Made what you thought he'd made?

Joyce stares at him. Now she's a little pissed. But she plays coy.

JOYCE (a little hurt)
Maybe you got another feelin'?

TONY
What other feeling?

JOYCE (demure)
I don't know. Like you don't like me?

Tony stares at Joyce.

TONY
This is definitely not the case.

HE CRASHES HIS MOUTH INTO HERS. And the make-out continues.

128. INT. DENISE'S HOUSE - DAYLIGHT

Denise, Vince Jr., and Cheryl eat a mountainous meal.

CHERYL
My parents put me on a diet of seaweed and watermelon. I thought I was gonna starve to death.

(and then, with self-loathing)
My sisters are both runway models. I hate them. All they do is throw up and go shopping. Why do I have to be beautiful too? I hate beautiful people.

DENISE
You are beautiful, honey! We're all beautiful people. Only our society has taught us that we're ugly if we're not a certain weight. They teach you to be a glutton for every kind of product they sell, then they open huge supermarkets filled with food and tell you you're not

supposed to eat too much! Hello,
 America! Where's the beef?
 (pause)
 I said, where's the beef?

Vince Jr. snaps to. Grabs the platter of spare ribs.

VINCE JR.
 Um, sorry. Here.

As he serves the girls-

129. INT. WEST BANK CAFÉ - DAYLIGHT

Vince and Molly, having another round. They've had a few already and this, combined with the events of the day, are sending them into the orbits.

MOLLY
 I have a dear friend who was sleeping
 with a William Morris agent for weeks!
 I'm sure she would put you in touch if
 there was a deal to be made.

VINCE
 Course, my daughter's gonna go to law
 school. Maybe she could help out with
 the...deal. You know?
 (to bartender)
 Hey, encore here, huh?

He makes a "two more" motion. The bartender starts mixing.

MOLLY
 What about your wife, Vincent? Have you
 thought of how you'll tell her? I mean,
 she doesn't even know of your acting
 ambitions as yet, does she?

VINCE
 No, she don't know nothin'. She thinks I
 got a poker game.

130. INT. JEEP ORCHARD BEACH - DAYLIGHT

Tony and Joyce making out. Once again she's heading for his crotch. Once again he stops her.

JOYCE
 What?

TONY

Joyce. I can't. It's not that I don't
wanna. It's not nothin' except...Joyce.
Maybe your husband...

(pause)

I mean, maybe he's got something else
goin' on in his life. Maybe it's not a
poker game, but that don't mean it's
gotta be another woman.

JOYCE (sarcastic)

Oh yeah? What's he-takin' a class
somewhere? Puh-leeze.

Tony's eyes: wide! She's onto it and doesn't know it.

TONY

Joyce.

(and then)

I'm sorry. I can't.

He's looking ahead, frozen with the demands of his own
conscience. Joyce sees that he means it. Tony's eyes:
conflicted between what he thinks is right and what his dick
thinks is right.

131. INT. WEST BANK CAFÉ - DAYLIGHT

VINCE

She ain't gonna believe it. No matter
what I say, she ain't gonna believe it.
Jesus. I got a lot to back up and
explain to her. Hard to know where to
start.

The new drinks arrive. They each sip, thinking.

MOLLY

I suppose the truth is out of the
question.

VINCE (quickly)

Oh yeah.

(pause, an idea)

I got it! You're my manager! We'll say
that you discovered me.

MOLLY (warming to the idea)

In some strange way—my brother's an
inmate or some such nonsense, and I'm a
talent manager, and I brought you in to
read for Mr. Scorsese. Right. If she has
any problems, they'll be directed at me.

VINCE (not liking that)
Is that OK?

MOLLY
Wives always hate me, Vincent. I'm used
to it.
(pause, then)
City Island. Here we come.

He gets to his feet. Wobbly! So's she. They hold onto each other as they exit into the twilight.

132. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE - DAYLIGHT

The Jeep pulls up. Tony and Joyce get out. Obviously, they are not talking. Tony walks a little funny. As Joyce starts up the stairs-

TONY
Hey. Thanks.
(pause)
I had a great time.

Joyce looks at him, profoundly hurt and annoyed. She shakes her head patronizingly and enters the house.

Tony stares after her as the door slams. Once she's gone-

TONY
Shit. Shit. Shit.

133. INT. GARAGE - DAYLIGHT

The room is a square box--no place to hide. He pulls down his pants, but looks around the room.

Way too exposed. Pants around his ankles, hard-on bulging through his underwear, he heads for a corner. Looks around the room. Way too weird. He sits on the floor, in pain.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY DAYLIGHT

The Rambler approaches the exit sign that reads: CITY ISLAND AND ORCHARD BEACH.

MOLLY (points out)
Oh look! You can see the bridge from here! And boats. And co-op city! What a brilliant sunset. Can we stop?

134. INT. GARAGE DAYLIGHT

Tony sits, glowering.

Suddenly Tony stands up and BANGS his head against the wall, once, twice, three times.

Scary. He pauses. Self-loathing and fury in his eyes.

Then he notices:

HIS BELONGINGS IN THE CORNER

A couple of pairs of pants and socks. Plus his duffel bag.

In his eyes: impending freedom. He throws the bag together and finds a piece of wire from a hanger on the floor. He bends it and conceals it under his shirt. Checks his appearance in the reflection of the window and then, on his way out, notices

A PACK OF MATCHES ON THE FLOOR

He picks them up. The matches from Hell's Half Acre that Vivian tossed away the previous day.

Tony's face: staring at the caricature of the curvaceous woman on the cover. Looks on the back of the matches. Lo and behold:

An address: "Hell's Half Acre. 2100 Route 6, Piscataway, New Jersey."

135. EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAYLIGHT

Tony looks upstairs at a light in the window. He can see the glow of a television and a silhouette of Joyce.

He makes his way stealthily down the driveway, keeping his eyes on the window.

136. EXT. CITY ISLAND - DAYLIGHT

The Rambler drives down the main street of the village.

137. EXT. RIZZO DRIVEWAY - DAYLIGHT

Tony opens the door to the Jeep. Quickly and expertly attaches the wire to the ignition head. Pigs it to another wire. A moment later, the engine starts.

He shuts the door, quickly backing out of the driveway and jamming forward, down the little street.

Tony has boosted the Rizzos' car.

138. EXT. CITY ISLAND DOCKS - DAYLIGHT

Magic Hour—a glorious summertime 7:00 P.M., where the sun hangs in the air, slowly sinking. Molly and Vince stand at Island's edge.

MOLLY

Every busy city needs an island of peace. And every busy soul needs a place of repose.

VINCE

Yeah. Guess that what draws the mussel-suckers.

MOLLY

What's that?

VINCE

'S what we call the people from somewhere else. See, if you're born and bred on City Island, you're a clam-digger.

MOLLY

Like yourself. But the newbies—

VINCE

Mussel-suckers.

MOLLY

And they're looked down upon.

VINCE

Oh, we don't make life difficult on nobody. It's just the way the world divides up.

MOLLY

Yes, I suppose it is. Those that stay and those that wander.

(pause, then)

Tell it to me again. Your big secret.

VINCE

About Tony? Well, you know the whole thing. You're the only one who does.

MOLLY

But how did it work? How did you meet his mom? And when did you know you were leaving?

Beat. Vince looks into her and can see that she has a reason for wanting these specifics. Deep breath. Here it goes...

VINCE

Well, when I was 'bout nineteen, I met Nan, who was older. And she was hot for me, and I was hot to get away from my family. We drank at the same bar. And before you know it...we were living at her place in Jersey.

(pause, then)

Strange how things happen when you're not even looking.

139. INT. JEEP DRIVING - DAYLIGHT

Tony drives, reggae dance hall BLARING from the radio. He grooves along with the radio, cruises in and out of traffic, and generally seems to be having a great time. Freedom!

140. INT. RIZZO BATHROOM

Joyce is brushing her teeth. But she's out of toothpaste. She opens a closet door and finds

VINCE'S BOOK

An Actor Prepares. She stares at it, suspiciously. Opens it. Inside is a card, on which is written MOLLY CHARLESWORTH-917-463-3742.

Joyce stares at the number, having at last found the enemy.

JOYCE

Bitch.

141. EXT. CITY ISLAND DOCKS - DAYLIGHT

Vince and Molly.

VINCE (finishing his tale)

And then the next thing she's pregnant, and by then I knew she was bad news for me, and I tried to get her to get rid of the kid.

(remembering the moment)

And she said to me, "I know you'll be leaving soon anyway. And I ain't getting left with nothing for myself." And that's how I knew she was having the kid, and I had to just...do what I had to do.

(pause, then)

I had seventy-five hundred bucks saved from when I started working with my dad on his boat. It was gonna put me through City College. I sent it to her instead. Then I got hooked up with the prison stuff—figured I needed a good, steady income and pension. I never heard from Nan again.

MOLLY

And did you ever tell anyone else in your family?

VINCE

Nah. I didn't wanna burden nobody else. Besides, I wasn't too proud of taking off.

MOLLY

Leaving's never pretty. No matter how you do it.

A beat. Then Molly's cell phone rings. She answers it.

MOLLY

Hello...hello...

But there's nobody there.

142. INT. RIZZO BEDROOM

Joyce hangs up the phone, pain and anger in her eyes. She mimics Molly's accent.

JOYCE

Hulew! Hulew! Bitch.

143. EXT. CITY ISLAND DOCKS - DAYLIGHT

Molly and Vince. She hangs up the cell. An odd look in her eye.

MOLLY

There was nobody there.

VINCE

I hate these things. I'm always getting' wrong numbers.

MOLLY

No, it wasn't a wrong number, it was...an announcement. A ring-a bell, an indication.

VINCE
Of what?

MOLLY (smiles)
Now, Vincent. Now's the time. You do have it on you, don't you?

Vince's face: blank for a moment. Then he realizes she means the envelope! The secret! He pulls it out.

VINCE
Your secret? Yeah, course.
(before he opens it)
You sure?

She nods. Doesn't take her eyes off him. He opens it. Inside is a single photograph.

THE PHOTO

is of three very young children, all grouped on a couch, smiling at the camera.

VINCE
Who are they?

MOLLY (beat, then)
My three secrets.

Vince takes this in, trying to connect the Molly he knows with the Molly that is being revealed. She looks him in the eye. Her looks says it all. He takes it in. Then, quietly-

VINCE
Where are they?

MOLLY
With my husband in Schenectady.

VINCE
Schenectady? Upstate? What were you doin' up there?

MOLLY
The real question is: what am I doing down here?
(and then)

That's where I'm from, Vincent. Born and raised.

VINCE

Your family own some big business up there or somethin'?

MOLLY

My father was the janitor at the grade school. My mother left when I was six.
(the photo)
And their mother left a year ago.

Big beat. Vince connecting the enchantress he knows with the woman she's revealing herself to be.

VINCE (pause, then)

Why?

MOLLY

To see if it was possible to pretend the past never existed.
(and finally)
Don't hate me, Vincent. I thought if anyone might understand, it would be you.

Vince looks at the picture. Then at her. In his eyes: sadness—as much at himself as at her. He extends his hand. She takes it.

144. EXT. ROUTE 6 NEW JERSEY - DAYLIGHT

The Jeep swerves in and out of traffic at double the speed of the other drivers. It takes a sharp right and heads off the road.

145. EXT. HELL'S HALF ACRE - DAYLIGHT

The Jeep pulls in. Plenty of other rowdy cars in the parking lot. Tony parks and gets out. Feels fucking great!

146. INT. HELL'S HALF ACRE

Tony enters. A bouncer stands at a curtain. Behind him is visible the bar and the elevated dance floor. Strippers undulate. The bouncer looks at Tony.

BOUNCER

You got ID?

Tony pulls out his wallet. Produces a prison ID card. The Bouncer shrugs. Nods him in. Tony enters.

THE MAIN ROOM

Heads for the bar. Catches Bruno the bartender's eye.

TONY
Heineken.

Bruno nods, pours a cold one. Tony puts down a twenty. Turns and looks at the stage longingly.

Three strippers, pole dancing. Hot stuff. Tony stares, trying to drink in a good, long look. Then—

TONY'S FACE

Something funny here. He moves back into the main room staring at one of the strippers. Yes, it's—

VIVIAN

Wrapping her legs around the pole.

TONY'S FACE

He can't put it together. He moves closer to the stage.

VIVIAN

Wrapping legs, shaking booty. Customers pant. She opens her eyes. And—bingo! SEES TONY.

TONY'S FACE

Not wanting to be seen but frozen in place.

VIVIAN'S FACE

Not wanting to be seen, but frozen in place.

They each stare bug-eyed at each other. Then she jumps off the stage and races off.

Tony goes out the front way.

EXT. REAR DOOR OF HELL'S HALF ACRE

Vivian emerges in a bathrobe and slippers. Slams the door behind her, grasps the wall, and closes her eyes.

VIVIAN
Shit.

147. EXT. FRONT DOOR OF HELL'S HALF ACRE - DAYLIGHT

Tony emerges, looks confused.

TONY
Shit.

The bouncer stares at him.

THE REAR OF THE BUILDING

where Vivian is trying to calm down. She furtively looks over her shoulder, out toward-

THE PARKING LOT

where she stares ahead at-

JOYCE'S JEEP

Vivian's eyes: filled with suspicion. She walks to the car. Opens the door and then the glove compartment.

The handcuffs fall out. So does a cell phone.

TONY

watches Vivian discover the Jeep. Fear in his eyes. He briefly looks like he might flee. But this is not an option. After squirming a little, he heads toward her.

TONY
Uh. Hi.

VIVIAN (furious)
What are you doing here?

TONY
Yeah, well, guess I could ask the same question.

VIVIAN
Does my mother know you have her car?

TONY
Does she know you're a stripper?

Beat.

VIVIAN
Give me the key.

TONY
I'm not trying to make any trouble-

VIVIAN
Let me have the key.
(pause, then)
Do you even have it?
(pause, then)
You don't have it.
(a smile now)
You stole my mother's car! Didn't you?
Oh, you loser!

Tony's eyes: real fear. She takes the cell phone and dials 911.

TONY
I really think before you do anything we should talk.

VIVIAN
About what? Economic theory?
(into cell)
Hello, I'd like to report a stolen car.
Yeah, I can hold.
(and then)
J-A-I-L, here he comes!

TONY
I thought you went to college.

VIVIAN
Who says I don't go to college?

TONY
What's this, your part-time gig?

VIVIAN
I don't have to tell you anything.

TONY
So you *do* go to college?

VIVIAN
I do? I mean—yes! I do, but...shit, why are you even here?

TONY (the matchbook)
'Cause I found this in the garage.

VIVIAN
Shit! Well, so what? My parents aren't gonna listen to anything you have to say once they find out you stole their car!
(into phone)

Hi, yes. My mother's car was stolen.
License plate number is...

She doesn't know it. She goes to the back of the car. But Tony runs to the back of the car and stands in front of the plate as Vivian tries to read it.

VIVIAN
Hold on!

She runs to the front of the car. But Tony sprints there first and once again obscures the license plate with his body. In frustration, she turns to run to the back again but—

SHE TRIPS

falling on her face and sending the cell phone skidding across the asphalt. Tony makes a diving leap for the phone and grabs it. But now Vivian is on his back, pounding his neck and shoulders, trying to get the phone. As they roll around the asphalt, struggling—

VIVIAN
GIVE ME THAT!

TONY
CALM DOWN!

VIVIAN
YOU STOLE MY MOTHER'S CAR!

TONY
AND YOU'RE A STRIPPER!

VIVIAN
STRIPPING ISN'T AGAINST THE LAW!

TONY
DOES THAT MEAN IT'S OK FOR ME TO TELL
YOUR PARENTS 'BOUT WHAT YOU DO?

VIVIAN
DON'T YOU DARE! LOSER!

TONY
BITCH!

VIVIAN
JAILBIRD!

TONY
HOOKER!

VIVIAN
DON'T CALL ME THAT! I'M NOT A HOOKER.

TONY
SHOWIN' YOUR TITS FOR MONEY, WHAT'S
THAT CALLED? LIBRARIAN?

VIVIAN
I GOT SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL AND LOST MY
SCHOLARSHIP! IT'S JUST SO I CAN MAKE
ENOUGH MONEY TO GO BACK AND NOT HAVE TO
TELL MY PARENTS WHAT HAPPENED!

TONY (laughing at this)
AND I'M A LOSER, HUH?

She hits Tony hard on his face. This stops him.

TONY STANDS,

throwing her to the ground. Beat.

TONY
Oh, the hell with all of you.

HE THROWS THE CELL PHONE

across traffic and the highway. Vivian looks stunned as Tony marches to the car. He grabs the handcuffs, cuffs one end to himself and the other end to Vivian's arm.

VIVIAN
What are you doing?

TONY
I'm taking your mom's car back with you
in it—so you know I really delivered.
And only you know I took it, and only I
know you work here. That's the deal
forever. Unless one of us blows it.

(then)
That's how it works where I've been, and
that's how it's gonna work with you and
me. Got it, Vivian?

She gets it. But she looks at the handcuffs.

VIVIAN
Take these off.

TONY

Sorry. But your behavior toward me in the past few days hasn't exactly earned my trust.

Vivian's hostile glare at Tony is mixed with something else: the guilty knowledge that he's right.

148. INT. JEEP DRIVING - DAYLIGHT

Tony drives with his unhandcuffed hand. Hostile silence.

VIVIAN

Why did my father bring you home?

TONY

I have no idea.

Hostile silence. Then—

VIVIAN

What was goin' on with you and my mom?

TONY

Nothing.

VIVIAN

Are you gonna tell them that I'm a—

TONY

I gave you my word, didn't I? My word is my word. Which is something you and your jerk-off family probably never heard of. Bunch of lyin' psychos.

VIVIAN (sullenly)

Why are you so angry at us?

TONY (thinks, then)

Why am I so angry with you? Why am I so goddamned angry with you?

(thinks, then)

Because you're all good people. I can tell. Only it's like each of you gotta keep somethin' from the other just to feel better, or smarter, or...I don't know. All of you could be happy if you were just...just straight up with each other.

(pause, then)

I been inside the last three years, and I never met anybody there half as screwed up as you and your psycho family.

Tony is finished. He stares ahead at the road. Vivian doesn't react overtly.

But in the mirror we see that her eyes are welling up.

149. EXT. RIZZO HOUSE - NIGHT

The Rambler pulls up. Vince and Molly get out. Molly looks at the little clapboard house and smiles.

But Vince notices the empty parking space, the lack of Jeep.

VINCE
What the hell?

MOLLY
What's wrong?

VINCE
She ain't home. How 'bout that?
(shrugs)
Maybe she went out for some food.

They mount the stairs and enter the house.

150. INT. HOUSE

Vince and Molly in the living room. Vince unpacks his pockets of keys, change. Molly sits on the couch.

VINCE
Now I'm thinkin', when she comes in, I'm gonna say, "Joyce, it's time we had a talk."

151. RIZZO BEDROOM

Joyce is lying in bed. She hears Vince's voice, gets up from the bed and heads for the

152. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Where she sees Vince and Molly from the top of the stairs. She looks puzzled. They cannot see her.

MOLLY
Vincent, darling, it's the wrong way.
Women—they feel challenged by too much honesty too quickly.

Joyce's face: *what the hell?*

VINCE

Trust me, twenty years I've been with her. I know what I'm talkin' about-

MOLLY

Vincent, darling, thirty years I've been a woman. Let me handle her. We begin casually. No mention at all of anything unusual going on. Before she can even think to ask what I'm doing here, she'll be thanking me for having come into your life.

Joyce's face: *enough is enough*. Slowly she walks down the stairs. Molly sees her first. Looks puzzled. Motions to Vince who turns.

VINCE

Hey, you're home!

Joyce nods, face blank with shock and outrage.

JOYCE

Yeah, Vince, I'm home. Where I live.
(looks at Molly)
Who's this?

Molly stands and extends an arm.

MOLLY

Molly Charlesworth. A pleasure!

Joyce doesn't take her hand. Uncomfortable pause. Molly withdraws it and looks at Vince.

VINCE

Molly here...well, we got somethin' to tell you.
(flustered-to Molly)
Go ahead.

JOYCE

I got something to tell you, Vince.

VINCE (eyes narrow)

Oh yeah? Well, what we got to tell is really very important here.

JOYCE

Oh really? Well what I got to tell is pretty important too.

VINCE

Well...is it more important or less important than what we gotta tell?

JOYCE

How would I know that Vince? I don't know what you have to tell me.

Beat. She has led him successfully down the path of total incomprehension.

MOLLY (helpfully)

May I say—

JOYCE

Don't say a word, bitch.

Gasp. Molly looks astounded. Vince looks astounded. Joyce is calm with righteousness. But the pot has begun to boil.

VINCE

Joyce! What the—

JOYCE

Prick! Into my house you bring her, huh? Into my own house where I raised your two children you bring this...*thing* of yours. Well, lemme tell you, Vince, I'm gonna do you a big favor. I'm gonna put both of you outta your misery here. I'm not gonna be insulted in my own house. I want you gone, Vince. Out of my life! No more running around behind my back. No more cheap, dirty lies! No more lying in bed wondering who else has been touching my husband. No more lying to myself that it doesn't matter. I found passion today, Vince, and it felt great. I was touched and kissed and held, and it felt like you haven't made me feel in years!

Molly and Vince are watching the monologue, mouths agape.

Long beat.

VINCE

What are you talkin' here?

JOYCE

I'm talking about Tony!

Big beat.

VINCE

You did somethin'...with Tony?

JOYCE
More than "something," Vince!

Vince's eyes: thunderstruck. He suddenly rushes off into the kitchen. The sound of him retching over the sink.

Joyce looks perplexed. Molly doesn't. She knows what's wrong.

MOLLY
Oh dear. Greek in scope..

Just then—

JOYCE SEES THE JEEP THROUGH THE WINDOW

JOYCE
That's my car!

Joyce watches as Tony and Vivian mount the stairs, still handcuffed to each other.

VINCE

stumbles back into the room, dabbing his face with a wet cloth. What he sees is:

TONY AND VIVIAN HANDCUFFED TOGETHER

And she's in a robe.

VINCE'S FACE

Veins are popping. The thought that Tony has had both his wife and daughter is too much. He grabs a BUTCHER KNIFE AND CHARGES TONY.

VINCE
AGGGGGHHHHHH!

Everyone screams. Vince lunges for Tony. Tony jumps out of the way, dragging Vivian with him.

Vince lands on the floor in front of the door. Joyce grabs the handcuffs, trying to keep them from running.

JOYCE
Vince, get the key!

Vince gets up, fumbles in his pockets, and pulls out his keys. Hands them to Joyce and wields the knife at Tony, who looks terrified. Joyce unlocks Vivian, who runs across the

room. Tony shoves Vince away and dashes for the back door, handcuffs dangling from his wrist.

153. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD - NIGHT

As Tony jumps out, Vince comes after him with the knife.

*VINCE

You sonofabitch bastard. You better run!
I'm gonna kill ya! I'm gonna kill ya!

154. INT. DENISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vince Jr., Cheryl, and Denise are eating M&M's and watching TV. Vince's voice pierces the walls.

Vince Jr. sits up.

VINCE JR.

Dad?

Concerned looks. He gets up and goes to the window. Denise and Cheryl follow. They look-

THROUGH THE WINDOW

155. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD - NIGHT

Vince has Tony trapped by the garage.

VINCE

You piece of shit. You screwed my wife?
My daughter? Who was next, my son?

TONY

I didn't screw nobody!

ON THE BACK PORCH

Molly, Joyce and Vivian stare at the scene.

VIVIAN

He didn't screw nobody!
(then-looks at Joyce)
Did he?

Joyce, stymied by the goings-ons, can't answer.

VINCE AND TONY

Vince is wielding the knife, trying to trap, Tony who's dodging and feinting for his life.

TONY

Put it down, man. Put it down! You're making a huge mistake!

VINCE

AGGGGGHHHH!

HE HURLS THE BUTCHER KNIFE

It sails over the fence, cleanly missing Tony and disappearing from sight.

VINCE JR.

Jeez, Dad. Pretty lame.

TONY

There. No more knives, OK?

(he approaches Vince)

Peace. OK? I don't know what you think happened here, but peace. OK, Vince?

Then we'll talk.

He's holding his hands out like a suspect apprehended. The handcuffs dangle from his wrist.

VINCE (pause, then)

OK. Peace.

Vince holds up his hands in mimicry of Tony. Then—

VINCE GRABS THE HANDCUFF

And yanks Tony to the ground.

JOYCE

Leave him alone, Vince!

Tony howls in pain as Vince, in expert prison-guard mode, subdues him, twists his wrist, and drags him across the cement yard. He attaches the other end of the handcuff to the wooden deck.

Then he runs to the garage, grabs the other pair of handcuffs, and chains Tony's leg.

Tony is now chained, on all fours, like a wild animal. Vince whacks him across the face.

JOYCE

Stop it!

VINCE (whacks him again)

Bastard!

TONY
Leave me alone!

As Vince winds up to whack him again—

JOYCE

Is moved to action. She jumps off the back porch and throws her tiny frame onto Vince's back. Pounds him with her fists.

JOYCE
Stop it, Vince! He didn't do nothing!

Vince spins around, trying to get Joyce off his back, but she stays attached.

VINCE
What about your goddamned passion and all that crap?

The two of the them are now arguing while she rides piggyback on him.

JOYCE
So what about yours, Vince? Your Molly Ringwald over there who's gonna take care of everything for you and who I'm supposed to thank for "being in your life." You bring your filthy girlfriend into my house—

VINCE
She's not my girlfriend!

Joyce looks up at Molly, who, appalled, shakes her head.

MOLLY
I'm his manager.

JOYCE
His what?

VINCE
For the Scorsese movie with De Niro.

JOYCE
What De Niro movie?

VINCE
That's what I was trying to tell you!
I'm gonna be in a Robert De Niro movie directed by Martin Scorsese!

Beat. All look at each other, puzzled.

JOYCE

What kind of bullshit is that?

MOLLY

Actually, he hasn't been signed yet. But he auditioned today and apparently made quite an impression. They've called him back.

JOYCE

You auditioned for a movie today?

VINCE

Yeah, and Molly here—well...she sorta...
(pause, sigh, what the hell)
She's a friend of mine. We're in acting class together. She told me to go this audition here, so I went.

JOYCE

Acting class? When do you go to acting class?

VINCE

WHEN I PLAY POKER!

Pause. Nobody can figure this out.

MOLLY

It's a ruse, you see. He didn't want you to know because Vincent has feelings of shame and inferiority about his ambitions.

JOYCE

Is this just a lot of crap?

VINCE

No, it's the truth. And I wanted to tell you about it, but I knew you'd be mad about lying to you about the class, so Molly here said she'd come along and...pretend to be my manager!

Joyce dismounts Vince. Stares at him. He stares back at her. So much frustration, jealousy, and sheer anger.

JOYCE

I don't believe you.

VINCE

You know what, honey? I don't give a shit! In fact, I don't give two shits! You don't believe me? Fine with me. You got a few things to answer for yourself, here.

(he looks at Tony)

What's goin' on here?

JOYCE

Nothing. I was just...I was...just...

(feels scared)

You're leaving me...for her. Aren't you?

She nods to Molly. Vivian looks at Molly as if for the first time.

VIVIAN

Oh, come on. Dad couldn't get her!

VINCE

You keep your mouth shut, little girl. What are you doin' running around with that animal in your robe there?

Pause. From the ground:

TONY

Tell him.

(looks up at Vivian)

Tell him!

She shakes her head, nervously.

VIVIAN

I was back at school, and I-

TONY

Tell him the truth! You're all so sick. Just tell each other the goddamned truth!

Joyce and Vince staring at their daughter. Tony looks as well. He and Vivian lock eyes. It's clear she won't give first, so-

TONY

I stole your car. You hear me? I boosted your goddamned car so I could take off and get away from all your crap! I couldn't live here another thirty days if my life depended on it. And if you

want to send my ass back to the cage, be my guest!

JOYCE
You stole the car?

VINCE
What's that got to do with her?

Tony stares at Vivian, who looks back at him. Beat. She realizes it's her turn now.

Tension: Vince is preparing to whack Tony again. Vivian must come clean or he will be hurt! As Tony stars at her—

VIVIAN
I'm...a strrrr...a strr...stripper.

JOYCE (as if she misheard her)
A what?
(and then)
Oh my God. You're a what?

TONY
She's a stripper! She takes her clothes off for money! OK?

Vince and Joyce can't believe what they're hearing. So each chooses not to believe it.

JOYCE
She is not!

VINCE
You lying piece of shit!

He whacks Tony hard. Vivian can't take it. As Vince winds up to whack him again—

VIVIAN
Stop it, Dad. It's true!

Big beat. Vince looks at his daughter. His eyes go to her chest.

So do Joyce's eyes.

So do Tony's eyes.

Vivian tries to make her chest look smaller. Stares back defiantly.

VIVIAN

I paid for them myself! All right?

VINCE

No. No, you go to school, honey. You got that scholarship—

VIVIAN

They took it away.

(and then)

I can reapply next year, but no more scholarship. I gotta pay for it myself. And I'm gonna.

JOYCE

Why'd they take it away?

VIVIAN

Because my friend...because this guy I know...

(pause, finally)

Because I screwed up. Me. I screwed up and got caught with...pot in my room. "Pot." That is such a stupid little word.

Long pause. The family stares at each other.

JOYCE

They kicked you outta school and took away your scholarship over an ounce? Jeez. When I was at Oneonta, I couldn't get back into my dorm after a weekend unless I was carrying an ounce!

Vivian and her mother lock eyes. She sees at once that her mother would have been her best friend if she'd let her. Tears well up!

VIVIAN

Oh, Mom, I'm such a screw-up!

VINCE (not as moved)

Wait a minute here! What about this stealing my car? You know I could have you back inside in about ten minutes if I want to—

TONY (at Vince)

Fine, do it. At least everyone's honest. You're so scared of your wife you don't even smoke in front of her!

JOYCE (looks up)

Vince—you smokin'?

VINCE
No, I quit!

TONY
Liar! And you got your wife thinking you got a girlfriend 'cause you're too scared to tell her you want to go to acting class.
(and then)
And the whole time, you got some weird agenda with me, and you won't tell me what it is! Why'd you get me outta prison? Why'd you bring me here?

VINCE
I told you. I was a friend of your mothers!

TONY
My mother never had a friend so good they'd do me a right turn! Everybody hated her! She's a whore and a bitch, and if she put you up to getting me out-

VINCE (raging)
SHE DIDN'T PUT ME UP TO NOTHING! NOBODY PUTS ME UP TO NOTHING, LEAST OF ALL YOUR MOTHER! SHE WAS A GODDAMNED PSYCHO BITCH, WHICH IS WHY I WALKED OUT ON HER BEFORE YOU WERE BORN!

There it is! Tony and Vince stare at each other, each mutually shocked at what's now out in the open.

Molly is wide-eyed.

Joyce tries to take this in.

Vivian stands, frozen, staring at Tony.

Tony is hyperventilating, on all fours.

So is Vince, standing over him.

TONY
Are...are...you...my...father?

Big beat. Quietly, as befits the moment-

VINCE (nods)

Yeah, Tony. I'm your...father.

Holding back tears as he says it. Tony holding back tears as he hears it.

Joyce looks shocked.

JOYCE (sotto)
Oh my God.

VIVIAN
Mom?

Joyce shakes her head.

JOYCE
Nothing.

Said like: *close call*. Vince turns and stares at her. His eyes are pleading for an answer that won't kill him.

VINCE
Honey...what happened here?

Meaning Tony. Her eyes plead forgiveness back.

JOYCE
Nothing, sweetie.
(and then, looking at Tony)
Your son was a perfect gentleman.

Tony's eyes meet Joyce's: they know what they each shared and why their day together was ultimately a success.

JOYCE (back at Vince)
Anyway, how long you known about this guy?

Meaning Tony. Vince looks at her. Shrugs through his emotion.

VINCE
I meant to tell you the whole thing, sweetie. Years ago. Really. There's so much I been wanting to tell you. It just...never seems like the right time...

Tears forming in their eyes.

JOYCE
I thought you were just...sick of me.

VINCE

Sick? No. Scared of you maybe, but not sick of you. You're...you're...

He looks around. Sees Molly. She pantomimes BREATHING DEEPLY. Vince remembers.

VINCE

You're the air that I breathe.

They embrace each other. Oh, how they embrace. *Like two people who are so happy to have each other back.*

Molly watches Vince and Joyce. Something in this moment is affecting her as well. Very gradually-

MOLLY BACKS AWAY INTO THE HOUSE

Her face: she is done here.

156. EXT. FRONT PORCH OF RIZZO HOUSE NIGHT

Molly exits. Looks down the little City Island street. As the song continues, we watch Molly walk alone into the encroaching evening.

157. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD NIGHT

Joyce and Vince hugging each other.

TONY

Will somebody please unlock me?

Vince turns and stares at his son. Tony stares up at his father. Long beat. Tony stares at his father. A tear glistens in his eye.

Vince unlocks Tony. Tony stands. A long look between the two-wordless, but filled with apology and a never-ending sense of how weird life can be.

And then Tony and Vince hug each other. Vince grabs Joyce. And even Tony and Vivian grab each other.

VIVIAN (amazed)

You're my brother! No wonder I...I...

(searching, then)

I hate you so much!

At that moment-

DENISE'S WINDOW OPENS UP

Vince Jr. stands there. As Cheryl and Denise looks on-

VINCE JR. (pleased)
 You were right, Mom. Dad did have sex
 with Tony's mom!

Joyce looks at her son. Long beat. Then—she starts to laugh.
 The more she tries to stop laughing, the more she cries!

Vince watches this. His tears start to mix with his
 laughter. That odd mixture again. He cries and laughs onto
 Joyce's shoulder.

Now the whole family is laughing and crying together as the
 sun sets over the Bronx.

158. EXT. PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL - MORNING

The sun just breaking. A bus pulls out of the terminal
 gates. In a window of the bus we see—

MOLLY

Sitting, watching as Manhattan recedes from view, the sun
 breaking over the city.

159. INT. MALAKOV ACTING STUDIO

Class is being held. The students watch each other's
 monologues. Listen to each other's worst secrets. Vince sits
 off on his own. No Molly.

YOUNG ACTOR
 And I realized then that my sexuality wasn't
 in question. It was his that was being...
 (begins to cry)
 ...thwarted by my love...

The class listens, riveted.

ANOTHER MONOLOGUE

YOUNG ACTOR (intensely)
 Bang, he's gone! And he's not coming back!
 Ever! Ever! Do you know the meaning of the
 word "ever"? It has no meaning until your
 father takes your dog out back and shoots him
 in front of your eyes!

The class listens, aghast.

ANOTHER MONOLOGUE

YOUNG ACTRESS

All the time I was sleeping with my...
 (pause)
 ...my uncle...I was telling myself that
 I was doing it...to protect my sister...

She breaks down. Malakov nods understandingly. Gets up and holds her hand.

The class listens with emotional dignity and restraint. But some are crying. There's so much crying that's needed.

ANOTHER MONOLOGUE

YOUNG ACTRESS

I realized finally that I've led a remarkably perfect and totally boring life! Not paying for cable is it! My deepest darkest secret! No wonder I never get cast! They take one look at me and say: boring!

The class laughs. There's so much laughing that's needed.

THE CLASS

The stage is empty.

MALAKOV

Molly Charlesworth.

VINCE (pause, then)

She's not here.

Malakov turns to Vince.

MALAKOV

Was she your partner?

VINCE

Uh, yeah. She left town, I think.

MALAKOV (shrugs)

Hm. Well, class, you now have one less actor in New York City to worry about stealing your role.

People applaud sarcastically. But not Vince.

MALAKOV (cont.)

Vince? You ready?

Vince stands and walks to the stage.

He looks out at the faces in the audience. Seems calm and sure of himself. And, after taking a pause, he begins.

VINCE

You asked me my worst secret. My most personal secret. The secret of all my secrets. I get it.

(pause, then)

But first...I'm Vince Rizzo, and I want to begin by telling you about where I live.

Now we realize that the opening monologue was, in fact, a flashback from this point.

VINCE

City Island is a fishing village, located in the Bronx, New York, a place most people associate with machetes, chop shops, the Son of Sam, gang warfare, and the once-great New York Yankees.

Laughter from the class. Michael Malakov leans forward, intrigued. He likes that Vince is taking him on a journey.

160. TIME DISSOLVE:

The faces of the class watching Vince, interested. He is confident and is working the audience like a pro.

VINCE

And within the one square mile that comprises all there is of City Island lies another distinction. That of the mussel-sucker versus the clam-digger.

(pause, then)

Myself, I'm a clam-digger. There's quite a few of us. Houses don't go up for sale here every day. My grandparents built our house in 1924. My dad grew up here. So did I. My kids did too. And this goes to the heart of why it matters so much to a clam-digger to be what he is and not some mussel-sucker. Because we represent family, continuity, stability. And in the Bronx-hell, in the world as we know it-these qualities are in increasingly short supply. In short, the world can be divided between clam-diggers and mussel-suckers. Those who stay, and those who wander.

He smiles slightly at the remembrance of Molly and her contribution.

VINCE

But I digress. You asked me my worst secret. My most personal secret. The secret of all my secrets. Well...like most of us, I guess I have a few.

THE FACES OF THE CLASS

Everyone following Vince. And then we see—

JOYCE IS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY OF THE CLASS

watching her husband perform. In her eyes: pride and amazement. Who knew her Vince had this in him?

VINCE

The biggest one being that I wasn't quite the clam-digger I'd thought I was all these years. Because family and stability require honesty. And until one week ago, I'd never faced the simple fact...

(pause—a long one)

...that when I was a young, screwed-up guy, I had a little boy. And I walked away from that boy and his mother as if they never existed. And I woulda gotten away with it, probably. Except God has a way of dealing you a chance every so often...to atone for...for your screw-ups.

Joyce and Vince. Looking at each other now. In their eyes: each asking the other for forgiveness.

161. EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Vince exits a deli with three friends. They all bid each other a casual farewell. As Vince walks away—

THE SOUND OF A GUN GOING OFF

Vince looking scared. Bullets are in the air. And THREE BULLETS STRIKE VINCE.

He collapses on the sidewalk, blood pouring from his stomach, the look of unexpected death filling his eyes.

A very long pause. During which we, in the audience, might well be thinking: *what the hell just happened to this movie?*

162. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD DAY

A yard party in progress. The whole Rizzo family—Joyce, Vivian, Vince Jr., and Tony. EVERYONE EXCEPT VINCE.

Joyce raises a glass of red wine in a solemn toast.

JOYCE
To my husband.

163. EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Vince, still lying on the street "dead," blood pouring from him. Finally he hears—

SCORSESE'S VOICE
Cut. Great! Thanks, everyone.

Vince opens an eye. He's helped up by some of the crew. His moment on screen—getting murdered by Martin Scorsese—is over.

Costume and props and assistants help him up, clean him, congratulate him. He looks proud. Vince is now a working actor.

164. EXT. RIZZO BACKYARD - DAY

Joyce, continuing her toast. A smile now appearing on her lips.

JOYCE
To my husband. The best actor in City Island.

Now we see Vince, standing at the barbeque. He smiles at Joyce. Then Tony steps up with his toast.

TONY
To my father. *The only actor in City Island.*

He smiles at the man who is his dad. And his dad smiles back at his boy.

VINCE (V.O.)
Somehow, with Tony's appearance, a lot of good things happened. I shoulda looked for him years ago.

Everyone seated at the picnic table. Behind them the view of the water. New York City in the distance, clear as a friggin' bell.

VINCE (V.O.)

Every busy city needs an island of peace.
Just as every busy soul needs a place of
repose. Before, City Island was the place
where I hid from my own life.

(and then)

Now it's home. For everyone. What else you
need?

The food is on the plates. Grace time. Everyone bows their
heads.

VINCE

Yeah. We thank you for this meal here...and to
show our faith and unity...a moment of silence.

As Vince says grace, we see their faces. Vince. Joyce.
Vivian. Vince Jr. Tony. Vince and Joyce look at each other.
This is their bond. *This is their life.*

VINCE

All right. Let's eat!

The Rizzo family starts passing the food. The water in the
background and the forever-majestic skyline of Manhattan in
the distance.

Ain't life grand?

FINITO

MAKING *CITY ISLAND*

City Island was written in a kind of fevered rush in the infamous month of September 2001. It was originally titled *Make Someone Happy*, largely because that great song, as sung by Tony Bennett, was constantly playing on my antique Bang and Olufsen stereo (of blessed memory) while I was writing the script. Unlike my other scripts, I was seized with the idea quite suddenly and proceeded without an outline, watching the pieces of the story fall into place with an odd inevitability. Indeed, the writing somehow felt more like a process of taking dictation from some unknown source as I rushed to keep up with what the characters were saying and doing and where they were going. And then the morning of September 11 dawned and everything stopped.

I don't know if you remember the absolute hopelessness and desolation that were the direct effect of the towers going down. At least in New York, it truly seemed that life as we knew it had abruptly been seized from us. Work stopped. Stunned silence prevailed. And it sure as hell didn't seem all that necessary to fill the void with *another screenplay*, especially one about a prison guard who wants to become an actor. But as the days following the tragedy progressed, and as my own inertia and confusion began to wane, it occurred to me that, since there was really nothing at all I could do to alter the course that events had taken, I might as well do the only thing I really know how to do, which is to create stories about people who interest me. And why not tell a story about family, hope, confusion, secrets, fear of the unknown, desolation, and redemption at this sad and rootless time we'd suddenly been thrust into? For the very questions we were asking ourselves, and the solutions we were seeking, were, in a sense, what my little domestic dramady was really about. Searching for roots that seemingly had disappeared. Confirming faith and unity. Not giving in to fear. With trepidation, I took up where I left off (page fifty or so?), hoping the muse hadn't deserted me. To my relief, my characters had been waiting patiently for my return. The script was finished in a few more weeks. I showed it to a couple of trusted friends and advisers.

Happily, people seemed to like it. There were very few notes or complaints and lots of enthusiasm. Since this was the first time in my many years of screenplay creating that I'd had an experience quite like this—automatic writing is not to be taken for granted—I decided this must mean that, for the first time, making a movie out of a script wouldn't be a teeth-pulling, gut-wrenching, blood-letting experience. As the script was finished in October 2001 and the finished film was released in March of 2010, it's clear that this last prediction didn't quite come true. Rather than leaping effortlessly into production, the movie instead lurched and tripped along,

stumbling, farting, and burping like a cinematic town drunk who never quite makes it home and irritates the crap out of everyone along the way.

The project acquired its first set of producers a year after the screenplay was done—two very nice guys with lots of good intentions, a little bit of option money, and a killer case of “fear of photography,” a syndrome in which anything that appears to be a step forward is regarded with fear and loathing and must be immediately countered with two steps backward. Progress was inordinately slow—it took a year until I finally convinced them that the script was ready to submit to actors. A budget of three to four million dollars was agreed upon. We brought on ace casting director Sheila Jaffe (*The Sopranos*, *Entourage*, etc.) whom I’d worked with on my previous films, and we all went to Ca’Brea, a trendoid West Hollywood joint, where we proceeded to loudly consider and discard names.

The first casting meeting on any project is, by far, the most enjoyable and delusional experience of the entire movie. You sit around tossing out famous name after famous name, roundly rejecting many or pretending to take others under careful consideration (“De Niro?” “Too old.” “Pacino?” “Love him.” “Eric Roberts?” “Kidding.” etc.). The actual likelihood of getting one of the big names is not confronted at this early meeting—indeed, the sky’s the limit, with only our imaginations to stifle the proceedings. So who had the mix of star power and appropriateness to be Vince Rizzo? He needed to be a working-class man, not too old, but old enough to be the father of two teenagers and an older son whom he meets in the prison where he’s a correctional officer. A man with a tough exterior and a big heart that’s been frozen for too long. A man who secretly yearns to bring out his inner artist. What actor could possibly convey all these qualities, be serious, funny, and emotional all at the same time and deliver enough “marquee value” to help get the movie financed?

Yes, yes, I know the answer: Andy Garcia. But for reasons that I’ll never comprehend, his was not a name that we first considered. We got stuck thinking that Vince had to be an Italian-American actor—DeNiro, Pacino, John Turturro, Stanley Tucci, James Gandolfini. These were the names we were throwing around that day at Ca’Brea. Alas, they were all pretty much out of our price range. Gandolfini was the voice I’d had in my head while I was writing the script, but he was deep into *The Sopranos* and already committed to several movies in his off-months. What we needed was a fresh and unusual choice, an actor who would welcome the opportunity to star in an independent film and yet who also had a strong enough career and enough audience recognition to help us sell our movie once it was done. After many lists and much discussion, we finally decided on our first submission.

I knew Michael Chiklis from his then newish television show *The Shield*, as well as his turn playing Curley Howard in a surprisingly good TV biopic about the Three Stooges. His acting was dynamic, he was tough, and he also had a pathos that I thought might make him a good Vince Rizzo. He was Greek, not Italian, but who cared, really? The other thing I liked about him was that, while he was certainly well known, he wasn’t a mega-over-the-top-super-duper-A-list movie star. In other words, we stood a good chance of getting a fairly quick reaction as to whether or not the script was for him. And we did. Almost immediately we got word from his agent

that he really liked it. Never before in my career had the first actor I sent something to evinced immediate interest

Michael and I met and liked each other quite a bit. I saw a version of Vince Rizzo in the man—tough, demanding, and also sweet, funny, and a bit...insecure, perhaps? Michael had recently lost a lot of weight and undergone a kind of image makeover to become the star of *The Shield*. This was clearly somebody who went after what he wanted in life—and he was unabashed in telling me that he loved Vince Rizzo and wanted to do my movie. I reported on my meeting to my producers. And they were happy too—kind of. But I began to sense a reserve coming from them. Every time we spoke about the female roles, the names they were suggesting got bigger and more unrealistic. What about Meryl Streep as his wife? What about Cate Blanchett as Molly, his friend in the acting class with whom he shares his big secret? Aside from the fact that most of the names didn't really seem right for the roles, they also seemed somehow lopsided. Like our three-million-dollar movie with a respected TV name in the lead was teetering one way, while being overloaded on the opposite end with star power it probably couldn't accommodate, financially or aesthetically. Ultimately, though, I began to sense that the problem was one of expectations. You see, nobody really expects the first person to whom you offer a movie to take it. Once Michael said yes, I think my producers began to wonder along these lines: "If the first guy who we tried loves it, maybe we can get..." And the names start swirling about: De Niro! Bruce Wills! John Travolta! You name it. While I really liked Michael and kept pushing to get the movie started by the upcoming break in his TV schedule, my producers seemed to be sliding in the other direction. Things got slower, the budget seemed to be getting smaller, and more and more impossible names were added to the female roles list. Soon Michael Chiklis—no dummy, he—began to get a whiff that something was not going right. Who could blame him for being a little pissed? We offered him a movie, he said yes, he and the director liked each other, and suddenly the whole thing seemed to lose momentum. Then he was offered a part in *The Fantastic Four* and, of course, he took it. That was that. We'd lost his window, his interest, and—most importantly—his trust.

I was depressed. We'd somehow torpedoed an opportunity that we'd created. Now we had to start all over again. My producers didn't seem daunted. After all, we'd scored the first time out of the box. How hard would it be to get a Vince Rizzo? But something told me we were a leaking balloon. As much as I personally liked my producers, they exercised so much caution in every decision that nothing seemed good enough to go ahead. Still, they were still convinced that a major name would bail us out, so the first stop was the major agencies to tell them what a wonderful opportunity we had for some of their A-list middle-aged male stars: a genuinely emotional, funny, and complex role for a male old enough to have sired a son in his early twenties. Nobody could have cared less. Calls went unreturned. Eyes glazed over. People avoided us on the street. Yawns were stifled when the project was mentioned—and then, perhaps more seriously, yawns started *not being stifled*. When this happens—when torpor and disinterest set in—the blame usually falls on the script. Time for a rewrite. Thankfully, my producers didn't ascribe to this philosophy. They loved the script and stood by it. Good for them! What they did do, though, was talk about lowering the budget. This may seem odd given that the

budget was pretty low to begin with and that we were somehow talking about attracting actors whose quotes were in the seven-figure range. There really isn't any way to explain it except to say that pursuing two completely opposite goals simultaneously in the hope of achieving one unified goal is business as usual in movie-land. And yet I knew we were going nowhere fast. This was no longer a movie waiting to be made. It was a "project" in which we were all "involved." "Developing." "Exploring." Whatever you want to call it, we were now on the bottom of each other's piles as well as everyone else's.

And then I got a phone call that I'd never before gotten. The late producer Bobby Newmyer was putting together a movie from a screenplay by TV mega-star Paul Reiser. Paul wrote *The Thing About My Folks* for himself and Peter Falk to play father and son, and Falk was already committed. The money was even in place. All they needed was a director, and somehow they'd landed on me as a likely candidate. This sounded too good to be true. All the crap I'd been going through—casting, budgeting, what-iffing—none of it was an issue! The movie was ready to be made. All I had to do was say yes. The level of talent involved in the film, and the fact that the film was already packaged and financed, certainly influenced my decision to jump on the bandwagon. But I think another factor was at work, though I didn't consciously know it at the time: I wanted to show my producers that I had better things to do than to dawdle any longer on a timetable that they were comfortable with but I wasn't. Perhaps my leaving to make a movie would galvanize them, give them a much-needed shot of adrenaline—a little like making a woman jealous in order to arouse her interest. Certainly they would envy my activity and want to mimic the speed and certainty with which *The Thing About My Folks* had come together.

The movie was prepped in five weeks, shot in six weeks, and edited in four. By the time we were wrapped, it was Christmas, and I was ready to reapproach *Make Someone Happy* and my producers. Only my gambit seemed to have backfired. Apparently my leaving to do another project was construed as a lack of interest on my part in continuing. Or maybe they were just relieved to be rid of my increasingly abrasive phone calls. I was informed by my agent that we were in "turnaround," which in Hollywoodspeak means: *we're dumping your project*. My producers had passed up renewing the option on the script. I had to start all over again.

I wish I could honestly portray myself as so driven, so filled with mission, so unchallenged by disappointment, that I awoke the morning after the option on my script had been dropped and got right to work on finding another way to make the movie. But I didn't. It's not that I didn't still want to film *Make Someone Happy*, but it needed some sort of rejuvenation, something to freshen it up for another jog around the block.

Looking over my research materials on the real City Island, I came across a phrase that I'd forgotten about—it had never made it into the script, even though I liked it when I heard it. This is the distinction made by City Island residents between "clam-diggers" and "mussel-suckers." Clam-diggers are island residents who were actually born on City Island and not somewhere else—not even in a hospital on the Bronx mainland. Since City Island boasts no hospitals, this means they are born at home, thus making them truly of the island. Mussel-suckers, on the other hand, are

everybody else. While they are not unwelcome by clam-diggers, they are—by dint of having moved from elsewhere—essentially rootless, people without a land of their own. This odd and emotional differentiation got me to thinking about the themes of the script. Vince Rizzo is a family man. He’s a clam-digger and lives in the house that his grandfather built. He’s proud of his heritage and wants to tell the world about it—which he does, at occasionally boring length. But this admirable trait is also strangling him, for he’s not able to accept that he’s changing as a person and that in order to grow a bit he needs to confront some ugly truths about his past—namely, who that kid in the prison in which he works truly is.

Suddenly the script seemed a lot deeper to me than it had in a long time. City Island itself was a metaphor for Vince meeting his son in prison. “Sometimes good things can be found in the strangest places” might be our theme—just as City Island itself might be considered a “good thing found in a strange place” (a fishing village in the Bronx?). The notion of the conflicting sides of his personality and his need to unify them suddenly made Vince a little deeper to me. Buried within us all is a clam-digger, a person hanging on to our deepest roots and connections, yearning to break free and suck some mussels. The result of all this was a simple but important act: I changed the title from *Make Someone Happy* to *City Island*.

OK, maybe this sounds like much to do about not much, but it seemed to bring the whole thing back to life and give it more focus. Then, in a moment of pure synchronicity, *The Sopranos* came to an end. James Gandolfini, who I’d always loved for the role of Vince, would be free. Kismet! Naturally he’d jump at it. After all, he was out of work. And how many parts were out there that would fit him as snugly as Vince? I’d had a nice mini-encounter with him several years earlier, when *The Sopranos* had just taken off. My film *Two Family House* contained a great many actors from the cast of the show, and, in a show of support, Gandolfini came to our premiere party and hung out with us all night, leading to some serious press coverage of our event. He’d seen the film, professed to like it very much, and told me to please feel free to get in touch with him directly if I ever had anything for him to read. Clearly now was the time to cash that chit.

I somehow obtained his number and left a message, and I was a little startled by how quickly he got back to me. He remembered me well and, in his low-key manner, seemed interested in reading my script. I sent it off. I waited. I waited patiently. I waited until I couldn’t stand it anymore. Finally I called him again. He was polite but sounded distracted, like he wasn’t quite sure of what I was calling about. After I jogged his memory a bit, he recalled reading the script. In a heartbreakingly off-handed way, he said, “Yeah. Good work. But I couldn’t play that guy.”

“Why not?”

“Come on. I can’t keep playing Italians.” I didn’t bother asking him what else he was planning to play. I simply thanked him for reading it and hung up. Thus ended my moment of kismet with James Gandolfini.

Despite this, my agent, Lucy Stille, was freshly excited about the piece and wanted to find a way to package it. One of her agency’s biggest star clients was Andy Garcia. What did I think of him for the role of Vince? I remember my reaction at the time as being befuddled; of course Andy Garcia could be a great Vince. Why hadn’t I

thought of him before? Was it because we were so focused at first on Italians? I asked if Andy would read the script, knowing that there was nothing—no money, no producers, no reality to it being a movie. My agent said, “We’ll give it a try.” And then we waited. And waited a little more. One learns not to ask if there’s any news from an actor—if there is, after all, it’s going to be the first phone call your agent makes to you. I put the idea of the submission to Andy out of my mind for I can’t remember how long. I do remember, though, that just before Thanksgiving weekend, 2006, I got a message on my voicemail from a man doing a very decent Andy Garcia impression, telling me he wanted to talk to me about my script.

On a hot Los Angeles winter afternoon in 2006, I drove out to the San Fernando Valley, to a modest house, where I was scheduled to meet Andy Garcia. The house, which had been a starter home of his and his family’s that was now used as an office, was filled with memorabilia—pictures, letters, awards, etc.—attesting to the incredibly rich and varied career Andy has had. In time I would come to think of the house as the *Musea di Andy Garcia*, but on that first day I paid only cursory attention to the stuff surrounding me. Instead, I was face to face with an actor I’d long admired and a man who, clearly, was the Vince Rizzo for which I’d been looking for five-plus years.

We sat in the garden and talked of many things: life, music, movies, family. Personally, I think this first conversation between an actor and filmmaker is the most important one. Nothing creative need come out of this first meeting, for nothing is more important than both actor and director getting a mutual sense of comfort and understanding about some basic philosophical beliefs. If the air is muddy early—if a basic air of unease permeates things from the beginning—it will never get better. When our talk finally turned to the script, Andy did something I’ll never forget. Rather than getting into a long talk about the character of Vince, he stood up and said he’d thought of something that Vince might do at the end of the movie, when the whole family is exploding in confessions about their secret lives. I watched and waited...and then Andy twirled around in pain, agony, and exhaustion and sat down on the ground holding his head, defeated and literally floored. The gesture was perfect: both humorous and genuinely pained. In a sense we never needed to discuss much about Vince again—this is the kind of the thing that lets you know an actor truly gets it. The gesture survived—it’s in the movie, and it works wonderfully well.

Before the day was over, we’d made another kind of connection. Both of us are, essentially, entrepreneurial in spirit; I have never thought of myself as working “for” anyone (to my own detriment at times, but still, that’s who I am) and have always looked at every movie as a sort of start-up business, one requiring only a few good breaks to turn into the long-awaited cash cow of which all entrepreneurs dream. And Andy is not just an actor. He’s a producer, a filmmaker, a musician, and a supporter of anything in those fields he believes in. My feeling was that, between us, we were sitting with most of the firepower we needed, if harnessed correctly. So without much thought about it beforehand, I simply proposed that he and I become

partners—coproducers—on the movie. Together we would find a way to mount it: cast it, finance it, the whole thing. Remember, we had nothing but a script, a director, and an actor. But the actor was so right for the script, and the director came cheap.

First stop would be letting some of the better companies know that Andy was attached to a new project, a script that we both thought would be regarded not as an “art film” but as a highly accessible family comedy. I believe we went out to Sony Classics, Fox Searchlight, and the now extinct Paramount Vantage. All three passed. Now, while this isn’t unusual at all—what’s truly unusual is when they want to *do something*—it still always chips away at a little bit of your heart. I suggested that we send it out to some actors for other roles and start building up the cast. Andy agreed, and we brought in Sheila Jaffe, who had previously worked on the project (at Ca’Brea, you’ll remember), to start helping us with a list of names and some ideas as to availabilities. One of Andy’s best traits emerged here: that of being completely behind the material and willing to reach into his phonebook if necessary to get the script out to actors he knew. It’s a little hard for me to remember all the names now, but two of the early submissions we made were to Michelle Pfeiffer for the role of his wife and Justin Timberlake for the role of his son. Timberlake knew Andy and got back—via his manager—fairly quickly to say that he liked the script but was about to begin an endless tour, so he couldn’t commit. Fine. A nice pass, but a pass nonetheless. The real surprise, though, was Michelle Pfeiffer. I think she was our very first stop, and her CAA agent called to say that she liked it. It wasn’t exactly a yes—more of a “wait and see...she’s reading other things...liked the script and likes Andy...” (The two had worked together once before.) Then, after a few weeks of nothing, she passed as well. Suddenly, though, in what seemed like a flash, two different actors expressed interest, which led to a third actor expressing interest. Marcia Gay Harden read it and liked the role of the wife. Chloe Sevigny read it and liked the role of Molly, Vince’s muse and acting class partner. And Marcia Gay Harden’s agent also represented a young actor named Steven Strait, who he’d shown it to and who wanted to meet me about the role of Vince’s older son.

I met Marcia Gay Harden at the Four Seasons Hotel in LA, where she was getting ready to do a slew of promotions for a very good movie she did with Richard Gere called *Hoax* (concerning the author Clifford Irving, who wrote a fake autobiography of Howard Hughes). It must have been midmorning on a weekend, because the dining room/salon was eerily empty—she walked in looking a little perplexed, as if everyone had been evacuated for some reason. We introduced ourselves. I told her how much I liked her work. She said nice things about the script. And then an interesting thing happened: she began to interview me. Or so it seemed. Rather than letting the meeting be about me checking her out for the role (which it never really was to begin with), she made sure—with grace and skill—that the shoe was on the other foot. Was I a clear-headed, together enough, actor-friendly enough filmmaker for her to be willing to work with? I love when actors take situations into their own hands, so I was more entranced by the shift than thrown by it. After a while we seemed to relax into everyday stuff. I remember talking about her kids, my son, where she lived in New York, stuff like that. She was at once frank, funny, and also just self-protective enough to send a clear message: she didn’t go where she wasn’t comfortable. Fortunately, she was comfortable enough to allow us

to go ahead and use her name to help get the movie up and going. She was excited; I was delighted.

Next was Chloe Sevigny. She was in LA, doing publicity for her HBO series *Big Love*, and as they'd put her at the Chateau Marmont on Sunset, we arranged to meet there. This time Andy accompanied me, and I remember sitting out in the pretty, smog-choked patio garden talking with her about the role of Molly. She liked the script and the other cast we had. The one thing about Chloe that I remember thinking was that she was just a bit...well, let's not say strange since we are talking about the costar of Vincent Gallo's *The Brown Bunny*, so strange is perhaps to be expected of her. I remember thinking, though, that there was a slight tinge of puzzlement, of not quite seeming to know why we were so interested in her for the movie. She was demur about her abilities—charmingly and incorrectly, I think—and didn't delve deeply into the script or role. Things stayed pleasant and on the surface. It didn't bother me, and at the time I put it down to actor insecurity—actors really do come in all shapes and sizes, and not everyone has the personal command of Marcia Gay Harden, or the cool charm of Andy Garcia.

So we had three fine actors attached to our script. It was early fall, 2007. Andy and I had been at work on the project for almost a year. Not a bad place to have arrived. Alas, still not one red cent toward production seemed to be in view. So more reality needed to be added to our still notional movie. Having cast the main roles, what more reality was there to add? The answer was: a budget.

It may seem odd to create a budget for a movie lacking any funding whatsoever, but this is what's known in self-enlightenment literature as "visualization." And I don't say that with crooked smile and forked tongue (whatever a forked tongue actually is). Movies are *willed* into existence. Nobody truly needs to make one. It's a very expensive and emotionally exhausting task and usually ends with a vague feeling of disappointment. It's the filmmaker's job to overcome the tides of resistance that push against the as-yet-unmade film and force it to come into being. And a budget is a very clear-headed exercise. It forces you to make a schedule to go with your ideas. Soon you're looking at a breakdown of your script as laid out in blocks of individual shooting days. The whole enterprise begins to feel less notional, more achievable. Who does the budget and schedule? If you don't know somebody, then the answer is an out-of-work producer who needs a few thousand bucks. If you know such a producer personally, chances are you can work something out. Something on spec.

Enter my old friend, veteran indie producer Zachary Matz. Zach and I go back twenty or so years and were often, in our so-called salad days, to be found hanging around various dimly lit lounges in LA trying to figure out how to make movies together. Over the years our personal friendship outlasted our never-quite-professional one. But he'd read the *City Island* script and loved the cast that we'd assembled, and soon he and I were on our way to New York, where I showed him the real City Island. We cruised the city, and I showed him the other locations—Roosevelt Island, Tribeca, prisons, etc. We talked through the script and about how many days it would take to comfortably and efficiently shoot it. And he did a budget and schedule on spec, with the understanding that he would be a producer on the film if—no, *when* it got made.

It was at the end of our New York scouting expedition that the next piece of the puzzle fell into place. My old friend Lauren Versel—we'd met in Hollywood in the 1990s when she was a screenwriter—called me to catch up. Lauren had moved to New York, gotten married, had two lovely children, and decided to reenter show biz, this time as a producer. She asked what I was working on. I told her about my fully cast movie with no money, and she asked to read the script. And then a bit of serendipity came our way. Lauren had been trying to produce another movie, which had the reverse problems of *City Island*—they'd raised some money but hadn't been able to get a cast together. The person who was investing in that movie asked to read my script. She liked it. Could she simply move the money from the one project over to the other? Lauren said...well, do I need to tell you what she said?

So we had about a million dollars committed—a fifth or so of what it would take, but believe me, that first money is valuable in ways that goes beyond mere monetary value, for it shows that the train has, indeed, left the station. But a moving train encourages others to hop on. Lauren took the project to the Berlin Film Festival early in the new year, and the combination of Andy, our other actors, my script, and some money already being in place proved immensely attractive. Soon we had our second investor—another million. When this happens, you have enough pieces in place to start gathering other segments of the financing in different ways. Given the strong nature of our cast and a third of the budget now in place, we were able to start looking around for a foreign sales company to presell territories in order to pump more cash into the as-yet-unmade movie. Soon one emerged—WestEnd Films. They took the project to Cannes in the spring of 2008. Now Cannes is in May, and I showed Lauren the script in November. So a scant six months later we were well on our way to having the movie fully financed.

And then cracks started to appear in the surface. Minor at first, then growing worse. It's safe to say that by the end of Cannes, 2008, the bottom began to fall out of our movie. Most of our cast—except Andy—suddenly seemed like they had other things they'd rather do than make *City Island*.

Why does this happen? Actors oftentimes will commit to roles without any real belief that the damn thing will truly happen. Because the truth is *most movies don't happen*—except when they do. And what seemed like a promising meeting about good material months ago will, upon second look, perhaps appear in a different light and set said actor to posing some introspective questions. Like, w “Why aren't I getting a better paying gig?” Or, “Where and when does this shoot, and is it going to screw up my vacation plans?” Or, “I liked this then, but now not so much.” Often it is simply a case of the dance card getting filled up and priorities shifting.

In the case of Marcia Gay Harden, she had two conflicts. One was a part in a movie that Drew Barrymore was directing, and the other was a television pilot that was on the verge of getting picked up. At one point, we were actually in touch with the unit production manager of the Barrymore movie, trying to work out dates. The TV pilot was a different matter—there was nothing to do but wait to see if it was a go. For the moment she remained attached to *City Island*, but “loosely,” as they say. I put on a bold front, certain that she'd do our movie. From the beginning Andy was convinced otherwise. Soon he turned out to be right. She wasn't available to us, and

we had to face facts and move on. (Later, when I asked him why he knew early on that she wasn't going to do the movie, he replied, "Actor's intuition."). Chloe Sevigny's disappearance was a simple matter of HBO making things too difficult for us. The new scripts for that season of *Big Love* had just come in, and apparently there was a lot of Chloe in the show. From the earliest agent calls, we were pretty sure that we weren't going to be able to get her when we needed her.

It was May now, and Lauren, Andy, Zachary, and I were committed to a schedule: get this movie up and rolling for a summer shoot in New York. We looked at the calendar and figured that the latest we wanted to be shooting was Labor Day. Moving backward, the six-week shoot would thus have to begin no later than midJuly. Which meant that our six-week prep would need to begin no later than the top of June. Which meant that we needed some new actors in a serious hurry, before our investors smelled trouble and the whole project stack-tabled (i.e., folded). Andy had the idea that the part of Molly would be well served and sparkingly realized by his friend Emily Mortimer, whom he'd appeared with in the two *Pink Panther* movies and whose off-screen humor sounded like a distressingly good match for mine and Andy's. So we sent her the script. Bingo! She loved the part, and we made arrangements to meet for coffee at a far too precious joint in Brooklyn near where she lives. Once she showed up, I liked the place a hell of a lot better. Emily would be a delightful Molly—proof, really, that problems really do happen for good reasons.

Which would lead one to think that our problems casting Joyce Rizzo would also soon be over. If you read interviews with actresses approaching or just passing the age of forty, certain themes tend to recur. Usually they complain a lot about the parts they are offered. Hollywood, it seems, doesn't respect women over thirty. They don't believe "older" women (which means over thirty-five) can be desirable, sexual beings. They don't get offered parts featuring "strong" women, mothers, professionals who are also...sexy, I guess. You've read this rant before if you read *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Premiere*, or *Vanity Fair*. We made a list of appropriate actresses and prepared to spring into action. We were a "go" movie, with a start date only a few weeks away. We would make the offers to these lucky women one at a time (protocol demands this), give them a few days to consider, and then move on in the unlikely event they turned us down.

First up was Laura Linney. She passed. Second up was Patricia Clarkson. Also a quick pass. Laura Dern anyone? Pass. Marisa Tomei? Pasadena. Before we knew it, a week was turning into two weeks, our start date loomed ever closer, and all of those movies that don't write roles for strong women who are also mothers and also sexual suddenly looked pretty smart—they didn't write them because actresses *didn't really want to do them*. I honestly do think that a big turn-off was the fact that the Rizzos have two teenage children—in the real world, of course, people have kids in their twenties, but in Hollywoodland the idea of being in your early forties with teenagers seems unnecessarily hurried.

We were, by now, bordering on despondency mixed with anxiety. Xanax was my morning drug of choice. Evenings saw the bottle of Absolut Vodka rapidly diminishing. We began discussing who in the office might be qualified to play the role. And then Andy suggested Julianna Margulies, with whom he'd previously appeared in a movie called *The Man From Elysian Fields*. How come we hadn't

thought of her before? Because she had been in something of a retirement phase. She'd gotten married and had a baby and was living in New York, not working...living in New York...got married, had a baby...and not necessarily acting like she was too interested in going back to work. This is all a little hard to believe now that she's "The Good Wife," but remember, this is the summer of 2008 I'm talking about.

I thought it was a fine idea—a bit of a long shot, perhaps, but why not give it a try? A couple of days later, she phoned Andy and said she'd like to meet me. Almost immediately, so it seemed, I found myself sitting across from Julianna Margulies at DeMarchier on 86th and Madison. We were less than two weeks away from principle photography, and as soon as I sat across from this foxy, magnetic, and totally down-to-earth woman, I suddenly realized everything truly does happen for a reason. She was exactly the combination of elements that I wanted for Joyce Rizzo. We talked around the subject for a bit. How happy she was living in New York again. Isn't it great to have kids. The shmeer. We got into the script, and I found she had a lot of insight into the role and—very importantly—she also really liked Andy. And then I started thinking: when is the other shoe going to drop? When is she going to tell me what she doesn't like about it? But that didn't happen. Instead, after quite a bit of conversation, she said, "So when are you guys looking to try to make this movie?" Pause. *Try to make this movie?* As if it were a faraway prospect, still unfinanced and unready to roll. Apparently nobody had informed her of the emergent nature of the situation. There was the other shoe! She had no idea we were days away from starting...and no doubt she had other plans for the summer that was already upon us.

As calmly as possible, I replied, "A week from next Thursday."

Now the pause belonged to Julianna. She took this in. Looked away for a moment. Then she said, "Oh. I get it. You're in trouble."

"Yes," I replied. "I'm in trouble."

Another long pause as she no doubt contemplated her still open options. Then she nodded and said, "Well, a lot of the time it's much more fun for me to just jump into something without overthinking it too much, so I'm up for it. There's one thing that I really would need from you."

At this point I was thinking, *Anything. Even script changes.*

"What's that?"

"I have this great custom-made wig that would be perfect for Joyce. It'll also save you guys lots of time because my hair is a big deal to deal with every morning. If I can use the wig, I'll do the movie."

We shot *City Island* in six weeks over the summer of 2008. It was, without a doubt, the most joyous filmmaking experience I've ever had—except, perhaps, for my first Super 8 production when I was in sixth grade. Though the schedule was tight, there was no panic—at least none visible to me. (Directors tend to be myopic, though. I've often said that there are two movies being made at once—the one I'm concentrating on and the other one to which everyone else on the set is privy—the “who's sleeping with whom,” “what asshole said what to what other asshole,” etc. The second one is much more fun than the first one, and the director, consumed and exhausted by work, usually misses out on it.)

Exactly half of the movie was shot on the real City Island and the other half at various locations around Manhattan. Since we were located on the Island for the first three weeks, I rented a small house just blocks from our “hero” house (the one that appears in the film), which allowed me to soak in the ambience of the place and avoid spending an hour in the car at the beginning and the end of each workday traveling to and from Manhattan. I shared the house with my excellent cinematographer, Vajna Cernjul, and spent quite a few pleasant sunset hours, cocktails in hand, discussing film, life, and other less important trifles with him on a small terrace overlooking the Long Island Sound.

Because City Island, the place, is so small—there is only one way in and out, involving a two-lane main street—we were loath to be a typical movie company who crashed the gates of a neighborhood and parked our trucks wherever was convenient. City Island is a very proud little enclave, and the residents were initially wary of the idea of a movie crew invading their tranquility for three weeks. From our perspective, we wanted the residents' goodwill toward our production, but we also wanted to be as efficient as possible. Getting trucks and equipment on and off of the island on a daily basis wasn't in the cards. The solution was to rent a series of “support spaces”—a few unrented storefronts, some basements and attics belonging to the less wary locals, a couple of empty houses—and use them to store everything we needed for our stay. Wardrobe, equipment, props, art department, all loaded in exactly once—on the weekend before the shoot began. The trucks returned one more time, three weeks later to load out. Once we'd loaded in, most of the residents forgot we were there, except for the night when the climax of the film was shot. The confrontation on the street between the whole family was an all-night burn, and I guess word of the shoot spread through the Island. All of the actors were together for once in a big blow-out scene, and gradually we noticed that we'd accumulated an audience of several dozen interested clam-diggers (and, I suppose, some mussel-suckers as well). It was as if the actors were onstage, performing for an audience. Fortunately, most people who arrive on a film set for the first time tire of the process fairly quickly. The ponderously slow and seemingly disorganized nature of a shoot tends to turn even the most rabid fan into a bored bystander.

From the beginning of its production, *City Island* was positioned by me as a movie based in the era of information democracy. It's a movie about (sort of) ordinary, everyday people and their trials and travails. I wanted the act of making it to feel open and ordinary as well, hence my decision to appeal to an Internet audience by demystifying the process of filmmaking. I decided to blog the behind-

the-scenes making of the film, posting outtakes as well as on-set clips every day and discussing the progress of the film as it was being made.

I don't think I'm the first person to have done this, but we may have been the first relatively mainstream movie—in other words, a movie with a cast of actors you've heard of—to have opened the doors to the set quite so thoroughly. In any event, the immediate effect was for the hits on my little blog, www.moviestildawn.blogspot.com, to double overnight. People loved seeing the filmmaking process exposed, and why not? Movies are over a century old, and by now most of us have some idea of what goes into making them. Seeing the process unfold on a daily basis not only fills in the gaps of this fascinating process, it allows you to feel like part of the filmmaking family. And if you prefer to experience the finished movie itself minus the demystification process, you're free not to look at the blog. So, I reasoned, there was little to be lost. The clips I posted were short and mostly funny goofs. The interest that the "film diary" was provoking naturally seemed good for the movie's profile. Who could begrudge a little advance publicity?

Still, a week or so into shooting, somebody did. I got a rather stern e-mail (and a series of worried calls from my producers) saying that one of the financing entities behind the movie had stumbled upon my blog and wasn't at all happy with what I was doing. I was told in no uncertain terms to take down the outtake clips from YouTube and to not post any more "raw" footage. I was harming the potential of the film by exposing the "mistakes" we were making along the way. And, of course, piracy was a constant threat, and here I was, inviting the pirates into our cozy little den.

My reaction? Fear and shame. Suddenly I was in sixth grade again. I felt the terror of having made the authorities angry, and I quickly pled for forgiveness. After all, this particular authority came with money behind it. And besides, I was super-busy making a movie, so who had time to argue? I said I would take down the clips, cease and desist, and just go ahead and shoot our little old movie—no behind-the-scenes blogging required. I posted a short item telling readers that we would no longer be showing the outtakes but that I would continue to share what information I could on the progress of the movie.

To my surprise we got quite a few comments expressing some indignation. And then I got to thinking: maybe the financiers were right, but maybe they weren't. Why not discuss the whole issue on the blog? Perhaps my audience might chime in with their opinions. On our next weekend off, I sat down and banged out a blog entry titled "Information Democracy: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love YouTube." Underneath a massive still of Peter Sellers as Dr. Strangelove, I posted the following piece:

Last week I was asked by one of the production entities helping to finance my film City Island to stop posting clips of the dailies. Actually I wasn't asked to do so, I was ordered to do so. Being in mid-filming and this not exactly being a priority of my day, I told them it was not a problem. So the clips came down. But now I wonder—why did they ask me to do this? And what message does my compliance with their request actually send? Having had a few days to think this one over, I'm gradually coming to some conclusions and I am ultimately glad that this controversy—minor though it is—

has reared its head. I was especially interested to see how many readers of the blog wrote in protesting the removal of the clips. This, more than anything, told me that I was on to something with the whole notion of blogging a film production and sharing the experience as well as sharing the bits of the mosaic—the ‘dailies’—that go into the end result.

So, in order of the above questions, first: they asked me to remove the clips because of “piracy” issues and fear that the small amounts of the film that I’m sharing could possibly appear to other buyers as “unpolished” or “unrepresentative” of what the final product will be. OK. But what is piracy? It’s taking something for free that should have a monetary value and profiting off of it. So my question is: what could possibly be done with any of the dailies clips I’ve posted that would provide monetary gain? Would anybody pay cash for a ten to thirty second clip of my film? Clearly the answer to this is no. As to how representative of the final product the dailies are, I argue that they are both completely unrepresentative while at the same time super-representative in their rawness and thus a good deal more tantalizing than, say, a slick little trailer. When I show you a piece of my dailies (and believe me, I’m like all good directors—I ain’t showing nothing that I’m not proud of) I’m showing you part of the process we go through in achieving the end result. One of the reasons outtakes are so fascinating and illuminating is that they provide a view of the meta-film, the other movie that’s happening while the end result is achieved. Robert Altman used to insist that the cast and crew watch the dailies together at the end of the day because, as he said, “The real movie is in the dailies.” (This was also Altman’s way of encouraging his actors to improvise and then feeling free to discard 90 percent of it without guilt, since they’d already seen and admired their work in the dailies). Dailies are an entirely different view of the movie that will eventually emerge. I think it’s important and not at all harmful to let people in on how the process works. That old “don’t show the magic” line feels very last century to me. By now, the bizarre and beautiful process of movie making is known to many, many people. And if it’s not, I think it’s my right to share the process. What are you going to do? Pirate the process?

As to what message I’m sending by complying with the request to not show the dailies, clearly I’m agreeing that the last century and its thinking is still correct, that the world order is unchanged, that 19th- and 20th-century notions of ownership and control (as well as 19th- and 20th-century fears) are still wagging the dog. But let’s face it; even large corporations realize that in the current world, any viral presence is a help, not a hindrance. Clips of movies on YouTube are a non-starter in terms of harming people’s copyrights. Clips are clips. Not movies. They are there to educate you on the existence of the finished product, not rob you of the opportunity to see it.

I don’t know how many people will see City Island when it’s done. Plenty, I hope. Some readers of this blog will probably seek it out and some may have, by the time of its release, moved on. But if right now people are interested in the story of how a movie is made, that part of the process should be shared if I choose to do so. And posting information about the film—production reports, call sheets, dailies—can’t, I believe, truly do any harm and probably can do some good in terms of letting people know that

we're out here, creating this particular film. I'm not sure that removing the clips was the right decision.

The response was instantaneous. I usually averaged anywhere from three to eight comments per post. The next day—even before the next day—there were twenty comments posted. Some were understanding of the financiers' position. Some were over-the-top angry at having had their dailies removed (I rather liked this—it strengthened my feeling that *City Island* was a movie that belonged to “the people”). But most of the comments were philosophical and articulate and demonstrated a clear understanding of the reality of twenty-first-century communication; they seemed to say that an opportunity was being lost, one that was both helpful to the movie and positive to those who were interested in the film's “private” life. Certainly none of the material was grossly misrepresentative of the work in progress. How many DVD extras are we all used to seeing these days, and what are those extras usually composed of? Deleted scenes and goofy outtakes. Furthermore, most of the comments indicated a genuine goodwill toward our endeavor, a delight that we had invited strangers into a usually private, mysterious process and welcomed them without the normal, paranoid reserve.

It was really a karma thing. As I said, it always felt good to me, with this particular venture, to project an air of brotherhood, or solidarity. We were all making this movie together. And to their credit, the company who'd objected to the clips now admitted that perhaps they'd been a little...sudden in their opinion. Perhaps they'd simply been surprised at what they'd seen and unprepared for such a bold experiment. I could put the clips back, they said. But no edited scenes. (Which was fine by me—I hadn't been posting assembled footage anyway.) And keep the clips short, under thirty seconds. (No problem. The Internet attention span doesn't really go beyond thirty seconds anyway.) And no production stills—they need to be approved by actors. (Yes, yes, of course.)

By the time we'd finished shooting, my editor, friend, and fellow pastrami connoisseur David Leonard had assembled a long first assembly of the film. We continued cutting in New York, moving to LA at the very end of the process in order to mix the film at Warner Brothers on a very big stage—this coming courtesy of Andy's involvement with the lucrative *Oceans 11* franchise. Oscar-winning composer Jan Kaczmarek (*Finding Neverland*) created a wonderful score, which included a Nino Rota-ish Italian waltz that perfectly captured Vince's pathos. We targeted Sundance—America's Premiere Indie Film Festival—as our best debut platform. I'd had good luck at Sundance before, winning the Audience Award in 2000 for my film *Two Family House*, which was bought at the festival by Lionsgate. And in 2006, my documentary *Tis Autumn: The Search For Jackie Paris*, premiered at Sundance, also finding a buyer and a slew of nice reviews. So we, the filmmakers, elected Park City as the place to proudly display our new movie. Of course they'd leap at the chance—how could they not? Does that sound a bit arrogant of me? Do you detect hubris in my certainty that they'd welcome me with open arms and proudly present my newest work?

Well, either they detected something like hubris and were not amused or they just didn't dig the movie. Whatever the reason, Sundance passed on *City Island*.

Now this shouldn't be the most earth-shattering thing in the world—truth be told, I don't particularly enjoy the climate, altitude, or screening facilities at America's Premiere Indie Film Festival. But I was genuinely surprised and even a little hurt that they passed us up. I felt like I was part of a family that had secretly moved houses while I was at school one day and didn't bother to leave me the new address.

Then I decided there were other festivals and other ways to sell a movie, and we'd march forward. Only there were also investors (and a big bank loan), and they'd all rather counted on the Glamour Boy of 2000 (me) getting our movie into America's Premiere Indie Film Festival. Nerves were fraught. Edgy phone calls were exchanged. If I'm not mistaken, the bank began to inquire of us if we'd explored the option of going straight to DVD. Jesus. One little turndown, and the movie's theatrical life is history? My producers and I persevered and told everyone to stay calm. We looked at the calendar, saw South by Southwest and Tribeca coming up, and decided to take our shot with what was then New York's newest festival. We showed the movie to Tribeca and waited a bit nervously. Because the truth was, if they turned us down, we probably would be looking into DVD companies. The schedule after Tribeca includes the difficult-to-penetrate Cannes Film Festival and then a long wait until Toronto in the fall. Not that there aren't many other festivals in between; they simply are not buyer's markets.

And then, thank Christ, Tribeca called us and said they wanted the film. Not just wanted it but wanted to give us a real sendoff—a fine featured spot in the festival lineup. We told them we'd bring our stars with us and all the muscle we could muster. Still, a festival is a festival, not an auction house. Getting distributors' asses into the seats was still difficult and iffy at best. The movie needed to get some advance press and that most elusive of all things—*buzz*. You can't buy it, and you can't count on it, but you do need it to stand out from the crowd. We held our breath, went to premiere night with our fingers crossed, and hoped the buyers would show up at one of our four scheduled screenings.

The rest of this tale consists of a series of mostly nice surprises. The first surprise came on premiere night, when the film got a standing ovation.

Now festival audiences are not regular audiences, and the presence of the lead actors of any given movie in the audience certainly charges things up. But the laughter, applause, and genuine goodwill the movie attracted was slightly astonishing to us. And soon another surprise came our way—we seemed to have *buzz*. How did we know? *Because our other screenings all suddenly sold out*. Now the problem was, did we have enough seats for distributors? Soon Tribeca was adding screenings—I believe we finally had nine or ten, and they too were all sold out. We did Q&A's after each screening and were always delighted with the big-time reaction the movie seemed to provoke; it was an audience movie, one the viewers laughed at, rooted for, spoke back to. (Oddly enough, it seems to provoke some people into urging the on-screen actors to do or not do certain things. "Don't go in that door!" "Watch out!" "Oh no!" etc. It's an almost Nickelodeon-ish experience.) Proof that it was, in fact, an audience movie came one afternoon, deep into the festival, when my

producer, Lauren Versel, called me to tell me that the votes for the Audience Award were being tabulated online, and we seemed to be in a tie for first place. That night we were thrilled to be the recipients of the Heineken Audience Award—the movie seemed to have acquired a streak of good luck, goodwill, and good karma. Of course buyers would be interested in us now. Right?

Not exactly. While people from the major companies were coming to screenings, our phones weren't exactly ringing off the hook. A few passes came in—always couched in compliments and confusion (“We loved it. Very nice. We're all broke and just aren't acquiring right now.”) A few companies seemed genuinely interested—Sony Classics and Miramax both made noises sounded like they might be making offers...and then disappeared from view. Fox Searchlight watched the film and felt it necessary to send me an e-mail saying that while they liked the film and found it in some ways reminiscent of *Little Miss Sunshine*, the “filmmaking just wasn't quite up to that level.” Which is the snarkiest way anyone in Hollywood has ever told me to fuck off.

But there was a company that kept calling that we didn't know much about. Anchor Bay was the “specialty” division of Overture (which no longer exists), and a very nice man named Kevin Kasha was genuinely enthused by the film. Well, that was a relief. Although they were a small company, they thought big. And they thought we had something that might---just might —be a tiger by the tail. Our talks extended way past the end of the Tribeca Film Festival and culminated in their acquiring the film for theatrical release.

When we sold the film to Anchor Bay, it was in a low-impact, open-small-and-see-what-we've-got kind of way. They would open us in two theaters—New York and LA—with some good print advertising and as much on-air stomping as the cast would agree to do. I was fortunate to have a cast full of supportive people. Andy Garcia pledged and delivered as many television appearances as they could book for him. And Julianna Margulies, despite her grueling television schedule with *The Good Wife*, committed to doing as much big-ticket stuff as she could fit in. Which leads to our next very nice surprise. Thanks to the enormous popularity of her TV show (and her Golden Globe/Emmy wins), she wound up doing David Letterman's show the week prior to our opening—a major score.

In due time, opening weekend (March 9, 2010) arrived. On Friday morning it was hard to guess the direction the wind was blowing. The reviews were positive—but mixed-positive might be a more accurate assessment. Two big guns—the *Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*—came out with “we didn't love it but we didn't hate it” kinds of reviews. I was in LA, and the crowd at the Landmark seemed pretty good. In New York, my producer Lauren Versel was haunting the Angelika, where the big opening weekend attraction clearly was *Greenberg*, starring Ben Stiller.

Now you might as well know the truth: by the end of your very first Friday in theaters, your distributors will have a pretty accurate picture of what awaits your movie. Even though Saturday is traditionally a much stronger movie day, projections for the weekend can quite accurately be made without the Saturday figures, based on Friday's performance. You can't let this freak you out. But it will if you think about it. Eight years spent getting something made, and it gets all of five

(or four) showings before its fate is sealed? Well, you opted for show biz. That's the story.

On Saturday morning, March 20, we got the following stats from Anchor Bay:

Final numbers for Friday:

Angelika: 5938 - #2 in complex behind Greenberg

Landmark: 4599 - #3 in complex behind Dragon Tattoo and Alice in Wonderland

TOTAL: 10, 538

AVERAGE: 5,269

We're off to a solid start.

Well, that was a relief. On Saturday the Landmark theaters were quite full—I was pacing the halls and bugging the very nice ticket-takers for looks at their seating charts. Lauren was up to the same in New York and called me from outside the theater, where there was a line to buy tickets. Angelika shows five movies at a time, so it's impossible to know what people are in line to see. That is, unless you canvass the crowd as she did. Many were in line for *Greenberg*, which was selling out. So Lauren simply started telling people to see *City Island* instead.

On Monday morning we heard the following from Anchor Bay.

We had a very good opening. We ended up at \$32k for a \$16k screen average. This is very solid and we're well positioned for next weekend.

First bullet dodged. Our reviews were mostly positive, and the distribution company liked the first figures that came back. But you can never relax in this business, and the key was in how well we held up the following weekend. We always knew we were a "word of mouth" movie more than anything—reviews and publicity are only going to take a movie like ours so far. So we awaited the following weekend, when we were scheduled to expand to another eight cities, with some trepidation.

I won't take you through the blow-by-blow of the next weekend—rain, signage issues, other movies opening, etc. But ultimately there was good news on the report that arrived after the second weekend stats were all in: we were up 84 percent on Saturday from the previous day. That suggested people telling their friends, "Go see this movie I just saw." The memo continued:

For the six screens that carried over from the previous weekend, as a group they are up 5 percent versus last Friday. Angelika NY, Landmark LA and Cumberland Toronto are all up while the other three are down only slightly. For Friday, we were #1 in the complex in fifteen of our twenty-seven theaters. Of note, #1 in Landmark SF, Landmark Minneapolis, Laemmle Encino and Westpark 8 in Irvine. Held #1 position at Ritz in Philly.

The trades—*Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*—started describing the performance of our "little movie" as "sturdy" and "impressive." Great. But what does

all this mean? Trends are what these projections are all about. And the trend that we were seeing was that our movie seemed to be *gaining* momentum, not losing it. In addition, the “word of mouth campaign” seemed to be working—when the Saturday gross doubles, you’re clearly seeing the effect of people telling other people to see a certain movie.

On the fourth weekend we were open, the following stats from Anchor Bay arrived. We were:

- *#1 in twenty-four complexes, #2 in seven.*
- *Boca (West Palm DMA) and Bethesda (Wash DC DMA) did fantastic. In other new markets, we’re #1 in most of the complexes, with Denver and Houston being strongest.*
- *NY, LA, SF all doing well.*
- *Many screens are going up versus last weekend, and others only showing small drops, which means our word-of-mouth is working well for us.*
- *Two of our new screens/markets, The Palace in Boca Raton and the Landmark in Bethesda, did very well, both exceeding 10,000 for the weekend. We were #1 in complex in Bethesda and the #1 limited release film in The Palace in Boca.*
- *In other new markets, we were #1 in complex in Denver, Houston, Atlanta and Seattle.*
- *Weekend Average for the twenty-seven holdover screens versus last weekend was down only 16 percent, with some going up, all of which is a good sign.*

The fact that the screens were going up was great. But more significant were the locations where the film seemed to be performing. The fact that a movie about a Bronx-based, Italian-American family was achieving number one status in Denver, Houston, Atlanta, and Seattle seemed to disprove one of the many myths that early on clung to our movie and made selling it difficult: that it was a movie that would only perform in New York, to New York audiences. If the movie could cross urban/cultural barriers and speak to audiences in places that know not from the San Gennaro Festival (New York’s ultimate Italian extravaganza given every year on the streets of the Lower East Side), then it might, in fact, play in the so-called hinterlands, the land of the much desired multiplex audience. The growing popularity of the movie and its ability to reach audiences was socked home on the following weekend.

- *Of the forty-three screens we held over from last week, twenty-three of them actually are up this Friday versus last Friday, and another five are down less than 10 percent. So we’re holding in very well on most of our screens where we are in our second and third weekend.*
- *New Markets: Phoenix screen did an amazing 3,952 on a Friday! And San Diego opened with 2,518. Other good openings include Kansas City, Palm Springs, and Detroit. Austin and Hartford showed good numbers too.*
- *Returning Screens/Markets: Our big winner from last weekend, Bethesda Row outside of DC dropped only 3 percent versus last Friday, which is great. And Boca*

is up 8 percent. All three Manhattan screens had stronger Friday this weekend versus last. And Denver, San Jose, Irvine, Long Beach and Dallas screens are all up as well. PLUS: The NY/NJ/CT screens continue to do well, many of them doing better this Friday versus last.

And that morning, Indiewire reported the following:

Anchor Bay's City Island—starring Andy Garcia and Julianna Margulies—continued to be an under-the-radar success story. Going from forty-five to fifty-seven screens, the film grossed \$259,000. That made for a 30 percent increase, seeing its per-theater average actually rise despite a higher screen count (\$4,544 vs. \$4,422 last weekend). After five weeks, Island has taken in \$842,858, and should soon become the first \$1 million grosser in young Anchor Bay's history.

The result was that Anchor Bay ordered up a significant increase in prints, rolling out to several hundred theaters over the course of the next few weeks. What was working in our favor, and why? Certainly the PG-13 rating that we fought hard to achieve was a big help—I'd had to make a number of silly trims in the strip-club scenes, none of which contained any nudity in the first place, but were deemed too "suggestive," but not for the reasons you may think. It's not so much a movie that chases after a youthful audience, though people under eighteen can totally relate to the story of screwed-up family dynamics. The PG-13 is very much for the older crowd, the seniors who are hesitant to see movies that are rated R for fear of too much violence. This demographic was coming out to see the movie, as demonstrated by the strength of the "early bird" showings—the 1:00 p.m. shows that are usually sparsely populated. Our early shows were frequently as strong, or almost as strong, as the after-work screenings. In fact, I shlepped out went to the theater we were showing at in Encino—the burbiest of LA burbs—and peeked in at the 1:20 crowd: the theater was three-quarters full. And there were plenty of walkers in the aisles. God bless the seniors...and, for that matter, the unemployed.

So those were the stats that defined the projected course of *City Island*. As a result of those stats, more and more exhibitors started calling us, wanting to book the film. Anchor Bay did a careful and very astute job of determining where and how the film would play best so as not to burst the bubble that appeared to be growing larger with each weekend.

But there was another way to measure where the film was going, one I never tired of checking up on. It involved seeing the film in a crowded theater and listening to the audience react. Starting with the first screening of the film at Tribeca, we saw how engaged the audience was with the story. The laughs were louder than we expected, and there is a scene—I won't say which—that always provokes applause (sometimes a lot, sometimes a little, but always some measureable amount of applause). And something else happened that we couldn't have planned on: audiences become wrapped up enough in the story that they started *to talk back to the screen at crucial moments*. This "breaking the fourth wall" thing is always a fun part of the theatrical movie-going experience but is usually reserved for movies that encourage such behavior. I recall always enjoying the *Die*

Hard movies for just that purpose—it's the feeling of uninhibited release, of being part of a crowd that is all on the same rollercoaster ride. But our movie was not a conventional rollercoaster ride. So why did they react so openly, so verbally, to the story twists and turns? Because it was an emotional rollercoaster ride?

The answer is: I don't know. And in a sense I don't want to. It's the magical element in filmmaking that can never be defined or counted on. But I do know that transportive experience—the kind where you, as an audience member, become so wrapped up in the movie that you forget where you are and that you're in a public place, and instead you are communing with the movie as if you're a part of it—is the kind of movie-going experience that makes you want to tell your friends to *see the film while it's in theaters*. And I don't care what the doomsayers say, that experience will never go away. Movies will always be seen in theaters because shared group emotion and response is the essence of what we love about going to the movies. Your eighty-inch flat screen will simply not provide it. There. I'm on record. Jot that down on a slab of marble.

At the end of the day, Anchor Bay was satisfied with letting the film be a better-than-average box office success and moving it on to the subsidiary platforms. My producers and I argued in vain that by chasing the audience with more advertising dollars we were certain that the film could attract the kind of big numbers typical of a *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* or a *Little Miss Sunshine*. Maybe, maybe not. I chose not to look at it as a defeat in any way. The movie performed very well in theaters but has had its strongest life in the subsidiaries. The best part of having a movie available on cable, DVD, or Netflix is that it's out there for people to continually discover. The nicest compliment I get—and I've gotten it a lot over the last few years—is that *City Island* is a movie that some people like to watch multiple times. "Whenever we don't know what to watch, we watch *City Island*," said a very nice woman to me at a dinner party recently. When somebody takes your work into their home and makes it part of their life, you feel like you've unlocked something in the human heart, said something that needed to be said in just the way it needed to be expressed. That the journey began alone in a room in September of 2001 and, a decade later, ended with a movie that I hope will be entertaining and moving people for a good long while, makes me feel like the almost decade-long journey was worth it.

Almost.

"TWO FAMILY HOUSE"

BY

RAYMOND DE FELITTA

Fall, 1993

Over black we hear a MALE VOICE.

VOICE

In the year 1956, in the borough of Staten Island in New York, Buddy Visalo decided to buy a house.

Two men, in factory uniforms, stare at an as yet unseen house.

BUDDY VISALO with the handsome, craggy face of a man who works too hard and lives in a cold climate. The other man is named CHIPMUNK. From his name you can guess what he looks like.

VOICE

After work, at the Inzalaco Labeling plant, he and his friend Chipmunk went to see a house that had been for sale for several months.

The house is two stories. Dating from the early part of the century, it is in poor shape. A gabled, ecclesiastical-looking porch shelters its doorway. On the side of the house, an indoor stairway, obviously added, leads upstairs.

BUDDY

Looks kinda old, huh?

CHIPMUNK

It's a fucking house...who cares what it looks like?

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Dim, lit by a single bulb. MR. MAHONEY shows Buddy and Chipmunk through the house. It's trashed, all peeling paint and junk. As Mahoney speaks—

VOICE

Mr. Mahoney explained that the house was built in 1912 and that the plumbing was practically new—he'd done it himself a few years ago. And that upstairs was a completely separate apartment, with a rental price of eighty dollars a month, enough to cover the mortgage payment.

CHIPMUNK (TO BUDDY)

Two-family. You could quit the factory.

MAHONEY

I haven't had to work since I bought the place ten years ago.

(opening door)

Here's the showpiece...

He turns on a single hanging bulb, illuminating the

LIVING ROOM

Buddy and Chipmunk stare at the room.

It's trashed. But it is definitely the showpiece. Fifteen-foot ceilings with crown moldings, marble fireplace, bay window, paneling. Buddy and Chipmunk fight to conceal their awe.

BUDDY

Boy, to beat the heatin' bill.

CHIPMUNK

Guess you could always drop these ceilings.

MAHONEY

She's the best buy on Staten Island.

BUDDY

So why ain't somebody bought it already?

Pause. Mahoney turns. Then smiles at Buddy.

MAHONEY

I'm glad you asked.

VOICE

Mahoney went on to explain that it was the street. It was the last private house on the block—the others had all turned into businesses—and folks got a thing about living next to shops.

BUDDY

So someone, if they wanted to, they could run a business here?

MAHONEY

Street's zoned for it.

That's what you're looking to do, Mr. Visalo?

BUDDY

Me? No, I work at the factory, I ain't...

(pause, then)

I didn't say me, I said someone.

INT. ANGELO'S BAR - NIGHT

A Staten Island working man's bar. Vic Damone is on the jukebox singing "I've Got Grown Accustomed to Her Face." Chipmunk and Buddy drink beers. On a napkin, Buddy has written 524 WEST STREET. He stares at it.

BUDDY

The twelve hundred my mother left me—there's the down payment.

CHIPMUNK

Quit the fuckin' factory. With the upstairs tenants you wouldn't have to work. Life of fuckin' Riley.

BUDDY

No. No tenants. Estelle and I live upstairs. Downstairs...

Buddy pauses. Smiles like he's been thinking this over.

CHIPMUNK

What?

BUDDY

Buddy's Tavern. Have my own business.

CHIPMUNK

Your own bar.

BUDDY

That big fuckin' living room? With a bar and some tables? Knock out a wall and do some live entertainment.

CHIPMUNK

Who'd you get?

Off Buddy's smile-

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS - TWILIGHT

The sun is setting behind a two-block-long street festival.

A miniature San Gennaro, it's an Italian Pride thing, with food stands, a shooting gallery, and concession stands, one of which has a sign over it that reads: "Can You Be A Singing Star? Screw 'Em-Why Not?"

Buddy is singing "Fools Rush In" with a prerecorded band. Chipmunk watches him with pride. Buddy is a good singer.

VOICE

It might be worth noting at this point that in 1945, when Buddy was in the Seabees, he performed at a special services show that was attended by Arthur Godfrey, then a popular radio star.

As Buddy sings on-we DISSOLVE INTO

A NAVAL BASE (1945)

A show is going on, for men in uniform. A younger Buddy is singing "Fools Rush In." Arthur Godfrey watches, impressed.

VOICE

Godfrey offered Buddy an audition when he got back to New York.

Godfrey gives Buddy the high sign. Buddy catches it, plays to the radio star. CUT TO:

A HOUSE (1946)

Buddy is in midargument with a young woman, Estelle, and her parents, MARIE and DONATO. We can't hear what they're saying, but it looks unpleasant. The song continues under.

VOICE

But Buddy's fiancé, Estelle, and her parents thought the whole idea incredibly vulgar.

A TV SHOW (1949)

Arthur Godfrey watches as Julias La Sosa finishes a song to wild applause.

BACK TO THE STREETFAIR (1956)

And Buddy finishes up the song. Applause from the little crowd. Buddy takes it in, loving it. Chipmunk looks at him admiringly.

CHIPMUNK

Buddy's Tavern.

BUDDY

What do you think?

CHIPMUNK

I'm your first customer. You know that.

INT. ESTELLE'S PARENTS' HOUSE

Estelle Visalo screams. Her parents look on.

ESTELLE

Now it's a bar with a stage where you can show off to your friends and embarrass me and my family?

MARIE

He's crazy—spend all your savings on a nut-brain idea like this?

BUDDY

It can't miss. I told you it's a two family house. We live upstairs. If the bar don't work out for some reason, we just rent out the other floor.

ESTELLE

Every year, Buddy. These ideas just get worse and worse—

DONATO

Pazzo fututo! Managgio porche miseria—

MARIE (TO ESTELLE)

Then the franchise, the hamburgers—

BUDDY

I coulda had that for ten grand, back then. Know what those are worth now? A White Castle franchise? Half a million bucks!

ESTELLE

In your hands, half a dollar.

MARIE

How about the pizza delivery service—

BUDDY

I don't wanna hear about that!

Silence. Estelle goes to Buddy.

ESTELLE (CALMLY)

Buddy, eleven years we been married. Have I ever put you up to anything? Have I ever wanted you to be somethin' different like other woman are always doin' to their husbands? Huh?

Pause.

BUDDY (SHAKES HIS HEAD)

No...

ESTELLE

I love you just like you are. You're a worker. You make minimum wage. That's all we need. That's all I want from you.

(pause)

And that's all you are, so accept it..

Estelle has finished her speech. She looks to her parents. They nod solemnly as Buddy mounts the stairs, defeated. Pause. Donato turns to Maria.

DONATO

Pizzalo...una buccada di merde!

SUBTITLE: The pizza. A mouthful of shit!

BUDDY

I got screwed on the oven!

As the argument rages afresh—

VOICE

Most people with Buddy's track record
would have probably lost heart.

INT. BUDDY AND ESTELLE'S ROOM

A large old-fashioned room. Buddy's record plays on a sadly outdated Victrola. Buddy, wearing underwear and suspenders, looks at himself in the mirror and lip-syncs along, performing. He takes a puff from a cigarette and blows it out the window. Then he removes a flask, hidden in his underwear drawer, and does a shot.

VOICE

But Buddy had a faith in himself that
could only be called unshakable..

Over the mirror hangs a printed maxim: GREAT SUCCESS IS ALL
THE SWEETER WHEN PRECEDED BY GREAT FAILURE.

INT. ESTELLE'S PARENTS' ROOM

Estelle's father is asleep. Her mother lies in bed, watching the television. Estelle is at her side, darning socks. Buddy's record can be heard in the background. Donato stirs.

DONATO

Who's playing the radio?

ESTELLE

It's Buddy. He made a record at the
fair.

Marie reaches behind her and slams her hand against the
wall.

MARIE

He still ain't fixed the barbecue.

ESTELLE

I'll tell him, Ma.

MARIE

It's September already. Before you know it, it'll be Christmas, and we gotta lug that thing into the basement.

DONATO

He won't do it. I'll do it. You wait for Buddy to do something, you'll die waitin'.

Marie slams her hand against the wall.

INT. BUDDY AND ESTELLE'S ROOM

Buddy, flask in hand, sings into the mirror, like Sinatra. The knocking from Marie stops him, bringing him back into the present, into his life.

He lowers the Victrola and sits on the bed, flask in hand, listening. The song ends. He starts it over. A moment later, Estelle enters, unseen by Buddy. She listens.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

This is "Fools Rush In," as sung by—

BUDDY'S VOICE

Buddy Visalo...proprietor of Buddy's Tavern...located at 524 West Street in beautiful Staten Island.

As the song begins, Estelle lowers the lights. Buddy quickly hides the flask beneath the bed. She approaches and makes a face.

ESTELLE

Smells like smoke...

BUDDY

I don't smell nothin'.

Buddy looks away morosely. Estelle kisses him on the forehead, then on the mouth. She gets on top of him.

ESTELLE (A WHISPER)

C'mon, Buddy...

He kisses her. Their lovemaking is perfunctory. As it gains in intensity, however, Buddy permits himself to moan.

ESTELLE

Don't make noise...my parents...

Buddy obliges. They start again. A few seconds later, though, he stops. Estelle stares at him, inquiringly. Then—

BUDDY

I wanna make noise...

Estelle stares at Buddy, who reaches under the bed and produces his flask. Defiantly, he takes a swig from it. He gets up and crosses to his desk, removes a cigarette, and defiantly lights it. He stares at his wife.

VOICE

There's an old and perhaps understandable tradition in Italian families that men must be allowed to make the decisions. That's because nobody can make life as miserable for those around them as an unhappy Italian man.

Buddy takes another swig from the flask.

INT. DINER

Estelle sits with three women friends. One of them is Laura, Chip's wife. The others are GLORIA and TINA.

VOICE

Consultations were held with each side's closest emissaries—

TINE

If you ain't ready to move, then don't move. It's your life too.

GLORIA

On the other hand, you been married ten years, and you're still with your folks. That's hard on a guy. You know?

LAURA

Who knows? You move maybe you'll have kids. Good things come from good things—

ESTELLE

I ain't ready for a house, and I ain't ready for kids.

GLORIA

So there's your answer. You're not gonna do it.

Pause. Estelle smiles to herself and adds sugar to her coffee.

ESTELLE

No. That ain't the answer. We're moving.

LAURA

What?

ESTELLE

Let him get it out of his system. He wants to own a house, have his own bar—let him. It'll never work out.

TINA

What if it does?

ESTELLE (SHAKES HER HEAD)

It can't. It's impossible. He's Buddy. Don't you see? Look, some men, they're destined for success. There's nothing they can do wrong. Like they were pregnant with it. Well, Buddy's pregnant with failure.

The girls smile at Estelle's logic.

INT. ANGELO'S BAR

Buddy sits with his friends: Chipmunk, Danny, Anthony, and Mike.

DANNY

It's in the mick neighborhood?

BUDDY (SHAKES HIS HEAD)

West Street.

ANTHONY

On the border.

CHIPMUNK

Helluva an idea. Buddy's Tavern.

MIKE

You oughta ask Angelo. Could be bad for his business.

BUDDY

Yeah. I didn't think of that.

ANGELO (COMING OVER)

What?

DANNY

Buddy here's thinking of opening up a bar. Over on West Street.

ANGELO

The mick neighborhood?

BUDDY

On the border. I mean, it's just an idea. If you thought it would interfere with your business-

ANGELO

Buddy, you can have my business. I'm sick of it. I got me a lot up in Orange, New Jersey. First chance I get, I'm goin'.

CHIPMUNK

The hell you gonna do up there?

ANGELO

Chicken farm. I got it all figured out.

Angelo pulls out a prospectus for chicken farming.

VOICE

And ultimately, as things always do, it came down to legalities. Could the house be converted into a bar?

INT. HOUSING OFFICE OF STATEN ISLAND

Buddy sits across from MR. PINE, an aging man with thick glasses and a cigarette stuck in his mouth. He studies a large, dusty volume.

PINE

According to this, yeah. 'Cause you're on the northwest border of a town that falls under the business statute of 1877, which doesn't require approval of the Bar and Restaurant Commission.

(closes the book)

Lucky for you. Those sonsofbitches can tie you up forever.

BUDDY

Huh. That's a great law.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Mahoney shows Estelle and Buddy through the house. Estelle is appalled by it.

VOICE

After a perfunctory tour of the house..

ESTELLE

This is your idea of a home?

BUDDY

This is the bar. We'll live upstairs.

ESTELLE

I suppose the upstairs is a palace.

From upstairs a sudden noise. The sound of something being dropped. All look up.

MAHONEY (SMOOTHLY)

The tenants are moving out in a few days.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE

Buddy and Estelle sit with a corpulent lawyer named MR. ASIPPI, staring at mounds of documents.

VOICE

And the usual visit to a relative who happens to be a lawyer-

ASIPPI

And this is a rider for the original papers on the house, which are covered on the original rider—

ESTELLE

What happens if the tenants don't leave?

ASIPPI

Don't worry. I took the precaution of sending them a change of title. They have a month to get out.

(pause)

I know you wanted to move in as soon as possible.

BUDDY (TO ESTELLE)

We'll move in downstairs. Just till they leave.

ESTELLE (BLITHELY)

I'm in no hurry.

INT. ESTELLE'S PARENTS' HOUSE

Buddy, Estelle, and her parents are all screaming.

VOICE

And the usual last argument—

ESTELLE

I hate that house! It's a slum!

DONATO

Una porchia!

SUBTITLE: It's a slum!

BUDDY

It's my chance, Estelle!

ESTELLE

To what? Turn me into a barmaid?

DONATO

Una casa vilenado.

SUBTITLE: A house of misery.

VOICE

Moving day arrived!

Vic Damone's mournful recording of "Cottage For Sale" plays over—

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS

A procession of people, carrying furniture. Buddy's friends from the bar. They march toward the two family house.

In the background, Estelle, her girlfriends, and her parents all support her.

It looks like a funeral procession. As they arrive at the house, Estelle's friends stare at it.

GLORIA

Oh, Estelle. I'm so sorry.

ESTELLE

Don't worry. We'll be in and out in a month.

But Buddy's friends are on the porch as Buddy excitedly shows them the front door.

BUDDY

...neon sign, right over there. "Buddy's Tavern. Featuring Buddy Visalo."

ESTELLE (UNDER)

Good luck.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bed lies in the center of the room, surrounded by unpacked boxes. Estelle and Buddy lie side by side.

BUDDY

What's the matter?

ESTELLE

I can't sleep. All these boxes—

BUDDY

It's just till they move. Couple of days.

ESTELLE

I feel like I'm in the luggage
compartment of a train

BUDDY

What sense would it make to unpack
everything just so we could pack it up
again when they move?

Outside the sound of SINGING stops Buddy. A man sings "It's
Only A Shanty In Old Shanty Town." From the quality of his
voice, we can tell he's drunk.

ESTELLE

Buddy...

The singing gets louder, the man closer. Buddy gets up and
looks out the window. He sees—

JIM O'NEARY

A wreck of a man, tall and very drunk. He staggers up the
walkway to the house.

BUDDY AND ESTELLE STARE OUT THE WINDOW

Buddy opens the window.

BUDDY

Hey!

O'NEARY (SINGS)

...the roof is so slanted it touches the
ground..

BUDDY

Hey!

O'NEARY

Hey yourself!

(sings)

Just a stumble down shack...by the ol'
railroad tracks—

BUDDY

You mind keeping it down? We were goin'
to sleep.

O'NEARY (STARES AT BUDDY)

Go sleep in your own house, you fat
bastard!

(sings)

Like a millionaire's mansion—

BUDDY

This is my house. I'm the new owner.
Visalo.

A look of drunken recognition crosses O'Neary's face. He
clumsily searches his pockets, finally coming up with a
crumpled piece of paper.

O'NEARY

Well—Vis, Viz-ula...you're the one who
shent this most despicable letter
telling me to screw off.

BUDDY

That was my lawyer.

O'NEARY

Your lawyer, was it? Well, Vizulo, why
not come out here...and kiss my ass!

O'Neary spins around, sticking his ass into the air. He
sticks the paper in his ass. Then he collapses over the
edge.

O'NEARY (SINGING—OFF)

I'd give up a palash...'f I was a king—

BUDDY (TO ESTELLE)

He lives upstairs.

O'NEARY (SINGING—OFF)

More than a palash...'s my everything!

ESTELLE

Good. He can stay.

Estelle walks off.

BUDDY

Where you goin'?

ESTELLE

Home.

BUDDY

We are home!

Suddenly the sound of a BOTTLE BREAKING against a wall.

BUDDY

Hey, what the hell?

O'NEARY

Sorry 'bout that. It's my aim...you see...I aim to please.

(pause—then, the old joke)

Will you aim too, please?

With that, O'Neary undoes his fly and starts pissing on the walkway, laughing maniacally. Buddy stares, in disbelief.

VOICE

It was at this moment that the awful truth became apparent to Buddy Visalo. His dreams of the success he knew would be so sweet after years of failure were once again to be foiled.

Buddy stares at the pissing O'Neary.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

Buddy mounts the stairs, knocks on the door. A moment later Jim O'Neary opens it. He holds a beer in his hand and is unshaven. The two men stare at each other.

O'NEARY

Well? Who are you?

BUDDY

Visalo. We met last night. Don't you remember?

O'NEARY

What if I don't? Who are you?

BUDDY

I own the place.

O'NEARY (REMEMBERING)

Ah, the bastard who sent me the notice.

BUDDY

Yeah. Listen. I don't wanna make things uncomfortable for you or nothin'. Me and the wife, though, we're not looking to be landlords.

O'NEARY

Oh, you're not?

BUDDY

Nah. The idea here is for me and my wife to keep the whole house for ourselves.

O'NEARY

Be nice, wouldn't it? Big too.

BUDDY

Yeah, well, actually...what I'm really looking to do is turn that downstairs into a little bar. We're gonna live up here.

O'NEARY

A bar? Lovely idea.

BUDDY

Yeah, well, it's kinda been in my mind for a while, now. Seein' how this street's got a lot of businesses on it, I figured it could be done-

O'NEARY

And will you be serving food?

BUDDY?

Food? Yeah...maybe sandwiches or something. But the point is-

O'Neary slams the door on Buddy's face. Pause. Buddy reflects. Knocks on the door again. O'Neary opens it.

O'NEARY

What?

BUDDY (CALMLY)

I didn't get to the point yet. The point is, I'm looking for you to vacate. I don't want to make anything too hard on you—doesn't have to be this

minute. Couple of days would be fine.
Maybe even a week.

O'NEARY

Well, aren't you a generous soul, Mr.
Visalo.

Buddy catches the sarcasm.

BUDDY

I'm just trying to be fair.

O'NEARY

Well, let me tell you something. Just
the fact that you bought this firetrap
from that prick Mahoney tells me that
above all you're stupid. And if you
think you can come up here and throw me
out, you're even dumber than you look.

(jabs finger toward apartment)

I got a wife in there expectin' a kid,
I got laid off from my job six months
ago, and I ain't got a cent. In spite
of your stupidity, I'm sure you're able
to see that perhaps I'm not in much of
a mood for getting thrown out on the
street by some dimwit, two-bit Italian
who fancies himself a—restaurateur.

He SLAMS the door on Buddy's face. Buddy reflects. His face
is that of a man who has calmly heard the battle cry and is
prepared. He turns and walks down the stairs.

As he reaches the bottom, O'Neary opens his door again and
calls down.

O'NEARY

Oh, Mr. Vizula...one more thing. The
rent.

BUDDY

What about it?

O'NEARY

I ain't got it. I ain't had it for
months. And if you think you can throw
me out for that, you're very much
mistaken. According to the New York
Renters Association—

Buddy turns and walks out. O'Neary runs back into his apartment.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

As Buddy walks out the side door, down the street, O'Neary appears in an upstairs window, yelling—

O'NEARY

I got me the right to remain in my domain for another year, you hear me? Another year I've got! Those are my rights, Visalo. So don't be knocking on the door asking for the rent. 'Cause you won't get it!

He laughs maniacally. Buddy continues walking away, ignoring him, his face a taut mask of fury. Estelle appears in the window.

ESTELLE

Hey, Buddy. Where you goin'?

Buddy marches out to some trash cans and KICKS THE SHIT OUT OF THEM. Once they're all down, Buddy marches away.

ESTELLE (SINGS QUIETLY)

I'm afraid...the masquerade...is over..

INT. HOUSING OFFICE

Buddy sits across from MR. PINE who reads from a thick old manual.

PINE (READING)

If said dwelling has no more than two and no less than one rental apartment on premises, and was built no later than nineteen thirteen originally to serve as a private dwelling, it is covered under the renter's act of nineteen twenty-one.

BUDDY

I mean, if he's talking about squatter's rights or something, that don't hold, do it?

Pine is reading, intently. He seems interested in what he's found. He smiles.

PINE

It turns out, after World War One, a special law was passed...specifically pertaining to the owners of two family dwellings...

(reads, then shakes his head)

Stuff's fascinatin'...

BUDDY

What is?

PINE

Well, most of these one family homes were converted to provide housing for returning veterans. And since unemployment was high and there was no GI bill or nothing, they gave 'em a year on the house.

(looks at Buddy)

In a manner of speaking.

BUDDY

How's that possible? Everyone lived rent free?

PINE (READING, THEN-)

Only applies to two family houses...converted from what were formerly single family dwellings...between the years 1919 and 1921. Like yours.

Pause. Buddy digests this, then collects his papers, rises and leaves the office. As he gets to the door, he turns.

BUDDY

That's a terrible law.

INT. BEDROOM OF TWO FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy and Estelle lie side by side in bed. The light from a distant streetlamp illuminates the sad little room. Both are awake, though neither faces the other.

ESTELLE

My grandfather woulda known better to buy a house and not ask about whether or not the tenants had to stay. My

grandfather, Buddy! And he couldn't read. Or write!

Buddy accepts the abuse with a bitter smile.

BUDDY

Maybe we should go to your grandfather's grave and ask him what to do, huh?

ESTELLE

We gotta sell this place, Buddy. Fast.

BUDDY

Maybe your grandfather'll buy it, huh?

From off-screen the SOUND of a WOMAN SCREAMING. It's coming from upstairs. Buddy and Estelle react as the woman screams again. The sound of a piece of furniture overturning. Another scream.

BUDDY

What the hell—

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Let him live! Not for me, for your son!

JIM'S VOICE (O.S.)

Fuck the bastard who made me eat this shit! Fuck 'em all!

ESTELLE

Oh, God, this isn't happening.

INT. UPSTAIRS OF TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Buddy, wearing a bathrobe, knocks on the O'Neary's door. No answer, but the sound of objects being thrown continues. Buddy knocks again, louder. Finally—

O'NEARY

Mind your own business, Vizulo!

WOMAN'S VOICE

No, not my mother's—

The sound of a glass object shattering. Buddy swallows, then heaves his weight against the door. Once, twice, three times—and it gives.

INT. O'NEARY'S APARTMENT

Buddy comes crashing in. The apartment is in shambles. All beer bottles, ashtrays, mirrors (broken), second hand furniture, old davenports...

Lying on a bed, oddly placed in the front room, is a woman who is very pregnant. She has long blond-red hair and cowers beneath the tattered bedsheets. She is no more than twenty-five. Her name is MARY.

Mary is very beautiful.

Buddy stares at her. Then at her stomach. Then back at her. Jim O'Neary is not in sight.

MARY

Who are you?

BUDDY

Visalo. I'm the landlord. I heard noise—

The sound of another piece of furniture breaking. Buddy cringes, but Mary remains oddly stoic, offended by Buddy's presence.

MARY

What of it?

BUDDY (LOOKS AT HER STOMACH AGAIN)

You all right?

MARY

I was fine until you broke my door down.

O'NEARY (O.S.)

—screwed into the ground by God. Son of God screws Jim O'Neary into the fucking ground—

The sound of glass breaking.

BUDDY

You gotta be kiddin' me. I coulda just called the police.

MARY

You broke my door down. What right have you?

Jim O'Neary appears in the doorway, roaring drunk.

O'NEARY

Christ, he's here. Look Mary, our loving protector. Here to examine the fuckin' damage, huh, Vizulo?

BUDDY

Settle down, pal-

O'NEARY

You know, I meant to tell you something this afternoon when you paid your call, but you didn't give me the chance.

(approaching Buddy)

It's about your figure. Your girlish figure. I thought it reminded me of somethin', but I wasn't sure what.

O'Neary stumbles toward Buddy and feels his stomach.

BUDDY

Look, pal-

O'NEARY

Now I know. You look like a sausage, Visalo. Know what I mean. Short at the top-

(taps Buddy's head)

-and bottom-

(squeezes his ass)

-but in the middle-

(pats Buddy's stomach)

-packed like a fucking sausage.

He laughs maniacally and stumbles away. Buddy stares at him.

BUDDY

I got news for you, pal. You're movin'.

O'NEARY

I got news for you. You smell like a fuckin' garlic press.

MARY

Jim, please stop-

O'NEARY

Ah, piss off!

O'Neary suddenly whacks Mary in the face. She SCREAMS. Buddy winces, jumps at him. O'Neary grabs his wife.

O'NEARY

You want a piece of her, do you?

BUDDY

Settle down, pal-

O'NEARY

She your type, Visalo? Well, it'll please you to know that the woman is all mine.

He grabs Mary's hair.

From here-

(he slaps her face)

-down to here-

(bats her legs)

-includin' everything in between-

MARY

Don't, Jim!

He's raised his hand and is about to bat her stomach, but Buddy lunges at him, pulling him off the pregnant Mary.

Buddy punches O'Neary twice, in the stomach and the face. O'Neary collapses, unconscious. Buddy looks at Mary. She stares back, unrepentant.

MARY

I suppose you expect me to thank you.

BUDDY (ASTONISHED)

You know what? You're sick as he is. You're even sicker. You're both sick...and you're both moving...tomorrow!

Buddy slams the door as he leaves. On that slam-

INT. ANGELO'S BAR - NIGHT

Buddy sits with Chipmunk, Mike, Danny, etc. Drinking. Thinking. On the jukebox, Sinatra singing "I Get A Kick Out of You."

VOICE

Naturally, news of Buddy's drunken Irish tenant and his ungrateful pregnant wife soon made the rounds.

BUDDY

This bitch—know what she says? "You gonna repair the door?"

CHIPMUNK (TO OTHERS)

Some legal bullshit, and he can't even throw him out. Sound like the United fuckin' States to you?

VOICE

But it was Angelo, the veteran barkeep, who was able to cut to the quick.

ANGELO

You know what they say, Buddy. Only thing worse than a drunken mick is a drunken mick with a broken nose.

BUDDY

I don't know, Ang—

ANGELO

You come this far, Buddy. What the hell?

(looks at guys—smiles)

Besides, I was noticin' the other day that maybe what we could all use was a little exercise...know what I mean?

He rolls up his shirtsleeves, revealing his fat arms. He boxes the air a couple of times, then turns and boxes the wall with his bare fist. It makes a serious dent.

VOICE

With the wall serving as a diagram, a plan was made. Like all good plans—

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - DAWN

The same group of guys approach the house. Buddy comes out of the house. Stares at this friends grimly. Approaches them. Speaks unheard words.

VOICE

-both simple and elegant. The O'Nearys were to receive three warnings in the space of five minutes. If they didn't begin actively moving their possessions after the third warning..

Estelle appears in the window, stares at the men. She looks grimly satisfied. Angelo and Buddy discuss things.

VOICE

...then appropriate actions would be taken...said actions remaining vague but without doubt, involving violence.

Everyone looks to Buddy.

ANTHONY

Well? You gonna warn 'em or what?

BUDDY

Yeah. Of course. I was just thinking...should I go up there or do it from down here?

CHIPMUNK

Do it from down here.

BUDDY

But what if the shouting wakes up the neighborhood?

ANGELO

Who the fuck cares?

DANNY

C'mon, what are you stalling for?

BUDDY

Hey, it's my fuckin' house, right?

CHIPMUNK (HITS DANNY)

It's his fuckin' house, Danny. C'mon.

Buddy marches off.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Buddy stands at the O'Nearys' door, which is splintered from the night before. A sofa has been shoved in front of it on the other side. Buddy knocks. No answer. Knocks again.

BUDDY

Wake up in there. It's Visalo.

(nothing, knocks again)

Hey, wake up! It's movin' day!

Mary O'Neary's pretty face scowls through the cracked door.

MARY

Go away

BUDDY

I ain't going away. *You're* going away.

MARY

Leave us alone

BUDDY

I ain't leavin' you alone. *You're* leaving us alone.

MARY

Oh, shut up.

She disappears. Buddy knocks again. Her face reappears.

BUDDY (PSEUDOFORMAL)

This will serve as the first of three warnings. Now you listen and listen good. If you're not up and actively engaged in the...uh...pursuit of moving said furniture and clothes and...whatnot from the premises—

MARY

Would you shut up!

BUDDY

-from the premises in a few minutes,
you will receive a second warning.

MARY

I'm sick. Go away.

BUDDY

After the second warning, a third
warning will be issued.

MARY

I told you, I'm sick-

BUDDY

After that, you will be forcibly
removed from the property. And I don't
care how fuckin' pregnant you are!

Mary stares at him with ill-concealed hatred.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Buddy has rejoined the men.

BUDDY

Give 'em a couple minutes.

ANGELO (TO GROUP)

Set your watches. It's seven minutes
after six.

The group stares at their watches.

DANNY

I got five after.

ANGELO

Well, set it to mine.

CHIPMUNK

I got five after too. Maybe you should
set to us-

As the group argues about the time, we see, in an upstairs
window-

MARY O'NEARY

Staring out at the group, fear gradually growing in her
face.

INT. O'NEARY APARTMENT

Mary makes her way down the hall. Her advanced state of pregnancy makes this journey difficult.

MARY

Jim? Where are you?

She peers into the bathroom. Jim O'Neary is passed out, in his underwear, in the bathtub. She gets him out of the bathtub and dunks his head in the toilet. It's a ritual.

JIM

Agghh-

MARY

Jim. Something's happening.

Suddenly she recoils. Pain in her abdomen. She breathes deep. O'Neary rubs his eyes with toilet water.

JIM

When-what's-

(sees Mary crouching in pain)

Mary, what the hell?

MARY

Nothing. I'm fine. You gotta go to the window. Someone's-

(recoils in pain)

-outside. All these men...

JIM

Who? Mary, what's wrong with you?

Her pain is clearly getting worse.

MARY

Go to the...window...they're gonna throw us out...

JIM

Vizulo?

Murder in Jim's eyes. He gets up and stumbles away, leaving Mary on the bathroom floor.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

The group is still looking at their watches. Buddy regards them with increasing mistrust. He turns to the house and cups his hands.

BUDDY (SHOUTS)

This is your second warning, O'Neary. Let it be known that you have received two out of a possible three warnings. If said possessions which...you are in possession of...are not actively moving in a timely...uh, manner-

INT. O'NEARY'S APARTMENT

Jim O'Neary stumbles through the living room. Stares out the window. Sees the posse. Dimly hears Buddy's voice.

BUDDY (O.S.)

...appropriate actions will...be ensued...construed..

O'Neary gets a sick smile on his face.

O'NEARY (YELLS)

Hey, Vizulo! If you and your band of fatass dagos want to be responsible for breaking the law and dispossessing me, that's fine! 'Cause I'll see you in court.

As they take this in.

BUDDY

How do you like this guy?

CHIPMUNK

He ain't takin' no one to court. You know how expensive that is?

O'NEARY (SHOUTS FROM THE WINDOW)

But if you want to be responsible for harming a pregnant woman and an unborn child, you'll have to harm me too! And that encounter will surely be fatal for all of you!

The men take this in.

ANTHONY

Hey, what about that, huh?

DANNY

He's bluffing. I could take him myself.

O'Neary shuts the window, satisfied with his bluster. He rambles down the hallway—

O'NEARY

It's OK, Mary. They're just bluffin' us.

—and gets to the bathroom where he sees—

MARY O'NEARY IN LABOR

Pain on her face.

MARY

God help us, Jim. It's happening.

JIM

God help us. It's happening.

Jim O'Neary is panic-stricken as well. Mary has a contraction.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Jim O'Neary appears in the window. Opens it.

DANNY

There he is. Big mouth.

(yells up)

What now, big fuckin' mouth?

BUDDY (SHOUTS UP)

You get one more warning, O'Neary!
Unless you came to your senses already—

O'NEARY (PANICKED)

Listen to me. Please. You've got to help me. We need a doctor. Now.

BUDDY

What?

O'NEARY

A doctor, for God's sake! She's having the baby!

Pause

ANGELO (UNDER)

Bullshit.

BUDDY

Bullshit!

O'NEARY

Please, if you have an ounce of brains between you all, you'll get me a doctor, then...we'll work something out. I swear it, Visalo. But you've got to call a doctor.

ANGELO (TO BUDDY)

Why don't he call a doctor?

BUDDY (SHOUTS)

Yeah! Why don't you call a doctor?

O'NEARY

Because they shut the phone off!

INT. O'NEARY APARTMENT

O'Neary leaning out the window. The men are all conferring below. From O.S. we hear Mary SCREAM. O'Neary is going to pieces.

O'NEARY

Please, gentleman, I swear to you, we'll get out of here. But you've got to call me a doctor. Now!

The men all look confer, then look up. Buddy cups his hands and shouts.

BUDDY

Since technically you had one warning left, we'll take your word for this. But don't try nothin' funny, you hear?

Buddy turns to Chipmunk and says something unheard. Chipmunk hurries into Buddy's apartment.

INT. BUDDY'S APARTMENT

Chipmunk enters, looks around. Estelle comes out, wearing a bathrobe.

ESTELLE

So what happened? They out?

CHIPMUNK

I need the phone. Where's the phone?

ESTELLE

Kitchen. Hey, what happened?

Chipmunk's already in the kitchen, dialing.

CHIPMUNK

Yeah, Operator. We need a doctor here. Right away. We're over on West Street-

ESTELLE

Someone got hurt?

CHIPMUNK

The woman upstairs is having a baby.

ESTELLE

Oh my God...

Estelle rushes out.

EXT. HOUSE

Estelle looks at the men.

ESTELLE

She's having a baby?

BUDDY (SHRUGS)

Yeah, that's what he says.

ESTELLE

Well, what are you doin' out here?

DANNY

We're just making sure he don't try nothin' funny.

ESTELLE

You're all a bunch of knuckleheads. You know that?

Estelle goes to the side entrance of the house, takes the stairs-

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING

Estelle runs up, sees the cracked door, peers in, and knocks. O'Neary opens up the door.

ESTELLE

Where is she?

O'NEARY

In the bathroom. She's-

Estelle pushes past him and rushes down the hallway.

INT. BATHROOM

Mary is contracting. Estelle comes in. Looks at her. Runs the tap water and wets a cloth.

ESTELLE

It's OK. I'm gonna help you till the doctor comes.

MARY

Oh, God-it hurts!

ESTELLE

I'm gonna help you. I never done this before, but-

MARY

Oh God!

Mary has a major contraction. The baby is coming out. Estelle's eyes go wide.

ESTELLE

I've never done this before...

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

The group stands around, dumbly.

BUDDY

Maybe I ought to go up.

ANGELO (SWEATING A LITTLE)

Yeah...we'll stay down here. Case he
tries something funny...

Buddy heads for the house.

INT. O'NEARY'S APARTMENT

The front door is still open. Buddy enters. Sees Jim
O'Neary pacing the living room. Mary SCREAMS O.S. Both men
look off.

ESTELLE (O.S.)

Buddy! Come quick!

O'NEARY

Love of God-

The two men rush into the hallway, heading for the
bathroom-

INT. BATHROOM

Buddy and Jim O'Neary blast in.

BUDDY

Chip's calling for someone-

Estelle turns. Tears in her eyes.

ESTELLE

It's too late.

O'NEARY

What happened?

BUDDY

What's wrong?

ESTELLE

Nothin'. She did it already. Can you
believe it?

The two men stare. A baby has been born. An exhausted Mary
O'Neary holds it.

O'NEARY

Love of God..

ESTELLE

Help me cut this..

BUDDY

Jesus Christ...

We focus on the baby, who is just minutes old.

VOICE

That's me on the floor of the bathroom
in which I was born.

Buddy, O'Neary, and Estelle all examine the screaming
infant. Gradually confusion enters their eyes.

VOICE

You may detect vaguely quizzical looks
on the faces of those who were present.

We see the baby closely.

Its skin is dark.

BUDDY

What's—he dirty or something?

VOICE

That's because it was immediately
apparent that in spite of having been
born of two white parents, I seem to be
made of...darker material.

Estelle runs the washcloth over the baby's skin. It does
not change color.

ESTELLE

Oh my God...he looks...

(looks at Buddy)

...colored...

BUDDY

Yeah...maybe that's just what they look
like...

(to O'Neary)

...when they come out.

But nobody buys this. O'Neary steps back.

O'NEARY (ASTONISHED)

Love of God...

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

The group stands ready for action. Jim O'Neary comes out of the side entrance. He stares at the group. They stare back.

But he seems to not see them. To look through them. After a pause—

ANGELO

Hey, pal—

O'Neary waves his arm loosely toward the group and stumbles away, muttering. The group is puzzled. A moment later Buddy appears in the upstairs window. Danny yells up.

DANNY

What happened?

BUDDY

Danny, listen...what happened...you'll never believe it...

Buddy disappears. The men look in puzzlement at Jim O'Neary, now disappearing down the street.

VOICE

That was the last time anyone in Staten Island ever saw Jim O'Neary, my mother's husband.

SHOT OF JIM O'NEARY

lying behind a billboard on the edge of town, drunk, desolate, a bottle clutched in his hand. A policeman is shaking him awake.

VOICE

He was arrested for vagrancy later that afternoon and presumably never returned to Staten Island.

SHOT OF MARY O'NEARY

Lying in bed, holding her baby. Alone.

VOICE

My mother recovered from my birth in a short time...

Mary looks at the baby. Taking it in.

VOICE

...and later told me that the only shocking thing about the color of my skin was that the inevitable hadn't occurred to her during the eight and a half months of her pregnancy.

The baby. Crying.

VOICE

The brief and apparently mutually satisfactory union she had with my natural father had never entered her mind as a possible complication.

Mary holds the baby.

VOICE

And yet, upon giving birth, she said she felt as if she'd always known—always *expected*—that she's give birth to a baby that looked exactly as I did..

INT. ANGELO'S BAR - NIGHT

The group stares at Buddy, dumbfounded.

CHIPMUNK

The kid's a fuckin' colored?

BUDDY

Half. Yeah.

CHIPMUNK

You *gotta* be kidding.

BUDDY

Chipmunk, I swear to Christ.

The group takes this in. they start laughing. Slowly at first. As it builds—

ANTHONY

You mean she fucked some coon?

BUDDY

Evidently.

ANGELO

Look at it this way. In a few years,
you'll have your own janitor on the
premises.

As the bad joke opportunities present themselves.

ANTHONY

Kinda puts a black mark on the whole
place, huh?

Laughter building-

CHIPMUNK

Guess it kinda gives new meaning to the
term "black Irish."

Laughter CRESCENDOS. As the guys go on laughing, drinking,
smoking, etc., Buddy gets up and goes to the jukebox. Drops
in some change. Johnny Mathis singing "Fools Rush In" comes
on the juke.

Gradually the voices of Buddy's friends fade out...just
Buddy, listening to the tune, smoking a cigarette, looking
amused, a little detached.

THE SONG PLAYS OVER THE SILENT IMAGES OF-

Buddy and friends getting drunk in the bar.

Buddy and his friends outside the bar, engaged in a mock
fistfight...

Buddy and Chipmunk weaving down the streets, laughing,
walking. Both are very drunk.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy stumbles up the walkway. After a few failed attempts,
he manages to get his key in the lock, open the door, and
enters.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS

He stops abruptly, but not steadily as he sees-

Estelle and her parents are sitting on the sofa in the
still-junked-out living room. A bare bulb is all that
illuminates the room. Donato and Marie look grim.

MARIE

Estelle told us what happened. What are you going to do about it?

Buddy thinks. Looks at Estelle. Her expression doesn't aid him.

BUDDY

'Bout what?

ESTELLE

He's drunk. He don't know what's going on.

BUDDY

I'm fine. I ain't drunk!

The words come out garbled.

ESTELLE

You think you're a big shot, a big homeowner. You're gonna have your own business, but you can't even realize when something very, very important has happened.

BUDDY

What? She had a baby.

ESTELLE

Buddy, the baby is colored!

BUDDY

So? He ain't ours.

ESTELLE

It was under our roof! This—

(points up)

—thing and her baby are still here! We gotta get her out and get her out now!

Buddy looks at Donato and Marie, sitting silent in grim agreement.

BUDDY

Honey, she just had the kid. I mean, a couple of days—

ESTELLE

Tomorrow. Or you know where I'll be.

She looks at her parents.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Buddy knocks on the splintered door and enters—

INT. O'NEARY APARTMENT

—where he sees Mary O'Neary lying on the bed, nursing her baby. His eyes go right for the nipple. She catches this.

MARY

Ever seen one?

BUDDY

Sorry—I ah—

MARY

—came up to tell me that my husband is back and quit the booze and paid you the back rent and all is forgiven?

Pause. Buddy stares at her beautiful face, which is consumed with anger.

BUDDY

Ah...no. I...came to tell you—

MARY

That I'm welcome to stay on long as I like rent free and that you're all thrilled my baby came out proper and nice, although perhaps it's obvious that I didn't have him with my husband?

(pause)

Is that it, Mr. Visalo?

Pause. Buddy stares at Mary...weaves drunkenly...

BUDDY

I guess you know what I came up to tell you.

MARY

All I ask you for is a week. Just a week to rest and make some arrangements.

BUDDY

A week?

MARY

I got a sister in Sheepshead Bay. She'll help. We haven't spoken in a while, but I'm sure she'll help.

BUDDY

Look, I think you oughta know—

MARY

If it's the money...I'll pay you for it as soon as I can. Just a week is all I ask you.

Pause

BUDDY

It's gotta be tomorrow.

As Mary takes this blow, the weight of her situation settles in on her.

MARY

Well, I couldn't expect you to let me stay rent free while I take care of a child who nobody in the world could possibly want, now could I?

BUDDY

Hey, you gotta admit it's a little odd.

Pause. Ever so faintly, tears appear in her eyes.

MARY

Well, so what? Am I askin' for your pity? Do I care what you or anyone thinks? I got my baby and nothing else in the world, including a home. And if you think that I'm gonna beg for mercy or forgiveness, you're wrong, Mr. Visalo. Wrong. I got nothin' to be ashamed of.

(fighting the tears)

Nothing, Mr. Visalo. I'll do you the courtesy of getting out of your house tomorrow.

Buddy stares at her. Sways on his feet. As he backs out—

BUDDY

No hard feelings. Right?

MARY (STARES, INCREDULOUS)

God help you...

As Buddy closes the door...

VOICE

True to my mother's word, we left promptly at eight the following morning—

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Mary descends the side steps, one suitcase in her hand, the baby under her other arm. As she descends the steps, we see Estelle watching her from a side window. She ducks her head back as Mary passes.

BUDDY, CHIPMUNK, AND ANTHONY

Are in front of the house with cans of paint.

DANNY

What's with the green paint?

BUDDY

It's leftover from, you know—

CHIPMUNK

The house-painting service.

BUDDY

Yeah.

DANNY

I just don't see a bar done in green.
'Less maybe it had an Irish theme.

CHIPMUNK

Bite your fuckin' tongue—

They stop as they see

MARY LEAVING

She stops as she sees the men. Embarrassed pause.

BUDDY

Mornin'.

MARY

Morning.

She continues on her way. They stare at her with odd fascination.

CHIPMUNK (UNDER)

Girl like that screwing around with a moulán yan. Fuckin' shame, huh?

Mary turns. For a second the men think she heard them. Then—

MARY

I left all the furniture. Sell it if you wish.

BUDDY

Less you want it.

MARY

What would I need with it?

Mary continues her way. As they step up the porch of the house. Buddy takes a last look at the departing Mary.

DANNY (UNDER)

Think she likes you Buddy. You got that animal thing goin', you now?

BUDDY

Take this stuff in. I'll be with you in a sec.

Chipmunk and Danny oblige. Buddy stares at Mary.

BUDDY

Hey!

(she turns)

You uh...know where you goin'?

MARY

What does it matter to you?

BUDDY

I was just askin'.

MARY

If you must know, I'm checking into a hotel until my sister can make some arrangements. The Dorilton.

BUDDY (MAKES A FACE)

The Dorilton?

MARY

It was the only one that would take me.
The baby starts crying.

BUDDY

Jesus. Be careful. That's mostly...
(embarrassed, looking for word)
"ladies of the evenin'."

MARY

I'm sorry?

BUDDY

You know...hookers.

MARY

Well, I didn't expect the Waldorf.
(pause)

May I go now?

BUDDY

I'm just tryin' to be-

MARY (CONTEMPTUOUSLY)

Helpful. As always, Mr. Visalo.

As she leaves-

BUDDY (UNDER)

Crazy bitch...

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE DOWNSTAIRS

Buddy and the guys knocking holes in walls downstairs, painting.

VOICE

On weekends, everybody did what they could to help Buddy and Estelle make something of their home.

Buddy is about to nail a molding into the floorboards. It's a lovely piece of varnished wood, which will cover an unsightly hole. He winds up, hits the nail, and splits the wood into two.

Estelle is watching. Buddy looks up. She stares glumly at his incompetence.

INT. FACTORY

Buddy and Chipmunk operate the massive labeling machine.

VOICE

During the weeks, work went on as usual, though the double shifts of working days at the factory and nights on the bar occasionally took their toll.

BUDDY (PAUSES, YELLS OVER MACHINE)

Hey. Thanks. You know?

CHIPMUNK

For what?

BUDDY (SHRUGS)

For encouragin' me. You know? You're about the only one I know who does.

CHIPMUNK

That's 'cause you got balls. I admire that in you. Myself, I ain't got any.

BUDDY

I do, right? I mean...I'm doin' the right thing. I'm fightin' for what's right, not what's just handed to me.

Chipmunk thinks about this.

CHIPMUNK (NODS)

Yeah. That's balls.

BUDDY

This one's gonna work. It's my time.

The machine careens out of control, madly moving around of its own will.

CHIPMUNK

Christ!

As they struggle to get the machine under control—

VOICE

And gradually the odd set of events involving my birth seemed to disappear into a haze of folklore..

INT. UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Dinner in the now vaguely presentable kitchen. A large selection—chicken, a roast, pasta, salad, etc. Estelle's parents, Marie and Donato, eat with Buddy and Estelle. We notice that Buddy chews his food with his mouth open.

MARIE

I told Mrs. Genova all about that crazy putana. Know what she says? "Only Buddy...it could happen to Buddy."

Everyone laughs. Buddy smiles slightly and chews.

ESTELLE

That's right. He's got a talent for things like that.

MARIE

She also said you shoulda called the police. It's against the law what she did.

BUDDY (CHEWING)

What is?

MARIE

Mis...ah...cejantin'. Or somethin'. They say the Irish got an imbalance like that. The men beat the women so much over so long, the women think it's normal. It's in their genes. The only kind of men they like are—

ESTELLE

Buddy.

Buddy looks up, mouth full. He continues chewing with his mouth open.

BUDDY

What?

ESTELLE

Look at the way you eat.

Still chewing, Buddy examines his shirtfront.

BUDDY

What?

ESTELLE

With your mouth open. You chewing with our mouth open.

Buddy realizes he's doing it. Shuts his mouth and swallows.

BUDDY

So what?

ESTELLE

It's disgusting.

BUDDY

Hey, I didn't know we was entertaining royalty.

ESTELLE

What's that mean?

BUDDY

I didn't know I was in the company of, uh, the King and Queen of England here.

ESTELLE

You saying my parents are slob or something?

DONATO

Please, children—

BUDDY

You're saying I'm a slob.

ESTELLE

What would you call someone who chews
with his mouth open-

Buddy suddenly flings down his napkin on the table and
stands.

BUDDY

I'd call him a slob. But you know what?
This is my house. I own it, see? So I
can be a slob and chew my food however
the hell I want-

ESTELLE (TO MARIE)

He's such a big shot now. He bought a
slum and thinks he's lord of the
manner-

BUDDY

I am a big shot. How many people own
their own home? Huh? Not too many,
baby. I did it. I not only got my own
house, I got my own business. I'm gonna
have my own bar down there! How many
people got that?

ESTELLE

So why don't you go eat in your bar,
big shot? Maybe you'll find the company
more to your likin'.

Buddy's face is red with anger. He storms out of the room.
A moment later he reenters, grabs the plate off the table,
and leaves again. Once he's gone-

ESTELLE (CALMLY)

You want more vegetable, Pop?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

Buddy eats alone at the half-built bar. But he's lost his
appetite. He stares out the front window. A neon sign
blinking somewhere in the distance.

Sinatra sings "Stars Fell On Alabama" over:

EXT. STATEN ISLANDS STREET - NIGHT

Buddy wandering...smoking a cigarette...eventually winding up
at-

INT. ANGELO'S - NIGHT

—sitting with some of the guys. They are all laughing. Anthony and Danny are talking to two guys we haven't seen before. Buddy's got a double whiskey going.

ANTHONY

...sonofabitch leans out the window, right? Says he's gonna kill us all. Two minutes later—less than two minutes—he's back beggin' us for mercy.

DANNY

Tell 'em about the kid—

ANTHONY

I'm getting there.

BUDDY (TO ANGELO)

How much longer I gotta hear this story, huh?

ANGELO

Buddy, you don't know it, but you made history. What happened in your house...it ain't never gonna be forgotten.

BUDDY

What the hell? Wasn't my fault.

ANGELO

Nobody said it was. C'mon. You want another, Buddy?

Buddy nods. Angelo's about to pour a shot of Crown Royale.

ANTHONY

The mick says she's havin' a baby—

DANNY

Meanwhile, Buddy's rushin' upstairs—

BUDDY (TO ANGELO)

Second thought, skip it.

Buddy gets up and pays his tab. Anthony sees this.

ANTHONY

We're getting to the good part here.

As Buddy leaves—

DANNY

And I say, "What is it? Boy or girl?"
Buddy says, "Neither. Pickaninny!"

Much laughter. Buddy pauses at the door. The look on his face: I didn't say that.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS - NIGHT

Sinatra still singing, Buddy still walking. Eventually he winds up in front of—

THE DORILTON HOTEL

A seedy, turn-of-the-century dump. Several hookers hang around. Buddy stares up at the window.

INT. LOBBY

Buddy's at the front desk. An aged clerk appears. Pimps hover.

BUDDY

I'm lookin' for somebody. Her name's
O'Neary. Mary.

The clerk regards Buddy curiously. Looks at the register.

CLERK

Fourth floor.

BUDDY (ON WAY TO ELEVATOR)

What room?

CLERK

How the fuck should I know?

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL

Buddy makes his way down a very seedy hallway. The sounds of sex come from behind one door. In a corner of the hall, a man crouches, asleep, with his hat on.

Buddy passes several doors. Then he HEARS a baby crying. He knocks on that door.

MARY (O.S.)

Yes?

Buddy doesn't speak. He knocks again.

MARY (O.S.)

Who is it?

BUDDY

It's Visalo.

(no response)

I was just...passin' by. Wonderin' how you're doin'.

The door opens. Mary stands there, the baby in her arms. Her eyes are red from crying.

BUDDY

Not too good, huh?

MARY

My sister won't take me in.

(holding back tears)

She couldn't explain the whole thing...to her husband.

She starts crying. Buddy stares at the baby, now clearly, undeniably a mulatto.

BUDDY

Maybe you ought to consider...you know...giving it away.

MARY

Why are you here? Why am I even telling you this?

BUDDY

I don't know. They was talkin' about you...down at the bar. I didn't really say nothing...just started wondering if you were doin' all right-

MARY

I give you something to talk about, do I—with your friends at the bar? The people at the market too? And then you feel guilty, and the next thing you're paying a visit and giving me advice. "Why don't you give him away?" Because maybe I don't want to. All right?

BUDDY

I was just tryin' to help.

MARY

You don't care. Not at all. You just think I'm a slut, a stupid girl with her brain down here—

She points to her crotch. Buddy is appalled.

BUDDY

Hey, Mary, what the hell!

MARY

My name is not Mary. It's Mrs. O'Neary to you. I wouldn't dream of calling you by your first name, Mr. Visalo.

She slams the door on his face. Pause.

BUDDY (YELLS)

If it's Mrs. O'Neary, where's Mr. O'Neary? Huh? Where's your fuckin' bum husband?

But there is no answer.

VOICE

My mother's rebuff should certainly have ended any possible concern for her welfare on Buddy's part. He was neither tolerant nor understanding of emotional behavior.

As Buddy leaves, the man sleeping in the corner emerges from his stupor, flashing a toothless grin and grabbing at Buddy, who kicks him away.

BUDDY

Get the fuck outta here!

INT. BEDROOM OF TWO FAMILY HOUSE

Estelle sleeps. Buddy reads the newspaper by a dim light.

VOICE

But it remains an undisputed fact, even by agnostics, atheists, and hard-core cynics, that every man has at least one

moment of total selflessness in this
life.

Estelle stirs. Opens a sleepy eye and looks at Buddy.

ESTELLE (ROLLING OVER)

Don't throw it away...coupons for Macy's.
We see that it's the "Apartments to Let" page.

BUDDY

Macy's?

ESTELLE

The half-off. Me and Laura—
(yawns)
Saturday..

She rolls over, asleep again. Buddy peruses the paper,
circling something lightly with a pencil.

EXT. CICCOS GROCERY STORE - DAY

Mr. Cicco, apron on, stands outside his small shop with
Buddy, pointing to a room built over it.

MR. CICCOS

Used to be my grandmother's room. She
died last year—a hundred and four.

(pause)

Twenty-five a month.

(pause)

Includin' the water.

INT. APARTMENT

A very small, empty room. Clean and undistinguished.

MR. CICCOS

Last guy I had just used it in
emergencies..

(wink, nudge)

...know what I mean?

BUDDY

I think so. In fact, I'm kind of looking to just do this...you know, quietly.

MR. CICCO (SMILES)

I was married myself for years—

BUDDY

No, it's not that. Something else. Little hard to understand.

MR. CICCO

Don't got to explain a thing to me. Deaf and dumb. D and D. That's me.

Pause. Buddy sees that Cicco doesn't believe him.

BUDDY

Good. We'll keep it that way, then.

Pause. Buddy suddenly grabs Mr. Cicco by the shirt collar.

BUDDY (CONT.)

Otherwise I'll kill ya.

INT. DORILTON HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Buddy is standing at the front desk with a furious and embarrassed Mary O'Neary, baby under her arm, her single piece of luggage at her feet.

MARY

I won't have this.

CLERK (TO BUDDY)

Comes to thirty-eight bucks.

BUDDY

Jesus. For this dump?

MARY

Stop, you hear me? Why are you doing this?

BUDDY (PAYING THE BILL)

You'll pay me back.

MARY

Damn right I will. I won't take charity.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS

Buddy and Mary walking angrily toward a house.

BUDDY

It ain't charity. You think I got
enough to lay out for this?

(points off)

Here we are.

Mary stares at the grocery store and the little room over
it.

MARY

That's it?

BUDDY

Hey, it ain't the Waldorf, but it's
better than that fuckin' hotel.

INT. ROOM

Buddy shows Mary the room. He opens the blinds, turns on
the water...

MARY

Does your conscience bother you? Is
that it? Because it needn't.

BUDDY

He pays for the water.

MARY

Are you doing it to make yourself into
a saint? Is that it?

BUDDY (FED UP)

Ah, Christ. I'm doin' it...I don't know.
I'm just doin' it, all right? Can't you
just say thanks?

(pause)

No, you can't. That's nice. Well, in
that case, I ain't doin' it for your
thanks. I'm just sorry...

MARY

I don't need your pity.

BUDDY

No, you don't. You need a goddamned roof over your head while you figure out what to do with your goddamned self. Look, don't get it in your head that I think what you did was OK. Believe you me, I think what you did is sick. But—

(pause)

—you shouldn't be in that hotel. That's all.

MARY

I take it your wife doesn't know.

BUDDY

No. She don't know.

Long pause. Mary looks out the single window at the view of Manhattan.

MARY

The view is nice. Thank you, Mr. Visalo.

Buddy nods, looks away, avoids her eyes.

INT. KITCHEN TWO FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Estelle goes through the mail. Stops and regards a certain piece of mail with curiosity.

VOICE

The letter was addressed to Buddy Visalo. It was form the Staten Island Savings Bank.

Estelle thinks for a moment, then opens it. Reads.

VOICE

Mr. Visalo was being notified, as a courtesy, that the discrepancy between his earned income and recent expenditures was not going unnoticed. As a service, the bank suggested coming in for a conference—

Estelle picks up the phone and dials a number without looking. She stares at the letter.

ESTELLE

Hi, Laura. I was thinking of doing some shopping. Yeah? I'll come by in half an hour. Yeah...

(pause)

I gotta stop at the bank first.

INT. STATEN ISLAND SAVINGS BANK

Estelle sits across from MR. BRANCACCIO, a middle-aged bank clerk. Her expression is deadpan, unexpressive.

BRANNCACCIO

According to my calculations, your spending is running at about two and half times your income. Now I know that's your private business, but if your income doesn't increase commensurately—

ESTELLE

There's no law about how much of our money we can spend, is there?

BRANCACCIO

Certainly not. This was merely a courtesy on our part to protect you—

ESTELLE

Yeah, well, thanks for being so courteous, but I'd prefer if certain things were kept private.

She stands.

BRANCACCIO

That's your decision, that's fine. I do want to point out, though, that if your rate of spending continues, you only have perhaps another month and a half until your savings are gone.

ESTELLE

And I'd prefer if you wouldn't bother us about this anymore. My husband works hard. He's under lots of pressure, and he don't need this aggravation.

She stalks away. She stops at the door and turns.

ESTELLE

You said a month and a half, right?

Brancaccio nods, puzzled.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Buddy and Chipmunk are hauling a large crated thing up the porch. Both are sweating profusely.

BUDDY

Jesus. OK, one more, and we got it.

Chipmunk spits on his hands. They hoist it and enter the bar-

INT. DOWNSTAIRS TWO FAMILY HOUSE

-which is now about halfway completed. They deposit the crate in the middle of the floor, breathing heavily. Naturally they both light cigarettes. Once they're ready-

CHIPMUNK

Let's go...

They start ripping apart the crate.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS - TWILIGHT

Estelle, Laura, and their friends are carrying packages of wallpaper, linens, etc. As they approach the house-

GLORIA

Can I ask a personal type of question, Estelle?

ESTELLE?

Where we getting the money for all this?

TINA

You gotta admit, you're spending like there's no tomorrow.

ESTELLE

What's the worst that could happen?

TINA

Are you kidding? How 'bout you lose all your savings?

ESTELLE

Yeah. What then?

TINA

Well, you couldn't open the bar then.

ESTELLE (SMILING)

So what's wrong?

Laura looks at Estelle, getting it.

LAURA

Oh, Estelle.

GLORIA

Well, you'd have to rent it out. Or maybe even—

LAURA

Sell the house.

ESTELLE (TO LAURA)

Bingo.

INT. BUDDY AND CHIP IN THE "BAR"

Quick cuts of them ripping the wood off, piece by piece. Gradually we begin to see pieces of chrome revealed, wood, lacquer. Finally all the wood is off, and we see that inside the crate is

AN EXCELLENT RCA JUKEBOX

Buddy and Chipmunk admire it. Buddy hooks it up. The lights come on. He runs over and presses a selection.

A big band comes on. The Sinatra intro to "Lady Is A Tramp."

Just where the vocal should come in, however, it doesn't. Instead, just the band backs up.

CHIPMUNK (PUZZLED)

Where's Frank?

BUDDY (SMILES)

Who needs him?

He points to lettering at the top of the juke. MUSIC MINUS ONE. Then Buddy starts singing along with the band.

CHIPMUNK (IMPRESSED)

No shit. Your own house band.

Buddy sings on, moving around his bar with great confidence, singing to nonexistent patrons.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF HOUSE

Estelle and her friends approach the house. She stops short as she sees

THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW OF THE HOUSE

Buddy dancing, singing.

The other women smile and start to laugh. Estelle sees nothing funny about her husband's performance.

ESTELLE

Buddy! Hey, Buddy!

Buddy stops. The "band" continues behind him. He looks out at the girls.

BUDDY

What?

ESTELLE

That your idea of having respect?
Making a fool out of yourself in front
of the whole neighborhood?

BUDDY

What's with you? If I was earning
thousands of dollars doin' that, you'd
be proud of me.

ESTELLE

That's the point. The only reason a man
should be dancing around like a monkey
is if he's getting paid.

The girls laugh nervously. Buddy stares at his wife.

BUDDY

What'd you call me?

ESTELLE

Oh, dry up.

BUDDY

You called me a monkey.

ESTELLE

Oh, come on. I was just kiddin'.

BUDDY

You know what that means?

(points at her)

It means you married a monkey. Who's dumber? A monkey or somebody who married a monkey?

He exits the bar, walking the other way down the street as the ladies look on, embarrassed.

ESTELLE (BLITHELY)

If he thinks he's gettin' dinner tonight, he's dumber than I thought.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS - NIGHT

Buddy walking down the streets, drinking from a flask. He passes a five and dime. Looks in the store window. There are toys.

INT. FIVE AND DIME - NIGHT

Buddy at the counter.

BUDDY

You got anything for...for kids?

COUNTER GUY

How old?

Buddy makes a vague show with his hands.

BUDDY

Little.

COUNTER GUY

Kids like soldiers. Guns. All that crap.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS - NIGHT

Buddy marches along carrying TWO VERY LARGE GI JOE DOLLS WITH GUNS. Perhaps they'd be appropriate for a twelve year old.

He arrives in front of Mary's house. Walks up the side stairs. Knocks on the little door.

MARY (O.S.)

Who is it?

BUDDY

Visalo.

(no answer)

I, uh...got something here. A gift.

She opens the door and peers out. The first thing she sees are the "guns" pointing at her. She screams and slams the door.

BUDDY

Hey, what the hell?

MARY (O.S.)

Go away!

BUDDY

No, no, they're fake. They're for the kid.

She opens the door slowly and stares out, not giving him any room to enter.

MARY

Those are for him?

BUDDY

Yeah. What's the matter?

MARY

For one thing, they're too big.

Buddy looks at them.

BUDDY

Maybe you're right, huh?

MARY

What are you up to?

BUDDY

I just figured...maybe I'd drop by and bring a little gift.

Suspicion fills Mary's luminous eyes. They fall on the flask in Buddy's coat.

MARY

Just like that.

BUDDY

If you must know, me and the wife...we had a little fight. Nothin' big, but...I was out walkin' around trying to cool down-

MARY

So that's why you're doing it. You wanted a little place to come to when you and the wife were on the outs. My God, I can be stupid.

BUDDY

What are you talkin'?

MARY

You're just like all of them. All you Italians, you're all just a race of pimps. You saw a women in need and stepped in to help her, did you? Gave her a roof over her head, told her not to worry about a thing. And now it's time for you to collect, isn't it?

BUDDY

That ain't-no, that ain't it.

MARY

Sick bunch of whoremasters you all are. You'd prey on a dying nun if it suited you-

BUDDY (AGHAST)

Don't say that!

MARY

Get out!

She slams the door. Buddy looks truly astonished. Shaken.

He descends the stairs. A strange look in his eyes.

Once he's in front of the house-

BUDDY (SHOUTS)

All of a sudden everybody hates me!

He looks up at Mary's window. Then he HURLS one of the GI JOES at it.

It SHATTERS THE WINDOW. Mary screams. In the background we hear the baby crying. A moment later she comes to the broken window.

MARY

You bastard! I'll leave tomorrow! I'll pay for everything! I will!

Buddy looks up, face filled with anger.

BUDDY

I don't want you to leave!

MARY

Don't you think I know that?

BUDDY

That ain't why!

MARY

Why, then?

Pause. All of a sudden, Buddy's face is flooded with tears. Mary notices, looks oddly disconcerted.

BUDDY (THROUGH HIS TEARS)

I just wanna talk...to someone..

MARY

What's with you?

BUDDY (WEEPING)

I don't know...Jesus Christ!

He's crying like a baby. As he tries to stifle his tears, they only increase.

MARY

My God, you're a mess.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - LATER

A towel has been hung over the broken window. Buddy is wiping his eyes, sitting on the edge of the bed.

Mary stays across the room from him, staring at him. Buddy is unloading a lifetime of bullshit, wiping his eyes as he speaks.

BUDDY

Then that whole thing went in the toilet, and I tried a house-painting business...and I had these uniforms made up, right? With the name of my business on 'em. I showed 'em to her, soon as I got 'em. Know what she says? "Buddy, who we gonna sell those to when it goes out of business?"

The baby starts crying. Mary nonchalantly takes out her breast and begins feeding it. Buddy notices but looks away. The worst of his crying jag seems to be over.

MARY

Are you all right now?

BUDDY (WIPING HIS EYES)

Yeah. That was terrible. I'm real sorry. I ain't done that since I was a little kid. Maybe even before that.

MARY

It builds up. I've done plenty of it myself lately.

BUDDY

Yeah, well, you're a broad. Broads are supposed to cry.

Mary crosses and sits on the floor, across from him, still feeding the baby. Buddy regains his composure.

MARY

I'm sure things will get better for you. Your wife will get used to the idea. Who knows, she might even come to admire you. Once you...succeed.

BUDDY

How much success can I have? I already missed my big one.

MARY

I don't understand.

BUDDY

You ever hear of Julius La Rosa?

MARY

No.

BUDDY

You kidding? He's a big singin' star, on Arthur Godfrey's TV show. Used to be, anyway.

MARY

I've never had a television.

BUDDY

No kiddin'. Well, anyway...I coulda been him. That was my big one. Godfrey heard me sing when I was in the navy, see? Told me he'd give me a job when I got out.

(pause)

I told Estelle, and she got a little crazy. She said no.

MARY

You said no.

BUDDY (PAUSE)

Ah, Christ. I guess so. Ever since, whenever I get an idea, she says no, and I do it anyway..

(looks at her)

...'cause that's all that matters. When you see something you want, you gotta take it. I don't suppose this means anything to you.

Mary looks right at Buddy.

MARY

I know exactly what you mean.

Buddy is silent as he thinks about this. He stands.

BUDDY

I'll leave you alone now. Thanks for the ear.

MARY

You sure you're all right?

BUDDY

Yeah. Course. I'm not really like this, you know. I mean, cryin' and talkin'...I'm just like anyone else most of the time.

Pause.

MARY

I'm afraid I don't believe that.

Buddy smiles slightly. He's in the door now.

BUDDY

I'll fix that window tomorrow.

MARY

I'd appreciate it.

As he leaves—

BUDDY

I'm sorry I brought such a stupid gift.

MARY

They say it's the thought that counts.

Buddy stares at her for just a moment too long. Then he leaves.

EXT. DOCKS AT THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY - MORNING

Buddy and Chip are packing Estelle and Laura off into the ferry. The ferry belches smoke. The girls rush up the plank. As the ferry starts leaving—

LAURA

Six o'clock at Mickey's. Don't forget.

CHIPMUNK

We won't.

(to Buddy, as they leave)

All fuckin' year I wait for that Macy's half-off. A whole Saturday all to myself.

BUDDY

So what are you doin'?

CHIPMUNK

I told Laura I was gonna take it easy.
Know what I mean?

BUDDY (LOOKS AT WATCH)

Angelo don't open for another hour.

CHIPMUNK

He'll let us in.

They continue walking. Buddy remembers something.

BUDDY

Second thought, I gotta do something.
Errands.

CHIPMUNK

I'll go with you.

Pause. As they walk on, Buddy thinking..

BUDDY

I'll do 'em myself. You done enough for
me, Chip.

CHIPMUNK (AS BUDDY WALKS AWAY)

You sure?

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Buddy is fixing the broken window. Mary sits in a corner,
watching him replace the glass. She holds the baby.

MARY

Mr. Cicco asked me about the noise. I
said it was an accident.

BUDDY

He thinks you're my...you know.

MARY

I figured as much.

BUDDY

I told him that wasn't the case,
but...what are you gonna do?

The baby starts crying.

MARY

Shh...

BUDDY (LOOKS AT THE BABY)

He seen the kid?

MARY

No.

BUDDY

Well, if he does and anything happens,
tell me. I'll take care of him.

Mary smiles sardonically at Buddy's tough-guy routine.
Buddy is finished with the window.

MARY

We both appreciate it, Mr. Visalo.

BUDDY

He got a name?

MARY

There was no birth certificate...so there
was no need for a name.

She stops the baby from crying, holds it close. Buddy turns
and looks at her.

BUDDY

If he don't have a name, he ain't a
person. Legally. Same with a birth
certificate. They don't cost much—

MARY (CUTS HIM OFF)

What does it matter?

BUDDY

Well, you said you didn't want to give
him away. In that case, you ought to
make him a legal person.

Pause. Then—

MARY

He's not getting a name, Mr.
Visalo...because I've got to let him go.

BUDDY

You're gonna get rid of him?

MARY

I've already spoken to an agency. They said they'd take him.

BUDY

Do they know he's...he's a-

MARY (SHARPLY)

I'd appreciate you leaving me alone about this. Believe me, it's not a decision I'm proud of.

BUDDY

So why you doin' it then?

MARY?

What difference does it make to you?

BUDDY

I...you know...thought it was kind of brave, keepin' him. Showed some balls. 'Scuse me. My friends Chipmunk says I got 'em. Balls, I mean. 'Scuse me.

(pause)

I don't know, but...I was thinkin' maybe you and me, we got something in common. You know?

Mary stares at him.

MARY

If that was your idea of a pass, it was the clumsiest, stupidest attempt I've ever seen.

BUDDY (WOUNDED)

Oh, that's nice, thanks. I guess that fuckin' moulan yan was a thousand times classier huh? What he do, tap dance his way into your heart?

Mary SLAPS him. Buddy is astonished. As he backs toward the door-

BUDDY

Miss Morals of 1965 here, huh? What the hell. I'm married. I never cheated.

You're the one done that. Not me.
Christ.

Buddy's almost out the door when—

MARY

Mr. Visalo...

(Buddy turns)

...I'm sorry.

BUDDY

Yeah, well, it takes two to tango.

MARY

I'm not used to people doing good by
me.

BUDDY

Skip it. Hey, uh—you need some money?
For food, I mean?

MARY

My sister sent me some money.

Buddy looks unconvinced. He yanks open a small, dingy
icebox. Inside are several damaged melons, a carton of
milk, some potatoes.

MARY (DEFENSIVELY)

It's enough.

Buddy grabs a pencil and starts scribbling on the back of
an envelope. He gives it to Mary, along with a few dollars.

BUDDY

Go downstairs and give this to Mr.
Cicco. I'd go myself, but I don't wanna
give no false impression—

She tries to foist the money back into his hands.

MARY

Please, Mr. Visalo, I can't take—

But he foists it back in hers.

BUDDY

And don't argue with me.

INT. CICCICO'S GROCERY STORE

Mary stands at the counter, reading the list of groceries as if reading Greek.

MARY

Two boxes of D...secco?

CICCO

Di Cecco. Pasta. What kind?

MARY

What kind of what?

CICCO

Pasta. Linguine? Cappellini?
Fettuccine?

MARY (NODS UNCERTAINLY)

Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Cicco stares back at her uncertainly.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Buddy sits on the bed, smoking a cigarette. He's staring at-

THE BABY

Who sits, bundled up, staring back. The staring contest goes on for a while. Then-

The baby begins to cry.

BUDDY

Aw, Christ...

INT. GROCERY

The basket is filling up with canned tomatoes, cheese, fresh vegetables...

MARY

And a bottle of-

(reading)

-ch...ch...

(confidently)

Shan-tay.

It sounds French. Cicco grabs a bottle of Chianti off the wall.

INT. MARY'S ROOM

The baby wails on. We don't see Buddy as we hear—

VOICE

This was the first time I can remember ever seeing Buddy. That I ever noticed him.

THROUGH THE BABY'S EYES

Which are fuzzy around the edges—distorted, like a memory—we see Buddy pacing nervously, speaking unheard words to the baby, pleading for his cooperation.

Until he is forced to get on his knees and perform animal tricks.

VOICE

They say that memory is selective.

Buddy mimics a dog. Does a dance. Makes an ass of himself.

THE BABY'S FACE

The baby stops crying, though he stares in puzzlement at Buddy. Then—

The door opens, Mary enters. Buddy immediately springs to his feet.

MARY

Everything all right?

BUDDY

Yeah...what the hell?

INT. MARY'S ROOM - LATER

Buddy and Mary sit on the floor, eating the pasta out of a pot. A bed sheet serves as a tablecloth. They drink the Chianti out of coffee cups.

In the background, we hear the faint strains of a radio playing swing music.

MARY

It's very good. I don't usually eat...quite so much.

BUDDY

Yeah, I noticed. Gotta keep up your strength.

MARY

I don't really cook much. I'm afraid I'm not a very good housewife.

Buddy smiles at her.

BUDDY

Yeah, I noticed. When I was up in your house, I mean.

MARY

I don't know why Jim married me. Oh, I mean, I know why. I was so young...but he couldn't have been satisfied for long.

BUDDY

Why'd you marry him?

MARY (SHRUGS)

He was a friend of my father's. When my father was dying, I asked what I could do to make him happy...

(pause)

...he told me to marry Jim. So I did. I was fourteen.

Buddy looks away. This doesn't seem to sit well with him.

BUDDY

Fourteen, huh?

MARY

Is there anything else you'd like to know?

Buddy looks into her eyes. Without wavering—

BUDDY

Yeah.

Mary looks away, toward the baby. Without looking back—

MARY

Because I wanted him. I didn't know him more than twenty minutes, and I knew I had to have him.

BUDDY

Christ—

MARY (AT BUDDY)

And I did. It was wonderful—

BUDDY

Come on—

MARY

He was the best lover I ever had...and I never even asked his name.

BUDDY

Ah, stop, will ya—

MARY

It's too much for you, is it?

BUDDY

Yeah. I mean, it don't make no sense.

MARY

Is it really so hard for you to understand? Wanting something and making sure you get it?

As Buddy takes this in, on the background radio: Perry Como singing "Fools Rush In." Buddy listens to it.

BUDDY (SMILES TO HIMSELF)

That's my tune.

(off Mary's puzzlement)

The one I sang for Godfrey.

MARY

Sing it for me.

BUDDY

Nah, c'mon...

(almost instantly)

You sure?

Mary nods. Buddy gets up, assumes his stage persona, and starts singing along with "Fools Rush In." As Mary stares at him—

VOICE

My memory of the rest of that long-forgotten afternoon is strangely exacting.

SHOT OF THE BABY

Staring at Buddy.

VOICE

For instance, I seem to remember every song he sang. After "Fools Rush In" was "I'll Be Seeing You."

BUDDY—

Singing "I'll Be Seeing You," much more upbeat. He snaps his fingers, points with a cigarette. Mary continues to stare at him. She begins to smile.

VOICE

I believe that was followed by a Gershwin tune.

BUDDY

Singing a medium-tempo version of "Nice Work If You Can Get It." Mary is reclining on the floor drinking wine. The sun is setting outside as Buddy bops around the room, gesturing to Mary, to the baby, out the window, etc.

VOICE

"Mam'selle" was next. Now completely forgotten, this lovely tune was a big hit in its day.

BUDDY

Singing "Mam'selle." When he gets to the last lines of the very sad lyric, he gets on his knees, doing the windup right to Mary.

THE BABY

Staring in fascination at Buddy...smiling...

VOICE

And last on the hit parade was a Nat King Cole hit, "Would You Care to Dance."

BUDDY

Singing the swingin' tune. He lifts Mary off the ground and dances with her.

BUDDY

"Let me lead you in a rhythm that's great. Now you're getting with 'em; that's great. When we take the floor, I would just adore making an advance."

He swirls her. They both enjoy this.

BUDDY

"And dancing, something makes me want to dance with you. Lady, I'll be there, to do my share, in case you care to dance. You're taking quite a chance. You just might find romance.

(big finish)

Would you care to dance?"

The song ends in a sweep. Buddy holds Mary in "baby, you're the greatest" position.

They stare at each other. Then they kiss.

MARY

Mr. Visalo—

BUDDY

Yeah...

MARY

I really shouldn't drink.

BUDDY

Yeah, me neither, I guess.

But then they kiss again.

EXT. DOCK BY STATEN ISLAND FERRY - TWILIGHT

Chip stands alone as the ferry docks.

Passengers start getting off. Estelle and Laura are among them, loaded down with packages. They see Chip and wave. He waves back.

ESTELLE

Where's Buddy?

CHIP

Buddy? I guess he's, ah—at the house.
Probably working late on the bar.

(nods)

Yeah, at the house...the bar...

LAURA (SNIFFING)

You been drinking?

CHIP

Yeah, well, one or two.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT

It's dark in the little room. Buddy and Mary kiss each other. Then they stop—

BUDDY

This wasn't why I did this—

MARY

I believe you.

She kisses him. After a while—

MARY

Mr. Visalo...

BUDDY

What?

MARY

I just want you to know...I'm not doing
this because...I expect anything.

BUDDY

Yeah, well...it takes two to tango, huh?

They kiss again. After a while—

BUDDY

Hey, it's dark out, huh?

MARY

Must be late.

Panic strikes Buddy's face as he looks at his watch.

BUDDY

Mickey's at six. Jesus...

EXT. MARY'S BUILDING - TWILIGHT

Buddy rushing down the stairs.

VOICE

It's always dangerous to speculate on what's in somebody's mind at moments like this...but I suspect Buddy was thinking of my mother's word about my father...

Buddy's in front of the house. He turns and looks up at the window.

Mary is already looking at him. Standing in the window, framed by magic light.

BUDDY

Hey, Mary...

VOICE

The words he couldn't forget: "he was the best lover I ever had."

Mary and Buddy lock eyes.

BUDDY

I ain't so bad myself.

Buddy immediately feels foolish. He rushes off. But Mary smiles.

INT. MICKEY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Family-run Italian joint. Chip, Estelle, and Laura are seated.

CHIP

He said, now that I think of it, he said he'd be a little late. He had to get these nails or somethin'...

ESTELLE (LOOKING AT THE MENU)

They got smothered octopus tonight.

Chip looks out the window. Sees Buddy approaching. He gets up-

CHIP

Men's room. 'Scuse me. Honey, get me the breast of veal.

Chip hustles over to the door, meeting Buddy as he enters. They stand in the vestibule, obscured from view.

CHIP

Where you been? I said you were out-getting' nails.

BUDDY (SNIFFING)

You been drinking?

CHIP (BELCHES, THEN-)

I'm fuckin' tanked-been at Angelo's all afternoon waitin' for you.

Chip looks at Buddy's shirt. A large sauce stain mars the lapel. Buddy belches.

CHIP

You been eatin'?

BUDDY (SEES THE STAIN)

Uh...yeah, I had a bite.

CHIP

Where the hell were you?

BUDDY

Gettin' nails.

Chip eyes Buddy suspiciously. They go to the table.

CHIP

Look what the wind blew in.

ESTELLE

I ordered for you, Buddy. They got octopus tonight. I know how much you love octopus.

Buddy belches as he sits and lifts a napkin, covering his lapel. Salads arrive. As everyone digs in, Buddy plays with his.

ESTELLE

Wait till you see all the goodies we got. Half off on socks, underwear-

LAURA

We got you each new flannel jackets.

A man and his wife enter the restaurant and pass by the table. The man pauses as if he recognizes one of them. It's Mr. Brancaccio from the bank. He waves hello tentatively. Estelle sees him. Nods hello and then dives back into her salad.

BUDDY

Who's that?

ESTELLE

He works at the bank.

Pause. Buddy plays with his salad. Looks at Mr. Brancaccio, who looks back a bit uncomfortably.

BUDDY

What are you doin' goin' to the bank?

ESTELLE

Why can't I go to the bank?

BUDDY

'Cause you don't got a reason. You don't get a paycheck.

Buddy is looking over at Brancaccio, who finally stands and approaches the table. Estelle looks uncomfortable and keeps her head in the salad.

MR. BRANCACCIO

I don't mean to intrude. I just thought—

ESTELLE

Mr. Brancaccio, this my husband Buddy.

BUDDY

How are ya?

MR. BRANCACCIO

I just wanted to apologize again for—

ESTELLE

Don't mention it.

BUDDY

What are you talkin' about?

ESTELLE

Nothin', honey

(to Mr. Brancaccio)

Thanks. Don't worry.

BRANCACCIO

No, you were right, Mrs. Visalo. There's no law against how much money people are allowed to spend, and it's not our business—

ESTELLE

Look, we're eatin' here. OK?

Brancaccio is caught off guard by Estelle's rudeness. He goes back to his table. Buddy stares at Estelle, who eats quickly and nervously.

BUDDY

What the hell, huh, Estelle?

ESTELLE

I'll tell you later.

BUDDY

You tell me now.

ESTELLE (SLAMS DOWN FORK)

They sent a letter. The bank. Said we were spending too fast or something. So I was passing by and stopped in and told him to mind his own business. All right?

Buddy thinks about this.

BUDDY

The bank sent you a letter?

ESTELLE

To you. I opened it by mistake.

Pause.

BUDDY

Why'nt you tell me about it?

ESTELLE

'Cause I didn't wanna worry you, OK?

Buddy thinks about this, then turns to Brancaccio's table. Summons him with his hand.

BUDDY

'Scuse me...come here, will ya? Tell me what's going on.

Brancaccio approaches again, with trepidation.

ESTELLE

What's the big deal? It's none of their—

BUDDY

Let him talk. What's with this letter stuff?

BRANCACCIO

I only meant to help, but our letter upset your wife. We try to keep an eye on our first-time homeowners—

BUDDY

So what's the problem?

ESTELLE

Our spending is outdoing our money—or something. OK?

BRANCACCIO

I believe it was by two and a half times.

BUDDY

No, that's not OK. Why'n't you tell me?

The waiter arrives.

WAITER

Octopus!

ESTELLE

Just eat your dinner. I'll tell you later.

BUDDY (SLAMS TABLE)

I got a right to know! After all I'm a homeowner—

ESTELLE

Here we go, the big homeowner—

BUDDY (TO BRANCACCIO)

What'd she say to you?

ESTELLE

I said he shouldn't worry because you know what you're doing, and it's your business. All right?

Pause.

BUDDY

Yeah. Damn right. I know what I'm doin'.

BRANCACCIO

My apologies again.

Silence. Tension. Suddenly Buddy explodes again.

BUDDY

Two and a half times? How come you don't tell me something like that?

ESTELLE (EXPLODES)

Because you're a big-shot homeowner, you oughta know. And furthermore, if you don't, it'd serve you right. You don't know nothin' about owning a house or running some bar. You don't just do these things 'cause you feel like it. You gotta have brains for it.

BUDDY

What are you sayin', I ain't got brains?

CHIPMUNK

Ah, Christ—

As the argument rages on, others in the restaurant observe with discomfort.

VOICE

The argument was legendary, epic. It went on far into the night, encompassing virtually every aspect of the eleven-year union between Buddy and Estelle.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS - NIGHT

Buddy and Estelle go at it on the street where they live.

ESTELLE

Why you making us do this? Wasn't everything OK?

BUDDY

How the hell could everything be OK? Ten-hour shifts with a machine that can kill you? Dinner with your folks every night? Twenty years we've known each other, and we don't have kids. If it wasn't for me, we'd still be in living with your parents. Don't you wanna...better yourself?

ESTELLE

How? By serving drinks to a lot of bums? You wanna turn me into a barmaid!

BUDDY

We own our own business. We own our own home. Jesus, Estelle, where you livin'? This is America. This is the point! Most women are always after the husband to...to...

(hand gesture)

...go up in the world. You...you'd be happy if we stayed back in...in...

ESTELLE

Back where we belong. Not making fools of ourselves and being laughed at behind our backs!

BUDDY

By who? Your stupid friends? My stupid friends? Who the fuck cares? I got things they don't got. It's a crime for me to not use what I got.

ESTELLE

What do you think you got that's worth throwin' away our futures on?

BUDDY

I got talent. I got balls. I can be somebody, baby! I can run my own life

and not have to answer to some creep bastard who has a sign on his desk says "supervisor."

(pause)

This one's gonna work.

ESTELLE

Why should it? The others didn't.

BUDDY

'Cause I'm making this work no matter what!

INT. BANK - DAY

Buddy, in his factory uniform, and Estelle sit across from Mr. Brancaccio.

VOICE

"No matter what" meant Buddy needed more money to spend at his present rate.

Brancaccio shows them their cancelled checks.

BRANCACCIO

So you see it's not possible, with the wage you earn, to make these expenditures.

BUDDY

Yeah, but that's just till the bar's set up. Once I open, I'll be in the dough.

ESTELLE

Like with the pizza.

BRANCACCIO

At this rate, it doesn't look like you'll have enough to finish.

ESTELLE

Buddy, he's right. Let's just rent the downstairs out-

BUDDY

The bar's half built!

ESTELLE

So we only have to rip out half a bar.

PUSH IN ON BUDDY'S FACE

BUDDY

Screw it. I'll work the nightshift.

EXT. INZALACO LABELING PLANT

As the workers file out—

VOICE

And so, as the working men look forward to the happiest part of their day, a drink at the local bar with their friends...

Buddy stands at the entrance to the factory. He removes a sandwich from a bag and starts eating.

VOICE

Buddy prepared to pay the price for his future independence.

INT. PLANT - NIGHT

Darkened outside. Buddy works the machine with TINY, who is, of course, enormous.

TINY (SHOUTING OVER MACHINE)

You get used to it. After a while, dayshift guys start to look like suckers wakin' up at dawn. See, that's the good news. We get to go to sleep at dawn.

BUDDY

Dawn. Yeah...

EXT. PLANT - NIGHT

Buddy and Tiny exit together. It's pitch black out.

BUDDY

Jeez, I don't remember the last time I was awake at three thirty.

TINY

I don't remember when I wasn't. Wanna get a drink? I know a place stays open.

BUDDY

Rain check, huh?

As they head off in opposite directions, Sinatra sings "It Gets Lonely Early."

EXT. STATEN ISLAND STREETS

Buddy wanders the streets. Everything's closed. Eventually he gets to his house.

He looks up at his windows. They are dark. He keeps walking.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

Buddy looks at Manhattan in the distance. Turns and crosses a street. He's now standing in front of Cicco's Grocery Store, and Mary's apartment. He looks up.

The light is on.

He calls up. We see a shadow in the window. Mary looks out.

Buddy waves. Mary stares at him for a beat. Then smiles.

EXT. ROOF - DAWN

Buddy and Mary sit on the roof of her building watching the dawn rise over Manhattan.

MARY

You must be tired.

BUDDY

I gotta do what it takes. I figure, she don't want me to have my own bar, that's fine with me. She'll get used to it, eventually.

(pause)

But this one can't go in the tank like all the others.

MARY

Maybe I can help.

BUDDY

Huh?

They look at each other like they'd like to kiss. But they don't. Mary looks away.

MARY

I'll be moving soon. I found an adoption agency for my baby. They said they don't care what he looks like.

Buddy's expression: unexpectedly stung. But he tries a joke.

BUDDY

Guess they're just startin' out or somethin'?

MARY

It means I can move in with my sister.

BUDDY

When?

MARY

In a week. Maybe with the money you save on paying for me, you won't have to work so hard—

BUDDY

I suppose. Yeah...but—

MARY

You'll be able to open your place soon—

BUDDY

Yeah, well, in good time—

MARY

I can try to start over like nothing ever happened—

BUDDY

Why would you do that? I mean, maybe you never gonna wanna tell anyone what happened, but you can remember it. Just yourself..

Tears well in Mary's eyes. But she won't let them out. Instead she looks off at the view.

MARY

No. I can't. I've just got to forget everything.

Buddy takes this in.

BUDDY

Guess that would be a little easier, huh?

MARY

A lot easier.

Buddy sees her emotion and knows better.

BUDDY (NERVOUSLY)

Well, in that case...if we were to do somethin' with each other...you'd just forget it anyway, and 'course I'd never tell. It'd be easier that way. Like you said.

Mary looks at him.

MARY

Why do you want me, Mr. Visalo?

BUDDY

I don't know, but I got this feeling with you...that I never felt before...not even with my wife. And it's not like I don't love her—even though she pisses me off all the time. It's just this feeling...

(pause—he takes her hand)

I been a good husband eleven years. I was thinking that maybe one week wouldn't really matter...

Mary takes his hands and brings them to her face.

MARY

I've been a bad girl my whole life. I guess a week wouldn't matter to me either.

They kiss. Julius La Rosa sings "Fools Rush In" over-
MONTAGE

Of Buddy and Mary kissing in different locations.

-On the roof.

-On the docks.

-On the street in front of her building, as Buddy leaves.

INT. PLANT - DAY

Buddy and Chip working the machine. Buddy can barely stay on his feet.

VOICE

Eight to six at the factory.

A HOT DOG STAND

Buddy wolfs down three hot dogs, each in one bite.

VOICE

A half hour for dinner.

NIGHTSHIFT - BUDDY WORKING

VOICE

Then the nightshift till three—an unlivable schedule.

The whistle blows. Work ceases for the night.

VOICE

It is likely that Buddy had every intention in the world of going straight home after that second night on double shift.

EXT STATEN ISLAND STREETS - NIGHT

Buddy walks past his house...the lights are off upstairs...

VOICE

But, like an alcoholic swearing off the booze, there came a moment during the night when the very thing that was to be avoided suddenly seemed like the natural and inevitable solution.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Buddy and Mary make love on the roof. Mary is on top of him. They both come simultaneously. She smiles. Buddy looks at her, puzzled.

BUDDY

What's wrong?

MARY (RAPTUREOUSLY)

Nothing...oh, nothing...

She lowers herself, putting her head on his chest.

BUDDY

You sure? I mean, I hurt you or somethin'?

Mary stares at him, realizing he's never heard a woman orgasm before.

MARY (PUZZLED)

Oh, Buddy, you don't hurt me...you soothe me...

She lowers herself again. Buddy looks into the night sky, smiling crookedly to himself.

BUDDY

Jesus...

INT. DINER - DAY

Estelle sits with Tina, Gloria, and Laura, eating, talking.

ESTELLE

You oughta see him. Poor Buddy. I never seen a man look so tired.

TINA

How long's it gonna last?

ESTELLE

In a week he'll give up. Then he'll be so mad he'll tear the bar down himself.

GLORIA

My Harry's been on the nightshift for two years. He still ain't used to it.

LAURA

They say it isn't healthy-bein' awake
at night and sleepin' all day.

ESTELLE

How about sleepin' two hours and going
back to work? I'll tell you, if he
don't give up this eight-to-six stuff,
I'm gonna make him. Bad for his health.

GLORIA

It was worse before the unions. Then
they made 'em work eight to six, like
it was daylight out. My Harry used to
get home just in time for me to wake up
and get dressed for work.

(pause)

Back when I had to work.

LAURA

I wouldn't let Chip work those hours.

TINA

Unless he wanted to open his own bar.

Estelle is strangely silent as the girls laugh. They notice
this.

ESTELLE

What happened after the unions? I mean
to the hours?

GLORIA

Used to be eight to six. Now it's eight
to three. That's why we voted for
Impelliteri.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sinatra sings "In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning" over-
Estelle, lying awake in bed, alone.

Off-screen, footsteps. Buddy enters. Estelle shuts her eyes
as he begins to undress.

VOICE

She'd never doubted that her husband was simply not talented enough to be a singer, enterprising enough to be a businessman, or intelligent enough to be anything but a factory worker.

As Buddy lowers himself into bed.

VOICE

She also never doubted his fidelity, his naïve, or blundering honesty.

ESTELLE

How was work?

BUDDY

Murder.

He turns on his right side. She turns onto her left. Both of their eyes remain open. She looks at the clock. It's 6:15.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Estelle sits alone at a table. She doesn't look happy. In the background, through windows, we see the FACTORY behind them. Laura enters and sits with Estelle.

ESTELLE

What'd you tell Chip?

LAURA

I told him I was at my mother's. What's all this secret stuff?

ESTELLE

What if he calls your mother?

LAURA

There's no possibility in this lifetime of Chip calling my mother. Estelle, what's going on?

ESTELLE (PAUSE, THEN)

Every night...Buddy comes home from work at six. I mean in the morning.

LAURA (PUZZLED)

So he's got the nightshift.

ESTELLE

You heard Gloria—yesterday she said they went home at three.

LAURA

'Cause of the unions, yeah.

(pause)

Oh, Estelle. Really?

Estelle nods, looks upset.

ESTELLE

It ain't possible, is it?

LAURA

Oh, not Buddy. Course not.

ESTELLE

What do you mean of course not? Why not? He's attractive—

LAURA

I ain't saying that. Just that, well...he ain't that type, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Then where is he? From three to six, where is he?

LAURA

Maybe he's workin' on his bar.

ESTELLE (SHAKES HER HEAD)

I looked last night.

LAURA

So what are you gonna do?

Estelle stares out the window, at the factory.

ESTELLE

I'm gonna wait...

LAURA

Till three?

ESTELLE

Well, what would you do?

LAURA

I'll tell you what I do. I let Chip have his way...'cause I know it ain't love. They're just men.

ESTELLE

You're sayin' that Chip-

LAURA

Why not? He's attractive.

Estelle considers this.

ESTELLE

I feel like my whole world's just crumbling...

LAURA

Estelle, go home. Don't stay.

(takes Estelle's hand)

You'll just be disappointed in his taste.

But Estelle doesn't look convinced.

EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

The workers leave the 3:00 a.m. shift. Buddy emerges, lights a cigarette and walks down the street.

VOICE

It had never occurred to her that there might be the slightest hint of deception in her husband.

Estelle stands in a doorway, opposite. She starts following Buddy at a distance, staring through curious and lost eyes at her husband's back.

VOICE

They thought of it was the first exciting thing she'd felt for him in years. That her Buddy might actually be dangerous.

WALKING DOWN STREETS - NIGHT

Manhattan in the distance. Estelle following Buddy...

VOICE

At one point she thought of how disappointing it might be if Buddy were simply to go to an all-night diner and sit there reading the papers till six. That would indicate that he simply preferred to be anywhere but with her...

Buddy turns down a street leading to Mary's building.

VOICE

She remembered, on that long-forgotten night in Staten Island, how she and Buddy had met. He'd followed her home from school for over two weeks. He pretended he wasn't, and whenever she turned around—

Buddy turns around, Estelle ducks into the shadows—

VOICE

He'd disappear into a doorway. Finally he got up the nerve to ask her out. They were fifteen years old.

Buddy is in front of Cicco's grocery store. The light is on in Mary's room. Buddy mounts the stairs.

A moment later, the light goes off. Estelle stares. Then she runs away, into the night.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The baby's face, as it sleeps.

Buddy cooks a mountainous omelet. Mary watches him.

MARY

You must be tired.

BUDDY

Nah. It's funny, but I was thinkin' today, how much time I've wasted sleeping eight hours every night. Two's plenty.

(looks at Mary)

Course I'm seein' double right now.

She smiles.

MARY

I'll be out of your life before you know it.

BUDDY

Yeah, well, things being what they are, huh? I guess I'll quit the nightshift. What with the savings on this place and-

MARY

I'll pay you back. You know that.

Buddy looks at her.

BUDDY

Nah. You have. Not like that...I mean...it's different.

MARY

I have to pay you back, Mr. Visalo.

BUDDY

You don't understand somethin'. See, when I was overseas, me and Estelle, we was already promised.

MARY

Promised?

BUDDY

Yeah. It's a neighborhood thing. We got promised real young--sixteen, seventeen, you know. Well, lotsa guys in my outfit were married or engaged or promised...but they went out and started banging Jap broads like there was no tomorrow. Spendin' their pay all over the place...

BUDDY (CONT.)

And I never did. 'Cause the way I saw it...

(pause)

...money don't belong in it.

MARY'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

They sit on the floor, eating the omelet.

MARY

I had no idea eggs could be such a big meal. I really don't eat this much usually-

BUDDY

Not that I'm-doin' what I just said to you. I guess I am, huh? I mean, bangin', that's such a-

MARY

Mr. Visalo, you're not doing anything to me...I wouldn't have allowed it if I didn't want it.

BUDDY

You mean that, huh?

MARY

Why is that so hard to believe?

BUDDY

I never heard it said that way. To me, I mean.

MARY

That I want you?

BUDDY (NODS UNCOMFORTABLY)

Let's eat.

Buddy pours Chianti into the coffee cups.

MARY

Why shouldn't someone want you? You sing, you dance, you cook-

BUDDY

You're makin' me sound like some kind of sissy-

MARY

You make great love-

BUDDY (SKEPTICALLY)

I do?

MARY

Mr. Visalo, I may not have any morals,
I may not have any proper life like
you...but I never lie.

Buddy considers this.

BUDDY

Yeah, I never did either. Until this
week.

MARY

I've ruined you.

He looks at her. Puts his plate of omelet aside. Gets on
his knees, and takes her face in his hands.

BUDDY

Yeah...

They kiss.

EXT. MARY'S BUILDING - DAY

Estelle warily approaches the building, looking at the
grocery store. Inside we see Mr. Cicco at work.

Estelle mounts the stairs, approaches Mary's door. Looks
into the window next to it.

Nothing very telling. The Spartan little room. Very
tentatively, Estelle knocks. No answer. She knocks again.
No answer.

Estelle descends the steps.

INT. CICCOS GROCERY

Mary is ordering.

MARY

And those tomatoes, the strange ones-

CICCO

Sun-dried.

MARY

And the-ricotta?

CICCO

Ricotta seca.

Cicco rolls his Italian with a flourish. Mary smiles.

EXT. CICCOS

Estelle moves past the window, glancing in. She passes.
Then a moment later—

She reappears, staring into the window.

WHAT ESTELLE SEES

Is Mary, ordering, paying for the groceries? Mary starts
out of the store.

Estelle hyperventilates.

ESTELLE

Oh God—

As Mary exits the store, Estelle stands against the wall,
frozen.

Mary glances at her as she passes. Then their eyes lock.
Mary is as astonished as Estelle. The two women stare at
each other.

ESTELLE

You live...around here?

MARY (FROZEN)

Upstairs.

ESTELLE

How's your baby?

MARY

He's fine.

Estelle's strange fake smile starts cracking.

ESTELLE

I just...came to see you were doin'.

Estelle runs off. Mary looks like the house just fell on
her.

INT. FACTORY

The five o'clock whistle blows. Work ceases immediately.

CHIP

Nightshift?

BUDDY

Fuck 'em. I'm goin' home.

CHIP

Good for you.

VOICE

He was lying, of course. He was going to see my mother.

INT. MARY'S ROOM

Mary sits in the room, holding the baby.

VOICE

Who was hoping, praying, that he would come by early that night, just to explain the presence of his wife in this strange neighborhood.

Buddy enters, holding a bag of groceries.

BUDDY

I had this idea, for the bar, see? Once a week, we have a cookout. Everybody comes with their favorite recipe, but you do it like a contest.

MARY

Your wife—

BUDDY

She'll like it, see? 'Cause her worst fear is she's gonna have to do the cookin'—

MARY

She came by.

Pause.

BUDDY

She came by here?

MARY

She said she just wanted to see how I was doing.

Buddy drops the bag of groceries.

BUDDY

Oh, no.

MARY

Tell me that she shops downstairs
sometime. I know she doesn't. Tell me
that it was just by accident—

BUDDY

Estelle came by here?

MARY

Or that you said I lived here and she
really wanted just to see how I was
doing. Please, Mr. Visalo...

But Buddy is out the door.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Buddy approaches his house, mounts the steps. Stops and
looks through the window.

WHAT BUDDY SEES

is his bar. It is completely unsalvageable. Destroyed.
Wrecked. The mirrors broken, the jukebox bashed in, the bar
itself fragmented.

Buddy turns and looks around, a confused man. Runs
upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS APARTMENT

Buddy enters. The drapes and carpets all got the same
treatment.

VOICE

It was a massacre of sizable
proportions, limited only by the amount
the Visalos owned.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Estelle is sitting with Laura, Tina, Gloria. She is
hysterical.

ESTELLE

She's standing there, with a basket of
food, like a good little housewife or
somethin', probably gonna cook for him.

GLORIA

I can't believe it.

TINA

The one with the colored baby?

ESTELLE

Yes! And he spent the night with her.

Pause.

GLORIA

It's the worst I ever heard. And my Harry's slept with some real scivosas.

TINA

Are you gonna go back?

ESTELLE

Are you kidding? I already packed my stuff and went back to my folks.

(pause)

Besides, there's hardly anything left.

LAURA

Oh, Estelle. All that work—

ESTELLE

That's right, all that work, and for what? So he can go and play the hokey pokey with some putana who'd sleep with a nigger? Who'd have his baby?

(pause)

ESTELLE (CONT.)

Am I that disgustin'?

She starts crying. The girls all hold her.

TINA

No, honey. Men—they got no sense about that stuff. Some of them—they'll sleep with anything. Kids, animals...long as they got a woman at home who don't know about it. It excites 'em.

ESTELLE (THROUGH TEARS)

You can't...you can't tell anybody about this. Please. Nobody.

The women all nod.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Chip walks up the steps. Notices the lights are out. Knocks. No answer. Peers through the window. Sees the damage.

CHIP

Somethin' happened.

INT. ANGELO'S - NIGHT

Chip enters. Mike, Anthony, Danny, et al. drinking. Laughing. They are having a particularly raucous time. Chip signals Angelo for a drink and joins them.

CHIP

What's up?

ANTHONY

We was just...aw, Christ...

More laughter.

CHIP

So leave me out. You seen Buddy?

The group stares at him. Suppresses laughter.

DANNY

Yeah, I think I saw him the other day.

(cracking up)

DANNY (CONT.)

Wearing knee breeches with a whip up in Harlem.

The group breaks up.

CHIP

The fuck you talkin' about?

EXT. ESTELLE'S PARENTS' HOUSE

Buddy approaches the house. Musses his hair back. Knocks on the door and stays cool. Donato opens the door. His expression reveals nothing.

BUDDY

Hi, Pop. You seen Estelle?

Pause. Then Donato shuts the door on his face. Buddy knocks again. After a beat, the door opens again. This time it's Marie.

BUDDY

Hi, Ma. I was wonderin'—

Marie SOCKS Buddy square in the jaw. He reels back in shock and pain. Marie stands there, staring at him.

BUDDY

Jesus...what the hell, Ma?

And she closes the door.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE DOWNSTAIRS BAR - NIGHT

"Here's That Rainy Day," sung by Sinatra, plays over Buddy, sitting alone in what's left of his bar. Chipmunk peers through the window. Buddy looks up. Smiles, gets up, and lets him in.

From Chip's look, from his lack of shock at the destruction, Buddy can tell he heard.

BUDDY

I guess you heard.

CHIP

Down at the bar, yeah.

BUDDY

How'd *they* find out?

CHIP

You know, Estelle told the girls, they told the guys, that's that.

Buddy sweeps away some rubbish and makes room on a barstool for Chip. They sit.

BUDDY

I fucked up here, huh?

CHIP

Why her, huh, Buddy? What the hell? Anytime you felt like it, you coulda

come with me and Danny down to Ring Boulevard.

BUDDY

You mean hookers?

CHIP

Yeah, well, they got some class. They don't sleep with the coloreds.

(pause)

You want her back, don't you?

BUDDY (SHRUGS)

Hell, yeah. I mean, one time in eleven years. What's that?

CHIP

So call her.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy on the payphone across the street. It's raining. Chip stands by.

VOICE

Negotiations were underway. Estelle wouldn't even see Buddy until he'd gone to Mary and renounced her. That was the term that was used: "renounced."

BUDDY (INTO THE PHONE)

What the hell does that mean?

VOICE

Then she would agree to see him. But at a neutral location. The Skyline Diner. And not alone. Her parents and her best friend Laura were to be in attendance, though not at the same table.

BUDDY

Why they gotta be there?

(pause, faint hint of screams over the phone)

Look, whatever you say, baby, huh?

EXT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary stares in the rain through the window. A figure appears in the rain. It's Buddy, coat over head.

INT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary nurses the baby as Buddy paces, smokes.

BUDDY

Like a fuckin' hurricane hit the house.
That's what it looks like.

(looks at baby)

'Scuse me. Ah, Christ. Visalo rides
again. Ah, Christ...

MARY

It takes two to tango.

Buddy looks at her. The hint of a smile on his face. But not for long.

BUDDY

Nah, this one's mine, all mine. King-size idiot asshole, that's me.

(to baby)

'Scuse me.

MARY

I'm leaving tomorrow. So you'll have no more problems. Financial or otherwise.

BUDDY

You really doin'? I mean, the kid?

Mary nods.

BUDDY

Jeez—such a tiny room, so many problems.

(pause)

I'm, uh...supposed to renounce you.
Whatever that means.

MARY (QUIETLY)

It means to make like I never existed.
It's OK. I'm getting used to it.

Buddy's eyes: filled with doubt, tenderness.

BUDDY

That's what that means? Well, screw it.
I'll say that I did...but I don't.

MARY

Thank you.

The baby starts crying.

BUDDY

Kid likes a good show, huh?

MARY

I suppose.

As she quiets the baby down, Buddy stares at her.

BUDY

Well, I guess this is the last time
I'll see you, so maybe I should say
something.

MARY

You don't have to—

BUDDY

Why do you always say that? I know I
don't have to. I want to.

(pause)

I *have* to go back to my wife.

(pause)

Well, anyway, here's what I want to
say. I was thinking...when you had this
situation and all...I had just done the
hardest thing I ever did. Buyin' that
house, I mean. Nobody really believed
in me—except my buddy Chip, but what
does he got to lose?

(pause)

Anyway, somethin' about you...what you
did...I mean, everybody was talkin' about
it and kind of laughin' in a way...but it
made me think. What the hell? Things
happen...you go on...long as you believe

you did the thing that was right for
you—

MARY

Mr. Visalo?

BUDDY

What?

MARY

Thanks very much. I think you should
go.

Buddy is stung. But he nods. He doesn't see Mary's tears,
but we do.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Buddy approaches, looks through the windows. We see Estelle
seated alone.

At another table sits Laura alone.

At another table sits Donato and Marie.

Buddy enters. Makes vague nods to everyone around him. Sits
with Estelle, whose expression betrays very little of her
feelings. On the jukebox is Little Jimmy Scott's recording
of "When I Fall In Love."

BUDDY

Hi, Estelle.

ESTELLE

Hi, Buddy.

Pause. Buddy looks around as the others watch from their
vantage points.

BUDDY

Why they gotta be here?

ESTELLE (FIRMLY)

I want 'em here.

The ice in her voice makes Buddy nod.

BUDDY

All right. First off, you gotta believe
something. This is the first and only

time this ever happened. You believe that.

ESTELLE

Yeah. I do.

BUDDY

OK. Now the other thing...it was a big mistake.

ESTELLE

Then why'd you do it?

Buddy thinks about this. Shrugs, nods to himself..

BUDDY

Well, I don't know. I...I guess-

ESTELLE

Don't guess, Buddy. You tell me why you'd do something like this to me.

BUDDY

Well, you know, baby-

ESTELLE

And don't call me that.

BUDDY

Sorry. I guess-I mean, I know it had somethin' to do with...us.

ESTELLE

With us?

BUDDY

Yeah, well, you been ridin' me a little hard about the house, huh? I mean even you gotta admit that at times you make like I'm tryin' to ruin your whole life-

ESTELLE

So it was my fault? Is that what you're saying?

(yells)

Answer me!

All onlookers perk up. Buddy looks around, embarrassed.

BUDDY

I didn't say that. I'm just tryin' to figure out myself why I did it-

ESTELLE

Buddy. Let me make it easy for you. You did it because you were feeling like a big shot. You did it because you think you're something you're not. You did it for the same reason you done every crazy thing in your life. 'Cause you wanna be somebody you're not. You ain't no Don Juan. You're Buddy Visalo.

(she takes his hand)

And that's all I want you to be.

Buddy's face: he's heard the words, but his eyes don't seem at peace with them.

ESTELLE

And I been doin' some thinking too.

BUDDY

What about?

ESTELLE (SHYLY)

About how...well, you know I've never really liked...

(glances over at her parents table and then back)

...you know...I mean, I like it OK, but maybe not...as much of the time as you like it.

BUDDY

What?

ESTELLE (SOTTO)

You know...doin' it.

Buddy is feeling uncomfortable.

BUDDY

What are you sayin' here?

ESTELLE

I was just thinkin' about what you did and how...men are different than

women...they have different needs. Maybe if you need a little more of that, if you gotta go outside to get it, that's OK with me. I guess.

BUDDY

Are you serious?

ESTELLE

I thought about it. I even talked to Laura about it. I mean, I know you're not really goin' anywhere, so what's the difference?

Buddy takes this in.

BUDDY

Then you're not angry with me...about that?

ESTELLE

Buddy, if you wanted to have a little fun, I'd of looked the other way.

(leans in)

ESTELLE (CONT.)

But for you to screw around with that whore, that putana, that nigger-lover...

(pause)

Just try to have better taste next time. OK?

Buddy stares emptily at his wife.

ESTELLE

Buddy?

Then he stands up.

Buddy looks around. At Laura, Marie and Donato. Outside the window he sees Chip, Donny, and Anthony, casually hanging on the sidewalk looking in.

VOICE

He'd never thought of the people he'd known his whole life as his jailers...until that moment.

ESTELLE

What's the matter, Buddy?

Buddy looks at Estelle, whose eyes betray worry and confusion. And Buddy stumbles toward the door of the diner, all eyes are on him.

ESTELLE

Buddy? Where you goin'?

BUDDY (TURNS TO ESTELLE)

I'm sorry, Estelle. Sorry...sorry...

He leaves. As "When I Fall In Love" plays, we see-

IMAGES OF

Confused faces

Buddy's friends on the street...

Laura, Estelle's parents...

Estelle through the diner window, calling for Buddy as he walks away, the rain beating on the pane, the neon flashing sing showing us her eyes...

Buddy walking the streets arriving at,

EXT. MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Where he stares at the grocery, the room above.

The light is off.

Buddy stares...then he leaves...

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE BAR - DAWN

Buddy sleeps on the floor of his ruined bar. As sunlight breaks through the window, his eyes open.

He lies on the floor, alone...awake...thinking...

INT. MARY'S ROOM - DAY

Mary is with MISS DIMUNJIK. She is the epitome of midfifties beatnik, with black-rimmed glasses among other options.

And she's holding the baby.

MISS DIMUNJIK

He's just perfect.

MARY

Thank you. I really hadn't planned—

MISS DIMUNJIK

Don't explain, darling. That's not what we're about. I know a couple up in Woodstock who'd absolutely adore him. In fact, they specifically asked for a baby out of wedlock with some...dark heritage...

(pause)

MISS DIMUNJIK (CONT.)

They're professors at some little college.

MARY

I was married when I had him.

Miss Dimunjik's eyes go wide.

MISS DIMUNJIK

Even better. You know we have a little thing we do every month—"Women On Women On Race and Sex"—down at the New School. Why, you'd fit the—

Heavy knock on the door. Mary looks puzzled.

MARY

Excuse me.

She opens the door. It's Buddy. She's surprised to see him.

MARY

Mr. Visalo.

BUDDY

How ya doin'?

He sees Miss Dimunjik.

MARY

I was just—

BUDDY

Yeah, I figured. Look, can I talk with you for a minute?

MARY

We're almost done—

BUDDY

I mean now. Before.

Off Mary's face—

EXT ROOF OF MARY'S BUILDING - DAY

New York City is as clear as a fuckin' bell.

BUDDY

My wife and I...we were tryin' to make up...and all of a sudden I realized that she never...well, I never understood her. What she wanted from me. Me from her. I don't know. Wasn't her fault.

MARY

I hope everything worked out.

Buddy looks at her, intently.

BUDDY

Really?

MARY

Well, of course.

BUDDY

No. Don't say that. Why'd you say that?

MARY

I don't know. I just assumed...that's what you wanted me to say.

BUDDY

No...you're wrong. That ain't what I wanted. I wanted somethin' else.

(pause)

I walked out.

MARY

Love of God..

BUDDY

'Cause of you.

MARY

Why would you-

BUDDY

'Cause I got this feeling about you-

MARY

I don't think you know-

BUDDY

It's a little strange, maybe, but I think I'm in love with you.

MARY

You don't know what you're doin', Mr. Visalo.

But they kiss. Then they stop.

BUDDY

I know I don't know what I'm doin'.

They kiss again. Then-

MARY

I've got to take care of...downstairs...my baby...

Buddy shakes his head no.

BUDDY

Where'd you find that broad?

MARY

Social services.

BUDDY

Lose her.

Pause. As Mary stares at Buddy, taking this in...as he looks back at her, strongly, tenderly...as they embrace-

MARY

Oh, Mr. Visalo...

Nat King Cole sings "The Party's Over."

VOICE

She certainly never expected to stay in
Staten Island.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE BAR

Mary and Buddy fixing up the bar. The baby sits on the bar. Slowly the place begins to take shape, to emerge. A long, polished bar, sports pictures on the walls, red tablecloths, the jukebox in the corner.

VOICE

And if she did, certainly not in the house in which she had spent several very unhappy years with her first husband.

As it takes shape-

VOICE

And certainly not with me.

-we see the baby, lying on top of the bar, now several months old.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Snowing out. It's Christmas time. Decorative lights hang.

VOICE

And the months of hard work, of working all day and rebuilding Buddy's Tavern eventually came to a close, right in time for a festive Christmas opening.

INT. INZALACO PLANT - DAY

Buddy works the big machine with Chip. The five o'clock whistle blows. Work ceases immediately.

BUDDY

Goin' to Angelo's?

CHIP

Yeah...

Chip gets his coat and walks off, barely looking at Buddy, who stares after his friend.

VOICE

Buddy knew the score. It had been like that for months.

EXT. ANGELO'S BAR - NIGHT

Chip, Danny, Anthony, etc. all drinking, hanging. Buddy enters the bar. Heads turn. Angelo looks at him.

ANGELO

Look what the wind blew in.

BUDDY

How you doin', Ang?

ANGELO (UNCOMFORTABLY)

Yeah, you know. Where you been?

BUDDY

Workin' on my bar.

Uncomfortable pause. Nobody responds.

BUDDY (CONT.)

We're gonna open next week. Christmas Eve.

ANGELO

No shit. Quite the showman, Buddy. You do things in a big way, huh?

Some chuckles.

BUDDY

I was thinkin' maybe you could all come down...see the place. I'm gonna sing. Mary's gonna cook.

Uncomfortable pause. Heads turn away.

ANGELO

I'm stayin' open Christmas Eve.

BUDDY

Well, maybe after you close, huh?

ANGELO

Maybe, Buddy.

But it doesn't look likely. Buddy gets this. He nods. Steps away.

BUDDY

You take care, huh?

And he leaves.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - NIGHT

Buddy and Mary are in the now completed bar. Mel Torme sings "The Christmas Song."

Buddy is wearing uniform that reads BUDDY'S TAVERN OF STATEN ISALND. Mary wears one also.

The place is empty.

BUDDY (SINGS)

Silent fuckin' night...holy fuckin'
night...

Mary smiles. So does Buddy.

MARY

Things'll get better.

BUDDY

Of course they will. If they don't,
screw 'em.

A knock on the door. Buddy opens it. A drunken man stands there.

DRUNKEN MAN

'S place open?

BUDDY

Yeah. You're my first customer.

MARY

Come in!

DRUNKEN MAN (COUGHS—THEN)

I don't got no money. 'Magine that?

BUDDY

The hell you expect to get a drink?

The drunken man belches. Then—

DRUNKEN MAN

'S over at Angelo's. Couldn't pay. He said to come here. He says to me, "They serve anybody over at Buddy's Tavern."

Buddy and Mary look at each other. They get it. But Buddy looks back at the drunk.

BUDDY

Have a seat.

(goes to bar)

St. James?

DRUNK

Love one.

Buddy pours a St. James over ice. The drunk grabs it and gulps. He looks for an ashtray. Mary provides him with one.

DRUNK

Slow night, huh?

BUDDY

I guess.

VOICE

There would be many slow nights in the future.

MARY

We just opened.

Silence as the lone customer drinks. Buddy looks around. The drunk stubs his cigarette out.

Mary takes the ashtray, fastidiously wipes it, and [puts it back in front of him. Buddy smiles at her.

VOICE

But not enough to close the bar, which my father, Buddy Visalo, ran in Staten Island until his death in 1988.

On the jukebox comes "Fools Rush In," sung by Sammy Davis Jr.

BUDDY

Yeah, things'll get better. Just takes time.

As the drunk drinks on, Buddy takes Mary and slow dances to the tune.

VOICE

And which my mother, Mary Wylie Visalo,
ran until her death last year.

MARY

I wonder sometimes, Buddy...whether you'd
have been better off-

Buddy puts his hand to her mouth as they continue dancing.

BUDDY

I don't.

We pull back, and we see the baby asleep, wrapped tightly
in blankets, on top of the jukebox.

VOICE

Buddy's Tavern of Staten Island...of
which I am the current owner, manager
and barkeep.

FADE OUT

MAKING *TWO FAMILY HOUSE*

Two Family House was written in the fall and winter of 1993, in the apartment I then occupied in Los Angeles, a ghostly 1920s hillside Spanish villa that was as different from the distant eastern outer borough that I was writing about as can be. The reason I wrote the script was simple: the previous year I had won a Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting for a screenplay I'd written called *Begin The Beguine*. Twenty thousand dollars was bestowed upon me for having been one of the best five scripts picked from a few thousand. But you couldn't just collect your check. The Nicholl people had cleverly created the proviso that the money be used as a stipend while you were producing new material. Upon submitting an outline, you were granted a portion of the money. More was doled out as your draft progressed. *Two Family House* was the script I chose to write during that stipend period.

Why? Because it was the least commercial idea I had in my drawer. Since there was plainly no way in hell such a script would ever get sold, much less made into a movie, I thought it a neat trick to at least collect twenty G's for going through the trouble of writing it. A more clever—and venal—man would have reasoned that the twenty G's would be good support while writing an incredibly commercial, blockbuster script that would then sell for a massive amount of money, thus making the twenty the small stake at the casino table that lures the large game. For whatever reason, I was born lacking the gene that produces this kind of good, solid reasoning.

The main character in the film *Two Family House* is a midcentury, outer-borough everyman named Buddy Visalo. Oddly, ever since I made the film, people have asked me if I “knew the real Buddy”—as if there was something about him and his story that couldn't have just been made up. And I always answer thusly: yes, I knew Buddy. He was my uncle. His name was Dan (birth name: Donato, meaning Donald, which he apparently didn't like) but always, familiarly, “Buddy.” Or, to me, “Uncle Buddy.” Buddy was an Italian-American, born in the Bronx in 1919 and destined for a lifetime of manual labor. My grandfather was a housepainter, and early on he hired his second born (age ten) to be his assistant and helper. Never finishing school, Buddy kept working—doing construction, working in factories, doing woodwork, etc. All the while he had an intense need to express himself artistically—in his case it was an ambition to be an actor that simmered within him for many years—he'd apparently had a taste of acting in theatrical productions that they put on when he was in the navy during World War II. Barring the ability to become a paid artist, his secondary ambition was to work for himself—to not work for “some guy with a sign that says ‘supervisor’ over his desk.” (I'm quoting my own dialogue from the movie now—but I must have gotten it from somewhere, and I bet it was from my uncle.)

This led him to attempt, on a number of occasions, to launch his own businesses. And one of them that I heard about—it happened years before I was born—had to do with buying a two-family house with the intention of living in one half of the house and operating a business out of the other, said business being a bar.

The story of what happened when Buddy bought the house was a piece of family folklore; there were tenants that wouldn't leave. To make matters worse (assuming you were Italian in the 1950s), they were Irish. They were broke. The wife was pregnant. And when my uncle and some of his thuggier friends went to physically evict the poor couple, the woman went into labor. The baby being born slowed everything down. The humane and correct decision was made to wait for the couple to have their child and *then* throw their asses out on the street. Only once the baby was born, another issue arose—one that was truly unforeseen and scandalous: the baby was mulatto, clearly not the result of the Irish couple's union.

This scandal didn't solely reflect upon the Irish lady. Italians tend to be partial toward omens, and the fact that the disgraceful events occurred at the place that my uncle was trying to convert into his home and business meant that it reflected equally badly on him. How could a future of any worth be possible at a house that hosted events such as these? The shame of the mulatto child's birth seemed to have taken the air out of my uncle's business plans. I'm not sure how much longer he owned the place, but it wasn't long before he abandoned his plan and was back at the factory, working for that guy with the sign that reads "supervisor" over the desk.

My Uncle Buddy died in 1988, and I thought of him a great deal over the next few years. He and his life remained enigmatic, an unsolved riddle to me. In a sense, his character and his unresolved issues were the perfect example of the questions writers ask themselves when creating a character. *Who was he? What did he want? What stopped him from getting it? What would it have taken for him to conquer his demons?*

Looking for these answers ultimately led to the idea of dramatizing a segment of his life. And the tale of the two family houses, the unfortunate Irish couple, and the stubborn landlord who had to face the scandal that he'd been unwittingly drawn into seemed an ideal plot through which to examine his personal character and motives. What my uncle ultimately did in the situation is not what the character in the movie does; in a sense I gave Buddy Visalo the ending that I wish my uncle had found for himself, one of clarity of conscience and love of vocation. My decision as a dramatist was to give him the power, on paper, to make the kind of decisions that he wasn't able to make in life.

Or perhaps that's arrogant and misguided of me. Maybe the decisions he made later in life—he married several times and attempted to start his own life over on any number of occasions—were indeed informed by events such as the one I've described. Life isn't nearly as neat as a three-act script; but it does, in retrospect, oddly resemble a long novel in the rambling, discursive, and oddly coincidental way that our "plots" meander along, making a kind of backward-looking sense as we stumble toward the unavoidable climax we all share.

I finished the screenplay at the end of 1993, and it instantly attracted no attention whatsoever. But as my father—a professional writer for sixty-some years—always said to me, "Every one of those scripts in your drawer is potentially

money in the bank!" I never quite believed this, though, until six years later, when my producing partner, Anne Harrison, introduced me to a fellow named Alan Klingenstein, who, with his partner James Kohlberg, wanted to enter the indie movie game. They'd seen my first film, *Cafe Society* (which I'd made just a year and half after writing *Two Family House*) and wanted to know what else I had up my sleeve.

I liked Al and Jim upon first meeting them. They came from investment banking, had no pretensions about their show-biz desires, and were looking to spend a fixed amount of money (a couple of mil) on whatever script they fell in love with. By then (1999)—I'd written a healthy amount of unproduced screenplays, many a good deal more "commercial" than *Two Family House*. Perversely, I decided to give Al and Jim my least commercial script to read, the one I'd written a half-dozen years earlier in that moldering villa in Hollywood. Why? Because I still loved it and knew in my heart and soul that it would never get made. Giving it to these two very nice newbies would be an act of homage to the script itself. They wouldn't make it, but at least it showed the script that I hadn't forgotten about it.

A few weeks later, I got a strange call from Anne Harrison. "They loved it," she said. "They want to know if it can be made for the amount of money they want to spend and how soon you'd be available to get started." Before I knew it, the little script that I never thought would see the light of day had—as it were—come out of the closet. I told them that the film was makeable for the money they had, although probably not with big stars. They won my heart by telling me that they thought the script was so strong that it didn't need stars—it needed the perfect actors to play the lead roles. After flirting a bit (in a manly sort of way) with Anthony LaPaglia and getting turned down by Vincent D'Onofrio, I saw tape on a character actor who was one of those faces that you recognize from a hundred movies but whose name you don't necessarily know.

Michael Rispoli was Buddy. I knew it when I saw him on screen, and I knew it for certain when he and I sat down and met at Rocco's, a pastry and coffee joint on Bleecker Street in the West Village. Michael exposed his feelings and desires about the part so fearlessly at our meeting that I left not only knowing that I had my Buddy, but that I had a *movie*. When big casting pieces fall into place, your work as a director is considerably less daunting. Indeed, I would argue that well over 50 percent of a director's work is done when the perfect actor comes along to fill the leading role.

Our casting directors, Sheila Jaffe and Georgianne Walken, happened to also be working on an HBO series that hadn't yet aired. They told me that it had an Italian-American theme and that they'd seen plenty of great actors for that show who would be perfect for my movie. Before I knew it I had cast Vincent Pastore, Matt Servitto, and Sharon Angela. Most importantly I found the great Katherine Narducci for Buddy's wife, Estelle. If the above names don't suggest the name of the HBO show that they were putting together, then I'll spell it out for you: *T-H-E-S-O-P-R-A-N-O-S. The Sopranos.*

By the time *The Sopranos* aired, of course, my movie was done, and it looked to the world like I had somehow raided David Chase's set. Cynics might well have thought (and they might well have been right) that I was trying to capitalize on the Italian-American faddishness that arose from the show. In fact, I was blindly

following Sheila and Georgianne's instincts and woke up one morning to find my film tied to the wings of a legend. At the time we made the movie, however, the show had yet to air, and the general feeling about it was that everyone liked it but that HBO would probably pull the plug on it after airing a few episodes.

Most unusual of all, casting-wise, was getting Kelly Macdonald to play the young, pregnant Irish lass. I'd seen her in *Trainspotting* and a strange movie called *Cousin Bette*, and what I'd noticed about her was that whatever the size of the role and however little she might have had to do, you couldn't take your eyes off her when she was on-screen. This might be the single most important thing a film actor has—that kind of mesmerizing authority while on-screen. We were fortunate to have attracted the interest of her English manager, who pushed the script on her while she was shooting something else in Europe. When we heard back that she liked it but couldn't come to New York for a meeting with me, I volunteered to go wherever she was to have the usual actor/director sit-down. All practicality, Kelly insisted that it was too much trouble and that a phone call would do. This was charmingly Scottish of her, and I realized early on that I was dealing with an unaffected young woman of little pretension. When she showed up in New York, a week before our shoot, she presented herself at my apartment in the Village and was unbelievably assured, friendly, and down to earth. After we'd hung out, had lunch, taken a pleasant Village walk, and talked for a good long while, I offered to get a cab and personally accompany her to her hotel uptown, figuring that she didn't know New York too well. With admirable spunk she declined and said, "Please don't bother. I'm a very self-sufficient girl!" This line endeared her to me forever. It was only later that I considered the fact that she might have thought her new director was being a bit...*forward*.

When was *Columbine*? April 20, 1999. Why do I care? Because that dates when the preproduction phase of *Two Family House* had begun. (How telling that I mention an American tragedy in context of my filmmaking life. I apologize for being who I am but I'm reasonably sure I'm not the only director who thinks about life quite this myopically.) We'd been in prep for approximately two weeks when the *Columbine* massacre was suddenly being reported on the news. So that means we started our prep in the first week of April—or close—leading us to a midMay start of principal, in turn leading us to wrap before the fourth of July weekend. (For some reason movies are always backing themselves into schedules by choosing outside dates by which they arbitrarily need to be done. On *City Island* we had to wrap by Labor Day—a fact that drove more business and artistic decisions than a normal person might find healthy.) Anyway, *Columbine* was dead-center (pardon) in our prep process and provoked one of my friend and editor David Leonard's most bleakly memorable ripostes. Upon hearing that the shooters were social outcasts disliked by their peers he said, "Whatever happened to pushing the other kid's books off his desk?"

By midMay we were shooting. As the film is set on Staten Island, we were keen to make the entire film on that somewhat overlooked borough. Alas, the main bridge that connects the island to the rest of New York, the Verrazano-Narrows, is the most expensive toll the city has to offer (currently, it's an astonishing sixteen dollars). Trucking our actors, crew and equipment back and forth for five weeks

wasn't really an option. But we did spend a few days there, shooting the exterior of the ramshackle "hero house," as well as the interior and exterior of a wonderful old bar called the Bridge Tavern, where they served a killer kielbasa. The wonderfully decrepit house we found for Buddy to buy was perfectly lousy on the outside but far too dilapidated to even consider shooting in. Instead, just across the water in Jersey City, we found an enormous old Victorian in junky but stable condition. This was good, as we wanted the freedom to do whatever we needed to the interior of the place and its unrestored, uncared-for interiors didn't exactly scare the art department, led by my excellent production designer Teresa Mastropierro, away from making a few "alterations." The family that lived there promised to leave when we were ready to shoot, but we'd heard from other film people they'd rented the house to that they tended to hang around and make problems. The answer was simple. We bribed them. Four round-trip bus tickets to a warmer climate (as well as four phone cards—remember them?) were dutifully procured for them while we hunkered down for a few weeks in their house.

My excellent producer, Adam Brightman, and my fine cinematographer, Michael Mayers, were truly my codirectors in this venture. It's hard to explain to the outside world how little a director can accomplish if both of these key roles are miscast. Adam and I pieced together the logistics of the movie and, given its limited budget, had to come to terms with what we were willing to splurge on (creating fake snow, for instance, for the ending when Buddy leaves the local bar and takes a lonely walk home, having been snubbed by his friends) and what we could just get by with (remarkably few period cars fill the film, but juggling them judiciously makes the streets feel appropriately populated). Mike Mayers was a DP who had a rare and dissonant combination of talents: he never held you up or made you wait, yet at the same time was never satisfied with just "getting it"—he was always tweaking a shot, reframing, adding, or finding a little something extra. I think his work on *Two Family House* is world-class—the camera never stops moving and yet is never ostentatiously distracting. The film has a lilt to it that is all Mike's doing.

We wrapped at the end of June, cut, and posted the picture in New York through the summer and early fall. My composer, Stephen Endelman, created an intimate, romantic score using only a small string quintet and a few horns, which quite brilliantly captured the mixture of pathos, pain, emerging love, and strength that Buddy was going through. We finished things up, mixed at the now-defunct (but fondly remembered) Sound One in midtown, and sent it off for submission to the Sundance Film Festival. Around Thanksgiving of that year, I received an oddly apologetic call from Rebecca Yeldham, then one of the festival's key programmers. They wanted the film, but not as part of the "official competition." Rather, it would be part of the series known as "American Spectrum"—which I suppose means movies not quite hip enough for the cool competition group. (Even at the festival level, the movie business is incredibly high school-esque. I was never particularly cool in high school and, in fact, turned my uncoolness into its own form of cool anticoolness. I didn't bother having a locker, played jazz in the band room at lunch, skipped all social events, and sat in the back of my classes reading film and architecture books and magazines. You knew this guy, right?) But I truly didn't care

in what section of the festival we played. Premiering your film at Sundance is a major event, and it was my first time there.

A first-time Sundance attendee recently asked me where you live while at the festival. The real question is: *how do you breathe?* The altitude makes normal walking, talking, and breathing almost impossible. To be honest, the truth about Park City, Utah, is that if you don't ski, you're in hell. The town is too small to accommodate the throngs of people who show up, the cell phone service is poor, most of the restaurants are mediocre, the ski condos are depressingly early '70s (faux-wood paneling, glass doors that don't shut properly) and the projection facilities are atrocious—or at least they were back then.

But it is our premiere American film festival, and it's a great place to show your film—assuming that everyone likes your film. For the truth is that while getting into Sundance seems to promise a bright and rosy future for your film, if people don't care for your movie, *you have failed on a massive, world-class stage.* To be invited to Sundance is a wonderfully promising thing—great reviews and interested distributors can make a career. The flipside of that coin is that to leave Sundance with mediocre to poor reviews and no distributor is, in effect, to have attended your movie's funeral. A hundred or so movies a year get screened there. You hear of, perhaps, four of them. And that's a good year.

We rented a relatively pleasant, large-ish house where we put up actors, producers, my wife and me, and assorted others. Our first screening wasn't in Park City proper but rather in Salt Lake City. Everyone has to do a Salt Lake screening, and it's generally considered the bane of the whole Sundance experience, as it's too far away for most industry hotshots to attend. We dutifully trudged off to our first screening, assuming it would be a basic washout.

Then a strange thing happened. No sooner had the film ended than I found myself being pulled into the lobby by a guy who worked at the now-defunct USA Films. He was rabid and excited as only people in show biz can be when they want something. And what he wanted—to our surprise—was our movie. Suddenly we had gone from being the “dark-horse, Salt Lake screening, out of competition, not-cool enough for school” movie to being the “grab it while it's hot, take it off the table, we're the guys for you” movie. Somehow, word of a company's interest in acquiring a movie seems to travel quickly, and the other acquisitions people showed up en masse to our second screening the following night, this time in Park City. We'd planned a little post-screening party at the house we were renting, figuring on twenty or so people dropping by. The film played very well, but it was hard to judge if we were going to get any more offers.

Until we got back to our house. To our astonishment the party had already started, prior to us even getting there. People were pouring in to the place, I imagine having been told that the new hot film at the festival was throwing the evening's hot party. Sundance is basically one overcrowded party after another, and there we were, purveyors of one of the festival's most uncomfortably overcrowded events.

Present at the party was Mark Urman from Lionsgate films, whose very presence seemed to indicate that we had another buyer interested. The next day the producers met with each company and considered the two offers—I absented myself from this process, the better to do press. And by the end of the next day, we'd

sold the movie to Lionsgate. The festival was only a few days old, but it was, for all intents and purposes, over for me. We'd accomplished what everybody hopes to in the independent film game: we'd made a movie, shown the movie at Sundance, and sold the movie. I disliked the altitude in Park City and didn't want to go to any more parties or screenings, so I went home a day later, thus missing out on being present to accept the only award I'd ever actually won (up to that time). Since *Two Family House* wasn't allowed in competition, we were only eligible for the Audience Award, and the movie that seemed to be attracting the heavy buzz that year was *Girlfight* (probably best remembered as the movie that brought us—for better or worse—Michelle Rodriguez). *Girlfight* was in competition and seemed a certain bet to win the Jury prize (which it did). Since the film was apparently a big crowd pleaser, I figured it would also pick up the Audience Award and that it would be best for me to be satisfied with the sale and head back to New York.

A week later, on the day of the closing night of the festival, my manager Gary Unger called me from Park City. "They're asking if there's any chance you can get on a plane and make it back here before the awards ceremony!" And that was how I knew that we'd beaten the odds-on favorite. Alas, the answer was no—I was in New York, and the timing would have been perilous if not impossible. But at least Gary and my producer Al Klingenstein were there to accept the award on my behalf. The awards show was televised, though, and my wife and I and two of our friends watched it on TV in the upstairs living room of our Greenwich Village apartment. I had no regrets about not being there in person to collect my award. Indeed, my perversely "uncool is cool" high-school persona was still alive and well deep within me, and I enjoyed the shadowy glamour implicit in my conspicuous absence. A couple of days later, one of the New York dailies ran a piece on the Sundance winners and noted that year's winning filmmakers all came from New York. Referring to me, the writer commented, "De Felitta, who has always marched to his own drummer, skipped the ceremony," thereby placing me in the august company of Woody Allen, the New York filmmaker who actually *planned* to miss all of his own award ceremonies.

You may have noticed that this chapter is a good deal shorter than the *City Island* saga. That's because there were not only fewer ups and downs in the making and selling of *Two Family House*, there was also much less to talk about in the wake of the film's sale to Lionsgate. The company planned a good publicity campaign and got the film into both the Toronto Film Festival and the Deauville Festival (by far my favorite of all festivals). It was my second time at Deauville, and I had the memorable experience of partying with Robert Altman and his wife and being asked by a somewhat forlorn Anouk Aimee to see her back to her hotel across the beach (on the way back, she remarked, "There was a time when the entire hotel would have fought to be the one to walk me home").

Just when the entire rosy experience of making and selling the film seemed to be headed for home plate, something happened that I instantly knew was *not a good thing*. It was announced that Mark Urman, who had acquired the film for Lionsgate, would be leaving the company for "new opportunities." When this sort of thing happens, there's pretty much one thing you can count on: whoever takes the place of the departing executive will personally rid the company of whatever projects the

previous executive championed. We were not to prove an exception to this unfortunate rule. By the time *Two Family House* opened in the fall, it had dropped quite seriously on the distributor's priority list. Our opening weekend was pushed from September into November, thereby burying us in the glut of "awards films," all of which had publicity budgets that dwarfed ours. *The New York Times* ad on opening weekend was miniscule. *Meet The Parents* was our opening weekend competition. It was also the year New York had a "subway series" for the close of the baseball season—a rare and thrilling experience. Even I found it difficult to leave the house to go to one of our theaters and see how the movie was performing.

Our opening weekend was, for the most part, the end of the film's theatrical life. "It's just not connecting with audiences," said the distributors, blaming the movie for its lackadaisical performance and not their own indifference. What was especially galling about this was the level of praise the film received by virtually all the reviewers. My mother couldn't have written better notices. At the end of the year, in a poll taken by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Two Family House* was tabulated to be the second-best-reviewed film of the year (*Almost Famous* was first). By then, it didn't matter.

How do you go through this crap and come back for more? I've been asked this a few times now, and I can only repeat something that Orson Welles said to Peter Bogdanovich, who'd asked him if he ever felt like a martyr: "Martyrdom? I haven't the vocation for it." I know what he means. When this work is your calling, you have no choice but to find the good in every situation, as most situations turn out in highly unsatisfactory ways. *Two Family House* found its audience over the years on cable—first on HBO, and then Cinemax, where it continues to be shown quite regularly. It was turned into a wonderful musical show (I wrote the libretto, and Kim Oler and Alison Hubbard wrote the songs) that won the prestigious Richard Rogers award and was staged at several venues, including the Eugene O'Neill Center in Connecticut. Recently somebody sent me a magazine article that listed the all-time "ten best Valentine's Day movies," and there we were! Roger Ebert, always supportive of my work, included us in the somewhat dubiously titled "One Hundred Greatest Films You've Never Seen" compilation. While I would have preferred being in "One Hundred Greatest Films Everybody's Seen Over and Over," I'll gladly accept the honor. I get a lot of mail about the film, by which I'm always quite moved. How many times do people like a movie enough to reach out to the filmmaker and connect with him? Something about the story of my uncle and the bar and Irish girl with the black baby continues to intrigue people enough to ask me where the story came from. "Was Buddy a real person?" is the question asked in almost every e-mail I get.

And I always answer: "Yes. He was my uncle. And the story is true, up to the end of act one. After that, I gave him the ending that I thought he would have liked, had he been watching a movie of his own life." Which was, in the end, probably the most satisfying thing about the whole experience.

PRODUCTION MATERIALS

What follows is a sampling of documents related to the making of each film. Included are the complete cast and crew lists, the budget top-sheets, and three call sheets, accompanied by the corresponding production reports for *Two Family House* and the shooting schedule for *City Island*. By studying the schedule, you'll be able to see the intricacies involved in breaking down a movie scene by scene and grouping those scenes into a shooting order based largely on logistics, as opposed to dramatic relevance. In studying the call sheets, you'll see the ambitions for a given day's work, while the production reports will reveal the reality of what was achieved on that same day. Fortunately for me (and for the financiers, producers, and the bond company), we pretty much always met our goals, albeit sometimes in ways that exhausted all of those present.

APPENDIX A – *CITY ISLAND* PRODUCTION MATERIALS

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City Island**Directed by**

Raymond De Felitta

Writing Credits

Raymond De Felitta

Cast

Andy Garcia

Julianna Margulies

Steven Strait

Emily Mortimer

Ezra Miller

Dominik García-Lorido

Carrie Baker Reynolds

Hope Glendon-Ross

Alan Arkin

Louis Mustillo

Jee Young Han

Sarah Saltzberg

Vince Rizzo

Joyce Rizzo

Tony

Molly

Vince Jr.

Vivian Rizzo

Denise

Cheryl

Michael Malakov

Bruno

Casting Assistant

Casting Director

Curtiss Cook
 Sharon Angela
 Marianne Ebert
 Paul Romero
 Paul Diomedede
 Vernon Campbell
 Benjamin Mathes
 Jennifer Larkin
 Yevgeniy Dekhtyar
 Marshall Efron
 Lora Chio
 Ivy Jones
 Louise Stratten
 Matthew Arkin
 Michael Dozier
 Carly Hughes
 Hallie Copper-Novack
 Joe Drago
 Dylan Bresnan
 Lynn Collins
 Bettina Bresnan
 George Aloï
 Joseph Basile
 David Boston
 Joseph Cintron
 Donato DeMarinis
 John Farrer
 Steven J. Klaszky
 Adam Larrabee
 Tom Margiotta
 Cerrone May
 Chris Miskiewicz
 Tim Schuebel
 Nicole Wilson

Produced By

Maria Teresa Arida
 William J. Bresnan
 Raymond De Felitta
 Thomas De Litto
 Luis de Val
 Ged Dickersin
 Joe Drago
 Edward Easton
 Andy Garcia

Matt Cruniff
 Tanya
 Ezmalia (as Marianni Ebert)
 Security Man
 Working-Class Guy
 Bouncer
 Male Actor
 Female Actor
 Young Actor
 Actor-Dog
 Actor #3
 Actor #4
 Actor #5
 Actor #6
 Actor #7
 Actor #8
 Actor #9
 Actor #10
 Market Stockboy
 Vince's Bombshell Girlfriend
 Vinnie's Attractive Admirer
 Auditioning Actor (uncredited)
 Inmate Prisoner (uncredited)
 Man in Casting Line (uncredited)
 Prison Guard (uncredited)
 Standee (uncredited)
 Supermarket Patron (uncredited)
 Actor (uncredited)
 Goombah (uncredited)
 Extra (uncredited)
 Correction Officer (uncredited)
 Drunk (uncredited)
 Wiseguy 2 (uncredited)
 Bar Tender (uncredited)

Executive Producer
 Co-Executive Producer
 Producer
 Associate Executive Producer
 Co-Executive Producer
 Line Producer
 Associate Producer
 Co-Executive Producer
 Producer

Rene Garcia
 Milutin G. Gatsby
 Antonia Gijon
 Grzegorz Hajdarowicz

Co-Executive Producer
 Executive Producer
 Co-Executive Producer
 Executive Producer (as Greg
 Hajdarowicz)
 Associate Executive Producer
 Associate Executive Producer
 Producer
 Executive Producer
 Associate Executive Producer
 Executive Producer
 Associate Executive Producer
 Producer
 Co-Executive Producer

Omar Kodmani
 Raymond Mason
 Zachary Matz
 Michael Roban
 Lawrence Salameo
 Lucia Seabra
 Isaac Souede
 Lauren Versel
 Edward Walson

Music By

Jan A.P. Kaczmarek

Cinematography By

Vanja Cernjul

Director of Photography

Film Editing By

David Leonard

Casting By

Sheila Jaffe
 Meredith Tucker

Production Design By

Franckie Diago

Art Direction By

Sorangel Fersobe

Set Decoration By

Kelley Burney

Costume Design By

Tere Duncan

Makeup Department

Jorjee Douglas
Joseph Farulla
Sharon Ilson

Tina LaSpina
Annie Martin
Pamela May
Katherine O'Donnell
Shazia Saleem
Barbara Sansone
Colleen Wheeler

Makeup Artist: Emily Mortimer
Makeup Assistant
Key Makeup Artist (as Sharon Ilson
Burke)
Additional Makeup Artist
Additional Hair Stylist
Key Hair Stylist
Additional Makeup Artist
Additional Hair Stylist
Assistant Hair Stylist
Additional Hair Stylist

Production Management

Ged Dickersin
Zachary Matz
Erin Moore
Andrew Saxe
Dale Tanguay
Nancy Valle

Unit Production Manager
Unit Production Manager
Post-Production Supervisor
Production Supervisor
Post-Production Supervisor
Post-Production Supervisor (uncredited)

Second Unit Director or Assistant Director

Inna Braude
John Greenway
Eric Henriquez
Patrick McDonald
Eric Henriquez

Additional Second Assistant Director
Second Assistant Director
First Assistant Director
Second Second Assistant Director
Second Unit Director (uncredited)

Art Department

Jasmine E. Ballou
Michael Dickman
Daniel Fisher
Kley Gilbuena
Marina Heintze
Jonathon Huggins
Katie Klemsley
Doro Klusmann
Daniel Neroda
Eric Pastore
Tallulah Rotman

On-Set Dresser
Set Dresser
Property Master
Additional Props (as Kley Gilbuena)
Art Department Production Assistant
Lead Person
Scenic Artist
Set Dresser
Set Dresser
Set Dresser
Art Intern

Max Sherwood
 Christine Skubish
 Dennis Tillberg
 Nick Torelli
 Cathy Wesslenko
 Alexis Weiss
 Natalie McKeever
 Raymond J. Stenzel

Set Dresser
 Scenic Artist: New Mexico
 Charge Scenic Artist
 Set Dresser
 Camera Scenic
 Assistant Property Master
 Art Department Intern (uncredited)
 Construction Coordinator (uncredited)

Sound Department

Carly Bodmer
 Vince Camuto Sr.
 Vincent Camuto
 Gary Coppola
 Jason England
 Sang Jun Kim
 Michelle Mader
 Darrin Mann
 Damon Martin
 Jan McLaughlin
 Thomas O'Neil Younkman
 Nancy Parker
 Sarah Payan
 Benjamin Rauscher
 Chris Roach
 William Schneiberg
 Christopher Sheldon
 Brad Sherman
 Edward M. Steidele
 Lars Bjerre
 Yagmur Kaplan
 Beauxregard Neylon

Post-Production Facility Manager
 Boom Operator
 Sound Utility
 Sound Re-Recording Mixer
 Dialogue Editor (as Robert Jason England)
 Assistant Sound Editor
 Sound Utility
 Foley Mixer
 Sound Services: Departure Studios
 Sound Supervisor
 Supervising Sound Editor
 Foley Artist
 ADR Editor
 Foley Assistant
 ADR Mixer
 Sound Utility
 Sound Editor
 Sound Re-Recording Mixer
 Foley Artist
 Dialogue Denoising (uncredited)
 ADR Mixer (uncredited)
 ADR Mixer (uncredited)

Special Effects By

Emily Millay Haddad
 Phillip Beck

Special Effects Supervisor: Live Computer
 Special Effects Coordinator (uncredited)

Stunts

Damian Achilles
 Rick Aiello
 Mike Burke
 Chad Hessler
 Daniel Maldonado

Stunt Driver #1
 Stunt Driver/ Stunt Shooter #1
 Stunt Driving Double: Vince
 Stunt Double: Vinnie Jr.
 Stunt Driver: Traffic Jam

Paul Marini
 Chad Menendes
 Manny Siverio
 Chris Colombo
 Jeffery Mowery
 Hollywood Nick Pagani

Stunt Double: Vince
 Stunt Driver #2
 Stunt Coordinator
 Stunt Rigger (uncredited)
 Precision Driver (uncredited)
 Driving Double (uncredited)

Camera and Electrical Department

John Alcantara
 Michael Arisohn
 Vincent Arteca
 Josh Blakeslee
 Daniel Buneta
 Beverly Cable
 Phillip V. Caruso
 Mike Cascio
 Matthew Clark

Tom Concordia
 John Donohue
 David Dutkus
 David Feeney-Mosier
 Casey Ford
 Christopher Gamiello
 Spencer Gillis
 Ashton Golembo
 Sandy Hays
 Christopher Heikel
 Petr Hlinomaz
 Glenn Kaplan
 Meredith Kendall
 Chris Langan
 Christopher LaVasseur
 Kevin Lowry
 Greg McMahon
 Keith McNicholas
 Laretta Prevost
 Brendan Quinlan
 Collin Quinlan
 Greg Quinlan
 Ryan Quinlan
 Satish Sahi
 Joe Sarao
 Jaime Segschne

Rigging Best Boy
 Set Electric
 Grip
 First Assistant Camera: "B" Camera
 Camera Intern
 Electrician (as Beverly Jones)
 Still Photographer (as Phil Caruso)
 Camera Intern
 Camera Operator: Second Unit / Director
 of Photography: Second Unit
 Additional Still Photographer
 Grip (as John Donahue Jr.)
 Rigging Electrician
 Camera Intern
 Rigging Electrician
 Grip
 Additional Loader
 Camera Intern
 Steadicam Operator
 Rigging Gaffer
 Camera Operator
 First Assistant Camera: "A" Camera
 Camera Intern
 Camera Intern
 Camera Operator
 Dolly Grip
 Second Assistant Camera: "B" Camera
 Best Boy Electric
 Second Assistant Camera
 Key Grip
 Electrician (as Colin Quinlan)
 Gaffer
 Generator Operator
 Electrician (as Satish Shahi)
 Best Boy/ Loader
 Director of Photography: Second Unit /
 Steadicam Operator

Dobb Shreiber
 Markham Sindeband
 Al Stetson Grip
 David Woolner
 Vincent Camuto
 Sung Rae Cho
 Rashad Clinton
 Alexander Martin
 Antonio Ponti

Electrician
 Grip
 Electrician
 Video Playback Technician (uncredited)
 First Assistant Camera (uncredited)
 Grip (uncredited)
 Lighting Technician (uncredited)
 Additional First Assistant Camera
 (uncredited)

Casting Department

Richard Burrige
 Grant Wilfley

Background Casting Associate
 Background Casting

Costume and Wardrobe Department

Morgan Bennett
 Donna Bowers
 Sonja Cizmazia
 Rebecca Edmonston
 Delvan James
 McGinnis Ryan
 Rabiah Troncelliti

Wardrobe Production Assistant
 Stitcher
 Wardrobe Supervisor
 On-Set Costumer
 On-Set Costumer
 Wardrobe Intern
 Assistant Costume Designer

Editorial Department

Matthew Booras
 George Bunce
 Adam Moore
 Scot Olive
 Matthew Reedy
 Adriaan van Zyl
 Leroy Wolf

Assistant Editor
 Digital Intermediate On-Line Editor
 Dailies Transfer Operator
 Digital Intermediate Colorist Assistant
 Digital Intermediate Producer
 Assistant Editor
 Color Timer

Music Department

Jay Duerr
 Rick Eisenstein

William Ewart

Jan A. P. Kaczmarek
 Piotr Kopietz
 Bogna Kowalska

Music Editor
 Music Clearing and Licensing: Diamond
 Time Music & Media
 Music Clearance and Licensing: Montage
 Music
 Orchestrator/ Score Producer
 Musician: Accordion Soloist
 Orchestra Contractor

Dylan Maulucci
 Sylwia Mierzejewska
 Rafal Paczkowski
 Polish Radio Orchestra
 Wojciech Rodek
 Piotr Tatarski

Orchestrator
 Music Scoring Mixer
 Music Scoring Mixer
 Musicians: Orchestra
 Conductor
 Assistant to Composer

Transportation Department

Daniel Buckley
 Richard Busnido
 Joe Castiglione
 Paul Castiglione
 Reginald Crute
 Ralph Devivo
 Rich Marino
 Timothy Paustian
 Thomas Reilly
 Scott Roth
 Jerry Weiner

Driver: 15 Passenger #2
 Driver: H/W Truck
 Driver: Electric Generator
 Driver: 15 Passenger #1
 Driver: Swing Truck
 Driver: Grip Truck
 Driver: 15 Passenger #3
 Teamster Captain
 Teamster Co-Captain
 Driver
 Driver: Camera Truck

Other Crew

Theron Alford
 Maya Amsellem
 Alessandro Aquilina
 Luis Ayala
 Sophiya Banu
 Amy Basil
 Anthony Batarese
 Cathy Bodmer
 Alethea Bordallo
 Justin Cade
 Sarah Carleton
 Shannon Causey
 Bozena Cerba
 Geoffrey Chalmers
 Jessica Clauser
 Lanore Coloprisco
 Carol A. Compton
 Rachel Connors.
 Paul Dickover
 Olimpia DiLoreto
 Jessica Drake
 Joe Facey
 Amanda Faison

Set Production Assistant
 International Sales
 Set Intern
 Set Intern
 Accounting Production Assistant
 Assistant: Mr. De Felitta
 ADR Loop Group
 ADR Loop Group
 Office Production Staff
 Production Legal: Halloran Law Office
 Assistant to Executive Producer
 Location Manager
 Production Coordinator: Gremi Films
 Production Legal
 Office Production Staff
 Set Intern
 Script Clearance Research: IndieClear
 Script Supervisor
 Office Production Staff
 Set Intern
 Dialect Coach
 Craft Service
 Set production Assistant: First Team

Glenn D. Feig
 Heath Fisher
 Kathy Fisher
 Hassiba Freiha

Mariana Furtado
 Daniella Garcia

Grant George
 John Gilder
 Dan Gloeckner
 Evan Gregg
 Mark Halloran
 Reine Issa
 Sally May Homer
 Ashley Joyce
 Bryan LaCour

Steven Lafferty
 Dan Lasik
 Meghan Lechette
 Rebecca Lindsey
 Benjamin Logan
 Ziggy Maxwell
 Brian McKinley
 Mike McNamara
 Luca Michelson
 Erin Moore
 Campbell Morgan
 Joey Nabor
 Kate Noll
 Robert Plonskier
 James Post
 Demon Rayfelitta
 Gregory Saint Armand
 John Salinas
 Nora Schaffer
 Nicholas E. Schepisi
 Eve Schoukroun
 Kristy Schultz

Elias Scoropanos
 Tara A. Senior
 Dalice Shilshtut
 Natasha C. Smith
 Clay Steward

Production Legal: Reder & Feig
 Office Production Staff
 Assistant: Mr. Garcia
 Assistant Producer/ Set Production
 Assistant
 Completion Guarantor: Film Finances
 ADR loop group (as Daniella Garcia-
 Lorido)
 ADR Loop Group
 Unit Production Assistant
 Key Set Production Assistant
 Assistant Location Manager
 Production Legal: Halloran Law Office
 Set Intern
 Production Assistant: Background
 Intern: Lucky Monkey (as Ashley Bush)
 Production Lender: Union Bank of
 California (as Bryan LeCour)
 Set Production Assistant
 Chef: Gourmet To U (as Dan Lasiy)
 Set Production Assistant
 Set Production Assistant
 Set Production Assistant
 ADR Loop Group
 Office Production Staff
 Set Production Assistant
 Set Intern
 Assistant: Ms. Versel
 Set Intern
 ADR Loop Group
 Clearances Coordinator
 Set Production Assistant
 Set Production Assistant
 ADR Loop Group
 Website Designer
 Assistant to Chef
 Office Intern
 Production Assistant: PR
 International Sales: WestEnd Films
 Production Lender: Union Bank of
 California
 Production Bank: H.S.B.C/
 Production Legal: Reder & Feig
 Production Secretary
 Production Auditor
 Completion Guarantor: Film Finances

Mercedes Tahir
Laura Tressel
Jonathan Urband
Matthew Warren
Russell Washington
Sharon Watt
Betty Whitehouse

Canella Williams
Adam Wolk
Tracy Wong

Max Zimmerman
Adrienne Dine
Brandon K. Hines
David Laurentin

Brendan C. Lynch

John F. McCarthy
Karen Pritchett

Thanks

Jesse Dickersin
Nikola Dickersin
Nino Dickerson
Mia Goldman
Kevin Kasha

Intern: Lucky Monkey
Location Assistant
Location Scout (as Johnny Urband)
Completion Guarantor: Film Finances
Lead Accountant
Script Supervisor
Payroll Services: Cast and Crew Payroll
Services
Production Coordinator
Unit Production Assistant
Craft Service Production Assistant / Craft
Service
Production Secretary
Production Assistant (uncredited)
Production Intern (uncredited)
Assistant Parking Coordinator
(uncredited)
Additional Production Assistant
(uncredited)
Production Assistant (uncredited)
Production Assistant (uncredited)

APPENDIX B—*TWO FAMILY HOUSE* PRODUCTION MATERIALS

<insert image TFH Budget Top Sheet.jpg

<insert image Call Sheet Day 1 - TFH - 300DPI.jpg

<insert image PR Day 1 - TFH - 300DPI.jpg

<insert image Call Sheet Day 10 - TFH - 300DPI.jpg

<insert image PR Day 10 - TFH - 300DPI.jpg

<insert image Call Sheet Day 25 - TFH - 300DPI.jpg

<insert image PR Day 25 - TFH - 300DPI.jpg

Two Family House**Cast**

Michael Rispoli	Buddy Visalo
Kelly Macdonald	Mary O'Neary
Katherine Narducci	Estelle Visalo
Kevin Conway	Jim O'Neary
Matt Servitto	Chipmunk
Michele Santopietro	Laura
Louis Guss	Donato
Rosemary De Angelis	Marie (as Rosemary Deangelis)
Anthony Arkin	Danny
Saul Stein	Anthony
Vincent Pastore	Angelo
Sharon Angela	Gloria
Ivy Jones	Tina
Victor Arnold	Mr. Cicco
Richard B. Shull	Mr. Brancaccio
Nick Tosches	Hotel Clerk
Jack O'Connell	Mr. Mahoney
Gerry Bamman	Mr. Pine
Barbara Haas	Mrs. Genova
Marshall Efron	Tiny
Joseph R. Gannascoli	Counter Guy
Robert Fitch	Drunken Guy
Peggy Gormley	Miss Dimunjik
Richard V. Licata	Mr. Asippi (as Richard Licata)
Soja Moore	Baby

Bijon Moore
Shaidai Mingo
John McLaughlin
John Pizzarelli
Frank Whaley

Baby
Older Baby
Arthur Godfrey (as John Mclaughlin)
Julius LaRosa
Narrator

Produced By

Adam Brightman
Bernie DeLeo
Anne Harrison
Al Klingenstein

Executive Producer
Associate Producer (as Bernie Deleo)
Producer
Producer (as Alan Klingenstein)

Music By

Stephen Endelman

Cinematography By

Michael Mayers

Director of Photography

Film Editing By

David Leonard

Casting By

Sheila Jaffe
Julia Kim
Georgianne Walken

Production Design By

Teresa Mastropierro

Set Decoration By

Dina Varano

Costume Design By

Liz McGarrity

Makeup Department

Matt Garber

Assistant Makeup Artist

Red Johnson
 Claus Lulla
 Roxanne Manzano
 Nuria Sitja
 Dina Sliwak

Assistant Makeup Artist
 Key Hair Stylist
 Assistant Hair Stylist
 Key Makeup Artist
 Assistant Hair Stylist (as Dina Sliwiak)

Production Management

Adam Brightman
 Eitan Hakami
 Jill Rubin

Unit Production Manager
 Post-Production Supervisor
 Additional Unit Production Manager

Second Unit Director/Assistant Director

Louis Guerra
 Dylan Hopkins
 Alyson Latz
 Amy Lynn

Additional Second Assistant Director
 Second Assistant Director
 Second Second Assistant Director
 First Assistant Director

Art Department

Tamar Abigador
 Jennie Berman
 Sally Bonython
 Fritz Buehner
 Lisa Dent
 Barry Devine
 Ted Fairchild
 Chelsea Fetzer
 Julia Foug
 Charles Freidman
 Luna Hirai
 Carolyn F. Horst
 Borys Jakymovych
 Josh Kanter
 Emily Klimkiewicz
 Irina Kromayer
 David Lyerly
 Luca Novelli
 Diana Partyka
 Jose Pavon
 Diana Puntar
 Evan Rossiter
 Ariel Enriquez Saulog
 Leigh Sellinger
 Moira Shaughnessy

Art Department Intern
 Leadman
 Props Production Assistant
 Additional Carpenter
 On-Set Dresser
 Props Production Assistant
 Second Assistant Props
 Art Department Coordinator
 Designer: Filbert Steps Logo
 Additional Carpenter
 Scenic Charge
 Scenic Artist
 Graphic Artist
 Carpenter
 Art Department Intern
 Art Department Intern
 Assistant Props
 Art Department Assistant
 Art Department Intern
 Set Dresser
 Master Carpenter
 Props Production Assistant
 Graphic Artist
 Additional Scenic
 Additional Set Dresser

Jennifer Sirey
 Derek Stenborg
 Marc Stuart
 Ben Telford
 Pierre Vial

Property Master
 Additional Scenic
 Scenic Artist
 Set Dresser
 Additional Set Dresser

Sound Department

Antonio L Arroyo
 Nancy Cabrera
 Tammy Douglas
 Patrick Dundas
 Dave Fisher
 Chen Harpaz
 Kevin Lee
 Geoff Lippman
 David Novak
 Dominick Tavella
 Steven Visscher
 Adam M. Goldstein

Sound Mixer
 Foley Artist
 Boom Operator
 Foley Engineer
 Assistant Sound Editor
 Supervising Sound Editor
 Dialogue Editor
 Consultant: Dolby Sound
 Adr Engineer
 Sound Re-Recording Mixer
 Foley Sound
 Sound Effects Editor (uncredited)

Special Effects By

Adam M. Goldsten

Effects Editor (uncredited)

Stunts

Manny Siverio

Stunt Coordinator

Camera and Electrical Department

Jeffrey L. Baker
 Jonathan Beck
 Ruark Behan
 Matt Blades
 Hugo Bonilla
 Elizabeth Casinelli
 Ryan Cooke
 Kathleen Corgan
 Matt Craig
 Jesse Cummings
 Theresa Dillon
 Johnny Erbes-Chan
 Gregory Finkel
 Matthew Ford
 Michael N. Green

First Assistant Camera
 Second Assistant Camera
 Dolly Grip
 Best Boy Grip
 Additional Electric
 Additional Electric
 Additional Grip
 Camera Loader
 Additional Electric
 24 Frame Playback
 Still Photographer
 Key Grip
 First Assistant Camera: "B" Camera
 Best Boy Electric
 Additional Electrician

Tom Guiney
 Shawn Harkins
 Alan Jacobsen
 Ani Karougian
 Paul Kaye
 Marc Kroll
 Deidre Lally
 Scott Maher
 James 'Otis' Mayfield
 Jesse McLean
 Steven C. O'Neill
 Quinn Pawlan
 Jake Pollock
 Jeffrey Seckendorf
 Amy Silverman
 Alan Smith
 Andy Thomas
 Seamus Tierney
 Bryan Wachtel
 Cliff Weisner
 Timothy Wood

Additional Grip
 Crane Operator
 Gaffer
 Loader
 Electric
 Camera Operator: "B" Camera
 Third Electrician
 Additional Electric
 First Assistant Camera: "B" Camera
 Company Grip
 Additional Grip
 Additional Electrician
 Additional Grip
 Camera Operator: "B" Camera
 First Assistant Camera
 Additional Electric
 Additional Key Grip
 Additional Electric
 Additional Electric
 Additional Gaffer
 Additional Electric

Casting Department

Debbie Sheridan
 Katharina Eggman

Extras Casting Associate
 Casting Associate (uncredited)

Costume and Wardrobe Department

Danita Knight
 Stephanie Sowa
 Laura Wehrman
 Dawn Weisberg

Wardrobe Supervisor
 Wardrobe Intern
 Wardrobe Assistant
 Assistant Costume Designer

Editorial Department

Elizabeth Heeden
 Fred Heid
 Maria Lilja
 Tina Pacheco
 Joe Violante
 Michael Williams

Assistant Editor
 Color Timer
 Editing Intern
 Assistant Editor
 Coordinator: Technicolor
 Assistant Post-Production Supervisor

Music Department

Stephen Endelman

Orchestrator

James Flatto
Christopher Guardino

Greg Hesselink
Bohdan Hilash
Will Holshouser
Susan Jacobs
John Pizzarelli Trio
Christopher Kennedy
Garry Rindfuss
Antoine Silverman
Raymond Stewart
Adam M. Goldstein

Sonny Kompanek
Transportation Department

Jim Buckman
Jared Cauliffe

Other Crew

Laurie Allen
Brian Benedict
Walter Burns
Adam Carr
Mike Conte
Sean William Cunningham
Kenneth Davis
Katrina Elliot
Michael Espinosa
Harry Tappan Heher
Ishmael Hendricks
Petra Hoebel
Aubrey Isakson
Terri Jackson
Jule Anne Jappe
Nicholas Kaelin
Nancy Kolomitz
Clover Lalehazar
David M. McGuire
Livia Monte
Melissa Myers
Tomas Piche
Jeremy Rizzi
Sean Schaeffer
Felicia Standel

Additional Music Editor
Additional Orchestrator/
Arranger: Additional Music
Musician: Cello
Orchestra Contractor
Musician: Accordion
Music Supervisor
Composer: Additional Music
Music Editor
Music Recording Engineer
Musician: Violin
Musician: Tuba
Music and Effects Track Set-Up/
Music Editor (uncredited)
Composer: Additional Music (uncredited)

Parking Coordinator
Talent Driver

Assistant: Mr. Endelman
Military Consultant
Set Intern
Assistant: Mr. De Felitta
Office Production Assistant
Production Assistant
Additional Production Assistant
Location Scout
Set Production Assistant
Location Scout
Parking Coordinator
Location Scout
Unit Production Assistant
Assistant Production Office Coordinator
Location Manager
Office Intern
Set Production Assistant
Assistant: Mr. De Felitta
Production Assistant
Production Office Coordinator
Production Assistant
Office Intern
Production Assistant
Stand-In
Key Set Production Assistant

Janique Torres
Steven Weisberg
David Welch
Rory Wilson
Duannesse Wright
Elizabeth Zagraney
Jared Cauliffe

Office Intern
Assistant Location Manager
Script Supervisor
Additional Production Assistant
Office Production Assistant
Production Accountant
Production Assistant

Thanks

Sherry Brennan
Dorothy De Felitta
Frank De Felitta
Frank Whaley

Raymond De Felitta's films have been honored at international film festivals and hailed by critics. His short film *Bronx Cheers* was nominated for an Academy Award in 1991. *City Island* and *Two Family House* both won Audience Awards, at the Tribeca Film Festival (2009) and Sundance Film Festival (2000), respectively. His debut feature *Café Society* premiered in Directors' Fortnight at Cannes (1996). His first documentary, *Tis Autumn: The Search For Jackie Paris* premiered to wide acclaim at Sundance in 2007, and his second documentary, *Booker's Place: A Mississippi Story*, which premiered at Tribeca in 2012, was the subject of a full one-hour episode of Dateline NBC. An accomplished jazz pianist, his music can be found on iTunes and at cdbaby.com. His online filmmaking diaries and podcasts can be found at www.moviestildawn.blogspot.com