

PERFECT

by

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FADE IN:

INT. GARAGE -- DAY

A large, two-car garage, door open to the wide driveway. Amid a literal two tons of miscellaneous junk sits a battered 1965 Mustang convertible, hood open.

Bending deep into the engine, is GEORGE ARNER, 40s -- a little overweight, slightly balding -- a Joe SixPack kind of guy.

George grunts as he pushes a wrench against a hose clamp.

GEORGE

One...more...turn...

The clamp snaps and the wrench in George's hands slips, clattering through the engine to the floor.

George jumps up, bumps his head on the raised hood, then steps back and sucks a scraped knuckle.

GEORGE

Damn.

George shakes the bruised hand, rubs his bumped head with a greasy cloth.

GEORGE

Nothing's easy with you, is it, Baby?

PEG (O.S.)

George!

GEORGE

In the garage!

George walks out of the garage and around an old, battered, white Volvo pulled to one side of the driveway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- DAY

George looks toward the house. PEG ARNER, 40s, stands in the doorway on the back porch stoop. Short hair frames a still-cute face; torn jeans and a sweatshirt hang on a still-fit body.

PEG

Dinner.

George waves, turns, reaches up to pull the garage door down, but the whiny revving of a small engine draws his attention.

Across the hedge, BRUCE ELLSWORTH, late 30s, smug, smarmy, and full of himself in a pair of Wayfarers, pulls into his driveway in a small, red, two-seater Miata roadster, a stunning REDHEAD with him.

ELLSWORTH
 (to George)
 Howdy, neighbor!

GEORGE
 (not thrilled)
 Bruce.

Ellsworth doesn't bother to help the Redhead climb from the small car, instead waves his hand in George's direction.

ELLSWORTH
 Hey, Gina, check it out. A pair of
 antiques. You've been houndin' me
 to take you antiquing...
 (laughing, to George)
 Hey...who's older, George? You or
 that wreck in the garage there? Ha!

GEORGE
 Good one, Bruce. Workin' on that
 one a while, were you?

Ignoring George, Ellsworth grabs Gina's hand and pulls her toward his front door.

ELLSWORTH
 Get that, sweetheart? Pair of
 antiques? Funny, huh?

Ellsworth cracks himself up as he leads Gina into his house.

George turns to the Mustang, pulling the garage door down.

GEORGE
 Don't pay any attention to him, Baby.
 He's obviously incapable of seeing
 inner beauty...though you gotta admit
 he's got an eye for a nice chassis.

EXT. BACKYARD -- DAY

George walks across the lawn to the back stoop. An English Bulldog rests on the top step.

GEORGE
 Muggs! How you doin' Muggsie?

Muggs lifts his head, then his upper lip, growls low in his throat.

George bends and picks up a ball.

GEORGE
 Don't be that way, Muggs. Come on,
 boy...Let's play a little chase.

George tosses the ball. But Muggs ignores it, comes down the three steps, cocks a leg and pees a stream right at George's feet.

GEORGE

Nice, Muggs. Very nice.

As George steps over the puddle to go inside, he sees his son VINCE, a strapping, handsome young guy, coming across the lawn, a football under his arm.

GEORGE

Yo, Vince! How you doin', son?

VINCE

(not overly engaging)

Okay, Pop. You know...

GEORGE

Hey, come on -- let's toss the pigskin around.

VINCE

Nah. Got some things to do...

GEORGE

That can wait. Come on, let's play a little give 'n' go. Spend a little time with your old man.

Vince is not enthusiastic about this at all. He looks at George as if he's being asked to walk into fire.

VINCE

Pop--

GEORGE

(still trying)

Whattaya think about the Eagles this weekend, huh? Think we got a chance with the Redskins?

VINCE

Eagles suck, Pop.

GEORGE

Vinnie, Vinnie! Don't be knockin' my Birds, now! Any given Sunday, right?

(claps his hands)

Come one! Toss me the ball!

VINCE

Really, Pop, I gotta--

Peg appears again at the back door.

PEG
 Dinner, you two! Get in here now or
 Muggs eats like a king.

Vince's face reflects the great relief his mother just provided. He starts to jog into the house.

VINCE
 (to George)
 Maybe later, huh, Pop?

George watches his son disappear into the house, then slowly follows.

GEORGE
 (to himself)
 Sure. Maybe later.

INT. KITCHEN -- ARNER HOUSE -- NIGHT

George, Peg, and Vince pass small talk and bowls of food around the table.

PEG
 It's a money pit of a dead car is
 all I'm saying. Bruce is right.

GEORGE
 She may be a money pit, but she's a
 vintage money pit. She'll win a
 ribbon some day, you'll see.

PEG
 What's that claptrap of a Volvo out
 there gonna win? I'm afraid to drive
 it anymore.

VINCE
 That's a cool car, Mom. I'm claimin'
 it when Dad gets the Mustang running.

PEG
 Don't hold your breath.

GEORGE
 Oh, ye of little faith.
 (to Vince)
 So we still on for the game on Sunday?

VINCE
 (sarcastically)
 Like you could get tickets...

GEORGE
 You never know. Stoppin' by the
 stadium after work tomorrow.

VINCE
Way they been playin', there's
probably plenty left.

GEORGE
(almost hurt)
Vinnie. Vinnie. How can you--?

PEG
(to Vince)
Where's Susie? You tell her to come
down for dinner like I asked you to?

VINCE
She's not my responsibility, Mom.

GEORGE
(to Vince)
Hey. She's your sister. I expect
you to be responsible for each other.

Vince rolls his eyes.

Peg gets up and moves to the stairs.

PEG
(yells up the stairs)
Susan! Dinner! I'm not calling you
again!

Peg sits back down.

GEORGE
Somebody needs to talk to her about
bein' part of this family.

PEG
I agree. Be my guest.

GEORGE
Me? I don't see her long enough to
say hello most days.

INT. SUSIE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

SUSIE ARNER, 14, stands in front of a mirror. With one hand she puts the final touches on her makeup, which her natural beauty doesn't really need. Her other hand holds a cell phone.

SUSIE
...so I tell him, "I know you're not
saying that to *me*," and he gets this
look on his face like he's gonna cry
or something...
(beat)
No, Heather, of course not!
(MORE)

SUSIE (CONT'D)

But he hangs out with Trish and those guys, and I'm trying to get in with them, you know? They're so cool and all, and so if he likes me, maybe he'll take me to...

PEG (O.S.)

Susan!

SUSIE

Look, I gotta go before my mother has a cow.

(beat)

Yes. Yes, I will...

(beat)

Gotta go, Heather...

(beat)

Goodbye, Heather!

She slams the cell phone closed, checks herself in the mirror. She adjusts her skimpy outfit as if the half an inch makes a difference in what is or is not revealed, then scoops up her backpack and is out the door.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Peg is putting food on the plate at Susie's place.

VINCE

Well, if you get the tickets, I'll think about it. I'm supposed to hook up with the guys and--

PEG

Maybe you ought to think about hooking up with your studying, young man, instead of always running with that pack of yours.

Peg gives a meaningful look to George, who gets the hint.

GEORGE

Your Mom's right. We're a little worried about your grades, and...

VINCE

Aw, come on.

GEORGE

This is serious, Vince. You know you're going to need a scholarship. I really want you to knuckle down...

PEG

And while you're at it, why don't you clean up that disaster of a

(MORE)

PEG (CONT'D)
bedroom upstairs? I'm afraid to go
in there.

VINCE
Jeez, guys...give me a break.

George glances at Peg. He knows he should be pushing the
grades thing, but...

Susie comes bounding down the stairs, much to George's relief.

GEORGE
Hey, Honeybun...

SUSIE
Hi, Dad.

PEG
Your dinner's on your plate.

SUSIE
Not hungry. I'm late anyway. Gotta
get over to Heather's. Bunch of us
are gonna study for midterms.

GEORGE
You're going out like *that*?!

SUSIE
Like what? What's wrong with it?

GEORGE
Well, it's a little...It's a
little...Peg?

PEG
It's little, is what you're father's
trying to say.

SUSIE
It's no different than what other
kids are wearing. I can't go out
looking like a frump.

GEORGE
And that's another thing...you and
your brother are always going out.
Why don't your friends ever come
over here? I could grill up some
burgers...

VINCE
(though his mouthfuls)
It's not cool here is why.

SUSIE
Shut up, Vince.

GEORGE

Cool?

VINCE

She's trying to hang with those rich bitches from Chestnut Hill. We're kinda in the wrong bracket, if you know what I mean.

SUSIE

Shut up, Vince! God! You're such an asshole! I'm out of here.

Susie turns abruptly and goes out the door.

GEORGE

(to Vince)

Not exactly what I meant about looking out for each other.

VINCE

(shrugs)

Face it, Pop. Family's not high on her list. Least not like you'd like it.

(downs his last swig
of milk)

I'm outta here too. Goin' over to Kenny's. He's got the new Call of Duty and--

GEORGE

Wait a minute. What about the homework we were just talking about?

VINCE

Jeez, Pop, you guys really need to chill. You're starting to get a little naggy.

And Vince is out the door too.

George looks at Peg.

GEORGE

Naggy?

EXT. BACK DECK -- ARNER HOUSE -- NIGHT

George sits in an Adirondack chair. Peg comes out of the house with two mugs of coffee, hands one to George, then sits in a second chair near him.

GEORGE

You think we're good parents, Peg?

PEG

Not sure what you're getting at.

GEORGE

I don't know. Seems like they don't listen too well. Vince won't study, Susie's more interested in her clique than her family, neither one's ever home...

PEG

They're just being kids, George. You remember how you were at that age?

GEORGE

I just wish...well, you know.

Peg smiles a moment.

PEG

Yeah, I do. But you can't get everything you wish for in this life, right?

George thinks about that a moment.

GEORGE

Be nice if you could, wouldn't it?

Peg doesn't want to get morose. She pops her energy.

PEG

Okay! Your turn tonight. What's the subject?

GEORGE

How 'bout Picasso?

PEG

Picasso?

GEORGE

Yeah. Picasso.

PEG

Why'd you pick Picasso? What do you know about Picasso?

GEORGE

That's the point, isn't it? Been the point since we started this game. And it's my night, so I pick Picasso.

PEG

Okay. Picasso then. Well, he's a painter, right? Makes people look like a first grader's art project?

GEORGE

(laughing)

Yeah. And I hear he had a lot of wives. And a few girlfriends.

PEG

Artists. Such Bohemians. What's the book say?

George picks up an encyclopedia type of book.

GEORGE

Well, let's see. Pee-ca-ssssssssss-o-o-o. Here it is. Picasso. Pablo.

PEG

Pablo? See? Definitely a Bohemian.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The TV offers the only dim light in the room. George is propped up in bed watching a steamy love scene in a movie.

Peg leaves the bathroom, crosses the dark room, and climbs into bed. She snuggles up to George, whose eyes haven't left the screen. Peg glances at the movie.

PEG

Learning some new moves?

GEORGE

New moves aren't a bad thing.

George flicks off the TV, starts to turn to Peg.

GEORGE

Let's try a couple...

Peg snuggles in closer.

PEG

(mumbling)

Not tonight, babe, okay?

GEORGE

Ah, let's have a little fun. It's been a while...

But he stops short as he realizes that not only is she in hair curlers and some kind of green facial goo, but she's already asleep.

George sighs and flicks the TV back on. A beautiful, buxom BLONDE is on the screen. George glances from the screen to Peg and back again, then sighs deeply as he settles into his pillows to watch a bit more.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Quiet, except for soft snoring.

INSERT: AN ALARM CLOCK ON A NIGHTSTAND

The clock clicks to 7:00. An ear-splitting buzzer goes off.

A hand smacks the clock, knocking it off the nightstand.

BACK TO SCENE

George flops back on the bed.

GEORGE

Jesus, I hate that thing.

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

George, a bath towel around his waist, looks at himself in the mirror. He brushes his hair, then notices a bunch of hair on the brush.

GEORGE

Damn.

He touches a receding hairline.

GEORGE

I'm too young for this.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

George comes downstairs to the flurry of morning activity.

Vince and Susie are just rushing out the door.

GEORGE

See ya, kids.

Neither Vince nor Susie says anything as they disappear.

GEORGE

(to himself)

Bye, Dad...Love you.

Peg comes in from the living room, sliding on a coat. She pecks him on the cheek and moves toward the door.

PEG

I'm walking over to Phyllis's for breakfast, then we're heading up to IKEA for the sale. Have a good day at work.

GEORGE

What about my breakfast?

PEG
Bread's in the breadbox, eggs in the
fridge. See ya.

And she's gone.

George looks around the kitchen.

GEORGE
(sing-songy)
"Good morning, honey. How would you
like your toast?"

George looks at his watch. He sighs, grabs a banana from
the counter and leaves.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- DAY

George climbs into the white Volvo -- the door creaking. He
cranks it, but it won't start. He tries again until the
battery groans down. George climbs out and slams the door.

GEORGE
Shit.

ELLSWORTH (O.S.)
Mornin', neighbor!

George looks up to see Ellsworth jump into his Miata and
start it. He revs it -- it sounds more like a motor scooter
than a car.

ELLSWORTH
Need a lift?

George waves him off.

GEORGE
Uh...Nope. Thanks. Just flooded
momentarily. I'm fine.

ELLSWORTH
Suit yourself.

Ellsworth guns the Miata into the street.

George watches him go, then kicks the Volvo.

GEORGE
You piece of shit.

George looks at his watch.

GEORGE
Damn it.

George lopes down the sidewalk toward the corner. He doesn't notice his wallet flop out of his pocket as he reaches the corner.

EXT. CORNER BUS STOP -- DAY

The bus is pulling away. George bangs on the doors until it stops, then climbs in.

INT. BUS -- DAY

George steadies himself as the bus pulls into the street. He reaches into his back pocket for his wallet...it's gone.

GEORGE

Aw...not again!

The BUS DRIVER, a 50-something matron with a stern face made more extreme by having her hair pulled back in a tight bun, notices.

BUS DRIVER

You ain't gonna try that "lost wallet, I'm good for it" thing, are you? Not on my run, you ain't. No cash, no dash. You got to the end of the block to get it up.

George frantically rifles every pocket he has, comes up with just enough change and drops it into the fare bin.

GEORGE

(sarcastically)

Appreciate the kindness.

BUS DRIVER

Don't mention it.

EXT. CARBONARA CONSTRUCTION SITE -- THIRD FLOOR CORNER -- DAY

George studies blueprints, looks up into the skeleton of the high-rise under construction, then back down at the drawings.

PETEY MIKULSKI, 40s and Polish stocky, sits on the end of a stack of aluminum studs, sipping coffee from a styrofoam cup. SAM KING, 40s, a fit African American with a pencil-thin mustache, lounges next to Petey with his own coffee.

PETEY

(heavy Philly accent)

What I'm sayin' to youse is that when they make youse a two TD underdog, there ain't no way you're gonna win the game.

SAM
Absofuckinlutely. Raise the digit
in the "L" column by 1.

GEORGE
You guys have no faith.

PETEY
Faith has nothin' to do with it.

GEORGE
Sure it does. It's all about faith,
Petey. Gotta try to stay optimistic.

PETEY
Yeah, well, how you feelin' about us
gettin' tickets today then? You
optimistic about that?

GEORGE
I am.

Sam nudges Petey.

SAM
See that? That's faith in action.

George watches a pair of WORKERS walking by, calls out to
one of them, RYAN SCHMIDT, 30s, tattoo'd and ponytailed.

GEORGE
Ryan, you check the gear-sets on
the swing crane yet?

SCHMIDT
Nah. It seems fine to me.

GEORGE
Carl says it's been slipping the
last couple days. That's why I told
you to check it out.

SCHMIDT
Yeah, well, maybe you should handle
it, you think it's that important...

GEORGE
It is that important, Schmidt, and
I'm asking you to handle it.

Schmidt waves him off, moves away. George turns to Petey
and Sam.

GEORGE
Jesus. You see that?

PETEY

Some guys don't like bein' told what to do, even if you ask nice.

GEORGE

Don't mean he should ignore me like that.

SAM

He's an asshole, George. Forget it.

GEORGE

It's not like I'm his boss or anything. Why can't he just...

PETEY

(interrupting)

The hell with Schmidt, you guys. What's important is if you're willin' to put some 'a your paycheck on that faith of yours, George. I'll take the 'Skins on Sunday, give you 12.

George smiles at his friend.

GEORGE

I'll take that bet. Twenty bucks.

PETEY

You're on.

As George and Petey shake hands, a GROUP OF JAPANESE MEN in hardhats enters the floor from an elevator.

DOMINIC CARBONERA, 50's, a barrel-chested Italian whose oversized ego is as easily felt as seen, leads the Men toward an atrium-type area at the edge of the floor.

SAM

What's this?

GEORGE

Guys we're buildin' this thing for. Boss's showing them around today.

PETEY

Carbonera blowhardin' is what it is.

George digs under the blueprints on the table, comes up with a manila folder.

GEORGE

Be right back.

Petey and Sam exchange a knowing glance.

INT. ATRIUM AREA -- DAY

George walks up behind Carbonera as he's pointing up into the construction.

GEORGE
Excuse me, Mr. Carbonera.

Carbonera glances at George, but immediately turns back.

CARBONERA
What is it, Arner?

George holds the file out to him.

GEORGE
I had an idea about the layout of the upper two floors I thought you might like to see. I laid it out at home. I think we could save some money if we spin the floor plan ninety degrees and...

Carbonera grabs the file, tucks it under his arm without looking at it.

CARBONERA
Where you find the time, Arner?

GEORGE
I just thought...

CARBONERA
I don't pay you to think. I do the thinkin'. That's why my name's on the sign.
(motions toward the Japanese Men)
Look, I gotta deal with this. Don't you have something to be doing?

Carbonera turns his back on George and addresses the Japanese Men

CARBONERA
(pointing into the open space above)
So you see those large Plexiglas panels up there where roofing would normally go? By doing that, you'll get a much brighter area on this floor for meetings or casual conferences, and it actually saves you a couple thousand...

INT. THIRD FLOOR CORNER -- DAY

George rejoins Petey and Sam.

PETEY

Wasn't that Plexiglas thing the idea
you wrote up for him last month,
George?

George looks over at Carbonera. His jaw sets.

GEORGE

Yeah. It sure as shit was.

George picks up the blueprints.

GEORGE

Come on, guys. We're due up on six.

EXT. LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD BOX OFFICE -- DAY

Petey, Sam, and George are in line for Eagles tickets.

Petey and Sam each buy their tickets. But as George steps
up to the window, the TICKET AGENT pulls down the "Sold Out"
sign. George stares at the sign in disbelief.

GEORGE

Great.

EXT. ARNER HOUSE -- DAY

George climbs from Petey's car, leans back into the window.

GEORGE

Can you pick me up tomorrow? Damn
Volvo's on the fritz again.

PETEY

Need a ride to the poker game tonight
too?

GEORGE

Nah. I'll walk down. Thanks.

George walks to his mailbox as Petey pulls away, grabs the
mail and shuffles toward the house.

George casts a weary glance at the Volvo, starts to open an
official-looking letter as he enters the house past a growling
Muggs.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

George is reading the letter he just opened.

GEORGE

Oh, what the hell now?

Peg turns from the sink. Her face is covered with some kind
of cosmetic mask.

PEG
What's the matter?

GEORGE
(startled at the sight)
Jesus...
(points at her face)
What's...?

PEG
Deep-cleans the pores. What are you
so upset about?

GEORGE
You know that private golf club at
the end of the street?

PEG
Yeah...

GEORGE
Well, the damn community association
is making a surcharge assessment to
pay for street reconstruction for
the entrance. Private club we'll
never get into and we gotta pay for
it. That seem fair to you?

PEG
I don't think it's fair God gave me
big pores. But there's nothing I
can do about it, if you catch my
drift.

GEORGE
Still. What's for dinner?

Peg heads up the stairs.

PEG
I've got a PTA meeting tonight and
the kids are at a pep rally, so you'll
have to fend for yourself. There's
a frozen dinner in the fridge if you
want. Just microwave it on high.

George opens the freezer, looks at the box, makes a face.
He tosses the box back in the freezer.

George walks to the stairs, yells up.

GEORGE
I'm gonna grab a sandwich at Smitty's
before the game. See you later.

He waits for a reply, but when none comes, he shrugs and
heads out the door.

EXT. SPRING GARDEN STREET -- NIGHT

Dusk. George walks up the block toward Smitty's bar.

As he approaches an alleyway, George sees two teenage TOUGHS roughing up an OLD AFRICAN-AMERICAN BUM, maybe 70-75, in a tattered black suit and topcoat.

GEORGE

Hey! Hey! Stop that! Leave him alone!

George runs to the alleyway, shoves one Tough off the Old Bum, kicks at the other.

TOUGH #1

Fuck off, asshole! This ain't your business!

GEORGE

You two want to try somebody who can defend himself?

The Toughs glance at one another, then take off across the street and down the block.

George turns to the Old Bum, who is breathing hard and sliding down the wall onto the pavement just inside the alley.

GEORGE

You okay?

OLD BUM

Yessir. I think so, I think so.
(looks at George)
You prob'ly saved my life.

GEORGE

Nah. You'd a had 'em. Punks. Land one punch and they fold. You sure you're okay?

OLD BUM

Yessir. B'lieve so.

GEORGE

Okay, then.

George turns to continue up the street.

OLD BUM

Wait. Sumpthin' I can do for you? I mean, to return the favor?

George looks unsure what the bum means. What could a bum do for him?

GEORGE

Uh...No. No, I'm all right, thanks.

OLD BUM

You're sure? I owe you. Favors are my specialty.

GEORGE

No, really. It's okay.

The Old Bum holds up a tin can.

OLD BUM

Got any change then? For the struggle? We all in the struggle together, right?

George considers this, then digs into his pocket, drops a handful of change into the cup.

GEORGE

Some days more than others, I suppose.

OLD BUM

Thank you, my man. May you always get what you want.

George is caught by the Old Bum's eyes...something about them...Then he turns and walks on toward Smitty's.

INT. BACK ROOM -- SMITTY'S PUB -- NIGHT

George sits at a poker table with Petey, Sam, and three other blue-collar types -- CHEEKY, PENN, and BOBBY. A half-eaten sandwich sits near a meager pile of chips in front of George.

GEORGE

Nothin' against Peg, but frozen pizza just isn't what I'd call a decent meal, you know?

PENN

What's wrong with it?

GEORGE

It's more the principle of the thing, Penn.

BOBBY

You gonna keep bitchin', or are you gonna play cards?

George picks up his hand.

INSERT: GEORGE'S CARDS: George is holding a trio of kings, and a pair of sevens.

BACK TO SCENE

George tosses in a significant portion of his remaining chips.

CHEEKY

Hmmph. What're you holdin', Arner?
You don't bet 'less you're holdin'
something.

Cheeky tosses in his chips, then adds more.

CHEEKY

But I think you're bluffin' again,
'cause that's all you can do with
your luck. Call and raise.

The rest of the players toss in their cards.

George throws in the rest of his chips and calls, a smile on his face.

GEORGE

Finally!

George lays down his king-high full house, and reaches for the pot.

CHEEKY

Not so fast, Georgie.

Cheeky lays down his cards one at a time. One ace. Two aces. Three aces. Four. Then he smiles, pulls in the pot.

George sits back stunned, looks at Petey and Sam. He throws up his hands.

GEORGE

Just hasn't been my day, has it?
Anybody want to lend me the price of
a beer?

INT. SMITTY'S PUB -- CORNER OF THE BAR -- NIGHT

George, Petey, and Sam belly up to the end of the bar. George motions to the bartender, SMITTY, 50s -- a clone of the Marlboro Man. But Smitty's talking to a WOMAN, ignores George.

GEORGE

What, am I invisible?

PETEY

You don't have tits.

As if on cue, three absolutely striking young women, LINDY, SANDY, and MARTINA, walk out of the crowd and come to the corner of the bar, giggling among themselves. Lindy, a lithe blonde in her 30s, stands nearest George.

George looks at Petey and Sam, nods toward the Girls, raises his eyebrows. Petey raises his eyebrows in return. George smiles and turns to Lindy.

GEORGE

(to Lindy)

You girls seem to be having a good time.

Lindy turns to look at George, but as soon as she sees him, her smile drops, and her face freezes like she'd just smelled something bad.

LINDY

Excuse me?

GEORGE

I said, you're having a good time. I thought maybe my friends and I could buy you a drink or something.

LINDY

(suddenly an iceberg)

I don't think so.

Lindy turns to Sandy and Martina, whispers something, and points down the bar. They move off as Lindy throws a withering glance back at George.

PETEY

Nice move, Casanova. Now we can't even look at 'em.

GEORGE

Hey...all I said was can we buy 'em a drink. I didn't ask 'em for lap dances.

PETEY

Yeah, well, if any more come around, don't say nothin', all right? You're poison lately.

GEORGE

Seems that way, doesn't it?

Petey motions to Smitty, who starts drawing three drafts. George raises his hands in bewilderment.

GEORGE

I AM invisible.

INT. SMITTY'S BAR -- CORNER TABLE -- NIGHT

George, Petey, and Sam sit alone, beer mugs in front of them, digging into a bowl of bar nuts.

George looks up at the TV behind the bar.

INSERT: THE TV SCREEN

A lottery machine, balls tumbling. A hand reaches out to pull the first number.

BACK TO SCENE

George reaches into his pocket, pulls out a ticket, checks the numbers against those being drawn. After the last ball is drawn, George crumples up his ticket, tosses it on the table.

GEORGE

Don't know why I bother.

SAM

Waste a' money, you ask me.

PETEY

No, no, no. George had a winner once. Couple grand, wasn't it?

GEORGE

Don't bring that up.

SAM

You had a two grand winner?

PETEY

He did. For a couple hours anyway.

Petey starts laughing.

SAM

What?

PETEY

He puts the ticket -- a two grand winner, mind you -- in his pants pocket. Next morning, he remembers, goes to get it. Guess where the pants are.

Sam shakes his head.

PETEY

Tumblin' in four gallons of water and soap. Peg tossed 'em in the washer without checkin' the pockets.

SAM

You're shittin' me.

PETEY

Washed the numbers right off the paper. Shreds was all that was left. A two grand winner! Shreds!

GEORGE

Yeah, well, at least it was a winner.
Which shows it can happen. That's
why you gotta play to be a winner,
right?

ELLSWORTH (O.S.)

Gotta be a winner to play, you mean.

A big hand slaps George on the shoulder. He turns and there's
Ellsworth, with a loud laugh, and a smug smile.

ELLSWORTH

Play to win...winner to play...get
it? Ah, neighbor, you're a barrel
of laughs...

Ellsworth moves to Lindy and her friends at the bar. They
turn to him with smiles and easy smooches, a fact not lost
on George, who hunches over his beer, a grim look slowly
pinching his face.

INT. SMITTY'S BAR -- END OF THE BAR -- NIGHT

The bar is about empty. George, Petey, and Sam huddle over
their last beers of the night, and judging from the number
of empty mugs on the bar, it's been a long night.

PETEY

...so what I'm tellin' you is you
need to stand up to Carbonera,
Georgie. Stop lettin' him use ya
like he's doin'...

George isn't listening. He's locked into the images on the
TV as Petey continues to offer his opinion about Carbonera.

INSERT: THE TV:

A montage of video clips of actors Bradley Cooper and Emma
Stone:

- At a Hollywood premiere
- On an expensive yacht
- On a movie set
- Surrounded by fans obviously thrilled to be near them
- Receiving awards
- At a chic restaurant

BACK TO SCENE

Petey swigs his beer, grabs George's arm.

PETEY

...you know what I mean? He's a thief...stealin' your ideas...not givin' you credit...

George still stares at the TV.

GEORGE

Look at 'em. Leadin' the perfect life, aren't they? Money, fame, freedom, adulation. Whatever they want, always the best, never a hassle.

SAM

What're you talking about, George?

GEORGE

Where the hell was I when they handed out tickets to the Good Life?

PETEY

You got a good life, George. Peg, the kids, decent-enough job even if the boss is an asshole...

GEORGE

Yeah, yeah, yeah...they're fine, sure. I s'pose.

(looks at the TV)

But it could be so much better. I mean, there's okay, and...there's perfect, you know what I'm saying? The Good Life and...

(remembering)

...the struggle.

SAM

Struggle? What struggle?

George slides off his stool.

GEORGE

I gotta go.

PETEY

Lemme drive you home, George.

GEORGE

Nah. I'm gonna walk. You can pick me up tomorrow, though. Neither one of my goddamn "Good Life" cars will start...

And George is out the door.

SAM

What's with him?

EXT. SPRING GARDEN STREET -- NIGHT

George shuffles up the block, his hands stuffed in his pockets.

GEORGE
 (mumbling to himself)
 What's Bradley Cooper got that I
 don't have? Why's HE get the perfect
 ride and I get "the struggle"? Who
 decides this shit?

George approaches the alleyway where he'd helped the Old Bum earlier. George looks around...sees nobody.

George steps into the darkness of the alleyway, drops his zipper, begins to relieve himself.

GEORGE
 If I had the perfect life they have...

OLD BUM
 Hey! Watch where you're aimin'!

George jumps, startled, squinting into the darkness. The form of the Old Bum becomes apparent in the dim light, sitting on a folded cardboard box, leaning against the wall.

GEORGE
 (zipping up)
 Sorry, Old Man. Didn't see you there.

OLD BUM
 Well, I certainly heard YOU
 comin'...bitchin' all the way up the
 block. What you got to be bitchin'
 'bout, anyway?

GEORGE
 Tough day. Days. Whatever.

The Old Bum lights the end of well-chewed stogie.

OLD BUM
 Tough is relative. Look at me...a
 bum in an alley.

GEORGE
 Yeah, well, you should know then.

OLD BUM
 Know what?

GEORGE
 Don't you ever wish you could have
 things better? You especially.

OLD BUM

Who says this ain't my picture of perfection?

GEORGE

Good word...Perfection.

OLD BUM

Perfect ain't all it's cracked up to be.

GEORGE

Yeah, well, I'd certainly like to give it a shot.

OLD BUM

That really what you want? Everything perfect? No more struggle?

GEORGE

Absolutely! Wouldn't you?

OLD BUM

It's all in how you look at things. Always has been, always will be.

GEORGE

Yeah, well, from where I stand, I could do with a little less of "the struggle", if you know what I mean.

OLD BUM

You sure 'bout that?

GEORGE

I'm tellin' you, Old Man -- if I could have my life be perfect tomorrow, I'd take it in a heartbeat.

OLD BUM

Well all right, then.

GEORGE

All right what?

The Old Bum blows a thick smoke ring at George.

OLD BUM

One good turn deserves another.

The smoke ring encircles George's head. He coughs as it dissipates around him.

GEORGE

What are you talking about?

OLD BUM
 Perfection, my man. Perfection.
 (he smiles)
 See ya, George.

George stares at the Old Bum a moment, then nods and waves half-heartedly.

GEORGE
 Yeah, okay. See ya.

George steps out of the alley. But he stops suddenly, goes back.

GEORGE
 Hey...How'd you know my...

But the alley is empty.

GEORGE
 Huh...

George turns and shuffles on up the street.

INT. BEDROOM -- ARNER HOUSE -- DAY

Quiet, except for soft snoring.

INSERT: AN ALARM CLOCK ON A NIGHTSTAND

The time clicks to 7:00. Soft jazz starts playing. The snoring stops. A hand reaches out and picks up the clock.

BACK TO SCENE

George's eyes blink as he looks at the clock.

George looks around the room.

GEORGE
 Peg? Honey? How'd you get this
 thing to do the music? It's great.
 (he rises)
 Peg?

When no answer comes, George moves to the bathroom.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

George, dressed for work, steps out of the bedroom, moves down the hall. He stops at Vince's room, looks in. Nobody there. He starts to move on, but then glances back into the room.

The bed is made, no clothes on the floor. Things look awfully neat.

George moves down the hall, glances into Susie's room, is stopped again. Same thing. On the made bed is the short, short skirt and low-cut blouse Susie had worn at dinner a couple of nights ago.

GEORGE

If that's here, I don't want to know whatever it is she's wearing...

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

George enters.

GEORGE

Peg?

No answer. He notices a lunchbox on the table, a note nearby.

INSERT: THE NOTE

"Gone to yoga. Made you some lunch. Love you. Peg."

George opens the lunchbox, peers inside.

GEORGE

(total surprise)

Quiche?

A horn honks outside. George looks out the window, then grabs the lunchbox and his jacket and leaves.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- DAY

George walks toward the street, where Petey waits in his car.

Next door, Ellsworth bolts from his house, hops in the Miata.

ELLSWORTH

Hey, Neighbor! Got that 'Stang runnin' yet? Ha! Maybe you oughtta consider something newer and hotter. I can get you a deal on one of these babies.

GEORGE

Newer and hotter, huh?

ELLSWORTH

You betcha!

Ellsworth fires up the Miata and guns it. It's all George can do to keep from laughing at the puny sound.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

George climbs into Petey's car.

GEORGE
Thanks for comin'.

PETEY
Not a problem.

As George closes the passenger side door, Ellsworth guns the Miata into the street and wheels past Petey's car. George and Petey watch him blow past them.

PETEY
Cute car. Where do you put the batteries?

George grins as they watch Ellsworth go.

But Ellsworth doesn't get forty feet beyond them.

A loud POP! is heard. The Miata squats, jerks right, and bounces up and over the curb before coming to rest cockeyed half up on someone's lawn.

Petey pulls his car slowly past an angry Ellsworth climbing out of his Miata, slamming the door.

George leans out the passenger side window of Petey's car as they glide past.

GEORGE
Whoa. That's a shame there, Bruce.
Maybe you ought to think about replacing those training tires...

Petey and George laugh loudly at that as Petey floors it up the street.

EXT. CARBONARA CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY

George and Petey walk through the entrance, make their way toward the coffee truck parked inside the fence. Sam is already there.

George and Petey pour themselves coffee.

SAM
You hear the scuttlebutt yet?

GEORGE
What scuttlebutt?

SAM
Layoffs. Word has it that those Japanese guys Carbonara brought around yesterday are squeezin' him on the money. A quarter of the guys could go.

PETEY
You're kiddin'.

SAM
Swear. Look around.

George takes a look around the yard. WORKERS are standing idle in small groups, talking. No one's working.

GEORGE
This isn't good.

SAM
Shit, man. I can't afford a layoff.
Got a kid in college, two ex-wives...

PETEY
You're a senior guy here, George.
Maybe you can talk to him.

GEORGE
Me? He's not gonna listen to me.
You saw how much pull I got. I'll
probably be the first to go.

SAM
You're about to find out.

Sam points to the gate. A white Cadillac Escalade pulls onto the site and rolls up to the Main Construction Trailer.

Dominic Carbonera steps from the Escalade, looks around the yard, his brow furrowed.

Carbonera climbs the steps to the landing at the trailer's door, then turns to the yard, puts his fingers to his mouth and whistles loudly.

CARBONERA
Everybody over here! Come on! Over
here! I don't wanna have to be
yellin' this!

The Workers move toward the trailer, exchanging glances with each other. The rumors must be true, and he's going to lay it on them here and now.

George, Petey, and Sam move to the trailer.

PETEY
Here it comes.

GEORGE
And this had been shaping up to be a
pretty good day, too.

EXT. MAIN CONSTRUCTION TRAILER -- DAY

Carbonera looks at the men gathered in front of him.

CARBONERA

I know the word's been out about layoffs since the clients on this project came through here yesterday, and I'm not gonna bullshit you -- that's exactly what they expect me to do. For me to deliver the building they want at the price they want, I gotta cut somewhere, and it can't be in materials.

A low murmur spreads through the crowd.

CARBONERA

Last night I took a look at the numbers, and to make things work, the cuts will have to be at least twenty percent, probably more.

A much louder murmur.

CARBONERA

I've never been one to doubt myself. Frankly, I'm a little bullheaded most of the time, thinkin' I'm the only one knows what's right. So last night, I start writin' names on the "fire" list.

Carbonera points at George.

CARBONERA

And the first name I wrote was George Arner.

George stiffens.

CARBONERA

Arner. Up here with me.

George hesitates, drops his head.

CARBONERA

Come on. You're the one's going to take responsibility on this.

Petey touches George's shoulder as he steps toward the trailer.

PETEY

Sorry, George. It ain't fair.

SAM

Yeah, sorry, pal.

George climbs the stairs, stands next to Carbonera.

CARBONERA

Men, one of the biggest mistakes I
ever made...

George's face crumbles -- being fired and humiliated in front
of his friends in the same instant.

Carbonera throws his arm around George.

CARBONERA

...was not listening to this man
from the very beginning.

George isn't sure he heard right.

GEORGE

'Scuse me?

CARBONERA

Last night, after I wrote your name,
something made me pick up that last
file you handed me, George...the one
about the top floors? And it's
brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.
So I looked at the other files you've
given me that I've been ignoring for
months. And each one of them was
better than the last. Long story
short, men, the proposals George
here has come up with will save this
company enough money that no layoffs
will have to be made at all.

A roar goes up from the Workers.

CARBONERA

In fact, I'm now anticipating that
we'll come in under budget and ahead
of schedule, tripping the incentives
in the contract that will show up in
all of your paychecks as bonuses at
the end of the job!

Pandemonium, cheers, and high-fives erupt among the Workers.

Carbonera leans in to George as they walk down the steps to
the yard.

CARBONERA

Come and see me this afternoon,
George. We need to talk about
creating a Foreman's position. You
interested?

George's jaw drops, and before he can answer, he's swallowed
up by the crowd of jubilant workers.

EXT. COFFEE TRAILER -- DAY

George joins Petey, Sam and others, including Ryan Schmidt, at the trailer. Schmidt hands George a cup of coffee.

SCHMIDT
On me, boss.

GEORGE
(a little surprised)
Uh, thanks, Schmidt. Thanks a lot.

SCHMIDT
No. Thank you. And call me Ryan.

GEORGE
Okay. Ryan.

SCHMIDT
I'm gonna go check the gear-sets in that crane like you asked.

GEORGE
Okay. Good. Let me know what you find.

SCHMIDT
You got it, boss.

Schmidt moves off.

GEORGE
What's got into him?

PETEY
Gratitude, I'd suspect. You probably just saved his sorry ass.

Sam slaps George on the shoulder as they walk toward the main site.

SAM
Mine too. Thanks, George.

GEORGE
Come on, Sam. No need to be thanking me. I just...

PETEY
Yeah, there is. You ever meet his ex-wives?

They all laugh.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION YARD -- DAY

As George, Petey, and Sam walk past the Guard Shack at the entrance, a UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER approaches them.

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER
George Arner?

GEORGE
I'm George Arner.

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER
I believe this is yours, sir.

The Officer hands George a brown leather wallet.

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER
Found it on a street corner yesterday morning. Your company ID was in it. I was able to track you here.

George is elated.

GEORGE
Thank you!

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER
I think you'll find everything in it, too...credit cards, cash.

GEORGE
You're kidding.

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER
No, sir. All there. Have a good day.

The Uniformed Police Officer turns and walks away.

GEORGE
Yeah. You too.
(to Petey)
Can you believe that? How often does that happen?

PETEY
Turnin' out to be a pretty good day, huh, George?

George looks up toward the Uniformed Police Officer. His eye is caught by a small black figure, partially obscured by the Officer, walking past the construction site entrance.

George moves to get a better look. Just as the figure is about to turn the corner, he stops and looks back to George. It's the Old Bum. He raises his hand and waves at George as he disappears around the corner.

GEORGE
It is, isn't it?

As George, Petey, and Sam walk toward the building site, George glances back at the corner.

INT. SMITTY'S BAR -- DAY

George, Petey, and Sam sit at their normal end of the bar. Smitty leans on the bar near them.

SMITTY

So you guys hear the news?
 (off their head shakes)
 Redskin quarterback twisted his ankle
 in practice today. Out for the game.
 The line now has it even up.

GEORGE

You're lyin'.

SMITTY

On the news just before you came in.

Petey looks at George.

PETEY

Look, George...about that bet we
 made yesterday...you wouldn't want
 to...

As George laughs, he senses someone slide onto the stool next to him, and turns to see Lindy, Sandy, and Martina. Lindy is on the stool next to George.

George glances at her, but remembering what happened last time, doesn't say anything or let his eyes linger.

But Lindy smiles directly at George, and touches his arm.

LINDY

I'm so glad I ran into you.

GEORGE

You are?

LINDY

I was so rude to you the other night.
 I really owe you an apology. We
 were all kind of rude, weren't we?

Sandy and Martina nod, sincere looks of contrition on their faces.

George looks over at Petey and Sam with a "is this happening?" look on his face. He turns back to Lindy.

GEORGE

No apology necessary. It's not like
 I'm Bradley Cooper or anything.

Lindy laughs heartily, touches George's arm.

LINDY

Who'd want Bradley Cooper? He's a
Ken doll. I'd rather have a real
man, if you know what I mean.
Besides, you're much cuter.
(turns to her friends)
Isn't he?

SANDY

Definitely.

MARTINA

Much.

Lindy moves closer to George.

LINDY

So. You boys mind if we join you?

George looks to Petey and Sam, their distinct pleasure quite
apparent on their faces.

GEORGE

Smitty! A little help for our
friends!

EXT. SMITTY'S -- NIGHT

George, Petey, Sam, Lindy, Sandy, and Martina pour onto the
street, all laughing hysterically, obviously having a great
time.

GEORGE

...so when I pulled the ticket from
the pants pocket, it was completely
shredded! Most expensive laundry
load ever done!

They all explode in laughter again.

LINDY

You guys are a hoot! You coming
back tomorrow night? We'd love to
hook up with you again...

GEORGE

What do you think, Mr. Mikulski? We
free?

PETEY

I believe we are, Mr. Arner.

GEORGE

(to Lindy)
We'll see you tomorrow night, then,
ladies.

They say their goodnights. George, Petey and Sam walk toward Petey's car.

EXT. ARNER HOUSE -- NIGHT

George climbs from Petey's car, leans back in the window.

GEORGE

Thanks, boys. Great night.

PETEY

(to Sam)

I give you George Arner, chick magnet.

SAM

Yeah, who'd 'a thought?

GEORGE

Knock it off. I'd trade any of 'em
for a ticket to the game on Sunday
and you know it. See you tomorrow.

Petey backs into the street as George heads inside.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

George enters quietly. The wall clock reads 1:10 a.m.

George looks into the fridge and is surprised to find a BLT on a plate with a little sign on it that says "Knew you'd be hungry, Love, Peg".

George takes the sandwich and a cold beer to the table. He thumbs through the mail as he eats. He finds an envelope from the IRS, and opens it.

GEORGE

(reading over a
mouthful)

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Arner...da-da, da-
da, da-da...a mistake in withholding
was discovered...da-da, da-
da...resulting in a refund of...

George holds up a check to the light.

GEORGE

Holy shit. Ha! I'll be goddamned!

George picks up his beer, a big smile on his face, and heads upstairs.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

George's eyes flutter open. He stretches, obviously feeling completely rested. He rolls over in the bed...

...and there, looking at him, is Peg. Her hair is down in a sexy fall, her face is clean and glowing. George sniffs -- she's even wearing a touch of perfume on her throat.

Then George notices. Peg is wearing a Victoria's Secret teddy (very similar to the one on the girl in the TV movie George was watching the night before). George's eyes open a bit wider.

GEORGE

Hey, babe...what's up?

PEG

I was watching you sleep.

GEORGE

You were?

PEG

Uh-huh. You are such a handsome man. I'd almost forgotten how handsome.

Peg leans over and kisses George passionately.

PEG

And sexy.

GEORGE

Sexy? Me?

PEG

Oh, yes. Very.

Peg lifts the covers and slides under next to George, then giggling, pulls the covers over their heads.

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

George stands at the sink, bath towel around his waist, humming. He rubs the steam from the mirror, looks at his teeth.

Something catches his eye. He leans into the mirror, runs his hand across his hairline. It looks thicker, and not nearly as receded.

GEORGE

Huh.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

George is stopped in his tracks by the spread of eggs, bacon, and juice on the table. A cloth napkin sits folded by a plate.

Peg whirls around at the sound of George's entering. She's dressed in a cute little skirt and sweater.

George's eyebrows rising indicates he notices.

Peg sets a plate of toast on the table.

PEG

Just the way you like it...burned
around the edges. Coffee's ready
too.

George slips into a chair as Peg pours the coffee.

GEORGE

This is...uh...real nice.

PEG

I thought the new foreman at Carbonera
Construction should start his Saturday
morning right.

GEORGE

Hey ... that's not a done deal yet.
Carbonera's sister's pushing hard
for her son to get the job.

PEG

Well, you're the best man for it.

GEORGE

Yeah, maybe, but...

A small bark is heard at the screen door. Peg moves toward
the door.

GEORGE

Don't let him in here, Peg...he'll
just try to pee on my...

Too late. Peg has opened the door. Muggs comes running
into the room, straight for George.

But Muggs stops and sits up at the edge of the table, tail
wagging furiously. In Muggs's mouth is the rolled up morning
newspaper.

GEORGE

What the hell...?

Muggs drops the paper, gives a little bark. As George
tentatively reaches down for the paper, Muggs licks his hand,
then curls up at George's feet, tail still wagging.

PEG

See? I always knew you two could
get along...

George isn't convinced, but goes with it.

GEORGE

(to Muggs)

Well, thanks, Muggs. Maybe we'll try some ball later, huh?

Muggs gives a yap.

GEORGE

Huh.

PEG

So what are you planning to do with your day, honey?

GEORGE

Not sure. Figured you probably had a "honey-do" for me.

PEG

I think you should get that Mustang in shape.

GEORGE

(surprised)

You actually suggesting I spend time on the "money pit"?

Peg comes up behind George, bends down, hugs him.

PEG

I know how much that car means to you.

Peg starts nibbling on George's ear.

PEG

But do you think that hot car of yours can wait a bit so I can get a few minutes with its hot owner?

George's eyes grow wide and a smile forms around the piece of toast he's just put in his mouth.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

George emerges from the bedroom, hair tousled. In the background, Peg can be seen wrapped in the bedsheets.

George pulls the door closed quietly, leans back against it.

GEORGE

Whew...Jesus, Peg...

George walks down the hall, stops at Vince's bedroom, looks in.

The room is still neat as a pin. And quiet...no driving rock music.

Vince sits at his desk, dressed in an oxford cloth shirt and khakis, bent over a textbook, taking notes.

George knocks on the doorjamb.

GEORGE

Hey.

Vince doesn't look up from the book

VINCE

Hi, Dad.

GEORGE

You wanta go out and toss the ol' pigskin around a while, see if you can get by me?

Vince shakes his head, still not looking up.

VINCE

Nah. Got a report due in a couple weeks. Want to get a headstart on it.

GEORGE

You're kidding.
(when no answer comes)
You sure about the catch?

VINCE

(nose still in the book)
Yeah, Dad. I'm sure. How 'bout later, okay?

GEORGE

Yeah, okay.

George turns from the door, his face an odd mix of pride and wonderment.

EXT. BACK YARD -- DAY

George emerges from the kitchen, almost stumbles over Susie sitting on the stoop steps.

GEORGE

Hey, there, kitten...

Susie stands. She wears coveralls and an old sweatshirt, her hair pulled back in a ponytail.

GEORGE

Susie...? What...?

SUSIE
They're Mom's. I didn't think she'd
mind me borrowing them.

GEORGE
Kind of a different look for you,
isn't it?

SUSIE
Well, I thought it was what I should
wear if I wanted to work on the
Mustang with you.

GEORGE
You want to work on the car?

SUSIE
Yeah. It's all right, isn't it?

GEORGE
Well...yeah. It's just that I didn't
think you were interested in that
kind of thing. I mean your friends
would...

SUSIE
Forget them. I'm George Arner's
daughter. Thought I should learn a
thing or two about cars.

Susie puts her arm through George's, starts walking him toward
the garage. He's smiling.

INT. GARAGE -- DAY

George is bent into the engine. Susie is tucked in right
next to him.

GEORGE
Hand me that wrench on the windshield
there.

George takes the wrench, reaches into the engine again.

GEORGE
Just one...more...turn...

George rises from the engine, smiles.

GEORGE
Damn. Might have it, Kitten. Just
might have it. Hop in there and hit
the ignition when I tell you.

Susie slips behind the wheel. George reaches into the engine
again.

GEORGE

Hit it.

Susie twists the ignition key. The engine turns once, twice, then roars to life with a perfect, smooth, throaty rumble.

George throws his hands in the air and shouts.

GEORGE

YES! Son of a bitch! Wow, would you listen to that?

George turns at the sound of clapping.

Peg stands leaning against the door frame, smiling and clapping.

PEG

Nice going, Stud. Knew you could do it.

GEORGE

Don't she sound sweet?

PEG

Like chocolate. How 'bout we take her for a run down through the Valley, like we used to?

GEORGE

You betcha! I gotta stop by the dealership anyway. Grab shotgun, sweetie.

George gets into the driver's seat. Susie stands by the car as George and Peg buckle in and George puts the car in gear.

SUSIE

Hey...where do I sit?

GEORGE

Sorry, Kitten...only room for two.

Susie looks disappointed.

PEG

You have to get ready for your game anyway, honey. I've pressed your cheerleading uniform for you. It's up on your bed.

Susie leans down on the driver's side door.

SUSIE

But I want to spend more time with Dad. Cheerleading can wait, or...maybe I'll just quit it and...

George slips the car out of gear.

GEORGE

No, no. Don't do that. I love watching you doing your cheers and stuff. Why don't you go on, head to the game, meet your friends. Maybe you could invite them over later.

SUSIE

Sure!

GEORGE

(smiling)

Long as your friends don't think I'm in the wrong bracket...

SUSIE

(smiling back)

They won't. You're way too cool for that. Especially in this car.

Susie runs off toward the house.

GEORGE

(to Peg)

See that? I'm cool.

PEG

What's that all about?

GEORGE

What? Can't a girl worship her father?

(winks at her)

Hang on, baby!

George guns the Mustang. With a throaty roar, it wheels out of the garage and peels onto the street.

An absolutely dumbstruck Bruce Ellsworth stands by his soaped-up Miata with a garden hose in his hand.

EXT. VALLEY ROAD -- DAY

George and Peg whip along in the Mustang, which is running like a Formula One racer. It's obvious George is having a blast driving it.

INT. MUSTANG -- DAY

Peg slides over close to George, nuzzles into his side. He throws his arm around her shoulders.

GEORGE

Whattaya think? She a keeper?

PEG

She's perfect. Just like her owner.

GEORGE

So where do you...

George's face freezes. He glances down at his lap, then over to Peg.

GEORGE

I don't know if that's really a safe thing to be doing...

PEG

(a mischievous smile)

Keep your eyes on the road, George. Let me handle the rest.

George's eyes grow wide as he shifts into the next curve.

EXT. FORD DEALERSHIP PARTS DEPARTMENT -- DAY

The Mustang swings into a parking space and stops. George lets his head flop back on the headrest.

GEORGE

You are going to get me arrested.

PEG

Is that a complaint?

GEORGE

No, Ma'am. No complaints here.

George smiles broadly, gives Peg a kiss.

GEORGE

But I'm going to need a lawyer or a doctor if you keep this up.

They climb from the car, enter the Parts Department.

INT. PARTS DEPARTMENT -- DAY

George pays for a small can of touch-up paint, turns to leave.

PEG

Hey. What do you say we leave through the showroom, do a little bit of wishful-thinking window shopping?

George nods, and they enter the showroom.

INT. AUTO SHOWROOM -- DAY

As George and Peg walk through the door, all hell breaks loose.

The showroom explodes with sound and motion. It's filled with PEOPLE cheering and crowding around George. Balloons fall from the ceiling. A Sousa march blares from music speakers. Pandemonium.

BILL TIGUE, 50s, owner of the dealership in a 20 gallon cowboy hat, runs to George and vigorously pumps his hand.

TIGUE
 Congratulations, friend!
 (more pumping)
 Con-grat-u-la-tions!

GEORGE
 (bewildered)
 What? Congratulations for what?

TIGUE
 You, my friend, are the ten-thousandth customer to walk through the doors of Big Bill Tigue's! Been countin' 'em since Day One, I have, and you are number one, oh, oh, oh, oh.

GEORGE
 (to Peg)
 How 'bout that, honey? I'm number one, oh, oh...

TIGUE
 (interrupting)
 The box, Jenny. Gimme the box.

Tigue turns to JENNY, a rail-thin, 20-something blonde in a mini-skirt and a low-cut tank top that fails miserably at holding anything in. She hands Tigue a shoebox, which he immediately shoves at George.

TIGUE
 Here you go, friend. Take your pick. Whatever you want. SUV, Jag, pickup, roadster, luxury sedan, Hummer... Anything at all! It's yours!

GEORGE
 (dumbfounded)
 You're kidding.

TIGUE
 Big Bill Tigue don't kid, friend.
 (turns to the crowd)
 Do I?
 (off crowd's resounding
 "NO!")
 So what's it gonna be?

EXT. ARNER DRIVEWAY -- DAY

George pulls the Mustang into the driveway, followed immediately by Peg in a brand new Jaguar XK roadster.

George and Peg jump from their respective vehicles and grab each other in a big hug punctuated by kisses, spinning around in the driveway.

They suddenly notice Ellsworth and Gina, the Redhead, standing in Bruce's driveway next to his now wholly inadequate-looking Miata. Ellsworth is having trouble picking his jaw off the turf.

GEORGE

Bruce! How's it goin', buddy?

ELLSWORTH

George...
(points at the XK)
What's that?

GEORGE

That's the new Jag XK, Bruce. New and hot, as someone once said to me.

Gina smiles at George.

GINA

It's gorgeous.

GEORGE

Yeah, yeah. Sure is. Almost as nice as that Mustang there.

PEG

I'm going to go start dinner, hon.
(to Bruce)
Nice to see you, Bruce.

Bruce waves weakly. He can't take his eyes off the Jag.

Peg gives George a big kiss, pinches his ass.

PEG

See you in a while, stud.

Peg goes into the house. George hits the Jag's key lock, making it chirp. The sound seems to physically hurt Ellsworth.

Gina smiles at George again, then turns to Ellsworth.

GINA

Brucie? I'm a little chilly. Be a dear and get my sweater for me, will you? I left it in the bedroom.

ELLSWORTH
(eyes still on the
Jag)
Sure, honey. Sure. Be right back.

Ellsworth goes into his house, still turning and looking at the Jag as he goes.

GINA
Beautiful car.

GEORGE
Thanks.

GINA
I don't think Bruce will sleep
tonight.

George just smiles.

GINA
I'm sorry he's so awful to you.
Personally, I don't think you're the
loser he says you are.
(indicates the Jag)
Obviously.

Gina walks closer to the hedge.

GINA
Hey. I have something for you.

GEORGE
My lucky day...

GINA
Did Bruce tell you I'm an Eagles
cheerleader?

GEORGE
(surprise on his face)
No. No, he didn't.

GINA
Yeah. Probably wouldn't. Anyway,
here.

Gina reaches into the pocket of her shorts, pulls out two tickets, hands them to George.

GINA
They're tickets to tomorrow's game
with the Redskins. Right on the
fifty.

GEORGE
(stunned)
You're kidding!

GINA

I was supposed to get them for a couple of Bruce's friends, but why don't you take them? Just between us, okay?

GEORGE

Wow. Gina. This is terrific! What can I say?

Ellsworth comes out of his house, sweater in hand.

GINA

Just say hi when you get there...I'll be dancing right in front of you.

Gina winks at George as he tucks the tickets into his pocket.

GEORGE

You bet.

Gina turns and climbs into the Miata.

GINA

(cooly, to Ellsworth)
Take me home, Bruce.

George smiles as Ellsworth fires up the Miata -- even he winces at the sound now.

George goes into the garage, pulls the can of paint from the Mustang, starts to shake it up as he grabs an airgun.

GEORGE

Ready to get pretty, baby?

EXT. BACK YARD -- NIGHT

George wipes his hands on a paint-smudged rag as he walks to the stoop.

Muggs runs up, ball in his mouth, then drops it at George's feet.

GEORGE

What's gotten into you, huh? Well, here you go.

George tosses the ball into the yard, laughs as Muggs tear-asses after it, runs it back, drops it at George's feet again.

Peg appears at the door. She's dressed in a sexy little black dress.

GEORGE

Whoa. You look terrific.

PEG

Why thank you, sir. Dinner's ready
when you are.

George tosses the ball for Muggs, heads into the house.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

George dries his hands after washing in the sink. He notices the kitchen table isn't set for dinner.

GEORGE

Peg? You want me to set the table?

PEG (O.S.)

In here, honey. We're waiting for
you.

George walks to the door connecting the kitchen and dining room, looks in.

The room is beautifully set up -- candlelight, the best china, a picture-perfect roast beef sits waiting to be carved. A little soft jazz wafts in from the living room.

George emits a low whistle.

INT. DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

The family sits around the table, eating. Vince sits reading a book. Susie's in an understated blouse and skirt, her hair in an attractive twist on top of her head.

George takes a bite of roast beef, looks at them all.

GEORGE

Wow. Look at this. How long's it
been since we've been all together?
And God, Peg, this beef is fabulous.
Better than my mom's. And this...
(indicates the room)
...is wonderful.

PEG

All for you, sweetie.

GEORGE

(winks)
You're the best.
(to Susie and Vince)
And how are you guys?

SUSIE

Great. We won today. And I asked a
few of the other girls to come over,
like you said. I told them you grill
a mean burger.

GEORGE
 Just let me know when.
 (winks)
 And I love your outfit, Kitten.
 Very becoming.

Susie beams.

GEORGE
 (to Vince)
 And hey, I almost forgot! Guess
 what I have, Vinnie.

Vince sits with a forkful of food hovering near his mouth.
 He's got his nose buried in a textbook. Only his eyes move
 as he reads.

GEORGE
 Yo, Vince.

Vince comes out of it.

VINCE
 Sorry, Pop. Got kinda lost there.
 Never knew European History was so
 cool. Amazing what they did back
 then.

GEORGE
 (blank stare)
 Mm-hmm.
 (then excited)
 Well, anyway...Guess who came up
 with two tickets on the 50 for
 tomorrow's game?

VINCE
 (looking back at his
 book)
 I dunno. Who?

GEORGE
 What do you mean, who? Me! I got
 us two of the most perfect seats you
 can get for a game.

VINCE
 Gee, Pop, that's great, but I got
 that paper due, should read a bit
 ahead for next week...

GEORGE
 Come on. Take a break. You're not
 gonna let your old man sit on the 50
 all by himself are ya?

VINCE
 Really, Pop. I just don't think...

PEG

Oh, go on, Vince. Since when have you ever turned down a game with your Dad?

GEORGE

On the 50, Vinnie!

VINCE

All right, all right. I'll go. Jeez. But don't be yellin' at me when I don't get that scholarship.

GEORGE

Aw, you'll be fine.
 (looks around the table again)
 God, this is great, isn't it, guys?
 (to Peg)
 Pass those mashed potatoes, will you, honey? They're fantastic!

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

George lies in bed, Peg nuzzled onto his shoulder. They're naked under the sheets.

PEG

You're like a seventeen year old lately, you know that?

GEORGE

You're not complaining now, are you?

PEG

Nope. No complaints. Things couldn't be better.

GEORGE

Sure seems that way, doesn't it?

George stares at the ceiling, his brow furrowed.

EXT. LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD -- DAY

George and Vince in the stands. George holds a big cup of beer, and is standing with the rest of the CROWD, who are screaming themselves hoarse.

The scoreboard shows 4th Quarter, twelve seconds left, the Eagles up 28-0.

George sits.

GEORGE

I can't believe how well they're playing! It's unbelievable.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's like a different team, Vince.
Gotta be one of the greatest games
I've seen them play.

VINCE

Great? Knowing this team, I'd have
say they played a perfect game.

George looks down at Vince.

GEORGE

Huh. Perfect. You're right.
Couldn't have been more perfect,
could it?

A smile breaks on George's face as the gun sounds.

GEORGE

Absolutely perfect.

MONTAGE:

-- INT. SMITTY'S BACK ROOM -- NIGHT -- George plays poker
with Petey, Sam, and Others. George lays down four aces,
sweeps up the pot.

-- INT. SMITTY'S BAR -- NIGHT -- George is surrounded by a
crowd, including Lindy and a number of other BEAUTIFUL GIRLS
and COOL GUYS. George is the center of attention.

-- EXT. CARBONERA CONSTRUCTION -- DAY -- George stands over
a blueprint table with Carbonera, pointing out something on
the prints, then pointing up at the high-rise above them.
Carbonera nods vigorously and slaps George on the shoulder.

CARBONERA

Come on, George. Let me buy you
lunch.

George smiles, moves off with Carbonera. Petey and Sam stand
with their lunch boxes, watching George leave.

-- INT. SMITTY'S BACK ROOM -- NIGHT -- George lays down a
straight to the ace, sweeps up the pot.

-- EXT. ARNER BACKYARD -- DAY -- George stands at the
barbecue grill, flipping burgers. At the picnic table are
Peg, Vince and three of his FRIENDS, Susie and three of her
FRIENDS. George is telling a joke, and all are laughing.

-- EXT. CAR RALLY -- DAY -- George stands in front of the
now-resplendent Mustang, on which sits a blue ribbon. Peg
comes up behind George, pinches his butt, wraps herself around
him, and pulls him back behind a nearby tree.

-- INT. SMITTY'S BACK ROOM -- NIGHT -- George lays down a
royal straight flush and sweeps up the pot.

-- INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT -- George walks in from the bathroom, a toothbrush in his mouth. He's suddenly jumped from behind and tackled onto the bed by a stark naked Peg.

-- EXT. CARBONERA CONSRUCTION -- DAY -- George, Petey, and Sam at work, talking about the upcoming Dallas game.

PETEY

There's no way they're gonna beat Dallas, I don't care what kinda roll you think they're on.

SAM

Absofuckinlutely.

GEORGE

Look. If the Eagles beat Dallas on Sunday, they win the Division, right?
 (off their nods)
 After the most dismal start in recent club history, right?
 (off their nods)
 Which means they make the playoffs.
 (off their nods)
 And that would be simply perfect, wouldn't it?

SAM

Well, sure, but...

GEORGE

(interrupting)
 Then they're gonna win.

PETEY

You know that for a fact.

GEORGE

Trust me.

-- EXT. LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD -- DAY -- George, Petey, and Sam in the middle of an out-of-control CROWD of Eagles fans. The scoreboard reads: Eagles 42, Cowboys 7. George looks at Petey and Sam. He smiles.

END MONTAGE

INT. SMITTY'S -- DAY

A raucus crowd celebrates the Eagles' win. George, Petey, and Sam are at their usual place at the end of the bar.

PETEY

You gonna tell me what's goin' on with you?

GEORGE

What?

PETEY

You've barely lost a hand in two weeks, George. Carbonera thinks you're his long-lost son. You know more about what the Eagles are gonna do than the coach. What the hell's up?

George takes a deep breath, looks around the bar, then leans into Petey.

GEORGE

I don't know, Petey. It's like...lately everything's just been goin' my way, you know? Insanely goin' my way.

PETEY

Lucky streak, huh? Well, you better watch it. The guys are makin' noises like they ain't gonna play cards with you anymore.

GEORGE

It's more'n a run of good luck, Petey. It's like...whatever would be the most perfect thing that could happen for me...is exactly what I'll get. All the time.

PETEY

Bullshit.

GEORGE

No. I'm tellin' you. Peg, the kids, work, the Birds...
 (he nods toward Lindy,
 Sandy, and Martina
 with Sam nearby)
 ...even Lindy and the girls.
 Whatever...

PETEY

You're dreamin'. You're just on a roll.

GEORGE

Okay, what if I can prove it?

PETEY

How?

GEORGE

What would be the most perfect thing that could happen to me at this very moment?

PETEY AND SAM
 (without hesitation)
 Eagles-Giants Playoff tickets.

At that exact moment, a bellow comes from the door behind them.

CARBONERA (O.S.)
 George Arner!

George, Petey, Sam and a few others turn to see Carbonera making a beeline for George, a big smile on his face.

Carbonera slaps George on the back, gives him a big hug.

CARBONERA
 How's my number one boy, huh?

GEORGE
 I'm good, Mr. C. Real good.

CARBONERA
 Well, you're about to get better.
 Look, I've been called out of town
 on a business deal. Can't get out
 of it. So I can't use these.

Carbonera pulls an envelope from his jacket pocket, puts it in George's hand.

CARBONERA
 I want you to have them...just to
 show my appreciation for the
 outstanding work you've been doing.

George opens the envelope and pulls out...ten VIP passes to the Carbonera Superbox at Lincoln Financial Field for this weekend's Eagles-Giants playoff game.

Petey's eyes pop.

PETEY
 Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Are those
 what I think they are?

CARBONERA
 You bet they are. Eagles-Giants, my
 Superbox. Everything's on me. You
 boys have a great time.
 (to Smitty)
 Hey, barkeep! A round on the house.
 Tell 'em all it's on George, give me
 the tab.
 (to George)
 Where can I see a man about a horse
 around here?

George points toward the corner of the bar. Carbonera moves off.

George waves the tickets, smiles at Petey.

PETEY

I'll be a son of a bitch.

INT. PETEY'S CAR -- NIGHT

George, Petey, and Sam argue as they ride home.

SAM

Coincidence, plain and simple.

PETEY

Has to be.

GEORGE

That's a hell of a lot of coincidence.

SAM

Well, how would you explain it then?
'Cause I ain't buyin' that you're
suddenly "Mr. Perfect Life."

PETEY

You gotta test it.

GEORGE

What do you mean?

PETEY

I mean test it. Make some stuff
happen for yourself. Not that I
believe for an instant you can, mind
you.

GEORGE

Test it.

PETEY

Uh-huh.

George thinks a moment, then shrugs.

GEORGE

Why not?

INT. CARBONERA'S TRAILER -- CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY

George enters.

CARBONERA

Hey! There he is! Sit down, Georgie.
Sit down.

George takes a chair.

CARBONERA

So...what can I do for my top guy
this morning?

GEORGE

Look, Mr. C...I know you mentioned
the foreman's job to me a few days
back. But I also know that your
sister's pushing you to give it to
your nephew. But I really think you
ought to give it to me.

CARBONERA

Do you?

GEORGE

Yes. You're obviously pretty happy
with what I've done for you lately.
But I could really get a lot more
done -- save you a lot more money --
if I were foreman.

(a pause, then very
considered)

It would be the perfect job for me.

Carbonera doesn't even hesitate. He stands up and reaches
out to shake George's hand.

CARBONERA

You're absolutely right, George.
Don't know what I was thinking.
You're the only man for the job.
Consider this your first day as my
new foreman.

EXT. CARBONERA'S TRAILER -- CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY

George leaves the trailer, pushes the door closed behind
him. He stops, looks around, then smiles broadly, punches
his fist into the air, and literally jumps down the stairs.

EXT. PRESERVE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB -- DAY

George drives into the entrance circle in the new Jag XK.
He parks in front of the immaculate clubhouse, leaves the
car and goes inside.

INT. MEMBERSHIP OFFICE -- PRESERVE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB --
DAY

George sits in front of BROCKTON STRAWBRIDGE, whose desk
nameplate identifies him as the club's Executive Director.

GEORGE

...so what I'm wondering is how I
might play a few games on the club
course, you know?

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I live right down the street, and it would be perfect if I...

STRAWBRIDGE

(interrupting, standing)

Say no more, Mr. Arner. Consider it done. In fact...

(comes around his desk)

As it so happens, our Board of Directors, in their wish to maintain good relations with our surrounding neighborhoods, has authorized me to offer full memberships to certain neighborhood individuals.

(throws his arm around George's shoulders)

Now, when I saw you drive up -- nice Jag, by the way -- I thought, now there's the perfect man to start our Neighborhood Memberships drive with. So...

(shakes George's hand)

Welcome to the Preserve, George.

GEORGE

Perfect. Just the word I would have chosen.

STRAWBRIDGE

(opening the office door)

How are you fit for clubs?

INT. PRO SHOP -- PRESERVE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB -- DAY

George looks at an expensive set of Callaway golf clubs. The price tag reads \$3000. George emits a low whistle, and turns to walk away, but his attention is caught by a commotion at the front of the shop.

George sees the PRO SHOP MANAGER standing on a ladder, unfurling a huge sign across the store window that reads, "Storewide Instant Sale!"

A moment later, a SHOP SALESPERSON walks up and slaps a "Sale" pricetag on the Callaway clubs... "\$250".

George smiles.

INT. FAMILY ROOM -- ARNER HOUSE -- NIGHT

George and Peg sit playing rummy. Susie sits at a nearby desk, facing a computer.

Peg tosses a King on the discard pile. George immediately picks it up, drops all his cards.

GEORGE

Gin.

PEG

Not again! You have become unbeatable at this game. You been practicing somewhere and not telling me?

GEORGE

(shuffling)

Cards have just been coming to me lately, Peg. Weirdest thing. 'Nother game?

PEG

I don't think so. But...

She runs her foot up George's leg under the table.

PEG

Maybe we could play something else...

SUSIE

Darn it! I can't believe it!

GEORGE

What is it, kitten?

SUSIE

Oh...I've been waiting all week to get tickets for the Blue Rocks concert, and they're already sold out. Everybody's going, and I can't get tickets.

Seemingly relieved at the opportunity, George rises and stands behind Susie, views the screen.

GEORGE

How many times you tried?

SUSIE

A dozen at least. If there were any tickets, I'd have gotten in by now. They're sold out for sure.

GEORGE

Let me give it a try. How many tickets you want?

SUSIE

Four would be cool, but don't bother, Dad...they're long gone.

GEORGE

Probably.

George sits in the chair, taps a few keys.

GEORGE

Well, whattaya know? Look at this.
Four seats.

A totally surprised Susie leans into the screen.

SUSIE

Front row center?!? Daddy! Omigod!
I can't believe you just did that!
You're the best dad in the world!
Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Susie hugs George tight enough to make his face red, then bolts for the stairs.

SUSIE

Wait'll I tell Heather! She will
simply die! How perfect is this!

George smiles at this last comment.

Peg comes over to George.

PEG

Best dad in the world, eh?
(straddles George on
the chair, starts to
smother him in kisses)
Wanna be my daddy?

George tries to wriggle free.

GEORGE

Come on, Peg.
(laughs painfully as
she tickles him)
I thought we were gonna watch a movie.

Peg stops, holds George by the shoulders, looks him in the eye.

PAM

Maybe we should make one.
(winks)
Whattaya think, daddy?

Peg goes back to tickling a slightly distressed George.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

George sits on the couch with a big bowl of popcorn in his lap, trying to watch a movie.

But it's not going well. On one side of him is Peg, focused on nibbling on his ear. On the other side, Susie sits so close she could be on his lap, her head on George's shoulder.

George doesn't look all that happy.

INT. SMITTY'S -- NIGHT

George, Petey, and Sam sit at their normal end of the bar. Petey and Sam are in a great mood. George, however, sits quietly hunched over his beer.

Two COOL GUYS walk by the end of the bar. One of them slaps George on the shoulder.

COOL GUY 1

Hey, George! How's it goin', guy?

George just guy-nods in Cool Guy's direction.

COOL GUY 1

Love to have you join us down the end of the bar...

GEORGE

Yeah, sure...maybe in a minute.

The Cool Guys move toward the end of the bar, where Lindy and her friends have just sat down. They wave at George, who just smiles weakly.

PETEY

So, anyway, like I was sayin' -- I can't believe how they've turned the season around. Best comeback I've seen from any team in the NFL.

SAM

Giants have been awesome, though. Don't know if the Birds have what it's gonna take to win it.

PETEY

What do you think, George? They gonna take New York? Could go either way...

GEORGE

(understated)

Nah. They'll win huge. Maybe 60 points.

SAM

Sixty points!? Are you nuts? How are they...

GEORGE

Trust me.

George drains the last of his beer. Almost instantly, Smitty puts another one in front of him.

SMITTY

On the house.

GEORGE
 (sighing)
 'Course...

EXT. SMITTY'S -- NIGHT

George, Petey, and Sam exit the bar.

SAM
 I still don't see why you're so sure
 the Eagles are gonna win. And even
 if you could predict it, why ain't
 you excited about it?

George looks at his friend, then notices a convenience store nearby.

GEORGE
 C'mere.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- NIGHT

George walks to the counter.

GEORGE
 You didn't think gettin' Carbonera's
 playoff tickets was anything but
 coincidence.

SAM
 Still don't.

GEORGE
 Okay. I'll make it real simple.
 What would be the best thing that
 could happen if you bought a lottery
 ticket?

SAM
 Winnin'.

GEORGE
 Right. So buy one.

Sam digs a dollar bill out of his pocket, tosses it on the counter. The COUNTER CLERK hands him a ticket.

Sam rubs off the ticket.

SAM
 Nuthin'. Loser.

GEORGE
 Buy another one.
 (to Petey)
 You buy a couple too.

Both men buy tickets, rub them off. No winners.

PETEY

So what's that prove? Other than
we're stupid for listenin' to you.

GEORGE

(to the Counter Clerk)
Give me a ticket.

The Counter Clerk gives George a ticket. George rubs it
off. It's a winner.

SAM

Hey. A winner. Congrats.

GEORGE

(to the Counter Clerk)
Give me another.

George rubs this one off. Another winner.

SAM

Five bucks! Very cool.

GEORGE

(to the Counter Clerk)
Another.

Another winner, this time for twenty-five dollars.

SAM

Hey, hey, George. Three in a row.
Don't see that happen too often.

GEORGE

You EVER see it happen?

PETEY

What are you sayin'?

GEORGE

(to the Counter Clerk)
Give me twenty tickets.

The Counter Clerk counts out the tickets, hands them to
George. George proceeds to rub them off, one at a time. As
he does each ticket, he hands it to Sam.

GEORGE

(rub)
Winner.
(rub)
Winner.
(rub)
Winner.
(rub)
Winner.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(rub)
Winner.
(rub)
Winner.
(rub)
Winner.

PETEY
Jesus Christ.

GEORGE
Winner.
(rub)
Winner.

George rubs all the tickets. All winners.

SAM
It can't be.

PETEY
It's a trick, right?

GEORGE
No trick. You saw it. You buy a
ticket...nothing. I buy a ticket.
Winner, winner, winner, winner.

SAM
Why ain't you buyin' a Powerball,
then?

GEORGE
Why bother? No fun in it if I know
I can win it anytime I want. You
asked me why I'm not excited about
the Eagles. Well, that's why.

George pockets his winnings and walks out of the store.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Petey grabs George's arm.

PETEY
C'mon. Really. How'd you do that?

GEORGE
Perfect, wasn't it?

PETEY
I'd say so, yeah.

George climbs into the his Mustang and fires the engine.

GEORGE

That's what I've been tryin' to tell you. I can't get anything BUT perfect. Perfect this, perfect that...

SAM

So what, George? Jeez, I'd have a blast if I could have things goin' my way like that.

GEORGE

You'd think so, wouldn't you?

At that moment, the door to Smitty's opens and Lindy comes out. She sees George and weaves past Petey and Sam, leans on the Mustang.

LINDY

(a bit tipsy)

Hey, Georgie. How'd you like to give a girl a ride home?

(winks)

I'll make it worth your while.

Lindy giggles, doesn't wait for an answer, climbs into the Mustang.

GEORGE

(to Petey and Sam)

See? This's perfect, right?

Petey and Sam elbow each other and gleefully nod agreement as Lindy climbs into the Mustang.

George just shakes his head, and drives off, leaving Petey and Sam looking at each other on the curb.

EXT. GERMANTOWN AVENUE -- NIGHT

George pulls to the curb in front of Lindy's house. But she doesn't get out. She slides over close to him, starts to twirl his hair flirtatiously.

LINDY

Want to come in, Georgie?

George looks at her a moment.

GEORGE

It'll be incredible, won't it?

LINDY

Mm-hmm.

Lindy kisses George's neck, but he doesn't react at all. Just sits with his hands on the wheel, looking straight ahead.

GEORGE

Where were you when I was 18? When I really needed you? THAT would have been perfect.

(turns to look her in the eyes)

Look, Lindy...you're a wonderful girl and all, but...this isn't real somehow.

Lindy kisses at his neck again.

LINDY

C'mon, George. Your wife will never find out. We won't get caught.

GEORGE

Oh, I'm sure of that. But still...

Lindy pouts, but George ignores the ploy, leans over and opens the door for her.

GEORGE

Maybe I can come over some other time.

Lindy reaches up and caresses George's cheek.

LINDY

Okay, honey. And when you do, it WILL be perfect.

George smiles as he pulls away from the curb.

GEORGE

I have no doubt about it, unfortunately.

EXT. BACK YARD -- NIGHT

George walks from the garage. As he reaches the stoop, he sees Vince's football in the grass. He picks it up, makes a couple of moves, pump fakes a couple throws, but then stops and just holds the ball, looking into the empty yard.

INT. KITCHEN -- ARNER HOUSE -- NIGHT

George comes into the house quietly, puts the football on the counter, opens a cabinet. He pulls out a bottle of Scotch, pours himself a glass, sits at the table.

As he sips the scotch, he notices a note tented on the table, on top of two cards. The note reads "Check it out, Dad!" in Vince's handwriting.

INSERT: THE TWO CARDS

The cards are midterm report cards for Vince and Susie. Straight A's for both.

George stares at the cards, then giggles, then starts to laugh, then begins to cry.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

George enters, a little tipsy, drink in hand. Peg is asleep.

George sits on the side of the bed, turns the light on low. Peg rouses, rolls over and smiles.

PEG

Hey, honey. Why don't you come to bed...it's cold in here without you.

Peg reaches out for George, but he takes her hand and holds it.

GEORGE

Things have been going pretty good for us lately, haven't they? For me especially.

PEG

No complaints.

GEORGE

But I mean...better than usual. Better than ever.

PEG

It's an up and down world, George. Things equal out.

GEORGE

But what if they don't?

PEG

Don't what?

GEORGE

Equal out. What if...what if all you get is one or the other? All up, no down, for instance.

PEG

Be kinda boring, I'd think.

George thinks for a moment, takes a slug of scotch.

GEORGE

Yup. Perfect word.

George realizes what he's just said and laughs, then starts to snuffle again, a tear tracing down his cheek. He gets up and moves quickly to the door.

Peg sits up.

PEG

George? George, what's the matter?

GEORGE

Just tired, honey. Really tired.
Go back to sleep. I'll be up in a
little while.

George leaves the room. Peg sits back against her pillows, her brow furrowed.

MONTAGE:

-- INT. SUPERBOX -- LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD -- DAY -- A crowd of people, Petey and Sam among them, all decked out in Eagles colors, drinks in their hands, cheering. It's 4th Quarter, under a minute to go, and the Eagles lead the Giants 63-3. George sits behind the crowd, alone, nursing a beer, eating peanuts. He looks bored to death.

-- EXT. -- PRESERVE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB -- THIRD TEE -- DAY -- George pulls a club, walks to his ball. Nearby stands Carbonera, whispering to two other PLAYERS, pointing to George, nodding, and giving the "thumbs up". George, not even looking at his ball, takes a less than balletic swing, turns and walks to his bag without watching the ball...which sails high and far, takes a bounce to the lip of the green, rolls straight to the pin, drops into the cup. When Carbonera makes a big deal about the hole in one, George just waves from the golf cart.

-- EXT. HIGH RISE -- DAY -- George, Carbonera, and several dozen other DIGNITARIES stand on a dais in front of the just-completed building. Carbonera finishes his speech, turns to George and hands him the big scissors to cut the Grand Opening ribbon. George does so without a smile, almost like a zombie.

-- INT. SMITTY'S BACKROOM -- NIGHT -- George sits at a poker table with his friends. He looks at his cards -- 3 Kings a 4 and a 3. George throws away the 3 Kings, draws a 7, a 5, and a deuce. He smiles at his losing hand. Everyone bets, calls. George tosses in his cards.

GEORGE

I got nothin'.

Petey looks at the rest of the hands as they hit the table.

PETEY

No, George...pot's yours. Seven high.

GEORGE

You're kidding. How can I win with a seven? Nobody wins with a seven.

PETEY
Well, you just did.

George stands, leaves the table.

GEORGE
(angrily)
Jesus.

-- INT. BATHROOM -- ARNER HOUSE -- NIGHT -- George leans up against the door in his bathrobe. From the other side of the door comes Peg's voice:

PEG (O.S.)
Georgie? Where are you, stud muffin?
Come to Mommy!

George looks at the ceiling, sighs.

PEG (O.S.)
Come and get it, baby...

George closes his eyes, sighs again, turns, drops his head a moment, then opens the door.

GEORGE
(monotoned)
Coming, my sweet...

-- INT. SUPERMARKET -- DAY -- George walks in. All hell breaks loose -- a cheering crowd, confetti, music, and the STORE MANAGER running up to George as a banner unfurls that reads, "Our One-Millionth Customer!" George turns and runs from the store.

END MONTAGE

INT. SMITTY'S -- NIGHT

George sits at the end of the bar with Petey and Sam flanking him. In front of George are half a dozen empty beer bottles, and three or four full ones.

SAM
Couple of the guys are sayin' that maybe we oughtta take a break from the poker games for a while.

PETEY
Why?

Sam looks at George.

SAM
(awkwardly)
Well...you know...they'd kinda like to...

GEORGE
 (interrupting, but
 not looking up)
 Win a hand once in a while.

PETEY
 C'mon, George, he's not sayin' that.

SAM
 Well, yeah...I am.

Smitty approaches and puts another beer in front of George.

SMITTY
 From the girl over there in the...

George waves him off without looking up.

GEORGE
 Whatever.

Petey looks at Sam, nods his head toward the door.

PETEY
 Gettin' late. We got work tomorrow,
 guys. You need a ride home, George?

GEORGE
 Nah. I'll walk home. 'Sides...got
 a little beer to finish.

Petey and Sam leave. George just stares at the beer bottles
 in front of him.

BAR PATRON (O.S.)
 Hey, Smitty...turn on ESPN. Let's
 see the scores.

George looks up as Smitty turns on the TV and then starts to
 look around.

SMITTY
 Where the hell's the remote?

As Smitty looks around the back bar area, George's attention
 is caught by a newscast on the TV.

INSERT: TV SCREEN

Bradley Cooper and Emma Stone climb from a plane, walk into
 a crowd of fans and photographers.

TV REPORTER (V.O.)
 Bradley Cooper and Emma Stone landed
 today in Paris, France, where it's
 reported they will begin a new film
 purported to have Oscar written all
 over it...

BACK TO SCENE

A look of recognition, then determination, crosses George's face. He stands and moves toward the door.

SMITTY

Night, George! See you tomorrow?

George just raises his hand in a half-hearted wave as he goes out the door.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

George moves up the street, mumbling to himself.

GEORGE

...may be perfect, but it's perfectly fucked up, and he's gonna change it back, goddamn it...

George comes to the alleyway where he'd met the Old Bum. He looks into the darkness.

GEORGE

Hey! You! You in there?

(no answer)

Hey, Old Man! I want to talk to you! Hey!

(again, no answer)

Shit.

George leans against the alley wall.

GEORGE

Damn it. What the hell am I gonna do?

George pushes off the wall, moves toward the street.

OLD BUM (O.S.)

Not all it's cracked up to be, is it?

George jumps, startled.

GEORGE

Huh? What?

OLD BUM

I said, it's not all it's cracked up to be.

George peers into the dark, eventually catching the outline of the Old Bum, who sits about twenty feet into the alley.

GEORGE

Didn't you hear me calling? You been there all along?

OLD BUM

I'm where I need to be, when I need
to be.

George goes to the wall, slides down, sits next to the Old
Bum.

GEORGE

I've been looking for you.

The Old Bum bites the end off a cigar, spits it to the alley
floor.

OLD BUM

Uh-huh. So. What do you think?

GEORGE

About what?

OLD BUM

The Good Life.

GEORGE

Good life, schmud life.

OLD BUM

R-i-i-g-h-t.

GEORGE

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

OLD BUM

You forget I warned you? Didn't I
tell you? See, life ain't meant to
be all good or all bad. No balance
that way.

GEORGE

No balance.

OLD BUM

Uh-huh.

GEORGE

Yeah, but...I always thought that if
I could have everything go my way...if
everything could be perfect, you
know?

OLD BUM

Don't work that way.

George shakes his head "no" in agreement.

OLD BUM

Know why?

George shakes his head "no" again.

GEORGE
But I know how I feel.

OLD BUM
And how's that?

GEORGE
I'm beginning to think we're not made to have it all handed to us, you know? There's no thrill if there's no fight. We need challenges to overcome. Without that "struggle" you talk about, I think we lose the sense that there's a point to all this shit. We need it to be 4th Quarter, down 6, with 90 yards to go.

The Old Bum starts to light his cigar.

OLD BUM
Yup. Mankind ain't no good without his challenges. Else why he bother, right?

GEORGE
But what I really miss...what I want so much to have back, Old Man...is what I had in the first place. I had it good and I just didn't see it.

The Old Bum puffs on his cigar, glances at George and smiles.

GEORGE
I fucked it all up, didn't I?

OLD BUM
I tol' you to be careful what you wished for.

George eyes the Old Bum.

GEORGE
You did this. You can undo it.

OLD BUM
Don't be layin' this at my feet.

GEORGE
I saw you that first day...when it all started. You made this happen. I know it.

OLD BUM
I didn't make nuthin' happen.
(MORE)

OLD BUM (CONT'D)

All's I did was suggest you open your eyes a bit, that's all. Change your outlook. There's power in that, you know.

George struggles up, dusts himself off.

GEORGE

No. It was more than that. You changed things. You took away my life and gave me...

OLD BUM

(interrupting)

'Scuse me, but wasn't it you talkin' 'bout how you'd like your life to be perfect? How you didn't want the struggle no more?

GEORGE

I didn't know...

OLD BUM

I tol' you...it's all relative. There's good and bad in everything, and you just got to choose what you want to look at. But you didn't want to hear it.

GEORGE

I want it back the way it was, Old Man.

OLD BUM

Ain't you listenin'?

GEORGE

What will it take? To put it back the way it was? You gotta do something.

The Old Bum stands, puffs his cigar.

OLD BUM

I done tol' you already. It ain't up to me. It never was.

George stands in front of the Old Bum, looking a bit lost, a bit desperate.

GEORGE

I was a lot happier being unhappy sometimes, you know what I mean?

OLD BUM

Perfectly.

George offers the Old Bum a weak smile at that, then walks out of the alley and up the street.

The Old Bum comes to the alley opening, looks at George walking up the street. He takes a big puff of his cigar, and blows a thick, blue, smoke ring into the night air.

INT. BATHROOM -- ARNER HOUSE -- DAY

George stands in the shower. He hears the bathroom door open.

PEG (O.S.)

George? I'm leaving. I have a
massage and a facial appointment.
I'll drop the kids off at school on
the way. See you for dinner. Have
a perfect day, Sweetie.

George hears the bathroom door close. He leans his head against the wall, the shower beating down on him.

GEORGE

Perfect. Right.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

George comes downstairs. A gorgeous coffeecake and a plate of butter sit on the table. Coffee perks on the counter.

George sighs.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- DAY

George climbs into the Mustang, pulls it toward the street. He notices Ellsworth standing next to his Miata, a forlorn look on his face.

GEORGE

Hey, Bruce. How's it goin'?

ELLSWORTH

(not his normal up
self)

Okay, I guess.

GEORGE

Where's Gina?

ELLSWORTH

(shrugs)

A quarterback came along...

GEORGE

Well, you'll find someone better,
I'm sure.

ELLSWORTH

Yeah. In a perfect world, maybe.

George ponders this a moment.

GEORGE

Be careful what you wish for.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

George is having the perfect drive to work. Not much traffic and he's catching every light green.

EXT. CARBONARA CONSTRUCTION SITE #2 -- DAY

George swings the Mustang onto the new site, parks, and gets out. He moves toward the main trailer.

Ryan Schmidt passes him, a big smile on his face.

SCHMIDT

Hey, Boss!

GEORGE

Ryan.

SCHMIDT

(almost fawning)

Lookin' forward to workin' with you on this new one. Anything you want, you let me know.

GEORGE

(without looking,
monotone)

You bet, Ryan. You bet.

INT. MAIN TRAILER -- DAY

George enters his office, moves to the desk, picks up a roll of blueprints, tucks them under his arm, and starts to leave.

He notices something on the desk, and returns to pick them up. Six VIP passes to the Lincoln Financial super box for the upcoming Conference Championship game.

Scrawled on a post-it note: "Congratulations, Partner!"

GEORGE

Partner?!

George stares at the tickets a moment, then sighs, tosses them on the desk and leaves.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY

George moves toward the work site proper, but is stopped by a YOUNG LABORER, 20s, who is obviously very excited.

The Young Laborer shoves a picture into George's hand.

YOUNG LABORER

That's my new son, Boss. Born last night.

GEORGE

Oh...well, congrat...

YOUNG LABORER

Gonna name him George, 'cause I want him to grow up just like you.

GEORGE

Oh, don't be doing that. Name him something else. After your father or something. You want him to grow up to be like you...he's YOUR son...

YOUNG LABORER

No, man. I want him to be just like you. You're the perfect example of what a man should be.

GEORGE

Oh, no, no, no....

But the Young Laborer won't hear George's protest. He takes back the picture, heads off.

YOUNG LABORER

Just wanted you to know, Boss. See you on site!

George stands stock still, then looks to the sky.

GEORGE

ENOUGH! Please! Enough already!

George sighs heavily, starts to move toward the main construction site. He steps gingerly around a large puddle of mud, water, and concrete slurry.

CARBONERA (O.S.)

George!

George turns his head, sees Carbonera climbing from his Cadillac and waving George to come over to him.

GEORGE

(to himself)

Oh, what now...

George waves in recognition, but continues to walk away from Carbonera, trying to indicate he has something to do at the main site, which causes him not to be completely aware of where he's going.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE -- COFFEE TRUCK -- DAY

Petey and Sam stand at the coffee truck, watching the scene unfold before them as they fix their coffees. They see George half walking backwards, looking and waving at Carbonera.

They also see another WORKER walking on an intersecting path with George, two ten-foot four-by-fours on his shoulder. The beams obscure the Worker's view.

PETEY

Oh, shit.
 (yelling to George)
 Heads up!

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE -- DAY

George turns to see what Petey had yelled about.

Simultaneously, the Worker with the beams swings around to determine the same thing. But as the Worker turns, so do the beams, and they swing right into the back of George's head with a sickening "thunk".

George falls like a tree cut in the forest, right into the puddle of mud, water, and slurry, the blueprints crushed under his body and submerged.

Everything goes black.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE ENTRANCE -- DAY

George's eyes flutter open, but he blinks as raindrops hit his face. He lies on an ambulance gurney. EMT's, WORKERS, Petey, Sam, and Carbonera surround him, looking down at him.

Petey helps George sit up.

PETEY

You okay, George?

SAM

How's your head, buddy?

George touches the back of his head tenderly.

GEORGE

Sore as hell. What happened?

Petey opens his mouth to answer, but the booming voice of Carbonera cuts through everything.

CARBONERA

(holding the soaked
 blueprints)
 What happened?! I'll tell you what
 happened!

(MORE)

CARBONERA (CONT'D)

You destroyed nine grand worth of blueprints is what happened! Damn it! This is a construction site, Arner! We wear hardhats on a construction site! How can I expect these men to follow procedure when the man I have supervising them can't? Maybe I got the wrong guy headin' things up here, whattaya think? Shit. I gotta do everything around here? Am I the only guy who knows what's right?

(shoves his finger in
George's chest)

These prints are comin' outta your pay, Arner!

Carbonera turns to the crowd of workers.

CARBONERA

And what the fuck are you assholes gawkin' at? Get the fuck back to work, or hit the fuckin' pavement! Am I gonna have to lay off a few a' you to find out who wants to work?

Carbonera walks off toward his trailer, trying to shake out the wet and muddy blueprints. The blueprints start to shred. He finally throws them to the ground.

The Workers start to disperse.

WORKER #1

Thanks a lot, Arner. You got him thinkin' about layoffs again.

WORKER #2

Yeah, Dimbulb. Thanks a million.

Petey and Sam help George get to his feet.

PETEY

How soon they forget, eh? Don't pay 'em no mind, George.

SAM

Yeah. Fuck 'em. What you want us to do?

George wipes some mud from his face.

GEORGE

Not sure.

PETEY

Whyn't you get cleaned up a bit.

(MORE)

PETEY (CONT'D)

We'll meet you at the pour in a couple minutes.

George nods. Petey and Sam move off.

George stands a moment, a little shell-shocked. He looks around, about to move toward the Coffee Truck, when he notices something.

GEORGE'S POV:

A lone black figure is just turning the corner at the end of the block, his hand raised in a wave.

BACK TO SCENE

A little smile creases the corners of George's mouth as he reaches back and rubs his sore head.

INT. SMITTY'S -- DAY

George, Petey, and Sam enter and move through the after-work crowd toward their end of the bar.

George guy-nods and smiles at a few of the Cool Guys and OTHERS who have been his constant companions of late. But they hardly react, as if they don't even see George.

INT. SMITTY'S -- CORNER OF THE BAR -- DAY

George, Petey, and Sam belly up and order beers from Smitty.

George looks down the bar and sees Lindy, Sandy, and Martina.

George motions to Smitty.

GEORGE

(to Smitty)

Send a Cosmo down to Lindy, will ya?

SMITTY

On you?

GEORGE

(a little surprised)

Yeah. On me.

SMITTY

Eight-fifty.

George looks at Smitty, who remains leaning on the bar until George pulls out a ten and hands it to Smitty. Smitty moves off to make the drink.

GEORGE'S POV:

Smitty sets the Cosmo in front of Lindy, points to George. But Lindy shakes her head, pushes the Cosmo back to Smitty, then turns and gives a big hug to a HANDSOME HUNK who has walked up behind her. She doesn't even glance at George.

BACK TO SCENE

George is at first surprised, then starts to smile.

GEORGE
(to Petey and Sam)
I'll be right back.

PETEY
Where you goin'?

GEORGE
Gotta check on something.

George moves quickly to the front door.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

George runs from Smitty's and enters the convenience store nearby.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- DAY

George runs to the counter.

GEORGE
Give me twenty scratch-offs.

The Counter Clerk counts them out, hands them to George.

George quickly rubs one, then another, and another, until he's moved through the whole stack.

George jumps up, slaps his hands together.

GEORGE
Yes!
(tossing a twenty to
the Clerk)
Thank you. Thank you very much.

George heads for the door. The Counter Clerk starts to pick up the tickets.

COUNTER CLERK
Hey, mister! Don't you want your
winners?

George stops at the door.

GEORGE
(smiling)
No winners there. Not a one.

The Counter Clerk stands with a confused look on his face as George runs from the store.

INT. SMITTY'S -- CORNER OF THE BAR -- DAY

George rejoins Petey and Sam.

GEORGE
Hey, guys. Guess what?

George notices his friends shaking their heads, miserable looks on their faces.

GEORGE
What's up?

Petey points to the TV, tuned to ESPN.

PETEY
Just announced. Carson Wentz, Nelson Agholor, and Jay Ajayi were all ridin' to practice together. Got t-boned by some asshole runnin' a red light.

GEORGE
You're kidding.

SAM
They okay, but broke up a bit. None of 'em's playin' on Sunday. You know what that means. No quarterback. No wide receiver. No running back. No Conference Championship.

PETEY
Season's over. Goddamn it.

George looks from Petey and Sam to the TV, then down at his beer. He's having a hard time keeping a smile from cutting his face.

GEORGE
Yeah. Goddamn it.

EXT. SMITTY'S -- NIGHT

George, Petey, and Sam emerge from the bar.

PETEY
(to George)
Walkin' or ridin'?

GEORGE
I'll walk.
(beat)
There a poker game tomorrow night?

SAM

Not if you're gonna be there.

GEORGE

Tell the guys to show up. I have a feeling they won't be disappointed.

PETEY

What are you talkin' about?

GEORGE

(smiling)

Nothing. Just tell 'em. See you tomorrow.

George turns and walks up the street, somehow a little lighter on his feet than he has been in a while.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

George pauses at the alleyway, peers inside.

In the shadows sits the Old Bum. George enters the alley and sits next to him.

GEORGE

Wanted to thank you.

OLD BUM

For what?

GEORGE

For making things good again.

OLD BUM

Ain't no good. Ain't no bad.

GEORGE

I'm not so sure...

OLD BUM

No. I mean it, now. I keep tellin' you this. The good and the bad -- they're both there all the time. Two sides of the same coin. Just a matter of what you choose to look at.

George stands, dusts himself off.

GEORGE

Yeah. Well...Thanks anyway.

As George moves to the mouth of the alley, he hears a rattling. He turns to see the Old Bum holding up his tin can.

OLD BUM
For the struggle?

George laughs, digs into his pockets, pulls out whatever bills and coins he has in them, drops it all into the cup.

GEORGE
Always.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

George walks up the driveway, bends to pick up the paper. He glances at the front page as he approaches the house.

VINCE (O.S.)
Heads up!

George, startled, ducks. A football bounces off his arm. George looks up at Vince in the yard.

VINCE
How many times I gotta tell you,
Dad? Hands. You gotta keep your
hands up.

George, smiling broadly, picks up the ball and whips it back to Vince.

GEORGE
Maybe if the quarterback would let
his receiver know the play...
(catching the ball
again)
No homework?

VINCE
Nothing I can't handle later. Been
missing our catches, you know?

GEORGE
Yeah. Me too.

George guns the ball at Vince again. Vince makes a few moves, tries to get past George, but George makes a superb open-field tackle. They fall to the grass laughing.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

George and Vince enter the kitchen.

VINCE
Gonna get a shower.

Vince has to step over Susie, who sits on the stairs, talking on the phone.

VINCE
Jeez, Suse. Park it someplace else,
will ya?

SUSIE
(to Vince)
Bite me, Vinnie.

GEORGE
Hey, hey, hey...Be nice, you two.

SUSIE
(into phone)
Call ya later, okay?

Susie closes the cell phone, stands. She's wearing the short-short skirt and plunging tank top again, hair teased, and sparkle make-up.

Susie sees by George's face that he's noticed.

Susie walks to George, gives him a big hug.

SUSIE
Chill, Dad. I'm still your little
girl, and I love you totally. But
sometimes I just gotta be me, okay?

GEORGE
(smiling at her)
Not a problem, Kitten. You look
great.
(as she heads for the
door)
Where's your mom?

SUSIE
Upstairs. She bought some new stuff
for a home facial, and she's doing
her hair again. You know her.

GEORGE
(disappointed)
Curlers and goo.

SUSIE
Prob'ly. See ya later. I'm goin'
to Heather's.

GEORGE
Don't be late.

Susie waves as she leaves. George looks at the kitchen table -- no evidence of dinner. He peeks into the dining room. The table's empty.

George starts up the stairs.

GEORGE

Peg?

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

George walks by Vince's room, looks in.

Vince is playing his video game, headphones on. In his lap is an open textbook. The room looks like a tornado hit it.

George smiles, moves on.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

George enters, looks to the bathroom. The bathroom door is closed.

George knocks on the door.

GEORGE

Peg?

The sound of running water.

GEORGE

(knocking again)

Peg?

The bathroom door opens a bit. Peg stands there, face covered in a blue-green goo, her hair hidden by a towel twisted on her head.

PEG

Hi, honey! I'll be with you in a couple, okay?

George's face is frozen. All he can do is nod. Peg closes the door.

PEG (O.S.)

I haven't done anything for dinner.
If you want to order some pizza,
it's okay with me.

GEORGE

Yeah. Sure. Okay.

George sticks his hands in his pockets and shuffles out of the room.

EXT. BACK DECK -- NIGHT

George plops down in an Adirondack chair. The sun is just about to go down. He sighs.

The screen door opens behind George. He closes his eyes and furrows his brow, as if making a silent wish.

A hand drops in front of George, offering a highball glass of scotch on the rocks with a twist. George, surprised, takes the glass and tentatively glances up as Peg comes around the chair.

George's face lights up. No curlers. No goo. Peg's in her cute little black dress, her hair pinned up in a provocative style, her makeup sexy and alluring. She holds her own scotch.

Peg sits in George's lap.

PEG

Hi, handsome.

GEORGE

Hey.

The sunset explodes into a wash of pinks, blues, reds, and yellows.

Peg kisses George's forehead and looks into his eyes.

PEG

I told Vince to get out of the house tonight. He's going over to Kenny's.

GEORGE

Is he now?

PEG

Uh-huh. Thought we could use a little time alone, catch up a little, play another game of Subject. I'll even let you pick the topic again if you want.

George looks at Peg, his eyes becoming moist, a smile spreading on his face.

PEG

What? What's wrong, baby?

George gives Peg a hug as they both look out at the spectacular sunset.

GEORGE

Not a thing, honey. Not a thing. Everything's just perfect.

FADE OUT:

THE END