

Paradiso

written by

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FOURTH DRAFT

Southern Maine, Summer, present day.

INT. NIGHTCLUB

A slow-spinning DISCO BALL hangs from a club ceiling. Colorful beams of light fire at the reflective ornament. Tiny mirrors fight them off.

Techno music pulses. Rapturous conversations and laughter blur together. Ominous. Dread-soaked despite the drowning sound of joy. For just a moment, we see the sprinklers erupt before--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SCREECH. A needle scratches as it impacts a vinyl record that spins atop a well-loved player. Soft rock music plays.

-- **HALLWAY:** Framed photographs line the walls accompanied by a pair of TAXIDERMY FISH. They're not that impressive. A PHOTO OF JEREMY - twenty-something at the time. He's fit, handsome; beaming and cradling a NEWBORN BOY. A WOODEN CROSS.

-- **KITCHEN:** JEREMY (41) focuses over the counter, his face aged equally by the sun and hard labor. He plates two gratuitous portions of an all-American dinner and selects TWO GLASSES from the cupboard. He fills them with water. POP. A beer bottle opening. Jeremy takes a swig.

-- **DINING ROOM:** The room lacks a woman's touch. Jeremy sets the two plates/water glasses across from one another and sits.

A moment of loneliness.

We hear the front door open/close and a backpack THUMP to the floor. SAM (22) rushes past the doorway. Confusion. Footsteps patter in the distance.

Sam enters, flustered, hiding a secret. He locates his infectious smile - his kindness as visible as his youth with an approachable demeanor, soft features and a COLLEGE T-SHIRT.

JEREMY

What was that?

SAM

Oh, nothing, just had to pick a few things up from my old room.

JEREMY

Gotcha.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)
 (gestures to plate)
 Medium to medium-well, as
 requested.

SAM
 Yummmm. Thanks, Dad.

Sam is a figurative reincarnation of younger Jeremy aside from occasional effeminate gestures and reactions – reactions like the way he just said “yum” for far too long. Sam attempts to hide his embarrassment, having revealed this side of himself to his father, the man of all men.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Sorry I'm late. Class ran way over
 tonight.

JEREMY
 That's alright, Sam. Just sat
 down.
 (beat)
 How are your classes going?

Jeremy carves a piece of rare steak as thick as his New England accent.

SAM
 They're going good, I guess.

JEREMY
 I guess? It's your last year.
 Shouldn't you be out partying and
 getting laid?

SAM
 Gross, Dad.

JEREMY
 What? Isn't that what college is
 all about? Books and boobs, right?

SAM
 I mean... yeah... I like to go out
 with my friends.
 (beat)
 I actually have plans tonight, so
 I won't be able to stay too long.
 Sorry. But college isn't just
 about partying.

JEREMY
 Oh, I know, son. I'm just playing
 around.

SAM

It's also about veganism and being
brainwashed by liberal socialists.
Did you know that nearly one
hundred thousand cows are
slaughtered in America every day?

Sam smirks and waves his fork in the air, a piece of steak
mangled in the prongs. Jeremy eyes Sam. *Don't go there.* Sam's
playful demeanor drops.

SAM (CONT'D)

I feel like I need to talk to you
about something.

JEREMY

What's up?

Sam can't find the words.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Son... what is it?

SAM

Nothing. Forget it. I'm just
overthinking things. Like always.

JEREMY

Try me.

Sam plays mental gymnastics.

SAM

Uh... uhm.

JEREMY

What is it, Sam?

SAM

It's nothing. But there is this
one thing. My psychology
professor... she gave us this
assignment.

JEREMY

Well, I hate to break it to you,
but I doubt I'm bright enough in
psychology to help you with your
homework.

SAM

No, Dad.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

(beat)

Our professor told us to pick someone who's no longer with us – someone that we can identify with – and write them a letter. I guess it's supposed to help us identify the emotions of people grieving lost ones.

JEREMY

Who'd you pick?

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Your sixth-grade English teacher?

SAM

Mom.

The air thickens.

SAM (CONT'D)

You still miss her, don't you?

JEREMY

I'll always miss her. She was your mother. You know... she wasn't here for very much of your life, but she'll always be your mother.

SAM

I know. That's kind of why I wanted to write her this letter. Sometimes I feel this... shame. Because I don't know if I miss her or not. I hardly feel like I knew her. It's confusing.

JEREMY

That's okay, son. You were little when she passed. Plus, I miss her enough for the both of us.

They share a warm laugh. Jeremy cheers' his beer in Sam's direction, hiding a glimpse of sadness behind a sip.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I wish she were here to see you graduate. She'd be so proud. So, so proud.

SAM

Me too. Though, I don't feel like I'm ready for graduation. Adulthood feels... terrifying.

Jeremy chuckles. Relatable.

JEREMY

Well, it's not always easy but if I'm confident that anyone is going to succeed in this life, it's you.

Sam isn't satisfied. Jeremy notices.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

You'll get there, Sam. Don't put so much pressure on yourself. Otherwise, you'll end up a bitter old Mainer like your father.

SAM

Dad...

JEREMY

I'm just saying don't give up so easily. You know, you're the first in the family to even graduate from college.

Sam's heard this story too many times before. He picks at his food just enough for his father not to notice that he isn't that interested.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Are you still working?

SAM

Yeah, I'm still helping out part-time at that bar.

Sam smiles again. Jeremy is glad.

SAM (CONT'D)

I've met some cool people there. But it's been so slow. I'm hoping with graduation around the corner, I'll be able to make some extra cash.

JEREMY

(semi-jokingly)

You could always come work for me on some side gigs. I can see it now: J. Ross and Sons.

Sam's expression spotlights how unrealistic that is.

JEREMY

Alright, alright. Do you need money?

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I can pick up an extra shift at
the lumber yard next week.

SAM

No, no, no. Thanks, though.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I don't mind the overtime.
Keeps me busy.

JEREMY

Well, okay. But don't be
stubborn--

SAM

--Stubborn, huh? Wonder where I
got that from.

JEREMY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I just don't
want you to lose focus on your
studies, okay? You're a very smart
boy. Smarter than I ever was.

Jeremy fakes a chuckle. Sam picks up his plate; stands.

SAM

Dad, you have truly taught me
everything I know. I haven't
learned shit in college.

They laugh in a strikingly similar harmony. Sam exits.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Jeremy and Sam are HAND-WASHING the dishes. Passing plates
between one another, they work quietly until Sam breaks the
silence.

SAM

You know, they have these things
called "dishwashers" now. They
actually come in pretty handy.

JEREMY

I know, I know. I just don't need
to be spending money on anything
that I can do with my own hands.

Jeremy shakes water from his hands in Sam's direction. Sam
responds with a smirk. They get back to the dishes.

SAM

I would go crazy if I had to wash
my dishes every day.

JEREMY

There's something therapeutic about it. Like watering the lawn. You're taking care of something, you know? You should understand that being a psychology major and all. Right?

SAM

I definitely get that but you can't forget to take care of yourself, Dad.

JEREMY

I'm taken care of. I have everything I need right here. My home, my truck, my son and a cold six-pack in the refrigerator.

SAM

Well, all of that sounds nice, but if you won't get a dishwasher for you, get one for me, please. I'm late!

Sam dries his hands and pecks his dad on the forehead. Jeremy smirks. Sam exits. Jeremy stares into the grayish water. It stares back at him. He pulls the plug.

CUT TO:

Jeremy packages leftovers into a Tupperware container. He glances over his shoulder to make sure that Sam isn't in view, simultaneously reaching into his back pocket. Jeremy reveals a MANILLA ENVELOPE. He opens it. A modest stack of twenty-dollar bills. He places the envelope in the plastic bag with the leftovers.

Sam laces his shoes with haste by the front door. Jeremy approaches with the bag.

SAM

Alright, Dad. I'm heading to the city to meet up with some friends.

JEREMY

Oh, some *friends*, huh?
(beat)
A girlfriend, maybe?

SAM

No, Dad. Just some friends.
(jokingly)
Like the ones you don't have.

Sam looks up at his father – shoes now tied – and sheepishly smiles. They laugh together one last time. He stands up.

SAM (CONT'D)
I love you, dad.

They hug. It's brief.

SAM (CONT'D)
Call me if you need me but same
time next week?

JEREMY
You know it.

Jeremy hands Sam the bag.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Some leftovers for tomorrow. Give
me a call if you need anything,
okay?

Sam opens the door and paces to his car. Claustrophobic forestry isolates the residence from the world. Jeremy leans against the doorway, taking in a few last moments with his son. The creaking of a car door open.

SAM (O.S)
See you next week!

JEREMY
See you then. Love you, son.

Sam shuts the door. The ignition roars. Headlights blind Jeremy. He shields his eyes with a forearm before waving "goodbye."

Sam honks twice; turns out of the driveway. The wistful darkness swallows him.

-- **KITCHEN:** The same kitchen view as moments before, excluding Jeremy and Sam washing the dishes. They're ghosts.

-- **LIVING ROOM:** We hear the front door close. Jeremy enters. He removes the needle from the record and switches the player off. Silence.

-- **KITCHEN:** Jeremy pulls dishes from the drying rack, dries them with a towel and stacks them in the proper cupboards. Whatever joy he accumulated over dinner has diminished with the departure of his only son.

-- **SAM'S ROOM:** Sam left the LIGHT ON.

Jeremy enters to switch it off, momentarily haunted by memories: band posters, a graduation photo, college memorabilia. Jeremy notices A SHOEBOX peeking out from under the bed. He kicks it back under and switches off the light.

-- **BEDROOM:** Jeremy ignites his bedside lamp, illuminating a framed FAMILY PHOTO on the nightstand - his deceased wife, Sam as a baby and a younger Jeremy. Happiness. We hear him undressing. The dresser is mounted with Sam's SOCCER TROPHIES.

Jeremy pulls back the covers and settles into bed. He opens the nightstand drawer and selects a MEDICATION BOTTLE (medication unknown). VINTAGE PORNOGRAPHY MAGAZINES of women lie under a small ZIPLOC BAG containing low-grade CANNABIS and a well-used PIPE. The pill bottle is discarded back into place. The drawer slams shut. Jeremy reaches to switch off the lamp. Darkness.

-- **HALLWAY:** A picture of Jeremy and his family in a HOSPITAL - the baby (Sam) now a toddler, the mother now looking especially ill and in a hospital gown, Jeremy forcing a smile behind tired eyes.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A full view of Jeremy's worn, but clean living room. It's quiet, aside from the faint songs of morning birds. Peaceful.

The TELEVISION turns on. We see WEATHERMAN BOB, tired of being over-enthusiastic on-air but over-enthusiastic nonetheless.

WEATHERMAN BOB
... and a low of sixty-eight so it
should be a beautiful day out
there, folks.

Jeremy enters, holding a mug of coffee. The news program transitions to the two main news anchors.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE
Thanks, Bob. You know I sure plan
to take advantage of this
beautiful weather before we head
back into hibernation.

The anchors regurgitate phony laughs and affirmations. Jeremy sips his coffee and places his CELL PHONE on the coffee table.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN
I couldn't agree more, Stephanie.

Jeremy slides on a pair of slippers.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE
Switching gears, we have reports
of a horrific incident that took
place in downtown Portland, Maine
late last night.

Jeremy glides open the glass door and escapes to the backyard.

SLOW ZOOM IN ON CELL PHONE

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN
Shortly after one a.m. this
morning, a lone gunman entered
PARADISO – a popular LGBTQ
nightclub – and open-fired.

Jeremy picks up a hose and HAND-WATERS the lush green lawn. His
cell phone RINGS. He doesn't hear it.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Portland PD has reported a total
of fifteen deaths so far and they
expect that number to rise with
another five in critical care and
approximately twenty more injured.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (O.S.)
Such a horrible tragedy.

Jeremy's cell phone is silent for only a moment before it rings
again.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (CONT'D) (O.S.)
All of us here at the station want
to send our love and support to
the friends and families of the
victims.

We can now make out the caller: "Portland PD." NEWS ANCHOR JOHN
fades out:

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (O.S.)
The shooter was pronounced dead on
the scene after a shootout with
local law enforcement. The 38-
year-old man has been...

MAIN TITLE: PARADISO

BEGIN MONTAGE #1

Sailboats – parked at a harbor – bob with the ocean waves. A
beautiful early-summer day.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (V.O.)
 Good morning to all our viewers
 out there and thank you for
 joining us on this particularly
 beautiful May sixteenth.

Fishermen reel in plentiful lobster traps. A beach Ferris wheel
 – closed for the day. The sound of children playing in the
 nearby ocean.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (V.O.)
 That's right, John. The forecast
 here in Southern Maine is gracing
 us with a partly cloudy Tuesday
 and a high of seventy-seven.

A completely still lake. Birds dancing in the air. Forests that
 feel alive.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (V.O.)
 I tell you, I could not be more
 excited for some beach days after
 that winter.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (V.O.)
 Ain't that the truth? I'm still
 defrosting.

A quaint church, service not in session.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (V.O.)
 In our first story of the day,
 another round of layoffs at the
 Portland Dockyards has left dozens
 of Maine families scrambling to
 get back on their feet.

Jeremy in his backyard feeding lumber through a buzzsaw;
 focused. Sawdust spraying into beams of sunlight.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (V.O.)
 Workers claim they were laid off
 with little to short notice and
 were offered minimal severance
 packages.

Jeremy sands a small piece of wood. Stern; attentive.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 This news comes on the heels of
 the Paper Mill closure in Gorham
 only a few weeks ago.

Jeremy hammers a birdhouse together.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (V.O.)
 Certainly an unfortunate series of
 events for the Maine community.
 Our next story: local officials
 are expecting it to be a busy
 summer for tourism.

Jeremy making dinner in his ghostly home. He eats alone in
 front of a TV tray, watching football. The NEWS ANCHORS fade
 out.

NEWS ANCHOR STEPHANIE (V.O.)
 That's right, John. Local resorts
 have reported a higher-than-usual
 number of reservations in
 anticipation for the summer
 season.

The top of Jeremy's dresser. Dustless squares and rectangles
 stamp the surface where Sam's trophies once stood. The bedside
 photo of his family, now lined with dust.

NEWS ANCHOR JOHN (V.O.)
 Well, you sure can't beat Maine
 beaches isn't that right...

Jeremy washes the dishes. CLACK. A plate snaps in half. The
 sink pools with bloody water. Jeremy pauses — enamored — before
 examining his sliced hand.

END MONTAGE #1

EXT. SUBURBAN CHURCH — NIGHT

Artificial light cascades the church. An American flag blows in
 the rueful breeze.

INT. SUBURBAN CHURCH — LARGE MEETING ROOM — NIGHT

Several adults of varying ages and backgrounds sit in a circle
 facing one another. Everyone looks unhappy to be there. An AA
 meeting. A young woman speaks with a mixture of confidence and
 uneasy vulnerability.

CHRISTINE
 Now that he's out of my life, I
 feel like I can move forward.

Jeremy stares at the floor; absent. He looks like he smells
 like sawdust.

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

He was holding me back. Back from being who I wanted to be. Back from being sober. I don't mean to say that my drinking wasn't my fault, too. But he made things so much harder.

MEETING HOST

It sounds like you've made some great progress, Christine. Clearly you possess a lot of strength and I'm so proud of you.

The group claps unenthusiastically. Christine smiles; sits back.

MEETING HOST (CONT'D)

Jeremy. We haven't heard from you in a while. Would you like to go next?

Jeremy sits up from his slouch and glances around the gymnasium to find the group staring back at him, some with empathy, some with obscured anger.

JEREMY

Uh. Yeah. Sure. Why not.

MEETING HOST

It's okay if you don't want to.

JEREMY

No, it's alright. Unless anyone else wants to go.

Jeremy waits a moment. Other attendees refocus their attention to the floor or their nervous hands.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Alright.

(beat)

Hi, I'm Jeremy and I'm an alcoholic.

GROUP

Hi, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Hi, everyone. Uh like I said, my name's Jeremy and I've been sober for two months.

Light clapping from the group.

MEETING HOST

Congratulations, Jeremy. Two months is a huge milestone.

JEREMY

Thanks.

MEETING HOST

And how have you been doing?

JEREMY

How have I been doing? Uh, good I guess. Yeah, I've been good. It's been a rough year but I think I'm finally coming out of it.

MEETING HOST

Good, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Yeah. This life, it still ain't easy, though.

MEETING HOST

Sure. But where you are now – the Jeremy today – is better than the Jeremy two months ago, right?

JEREMY

Oh, yeah. I don't mean to say that I miss drinking or anything. I'm definitely doing better now.

(beat)

Well, I guess I do kind of miss it. Is that okay to say?

MEETING HOST

In here, you're safe to explore these feelings, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Okay. Yeah. I don't know. I lost my job at the lumberyard last month--

MEETING HOST

--Oh no, I'm so sorry to hear.

JEREMY

Yeah, it sucks. The economy here in Maine... is it ever gonna get better?

Jeremy lures some pessimistic chuckles from the group. He perks up.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

It's like this state is just slowly eating us alive. Every week there's another one of you here--

MEETING HOST

--Hold on now, Jeremy. Let's focus on your story.

JEREMY

Yeah, you're right. Sorry.

(beat)

When my son was born, Sarah and I, we lived in a little one bedroom apartment. Out in Saco near Alex's Pizza. It worked for us but when Sam came, we dreamt of something bigger. Sarah... she gave me purpose. Hell, back then I'd do anything to see her smile.

(beat)

I bought an acre and my brothers -- may they Rest In Peace -- they helped me build something. For our family.

(beat)

Back then it all just felt like beams and plumbing -- this hollow place cementing its existence. But now... I understand. Homes are more than that -- they house memories... legacies... lifetimes within their walls.

(beat)

My family's gone now but the memories... the memories we made... they live in that home. And I'm about to lose it.

MEETING HOST

I'm sorry, Jeremy. That must be very stressful, especially after how much you've been through. Your wife's cancer. Your son's car accident last year.

Jeremy glares at Meeting Host, ashamed of the lies he's fabricated about Sam's passing.

MEETING HOST (CONT'D)

Just remember the importance of maintaining a positive mindset.

Jeremy unravels his thoughts. MEETING HOST fades out.

MEETING HOST (CONT'D) (O.S.)
 And you're getting there, Jeremy.
 Despite your troubles, you're
 staying strong. I'm proud of you.
 Is there...

Jeremy examines his gauzed hand, lost in his mind. Dark red spots peak through the bandages.

SLAM. Jeremy snaps back, startled. The door to the room clicks shut. A janitor.

MEETING HOST
 Jeremy?

Jeremy glances at MEETING HOST.

MEETING HOST (CONT'D)
 Is there anything else you'd like
 to share?

JEREMY
 No. No, I'm all set.

MEETING HOST
 Well, thank you for sharing,
 Jeremy. Who would like to go next?

INT. SUBURBAN CHURCH — LATER

The group disperses — the meeting has just concluded.

The BULLETIN BOARD by the exit catches Jeremy's eye. A flier reads:

LABOR WORKERS NEEDED FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
 FULL TIME (PLUS OVERTIME)
 COMPETITIVE PAY

Jeremy eyes it curiously. He removes a tab that lists a phone number and slips it into his back pocket.

EXT. SUBURBAN CHURCH — MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy exits into the soft yellow floodlights. Just along the perimeter, he notices his sister, Jessica (36) — tender, charming, whimsical — leaning against her SUV. Jeremy shoots her a confused look. She responds with a wide smile, raising two enormous bags of to-go food.

JEREMY
 What are you doing here?

JESSICA

Well it's not like you can drive yourself home.

JEREMY

Good thing I'm picking up a new truck tomorrow.

JESSICA

Tomorrow isn't today, is it?

JEREMY

It never is.

(beat)

I could have called a cab, Jess.

JESSICA

But do cabs come with Chinese food from your loving sister?

JEREMY

I guess not.

Jessica hands Jeremy the bags.

JESSICA

I'm driving. Obviously.

INT./EXT. JESSICA'S SUV - NIGHT

Jeremy stares out the passenger window, seeking solitude from the horizon. Jessica drives into the night. She's chatty.

JESSICA

Ugh what a day. Guess what?

Jeremy begrudgingly looks in her direction.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I got rear-ended by a Prius this morning.

JEREMY

What?

JESSICA

Yeah! Rear-ended by a Prius. It left a pretty big dent, too. I didn't even think those baby cars could accelerate past twenty-five miles per hour.

Jeremy laughs almost unnoticeably.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Anyways. How are you doing? Living
a Prius-free life I hope?

JEREMY
I've been alright.

JESSICA
Yeah? What have you been up to?
Other than vibing at AA and
falling asleep to NASCAR?

JEREMY
Ha. Ha. Oh you know, just the
usual stuff. Coffee. Job
interviews. Eat. TV. Sleep.

JESSICA
Job interviews?

Yeah.

JEREMY

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Anything good?

JEREMY
Not yet, but I have a few leads
I'm following up with. How's
Lauren?

JESSICA
She's good. She's back in school
now and still a handful, I swear.
I worry about her more and more
every day. Just this week I was
looking through her browser
history and--

JEREMY
--You look through your daughter's
browser history?

JESSICA
Damn right, I do. I know what I
would have been doing if we had
internet back in the day. Shit, I
often wonder what Conner's search
history looks like. We haven't had
proper sex in months so you know
he's been breaking out the
Kleenex.

Jeremy doesn't react.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Anyways, I was looking through her history and found that she had typed "can you overdose on" in her search bar.

JEREMY

What in the world is a ten-year-old going to overdose on?

JESSICA

Melatonin, apparently. Poor thing accidentally ate three gummies thinking they were snacks and thought she was going to end up six feet under.

(beat)

She slept fuckin' good though.

Jeremy is still impassive. Jessica craves a reaction.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I swear. Kids are like periods.

JEREMY

What?!

JESSICA

Yeah. They both come from my vagina and they're both hellish about once a month.

JEREMY

Gross, Jess.

JESSICA

Gross?! That's my body. And my child we're talking about here. But seriously, it's like they're on a lunar schedule to go into monthly fits. At least I can take birth control for my periods... Shit, I wish I could take birth control for them, too.

(beat)

Wait...

They look at each other and burst into a heartfelt laugh.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Ugh kids, man. Was Sam ever fussy like that?

They freeze.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry... still too soon?

JEREMY
No, no. You're fine, Jess.

JESSICA
It's just... you never really talk about him anymore and you didn't go to the funeral and I don't--

JEREMY
--Jess. It's fine.
(beat)
The past is the past. No need to dig it up.

A pause. Jessica pulls into Jeremy's driveway.

JESSICA
You know you can talk about him with me, right? Whenever you need me, I'm just a 20-minute drive away. And always happy to be your cab driver.

Jeremy hides his gaze in the horizon.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Alright well I need to get home and help Lauren with her homework. Such bullshit. I don't think teachers comprehend that homework assignments aren't just for the kids. At least the kids are getting a degree out of this, I'm just reliving grade school.

JEREMY
Hey, maybe you'll get a Mother of the Year award from the PTA, huh?

JESSICA
Mother of the Year my ass. How about a *we're all just doing our fuckin' best* award?

Jeremy smiles. Then hardens.

JEREMY
Are we, though?

JESSICA
What's that supposed to mean?

JEREMY

Oh, that wasn't directed at you, Jess. I just mean... not everyone's as good of a parent as you are.

JESSICA

I'm reluctant to accept that compliment.

(beat)

My family isn't everything you see and hear, Jeremy. Lauren and I... we have our problems just like anyone else.

JEREMY

At least Lauren isn't hiding from you.

JESSICA

And how can we be certain of that?

JEREMY

I appreciate you picking me up. And the food.

Jeremy opens the door, his vulnerability expired.

JESSICA

Jeremy! I know this is hard. Especially after everything Mom and Dad taught us growing up.

JEREMY

Jessica...

JESSICA

You know that I love them and I miss them but they were so closed-minded... confined to their faith. You - we - aren't required to make the mistakes of our parents. God doesn't get to dictate the relationships we have with our children. You--

JEREMY

--Jessica! Just stop.

Jessica exhales, saddened. Jeremy is steadfast in his decision but regrets the tone he just took with his sister. He exits the car and opens the rear door, Jessica in pursuit.

JESSICA

Jeremy, come on.

JEREMY
It's fine, Jess.

Jessica looks at Jeremy with sadness from across the exterior roof of the car.

JESSICA
It's not fine. And that's okay.

JEREMY
I just need some space.

JESSICA
If you say so. Just know that I'm here. Whenever you need me.

She coerces an impassioned smile from Jeremy.

JEREMY
Thanks, Jess.

Jessica circles the SUV and embraces her brother.

JESSICA
I love you, Jer.

JEREMY
Love you too.

Jessica eyes her brother with love and concern before navigating back to the driver's seat. Jeremy waves goodbye. She smiles through her windshield and drives off down the narrow driveway.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE — MOMENTS LATER

Dirty dishes fill the sink. We hear the front door slam shut; footsteps; a plastic bag recklessly dropping to the floor.

Squares and rectangles of unfaded wallpaper hang where family photos once stood. We hear a series of constricted, labored breaths.

Jeremy's hands grasp the spine of the couch — arms straight, head dropped. He looks up, desperately wanting to bury his agony. He lumbers to the bedroom.

Jeremy opens a dresser drawer and retrieves a pack of Marlboro Reds. SAM'S TROPHIES are scattered amongst balled-up socks. The drawer slams shut.

Jeremy slides open one of the glass doors that lead to the backyard and pauses.

For just a moment we hear evening birds; crickets attempting to serenade a melancholic Jeremy. He steps out, seals the doors shut behind him and fades into the darkness.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S TRUCK/MAIN STREET - DAY

Jeremy's truck carefully navigates down a bustling New England street. Quaint shops. Hole-in-the-wall diners. A sense of community. Jeremy dons a worn polo and blue jeans.

Jeremy stops at a red light. He winces at the sharp morning sunlight and flips down the shade. A PHOTO OF SAM paper clipped on the inside. Jeremy flinches. He removes the photo and loses himself in it.

HONK. The light's green. A startled Jeremy discards the photo into his dash and speeds off.

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy shuts his truck door and ambles down the sidewalk with a notebook clutched in his hand. He eyes the building addresses, anticipating his arrival soon.

MIKE (O.S.)
Jeremy. Jeremy!

Jeremy glances over his shoulder. It's Mike (36) - a laid-back family man, content with normalcy. His attire is informal - Lumberjack handsome. A HARLEY DAVIDSON LANYARD dangles from his jeans.

JEREMY
Mike?

Mike hustles, catching up with Jeremy. A friendly embrace.

MIKE
Hey. It's been a while.

JEREMY
Yeah.

MIKE
What, since the dockyard gig in twenty-twelve?

JEREMY
I guess it has been that long.

MIKE
How you been, bud?

They walk together.

JEREMY

Good, Mike. Good. How you been?

MIKE

Can't complain. What are you doing here? I'm guessing you're working this gig, too?

JEREMY

Yeah. I think so, at least. They seemed pretty desperate on the phone.

MIKE

I guess we'll see. I hope the time commitment isn't too much. Business has been booming lately.

JEREMY

Good for you, Mike.

MIKE

Thanks. Opening that baby and being my own boss is the best decision I ever made. But I'm sure you know how it goes — it's never enough, right? Always gotta save for something whether it's the kid's college funds or a family trip to Disney. Speaking of, how's Sam?

A pause.

JEREMY

Sam passed actually.

MIKE

What?! Jeremy, I'm so sorry, I didn't know.

JEREMY

Oh it's alright, Mike.

MIKE

When did it happen?

JEREMY

Eight months ago.

MIKE

Shit, man. How are you doing?

JEREMY

Better. It was hard for a bit. Obviously. But life's hard. You get the deck you're dealt. Just how it goes I guess.

MIKE

Sure, yeah.
(beat)
What happened?

A pause.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I shouldn't have asked that. You probably don't want to be talking about this right now.

JEREMY

No, no. It's alright.
(beat)
Car accident. Drunk driver.

Jeremy tenses up. Shame.

MIKE

Oh man. Those drunk drivers around here, I swear.

(beat)

We've missed you in church. I know Sunday sermons were never really your thing but hey, a little God couldn't hurt, right? I'm sure all of this has been tough on you. I couldn't even imagine losing Justin.

The two approach their destination. A construction fence lines the sidewalk. Various laborers enter through an opening.

JEREMY

Guess this is it.

MIKE

Yeah. You recognize this place?

JEREMY

To be honest, this is my first time downtown in years.

MIKE

I hear that, brother. Can't beat the quiet of the country.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE – MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy and Mike enter the grim remnants of a torn-down building. Jeremy eyes an ominous ROOM still standing from the prior building – a roofless box surrounded by crumbled mounds of material that await clearing. The room's red door is padlocked; sealed shut.

A LEADERSHIP GROUP of several colorfully dressed men and women meet atop a mound with a stern, 30-something laborer at the helm. This is HOLDEN. They clutch their clipboards and talk with serious intent. Jeremy observes curiously.

The group breaks from their discussion and form an arc facing the laborers. Holden announces:

HOLDEN

Alright, everyone. Listen up.

The crowd gathers. Jeremy sweeps his gaze over the leadership group one by one.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

First off, thank you all for coming today. We're very happy to see such a good turnout. I'm sure you all have a lot of questions, which I promise we will get to.

Mike raises an eyebrow to Jeremy.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Due to the nature of this project, we've been prioritizing discretion which is why we wanted to bring you all here in person today.

A man in the leadership arc recognizes Jeremy. This is TREVOR (22) – unapologetically gay, utterly fabulous, big-hearted (but doesn't show it). Trevor glances at Jeremy attempting to suppress worry and bewilderment. Jeremy notices. Paranoia.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

My name is Holden Stern and I'll be the Project Manager for this site for the next four months.

(introducing leadership group)

This is Jason and Blake Henderson, the owners of the facility. Next to Blake is Susan Garcia with the City of Portland.

(MORE)

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Then we have Star Sully, our
Community Organizer and Trevor
Jones, our Fundraising Manager.

Trevor and Jeremy make eye contact again. Tense. What's this
all about?

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

And finally, to my right is Phil
Carrington, your assistant lead.

(beat)

Alright, let's cut to the chase.
The site you're standing on right
now is what remains of Paradiso
Nightclub, the gay nightclub that
was targeted by a mass shooter
last year.

Whispers erupt. Jeremy tenses with fear. He scans the site –
the beams, the ruins, the red door of the ominous room. Trevor
observes, wide-eyed.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

The team has spent months
fundraising and finally have
enough money to rebuild, renovate,
and reopen by the one-year
anniversary of the shooting.

Mike eyes Jeremy with uncomfortable uncertainty.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

The owners have a few words to
share so I'll pass the mic to
them.

BLAKE

Hello, everyone. Thank you for
being here. Like Holden said, we
are all incredibly grateful to see
you here today. Paradiso is really
important to us. We've owned this
venue since 1978 and we could tell
you a lot of stories, but what
happened last September was a
tragedy no one could have
anticipated.

JASON

This place... it means a lot to a
lot of people. And what happened
isn't going to stop us from moving
forward.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

Our mission is to reopen on the first anniversary of the tragedy as a sign of strength to the community, with a tribute to celebrate the lives of the loved ones we lost.

BLAKE

We understand this is a controversial project and if it isn't a good fit, we respectfully ask you to accept work elsewhere. If you decide to stay, we expect your full respect towards us, this space and this community. We've been through a lot and want this reopening to be a positive experience.

Jason and Blake step back; nod to Holden.

HOLDEN

Obviously, we would love for all of you to stay but like Blake said, if this isn't a good fit, the door's right there.

A pause.

Two laborers exit, shaking their heads and mumbling. Jeremy watches, unsure if he should follow suit. Mike notices his uncertainty; fear. Jeremy locks eyes with a distressed Trevor. Jeremy's paranoia grows. He darts his eyes to the ground; contemplating under the pressure.

Jeremy turns, rushing for the exit without looking back. Mike glances over his shoulder with worried curiosity.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy's embarrassment materializes through a reddened face as he paces to his truck. His hands shake with fury as he unlocks the door. He gets in, throws his clipboard raucously and slams the door shut.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

RING. We hear the front door open/close. An exasperated Jeremy enters. The phone rings anxiety into the airwaves. Jeremy clicks a button sending the call to voicemail.

Above the phone is a framed photo on the wall. SARAH and SAM enjoy breakfast at the kitchen island. They smile at the camera – Jeremy presumably behind it. BEEP.

BILL COLLECTOR (V.O.)
 Hi Mr. Ross, this is Arthur
 Knowles from Maine Mortgage
 Collections. I've been having some
 difficulty getting a hold of you.

Jeremy turns – the kitchen island, same as the photo but with the weight of his family's absence.

BILL COLLECTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We need to talk to you about your
 mortgage. Soon. If I don't hear
 back from you soon we will be
 forced to take more drastic
 actions.

Jeremy picks up the phone and slams it back down. He takes several labored breaths and chugs a glass of water. Eventually, he calms down. Something crosses his mind.

-- **BASEMENT:** The stench of abandonment. We hear footsteps descend the wooden stairs. CLICK. A single bulb illuminates a grim, abandoned basement.

Jeremy eyes a cluster of forsaken boxes labeled "University of Southern Maine – SAM ROSS." He reluctantly cuts one open. Sam's dorm materials.

He apathetically unpacks it all for the first time. AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO "MOM." The letter. Jeremy freezes under the weight of what he holds. Underneath the envelope lies a VALENTINE'S CARD addressed to Sam from "Your loving boyfriend." Jeremy throws the envelope back into the box and pushes it aside, spilling the contents to the floor.

Atop the scattered notes and nostalgia lies a Polaroid PHOTOGRAPH – Sam with friends. Sam's appearance contrasts with the Sam we met at dinner – a crop top, tight shorts and colorful eye shadow. Pure joy.

Behind the young men in the photo is a neon sign: "PARADISO." Haunting. An embattled Jeremy sighs. He folds the photo in half and slides it into his back pocket.

SLOW ZOOM IN on the VALENTINE'S DAY CARD and LETTER TO MOM. We hear Jeremy exit and click the light off. Darkness.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Jeremy closes his truck door and slings a heavy bag of tools over his shoulder. He's neon-clad - dressed for construction work - as he nervously paces down the sidewalk. His nervousness muddles with confusion as the sound of honking cars grows near.

He approaches the construction site but stops dead in his tracks. A handful of flashy drag queens - Trevor included - circle the entrance. They hold up signs saying "HONK FOR PARADISO" and "DONATE." Jeremy overhears their playful banter:

DRAG QUEEN #1 (O.S.)
Honk for Paradiso! Honk for
loooove. Honk for these beautiful
titties!

DRAG QUEEN #2
Honey, ain't no one honking for
them titties. They honking for you
to get out the way before you get
hit by a damn car.

DRAG QUEEN #1
Babe these knockers could stop any
car dead in its tracks.
(bumps breasts)
BOOM motherfucker. It's like my
superpower.

DRAG QUEEN #3 gestures a push.

DRAG QUEEN #3
I say we put that to the test.

Jeremy is conflicted. Fuck it. He puts his head down and hustles by. Trevor - glamorous, top-notch drag queen - notices him.

TREVOR (O.S.)
Hey! Jeremy, right?

Jeremy looks up, startled; confused.

JEREMY
Yeah.

Jeremy shuts down the potential conversation by rushing past Trevor into the site. Trevor watches him go, offended but concerned.

DRAG QUEEN #1 (O.S.)
Like why isn't anyone stopping?

DRAG QUEEN #3 (O.S.)
 These fools probably think we're
 hookers.

DRAG QUEEN #1 (O.S.)
 If that were the case we'd have a
 line of married men parked around
 the block.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy enters. Dozens of laborers work away, making ample progress on the site. Mike hammers a beam. He turns and notices Jeremy; intrigued. Jeremy dodges his gaze.

Holden meets with the owners. They look around, point and plan. Then, break and disperse. Jeremy approaches Holden and extends a hand.

JEREMY
 Hi. Holden, right?

HOLDEN
 Yeah. You are?

JEREMY
 Jeremy. Ross.

HOLDEN
 You look familiar. You here
 yesterday?

JEREMY
 No, no. Couldn't make it, but we
 spoke on the phone. I was hoping
 you'd still be hiring?

HOLDEN
 Well, we could certainly use the
 help, granted the deadline we're
 working with.

Holden looks Jeremy up and down.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
 Can you start today?

JEREMY
 Absolutely.

HOLDEN
 Alright. You're in.
 (MORE)

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Come find me in an hour or so and we'll get your forms signed. In the meantime, we're short-staffed on the east side of the building so I'm going to put you there for now.

Holden points to the area where Mike works.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Sound good?

JEREMY

Sounds good. Thanks, I really appreciate it.

HOLDEN

Don't worry about it. Just be on time and don't cause any riff-raff and we'll be okay, alright?

Jeremy nods. Holden departs.

Jeremy observes the grounds, attempting to hide his uneasiness. He stares at the haunting, still-standing room. A laborer removes the red door from the hinges. The laborer moves, revealing the word "FAGGOTS" spray-painted across the door.

Jeremy reluctantly approaches Mike and sets his things down. Mike smiles.

MIKE

Decided to stick around after all, huh?

Jeremy ignores the question. He secures his helmet, procures a hammer and gets to work.

The sound of queens and car horns bustle in the distance. Jeremy eyes Trevor curiously.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - EVENING

Jeremy and Mike pack up their tools, workday complete. The sun is nearly set as flood lights isolate the construction zone from the evening darkness.

The queens also pack up. One removes their wig. They chat and laugh indistinctly.

Jeremy straps his bag over his shoulder and heads towards Main Street. The queens cheer exuberantly. Jeremy stops, curious.

A new drag queen joins the group, making a rousing appearance in a sexy, yellow-neon-lad construction outfit. She holds a case of beer, a grocery bag brimming with snacks and a dozen donuts.

DRAG QUEEN #1

You bitch, where you been all day?

CONSTRUCTION QUEEN

Hoe can't you see I had a whole outfit to put together? Rome wasn't built in a day. Just ask these guys.

Trevor and Jeremy make awkward eye contact.

CONSTRUCTION QUEEN (CONT'D)

Attention all of you muscular, manly, gorgeous men--

DRAG QUEEN #2

--Debatable--

CONSTRUCTION QUEEN (CONT'D)

--I'm sure you've all had a long day of pounding, hammering and doing all of that other hot stuff you do all day so I just wanted to deliver a thank you package. I have some refreshing, cold beer and enough snacks to please a spoiled suburban shit on Halloween, how does that sound?

A few "woo's" emerge from the laborers.

CONSTRUCTION QUEEN (CONT'D)

Damn straight "woo," be grateful you heathens.

The laborers retrieve beers and cheer one another. They hesitantly mingle with the drag queens. Mike shrugs at Jeremy, joins the queens and pops open a beer can.

Jeremy warily looks on. Mike jokes about Construction Queen's outfit by flirtatiously pointing to her boobs.

Trevor approaches Jeremy with a beer.

TREVOR

Want one?

JEREMY

No, I'm okay. Thanks.

TREVOR
You sure?

JEREMY
Sober.

TREVOR
Ah. Good for you.

Trevor playfully conceals the beer in his massive wig.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Better?

A reluctant Jeremy smiles. Trevor extends a hand.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
I'm Trevor. Not that you cared to
ask earlier.

JEREMY
Sorry.

TREVOR
I'm just messing with you. Don't
worry about it.

Trevor assesses Jeremy.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
You seem nervous.
(beat)
What? Have you never met such a
fabulous drag queen before?

JEREMY
Drag? Like racing?

TREVOR
No, honey. It's a little more
glamorous than that.
(beat)
Drag is a celebration of gender
exploration. An art form. Used to
explore one's inner self and all
of the beauty that comes with it.

JEREMY
So like cross-dressing?

TREVOR
For the sake of this conversation,
sure.

JEREMY

And... why do you do it?

TREVOR

Why not?

A pause. Jeremy is despondent but Trevor has struck an interest.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I think it's important for men to connect with their femininity.

(beat)

I'm also the Fundraising Manager for Paradiso. Drag is a great way to raise money. We're out here doing the same thing as you: building this place back again.

JEREMY

Is this like... what you do for a job?

TREVOR

Drag? Yeah. Well, one day it will be. I actually just entered a big competition and if that works out... well... it would be huge for me.

JEREMY

Well, good luck with that. I think what you're doing is... great.

Trevor chuckles.

TREVOR

Yeah. It'd be nice to get out of Maine for a bit. Explore the world. Experience big cities. One day.

Jeremy can't relate. A pause.

JEREMY

Hey, it's been good chatting with you but I really need to get home. I'll see you around, yeah?

Jeremy darts away before Trevor can say goodbye. Trevor watches him depart – saddened – before joining the group of socializing laborers and queens.

Jeremy beelines to the exit. He stops and glances over his shoulder before turning the corner. The queens and laborers laugh. Jeremy feels he's missing out – enticed by the joy – but departs nonetheless.

INT. BOOK STORE – DAY

A small, independent bookstore. Quaint.

Jeremy observes a wall of greeting cards. Birthdays, weddings, Easter. We hear the BEEP of a voicemail machine.

VOICEMAIL RECORDING (V.O.)
You have one new message and three saved messages. First new message.

BEEP.

PRESTON (V.O.)
Hi, Jeremy. This is Preston from the Portland Pride Center just trying you one more time.

Jeremy reaches for a pink birthday card featuring a bird. It reads "Happy Birthday." It works.

PRESTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We're finalizing our plans for the memorial and Sam is the last name we need approval for.

Jeremy seeks out the card's matching envelope. Another card grasps his attention.

SLOW ZOOM IN: The card features a piece of buttered toast envisioned with human facial features. It boasts a warm smile and two thumbs up. It reads: TO BUTTER DAYS AHEAD.

PRESTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Listen... I know how hard this is. For you. For all of the parents. But we really feel that Sam would want to be included in this. All that we need from you is to come into the center and sign some paperwork. Oh, and provide a photo for the memorial. The deadline is this Friday so... please just think about it and let me know soon, okay?
(beat)
Thanks, Jeremy. Take care.

BEEP.

EXT. PRISTINE LAKE - DAY

A bobber breaks the surface tension of the water with a PLOP. Rings expand from the landing site.

Jeremy hands a fishing pole to his niece, Lauren - an adorable, inquisitive ten-year-old who's feeling a bit nervous about this endeavor. They stand at the end of a dock, stretched over the greenish water.

LAUREN
So what do we do now?

JEREMY
We wait.

Lauren is uncertain how to process this answer. Jeremy is in his element.

LAUREN
How long do we wait for?

JEREMY
Until it's time.

LAUREN
What's that mean?

JEREMY
It means that in fishing, you have to be patient. Patience is a virtue. And it can be very rewarding.

LAUREN
This doesn't feel very rewarding.

Jeremy laughs.

JEREMY
Well, we haven't gotten to that part yet. But that's part of the virtue: patience can be very rewarding. But not always.

Jeremy pats Lauren on the back. He looks over his shoulder. Lauren and her husband, Conner - handsome, smart, not equipped for family life - stand at the base of the dock. They're in the early stages of an argument. Lauren turns her head when Jeremy redirects her attention.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Speaking of rewards. I hear it's someone's birthday today.

LAUREN

Well, duh. That's why we're here,
aren't we?

JEREMY

Wow, what has turning ten done to
my sweet little niece?

LAUREN

I'm not little anymore, Uncle
Jeremy.

JEREMY

Darn. I guess that means you're
too old for birthday presents now.

Jeremy pulls a carelessly wrapped item and a card from a bag.
Lauren lights up.

LAUREN

No no no! I'll never be too old
for presents. Are you too old for
presents?

Jeremy chuckles.

JEREMY

I guess not.

Jeremy hands the gift to Lauren who hastily unwraps it. A
HANDMADE BIRDHOUSE.

LAUREN

Wow! Did you make this yourself?

JEREMY

Just for you.

A pause. Jessica and Conner's argument is more audible now.
Jeremy glances at them. Lauren zones into the birdhouse.

LAUREN

You know, if I were an animal, I
think I'd want to be a bird.

JEREMY

Yeah? Why's that?

JESSICA (O.S.)

Just fucking go then!

LAUREN

So I could fly.

Jeremy notices a gold cross necklace dangling from Lauren's
neck. It haunts him.

Jessica hastily approaches them – agitated – Conner lagging.

JESSICA
Hi sweetie how's fishing going?

LAUREN
I thought there would be more fish involved.

JESSICA
Give it some time, sweetie. I'm hopeful.

LAUREN
And I'm bored.

CONNER
Well, maybe fishing isn't for you, honey. But hey, you tried it. That's what's most important.

Conner's comment irks Jeremy. Fishing is fucking great. Jessica ignores Conner.

LAUREN
Look what Uncle Jeremy got me!

JESSICA
Wow! We'll have to hang that up outside of your window.
(to Jeremy)
That's so nice of you, Jeremy. I also love it.

CONNER
Alright, we need to get going. Sorry, sweetie. Daddy had a work thing come up.

JESSICA
Alright, Lauren let's get you home so we can cut some cake! Mommy's catching a ride home with Uncle Jeremy.

JEREMY
You are?

Jessica glares at Jeremy.

CONNER
Fine with me.
(to Lauren)
Come on, Lauren.

A defeated Conner – and excited Lauren – walk away, Lauren admiring her gift. Jessica and Jeremy exchange a look.

Jeremy reels in his fishing line. The bobber sails over the surface of the lake, pushing the water with its hollow force.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S TRUCK – LATER

Jeremy drives through a rural, forested area. He's semi-listening to Jessica's rant.

JESSICA

Like, what do I have to do to get him to want to be more a part of this family? Half the time it's like he isn't here and the other half the time he *actually* isn't here.

JEREMY

Work?

JESSICA

God, at this point I hope so. My mind has gone to all the wrong places – an affair, a baby mama, a serial killer.

Jeremy laughs.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Seriously, though. Like, what work meeting do you have on a Saturday evening, Conner?

JEREMY

Hasn't his job always been... demanding?

JESSICA

Yeah, but it seems to get more demanding the further we grow apart.

JEREMY

I'm sorry, Jess.

JESSICA

You'd think after twelve years together you'd really feel like you know someone but the longer we're together, the more mysterious he becomes.

JEREMY

You two married young. Maybe he's just... changing.

JESSICA

Well, we have a family now so he better change into a grown-ass man, and soon at that.

A pause.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Anyways. How's the job hunt going?

JEREMY

It's over, actually. Just started a new gig last week.

JESSICA

Congrats, Jeremy! What's the gig?

JEREMY

Oh, just helping renovate a restaurant downtown.

JESSICA

Oooo what restaurant?! Anything good?

JEREMY

I forget the name. Something fancy that's hard to remember.

JESSICA

Fancy? Does that mean they're paying well?

JEREMY

Well enough for me to get back on my feet.

JESSICA

Good! You've been sitting down for so long you probably have hemorrhoids.

Jeremy gives her the "gross, Jessica" look.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

What?! Have you checked?

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Jeremy - in uniform - exits his truck, sloppily parallel parked on Main Street. Something muffles under the popped hood.

JEREMY

Shit.

He lifts the hood and props it open. Steam spews into the air.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Shit shit shit shit.

Jeremy jets to the truck bed, retrieves a tool bag and hustles back to the hood. He whacks something with a wrench. THUMP. The steam and muffling cease.

He returns the tool bag to the back of his truck. WOOSH. A POLICE CAR speeds by, lights flashing and siren wailing. Jeremy watches it speed out of sight.

Jeremy tries the ignition. It doesn't work.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He slams the hood shut and glances at his watch. Late.

CUT TO:

Jeremy grows tired - he's been walking for a while. The sounds of muddled yelling and chanting emerge, growing louder.

Up ahead Jeremy sees the drag queens - Trevor included. A dozen enraged PROTESTORS line the sidewalk across the street. They howl and wield offensive SIGNS: "GOD HATES FAGS." "PARADISO = INFERNO."

The police car separates the queens from the protestors. An officer observes - on edge - and waves for the protestors to stay on their side of the street. They don't want to comply.

Jeremy reluctantly steps closer. The queens sport their fundraising signs, continuing as if the protestors aren't there. Fabulous.

Holden and Blake jet out of the construction zone with haste. They pause and look around, taking in the scene. Holden locks eyes with Jeremy, glances at his watch and gives him a look. You're late. Blake and Holden jog to the officer and ignite a cautious conversation.

Jeremy pauses, uncertain. He eyes the entrance - clear. He starts moving again, picking up the pace.

TREVOR (O.S.)

Jeremy!

Jeremy stops. Trevor gestures *be right back* to the queen beside him and approaches Jeremy.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

How are you doing?

JEREMY

I'm alright. You?

TREVOR

As good as I look.

JEREMY

What's all this?

TREVOR

All what?

Jeremy gestures to the protestors.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Oh them? Just some religious nut jobs with nothing better to do. Ignore them. It's better to just not give them the attention.

JEREMY

Yeah.

A pause.

TREVOR

Do you live around here?

JEREMY

No, I'm about forty minutes outside of the city.

TREVOR

Ah, a country boy, huh?

JEREMY

If you'd call Southern Maine the country.

TREVOR

Well, it's the closest thing to country I've ever known. Haven't made it out of Maine much. You?

JEREMY

Never had to.

TREVOR
But have you ever wanted to?

JEREMY
Not really. I like what I know.

TREVOR
Yeah, I get that.

A pause.

TREVOR
Hey, I've been meaning to talk to you. I just wanted to say how thankful I am that you're working on this project. It means a lot to me. The shooting... it's been... challenging to digest, to... accept. As I'm sure you know. How have you been doing? This must be hard for you, too.

Paranoia.

JEREMY
What?

TREVOR
Working here. After everything that's happened. It can't be easy--

JEREMY
--I don't know what you're talking about.

TREVOR
Jeremy--

JEREMY
--Listen, I don't know why you've developed an... interest in me but you don't know me, and I don't know you. I'm just here to get a job done - let's keep it that way.

Jeremy hustles into the construction zone leaving Trevor baffled; concerned.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

Ample progress has been made on the grounds - a few exterior walls have been cemented and the hollowed interior is mazed with wooden beams that outline future rooms. Jeremy beelines to his spot. Mike already works away.

MIKE

Hey, Jeremy.

Jeremy doesn't respond; discards his bag.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Rough morning?

JEREMY

Truck problems.

MIKE

Aw man, sorry to hear. Want me to take a look later?

JEREMY

I'll take care of it. Thanks.

MIKE

Sure thing.

(beat)

Got any plans for your weekend?

JEREMY

Nothing special. Just gonna get caught up around the house. Probably watch the race on Sunday.

MIKE

Still napping to NASCAR I see?

JEREMY

Caught me.

MIKE

Well I'm taking the family camping for a couple nights. Have some campfires. Teach the boy to hunt. Sip moonshine under the stars. You'd be welcome to join us.

JEREMY

Aw that's alright, Mike. Appreciate it, though.

MIKE

You sure?

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

I don't know about you but I could really use a couple nights away from the city. This craziness.

(gestures to the street)

Sometimes I worry about raising Justin up in this crazy world. Things just aren't the way they were when we were kids.

Jeremy eyes the protestors who practically foam at the mouth.

JEREMY

Yeah. I guess we live in a different world now.

The queens continue holding up their signs and soliciting donations.

MIKE

Why are they even rebuilding this place anyways? I mean, isn't it safe to assume that it's just gonna get shot up again?

Jeremy bites his tongue.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I don't know all of this is just... odd. Call me old fashioned I guess.

(beat)

Either way, I'm glad Justin is... normal. My boy was raised to know better.

A fire erupts in Jeremy. He removes his helmet and tackles Mike to the ground, pummeling a fist into his startled face. Another. Another. Mike's face grows bloody. He wrangles his strength and flips himself on top of Jeremy. Nails, shards of wood and other sharp objects surround them.

Mike punches Jeremy — hard — hoping to subdue him but he doesn't. He pins Jeremy down. A few laborers gather around them, unsure of what to do.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What the fuck... what the fuck is your problem?

Jeremy writhes. Mike punches Jeremy again, then pins him back down. Jeremy spits bloody saliva in Mike's direction but misses. Something switches in Mike's brain. Jeremy's anger taunts him. Mike leans into Jeremy's ear and whispers:

MIKE (CONT'D)
 Are you sure you aren't just a
 faggot yourself?

HOLDEN (O.S.)
 Hey! Hey!

Mike lets Jeremy go, feeling like a winner. Jeremy holds a murderous gaze with him, unwilling to go any further with this now-publicized escalation.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
 What's going on over here?

The queens gather and observe from a distance; gossip. Worry consumes Trevor.

MIKE
 I honestly don't know. I think
 Jeremy here had a rough morning
 and decided to take it out on me.
 Didn't you, Jeremy?

Jeremy snarls. Holden is baffled.

HOLDEN
 Look, I honestly don't give a fuck
 what happened. There is way too
 much shit going on today for
 whatever the fuck this is. I swear
 to God if this happens again
 you're both fired.
 (to Jeremy)
 Especially you. Don't think I
 didn't notice you come in late
 today. This isn't a fucking
 McDonald's.
 (to Mike)
 You: Swap places with Rich. Got
 it?

Mike nods, grabs his bag and departs to the other side of the site.

HOLDEN
 What the fuck are you all looking
 at? Get back to work!

The crowd disperses, Trevor worriedly glancing over his shoulder at an embarrassed Jeremy who collects himself.

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER

Jeremy paces down the sidewalk, cascaded in the day's final moments of sunlight. A lot's on his mind.

He returns to his truck and throws his stuff in the back seat. *Get me the fuck out of here.* He turns the keys having forgotten the truck's malfunction. It doesn't start.

He slams his palms on the steering wheel and screams.

Neon lights haunt him from across the street. He turns. DAVE'S LIQUORS. Jeremy processes a series of labored breaths; torn. He thrusts the door open.

INT. DAVE'S LIQUORS - MOMENTS LATER

The person ahead of Jeremy finishes checking out. A shiner already forms around his eye, now perceivable in the stale florescent lighting. Jeremy approaches the cashier, DAVE - an older, typical Mainer.

CASHIER DAVE

Jeremy. No shit. How you been? I feel like it's been ages.

JEREMY

Hey Dave. I've been alright. Rough day I suppose.

CASHIER DAVE

Well, you're in the right place then. What can I get you?

JEREMY

Pint of vodka. Whatever's cheap.

CASHIER DAVE

You got it.

The pint haunts Jeremy as Dave rings it up, slides it into a small paper bag and sets it on the counter.

CASHIER DAVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

That'll be fourteen-o-eight.

Jeremy hesitates; sweats.

CASHIER DAVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Jeremy?

Jeremy snaps back. He tosses a twenty on the counter and snags the bottle.

JEREMY
Keep the change.

EXT. MAIN STREET – CONTINUOUS

DING. The bell of the liquor store rings as the door closes behind Jeremy. He struts across the street – no regard to traffic – and jumps in his truck.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S TRUCK – CONTINUOUS

Jeremy locks the doors. Safety. He eyes the bag, embattled with temptation. A pinch of anger convinces him to unveil the bottle, twist open the cap and chug a few shots. He doesn't flinch as vodka drips down his chin. He chugs more before lighting a cigarette.

Jeremy hears laughing outside. He hides and observes. Trevor – still in drag – joyously moves arm-in-arm with ANDREA (21), a stunning, shy trans woman. They lovingly joke; laugh. Jeremy is on high alert.

The two pause as Trevor romantically pushes Andrea against a wall. Andrea beams with sensuality. She slides off Trevor's wig with a sly smile. They kiss.

Jeremy questions if he should be watching but can't turn away. He's curious; confused. The couple gets heated before Andrea decides to pump the breaks. She grabs Trevor's hand and leads him away.

Jeremy pauses. He curiously turns, watching them fade into the distance. Temptation. He opens the door.

EXT. MAIN STREET – MOMENTS LATER

Giddy late-nighters litter the street. Jeremy stumbles down the sidewalk, drunk with a cigarette in hand. Ahead of him, we see Trevor and Andrea, occasionally blurred by passerbys. He follows them.

Jeremy notices the couple stop and wait to cross the street. He hustles, afraid of losing them. Club music grows louder.

Trevor and Andrea cross the busy street, waving a "thank you" to a stopped car on the road. Jeremy watches like a hawk. The couple shows their IDs to a bouncer and fade into the dark interior of – what Jeremy now realizes is – a gay club.

Colorful patrons crowd the entrance smoking and conversing. Thunderous bass rots the joy permeating the air.

Two men kiss sloppily. A devilish drag queen cracks jokes. A man playfully twirls a woman in pasties.

Jeremy contemplates through a clouded exhale. He pulls the liquor bottle from his waistband and takes a gulp, finishing it off. He tosses it to the ground.

He takes a final puff from his cigarette and darts across the street.

INT. GAY NIGHTCLUB - ENTRYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy steps with cautionary strides. The club has a pulse. He keeps his head down, eyes darting at blurred bodies that glide past him. He's out of his element.

Jeremy stops. He grimaces. What is he doing here? Before he can convince himself to leave, he continues onward, lured by entrancing techno music and hypnotizing lights.

-- **BAR:** Jeremy finds a clearing. It's crowded with lively queer patrons. A hunky male bartender greets Jeremy.

BARTENDER

What can I get you, sweetie?

JEREMY

Uh...

The bartender flashes a coy smile.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Beer? A beer?

BARTENDER

Yes, honey, we have beer. Do you want a light or..?

JEREMY

Just a regular beer. Whatever you got.

BARTENDER

Coming right up, hun.

Jeremy's eyes graze the crowd. The dance floor brims with twirling bodies. Steamy. Shirtless men grind and grope. A go-go boy twirls on a pole. A woman slides a dollar bill into his jockstrap.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Here we are. That'll be five. Cash or card?

JEREMY

Actually, could I get a shot of
whisky, too?

BARTENDER

Absolutely. Make it a double?

JEREMY

Absolutely.

-- **DANCEFLOOR:** Jeremy rambles through a cascade of colorful lighting. He sloshes beer at every turn. People carelessly bump into him as they dance. Every bump instills him with more paranoia. He persists nonetheless, on a mission. What's the mission, again? Strobes burst repeatedly.

A stranger shoulders Jeremy. They don't notice and continue onward. Jeremy is unsure what happened. He glances down – beer drenches his shirt.

-- **BATHROOM:** Jeremy scours his shirt with a paper towel. KYLE (45) – muscular physique, flirtatious, casual – exits a stall. He looks through the mirror at Jeremy and smirks as he washes his hands.

KYLE

Rough night?

Jeremy glances at Kyle having momentarily forgotten where he was.

JEREMY

What?

KYLE

I said, rough night?

JEREMY

You could say that.

KYLE

I'm sorry to hear.

(beat)

I'm Kyle.

Kyle extends a hand. Jeremy eyes it with uncertainty.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Oh come on.

(coy)

I don't bite.

An awkward shake.

JEREMY

Jeremy.

KYLE

Well nice to meet you, Jeremy.
First time?

JEREMY

What?

KYLE

First time at the club?

JEREMY

First time at a club like this.

KYLE

What? A gay club?

JEREMY

Yeah.

KYLE

No shit.

Kyle tears a paper towel and helps Jeremy wipe his shirt.
Jeremy doesn't know what to make of it.

KYLE (CONT'D)

In that case, I feel obligated to
show you around.

(beat)

Come on. It'll be fun, I promise.

Kyle tosses the towel and drags an apprehensive Jeremy out of
the bathroom.

-- **SIDE ROOM:** Jeremy is wrecked. Kyle escorts him to a smaller
room with a stage. The packed audience claps their hands over
their heads and shouts praise.

KYLE

This is where all of the drag
shows are.

Kyle cheers. A drag queen dances and lip-syncs to an upbeat pop
song. Jeremy watches, lifeless behind his eyes.

-- **DANCEFLOOR:** Kyle and Jeremy are in the thick of it on the
dance floor. Sweaty bodies grind and sway in a strobed
convolution.

Kyle jumps around, whipping his head from side to side. He
shakes the sweat from his forehead. It glistens into the air.

He looks at Jeremy with a flirtatious smile. Jeremy doesn't notice. He's overwhelmed. Kyle grabs Jeremy's hand, encouraging him to dance more.

KYLE
Are you having fun?

JEREMY
Yeah.

Jeremy drops Kyle's hand and resumes swaying. He darts his eyes around the crowd. A blur.

KYLE (O.S.)
What?

JEREMY
I said, yeah.

KYLE
Good. Because you're cute.

JEREMY
What?

KYLE
Nothing. Hey... stay here, I'll go
get us more beers really quick.

JEREMY
Huh?

Kyle is already gone leaving a desolate Jeremy. He scans the floor. A disco ball spins on the ceiling. Men in harnesses. A man takes off his shirt. A group of friends shrieks with laughter.

SAM.

Sam dances free of inhibitions. Eyes closed, shirt and hair drenched in sweat. Jeremy stares on. Captivated. Perplexed.

KYLE
Here we are.

Kyle hands Jeremy a beer. Jeremy's trance brakes. He looks at Kyle, then glances back to where Sam danced. Sam isn't there anymore - a small clearing in the raucous crowd in his place.

JEREMY
Sorry... I...

KYLE
It's okay.

Kyle cradles his arms around Jeremy. He nestles his face into Jeremy's neck and sways to the music. Jeremy hardly notices, not-so-discretely searching the dance floor. Kyle kisses Jeremy's neck. Jeremy recoils.

KYLE (CONT'D)

What? I told you... I don't bite.

Kyle smiles with fervor. He burrows his face back into Jeremy's neck. Trapped. Kyle kisses Jeremy on the cheek. Jeremy unconsciously – and forcefully – pushes him off. Kyle falls but catches himself, unfortunately, on the people behind him.

CLUB PATRON #1

What the fuck?

CLUB PATRON #2

Fuck!

Jeremy startles with embarrassment and apologizes under his breath.

JEREMY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

KYLE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

JEREMY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to--

KYLE

--Whatever, man. I'm out of here.

Kyle stomps away, clutching his shame as he corrects his hair and probes the witnesses. The club patrons scowl at Jeremy.

JEREMY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Jeremy shoves his way through a sea of euphoria.

-- **BAR:** A haze. We see Jeremy take back-to-back shots. The club sounds blend together. Time doesn't exist. Jeremy eyes the exit. Then, the dancefloor.

BARTENDER (O.S.)

You alright, sweetie?

Jeremy waves away the bartender who rolls his eyes and moves to the next customer. Jeremy nestles his head atop his arms on the bar.

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

Hey! Alright, you've had one too many. Security?!

The music fades out.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeremy awakes on a couch, still in beer-spilled clothes. His body doesn't want to cooperate. The apartment sports modern, tasteful furnishings. Jeremy rubs his eyes and observes the modern, inviting apartment in confusion and fear. A MİRRORED VANITY adorned with WIGS sits in the corner.

Jeremy pats himself down. Not robbed. TREVOR enters wearing boxers and an oversized t-shirt. He darts a sassy look in Jeremy's direction on his way to the coffee machine.

TREVOR

Oh good. You're up.

JEREMY

Uh...

Trevor pours TWO CUPS of coffee. He delivers one to Jeremy and perches across in a chair.

TREVOR

Rough night, huh?

JEREMY

What am I doing here?

TREVOR

Being an inconvenience.

(beat)

Kidding. Seriously though, I thought you were sober? Was last night a slip up?

Jeremy frantically examines his body and throws the sheets.

JEREMY

Wait... we didn't... you know?

Trevor bursts into laughter.

TREVOR

Oh no, honey. I stopped messing around with straight folk a long time ago. Y'all are too wild. Even for me.

Jeremy feels relieved but uneasy.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
You passed out at the damn club
last night and I didn't know what
to do with you so I brought you
back here.

Trevor stands; tops off his coffee.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
You threw up in the Uber. You know
you're gonna reimburse me for that
cleaning fee, right?

Trevor semi-jokes, hoping to break the ice with Jeremy. It's
not working. Trevor returns to his seat.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
You act like you've never known a
gay man before.

JEREMY
I haven't.

TREVOR
Well... you knew one.

Jeremy ponders this.

JEREMY
How did you know Sam?

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Oh, Jeremy... you don't know?

Jeremy affirms this with a glare. Trevor sighs.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
When Sam moved to Portland, I had
already been living here for a
couple of years. He didn't know
the city very well and I think
that's something that initially
drew him to me.

(beat)
And him... I was drawn by his
dancing. He would always get so
lost in the music... I found it...
charming... sincere.

Trevor is a natural entertainer tapping into Jeremy's limited
curiosity.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Over time, our friendship grew
into... something more.

JEREMY
You were his... boyfriend?

TREVOR
For two years.

A sad, sincere smile spreads over Trevor's face. Jeremy wages an internal war.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
He told me a lot about you, you
know. Sam.

Jeremy eyes him with doubt.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Alllll the time. He looked up to
you so much.

He did? A pause.

JEREMY
Were you there?

Trevor shifts his weight.

TREVOR
No. No, I wasn't. I was supposed
to be. But Sam and I we... we had
a fight that night.
(beat)
Oh, that boy knew how to have fun.
How to love. But love doesn't
always win, you know?

In his attempt to provide comfort, Trevor is overwhelmed with defeat seeing that Jeremy is as uncomfortable as he is hungover.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Listen... I get that this is hard.
I get that you have questions and
might be questioning what it says
about you that you have a gay son.
But you can't be invading our
spaces like you did last night.

JEREMY
I'm not questioning anything.

TREVOR

I think you have a lot more questions than you manage to ask.

JEREMY

Yeah? Like why you weren't there to protect my son that night? Why you introduced him to that place... this lifestyle in the first place?

TREVOR

I didn't introduce him to anything and trust me,
 (serious)
 you don't want to know why I stayed home that night.
 (beat)
 Where were you?

Jeremy practically growls.

JEREMY

Don't you dare fuckin--

TREVOR

--You're right, you're right.
 (to self)
 Dear lord give me strength.
 (to Jeremy)
 There's only one person to blame for what happened. And thankfully, he's long gone.

Common ground.

Trevor takes a breath, hampered by the weight in his chest. Jeremy loses himself in his thoughts.

JEREMY

You know how they say when a person dies, their life flashes before their eyes?

Trevor nods, unsure where this is going but attentive out of respect.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

When Sam died, it was like his life flashed before my eyes. The life I thought he led, at least. A fabricated story of my son... the son I never knew.

TREVOR

Each of us, we... we only have the capacity to comprehend one life, Jeremy. And life gives perspective... Perspective gives knowledge.

(beat)

Our community... me... Sam... we're brave motherfuckers. But bravery has its limitations. You see, for courage to exist, so does fear. My parents disowned me when they found out. And honey, I'm one in a million.

Jeremy's path to understanding is barricaded with blame.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

You'll find your family again. You'll find Sam again. You'll find yourself again. And when that time comes... it will be tremendous.

(beat)

But you need to find the love in your heart for your son again.

(beat)

He deserves it.

A pause. Jeremy momentarily locks eyes with Trevor but doesn't know what to say.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Now drink your damn coffee and get out of here... I have a show to get ready for.

Jeremy grins for only a split second, enough to satisfy Trevor.

BEGIN MONTAGE #2

- A woman sweeps the porch of her urban, colonial-style home.
- A dive bar. The owner flips the sign to "OPEN."
- A group of children walk to school; joke.
- Wooden farm signs advertising various fresh crops for sale along a main road.
- A rundown strip mall. "CLOSED" signs.

END MONTAGE #2

EXT. WATER PARK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Families scatter like fish just freed from a bowl. A city bus pulls up. The doors open. Excited children and their parents flood out. Jeremy steps out with a toolbag in hand.

-- **ENTRANCE:** Jeremy makes his way to the back office, waving and smiling to familiar faces among the staff along his way.

-- **OFFICE:** Jeremy gently knocks on the door labeled "MANAGER," cracks it open and peeks in. It's LORI (42), the hard-ass, masculine-presenting owner of the park.

LORI

Jeremy! How you doin' bud?

JEREMY

Lori, how are ya?

LORI

I'd be a lot better if our goddamn main attraction were open, am I right?

JEREMY

Well, you called the right guy.

LORI

God bless ya.

Lori waves for Jeremy to follow him.

-- **MAINTENANCE AREA:** Lori escorts Jeremy through the machinery and plumbing.

LORI (CONT'D)

Seriously, you have no idea how much shit I would go through if we didn't open the Slide 'N' Swirl today. The only thing worse than angry kids are angry moms, I swear.

JEREMY

Oh, it's no problem, Lori. Could use the extra money. Plus, you know I never mind helping out an old friend.

LORI

Well, this old friend needs a lot of help. Hey, are you typically free these days?

JEREMY

Ah, I'm working full-time right now.

LORI

Aw, bummer because we really could use someone on call. Anyway, here's the problem. She won't seem to drain so I had to turn her off. I gotta go check on a few things before we open the floodgates but I'll be back in a few to check on an ETA okay?

JEREMY

Sounds good.

Lori exits. Jeremy gets to work. It's a surprisingly quick fix. Jeremy is pleasantly satisfied. He packs up and exits.

-- **PARK ENTRANCE:** Lori yells at an employee as Jeremy approaches.

LORI

Jeremy, please tell me you have good news.

JEREMY

You're all set. Easy fix.

LORI

Oh, thank god.
 (to staff)
 We're good, everyone! The Slide 'N' Swirl is swirlin'! Open the damn gates! Hurrah hurrah fuckin' hell.
 (to Jeremy)
 What do I owe you?

Lori removes his wallet and sorts through a wad of cash.

JEREMY

Oh, it's nothing. Took me twenty minutes.

LORI

Don't be humble. You came out to this shit show on a Saturday morning. Let's say one hundred?

JEREMY

Alright, one hundred it is.

LORI

Thanks, Jeremy. I mean it — you're a lifesaver. Here you go. Oh, and free tickets for you and the boy sometime this summer. How's that sound?

The question slices through Jeremy. He hides his wounds behind a fragile smirk.

JEREMY

Sounds great, Lori.

-- **PARKING LOT:** Jeremy impatiently waits for the bus. It takes forever.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - BUS STOP - LATER

Jeremy exits the bus at a rural stop. The sound of late-afternoon insects floods the humid air. He begins his journey.

-- **RIVER BRIDGE:** Teenage laughter serenades Jeremy from up ahead where the forest opens up like a window. He sees a teenage boy run across the bridge and leap over the edge. A moment of silence then, SPLASH.

TEENAGERS (O.S.)

(together)

Wooooo!

Jeremy grins, almost at the bridge now. One teenager remains — CODY (15), presumably the shy one of the group, always feeling the need to prove himself.

TEENAGER #1 (O.S.)

Come on, Cody!

TEENAGER #2 (O.S.)

Codyyyy!

Cody's breaths are shallow; anxious. Jeremy slows his walk. Cody notices him. The boy buries his fear and smiles with an uncertain excitement at Jeremy. Cody runs; leaps over the edge without a second guess.

SPLASH.

TEENAGERS (O.S.)

(together)

Wooooo!

Jeremy continues his trek.

TEENAGER #1 (O.S.)

Cody?

TEENAGER #3 (O.S.)

Cody!?

The calls become more frantic. Jeremy paces to the edge of the bridge. The group lines the riverbank below. They eye the roaring water with panic.

TEENAGER #1

Cody!?

Jeremy darts his eyes, anxiously searching. Waves crash. Massive logs cruise the current.

Cody surfaces and spits water. He swims to the riverbank with a tired limpness. The teenagers cheer unabashedly.

Jeremy continues with haste, uneasy and anxious.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jeremy enters and throws the day's mail onto the counter. Atop the pile of envelopes lies a red letter from PORTLAND MORTGAGE GROUP that reads "FINAL NOTICE." He chugs a glass of water and takes a moment to gather himself, perplexed as to why he's so shaken in the first place.

Jeremy glances around. Memories. Ghosts. He's overwhelmed with loneliness. He can't be here right now. Jeremy rushes past the DINING ROOM on his way out. More ghosts. SLAM. Jeremy is gone.

INT. GARY'S AUTO SHOP - DAY

DING. The bell rings as Jeremy enters. The small shop is empty aside from GARY, an affable small-town mechanic, about the same age as Jeremy.

GARY

Jeremy! How you doin', bud?

JEREMY

Hey, Gary.

GARY

Long time no see. I guess that's a good thing, though. They keep us in business, but we never wish for car troubles.

Jeremy respectfully smiles at Gary's friendliness.

GARY (CONT'D)

Ran into Jessica the other day.

JEREMY

Yeah?

GARY

She seems good. Mentioned that you were working at some new restaurant?

JEREMY

Yeah... somethin' like that.

GARY

Well I'm glad you're staying busy.

JEREMY

Yeah.

(beat)

So what do I owe ya?

Gary pauses, smiles and slides Jeremy's keys over the counter.

GARY

This one's on the house.

JEREMY

What? No.

GARY

Don't sweat it. Jessica mentioned that you've been struggling with the home and--

Jeremy shakes his head in disappointment.

GARY (CONT'D)

Jeremy... I never got to tell you how sorry I was. I am. For your son.

Jeremy grabs the keys, ready to go.

JEREMY

Thanks, Gary. And I appreciate it but I'll mail you a check.

Jeremy turns to leave.

GARY (O.S.)

You know, I also lost someone. That night.

Jeremy pauses.

GARY (CONT'D)
Hate is a terrible thing.
(beat)
This world could use more
kindness. And I'm just doing my
part... how little that part may
be.

Jeremy smiles at Gary with tenderness.

JEREMY
I'm sorry for your loss.

GARY
Thank you.
(beat)
Heaven gained a lot of beautiful
souls that night.

This thought surprises but comforts Jeremy; assures him.

JEREMY
I owe you one... okay?

GARY
I don't want to hear a word of it.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Jeremy browses the aisles while filling his basket, not much on his mind. He recognizes the classic rock song playing over the airwaves; mumbles the words to himself.

He turns a corner and stops at the unexpected sight of TREVOR. Jeremy freezes, unsure if he should greet or run.

Trevor stands still facing an aisle of FATHER'S DAY CARDS. He's indiscernible with something heavy on his mind.

Jeremy's uncertainty turns to curiosity. He's never seen this side of Trevor before.

Trevor senses someone is watching and looks around. Jeremy flees down the aisle out of sight.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Jeremy unloads bags of groceries into the bed of his truck. The wind carries the sound of cars whooshing by. It's a beautiful day.

Jeremy slams the door shut and notices a scuff in the paint by a tail-light, like someone ran a shopping cart into it. He licks his thumb and gives it a scrub. No luck. Jeremy not-so-discretely looks around for the perpetrator.

JEREMY
(under his breath)
Ass hole.

He pulls the bed back down; collects a rag, some spray, and car wax and gets to work buffing out the mark.

TREVOR (O.S.)
Why don't you just take it to a
car wash on your way home?

Jeremy is startled, humoring Trevor who holds two light grocery bags.

JEREMY
You kids and your car washes.
(beat)
A man's meant to care for his
truck.

TREVOR
In a grocery store parking lot?

JEREMY
What? You want the spot?

Trevor smirks. He sets his bags down and – without invitation – sits on the truck bed. Jeremy glares at him: *Seriously?*

TREVOR
What? It's not like you're going
anywhere.

Jeremy reluctantly resumes buffing.

JEREMY
(semi-jokingly)
Boy... if I were your father...

TREVOR
You'd what?
(makes whipping motion)
Give me the belt?

JEREMY
Jesus.

TREVOR
 You already know I don't have a
 dad, though.
 (beat)
 Maybe I should start taking
 applications.

Jeremy speculates if Trevor is implying that he should apply.
 It's cute, for just a moment.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
 Hey... there's something you
 should know.

The wind picks up.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
 Fundraising has been... slow.

Jeremy's paying attention now. Trevor hops down.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
 Everything is okay... we're still
 planning to finish construction on
 time but... you're going to hear
 about some layoffs soon and--

JEREMY
 --Layoffs?

TREVOR
 Yeah, but don't worry, Jeremy.
 Your job is safe we--

JEREMY
 --Fuckin' better be. I need this
 job, Trevor. I really need this
 job.

TREVOR
 I know, I know. Don't worry,
 Jeremy. I got you.

Jeremy glares at Trevor, frustrated he has no option but to
 trust him.

He slams the door shut and heads to the driver's seat. The
 ignition roars.

JEREMY
 (through the open window)
 See you at work.

Trevor hastily grabs his bags and jumps out of the way. Jeremy
 floors it, backing out of the spot.

The scuff remains.

BEGIN MONTAGE #3

-- **KITCHEN:** Jeremy unloads his groceries setting a CAN OF PAINT on the counter.

-- **DRIVEWAY:** He finishes buffing/waxing his truck, his frustrations eliminated by the natural isolation of his home where no one can disrupt his peace.

-- **GARAGE:** The makeshift toolshed is impressively stocked; organized. In the background, Jeremy finishes with his truck.

-- **BACKYARD:** The top of a ladder docks against the garage roof. Jeremy climbs it and paints with determination, a lit cigarette balanced between his lips. Later, he disembarks, steps back and admires the work unbeknownst to us.

END MONTAGE #3

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jeremy packs up when-- HONK HONK. Trevor pulls his sedan into the driveway and rolls down the window. POP MUSIC plays.

TREVOR

Hey.

JEREMY

What are you doing here?

TREVOR

(sarcastically)

I'm doing great, thanks.

(beat)

Okay, okay. I came to be the bigger man and... apologize.

A butchered, albeit lackluster effort.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, alright? For giving you a hard time earlier. Anyone who knows me will tell you it's a sign of affection.

JEREMY

Who said I wanted affection from you?

A pause. Trevor ponders if he's made a mistake by coming.

TREVOR

Listen, I'm heading to the pier. I don't know about you but I could use some ocean breeze and sunshine after this past week. What do you say?

JEREMY

Uh, I don't know. There's a lot I was hoping to get done around the house and--

TREVOR

--Fuck that.

JEREMY

What?

TREVOR

I said, fuck that. Let's go get some pier fries.

JEREMY

I don't kn--

HOOOOONK. Trevor lays on the horn.

TREVOR

Huh? I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you.

JEREMY

I sa--

HOOOOONK.

TREVOR

Yes? I heard a yes.

JEREMY

(reluctantly)

I guess you give me no choice.

TREVOR

At a boy.

JEREMY

Just give me a few to shower and get changed.

TREVOR

I'll be watching the exits.

JEREMY

Wait... how did you know where I live?

TREVOR

Honey, I dated your son, I've been all over this house.

INT./EXT. TREVOR'S CAR - LATER

Trevor blasts upbeat pop music, singing along as they cruise down the highway. The car is messy.

Jeremy is already out of his comfort zone when he sees a breast plate exposed on the back seat. Awkward, but not for Trevor who notices and chuckles.

EXT. BEACH PIER AMUSEMENT PARK - LATER

Jeremy and Trevor stroll through lively crowds of families and vendors. The ocean wind permeates excitement. Jeremy can't relate.

TREVOR

So... how have you been holding up lately?

JEREMY

Okay, I guess. Thankful for the job.

TREVOR

Well, you know we're thankful for your work. What is it you were working on back home? Painting was it?

JEREMY

Oh, nothing. Just an... idea. Something to keep me busy. Sober.

TREVOR

How long you been sober for now?

JEREMY

Since Friday.

TREVOR

Friday doesn't count. Don't be so hard on yourself.

JEREMY

That's not really how recovery works.

TREVOR

Yeah, but you should be more forgiving. We all have our vices. And you've been through a lot. Life isn't easy – we deserve to be kind to ourselves.

JEREMY

What's yours?

TREVOR

My what?

JEREMY

Vice.

TREVOR

Oh. It comes in different forms, I guess.

(beat)

Right now, it's food. More specifically, eating foods that I'm allergic to. Like, I'm lactose intolerant but when I'm depressed I'll fucking crush a pint of ice cream.

JEREMY

That sucks. What's life without ice cream?

TREVOR

Right? Well, for me, it's pizza. I love ice cream but fuck do I miss pizza.

JEREMY

Should we get a slice? Pier pizza's my favorite.

TREVOR

Ha... Ha. Tempting but I'll have to settle for some fries.

(beat)

What made you want to do it – get sober?

JEREMY

Drove my car into a tree.

TREVOR

Oh fuck. Did anyone get hurt?

JEREMY

Just me. But only some bruises and a pretty bad concussion. Luckily there wasn't anyone else in the car and the tree was on my sister's front lawn so it didn't get reported, either. She threatened to, though. Getting sober was thanks to her, really. She told me, "Get sober or go to jail."

TREVOR

Your sister sounds like one of the good ones.

JEREMY

She is. I probably don't tell her that enough.

A pause.

TREVOR

You know, I used to come here all the time with Sam.

JEREMY

Yeah?

TREVOR

Yeah.

The men stop at an ocean overlook. Waves collide into the beach with monotonous force.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I'll never forget him - his kindness. You raised a good man. But I'm sure you already knew that, didn't you?

Jeremy questions this reality.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Do you think he's here with us now?

Jeremy shrugs.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

If he were, what would you say to him?

Jeremy falls silent.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I'd tell him not to worry about me. Because you know that's exactly what he's doing - worrying. That boy could not turn off his brain. But it's because of that overthinking that he cared. He cared so damn much. And I'd just want him to know that I'm doing okay.

JEREMY

He always seemed like such a happy kid around me.

TREVOR

He was. For the most part. I think his problem was that he... he prioritized everyone else's happiness - treading so carefully as to never put himself before others, even if it hurt him.

Jeremy contemplates his culpability in this. Trevor reads his mind.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Would it have hurt you?

JEREMY

What?

TREVOR

Sam. If he told you.

JEREMY

These moments in hindsight are hard to fathom when your world has been turned upside-down.

TREVOR

But you know now.

JEREMY

Do I? It feels like the older I get, the less I know.

TREVOR
 Children hide things from their
 parents. It's in their nature.

Jeremy isn't satisfied

JEREMY
 I just... I feel like I tried my
 best. As a father. To make Sam
 feel safe.

TREVOR
 Let me ask you this: have you told
 all of your friends? Your family?

JEREMY
 No... I... I haven't.

Jeremy follows a young boy swimming through shallow water. He
 looks lost.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
 Earlier today, I saw a young boy
 nearly drown.

TREVOR
 Jesus.

JEREMY
 Kinda reminded me of Sam, too. In
 the way that he looked like he
 never really fit in with anyone,
 but desperately wanted to. And I
 just couldn't stop thinking about
 what if he hadn't come back up?
 What if he stayed down there,
 kidnapped by the current? All the
 lives he'd leave behind. I
 wondered... I wondered if anyone
 would miss him.

TREVOR
 I'm sure a lot of people would.

Jeremy ruminates on this for a bit.

JEREMY
 I think I know what I'd tell him.
 Sam.
 (beat)
 I'd tell him that I approve.

Jeremy smirks at a warmed Trevor. The men continue their trek
 down the boardwalk.

TREVOR
Oh shit.

JEREMY
What?

TREVOR
Isn't that the guy you got into a
fight with the other day?

Up ahead is MIKE with his wife, KALLIE (32) and son, JUSTIN
(7). They're enjoying themselves... until Mike notices Jeremy.

JEREMY
Fuck me.

TREVOR
It's okay. Let's just say hi.
We'll be cordial. Professional.
Right, Jeremy?

JEREMY
Yeah, I doubt he's on the same
page.

MIKE
Jeremy. What are you doin' here?

JEREMY
Uh, just catching up with a
friend. Mike, you know Trevor?

MIKE
I don't think I do. Hi. Uh,
Kallie, Justin - why don't y'all
go check out the games over there,
what do you say?

Kallie awkwardly nods and escorts her son away.

MIKE (CONT'D)
So... what's this?

JEREMY
Mike, listen... there's something
I've been wanting to tell you.

MIKE
Jeremy, I don't have time for--

JEREMY
--Sam was gay. He didn't die in a
car accident. He died at Paradiso.
In the shooting.

MIKE
Jesus.

JEREMY
Yeah.

MIKE
What... do you want an apology?

JEREMY
Mike--

MIKE
--Listen, Jeremy. I don't care that Sam was... gay. Whatever. That's none of my business. Just like whatever this faggy shit is.

JEREMY
Fuck you, Mike.

TREVOR
Whoa! Say what now?

MIKE
Fuck you too, Jeremy. And your little boyfriend.

Jeremy goes in for a punch. Trevor gets in between the two men and pushes them apart with surprising strength. Mike trips and tumbles to the ground. Kallie rushes over to help him up.

TREVOR
Aw, hell no. Not you, Jeremy, I can see now why you hit this motherfucker.
(to Mike)
You - some dumbass who clearly does not recognize me, one of the managers for Paradiso. Yeah. And you, sir, are fuckin' fired.

Jeremy chuckles.

KALLIE
What?! You can't fire him!

TREVOR
I just did.

Justin rushes over.

JUSTIN
Mommy! Look what I won!

The young boy points to a sparkling pink tiara, worn on his head with pride.

Trevor and Jeremy turn to each other and burst into laughter. Two security officers work their way through the crowd.

TREVOR

Let's go.

Jeremy and Trevor run off like giddy school children.

KALLIE

Yeah, you better run!

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREVOR'S CAR - LATER

Upbeat pop music blasts as Trevor drives. The two men sit in silence. What just happened?

EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jeremy exits the car. He waves at Trevor and starts for the front door. Trevor turns the music down and shouts through the open window:

TREVOR

Hey! That was fun. Right?

JEREMY

Yeah. I guess you could say that. Either way, thanks for getting me out of the house.

TREVOR

Anything for a fellow lost soul.

JEREMY

Hey, you know... you don't have to worry about me. Like what you were saying about Sam.

TREVOR

What makes you think I worry about you?

Jeremy gestures, *I mean...*

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, don't you worry about that. Hey, will I see you at the memorial tomorrow?

JEREMY

I'm not sure yet. I'll think about it.

A pause. Jeremy turns to depart again when--

TREVOR

He saved someone that night.

Jeremy stops.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Some... young woman. He... huddled over her.

Trevor digests what he just disclosed with Jeremy before driving off.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jeremy takes a seat at the table - the same seat as his dinner with Sam. He ponders his ghosts and their valor.

-- **SAM'S ROOM:** Jeremy passes the closed door to Sam's room. He opens it and peeks inside. It's grim, only lit by the day's final strands of sunlight. Jeremy flicks on the light. He departs, leaving the door cracked behind him.

BEGIN MONTAGE #4

- Jeremy's coffee machine brews.
- A tranquil beach in the morning. The beach Ferris wheel creaks alive.
- Jeremy gets dressed.
- Jeremy checks out at a home improvement store - an expensive purchase.
- Jeremy opens up at AA. A good session.
- Jeremy directs a delivery team where to put his new DISHWASHER.
- Jeremy nervously selects a BOUQUET.

END MONTAGE #4

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Jeremy returns to work. No drag queens this time. Instead, a hefty neon sign reading "Paradiso" in cursive rises above the entrance. Jeremy smirks. Progress.

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

Walls are now cemented, outlining a large event space. A team puts flooring down. Another finishes up the roofing.

Holden and the leadership team enter.

HOLDEN
(announcing)
Alright, I need Team 1 and Team 2
to join me over here for a moment.

Several of the laborers - Jeremy included - stop what they're doing and gather around Holden and the leadership team.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
First off, I'd like to... we'd all
like to congratulate you on your
hard work. The venue is really
coming together. We assessed the
progress today and it looks like
we're about a month behind
schedule but we've run into some
hiccups which were to be expected
so that's okay. Either way, we
appreciate your dedication to this
job. We wouldn't be able to do
this without you. Today--

Someone in the leadership team awkwardly claps. The rest follow suit.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
Today, we're going to be switching
gears. There's a project we've
been putting off that we need to
prioritize. I'm just warning you
now - it's not going to be easy.

Laborers glance at one another. Holden points at the section of the club left untouched by the previous Paradiso.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
That section over there needs to
be renovated ASAP so that the
production team can start loading
in equipment next week.
(MORE)

HOLDEN (CONT'D)
 Now... that room is — for the most
 part — still untouched since the
 shooting.

Jeremy tenses up.

HOLDEN (CONT'D) (O.S.)
 It was one of the only salvageable
 spaces left after the tragedy.
 That being said, you may come
 across some...

JASON
 Triggering.

HOLDEN
 Triggering scenes. Bullet holes.
 Shells. Police tape. Just be
 prepared. We'll be sending a
 custodial team in with you to help
 get all of that cleaned up. Any
 questions?

Trevor observes Jeremy, concerned. They meet eyes. Trevor
 offers a nervous smile. Jeremy doesn't flinch.

-- OLD ROOM: Workers enter the ominous room single file.
 Drowning sunlight is replaced by damp darkness and a single
 construction light in a corner. Everyone observes humbly.
 Heavy.

Jeremy enters; takes it all in.

Holden observes, allowing everyone a moment.

Jeremy examines a line of bullet holes that jet up the side of
 a wall. He brushes one with his hand.

HOLDEN (O.S.)
 Alright, everyone. Let's get to
 work.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE — LATER

The laborers scatter; depart.

TREVOR (O.S.)
 Jeremy!

Trevor catches up with Jeremy.

TREVOR

Hey, I'm really sorry... I didn't know they were going to put you on that project.

JEREMY

Considering you laid everyone else off who the fuck did you think was gonna have to do it?

TREVOR

Well you still have a job, don't you?

(beat)

Regardless, I'm sure that wasn't easy and I'm sorry.

Jeremy reluctantly comes around.

JEREMY

That's alright. I guess this is what I signed up for.

TREVOR

Jeremy... a man of his word.

Jeremy smirks.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Despite being kind of an ass hole, you are one strong motherfucker, you know that?

JEREMY

Yeah, tell that to my Alcoholics Anonymous group.
(chuckles)

Trevor doesn't laugh at the joke – something's on his mind.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

You alright?

TREVOR

Huh?

JEREMY

You seem... bothered. Is everything okay with the club?

TREVOR

Yeah... yeah... Paradiso's going strong...

JEREMY
Go on, spill.

TREVOR
Remember when I told you about my family? Getting kicked out when I was young?

JEREMY
Yeah.

TREVOR
I found out yesterday that my father... he passed away.

JEREMY
Oh... Trevor... I'm so sorry.

TREVOR
Yeah, it is what it is. But the funeral is this weekend. I didn't really expect it but... they sent me an invitation.

JEREMY
Well, that's good. Are you going?

TREVOR
Hell no. I haven't spoken to my family in over half a decade and they just send me an invitation to my father's funeral out of the blue? I didn't even know he was dying or... or how he died.

JEREMY
Maybe it's an olive branch of some sort.

TREVOR
Yeah well, that olive branch is dry and wilted.
(beat)
No good can come of it. And I just have so much going on right now: the drag competition, the tribute show, fundraising for Paradiso. I just don't have the capacity for any more... complications.

Jeremy doesn't know what to say. He never was good at this.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
It's just...
(MORE)

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I don't feel like I know the man they're burying. Who he is. Who he became. Hell, I don't even know if he'd want me there.

A pause. Jeremy clumsily finds the words.

JEREMY

You know, I'm not gay or anything--

TREVOR

--You don't say--

JEREMY

--And I never got kicked out of my home. But I can relate... I can relate in the way that I always felt like I didn't belong in my family. Like an outcast in my home. My mom, dad... they were good, hard-working people. But they were stern. Rigid. Sometimes downright mean. God-fearing people, you know? I mean, I tried... tried to find God... and for a while I thought I did. But the more I think back on it, I just don't think I ever related to any of that... to them.

(beat)

In their later years, we became distant. The closer they got to God, the more I felt ostracized.

(beat)

When they passed, I was just out of hip surgery... somewhat hooked on oxy... and didn't want to gather myself for the funeral.

(regretfully)

So I didn't.

(beat)

Two months later it hit me. The grief. Like an avalanche.

TREVOR

I... I didn't see you at Sam's funeral, either.

A knife to Jeremy's heart. He buries the pain.

JEREMY

Grief is a strange thing.

(MORE)

JEREMY (CONT'D)

It's no excuse but... it can cloud your vision. Create regret.

(beat)

This funeral... this... death. It's just as much about you as it is your family, Trevor.

This sinks in with Trevor.

TREVOR

Thanks, Jeremy. I'll think about it.

A pause.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

You know, you seem like you were a really great dad.

Jeremy is momentarily overwhelmed with emotions; uncertainty.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

No, really. You're a good man, Jeremy. And no, I'm not fucking flirting with you if that's what you're thinking.

They share a laugh.

JEREMY

Well apparently you're into women now so I guess I shouldn't be too concerned?

TREVOR

Oh, honey. We don't have time for that conversation right now but trust me we will be having it.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Jeremy and Jessica stare onward, saddened and stoic. They're surrounded by dozens of fellow onlookers, all clutching candles. Portland Pride Center's PRESTON - a passionate, confident, 30-something trans man - addresses the crowd from a podium.

PRESTON (O.S.)

... and that's why we came together - one year later - to remember those who are no longer here with this memorial.

Ahead of Jeremy, Trevor turns and offers a melancholic smile. Jessica notices. She curiously eyes Jeremy who redirects his gaze downward.

Preston waves an arm as someone yanks the blanket down from a concrete wall bordering the sidewalk. Jeremy is overcome with emotion. Jessica grabs his hand. The concrete wall has been transformed into a MEMORIAL.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Let this memorial serve as a testament to the love, strength and resilience each and every one of these human beings brought into this world.

(beat)

We will never forget them.

Photos of smiling young men and women checker the wall, cemented like ceramic tiles. The faces stare back at Jeremy.

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

Thank you to everyone who contributed. I encourage you all to spend however much time here as you need. Just like me... just like us... just like this community... this memorial isn't going anywhere. Thank you.

The crowd claps amidst sniffles and sobs.

CUT TO:

Flowers and candles scatter the ground. Jeremy emerges through the mourning crowd. He nervously approaches the wall and observes a few pictures. A graduation photo. A young mom cradling her newborn. A lesbian couple at the altar.

Jeremy pulls a photo from his pocket. He pins it to the wall with his thumb, analyzes the positioning making sure it's just right and tapes it on. It's the POLAROID OF SAM, reveling in young adulthood. Haunting. Heavy.

CUT TO:

Jeremy and Jessica depart.

JESSICA

Conner finally wanted to have sex the other night.

JEREMY

Well that's good, right?

JESSICA

Anal. He wanted anal.

JEREMY

Jessica, Jesus we're at a memorial.

JESSICA

Oh come on, we're surrounded by gay men - I don't think anyone here is going to shy away from the word anal. Not to mention you look like you just tried robbing someone and lost yet you're here so...

(beat)

But I guess you're right. How are you holding up? That was a bit... intense, huh?

JEREMY

I'm good. This was good.

JESSICA

Good, Jer. You... you seem to be pulling it together. For Sam. I'm proud of you. Have you thought--

TREVOR (O.S.)

--Jeremy!

Trevor catches up with Jessica and Jeremy, Andrea at his side.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Hey. It's really good to see you here.

JEREMY

I'm alright, thanks. Trevor, this is my sister Jessica. Jessica, this is Trevor. Sam's old... boyfriend.

Jeremy grows nervous about how much else Trevor may disclose to Jessica.

JESSICA

Oh. My. God. Trevor! It is an absolute honor to meet you.

TREVOR

Well, thank you, Jessica. I've heard such great things about you. This is my girlfriend, Andrea.

JESSICA

Hi Andrea, it's great to meet you.

TREVOR

(to Jeremy)

I just wanted to check in with you. See how you're holding up after that.

JEREMY

I'm doing pretty good, actually.

TREVOR

Good, Jeremy. Hey, so we're having a fundraiser next weekend that I've been organizing. It'll be at the club down the street and we're including a special tribute.

ANDREA

And?

TREVOR

And yours truly is performing.

JESSICA

Oh my God!

TREVOR

Well, I ain't no god but you could certainly say I'm god-like.

JESSICA

In that case, I will bring all of my dollar bills for this queen.

TREVOR

Damn straight you will! Jessica: a true ally.

(to Jeremy)

Take notes, straight man.

They laugh. Jeremy awkwardly joins in.

ANDREA

We'll see you there?

JEREMY

Uh--

JESSICA

--You know it!

Jeremy eyes his sister. She ignores him.

TREVOR
Excellent. Alright, well, we have
got to get going.

JESSICA
It was so great to meet you both.

TREVOR
Likewise. We'll see you around.

Jeremy bashfully nods goodbye. Trevor and Andrea exit. Jessica and Jeremy pace silently for a moment.

JESSICA
I think in another life all my
friends were gay.

JEREMY
Yeah, that checks out.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A record spins. The little things stress Jeremy out as he cooks dinner, but he enjoys the pressure.

KNOCK KNOCK. Jeremy wonders who it is.

-- **DOORWAY:** Jessica waits outside. She's bothered. Jeremy opens the door, surprised to see his sister who immediately perks up.

JEREMY
Hey, Jess.

JESSICA
Hey Jer.

JEREMY
Don't get me wrong, it's good to
see you and all but it feels a
little bit like you're checking up
on me.

JESSICA
What?! Can't a sister pay her
brother a surprise visit every
once in a while?

Jeremy eyes Jessica with an inquisitive smirk. Jessica melts.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Fine. It's been a rough day, okay?

JEREMY
Join me for dinner? I made extra.

CUT TO:

-- **DINING ROOM - LATER:** The brother and sister share a laugh from across the dining table. They've just finished dinner. Jessica drinks wine - she's had a bit already. Jeremy doesn't partake, enjoying a cola instead.

JESSICA

So wait... how did you even meet Trevor in the first place?

JEREMY

Oh, uh we met at that restaurant I'm working at.

JESSICA

Huh. Small world.

(beat)

I just can't believe you're friends with a drag queen.

JEREMY

Well, I don't know about friends. But we... we get along.

JESSICA

Gosh, where is my brother and what have you done with him?

(beat)

But seriously, I think it's really sweet that you've gotten to know Trevor. I bet Sam is smiling down on you from the vast heaven-less emptiness above the clouds.

They laugh. A pause.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I'm leaving Conner.

JEREMY

What?

JESSICA

Yeah. It's... it's just not working.

JEREMY

Are you okay?

JESSICA

I don't know yet. But I think I will be. I think it's needed. I love him but he's changed.

(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

We've both grown and I think that growth has caused distance. And that's okay. I just wish I felt that I knew the man I was moving on from.

A pause. Jeremy's lack of response disappoints his sister.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Are you happy?

Jeremy digests the question.

JEREMY

Yeah. Yeah, I guess. Happier than I've been in a while, at least.

(beat)

Summer's a tough time, though... Sam's passing and Sarah's birthday just a couple of weeks apart.

JESSICA

Yeah, if God does exist he's quite an asshole, isn't he?

JEREMY

Sometimes I wonder how Sarah would have handled all of this... Sam's passing... You know?

A pause.

JESSICA

Do you ever think about ghosts?

JEREMY

Ghosts?

JESSICA

Yeah. You know... souls. People. Still with us.

JEREMY

You don't believe in all of that do you?

JESSICA

I don't know what I believe in. But sometimes I choose to believe that we still get to walk this Earth in the afterlife. As observers. Seeing everything we've left behind.

(MORE)

JESSICA (CONT'D)

(beat)

I imagine Sarah would be by your side. Her arm probably wrapped around you like she always used to do. And if that's the case... if she is there... I think she's been there for a long time... seen... experienced all of the things you've been through.

(beat)

And I think she'd worry. For the family she left behind all those years ago.

JEREMY

Well, according to your theory she would be with Sam, right? She would have him.

JESSICA

That's not my point.

JEREMY

What is your point? Are you saying I should join them?

JESSICA

Jeremy! No, what?!

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I know, I know, Jess. I'm just messing with you.

Jessica eyes Jeremy. *You're not getting out of this one.*

JEREMY (CONT'D)

I think that if Sarah... and Sam... were here right now. Nothing would make me happier than knowing they're next to me when I say, "I love you both."

Jessica is warmed. The room grows hushed.

JESSICA

Okay, now I'm a little fuckin' freaked out.

JEREMY

Should I break out the Ouija board?

JESSICA

I said I believed in ghosts I didn't say I liked them. Creepy assholes.

JEREMY

That'll be you one day. One big
creepy asshole.

JESSICA

At least I'm not already one big
creepy asshole.

-- **LIVING ROOM:** Jessica and Jeremy's conversation is indiscernible in the distance — fading away — as we zoom in on a **COLORFUL BOOK**. It lies flat atop a coffee table on a small paper bag with an accompanying receipt. The title is too far away to make out.

AA JACOB (PRE-LAP)

Her fourth birthday was this past
May. So I got her a cake with four
over-the-top sparkling candles.

Eventually, we see the book's title:

EMBRACING LOVE: LESSONS IN PARENTING A QUEER CHILD

AA JACOB (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)

And I drank that day. Her
birthday... it's hard for me.

INT. SUBURBAN CHURCH — NIGHT

Jeremy loses himself in his thoughts once again at AA.

MEETING HOST (O.S.)

It's okay, Jacob. I know this is
difficult but it's important that
we confront this trauma. Please...
go on.

AA JACOB (CONT'D)

Well, like I said, Maddie's
birthday is hard for me because
that's the day I lost my wife. She
had a complicated pregnancy and...
(beat)

Anyways. I was drunk by the time I
brought out the cake. And then I
drank some more. Things got...
blurry. Dizzy.

(beat) (emotional)

But I lit the candles. The last
thing I remember was... one by
one... with each spark... I
watched her face light up with
joy.

AA Jacob now has Jeremy's attention.

AA JACOB (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 When I woke up...
 (beat)
 When I woke up, I was in a hospital bed. I didn't know where she was and... I was handcuffed to the bed. An officer explained to me that the house caught fire. And... and Maddie... Maddie was burnt bad... And she was with Child and Family Services.

MEETING HOST
 Jacob, I'm so sorry.

AA JACOB
 There's a trial date set but my lawyer... she said there's not much of a chance I'll get my baby back. I think she's gone.

MEETING HOST (O.S.)
 I understand how you're feeling, Jacob but she's not gone. She still has her whole life ahead of her.

AA JACOB (O.S.)
 And she will grow up. And I won't know who she is anymore.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Jeremy approaches the construction site. A group of boisterous workers huddle around the entrance. Curious.

He passes the memorial. CRATERS have been vandalized into the wall of photos. A HAMMER lies on the ground. Jeremy grows frantic. He rushes to the worksite. The Paradiso sign no longer hangs above the entrance. Jeremy pushes through the rowdy laborers, revealing a closed gate and a SIGN:

NO TRESPASSING. SITE CLOSED.

Jeremy is shocked; confused. Holden and the club owners rush toward them. Complaints roar through the laborers.

HOLDEN
 Everyone! Calm down. Hey! Listen up!

Holden struggles to get their attention. Blake blares the siren from a megaphone. It's piercing. Everyone grows sheepishly quiet. Holden thanks Blake with a nod.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Alright, everyone. I'm really sorry you had to find out this way but as you can see, we had a last-minute decision to make today.

Jeremy observes Trevor arrive and run into the crowd. It seems he's also in the dark.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

This morning... when we arrived, the site had been irreparably vandalized. After taking a short while to assess the damage, we've, unfortunately, deemed the remnants unsalvageable. Due to financial constraints, we don't have the funding to mend the damage.

(beat)

I'm really sorry, everyone, but Paradiso will no longer be re-opening. We would all like to sincerely thank you for your time, but sadly, your work here is no longer needed.

Trevor crumbles. Jeremy boils with emotions. He flees back to his truck, angrily mumbling under his breath. Trevor runs after him, Andrea in pursuit.

TREVOR

Jeremy. Jeremy! Hey!

(beat)

Are you alright? Fuck, this is awful. I can't believe after all of this work... all of this... faith...

Jeremy ignores him.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Jeremy. I don't know what to say.

(beat)

Hey, why don't you come over and we can blow off some steam before the tribute show tonight? I think we could all use it.

JEREMY

You think I give a shit about some drag show, or whatever the fuck you want to call it? I would never – never – go to something like that. Paradiso... all of this... this was a job. Nothing more, nothing less.

TREVOR

Jeremy what the Hell? I get that you're angry but you're not in this alone here.

JEREMY

Oh yeah? Are you going to lose your home now?

TREVOR

No but it wouldn't be the first time if I did.

(beat)

I guess now you could say we've both lost the place we once called home. And for the same reason.

JEREMY

Fuck this.

TREVOR

No. I hate to be the one to break it to you, Jeremy but this is the world we live in.

ANDREA

(to Trevor)
Let's just go.

JEREMY

This is the world you live in.

TREVOR

The world your son lived in.

JEREMY

Son? What son? Understand one thing, Trevor. I get that you feel guilty or whatever but this chapter in my life is closed. It should have been closed a long time ago. And I'm ready to forget about you. And all your friends. And this God-forsaken club.

(beat)

And Sam.

TREVOR (CONT'D)

Sam wanted to introduce us but he couldn't find the strength to tell you. And the only reason I feel guilty is the disappointment I showed him that night. And now I know that the disappointment I directed at Sam should have been aimed at you all along.

JEREMY

Fuck you, Trevor. I'm done here. Go cry about it to someone else.

TREVOR

Oh, I'm done crying. My wounds have healed. Maybe yours would too if you'd grieve your son the way he deserves.

Jeremy explodes.

JEREMY

How am I supposed to grieve a son that I never fucking knew? Fact is, my son died a long, long time ago. I just didn't know it. That - this - wasn't my son.

Jeremy gets in his truck, slams the door and glares at Trevor. The rubber of his tires squeal as he speeds off.

In the rearview, Trevor cradles Andrea in his chest.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jeremy reels into his driveway. Jessica sits on the front patio. Jeremy bypasses her on his way to the front door.

JESSICA

Jeremy... what's going on?
(beat)
Jeremy.

JEREMY

What are you doing here, Jess?

JESSICA

I was in the area and just wanted to check on you.

JEREMY

He fucking called you, didn't he?

JESSICA

Jer... Trevor's just worried about you is all.

JEREMY

Fucking hell.

JESSICA

I'm worried about you, too. Jeremy... I just want to help.

JEREMY

I don't need any fucking help.

JESSICA

You do need help. And that's okay. You need to face your grief. You can't keep putting yourself through this cycle.

Jeremy hardens, then contemplates for a moment.

JEREMY

Did you know?

JESSICA

Know about what?

JEREMY

Sam.

JESSICA

Jer, what are you talking about?

JEREMY

You know what I'm fucking talking about.

JESSICA

That he was gay?

Jeremy glares at his sister.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Listen... Jer--

JEREMY

--Just tell me.

JESSICA

(reluctantly)

He told me a few weeks before he passed. After we all went to dinner at Charlie's place.

JEREMY

Jesus.

JESSICA

I'm sorry, Jer. He made me promise not to tell you. He said it was something he wanted to do in his own time.

JEREMY

Then why the fuck didn't he?

JESSICA

I'm sure he was planning on it but it seemed like... I don't know... like--

JEREMY

--You're telling me he told his fucking aunt before his own father?

Jessica is stumped. A pause.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

Fuck this.

Jeremy jets back to his truck, Jessica in pursuit.

JESSICA

Jeremy... Jeremy!

Jeremy speeds off.

INT./EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - LATER

BAM. BAM. The sound of HAMMERING plays over grim glimpses of a nearly-completed, vandalized Paradiso:

- The PARADISO SIGN, cracked on the ground outside.
- Nails and their accompanying shadows on a sawdusted floor.
- Slanderous GRAFFITI.
- The haunting opening to the recently renovated OLD ROOM.

Jeremy hammers away. Violent. He grunts with every thrash, determined to continue his labor.

Jeremy notices MIKE'S HARLEY DAVIDSON LANYARD - ripped on the flooring. Curiously, he picks it up.

Anger takes over.

INT. GAY NIGHTCLUB - SIDE ROOM - SAME TIME

Joyous anticipation pulses through the room.

-- **DRESSING ROOM:** Frantic. Makeup spilling onto the floor. Shouting. Trevor looks saddened, though stunning. He plasters makeup on his face, gazing through the VANITY MIRROR.

ANDREA (O.S.)
What's wrong?

Trevor sighs, offers Andrea a sad smile and exits.

-- **BACKSTAGE** He saunters behind a closed curtain and peeks through, searching for someone in the crowd. He doesn't find them. Disappointment. Trevor saunters back to the dressing room, conflicted.

-- **DRESSING ROOM** Andrea embraces him. Atop the counter lies an ORDER OF SERVICE PAMPHLET from his father's funeral.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S TRUCK - LATER

Jeremy desperately inhales a smoke as he swerves through the ominous forestry of a rural road.

EXT. MIKE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Darkness floods the disheveled plot of land as Jeremy's truck speeds down the driveway. Jeremy parks and jumps out, leaving the engine running. He jets to the doors.

Jeremy prepares an aggressive knock but what he hears causes him to pause. Inside, Mike and Kallie are fighting. Caught off guard, he contemplates his next move.

JUSTIN (O.S.)
Are you here to hurt my dad again?

Startled, Jeremy turns to see a lonely Justin, only visible by the moonlight. He sits on a swing with grounded feet, fidgeting with a TOY. Jeremy inches closer.

JEREMY
Uh, hey Justin. What are you doing out here by yourself?

JUSTIN
This is where I come when Mom and
Dad fight. It's quieter.

JEREMY
I see.

Jeremy's now near enough to see that Justin is attempting to
piece a BARBIE DOLL back together. He has a few PAINTED FINGER
NAILS.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
What happened to your friend?

JUSTIN
Dad. He doesn't like it when I
play with them.

JEREMY
How'd you get it then?

JUSTIN
My babysitter, Jenny. I don't
think I'll be seeing her anymore.

JEREMY
Uh huh. Did Jenny paint your nails
too?

JUSTIN
Yeah. Do you like them?

JEREMY
I think they're great.

Jeremy sits on the other swing.

JUSTIN
Mom and Dad didn't. I think that's
why they're mad at each other.
(beat)
Me.

JEREMY
I'm sorry, Justin. You shouldn't
blame yourself, though.

JUSTIN
I think it's because I'm not like
the other boys at school.

JEREMY
Not different. Special.

JUSTIN
You think so?

JEREMY
I know so. Want to know why?

Justin nods. Adorably curious.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Because you're brave. Braver than me. Braver than your dad. You think your dad would ever dare paint his fingernails?

Justin laughs at the thought.

JUSTIN
No, I guess not.

JEREMY
Exactly. You... you're just being yourself. And I think that's the bravest darn thing anyone can do.

A pause.

JUSTIN
Can I show you something?

JEREMY
Sure.

JUSTIN
You promise not to tell my dad?

JEREMY
Promise.

JUSTIN
Swear to God?

JEREMY
Swear to God.

Justin reaches in his pocket and removes a bottle of SILVER NAIL POLISH.

JUSTIN
I took this from Jenny's purse before she left.

JEREMY
Well poor Jenny, she's having a rough night isn't she?

JUSTIN
She sucked anyways. Always brought
her boyfriend over, if you know
what I mean.

Jeremy laughs incredulously.

JEREMY
Do you know what you mean?

JUSTIN
Do you want one?

Justin presents one of his painted fingernails with a smirk.

JEREMY
Absolutely.

CUT TO:

Justin sloppily puts the finishing touches on one of Jeremy's
fingernails.

JUSTIN
... and that's when Ken realizes
he was wrong about Patriotarchy
and Barbieland is restored to its
normal self.

JEREMY
Wow, that sounds like quite a
movie.

JUSTIN
Yeah. There's even singing and
dancing. You know what I want to
be when I grow up?

JEREMY
What?

JUSTIN
A famous dancer. Maybe an actor,
too. But I love dancing. Though, I
have to hide it from my Dad.

JEREMY
Well you know what I think?

JUSTIN
What?

JEREMY

I think you can be whatever you want when you grow up.

This inspires Justin.

JUSTIN

You sound like my teacher. The other day in school, he asked us to write a letter to someone we wanted to be when we got older. Roller models.

(beat)

I picked my mom.

Something crosses Jeremy's mind.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

She wanted to be an actress when she was younger and... well... it hasn't worked out for her yet but you know what - she's still trying. She's always reminding me that it's never too late to start doing what you love.

JEREMY

I guess it isn't.

JUSTIN

What did you want to be when you grew up? I mean... before you got old.

JEREMY

Hey now. Uhm... I wasn't like you back then, I guess. Played lots of sports. Hung out with lots of women. And then I had a son and I got married, and suddenly it wasn't about me anymore.

(beat)

I guess I've always wanted to own my own business. Be my own boss.

JUSTIN

Did you do it?

JEREMY

I didn't. But a smart little man once told me it's never too late to start doing what you love.

JUSTIN

Amen.

(beat)

Yes! All done. What do you think?

Butchered.

JEREMY

I think they look great.

JUSTIN

Thanks. You... you should probably get going now. I think they're done fighting and will wonder where I am soon. Unless... should I go get my dad?

JEREMY

No, Justin, that's alright. I shouldn't have come here tonight but you know what... I'm really glad I did.

JUSTIN

Me too.

JEREMY

Hey... keep your head up. You're a good kid.

JUSTIN

Thanks, Jeremy. You're a good grown up.

Jeremy smirks.

CUT TO:

Jeremy shuts the door of his truck. He looks out the window at Justin and waves goodbye. Justin smiles and waves back. Jeremy drives off.

INT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The door atop the stairway opens, gleaming light into the dreary concrete confine. Jeremy's silhouette stands in the doorway before descending to the unnerving box of SAM'S DORM MATERIALS, still spilled across the concrete.

He picks up the LETTER ADDRESSED TO MOM with DIRTY/BATTERED HANDS and tears it open.

SAM (V.O.)

Dear Mom.

(beat)

I can feel it. I can feel how much you miss me. I feel it every day, almost as if you're here, watching over me.

(beat)

I wish I could say that I miss you too. My memories of you... they're all formed from photos, film of time come and gone.

(beat)

It's hard to stay in the present when I feel lost somewhere between the past and the future - a forgotten time when our family was whole and the time that I'm hopeful is yet to come... the time when I'm finally free.

Jeremy is flooded with emotions; grief.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That's why it's time for me to go. To leave home. To embrace myself and the world that's bound to shape me. I guess I have you to thank for this. Between the money you left me and the cash I've been saving, I finally have enough to start my journey.

Something crosses Jeremy's mind.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You aren't the only person I should thank, though. Ever since you passed, Dad's been there for me, through and through. He's still stuck in his old ways, though - you can tell because he still gives me money every time I visit like I'm his grandchild. I can't remember much, but from what I can remember of you, I think you'd get a kick out of that.

-- **SAM'S ROOM:** Jeremy flicks on the light and yanks the SHOEBOX from under the bed. He hesitates before opening it, revealing a MANILLA ENVELOPE brimming with twenty and hundred-dollar bills.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We're such different people,
 though - me and Dad. I try and I
 try to tell him the truth but...
 we don't tell each other secrets.

(beat)

I don't know how he'd take it but
 I do know that one day I'll garner
 the courage to open up to him...
 to the world. And on that day I
 hope our differences are
 outweighed by our openness - our
 honesty.

-- **KITCHEN:** Jeremy separates a chunk of the bills and seals it
 into a second envelope. He writes "PARADISO" on it and shoves
 it into his back pocket. He feels its weight.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 As I think about leaving, I worry.
 Not for myself, but for him. It's
 the faith I have in him, though -
 the faith in that same strength he
 passed down to me - that I choose
 to carry instead.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy is pensive as he drives through the darkness, puffing on
 a cigarette.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 This hasn't been an easy decision
 to make - to leave home, to leave
 Dad. Truth is, I have everything I
 need right here. But right here
 isn't what I need anymore.

(beat)

That's a goodbye for another time,
 though. This letter, Mom, is to
 finally say my goodbye to you. For
 now.

(beat)

Love, your son, Sam.

INT. JESSICA'S HOUSE - DOORWAY - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. The peacefulness of the home is momentarily
 disrupted. Jessica enters, approaches the door and squints
 through the peephole. Who could it be at this time of night?
 She opens the door. Jeremy. He holds up two large plastic bags.

JEREMY
I brought Chinese.

Jessica smiles.

-- LIVING ROOM -- LATER:

Jessica's home is spacious and warm. Family-oriented. The brother and sister have just finished dinner.

JESSICA
You're kidding? Ten-thousand dollars?

JEREMY
Yeah. I'm not keeping all of it, though.

JESSICA
No shit. I guess Sam was a damn good drag queen, huh?

JEREMY
I guess so.

JESSICA
Wait... did you paint one of your fingernails?

JEREMY
I didn't but yeah, I guess so.

JESSICA
Okay I don't know who you are anymore but I'm so here for it.

Jeremy smiles, then, revokes it. He has something on his mind.

JEREMY
Hey, listen. I'm really sorry about the other day. How I've been acting lately.

JESSICA
You don't have to apologize, Jer. You've been through a lot.

JEREMY
I haven't been entirely honest with you, either.
(beat)
That job I took... it's not at a restaurant. It's at that club. Paradiso.

JESSICA

What?!

JEREMY

Yeah. That's how I met Trevor. But the site closed down today.

JESSICA

Jesus, Jeremy. Why would you put yourself through that?

JEREMY

I needed the money. And I don't know... that place... I can't explain it. I know it sounds fucked up but it made me feel closer to him. Closer to Sam.

(beat)

But I don't know anymore. I feel like I've lost him all over again.

JESSICA

Jeremy... you did lose your son. You know that I miss him so much but Sam is gone. And yes, he will forever live on – in you, in me, in Paradiso. But that club--

JEREMY

--I know, Jess. I just wish I had the chance to get to know him. And that's what this felt like – getting to know the Sam I... I wish I had.

JESSICA

That doesn't end now. Jeremy... you don't feel this way because you've lost him again... you don't feel this way because of that club... you feel this way because since he passed – since you've found out that he was gay – you've pushed him away. Maybe... just maybe you've finally found what you needed – what you needed to finally grieve him.

JEREMY

What's that?

JESSICA

Unconditional love.

Jessica's words move Jeremy with warm yet heavy currents.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Man, Paradiso, huh? You know...
despite everything, you are one
brave man.

JEREMY
Oh yeah?

JESSICA
Yeah. Kinda reminds me of someone
I used to know.

Jeremy's taken aback.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
I think he would be very proud of
you.
(beat)
Fucking shocked as hell but proud.

Jeremy laughs; chokes up. Everything makes sense.

JEREMY
Which reminds me... There's
somewhere that I think I need to
be right now.

JESSICA
Somewhere we need to be. I'm still
coming with you, Jer.

JEREMY
You sure? I'm sure Trevor would
understand granted--

JESSICA
--Fuck that shit, I'm coming. I
need this. Plus I paid for a
sitter tonight because mommy
needed a mental vacation. Let me
get changed really quick.

Jeremy steps outside for a smoke. He lights one up. The FALLEN TREE from his drunken car accident still lays on the lawn. He eyes it. Then, smirks.

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S TRUCK - LATER

The breeze gusts through cracked windows as Jeremy navigates a rural road. Contentment.

JESSICA

So what are you gonna' do for work?

JEREMY

I've had this idea... one that I've maybe been too uninspired to pursue but now... now I think I have that inspiration.

JESSICA

Yeah?

JEREMY

Yeah. I think it's time to open my own business.

JESSICA

Fuck yeah, Jeremy! I mean, given all the connections you have I bet it won't be hard getting something like that off the ground. Good for you, brother.

JEREMY

Thanks, Jess.

Jessica opens her FORTUNE COOKIE. She smiles.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

What?

JESSICA

Oh, nothing.

INT. GAY NIGHTCLUB - LATER

Jeremy and Jessica push through a crowd of ecstatic bodies until they reach a large, crowded room. Jeremy spots Andrea and pushes towards her. She's startled, cautious.

JEREMY

Hey. Could you give this to Trevor for me?

Jeremy extends the envelope.

ANDREA

And why would I do anything for you?

JEREMY

Because I'm sorry. And because he deserves this.

Andrea accepts the gift with caution.

ANDREA

Well hello, Jessica. You're looking fabulous tonight. I see you were able to ditch the husband?

JESSICA

Yeah. Permanently.

ANDREA

What?! Honey, I'm so sorry.

JESSICA

It's okay. I think it was necessary for the both of us.

ANDREA

Okay, strong bitch energy. Who needs men anyways?

JESSICA

Who needs a shitty relationship when there's this much love in the world?

ANDREA

So much love, honey.

A vibrant emcee struts out, affixing everyone's attention on the stage.

EMCEE

Alright, you heathens quiet down now.

(beat)

No seriously quiet the fuck down.

(beat)

Alright! Thank you all for coming tonight. It brings me so much joy to see all of us coming together to celebrate the lives of those lost just over one year ago. This past year... it hasn't been easy for any of us. But what's important is that we are here. We are strong. And no one - no one - can stop us.

(beat)

It also brings me joy to introduce our next performer. This local queen recently won a competition that will embark her on a nationwide drag tour.

(MORE)

EMCEE (CONT'D)

But before she goes... brace yourselves because boy/she/they do we have a special show for you tonight. Dedicated to those lost one year ago, give it up for a very special performance from none other than the Queen of New England!

The crowd claps, the lights dim and the show starts. It's Trevor – stunning; commanding the stage. He lip-syncs to a heart-warming ballad. It's a moment.

Jeremy is warmed; overwhelmed. At one intentionally funny moment, he laughs.

Andrea wraps a friendly arm around Jessica – new friends.

The song concludes and the crowd erupts. Trevor is a star. He bows, waves and struts off-stage. Jeremy is nervous, unsure if he should stay.

JEREMY

Hey Jess, I think I'm gonna get out of here. It's late.

JESSICA

You sure?

JEREMY

Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure.

JESSICA

Alright. I think I'm going to stay.

(to Andrea)

Is that okay?

ANDREA

You are a free woman.

JEREMY

You okay taking a cab home?

JESSICA

Yeah. I don't think I'm ready to go just yet.

JEREMY

I'm glad you're having fun. Love you, Jess.

JESSICA
 Love you, Jer. Thanks for
 everything tonight.

INT. JEREMY'S TRUCK - LATER

Jeremy drives home, content. He notices Jessica's FORTUNE on the floor, blowing in the wind. He picks it up.

TO FIND PEACE IS TO LOVE WITHOUT LIMITATIONS

INT./EXT. JEREMY'S HOUSE - LATER

Jeremy arrives home. It's now early morning. He heads to the living room and takes it all in. Unexplained relief.

KNOCK KNOCK. Jeremy curiously heads for the door and opens it. It's Trevor, looking like he changed out of drag in a hurry.

TREVOR
 Hey, listen, I just wanted to say
 I'm s--

JEREMY
 --Do you wanna come in?

Trevor smiles.

-- **LIVING ROOM:** Jeremy throws on some coffee while Trevor peruses family photos. Nostalgic. Jeremy sets TWO CUPS on the counter and fills them with water as Trevor makes his way to the backyard. Through the glass doors, we see him take a seat on the stoop.

-- **BACKYARD:** Jeremy sits next to Trevor and hands him a cup of coffee. They watch the sunrise. Awkward, but warm. Jeremy's new TOOLSHED borders the yard - fresh construction; built with care. Painted on the side:

J. ROSS & SONS

Jeremy remembers something and exits. We hear a truck door open and close as Trevor watches. He smiles curiously. The sound of hammering.

Jeremy returns to his seat next to Trevor. They observe.

The PARADISO SIGN clumsily hangs on Jeremy's back fence, facing them. The broken neon lights flash with a BUZZ.

TREVOR

You know you're gonna have to give
that back now, right?

They exchange a warm smile/chuckle and stare into the distance. Trevor remembers something and retrieves a CARD from his back pocket. He hesitates before handing it to Jeremy.

A curious Jeremy takes the card. It sports a CARTOON CONSTRUCTION WORKER. Trevor has complimented him with a DRESS and BIG HAIR in Sharpie. Various TOOLS scatter the front. Inside, it reads:

THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME THE TOOLS I NEED TO SUCCEED
HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

A tear clutches Jeremy's eyelid when he turns to Trevor and smiles. For a split second, we see the IN GROUND SPRINKLERS ERUPT, raining water over them.

CUT TO BLACK.