The Underneathers

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“THE UNDERNEATHERS”

By

ALEXANDRA MARCELLA SWEENEY

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR TALMOR
PROFESSOR MANSOURI

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THE UNDERNEATHERS

"CHECKED IN, CHECKED OUT"

Written by
Alexandra Sweeney
INT. HOTEL - STAFF LOCKER ROOM - EARLY MORNING

PACO (40s, scruffy but kind) hurriedly changes into his uniform, muttering complaints about a leaky faucet to himself.

ESME (20s, wide-eyed, full of energy) adjusts her housekeeper's apron, double-checking her cleaning cart.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

MARIA (50s, head chef) barks orders amongst the chaos of breakfast prep. Eggs sizzle, orders are shouted, plates clatter.

JOSH (20s, eager line cook) works with intense focus. A bead of sweat rolls down his brow.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - FRONT DESK - SAME TIME

NATALIE (30s, polished and professional) checks a computer screen, a slight smile crosses her lips as a guest’s name pops up.

VOICE (O.S.)
Good morning, Ms. Fischer. Welcome back.

NATALIE stands to greet MS. FISCHER (60s). Behind her we see the sign:

OCEANVIEW RESORT AND SPA

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - LAUNDRY ROOM - SAME TIME

TOMAS (40s, quiet, diligent) folds sheets with expert precision amidst swirling washing machines. Steaming towels form a neat stack beside him.

FADE TO:
INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

A single fluorescent light hums overhead, casting a sterile glow on the cluttered desk. Papers and folders are scattered like fallen leaves, coffee rings stain the blotter, and a half-eaten sandwich sits abandoned on a plastic plate. The phone rings incessantly, its shrill sound adding to the air of barely-contained chaos.

GEORGE, housekeeping manager, is hunched over a laptop, squinting at the screen. He's muttering under his breath, more to himself than anything.

The door swings open, startling him. A woman, late 50s, with silver hair pulled back in a tight bun, her uniform starched and crisp, marches into the room. Meet GLADYS.

GLADYS
(Snapping)
Mr. George, I need those supply orders finalized. The new shipment is-

The phone cuts her off. GEORGE grumbles, stabbing blindly at the receiver amongst a pile of papers.

GEORGE
(Into the phone, tired)
Oceanview Resort, this is George speaking. Can I please place you on a brief hold?

The voice on the other end jumps, and then the dial tone.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I swear this place is going to sink if we don't bring in some new hires.

GLADYS
We don't need new staff, what we need is the supply orders and-

The phone cuts her off again. GEORGE answers.

GEORGE
Oceanview Resort, this is, for fuck's sake. You're calling me at work, now? You lawyers never stop, huh?

CUT TO:
INT. OCEANVIEW RESORT LOBBY - DAY

Sunlight, the color of bruised peaches, spills through the stained glass windows, casting long, distorted shadows across the opulent lobby. Dust motes dance in the golden beams.

ANDREW (20s, young and lost), sits dwarfed in a plush armchair, watching the twilight shift unfold. He shivers, not from the chill, but from an unease that hangs heavy in the air.

This hotel, with its faded grandeur and hidden corners, feels more like a mausoleum than a place of hospitality. He stands up, drawn by an unseen force, and walks deeper into the lobby.

He reaches a massive oak door, its surface scarred and weathered. It stands ajar, revealing a sliver of darkness beyond. A handwritten sign hangs crookedly on the knob: "Housekeeping Manager."

From beyond the door, he can hear the incessant ringing of a cellphone. It passes. Then the landline rings. Some clamor.

    GEORGE (O.S.)
    Well why don't you tell my wife to subpoena this!

The landline slams back into its receiver.

Hesitantly, ANDREW pushes the door open. The darkness within is absolute, a yawning maw swallowing the last rays of sunlight. He takes a step forward:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ANDREW stands in the doorway, awkwardly holding a baseball cap in his hands. He looks sheepish, a nervous grin tugging at the corners of his mouth.

    ANDREW
    (Brightly, a touch too loud)
    Uh, hey! George, right? I'm Andrew, for our interview—

GEORGE jumps in his seat, hand grasping at his chest.

GLADYS remains unbothered, her sharp gaze landing on ANDREW, dissecting him like a worn carpet. He meets her stare, then his gaze instantly falls back to the floor.
GEORGE
(gruffly)
Whoa, whoa, kid! Almost killed me... Shut the door, will ya? Don't want the air conditioning to escape.

ANDREW grabs the door handle and shoves it backward before realizing his mistake. He awkwardly tries to catch the door before it slams into its hinges. He fails, wincing slightly at the noise.

ANDREW
Sorry. Sorry.

GEORGE begins to rifle through a stack of papers, clearly sleep deprived and reeling.

GEORGE
Are you, uh... Andrew?

GEORGE seems to land on the paper he was searching for.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Shouldn't you be waiting in the lobby? Our meeting isn't for another fifteen minutes.

ANDREW
(fidgeting)
Yeah, uh, about that... I just... I really need this job Mr...

ANDREW desperately scans the desk for a name tag. He clearly hasn't done his research.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
...Mr. George. Like, really, really, need it.

GEORGE
It's just George, kid.

ANDREW
I really need this job, George. I'm desperate.

GEORGE raises an eyebrow, his gaze flitting between ANDREW's hopeful face and the cluttered desk. A sigh escapes his lips.
GEORGE
I won't lie, we need the staff, but
trust me when I say desperation
rarely makes for good decisions. I
have a failing marriage that can–

GLADYS cuts GEORGE off with a sharp cough.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Things are a bit... hectic right now.
Inventory's a mess, Mrs. Romano's
on the warpath about the leaky
faucet in 216, and...

He pauses, noticing ANDREW's eyes scanning the room, landing
on the half-eaten sandwich.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Long day. Surf's up so half the
wait staff is gone. Plus covid
absolutely destroyed our numbers.
Between you and me, I don't get
paid enough for this shit...

ANDREW shifts left and right on his heels, building the
courage to speak.

ANDREW
Sir, if I may..

GEORGE zips his lips closed, giving ANDREW a small nod "yes",
motioning him to continue speaking.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
I know it won't be easy, Mr.
George. But I'm a hard worker, and
I'm eager to learn. I really am.

GLADYS scoffs, a humorless sound that rattles the loose
papers on the desk. ANDREW's eyes dart to her frame, looming
in the background.

GEORGE
She's not wrong, kid. Sometimes
being eager isn't enough. This
hotel's got a soul as black as the
stains on those carpets.

ANDREW suddenly takes inventory of the space around him. The
air is thick and musty.

ANDREW
Maybe I don't know what I'm getting
into, sir....
ANDREW waits for a response but GEORGE just nods, a tight lipped smile on his face.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
But I know I need this job, and I'm really not afraid to get my hands dirty.

GEORGE nods his head, turning towards GLADYS for her approval.

GLADYS
Flaco como un palo.

GEORGE's eyebrows knit together in confusion.

GEORGE
English, please. I've said this a million times...

GLADYS
Too skinny, office boy not housekeeping.

GEORGE
Hey. Play nice. We both know you and Esme could use the help.

GLADYS
We have help. **Strong** help. **Big** help.

ANDREW suddenly becomes aware of how ill-fitting his stained white t-shirt is. It hangs loosely on his frame, amplifying his scrawny build.

GEORGE
We always need more runners.

The tension in the air is thick enough to choke on. ANDREW, caught in the crossfire of GEORGE's gruff demeanor and GLADYS's icy stare, is like a fly caught in a web.

ANDREW's eyes dart between the two.

GEORGE's weathered face, etched with exhaustion and worry lines, seemed to contort with each unspoken word. He chews on his lip, a habit that reveals a chipped tooth and a sliver of fear beneath the gruff exterior.

GLADYS, on the other hand, remains completely composed.
GEORGE (CONT'D)
Look, Gladys. We're short-staffed
and Andrew's eager, willing to
learn. Really eager, apparently.

ANDREW
Yessir.

GEORGE
He can start with errands, you
know, help Esme out with—

GLADYS cuts GEORGE off with a sharp wave of her hand.

GLADYS
We have enough runners.

GEORGE
It's my call, Gladys.

GLADYS
Then you can train him. I'm done
dealing with your hires. Eager,
eager, eager and then they're gone.
What was the last one's name? The
one who fainted as soon as he had
to scrub a toilet?

GEORGE
For fuck's sake Gladys he was
epileptic... or something...

ANDREW
(interjecting)
I've cleaned a toilet before. Many
actually. Lots of toilet scrubbing.
I'm not afraid to get my hands
dirty, ma'am, I promise.

GLADYS doesn't acknowledge ANDREW, her gaze still on GEORGE.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
And I've never fainted before.

GLADYS
Gladys.

A beat.

Suddenly feeling compelled to prove himself, ANDREW steps
towards GEORGE's desk, reaching for the sheet of paper GEORGE
was previously searching for.
ANDREW
See, uh, it's a-all right here.

ANDREW hands the paper, his resume, to GLADYS. He glances over her shoulder, pointing to each job as he announces them to her.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
I used to work construction for my uncle during the summer. Lots of heavy lifting required. Hard work. Very dirty, too.

GLADYS raises her eyebrow. GEORGE stifles a laugh.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
And then, I've done DoorDash.

GLADYS
DoorDash?

ANDREW
Yeah, like food delivery.

GLADYS
Waitstaff?

ANDREW
No, no, in a car.

GLADYS
Waiter in a car?

ANDREW
Sure?

GLADYS
So no cleaning.

ANDREW
No, I have– GLADYS (CONT'D)
What, cleaning in car?

ANDREW (CONT'D)
No, I've cleaned just not–

GLADYS
You clean cars?

GEORGE
(warningly)
Gladys.

ANDREW
No, after people.
GLADYS
What are "afterpeople"?

GLADYS (CONT'D)
(to George)
I don't see that on the paper, do you?

ANDREW
No, no, I used to look after my father. Before he, uh, died.

GEORGE
Well, shit.

ANDREW
I'd take him to his doctor's appointments, help him get changed, feed him, stuff like that.

GLADYS
Stuff like what?

GEORGE stands from his desk, snatching ANDREW'S resume from GLADYS'S firm grasp.

GEORGE
Damn, Gladys, give him a break.

GLADYS only sighs in response.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Let's just do a trial run, okay?

ANDREW nods his head. GLADYS rolls her eyes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(to Andrew)
Kid, can you come back tomorrow? We can start then-

GLADYS
Tomorrow's no good.

ANDREW
I could start now.

A beat.

GEORGE
I mean fine by me. Gladys?

CUT TO:
INT. STAFF ELEVATOR - AFTERNOON

The cramped metal cage rattles as it descends, the fluorescent light flickering ominously. ANDREW stands awkwardly between GEORGE and GLADYS.

The elevator dings to alert the three they have arrived to the basement corridor. GLADYS exists first, her movements silent and precise. GEORGE follows, clapping ANDREW on the shoulder with surprising force. ANDREW tentatively follows.

INT. STAFF CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE
Welcome to the belly of the beast.

ANDREW scans his new environment.

The air hangs heavy with a musty scent, a blend of disinfectant and something older. Numbered doors, some adorned with faded paint and cracked nameplates, line the walls like watchful eyes.

A stray roach scurries across the floor, its dark form momentarily illuminated before disappearing into a crack in the baseboard.

ANDREW
The beast, huh?

GEORGE chuckles lowly, his gaze flicking to GLADYS for a moment before returning to ANDREW. GLADYS marches forward.

GEORGE
That's what they call it.

GEORGE clears his throat, following quickly after GLADYS. He skims his fingers against the cement walls as he walks.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
This is where the magic happens, kid.

GLADYS
No magic. Only work. Hard work.

GEORGE
That too.
GEORGE (CONT'D)
To the left is the boiler room -
some say it's haunted by the ghost
of the first engineer, burned alive
tending the flames.

GEORGE motions to the door to the left of him, his tone
lowered by a few octaves. GLADYS responds without turning:

GLADYS
Boiler room needs scrubbing. Pipes
leak, guests complain.

GEORGE makes a fake ghost noise, which echoes throughout the
hall.

ANDREW
I'm not afraid of ghosts, ma'am.

GLADYS
Good. Laundry room first.

GLADYS takes a sharp right turn, throwing open a heavy metal
door that reveals a cavernous space bathed in the harsh glow
of overhead lights. Mountains of towels and linens are piled
high on industrial carts.

The clothing conveyor incessantly ticks like the hands of a
clock.

Two figures hunched over ironing boards straighten up,
startled by their entrance. PACO, a burly man with sweat
staining his faded uniform, wipes his brow with a forearm.
ESME, a petite woman with bright red hair peeking out from
her hairnet, adjusts her oversized glasses.

Both speak in unison:

PACO
Hola, Miss Gladys.

ESME
What's up, Gladys.

They nod respectfully to GEORGE as he enters behind her.

ANDREW
(whispering to GEORGE)
Is she being serious?

Tick. Tick.

GEORGE
Huh?
ANDREW
(still whispering to
GEORGE)
About the boiler room? The ghost?

GLADYS
Ghosts are for tourists. Work is
for those who stay.

GEORGE only shrugs in response.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Learn fast, work hard, no
complaints.

GLADYS turns and disappears through a swinging door marked
STAFF ONLY, leaving Andrew standing amidst the mountains of
towels. GEORGE claps his hand over ANDREW's shoulder for the
second time:

GEORGE
You ready?

The ticking slowly fades.

GLADYS emerges with a laundry cart stacked high with linens.

GLADYS
This is Esme. And the brute is
Paco. They'll get you started. We
have a mountain of linens that
belong on guests' beds tonight, not
on the floor.

PACO snorts, throwing a wrinkled sheet into a laundry basket
with surprising accuracy.

PACO
(with a thick accent)
She builds mountains, this one. We
climb just fine, eh?

GLADYS
Don't think I didn't hear that,
Paco.

GEORGE
(to Andrew, whispering)
Paco never thinks. That's his
superpower.

ESME, all warmth and twinkling eyes, approaches ANDREW. She
extends a hand, its knuckles surprisingly gnarled.
ESME
Don't mind Gladys. She's all bark, just a gentle bite.

GEORGE
(jokingly)
Since when does Gladys bite?

ESME
Shoulda seen her with that guest last week that used his pillow case as target practice.

ANDREW
(clearly confused, speaking to himself)
Target practice?

GEORGE
(shivering)
Nastiness.

GLADYS, who has been barking orders at PACO across the room, turns abruptly towards the trio.

GLADYS
Tourists. What do you expect?

ESME
She totally ripped him a new one.

GEORGE
(calling out to GLADYS across the room)
Aye! What did I say about talking back to guests!

PACO
Sometimes they deserve it.

ESME
C'mon George, we're just saying...

GEORGE
(cutting ESME off, lowering his voice)
I know, I know, but you're supposed to move in silence, remember? They want the illusion, the spotless room that magically cleans itself. We're the mechanics behind the curtain, not part of the show.

ESME rolls her eyes.
GEORGE (CONT'D)
You aren't being paid to run your mouth. Let's just...you guys get back to work, okay?

ESME
(to ANDREW)
Here, I'll show you how it's done, Whitey.

ESME hands him a sheet, the crispness a stark contrast to his ill-fitting shirt. They stand side-by-side, folding in rhythmic unison. For a moment, ANDREW finds the work oddly calming.

A distant ringing comes from GEORGE's pocket. He groans, grabbing his cell phone and exits the frame. The camera follows him.

INT. STAFF CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE steps out into the hallway, phone already pressed to his ear, his usual brightness replaced by concern.

GEORGE
Sammy? Hey, little man. What's-- yeah, yeah, I know... no, buddy, hey--

Choked sobs from the other end drown him out. A passing staff member gives him a sympathetic look. He grimaces.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
How 'bout we make a deal? You be brave for Daddy, and I'll check under the bed extra good tonight, okay? ...Yeah, promise.

A stack of towels nearly tips over in the hallway, adding to the chaos. GEORGE sighs heavily.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Alright, alright, give the phone to Mommy, yeah? ...I love you too, buddy.

GEORGE hangs up, scrubbing a hand over his face. GLADYS emerges from the linen room.

GLADYS
Problem, or are you just allergic to work?
GEORGE
Sammy. Usual stuff. Wants me home.

GLADYS
He'll get used to it.

GEORGE
Gladys, he's only six years old.

GLADYS
When I was six, I was already cleaning houses.

GEORGE
I know just--

GLADYS
Times change, the work doesn't.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - LATER

The mountain of laundry is no smaller, but ANDREW's movements are more confident now. He and ESME chat as they work, the sound of the ticking conveyor belt is back but remains a steady background rhythm.

GLADYS
(abruptly entering)
Esme! Room 311 needs a turndown, now. And you...

GLADYS wags a finger towards ANDREW.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
With me.

GLADYS and ANDREW exit.

ESME
(to PACO, a mischievous grin plastered on her face)
Twenty dollars says he lasts forty-eight hours.

PACO
Make it fifty, and he bails tonight.
ESME
We both know you don't have fifty dollars. Besides, that's too easy. I'll say...a week. And not just here, I bet he's gone for good. Probably back on a bus to wherever he came from.

PACO
You think so? He's soft, but got a stubborn look. Like a bad rash – won't quit itching.

ESME
(scoffing)
That's just scared. You try sleeping on the street, you'd get that twitchy eye too. Point is, he ain't meant for this. Look at his shoes - probably paid more for those than I make in a day.

PACO
Those shoes ain't gonna shine themselves.

ESME
So, what's it gonna be, big man? Just twenty, huh? Afraid to take a little risk?

PACO considers her, a flicker of amusement in his eyes.

PACO
He works the night shift, extra twenty. He doesn't? I pay.

ESME extends her hand.

ESME
Deal.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF LOCKER ROOM - A NEW DAY

The locker room is cramped and lit by a single overhead lamp, barely larger than a closet. Rusted lockers rattle as staff members come and go, a chorus of sighs and muttered complaints filling the air.
PACO, a burly man with a surprisingly gentle touch, stands pinning a shiny name tag to ANDREW’s chest. The uniform hangs awkwardly on Andrew's thin frame. He fidgets uncomfortably.

PACO
(accent heavy)
There. Official now. Like a soldado... a soldier.

TOMAS (O.S.)
Aye, fresh meat for Gladys!

A holler of laughter erupts from the rest of the staff. ANDREW glances down, then quickly looks away. He scratches at the crisp fabric of his freshly starched uniform, the collar chafing against the tender skin of his neck.

ANDREW
Yeah. Solider.

PACO
Don't sweat it, Gringo. Uniform grows on you. Like mold.

PACO lets out a booming laugh that rattles the old lockers. A bell clangs outside.

PACO (CONT'D)
Ah, that's the boss lady's summons. Gladys will meet you outside, little soldier.

ANDREW exits the locker room, the hollering of the rest of the staff following him

TOMAS (O.S.)
Show her who's boss, kid!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOCKER ROOMS - MOMENTS LATER

ANDREW emerges from the locker room, still adjusting his collar. GLADYS stands impatiently a few feet away, she clears her throat.

GLADYS
Don't fidget, boy. You'll get used to it. Or you'll quit.

Without further notice, GLADYS turns on her heels and begins to take strong strides down the hallway.

The two pass a door marked "MAINTENANCE." Groans emanate from within, punctuated by the rhythmic clinking of glass bottles.
GLADYS (CONT'D)
Don't mind them. Graveyard shift.
Real strange type. Like to drown
their sorrows after a night down there.

They stop at a doorway revealing a cluttered office. Inside,
a harried-looking woman with a mountain of towels beside her
barks orders into a phone.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Beatrice, this is Andrew. Another
one of George's hires.

BEATRICE
(distractedly)
Ah, wonderful. Dump him on Maria,
will you? Room assignments are a
nightmare today.

BEATRICE slams the phone down, frustration etched on her
face. GLADYS raises an eyebrow.

GLADYS
Bookings up again?

BEATRICE
Don't even ask. We've got those
social media influencers demanding
swan towels and a room with "good
vibes." You know, the kind of vibes
you can only charge to your
parents' credit card.

ANDREW shrinks back further into himself.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)
Go easy on him. Poor kid looks like
he's seen a ghost.

GLADYS barks a humorless laugh, the first time ANDREW has
seen her even crack a smile.

GLADYS
Maybe.

She turns toward ANDREW.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Beatrice oversees the day-to-day.
You answer to her, then there's
Maria who handles the floor
assignments. You'll learn the
drill.
ANDREW
And George?

BEATRICE rolls her eyes.

BEATRICE
Technically my boss, actually a man child.

ANDREW
Got it.

ANDREW and GLADYS move on. The air grows thick and heavy as they descend a narrow staircase.

INT. BASEMENT STORAGE ROOM - DAY

The room is a labyrinth of cleaning supplies and forgotten furniture. A hunched figure hunches over a bucket, muttering to itself.

GLADYS
This is Agnes. Night shift. Doesn't speak much. Keeps the place neat.

AGNES throws them a single, vacant look before returning to her scrubbing. ANDREW backs away, bumping into a rack of cleaning carts.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY (LATER)

Back in the hallway, ANDREW can barely keep up with GLADYS's brisk pace. He's completely overwhelmed by the sheer number of staff he's encountered, each with their own weary aura.

ANDREW
So who actually owns this place, anyway?

GLADYS stops abruptly, turning to face him. Her gaze is sharp, unnerving.

GLADYS
Never asked. They don't ask about me, either. This hotel, it runs itself. We just keep it ticking over.

ANDREW
Hm.
GLADYS
Now, let's get you to Maria before you faint. We've got rooms to clean.

GLADYS and ANDREW continue swiftly down the hallway. GLADYS halts abruptly before a nondescript door.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
(curly)
In here.

She throws the door open. The sound of clattering, hushed chatter, and the sharp scent of cleaning products rushes out.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Now.

GLADYS steps across the threshold and disappears down an adjoining hallway.

ANDREW stands frozen, framed by the doorway. He blinks at the chaotic scene within the cleaning station, a flicker of confusion and intimidation crossing his face.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE -

INT. OCEANVIEW RESORT POOL - DAY

A harried POOL ATTENDANT battles a horde of sunscreen-covered kids demanding towels. Laughter mingles with high-pitched complaints. A discarded pair of sunglasses floats in the corner of the pool unnoticed.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

A BUSBOY maneuvers deftly between tables, balancing towering stacks of dirty plates in one hand. An irate GUEST snaps his fingers impatiently, the table beside him filled with untouched food and a handwritten note: "This is inedible."

INT. CONCIERGE'S DESK - DAY

NATALIE, answers a rapid-fire stream of questions, frantically flipping through activity brochures.
A line of waiting guests fidgets impatiently behind her, muttering under their breath.

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

PACO restocks his cart, bottles clinking, pillow chocolates and hand soaps stacked with precision. His usual hum replaced by a low whistle.

Suddenly ANDREW explodes into the hallway, a whirlwind of white towels and panicked energy.

ANDREW
(to himself)
Shit, shit, where is it – c'mon, 212, 214, gotta be.... where the hell are you...

ROOM SERVICE ATTENDANT (O.S.)
Jesus Christ, watch it!

ANDREW swerves, narrowly missing a cart piled high with champagne flutes. The ATTENDANT staggers, tray tilting, a symphony of shattering glass echoing in his wake.

ROOM SERVICE ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
You little shit! That's coming out of your paycheck, you-

PACO
(to himself)
That kid's gonna be working off room service for the rest of his life...

But ANDREW's already past him, frantic shouts trailing behind.

ANDREW
Flooded! Suite 224, it's like Niagara Fall in there, towels, gotta move gotta-

He rounds the corner, and a muffled CRASH reverberates - a door slamming, or something breaking.

PACO sighs, an amused grin playing on his lips.
PACO
(Calling after Andrew)
Watch those corners, gringo!

PACO shakes his head, fondness battling amusement, and returns to his cart.

FADE TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

The relentless roar of washing machines fills the air. GLADYS folds a stack of towels with practiced efficiency. Her face is etched with its usual stern expression, a phone cradled between her ear and shoulder.

GLADYS
Yes, m'ija, just checking in. How's Checo doing? Any better?

Her grip tightens on the crisp towel as she listens attentively.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Still got that fever, huh? Well, are you giving him the fluids? The medicine, on the dot? Good. That's my girl.

She scans a towel for imperfections, then sets it aside. A flicker of frustration crosses her face.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Look, don't worry about me. I'm fine. Work is...work. You know how it goes. Just make sure that Checo gets his meds, okay? You know he can be stubborn.

Her eyes snag on a flash of color - a stain marring a pristine sheet. Her scowl deepens.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Hold on a second, m'ija... I have to call you back later.

She sets the towel down, her voice hardening.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
I'll be home soon. Mhm. Yes. Love you, too.
GLADYS snatches up her walkie-talkie, thumbing the button with a force that threatens to crack the plastic.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Housekeeping! Who the hell touched the damn washer?

Static hisses, then TOMAS's panicked voice cuts in.

TOMAS
Uh, Ms. Gladys? Think it was the new kid – Andrew. Saw him scrambling, had a whole pile of–

GLADYS
Where is he? Someone find him!

Overlapping voices crackle over the walkie-talkie – confused, apologetic, a hint of amusement mixed with fear. GLADYS shoves the device away, useless amidst the chaos.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Sunlight pools on the disheveled bed, highlighting scattered magazines and an abandoned room service tray. ESME yanks off a fitted sheet, her knuckles white as she battles the stubborn fabric. A bead of sweat rolls down her temple, leaving a streak in the dust on her cheek. Her eyes flick incessantly to her cracked phone propped beside a crumpled energy bar wrapper.

PACO vacuums a faded rug, the cheerfulness missing from his usual humming. The whine of the motor cuts off abruptly. He leans on the vacuum, a worried furrow appearing between his bushy eyebrows.

PACO
Esme, gotta be real with you... there's a...a kinda smell. Not a bad smell, just a...lived-in smell. Y'know?

ESME freezes, the sheet clutched like a shield. A flash of annoyance sparks in her eyes before she forces it down.

ESME
Huh?

PACO pulls on the collar of his uniform, motioning vaguely towards ESME's clothing.

ESME (CONT'D)
It's laundry day.
ESME continues with her task, forcing the crumpled sheet into her laundry bin, her movements frantic and jerky.

PACO

Hm.

ESME freezes again.

ESME

Just spit it out.

PACO

Just seems like it's been laundry day... every day?

ESME

For someone so dense, you really do pick up on things, huh?

PACO raises his hands in defeat.

PACO

Hey, hey, no need to be mean. I'm just concerned, is all.

ESME

Well thank you for your concern, but I'm okay. Seriously.

Her tone is forced, a thin veneer of humor attempting to cover a flash of annoyance and embarrassment.

The two continue to clean the room, this time in silence. A moment passes, and PACO speaks again:

PACO

It's just you've been looking extra tired lately, and on edge too. Constantly on the phone.

ESME

I'm fine, it's none of your-

PACO

Plus, that's the same coffee spill from our break yesterday. On the same shirt. We both saw it.

ESME lets out a sigh, her shoulders slumping forward.

PACO (CONT'D)

Hey, listen, it ain't about judging. I get it.

(MORE)
PACO (CONT'D)
Sending money back home, rent's a beast, all that. Believe me.

ESME finally turns to meet PACO. Her chest heaves.

ESME
You got no idea. And please...just...let's finish this room, okay?

PACO
Esme, c'mon I–

Before PACO can finish, ANDREW bursts through the door, juggling a basket of cleaning supplies.

ANDREW
(Breathless, surveying the products in his basket)
Hey guys what's better to get out a, uh, bad stain, bleach or hydrogen peroxide?

Both PACO and ESME whip around, their expressions a mix of shock and exasperation.

ESME
(voice strained)
You're kidding me...

ANDREW
I'm thinking bleach is stronger, but–

ANDREW suddenly surveys the room.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Shit, am I interrupting something?

CUT TO:

INT. OCEANVIEW RESORT - LINEN ROOM - LATER

The cramped room is stacked with piles of sheets, towels, and blankets reaching the ceiling. Musty old boxes litter the floor, labeled with faded handwriting. GLADYS stands in the doorway, arms crossed, observing.

ANDREW, flushed and already sweating, is haphazardly folding a mountain of towels.

Silence envelops them, until:
ANDREW
(swallowing hard)
Gladys, I... about this morning,
with the towels... I'm really
sorry. Won't happen again.

GLADYS
No excuses. We have standards here.
A blue rag in with the whites?
You're sloppy, Andrew. Very sloppy.

ANDREW fumbles with a towel, shame burning his face.

ANDREW
Listen, I know it's not perfect,
but I'm trying... it's just... a
lot. Please, give me another
chance.

GLADYS raises an eyebrow, her skepticism clear.

GLADYS
A lot? Don't even start...

ANDREW's voice rises slightly, a tinge of desperation
slipping out.

ANDREW
With all due respect, Ms. Gladys,
if you just knew-

GLADYS cuts him off, her tone sharper than before:

GLADYS
Knew what? That you have bills to
pay? That you have a life outside
this place? Everyone does. Focus on
the task at hand. That's what
you're paid for.

ANDREW's fist clenches tightly around the washcloth in his
hand.

ANDREW
(His voice a shaky whisper)
Please... I need this job. Really
need it.

GLADYS stares at him. There's a long, uncomfortable silence.
The fluorescent lights hum overhead, casting a sterile glow
on the mountains of towels.
ANDREW (CONT'D)
It's not just about the bills... it's my family. My siblings.

GLADYS's expression remains unchanged, but a flicker of curiosity crosses her face for a brief moment.

GLADYS (still stern)
Go on.

ANDREW takes a deep breath and continues:

ANDREW
Look, I wouldn't be messing up like this if... if things weren't so tough at home. My mom, she... she's not really in the picture anymore. Been that way for a while.

He hesitates, GLADYS unfolds her arms from in front of her, a gentle gesture.

ANDREW (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
That leaves me and my little sister and brother. They're young. Lilly's a fighter, though. Smartest kid I know. She wants to go to college. Be the first in our family.

He unfolds a towel, his hands shaking slightly.

ANDREW (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
This job... it's the only way I can keep a roof over their heads, food on the table. I gotta save up for Lilly's college too.

A heavy silence descends. ANDREW dares to look at GLADYS. Her face is an unreadable mask.

GLADYS
If you want to stick around, at least let me show you how to fold a damn towel properly.

GLADYS emerges from behind him.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Look, how I do it. Like this.

GLADYS snatches a towel from ANDREW's pile, demonstrating with quick, precise movements. ANDREW watches intently.
GLADYS (CONT'D)
Military corners. Tight. You want our guests to feel like they're the Try again.

ANDREW fumbles through another towel, his folds sloppy.

CUT TO:

INT. LOST AND FOUND ROOM - DAY
The cluttered room is a warzone of forgotten belongings. Esme digs through a bin, movements rapid-fire. A distant SHRIEK from the laundry room, PACO swears in Spanish from somewhere down the hall.

ESME snags something silky, a flash of electric blue. Designer scarf – score. It's around her neck in an instant, a splash of defiance against the drab. Snapping selfies – angle one, angle two – phone buzzing nonstop, barely time to read.

From down the hall, ESME can hear GLADYS call out:

GLADYS
Esme! Where are you?

With no time to think, the scarf gets tucked under her shirt. Heart pounding, she thumbs out a text, practically spitting the words:

"$20 or $25? Gotta move."

Reply lands even before she's out the door. A grin – YES. She's back in the hallway, pushing a cart, Gladys barking orders but under her uniform, a jolt of blue.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK AREA - DAY
Mismatched chairs and stained tables crowd the cramped space, the scent of stale coffee and Malboro reds clings to the air.

ANDREW sits slumped in a cracked plastic chair, a half-smoked cigarette dangling between his fingers. His first break in days. His weary eyes stare blankly at an overflowing ashtray. A walkie-talkie squawks beside him.

GLADYS
(over walkie-talkie)
(Harsh, staticky)
...Andrew. Andrew, respond.
ANDREW flinches, the cigarette falling from his grasp. He fumbles for the walkie-talkie, jolted by the sudden noise.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

PACO stands surrounded by mountains of discarded sheets and towels. He sings along to a crackly radio broadcast, sweat running down his face, a contented smile in place.

GLADYS
(over walkie-talkie)
(Harsh, staticky)
...Andrew. Andrew, respond.

PACO, suddenly intrigued, drops the towel in between his fingers, moving to turn the volume dial up on the walkie talkie strapped to his belt.

ANDREW
(into walkie talkie)
Uh, yes, Gladys. Andrew here. Go ahead.

GLADYS (O.S.)
Room check, 508. High priority.

PACO's eyes are wide, he murmurs something under his breath, shaking his head. He turns the walkie talkie down and...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK AREA - DAY

ANDREW slowly reaches for the fallen cigarette, his fingers brushing against the cold filter. For a fleeting moment, he considers taking another drag, savoring the moment even just a little while longer.

ANDREW
(carefully, into walkie-talkie)
Copy that. Room 508, on my way.

He slips the walkie-talkie back onto his belt but lets the cigarette linger in his hand, staring at it as if contemplating a lifeline. Resigned, he finally crushes the remaining tobacco under the heel of his boot.

ANDREW rises slowly from the chair, fatigue weighing down his limbs, and heads towards the staff entrance.
INT. OCEANVIEW LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

ANDREW emerges from the back hallways into the deceptive grandeur of the lobby. He tries to smooth down his wrinkled uniform, his movements jerky and self-conscious. He pops a piece of gum in his mouth to cover the cigarette stench.

GEORGE stands in a hushed conversation with GLADYS behind the front desk. They both wear grim expressions. She pauses mid-sentence to shoot ANDREW a glare that makes him instinctively straighten his spine. ANDREW approaches the two.

GLADYS
He's on it.

GLADYS motions toward ANDREW with a nod of her head.

ANDREW
On what?

GLADYS
Just follow me.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - DAY

ESME
Jesus Fucking Christ–

GLADYS (O.S.)
What did I tell you 'bout swearing?

A gagging noise erupts from ESME, a whining noise coming from ANDREW. GLADYS storms in, her face scrunched in confusion.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
This why Mr. George wants me to separate two of–

GLADYS stops mid sentence. ANDREW and ESME stand opposite one another, hovering over the bathtub. ESME has dropped a pile of clean towels to the floor, her body contorts as she covers her mouth and gags.

ANDREW
I–

ESME
What sick fuck!

GLADYS
What are you doing here?
ESME
This was my section today–

ESME removes her grip from her nose and instantly gags.

ANDREW
So is no one gonna talk about the
piece of shit in the tub?!!

GLADYS is unsurprised, her mouth forming a tight line. ESME
is still keeled over. GLADYS leans over the bathtub, as if
examining it.

There, on the floor of porcelain white tub, lays a single
human poop.

GLADYS
Esme, grab me napkin.

ESME begins to speak in a high pitched tone, her hand still
clamped tight over her nose.

ESME
Gladys, please, I can't do this.
I'll fucking puke. I swear to god.

GLADYS motions toward ANDREW, who has not moved an inch.

ANDREW
No, no, no you don't understand–

GLADYS
Grow up. Grab a napkin.

ANDREW
How are you not freaking the fu–

GLADYS whips her head toward ANDREW, ANDREW stops himself. He
lowers his voice to a whisper, as if there were a group of
people standing in the next room listening in on their
conversation. He leans into GLADYS.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
How are you not totally freaking
out right now?

ANDREW scans the room, his eyes wide and wild.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Is this like a normal thing?
GLADYS grabs a paper towel and pair of gloves from ESME'S cart. She walks back towards the tub and begins to reach her hand in. A blood curdling screech erupts from ESME.

ESME
At least put on a glove! What if it's like... diseased?

GLADYS retracts her hand from the tub, the poop remains there.

ANDREW
Shouldn't we be calling someone?

ANDREW (CONT'D)
(a beat)
Like Jeremy? Or the police?

ESME
What the hell are the police are gonna do? Arrest the shit?

ANDREW
(teetering off)
I don't know, I'm scared!

GLADYS
I'm not dealing with this. Andrew, pick it up.

ANDREW is taken aback, offended even.

ANDREW

ESME
Yeah, Andrew, you do it.

ANDREW whips his head around to meet ESME, his face scrunched in confusion.

ANDREW
Hey, what the hell-

ANDREW is interrupted by the snapping of GLADYS'S fingers, she motions towards the tub.

GLADYS
You said you needed work. So work.

ANDREW opens his mouth to protest and then promptly shuts it. From the corner of his eye he spots a growing grin emerge on ESME's face. She hands him a pair of fresh gloves.
ESME

Do it. We'll supervise.

GLADYS juts out the crumpled paper napkin from her hand towards ANDREW, he stares at it for a moment, contemplating his options. A deep breath. He grabs the napkin.

ANDREW approaches the tub, holding the napkin at arm's length. He hesitates, visibly gagging at the sight and smell.

ESME (CONT'D)
Is that corn? Gross.

ANDREW
Shut up.

ANDREW reaches down, still holding the napkin at arm's length. His face contorts with disgust as he pinches the napkin around the waste.

ESME
Don't look it in the eyes!

ANDREW moves quickly towards the toilet, his face pale and sweaty. He drops the waste into the bowl, flushing immediately. He tosses the napkin in the trash, shuddering.

ANDREW
Fucking hell.

ESME immediately bursts into laughter, doubling over as she clutches onto the bathroom vanity. Even GLADYS cracks a smile at her state.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Wait wha-

His eyes widen as the laughter explodes around him. PACO suddenly bursts through the door, GEORGE right behind him, both grinning like maniacs.

PACO
(between laughs)
Welcome to the jungle, whitey!

GEORGE slaps ANDREW on the back, sending him stumbling slightly

GEORGE
Should've seen your face, God I wish I filmed that!
ANDREW
Woah, woah, what are you talking about?

GEORGE
You passed the test, kid. That takes guts! Esme almost puked when she did it.

ANDREW turns to ESME, she takes a fake bow, alluding to her previous performance of disgust.

ANDREW
You.. you guys planned this?

ANDREW is bewildered, the rest of the team, including GLADYS try to catch their breath. ESME leans against the sink, wiping tears of laughter from her eyes. PACO and GEORGE high five.

ANDREW finally starts to grin, the absurdity of the situation hitting him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Oh my God, I hate you all. I really do.

ESME
Hey, hey we can't take the credit! Thank the shower shitter.

ANDREW
Shower shitter?

ESME
I mean I've never actually seen him but he's supposed to be famous or something.

ANDREW perks up.

ESME (CONT'D)
Like really famous, right? In the eighties of something? That one...
Br.. Bru..

ANDREW

ESME shakes her head no.
ESME
No, no. He's in that one movie with the group of-

ANDREW
Rob Lowe, The Outsiders!

ESME
Yes, yes!! Him, him!! The short white guy that looks like kinda like a, lika turtle!

ESME brings her shoulders high, tucking her head in. Trying, and failing, to emulate a turtle in its shell.

ANDREW
What?

ESME
With the ghosts! And the vacuum machine that goes SHGHGHHH.

GLADYS
Alright, enough. Paco, tell Tomas there was an, uh...accident. He'll supply appropriate cleaning chemicals.

PACO
(Winking at Andrew, still chuckling)
Got it, Boss.

As PACO exits, ESME slinks up to him, a mischievous gleam in her eye.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ESME
(to Paco, voice low)
You owe me $20, big man.

GLADYS (O.S.)
I can hear you two!

Suddenly the squawk of GLADYS's walkie talkie echos throughout the bathroom. She enters the bedroom, GEORGE and ANDREW trailing behind her.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Everybody back to work.
They all nod in agreement, forming a single file line towards the room's exit.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Aye, not you two!

GLADYS grabs ANDREW and ESME by the collars of their uniforms.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
You two still have a toilet to scrub!

ESME and ANDREW sigh in union, turning on their heels and walking back towards the bathroom door.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
And Esme.

ESME turns to meet GLADYS's gaze.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Take the tequila out of your pocket and put it back in the minibar.

ESME smiles sheepishly. GLADYS exits. ESME fumbles with the tiny glass bottle which reads "DON JULIO".

ESME
(under her breath)
You got it, boss lady.

CUT TO:

INT. OCEANVIEW DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The dining room shimmers under the glow of crystal chandeliers. Tables draped in pristine linen are laden with gleaming silverware and bouquets of exotic flowers. A WAITRESS, her movements polished and precise, pours ruby-red wine into a crystal glass.

Across the table, the MAN (60s, in a tailored suit) leans in.

MAN
... and that's when it hit me. That flicker of hesitation in his eyes. The deal? It wasn't as secure as I thought. Months of work, hanging by a thread.
His dining companion, an elegant WOMAN (40s, sleek dress, expertly applied makeup), listens attentively, a faint smile playing on her lips.

WOMAN
You'll find a way to turn it around. I know you will. Have you considered talking to the board?

Now a WAITER emerges, bearing plates laden with perfectly arranged food: quail glazed with honey, artfully stacked asparagus spears, and delicate swirls of sauce.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK ROOM – SAME TIME

ESME and PACO sit side-by-side, slumped with exhaustion. The half-eaten remains of a meager meal lie forgotten on a grimy plate. Esme pokes at a lone, cold fry.

The ticking of a battered WALL CLOCK is a constant, oppressive beat.

GLADYS, her brow furrowed, paces the cramped space.

GLADYS
(glancing at her watch)
We're cutting it close. The inspectress expects those suites prepped for the new arrivals, and that means double-checking those minibars.

ESME reaches for an industrial-sized bottle of cleaning solution, its sharp chemical scent prickling her nose.

ESME
Davenport in 312, right? I swear, that woman could find a cockroach in a snowstorm.

PACO, now leaning against the cracked countertop, sighs.

PACO
What does that even mean?

ESME just shrugs, too tired to respond. A ding from her cell phone grabs her attention. It’s a notification from Ebay stating:

1 Item Sold for $25. Get Ready to Ship!
She swipes the notification away.

A low rumble escapes from PACO’S belly, echoing the emptiness of the room. GLADYS shoots him a disapproving look.

ANDREW appears in the doorway, pushing a supply cart overflowing with fresh towels.

ANDREW
Pillow stash on the second floor, left-hand side of the linen closet. They should have extra-firm as well, if Mr. Jameson asks.

PACO
(whistles under his breath)
You're getting good kid.

A small smile creeps it’s way onto ANDREW’s face. He makes his way towards ESME and pops a cold fry into his mouth. ESME pushes the greasy plate towards him, a disgusted look on her face.

ESME
Yuck.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. OCEANVIEW DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A string quartet plays a Vivaldi piece as guests, adorned in their finest evening wear, raise forks laden with decadent desserts. Laughter and light conversation fill the air. A WAITER expertly navigates the crowded room, balancing a tray of chocolate mousse adorned with edible flowers.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK ROOM - SAME TIME

The silence in the break room is thick with the stale scent of cleaning supplies. Gladys checks her watch again, her expression grim.

GLADYS
Five minutes. That's all I can give you. Then we're back on our feet.

ESME
Ugh, already?
PACO
I barely got to eat.

ANDREW
(Shrugging)
Maybe I could grab some snacks from
the vending machines upstairs?
They're usually stocked with decent
stuff.

Esme's eyes light up – a momentary escape from the monotony.

ESME
Yeah, actually, that'd be great.
Anything but these mystery fries.

ANDREW exits.

ESME picks up her phone again. She begins to type a message
to "MAMA":

I'm sending out another check tonight. Give Papa a kiss for
me.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Andrew stands before a row of brightly lit vending machines.
The sounds of revelry from the ballroom leak through the
closed doors – snippets of conversation, bursts of laughter,
the clinking of glasses. A wave of bitterness washes over
him.

ANDREW
(Muttering under his
breath)
“Oh yes I’d love a side of
champagne with my champagne,
Richard!”

He punches in the code, 32A, for a bag of Nacho Cheese
Doritos. He watches as the machine comes to life. The Dorito
bag descends... halfway. Then jams.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
You’ve gotta be kidding me.

INT. GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

The clinking intensifies, punctuated by bursts of laughter. A
WOMAN’s voice trills across the room.
WOMAN
...dropped the entire tray! Imagine
Right in front of everyone...

MAN
How humiliating. I feel bad,
really.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

Andrew kicks the base of the vending machine, then gives it
one final, rage-fueled shake. The metal groans ominously.

ANDREW
(under his breath)
Come on, Come on, Come on.

The ballroom erupts in a chorus of delighted squeals.
Finally, with a metallic clang, the Doritos tumble down, the
bag tearing as he snatches it from the dispenser. Chips rain
down like confetti.

MAN (O.S.)
I swear they're recruiting staff
from off the streets, nowadays.

ANDREW lets out a huff, slowly dropping to his knees to
collect the fallen chips.

WOMAN (O.S.)
It's a wonder they don't just
wander off with the silverware.

ANDREW reaches his hand under the machine, shuffling the
chips towards him.

MAN (O.S.)
We really do need to close those
borders.

ANDREW
Holy fucking shit.

In his palm, covered in nacho cheese dust and stray crumbs,
a single diamond earring rests. The stone, monstrous in size,
catches the garish hallway light, throwing tiny rainbows
against the worn carpet. ANDREW takes a deep breath in.
WOMAN (O.S)
Honey, you better check the safe when we get back upstairs, make sure the maid didn't think one of my Tiffany bracelets was a tip.

Andrew's jaw tightens. He pockets the diamond earring, a flicker of rebellion replacing the bitterness in his eyes. He pops a Dorito into his mouth, the crunch echoing in the silence. His eyes meet the camera, a hint of defiance glinting in them. A wide smile spreads across his face.

FADE TO BLACK.
THE UNDERNEATHERS

"DIRTY LAUNDRY"

Written by
Alexandra Sweeney
INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Sunlight streams through gauzy windows, catching the sheen of freshly mopped floors. NATALIE checks a guest in, a practiced smile on her face. A BELLHOP efficiently wheels a modest suitcase by. An air of serene routine hangs over the hotel.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

GEORGE hums, leaning back in his office chair. He sips coffee, his tie loosened. A satisfied grin spreads across his face, reflecting the day's smooth start.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

PACO and ESME sip coffee at the table, an odd couple sharing a moment of quiet before the day's bustle. ANDREW nervously checks his watch, a hint of unease in his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Empty. The rhythmic hum of washing machines is absent. A crumpled uniform lies abandoned on the floor.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LOBBY - SIMULTANEOUS

NATALIE frowns slightly. She glances at the clock, then towards the back office. A flicker of concern crosses her face.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

ESME raises an eyebrow.

ESME
Shouldn't the dragon lady be terrorizing us by now?
PACO shrugs, but there's a subtle shift in his demeanor.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE

GEORGE leans forward, his calm expression replaced by confusion. He picks up the phone and dials a number. Listens. Then listens some more.

GEORGE
(Muttering to himself)
What the....

His voice trails off into a worried silence.

CUT TO: INT. LOBBY

Suddenly, the same GUEST from earlier storms back into the lobby, his face now red with fury.

GUEST
(rushing into the lobby)
This is BULLSHIT! Where's my goddamn room? I paid for this!

The last remnants of serenity shatter. NATALIE winces, the YOUNG BELLHOP freezes mid-step.

NATALIE
(behind the desk, already frazzled)
Sir, I understand your frustration, but -

The GUEST cuts her off, face turning a dangerous shade of red.

GUEST
Understand? Do you understand I flew in from across the country for a meeting that starts in an hour? Now I've got no time to change, no chance to even check my presentation!

YOUNG BELLHOP
(hovering behind the guest, wringing his hands)
Your ... your luggage, sir. It's ... um, a bit on the large side and-
GEORGE
(bursting out of the back office, phone pressed to his ear)
No, no, Mr. Sinclair, I promise we'll fix this, just need a little more--

GEORGE's voice trails off when he spots the chaos unfolding in the lobby.

NATALIE
GEORGE! We need PACO. Like, yesterday. This guy's luggage is the Godzilla of suitcases, and--

ESME
(lounging against the wall)
Maybe Godzilla had babies. Lots of little designer babies.

The GUEST whirls around, eyes landing on ESME.

GUEST
Is this some kind of joke? What sort of amateur operation--

Suddenly, PACO emerges from the shadows. He sizes up the luggage pile with a grunt.

PACO
(deep, accented voice)
Small things for small people. Big things... those are for Paco.

He heaves the luggage onto the cart, muscles bulging with the effort, as if it weighs nothing. The YOUNG BELLHOP gapes in awe. NATALIE breathes a sigh of relief. The GUEST momentarily loses his fury, replaced by startled confusion.

PACO guides the cart toward the elevator with a curt nod, the GUEST trailing behind, still sputtering half-formed insults.

GEORGE appears from the back office, phone pressed to his ear, a harried look on his face.

GEORGE
Has anyone seen Gladys?

NATALIE shakes her head frantically.
NATALIE
No, I thought she was with you. Her shift started five minutes ago.

CUT TO:

INT. STAFF BREAK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

PACO pushes open the door. It's eerily deserted. An uneaten sandwich sits abandoned on a table. A half-filled coffee mug still steams, the bitter smell hanging in the air.

ESME strolls in behind him, a glint in her eye.

ESME
So, the boss lady decided to take the day off, huh? Nice of her to warn us.

PACO
Think she’s okay? Hasn’t missed a day in over twenty years.

ESME only shrugs in response.

ANDREW bursts through the door, breathless and panicked.

ANDREW
Some Mr. Sinclair wants a word? Like, right now.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

GEORGE suddenly looks like he hasn't slept in days. Coffee stains his shirt. He rubs his temples, phone cradled between his ear and shoulder.

GEORGE
(Over the phone)
...Yes, sir, I understand. But with Gladys out, we're short-staffed. I'm not sure how... Yes, sir. Right away, sir.

CUT TO:
INT. OCEANVIEW LOBBY

ESME, PACO, and ANDREW rush through the lobby. Tension chokes the air. Their work boots pound against the linoleum floor, a frantic drumbeat in the sudden silence.

ANDREW
(out of breath)
Hey, uh, who is this Mr. Sinclair guy anyway? Seems important.

ESME
(Lowers her voice, a hint of disdain in it)
Old man Sinclair built this place ages ago, guess it's been in the family ever since. Jeremy Sinclair, he's the grandson, the big boss up in New York.

ANDREW
So what's he doing asking for us?

PACO
No idea. Must be bad.

They approach GEORGE'S office. The door is slightly ajar, and the muffled sound of voices spills into the hallway

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE -

GEORGE sits at his desk, staring at the phone with a mixture of dread and anger. The speaker emits JEREMY's voice, crisp and accusing.

JEREMY (V.O.)
...unacceptable! This level of incompetence reflects poorly on you, George. I expected better.

ENTER ANDREW, ESME and PACO, completely out of breath. PACO steps forward, interrupting JEREMY's tirade.

PACO
Mr. Sinclair...

PACO takes a deep breath. His face beat red.

PACO (CONT'D)
..No Gladys, things fall apart. Simple as that.
JEREMY stares at PACO, momentarily speechless.

JEREMY (V.O.)
And what, exactly, are you suggesting? That my hotel cannot function without a single housekeeper? And who is this? George, who's speaking?

GEORGE
Uh, sir, that would be Paco. Oh, crap, sorry, um, Mr. Sinclair I need to place you on a very very brief hold.

JEREMY (V.O.)
George, if you forward me, so help me God I-

GEORGE fumbles with the buttons on the receiver, answering another incoming call. He presses the phone to his ear:

GEORGE
(A hint of desperation creeping into his voice)
Gladys? Please tell me this is Gladys...

An empty silence fills the room as GEORGE listens to the voice on the other end of the line. His initial concern twists into a grimace of annoyance, then full-blown anger.

GEORGE: (CONT'D)
(Voice rising)
No, dammit, I said Gladys! G-L-A-D-

...Oh. Oh, you.

He stares at the phone as if it's a venomous snake.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
(A forced calm)
Look, I appreciate the dedication, but now is really not- ...Of course I understand. Legal matters must be... yes, yes, absolutely.

Slamming the phone down, GEORGE explodes in a string of expletives, kicking his desk chair in frustration.

A sharp cough cuts through the air.
PACO
Uh, George, what about Mr. Sinclair?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - SIMULTANEOUS

The lobby is descending into mayhem. Natalie fields a flurry of complaints from irritated guests.

MOM
Seriously, after all this, there isn't a single room ready? We booked this months in advance!

DAD
Look, we just need a quiet place to put the kid down for a nap. Do you have a break room or anything?

NATALIE
Sir, I completely understand. But-

Their conversation is drowned out by the TODDLER, whose cries have escalated to a deafening wail.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Sir, I'm so sorry-

TODDLER
WHAAAAA

NATALIE
The staff rooms are for-

TODDLER
WHAAAAA

NATALIE
The staff rooms are for staff only!

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

JEREMY
...Finally, George I hope that wasn't another personal call.

GEORGE's face instantly pales.
GEORGE
No, sir. I mean, yes it was, but
you see Ashley and I, we are
currently in the process of getting
a divorce and–

JEREMY's sharp tone cuts GEORGE off from the other end:

JEREMY
Care to elaborate? Or is this one
of those problems best solved off-
property?

GEORGE
Well turns out, my wife, soon-to-
be-ex wife, only does she want to
destroy me financially, she's
aiming for a jail sentence too!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - SIMULTANEOUS

The MOM begins to ruffle through her purse. Miscellaneous
items begin to fall to the lobby’s floor as she digs for
something.

MOM
God, Dustin please shut him up.
Where is it? It's got to be here...

DAD
(To Toddler)
Hey buddy, c'mon now, settle down!
What do you want? You want your
truck? Here's your truck...hey!

The DAD bends down with the toy truck, but the Toddler
aggressively swats it away.

MOM
(Still digging)
My pills...where the hell are my
pills...I need...oh here we go.

Finally, she triumphantly pulls out a prescription bottle.
With shaking hands, she fumbles to open it.

NATALIE
Ma'am, I must ask that you--

But the MOM is oblivious, popping 2 pills into her mouth.
MOM
(words obstructed by a
mouth full of pills)
This free?

The MOM reaches for a water bottle. Before NATALIE can answer
she has downed it.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

GEORGE
And you know the irony? I always
thought SHE was the dramatic one.
Me, I'm just trying to keep things
afloat, make a good life -

JEREMY cuts him off, yet again, his voice icy.

JEREMY
It was a rhetorical question, Mr.
Vera.

GEORGE sinks further into his chair.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Now would you please summon the
rest of your staff immediately. I
need answers. I need SOMEONE who
knows what's going on around here.

GEORGE
Yes, sir.

A ping! emits from GEORGE's open laptop.

JEREMY
I just forwarded you the Zoom link.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The conference room, usually a space of mundane meetings,
feels warped. The fluorescent lights cast harsh shadows, the
sterile atmosphere replaced by one of impending judgment. A
massive projector screen dominates the room, displaying
JEREMY's face in unnerving detail. His eyes, magnified to an
imposing size, scan the room, landing on each employee in
turn.
JEREMY appears frozen on the screen, his suit immaculate, his expression unreadable. His virtual presence is somehow more intimidating than if he were physically there, his image amplified and inescapable.

ANDREW, ESME, and PACO sit in the arranged chairs, facing the projector. ANDREW fidgets, his fingers twisting and untwisting a paper coffee cup on the table. GEORGE stands off to the side, shoulders hunched, eyes darting between the screen and his staff.

JEREMY breaks the chilling silence, his voice measured and cold:

JEREMY
I'm sure you're all well aware of the current situation. Complaints, delays, a general state of disarray that's a far cry from the standards this establishment was built upon. I trust you also realize that this reflects poorly, not just on this hotel, but on the Sinclair name itself.

ESME shifts in her chair, her trademark smirk fading into a look of defiance. ANDREW sits rigid, fear etched across his face. PACO remains stoic.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
My grandfather instilled certain principles into this company: efficiency, reliability, the pursuit of excellence. Now, whether it's misplaced loyalty, incompetent management, or insubordination - these principles have been compromised.

His gaze sweeps the length of the room.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
I'm not here to play the blame game. However, I expect results. I want this place running like a well-oiled machine. And let me be crystal clear - anyone found to be sabotaging those efforts will find themselves unemployed.

A sharp intake of breath from ANDREW, his fingers tighten around the coffee cup, threatening to crush it.

GEORGE clears his throat nervously.
GEORGE
Mr. Sinclair, they're... they're a
good team. This is an unusual
situation. Gladys, well, she's
indispensable but –

JEREMY
And yet, here we are. So,
enlighten me Mr. Vera – how do you
propose we bring order to this
chaos?

GEORGE shifts uncomfortably, then gestures to PACO.

GEORGE
Paco's been here the longest,
besides Gladys. Knows the job
inside out. He'll step into
Gladys' role for the time being,
oversee the workload...

PACO slowly stands, a quiet dignity in his posture.

PACO
Mr. Sinclair, I'll do my best, But
Gladys... her knowledge, it's not
just the tasks, it's the people.
The guests, their preferences, she
remembers everything.

JEREMY's brows furrow.

JEREMY
So you’re telling me, again, that
your operation relies solely on a
single employee?

ESME lets out a soft scoff. JEREMY's gaze lands on her, sharp
as a knife.

ESME
(meeting his eyes)
Gladys isn't the only one who keeps
track of whose sheets get changed
and whose martini arrives extra
dirty.

GEORGE shifts uncomfortably. JEREMY eyes her for a long
moment, weighing her words.
JEREMY
So, you believe you could step into... Ms. Martinez's place?

ESME's eyes widen slightly. She didn't seem to anticipate this. JEREMY's face is unreadable.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
I guess we will see.

JEREMY's attention returns to ESME, but just then, a muffled gasp sounds from ANDREW. His crumpled coffee cup slips from his grasp, landing squarely in his lap. Dark coffee stains spread across his pants.

The sudden distraction breaks the tension. ESME hides a smirk. GEORGE sighs in exasperation. Even JEREMY's stern expression cracks momentarily.

JEREMY (CONT'D)
Well, Mr. Vera, it seems "unusual situations" are the norm in your department.

With a ping! the projector shuts off, the abrupt silence broken by ANDREW's mumbled apologies.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - SIMULTANEOUS

DAD
(To Natalie)
Listen, is there anything? Any activities, places to take the kid? Just somewhere to get him out of here for a bit?

NATALIE
Well, the nearest beach is about a half-hour drive. Usually, building sandcastles or exploring tide pools are popular with little ones.

MOM
(Voice flat)
Sand's a no. Remember? Eats it. Tide pools, kid'll drown himself.
NATALIE
Let's see...maybe a boat tour? Some offer wildlife viewing, which can be fun for little ones.

MOM
Dustin gets seasick. Inner ear problems.

NATALIE
Well...sometimes they have those big inflatable play areas on the beach. You know, bounce houses, slides, that sort of thing?

DAD
Absolutely not.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM

The cramped men's locker room buzzes with the organized chaos of shift changes. Clanging metal echoes as lockers open and slam shut. The air hangs heavy with a mix of sweat, stale coffee, and industrial cleaner.

ANDREW stands before his locker. He tugs off his coffee-stained shirt, tossing it into the hamper, and reaches for a fresh set of clothes from a crumpled bag stashed in the back of his locker.

As he pulls out a pair of pants, a metallic CLATTER echoes as something hits the tiled floor. His exhaustion momentarily forgotten, Andrew stares down in surprise.

The giant diamond earring, previously unseen, sits in the center of the room. A collective gasp fills the room.

TOMAS
Woah, Andy! Since where are you dripping in diamonds? Hitting the jackpots with the tips, huh?

ANDREW snatches up the earring, pushing it back into his shirt pocket.

ANDREW
(frantic)
No, I - it's not- I have no idea where that came from! Must've been in these pants...
He shakes the pants out, but nothing else emerges. The other men in the locker room exchange curious glances.

PACO steps closer, one eyebrow raised. He has a fresh set of towels draped over one shoulder.

PACO
That's quite a rock to be hiding in your spare pants, amigo.

TOMAS
(chiming in)
Yeah, someone will definitely be missing that sparkly thing.

A burly maintenance worker, MIKE, overhears, wiping grease off his hands.

MIKE
Probably some rich lady, with more jewels than sense. Might not even notice it's gone.

TOMAS
Dude, you could sell that thing, buy yourself a new car! Or, like, a small island.

ANDREW stares down at the earring in his pocket, a flicker of temptation sparking in his eyes. But then, his shoulders slump further, the exhaustion washing back over him. He remembers Mr. Sinclair's words and shivers.

ANDREW
(Defensively)
No way! I found it, alright? Last week, during that fancy gala. Must've fallen out of someone's ear. I was gonna return it, I swear!

PACO
Found it, huh?

TOMAS
Interesting hiding place for a lost earring.

ANDREW fidgets nervously.

ANDREW
It... it got shoved in there somehow. I forgot about it, honestly!

(MORE)
ANDREW (CONT'D)
With everything that's been
happening, this place falling
apart...

MIKE snorts, but PACO raises a hand, silencing him.

PACO
Don't worry 'bout it, kid. You do
what feels right.

TOMAS claps ANDREW on the back, a grin splitting his face.

TOMAS
Yeah, kid, "what feels right".

TOMAS winks, causing a wide grin to spread across ANDREW's
face. ANDREW scans the room. MIKE shrugs and returns to his
locker. TOMAS whistles, impressed. PACO is busy adjusting the
stack of towels balancing on his shoulder.

ANDREW
Yeah... I will.

A squawk from ANDREW's walkie talkie rips him from his
thoughts.

GEORGE
(via walkie talkie)
Andrew! Andrew can you hear me?
Head to the lobby, some guest broke
a vase. Get over there, NOW.

CUT TO:

INT. OCEANVIEW RESORT - SUPPLY CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

The cramped closet smells of bleach and damp mops. ANDREW
fumbles with the broom, searching for the accompanying
dustpan.

Suddenly, muffled voices drift through the vent above:

JEREMY
(voice strained)
...disgrace, George. Someone on
staff, that's the only explanation
... This reflects poorly on all of
us...

GEORGE
...can't be. Not under my watch! My
staff... they are like family
JEREMY
(words broken up by static)
A thief... Word travels fast among guests.

A sharp buzz cuts through the air. ANDREW fumbles in his pocket, his heart pounding. It's his walkie-talkie, static crackling.

GEORGE
(Voice booming through the vent and the walkie-talkie simultaneously)
...What the-? Who was that?

ANDREW frantically tries to silence the walkie talkie in his hands. Panic takes over. He shoves the supplies aside and bolts from the closet.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The lobby bursts into view, guests scattering around the glittering shards of the priceless vase. ANDREW freezes.

NATALIE
(emerging from the chaos)
Andrew, there you are! I was just--

Before she can finish, ANDREW has bolted from the scene.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

PACO and ESME folds in unison, PACO humming to a salsa beat.

PACO
You think Gladys is okay? She never misses a shift, not without callin' ahead.

ESME (SCOFFS)
Maybe the old bat finally got tired of this place. Can't say I'd blame her.

PACO shoots her a disapproving look.

PACO
Aye, don't talk like that. She's family, remember?
ESME
Family or not, we're the ones left picking up her slack.

PACO stops folding, a frown appearing on his face.

PACO
You saying you're gonna replace Gladys? Good luck.

ESME
Never said anything about replacing her, but a little extra cash never hurt anyone.

PACO doesn't reply, his hands still.

ESME (CONT'D)
(Exasperated)
Paco, I need the money. It ain't about Gladys, it's about-

Suddenly, the door swings open in a flurry, and ANDREW bursts in. He's disheveled, his eyes wide and panicked. Sweat glistens on his face.

ESME (CONT'D)
(Jumping back)
Fuck, Andrew! What the hell?

ANDREW
Hey, uh, I... did you guys hear anything? About a... a thief?

ESME
Something you gotta tell me, whitey?

ANDREW
No, no, just overhead George talking, was gonna ask you if-

ESME
(not convinced)
Mhmm.

ANDREW
I gotta go organize some... Uh some cleaning supplies.

Just as fast as he entered, ANDREW has exited the frame.

ESME
Okay...
ESME pulls out her phone and begins to type a text, the screen reveals a string of texts to MAMA. The messages read:

I know the last check was late but I got good news.

I'll send another tonight. As soon as my shift ends. I promise

Mama?

CUT TO:

INT. GUEST ELEVATOR - LATER

The elevator doors slide shut behind ANDREW with a decisive whoosh. He stabs at the button marked 'L' for Lobby, his finger hovering over the talk button on his walkie-talkie.

ANDREW
(urgent, into walkie-talkie)
A vending machine doesn’t just vanish into thin air! Where is it?

GEORGE
(voice boiling with anger, through the walkie-talkie)
I don’t know, Andrew! Ask the mechanics! Do you think I have time for this nonsense? My job's on the line here!

ANDREW
No, no, GEORGE, you don’t understand. I–

GEORGE
(cutting him off, shouting)
You listen to me, Andrew! I'm not responsible for your midday munchies or your damn problems. I got Mr. Sinclair breathing down my neck, and–

ANDREW
(into walkie-talkie)
I'm trying to do the right thing, George, I have to tell you–

GEORGE
Get back to work!!
The elevator lurches downward, and ANDREW's panic seems to grow. He slumps his back against the elevator wall, sliding down until he's sitting on the floor.

The elevator DINGS loudly as it reaches the lobby level, the doors sliding open to reveal the chaos below.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

The hotel lobby is a scene of absolute pandemonium. Guests swarm around the front desk like bees to a hive, their faces flushed with frustration and impatience.

A group of business travelers huddle near the entrance, their briefcases and laptops scattered around them as they argue over the lack of available meeting rooms.

A tray of drinks crashes to the floor, spilling its contents across the polished surface as a waiter attempts to navigate the chaos.

A maintenance worker attempts to calm a group of guests near the entrance, assuring them that the issues with the air conditioning are being addressed. His words are drowned out by the sound of angry voices and the relentless ringing of phones.

ANDREW rushes past the front desk and into...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The locker room is a stark contrast to the chaos of the lobby, but it still buzzes with a sense of urgency. ANDREW rushes in, his footsteps echoing on the tile floor. He fumbles with the combination lock on his locker, finally managing to open it and grab his phone.

He clicks on a contact named: SIS

LILLY
Drew, what’s up?

ANDREW
Lilly, I need to ask you for a huge favor. It's... it's complicated. Please just don't ask any questions.
LILLY
Drew I don't have any extra cash right now. The baby's sick, bills are piling up...

ANDREW
No, no, it's not about money... well, sort of. I just need you to-

A strange sound cuts through the phone line – a muffled gasp mixed with a giggle.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Is everything okay? Who was that?

LILLY
Just Tommy, Jeez. Relax, Drew.

ANDREW
How's Mom... she okay? Still breathing?

ANDREW lets out a dry chuckle.

There's a deep breath on the other end of the phone, LILLY'S voice softens.

LILLY
Yeah, she's breathing. Always is.
You know Mom. Takes a lot to knock her down for good.

An unexpected chuckle escapes ANDREW's lips.

LILLY (CONT'D)
(A small laugh escaping from her too)
Yeah, tough old bird, isn't she?

A beat of awkward silence hangs between them. ANDREW glances nervously around the locker room, suddenly feeling exposed.

ANDREW
You gotta help me, Lilly. Please.
Just meet me at the hotel in 10.
Stay in the parking lot and DO NOT come in.

The walkie talkie on ANDREW's belt crackles to life, GEORGE's voice loud and urgent.

GEORGE
(via walkie-talkie)
Andrew, get your ass to my office.
(MORE)
GEORGE (CONT'D)
Mr. Sinclair is waiting on the other line.

LILLY
(still on the phone)
You’re acting strange Drew is everything -

ANDREW
(to Lilly)
I gotta go. See you soon.

ANDREW ends the call, slipping his phone into his back pocket.

He exits into the lobby.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

GEORGE
Look, Paco, I know you're close with the cleaning crew. Everyone likes you - a good quality in a manager, that. Makes you approachable.

PACO shifts uncomfortably. He forces a smile.

PACO
I try my best.

GEORGE
Absolutely.

GEORGE leans in, lowering his voice by a few octaves.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Now, I'm not asking you to betray anyone's trust. But there's a...a delicate situation. I have Jeremy breathing down my neck and I would never ask you to rat out a staff member but Something's gone missing from a guest room.

PACO stares down at his black work boots.

PACO
Missing, sir?
GEORGE
A valuable item. Very valuable, actually.

He pauses, gauging PACO's reaction. PACO forces himself to remain calm.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
... it's a watch. Extremely expensive. The guest is adamant it was taken.

PACO blinks in confusion. A wave of relief washes over him.

PACO
Watch? What watch, George?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

ANDREW's phone vibrates in his hand, the screen lighting up with a message from Lilly. It reads:

Drew, what the hell?

As ANDREW tries to formulate a response, his phone continues to buzz with notifications. Another text from Lilly pops up:

Seriously, what's going on?

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

GEORGE
Did you hear anything about this watch, Paco, see anything out of the ordinary?

PACO
No, nothing, promise.

GEORGE
Is there anything you're not telling me, Paco? This is a serious accusation.

Before PACO can answer, ANDREW opens the door. Only half of his body is in the doorway, his left arm, holding a brown crumpled bag, remains concealed behind the wall.
ANDREW
You needed me?

GEORGE looks past PACO, and addresses ANDREW:

GEORGE
Great timing, as always.

ANDREW remains in the doorway, confused.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Out, Andrew, get out!

GEORGE shoos ANDREW away, the door shuts.

CUT TO:

EXT. STAFF PARKING LOT - SIMULTANEOUS

A beat-up minivan pulls into a spot, the engine sputtering in protest. It's seen better LILLY, paint peeling and rust creeping along the edges. LILLY steps out, baby SAM balanced on her hip. He lets out a disgruntled wail.

ANDREW rushes towards her, the crumpled paper bag clutched tight in his right hand.

GLADYS's car pulls into a parking spot, the engine ticking as it cools. She opens the door, lets out a groan, and then slams it shut. A phone is pressed to her ear.

GLADYS (on the phone)
¿En serio? I swear I gave that PTO form to George. He's always all over the place, Checo, I swear.

Her gaze drifts across the lot, landing on the staff entrance just as ANDREW bursts out, panicked. He clutches a crumpled paper bag, his face pale.

GLADYS frowns, momentarily forgetting her own irritation. He eyes are fixed on Andrew. She watches as he glances over his shoulder, looking for witnesses.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
(on the phone)
Hold up, Checo, one second.

Suddenly, a beat-up minivan rattles into a nearby spot. LILLY steps out, her movements sluggish with fatigue. A young child sits at her hip.
ANDREW bolts towards LILLY, the paper bag awkwardly swinging in his hand.

GLADYS sinks down slightly, making herself smaller. She watches as ANDREW runs his fingers through his hair, slightly pulling at the ends. ANDREW pushes the young girl back towards the car.

She listens from a distance, ANDREW's words muffled:

ANDREW
Thank god...Fuck.

LILLY
Drew....are you... what is happening?!

ANDREW squeezes the toes of baby BEN, his voice reaching a high pitch as he mutters something indiscernible.

LILLY jerks her hip back, pulling BEN away from ANDREW. LILLY's words are cutoff by CHECO on the line.

CHECO
(over the phone)
Gladys, hey, Gladys, you okay?

GLADYS doesn't answer, she just watches as ANDREW glances around nervously. LILLY raises her eyebrow.

ANDREW
I can't explain everything right now. Just... take this.

He thrusts the paper bag into LILLY'S hands.

CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

GEORGE's eyes narrow, still questioning PACO.

GEORGE
So you're telling me you know nothing about a watch?

PACO shakes his head vehemently.

PACO
No sir, nothing about a watch.

GEORGE opens his mouth to speak before the shrill of the phone ringing cuts him off—
GEORGE
(Into the receiver)
Vera here… Yes? …Mr. Sinclair!

A flicker of surprise crosses GEORGE's face as he listens.

GEORGE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
The… the watch? …Are you certain? Well, that's… certainly good news. Absolutely, thank you for the update.

He hangs up, a strange mix of relief and confusion washing over him. He looks at PACO.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
It appears there's been a misunderstanding. Our guest found their watch. A false alarm, it seems.

PACO only stares at his boss, his face blank.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
You look surprised, Paco.

PACO
Just relieved it all worked out. If you'll excuse me, I got a mountain of linens to fold...

CUT TO:

EXT. STAFF PARKING LOT - SIMULTANEOUS

LILLY
Please tell me this isn't a bag of drugs, Drew. Are you doing drugs?

GLADYS watches as LILLY motions toward ANDREW's current state: his eyes wide, sweat beading on his forehead. ANDREW shakes his head violently.

ANDREW
NO. No, I'm not. But this-

ANDREW thrusts the paper bag into LILLY's hand.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
It's valuable. Trust me.

LILLY
Drew, what? Is this stolen?
ANDREW
No, no. I mean not really.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Just please. Go to that pawn shop
downtown, the one on 6th. I know a
guy there, Rico, he'll take care
it.

LILLY
Andrew, I'm not going to–

CHECO
(over the phone)
Gladys, answer me.

GLADYS watches as LILLY shakes her head, turning on her
heels, and opening the car door. ANDREW watches as she
buckles up, turns the old car on, and drive away.

ANDREW waves out to LILLY, looks left and right, and turns
around.

GLADYS rises, brushing the creases out of her uniform, and
pressing the phone back to her ear:

GLADYS
(to Checo)
I knew it! Damn white boys!

FADE TO BLACK.