

DO OVER

"Pilot"

Written
by
Erik Bork

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Creative Artists Agency
9830 Wilshire Boulevard
Beverly Hills, CA 90212
(310) 288-4545

ACT ONE

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD- DAY

A sunny Saturday afternoon. Eight lanes of traffic move briskly through the Miracle Mile. Including one late-model MINIVAN badly in need of a wash.

INT. MITCH'S MINIVAN - DAY

Piloting the family cruiser is MITCH FALLON, 34, decent-looking, intelligent, caring and responsible. The last guy you'd expect to walk out on you and ruin your life.

He's content at the moment, but scratch the surface, and you'd find a free spirit, a creative seeker -- trapped in the life of a suburban dad.

He checks the rear-view mirror, where he sees:

Two rows of rear seats, and four KIDS, ages 5-8, immersed in Gameboys, iPods, and DVD's.

On Mitch, watching them --

MITCH (V.O.)
Not all them are mine. Thank God.
Two are his.

He glances over to the seat next to him. Sleeping there is DAN BURNHAM, 38 -- rugged, athletic, native Californian.

MITCH
(loudly to wake him)
So you want to just head home then?

Mitch watches for a reaction. Dan doesn't stir.

MITCH (V.O.)
My neighbor. Dan. Full-time
househusband. Hates his life.
I decided to let him sleep.

Mitch turns back to Wilshire. It starts to rain. He flips on his wipers. Within seconds, it's a torrential downpour.

MITCH
Jesus. Where did this come from?

He glances in the mirror, then over at Dan. All are oblivious.

Rain POUNDS on the van. Mitch has trouble seeing. He peers out the windshield, at the dim tail lights of the car ahead.

MITCH
(incredulous)
I think I might have to pull over.

He applies the brake, gently turns the wheel. But it LOCKS UP. He can't pull over! And the brakes aren't working, either. The van is going faster and faster! And he can't see a thing! The rain has created a total white-out!

MITCH
What the hell...?

In growing panic, Mitch tries the brakes again, and the emergency brake. Nothing works.

MITCH
Hold on, everybody!

But Dan sleeps through it all. And the kids are in their own worlds. Mitch fights for control of the car in vain, as it rockets forward into an unknown fate.

MITCH (V.O.)
So this is a dream sequence. Maybe you guessed that. I apologize for the obvious symbolism. My life's out of control, I can't see where I'm going, nobody cares, etc. I guess I've been under some stress lately. Maybe my subconscious isn't as creative as it once was.

Mitch clutches the wheel in panic. Just as a crash seems imminent --

THE RAIN STOPS.

Mitch finds himself able to steer, and brake again. The sun blasts through the clouds. All is right with the world.

Heart still racing, he signals for a turn.

A TREE-LINED HANCOCK PARK STREET

In one of those rare L.A. neighborhoods with visible character and history. Mitch pulls up in front of a modest 1940's Craftsman.

He shuts the van off. Hands on the wheel, he sits there and breathes. The adrenaline begins to subside.

He glances back at the kids, still immersed in their electronic entertainment. Dan finally stirs, and looks over.

DAN

What?

Mitch shakes his head. Doesn't want to discuss it.

EXT. MITCH'S HOUSE - DAY

Mitch steps out of the van, takes in the view of his home -- it's small but charming, and beautifully redone.

MITCH (V.O.)

The renovation cost me a fortune.
Looks nice, right? Ah, well.
Seemed like a good idea at the
time.

As he slides open the side minivan door, a WOMAN steps out onto the front porch of the larger house next door. This is Dan's wife CECE, 35 -- attractive, high-strung, with a brittle smile. Worried about something, and trying not to show it.

CECE

(calls to Mitch)

What happened?

MITCH

The museum was closed. I guess we
should have called ahead.

Mitch's kids -- JONATHAN, 8, and RACHEL, 5, tumble out of the minivan, and race toward their front door. Cece watches them with some concern.

CECE

You guys want to come over and play
for a while?

The kids stop in their tracks. They look over at Mitch: all are surprised at this offer.

MITCH (V.O.)

Dan's wife is not big on hosting
"playdates." In three years living
next door, I think this is a first.

MITCH

(to Cece)

Seriously?

CECE
 Sure. Why not? You two can drink
 beer and watch pay-per-view. I'll
 make cookies with the kids.

Dan, ushering his twin 7-year old GIRLS out of the van, turns
 at the sound of this.

DAN
You're going to make cookies?

CECE
 I can bake.

DAN
 Really?

CECE
 (ignoring him)
 What do you say, Mitch?

MITCH
 Well, if you're sure... Let me
 just run inside and tell Natalie.

CECE
 (too quickly)
 No! I'll call and tell her.

Now Mitch knows something isn't right. And for the first
 time, he notices something else unusual: an outrageous
 foreign SPORTS CAR, parked across the street from his house.

MITCH
 Nice car.
 (to Dan)
 Whose is that? Seen it before?

Dan shrugs. Mitch glances from the car to Cece, with her
 pasted-on smile. Still nothing is adding up.

MITCH (V.O.)
 I know. You're way ahead of me.
 My wife is inside my house, having
 sex with another man. And Cece
 knows about it. But hey, it's my
 dream, so let me just play it out.

MITCH
 I need to get my cell phone anyway.
 I left it in the house.

Cece watches helplessly as Mitch approaches his front door.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A warm and inviting family home. Mitch enters to the sounds of loud LOVEMAKING, emanating from a bedroom. Confused and alarmed, he walks slowly toward them.

IN THE MASTER BEDROOM DOORWAY

Mitch now stands, disbelieving, devastated, as a MAN IN HIS 40'S makes love to his wife NATALIE, 32. She's conflicted, confused, trying to enjoy herself. And failing.

MITCH

Nat. NATALIE.

She finally hears him, looks around the body of her lover to see him. She closes her eyes, busted.

We PUSH IN on Mitch.

MITCH (V.O.)

Sometimes I think it would be easier if this had happened to us. Might've made more sense to everyone.

Off his woeful countenance, we:

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - MITCH'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Mitch is in the bed now, a younger female LOVER moving on top of him, eyes closed, concentrating. Mitch, working hard, is stopped by the sound of someone stifling TEARS. He looks around his lover to see:

Natalie, standing in the doorway, seeing them, and sobbing quietly. His heart sinks. He never wanted to hurt her.

MITCH

Nat. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. Let me explain --

NATALIE

(sincere)

It's okay. If you don't want me anymore, that's just... I'll leave.

We PUSH IN on Mitch's pained face, as he lies there.

MITCH (V.O.)

This might have been good, too. We would have had a clear reason. That nobody could argue with.

Mitch tries to get out from under his lover -- who is oblivious to Natalie's presence. A nearby alarm clock begins BEEPING hysterically.

CUT TO:

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - BACK TO PRESENT/REALITY - DAY

Mitch sleeps on a sleeping bag on the floor of the living room. There is not a single piece of furniture left in the house. Someone has very recently moved out. It looks like the Whoville house after the Grinch took the Christmas tree: wires and hooks and holes in the wall, nothing else left.

And Mitch is Cindy Lou Who, unshaven, bathrobe-and-sock-wearing, on the floor. He opens his eyes reluctantly, at the sound of the cheap digital clock CHIRPING eight o'clock. He shuts it off.

Propped on the mantle is a tiny unframed snapshot of Rachel and Jonathan, in happier times. He stands up and looks at it. It's his touchstone. He takes the photo and puts it in the pocket of his bathrobe. Then walks into

AN EMPTY BATHROOM

Which contains, beyond basic fixtures, one towel, one paper towel roll, and one shaving kit. He opens the kit and begins to shave. Staring at his bleary eyes in the mirror.

MITCH (V.O.)

In a few short hours, my divorce would be signed. The rest of my life was about to start. It was a good feeling.

But the tears sliding down his cheeks are thinning the shaving cream. He continues to shave, trying to hold it together. The door bell RINGS.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Mitch in a towel opens the door. Standing there is BILLY SYKES, 29 -- nice suit, winning smile, a born salesman from Texas, now transformed into a slick L.A. metrosexual. He holds two coffees, hands one to Mitch as he enters.

BILLY

Day one, huh?

(looks around the place)

Wow. She wasn't kidding about taking everything.

MITCH

I don't care. I'm just glad to be back in the house.

BILLY

I hear that.

MITCH

You want to see the room?

Billy nods.

AN EMPTY BEDROOM

It's not huge, but has some period charm. Crown moldings, a bay window, hardwood floors. Billy surveys it, skeptical. Mitch wants him to like it.

MITCH

Of course, it's got the crown moldings, which probably weren't here when you last saw it. The floors we re-did as well. As far as rent goes, I can be flexible.

Billy glances out the door with envy at the larger bedroom across the hall.

BILLY

Who's getting the bigger room?

MITCH

Uh, the kids...?

BILLY

Kind of a waste, isn't it? For a few nights a month?

MITCH

Didn't I tell you? I got her to give me joint custody, and more than forty percent time share.

BILLY

(with alarm)

What?

MITCH

Yeah. We're signing in an hour.
That's what the big fight was over.

BILLY

And you think you can handle that?

Truth is, Mitch is not entirely sure -- he's still convincing himself.

MITCH

They're my kids. They need me.

BILLY

Yeah, I guess. Hey, good for you.

MITCH

Are you saying this is a problem?

BILLY

Of course not.

(lies)

I love kids. Anyway, beggars can't
be choosers. Sherry's threatening
to put my stuff out on the street.
She's gone a little psycho on me.

MITCH

Well, we saw that coming...

BILLY

Yeah, I get it. I should have
ended it a year ago. Because I
knew I was never going to marry
her. I screwed up. I know.

MITCH

I didn't say that.

BILLY

No, but she certainly did.

Billy inspects the room. Trying in vain to get excited about it.

MITCH

If you want to make it month-to-
month at first, see how it goes...

BILLY

Could we? That would be good.

MITCH
So you're in?

Billy grins at Mitch's relief, and grabs him in a hug.

BILLY
I'm excited. I am. Fresh start,
for both of us, huh? For both of
us. Tonight, we go out. Now that
you have something to celebrate. I
know some places that are crawling
with your type of women.

MITCH
And what type is that?

BILLY
Desperate and so drunk they can't
see straight. Seriously, what is
your type? I haven't seen you with
anyone else besides Nat.

MITCH
I don't think there were enough to
form a particular type.

BILLY
Well, all that is about to change.
You've waited long enough.

Off Mitch, unable to see a positive future through the still
murky present, we:

INT. LARCHMONT VILLAGE STARBUCKS - DAY

Jam-packed with eclectic urban creative types -- lots of
laptops, trendy jeans, and intense conversations.

Mitch enters, finds his estranged wife sitting at a table.
Natalie is strong and sharp but also vulnerable, her emotions
close to the surface. She's trying to hold things together,
and move on with her life. It's harder than she ever
expected it to be. Mitch tries to be businesslike.

MITCH
Hey.

NATALIE
Hi. You want something?

MITCH

No. That's alright. I'd rather just get this over with. If you don't mind.

He pulls out a chair for himself.

NATALIE

(deep breath)

Alright. Well. Here's the thing.

Mitch stands there, waiting, knowing something's wrong.

MITCH

What?

NATALIE

I've talked to my lawyer, and I've decided I want full custody.

Mitch's shock and rage are too huge for him to form words.

NATALIE

(quickly)

If you don't agree to it, the court will appoint a custody evaluator, who will interview us, observe our parenting, and then make a recommendation to the judge.

MITCH

But we agreed to start the new schedule this weekend! We already told the kids!

NATALIE

I know. And I'm willing to stick with that time-share, for now. Until we have a permanent decision.

MITCH

You can't possibly think this is in their best interests.

NATALIE

They need a stable home, Mitch. You'd still get visitations. Let's be honest: you barely know them.

MITCH

That is outrageous! Why, because I was out earning a living, trying to support everyone? In a demanding business?

NATALIE

Which you're still in. And I don't want a nanny raising them when they're with you.

MITCH

It wouldn't be that way. Trust me.

NATALIE

Trust you?

He looks at her, has something to say. Not sure it's the right time. Decides to say it.

MITCH

The show got cancelled.

NATALIE

(alarmed)

What?

MITCH

Don't worry. I've got some money saved. Your checks will keep coming.

(beat)

It's for the best. And it will free up my time for them.

NATALIE

Well, are you looking for something else?

MITCH

I'm writing a book.

NATALIE

And... someone's paying you?

MITCH

(the answer is no)

My agent thinks it has a good chance of selling.

NATALIE

Great. I hope you won't take this the wrong way, but it's not my job to support your dreams anymore.

MITCH

Hey, why should you start now?

NATALIE

My parents really want me and the kids to move back with them. If the money runs out, I might have no choice.

MITCH

You can't move them out of state without my consent.

NATALIE

I can if I get full custody.

Mitch just stares at her, in disbelief, seething. She steals a quick glance over his shoulder at someone. Mitch, seeing this, turns to see a handsome younger man at a corner table, sipping an espresso and looking their way. He turns away when Mitch sees him.

MITCH

Who's that?

NATALIE

I don't know.

MITCH

Then why were you looking at each other?

NATALIE

We weren't.

MITCH

I saw you. Just now.

NATALIE

Mitch... Will you stop? God.

Mitch stares at her. Filled with helpless rage over what she's doing.

MITCH

Fine. You want a fight? How about I ask for full custody, too?

NATALIE
Don't be ridiculous.

MITCH
I don't think it's ridiculous.
We'll let the judge decide. You're
not such a perfect parent.

NATALIE
I didn't say I was...

Mitch glances back at the man in the corner, who is watching them openly. On a hunch, Mitch approaches him.

NATALIE
Mitch!

MITCH
(to the man)
Hi, I'm Mitch. Just want to say,
no hard feelings. I'm glad she's
moving on with her life.

The man, PERRY, is a deer in the headlights. As Natalie tries to get his attention, to stop him from speaking --

PERRY
Wow, thanks. I'm Perry. That's
really nice of you to say. You've
got great kids.

Natalie winces. Mitch turns to her.

MITCH
He's met the kids. That's great.
I don't think it's too soon at all.
I hope he makes them breakfast in
the mornings.

NATALIE
It's not like that.

And now Mitch notices something else about her: her breasts, which seem awfully high, round, and full. She catches him looking at them. Stares him down.

MITCH
You know what? Good for you guys.
I guess I'll see you in court.

And Mitch, filled with emotion, bangs out of the Starbucks.

EXT. LARCHMONT VILLAGE - DAY

Mitch emerges onto the sidewalk, and begins walking, in a daze.

MITCH (V.O.)
Aren't you glad the dream sequence
is over and we're on to real life?
Me, too.

And we

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

ACT TWO

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - KIDS' BEDROOM - DAY

Neighbor Dan helps Mitch assemble an Ikea-style kids' bunk bed set. Parts and directions are strewn everywhere, in the otherwise empty room. It's not going well. Mitch is confused.

DAN
So they look good?

MITCH
What?

DAN
The implants.

MITCH
I'm not sure they're implants.
Maybe it was a padded bra.
(Dan still wants an
answer)
Yes, they looked pretty good.

DAN
Wow, new breasts and a younger,
good-looking guy. And she doesn't
want to share custody. She's
pissed.

MITCH
Maybe she's just getting on with
her life. That's fine. But this
is bad for the kids.

DAN
And you having them full-time
wouldn't be?

MITCH
It's a negotiating position. It'll
never happen.

DAN
Yeah, you hope not. So much for
being free.

MITCH
This was not about being free. We
were miserable. It was so over.

DAN
For you, maybe.

MITCH
For both of us. It can't work if
it doesn't work for both people. I
think she sees that now.

DAN
Yeah. She's obviously good with
everything. You know what, I think
I might just have to stay married.
If this is how Nat takes it, can
you imagine how Cece would be?

Frustrated at two parts that won't fit together, Mitch angrily flings a piece of plastic across the room. Dan stares at him with concern. Mitch goes to retrieve it.

MITCH
So do the two of them still talk a
lot?

DAN
I don't know. I think so.

MITCH
Because I can't have anything get
back to her, that she could use
against me.

DAN
Who are you talking to here?

MITCH
I'm serious. She's going to be
looking to show that I'm a bad
parent. I could lose the kids.

DAN
I tell my wife nothing. I'm my own
man. You know that.

MITCH
No, you're not.

DAN
Keep this up, I might not tell you
about the hot nanny.

MITCH

That may be for the best.
 (a beat; Dan is silent)
 What hot nanny?

DAN

You said you might need somebody.
 Me and the wife put together some
 names. I recommend "Nicki."

He hands him a sheet of paper with names and numbers.

DAN

People we interviewed before I
 stopped working. Seriously, she
 was the best, by far. Great with
 the kids. Came highly recommended.
 But Cece took one look and was
 like, "Forget it."

MITCH

That seems like it would be a bad
 thing. Distracting. Tempting.

DAN

Do what you want. I'm just saying,
 you don't have to answer to anyone
 anymore. It's all you. Lucky
 bastard.

MITCH

And you want to live vicariously
 through me.

DAN

Yeah, but try not to seduce her.
 That would just be cruel. To me.

MITCH

I'll try to control myself.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The empty living room now has one piece of furniture, a fake
 leather couch. Mitch sits in one corner; perched on the
 other end is NICKI the nanny: 26, absolutely lovely in jeans
 and a tank top. An Ivory girl from a good family.

MITCH

I don't know how much Dan told
 you...

NICKI

He said you were divorced, two kids. Boy and a girl, right?

(off Mitch's nod)

I love little girls. How old is she?

MITCH

Five.

NICKI

Great age. Is she into jewelry, make-up, all the girly stuff?

MITCH

I... don't have much to compare her to. But... somewhat.

NICKI

I bet it's fun to take her shopping.

MITCH

Yeah, I mean, I plan on doing a lot more of that kind of thing...

NICKI

What does she like to do?

MITCH

Oh, you know. Play. Color. Stuff. Kid stuff.

NICKI

Will I get to meet them today?

MITCH

Actually, they're not here now...

A key turns in the front door and in walks Billy, dressed down for moving day, cell phone in his ear.

BILLY

(into phone)

Absolutely, baby. You know I'd be up for that.

(seeing Mitch with Nicki,
into phone)

Hold on a sec.

(to Mitch)

Am I interrupting something?

MITCH

Uh, Billy, Nicki. Nicki, Billy.

NICKI

Hi.

BILLY

I'm interrupting something.

MITCH

Nicki's a prospective nanny.

BILLY

Oh. Oh! Alright. I'll tell the guys to keep it quiet.

And now three biker-edgy MOVERS clamor in, carting boxes, conversing passionately in some middle Eastern tongue.

BILLY

Omar! Chaz!

He silences them with a finger to his lips, pointing to Mitch and Nicki. But as soon as he leaves the room, they continue their loud discussion. Mitch turns back to Nicki. Trying to focus.

NICKI

So he's your housemate?

MITCH

It's kind of an evolving situation. I don't know if Dan told you how recent this all is. The divorce.

NICKI

No. Why? Is it really recent?

MITCH

(positive spin)

Well, it's been a few months. But I just moved back into the house. We agreed to this great new schedule, where I have the kids two weeknights and every other weekend.

NICKI

Wow, that's great. A lot of dads wouldn't even ask for that much.

MITCH

Really?

NICKI
My dad didn't. I can tell you all
the pitfalls, believe me.

MITCH
Such as?

NICKI
The two most important things for
the kids are that you stay actively
involved in their lives, and never
put them in the middle.

MITCH
Absolutely, I wouldn't --

NICKI
Don't badmouth their mom in front
of them. That's really bad.

MITCH
No, no, of course --

NICKI
And don't bring other people into
the picture, unless it's serious.

MITCH
Yeah, I'm good on that one.

NICKI
Sounds like you're doing great,
then. I'd love to meet them. I
mean, if you decide you like me.

She flashes a high-watt smile that momentarily dazzles him.
He grins back. What's not to like about her?

MITCH
I think you should meet them. In
fact, they're coming over today at
five. If you're free.

NICKI
I can do that.

MITCH
Great.

They stand. She offers a hand to shake. Billy wanders back
through, watching this.

NICKI

It was nice to meet you. I'll see you then.

She exits, a wave to them both. They watch her go.

BILLY

Look at you.

MITCH

She's got great references. I just need some help so I can get work done.

BILLY

Of course. I like it. I really like it.

MITCH

Don't get any ideas.

Mitch's cell phone vibrates in his pocket. Startled, he fishes it out, flips it open.

MITCH

Hello?

BILLY

(whispers to him)
Drinks at nine?

MITCH

(nods; into phone)
Really? They did?
(to Billy)
Nat wants to settle.

Billy bumps fists with him, and exits. Mitch's face falls as he listens.

MITCH

(into phone)
But she'd retain full custody?
Legal and physical? Uh huh. Yeah.
I understand... When do we need to respond by?

INT. UPSCALE NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

An intimate Hollywood lounge with sexy lighting, bizarre furniture, and obscure thumping music. Hours from now it will be packed with beautiful people.

But right now it's nearly empty. Except for Billy and Mitch, sitting at the bar like losers. Both frustrated, for different reasons.

BILLY

We came too early. My game is off. I think I've been in a relationship too long. Well, at least we got in. That's something.

MITCH

So anyway, offering me twenty-five percent is a major concession. I obviously scared her some.

BILLY

Mm hm.

MITCH

It would save a lot of money and aggravation. We'd be done. And a judge might not be so generous.

A sexy barmaid, KYA, approaches -- 27, tall, long hair, statuesque body poured into a tiny t-shirt and slacks.

KYA

(re their drinks)

You guys good?

BILLY

Yeah. Actually, no. My friend's wife left him. He's devastated. Maybe you could talk to him.

KYA

(to Mitch)

So another round, or no?

Mitch shakes his head. She grins and struts off. Mitch watches with some awe.

BILLY

I thought bartenders were supposed to listen to your problems.

(off Mitch's awe)

You are so newly single. Even I can smell it. The need.

MITCH

What? I'm not needy.

BILLY

How long since you had sex last?

MITCH
Okay. So I'm a little needy.

BILLY
Try not to show it.
(then)
Oh, no.

MITCH
What?

Billy gestures toward a group of YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN who just walked in, ready to let their hair down.

BILLY
Friends of Sherry's.

Mitch turns, watches the exotic-looking KEIKO, wiggling to the music on the jukebox, in full look-at-me-I'm-hot mode.

MITCH
She's cute.

BILLY
Tell me about it. It was like
torture when we hung out with her.

MITCH
Well, now you can finally pursue
it.

BILLY
Yeah, right. She thinks I'm scum.
But you could give it a shot.

MITCH
That's okay.

BILLY
Go over there and bet her a drink
that you can guess where she has a
tattoo. And what it is.

MITCH
Yeah, right.

BILLY
Butterfly, on her ass. This is
golden.

MITCH
Seriously, you're out of your mind.

BILLY

The worst thing that can happen is
she rejects you. You can take it.
In the scheme of things? Come on.

Mitch weighs this. Takes a drink. Looks at Billy, who is so
eager for him to play the game. Decides what the hell.

He walks over to the group of females. Keiko waits at the
bar for a round of drinks.

MITCH

Excuse me? Hi. I'm Mitch.
(she eyes him warily)
I was just wondering... if I could
guess where you have a tattoo. And
what it is.

KEIKO

Yeah, that's okay.

MITCH

If I'm right, you have to buy me a
drink.

KEIKO

I don't think so.

Mitch glances over at Billy for guidance as he crashes and
burns. Billy waves him on to keep engaging. Mitch turns
back to Keiko.

MITCH

If I'm wrong I'll buy you one.

KEIKO

And then you'll walk away?

This is not going how Mitch hoped.

MITCH

Yes. Then I'll walk away.

KEIKO

Fine. Take your best shot.

MITCH

(heart not in it now)
Butterfly on your ass.

KEIKO

How the hell did you know that?

SHERRY (O.S.)

Mitch?

Mitch turns to see a Billy's ex-girlfriend SHERRY, who has just entered with a well-dressed DATE. Mitch freezes.

MITCH

Sherry! Hi!

KEIKO

You know each other?

SHERRY

He's a friend of Billy's. Is he here?

Over at the bar, Billy tries to look little. It doesn't work. Sherry spots him.

KEIKO

So that's how you knew.

SHERRY

Knew what?

KEIKO

That I have a tattoo on my ass.

SHERRY

Nice. So Billy's sending you over here to hit on my friends. Has your wife even moved out yet?

MITCH

Yes, she has.

(to Keiko)

I'm going through a divorce.

Sherry marches off toward Billy. Keiko, disgusted with Mitch, rejoins her circle of friends. Leaving him alone.

AT THE BAR

Sherry gives Billy an earful.

SHERRY

It's wrong on so many levels. You know what, I'm not even mad. I just feel sorry for you. You're like a child.

BILLY

I'm sorry you're hurting. I really am.

SHERRY

I'm not hurting. I'm fine. You're the one who's scared to commit. I've got somebody new.

BILLY

Congratulations. Seriously, I'm happy for you.

SHERRY

Stay away from me. And my friends.

She storms off to the other girls. Billy turns back to the bar, where barmaid Kya watches him dubiously.

BILLY

Could we get some shots here, dear?

INT. SAME NIGHTCLUB - A WHILE LATER

The place has filled up behind them, but Mitch and Billy still sit at the bar, plastered. Many empty shot glasses in front of them. Sherry and the others are nowhere to be seen.

BILLY

Maybe that's the answer. It's time for me to settle down. Find the right woman. Have kids.

MITCH

Don't let her get in your head.

BILLY

The problem is I just don't want to. And I don't know if I ever will. Am I just a shallow jerk?
(calls to Kya)
Can we have another round?

Kya looks them over, in their drunken state. Skeptical.

MITCH

Maybe we should call it a night.

BILLY

This is not how your first night out should end. This is setting a bad tone.

MITCH
Really, it's fine.

Another bartender, ROBERT, approaches: indeterminate age, skinny, rocker-looking, intense. Sees how drunk they are.

ROBERT
Gentlemen. How are we?

BILLY
We're thinking one more round would help.

ROBERT
Well, before I pour it, how about we set some intentions for the evening?

BILLY
Huh?

ROBERT
How do we want things to go? What are we all moving toward?

BILLY
Well, if we're granting wishes, how about a date with your co-worker for my newly single buddy?

ROBERT
I like that. Trying to help a friend. Hey, anything's possible.

Kya squeezes past Robert, giving him a pinch on the ass and a flirty grin. Robert grins back, then turns back to the guys, a touch annoyed.

ROBERT
She's got some confusion right now. Thinks I'm the answer, doesn't know the answers are inside her.

MITCH
(marveling)
So you and her...?

ROBERT
She's a kind person on the inside. A puppy dog that just wants to be petted. Unfortunately, she thinks it's about sex, and it isn't.

(MORE)

ROBERT(cont'd)

(to Mitch)

So you just had a breakup?

MITCH

Divorce.

Robert nods, seriously. Makes a decision. Pours three shots. Lifts one.

ROBERT

My intentions are as follows. I am moving into a new phase, into uplifting people, into celibacy until I find a true soul match, and friendships based on mutual support and love.

Mitch and Billy just stare at him in a glazed stupor. He pushes their shots toward them.

ROBERT

On the house. If you promise to cab it home.

Billy picks up his glass. Decides to give it a go:

BILLY

I'm going to forget about my ex-.
And support my friend here.

ROBERT

Now we're talking.

Mitch lifts his shot. Drunkenly but with sincerity:

MITCH

And I'm going to make the best of things, for myself, and for those around me. And move forward.

Robert nods, impressed. The three clink glasses and down their shots. Then slam the glasses back onto the bar.

BILLY

Dude, you are the best bartender ever.

Kya walks by again, and Robert stops her.

ROBERT

I want you to meet my new friends.

She stops and extends a hand to Billy.

KYA

I'm Kya.

BILLY

Billy. My hot friend there is Mitch.

KYA

How's it going, Mitch?

The answer is, not so well. Mitch is turning pale, and starting to sweat. He struggles to breathe.

KYA

Are you okay?

MITCH

I don't know. I'm just... my heart is racing, like it's gonna jump out of my chest. And I can't quite... catch my breath.

BILLY

I'm sure she's used to having that effect.

MITCH

No, seriously. Something is wrong here. I've got this... tightness -- Jesus!

ROBERT

(to another bartender)

Call 911.

(to Mitch)

Let's focus on our breath Mitch, nice and easy. Close your eyes, see the white light moving in and out. All is well. You're in charge.

KYA

Maybe he's having a panic attack.

Mitch tries to ignore this, closing his eyes, breathing, trying to calm down. It helps somewhat.

MITCH

Don't call 911. I'm fine.

BILLY

Dude, you're sweating and white.

KYA

He's right.

But the color is starting to come back. Mitch opens his eyes.

MITCH

You know what? I think it's stopping. Seriously. Can we just... cancel the 911?

ROBERT

Let me see if he reached them.

He moves off to check. Kya watches Mitch with concern. Self-conscious, feeling better, he tries to pull himself together.

MITCH

Well that was weird. So anyway...
Kya? That's a cool name. Where were we?

ROBERT

(to Mitch)

The paramedics are already on their way. Let them just check you out.

And off Mitch, feeling foolish, but also a little scared, we:

FADE OUT.

ACT THREE

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - DAY

Mitch in a paper gown sits on an exam table, embarrassed. Facing him on the stool-on-wheels is his internist, ALYSSA, 40, responsible and warm, and friendly enough to be on a first-name basis. She loves what she does, and it shows.

MITCH

So basically I'm a basket case.
That's what you're saying.

ALYSSA

No, I'm saying the good news is
your EKG is normal.

MITCH

And that would have shown anything
that was... real?

ALYSSA

What happened was real. And much
more common than you think.

MITCH

Nat would love this. For years she
was trying to get me on anti-
depressants. Please don't tell
her.

ALYSSA

I would never pass information
about one patient to another.

MITCH

Even if they're technically still
married?

ALYSSA

I want you to get this -- what
you're going through, it's a
huge amount of stress. I know.
You'll get through it. I did.

MITCH

What was your secret?

ALYSSA

Friends. People to talk to. Going
easy on myself.

MITCH

Was it your decision? If that's not too personal.

ALYSSA

I was the one that left. In some ways, I think that can be harder.

MITCH

Try telling her that.

(beat)

So what now? Xanax? Valium? Intense psychotherapy?

ALYSSA

After one incident? No. I could give you some names. But I wouldn't be surprised if you never have another one.

MITCH

I guess I should be relieved.

ALYSSA

Yeah, I'd say so.

(looking at his chart)

There is just one other test I want to do. To rule out any heart damage from the radiation you had back in... 1983. You had a small tumor removed?

MITCH

I was twelve. What kind of damage? Wouldn't I have had symptoms before now?

ALYSSA

Radiation can be unpredictable. Like I said, I just want to rule it out. I don't want you to get worried. We'll schedule it as soon as possible.

Off Mitch, hard not to be worried, now:

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

The house is beginning to resemble a home, or at least an Ikea catalogue. Mitch nervously straightens and rearranges items. Including his photo of the kids on the mantle, now in a cheap frame. The door bell RINGS. He answers it.

Standing there is Natalie, smile pasted on, with Jonathan and Rachel. Mitch drops to his knees. Opens his arms. The kids run into them, delighted to see him. As he is to see them.

MITCH

You guys ready to see your new beds
and stuff?

The kids take off running toward their rooms, excited. Natalie and Mitch exchange a look. Wary detente. They follow the kids back toward

BILLY'S BEDROOM

Where Jonathan stares, confused, at Billy's swinging bachelor furnishings and bed. Mitch enters and waves him out.

MITCH

Hey, buddy, come on in here.

He motions toward the room across the hall, and quickly closes Billy's door. Natalie approaches, trying to peer in.

NATALIE

What's going on?

Ignoring the question, Mitch follows Jonathan into

THE KIDS' BEDROOM

Where Rachel is bouncing on the bottom of the now-assembled bunk bed. A dresser, desk, and other generic kids' decor round out the furnishings.

MITCH

Daddy decided you guys might like a
bunk bed, so for now, you're going
to both use this room.

JONATHAN

I have to share with her?

MITCH

That's how bunk beds work. I
thought you always wanted one.

NATALIE

(to Mitch)

Can I talk to you?

JONATHAN

Then I get to be on top.

He climbs to the top bunk. Rachel rearranges the stuffed animals that Mitch has arrayed on her bed.

RACHEL
Daddy, are these mine?

MITCH
Those are yours. What do you think? You like them?

She hugs a couple of the animals, grinning, laying her head on the pillow. Mitch is relieved. And even a little moved.

NATALIE
Can I talk to you?

MITCH
(dreading)
Guys, I'm gonna talk to mommy for a second, I'll be right back.

IN THE HALLWAY

Natalie weighs her words carefully.

NATALIE
Look, Mitch. I don't want to be... at war here. We obviously have some different opinions on things. But for the kids' sake, we should be civil.

MITCH
I agree.

NATALIE
Good. I just need to know, why are you moving them into one room?

Mitch doesn't want to get into this. But sees no escape.

MITCH
I've decided to take in a renter.

NATALIE
If you can't afford it, maybe you should move to a smaller place.

MITCH
(blood pressure rising)
We're trying to provide continuity for them. Remember?
(MORE)

MITCH(cont'd)

That's why we agreed one of us should live here. And you didn't want to.

NATALIE

(a beat; afraid to ask)
Who's the housemate?

MITCH

(knows she won't like it)
Billy.

NATALIE

Real estate Billy? Slimy Billy? I am not comfortable with that.

MITCH

He's not slimy.

NATALIE

Yes, he is, Mitch.

MITCH

He's been a good friend to me during all this.

NATALIE

That may be. But if the kids are staying here... You really think he's a good influence?

MITCH

Well, he may be no Perry, but then, he and I aren't diving into a sexual relationship, right in front of them.

NATALIE

All he did was meet them. Once. I introduced him as a friend. You're the one that ended the marriage.

MITCH

I think we did that together.

NATALIE

And one of us was willing to try to save it.

If there's one thing guaranteed to set Mitch off, it's this. Natalie decides to try damage control before things escalate.

NATALIE

Sorry. I don't want to go there again.

MITCH

I think you should say goodbye to them now.

NATALIE

I have to go, anyway.

MITCH

Good.

IN THE KIDS BEDROOM

Natalie re-enters to find the kids investigating new toys.

NATALIE

You guys like your new stuff? Fun, huh? Have a great time with daddy!

She gives them both big hugs. They quickly break off to go play.

NATALIE

Okay then. Love you!

They don't respond, busy with what they're doing. Eyes moist, she slowly rises to head out.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Mitch walks her to the front door.

NATALIE

You'll call me if anything happens, right? If there are any problems, if they ask for me...

MITCH

We'll be fine.
(off her look)
But yes.

He opens the door. Standing there is Nicki, about to knock. Startled.

NICKI

Is this okay? I know I'm early.
Traffic was light.

Another headache for Mitch -- having these two meet.

MITCH

It's fine. This is Natalie, the kids' mom. She was just leaving.

(to Natalie)

Nicki is a professional nanny. Dan and Cece referred her.

Natalie is notably not excited about this development. But she shakes Nicki's hand.

NATALIE

You're a full-time nanny?

NICKI

Actually, I'm an actress. But I love kids, and it's a great way to pay the bills.

NATALIE

How long have you been doing it?

NICKI

Since I moved here from Ohio...
Two years?

NATALIE

(to Mitch)

We need to discuss this.

MITCH

Great. We'll talk later.

Natalie exits, reluctantly. Mitch closes the door. He turns to Nicki, who is weirded out by the whole vibe.

NICKI

I'm sorry I was early.

MITCH

No, no, it's fine.

Rachel comes running out.

RACHEL

Daddy! Daddy! I have new clothes!

MITCH

I know. You like them?

She nods. Nicki gets down in a crouch, eyes gleaming as she addresses Rachel.

NICKI
Hi. I'm Nicki.

MITCH
This is Rachel. Jonathan? Can you
come out here, buddy?

Jonathan wanders out, not entirely sold on any of this.

MITCH
And this is Jonathan.
(to the kids)
Nicki's gonna play with us tonight.
She's a babysitter, you know, like
Helen who used to come over? When
Mommy and Daddy went on dates?

JONATHAN
I don't remember that.

MITCH
Well, it was a while back. You
were little.

RACHEL
(to Nicki)
You want to see my new clothes?

NICKI
I do!

Nicki follows Rachel back toward the kids' room. Mitch watches them go, relieved that things are starting off well. He grabs Jonathan up in his arms and gives him a kiss and a playful squeeze.

MITCH
I love you, buddy.

He swings him around and Jonathan squeals with delight.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - KIDS' BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jonathan and Rachel, in pajamas, pile into the full-size lower bunk bed, with several oversized kids' picture books.

JUST OUTSIDE IN THE HALL

Mitch talks to Nicki.

MITCH
They really warmed up to you fast.

NICKI
They're great kids.

MITCH
I have them all day tomorrow.

NICKI
I'm free tomorrow.

MITCH
Nine o'clock?

JONATHAN (O.S.)
Dad! Are you coming?

Mitch and Nicki re-enter

THE KIDS' ROOM

Where Nicki bends down to address the kids.

NICKI
Bye, guys, it was nice meeting you.
I'm going to come back tomorrow.

RACHEL
Can you read us a story?

NICKI
I think that's up to your dad,
honey.

MITCH
(to Rachel)
You want me to read one, and Nicki
to read one?

Rachel nods. Jonathan hands Mitch a book. Mitch climbs into the bed, between the kids. Nicki sits in a chair. Mitch starts reading. It's a picture book about a Great Dane.

MITCH
"Sit, Truman."
(turns the page)
"Truman, sit." "Truman, stop
drooling. Truman, Oscar is not a
toy..."

Nicki watches as Mitch reads the story, and the kids snuggle up to him. She likes this family. He finishes the story.

RACHEL
Nicki's turn!

MITCH

(to Nicki)

Do you want to come in the bed?

(off her look)

I mean, I'll get out first.

He slides awkwardly out of the bed. Nicki takes a beat, then climbs into the empty place between the kids. Now Mitch watches as Nicki reads them another illustrated story, about a young female pig.

NICKI

"This is Olivia. She is good at lots of things. She is very good at wearing people out..."

Mitch watches: the kids like her, and her animated reading style.

BILLY (O.S.)

Mitch!

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Mitch finds Billy, with Robert the bartender, both dressed to go out: Billy in designer clubwear, Robert in "dirtbag cool."

BILLY

You remember Robert. Turns out he is totally connected to the nightlife scene that's going to be such a big part of our new lives.

MITCH

It is?

BILLY

Starting with a house party tonight, in your neighborhood! That barmaid Kya might be there.

MITCH

I've got the kids tonight.

BILLY

Can't nanny babe stay with them?

MITCH

It's their first time sleeping here without their mom. Do you have any idea what a big deal that is?

BILLY
Didn't they stay with you at the
apartment a bunch of times?

MITCH
Yeah, but this is different.

Nicki emerges from the kids' bedroom.

NICKI
They're both asleep already.

MITCH
Really?

BILLY
Things went good today, huh?

NICKI
They did.

BILLY
You have to go now? Or can you
hang while we take dad out for one
drink?

NICKI
I can totally stay, if you want me
to.

BILLY
(to Mitch)
It's literally just up the street.
You can come home at any time.

MITCH
I'd hate it if somebody woke up and
I wasn't here.

NICKI
Do they usually wake up?

MITCH
No. Almost never.

NICKI
Go have fun. Keep your phone on.

INT. HOUSE PARTY IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT

Mitch follows Robert and Billy into a beautiful, barely furnished house: sleek modern lines, a lit-up pool and jacuzzi, canyon views. And lots of HIPSTERS in their early to mid-twenties. Mitch checks his cell phone.

MITCH

You didn't tell me it was in the hills. I only have two bars. Can you call me?

BILLY

Dude, you have to chill.
(off his look)
Yes, I'll call you.

Billy pulls out his phone, dials. Mitch's phone rings. He answers it. They stare at each other, phones to ears.

BILLY

See? Everything is perfect.

INT. DAN AND CECE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dan sits up in bed reading. He looks out of place in his t-shirt and boxers, on an ornately frilly four-poster. The room has been professionally decorated to within an inch of its life. Cece, in high-tech workout garb, gazes out the window at Mitch's house next door.

CECE

I have to call her. I'd want her to call me.

DAN

The nanny is obviously there. I'm sure the kids are asleep.

CECE

It's his FIRST NIGHT with them. What if something happens?

DAN

Nothing is going to happen. I am very serious when I say, do not. Do not do this.

CECE

I at least have to go over there
and tell her to call us if she
needs anything.

DAN

No, you don't.

CECE

Alright. You want to? Since you
like her so much and think she's
such a great nanny. I bet you so
wish you were Mitch right now.

DAN

He hired her to do a job. You want
to discriminate against her because
she's hot?

CECE

So you admit you think she's hot.

DAN

So what? You're hot, too. When
you're not acting like this.

CECE

I'm just trying to be a good
friend. It's not easy.

DAN

Why don't you come to bed and we'll
both forget all about nanny girl,
or our friends, or their divorce.

He slaps her on the butt playfully. She realizes that he's
probably right.

CECE

I suppose you want me to change
into something with a thong.

DAN

It's your call. See how reasonable
I can be?

IN CECE'S WALK-IN CLOSET

She examines her lingerie collection, in her underwear. Then
looks at her cell phone. Makes a decision. Opens it. Dials
a number.

CECE

(whispers into phone)

Nat? It's me. Listen, don't get worried or anything. I'm sure everything is totally fine. But as a friend, I feel like I have to tell you. But please promise you won't tell anyone that I did.

INT. NATALIE'S NEW HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER - **INTERCUT**

Natalie, on the phone in her cozy little condo, reacts.

NATALIE

He what? I'm coming over there.

CECE

No! NO! You can't. Seriously. We'll keep an eye on them. We'll give her our number. Nat? NAT?

Nat has hung up. Cece shuts the cell phone, panicked. Drops it in the lingerie drawer just as Dan opens the closet door. He sees her there, wonders what's going on.

CECE

(re the lingerie)

I want you to pick, baby. Which one do you want me to wear?

Off Dan, suspicious, we

FADE OUT.

ACT FOUR

INT. HOUSE PARTY IN THE HILLS - NIGHT

Still standing in the entry way, Robert finishes a cell phone call as Mitch and Billy scan the crowd of young PARTIERS -- Billy impressed with some of the females, Mitch feeling old and out of place, regretting having come.

BILLY

Nice crowd.

MITCH

What are these, college kids?

BILLY

Isn't it great?

(off his look)

This is more twenty-three to twenty-six. Post-college, experimental phase. It's a very good phase.

ROBERT

(ending his call)

Kya can't make it after all.
Always a drama with that girl.

BILLY

(to Mitch)

You're better off. This will be great practice for you, working new prospects.

MITCH

"New prospects"? Who are you talking to? I should've driven separately.

ROBERT

It's your night, boss. Tell us what you want.

BILLY

(to Mitch)

Grab a drink. I'll be your driver. That's the love I have for you.

MITCH

No. I'm not going to drink. Just in case something happens.

BILLY
Nothing's going to happen.

INT. DAN AND CECE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dan lies on the bed, post-coital, blissfully satisfied. Cece, in an outrageous babydoll of his choosing, glances nervously out a window.

DAN
What are you doing?

CECE
Nothing.
(seeing something out the window)
I just remembered, I left something in the car. Go to sleep, baby. I'll be right back.

EXT. MITCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Natalie approaches the house cautiously. Cece bolts out her front door, still in her babydoll, trying to cut her off.

CECE
(*sotto*)
Natalie. Nat! Hey!

Natalie sees her, stops, raises an eyebrow at her get-up.

NATALIE
Dan's choice?

CECE
What do you think?

Natalie proceeds toward the house, Cece in pursuit, and takes a position behind some bushes. From which she can see, through the window, Nicki on the sofa, chatting on the phone.

NATALIE
I can't believe he did this.

CECE
I'm sure they're fine. She used to work for some friends of ours, who loved her. Danny forbid me to call you. You can't tell him I did.

NATALIE
He forbid you?

CECE
The two of them are still friends.
He wants us to stay neutral.

NATALIE
You and I were friends before they
were.

CECE
I don't think so. You thought I
was a neurotic bitch at first.

NATALIE
That's not true!
(a beat: it is true)
So, what, are they hanging out and
talking a lot?

CECE
I don't know. Some.

NATALIE
He tell you stuff?

CECE
No. And I wouldn't tell him
anything about you, either. I
don't want to be in that position.

NATALIE
I know. I was just curious.

CECE
We so shouldn't be doing this.
(beat)
Do you want to look in the kids'
window?

Natalie nods her head. And the two of them begin to creep
toward a side bedroom window. Where they peer in and see:

THE KIDS

sleeping peacefully in their bunk beds. Natalie is relieved,
but still upset.

CECE
Can we go now?

NATALIE

I just want to ask her where he went.

CECE

No! You can't! I'm begging you. Please go.

Natalie sees Nicki enter the kids' room to check on them. She adjusts Rachel's covers in a caring way -- causing a pang for Natalie. Then exits the room.

NATALIE

Fine. I don't want to talk to her.

CECE

(greatly relieved)
Thank you.

She opens her arms. Natalie gives her a quick hug.

CECE

I thought you'd be out with the boy toy tonight.

NATALIE

He's become annoying.

CECE

Oh. That's too bad. He was always temporary anyway, right?

Natalie shrugs. She's not so sure about that.

CECE

He didn't deserve the new and improved you. We'll find someone who does. So remember: I didn't call. And you weren't here.

Natalie nods. Cece heads back into her house. Natalie walks to her car, parked a couple of houses down. Get in. Starts the engine. Then has a change of heart. Shuts the car off. Settles in to stake out Mitch's house.

INT. HOUSE PARTY IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT

Mitch watches, bored and sober, from the kitchen, as Billy, Robert, and a variety of drunk young men and women enjoy the pool, jacuzzi, and each other out the window.

Mitch peruses the picked-over food. A couple of random GIRLS walk through, refilling drinks. One eyes him curiously.

RANDOM GIRL ONE
You somebody's chaperone?

MITCH
Something like that.

RANDOM GIRL ONE
Try the brownies. They're awesome.

And the girls leave. Mitch turns to a baking dish full of brownies. They do look pretty good. He tries one. Mmm. Tasty. Shoves it down and starts on a second. Then the same girl returns -- forgot her bag.

MITCH
You were right about these.

RANDOM GIRL ONE
I know. Usually pot brownies taste awful, but with those, you'd never know.

Mitch stops in mid chew.

MITCH
"Pot brownies"?

RANDOM GIRL ONE
Yeah...?

Mitch nods, becoming a little sickened.

MITCH
Thanks for telling me.

RANDOM GIRL ONE
(not getting the sarcasm)
You're welcome.

She exits. Mitch spits out the remaining brownie bits into his hand.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY IN HILLS - POOL AREA

Mitch finds Robert in the jacuzzi, where a serious and striking MED STUDENT (CLAIRE) is snuggling up to him. Robert is reluctant to engage with her, and happy to see Mitch.

ROBERT
Mitch! I want you to meet someone.

MITCH
You seen Billy?

Robert shakes his head. Mitch spots Billy sitting on a chaise giving a back rub to a drunken PARTY GIRL (LANA), who could easily fall asleep. Mitch approaches them.

MITCH
Billy. Can we go?

BILLY
Seriously?

MITCH
Yeah.

BILLY
Okay, wow. Did you get a phone call?

MITCH
No. But I ate two pot brownies. I want to get home before they take effect.

Billy considers his hapless friend. Leaves Lana's side to take Mitch aside for a private chat.

MITCH
Sorry.

BILLY
No, no. This may be just what I need. A reason to invite the girls back to the house.

MITCH
The kids are at the house.

BILLY
Yeah, I know. But if they're asleep anyway, and we squirrel the girls away to the bedrooms...

MITCH
Yeah, I don't think so.

BILLY
We could tell them there are kids there, and we have to whisper.

(MORE)

BILLY(cont'd)

They'll love it. Nobody will ever know they're there.

Mitch would like to be a good friend and a good dad. But this is too much.

MITCH

I guess we have to work out a system, for when the kids are there. I mean, it is your place, too.

BILLY

Alright. It's okay. Maybe we'll just drop you off and take the girls to a bar or something.

MITCH

You're okay to drive?

BILLY

No, but Robert's not drinking.

EXT. MITCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mitch's minivan pulls up to the house. Natalie, now asleep in her car, wakes up to see this.

INT. MITCH'S MINIVAN - NIGHT

Mitch shuts off the car. Billy slumps, half asleep, in the second row of seats, next to a bored Lana. In the back row, kids' booster seats on the floor, Claire is all over Robert.

ROBERT

Alright, everyone in my car. We'll find an after hours. William? You good?

Billy half-stirs.

BILLY

Wha?

LANA

(to Mitch)

I have to pee. Can I use your bathroom?

MITCH

Do you think you could hold it?
(off her look)

(MORE)

MITCH(cont'd)

Fine. Let me just send my nanny home first.

EXT. MITCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

From her car, Natalie watches with great interest as Mitch exits his minivan, and heads toward the house.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch enters to find Nicki on the couch, napping. She wakes up, embarrassed.

NICKI

Hi! Everything went great.

MITCH

Did it?

NICKI

Perfect. Jonathan just woke up once.

MITCH

(crestfallen)

He woke up?

NICKI

He came out here all sleepy. He wasn't upset or anything.

MITCH

Did he ask where I was?

NICKI

I told him you had to go out for a minute. He went right back to sleep.

MITCH

Damn. Okay.

NICKI

Really. He was fine.

MITCH

Alright. Thanks. Listen. This has been great.

He pulls some cash out of his pocket, counts out a few bills.

NICKI
So did you have a good time?

MITCH
Yeah, I've had better...

INT. MITCH'S MINIVAN - NIGHT

Claire continues to kiss Robert in the back row of seats. In the middle row, Billy nods off again. Annoyed, Lana slides open the van door.

EXT. MITCH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Natalie watches, eyes widening now, as Lana exits the car, and clatters off toward the house.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mitch looks at his watch, wanting to get Nicki out of there.

NICKI
So it was a party in the hills?

MITCH
Yeah. Not exactly my scene.
(yawns, exaggerated)
God. Tired.

Nicki gets the hint. Puts on her jacket to leave. Then the door opens. In comes tipsy, scantily-clad Lana.

LANA
Hi! Don't mind me. Where's the toilet?

Nicki is speechless, instantly assuming the wrong thing. Mitch, mortified, points down the hall. Lana heads off in that direction.

NICKI
Well, I'll get out of your hair then.

MITCH
She's a girl Billy met, and wanted to --

NICKI
I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

Nicki quickly makes for the front door, where she passes Billy, coming in. He tries to make light of things.

BILLY
Nicki! How'd it go?

She ignores him, and exits. Billy knows he screwed up.

BILLY
(to Mitch)
I'm sorry. I fell asleep. She ran in here. I am such an idiot.

MITCH
It's fine. If you could just --

Lana emerges from the bathroom, sees Billy.

LANA
You finally woke up, huh?

BILLY
We gotta get out of here. He's got kids sleeping back there.

LANA
Seriously? How many?

BILLY
Two. And we don't want to wake them.

LANA
And you live here, too?

BILLY
Yeah, for now.

Robert and Claire enter.

ROBERT
Sorry, Mitch. Lana, you ready?

LANA
Why can't we just stay here? I can be quiet. You got any booze?

Billy looks at Mitch. It would be great if Mitch were okay with this. Mitch is wavering, taking pity on him.

MITCH
Let us go check on that.

Billy and Robert take the hint, and follow Mitch toward the kitchen. Mitch regards Billy, conflicted. Makes a decision.

MITCH

It is your bedroom now. If you want to go in there and close the door... You should.

BILLY

Not if you're not sure.

MITCH

I'm sure. We have to make this work for both of us. Just have her out before the kids get up, okay?

BILLY

Absolutely. What about the others?

ROBERT

We don't have to stay. You think your girl will want to leave if mine does?

BILLY

It's a risk. You up for breaking your celibacy vow?

ROBERT

If it helps you out. And I do feel kind of bad for her.

Mitch listens to his new mentors in the art of women. Wondering how he ever got here.

BILLY

(to Mitch)

You see the kind of giving guy we're dealing with here? I love this man.

MITCH

(to Robert)

Use my bedroom. I'm going to go sleep with the kids.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - KIDS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch, exhausted, enters and closes the door. The kids are sleeping blissfully. He lies down on the bottom bunk, next to Rachel. He puts an arm around her, pulling her close.

EXT. MITCH'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Natalie, out of her car now, creeps toward the house. She gets to the kids' bedroom window, peers in. Sees Mitch lying there, eyes open, holding Rachel. A variety of emotions move through her. Affection, resentment, frustration, regret...

After a beat, she moves off to

A DIFFERENT BEDROOM WINDOW

Where she peers in and sees: Robert and Claire having sex on Mitch's bed.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - KIDS' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mitch next to Rachel is just drifting off to sleep when he hears the DOOR BELL RING, and somebody BANGING LOUDLY on the front door. He awakens and leaps out of bed.

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mitch heads to the door. Opens it to find a furious Natalie. The marijuana is starting to take effect. He isn't seeing or standing so well. He shakes his head to try to clear it.

NATALIE

How could you? On your first night? There are people HAVING SEX in there!

MITCH

What? Shh...

NATALIE

Don't "shh" me! I'm taking the kids.

MITCH

What? Will you just... stop for a second. I'm kind of... dizzy.

He puts out a hand to steady himself. Grabs onto her.

NATALIE

Where were you tonight?

MITCH

What do you mean, where was I? I was here.

NATALIE

I know you went out. I drove by and saw your car gone. What was it, a party? A bar or something?

MITCH

You know what? It's none of your business. Nicki was great with the kids. Everybody was fine. Jesus, it's like I can't stop my head from spinning.

NATALIE

What are you, on drugs? You didn't take something, did you?

MITCH

What? No! Of course not.

She looks at him, makes her decision. Darts off for the kids' room. Desperate to stop her, he leaps after and TACKLES her. She falls to the floor, his arms around her legs.

NATALIE

Get the hell off of me! Mitch! I mean it!

She struggles to get away. Finally, Mitch lets her go. He lies there defeated -- frustrated, drug-impaired, his world closing in. She starts to get up to go after the kids. But then stops, looking down at him in his compromised state.

NATALIE

What is the matter with you? Are you okay?

MITCH

No. I'm not okay.

NATALIE

What's going on?

He shakes his head, not going to talk about it. But is near tears. He doesn't know what to do or say. Natalie softens somewhat, seeing the pain he's going through.

NATALIE

If there's something you need to say... we can call a truce, for a minute. I didn't want things to get this way, anyway.

MITCH
Neither did I. Neither did I.

NATALIE
So what is it?

Mitch looks at her. Should he confide in her? Finally:

MITCH
I had... an incident. It might
have been a heart attack.

NATALIE
Oh my God...

MITCH
I'm having tests. To see if the
radiation I had as a kid affected
anything.

This stops her cold. Sympathetic, and scared, all her
animosity gone for the moment.

NATALIE
Mitch. I don't know what to say...

He struggles to stand. Instantly regrets having told her.

MITCH
Now could you please... just go
home, and let me enjoy my night
with the kids?

She's too shocked to fight. He moves off toward the kids'
bedroom. Off Natalie, standing there, stunned, we:

FADE OUT.

ACT FIVE

INT. MITCH'S HOUSE - DAY

Mitch prepares breakfast for Jonathan and Rachel. Peels a sticker off a brand new sauté pan. Scrapes at its glue residue with a brand new metal spatula. Half-satisfied, he heats the pan and dumps in beaten eggs from a brand new bowl.

At the brand new kitchen table sit the kids, tired, hungry, and grumpy. Dad, also grumpy, slops some eggs onto their brand new plastic plates.

RACHEL

No!

MITCH

What? I thought you wanted eggs.

RACHEL

(teary)

Not those kind.

MITCH

(frustrated)

This is the kind you always have, right? Scrambled?

RACHEL

Uhh.

She pushes them away, brattily. Mitch seethes. Jonathan takes a tiny little bite, acts like he might gag.

MITCH

What?

JONATHAN

They're all wet.

MITCH

They're supposed to be moist. I'm not making you something else. This is what we're having.

They both pout, refusing to eat. Mitch hears something, then turns to see Lana wandering out of the bathroom, in a tiny bra and panties. Mitch is incredulous. Lana sees the kids and lights up, bopping over to join them.

LANA

Cute kids!

MITCH
(re her clothing)
Do you think you could...?

LANA
Oh. Put something on? Sure.

She finds one of Mitch's shirts, draped over a chair, and throws it on, unbuttoned. Not quite what he had in mind. She takes a seat at the table, regarding the children like exotic specimens.

LANA
What are your names?

Both kids glare at her suspiciously, in terrible moods.

JONATHAN
(to Mitch)
Is she your girlfriend?

MITCH
No! No. This is a friend of
daddy's friend. Daddy... doesn't
have a girlfriend.

JONATHAN
Why not? Because you still love
Mommy? Mommy said you were the one
that wanted the divorce.

MITCH
Let's talk about that later.

Lana thrusts out a hand to shake to Jonathan. He leaves her hanging.

LANA
Well, I'm Lana.

MITCH
This is Jonathan, and Rachel.

The door bell RINGS. Mitch is reluctant to leave the kitchen. He hurries to the front door, opens it. Standing there, to his relief, is Nicki.

MITCH
Hey! Come on in. So glad you're
here. We're having breakfast
issues.

She smiles tightly, her mood cooler. She enters, sees the scene in the kitchen: Lana with the kids, now joined by a deeply hungover Billy.

NICKI

I guess somebody had a fun night.

And now Robert and Claire stumble out of Mitch's bedroom. Oblivious to Mitch and Nicki, they head into the kitchen to join the party.

MITCH

Unbelievable.

(to Nicki)

Yeah, about this. It wasn't my plan to have this kind of... morning. With the kids here.

NICKI

You don't need to explain.

MITCH

No, I do. I don't want you to think that's the kind of dad I am.

NICKI

So, did you meet the girls at the party?

MITCH

They did. I didn't want to stay. I shouldn't have gone.

NICKI

Struck out, huh?

MITCH

No. I wasn't trying to -- look, I'm very new at this. Being single. The whole thing.

NICKI

It's okay. Really. It's fine. But you know, I was thinking about my schedule. And I'm not sure I'll be able to do this on an ongoing basis.

MITCH

Oh. That's too bad.

(beat)

Is it because of... this? And me being divorced, and all?

NICKI

No. I mean, it's not a typical situation, that's for sure.

MITCH

Yeah, I guess not.

NICKI

And my family definitely think it's kind of weird. And my boyfriend. Not that I just do whatever they say.

Mitch takes a beat. Disappointment turning to resignation.

MITCH

Well, I may not be needing as much help anyway. If I end up having them less.

NICKI

I thought your schedule was set?

MITCH

Their mom offered a new settlement. She'd have full custody, but it would save us fighting. I'm thinking it may be for the best.

Nicki nods, not sure what to think. Mitch is obviously conflicted.

RACHEL

Nicki!

NICKI

Hi, sweetie!

Nicki heads into the kitchen to greet the kids, Mitch following.

IN THE KITCHEN

Mitch finds Lana stroking Rachel's hair as Claire giggles with Jonathan about something. Robert delivers toast to the kids. They devour it. Things are actually kind of under control.

RACHEL

(re Lana)

Daddy! She doesn't have any pants on.

MITCH

I know, honey. Girls? Great to meet you both. I'm afraid I'm going to have to kick everyone out now. This is my nanny, and we have some family stuff we need to do...

ROBERT

I already told them, I'm taking everyone home.

RACHEL

Lana said she'd braid my hair!

MITCH

You know what? We'll deal with that later.

RACHEL

You don't know how!

Nicki crouches down next to Rachel.

NICKI

Actually, I am an excellent braider.

Rachel grins. Lana has been upstaged.

LANA

Whatever. Let me get dressed.

She heads off for Billy's bedroom. Billy looks up at Mitch, contrite.

BILLY

Aren't you glad I moved in?

MITCH

Yeah, now's not the best time to ask me.

Mitch grabs some dishes off the table, joins Robert at the sink.

ROBERT

(re Nicki)

I'm guessing aspiring actress?
Nannies to pay the bills? From...
the Midwest, maybe?

MITCH

How'd you know that?

ROBERT

Been here maybe two years. Just enough to get it. But not hardened yet. She could be perfect for you.

Mitch is stunned by Robert's insights.

MITCH

No, it's not about that. I would never... I just thought she'd be a great nanny...

ROBERT

I think you're right...

They watch Nicki braid Rachel's hair, Mitch with increasing disappointment...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mitch sits across from Alyssa, in her office. This time, she's dead serious, as she uses a remote control to play a video tape of his echocardiogram on a TV monitor.

Mitch's face is draining of color as she speaks.

MITCH (V.O.)

Sometimes I miss being married. I admit it. There was a certain security to it.

ALYSSA

So here you see some of the thickening or "hardening" of the heart wall. The scar tissue there and on the aortic valve is clearly impeding the cardiac blood flow.

MITCH (V.O.)

Turns out I wasn't having a panic attack after all. That's good.

ALYSSA

Although we may be able to control symptoms with medication for a time, it will eventually get worse.

Mitch takes this in, not knowing what to say. What's left of his world is now falling out from under him.

MITCH (V.O.)

And hey, at least the radiation
took care of my childhood tumor.
That's a positive.

ALYSSA

We probably can't get you on the
transplant list until it does.

We PULL UP now to a wider overhead view, as Alyssa stands,
offering some last encouraging words to Mitch that we don't
hear. He nods his head, trying to hold it together.

MITCH (V.O.)

So yeah, marriage was stifling,
aggravating, boring at times. But
predictable. Stable.

INT. LAWYERS' OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Natalie in a suit, with two female LAWYERS in suits, signs a
document. Mitch enters, a mess, with sunglasses on, looking
like he just fell out of bed. A lawyer hands Mitch a pen to
sign on the same page as Natalie. He leans over the
document, looking at it.

MITCH (V.O.)

Even if you didn't like it, you
kind of knew what you were getting
from day to day. And who you were.

His eyes go to two BOXES with check marks in them -- next to
the words "Full Custody - Legal" and "Full Custody -
Physical." And at the empty, unchecked boxes next to "Joint
Custody."

He looks up at Natalie. She stares back at him, concerned by
his hesitation.

MITCH (V.O.)

As opposed to afterward, when you
might not have a clue.

He makes a difficult decision: he puts down the pen. He
gives her a grim smile, not without compassion, but with
determination. She asks him what's going on, but we don't
hear her words -- and he ignores them. He simply turns, and
exits.

EXT. NICKI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Mitch, on the sidewalk, having come straight there, looks at the funky older building in front of him: this is it.

INT. NICKI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Nicki opens the door of her apartment, really surprised to find Mitch standing there.

MITCH
I tried calling, but I couldn't reach you, and I wanted to talk right away.

NICKI
How'd you get my -- ?

He holds up a piece of paper: her resume.

NICKI'S BOYFRIEND (O.S.)
Nic? Who is it?

NICKI
I got it! I'll be right there!
(to Mitch)
What's up?

MITCH
Well, I thought about what you said. About divorce, and kids, and everything. And I've decided to fight for joint custody after all.

NICKI
Oh. Well, that's great.

MITCH
Which means that for now, the original schedule will continue. And I need help.

She stares back at him, a little unnerved.

NICKI
Okay...

MITCH
I know it's a little weird that I came here.

(MORE)

MITCH(cont'd)

But this just happened, and I feel
you are a great resource. I want
to do what's right. For the kids.

She takes a beat. A mix of feelings, but one predominating:
she's impressed with him. Even a little proud. Finally:

NICKI

Wow. Okay.

MITCH

So... next Tuesday?

NICKI

I guess... I'll see you then.

She grins. He grins back. She shuts the door. He stands
there a moment in the dark hallway, adrenalized.

MITCH (V.O.)

Some would look at my behavior, and
call it impulsive. Desperate,
even, or unstable...

EXT. NICKI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Mitch exits to a sunny Los Angeles day. Dons sunglasses. He
walks toward his minivan. Smiling.

MITCH (V.O.)

I can see that. How it looks like
I'm teetering on the edge, making
choices I might live to regret.

He gets in the minivan, starts it up.

MITCH (V.O.)

Maybe that's true. Or maybe, for
the first time, I'm living my life.
The way it was meant to be lived.

Hold on Mitch's face as the smile drains, and his eyes fill
with doubt, even fear. He takes a deep breath.

MITCH (V.O.)

Yeah, it could really go either
way.

And, taking another, he puts it in gear, and drives off.

FADE OUT.

THE END