

Extend my credit. Give me the Bears on Sunday.
Double or nothing.

LUTHER

That's how we got into this mess. I knew better than to let you double down at eight but I was doin' you a solid. It's over now; I can't do it. Cutler tanks and you're into me for thirty-two thousand and that can't happen. Anyway, you want to gamble on paper only and I need cash in hand, right?

KEVIN

Meanwhile the juice is adding up.

LUTHER

That's right, our debts just get bigger, yours and mine.

FRANCO

I'd lay it off with another bookie if I could--

KEVIN

If you could find someone who'll let you bet sixteen grand that you don't have. And you can't find that.

LUTHER

Credit's dried up all over.

KEVIN

And word's out on you.

LUTHER

And word's out on you, Frank. So what are we going to do about this situation? Cause I'm worried.

FRANCO

Let it ride, double or nothing, one more week.

KEVIN

The fuck.

FRANCO

Let it ride. Bears plus three-and-a-half.

Luther winces, grabs his stomach.

LUTHER

Got any milk?

Franco gets Luther a glass of milk.

LUTHER (cont'd)

Ulcer. Like I swallowed a hot coal. My wife's sister showed up at the apartment last week, from Puerto Rico, left her husband or he kicked her out, some fucking thing, nobody has a job, brought her two kids with her. They're living in our dining room, for Christ's sake, got their toys spread out all over. I wake up in the morning and all I hear all day is these electronic video games and computers. I live with robots. I said, "Marisol, for the love of God, your sister can't afford to rent a place for her and her kids but she's got more electronics than NASA." My wife bawled me out. You know Marisol: "Chu got no caring is what. Chu got no empathy." I said, "Why do you think I got an ulcer? What do you think gave it to me?" She

says smoking cigars and eating Italian beef. I say, "No, it's empathy."

KEVIN

Right.

LUTHER

I got a hole in my stomach because I take on the worries of the world. That's my problem, Franco: it's empathy. Your worries are my worries. You can't come up with a solution to your problem and it makes the hole in my stomach get that much bigger. So let's get practical here. How about your Mom? Can you hit her up for it?

FRANCO

Luther, my mom is livin' on a government check. I pay for her and my baby sister.

LUTHER

C'mon, nothing stashed in the coffee can for a rainy day?

FRANCO

No way. I'm doing everything I can to get us out of that dump we're in.

LUTHER

And you don't know where your old man is.

KEVIN

There's a shocker.

FRANCO

(ignoring Kevin)
No, I don't hear from him.

LUTHER

Grannies? Uncles? Aunties?

FRANCO

No.

LUTHER

How about the teachers over at your old school, at Truman, none of them are--?

FRANCO

No, we don't keep in touch.

LUTHER

Neighborhood buddies.

FRANCO

Nope...

Luther stares at Franco.

LUTHER

You're very negative, Frank.
(beat)

Okay. Here's the deal. I don't have the inclination to jump on you and start whackin' you on the head.
(points to Kevin)

But he does. Grady is coming down on me hard and before I take a beating from him, you'll take a beating from Kev. And I don't mean love taps. We're gonna get serious, and you know what that means. I don't like it, but...that's your incentive. I don't care if you got to walk into Bank of America with your momma's panty hose on your head and your pickle in your hand. I need my fucking money. I need to get paid.

Silence.

LUTHER (cont'd)

I'm embarrassed.

KEVIN

Don't be.

Arthur enters.

LUTHER

Let's go.

(to Franco)

See you about a week.

Arthur exits to the kitchen. Kevin whacks Franco collegially on the shoulder...

KEVIN

I can't wait to see you again.

...and exits. Luther shrugs apologetically.

LUTHER

Nothing personal, kid.

Luther exits. Arthur reenters.

ARTHUR

What's all that about?

FRANCO

Just some friends...

ARTHUR

That didn't seem too friendly.

FRANCO

Yeah, well. You're not paying me to talk about this stuff. You're paying me to sell donuts.

ARTHUR

Right...

Franco shoulders his backpack, exits.

Lights shift.

ARTHUR

Dad dropped dead. Right here, right where I'm standing. May Day, 1970. Three days before the National Guard murdered four kids at Kent State University. Wonder what the old man would have said about that.

What did you do?

Couldn't come to the funeral. Mom sent photos. Including a snap of two guys from the FBI. Just looking around. Looking around at my father's funeral. That seems weird, they'd send someone just for me. But they did.

What did you do, where did you go?

Further away. Split Toronto, headed up to the Great Slave Lake, outside Yellowknife, in the Northwest Territory.

What did you do?

Cut timber and read a lot of books. Until President Carter invited me home.

What did you do?

Caught a cab at Midway, had the driver take me directly to the cemetery. Stared at the old man's headstone there in St. Adalbert's. Remembered the last word he ever said to me: coward.

Coward.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

A bitter Chicago dawn.

Sounds: approaching rumble of a bus...
brake whine...bus door opening...bus
recedes.

Arthur enters the shop carrying his plastic grocery bags. He opens the radiator valve, prepares for the workday.

Moments later, Franco enters, frozen. He goes about the routine of opening the shop.

Tension. Arthur wants to initiate conversation but Franco is all business.

Activity without speaking for at least one full minute...perhaps two.

Arthur removes Franco's book from his grocery bags, sets it on the counter between them.

ARTHUR

I read it.

FRANCO

That was fast.

ARTHUR

It's a quick read.

FRANCO

And?

ARTHUR

It's really impressive, Franco.

FRANCO

You think?

ARTHUR

Yeah.

FRANCO

Really?

ARTHUR

It's really something.

FRANCO

No. Really?

ARTHUR

No. Really. I'm impressed.

FRANCO

Really?

ARTHUR

I just think it's great.

FRANCO

Arthur P. You. You just. You.

ARTHUR

Pick a verb, any verb.

FRANCO

You just...sit right down and tell me every little thing you can think to say about it.

ARTHUR

It's completely engaging, from start to finish.

FRANCO
Engaging, you mean in the sense you were interested.

ARTHUR
Yeah.

FRANCO
You were engaged, it was engaging, yes! Okay, what else?

ARTHUR
From start to finish, I was really swept along by the story.

FRANCO
"Swept along by the story." Arthur P. says: "Swept Along by the Story."

ARTHUR
The writing, really. I would never believe it was written by someone so young. I just can't think of enough good things to say about it. It's just great.

A long moment.

FRANCO
Did you like Rocco, the main character?

ARTHUR
Rocco Biggs is just a great character.

FRANCO
Yeah?

ARTHUR
He's funny and smart, and we cheer for him, y'know? We want to know he's going to be okay. That's what keeps us reading.

FRANCO
Right.

ARTHUR
That chapter about his dad, that's a killer.

FRANCO
Which one, you mean when his--

ARTHUR
Well, that whole section really, at the race track, after his dad gets in trouble and you know he has to blow town--

FRANCO
--right--

ARTHUR
--and he sits Rocco down and you know this is really the last time they'll ever see each other, and he tells Rocco this is really it. He's not going to be around anymore.

FRANCO
Yeah.

ARTHUR

And that if Rocco wants to survive in America, he's got to just keep hustling, keep, what is it he says? The little mantra he gives him?

FRANCO

"Never stop moving."

ARTHUR

That's it.

FRANCO

"Never stop moving."

ARTHUR

I think you should show this to some people.

FRANCO

What do you mean? Who?

ARTHUR

Get it typed up or put on a computer or whatever, then show it to I don't know, a publisher, or an editor.

FRANCO

No shit?

ARTHUR

No, I'm serious. I mean you have to clean it up, right, no one wants to go through all these legal pads and--

FRANCO

Right, right, right, right--

ARTHUR

--but no, get it cleaned up and then find someone who does this sort of thing.

FRANCO

You know anybody?

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

FRANCO

You know anybody who does that sort of thing?

ARTHUR

You mean the typing?

FRANCO

No, man, the publishing. You know any publishers?

ARTHUR

No. How would I know publishers? No.

FRANCO

You don't know anyone like that?

ARTHUR

No. Hey, don't let that stop you. You know what, I get the feeling you won't let that stop you. You'll find someone.

FRANCO
Thanks, Arthur.

ARTHUR
I haven't done anything.

FRANCO
Just that you read it. Y'know? Means a lot.

ARTHUR
Thanks for letting me read it.

FRANCO
You won the bet, fair and square.
(beat)
Nah. I wanted you to read it.

ARTHUR
I guess it's not real unless someone else reads it.

FRANCO
That ain't it. Just. Well, that's what friends do, right?
They share their stories.

Arthur takes this in...seems to want to respond.

Lights shift.

ARTHUR
Magda asked me to talk. She begged me to talk, begged me to fight, but I couldn't do it. I can't say why. And I can't say why because I don't know why.

Magda was the daughter of a family friend. I met her at my mom's wake, 1988, and we hit it off. Maybe that doesn't sound too romantic, but wakes can be heady stuff, especially to us, to the Polish. The root of the Polish character is hopelessness. A wake is proof; death is confirmation. The old ladies take the mourner by the arm and guide him straight to the casket and gesture at the body as if to say, "See?"

We came from similar backgrounds. We knew some of the same people. We were neighbors. When I asked her to marry me, it was a comfortable notion. "Hey, I really dig you and you dig me too and so maybe we should get married." Comfortable.

It's easy to underrate that now, but there's nothing wrong with comfort, you know? You're lying in a bed in the city of Chicago and you have your arms wrapped around a person who's made the decision to move through the world with you. That may be comfort and not much more, but it may be love, too...

Light shift. Arthur, Randy.

Uncomfortable silence.

RANDY
Wow. You really know your donut history.

ARTHUR

Yeah. And that's just the American side of the story. The French have a donut they call *pet de nonne*, which means "Nun's Fart." The story is that a young nun living in an abbey was preparing a meal when she suddenly...emitted flatus. The other nuns laughed at her and she was so startled that she dropped a ball of dough into a bubbling cauldron, accidentally inventing the donut.

Huh.

RANDY

Yeah. The French.

ARTHUR

Emitted flatus.

RANDY

Right?

ARTHUR

Franco, with dough-covered hands, enters from the kitchen in a cloud of flour. He hands Arthur one tiny wrinkled donut on a small plate.

Eat that.

FRANCO

Arthur tries the donut.

Little overdone.

ARTHUR

Franco exits to the kitchen.

Got him cooking, huh?

RANDY

He's been messing with the dough for a few days, trying to get that just right. But today's his first day at the fryer.

ARTHUR

Big day.

RANDY

An awkward silence.

Do you want a donut?

ARTHUR

What's good today?

RANDY

Everything's the same. Not the same as everything else. The same as it always is.

ARTHUR

What's your favorite?

RANDY

ARTHUR
I don't eat them so often.
(off her disappointment)
Cinnamon. Cinnamon's the most fresh. The freshest. The most recent. I made the dough the most recent of the doughs I made so the cinnamon is...the freshest.

RANDY
Okay. I'll have a cinnamon.

He serves her a donut.

RANDY (cont'd)
Franco make this?

ARTHUR
No no. He's a long way from edible.

RANDY
You make the dough from scratch?

ARTHUR
By hand. Every evening.

RANDY
I bet not a lot of people do that anymore.

ARTHUR
It's a dying art.

FRANCO (O.S.)
YEE-OWW, GODDAMN IT, MOTHERFUCKIN' PEANUT OIL GETS HOT!

ARTHUR
Would you like some coffee?

RANDY
Yeah, sure.

He pours her a cup of coffee.

ARTHUR
How was your game?

RANDY
What?

ARTHUR
The Blackhawks.

RANDY
Oh right. I didn't go.

ARTHUR
Oh.

RANDY
Yeah, I gave the tickets to my brother Mike.

That's too bad.

ARTHUR

Yeah.

RANDY

That's too bad.

ARTHUR

Hey.

RANDY

Mm.

ARTHUR

An awkward silence.

I better check on Franco.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Arthur exits to the kitchen. We can't hear their conversation, but Franco heatedly kicks Arthur out...concluding, possibly, with, "Get out there and talk to that girl."

Where's James?

ARTHUR (cont'd)

On the phone with his wife. They've got a convention coming up. Star Trek convention.

RANDY

Convention, wow.

ARTHUR

Yeah, they get all dressed up like characters from the show.

RANDY

James dresses up?

ARTHUR

Yeah, pointy ears, the whole shebang.

RANDY

Whatever gets you through the night.

ARTHUR

RANDY
He's a total nerd and a freakin' idiot but it's kinda sweet that he and his wife do all that together, y'know? No matter what losers they are, at least they got each other. My whole family is guys right, all of 'em cops. My dad was a cop, and six of my seven brothers are cops, and so all my life it's been cops and sports and whiskey and all that good Irish horseshit, and I love it and everything, that's my home, y'know, that's who I am. But I don't know, I used to wish I didn't always have to be in the club. I thought wouldn't it be nice if I got to be who I wanted

to be and maybe someone could come and join in
with me for a change.

Yeah... ARTHUR

I don't know. RANDY

No, I...yeah. ARTHUR

An awkward silence.

Really good. (re: donut) RANDY

Good coffee, too-- RANDY ARTHUR
Y'know I think I-

Hm? RANDY (cont'd)

No, sorry. ARTHUR

No, go ahead. RANDY

No, you. ARTHUR

No, I was just, I just said "Good coffee." RANDY

It is good. ARTHUR

Yes. RANDY

I mean, "Is it good?" ARTHUR

Yes. So you were saying. RANDY

I... ARTHUR

A long painful silence.

I don't remember. ARTHUR (cont'd)

Franco enters with a plate which holds
an ugly ball of dough.

Eat that. FRANCO

Arthur tries the donut.

ARTHUR

Yeah, that's hot raw dough.

James enters.

JAMES

Arthur. Give me a large coffee, please, extra cream, extra sugar. Hey, Franco. How's your mom?

FRANCO

She's good.

JAMES

Tell her I said hi.

ARTHUR

You guys know each other?

JAMES

All black folks know each other. Didn't you know that?

Arthur looks to Franco, who nods.

JAMES (cont'd)

(to Arthur)

Franco's mom worked with my mom in the cafeteria. High school, at Senn.

(to Franco)

You're not in college anymore? Weren't you going to Loyola?

FRANCO

Truman.

JAMES

I thought you were at Loyola.

FRANCO

Just for a semester.

JAMES

Then you went to Truman.

FRANCO

Yeah.

JAMES

You drop out?

FRANCO

I had to take a break.

JAMES

Why'd you do that?

FRANCO

Had to get a job.

JAMES

Don't stay out too long. You let too much time go by and you won't go back.

FRANCO
No, I'm going back, I just need to make some scratch.

JAMES
I hear that.

Franco exits to the kitchen.

RANDY
How's Crystal, she got your little costume all picked out for your little convention?

JAMES
Oh, man...

RANDY
She get your little pointy ears all sharpened?

JAMES
(to Arthur)
I had a beer over at Carol's Pub last night. Know who I ran into?

ARTHUR
Ray Klapprott. That's his hang-out.

JAMES
He tells me you two didn't part on such good terms.

ARTHUR
Yeah, I suppose.

JAMES
Suppose he's the one who vandalized your store?

ARTHUR
Nah.

JAMES
You sure? What was your fight about?

ARTHUR
No, we didn't have a fight.

JAMES
He called it a fight.

ARTHUR
It wasn't a fight.

JAMES
You don't want to say.

RANDY
No, he doesn't want to say.

ARTHUR
No, it's not like that, we just...it was political.

JAMES

He made it sound personal.

ARTHUR

Same thing, man.

JAMES

No, reason it got me thinking about the writing on your wall there...he called you a coward, more than once.

RANDY

Hey, what is this?

JAMES

What?

RANDY

You need to interrogate the man? It's obvious he doesn't want to talk about it.

ARTHUR

It's no big deal.

RANDY

Why are you forcing him to talk about this?

JAMES

We're just having a conversation.

RANDY

Just a conversation--

JAMES

Arthur and I talk to each other. We've known each other a long time.

RANDY

Why don't you give people a break?

JAMES

What do you mean by that?

RANDY

You've always got to get in everybody's business.

JAMES

I do?

RANDY

"Stay in school, Franco." "Tell me why Ray Cockrot called you a coward--"

ARTHUR

--Klapprott--

RANDY

You're like a fuckin' after-school special. You hear yourself?

JAMES

Is that bad advice? "Stay in school," is that wrong?

RANDY

What is this, are you the Captain of the starship now? Captain what's-his-fuck on Deep Space Now?

JAMES

Nine! Deep Space Nine, damn it!

RANDY

Who gives a fuck?!

JAMES

You say that shit on purpose!

RANDY

We can't get along unless you fix everybody, right, Captain?

JAMES

Hey, Randy.

RANDY

Arthur just wants to be left alone. He knows we care about him. We don't have to spell that out. I think he knows how we feel. So I think it's pretty clear he's not interested in us! That's clear!

She storms out.

JAMES

Where did that come from?

Arthur shrugs.

JAMES (cont'd)

This is my job. Solving problems is a part of the job. Settling disputes. I'm just taking care of my business.

ARTHUR

Right.

JAMES

I'm not trying to make myself more important than I am.

ARTHUR

I know.

James sits, stews.

JAMES

I hate having people mad at me.

James exits. Arthur calls into the kitchen.

ARTHUR

Franco, I blew it. I was almost there and I tightened up. If James hadn't come in. I would've pulled the trigger if James hadn't come in.

Franco enters with another plate, another donut.

FRANCO

You just gotta wade in there, man. If you get knocked around, you get knocked around. No way to protect yourself.

ARTHUR
And how do you know this? You've been knocked around?

FRANCO
I can't complain.

ARTHUR
You can't?

FRANCO
I won't. Now try this please.

Arthur tries the donut, makes a face:
"pretty good."

FRANCO (cont'd)
It's good?

ARTHUR
I think you nailed it.

FRANCO
Nailed it!

ARTHUR
That's a very good donut.

FRANCO
And that's from my dough, too. I made that donut from the ground up.

ARTHUR
That's right.

FRANCO
Look out now, I start crankin' out delicious dessert cakes and everyone's just gonna have to get the hell out the way.

ARTHUR
You're on the path to donut greatness. Which reminds me, I had a thought about your book.

FRANCO
What's that?

ARTHUR
I thought of someone we might get to look at your book.

FRANCO
Who?

ARTHUR
Look, this isn't anything, but--I see the look in your eye, and I'm telling you, this isn't anything.

FRANCO
What.

ARTHUR

My ex-wife's brother's...partner. He wrote--used to write little restaurant notices for the Reader.

FRANCO

And?

ARTHUR

And nothing, that's all I got. A guy used to write restaurant notices, for a free paper. That's as close to a publisher as I can get you. If I can even track him down. But it's a place to start.

Franco leaps in the air, screams, dances, pumps his fists.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Okay, okay--

FRANCO

HELL yeah! Look out, Arthur P., cause here we come, baby, back from the dead! Ain't no stopping us now, man! Let me tell you how it's gonna be: this man is gonna read America Will Be and he'll set me up with the next man I need to talk to and that man's gonna put a check in my hand--

ARTHUR

--right, yes, a big check--

FRANCO

--and they're gonna print my book and we'll put my book right here in a big display in the window that says "The Great American Novel."

ARTHUR

Very catchy, why not.

FRANCO

And meanwhile you and me are poppin' out the delicious dessert cakes and there's people out the door of this place and down the street, lined up to buy my book and eat our donuts and drink our coffee--

ARTHUR

Yeah, hey, fuck you, Starbucks!

FRANCO

And then wait till we get Poetry Night going--

ARTHUR

The Superior Donuts uhh, Literary...

FRANCO

The Superior Donuts Literary Festival and Poetry Jam--

ARTHUR

"It ain't horse fat."

FRANCO

And we get a microphone and a little stage right over here--

ARTHUR

I can serve some specialty donuts--

FRANCO
And we'll get all the people from the neighborhood--

ARTHUR
--the Countee Cullen Cruller--

FRANCO
My mom and baby sister'll be right over here, eating their donuts and listening to me read from my book.

ARTHUR
You know I bet James could actually help me get a liquor license--?

FRANCO
You can have a little glass of wine with your cop lady friend, right, taking it all in, the King and Queen of Uptown, and your daughter shows up too, to take her place in the kingdom, all of us together, a real home filled with books and ideas and food and family.

Silence.

ARTHUR
That's not going to happen.

FRANCO
Why not?

ARTHUR
It's not going to happen because that isn't what happens.

FRANCO
We'll make it happen.

ARTHUR
Life isn't just what you wish for.

FRANCO
You know what life is?

ARTHUR
Derailment.

FRANCO
You're wrong.

ARTHUR
I'm old.

FRANCO
Sometimes good things just happen.

ARTHUR
I used to know a restaurant critic.

FRANCO
Like you said, a place to start.

ARTHUR

Dreaming's dangerous.

FRANCO
Dangerous to who? To you?

ARTHUR
You're going to get crushed.

FRANCO
What are you so scared of?

ARTHUR
I'm not scared of anything.

FRANCO
Are you serious? You don't talk, you don't vote, you don't listen to music. Why do you bother to get outta bed in the morning? You can't even ask that old lady out on a date.

ARTHUR
That's got nothing to do with this-

FRANCO
You can't even talk about your own daughter.

ARTHUR
You're way outta line.

FRANCO
Right, if I mention her, I'm just an employee.

ARTHUR
You are just an employee.

FRANCO
And you're just a tight-ass boss.

ARTHUR
Because I know a fantasy when I hear one?

FRANCO
They ain't fantasies, goddamn it, they're possibilities! Don't you even believe in possibilities?

ARTHUR
This conversation is over.

FRANCO
See, you're even scared to fight with me. You just wait and see, old man. Wait and see what happens with this book. I'll show you. I'll prove it to you!

ARTHUR
(wheeling on Franco)
You'll prove it to me? You'll prove it to me? Who the hell are you? Come in here with your chewed-up notebooks and your goddamn pipe dreams. Even if I find this joker, and even if I convince him to wade through your frickin' legal pads and even if he pats you on the head, that isn't your ticket. It's just another dead end. They're all dead ends. You don't want to do yourself a favor, do me one: grow up. Stop acting like a fuckin' clown.

Franco exits. Lights shift.

ARTHUR

Magda and I had our problems. Usual stuff. I didn't talk. I didn't listen. We didn't have enough money and I didn't care. No big deal. Nothing insurmountable.

Something went sour.

Joni.

Our marriage became an arrangement. Magda and I became partners in a business and the business was Joni. A child is born, and a kiss becomes a handshake, and you no longer cast a shadow in your own house.

I didn't know you had to have hope to raise a kid. I didn't know you couldn't raise a kid without it.

Five years ago last summer, Magda and Joni packed up the car to drive to North Carolina, where Magda had found a job through some relatives, cleaning hotel rooms. I stood in the driveway of our house while Magda and Joni got into the station wagon. Joni stuck her head out of the window, tears streaming down her face. I told her I'd see her soon. She saw right through me. I said, "I'll prove it to you." That was the last time I saw my daughter. She was thirteen years old.

Lights shift. Arthur dials the phone.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Hi, it's me, it's Arthur. Sorry for all the messages but I'm...I'm just getting a little worried here. You didn't come in today and I guess that means you're not coming in today. Which is...I mean I don't care at this point, but I wish you'd at least call me and tell me you're not coming in. Because then we could...I don't know, I guess I'm feeling like...like we had
(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT.)

that argument and maybe, I don't know, hello? I just heard a click. Is the click indicative of something? Okay, well. The number at the shop is you know the number.

He hangs up. Thinks. Takes Randy's card from behind the phone, studies it. Takes a deep breath, dials.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Hi. Randy. It's Arthur. Mm, Arthur, from the donut shop. Superior Donuts. I, I think you said this is your cell phone. And hey, I was just thinking that...

Lady enters.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

That's Lady. Lady just walked in. Man, it feels cold out there. Um. Where was I? I thought if you were up for it, you, we could...

LADY

Can I have a donut?

ARTHUR
What? Yeah, uh. Randy, sorry, I just, it's getting kind of busy here, so I guess I'll talk to you next time you come in. To the shop. Thank you.

He hangs up.

ARTHUR (cont'd)
Hi, Lady.

LADY
Can I have a donut?

ARTHUR
Yeah, sure.

She sits as he gets her a donut and coffee.

ARTHUR (cont'd)
Looks pretty nasty out there.

LADY
Yeah. And the weather ain't so great.

Arthur looks out the window, scans the street.

ARTHUR
You've got kids, right, Lady?

LADY
What's that?

ARTHUR
You have kids, don't you?

LADY
Oh, sure. Two boys, two girls. One of 'em's still alive.

ARTHUR
You've outlived three of your kids?

LADY
Yeah.

ARTHUR
That's awful.

LADY
One of 'em got shot by the coppers in a gasoline station stick-up. One of 'em had a grabber, mowin' the yard. And one of 'em died in the crib with that disease. Where the spinal cord gets a mind of its own and decides it don't want to live trapped inside those little bones no more. You know what I'm talkin' about?

ARTHUR
I don't think so.

LADY

Your spinal cord gets it in its head to go free and slitherin' out into the world. That's what killed my little Venus. Her spinal cord got its own notions.

ARTHUR

Wow.

LADY

It happens. Happens to all of us, just not so extreme.

ARTHUR

It does?

LADY

The body don't work together. You know how they say the heart wants one thing but the brain wants something else?

ARTHUR

Yeah, sure.

LADY

The spine. It don't speak up for itself much. But when it does? Look out. Trumps the heart and brain every time.

Arthur thinks about this.

ARTHUR

You've still got one kid.

LADY

Walter.

ARTHUR

What's he do?

LADY

He's a bum.

(beat)

No, he's okay.

ARTHUR

You and Walter...you on good terms? I mean you talk?

LADY

Not so much.

ARTHUR

Mm.

LADY

He's got a lot goin' on.

ARTHUR

Right.

LADY

You got kids?

ARTHUR

A daughter. One daughter.

LADY
Aw. That's nice. Girls are better.

ARTHUR
Better than boys?

LADY
Yeah, they're just better people. What's your girl's name?

ARTHUR
Joni.

LADY
Aw.

ARTHUR
Yeah, Joni.

LADY
And she's still alive?

ARTHUR
Yeah.

LADY
Good for you. You still got time.

James enters, out of uniform.

JAMES
Arthur, I have to talk to you.

ARTHUR
Okay.

JAMES
Come over here.

ARTHUR
You want some coffee?

JAMES
No, that's okay. Just some water.

Arthur pours water while James removes his coat, revealing a Captain Kirk costume.

LADY
Holy shit.

ARTHUR
Wow.

LADY
The spacemen have landed.

JAMES
I know, I know. Arthur, listen--

ARTHUR

You look great.

JAMES
Right, thanks. Sit down.

ARTHUR
Where are your ears?

JAMES
What?

ARTHUR
Randy said you wear ears.

JAMES
She doesn't know what she's talking about. I don't wear any damn ears.

ARTHUR
Yeah, cause that might look odd.

JAMES
Me and Crystal were at the convention when I got a call on my cell phone. Franco's mother called me.

ARTHUR
His mother.

JAMES
Franco's in the hospital.

ARTHUR
What's the matter?

JAMES
They've got him over at Masonic. I just came from there.

ARTHUR
What's the matter?

JAMES
He's been assaulted. It's pretty bad, Arthur.

ARTHUR
How bad.

JAMES
Someone cut off three of his fingers.

James indicates the last three fingers of his right hand.

JAMES (cont'd)
These three fingers.

Beat.

ARTHUR
What?

JAMES

Yeah.

ARTHUR

Well, is he...what, is he going to be okay? I mean--

JAMES

He lost a lot of blood but he'll survive. They've got him on some serious pain killers, you know, and he's still in the ICU, still pretty out of it. So he can't have visitors yet, but in a day or so.

A moment, as this sinks in.

JAMES (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Arthur. I know you like that kid.

ARTHUR

Who did it?

JAMES

He wouldn't tell me. But like I say he's not making a lot of sense. He never said anything to you, did he?

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

JAMES

You never saw him dealing with anyone, or--?

ARTHUR

No.

JAMES

You sure.

ARTHUR

No, no, nothing.

JAMES

Okay. If you think of anything. I gotta run.

ARTHUR

Right.

JAMES

I mean anything, you call me, you understand?

ARTHUR

Yeah.

JAMES

Take it easy.

(as he goes)

Night, Lady.

LADY

Live long and prosper.

JAMES

Oh, one more thing. What's the story on this book?

ARTHUR

Em?

JAMES
You know anything about a book?

ARTHUR
What about it?

JAMES
About all he said in the hospital is, "They destroyed my book."
You know what that means?

ARTHUR
No.

JAMES
Okay. I'll see you.

James exits. Silence.

LADY
Who's this now?

ARTHUR
Franco. The young man who works here.

LADY
That's rough. They'll patch him up though. They can patch up
most anything these days.

ARTHUR
Lady, I don't know what to do.

LADY
Sure you do. You know what to do.

ARTHUR
I do?

LADY
Sure you do.

ARTHUR
I don't want to do this. I'm scared.

LADY
What are you gonna do, run away?

ARTHUR
I can't.

LADY
That's right. Why not?

ARTHUR
That kid. Because of that kid.

LADY
Which kid are we talking about here?

Arthur turns, looks at Lady.

Got it now, champ? LADY (cont'd)

Lights shift. Nighttime. Arthur and Kevin.

Do we know you? KEVIN
(beat)

Does Luther know you? (beat)

Didn't you ask to see Luther? (beat)

Anything you can say to Luther you can say to me. ARTHUR

Go get your boss.

You said something about some money. KEVIN

I didn't say anything to you. Now go run and get your boss. ARTHUR

You got a big mouth. KEVIN

Don't waste my time. ARTHUR

Kevin stares at him, uncertain.

Your boss wants his money, right? So go get your boss and I'll pay him his money. ARTHUR (cont'd)
(beat)

I'm not calling any cops, all right? Now I guess your boss is sitting in a car about a hundred feet from here, so go get him and bring him in here so I can pay him his money. (beat)

Shoo.

Kevin exits. Arthur crosses to the phone, dials.

They're here. ARTHUR (cont'd)
(into phone)

He hangs up. He waits.

He waits.

Luther and Kevin enter.

Hi. Arthur? LUTHER

That's right. ARTHUR

Luther extends his hand.

LUTHER

Luther Flynn.

Arthur stares at him.

LUTHER (cont'd)

All right, whatever. What's this about? I'm getting paid?

ARTHUR

Yeah.

LUTHER

Well. Terrific.

KEVIN

Sure.

LUTHER

That's just terrific.

ARTHUR

Wait here.

LUTHER

I wouldn't be surprised if you'd already dropped a dime on me. Which would be silly. No one has anything on me.

ARTHUR

I didn't call the cops.

Arthur disappears into the kitchen, reenters with a large Kotex box. Luther and Kevin share a laugh.

KEVIN

The fuck.

ARTHUR

Count it.

LUTHER

I trust you.

ARTHUR

Count it.

Arthur tosses the box to Luther. Luther tosses the box to Kevin. Kevin sits down, opens the box, takes out sheaves of bills, starts counting. Luther winces.

LUTHER

Can I have a glass of milk?

ARTHUR

No.

LUTHER

Franco told you how to find me?

No response.

How is he?
LUTHER (cont'd)

He'll make it.
ARTHUR

Was that ever a question?
LUTHER

He lost a lot of blood.
ARTHUR

That's awful. He's a good kid. I've known him a long time. He used to run some bets for me out at Hawthorne. Christ, he couldn't've been more than fourteen? Fifteen?

Run bets?
ARTHUR

You know, where you don't want to leave your seat. He takes your money and runs to the window, makes the bet for you. Gets a little tip and he can make some bets himself. He's always had the itch, Franco. His dad had it, too. Action junkies.

He doesn't run bets anymore.
ARTHUR

No, I know.
LUTHER

He's a writer now.
ARTHUR

Is that so?
LUTHER

Yeah. He's written a book. A great book.
ARTHUR

Really. God bless him. He's a sharp kid.
LUTHER

And he's got this donut thing working for him too.
KEVIN

Luther and Kevin share a look. Kevin continues counting money.

You don't know about his book?
ARTHUR

Can't say I do. Wait a minute. You don't mean that pile of garbage he tried to sell us, all tied up with cords? No, see, I've read a few books, and they didn't look like that.
LUTHER

Arthur and Luther stare at each other.

ARTHUR
He's twenty-one years old.

LUTHER
Old enough to know better.

ARTHUR
Right, cause you and me, we only made good decisions when we were twenty-one.

LUTHER
I never forced him to make a bet with me.

ARTHUR
You never stopped him either.

LUTHER
That's a gray area.

ARTHUR
Know who talks about gray areas? People who exploit them.

LUTHER
Where you from? You're Chicago, right?

ARTHUR
Jefferson Park.

LUTHER
North Side Polish. I knew it. Kevin, I told you, right?

ARTHUR
You're South Side.

LUTHER
Bridgeport. Originally.

ARTHUR
Now?

LUTHER
Right here. Historic Uptown.

KEVIN
(replacing money in box)
It's all here, Luther.

LUTHER
Great. Well--

ARTHUR
Wait. How much is there?

KEVIN
It's all here.

ARTHUR
How much? What's the dollar amount?

KEVIN
Twenty-two thousand.

ARTHUR
Is that the total amount of money you were owed?

LUTHER
What do you mean? Yes.

ARTHUR
There's no bullshit. No add-ons, no extras.

LUTHER
No.

ARTHUR
No more juice.

LUTHER
The debt is paid.

ARTHUR
Then you don't ever need to see Franco again. Right?

Luther hesitates. Kevin urges him to the door.

KEVIN
Let's go.

ARTHUR
Right?

LUTHER
Yeah, that's right.

ARTHUR
Good. Whatever else happens, you're leaving with that money. You've been paid.

LUTHER
Yeah, okay...

KEVIN
I feel like an asshole carrying this fucking Kotex box.

ARTHUR
You really gave him the business, didn't you?

LUTHER
How's that?

KEVIN
Come on, Luther--

ARTHUR
You humiliated that boy's body and you think you can justify that. But you can't justify destroying that kid's story.

LUTHER
The end justifies the means.

ARTHUR
Y'know, it doesn't. It really never does.

Fuck him. Let's get out of here.

KEVIN

Hold on.

ARTHUR

What?

LUTHER

You can't go yet.

ARTHUR

Why?

LUTHER

We're not through.

ARTHUR

We're not.

LUTHER

No.

ARTHUR

Yes we are.

KEVIN

What are we forgetting?

LUTHER

I'm going to fight you.

ARTHUR

Sorry?

LUTHER

I'm going to fight you.
beat you up.

ARTHUR

And I'm going to win. I'm going to

Silence. Then Luther and Kevin laugh.

Good night.

LUTHER

Again, Luther and Kevin move for the door. Arthur grabs Luther's arm and Luther effortlessly pushes Arthur away.

We're all done here, okay?

LUTHER (cont'd)

Again, they turn for the door, and again, Arthur grabs Luther's arm.

Goddamn it--

LUTHER (cont'd)

Luther shoves Arthur more forcefully.
Arthur falls.

LUTHER (cont'd)
Now cut the shit, old man. We're leaving here now.

Arthur begins to stand.

LUTHER (cont'd)
Stay down. Kevin, if he gets up, put him on his ass.

ARTHUR
No, not him. I want to fight you.

LUTHER
You don't have a choice.

Max enters.

LUTHER (cont'd)
Who the fuck are you?

MAX
I'm the guy who make sure this douchebag stays away from Arthur.

LUTHER
This is ridiculous. Kevin. Deal with this.

Kevin approaches Max.

MAX
And this is Kiril.

KIRIL, an enormous stone-faced Russian,
enters.

MAX (cont'd)
And he is the guy who make sure this douchebag stays away from me.

LUTHER
What the fuck is going on?

MAX
(in Russian)
Kiruysha, zakroi dver. Otpusti zhaluyzi.
[Kiril. Lock this place up. Close the shades.]

Kiril follows his instructions.

LUTHER
Arthur, this doesn't make any sense. Now use your head, please.

Luther looks around, perplexed. Max,
Kiril, and Kevin stand by the door,
watching.

LUTHER (cont'd)
(to Kevin)
What do I do?

KEVIN
You want me to take the German?

LUTHER
You kidding? Look at him. It's Ivan Drago, for God's sake.

MAX
(to Kiril)
Idiot, on dumaet mui nemtsui.
[This asshole's so stupid he thinks we're German.]

ARTHUR
No one else gets in this. Just you and me.

LUTHER
What's the point?

ARTHUR
You don't get away with hurting my friend.

LUTHER
All right. Fuck it. Christ.

Luther, out of options, gets out of his coat, hat, etc. Arthur awkwardly assumes a boxer's stance.

LUTHER (cont'd)
Look at the fucking Marquess of Queensberry over here.

KEVIN
Kick his ass, Luther.

The fight:

The fight is long. And painful. It is sweaty and bloody. The fighters display great ferocity.

The fight involves fisticuffs, grappling, wrestling, and found objects. The fight contains gouging, biting, kicking.

Arthur and Luther speak very little during the fight. They swear, they grunt, they cry out in pain.

Max, Kiril, and Kevin are for the most part silent.

The fight goes through phases.

The early phase of the fight is somewhat of a surprise for both men...that they are in fact engaged in a fight, that they land blows, that they receive blows.

It is apparent in the early phase of the fight that Luther is the superior and more experienced fighter. He is also in better physical condition.

The middle phase also holds a surprise for both fighters in that their opponent shows tenacity and resilience.

This fight will not be easily decided.

By the endgame, both men are bloodied and sweaty, their bodies bent with exhaustion. But ultimately, Arthur prevails, not because of dexterity or muscle, but because of his strength of purpose...and Luther's ulcer. And although Luther will readily recover, Arthur has genuinely hurt him.

The fight is over.

MAX

May I say one thing, please? We believe this is over. There should be no more effort to retaliation. Yes? Because you have friends, I am sure, and they are bad men, I know, but I also have friends, and they are Russian, and so they do not give a fuck.

LUTHER
(to Kevin)

Get me to a hospital...

Kevin assists Luther to the door.

MAX

Wait.

Max points to the Kotex box on the counter.

MAX (cont'd)

Do not forget your box of Kotex.

Kevin grabs the box, and he and Luther exit.

Arthur has pulled himself into a chair.

MAX (cont'd)

Well, old boy. That is the goddamndest thing I ever saw. If I live to be a hundred, I will never forget the fight I see in Superior Donuts.

ARTHUR

I don't know...

MAX

What?

ARTHUR

I don't know if it did any good.

MAX

Maybe not for you. But I sure got the charge.
You beat the piss out of that big guinea.

ARTHUR

I think he's Irish.

MAX

I don't care if he is Eskimo, he think next time before he hurt someone. He stick his finger in wrong asshole.

Arthur and Max look at each other...and start laughing. Then Arthur collapses.

MAX (cont'd)

Pomogi evo podnyat. Davai otvedyom v ofis, polozhim na divan.
[Help me get him up. We'll take him next door and lay him down in the couch in my office.]

Kiril picks Arthur up in his arms.

MAX (cont'd)

Bozhe, kakoi tui silnoi. Tui sluishal shto italyashka skazal? Govoril tui pohoj na Dolpha Lundgrena v Rocky.
[Christ, you're strong. Did you hear what that guinea said about you? He said you look like Dolph Lundgren in that Rocky movie.]

KIRIL

Mne chasto eto govoryat.
[I get that a lot.]

MAX

Pravda? A ya dumayu nichevo obshevo.
[Really? I don't see it.]

KIRIL

A posle etova mogu poiti k svoei barmenshe?
[When we're done with this, can I go see my bartender?]

MAX

Opyat eta barmensha! Ostav!
[Again with this bartender! Give it a rest!]

Transition. Two weeks later. Snow falls heavily outside. Randy, in civilian clothes, hangs a "Welcome Back" banner. A Tupperware cake carrier sits on the counter.

Lady enters.

RANDY

Hi, Lady.

LADY

Where's Arthur?

RANDY

He's gone to pick up Franco, from his mother's place. You want coffee?

Yes.

LADY

Lady takes her seat at the counter as Randy pours her a cup of coffee.

Who are you?

LADY (cont'd)

Lady. You know me.

RANDY

I do?

LADY

Randy. Osteen. You've known me forever.

RANDY

Oh.

LADY

Are you drunk?

RANDY

No.

LADY

You're just not accustomed to seeing me out of uniform.

RANDY

You're different.

LADY

Yes.

RANDY

Can I have a donut?

LADY

Would you rather wait and have some cake?

RANDY

No, I want a donut.

LADY

Sure. We're having a little party.

RANDY

We are?

LADY

Not a party so much. Well, sure, why not, we're having a party.

RANDY

What's the occasion?

LADY

Franco's first time back at the shop. Franco's first time out of his mother's apartment.

RANDY

LADY

That's the colored fella.

RANDY
Yes, that works here.

LADY
The one got cut up.

RANDY
(beat)
Yes.

LADY
You never see the bad stuff coming. Just always comes up behind you and pow! Socks you behind the ear with a glove fulla marbles. Sets you back a few steps.

Max enters, followed by Kiril. Max carries a half-drunk bottle of vodka. He is drunk, more jovial than usual; Kiril seems embarrassed, sheepish.

MAX
Hello, good people. I trust you have wonderful holiday time.

RANDY
Sure. You?

MAX
Very nice. Very nice indeed. This is my nephew, Kiril.

RANDY
Hello.

Kiril nods.

MAX
Say hello to the good people.

KIRIL
(mumbling, quiet)
Hello.

Max whacks Kiril on the arm, too hard.

MAX
This is your country now, boy. You have to speak up!

KIRIL
Hello.

MAX
(to Randy)
He is shy. I believe you are having a party. Yes?

No response.

MAX (cont'd)
Delightful. I trust we do not interrupt.

No response. Max opens
the cake carrier.

MAX (cont'd)
The cake looks wonderful. Did you bake that cake?

RANDY
I did.

MAX
I will be standing in line for a big piece, please. You will
know me from my smile across from ear to ear. My oh my, it is a
wonderful January day for a party, is it not? The world is
white; the air is snap. How do you say this?

RANDY
I don't know what you're saying.

MAX
Don't you say this? "The air is snap."

RANDY
No, I don't say that.

MAX
You don't know what I am--

RANDY
Oh yeah, "there's a snap in the air."

MAX
There's a snap in the air?

RANDY
Yeah, I don't know anyone who says that.

MAX
Well, it is a wonderful day, with or without the snap.

Arthur, James, and Franco enter.
Arthur is bruised, cut. Franco wears a
bandage on his right hand.

RANDY
There we are.

ARTHUR
Here we go.

MAX
The man of the hour!

Franco nods, offers quiet greetings...

ARTHUR
Take a seat.

RANDY
Can I get you something?

MAX
Yes, make yourself at home!

RANDY
What do you want? Do you want some coffee, or--?

JAMES
Yeah, get yourself something--

RANDY
I bought some beer. Do you want a beer?

FRANCO
(quietly)
No, I'm good.

Franco moves to a chair, sits, his head down.

Then silence.

Max walks up to Franco, pulling Kiril behind him.

MAX
This is my oldest sister's oldest boy, Kiril Ivakin. Kiril, say hello to the man of the hour.

KIRIL
Hello.

Kiril extends his hand. Franco looks at it. Max pulls Kiril away.

ARTHUR
Does the old place look the same to you?

JAMES
Looks kind of like a donut shop, don't it?

MAX
It looks better with you in it, young Franco!

JAMES
That's the truth.

RANDY
No, hey, there's been an improvement. Show him, Arthur.

Arthur goes behind the counter, displays a small new boom box.

RANDY (cont'd)
How about that, huh?

ARTHUR
You wanted a radio. There you go.

JAMES
Before you know it, there's going to be a pool table in here.

MAX

Shop has gone sixty years without radio! No sound other than Arthur's beard, growing slowly! Now it gets radio with only one month left!

ARTHUR

I never knew I needed a radio and now that I've got one--

FRANCO

(to Max)

What's that mean?

MAX

What--?

FRANCO

What's that mean, only one month left?

MAX

Sorry, I am drinking vodka and do not know anything.

ARTHUR

(to Franco)

I'll tell you later.

FRANCO

Tell me now.

ARTHUR

It's nothing.

FRANCO

What's that mean, only one month left? Month left till what?

ARTHUR

I sold the shop.

(beat)

I sold it. I needed the money. And it was time.

MAX

(bursting)

I bought it. Finally. One hundred thirty thousand and now Superior Donuts belongs to me. It feels like a dream. My God, if my father could be here now and see me...

(to Arthur)

You should have listen to me, my friend. You cannot live in the past. If we could change things. If life were different. This unhappy life.

Max seems to notice for the first time that this is not being received in the spirit he intends it. Lady weeps.

MAX (cont'd)

What's the matter? Turn on the radio.

No one approaches the radio. Max turns on the radio, dances.

MAX (cont'd)

Come on everyone, dance! It's my shop now and I say dance.

He pulls Lady from her stool, twirls her to dance. She cries, but he laughs, props her up, dances with her.

MAX (cont'd)

Lady, is a good day. Not a sad day. See? We are dancing at a happy party--

Kiril gently tries to restrain Max.

KIRIL

Dyadya Maxim, oni ne hotyat seichas tantsevat..
[*Uncle Maxim, they don't want to dance right now--*]

Max breaks off the dance and slaps Kiril, yells at him. Lady is left alone, slumping, weeping.

MAX

Goddamn it, I told you to speak English! Do not hang down your head like a dog, mumbling in Russian. You are American now! Speak up!

Max sees that the party is spoiled.

MAX (cont'd)

I am drunk now. My stomach is sick. Good day all. Good day.
(to Kiril)
Let's go and eat some fried chicken.

He swaggers out. Kiril starts to follow, then stops at the open door, thinks. He closes the door, crosses to Lady and gently assists her back to her seat. He returns to the door, nods graciously to the others..

KIRIL

Thank you. Thank you.

...and exits.

Silence.

RANDY

I'm going to cut this cake. Who wants some? Arthur?

ARTHUR

Yeah, it looks good.

RANDY

It is good.

ARTHUR

What kind of cake is it?

RANDY

Red velvet.

ARTHUR

That sounds good.

JAMES
I better get going too, actually. My wife's waiting for me.

James grabs his coat, approaches Lady.

JAMES (cont'd)
Lady, you need a ride someplace? It's snowing outside.

LADY
I guess I gotta find someplace else to go.

JAMES
Where would you like to go?

LADY
If you're headed south, I'm going to a meeting at the Rec Room.

JAMES
What if I'm going north?

LADY
Then I'm going to Ole St. Andrews Bar.

James lays his hand on Franco's shoulder.

JAMES
You promised your mother you'd be home in a couple of hours, right?

Franco nods.

JAMES (cont'd)
Arthur? You'll take care of him?

ARTHUR
I'll take care of him.

JAMES
All right. Take it easy, Franco. I'll see you around.
(to Randy)
See you tomorrow, pardner.

James and Lady exit. She looks pained and perhaps even a little panicked as she takes a final look at the shop.

Arthur and Randy share a private communication, eyes only.

RANDY
All right. I'm out of here.

Randy grabs her coat, lays her hand on Franco's shoulder.

RANDY (cont'd)
Great to see you.

She gives the "call me" signal to Arthur, who nods. She exits, leaving Arthur and Franco alone.

ARTHUR

Hey. I did it. I called her. We've had one lunch and one dinner. It's nice. No, not nice, it's great. Could be great.

Silence.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

You want some of this cake?

Arthur eats cake.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

I think they finally gave up trying to figure out who broke into the shop, Randy and James. I'm pretty sure it was Ray Klapprott, my old assistant.

Silence.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Ray supports the war. He's got a brother there and. I got in an argument with him about it. I don't know, I'd just gotten the news about Magda--that's my wife--and I was feeling...Anyway, he took exception to my...history. He got offended and quit.

Silence.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

You don't know what I'm talking about, do you? Magda, or the war...my history. My parents. Maybe I can tell you about myself.

Silence.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Look, don't take this hard, me selling the place. It's just a place, for Chrissake. I'm almost sixty years old and I've. I'm. I've run this place long enough. And I've got some money

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT.)

in the bank. For a change. Max and I agreed to give me the month. Just to make the, y'know, the transition. I'm going to see if I can sell off some of this stuff. The register's no good anymore, but someone'll buy that freezer.

Silence.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Now you're not talking to me? Is that the thing? I deserve a break, right? And I got paid for it. We...both of us, we got helped.

FRANCO

I didn't ask for no handouts.

ARTHUR

I know that.

FRANCO

I'm gonna pay you back too, every penny of it.

ARTHUR

Okay.

FRANCO

Don't expect me to walk around kissin' your ass.

ARTHUR

I don't expect that.

FRANCO

Yeah, you better not.

ARTHUR

I also don't expect to be treated like an asshole. All right? I didn't just do it for you.

Silence.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

All right, screw it...

Arthur takes his cake plate behind the counter, drops it, breaks it.

Franco cries, quietly, holds his bandaged hand in front of him. Arthur turns to him.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Franco.

Franco refuses to look at him. Arthur takes a step toward him.

ARTHUR (cont'd)

Franco. Look at me.

Franco does not.

Arthur goes behind his counter, gets a notebook and pen, rejoins Franco at the table. Arthur opens the notebook, smooths out a blank page, and speaks the words he writes on the top of the page:

ARTHUR (cont'd)

"America...Will...Be."

Franco looks up.

Arthur and Franco look at each other.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.