

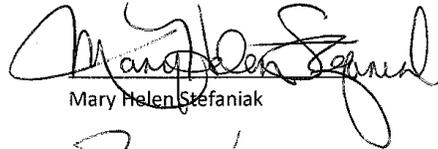
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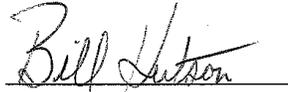
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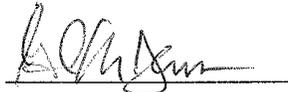
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LOVE : GAME

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EXT. A HILLTOP - MORNING

Arm in arm, ALASTAIR SMITHE and CATHERINE BRIGHN, two 17-year-old lovers, watch a turquoise sunrise in late autumn. Alastair reads the first stanza of *They Say That Hope Is Happiness* from a Lord Byron poetry book.

ALASTAIR

They say that hope is happiness, but
genuine love must prize the past.
And memory wakes the thoughts that
bless: they rose the first, they set
the last.

Catherine leans her head against Alastair's chest.

CATHERINE

You know, you're pretty well
educated for a high-school jock. If
I didn't know any better, I'd say
you're playing for the other team.

ALASTAIR

Shush, I thought that's why our
parents sent us to boarding school.
So we'd get an education. Or maybe
they just don't like to see us that
often. I don't know. I just like
Byron, the--

CATHERINE

It's beautiful, honey. I love it.
(kisses him)
Do you remember our first kiss? It
was right here.

ALASTAIR

Course I do. I had to wait until we
were properly married.

Catherine giggles and looks at a braided ring on her finger.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

At 10-years-old, Alastair and Catherine slowly walk up to each other as in a wedding ceremony.

Catherine wears a white, silk dress and flowers in her hair.
Alastair sports a badly-fixed bow-tie.

ALASTAIR (V.O.)

You were wearing that white silk dress I liked so much, and I had labored on these braided rings for months.

Alastair takes a pair of braided rings out of his pocket. They exchange rings and lean in for their first kiss when the buzzing of a cell phone can be heard.

END OF FLASHBACK:

EXT. HILLTOP - MORNING

Hearing his buzzing cell phone, Alastair searches the pockets of his letter jacket. He pulls out a ring case. Swiftly, he tucks the ring case back away, monitoring Catherine's eyes. He pulls out his cell phone.

CATHERINE

What?

Alastair looks at his cell phone display.

INSERT: from Brian Plac: Check out our draw on your way in.

Alastair checks his wristwatch.

ALASTAIR

Shoot, I'm gonna be late.

Alastair eases out of Catherine's embrace and throws the poetry book into his school bag.

CATHERINE

But what about the rest of the poem?

ALASTAIR

You'll have to wait until this afternoon.

Alastair shoulders his schoolbag and jogs down the hill.

CATHERINE

I can't believe they make you practice this early!

Alastair shrugs his shoulders and waves as he arrives at his car, a black Corvette Z06.

INT. ALASTAIR'S CAR - MORNING

Alastair shuts the door. He glances at Catherine as he pulls out the ring case again. He opens it and looks at a diamond ring inside. He sighs, tucks the ring case away and starts the roaring engine of his car.

EXT. HILLTOP - MORNING

Catherine looks up from staring at her braided ring as Alastair's car pulls away with squealing tires.

CATHERINE
Drive safe! Show off.
(sighs)

INT. ALASTAIR'S CAR - MORNING

Alastair parks in front of a gym. He wrinkles his forehead as if to suggest puzzlement at a number of TV crew cars in the parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MORNING

Alastair takes his gym bag out of the trunk. The imprint on the bag, which is colored in stars and stripes, reads: U.S. Sand Volleyball Team. Alastair R. Smithe No.10.

PATRICK WILLIAMS, a 19-year-old volleyball player sporting a beard and long brown hair, grabs Alastair's shoulder from behind.

PATRICK
Nice wheels, Smithe. I wish my dad
was a senator.

Patrick flicks Alastair in his man zone, but Alastair blocks successfully. Patrick smirks rascally.

ALASTAIR
It's a lease, Pat.

Alastair shoulders his gym bag and slams the trunk shut.

PATRICK
Woo, woo. What are you? Pissed
because they didn't have it in
fushia.

ALASTAIR
It's a weak parental attempt at an
apology.

PATRICK
And what the hell is that supposed
to mean?

ALASTAIR
(reflective)
Nothing.

PATRICK
Shit, I wish my parents would
apologize like that. Are those
vacuum boosters on your power
brakes?

Alastair observes Patrick squatting while inspecting the car
brakes.

ALASTAIR
Are they still fighting, your
parents?

PATRICK
Yeah, it's pretty bad.

ALASTAIR
Well, I'll have to take you for a
spin some time.

Patrick stands back up. In a signature manner, he tosses his
long brown hair out of his face.

PATRICK
I don't need your sympathy. I'll get
my own vet some time. And I'll own
it.

Patrick walks past Alastair toward the gym's entrance. Alastair
follows him. They pass the TV crew cars.

ALASTAIR
Hey, what's with those TV cars?

PATRICK
No idea.

INT. GYM HALLWAY - MORNING

Bouncing a volleyball, Alastair exits the locker room in a No.10
U.S. sand volleyball jersey. He stops at a bulletin board and
reads a tournament draw.

INSERT: Sheik Ahmad Al-Abdai Open Dubai. FIVB Sand Volleyball
Olympic Qualifying. Jan.1- Jan 4, 2012.

ALASTAIR
 (under his breath)
 Fernando Ruiz/Blanco Perso, Brazil,
 No.1, bla bla bla.

Alastair sighs and runs his index finger down the draw.

ALASTAIR
 Clay Reynolds/Patrick Williams, USA,
 No.3, vs. bye, ok. Andreij
 Sikorsky/Igor Dimitrajev, Russia,
 vs. oh shit!

Alastair's finger merges from his and Brian Plac's name toward the quarterfinal bracket to Clay Reynolds and Patrick Williams.

INSERT: Clay Reynolds/Patrick Williams (USA) No.3 vs. Bye, Andreij Sikorsky/Igor Dimitrajev (RUS) vs. Alastair Smithe/Brian Plac (USA).

INT. GYM - MORNING

Alastair squeezes by a crowd of cameramen and journalists. MELISSA MAYS, a young, blond sports reporter, holds a microphone into CLAY REYNOLDS's face. Clay is a senior college volleyball stud.

MELISSA
 Clay Reynolds: How do you feel about a potential quarterfinal clash with your teammates Alastair Smithe and Brian Plac?

CLAY
 You know, they're good players, great teammates, but young, so--

Alastair stops and listens to Melissa's questions.

MELISSA
 If they beat you in the quarterfinals, they would qualify for the Olympics as the youngest team in sand volleyball history. I hear you are Alastair Smithe's big role model. Do you think his game is mature enough to beat you?

CLAY

Well, I hope not.
 (the journalists laugh)
 But you better ask him that
 question.

DAN, a young energetic manager, bumps into Alastair as he elbows his way through the journalist crowd. Dan holds his cell phone to his ear.

DAN

Sorry Alastair. How are you?
 (on his cell)
 Yes, Larry. Are you there?

ALASTAIR

No worries, Dan. My bad.

Alastair spots his volleyball partner BRIAN PLAC, a slight 17-year-old, sitting alone on a change-over bench courtside.

INT. COURTSIDE - MORNING

Alastair walks past U.S. head coach HENRY LEVINE, who is maybe forty, as well as COACH T, a young strength coach, and COACH MILES, a gray-haired sports psychologist.

ALASTAIR

Coach. Coach T, Miles.

Coach Levine frowns at Alastair while pointing at his wristwatch. Alastair sits down on the change-over bench next to Brian, who puts his contacts in.

ALASTAIR

Glad I could find you. What a circus.

BRIAN

What did you expect with superstar Reynolds on the team. Did you check the draw?

Adjusting his contacts, Brian blinks heavily as he tries to look Alastair in the eye.

ALASTAIR

Yeah. Looks like we gonna have a part in this attraction, too.

BRIAN

You think we have a shot? Against
Pat and Clay I mean?

Brian checks his vision and looks toward Clay and Patrick. With hands crossed, Patrick blows out air as he stands aside to the journalist crowd around Clay.

ALASTAIR

Now relax. We have to beat the
Russians first before we get to jump
at the throats of Siegfried and Roy
over there.

Brian starts biting his fingernails. Alastair is wrapping tape around his braided ring.

BRIAN

Yeah, but you remember we routined
the Russians at that tournament in
Austria about a month ago. Our first
round is gonna be a walk in the
park.

ALASTAIR

So?

BRIAN

So you don't think having to beat
our teammates for a spot at the
Olympics is a big deal at all?

Alastair finishes taping and looks up into the stands where Catherine is just sitting down.

ALASTAIR

No. No big deal at all. You just
gotta have faith in your ...

Catherine and Alastair make eye contact and smile at each other.

ALASTAIR

... in your game.

Alastair sees PATRICK'S FATHER and Patrick's mother, who are in their late forties, sitting down next to Catherine in the stands.

Alastair spots HEATHER, a hot 17-year-old volleyball player, staring into Brian's and his direction. Embarrassed, Heather diverts her look.

ALASTAIR

Hey, see Heather over there? I think she's checking you out.

BRIAN

Whatever.

Alastair taps Brian's back and the two perform their signature high fives. Coach Levine blows on his whistle.

INT. VOLLEYBALL COURT - MORNING

On an indoor sand volleyball court, Alastair and Brian spar against Clay and Patrick. They play out a point that Alastair closes with a spectacular spike, which breaks Patrick's block.

The journalists take notes. Coach Levine gives his whistle a sharp blow. Alastair and Brian high-five. Clay lets his head hang. Patrick rubs his blood-shot eyes.

COACH LEVINE

No!! Patrick, what did I tell you about your goddamn hands on the block?!

Coach Levine walks onto the court and demonstrates.

With his hands on his hips, Patrick glances up into the stands, where his dad shakes his head at him. Smiling at Catherine, Alastair catches a glimpse of Patrick's unnerved father.

COACH LEVINE

You keep them around the ball, you understand?

PATRICK

(tossing his hair)
Sorry, coach. It came at a weird angle, the sunlight.

Patrick gestures toward a sunray shining through a gym window. Coach Levine is in Patrick's face, examining the rings underneath Patrick's eyes.

COACH LEVINE

Pat--

Dan, with his cell phone in his hands, waves at Coach Levine.

DAN

Hey coach. Can I steal my man for a sec?!

COACH LEVINE

Now?! What is it?

DAN

Sorry, can't tell. You'll get him
back in two.

Melissa observes this conversation while taking notes. Coach Levine looks at Clay and waves dismissively. Clay hustles off court and gets on Dan's cell phone.

CLAY

(on Dan's cell)

Hello?

Coach Levine is in Patrick's face again. Alastair observes this while glancing at Patrick's father, who eagerly jots down notes. Disinterested, Patrick's mother gossips on her cell phone.

COACH LEVINE

Pat, you look like hell. Dubai is in
less than two weeks. You want to
blow your last chance at the
Olympics?

PATRICK

No.

COACH LEVINE

Good. Then stop blocking like a damn
virgin.

Demonstratively, Coach Levine presses his thighs together. Patrick nods submissively.

COACH LEVINE

Now where the hell is Clay?
I hate those managers. Dan?!

Dan shrugs and points at Clay, who is busy talking on Dan's cell phone. Coach Levine blows on his whistle and waves at Heather, who practices on a nearby court.

COACH LEVINE

Heath, can you help out real quick?

Heather exchanges a quick nod with a female coach and comes running onto the sand volleyball court.

COACH LEVINE

Ok, same thing. I want Pat to block
at least once.

Heather nods. Alastair and Brian get into a huddle.

ALASTAIR
I'll be at the net.

BRIAN
But then I'll have to spike?

ALASTAIR
Let's give it a shot. It's just
practice.

Grudgingly, Brian positions himself in the back of the court. RICHARD SMITHE, a congressional senator in his early fifties, arrives in a door. He catches Alastair's eye and they smile at each other.

Heather serves, Brian receives and Alastair sets up Brian for a spike that Patrick blocks successfully. Coach Levine whistles again.

COACH LEVINE
Ok, better, better! Now that's
enough for today.

Alastair and Brian low-five.

BRIAN
I told you. I don't jump as high.

ALASTAIR
High enough for Dubai.

Brian swallows his anger and they perform their signature high fives again. Sweating, Patrick hugs Heather, whose face shows disgust at Patrick's embrace.

PATRICK
(to himself)
Why would they have Smithe at the
net? Brian doesn't jump as high.

Patrick looks up into the stands where his parents prepare to leave.

INT. GYM - MORNING

As Clay returns the cell phone to Dan, Melissa walks up to Clay.

MELISSA
Clay, Clay. Who was on the other
line of that phone?

CLAY
Interview session's over Melissa.
You should have asked earlier.

MELISSA
Does that mean you can't talk about
it?

Clay turns to Melissa and frowns at her.

CLAY
No, it means I won't talk about it,
ok!?

Melissa shrinks back. As soon as Clay has turned his back to her, she eagerly scribbles in her notepad. Patrick walks up to Melissa.

PATRICK
Why don't you ever ask me any
questions? I'd never turn you down.

MELISSA
Well what do you have to say?

Patrick opens his mouth to speak but hesitates. Melissa slips him her business card.

MELISSA
Call me when you're ready.

INT. COURTSIDE - MORNING

At a change-over bench, Clay tosses his gear into his gym bag as Patrick arrives.

PATRICK
What was that all about?

CLAY
Your shitty block you mean?

Patrick shrinks back and glances at Brian and Alastair.

PATRICK
The kids aren't amateurs anymore.
They know how to play.

CLAY
I know. I was there.

PATRICK
Hardly.

CLAY
What?!

Clay shoots Patrick a sharp look.

PATRICK
Gosh, why're such a bitch today? Are you having your period?

Clay violently zips up his gym bag.

CLAY
I just got a lot on my mind.

PATRICK
Well, we all do.

Patrick looks over to Alastair and Brian. Catherine is hugging Alastair as Melissa taps Alastair's shoulder.

PATRICK
You think we could lose?

Alastair lets Catherine out of his embrace and turns to Melissa. Catherine raises her eyebrows as if to suggest surprise. She sighs and sags her shoulders.

CLAY
Well, if you continue to show up with those rings under your eyes we probably will. In the meantime, don't sweat it. We just gotta figure out how to throw those kids off their game. Especially Smithe. His spike is a killer.

PATRICK
Oh, you think?

CLAY
It's the best I've ever seen, including mine.

Clay shoulders his gym bag and leaves. Patrick throws an envious look toward Alastair, who is answering Melissa's questions. Catherine gestures to Alastair that she is leaving. Upset, Catherine walks away.

Wiping sweat off her forehead, Heather passes Patrick.

PATRICK

Hey Heath, we would make a great team you know.

Patrick puts his arm around Heather's shoulder. Heather removes it with disgust.

HEATHER

Why would you think that?

PATRICK

Remember how you used to have a crush on the senator's kid?

Heather sighs and looks over to Alastair, who is laughing while chatting with Melissa.

HEATHER

Yeah, it's hopeless. I still think he's cute. His legs.

PATRICK

Whatever. Did you know that he also refers to you as, quote, cute?

HEATHER

He does?

PATRICK

Are you kidding? You know, in my opinion, you always made for the perfect couple.

Patrick puts his arm back around Heather's shoulder as they walk toward the locker rooms.

INT. GYM HALLWAY - MORNING

Wearing a U.S. team warm-up, Coach Levine exits his office with boxes in his hands. Richard arrives at his door.

RICHARD

Stars and stripes, hm?

COACH LEVINE

(shaking hands)

Richard, what a surprise. Are they sending us the president's envoy?

RICHARD

I don't think you need our blessing. Here, Henry.

RICHARD

The consulate is just down the road.
I thought I'd save you guys a trip.

Richard reaches into his pocket and hands Coach Levine a stack of passports.

COACH LEVINE

Thanks, Richard. I'm glad we got our visas.

Richard nods as they walk down the hallway.

RICHARD

So, how are we doing?

COACH LEVINE

Doing great. Alastair is doing really well. He and Brian are winning four out of five sets against Clay and Pat these days. I think they have a real shot at the Olympics.

RICHARD

(smiles)

Is that so?

(concerned)

Listen, Henry, there's something I want to talk to you about.

They arrive in the gym's entrance lobby. They stop and Richard turns to Coach Levine.

INT. GYM LOBBY - MORNING

RICHARD

Angela and I, we've been having some problems. You understand, I have to be discreet about this for various reasons, political reasons mainly, but--

(clears his throat)

You don't think the Dubai trip is too much for Alastair? I mean, all the media, the expectations. It was a zoo out there today. He's only a teenager.

Richard glances at Alastair and Patrick, who has his arm around Alastair's shoulder as they exit the lockers. Cameras flash and TED, a middle-aged TV reporter, holds his microphone into Alastair's face.

TED

Alastair: What do you think about your form? Can you beat your friends for a spot at the Olympics?

Alastair waves the question off and elbows his way through the crowd. Clay and Brian exit the lockers, and the journalists swarm toward Clay. Alastair blows out air and makes eye contact with Brian, who raises his eyebrows as if to suggest exhaustion.

COACH LEVINE

Look, I wouldn't allow him to travel if I didn't think he could handle the pressure, mentally and physically.

Patrick, Alastair and Brian walk up Richard and Coach Levine.

RICHARD

Hey, nice elevation on that last block, Pat.

PATRICK

Thanks, senator. Gotta keep the young guns honest you know.

Alastair and Brian roll their eyes at each other.

RICHARD

Well, you're a lucky guy to be partnered up with Clay. He's Alastair's big idol, why he plays volleyball.

Alastair tears the tape off his ring finger. Clay still talks to reporters.

PATRICK

Clay's an inspiration to all of us.

COACH LEVINE

If only he would inspire us to go to bed a little earlier.

Heather walks by in a stunning outfit.

COACH LEVINE
Thanks for helping out, Heath.

HEATHER
You got it, coach. Good luck guys.

Turning around, Heather throws Alastair a flirtatious look, which Patrick notices.

PATRICK
What can I say, coach. Heather just knows how to shag balls. And not just on the volleyball court, if you know what I mean.

Patrick winks at Alastair. Richard looks at Heather's butt.

RICHARD
Well I wouldn't kick her out of bed for eating crackers.

PATRICK
Nice one, senator.

Patrick and Richard fist-punch. Alastair hits his father's shoulder.

ALASTAIR
Dad!

RICHARD
Just a joke.

ALASTAIR
Well it's not funny.

Coach Levine hands his players their passports. Richard takes Alastair into his arm and runs his hand through his son's hair.

RICHARD
When you get a chance, tell Clay his country's proud of him.

PATRICK'S DAD
Pat!

Patrick's dad stands at the front door with a handful of notes. Hands crossed, Patrick's mother impatiently inspects her high heels.

PATRICK

Sure thing. Thanks for the passport.

Patrick walks toward his parents.

RICHARD

Nice going, junior. Although I was a bit surprised to see you setting on that last play.

Brian throws Alastair the stink-eye.

ALASTAIR

Executive decision.

Richard kisses his son's hair while Alastair observes Patrick's dad flicking the back of Patrick's head.

RICHARD

Your mom and I are proud of you.

Coach Levine throws Richard a comforting smile and leaves.

ALASTAIR

Thanks dad.

Richard's cell phone rings. He lets Alastair out of his embrace and picks up his phone.

RICHARD

(on his cell)

Yes, Peter. No, no problem. Who?

Yeah, go on, put him through.

Alastair sighs and throws a pleading look at Richard. Richard covers his cell with his hand.

RICHARD

I have to take this. It's the state secretary on drugs at local high schools.

ALASTAIR

So?

RICHARD

So, you're in high school too.

ALASTAIR

(ironic)

Sure, I forget.

ALASTAIR

You're a politician. Your neglect is
for my own good. I just don't know
it, yet.

Richard consults his wristwatch.

RICHARD

That reminds me. Have fun at school.
(on his phone)
Yes, secretary Corrs. How are you
Bill?

Alastair looks at Brian, who shrugs his shoulders. The boys and
Richard leave the gym in opposite directions.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NOON

Alastair and Brian, who wears big, black-framed glasses, are in
the midst of a crowd of pupils leaning over an overhead
projector at the teacher's desk. Alastair's eyes run over the
computation of a math problem:

INSERT: $y = 32x + b$.

Patrick leans on Alastair's back and gropes his chest.

PATRICK

Keen on 32bs?

Brian observes them and leans back from the overhead projector.
Alastair grins and shakes Patrick off.

ALASTAIR

In fact, it's $32x + b$.

PATRICK

Whatever, math wizz.

Brian ducks a sponge that sizzles over his head and splashes on
the blackboard behind him. In a huddle of THREE STUDENTS, one
wears a pink shirt and uses a wooden pointer to drive the wet
sponge against the blackboard.

FIRST STUDENT

Fore!

SECOND STUDENT

Dude, you almost nailed pretty boy!

THIRD STUDENT

Good that his partner is there to
rub him.

The second student rubs the first student's butt as the latter sticks it out in a suggestive pose. They laugh. Brian makes a fist and clenches his teeth. Alastair grabs Brian's wrist.

ALASTAIR

Easy, easy. It's just some bruise
in a pink shirt.

Heather follows the argument while chewing on gum and flipping through a fashion magazine. Brian relaxes his fist.

THE THREE STUDENTS

Uhh, chickie, chickie chickie.

HEATHER

(sighs)

Boys.

Heather stares at Alastair's butt as he walks by. Patrick observes this, catches Heather's eye and winks at her. Alastair and Brian sit down at their desk. Patrick flicks Alastair's man zone, but Alastair blocks again.

ALASTAIR

Denied. You've got issues with
blockage you know.

PATRICK

All right. I give it to you. That
was good stuff at practice this
morning. Hey, know who's got the
hots for you? Heather Woodman.

Alastair looks at Heather, who smiles into his direction. Disappointed, Brian casts down his look.

ALASTAIR

Whatever.

Alastair picks up a math book and starts reading.

PATRICK

By far the hottest girl in school.
What's your verdict?

Alastair glances at Catherine, who sits down at her desk and puts on her glasses.

ALASTAIR

She's cute, but I already have a
girlfriend, remember?

PATRICK

Well that's a reason but not an obstacle. C'mon Smithe. What are you, married?

Alastair fiddles with his ring and glances at Catherine.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

10-year-old Alastair and Catherine have their first kiss at their pretend wedding ceremony.

ALASTAIR

You have to say olive juice now.

CATHERINE

What do you mean?

ALASTAIR

You know, married couples say it all the time. They say o-l-i-v-e j-u-i-c-e.

Catherine reads Alastair's lips and rolls her eyes.

CATHERINE

They mean I love you. It's just that they don't say it out loud. Here, read my lips: o-l-i-v-e j-u-i-c-e.

ALASTAIR

(reads her lips)

Oh. So, I say I love you now?

Shy, Catherine shrugs her shoulders. Alastair gulps.

END OF FLASHBACK:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NOON

Alastair smiles at Catherine as Patrick snaps his fingers in front of Alastair's eyes.

PATRICK

Hey, I know you're secretly doing the old math equation.

Patrick's index finger points at his temple. Alastair twists his hair. He turns to his book again. Brian observes this.

PATRICK
(whispering)
You know: subtracting the clothes,
dividing her legs.

Alastair slaps down his book. Patrick smiles.

BRIAN
I can see re-taking 12th grade has
really helped you mature Williams.

PATRICK
Look who's talking. How many tissues
have you gotten pregnant this year!?

Brian shrinks back.

PATRICK
C'mon, Smithe, you can figure her
out. Just think of Heather as ... y
 $= 32x + b$.

Alastair throws Patrick a sharp look and picks up his book
again.

ALASTAIR
I'll stick with math.

PATRICK
Aight, just keep blocking the cock,
pussy.

The school bell rings and PROF.EDWARD BRIGHN, a math teacher in
his fifties, walks into the classroom. Alastair puts down his
book and glances at Heather. He starts folding up a paper plane.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NOON

Prof.Brighn sits at the teacher's desk in front of Alastair's
silent class. He talks to a female student while the overhead
projector shows the test's solutions.

PROF.BRIGHN
And that would have given you y
equals $32x$ plus b .

Alastair lifts his paper plane off his desk and lets it sail.
The plane takes off and lands on Prof.Brighn's forehead.

PROF.BRIGHN
Who was that?!

The class and Alastair freezes.

PROF.BRIGHN
I said who was that?!

Alastair hesitantly raises his hand. Heather giggles while Catherine observes.

PROF.BRIGHN
It's a B. Nice work.

The female student sits down and Prof.Brighn throws Alastair a sharp look as he grabs the next bluebook from a stack on his desk.

PROF.BRIGHN
Smithe, you're next.

As Alastair gets out of his chair Patrick offers him a low five.

PATRICK
Vintage man.

Alastair walks up to the teacher's desk in front of the class.

PROF.BRIGHN
Some unusually sloppy errors on
divisions and root extractions.

While Prof.Brighn flips through Alastair's bluebook, Alastair rolls his eyes and bites his tongue.

PROF.BRIGHN
You solved problem three just fine,
and, like most, couldn't figure out
4c. And, Mr.Smithe, tell me: Your
correct but complicated way of
arriving at $2x - 4y = 23$ for problem
4a perfectly matches Mr.Williams's
computations.

Alastair throws a surprised and frightful look toward Patrick. Patrick stares back at him.

PROF.BRIGHN
Mr.Smithe?

Alastair starts fiddling with his braided ring. Catherine observes him.

ALASTAIR
Well, professor, Mr.Williams and I,

we studied together a lot for this exam, and so it's probably just natural that we think alike on a lot of these problems.

The class bursts out in laughter. Only Brian frowns. Prof.Brighn looks at his daughter, Catherine, and sighs. He closes the bluebook and hands it to Alastair.

PROF.BRIGHN

It's a C. I am not impressed.

The bell rings. Heather observes Alastair returning to his desk with his head down. The class and Catherine leaves.

PATRICK

Thanks, man. I owe you.

BRIAN

He's a jerk. Are you ok?

ALASTAIR

I'm fine.

Brian leaves. Alastair broods over his open bluebook at his desk. He raises his eyebrows at a problem, grabs his bluebook and walks up to the overhead projector.

As he checks the computations on the overhead, he notices someone leaning against his back. Alastair gropes the breasts behind him.

ALASTAIR

Yeah, I know. Still keen on 32bs.
Funny, Pat.

Alastair's face freezes. He turns around and sees a baffled Heather. The classroom is empty.

HEATHER

What you did, was nice ... for Pat, I mean.

Alastair cast his eyes down in embarrassment.

ALASTAIR

We're on the same team ... after all.

Heather steps closer. Ashamed, Alastair keeps his head down.

ALASTAIR

I'm sorry. I thought ... Please,
don't. I--

HEATHER

Not everyone has friends like you.
Someone who ... stands up for
others.

Heather presses her breasts against Alastair, and the back of her hand touches his crotch. Heather pulls Alastair closer.

HEATHER

Friends like that have benefits too,
you know.

Heather takes Alastair's hand and places it on her breast. She whispers into his ear.

HEATHER

Especially when they've been
naughty.

Alastair hears Heather's racing heartbeat. She kisses his cheek when Alastair hears Catherine's voice approaching.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

No, dad. I'll be right out. I just
left my ...

Talking on her cell phone, Catherine appears in the door. She spots Alastair's and Heather's bodies pressed against each other.

CATHERINE

... glasses.

PROF. BRIGHN (O.S.)

(on Cat's cell)

Hello? Catherine? Are you there?

Catherine drops her cell phone.

ALASTAIR

Catherine, I--

CATHERINE

I presume that's the second stanza.

Catherine frowns and rushes off. Heather buttons up her blouse, embarrassed.

ALASTAIR
Catherine!!

Alastair runs after her but slips on her phone on his way through the door. He reaches for his Achilles heel as he picks up the crushed cell phone.

ALASTAIR
Ouch! Damn it.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LOCKERS - NOON

Catherine storms down the hallway. Limping, Alastair follows her.

ALASTAIR
Catherine! Wait! It's not what it looked like.

Alastair manages to get in front of Catherine. He stops her.

CATHERINE
You've got a nerve. Kissing another girl on our anniversary.

Catherine takes off her braided ring and throws it to the floor. She swerves around Alastair and rushes on.

ALASTAIR
I didn't kiss her. What about your glasses?!

CATHERINE
I don't need my glasses. I saw fair well what was going on!

Catherine and Alastair walk by Patrick, who draws a curious face as he shelves some books in his locker.

INT./EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NOON

Catherine and Alastair rush out the front door into the pouring rain.

ALASTAIR
But Catherine?! I didn't kiss her!

CATHERINE
I don't wanna hear about it!

ALASTAIR
I'll call you!

Alastair looks at Catherine's broken cell phone in his hand.

ALASTAIR
Or not. Damn it.

Catherine gets into her father's car and drives off. Alastair, who's getting soaked, retreats back into the school building.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LOBBY - NOON

Heather, with Catherine's glasses in her hands, walks up to Alastair. Patrick watches from a distance.

HEATHER
I'm sorry. I shouldn't have been so shortsighted.

Heather hands Alastair Catherine's glasses.

ALASTAIR
(sighs)
It's ok. Nothing happened.
She'll calm down again.

HEATHER
So, we're cool, right? Please, don't tell anyone. I do actually have a boyfriend.

Patrick perks his ears.

PATRICK
(to himself)
It worked. I can't believe it worked.

HEATHER
He looks just like you too.

Heather leaves. Alastair shakes his head as if to suggest confusion.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LOCKERS - NOON

Soaked, Alastair walks up to his locker. He opens it and tosses his books in. At a distance, Patrick follows him while gesturing and rehearsing a speech.

As Patrick turns a corner and is about to walk up to Alastair, Brian cuts in front of him. Patrick hides and listens to their conversation.

ALASTAIR

Brian, I thought you'd be long gone.

Brian runs his eyes up and down Alastair's wet clothes as he opens his locker.

BRIAN

I had to talk to a professor. Listen, my folks were wondering if you and your parents would want to stop by on Christmas Eve. You know, with us being volleyball partners for so long and missing New Year's at home this year.

ALASTAIR

I'm not sure. You know my parents. They're pretty busy.

BRIAN

C'mon. Just for half hour. For a Christmas cocktail at least.

ALASTAIR

Sorry, man. But I think we're booked solid.

BRIAN

Whatever.

Brian slams his locker shut.

ALASTAIR

What whatever?!

BRIAN

You're full of it, you know. Just look at you. You've got guilt written all over your face. And you're acting weird.

ALASTAIR

Weird? I'm acting weird?!

Patrick peeks around the corner.

PATRICK
(to himself)
Oh, brilliant. This works out better
than I thought.

BRIAN
Yes, weird. I mean, what was with
that play call this morning? Can you
answer me that? Or why are you
covering for Williams when everyone
in class knows, including
Prof. Brighn by the way, that idiot
cheated off your math final?

PATRICK
(to himself)
That idiot? Tzz, tzz.

ALASTAIR
(beat)
All right. But promise me you keep
this to yourself.

Alastair looks Brian deep in the eye.

BRIAN
I promise.

ALASTAIR
Look, I admit that Pat had something
to do with my play call this
morning, and that there's a reason
why I didn't tell on him in math.

Patrick perks his ears.

BRIAN
Well, what is it, Stares? Spit it
out.

ALASTAIR
My dad ... had an affair ... with
his secretary. My mom's moved out to
an apartment. They're thinking about
a divorce.

BRIAN
I had no idea.

PATRICK
(to himself)
Neither did I.

ALASTAIR

Well, nobody knows. Except my parents, Lindy, the secretary, and ... you.

PATRICK

(to himself)

And me.

ALASTAIR

Now, with Pat: I just pity the guy. Sometimes I think he is going through some of the same stuff as me. With his parents fighting and all, you know?

Alastair shrugs and looks at his braided ring.

ALASTAIR

We all mess up every once in a while. And if I want to learn how to forgive my dad, then practicing on Pat really prepares me for the worst. Don't you think?

PATRICK

(to himself)

Is that so? Well, let me teach you a lesson you pampered son of a senator's bitch. Forgiveness, tzz.

Patrick takes out Melissa's business card.

BRIAN

I guess so.

ALASTAIR

C'mon, let's get out of here. It's Christmas break and I have to bring back that warm and fuzzy feeling to Catherine somehow?

Brian and Alastair start walking down the hallway and past the hiding Patrick.

BRIAN

What happened there?

ALASTAIR

That's a whole other bag of chips.

BRIAN

Gosh, Merry Christmas Stares.

Alastair nods as he steps on Catherine's braided ring on the floor. Patrick types in Melissa's number on his cell phone.

PATRICK

(to himself)

Yes, indeed. Marry Christmas,
Stares.

(on his cell)

Hi, yes, Melissa? This is Patrick
Williams. Yes, yes, I know, I talk.
I can't believe it either. Listen, I
think I might have something to say
now, but you can't print my name,
understand? Yes, I'm ready. Are you?

EXT./INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alastair rings the doorbell. Prof.Brighn answers and sees a soaked Alastair with Catherine's cell phone and her glasses in his hands.

PROF.BRIGHN

Alastair, dropping by for some late-
night studying?

ALASTAIR

Prof., Mr.Brighn. Is Catherine home?
I'd need to talk to her. It's
important.

PROF.BRIGHN

Yeah, no kidding. She's upstairs,
but I think she--Listen, why don't
you come in?

Alastair is about to step inside, when Catherine puts her foot in the door. She nods at her father.

CATHERINE

It's ok, dad. He can wait outside.

Prof.Brighn leaves. Alastair hands Catherine her cell phone and her glasses.

ALASTAIR

I guess that explains why you didn't answer my calls. You couldn't see you didn't have your cell phone, which is broken.

Alastair's smile sobers as Catherine remains stern.

CATHERINE

It's very couragous of you to come by.

ALASTAIR

Oh, well. You left me no choice. Granted, the thought of a grumpy old math teacher was a little intimidating, but it's just a little rain and it should actually be much colder and maybe snowing this time of year, so ...

Numb, Catherine stares down at her cell phone and her glasses.

ALASTAIR

What's the matter?

CATHERINE

I'm sorry about what happened.

ALASTAIR

Me too. But that's why I'm here. It doesn't mean we--

CATHERINE

No, I mean I'm sorry about, you know, your dad.

ALASTAIR

My dad?

Catherine fetches the evening edition of a newspaper and hands it to Alastair.

CATHERINE

Haven't you read the paper yet?

Shocked, Alastair reads the headline next to a picture of Richard:

INSERT: SENATOR SMITHE ADMITS TO EXTRAMARITAL AFFAIR

CATHERINE

You know, today in class, I thought you'd never have the nerve to lie to

my dad. I thought you were just covering for Pat. But now, and with the stuff about Heather--

ALASTAIR
Catherine, I--

CATHERINE
Love is not a game, Alastair. It's not some calculated risk, or a test where you try to get away with cheating. Love is built on honesty, and trust. And I'm not sure I can trust you anymore.

ALASTAIR
So, what are you saying?

CATHERINE
Maybe we shouldn't see each other for a while, until all of this has ... cleared up.
I'm sorry.

Alastair looks at the newspaper and gulps. Catherine slowly shuts the door.

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

Alastair sits in the grass as the rain turns into snow. He takes the ring case out of his letter jacket and looks at the diamond ring inside.

INT. ALASTAIR'S CAR - NIGHT

Teary-eyed, Alastair pulls up in front of his parents' villa. He notices an SUV parked in front of the house.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Troubles, a black Schnauzer, wheezes at Alastair, who carries his gym bag. Alastair pets Troubles.

ALASTAIR
Shhh, Troubles. How are you old boy?

INT. VILLA HALLWAY - NIGHT

Alastair sneaks in through the front door, but ANGELA, Alastair's mother, who is maybe forty and wears blond, wavy hair, waits for him.

ANGELA

Oh, hi there. Wasn't afternoon practice supposed to get out at five?

Alastair looks at a clock. It's 9:20 p.m. He drops his gym bag and takes off his shoes.

ALASTAIR

I didn't know you'd be stopping by.

Angela glances at a calendar, on which December 17th is circled.

INSERT: December 17th.

ANGELA

Ah, I see. Anniversary day it was. How's Catherine?

With a frown, Alastair walks past his mother, who notices his cried-out eyes.

ANGELA

Honey, is everything ok? Do you want to talk?

Alastair stomps up a flight of stairs.

ALASTAIR

No mom. Everything's great.

Alastair slams the door to his room. Angela sighs and looks at a newspaper copy with Richard's photo.

INT. ALASTAIR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Alastair lies in his bed with his eyes open. He glances at a clock. It's 12:20 a.m. He looks at a volleyball poster of Clay and Patrick and sighs.

EXT. JET - MORNING

On a sunny morning, an Airbus 380 sails above a blanket of clouds.

INT. JET - MORNING

Alastair lowers his Lord Byron poetry book and looks out of the window at a blue sky as the jet hits turbulence.

He peeks at Clay and Patrick, who fly first-class. Coach Levine, Coach T and Coach Miles also fly first class. Brian, who is sitting next to Alastair, isolates himself with headphones and a computer game.

ALASTAIR

I can't believe you did this. You promised.

BRIAN

I didn't do anything or call anyone.

ALASTAIR

What is that? Your pathetic attempt at the spotlight?

BRIAN

(ironic)

And make an anonymous phone call?
Yeah, makes perfect sense.

ALASTAIR

Then who did it? Whom did you tell?
That's my family, god, I--

Alastair stops as Patrick approaches their seats. He also wears headphones and sings something like The Carpenters' They Long To Be Close To You.

PATRICK

Why do birds suddenly appear? Every time you are near. Hey, what's with the arguing? You guys married?

Patrick messes with Brian's console so that Brian loses a game on his computer. Brian frowns at Patrick. Patrick spots the Lord Byron poetry book in Alastair's lap and takes it into his hands.

PATRICK

What the? Are you drinking from the fairy cup, Smithe?

Brian glances at Alastair as Patrick throws the poetry collection back into Alastair's lap. Alastair picks up his own game console.

ALASTAIR

What do you want, Pat?

PATRICK

I don't know. My boy ...

Concerned, Patrick looks toward Clay, who studies hard.

PATRICK

The guy is just off. I don't know:
school, volleyball? He won't talk to
me. We haven't even hit on a
stewardess.

Clay rejects a drink offer from a stewardess.

BRIAN

Well, he's a senior at Princeton.
I'm sure he's got a lot on his mind.

PATRICK

Yeah, but my parents died, and I'm
not grumpy, am I?

BRIAN

Your parents died?

Alastair and Brian neglect their computer games.

PATRICK

No, but they're getting a divorce,
which, you know, is basically the
same thing.

Alastair draws a sympathetic face. The jet rattles again and the
fasten seatbelt sign comes on.

PATRICK

But sooner or later, we're all going
to die. Hey, Smithe: You still close
with that Brazilian chick, what's
her name?

ALASTAIR

Janaina?

PATRICK

Exactly, Janaina. Are you?

A STEWARDESS, an attractive blonde, walks up to Patrick.

STEWARDESS

Excuse me, sir. I'd need you to sit
down.

STEWARDESS

The captain has turned on the fasten seatbelt sign.

PATRICK

Certainly, m'am. Just a moment.

STEWARDESS

Sir, I don't think you have a--

Patrick coughs heavily.

STEWARDESS

Omigod, are you ok?

PATRICK

I think I've got SARS.

The stewardess shakes her head and leaves.

PATRICK

Anyway, where was I? Oh, yeah, tits: You think you can set me up? You know, down south?

ALASTAIR

What about Heather shagging your balls?

PATRICK

Oh, c'mon, Smithe. She is cute, but I hear she has a boyfriend, and call me a romantic, but I'd never wreck anyone's home, especially when I know whose home it is.

Patrick shoots Alastair a sharp and rascal smirk, which Brian notices.

PATRICK

I'd always call first.

Patrick laughs. He slaps Brian's arm, so that Brian loses another game. AN AIRPLANE SECURITY MARSHAL, a strong black man, and the stewardess walk up to Patrick.

SECURITY MARSHAL

Sir, I understand you suffer from an acute respiratory syndrome?

PATRICK
 Sorry, that's not true. I lied.

SECURITY MARSHAL
 Then what's the truth?

PATRICK
 I have H1N1.

The security guard grabs Patrick by his upper-arm and drags him away.

PATRICK
 You're going to get me those digits,
 Smithe.
 (singing)
 Why do birds suddenly appear, every
 time you are near.

Alastair puts his computer console down and looks out of the window.

BRIAN
 What was that all about?

ALASTAIR
 Pat is an idiot. We all know that.

BRIAN
 No, I mean the stuff about Heather
 ... and her boyfriend.

Alastair turns to Brian and gives him a deep stare.

ALASTAIR
 Do you really think I'd tell you
 anything ever again? Do you?

The jet hits more turbulence and Brian and Alastair both clasp the middle console. Their hands meet, which Brian notices. Alastair withdraws his and holds on to his poetry book. He stares out of the window.

ALASTAIR (V.O.)
 And all that mem'ry loves the most
 was once our only hope to be. And
 all that hope adorned and lost hath
 melted into memory.

SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. DUBAI AIRPORT - DAY

The Airbus 380 touches down.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

The U.S. sand volleyball team is picked up by tournament stretch limousines. TV crews shoot footage. Fans beg for autographs.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

The team cruises through downtown Dubai on the way to the hotel.

EXT. BURJ KHALIFA HOTEL - DAY

The team arrives at the front doors of the tallest building in the world. The driver opens Alastair's door and Alastair proceeds to the trunk. A valet politely gestures no and takes out Alastair's luggage.

INT. HOTEL RECEPTION - DAY

Two Emirate receptionists check in the U.S. team. Alastair notices how close the valet carrying his luggage keeps to his side.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY - DAY

As the team walks up to the elevators with four concierges, Alastair sees his valet, as well as others, continue down the hallway. Alastair throws his valet a questioning look. The valet smiles and salutes him.

INT. UPPER FLOORS - DAY

The U.S. team steps out of the elevator and the four concierges walk each team and the three coaches to their suites.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

A concierge unlocks a suite. Alastair and Brian enter and inspect the suite. Brian rushes to the window and smiles at the view. Alastair spots his luggage in a corner of the room.

EXT. VOLLEYBALL STADIUM - DAY

The U.S. team pulls up outside a 10,000-seat outdoor arena. The team steps out of their limousines and inspects the stadium with amazement.

EXT. CENTER COURT - DAY

Alastair, Brian, Patrick and Clay practice. Patrick and Clay win a point and high-five. Alastair and Brian low five with their heads down. Coach Levine takes notes.

EXT. CHANGE-OVER BENCH - DAY

Alastair sits down and wipes some sweat off his forehead. Reflective, he looks at his braided ring. Brian observes him from the corner of his eye.

END OF SERIES

INT. CATHERINE'S ROOM - DAY

Wearing her glasses, Catherine sits at her desk by a window. She flips through pages of a scrapbook, scanning over pictures that show her and Alastair kissing and smiling.

Her gaze skips to her broken cell phone on her desk and merges to a pigeon sitting on her window sill.

PROF.BRIGHN (O.S.)
Reminiscing about olden times?

Catherine swiftly shuts her scrapbook. With a new cell phone box in his hand, Prof.Brighn leans against the doorframe of Catherine's room. He loafes across the room to his daughter.

Speaking over Catherine's shoulder, he looks at the pigeon.

PROF.BRIGHN
They used to bridge long distances once. Very reliably, too. But I think Dubai - Washington would have been quite the stretch, even for a carrier pigeon.

Prof.Brighn puts the new cell phone box on Catherine's desk. Subtly, Catherine glances at the box. Prof.Brighn catches a glimpse of the front cover of Catherine's scrapbook. It reads: My Favorite Boy and I.

INSERT: My Favorite Boy and I.

Prof.Brighn spins Catherine's broken cell phone on her desk.

PROF.BRIGHN

Plus, it's hard to get a message
when you have no reception.

CATHERINE

It's not the reception, dad. My cell
phone is broken.

Prof.Brighn sighs and pulls up a chair. He sits down next to his
daughter.

PROF.BRIGHN

Look, I know kids usually don't talk
to their parents about this stuff,
but if this is just about Alastair
lying to me about his final, I think
you're being a bit dramatic.

CATHERINE

It's not that. I know it was
probably all Pat's doing. But how do
I know Alastair's not like his
father? How do I know he's not
keeping things from me? I mean, why
didn't he tell me?

PROF.BRIGHN

Now, don't get me wrong, Catherine.
It's not that I condone cheating,
and I think Alastair got his
punishment, too.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NOON

Prof.Brighn glances at Catherine while handing Alastair his
bluebook.

PROF.BRIGHN (V.O)

He earned a bad grade. A really bad
grade considering his standards.

INT. VILLA HALLWAY - NIGHT

Angela holds a landline receiver to her ear. She shakes her head while looking at a childhood photo of Alastair.

PROF.BRIGHN (V.O.)
And I made sure to phone his mom
that night, let her know what
happened, and also about that plane.

END OF FLASHBACK:

INT. CATHERINE'S ROOM - DAY

Prof.Brighn rubs his forehead where the paper plane hit him. They chuckle. Prof.Brighn looks Catherine in the eye.

PROF.BRIGHN
But I forgive him, because I know he
means something to you.

Catherine glances at her scrapbook.

PROF.BRIGHN
And I love you.

Catherine casts down her look and nods.

CATHERINE
Thanks, dad.

A FEMALE BODYLESS VOICE yells from outside Catherine's room.

FEMALE BODYLESS VOICE (O.S.)
Edward?!

PROF.BRIGHN
Now that's your mom. She's baking
her famous New Year's cookies. Are
you hungry?

CATHERINE
I might as well indulge in some
frustration chocolate. We only get
those cookies once a year, right?

PROF.BRIGHN
That's my girl. A sweet tooth like
her dad.

Prof.Brighn puts his arm around her as they leave the room.

INT. HARD ROCK CAFE - NIGHT

Ordering, Alastair raises two fingers. The U.S. team eats dinner while Clay signs autographs.

COACH LEVINE

(to Brian and Alastair)

So, looks like they have you on at 9 a.m. tomorrow. Means you'll have to grab a bite at the courts. The breakfast club at the hotel doesn't open until seven.

Alastair and Brian avoid eye contact.

PATRICK

That sucks. When are we on?

A waitress, KAISA, a young Emirate beauty, arrives with a pitcher of orange juice.

ALASTAIR

(to Kaisa)

Could I order desert, please?

Patrick checks out Kaisa, who smiles amorously at Alastair while pouring refills from her pitcher.

PATRICK

(to himself)

Son of a senator's bitch.

Coach Levine looks at a copy of the tournament schedule while biting into a fajita.

COACH LEVINE

Nah, because of your bye first round you won't play until Monday.

PATRICK

Means we got tomorrow off. Party, party, party.

Patrick smiles and nudges Clay's elbow. Preoccupied, Clay picks his food, which Coach Levine notices.

COACH LEVINE

I don't think so, Pat.

COACH LEVINE

There are no holidays in professional sports.

PATRICK

Ahh, c'mon, coach. It's New Year's. See, that's what's wrong with being a student-athlete. You've got no social life whatsoever.

COACH LEVINE

(to Alastair and Brian)

You're on after a women's match on center court. Two-seeds Heidi Sairo/Janaina Bayo, Brazilians.

Catching Alastair's eye, Patrick winks at him. As Alastair clears his throat and leans back in his chair, his arm hits Kaisa's hand and Kaisa spills her pitcher over Alastair's clothes.

ALASTAIR

Ah, cold.

KAISA

Oh, lord! I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I'll get you a spare? Don't move.

ALASTAIR

Where am I going like this?

All laugh except for Clay, who runs his hand through his hair. Flustered, Kaisa turns around and bumps into JANAINA, a 20-year-old Brazilian beauty.

KAISA

Oh, excuse me.

JANAINA

Don't worries.

Alastair hears Janaina's voice and turns around.

ALASTAIR

Jain? Beum?

JANAINA

(in Portuguese)

Alastair, my boy! How are you? It's so good to see you.

Alastair smiles and gives Janaina a tentative hug.

ALASTAIR

I would give you a proper hug but
...

Alastair points at his drenched clothes. Janaina waves dismissively.

JANAINA

Ah, it's okey. You're excite to see me.

JANAINA

Like little puppy, you pee pee.

The U.S. team laughs.

ALASTAIR

Very funny. Everyone: this is Janaina. We go way back. She's the one who plays right before us on center court tomorrow.

JANAINA

(waves shyly)

Yeah, get up early. I can't believe. On New Year's. How you say in English? Luck in the--

PATRICK

Luck of the draw.

JANAINA

Yeah, yeah. Luck of draw. No carnival.

ALASTAIR

Oh, you'll be fine. How are things at home? Everything ok?

Janaina's smile fades and she lowers her head.

JANAINA

Yeah, good, okey.

ALASTAIR

(reflective)

Good, good.

Patrick glances at Alastair, who observes Janaina's sad face. Kaisa returns with a spare t-shirt and a sponge.

KAISA
 (to Janaina)
 Excuse me, again.

JANAINA
 Oh, I should go. Coach is wait
 outside, early match, so, good
 night. Maybe see you later. You stay
 at Burj?

ALASTAIR
 Yeah, the hotel. Catch you later.

JANAINA
 (in Portuguese)
 Take care.

They hug and Janaina leaves. The U.S. team makes whistling sounds at Alastair.

PATRICK
 Uhh, Smithie, see you hotel maybe
 later.

ALASTAIR
 (smirks)
 It's not like that.

Brian subtly glances at Alastair. Kaisa knees down to wipe Alastair's pants with a sponge, which Patrick observes curiously.

KAISA
 And after you change, just leave
 shirt here and we take it for
 laundry, ok? Here's our, my number.

Alastair nods as Kaisa hands him her business card. Patrick sees that. Coach Levine chuckles and sees Janaina exiting the front door when Melissa and a TV crew arrive.

COACH LEVINE
 What the fuck is she doing here?

The U.S. team turns heads and spots Melissa. Coach Levine gets out of his chair as Melissa hustles toward their table.

COACH LEVINE
 Now, go worry about your own
 business, would you? It's New Year's
 Eve for Christ's sake.

MELISSA

I have a right to be here, just like
any other person in this restaurant.
(to her crew)
Are we on?

COACH LEVINE

I'll tell you this very kindly:
Leave Alastair alone. Don't you have
family?

MELISSA

Oh, I'm not here for Smithe, coach.
That was last week, remember? This
week I want to talk to Clay
Reynolds.

The cameraman nods at Melissa. Melissa squeezes past Coach
Levine and holds her microphone into Clay's face.

MELISSA

Clay Reynolds: Is it true that your
sponsor has promised you a six-
million dollar endorsement if you
qualify for the Olympics?

Coach Levine's jaw drops. Everyone at the table looks at Clay.
Patrick stares at Clay, but Clay avoids Patrick's eye contact.
Patrick slams his napkin on the table.

MELISSA

Does your partner Patrick Williams
know about this? Does he know he's
not part of the deal?

Patrick shakes his head and leaves. Clay rubs his face.
Coach Levine, Coach T and Coach Miles try to block the TV crew.

COACH LEVINE

All right, all right. That's enough.
Now, get out of here. Have you no
decency?

EXT./INT. HOTEL BACKDOOR - NIGHT

Coach Levine closes the door behind him, keeping the TV crew
out. Melissa holds her microphone up to Coach Levine.

MELISSA

Coach Levine: Did you know about the sponsorship deal? Is that why Reynolds and Williams haven't been sharp at practice?

COACH LEVINE

Leave my players alone. Thank you, good night.

The U.S. team walks past the staff elevators to the main lobby elevators. It's so quiet that Alastair hears the squeaking of a luggage trolley in the hallway. Coach Levine yells from behind.

COACH LEVINE

Hey, Clay. Hold on, I want to talk to you for a second.

Clay stops and turns around while the rest of the U.S. team keeps walking.

INT. MAIN LOBBY ELEVATORS - NIGHT

Coach T, Coach Miles, Brian, Alastair and Patrick walk up to the main lobby elevators and push multiple buttons to go up.

PATRICK

So that was her, ha? Janaina.

ALASTAIR

(stalling)

Yeah, that was her.

Coach T and Coach Miles smile and yawn. An elevator packed with tourists and an EMIRATE ELEVATOR VALET, who is young and wears a mustache, arrives.

ELEVATOR VALET

Observation deck. 50th floor. Please, hop on.

COACH T

(sags his shoulders)

You're kidding.

Alastair waves at Coach T and Coach Miles.

ALASTAIR

Go ahead.

The coaches squeeze onto the elevator.

ELEVATOR VALET

Ah, room for one more.

Patrick pushes Brian forward.

PATRICK

Go ahead, pretty boy.

PATRICK

Smithe and I have some stuff to talk about: man stuff.

Brian gets on the elevator.

COACH MILES

(yawning)

Happy New Year, guys. Get some rest.

PATRICK

Yeah, happy boring New Year. This is the lamest place I've ever been.

Patrick smiles sarcastically at the elevator valet as the elevator doors close. The next elevator arrives. Patrick and Alastair get on.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Alastair and Patrick are riding up.

PATRICK

But seriously, Janaina is a pois. And she was loving you as well.

ALASTAIR

So?

PATRICK

So, are you gonna rebound or what, ha? Smithe, are you? Smithe boi?

ALASTAIR

You know, Pat, shut up. Not every girl is just about sex. People have feelings, or at least a history, too.

PATRICK

So, do you and the wonderful Janaina have a history?

ALASTAIR

Yes. Her father died when we played our first tournament together. She needs someone who protects her, like family, you understand?

PATRICK

Well, that's a very touching story, Smithe, but what I was thinking has nothing to do with family planning.

ALASTAIR

See, that's exactly what I mean.

PATRICK

Oh, c'mon, Smithe. Don't be such a fucking angel all the time. You're practically single now. I'm sure you've thought about it, at least once.

ALASTAIR

(smirks)

Just shut up, Pat.

PATRICK

Ahh, good times. I just know how to push your buttons, Smithe.

The elevator bell rings and the doors open. Alastair and Patrick stand in front of a dolled-up Janaina and her volleyball partner, HEIDI, an attractive sidekick to Janaina in her early twenties.

INT. HOTEL UPPER FLOORS - NIGHT

ALASTAIR

Jain, Heidi? What are you doing here?

Drunk, Janaina falls around Alastair's neck. She holds a champagne bottle in her hand.

JANAINA

We're going observation deck.
Fireworks...

Behind Janaina's back, Patrick winks at Alastair. Alastair wrinkles his forehead as if to suggest disapproval, and his lips read no. The elevator doors are closing.

JANAINA
(in Portuguese)
No, hold it!

Heidi sprints and gets a foot in the elevator door.
She tumbles to the floor. The girls giggle.

PATRICK
(to himself)
These ladies are hammered.

JANAINA
With some champagne. You should
join.

ALASTAIR
Nah, I don't know, we've got an
early match tomorrow. And so do you.
We should really go to--

JANAINA
Ahh, c'mon.
(in Portuguese)
My little Stairy boi best friend.
(in English)
It's New Year, carnival, and we
haven't seen so long.

ALASTAIR
(shaking his head no)
I'm sorry.

PATRICK
But I will gladly join your party
tonight, seniorinas.

Patrick smiles at Janaina, who holds out the back of her hand.
Patrick kisses it.

JANAINA
Ah, flatter type.

JANAINA
Flatter, flatter. Like butterfly. I
like. Good friend?

Alastair shrugs his shoulders. Heidi still holds the elevator.

HEIDI
(in Portuguese)
C'mon, Jain. We've gotta go.

PATRICK

What did she just say? That sounded so beautiful.

JANAINA

It's Portuguese. We can teach. Come, come.

PATRICK

Oh, I'd love to.

Patrick smirks at Alastair as Janaina pulls Patrick onto the elevator.

JANAINA

C'mon. Let's go up.

PATRICK

Wait, I've got a better idea.

Patrick steps off the elevator and walks up to Alastair.

PATRICK

Smithe, give me those digits.

ALASTAIR

What digits? Janaina's right here?

PATRICK

No, of the cafe, the waitress.

Patrick holds out his hand to Alastair.

ALASTAIR

No.

PATRICK

Now, what the fuck?! It's ok to block your own cock Smithe, but don't you get your hands on mine.

JANAINA

Starie, what means this block cock?

ALASTAIR

It's just an expression.

PATRICK

C'mon, Smithe. The waitress owes a favor.

Janaina and Heidi giggle as they hold the elevator.

HEIDI

C'mon. Let's go. Is this your better idea?

(in Portuguese)

This guy sucks.

PATRICK

Give me a break, Smithie. It's New Year's.

Alastair hesitates and hands Patrick Kaisa's business card.

PATRICK

Thanks, Smithie, you're the best.
Don't worry, I'll protect Janaina.

Patrick grins and gets back on the elevator. As the doors close, Patrick waves a condom at Alastair. Alastair leaps forward.

ALASTAIR

Hold it!

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Music blasts in a classy Mid-Eastern club, which is drenched in blue psychedelic colours.

Alastair sees everything in slow motion as GEORGE, a young Emirate barkeeper, wraps a wristband around his hand at a backdoor entrance.

GEORGE

All right, guys. Whenever you need a drink, just come find me. And be smooth about it.

PATRICK

Sure thing, man. You got it.

GEORGE

And take care of my girl Kaisa, aight?

Alastair nods and follows Patrick through the crowds.

ALASTAIR

But I am only staying until midnight.

PATRICK
Midnight where?

A mix of oriental and European beauties throws second looks at Alastair and Patrick.

ALASTAIR
Does coach know about this?

PATRICK
You have to be joking.

ALASTAIR
Oh, god. Why did I come here?

PATRICK
Cause you want to protect Janaina.
Now, no more questions, all right?

Alastair spots Clay on the dance floor with a couple of Mid-Eastern beauties. Alastair recognizes Kaisa.

ALASTAIR
Is that Clay? And the girl from the restaurant?

PATRICK
Now, what did I just tell you, Smithe? No, questions.

Clay spots Patrick and Alastair and raises his drink. His lips read a loud Sweet!

PATRICK
(raising his hand)
Sweeeeet!
(to Alastair)
What can I say? He felt like going out.

Alastair is shocked as he sees Clay chugging his drink.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Clay lights a cigarette as Patrick and Alastair join him and Kaisa on the dance floor. Clay is drunk.

CLAY
Stares, my boy! Glad you could make it!

CLAY
How are you, man?!

ALASTAIR
(beat)
Great, great.

CLAY
Stares, remember Kaisa? She feels
really sorry for today.

Alastair and Kaisa hug. Patrick and Clay make eye contact behind Alastair's back. Kaisa gives Alastair a kiss behind the ear and smiles at him.

CLAY
So she suggested this place for
tonight. For an apology.

ALASTAIR
(to Kaisa)
Yeah, thanks. That's nice.

Shy, Alastair looks away. Patrick and Clay make eye contact again.

PATRICK
Listen, we'll be at the bar. C'mon.

Patrick puts his arm around Alastair. They leave.

INT. NIGHT CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Patrick and Alastair arrive at the bar. Patrick orders two drinks from George, who nods.

ALASTAIR
Where are Janaina and Heidi?

PATRICK
(pointing into the crowd)
In there somewhere.

ALASTAIR
I have a bad feeling about this. Can
we leave?

PATRICK
What did I tell you about questions,
Smithe?

ALASTAIR

Please, Brian and I have an important match tomorrow and--

PATRICK

Wow, newsflash: We all got important matches: next year. Now relax, even Clay Reynolds is here. Your idol. Take it easy.

Alastair and Patrick look at Clay dancing with Kaisa. Clay smokes and drinks.

ALASTAIR

Yeah, I can't believe that's him.

PATRICK

Not quite the role model you see on TV, what?

ALASTAIR

Why is he smoking?

PATRICK

I don't know. Pressure from school, volleyball, reporters. It gets to him.

George serves Patrick and Alastair their drinks. Patrick downs his drink.

PATRICK

It gets to everybody.

ALASTAIR

So, he didn't tell you about his sponsor, ha?

Patrick throws Alastair a sharp look.

ALASTAIR

Sorry, another question. But you know, the sponsor is not why you're here.

PATRICK

(uneasy)

Obviously. I'm here to enjoy myself.

ALASTAIR

No.

ALASTAIR

You are doing all this, because you can't deal with your parents' divorce. That's why.

PATRICK

So what? If they don't tell me the truth why they sleep in separate beds each night, a little white lie in which sheets I woke up on New Year's Day is only fair. And I'm not even married.

Alastair glances at his braided ring.

PATRICK

It's New Year's Eve, Smithe. That's why I'm here. Now, don't kid yourself. It's not like your family is a bunch of happy campers.

Patrick leaves for the dance floor. With his drink in his hand, Alastair stares into empty space at the bar.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. THE SMITHE VILLA - MORNING

Alastair throws his volleyball bag and a suitcase on the backseat of his mother's SUV. Angela and Alastair get into the car. Troubles sits in the back.

INT. ANGELA'S SUV - MORNING

Alastair and Angela drive along in silence. Alastair stares out of the window.

ANGELA

I'm sorry your dad couldn't make it.

ALASTAIR

He's busy. I understand.

ANGELA

Speaking of dads: I got a call from Prof. Brighn the other night ... You wanna talk about it?

Alastair keeps staring out of the window. Angela sighs and turns on the radio. She scans through some music channels until she hears the voice of a familiar RADIO ANNOUNCER, a bodyless voice.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

It's 7:49. I'm Peter Norris. In a desperate attempt to salvage his ailing re-election campaign, congressional Senator Richard A.Smithe will be holding an emergency press conference this morning.

Senator Smithe, who has been trailing Democrat Samuel Collet ever since his alleged affair with his secretary was revealed shortly before Christmas, is expected to--

Swiftly, Angela pushes the scan button again. Classical music comes on, but Angela switches to her GPS, a bodyless voice.

GPS

Calculating route: Dulles Airport. 5 miles.

Angela shifts in her seat and adjusts her rear-view mirror.

ANGELA

Alastair, you know we need to talk about this.

ALASTAIR

What's there to talk about? Dad cheated on you. Now the whole world knows.

Alastair keeps staring out of the window.

ANGELA

I know, but I'm not worried about what everyone else knows. I'm more worried about you.

ALASTAIR

I'm fine, mom.

ANGELA

Gosh, honey. You almost lie as well as your dad.

ALASTAIR

What do you want to know, ha?! If I talked to the press?

ANGELA

No! I simply want to know why you come home crying at night. Or why you'd cheat on your math final. What's going on?

ALASTAIR

I have a damn important tournament coming up and I'm just thinking about it, ok?! It's what I worked for all my life. It's why get up at five in the freaking morning to go to practice everyday. It's why I sideline my girlfriend on our anniversary day. Because I have to talk to these idiot reporters who are dragging our family through the mud when all I want is go quietly about my business and be with my girlfriend from time to time! And right now, I can't do either of that. And for some odd reason, my parents aren't the first ones I want to talk to about it, because it just occurs to me that their screwed-up marriage is at the bottom of all this stupid mess!

GPS

Turn right, exit 420. Dulles airport.

Alastair bangs his fist on the board computer.

ALASTAIR

Oh, shut up!

ANGELA

(teary-eyed)

So, you and Catherine broke up?

Alastair doesn't respond and looks out of the window at a jet in the sky.

ANGELA

Well, if it makes you feel any better: I didn't talk to the press either. And it's true that your dad and I have been fighting for a while, but that doesn't mean you

can't talk to us anymore. I want
this family to work out too, you
know?

They arrive at the departure gate and Angela stops her SUV.

ALASTAIR
So you trust dad again?

Angela casts down her look.

ALASTAIR
That's what I thought.

Alastair opens the passenger door and is about to step out of
the car when Angela grabs his wrist.

ANGELA
Wait, I don't want you to go. I
don't think this trip is good for
you.

ALASTAIR
It's better than being at home. I'm
sorry mom, but volleyball is all I
have right now.

Alastair removes his hand from his mother's, slams the passenger
door and fetches his luggage from the backseat. He pets
Troubles.

ALASTAIR
Bye, old boy. I wish we all could be
as loyal as you.

Angela wipes some tears from her eyes as Alastair shuts the back
door.

ANGELA
But I still love you.

END OF FLASHBACK:

INT. NIGHT CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Alastair snaps out of his memory as Clay slaps his back.
Clay orders two drinks from George.

CLAY
Nice friends you have.

Clay gestures toward Heidi and Janaina, who grind up on Patrick.
Alastair looks at Kaisa.

ALASTAIR
Yours don't seem unfriendly either.

CLAY
I don't do friends.

George serves their drinks. Clay downs his and orders one more, which a baffled Alastair observes.

ALASTAIR
Then how do you do girlfriends?

CLAY
I don't. You know, Smithe, you get to see a lot for your age. I hope you know what to do with all this ... insight.

Clay draws from a cigarette. Alastair nods.

CLAY
I like you, Alastair Smithe. You know when to keep your mouth shut.

George brings Clay the drinks and they toast.

CLAY
To idols, and friendship.

Clay shoots Alastair a sharp look. They down their drinks.

CLAY
Happy New Year's resolution, Smithe.

Alastair draws a puzzled face. His vision blurr. As Clay leaves for the dance floor, Clay and Patrick exchange a quick nod. Patrick joins Alastair at the bar and orders another two drinks from George.

PATRICK
So Clay talked to you about your New Year's resolution, ha?

Patrick shoots Alastair a stern and eerie look.

PATRICK

What do you think of Kaisa?

Dancing, Kaisa throws Alastair a seductive look.

ALASTAIR

She is nice.

PATRICK

She is nice? She's loves you, man. I told you, I owe you. And Clay just told me. He is going to give her up tonight, for you.

Alastair casts down his look and shakes his head.

PATRICK

You know, Smithe: What's your problem?!

ALASTAIR

What problem?

PATRICK

I try to repay you a favor, and you make everything I do look like a moral crime.

ALASTAIR

What are you? Mad at me, because I want to catch some sleep before one of the most important matches of my life? Or because I don't collect STDs from a random waitress when my girlfriend of seven years has just broken up with me?!

PATRICK

Yes, yes, I'm mad at you! I mean what does Kaisa have to do with anything?! You don't know her?! You don't have a history?! You can't hurt her.

Alastair lowers his head and looks at his braided ring.

PATRICK

So you broke up with Catherine, big deal.

PATRICK

There are tons of girls who want to jump your bones. But you're so wrapped up in your self, you don't even notice they're out there. It's time to rebound now. C'mon!

ALASTAIR

(teary-eyed)

It's not that easy! I don't cheat on people I love!

PATRICK

Oh, I see. This is not about everybody else. This is about you. You and having to prove to yourself that you're not like your father. But guess what, Smithe: Acting like a goddamn saint all the time is not going to make your parents a happy couple again. Don't you think I know? Just because you're letting me have a moment at practice doesn't mean my parents won't file for divorce.

FLASHBACK:

INT. GYM - MORNING

Alastair looks at Patrick's father shaking his head. Hugging Heather, Patrick looks at his parents.

PATRICK (V.O.)

Or keeping Janaina from sleeping with me tonight doesn't mean the next guy won't try to get into bed with her.

INT. HOTEL UPPER FLOORS - NIGHT

Alastair looks at Janaina, Heidi and Patrick in the elevator as Patrick waves with his condom.

END OF FLASHBACK:

INT. NIGHT CLUB BAR - NIGHT

Alastair observes a drunken Janaina grinding up on a guy on the dance floor.

PATRICK
Just look at her, look!

Patrick looks Alastair deep in the eye.

PATRICK
You can't go around protecting people all the time. It doesn't work that way.

THE CROWD
Ten, nine, eight...

PATRICK
You and me, Smithe, we're just the same. We come from broken homes, and we both don't know how deal with it.

ALASTAIR
It? What's it?

PATRICK
Separation, Smithe. We both don't know how to deal with separation.

Sad, Alastair fiddles with his braided ring.

PATRICK
Listen to me, Smithe: Let go of Catherine. You can't protect her. Make that your New Year's resolution.

Patrick taps Alastair's shoulder, chugs his drink and leaves for the dance floor.

THE CROWD
Five, four, three, two, one: Happy New Year!!!

Alastair is at the bar, alone. Everyone throws confetti.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MIDNIGHT

Brian lies in his bed with his eyes open. He looks out of his window as huge fireworks explode above the city. Alastair's bed is empty.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - PAST MIDNIGHT

Drunk, Alastair, Clay and Patrick party arm in arm. Alastair smokes. Kaisa, Janaina, and Heidi dance close to them.

PATRICK

So about Janaina: What's her New Year's resolution?

ALASTAIR
JT.

PATRICK

She keeps fit for an aa.

ALASTAIR

No, idiot, T! Timberlake, she loves him.

PATRICK

So what do we do?

ALASTAIR

I don't know. You're the people expert. Tell her you wrote all his songs.

PATRICK

Really?

ALASTAIR

She doesn't know any better. Hold on.

Alastair disappears into the crowd.

Patrick looks for him and spots him talking to the club's DJ, a young black man. Alastair makes his way onto the club's stage and grabs a microphone as the DJ stops the music.

DJ

And now, ladies and gentlemen, on request of our special American friends tonight, a hot and sticky tune to heat up this party place. Dubai: Are you with me? Say Hell yeah!

THE CROWD

Hell yeah!

INT. ON STAGE - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair nods toward the DJ and something like JT's Senjorita starts playing. The crowd starts clapping their hands above their heads.

ALASTAIR
(singing)
Ladies and gentlemen.

Alastair waves at Patrick to join him on stage.

ALASTAIR
It's my pleasure to introduce to
you.

Patrick makes his way to the stage and passes the DJ who hands him a microphone.

ALASTAIR
He's a friend of mine.

PATRICK
(on stage, singing)
Yes, yes I am.

Kaisa and Clay cheer in the crowd.

ALASTAIR
And he goes by the name:

PATRICK
Patrick.

Kaisa smiles and stares at Alastair.

ALASTAIR
Wow. All the way from W.D.C. And he
got somethin' special for you all
tonight. He's gonna sing a song to
y'all, about this girl.

Alastair looks at Janaina, who is screaming and dancing for this song.

PATRICK
Coming right here?

ALASTAIR
Yeah, c'mon.

PATRICK
(to Janaina)
On that sunny day, didn't know I'd

meet.

PATRICK
 (to Janaina)
 Such a beautiful girl walking down
 the street.

Patrick reaches his hand out to Janaina to join him on stage.
 Janaina hesitates but Heidi pushes her onto the stage.

PATRICK
 See those bright brown eyes, with
 tears coming down.

ALASTAIR
 She deserves a crown. Where is it
 now? Mama listen.

The DJ turns down the volume for the beginning of the refrain.
 Alastair and Patrick hold their microphones to the crowd.

THE CROWD
 Senjorita, I feel for you.

PATRICK
 (to Janaina)
 I feel for you.

THE CROWD, KAISA AND CLAY
 You deal with things that you don't
 have to.

ALASTAIR
 Aaaaa.

Patrick and Janaina dance closely.

ALASTAIR
 He doesn't love you, I can tell by
 his charm.
 (pointing at Patrick)
 He don't love you, baby.

PATRICK
 But you can feel this real love.

ALASTAIR
 Feel it.

PATRICK
 Baby if you just lay in my aaaa,
 aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, arms.

The whole club is dancing and singing.

ALASTAIR
Ohhh, won't you lay in his:

PATRICK
Aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, arms. Mama,
lay in my:

ALASTAIR
Aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, arms.

ALASTAIR
Baby, won't you lay in his:

PATRICK
Aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, aaaa, arms. When I
look into your eyes.

ALASTAIR
Just listen, baby.

PATRICK
I see something that money can't
buy.

ALASTAIR
Just hear me, baby.

PATRICK
And I know if you give us a try.

ALASTAIR
Oh, won't you girl.

Kaisa wrinkles her forehead as if to suggest confusion at Alastair's deliberately altered lyrics.

PATRICK
I will work harder for you girl.

ALASTAIR
Aaaa.

PATRICK
You won't ever cry. Now listen: I
want to try something right now.

ALASTAIR
See, they don't do this anymore.

Kaisa catches Alastair's eye. Alastair looks away.

PATRICK

I am going to sing something, and I want the guys to sing with me.

ALASTAIR

They go:

PATRICK

It feels like something's heating up, can I leave with you?

ALASTAIR

And then the ladies go:

JANAINA

(into Patrick's mic)

I don't know what I am thinking 'bout, really leaving with you.

ALASTAIR

Guys sing:

Alastair and Kaisa make eye contact again. Kaisa sings with the guys and points at Alastair.

GUYS IN THE CLUB AND KAISA

It feels like something's heating up, can I leave with you?

PATRICK

And ladies:

Alastair looks at Kaisa. He doesn't move his lips.

LADIES IN THE CLUB

I don't know what I am thinking 'bout, really leaving with you.

PATRICK

(to Janaina)

Feels good, don't it? C'mon.

PATRICK AND GUYS IN THE CLUB

It feels like something's heating up, can I leave with you?

JANAINA AND GIRLS IN THE CLUB

I don't know what I am thinking 'bout, really leaving with you.

PATRICK

Sure feels good to me. Sing it one more time.

PATRICK AND GUYS IN THE CLUB

It feels like something's heating up, can I leave with you?

ALASTAIR

Ladies:

JANAINA AND GIRLS IN THE CLUB

I don't know what I am thinking 'bout, really leaving with you.

ALASTAIR

Gentlemen, good night

Alastair leaves the stage and returns his microphone. Patrick dances closely with Janaina.

PATRICK

Ladies, good morning. Hahaha.

DJ

And that's it! Thank you, our American friends. Give it up for Pharell and Justin!

The crowd cheers and claps.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - PAST MIDNIGHT

With a big bang, soap and water starts raining from the ceiling like a champagne supernova. Something like Champagne Supernova by Oasis starts playing.

Foam starts to build as Alastair elbows his way through the crowd. Kaisa grabs him and drags him into the middle of the crowd. Alastair's and Kaisa's clothes are totally soaked. Kaisa pulls Alastair close and they start slow-dancing.

Alastair glances to the side, where he sees Clay making out with two girls. While Janaina and Patrick are slow-dancing, Patrick winks at Alastair.

KAISA

I know what's happening.

ALASTAIR

You do?

KAISA

You don't want your friends to kiss
... And now you don't want to kiss
me.

Alastair looks at Kaisa's blouse as she opens its top button. His head starts spinning and he looks over to Janaina and Patrick, who are kissing.

Kaisa starts kissing Alastair and as she puts his hand on her breast, Alastair hears her heartbeat.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. HILLTOP - MORNING

Alastair and Catherine kiss.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NOON

Heather pulls Alastair near. Alastair's hand touches her breast.

EXT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alastair looks at the photo of his dad in the newspaper.

EXT. HILLTOP - NIGHT

Alastair looks at his diamond ring while sitting in the falling snow.

EXT. DULLES AIRPORT - MORNING

Dragging his suitcase through the airport entrance, Alastair turns around to see his mother crying in her car.

END OF FLASHBACK:

INT. DANCE FLOOR - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair pulls away from Kaisa. He stares at her and rushes off the dancefloor. Kaisa looks after him.

EXT. A BEACH - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair paces out of the club and knees down in the sand. He's panting, tearing his hair. He looks up into the starry sky.

ALASTAIR

What am I doing?! I'm not a ...

Alastair breaks down and cries.

ALASTAIR

I'm not a cheater. What am I doing?

He bangs his fist on the sand but slowly calms down as he hears Champagne Supernova in the distance. He falls on his back and lies down in the sand.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. NIGHT CLUB - PAST MIDNIGHT

Clay, hugging Kaisa, and Patrick, with a drunk Janaina in his arms, scan the club.

CLAY

Where is the man?

PATRICK

I don't know, this is his favorite song.

EXT. A BEACH - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair gets out his cell phone and texts Catherine:

INSERT: to Catherine Brighn: I still love you. Letting go is not my New Year's resolution.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE N.Y.C. - BEFORE MIDNIGHT

Catherine looks at the New Year's Ball hanging above the streets of New York. In her open purse, the display of her new cell phone buzzes and blinks, showing Alastair's message. But Catherine doesn't hear or see it.

INSERT: Message from Alastair.

Catherine spots Heather in the crowd.

CATHERINE
(to herself)
What the heck is she doing here?

Heather looks at Catherine, but Catherine avoids eye contact.

EXT. A BEACH - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair looks at a full moon in the starry sky. He hears the last stanza of Byron's poem in his head:

ALASTAIR (V.O.)
Alas! It is delusion all.
The future cheats us from afar, nor
can we be what we recall, nor dare
we think on what we are.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - PAST MIDNIGHT

Kaisa scans the club.

KAISA
Where is he? I'm scared.

Patrick and Clay exchange a concerned look. Patrick gets out his cell phone and calls Alastair.

EXT. A BEACH - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair has taken off his shoes and, carrying them in one hand, walks into the ocean. The moonlight glitters on the water.

His phone vibrates in his jeans pocket. As Alastair reaches for it, he tears his braided ring and the ring falls into the ocean.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - PAST MIDNIGHT

Patrick waits for Alastair to pick up the phone.

EXT. A BEACH - PAST MIDNIGHT

Alastair sees Patrick's name on his cell phone display.

INSERT: Incoming call: Pat Williams.

Alastair frowns and throws his shoes and his cell phone wide into the ocean.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - PAST MIDNIGHT

At the busy tone, Patrick chuckles at Clay and Kaisa. Janaina is too drunk to notice.

PATRICK

His cell phone's off. He must be home already.

CLAY

All right. Let's get Heidi and head out.

Clay observes Kaisa, who still draws a concerned face. Clay scans the club once more.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE N.Y.C. - BEFORE MIDNIGHT

Heather follows Catherine through the crowd.

HEATHER

Catherine, wait. Please.

Catherine sags her shoulders, stops and turns around.

CATHERINE

What do you want?

HEATHER

Apologize? A new start, maybe? I mean, it's New Year's, right?

(beat)

It wasn't his fault. I came on to him.

CATHERINE

Well, he didn't exactly stop you either.

HEATHER

But he didn't do anything wrong. I promise.

Catherine has her hands crossed and sighs.

HEATHER

Forgiven?

Heather extends her hand to Catherine, who shakes Heather's hand.

CATHERINE

Sure.

ROY, an Alastair look-alike, joins them. He hugs Heather.

ROY

(to Heather)

There you are. Are you crazy,
leaving me in this crowd?

Surprised, Catherine runs her eyes up and down Roy's body.

HEATHER

This is Roy, my boyfriend.

ROY

Hi, nice to meet you.

CATHERINE

But he looks just like--

HEATHER

Yeah, I know. If you and Alastair
don't work out, you'll get a shot at
him. That will even things out.

Heather winks at Catherine, who chuckles and shakes her head as if to suggest disbelief. Arm in arm, Heather and Roy walk away.

HEATHER

(to Catherine)

You should call him.

Catherine takes her cell phone out of her purse. She sees Alastair's message. She sighs and tucks her phone away. She looks up at the New Year's Ball and the moon.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MORNING

Brian looks at the full moon, which descends next to the rising sun over the Dubai skyline. The bedside alarm clock rings and a muezzin preaches outside.

EXT. BUS STATION - MORNING

A battered, storm-ridden Alastair opens his eyes at the rising sun as he hears the muezzin preaching in the distance. A group of curious Emirate workers dressed in traditional gowns circle around him.

As Alastair sits up, he pushes a homeless person off the bench and the group of workers steps back in murmur.

ALASTAIR

Coming through, coming through. Get
out of the sun, bunch of clowns.

Alastair gets on his feet and walks through the crowd, which parts in the middle. Alastair sees he's at a remote bus station near the beach. He's barefooted.

In the far distance, he spots Dubai's skyline and the Burj Khalifa Tower. He reaches for his cell and can't find it.

ALASTAIR

What's the time?

Alastair gesticulates heavily at the Arabs and points at the sun.

ALASTAIR

The sun! Where is it the sky? The
sun! The damn sun!

The workers remain numb. Alastair sighs then points toward the Burj Khalifa.

ALASTAIR

That hotel? How far? Shit! Well, I'm
at a bus station, right?

As Alastair takes a sceptical look at the shabby construct in front of him, a clinkering old bus turns around a corner. It's packed to the rim with workers. The exhaust pipe blows thick clouds of gas.

ALASTAIR

Where something resembling a bus
occasionally commutes. Jesus Christ.

The crowd starts shifting, elbowing and pushing. As the bus slowly drives by the station all workers hop on. Alastair curiously observes the spectacle, and the bus full of workers stares back at him.

ALASTAIR

All right. Back east. Shit.

Alastair starts running down the beach. He catches up to the bus and passes it.

EXT. A BEACH - MORNING

Running on the beach, Alastair stumbles and reaches for his Achilles heel.

At the sound of rotor blades, he looks into the sky at a helicopter. He spots a diving crew in the ocean. The police and paramedics secure the beach around the night club.

EXT. SEARCH SITE - MORNING

Walking by the secured area, Alastair spots a middle-aged EMIRATE POLICEMAN, who picks his teeth.

ALASTAIR

Excuse me, officer. What's going on?

The policeman keeps his eyes on the scene, so he doesn't know whom he's talking to.

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

This is a search.

ALASTAIR

For what?

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

It's standard procedure ... I might as well tell you. You're going to hear it on TV anyways.

Alastair looks over to Emirate TV crews reporting from the beach.

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

A woman found a cell phone and a pair of shoes washed up on the beach last night.

ALASTAIR

(gulps)

And that's enough for a search?

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

She called the police and said she had talked to the owner of the shoes, who seemed distressed. They think he might have walked into the water.

ALASTAIR

Really?

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

You see that building over there?

The policeman points at the night club.

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

It's one of the most famous night clubs in Dubai. Only rich people go there. Businessmen, artists, you see?

ALASTAIR

I see.

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

So it's standard procedure we search.

ALASTAIR

Crazy people, hm?

EMIRATE POLICEMAN

Well, if you ask me, I think what happened here last night had to do with making life not taking it, if you understand?

The policeman smirks and as he gets no response, he turns around and discovers he's alone. He shrugs and watches the beach again. In the distance, Alastair is running away from the search site, barefooted.

EXT. BURJ KHALIFA HOTEL - MORNING

In his dirty clothes, Alastair nods at two doormen, who, opening the door and returning the nod, hold their noses behind Alastair's back.

INT. HOTEL RECEPTION - MORNING

Alastair hesitantly waves at the two check-in receptionists while hustling toward the elevators. One nods with a smile and turns to pick up the phone. The second one gently stops him and shakes his head no.

INT. MAIN LOBBY ELEVATORS - MORNING

Alastair jogs up to the elevators where an old English tourist couple has just pressed the up button.

Impatiently, Alastair hits the up button multiple times as he discovers the night club's wristband. He tears it off and stuffs it into his jeans pocket. The English couple throws appalled looks at him.

ALASTAIR

What?

Alastair burps and the couple shakes their heads. Alastair checks the clock. It's 6:45 a.m. The squeaking of a valet trolley makes him turn to spot a valet pushing a luggage trolley down the hallway.

INT. HOTEL STAFF ELEVATORS - MORNING

Alastair runs toward the staff elevators. He hits the up button when AN ELDER STAFFER, who resembles a worker from the bus station, and A YOUNG HOTEL STAFFER pull up a breakfast trolley.

Pointing at the trolley, the elder starts yelling at the younger, who immediately rushes off. Alastair smirks and takes a closer look at the elder staffer, who notices Alastair's stares.

ELDER STAFFER

What?

Apologetically, Alastair takes out his hotel key and waves it awkwardly at the staffer.

ELDER STAFFER

(in Arabic)

Gay asshole.

Alastair chuckles and the elevator arrives. The young staffer returns with a dessert fork in his hand.

YOUNG STAFFER

(in Arabic)

I got it! I got the fork!

Meanwhile, Alastair gets on the elevator and the doors close.

ELDER STAFFER

(in Arabic)

Hold the door! Gay asshole, hold the door!

Alastair smiles and departs alone.

INT. HOTEL UPPER FLOORS - MORNING

Alastair gets off the elevator and turns a corner. He spots Coach Levine closing the door to his suite down the hallway. Quickly, Alastair turns around and manages to catch one of the main elevators going down.

INT. MAIN LOBBY ELEVATORS - MORNING

The elevator doors open and Alastair faces the English couple and the disgruntled pair of hotel staffers.

They get on, and the elder staffer pushes the breakfast trolley against Alastair's crotch. The staffers smirk. Bending over in pain, Alastair sees a pitcher of orange juice and some pastry on their trolley.

INT. HOTEL UPPER FLOORS - MORNING

The doors open and Alastair holds the elevator with his foot while listening for noises in the hallway.

The staffers begin to complain in Arabic. Alastair holds his finger to his lips and the staffers stop yelling. Alastair reaches for the orange juice and starts drinking and spilling it all over his shirt and pants.

He stuffs some of the pastry in his mouth and smears parts of it over his shirt. The English couple watches apathetically and the staffers yell again as the elevator doors close.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MORNING

Quietly, Alastair opens the door. He hears a running shower and sneaks toward his bag to pack his gear. Brian appears from behind an open closet door, wearing a towel only.

ALASTAIR

(shocked)

Jesus, man! Could you be more subtle?

Brian checks out Alastair's dirty clothes.

BRIAN

Happy New Year, I guess. Seems like I should be the one who's shocked.

ALASTAIR

I thought you were taking a shower.

BRIAN

I was going to. But looks like you
need a rinse more than me. You
stink.

Alastair proceeds into the bathroom. He takes off his clothes,
throws them through the open bathroom door and on the floor in
the suite. He gets in the shower.

BRIAN

Where have you been?

ALASTAIR (O.S.)

Oh, the stink you mean?

BRIAN

Yeah.

Turning up his nose, Brian goes through Alastair's dirty
clothes.

ALASTAIR (O.S.)

I went to grab some early breakfast.
You know how my stomach's spinning
before matches.

BRIAN

Mhm.

Brian finds the night club's wristband in Alastair's jeans
pocket.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SHOWER - MORNING

ALASTAIR

So I thought an early start might be
a good idea. And then ... well you
saw what happened.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MORNING

Brian reads the wristband.

INSERT: Dubai Night Club.

BRIAN

Yeah, seems like spilling OJ over
people's shirts is a New Year's
tradition over here.

ALASTAIR (O.S.)

Right.

Brian puts the wristband back into Alastair's pocket.

BRIAN

So this one didn't give you spare one, ha?

ALASTAIR (O.S.)

No.

BRIAN

Well, it's New Year's Day, early in the morning. I bet there was hardly anyone down there.

Brian checks himself out in the mirror. He puts on mascara.

INT. SHOWER - MORNING

ALASTAIR

No. No witnesses. I probably wouldn't even get away with a complaint.

BRIAN (O.S.)

The waiter could just straight out lie about everything.

ALASTAIR

Yeah, he could.

BRIAN (O.S.)

And get away with it.

Shampooing his hair, Alastair pauses.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MORNING

BRIAN

Yeah, but you know, I don't even think this entire thing would come up in the first place.

ALASTAIR (O.S.)

Why is that?

BRIAN

The hotel manager wouldn't believe either one of you. The breakfast club doesn't open until seven.

INT. SHOWER - MORNING

Alastair bites hits lip.

ALASTAIR

(to himself)

Damn it. I'm such a bad liar. I'm really not cut out for this cheating business.

Alastair looks at his ring finger, which is empty.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - MORNING

Brian finishes combing.

BRIAN

C'mon, let's go. We're late.

INT. HOTEL RECEPTION - MORNING

Alastair, wearing big sunglasses, and Brian hustle past the two check-in receptionists. The suspicious one looks disbelievingly at his watch. It's 7:05 a.m.

EXT. HOTEL FRONT DOORS - MORNING

Surprised, the two hotel doormen look after Alastair and Brian, who get onto the backseat of a tournament limo.

INT. TOURNAMENT LIMOUSINE - MORNING

Coach Levine is in the front seat. Coach T and Coach Miles are in the car as well.

COACH LEVINE

You know what time it is?

Brian throws a sharp look at Alastair, who looks out of the window.

ALASTAIR

Where are Clay and Patrick?

COACH LEVINE
They're gonna be there later on.

EXT. TOURNAMENT COURTS - MORNING

Western tourists and Middle-Eastern fans flood the tournament gates.

MELISSA (V.O.)
Hello and Salam to the first day at the Sheik Ahmad Al-Abdai Open in Dubai. Here the beautiful sport of sand volleyball melts all cultural borders as Easterners and Westerners gather to witness the world's finest players on a magnificent New Year's Day.

INT. COMMENTATOR BOOTH - MORNING

Ted and Melissa sit in front of monitors at their desk.

TED
A beautiful day it is indeed and I'm telling you Melissa: we won't be disappointed as the first surprise upset of the tournament is already on its way.

A TV monitor shows Heidi and Janaina playing on center court.

MELISSA (O.S)
That's right, Ted. The French duo of Suvoit/Bagthe just a pair of points away from upsetting Brazilian No.2 seeds Sairo/Bayo.

TED (O.S)
And after this it's U.S. hopefuls Plac/Smithe taking on the Russian team of Dimitrajev/Sikorsky. Don't go away.

A TV monitor shows Alastair and Brian warming up in a stadium tunnel.

EXT. CENTER COURT TUNNEL - MORNING

Alastair watches Janaina failing on a dig. Lying in the sand, Janaina's eyes meet Alastair's. People cheer and music plays. The STADIUM SPEAKER, a bodyless voice, comes on over the speakers.

STADIUM SPEAKER
Ohhh! Give it up for match
poiint!!

Janaina's eyes call for help as Alastair watches her get up on her feet in slow motion. As he turns around, he steps on a rake and the stick hits him on the forehead.

ALASTAIR
Ouch! Damn.

Russians Dimitrajev/Sikorsky chuckle at Alastair as Brian walks up to Alastair. Alastair rubs his forehead. His eyes are blood-shot.

BRIAN
(rambling)
Are you all right? Listen, I was
thinking: We should play strategy on
big points, just like in Austria,
remember?

ALASTAIR
Sure.

BRIAN
Or maybe not. Just mix it up? I
don't know. What do you think?

Brian starts biting his fingernails. The stadium crowd cheers again.

ALASTAIR
Brian, we'll be fine.

Brian nods. Janaina breezes by, swearing in Portuguese as Heidi follows her. Alastair looks after Janaina rushing down the tunnel.

BRIAN
Are you ready?

ALASTAIR
Yeah! C'mon! Let's do this!

They chest-bump and run onto the court to loud cheers.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Alastair scans the packed stadium. The blistering sun is beating in his face. The net referee blows on his whistle.

CUT TO:

Dimitrajev sets up his serve. Alastair and Brian prepare to receive.

TED (V.O.)

Dimitrajev/Sikorsky on serve. We're tied at five in the first. Slow start from the Americans.

MELISSA (V.O.)

That's right, Ted. Plac and Smithe very timid, just floating their serves. It's not enough so far.

Dimitrajev serves, the teams rally, and Dimitrajev wins the point by breaking a block by Alastair with a spike at the net. The Russians and the crowd celebrate.

TED (V.O.)

Boom! Like a New Year's firework exploding over Smithe's head. A Dimitrajev smash makes it six-five to the Russians.

MELISSA (V.O.)

Plac/Smithe showing some uncharacteristic indecision there. Poor hands on that block from Smithe.

INT. COMMENTATOR BOOTH - MORNING

Ted turns to Melissa and looks her in the eye.

TED

You know what I'm thinking: nerves.

Melissa nods and takes notes.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Brian and Alastair are in a huddle.

BRIAN

What the fuck are you doing? Keep your hands around the ball!

ALASTAIR

(tired)

I know, I know. I'm sorry. I blacked out.

BRIAN

Sorry is not gonna cut it! Now get your ass into the game!

TED (V.O.)

Wow. Some clear words from Plac to his partner as the U.S boys prepare for another Dimitrajev serve.

Dimitrajev puts the ball in play. Alastair receives and Brian sets him up for a smash, which Alastair misses way wide. The crowd uhs and ahs.

MELISSA (V.O.)

Another unbelievable error by Smithe making it seven-five for the Russians. That's got to be more than nerves Ted.

Resting his hands on his hips, Alastair looks up into the coaching box where Coach Levine shifts in his seat. Clay and Patrick arrive. Eating, Patrick grins at Alastair while Clay signs some autographs.

Brian taps Alastair's butt.

BRIAN

(frowning)

C'mon, Stares. Right here.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - AFTERNOON

Brian slams his bag into a corner.

BRIAN

That's bullshit is what it is!

Alastair quietly drops his bag, sits down on his bed and starts unpacking.

BRIAN

In practice we toy with one of the best teams in the world, and today?

Brian paces through the room. He stops and looks out of the window over the Dubai skyline.

BRIAN

You know, Alastair, sometimes I ask myself: What we are doing here? I mean, what are we actually doing here?

There is a knock on the door.

BRIAN

It's unlocked.

On his way in, Coach Levine turns up his nose at a bad smell from Alastair's closet. He spots Alastair's dirty clothes through a half-open closet door.

Coach Levine leans against a table opposite Alastair's bed. Alastair avoids eye contact.

COACH LEVINE

Are you going to confess now or do you want to lie to your parents first?

Alastair remains mute.

COACH LEVINE

I just wanna make sure our stories match, because I'm pretty sure from what they saw on TV they won't believe that any of this actually happened.

Coach Levine sees Alastair's Lord Byron book on his bed.

COACH LEVINE

(sighs)

Imagine, you're on a plane. Take off was excellent, you're in mid-air. The sky's a perfect blue and it's pretty much smooth sailing, but all of a sudden, the plane starts rattling. And you look out of your little window but you can't see anything.

COACH LEVINE

The damn sky's damn blue? So, a voice in your head starts telling you that something's not right. So you shut your blinds, shift in your seat, but the voice doesn't go away. And now, you're sitting there, just waiting for the pilot to bullshit you with some story about ... something. So, what do you say, Alastair? What is it? A system, bad weather ... turbulence?

ALASTAIR

Well, in any case, I wouldn't call it an unlikely event.

COACH LEVINE

Good. At least you know we can't predict the weather. Because I don't understand how you can go through a goddamn blizzard when it's a goddamn 100 degrees out!!

Alastair looks down at his empty ring finger.

COACH LEVINE

I don't know what cloud was over your head this morning! But I sure hope it wasn't some brew of whisky, cigarettes and a lack of sleep!!

Coach Levine tries to compose himself.

COACH LEVINE

The only reason you didn't crash was because those Russians can't hold their damn liquor either!!

Coach Levine is in Alastair's face.

COACH LEVINE

But I tell you this: There are only so many air pockets you can hit, Alastair. If it hadn't been for Brian today, you would be out. You hear me, Smithe: Out.

Coach Levine turns and walks toward the door. He stops.

COACH LEVINE
Wasn't Byron the one with the Club
foot?

Alastair nods.

COACH LEVINE
He swam the Hellespont: twice. Think
about it.

Coach Levine walks out of the room and slams the door.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

With their eyes open, Alastair and Brian lie in their beds.
Their backs are turned to each other.

BRIAN
Alastair?

No response.

BRIAN
I can hear you breathing, man.
(sighs)
You know we're going to suck if we
don't talk now.

Brian sighs again and closes his eyes.

ALASTAIR
We went out.

Brian opens his eyes.

ALASTAIR
Last night. We went to a night club,
and I got home late, well, early.
That's why I ran into that rake this
morning.

Brian smirks. Alastair stares at the ceiling.

ALASTAIR
When we sat down for change-overs, I
could barely keep my eyes open. And
that sand. My feet were burning like
my liver.

BRIAN
You deserved it.

ALASTAIR
I know. It was such a mess.

They both chuckle.

BRIAN
You're an idiot.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Patrick lies in his bed, snoring. Clay is tossing and turning. He's sweating and restless, haunted by a nightmare.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

ALASTAIR
And then, I look down at her mature
and beautiful breasts. I mean,
that's a grown woman I'm talking
about.

BRIAN
Oh, man!

Alastair stands up on his bed and starts dancing. He's wearing tight boxers and a shirt. Brian checks him out.

ALASTAIR
Yeah, I know. So, we're soaking wet
from the foam, and I can see, like,
their perfect shape.

Alastair makes the shape of full breasts with his hands.

BRIAN
Ohh, Ohhh!!

ALASTAIR
And then she grinds up on me, and
her hands are all over my body, you
know, and all of a sudden she pulls
me real close. And then she
whispers: I want you, right here.

BRIAN
That's a lie!

ALASTAIR
No more than the truth!

BRIAN
No! No!

ALASTAIR
Yes! Yes!

Alastair falls flat down on his sheets and starts humping his blanket.

BRIAN
So what happened?

ALASTAIR
What do you mean what happened?

BRIAN
Well, are you going to have children with middle names like Achmed or Rasheed?

ALASTAIR
No!

BRIAN
Why not?!

ALASTAIR
I don't know. I just couldn't do it.

BRIAN
What do you mean you couldn't do it?! Bob wouldn't stand up for his right?

ALASTAIR
No!

BRIAN
There was blood on the dance floor?

ALASTAIR
No!

BRIAN

You discovered she was the sultan's daughter and her servant at the door was going to chop off your balls had her lips sheathed the sword of a foreign soldier?

ALASTAIR

Now you're just being silly.

BRIAN

Are you telling me you can't think of one good reason in the entire world that could potentially explain why you choked on a girl like that?

ALASTAIR

It's not what I want, Brian. She's not what I want.

Alastair looks at his empty ring finger.

BRIAN

Man, the entire day I felt like I didn't know what was going on with you. But now, I really feel like I don't know what's going on with you.

Alastair chuckles and closes his eyes.

BRIAN

Hey, Stares. Let's kick some ass tomorrow.

ALASTAIR

Definitely.

Brian smiles and bites his lip.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Clay talks in his nightmare.

CLAY

No, no! I can't lose. I can't lose!

Sweating, Clay wakes and sits up in his bed. He looks toward Patrick, who snores.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Alastair is fast asleep. There's light in the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

As Brian wipes on the toilet, he starts touching himself. He breathes heavily when, frightened, he stops. Brian pulls up his boxers and softly flushes the toilet.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The bathroom light goes off and only the popping of Brian's ankles can be heard. Alastair's eyes open in terror as he feels Brian slipping under his blanket.

BRIAN

(whispers)

Stares, Stares. I think I know why you didn't kiss that waitress in the club last night. I've been fighting these feelings for a long time too.

ALASTAIR

What?

BRIAN

It's ok. There's no need to pretend anymore. It explains why you broke up with Catherine too.

Alastair jumps out of his bed.

ALASTAIR

What? I didn't break up with Catherine. She broke up with me!

BRIAN

Now stop! Don't turn your back on me! Not you, Alastair!

ALASTAIR

What are you talking about? You know, Clay was right. One shouldn't do friends.

BRIAN

All the time I'm picked on, left out, lied to!

BRIAN

Now you shut up or I--

ALASTAIR

Or what? You gonna make another phone call?

BRIAN

You bet I call coach and tell him what went on last night. And then you're out Alastair, out!

ALASTAIR

Then neither of us will go to the Olympics! Have you given this some thought?!

BRIAN

I don't care!

Brian sits down on his bed and cries.

BRIAN

I don't care about the Olympics. I'm only in this because you like it so much, and you want to be like Clay.

ALASTAIR

You are my best friend. I trust you. I gotta get out of here.

Alastair rushes out of the door. Brian cries on his bed.

EXT. HOTEL BACKDOOR - NIGHT

As Alastair slams a hotel backdoor open, he spots a shadow hiding behind a wall. The shadow flicks away a cigarette and Alastair presses his body against a wall.

Carefully, Alastair and the shadow glide along the same hotel wall toward each other. Alastair's hand touches a gecko. He takes a deep breath and continues moving.

The shadow and Alastair move closer and closer to each other until only separated by a small jut. Their fingertips touch briefly. Both retract their hands.

Alastair looks to his left, where he sees a gecko making its way up the wall. The shadow is not moving. Alastair grabs the gecko by its tail and jumps out of his corner. With a war cry, he whacks the gecko over the shadow's head.

After the gecko has hit Clay's forehead, the animal's body separates from its tail and the gecko sails through the air.

CLAY
Ouch!! What the fuck?!

Alastair looks after the flying gecko. He takes a look at his hand and drops the tail.

ALASTAIR
Wow, I forgot they do that.

CLAY
(rubbing his head)
You just whacked my head with a gecko! Why did you do that?!

ALASTAIR
It seemed like a good idea at the time.

CLAY
It hurts!

ALASTAIR
Well, what the hell are you doing out here?!

CLAY
What are you doing here?!

Clay sits down and takes a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket. Alastair observes this and sits down next to him.

CLAY
I had this dream. Pat and I, we're playing in the Olympics and ... nevermind.

Clay takes a joint out of his cigarette package and lights it. Alastair observes this.

CLAY
What about you? You still running away from your New Year's resolution?

Alastair shakes his head no and looks into the distance.

CLAY

Kaisa was, is a fine girl. Quite the body that slipped through your fingers.

ALASTAIR

She's not my type.

CLAY

(chuckles)

Not your ... you crack me up, Smithe. You're still thinking about your girl, aren't you? What's her name?

ALASTAIR

Catherine.

CLAY

Right, Catherine. You love her?

Alastair starts twisting his hair and doesn't respond.

CLAY

Look, I'm obviously not big on morals or on relationships for that matter, but let me tell you this: There's little room for your type in professional sports.

ALASTAIR

What do you mean?

CLAY

The big 1: love. It gets in the way, makes you vulnerable, creates unnecessary conflict. Think about it: Why did you go out the night before one the most important matches in your life?

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOTEL UPPER FLOORS - NIGHT

In slow motion, Patrick grins while waving with his condom as the elevator doors close.

CLAY (V.O.)

Was it to protect Janaina from a regrettable one-night stand? Or did

you try to salvage your ideal of
true love? The romantic notion of
braving the storms of life together?

END OF FLASHBACK:

EXT. HOTEL BACKDOOR - NIGHT

ALASTAIR

One shouldn't do friends, hm?

CLAY

(draws on his joint)

Now, don't sweat it, Smithe. You're
not the only one who got screwed
last night. Pat guilted me into
going out with him too.

ALASTAIR

I knew it wasn't your idea.

CLAY

He said I owed it to him for keeping
a secret about my endorsement.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HARD ROCK CAFE - NIGHT

Patrick shoots Clay a sharp look as he throws his napkin on the
table. Clay avoids eye contact.

CLAY (V.O.)

Or do you think I'd go out with a
six million dollar contract on the
line, just because it's New Year's?

END OF FLASHBACK:

EXT. HOTEL BACKDOOR - NIGHT

ALASTAIR

But what about the drinks ... and
the smoking?

CLAY

It's a lonely profession, Smithe.
You better bring some thick skin, or
you'll find yourself walking into
the water pretty quick.

Clay looks at Alastair, who stares toward the horizon.

CLAY

I like you, Smithe. I think you're a
good boy, really. But I don't think
you'll make it.

ALASTAIR

Make what?

CLAY

This life. A professional athlete.
Trust me, I've seen a lot of players
like you crash and burn. What's more
important to you: Your love for
Catherine or your love for the game?

ALASTAIR

Can't I have both?

CLAY

(chuckles)

You crack me up, Stares, you really
do. And I thought you learned
something last night.

ALASTAIR

And what would that be?

CLAY

That you can't have both, Smithe.
Just look at your father. You're too
... nice, too fragile for this
sport.

(giggles)

I mean you get upset because Pat
makes a phone call.

Alert, Alastair turns to Clay, who unsuspectingly draws on his
joint.

ALASTAIR

(sly)

Yeah, you're right. So what do you
suggest I do?

CLAY

I really need this win tomorrow. My whole career is on the line. And the way you and Brian are playing, you can qualify for the Olympics in four years. Easy. So, why don't you put on the goggles?

Alastair throws Clay a doubtful glance.

CLAY

You know, and get into the tank. Throw the match.

Alastair's eyes are filled with disappointment.

CLAY

Now, c'mon, Smithe. I know you got Brian on a string. He doesn't have to know. A few misses here and there. Who's gonna notice the way you played today?

ALASTAIR

So you're asking me to do this for a friend?

CLAY

You're so young, Smithe. This match is my life. But don't do it for a friend. Do it for your idol.

Clay offers him his joint. Alastair hesitates and accepts. Alastair inhales and coughs. Clay smirks and taps Alastair's back.

CLAY

So did you have a bad dream as well?

ALASTAIR

No. Sometimes reality does just fine for a bad dream.

Morning dawns and a muezzin on a distant minaret of a mosque prays.

INT. COMMENTATOR BOOTH - MORNING

Ted and Melissa sit at their desk in front of a number of TV monitors.

TED

Salam and welcome to the second day of the Sheik Ahmad Al-Abdai Open in

Dubai. It's another beautiful
morning for sizzling sand volleyball
and
yet another day of great decisions
here on center court.

A TV monitor shows Alastair, Brian, Patrick and Clay warming up
on a practice court. Alastair is doing warm-up sprints when he
buckles and holds his Achilles heel.

COACH LEVINE
Hey, Stares. Are you ok?

ALASTAIR
Yeah, I'm fine.

Alastair catches Clay's eye. Clay nods at him.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Angela and Richard watch the broadcast on TV.

TED (V.O.)
Today's broadcast features U.S.
newcomers Smithe/Plac who take on
their fellow teammates and sand
volleyball superstars Patrick
Williams and Clay Reynolds.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CATHERINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Catherine follows the broadcast, nervously spooning yogurt in
her bed. Her dog, a golden Labrador, rests his head in her lap.

TED (V.O.)
Plac/Smithe will look to become the
youngest contenders ever to qualify
for an Olympic sand volleyball
event. The two teams are warming up
already.

TED (V.O.)
 We'll be back with live action right
 after the break.

The dog wheezes.

CATHERINE
 Shhh, I know. You're watching too.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Alastair stretches for a dig. He recovers the ball and Brian finishes the point with a spectacular spike that breaks Patrick's block. Brian offers Alastair a low five, but Alastair only frowns and picks up the ball.

The crowd cheers and music plays while the scoreboard skips to 20-16 to Plac/Smithe.

TED (V.O.)
 Boom! Another punishing overhead
 sets Plac/Smithe up for set-point.

MELISSA (V.O.)
 A walk on hot coals for
 Williams/Reynolds so far. And not
 just because of the boiling Dubai
 sand.

TED (V.O.)
 But not a lot of celebration from
 the young boys so far. There seems
 to be something going on.

Alastair and Brian both have their heads down as they wait for the crowd to calm down and the music to cease.

MELISSA (V.0)
 Probably too concentrated to cheer,
 Ted. Looks like they want to avoid a
 replay of the third-set nailbiter
 against the Russians yesterday at
 any price.

A TV monitor on center court shows footage of Alastair and Brian's match point against the Russians. They hug.

TED (V.O.)
 Yes, a very concentrated match from
 Plac/Smithe today as we see them
 embrace in true friendship after

their win against the Russians.

Alastair sets up his serve on center court.

TED (V.O.)

Not the same friendship on the court
today but definitely a better game.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

While Richard and Angela watch, Angela chews on her fingernails.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Kaisa, Janaina and Heidi sit down in the stands. Tense, Coach
Levine follows the game.

TED (V.O.)

Smithe serving at set point.

Alastair serves and the point is played out. He finishes it with
another great spike. People cheer and music plays. Again,
Alastair and Brian do not celebrate.

TED (V.O.)

And another spectacular Smithe smash
makes it 21-16 for the youngsters as
they take the first set by storm!

Alastair and Clay exchange hateful glares as both teams walk to
the change-over benches. Patrick and Alastair walk to the cooler
at the same time.

INT. CATHERINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Catherine spoons her yogurt as the broadcast switches to
commercials.

EXT. CHANGE-OVER - MORNING

Alastair and Patrick meet at the cooler.

PATRICK

You better know what you're doing,
Smithe. Bringing down your idol.

ALASTAIR

Why don't you shut up Pat?

PATRICK

What? You win one set and you risk a

fat lip?

ALASTAIR

As far as I know you're the one
risking a fat lip. I know you called
Melissa.

Patrick gulps and spills some water.

ALASTAIR

Turns out your partner spilled the
beans when he had a little too much
whacky tabbacy last night. Like you
said: Not quite the role model you
see on TV.

PATRICK

You have no proof.

ALASTAIR

I don't need any proof. I'm just
going to kick your sorry little ass
on the court. Like I should have
done all along.

Alastair turns away, preparing to leave.

PATRICK

Oh, yeah? I guess you don't mind
Catherine finding out about your New
Year's resolution then?

Alastair stops and turns back around.

PATRICK

How much proof do you think she
needs? Or did Heather already tell
her that you're just as faithful as
your dad?

Alastair stares Patrick deep in the eye.

ALASTAIR

A tough break in life is one thing,
Pat, but manipulating somebody else,
that's just messed up.

PATRICK

(tossing his hair)

I never wanted any of your pathetic
sympathy, Smithe. Sympathy is for
losers, just like love.

ALASTAIR

You're an idiot, Pat. You always
were.

As Alastair leaves he flicks Patrick's man zone.
Patrick bends down. Clay walks up to Patrick.

CLAY

Are you ok?

EXT. CHANGE-OVER BENCH - MORNING

Alastair sits down next to Brian. Brian remains mute and looks
at the scoreboard. The score's 21-16 to them.

BRIAN

You sure spiking the shit out of
that volleyball.

ALASTAIR

I'm pissed.

BRIAN

Listen, Alastair. I--

ALASTAIR

Please, can we not talk about this
now. It's just awkward.

BRIAN

Do you remember what you said about
forgiving Patrick. That we all mess
up every once in a while. Well, I
messed up. And I'm sorry.

ALASTAIR

It was Pat who leaked my dad's
affair to the press.

BRIAN

What?

Brian looks over to Clay tapping Patrick's back.

ALASTAIR

Clay is in on the entire ploy. Just because he's so fucking concerned about his sponsor money and career too. The leak wasn't your fault.

BRIAN

Look, I realize things will be different from now on.

Alastair nods and raises his eyebrows as if to suggest agreement.

BRIAN

And I don't know if we can be friends ever again. But, I do know one thing: We are a way better team than Clay and Patrick. And we deserve a spot at the Olympics ten times more than these scumbags.

The net referee sharply blows on his whistle. Alastair looks at Janaina and Heidi in the stands.

ALASTAIR

(smirks)

What the fuck are we doing here?

(they chuckle)

C'mon, let's kick the shit out of these assholes.

They perform their signature high-fives. Brian wants to tap Alastair's butt, but Alastair shoots Brian a sharp look while raising his index finger as if to suggest a warning gesture. Brian pulls back his arm.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Richard glares at the broadcast as Alastair and Brian re-take the court to deafening cheers.

ANGELA

That's our son. I'm so proud of him.

Angela's leans her head against Richard's chest. Richard slowly puts his arm around his wife.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Patrick sets up his serve.

TED (V.O.)
Start of the second.
Williams to serve and so far, this
Dubai center court is quick-sand for
Williams/Reynolds.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The dog wheezes.

CATHERINE
Shhh, baby. We're doing fine. Just
fine.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Patrick floats a serve. The point is underway and Brian finishes
it by nailing Clay on his bruised forehead.

TED (V.O.)
Ouch! Plac nails Reynolds on his
forehead. Reynolds takes it like a
man.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Angela presses her body against Richard's. On TV, Alastair and
Brian perform their signature high fives.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Brian raises his hand in mocking apology. Clay is bleeding and
the paramedics have to come on the court. They administer a
band-aid. The referee calls a time-out.

BRIAN
Nice going, man. We've got them.
Strategy next.

Alastair nods and looks up to Coach Levine, who follows the
match with a poker face.

The paramedics leave and Alastair prepares to serve. He has to
wait, because the ecstatic crowd produces the wave.

TED (V.O.)
And now, Alastair Smithe has to wait
because a simmering crowd of more

than 10,000 fans here in a sold-out arena is boiling over. Dear viewers, what a spectacle. This stadium now resembles the coliseum in ancient Rome, and just like Caesar, Smithe looks up to the stands, asking up ... or down.

Time passes in slow motion as Alastair scans the crowd. He serves and a long, spectacular rally ensues.

Patrick tries to close out the point with a spike. Alastair blocks and the ball hits the net on his side. Alastair hustles and jumps for a dig when he tears his Achilles heel.

The silent and observing crowd hears a loud snap as Alastair falls to the ground. He cringes and holds his heel.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGELA
(covering her eyes)
Oh, no! My baby!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Catherine freezes while spooning her yogurt. Her lab wheezes again.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Coach Levine gets out of his chair.

INT. THE COMMENTATOR BOOTH - MORNING

Ted and Melissa are speechless.

EXT. CENTER COURT - MORNING

Kaisa, Janaina and Heidi hold their hands over their mouths. Patrick and Clay hesitantly low-five. Brian lowers his head. Alastair screams in pain.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A nurse brings Alastair his lunch tray. She smiles and looks at Alastair's heavily wrapped foot. Alastair stares out of a window, listening to a propeller plane. Richard enters the room and sits down at his bed.

RICHARD

Hi champ? How are you feeling?

Alastair doesn't respond. Richard looks at Alastair's heavily wrapped Achilles heel.

RICHARD

I just talked to your doctor. He said surgery went well. But the Achilles heel, it's a tricky thing.

Alastair looks at Angela, who leans against the doorframe.

ALASTAIR

Am I gonna play again?

RICHARD

They don't know ... Listen, Alastair. In sports psychology, they say there is a connection between the physical and the mental. So, there could be a link between your injury and my--

(clears his throat)

Just all the stuff that's been going on.

Richard takes Alastair's hand. Alastair looks away.

RICHARD

I know I've been a bad father this year, Alastair. And there's no excuse for what I did to you or our family. But, even if things will never get back to normal between your mom and I, you have to believe that we still love you.

Angela wipes some tears from her eyes.

RICHARD

God knows, with my job, it's so important to be tough, invulnerable.

RICHARD

You've got to make people believe you're in control, that you can protect them, you see? But it's an illusion, Alastair, being in control. It's a game you play in your mind.

(beat)

Now, love is not a game. It's built on trust, honesty and forgiveness.

Richard squeezes Alastair's hand. Alastair looks at him.

RICHARD

You remind me of that. And I hope that one day, you can forgive me. I love you.

ALASTAIR

Thanks dad.

They hug. Alastair sees Catherine appear in the door next to his mother. Richard's eyes follow Alastair's stare. Richard smiles.

RICHARD

Well, I guess I should go now.

Richard leaves and Catherine sits down on Alastair's bed. She looks at Alastair's Achilles heel.

CATHERINE

So that's what you get for not letting go?

Catherine waves with her new cell phone.

ALASTAIR

You probably think I deserve it.

CATHERINE

(sighs)

No, I don't think you deserve it. Why didn't you tell me about your dad earlier?

ALASTAIR

I don't know. I guess I was trying not to jeopardize my game.

ALASTAIR

I thought I could handle it alone
and have both: an untroubled love
life and success on the court. But
by trying so hard not to be my dad,
I guess I ended up being just like
him.

CATHERINE

I saw Heather on New Year's Eve. She
told me what happened, that you
didn't do anything wrong.

(beat)

Now, the way I see it, injuries
happen, just like two people in love
hurt each other, sometimes. And,
breaking up with you, I knew I could
hurt you. So, if you deserve this
injury, I deserve it too.

ALASTAIR

(looking at his heel)

You know, I'm not even sure it just
happened. Maybe I realized I can't
have both, you and my love for the
game. Maybe I decided to come back.

Catherine smiles and gently caresses his hair.

CATHERINE

Then where's your ring?

Alastair looks at his empty finger.

ALASTAIR

I don't know. Where's yours?

CATHERINE

(shrugs)

I was hoping I'd get a new one.

ALASTAIR

Well, you know what they say?

Catherine throws an inquisitive look at Alastair.

ALASTAIR

They say that hope is happiness, but
genuine love must prize the past.

Catherine smiles and kisses him. Angela and Richard watch in the
door.

EXT. A HILLTOP - AFTERNOON

TITLE OVER: June

Alastair and Catherine sit on a blanket having picnic. Catherine kisses Alastair as he holds his Lord Byron book in his lap.

ALASTAIR

Let me finish. I never get to
finish: And mem'ry wakes the
thoughts that bless, they rose the
first, they set the last. And all
that mem'ry loves the most--

A golf ball sizzles by Alastair's head and lands in the grass right next to him. Alastair ducks.

ALASTAIR

Wow!

CATHERINE

(giggles)

That was close. Are you ok?

Near the hilltop is now a golf course. A CLAY AND PATRICK LOOK-ALIKE, two golfers, stand next to a hot blonde, who resembles Heather, as they wave into Alastair and Catherine's direction.

PATRICK LOOK-ALIKE

Fore!

CLAY LOOK-ALIKE

No, idiot. You say that before you
almost nail someone's head.

The two golfer's walk up to Alastair and Catherine.

CLAY LOOK-ALIKE

I'm sorry. My partner is an idiot.
I'd rather have you hit the next
shot. Do you want to try?

CLAY LOOK-ALIKE
Take it as a consolation.

The Clay look-alike offers Alastair his club and Catherine nods affirmatively at Alastair.

CATHERINE
Why don't you try honey?

Alastair takes the club and limps to the golf ball. His chip lands on the green and almost sinks the ball. Everyone watches with amazement.

CLAY LOOK-ALIKE
Nice shot, man. Are you a regular?

ALASTAIR
No, never played before.

CLAY LOOK-ALIKE
Do you want to finish this round
instead of my incompetent partner?

The Patrick look-alike frowns and tosses his long brown hair out of his face. The blonde throws Alastair a seductive smile. Alastair glances at Catherine.

ALASTAIR
You know, I'm good for now.

He hands the club to the Clay look-alike, who nods. The golfers leave and Alastair sits down next to Catherine and picks up his poetry book again. He puts his arm around Catherine.

ALASTAIR
So, where was I? Oh, yeah: but
genuine love must prize the past.
Mem'ry wakes the thoughts that
bless, they rose the first, the set
the last.

An open ring case with Alastair's diamond ring lies in a picnic basket. A newspaper copy shows Clay and Patrick's photo next to the headline:

INSERT: DRUG HABIT KILLS VOLLEYBALL DUO'S OLYMPIC HOPES

Something like Oasis' Champagne Supernova plays.

THE END