

MARIO'S LUV

By

Paul Byrne

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FADE IN:

EXT. BOSTON - PARK - DAY (1989)

MARIO DA COSTA, 18, second generation Portuguese, plays soccer like Beckham, and CHRISTINA WORTHINGTON, 17, Beacon Hill blue blood without the attitude, sit back to back on top of a picnic table.

MARIO

Have you told your parents
about me?

CHRISTINA

No. What about you?

MARIO

My folks keep asking when they
can meet you.

Mario pulls Christina's face towards him.

MARIO

What are you afraid of,
Christina?

CHRISTINA

Your parents won't like me.

MARIO

What do you think your folks
will say about me?

Christina watches a flock of geese fly south.

CHRISTINA

Sometimes...

MARIO

You feel like walking away.

CHRISTINA

Actually, I want to run away...

Her hazel eyes lock with Mario's.

CHRISTINA

... with you.

Hugs Mario tightly.

MARIO
I promise, Christina. We'll
spend more time together.

CHRISTINA
When will that be, Mario? Ten
years from now? Fifty?

Christina pushes her boyfriend away.

CHRISTINA
We've been seeing each other
for months.

Caresses Mario's cheek.

CHRISTINA
I want to meet you some place
other than this park.

MARIO
The problem is, I don't fit in
your world anymore than you
fit into mine.

Christina looks away. Mario picks up on her frustration.

MARIO
I've got a soccer game after
school tomorrow.

CHRISTINA
Is that supposed to be an
invitation?

MARIO
Think of it as a dare. My P-S
is nothing like --

CHRISTINA
The snooty rich academy I
attend?

Christina slides closer to Mario. Strokes his stubbly
chin.

CHRISTINA

After the game, will you kiss
me underneath the bleachers?

MARIO

I'll kiss you anywhere you want.

Christina playfully slaps Mario.

CHRISTINA

You're bad.

Mario gets his girlfriend in a lip lock. Christina
pulls away dreamy-eyed.

CHRISTINA

See you at the game.

Christina slips on her school blazer. Grabs her book
bag and walks off. Leaves Mario with a smile.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

FRANCISCO, 55, his face weathered from years on the sea,
ISABELLA, 50, very motherly, and TERESA, 20, has the
beauty and temper of a gypsy, argue at dinner in
Portuguese. Mario beebops in.

MARIO

Hey, pops.

Slaps Francisco on the back.

MARIO

Hi, mama.

Kisses Isabella. Mario saddles up to the table. Dumps
his soccer shoes on the floor.

FRANCISCO

(in English)

You're late. Did you have
practice?

TERESA

It's not soccer that keeps
Mario after school these days.

Puckers her lips at her brother.

TERESA
It's his new girlfriend.

Mario and Teresa trade head slaps.

FRANCISCO
(in Portuguese)
Knock it off!

Mario ladles himself a bowl of homemade fish stew.

ISABELLA
This girl you've been seeing.
What's her name?

MARIO
Christina.

ISABELLA
Ah, Christina. So when are
you going to invite her home?

MARIO
Soon, mama.

TERESA
Don't bet on it, mama. The
day little Miss High 'n'
Mighty visits this
neighborhood is the day the
Feds find Jimmy Hoffa's body.

Mario shoots his sister a dirty look.

MARIO
How can you say that, Teresa?
You don't even know her.

TERESA
I see chicks like her at the
bar.

Teresa kicks out her chair. Struts her stuff around the
dining table.

TERESA
They sashay their white uptown
asses...

Shimmies like a stripper.

TERESA
... flash their fake tits --

ISABELLA
Teresa!

Teresa leans over Mario with a mocking grin.

TERESA
You think you found love,
little brother?

Jams her finger in Mario's chest.

TERESA
All you got is some country
club debutante who wants to
make it with a homeboy.

FRANCISCO
That's enough!

With a devilish grin, Teresa abandons the dinner table.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Mario steals a pass. Shoots!

Scores off the goalie's fingertips.

Ref whistles the game over.

Christina and the other fans in the bleachers go bonkers.

INT. DELI - DAY

Mario and Christina feast on pastrami sandwiches and
cream sodas.

CHRISTINA
Can't believe you scored that
last goal.

Mario smears mayonnaise on Christina's nose.

MARIO
That goal was for you.

Christina wipes off the mayo.

CHRISTINA
Keep playing like that and
you'll land an athletic
scholarship.

MARIO
Hope so. It's the only way
this poor boy's getting to
college.

Mario's face lights up.

MARIO
Homecoming's next week. I was
thinking --

CHRISTINA
I would love to, but...

MARIO
Your parents wouldn't go for
it.

Mario takes Christina's hand.

MARIO
Maybe your folks aren't as
uptight as you think.

CHRISTINA
You don't know my parents.

Mario reads the fear in Christina's face.

MARIO
It's not just 'cause the dance
is at my school, is it?

Looks seriously at Christina.

MARIO
It's 'cause I'm Portuguese.

Mario stands. Snatches his varsity jacket off the back
of his chair.

CHRISTINA
Mario --

Mario leaves in a huff.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Sitting alone, Christina pokes at her school lunch. JENNIFER, 17 and all brass, drops her tray opposite Christina's. Notices all the empty chairs.

JENNIFER

What's this? The quarantine unit?

Plops her sassy self down.

JENNIFER

Haven't seen you around lately.

Digs into her burger and fries.

CHRISTINA

I've been busy with a term paper.

JENNIFER

Uh-huh. What's the real scoop?

Christina drops her voice.

CHRISTINA

I met a guy.

Jennifer slams the table with her hand.

JENNIFER

I knew you were seeing somebody!

Girls at the other table look over.

CHRISTINA

Little louder, Jen. I don't think the cook heard you.

JENNIFER

Sorry.

Shoves her tray aside.

JENNIFER

So dish.

Christina fishes out a small snapshot of Mario. Passes it to her best friend.

CHRISTINA

His name's Mario.

JENNIFER

Heeee's cute.

Looks eagerly at Christina.

JENNIFER

Does he have a brother?

Christina sits back in her chair. Looks worried.

CHRISTINA

I need your help.

JENNIFER

Don't like the sound of that.

Munches on her fries.

JENNIFER

Just for the record. I don't do blind dates or baby-sit six-year-old brats.

CHRISTINA

Mario's invited me to his homecoming.

JENNIFER

So?

CHRISTINA

He goes to Lincoln.

JENNIFER

Gangbanger High?

Christina leans across the table.

CHRISTINA

I need you to cover for me.

Jennifer doesn't look too happy.

CHRISTINA

It's important, Jen. I
promise, I'll only ask you
this one time.

JENNIFER

I seem to remember someone
saying that when she wanted to
to learn how to drive without
her parents' permission.

Eyes Christina as she sips her Pepsi.

JENNIFER

All right, Chrissie...

Points her finger.

JENNIFER

... but you owe me big time.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Looking baggy in his father's sport coat, Mario scours
the living room.

MARIO

Hey, pops! Where are the car
keys?

Doorbell RINGS. Mario opens up. Sees Christina looking
hot in fishnets and a red mini.

MARIO

Check it out.

CHRISTINA

You like it? I borrowed it
from my girlfriend.

Christina twirls on the front stoop. Gives Mario an
eyeful.

CHRISTINA

You don't think it's too --

MARIO

No way.

FRANCISCO (O.S.)

Mario!

Mario catches a set of car keys. Francisco spots Christina in the doorway.

FRANCISCO

(in Portuguese)

Who's this?

MARIO

Pops, this is Christina.

Quickly, Francisco tucks his T-shirt in around his beer belly.

FRANCISCO

(in English; speaks formally)

How do you do?

CHRISTINA

Nice to meet you.

Francisco's hand ricochets off Mario's head.

FRANCISCO

(to Mario)

What's the matter with you?

MARIO

What?

Francisco gently takes Christina by the hand.

FRANCISCO

Invite the young lady in.

Francisco leads Christina in on his arm. Mario rolls his eyes. Closes the front door.

FRANCISCO

Isabella!

Isabella feels her way into the living room.

ISABELLA
(in Portuguese)
What is it?

FRANCISCO
There's somebody I want you to
meet.

Francisco presents Christina like she's visiting royalty.

FRANCISCO
This is...

MARIO
Christina.

FRANCISCO
Mario's new girlfriend.

Isabella extends her hand off-center.

ISABELLA
(in English)
It's wonderful to finally meet
you, Christina.

Mario captures Christina's hand. Makes the connection
with his mom's.

ISABELLA
Mario's told us so much about
you.

Teresa passes through the living room. Sizes up
Christina with a glance.

FRANCISCO
Hey, Teresa. Come and meet --

TERESA
Gotta get ready for work, pops.

Hustles upstairs.

FRANCISCO
Hey, I got an idea.

Francisco pulls a Polaroid camera from a drawer. Pushes
Mario and Christina into each other.

FRANCISCO

Okay you two...

Aims the camera.

FRANCISCO

... say cheese!

Mario and Christina open their mouths to speak.
Flashbulb blinds them.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Colorful streamers and handmade banners decorate the walls. Decked out students bump and grind to HIP-HOP. Mario proudly escorts Christina past his BUDDIES.

BUDDY #1

'Sup, Mario?

BUDDY #2

You hit the numbers, bro?

BUDDY #3

(in Portuguese)

The chick is hot!

Portuguese girls eye Christina with territorial disdain.

MARIO

Go for some punch?

CHRISTINA

I'd love some.

At a refreshment table, Mario pours Christina a lemon-lime. Draped in Hugo Boss, DOMINGOS SALAZAR, 25, cool as a switchblade, swaggers up.

DOMINGOS

(in Portuguese)

What's happenin'?

Mario turns around. Isn't exactly ecstatic at who he sees.

MARIO

How's it going, Domingos?

Domingos gives Christina the once-over.

DOMINGOS
(in English)
Who's your friend?

MARIO
Christina. She's my date.

DOMINGOS
(to Christina)
What school you go to?

CHRISTINA
Woodmoor Academy.

DOMINGOS
Woodmoor, huh? That's where
all the rich P-Y-Ts go.

CHRISTINA
Excuse me?

DOMINGOS
Pretty Young Things.

Rubs his hand across Christina's alabaster skin.

DOMINGOS
If you really wanna taste the
local ambience...
(winks)
... gimme a call.

Domingos slithers off.

CHRISTINA
Who was that creep?

MARIO
Domingos Salazar. He's a dealer.

CHRISTINA
Dealer? As in drugs?

MARIO
I don't mean Chryslers.

Christina observes Domingos skinning and grinning his way through the teenage crowd.

CHRISTINA
If you ask me, he looks a
little old to be in high
school.

MARIO
Domingos dropped out. He
still hangs around so he can
recruit.

CHRISTINA
Recruit?

MARIO
For his crew. To sell drugs.

CHRISTINA
And the teachers permit it?

MARIO
They don't have a choice.
(beat)
They're afraid of him.

Mario bobs his head to the infectious MUSIC.

CHRISTINA
Somebody want to dance?

MARIO
Thought you'd never ask.

Mario leads Christina to the dance floor. The two
boogie down with the other couples.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - NIGHT

Mario and Christina dig into their Blizzards.

CHRISTINA
How did your mother lose her
eyesight?

MARIO
Back in Portugal, Mama worked
in a restaurant. One day, a
gas stove blew up in her face.

Stops chewing.

MARIO

Doctors tried to save her vision, but it was too late.

CHRISTINA

I'm sorry.

MARIO

After the accident, pops' family pressured him to leave my mother. In his village, a woman was of no value if she couldn't support herself.

CHRISTINA

That's terrible. What did your father do?

MARIO

Being hardheaded, as most da Costas are, pops packed up his things and sailed to America with mama.

Mario scoops some ice cream in his mouth.

MARIO

When they came to Boston, pops saved his money and bought a fishing boat. And the rest, as they say...

Pats out a drum roll on the table.

MARIO

... is history.

CHRISTINA

Your parents are very special.

MARIO

They have a very special love.

Mario's hand engulfs Christina.

MARIO

The same love I have for you.

Christina's face show no emotion.

MARIO
Did I say something --

CHRISTINA
No.

Mario releases Christina's manicured hand.

MARIO
You don't feel the same way,
do you?

CHRISTINA
That's the whole problem...

Her icy expression melts into a smile.

CHRISTINA
... I do.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A key UNLOCKS the door. Mario steps in. Looks back at Christina standing at the threshold.

MARIO
We don't have to do this.

Their eyes tango in the moonlight.

CHRISTINA
I want to be here with you.

Slowly, Mario draws her in. Christina closes the door on the outside world.

INT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Front door quietly opens. Christina slips in. Sneaks past the study.

PAMELA (O.S.)
Christina!

Christina stops dead in her tracks.

PAMELA (O.S.)
Your father and I would like a
word.

Blood drains from Christina's face.

STUDY

PAMELA WORTHINGTON, 40, a high-strung perfectionist,
chain smokes Virginia Slims by the fire. ROYCE
WORTHINGTON, 45, mellow as his 30-year-old port,
reclines on the French Provincial. Christina walks in.

PAMELA
Where were you this evening?

CHRISTINA
At the movies.

PAMELA
That's a bald face lie!

Pamela shortens the distance. Nails her daughter with
an interrogating stare.

PAMELA
I called Jennifer's mother.
Asked her what time the movie
ended. I was going to
surprise you girls and take
you out for sorbet.

Crushes her cigarette in a silver ashtray.

PAMELA
It was me who got the surprise.

Christina turns to leave. Pamela spins her around.

PAMELA
Where were you?

Christina stonewalls. Pamela rips open her daughter's
topcoat. Exposes Christina's red mini dress.

CHRISTINA
I went to a dance, all right?

PAMELA
Where?

CHRISTINA
At a school.

PAMELA
Which school?

CHRISTINA
Lincoln High.

ROYCE
Correct me if I'm wrong, but
isn't that in an unsavory part
of town?

Pamela's cold blue eyes narrow.

PAMELA
Who did you go with?

CHRISTINA
His name's Mario da Costa.

PAMELA
Da Costa? You went with a
Spanish boy?

CHRISTINA
He's Portuguese.

PAMELA
That's supposed to make a
difference?

Pamela folds her arms with indignation.

PAMELA
Where did you meet this... boy?

CHRISTINA
At a park.

PAMELA
A park? Why not a bus station?
Or a homeless shelter?

CHRISTINA
Stop it! Just stop it!

Backs away from her irate mother.

CHRISTINA

This is why I didn't tell you
where I was going.

Pamela looks puzzled.

PAMELA

I don't understand you,
Christina. You've had plenty
of opportunities to meet
suitable boys. Boys who share
the same values and upbringing
as you.

CHRISTINA

For your information, Mario
has more class in his big toe
than all those pompous prep
boys you're always fixing me
up with.

Christina heads for the door. Pamela grabs her again.

PAMELA

You are never to see this
Mario again.

Christina tries to jerk free.

PAMELA

I'm warning you, Christina.
Don't make a mistake that will
ruin the rest --

Christina escapes her mother's grasp. Vacates the room.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dirty and sweaty, Mario and his teammates clamor in
after a hard practice. COACH LANIER, 50, looks like a
drill sergeant in sweats, emerges from his office.

COACH

Da Costa!

Crooks his finger at Mario.

OFFICE

Mario ambles in on his cleats. Shining in a gold blazer, ZACK BRAYGEN rises from his chair.

COACH

Mario. Zack Braygen.

The two shake hands.

COACH

Zack's with the athletic department at Boston College.

BRAYGEN

Good to meet you, Mario.

Coach motions everyone to sit.

BRAYGEN

Coach Lanier forwarded some of your game videos. Needless to say, our coaching staff at B-C was very impressed.

Braygen withdraws an envelope. Extends it.

BRAYGEN

So impressed, in fact, I'm prepared to offer you a full athletic scholarship to Boston College.

Mario looks to his coach. He nods. Mario takes the envelope.

BRAYGEN

There is one stipulation, should you decide to accept.

MARIO

What's that?

BRAYGEN

In accordance with the N-C Double-A, every student athlete is required to maintain an overall G-P-A of two point five or better for their senior year.

Braygen sits back. Radiates confidence.

BRAYGEN

Judging by your school transcripts, that shouldn't be an issue.

MARIO

I, uh... I don't know what to say.

BRAYGEN

Given your reaction, Mario, B-C is obviously the first university to approach you.

Mario still appears flabbergasted.

BRAYGEN

When weighing your options, there's one more thing to consider.

Braygen leans forward.

BRAYGEN

In addition to offering all the amenities of a large campus, Boston College is local. You'll still be near all of your family and friends.

Tuning out Braygen's pitch, Mario focuses on the envelope he's holding.

COACH

I think Mario needs more time.

BRAYGEN

Of course.

Braygen stands.

BRAYGEN

It was a pleasure, Mario.

Mario stands. Shakes Braygen's hand.

BRAYGEN

If you have any questions or
would like a tour of the
campus...

Passes Mario a business card. Braygen turns to Coach
Lanier.

BRAYGEN

Coach.

Walks out. Mario falls back in his chair.

COACH

Strange feeling when a dream
finally becomes a reality.

Rests his hand on Mario's shoulder.

COACH

Give it some thought, Mario.
Talk it over with your family.

Coach breaks into a rare smile.

COACH

Who knows? There may be more
offers to come.

Mario returns Coach Lanier's smile.

INT. ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cork pops on a bottle of Matuse Rose. Franciso pours
wine for Mario, Isabella and Teresa. They raise their
glasses.

FRANCISCO

To my son, Mario. The first
da Costa ever to go to college.

The da Costas clink their glasses and cheer.

ISABELLA

You've made me so proud, Mario.
I feel like...

Isabella reaches out. Mario takes his mother's hand.

ISABELLA

... I feel like I want to sing.

FRANCISCO

Please, mama. Don't sing!

Isabella jokingly slaps Francisco.

TERESA

What can I say, little brother?
At least one of us will be
going to college.

MARIO

You'll get your chance.

TERESA

Bullshit.

ISABELLA

Teresa!

TERESA

My luck, I'll be waiting
tables when I'm seventy.

Loops her arm around Mario.

TERESA

I really am happy for you.

Portuguese MUSIC kicks in on an old hi-fi.

FRANCISCO

C'mon, everyone! Let's dance!

Linking arms, the da Costa family dances around the
coffee table.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Chilly wind rustles the autumn leaves. Sitting on
Mario's lap, Christina floats back and forth in a swing.

MARIO

What do you think?

Christina snaps out of her deep thought.

CHRISTINA

Hm?

MARIO

About the two of us going to
the same college. I know B-C
isn't Ivy League, but --

CHRISTINA

I may not be going to college.

MARIO

What?

CHRISTINA

(beat)

I may be pregnant.

Abruptly, Mario stops the swing.

CHRISTINA

I bought one of those home
pregnancy tests.

Rubs her tummy.

CHRISTINA

It turned out positive.

MARIO

Have you told your folks?

Christina springs off Mario's lap.

CHRISTINA

Are you insane?

MARIO

They're eventually going to
find out.

CHRISTINA

Not if I have an abortion.

Christina scrambles to the edge of a pond. Mario
quickly follows.

MARIO

You can't have an abortion,
Christina. It's wrong.

CHRISTINA

Is that you talking or your
parish priest?

Christina whirls around. Confronts Mario with an
adamant look.

CHRISTINA

I'm not Catholic, Mario. I
don't have to deal with that
ridiculous guilt trip.

MARIO

I'm not talking about religion.

Presses his palm against Christina's belly.

MARIO

This baby inside of you. It's
a part of both of us.

Christina removes Mario's hand.

CHRISTINA

Do you have any idea what's
involved in taking care of an
infant?

Turns away from Mario.

CHRISTINA

The round-the-clock feedings.
Constant diaper changes. The
doctors' visits. I'm not sure
I want that responsibility.

Mario laces his arms around Christina's waist.

MARIO

You won't be alone.

CHRISTINA

Be realistic, Mario. You're
going to college next fall.
Between taking a full course
load and playing on the soccer
team, do you really think
you'll have time for a baby?

Christina departs. Leaves Mario speechless.

EXT. GIRLS ACADEMY - DAY

School bell RINGS. Slinging their book bags, Christina and Jennifer leave with the other students. Dented Toyota idles by the curb. Horn HONKS.

JENNIFER

Don't look now, but there's
Romeo.

Spotting Mario, Christina doesn't appear too thrilled.

CHRISTINA

I'll call you later.

The two girls walk off in opposite directions.

EXT. TOYOTA - DAY

Christina approaches. Mario pokes his head out the window.

CHRISTINA

What are you doing here?

MARIO

Something I want you to check
out.

Mario opens the passenger door. Christina hesitates.

MARIO

It won't take long.

Christina looks around. Climbs in.

INT. TOYOTA - LATER

Mario steers into a parking lot. Christina looks befuddled.

CHRISTINA

Why are you taking me to the
hospital?

Turns to Mario.

CHRISTINA
Is your mother all right?

MARIO
She's fine.

Throws the car in park. Kills the engine.

MARIO
Come on.

Mario and Christina hop out.

INT. HOSPITAL - MATERNITY WARD

Mario and Christina stand behind a glass. A nurse cuddles and coos one of the newborns. Christina tears away.

HALLWAY

Choking on her emotions, Christina hustles for the elevator. Mario grabs her.

CHRISTINA
How could you do that to me?

MARIO
I want this baby, Christina.

Pulls Christina into his arms.

MARIO
In your heart, you want it too.

Christina gives into the tears.

CHRISTINA
I don't know what I want...

EXT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - DAY

From an upstairs window, Pamela spies Christina climbing out of Mario's rattle trap. The blinds snap shut.

INT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - BEDROOM

Looking spent, Christina straggles in. Discovers her mother coiled on her bed.

CHRISTINA

Mother? Why aren't you --

Pamela holds up a small, crumpled box. Christina recognizes the letters "E.P.T."

PAMELA

You want to explain this?

CHRISTINA

Where did you get that?

PAMELA

The maid discovered it emptying your trash.

Lunges off the bed.

PAMELA

You slept with him, didn't you?

Pamela shakes Christina violently.

PAMELA

Answer me, damn it!

CHRISTINA

(screams)
What if I did?

Pushes away from her mother.

PAMELA

You stupid...

Pamela exhales. Focuses her anger.

PAMELA

Do you have any comprehension
of what you have done?

(beat)
You have just flushed your
entire future down the toilet.

Christina makes a beeline for the door. Pamela slams it shut.

PAMELA

There's only one way for you
to straighten this out.

Pamela grabs Christina's chin. Forces her daughter to look at her.

PAMELA

You have to terminate this
pregnancy.

Christina swats her mother's hand away.

CHRISTINA

Suppose I don't want to
terminate it?

Shocked, Pamela steps back.

PAMELA

Either you get rid of that
fetus... or you find somewhere
else to live.

Pamela throws open the bedroom door. Storms out.

EXT. ABORTION CLINIC - DAY

Christina sits on the curb. Her head sunk between her hands. Dented Toyota RACES UP. BRAKES. Mario bails out. Seeing Christina, hope drains from his face.

MARIO

She made you do it, didn't she?

Christina looks up at her boyfriend. Her eyes are red from crying.

CHRISTINA

I... I couldn't.

Glances down the street.

CHRISTINA

My mother left me here. She
told me...

Christina bites her lip.

CHRISTINA
... I no longer have a home.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Christina sits on the edge of the couch petrified.
O.S., a heated argument rages.

DINING ROOM

Mario and Francisco stake out opposite ends of the
table. Isabella and Teresa are sandwiched in between.

MARIO
You and mama got married when
you were eighteen!

FRANCISCO
That was thirty years ago in
Portugal. This is America.
Nobody gets married before
they're thirty-five!

Isabella turns her face in Mario's direction.

ISABELLA
What about your schooling,
Mario? You were planning to
go to college next year.

MARIO
I can still go, mama. On the
weekends, I'll come home and
be with Christina and the baby.

Francisco paces like a caged tiger.

FRANCISCO
Mister Smarty Pants. He's got
it all figured out.

Points an accusing finger at his son.

FRANCISCO
Too bad you used your zipper
instead of your brains that
night!

ISABELLA

Francisco!

TERESA

Pops is right.

Mario hammers the table with his fist. Silences everyone.

MARIO

All right! I screwed up!

Mario glances around the table. All eyes are riveted on him.

MARIO

You're my family. I thought you would understand.

Head hung low, Mario walks out.

EXT. ROW HOUSE

Mario sits on the stoop. Cold breath drifts from his mouth. Storm door SLAMS. Someone drapes a parka over Mario's shoulders.

FRANCISCO (O.S.)

You gonna freeze out here.

Francisco lowers himself on the frigid steps.

FRANCISCO

You were right. We are family. And family sticks together no matter what.

Puts his arm around Mario.

FRANCISCO

I'm a simple man, Mario. I catch fishes in the sea.

Smile beams from his face.

FRANCISCO

You? You can be anything you want. An engineer. A doctor. A physconologist.

MARIO

Think you mean, psychologist.

FRANCISCO

Whatever.

Pinches Mario's boyish cheeks.

FRANCISCO

Your mama and me... we just
want what's best.

MARIO

I know pops.

Feeling the cold, Francisco shifts his frozen booty
around.

FRANCISCO

Look, if you want to marry
Katrina --

MARIO

It's Christina.

FRANCISCO

That's what I said.

Gestures to the row house.

FRANCISCO

You wanna move her in with
your mama and me, that's okay
too.

MARIO

Thanks, pops.

Francisco stands. Rubs his stiff butt.

FRANCISCO

C'mon. Let's get back inside
before we both get double
ammonia.

MARIO

Think you mean -- forget it.

Mario slides his arm around his old man. The two walk
into the house.

EXT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - DAY

Mario taps a brass door knocker. Royce opens up.

MARIO

Hi...

Clears his quaking voice.

MARIO

... I'm Mario.

Royce looks Mario up and down. Opens the door all the way.

INT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - FOYER

Hesitantly, Mario walks in. Royce closes the door behind him.

ROYCE

How is my daughter?

MARIO

My family's looking after her.

ROYCE

Please give her my love.

Mario nods. Royce motions to a pair of Louis Vuitton suitcases.

ROYCE

Those are Christina's.

Mario reaches for the pricey luggage. Pair of high heels TIP-TAP on the Italian marble. Mario looks up. Connects with Pamela's steely gaze.

PAMELA

I presume you're Mario.

Puffing a cigarette, Pamela releases the smoke in Mario's face.

PAMELA

You've destroyed my daughter's life. Are you aware of that?

Gripping the suitcases, Mario turns toward the front door. Pamela snags him by his letterman jacket.

PAMELA

Was it worth it? Your little clandestine affair with my daughter?

Mario gets a whiff of tobacco with every word Pamela spits out.

PAMELA

Was it worth shattering every hope and dream we had for Christina?

MARIO

You may not believe this --

Pamela stifles Mario with a resounding slap.

PAMELA

Get out.

Heaves open the front door.

PAMELA

Get the hell out!

Solemnly, Mario walks out toting Christina's luggage. High gloss door SLAMS behind him.

INT. ROW HOUSE - DAY (TWO WEEKS LATER)

Traditional Portuguese MUSIC rocks the crowded house. Francisco peeks out the front window.

FRANCISCO

They're here!

Front door swings open. Dressed to the nines, Mario carries Christina across the threshold. The newlyweds walk past a gauntlet of fishermen who break into a Portuguese wedding song.

KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hunched over the table, Francisco finely sands a model ship.

Wearing his PJs, Mario wanders in. Peers over his old man's shoulder.

MARIO
Looks good, pops.

FRANCISCO
I'm making it for my grandson...

Lets go of a big smile.

FRANCISCO
... or granddaughter.

Franciso proudly holds the wooden vessel in his calloused hands.

FRANCISCO
It's called a caravela redonda.
Portuguese and Spanish sailors
used these ships to explore
the world. Like Christopher
Columbus.

MARIO
Speaking of ships...

Pulls up a chair next to his dad.

MARIO
... there's something I want
to talk about.

Francisco lays down the hand carved boat. Gives Mario his full attention.

MARIO
With Christina living here and
the baby on its way, I want to
help with the expenses.

FRANCISCO
Help? What do you mean?

MARIO
You're always saying you can
use an extra pair of hands on
the trawler.

FRANCISCO

No. Absolutely not.

Resumes sanding the wooden ship.

MARIO

Come on, pops. I want to help.

FRANCISCO

You wanna help? You go to school and keep your grades up.

Mario places his hand over his father's. Stops him from sanding.

MARIO

I can work weekends and still study at night.

FRANCISCO

What about soccer? You need to practice.

MARIO

Season's over, pops. Spring training's not for another three months.

Francisco smooths out his bushy mustache as he weighs his options.

MARIO

Come on, pops. Let me do this.

Francisco bangs his fist on the table.

FRANCISCO

All right! But the minute I see you falling behind at school, you stop the work.

MARIO

Deal.

INT. ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY (SEVEN MONTHS LATER)

Game show PLAYS on T.V. Christina sits on the worn sofa flipping through a magazine. Next to her, Isabella works a sewing machine like a pro.

CHRISTINA

I'm amazed, mama, how well you
can sew.

ISABELLA

You mean for someone who can't
see?

Isabella pulls a pair of pants from a stack of clothes.
Lines it up in her Singer by touch.

ISABELLA

I've been sewing since I was
your age, Christina. It's
gotten to the point...

Flashes a mischievous grin.

ISABELLA

... I can do it blindfolded.

The two of them chuckle. Tea kettle WHISTLES in the
kitchen. Visibly pregnant, Christina struggles to get
to her feet.

CHRISTINA

I'll get your tea, mama.

ISABELLA

No Christina, you --

With a big push, Christina ejects off the sofa.

CHRISTINA

Too late, mama. I'm up.

ISABELLA

Thank you, my dear.

Holding her protruding belly, Christina waddles off.

KITCHEN

Shooting pain doubles Christina over. She fumbles a cup
and saucer.

ISABELLA (O.S.)

Christina!

Christina collapses. Isabella feels her way in.

ISABELLA
Where are you?

CHRISTINA
On the floor.

Isabella follows Christina's voice. Lowers herself.
Feels Christina's stomach.

ISABELLA
It's coming, isn't it?

CHRISTINA
(breathless)
Yes.

O.S. the front door SLAMS. Moments later, Teresa
walks in with groceries. See her mom and Christina on
the floor.

TERESA
What the --

ISABELLA
Christina's having the baby.

TERESA
What?

ISABELLA
The baby is coming.

TERESA
When?

ISABELLA
This minute!

Groceries fall from Teresa's hands.

TERESA
Right here? On the linoleum?

ISABELLA
Yes!

TERESA
Oh my --

Christina blurts out a piercing scream.

Teresa drops to the floor.

Searches her purse for a cell phone.

TERESA
I'll call nine-one-one.

ISABELLA
There isn't time!

Christina cries out again.

ISABELLA
I need towels and pillows.

TERESA
Why?

ISABELLA
I'm going to deliver the baby.

TERESA
Now? Are you crazy?

Christina yells.

CHRISTINA
Mama!

ISABELLA
Teresa!

TERESA
I'm going!

Teresa flies out of the kitchen.

INT. TRAWLER - DAY

Francisco pours himself a mug of steaming coffee.
Short-wave CRACKLES with an incoming transmission.

VOICE OVER
(filtered)
Base to Lisbon Lady. Over.

Francisco snaps up the microphone.

FRANCISCO

Go ahead, Pete. Over.

VOICE OVER

Isabella called.

Francisco sips his Sanka.

VOICE OVER

Your daughter-in-law had a
baby boy. Over.

Francisco spits his coffee. Drops the radio mike.

FRANCISCO

Mario!

EXT. TRAWLER - MAIN DECK

Mario and the FIRST MATE haul in a fishing net bulging
with haddock. Francisco sprints out of the cabin.

FRANCISCO

It's a boy! It's a boy!

Mario looks at his father like he's nuts.

MARIO

What?

FRANCISCO

Christina! She had a baby boy!

Mario and the first mate dance in a circle. Slipping
and falling amidst the wiggling fish.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Christina nestles her newborn. Sitting beside her,
Isabella perks up when the door CREAKS open. Still
wearing their fishy work duds, Mario and Francisco
troop in.

ISABELLA

Is that Mario?

MARIO

Yes, mama.

ISABELLA

Come see your son.

Slowly, Mario approaches. Warmly smiles at Christina and the baby.

ISABELLA

He's beautiful, no?

MARIO

Yes, mama. He's beautiful.

Mario kisses his baby boy.

MARIO

He's so tiny.

CHRISTINA

Preemies usually are.

Francisco leans in. Jiggles the infant's booties.

FRANCISCO

(in Portuguese)

That's my grandson.

CHRISTINA

Mario and I were talking. We want to name him Francisco.

The elder Francisco throws out his chest.

FRANCISCO

You know something? That's a good name.

Everyone laughs.

INT. ROW HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bleary eyed, Christina shuffles in. Discovers Mario asleep at the table. His head rests on a textbook.

CHRISTINA

Mario.

Mario stirs. Looks around. Not sure where he is.

CHRISTINA

You need to come to bed.

Removes a baby bottle from the fridge.

MARIO

Can't. Got midterms tomorrow.

Christina places the formula bottle in the microwave.
Nukes it.

CHRISTINA

Even more reason to get some
rest.

Massages Mario's tense shoulders.

CHRISTINA

You know you were supposed to
give up working with your dad
when the soccer season started.

MARIO

I know, but we need --

CHRISTINA

You've got to think about
college, Mario. If you don't
maintain your grades --

Mario throws off Christina's massaging hands.

MARIO

I can handle this!

Christina stares at Mario with disbelief.

CHRISTINA

Sure you can.

BELL from the microwave goes off. Christina grabs the
baby's bottle. Walks out.

INT. ROW HOUSE - KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

Listening to the RADIO, Isabella chops up vegetables.
Looking uneasy, Christina walks in. Slips on a cashmere
waistcoat.

CHRISTINA

I'm taking the baby for a stroll.
Do you need anything while I'm
out?

ISABELLA

No, my dear. Enjoy your walk.

Christina kisses Isabella and leaves.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Christina sits on a bench. Rocks the baby in a stroller.
A looming male figure blocks out the noonday sun.
Christina looks up. Recognizes her father.

ROYCE

Hello, Christina.

His eyes fall upon the baby.

ROYCE

I take it this is my grandson.

CHRISTINA

We named him Francisco. After
Mario's father.

ROYCE

He's a handsome child.

(motions)

May I?

Royce takes a seat. Soaks up the tranquility of the
park.

ROYCE

So this is where you and Mario
used to rendezvous.

Turns to his daughter.

ROYCE

Must seem ironic that now it's
me you're secretly meeting.

Christina's smile fades away.

CHRISTINA

How's mother?

ROYCE

She lost another case. That makes four in the last three months.

CHRISTINA

How tragic.

Looks away.

ROYCE

Your mother's worried about you, Christina.

CHRISTINA

Yeah, I can tell by all the cards and letters she sends me.

Royce takes Christina's hand in his.

ROYCE

Believe it or not, this separation has been devastating to her.

Royce leans close. His tone is candid.

ROYCE

Let me tell you something about your mother. She grew up in a very competitive family.

CHRISTINA

I know all the gory details.

Withdraws her hand from her father's grasp.

ROYCE

What you don't know is Pamela's brother died when he was just sixteen. He had leukemia.

Christina looks back at her father.

ROYCE

As a result, a great deal of expectations were placed upon your mother.

CHRISTINA

What's this got to do with me?

ROYCE

When you dropped out of school to have the baby, it flew in the face of everything your mother was taught.

Royce's attention drifts back to little Francisco.

ROYCE

Your mother planned for you to follow her into the legal profession. Or at the very worst, become a humble architect like your old man.

Hearing enough, Christina busies herself with the baby.

CHRISTINA

No wonder I'm such a disappointment.

Christina wheels the baby away. Royce catches up.

ROYCE

What I'm saying, Christina... your mother needs time to understand.

CHRISTINA

Mother will never understand.

Christina stops the stroller. Looks point blank at her father.

CHRISTINA

All of my life, mother's tried to control me.

Ticks off each point with her fingers.

CHRISTINA

She chose the prep school I
attended. She screened all of
my friends.

Tugs at her preppie waistcoat.

CHRISTINA

Mother even picked the clothes
she wanted me to wear.

Christina gazes lovingly at the baby.

CHRISTINA

Having Mario's baby was the
first real decision I made for
myself.

Looks back at Royce.

CHRISTINA

And you know what, father? I
don't regret it.

Christina pushes off with the stroller.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Mario and a teammate play an intense one-on-one. Coach
Lanier intercepts a pass.

COACH

(to Mario's teammate)

Take five.

Teammate jogs off.

COACH

(to Mario)

Want to tell me what's going
on?

MARIO

Just trying out a new move,
coach.

COACH

You know what I'm talking
about.

Stands eyeball to eyeball with Mario.

COACH

Got a call from your counselor yesterday. She tells me you're flunking four out of your six classes. You want to fill me in?

MARIO

Haven't been getting a lot of study time in.

COACH

I know you've got a lot on your plate.

Coach places a fatherly hand on Mario's shoulder.

COACH

You can't slack off on your studies. Soccer aside, Mario... what you do academically determines where and if you go to college.

MARIO

I hear ya, coach.

COACH

Do you?

MARIO

Sure.

Coach Lanier walks off. Turns around.

COACH

Hey, da Costa. You need help with something, you let me know.

Mario nods.

EXT. TRAWLER - DAY

White-capped waves COLLIDE with the lurching rust bucket.

Francisco inches his way across the slick deck.

Mario and the first mate struggle with the fishing lines.

FRANCISCO

If you can't reel 'em in, cut
'em!

Trawler sinks into a deep swell.

Thirty foot wave SPLITS the vessel in two. CAPSIZES it.

Treading for his life --

Mario spots his father face down in the rough sea.

MARIO

Pops!

Frantically, Mario swims through the angry water.

Reaches his dad.

Blood seeps from an ugly wound on Francisco's head.

Strong hand pulls Mario backwards.

MARIO

Let me --

First mate yanks Mario away from his father.

Mario whacks at the fisherman's arm.

MARIO

I said --

FIRST MATE

He's dead!

Latches onto a piece of driftwood.

Squints at Mario through the soaking sea spray.

FIRST MATE

Your father's dead...

INT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - DAY

Royce dons a trenchcoat. Pamela strides in. Cigarette
poised in her hand.

PAMELA

You're going, aren't you?

ROYCE

It's the respectful thing to do.

Royce turns to leave. Pamela steps between her husband and the front door.

PAMELA

You're going because there's a chance you'll see Christina.

Royce reaches around Pamela. Opens the door.

PAMELA

If you go, Royce, you'll undermine --

ROYCE

Undermine what, Pamela? Your tyrannical rule of our daughter?

Royce matches Pamela's intense stare.

ROYCE

Did you ever once sit down and really talk to Christina? Find out what she was feeling?

PAMELA

That's rich coming from you.

Points her cigarette at Royce.

PAMELA

As I recall, no one handed you a trophy for being father of the year.

ROYCE

Maybe not. But the one thing Christina always knew is that I loved her.

PAMELA

Are you implying --

ROYCE

I'm not implying anything --
but there's a greater tragedy
in all of this than our
teenage daughter having a baby.

Royce grasps Pamela.

ROYCE

Depending how we handle this,
there's a very distinct
possibility we could lose our
daughter forever.

(beat)

Is that a reality you're
prepared to deal with?

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Beneath a phalanx of umbrellas, friends and family of
the da Costas huddle together in the cold rain. A
white haired PRIEST reads aloud from a weathered book.

PRIEST

"I must go down to the sea
again. To the lonely sea and
sky. And all I ask is for a
tall ship and a star to steer
her by."

The old reverend closes the book. His eyes fall upon
the grieving faces.

PRIEST

Like a true fisherman,
Francisco Joaquim da Costa
earned his living from the sea.
And in the sea, found his
final resting place.

Slight smile crosses the priest's craggy face.

PRIEST

But be assured, Francisco's
spirit is still with us.

His gaze turns to Mario, Christina and baby Francisco.

PRIEST

He lives on in the legacy of
his children and grandchild.

One by one, leather-skinned fishermen lay white lilies
on the rain drenched coffin. A well dressed man in the
distance captures Christina's attention.

CEMETERY DRIVE

Christina approaches Royce who is standing alone.

CHRISTINA

How did you hear?

ROYCE

I came across the obituary.

Glances at the people around the gravesite.

ROYCE

How's...

CHRISTINA

Mario?

Christina gazes solemnly at the lily she's clutching.

CHRISTINA

Mario feels guilty he couldn't
save his father.

Royce takes hold of Christina's hand.

ROYCE

I want you to come home,
Christina. You and the baby.
It's best for both of you.

CHRISTINA

I'm married, father. My place
is with Mario.

Pulls her hand back.

CHRISTINA

Besides, I don't think mother
would exactly welcome
Francisco and I with open arms.

ROYCE
Your mother's changed, Christina.

CHRISTINA
If that's true, then why isn't
she here?

ROYCE
She is.

Christina looks past Royce. Spots her mother in the
front seat of a Lexus.

CHRISTINA
I have to go.

Royce places an overstuffed envelope in his daughter's
hand. Mario marches up with a full head of steam.

MARIO
(to Christina)
What's he doing here?

ROYCE
I came to pay my respects.

Mario swipes the envelope from Christina. Twenties and
fifties slide out.

MARIO
Pay your respects, huh? In
cash?

Pitches the money back at Royce.

MARIO
We don't need your handout.

Mario steps up to Royce.

MARIO
Christina is my responsibility.
You got that?

Mario hauls Christina away.

INT. ROW HOUSE - DAY

Still dressed in mourning, Christina pours Isabella a
cup of tea.

Mario blazes out of the kitchen. Teresa is hot on his heels.

TERESA
Have you lost your mind? We
could've used that money.

MARIO
It was charity, Teresa.
That's one thing this family
has never taken.

Teresa wheels Mario around.

TERESA
Since when do you make
decisions for this family?

MARIO
And who else is going to make
them? You? A lousy cocktail
waitress.

Isabella bangs the coffee table with her hand.

ISABELLA
Stop it! Both of you!

Rises.

ISABELLA
Today, we buried your father
and this is how you honor his
memory?

Isabella feels her way upstairs. Mario starts after her. Teresa cuts him off.

TERESA
You want to be head of this
family? Then earn it.

INT. STOREFRONT OFFICE - DAY

Squeezed between boxes of cleaning supplies, a scuzzy SHOP OWNER scans a piece of paper. Mario watches him apprehensively.

SHOP OWNER

According to your app', only
job ya ever had was working on
a trawler.

Looks up at Mario.

SHOP OWNER

So... ya ever fucked a mermaid?

Shop owner cuts up over his raunchy joke. Mario turns
to leave.

SHOP OWNER

Job pays seven and a quarter.
Eight bucks if ya work nights.

Mario does an about-face. Looks dejected.

MARIO

When can I start?

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Looking tense, Mario, Christina and Isabella cluster
around the dining table. Teresa tallies up a pile of
bills with a pen and paper.

TERESA

Even with Mario's paycheck and
the cash mama made from her
sewing, we're still four
hundred bucks short.

CHRISTINA

What are we going to do?

MARIO

I can get a second job.

TERESA

Doing what? Flipping burgers?

Mario shoves his finger in sister's face.

MARIO

You saying I don't pull my
weight?

TERESA
If you hadn't knocked up
blondie over there, we
wouldn't be in this mess!

Mario vaults out of his chair.

Knocks it over.

Isabella grips Mario's hand.

Squeezes it tightly.

ISABELLA
(sternly; in Portuguese)
Sit down. Now.

Fuming, Mario rights his overturned chair. Takes a seat.
Isabella faces in her daughter's direction.

ISABELLA
(in English)
Teresa, you apologize to
Christina.

TERESA
But mama --

ISABELLA
But mama, nothing!

Teresa looks like she's been ordered to kiss a toad.

TERESA
I'm sorry.

CHRISTINA
Forget it.

ISABELLA
Now about these bills.

Slowly twists a gold band off her finger.

ISABELLA
(to Mario)
I want you to take this to a
pawnbroker

MARIO

No, mama.

ISABELLA

Mario --

MARIO

That's your wedding ring.

Isabella searches out Mario's hand. Presses the ring into his palm.

ISABELLA

It's not worth a lot, but it should get us by for the next month.

Sadly, Mario gazes at his mother's wedding band.

MARIO

Whatever you say, mama.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT (WEEKS LATER)

Christina sits by the window in candlelight. Spots Mario trudging up the sidewalk. Christina opens the front door. Kisses her husband.

MARIO

What's with the candles?

CHRISTINA

Electric was shut off today.

Clad in dirty coveralls, Mario plops down on the sofa. Massages an oncoming headache.

CHRISTINA

How about a sandwich?

Mario is too tired to respond. Christina withdraws an envelope from her flannel robe. Hands it to her husband.

CHRISTINA

This came for you today.

MARIO

Let me guess. Another bill?

CHRISTINA
It's from Boston College.

Mario rips open the envelope. Reads the enclosed letter with anticipation. Mario's face drops.

CHRISTINA
What is it?

MARIO
They canceled my scholarship.

INT. HIGH-RISE CONDO - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Foaming bath water swirls in a jacuzzi. Domingos and his lover TITO, 30, trim and coiffed African-American, come up for air laughing. Doorbell CHIMES.

DOMINGOS
The Chinese is here.

TITO
I'll get it.

Domingos sips his amaretto. Leers at Tito as he dries off.

LIVING ROOM

Tito ties off a silk robe. Peers through a peephole in the front door. Quizzical look crosses his face.

TITO
Yes?

MARIO (O.S.)
I'm looking for Domingos.

Domingos swings in wearing a matching silk robe.

DOMINGOS
Who is it, Tito?

TITO
Some kid.

Domingos takes his turn at the peephole. Unlocks a trio of deadbolts. Opens the door. Domingos greets Mario with a stone face.

TITO
(to Domingos)
I'll be in the jacuze.

Tito smacks Domingos with a French kiss. Sashays out.
Mario tries to hide his shock.

DOMINGOS
Sit down.

Mario parks it in an art deco chair.

DOMINGOS
Sorry to hear about your old
man.

Witnesses the exhaustion in Mario's face.

DOMINGOS
How ya doin'?

MARIO
Things are tight.

Domingos saunters over to a chrome and glass bar.
Splashes Disarrona over ice.

DOMINGOS
So wha'sup?

MARIO
I want to join your crew.

Domingos stirs his cocktail with his finger. Licks it.

DOMINGOS
Ever since I known you, Mario,
you ain't had two seconds for
me. Now all of a sudden you
want a ride on the gravy train?

Mario leans forward with a serious expression.

MARIO
I really need the bread.

DOMINGOS
What's the matter, bro? Cost
of Pampers and baby food
cramping your style?

Domingos tastes his almond liqueur. Sizes up Mario through his Irish crystal.

DOMINGOS

There was a time, Mario, when I coulda used a sharp guy like you.

Steps away from the bar.

DOMINGOS

Star athlete. Aced all your classes.

Motions to Mario's filthy coveralls.

DOMINGOS

Now look at you. Like some idiota who scrapes the shit outta the city sewers.

Mario launches from his chair.

MARIO

Hey I don't need this, man.

DOMINGOS

That's what you get for banging a white chick.

Smiles wickedly.

DOMINGOS

They never know when to keep their mouth or their legs closed.

Mario takes a swing.

Domingos dives low.

Comes up punching.

Pummels Mario to his knees.

DOMINGOS

You always thought you was better than me.

(shouts)

Didn't you?

Domingos straightens his expensive robe.

DOMINGOS

Truth is, chump, you was never
in my class.

Domingos heaves open the front door. Unceremoniously
chucks Mario out on his ass.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Mario vacuums a plush office.

A man's hand slaps him on the back. Mario spins around.

Comes face to face with Domingos.

Mario kills the Hoover.

MARIO

How did you get in here?

DOMINGOS

You forget who you're talking
to.

Cradling a leather gym bag, Domingos deposits himself
in an executive's chair. Props his feet up.

DOMINGOS

One day, I'm gonna have an
office like this.

Waves his hand like a lord.

DOMINGOS

Outside, important people will
be waiting to see me.

Domingos watches Mario unplug the vacuum. Reel in the
cord.

DOMINGOS

Word is you flunked out. Is
that straight up?

MARIO

(beat)

Yeah.

DOMINGOS

Guess we ain't so different
after all.

Mario empties a waste basket into his cleaning cart.

MARIO

Is that why you're here? To
rub it in?

DOMINGOS

You still want in on my
organization?

MARIO

Figured I blew that chance.

DOMINGOS

I dissed your woman. You had
a right to go off.

Domingos pulls the gum out of his mouth. Looks around.
Sticks it underneath the executive's desk.

DOMINGOS

So you into this janitor's gig...
or you interested in making
some real money?

MARIO

Depends. What do you call
real money?

Domingos leans back in the upholstered chair. Flashes a
gold tooth grin.

DOMINGOS

Five hundred.

MARIO

Five hundred bucks?

DOMINGOS

To deliver something to
someone. No questions asked.

Mario sits on the edge of the mahogany desk.

MARIO

Five hundred doesn't buy what
it used to.

DOMINGOS

Shit, I know a dozen dudes who
would do this for a C-note.

MARIO

So why aren't you asking them?

DOMINGOS

Maybe I can't trust them.

Sits up.

DOMINGOS

You down with this or what?

MARIO

Like you said. Cost of
Pampers and baby food are
cramping my style.

Domingos pensively scratches his trimmed goatee.

DOMINGOS

What do you say to five
hundred up front? Another
five when you do the dirty
deed.

Mario nods. Domingos tosses him the leather bag. Stands
up.

DOMINGOS

I'll call you tomorrow with
the where and when.

Peels hundreds from a fat billfold. Floats them onto the
polished desk.

DOMINGOS

One more thing...

Domingos chokes Mario with one hand.

DOMINGOS

... you rip me off... or turn
my ass into the heat...

Squeezes harder. Mario's face flushes beet red.

DOMINGOS

... they will bury you next to
your old man.

Domingos saunters out. Mario bends over and inhales --
desperately forces air into his lungs.

INT. ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Soccer game PLAYS on T.V. Oblivious to his favorite
sport, Mario fixates on Domingos' gym bag. Phone RINGS.
Mario leaps off the sofa.

MARIO

(into the phone)

Hello?

Snaps up a pencil. Scrawls something on a magazine
cover. Tears it off.

MARIO

Got it.

Hangs up. Mario grabs the gym bag. Christina emerges
from the kitchen. Nurses Francisco Jr. in her arms.

CHRISTINA

Where are you going?

MARIO

Raymundo called. There's a
pickup game over at the park.

Mario kisses Christina. Pats the baby's head.

MARIO

I'll be back in time for
dinner.

Rushes out.

EXT. ROW HOUSE

Mario hops in his dented Toyota. SPEEDS OFF. Slung low
in a 3000 GT, Domingos tails him.

INT. TENEMENT - DAY

GANGSTA RAP pulsates through a dimly lit hallway. Mario nervously walks to the last apartment. Perched on a radiator, a beefy MIDGET puffs a cigar.

MARIO

I'm looking for Vasco.

Midget looks up from the sports page. Checks Mario out. He's not impressed.

MIDGET

Got the wrong floor, kid.

Midget resumes reading.

MARIO

Domingos sent me.

Midget slams Mario against the wall.

Brutally frisks him.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT

Midget escorts Mario in. Greasy gunman oils a MAC-10. Potbellied SLEAZOID separates marijuana into dime bags. Hunched over a felt poker table, VASCO, looks like Jabba the Hut with gold chains, slurps a gaspacho.

VASCO

(in Portuguese; to the midget)
Who's the punk?

MIDGET

(in Portuguese)
He's Domingos' boy.

Midget steps back. Leans against the front door. Vasco cocks his head looking at Mario.

VASCO

(in English; to Mario)
You look familiar. What's
your name?

MARIO

Mario...

(clears his shaky voice)

... Mario da Costa.

Vasco stuffs a breadstick in his mouth.

VASCO

Da Costa. Da Costa.

Snaps his fingers.

VASCO

You're that hotshot soccer
player over at Lincoln. I
seen your picture in the paper.

Wipes his mouth on his sleeve.

VASCO

What are you doin' with
Domingos? Workin' for extra
credit?

Laughing, Vasco's abundant belly jiggles.

VASCO

You got somethin' for me?

Cautiously, Mario approaches Vasco. Lays the leather
bag in front of him. Vasco unzips it. Extracts four
packages rolled in butcher's wrap.

VASCO

(to the sleazoid)

Luiz!

Lobs one of the packages. Sleazoid spears it with a
switchblade. Scoops the white powder into a vial
containing a solution. Shakes it up.

SLEAZOID

Prima cocaina.

Black gunmetal strikes Mario's jawbone.

He drops to the blood-stained carpet.

Gunman stands over Mario aiming the MAC-10.

VASCO
Take him into the alley and
shoot him.

Gunman hoists Mario to his feet -- dazed and bleeding.

VASCO
(to Mario)
You shoulda stuck with soccer,
kid.

Front door is KICKED in.

The midget catapults across the room.

Twin .9 millimeters OPEN FIRE.

Domingos BLASTS the sleazoid and the gunman.

MARIO
Domingos!

Shielding himself with Mario --

Midget SPRAYS the room with the MAC-10.

Domingos rolls. Returns FIRE.

Wings the midget in the hip.

VASCO
Hold up! Hold up!

Domingos lines up Vasco in his sights.

VASCO
Domingos --

DOMINGOS
Shut up!

Domingos approaches Vasco. Nonchalantly plants one
foot on a stool.

DOMINGOS
What am I gonna do with you,
Vasco?

Scratches his chin with one of the Glocks.

DOMINGOS

First you steal my product...
then you try to off my people.
Not a very nice way to conduct
business.

VASCO

It wasn't my idea, Domingos.
Dom Afonso --

Vasco is backhanded by one of the pistols.

Bloodies his quivering lip.

DOMINGOS

You not only a pig, Vasco...

Cocks one of the semi-automatics in Vasco's ugly mug.

DOMINGOS

... you also a --

MARIO

Look out!

Midget sits up with the MAC-10.

Domingos FIRES first. Drills the midget between the eyes.

Vasco YANKS a .45 taped beneath the poker table.

Domingos swings round. PUMPS the fat man with hot lead.

DOMINGOS

(beat; to Mario)

You breathing?

Shell-shocked, Mario can only nod.

DOMINGOS

Welcome to the big leagues,
bro.

Domingos slaps Mario on the back. Struts out. Mario
surveys the surreal carnage.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Three-man band plays Portuguese MUSIC to a packed house.

In a back booth, Mario tries to sip a soda. His hand shakes. Domingos snatches the glass from him.

DOMINGOS

You need something stronger.

Flags down a waitress.

DOMINGOS

Whiskey and another cognac.

Mario's dazed expression fades away.

MARIO

You killed those men.

DOMINGOS

If I hadn't, your wife would be I-Ding your shot-up ass in the city morgue.

Mario points at Domingos.

MARIO

You knew it was a set up!

Domingos looks around the bar. Stares down the eavesdropping customers.

DOMINGOS

For weeks, Vasco been skimming my action. I'd send him ten keys of smack... he'd say he only got nine. I'd send him four pounds of Thai... somehow he'd only get three.

Waitress returns with the drinks and leaves.

DOMINGOS

At first, I suspected my own people, but they all checked out.

Domingos sips his Hennessy.

DOMINGOS

I figured you being a cherry, Vasco would make a grab for the whole drop.

(smugly)

I was right.

MARIO

You used me!

Domingos collars Mario. Reels him in.

DOMINGOS

You need to be cool.

Mario breaks Domingos' hold. Stands up.

DOMINGOS

Where are you going?

MARIO

The hell away from you.

Domingos snags Mario's arm.

DOMINGOS

You wanna make big money?
Well big money means taking
big risks.

MARIO

You could've gotten me killed.

DOMINGOS

You almost got killed haulin'
mackerel on your old man's
boat. And for what? Peanuts?

Releases Mario.

DOMINGOS

In my business, you got a
shot at becoming rich. Rich
beyond your fuckin' dreams.

Domingos shoots the remains of his cognac. Rises.

DOMINGOS

Think about that.

Domingos taps Mario on the forehead. Saunters out.

EXT. WHARF - DAY

Mario pushes Francisco Jr. in a stroller. Stops to
watch fishermen bringing ashore their daily catch.

Munching on batter fried cod, Domingos approaches.

DOMINGOS

Had a hunch you'd be here.

Finishes off the tasty fish.

DOMINGOS

I've eaten at some stylin'
restaurants.

Licks his fingers.

DOMINGOS

Best fish in the city is right
here on the docks.

Domingos tosses the greasy newspaper wrapping over his
shoulder. Turns his attention to Francisco Jr.

DOMINGOS

So this is your pride and joy.

Crouches in front of the baby.

DOMINGOS

Belo menino.

Domingos stands beside Mario. Notes the distant look in
his eyes.

DOMINGOS

This place reminds you of your
old man, don't it?

MARIO

When I was a kid, pops would
take me out in his trawler.
He'd let me steer it around
the harbor. Honk the fog horn.

(smiles)

I remember one time...

Mario chokes up. Turns the stroller around. Domingos
blocks his exit. Pulls out a small bankroll.

DOMINGOS

That's the other half grand I
owe ya.

Mario stares at the money.

DOMINGOS

Take it.

MARIO

I can't.

Domingos gestures to Francisco Jr. in the stroller.

DOMINGOS

Your family's gotta eat, right?

MARIO

There's blood on that money.

DOMINGOS

There's blood on my hands too.
That's the price of doing
business.

Goes nose to nose with Mario.

DOMINGOS

You gotta make a decision,
homes. Are you gonna work
hard and die early like your
old man?

Domingos fans the cash in Mario's face.

DOMINGOS

Or are you gonna grab the
future and make it your own?

Mario looks at his boy. Looks back at the money. Takes
the cash from Domingos.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Mario bustles through the front door. His arms loaded
down with goodies.

MARIO

Hey, everybody! Come see what
I've got!

Isabella, Christina and Teresa converge in the living
room by candlelight.

ISABELLA
What's all this?

MARIO
Check it out, mama.

Spills the contents of a shopping bag on the table.

MARIO
Lobster. T-bone steaks.
Chocolate truffles... whatever
they are.

Mario reaches into the second shopping bag.

MARIO
And to wash it all down with...

Pulls out a bottle of Sainte Michelle.

MARIO
... champagne!

ISABELLA
Mario, we can't afford --

Mario glances at his watch.

MARIO
It's almost eight!

TERESA
What the hell does that --

MARIO
Five, four, three, two...

All the lights in the house kick on.

TERESA
The electric's back on.

MARIO
Check the phone. You'll find
that's working too.

ISABELLA
What's going on, Mario?

MARIO

I've got a new job, mama.

Mario produces a gold band. Slides it on his mother's finger.

ISABELLA

My wedding ring! Oh, Mario!

Isabella feels for Mario's face. Gives him a big kiss.

MARIO

I'm working at an appliance store. I sold two refrigerators and a washer my first day.

TERESA

And they pay you this kind of money?

MARIO

I work on commission.

ISABELLA

He works on commission!

Pats Mario on the back.

ISABELLA

Your papa would be so proud.
(to her daughter)
Come, Teresa. Help me get dinner started.

Teresa pops a truffle in her mouth.

TERESA

Sure, mama.

ISABELLA

Teresa. Are you eating chocolate before dinner?

Teresa swallows hard.

TERESA

No, mama.

Isabella and Teresa carry the groceries into the kitchen.

Mario turns to find Christina staring at him.

MARIO
You don't seem happy.

CHRISTINA
And you seem edgy.

MARIO
Edgy? What are you talking
about?

CHRISTINA
How did you get the money,
Mario?

Mario tries to get a read on Christina's expression.

MARIO
You don't believe me?

CHRISTINA
What appliance store are you
working for?

Mario throws up his arms.

MARIO
Why are you doing this,
Christina?

CHRISTINA
Doing what? I just asked --

Mario gets in his wife's face.

MARIO
All you need to know... is
that I earned that money.

Mario turns on his heels. Joins the others in the
kitchen.

INT. HIGH-RISE CONDO - DAY

Mario sports a new look -- pencil thin mustache. Diamond
earring. Electronic money counter HUMS along. Mario
rubberbands the last bunch of Ben Franklins.

MARIO
(calls out)
Seventy-five G's!

Mario stuffs the moolah in a wall safe. Hanging by gravity boots, Domingos works up a sweat cranking out upside down sit-ups.

MARIO
Ever since we took over
Vasco's operation, our weekly
take has increased thirty
percent.

DOMINGOS
You sound like an accountant.

MARIO
Always was good in math.

Domingos unhooks his gravity boots from a chin-up bar.
Mario towels him off.

MARIO
You've got a lot of excess
cash, Domingos. Ever thought
about investing it?

DOMINGOS
What do you know about that?

MARIO
I've been reading up at the
library.

DOMINGOS
No shit.

Mario mixes Grey Goose and O.J. in a crystal tumbler.
Hands it to Domingos.

MARIO
Say you want a quick return on
your cash. You put your money
in high yield, high risk
investments.

DOMINGOS
Like what?

MARIO
Fiber optics. Biomedical
research.

DOMINGOS
Damn, you have been reading up.

Domingos eases into a leather recliner. Hits the
massage button.

MARIO
Say you're not bullish --

DOMINGOS
What did you call me?

MARIO
It means an optimistic
investor. You can drop your
money into mutual funds or
munis.

DOMINGOS
Moonies? You talking 'bout
those religious wackos?

MARIO
Government bonds.

Totally chilled, Domingos stretches out in the massage
chair.

DOMINGOS
There's one hitch with your
plan, homes.

MARIO
What's that?

DOMINGOS
What do I tell the I-R-S when
they ask me where all the loot
came from?

MARIO
Piece of cake.

Mario kneels beside Domingos who's grooving in the
massage chair.

MARIO

Launder the money. Like the mob does.

DOMINGOS

You need a legit business to do that.

MARIO

Buy one.

DOMINGOS

You got something in mind?

Mario segues to the bar. Shoots seltzer in a lowball. Wets his whistle.

MARIO

There's a club for sale over on twenty-ninth. It'd be perfect.

Domingos shuts off the massage chair. Approaches Mario with an intense look.

DOMINGOS

You know something, Mario?

Mario steels himself.

DOMINGOS

I'm liking you more and more.

The two clink glasses.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DAY

Place is littered with dropcloths. Power tools. Tito chases a group of carpenters and painters. Barks out orders. Mario and Domingos walk into the chaos. A FOREMAN approaches.

DOMINGOS

How's it going, Pedro?

FOREMAN

Everything's on schedule, Senhor Salazar.

Domingos pats the foreman on the back.

DOMINGOS
That's what I like to hear.

Foreman walks off.

DOMINGOS
(to Mario)
I'm having them increase the
size of the dance floor.
Should draw a larger crowd.

MARIO
Not to mention pump up your
cash flow. The more money we
take in...
(lowers his voice)
... the more we can launder.

Domingos slings his arm around Mario.

DOMINGOS
You might get that C-P-A after
all.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT (WEEKS LATER)

Spotlights crisscross the jamming dance floor. Looking
suave in a Versace jacket, Mario swaggers up to Domingos.

MARIO
Tito says the line outside
wraps around the block.

DOMINGOS
Picked up the paper on the way
in. There's a review of the
club.

Domingos swipes a flute of champagne off a waiter's tray.

DOMINGOS
It says the Pink Lady, with
its extended dance floor and
multiple bars, makes Studio
Fifty-four look like a moose
lodge.

Mario high-fives Domingos. Tito comes hustling up.

TITO

Domingos. There's a call for
you at the main bar. It's Dom
Afonso.

With a serious expression, Domingos walks off. Tito catches Mario in an awkward glance.

TITO

It perplexes you, doesn't it?

MARIO

What's that?

TITO

My relationship with Domingos.

MARIO

Hey, it's none of my --

TITO

Domingos saved my life. Did
he tell you that?

Mario shakes his head.

TITO

I used to turn tricks downtown.
Businessmen looking for a
quicke on their lunch hour.

Tito watches Domingos engaged in a heated telephone conversation.

TITO

One day, this older,
distinguished gentleman
approached me. We went into
an alley behind a bar. After
we did it...

Traces a small scar on his cheek.

TITO

... he began beating me. At
first with his fists. Then
with a metal trash can.

Turns back to Mario.

TITO

When I came to, this angelic
face was hovering over me.

Tito's eyes brighten.

TITO

It was Domingos. He took me
to his apartment and nursed
me back to health.

Seeing Domingos return, Tito smiles.

TITO

We've been together ever since.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mario, Domingos and Tito sway out of the club.

MARIO

What did Afonso want?

DOMINGOS

Percentage of the action from
Vasco's turf.

Black 750i rolls up.

DOMINGOS

I told him I'd think about it.

Mario holds out money for the valet.

He rushes by without taking it.

INT. 750i

Mario and Domingos hop in the front seat.

Gun barrels thrust against the back of their skulls.

TITO (O.S.)

Domingos!

Domingos glances out the corner of his eye.

Glimpses two no-necks dragging Tito away.

AFONSO'S LIEUTENANT (O.S.)

Drive.

Domingos shifts his gaze into the rearview.

Confronts the unsettling stare of --

AFONSO's psychotic LIEUTENANT.

Gun COCKS behind Domingos' ear.

AFONSO'S LIEUTENANT

Do it!

Domingos slams the Beemer in gear.

PEELS OUT.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

750i parks under the twisted shadow of a towering crane. Slowly, Mario and Domingos get out. At gunpoint, Afonso's lieutenant marches them to the edge of a muddy trench.

MARIO

Come on, man, we can work something --

AFONSO'S LIEUTENANT

Shut the fuck up!

Silver stretch sails up. DOM AFONSO, 60, his brutish looks clash with his aristocratic flair, steps out. Bodyguard shoves Tito out the other side.

DOMINGOS

Dom Afonso --

Lambskin glove smacks Domingos. The dom circles his three captives like a vulture circling its prey.

DOM AFONSO

Carlito Vasco was an employee of mine. The territory he and his crew worked belongs to me.

Dom Afonso fingers the lapel of Mario's sharkskin.

DOM AFONSO
You now run those blocks.
Sixty percent of the cash you
rake in belongs to me.

The dom comes face to face with Domingos.

DOM AFONSO
I want my money.

DOMINGOS
As I see it, you owe me.

The dom steps back. Assesses Domingos' poker face in the moonlight.

DOM AFONSO
How do you figure?

DOMINGOS
When I confronted Vasco about
rippin' me off, he said you
gave the order.

The dom flashes an insincere smile.

DOM AFONSO
Next to stuffing his fat face,
Vasco's favorite preoccupation
was shading the truth.

DOMINGOS
He confessed while staring
down a nine millimeter.

DOM AFONSO
All the more reason to lie.

Dom Afonso paces in front of the three men.

DOM AFONSO
You've placed me in a very
awkward position. By killing
Vasco, you've given others the
impression I'm no longer in
control.

Looks Mario in the eye.

DOM AFONSO
You know, of course, what that
means.

Dom Afonso steps in front of Domingos.

DOM AFONSO
As I see it, I have two
choices. Either I kill you...

Domingos' eyes dart around searching for an escape.

DOM AFONSO
... or I make you part of my
organization.

Dom Afonso tightens the knot on Domingos' silk tie.

DOM AFONSO
What would you do if you were
in my shoes?

The dom throttles Domingos with his beefy hands.

Kisses him on both cheeks.

DOM AFONSO
(in Portuguese)
Welcome to the family!

Mario and Domingos exchange smiles of relief.

Afonso casually nods to his lieutenant.

.357 is plastered against Tito's temple.

GUNSHOT blows his brains out sideways.

DOMINGOS
No... !

Afonso seizes Domingos.

DOM AFONSO
In case you forget who you're
dealing with.

Afonso's lieutenant kicks Tito's lifeless body into the
muddy trench. The dom and his entourage climb back in
the limo.

The headlights swing around. Mario glimpses the pure hatred in Domingos' eyes.

INT. ROW HOUSE - DAY

Christina carries a cranky Francisco Jr. into the bedroom.

CHRISTINA
Sounds like you, little fellow,
are ready for your nap.

Feels the baby's bottom.

CHRISTINA
Better change your diaper
first.

Christina lays the infant on the bed. Sits down next to him. Christina feels something underneath her.

CHRISTINA
What in the world --

Christina slides her hand between the box spring and mattress. Pulls out a Tech-9 machine pistol. Her jaw drops.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Christina slaps Mario hard.

CHRISTINA
You lied to me!

Dumps the Tech-9 on the couch.

CHRISTINA
You're working for Domingos,
aren't you?

Grabs Mario by his lapels.

CHRISTINA
How could you, Mario?

Mario shoves Christina away.

MARIO

In case you've forgotten, we
were this close to being
tossed out on the street.

CHRISTINA

You were the one who told my
father you didn't need his
help.

MARIO

And I don't.

Mario picks up the machine pistol off the sofa.

MARIO

You've got nothing to worry
about, Christina.

CHRISTINA

Are you kidding me?

Snatches the Tech-9 from Mario.

CHRISTINA

How could you bring this into
our bedroom? Where our baby
sleeps.

Mario steals back the gun.

CHRISTINA

You've got to stop, Mario.
Whatever you're into, you've
got to get out. Now.

Mario walks away. Spins around.

MARIO

It's not just about the money,
Christina. It's about
self-respect.

Anger in Mario's eyes gives way to pride.

MARIO

I look in the mirror now and
I'm proud of what I see.

CHRISTINA

If you need that gun or those
designer clothes to make you
feel like a man, then you need
to start looking in a
different mirror.

Christina beats her husband out the door.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOFTOP - DAY

Metal door swings open.

Mario steps out into the morning sun.

.9 millimeter is jammed underneath his jaw.

DOMINGOS (O.S.)

Were you tailed?

MARIO

No.

Domingos lowers the Glock. Lobs a small, shiny disk to
Mario.

DOMINGOS

Found that bug in my ride.
There were two more in the
condo.

MARIO

Who planted them?

DOMINGOS

Who the fuck do you think?

Angrily points to the listening device in Mario's hand.

DOMINGOS

Do you know what that means?
Afonso has access to me
anytime he wants.

Domingos brandishes his gun.

DOMINGOS

I gonna take that sonovabitch
out.

(beat)

I need to know if you got my
back?

Mario looks worried.

MARIO

If you take out Afonso, it
could start a war.

Domingos walks over to the edge of the rooftop. His
eyes make a sweep of the city.

DOMINGOS

Already had a sit-down with
os Machetes. All the crews
from Twelfth Street up to
Twenty-third. They all fuckin'
had it with Afonso claiming
his sixty percent.

Turns back to Mario with a determined gaze.

DOMINGOS

If I whack Afonso, all the
bangers will back me. In
exchange, seventy percent of
what they deal, pimp or heist
on their turf, they get to
keep.

Domingos closes in on Mario. Still gripping the Glock.

DOMINGOS

I need to know, homes... are
you down with this?

Mario looks away. Domingos palms his face. Compels
Mario to look at him.

MARIO

I've got a family, Domingos.

DOMINGOS

And I had Tito!

Domingos points the Glock at Mario. Then at himself.

DOMINGOS
How long you think it'll take
before Afonso puts a bullet in
our heads?

Paces the rooftop.

DOMINGOS
We've been bustin' moves.
Kicking out new biz.
Expanding our operation.

Domingos stops. Zones in on Mario.

DOMINGOS
Don't you get it? Afonso
don't see us working for him.
Afonso sees us as the
competition.

(beat)
And how do you get rid of the
competition?

Domingos holds up the .9 millimeter. The other hand
weighs heavily on Mario's shoulder.

DOMINGOS
What's it gonna be, Mario?
Are you in or out?

INT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Bloodless moon shines eerily. Mario, Domingos and Tito
stand at the edge of a muddy trench. Afonso cocks a gun
in Tito's face. Changes his mind. Levels the barrel
between Mario's eyes. GUNSHOT.

INT. ROW HOUSE

Screaming, Mario sits bolt upright in bed. Jolts
Christina from a sound sleep.

MARIO
I'm sorry -- I'm sorry.

The baby wails in his crib. Christina whips off the
covers.

MARIO

I've got him.

Mario swings out of bed. Scoops up Francisco Jr. in his arms. Gently rocks him.

INT. 750i - NIGHT

Mario and Domingos observe a shadowy figure...

... slipping out of a black minivan.

The assassin nimbly scales a brick wall.

Disappears onto an estate.

MARIO

Who is he?

DOMINGOS

Mechanic for the Triads.

Checks his TAG Heuer.

DOMINGOS

Showtime, homes.

Domingos cranks the V-8. Steers up to an iron gate. Armed guard waves him through.

INT. MANSION

Dining table is elegantly set. Bodyguard pulls out a chair for Dom Afonso. Mario and Domingos seat themselves.

DOM AFONSO

I'm so glad you accepted my invitation.

Nods his approval for a bottle of wine.

DOM AFONSO

Especially since we started off with such unfortunate circumstances.

Subtly, Domingos glances at his watch.

EXT. MANSION

Patrolling in a golf cart, two armed GUARDS spot one of Afonso's Dobermans lying motionless on the manicured lawn. Guard #1 cautiously approaches. Spies a throwing knife sticking out of the dog's ribs.

GUARD #1

Sound the alarm!

Assassin vaults from the darkness.

Slashes the guard's throat.

GUARD #2

Hey!

Second guard whips out his gun.

Assassin flings a pair of poisoned shurikens.

The metal stars imbed in the guard's chest.

He keels over dead.

INT. MANSION

Visibly tense, Mario and Domingos watch Dom Afonso devour his shrimp cocktail.

DOM AFONSO

How do you like the prawns? I had them flown in from the gulf.

Dabs his mouth with a linen napkin.

DOM AFONSO

I would like to discuss our business arrangement.

DOMINGOS

I wanna talk about something else.

Domingos sits back in his chair. Looks directly at Dom Afonso.

DOMINGOS

That night at the construction site. The night you had Tito killed. You destroyed the most important thing in my life.

Domingos lifts his silver knife. Twirls it in his hand.

DOMINGOS

I don't expect you to understand. When you lose someone you love, it's like part of the sky has fallen in.

Looking uneasy, Dom Afonso pushes his plate aside.

DOMINGOS

I was raised a Catholic, as I'm sure you was. You know for every sin, there is a penance.

Afonso ejects from his chair.

DOM AFONSO

Gustavo!

Domingos lunges at the dom.

Plunges the dinner knife in Afonso's heart.

Bodyguard draws his weapon.

Mario CRACKS him with the wine bottle.

DOMINGOS

Mario!

Afonso's lieutenant BURSTS through the French doors.

Uzi CHATTERS AWAY.

Afonso's lieutenant falls face down on the dining table.

Assassin appears behind him. Yanks a dagger out of his back.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Mario shuffles in wearing the same suit he wore the night before. Reaches for the fridge. Christina strides in. Fires the morning paper at her husband.

CHRISTINA

You just keep getting deeper
and deeper.

Mario checks out the newspaper.

INSERT - FRONT PAGE

Headline reads: "MURDER IN THE MANSION - GANGLAND BOSS
EXECUTED".

RETURN TO SCENE

Christina stares at Mario like a stranger.

CHRISTINA

I don't know you anymore.

MARIO

That's 'cause you still
remember the innocent kid from
the hood who had the dumb idea
he could go to college.

Mario shoves the newspaper back at Christina.

MARIO

I have a different set of
dreams now.

Mario heads for the door.

CHRISTINA

Don't you see what you're
doing to yourself? To us?

MARIO

What do you want from me,
Christina? I put a roof over
your head and food on the
table.

CHRISTINA

At what price, Mario?

Holds up the newspaper.

CHRISTINA

I don't want to be somebody's
headline.

Christina storms out.

INT. ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Silently, Christina slips into jeans and a sweater.
Stirred from sleep, Mario rolls over in bed. Christina
freezes like a statue.

HALLWAY

Clutching the baby, Christina tip-toes. Isabella steps
out of the bathroom. Senses another's presence.

ISABELLA

Who's there?

Christina has an "Ah Shit" look on her face.

CHRISTINA

It's me, mama.

ISABELLA

What are you doing up?

CHRISTINA

Um, Francisco couldn't sleep.
I'm going to warm up some
formula.

ISABELLA

Would you like some company?

Nervously, Christina looks back at Mario's bedroom.

CHRISTINA

Thanks, mama, but there's no
sense in both of us turning
into insomniacs.

ISABELLA

Goodnight, my dear.

Isabella retires to her bedroom. Looking guilty, Christina hurries out of the house with the baby.

INT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Doorbell RINGS annoyingly. Half awake, Royce descends the stairs. Opens the front door. Clinging to Francisco Jr., Christina stands in the doorway.

ROYCE

Christina?

Christina brushes her tears away.

CHRISTINA

I want to come home, daddy.

Pamela appears at Royce's side. Seeing her daughter and grandson, her face shows no emotion. The baby smiles at Pamela. You can see the ice melt around her heart.

PAMELA

Come in, Christina.

Hesitantly, Christina walks in with Francisco Jr. Pamela steps closer.

PAMELA

May I?

Christina offers the baby. Pamela takes him in her arms. Rocks her grandson with love.

EXT. LUXURY TOWN HOUSE - DAY

Red Corvette SKIDS to a halt.

Mario bails out.

Pounds on the front door.

MARIO

Christina! Christina!

Door swings open. Royce greets his son-in-law with a hard look.

MARIO
I want to see my wife.

ROYCE
She doesn't want to see you.

Mario charges forward.

The bigger man --

Royce stiff-arms Mario.

Staggers him backwards.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)
Father!

Christina sidles up to Royce.

CHRISTINA
I'll handle this.

Royce shoots Mario a warning look. Leaves.

MARIO
What are you doing here?

CHRISTINA
I could ask you the same thing.

Christina sweeps the blond strands from her tired face.

CHRISTINA
I can't take it anymore, Mario.
The lies. The guns. The
secret things you do for
Domingos.

MARIO
This isn't your home,
Christina. You belong with me.

Mario clamps down on Christina's arm.

She jerks free.

CHRISTINA

I don't... I can't live with
you anymore.

Christina closes the door.

Mario braces it open.

MARIO

You want to walk out on me?
Cool.

Mario shoves open the door.

Sends Christina reeling.

MARIO

You are not taking Francisco!

INT. LUXURY TOWNHOUSE

Mario marches into the foyer.

Royce hurries out of the study.

Mario draws a gun.

Levels it at Royce.

ROYCE

You pull that trigger, you
will go to prison and never
see your son again.

Mario thumbs the hammer back.

CHRISTINA

Mario!

MARIO

Shut up!

Mario watches Royce.

He doesn't sweat.

He doesn't budge.

CHRISTINA

Mario, please...

Beretta shakes in Mario's hand.

Gun GOES OFF.

SHATTERS a mirror on the wall.

Mario clears out.

INT. STRETCH LIMO - DAY

Mario sits in back blindfolded. Tough looking BODYGUARD keeps him company. Limo stops. Bodyguard pops open Mario's door.

BODYGUARD

Get out.

EXT. STRETCH LIMO

Awkwardly, Mario climbs out. Black sash is yanked from his eyes. Squinting into the sun, Mario finds himself on familiar turf. Sees Domingos grinning.

MARIO

Why did you bring me here?

Looks around the manicured estate.

MARIO

This is Afonso's place.

DOMINGOS

Was Afonso's place.

Domingos makes a grand gesture.

DOMINGOS

It's all mine now.

INT. MANSION

Domingos leads Mario into a cavernous living room. Their footsteps ECHO off the bare walls.

MARIO

Where's all the furniture?

DOMINGOS

Sold it. I'm having the
whole joint redecorated.

Looks around wistfully.

DOMINGOS

That was Tito's specialty.
Knowing how to jazz up a place.

Mario detects a sadness in Domingos' tone.

MARIO

You miss him, don't you?

DOMINGOS

We was more than lovers.
Tito was my best friend.
My mentor.

Domingos paces the spacious room. Imagines pictures and
prints on the vacant walls.

DOMINGOS

He taught me about fine dining
and fine art. Made me read
books by Strindberg and
Hemingway.

Smiles at Mario.

DOMINGOS

Even taught me the difference
between a salad and a dinner
fork.

Domingos wanders back to Mario.

DOMINGOS

Most important thing I learned
from Tito...

Straightens Mario's linen jacket.

DOMINGOS

... was how to be a man.

Domingos curves his hands around Mario's face.

DOMINGOS
That's what I've been trying
to teach you.

EXT. MANSION - POOL - DAY (ONE MONTH LATER)

Domingos bobs up and down in a floating lounge chair.
Mario's Guccis CLICK on the terra cotta as he
approaches.

MARIO
Why is Felipe packing the limo?

DOMINGOS
I'm flying to Jack City.
There's business I need to
take care of.

Domingos sips his frozen Daiquiri.

DOMINGOS
I want you to handle something
while I'm gone.

MARIO
Name it.

DOMINGOS
Hundred keys of smack.

MARIO
Who's the connect?

DOMINGOS
Some micks from the south side.
I checked 'em out.

Domingos paddles toward the shallow end.

MARIO
Why are we doing business with
a bunch of southies?

DOMINGOS
'Cause they're paying
twenty-three-five a key. That
works out to an extra hundred
and fifty grand in our pockets.

Domingos ascends the pool steps. Mario helps him into his silk robe.

MARIO

Why would anyone pay more than the going rate?

DOMINGOS

They want the entire shipment by tomorrow night.

Polishes off his cocktail.

DOMINGOS

Word is, these paddies are front men for the Provos. They're gonna smuggle the shit into the U-K and sell it there.

Domingos eases into a pair of velvet slippers.

DOMINGOS

It's a kick, ain't it? The cash these southies make off the heroin in London will buy pipe bombs and M-sixteens for the I-R-A.

MARIO

That's what I call an entrepreneur.

DOMINGOS

That's what I call takin' care of business.

Laughing, the two stroll into the mansion.

INT. ROW HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mario slams a fresh clip in his Beretta. Photograph on the dresser catches his eye.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

Humorous picture of Mario and Christina that Francisco took the night of the homecoming dance.

RETURN TO SCENE

Mario swats the photograph off the dresser. Picture frame SHATTERS on the hardwood. With a forlorn look, Mario picks up the photograph.

INT. BAR - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Nervously, Mario paces. Two mountainous bodyguards play dominoes on top of a beer keg. Staccato KNOCK at the door. Mario's eyes flash to a closed circuit T.V.

MARIO

It's them.

One of Mario's earth movers unbolts the door. FLANAGAN, 35, has Boston Irish written all over him, peers in.

FLANAGAN

Someone order a male stripper?

Flanagan steps in. Bodyguard blocks three more southies from entering.

MARIO

(to Flanagan)

You and one other.

Flanagan nods to one of his cohorts. The Irish gangsters saunter in with duffle bags. Bodyguard bolts the door. Other bodyguard pats down the southies.

FLANAGAN

(looks around)

If I knew we were gonna meet
in a dump like this, I woulda
stayed in Dorchester.

MARIO

Which one of you is Flanagan?

Flanagan daintily waves at Mario.

MARIO

Let me see it.

Flanagan and his cohort unzip the duffle bags. Bundles of cash tumble out.

FLANAGAN

You've seen my green. Now
where's the smack?

Mario snaps a tarp off a table. Scores of kilos of heroin are neatly stacked. Flanagan whips out a butterfly knife. Slits one of the packages. Taste tests the dope.

FLANAGAN

Ah, mother's milk.

Flanagan's cohort back kicks the bolted door.

Steps aside.

EXPLOSION blows the door off its hinges.

S.W.A.T. team swarms in.

FLANAGAN

You bozos are under arrest!

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Flanagan stands guard over Mario. Door flies open. FONSECA, 40, always appears to be racing the clock, bursts in.

FONSECA

I'm Assistant District
Attorney Fonseca.

Pulls up a chair opposite Mario.

FONSECA

Let's see...

Fonseca extracts a file from a leather briefcase. Reads aloud.

FONSECA

... trafficking in a
controlled substance.
Possession of an unregistered
firearm. Resisting arrest.
And the cherry on the pie...

Stares at Mario over his designer glasses.

FONSECA

... conspiracy to murder of one
Afonso Bomtempo.

Fonseca closes the file.

FONSECA

Option one. Full ride to
Walpole. Mandatory minimum.
Twenty-five years.

Mario casts his eyes downward.

FONSECA

Option two. Five years
minimum security. Another
five probation. You're back
on the street before your
twenty-fifth birthday. All of
this in exchange for...

Removes his spectacles.

FONSECA

... Domingos Salazar.

Mario leans across the table.

MARIO

Forget it.

Abruptly, Fonseca packs up his briefcase and glasses.
Pushes away from the table.

FONSECA

I suggest you get an attorney,
son. You're going to need one.

Fonseca leaves. Finding no relief in Flanagan's
unwavering stare, Mario bows his head.

INT. COUNTY LOCK-UP - VISITATION AREA - DAY

Mario sits apprehensively behind a bullet-proof window.
A guard ushers in his mother-in-law. Pamela takes a
seat facing Mario. The two speak through telephones.

PAMELA

Let's get something straight.
Only reason I'm here is
because of my daughter.

MARIO

How is Christina?

PAMELA

What do you want, Mario?

Mario takes a deep breath.

MARIO

Christina said you're one of
the best lawyers in Boston.
I want... I'd like you to
represent me.

Pamela hangs up. Heads for the exit. Stops. Returns
to her seat. Picks up the phone.

PAMELA

What are the charges?

MARIO

It's a grocery list. Top of
the pile is conspiracy to
murder.

Pamela sits back. Scrutinizes Mario through the
bullet-proof glass.

PAMELA

First of all, I handle civil
litigation, not criminal.
Secondly, what makes you think
I would even want to help you?

MARIO

'Cause we're connected by blood.
No matter what you think of me,
Francisco is still my son.

PAMELA

Maybe I want you to stay in
jail. Keep you out of my
grandson's life.

Slight grin forms on Mario's lips.

MARIO

I'm sure you do.

Mario leans close to the glass separating them. His eyes pierce Pamela's.

MARIO

Among the Portuguese, when someone has done something kind for you, you're obligated to repay the favor.

PAMELA

What are you talking about?

MARIO

When you threw Christina out, my family took her in. Treated her like one of our own.

Pamela stares blankly at her son-in-law. Getting the message, Mario hangs up. Starts back to his cell. Pamela knocks on the glass. Mario looks back. Slowly, Pamela nods her head.

INT. COUNTY LOCK-UP - TWO DAYS LATER

Mario watches a guard unlock his cell. He signals someone down the corridor. Reluctantly, Pamela walks in. Cell door SLAMS behind her. Startles her. Mario vacates the metal bed.

MARIO

Sit down.

Pamela looks around at the dingy, dirty cell.

PAMELA

I prefer to stand.

Pamela notes Mario's shiner and swollen lip.

PAMELA

What happened to you?

MARIO

My former cellmate liked me.
A lot.

Gently touches this black eye.

MARIO

That's why they transferred me
to solitary.

PAMELA

I convinced the district
attorney to drop the
conspiracy and trafficking
charges.

MARIO

How the hell did you do that?

PAMELA

The D-A is a Yalie grad like
me. He also knows Royce.
They golf at the same country
club.

Pamela's leg accidentally rubs against the stainless
steel toilet. Quickly, she moves away.

PAMELA

On the possession, the D-A is
offering three years probation
with the first six months in a
halfway house. All you have
to do --

MARIO

Is roll over on my boss.
(beat)
Otherwise?

PAMELA

Five years maximum security.
No chance of parole.

Mario presses his face against the metal bars. Gazes at
a beam of sunlight.

MARIO

If I sign on, how does it go
down?

PAMELA

Both the D-E-A and Vice have
Salazar under surveillance.

Surprised, Mario turns back to Pamela.

PAMELA

Supposedly, he had a meet
yesterday with Chinese...

MARIO

Triads.

Making a face, Pamela motions to the expose toilet.

PAMELA

Can you...

Mario grabs a towel. Throws it over the yawning commode.

PAMELA

It appears your boss is
seeking to expand his illegal
enterprise. The D-A wants you
to wear a wire.

Mario walks to the rear of the cell. Looks boxed in.

PAMELA

When the case is brought to
trial, you will provide
corroborating testimony for
the prosecution.

MARIO

What about witness protection?

PAMELA

Only the Feds offer that. If
and when they bring their own
charges against your boss
would you be able to negotiate
that.

Mario glances around the cell. Realizes he's backed
himself into a corner.

PAMELA

The district attorney's offer
is good for twenty-four hours.
After that...

Pamela sticks her hand between the bars and waves.

MARIO
Does Christina ever ask about
me?

Pamela turns back to Mario.

PAMELA
Occasionally.

Jangling keys, the guard opens the cell door. Pamela steps out. Mario rushes after her.

MARIO
Tell the D-A -- he's got a
deal.

The guard locks Mario in. Escorts Pamela away.

INT. STRETCH LIMO - DAY

Mario ducks in the back seat.

Domingos hurls a champagne flute against the wet bar.

SMASHES it.

MARIO
It wasn't my fault, Domingos!

Pissed off, Domingos stares out the tinted window.

MARIO
Cops must've been staking out
the bar.

Domingos shoots Mario a distrustful look.

DOMINGOS
How come you wasn't busted?

MARIO
I... I ran out the back.

Abruptly, Domingos raises his hand. Mario flinches. No punch. Domingos massages Mario's neck.

DOMINGOS
At least you didn't get nailed.

Mario starts breathing again.

DOMINGOS

I cinched a deal this weekend
that makes those hundred keys
the cops impounded look like
chump change.

Kicks back in the leather seat.

DOMINGOS

So... you got anymore
champagne in this buggy?

EXT. ROW HOUSE - DAY

Mario unlocks the door to his Vette.

White van SCREECHES to a halt. Side door is thrown open.

Two bruisers yank Mario inside.

Van BURNS RUBBER.

INT. VAN

Mario is squeezed between the two bruisers. Flanagan
climbs in back from the front seat.

FLANAGAN

Guess what our I-T guys
discovered monitoring the
internet activity on your
home computer?

Mario looks away. Flanagan leans his body. Annoyingly
maintains eye contact with Mario.

FLANAGAN

Purchase of not one, not two,
but three airline tickets to
the warm and sunny isle of
Aruba.

Flanagan grabs a fistful of Mario's coiffed hair. Pulls
him face to face.

FLANAGAN

You weren't thinking about
skipping out on us? Were ya,
pally?

Flanagan and the two big undercover cops stare Mario
down.

MARIO

Another meet's been set up
with the Triads.

FLANAGAN

And you were going to tell me
this when?

MARIO

I was headed to a pay phone
when you got the drop on me.

Flanagan nods to the large cops. They give Mario space.

MARIO

Tomorrow at midnight. The
Pink Lady.

FLANAGAN

Who are the players?

MARIO

Triads are flying in their dai
lo from Hong Kong.

FLANAGAN

Die what?

MARIO

Dai lo. It means big brother
or boss.

FLANAGAN

Ya don't say.

Thoughtfully scratches his five o'clock shadow.

FLANAGAN

What about Salazar?

MARIO

He'll be there.

Flanagan pokes Mario in the chest with his bony finger.

FLANAGAN

You'd better be there too,
pally.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Flanked by four gunmen, Domingos sits at a table. Walking point, Mario leads the DAI LO, 65, polished like a museum curator, and a pair of bodyguards in.

MARIO

Domingos Salazar.

Domingos stands. Mario gestures to their guest.

MARIO

Mister Chen Yee. Dai Lo of
the Red Dragons.

Domingos and the dai lo exchange slight bows. Dai lo is seated by a bodyguard. Mario pulls the chair for Domingos. His police wire peeks out. Quickly, Mario retreats out of the spotlight. Tucks in the microphone.

DOMINGOS

If it's all right with you,
Mister Yee, I'd like to get
straight to business.

Dai lo sweeps his hand. Signals his agreement.

DOMINGOS

I need a thousand keys a week
of China White.

DAI LO

That's rather ambitious, don't
you think?

DOMINGOS

Citywide, my organization
controls eighty percent of all
street level drug transactions.
On top of that, I got
secondary distributors in
Newark, Philadelphia, Miami.

DAI LO
Apparently, business is good.

DOMINGOS
Business is obscene.

Dai lo holds up two fingers. Bodyguard double times it with a cigarette and holder.

DAI LO
May I?

Mimicking the dai lo, Domingos sweeps his hand. Signals his agreement.

DAI LO
I have only one concern,
Mister Salazar.

Bodyguard lights the dai lo's cigarette. Backs away.

DAI LO
How shall my organization
receive payment?

Domingos motions to Mario standing in the shadows.

MARIO (O.S)
The funds will be held in
escrow in a Bahamian account.

Mario steps into the spotlight.

MARIO
There will be two access codes.

Stands beside Domingos.

MARIO
One to wire the money in. The
other code, which will be date
and time sensitive, will
release the funds at the
moment of the product's
delivery.

Thinking, the dai lo takes a draw off his cigarette.
Holds it.

DAI LO

I shall have three hundred and
thirty-three kilos delivered
at a time and place of your
choosing.

Slowly releases the cigarette smoke through his nostrils.

DAI LO

If payment transacts as you
say, I will triple the
shipments from that point --

Battering ram BREAKS down the front door.

D.E.A. and Vice pour in.

FLANAGAN

Police! Freeze!

Gunmen open up with AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. Cops return FIRE.

Red laser dot appears on Domingos' chest.

MARIO

Domingos!

Mario knocks his boss sideways.

Sniper's bullet rips through Mario's suit jacket.

Domingos tugs at Mario lying crumpled on the parquet.

DOMINGOS

C'mon!

MARIO

I can't... move.

Domingos' hand slips -- it's slick with Mario's blood.

DOMINGOS

Oh, shit.

Hunkering, Domingos hauls Mario between the CROSSFIRE.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - ROOFTOP

Domingos trips and falls carrying Mario.

Police microphone dangles out of Mario's shirt.

DOMINGOS

You?

Domingos rips the mike from Mario's body.

DOMINGOS

You set me up?

Centers a .9 millimeter between Mario's tearful eyes.

DOMINGOS

Why?

Domingos cocks the hammer.

DOMINGOS

I treated you like blood.
Like familia.

MARIO

I'm sorry, Domingos.
(in Portuguese)
Forgive me --

Narcs rush out of the stairwell.

Domingos CUTS LOOSE with the Glock.

Drops the cops where they stand.

Domingos drags Mario behind a vent stack.

FLANAGAN (O.S.)

Give it up, Salazar!

Domingos BLASTS away with his semi-automatic.

Scatters a charging S.W.A.T. team.

Domingos ducks down. Shoves in a fresh clip.

MARIO

Do what they say.

DOMINGOS

No way, bro.

Domingos whips out a second Glock. Checks its load.

DOMINGOS
I turn myself in, I'm looking
at a one-way ticket to the
chair.

FLANAGAN (O.S.)
Last chance, Domingos!

Domingos cocks both guns. Mario latches onto Domingos.

MARIO
Don't do it.

Gripping the Glockes -- Domingos grasps Mario's face.
Kisses him emphatically on the lips.

DOMINGOS
(in Portuguese)
Farewell, my brother.

Domingos leaps up. Lays down a BARRAGE of hot lead.
Domingos makes a dash for the stairwell.

FLANAGAN (O.S.)
Domingos!

Flanagan steps out from behind an A/C unit.
Domingos spins around. Flanagan fires a KILL SHOT.
Domingos falls dead -- his body inches away from the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL - I.C.U. - NIGHT

Feeding tubes and monitors are plugged into Mario's body.
Isabella and Teresa maintain a silent vigil. TAP on the
door. Teresa sees Christina through the glass. Opens up.

CHRISTINA
How is he?

TERESA
He was shot in the back. Doc
says the bullet severed his
spine.
(beat)
Even if he survives, Mario
will never...

Christina looks beyond Teresa. Glimpses Mario on life support.

CHRISTINA
I'd like to see him.

TERESA
He won't know you're here.

CHRISTINA
Please.

ISABELLA (O.S.)
Teresa.

Teresa steps aside. Slowly, Christina approaches Mario. Grips her husband's lifeless hand. Quietly weeps.

EXT. PARK - DAY (MONTHS LATER)

Bundled up in a wheelchair, Mario watches a flock of geese fly south. Christina approaches undetected. Catches her husband in a stolen moment.

CHRISTINA
Your mother said you still
come here.

Mario cranes his neck to see his wife. Says nothing. Christina takes in the vibrant autumn colors.

CHRISTINA
You know I haven't been to the
park since...

MARIO
Since you left me?

Mario looks serenely into Christina's pained expression.

MARIO
They told me you came to the
hospital.

CHRISTINA
I did.

Mario gazes back at the pond.

MARIO
Why are you here now?

CHRISTINA
I wanted to see you.

MARIO
In a wheelchair?

Christina appears uncomfortable with the question.

MARIO
How's Francisco?

FRANCISCO
He eats a lot.

Faint smile crosses Mario's lips.

CHRISTINA
You can come to see him
anytime.

MARIO
You know I --

Mario glances at his watch. Releases the brakes on his wheelchair.

MARIO
I need to go.

CHRISTINA
Somewhere I can drive you?

MARIO
Coach Lanier is picking me up.

CHRISTINA
Are you going back to school?

MARIO
Kind of.

Mario wheels himself down a path. Christina keeps up.

MARIO
I help train the varsity
soccer team.

(MORE)

MARIO (CONT'D)

In exchange, coach helps me
study for my G-E-D.

Looks over at Christina.

MARIO

What about you?

CHRISTINA

My parents are bugging me to
finish my final year. Can you
imagine that? I'd be the
oldest senior in the history
of Woodmoor.

EXT. SIDEWALK

Mario looks down the busy street. Christina blocks his view.

CHRISTINA

You started to say something
back there.

Mario shifts his attention to his wife.

MARIO

Before...

Fixates on the wheelchair.

MARIO

... before this happened, I
bought three plane tickets to
Aruba.

Mario looks at Christina.

MARIO

They were for you, me and
Francisco. When we first
dated, you used to say --

CHRISTINA

I want to run away with you.

Christina kneels down. Gets on Mario's level.

CHRISTINA

The reason I came, Mario, is
to find out...

Silently, Mario watches Christina struggle with the words.

CHRISTINA

... if there's anything... any
love left between us?

Christina takes hold of Mario's hand.

CHRISTINA

I still care for you, Mario.
And in time, I think we could
find that special love we once
had.

MARIO

It would never be the same.

Mario rolls. Christina grabs the wheelchair. Stops Mario.

CHRISTINA

Because you're in a wheelchair?

MARIO

Because of a lot of things!

Mario takes a breath. Calms himself.

MARIO

What kind of future can I
offer you? What kind of
father can I be to Francisco?

CHRISTINA

You can be anything you want.

MARIO

Now you sound like pops.

Christina leans into Mario.

CHRISTINA

If you feel your life has been
shortchanged, it's not because
of this wheelchair...

Taps at Mario's heart.

CHRISTINA

... it's because you gave up
here.

Seeing no change in Mario's expression, Christina walks
away. Mario pushes off in the other direction. Stops.
Pounds the armrests of his wheelchair.

STREET CORNER

Christina waits for the light. Mario glides up next to her.

MARIO

Say...

Surprised, Christina looks at Mario.

MARIO

... you wouldn't know where
you can get a pastrami
sandwich around here, would ya?

Christina's frowning face transforms into a glowing smile.

CHRISTINA

As a matter of fact --

Old Chevy pulls up. Coach Lanier toots the HORN.

MARIO

Pick me up after practice?

CHRISTINA

It's a date.

Mario extends his hand. Christina takes hold of it.
Coach Lanier hustles up.

COACH

Hey, da Costa. Are you going
to flirt with your wife all
day or are you coming to
practice?

Holding hands, Mario and Christina laugh.

FADE OUT.