

Spring 2023

You're Dying Up There

Ryan H. Smith
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Smith, Ryan H., "You're Dying Up There" (2023). *Master's Theses*. 5420.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.t9mp-3wgk>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/5420

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

YOU'RE DYING UP THERE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English and Comparative Literature

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

by

Ryan H. Smith

May 2023

© 2023

Ryan H. Smith

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

YOU'RE DYING UP THERE

by

Ryan H. Smith

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2023

Prof. Kirsten Brandt

Department of Film and Theatre

Dr. Selena Anderson

Department of English and Comparative
Literature

Prof. Lawrence Schapiro

Department of Film and Theatre

ABSTRACT

YOU'RE DYING UP THERE

by Ryan H. Smith

YOU'RE DYING UP THERE is a feature-length dramatic screenplay about Bob Nash, a struggling stand-up comedian, whose sole focus, after discovering he has stage IV lung cancer, becomes headlining The Comedy Store in Los Angeles. This feature length dramatic screenplay serves as a meditation for how to write an anti-hero, as well as an exploration of the emotional depths of the traditional harlequin role. By stripping away much of the joke-heavy presence that the main character resides in as a public persona, the audience can explore both the depression he experiences and the loathsome qualities he possesses. Nash convinces his manager-slash-ex and his parents that all he has is his legacy, and nothing else can get in the way of achieving that. In doing so, he fulfills his dream, but not only at great cost to his health, but with impact to those around him.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I started writing this script as a letter to the late Bill Hicks, but I now realize it's a postcard to the future you. Are you there? Can you hear me? Did you make it? I hope so.

Mom, Dad, Grandma - I love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Works Cited	xix
Dramatic Work: You're Dying Up There	1

PREFACE

Nash seems to only have Marcia- his manager, only friend, and former lover- to help keep him from absolutely destroying what little career he has throughout most of the story. Both Nash and Marcia know that a great burden is carried partially on Marcia's shoulders (who already has a family to take care of), but neither of them has reached a breaking point, yet. Those burdens are something I'm experiencing now, as being a scriptwriter in this MFA program has felt like floating between "little" and "no" options when it comes to finding the correct match for a thesis director. Unofficially, three separate individuals have taken on the role for me and three times the position has been relinquished for one reason or another. Creativity feels empty to me without support and my character Nash feels the same sentiments. He's gruff and detached, but he has an anchor that allows for some sense of normalcy and gratification. While Marcia has filled this role for Nash over the many years, I've only just found a director that feels a correct fit for this last academic hurdle in Kirsten Brandt. She has shown her support through asking questions to better guide my writing style and voice. Over the last several months, we've had conversations about what the role of the comedian is, how sadness and emptiness may often consume the comedian's existence, and where I want this story to go. These are conversations I was only having internally, and it's so refreshing to share ideas and hypotheticals with another script writer who understands the nuances in the otherwise traditional trope of "the jester."

In having these conversations, I'm realizing a number of things about my writing, but also who I am as a writer. One thing is that my writing style is pulled much more from a nonfiction perspective than I previously realized. If I'm being honest with myself, I chose fiction as a secondary genre because it seemed to better fit with scriptwriting and I was more familiar with fiction as a genre. However, nearly all of my scripts are drawn from a personal experience. I'm adding a fictional narrative to fictional names and a fictional timeline of events, but the pool of inspiration is filled from the well of nonfictional waters. Finding that balance of fictional components within a nonfictional inspired narrative has been a learning curve for me, even though scriptwriting lends itself to exploration of multiple genres.

Another thing I've been feeling is that maybe I'm more of a publisher rather than a writer, per se. I've spent the past four years working for and heading the literary journal at SJSU, *Reed Magazine*, to great success. Without any publishing background or experience, I worked my way up to the head position of managing editor and paved the way for new opportunities for the journal within the greater SJSU community, as well as across the small press sector. I see that work pay off and others have recognized the work, too, and in this way a creative need is fulfilled for me. My writing, which has taken up just as much volume of my life, now feels secondary to this other endeavor. So, too, does Nash find that his stand-up routine often feels secondary when people tell him, "You can get a job as a joke writer," or "Did that acting gig ever go anywhere?" He has a spark, but the ideals of what

the artist wants and what the audience wants are very different. My frustrations in not feeling like I'm getting anywhere with my writing are shared by Nash and his lack of professional momentum. And so for years his life and his art have suffered in tandem. He has become what Lawrence E. Mintz terms, "the oldest, most basic role of the comedian"- that of *negative exemplar* (Mintz). At this point in his life, both professionally and personally, Nash is the definition of "screw up" and "failure" having nothing to show for his years on the road playing the small circuits. He's punished not only for the role of stand-up on stage but also because he continues to pursue the dream as feasible reality. And I'm not saying I see my writing as a pipe dream or that publishing is the answer to my happiness- far from it. However, what Nash explores as a character for me are the frustrations of two warring ideas: 1.) what one should do and 2.) what one is drawn to. He's caught between these ideas and feels like it's now or never to make something happen. The later parts of the story explore his willingness to make change, but also to fail, repeatedly. He learns, as I learn, by making mistakes, reevaluating, then making smaller mistakes that allow more space for growth.

From a thematic standpoint, some of my personal creative writing influences come from two Alexander Payne-directed films: *Sideways* (2004), adapted by Payne and Jim Taylor, and *Nebraska* (2013), written by Bob Nelson. Having received my BA from film school, my writing is currently informed by sensory aesthetics and the human condition. I like my characters to be motivationally driven not only by their goals and wants, but by their

interactions with the world around them. The two aforementioned films are ones I often revisit when I'm looking for visual reminders about how characters can open themselves to vulnerabilities and morph their narrative because of them. When Nash is released from the hospital, he wears the festival t-shirt not only out of necessity, but as a direct insult to Marcia's husband Brian, who he has nothing but contempt for. And Marcia helping to get Nash released at all is because of what she witnessed in the hospital cafe: a sterile, soulless room void of any human compassion. These kinds of interactions can trigger so much unspoken emotion that can be filtered through the audience lens, past their own experiences, complexions, and singular moods. Payne once gave advice on his own process for crafting the story as such: "If you want to make narrative films, you're gonna have to write for yourself. You're making a film in your brain, and a screenplay is the written record of your imagination" (Dempsey). Everything I've put to paper when it comes to writing screenplays has been to tell a story I'd like to watch by filtering it through my respective emotional lens. My imagination is present in the first draft and the final draft of any script I write, and within that imagination is some piece of me trying to rationalize a perceived fear or truth. My writing is the result of an internal process of trying to make sense of the world as I've filtered it, and the aforementioned scripts and films have helped guide that process since long before I focused the academic lens on writing.

From a narrative standpoint, two of the largest influences for my thesis project are the Darren Aronofsky-directed films, *The Wrestler* (2008), written by Robert Siegel, and *Black*

Swan (2010) written by Mark Heyman, Andres Heinz, and John McLaughlin. Considered companion pieces as conceived by Aronofsky, both films involve demanding performances showcasing art forms arguably at the lowest and highest points of the artistic performance spectrum: professional wrestling and ballet, respectively. There's no denying the character Bob Nash gives everything he has to his chosen profession of stand-up comedy. For him, all he seems to know is how to get the laugh, how to perform on stage, and how to live in the impermanence of the road life. This directly mirrors *The Wrestler's* Randy "The Ram" Robinson character whose attempts to forge relationships implode, and the end brings him to acceptance and the embracing of his fate, which is likely to be death. While the life of a comic doesn't necessarily have to lead to substance abuse, living show to show, or even untimely death, Nash is cut from the same cloth as many of the 1980's larger-than-life superstars who lived fast and died too young: John Belushi, Sam Kinison, Gorgeous Gino Hernandez, and the Von Erich brothers. Nash has spent his entire adult life honing his craft, and though until now he hasn't seen much critical or commercial success, he feels one of the biggest hurdles for him is having the proper venues to perform at, with audiences and bookers who respect and understand his style. His cancer diagnosis is just the motivation to get him performing at a higher level and taking his career trajectory seriously.

Another influential parallel from *Black Swan*, specifically, is that unlike Randy "The Ram" from *The Wrestler* or the big-name comedians of yesteryear who shined too bright, Bob Nash hasn't quite made it. Thus far, he's a never-was. His career trajectory is more

similar to that of the character Nina Sayers, right now, in that he hasn't had that career defining moment that could take him to the next level, but now he has the opportunity to leave his mark (even if it turns out to be his final act.) While Nina and Nash's specific incentives and goals are drastically different, from the moment Nash realizes his dream can be within reach, similar to Nina in her headlining performance of *Swan Lake*, all he can focus on now are the new regimens he must adhere to if wants his own headlining showcase. At first, Nash decides all he has to do is concentrate on getting work and sharpening his comedy routine. But the wear and tear of road life and severe illness take their toll. To the detriment of his well-being and reputation, Nash starts to indulge further into his addictive behavior. Those vices – the alcohol, the drugs, the chain smoking – both endanger Nash, as well as fuel his artistic need to perform at a higher level, believing that he can maintain balance so long as his decisions justify getting to his end goal of headlining The Comedy Store.

Bob Nash is my attempt at an anti-hero character. He is purposefully alone and loathsome, egocentric and amoral. It's not only character quirks written on the page, but traits that allow a way for Nash to feel in control of his own intimate narrative. This control is shared by many anti-heroes, as they seek to shape their destiny, or their calling, if you will. In the novel *Jernigan*, it's written that, "From Holden Caulfield to Moses Herzog, our best literature has been narrated by malcontents" (Gates). In doing so, at the end of the 2nd act when the "all hope is lost" moment arrives after Nash has a confrontation in front of his parents and hometown community members, he has a springboard towards possible

redemption (or what he views as redemption) in his quest for a comedy legacy. His goal is ever-present and the potential heights of his comeback balance out nicely with the lows that of his character flaw. He'll throw it all away one final time, however, as Nash's blind reasoning only allows for a singular self-interested perspective. When he discovers Marcia had him unknowingly sign a life insurance policy on him, he feels the ultimate betrayal from the only person he's ever loved. Nash can't understand that his dream and his life aren't shared by Marcia, who still has to look out for her family in case Nash passes away. She cares about Nash emotionally, but she can't allow herself to be financially pulled under anymore by his inability to properly address his personal demons.

When I think about my process for this project, I go back to those sensory details. I'm naturally an emotional and introverted individual. For much of my life that meant that I watched my outgoing peers step up to opportunities that I could have also participated in, but I always held back for fear of embarrassment. Since joining the MFA program, though, I've leaned into those uncomfortable feelings and let myself experience moments, rather than dread them needlessly. The impetus for settling into the uncomfortable was going through my divorce. Less than a year before jumping into creative writing at SJSU, I was living in another state, separated from friends and loved ones, and my marriage was over. I had been seeing a therapist and they kept asking me, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" That was too far into the future, but I did know I wanted to go back to school and get my master's degree. I could only see this one goal of getting back into academia. In a lot of ways, the character of Bob Nash is not only mirroring real life comedy greats from the

past, but he's also a creative manifestation of my own desires and insecurities. The professional journey and endeavors of a creative-type are very romanticized to me, but there's this looming question of whether or not one could be successful in that kind of grind. Art and creativity are not perfect and that's what's so attractive about them. That I- or Nash- could find acceptance or absolution from our creative exploits is the everlasting selling point. Will the hours of writing give way to a job in the industry? Publication? Graduation? And will the months of touring finally land Nash that elusive headlining gig at The Comedy Store?

The opposite side of the coin is the character Marcia who also possesses many of my personality traits, not the least of which are being cautious and structured in my daily routines. I'm inclined to be skeptical of the supposed glitz and glamour of a life in "the industry," but that's the dream goal, isn't it? A six-figure deal, name recognition, the works. As a way to rationalize these opposing viewpoints inspired by my own life, the answer in my script was to isolate Nash from everyone in his life, except for Marcia, his former lover. Marcia is seemingly the only person who chooses to be around Nash. She's drawn to the mystique that his lifestyle creates, and by all accounts Nash was a funny guy in his younger days. It's what won Marcia over initially, but ultimately Nash seemed to care more about looking cool than sharpening his skillset or taking care of her. Having lost Marcia long ago and keeping himself removed from any new relationships, Nash's insular ways continued to take shape, hardened by his addictions and loneliness. Marcia can keep caring for him, but she has also reached her own crossroads, as she's seen the destruction Nash's choices have

wrecked on his life. Nash doesn't fully see how volatile and draining his presence is because of the tunnel vision he has for his own legacy. That legacy is something he shared with Marcia long ago when they first met and dated. She knows what this life means to him. So the problem is twofold: Nash recognizes Marcia's family, her husband and kids, and the direction she took for stability, but Marcia continually helps Nash because of her guilt for leaving him with nothing and no one. Marcia feels (at least partially) responsible for Nash's spiral into addiction, as it really set off after the child they had together passed away and she decided the road life, and by extension Nash, wasn't for her, anymore. That guilt, and her constant trying to fix him, only fuels Nash's belief that maybe he can win her over again. If he cleans up, she'll come back. If his career takes off, they'll be together again. If he can headline The Comedy Store, they can start their own family. Similarly, when I finish this script, the idea is there that maybe my life will begin to have a sense of purpose. Maybe.

Nash's quips are only scattered throughout, because he's merely a shell of himself at this point. This story isn't about comedy so much as it is about a comedian who is lost. It isn't just the cancer diagnosis or the down-on-his-luck circumstances; it's everything that's built up to where we meet him currently. Nash can "turn on" for an audience, and even if he's not always laugh-out-loud funny he feels in control of this aspect of his life. When he's off-stage and just has to be Bob, he has no idea how to act or what people expect out of him (just one of the reasons he constantly insists people call him by his last name - he can better identify with a chosen persona, rather than a given name.) This is all a slightly different approach from the typical dialogue-heavy scripts I've written in the past. I wanted

Nash's limited speaking part to be further informed by the restrained natures of the aforementioned characters Woody Grant, Randy "The Ram", and Nina Sayers, all reserved in their own particular ways as they struggle to identify with those around them. That reservation is a personality choice, both from character and creator alike. Nash has found himself surrounded by conventional people, but he bucks the trends of convention and so, too, must his presence and interactions be atypical of the standard protagonist for a film. Paul Zimmerman describes it as such: "Protagonists don't have to be all that likable or good. Their appeal can come from other places. They can be seriously flawed, and test us" (Gotham Writers' Workshop). Nash is testing me, you can be sure of that. I'm not one, in the first place, to write about a happy-go-lucky, all's well character, but even Nash is pushing my reasoning of what it means to be layered, unapproachable, and contentious as a character to analyze, be motivated by, and derive resolution from.

That being said, most of the actual dialogue comes from the other characters, as Nash has very carefully detached himself from polite interaction and civility with those around him. His presence can be felt more heavily in the exposition on the pages. His incessant finger tapping, his standoffish temperament, and his open disdain for perspectives that don't align with his view of how the world should operate all lend themselves to making Nash appear as a bubble of a character at first. He has not only isolated himself within his own existence, but he feels isolated and removed from the audience, as his story takes shape. Every action is a direct response to someone or something around him, as well as a correlation to the kind of life Nash has chosen. He

doesn't like comedy festivals, but he hates Marcia's husband even more. He doesn't want to perform at dives, but can't stand the thought of not performing at all. He seems to have but one friend in the world and it's an unrequited lover. In many ways, he's a petulant child. Nothing seems to go his way, so he makes nothing go his way. Everything is awful and the repetition of awful things is almost like white noise for Nash. He's learned to deal with it. Since the first pandemic lockdown of 2020, this has been a recurring theme which then found its way into my story. If everything seems to be going wrong, why not lean into it? Addictive behaviors, cutting ties, depression, and self-deprecation are all hallmarks of a journey that seems out of our control. Instead of going to therapy and working on my problems, I buried myself in publishing work and unhealthy eating. Nash can only find solace in touring, when his life is at its lowest.

So in this screenplay, I've made Nash act out in defiance, rather than speak up for himself. And it's only now that he sees his chance at a comedy legacy possibly slipping away that he starts to understand how powerful his voice could be. He'll use that in-your-face style of comedy to garner a better professional reputation and answer some looming questions: What if an artist who was given a death sentence refused doctors' orders and pushed ahead? What if they felt they never secured fame and now viewed this moment as their one last shot? What if someone's demons were too strong, yet still part of the narrative they had crafted and felt they could control – what would happen then? This story acts as that call and response between Nash and I. While he stubbornly forges ahead with touring against professional medical advice, his mental well-being improves for a time. He'll

get to live out his dream of headlining The Comedy Store, but at great personal cost to his health and his relationship with Marcia. She has to watch out for herself and her family, ultimately, and that realization for Nash is what breaks him in the end. He lost Marcia a long time ago- the one person who he may have been doing this for all along. His reality is not the reality other people share, or even want, and in the end he feels even more alone than when this story began.

The title of my project serves as a double entendre, both playing off the fact that Nash has been given a literal death prognosis, as well as referencing the terminology that comedians use for someone who is bombing on stage. *You're Dying Up There* examines the mystique of the outsider and the drive that possibly carries these kinds of personalities into another echelon. For as forward and gruff as an individual might be, behind the mask is a person trying to find happiness as part of a larger human collective. They just don't know how. Exploring the intimate struggles of finding oneness within one's existence draws me once again towards those sensory details. Bob Nash and (by extension) myself just want to know that we matter in some way; that all of this work towards a central goal means anything. The tact of our work, the color of our daily routines, and the cadence in our actions have to amount to something, right? Otherwise, what's the point? Bob Nash's story navigates that journey, highlighting the extreme peaks and valleys of dream chasing, as he and I both struggle to figure out if any of this was worth it.

WORKS CITED

- Dempsey, Dylan Kai. "‘Never Ask for Permission’: Alexander Payne’s Seven-Step Filmmaking Crash Course." *No Film School*, NONETWORK, LLC, 2 May 2018, <https://nofilmschool.com/2018/05/alexander-payne-filmmaking-crash-course>.
- Gates, David. *Jernigan: A Novel*. Vintage Books, 1992.
- Gotham Writers’ Workshop. *Writing Movies: The Practical Guide to Creating Stellar Screenplays*. Edited by Alexander Steele, Bloomsbury, 2006.
- Heyman, Mark, et al. *Black Swan*. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2010.
- Mintz, Lawrence E. "Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation." *American Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1985, pp. 71–80. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712763>.
- Nelson, Bob. *Nebraska*. Paramount Vantage, 2013.
- Payne, Alexander, and Jim Taylor. *Sideways*. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2004.
- Siegel, Robert. *The Wrestler*. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2008.

YOU'RE DYING UP THERE

Dramatic Script By
Ryan Hamilton Smith

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

BOB NASH, young and clean shaven, wakes up from a nap. He stretches and clears his eyes. He gets up from the couch, walks to the small kitchen, and checks inside the fridge. But it's quiet inside and he realizes it now. He quickly scans the living room where he just was. Nothing. Pokes his head into the bathroom. Nothing. Walks into the bedroom. Nothing at first, but then he walks to the far side of the bed and there lies a small girl. Some toys rest next to her, as she is sprawled on the floor in a purple flower dress. Her face already has a blue tint.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. BAR "GREEN ROOM" - NIGHT

Nash startles out of a slumber, lit cigarette burned down just enough to start kissing his fingers. He scrambles to put it out in the already full ashtray sitting on top of the chair next to him. All clear, he sits back, dejected, and brushes the ashes off of him. He's older now - disheveled and sunken, and seems to be going nowhere fast.

In this smoke-filled room, there's a hanging lamp on a worn gold chain, two folding chairs, a water cooler, a dead plant, and a small hanging mirror. So much for the glamour of showbiz. The muffled sound of bad karaoke comes through the wall.

A middle-aged WAITRESS comes in carrying empties.

WAITRESS

You're on in two, hon.

Nash raises his cigarette fingers, as if to say, "Heard." He lifts his head towards the ceiling and lets out a sigh. He runs his hand through his hair in front of the mirror. Grits his teeth to examine them for a moment, then checks out the rest of his face. Whatever he's inspecting doesn't seem to be there.

Maybe smoothing out his shirt will do the trick. No. He tucks his shirt in and stands staring at himself, hands on his hips.

He untucks the shirt, again. Time for another cigarette.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

This is no comedy club. There are maybe 15 people here, all regulars. The "stage" is a corner with a stool and a mic.

Nash waits in the hall for karaoke to finish.

WAITRESS

Everyone give it up for Carol Lynn.
I never get tired of hearing "Take
My Breath Away."

Scattered claps.

WAITRESS (CONT.)

Up next, please welcome to the stage
Mr. Bob Nash!

Nothing from the crowd.

Nash is unfazed, as he walks up to the mic.

NASH

Let's hear it for Carol Lynn, again.
Wow. I wasn't sure human vocal cords
could master those particular pitches.

Scattered laughs from the crowd. Nash takes a deep drag.

NASH

I actually haven't listened to that
song since my date dumped me at our
high school prom. But it's good to
see she landed on her feet.

Nash gestures to the back where Carol Lynn sits. A small ripple from the audience. He smirks to himself and takes another drag.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

A bald man counts off \$75 in Nash's hand and he's out the door,

straight to his Toyota Tercel. He FaceTimes MARCIA TALLON, his ex from another lifetime and current manager. Nash is Marcia's only client, the last signifier of their shared past. Nash's right index finger taps away while making a call.

NASH
(to phone)
Come on, pick up.

Marcia picks up and before she can say hello-

NASH (CONT.)
(to Marcia)
Marcia! What the fuck was that?

MARCIA
(groggily)
Nash, is everything OK?

NASH
Yeah! Me and my 75 bucks are great.
Why am I still playing these shitholes?

MARCIA
\$75 for 20 minutes isn't bad.

NASH
The motel is \$40 and I've still
gotta get gas and eat.

Marcia lets out a long yawn.

MARCIA
Sorry, Nash, but it's 12:30.

NASH
It's fine. I'm done with this. I'm
driving home tonight.

MARCIA
You've got another show in two days.
You have to be there.

NASH
For what? Another 75, 80 dollars?
Not worth my pride.

MARCIA

(whisper yelling)

Is it worth my car? Or my house?
Because we signed contracts to play
gigs and if you don't show up, they
come after me, too. Your manager.
I actually have a family to support.
Besides, this one's \$250. It's a
whole festival thing.

Nash is holding up the phone, staring out the window, picking
nothing out of his teeth with his tongue.

A beat.

NASH

Yeah. Yeah, OK. I'll do the last
show.

Deep drag and another cough.

NASH (CONT.)

But that's it. I'm done after this.

He hangs up without hesitation. He flicks the butt of the
cigarette into the night and lights up a new one.

INT. MARCIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marcia comes out of the bathroom, splashing light onto her
husband BRIAN for a moment. He's a real Abercrombie and Fitch
type: good set of hair, V-neck tee, strong jawline. The light
stirs him.

BRIAN

Who was that?

MARCIA

Just Nash letting me the show went
well. He was pulling into the hotel.
Wanted to say goodnight.

He makes sure Marcia hears the exhale out of his nose, as he
turns to hug a pillow.

BRIAN
Goodnight, Nash.

INT. MOTEL - AFTERNOON

There's an empty six-pack next to the bed and the TV is humming. Last night's outfit is on the floor. Ashtray, full. A delivery truck backing up wakes Nash.

He immediately lights a cigarette and heads for the toilet. It's hard to tell if he's always this pasty looking or if it's just the hangover. He finishes his business and while washing his hands, he coughs. Just a spot or two of blood comes out, before he hurls. He takes a couple of aspirin and splashes some water on his face.

He's scrolling through his phone. Nothing. TV's still humming. A local motel ad comes on.

MOTEL ADVERT (VO)
So come on down this weekend for
the Funny Folks Festival. Featuring
Joel Ribbons, Kendra Edelstein, Bob
Nash, and more! Beer, BBQ, and you
can even take a picture with our
very own-

NASH
(interrupting and pointing)
You're goddamn right!

He drags and coughs. He wipes the blood off his hand and keeps watching the advertisement on loop. His right index finger tapping.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Nash is surrounded by a small group of other comics, but he still doesn't engage. He smokes and watches.

BEARDED COMIC
I played Laugh / Riot two weekends
ago. It wasn't as crazy as last year,

but they kept the cage matches in
between sets.

LEGGINGS COMIC

As long as I've got my money upfront,
I'll play for the troops.

ROCKABILLY COMIC

I've got Chucktober in Aberdeen next
month. You gonna be there?

(OS, slowed down loop, focusing on Nash)

You gonna be there?

You gonna be there?

Nash comes to, off a drag.

ROCKABILLY COMIC

(to Nash)

Hey, man. You gonna be there?

Nash looks confused.

NASH

Oh. Yeah. I think my manager booked
me a spot.

This excites Rockabilly Comic, as they walk off satisfied.

Circuit comics. As they walk away, Nash eyeballs them like he's
looking for Waldo.

The sweat is collecting on Nash's brow. He keeps wiping it away
every few seconds. Another drag, another cough. He's scanning
the crowd. Audience members imbibe and laugh. Another drag.
Another cough.

The room is starting to spin. Nash is stumbling. He shakes his
beer bottle right in front of his face. A small girl walks past
him back into the crowd. He tracks her with an inquisitive eye,
but she's gone in the darkness.

NASH

(to himself)

Pff, they let anyone in these places.

(yelling behind him)

Hey, can I get some french fries?

A "Sure thing!" comes from out of the darkness.

An overly produced act finishes up.

FESTIVAL MC

Up next, please welcome for the
first time to Funny Folks, Mr. Bob
Nash!

Nash has that very deliberate, drunk body language. He sets his half-empty on one of the patron tables walking up. When it falls, this gets a laugh.

NASH

(off the mic, muffled)
Whoops. All hands on deck.

Another laugh and he's reached the mic.

NASH (CONT.)

How's everyone doing?!

Another drag, another cough.

NASH (CONT.)

I wasn't even sure I wanted to be here tonight. But my manager said, "What about my house, Nash?" And I said, "No, I don't want to be there either." Her husband's a dick.

Some laughs and claps. He drags and when the extended cough comes this time, it doubles him over. Blood is staining the front of the stage. Gasps from the nearest tables - the sort of stunned reaction when you're waiting to see who moves first. Nash notices the small girl, again, who's watching him intently. They hold each other's gaze for a moment, Nash's blood spilling over his hand and the microphone.

NASH (CONT.)

(quietly, but picked up)
Oh shit.

His body falls forward. Commotion, as everything fades to black.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A sterile, simple room. Not unlike every hospital room you've ever seen, except this one has a desert flower motif. Two bouquets sit on the table next to Nash. One small, one large. He'd reach for them, but there are tubes running in and out of him. A balloon reads "Get Well Soon." Nash looks around for any sign of life. There's a window, but the tops of other buildings don't provide much in the way of scenery. Nothing but the ticking and tocking of the clock.

A nurse finally enters.

NURSE

Oh! Mr. Nash. You're awake. Let me get the doctor.

NASH

Where am I?

NURSE

Providence General.

NASH

What happened?

NURSE

Let me get the doctor.

She looks panicked. Nash is looking around the room more intently now. He reaches for the foot of the bed where his paperwork- NOPE. Agony shoots across his face. Just as he thinks to move the sheets and maybe try to stand, the doctor arrives.

DR. WELLS

Mr. Nash. I wouldn't if I were you.

Nash pulls the sheet back over himself.

DR. WELLS (CONT.)

Wouldn't want to fall and cut open your chin again.

For the first time, Nash notices his chin and the pain sets in, immediately.

NASH
What happened?

DR. WELLS
You fell on stage. Do you remember
any of that?

NASH
(frustrated, puzzled)
I remember I was supposed to do a
set at the festival. I'm a stand-up
comic.

DR. WELLS
I heard. We spoke to the club and
your manager.

NASH
Marcia knows?

DR. WELLS
Mrs. Tallon was your point of contact.
Mr. Nash, I'd like to discuss what
led to this fall.

NASH
Nash. Just Nash.

DR. WELLS
Nash. How long have you smoked?

Nash's eyes show the rattling around in his brain for the
answer. He's interrupted by Dr. Wells checking his vitals.

NASH
I guess - since I was 13.

DR. WELLS
And how old are you now?

NASH
34.

DR. WELLS
Any history of smokers in your family?

NASH

My dad smoked for years. Both my
cousins used to smoke. Maybe they
still do.

DR. WELLS

Have you been coughing a lot lately?

NASH

I don't know. I've had this bug for
a few months now. What are you
getting at?

Dr. Wells pulls a chair over, leveling his eyeline with Nash.

DR. WELLS

Mr. Nash, we did a scan of your
lungs after we cleaned up your chin.
The scans indicated a positive result
for stage 4 lung cancer. Blood tests
confirm.

Nash's brows furrow.

DR. WELLS (CONT.)

We'd like to start treatment immediately.
This will give us the best percentage
of survival rate.

NASH

Us? You have cancer, too, doc?

A beat.

DR. WELLS

If you start now, with a year-long
course of treatments, you're looking
at 20-30% survival rate.

NASH

(snapping toward the doctor)
20-30%? That's the best? Is that
even surviving?

DR. WELLS

Well, you have to understand, Mr.
Nash-

NASH

Just Nash.

Nash looks out the window.

DR. WELLS (CONT.)

(unfazed)

This is advanced stage cancer. Even
at 30%, you could still live another
2-3 years.

NASH

And if I don't do treatment?

DR. WELLS

We could give you a prescription
to help with the pain, and if you
stop smoking, maybe six months to a
year before expiration.

Nash's gaze is lost in the skyline outside. Dr. Wells reads the
room.

DR. WELLS

I'll give you some time to think
about it, but I really think our
best course of action is to start
treatment now. Your manager has
already agreed to pay for it, too,
so you just give us the word.

Nash slowly turns his head towards Dr. Wells leaving, as that
last sentence hangs in the air.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

Lights pass from outside, underneath the window. The TV is on
for no one. Nash lies in bed, glaring at the flowers.

A commercial for cannabis catches Nash's attention -

HOSPITAL ADVERT (VO)

And it's not just for the concertgoers, anymore. The CBD in cannabis has been scientifically proven to increase energy and blood cell count, reduce pain and clinical depressive episodes, as well as level out stress and anxiety. Don't let big pharma scare you: try CBD supplements today. It's as easy as Sunday morning.

The commercial ends, Nash grabs his phone and starts typing. The nurse opens the door and lets Marcia in, snapping Nash out of his concentration.

MARCIA

Nash, oh my goodness, how are you? Sorry I couldn't get an earlier flight. The booker for the festival called and-

NASH

I'm fine, I'm fine. 'Tis but a scratch.

(motioning at his chin)

A beat.

MARCIA

(pointing at the vases)

Who else sent you flowers?

NASH

I don't know who either of those are from.

MARCIA

Well, one is from me. As soon as I got the call, I had Brian place an order.

Marcia fiddles with the bigger bouquet's card.

MARCIA (CONT.)

"All of our prayers and best wishes for a speedy recovery, Bob! Come and see us again sometime. Please

enjoy this free festival t-shirt.
The staff at Funny Folks Festival."

Marcia lets a shirt unfurl and Nash grabs it away from her.

And the much smaller bouquet Marcia reads to herself. She tosses it to Nash who reads it.

MARCIA (CONT.)
Guess I should've given Brian clearer instructions.

NASH
"Feel better." How touching.
(holding the shirt up to himself)
Festival gave me a free shirt. Where's Brian's gift?

MARCIA
(inspecting Nash)
They said you fainted. And you were coughing up blood. Your doctor said it's cancer.

That C-word is hanging in the air. Nash starts shaking his foot in the bed.

MARCIA (CONT.)
Look, Nash, I've already said I'll pay for everything. Don't worry about it. Works been steady at the firm. Let's get some appointments set up and we'll start going after this thing.

NASH
Why does everyone keep saying "we?"

(overlapping)

MARCIA
We're just trying to help. Besides I'm not doing treatment.

MARCIA
Marcia's eyes widen in alarm.

MARCIA
What?!?

NASH

I'm gonna look into alternative medicines. Maybe yoga and meditation. You know, holistic, woo woo kinda stuff.

MARCIA

Woo woo.

(eyeballing Nash)

And you've talked to your doctor about this?

NASH

I'm sure he's fine with it. As long as I feel better, right?

Marcia presses the button for the nurse to come in.

NASH (CONT.)

What are you doing?

Nash can't do anything from the bed.

MARCIA

We need to speak to your doctor. You can't just leave here sick.

NURSE

(in the doorway)

Everything alright?

NASH

No!

MARCIA

We'd like to speak to his doctor about treatments now, if he's available.

The nurse nods and she's gone. Nash crosses his arm and looks away. He's turned into a pouting 34-year old.

Marcia and Nash sit in silence, until Dr. Wells arrives just moments later.

DR. WELLS

So we want to talk treatment? I'm glad to hear we've made a decision.

NASH

I've made a decision and I'm going to try some alternative remedies.

DR. WELLS

I wouldn't advise that.

MARCIA

See?

NASH

(at Marcia)

Well, of course he wouldn't. He's part of the whole-

(shaking his hand back and forth)

-hospital industrial complex!

(at Dr. Wells)

If I did these treatments, you said it would be a yearlong process and maybe I'd live another 2-3 years, right?

Dr. Wells nods his head in agreement.

NASH (CONT.)

But that's not guaranteed. And those 2-3 years, what's the quality of life like?

DR. WELLS

Chemo affects everyone differently, but you can expect hair and weight loss, mood swings, lethargy - you wouldn't be able to travel great distances. Afterwards, travel will still be difficult. Your immune system will be fragile.

NASH

(at Dr. Wells)

And that's *if* I got 2-3 years.

(at Marcia)

I need to travel. I need to work.
I can't be bed-ridden.

MARCIA

You can still write. We'll get some
workshops set up.

NASH

(not listening; at Dr. Wells)
Alternative medicines could still
cure me. You know, like all those
people in Santa Cruz?

DR. WELLS

I can't speak to the efficacy of
any alternative treatments, but I
can't force you into treatment here.
I have to remind you, though, of
the risk you take.

NASH

Risking losing my career. I'm not
about to do that.

Nash starts clicking through the channels on the TV. The index
finger of his free hand taps his leg rapidly, without obvious
awareness. He's clearly done with this conversation.

MARCIA

(to Dr. Wells)

Sorry. I haven't eaten since this
morning and I'm sure you probably
want to get back to whatever you
were doing.

(to everyone)

Why don't we talk about this later?

INT. HOSPITAL CAFÉ - NIGHT

Marcia is browsing the limited selection with an empty tray.
Squares of pizza. Halves of bagels. Wrapped sandwiches. Juice
boxes. Bottles of soda and water. Red and green gelatin. Candy
and chips. She looks around the room, as if someone may have
found a better menu and could clue her in.

One family sits at a corner table, crying. An older woman near the exit eats her pizza square with a knife and fork. A younger man sits near the window on his phone, constantly poking the gelatin with a spoon. His beaten conversation reaches Marcia's ear.

MAN ON PHONE

Of course, I wanted to visit more,
but what were we supposed to do?
We couldn't leave every two weeks
to spend a weekend out here. The
kids have school and we work. We
told him that when all of this
happened. And I'm sure he could tell
we were here this weekend. I swear
I saw his eyelids move like he could
hear us. At least we got that.

Marcia is still standing where she was at the counter, eyes on the empty tray. She looks around, again, like she suddenly doesn't know what she's doing in the café. She grabs some sodas and some bags of chips.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY

Nash sits in a wheelchair, waiting, with the nurse behind him. He's wearing his Funny Folks Festival t-shirt and dark shades. His old shirt is in a bloodied baggy sitting in his lap; his right index finger tapping against his leg. Marcia pulls up in Nash's Tercel.

NURSE

(to Marcia)

Here are his discharge papers and
Dr. Wells information.

(to Nash)

Alright, Mr. Nash, you take care
of yourself.

(mumbling to themselves)

Lord knows you're gonna need it.

Nash gets up and hobbles to the car. He won't let Marcia help him.

MARCIA

I went by and got your - stuff -
from the motel. Let's stop somewhere
and get some lunch.

Nash already has a cigarette hanging off his lips. Like a true
smoker, he can't find his lighter.

MARCIA (CONT.)

I threw it out, Nash. I should've
known you still had a pack in your
pants, though.

NASH

Can we stop somewhere, real quick?

MARCIA

What do you think?

INT. DINER - DAY

The All-American kind of diner: décor way past its prime. Pie
carousel. Every inch of wall-space covered with a memory. Nash
and Marcia are still bickering about the lighter.

NASH

I just don't see what the big deal
is. I've already got cancer. One
more smoke ain't gonna kill me right
now.

MARCIA

That's not the point, Nash. You said
you wanted to work. And for some
reason, I agreed with you. You must
have had something in mind.

NASH

Well, yeah, but who's gonna book
me? I'm dying.

MARCIA

We don't need to let people know
that right now. We'll get you on a
juice diet, start doing yoga. Whatever
you think'll make you feel better.

NASH
'Shrooms.

MARCIA
(off an open mouth)
Wow. Mushrooms?

They exchange looks of "Obviously" and "Really?" respectively.

MARCIA (CONT.)
And you're going to do what with those? And while you're on the road? You know that's a scheduled drug?

NASH
Oh, come on now. You must know psilocybins are a whole business these days. I didn't realize how behind the curve I was. Everybody went straight before I did: oils, edibles, teas. It's incredible. Don't tell me you haven't tried any of it. Buy me a pair of yoga pants and I'm right back on the upswing. Maybe even get an endorsement deal.

A young college stud comes by for orders.

COLLEGE STUD
What'll it be?

They haven't even touched the menus.

MARCIA
(with delay)
Uhh, scrambled eggs and toast, please. With coffee.

NASH
(with zero hesitation)
Denver omelet, extra cheese, with a short stack, extra syrup, and a side of bacon. Coffee, black.

COLLEGE STUD

I'll get those going.

He leaves.

Another, "Really?" from Marcia. Nash mirrors it back to her like a child.

MARCIA

One hospital visit isn't enough for the week.

NASH

I know you traded in your cool card for a CPA license, but for godsakes, Marsh. Stop talking like you're the one who's died already.

MARCIA

I have that CPA license to provide for my family. It's called a job. It's called being a good wife and mother.

NASH

I have a job. And you don't get paid to be a good wife and mother.

MARCIA

You nearly died doing your job. Now I'm here trying to help you get a second chance. Also, I barely get paid to manage you, last I checked. I have to work to make sure my family is taken care of. I barely see Audrey as it is. With you it's like I have two kids.

Marcia catches herself. Nash's finger begins tapping.

MARCIA (CONT.)

I didn't mean-

NASH

No, you're right. It's like you have two kids.

He begins rearranging the condiments at the table.

NASH (CONT.)

I did have something in mind.
I want to headline the main room
at The Comedy Store. I figure the
drugs could get me feeling well
enough to at least do that.

MARCIA

OK. We can definitely - probably -
do that. But real treatment afterwards.
If this goes well, maybe it could
lead to something else.

NASH

Sure. Fine. But don't get me the
gig by paying someone off or calling
in one of your favors. If I have a
shit set and blow it, what's the
point? This could be my one shot.

MARCIA

When are you thinking?

NASH

When my set's tight. That's why I
gotta tour.

MARCIA

You could be dead before that happens.

Nash looks Marcia straight in the eyes-

NASH

I'm gonna be dead either way.

College stud brings over the coffees.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Not a whole lot of people traveling on a weekday. A few families
from the festival. Maintenance crews walk up and down corridors.
A child screams running down an aisle way, as their parent
chases them.

Nash and Marcia are playing the card game War.

MARCIA

Should be able to book you for the next 3-5 months solid. It's the off season.

NASH

Just no more shit spots, please.

MARCIA

There's gonna be some.

NASH

If I wanted to die in a grease hole I would've done it two days ago.

MARCIA

Look, there's gonna have to be some. If you wanna work and tighten up your set, you gotta get out there. And you don't exactly have the best reputation right now.

NASH

My reputation is sound. People know exactly what they're getting: a sick comic on the mend.

(motioning the cards)

War.

MARCIA

That might not be everyone's impression.

NASH

They've heard the news, though. I collapsed because - drum rolllll - cancer! 8s over 3s.

He collects his winnings, gleefully.

MARCIA

I didn't do it.

NASH

No, you didn't, but this game is mostly luck.

MARCIA

I didn't tell anyone you have cancer.

NASH

What did you tell them?

Marcia starts loosely shuffling her cards.

NASH (CONT.)

That's cheating. What did you tell people?

MARCIA

(faintly)

You were drunk.

NASH

Why the hell would you tell people that?

MARCIA

By the time I got to the hospital, people were already posting about how you collapsed after a drunken binge and I hadn't talked to your doctor, yet. I didn't know the story.

NASH

So you kept letting people think I was drunk??

MARCIA

You were drunk!

NASH

But that's not why I passed out, Marcia, what the fuck?

MARCIA

I figured it was better to be drunk than terminally ill. We can spin that you're getting sober, but if

you're dying people won't want to lose money on a booking knowing you've only got a few months left.

NASH

All the goodwill I thought I had.

MARCIA

You'll still have that. People want reliability and that's what we're going to give them.

NASH

I'm always reliable. Comedy is my life. I'm at every show you get me.

MARCIA

And half the time you. Are. Drunk. Or, excuse me, hungover. This way you're a recovering addict.

NASH

With zero sympathy.

MARCIA

I can't believe I'm saying this, but being sick with cancer doesn't get you The Comedy Store. You don't need sympathy. You need a redemption story. If you want gigs, better gigs, you need to sober up. It should keep you healthy longer, too.

Nash grabs Marcia's cards and starts reshuffling the deck.

MARCIA (CONT.)

In fact, let me make some calls, get you some shows lined up. We know plenty of people who would still be willing to let you open for them. Try out the material on some different crowds.

Marcia leaves Nash shuffling, while she makes some calls in an emptier seating area.

LUCY (VO)

Of course, we can make room for Nash. I watched him come up, when you two were still goin' together. He's always welcome here.

MARCIA

It would mean a lot to him. He's had some setbacks and the medical scare kinda just put everything into perspective, you know?

LUCY (VO)

(off one breathy chuckle)

I heard he was drunk, but liquor doesn't give you a cough like that. How are you doing? With Nash?

MARCIA

I'm hanging in there. Just getting him gigs, keeping him out of trouble.

LUCY (VO)

Bit more than trouble this time.

Marcia turns toward Nash who's playing card toss into his boot.

LUCY (CONT.,VO)

So your girl's gotta be about six now, right?

MARCIA

Six in June.

LUCY (VO)

That's good. You make sure you're taking care of her. And your husband. Nash'll be fine. You shouldn't be fixing everything for him still, Marsh.

MARCIA

This is nothing like that. I don't *fix* everything for him. He could've died on stage. I came to make sure he was OK. Like any friend would,

Lucy. And I take care of my family,
thank you.

LUCY (VO)

Of course, didn't mean nothin' by
it. You've always been solid as a
rock for him. Probably saved him
more times than he knows. You're
good for him. But if he's as sick
as you say, you gotta ask yourself:
what's he willing to risk and what're
you willing to lose? Alls I'm sayin'
is it wouldn't hurt to have a
financial safety net for yourself.
When his situation goes south. Make
sure you can still send your little
girl to college.

The child runs by again, parent chasing after them. Marcia
glances over at Nash, again, who's now kicking a reclining
massage chair.

MARCIA

Yeah, I'll get back to you on that.

Marcia heads back in Nash's direction, putting on a face.

MARCIA

(at Nash's predicament)

It works by card.

NASH

Well, get it out.

With a sigh, Marcia gives in to the request.

MARCIA

I got you a weekend at Lucy's place.

Nash settles into the chair.

NASH

She was always one of the good ones.

(melting)

Oh, yeah. That's exactly what daddy
needed. Take all my aches and pains

away, Brookstone.

Marcia watches for a moment. When she sits next to their stuff, she starts making another call.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Marcia makes excited calls at the office, marking gig dates on her calendar.

Nash opens a jar of mushrooms and takes one. He grabs a drink and continues watching a movie on TV.

Marcia is on the phone in a parking lot at a little league game. Brian disappointedly watches Marcia from the stands. He waves at and claps for their daughter.

Nash tries yoga in his hotel room. He falls and coughs. He holds his side.

Marcia is at home making calls and writing checks. She's more agitated, but Brian walks by her office and doesn't bother.

Nash is performing, drinking on stage. The crowd is enjoying it. He sees a little girl sitting on her hands, swinging her feet off the chair. He coughs, but continues on.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Guests walk in and out, going about their days. Nash sits at the bar, nursing a drink, watching the outside. A car pulls up and lets a middle aged man out. Jeans and t-shirt, sneakers. Newspaper rolled up in his back pocket. Nothing exceptional about this guy. He walks into the lobby and sits a few seats down from Nash at the bar. He orders a soda to-go. The man is unassuming, but Nash watches him out of the corner of his eye.

MIDDLE AGED MAN
(noticing Nash's side eye)

Hi.

NASH

Hey. Just get in?

MIDDLE AGED MAN
Staying here with the family. Little
vacation from the grind, you know?

NASH
Yeah, definitely.

Nash keeps eyeing him and it's getting more noticeable.

MIDDLE AGED MAN
I'm sorry, can I help you with
something?

NASH
Sorry, I was expecting a friend and
I thought maybe it was you.

MIDDLE AGED MAN
You don't know what your friend
looks like?

Nash turns around embarrassed, as the bartender brings the
Middle Aged Man his drink.

The Middle Aged Man grabs his drink and walks Nash's direction,
stopping at his stool.

MIDDLE AGED MAN
Look, whoever you're waiting for,
maybe you can find something fun
to do in the paper.

He places the newspaper on the stool next to Nash and walks off
towards the elevator. Nash opens the paper and a baggie of pills
sits inside. He immediately closes it and checks that the coast
is clear. Nothing. He slams his drink and heads towards the
elevator.

Nash catches him, just before the elevator door closes.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - DAY

Nash frantically whispers.

NASH

You are the guy I was looking for.
What are these?

MIDDLE AGED MAN

(playing it cool)

First of all, you said you were
waiting for your friend. I'm not
your friend. Secondly, I don't know
what you're talking about.

NASH

I'm talking about these pills.
(whispering even more)
Where are the 'shrooms?

MIDDLE AGED MAN

I think you've got me mistaken for
someone.

The elevator door opens and a guest steps on. Everyone smiles
and nods then stands in silence as the floors tick away.

The doors finally open again and the guest steps off. The doors
close and Nash is right back at the interrogation.

NASH

These are pills, not mushrooms.
What the hell?

He's in the man's face now and getting angry. Still, this new
friend plays it cool.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Look, man, I don't want any trouble.
I'm just trying to get back to my
family.

The doors open again and they both step off. Nash is still
berating him. Away from the elevator camera, the Middle Aged Man
turns and shoves Nash against the wall, holding him with his
forearm across Nash's throat. The can of soda falls to the
ground and the elevator doors close.

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT.)

All I do is deliver. But since you're so curious, these capsules are lower dosage, higher potency. You get in my face again, we're gonna have a problem.

He releases Nash from his grip. Nash hunches over and coughs.

MIDDLE AGED MAN (CONT.)

(picking up the can, walking away)
You better hope this thing doesn't explode all over my kid.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Marcia sits in the green room, exhausted. She doesn't seem to register that Nash is even out there.

The crowd applauds and Nash enters the green room. He paces the room back and forth. Muffled MC in the background.

NASH

Did you hear that?

MARCIA

Pretty good.

NASH

Pretty good? They loved it!

MARCIA

Good enough for me to take a break for a bit? Audrey has a little league championship.

NASH

Definitely. I'd rather be off the leash for a while, anyway. Do my own thing.

Marcia gives him a concerned look. He stops for a moment-

NASH (CONT.)

I'll be fine. I promise. We both

could use some space. Take the break.

-but gets right back to pacing.

MARCIA

(hesitating)

Fine. But check in with me. I'm gonna head back to the hotel and see about switching my flight.

Marcia collects her things. Some papers in a manila envelope stick out from her shoulder bag. She stares at them for a moment, then turns back to Nash, still in the zone.

MARCIA (CONT.)

Oh, hey, I forgot there's a few more contracts for shows I need you to sign.

She pulls out a pen for Nash.

NASH

(signing and talking)

Words really gettin' out there.

(flipping pages)

I knew if we just hit the bigger venues, people would start to talk. Didn't I tell you?

MARCIA

Yeah, you did.

NASH

(flipping one last page)

And those doctors wanted me to stay in a sterile hospital room. I can't thrive there. They don't know.

He finishes signing and coughs. He resists looking up at Marcia and, instead, grabs a beer out of the cooler.

MARCIA

Text me, OK? And only one beer.

She squeezes Nash's shoulder on her exit. Nash is still pumped. He continues pacing the room, buzzing. He catches his

reflection. He stops and looks deep into his own eyes. He takes a long sip, never losing eye contact with himself.

A knock. The club owner, ROSEY, comes in. He's in full suit, Rolex, the works.

ROSEY

You were great out there tonight.
That's what I like to see, Bobby.

NASH

It felt great. Did you hear them?

ROSEY

Of course, but you gotta keep that energy up. Comics think they done a couple good shows and the audience'll love 'em forever.

Nash's brow begins to furrow to a thousand-yard stare. He's nursing the beer, tapping his right index finger.

ROSEY (CONT.)

(matter-of-factly)

I've seen comics come and go because they can't maintain. But when I first saw you up in Rockport, you had that tenacity. And I saw it again out there tonight. I think you've got what it takes.

Nash, a bit stunned, sits on the couch. Compliments feel good.

ROSEY (CONT.)

Keep at it and you'll have your pick of stadiums, kid. Real Kevin Hart treatment.

He hands Nash the envelope with his money.

ROSEY (CONT.)

Little something extra in there, from me to you. Keep that energy up. I'd hate to see all that talent go to waste.

Nash comes to out of the stare, coughs, and drinks a sip of beer.

Rosey leaves, smiling. Only the tapping of Nash's finger on his beer can be heard, as he dumps the contents of the envelope on the table. \$300 and a dime bag of powder.

INT. TALLON HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Marcia enters with luggage in-hand. The house is lived-in, but quiet right now. She sets her luggage down.

MARCIA

Hello?

No one. She walks into the kitchen.

MARCIA (CONT.)

Hello? Mommy's home.

Still nothing. She reaches for her phone and begins typing when faint laughter is heard from the backyard. Brian and their daughter, AUDREY, play hide and seek. Audrey looks so much like the girl from when Nash collapsed: long brown hair, freckles lining the bridge of her nose, a small mole on the left side of her chin, and tons of energy. Marcia smiles in relief, heading for the sliding door.

MARCIA (CONT.)

There you guys are. I was looking for you.

AUDREY

(running from her hiding spot)
Mommy! I was hiding from Daddy.

Brian's body language is less receptive, as he saunters over.

MARCIA

I see that. And you're such a good hider.

AUDREY

I'm gonna hide again and you find me this time.

Audrey runs inside.

MARCIA

Looks like you two have been having
a fun week.

BRIAN

Yeah. We have a lot of fun together.
You having fun with Nash?

He picks up some of Audrey's toys around the yard. Marcia has to
follow him.

MARCIA

He seems to have a goal this time.
He's energized. He seems - more
clear-headed. At least for now.

BRIAN

So you'll be home more often then?

MARCIA

Hopefully. I mean, Nash is still
sick, so short of a miracle, I'll
probably still have to check in
with him here and there.

Brian throws the toys in a large bucket.

BRIAN

But you just said he's better?

MARCIA

He's better right now, but you know
he's not getting treatment. He's
kinda just taking it one day at
a time.

BRIAN

So how long before you're taking
care of him again? It'd be nice if
we knew when you were coming and
going.

He starts coiling up the garden hose. He's getting more agitated.

MARCIA

I always let you know when Nash has dates and which ones I need to go to.

BRIAN

Yeah, when he shows up. What about when he misses shows because he's on another bender and all these bookies start calling here?

MARCIA

They're not bookies. It's just stand-up.

BRIAN

But they call asking for money.

MARCIA

And I always clear it up with them. We're good for it.

BRIAN

Is Nash good for it? Does he pay back that money? Because it seems like we're always picking up the tab for his habits.

The last bit of water dribbles out of the hose, onto Brian's hands, and he wipes them on his pants.

MARCIA

He's doing better.

BRIAN

(not even registering the comment)
Look, I know you want to help him. Your empathy is one of the best things about you. And you two have a past and I've always understood that, but he's a junkie, Marsh. He was taking drugs when you met and he's taking drugs now still. Sure

maybe they're not hard drugs, but he's still drinking right? He still refused treatment. You said it yourself, all he could think about was headlining the next venue. His addiction constantly rips you away from Audrey and me. And I have to make it fun for her, so that she doesn't keep asking where Mommy is. If I make it a game, she's alright. But I don't know that you're alright. I don't know what kind of situation Nash has gotten my wife into. Some trashed out, backwater, drug den. He calls at all hours and you drop everything for him. When are you going to drop him for your family?

MARCIA

You know I would do anything for you two.

A beat. It *almost* gets Brian.

MARCIA (CONT.)

But I can't just abandon Nash, either. He's got no one else.

Brian picks up some trash from the patio table.

BRIAN

Yeah, I've heard that one, too.
(stepping inside)
Audrey's still hiding. You should probably find her.

Brian walks off into the recesses of the house. Marcia eyeballs the ground for a moment before heading back inside. She sees the door to their laundry room cracked open. Shaking her head slightly and finding a smile-

MARCIA

I sure hope there aren't any little girls hiding in here!

She swings the door open in surprise.

AUDREY

Ahh!! You found me!

Audrey runs into Marcia's arms.

AUDREY

Do you wanna hide now, Mommy?

MARCIA

You're such a good hider why don't
you find another spot and I'll find
you again, OK?

Audrey runs off in excitement only a child can have. Marcia heads for the couch next to her luggage. She opens the front pocket and retrieves the papers in the manila envelope. She fingers through them half-heartedly and pulls out one packet from the bunch. She looks it over more concertedly. A life insurance policy signed by Nash.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

Nash and other stand-ups congregate in a nicer, mid-sized room - a staging area. Water, cans of soda, and a few trays of pre-packaged sandwiches and cookies line one wall. Event chatter fills the room. Everyone seems to know each other or acts the part. Nash is in what appears to be the smoking corner making small talk.

Outside in the halls, banners and posters highlight the event: "The 3rd Annual Roast-A-Thon! Watch As Comics From All Across The Country Roast Your Mayor! 21+, Two Drink Minimum. Benefiting Local Charities."

Droves of folk bump into each other: taking selfies in front of banners, buying souvenir tees, in line for drinks. Showtime looms as the crowd amasses.

The staging area is closer than the crowds realize. Just a matter of a few dozen feet. All that separates them is a set of double doors. Workers of the event are buzzing around with headsets and clipboards. One of them notices the smell of smoke and pops their head in-

HEADSET

Hey! You can't smoke in here. City rules. Gotta go outside. The door back there will take you to the loading dock.

The smokers put their sticks out in their drinks. The chainsmokers - all 3 of them - head for the door. It's one of those doors that's as clean as the hotel on one side, and as grimey as the bum on the street on the other side. Nash is #3 in this group.

EXT. CONVENTION CENTER LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

It's brisk. The three remaining smokers huddle, as smokers do. There's several dozen dumpsters. Everything is stained.

JASON

Left my damn jacket inside.

He puffs a few more times. Exhales on a slight chattering.

JASON (CONT.)

Fuck it. Too cold. I'll see you back inside.

He gives Nash and the remaining smoker each a pat on the shoulder and barrels back through the doors.

STEVE

Hey, grab that bottle, too!

The door shuts, cutting Steve off. Steve is hovering around Nash's age. Good looking enough. He's unassuming in his bomber jacket. That natural cool you want to punch because you don't have it. Nash is wearing a full-length black trench coat.

STEVE (CONT.)

He ain't gonna grab it. Just as well. One vice at a time, right?

NASH

I guess.

Steve quickly eyeballs Nash up and down, as Nash takes a drag.

STEVE
I'm surprised to see you here.

NASH
Yeah, not really my kinda gig.

STEVE
Not that. Word is you almost checked out.

Steve drags.

NASH
Just a fainting spell. Dehydration.

He motions the water bottle in his coat pocket.

STEVE
That's good. Heard it got messy on stage.

NASH
Nah. Just tabloid shit. I'm fine.
Feeling better than ever.

Nash takes a huge sip, as if to prove his health.

A beat.

They stand there smoking.

STEVE
(motioning to the door)
My man Jason there is still coming up. Can't even remember to have his coat with him at all times.

Steve smirks.

STEVE (CONT.)
He's been opening for me, but the grind's been getting to him. Kid's solid, he just needs a little something. You holding?

Nash looks had.

STEVE (CONT.)
'Cause I'd gladly pay. I know how
it is out there. Ain't nothing free.

NASH
(flatly)
No. I'm not.

STEVE
Nah, that's cool. I just thought
with this whole Breakfast Club,
Bender look you got...

Nash feels the dimebag in his coat pocket. He tickles it with
his fingers.

NASH
Actually, yeah. Yeah, I do have
something.

He pulls the dimebag out from his pocket.

STEVE
And that's why you always have your
coat. You never know.

Steve takes one more drag and snuffs out his cigarette. He pulls
out a Benjamin and stuffs it in the opposite pocket the drugs
came from. He grabs the bag from Nash and a mirror from his own
pocket.

STEVE
It's good to hear it was nothing
serious, man. Tonight's gonna be
fun.

Nash takes a drag and flicks his cigarette into a puddle.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Each stand-up is hovering just off stage behind the curtains.
The headsets now quietly race around with their clipboards. The
"hurry up and wait" game.

At least there's alcohol for everyone. Audience and performer alike, all seem to have a glass or a bottle in their hand. Nash barrels around a corner, catching his breath, wiping his nose. He hasn't missed anything yet.

HEADSET

Everyone ready? House lights are about to go down. Stand by.

Everyone steadies themselves. Nash rubs his chin and cheeks a handful of times. He's nodding a lot to no one in particular.

The lights drop and the crowd roars with whoops, cheers, and applause. Nash stands with his arms folded and tries to lean out to catch a peak at the crowd. Hundreds. His finger is rapidly tapping against the back of his elbow.

PA SYSTEM

Good evening!

Another roar.

HEADSET

Places. You'll head out one-by-one to your chairs in this order. Give a quick wave, they'll announce the next person. Alright?

The first stand-up heads out and the show is rolling. The dais is 15-deep. Nash is straight-faced, but starting to glisten and simply raises his hand in acknowledgement. The crowd doesn't stop cheering. Once everyone's on stage, the production starts for the Mayor. Presidential music set to a beat, an American flag, pyro, young women in tight clothes dancing: the spectacle is elaborate. Nash turns his head to the crowd and they aren't cheering anymore. He tilts his head up and can hear the cheers now being pumped through speakers. He turns his head back to the Mayor, who is beside himself with glee, and a grin sneaks out of the corner of his mouth.

The show starts.

The crowd is cheering once again as the stand-ups rip into their elected official.

MONTAGE

JASON

I'm as surprised as anyone on this dais. I thought for sure the only time tonight I was going to see an old man with that kind of tail was going to be later in the hotel room on the premium channels.

Each comic hits the dais and controls the crowd. Some interact with the Mayor more. One takes the mic into the crowd. Nash is sweating and nodding. His finger tapping wildly on his knee. He feigns laughter at each joke.

STEVE

Actually saw you pull up outside earlier, Mr. Mayor. I gotta say, whatever you were charging tonight was not enough. With that limo? You could've easily charged three, maybe five more cents! Ya cheap ass.

The Mayor takes it all in stride and laughs right along. Nash is sweating and nodding. Nodding and tapping. It's difficult to focus his gaze in any one spot, as more comics take their turn.

END MONTAGE

PA SYSTEM

Up next, please welcome to the stage, Mr. Bob Nash!

NASH

Thank you. No, really. That was almost as loud as the cheers they were pumping through the speakers earlier.

Laughter and sweating.

NASH (CONT.)

(motioning to the Mayor)
You know, you actually remind me a

lot of my father. He never worked a day in his life, either, and took all the credit. So you're in good company.

More laughter. More sweating.

Nash is flush, but the crowd is eating up his routine. He motions to several other comics on the dais making jokes about them. More laughter. He points to another older suited gentleman in the audience - two large screens on either side of the stage get a close-up of the man. Nash lands another joke and the crowd is doubling over.

NASH (CONT.)

Thank you, again, Mr. Mayor. It's good to see someone of your rank taking this so well. But I guess being at a roast is pretty similar to your day job: everyone around you is drunk and they absolutely hate you. Goodnight!

Nash shakes the hand of the Mayor and heads backstage. He wipes his forehead with his sleeve and goes for a swig from the water bottle in his pocket. Empty. He drops the bottle on the floor and starts asking-

NASH (CONT.)

Any water around here? Bottle or something?

Headset notices.

HEADSET

You ok?

NASH

Cup? Anything? Just need some water.

HEADSET

Let me get that for you.

Headset rushes off, but Nash's vision is swirling. His sweating hasn't stopped and he's looking for something stable. He drops to his knees. Through his blurry vision, he sees a small girl

jumping on a couch in one of the backstage rooms. She giggles, as he tries to catch his breath. He pulls out his phone, but before he can dial he pukes and slumps over to his side on the floor.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Familiar off-white walls and standard paintings of nothing-in-particular.

Nash looks down at his arm and he's all tubes and wires.

NASH
(Softly gargles)

He coughs. There's a tube in his throat. He looks towards the door and an older woman is sitting in a chair.

Nash's mother, LORETTA, is petite and trapped in fashion from 20 years ago. Her glasses look more like goggles and she keeps her long gray hair in a pony.

LORETTA
Good to see you awake.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Nash is already sitting in the front seat of the family's 1987 Cutlass Supreme. Loretta is outside.

LORETTA
(to the doctor)
Understood, doctor. I'm just glad you called when you did. Rest at home will do 'em some good.

She's in, she buckles herself, and they're driving. They pass by the hospital sign, WICHITA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL. The buildings they pass can't hide the flatness of prairie country.

Several beats of silence.

LORETTA (CONT.)
Your Pa should have supper ready

by the time we get back. I think
he said he was makin' chicken mash.
He's been using red potatoes lately.

Nash's hands are folded over in his lap. His finger is tapping.

LORETTA (CONT.)

Your Aunt Gertie called last week.
Seems Ricky and them is still tryin'
to get that ol' tractor out the
barn. I told 'em it got water in
it from when you rode it down by
the creek.

Nash repositions in his seat uncomfortably. She gently slaps his
knee. His phone starts to buzz - Marcia.

INTERCUT- CUTLASS SUPREME & MARCIA'S HOME OFFICE

MARCIA (VO)

Nash, oh my God, are you alright?
I read you collapsed on stage.

NASH

I'm fine. Just people overreacting,
again.

Loretta is mouthing, "Who's that?"

MARCIA

Are you sure? The road isn't taking
a toll on you? I can be there as
quick as last time.

Loretta again - "Who's that?" She keeps turning to look Nash's
way. He bats her away in annoyance.

NASH

No, I was just feeling faint after
the roast set is all. Got some water
and I'm fine. It's probably just
some intern trying to get clicks.

(overlapping)

MARCIA
You're absolutely sure?

LORETTA
(whispering)

Who is that??

NASH

(whispering to Loretta)

Stop!

(back to Marcia)

Yeah, Marsh. And besides, if I wasn't fine would I have stopped in to see my folks? Say hi, Ma.

LORETTA

Marcia! Hiii! How are you, hon?

NASH

(to Marcia)

Ma says hi.

MARCIA

I heard. Hi, Loretta. So- you're staying with them?

NASH

(to Loretta)

Marcia says hi.

Loretta beams.

NASH (CONT.)

(to Marcia)

Yeah, for now. Just catching up.

MARCIA

It's been awhile since you've seen them.

NASH

Yup. Figured I was down here, so-

Beat.

MARCIA

(cautiously)

Ok. Well, so long as you're fine. Did you want to work a couple shows while you're there.

NASH

Nah, you know there aren't any clubs out here. I'll just hang out around the house.

LORETTA

That's not true! We just got that new Wendy's.

NASH

Like I said. Just gonna lay low for a bit.

MARCIA

Remember, you've got a few shows this coming weekend and Lucy's in two weeks.

NASH

Yeah, and I'll let you know if I'm gonna be there this weekend.

MARCIA

If? Nash, we have contracts with these places. What am I supposed to tell them?

NASH

Tell 'em I'm visiting my elderly parents. They'll understand.

He turns to give Loretta a closed-mouth, weak smile.

MARCIA

And Lucy? She gave you this gig when you were laid up in the hospital.

NASH

Wonderful. So we know she's good for it.

MARCIA

And where are you good for it in this scenario? Am I supposed to just tell her you won't be there?

Brian walks by holding Audrey's hand, a small backpack in the other.

NASH

(terse)

I said I'm taking a break to visit my folks. Can I do that? I never see them.

Everyone's silent.

MARCIA

Yeah. Just - take your time.

They exchange abrupt goodbyes and hang up.

END INTERCUT

More silence.

NASH

Sorry 'bout that. Scheduling conflict.

LORETTA

That's alright.

Loretta drives for a bit. Slow enough to get under your skin, quick enough to not get pulled over. They pass by strip malls and industrial buildings. Old neighborhoods of small houses with big yards and no fences. Waterways seem to be the only geographic feature breaking up the flatness.

LORETTA (CONT.)

Oh, look, that's where you and Marcia had your prom!

She points to a furniture store.

He looks out her window puzzled.

NASH

That's a Coleman's.

LORETTA

Well, yeah. Everyone movin' to the

city now's gotta have furniture. I
always did like Marcia. How she
doin'?

NASH
(flatly)
Fine.

LORETTA
You two was always so good together.
I always tell the girls at church,
"My Bobby was never happier than
with Marcia."

NASH
Please don't do that.

LORETTA
What? It's true! You always made
eachother laugh. And she was such
a smart girl.

NASH
That was a high school thing, Ma.

LORETTA
It was more than that. Besides,
true love never dies.

They roll up to a red light. She lowers her visor and there's a
worn picture. Marcia and Nash in younger, happier days. Marcia
is pregnant. Loretta holds it out for him to see. His eyes move,
but he seems to already know what it is.

As she glances over at her son cheekily, she realizes what she's
done and turns back to the windshield, putting the picture back.

LORETTA
I didn't mean-

NASH
Yeah, Ma.
It's fine.

His finger tapping slows to a stop, as he stares at the door
panel. Green light.

LORETTA
(off a chuckle)
You have to see what the Johnson's
did to their mailbox. Big ol' rooster
and you open his mouth.

The "LEAVING WICHITA, COME AGAIN" sign zips past the window, as the low lying buildings give way to fields of gold.

EXT. NASH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

A stone's throw away from Oklahoma, the small township sign "WELCOME TO CANUPTON" hangs rough and ready from some old wooden posts. Large plots of land with barns, farming equipment, and fully-porched houses sit acres apart. No one seems to grow much of anything, with the occasional tree providing shade and holding a forgotten tire swing. This is living in the sticks.

The Nash homestead is chipped white, like every house appears to be. An old pickup sits out front.

LORETTA
Look see! That's the rooster box I
was tellin' you 'bout.

A rooster, twice the size of your standard, plumed in red and green, sits at the bank of mailboxes. It is the most visually striking thing in eyeshot.

Loretta parks and the two of them get out of the car.

LORETTA (CONT.)
I'll get your bag.

Nash doesn't argue. A simple, breathy-

NASH
OK.

No sooner do they get out when AL NASH walks through the house's open front door. Al is a tall man of medium build. A jeans and flannel character. He has a slight lumber to his aged walk.

AL

Well looky here. Where'd ya pick
this one up?

Al stays at the top of the 3 steps for Loretta and Nash to greet
him.

NASH
Hey, Pa.

They embrace. Al seems to envelope his son. He gives Loretta a
peck on the cheek.

AL
Come on in. Supper's 'bout ready.

INT. NASH DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Loretta and Al have left nothing on their plates. Nash has
picked at and spread his food around enough to give the
appearance of "done."

Al starts collecting dishes from the timeworn formal dining
table.

NASH
That was real good. Been awhile
since I had a home cooked meal.

LORETTA
(proudly)
Tell your father about the tour you've been on.

Nash looks annoyed.

NASH
There's not much to tell.

LORETTA
Oh, come now. You been on a national
tour.
(to Al)
He's headlinin' and even met a mayor.
(to Nash)
Tell your Pa.

NASH

Seems you already did.

She lightly brushes her son off.

LORETTA

Gah!

AL

Your Ma says you was playin' up in Kansas City. Hope it wasn't too much trouble gettin' down here.

Nash adjusts in his chair.

AL (CONT.)

Know that stretch on to Wichita gets tiresome. You didn't need to come all that way.

NASH

It's fine. Let me get your plate, Ma.

Nash starts collecting what's left on the table.

LORETTA

So good to have both my boys here.

She's beaming. Nash opens his mouth like he wants to say something, but lets it go and gives a closed-mouth smile. He changes course-

NASH

Yeah, did you guys need any help around here? I saw the screen door wasn't on the hinges.

AL

Naw, I took that down - pff - 3 summers ago. Couldn't even see it was there. Put my leg right through it one day.

NASH

Maybe you got some pictures you need

hanging?

LORETTA

Pictures a what? We don't do nothin'. We got all the pictures we ever need from when you was a kid. Unless you got a new one of those... oh, what is it? A picture of your head?

She's looking to Al for the answer, but he's busy rinsing dishes with a sponge.

NASH

A headshot?

LORETTA

Yeah! We only got the one from when you was startin' out.

She points to it on the mantle. Nash is much younger and spry. He's all haircut and teeth. The name at the bottom reads, "Bobby Nash."

NASH

No. I don't. I probably should take a new one though.

He walks over and grabs the photo to examine it.

LORETTA

Well, when you do, send me some copies. The girls in my group would love some. Actually, now that you mention it, I was thinkin' after service t'morrow you could meet some of the ladies. We do a whole big lunch spread. You remember Phyllis. She always had that hat. The small one. And I tell her, "Ain't nothin' that hat protectin'!" It ain't her head that's small. It's Phyllis turn to bring the Watergate salad. Bless her heart.

She's about to trail on, but Nash cuts her off-

NASH

Sure, Ma. That - sounds great.

AL

And when you tire of them hens cluckin' we can go over to your Aunt Gertie's. Your Ma tell you they been tryin' to start that ol' tractor? I tol' your Uncle Ricky you boys ran it into that cottonwood when y'all was kids. It ain't gon' run again. Engine took a header. You remember how scared you was?

NASH

That's 'cause I knew you'd get the belt.

AL

Belt ain't hurt nobody. I grew up with the paddle. Your Grandad kept it-

(overlapping)

NASH

Next to his chair.

AL (CONT.)

-next to his chair.

LORETTA

Oh, hon, nobody wants to hear those ol' stories again. Bobby just got in.

Al washes his hands and goes silent.

NASH

Yeah, tomorrow sounds great. I'mma go shower and get to bed.

LORETTA

I got your room all set up.

AL

She hadn't touched it since you left.

LORETTA

I dusted! You never know when my
boy might stop by.

She looks to Nash, who averts his gaze to the floor. Loretta
looks to Al, drying his hands. He gives her a look over his
glasses.

LORETTA (CONT.)

Well, you never know who might stop
by.

(to Nash)

Lemme take you up there.

NASH

I remember the way. Spent 18 years
up there. 'Night, Pa.

His father raises a hand.

LORETTA

Let me know if you need anythin'.
Extra towels or soap or snacks.
There's pillows and blankets in
the hope at the end of the hall.

Nash is already at the landing.

NASH

(louder)

Thanks! 'Night, Ma.

INT. NASH HOUSEHOLD 2ND FLOOR - NIGHT

Old family photos spanning generations hang on the wall. Dated
drapery covers windows. Knick-knacks adorn the surfaces of the
few pieces of furniture. The dark interior wood of the house
gives it a cozy, but heavy feeling.

All the doors are as unassuming as the next. But the second one
on the right is his.

INT. NASH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nash slowly opens the door, flicking the lightswitch. Quilted sheets on the bed. Posters of Richard Pryor, Sam Kinison, and Bill Hicks hang push-pinned on his walls next to posters of Sonic Youth, Garbage, and Sleater-Kinney. That headshot again, hung above a disheveled desk. Everything really does seem as though it was left just the way it was when he moved out.

He walks over to his desk and opens the top drawer. Pencils, notebooks, a pack of Newports - your typical desk wears. He grabs the smokes and a notebook that reads, "KILLER JOKES!"

NASH
(laughing to himself)
Oh, man.

Nash opens the window and lights up. He thumbs through a few pages shaking his head in delighted disbelief before placing the notebook back in the drawer.

He coughs and pauses.

Cigarette hanging from his lips, he cups both sides of the drawer, carefully pulls it out and lifts it above his head. A PICTURE ripped in half taped to the underside. Marcia. He pulls it off and puts the drawer down. On the back, the words "always" and "you" are written.

The torn picture goes in his wallet, before placing the drawer back. He snubs the cigarette out on the window sill in a previous burn mark then closes the window. Nash backs up to the edge of the bed and sits. He stares at the floor for a moment, then leans back.

INT. NASH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Nash is simultaneously woken by the sun cracking through the blinds and his father, unaware of his own noises. With one eye, Nash looks at the old clock radio on the side table: 6:18 AM.

NASH
(barely audible)
Son of a bitch.

He slams the pillow over his head.

His father's noises persist. Closing cabinets and drawers, blowing his nose, heavy footsteps, various mouth exhales - Al's got it all.

But then a door opens and silence. Fainter footsteps outside and then nothing. Nash peeks his head out from under the pillow, with a look of annoyed questioning. He walks over to the window.

Al is sitting on a chair out in the yard drinking from a mug. He's got sweats, an old ratty tee, and loafers on. He sips and watches, sips and watches. When a bird lands on an overhead branch, Al watches it, then starts to talk, but inaudibly from where Nash is. The bird hops down to a lower branch for what seems like a fuller conversation with Al, as it starts to chirp. Except for his mouth and mug arm, Nash's father is very still. The conversation seems to last for minutes on end - Al talking and the bird chirping in reply - all the while Nash stares intently from the window. The bird and Al, chirping together. A few quick head movements from the bird and it suddenly takes flight. Al sends it off like an old friend with his raised mug. He continues sipping and surveying the world.

Nash is quiet with a slight upcurl to the corner of his mouth.

INT. CHURCH - MIDMORNING

A modest house of the Lord, the twenty or so pews are full with a few dozen towns folk all in their Sunday best. The REVEREND TREVOR BEYER, a man not too much older than Nash with a coif of deep brown hair and a stoic smile, is in the middle of his sermon.

REVEREND BEYER
May God be with you.

CONGREGATION
And also with you.

It's here that we now see, sitting four rows back, the Nash Family. Loretta and Al are firmly attentive to Rev. Beyer. Nash squirms in his seat, holding his tapping finger in his other hand, shoegazing.

REVEREND BEYER
I was talkin' to a friend some weeks

ago from my previous congregation. For four generations his family have raised and bred cattle up in Bandy. Lately one of his cows was havin' trouble milkin'. Each day she swelled a little bit more and so did my friend's frustration. "I've tried everythin', but she just won't take!"

Rev. Beyer slams his fist on the pulpit.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)

"Her mother before her and her mother before that all took to milkin' just fine. She just seems so skittish. It's to a point I can't even get her in the milkin' parlor anymore."

Al and several other members nod their heads in acknowledgement.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)

I said to my friend, "Have you tried singin' to her?"

A full laugh from the congregation.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)

He probably would have laughed, too, if he didn't have such a frightful look on his face. But I asked him, "You argue with your children sometimes, correct?" Now, he was embarrassed, but I reminded him it was alright. We all argue. We all have times of deep strife and misunderstandin'. Times we've hit that proverbial brick wall and want to give up.

LORETTA

(nodding; to herself)

Yes, we do.

Nash furrows his brow and looks at his mother out of the corner of his eye.

REVEREND BEYER

Finally, my friend, rather sheepishly, said, " I yell at my kids sometimes, Rev. Beyer, yes."

"And do you keep arguin' with them?"

"Of course not. What would that solve?"

"What do you do when you want to move past it?"

"I grab the glove and we go play catch to talk it out."

"You show patience and understandin'."

"And what is so different about this situation? You could continue to stress and headbutt, but your cattle can sense your aggravation. Your anger, your expectations, only serve to isolate you from them more, as your paths diverge. Try bein' gentle with this cow. Talk them through the steps, if for no other reason to understand why you are doin' this."

Several more nods from members.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)

Well, friends, earlier this week his cow took. He didn't give up. He was patient. And became more aware of the needs of those around him. Oftentimes, we want to break a cycle by breakin' each other down, but that only serves to damage our souls. A gentle hand will often be the strongest guide to lead us to salvation. Now let us pray.

The congregation bows their heads, as Rev. Beyer launches in. For the first time, while everyone is preoccupied and eyes closed, Nash looks around the church. The natural light is just starting to hit the stained glass that lines each side of the church. His eyes scan down the wall to the aisle opposite his. A

young girl holding her hands in prayer. She looks so familiar. Nash tries to hold back a short series of coughs, but they escape into the silence. Small droplets of blood in his hand.

Rev. Beyer is watching Nash and they catch eyes. Without skipping a beat, the Reverend finishes the prayer, locked onto Nash.

INT. CHURCH DINING ROOM - DAY

Paper cups and plates at every table. Folks are mingling, catching up on the week-in-review. Several Blue Hairs buzz around Loretta.

BLUE HAIR #1

I just can't believe he stopped
into town from his tour!

Loretta beams.

BLUE HAIR #2

And you say he was about to get a
TV deal?

LORETTA

Well, he hasn't said as much, but
I suspect. I know my Bobby.

The ladies all seem impressed and giddy.

Nash is hovering around the various bowls of chips, sipping his water. He clocks Rev. Beyer at the other end of the table talking to another member. The Reverend wraps up, spots Nash avoiding eye contact, and walks over.

REVEREND BEYER

(extending a hand)

I don't believe we've met. Trevor
Beyer.

NASH

Na-

(he stops himself)

Bob.

REVEREND BEYER
Loretta and Al's son?

Nash furrows his eyebrows in somewhat disbelief.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)
I saw you sitting with them. I
figured. You're a writer, your
mother says?

NASH
Kind of. I mean, yes, I write jokes.
I do stand-up.

REVEREND BEYER
Oh, excellent. We could use some
laughs during service. It can get
so dour around here.

Nash doesn't know what to say. He stuffs more chips into his
mouth.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)
So what brings you here?

NASH
Grew up here. Thought I'd stop in
to visit.

REVEREND BEYER
In the middle of a tour?

Another look from Nash.

Off a drink from his own cup-

REVEREND BEYER
Loretta mentioned it.

That seems to satisfy Nash.

NASH
Just figured I'd stay with my folks
for a while. Check in on them. Been
on the road almost half my life.

REVEREND BEYER

That's good.

MEMBER

Oh, Reverend, I'd love to go over the upcoming swap meet.

REVEREND BEYER

(starting to walk off)

You know Canupton. Swap meets. If you ever get tired of the booming nightlife here, Bob, we could always use some willing hands around the church.

NASH

Yeah. Definitely.

Rev. Beyer has already found his way into another circle of people, eager to chat with him.

Nash grabs some more chips and surveys the room. Al's in a spirited debate over sports with some other older men. A couple of tables have emptied as folks shuffle along. An elderly woman with a "Hi, my name is MARJORIE" sticker on her chest sits just a table away watching Nash. Her glare stops him. She pulls her handbag closer to her, still watching him. She purses her whole face, caked in makeup.

NASH

(terse)

What?

Marjorie grabs her bag and scuttles past the crowd, bumping into several congregation members on her way out.

Loretta and her Blue Hairs catch Nash's attention and wave him over. His finger is gently tapping the side of his cup.

LORETTA

Bobby, the girls and I were talkin' you could help us set up the next bake sale. We need someone to carry equipment and help with signs.

All the Blue Hairs beam with anticipation. Before he even has a firm answer-

LORETTA

Great!

(to the Blue Hairs)

Let's show 'em where we keep the church paints.

MONTAGE

Nash, Loretta, and the Blue Hairs paint signs, and sit around drinking iced tea.

Al makes sandwiches for the group. Everyone seems pleased at the sign progress. Nash even appears to be enjoying the company.

Marcia texts Nash:

-TOLD THE VENUES YOU'RE WITH YOUR FOLKS. DOING ALRIGHT OVER THERE?

He only replies:

-YEAH THX

Two or three days pass and the signs increase in number.

Every night, Nash pulls out the photo from his wallet and stares at it for minutes on end. He turns off his lamp.

END MONTAGE

EXT. NASH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Loretta and Al are gathering things and putting them in the car. Nash drinks from his mug.

NASH

You guys need any help?

AL

We got it.

Blankets, snacks, extra jackets, a cooler, and more all being stuffed into the bed of the pickup. Nash walks to the window and sees the birds collecting on the branches above Al's chair.

LORETTA

Did you grab my hat?

AL

What hat?

LORETTA

My blue one, in case it gets hot.

AL

I don't know where you keep your hat.

LORETTA

It was on the hook by the door. Gah.

She goes to find it.

Nash walks to the family room to sit while his folks go back and forth, deciding if they're ready yet. Their walls and surfaces really are *covered* in pictures. Old but numerous. His eyes scan the walls. Close-ups of B&Ws with people standing together formally dressed. Some wedding photos. People and their kids, grandparents, pets, cars. There's no real rhythm to the photos, but here it is: the Nash family tree.

He gets up and inspects one photo. It's a young couple from decades before any of this. They sit next to each other on a couch smiling at the camera.

NASH

Hey, Ma. Who is this?

She comes in holding a wicker basket, clearly sifting through it.

LORETTA

Let me see.

She reaches for the photo with her free hand and examines.

LORETTA (CONT.)

That's your great grandparents.
Otto and Louise. Must have been up
in Salina before everyone spread
out. They're probably about your
age there.

She hands back the frame and keeps digging through the basket.
Nash looks a moment longer and puts the photo back with the
rest.

He sees the chair to his left. Wedged in between the cushion and
the arm is a blue hat. He goes to grab it.

NASH
This what you're looking for?

LORETTA
Yes! What a life saver.
(calling out to Al)
I'm ready!

EXT. GERTIE & RICKY HOUSEHOLD - DAY

This house looks almost identical to Nash's folk's place. Wrap-around porch, chipping paint, barn, sedan in the long driveway, truck out front. All on a few dozen acres of land dotted with trees.

GERTIE, a sturdier woman with a shock of unnatural red hair, comes bouncing down the steps to Nash and family.

GERTIE
Ahh!! You made it!

LORETTA
(matching her excitement)
And I brought everyone with me!

GERTIE
How are you, Al? Let me get Ricky
to come grab some of these things
for you.
(to Nash)
And- that can't be Bobby? My goodness.

She goes in for the hug. Gertie's sons, COLIN and GAVIN, make their way to the front door. They're a portly, stagnant pair in pro wrestling shirts and trucker caps.

GERTIE (CONT.)
Boys, get your father out here.
And come help with these things.

COLIN
Hi Auntie Retta, Uncle Al.

GAVIN
What's up, Bobby?

Everyone grabs some items from the truck bed and heads back inside. Nash gathers everyone's coats and follows.

INT. GERTIE AND RICKY'S HOUSE - DAY

RICKY is sitting in front of the TV watching football, several beers in. He's the burley type and constantly at a volume that overtakes everyone else.

RICKY
Well, look who we have here.

He gets up, gives Loretta a kiss on the cheek, gives Al a bear hug, and pats Nash on the back.

GERTIE
Grab these things from me, Ricky.

He grabs the several items his wife is carrying and places them on the floor right where everyone is standing.

RICKY
Get y'all a drink? We got beer,
soda, water.

AL
I'll take a beer.

LORETTA
Just a glass of water.

RICKY
(heading towards the kitchen)
Bobby?

NASH
I'm good for now, thanks.

RICKY
Probably used to sparkling wine and
fancy cocktails, huh?
(laughing to himself)
Ah, I'm just razzin' ya.

He grabs four beers and heads back to the TV. Gertie sighs and
grabs some glasses for water.

Colin and Gavin are parked in front of the TV. They each get
tossed a beer.

RICKY
(to AL and Nash)
Have a seat. This game's basically
over. Refs don't know what the hell
they're doin'.

The screen shows it's early in the 2nd quarter. Al sits in an
easy chair. Nash continues to stand.

RICKY (CONT.)
So Bobby, how's the celebrity life?

NASH
Lot less celebrity these days. Just
doing some comedy shows.

GAVIN
That it? Travelin' 'round the country.
5-star hotels with room service.

NASH
Nope. Places not much better than
this.

COLIN
This place ain't up to your highnesses standards?

Nash is about to respond, but Al intercepts.

AL

Bob's used to surroundin's like this. He tries not to go beyond his means. Makes him uncomfortable.

Nash raises his eyebrows in fake agreement.

RICKY

Well, that's good. Can't believe how much these Hollywood types forget 'bout where they came from once they got some money.

COLIN

I'd get myself a couple ATVs and a trailer.

GAVIN

You just wanna impress Charlene.

Gavin pokes at Colin like a child.

COLIN

If I had those, we could go down to Kaw and ride all weekend. Then she'd be my girl.

Gavin and Ricky both laugh out loud at this. Al and Nash exchange looks. Ricky starts changing the channel to find something.

Loretta and Gertie come back out, water and wine cooler in hand, respectively.

GERTIE

Thanks for helpin' unpack the bags, you guys.

RICKY

You got it.
(back to the action)
Ooo, European basketball.

Ricky and his boys lean back into their couch grooves.

LORETTA

Well, lunch is heatin' up, so don't
get too comfy.

Nash notices the same B&W photo of the couple from his folk's
place hanging in the corner by a hutch.

NASH

Hey, this is Otto and Louise, right?

GERTIE

Sure is. Took that on their weddin'
day.

She approaches the photo, too.

LORETTA

They did not. That's when they lived
up in Salina.

Loretta also approaches, all three of them crowding around the
hutch and photo.

GERTIE

Where do you think they got married?

LORETTA

Do those look like weddin' clothes?

RICKY

Ladies! The game's on.

Colin and Gavin start laughing at the situation unfolding.

NASH

(still admiring the photo)
Seems like there's always a game
on.

LORETTA

(to Nash, but so everyone can hear)
Thank you.

GERTIE

Otto traveled all the time. This

was a quickie weddin'.

LORETTA

There were no quickie weddin's back then. This is when they moved down from Battle Creek.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK

Marcia and Nash kiss and hold each other. They're glowing together, rings on their fingers. A photo snaps the moment and it's the picture from Loretta's car visor.

END FLASHBACK

AL

We had a quickie weddin'. Worked out.

Al raises his beer in a "cheers." Colin and Gavin "cheers" their uncle.

LORETTA

I didn't say it didn't work out for them.

NASH

What did he do?

Nash walks around, passing the TV, now looking at other photos and knick-knacks hanging on the walls.

GERTIE

(at Loretta)

Didn't he propose at the Red Lobster?

AL

Nah, Jack's Roadhouse.

RICKY

Can everyone sit down, so we can watch the game?

GERTIE

(at Ricky)

Ain't nobody watchin'.

NASH
(at Loretta)
Not Pa. What did Otto do?

Loretta walks over to Nash, in front of the TV, too. Ricky scoffs. The boys snicker.

LORETTA
He was a salesman. Typewriters,
powdered detergents, magic kits.
He sold it all with flair. All my
memories of him he was always doin'
tricks when we came over.

GERTIE
I only remember how big his laugh
seemed. It was like a roar.

LORETTA
You would've loved him, Bobby. He
was a prankster. Always makin' a
joke or doin' tricks for us. That's
probably where you got it from.

GAVIN
Yeah, he was broke, too.

COLIN
Nice!

The brothers high-five and kill their beers.

A ding from the kitchen signals food.

GERTIE
Come on everyone. Turn that game
off. Let's eat.

She tugs at Ricky's shirt and he obliges. The boys race over.

AL
Don't have to tell me twice for
food.

Al grabs Loretta's arm and they walk off. Nash walks past the B&W photo one more time, examining it. He starts for the kitchen. Stops. Turns around and changes the channel - telenovela - he smirks then joins everyone.

INT. NASH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

BAKE SALE posters are scattered around the living room. There's hustle and bustle in the kitchen.

BLUE HAIR #2

That took longer than I thought.

BLUE HAIR #4

I told you to get the acrylic paint this time. It sets heavier and dries faster.

LORETTA

My oil paints are right in the closet.

BLUE HAIR #1

You can't use oil points. We'd be here all week waiting for them to dry!

NASH

We could turn on some fans.

BLUE HAIR #3

(playfully scoffing)

Oh, you shut up.

Everyone laughs.

BLUE HAIR #4

Bobby, it's so good you came to visit your Ma and Pa. I wish Roger would come around more often. But he's too busy in Des Moines, I guess.

Nash doesn't say anything. Just smiles.

BLUE HAIR #2

And after being on that big tour?

I still can't believe we have a
celebrity on our hands.

BLUE HAIR #1

Not, yet. But once he gets his TV
showww.

She's poking him with excitement.

Nash tries to escape the poking, but sends a look of question
his mother's direction. Loretta clocks it.

LORETTA

Ladies, Bobby doesn't want to talk
about that right now. One event at
a time. Let's get these signs ready
to go. They should just about be
dry.

Loretta scoots them off into the other room with the posters.

NASH

A TV show?

LORETTA

I thought it sounded good.

NASH

Please don't.

Nash takes another sip from his mug and leaves his mother in the
kitchen.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

The crowd is as large as any Sunday church service. People flock
to the handful of booths. Nash is at his booth with the Blue
Hairs, handling the crowds like this is all he's ever done.

NASH

And you enjoy those brownies. Old
family recipe. Who we got next?

A couple walks off smiling and another couple walks up eyeing
the table of baked goods.

NASH (CONT.)
What can I do ya for?

HUSBAND
Well, we saw Ms. Paula had made
some of her pecan sandies and we
had to get some.

NASH
Excellent choice. I tried to sneak
one earlier and she just about tore
my hand off.

Everyone laughs.

NASH (CONT.)
Five dollars for a baggie.

The small girl runs behind the couple with a ball in her arms.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK

The small girl is playing at a park. Sounds feel muffled. She
turns her head away, before running off in that direction.

INTERCUT FLASHBACK

Nash is being handed the dimebag by Rosey from before, who has a
smarmy grin on his face. Nash looks sweaty and unsure.

END FLASHBACK

The Husband hands over a fiver and Nash drops the baggie in the
man's hand.

Nash is starting to sweat again. He plays it cool.

NASH
I'm gonna hit the head real quick.
Ma, cover me?

Loretta is already chatting up fellow church goers, effortlessly
slipping into sales mode.

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN - DAY

Nash walks into the church kitchen. He puts his arms out to lean against the counter and catch his breath.

In and out.

In and out.

In.

And out.

REVEREND BEYER

Need some water?

NASH

(somewhat startled)

Yeah. I-I couldn't find the cups.

Nash starts opening cabinet doors.

REVEREND BEYER

They get moved a lot, but I try to keep them over here.

He walks to a corner cabinet near the sink and grabs a hard plastic cup. He fills it at the sink.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)

(handing the cup to Nash)

It's good to see you've found some grounding out here.

Nash is drinking, but stops and gives a furrowed brow to Rev. Beyer.

NASH

Happy to help with the bake sale.

REVEREND BEYER

Nah, I mean with your career and everything.

Nash turns to face Reverend Beyer front on.

NASH

My career is fine. I'm here visiting

my folks.

REVEREND BEYER

Is that all?

Nash sets his cup down. He squints his face in irritation, holding back.

NASH

That's all.

A beat.

REVEREND BEYER

Bob-

NASH

(cutting him off)

It's Nash.

The tone has changed.

REVEREND BEYER

Nash - I do have Twitter. And people talk. Your last hospital stay?

Nash turns back to the counter.

REVEREND BEYER (CONT.)

It's nothing to be ashamed of. You're on the mend and this family time really seems to be doing everyone some good.

NASH

Who said I was ashamed?

REVEREND BEYER

You must have felt humbled being sent to the hospital again?

NASH

No. I felt sorry I wasn't dead.

REVEREND BEYER

You should talk to your parents
about that. I'd be happy to facilitate.

NASH

You don't know us well enough to
give that sort of advice.

REVEREND BEYER

I know Al and Loretta very well.
And I'd like to get to know you.
If you'd let me.

Nash turns back around. He's getting heated.

NASH

Why- so I can repent? Tell you-
(air quoting)
-I "feel so bad" about leaving my
folks behind. Never calling. Getting
caught up in a career that doesn't
give a shit about me.

REVEREND BEYER

If that's what you'd like, sure. I
just want to help you make peace
with this, like your parents have.

Nash tosses his cup in the general direction of the sink.

NASH

(with intent)

What the fuck have you said to them?

REVEREND BEYER

They needed spiritual guidance.
They've been worried about you, so
we've been working through how they
can let go. For their own peace of
mind.

NASH

You told them to *forget* about me?

Nash steps up to Rev. Beyer with force. The Reverend is
startled, but keeps his composure, pressed up against the
counter now.

REVEREND BEYER

No. Only that there are things out of their control and they shouldn't burden themselves with-

NASH

(cutting him short, raising his voice)
Their son. So while I'm out there struggling to pay for a shit motel, literally dying for a laugh, you've told my folks to just - let go?!

Nash gestures to the open.

He stares down Rev. Beyer. Then starts to cough.

Rev. Beyer slips out from between Nash and the counter to find the cup and fill it with water again. He hands it to Nash.

REVEREND BEYER

Would you have called them for help?

Nash drinks, coughs, and catches his breath.

A commotion from the bake sale. Loretta is yelling. Rev. Beyer fast walks out. Nash is slower to go, but leaves right behind.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

Loretta and another voice continue to shout at one another. A crowd has formed and it's difficult to see who else is involved. The whole town, it seems.

Marjorie. With her caked on face and too-large handbag. She swings the bag in Loretta's direction.

MARJORIE

He. Is. Not! You're a liar!

Loretta grabs at the handbag, forcing a tug-o-war. The Blue Hairs flank behind Loretta and help, while some members of the flock put their weight behind Marjorie.

Rev. Beyer runs up on the scene.

REVEREND BEYER
Ladies, what's going on here?

Nothing. He tries to physically intervene, but is too gentle and gets shoved aside into Al - by Nash.

NASH
Get off my mother!

Nash pulls at the handbag. One loop breaks, swinging the bag into Marjorie's chin. She falls back. Gasps from the crowd and suddenly all eyes are on Nash. Things slow down and it's like they're staring for hours. Breathless, silent.

NASH (VO)
You're dying up here, kid.

Nash, still holding the bag, drops it at his feet. Rev. Beyer goes to Marjorie's side. He shoots Nash a look of disappointment, but much of his focus is on the fallen Marjorie. Nash starts walking. Much faster than when he exited the church kitchen just moments before. Loretta chases after him.

LORETTA
Nash, wait!

NASH
(turning his head, but still moving)
What the hell was that??

LORETTA
(almost caught up)
Marjorie and I just don't agree on some things. That's all.

NASH
That was more than just a spat.

He's just about at the family truck.

LORETTA
(grabbing Nash's wrist)
I was defending you.

NASH

(pulling his wrist back)
From what? We're out there selling
cookies, Ma.

Loretta is suddenly coy. She starts tearing up. It dawns on him-

NASH (CONT.)
Why did she call you a liar, Ma?

She's holding her face.

NASH (CONT.)
Going on about a TV show again,
huh? I told you that's not happening.
It's never going to happen! I'm a
screw up who nobody wants to work
with. Why can't you see that?

LORETTA
But you're not a screw up, Bobby.
You're my baby. You can do anything.

NASH
Don't.

Now Nash is starting to tear up. He looks to the sky, fighting
back the tears. His coughing interrupts it all. Hard, deep,
extended coughs.

When he stops, there's blood on his hands again. Loretta sees
this.

NASH
We're not doing this right now.
Give me the keys.

LORETTA
(through tears)
Bobby, stay here. We can get you
help.

Rev. Beyer stands up from the scene and begins walking towards
Loretta and Nash.

NASH
There's no "we." And there's

definitely no help. I'm done. Give
me the keys now!

He reaches for Loretta's pocket and fishes them out, against her attempt to stop him. The truck rumbles to a start and speeds off down the road. Rev. Beyer reaches Loretta, just as the truck drives off, and consoles her.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

The diviest of spots. No music. No crowds of hipsters. A few sad old timers, one couple making a corner booth their own, and Nash, several shots in. A lone box TV hanging above the bar plays a rerun of *Cheers*. The show's opening music plays.

TV (OS)

Norm!

NASH

Be careful, Norm. They're not your
real friends.

He downs his shot and tears into a lime wedge.

NASH (CONT.)

Hoo ahh. Two more shots, Gus.

Gus, the bartender, pours him two more.

Al enters and takes a stool near his son. He waits with his hands crossed on the bar for Nash to clue in.

NASH (CONT.)

(slow and deliberate)

Shit.

AL

That's what I was thinkin'. Should
I ask how many you've had?

NASH

Not enough.

AL

That so?

NASH
I'm still here. Two more Gus.

Nash raises his hand like he's signaling a garçon.

AL
No thanks, Gus. I'll get him home.
(handing over a set of keys)
Mind dropping off the truck later?

Gus gives him a nod. Al gets his arm underneath Nash and helps him walk to the car.

INT. CUTLASS SUPREME - NIGHT

Al buckles Nash in.

AL
Don't you dare puke in here, boy.

NASH
(slurring his words)
I'm fine. How's Ma?

AL
She's been better. And not that
you'll remember, but Marjorie is
gonna be fine, too.

He starts the car. Nash is already passed out.

INT. NASH FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Nash wakes up to a drawer slamming. He's on the couch. Al walks out from the kitchen with a cup of coffee.

AL
Morning.

Nash sits up too fast.

NASH
Mmm mistake.

He holds his temples between his palms.

AL
(handing the cup over)
Here. You need it more than me.

Nash sips, and lets out grumbles and moans. Al sits across from him.

AL (CONT.)
You remember anythin'?

NASH
Going to the bar. Drinking. What more is there?

AL
There's your ma. Up in bed. Cryin' all night. There's me. Tryin' to fish you outta some hole like you were 16 again.
(he scoffs)
Were you ever gonna talk to us about it?

Nash doesn't dare make eye contact.

AL (CONT.)
How bad?

Nash starts to well up.

NASH
Stage 4.

He watches Nash trying to temper his tears.

AL
And how long?

NASH
Few months. Maybe a couple of years, at best.

Al leans back and lets out the longest sigh through his nostrils.

AL
I shoulda stopped smokin' before
you was born. Gave you the wrong
idea.

Nash shakes his head as if to say "No", still trying to manage his tears.

AL (CONT.)
Is there anythin' your ma or I can
do?

Nash shrugs. He's losing the fight against his tears.

NASH
Is she alright?

AL
You know your mother. She's resilient.

Al leans forward again. He rests his arms over his knees and folds his hands. Neither says anything for a beat.

AL
She's upstairs. She probly wants
to see ya.

Nash tries to compose himself as best he can. He takes another sip of coffee.

INT. 2ND FLOOR MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

At the end of the hall is his parents room. Nash gently raps on the door before entering.

Loretta is curled up in bed, staring out the window.

LORETTA
Did you sleep ok?

NASH
I guess so, yeah. You?

LORETTA
I made it to the bed.

Nash moves towards the window she's facing.

NASH
Ma, about Marjorie-

LORETTA
I don't care about Marjorie. She's
a stupid old bat.

She sits up.

NASH
Ma, you said I was gonna be on a
TV show.

LORETTA
(finally making eye contact)
I know what I said. And I know it
ain't true.
(staring intently at Nash)
What am I supposed to tell folk?
My son is sick and dyin'?
(she's tearing up)
I hear you cough, I see the blood.
Did you forget I picked you up from
the hospital?

Nash lowers his head.

LORETTA (CONT.)
So I tell folk you got a TV show
deal. Because you're talented.
Because I know you can be great.
Because at least that way when you
run off again nobody'll question
where you went. I can say, "Bobby
went to film his TV show. We're so
proud of him." And I am proud of
you. Every single day I'm proud of
who you are. I know it ain't been
easy, but you're out there takin'
the risk. Tryin' to achieve your

dream by facin' the uncertainties.
Which is more than most of the
people in this town can say. More
than I can say.

They're both crying.

NASH
I'm dying, Ma.

He moves to her and she pulls him in to cradle him. Both crying.
Holding the moment.

LORETTA
You gotta perform, don't you?

NASH
I should get treatment.

LORETTA
And we should paint this house, but
we got other things goin' on. You
know as well as I do you got somethin'
you're chasin'. Your pa and I been
livin' this life and it's fine, but
you got a spark. You better ignite
it before it goes and gets snuffed
out for good.

They embrace. Nash gives her a kiss on the forehead.

INT. NASH LIVINGROOM - DAY

Nash has his travel bag slung over his shoulder. He pulls out
his phone. Three missed calls and a handful of texts from
Marcia:

-JUST CHECKIN IN. U OK?
-SHOULD I CANCEL LUCY'S
-COMEDY STORE IS ASKING QUESTIONS
-PLEASE CALL ME OR SOMETHING. NEED TO KNOW WHAT U WANT ME TO DO

Nash swipes up and opens the Uber app. He looks up and Al's
sitting in a chair right next to the front door.

AL
Headin' out?

NASH
Got some shows. Trying to make a
name.

AL
You will. Funniest person I know.

Nash tears up again. Al stands and goes for the hug.

AL (CONT.)
Call your ma, ok?

Nash shakes his head buried in Al's shoulder. They let go.

As Nash pushes open the door-

NASH
You carried me all the way to the
couch?

AL
Pff, barely. You fell on it as soon
as you saw it. Good thing, too,
because there was no way I was makin'
it up the stairs with you. I've
slept there a few times. It's pretty
comfy.

NASH
Guess it has to be.

Nash steps out and off the porch. An Uber pulls up and he gets
in.

Back inside, Al walks through the room and heads off screen. On
the mantle, we close-up on the picture frame that had Nash's old
headshot, now holding his latest one: B&W, hair thinner, bags
under his eyes, cigarette hanging from his lips. It's signed,
"To my first fans - Bob Nash"

EXT. WICHITA NATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Nash gets out of the Uber with his bag and lights up. He pulls out his phone.

NASH

Lucy, hey... I'm good... Nah, I was just taking a break after that roast gig. Figured I'd visit my folks... Yeah, it's been long enough, right? ... That's what Marcia said, but I lost my phone and had to get a new one. So listen, you still got an open spot for the showcase? Gotta prep for The Comedy Store... Of course, gotta go big. Your place is the final stop... Perfect. I'll see you Wednesday.

He drags and begins coughing again. Blood. He flicks his cigarette, takes a swig of water, and heads inside.

INT. LUCY'S - NIGHT

Nash is at the bar with a cocktail, smoking. The spotlights light the backdrop on stage: "New Talent Showcase!" Someone walks up to Nash.

NEW TALENT

You're Bob Nash, right?

NASH

Just Nash.

NEW TALENT

Cool. Are you going on tonight?

NASH

That's why I'm here.

NEW TALENT

That's awesome. My friends and I used to watch bootleg tapes of your shows when we were in middle school. Your stuff's so honest and raw.

Nash looks to the bar for any help. No one.

NASH

Thanks. Hey, I gotta go take a call,
but, uh, you got 40 bucks?

NEW TALENT

Um, yeah, I think.

He pulls out his wallet to look. A \$50 bill flashes. Nash takes it.

NASH

Perfect. We'll call it even for the
bootleg tapes. Good luck out there.

Nash gets up and walks down a long corridor past employees and other up-and-comers congregating. They murmur with excitement as Nash walks by. He hangs a right and near the back exit door is another door labeled "Office." He stubs his cigarette, knocks, and a woman answers-

LUCY

(beaming)

Nash.

A cloud of smoke escapes her office. She's probably around Loretta's age, but you wouldn't know it. Heavy bags and creases hide behind Hollywood's finest plastic surgery. She's in a white pantsuit with leopard print jacket.

LUCY (CONT.)

Are you still smoking?

Nash chuckles, caught. She lets him in and closes the door.

LUCY (CONT.)

Just don't do it on the floor after
we let the crowds in. Fire department'll
be on my ass. You ready for tonight?

She sits at her desk and instinctively touches-up her face in a desk mirror. Nash sits on a loveseat across the room.

NASH

Yeah, been working the new material.
Just got back from visiting my folks.
Got some fresh air. It feels like

the time.

LUCY
And your health?

NASH
Better than ever.

LUCY
(catching eyes with him above the mirror)
Don't bullshit me.

NASH
I promise you, I'm great.

LUCY
(shuffling papers)
How do you think the internet works?
No one's too small for a story.
Especially when it's in the Midwest.
You passed out a couple weeks ago.

NASH
I was just dehydrated. Overdid it
that day and forget that waters a
thing.

Lucy gives him a glare. His finger is tapping against the side
of his leg.

NASH (CONT.)
I swear. Would I be here if I wasn't
feeling better?

LUCY
And your health scare a while back?
Marcia made it sound like this might
be it.

NASH
Doctor said nothing's progressing.
As long as I take it easy - and stay
hydrated - clean living, things are
looking good.

Lucy is skeptical, but gives in. She walks to the front of her desk and sits on the edge, crossing her arms.

LUCY

Ok. But you're on the cusp of something great, Nash. Don't go and fuck it up.

NASH

That's the plan.

LUCY

Doors open in ten. Let the bar know if you need anything now, before they come in. Looking forward to hearing the new stuff.

Nash gets up to leave.

LUCY (CONT.)

Nash-

(holding out her hand)

-your pack.

He hands it over, but not before-

NASH

One for my nerves?

Lucy takes the pack, pulls a stick, and gives it to Nash.

LUCY

Have fun tonight. Shows these new kids a thing or two.

Nash closes the door behind him and Lucy immediately lights up at her desk.

Nash opens the exit door and steps outside, holding the door with his foot. He lights up. Groups of people are chattering from the street end of the alleyway. Nash coughs and coughs and coughs and spits.

INT. LUCY'S STAGE - NIGHT

The last performer wraps up.

NEW TALENT

Thanks, everyone. That's my time.
You've been a great crowd.

Mild clapping. The Emcee for the evening runs on stage. Just off stage, Nash shakes the hand of the exiting talent.

EMCEE

Give it up for these first timers!
Takes a lot a guts to get up here.
But once you've been doing it awhile,
there's no better place. And in that
spirit, are you guys ready for a
treat? I said are you ready for a
special guest?! Hot off a multi-city
tour, give it up for a long-time
Lucy's favorite, Mr. Bob Nash!

The crowd roars with excitement. Nash coughs into a paper towel and wipes his mouth. He takes a swig of water, then heads on stage.

NASH

Thank you. Thank you. Good to be
back.

He lets the roar die down a bit.

NASH (CONT.)

Always love that middle of the week,
no kids to speak of kinda energy.

Laughs and cheers.

NASH (CONT.)

Really, I appreciate you all finding
time in your busy schedules of
making hand-hewn, artisanal letter
openers. You're keeping those hipster
calligraphers afloat.

More laughs, more cheers.

Lucy laughs watching a monitor backstage. A server brings her a drink.

LUCY
Thanks, dear.

She gets a text from Marcia:

-SORRY NASH DIDNT MAKE IT TO THE SHOW TONIGHT. VISITING HIS PARENTS, FEELING UNWELL

Lucy looks confused. She starts typing:

-WHAT??? HES ON RN. LOOKS GREAT

The green text bubble pops up. But nothing. Pops up again.

Nothing.

Marcia calls.

MARCIA (VO)
He's there? Right now?

LUCY
I'm looking at him.

MARCIA (VO)
And he's performing?

LUCY
Here, listen-

Lucy holds out her arm towards the stage. Big laugh.

LUCY (CONT.)
Is everything OK?

MARCIA (VO)
Last thing he said was he'd get back to me about his shows. I haven't heard from him in almost two weeks.

LUCY
Give me a sec, Marsh.

Lucy walks back to her office and closes the door. There's a monitor in there, as well, but no volume.

LUCY (CONT.)
You two haven't talked?

MARCIA (VO)
He's been MIA. I had to cancel shows.

LUCY
I was wondering why you kept giving me updates about him. I thought you were just being overly cautious.

MARCIA (VO)
Was he drinking?

LUCY
I didn't see, hon. He had a pack on him and I had him give it to me.

MARCIA (VO)
Thanks. Look, I'll just call him later once he's eaten.

LUCY
Of course.

They hang up and Lucy watches the monitor. Nash is walking back and forth, a slight smile on his face.

EXT. FAST FOOD PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Nash is deep into some Nacho Fries and a Crunchwrap Supreme. He sips his Baja Blast and then his phone buzzes. Texts from Marcia:

-LUCY SAYS TONIGHT WENT WELL. WHY DONT U STOP BY BEFORE AUDREYS PARTY ON FRI

Nash takes a sip from his cup. He looks out his driver side window. He replies:

-SURE THING. WHAT TIME?

Marcia:
-BE THERE AT 1

INT. TALLON HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

Marcia puts her phone down. She's sitting at her desk. The insurance policy papers sit on their manila envelope, amongst a calendar, several bills, wrapped gifts with wrapping paper and office supplies, and little Post-its everywhere. Marcia places her forehead on the desk and crosses her hands behind her head.

EXT. TALLON HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Birthday decorations adorn the kitchen and living spaces of the house, leading into the open backyard where children's excited screams and chatter can be heard.

Parents are in and out, wrangling kids, talking in between bites of food. Marcia is in the kitchen pouring drinks for some kids.

MARCIA

There you go, sweetie. Don't spill.

The kids run off outside with their drinks, just barely missing Brian coming in. He chuckles, but then sees Marcia's face.

BRIAN

No word?

She shakes her head.

MARCIA

Probably just as well.

Brian gives her a kiss on the side of her head. She starts to pick up a plate, but he grabs it from her, and they walk outside with everyone else. We can hear Brian say-

BRIAN

Who wants cookieees?!

More screaming from the kids.

Just then Nash walks through the front door, gift in-hand. He can see everyone's outside, but he walks gingerly through the house, nevertheless.

He gets to the back sliding door and watches for a moment. He scans for Marcia. Audrey sees him first and makes a beeline towards Nash.

AUDREY

Uncle Nash! Did you bring me a gift?

She's all open arms in her birthday dress. Nash is awkward, even here.

NASH

I sure did. Sorry I didn't wrap it, but this way you can play with it right now.

She unlatches her grip, takes the toy, and runs screaming. Brian now notices Nash is here and forces his way over.

BRIAN

Here, why don't we go inside?

He pushes Nash back inside the kitchen, closing the sliding door, and begins to lay into him.

BRIAN (CONT.)

So you finally decided to show up?

NASH

There was a flight delay and I still had to get a gift. Which she loved, by the way. Don't know if you saw that.

BRIAN

I don't give a shit what you brought. You haven't called Marcia and she's been stressing over- whatever the hell you've been up to.

He's trying to corner Nash.

NASH

Visiting my parents, not that it's
any of your business.

BRIAN

(raising his voice)

When it's my family's livelihood,
it's absolutely my business. You
fuckin' bum.

Marcia can hear the commotion and heads inside to Brian and Nash
beginning to yell over each other.

MARCIA

Brian stop! Nash, it's 2:30, I said
1:00.

NASH

There was a flight delay. And I
still had to get a gift.

He escapes the almost-corner Brian was making.

MARCIA

Fine. What happened with Lucy's?

NASH

What? I showed up and performed.
And people seemed to love it. Wasn't
that the plan?

MARCIA

I don't know, was it? When we last
spoke you made it sound like you
were done. You said "I'll get back
to you." And then nothing. You
ghosted me.

NASH

I never said I was done. I just
needed some rest.

BRIAN

You're done. You've been done for
years.

NASH

(with attitude)
Excuse me, I'm talking to my manager.

BRIAN
(stepping to him)
You're talking to my wife and the
mother of our daughter.

A beat of silence.

MARCIA
Brian, go outside, please.

Brian scoffs.

BRIAN
You're gonna give him another
chance? It's our kid's birthday and
you wanna cater to this asshole.
You've been doing so much better
separating yourself from this mess.
But he shows up with a clean shirt
and a gift, and it's right back to
it. Just like that.

Marcia shows her aggravation, but can't find the words. Nash
stands silent.

BRIAN (CONT.)
You know what, that's typical. Nash
over everything. And for what?
Because you two had some fling years
ago?

MARCIA
Stop.

BRIAN
Because he's some sad puppy, upset
over losing you?

MARCIA
Stop!

BRIAN
He's as worthless at being a comedian

as he was at being a parent.

Nash lunges and tackles Brian, but one good swing to the back of Nash and he starts coughing bad. Marcia screams and attempts to get Brian off of Nash.

There's no ignoring the noise now, and people have stepped back inside to see what's going down.

MARCIA

Brian, get out! I told you not to!

Brian dusts himself off. Nash is coughing up blood. The crowd is stunned and don't know whether to help or gawk. A guest picks up Audrey who is crying at the scene. Several other kids follow her lead. Marcia grabs a hand towel from a drawer and quickly runs it under the sink.

BRIAN

Parties over, folks. There's goodie bags outside.

Brian herds the crowd to the backyard, as Marcia tends to Nash.

MARCIA

What the fuck, Nash?

He's still coughing.

MARCIA (CONT.)

Can you get up?

She helps him stand and they walk down the hall to her office.

MARCIA (CONT.)

Sit here and I'll get some things outta the bathroom.

He's sitting at the head of her littered desk. He wipes his mouth with the towel, the coughs diminishing. He makes a few deliberate blinks like he's trying to refocus. And that's when he catches sight of the papers.

On top of their envelope are the insurance policy papers taking out on Nash in case of his death. Nash grabs them and tries to make sense of them in between blinks.

Marcia reenters holding several first aid items, but immediately reads the room.

NASH
What is this?

MARCIA
Nash, look-

NASH
Marcia, *what is this?*

She walks closer to the desk.

MARCIA
An insurance policy.

NASH
For what?

MARCIA
So that when you die I'm not left financially picking up the pieces.

NASH
It says you get \$250,000. Am I even worth that?

MARCIA
That's the limit.

A short burst of air escapes Nash.

NASH
Thanks. I mean, I guess you don't need this since The Comedy Store's tomorrow.

She puts the items on the desk and sits in her chair.

MARCIA
The show's not happening.

NASH
What do you mean it's not happening?

That's the point of all of this.
The tour, the shows.

MARCIA

You didn't call me for almost two weeks. They called to confirm and you hadn't texted me back, so I figured you were done. They gave the spot to someone else.

He tilts his head back and clenches his eyes.

NASH

Call them back. Call them back now.

MARCIA

And tell them what? "JK, guys, Nash is all ready to go?"

Nash slams the desk and leans forward in the chair.

NASH

Then I guess you won't need these.

He frisbees the policy out of his hand. Marcia stands up and gathers the papers off the floor.

MARCIA

It's not just for if you don't make one show, Nash. You never got treatment. It's not "if" you die - you're going to die.

He's shaking his head.

NASH

So you took out some secret policy on me?

MARCIA

Would you have let me otherwise? You've been so depressed or drunk or high - or all three - for years. And I've always been the beneficiary of your estate. So, yeah, I made

sure I was financially safe. That my daughter was safe.

NASH

There it is. It's because of her.

MARCIA

(welling up)

Don't.

NASH

I did what I could to make sure Maddie had what she needed. It was a freak accident what happened and it eats me up every single day.

MARCIA

(full crying)

Please stop.

NASH

Are you gonna pretend I never existed, too?

He looks up at Marcia and she's beside herself.

MARCIA

You two were everything to me. I wanted our family. I wanted us to pick you up from the airport after shows.

Now Nash is full crying.

MARCIA (CONT.)

I don't do this because I feel bad for you. You're funny and I think you could be one of the greats. But ever since Madison died, it's like you don't give a shit about anything. I've had to be the strong one and make sure you can still work. And now you're sick and you don't want help and it's like none of that even mattered. It's like I'm losing her all over again. Every time I look

at you, I see her face.

They're both sobbing.

He reaches into his wallet and pulls out the torn picture. He puts it on her desk. She opens a drawer and fishes around for something. Another torn scrap that she tapes to Nash's other half. The full picture is of Marcia and Madison, the girl from his hallucinations. Nash takes it back and flips it over: "We'll always love you"

They both get up and embrace. They simply hold each other and cry.

Finally-

NASH

(collecting himself)

I need to do that show.

MARCIA

Your spot's already gone, I told you.

NASH

It's better if you just let me do this. You did your part. Let me take care of this. Your job is here with your family.

She gives him a long, deep look in his eyes. Then a kiss on the cheek, hugging him.

He puts the taped picture back in his wallet, finger tapping, and heads for the front door. He stops at the doorway.

NASH (CONT.)

Tell Audrey happy birthday for me.
Buy her something nice with that money.

He leaves. Marcia watches him through the window drive off in a rental.

EXT. LA COMEDY STORE - NIGHT

No one's lined up outside yet. Only a few cars are even parked outside. Across the street, Nash stands on the sidewalk smoking, coughing, and spitting. A man walks by and asks for a cigarette. Nash obliges, they shake hands, and suddenly he's got a baggie wrapped in a \$1 bill. He finishes smoking and jay walks back.

INT. LA COMEDY STORE - NIGHT

A few of the staff see Nash and greet him. He goes to the bar and orders a drink then walks backstage to wait. Drinking and smoking.

Ten minutes pass and the first comic to enter is Chip Pettapiece, a cocky stud in sunglasses.

CHIP

Nash! I didn't know you'd be here.
My manager said you had to cancel
and they slotted me in last minute.

NASH

Yeah. Been sick lately, but I thought
I'd stop in and see how everyone's
doing. Get you a drink?

CHIP

Of course!

Nash goes behind the bar and takes out the baggie discreetly. He drops its contents into one glass and starts mixing in liquids for both.

NASH

My go-to on big nights: gin and
tonic. Cheers.

He hands Chip the other glass and they clink.

CHIP

Cheers. Gonna be a great night.

An hour or so passes and the Main Room has the hustle and bustle of getting ready to open. A pair of shoes drag backwards into a

room and Nash is propping Chip up in a bathroom stall. He closes the door, then reaches over and latches it from the outside.

He's exhausted and coughing up blood into the sink. The room is starting to spin. He stumbles to the empty stall and vomits. The room gets spinny and from his stall he sees two small feet run across the room and outside. He pokes his head out from the stall but no one's there.

Nash manages to get back on his feet and over to the sink to splash some water on his face. He's lost some color. He braces the sides of the sink and his finger is tapping rapidly.

He collects himself and walks to the Main Room backstage again. One comic, TAYLOR AMATI, a young go-getter, is already onstage warming up the crowd and another, veteran comic MANNY RODRIGUEZ, sits waiting.

MANNY

Nash. I thought you had to cancel
and they got Chip?

Nash can barely focus. He falls onto a stool.

NASH

Change of plans. Uh, miscommunication
from my manager to the booker. They
got it all sorted out earlier.

That satisfies Manny well enough. Taylor finishes up and swaps places with Manny.

TAYLOR

Oh, hey, Nash! Gotta sneak upstairs
for a bit.

They're off and Nash is all alone. He's resting his elbow on the bar and his head in his hand, finger tapping against his hairline. His eyes are closed and he seems barely there. He grabs a water from behind the bar and chugs it. That slows things down.

A stagehand comes backstage and looks confused.

STAGEHAND

Uh, hi. Where's Chip?

NASH

They didn't tell you? Chip had to cancel. We're still rolling for me. Just like you were going to.

STAGEHAND

I should probably check with the floor director first.

NASH

Kid, listen, you talk to whoever you need to. Here- here's my manager's number. You call her and she can square this away for you. Just be ready to roll as soon as Manny's set's over.

The stagehand eyeballs the card and gives in.

STAGEHAND

Ready in ten.

NASH

Copy that.

As soon as the stagehand leaves, Nash starts coughing again. The napkins on the bar are caked in blood. He stuffs them in his pocket. He chugs another bottle of water and tries to focus through some dizziness.

Before he knows it, Taylor runs past him again.

TAYLOR

Almost that time, bud.

They're gone on the other side of the curtain.

Manny comes back out and-

MANNY

Bathroom time.

Nash panics to a standing position. He walks to a mirror to fix his hair and straighten his clothes, but from here he can also see the bathroom door. No noises. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Nash is sweating. The bathroom opens and Manny walks back around and sits at the bar.

MANNY

Sounds like you're up.

Nash grabs another water and walks to the curtain. He holds the bottle in both hands, index finger tapping against it. Still sweating. Stifling a cough, but looking straight ahead with intensity behind his eyes.

TAYLOR

We've got a surprise for you all.
Making his way from a national tour
to the Main Room stage for the very
first time. An 18-year veteran in
comedy. Please make some noise for
Mr. Bob Naaash!

Slow motion: Nash closes his eyes. He exhales. He swallows. He opens his eyes on an inhale and walks through the curtain to a roar from the crowd. Taylor shakes Nash's hand on their way off stage. The lights are bright, making the shine from Nash's sweat glisten. He adjusts the mic, as he blows a heavy, exhaustive breath into it, blinking.

FADE OUT