

The Last Entrepreneur

Play

By

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STAN 45 YEARS OLD AND THE OWNER OF A FURNITURE
MANUFACTURING COMPANY

JOSE 35 YEARS OLD, HISPANIC, SALESMAN IN STAN'S COMPANY

RONNIE AROUND 40 YEARS OLD, SALESMAN IN STAN'S COMPANY

CINDY AROUND 40, THE OFFICE MANAGER OF STAN'S COMPANY

KYLE AROUND 40 AND ONE OF STAN'S LEADING SALESMAN

STAN'S MOTHER 25 YEARS OLD IN HER FIRST SCENE. AROUND 40
YEARS OLD IN SUBSEQUENT SCENES.

STAN'S FATHER 25 YEARS OLD IN HIS FIRST SCENE. AROUND 45
YEARS OLD IN THE FLASHBACKS. 60 YEARS OLD IN ACT II

MARIO AFRO-AMERICAN LOCAL COFFEE SHOP OWNER. AROUND 45
YEARS OLD

LEWIS STAN'S BROTHER, 50 YEARS OLD, EMPLOYED AT A LARGE
CORPORATION

FOSTER LEWIS' BOSS, HEAD OF MERGER AND ACQUISITIONS AT THE
CORPORATION. AROUND 50 YEARS OLD

RILEY EMPLOYEE OF MARIO, AROUND 18 YEARS OLD

STAN'S FATHER'S BOSS AROUND 25 YEARS OLD

HOMER 25 YEARS EMPLOYEE OF COMPANY

MARTHA STAN'S WIFE

SHELLY JOSE'S WIFE

BOSS STAN'S FATHER FORMER BOSS

The year is 2008, smack in the throes of the Great Recession.

ACT I, SCENE ONE

The year is 2008.

The play opens in the office of a major corporation, stage left. Filling the rest of the stage is the office of a small manufacturing company: one large room and two small offices. During this scene, the office remains in shadows except for the office of Stan, the owner. A light shines in on him as he pours through paperwork and works on his computer. He is silent throughout the scene. Lewis and Foster are seen as the curtain rises, both standing, a large binder on the desk between them. Foster is head of Merger & Acquisitions. Lewis reports to Foster. They are both over 50.

FOSTER

Let's get started. This binder has the companies we are targeting, mostly small companies who are struggling, ready to be pushed off the cliff with a gentle nudge...sometimes not so gentle. They have 48 hours to make their decision once our offer is made.

LEWIS

(Picking up some of the files.)

I went through the files last night: why would any of these companies entertain our offers? They're insulting.

FOSTER

They're meant to be insulting. These companies shouldn't be in business. We target them because they are vulnerable and they have a certain market share. But they're all on life support; we're doing them a favor by shutting them down.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

Doesn't anybody fight this?

FOSTER

Sure they do but we underprice the hell out of them, even to the point of losing money, and we will keep losing money till we bring them to their knees.

LEWIS

(Pause, surprised.)

That's our business strategy: lose money till our competitors go out of business?

FOSTER

That's American capitalism--survival of the fittest. Listen, we're employees; we do as we're told. And the sooner you understand that, the better off you'll be here. This is the strategy; it's our job to execute that strategy.

LEWIS

What about a business strategy of building a better product, giving better service? That's American capitalism.

FOSTER

(Pause)

This is how the real world works. Manufacturing is done overseas. It's simple math. We have a competitive advantage and exploit it to the fullest. And why shouldn't we?

LEWIS

Well, to be honest, our competitive advantage is based on the fact we use slave labor.

FOSTER

For those countries, it's a decent salary. We're raising their standard of living.

LEWIS

(Incredulous.)

In Vietnam, the minimum wage is 28 cents an hour. How is that raising their standard of living? 28 cents! Slave labor is slave labor. I don't care what kind of bow you pin on it.

FOSTER

Listen, because we manufacture overseas, we can bring product to market that the American consumer can afford, which in turns allows them to live better.

LEWIS

(Pause)

Live better? You know, we use to have slave labor in this country; now we just export it so we don't get our hands dirty. But we still embrace the practice, as if low prices can wash away all our sins.

(Pause.)

I use to wonder why Nixon opened up China, why we invaded Vietnam. At some point I realized it wasn't about making the world safe for democracy, or stopping the spread of Communism. We were simply creating our future work force so we could bring low prices to the American consumer, just so we could live better.

FOSTER

(Irritated.)

What are you talking about? This is 2007. What does Nixon and China have to do with our job? I was in Vietnam. We were there for a purpose and I lost a lot of brothers there.

LEWIS

You were there for a purpose but not for the purpose they told you.

FOSTER

(Pause)

I bet you were a draft dodger, perfectly content to let the working class do your fighting.

LEWIS

I was raised by a single mom. I was the working class. They lied to us and they did it again with the Iraq war.

We keep celebrating the veterans with the catch phrase: “we appreciate your service”. And the more we repeat that, the more they don’t have to confront the lies that put us into that hell hole in the first place. They are not honoring our veterans; they are using them to sell product with this false patriotism. The way you honor our veterans is by telling them the truth. They at least deserve that.

FOSTER

(Pause, flustered.)

Listen, I’m proud of my service.

LEWIS

I’m not saying you shouldn’t be.

FOSTER

And what the hell does Vietnam or Nixon have to do with our job? This is the goddamn job. So let me know if you are in or are you out?

LEWIS

(Pause.)

I’m just trying to wrap my head around this.

FOSTER.

You need to get your head right. We’re doing business here. If you think you’re good for this, tell me now. I can easily find someone else--lots of people out there looking for work. In case you haven’t noticed, we’re in a recession.

LEWIS

I’m sorry. Listen, I’m on board.

(Pause, almost desperate.)

I need this, believe me.

FOSTER

Just do your job and you’ll be fine.

LEWIS

How do these companies react?

FOSTER

Well, it's a shock to their ego but they come around eventually. They just don't get it: they think if they just worked harder then everything will be all right. They were raised with the mantra of hard work but hard work ain't gonna save them. It's a brave new world: they either file bankruptcy, fold, or go gently into the night. It's just simple math. American manufacturing is no longer viable.

LEWIS

(Pause)

But these are good American companies we are putting out of business.

FOSTER

We're not doing anything wrong or illegal. This is how the real world operates. Besides, we don't make these decisions. We are just loyal foot soldiers, following orders. It's not our concern.

LEWIS

There are 12 year old kids making a dollar a day, working 12 hour days in toxic hell holes. And you're saying it's not our concern? Whose concern is it then?

FOSTER

It's not ours..

LEWIS

It doesn't feel like free enterprise anymore. There use to be a level playing field.

FOSTER

The playing field was never level. Listen, this is what we do in this department; we get our hands dirty.... I understand your brother owns a company...

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT I, SCENE TWO

The lights come on in the main sales office of a furniture manufacturing company. There is one main room with desks, adorned with typical office paraphernalia, computers, in-baskets, family photos, folders, etc.

To the left of this room are two offices: a large one for Stan, the owner, and a smaller one for Cindy, the office manager. Kyle, a salesman, arrives. He is about 35 and dressed conservatively in a business suit. He removes his coat and methodically goes about his routine: looks on people's desks, rustling through their papers; sits down; takes out a bunch of business cards, organizes them; scans his computer screen and finally picks up the phone and starts dialing. His voice remains monotone and he never puts the receiver down. Kyle continues to call throughout the entire first act, his voice muted when not given lines. Stan is in his office as the scene begins. Stan is the main character. In playing this part, the actor should dominate the stage with his movements, his voice and his passion. He is never still. He is like a caged tiger, ready to spring.

Stage left is the counter of a fast food restaurant. Stan's father stands behind the counter, scrubbing it down. After a few scrubs he turns his gaze towards the furniture company, his face a combination of sadness and hope. He remains motionless throughout the first scene, staring toward the company. A gauge covers the set of the restaurant, a light illuminating Stan's father's face.

KYLE

Is Mr. Simpson in?...Just tell him I called. This is Kyle Perkins from Office Furniture Limited. My number is 781-777-2323...Thank you

STAN.

(Stan comes out of his office, enthusiastic.
turns towards Kyle.)

Buddy, what's your week looking like?

KYLE

(Already starting another call.)

Is Ms. Carter in...Ms. Carter? My name is Kyle Perkins and I'm from Office Furniture Limited. Keith Abrams from Viacom referred me to you.

We have a great new line of furniture which I am very excited about. The quality and design are remarkable. Now I'm gonna be in your area next Tuesday and I could swing by and show you the line...Great, see you at 11:00.

(To Stan.)

It's O.K.

STAN

(Impatient.)

What does that mean exactly? 100 Units? 10 Units? I'm doing projections.

KYLE

(Already starting another call.)

Is Mr. Samuals in?....Just tell him I called. This is Kyle Perkins from Office Furniture Limited. My number is 781-777-2323.

Ronnie, another salesman, arrives. He is slightly disheveled, his tie loose.

RONNIE

Anybody see my appointment book?

STAN

Ronnie, I thought you had an appointment first thing this morning? Why are you here?

RONNIE

(Ignoring Stan's question)

Kyle, you see my appointment book?

KYLE

Hello Sidney. My name is Kyle Perkins and I am from Office Furniture Limited. We have a wonderful new line of furniture that I am real excited about...All right, I will talk to you next month. Thank you.

(To Ronnie.)

I haven't seen it.

STAN

He missed his appointment, didn't he? This is great: you bust your ass to make appointments but you never actually go to the appointment. Maybe we didn't emphasize in our sales training that after you make an appointment, you have to actually go to the appointment.

Ronnie doesn't listen for an answer but continues to search his desk for the elusive appointment book.

RONNIE

Kyle, you sure you didn't see it?

Jose enters. He is well dressed and exudes an air of confidence, of success.

KYLE

Big man.

JOSE

Gentlemen.

He removes his sports coat slowly and meticulously places it on the back of his chair.

KYLE

Hello Mr. Kasten. My name is Kyle Perkins and I am from Office Furniture Limited. We have a wonderful new line of furniture that I am very excited about...All right, I will call you next month. Thank you.

STAN

Jose, didn't Ronnie have that big appointment this morning? I'm not making this up, am I?

Ronnie continues to look for his appointment book, opening every drawer in his desk.

JOSE

(Ignoring Stan's question.)

Guys, anybody see the game last night? Was that a fuckin' game or what?

RONNIE

Jose, I didn't leave my appointment book on your desk, did I?

JOSE

(Not listening.)

Double overtime. Unfuckin' belevable.

STAN

(To Jose)

You saw him make the appointment. You were sitting right there when he made it.

JOSE

Guys, the guy scored 42 points. 42 points. Didn't anyone see that?

(Everyone ignores what Jose is saying, lost in their own world.)

KYLE

Hello Tom. Kyle from Office Furniture Limited. Listen, I really want to show you our new line. I'm real excited about this...How 'bout next Wednesday?....See you then.

JOSE

This is America; doesn't anybody watch sports any more?

KYLE

Who's going for coffee?

(Into the phone.)

This is Kyle Perkins...

(He goes mute as other characters speak.)

JOSE

Stan, I want to show you something.

He brings out a brochure and shows it to Stan. It is a brochure for a housing development.

I'm getting my mortgage approved on this house today. Look at this split level: huge yard, a garage, 4 bedrooms.

STAN

(Sincere.)

Very nice Jose.

JOSE

Opening up the brochure and showing Stan.

Look at this: the American Dream right there-- deck in the back with over an acre of land. Here I am, a first generation immigrant, and I'm gonna be a homeowner--I just wish my father was alive to see this; god he would of been proud.

STAN

I'm happy for you Jose. But listen, I need to know what you're gonna sell this week. I'm doing my projections.

JOSE

(Pause)

Please try to contain your enthusiasm for my good fortune.

STAN

You should know me by now.

JOSE

But just look at this brochure. Look at how big the kitchen is.

STAN

This is fascinating but I need to know what you have lined up for this week.

JOSE

I do have something big I've been working on.

STAN

Could you be any less vague?

JOSE

Could be huge.

STAN

Ronnie, what do you got going this week?

RONNIE

I'm on the verge of a big one.

STAN

Well of course. This is unbelievable: Ronnie's on the verge of a big one; Jose has something SO big he can't even talk about it and Kyle...well, the only way you can get projections out of him is through water boarding. I should just stay home and count the money.

JOSE

(Pause.)

I'm detecting a note of sarcasm here guys.

STAN

A note of sarcasm? Really? There's no note. This is an orchestral opus of sarcasm. Guys, I need your line-ups in order to do sales projection. And listen, this is gonna be a great week. We're gonna bust open sales this week. Believe that.

(Pause)

Jose, let me see that brochure again.

Jose hands him the brochure.

What are you paying for this? That's a lot of house.

JOSE

\$500,000.

STAN

(Pause, shocked.)

Why the hell you buying a \$500,000 house? I know what you make. How the hell you gonna afford that?

JOSE

It's all approved. Just need to bring 10gs to the closing.

STAN

Jose, how is this even possible?

JOSE

My homeboy hooked me up. No income verification. Don't worry: I'm gonna kick ass this year with my sales. The mortgage payment won't be a problem. Besides, it's an investment. Home prices never go down.

STAN

I don't know.

JOSE

It's fine. Let me get you a coffee. Who else wants coffee?

STAN

9:15. Break time already.

RONNIE

Listen, get me a large, 1 1/2 sugars and light. But you got to watch them. They always screw this up. It's 1 1/2 sugars--make sure its 1 1/2, not 2, not 1. 1 1/2. You just gotta watch them because they like to put the second pack of sugar all in. Don't let them do that. I think they do it on purpose just to piss me off.

JOSE

Really? These minimum wage workers have a staff meeting and say: 'how can we piss off Ronnie today'?

RONNIE

It is what it is.

KYLE

Listen, get me a coffee, light, but not to much cream, just enough to make it a regular coffee. You got to keep your eye on them and if they know the coffee's for me they will stick it to me.

STAN

(Pause.)

The level of coffee paranoia in this company is off the charts. Get me a large coffee, with just a dab of cream, just a dab, almost black, but not quite. And two sugars. Remember, two sugars. I'll send it back if it's not right.

(Pause.)

You're not writing any of this down?

JOSE

Guys, I'm bringing back 3 coffees, cream and sugars will be on the side. Now cough up the money.

RONNIE

I'll catch you this afternoon. I gotta go to the bank first.

KYLE

I'll pay you after I see the product.

JOSE

Guys, this isn't COD; it's prepay. Jesus Christ, what am I, an ATM machine?

They start pulling their money out. Cindy, the office manager arrives. She is around 35, dressed smartly in a suit. Her dress and manner are both stiff and formal.

CINDY

Jose, you going for coffee?

JOSE

No.

CINDY

(Spoken rapidly.)

Great. Get me a double decaf, cappuccino, soy latte with two shots of espresso, one sweet and low, 3/4 packet of sugar in a double grande cup.

JOSE

(Pause)

O.K., that's gonna cost you about 30 bucks. But listen, I'm going to that new yuppie cafe and all they sell is that instant coffee. You like Sanka right?

KYLE

(On the phone.)

Ms Mckay, Kyle from Furniture Limited. I left you a message about our new line--unbelievable design...What's good for you?...

RONNIE

(Holding the phone up.)

Stan, your brother is on the line again. You want to take it?

STAN

I'll call him back. Ronnie, what's happening on that big sale you were working on? Is it ready to close?

(During this conversation the spotlight focuses in on Stan and Ronnie. The rest of the office continues their routines in silence.)

RONNIE

We didn't get it.

STAN

(Shocked)

You're kidding me. We were a lock for the whole building. I thought you were tight with the decision maker.

RONNIE

They went in another direction.

STAN

Why?

RONNIE

To expensive.

STAN

We're not to expensive. You didn't sell them on the quality we bring to the table.

RONNIE

We're competing against companies that manufacture overseas at half our cost.

STAN

I don't care what sweatshops we are competing against. You sell them on the quality of our product. In the long run, it's more cost effective for the customer. You got to sell them on that.

RONNIE

This is 2009; customers don't think long term. You got some exaggerated idea of quality that is killing us.

STAN

Putting out a high quality product will never kill a company--ever.

RONNIE

I don't think you understand: we lost the bid by \$100,000 on a \$250,000 quote--\$100,000 dollars. There is something happening out there and I don't know if we are confronting it, or if we even want to confront it.

STAN

(Long pause.)

100,000?

RONNIE

Yes.

STAN

(Pause)

Listen, customers can always find a cheaper product.

RONNIE

This isn't cheaper; this doesn't even register on the Richter scale. How can we compete with shit like that?

STAN

(Pause)

At the end of the day, people will want quality. People will want things that last.

Our product lasts and people will pay for that quality. Don't ever question that. We're not competing with the bottom feeders. That's not who we are.

RONNIE

(Long pause.)

I don't know. I really don't know.

STAN

(Irritated.)

Listen, if you don't know you can leave. If you don't think this company can compete, I don't want you here.

RONNIE

I'M NOT SAYING THAT.

STAN

Well, what are you saying?

RONNIE

I'm scared. There is no plan B for guys like me. What the hell would I do? I got a brother-in-law who has been out of work for two years. Two fuckin' years. There's nothing out there. And I'll tell you what really scares me--your father.

STAN

What are you talking about?

RONNIE

You father works across the street at MacDonald's. Your father was a salesman, just like me. If you close, is that where I end up--my job obsolete, my skills obsolete?

STAN

I'm telling ya, we're gonna be fine. What happened with my father has no relationship to now, He is where he is because of his sins. It's called karma.

RONNIE

I don't know what that's suppose to mean but I did everything right. And I'll tell you, your father was my hero: he always dressed so well and always had a wad of cash on him. He knew how to live. He knew what it was all about.

STAN

My father was no hero, believe me.

RONNIE

He sure looked successful. Listen, I graduated from college, raised a family, bought a home and suddenly it seems I went down the wrong path. What happens if you close? Who the hires a white middle age man?

STAN

(Kidding.)

Well, MacDonald's obviously but Walmart also. You can probably catch on as a greeter at Walmart. I'll give you a good recommendation.

RONNIE

This is not funny.

STAN

I'm kidding. Relax. The company is doing fine. You're not going anywhere.

RONNIE

But how do I know that? I have to face the reality of the situation. And the reality is the fact that the only opportunities out there are for minorities.

STAN

What does that mean?

RONNIE

It means quotas. Guys like me have no shot. My brother in law was next in line to be the local Police Chief but he didn't get it. You know why: fuckin' affirmative action. It's not right. And I'm sorry if you think this is racist but I'm just telling the truth.

STAN

Of course it's racist. And I'm sorry about your brother in law but why do you think Affirmative Action was created in the first place? You think there was a level playing field?

RONNIE

All I'm saying is I would have more opportunities if I wasn't white.

STAN

Ronnie, that's bullshit. You're smarter than that.

RONNIE

Listen, I treat everyone equally, as long as they carry their weight.

STAN

What the hell does that mean, 'carry their own weight'?

RONNIE

You know what I mean. And I'm not talking about guys like Mario.

STAN

I'm sorry, you are talking about guys like Mario. You are talking about his race.

RONNIE

I'm talking about people who live off the government, that I have to pay for with my tax dollars.

STAN

So Mario is one of the good guys of his race?

RONNIE

That's not what I said.

STAN

I know exactly what you said. It always comes down to the welfare mothers, who live this luxurious lifestyle, or the working poor, who work two or third jobs to make ends meet and get public assistance like food stamps.

I know exactly what you said. And I'm sure Mario is a good friend of yours, bosom buddies. But what if your daughter starts dating Mario's son. Would you still be friends then?

RONNIE

I don't know what that hell that means. Listen, all I'm saying is that minorities get the breaks. It's just a fact. You're making it into this big racial thing. Look at Jose, all the favors you do for him.

STAN

He's my friend. You do things for your friends.

RONNIE

All I'm saying is I followed the script. I shouldn't be in this position.

STAN

I'm telling you. You're blaming the wrong people.

RONNIE

(Pause)

Somebody is at fault. This shit doesn't just happen. People make decisions somewhere. I'm just scared. That's all. I got a mortgage. And you know I would do anything for you. You know that right?

STAN

(Pause)

I appreciate that. But listen, things are gonna turn around.

RONNIE

I hope you're right.

STAN

Of course I'm right.

RONNIE

Listen, you can count on me. I want you to know that.

STAN

I appreciate that..

Jose comes into Stan's office as Ronnie leaves.

JOSE

Hey, I need to go over this deal with you. And don't say no before you hear me out.

STAN

(To Ronnie.)

Are we O.K. here? If we're not, I wanna know.

RONNIE

We're fine. I just get worried.

STAN

I know, but we're gonna be fine. Listen, I want you to have a good week this week. Forget about last week. There is a ton of business out there.

RONNIE

Don't worry; I'll be fine.

STAN

OK.

Stan's wife Martha is seen entering the main office, heading towards Stan's office. She quietly greets Stan's employees as she makes her way to his office. She is about 40 years old, smartly dressed and presents an air of professionalism.

CINDY

Hello Martha.

MARTHA

Hello Cindy.

CINDY

I'll be in my office.

Cindy goes to her office and starts working on her computer. The rest of the office continues their routines, in silence.

STAN

What's up?

MARTHA

I need to send out the mortgage today and I forgot to grab your paychecks. You got about 3 right?

STAN

Something like that but you can't deposit them yet. I had to use the money for one of our suppliers. I should have it back in a couple of days.

MARTHA

Not this again. That's our money.

STAN

I told you, I'll have it back in a couple of days..

MARTHA

What am I suppose to do about the mortgage?

STAN

(Pause, studying his wife.)

What are you so worked up about?

MARTHA

What happens when we can't re-mortgage our house anymore? Where's the cash for the business gonna come from? And what if the bubble bursts on the housing market? We'll owe more than what our house is worth. That house is our future. You're gambling away our future.

STAN

(Pause)

Why do you have to fight me on this all the time?

MARTHA

Because all I see is more and more of our future being sunk into this black hole.

STAN

You got to trust me on this.

MARTHA

I can't even trust you to come home at night. When was the last time you were home for dinner with the kids? When was the last time you had a catch with your son? .

STAN

You think I don't want that? You think I have a choice?

MARTHA

Of course you have a choice. I'm tired of being a single Mom. I want a husband that is home at night, a husband who is a father to our sons.

STAN

I'm responsible for all those families at the company.

MARTHA

All I'm asking is for you to be responsible for one. Just one. You always complained about your father never being home, well, look in the mirror: you are your father.

STAN

My father was a drunk.

MARTHA

Maybe, but he probably made more family dinners than you. And when are you going to go see him? He works right around the corner.

STAN

Why would I want to see him?

MARTHA

(Pause)

He's your father; that's why. And I'm sure he would love to see his grandchildren. Listen, I'm just not build for this. Your company is tearing us apart. I love you but I am spent. This company has laid waste to our marriage. If you want this family, you need to fight for it cause I can't fight anymore. And you need to fight for me because I am worth fighting for and if you lose me you will regret that the rest of your life.

STAN

(Long pause.)

What are you saying?

MARTHA

I don't know anymore.

STAN

(Long pause.)

How'd our son do at his game last night?

MARTHA

They lost. He was very upset afterwards.

STAN

I keep telling him it's just a game, that he should just go out there and have fun.

MARTHA

He wasn't upset about the game. He was upset because you weren't there. He was under the impression that you would make the game.

STAN

(Pause, taken aback.)

You know I had to work.

MARTHA

Don't tell me. Tell him.

STAN

I told him I probably couldn't make it.

MARTHA

To a 10 year old kid, probably means you will be there. Listen, do you have the mortgage statement? I'll pay the mortgage myself.

STAN

Why would I have the mortgage statement?

MARTHA

I didn't say you had it. I was just wondering if you picked it up? I need to pay the mortgage today or it will be late.

STAN

Why would I have it?

MARTHA

(Pause.)

You didn't take any more money out of our equity line did you?

STAN

Why would you ask me that?

MARTHA

I'm asking.

STAN

(Pause)

Listen, I didn't want to say anything until it was real but this company has been studying our books for the past 2 months and it looks like they will be making us an offer to buy the company.

MARTHA

(Pause, hopeful.)

After all these years.

STAN

Well, I have no idea what kind of offer it will be. It may end up being nothing but they're coming by tomorrow.

MARTHA

(Pause)

I want you to take the offer.

STAN

There's no offer yet.

MARTHA

(Pause, angry.)

I want you to seriously consider taking this offer. Don't blow this.

STAN

(Pause, calm.)

What does that mean?

MARTHA

It means, this is our ticket out. You deserve this. We deserve this.

STAN

What about my employees?

MARTHA

Why can't we come first? For once. Why can't we come first? We earned that.

They stare at each other.

I'm late. Will you be home for dinner?

STAN

Not sure yet.

MARTHA

(Hostile.)

Well try.

Martha exits. Stan lifts up the mortgage statement, stares at it for a moment and puts it back in the drawer. Stan's father leaves the fast food set and cuts to stage left.

LIGHTS DIM.

The spotlight cuts to stage left, 35 years earlier, the home of Stan and Lewis' parents. They are in a small kitchen, outfitted simply with the kitchen table. The furniture is dated. The spotlight is on the room, the rest of the stage remains in shadows.

The office personnel continues to go about their routines in silence. Stan has gone back to his office and is seen working on his computer.

STAN'S FATHER

(He is a bit nervous, agitated.)

Listen, I want to talk to you about something that I have been thinking about for awhile.

STAN'S MOTHER

Should I be worried?

STAN'S FATHER

You remember my friend James? The kid I grew up with?

STAN'S MOTHER

I remember James.

STAN'S FATHER

Well, he is the new Principal of the High School.

STAN'S MOTHER

That's nice.

STAN'S FATHER

Anyway, he offered me a job as a teacher, and he also wants me to be the new basketball coach. I know it's a big cut in salary but I really want to do this. I could work a 2nd job, even a 3rd, just to make ends meet.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Sitting up, going to the counter and pulling out a brochure.)

Honey, we are moving into this brand new house in three weeks. Three weeks. This is crazy. You have two young sons.

(Shoving the brochure toward him.)

Look at this brochure. This is our dream. Look at the size of the kitchen, the size of the yard. This is where we will raise our sons, not in some overcrowded apartment. It shows we have made it. Nobody can look down on us anymore.

STAN'S FATHER

Who looks down on us?

STAN'S MOTHER

You wouldn't understand. And how could you? You didn't come from poverty. You had a nice house, a nice yard, a nice family. I grew up in a tenement: it was dirty, it was overcrowded and when you went beyond the block, you weren't welcome. They made you feel embarrassed, shameful. You were looked down upon. I'm not gonna ever let someone look down upon me, ever. Poverty has a smell and it was impossible to wash away the stench. I'm not going back there. You hear me? I'm not going back. We are moving into this house and I don't want to hear any more of this talk. Stan and Lewis need space; they need a neighborhood.

STAN'S FATHER

But this is my dream. This is what I've always wanted to do.

STAN'S MOTHER

We can't afford to indulge these dreams of yours. We are doing it for our family, our two boys. We can't afford for you to be a teacher.

(He stares at her, defeated.)

Once we move in, you'll forget all about this nonsense. It's the right thing.

STAN'S FATHER

But I'll work a 2nd job to make ends meet.

STAN'S MOTHER

We're not living our life just so we can make ends meet.

STAN'S FATHER

(Long pause, defeated, staring at his wife.)

OK, I'll let James know. Maybe I'll coach the kids in Little League.

STAN'S MOTHER

Sure, you can coach Little League.

STAN'S FATHER

How about getting me a drink...and make it a double.

FADE TO BLACK.

Cindy pulls Stan into his office, away from the rest of the staff. The spotlight shines on Cindy and Stan, the rest of the office is mute as they perform their tasks.

CINDY

(Pauses)

Listen, we got a problem. Atlas filed bankruptcy.

STAN

Jesus!

(Long pause as he takes it in.)

That really pisses me off. They didn't have to do that.

CINDY

What does that mean?

STAN

It means we get 10 cents on the dollar, if we're lucky... Boy that pisses me off. You pay people back no matter what it takes. Families depend on it. They just lawyered up rather making this right.

CINDY

I'm worried. I think we need to let John and Dexter go, maybe a few others.

STAN

They have families. We don't lay off parents--ever. Listen, we just need to get in more sales. Once you get sales, everything else is just details.

CINDY

But we gotta do something. We're not gonna be able to make payroll soon.

STAN

Listen, Fortune 500 companies can lay off parents. We don't lay off parents.. We'll figure something out.

CINDY

I don't think we are.

STAN

What are you saying?

CINDY

I don't think we are getting through this. You won't listen. Our payroll is way too high and you refuse to even look at reducing it. And I'll tell you, we are losing more and more jobs due to price.

STAN

I refuse to compromise on the quality of our product. You know that.

CINDY

Fine, don't compromise but know this: you will continue to lose jobs, especially the big projects.

STAN

(Pause.)

You don't think we're gonna get through this do you?

CINDY

You won't change and I can't force you. It's your company. And I'm tired of fighting you on this.

STAN

That's not true. I'm open to change but what I'm not open to is compromising the quality of our product.

CINDY

That's all well and good but it doesn't handle the situation we are in. I have a lot at stake here. My husband has been out of work for 8 months. There's nothing out there for him. He said he won't humiliate himself anymore by going on job interviews where there are 200 other people going for the same job. I've never seen a man so defeated. He won't even leave the house now because he feels so shameful. He says that a man should be able to support his family and he doesn't feel like a man anymore. So we have to do something. This is all I got. We can't close down.

STAN

I'm sorry to hear this. Have him come see me.

CINDY

We can't afford to hire anyone.

(Pause.)

I wonder every day if I should be looking for another job. These loyalties you have are killing us.

STAN

That's not true. And it's not that simple.

CINDY

It is that simple but you make it complicated. Do you have any idea what's happening out there? This subprime mortgage fiasco has brought this economy to it's knees. The banks have stopped lending. Think of the ramifications of that fact. I keep getting calls about all these construction projects being put on hold. I'm scared.

STAN

We're gonna be fine. We'll not going anywhere. Now come on, help me rally the troops .

The spotlight comes back on in the main office. Stan enters the main office, followed by Cindy.

KYLE

This is Kyle Perkins from Office Furniture Limited. We have a brand new line of custom furniture that I am real excited about...

(He mutes his lines as the rest of the office begins to speak.)

CINDY

Stan, I forgot to ask you: did you find the receipt yet?

STAN

The receipt?

CINDY

The receipt for the file folders. Last week you needed file folders and I gave you cash out of the petty cash drawer but you never gave me a receipt. I really need that receipt so I can finish the reports from last week.

STAN

I never gave you that receipt?

CINDY

Absolutely not.

STAN

(Pause.)

How much was that receipt?

CINDY

\$23.78. You said it cost \$23.78 and that's per the price list. You promised me you would get me the receipt but I still don't have it. I really need the receipt to finish the expense pack.

STAN

Consider it done.

CINDY

I don't think you're seeing the big picture on this.

JOSE

Cindy, he hasn't seen the big picture since 1999. And listen, don't let him sweet talk you about other priorities.

STAN

(To Jose.)

Are you quite finished here? Cindy, I'll take care of this.

CINDY

I'll be in my office. Let me know as soon as you get it.

(Cindy leaves and goes back to her office.)

LIGHTS DIM.

The lights on the rest of the office remain dim and the office personnel continue their routines in silence. The scene is a sparse hotel room, 25 years previously. Behind Stan's father, in a separate room, sits Stan's mother waiting by a phone. During Stan's father scene, she nervously glances at the phone. She is home. Stan's father is seen making business calls on a touch tone phone. A breakfast tray and a pot of coffee are on the table next to him. He is well dressed in a tailored business suit, the suit jacket off, hanging on the back of a chair. He looks in his appointment book and dials a number.

STAN'S FATHER

(With enthusiasm.)

Good morning. Jim Spencer for Stu Lambert...Yes, he's expecting my call. I'm in town for a couple of days and he wanted to meet with me regarding our new product line...Yes, he can call back...wait, don't you want my number?

Goes to the next page of his appointment book and dials a number.

STAN'S FATHER (cont'd)

Jim Spencer for Jim Towle...he'll know what this is about...what time will he be out of his meeting?...No, that's fine. I'll call back. Have a good day.

The spotlight dims on Stan's father and focuses in on the mother. It is 25 years previously. She is on the phone to her husband.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Anxious)

What time do you think you will be home?...Really, that late? I have a nice dinner all ready for you. And your two sons are sitting by the door waiting for you to come home so they can have a catch with you. What should I tell them?...All right, I'll leave your dinner in the oven but try to make it home sooner...

LIGHTS DIM.

Stan's Office. Jose has entered.

STAN

I know what you're gonna say but listen, we don't sell direct. We only sell through our dealers.

JOSE

Screw the dealers. We can't be sitting around hoping they sell.

STAN

I shook their hands and told them we wouldn't sell direct. My word is on the street.

JOSE

Are you gonna let me speak?

STAN

(Pause.)

Speak, but we don't sell direct.

JOSE

I know that but here's the thing: I know this guy who wants to do their whole facility with us. He really likes the quality of our product but he wants to deal directly with us and he wants wholesale pricing. He knows the margin we give to dealers and he wants that discount.

STAN

Can't do it.

JOSE

You're not hearing me.

STAN

I heard you; we can't do it.

JOSE

This is too good to pass up. We need the sale; I need the sale. Our dealers will never find out.

STAN

That's not the point. I shook their hands.

JOSE

But nobody is gonna find out we sold direct this one time--nobody. And this guy will give a 300 grand deposit.

STAN

(Pause.)

300 grand?

JOSE

And he said he would make the whole job COD. Why should we be held hostage by our dealers? Fuck the dealers. If they could cut us out of a sale they would do it in a heartbeat.

STAN

Jose, I don't get this: you don't usually do cycles like this. Why this all of a sudden? And who is this guy?

JOSE

Listen, nobody else around here is doing sales like this? Here's the deposit. I gotta go to an appointment.

He places the check on Stan's desk and walks out. Stan picks it up and starts examining the check.

The spotlight shifts to an office of the corporation where Stan's brother Lewis works. The rest of the stage remains in shadows as they continue to perform their office tasks. Foster is in the room with Lewis.

FOSTER

(Handing Lewis a folder.)

This is the next company we are targeting. We've been pouring over their financials the last two months. Tomorrow we meet with them and make our offer.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

I hate this. I had no idea how much these business owners put their heart and soul into their operations.

FOSTER

Well, why wouldn't they? Listen, this is what we do. You know, my old man told me to start my own company, told me to never be in a position where you are subject to some asshole's whims. That's the thing about working for someone: you have to kiss some asshole's ass.

(Pause)

And I almost did it. Years ago. But then I started getting promoted, started making decent money and the next thing I know it's 20 years later. There's something about a weekly paycheck, almost comforting, but sometimes you have to do things, be the loyal soldier.

LEWIS

(Pause)

What do you mean, 'do things'?

FOSTER

Follow orders, no matter what those orders are. You have to show that you are a team player, because that is how you get on, how you get promotions.

LEWIS

But it's worth it in the long run, right?

FOSTER

Mortgage is almost paid off and I have a nice pension I'm looking forward to. It's all good... My kids don't talk to me but that's a whole other story.

(Bitter))

And I can't sleep at night, unless I have a few drinks or take some pills.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

You must of pissed some very important people for them to put you in charge of this operation.

FOSTER

You have no idea...you lose something of yourself doing this shit. I was a loyal soldier when I was in the Army and I'm a loyal soldier for the company. Chain of command; that's what I believe in. But I'm out of here in two years. It's all good. I got it marked on my calender. Two years, two years to the day.

(Pause.)

But my old man was right: I should of started my own company. There's nothing better than being your own boss. Now I follow orders, that's what the Army taught me. Follow orders no matter what they are.

(Pause, handing him a folder.)

Here's the next company we are targeting.

LEWIS

(Glancing at the folder, and then suddenly looking up.)

This is my brother's company.

FOSTER

I know.

LEWIS

You know?

FOSTER

I'm paid to know. Listen, I know he is gonna fight this so I want you to talk some sense into him. We will put his ass out on the street so I need you to convince him to take this golden parachute. Don't get all sentimental about this.

(Long pause. Lewis stands there in shock.)

Listen, your brother makes out very well on this buy out. He can walk away clean.

LEWIS

What about his employees?

FOSTER

They're gone. We're not a welfare agency; we're a corporation. This is the lot these people choose for themselves when they decided to drop out of high school or go to a trade school instead of college. We're in the great recession so don't get all sentimental.

LEWIS

I don't know if they choose their lot. Sometimes it's chosen for them. Listen, I don't know if I can do this.

FOSTER

This is the job.

LEWIS

I don't. ..

FOSTER

You are family and that's why you need to do this. Don't let his ego get in the way of him doing the right thing. Make no mistake: we will crush him. And we're doing him a favor; this is a good deal for him. Manufacturing is done overseas now and your brother's company simply can't compete.

LEWIS

Why do we have to take out all the competition? We can still control the market without this carnage.

FOSTER

They don't care. As one board member said to me once: 'they have a fiduciary responsibility to maximize profits for their shareholders'. We are maximizing profits my friend.

LEWIS

(Pause)

I don't know.

FOSTER

You're either part of the team or your not. This is what we do. I've seen his books and I'm not sure how he keeps his doors open.

Listen, we're doing him a favor. He shouldn't be stringing his employees along like this. I admire what he has build but this is how capitalism works. It uncovers the weak.

Your brother is collateral damage. I just need you to do this and if you can't do this then I'll find someone who can. Are we clear on this? You need to save him from himself.

Lewis drops his head. The light focus on the main office.

Mario enters the main office. He is carrying a letter. He addresses Ronnie.

MARIO

Where is he?

RONNIE

In his office.

They stare at each other before Mario walks into Stan's office.

MARIO

Why do you keep Ronnie on your payroll?

STAN

I didn't know I had to run personal decisions by you.

MARIO

I just don't understand why you keep him on.

STAN

He's a pretty good salesman when he puts his mind to it. Why do you ask?

MARIO

He's a racist fuck, that's why.

STAN

(Pause)

Where'd you get that from?

MARIO

We talked politics. All the code words came out; he doesn't have much of a filter.

STAN

I don't know what the hell that means.

MARIO

Hey, I get it. He's your friend, very loyal to you. I got racist friends too. You should hear my grandmother go off sometimes. I'm not judging you.

STAN

Really? Sure feels like it. He has a good heart and he's loyal. I owe him. And like I said, he can be a petty good salesman.

MARIO

Hey, I'm not trying to rock any boats here. But listen, did you get the letter?

STAN

I got the letter.

MARIO

I'll read it to you.

STAN

I got the same letter.

MARIO

I'll read it to you.

STAN

(Pause.)

Why don't you read the letter?

MARIO

(Pause.)

"Dear Tenant"

(Looks up from the letter.)

Use my Christian name for God's sake. They know my name--use it. O.K., here's what it says...you listening?

STAN

It's a goddamn form letter. Haven't you ever gotten a form letter?

MARIO

Hear me out: “Dear Tenant”--I’m still pissed off about that....”Failure To sign the enclosed lease on or before September 30th will result in immediate eviction proceedings, effective upon the order hereby issued to quit and deliver said premises namely 1343 Washington St., 12:00 October 31, 2008. Any previous lease extension is hereby rescinded and declared null and void.

What the hell they trying to say?

STAN

It’s how lawyers say: “get the fuck out”.

MARIO

I don’t understand, why would they would do this? I’ve been a tenant here for 20 years, always paid my rent on time. Why are they raising my rent 25%? They know I can’t afford that.

STAN

I told you: they want your ass out. They got the city to declare this area blighted so the developers can move in and build high price condos and restaurants. A lot of money is at stake,

MARIO

But blighted? How do they call this neighborhood blighted? This is a fully functioning neighborhood: shops and small businesses have been here for over 25 years. Where’s the blight? This is a community. Why do they want to wipe out a community?

STAN

There’s money to be made.

MARIO

Not in this economy. I have never seen the economy come to such a screeching halt. It’s scary. You should see all these suits sitting in my place all day, drinking coffee with no idea what to do or where to go. I bet some haven’t even told their families they have been laid off. They go on these job interviews where there are 200 people applying for the same job.

(Long pause.)

Listen, I know that company has been studying your books. I don’t care what kind of offer you get, you can’t sell.

STAN

There's no offer.

MARIO

But if they made an offer, you can't take it.

STAN

There's no offer.

MARIO

Hey, I'm not judging you. I understand if you take the money and run. I get that. You're worked hard to build this thing. All I'm saying is this: these families need these jobs. It's all they got.

STAN

(Defensive, angry.)

You think I don't know this? But if I get an offer, I have every right to take it.

MARIO

You just said there was no offer.

STAN

There will be tomorrow. I've worked my ass off for 25 years. 25 fuckin' years. You can't tell me I can't take the offer.

An employee of Mario, Riley, walks in. He is a kid of about 19 years old. He is timid and shy.

MARIO

Hey Riley, what's up?

RILEY

They said you were over here. I was hoping I could talk to you.

MARIO

What's on your mind?

STAN

You wanna use my office?

MARIO

You're fine. What's up Riley?

RILEY

Well, I was talking to Steward and he said you might have some connections at the University.

MARIO

That's a fine school Riley but yes, I know some people there.

RILEY

Well, if you wouldn't mind....it would be great if you could maybe put in a good word for me?

MARIO

I'd be happy to do that. And like I said, that is a very fine school and it's good you are thinking about your future.

RILEY

Well, that would be great because I heard there were some janitor jobs opening up and if you could put a good word in for me, well, I think that would go a long way..

(Long pause.)

MARIO

You want to work as a janitor?

RILEY

Like I said, if you know someone there and could put in a good word for me, well, I think that would be very helpful.

MARIO

(Pause)

O.K. Riley, I'll see what I can do.

RILEY

O.K. thanks. I appreciate it. Sorry to bother you..

Riley turns and leaves. Mario is speechless for a moment.

MARIO

Can you believe this shit? A goddamn janitor? What the hell is happening out there where kids dream of becoming a janitor? How does that happen?...And this is a smart kid. You should hire him.

STAN

He works for you.

MARIO

I'm gonna have to lay him off soon. Can't afford him.

STAN

Why'd you hire him then?

MARIO

I didn't hire him because I needed him; I hired him to keep him off the streets.

STAN

Have him come see me.

MARIO

He's a smart kid. But maybe Riley's onto something. There's security in being a janitor. It's not a job you can export.

(Pause)

I worry about this neighborhood. You are starting to see a lot of unemployed fathers just hanging out in the middle of the day. Kids should not be a witness to that.

It ain't a good time to just have a high school diploma. In the old days you could fuck up, get a GED and land on you feet with a high paying union job. You could even buy a house, send your kids to college. The American dream was possible. A kid like Riley, what's his future, what's his American dream?

STAN

I told you: have him come see me.

MARIO

(Incredulous)

You're gonna hire him?

STAN

Why not? You told me he's a good kid.

MARIO

There's no way you are hiring.

STAN

We're gonna be extremely busy very shortly and I will be needing some warm bodies. Besides, I like the kid. I think I can help him out.

MARIO

What are you, one of those 1%ers job creators?

STAN

Absolutely: we hire people we don't need and can't afford.

MARIO

That my friend, is a job creator. But listen, you can't sell this company.

STAN

You told me I should take the money and run.

MARIO

That was before Riley told me about his career plans. Listen, what are we gonna do about this letter? I can't afford to move. My customers are all here. And why aren't you worked up about this?

STAN

I have a little receipt situation I dealing with.

MARIO

I don't know what the hell that means. You want me to leave the letter?

STAN

Yeah, we'll frame it. No, I don't want you to leave the letter. I got the same goddamn letter. Listen, we'll figure something out. By the way, that coffee was terrible this morning.

MARIO

You say that every morning. Why don't you go to Dunkin Donuts and buy that waterly ass coffee. I think sometimes they forget to put the coffee in the coffee.

STAN

I just might.

MARIO

Don't forget about the letter.

Spotlight goes to stage left. Stan's father is on the phone in his hotel room. The rest of the office goes about their routines in shadows.

STAN' FATHER

Good morning. Jim Spencer for Sidney Tyson...Yes, he's expecting my call...Yes, he will know what it's about...Then tell him I'm only in town for just a couple of days...All right, I'll leave my number: 445-6212, area code 617.

He pours another cup of coffee, hesitates, and then opens a small flask and pours a small portion of whiskey into his coffee. He takes a sip, hesitates, and then pours some more whiskey from his flask.

The spotlight shifts over to the mother, who is on the phone to her husband.

MOTHER

But you said you would be home early tonight...It's Friday night and your kids are sitting by the door with their baseball gloves, just waiting...But it's Friday night. Why do you have to finish the project on a Friday?...I hope you can make it home before the grocery store closes. I need your paycheck so I can buy food for the house...

LIGHTS DIM.

Spotlight shines on the main office. Stan is walking through the office and Cindy sticks her head in.

CINDY

Any luck with the receipt?

RONNIE

Cindy, I can attest he has not stopped looking for it. Now if it was me, I would be concentrating on sales. But that's just me.

STAN

Thank you for that insight Ronald. Cindy, there is a accounts payable call on line. Can you take it?

CINDY

You owe me. Don't forget about the receipt.

She walks to her office and picks up the phone.

Yes, can I help you?...What invoice is that?...All right, let me check...

She puts the caller on hold and waits for about 5 seconds.

Hi, that should be going out shortly. We're just waiting for a big check and your bill is an absolute priority...I'd say about two weeks, max...O.K. thank you for calling..

STAN

Stan has moved to the outside of Cindy's office and listens in.

What big check are we waiting for ?

CINDY

The one you are selling to this week where they give you a big deposit.

STAN

I almost forgot about that check. I do have a few I'm working on.

CINDY

You're starting to sound like your sales staff. Listen, I want to go over something with you. Ronnie lost another job because of price.

STAN

It's never because of price.

CINDY

Until recently, he use to sell a hell of a lot..

STAN

That's because the economy was booming. I told him he talks to much on his sales calls, that he needs to listen, form a relationship--but he won't listen to me. Ironic, huh? We have a great product. And there's an integrity to it. All you have to do is listen to your client; it's as simple as that. He thinks he needs to sell it. He just needs to make the client understand the quality.

CINDY

Well, it takes more than quality nowadays. He lost that last bid to a company who bid 1/2 what we bid.

STAN

(Shocked.)

1/2?

CINDY

1/2. Listen, and don't take this the wrong way but I've been talking to this company that brokers overseas manufacturing and they said they could do all our manufacturing overseas at half the cost. 1/2!

STAN

(Pause)

You wanna shut down our manufacturing?

CINDY

What choice do we have?

STAN

What about the people who work here?

CINDY

What about them? We're competing against companies that manufacturer overseas. At least this saves some of the jobs.

STAN

You really want 12 year old kids working in environmental shit holes to be making our product? Is that what you think this company is about?

CINDY

We don't have a choice. Everyone in our industry is doing it. If Apple can manufacture overseas, why shouldn't we?

STAN

Because Apple has figured out a way to use slave labor while calling them factory workers.

Last week there was an explosion at one of their factories, killing 4, injuring a lot more and you know why? It blew up because of all the flammable dust particles that were floating around in the factory. And do you know how easy it is to control that? It's called ventilation. We solved that problem a century ago. Fuck Steve Jobs. We will never, ever participate in that shit storm of exploitation.

CINDY

You're not being rational. These jobs are raising the standard of living in those countries.

STAN

How does promoting slave labor raise the standard of living? It's slave labor. We outlawed slave labor in this country 150 years ago. Why are we embracing it again?

CINDY

You're exaggerating. It's not our concern.

STAN

Exploiting child labor is not our concern?

CINDY

You're competing against companies that have at least 1/2 of the production costs we have. How can you compete against that? This company will die if you don't make changes. These loyalties of yours are gonna kill us in the end.

STAN

(Passionate.)

I owe these people. I have to be able to look them in the eye and know I have done everything possible to preserve their jobs. There is a craft in what they do, an artistry to our designs. Our products are well made and build to last and I'm proud of every single thing that goes out that door. The day I'm not proud is the day I close the doors. And I know our competitors manufacture overseas. I get that. I just believe in our company, what we do, the product we produce.

And I refuse to believe that American craftsmanship can't make it in this economy. I won't accept that. And if American craftsmen can't compete, then God bless us all.

Stan storms out into the main office.

KYLE

(On the phone.)

This is Kyle Perkins from Office Furniture Limited. We have a brand new line...

(His lines become mute as others begin to say their lines.)

STAN

Buddy, I need you to do me this favor.

RONNIE

Sure.

STAN

On your way in tomorrow, I want you to find somebody who can forge a receipt.

RONNIE

(Confused.)

You want me to forge a receipt?

CINDY

I need to get Cindy a receipt for \$18.78 cents. She's all over my ass about this receipt. Now remember, its \$23.78 cents. It 's got to say \$23.78 cents. Here's ten bucks. Don't let them charge you any more than ten bucks.

RONNIE

You want me to pay ten bucks for a receipt?

STAN

Whatever it takes. \$23.78 cents. Remember that...you're not writing this down.

RONNIE

\$23.78. I got the memory of an elephant.

STAN

Don't mess this up. I got to get this receipt to her before she looks in the petty cash drawer. Then the shit really hits the fan.

RONNIE

Consider it done.

JOSE

Buddy, there's an accounts payable call on line one. Should I give it to Cindy?

STAN

Yes.

JOSE

(Into the phone.)

Cindy, accounts payable, line one.

STAN

Jose, come into my office. We need to talk.

They walk to Stan's office while Cindy takes the call.

CINDY

This is Cindy, can I help you?...What Invoice was that?...All Right, let me check.

(Puts the caller on hold and then waits for
about 6 seconds before she picks up the
line.)

Hi, that should be going out shortly. We're just waiting for a big check and your bill is an absolute priority...I'd say in about two weeks max...O.K. Have a good day.

The spotlight shines on Stan's office. The rest of the office continues their routines in silence.

STAN

Listen, I'm worried about you. You're not generating sales like you use to.

JOSE

I know. I mean some weeks I can go out there and all they say is yes. And then bang, nothing. No one will even return my phone calls. I mean, what's the secret? What does Kyle have that I don't have.

STAN

He works hard. There's no magic formula; just hard work. Selling is a craft but you don't work at your craft. It isn't anymore complicated than that.

JOSE

(Pause.)

Listen, I really need an advance on that sale. I need it for my down payment.

STAN

Why are you buying a house now? You need to fix your marriage. That's a good woman you married.

JOSE

That's what this house is for.

STAN

A house isn't gonna fix your marriage.

JOSE

It's bigger than that.

STAN

What does that mean?

JOSE

(Pause)

My father always dreamed of owning a house. For as long as I can remember, he was always working two or three jobs because for him, owning your own house was the American Dream. That's why he came to America, anything was possible. He believed the part about equal opportunity, that in America hard work was rewarded. That was his dream, the promise that America offered. After 35 years, he finally got the money and put an offer in on a house.

Everything was all set till they actually met my father and saw with their own eyes who George Walker really was. Suddenly the house was no longer available. Well, that house stood empty for another 6 months. He would often drive to the house and just stare at it for hours. They were never gonna let us into their neighborhood. He got real quiet after that. And he died 6 months later. So don't ask me what owning a house means. It means a lot more than just your name on the deed.

(Pause.)

Listen, I need this advance, so I can do what they wouldn't let my father do.

STAN

(Long pause.)

I got to think about this.

JOSE

I'm asking you. This is me, Jose. Don't make me beg.

STAN

(Pause.)

Let me think about it.

JOSE

(Desperate.)

We go back a long way.

STAN

(Pause.)

We'll talk in the morning.

Jose leaves as Mario enters and goes over to Ronnie.

The spotlight shifts to stage left where Stan's mother and father are in their respective locations: hotel room and the home. The rest of the office continues their routines in silence.

The father begins by opening his flask and pouring a large shot of whiskey into his coffee cup. He picks up the phone and dials.

STAN'S FATHER

Good morning. Jim Spencer for Mr. Young...Yes, he knows me...No, I don't have an appointment but as I explained in my letter, I'm only in town for a few days and Mr. Young expressed a strong interest in our new product line...Yes, he can call back but is he in now?..

(Desperate.)

If I could just have a few moments of his time...Yes, I will leave my number....

The spotlight shifts to Stan's mother who is on the phone.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Angry.)

But I have no money for groceries. When will you be home?...But you promised you would be home earlyI can't do this alone...Your kids need to see you...They're not fine; that's what I'm trying to tell you: they're not fine...

The lights come on, shining on the entire office.

STAN

Kyle, how was that appointment yesterday?

KYLE

Got the order this morning.

STAN

See how easy this is guys? You just have to do the fundamentals, work hard.

RONNIE

How does the man do it? The man is a machine, a goddamn machine. I just don't know how he does it?

KYLE

(Spoken rapidly.)

I'm here every morning at 8 making calls, making appointments.

Whenever I'm in a building I get the name of at least 10 other people I can subsequently call. Whenever I sell to a person I always ask them if they know of any one else who would like the product. I know of every construction project in a 60 mile radius. I am constantly reading books in my field for the purpose of improving my craft. And I am constantly sending emails to my clients prospecting for more projects.

RONNIE

(Pause.)

I don't know how he does it?

STAN

This may be a shot in the dark, but I think he just told you.

RONNIE

(Turning towards the rest of the office.)

A goddamn machine.

STAN

Ronnie, you ever consider making some calls?

RONNIE

Hey, now hold on there buddy, I made a call this morning.

STAN

Stan takes out a handkerchief and starts to wipe Ronnie's brow.

Here I thought you were spinning your wheels but my God, you're working your ass off. Slow down for Christ sakes; you're making me dizzy with all this production. Guys, I need some sales today.

(To Jose.)

Here buddy, take this lead.

Stan walks back to his office where he is greeted by Cindy.

CINDY

Why did you give Jose that lead? That's a good lead you gave him. He needs to earn his leads. Kyle should of gotten that lead.

STAN

He just needs something to get him started.

CINDY

You can't put friendship ahead of what's best for the company. He will waste that lead, I guarantee it. He hasn't sold in weeks and I thought I smelled alcohol on his breath yesterday.

STAN

Alcohol?

CINDY

Yes. I just don't understand why you keep propping him up like that.

STAN

Actually, he just did a big sale. He's turning things around.

CINDY

That cycle is not a sale and you know it. What are we gonna do about payroll this week?

STAN

We'll figure something out. Listen, we're gonna have a great week.

CINDY

I don't care about a great week; I just wanna make payroll.

LIGHTS DIM.

Spotlight goes to stage left where Stan's father is back in his hotel room making business calls. He is now pouring straight whiskey into his cup.

STAN'S FATHER

(He is drunk.)

Good morning...I'm sorry, is it afternoon already?...Yes, well good afternoon. Is Mr. McKay available?...Yes, This is Jim Spencer.

I'm an old friend of his....Listen, I'm in town for only a couple of days and I always make it a point to see John, I mean Ted...busy both days?...I just need about 20 minutes of his time. He always makes it a point to see our new products...If he could fit me in I think he would be very pleased with what I have to offer...

(Showing anger.)

Ted has always, always made it a point to see me when I come into town...He did say that...Take my number anyway; I'm sure he will change his mind...You know what, never mind. Why don't you go fuck yourself.

He slams the phone down and pours another shot. As he gathers his composure, the phone rings. He picks it up.

STAN'S FATHER (cont'd)

Jim Spencer....My son's in the lobby?...Tell him I'm not here....(Forceful) That's right; I'm not here...Don't have him wait. I'm not here...I don't know when I will be home. I can't make it any goddamn clearer; I'm not here.

He hangs up the phone and pours himself a stiff drink. A flush is heard in the bathroom. He is not alone in the hotel room.

The spotlight goes back to the main office. Cindy is pouring herself a cup of coffee as Stan walks in. The rest of the office continues to perform their tasks. Jose walks over to Stan.

JOSE

Hey buddy, you ever find that receipt?

CINDY

Thank you Jose. I almost forgot about that.

(Stan stares at Jose for a second in complete disbelief.)

STAN

Well how about that Jose--she almost forgot about it.

JOSE

It is the elephant in the room.

STAN

Well, it warms my heart you're staying on top of this receipt situation. Your sales are a dog's breakfast but you seem to be finding time to micromanage this receipt situation.

JOSE

I just think it's important not to lose sight of the big picture.

STAN

Oh, so you're a big picture guy. Cindy, how can you be so down on a guy like this? How is that possible.?

CINDY

He a salesman that doesn't sell; how is that possible?

STAN

Don't you love the way she sugar coats things?

CINDY

Stan, I need to go over something with you.

STAN

Let's go in my office.

They walk over to Stan's office. The rest of the office continues to work.

CINDY

That company in Waltham called wondering about their order. They have an open house on Friday.

STAN

What did you tell them?

CINDY

I told them that per the log, it's scheduled for this week. Is it?

STAN

It is now.

CINDY

Well you need to get Angelo to release his order. We need some of those materials in order to finish up the job.

STAN

We're getting materials from Sherman's. It's being delivered today.

CINDY

How are we paying for it?

STAN

I got terms: Net 15.

CINDY

(Happy.)

How the hell you pull that off?

STAN

You don't wanna know.

CINDY

(Pause.)

O.K., but we have to talk about payroll.

STAN

Isn't that big check coming in from that dealer this week?

CINDY

They couldn't cut it early. We'll get it in about 3 weeks.

STAN

Anything else big due in this week?

CINDY

No. We'll be fine in a couple of weeks but these next two weeks will be tough. I have no idea how we are gonna make payroll.

(Stan pauses but then pulls out Jose's check from his draw.)

STAN

Deposit this. Jose did a big sale and this is just the deposit.

CINDY

(Angry.)

I know about that check: Jose is selling direct and you know we can't use that.

STAN

I know we don't sell direct but unless you have a better idea on how to make payroll, we have to use it.

CINDY

I'm not depositing it and you shouldn't either.

STAN

(Angry.)

Then what's your solution for payroll? You can sit there all high and mighty but that really doesn't handle payroll now does it? Come Friday, guys will be wanting their checks.

CINDY

This I know: you can't deposit that check.

Stan stares at her. Cindy leaves and goes back to her office. Stan picks up the check, holds it up, stares at it and then puts it back down on his desk.

The spotlight continues to shine on Stan's office as Homer, a long time employee, stands meekly outside his door. He is about 55.

HOMER

I was wondering if I could speak to you Mr. Spencer?

STAN

It's Stan. What can I do for you Homer?

HOMER

I hate to bother you but I've been hearing things....I'm sorry to bother you like this.

STAN

It's not a bother, now what have you been hearing?

HOMER

Well, I've been seeing all these people coming in and I know things have been slow, and I've been hearing that you might be selling the company or just shutting it down.

STAN

Listen, I don't know what you have been hearing but we're not going anywhere. I know sales have been slow but we've been through this many times and every time we always come back bigger and stronger.

HOMER

But this seems different. There use to be a lot of companies around here but we seem to be the last one standing.

STAN

There is nothing different about this, believe me. And the reason we are still standing is that we're a strong company.

HOMER

But I don't know where I would go if you closed. I've never seen it like this. You know me, I can fix anything, build anything. When you make something with your own hands, it means something. I need to work. I don't know what I would do all day if I couldn't work. As long as I can work with my hands, then I'm OK. Before, I could always catch on with another company but I don't see these companies around anymore. I don't understand where they went all of a sudden. It seemed so fast. I just wanna provide for my family. It's my duty. If you close, I don't know where I would go.

STAN

Listen, we've been in business 25 years. You think we're gonna close now after 25 years? If we were gonna close it would of been 20 years ago, that's when things were really on the edge.

HOMER

I'm sorry to bother you like this but like I said, I just need to work. I make sure things are done right, build right. I take pride in my craft. I think that is important. I don't know if I could catch on anywhere if you closed. There's nothing out there.

STAN

We're gonna be fine. OK.? I'm not gonna let anything happen to this company. We're open for business.

HOMER

OK. I trust you.

STAN

Listen, I might need you tonight. We have to get this order ready for an open house.

HOMER

I'll be there. You know me.

They shake hands. Homer exits. Mario walks into the main office.

MARIO

Where is he?

Ronnie points to Stan's office. Mario walks into Stan's office.

MARIO (cont'd)

I'm really worried about this.

STAN

It'll be fine.

MARIO

They're raising your rent too. What's the plan?

STAN

We're playing the race card.

MARIO

What are you talking about?

STAN

I'm sending them an email demanding to know why they intend to evict the only two black tenants in the whole building.

MARIO

But I'm the only black tenant.

STAN

They don't know that. They have never come by this place. They just sit in their offices and issue threats. If I'm a week late on my rent, they have their lawyers threaten me with legal action. One time our dumpster was about three feet into another's property and rather than calling me up and saying: 'Hey Stan, how about moving the dumpster over three feet? Can you do me that favor?' Instead they had their lawyer write a letter threatening legal action. It's all legal with them. They don't know how to have a conversation without their lawyer issuing a threat.

MARIO

(Pause.)

And this is our plan?

STAN

You know, you should be ashamed of yourself: a white man showing you how to play the race card. That is some shameful shit.

MARIO

Believe me, I know how to play the race card. How do you think I have been able to manipulate you all these years? But listen, we can't lose our leases.

A big cheer emanates from the main office. Stan goes out to see what the commotion is about.

STAN

What's up guys?

KYLE

Ronnie just got the medical building order.

STAN

.(enthusiastic)

Well done my man.

RONNIE

I have no idea how I got awarded this contract.

STAN

You gotta love the Ronald's confidence.

RONNIE

Well, I did have a nice connection with the buyer.

STAN

How about that--not so mystical after all.

RONNIE

Well, you know, there was a point in my presentation where I started to get the nod.

JOSE

Book it right there--ain't nothing better than the nod.

KYLE

You get that nod, they're ready to have sex with you.

RONNIE

I've might of gotta two.

JOSE

Two nods! You could of had sex with her right there on the conference table.

RONNIE

Well, it was actually a guy.

JOSE

Gay sex, even better.

Mario walks in.

MARIO

Ronnie had sex while closing a sale?

KYLE

Gay sex.

MARIO

Even better.

RONNIE

Guys, there was no sex at the close, gay or otherwise.

STAN

Can we get back on point? Now Ronnie had a nice sale and we can all learn from this. What did we learn here guys?

JOSE

Always bring a condom to the close.

The guys laugh.

KYLE

It's what we like to call, safe closing.

The guys laugh again.

STAN

Guys, seriously. Ronnie, why did they go with us?

RONNIE

He had seen our product in another facility and was quite impressed by the design and the quality.

STAN

Design and quality, how 'bout that? This is what people want.

KYLE

I wanna hear more about the nod...

MARIO

I wanna hear more about the gay sex.

RONNIE

Guys, to repeat: there was no sex, gay or otherwise..

JOSE

(He gives a big wink as he says his line.)

Whatever you say Ronnie..

Spotlight shines, stage left. It is about 10 years prior. Stan's father comes into an office, standing before his boss, 20 years younger than him. His boss sits behind a desk.

BOSS

We're letting you go.

STAN'S FATHER

(Shocked.)

Why?

BOSS

We're going in a different direction.

STAN'S FATHER

This is really not a good time for me. I'm under water on my mortgage. I got car payments and I got two kids who would like to go to college.

BOSS

I'm sorry.

STAN'S FATHER

(Angry.)

That's not acceptable. Promises were made across this desk. I helped put this company here, kept it alive with my sales. I was to retire with full benefits, full benefits.

Promises were made!

BOSS

I'm sorry; we've made our decision.

STAN'S FATHER

(In propitiation.)

Listen, this can't happen, my mortgage. What do I need to do to fix this?

BOSS

I'm sorry. Things change. We're going in a different direction.

STAN'S FATHER

But nobody has the personal contacts I have. I don't even have to call for an appointment. I can just walk into any of those dealers and they will see me immediately, no appointment necessary. And you know why they do that--it's because of a personal relationship, relationships that took 20 years to develop. These relationships are priceless, priceless. You think you can just throw some kid up there and he's gonna develop these relationships overnight, pull what I pulled out of that territory?

BOSS

Listen, you were well compensated for your work but our business model has changed.

STAN'S FATHER

I can change.

(Angry.)

After all the business I have brought to this company, to be told this. This can't happen.

(Pause)

You know what, go fuck yourself. I knew your father. He wouldn't have put up with this. He would of kept his promise.

BOSS

(Pause)

Listen, my 2 o'clock is waiting.. My secretary has your last check.

STAN'S FATHER

You know, my son owns his own company. He would never do something like this. His word is his bond; he believes in loyalty.

BOSS

Go work for your son.

STAN'S FATHER

We don't speak.

BOSS

(Compassionate.)

I'm sorry.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause. Begging.)

This really isn't a good time....you see my mortgage, I have car payments. I'll work for less. You can have my commissions, just leave me my base salary.

BOSS

We're not gonna do that.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause, crushed.)

What am I gonna do? What am I gonna tell my wife?

BOSS

(Stands up to go to his meeting.)

Just see my secretary. She has your check.

He leaves. Stan's father drops his head, the life seeping out of him. He gets up, disoriented, trying to absorb the enormity of what just occurred. He finally puts his hand on the desk, steadying himself. The spotlight shines on the entire office.

STAN

Mail come?

CINDY

No checks.

STAN

I thought TRW was paying this week.

CINDY

Couple of weeks. They couldn't cut the check early.

STAN

What else we got lined up?

CINDY
I'm working on it.

STAN
All right. Let me know.

Lewis enters the main office, looking for Stan. He is a bit agitated.

LEWIS
Where is he?

RONNIE
I think he's in his office.

Lewis walks over the Stan office. Stan gets up as Lewis enters.

STAN
My long lost brother.

LEWIS
How are things?

STAN
We're doing well.

LEWIS
Making any money?

STAN
Hands over fist.

LEWIS
You sure?

STAN

(Irritated.)
Am I sure? What does that mean?

LEWIS
That's not what I'm hearing from your wife. She's at her wits end.

STAN

You talked to my wife?

LEWIS

She really wants you to take this offer.

STAN

(Pause)

There's no offer and I'm not sure why she's talking to you about this.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

Why do you keep this going? You could be making so much money somewhere else. You'd be set for life.

STAN

Like Dad was set for life?

LEWIS

That was different.

STAN

Sure it was. The corporation was gonna take care of him. How'd that work out? They took such good care of him that I had to drop out of school to support the family. I would of loved to have gone to collage like you.

LEWIS

You didn't have to do that. Mom would of been fine.

STAN

(Incrdulous)

She was gonna be homeless. You think I had a choice about coming home? Where were you?

LEWIS

Where was I? I was out in the world fighting for things that mattered.

STAN

While being supported by your wife. Well, I was out in the world fighting for things that mattered--our family, a roof over our heads.

LEWIS

Well, according to your wife, you're not exactly father of the year.

STAN

That's none of your business. And what about your wife? How'd she feel about you being gone all the time?

LEWIS

My wife supported me because she believed in the causes I fought for.

STAN

She believed in your causes so much that she divorced you. At some point in your life, you have to support your family in order to call yourself a man. And what about your kids, did you sacrifice them for your causes?

LEWIS

Well, from what your wife told me, I see my kids a hell of a lot more than you see your kids.

STAN

Are we having an argument as to who is the better father?

LEWIS

No, we're talking about Mom. The fact of the matter is, Mom would of been fine. You just like playing the martyr.

STAN

There's another word for what you call martyrdom; it's called responsibility.

LEWIS

You saying I'm not responsible? I have dedicated my life to causes.

STAN

Tell me Lewis, how many jobs have you gone though? You're a hypocrite. You always found time for causes but never for your family or your mother.

LEWIS

Sometimes there are more important things than family. And you, of all people, how dare you judge me about my family. You're never home.

STAN

That's none of your business.

LEWIS

And you criticize Dad because he was never home. According to your wife, he was home a lot more than you.

STAN

That was different.

LEWIS

Keep telling yourself that.

(Pause.)

You should go see him.

STAN

Why?

LEWIS

He stopped drinking.

STAN

How many times has he done that?

LEWIS

He's worked hard to put his life back together. You should go see him. He's right around the corner for Christ's sake.

STAN

He doesn't just get to walk back into my life. When I needed him the most, he wasn't there.

(Pause.)

When I was a kid I would always go to the park to play baseball and when it got dark, I would walk home and when I turned the corner to go on our street, I would pray that I would see his car in the driveway. Cause if his car was in the driveway, then I knew, at least for that night, that things would be OK, that Mom wouldn't be so sad.

But his car was almost never there. But I learned something: I learned that you can't depend on other people; you have to depend on yourself. And it was a great lesson when I started to build this thing, door to door, one customer at a time. Sometimes I would be on the street for three days, just going door to door, before anyone would even see me. 3 days. And I knew if I didn't sell, no one would get paid that week.

The spotlight shifts to stage left. Stan is standing with a portfolio, back to the audience. In rapid fire succession, people walk in front of him, deliver their line, and then move off stage.

MAN

Get out!

WOMAN

(Condescending.)

Why on earth would you think we would be interested in something like that?

WOMAN (cont'd)

Who gave you permission to walk in here?

MAN

No!

MAN (cont'd)

What's the matter with you? Can't you read? NO SOLICITING.

WOMAN

NO SOLICITING!

MAN

Security is on its way.

MAN (cont'd)

What makes you think you can just walk in here?

WOMAN

Can't you read: NO SOLICITING!

MAN
We're not interested.

WOMAN
We're not interested.

MAN
No.

WOMAN
No.

MAN
NO!

WOMAN
I'm calling security.

Stan continues to stand with his briefcase, the stage dark except his lone figure. In the darkness various voices call out: "No soliciting". This refrain is heard about 6 times. Next, unseen voices call out:

VOICE
He's in a meeting.

VOICE (cont'd)
What is this about?

VOICE (cont'd)

(Patronizing tone.)
Would you like to leave a message?

VOICE (cont'd)
I'll put you though to his voice mail.

VOICE (cont'd)

(Irritated.)
She wants me to take a message.

VOICE (cont'd)
 What is this about?

VOICE (cont'd)
 We're not interested.

VOICE (cont'd)
 We're not interested.

VOICE (cont'd)
 He's in a meeting.

VOICE (cont'd)
 He's in a meeting.

VOICE (cont'd)
 He's in a meeting.

VOICE (cont'd)

(Patronizing tone.)

What is this regarding?

VOICE (cont'd)
 What is this regarding?

VOICE (cont'd)
 What is this regarding?

VOICE (cont'd)
 I can take a message.

The lights shine back on Stan's office.

STAN

Why'd you come here?

LEWIS

I came here offering you a lifeline. Why won't you let me help you?

STAN

What about my employees?

LEWIS

Your employees will be fine. You're not your brother's keeper. I can get you a nice job at this company I'm working for.

STAN

Why are you bringing this to me all of a sudden?

LEWIS

I told you: I'm just trying to help. This could be your golden parachute. Your time is running out.

STAN

What does that mean: my time is running out?

LEWIS

You simply can't compete. Why is this so hard for you to understand? You're too small. Just do the goddamn math.

STAN

I'm responsible for the families here. That is a sacred trust. I make payroll every week so people have a job, can pay their rents, mortgages, maybe send their kids to college. You think that's something you just walk away from, free and clear?

LEWIS

It's not your responsibility..

STAN

That's quite a statement coming from someone who was always trying to save the world but who could care less about his family. Even today, you can't find time to go see Mom?

LEWIS

I can't deal with that.

STAN

Well, neither can I but I do it.

LEWIS

Listen, you got to give this up. It's not good for you; it's not good for your family.

STAN

(Pause, suspicious.)

Why you so sure about this? What aren't you telling me?

LEWIS

What aren't I telling you? Listen, sometime in the near future there will be padlocks on this fuckin' place. That's what I'm not telling you. Padlocks. And all because of your pride. You don't know what you're up against.

STAN

I don't care what I'm up against. I choose my employees; I choose my company.

Spotlight shifts to stage left, Stan's Mother and Father's kitchen. Stan's mother is at the stove; Stan's father walks in.

STAN'S MOTHER

You're home early.

STAN'S FATHER

Yeah, I got out early.

STAN'S MOTHER

But you're never home this early.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause.)

Listen, I have to talk to you about something.

STAN'S MOTHER

Somehow anticipating the subject. She continues to pull out cooking utensils

We'll do it later. I was gonna make chicken or steak. Which one do you want?

STAN'S FATHER

Not now. We need to talk.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Pulling out some pots, nervous)

And we will. Now I can make the chicken southern fried, just the way you like it.

Stan's father walks over and removes the pots and pans from his wife's hands.

STAN'S FATHER

Please stop.

Stan's mother stops and looks at her husband with fear.

You have to believe me when I say, I didn't mean for this to happen.

STAN'S MOTHER

What are you talking about?

STAN'S FATHER

(Long pause as fear begins to creep into the mother's eyes.)

I've fallen in love with another woman.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Angry.)

Who?

STAN'S FATHER

It doesn't matter.

STAN'S MOTHER

It doesn't matter? Of course it matters. WHO IS IT?

STAN'S FATHER

It's not important.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Almost shouting.)

WHO IS IT?

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause.)

It's Maggie, from our office. I knew you'd would act this way.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Angry.)

Oh, I'm sorry. I'm not acting right? Please tell me the proper conduct for when your husband tells you he doesn't love you anymore. Tell me how I'm suppose to act? Am I not making this easy enough for you?

STAN'S FATHER

I'm sorry. It just happened.

STAN'S MOTHER

Nothing just happens.

STAN'S FATHER

(Combative.)

Why shouldn't I be happy?

STAN'S MOTHER

(Fighting to keep her composure.)

I loved you and supported you for 20 years; I raised our kids for 20 years. And this is what I get after 20 years--you're not happy?

STAN'S FATHER

I just have to see where this goes.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Breaking.)

And what about me? What about our 20 years? I MATTER.

STAN'S FATHER

I'm sorry. I never meant for this to happen.

STAN'S MOTHER

Well don't tell me; tell your sons.

(Calls out to the boys in another room.)

Come here boys. Your father has something to say to you.

STAN'S FATHER

Don't do this. Not here, not now.

STAN'S MOTHER

Come out here boys. Your father isn't happy here. We're not making him happy.

STAN'S FATHER

What are you doing?

Stan's father goes to the door, racked with guilt, hesitates as he stares at his wife, and then leaves. Stan's Mother drops her head in despair.

The spotlight goes to stage left. It is night and the rest of the office is dark. The scene is Jose's kitchen. Jose's wife Shelly is seen picking up toys, a sadness enveloping her face. Jose walks in drunk, singing a song, "Me and My Shadow" while doing a soft shoe. Jose's wife stares at him, full of rage. He has a can of beer in his hand.

JOSE

Wanna dance?

(Shelley looks away.)

Not in the dancing mood huh? We got any beer left?

SHELLY

Where were you? I had dinner all ready.

JOSE

Popping open a beer can.

We were celebrating Ronnie's big sale.

SHELLY

Where did you get the money to drink? Our account is overdrawn. I couldn't even get money out for groceries.

JOSE

(Menacing.)

It's not your problem where I got the money to drink.

He takes a long deep swig of his beer.

SHELLY

I don't know how much longer I can do this.

JOSE

(Angry.)

It's a goddamn jungle out there now. Nobody is buying. I just need a little support. That's all. Business is slow. It will turn around; it always does.

SHELLY

And what if it doesn't?

JOSE

Then we'll have a little problem now won't we?

SHELLY

What is that suppose to mean?

JOSE

You figure it out. Listen, our mortgage was approved.

SHELLEY

(Incredulous.)

I told you; I don't want this house.

JOSE

Why can't you just respect my dream? This house is what our marriage needs.

SHELLY

Owning this house means nothing to me. You think this is some big accomplishment? You think a split level is gonna fix what's broken here?

JOSE

Why are you fighting me on this?

SHELLEY

(Pause.)

There's something broken here and you're trying to fix it with a split level. I never cared where we lived. I only cared about us.

JOSE

How could you possibly know what owning a house means to someone like me? You're white. Everyone you knew owned their own house..

He stares at her for a few moments and then puts his coat on.

SHELLY

Where are you going?

JOSE

Out.

SHELLY

Now?

JOSE

Yeah, now.

SHELLY

Why?

JOSE

From day one of this marriage, you always thought you were better than me. You always looked down on me because I never went to college. It was in your eyes. And I saw it in your mother's eyes. I wasn't good enough for her daughter. I know that look. I grew up with that look. You're a nice boy but don't ever think about marrying our daughters. That's the sacred line a guy like me can never cross. I'll never forget the look in your mother's eyes when we told her we were getting married.

And this is what owning a house will mean--I will never get that look again. You can live with me in this house or not, but what you can't do is look down on me anymore.

SHELLY

(Pause.)

Jose, this is crazy talk. I never looked down on you. And my mother looks down on everyone.

JOSE

Yeah, especially people like me.

SHELLY

Jose, stop trying to be white. Don't you know they will never let you into their club no matter how many houses you buy.

JOSE

How dare you.

He walks out while his wife stares in disbelief.

LIGHTS DIM.

Spotlight goes to the main office. Stan is standing near a desk when his father walks in.

STAN

(Antagonistic.)

What are you doing here?

STAN'S FATHER

(Taken back by the cold reception.)

I was just on my way to work and I thought I would drop by, see the place. Your brother has given me glowing reports about this place.

Long pause as Stan doesn't respond.

I work right around the corner here.

STAN

(Cold.)

I know.

(Pause)

Anything else?

STAN'S FATHER

No, I better get to work.

(Long pause.)

Maybe you can give me a tour sometime when you have more time.

STAN

I don't know, we're pretty busy.

Stan just stares at him. Stan's father, embarrassed by the reception, quietly leaves.

The spotlight shines stage left. It is Stan's kitchen. He walks in; his wife is standing near the stove.

MARTHA

I didn't expect you home so early.

STAN

I have to go back.

MARTHA

Do you at least have time for dinner?

STAN

Unfortunately no. We have to get this order ready for the morning.

MARTHA

You sure you can't stay? The kids were asking about you.

STAN

(Long pause.)

Listen, I need to take some money from our equity line.

MARTHA

(Pause.)

How much is some?

STAN

I need another \$50,000.

MARTHA

(Pause.)

How could you even ask that? The house is our future. That leaves us with no equity in our house.

STAN

I wouldn't be asking if I didn't need it.

MARTHA

Are you actually asking?

STAN

You think I enjoy this? You think I have a choice in this?

MARTHA

Don't tell me you have no choice. I'm tired of you telling me you have no choice. That's your excuse for everything after the fact--'I had no choice'.

STAN

You think a bank is gonna return my calls, give me a commercial loan?

MARTHA

I don't care. This house is our future. I'm not gonna let you destroy our future.

STAN

This company is our future, not the goddamn house. Why do you think I work so hard:? I do it for our family.

MARTHA

You do it for yourself. And I don't even know why you are even asking. You're gonna take the money anyway.

STAN

We just have to get through these next two weeks. After that, we'll be fine.

MARTHA

We won't be fine. We have never been fine. I'm not made for this.

STAN

I'm trying to save jobs.

MARTHA

(Long pause.)

I want you to take the offer.

STAN

There's no offer yet.

MARTHA

(Pause)

If you don't take the offer I'm leaving with the kids.

STAN

(Pause.)

How could you even say that?

MARTHA

I can't do this anymore. I'm done.

(Pause. Stan stares at her, speechless.)

Go say hi to the kids before you go back.

He looks at her and slowly leaves the room. She leans against a counter, exhausted and resigned.

The spotlight cuts to stage left. It is Stan's mother kitchen.

The mother is seen setting a couple of place mats, dishes, silverware, etc. She does it systematically and meticulously, double-checking to ensure everything is just so. Next, she carefully dishes out food onto the two plates. She then pours tea into both cups, puts the kettle back on the stove, comes back and sits down, puts a couple of tablespoons of sugar in her tea, stirs it, and then faces the empty chair. She is in a fantasy world.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Talking to the empty chair.)

Do you like the squash? This is the time of year for it, nice and fresh. There is a roadside stand on Oak Street that I can get it fresh now. The owner always sets aside a couple of his best ones for me...would you like some more tea?

(She gets up, picks up the kettle, brings it over and pours more tea into her imaginary friend's cup.)

I can see you're a tea drinker also. Have it with every meal myself, never do without it...there's plenty more so eat up...My husband should be home soon. I have his dinner in the oven so it won't get cold. Oh dear, there's the phone. (The phone hasn't rung.) Excuse me a minute Ellen. It might be my husband.

She walks over and picks up the phone, which hasn't rung. Stan quietly enters, standing in the shadows, observing his mother.

Oh hello mother. And how are you?...Oh, I'm fine...Tonight? Oh a friend of mine is over for dinner...We'll probably go to a movie later on...Oh, he'll be home soon. I think he is buying me something special. He likes to surprise me, even after all these years...Listen, I have to get off. My sons might be trying to call and you know how busy they are. Good-bye.

Stan's mother suddenly stops, looks around., puts her hands on the stove and looks blankly into space, despair enveloping her. Stan comes out of the shadows.

Mom. STAN

Who's that? STAN'S MOTHER

It's Stan. STAN

STAN'S MOTHER
(Confused.)

Stan? STAN

Yes, your son.

STAN'S MOTHER
I have to get your Dad's supper ready. He'll be hungry when he gets home.

STAN
(Pause.)

He's all set Mom. STAN'S MOTHER

(Surprised, confused.)
He had his dinner?

STAN
Yes, he had a good dinner.

(Placing his hands gently on her shoulders.)
Let's get you ready for bed.

STAN'S MOTHER
Your Dad had a good meal?

STAN
You fixed him a great dinner. Now let's get ready.

He guides her up from her chair.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Confused, rambling.)

Your father had a good dinner? When he's on the road I worry. You don't get good meals being on the road all the time. I worry about him. He needs to make sure he has a good meal.

(Distracted, looking out into space.)

I feel so tired. I don't know why but I feel so tired.

STAN

(Gently guiding her.)

Let's get you ready for bed. You had a long day.

STAN'S MOTHER

What about your father? I have to get his dinner ready.

STAN

He's all set. He had a great dinner. Come on, let's get you ready.

STAN'S MOTHER

(Staring into space)

I have been so tired lately.

Stan guides his mother off stage, toward her bedroom.

The spotlight shifts to a fast food restaurant, stage left, which is closed. Stan's father is seen in uniform scrubbing the counter. He stops, bows his head in despair and then continues to scrub. He then takes off his uniform hat, holds it in his hands and stares at it, a lifetime of regret surging to the surface. The spotlight shifts to a bar, stage right. Jose is sitting at the bar, drinking shots..

The lights shifts back to Stan's home. He is coming out of the kid's room. His wife is still leaning against the counter.

STAN

(To his kids who are in the other room.)

Guys, get some sleep. I'll see you in the morning.

He walks to the middle of the room and turns to his wife.

I'll take the offer.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II, SCENE I

On the left side of the stage is the inside of the fast food restaurant , behind a large gauze curtain. The inside is lighted and Stan's father is seen behind the counter wearing the cap while scrubbing down the counter. Stan enters the restaurant, goes to the counter and orders a coffee.

STAN

Small coffee..

The father, surprised, hesitates, then turns around, pours the coffee and places the cup on the counter.

STAN'S FATHER

That will be \$1.34 and you get a free refill.

Stan doesn't respond but gives him the money and gets his change. He stares at his father for a moment and then exits. The father stares at his departure, sadness and hope enveloping his face.

As the office scene begins, the lights slowly fade behind the gauze. As the scene commences in the office, Stan's father becomes motionless but still visible behind the gauze. He stares toward the office.

A rap song can be heard in the main office. Stan and Mario are dancing intensely to the music. They are both extremely bad dancers. Jose and Cindy enter and stare at the spectacle. The music ends.

JOSE

Cindy, I'm sorry you had to witness this.

CINDY

That was scary.

RONNIE

I'm just glad there was no children here to bear witness. Here you go.

(He hands Stan an envelop.)

MARIO

I got to get back.

STAN

I emailed our response to the landlord.

JOSE

You sent the Hail Mary?

STAN

Hey, sometimes the Hail Mary works. Didn't you see the Packer game last week?

MARIO

We'll talk later.

Mario exits. Ronnie and Kyle, who has just entered, proceed to their desks. Stan hands Cindy the envelop.

STAN

Here's the receipt.

CINDY

Why you here so early?

STAN

We had to get that order ready, the one that has the opening on Friday.

CINDY

You had our guys work overtime?

STAN

Yeah.

CINDY

That's not in the budget.

STAN

The order has to be there today. They have an open house.

CINDY

But it's not in the budget.

STAN

(Getting angry.)

Their open house is tomorrow. If you have a better solution, I'm all ears.

CINDY

You just can't do that. It's not in the budget.

STAN

I don't care if it's in the budget or not. We promised the customer we would make their open house. End of discussion.

Cindy walks away, angry.

Ronnie, why don't you give that dealer a call, the one that's doing the medical building. I bet you he's ready to pop.

RONNIE

He never takes my calls. He just jerks me around.

STAN

You say that about all your clients.

KYLE

(On the phone.)

I'll get that rolling. We'll call you when the order is ready.

STAN

You got it?

KYLE

I got it.

STAN

That's what I'm talking about. Jose, give that dealer a call, the one who is doing that new high tech building. They should be ready to sign the contract.

JOSE

He never returns my calls.

STAN

(Enthusiastic.)

This company is a cesspool of optimism. Guys, this is gonna be a great day. This is the day everyone says YES! You got that: everyone says "YES"!

CINDY

She has brought the receipt out of the envelope.

Stan, this is the wrong receipt.

STAN

(He accidentally knocks over his cup of coffee.)

Shit. Cindy, that's impossible.

CINDY

The receipt you gave me is for \$23.79. I need the receipt for \$23.78.

STAN

(Pause.)

You sure it wasn't \$23.79?

CINDY

No, you told me it was \$23.78 and the price list says \$23.78. I don't think you understand how important this is. I can't complete the income pack till I have this receipt. I need the receipt for \$23.78. Look, it says right here in the price list--\$23.78.

STAN

O.K. I'll take care of it. I must of grabbed the wrong one off my dresser.

CINDY

I'll be in my office. I need it as soon as possible.

She exits to her office.

STAN

BUDDY, YOU'RE KILLIN' ME HERE. YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY KILLING ME.

RONNIE

What?

STAN

The receipt you gave Cindy was for the wrong amount. Did I not emphasize the importance of this mission. Did I not say the receipt had to be \$23.78. I couldn't have been more clear.

RONNIE

No way.

STAN

Yes way. The receipt you gave her was for \$23.79. How in God's name could you mess that up?

RONNIE

(Long pause.)

Jesus, I'll tell you what happened. I was playing my number and I must of gotten confused because my number has 79 in it.

STAN

You're killin' me here buddy; you 're absolutely killing me.

(Shouts)

CINDY.

Cindy comes out of her office.

Listen, I want you to issue a memo today that forbids any employee from playing the lottery.

CINDY

(Pause)

I really don't think you can do that.

STAN

This is my line in the sand.

JOSE

What's the company policy on scratch cards?

STAN

Don't push it buddy. Cindy, I need to go over something with you.

They head back to Stan's office. Stan hands Cindy a check.

Deposit this check and pay Angelo, maybe a few other suppliers.

CINDY

(Pause, surprised.)

That's your personal check. You sure you want to do this?

STAN

It's just a loan.

CINDY

But you never end up paying yourself back.

STAN

Don't worry about that.

CINDY

Have you cleared this with your wife? Does she know that your house has acted as the company's bank the last 5 years?

STAN

Believe me, she knows.

Jose has come over to Stan's office, waiting for Cindy to finish up.

CINDY

All right, I'll be in my office.

STAN

Listen, we need to go over this cycle.

JOSE

I need this sale.

STAN

We all need the sale but why did he give you such a big check?

JOSE

I told you; it's a deposit.

STAN

We don't even have a signed contract. Why would he give you a deposit?

JOSE

What difference does it make?

STAN

Because he needs to buy from one of our dealers. Our whole company is based on that business model. It's what build this company.

JOSE

I told you. He's not gonna buy from any of our dealers. He wants wholesale pricing. What's so complicated about that?

STAN

We don't sell direct.

JOSE

We've been over that. Are you saying you're not gonna do the sale?

STAN

I'm not saying that.

JOSE

So what are you saying?

STAN

I'm saying this: nobody gives a large check without a signed contract and with no strings attached. This is what I'm asking: what are the fuckin' strings?

JOSE

(Pause.)

I can't believe this. Why can't you just be happy for me? This is a good sale, not only for me but for the company. The company needs this sale.

STAN

What are the strings Jose?

JOSE

There's no strings. I'm asking you to do this. I have sold a lot of product for this company and I am asking you to do this.

STAN

It's a simple question.

JOSE

I'm asking you to do this. I'm the godfather of your son for Christ sake. Don't make me beg.

Jose starts to leave.

STAN

Wait.

JOSE

(Angry.)

Do the goddamn sale. You owe me.

He turns and leaves Stan's office. Mario brushes by Jose as he leaves Stan's office. Jose enters the fast food restaurant, orders a coffee and sits down in one of the booths. Stan's father waits on him.

MARIO

What's up with him?

STAN

I'm not sure yet.

MARIO

Listen, you can't close this place.

STAN

You told me to take the money and run.

MARIO

There are consequences. This is what I'm trying to tell you. There are consequences.

STAN

(Long pause, angry, losing it.)

You think I don't know this? I live with consequences 24/7. You have any idea what it takes to keep these doors open? Do you have any idea what it takes to make payroll every week? And you ask me if I'm aware of the consequences? I LIVE WITH THE FUCKIN' CONSEQUENCES. And I'll tell you another consequence: if I don't take this offer my wife leaves with the kids. HOW'S THAT FOR A CONSEQUENCE!

And here's another consequence: I'll be just like my father. So don't stand there and lecture me about consequences. I'm all about the consequences.

MARIO

(Pause)

You're not your father. Your father never built something from scratch that provided livelihoods for all these people. You think that's nothing?

You should be celebrated, not preyed upon. And that is precisely what this company is doing--preying upon you, preying upon your employees. What you have done for this community over the last 20 years by providing good paying jobs, well, you should be celebrated. That's what should happen. You should be celebrated because a job gives a man dignity, and you have infused this community with dignity.

(Pause.)

You are not your father.

STAN

(Pause.)

He left his kids. I might do the same.

MARIO

It's not the same. Your kids are being taken away.

STAN

It sure as hell feels the same.

MARIO

You're not your father...but having said that, you need to forgive him.

STAN

What are you talking about?

MARIO

You need to forgive him, not for his sake but for your own. This hatred you have for him colors your actions, colors your relationships and colors your ability to take responsibility. I know you don't want to hear this but you need to hear this.

(Long pause as Stan stares at Mario.)

All right, I'm gonna change the subject. You hear back from the landlord?

STAN

No.

MARIO

O.K., I'm gonna leave you now. By the way, you're father is working today.

STAN

Why are you telling me that?

MARIO

Just saying.

Mario leaves. The spotlight goes onto the fast food restaurant.

Jose's wife Shelley has arrived and goes to a booth with a cup of coffee. Jose is already there..

The rest of the office remains in shadows as they continue their routines in silence.

SHELLEY

Thanks for meeting me.

JOSE

Well, it's good you're here. We can go to the bank to sign some papers. Our mortgage was approved. We made it.

SHELLEY

(Long Pause.)

Made what? What do you think we made? I came here to tell you that I'm going to my mother's with the kids.

JOSE

(Long pause.)

Why? I just made a big sale and now we got the house. Everything is turning around. Why would you leave now? We made it; we got the house.

SHELLEY

Jose, I never cared about where we lived. I only cared about us.

JOSE

(Slight desperation.)

Look. Here's the e-mail right here, approving our mortgage.

SHELLEY

You're not listening. I'm leaving. What happened to you Jose? You had such dreams. That's the person I fell in love with.

JOSE

I can't afford to dream. I got a family to support.

SHELLEY

It's never about the money.

JOSE

Well, I live in the real world and in the real world it is about the money. What's gonna pay our bills--our goddamn dreams? Why can't it be like it was before? You changed.

SHELLEY

I grew; I didn't change. You use to be so passionate about your dreams. Now all you talk about is getting by. I don't want to live a life where the bar is set at 'getting by'. You see, I can see this thing 20 years from now. I will be abandoned, lonely, waiting for you to come home. I won't put myself though that. I'm leaving because you have given up hope. I'm leaving cause you insist on this false American dream that. I grew up in that fantasy and it was a nightmare. A nightmare. I can't live with that, and I can't have our kids be a witness to that.

JOSE

(Pleading)

But we got the house.

SHELLEY

I don't care about the house. I dreamed of a life where we challenged each other, reached for the stars. Buying this house is just a band aid for our marriage.

I like where we live. It's a community.

JOSE

It's dirty and overcrowded and the city has declared it blighted.

SHELLEY

It's not blighted. It's a neighborhood. I know everyone on the block. Why can't you see the beauty of the community we live in. I feel safe. It's a home. Our kids are watched out for by the neighborhood. I wish you could see what I see.

JOSE

What we live in is an overcrowded ghetto. I want out. You told me to pursue my dreams. That's my dream.

Shelley

(Pause, firm.)

I'm sorry but I'm not moving into this house with you.

Shelley quietly gets up, hesitates, and then exits. Jose remains seated, stunned.

Stan enters, orders a coffee and sits at a booth. His father is wiping down booths, tentatively approaches him.

STAN'S FATHER

Hello son. Can I get you anything else?

STAN

No, I just needed to get out of the office for a bit.

STAN'S FATHER

Everything OK?

STAN

I don't know. It gets hard sometimes.

(Pause.)

Why are you working here?

STAN'S FATHER

Why? This is the only place that would hire me. I looked for work for over a year and a half. Son, don't ever look for work when you are 65 years old. That is the most humiliating, degrading thing you could do to yourself. You see, trickle down economics doesn't trickle down to poor people and it certainly doesn't trickle down to people like me.

STAN

Why didn't you call me?

STAN'S FATHER

I have my pride. And I'm not sure you would of taken the call.

STAN

(Pause.)

You still should of called.

STAN'S FATHER

Son, I have been humbled but I'm OK. I get by. I have my social security... How is the company?

STAN

We're hanging in there.

STAN'S FATHER

You ever see your brother?

STAN

He came by yesterday. He wants me to sell the company, cut my losses, take the bailout.

STAN'S FATHER

What do you mean by bailout?

STAN

There's this company that has been studying our books for over a month and they're gonna make me an offer.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause)

What do you think?

STAN

I don't know. I don't know how long I can hold this together. I got a lot of jobs on the line. What's more important than that?

STAN'S FATHER

There's nothing more important son. It's a sacred trust.

STAN

(Pause)

I told my wife I would take the offer, no matter what it is but I know I can pull this thing off somehow. I know I can take this thing to the next level but I don't know what it is I'm up against anymore, like I'm fighting something I can't see. I just believe that if you make a great product, with great design, build to last....well, that use to be enough.

STAN'S FATHER

I don't know son, but it should.

STAN

I don't know what to do?

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause)

You know what to do son. And I have to much respect for you to tell you what to do. I know you will do the right thing for your employees--that's part of the sacred covenant of being a business owner. You have to be able to look them in the eye, knowing you did everything in your power to save their jobs.

STAN

(Long pause as Stan stares at his father.)

I got to get back.

STAN'S FATHER

It was good seeing you son.

Stan leaves, not knowing what to say. The lights slowly come back on in the main office as the employees continue to go about their routines in silence. Lewis has entered with Foster and Ronnie points them in the direction of Stan's office. As they enter Stan's office, Stan acts surprised they are together.

STAN

You guys know each other?

LEWIS

He's my boss.

STAN

He's your boss?

LEWIS

Yes.

Stan stares at him, stunned.

FOSTER

(Extends his hand.)

Good to see you again Stan.

STAN

Well, let's do this. What have you got for me?

FOSTER

(Hands Stan a binder.)

As you will see, we studied your company and its financials very thoroughly and I believe we came up with a very nice offer. And I think you will find it's very generous to yourself.

STAN

(Leafing through the binder.)

Where's the bottom line?

FOSTER

Last page.

STAN

(Turns to the last page. Pause.)

This is the offer?

FOSTER

Given your circumstances, we believe it is a very generous offer. And you would personally walk away with a very nice check. We felt that was more than generous.

STAN

Given my circumstances, what the hell does that mean?

FOSTER

What it means is at the rate you're going, you'll be bankrupt in 6 months. You simply can't compete in this market.

STAN

(Pause.)

This wouldn't even pay off my suppliers.

FOSTER

We're very comfortable with our offer. We're offering you a lifeline. And you personally will make out very well on this deal.

STAN

You call this a lifeline?

FOSTER

Absolutely. And we are prepared to offer you a position. Your brother pushed hard for that.

STAN

(Turning toward Lewis.)

Always thinking of family.

FOSTER

But the main thing is you will be working for a major corporation, plus you will have a nice nest egg in the bank.

STAN

You're calling that the main thing? I thought the main thing might be the fact that you are putting my employees out on the street.

FOSTER

Listen, this offer is more than generous.

STAN

What about my employees? Are you going to hire them too?

FOSTER

Of course not.

STAN

What happens to my company?

FOSTER

Honestly?

STAN

Yeah, honestly.

FOSTER

We shut the doors and sell off anything we can't use.

STAN

Do you have any idea how many people you are putting out of work?

FOSTER

It's not my concern.

STAN

Who's concern is it?

FOSTER

Listen, this is the way capitalism works. Every day you keep this company open...well, it just means you are putting off the inevitable.

STAN

Fuck the inevitable.

LEWIS

Stan, don't do this. You can't fight this.

STAN

How can you work for these people? They're parasites.

LEWIS

Let's not get personal.

STAN

You think this isn't personal? They sent my own fuckin' brother to close my company. And you don't think that's not personal?

LEWIS

They didn't know I was your brother.

STAN

The hell they didn't know. They absolutely knew. One thing they are not is stupid. Amoral, but make no mistake about it--they're not stupid.

FOSTER

(Combative.)

You don't get it, do you? I'm offering you a lifeline. You really think you can compete in this market? You shouldn't even be in business. You string your employees along, talking about loyalty and family. They deserve better. They deserve to be with a company that is built to last. I've seen your books. Your company is running on fumes.

And what's amazing to me is how surprised you are by my offer. How could you be so clueless? I don't understand why we would offer you a job. You ran this company into the ground and I don't understand why we would reward that.

LEWIS

Stan, I'm sorry. Please consider the offer. You have no choice.

STAN

You always have a choice. That's the one thing I do have. But lets talk about choices. Your company made the choice of manufacturing overseas, no matter what the human cost. That's a choice. And you know what, one of these days one of those factories are gonna collapse, killing thousands. Actually, that has already happened. It just hasn't been your factory yet. But when it does happen, and it will, that will be a consequence of that choice, collateral damage, simply the cost of doing business, right? And they made the choice of having a brother try to convince a brother to go out of business. And you know what, I'm not even pissed at you; I'm pissed at them for making you do this.

LEWIS

They didn't make me do this.

STAN

Bullshit.

LEWIS

It was my choice to try to save you from yourself.

STAN

They fuckin' played you Lewis. They made the decision and you were their willing executioner.

LEWIS

Stan, this is business; it's not personal.

STAN

Don't keep telling me it's not personal. It's deeply personal. And when you sit down to tell someone you have to let them go after 25 years of service, well, you think that doesn't get personal?

(To Foster.)

You ever lay someone off?

FOSTER

That's not the point.

STAN

It's exactly the point. This is about jobs.

FOSTER

We create a lot of jobs in this economy.

STAN

I know all about your company and you create shit for the economy. You create minimum wage shit jobs; that's what you create. It's not a livable wage. Why is that the only people that pay its workers a livable wage are small companies? What you create are indentured servants, our new form of slavery. And I'm sure you create a lot of wealth for the owners, the stockholders, but make no mistake about it--what you create is not a job. And what about your factory workers in India--do you call those jobs? If you can't support a family off a paycheck, it's not a fuckin' job.

(To Lewis)

How can you work for these people?

LEWIS

I'm not gonna apologize to you for supporting my family. I don't have the moral superiority that you have, your ability to look down on people who are just supporting their families.

STAN

You know, that's what drug dealers say--they're just supporting their family, doing their job. Nothing is personal. They're all just businessmen.

LEWIS

I'm not responding to that. Just know this: these people don't care about your cute little business. They will crush you. You need to take this offer before it's too late because it will be off the table by tomorrow.

STAN

Well, let's not stretch this thing out any further than we have to. I'll make it real simple for you: : fuck the offer.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

Why won't you let me help you? Why do you have to be so stubborn?

STAN

You wanna help me? You call this help? Listen, this company has been in business for 25 years and it will be in business for another 50. No one is closing us down.

(To Foster.)

Thank you for the offer but we ain't going anywhere.

FOSTER

(Pause, gathering up his briefcase and documents.)

You know why we manufacture overseas? Because it is good for the American consumer. Our low prices makes goods and services affordable. People are able to live better because of our low prices.

STAN

But if you wipe out all their jobs, how do they living better? Explain to me that. But maybe you're right: their unemployment checks will have more purchasing power. I forgot about that.

LEWIS

Don't be like this? You have no idea what you are up against.

STAN

I'm competing against child labor sweatshops in India and China. I know exactly what I'm up against. And you know what, I don't care. We're still gonna compete.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

Don't do this.

Fosters stares at Stan, walks to the door and stops.

FOSTER

Let's go.

Lewis remains frozen.

STAN

(Pause.)

It's O.K. Go.

Lewis hesitates, stares at Stan and then slowly walks out. Stan remains still, absorbing what just happened. Cindy comes in.

CINDY

Who was that?

STAN

Nobody. Listen, we need to get sales moving. Now!

He moves out to the main office with Cindy following.

Guys, I need you to follow up on every proposal, every quote and every project. And I need you to do this today as well as make 3 appointments for the rest of the week.

KYLE

(On the phone.)

I'll get that rolling. We'll call when the order is ready.

He hangs up the phone and turns to Stan.

Stan, we got that Providence project.

STAN

See how easy this is guys? Just do the basics like Kyle here.

Ronnie is in the middle of a call, standing.

RONNIE

Good morning, is Mr. Simpson in...Ronnie Bulger...Furniture Unlimited...He'll know what this is about..trust me...just give him my name. He'll take the call.

(To Stan.)

She's stonewalling me.

STAN

Buddy, I can feel this one. Let's book this sale now and don't forget to get a deposit.

RONNIE

(On the phone.)

Mr. Simpson? Ronnie. How have you been?...Play any golf lately?....Your son plays too?

STAN

(To the rest of the office.)

I've never seen such foreplay in a salesman.

RONNIE

And what's your son's handicap?...Really?...Well, That's a very good course...

STAN

Ronnie, you can go with 80% less foreplay here--trust me.

Ronnie holds up his arm to keep the office quiet.

RONNIE

I didn't know you were in Nam.

Stan throws his arms up and looks to the heavens, rolling his eyes. He then makes a motion with his hands, exhorting Ronnie to move it along.

Well, it's good you came back in one piece...By the way, did you receive that proposal I sent? ...any questions?...

STAN

Buddy, this is yours. Absolutely yours.

RONNIE

Delivery is in about 6 weeks.

STAN

Get the purchase order buddy.

RONNIE

Do you have the purchase order number?...Let me read that back: BP14723...All right, I will expect the hard copy but thank you. We will set up installation in about 6 weeks.

He hangs up the phone and looks at Stan in astonishment.

We got it.

STAN

Well done Ronnie, well done. Guys, the quarter is ending and we can still pull this quarter off.

Cindy comes over to Stan.

CINDY

Can we talk about Jose now?

STAN

Sure. I'm not sure why but come to my office.

They both walk over to Stan's office. The rest of the office continues their routines in silence.

CINDY

We need to let Jose go.

STAN

Why is this so important to you?

CINDY

Because it is important for the company. I know he is your friend but the company can't afford his non-production. He is just sucking up air here. And he's drinking way to much..

STAN

And if I did get rid of him, what do you think happens to him? Should we put him out to pasture, maybe shoot him, put him out of his misery. They shoot horses don't they? Let me tell you something: he has sold a lot of product for this company, a lot of product. And you think this should be his reward? Is that what you think this company is all about? I think he needs our help. Other companies can shoot horses but let me make this clear: we don't shoot horses here.

CINDY

We're struggling to keep the doors open.

STAN

He's my friend; that's all you need to know.

Jose is seen walking towards Stan's office.

CINDY

(Pause.)

It's your company.

JOSE

You guys talking about me?

STAN

You're not that interesting.

CINDY

I'll be in my office.

Cindy goes back to her office.

STAN

We need to talk about this sale.

JOSE

She's leaving.

STAN

Who's leaving?

JOSE

My wife.

STAN

(Pause.)

I'm sorry.

(Long pause.)

Listen, I know you don't want to talk about this but we have to talk about your sale. I need to know why that guy give you such a big deposit?

JOSE

I told you why.

STAN

Not really.

(Pause.)

Jose, what's going on with this? Just tell me. It's OK. Just tell me.

JOSE

(Long pause, holding back emotions.)

You were still gonna make money.

STAN

What does that mean?

JOSE

(Long pause.)

He said if I could get him wholesale pricing he would pay me \$10,000 under the table. That's what I needed for the rest of my down payment.

STAN

(Long pause.)

How could you do this?

JOSE

This was the only way this deal would go down. I told everyone in my family I was buying a house. I was to be the first.

STAN

This is stealing. Don't you get that?

JOSE

(Desperate.)

But I will be the first. I need this sale. Don't make me beg.

STAN

(Incredulous.)

You were gonna steal from me.

JOSE

(Bringing out the crumbled house brochure.

He is starting to break.)

Look at the brochure; look how big the kitchen is, the back yard....Why can't you do this one sale?

STAN

(Pause.)

We have to be loyal to our dealers.

JOSE

But they're not loyal to us.

STAN

I don't care. That's on us. My word is on the street.... You stole from me Jose. And what makes it even worse, you don't even think it was stealing. You got it all justified. I'm sorry. You can't work here anymore.

JOSE

(Breaking down, even more desperate.)

You can't do this. This is not a good time. Tell me what I need to do to fix this. Here's the check. You take the 10gs.

(Pushes the check toward Stan.)

STAN

I don't want your money.

JOSE

Then just tell me what I need to do. Take my commissions; just pay me my base. Tell me what I need to do to fix this. I'm your son's Godfather for Christ sakes.

STAN

You are done here.

Stan walks out. Jose sits down, devastated. Stan walks over to the fast food restaurant where his father is wiping down tables. The father sees him and goes over. Stan is visibly shaken from the last scene with Jose.

STAN'S FATHER

Coffee?

STAN

Sure.

The father pours a cup and walks over with it.

STAN'S FATHER

What's up?

STAN

(Pause)

I just fired my best friend.

STAN'S FATHER

That must of been tough.

STAN

He stole from me.

STAN'S FATHER

He must be desperate.

STAN

We're all desperate. It sounds like you're condoning what he did.

STAN'S FATHER

No, I just understand desperation. He must of been in a living hell for him to do that.

STAN

(Pause.)

Is that why you left the family? You were desperate?

STAN'S FATHER

(Long pause, getting emotional.)

It was never about you and your brother.

STAN

It was absolutely about me and Lewis.

STAN'S FATHER

(Long pause.)

Son, I'm sorry. You have no idea how hard it was walking out that door, leaving you and your brother.

STAN

What was hard was being abandoned; that's what was hard. You terrorized us by your absence. Your absence was a form of violence, of abuse. We never knew when you would be home, if there would be money for food, if you would come home drunk, or if Mom would spend the night crying. I use to pray for a divorce, pray you would get into a car accident, anything to stop the nightmare. And you know what, I will probably be doing that exact same thing to my kids very shortly.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause)

I'm sorry to hear that. Son, your mother and I had problems for a long time.

STAN

I needed a father. You went off with your girlfriend and left us to care for Mom.

(Pause)

After you left, I told myself I would never do that to another person. Ever. And Lewis asks me why I keep this going. I'm not gonna abandoned my employees like you abandoned us.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause)

I'm sorry son. You didn't deserve that.

STAN

(Breaking down.)

I wasn't ready to be the man of the house. I was working 40 hours a week as a 16 year old. I didn't want to be the man of the house. I needed a father. I needed somebody to tell me what to do, teach me right from wrong.

STAN'S FATHER

(Long pause as he watches his son break down.)

I wish I could take those years back. I just knew there was something more, but I didn't know what it was. I just knew that the assumptions I grew up with wasn't making me happy.

And I was on the road so much that after awhile you start to get lonely, and you start to look for something to fill the loneliness. But that loneliness just eats away at you and you try to numb it with drink but it goes deeper. You know, I never wanted to go into business; it wasn't in my nature. I wanted something different but the money just got to be to good. And we had the big house, the new car every year but I started to wonder: is this it? Is this all there is? I just realized one day that the life I was living wasn't making me happy. I felt a void, almost spiritual. I wanted something different but I didn't know what that something was.

And I'm so sorry son. I'm sorry I put you though that because you didn't deserve that. No one deserves that.

STAN

(Pause.)

But you did. You had choices and you choose that woman over your family.

STAN'S FATHER

Son, at some point you have to stop being a victim in all this.

STAN

(Angry.)

You have no right.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause)

You're right son. And I'm not one to judge but you're too much of a man to keep being a victim.

STAN

(Long pause, emotional)

I'm losing 'em Dad. She is gonna leave with the kids if I don't take the offer, the offer I just turned down.

STAN'S FATHER

Fight for them son.

STAN

How can she ask me to make a decision like that? I'm just trying to save jobs but I'm losing my family and I don't know what to do. I don't want to be one of those fathers whose kids wait on the front stoop, praying their father will make it home.

STAN'S FATHER

She's just fighting for the family son. That's what your mother use to do.

STAN

(Pause)

But how do you tell a room full of people they no longer have a job? How do you do that?

STAN'S FATHER

I don't know son.

(Pause.)

Son, I have always been your biggest fan. I have rooted for you from day 1. I have loved you from day 1.

STAN

(Pause.)

I never thought you cared.

STAN'S FATHER

I never stopped being proud of you, no matter what I was going through. It was the one thing I had in my life, the one thing I was proud of, that I had a son that was as accomplished as you... I never stopped loving you son. I know I was a lousy father but I never stopped loving you.

Stan is somewhat stunned, not knowing what to say.

(Pause)

After I left, your Mom didn't want me to come around.. I used to try and see you but she would tell me that you and your brother didn't want to see me but I shouldn't of fought that. You don't know how much that hurt me but that's how she got her revenge-- not that I blame her. But she just didn't want me around you when I was drinking. She was just trying to protect you from a drunk. After I sobered up, well, too much time had passed and I didn't press the issue. But you and your brother were the one thing in my life that warmed my heart, that kept me alive.

STAN

(Pause.)

I never knew that.

(Pause)

What should I do about my family?

STAN'S FATHER

Fight for 'em. I wish I had fought for you and your brother. It's the biggest regret of my life. Don't give up on your family.

STAN

(Pause.)

What was your dream Dad?

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause)

I can't remember. But it wasn't working at a fast food restaurant at 65 years of age.

STAN

But this offer. I'd make out very well on this deal.. I could walk away from all this and not look back.

STAN'S FATHER

(Long pause.)

It's no small thing. What you created here, with no help from banks or investors, is remarkable.

Don't give up on this. You see, I was set for life, living the American dream, just like all my friends. And I look at them now: damaged souls, unemployable, divorced, alcoholic and diseased--the collateral damage of the American dream.

STAN

I'm sorry.

STAN'S FATHER

Don't be.

(Long pause.)

Listen, I was at a similar fork 40 years ago. I went down the wrong path and have been dealing with the consequences ever since.

STAN

(Long pause as Stan takes in the last statement, touched.)

How is it for you here?

STAN'S FATHER

My 21 year old boss Joe said I have a lot of potential, that I have a bright future here. He said I was becoming a vital member of the family. That's what their recruitment posters say: join the family, become a vital member of our team.

STAN

With all due respect to your 21 year old boss--screw Joe. You got a family.

STAN'S FATHER

(Pause.)

Thank you son.

STAN

I'll let you know how it goes.

STAN'S FATHER

I'd like that son. Maybe come back for lunch. I'll supersize you, no extra charge.

STAN

I'm always looking to put on weight.

STAN'S FATHER

That's what we're here for.

Stan walks back to his office. Meanwhile his brother has entered the office and Ronnie points him in the direction of Stan's office. The rest of the office continues their routines, in silence.

STAN

I can't believe you are walking in here.

LEWIS

I had no choice. They told me to do it or I was gone.

STAN

You should of told them to go fuck themselves, that this was family, that you don't fuck your family.

LEWIS

You gonna pay my mortgage?

STAN

I got families here who have bills, mortgages, and dreams for their kids. And that's probably the most important thing--dreams for their kids. That is who you are trying to put out on the street. So no, I could care less about your mortgage and your bills.

LEWIS

This was gonna happen whether I did it or someone else did it.

STAN

Keep telling yourself that.

LEWIS

(Getting emotional.)

You don't understand. I had no choice.

STAN

(Pause.)

You looking for forgiveness? Is that why you're here?

LEWIS

I just want you to understand why I did what I did.

STAN

(Long pause.)

It breaks my heart that they put you in that position.

LEWIS

(Long pause.)

They laid me off.

STAN

What?

LEWIS

They laid me off. I think getting you to close down was some kind of loyalty test.

STAN

Don't flatter yourself. Some accountant did a cost analysis and decided you were expendable, that the profit margin for your division would be greater if your job was eliminated.

LEWIS

What am I gonna do? I'm afraid to tell my wife. I've been through so many jobs. I'm scared. I'm 47 years old. In this economy, who hires someone like me? I keep seeing people like me working at Walmart or McDonalds, or sitting on a bar stool all day.

STAN

(Long pause.)

Work here.

LEWIS

That's crazy. I've seen your books Stan. You can't hire someone like me.

STAN

But we do generate a lot of cash. You saw that, didn't you?

LEWIS

Yeah, that's why the company was interested in you. But it's your expenses.

STAN

We can make a few changes, tighten our belt. But this I know: we can always generate sales. This we can do. And at the end of the day people will pay for quality. We have personal relationships with our clients, relationships we have been developing for decades. You think some company is gonna come into our market and take those relationships away? You think a cheaper product trumps relationships and quality craftsmanship?

LEWIS

That's what they are banking on...You're serious about this.

STAN

And I'm not doing you any favors. I know how good you are developing web sites. We need to be selling worldwide and we need a kick ass web site in order to do that.

LEWIS

Well, your web site does suck.

STAN

You know of course I designed our site.

LEWIS

Ain't no sugarcoating it--your web site sucks.

STAN

Well, if you're gonna work for me you have to be more diplomatic towards the owner.

LEWIS

You got a horrible web site. It is what it is.

STAN

(Pause)

I hate what they made you do.

LEWIS

It's O.K.

STAN

Listen, we're gonna be O.K.

LEWIS

(Pause.)

I'm counting on it. You really want to hire me?

STAN

Don't ask me that again. I might change my mind.

Jose walks in, looks at Stan, waiting for him to finish his conversation with his brother.

JOSE

(Pause.)

I have nowhere to go.

They stare at each other for a few moments.

There is nothing out there for me. I have nowhere else to go.

STAN

(Long pause.)

O.K. Come back in the morning. If you're not here by 8, you're fired. And close that guy to put the sale through one of our dealers. Use Sterling. And rip up that 10g check.

JOSE

I have a job?

STAN

A job with a shitload of contingencies.

JOSE

But I have a job?

STAN

If you're here at 8:01 you are fired. If you ever take a drink during the day you're fired. 8:00 o'clock.

JOSE

8 o'clock.

RONNIE

Stan, we've been short listed for that new medical facility in Boston. You know, I really think we are gonna get it.

STAN

A shocking display of optimism from the Ronald. We are absolutely getting this job. Guys, didn't I say this would be a great day.

Martha walks in. Stan and her Martha stare at each other for a few moments. The spotlight focuses in on Martha and Stan, the rest of the office continues their routines in silence.

MARTHA

You didn't take their offer, did you?

STAN

(Pause)

I just couldn't. I had every intention of taking the money but I just couldn't do it. I'm sorry.

MARTHA

(Pause)

So am I. All that money. It's a slap in the face. We could of been home free, set for life.

STAN

(Pause, slightly angry.)

How can you ask me to just walk away?

MARTHA

I'm just asking you to choose me, your kids, your home. That's all I'm asking.

STAN

There's consequences to that. Why can't you see that?

MARTHA

Give this up. This has gotten way out of hand. You have used every cent of our house's equity.

STAN

I need you to have some faith.

MARTHA

I'm sorry. I have no more faith to give.

STAN

(Pause, pleading.)

Don't give up on us.

MARTHA

You're the one who gave up.

She starts to leave.

STAN.

Wait!

MARTHA

I'll be at my mother's with the kids.

She leaves. Stan stands there, frozen. He sits down to compose himself. He finally rises, goes to the edge of the office and looks out on his employees. He slowly walks into the main office, still absorbing the enormity of what happened.

Cindy walks in holding a fax.

CINDY

You OK?

STAN

Martha's leaving and taking the kids.

CINDY

Why?

STAN

She wants me to sell.

CINDY

What are you gonna do?

STAN

(Pause)

I'm gonna keep showing up. That's what I'm gonna do--keep showing up.

CINDY

OK. Listen, we just got this fax from our landlord offering to extend our lease at a 10% discount. Where did this come from?

Mario walks in holding a fax.

MARIO

Did you get the fax?

STAN

LET FREEDOM RING BROTHER. LET FREEDOM RING.

MARIO

FREE AT LAST. THANK GOD ALMIGHTY, WE'RE FREE AT LAST.

RONNIE

We should go out and celebrate.

STAN

You celebrate everything. Why don't you and your buddy Mario go out?

MARIO

Absolutely. We can have a discussion about environmental racism.

RONNIE

This is what I'm talking about--that black shit again.

STAN

Yeah Mario, there you go with that black shit again.

MARIO

It is what it is.

RONNIE

Well, are you buying?

MARIO

First round. We'll talk about institutional racism.

RONNIE

This is what I'm saying. Well, I'll listen to anything as long as the beer is free.

STAN

There you go Mario, his mind is open.

RONNIE

You coming?

STAN

I'm going home and perform the greatest sales job of my life.

MARIO

Seriously, good luck with that.

STAN

Thanks.

Stan starts to leave, stops, bends down and picks up something under a desk.

Cindy. The receipt. I found the receipt. I told you it would be a great day.

CINDY

You did say that.

RONNIE

We gonna be OK?

STAN

I found the receipt didn't I? Anything's possible!

BLACKOUT. CURTAIN