

burnout.

by

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**NOAH**- 26. He/Him. A bar worker barely a year out of college. Probably stoned right now.

**TARYN**- Late twenties. She/Her. A bartender that somehow doesn't worry about money.

**AUBREY**- 24. He/Him. A gay food runner that cannot do his job sober.

**GRACE**- Early thirties. She/Her. A server who hates her job.

**RYAN**- Early thirties. He/Him. Works at a private school. Noah's boyfriend.

**VICKY**- A student debt call line assistant, a health insurance call line assistant, a receptionist for a doctor's office, and a museum subscription coordinator. Just trying to do her job.

**DAD**- Early fifties. Noah's dad.

**A CHORUS OF STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS**- at least two, less than ten, and at least one man and one woman

## SETTING

A bar, a house, and eventually, a museum

## NOTES ON PRODUCTION

*There's space. There's waiting. Anxiety builds in silence. It's uncomfortable. Let it be.*

*"..." means a lot of things in this script. Feel it out. What do they look like in your head?*

***DAD** should be doubled as the male **STUPID MOTHERFUCKER** chorus member. This is not Freudian.*

*I request that, if this play is performed, an industry night for service workers be included in the performances. I also request that they get discounted tickets that night.*

*No all-white casts please.*

*burnout (n.)*

- 1.) a.) *exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation, usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration*  
b.) *a person suffering from burnout*
- 2.) *a person showing the effects of drug abuse*

*Blackout.  
A dial tone.  
Another.  
Then, a recorded voice plays.*

VOICE

Thank you for your call! It's very important to us! All of our representatives are currently assisting other customers. Please stay on the line, and we'll be with you as soon as we can.

*Hold music plays,  
the generic type that all customer service lines use.  
In the darkness, someone onstage flicks a lighter.  
Something catches and is alight for a bit.  
The lights fade up slowly, but they stay dim.  
NOAH is revealed sitting in the floor, his phone in his lap.  
He is dressed plainly.  
Jeans and a t-shirt. Maybe Chucks.  
He holds a dugout in one hand and a lighter a one-hitter in the other.  
He exhales. Smoke.  
He bangs the one-hitter on the ground to clear the ash out, then opens his dugout and packs another hit of weed in the one-hitter.  
The music cuts, and the voice interjects again.*

VOICE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Your call is important to us. Please stay on the line, and we'll be with you as soon as we can.

*The music returns.  
NOAH flicks the lighter and ignites the weed, takes a hit.  
The lights fade up a bit more as he inhales.  
...  
He exhales. Smoke.  
He bangs out the one-hitter and sets it up again.  
...*

NOAH

Come on, I have work in like fifteen minutes.

*...  
...  
The music cuts.*

VOICE

Did you know? You can access your account /online as well!

NOAH

/Oh my God.

VOICE

Just go to our website at ww--

*The recorded voice stops abruptly,  
and a happy new voice comes in.*

VICKY

Hello! Thank you for your patience. My name is Vicky, and who do I have the pleasure of speaking with today?

NOAH

Noah Harding.

VICKY

Okay, let me just pull your info up really quick.

*Silence, save for VICKY typing on the other line.  
NOAH waits.*

...

...

*He is impatient.*

*He lights the one-hitter again and takes the hit.*

*This time, the lights don't get any brighter.*

*He unexpectedly coughs, which launches him into a  
full coughing fit.*

VICKY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Is everything okay, sir?

*NOAH coughs and sputters.*

NOAH

Yeah, just got a--

*NOAH launches into it for a bit longer.*

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Sorry.

*It settles a bit.*

NOAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Just got a bit of a tickle in my throat.

VICKY

I understand, sir. I have all your information pulled up. What did you need help with today?

NOAH

I'd like to use three more months of my forbearance.

VICKY

Well, we can certainly help you with that today! And for what reason would you like to utilize forbearance?

NOAH

Can't make the payments.

VICKY

Okay, we certainly understand that.

*As VICKY continues, NOAH ponders his one-hitter for a bit.*

VICKY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

And just to let you know, most of your loans do qualify for a graduated repayment plan which entails only making the interest payments for a year. Would you like to consider that?

NOAH

I've considered. Can't make those payments either.

VICKY

I see.

*NOAH begins to pack another hit.*

VICKY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

So before we proceed, I need to let you know of a few things. First of all, during your forbearance period, the principal amount of each loan will increase. Also, utilizing forbearance may affect your ability to receive loans with us in the future. We strongly suggest that you discuss this with your cosigner before you proceed.

NOAH

We've discussed.

VICKY

Okay! So I'll have to ask a few questions about your employment and education history.

NOAH

I've never been asked questions during this process before.

VICKY

We just need to update information in your file. Shouldn't take that long at all.

...  
*NOAH takes the hit.*

NOAH

Okay.

VICKY

Great. So are you still at the address on file?

NOAH

Yes.

VICKY

And how long have you been there?

NOAH

About three years.

VICKY

Great, great. What was your major in college?

NOAH

...religion.

VICKY

You said 'religion?'

NOAH

Yes.

VICKY

And you did graduate?

NOAH

Yes.

VICKY

Okay, great.

*VICKY types more.  
NOAH bangs out his one-hitter.  
He puts the one-hitter into the dugout,  
then puts the dugout in his pocket.*

VICKY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Are you currently employed?

NOAH

Yes.

VICKY

What industry do you work in?

NOAH

Restaurant. I'm a bar worker.

VICKY

Is that full time or part time?

NOAH

...part time.

VICKY

Are you looking for other work?

*NOAH recoils at this question.*

NOAH

Yeah... it's a process, I guess.

VICKY

I understand that!

*VICKY laughs politely.  
NOAH does not.*

VICKY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

And about how much money will you make this year?

NOAH

...it'll probably cap out at about sixteen thousand.

*VICKY does not respond.  
She types.*

...

*More typing.*

...

*NOAH rolls his eyes and retrieves the dugout again.*

*He packs another hit.*

*He lights it and inhales.*

*He holds it in.*

VICKY

Okay. So the overview: You are willing, but unable at this time, to make payments to your loan. You are applying for forbearance for all of your loans for three months, pushing back your payments until July. If for any reason you wish to end your forbearance period, you may call back, and we can help you get started with your payments. Would you like to proceed?

*NOAH exhales. Smoke.*

NOAH

Yes.

VICKY

Okay. We will need a payment of fifty dollars for each loan to apply forbearance to, with a maximum cost today of one hundred and fifty dollars to apply it to all of your loans. This payment will of course go towards the total cost of the loan, even if your application for forbearance is rejected. Would you be able to make or schedule that payment today?

NOAH

I can make it. My bank information should be in the system.

VICKY

All right. Let me go ahead and process that payment. One moment please.

*And the music comes back.*

*NOAH reacts viscerally to this.*

*He bangs out the one-hitter again.*

*He considers packing another,  
but he's already pretty fuckin' stoned.*

*He just puts the one-hitter into the dugout  
and puts the dugout in his pocket again.*

...

*VICKY is still not back.*

*The worry begins to set in.*

*He begins to drum his fingers.*

*He fidgets.*

...

*Fuck it.*

*He pulls out the dugout again.*

*He is just about to pull out the one-hitter when the music cuts, and VICKY is back.*

VICKY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Thank you again for your patience. We were able to process that payment. You should receive an e-mail with your receipt for payment in a few minutes. Your next bill will need to be paid on July the fifth. Is there anything else I can help you with today?

NOAH

No, that's it.

VICKY

Okay, well thank you for choosing Sallie Mae! Have a great day!

*NOAH doesn't answer and hangs up his phone.  
He stays in the floor.  
Somewhere, a sole word can be projected:*

*burnout.*

*Lights fully go up.  
 We're at only one side of a restaurant bar.  
 A hole in the wall,  
 but one of the good ones,  
 the kind that's in every TripAdvisor list.  
 Successful and trendy.  
 TV's may be playing in the bar,  
 probably movies or old reruns of sitcoms,  
 maybe Jeopardy!  
 A shelf behind the bar holds various liquors.  
 A host stand sits close to the end of the bar  
 with a corded phone sitting on a shelf next to it.  
 There are two entrances:  
 one beside the host stand,  
 and one in the back on the opposite side of the bar.  
 NOAH is still in the floor.  
 He doesn't move from his spot.  
 TARYN enters carrying a bar tub.  
 She's also dressed in a t-shirt and jeans.  
 Probably a ponytail.  
 Very casual dress code stuff.*

TARYN

They want you to pay how fucking much?

*TARYN plops the bar tub into NOAH's lap.  
 NOAH rolls his eyes and gets up, tub in hand.*

NOAH

Thirteen hundred. A month.

TARYN

Noah!

NOAH

And they have this other repayment plan that's supposed to be, ahem, cheaper, that I can do for a year, but guess how much they want for that?

TARYN

I dunno, four fifty?

NOAH

Try double.

TARYN

Nine hundred fucking dollars a MONTH? My rent isn't even that high.

NOAH

Yeah, and I make like three-hundred here on a GOOD week. So I've been delaying the payments.

TARYN

Okay, but what the hell are you gonna do when you have to actually pay them?

NOAH

Fuck if I know. I'm worrying about it in increments, you know? I've got six more months of forbearance, and if I hear that word one more time, I'm gonna blow my brains out and name Sallie Mae in the note.

TARYN

God, I'm glad I never went to school.

NOAH

College might be a scam.

*TARYN begins to clean the bar.*

*NOAH sets the tub on the bar top and begins to stock the bar with whatever liquors are missing from the shelf.*

TARYN

Soooooo how's Ryan?

NOAH

Ryan's good. Always busy doing some kind of bullshit for work.

TARYN

What's that new job he's got now?

NOAH

Well, he's been there for a year already, but he works at some fancy school doing... something? I'm actually not super clear on it.

TARYN

Some boyfriend you are.

NOAH

I'm a delight. How's your man-thing?

TARYN  
His name is David.

NOAH  
How's David?

TARYN  
Eh. I think I'm gonna break up with him soon.

NOAH  
Wait, really? Already?

TARYN  
Yeah, he's kinda weird. It's been like a month, but he doesn't want to make it "official" yet or whatever that means, but he brought it up? Like, we were just having a normal lunch, and he just blurts out "I don't want to make things official or anything yet." What kind of message does that send?

NOAH  
Okay, that is kinda weird. Dump him.

TARYN  
In due time. My birthday is soon.

NOAH  
A true Aries bitch.

*NOAH checks his phone for the time.*

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Hey Taryn, where's Aubrey?

TARYN  
You think I ever know where he is?

NOAH  
It's like ten past.

TARYN  
I'm sure he'll stroll in soon. You know him.

*NOAH looks offstage.*

NOAH  
Okay, but the food window is getting a little full.

TARYN

Already? We just opened.

NOAH

Yeah, but we got that reservation. That twenty top that wanted to get here EXACTLY at four.

TARYN

Who's on right now?

*At that moment, GRACE stomps into the bar.  
She wears a black shirt, black jeans, and a black  
apron with pens falling out of the pockets.*

GRACE

Who's supposed to be our food runner?

NOAH

Aubrey.

GRACE

Well where the fuck is he?

TARYN

Your guess is as good as ours.

GRACE

That twenty top ordered like a billion appetizers already, and they're all currently burning in the food window.

NOAH

I'll come help out.

GRACE

That's not the POINT. He always does this! Just shows up whenever the fuck he wants to as if this isn't a place of business.

NOAH

I mean, it's barely that.

GRACE

Noah, I swear to God.

NOAH

Chill, Grace. He'll be here soon probably. Let me come help.

GRACE

No, it's fine, I'll run them myself.

*GRACE stomps right back out of the bar.  
NOAH laughs.*

NOAH

It's like, sometimes she couldn't give a shit if this place burned to the ground, but then she wants us all to care?

TARYN

I think she's gunning for manager, so she's acting like she cares more.

*NOAH laughs again.*

NOAH

GRACE? A manager? She hates it here.

TARYN

Yeah, but full time and benefits. I'd kill a man for that.

NOAH

But would you manage this place?

TARYN

...probably not.

*AUBREY enters.  
He wears short shorts  
and a very cute top that is in no way conducive to  
working in a restaurant.*

AUBREY

Hello, darlings.

TARYN

You've got Grace on the warpath already.

AUBREY

I'm barely late. The traffic.

NOAH

It was pretty bad.

TARYN

Okay, but you can't keep blaming the traffic. Noah lives further away than we do, and he's always early.

NOAH

Mostly just so I can smoke in the parking lot before I come in.

TARYN

Yeah, by the way, you reek of weed.

NOAH

Why care if no one else does?

AUBREY

Oh, speaking of, do you have any to spare? I'm all out myself.

NOAH

Nah, I smoked my last bit in the parking lot. I'm down to the kief.

AUBREY

Boo. I can't stand to be here sober.

NOAH

You can't stand to be here at all.

*GRACE storms back in.*

GRACE

Great of you to show up!

AUBREY

Sorry that I'm late, Grace. The traffic--

GRACE

We always have traffic! There's traffic every day! We still manage to get here on--

AUBREY

The important thing is that I'm here.

GRACE

There's a twenty top already down that ordered a billion appetizers WHICH I ALREADY RAN, and now they only want drinks, and they're taking up my entire section, and they're not gonna move for three hours, and I'm not gonna make ANY money tonight!

...

AUBREY

That last part isn't my fault.

GRACE

UGH just forget it, Aubrey.

*And GRACE exits in fury.*

NOAH

You know, at the other restaurants I've worked at, they didn't even have food runners. Servers ran their food.

TARYN

Is it the teacher group that always comes in?

*NOAH cranes his neck to look.*

NOAH

Think it's the teacher group.

TARYN

They're always the worst. They camp and don't tip well.

AUBREY

We should ban them.

TARYN

We already changed happy hour because of them.

NOAH

No way, really?

AUBREY

Yes, it was four to seven, but *they* kept coming in and pulling this shit. Now it's four to six.

NOAH

How dare they.

TARYN

So you can understand why she's a little pissed.

AUBREY

Fiiiiiiiiine. I will extend an olive branch. But only because it's Teacher Tuesday. And oooooonly for a shot.

TARYN

Come on, we just started. We'll do shots later.

AUBREY

But I hate being here sober! You know it sucks! You're not sober!

TARYN

AUBREY!

AUBREY

Taryn, I will not run food sober. I just won't.

...

TARYN

Goddamn you.

*TARYN grabs a shot glass and pours a sloppy shot of tequila and slings it to AUBREY.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

You get one less tonight though.

AUBREY

Well a shot now is worth two later.

*AUBREY downs the shot like a pro and hands the empty shot glass to NOAH.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

For you, monsieur barback.

NOAH

The pleasure is all mine.

*NOAH puts the glass in the bar tub.  
AUBREY exits.*

TARYN

He's a wreck. Can't believe I live with him.

...

So how much do you owe?

NOAH

Oh. Uh.

TARYN

Sorry, don't answer that. That's personal.

NOAH

No, it's fine. It's uh... Over a hundred gr/and.

TARYN

Christ on the cross, Noah!

NOAH

I know. Believe me, I know.

TARYN

What, is there a fifty year payment plan?

NOAH

Listen, I almost had a panic attack in the parking lot talking to them, and I'm very high right now. Can we change the subject?

TARYN

What, did it take you eight years?

...

NOAH

Six.

...

TARYN

Oh.

NOAH

You know, some people just find their thing really early.

TARYN

And your thing is religion?

NOAH

...I dunno what my thing is.

TARYN

Hold that thought, frat dudes just sat at the side bar. Get me ice?

*TARYN exits.*

*NOAH stands for a second.*

...

*NOAH leaves to get ice.*

*RYAN, a stocky guy in a button up and tie, enters.*

*He situates himself off in a corner.*

*He is carrying a small cake with a candle sticking out of it.*

*He looks at the cake and smiles a little.*

*He sits and waits.*

...

*He begins to fall asleep.*

...

*He snores.*

*It's very late, about midnight.*

...

*NOAH enters.*

*He is very tired.*

*He notices the cake.*

*He looks at RYAN.*

*He smiles.*

*He nudges RYAN.*

NOAH

Hey, Ryan.

*RYAN never actually wakes up in this scene.*

RYAN

...mmff.... birthday....

NOAH

What?

RYAN

...peeee birthday... made cake.

NOAH

I saw. I love it.

RYAN

mmmm.... tanks.....

NOAH

Want me to take you up to bed?

RYAN

...nah yet.....

NOAH

Okay... Sorry I'm home so late. People wouldn't leave, so I couldn't finish all the dishes until like eleven thirty.

RYAN

mmmmm...

NOAH

I called in my forebearance today. I have six months left.

RYAN

Mmmmmgood.

NOAH

Gotta figure out something soon.

RYAN

...mmmm... gonna.... birthday.

*NOAH gets his lighter out of his pocket.  
He lights the candle.*

NOAH

Yeah. Happy birthday to me.

*NOAH pulls out his dugout and one-hitter.  
He packs a hit.  
He takes the candle out of the cake,  
lights his one-hitter,  
puts the candle back in.  
He makes a wish.  
He blows out the candle and his smoke.  
He bangs out the one-hitter,  
places it back into the dugout,  
and puts the dugout in his pocket.*

RYAN

Mmmmf..... love you...

NOAH

Love you too.

*NOAH gets under one of RYAN's arms and hoists  
him up to his feet.*

Let's get you to bed.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Mmf...

RYAN

*Then, for a brief moment of near-lucidity...*

Did you smoke weed...?

RYAN (CONT'D)

No, babe. Come on. It's time for sleep.

NOAH

*NOAH leads RYAN out.*

...

*GRACE enters.*

*She goes behind the bar to find a tub of rolled silverware.  
She finds it.*

Those motherfuckers.

GRACE

*It's only half full.*

*She fumes and tosses the tub onto the bartop.*

*She reaches under the bar again to grab another tub,  
full of silverware, and covered with a stack of napkins.*

*She sits at the bar and begins to roll the silverware.*

*She continues throughout the scene.*

*NOAH re-enters,*

*but this time, he walks to the host stand.*

Hey, who the fuck closed last night?

GRACE (CONT'D)

Uhhhhh... I think it was maybe Ben?

NOAH

Of fucking course. Never does his silverware.

GRACE

*NOAH grabs the receiver for the phone.*

*He presses a button.*

VOICE

You have! eight. New /voice messages and! three. old voice messages! Press one for! new messages.

NOAH

Jesus, *eight*?

*NOAH presses another button.*

VOICE

First! Message!

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Hey, uh, my name is Patrick Russell. I was in there last night 'n got drunker 'n hell, and I thank I left my debit card there. Problem is, I'm from outta town--

*NOAH presses two buttons very quickly.*

VOICE

Message deleted! New message!

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Hi! I was hoping I could make a reservation for Thursday night for three peo--

*NOAH presses the buttons again.*

VOICE

Message deleted! New message!

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #3

Hi there! I got a kinda weird question. I love the sign you guys have on the front of the restaurant, with all the funny sayings? It gets me every time I see it. I'm getting ready to propose soon, and my girlfriend and I had our first date at your restaurant on the patio where we talked for about four hours. I was wondering if y'all could change the sign to say--

*NOAH, in disgust, hits the buttons again.*

VOICE

Message deleted! New message!

*NOAH rapidly pushes the two buttons over and over again until, instinctively, he stops, and the machine says...*

VOICE (CONT'D)

There are no more messages.

*And NOAH hangs up the phone.*

GRACE

I heard all that.

NOAH

What, are you gonna tell on me for not making a reservation for three people?

GRACE

I'm just giving you a hard time. I don't understand everyone's obsession with using our sign to propose to their gross significant others with.

...

Weird to see you hosting.

NOAH

Yeah, well, Christy was sick, and no one could fill in for her, so I picked it up. Need the money.

GRACE

It's gonna be another slow one. It's cold as hell. Everyone wants to stay inside, and SOME kind of game is on tonight. Looking forward to taking home forty bucks for six hours of work.

NOAH

Maybe we'll have a pop.

GRACE

Maybe.

...

NOAH

So, uh, I heard that you're trying to move up to manager.

GRACE

Who told you?

NOAH

Taryn.

GRACE

That loudmouthed bitch. Are you mad at me?

NOAH

Mad? Why would I be mad?

GRACE

Everyone else is. Like, how dare I try to move up?

NOAH

I didn't even know we needed another manager.

GRACE

Wait, have you not heard about Sierra?

NOAH

What about her?

GRACE

She quit.

NOAH

She *quit*??

GRACE

Yeah, she gave someone a to-go cup full of liquor, and they caught it on tape.

NOAH

We give away liquor all the time.

GRACE

Yeah, but not in to-go cups. This isn't New Orleans, it's illegal here. Like, that alone probably wouldn't have gotten her in trouble, but the guy got pulled over for a DUI afterwards, and you know we have our logo on the cups.

NOAH

Oh, shit.

GRACE

The other managers were just gonna demote her back to server--

NOAH

*Server?*

GRACE

But when she heard that was gonna happen, she just left. Think she's already tending bar somewhere else.

NOAH

How did I not hear about this?

GRACE

Because you never go to the work parties. Or stick around to get drinks with us. Or anything.

...

Manager pay is seventeen an hour, and I've seen what they do in the office. They make a few phone calls, do a little inventory, and sit on their phones. Shauna brings fucking books with her. I wanna read on the clock. Plus the benefits.

NOAH

I've heard they're good.

GRACE

Health AND vision AND dental? Yes, please.

NOAH

God, that's what I really need. Dental insurance. My teeth are all fucked up.

GRACE

They look fine.

NOAH

I mean, I haven't had dental for like four years. I've got like five cavities that I need to fill. Two broken teeth.

GRACE

Broken?

NOAH

I mean, they don't hurt anymore, and they're like waaaay in the back. Enough Orajel on it, and I think the tooth just gives up. Like driving with your check engine light on until one day, it turns off.

GRACE

Jesus, that doesn't seem like a healthy way to live.

NOAH

Yeah, but who can afford to fix that shit?

GRACE

You know you can just buy insurance, right?

NOAH

I can't even afford car insurance.

GRACE

Noah!

NOAH

It's on my to-do list! My very long to-do list. Before my teeth, but after telling my parents I'm living with Ryan.

GRACE

They don't know?

NOAH

I'm from Alabama. It's not exactly a haven for progressives.

GRACE

You've been living with him for like three years already.

NOAH

To-do list.

GRACE

You should tell him to come by again. I miss his face.

NOAH

He's all grown up now. Too good for all of us.

GRACE

Even you.

NOAH

Especially me.

GRACE

He was a hell of a barback. Never noticed him, that's how you know he's good.

NOAH

Now he's got a salary and shit.

GRACE

God, can you imagine having a salary?

NOAH

I literally can't.

GRACE

Look at you, living with a sugar daddy.

NOAH

Grace, don't call it that please.

GRACE

It's kinda like that though.

NOAH

That doesn't mean I fucking like it. I hate not being able to pay for my stuff or my bills.

GRACE

You pay rent though, right?

NOAH

...

GRACE

Noah!

NOAH

I have a lot of shit to pay for. I pay like over three hundred dollars for student loans a month.

GRACE

I thought you were delaying payments.

NOAH

There's one that's a Plus loan that I can't delay for some stupid reason. So yeah, Ryan's paying my rent right now.

GRACE

Huh... so how much do you spend on weed each month?

NOAH

Okay, Grace.

GRACE

I'm serious.

NOAH

I buy a quarter a month. That's only a hundred bucks. And it's necessary.

GRACE

Oh, fuck off, "necessary?"

NOAH

Okay! Grace! Thank you!

GRACE

I'm being serious! I know everyone around here has a cavalier approach to drugs, but when you use words like 'necessary'--

NOAH

You don't

...

I haven't had medicine in a long time. I had to cancel my insurance. It helps. It's just weed.

GRACE

Weed isn't this harmless cure-all. There's been studies--

NOAH

Grace, I'm just trying to make it through the day.

...

GRACE

Hm. Aren't we all.

*GRACE finishes her silverware.*

GRACE (CONT'D)

Silver's here when you need it. I know I came in first, but would you put me second in rotation? I need to eat something before I fall over.

NOAH

Sure.

*GRACE begins to exit through the back entrance as  
TARYN enters the same way in a flurry.  
They collide.  
GRACE falls.*

GRACE

Ouch, fucking-- TARYN!

*But TARYN is already back up.  
She rushes to the host stand.  
GRACE gets up and stomps out.*

TARYN

Noah, I need you to barback tonight.

NOAH

What? I'm hosting.

TARYN

Yeah, but Aubrey didn't come in today, and he hasn't called.

NOAH

Who's gonna host?

TARYN

We called in Jacob.

NOAH

Oh, so NOW people can cover the shift. Taryn, please don't make me barback. I wasn't even supposed to be here today. I won't get home until like midnight, and I wanted to see Ryan before--

TARYN

Dude, I'm sorry, but I gotta have a bar worker, and you're here. I need a bunch of shit.

*And TARYN exits.  
NOAH just stands there for a second,  
then he yells...*

NOAH

I'M TAKING A FUCKING BREAK BEFORE I START FUCKING BARBACKING.

*NOAH leaves the host stand and goes "outside."  
He pulls out his dugout.  
He packs the one-hitter.  
He lights it up and takes the hit.  
...  
He exhales. Smoke.  
TARYN comes outside, mad as hell.*

TARYN

Listen, I get you're pissed or whatever, but you don't get to just yell at everyone--

NOAH

I'm not even supposed to be here tonight! And now I'm fucked over because Aubrey couldn't be bothered to show up for work.

TARYN

Tough shit! We have to do this all the time.

NOAH

I never get to see Ryan. NEVER. And I finally pick up a host shift so I can be home by nine, and of course this shit happens.

TARYN

You don't get to be this way to me.

NOAH

Also! You're not my manager! You can't just tell me to do whatever you want! We can find another host, but not another barback? Bullshit.

*NOAH starts loading another hit.*

TARYN

I need you in there.

NOAH

I'll be there in a MINUTE.

...

*TARYN leaves.*

*NOAH lights the hit.*

*He takes it.*

...

*Suddenly, a sharp pain sparks in NOAH's mouth.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

Shit! Son of a bitch!

*Another toothache.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

God, I just got over the last tooth. Ow. Shit.

*NOAH rubs his cheek.*

*He stands for a second,*

*then he steps forward.*

*He takes a safety pin from his pocket.*

*He opens it and straightens it out.*

*He looks out to the audience like he's looking in a mirror.*

*He opens his mouth.*

*He examines it.*

...

*He pokes around his mouth with the safety pin.*

*He winces, but he persists.*

*RYAN enters.*

*He's holding an envelope.*

*He watches NOAH for a bit.*

*Then...*

RYAN

What the hell are you doing?

*NOAH is startled.  
He slips.*

AGH FUCK  
NOAH

*He pulls the safety pin from his mouth and rubs his  
cheek.*

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Shit, that fucking hurt. I thought you were asleep.

RYAN  
I woke up. What are you--

NOAH  
Nothing.

RYAN  
You were poking around your mouth with a safety pin. That's not--

NOAH  
I have an abscess. Okay?

...

RYAN  
Those things can kill you. Go to a dentist.

NOAH  
Yeah, with what money?

RYAN  
I'll pay for it.

NOAH  
No. I already owe you like a thousand dollars in back rent.

...  
It's not a big deal. I've done it before. You just have to

*NOAH puts the safety pin back in his mouth.*

NOAH (CONT'D)  
get under....NEATH it.... FUCK.

*He takes the safety pin out again. He spits blood.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

And it's as simple as that. It drains, and my tooth lives to fight another day.

RYAN

I'm gonna be sick.

NOAH

Don't be dramatic.

RYAN

Maybe you should think about getting another job.

...

NOAH

Like, in addition to?

RYAN

No, like, get a different one. One with benefits so that you can go to a dentist.

NOAH

Well that's the long term goal, isn't it?

RYAN

It's not that hard.

NOAH

Easy for you to say.

RYAN

Oh, here we go.

NOAH

No, not like that. I'm not trying to fight.

RYAN

...  
...

NOAH

It's just

You've got this great new job where you make good money and you're taken care of. And you have this really nice house--

RYAN

We have a house.

NOAH

You have a house. Your name is on the mortgage. I haven't been able

...

Do you know how that feels? I'm a leech. No matter how much I work, I feel like I'm never able to catch up. Always fucking something. And I know you feel it too, don't deny it.

RYAN

I don't.

NOAH

...

I'm not like you. You're... professional. Or something. You're... impressive. That's the word. And I'm not.

RYAN

So you're just gonna give up before you even try?

NOAH

...

RYAN

You're not unimpressive. You're just a little unfocused.

NOAH

Ryan

RYAN

I can help you. I'll look for jobs. We can find a resume builder. There are programs that just write cover letters.

NOAH

...

You think I could actually find a job that pays well and doesn't make me want to kill myself?

RYAN

Fifteen an hour, full-time? Benefits? Of course.

NOAH

You're putting a lot of faith in me.

RYAN

I believe in you.

*RYAN goes to kiss NOAH.  
NOAH backs up.*

Abscess, remember?

NOAH

*NOAH kisses RYAN's cheek.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

We can look for jobs. But I'm keeping my expectations low. What's that envelope you have?

RYAN

Oh, it's mail for you.

NOAH

For me? I don't get mail.

RYAN

It's from that health center you went to.

NOAH

I haven't been to them in months.

*NOAH takes the letter and opens it.  
He reads it.*

RYAN

What's it say?

NOAH

Uh, nothing. Just reminding me to come in for a visit. Like that's happening anytime soon.

RYAN

I could help--

NOAH

No more help. I'm fine. I'm handling it. Don't worry, okay?

RYAN

...

NOAH

It's been a long time. Really. I've been doing well.

RYAN

Okay. If you say so. I'm gonna head to bed. Work in the morning.

NOAH

I'll head that way in a bit. I love you.

*RYAN kisses in his direction and exits.*

*NOAH looks at the letter again.*

...

...

*He gets out his phone and calls a number.*

...

...

*A voice appears.*

VOICE

Thank you for calling! Your call is very important to us. Please stay on the line, and we'll be with you as soon as we can!

*The exact hold music from earlier begins to play.*

*NOAH looks at his phone in disgust.*

...

*He pulls the dugout from his pocket.*

*He loads the one-hitter.*

*He pulls out a lighter.*

*He takes the hit.*

...

*He exhales. Smoke.*

...

NOAH

Oh my God, it's always when I need to go to work.

*The hold music still plays.*

...

*VICKY enters,*

*but it's a different VICKY.*

*NOAH doesn't see her.*

*She slumps, seems bored.*

*She walks over to the phone that's at the host stand.*

VOICE

Your call is important to us! Please stay on the line, and we'll--

*VICKY picks up the phone at the host stand.*

VICKY

Thank you for calling Cornerstone Medical Offices, this is Vicky, how may I help you today?

NOAH

Your name is Vicky.

Yes. VICKY

Oh. Uh. That's funny. My loan-- NOAH

What can I help you with today, sir? VICKY

NOAH

...

So I came to see you guys a couple of months ago when I had health insurance. The lady I talked to at the desk said that even if I cancelled my health insurance the next day, I would be covered for the visit. So I cancelled the next day because I couldn't afford it anymore, and I just got a bill for a hundred dollars for that visit.

Okay, sir, what's the name and date of birth on that account? VICKY

Noah Harding, and March 31st, 1993. NOAH

Please hold for me. VICKY

*VICKY presses a button on the phone.  
The hold music returns.*

Jesus FUCK. NOAH

*NOAH loads another hit.  
VICKY rubs her back.  
She's in a bit of pain.  
NOAH lights his hit.*

...

*He exhales. Smoke.  
VICKY inhales.  
She presses the button on the phone again,  
and the hold music disappears.*

Thank you for holding, Mr. Harding. I see here that we sent correspondence to your insurance provider shortly after because they did not cover that visit. VICKY

NOAH

I... I was told I wouldn't have to pay anything. I was even prepared to make a co-pay, and the receptionist told me everything was covered.

VICKY

You'll have to make a claim with your health insurance--

NOAH

I don't even have them anymore. Is there any way I can work this out? I can't afford this bill.

VICKY

Talk to them. Even though you're not covered with them anymore, they should still have your records. Maybe this is a misunderstanding that they can fix.

NOAH

And what if they can't? Do I just call you again?

VICKY

I sure hope not.

*VICKY hangs up the phone.  
She rubs her back again.  
NOAH looks at the phone.*

*...  
He looks something up on his phone,  
then calls a number.  
He waits.*

*...  
The phone at the host stand rings again.  
VICKY sighs.  
She picks up the phone.*

VICKY (CONT'D)

Thank you for calling Heartland Medical. This is Vicky. How may I help you?

*NOAH hangs up.  
He shoves the phone in his pocket.  
VICKY looks at the phone,  
then hangs it up.  
She observes NOAH as he is outside the "space."*

*...  
STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS 1 and 2 enter,  
a man and a woman respectively.  
They're in their late 40s to early 50s.*

*They walk up to VICKY.  
They're laughing, already a little tipsy.  
The man pipes up first.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Sup, hon. We'll just sit at the bar, if that's okay.

VICKY

Sit wherever the hell you want. I don't work here.

*VICKY exits.  
The two STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS look confused,  
but then, they walk over to the bar.  
They sit.  
...  
NOAH enters the bar from where he was standing.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Comin' in a little late, aren't ya?

*NOAH instantly jumps into his customer service  
voice.*

NOAH

My phone says four o' clock.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Huh. Mine says four oh one.

*NOAH forces a grin.*

NOAH

Have you two been taken care of?

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Oh, yes. The girl over there took our order.

*TARYN enters carrying two drinks, probably  
something like whiskey and coke.  
She notices NOAH.  
She hands the drinks to the STUPID  
MOTHERFUCKERS.*

TARYN

Here we are!

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Took a little longer than I expected.

TARYN

Yeah, sorry about that. We've been having problems with our soda machines lately.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

You should get that checked out. Bad for business.

...

TARYN

Did y'all want to order any food with your drinks?

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Naw, we're just havin' a drink is all.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Or three.

TARYN

Well, I'll be over down on this end making some other orders. Wave me over if you need anything.

*TARYN goes to the other end of the bar.  
She makes drinks.  
NOAH begins to take inventory of the liquor.  
The STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS talk and drink.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

So he's still living at home?

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Can you believe it? Twenty years old! Going to community college. Doesn't even have a job!

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Jesus Christ.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

They're not charging rent. She's still cooking for him. He's still on the family plan, for crying out loud. Get off the couch and do something!

*NOAH and TARYN are both hearing this.  
They look at each other.*

...

*NOAH goes back to inventory.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

You gotta transfer to a state school at that point. He needs to know how to live on his own.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Kids these days don't learn.

*STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 looks at NOAH.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Hey, buddy. Lemme ask you something real quick.

*Oh, goddammit.*

*NOAH stops taking inventory and turns to STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 (CONT'D)

You go to college?

NOAH

Uh, not anymore.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Ah, you dropped out and got a job here.

...

NOAH

No, I worked here while I went to school, and I graduated.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

See? That's how to do it. Not just lazing around the house all day.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Well, congrats, bud. New graduate. So have you found any job leads yet? Only so much of restaurant work you can do.

NOAH

...none yet.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Well, what'd you major in?

*TARYN takes notice.*

NOAH

...religion.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Religion? You can major in that?

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

So are you gonna be a priest, hon? Seems like you shouldn't work in a bar.

NOAH

I--

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

You paid American dollars to go to school and read the Bible? You can do that for free. What kind of--

TARYN

Yo, Noah. Come here for a sec.

*NOAH escapes and returns to TARYN.  
The two STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS continue to chat.*

NOAH

...  
Thanks for that.

TARYN

Fucking pricks, the both of them.

NOAH

...  
...  
Hey, I'm sorry about yelling at you last week.

TARYN

What, that? I already forgot about it.

*GRACE enters.*

GRACE

Hey, Taryn. Did you get my drink orders?

TARYN

Yeah, they're not ready yet because the soda machines--

GRACE

The soda machines are fine.

TARYN

They weren't when--

GRACE

Yeah, but I called the place, and they sent someone over to fix it.

TARYN

...  
Oh.

...

GRACE

So yeah. Uh, no rush or anything.

*GRACE exits.*

NOAH

She seems... not as angry?

TARYN

She's kissing up to everyone. Don't wanna be the one boss that everyone hates.

...  
She called the soda place. Ugh.

NOAH

...where's Aubrey at? Haven't seen him around lately.

TARYN

Oh, you haven't heard?

*AUBREY enters.**STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 takes notice.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Runnin' in late. Seems to be a trend.

*AUBREY stops for a minute.*

...

*He walks behind the bar.*

TARYN

Hey, Aubrey.

AUBREY

Hey.

...

TARYN

I'm gonna go make Grace her drinks. We're slow. Catch up.

*TARYN exits.*

NOAH

Good to see you. Where you been?

AUBREY

...

No one told you? I got arrested. DUI.

NOAH

Oh. Shit.

AUBREY

Took me a while to make bail. Had to ask my sister for the cash.

NOAH

Are you okay?

AUBREY

Of course I'm okay.

...

I'm great. I just owe her a lot of money. You planing to drop any shifts?

NOAH

I dunno. Maybe. Haven't had a date night in forever.

AUBREY

Just let me know, darling.

*TARYN enters with the drinks for GRACE. She puts them on the bar.*

TARYN

Someone tell Grace that her drinks are ready.

*No one moves.*

...

*AUBREY rolls his eyes.*

AUBREY

Fine. Whatever.

*AUBREY exits.*

*TARYN takes out three shot glasses and begins to pour shots of tequila.*

NOAH

Why didn't you just use the soda gun back here?

TARYN

I needed a break from those two. They're insufferable. Typical rich old folks.

NOAH

Never seen them before.

TARYN

I think they're from out of town. Tourists never fucking tip well.

*TARYN finishes up the shots and hands one to NOAH.*

*GRACE and AUBREY enter.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

Perfect timing. Here's your shot, Grace.

*TARYN slides one of the shots to GRACE.*

*TARYN raises her own glass.*

NOAH

Wait, what about--

*GRACE and TARYN take their shots.*

*NOAH hurries and takes his.*

*AUBREY looks away.*

GRACE

Thank you for getting my drinks. I'll help you in the window if you want, Aubrey.

AUBREY

I'll be fine, Grace. We're not busy.

GRACE

Well if you need any--

*STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2 throws her drink into STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1's face.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

It's always the same thing with you. I can't stand this shit anymore.

*STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2 exits.  
STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 is stunned,  
but after a second, he regains his senses.  
He notices the gang staring.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 (CONT'D)

And what the FUCK are you all staring at?

TARYN

Someone that's about to get kicked out if he keeps talking to us that way.

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Fuck you.  
FUCK you.

GRACE

Sir, if you'll just calm down--

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Don't you FUCKING tell me to calm down, you cunt.

AUBREY

Can someone knock this bitch out?

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

Wanna take a swing, faggot?

AUBREY

Oh, PLEASE give me an excuse.

*AUBREY gears up to swing.*

TARYN

AUBREY! Your probation!

...

*AUBREY backs down.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

*Probation?* They'll just let anyone work here I guess. Heh heh.  
You think you can touch me. Heh. The car I parked in your lot is worth more than you'll  
make here in four years. And that bitch that just walked out, I've got five more where she  
came from, on tap.

*STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 turns his focus to NOAH.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 (CONT'D)

Heh heh. Degree in religion. Useless as donkey piss. Hope you like it here, son, because you're gonna be here for the rest of your life, just like these other failures.

NOAH

Eat shit and choke.

*STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 launches his drink glass at NOAH.*

*NOAH dodges it.*

*The glass shatters against the wall.*

*NOAH throws himself at STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1, but GRACE and TARYN hold him back.*

*STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 laughs.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1

This was fun. I feel way better now. Heh heh.

*And with that, STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 leaves.*

...

TARYN

Everyone okay?

...

*TARYN reaches under the cash register and pulls out a few envelopes.*

*She hands them out to AUBREY, GRACE, and NOAH.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

So I'm gonna go call the cops on him. Here are your checks. Aubrey, go get the broom. Noah, fill me up on ice while I'm gone, okay?

*TARYN and AUBREY both exit in different directions.*

*GRACE opens her check.*

*She looks at it, then in the direction that TARYN exited.*

...

*GRACE puts her check in her pocket.*

*She takes her drinks and exits.*

*NOAH is alone.*

...

...

*NOAH opens his check.  
He looks at it.  
He walks out from behind the bar.  
After a moment, RYAN enters carrying his laptop.*

RYAN

Welcome back! You know what time it is.

NOAH

Noooooooooo no no it's almost midnight. I just got home. I don't want to do more job shit.

RYAN

Come on, I drank cold brew for this.

*RYAN opens his laptop.  
He sits wherever.*

NOAH

My checks have been lower lately for some reason.

RYAN

Has it been slower? Maybe the tip out hasn't been good.

NOAH

I mean, up and down, but not terrible or anything.

RYAN

All the more reason for you to get another job. I found this website that will write your cover letter for you.

NOAH

Isn't that cheating or something? Like plagiarism?

RYAN

It just uses a template, and you just insert details about your work history.

NOAH

You use one of these to get your new job?

RYAN

You've gotta stop calling it new. I've been there for almost a year now. Look, I've been finding jobs all day for you.

NOAH

We've been searching for a month now, and I haven't even gotten an interview.

RYAN

That doesn't mean you stop applying! You give up too easily.

NOAH

I didn't say I was giving up.

RYAN

You've had the same job for nearly four years. Almost as long as we've been together. Getting back into this is intimidating.

NOAH

You should come back to the restaurant sometime. Everyone misses you.

RYAN

Maybe when I'm not so busy.

NOAH

You're always busy, it seems like.

RYAN

I just

...

I'm not the same person anymore. I don't think anyone really misses me there. They just remember that I was nice and did my shit.

NOAH

So you're too good for us now.

RYAN

It's not that, god.

...

When I leave a place, I leave. I don't really keep up with anyone from college either. I'm in a new place. I gotta focus on that. You of all people should understand.

NOAH

Low blow.

RYAN

Sorry.

...

NOAH

I've been thinking about grad school a little bit.

RYAN

More school? You hated college.

NOAH

I hated THAT college. Buncha Jesus freak evangelicals that like to overstep boundaries. But I've always thought about getting my master's.

RYAN

In theology?

NOAH

Or something. I dunno.

RYAN

You should have a plan before you start applying for grad programs. Can you even take out anymore loans?

...

NOAH

Nevermind, I guess.

RYAN

Babe, I'm not trying to discourage you or anything. There are just things you have to factor in before making big decisions for the future. You could take a few years to make sure that you want to do it, build up some capital, pay off some of the loans. See if this is something that could happen further down the line.

*NOAH says nothing.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

Hold on a sec. Let me get something.

*RYAN exits.*

...

*NOAH pulls out his dugout.*

*He pulls the one-hitter from it and loads it up.*

*He takes the hit.*

...

*He exhales. Smoke.*

*RYAN re-enters holding a nice shirt and slacks.*

*He smells the air.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

Did you smoke?

NOAH

I took a hit. This is stressful.

RYAN

You should think about smoking less. What if these jobs require a drug test?

NOAH

Then that job wasn't made for me.

RYAN

You've gotta fucking take this seriously.

...

NOAH

Sorry. I will.

RYAN

You just  
You owe me a lot of money.

NOAH

I know.

RYAN

And we're fine. I'm not scared about not being able to afford bills anymore, but--

NOAH

I know. Okay?

...

RYAN

Here. Put these on.

*RYAN hands NOAH the clothes.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

We'll go over your cover letter tonight, okay? Resumé tomorrow.

NOAH

My whole weekend?

RYAN

It's Monday. Nose to the grindstone.

*NOAH begins to undress.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

So what has your job history been?

NOAH

I mean, it's been the restaurant, the gas station, the other restaurant. Oh! I worked for a political campaign one summer, but we lost.

*RYAN types on his laptop.*

RYAN

Years of customer service. Good. Working with diverse teams.

*As the two talk and NOAH continues to undress,  
TARYN walks into the bar.  
She works.*

NOAH

I've worked almost exclusively with people. People based businesses, is that a thing?

RYAN

Excellent people skills, sure.

*AUBREY enters the bar with the broom.  
He sweeps up the broken glass.*

NOAH

Proficient in Microsoft Office. Except Excel, I mean.

RYAN

The internet has video tutorials. You could watch some.

*GRACE enters.  
She watches TARYN for a while.  
TARYN doesn't notice.  
Then,  
someone enters.  
They wear a blank mask.  
They stare at NOAH.  
NOAH is in his underwear at this point.*

NOAH

That feels like lying.

RYAN  
It's embellishing. Everyone does it.

*NOAH looks at the shirt.*

NOAH  
I hate this shirt.

*Everyone in the bar looks at NOAH in his underwear.*

RYAN  
It's the nicest shirt you own. You'll have to wear it for interviews.

*NOAH looks at the shirt again.  
He starts getting dressed in the clothes he took off.  
TARYN, AUBREY, and GRACE go back to what they were doing.  
TARYN pours two shots.  
The masked person stares.*

RYAN (CONT'D)  
You're not even--

NOAH  
Do you ever miss the old place?

...  
*AUBREY looks at the shots.  
TARYN beckons GRACE over.  
GRACE doesn't move.  
AUBREY finishes sweeping.*

RYAN  
It was a cracker box. Like five hundred square feet.

NOAH  
It was cozy.

RYAN  
Cramped.

*GRACE exits.  
TARYN shrugs and takes both shots.  
AUBREY looks away.*

NOAH

I liked it. I could've lived there for a little while longer.

...

I remember moving in. We'd only been talking for about a month, and all of a sudden, my summer school housing fell through, and I really didn't want to move back home. So you said, even though we weren't dating, I could come crash on your couch for the summer. And I never ended up sleeping on that couch.

...

We'd come home from work, get high, and play video games. Make ramen in that tiny ass kitchen. You don't ever smoke with me anymore.

...

*The masked person exits.  
No one notices.*

RYAN

I

...

I just can't do it anymore. You know that.

...

You don't have to put the shirt on right now.

...

I'm kinda turned on.

NOAH

What, because I'm in my underwear? You've seen it a million times.

RYAN

Can I not find my boyfriend sexy?

*NOAH rolls his eyes and keeps dressing himself.  
AUBREY watches NOAH.*

NOAH

Listen, any other time, I'd jump your bones, but I'm so tired. Can we reschedule?

RYAN

Do you work tomorrow night?

NOAH

Yes. Which is why I want to sleep.

RYAN

I know you're nervous and tired, but at least look at the list of jobs I found today, okay? Before you go to bed.

*NOAH, only in a shirt, socks, and underwear, kisses RYAN.*

*AUBREY moves closer to NOAH.*

*RYAN kisses NOAH.*

*AUBREY watches.*

*RYAN finishes kissing NOAH and exits.*

*NOAH puts on his pants and shoes.*

*AUBREY watches this as well.*

TARYN

Aubrey, there's food in the window. Hurry, we're almost finished.

*AUBREY takes the food out of the window and exits.*

...

*NOAH is dressed.*

*As he finishes,*

*a gang of STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS enter the bar,*

*drinks in hand.*

*They party.*

*NOAH enters the bar and picks up a bar tub.*

*He slams the bar tubs around,*

*trying to make a racket.*

*He looks at the gang of STUPID*

*MOTHERFUCKERS.*

*He rolls his eyes and bangs the bar tubs around again.*

*They don't hear.*

*TARYN attempts to enter,*

*but STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2 grabs her.*

*She speaks much louder than she needs to.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2

Hey! So it's my bachelorette party, and I was wondering if you could play some Beyoncé for us??

*TARYN composes herself.*

TARYN

Sure thing, hon. Let me start my *closing* duties, and I'll put that right on for you.

*TARYN goes behind the bar.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

God, un-fucking-believable.

NOAH

Forty minutes after closing and counting.

TARYN

They have ten more minutes before I go apeshit.

*The STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS unleash a loud  
"WHOOOOOOOOO!" in unison.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

Five minutes.

NOAH

I'm so tired of getting home after midnight.

TARYN

So am I.

NOAH

You're going drinking after this.

TARYN

The fact stands. Is Ryan gonna be--

NOAH

Probably.

...

So... I've been kind of looking for other jobs.

TARYN

What?

NOAH

I mean, it's mostly Ryan's idea. He thinks I could be making more somewhere else.

TARYN

Come on, you're the best barback we have.

NOAH

Bullshit.

TARYN

You could ask to move up to server. That could--

NOAH

We never move bar staff up to server.

TARYN

You're just gonna leave?

NOAH

I mean, I don't have anything else lined up yet.

TARYN

You know that Cade and Sarah are leaving, right? We're losing two barbacks.

NOAH

So I wouldn't be allowed to?

TARYN

The timing is bad.

NOAH

The timing is always bad.

TARYN

Come on, don't leave. I don't like anyone else here. We fight and shit, but we still work well together and tough it out.

NOAH

Taryn--

*Another loud "WHOOOOOOOOO!"*

TARYN

Hold that thought. Their time is up.

NOAH

At least pour the shots first.

TARYN

You can't pour 'em?

NOAH

I don't have my license. I let it expire.

TARYN

It's not illegal unless you give it to a customer. Just pour 'em. I'll be back.

*TARYN exits.*

...

*NOAH gets out four shot glasses and a bottle of tequila.*

*He begins to pour shots.  
 After a brief second,  
 the loudest, angriest deathcore music blasts through  
 the speakers.  
 NOAH isn't phased.  
 He continues to pour the shots.  
 The music hurts the STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS'  
 ears.  
 STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 walks to the bar.*

STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1  
 HEY, COULD YOU TURN IT DOWN A LITTLE?

*NOAH looks at STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1.  
 He points to his ears, then shakes his head, mouths  
 "sorry."  
 STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #1 looks panicky.  
 He throws money onto the bar.  
 He drags STUPID MOTHERFUCKER #2 with him.  
 The STUPID MOTHERFUCKERS exit.  
 The music plays for a little bit.  
 Then, it turns off.  
 NOAH goes ahead and takes his shot.  
 TARYN enters again.*

TARYN  
 Aaaaaaaaand they're gone. Works every time. I'll gather up their glasses for you.

NOAH  
 Taryn.

*But she's already gone.  
 AUBREY enters.*

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 You're still here? Kitchen's been closed for like two hours.

AUBREY  
 Just waiting for my very late ride. A friend came into town, and she wants me to show her all  
 of the spots that I can't drink at anymore.

NOAH  
 Can't drink?

AUBREY

Not after my DUI. I get called to the courthouse for random drug tests now. This was news to me, but apparently they can test for booze.

*GRACE enters.*

NOAH

Shit, everyone's still here.

GRACE

Last table just left. Told them that the kitchen closed, so they kept ordering drinks until the death metal pushed them out. Assholes.

*NOAH slides a shot to GRACE.  
She catches it.*

GRACE (CONT'D)

You read my mind.

*GRACE takes the shot.*

GRACE (CONT'D)

Has anyone called dibs on Aubrey's shot?

NOAH

Uh--

GRACE

MINE.

*NOAH slides her another shot.  
GRACE catches it and downs it.  
She stacks the glasses up.*

GRACE (CONT'D)

And once again, my will to live is restored. Where's Taryn at?

NOAH

She went to drive out the stragglers.

...

GRACE

They gave her manager.

NOAH

Shit, really?

AUBREY

Where have you been? She's been manager for like two weeks.

GRACE

She didn't even want it. I stepped up, and they fucking gave it to her anyway.

AUBREY

You know the politics of this damn place. She's buddy-buddy with all the other managers. You didn't have a chance.

GRACE

Thanks, Aubrey.

AUBREY

It's not meant to be an insult. Nepotism won. It always does.

GRACE

It isn't just a fucking job, dude. I haven't been making as much in tips lately. I needed that money. She lives in a house that her parents bought her. She's only here because she dropped out of college. I'm actually struggling to pay my bills while she barely has any. I'm already donating plasma twice a week. Barely pays for anything, but I have to do it to scrape up the cash.

AUBREY

Listen, you're preaching to the broke choir, hon. It's a shit world, and we're all shitting in it.

*TARYN enters.*

*She's holding checks and a few glasses.*

*She puts the glasses on the bar and hands the checks out to the group.*

TARYN

Payday, ladies.

*GRACE takes her check.*

GRACE

I'm going to do the last of my sidework, and then I'm out. Drive safe, Noah. Night, Aubrey.

*GRACE exits.*

TARYN

She's been such a bitch to me lately.

AUBREY  
Can't imagine why.

...  
*TARYN takes her shot.*

TARYN  
I'm gonna go do the books for the night. Leave whenever you finish, Noah.

*TARYN exits.*  
*NOAH grabs the glasses and puts them in his tub.*  
*AUBREY watches NOAH.*

...

AUBREY  
You're leaving soon, aren't you?

NOAH  
Well yeah. It's late.

AUBREY  
You know what I mean.

...

NOAH  
It's a thought I've kicked around a little bit. Nothing serious yet.

AUBREY  
You and Ryan were the only cute ones that worked here. You can't both leave me. Who will I stare at?

NOAH  
We get plenty of hot customers.

AUBREY  
But I can't subtly flirt with them!

...  
Why are you leaving?

NOAH  
I'm not for sure.

AUBREY  
But you will.

...

NOAH

There's a lot of reasons.

*AUBREY gets out a shot glass and the tequila.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

Aubrey, you can't do that. The cameras--

AUBREY

Oh, please. Everyone here pours their own liquor.

*AUBREY holds the shot.  
He stares at it.*

NOAH

You're the king of making bad decisions.

AUBREY

Nah, that's you. I'm just a hedonist.

NOAH

Don't speak Greek at me.

AUBREY

I love feeling good. Drinking makes me feel good. Who is anyone to tell me I can't? I have a constitutional right to get shit faced whenever I want.

NOAH

That's what got you arrested in the first place.

AUBREY

I wasn't even drunk. I had one beer that night.

NOAH

Bullshit.

AUBREY

Believe what you want. I make the RIGHT bad decisions. Besides, this shot isn't for me, it's for you.

*AUBREY gives the shot to NOAH.*

...

*NOAH takes the shot.  
He puts down the glass.*

NOAH

God, this is swill. I don't understand how we drink it.

AUBREY

Well, that's because it's the shitty well stuff.

*AUBREY surveys the bar,  
then brings down a top-shelf bottle of reposado tequila.  
Someone wearing a blank mask enters.  
They stare at NOAH and AUBREY.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

We always get the blanco, non-aged, good for getting slap faced, but the real treasure is here. Reposado.

*AUBREY pours a shot of the reposado.*

NOAH

That's top-shelf, don't--

AUBREY

Like anyone is gonna know. Hardly anyone gets this one. Nobody's gonna miss a shot.

*AUBREY finishes.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

The secret is that after it's cooked and fermented, reposado gets aged in barrels for up to a year. It gets more flavor, more sweetness. Usually we're supposed to sip it instead of shoot it, but that's not really conducive to a fast-paced restaurant.

*AUBREY slides the shot to NOAH.*

NOAH

Aubrey, I'm driving--

AUBREY

Come on. Do it for me.

...

*NOAH takes the shot.  
This one is harder.*

NOAH

Jesus fucking-

*AUBREY kisses NOAH.*

...

*NOAH breaks away.*

Aubrey.

NOAH (CONT'D)

...

AUBREY

The right bad decisions. You know.

Man, I've wanted to do that forever. Had to get it in before you left me forever.

NOAH

That shit's not fucking cool.

AUBREY

It was a kiss.

NOAH

Listen, I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong idea, but--

AUBREY

Sorry, gotta run. My ride is here.

*AUBREY exits.*

*The masked person continues to stare at NOAH.*

...

*NOAH is about to get out his dugout when his phone rings again.*

NOAH

Christ on the CROSS, what do you people want?

*NOAH answers his phone.*

*VICKY enters,*

*the Heartland Medical VICKY.*

*She's... still tired.*

*NOAH doesn't look at her during the following exchange.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

Hello?

VICKY

Hi, this is Vicky from Heartland Medical calling for Noah Harding.

*NOAH takes the phone from his face.*

...

*He puts it back up.*

NOAH

Speaking.

VICKY

Yes, I'm calling in regards to an outstanding bill that's past due.

*Another person wearing a mask enters.*

*They also stare at NOAH.*

NOAH

Past due? I cancelled my insurance months ago.

VICKY

According to our records, you're still being covered by us.

NOAH

Then your records are wrong. I went online and did it after my last doctor visit that you guys didn't pay for.

VICKY

Sir, I--

NOAH

Like, which is it? Am I covered by you guys or not?

VICKY

Sir, I understand your frustration, but please don't take it out on me.

NOAH

I know you're not in charge, but you called me. What is my outstanding bill?

VICKY

Well, sir, it's about five hundred/ and seventy-two--

NOAH

Five HUNDRED?

VICKY

Yes sir. Late fees accrued for the payments you didn't make.

NOAH

YOU DIDN'T EVEN COVER MY DOCTOR VISIT I HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE DOCTOR IN MONTHS BECAUSE I THOUGHT I WASN'T COVERED I HAVEN'T HAD MEDICINE IN SO LONG

VICKY

Sir, I'm going to hang up.

NOAH

I can't afford that! What am I supposed to do?

VICKY

Is there someone you could borrow it from?

NOAH

Are you asking me to go deeper into debt to get out of debt with you?

VICKY

Sir--

NOAH

So I'm supposed to pay you AND this doctor bill that you guys skipped out on?

VICKY

Sir, our records say that you went to a doctor that wasn't within our network.

NOAH

They were covered all year by you guys.

VICKY

Sometimes networks change. We let our customers know/ in advance when these changes are coming.

*As VICKY is talking, RYAN enters.*

*He's in a button-up and slacks.*

*He watches NOAH.*

*...*

*NOAH can't move.*

NOAH

Just... I can't do that. I really can't. That's almost two paychecks for me.

VICKY

I'm sorry, sir. I wish I could help.

NOAH

Is there a way I can contest this?

VICKY

If I'm being honest, it would probably take a couple of months to make an appeal. During which time, late fees would continue to accrue, and there's still a chance of having your claim denied. You may end up stuck with a bigger bill.

...

NOAH

Then can I please cancel my insurance today?

VICKY

Yes, sir.

NOAH

Thank you.

...

...

I'm sorry for yelling.

*VICKY hangs up.  
She disappears.*

RYAN

Who was that?

*NOAH whips around.*

NOAH

I thought you were at work.

RYAN

Tell me.

*A third person wearing a blank mask enters.*

...

...

NOAH

It was my insurance.

RYAN

I thought you cancelled it.

NOAH

I thought I did too.

...

They want me to pay them almost six hundred dollars.

RYAN

Jesus Christ.

NOAH

I know.

...

And they didn't cover my last doctor visit. So I have a bill of a hundred dollars that I have to pay too.

RYAN

How long have you sat on that one?

NOAH

A while.

...

I didn't want to worry you.

RYAN

Well, now I'm worried.

...

Have you been smoking at work?

NOAH

...

RYAN

You always smell like weed. You promised me you wouldn't get high at work.

NOAH

I don't. I just smoke when I get home.

RYAN

...

Been smoking a lot more lately.

...

I know what happens when you get like this. It's not a symptom; it's a warning sign.

NOAH

I'm fine. Swear. Just need to catch up on a lot of things, but I will. I'll figure out something.

That's not what I--

RYAN

I know  
what you mean.

NOAH

...

...

I'm gonna handle it.

RYAN

How? You can't even pay--

NOAH

I said!  
I'm going to handle it.

...

...

RYAN

You're so fucking stubborn.

NOAH

Go to work.

...

*RYAN exits.*

*NOAH turns around.*

*HE SEES THE MASKED PEOPLE.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

...

Who are you?

*The masked people don't respond.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you looking at?

*The masked people disappear.*

*NOAH stands for a moment.*

...

*TARYN walks into the bar.*

TARYN

Perfect timing. I need a six pack of Miller Lite over here. We reopen for dinner in fifteen.

...

*NOAH exits.*

*TARYN pours herself a shot.*

*She takes it.*

*She pours another one.*

*She takes it.*

...

*She takes out a small baggie of coke.*

*She takes a straw from the bar  
and inserts one end into the bag,  
the other into her nose.*

*She takes a sniff,*

*but she doesn't drain the bag.*

*NOAH comes in with the six pack.*

*He doesn't see the bag,*

*but he's not fucking stupid.*

NOAH

Taryn, what the hell are you doing?

TARYN

What does it look like I'm doing? You want a shot?

NOAH

Coke? Really?

TARYN

All the managers do it. Chill. It's just a little. No different than popping an Adderall. Want some?

NOAH

God, no thanks. The one thing I have going for me in life is not having a coke addiction.

TARYN

I'm not addicted. Prude.

*NOAH's phone starts to ring.*

*He pulls his phone out of his pocket.*

...

*He silences it and puts it back.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

Not important?

NOAH

It's my fucking insurance again. They keep calling me, asking for money I don't have.

TARYN

Then tell them you don't have it.

NOAH

They already know. They keep calling.

TARYN

Shit, if it was me, I'd pick up every time they called. "No, I still don't have the money, and I probably won't the next day, or the next day, or EVEN the day after that."

NOAH

Have you ever had people call you over debt?

TARYN

Pfft, no.

NOAH

Well, it's a living nightmare. And not that simple.

TARYN

You ignoring them isn't gonna make it go away.

NOAH

I'm not ignoring them. I'm just not answering until I have a plan.

...

If I don't figure out something soon, Ryan's gonna kick me out. I just know it.

TARYN

He wouldn't do that to you.

NOAH

He's just been talking about money a lot more lately.

TARYN

I've got that room open if you need it.

NOAH

What room?

TARYN

...

Do you really not know? Aubrey got arrested.

NOAH

...

TARYN

Courthouse called him in for a random drug test, but he only had like an hour to get there. Traffic was miserable. He missed the deadline by fifteen minutes. As soon as he walked in, they arrested him.

NOAH

They can just--

TARYN

Yep.

NOAH

Just do whatever they want.

...

It's because he's poor. He can't fight back. He can't fucking afford it.

TARYN

It's because of a lot of things.

*A fire lights inside of NOAH.*

NOAH

Say it. Say it's because he's poor.

TARYN

...

NOAH

Say it. Say it's because he's **FUCKING** poor! So they can do whatever they want to him because he's poor!

TARYN

It's because of a lot of things! One of those **POSSIBLY** being because he's poor.

NOAH

Now what the fuck does **THAT** mean?

TARYN

Look, don't misunderstand. I am sad. I am **UPSET**. But I can look at the situation dead in the face and see that it's a complicated myriad--

NOAH

He only had one beer! And they gave him a DUI?

TARYN

We weren't there! We don't know anything! We're going off of Aubrey's word here, and honestly, that's not a lot.

NOAH

...

It's because he's poor. He couldn't afford to dispute it, even if he wanted to. Call him a fucking hour before he has to be there. Bullshit.

TARYN

God, you talk like they set him up just to get him.

NOAH

Why shouldn't I believe that? It feels like that!

TARYN

You're fucking paranoid is what you are, how high are you?

NOAH

I'm not high.

TARYN

You are high. We're all high.

NOAH

I'm NOT high.

TARYN

Why not?

NOAH

Taryn! Our friend is in police custody! After trying to do everything right, he is STILL in jail right now. He was sober. He showed up to every single meeting and goddamn drug test, and they cop him when he's this close to finishing?

TARYN

He was using again.

NOAH

He was clean. He told me.

TARYN

Aubrey lies all the time! He's an drug addict!

NOAH

EVERYONE here apparently does drugs! YOU just did coke! Don't get so high and fucking mighty--

TARYN

And don't raise your voice at me! We are at work! We may be friends, but I am STILL your manager.

...

You're taking up for him quite a bit after what he did to you.

NOAH

What he did?

TARYN

I saw what happened on the cameras. You're being real buddy-buddy with him all of a sudden.

NOAH

Things can be fucking complicated, Taryn.

TARYN

Swear at me one more time, I swear to God.

...

Believe what you want. I believe that it wasn't a "system" that got Aubrey. Aubrey got Aubrey. It's sad, but it's what happens. He had two strikes. He knew.

*TARYN shoves an ice bucket at NOAH.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

Go get me ice before I write your ass up. Side bar too.

*And with that, TARYN exits.*

*NOAH stands there for a second, dumbfounded.*

*His phone begins to ring again.*

...

*He throws the ice bucket.*

*He answers his phone.*

NOAH

NO I DO NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO PAY YOU TODAY AND I WON'T TOMORROW AND I WON'T THE NEXT DAY STOP CALLING ME I'M FIGURING IT OUT

*NOAH hangs up.*

...

*He looks at his phone.*

Oh, fucking shit.

NOAH (CONT'D)

*NOAH immediately dials a number.*

*He holds the phone to his ear with his shoulder and pulls out his dugout.*

*He loads a hit.*

*A cellphone begins to ring offstage.*

*NOAH lights the hit.*

*DAD enters, holding his cellphone, the source of the ring.*

*He hits a button on his phone and stops the ring.*

Hey, son.

DAD

NOAH whips around.

He exhales. Smoke.

Dad! What are you--

NOAH

DAD

Just up here for a visit. Elise wanted to do some shopping.

...

That smells awful.

NOAH

Yeah.

Sorry. I had a really shitty day.

DAD

Hey.

NOAH

Sorry.

...

DAD

So, uh, when you answered your phone--

NOAH

I'm sorry. I

I thought someone else was calling. I got mad.

Oh.

DAD

I didn't  
I wasn't talking about what I owe you. It wasn't about you.

NOAH

Huh.

DAD

...

So who do you have to pay?

NOAH

I'll handle it. I just need to catch up.

DAD

Son.

...

NOAH

My insurance charged me even though I cancelled them. And I have a medical bill because they didn't--

DAD

Okay. I can help you cover it.

NOAH

...

That's it? It's like seven hundred dollars altogether.

DAD

You can pay me back.

NOAH

But what if I can't? I already owe you so much. I owe Ryan more, I owe so many people so much money. I can barely pay--

DAD

Then we'll figure out something.

...

...

How is Ryan?

NOAH

He's good.

Still liking that new job?

DAD

Yeah.

NOAH

...  
How are you doing?

DAD

I'm good.

NOAH

You sure?

DAD

...  
Yeah. I've been job searching. Looking at places with benefits so I can go get therapy again.  
...  
I've been good about that lately though.  
I haven't had a bad one in a little while.

NOAH

That's good. That's all really good.  
You just  
You gotta start talking to me about this kind of stuff.

DAD

...  
...

Uh.  
Well.  
I just wanted to see you before we left.  
I love you.

DAD (CONT'D)

*DAD starts towards the door.*

Wait.

NOAH

*DAD stops and turns back to NOAH.*

...  
All those times I talked about my roommate.

NOAH (CONT'D)

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

I was talking about Ryan.  
 I've lived with him for the past three years.  
 I just didn't tell you because  
 ...  
 I thought you would be uncomfortable.  
 And I've been trying so hard not to disappoint you anymore.  
 That's why I'm able to live somewhere and not pay rent.  
 And I'm scared because things have gotten different.  
 We always talk about money, jobs,  
 and I can feel the distaste on his tongue as the words fall out.  
 He feels contempt for me.  
 And I don't know if he'll keep me around for much longer.  
 And I don't want to lose him.  
 And I don't want to

...  
 I have nowhere else to go.  
 And every moment I stay at that job...  
 I wake up, and he's already gone.  
 I get home, and he's already asleep.  
 I end the day with aches and pains.  
 I can't get through a shift without smoking and taking a shot.  
 And I've just started to hate people.  
 Someone comes through the door, and I instantly get annoyed.  
 I don't want to talk to them.  
 I kind of want them to die.  
 I imagine them getting hit by cars while they're crossing the street to get to the parking lot.  
 I imagine that they all choke on their food at the same time,  
 and I didn't used to be that way. I used to like people,  
 but where else can I go?

DAD

...  
 You know,  
 you can always come home.

NOAH

I can't.  
 I don't know if I could recover, Dad.

DAD

Well, it's always on the table.  
 I'm sure you two can work things out.  
 Three years is a long time.

NOAH

Is it?

DAD

Longer than you'd think.

...

Just for the record, I figured you'd been living there, but... I appreciate you thinking of my feelings.

...

Well, I love you, son. I'm always praying for you. Call me more often.

NOAH

Okay.

*They hug.  
It lasts for a while.  
It's real.*

...

*They break apart.*

DAD

Let me know if you need anything, okay?

NOAH

Are you guys leaving soon? I could check my schedule, see if I have a time we could get dinner.

DAD

Actually, we're leaving once I pick her up from the mall.

NOAH

Oh.

DAD

I tried calling you--

NOAH

I'm sorry. They've called non-stop, and I--

DAD

No, it's fine. We'll get back up soon.

NOAH

Okay. I love you.

DAD

Love you too, Noah.

*DAD exits.*

...

*NOAH wipes his face.*

...

*He pulls out his dugout.*

*Loads it.*

...

*Instead of lighting it,  
he puts the one-hitter back in his dugout,  
weed-side up to save it for later.*

*RYAN enters again.*

*He is holding the nice pants  
and the shirt that NOAH hates.*

...

*NOAH takes them.*

*RYAN exits.*

*NOAH puts his dugout on the ground.*

*He begins to change.*

*As he does, he speaks.*

NOAH

Well, I think I'd be a great match for this job because I have an extensive job history involving customer service. I like to help people. It fulfills me.

...

...

My biggest strength? I'm a team player. Like I said in my cover letter, I've had the privilege of working with many different, diverse teams of people, and I'm very flexible. I adapt well when faced with different situations or working with different people. Huh, I guess I gave you two.

...

...

Biggest weakness is that sometimes, I pay too much attention to the details and get hung up on them, but my thinking is if the all the details of a plan are treated with care, the bigger picture turns out much better, clearer. Kind of like a painting.

...

...

I was a student only about a year ago, so I definitely know my way around word processors and the like.

...

ESPECIALLY Excel. I use it all the time to make my monthly budgets.

...

...

I do enjoy the job I have, but I don't make enough there to pay my bills. They're a great crew, but I can't stay there.

*At this point, NOAH is fully dressed.  
He notices the dugout on the floor,  
then quickly pockets it,  
almost an attempt to hide it.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

When should I expect to hear back from you?

*TARYN enters.  
She's carrying a bar tub.  
As she passes NOAH,  
she shoves it into his arms.*

TARYN

You're here awfully early. Thought you were off today.

NOAH

I am.

TARYN

Then why are you here?

NOAH

I got a new job.

...  
...

TARYN

Well good for you. That doesn't answer my question.

NOAH

You're a manager, and I have to turn in my two weeks. This is it.

...

TARYN

Really? We are THIS close to summer, already understaffed, and you're gonna quit now?

NOAH

They want me to start in exactly two weeks. I just got back from the interview.

TARYN

Aubrey is in jail right now.

NOAH

You can't guilt me into staying, Taryn! Maybe if you guys needed me so badly, you could have paid me more. You could have scheduled me for more hours.

TARYN

Oh yeah, let me schedule you for more hours when all you do is bitch about how you wanna go home.

NOAH

You've gotten a lot shittier since becoming manager.

TARYN

I'm sorry I'm not a sweet little bubblegum princess when I have all this to deal with!

NOAH

You don't have to be such a dickhead--

TARYN

What'd you call me?

NOAH

Dickhead? You've called me that for--

TARYN

I'm your fucking manager. You're too familiar.

NOAH

You're not my manager anymore.

...

TARYN

Two weeks, huh?  
How about you just don't come back?

NOAH

You just said you were understaffed.

TARYN

I'll figure it out. I don't need anyone with a shitty attitude being around here anymore.

...

NOAH

Fine. Good luck with this stupid place. Have fun being in charge.

*NOAH exits the bar,  
but stays onstage.  
TARYN exits.  
NOAH stays in his nice clothes.  
VICKY comes onstage,  
but it's a different VICKY.  
A different, different VICKY.  
She wears nice clothes and a name tag.*

VICKY

So

...

What we do here is mostly face-to-face customer service on a daily basis. We interact the guests, help them find something that best fits their needs. That's why we offer five different subscriptions for different types of families.

*NOAH follows VICKY as she walks about the space.*

VICKY (CONT'D)

We have several exhibits that are permanent and a few that we change out every so often. The ones that rotate will always be in the North gallery. Permanent pieces stay in the East and West galleries.

*VICKY points in the direction of the galleries.*

VICKY (CONT'D)

Subscribers usually ask about the different exhibits that are new, so you'll have to learn about those. We usually have a meeting before each new opening to learn about it.

...

North Gallery is currently housing a collection of paintings from various artists who worked in American social realism. East Gallery is currently being remodeled, won't be finished for about three months, so we're offering new subscribers fifteen dollars off of their subscriptions. We have a smaller collection of our own in the West Gallery, but sadly, not all of our pieces can fit there.

NOAH

Do we always call them subscribers?

VICKY

Only in this context. When we're around them, we call them guests.

NOAH

Gotcha.

VICKY

The museum opens at nine and closes at five. Once three o' clock hits, we head up to the office to enter the data from our sold subscriptions. We're a bit behind on those. At five, we leave.

NOAH

Is it hard?

VICKY

...

Not really. It just gets very tiring being in front of a screen all day, but you make it through.

NOAH

...

And when do benefits kick in?

VICKY

They usually start the month after you've been employed for thirty days.

NOAH

Okay. Okay, good.

VICKY

...

You better take this job seriously.

...

NOAH

I'm sorry?

VICKY

"Is it hard?" What kind of question is that?

NOAH

I just--

VICKY

I've been in this position for six years. I have a master's in Art History from Brown. Then you come in with a bachelor's--

NOAH

You helped hire me. You were in my interview.

VICKY

...

We're taking a chance on you, Noah.  
You can do it, but it will be challenging. We have thousands of subscribers in this city.  
Sometimes we're packed, especially when new exhibits open or when we acquire new pieces. This is a prestigious museum.

NOAH

...

Got it. I'll be on my A-game.

VICKY

Good.

...

Sorry. I don't mean to be harsh or anything. We just want to make sure you're serious.

NOAH

I'm absolutely serious. I do want this job.

...

You must love it being around art all the time. Working in a museum, putting your studying to something useful.

VICKY

...

I do.

...

Come this way. We'll go upstairs and continue your on-boarding training. I'll teach you how to use our subscription database. You're going to have to be proficient in it in order to best serve our subscribers.

*VICKY exits.*

...

*NOAH walks out of the museum.*

*RYAN soon enters.*

RYAN

Well, look who's home before six! The sun's still out!

*RYAN kisses NOAH.*

NOAH

It's kind of nice.

RYAN

I could get used to it. How was your first day?

NOAH

It was a little weird.

RYAN

Weird?

NOAH

I mean, maybe I read it wrong or something, but I think Vicky sort of chewed me out today.

RYAN

Like she yelled at you?

NOAH

She didn't yell, but she assumed I wasn't taking it seriously. I was just asking when benefits kick in. I've gotta fix my teeth and go see a doctor. I'm extremely serious about that.

RYAN

Maybe you were just nervous, so it seemed weird to you.

NOAH

I dunno. She sort of talked like a robot all day. Super clinical. She kept using the term "subscribers" and shit.

RYAN

That's what they are, right?

NOAH

...

I'm just too used to working at the restaurant.

RYAN

You'll eventually get past it. It took me a while before I got comfortable working at the school.

...

So if I tell you something, will you not get mad?

NOAH

What? No, I'm not gonna promise that.

RYAN

I'm gonna have to raise your rent a little bit. Not by much.

NOAH

Okay, but by how much?

RYAN

I'm gonna make it four-hundred instead of three-hundred.

...

Is that okay?

NOAH

I mean, sure. I may actually be able to pay it now.

RYAN

What's your projected income looking like?

NOAH

Thirty-five K a year.

RYAN

Not too bad for someone with a degree in religion.

NOAH

Oh, shut up.

...

Thank you for your help. I couldn't have done it without you.

RYAN

Of course. I love you. Next, we'll get your loans refinanced. Baby steps.

NOAH

Baby steps.

RYAN

Right now, I'm just glad to see you.

...

*NOAH kisses RYAN.*

*RYAN kisses NOAH back hard.*

*RYAN pulls NOAH in closer by the loops of his pants.*

*Then, he pulls away.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

Apparently *very* glad.

...

Meet me in the bedroom.

*RYAN exits.*

...

*NOAH smiles.*

...

*VICKY comes back onstage.*

VICKY

Hello, Noah.

NOAH

Hi, Vicky.

VICKY

You seem to be catching on rather nicely. I've also gotten several comments from subscribers about your excellent service. Well done.

NOAH

Oh. Thank you. I appreciate it.

VICKY

...

I fear we may have gotten off to a bad start on your first day. I want to apologize for that. I clearly had no reason to worry about your performance here.

NOAH

I mean, I'll admit that I was worried myself.

VICKY

Well, these first few days have proven that, with some extra training, you'll definitely excel here.

*NOAH's phone starts to ring.*

NOAH

Oh God, I'm sorry. I could've sworn I turned it off before I came in.

VICKY

Go ahead and take it. We're pretty slow right now. Take an extra ten minutes for your lunch break, okay?

NOAH

Okay. Thanks so much.

*VICKY exits.**NOAH walks outside.**He answers his phone.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

Hello.

*Static for a bit.*

Hello?

NOAH (CONT'D)

*A voice starts to come through, but it's still mostly static.*

Sorry you're breaking up.

NOAH (CONT'D)

*VICKY's voice comes through,  
but a different VICKY.  
The VICKY from the very beginning of the play.  
She speaks only through the phone. She doesn't enter.*

Sorry about that! I actually dropped the phone.

VICKY

Uh, who is this?

NOAH

This is Vicky with Sallie Mae. Am I speaking to Noah Harding?

VICKY

...

Yes.

NOAH

Hi, Noah! How are you?

VICKY

I'm doing okay. You caught me on my lunch break.

NOAH

Oh, I'm sorry! Should I call at another time?

VICKY

...

...

No, I've got a little bit of time.

NOAH

Perfect! So I'm assuming you got the bill we e-mailed you?

VICKY

NOAH

Yes.

VICKY

I just wanted to call and confirm. Do you have a plan for starting your repayment?

...

NOAH

No. I'll probably have to use the last of my forbearance.

VICKY

Well, we can certainly begin that process right now, if you have the time?

NOAH

Are you going to ask a lot of questions again?

VICKY

Um... yes sir.

NOAH

I've got a new full time job, and my yearly income is estimated at thirty-five thousand here. I'm gonna start looking at refinancing options soon.

VICKY

...  
Okay sir. I'll start entering that information in.

*The sounds of typing.*

...

*NOAH rolls his eyes.*

NOAH

Also, I'm working for a non-profit.

VICKY

That sounds wonderful, sir.

NOAH

Is there a loan forgiveness program or something I can enroll in?

VICKY

Yes, there is, but you'll only begin to qualify for it after you start making payments.

NOAH

...which I won't be able to do because I have to refinance.

Right, sir.

VICKY

*More typing.*

Okay, sir. I'm going to go ahead and file for your forbearance. Hold for a bit, please.

VICKY (CONT'D)

*Aaaaaaaaand the hold music comes back.*

Are you FUCKING kidding me?

NOAH

*It plays.*

*And plays.*

*And plays.*

...

*Jesus Christ, it's still playing.*

...

*Someone with a mask enters.*

*NOAH doesn't notice,*

*but suddenly, he doesn't know what to do with his hands.*

*He gets antsy.*

*He moves and shifts a lot.*

*He looks around.*

*He tries to center himself and not move.*

...

*The music continues to play.*

...

Always when I'm in a rush, I swear to God.

NOAH (CONT'D)

...

*VICKY pops back in.*

Thank you for holding, sir. I appreciate your patience.

VICKY

Yeah.

NOAH

So that forbearance did clear. You won't have to pay anything for the next three months, during which--

VICKY

NOAH

I know.

VICKY

...

Sir, I just want to provide you with some information really quick, if you have just a bit more time.

...

NOAH

Sure.

VICKY

So, due to your forbearance and the interest on each of your loans, the amount of money you'll have to pay back has increased.

...

You can find this information online if you'd like, but would you like to hear the total amount of your loans?

...

...

NOAH

No.

VICKY

I understand, sir.

NOAH

...

Never mind. I do want to know.

VICKY

...

Well, sir, your current loan cost is now one hundred seventy-five thousand three-hundred and--

NOAH

It's fucking HOW MUCH?

VICKY

Sir, please don't--

NOAH

I will never EVER be able to pay that back! Are you kidding? The interest made it raise that much?

VICKY

Sir, interest raises on each loan because each loan was taken out individually. They start to add up--

NOAH

I was fucking eighteen when I started taking out those loans. I didn't even know what interest meant. Even with my new job, I'd never be able to pay that off.

VICKY

Please don't swear at me. I'm just doing my job.

NOAH

Do you like your job, Vicky? Do you like hearing people on the phone in tears because they don't know how they'll ever get out from under your company's thumb? Do you enjoy this?

VICKY

Every student has a choice--

NOAH

What choice?! It wasn't a choice! I had to go to school! You don't know--

...

I even tried dropping out. I wanted to, and everyone told me that I had to finish. That I'd be able to pay you guys back.

VICKY

Sir.

...

There's nothing I can do. I'm not in charge of these things. I just make and take the calls.

NOAH

I wonder how many people kill themselves because of Sallie Mae. I wonder how many suicide notes you're named in.

*VICKY hangs up.*

*NOAH hears this.*

...

*He throws his phone.*

*He screams.*

*He screams again.*

*His screaming turns into deep, heavy sobs.*

*He begins to breathe too quickly.*

*Too quickly.*

*He falls to the ground on his hands and knees.  
 He tries to steady his breathing, but he can't.  
 It's getting bad again.  
 He begins to punch the ground.  
 He punches and punches while he cries.  
 His hand becomes bloody.  
 He falls over on his side.*

*...  
 He feels something pressing his leg in his pocket.  
 He reaches into his pocket and pulls out  
 his dugout.*

*...  
 ...  
 ...*

NOAH (CONT'D)

It'll be quick. It'll be quick.

*He opens the dugout to reveal his one-hitter,  
 still pre-loaded.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

It'll be quick. It'll be quick.

*He reaches into his pocket again.  
 A lighter.  
 He pulls it out and lights the one-hitter.  
 He inhales. HARD.  
 Museum VICKY enters.*

VICKY

Noah, I forgot to mention--

*VICKY sees NOAH,  
 holding a one-hitter with a bloody hand.  
 He exhales. Smoke.*

NOAH

Vicky.

VICKY

What on earth are you doing?

NOAH

I--

VICKY  
Is that marijuana?

NOAH  
Vicky, listen, I just  
I'm having a really hard time with stuff, and it's really messing with my  
I just need to get insurance again, and I'll be  
It'll never ever happen again, I swear to God. I just--

VICKY  
Leave. Get out of here.

NOAH  
Vicky, please, I'm begging--

VICKY  
You're fired. Leave and don't come back. We'll find someone else.

*VICKY exits.*

...  
*NOAH falls back to his side.*  
*He stays there.*  
*He rubs blood on his face.*  
*He doesn't move.*  
*Another masked person enters.*  
*The two masked people edge closer to NOAH.*

...  
*RYAN enters.*  
*He looks at NOAH.*

RYAN  
...  
Fired.  
For smoking weed.  
On the job.

NOAH  
Can we not right now?

RYAN  
What happened to your hand?

NOAH  
Ryan, I can't move or I will explode. All of me will fucking rip apart.  
So please  
can we not right now?

RYAN

Then when? When will be convenient for you?

NOAH

I'm gonna throw up.

RYAN

It was a promise. The ONE thing I asked you to promise me.

NOAH

Ryan--

RYAN

I worked so hard, so goddamn hard to help you get that job, and you threw it away just to get--

*NOAH gets up.  
He finds a trash can.  
He vomits.  
Loudly.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

Oh, did you give yourself a panic attack from smoking too much?

*NOAH vomits again.*

RYAN (CONT'D)

It's like you can't do the basics of life. Who gets fired after three fucking days?

*NOAH vomits once more.  
He is empty.  
He spits on the floor.  
He wipes his mouth.*

NOAH

Do you think  
that this is only  
your  
problem?

...

You are not the ONLY ONE THAT THIS FUCKING AFFECTS.

*A throb in NOAH's mouth.  
Sharp and burning.*

AGH FUCK

NOAH (CONT'D)

*NOAH grabs his cheek.*

No no no no not again not again.

NOAH (CONT'D)

*NOAH touches one of his teeth.*

SHIT FUCK.

NOAH (CONT'D)

What is it?

RYAN

No no not this time I am goddamn DONE WITH THIS

NOAH

*NOAH reaches behind the bar and grabs a set of pliers.*

Oh fucking Christ, you are not--

RYAN

Get away from me. Get the FUCK AWAY FROM ME.

NOAH

You are NOT pulling out your tooth!

RYAN

WHAT ELSE AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

NOAH

Noah, put them down.

RYAN

IT'S MY TOOTH. Get away from me, or so help me God.

NOAH

*NOAH inserts the pliers into his mouth.*

*RYAN advances.*

*He tries to wrestle the pliers away from NOAH.*

*NOAH screams in pain.*

*The masked people move into the fray.*

*RYAN is trying,  
but the masked people help NOAH push RYAN to the  
ground.  
NOAH screams one last time.  
He extracts the tooth.  
He drops the pliers  
and spits his bloody tooth onto the ground.  
The masked people hover behind NOAH.  
RYAN stands.*

RYAN

Fucking JESUS, what the hell is wrong with you, Noah?!

NOAH

I am SICK  
and I don't have access to medicine.  
YOU  
KNOW  
THIS.  
I have been barely scraping by,  
and I have fucking stayed on this earth by the skin of my goddamned rotten teeth,  
KNOWING that if I keep trying to push forward,  
my life will be WRACKED with fucking debt.  
Do you think I don't care  
about paying you?  
Do you believe that I consider it no big deal?  
It keeps me awake at night.  
I lose sleep thinking about how much I owe you and my dad.  
I understand how much of a burden I am,  
and I hate it.  
And I hate me because you're right.  
I don't know if I am able to do the basic things of life.  
I know I could,  
but right now, all of my energy is spent on keeping myself alive.  
And I don't have much left in me, man. I just don't.  
...  
I smoked weed every day before work at the bar.  
Every single day.  
It's to the point where I don't even get high anymore.  
I just get sort of  
detached.  
And for a while, I don't have to think about how much money I owe everyone,  
I don't think about all of the shit in my brain.  
I can just wash glasses, get beer and ice, and go home.  
And then I'd get home, and I'd find you already asleep.  
And I would just stare at you for a while.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

Just to see you breathe.  
To see you at all.  
And I could fool myself into thinking that eventually things would work out.  
Someday, I wouldn't have to be afraid of picking up my phone,  
or buying food on the way home,  
or hitting low fuel two days before my check.  
That's all I want.

...

So I smoke.  
And I stay alive.  
Because maybe it'll be better than the alternative.

RYAN

...

You play victim so much,  
but you don't understand how much you destroy yourself.

NOAH

I do understand.  
I lived in this body for years and years before I met you.

RYAN

This is supposed to be a partnership,  
but it's not.  
You keep things from me,  
and I can't help if you keep lying to me.  
I think that makes me the angriest of all.

NOAH

What the hell are you supposed to do?  
You have your own shit to pay for.  
Do you know how much money I owe?  
Almost a hundred and eighty grand, and that's just private loans.

RYAN

Jesus fuck, you never told me that.  
What else are you--

NOAH

You know what?

...

You don't want to have this conversation right now.

RYAN

Uh, I fucking do now. What else are you hiding?

NOAH

...

...

Aubrey kissed me.

He gave me two shots. Then he kissed me. I pushed him away. And now he's in jail for a fucked up DUI charge, and I don't know how I'm supposed to feel.

My dad didn't know we were living together. I told him about a week before my interview.

That's why I never suggest going to my house for Christmas.

I never told you about my teeth,

but two of them are broken,

one's basically almost gone.

And another started to abscess, and you just saw what happened there.

...

You wanted the truth, didn't you. There it is.

RYAN

...

If anything,

I'm even angrier hearing all of that.

I just--

*RYAN turns away from NOAH.*

...

*NOAH turns away from RYAN.*

*The masked people raise their hands,*

*almost embracing NOAH,*

*but not touching him.*

*He doesn't see them.*

NOAH

...

I don't think I can be here anymore.

RYAN

...

NOAH

The weight is too much. I feel it every second of the day, in every word you say to me.

RYAN

...

...

Just like that? After three years?

Just  
like  
that

NOAH

*RYAN disappears.  
The masked people lower their hands.  
They exit.*

...  
*NOAH's phone starts to ring.*

...

...  
*He picks his phone up from where he threw it earlier*

...

*He rejects the call and puts the phone back in his pocket.  
TARYN enters.  
NOAH still hasn't washed the blood off of his face.*

TARYN

Jesus, what happened to you?

NOAH

...

TARYN

...  
Why are you here? Come to grovel for your old job back?

NOAH

...  
I'm picking up my last check.

TARYN

...  
Coming right up.

*TARYN exits.  
NOAH waits.  
His phone rings again.  
He pulls it out.  
He rejects the call.  
He puts the phone back.  
TARYN returns with two checks.  
She hands one to NOAH.*

Here you go, dickhead.

TARYN (CONT'D)

...  
We broke up.

NOAH

Holy shit.

TARYN

Yeah.

NOAH

Are you doing okay?

TARYN

No. Not really.

NOAH

Do you need a place to stay?

TARYN

No. I'm staying with my dad for a while.

NOAH

The rent I would charge is only like six hundred dollars.

TARYN

I don't have a job anymore.

NOAH

Just come back. We still need another barworker.

TARYN

This place isn't good for me.  
I'm glad it's good for you.

NOAH

*GRACE enters.*

Taryn, do you have my--  
Good God, Noah, are you okay?

GRACE

NOAH

Yeah, I--  
Getting my check and seeing everyone before I leave town.

GRACE

You're leaving? What happened?

NOAH

A lot. So this is probably goodbye.

...

*GRACE hugs NOAH.*

GRACE

I'm sorry, babe.

TARYN

Maybe it won't be so bad, moving back home.

NOAH

Moving back to your hometown,  
it's like the ultimate gay failure.  
Or at least *my* ultimate gay failure.

*NOAH and GRACE break apart.*

GRACE

Take care of yourself. Come visit sometime. We'll probably still be here.

TARYN

Speaking of, here's your check, Grace. I'll have your drinks done in just a sec.

*GRACE takes the check.*

*She exits.*

TARYN (CONT'D)

Well, what she said. Take care, Noah.

NOAH

You too.

*NOAH walks off to the side.*

*TARYN stays onstage.*

*NOAH opens his check.*

*He looks at it.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

Wait.

Taryn, something is definitely wrong with my check.

TARYN

...

What?

NOAH

I worked twenty-five hours that last week, and we were busy as shit. I remember. Why is my check less than two-hundred dollars? Where are my tips?

TARYN

...

NOAH

...

Hey, Grace!

Come back for a second.

*GRACE enters.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

Look at your check real quick.

GRACE

Right now? I need to get--

NOAH

Just look.

TARYN

Noah, come on.

*GRACE looks at TARYN.*

...

*She opens her check.*

*Her jaw drops.*

GRACE

Ex-CUSE ME?

Taryn, what is this shit?

TARYN

Grace, don't talk--

GRACE

I worked thirty hours during one of the busiest weekends we've ever had. This is a check for three-hundred and fifty dollars.

TARYN

Listen, if there's something wrong with your checks--

NOAH

They've been low for weeks. Are you stealing from our tipshare?

TARYN

...

GRACE

TARYN.  
FUCKING SAY SOMETHING.

TARYN

Of course we're not stealing your fucking tips, Jesus Christ.

GRACE

Then why have my checks been disgusting lately? Why am I missing money that I clearly made? Why have I had to sell my goddamn blood twice a week to pay my bills?

TARYN

I DON'T KNOW.

NOAH

You're guilty as sin. Holy shit, you've been stealing from us.

TARYN

You can't prove a goddamn thing. Your tipout is listed on your check. If something is wrong-

GRACE

I quit.  
I fucking goddamn quit.  
Burn in hell, Taryn.

*GRACE begins to take off her apron.*

TARYN

Fine, fuck you! Go! I'll have another server here before the dinner rush starts, and I'll be sure to tell all the other bar managers in town not to hire you.

GRACE

The other managers fucking HATE you. I'm actually friends with them, and everyone knows you can't make a margarita to save your life.

TARYN

You've got a whole lot to say for being unemployed, bitch.

*GRACE takes her earrings out.*

GRACE

Come on out! I've been dying to fight you since the day we met.

*Is this actually happening?*

...

*It is.*

*TARYN comes out from behind the bar!*

TARYN

Okay, but when I beat you to a pulp--

*But GRACE is already upon TARYN.*

*GRACE wrestles TARYN to the ground.*

*She starts to beat the holy fucking shit out of TARYN.*

*TARYN immediately begins to scream for mercy, but there's none to be had.*

*The fire inside of NOAH sparks again.*

NOAH

HEY, EVERYONE!

EVERYONE IN THIS RESTAURANT!

*NOAH stands on the bar as GRACE and TARYN continue to fight.*

NOAH (CONT'D)

The managers at this restaurant steal from their workers! You are supporting a business managed by filth! Fuck this place, and fuck you for eating here. I hope you all choke!

*GRACE lands one more hit on TARYN.*

*She's done.*

*GRACE stands up.*

TARYN

I'm gonna call--

GRACE

Yeah, call the cops, and I'll tell them about the coke in your purse. And you better believe I'm lawyering up because I'm coming for what I'm owed, what EVERYONE was owed, and then some. You picked the wrong fucking side.

*TARYN spits blood.*

TARYN

Fucking get out.

*TARYN gets off the ground and exits.*

GRACE

Let's go.

*GRACE and NOAH exit the bar.*

NOAH

Grace.

...

Are you gonna--

GRACE

I'll be fine, hon. I really am friends with all the bar managers in town. I'll have another job soon, but

...

Come here.

*NOAH goes to GRACE.*

*GRACE pulls out a small package of makeup wipes from her pocket.*

*She pulls a wipe out of the package and begins to wipe the blood off of NOAH's face. As she does, she speaks.*

GRACE (CONT'D)

...

For a while, things were good. I used to be excited to work here. I would tell all my friends about how we made the best margarita in town. It's dumb, but it made it feel better to be where I was.

...

They were smart. I barely noticed anything was gone until Taryn became manager. Idiot must have gotten too greedy with it.

*GRACE finishes wiping NOAH's face. She moves to his bloody hand.*

Ow, shit.

NOAH

*GRACE's touch becomes more gentle.  
She cleans NOAH's hand gingerly.*

GRACE

But  
Now knowing everything, I have to wonder...  
I was so close to being manager.  
If I had gotten it,  
would I have done it too?

NOAH

You wouldn't.

GRACE

But I can ask the question. And even being able to think about it...  
Would I?  
Would I have become like that?  
Would I have done it too?

*GRACE finishes cleaning NOAH's hand.  
She holds it in hers and looks at NOAH.*

GRACE (CONT'D)

You're better than them. You're better than this place.

NOAH

I don't feel like I am.

GRACE

But you are. You are.  
Drive safe, Noah.

*And GRACE exits.  
NOAH is alone.  
The lights around him fade away until  
he's only in a spotlight.  
He looks forward.*

...

*He speaks.*

NOAH

There's this dream I have every now and again,  
where I'm stuck in a room,

(MORE)

## NOAH (CONT'D)

and the room is "Heaven,"  
 but it's just a blank room.  
 A blank room with grey walls and off-white carpet,  
 but it's supposed to be Heaven,  
 I just somehow know that it is.  
 And there's a hallway.  
 It's a short hallway,  
 but it leads to another room.  
 And I'm stuck in Heaven,  
 and I want to go over to the other room,  
 but there's a gate in front of the hall.  
 It's not even a big gate,  
 it comes to about my hip.  
 I try to climb over, but...  
 the gravity betrays me,  
 as it often does in dreams.  
 I can't lift my legs.  
 The door is so close that  
 I can almost reach out and touch it,  
 but I'm stuck.

*Someone wearing a mask enters.  
 Then, another.*

And then,  
 someone else comes into Heaven with me.  
 I never see who it is.  
 They always wear a mask.  
 And then,  
 another person comes into Heaven,  
 and they're wearing a mask too.  
 And they just stare at me.  
 They never talk,  
 and I never find out who they are.  
 They just look at me and wait.  
 I try to speak,  
 but nothing comes out.

*Another person wearing a mask enters.  
 And another.  
 And another.  
 They all stare at NOAH.*

And I'm so terrified  
 because if this is Heaven,  
 this blank room with a gate I can't climb,  
 strangers that look at me as if I'm doing something wrong,  
 as if I should know better than to be there,  
 a mouth that works,  
 but a voice that shrinks until I can say nothing at all,  
 forever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

World without end.

I know what Heaven is now,  
 and I try to wake up,  
 but I can't.

...

I don't know what it means,  
 but I never remember dreams,  
 and this one keeps happening.  
 I feel like it's trying to tell me something,  
 but I don't know what.

...

I'm driving.  
 Back to my dad's house with all the shit I could stuff in my car.  
 And I get a c--

*NOAH's phone begins to ring.  
 He pulls it out of his pocket.*

...

*He rejects the call, and puts the phone back in his pocket.  
 The masked people begin to edge towards NOAH while he  
 speaks.  
 They stretch their arms out towards him.*

And I keep driving,  
 and all of a sudden,  
 I realize that I'm in that room.  
 That room that I've been promised.  
 I've always been in that room.  
 I'm in Heaven,  
 but I know what Heaven is now,  
 and I try to wake up.  
 I try to wake up,  
 but I-

*Blackout.*

**END OF PLAY**