

AMBOS

By Hank Willenbrink

208 Ridge St.
Clarks Summit, PA 18411
hankwillenbrink@gmail.com
(502) 314-3896

Characters:

Ed – M, mid 30s, Air Force vet, Customs & Border Patrol (CBP) officer

Emily – F, early teens, Ed’s daughter

Vanessa – F, mid-late 20s/early 30s, Mexican-heritage

Alfonso (Sancho) – M, late 30s/40s, career CBP, worked his way up the ranks, Latino

Place:

Ambos Nogales, a town split in two by a wall.

In the final scene, Maryvale, AZ.

Time:

September 2016 to January 2017

Note:

*** denotes a shift in time and place

“As a front-line worker, bureaucracy...exposes you to [morally agonizing situations] so frequently that you must develop psychological coping mechanisms that reduce the strain.”

— Bernardo Zacka interviewed in *Vox*

Title: September 2016

The dining area of a Jack-in-the-Box. Ed is in his CBP uniform, on a break, with a tray of food set out before him that he eats through the scene. Emily has on an Adidas track suit. She drinks from a plastic Gatorade bottle here and there as Ed eats.

ED
How many did you say there were?

EMILY
15 or 20. I didn't count.

ED
Mostly NYS?

EMILY
Yeah.

ED
Because sometimes they bring in ringers. You know, to keep you on your toes.

EMILY
No, this was all people from Youth.

ED
That's good, right?

EMILY
I guess.

ED
Well, I mean, you're the best player in your age group. Pretty much assures you a spot on the team. How many are they taking?

EMILY
How do you know I'm the best player?

ED
I go to the games. I can tell you are.

EMILY
Yeah, but you...

ED
What?

EMILY
You're my Dad.

ED
So? I can't be an impartial football aficionado? Was whats-her-name there? From Soccer Sleepaway?

EMILY
Ashley.

ED
Yeah.

EMILY
Yeah, she was there.

ED
That's good. You'll probably have a friend on the team, then.

EMILY
We're not really friends.

ED
Why not? You were inseparable last year.

EMILY
I don't know. We just aren't.

ED
That's not a reason.

EMILY
We don't really talk as much or hang out. She got a boyfriend, so...

ED
Yeah? Are you jealous of her, or him...?

EMILY
Dad, I've had boyfriends before.

ED
Oh. More than one?

EMILY
Yeah.

ED
I didn't know.

EMILY
It's no big deal.

ED
Did you like them? You must've liked them.

EMILY
Yes. Just not like I was going to bring them around to meet you all.

ED
If there's ever someone that you do want me to meet, you don't have to be, I mean, that's fine with me, Em. I know things weren't great in the spring, but that doesn't mean that I don't want to be a part of, or you know, your romantic stuff.

EMILY
Yeah, okay.

Ed's finished eating. He pushes a container of fries towards her.

ED
You want some?

EMILY
I'm fine.

ED
You have to be hungry after tryouts.

EMILY
Fries aren't really healthy.

ED
I only had a little time before I have to get back to work.

EMILY
It's okay. I know your job's important to you.

ED
To us.

EMILY
Right.

ED

Working for CBP, the government is / a privilege.

EMILY

/ A privilege. Yeah, I know.

ED

Well, I think it's great you're trying out for Junior Diablos. I know these last months have been rocky and you're going through a lot of different things. New school. Uh, but it's great that you're keeping up with soccer. I don't know why they didn't let me come and see you try out, but whatever.

EMILY

They're closed. None of the other parents are there.

ED

Yeah, but I just think they didn't have to be so curt about it. Really slammed the door in my face.

EMILY

It's not personal. None of the parents are there.

ED

Yeah, and it's true, you know, I don't want to be a distraction or added pressure to you. I'm still picking things up, I know. The first time I ever saw anyone playing soccer was in Iraq. Right around the time that your mom let me know you were coming. I got assigned to this bare bones mission. Right at the beginning of the war. They dropped us off in this old airfield in the south left over from Stormin' Norman and Desert Storm. Marine's had buzzed through, but we needed bases for closer air support now that they were getting closer to Baghdad. So, we got a couple weeks to turn this place that's been outta commission for twelve years around. They drop us in and there's no electricity, no supplies, no food. Nothing. Except these families that were supposed to be caretakers. They'd been in place since. Supposed to, you know, leave the light on or something. One of the families had two boys. Oldest one was probably around your age now, the other was littler: 6, maybe 7. They're living in the tunnels under the base. Imagine that. Anyway, everyday they'd get a soccer ball and come out and start kicking around. Playing, you know. Kinda gave us some entertainment. Ops'd cleared the Republican Guard out, but they'd left their toys all around. Munitions, that sort of thing. It was about the most dangerous part of the job. Never quite knew what you were gonna come across. One afternoon, we're out breaking our backs to get one of the runways ready for the A10s and also keeping an eye on these kids. They're real brothers, you know, the little one has it in for the bigger one and that day I don't know for whatever reason, the little guy was givin' it to him. I mean, he was quicker dribbling the ball through his legs, and at some point he kinda rears back and just takes this shot—

He lets it fly and it sails past the outstretched leg of his brother toward this part of the base that we hadn't gotten to yet—

And I remember Scotty yelling at me, because I'm the closest to the game and the little one is running past me because he's pegged that thing so good it's pretty much left the field of play, and I don't know why, but I grab him and hit the floor—

The balls still rolling and stops then, boom—

Hits a mine. The concussion knocks his brother to the ground. I feel the shockwave blow past me. But, luckily I'm on top of the little guy so me and Scotty run over to the brother whose lying on his back. We don't know what happened to him. If there was shrapnel. If he's dead or alive. His parents are running over. We hear the medic, too. And I'm thinking to myself: give us this one. If you can just give us this one. Maybe then, it will be worth it. All this shit will be worth it.

You sure you don't want any?

EMILY
I'm fine.

ED
Okay.

EMILY
Why do you love telling that story?

ED
I don't know that I love telling it.

EMILY
You say it, like, all the time.

ED
I saved someone's life. And you didn't know me back then.

He finishes the fries.

ED
There. Now I'm the unhealthy fat lazy slob who doesn't know what a vegetable is.

A smile passes between them.

EMILY
Have you been to Panera? They have a secret menu.

ED
Secret, huh?

EMILY

It's like In & Out when you can say animal style, but at Panera you can see Power Chicken Hummus Bowl.

ED
That's cool.

EMILY
It's my favorite thing to get there.

ED
If the menu's secret, how do you know what's on it?

EMILY
The internet.

ED
I didn't even know we had a Panera.

EMILY
We don't.

ED
Then where do you say Power Chicken humma whatever?

EMILY
Like when you go.

ED
When did you go?

EMILY
Monday.

ED
How did you go if we don't have one?

EMILY
Oh, um, in Scottsdale.

ED
You drove all the way to Scottsdale just to go to Panera?

EMILY
We were looking at some places. Apartments.

ED

Your mom took you to look at apartments in Scottsdale.

EMILY

It's no big deal.

ED

It's a huge fucking deal, Emily. She's not supposed to leave the county without my permission—
notifying me at least.

EMILY

God, I don't know why I said anything. This is why I can't tell you anything and you just go on
with your dumb war stories because when I say something you get all pissed.

ED

I'm not pissed.

EMILY

You look pissed.

ED

Well, I'm not. You know, I'm looking for places, too. But, here, in Nogales. Where my job is
where we live.

EMILY

It's a bigger city. Mom really likes it there.

ED

The courts have a systemic bias against male participants despite / everything I've done.

EMILY

That's not cool.

ED

Look it up! You know you never had to worry about a roof over your head, electricity, food, all
that stuff. And just because I was away it doesn't make it like she's a single parent or something,
right? I provided. Me. Now she's claiming emotional abandonment and pulling out of school to
go to Scottsdale for Christ's sake.

EMILY

Are you done now? Are you done insulting my mom?

ED

I'm sorry. We shouldn't have gotten into this topic. You're not your mother. This is an adult, a
lawyer thing. And I shouldn't have gotten dragged into—I shouldn't have brought it up,
especially if she's taking you to see places behind my back.

EMILY

And I'm just supposed to fucking have you all talk about me when I'm not there?

ED

Language.

EMILY

Because that's what gets your attention.

ED

Language!

EMILY

Sir.

I hope we move. I don't want to be here.

ED

Emily.

EMILY

I mean it. I want to go home now.

ED

Okay.

EMILY

You can take me there or I'll Uber.

ED

I'll take you.

EMILY

Mom gave me a card specifically for Uber.

ED

I'll take you, okay? Christ.

Emily stands up and walks out.

Ed turns, force of duty pushing against his rage, and picks up the tray to throw it away, before:

Blackout.

A room in a Department of Homeland Security Office. Ed and Alfonso with Styrofoam cups. Ed continues to wear what we saw him in the last scene. Alfonso is in the business casual gear of DHS management.

ALFONSO
Eddie?

ED
Yeah?

ALFONSO
You were saying about Elizabeth?

ED
Yeah, sorry.

ALFONSO
Stick with me, here, Eddie.

ED
I am.

ALFONSO
Good, because this is phase one. When we get in there, it's gonna get wet, okay? Real wet and real raw and real fast.

ED
I know.

ALFONSO
You're at the bottom of the food chain, pal.

ED
I know.

ALFONSO
And you're gonna meet all the other fuckers who are swimming above you. And it's a food chain so those fuckers bite. And you know who they bite?

ED
I know, I know. I know.

ALFONSO
You're pissing your pants. Know what they said about the pirate in red pants?

ED

No.

ALFONSO

They knew they were fucked when he showed up in brown.

ED

Har har.

ALFONSO

Why were you coming back in such a circuitous route?

ED

You're asking me?

ALFONSO

I'm asking you.

ED

My wife. My ex, Elizabeth. We're separated.

ALFONSO

And she lives?

ED

Yes. Nearby.

ALFONSO

Nice neighborhood.

ED

It's alright. We have a place there.

ALFONSO

And you live with her.

ED

Not currently. I was dropping my daughter off. We're splitting up. Me and Liz. Not me and my daughter. I contribute the majority of income to the mortgage.

ALFONSO

With your wife?

ED

Yes.

ALFONSO

So, she's still your wife.

ED
My ex.

ALFONSO
She's not your ex if you're together.

ED
We're separated.

ALFONSO
But she's only your ex if you're divorced. If you're separated, you could get back together.

ED
I'm not going to get back with her.

ALFONSO
Legally.

ED
Legally what?

ALFONSO
Just say your wife.

ED
My soon to be ex-wife.

ALFONSO
Estranged is better.

ED
Fine, my estranged wife.

ALFONSO
That isn't right. I think it's "my wife and I are estranged," not "my estranged wife."

ED
Shelly, the woman I have a mortgage with and that is the mother of my daughter, is estranged and we are probably divorcing. Happy?

ALFONSO
I think that covers it. Go on.

ED

But we haven't yet because we have a daughter, Emily. And for the time being Emily has been split between us, but because of my living situation I haven't taken any overnights as of yet. Hence why I was driving her back to her mother's house, which I no longer live in, after we had had a little Daddy-daughter time.

ALFONSO

Uh huh, and how's that going.

ED

Not so good, because my wife—do I need to say estranged again?

ALFONSO

Not to me.

ED

Okay. My wife has been really passive aggressive toward me stemming from an incident a few months ago when Liz diagnosed my daughter as being lactose intolerant, which none of her doctors supported and we had tested and is just purely false. But, Liz, maybe because she has too much time on her hands, just cut dairy out of our entire diet. And I told her that six credits at Pima County Community College and WebMD do not enable someone to just tell someone else, especially when that person is a minor, that they have celiac disease.

ALFONSO

You mean lactose intolerance.

ED

Yeah? What'd I say?

ALFONSO

Celiac.

ED

You know what I mean.

ALFONSO

Yeah, because I heard the story. But, it's not the same.

ED

What's the difference?

ALFONSO

Lactose is milk products; cheese. Celiac is gluten.

ED

I mean what's the difference what I say?

ALFONSO

You're the father, right? Isn't part of the point here that you've been fighting Liz about this shit with Emily? You've got to show that you're as up to speed on this as she is. That you're in tune with what's going on. That you know everything. There's a prejudice against men in custody cases. This'll be on the record... So, even if it is imaginary diseases created by your ex to alienate you have to be accounted for in such a way that appears genuine.

ED

So, she is my ex.

ALFONSO

Let it go, Eddie. Um, so, she wasn't happy with the dietary choices that you had made for your daughter, correct?

ED

In specifics, she was pissed about the pizza.

ALFONSO

Gluten free or cheese?

ED

They have gluten free pizza?

ALFONSO

Look, cover all bases: "We had a disagreement about our daughter's diet."

ED

Okay, ok. We'd been having a running disagreement over our daughter's diet because she found out that I had recently taken her out for pizza. This is a normal type of American food, but my ex took this as a hostile act toward my own daughter, which resulted in threatening to limit my access to Emily, which I was very upset about and which I felt violated the heart of our agreement, seeing as how I let her keep the house, moved out, and was still paying the mortgage. She and I had been doing a lot of this negotiation between ourselves. And really it was after this incident that both she and I retained legal counsel, though to be clear she was the one who got the lawyer first. And basically all I said was that I'd stop paying the mortgage if she didn't acquiesce to some of my concerns about Emily's diet. This exchange prompted her to contact someone for legal representation, because in her words I was "fucking blackmailing her." I remember that she said that.

ALFONSO

Good.

ED

So, fast forward like a month.

ALFONSO

To today.

ED

Yeah. My daughter and I are having lunch and there are these fries that she won't eat. And I know, I just fucking know that it's because my fucking wife has like polluted her mind with this shit about how you have to look a certain way. She's playing into the natural uncertainty of young women and just fucking magnifying it.

ALFONSO

So, a lot of tension? Less "fucks," by the way.

ED

Yes, a lot of tension. There's been a lot of tension between my wife and I lately.

ALFONSO

Great. Okay, so it was just this difference in parenting style that pushed you over the edge? Or was there something more nefarious going on?

ED

I'm glad you asked. In the course of my time with Emily this afternoon, I'm informed, accidentally, that she and my wife have gone to Phoenix to look for houses. They're thinking about moving away from me without letting me know. I'm already paying a mortgage here plus my hotel stay because we're not living together. Should I go on more about the financial stuff?

ALFONSO

Only if they ask. I wouldn't bring it up. It's good to have in your back pocket, though in case you need it. You've been bankrolling Shelly's education and career transition. That sort of thing. Okay, so, had relocation been discussed by either of you or with you representatives present?

ED

No.

ALFONSO

And you stated that your daughter had been explicitly ordered not to divulge information regarding the impending relocation to you.

ED

Yep.

ALFONSO

Tighten up the top and lose some of the emotional stuff. At least the stuff directed at Liz. You gotta ride the fine line here. Appear emotional while you keep objective and determined. The most important thing is don't be offended. Keep it clear, concise.

ED

Right, okay.

ALFONSO
Nothing to be afraid of.

ED
I know.

ALFONSO
Ready?

ED
Yeah.

ALFONSO
Okay. Red pants?

Ed nods. Sancho clicks a small recorder.

ALFONSO
Okay, here with Officer Edward A. Murphy for his statement. 5:26pm, September 16, 2016.
Alfonso Torres, Supervisor. Ed?

ED
Yes, Sir.

ALFONSO
We were talking a bit before I had to step out about some intelligence.

ED
Yes.

ALFONSO
Go ahead and pick up about there, would you?

ED
Sure, uh, thanks. Intelligence has been sending these memos down—increased Cartel activity at ports of entry. Forget the defensive measures, it's been pretty brazen. Broad daylight kinda things. Low-tech smash and grab. Well, not smash. What they do is throw these bags, garbage bags, duffel bags, backpacks, whatever, over the wall and someone on our side comes and nabs it. Intel was even saying they have catapults that can launch hundreds of yards. It's all this way to show up that wall idea that Trump and all his people are going on about: if you want a wall, we'll just throw things over or go underneath like that Chapo guy. It's always this game about this for that.
Sorry.
Uh, I was in transit between Aduma and Mariposa.

ALFONSO

Why did you take the route?

ED

My daughter, I was dropping her off with my wife, she and I are in the process of being separated.

ALFONSO

I see.

ED

Yes, we'd hadn't been seeing eye to eye on some important parenting issues regarding my daughter, Emily's diet.

ALFONSO

Other folks will handle the context, here, Officer. If you could focus on what happened after? When you were back on duty?

ED

There was a sound—like a shot. I heard it down below. Small caliber. Something crashed off the hood. You'll see that on the report and the details on the paint from the hood and roof of the car. I was afraid.

I pulled over to the right hand side and got out the passenger side. I was close enough to action in the service that I know... Once I was outside the vehicle, I tried to control my breathing. I was in fear for my life. I wasn't sure what it was. My sidearm was with me, but it wasn't out. I crept toward the front hood. There were a couple more reports from across the barrier. Then nothing.

Whatever it was felt like it'd stopped. Of course maybe that was the idea was to pin me down and from behind the drop could be made or further up ahead. Thinking like that didn't add to the situation. That's when the fireworks started. A couple ground level, then bam, up in the air, a few huge ones. Couldn't have been half kilometer from Aduma. My pulse picked up. I felt squeezed. Short of breath. The impact from the projectiles could have been anything. I was trying to keep myself from going into shock even though I was afraid. Cartels out here, you never know.

Figured I'd hear sirens from the fireworks. But nothing came, which made me feel even more boxed in. Maybe it was a diversion and they were concentrating there. I don't remember when, but I must have got my sidearm out as I moved forward away from the car.

I was probably 15-20 yards from the barrier but the embankment made it impossible to see through to the other side. Both our side and theirs had gone quiet. On the walkie, I could hear an all clear from the fireworks down to Aduma. Someone's cuple, maybe, or something to get me alone. The talkie gave me away. So, that's when I stood up.

But, as soon as he saw me get up, he bolted. My adrenaline from the fear kicked up. I don't know why I gave chase: 10, 20 yards. Yelling: Stop, stop, para, para! He turned to head down the slope and that's when I saw he had on a backpack.

I discharged once in the air and yelled again. He didn't respond. I aimed above him and discharged my weapon again. He may have thought that the fireworks had started back up. I saw him start to cut up and out of my nightlines. I lowered my weapon and fired three more times. I didn't know if he was cartel or not. My heartbeat was pounding in my ears. All I could hear. Then, a scream that wasn't mine.

When I heard it, on the other side, I called it in immediately. Mexican authorities were on the scene in less than five minutes. They attended to the victim on the other side. Gave chase with my directions where the perp had gone to but came up empty handed. I described the pack, but it looks like he got away with it or stashed somewhere that they couldn't get to. I wrote up the description and his in my report.

How's the kid?

ALFONSO

14 and with a bullet in his thigh. Stable. He'll survive.

ED

That's good.

ALFONSO

They swept the place?

ED

What they said. Obviously, I had to get back here.

ALFONSO

Mm. You saw them, though? Lotsa abandoned, empty lot kindsa places there. Easy enough to throw something in and come back for it.

ED

He was making good sped. I don't think the bag slowed him down. Easier to keep it, wait till we're gone, toss it back over.

ALFONSO

If there was stuff in it.

ED

There was something, I'm sure of it.

ALFONSO

I know you are. Thank you, officer.

Sancho stops the recording.

ED

I owe you one, Sanch.

ALFONSO

Don't worry about it. How many times?

ED

Enough. I was just trying to follow the intel.

ALFONSO

Intel says a lot of things. Intel has Israeli surveillance and needs us to clean up after them because they're breeding teenage pitchers like Fernando Valenzuela.

ED

How do you think this is gonna play?

ALFONSO

To them?

ED

Yeah.

ALFONSO

It doesn't look good. On the other hand, it wasn't like you meant it. Right?

ED

Right.

ALFONSO

Well, then stick to that. I'm gonna run this in.

ED

Great.

ALFONSO

You're gonna have to come with me.

ED

Now?

ALFONSO

Right now.

Sancho stands then Ed. They look at one another.

Blackout.

The automatic doors under the awning of a Best Western. Across the parking lot, maybe we can see Checker's, the off-brand sports bar where Vanessa works. Ed comes charging toward them and Vanessa steps out. She's in her work attire, a black polo a couple sizes too small and Kahiki shorts, also cut short.

VANESSA
Hey, stranger.

ED
What are you doing here?

VANESSA
Nice to see you, too.

ED
Sorry. Bad manners.

VANESSA
You're about the only guy who cares about those.

ED
I guarantee I'm not.

VANESSA
Okay, maybe the only guy I dated who does.

ED
I'm sorry. Just didn't expect to see you. You doing okay?

VANESSA
Why wouldn't I be?

ED
I thought you had to work.

VANESSA
I did. It's late, Eddie. Work's over.

ED
Yeah, I know, that's why I was checking in.

VANESSA
You were checking in?

ED
Yeah.

VANESSA
Eddie, I came by, not the other way around.

ED
Sorry, things have been intense.

VANESSA
It's okay. Work?

ED
Yeah.

VANESSA
Catch any bad guys?

ED
You know I don't do that.

VANESSA
Sure you don't, cariño.

She kisses him lightly.

VANESSA
Just thought you might have today.

ED
No, just some Em stuff.

VANESSA
Emily? Why am I not surprised.

ED
Looks like Liz took her up to Scottsdale on Monday. Looking for places.

VANESSA
Hm. Cariño, you really shouldn't be surprised by that.

ED
So, it's okay for them to break what the court ordered and leave county without telling me?

VANESSA
No, you shouldn't be surprised that they went to Scottsdale.

ED

Why's that?

VANESSA

From what you've said about her, that gringa has the stench of Scottsdale all over her from the moment you started to describe who she is. This like, *oh, I'm so tired of the aguaceros and dirty central Americans. I mean, how do I find a decent burrito in this town if there's no Chipotle?*

Ed laughs.

ED

You're funny.

VANESSA

I'm not. Just the same way that you're not a bad guy catcher, remember?

ED

Right. I'll remember.

They kiss again, maybe a bit more energy this time.

ED

So, you just came by to see my waffle bar?

VANESSA

Technically it's not yours.

ED

Complimentary international breakfast is included.

VANESSA

It's international?

ED

Sure, Belgian waffles and one of the workers brings in homemade salsa. They don't call it a Best Western for nothing.

VANESSA

You know you can buy one of those machines that does them anywhere. So, what're you going to do?

ED

I don't know, whipped cream, maybe?

VANESSA

I meant about Scottsdale.

ED

Fight it. I'm a vet. CBP. You think they're going to take the daughter of an Airman with three tours? I didn't know Em till she was 4 months old, because I was abroad, serving my country. Now they're trying to revoke custody? A guy whose done nothing his whole life but serve.

VANESSA

And lives in a Best Western.

ED

This is temporary. I'm looking.

VANESSA

Temporary is a week, Eddie. It's been how many months since you've lived at home? Liz kicked you out back in May.

ED

She didn't kick me out.

VANESSA

She's there. You're here.

ED

Don't make me try to look like the bad guy here.

VANESSA

I'm trying to help you out.

ED

Shouldn't you be at work or something?

VANESSA

Ash is closing for me.

ED

Ash doesn't know how to make a margarita. Much less spell it. And you're putting her in charge so you can come over here and relitigate my living situation?

VANESSA

I missed you. You haven't been around.

ED

I'm sorry. Stuff's going on, Vanessa. I needed to get my head on straight.

VANESSA

Em's not going to end up in Scottsdale, Eddie. Surprise. Maryvale, if they're lucky. Scottsdale is fucking Mars. Besides, you being in that headspace isn't going to help you in the here and now.

I like that you're sensitive. You care about your family. I want to be a part of that. I'm your girlfriend. If you're going through shit, I'm supposed to be the one whose there for you. You can't just ghost me like this.

ED
Right. Copy that.

Vanessa reaches into her pocket and pulls out a token. She gives it to him.

ED
What is this?

VANESSA
Six months.

ED
Shit.

VANESSA
Yeah.

ED
Was it tonight?

VANESSA
Yesterday. I was hoping you'd come by.

ED
I didn't know.

VANESSA
I didn't want to—this was for me, ya know.

ED
Yeah. I can't believe I missed it. You know how much I hate missing stuff.

VANESSA
Yeah, I know.

ED
Shit, Vaness. I'm so fucking proud of you.

VANESSA
I couldn't have done it without you. You make me feel: Good. Like myself again. Like I belong here. You kinda saved me, Eddie. I know you probably don't wanna hear that.

ED

No. It's good. You're amazing. What...What if I checked out?

VANESSA

Checked out?

ED

Yeah. Gave up my room. Got a new place.

VANESSA

That'd be great. I mean, no offense, but telling your abuela that you're gonna go see your boyfriend at his hotel is not as sexy the tenth time around.

ED

Not just me. What if we got a place?

VANESSA

Yeah?

ED

Yeah.

VANESSA

You'd give up this whole waffle bar just for me?

ED

And complimentary dry cleaning.

VANESSA

I don't know if I can take you up on that, unless we get to keep the whipped cream.

ED

That we can definitely do.

Here's the passionate, oblivious kiss.

Blackout.

Title: October 2016

An expanse of grass carved out of the desert. But, we're at the brown, fraying end. Ed has on a brightly colored T shirt that says "Em's Dad" on the back.

ED
VAMOS DIABLOSSSS!!!

He claps his hands hard, getting pumped up.

ED
Woo! Woo!!!! Woo. Let's go get 'em there on the...field. Pitch. Get 'em on the pitch!!
Good pass Stef! Good pass...
What was that?! Card. Card! C'mon blue, ref...guy...
That's alright we'll get it back! Eyes on the ball ladies. Eyes on the ball.
YES!!

He blows a noise maker of some sort.

Turnover!!
Nice tackle, Em, that's my girl! That's my girl!
Take it down... Take it down...
Shoot your shot. Gotta shoot your shot...
Patience... Yes, yes, yes.....

GOAAAAAAA — AAAALLLLLLL!!

He opens a cooler and throws Gatorade on himself.

DIABLOSSSSSSSSSSSS!

Ed sits on a cooler covered in Gatorade. A soccer ball comes by. He reaches down for it and kind of fumbles it, before getting a handle and as he's about to roll it back Sancho enters.

ALFONSO
Hey, Eddie. Thanks.

ED
Yeah.

He rolls it back.

ALFONSO

They win?

ED
Yeah.

ALFONSO
Alright. I hear Em's doing real good. They should have her traveling soon.

ED
Who'd you hear that from?

ALFONSO
Some of the parents.

ED
Runs in the family.

ALFONSO
Thought you were a linebacker.

ED
In high school. They don't need to be prying into other people's business. Em can do whatever she wants to.

ALFONSO
It's a compliment, Eddie. You got a good one there.

ED
I know that. Don't you think I know that?

ALFONSO
Sure. Just didn't know this was your type of football, Eddie.

ED
I know soccer players.

ALFONSO
Like?

ED
Pele.

ALFONSO
And...?

ED

The guy with the hair.

ALFONSO
Ronaldo?

ED
See, you know who I'm talking about.

ALFONSO
That's two and two of the most famous.

ED
What's your point?

ALFONSO
Was I supposed to have a point?

ED
I don't know. You came over here.

ALFONSO
Yeah. Look, man, I'm gonna buy you vuvuzela or something to get some of this out of your energy.

ED
A what?

ALFONSO
Vuvuzela — at the 2010 mundial in South Africa it was like this buzzing — you know what, forget it. I'm saying this isn't a Cardinals game. Or a little league tournament. You're dancing around like Cher's in town then yelling like Andres Cantor.

ED
Who does he play for?

ALFONSO
He doesn't play, he's an announcer.

ED
Oh yeah — Gooooooooooooooooaaalllll.

ALFONSO
Yeah, yeah, just stop it, alright?

ED
I get emotional about my child's performance, so sue me. I'm trying to empower her.

ALFONSO
You look like an idiot.

ED
How was Sanchito's game?

ALFONSO
They haven't started.

ED
He gonna play today?

ALFONSO
They let them all play.

ED
But from the beginning.

ALFONSO
Eddie.

ED
Because my girl is starting striker for Junior Diablos and last I checked, we were kicking all kinds of ass up and down this grass, hombre.

ALFONSO
They're not going to let her travel if you keep this shit up, man.

ED
What? Bullshit.

ALFONSO
I'm serious, man.

ED
She's the best player — she had a fucking hat trick last week. Don't tell me I don't know soccer when I know what a hat trick is.

ALFONSO
329 is trying to get FC Tucson attention. At this rate you're gonna do it for them, but not in the good way. You know what FC Tucson would do to the quality of play around here? We're talking scholarships, traveling squads.

ED
Doesn't help if you don't have the players.

ALFONSO

Or if their dads are being jackasses and yelling at the cousin of the Sun Devil's Coach.

ED

Shit.

ALFONSO

Yeah, shit. So think about that.

He throws the ball back at Ed, who catches it.

ALFONSO

Hand ball. Red card, Eddie.

Sancho walks away.

Emily comes over, a bit perplexed at Sancho walking away.

EMILY

Is Sanchito playing?

ED

Yeah, they're just about to start.

EMILY

Cool.

ED

Hey, you were great.

EMILY

Thanks.

ED

I mean it. That goal...Wow.

EMILY

Yeah, I heard you.

ED

Sorry, I just get excited about your accomplishments.

EMILY

It's just a goal, Dad. Really not that big a deal.

ED
It is to me, sweetie.

EMILY
Mr. Torres looked angry.

ED
Yeah, we've had some things going on at work.

EMILY
Is everything alright?

ED
Yeah. I'm gonna be doing some different stuff at work.

EMILY
Like a promotion?

ED
Let's go, hon.

EMILY
Jess was gonna give me--

ED
Oh, are you--

EMILY
I mean, if there's something you want--

ED
I hadn't been able to catch many games, so I thought--

EMILY
They're called matches, Dad.

ED
Marches, right.

EMILY
Matches. It's cool; I'll text Jess that I'll send her a message later.

She does.

ED
Great. So, you're ready?

EMILY
Sure.

The interior of Ed's truck. Emily is fumbling with her phone.

ED
It says input: BT.

EMILY
I know, that's what I'm on.

Silence.

ED
It's not coming up?

EMILY
No.

Silence.

ED
Is it up now?

Silence.

ED
I can't stop the truck just to...

EMILY
I still can't see it.

ED
It says that it has Bluetooth compatibility.

EMILY
I turned the Bluetooth off and then on again.

ED
Will that do something? We're almost home.

Emily looks up. Silence.

ED

I can turn on the radio.

Silence.

ED

Emily?

EMILY

Yeah. Yeah?

ED

Do you want to hear the radio?

Blackout.

The postage stamp sized backyard of a small rental unit. Vanessa holds a brochure and looks toward the inside of the house. Ed crouches, pawing at the grass.

ED

Eleven hundred and this is the “space for your family BBQ”?

VANESSA

It’s space.

ED

Technically.

VANESSA

All depends on the size of your family.

ED

Doesn’t that thing say manicured lawn?

VANESSA

Uh, yeah.

ED

Who’s mowing this? If you mowed this, it’d come back to life and eat your brains. This is zombie grass.

VANESSA

So we tell them to knock off 100 a month and bring in some stones. No mow is very de moda. Very eco-conscious.

ED

He’s such a prick. I doubt he’ll go for it.

VANESSA

Well, prick or not, eleven hundred is what we’re looking at.

ED

I know a rip off when I see it.

VANESSA

I told you that I’d kick in.

ED

Vaness—it’s not about that.

VANESSA

I know it's not, Eddie. But this isn't Ohio, okay? There's no ancient houses passed down through the generations with tire swings in the front for \$500 a month, okay? These things leak when it rains, bake when it's hot, and are barely able to break the wind. Two bedrooms is eleven hundred. Simple. Flat. Maybe in a complex we can get to 900, but, then you have to deal with complex people. It's a duplex. But, it's our duplex.

ED

What if I told him I'm a vet?

VANESSA

Well, now you're talking.

ED

And CBP? You know he's probably team MAGA.

VANESSA

Don't make me think about it. I don't want to think about giving money to those people.

ED

"Those people" is like more than half of / the people you know.

VANESSA

I'm not doing this here, Eddie. Okay, so let's drop it and focus on the task at hand. How much are we talking?

ED

2, maybe 3.

VANESSA

For wrapping yourself in the flag?

ED

Yeah. Maybe throw in a little "story of me and my ex and how much fatherhood means to me."

VANESSA

Wow.

ED

Worth a shot?

VANESSA

Sure. But I wouldn't take less than 300 for all that.

ED

Alright, then.

Ed turns to go inside.

VANESSA
Eddie?

ED
Vaness, if this is gonna be about Trump, we can talk later.

VANESSA
It's not.

ED
So?

VANESSA
Does this mean you're back?

ED
Back?

VANESSA
Yeah. Reinstated.

ED
I'm working on it.

VANESSA
I can't afford this place on my own.

ED
I know, baby. I'd never ask you to.

VANESSA
I know you're close with Sanch. I'm sure he's got your back, but it's been a month. There are other places we can look at. We don't have to take it.

ED
Sancho is a good guy.

VANESSA
Sancho is una machista mexicano. He's good for a beer and a fuck, but that's it. And by the way, the fuck probably isn't his wife. And you paid for the beer. But, yeah, other than that, good guy.

ED
I shouldn't have told you that.

VANESSA

You didn't have to tell me. I know that type. Trust me.

ED

He's stood up for me.

VANESSA

Not very well. You're still suspended.

ED

With pay.

VANESSA

Because you fucked up on a report. So what? Ash leaves the drawer like \$200 low one night and the next it's high by \$203.

ED

I think she has a drug problem.

VANESSA

Of course she does. She works in a restaurant.

ED

But you stand up for her, you protect her.

VANESSA

No. I fucking report her, and if they don't fire her that's not my job, but it sure as shit isn't going to mean my ass. It shouldn't mean yours either.

ED

I know you don't like what I do.

VANESSA

It's not about that.

ED

It's not?

VANESSA

Cariño, I don't care what you do, I care who you are. Sancho puts you over the barrel on this, then you have every right to walk away. You don't owe him anything.

ED

Sancho didn't put me over a barrel. I did that myself.

VANESSA

Yeah, yeah, we all make mistakes, Eddie. You told me. But how long are they gonna sideline you for a paperwork error? I know Uncle Sam's a bitch, but I didn't know he's a Miranda.

ED
Miranda?

VANESSA
It's a *Devil Wears Prada* reference.

ED
Okay. Look: It's more complicated than you think. I don't work in a chain restaurant.

VANESSA
At Checkers, we aspire to be a chain.

ED
I believe in my job.

VANESSA
My point is—do they believe in you?

ED
Of course. You don't understand what it's like to be part of a team. Okay? We've got one another's backs.

VANESSA
Till one of you doesn't. I'm worried, Eddie. Everything that's going around. I know you love your job but it's so political now.

ED
It's going to be fine. I'm going to be fine. We're going to be fine. Alright? I'll talk to Sanch. Make sure everything's straightened out. And if not, I know some people at CoreCivic.

VANESSA
The prison thing?

ED
The pay's better. It's leverage at least.

VANESSA
Okay. If you think that will help.

ED
Can't hurt more than what's already going on.

VANESSA

I'm just worried that she's going to lose and they'd dump you and we'll lose everything that we've been working for.

ED

Why would they dump me?

VANESSA

Because I know you're one of the good ones.

ED

The most important thing is you and Emily. You're not going to lose anything with us, okay? If anything you might be getting more than you bargained for.

VANESSA

I know that. You think I'm ready to just step in and be a stepmom to a teenager?

ED

She's 13.

VANESSA

Yeah, that's what a teenager is!

ED

Yeah, but she's not bad. I mean she's tough, but.

VANESSA

That's what I mean. And that's to you.

ED

You just have to find your own rhythm with her. That's why we're doing this, right? So we can stake out our own lives. Our own piece.

VANESSA

Right.

ED

So, I'm gonna go in there and do it. You got my back?

VANESSA

Of course.

Ed smiles. He goes to kiss her. She stops him short of kissing. Instead, she pivots him toward the door.

VANESSA

Not me. Him.

ED

I don't think he's into that.

VANESSA

I'm sure he loves a man in uniform.

ED

I love you.

VANESSA

I love you. Now, get in there, and don't take anything less than 3.

She smacks his butt, playfully. He turns and walks inside.

Blackout.

A patio space of a public golf course. Ed and Sancho are working their way through a bucket of Corona.

ED
Bullshit. How is that even a thing?

ALFONSO
You really need me to tell you?

ED
Fingering a girl, I understand. Finger banging, but, c'mon.

ALFONSO
Finger banging?

ED
Yeah. You never heard of that?

ALFONSO
No.

ED
It's kinda self-explanatory.

ALFONSO
You get into some weird shit, dude.

ED
You're trying to tell me grabbing pussy is a thing.

ALFONSO
Of course it is, bro. To get 'em on the D you gotta grab 'em by the P.

ED
Tell me that's a meme.

ALFONSO
Yeah, cause being like – “Honey, wanna come over to my place for a finger bang?” – is so suave.

ED
Gets the job done.

ALFONSO
Yeah, right, last I remember you were beating off in a hotel for a month. After you were beating off on my couch for 2.

ED

I didn't need beat off on your couch with your wife around.

ALFONSO

Bro, I wish. Would give her something to do besides be all over my back.

ED

Leash is getting tight, huh?

ALFONSO

Let's just say I don't have the kind of face that people trust.

ED

Yeah, your face, that's the problem. Not your wandering dick.

ALFONSO

Can you blame me if the little head gets the best of me?

ED

I'm probably the wrong person to ask. I'm not married to you.

ALFONSO

She knew what she was getting into. Hell, I was cheating on my girlfriend at the time with her. What does she think that you can just turn that off? It's biological. Men stay virile way later in life. Women's reproductive cycles switch over at 40. Why? Explain that to me?

ED

Out of my paygrade, bro.

ALFONSO

Well, I'm not for certain, but I would think that it's to father children. Mama Nature's not some mad scientist. This is evolution. You adapt to propagate the species. If we're potent into our 50s, then that's for a reason. How old is the youngest kid?

ED

Whose?

ALFONSO

Trump.

ED

Baron?

ALFONSO

Yeah.

ED
I don't know, 9, 10?

ALFONSO
And motherfucker's 70. So, that means he was plowing Melanie when he was in his 60s. You think that's normal? Banging some Serbian model whose like 30 years younger than you?

ED
No.

ALFONSO
Well, you know who does? Charles fucking Darwin, that's who.

ED
I don't think he ever said that.

ALFONSO
He may not have said it, but he knew. You getting the next one?

ED
The next one?

ALFONSO
Yeah.

ED
No.

ALFONSO
No?

ED
First off, I won.

ALFONSO
Yeah, you won – I get this one. Then you get the next one.

ED
Since when is that the rule?

ALFONSO
Since you fucking beat me. What's two?

ED
Two?

ALFONSO

Yeah, you had a list going or something, I cut you off.

ED

I just don't think I'm gonna have another one.

ALFONSO

Ah, c'mon, Eddie, you're giving me blue balls here. It's Saturday. I know you ain't got fuck all to do tomorrow or Monday for that matter. I'm out of the house. I'm in my element. You're just gonna give me blue balls like that?

ED

You're just pissed I beat your ass.

ALFONSO

Fuck yes I am. You demolished me.

ED

Yes, I did.

ALFONSO

See, I'm already in a vulnerable position.

ED

I'll think about it.

ALFONSO

Do or do not. There is no try. Sanchito's been getting into Star Wars. Fucking kid's gonna turn out nerd.

ED

Nerds are cool these days.

ALFONSO

Fucked up world we're living in, man. Fucked. Up.

ED

Vanessa's been sober for almost 90 days, so / I'm trying to be good about that.

ALFONSO

Oh shit, that's right, I forgot, you're still laying that?

ED

Laying what?

ALFONSO

Vanessa, from the bar, Checkers?

ED

Yeah.

ALFONSO

Shit, man, now we have to get another. What's she like? No wonder you're all talking about finger banging and shit. A buddy of mine knew her from Pierson—said girl was a freak.

ED

Yeah, she's cool.

ALFONSO

Nerds are cool, man. What's she like?

ED

She's kinda a freak, yeah. I mean she's trying to get her life together.

ALFONSO

Hot. She do that in like thongs or bikini cut?

ED

You're asking me about my girlfriend's panties?

ALFONSO

Girlfriend? Man, whose talking about girlfriends? I'm talking about who you're fucking. Vanessa, from Checkers.

ED

We're living together.

ALFONSO

You're living with the girl from the bar?

ED

Yeah.

ALFONSO

Oh man, I told them they shouldn't have suspended you.

ED

What're you talking about?

ALFONSO

I told the CO: "Man, Eddie, he's a nice guy. Vet and all that. But dude is a time bomb."

ED

What'd you call me?

ALFONSO

I said: "We gotta keep him coming in." You know, "routine is good." Right? "He's going through a bunch of shit right now—Divorce, the kid, the investigation. Can't let Eddie go off the reservation. He needs mentorship. Gotta keep him close."

ED

You called me a time bomb?

ALFONSO

Yeah, bud. Cause you are.

ED

We moved in together. We got a place. Time bombs don't get places.

ALFONSO

They do. That's why there's a timer. Tick, tick, boom. You know what a time bomb is, right?

ED

Don't fucking grill me about explosives.

ALFONSO

Sorry, man. I'm just saying.

ED

It really fucking pisses me off that you think just because I moved in with Vanessa that's like some sort of something about my mental health or whatever.

ALFONSO

Look, man, I don't know about your mental health. I'm your friend. I'm trying to look out for you, here. I just don't think it's good when you like hook yourself up with an addict right after and you're fighting for custody.

ED

She's sober.

ALFONSO

That's good. I'm just saying. From the outside. You hear me?

ED

Yeah.

ALFONSO

Eddie?

ED
Yeah.

ALFONSO
If you think she's good for you, that's great.

ED
Yeah, she's good.

ALFONSO
Cool. All that matters. I mean, definitely good for your short game.

ED
I been out a couple times.

ALFONSO
Shows.

ED
Can't do anything at my place, supposedly "no mow" more like zombie grass.

ALFONSO
Zombie grass?

ED
The ghost of past grass.

ALFONSO
Christmas Carol grass.

ED
Whatever.

ALFONSO
I wasn't fooling.

ED
About what?

ALFONSO
The CO. I put in for you to come back.

ED
You did?

ALFONSO

Yeah. Just desk stuff while everything clears itself out. Doesn't look good, but Trump's dominating news anyway so it'd be easy enough to get you back without too many eyebrows being raised.

ED

CoreCivic's always looking.

ALFONSO

Of course they are.

ED

We were talking about it.

ALFONSO

Don't tell me.

ED

Guess I just did.

ALFONSO

Shit. You're gonna ride heard at the zoo?

ED

Nobody rides heard at a zoo, Sanch.

ALFONSO

You know what I mean.

ED

The money's better in private.

ALFONSO

Of course the fucking money's better. One of them you serve your country and the other one you're putting money in the pockets of billionaires. One, you have pride, hombre. The other one, you're what, looking to climb the corporate ladder? Wear a polo on casual Friday with your good jeans?

ED

You said it yourself. It's a demotion.

ALFONSO

Jesus, I can't believe we're having this conversation.

ED

You can't?

ALFONSO

No.

ED

I didn't know he was gonna die, Sanch.

ALFONSO

No one did.

ED

You expect me to just go back after that?

ALFONSO

Yes.

ED

How?

ALFONSO

Because it's the job.

ED

That wasn't.

ALFONSO

You fucked up, you take your lumps, you get back out there.

ED

See, this is what I gotta get away from.

ALFONSO

CoreCivic. That's really getting away from it.

ED

At least I'm not out there.

ALFONSO

Yeah, then you're in there with all the real rapists and murders. Do you know what's going to happen when he gets elected?

ED

Gimme a break, Sanch.

ALFONSO

He's getting fucking elected.

ED
Dude.

ALFONSO

He is. And when he does, this whole place is going to shit. We're talking mass incarcerations, more years to hear an asylum claim. You're trying to work your way up, but CoreCivic's gonna just take in all that overcrowding and overwork you while they try to take away benefits one by one. Shit, they'll probably name Arpaio CEO if he doesn't get head of DHS. We'll see what you think about the zoo then.

ED
You've been listening to too much shit, man.

ALFONSO

That's without even mentioning the real reason you're pissing me off.

ED
Which is?

ALFONSO

You know the amount of shit that I did for you? You think they wanted you back? I had to do a backbend and suck a dick. I had to suck a dick while doing a backbend. And take it up the ass. "I'll go work for CoreCivic." Christ, my ass is sore, Ed. Sore.

ED
This isn't taking me back.

ALFONSO

So what is it? A paycheck. Rehabilitation, homes. I went to bat for you.

ED
What happened, Sanch. It wasn't an accident. It was a wake up call.

ALFONSO

Of course it was an accident.

ED

It was, I mean, you know what I'm saying...I can't just pretend that it didn't happen.

ALFONSO

Brother, these things happen. Not everyday, but they happen. People are on edge. You think there's not protocol? I'm a supervisor, right, you don't think I don't have a box in my office right now that's full of just bullshit waiting to sink the lives of good men. Which you are, Ed. You're a good guy. These things happen. Here.

He holds out a bill.

You fly, I'll buy.

Ed just looks at him.

Fine.

Sancho gets up.

I'm not done convincing you.

ED
I know.

SANCHO
You're gonna say yes.

ED
I know.

SANCHO
Good. Just so we're both clear. And, I wanna hear all about them chones when I get back.

A clothing rack in the Marshalls in the Mariposa Shopping Center. Vanessa and Emily are looking through some clothes. They naturally gravitated to this same section. And, are a little self-conscious about it. Emily tenses.

EMILY
Shit. I mean, shoot.

VANESSA
Don't look. Stay still.

EMILY
Ok.

VANESSA
Where is he?

EMILY
Uh...

VANESSA
Straight ahead is 12, behind you 6. Due right, 3, and left 9. Where is he on the dial?

EMILY
Uh, 5, 4?

Vanessa judiciously scouts.

VANESSA
Nice.

EMILY
You saw him?

VANESSA
Uh huh. Don't move. Let him come to you.

EMILY
He's not going to come to me.

VANESSA
He sure won't if you go to him first!

VANESSA
He works here?

EMILY

I don't know. I've never really talked to him.

VANESSA

Well, he has the vest on. So probably safe to say he's an employee. No one's gonna wear that out for fun.

EMILY

Ha. No.

VANESSA

He in your grade?

EMILY

No. A junior.

VANESSA

Older guys, huh?

EMILY

I just think he's cute.

VANESSA

You're not wrong.

EMILY

Yeah?

VANESSA

He's definitely cute. Even in the vest.

A beat. Vanessa traces something. Emily notices.

EMILY

Is he coming over here?

VANESSA

No.

EMILY

Oh.

VANESSA

But he definitely saw you.

EMILY

He did?

VANESSA

Definitely. You should wear what we got today to school next week.

EMILY

I should?

VANESSA

Yeah. First of all, it'll be super cute. Second of all, when he sees you again, it'll help him make the connection.

EMILY

Thanks.

VANESSA

Yeah. Of course.

EMILY

You're really good at this.

VANESSA

Years of practice. Plus when you're tending bar, you have to be able to pick out the good ones from the bad ones.

EMILY

Did you go to Nogales?

VANESSA

No. Pierson.

EMILY

Oh. Did you like it?

VANESSA

No, not really, I had friends—some of my friends went to Nogales.

EMILY

Why did you go then?

VANESSA

Let's say that my Mom was not as helpful as your Dad at least is.

EMILY

Is that what he is?

VANESSA

Yeah. Wanting to put you into a good spot. Fighting for you. What do you think about this?

EMILY

Is that what he's doing? Sometimes I think he's only fighting for himself. I like the color.

VANESSA

Yeah, it's cute, isn't it? At least he's not forcing you into cosmetology classes.

EMILY

What about your Dad?

VANESSA

What about him?

EMILY

What did he say?

VANESSA

He wasn't really around. By the time I was your age, he'd already started family number 2. My mom always defended him. Pero era un mujerigo.

EMILY

What's that?

VANESSA

Let's hope you don't find out.

EMILY

Are you going to get it?

VANESSA

It's not for me.

EMILY

I can't wear this.

VANESSA

Sure you can. It'll be great. Wear it this week. He'll like it.

EMILY

That's not even my—

She checks the tag.

VANESSA

I've had 1000 jobs. But I have never, ever cut someone else's hair. What's his name?

EMILY
Tyler.

VANESSA
You'll look great in it.

EMILY
Yeah?

VANESSA
Promise.

Ed comes over. He has a ton of sports bras in one hand and a plastic bag with a soccer ball, jersey, and a few other things in another.

ED
Okay. I didn't know which one you wanted, so I got all of these.

Emily begins to look mortified. Vanessa starts to dig through them.

VANESSA
Don't worry, he went into the back.

ED
Who?

EMILY
Some/one—

VANESSA
Don't worry about it.

ED
Someone or don't worry about it?

VANESSA
Someone you don't need to worry about.

ED
Okay.

VANESSA
Eddie, half these are the wrong size and the other half are cheap.

ED
There are sizes?

VANESSA

Do we look like the same size to you?

ED

Yes? No. I don't know what to say here.

VANESSA

Why don't you go sit in the truck then? I got this.

EMILY

We're fine, Dad.

ED

You can't just tell me to go sit in the truck, Vaness.

VANESSA

I think I just did.

EMILY

It's fine.

VANESSA

7 o'clock. I love you, baby. Go sit in the truck.

Emily semi-freezes.

VANESSA

Just leave the card with me.

ED

Give us the card, sit in the truck. I don't know why I even came. I could be watching TV.

VANESSA

You watch too much TV anyway.

ED

Not too much on the charge?

VANESSA

I promise. We're not going to get 800. Buying underwear in bulk is never a good idea.

ED

I know that. I thought you wanted options.

VANESSA

I can help.

ED

Hey, check it out: I got this.

He pulls out the ball.

Sale, right? Not so bad. Plus...

He holds up a shirt for UNAM Pumas.

It's soccer.

EMILY

Yeah.

ED

What do you think?

EMILY

It's cool.

ED

I bought it at Hibbett. Pretty cool, right?

VANESSA

Those are Pumas.

ED

Yeah?

VANESSA

UNAM. Mexico City. We follow Tigres. Monterrey.

ED

It's not a tiger.

VANESSA

It's a Puma. I just told you the name.

ED

I'm sorry, I didn't know. Did I do something wrong? You're both being hostile.

VANESSA

That's why I'm telling you. No one's being hostile.

ED

Well, I already bought it. So, you want me to go return it? I was just thinking about what Emily would like. I'm sorry it's not the perfect thing for you.

VANESSA

Calm down, Eddie.

EMILY

It's okay, Daddy. I like it.

ED

You do?

EMILY

Yeah. Thanks for thinking of me.

ED

Of course, honey. Okay. Guess that I'm going to go wait in the car.

VANESSA

Love you.

ED

Yeah, you too.

Ed turns and goes. The women watch him for a moment.

VANESSA

He's going through some things.

EMILY

Yeah.

VANESSA

Now. Here's what you do. Take that dress and walk right past him. Don't look at him. Right past. Do not pass Go! Do not collect \$200. When you're done, come out. He'll be closer to the rooms. Then, give him a smile. I'll be waiting by the front of the line. Come and meet me.

EMILY

Okay.

VANESSA

I'm going to find 3 that fit. Adidas?

EMILY

Yes, please.

VANESSA
Okay. Go Tigre.

EMILY
Thank you.

Kind of unexpectedly, Emily hugs her. Then, she spins and heads toward the fitting rooms. Vanessa looks taken aback a bit. She sighs at the pile of sports bras, picks them up and heads to change them out.

Blackout.

A table at Arizona Bol. Vanessa and Emily have their bowling shoes up on the table. Ed holds his, looking out at the lanes. It's a busy night.

ED
I'm looking at them right now. They're not even moving.

VANESSA
Are you sure that's the same lane?

ED
11. He said "11," didn't he?

VANESSA
Yes.

ED
It's teenagers, taking their sweet time.

VANESSA
Well, just give them a minute. We don't have anything else to do.

ED
I don't know what you expected. Friday night is the worst.

VANESSA
God knows why anyone would want to go out on a Friday night.

EMILY
It's fine.

VANESSA
You know why he's getting up tight?

EMILY
Why?

VANESSA
Because he knows he's going to lose.

ED
He said 10 minutes. It's already been (*checks phone*) 10 minutes.

EMILY
He's a pretty good bowler.

VANESSA

Not as good as me.

ED
Please.

EMILY
You beat him?

VANESSA
All the time.

ED
You don't beat me all the time.

VANESSA
Yes, I do.

ED
When?

VANESSA
Um, let's see, how about the last time we went bowling.

ED
She talks a lot of game. That shouldn't even count.

EMILY
So you did beat him?

VANESSA
It was bad. He's still butthurt about it.

EMILY
Dad's butthurt?

ED
Why are you teaching her that word?

VANESSA
She knows what butthurt is.

ED
How do you know she does when I don't? What does it even mean? Use it in a sentence.

VANESSA
Don't be so butthurt just because you lost to a superior player.

ED

I don't think that's a word.

EMILY

I thought you were good, Daddy.

ED

She made me play with a 15 pound ball. My shots were all off.

VANESSA

I didn't make you! He said he could beat me with a 15 pound ball. I said prove it. Guess what:

EMILY

He didn't.

VANESSA

That's right.

ED

Who won the time before that?

VANESSA

I did.

ED

I let you.

VANESSA

You let me? What does that mean?

ED

It means I was letting you win.

VANESSA

Bull—That's not true.

ED

See, we would go bowling on dates. I was being a gentleman.

VANESSA

Okay, hang on. That's insulting.

EMILY

This is a date?

ED

Not now. Well, kinda, yeah.

VANESSA

I hope it's not, because you just insulted me.

ED

How did I insult you?

VANESSA

Saying that you let me win. That's not the sort of thing that you should be saying in front of your daughter.

ED

Give me a break. I was being nice.

VANESSA

Right, because it's so much better to make yourself sexually available to someone who doesn't treat you as an equal.

ED

I'm—I'm just going to skip the sex part.

VANESSA

Sorry, honey.

EMILY

It's okay.

ED

How am I not treating you as an equal?

EMILY

Because you're playing but you're not really playing to make her feel better. There's an assumption that there's no way she could be as good as you and so are unequal competitors.

VANESSA

Yes!

They high five.

And that is why I love beating you and why I'm going to beat your mm-mm so bad tonight.

ED

I've created a monster.

EMILY
It's true, Dad!

ED
Yeah, yeah.

VANESSA
You're right, those bastards are slow playing us. They've moved like one frame since we sat down.

EMILY
Were you like this with Mom?

ED
What do you mean?

EMILY
I don't know. Did you let her win?

ED
Uh, yeah, something like that. It was a bit more complicated with her. I was deployed a lot. Didn't really have much of a time to do this sort of thing. You came around, and that changes a lot of things. In a good way, of course.

EMILY
Was she good?

ED
Vanessa's better.

VANESSA
I did youth bowling after I tore my ACL. Sports are an easy way we get kinds out of the house. Oh, thank god 10th frame. I thought they'd never get there. I'm gonna go down and put the heat on so they don't spend the rest of the night trying to finish this one out.

ED
Go ahead.

VANESSA
Em, when you come down, don't forget tissues.

EMILY
Tissues?

VANESSA
Yeah, because someone's gonna cry.

ED
Ha ha.

VANESSA
Okay, the heat is on.

She goes. Emily and Ed put on their shoes.

ED
I like to see you getting along.

EMILY
She's cool.

ED
Yeah. I like her. It's also important to me that you like her.

EMILY
I do.

ED
So, once this probationary thing is over, do you think you'd be able to come and stay with us? I mean, however they decide and whatever you want. I'm not trying to pressure you. And, I know it won't be like the way it was, but I really want you to feel at home where I am, too. I even painted your room. Got you some stuff to put in it. I know my taste in Mexican soccer teams is questionable, but I hope you don't mind.

EMILY
Yeah, Dad. I appreciate that. Thanks.

ED
I want you to feel just at home with us as you do with your Mom. Whatever way that works out.

EMILY
Yeah. I will.

ED
Okay, you don't sound too enthused.

EMILY
I am.

ED
Ok.

EMILY
You know.

ED
What?

EMILY
You don't have to let me win.

ED
What are you talking about?

EMILY
You're like trying to compensate because you couldn't be home because you were deployed or whatever. But I'm your daughter. You don't have to try and win me over. I just want you to be real with me.

ED
I'm being real with you.

EMILY
I know about this. But, are you with her?

ED
Am I what with her?

EMILY
I know things, Dad. About the kid.

ED
What kid?

EMILY
It was like a mile from the house, Dad. You just dropped me off. You said you had to go back to work. He was kicking a soccer ball against the wall. It was a soccer ball.

ED
Em, I didn't do anything wrong.

EMILY
I know that you think that you didn't. But, what if you're wrong?

ED
Then I have to own it.

Vanessa returns. She grabs her shoes.

VANESSA

So, they were totally slow rolling again, but I figured out how to speed them up.

ED

How's that?

VANESSA

I gave 'em a twenty. Let's go, losers. Time to play.

She goes.

ED

Looks like you got what you wanted.

Blackout.

Title: November 2016.

Checkers, the off-brand sports bar where Vanessa works. She's there, cleaning up on the bar. It's a dead night in the middle of the week. There's a Phoenix Suns game on.

Alfonso comes in. If Vanessa can see him, she doesn't let on at first. He looks like he's had a couple already.

VANESSA

I know you're there Sancho, I can smell you.

ALFONSO

I want a Baileys. No. Tequila.

VANESSA

House or real?

ALFONSO

Please.

VANESSA

If it's real, you're having two.

ALFONSO

Is there a special?

VANESSA

Yeah, buy one, I get one free.

She lays down the glasses.

ALFONSO

This is special.

VANESSA

Don't be a dick.

ALFONSO

It's good to see you, too.

VANESSA

Been a spell.

ALFONSO

This mean you're back on the wagon? Or is it off the wagon? I can never tell.

VANESSA

Does your making an appearance mean that Beth let you out of the house?

ALFONSO

Ouch.

VANESSA

I'll take that as a no.

ALFONSO

I can make decisions about when and where I go.

She pours.

VANESSA

Sure you can. Salud.

ALFONSO

Salud.

They drink. Not quite a shot but not quite a sip, either. Vanessa takes a beat, savors.

ALFONSO

Real?

VANESSA

It's Cuervo, but the one where he gives a shit.

ALFONSO

Not bad.

VANESSA

You pay for it up front, so you don't have to pay for it in the end.

ALFONSO

You ever wonder why we drink to health first even though this shit will kill us all in the end?

VANESSA

Because it's the holidays?

ALFONSO

Not for a few weeks.

VANESSA

End of the world, then. Always a good reason to tip the cup. Health, then Armageddon.

Vanessa grabs the bottle to refill.

ALFONSO

Careful, I might start to think that you're compensating for things at home.

Vanessa pours.

VANESSA

Drink.

ALFONSO/VANESSA

Amor.

They drink.

VANESSA

Things at home are fine, thank you very much. How's your marriage?

ALFONSO

Not my place, I know.

VANESSA

I just can't believe that you'd break your wife's heart to leave domestic bliss and come to a place, which is known for girls in tight polos, just to bend one of their ears about your buddy from work. Or am I wrong?

ALFONSO

My regular joint wasn't open.

VANESSA

Your regular girl.

ALFONSO

Something like that.

VANESSA

You remember Jalen Rose? Michigan player? Fab five.

ALFONSO

He play for the Suns?

VANESSA

No. Anyway, he had this great line. Only think open in Detroit after 2 am are hospitals, prisons, and women's legs.

ALFONSO
Funny.

VANESSA
Everything closes at 9 here.

ALFONSO
Almost everything.

VANESSA
We're not as discerning about our clientele as the prisons are.

ALFONSO
You're a bucket of laughs.

VANESSA
Its barrel.

She pours another.

VANESSA
I'm not proud of it, okay?

ALFONSO
I wasn't saying anything. Just sitting here wondering when my luck turned around.

VANESSA
Yesterday.

ALFONSO
What happened yesterday?

VANESSA
The coronation of Trumpito, pendejo. Don't tell me you didn't crack a couple in celebration.

ALFONSO
And she would have been so different.

VANESSA
Spare me.

ALFONSO
Who beefed up security? Deported more than Bush, Clinton. Courts are backed up for years.

VANESSA

You like being called a rapist? A murder?

ALFONSO

Yeah, your names for me are so much better.

VANESSA

I call 'em like I see 'em.

ALFONSO

Shoulda voted for him, then. Isn't that the attraction?

VANESSA

Fuck. I'm not getting dragged into this with you.

ALFONSO

You're already dragged into it. The county may have gone blue, but people don't give a shit about how you vote. They helicopter down in here, take pictures of the wall and helicopter back out. No one cares what you think or I do outside of some soundbite to Fox or quote to the Times. You can understand how they got the whole thing wrong. Never wanted to get it right.

VANESSA

Rah, rah, build the wall. Except we got one. Hasn't changed anything except what you can see.

ALFONSO

I didn't vote for him.

VANESSA

Bull shit. You're so into that alpha male chauvinista de mierde, I bet you voted for him twice.

ALFONSO

Nope. Johnson.

VANESSA

I'd praise you for expanding political horizons if our democracy hadn't just died.

ALFONSO

Johnson was pro-immigration. You'll have to excuse me for not voting for her.

VANESSA

Who, Stein?

ALFONSO

Yeah, her. Believe it or not, I'm not sure this is a good thing for us.

VANESSA

No shit.

ALFONSO

I got friends on the other side.

VANESSA

What time do they close over there?

ALFONSO

I'm not there yet. Gimme another?

VANESSA

Okay, but this is where I tap out.

ALFONSO

Still obeying boundaries.

VANESSA

Only two ways to hit the bottom: hard or soft. I got lucky the first time. I don't want to tempt the fates.

ALFONSO

So he doesn't know. Serves him right.

She has another, cheaper bottle pulled down. Pours for him.

VANESSA

This is gonna burn.

ALFONSO

What comes after love?

VANESSA

Money.

ALFONSO

Dinero, entonces.

He shoots.

VANESSA

I thought he talked it out with you.

ALFONSO

Talked it out. He's still suspended, Vanessa.

VANESSA

Yeah, I know. He fucked up on some paperwork. Big deal. Ash is like skimming on every drink.

ALFONSO

Yeah, that's what he told you. That's what I was telling people. Then he goes and fucks me, brings in an offer let from fucking CoreCivic. See, this is my point that you people don't get — this whole thing's fucked up because we fucked it up. It's not a border, it's a fucking political chip, a goddamn...you know, it doesn't even matter. What's he gonna do, build one wall on top of the other? People will still shoot through it.

VANESSA

What are you talking about?

ALFONSO

You know the first barrier they put up here was 1918? Gringos and Mexicanos beefing over god knows what and they started fighting one another. You wonder if they call it Ambos Nogales as some sort of fucking joke. We've haven't been together since. Wonder what side your grandparents woulda been on. Who were they rooting for then? Who're we rooting for now? Protect us from ourselves. Now they wanna take what we did and say that it's the way to go.

VANESSA

You're drunk.

ALFONSO

Yep. You know they didn't find anything?

VANESSA

Who?

ALFONSO

Not a fuckin Percocet bottle. He may'a had a backpack on. It was just after school. Probably had the damn soccer ball in it.

VANESSA

Who didn't find anything?

ALFONSO

The Mexicans. We had them over there for a week, nearly. This side too. Nothing. Well, I shouldn't say nothing. A basketball. Had the kids name on it: Enrique.

VANESSA

The one that was shot?

ALFONSO

The one Eddie shot.

VANESSA

Eddie didn't shoot anyone.

ALFONSO

You think you get put on leave for paperwork errors? C'mon, Vanessa. The kid was kicking a soccer ball against one of those concrete walls. That sounds like a gunshot? Like your life is in danger?

VANESSA

Oh god, Eddie.

ALFONSO

Wonder if CoreCivic knows. Don't worry, we kept it tight, in house. Anything else would be too...political. If he goes, though, there'd be questions.

VANESSA

Sancho, you can't.

ALFONSO

Why? He lied to you, didn't he? What're you trying to protect?

VANESSA

He was in the army. If he'd really wanted to hurt someone.

ALFONSO

He was in the fucking Air Force, not the army. Three tours, why do you think we didn't ask too many questions when he applied during the Obama surge?

VANESSA

He wants out.

ALFONSO

Out of what?

VANESSA

All this shit.

ALFONSO

Join the fucking club.

A slow silence filled only by the sound of the Suns losing a basketball game.
Neither of them can leave. Neither of them can speak.

ALFONSO

Can I have a water?

VANESSA

Sure. Sorry.

ALFONSO
In a bottle?

She finds him one. Hands it to him.

ALFONSO
Thank you.

Let the silence keep. Then:

VANESSA
Your regular joint was closed, huh?

ALFONSO
Something like that.

Blackout.

Title: December 2016

Twilight. The backyard of the house with the zombie grass. The backyard. They've dumped stones in and it's now 100% no mow. Vanessa has her arms draped around Ed from behind. He rubs one of them as she takes a drag on her cigarette. Her energy is sloppy drunk.

VANESSA

It'll be nice, don't you think?

ED

Yeah.

VANESSA

We haven't had a chance to do that. To be that couple. To be a couple, really. That's not a guilt—I'm not trying to make you feel guilty, give you a guilt trip.

ED

It's okay, baby.

VANESSA

I'm just saying, like a coming out party, a relationship quinceañera.

ED

You're funny.

VANESSA

Well, it's true. Isn't it?

ED

If you say so. You know that the odds of Em coming are nil.

VANESSA

It's for us, jerk.

ED

You know what I mean.

VANESSA

I don't think it's gonna be like a family kid friendly thing anyway.

She breaks away and finds a glass, taking a swig from it. Ed watches, her finding a beer. You get the sense he always has a wary eye trained on her.

ED

I thought you said it was Christmas.

VANESSA
Exactly. It's Christmas! Fun Christmas.

ED
Ah.

VANESSA
Don't be skeptical.

ED
I'm not. What kind of a thing is fun Christmas?

VANESSA
Usually we celebrate, you know, it's not all gifts and early morning stuff. It's all night long.

ED
Sounds like fun.

VANESSA
And dancing.

ED
Oh, no, no no no...no no.

VANESSA
Yes yes yes yes. If you go with me you have to dance with me.

ED
Says who?

VANESSA
Says your girlfriend.

ED
Alright, alright. Who else is going?

VANESSA
People from work. People Ash knows. It's her place. Why?

ED
Just wondering.

VANESSA
There will be people you know and people you don't, alright, so no need for the paranoia.

ED

I'm not paranoid. I don't remember you being all tight with Ash and then all of a sudden.

VANESSA

Ash and I are good.

ED

I know. That's my point.

VANESSA

Did I think she was a model employee? No, I did not. But, she's fun. She's good people. You might even like her. We have to see people some time. Don't you think that part of the reason your ex put you into that psychic pretzel is that your world solely centers around attending to her demands? You need to lighten up, Eddie.

ED

As opposed to yours?

VANESSA

For example.

ED

Yeah, I know what your demands are.

VANESSA

Oh do ya?

ED

I do.

There's a shift here, and in it, the sense of a scar. It's only a matter, both of them know, about how far to push and even a playfulness about going up to the edge, even as they know how easy it is to fall over.

ED

I said I was game.

VANESSA

I know. I said I'd start going back to meetings again after the first. I promised.

ED

Yeah, I know.

VANESSA

It's just with the election and the holidays and everything going on.

ED
Yeah.

VANESSA
I needed to let my hair down a little. There's still a good girl in there somewhere.

She comes to him flirtatious, sexual. He plays to a point.

VANESSA
We need some party music. This is boring. Don't take this the wrong way, but this is boring. Didn't you download Spotify?

She finds his phone, which is hooked up to a speaker or laying out and begins to tap into it.

ED
Em downloaded it.

VANESSA
Yeah, but did you start your own account? You can't have two devices playing with the same account.

ED
She set it up. I think with my Facebook...?

VANESSA
Your passcode is so dumb.

ED
Dumb. Boring. Anything else you wanna hit me with in there?

VANESSA
Not a critique, babe. It's cute. Everything is Em's birthday.

ED
Dumb, boring, cute. I think that's the trifecta.

VANESSA
What's this?

ED
What's what?

VANESSA
This list.

ED
A playlist, I dunno.

VANESSA
It's not on your playlist.

She shows him the phone.

ED
I thought you were putting on music.

VANESSA
My finger slipped, they're right next to each other.

He has it back from her.

ED
Your finger slipped because you're drunk. Unless you're trying to get into my notes.

VANESSA
I'm going to pretend you didn't say that.

ED
It's a note. I'm sorry. Just tell me what song you want.

VANESSA
Something fun. It's a list. With dates.

ED
You said all my music was boring. Be more specific.

VANESSA
Not all your music, what you're playing. What are the dates for?

ED
For corroboration. What about this.

Pitbull's "Greenlight" comes on.

VANESSA
Eddie.

ED
What?

VANESSA

It starts 9/16. Dates for what?

ED

If he's going to fuck me, I'm going to fuck him back.

VANESSA

Fuck who?

ED

Sancho. All of them.

VANESSA

Babe, what are you doing? You're making no sense.

ED

We're just playing Pitbull. Partying. C'mon. What you wanted, right?

VANESSA

Stop.

ED

Alright.

VANESSA

Why'd you say I was drunk?

ED

Oh, for fucks sake, Vanessa.

VANESSA

I'm not drunk. I'm in recovery.

ED

I know, baby. I know.

VANESSA

Why do you have that on there, Eddie? What are you doing?

ED

You think I'm going to stick around here with them calling me a murderer? I know the truth. I know the shit they did. I'm not going down because they need someone to go down. I have these dates. I know what they did each time with me. With my case. The investigation. I know how they tried to cover everything up. I know the truth.

VANESSA

Why would someone believe you?

ED

Vanessa. I've been over this with you a hundred times. It's why I said, you were..., because you don't listen to me.

VANESSA

Stop the music.

ED

What?

VANESSA

Stop it.

He does.

VANESSA

Who's going to believe you?

ED

It's the truth.

VANESSA

Yes, but who are you sending it to?

ED

They cock blocked me with that CoreCivic job. Everything was lined up. I could have gotten out of this.

VANESSA

Who, Eddie, who?

ED

Guy at the *Republic*. Said that I could come to him with anything and he'd write it up.

VANESSA

Jesus Christ, Eddie. You're trying to be a martyr.

ED

I thought my life was in danger.

VANESSA

That was your lie to them, Eddie. Don't repeat that back to me.

ED

Sanch coached me through it. And on each of these days they purposefully covered up or gave misleading statements.

VANESSA

He was kicking a soccer ball, Eddie. He came from school. Enrique. That was his name. His friends / called him Kiki

ED

You don't know that.

VANESSA

Sancho told me. I looked into it, Eddie.

ED

Yeah, he's credible and I'm not.

VANESSA

Why would he lie?

ED

You tell me.

VANESSA

I told you we didn't—I didn't sleep with him.

ED

Yeah, he just dropped you on my doorstep at 2am because you had to work overtime.

VANESSA

You don't have to buy what I told you, Eddie, you don't. But if you send that, you might as well kill yourself and me, too, while you're at it. And Sanch, and Em. How the fuck do we live with you? How do we live with the person who did that?

ED

I don't know.

VANESSA

I'm getting a drink.

ED

Yeah, let me know if you see my girlfriend down in there, because she hasn't come out in a while.

Vanessa disappears into the house. We hear the sounds of a party in the distance. Ed wanders and takes a cig from Vanessa's pack. He lights it.

Vanessa goes to the stereo turns it on. loud, Latin club song, something like Enrique Iglesias' "Bailando" comes on. It overtakes the sound of the night. Maybe we see Vanessa dancing to it.

Ed turns toward where the fiesta is going on. Darkness is settling down.

A cheap firecracker explodes in the night air above. Ed watches it.

ED
I don't know.

Blackout.

The parking lot of Emily's high school. She's got on a nice dress from a dance, which contrasts against how distraught she is. Ed's trying to keep up.

ED

Okay, okay, okay...so...slow down. Just slow down. Okay? Slow down. Yeah? Take a deep breath. And just tell me...one more time. Can you tell me just...What happened? Yeah? Sweetie, can you tell me?

EMILY

Did you tell her?

ED

Tell who, honey?

EMILY

Her. Mom.

ED

No. You told me to come.

EMILY

Okay. Good.

ED

You gonna tell me what happened?

EMILY

I was talking to Tyler.

ED

Who's Tyler?

EMILY

He's a guy. He works at Marshall's. Vanessa was, like, helping me out when we all went. To talk to him.

ED

Uh huh.

EMILY

He's a junior and I didn't know that Gabi was into him and I was just talking to him.

ED

That's okay. It's okay to talk to people.

EMILY

No it's not. It's really not. She comes over and she's like—that dress makes you look like a giant fucking grape.

ED

What? She's crazy, Em.

EMILY

But, it's—I am *bigger*. I've been trying to, but even with soccer.

ED

You're growing.

EMILY

Mom thought it was Celiac or that I was having a reaction, but we changed diet and still I... Gabi's on the team. She's varsity. She knows. She *knows*.

ED

You don't have to listen to her. Everything's going to be fine, Em.

EMILY

I threw up.

ED

What? When?

EMILY

I thought if I...

She stands back in such a way that some vomit on her dress is seen.

EMILY

I'm so sorry.

ED

Is this—are you doing—is this the first time?

EMILY

No.

ED

Honey.

EMILY

I don't want to. Sometimes when I feel bad or like I don't like what I'm seeing. I make myself. It isn't often just sometimes.

ED

You don't have to. Em. You're such a good kid. A good person. You don't have to make yourself do that.

EMILY

I know.

ED

Do you?

EMILY

Yes!

ED

Okay, okay. You passed the test. I trust you. You don't have to listen to other people. You're better than that. It sounds like this girl's a real bitch.

EMILY

You can't say that.

ED

Why not?

EMILY

It's not nice.

ED

And what she did to my little girl was nice.

EMILY

I'm not yours, Dad.

ED

I know.

EMILY

I love you, but I'm not yours.

ED

Do you think Tyler saw?

EMILY

No.

ED

Good. You shouldn't let that kill your night.

Ed pulls out the clothing from Marshalls and hands it to her.

ED

I thought you might want this.

EMILY

I can't.

ED

Why not?

EMILY

My dress.

ED

You can.

EMILY

They'll notice.

ED

You're going to look amazing. It'll be fine.

EMILY

What will?

ED

Everything, honey. Things have been too intense. I'm sorry for that. I'm sorry you had to be downstream of all this—your mom and me, all my...downstream of me.

EMILY

It's okay.

ED

There are times when I think I shouldn't have come back from over there. You and your mom would have never known me. Never really known...There are guys who just vanish into it all. Maybe I should have done that.

EMILY

Who would have been my Dad?

ED

That's why I didn't. Okay, don't give that bitch the satisfaction. Get back in there.

EMILY

Okay. Thank you. Thanks for coming.

ED
Of course.

EMILY
Yeah. This time – do you promise?

ED
Promise what?

EMILY
Between us.

ED
Absolutely.

EMILY
I believe you.

ED
Get back in there and dance. Or jump. Or whatever.

EMILY
Okay.

ED
Say hey to Tyler for me.

EMILY
God. No.

ED
Honey – I love you.

EMILY
Love you too, Dad.

She goes back in.

Blackout.

Title: January 2017

A driveway in Maryvale, AZ. There's a box between Emily and Vanessa filled with things from Ed and Vanessa's duplex. Some of the items are recognizable – the Pumas camiseta, clothing from Marshall's, soccer ball that Ed bought.

EMILY

So, yeah, that's a possibility.

VANESSA

That's great!

EMILY

Thanks.

VANESSA

What's her name again?

EMILY

Julie Ertz. She plays for the Chicago Red Stars and is on the National Team.

VANESSA

Impressive.

EMILY

Tryouts aren't till spring, tho, so I'm not even sure if I'll be playing.

VANESSA

I'm sure there are pickup games you can get into.

EMILY

Yeah.

VANESSA

You're really good. Don't let anyone take that away. Right?

EMILY

I'll try. Thanks for bringing my stuff. You didn't have to drive all the way up here.

VANESSA

I felt like getting out of town for a bit. Plus, I thought, maybe I could get to see me some Emily. How's she doing? What the hell, right?

EMILY

Yeah.

VANESSA
How are you doin'?

EMILY
Fine. Ok.

VANESSA
Cool, cool.

EMILY
How are you?

VANESSA
Good. Yeah? Okay. Making it through.

EMILY
That's good.

VANESSA
As well as can be expected.

EMILY
Are you still living...?

VANESSA
Moved back in with my abuela.

EMILY
She must like that.

VANESSA
Beats a hotel.
Listen. If you got one more second.

EMILY
Yeah, sure.

VANESSA
There was something else that I wanted to say to you.

EMILY
Yeah?

VANESSA
Yeah? Okay. Good. So, what I wanted to say. I wanted to, um, apologize and, uh, make amends to you for not really going to bat for you in the ways that I should have. I was in a pretty bad

place toward the end with your dad there, and there are a list of things that I felt like I could have done better. For me and my health obviously. But also for him. And for you. I didn't because I'm an alcoholic and have like a co-dependent streak a couple of miles long (I'm coming to realize). So, I also wanted to come up and see you so that I could say that to you directly. You don't have to say anything. The important thing is I say it.

EMILY

Like what?

What do you wish you had done?

VANESSA

Good question. Um. Honestly, I don't fucking know. Shit. Sorry. Ah! I've been swearing when I get nervous.

EMILY

It's fine. You didn't say anything when I cursed in Marshall's.

VANESSA

When did you curse in Marshall's?

EMILY

When I saw Tyler. I was like: "Holy shit" or something.

VANESSA

You did not say "Holy Shit."

EMILY

I might as well have.

VANESSA

Well, you didn't. I would have remembered that. That was a good day, wasn't it? For all of us.

EMILY

Seeing you reminds me of him.

VANESSA

Yeah. I was worried about that.

EMILY

It was good. I think, maybe, though that was bad, too. Like if we had seen the way he reacted with that dumb shirt or something that he'd still be here.

VANESSA

You knew your Dad better than anybody. There was nothing that was going to stop him.

EMILY

Yeah, but, maybe if instead going bowling, we'd gone to therapy or. I don't know. Something to make him not take it so tough.

VANESSA

Cariña, the only time he didn't take himself seriously was with you.

EMILY

That's not true.

VANESSA

Yes it is. If he was any more buttoned up, he would've been a...

EMILY

A what?

VANESSA

I don't know a Mormon or something.

EMILY

Did the article do anything?

VANESSA

Sure. Did it do what he wanted? Probably not. But, you know, anonymous whistleblower takes his own life is the sort of thing that makes the news for like 30 minutes now before everyone closes ranks and makes it impossible to blow the whistle again.

EMILY

I can't accept your apology.

VANESSA

That's not really how it works. The point is for me to say it.

EMILY

If he was here, would you make amends to him, too?

VANESSA

I tried to. Before everything. It was too late. He'd been talking to the guy from the *Republic* for weeks. I think once he got in that far he knew he was lost. I still haven't processed everything. I don't think I ever will. But, hey, I should be going. I'm sure your mom is in there giving me the hairy eyeball.

EMILY

What's a hairy eyeball?

VANESSA

It's the bad version of what you gave Tyler. It was good to see you.

EMILY

Why don't you come in?

VANESSA

It's fine. I don't want to bother you.

EMILY

You're not bothering us. My mom wants to meet you.

VANESSA

Really?

EMILY

Yeah.

VANESSA

Your mom does.

EMILY

We're survivors.

VANESSA

Survivors of what?

EMILY

My Dad.

VANESSA

It's fine. Really. Thank you. Thank your mom for me.

EMILY

You going back home?

VANESSA

No. Not right now.

EMILY

Phoenix is nice.

VANESSA

I was thinking South Dakota.

EMILY

Yeah? Why South Dakota?

VANESSA
You ever met anyone from South Dakota?

EMILY
No.

VANESSA
There ya go. I'd be the first.

Emily suddenly runs in and hugs her.

EMILY
Don't go yet.

VANESSA
Okay.

EMILY
I don't want you to go yet.

VANESSA
I won't.

EMILY
Fuck him.

VANESSA
Fuck him.

EMILY
Fuck him.

VANESSA
Fuck.

She looks up. The embrace is disentangled. Both women stand looking at one another. Vanessa may wipe tears from her eyes. Emily turns. Looks back.

EMILY
You're coming, right?

VANESSA
Yeah, yeah. I am. You just gotta give me a second.

Emily goes in with the box. We stick with Vanessa for just a moment too long.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY