

THE AFTERPARTY

First Episode Proposal
For creative discussion purposes

Official writing credits TBD

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EXT. HILLSIDE HIGH PARKING LOT / INT. VARIOUS CARS - SUNSET

- ANIQ, 38, geek-chic button-down, drives his cluttered Honda Fit to a high school parking lot on a late fall Seattle day.

He pulls into the parking lot with the sign "CLASS OF 2001: A REUNION ODYSSEY" and rolls his eyes at the obvious theme. Parks. Takes a DEEP BREATH.

ANIQ
(to himself)
You can do this.

He re-opens "Zoë"'s email from a few days ago:

"Hey! Hope to see you at the reunion Saturday! Can't wait to catch up... :) Zoë"

He smiles.

- ZOE, also 38, in a red dress, hair blown out, sits in the back of an Uber, doodling on the margins of a paper LIST.

DRIVER
Big night?

ZOE
Oh, it's just my high school reunion. But I just got separated so... it's my first chance to let "Fun Zoe" out since-- wow, I guess since I had a kid. It'll be like the old days-- gonna wild out with my girlfriends, there's an afterparty, stay up to watch the sunrise...

She holds up a gold INVITATION to "XAVIER'S VIP AFTERPARTY".

ZOE (CONT'D)
I made a list of all the things I want to do tonight--

The driver eyes her list skeptically in the rearview mirror.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I guess having a list isn't super free-spirited...

She RIPS the list in half. After a beat, she neatly FOLDS it and puts it back in her PURSE.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I'll keep it just in case.

- YASPER, 38 (they all are, it's a reunion), is alone in a Bentley Continental GT sports car, blasting the song "X Marks the G Spot" and singing along. Really rocking out, getting himself psyched up.

YASPER

(singing)

*You know I always hit the jackpot/
because X marks the G-spot!*

He looks at himself in the visor mirror:

YASPER (CONT'D)

(to himself)

You: are a goddamn star.

- CHELSEA, (yeah, 38), a little worse for wear, is in her Jetta, nervous. Looks behind her shoulder often. Her phone buzzes. It's a text from a BLOCKED NUMBER:

"Don't come to the reunion." "You aren't wanted tonight."

She pulls a FLASK from her purse, chugs from it. Glances at her AFTERPARTY INVITATION. Looks over her shoulder again.

- BRETT, leather jacket, tight cashmere sweater, alone in his revving '68 Shelby GT500, parked up the street.

He watches someone intently over his sunglasses. It's ZOE in her Uber. She gets out of her car--

BRETT

Here we go.

He puts it in gear, and SCREECHES into the parking lot.

- XAVIER, wearing a hipster hat, in a HELICOPTER, checking himself out in the mirror app on his phone.

XAVIER (OVER HEADSET)

I'll need you to take me home for
my afterparty around 9, and that'll
be all for tonight.

PILOT (OVER HEADSET)

Taking just you home?

XAVIER

(smiles)

Doubt it.

PILOT
(chuckles)
Copy that.

BACK ON ANIQ, in his car. He sees Zoe getting out of her Uber across the lot and looks away. He tries to relax:

ANIQ
She wants to see you, you want to see her. Power of positive thought: Nothing is going to mess up this night.

EXT. MAGNOLIA BLUFF - NIGHT

Serene night, waves lap on rocks. Silence. Then, a body falls from high above onto the rocks at the shoreline.

WHAM!

The now-dead body belongs to Xavier.

EXT. XAVIER'S MANSION ABOVE - A MOMENT LATER

A sleek, modern mansion with two balconies atop the cliff. A high-pitched SCREAM. Then ANOTHER, then a CHORUS OF SCREAMS.

EXT. XAVIER'S MANSION, GATES - NIGHT

DETECTIVE DANNER, wrinkled suit, looks like she just got out of bed (because she did), gets out of a messy Subaru Outback with her junior partner, DETECTIVE CULP, who tries to look professional and not green. Danner's on the phone.

DET. DANNER (INTO PHONE)
Yeah, we're already at the house.
We were in the neighborhood.

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
You don't live anywhere near--

DET. DANNER
I heard it on the scanner and picked up Culp. Please, just let me take the lead on this.

She walks up to the gate, guarded by a uniformed officer.

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*I can't let you take this one,
you're not right for it--*

DET. DANNER
Okay, I've stepped on a few toes,
but I've been right. Like the
Ruffins twins murder--

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*Don't start with the child beauty
queens again--*

DET. DANNER
They killed each other.

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
They were nine.

DET. DANNER
That's why their parents didn't
want to believe it.

Culp shows his badge to the officer. Danner tries to pull out her badge, while on the phone and walking, she's struggling.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
The only reason I've ever been
taken off cases is because I
haven't been allowed to do my
process. I need this, Greg. I
promise I'll be super professional
on thi-- oh--

She accidentally drops her phone as she pulls out her badge. She picks up the phone to hear:

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*Can't risk it, Danner. It's too
high profile. Ramirez already
called in a ringer from L.A.*

They walk around the side of the house to the cliff.

DET. DANNER
A ringer?

DET. CULP
A ringer?

Culp stops. Danner waves at him like "don't worry about it."

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*Detective Germain, he caught the
Tar Pits Strangler, I'm sure you--*

DET. DANNER
(loaded)
Yeah, I know him.

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*He'll be in on the first flight in
the morning. He's taking lead--*

DET. DANNER
--But that's hours from now--

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*You can collect statements and
write up a report for him when he
arrives. That's it. Nothing more.
And try to keep it quiet until he
gets there.*

DET. DANNER
It was an afterparty, the house is
full of people with phones, it'll
get out. We might as well get a
jump on the investigation--

CAPTAIN OSTRANDER (OVER PHONE)
*Danner. Listen to me: you mess this
up, you're done. Just statements.
This is not your case.*

EXT. MAGNOLIA BLUFF ROCKS - MOMENTS LATER

DET. DANNER
(announcing)
Captain named me lead on the case.

Danner and Culp walk down the steep cliff stairs, past police
tape to a bunch of uniformed officers and CSI working the
scene, where Xavier's dead body lies, bloody on the rocks.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
Yeah he wants me to have someone in
cuffs before dawn. Guess he wants
someone on the morning news or
something. So let's get cracking.

Danner and Culp approach the body, put on gloves.

DET. CULP
Wow, it's really him.
(then)
Okay, victim landed on his back--

DET. DANNER
...but there's a contusion on his
nose, wet from--
(wipes finger, tastes)
Scotch. Single malt... Islay.

Culp is grossed out by that.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
...both indicating a struggle. And--

DET. CULP
Ice. Like, a lot of ice. Way too
much to fit in the scotch glass.

There are hundreds of ice chunks near the body. And a BLOND
WIG on a nearby rock.

DET. DANNER
And a blonde wig. Was he-- or the
murderer-- in disguise?

Culp tips the body to reveal a HIPSTER HAT underneath him.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
How does a person committing
suicide land *on top* of his own hat?
If it falls off your head, it'd
float down slower. The hat came off
first. If this was a suicide or an
accident, I'll eat my hat. Wait, I
don't have a hat. I'll eat his hat.
No, it's covered in blood and gross
chunks of stuff. Dammit. I need
someone's hat. Because this was
definitely... a murrrrder.

INT. TV NEWS REPORT - NIGHT

Local Seattle-area Breaking News.

TOO-CHIPPER ANCHOR
Breaking News! Multiple reports confirm that Pop star, actor, and celebrity humanitarian Xavier was found DEAD tonight on the cliff below his second home during an afterparty for his high school reunion. Over to Linda Hasegawa with more on this shocking news.

On the scene, **LINDA HASEGAWA** reports.

LINDA HASEGAWA
I'm here outside Xavier's Magnolia compound where there is no word yet from police on who or what caused this unthinkable tragedy.

A CLIP PACKAGE rolls with images of Xavier, his album covers and movie posters.

LINDA HASEGAWA (V.O.)
Film, TV, and music superstar "Xavier" was born Seattle resident Eugene Xavier Steinhauser, son of coffee mogul Alan Steinhauser. At age 21, Xavier went platinum with the song "X Marks the G-Spot" off his album "Somebody Xave Me"... From there he turned to acting, in such films as the action movie adaptation of the game "Jenga"...

CLIP of Xavier dressed as an engineer, approaching a **CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN** played by Nick Offerman.

XAVIER
I designed this building and I'm telling you if you remove that I-Beam, the whole thing'll collapse!

CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN
My team says it's structurally fine. Sorry, kid.

XAVIER
Those kids in the pediatric hospital on the 32nd floor... I have to save them.

LINDA HASEGAWA (V.O.)
...voicing the titular dog in the family film "Legal Beagle," starring as Captain Chip Marbles in jungle adventure "Hungry Hungry Hippos" and securing a Golden Globe nomination for his portrayal of Darryl Hall alongside Channing Tatum's Oates in the musical biopic "Private Eyes"...

CLIP: Hall and Oates are arguing.

"OATES"/CHANNING TATUM
We have to, Darryl. The label gave us no choice.

Xavier (Hall) throws a vinyl record at a wall, SMASHING it.

"HALL"/XAVIER
(teary)
I can't go for that! No can do!

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

This is now on a TV screen inside Xavier's house.

LINDA HASEGAWA (ON TV)
No indication if it was an accident, suicide, or foul play, but police have held the party attendees for questioning...

Pull back to find Aniq - now SOAKING WET and covered in SHARPIE GRAFFITI all over his body (mustache, teardrops, eyepatch, etc) - stares at the TV, lost in thought.

A dozen or so people are inside, shell-shocked, despondent, including the other classmates we saw in their cars. OFFICER MATSUNO, a uniformed cop, stands by the door. JENNIFER 1, preppy, pregnant, sobs in the corner.

JENNIFER 1
I can't believe he's gone...

In the front door enter Danner and Culp.

DET. DANNER
Hello everyone, I'm-- WHOA!

She slips on a puddle of water in the foyer entry.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
Just a puddle of water in the
entryway floor. Okay. Anyway, I'm
Detective Danner, and this is...

She gets distracted by everything in the room: The walls are covered with posters, records, and other memorabilia. On the concrete floor are a single SNOW SKI, a purple BOA, a "Xavier World Tour 2015" TRACK SUIT jacket and pants, a broken acoustic GUITAR, an ARROW lodged into a poster of Xavier, several red plastic cups and spilled beer.

DET. CULP
Culp. I'm Detective Culp. Everyone--

DET. DANNER
Are these pigs in blankets? I'm
starving.

She dips a pig-in-blanket in mustard on a nearby tray.

DET. CULP
That could be evidence.

DET. DANNER
It's not evidence, it's a snack.

A pot-bellied PIG runs by. She puts it back on the tray and turns to the group.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
Alright everyone, let's get to it.

DET. CULP
Shouldn't we go check out the scene
of the crime first?

DET. DANNER
Yeah, I suppose.
(sighs, then to group)
We'll be right back.

They walk upstairs. When she's out of earshot:

BRETT
This sucks. How long do we have to
stay in here? This is America.
Freedom or whatever.

ZOE
Brett. A person died tonight.

YASPER

Yeah and it was a rich and famous person, so it's extra sad.

Brett walks out onto the lower balcony, annoyed. INDIGO, a nihilist dressed in all black, pipes up.

INDIGO

All life is precious. And also meaningless.

CHELSEA

You're all such frauds. None of us here really knew Xavier. Or even liked him.

NED

I've seen all of his movies.

YASPER

We had a bond...

JENNIFER 1

We all know what happened.

She stares daggers at Aniq, who snaps out of his funk.

ANIQ

No we don't! What are you implying?

EXT. XAVIER'S MANSION, LOWER BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Brett watches the far rocks below, as police bag the body and transport it away. Chelsea approaches. He's instantly jumpy.

BRETT

How many times tonight have I said I don't want to talk to you?

CHELSEA

Three.

BRETT

Then why are you talking to me?

CHELSEA

Because I know what you're hiding in that room, and--

Brett stiffens. He turns to her, serious:

BRETT

And I know what you said in the school hallway, so--

CHELSEA

So nobody needs to say anything.

BRETT

About anything.

EXT./INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, MASTER BALCONY/BEDROOM - SAME

Danner's on the upper balcony, looking down at Chelsea and Brett. She can't quite hear anything with the wind and water.

DET. CULP

There are some scrapes here on the railing, could be--

DET. DANNER

Shh, can't hear.

Danner doesn't take her eyes off the two below. She watches Brett SLAM his hands on the railing and walk away.

Danner walks into the bedroom. Culp follows her.

DET. CULP

There's one drop of blood on the balcony floor, probably from Xavier being punched in the nose, but--

Danner walks past the cops photographing/dusting the bedroom, picks something out of her teeth in the closet mirror door, walks out the bedroom door cordoned off with tape.

DET. CULP (CONT'D)

Don't you care about--?

DET. DANNER

We're not going to learn anything up here.

She walks downstairs to:

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danner addresses the group.

DET. DANNER

And we're back! Is everyone that's still here accounted for, and in this room? Anyone who isn't here, raise your hand. That is, raise your hand if you know who isn't here on behalf of the hand of the person who isn't here... No one?

Everyone stares at her. Aniq is like "this is who they sent"?

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)

Okay. There are too many of you to take to the station so I'll interview everyone here. No one may leave until questioning is over. Could take a few hours.

Jennifer 1 steps forward.

JENNIFER 1

Hours?! I volunteer to go first. We all know Aniq killed him.

ANIQ

Oh my GOD. No. I did not!

DET. DANNER

(to Jennifer 1)

Did you witness the murder firsthand?

JENNIFER 1

No, but I found the body first--

DET. DANNER

Then you don't know what really happened, do you? You only know your own subjective experience. And everyone is the star of their own movie.

She stares at them, one by one. Jennifer 1, Brett, Zoe, Aniq. Each person looks nervous, shifty, furtive.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)

That's why I have a process: if you understand enough personal narratives, overlay enough mind-movies, you can see what they have in common and what they don't... and that's when you get a sense of that elusive element: the truth.

JENNIFER 1

Well Indigo saw Aniq at the scene
of the crime. Tell her, Indigo.

Dour Indigo steps forward.

DET. DANNER

What did you see?

INDIGO

I was on the lower balcony...

INT./EXT. XAVIER'S MANSION - EARLIER (FLASHBACK)

Indigo's FLASHBACK is told as a **BLACK & WHITE ART HOUSE FILM**,
like the Lighthouse. Nihilistic, cold, cerebral.

Jennifer 1 is on the LOWER BALCONY with JENNIFER 2, also
preppy and pregnant. Inside, in the LIVING ROOM, Ned
carefully places a row of beers in red plastic cups balancing
on a SNOW SKI laid on Aniq's passed-out, Sharpied body.
Indigo is between them.

JENNIFER 1

Come out and enjoy the view with me
and stop pranking Aniq.

NED

This is more than a prank. It is a
metaphor for society's illusion of
stability that will inevitably
crash down all around us.

NED (V.O.)

Whoa, wait, what?

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, LIVING ROOM - (PRESENT)

BACK TO SCENE. Ned pipes up.

NED

Dude, I don't know what that means.
I was just doing a prank.

DET. DANNER

This is how she remembers it.
(to Indigo)
Continue.

We CUT back to Indigo's **FLASHBACK:**

INT./EXT. XAVIER'S MANSION - EARLIER (BLACK&WHITE FLASHBACK)

Suddenly Xavier, alone on the balcony above and to the right of them, URINATES off the railing. It falls on Jenn 1's hair.

JENNIFER 1

AAAAAH!

Ned LAUGHS, cackling uncontrollably. Indigo remains calm.

INDIGO

Urine is a natural astringent for the scalp. I use a body waste-based tincture on my head daily.

Jennifer 1 ignores her and rushes inside. Ned helps her step around Aniq's body. They try to go in the foyer bathroom, but the door is locked.

VOICE (O.S.)

Occupied!

Suddenly: NOISE and LIGHTS behind her. Indigo faces away from the action, still. Chelsea and Zoe walk over from the stairs to see what the commotion is.

INDIGO (V.O.)

And then: television. Light. Sound. Chaos.

DET. DANNER (V.O.)

What was on the TV?

INDIGO (V.O.)

I try to avoid looking at screens.

Whatever plays, wakes up Aniq. He gets "skied" and all the beers spill on him. Ned is loving the result of his prank.

NED

Ha ha! Where is Brett? He would LOVE this!

Aniq shouts out cryptic outbursts.

ANIQ

He did it again. The door is closed! Is he still up there? What is existence?

Yasper rushes in from the balcony.

YASPER

Calm down, my friend. This is not
Xavier's fault.

ANIQ

You're always defending him. He's
still up there, isn't he?

YASPER

Just stay here and calm down.

ANIQ

No. This ends now.

Aniq passes Chelsea and Zoe as he rushes upstairs to find
Xavier. Everyone stands perfectly still.

INDIGO (V.O.)

*A moment later, we heard a sound
from above not unlike the squeal of
a dolphin giving birth.*

SQUEEEEEEEAL!

Jennifer 1 rushes outside...

JENNIFER 1

What made that horrible noise?

Jennifer 1 SCREAMS! Ned SCREAMS louder than Jennifer 1.

Indigo goes to see what they are screaming about. She sees
Xavier's BODY on the rocks below.

Indigo calmly turns around, goes upstairs to see...

ANIQ in Xavier's bedroom, ALONE looking confused and scared.

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT)

BACK TO SCENE. Danner gives a "thank you" nod to Indigo, and
addresses the group.

DET. DANNER

Okay, so that was *one* person's
subjective experience. Now I'm
gonna want to hear about tonight
from each one of you. Because the
truth is, the murderer could be any
one of you.

Chelsea. Yasper. Walt. Back to Aniq. Eyes dart, people sweat.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
You were at a high school reunion
tonight. I'm sure you came here
with things you wanted to do,
second chances you wanted to
create. Only you know what those
are, your secrets, your desires.

Aniq looks over to Zoe. Chelsea looks at the floor.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
But on a heightened night like
tonight, if something threatens
your worldview, someone pushes you
to the breaking point, your fight-
or-flight kicks in and you're not
thinking rationally anymore. Any
one of us, any one of us, can SNAP.

Everyone flinches at her loud "SNAP."

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
...But sometimes cases are pretty
straightforward and it's who
everyone thinks it is.

She walks to Aniq, sizes him up. His Sharpie'd face--

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
Alright Scribbleface, let's go
somewhere private. We need to talk.

GULP.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
Culp, while I'm questioning Aniq,
search the rest of the house, see
if you find anything interesting.

CULP
I mean, there's a whole room full
of rare Xavier memorabilia --

DET. DANNER
Anything of interest to the case.

Brett turns white. Danner clocks it as they walk off.

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE, RECORDING STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Danner sits Aniq in a room converted to a recording studio. Danner looks at all the recording equipment and fader board, and opts to use her old-fashioned handheld recorder.

DANNER

I know things look bad for you, but you shouldn't worry.

ANIQ

You just told the group that I probably did it!

Danner takes a seat, waves it off.

DANNER

I was talking statistically. But solving a case isn't about facts and figures. It's about following your intuition.

ANIQ

...But it also kind of is about facts and figures.

DANNER

Like I said, I've got a process. And I've been criticized for it. But it works. For instance, I can tell by your clothes you were a scholarship kid, a hard worker with a lot to lose.

ANIQ

My button down says all that?

DANNER

And a scholarship kid must be pretty smart. What's 37 times 42?

ANIQ

...Um, 1,554?

DANNER

(pulling out phone)

Hold on, just checking a text here -
- this is completely unrelated...

(typing something)

Yep, 1,554. We both knew the answer to that. Which means I'm smart too and you can trust me.

(MORE)

DANNER (CONT'D)

I want to hear your side of the story, from the beginning. So let me start with this: Why did you come tonight?

Aniq gets a starry look in his eye.

ANIQ

Simple. I came for love.

*NOTE: Aniq's flashbacks are shot in the style of a **ROM COM**: studio lighting, bright colors, lots of dolly moves and cranes, and a romantic pop soundtrack.*

I/E. ANIQ'S CAR - DUSK - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq, now wearing a nice button-down shirt, drives, checking his hair in the rearview.

ANIQ (V.O.)

Or, I should say, I came for Zoe. We were chemistry partners back in high school. But it was more than that. Or at least could've been. But things happened, we graduated, she got married and we didn't see each other for twenty years. I thought that door was closed.

Aniq pulls into a spot in the High School parking lot.

ANIQ (V.O.)

Then I heard she got divorced, and last week I got an email--

Aniq has Zoe's email on his phone screen. As he reads--

ZOE (V.O.)

Hey! Hope to see you at the reunion Saturday! Can't wait to catch up. Smiley face emoji. Zoë

ANIQ

Smiley face emoji. What does that mean?

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - SUNSET - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq gets out of the car. It's a bit run down, surrounded by Benzes and BMWs. He SIGHS. YASPER jogs up.

YASPER

Aniq! My man! What up, dog?! It's been like two years!

ANIQ

Good to see you, Yas!

YASPER

Nice shirt. But you need to up your game, brother. Here. Wear my tie. It's basically a big arrow pointing to your dong.

ANIQ

I'm fine--

YASPER

You're right, when you talk to Zoe just put your thumb in your pocket and point your index finger to your junk. More subtle. You get my texts about her being single?

ANIQ

I did. Thank you for those. Also the coupon for an A/V installation?

YASPER

Always hustlin'-- And boom!
(showing Aniq his phone)
Zoe changed her status from "Married" to "It's Complicated."
It's like she's begging you to make a move tonight.

ANIQ

Or she wants the world to know that her life is, in fact, complicated. Which would make sense. She just got out of a relationship. I'm gonna keep it casual.

YASPER

You can't think like that! This is your second chance to make a first impression. Or... your first chance to make a second impression-- Which one is it?

ANIQ

I don't know.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - WALKWAY TO GYM - LATER - (FLASHBACK)

ALUMNI mingle in an elaborate space-themed walkway: solar systems, rows of white balloon arches that look vaguely like the *2001: A Space Odyssey* corridor, a high school portrait of everyone in the class on their own easel.

ON ANIQ AND YASPER, walking and laughing.

YASPER

Look at everyone. Reunions are back! It's like an analog version of social media, but in person.

Aniq and Jasper are stopped by a soft-spoken, bland PERSON.

PERSON

Hey Aniq!

ANIQ

Hey man!

PERSON

Do you remember me?

ANIQ

Yeah of course! Long time...

PERSON

What's my name?

ANIQ

Whoa, coming in hot. Good to see you again.

PERSON

So what is it?
(off Aniq's stammer)
It's Walt.

ANIQ

Yes. Walt. Good to see you...again?

YASPER

Did you actually go here or is this a Reunion Crasher-type situation?

WALT

(frustrated)
Yes, I went here. We all were in the same chemistry class with Mr. Shapiro. I can't believe this.

(MORE)

WALT (CONT'D)

Nobody paid attention to me in high school, but tonight's gonna be different.

(growing dark)

I won't let 'em forget. Not this time.

YASPER

Well good luck with that, but no one is gonna pay attention to you tonight. Not when Xavier is coming.

WALT

(instantly excited)

I know I can't believe he's coming!

YASPER

You know, I gave X-Man his start. We were in a ska band together senior year. Ska-pe Diem? We shredded the MLK Day BBQ?

WALT

I don't remember that.

YASPER

Well I don't remember you. Anyway, I still got the musical bug. Been working on a track of my own, just a hobby, but it totally slaps. Gonna ask Xavy to bless my track tonight.

ANIQ

"Bless" your track? Is he a priest?

YASPER

A Priest of Pop. I just need him to help me get a foot in the door to the industry... and I'm gonna get it tonight!

(off Aniq's look)

Don't judge me. We're all here for our own reasons. I want Xavier to bless my track, you're here for another shot with Zoe, and even Will here just wants people to remember him.

WALT

It's Walt.

YASPER

Right. Sorry.

They walk off, leaving Walt behind.

YASPER (CONT'D)

All I'm saying is, everybody here
is fronting, even you.

ANIQ

Not everyone-- Whoa, look at
Chelsea. What happened to her?

He gestures to Chelsea who looks bedraggled. She trips on her
heels, nervously looks over her shoulder. The contents of her
purse fall on the walkway, and she picks them up quickly.

YASPER

From class prez to hot mezz. I
heard she had a breakdown, went
loco.

ANIQ

How the mighty have fallen. See?
Not everyone is here for an agenda.

YASPER

Please. You're telling me you don't
want to get with this girl?

He points to an easel with Zoe's 9th-grade PHOTO.

ANIQ

It would be illegal if I did,
because that girl is underage. And
it doesn't matter what I want. In
high school every time we got
close, some rich, good-looking guy
would swoop in and get between us.
I couldn't compete.

YASPER

That was high school! Now you're
the rich, good-looking guy.

ANIQ

I wish. My investors are making
money, I'm just getting by. But I
do work out.

YASPER

(looking off)

Zoe.

ANIQ
Not for Zoe, for my health. Mostly
bodyweight stuff. Or I'll jog--

YASPER
Zoe!

ANIQ
I tried crossfit once. Not for me.

YASPER
ZOE.

Yasper tries to TURN Aniq--

ANIQ
What are you--!? OW!

He grabs onto a BALLOON ARCH for support, but it tears free.
He falls. The balloons FLOAT up and POP like firecrackers
going off-- POP POP POP POP POP POP!

Aniq falls, INTERTWINING in balloons with--

ANIQ (CONT'D)
Zoe...

MUSIC: Something wonderful and ROMANTIC. Zoe tangles up with
Aniq in SLO-MO, looking INCREDIBLE. The sequin star confetti
from the balloons falls around her. The perfect MEET CUTE.

ON ANIQ, hitting on the ground, watching her in wonder.

BACK TO Zoe who starts to SMILE and she's brought closer.

SLO MO OUT.

ZOE
Aniq? Are you alright?

ANIQ
Hi. Yes. Me? Oh. I'm fine. Just a--
It was nothing. You okay? let me--

They get up, brush themselves off--

ZOE
I'm fine. Ohhhh, the Jennifers are
gonna be pissed at you.

ANIQ
Sorry, don't know my own strength.
Probably from working out so much.

He mimes exercising. She smiles, it's instantly comfortable.

ZOE

Wow. Now, how strong do you have to be to pop a balloon?

ANIQ

Still a smartass, I see.

ZOE

Used to be a smartmouth, but it migrated south after I had a kid.

ANIQ

Good to see you again, Zoe.

ZOE

You too, Aniq. See you inside?

ANIQ

You will.

She walks off, smiling. Aniq smiles too.

YASPER

Dude. It's a miracle that glitter didn't catch on fire cause that was some SPARKS! Tell me you didn't feel that.

Aniq SHRUGS--

ANIQ

Maybe.

YASPER

MAYBE!?

Aniq GRINS, he can't play it cool--

ANIQ

Maybe I still love her very much. I definitely felt it! This might actually happen!

A CRAZY WIND as a HELICOPTER lands in the nearby football field. People whip out their phones to take videos.

YASPER

Dude knows how to make an entrance.

ANIQ

See? This is what I was talking about. I talk to Zoe for the first time in twenty years and a rich, good-looking guy literally swoops in out of the sky.

Zoe is part of the throng excitedly watching the helicopter.

YASPER

Forget him. You got this.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

MUSIC: Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time"

JENNIFER 1 and JENNIFER 2 stand behind the REGISTRATION DESK, manning the name tags. Aniq and Yasper approach.

JENNIFER 1

Welcome! Find your name tag and hand it to me. I'm writing down everyone's job for networking purposes. My husband Ned's idea.

We see her name tag reads "Jennifer 1: Ned's wife".

JENNIFER 2

I so wish Josh could be here, but he's in Tokyo closing a deal for PoochKicks.net. They make NBA-grade sneakers for dogs. Kanye invested.

JENNIFER 1

So, what do you two do?

YASPER

I own a highly successful Audio Visual installation company.

Jennifer 1 writes "Small Business Owner" on Yasper's name tag, then looks expectantly at Aniq.

ANIQ

Oh, I design escape rooms. Our current one is Christmas themed, so it's called Santa Claustrophobia, but -- okay.

She writes "Santa Claus" on his name tag and hands it back. Aniq rolls his eyes. He steals a pencil and writes "*trophobia, Escape Room Designer*" on his nametag.

DET. DANNER (V.O.)
*Wait, you made that holiday-themed
escape room in Belltown?*

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

ANIQ
You know it? I designed it!--

DET. DANNER
Whoa, that was tricky. I got so
stuck in there.

ANIQ
So you couldn't... track the clues
and solve it?

DET. DANNER
Not how my brain works. I'm more of
a social dynamics type person. But
it must take a diabolical mind to
make puzzles like that.

Aniq looks astounded. And sick to his stomach.

DET. DANNER (CONT'D)
Continue!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

The gym is lavishly decorated-- Dinner tables with huge
floral centerpieces and tapered candles, like a Nancy Meyers
movie. ALUMNI mingle with drinks. Aniq enters, searching--

NED
We can't get flood insurance on our
new casita in Hawaii because it's
at sea level. But what's the other
option -- buy a house in Hawaii and
not have a seaside lanai?!

MACKENZIE
Gun to my head? I would have done
exactly what Lori Loughlin did.

ANIQ (V.O.)
*I wanted to find Zoe. Tell her what
I never got a chance to say in high
school. See if a door I thought was
closed could open again.*

Then he sees her. On stage singing KARAOKE. She's the one we've been hearing sing Cher--

ZOE

*If I could turn back time/ If I
could find a way/ I'd take back
those words that hurt you/ And
you'd stay!*

She smiles directly at Aniq. Gives him "the eyes."

ANIQ

That seems like a message right?
Turning back time? Finding a way?
She's trying to tell me something.

INDIGO

Are you talking to me?

Aniq rushes over to the karaoke area, grabs a song book, writes down a song number, hands it to the KARAOKE DJ.

ANIQ

Hi. I know there's probably other
people ahead of me waiting to sing.
But it is imperative that I sing
this song next.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - KARAOKE STAGE - LATER - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq stands on stage and locks eyes with Zoe in the crowd.

ANIQ

This is dedicated to my chemistry
lab partner. Here's to rekindling
old covalent bonds.

Zoe SMILES.

ON THE KARAOKE MONITOR: "My Neck, My Back" by Khia.

Aniq turns to the DJ.

ANIQ (CONT'D)

Oh, no, this is the wrong song.
Sir? I think I wrote down the wrong-

The DJ has headphones on and isn't listening. The BACKING MUSIC begins to play, which unfortunately also has lyrics.

ANIQ (CONT'D)
(singing frantically)
*All you ladies pop yo' diploma like
this/ Shake your feminism, don't
stop, don't miss!/ Just do it, do
it, do it, do it, do it now/
Respect it good/ Attend this
reunion just like you should, right
now! -- I'M SORRY THIS IS THE WRONG
-- My neck, my back...Marion Barry
did some crack -- Remember him?! My
neck, my back/ I'm having a panic
attack. CAN WE PLEASE TURN THIS
OFF?*

Mercifully, the song STOPS. Aniq looks over to the speakers,
and Zoe is holding the cord, SMILING. Aniq is relieved.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Aniq and Zoe stand off to the side, LAUGHING. Aniq has his
thumb in his pocket, index finger pointing towards his junk.

ANIQ
--so embarrassing! It was supposed
to be "Angel" by Shaggy.

ZOE
I love that song! But I am so glad
it wasn't, cause that was adorable.

ANIQ
Thanks for saving me. How can I
ever repay you?

ZOE
Oh, I don't know. Maybe get my name
tattooed somewhere? Say on your
neck. Or your back?

ANIQ
Oh my GOD. You're not gonna let me
live this down, are you?

ZOE
Never.

ANIQ
Well unfortunately my body's
already covered in tattoos.

ZOE
(playing along)
Really? What tattoos do you have?

ANIQ
Well there's a "Hang In There"
kitty hanging from my nipples.

ZOE
Obviously.

XAVIER swoops in beside Zoe, holding two drinks.

XAVIER
You two sure look like you're
having fun.

ANIQ
Oh. Hi "Xavier."

XAVIER
(eyeing Aniq)
Zoe, I noticed no one got you a
drink yet, so I got you a Kir
Royale. To match your dress.

ZOE
That's very nice. Look at you.
Xavier. You're so famous!

XAVIER
Yeah, I don't know if you noticed
but I'm kinda getting swarmed.
Everybody wants a piece of X-tasy.
(to Aniq)
Get it?

ANIQ
I did. I got it.

XAVIER
So I'm kinda trying to curate the
people at my table for dinner. Make
sure they're all cool. Keep away
the riff-raff. Saved you a seat.

ZOE
Oh! Is there room for Aniq?

XAVIER
Sorry, there's just one seat left.

ANIQ

Go. You take it. I already have a seat... at another table. I'll catch up with you later?

Zoe nods. Aniq heads off. Xavier waves, mocking--

XAVIER

Bye Aniq! So good to see you!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - ANIQ'S TABLE - LATER - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq slumps into a seat next to Jasper as he watches Zoe LAUGHING with Xavier.

ANIQ

It's my fault. I let it happen.

YASPER

There's not one thing Xavier's got that you don't got.

ANIQ

Um. A Grammy. A People's Choice Award. An MTV Movie Award for Best Comedy Sex Scene.

YASPER

He is pretty cool. Well, Zoe's last husband was Brett. You're definitely better than that guy.

ANIQ

That's true. Brett makes a baboon butt look refined.

Just then, BRETT plops down in the empty seat next to Aniq and seethes. Aniq and Jasper freeze -- did Brett hear that?

ANIQ (CONT'D)

Hey Brett. Uh, how's it going? Long time no see.

BRETT

I hate Xavier so much.

ANIQ

Really? We were just saying something very similar.

BRETT

If he hooks up with Zoe tonight--
I'm gonna lose it.

Aniq gives Yasper a look then leans in to Brett--

ANIQ

Maybe you should talk it out with
Xavier? Outside? For a while? Tell
him your perspective on the matter--

Brett suddenly ERUPTS. Stabs the table with a BUTTER KNIFE.

BRETT

Anyone touches her tonight, I'll
kill 'em!

He STORMS OFF, angrily knocking over a chair.

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

DET. DANNER

Hold on. He said that?

ANIQ

That was the spirit of it.

DET. DANNER

So Brett literally threatened to
kill Xavier?

ANIQ

No. He said he'd kill *anyone* who
touched Zoe. So-- not just Xavier.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - ANIQ'S TABLE - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq and Yasper as they were.

ANIQ

I just know if I could spend some
real time with Zoe I'd have a shot.

YASPER

Then you know what time it is?

ANIQ

Eight-thirty?

YASPER

Yasper Time. I GOT you, Romeo! I'll distract Xavier while you run off with Zoe. It's perfect- I've got music biz to discuss with him anyway.

ANIQ

But what about Brett?

YASPER

Don't worry about that. No one is getting killed tonight.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - XAVIER'S TABLE - SAME

Yasper approaches Xavier.

YASPER

Uh oh! The X-Man Cometh! Rated Triple X-X-X! How are ya, my man?!

XAVIER

Yasper. How's it going?

Yasper goes in for a choreographed handshake. Xavier tries to do it back, but clearly doesn't remember it.

YASPER

Hey, you liking that new A/V system I put in your local digs? I was flattered you called on an old friend to do the job.

XAVIER

My assistant picked the company we hired. But actually, I do have a question about the blinds...

YASPER

Those are complicated. I'll walk you through it over a drink. What are you glugging?

Yasper pulls Xavier away to the bar. Aniq sees his chance. As a waiter goes by, he grabs a BASKET OF BREAD off their tray and approaches Zoe.

ANIQ

Madam, might I offer you some more bread this evening?

Zoe looks up, sees it's Aniq, then SMILES and PLAYS ALONG--

ZOE

You know what? I'm on an all-bread diet right now so I'll take the whole basket.

ANIQ

All bread? Like a reverse-Keto?

ZOE

It's very bloating, yeah. But that's what I'm going for. I love a nice bloat.

Aniq laughs and sits in Xavier's empty seat--

ANIQ

It's so weird being back here, isn't it?

ZOE

Not for me. I'm here every day.

She points to her name tag: "Hillside High Vice Principal".

ANIQ

Oh! I had no idea. Sorry. I didn't look at your name tag because I didn't want to appear to be looking at your chest.

ZOE

Aren't you gallant.

THEN-- The LIGHTS DIM and a SLIDE SHOW entitled "CLASS OF 2001: NOW AND THEN" starts to play. The first picture is of Zoe and Brett at their WEDDING. Zoe is visibly bummed.

ANIQ

Hey, do they still serve those insanely good chocolate crinkle cookies in the cafeteria?

ZOE

Every Tuesday. Best part of my job.

ANIQ

As Vice Principal you think you could get us in there?

Zoe thinks for a beat. She looks at the slide show.

ZOE

I'll get my keys.

She dashes off. As Aniq snags a bottle of wine and two cups from the bar, he overhears Jasper and Xavier.

YASPER
...Whaddya say?

XAVIER
Yeah, sure, whatever.

Yasper gives Aniq a THUMBS UP.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

START ON: A very INTRICATE AND DETAILED MURAL.

ANIQ (O.S.)
This mural is incredible. And definitely was not here when we were in school.

REVEAL Aniq and Zoe looking at the mural, taking it all in.

ZOE
Would you believe me if I told you I painted it?

ANIQ
What!? Wow.

ZOE
It was a few years ago. I was the art teacher then. Got promoted to VP. Don't get to do too much painting anymore...

ANIQ
I love it. It's very Shepard Fairey meets... some other artist's name.

ZOE
So what's our plan? Crinkle cookies then go we run some laps on the track?

ANIQ
Crinkle cookies definitely. Then... see where the night takes us.

A drunk CHELSEA exits the bathroom, slurring.

CHELSEA
Zoe! I need to talkayou. Right now!

ZOE

Wow. Are you drunk?

ANIQ

Hey Chelsea. You okay?

CHELSEA

I have things and they need to be said. And another thing.

Chelsea gestures at Zoe and SPILLS her vodka cran on Aniq.

ANIQ

Oops. It's okay. It'll come out.

Aniq goes to the water fountain to clean his shirt, but Zoe grabs his hand.

ZOE

Leave it! Let's go!

"*Suddenly I See*" by KT Tunstall kicks in. They run away.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - VARIOUS - ROMANTIC MONTAGE - (FLASHBACK)

- CAFETERIA KITCHEN

Aniq and Zoe sit on the counter eating cookies.

ZOE

Man, these never disappoint!

ANIQ

Oh you got some on your nose --

He boops her nose, leaving a print of powdered sugar. She looks adorable.

ZOE

You just left a bunch of powdered sugar on my nose, didn't you?

ANIQ

I dunno what you're talking about.

He GRINS. Then--

ANIQ (CONT'D)

You know there is one room in this school I've always wanted to see...

- TEACHER'S LOUNGE

Zoe unlocks the door and lets them in.

ZOE

The mysterious teacher's lounge. Is it everything you hoped it'd be?

ANIQ

Oh yeah. It's exotic. Peculiar.

ZOE

This-- is what we call a "coffee maker." We use it to make coffee.

ANIQ

So interesting!

ZOE

And this-- is a fax machine, for some reason... And this-- is where we keep the printer paper--

She opens a supply closet to reveal A COUPLE MAKING OUT.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Whoops!

Aniq and Zoe run out of the room, laughing.

ANIQ

Was that Mr. Shapiro the Civics teacher with Quiet Heather?!

- ART CLASSROOM

Zoe and Aniq sit across from each other sketching each other.

ZOE

I haven't been in here since I was promoted. I miss the smell.

ANIQ

I just can't imagine you not doing art. It makes you so happy. Though on the other hand, I make escape rooms because it makes me happy and I've got a crushing amount of student loan debt.

ZOE

Santa Claustrophobia! That's what your escape room's called, right?

ANIQ
You know it?

ANIQ (CONT'D)
My nerdy students can't get enough
of it!
(realizing)
Sorry!

ANIQ (CONT'D)
No, it's fine. It's not just for
nerds. You should come by sometime.

ZOE
Maybe I will.
(she grins, then)
Alright! Show your cards.

Zoe shows her picture. It's a very good drawing of Aniq.

ANIQ
See? You can't let that talent go
to waste.

ZOE
You're sweet. You always saw the
real me.

He smiles, then flips his picture around. It's terrible. It
makes Zoe look crazed with one big eye and huge teeth.

ZOE (CONT'D)
...Or I thought you did. Come on!

- FOOTBALL FIELD/BLEACHERS

Zoe runs to the track and does a CARTWHEEL.

ANIQ
Very impressive!

ZOE
Didn't know I could still do that!

They sit on the bleachers. Aniq pulls out the wine and cups.

ANIQ
Shoot. Forgot a corkscrew. Gimme
your shoe.

ZOE
My shoe?

ANIQ
If you want the wine I must have
the shoe!

Zoe laughs and gives Aniq her shoe. Aniq puts the base of the wine bottle in the heel of her shoe then taps it against a wall. Three taps and the cork is halfway out.

ZOE
Whoa! That's amazing!

ANIQ
Little trick I learned from a
puzzle master-- who was an
alcoholic.

He pulls the cork out and pours the wine--

ANIQ (CONT'D)
To twenty years.

ZOE
Twenty years.

They TOAST. Then--

ZOE (CONT'D)
So! Reunion questions! Are you
happy? Is your life everything you
hoped it would be? How do you *feel*?

ANIQ
Wow. Um. Well there are definitely
things I wish were different...

Zoe NODS, thinking. The mood a little more serious.

ANIQ (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about your marriage.

ZOE
Me too.

ANIQ
That really sucks. But I always
thought Brett was a pompous jerk.

ZOE
No. He's not. I mean, he is. But--
He's a really great dad to Maggie.
That's our daughter.

(MORE)

ZOE (CONT'D)

And if there's one thing I've learned through this shitty situation it's that people are more complicated than we think. It's not fair to limit everyone to the one-note impression you got of them in high school.

ANIQ

Did you talk to the people in there? Because everyone I talked to besides you is an selfish snob. Even our mascot is a snob.

They look at the Hillside Mountain Goat on the score board.

ANIQ (CONT'D)

What makes him think he deserves the whole mountain? And why won't he look us in the eye?

ZOE

(playful)

Hey you don't know what that goat's been through. Maybe you should give people, and mascots, a chance, and you'll see you have more in common with them than you think.

ANIQ

You know... I had a bit of a crush on you back in the day.

ZOE

You did? You never made a move...

Aniq gets the hint. Or at least he's pretty sure it's a hint. It starts to rain, like in every great kiss moment in a rom com. He LEANS IN to kiss Zoe when --

MAGGIE (O.S.)

HI MOMMY!

MAGGIE, Zoe's 6-year-old daughter runs up to them, trailed by VERONICA, her 17-year-old babysitter, who is in a L'il Nas X t-shirt and an expertly done cat eye. The rain stops.

ZOE

Maggie?! What are you doing here?

VERONICA

I have a family emergency. I called Brett like a thousand times, but he didn't answer.

Aniq raises his eyebrows. Zoe sighs.

ZOE

Thanks. I'll take it from here.

Veronica walks off, making a call.

VERONICA

I've got Bacardi... It's Limon... Well, that's all they had, Sarah.

Zoe turns to Aniq.

ZOE

Would you mind keeping an eye on Maggie? I need to talk with her father, using some adult language.

ANIQ

Happily.

Zoe heads off. Aniq and Maggie stare at each other. He notices that she has a STUFFED KOALA.

ANIQ (CONT'D)

Who is this?

MAGGIE

This is Mr. Koala.

She hands it to him. He sings in an Australian accent--

ANIQ

*I'm Mr. Koala and I'm here to say,
I like eucalyptus snacks every day!*

MAGGIE

(laughs)

You're silly. Did you put bones in my mommy?

ANIQ

What?

MAGGIE

Daddy said that he had to make sure no one boned Mommy tonight. Did you do the bones?

ANIQ
Wow. Um...? That's a... provocative
question. Let's see...

Aniq paces on the bleachers, looking for a response. When he
turns back, Maggie has RUN OFF.

ANIQ (CONT'D)
Dammit!

He shoves her koala in his pocket and runs after her.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq runs in, scans the crowd. He spots Maggie at the bar,
picking up an abandoned drink.

ANIQ
(panic whisper)
Maggie! No!

Maggie runs up to her parents with the drink just as Aniq
catches up. Maggie takes a sip.

MAGGIE
My juice tastes funny.

Aniq grabs it, downs it. It's clearly whiskey.

ANIQ
Tastes fine to me!

Brett looks Aniq up and down. Aniq smiles innocently. When
Brett looks away, Aniq spits out two CIGARETTE BUTTS.

BRETT
Come on, Maggie. Daddy's gonna take
you home.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq and Zoe walk out of the reunion. Aniq makes an attempt
to put his arm around her, but he chickens out.

ANIQ
Hey, just to get back to what we
were talking about before... Life
goals and all of that-- Do you
wanna maybe go get a nightcap or--

ZOE

Aren't you coming to Xavier's
afterparty? I was gonna get an Uber
but if you drove--

ANIQ

Yeah. I did! I'll give you a ride!

They walk up to Aniq's car, but Xavier walks up--

XAVIER

Hey hey! Who wants to ride in a
helicopter!?! Zoe, you in?

ZOE

For real? Yeah! Hell yeah! I'd love
to ride in a helicopter tonight!

ANIQ

(just as enthusiastic)
Me too assuming conditions are
safe!

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER - (FLASHBACK)

Xavier helps Zoe into his helicopter. As Aniq tries to get
in, Xavier steps in his way--

XAVIER

Sorry. Can't take any more weight
on board. I don't make the rules.

ANIQ

Xavier, come on, man. Don't do
this. I've been hanging out with
her all night.

XAVIER

And now she's with me. Unless...
I'm sorry, were you planning on
flying her to a mansion in a
helicopter? And I'll tell you
something-- it's a great way to get
laid. See ya!

Aniq's stunned. As Xavier gets in and shuts the door--

XAVIER (CONT'D)

Aniq decided to drive!

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Aniq walks, defeated, then pulls out a piece of paper. It's the DRAWING Zoe did of him in the Art Classroom.

ANIQ (V.O.)
*I could feel the door closing like
it had before. But then I looked at
that picture and-- it hit me.*

Aniq gets HIT by Yasper's car. He goes FLYING.

YASPER
Holy shit, man, are you okay?!

Yasper scrambles out, and helps Aniq up. Chelsea watches from the passenger's seat.

ANIQ
I'm fine. I swallowed a molar, but
I'm fine. Zoe and I almost kissed!

YASPER
Whoa!

ANIQ
I think-- But now she's on Xavier's
helicopter.

YASPER
Oh.

ANIQ
I gotta get to that afterparty!

Chelsea spots Brett and leans out the window.

CHELSEA
Hey Brett! Aniq kissed Zoe and now
he's going back for more!

ANIQ
What!? No! Why would you say that?!

Brett wheels around and sees Aniq.

BRETT
Aniq!? Where is that guy?!

He runs towards them. Chelsea squeals with laughter.

ANIQ
Go go go!

YASPER

Hop in. Let's go get your girl!

"*Ain't No Mountain High Enough*" by Diana Ross kicks in as Aniq scrambles into the back seat and Jasper peels out. It's a Rom-Com race to the airport/wedding full of obstacles!

I/E. YASPER'S CAR / SEATTLE STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Yasper drives. Aniq leans forward between him and Chelsea--

ANIQ

I need a plan. Some kind of grand romantic gesture to wow Zoe. Something meaningful, like that mix CD I made for Zoe in high school that I never got to give her.

CHELSEA

Mix CD!? Whoa, remember mix CDs?!

She LAUGHS uproariously--

YASPER

Ignore her, man! Whatcha gonna do?

ANIQ

There is one song. The one I was trying to sing at karaoke. Maybe I could sing it to her? At the house? You installed the A/V system--

CHELSEA

Oh, that's a great idea. Go to a rockstar's house to sing a song to the girl he's trying to bang.

Aniq spots a flask in Chelsea's bag.

ANIQ

I need some liquid courage.

He takes a big gulp from her flask. Chelsea yells at him.

CHELSEA

Hey! Give me that! You can't just reach in people's bags!

She rips her bag back from him. They STOP at a stop light. Brett SQUEALS up beside them and shouts out his window--

BRETT

I'll kill all ya! I'll kill all ya!

ANIQ

Oh my god! He's gonna do it. GO!

Yasper accelerates but not too fast--

ANIQ (CONT'D)

Can't you go any faster!? Whose car is this?

YASPER

(eyeing Chelsea)

It's my car. That I drive. All the time. Because of my successful business acumen.

Aniq sees a "Luxury Prestige Rentals" keychain on the keys.

YASPER (CONT'D)

And I didn't get damage insurance!

Suddenly, an OLD LADY steps in front of them at a corner. Both cars SCREECH to a halt while they wait for her to cross. Then it's back on! Chelsea's phone rings in her purse.

CHELSEA

It's Brett!

Aniq snatches her phone and her purse from her.

ANIQ

Don't answer!

Aniq looks back worried at Brett in pursuit. THEN--

ANIQ (CONT'D)

If something bad happens, I'll help you pay for it. Eventually.

YASPER

What?

Aniq lurches into the front seat and grabs the wheel and yanks LEFT. The Bentley squeals around a corner.

CHELSEA

Whreeeeeeee!

YASPER

What are you doing?

ANIQ

Taking a short cut!

Aniq climbs all the way into the front. His legs are in Chelsea's face. He elbows Yasper in the gut.

YASPER

Ow! I can't see! Get off me!

ANIQ

This is working! We're losing him!

Diana Ross belts "Nothing can keep me, keep me from you!"

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq, Yasper and Chelsea enter. Aniq looks a little shaky.

YASPER

Just for the record. I'm mad at you. But also I forgive you.

Aniq walks to the bar and does a SHOT.

YASPER (CONT'D)

Whoa. Take it easy, lightweight.

ANIQ

I'm fine. I just need to find Zoe.

ANIQ (V.O.)

But I suddenly felt very, very drunk. Things got pretty hazy.

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION - VARIOUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We see hazy moments from Aniq's fractured memory.

ANIQ (V.O.)

I talked to Channing Tatum, which was cool. Though he was a little standoffish.

- Aniq talks to a silent CHANNING TATUM, who has a mustache.

ANIQ

I get a pimple and it's like, big whoop, I move on with my day.

(MORE)

ANIQ (CONT'D)

But for you, Mr. Tatum, it's like,
we just ruined the Sistine Chapel
with some finger paint, don't tell
the Pope. Ya know?

ANIQ (V.O.)

I took a flaming jell-o shot...

- Aniq takes a FLAMING JELL-O SHOT.

ANIQ (V.O.)

*And I remember being accosted by a
grizzly bear.*

- Aniq is on the BALCONY when a BEAR gets in his face.

GRIZZLY BEAR

You're a bad person! You steal from
children!

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Danner looks at Aniq.

DET. DANNER

A Jell-O shot, Channing Tatum and a
grizzly bear? You were supposed to
be telling me a love story.

ANIQ

It's all a blur! But there is one
thing I remember. Brett showing up.

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - BALCONY - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq is on the balcony, out of it. Brett gets in his face.

BRETT

I've been looking all over for you!

ANIQ

Don't hurt me! I didn't do
anything!

Brett **SHOVES** Aniq against a **BEAUTIFUL CRYSTAL FIGURINE**, which
SHATTERS! Zoe and Xavier look down from the upper balcony.

ZOE

Brett?!

BRETT
(staring at Xavier)
...Dead! DEAD!

Brett runs up to the upper balcony. From below, Aniq sees Brett get in Xavier's face.

BRETT (CONT'D)
I oughta break your jaw, lover boy!

Brett pokes Xavier in the chest, causing Xavier to back up. Just then, Aniq notices Zoe is back downstairs.

ANIQ (V.O.)
I don't know what happened next with Xavier and Brett, because I saw Zoe on the stairs. And I knew this was it-- I had one last chance to tell Zoe how I really felt.

Aniq sees a GUITAR...

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE, RECORDING STUDIO (PRESENT)

Danner waits intently. After a beat:

DET. DANNER
You're not gonna tell me what happened, are you?

ANIQ
I don't remember. I passed out.

DET. DANNER
Well that's very unsatisfying. What happened after you woke up?

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

A video BLARES on every TV in the house. Aniq, passed out on the couch, BOLTS upright. He looks down at himself: soaking wet, pants around his ankles, wearing a boa.

ANIQ
What happened to me? Did Xavier do this?

He pulls up his pants as Jasper runs in from the balcony.

YASPER
Dude, relax! It's all in good fun!

ANIQ

No. Xavier has been messing with me all night. I'm not gonna let him treat people this way.

Aniq walks by Yasper. He passes Zoe and Chelsea on the stairs, and looks at Zoe.

ANIQ (CONT'D)

I have some things I want to say to you. But first, I have to go see about an asshole.

Zoe gives him a quizzical look.

ANIQ (CONT'D)

Not *my* asshole. Someone else. Not someone else's asshole, a person who is an asshole-- Just please wait here, I'll be right back.

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

ANIQ (V.O.)

I was hoping she'd follow me. I'd go upstairs, tell Xavier, once and for all that even if I had missed my chance with Zoe, he wasn't worthy of her. She'd overhear everything and realize that I was the man of her dreams...

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - XAVIER'S ROOM - NIGHT - (FLASHBACK)

Aniq barges in:

ANIQ (V.O.)

But there was no one there.

The room is empty. He spots a mirror on the back of the open closet door. He shuts the door and looks at himself. His face and entire body is COVERED in MARKER GRAFFITI.

ANIQ

AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

He hears more SCREAMS from downstairs. A second later, Indigo appears in the doorway. She GASPS and RUNS out.

INT. XAVIER'S HOUSE - RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT (PRESENT)

ANIQ

...And then I came down to hear they found Xavier's body. The end.

DET. DANNER

You just admitted a bitter rivalry with Xavier. You admitted to feeling like he was getting in your way with Zoe. Pretty sure you admitted to going upstairs to confront him moments before he was found dead. Wow. I don't think I've been this invested in a socio-economically imbalanced romance since Tony Danza was vacuuming Judith Light's floor, but I can't root for ya bud, 'cause the only thing you didn't admit to was the actual murder.

ANIQ

Wait, what? No! What about Brett!? He hated Xavier more than anybody, and he's a proven shover!

DET. DANNER

I'm not talking about Brett, I'm talking about you.

ANIQ

I told everyone I was going upstairs to see Xavier. Why would I do that and then kill him? That would be super dumb.

DET. DANNER

Love makes you do dumb things. Maybe you snapped. Maybe that's not even when you did it. You say you had four drinks and a Jell-O shot and then passed out? That's hard to buy even for a lightweight.

ANIQ

Are you suggesting that I faked passing out and just let people write all over my face?

DET. DANNER

I'm asking the questions! And I think we're done here.

Aniq exits, sick to his stomach.

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, FOYER - SAME

Aniq rushes out past Jasper, who scrolls his phone.

YASPER
How'd it go with the fuzz?

ANIQ
Terrible. She thinks I did it.
She's a complete mess. She's never
going to find the killer...

Aniq starts to hyperventilate, rushes into the bathroom.
Jasper follows. Down the hall, Danner watches, curious.

INT. XAVIER'S MANSION, FOYER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aniq steps over a ROBE on the floor, talks to himself in the
mirror, pained and sweaty. Jasper closes the door behind them.

YASPER
You okay, man?

ANIQ
(to his own reflection)
You can solve this yourself. You
don't need to rely on her.

He tries to wash the Sharpie off. It's faded but still there.

ANIQ (CONT'D)
I'm a professional puzzle maker,
and this is just another puzzle to
solve.

YASPER
Yes! I like it! You solve the case,
and the room you'll escape... is
prison. Ooh, I'll be your Watson!

ANIQ
There's evidence somewhere, I just
have to find it...

He tosses a wad of wet, inky tissues in the trash. It knocks
out a torn up scrap of paper. He picks it up. It reads:

"THIS IS PAYBACK FOR WHAT YOU DID TO ME"

Aniq lights up! This could be the key to his salvation!

YASPER
Dude! Holy shit!

Aniq's about to rummage through the garbage for more but--
KNOCK, KNOCK.

DET. DANNER (O.S.)
Illustrated Man. You in there?

ANIQ
Just a second!

He abandons the trash, opens the door to see Danner.

Danner peeks at Aniq with an odd expression, and Jasper in the bathroom with him.

DET. DANNER
You ran off in a hurry. Everything okay?

Aniq thinks, decides to hide the scrap of paper.

ANIQ
Mm-hmm.

Danner gives him another once over...

DET. CULP (O.S.)
Danner!

They turn as Detective Culp pulls Brett inside in HANDCUFFS!

CULP
This man was just caught outside,
trying to escape.

Off Aniq's look to Danner...

END OF EPISODE