

FADE IN

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

RAMI LEWIS sits at his desk, a chinese takeout box with half-eaten Lo Mein beside him. Rami, a sardonic, arrogant, and heavily depressed comedian, writes on a notepad.

RAMI (V.O.)  
I killed my mother.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Rami stands onstage before a small audience, a microphone in one hand, an open bottle of water in the other. An empty mic stand sits to his side, while his backpack slumps on the floor behind him. The audience is silent, gawking at Rami.

RAMI  
That was a joke, people, jesus.  
Comedy folks, this is a comedy  
show, lighten up.

A few scattered chuckles frm the audience.

RAMI (CONT'D)  
For real though, I did not kill my  
mom. She died before I would've had  
a reason to.

Rami smirks at the audience.

RAMI (CONT'D)  
Come on, you guys know how it  
works: I say a bunch of s hit, you  
guys have to laugh about it, rinse,  
repeat, let cool for 2 minutes  
before serving.

Silence. Rami looks around the room, then clears his throat.

RAMI (CONT'D)  
Right.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami crosses out a line on his notepad; DEAD MOM OPENING BIT. He leans back in his chair and idly taps his pen against the desk a few times, then leans forward again and starts to write. We see: SHIT TALK DAD.

RAMI (V.O.)  
So my dad, right?

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI

My dad, he was a real character. Is, a real character. Imagine this old, fat, drunk, white guy, always yelling, always there to tell you "ya fucked up, kid". The man absolutely hated me, I mean, he probably wouldn't have shed a tear if I had got hit by a bus or something. I could do no right in his eyes. Like, he would go after me for the smallest fucking thing. Didn't take out the trash? "You lazy fucking waste of space!" Didn't finish your dinner? "Ungrateful leech of a human being!" Some asshole breaks your arm in the second grade? "Quit whining for one goddamn second of your miserable life, you fucking brat!" I tell you, the man had a way with words.

Rami takes a sip of water.

RAMI (CONT'D)

Being a comedian's great. I get paid to just talk shit about people.

A few laughs from the audience.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami sets down his pen and starts eating his cold Lo Mein. He stops suddenly, eyes wide, mouth full of noodles.

RAMI (V.O.)

So I dated this girl in high school, right?

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI

This was ninth grade, my first year of high school. My dad, he'd started to take notice that I hadn't had a girlfriend, like, ever. Being the considerate, open-minded gentleman he is, my dad

(MORE)

RAMI (CONT'D)

immediately jumped to the  
conclusion that I was-

He gasps.

RAMI (CONT'D)

-homosexual! I mean, he was right,  
I mean...

Rami strikes an effeminate pose, earning a few chuckles from  
the audience.

RAMI (CONT'D)

...but my dad had enough reason to  
hate me, I didn't want to give him  
another.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami searches through a mess of books and papers under his  
desk. He pulls out a thick highschool yearbook. He sets it  
on his desk and flips through it. He stops on the "Class of  
2006" page, and slides his finger across the page until he  
finds the name and picture of a young Valerie Turner.

RAMI (V.O.)

So that's where Valerie comes in.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI

Valerie Turner- that was her name.  
Okay, so, picture those girls in  
high-school, y'know, quiet,  
awkward, sits in the back of the  
classroom, bit on the hefty side,  
maybe two, three real friend, about  
seventy fictional boyfriends? If  
there was an encyclopedia for  
high-school cliches, Valerie would  
be the picture beside that  
particular one. We had math  
together, and the girl could not  
solve an equation to save her life!  
Every class, she would just doodle  
her crush-of-the-week in her little  
boy band notebook. Probably would  
have dropped out if it wasn't for  
me. See, I was in the market for a  
beard, and fortunately for her, I  
was very good at math.

Rami takes a sip of water.

RAMI (CONT'D)

Poor girl was so desperate, all I had to do was offer to help her with her homework, and she was all mine. Like, okay, look at me now, right?

He gestures to himself.

RAMI (CONT'D)

Imagine this-

He gestures again.

RAMI (CONT'D)

-but thirty times worse. That was me in high school. But in her eyes, I might as well been Brad Pitt. You'd think no guy had ever talked to her before, which was probably the case, and to be honest I don't blame them. Valerie wasn't exactly the sharpest tool and all that.

A few scattered chuckles, but most of the audience looks uncomfortable.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami writes furiously. The yearbook lies open beside him, next to his now-abandoned takeout.

RAMI (V.O.)

Two years. It took her two fucking years to figure out I was gay.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI

Like, I don't know about you guys, but if I was a straight guy, I think I would figure that out a bit sooner. We never even had sex! Not once, in two years, didn't even make out! Like I said, not the sharpest tool.

Rami takes a sip of water

RAMI (CONT'D)

But she did find out, finally, and  
(MORE)

RAMI (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

let me tell you, it was not pleasant. She told her little friends, and they started spreading all sorts of rumors around the school. Rumors along the lines of "Hey, you know that terrorist looking kid? I heard, he's also a fucking queer". That was my fate for the rest of my highschool life; the "gay boy", the "terrorist faggot", "Osama bin Ladda Dicks, leader of Al-Queerda".

Silence. Some of the audience members in the back whisper to each other as they stare. Rami clears his throat.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami repeatedly crosses out OSAMA BIN LADDA DICKS on his notepad. He sighs and leans back in his chair. He picks up the takeout box, peers into its contents, then sets it back down.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Rami drinks some water as he paces the stage.

RAMI

Let's... um... let's see... I still got ten minutes to go, uh, who else can I shit on?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami opens the fridge and puts the takeout box away. As he closes it, a letter on the fridge catches his eye; a wedding invitation ("We invite you to celebrate the union of Lonnie Mitchell and Jamie Reed"). Rami chuckles to himself.

RAMI

Lonnie Fucking Mitchell.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI

Lonnie's my ex. we met what, four, five years ago? I thought he was perfect. He's an artist, real sensitive type, y'know? My dad would probably vomit if they ever shook hands, you just look at him and it's like, "Oh, yeah, he's

(MORE)

RAMI (CONT'D)

gay". Great ass, too. The whole package. Well, except for the fact that Lonnie is, to this day, the single most self-loathing, paranoid, passive-aggressive asshole I have ever met. He couldn't trust me a fucking inch. Once we moved in together, he would not stop questioning everything I did.

Rami clears his throat.

RAMI (CONT'D)

(in a mocking voice)

Where were you?

(in a normal voice)

Just out with some friends.

(mocking)

Out with Steve, right?

(normal)

Steve was there, I guess-

(mocking)

Yeah, uh-huh, of course Steve was there.

No response from the audience. Rami's eye dart the room.

RAMI (CONT'D)

He had a real problem with Steve, was totally convinced we were sleeping together, which, of course, I was not-

Rami paces back and forth across the stage.

RAMI (CONT'D)

-but that didn't stop Lonnie from doing his little passive-aggressive thing, trying to make me out to be the bad guy, like he always did. Like-

Rami stops pacing.

RAMI (CONT'D)

-okay, real talk, I used to dabble in Oxycotin, alright? Those heavy duty pain meds? I was going through some rough times, y'know, whatever, it helped.

Rami starts pacing again.

RAMI (CONT'D)

Lonnie made me quit, made me go cold turkey. Fucking worse month of my life, trying to flush that shit out of me, but it would have been worth it if it had gotten fucking Lonnie to shut up for one goddamn second about it. But noooo, he was convinced I was back on the train to Oxy-town. He'd go through my stuff, looking for some proof I was slipping. He'd question me daily, talking about how he was "seeing those signs", that he was "just worried", just "looking out for you", bull-shit. He treated me like I couldn't be trusted with my own fucking life.

He stops and looks out at the audience.

RAMI (CONT'D)

Isn't that funny? Isn't my whole life one big fucking joke?!

Silence.

RAMI (CONT'D)

Why aren't you laughing?!

Rami takes a breath.

RAMI (CONT'D)

That's okay. I get it. It's not funny. I'm not funny. I'm just pathetic. My life is just sad, right?

Rami laughs. He puts the mic on the stand, then reached down and picks up his backpack and rummages around inside.

RAMI (CONT'D)

It's fine. Really. I get it now.

Rami pulls a handgun from his bag. He drops the bag as he raises the gun to his temple. Members of the audience gasp. Someone screams while others mummer to each other. All eyes are on Rami.

RAMI (CONT'D)

That got a reaction out of you all, huh? Maybe I should have opened

(MORE)

RAMI (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

with this.

Rami flicks off the safety on the pistol.

RAMI (CONT'D)

I guess this is it, folks. A sad, pathetic ending to a sad, pathetic life. Maybe you all can laugh about this someday.

Rami closes his eyes and tightens his grip on the gun. A few seconds pass. Nobody moves. Dead silence.

LONNIE MITCHELL start to clap from the back of the club. Rami opens his eyes, confused.

RAMI (CONT'D)

This... this part's not a joke.

Lonnie, who is usually averse to conflict but more than makes up for it with passive-aggression, stands up from his seat.

LONNIE

I know.

RAMI

Lonnie?

LONNIE

Don't mind me, just doing my "passive-aggressive" thing. Carry on.

RAMI

I'm not... this isn't a bit, Lonnie, I... I'm about to shoot myself in the had.

LONNIE

Yeah, no, I got that. Go ahead. You've earned it.

RAMI

That's not... what are you talking about? What are you even doing here?

LONNIE

Watching you get what you deserve.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lonnie stands behind Rami, who sits at his desk, facing forward, with a pistol aimed at his head.

LONNIE  
But don't mind me. By all means,  
please, carry on.

RAMI  
I don't... I don't deserve this,  
this is... it's...

LONNIE  
Oh, no, you do. You know you do.

RAMI  
This isn't... that's not what this  
is about, it's-

LONNIE  
-it's simple; you're a piece of  
shit who deserves to die.

RAMI  
No!

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI  
No, I'm not... how the hell can you  
say that?!

Lonnie walks towards the stage.

LONNIE  
You're just a lying, cheating,  
disgusting, drug dependent waste of  
space who comes into people's lives  
and ruins them. You got the right  
idea; you should kill yourself. But  
your motivation is all wrong. If  
you're gonna kill yourself, at  
least be honest about it. For once  
in your life.

Lonnie steps onstage and grabs the microphone off it's  
stand. He turns to the stunned audience.

LONNIE (CONT'D)  
You folks want to see the true Rami  
Lewis? You want to know why I ended  
things with this sorry sack of  
shit?

RAMI  
Lonnie, shut up!

LONNIE  
Remember our good friend Steve?  
Steve Habersham? Mr. Steve "Just  
Friend Quit Being So Paranoid Babe"  
Habersham?

He turns to Rami

LONNIE (CONT'D)  
Remember when I found you in our  
bed with your good friend Steve  
Habersham?

RAMI  
Lonnie, you don't get to just come  
here and just-

LONNIE  
-and remember-

He turns back to the audience

LONNIE (CONT'D)  
- remember how poor, poor Rami  
suffered through weeks and weeks of  
withdrawel from his precious  
Oxycotin? I sure as hell don't. I  
remember begging him to stop, to  
find help. I remember his  
assurances that he was done, that  
he was clean, that that would be  
the end of that. I remember finding  
his stash hidden under the  
mattress.

RAMI  
Shut... up!

Lonnie turns to Rami

LONNIE  
But I'm not the only one you've  
lied to, am I?

Rami points the gun at Lonnie.

RAMI  
Lonnie, you'd better shut the fuck  
up-

VALERIE (O.S.)  
Or what, Rami?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami turns around. VALERIE TURNER, a shy and uncomfortable woman, stands behind him.

RAMI  
Who the hell are you?

VALERIE  
Don't you recognize me? You were  
just talking about us.

Rami looks down at the yearbook, at the picture of young Valerie Turner. He looks back.

RAMI  
Valerie?

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

LONNIE  
That's right. You recognize her  
now, don't you?

We see Valerie sitting near the middle of the audience. She stands up and walks towards the stage.

VALERIE  
There was something you forgot to  
mention, Rami.

RAMI  
I don't...

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lonnie looks through Rami's fridge while Rami stares at Valerie.

LONNIE  
That's right. You forgot to mention  
what happened after.

RAMI  
After...?

LONNIE  
After she found out.

He takes out the Chinese takeout, looks inside, wrinkles his nose, and puts it back in the fridge.

LONNIE (CONT'D)  
What finding out did to her.

RAMI  
That- no, that wasn't-

VALERIE  
-I was an easy target.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Valerie stands beside Lonnie onstage, holding the mic.

VALERIE  
That's all I was to you, right?  
Just some poor, desperate girl,  
stupid enough to think a boy might  
be nice to her, just an idiot who  
made the mistake of thinking  
someone might care about her.

RAMI  
Val, no, I... I didn't have a  
choice, I-

VALERIE  
You manipulated me! For two years  
of my life, you looked me in the  
eye and told me that you cared  
about me, that I mattered to you,  
that I mattered at all! I believed  
you. I wanted to believe you.

RAMI  
It... it was years ago! It doesn't  
matter anymore, it was-

VALERIE  
-not exactly the sharpest tool.  
That's what you said about me.

RAMI  
I didn't-

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lonnie leans over Rami's shoulder.

LONNIE  
Remember when she tried to kill  
(MORE)

LONNIE (CONT'D)

herself? After you ruined her life?

RAMI

No... I... no!

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

RAMI

I was the fucking victim here! Her friends, they outed me, to the whole fucking school! She got her fucking revenge!

VALERIE

I never told them.

RAMI

Liar!

Rami looks out at the audience.

RAMI (CONT'D)

She's lying! She told them, she told her friends, she told them to tell everyone! My life was hell!

Lonnie sighs.

LONNIE

Rami, stop it. You know she's telling the truth. You knew she never said a word, even after what did to her.

Lonnie takes the mic from Valerie and turns to the audience.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

Her friends made that rumor up. They wanted revenge, not Valerie.

RAMI

Shut up shut up shut up!

LONNIE

Rami, please. You're embarrassing yourself. You have no excuse for what you've done. To me, to Valerie, to your mother...

RAMI

My... what?

GEORGE LEWIS, once a kind man who has since become an angry

drunk, appears behind Rami, and grabs him by the shoulder.

GEORGE  
My wife, you little shit! You  
killed my wife!

Rami turns around, startled.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami turns around, startled. George stands behind him. He raises his arm instinctively, but George grabs it, holding it in the air.

RAMI  
...Dad?!

GEORGE  
You don't deserve to call yourself  
my son, after what you did to  
Faridah.

RAMI  
I knew... I fucking knew you blamed  
me for that.

GEORGE  
And why the hell wouldn't I? You  
took the love of my life away from  
me!

RAMI  
I was three! She died in a robbery!

GEORGE  
Remind me, how exactly did she did  
caught up in that robbery, huh? I  
seem to recall an ungrateful little  
brat who wouldn't shut up for five  
minutes about getting some fucking  
candy!

RAMI  
I... I was...

GEORGE  
You killed her.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

GEORGE  
You hear me, boy? You killed my  
Faridah. From the moment you were  
(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

born you've caused nothing but pain  
and suffering for everyone you've  
ever known.

RAMI

I didn't... It wasn't... my...  
fault...

GEORGE

Oh, right, of course. You're the  
victim here, right? Poor, sad,  
pathetic Rami, with the poor, sad,  
pathetic life he never deserved.  
You were never responsible for any  
of it, of course, oh no. Not you.  
You're the victim here. People  
should pity you. You put a gun to  
your fucking brain, and people  
should be lining up to tell you "Oh  
no, Rami, you don't deserve this,  
it's not your fault". Well fuck  
that.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

George grabs the hand Rami using to hold the gun and forces  
it against his head. Rami doesn't struggle.

GEORGE

You deserve this. You know you  
deserve this.

George steps back, leaving Rami with the gun against his  
head. He watches Rami for a moment.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

DO IT!

FARIDAH (O.S.)

That's enough!

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

FARIDAH LEWIS, a kind but blunt woman, stands to Rami's  
side. She places her hand on Rami's, over the pistol, and  
moves it away from his head. Tears run down his cheeks.  
George, Lonnie, and Valerie are nowhere to be seen.

FARIDAH

That's enough, Rami.

RAMI

...mom?

FARIDAH  
Shhh.... It's okay, Rami.

RAMI  
Mom, I... I'm so sorry... I- I  
killed you...

FARIDAH  
No, Rami, you do not need to  
apologize to me. Your father, he  
needed someone to blame for what  
happened, but it should not have  
been you. You did nothing to cause  
this. You know this is true, Rami.

Rami doesn't respond for a moment. Then he turns to Faridah.

RAMI  
I- I knew it, I'm not... none of  
it's my fault... not you, not Val,  
not Lonnie Fucking Mitchell, it  
wasn't my fault, I-

FARIDAH  
-Rami, don't do this.

RAMI  
...what?

FARIDAH  
You are not without fault in your  
life. You have hurt many who have  
cared for you.

RAMI  
But, you... you said, you said I  
wasn't to blame-

FARIDAH  
-for how your father treated you.  
For what happened to me. But you  
have wronged others, have you not?

RAMI  
I... I never meant...

FARIDAH  
I know, shhhh, I know, Rami. But  
there is much that you must make  
amends for. Your life is not yours  
to end, it belongs to those you  
have wronged.

RAMI

I don't... I don't know what do,  
mom.

FARIDAH

It is not too late for you to find  
forgiveness, Rami. You must find a  
way to live with what you have  
done, you must make amends, you  
must find peace and move on.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Faridah holds a sobbing Rami in her arms. She kisses him on  
the forehead.

FARIDAH

This you can do, Rami. I know you  
can

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Rami lies curled up on the stage. Faridah is nowhere to be  
seen. He sobs as the camera pans around, showing an empty  
audience; the chairs are stacked, everything is put away, no  
sign that anyone was ever in the audience.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rami sobs alone at his desk. He knocks the gun off the desk  
and onto the floor. He takes a few deep breaths, and calms  
himself down a little. He sits for a moment, then stands up  
and shuffles to the fridge. He opens it, pulls out the  
takeout box, looks inside, sighs, and throws it away. He  
starts to close the fridge, but his eye catches on the  
wedding invitation. He takes it off the fridge, reads the  
front, then turns it over. On the back, we see a handwritten  
note; "Wanted to bury the hatchet. Please come if you can,  
it would mean a lot -Lonnie". Rami checks the date, then  
marks the calendar on his fridge.

FADE OUT