MJF

Episode 101

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COLD OPEN

MIKE TALKING HEAD (LIVING ROOM)

CLOSE ON MIKE BURNABY as he talks directly to camera.

MIKE
My name is Mike Burnaby. I was lead anchor of the WNBC 5 O'Clock News until I stepped away five years ago. The great thing is, now I get to spend more time with my fam--

EVE (O.S.)
Dad, you're moving too much. I've got to zoom out and start again.

MIKE
You could shoot me from across the street and it still wouldn't matter.

EVE (O.S.)
Maybe if you had gotten me a phone with an image stabilizer...

MIKE
Yeah, that would cure it.

EVE (O.S.)
Can you sit on your hands or something?

MIKE
Then my legs just go. Are you new?

IAN TALKING HEAD (GRAHAM'S OLD ROOM)

IAN BURNABY (19, smart, driven, overly confident) addresses the camera in a tiny Lego-themed kid's room.

IAN
(annoyed by this)
Why do I have to state my name?

EVE (O.S.)
Ian!

IAN
There. It's on the record now.
(smug smile, then)
How would I describe Dad? Fine: he's from Pennsylvania, he's not as funny as he thinks he is, he's read every book ever, he wears hats like they just fell off a shelf in a store and however it landed on his head he just keeps it that way, and--
(Eve prompts him off camera)
What? Oh yeah, he's got Parkinson's.

LEIGH TALKING HEAD (LEIGH'S APARTMENT)

LEIGH BURNABY (39ish, narcissist, always single and jobless) sits on a couch in her perfectly nice one bedroom apartment.

LEIGH
Do you have a soft filter on that?

EVE (O.S.)
It's an iPhone camera.

LEIGH
Amateur hour.
(then)
Mike's a generous big brother. To a point. Like he helps me pay rent on an apartment in his building, but it's in the basement.
(points to half-windows behind her)
They don't let any light in, but pervs can watch me walk around na-- Wait, why haven't I seen anyone lately?

As Leigh reacts, a little disappointed...

ANNIE TALKING HEAD (CRAFTING ROOM)

ANNIE BURNABY (40s, tough, loyal, goofy side) grades papers on a crafting table as GRAHAM (8, old soul, self-possessed, not precocious) uses dowels to make walrus tusks nearby.

ANNIE
What about Dad?
(smiles, with clear affection)
He's been my husband of... Shit, has it been twenty years?

EVE (O.S.)
Mom!

JUMP CUT to another "take":

ANNIE
Mike has always been about family. So much so that he kept lobbying me to have a third. Of course, he was working sixteen hours a day, so most of the parenting fell to me. But I went back to work last fall,
(re: Graham knocking over papers)
so now this is all him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

In a comfortable, lived-in Upper West Side apartment, Mike finishes making dinner. Annie hurries in from the foyer.

ANNIE
Sorry, there was a never-ending staff meeting after school.

Mike gives Annie a sweet kiss.

MIKE
And now you're all better.

ANNIE
Amazing. I can't even remember what we were meeting about--
(then, recalling, pissed)
"Refrigerator policy." For *two hours*. I work with children, Mike.

MIKE
Which is weird, because you're a teacher.

ANNIE
You know what I meant.

MIKE
Well, the unbelievable happened. Everyone's home at the same time. We can have an actual sit-down meal.

Before Mike finishes the sentence, EVE (15, whip-smart, unconventional, games the system) crosses in and takes a bite of pasta right out of a serving bowl.

MIKE (CONT'D)
No. No more standing meals! For one second of life we're just going to unplug and have--

Ian hustles in, interrupting Mike.

IAN
Garlic bread. Good. Mom, hit me.

Annie tosses Ian a piece of garlic bread and he takes a bite.

MIKE
I know I'm saying words... Am I a ghost? Someone take a swing at me.

Graham casually strolls in and uses the open door of the dishwasher as a makeshift seat.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Really? There's a dining room just steps away. I'm looking at it now.

It's useless; Mike joins in as they pass food back and forth.

ANNIE
How's that big English project coming, Eve?

EVE
(a beat, she's got nothing)
Why do you have to teach at my school?

ANNIE
The question is why do you get to study at *my* school? On paper you should be at boarding school by now.

EVE
(not taking bait, to Ian)
What'd you do for the *King Lear* project when you had Mr. Diaz?

IAN
Huh. I'm not sure I can remember--
(whimsical laugh)
It was actually pretty clever. You're familiar with venn diagrams, right?

EVE
Stop. Can I copy it or not?

MIKE/ANNIE
No./No!

IAN
No one will believe you did it.

They hear the FRONT DOOR OPEN; Eve takes a final huge bite and grabs her jacket.

EVE
That's Aunt Leigh. We're late for the "We" concert.

GRAHAM
(giggles)
There's a band called "Wee?"

EVE
It's short for "We Make the Road by Walking." They're like "Death Cab for Cutie" meets "And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead."

MIKE
What ever happened to just "Rolling Stones," "The Beatles," "Led Zeppelin"--

EVE
They died, Dad. They all died.

Leigh enters, dressed in a trendy outfit, to Eve:

LEIGH
Let's go, lady.

We can't see Leigh's chest, but everyone REACTS to it.

MIKE
Whoa, there are young children here.

IAN
(smiling)
Hey, Aunt Leigh.

LEIGH
(hands over her chest)
You catch more flies with honey.

ANNIE
Not when you're going out with my daughter.

EVE
I'll let you borrow a bra, Aunt Leigh.

LEIGH
You're cute. That'd be like trying to catch a jet with a butterfly net. I'll grab one on the way out.
(starting off)
And stop calling me "Aunt Leigh." Tonight we're sisters.

MIKE
You girls better be home by 10:30.

Both Eve and Leigh GROAN like teens as they exit. Mike turns back to eat, but Annie and Ian are already walking off.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Seriously?! It's been three minutes.

ANNIE
This skirt is cutting me in half.

IAN
They're trading in Frankfurt.

As everyone disappears, a frustrated Mike sits on the dishwasher door next to Graham.

MIKE
At least we can enjoy a meal together.

GRAHAM
I already ate.

Then the dishwasher door collapses.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Annie stalks down the hall, on a mission.

ANNIE
LET'S GO! Why do I have to do this every morning? Why are you making me be this woman?

Annie throws Eve's door open but Eve just burrows deeper into the bed. Then she stalks into Ian's old room, where Graham lazes about on a comfortable queen-sized bed.

GRAHAM
Sorry, there's just so much bed.

ANNIE
LET'S GO LET'S GO LET'S GO!!!

IAN (O.S.)
STOP YELLING!

INT. GRAHAM'S OLD ROOM - SAME TIME

Ian sits Indian style on a kid's race car bed as he works uncomfortably on a laptop.

IAN (O.S.)
THIS IS A WORKPLACE!

Ian sees Mike pass by the doorway.

IAN (CONT'D)
You never had to drag me out of bed, Dad. These kids have no work ethic.

MIKE
This from a college drop-out.

IAN TALKING HEAD (GRAHAM'S OLD ROOM)

A cramped Ian struggles to set up a printer/fax, to camera:

IAN
I didn't "drop out." Drop-outs don't have business plans. I opted out of college so I could revolutionize the search engine.

EVE (O.S.)
What's wrong with Google?

IAN
Where do I start? God, you're naive.

Ian tries to run a cord behind a small kid's dresser, knocking over a Lego robot. As he tries to rebuild it, annoyed:

IAN (CONT'D)
After freshman year, I interned at Bing -- to learn what not *to do. I got back a couple weeks ago to find out my parents let Graham take over my room. It's big, it's got an actual desk, and it's at the end of the hall where a man can self-incubate a start-up in peace.*
(*getting into playing Legos*)
Where's a three-by-two? I need an orange three-by-two.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Annie drags Graham out of his room as he clings to his brother's sheets. Mike approaches, proud.

MIKE
He's badger-strong, right?

ANNIE
I need you to take the kids to school. I've got thirty poems to grade before Senior English.

MIKE
How do you *grade* poems?

ANNIE
Harshly. The world doesn't need more terrible poetry. I'm the firewall.

MIKE
(sarcastic)
To give wings to dreams.

Annie gives Mike a quick kiss and rushes off. Eve approaches, still groggy, in a Carhartt jumpsuit and bright red lipstick.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Are you going to get dressed for school, or...
(Eve punches him, playful)
How could you hit a man in my condition?

MIKE TALKING HEAD (LIVING ROOM)

MIKE
I'm actually doing much better now. Medication has improved dramatically, or at least I've found a cocktail that seems to work for me. Of course, if there's a long line at Starbucks, I might amplify things a little.

Mike picks up a Starbucks coffee cup and takes a sip.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE

As they get ready to go, Mike puts on a baseball cap and pays no attention to the awkward way it sits on his head.

MIKE
Okay, let's boogie.

EVE
So you're gonna just let it...

MIKE
What?

EVE
Nothing.

EXT. VARIOUS UPPER WEST SIDE STREETS - LATER

On 86TH STREET, random passersby recognize Mike as he walks with Eve and Graham. A CONSTRUCTION WORKER shouts out:

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Mike Burnaby! Love you, man!

Mike flashes his affable smile and waves, then turns his attention to connecting with his kids.

MIKE
Okay: power walker. Two O'Clock. Totally has to pee. Look at that focus. And the tell-tale purse hug.

Mike nods to an ANXIOUS WOMAN as she hurries past, but Eve types on her iPhone and Graham plays a hand-held video game.

MIKE (CONT'D)
How can neither of you want to play "Who's Gotta Pee?"

EVE
I've got to Instagram this.

Eve takes a photo of something on the street with her iPhone.

MIKE
Of course. What would the world do without an old-timey photo of a half-eaten hot dog?

EVE
It's a metaphor.

MIKE
For what -- why we should've never given you a phone?

GRAHAM
(as he plays his game)
Sorry, Dad. My guy won't die. And I'm just kind of running him around.

As they turn down AMSTERDAM AVENUE:

EVE
Six O'Clock. Business suit.

Mike sees a perfectly normal BUSINESSMAN passing by.

MIKE
Really? He seems pretty casual. No beads of sweat. No squat running.

EVE
No. It's Harris.

Mike adjusts where he's looking and sees HARRIS GREEN (47, slick, twice-divorced) coming out of BARNEY GREENGRASS.

MIKE
Harris doesn't have to pee.

They approach Harris, who notices the kids on their devices.

HARRIS
Aren't you worried they're going to fall into a couple open manholes?

MIKE
Then I don't have to pay for college.

EVE
Hey, Harris. I'm in the middle of a Twitter war.

HARRIS
(re: Eve's outfit)
Is it with a rival mechanic?

MIKE
I'm praying it gets up to eighty today.

EVE
Oh, two super old friends and their laffs.

HARRIS
You guys cutting across the park? There's a press conference at ten. City council's trying to ban foot-long sandwiches now.

MIKE
I saw that.
(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)
Do me a favor and don't just show a bunch of obese pedestrians with their faces blurred out. It's creepy. Pull tape on the special we did in '05. *That* was journalism.

THROUGH CENTRAL PARK, Mike's still energized by work talk:

MIKE (CONT'D)
Know what else you've got to change? Susan's new sign-off. "Find Your Happy?" We used to cover <u>wars</u>.

A passing JOGGER calls out:

JOGGER
Mike Burnaby! We miss you! Keep fighting!

Mike smiles and puts up his dukes. As the jogger passes, Eve rolls her eyes; this happens <u>a lot</u>.

HARRIS
He's not the only one who misses you, Mike. We all do. You should come back to work.

MIKE
Are you forgetting why I left? Remember the rolling chair thing?

HARRIS
You're way better now. Plus, I sprung for wheel locks.

MIKE
I don't want a pity job. We both know if I come back, NBC's going to milk the moment for ratings by showing me in slow motion with lame uplifting music.

HARRIS
As long as I'm news director, that will not happen. It could just be a part time thing. All I'm asking is that you think about it.

Before Mike can respond, he's hugged by a FEMALE MTA WORKER.

MTA WORKER
Mike Burnaby! You're a brave man.

EVE
Would a "brave man" set his grown daughter's curfew for 10:30?

MTA WORKER
(glares at Eve, then to Mike)
Could you sign my Metrocard? My grandma has Parkinson's...

EVE TALKING HEAD (EVE'S ROOM)

Eve films herself in a messy, impulsively decorated room.

EVE
Yes, my dad is a local celebrity and people love him, blah, blah, blah, but why does everyone have to stop him on the street to tell him about another person who also has Parkinson's? Alcoholism is a disease. Do people go up to Joe Namath and tell him about their crazy uncles?

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

MR. DIAZ (late 30s, handsome, good teacher) addresses his 10th Grade English class. Eve goofs-off in the back.

MR. DIAZ
Alright, time for *King Lear* updates. Eve, where are you?

EVE
(caught off guard)
Sophomore English?

A few kids LAUGH. Eve doesn't mind; it's the role she plays.

MR. DIAZ
Please tell me you started your project.

EVE
(a beat, stalling)
Of course I have. I am doing a video...

Eve sees Annie pass by in the hall, carrying a stack of papers. After a beat, she gets an idea.

EVE (CONT'D)
On another tragic family: The Burnabys.
(off Diaz' look, pouring it on)
I just think if I could compare my Dad's struggles to King Lear's, it could be a way to start the healing.

Students comfort Eve; she looks to see if Diaz is buying it.

MR. DIAZ
Fine. It's due on Thursday. Who's next?

As Mr. Diaz calls on another student, Eve cracks a smile.

EVE TALKING HEAD (EVE'S ROOM)

Eve props her iPhone on her desk, then sits down to address the camera. NOTE: This is how Eve recorded the talking heads we've seen so far, which were all filmed after this point.

EVE
King Lear is driven to madness. And his children suffer as a result. As we all know, my father has a "brain sickness," too. One that has torn my family apart-- nah, not sad enough.
(*JUMP CUT, another take*)
It's ironic that this project is on Shakespeare, because "shaking" is a daily reality in my house-- hacky.

We hear BANGING:

INT. GRAHAM'S OLD ROOM - SAME TIME (LATE NIGHT)

Ian pounds on the wall he shares with Eve as he tries to sleep in the race car bed. His legs dangle over the edge.

IAN
Some people have to work in the morning!

INT. IAN'S OLD ROOM - SAME TIME

Graham pauses his X-Box game and crosses to a mini-fridge, where he gets a Gatorade and takes a long, satisfied sip.

INT. MIKE AND ANNIE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Mike sits in bed with an iPad, watching a YOUTUBE CLIP of his last broadcast as anchor of the 5 O'Clock News:

MIKE (ON VIDEO CLIP)
If Parkinson's has taught me anything, it's that you can't control everything. So for all of you: try to face each new challenge with optimism, because if you spend time worrying about the worst case scenario and it happens, you've lived it twice. And with that, I leave you the same way I have every night for the last eleven years: Stay informed, New York.

MIKE (CONT'D)
That so kills "Find your happy."

ON THE VIDEO, Mike rolls completely off camera in his chair. Annie heads out of the bathroom to see what Mike's watching.

ANNIE
If you're "definitely not going back," why do have that thing on repeat?

MIKE
I'm just driving up the number of hits. Did you know a Levitra commercial plays in front of it now?

ANNIE
So you said no? Just like that?

MIKE
I'd just be a feel-good story to them. Do I really want to be the guy who gets standing ovations at work everyday?

ANNIE
Uch, standing ovations. The worst.
(before Mike protests)
It just seems like you've been going a bit stir crazy lately.

MIKE
That's because no one's ever around! When I left, the silver lining was spending more time with you guys. But then you started teaching again and the kids got busy. Now Eve's documenting every gross thing she finds on the street, Graham's got his ultra-violent video games, and Ian, well, he's...

ANNIE
Throwing his life away. It's okay, you can say it. What's wrong with Google anyway?

MIKE
Most of the time, I'm alone up here, just waiting on deliveries.

ANNIE
I hear your complaint, and I honor it. New paragraph: you have to be home from eleven to six to sign for our new dishwasher. Someone tried to use the old one as a chair.

MIKE
Eleven to *six*? How is that a window?

ANNIE
All you have to do is let them in. And make sure they connect the water line to the main furnace line, not the sink filter, but they're both housed in identical PVC tubing, so--
(off Mike's panicked look)
I'll leave you a note.

MIKE
Why do you make me do these things?

ANNIE
(flirty)
I can make it up to you.
(kisses him, then pulls back)
When did you last take your medication?

MIKE
Not since this morning.

ANNIE
Great. I don't have to do all the work.

Annie kisses Mike as they get under the covers.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT AFTERNOON

Annie and Leigh try out different looks with Leigh's hair.

LEIGH
I don't know, it feels like bangs are for heavy people.

ANNIE
I have bangs.

LEIGH
You're the exception that proves the rule. Although this is always your biggest season, if I'm just being real.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Mike observing this. Eve's there, too, filming everything with her iPhone camera.

MIKE
This is why I have to stay home? So you can babysit a haircut?

ANNIE
(smiling, amused by it all)
I'm going for moral support.

ANNIE TALKING HEAD (MIKE AND ANNIE'S ROOM)

ANNIE
Some people escape by watching trashy reality shows. I watch Aunt Leigh. Same train wreck, but she's on every day of the week.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE

LEIGH
This isn't just some haircut, Michael.
(MORE)

LEIGH (CONT'D)
It's a symbol of my mortality. At the "We" concert, some idiot asked if I was Eve's mom.
(to Eve as she films)
Wasn't that insane?

EVE
I don't remember that.

LEIGH
Of course you do. The music literally dropped out. Plus, I haven't had *one* scumbag spy on me naked in months.

MIKE
The world is a cruel place.

As Leigh rambles, Mike struggles to open a jar of pickles.

LEIGH
I know it's hard for you to step outside your charmed life and see other people's challenges, but I'm about to turn thirty-nine... ish.

When Graham crosses in, Mike pulls him over with his leg and hands him the pickle jar. Without saying a word, Graham opens it and Mike sends him off with a pat on the butt.

LEIGH (CONT'D)
There's a spider vein on my upper thigh that pretty much spells out "Buyer Beware." Are you even listening to me?

MIKE
No.

Before Mike can get it, Leigh grabs the only pickle in the jar and takes a bite. As she heads out with Annie, Leigh tosses the rest of the pickle in the trash. Then, judgmental:

LEIGH
You guys should really compost.

Mike shakes his head, annoyed, then looks at Eve filming:

MIKE
What's this for again?

EVE
Academic stuff, don't worry about it.

INT. LIVING ROOM/FOYER - LATER

As Mike reads the paper and drinks a soda, the DOORBELL RINGS.

MIKE
Hello? Is anybody going to get that?
(a beat, another DOORBELL RING)
Why, yes, that would be you, Mike.
And now you're talking to yourself.

Annoyed, Mike sets his soda down and goes to open the door. It's two RUSSIAN DELIVERY GUYS, with a new dishwasher.

RUSSIAN DELIVERY GUY 1
Mike Burnabies?! News guy! "Stay Inform!"

Mike leads the guys inside, leaving the front door ajar.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mike searches for something as the delivery guys follow him.

MIKE
Where is that note? I know she left a note.

RUSSIAN DELIVERY GUY 2
You need *wife* to write you note?

RUSSIAN DELIVERY GUY 1
Ta gueule, Matvei, this Mike Burnabies. News guy!

Mike passes by where he was sitting and we see he set his soda on Annie's note -- the whole thing is wet and smudged.

MIKE
(as he strains to read note)
Does that say "gravy?" Why would it say "gravy?"

MIKE TALKING HEAD (MIKE AND ANNIE'S ROOM)

MIKE
I have advanced degrees, I have won many awards, I have been to Tikrit. But this stuff makes my head explode.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE

Mike picks up a landline and starts to dial.

MIKE
I'll try her cell. That's my Peabody.
(points to award, then into phone)
911? What? No, there's no emergency. I was trying to dial 917 but I'm waiting for the drugs to kick in, so--
No! I'm fine.
(hangs up, to delivery guys)
Let's check the kitchen.

INT. FOYER/KITCHEN - LATER

TWO COPS enter through the open front door. They head into the kitchen to see Mike squirming under the sink. The Russian delivery guys stand over him.

MIKE
I give up! I GIVE UP!

Chaos breaks out as the cops draw their guns and advance on the delivery guys. As they AD LIB confrontation (in English and Russian), Mike hops up and brokers a peace:

MIKE (CONT'D)
Stop! *Nyet!* I'm fine! I said I was fine on the phone!

COP
Doesn't matter, Mr. Burnaby. Either way we gotta respond. Better safe than sorry.

MIKE
I called forty five minutes ago. If there was an actual emergency, we're squarely in the "sorry" category.

COP
It's not us, it's the new call system. This is what a two billion dollar upgrade gets you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. But since we're already here, you mind signing an autograph?

After a frustrated beat, Mike puts on his affable smile:

MIKE
You got it.

COP
(as Mike signs autograph)
My neighbor's uncle has Alzheimers.

MIKE
I actually have Parkinson's.

COP
Either way.

INT. LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Mike makes another call, carefully dialing with a pencil this time. Then, into phone:

MIKE
Harris. It's Mike. Talk to me about these wheel locks.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Leigh, now with a very short haircut, and Annie share a bottle of wine as Mike makes dinner. Graham drinks another Gatorade as he helps his dad -- they have an unspoken shorthand.

LEIGH
I just feel lighter, you know? Emotionally and physically.

ANNIE
The woman just kept cutting. I thought the theory was that *long* hair makes you look younger.
(off Leigh's look)
But you shattered that. Obviously.

LEIGH
(plays with hair, loving this)
I hope I'm not mistaken for a little boy.

MIKE
I'd worry more about Jamie Lee Curtis.

LEIGH
I don't know who that is. That's how young I am.

Eve enters, filming with her iPhone again.

MIKE
Good, you're here. I've got something to tell you guys.
(calling off)
Ian?

EVE
Ooh, do that again, but say, "Ian, I need help!" this time.

MIKE
What?

Ian enters, noticing Graham drinking the Gatorade.

IAN
Is that from *my* mini-fridge?

GRAHAM
I thought they came with the room.

IAN
Okay, that's it. I can't rethink technology in a converted closet.
(MORE)

IAN (CONT'D)
It's cramped, Eve's next door playing garbage music, and the Legos are distracting.
(to Graham)
You're missing a bunch of pieces. It's not a Millenium Falcon without quad-blasters.
(then, to Annie)
Either make Graham give me my old room back or let me take over your crafting room.

ANNIE
But where would I craft?

ANNIE TALKING HEAD (CRAFTING ROOM)

Annie talks to camera in the same room where she graded papers earlier. It's a well-stocked, medium-sized room.

ANNIE
Every woman loves to craft. At least, every woman should *love to craft, according to the magazines, right?*

EVE (O.S.)
We don't read the same magazines.

ANNIE
In the nine years I've had this room, I've never actually finished anything, but the idea *of being a woman who crafts mellows me out.*
(*looks around room, exhales*)
Just the idea of it.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE

IAN
Come on, Mom, when was the last time you crafted?

ANNIE
It was, you know, before last...
(stumped, defensive)
My hobbies are not on trial here, Ian. *You* decided to drop out. *We* decided to send you to a great university with a killer math department and unlimited soft serve in the dining hall.

MIKE
On tap. 24-7. And not just chocolate and vanilla. Each week a different featured flavor. What was it parents' weekend?

ANNIE
Salted caramel. I could've died in that dining hall.

IAN
Where are you going with this--

ANNIE
The point is, we did our jobs. You're technically no longer our problem. As a child who actually belongs in this apartment, Graham has dibs.

IAN
(a beat, to Graham)
I'll make you a ten percent shareholder--

GRAHAM
(sweetly)
No thanks.

Now with everyone assembled, Mike changes the subject:

MIKE
Guys, I've got to tell you something, but I don't want you to freak out.
(then, delicately)
I'm thinking about going back to work.

EVE
Awesome. When do you start?

MIKE
I said I'm *thinking* about it.

IAN
No time like the present, Dad. And with two salaries coming in, you could probably help me rent an office--

ANNIE
Not happening.

GRAHAM
(as he eats from a serving bowl)
Is Mom gonna start making dinners? Dinners that aren't pasta? It's always pasta.

MIKE
No one's even a *little* upset? I get hugs on the street from complete strangers.

ANNIE
Sorry, but we're kind of happy you're getting out of the house.

LEIGH
(also eating)
Kind of?

ANNIE
Truth is, you've been driving us all a little crazy lately.

MIKE
What?! That's outrageous.

As Mike takes a bite of food, he looks around and realizes they're having another standing meal.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Damn it! We're doing it again! Eve, spit that out.

EXT. NEWS STATION - NEXT MORNING

Mike takes in the old building, unsure of what he's about to do, until Harris hurries out.

HARRIS
There he is!
(giving Mike a big hug)
Welcome back, my friend.

MIKE
This is an exploratory meeting.

HARRIS
We're just dipping our toes in.

INT. NEWS STATION - CONTINUOUS

As they head inside, STAFF MEMBERS give Mike a STANDING OVATION. Mike gives a friendly wave, then to Harris:

MIKE
How is this "toe-dipping?"

HARRIS
The whole city feels this way. Imagine the monster number we pull the first time you're on air.

Mike AD LIBS greetings to a few COLLEAGUES until he's approached by KAY (24, sweet, hardworking, emotional).

KAY
Welcome back, Mr. Burnaby. I'm Kay, your new segment producer.

MIKE
Potential new segment producer.

KAY
Right. I've got to earn it. And I will. Because being a part of this, to call it inspirational is just--

Kay breaks off as she gets emotional.

MIKE
Are you crying? Is she crying?

As they start down a hallway, they pass MATT LAUER.

MATT LAUER
There's the man of the hour.

MIKE
Matty. Why are you slumming it down here at the affiliate? On your way to a teeth whitening?

MIKE TALKING HEAD (LIVING ROOM)

MIKE
Matt Lauer and I have always had a rivalry. We were both young, talented mavericks who came up around the same time. Some of us still have our hair. Either guy could've gotten the gig at The Today Show*, but thank god I didn't. Doing hard news was always more important to me than talking about "guilt-free smoothies."*

EVE (O.S.)
Matt Lauer has a private jet, Dad.

INT. NEWS STATION - CONTINUOUS WITH BEFORE

MATT
I actually just recorded something for your welcome back promo.

MIKE
(surprised by this)
Well... that is thoughtful. Thanks.

MATT
You got it. Great to have you back.

Matt Lauer walks off, nice as can be. Harris and Kay start off down the hallway again. Mike follows.

MIKE
There's a promo?!

HARRIS
Alright, fine: I was straight-up assuming you'd come back.
(MORE)

HARRIS (CONT'D)
I saw you out on the street, basically mannying your kids. It was sad.

MIKE
"Mannying?" It's called fatherhood. And most men don't spend their lives trying to avoid it.

HARRIS
Over thirty years of lovemaking and not one slip-up. Not even a scare.

MIKE
Living the dream.

HARRIS
Things happen for a reason, Mike. Us running into each other at Barney Greengrass? And then you talking my face off about work? It was fate. News is in your blood, man. You need us just as much as we need you.

MIKE
(considers, then)
That is wholly untrue.

They've arrived at the 5 O'Clock News set.

HARRIS
Hey, it's your old anchor chair. Go ahead, give it a spin.

Mike gives Harris a look -- he knows what he's up to.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
Fine.
(sitting in the chair)
Look at this. Am I moving? Not an inch. Reaching for a pen, pointing to a graph, adjusting my jacket, throwing it to weather -- locked in.

On Mike as Harris continues demonstrating...

<u>EXT. 86TH STREET - SAME TIME</u>

Annie and the kids enjoy donuts at a classic NYC coffee stand. They can't eat fast enough; it's like they've been in prison.

GRAHAM
Can we always eat breakfast here?

ANNIE
If Dad keeps going in early like this, probably.

EVE
(sarcastic)
I'm really going to miss his "healthy scrambles."

IAN
They're always over-salted.
(mimes shaking salt)
He just shakes, and shakes.

EVE
You're better than that.

IAN
But he sure can scramble those eggs.

EVE
There you go.

IAN
(starting off)
I'm going to the library to work.
Like a drifter.

ANNIE
You know who has an amazing library?
Cornell. They actually have five.
One is just for hotel management--

IAN
Excuse me for having a vision.

Ian stalks off. Annie shrugs and goes back to her donut.

EVE
Let's go, Mom. We're going to be late.

ANNIE
Since when do you care?
(as they start off)
And I heard you signed-out a TV for your presentation today. What sort of bullshit project did you talk Mr. Diaz into letting you do?

EVE
Whatever happened to teacher/student confidentiality?

ANNIE
That's not, and will never be, a thing.

INT. NEWS STATION - LATER

Mike meets with Harris and Kay in a room off the main studio.

KAY
...your first segment should be a return to the kind of investigative reporting you were famous for: out on the street, hustling -- *the guy who always finds the story.*
(catching herself, sweet)
That's if you're up for being on location. Maybe you can do your stand-up sitting down.

MIKE
Or you could just carry me.

KAY
I'll wear my sneakers.

As Mike shoots Kay a look, Harris jumps in:

HARRIS
You can do whatever you want and people will eat it up. You could do a whole segment just talking about where to get the city's best pastrami.

MIKE
That's easy, it's Katz's--
(catching himself)
I'm not talking about pastrami!

As Kay and Harris continue BRAINSTORMING, we see that Mike is a little overwhelmed. Then he notices a MONITOR playing his WELCOME BACK PROMO. Mike heads over to see... footage of his final broadcast, only now it's in SLOW MOTION, accompanied by "Hero," by Enrique Iglesias.

MIKE (CONT'D)
That's it. I'm out.

HARRIS
What?! I brought in Lauer!

As Mike stalks off, Kay bursts into tears.

INT. CLASSROOM - SAME TIME

Eve screens the end of her video project for her class. On a TV MONITOR we see a talking head she recorded in her room:

EVE (ON TV)
Although my dad has experienced enormous tragedy in his life -- just getting out of bed each day is a living miracle -- he bravely soldiers on, and that makes him a hero.

ON THE TV, Eve picks up a KEYTAR and starts performing "Hero," by Enrique Iglesias. Then we see a SLOW MOTION SHOT of Mike.

It's footage of him trying to open the pickle jar. The BELL RINGS and students APPLAUD. Eve starts off with the others.

MR. DIAZ
Eve, hang back a sec.
(as a satisfied Eve sits on a desk)
Great job editing that together. Those wipe transitions-- first you're looking at one thing and it just peels away and then you're looking at something else. Wow.

EVE
Well, thanks for giving me the opportunity to tell a story--

MR. DIAZ
I'm failing you.

EVE
What?

MR. DIAZ
You're getting an "F." That was a puff piece. And your connection to *King Lear* was tangential at best.

EVE
But I called myself a modern day Cordelia.

MR. DIAZ
Stop. The whole thing was manipulative. You had a chance to really reflect on your family -- what your dad's been through, what *you've* been through -- but you did none of that. You just held up a phone.
(grabbing his bag)
Maybe I was wrong about the whole bright-girl-who-could-be-amazing-if-only-she-applied-herself thing. Because if you were really bright, you'd know now's the time to apply yourself.

As Mr. Diaz heads off, Eve notices that her video is still playing. ON TV: Over POORLY TYPED CREDITS, Eve performs "<u>One" by U2</u>, with new lyrics:

EVE (ON TV)
One dad. One diagnosis. One disease and guess what, destiny chose us! One dad, but he's still the same...

Eve heads over and turns off the TV, ashamed.

<u>END OF ACT TWO</u>

ACT THREE

INT. CRAFTING ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Annie works on a fall-themed centerpiece. Ian enters.

IAN
Is that a weapon?

ANNIE
What? It's a centerpiece.

IAN
For a table in a home?

ANNIE
Get out.

IAN
(as Annie pushes him out)
Wait. I need some muslin.

Ian grabs two big armfuls of white cloth.

ANNIE
That's what that is. Hey, why are you taking all my muslin?

IAN
I'm soundproofing Graham's room. If you're stuck on the whole "tough love" thing, I'm going to find a way to make it work.

ANNIE
You always do.
(smiles, proud, then)
Hey, is this chenille?

Annie holds up spool of material. Ian shoots her a look and heads out, pushing past Mike in the doorway.

MIKE
Whoa, where are you going?

IAN
They're trading in Frankfurt.

MIKE
(calling after)
No they're not. Frankfurt's six hours ahead. It's midnight.

Mike then approaches Annie, noticing her centerpiece.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Ooh, a gargoyle.

ANNIE
It isn't a gargoyle!

MIKE
Then what's buggering that bird?

ANNIE
That's a field mouse nestled in a gourd.

MIKE
I'm seeing a lot of rape imagery. I know people call you "my rock," but you're clearly working out some issues.

ANNIE
You're crazy.
(shoves centerpiece in drawer)
How was your meeting?

MIKE
Awful. They already cut a promo showing me in slow-motion. When they run footage of you in slow-motion, it means you're either dead or under indictment.

Mike goes to sit down on a nearby chair, then has to move a half-finished God's Eye. He sets it down, confused, then:

MIKE (CONT'D)
They're only interested in "Mike the poor son-of-a-bitch," not "Mike the newsman." I should've never gone down there.
(off Annie not responding)
Right? You're not saying anything.

ANNIE
What do you want me to say? Of course they're going to pity you. You've got an incurable brain disease! People care about what's happened to you, Mike. Those hugs on the street are real. And if you think you can manage how everyone expresses that, you're going to have two diseases.

MIKE
(after a long beat)
You're supposed to say, "They suck, honey, I love you."

ANNIE
Do what you want, but it's not a promo that's scaring you off. You're just not sure if you can do it anymore.

This hits Mike; it's true.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
And I get that. But aren't you always talking about giving up control?

On Mike as he considers this.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Ian walks past Eve's room to see her sadly playing her KEYTAR.

IAN
Roof?

EXT. ROOF - A LITTLE LATER

Eve and Ian drop water-filled condoms off their building.

EVE
It's weird using condoms.

IAN
I couldn't find any water balloons. And they give these out like candy in college. Getting five hundred free condoms isn't preventative, it's pressure.

EVE
Open convertible.
(drops condom, then)
It sucks they don't break.

IAN
They did once. When we were at camp.
(off Eve's look)
Graham.

EVE
Ew. I don't want to think about them using-- Ew!

As the scene continues, they keep bombing the street below.

IAN
So, are we just going to talk about contraception, or...

EVE
Diaz failed me. For that video.

IAN
Really?

EVE
It's not my first "F", but this one kind of hurt. He basically called me a phony.

IAN
A "phony?" Who are you, Holden Caufield?

EVE
I know that's a *Catcher in the Rye* reference, but I only read the wiki summary.

IAN
If it bothers you that much, ask Diaz for an incomplete. Tell him you want to prove him wrong -- he loves that crap -- then keep working on the project until you're actually proud of what you've got.

EVE
Okay, but then I'd have to film you a lot more--

IAN
Take the "F."
(re: another condom drop)
Right on a guy's soft pretzel. You could tell he was going to enjoy that.

EVE
(regards Ian for a beat)
Why am I talking to you about this? You're Mr. Perfect-who-always-makes-it-look-like-I-suck-ass in comparison.

IAN
That's where you're wrong.

EVE
What?

IAN
Rebooting the search engine isn't the only reason why I'm back here.

EVE
I've got to start using that. How do I find *Looksie* again?

IAN
(a beat, small)
Google it.

EVE
Wait. To get to your search engine you have to use another--

IAN
I failed an Econ class last year. It was graded on a curve and apparently everyone at college is smarter than me.

EVE
But that's just one class--

IAN
A curve is a mathematic formula designed to separate the very best from the people who used to be the best. That's me now.

EVE
Okay, but coming home? Isn't that a little drastic?

IAN
I'm a drastic person.
(dropping condom)
Nailed an old lady.

EVE
No, that's Aunt Leigh.

Eve and Ian share a look, then race back inside.

EXT. BURNABY APARTMENT BUILDING - NEXT DAY

A driven Mike hurries past an unexploded water-filled condom, a little unnerved, as he dials a number on his cell phone.

MIKE
(into phone)
Kay, it's Mike. I'm back in.

KAY (ON PHONE)
What?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BUS - SAME TIME

Kay rides a crowded bus from deep in Brooklyn.

MIKE
I'm "the guy who always finds the story," right? Meet me at City Hall.

KAY
I'm in *Far* Rockaway.

MIKE
I got us a meeting in an hour.

KAY
But I didn't reserve a news van. Or a crew! Maybe if you hadn't spent the whole night hemming and hawing, but now we're boned! Hard!

A FAMILY looks over at Kay. She quickly sobers:

KAY (CONT'D)
I apologize for that, Mr. Burnaby. I was up until two researching a piece on sex offenders and my commute has a bus and two trains and I want to do a perfect job for a man who's given this world so much...

MIKE
Are you starting to cry again? I can hear that.

As the MOTHER from the family hands Kay a tissue:

KAY
No. It's allergies.

MIKE
Listen, Kay: it's going to be okay. If a lady can have a baby in a tree, we can handle this.

KAY
(blowing her nose)
What?

VARIOUS TALKING HEADS (BURNABY APARTMENT)

In their respective rooms, each family member retells a story Mike has told them a hundred times:

GRAHAM
There was a pregnant woman in Mozambique...

IAN
...The day she went into labor, her village flooded. As she was literally being taken away in the rolling currents...

ANNIE
...she climbed up into a tree and gave birth. And she stayed in that tree, with her newborn baby, until she could be rescued. So remember:

EVE
However bad you think you've got it, a lady had a baby in a tree.

"I'm Shakin'" by Jack White RAMPS UP:

RAPID FIRE MONTAGE - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

- Mike and Kay race up the steps of City Hall.

- Mike and Kay argue with a YOUNG INTERN at City Hall.

MIKE
Either the Councilman explains how *two billion dollars* fails to upgrade a call system or we put in a few calls to the sandwich lobby...

YOUNG INTERN
(a beat, busted)
Let me try his office once more.

- Mike and Kay study a map on the hood of a 5 O'CLOCK NEWS VAN as they listen to a POLICE SCANNER.

DISPATCHER (ON SCANNER)
911 on 64th and West End.

MIKE
Let's boogie.

As Mike puts an NBC news cap on, Kay holds back commenting.

- Mike and Kay race uptown in the news van. DV disks fall on them as they're jostled around. Kay looks nauseous.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Car sick, huh? For me, this is perfectly still.

- ON CAMERA, Mike does his stand-up next to a FAMILY. In the background, NYC FIREMEN put out a fire in a BROWNSTONE.

MIKE (CONT'D)
After waiting *thirty-nine* minutes for emergency services to arrive, one has to wonder what memories have been lost inside.

The TEEN DAUGHTER uses her phone to sneak a photo of herself with a hot fireman right behind her.

FATHER
Jenny, quit messing with your phone.

MIKE
It's fine. I'm used to it.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - A LITTLE LATER

The fire is finally out. Firemen clean up and help the family sort through belongings. Mike is on the phone:

MIKE
Yeah, we just wrapped. Got some killer B roll of the family going through burnt photo albums, too.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MARTINI BAR - SAME TIME

Harris holds up a "one sec" finger to his much YOUNGER DATE.

HARRIS
That's awesome, man.
(hand over phone, to date)
Mike Burnaby. Close friend.
Parkinson's. So sad. But he's a
fighter.

As Harris pounds his chest respectfully, his date melts.

MIKE
I gotta say, it's pretty energizing
being back out here, taking on the
city again.

Off to one side, we see Kay vomiting into a trash can.

HARRIS
Well, you're going to love this,
then: guess who's introducing his
segment on *The Today Show*? Tomorrow!
Live! In front of millions of people!

MIKE
(a beat, small)
Me?

HARRIS
Matt Lauer cherry picked the story.
Looks like you've been hating on the
wrong guy.

Mike freaks out for a beat.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
You alright, Mike?

MIKE
Yeah, I'm just going through a tunnel.

HARRIS
Aren't you on West End?

MIKE
They just built it. It's a flash
tunnel. I'm losing you.

On Mike as he hangs up.

INT. GUEST BATHROOM - EARLY MORNING

Mike stands in front of a mirror, dressed in a sharp suit, trying to adjust his tie. His hands are shaking more than usual. Annie enters, clocking this.

MIKE
I'm just timing my meds so they kick in right before I go on.

Annie heads over to Mike and helps him with his tie. Then she turns him towards her to get a look. After a sweet kiss:

ANNIE
Hey: a lady had a baby in a tree.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Annie heads back to bed. She passes Eve's room to see her daughter working intensely at her computer.

ANNIE
Eve Burnaby? Up before seven? What are you doing?

Eve scrolls through her VIDEO, deleting almost everything.

EVE
I don't know yet.

A NOISE comes from Graham's old room. Annie heads over to see Ian and Graham struggling to squeeze Ian's queen-sized mattress into the now "soundproofed" room. They drop the mattress in place; it fills up the entire space.

GRAHAM
(looks up, noticing Annie)
I felt bad about the room.

ANNIE
(as she sits on mattress)
I went to a club like this in the 80s. Do *not* wear heals in here.

IAN
Turns out the little guy has a heart. Let me get some sheets.

Ian musses Graham's hair as he heads off. After a beat, Annie feels the mattress beneath her.

ANNIE
You wet your bed, didn't you?

GRAHAM
That fridge is full of Gatorade!

INT. TODAY SHOW SET - LATER

ACTUAL TODAY SHOW FOOTAGE, as Matt Lauer and SAVANNAH GUTHRIE sit with Mike in front of the street-level windows. Behind them, hundreds of fans CHANT Mike's name. CLOSE ON MIKE as he closes his eyes and his body becomes still; he's ready.

MATT LAUER
We have a very special guest this morning. Mike Burnaby is here to introduce a segment he did for our New York affiliate.

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE
(grabbing Mike's hands, pitying)
It is so inspiring that you're here.

MIKE
(slowly taking his hands back)
Always good to be with old friends.

OFF TO THE SIDE: Annie and Graham watch Mike with Harris.

HARRIS
Good to see him back, right?

ANNIE
Yeah, it only took six months of us figuring out how to get him to "run into you" at Barney Greengrass.

HARRIS
I mean, I like whitefish as much as the next black man, but it got a little *facacta*.
(then)
I still don't know why you didn't just have me call him.

ANNIE
You know Mike. This had to be his idea.

HARRIS
So he has no clue?
(off her "no" nod)
So much for "always finding the story."

BACK ON SET:

MATT LAUER
First, let's go outside. Al: what's the reaction like out there? Does <u>anyone</u> like this guy?

OUTSIDE: AL ROKER stands with REAL NEW YORKERS holding "WELCOME BACK MIKE" signs. INSIDE, Matt leans over to Mike:

AL ROKER
It's absolutely Mike-otic out here. Seems like the whole city came out to welcome back their anchor.

MATT LAUER
(whispering trash talk)
See if you can handle the pressure now, Mikey.

As Mike reacts, Matt Lauer turns back to camera, all charm:

MATT LAUER (CONT'D)
In his first segment as a contributing reporter, Mike took on the city's costly overhaul of the emergency call system.

MIKE
That's right, Matt.

Mike runs his fingers through his hair for Matt's benefit.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Eve and Ian watch Mike on *The Today Show* on a small TV.

IAN
Wow. He's still got it.

EVE
Yeah... I thought we made him get rid of that jacket.

IAN
He looks like a flight attendant.

INT. TODAY SHOW - SAME TIME

MIKE
Two days ago, I accidentally made a 911 call--

Just as Mike begins, A NEWS ALERT interrupts him and we cut from his ONE SHOT back to a WIDE SHOT. On a SCREEN behind them, a beautiful image of the burning building FREEZES.

MATT LAUER
(checking ear piece)
Unfortunately, we have to cut this short. We have some breaking news. The Supreme Court is about to announce its decision on early voting.

The CAMERAS TURN OFF and Matt Lauer slaps Mike on the back.

MATT LAUER (CONT'D)
That's the breaks.

Matt Lauer goes to get a coffee. After a beat, a disappointed Mike crosses to Annie, Graham and Harris.

HARRIS
Should've done the pastrami piece. You don't preempt *that* gold.

ANNIE
You okay, Mike?

After a long beat, Mike puts on his trademark smile:

MIKE
Hey, you can't control everything.

EVE TALKING HEAD (EVE'S ROOM)

Eve sits down in front of her iPhone and takes a deep breath.

EVE
What do I really think about Mike Burnaby?
(*long beat, tearing up*)
He was an award-winning news anchor, and an awesome dad, and then he got a stupid disease.

EXT. STREET - A LITTLE LATER

MUSIC BEGINS and Eve's talking head BRIDGES THE CUT as Mike walks with Graham and Annie, holding their hands.

MIKE
Why don't we grab breakfast?

GRAHAM
Nah, let's go back home.

ANNIE
Yeah, I've got papers to grade.

As Annie and Graham lead Mike back home:

MIKE
Huh. I guess you really can't control everything.

EVE (V.O.)
Of course he's not the same person he used to be. With everything that's happened, how could he be?

EXT./INT. BURNABY APARTMENT - LATER

Mike, Annie and Graham arrive back home. As Mike opens the front door, Graham jumps in front of him and rushes inside.

GRAHAM
Wait! Stay here.

Graham slams the door closed and we hear sounds of PLATES CLANGING and ARGUING inside. Mike looks at Annie; she shrugs.

GRAHAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Okay!

Mike and Annie enter and walk through the foyer to find Eve, Ian and Graham sitting around the dining room table.

In front of them is a huge homemade breakfast. Leigh rushes in with a platter of sausages and sits, too. Then:

KIDS AND LEIGH
Surprise!

A beat as Mike processes what they're doing.

GRAHAM
Sit down meal. Get it?

Mike smiles, touched. He looks to Annie--

ANNIE
Their idea.

EVE (V.O.)
The truth is, none of us are the same. And we're still changing.

IAN
These are the *idea* of waffles more than actual waffles. Sorry.

Mike and Annie sit down, joining the others.

EVE (V.O.)
But through it all, my dad has never stopped trying, he's never stopped being here -- being a part of this family. And that makes him amazing.

MIKE
This is great, guys. Thanks. Who wants some eggs?

As Mike reaches for a spoon and struggles to spoon eggs onto his children's plates, the MUSIC CUTS OUT.

ANNIE
Can you not have a personal victory right now? We're starving.

Annie grabs the spoon from Mike and takes over.

LEIGH
Yeah, and I'm having coffee with a <u>skateboarder</u> in a few, so... chop chop.

Graham notices Annie's centerpiece on the table.

GRAHAM
Somebody move that. It's scaring me.

As everyone enjoys sit-down breakfast, we PULL BACK AND OUT.

<u>END OF ACT THREE</u>

TAG

EXT. AMSTERDAM AVENUE - MORNING

Mike, Eve and Graham walk past BARNEY GREENGRASS. Harris sits at a table in the window. CHYRON: "Six Months Earlier".

EVE
Let's grab some bagels.

MIKE
Why? You just had a healthy scramble.

Mike continues on. Eve and Harris share a frustrated look.

- ANOTHER DAY, same walk. CHYRON: "Four Months Earlier".

EVE
You know who has to pee? Graham. At Barney Greengrass.

GRAHAM
What? No, I don't.

Mike continues on. Eve looks to Harris, then punches Graham.

- ANOTHER DAY, same walk. CHYRON: "Two Months Earlier".

EVE
Fresh Nova? For just $7.99 a pound?

As Eve physically moves Mike to look at Harris, a BIKE MESSENGER screeches to a halt right in front of them.

BIKE MESSENGER
Mike Burnaby! The man, the myth!

- ANOTHER DAY, same walk, only Annie's there, too. CHYRON: "Last Week". Annie pulls Mike toward Barney Greengrass.

ANNIE
Hey, look, it's Harris Green. Let's go say hello to him *right now*.

MIKE
You're hurting my arm. Slow down.

They head inside to find Harris sitting at his usual table, only he's busy talking to a HOT WOMAN sitting next to him.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Hey, Harris.

HARRIS
(looks up, sotto to Mike)
Not now, man. I'll get with you later.

Harris turns back to the woman and keeps hitting on her. As the family glares at Harris, Mike shrugs and heads out.

END OF EPISODE