

RESTING COMFORTABLY

By
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Registered WGAW

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FADE IN:

INT DOCTOR'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM, PRESENT - DAY

AL FINE (74) rummages through newspapers on a coffee table. He glistens, wriggles anxiously, flaps the front of his sport shirt as if hot. Two other GUYS sit on opposite sides of the drab, beige waiting room. Everyone ignores everyone else.

AL
Magazines... Whatever happened
to Goddamn magazines? Doctor's
office...? Magazines?

Al finds and delves into a copy of National Geographic.

A NURSE (30) in crisp, colorful scrubs, steps into the doorway and mumbles a name. Al intently studies a photo in the magazine, turning it sideways. The nurse takes another step in.

NURSE
Who's Fine?

Al pops to attention, tosses the magazine onto the table and stands up.

AL
I'm Fine.

GUY
I'm fine, too.

NURSE (unamused)
Al Fine, 11:15 appointment.

Al gives guy a look as he walks toward the nurse. To her:

AL
Like I never heard that before.
All my life, I'm telling you.

INT DOCTOR'S OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

As the nurse walks ahead, Al watches the flow of her hips.

NURSE

I'm sure.

AL

Oh, Ms. Sure. Nice to meet you.
I'm Fine.

At an office doorway, the nurse swings around to face Al.

NURSE

The doctor will be right in.

AL

I'm sorry. A guy forty years older than you, coming on to you?

NURSE

That's a come on? Oh, Mr. Fine, come on!

She laughs down the hall. Al looks deflated.

INT DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Al walks into the nicely appointed office, plops in a leather chair on the near side of a large wooden desk. He distractedly twirls his fingers and hooks his two thumbs-and-forefingers to form an "S."

AL

"S" is for schmuck. Such a schmuck.

INT DOCTOR'S OFFICE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

DR. LEWIS steps in the doorway, shuts the door behind him, shakes Al's hand and settles in the chair behind the desk.

AL
No disrobing? That's always a
bad sign.

DR. LEWIS
I'd like to go over your PSA
test results, Mr. Fine.

Al's forehead is really shiny. He's glassy eyed.

DR. LEWIS
PSA. You know what this test is,
right?, what it indicates.

AL
PSA. Prostate... specific...
uh...

DR. LEWIS
Antigen, that's right. Prostate
specific antigen. The prostate
gland being, of course, the
walnut-sized...

AL
Yeah, that I know. The walnut,
the famous walnut...

DR. LEWIS
So, your blood test shows an
elevated level of 7, almost
twice what we'd like to see
here. Now, with regard to
possible mitigating factors, let
me ask you. You had your blood
drawn, uh... let's see... a week
ago, exactly a week ago. Did you
have an ejaculation shortly
before that, let's say, within
24 hours prior?

AL
Let me see, Doc, let me think...
Hmmm... No, I'd say not within
the previous 24 hours. Or the
previous 24 days, or 24 weeks,
or...

DR. LEWIS
OK, I think I understand.

AL (serious, worried again)
So it's bad, huh?

The doctor leans over his desk, intently.

DR. LEWIS
I'd like to say we caught it in
time, but we can't be sure. The
prostate is a tricky gland.

AL
Cancer.

The doctor nods as he pulls together a stack of
papers.

DR. LEWIS
Possibly.

AL
Shit!

Al sits back in his chair, stares at the doctor
who casually sifts through his papers.

AL
So how long? What's the story?

The doctor looks up, taps the stack into order.

DR. LEWIS
That depends on treatment. I'm
sending you home with a lot to
read. I want you back here soon,
no later than a week. You've got
choices to make.

He puts the paper into a large, LIME GREEN PLASTIC
ENVELOPE, and shoves it across the desk to Al.

AL
I gotta decide in a week?
Nothing's gonna fall off, is it?

The doctor shakes his head with a little smile.

DR. LEWIS

My digital exam, showed nothing more than an enlarged prostate common in a man your age. Of course we need to get a tissue sample, a biopsy, as soon as possible. There are various treatment options, all with their own, uh, considerations. Meanwhile, I'd like you to keep up healthy sexual function as long as you feel okay.

AL

Yeah. I'd like that, too. You know, Doc, I'm 74. If this is going to involve a lot of iffy surgery and misery, well, I've had a pretty good life, all things considered. There's a few tall buildings even around here I could possibly, just, accidentally, well, you know what I mean.

DR. LEWIS

I don't tolerate that kind of talk, Mr. Fine. I'd like you to get a serious attitude about this and decide...

AL (handing back the papers)

I'm not sure I like your attitude either, Doctor...

DR. LEWIS

Mr. Fine, I'm 54 years old, your junior, but to be perfectly honest, life is too short to deal with patients who don't want to be helped. Please, keep the papers, my gift. And forget about the charges for today. Except for the lab tests, which of course...

AL (takes papers and exits)

Thanks Doctor. Sorry for the trouble. Really.

Montage of shots - day

1) INT - AL'S CAR

Al sits behind the wheel of his once-classy, ten-year-old Cadillac Allante' convertible, a sort of "compact" Caddy, top down, and quietly drives.

2) EXT - ROADWAY

Stretches long and straight, with little traffic.

3) EXT - FINE DRIVEWAY

Al exits the dusty car, slams the squeaky door. He turns back, reaches in to retrieve green envelope of papers.

INT - FINE HOME - DAY

Suburban, ranch-style home. Al tosses the green envelope on an already cluttered coffee table. The simple living room is sparsely decorated but featured front and center are a giant screen TV and a leather EasyBoy recliner.

Al flips the remote toward the TV.

ONSCREEN: A cable news commentator talking head.

Al makes a face and quickly flips the channel.

ONSCREEN: A women's wrestling match with two women in bright, tight outfits, diving after each other. The crowd cheers and the male announcer's drowned-out voice gets more and more excited.

AL

C'mon. Grab something!... Watch out!... Don't let her do that! What's the matter with you?

Al plops in the chair and sighs. Behind his chair is the only photo on the walls, a large black and white of him and his dad, years ago in front of "Fine Furniture" in New York City.

AL

Geez! Too fast. Too Goddamn fast. Where did it all go?

Al turns down TV volume, dials telephone and waits...

AL

Yeah, Adobe Pizza? Yeah, Al Fine, regular customer. I'd like to get my usual. No drink. Deliver it to the house... My usual, my usual! I guess you're new there? HEY GET OFF HER, YOU COW! ... What? no, sorry, I'm talking to the TV. Anyhow, OK, I'm talking about a vegetarian pizza, loaded, whole wheat crust, with sausage... That's right, sausage... Vegetarian, right, it's the only way to get all the vegetables, and I like my sausage... You should call it the Al Fine Special. Anyhow, see you soon...yeah, whenever. I'll be here... Thanks.

Al sits, watches wrestling, but is moody, head in hands.

INT - FINE HOME - SHORTLY AFTER

Doorbell rings. Al answers door. BLAISE, male (25), blonde, arrives with pizza. Al has a glimmer of recognition.

AL

Hey, uh, from the casino, uh, maintenance, right?

BLAISE

Right, Blaise, from the casino. Hi Mr. Fine. Just doing a little moonlighting here.

AL

Come in, sit down, take a load off, let me get you some dough... Moonlighting, Jesus, where do you kids get all that energy? Well, I guess I used to be the same... Here you go Blaise, and here's five extra for you. OK?

BLAISE

Yeah cool, thanks. OK, well, I'll see you later, Mr. Fine? Won anything at the casino lately?

AL

Al. Call me Al. Are you kidding? You know better than that. The whole thing is rigged. Just enough to keep me coming back for more.

BLAISE

Right. Well, OK, Mr. Fine - Al. See you later.

They shake hands and Blaise exits. Al sits down to eat his pizza, watching TV wrestling, once again subdued.

EXT ROARING THUNDER CASINO ENTRANCE - DAY

Al's convertible rolls to a stop at the valet stand. A hefty Native American trots to his door. Al, in the same sport shirt and slacks he's worn all day, pats the car proudly, hands the valet \$5.

AL

Park it in the shade, will you?

The valet squints in the bright, late afternoon sunlight, looks left and right. No trees. No shade. Al strides along the entry sidewalk.

INT CASINO ENTRANCE - DAY

GABE, a husky Native American security guard, calls out:

GABE
Hey, Mr. Fine. You're here
kind of early.

Al nods at him, walks, jingles coins in his pockets as the jingly, circus-like casino music increases.

INT CASINO SLOT MACHINE AREA - DAY

EVVIE, a dark-haired cocktail waitress in a scanty outfit, steps into Al's path wielding an empty black tray. He halts.

EVVIE
Too early for a drink, Mr. Fine?

Al hesitates. He looks around the room where a few people sit in front of slot machines. HENRY, the floor manager in a dark suit, waves from across the room

AL (to Evvie)
It's not too early for, uh,
apple juice... On the rocks!

Evvie winks and smiles.

EVVIE
Gotcha. Be right back.

Henry makes his way toward Al as Al continues to walk.

HENRY
Mr. Karaoke! What's up?

Al cracks a little smile.

AL
Now you admit it, Henry. You're
jealous of a man with a title
and a following.

Henry slaps him on the back and walks on, calling back:

HENRY

You're here on the wrong night.
Karaoke is Thursday.

AL (half to himself)

Anytime's all right for a little
escape.

We get the sense throughout that Al is a little more urbane, or at least a little more "New York", than these local folks. And while he makes an effort at camaraderie, there is always a little effort, a little distance. No condescension, though; Al seems to envy the generally easygoing, relaxed local style.

INT CASINO CRAPS TABLE - DAY

Al sits down at a nearly empty craps table. The beautiful croupier could not look more bored, even irritated. Evvie, the waitress, finds Al, delivers his juice in a highball glass and winks. Al raises his voice and glances toward the croupier:

AL

Sweetheart, this is the best-
looking drink I've had all day.
So far...

Nothing. The croupier looks at her red polished nails.

AL (trying harder)

A tall glass... A tall drink...

Less than nothing from the croupier. She's heard it all before. The waitress pats Al's shoulder and exits. He lights a cigarette.

INT CASINO CRAPS TABLE - LATER

Al hasn't started playing; he scowls at the detached croupier who doesn't even look up, puts his wallet in his back pocket and stands to leave.

INT CASINO LOUNGE ENTRANCE - LATER

Al leans against the lounge entry door as a couple of musicians warm up. He turns to leave as slim, leggy STAR (43) crosses the floor and heads his way. He's starstruck.

The Native American beauty wears a jacket with the ROARING THUNDER logo emblazoned on one side. Al grabs at his heart dramatically.

STAR
Are you alright?

AL
My heart is breaking and I haven't even alienated you like I have all the other beautiful women around here, not that..., uh, I've seen any, uh, quite like...

Star giggles and holds out her hand.

STAR
I'm Star, the new concierge.

Al closes his eyes as they shake.

AL
I wish I may. I wish I might.

Star slaps him lightly on the hand.

STAR
Very funny. What's your name?

AL
Al. Al Fine.

STAR
Ah, Mr. Karaoke! I've heard of you.

Al shrugs and nods.

AL
At your service. So how'd you get to Roaring Thunder?

STAR

Roundabout. I'm actually from nearby here but I've been out in Hollywood.

Al nods, seems to understand and sympathize.

AL

My daughter's in LA also, acting. So you came back to the real people.

STAR

Oh, there were real people there. Good friends. But my family is here and at my age...

AL

Whoa, what, "age"? Hollywood's loss. They may not know what to do with a woman over thirty, but from this vantage point, with a trained eye, I feel you're just approaching your --

Star turns away as a Native American businessman, GEORGE MONTOYA (40s) walks up and puts his arm around her waist. George is a little overweight, not particularly movie-star attractive, but appealingly unpretentious.

STAR

George, this is Al.

GEORGE

Yeah. I see Al around. Hi Al.

STAR (to Al)

George is as sweet as a river valley apple. And you're right, Al. Life is just beginning.

Star waves and walks off, arm-in-arm with George. Al looks blankly forlorn as he turns away slowly.

INT CASINO SLOT MACHINE AREA

Al wanders over and sits at the Wonder Whirl slot machine and feeds a \$5 bill into it. He pushes a few buttons, looks woefully along the row of empty chairs. Nothing. He pulls out another \$5, hesitates, feeds and pushes.

Closer look: lights begin to flash. The tornadoes all line up in a row on the screen.

There's a huge RINGING COMMOTION. Al looks around, then up. He sees lights whirling over his machine.

Henry and Gabe, the Security Guard, show up at Al's side and pull him by the arm away from the little crowd gathering.

INT CASINO MANAGER'S OFFICE

Al sits in a plush overstuffed chair next to Henry and across a broad desk from Casino manager, NATHAN MIERA, stocky with cropped dark hair. He wears a red Roaring Thunder shirt. Gabe leaves.

AL

What did I win, Nathan? I won something.

Nathan runs a hand through his dark hair, naturally swept back, and grimaces.

NATHAN

No shit, Al. You won the friggin' Wonder Whirl Flying Jackpot.

AL

Ha! That's - what - a million or what? Hey, aren't you happy for me?

NATHAN (not happy)

On Tuesday afternoon. To a guy who's practically an employee.

AL

Hey, I never get paid for
Karaoke night. And I just about
pay the mortgage here, don't I?

NATHAN

I said practically.

There's a knock at the door and George (Star's
boyfriend) enters. Nathan stands up and shakes his
hand. He motions to Al.

NATHAN

Meet Al Fine. Al, George
Montoya.

AL

Yeah. I seen George around.

George holds out his hand and Al half-heartedly
shakes it.

NATHAN

George is our attorney. George,
Al had some excitement. The
Wonder Whirl. A half a million.

AL

Shit. Only a half a million?

GEORGE

That's what all the noise was.
Way to go, old soldier.

Nathan walks back behind his desk, picks up his
jacket and slips it on. He eyes George,
deliberating.

AL

What? What's everybody so glum?
Did I do something wrong? Don't
I qualify or something?

NATHAN

We've got a situation.

Al looks back and forth at the guys anxiously.

AL

Yeah? I got a situation, too.
You don't want to know about it.

George sits on the edge of Nathan's desk as Nathan sits back in his chair.

NATHAN

Ordinarily, we'd give you a choice: lump sum or extended payout.

AL

Yeah, OK...

GEORGE

See, we just settled a big lawsuit. Had to put out a shitload of cash, like yesterday. Not covered by our insurance policy.

Nathan steps out in front of George. He taps his shoulder and takes over the discussion.

NATHAN

We'd prefer that you take the extended payout. We know you, Al. Be honest with us. Could that work out for you?

GEORGE

Tax wise, it's to your benefit to take the extended payout. You know that, right?

Al nods, understandingly. He sits back, gives them his best New Jersey accent:

AL

I tought youse was gonna bump me off.

Everyone laughs, though a bit nervously.

NATHAN

Like I said, you're practically an employee.

AL
I'm thinkin, about that... and
about this extended payout...

NATHAN
What?

AL
I'm just thinking... I'm
wondering...My situation is...
well, I have some things I need
to figure out. Could I call my
attorney?

NATHAN
Of course. We'll leave you alone
if you like. You want some
privacy? Here, let's go, guys.

Nathan nods and gets up, slaps Henry on the
shoulder and takes him and George out the door. Al
dials the phone.

AL
Listen, Hector, Al Fine. I've
got a situation here. I'm at
Roaring Thunder Casino...

OUTSIDE OFFICE

Nathan, Henry and George lean against a wall,
eyeing the door a bit nervously, not saying much.

INSIDE OFFICE

AL
Look, Hector, just because
you're my attorney doesn't mean
you have to piss on everything I
suggest. I'm serious here. I
feel like I'm getting this
inspiration here. It feels
right, as the locals say... No,
you can check it out with my
doctor, my former doctor,
whatever, Dr. Lewis...

Al glances toward the door

AL (contd)

...Vance Lewis, and give him the go-ahead to send over those results... Yeah, yeah, thanks. That's a bunch of bullshit, but thanks. Send me some flowers, OK, but first, get those test results sent over here, or faxed or whatever.

There's a knock on the door. George pokes his head in.

GEORGE

Nathan's making the rounds. He asked me to check on you.

AL

Hey, I'm checking on something. Could we all meet back here tomorrow, like 4 in the afternoon or so. Can we just put this whole thing on hold til then?

GEORGE

I'm sure that'll be fine. Sure. Just take care of yourself til then, Mr. Fine. Drive carefully.

AL (not entirely kidding)

Yeah, George. You wish, you wish. Don't worry, I'll be back.

INT AL FINE HOME - NIGHT

Al watches more wrestling on TV, beer in hand, dozes off in recliner.

(AL DREAMS) INT WRESTLING RING - CROWD ROARS O.S.

Al's head is in the firm headlock of a fierce, FEMALE WRESTLER.

We see Al's grunting, squirming, struggling face, then his head turns into a big WALNUT. Al still in a headlock, she bashes it on top of a beautiful old wooden TABLE in the ring.

AL

Hey - careful! That's walnut!
That's fine walnut. Only the
finest walnut...

INT CASINO MANAGER'S OFFICE - NEXT AFTERNOON

George paces the office, deep in thought. His jacket is off and his sleeves rolled up. He's looking at Al's medical test results and doctor's report. Nathan and Henry are seated.

GEORGE

Al, that's really something.
I've gotta say. You've thrown us
a curve here, but maybe it makes
sense for all of us, maybe this
is the way it's meant to be.

AL

Promise me though, not a word to
anyone, not even Star, OK,
George? Not about the penthouse,
not about the medical stuff.
Especially not the medical
stuff.

GEORGE

You're sure it's what you want?
The north penthouse suite, for
life? A lifetime to be
determined. We understand a PSA
reading of 7 is high, Al. You
know that, right? I don't want
you to feel we're taking
advantage of you here. We're
just playing the odds...

AL

No problem, my choice, my
proposal. Meals, too, right?
Sauna, gym, maid service, clean-
up, the whole penthouse routine.

George nods and they shake hands. He holds a sheet of paper.

GEORGE

You got it; here's the memo, initialed by Hector, your attorney; he faxed it back. The penthouse suite for the rest of your life. Your doctor's fax verifies what you told us. Your prognosis doesn't look good, but, uh, of course we wish you as many good years as possible, Lord willing.

AL

You'll regret saying that when I steal that beautiful woman of yours.

George laughs a little too good-naturedly for Al's taste. Al scowls.

AL

Yeah, I just need to simplify my life, you know what I mean? Too much commuting time between home and work - the casino - for one thing.

GEORGE

Well, if you think it'll work for you, great.

AL

What's not to work? Cable TV, unlimited saunas, all my meals. I'll feel like a king!

GEORGE

And you're now the official lounge host for Karaoke Night - go crazy - you're always there anyhow. I think you should do the Open Mic night, too, if you want, until we find a regular.

George winks and slaps Al on the arm.

GEORGE

Gets you out there with the ladies.

AL

Down. I'm down with that.

GEORGE

Yeah. Make it work for you.

AL

Workin' it. See? I feel younger already. A new lease on life. A king. I'm telling you.

EXT CASINO PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

Al's "second car", a beat-up 4-wheel-drive pickup, is attached to a rental trailer. The back is open and unloading boxes is BLAISE (25) the pizza guy/maintenance guy, in a worn river rafting t-shirt imprinted: "Surf New Mexico."

Al, smoking a cigarette, steps around into view from the side of the trailer, making a move to help.

BLAISE

I can get this, Mr. Fine.

AL

Al, please, call me Al. And I was in the furniture business for fifty years, you know. I've moved a few things.

BLAISE

Fifty years! Dude.

POV FAR SIDE OF PARKING LOT

POV from behind bearded man in vehicle, watching Al and Blaise, unseen by them, with SINISTER BACKGROUND MUSIC

EXT CASINO PARKING LOT - BACK AT MOVING TRAILER

Al nods, takes one more drag on his cigarette and tosses it. They start into casino with dolly.

AL

Fine Furniture. Lower Manhattan, middle of the garment district, right where you'd expect to find a furniture store...

INT CASINO FREIGHT ELEVATOR - LATE AFTERNOON

Blaise hangs on to the dolly and the large television screen as the elevator jolts. Al chats on:

AL

...Surrounded in New York by folks in the clothing business. They live and breathe the clothing business. It's all they knew. This is just a story, you understand. So one day, this clothing store, the owner's daughter, she's closing up shop, a guy jumps out in front of her, opens up his coat and flashes her. She just looks at him and says, get this, she says to him, "You call that a lining?"

Blaise smiles politely, wrinkles his nose as the elevator doors open.

AL

It's a joke. Get it? She only knows the clothing business...

INT CASINO HOTEL PENTHOUSE HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

As Blaise guides the dolly out of the elevator, the doors begin to close. Al panics, pokes buttons and hollers:

AL

Hey! Hey! Keep it open.

Blaise hits button and the doors remain open. Al's arms hover protectively over the screen as he helps guide it out.

AL

When my pop gave me the "Facts of Life" talk, he always referred to the Fine Furnishings. Down there, you know.

Blaise laughs as he pulls the load into the hall.

BLAISE

The Fine Family Jewels? The manly bits.

AL

Right, you gotta protect the furnishings, yes? Don't want bugs, you know, Papa used to say. Definitely not dents and scratches. He told me to use great care in who does the polishing...

BLAISE

Yuck! No way! Your old man?

AL

Well, I'm exaggerating a bit, maybe. My dad was a quiet little guy. Usually. (a beat) Except when there was some polishing going on upstairs ...

BLAISE

Stop! I'm gonna throw up, man.

They laugh at themselves. Al taps top of the TV.

AL

"Things." Most 'things' are not that important to me, but this baby ranks right up there. This place only has a 32-inch, man, a breadbox, can you believe that? That one's going in the bedroom.

Blaise whistles and maneuvers the wide load around a corner.

BLAISE

Well, I'm sure watching TV isn't your whole life, I mean I hope you get out and...

AL

Hey, hey. I get enough of that from my daughter. She thinks all I do is watch TV. I got a life. Ladies, gambling, a regular one-man Rat Pack, 20th century style.

BLAISE

Twenty-first.

AL

...Wha... Oh yeah, 21st.

Al scowls and shakes his head, confused.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Blaise and Al roll the dolly awkwardly through the door. Blaise steps in and looks around the spacious, beautifully appointed room and exclaims:

BLAISE

Whoa! You scored, man. Look at this place. You know, I just do mostly outside maintenance; I've never actually seen the penthouse.

Al nods, happily.

AL

Meals, too! Sauna, gym...

Al directs Blaise to steer the dolly to the center of living room.

AL

Front and center, Blaise. Right there. Careful.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DUSK

Blaise walks out of the bedroom with the big green envelope in which the doctor had put the prostate information.

BLAISE

Well, that's about it. This envelope says 'Read'

AL

Uh, my papers. Just set it on the table there.

Blaise sets it down.

AL

But look at this, Blaise.

Al hands Blaise the framed photograph of "Fine Furniture."

AL

This needs a good place to hang. I'll open a couple beers for us, yes?

Blaise holds the photo up in a few places and checks it out, as Al rummages through the small fridge.

INT LOS ANGELES "HOLLYWOOD THEME" RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON

Nearly everything is white in the almost-empty restaurant, except a few brightly-colored movie posters on the walls, along with some black-and-whites.

RHONDA FINE (25), with wavy platinum hair and sad eyes, especially sad now.

From a booth in the corner, away from what little activity there is, she tugs at the platinum wig to reveal straight, brown hair. She flips open a cell phone and punches buttons.

RHONDA

Hey, Dad. I'm on a break - a break from nothin' - so I gotta make this quick. I got your message. Why the new number?

She listens, at first casually, then frowns. She stands and spins in her slinky white halter Marilyn Monroe getup. She flops the wig around, agitated. Disdain drips from her voice.

RHONDA

The casino? You can't live in a casino!

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DUSK

Al (on phone) stops Blaise and gives him the thumbs up as Blaise sets the photo on a wooden shelf on the wall. Al's EasyBoy is situated directly in front of the TV but Al sits in the chair beside it. His feet rest on the green envelope. Two beers sit on the table.

AL

Naw, it's perfect, honey. (whispers to Blaise) My daughter.

He pulls the phone away from his ear, winces for effect, making a face at Blaise, listens from a couple inches away.

AL

No. No! I'm not blowing all my money. In fact I'm saving money, everything's taken care of...
(to Blaise) She hung up on me.
Always does. She'll call back.

INT LOS ANGELES RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - LATER
AFTERNOON

Rhonda crosses to the kitchen, opens a closet door and pulls out a rain jacket.

She puts a purse over her shoulder. She's got her cell phone to her ear.

RHONDA

So anyhow I was calling to see if I could come home for a while. My boss found a Marilyn with bigger boobs. What a surprise.

A GUY cleaning the kitchen looks up. She shrugs and turns away, lowers her voice into the phone.

RHONDA

No. Jack is... *was* his name. We broke up last week. All the great stuff happens at once.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DUSK

Al, on phone, holds up a beer for Blaise and motions toward the EasyBoy next to him.

AL

That's doesn't sound good. You don't want to take after your old man, no love life.

Al winks at Blaise and holds hand over the phone.

AL

Broke up with her boyfriend. You have to meet her. She's beautiful - she's a gem.

Blaise settles in and leans back in the recliner with his beer.

AL (back to phone)

That soon? No... it's great, honey. Of course I'll pay for it. Don't I always? Sure, sure. I'll call the travel agent. I love that gal... Okay, okay. Enough lectures. I know. I can't wait. See you soo... (to Blaise) I think that was a hang-up, too. Spirited little gal, that's all, heh.

Blaise moans from the soft world of the recliner.

BLAISE

This is great. You've got it made here. I can't believe you made this deal with the casino, maid service and everything. I agree, it's even better than cash. You could be here for decades.

Al leans over and they clink bottles.

AL

Here, let's go out on the balcony and watch the sunset.

They step out on the balcony.

EXT CASINO PARKING LOT - DUSK

POV behind bearded man in vehicle, looking up at them on balcony, unseen. Same SINISTER BACKGROUND MUSIC as before.

EXT BALCONY - DUSK

AL

Sometimes I think I would have done a lot better raising a son.

INT CASINO LOBBY - NIGHT

Al, clean-shaven and in a bright colored shirt, strolls across the hotel lobby toward the lounge. Star comes from behind the counter and slips up behind him.

STAR

Are you all settled in?

AL

Oh, you heard about me moving in? What'd George tell you?

STAR

He said he's glad not everyone wishes on a star. I take some credit, you know, for drawing you in here.

Al relaxes and smiles.

AL

That's right. Well, a lot of things went into that decision, including the very special concierge, but you're.. well... yeah, my inspiration, I owe you dinner or something.

Star brushes it off, laughs, waves across the room as George approaches. Al wistfully watches the two lovers greet each other.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Al sits on a stool at the front of the lounge, next to a Karaoke screen. A single light shines brightly on his head. He's more in conversational "prep" mode than on-stage mode.

George sits alone at a table near the front. A few other people wander into the room.

AL

...So a guy jumps in front of her, opens his jacket and flashes her. She says " You call that a lining?"

Very little response from the sparse audience.

GEORGE

That's all you got? You gotta do better than that, Mr. Fine.

AL

Her whole life in the clothing business. All she sees is the coat lining!

GEORGE

I get it, Mr. Fine. It just doesn't do it for me.

Star arrives and sits at George's table.

AL

Star, what are you doing with this guy? My socks have a better sense of humor.

Star takes George's hand as she settles into her seat. More audience has drifted in.

STAR

Well, maybe he can sing. We'll get him up there some day.

George shakes his head. Al puts a CD in the Karaoke player and selects a track.

AL

Here we go. Show us your stuff, George. 1975, you remember, Earth, Wind and Fire. Here's a tribute to your lady, "Shining Star."

George sips his drink, shakes his head and waves his hand, unsmiling as the music cues up.

GEORGE

You sing, Al. Show us what you got.

A few people mill around. SADIE, (60ish), in a fancy embroidered cowgirl shirt, walks in and sits in the rear. People watch curiously as Al takes up the microphone. Al nods to the beat, clowns and improvises with the lyrics to the 1975 hit:

AL

You're always shining, Star!
No matter where you are.
Anyone can see
That special quality,
there's no way *not* to see.

Al glances at Star

AL (contd)

Shining star come into view
Shine a watchful light on you.
Gives you strength to carry on
Make you shine just like the sun.

Al plays with the high notes of the chorus.

AL

No matter who you are...

The small crowd applauds. Star plays cool, but is pleased. George coolly stirs his drink. He tries unsuccessfully to hide a tiny smirk. Star cracks up.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's later; small crowd has thinned a bit.

TWO COLLEGE-AGED GIRLS who look like sisters croon a rock ballad -- something like this: *[NOTE: karaoke songs could be classics, if licensed, otherwise classic-sounding originals]*

TWO GIRLS

Something happened along the way
What used to be happy was sad
Something happened along the way
And yesterday was all we had..

And ohh.. after the love has gone
How could you lead me on...

One girl puts her arm around the other. They crack each other up and the small audience gives them a hand to egg them on.

Al steps into the shadow and leans against the counter beside the Karaoke machine. He winces, breathes heavily and tilts.

Star tiptoes up beside him.

STAR

Are you OK, Al? You're only on
your first drink, right?

Al pushes his half-empty highball glass toward her and winces.

AL
Wow - I feel like crap. Is this
what healthy living gets me?

INT CASINO LOBBY - NIGHT

POV watching this scene from far across casino lobby. We don't see watcher, but same SINISTER BACKGROUND MUSIC hints that it's the same unseen bearded guy as before.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Star leans and sniffs Al's drink.

STAR
Apple juice? That's what you've
been drinking all night?

Al nods, obviously in discomfort.

STAR
Time to wrap things up. We'll
help you upstairs.

George and Al sit at the side of the stage while Star fiddles with the karaoke machine.

STAR
It's okay, guys. I'll shut this
thing down. There's hardly
anyone here tonight anyhow.

Sadie, seated alone in the back of the lounge, gathers her things and starts to leave. Star notices her heading out.

STAR (to Al)
I think that cowgirl likes you.
I've seen her here before.

AL

I hope she doesn't see me like this. I feel half-dead.

STAR

You'll be okay. Maybe just something you ate. I'll join you guys in a second.

George betrays nothing about Al's illness, and we sense that he never would - not even to Star.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

George holds the door open as Star helps Al into his room. Star's concern is unspoken, but she settles Al into his recliner and brings him a glass of water. George sits in the chair next to Al's.

GEORGE

She comes by this naturally, you know. She was a nurse's aide at her father's clinic.

STAR

Al doesn't know my pop is a doctor. It's not what you'd expect of a little girl from the rez, right Al?

AL

Well, before you even suggest it, I don't want to see a doctor. Not even your dad. Though I'd like to meet him some time.

STAR

You'll meet him very soon, and don't argue with me about it. You don't want to see my mean side, Al.

George raises his eyebrows towards Al; signifying "you really don't wanna mess with her"

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT ENTRANCE - DAY

There's a knock at the door and Al shuffles groggily in his pajamas to open it. Standing in the hallway is DR. FRED, a small, older Native American man. Distinguished long gray hair is pulled back in a pony tail. He wears a simple white Brooks Brothers shirt and crisp jeans. Al is silent, sleepily puzzled.

Dr. FRED
Hey. I'm Star's dad.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Dr. Fred listens to Al's heart with a stethoscope as Al sits in a chair, cooperative but slightly annoyed. Dr. Fred's medical bag sits on the coffee table. The green envelope still sits unopened on the table, getting submerged under magazines etc.

AL
So what did Star say? Did George tell you anything?

DR. FRED
George? No. Star just said you didn't look well.

AL
I have a daughter too. I've checked out a lot of her boyfriends. So... what do you make of George? Do you think he's good enough for Star?

DR. FRED
I think my daughter knows people very well. And herself. George seems like a good guy.

Al twists his nose and nods, resigned.

AL

Look, doctor, I got a PSA diagnosis the other day, 7 points, I told my doctor I wasn't going to worry about it and he fired me. I don't even want to get a biopsy.

DR. FRED

That's up to you. You've talked to your daughter about your diagnosis?

Al shakes his head.

AL

But she'll be here soon. We'll talk.

DR. FRED

It's likely to progress. You know that, right?

AL

I'm 74 years old, so... Well, maybe you'd have to be there. You could give me some herbs to smoke?

DR. FRED

There's one treatment that's not too bad, brachytherapy. Inserting some radioactive pellets that can curb the progression, if it's not too far gone already.

AL

Forgive me, Doc, I've been negligent. I know I should take this seriously but for some reason I don't really care. I'm such a schmuck... You know that word?

Dr. Fred nods as he puts his things away.

DR. FRED

Oh, we have schmucks. Believe me. But I know your culture has more words for them. Mostly starting with "s-h".

AL (excited)

Right. Or "s-c-h." Hey, did you ever hear the one about the clothing store...

DR. FRED

I'm sorry. Maybe another time. I've gotta get to the clinic. I just stopped by because Star asked me to, and she's been telling me about you. She's very fond of you.

Al shakes Dr. Fred's hand as the doctor picks up his bag.

AL

Star is a good friend. She's a rare gem.

DR. FRED

Believe me, I know, thanks. My daughter and I are very close. But we never talk about my patients, so don't worry about that.

Al presses his lips and nods as Dr. Fred leaves and closes the door.

EXT ALBUQUERQUE AIRPORT - DAY

Al pulls a roller bag along the sidewalk, piled high with luggage that slips awkwardly off the top. He stops and fumbles, retrieves stray pieces. Rhonda, in a stylish California outfit, walks in front with one bag.

Al points across the street from the front airport entrance and he and Rhonda cross. They approach the parking garage.

RHONDA

At least it's sunny here. I'm so tired of the smog.

INT ALBUQUERQUE AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Al and Rhonda roll through the aisle between rows of cars toward where they see the Allante.

AL

So Jim is out of the picture.

RHONDA

Jack, Dad. And it never was much of a picture.

AL

Jack. Sorry I never knew Jack.

RHONDA

Just another loser. I attract freaks and losers like dogs attract fleas. Only there's no kind of bath for it.

Al stops at the trunk of the Allante. He opens the lid and loads the bags.

RHONDA

Sometimes I wish I liked NASCAR or football, or even women's wrestling like you do. I see why you like to distract yourself with those things. Life just sucks.

AL

I don't need distracting. That IS my life you're talking about. I'm fine with it. I enjoy those things. They're all part of The Good Life. You'd have to work 50 years then retire to know what I'm talking about.

RHONDA

Yeah I know. It's idyllic,
freakin' Nirvana. And now you've
died and gone to casino heaven.

Al stares at Rhonda, getting angry, then restrains himself. He moves his lips like he's about to say something, then:

AL

God, I've done this to you. This judgment, this sarcasm. *I* can get away with it, sort of. But it's tragic to see cranky old guy spilling out of such a pretty face.

Rhonda glares at him, then shrugs and gets in the car.

EXT ROARING THUNDER CASINO ENTRANCE - DAY

Al hands the valet a \$5 bill. Rhonda, next to him, looks on. Al pats the Cadillac and they head toward the entrance.

VALET

Thanks, Mr. Fine.

The valet hops into the driver's seat.

INT CASINO ENTRANCE - DAY

Al and Rhonda walk in past Gabe at the security desk.

GABE

Hello, Mr. Fine.

Al waves and Rhonda whispers:

RHONDA

Jesus, are you the Godfather or what?

INT CASINO SLOT MACHINE AREA - DAY

The musical noise of the slot machines increases as Al and Rhonda walk between a row of bright machines. Star strolls in from the lobby entrance and spots them. Al waves.

STAR

You look a little better today, Al.

AL

Thanks to you.

STAR

We look after our family here.

RHONDA (to Al)

She's encouraging you? I can't believe you're serious. This is the most crazy, irresponsible idea you've ever come up with.

Star is taken aback, but smiles a little curiously.

STAR

Let me guess. Your daughter?

AL

Yes, from L.A. An actress like you.

(to Rhonda)

Star just moved back here from Hollywood.

STAR

I'm retired from that. You're young and beautiful -- probably still getting some great roles.

RHONDA

Whaddya mean? You're not so old.

STAR

Forty-three, actually.

AL

And more beautiful every day.

Star laughs and slaps Al playfully. Rhonda looks suspiciously.

RHONDA
My last gig, I played Marilyn.
Platinum wig.

Rhonda pretends to primp her hair.

STAR

Cool! For a film?

RHONDA
A restaurant.

STAR
Oh yeah, I know how that goes. I
quit a job at Pocahontas Tours
to come home. That was the last
straw.

Two cocktail waitresses in mini-skirts walk toward the lounge and Al watches them very closely. Rhonda pokes him on the shoulder.

AL
What? Leave me alone. You hassle
me for sitting at home, say I
watch too much TV. So... I'm not
watching TV.

STAR
You're going to have a great
visit. Let me know if I can
help.

AL and RHONDA
Thanks.

Al and Rhonda walk away, continuing to bicker.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Al opens the door, smiles emphatically and motions Rhonda inside. She looks around with some wonder, but when she sticks her head in the bedroom door, she acts repulsed. She turns around to Al:

RHONDA

I don't know how to say this delicately, but this place looks like a whorehouse. No way am I staying here.

AL

What're you talking about? This is very tasteful.

RHONDA

If you like things pimped out, which apparently you do.

Rhonda walks around a little, glances in the bedroom door.

AL

You thought my old place was depressing.

RHONDA

I'll take the old place. You still have it?

AL

I'm not running you back and forth. You can use the truck. You still remember how to drive a stick?

RHONDA

Sure, all the survivor skills. You taught me to drive the truck, build a campfire, fish...

AL

You probably really should have had a mother.

RHONDA

It's okay, Dad. You prepared me for L.A.

AL

For what? Marilyn Monroe jobs?
Internet gurus? Guerilla driving
skills? Horny Romeos?

Rhonda shakes her head.

RHONDA

No more than here, probably.
Bullshit artists. With polluted
eyes.

EXT NEW MEXICO SKY - NIGHT

It's dusk and the last edge of pink is bright on the sides of the clouds. There's an array of shades of blue and at the darkest shade, the neon lights of the Roaring Thunder glow. People go in and out of the glass and faux-adobe entrance.

EXT CASINO PARKING LOT - DAY

Rhonda jerks the truck into a parking place. The valet watches her jump out of the high door. She straightens her skirt and frowns at him.

RHONDA

We can just leave it here,
right? I don't need it valet
parked.

VALET (agreeably)

Aren't you Al's daughter?

Rhonda rolls her eyes and huffs off.

INT CASINO HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Star sees Rhonda hurry across the lobby and steps out from behind her desk.

STAR

Nice to see you again...
Rhonda, right?

RHONDA

Oh, hi. Star. Uh, I'm supposed to be having lunch with my dad.

STAR

That's nice. How long are you in town?

RHONDA

I don't know. Have you seen him? I called but no answer.

STAR

I saw him a awhile ago heading for the fitness center.

RHONDA

Al? We're talking about the same guy? My dad?

Star nods, smiles and points the way.

INT CASINO HOTEL FITNESS CENTER - DAY

As Rhonda walks into the fitness center lobby, Al comes out of the dressing room door and greets her with a groggy smile, sort of dazed.

AL

Hey, how'd you find me?

RHONDA

I consulted your Guiding Star.

AL

Heh. That Star isn't aligning with me, I'm afraid. So hey, I just had a massage!

Rhonda's mouth falls open.

AL

Don't start! It wasn't that kind of massage. This is wholesome country. Hot rocks, fresh off the fire, all over my back! Very nice.

RHONDA

Sounds great. Good for you. Really.

Al looks surprised at her non-sarcastic response.
Then:

AL

And the human touch is good. I
won't deny it.

RHONDA

I'm with ya, Dad. As long as you
keep it clean!

AL

No promises. But I try to keep a
healthy attitude.

INT CASINO SLOT MACHINE AREA - DAY

Al pulls Rhonda by the sleeve over to the big
Wonder Whirl.

AL

See... this is where it
happened. Lights flashing, bells
ringing. I thought I was being
arrested for something, at
first.

RHONDA

I still don't get it. You win
big and so... now you have to
work here two nights?

Al leans close and lowers his voice.

AL

I explained it to you. All
expenses paid. For the rest of
my life! It's a win-win.

Rhonda shakes her head.

AL

And I get to be the host of the Karaoke. And talent night too. It's fun. It's that social life you always wanted for me.

RHONDA

They're taking advantage of you, Pop. Take the money. You could do anything. Go anywhere.

AL

Yeah. By myself.

RHONDA

That's up to you. You're so hard on yourself. Your favorite, your hero, Judge Judy - even she wouldn't punish you like you punish yourself.

AL

Maybe I'd like that. Judge Judy, I mean.

RHONDA

You're not always going to be alone, come on.

AL

Anyhow, the deal is done. Signed and delivered. I'm here.

Al sighs, leans on the Wonder Whirl. He turns when he hears:

STAR

Hi, you two.

Star walks past, pauses and gives them a little wave.

STAR

You found him. Looks like you're having a deep discussion. I'll catch you later.

Al watches her walk on, watches long enough for Rhonda to clear her throat, signal her discomfort. Al nods.

AL

But I always zero in on the wrong woman. Usually someone who's already taken.

RHONDA

Pop..? Oh no - Star??

AL

I'm not saying who. I didn't say Star.

RHONDA

But if you mean Star...

Al brushes her off and shakes his head. He looks up. He's face to face with Star.

STAR

Did you call me?

AL

Uh.. I'm going upstairs. All rise for Judge Judy, now entering the courtroom.

Star and Rhonda watch him exit.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Al meets Rhonda at the lounge entrance. Sign says "Talent Night." He straightens his jacket, seems nervous.

RHONDA

You look nice.

Al acts unconvinced, points her to a table near the front. Star sidles up between them and nods toward the back. Sadie has returned and sits in the same rear table as she did before. Star's voice is sing-song:

STAR

Your friend is back.

Al looks back and smiles. Then he fumbles his way up to the stage. Rhonda glances at Sadie, glances at Star with a disapprovingly, then focuses on KENNY and GLEN, the two musicians that Al introduces:

AL

Folks, here's Kenny and Glen, also called Nightshade. I played a little when I was young like them, really, I did. I wish you guys a lot better luck. Let's welcome a couple of hometown guys, Kenny and Glen!
[[original song here]]

Scattered applause. The music is loud. Some patrons, including Sadie, wince a little at the volume, but Rhonda rocks along. She applauds enthusiastically when they finish.

AL

Those guys will be back, but we're going to tone it down a little with the poetry of Miss Ella Miera, from right down the road in little Old Albuquerque. Everybody welcome Ella Miera!

Applause. As Ella takes the stage, the two guitarists follow Al and all three sit down at the table with Rhonda. Ella lights a sage bundle, wraps herself in a shawl, takes her time preparing to recite.

Kenny and Glen, on either side of Rhonda, whisper loudly.

KENNY

Hey, I'm Kenny.

GLEN

I'm Glen. Your dad plays guitar?
Sings?

When Rhonda nods, Kenny looks at Al.

KENNY

No way. Come up and play, Al.

Al shakes his head, brushes them off and points up at Ella, who has begun her reading. They all turn to listen.

Ella reads Rilke, in this unusual setting she has created. Some look puzzled and but Al is entranced. Rhonda takes it all in. Mostly she notices what Star is wearing, notices her blouse sleeves are rolled up, rolls up her own.

Applause for Ella, who returns to audience. Al takes the stage with KIM. Kim is 40ish, female, in a colorful caftan, frosted hair.

(This could be any other unusual entertainer)

AL

Now Kim, your card here says you can make your voice sound like a flute. Is that hard? I mean, I don't think I've ever heard of anyone doing that before. A trumpet maybe, a trombone, but a flute? I can't wait to hear this.

KIM

It's not the usual stuff.

AL

Show us a little?

Kim nods, centers herself and takes a deep breath.

KIM

(The beautiful noise that comes out of her face seems really crazy to be coming out of her face. She makes funny shapes with her mouth to change the tones.)

The crowd applauds and Kim smiles proudly, beautifully.

AL

Show me how you do that.

Kim gives Al a little instruction and he tries and makes a dismal honk. Everyone laughs and a few applaud.

AL

That's impossible. How'd you learn to do that?

KIM

I had a really bad cold once. It's all I could do.

The show progresses (quick cuts) and finishes (to be determined). Afterward, Rhonda sits at the side of the stage as the guitarists pack up. Kenny points at Al, who is talking to Sadie.

KENNY

So what kind of stuff did Al play?

RHONDA

Folk mostly. He had a radio hit back in the 60s. Kind of a fluke.

GLEN

Al!? The man! He's hiding out! What was the song?

RHONDA

"Kokomo Island." Sort of a rocking, folky...

GLEN

No shit!?? I remember that. I love it! That was Al?

RHONDA

Yeah, Al and his group... And they had another one, smaller hit, (sings) "Upon My Soul."

Star walks up, nods toward the back of the room where Al talks to Sadie.

AL

...and she says, "You call that a lining?"

Sadie howls with laughter. She waves her hand full of rings and Al takes hold of it. He peers at one.

AL

What about this great big diamond? Located on, wouldn't this be... traditionally..., the wedding finger?

SADIE

Nothing to concern you, Mr. Fine. Really. Trust me.

AL

Al, please. You sure there's no great big tough guy that goes with it?

SADIE

I'd tell you if there was. Anyhow, I'll see you here again soon. I promise.

EXT SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Al and Rhonda sit at a table and eat bagels, drink coffee.

AL

Hey, this is a decent bagel! There was a time when America didn't know from bagels, outside New York and LA. Remember? Oh, I guess you wouldn't know what I'm talking about.

RHONDA

So did you ask her out?

AL

Sadie? If I'd had fifteen more minutes, I'd have offended her completely, yeah. I still have that to look forward to. Probably a good thing she took off so quickly.

RHONDA

You think she's just going to wander back in, without you asking her?

AL

I should hope so. She said she would.

Al sees Blaise get out of his car nearby. He waves, beckons.

AL

This is the guy I told you about.

RHONDA

Not the moving guy. Dad, don't...

AL

Hey Blaise. Sit down with us. Meet my daughter, Rhonda. Honey, this is Blaise. He works for the casino. A handy everything kind of guy.

Blaise shakes Rhonda's hand, then Al's, sits.

RHONDA

How do you happen to work for the casino? Don't you have to be Indian?

BLAISE

My mom's full blooded.

Al puts down his cup and stares. Rhonda's is even more skeptical.

BLAISE

Irish.

Blaise laughs at himself.

BLAISE

That one gets everybody.

Rhonda, very unamused, wipes her mouth with a napkin.

BLAISE

I grew up down the road from Nathan - the casino manager - and his family. He did my mom a favor and gave me a job. Fudged the rules a little bit.

RHONDA

I'd say so.

Rhonda flags the waiter and turns back to the guys.

RHONDA

Want anything else? What about you, Blaise?

BLAISE

Just coffee. Black. Thanks.

He's clearly turned on by Rhonda and her distant manner; we can see he's in "presentation" mode.

AL

See if they have some sprouts for my bagel. I'm into health now.

Blaise and Rhonda stare blankly. Al is straight-faced.

AL

That's so hard to believe?

RHONDA

Yes it is. But I'll ask the waiter for sprouts.

Al shakes his head, mocks her. WAITER arrives. As Rhonda talks with the waiter, Al leans close to Blaise and points out a fluffy little dog as it trots toward them.

AL

Check out the pooch, give it some love. You know, women love a guy who likes dogs. It kinda hints at, uh...

Al mimics a slow petting motion, exaggerated, and nods to the dog.

Blaise whistles and pats his leg.

BLAISE

Hey, poochie, hey, sweetie. C'mere.

The little dog wanders over to Blaise, who pets her head and ears. She rolls over and Blaise rubs her belly, a little too affectionately. Al smiles at Rhonda, who looks very skeptical.

BLAISE (to dog)

Look at you. You like that, huh?

The little dog's tongue hangs out and she pants hard.

AL

Oh, yeah. Look at that. She likes you...

The little dog rolls over and jumps up, humps Blaise's leg.

AL

Uh oh...

BLAISE

Sorry, girl, I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong idea.

Al laughs, with a guilty glance at Blaise. Rhonda looks disgusted. She grabs her purse and gets up.

RHONDA

I'll be back in a minute, gotta powder my nose.

AL

Sorry, man, actually I just made that up, the dog thing. It seemed like a good idea - just trying to help.

BLAISE

It's OK. Who knew? A girl dog, too - what a freak!

EXT CASINO PARKING LOT - MORNING

Al and Rhonda come out the exit door of the casino. As Al stops, Rhonda turns back to him.

AL

It's so hard to believe I could turn over a healthy new leaf? Sprouts, massage, they call it healthy living. You've heard of it? They have it in L.A.?

Rhonda shakes her head.

AL

In fact I think we should just go right now and take a good hike. Just head out for a vigorous walk.

RHONDA

Sure, OK, that sounds good.

Al turns, heads down the sidewalk as Rhonda hurries to his side. Al looks determined. For a minute. Then he stops to fidget with his shoe.

AL

Rock in my shoe.

They take off again and walk faster.

Al starts to limp, but presses onward. He's perspiring and looking miserable. He stops, bends over and pants.

RHONDA

Okay, Dad, you made your point.
I mean, that's good enough for
one day. Let's go back.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Al reclines into the LazyBoy and sighs loudly.

AL

Ah! Help yourself... Beer in the
fridge... or iced tea.

Someone noisily pokes around in the kitchen.
Rhonda enters with two glasses of iced tea and
sets them on the table.

She continues to nose around the apartment,
disappears into the bedroom and returns with Al's
old acoustic guitar. She sets it across his lap.

AL

Why'd you dig that out? I've
hardly looked at that thing for
years.

RHONDA

Come on. Someone needs to knock
the cobwebs outta here.

Al takes out the guitar, tunes it and plays some
beautiful chords. He sings a soulful rendition of:

AL

"The... itsy bitsy spider...
climbed up the water spout..."

RHONDA

Come on, let's not go that far
back.

AL

OK. What songs did we sing?

Rhonda plops hard into the chair next to Al. She's agitated, anxious.

RHONDA

Pop, I need you to tell me the truth.

Al strums a dramatic chord.

AL

About?

RHONDA

The money. How much was it?

AL

That's not important. It's just applied to the rent anyhow.

He strums louder on the guitar.

AL

Come on. Sing with me.

She leans and puts a hand on the strings.

RHONDA

Seriously. Talk to me.

Al puts the guitar down and looks serious.

AL

What? What is it, honey? You in some sort of trouble?

RHONDA

No. No. I just worry about you. I don't know whether you've got the cash you need or what.

AL

If I've got the cash I need? How about you? I worry about you. Are you sure you're not worried about Rhonda, too? You should be.

He touches the guitar, almost for comfort.

AL

I've helped when you needed it, but I want you to get your legs under you... In fact, I moved in here so I'd have people around and you don't have to worry about my, uh, isolation. Partly for that, anyhow.

RHONDA

But why this place? I still don't get it.

AL

It's my choice. See? I'm choosing. I enjoy it here, simple. Maybe you'll just never get it, I'm sorry. There might even be things you don't know about me.

He stands up and turns around, playfully.

AL

I'm all grown up. I'm not your little boy anymore.

RHONDA

Dad.

AL

You're mothering me, you know that? Do I look like I need a mother?

She turns away, emotional.

AL

I'm sorry, I'm just not good at this kind of talk.

Al grimaces and knocks himself in the head. He picks up the guitar.

AL
 Your mother loved it when we
 played, remember? Come, sing
 with me.

Al sits forward in the chair and strums. When he
 sings, she reluctantly joins. They DO sound great
 together:

AL
 "Puff, the magic dragon
 lived by the sea
 and frolicked in the autumn mist...

AL AND RHONDA
 ...in a land called honah lee."
 (or some such folk tune)

He's playful and gets some big smiles out of her.

AL
 Wow. You sound good.

RHONDA
 We do.

Al watches Rhonda sit back, relax a little, gaze
 back at him.

AL
 You won't worry anymore?

Rhonda shakes her head, but not convincingly.

RHONDA
 Hey, guess what? I'm going out
 this weekend. The moving guy.

AL
 Blaise? Even after the dog trick?

RHONDA
 Dumb, but cute. YOUR dog trick,
 I mean. That whole "chicks like
 guys who like dogs" is so passé.

Al nods and rolls his eyes, dramatically /
 apologetically.

AL

Yeah, sorry about that.

Rhonda throws her legs over the arm of the chair and leans back. She motions to the guitar.

RHONDA

Play more.

AL

What did you like about Blaise?

RHONDA

I don't know. Good-looking. And he seems... uncomplicated. He asked me to go fishing. I haven't fished in years.

Al's eyes widen. He strums the guitar.

Al

When did he slip that in? I didn't tell him you like to fish.

RHONDA

You also didn't tell me he's been in jail.

AL (setting down guitar)

Jail? What're you talking about? I didn't know. I don't know him that well..

RHONDA

He told me he was in jail for almost a year when he was about, uh, 16.

AL (knowingly)

Oh, juvie. For what?

RHONDA

Accessory.. accomplice.. to a, uh, armed robbery.

AL

Accessory? So he wasn't involved then.

RHODA

Well, he was sort of helping, he wasn't armed, anyhow the other guy got away, it was a 7-11 kind of store, the other guy got away and Blaise got nabbed. By the clerk, I guess - called the cops.

AL

OK, well, 16, hey, who really knows what they're doing when they're 16? Huh...

RHONDA

Blaise wouldn't give the other guy away, wouldn't give him up, so they threw the book at him. Otherwise they probably would have just given him probation.

AL

Well, come on, that's sort of... *admirable*, don't you think? He wouldn't give up his partner, his buddy. He took the rap himself. That's sort of noble, actually, don't you think?

RHONDA

I don't know. Anyhow, he just wanted to sort of get that on the table. Like he's preparing for a big relationship here and wants to clear the air. That I like.

AL

OK, so the air is cleared. Good. On to other things, come on... "There was a man went down to the shore and cast his boat to the sea..." (or some such)

She stops him.

RHONDA

No, no. I have the song.

She starts another, something they've obviously sung together many times. He recognizes it as soon as:

RHONDA
"There was a girl..."

AL
I remember...

Al plays the chord.

RHONDA
"Who met a boy..."

AL AND RHONDA
"...and after that their days
were filled with fun and joy."
(or some such)

After a really nice melody, they both look happy, peaceful and mellow. Al sighs and rubs the wood of the guitar.

AL
Yeah, your mother loved that one.

He looks up to see Rhonda's eyes filled with tears.

AL
Baby, you're so, uh, emotional
today.

Rhonda shakes her head.

AL
What is it? What's going on?

RHONDA
Things just haven't been
working. The job. The boyfriend.

Al nods and puts the guitar away, listens.

RHONDA
I'm thinking about moving back.

AL

Here?

Rhonda nods; waits for more of a response.

AL

Here is great! Hey, it's a great idea. Whatever you need. Home is wherever Daddy is, you know that, what the hell.

Al wrinkles his brow but manages to crack a convincing smile. Then he frowns and double checks; a hand indicates his apartment:

AL

Oh, you mean here, but not HERE.

Rhonda adamantly shakes her head.

RHONDA

No. No way. Never, never... never!

Al waves his hands for her to stop.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

The lounge is fairly full for karaoke night. On stage is a group of friends. They all stand and huddle around a couple of microphones. Al cues up their song.

As they start to sing, one guy clowns too dramatically and accidentally yanks a microphone cord too hard. The amplifier falls to the floor, buzzes and the sound goes out.

CROWD

Ohhhhh.

Al hustles over to the equipment, checks some things and reports:

AL

Okay, uh... sorry, it looks like the whole system is shorted out.

CROWD
(louder)
Ohhhhhhh!

AL
Just stay put. A little bird
told me to bring my guitar
tonight. Sorry folks, give me a
minute.

Al picks up his guitar case and as he pulls out his guitar he looks around the crowd. He gestures to the back, where he sees Rhonda entering with Blaise.

AL
There you are. Come on up,
Rhonda. Hey, everybody move on
up, move in closer so you can
hear without the sound system.

Most people move up and settle into their seats. Blaise finds a table up front. Sadie wanders in, heads for her usual seat in back. Al plays a peppy introduction...

RHONDA
Who's been practicing?

He nods and they begin. They immediately sound great together. Blaise and everyone register surprise and delight.

HEAR: Al and Rhonda's song...
The crowd claps along and applauds loudly when they finish. Star and George walk in and sit in the back near Sadie, who's smiling.

AL
Thanks, everyone. This is my
daughter, Rhonda Fine. She just
told me she today can't stay
away any longer. She's moving
back to the land of Enchantment.

Blaise and all clap enthusiastically. Star leans close to George:

STAR

She's keeping an eye on him.

George shrugs, nods a little.

GEORGE

Somebody better.

AL

Here's a song I used to sing to Rhonda when she was a little girl.

(to Rhonda)

You remember?

He starts to play and Rhonda nods. They sing a beautiful duet and harmonize sweetly. The crowd is quiet for a moment when they finish.

AL

Amen!

Everyone applauds eagerly.

HEAR/SEE: Snippets of several more performances.

Sadie approaches Star and comments:

SADIE

Your friend has some good chops. Please tell him I said goodbye - I gotta go home and get up early.

STAR

Yeah, OK. He'll be sorry he missed you.

Sadie prepares to leave. Star gets up and approaches her.

STAR

I've seen you here before. Do you live nearby?

SADIE

Not far. I have a western wear shop in Santa Fe. I like to come out here to unwind sometimes.

STAR

My name is Star. I'm the concierge here. You should leave me your info. I'll send some folks your way.

SADIE

Sure. I appreciate it.

Sadie pulls several cards from her purse and hands them over. Star nods at Sadie's fancy western shirt.

STAR

I should have known.

Sadie starts to turn away. We see a \$10 tip on the table and only one empty glass. Star stops her.

STAR

Al's really a diamond in the rough. But a diamond for sure.

Sadie looks at Al surrounded by some of the women who sang and she shrugs, smiles warmly.

SADIE

Yeah, a little of that sparkle seeps out. Well, I sort of like polishing diamonds, the more imperfect the better. Having rough diamonds in my life brings out the Mother Theresa in me. It's as close to sainthood as I can get. Well, see ya later.

As Sadie wanders out, Star smiles and looks at Sadie's card.

INT CASINO HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Star, behind the concierge desk, concentrates on her work. She looks up to see Blaise walk through the lobby toward her. He beams a broad smile, is wearing new jeans and a long sleeved t-shirt.

STAR

Well, from the look on your face, today's the day. I heard about your big date.

BLAISE

Not so big. I'm taking her to one of my favorite fishing spots.

STAR

V-e-r-y romantic.

Rhonda gets off the elevator and waves at Blaise. She wears neat jeans, cowboy boots and a simple chambray shirt. Her smile indicates she's progressed to 'cordial' with Star.

RHONDA

Anyone for a nice drive in the country?

She hooks her arm through Blaise's and tugs gently, prodding him to go. Blaise tells Star:

BLAISE

We're stopping for a meal in Santa Fe on the way back.

Star acts interested but Rhonda seems impatient.

STAR

I'm sorry. Don't let me keep you. Get on up there and have a great time.

Blaise shrugs. Star reaches into a desk drawer.

STAR

Oh, Santa Fe. The mystery lady who comes to the lounge - she has a western shop in Santa Fe. Sadie's Roundup.

Rhonda takes the card out of Star's hand and looks at it.

RHONDA

It figures. It seems like she's trying to lasso my dad for the Big Roundup.

BLAISE

Hey, girl. What an attitude. Al could do worse. She seems like a nice lady.

Rhonda looks shocked.

STAR

Rhonda, no one looks good in lonely. So here's someone a little closer to his age. Someone who might be interested. Interesting. I kinda like her.

RHONDA

Hmmm. Maybe we'll poke around and see what we find.

BLAISE

Well, so, let's go fishing.

Rhonda flashes the card at Star as they leave and tucks it in her jacket pocket. She gives Star a little smile.

EXT RIO CHAMA HIGHWAY - DAY

Al's old truck jerks along the scenic road. Blaise laughs:

BLAISE (O.S.)

I'll drive if you want. Like I said, my truck is in the shop today, or we could...

RHONDA

No problem, I'm enjoying it, it's all coming back to me.

EXT - RIO CHAMA RIVERBANK - DAY

Rhonda lies on her back in the tall grass next to the river. She watches the sky as clouds puff up and billow past. Blaise has a fishing pole laid across his lap. He bends over the science-fiction-looking lures, finally picking one and snapping it on the line.

RHONDA

What do you like best: fishing
or the little rubber critters?

BLAISE

Oh, the lures? They're pretty
cool. Like this one.

He dangles a rubbery thing between his fingers.

BLAISE

It's interesting. They're so
bizarre looking, nothing you'd
ever see in nature. But from a
fish-eye-view, it must be
appetizing. They seem to work.

RHONDA

Night of the zombie fishing
lure.

They laugh and he sets the pole down. He leans beside her and gazes.

BLAISE

Somehow I'm losing all my
interest in fishing.

Rhonda looks at him, sees him upside-down.

RHONDA

From a fish-eye-view, you don't
look too bad either.

He kisses her. They're both a little stunned. Then they smile and laugh, easy, natural.

EXT SADIE'S ROUNDUP WESTERN STORE - DAY

Blaise and Rhonda approach the window of the store and try to peer in, beyond the glare of the sun's reflection.

INT SADIE'S ROUNDUP WESTERN STORE - DAY

Between fancy embroidered shirts and a few cowboy hats, two faces peer through the glass. Sadie spots them and walks slowly toward the window. They don't see her so Sadie continues toward the door and pokes her head out.

EXT SADIE'S ROUNDUP WESTERN STORE - DAY

Sadie leans out the door and calls:

SADIE

See what you're looking for?

Blaise and Rhonda jump back and apologize...

BLAISE

Sorry.

RHONDA

We weren't sure we were in the right place.

Sadie holds up her hands and stops their jabbering. She points to the sign over the window.

SADIE

What's the sign say?

BLAISE

Sadie's Roundup.

Sadie opens the door wide and motions them in.

SADIE

I guess you found what you're looking for. Come on in. How are you guys doing? You must have gotten my card from St..

RHONDA

Star. Yeah, we just thought we'd check out, uh, the store.

Blaise gives a sideways glance at Rhonda and walks toward Sadie and the door. As Rhonda follows, Sadie points to her:

SADIE

I love your singing, by the way.

Rhonda shuts her eyes and blushes, pauses, but Sadie takes hold of her elbow and escorts her inside.

SADIE

Nothing to be embarrassed about, honey, it's a great gift.

INT SADIE'S ROUNDUP WESTERN STORE - DAY

Blaise stands in the midst of a display of bright women's western shirts and looks around the store. In the light of the front window, Rhonda stands face to face with Sadie.

SADIE

Mr. Karaoke sent you to check me out?

BLAISE

No. Al may not be too slick, but I think he knows what he li...

RHONDA

He needs a little help sometimes, but we came on our own. He'd probably be pissed, actually.

SADIE

Oh... Protective, are we?

Blaise nods toward Rhonda and lowers his voice.

BLAISE

She is. A little.

Sadie looks Rhonda in the eye.

SADIE

So what do you think might happen?

RHONDA

He'll eventually work up the courage to ask you out. You'll handle his awkwardness with patience and grace and you'll probably have a really nice time.

Sadie strolls across the store as she absorbs this information.

SADIE

That doesn't sound too terrifying.

Rhonda looks sheepish and shakes her head. Blaise puts his arm around her. Sadie softens her voice, compassionately.

SADIE

How long ago did your mama die?

RHONDA

How did....?

Sadie closes her eyes and nods.

RHONDA

Twelve years ago.

Sadie looks at her with big questioning eyes.

RHONDA

You think I'm horrible. And spoiled. And selfish.

SADIE

No, but maybe it's time to let him go. (beat) I hope you don't mind my cutting to the chase here, but if you're around long enough, you tend to just use shorthand and get to it.

Rhonda, chagrined, takes hold of Blaise's sleeve, gives it a little tug. They nod goodbye and shuffle to the door.

INT CASINO HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Al strolls through the lobby with Sadie at his side. Star, away from the concierge desk, observes, but unseen by the twosome.

AL

So my dad went to the door of the store and shook a fist at the guy.

Al shakes his fist in the air.

AL

He hollered at the top of his lungs: "It's my name, Fine, you dipshit. I'm not going to call it Pretty Good Furniture."

Sadie chuckles and takes Al's arm as they walk into the lounge bar. Star smiles and goes back to work.

INT RESTAURANT IN COUNTRY - NIGHT

Al flags the waiter and points to a booth in the corner. He guides Sadie into the booth.

AL

If I'd known how elegant you'd look tonight, I would have worn the jacket with the better lining.

Sadie scoots closer to Al in the booth.

SADIE

You don't have to try so hard, Al. I'm glad you called me.

AL

Oh, my pleasure. I mean, I'm taking it as a compliment that you agreed.

SADIE

Go right ahead. You deserve all the strokes you can get. Who doesn't?

Al sips his drink and smiles at Sadie. In the candlelight of the restaurant, they look like a very handsome couple.

INT CASINO RESTAURANT - DAY

Rhonda sits alone at a table near the entrance, studies a menu and sips black coffee. Star, on her way out, notices Rhonda and waves.

RHONDA

Wow. I'm beginning to think you live in this place, too.

Star smiles and nods.

STAR

I might as well - it would make life simpler. At least I like the food.

RHONDA

Al's crazy about the food. Five-star.

STAR

Is he meeting you?

Rhonda shrugs and sips her coffee.

RHONDA

I knocked on his door. No answer.

STAR

O-h-h-h.

Rhonda questions with her eyes. Star shakes her head and smiles slyly.

STAR

Uh-uh. Who knows? But I'm not gonna be a big old gossip.

RHONDA

Yes, you are... I mean...

Star laughs and sits down in the chair next to Rhonda.

STAR

I think Al and Sadie went out last night. He asked me for her business card yesterday.

Rhonda slaps a hand over her mouth. She slides it up and covers her eyes.

STAR

What? What? You and Blaise went to her store, didn't you?

Rhonda nods her head, her eyes still buried.

STAR

So what happened?

RHONDA

She made me feel totally stupid... spoiled. (a beat)
I like her, though. She's pretty cool.

Star lets out a funny, flat laugh and the two giggle and whisper like old girlfriends.

Rhonda grabs Star's hand and stops their whisper-fest.

RHONDA

Pop's here. Oh - by the way - thanks for giving me that card.

Rhonda waves and Al walks over, looks at the two of them.

AL
Well, well. Look at you two.

RHONDA
I came by your room.

Al raises his eyebrows.

AL
And I wasn't there.

Rhonda and Star both look at him, expectantly. He slips into the chair beside Rhonda, looks eager and evasive at once.

AL
My evening went better than usual.

RHONDA
You made popcorn to go with the wrestling, instead of eating cold pizza?

AL
No. I had a date. Sadie. You've met Sadie, I take it?

RHONDA
Yes. And please, no details.

AL
All I'm saying is... maybe it's not too late for old Al.

STAR
Never, Al. It's never too late.

Al drums his fingers on the table, but looks mildly pleased.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Sadie sits front and center before the show. As the two guitarists get set up, she puts little earplugs in and pulls locks of hair over them. Al strolls to the microphone, winks at her.

AL

I know you all love Nightshade.
They're here to liven up the
place again. Give them a hand,
please, Kenny and Glen.

Applause. Kenny and Glen do their rock act. Sadie seems to enjoy it more than before, with earplugs. When they finish, though, she eagerly calls out:

SADIE

Al and Rhonda! Al and Rhonda!

A few others start to join in. Star stands at the back of the lounge, leans toward George.

STAR

The father-and-daughter act are starting to take off.

George smiles, nods. He sees Al point and Rhonda stand up.

Al brings up his guitar, and the two sit on stools side by side. Sadie beams up at them.

HEAR: Al and Rhonda's very fun song. Something original by Al. Maybe a touch too East Coast "hip" for New Mexico, but the crowd loves it. They cheer enthusiastically.

Afterward, the guitarists have their heads together in conference with Rhonda.

KENNY

...We'll blast him with it next time, surprise him.

EXT RIO GRANDE GORGE HOT SPRING - DAY

Al and Sadie lean back in the natural rock hot spring. Steam rises around them and rock walls tower overhead. A bottle of champagne sits in a green bush next to them. They both hold glasses of champagne.

SADIE

Are those vultures up there?

AL

Oh no! They're coming to pick
our bones clean.

SADIE

They'll be busy for a long time,
with me at least.

Al leans closer to her and clinks her champagne
glass.

AL

Here's to your loveliness.

SADIE

You're not too picky.

AL

Please, don't be modest. I'll
never let you get away with
that.

They kiss.

AL

Wow.

Al holds her hand, and reaches into his stuff
behind him and gives her a gaudy bracelet. She
tries it on, tentatively.

SADIE

Oh Al, you shouldn't have... Oh
God, listen to me, what a
cliché. (They laugh). But
really, I don't need *stuff*, I've
got tons. My husband loaded me
up with stuff. The wrong stuff,
but plenty of it - ha!

AL

Your husband.. I've been wanting
to ask you about...

SADIE

Shush. Really, shush. I told you we don't need to talk about the guy behind this ring. I never even see him. I just like the ring.

AL

Well, I've heard that before, you know, I've been around a while, and.. Well, I'm not a fighter, you know, never have been.

SADIE

Please. Trust me. You know I'd never put you in that position. But let me try to put you in *this* position...

A few moments of affection, Al's forehead bubbles with perspiration. He pulls Sadie close again.

AL

It's all too hot. I'm about to pass out. Call 911 if you need to, if we have cell service down here.

They kiss again and Sadie snuggles up to his side.

SADIE

So here we are in Vision Quest country. What do you see from here, for Al and Sadie, the unlikely couple? What happens next?

Al hems and haws, looks at her then looks at the tall rock towers around them.

AL

Look at us. Look where we are. You and I have been around for awhile, but it's nothing compared to these old rocks. I feel like I'm twenty again. Thirty anyhow. I just want to soak it all up...

He looks at her very sincerely

AL (contd)
Just stay right here just like
this. Just soak... Hmmm...

Sadie cuddles up to Al. He leans back against the
rocks, laughs then moans.

Then his moan takes a downturn, and the volume
goes up; there's a little panic in his voice.

AL
OY!

SADIE
Oy what? Let's get out of here -
- I'll take you to that Indian
doctor you know...

AL
No, I'm okay. Really, I'll be
okay. Let's just head home and
enjoy the sunset.

EXT - HIGHWAY - THE "GOLDEN HOUR"

Al and Sadie ride back in Sadie's SUV, Sadie
driving. Not on the interstate, but on scenic two-
lane roads through Los Alamos and Jemez and the
mountains.

She pulls over unexpectedly at Black Eagle Casino,
with its huge eagle logo more brooding and ominous
than majestic and inspiring.

SADIE
Let's go in here for a while, OK?

AL
Well... I never go into other
casinos. At least I haven't. I
guess I've got a certain loyalty
to Roaring Thunder.

SADIE

Hm. You'll survive. But ok, suit yourself. You can wait out here if you want to, is that OK? I just want to go in for a few minutes and hang around. This place has a certain nostalgic value for me.

AL

No problem. Take your time. I'm very fine.

Sadie exits the SUV and Al listens to the radio for a while, switching stations. Then he decides to go inside, exits SUV, hands in pockets, looking a little guilty.

INT BLACK EAGLE CASINO - DUSK

Al wanders around casino a bit, puts a couple dollars in a couple machines, and suddenly "300" flashes as the silver dollars come pouring out, with lights and commotion.

A few people take some notice, and a security guard walks by and smiles as Al scoops his winnings into a big paper cup.

Al goes to the bar, and sits two stools away from a rangy, 60ish, bearded COWBOY, somewhere between "drug store" and "real."

COWBOY

I see you won something.
Congratulations.

AL

Thanks. Well, yeah, \$300. Not a fortune or anything.

COWBOY

Hey, that's OK. It'll buy a few drinks... Not that I'm asking or anything. I don't really drink, myself. Just this ginger ale.

Cowboy is quiet for a while, then, half-kidding, gestures to include all 4 or 5 people in the bar:

COWBOY

So, you gonna buy us all a drink?

AL

Uh... sure, why not? Drinks on me, everybody!

Drinks are served, all around.

COWBOY

So, congratulations on your win at Roaring Thunder. Good deal you made with them.

AL (surprised)

How did you know about that?

COWBOY

They're not as confidential with their confidential information as you'd like to think.

AL (surprised)

Those bastards. There was a confidentiality agreement.

COWBOY

Well, it's the way of the world, right? No secrets. Plus I got friends there. I mean I got a *couple* friends left there, low-level, after they fucked me over a while back.

AL

Really? Tell me about it.

COWBOY

Well, the casino was low on funds - like they still are, as you know.

AL

Uh..yeah...

COWBOY

So, I won almost 24 thousand, fair and square, at blackjack one night. They accused me of counting - which I wasn't - and wouldn't pay me, and threw some ex-con stuff at me for good measure, so they could get away with it. I did some time, long time ago, paid my debt. A clean slate supposedly but it never really is.

AL (sympathetically)

Right.

COWBOY

Fuckers. What can you do, right?

AL

Right.

COWBOY

So anyhow, I don't really come to this place very often. I'm not much of a gambler. I don't really have much to gamble with. I just kinda like the atmosphere ... and the "view"!

He nods toward Sadie, across the far side of the room, beyond the bar.

COWBOY

See that gal over there? That was my wife.

AL (trying to stay casual)

Really?? ... Uh, good-looking woman.

COWBOY

Yeah, we were married five years.

AL

(looking at Cowboy's ring, confused)

Are you, uh, re-married?

COWBOY

What? Oh no, this? My old wedding ring, man. No, I kinda still like it. Nice, don't you think? Plus a lotta nostalgia value, too, I guess.

AL (confused, glances at Sadie across lobby)

Yeah, uh, it's nice. But doesn't it, uh, cut into other romantic.. opportunities?

COWBOY

Naww, I like girls who're bold enough to just go for it regardless, regardless of the ring. Separates the naughty gals from just the pretty ones.

AL

I see. Interesting approach.

COWBOY

Anyhow, we're still there for each other, I suppose, if need be - though we hardly ever talk, really.

AL (gestures to Sadie)

Aren't you gonna say hi to her?

COWBOY

Naw, not unless she walks by here. And even then she might not recognize me; she's never even seen me in this beard! Yeah, two ships passing in the night, across the horizon. We only lived together for a couple years anyhow.

Al tries to soak all this in, glances nervously in Sadie's direction, but she's disappeared.

COWBOY

So what do you do for a living?

AL

Uh, retired. 42 years in the furniture business - retail.

COWBOY (sizing him up)

A risk taker. I mean, any self-employed businessman is.

AL

Uh-huh. Yeah, you roll the dice very day in a business like that.

COWBOY

(after a couple beats, and a sip)

You know, there's something you could do to help me out. Wouldn't cost you anything, a little risk maybe, a little excitement.

Al indicates "keep talking."

COWBOY

Are you sure? This might require a little nothing-to-lose attitude.

AL

I got nothing to lose, believe me. Go ahead.

COWBOY

OK, so I know you do that talent night thing over there at Roaring Thunder. I've actually seen you.

AL

Yeah?

COWBOY

Well, say the host of the talent night, he's up there, hosting, and suddenly he has a huge heart attack...

INT ROARING THUNDER CASINO LOUNGE - DUSK

We SEE this heart attack sequence, as Cowboy and Al discuss it:

O.S. Cowboy's voice:

COWBOY (continuing)
 ...you sort of, it's not hard to
 fake. Aaagh!

AL
 Yeah, I think I know how it goes.

COWBOY
 OK, so you hit the ground,
 gasping for air. The crowd goes
 wild. "Is there a doctor in the
 house?" Total chaos.

AL
 Yeah?

"Visualizing" ends, back to conversation:

INT BLACK EAGLE CASINO LOUNGE - DUSK

COWBOY
 So, maybe in all that chaos a
 disgruntled customer, somebody
 who got fucked out of, you know,
 maybe 24 thousand, waltzes in,
 maybe turns out the lights,
 grabs what he can, sets things
 straight, liberates his 24
 thousand, maybe 25 thousand to
 include interest.

AL
 Yeah, but people could get hurt,
 I don't want to be part of
 anything like that...

COWBOY
 No, no, no, unarmed, I'm not
 into that, it's like Zen,
 effortless, if it doesn't just
 flow, I'll just let it go.

AL

Well... OK, I guess, if nobody gets hurt. I still can't believe those bastards didn't keep my deal confidential.

COWBOY

OK, so we got a deal then? Say, what, around 9 o'clock, not this Tuesday but the next one?

AL

9 o'clock, why not? You got it. Full faith and credit, my word is my bond, good old-fashioned values. You and me, the Three Musketeers. Remember, no violence.

COWBOY

Do I look like a violent man? I'm a love man, just like you, I imagine. Thanks.

Cowboy gets up and leaves.

Al leaves, goes outside and stands by the SUV. Sadie comes out shortly.

EXT BLACK EAGLE CASINO PARKING LOT - ALMOST DARK

AL

So did you win anything?

SADIE

Are you kidding? Never. I just come to give back to the Indians. Plus a little, uh, nostalgia. I used to come here now and then, long ago.

They get in SUV and drive off.

INT SUV - RIDING - ALMOST DARK

AL

I *did* win. \$300. Spent some of it on drinks for everybody, though. My good luck charm!

He leans over to kiss Sadie, but she pulls away.

SADIE

You were in the casino? I didn't even see you.

AL

Yeah, I went in after a while.

SADIE

So, you gonna split what you got left with your good luck charm?

AL

Uh...

SADIE

Uh what? What's the hesitation?

AL

I don't know, I, uh...

SADIE

I'm just testing you, Al. Of course I don't want your money. Just give my half to Rhonda. She probably deserves it, doesn't she, for putting up with you?

AL

No way. I mean I love her, you know I love her, but I'm trying to teach her to be self-reliant.

SADIE

Self-reliance is over-rated, Al. We're all connected, you know that. There's no getting around it, even in the USA, "independence first" and all that. She's your daughter. Maybe she even gives you some of your good luck. You seem to have a lot of it.

AL

No, she needs to stand on her own two feet.

SADIE

God almighty, Al, I don't know how you can be so clueless. And such a cheap bastard -- since I'm already insulting you anyhow. And such a generous person at the same time. I must just be fated to know walking contradictions. That's my training for sainthood.

AL

Well, I don't know what to say. I *am* a little insulted.

SADIE

Don't be, Al, really, it's all OK. Just consider it venting.

AL

Right. OK. So keep venting if it makes you feel good. I'm just glad you're drawn to me, with all my faults.

SADIE

Of course I am. Hey, I'm just gonna drop you off at your palace, OK. I can't come in. I've gotta open up the shop early tomorrow. Now call and ask the doctor to come over and see you? Promise?

INT CASINO HOTEL - PENTHOUSE HALLWAY - MORNING

Dr. Fred knocks on Al's door. He looks cool in a leather jacket and cowboy boots. A voice calls from inside:

AL (O.S.)

Come on in.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - MORNING

Dr. Fred walks in to find Al in his pajamas watching television from the recliner. Al is unshaven, looks low energy and pitiful. TV sound is low, the NASCAR races on.

DR. FRED

Sorry I'm just getting here, I got your message last night. You weren't asleep, were you?

AL

I've been reading.

He indicates the green envelope; a few papers sit open on the table. Dr. Fred looks and see it's the prostate information.

Dr. FRED

So what have you figured out?

AL

That I still don't want to deal with it.

Dr. Fred shakes his head. He sits in a chair next to Al.

AL

I had a meltdown yesterday. For just a minute, but it scared the shit out of me. Then I got distracted and it went away - thank God.

DR. FRED

That's gonna happen. You can't put off dealing with this.

Al looks down at the floor. Dr. Fred opens a small bottle, gives Al two tablets and a glass of water. Al drinks.

DR. FRED

Just something to settle you down. My treat. Have you talked to your daughter?

AL
No... But I will.

Dr. FRED
Well, you know what? You're a big boy. You're not the first patient I've seen whose way of dealing with it is not dealing with it. So...what's on? NASCAR?

AL
Yeah, NASCAR! Stick around. Here, can I get you a beer?

Dr. FRED (taking off his jacket)
It's a little early for that. But I've got a few minutes.

Al gets up, goes to the fridge, gets a beer for himself, sits down.

AL
So that's it? You're just gonna let me go? Just like that?

Dr. FRED
So who do you like for Daytona?

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

Al opens the door, still in his pajamas, to find Sadie in the hall. She looks lovely but sad.

SADIE
I've been calling.

Al hangs his head a moment, then backs up and motions her inside. Sadie walks in slowly, looks around.

SADIE
Well. They take good care of their karaoke guy.

AL
Yeah.

He cleans up some papers and offers Sadie a chair.
He paces around her, anxiously.

AL
Sorry. I've kind of let things
go the past day or so.

SADIE
You mean me?

AL
No. No! I think about you all
the time.

Al sits down across from Sadie and looks her in
the eyes.

AL
I mean, I haven't felt well.
It's hard to start up something
great when... when you feel like
crap.

Sadie smiles.

SADIE
Yeah, I can tell you've got
something going on. And I'm not
gonna pry about it. But I
thought maybe I scared you,
also.

AL
Oh, God yes. Right outta my
socks.

The two laugh and then laugh hard.

AL
No. I should have called. Or
answered. It's just... I've had
this... something pressing on me
for a while.

Sadie is silent, listens.

AL
I mean... can we talk?

Al looks at Sadie with pleading eyes that beg her patience.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Sadie wakes up and reaches next to her. She stretches, further and further. The bed is giant. Finally she sits up and looks around.

Al breezes into the bright room. One whole wall is a huge window and the sun is brilliant. Al, clean-shaven and showered, carries a tray of orange juice and bagels. He wears a plush terry cloth robe with the bright ROARING THUNDER logo on his chest.

Al sets the tray on the bed and leans over and kisses Sadie.

SADIE

My, this place is, uh, fancy, now that I see it in broad daylight. Looks a bit like a whorehouse. A nice one, though.

AL

Amazing - that's exactly what Rhonda said.

Sadie pulls him into the bed. He knocks over one of the juice glasses. It fills the bagel plate with orange juice. He stops and watches the bagel soak up the juice.

AL

You know, I'll bet that's not bad.

Sadie tugs him back toward her. He pauses, sets the tray on the nightstand, takes a little taste and likes it.

She grabs him successfully. They kiss passionately for a moment then Al snuggles close and leans up on an elbow.

AL

I woke up this morning wondering why you were still here... You heard my sad story and didn't run away.

SADIE

Where would I go? There are sad stories everywhere. I'm a sucker for sad stories and sad characters.

Al smiles at her. An apologetic smile.

AL

Well, you can tell me yours any time.

He leans toward her, amorous and playful. She holds him and rolls him closer.

SADIE

How about a happy story? Here, I'll start it.

She pulls him close.

SADIE

It's a good thing my assistant can cover for me today.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - LATER

Phone rings. Al slips on glasses and glances at the caller ID.

AL

Oh! The women. They won't leave me alone!

SADIE

Rhonda?

AL

Yeah. Yeah, I know I need to call her back. I know I need to talk to her.

Sadie clears her throat dramatically.

SADIE

She needs to hear all of this from you, what's going on. You know that, right?

AL

I just haven't been able to muster it up.

SADIE

Because you're thinking of yourself.

Al sighs hard, groans even.

AL

Man, I get that all the time.

SADIE

It's okay. That's how we all operate.

AL

So what do I do?

SADIE

Come on, you've been in business, just like me. You can get inside anybody's head if you want to.

AL

Okay, lemme think. Rhonda.. Rhonda...

SADIE

Right. Okay, practice on me. So what am I thinking about? What do I need to hear?

Al laughs, kisses, holds her affectionately. He sighs.

AL

Sadie. Sadie. I don't want to think of a morning when I don't feel like waking up exactly like today.

SADIE

Uh.. we were talking about Rhonda.

AL

Yeah. Rhonda. You know, there are a lot of issues there...

SADIE

Oh bullshit. Come on, Al.

AL

OK, I promise, I'll talk to her about it. Next time I see her. In person.

INT AL'S / RHONDA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Rhonda, yet in a bathrobe, pours a cup of coffee when a man slips up behind her. Barebacked Blaise wraps his arms around her and kisses her neck. She turns around and he lifts her, while they kiss, up to sit on the counter top.

She smiles alluringly and then the phone rings. She glances:

RHONDA

It's him. I better take it.

Blaise, with his most patient smile, hands her the phone.

RHONDA

Pop! You've risen from the dead.

She sips her coffee and points Blaise to another cup.

RHONDA

Stop apologizing. I'm just glad you feel better... No, I've been kind of distracted myself.

In the b.g. Blaise finds a loaf of bread and pops a couple pieces in the toaster. He opens the refrigerator. It's nearly bare, like the rest of the place. Super simple. He opens a small carton of milk and sniffs, pours some in his coffee.

RHONDA

I've been working on a plan to cheer you up but I know you hate surprises. Just get ready for a little surprise, okay?

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Al, casually dressed, sits in his LazyBoy, halfway reclined.

AL

That doesn't help. Don't do that to me.

INT AL'S / RHONDA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Blaise takes a bite of toast and hands Rhonda a piece. She waves it, emphatically.

RHONDA

Come on. You sound a lot better. I promise you're going to like it.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT

Al hesitates, lips pressed, a bit frustrated. He puffs air:

AL

OK, I can't wait. I'm getting a surprise ready for you, too... but I'm not sure you'll like it.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Al looks really cleaned up, even wears a nice dress jacket. He walks right up on stage with a brief introduction:

AL

These guys, Kenny and Gene really know their music. They really keep it together for us up here. Your genial host - myself - has been in a bit of a whirl, but you can always count on these guys, my rock. You rock!

Kenny and Gene lead in with a riff that sounds like one of their rock tunes, then they move along a different set of chords. Al starts to walk off the stage but turns back like he hears something familiar.

KENNY

Familiar tune?

Al looks around the crowd, surprised. He points at Blaise seated up front with Rhonda. She's smiling and has her hand over her mouth.

KENNY

Folks. This is a song from 1962. On the Billboard charts for 8 weeks! And the number one song on the radio in New York City for three weeks in a row. Anybody remember this one?

They jazz it up a little, then settle into the vintage tune.

KENNY

How about if we get Mr. Al Fine up here to sing his hit song? The group was called The Russels. The Russels, anybody?

Scattered applause from the small crowd. Blaise lets out a whistle. Al half smiles, fascinated. He listens to the guys. He smiles bigger when Kenny and Glen wave him back up on stage, but he waves his hands and bows out.

Rhonda leads a chant and the crowd picks it up:

RHONDA

Al Fine. Al Fine. Al Fine.

CROWD

Al Fine. Al Fine. Al Fine.

Star walks in with George and sits at a table next to Sadie. When Al sees the three of them together, beaming up at him, he pauses. He gathers his courage and turns, walks back up the steps to the microphone.

AL

This is a shock. We're going
pretty far back, here. You're
really testing my memory.

Guitars intro and Al begins a really pretty love song. He looks especially self-conscious.

AL

(singing)

"Upon my soul, I swear to you
My love is pure, my heart is true,
I love each lock of your golden hair,
Upon my soul I swear."

Al's voice cuts off mid-verse. The guitars lower but continue to play. Al is choked up and embarrassed. He shuffles awkwardly from one foot to the other.

The guitars are muffled, almost stopping. Rhonda hops out of her seat and trots up the stairs. She puts an arm around Al and he pats her, reassures her. The crowd rustles, but quietly waits. Rhonda talks away from the mic:

RHONDA

Let me sing it with you.

Al nods. The band picks up, gently.

AL AND RHONDA

"Upon my soul, I'll never leave,
If you should go, my heart would grieve,
I waken just to see you there,
Upon my soul I swear."

Everyone cheers when they finish. Blaise whistles loudly.

RHONDA
That's still a beautiful song.
(to the audience)
It's sweet that he still chokes
up thinking of my mom.

Al has turned away from the mic, says to Rhonda:

AL
That song's not about your
mother.

Kenny's well-placed chord strikes a note of mystery. Rhonda is also leaving the stage, but she stops.

RHONDA
What? I always thought that song
was for her.

Al shakes his head.

AL
You always think whatever you
want.

The musicians are quiet. They stand aside as Al and Rhonda walk off the stage.

RHONDA
Well, what else don't I know?

AL
A lot of things. It's alright.

RHONDA
No. I feel kind of... tricked.
Like you lied to me.

Al throws down his hands. He's not interested in the fight. He starts to walk away.

George meets him and whispers something. Al nods and they shake hands. Star stands back and watches Al walk past. Rhonda grabs his shoulder.

RHONDA

Great. You can't even stand up to me.

Al spins around.

AL

Right. It's always all about you.

He spins around again and heads for the exit. Star looks quizzically at George, who shrugs.

GEORGE

He said he was okay. But I got a feeling that's not gonna last long.

INT CASINO CRAPS TABLE - NIGHT

Al storms through the casino as Rhonda shuffles behind him and yells...

RHONDA

Hey, then who is it about? Who'd you write the song for? Someone else who gave up on you?

AL

It doesn't matter. It was no one.

RHONDA

No one writes love songs for no one.

Al stops and spins around in front of the craps table and the disgruntled croupier. The previously detached woman now watches wide-eyed.

AL

(to the croupier)

Oh, now you're fascinated, huh?

As Rhonda storms up behind Al, the croupier shrinks a bit, but still watches, fascinated.

AL
(to Rhonda)
Why do you care? Why's it so
important to you?

Rhonda pulls the reins on the anger and looks hurt.

RHONDA
Who are you? I feel like I don't
even know you sometimes.

Al softens a bit. He walks toward Rhonda and the slot area.

INT CASINO SLOT MACHINE AREA - NIGHT

The slot machine music and noise intensify. Friends have followed, standing a safe distance away: Star and George, Sadie, Blaise, even Kenny and Glen.

Rhonda, a defensive fist on her hip, is still disgruntled but also softens. She and Al are face to face.

AL
So, finally... you think? Maybe
you want to know some things
about your old man?

RHONDA
Hey, I have a right to be upset.
You moved in here without even
talking to me. Gave up a jackpot
that could have changed my life.

Al shakes his head, adamantly.

AL
No, honey. Sorry. It's mine. I'm
very clear on that. My decision.
My money. My life. This is my
retirement now.

RHONDA
That is so selfish.

AL

Is it? Didn't I work fifty years
at the furniture store?

Al paces away from her, then turns back.

AL

I provided for your mother and
you. She would have retired out
here with me if she'd made it,
God rest her soul.

RHONDA

She would not have lived at a
casino. She would not watch you
blow all your money.

Al looks like he'll explode, but holds his tongue
and marches away. Rhonda takes off after him as
Blaise follows at a distance.

In the b.g., Star finds George and pulls him
along. Sadie hurries along with them. Behind Al,
Rhonda stomps a foot and yells.

RHONDA

You could think about me and not
gamble everything away!

Al stops in front of a spinning lighted display.
He yells back at her:

AL

It's my life! ...What's left of
it.

All the onlookers freeze.

RHONDA

God. You make it sound like
you're dying or something.

Al's and George's eyes meet. George is the only
one who knows, besides Sadie now. The jolly,
jingly casino music and sounds provide a strange
counterpoint.

Star sees the look the two guys give each other and chokes up a little. Sadie puts a hand over her mouth.

Rhonda's eyes narrow, tension builds and she spurts out:

RHONDA

What the fuck! How dare you keep that from me?! What's going on??

Al, shocked at her attack, comes back wide-eyed and angry, ready to explode. Blaise is stunned too but tries to step between father and daughter. Then Rhonda bursts into tears.

RHONDA

How do you think that makes me feel? Like a moron; like I don't even matter to you! What is it?? Couldn't you have said something?

Al is really sweaty and agitated. He looks like he may faint.

AL

You... you...

Al puts a hand on his forehead, gets glassy-eyed and starts to sink. He collapses further, just as Blaise turns to break his fall. Blaise holds Al's shoulders as Al looks up at him and winces in pain.

AL

It's the Fine Furnishings... damaged, splintered...Oh Christ!

He shakes his head and takes short breaths.

Rhonda and the others rush up closer. George tries to move people back as Star rushes away to get help.

Al's "look" changes slightly to give us a hint that he's in a semi-dream state: He looks across lobby and sees:

INT - CASINO LOBBY - NIGHT - FROM AL'S POV

Cowboy strips off his trail duster cowboy coat to reveal full combat paraphernalia. He pulls out a gun and grabs guard near the cashiers' cage.

AL
Hey...wait...!!

Al looks at Blaise, who was holding him up, and suddenly it's Sadie's face now ... then Rhonda!

He looks back across lobby and Cowboy is inside cashier's cage, pulls circuit breaker and all goes BLACK!

Jangling stops, all is quiet. After a beat, lights come back up and noise resumes.

INT - CASINO LOBBY - NIGHT

AL
Www...what happened? Was there a robbery?

STAR
A robbery?? Al, you almost passed out. You collapsed.

AL
(now standing up strong)
I'll be back. I've gotta go to the bathroom.

BLAISE
I'll go with you.

AL
No, please, I don't wanna feel like an old invalid. Even if I am one. I'm OK. I'll be back.

Al leaves for restroom as all others watch.

INT - CASINO LOBBY RESTROOM - NIGHT

Al enters, takes a leak (we hear him wincing, grunting), then Cowboy enters, angry, dressed in his previous casual cowboy attire. He stands with his boot heel barring the door.

AL

I.. I'm sorry. I forgot the whole thing. I had other things going on, my daughter's beating the shit out of me out there. Plus it's just not right... your deal. Here, here's a couple hundred for the inconvenience, for your trouble. Probably not enough, but, like I said... I'm sorry.

Cowboy glowers, very menacing. Al cautiously approaches him, trying to be manly.

AL

Here, make it four... here, make it five hundred.

Cowboy slaps his hand away:

COWBOY

You fucked with the wrong guy, pardner. I thought you said you had nothing to lose. Well now you *do* have something to lose. You better make this right with me. You're gonna compensate me for my trouble, alright.

AL

No, it's really just not right. I shouldn't have signed on to your plan, but I'm signing off. And - hey - don't forget you're all over these security cameras (glances up), so let's just forget about the whole thing.

Cowboy looks up, worried now.

AL

(seeing he's worried)

In fact, fuck you, how about that? Get a job. I did. Now I'm retired. Let me enjoy my retirement.

Al looks up at the cameras again, to make his point.

AL (even bolder)

Yeah, fuck off, Gene Autry. And forget about the five hundred; I take it back. I really am sorry for the trouble, though.

Al stands defiantly, waiting for Cowboy to get out of the way, when there's a push on the door. Cowboy glares at Al and moves out of the way, as:

Blaise comes in. Blaise and Cowboy look at each other, frozen, startled.

BLAISE

What the...!! What's going on?

COWBOY

Blaise! I, I never meant to...

BLAISE

I've wanted to break your neck all these years, but I've tried not to think about it, you're not worth it, but now I think I will. I don't care what happens to me.

AL

What's going on...?

COWBOY

Blaise, really, I never wanted to...

BLAISE (red-faced, exploding)

SHUT UP!! (to Al) Is he giving you some trouble? Is this piece of shit pulling something on you, Al? Tell me!

AL

Blaise, please, I don't know what's going on, but I got it handled here, there's no problem. Really. I'm fine. Please, let's just leave. Here, help me out, I think I need you to help me out of here.

Blaise glares at Cowboy for a few seconds, then takes Al's arm to help him leave restroom.

INT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Al in hospital gown, lies back against his pillows. Sadie sits beside him, holds his hand. Rhonda and Blaise stand nearby.

SADIE

I can't believe it. So my husband was your father, Blaise, I mean your... he lived with you and your mom, near the rez?

BLAISE

Yeah, well, I've tried not to think about him, about... what happened. If he's been around here lately I guess I didn't even recognize him.

SADIE

Me too. He's been floating around here for years, on and off, but the beard is new, I haven't seen him in a long time. I can't believe what he did to you!

BLAISE

Well, it was my choice, I guess, I figured why give him up to the cops? He would have gotten ten years for that robbery. And I was only in for less than a year, being a teenager and all.

Rhonda hugs him a little tighter.

BLAISE (cont'd)

But he was never in touch again, with me or my mom. I hated him for it, but I guess I figured it was worth it if he was out of my mom's life, too, wouldn't hurt her again either.

SADIE

I can't believe it. You know, he told me he was involved in a robbery once, but he didn't say it was with his own kid - his own...ward - who got *caught!* And you served time for him!

She struggles to remove her wedding ring, and does, rubbing her sore finger, and looking at it with disgust.

SADIE

I think it's time to get rid of this damn thing. Rhonda, if I give you this will you promise to sell it, or get it melted down for all I care - whatever you want to do?

RHONDA

Sure, I guess. Thanks. Make something good out of something bad. Are you sure?

SADIE

Absolutely. If you sell it, you and Blaise buy a little fishing boat or something.

AL

Sadie, honey, Dr. Fred is coming in a minute. This won't be any fun. I mean this whole Al Fine adventure. You don't need a big waste of time.

SADIE

I suppose someone else is going to bring you your juice?

AL

Well, no, not really...You still want to bring me juice?

A knock, and the door opens. Sadie looks over her shoulder. Dr. Fred enters with George and Star, nods, quietly looks over Al's hospital chart then looks around the room.

Rhonda sits on Al's other side; next to her is Blaise. Star and George stand behind them. Sadie whispers to Al:

SADIE

We'll talk about it later.

Dr. Fred puts down the chart and addresses Al:

DR. FRED

Now, listen. This was a wakeup. I guess I've got good news and bad news. You want all these folks listening in?

AL

Sure... no... well, only if they want to. I need Star to get back to the Roaring Thunder and tell them they haven't gotten rid of the schmuck yet.

Star gives Al a kiss. George shakes Al's hand, and he and Star half-start to leave.

DR. FRED

Wait, wait, just a minute. I guess the good news outweighs the bad news. Bad news, you've got some sort of infection, probably, but let's assume we can clear it up with antibiotics. Your symptoms of the past couple weeks aren't consistent with prostate cancer. Infection, maybe, but probably not cancer.

AL

Are you kidding? All that worry for nothing?

DR. FRED

Well, the worry probably helped drag you down. Might even have given you some of that pain. It works that way sometimes. You've gotta rest for a few days, understand?

AL AND RHONDA

Holy shit! / Oh my God.

Rhonda almost collapses with relief, sits down.

DR. FRED

The current thinking, which I've been catching up on, is that a high PSA reading doesn't mean as much as we used to think, and in a 74-year-old man it's probably not worth throwing your life in a spin to do anything about it. Because even if you've really got cancer, it usually takes so long to progress, you'll probably check out from something else first.

AL

Praise God. I hope you're right.

SADIE

It sounds like Al and I have lots of adventures yet to go, so we can relax and just get on with it?

DR. FRED

Hopefully, yeah. Oh, by the way, Al, you asked about "schmuck"... We have schmuck. When winter is ending, we have a Breaking of the Ice.

Star cocks her head, listens curiously.

DR. FRED (contd)

The guy we poke through the ice first - I guess you'd call him the schmuck, right? If the ice stays open, we know a good summer is coming.

AL

Yeah, sounds about right.

RHONDA

Sounds to me like a good use of a schmuck. Better than the usual.

Sadie pulls open the draperies to reveal the magnificent greened-up Sandia Peak skyline. She turns to hold Al's hand.

SADIE

Oh, it's going to be a fine summer. The first of many, Al.

Star and George exit with Dr. Fred, with blown kisses, nods, etc.

AL

Rhonda, honey, will you and Blaise help me get home? Sadie's Roundup is waiting on her.

Rhonda nods and smiles; Sadie squeezes Al's hand and gets up, gathers her purse, jacket.

Al pats Rhonda's hand and gazes at her.

AL

You've heard me apologize all your life, but it doesn't seem like there's enough 'sorry' for all of this.

RHONDA

Back atcha, Pop. No problem.

Al glances over Rhonda's shoulder at Sadie.

AL

For the record, your mother and I were great together.

Rhonda smiles faintly and nods.

AL

Best thing she ever gave me was you.

(half-sings):

"Upon my soul I bless the day
I saw that you had come my way.."

But I think maybe I have another
verse to add.

Rhonda leans and gives Al a kiss on the cheek. She
winks and nods toward Sadie.

RHONDA

Maybe a whole new song?

Blaise hands Al his shirt and pants as Rhonda
picks up a vase of flowers. Sadie and Al share
another kiss; she leaves.

INT CASINO LOUNGE ENTRANCE - DAY

Al and Rhonda walk between the lobby and lounge
and meet Kenny as he comes through the entrance.

AL

Hey, they said you're the new
Open Mic guy. I needed you to
relieve me of the burden. Too
much to do.

KENNY

Cool, huh? We're gonna try to
record a live CD here one of
these nights.

Al nods approvingly.

KENNY

You're coming to sing... soon!

Al waves as he and Rhonda walk toward the
elevator.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rhonda sets a glass of water on Al's nightstand and gives his pillows a fluff. Al is in his pajamas, tucked in.

AL

You don't have to stay.

Rhonda nods.

RHONDA

I'll stay.

AL

You said never, never, never.

RHONDA

I said I don't want to live here. But I'll be around... anytime you want.

Al smiles gently; pulls the blanket up.

Montage OF SHOTS - day

- 1) INT PENTHOUSE APARTMENT -- Al and Rhonda watch NASCAR races.
- 2) INT CASINO HOTEL PENTHOUSE LEVEL HALLWAY -- Al, in robe, walks with Sadie and Rhonda.
- 3) INT PENTHOUSE APARTMENT KITCHEN -- Rhonda gives Al (still in robe) his medicines and water.
- 4) EXT CASINO PARKING LOT -- next to the Allanté, Blaise and Rhonda show off their new, modest aluminum fishing boat to Al, now dressed.
- 5) INT PENTHOUSE APARTMENT -- Perkier looking Al sits in chair with guitar in lap; he plays as Rhonda looks on.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Al gets ready to climb in bed. When he leans back, Sadie fluffs his pillow and lays close to him. Al puts his arm around her.

AL

The Roundup was busy today?

SADIE

This is a hectic time. People getting ready for fiestas and fairs... I'm sorry I haven't been around more.

AL

It's alright. Rhonda's been a big help. It's been good for us.

SADIE

I think so.

AL

But I haven't been getting my orange juice.

SADIE

A shame.

They kiss, laugh a little, and Al gathers Sadie in his arms.

INT CASINO PENTHOUSE APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Al sits in front of the huge window with the gorgeous morning sky behind him, Sadie nearby. He leans back in his chair, guitar on his stomach. He strums and hums lightly:

AL

"Every inch you worry 'bout
Is more to hold and love, no doubt.
And if some day you can't see your
feet
Just know, to me, it's all so
sweet."

Sadie laughs and listens, gets a little teary eyed, but is happy. Al is handsome, peaceful.

INT CASINO LOUNGE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Al sets down his guitar case outside the entrance. Sadie smooths his jacket and pats him reassuringly:

SADIE

She'll be here. She said she'd meet us.

Star and George approach from the lobby area.

STAR (to Al)

Hey, you're looking better.

AL

I've got some good help.

The women laugh. George and Al shake hands.

AL

Here she comes.

GEORGE (to Al)

You're singing tonight? That's great.

Rhonda bustles up and Blaise follows.

RHONDA

Sorry we're late, but we're good. We're ready.

The group proceeds into the lounge, beginning to fill up.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Star and George are seated at a table at the side with Blaise and Sadie. Other guests fill up the other tables.

Kenny stands at the microphone. Glen is behind him, with a guitar. Kenny greets the crowd as new host:

KENNY

Thanks for being here, everyone. It looks like word has got out about our performers. We'll try to keep all the excitement up on stage this time.

INT LOUNGE OFFSTAGE AREA - NIGHT

Al and Rhonda stand behind a partition. Al breathes deeply:

AL

No mistakes... no mistakes.

Rhonda tips her head, wondering why a seasoned performer like Al would be nervous..

AL

There are no mistakes. You are absolutely beautiful. Everything we do brings us closer to where we're headed.

Rhonda's eyes are wide and she stifles a smile. She looks up.

RHONDA

I think you've been hanging out in God's country too long, you're starting to sound like a Wise Man.

AL

Can't ever be too wise, right? Okay. We're good.

KENNY (O.S.)

It's great to see him looking so fine. Please welcome Al Fine and his daughter, Rhonda Fine.

Applause. Al takes Rhonda's hand and leads her out.

INT CASINO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Al picks up his guitar and he and Rhonda step in front of the microphone.

AL

We re-wrote this a little bit,
updated it for our time. Yeah,
our time...

AL AND RHONDA

"Upon my soul I call you in
Through good and bad, through thick and
thin,
A darkened sky, rain from above,
Upon my soul I guess that's love."

(Their song is a remake, a rewritten version of the hit tune. New words indicate they won't look for the love of their life, but find it in each other, themselves. Find love IN their lives.)

Kenny and Glen join in on guitars.

Applause.

Al and Rhonda take a bow.

Star jumps up, first to give them a standing ovation. Blaise whistles and stands next to George, Star and Sadie. The crowd cheers.

FADE OUT.