

PAULIE AT ODDS

*Friends. Family. Loyalty.
A day can change everything.*

an original screenplay by

Domenico Silipo

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Domenic Silipo
(917) 363-3524
Domenic@CineModProductions.com

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

TWO MEN, mob-looking types, leaning against a parked car.

BOBBY
What happened to us?

ALBERTO
Time.

BOBBY
Time?

ALBERTO
Always brings out the truth.

BOBBY
But if you can't rely on your friends
no more...

ALBERTO
Rely on...? Or control?

BOBBY
Whatever.

ALBERTO
It's not 'whatever'. There's a
difference.

BOBBY
Maybe. But in the end, the result's
the same.

He turns toward Alberto and stabs him in the stomach... holds
him close as he starts to crumble to the ground. Suddenly,
CHRIS, 14 years old, appears.

CHRIS
Who's Marty!?

MARTY (O.S.)
CUT!

Chris has walked right in front of a movie camera. Marty,
the director, is furious.

MARTY (CONT'D)
What the hell is going on here!?

CHRIS
Are you Marty?

MARTY
I'm Marty. Yes! Who the hell are
you?

CHRIS
Paulie sent me to pick up a package.

MARTY
Paulie? Who the fuck is...?
(sudden attitude change)
Oh. The Pool Hall!
(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)

Paulie, at the Pool Hall. Yeah. Yeah,
just a second, kid.

(frantic)

Who's got that package for the Pool
Hall...!? Get me that package...!

INT. POOL HALL - PAULIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

PAULIE is at his desk, on his office phone...

PAULIE

... Thanks, Enzo.

(beat)

10am sharp. I'm looking forward to
it.

He hangs up the phone.

He's in his early 40's. He's a powerful presence with a
streetwise manner and confidence. But though he seems content
with the phone call, a sadness is clearly weighing on him.

He glances over some of the many photos on the wall, resting
on a large portrait on the shelf behind the desk... a small
light at the bottom of the frame illuminates the face of a
man in his mid 40's. Paulie looks away. His eyes land on a
photo on his desk... of himself and a teenage girl. He looks
at the time... and makes a call on his cell phone.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Hey. It's me. Is she there?

(he waits)

Hey, sweetie, how you doin'?

(beat)

No, Sabrina's not here. Can't you
talk to me?

(beat)

You're goin' out now? Isn't it a
little...? With who?

(beat)

Yeah? Do I need to fly down and
meet this boy? What's his father
do?

(beat. laughs)

Alright, alright. But listen... you
just say the word, and I'll fly down
again in a minute.

(beat. smiles)

I don't mean for the boy... I mean
for anything.

(beat)

Love you too.

He hangs up, smiling... but sadness, again creeping in.

INT. POOL HALL - PUBLIC AREA - CONTINUOUS

Fairly large. About 25 pool tables... more than half in
use, but all toward the front. The front area also serves
as a cafe, with 5 or 6 bistro tables, also at least half
full... mostly with older men, local regulars. ROCCO is
behind the front counter, 50's, slow moving, unkempt, yet
authoritative. Chris walks in with his newly acquired package
tucked safely into the front of his pants.

ROCCO cocks his thumb toward the back, giving Chris the 'go-ahead'. Chris makes his way towards the back of the pool hall, and the office area.

Outside the office are two more bistro tables, a foosball table and, of course, a pool table. Though other tables are nearby, they are empty and less lit than the ones up front, giving this back area a sense of separation.

Here, Paulie's contemporaries, each with their own brand of street savvy, are shooting pool. FREDO, charismatic, intellectual; MIMMO, broadminded, sensitive; and NARDO, tough, rebellious.

BIANCA is sitting at one of the bistro tables, watching them admiringly. She's clearly younger, in her 20's, and hot, looking like she just came out of a neighborhood beauty shop.

The balls are racked... MIMMO is set to break. He scratches... shakes his head, frustrated.

MIMMO

I'm done.

FREDO

Are you blind?

NARDO

You so stink.

Mimmo puts his stick down and sits at the bistro table with BIANCA. He picks up a badly creased magazine... the latest issue of NEWSWEEK.

BIANCA

You need to keep your elbow in more.

Mimmo is clearly put off by her. When he speaks, it's soft enough so Fredo and Nardo won't hear him.

MIMMO

We need to talk.

BIANCA

Then call me.

MIMMO

I tried that.

She stands, dismissing him and addressing the other guys.

BIANCA

When do I get to play?

Mimmo, feeling vindictive, calls over to her.

MIMMO

Hey, Bianca... what time's your last train?

She's off guard, unsure how to answer a simple question... but then catches a glance from Fredo...

BIANCA

Oh, yeah... I guess I better be goin'.

Chris walks past them and toward the office, just as Paulie opens the door to come out. He nods to Chris.

PAULIE
Just throw it on the desk. There's
a twenty there for you.

Paulie holds the door open as Chris disappears inside, then comes back out stuffing the money in his pocket. Paulie shuts the door... A brass plated door sign reads, "ANTHONY'S OFFICE". As Chris begins to walk away...

PAULIE (CONT'D)
Before I forget... Danny's still
out. The place could use a moppin'
tonight.

Chris stops... turns to face him with a frown.

PAULIE (CONT'D)
Whatsa matter?

CHRIS
Nothing. It's just that... I thought,
after I started doin' errands, I
wouldn't have to mop no more.

PAULIE
What's wrong with moppin'?

CHRIS
It's cleanin', Paulie... I don't
wanna clean. It's like a demotion.

Paulie considers this... respecting the kid for speaking up.

PAULIE
Alright. I'll get... one of the
other kids to mop.

CHRIS
Thanks, Paulie.

Chris walks away. Paulie joins the others. Bianca is already walking away.

PAULIE
She leavin'?

FREDO
She's gotta catch a train.

Paulie sees a garbage can against the wall, near the bistro tables... he isn't happy.

PAULIE
Who put this here?

He looks over at Nardo who grunts as he goes to pick it up.

NARDO
You said you don't like garbage on
the tables.

PAULIE

So? It'll kill you to walk over to the garbage can? Move it. It's ugly.

Nardo carries it back to it's place near another pool table.

MIMMO

How'd it go?

PAULIE

I guess... good. I don't know. He wants to see me in the morning.

MIMMO

So, that's good.

Paulie nods, hesitantly.

FREDO

Just a formality, Paulie. He's not gonna make it official over the phone.

PAULIE

No, I know. Either case, we should plan to meet here afterwards. Let's say about noon.

Fredo and Mimmo nod in agreement. Nardo has returned and ready to shoot pool again.

NARDO

Can't. Dentist appointment at 12:30.

Paulie looks at him.

NARDO (CONT'D)

I mean... I could prob'ly change it.

PAULIE

I'm sure you can change it.

Fredo and Nardo continue with their pool game, as Paulie steps away and sits at the bistro table with Mimmo.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

So... you alright?

MIMMO

Yeah. Whadaya mean?

PAULIE

I dunno... you've been kinda... I dunno...

MIMMO

Just tired. This new class is pretty stressful.

PAULIE

So, quit.

MIMMO

Nah.

(MORE)

MIMMO (CONT'D)
 (like a martyr)
 Gotta keep up with modern technology.

PAULIE
 Yeah.
 (joking)
 That's why I bought an Xbox-360.

Mimmo laughs.

PAULIE (CONT'D)
 But seriously... you're alright,
 then?

MIMMO
 Yeah, Paulie.

PAULIE
 Good.
 (beat)
 'Cause I need you to be ready for
 all this.

MIMMO
 Me...? What do you mean?

PAULIE
 It's gonna mean a little more work
 for all of us.

MIMMO
 Nothing more than we've been doin'...
 for months, now.

PAULIE
 Maybe. But we've just been
 maintaining, not really moving forward
 in any way. I wanna start showin'...
 some growth, so to speak.

MIMMO
 Paulie, I'll do whatever I can. But
 I can't be runnin' around all the
 time. Unless you got someone else
 who can handle the shop.

Paulie sighs, knowing this isn't an option.

MIMMO (CONT'D)
 Besides, you got Fredo and Nardo.

They see Nardo doing a victory dance after sinking a shot.

PAULIE
 Well, at least Fredo.

They laugh... as ROCCO is heard through an INTERCOM on the
 wall, above the bistro table.

ROCCO (O.S.)
 Paulie... Fatman and Robbie are here.

Two men are seen walking toward them... One very large, the
 other short and wiry.

PAULIE

What the hell are they doin' here?

As the two men make their way over to Paulie, he turns back to Mimmo for a moment.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Just remember... no matter what happens here, you're still my number one.

Mimmo smiles.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Ever since that time...

MIMMO

I know Paulie. But we're not kids no more.

PAULIE

Doesn't matter, we're not kids no more... you're still my number one.

FATMAN and ROBBIE have reached Paulie.

FATMAN

Hey... Paulie.

PAULIE

Fatman. What the hell are you doin' here?

ROBBIE

We stopped by...

Fatman jabs Robbie with his elbow, for speaking out of line.

FATMAN

We stopped by.
(exposes an envelope)
I got... you know, the thing for you.

PAULIE

What thing?

FATMAN

The thing.

PAULIE

The regular thing, or something new that I don't know about?

FATMAN

Nah. The regular thing.

PAULIE

Now...? I got customers.

FATMAN

I know. My apologies.

A beat.

PAULIE

This one time. Leave it at the register with Rocco.

FATMAN

I thought... we could go into Anthony's... your office.

NARDO

I thought he already told you what to do.

Paulie shoots Nardo a glance, before turning back to Fatman.

PAULIE

Why would we need to go into the office?

FATMAN

The thing is... I need to discuss the thing with you. The contents.

PAULIE

No you don't. If there's something wrong with the contents, then you need to come back when it's taken care of.

FATMAN

It's not that easy.

PAULIE

Let me ask you something. Would you even be having this discussion if it was Anthony sittin' here instead of me?

FATMAN

Uh... well...

PAULIE

You know what? Maybe we should go into my office.

He stands. Fatman and Robbie start to follow him... so does Nardo.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

That's alright, Nardo...

(he turns to Fatman)

Just you.

(then to the others)

Keep Robbie here, entertained.

Paulie leads Fatman into his office. Fredo approaches Robbie.

FREDO

So, Robbie... up for a game of pool? Hundred bucks says, you lose against any one of us.

He places a hundred on the pool table, begins racking.

ROBBIE

A hundred bucks?

FREDO

Yup.

ROBBIE

Anyone I want?

FREDO

Anyone you want.

Robbie smirks, pulls out his money... points to Mimmo.

ROBBIE

I want him.

MIMMO

What? Nah. I'm not playin'.

NARDO

He stinks.

ROBBIE

(to Fredo)

You said any one of you's.

(to Mimmo)

And I wanna play you.

Robbie throws his money down, on the table in front of Mimmo.

MIMMO

Fine.

Mimmo stands, grabs a pool stick... tries to break, but scratches again. Robbie laughs.

ROBBIE

Easy hundred.

FREDO

Yup. All you gotta do, is finish the game.

ROBBIE

Why wouldn't I finish the game?

FREDO

Nah... I'm just sayin'.

NARDO

He's just sayin'.

Suddenly, a loud 'THUD' is heard in the office. Robbie looks at the closed door... then at the others.

ROBBIE

Maybe I should...

FREDO

They're just talkin'.

NARDO

Yeah, discussin' the contents.

They all laugh... even Robbie, though a little nervous.

MIMMO

You gonna play, or do I get a 'do-over'?

Reluctantly, Robbie gets ready to shoot... just as Paulie and Fatman walk out. Fatman is holding some paper towels to his bloody nose.

ROBBIE

What the fuck!?

FATMAN

Robbie! Let's go.

Robbie hesitates, looking at the pool table... and Fredo waving the money back at him.

FATMAN (CONT'D)

Robbie...!

PAULIE

Use the back door, over here.

FATMAN

Sure. We'll see you tomorrow, Paulie. Thanks, again.

Fatman and Robbie head out a nearby back door. Paulie sits back down.

NARDO

Why couldn't I come in?

PAULIE

No room with his fat ass.

The INTERCOM crackles...

ROCCO (O.S.)

Paulie, your mother's on the phone.

Paulie drops his head, but stands and turns toward the office.

INT. POOL HALL - FRONT END - CONTINUOUS

SABRINA and ROSIE have just walked in. They are both in their 30's. SABRINA is carrying a file folder. She is naturally striking and simply dressed in jeans and t-shirt. She is confident and outspoken. ROSIE, also attractive, but reserved. She's taken the time for some make-up but it doesn't completely hide her tired face.

SABRINA

(indignant)

So what! She's a single mom. She kicked him out.

ROSIE

With good reason.

SABRINA

Absolutely, with good reason, but she can't compare herself to you! And when I see her...

ROSIE
 (amused, but adamant)
 Don't you dare.

Sabrina huffs with a roll of the eyes, indicating she will reluctantly respect Rosie's wish. Sabrina heads behind the counter...

SABRINA
 I'll catch up in a minute.
 (an afterthought)
 Don't say anything to Nardo.

ROSIE
 I'm not touchin' that.

Rosie heads toward the back of the pool hall. She garners a few disapproving glances from some of the older locals, though they quickly divert their eyes when she looks their way.

Rosie makes her way toward Fredo, Mimmo and Nardo at the back. Mimmo sees her first.

MIMMO
 Hey, Rosie.

Nardo looks up from the pool table, suddenly irritated.

ROSIE
 Hi, guys.

NARDO
 Where's Sabrina?

ROSIE
 She's comin'.

NARDO
 Did she do it?

ROSIE
 I don't know anything, Nardo.

NARDO
 She fuckin' did it.

Rosie goes to Fredo, excited, as she pulls out a small manuscript.

ROSIE
 Fredo, oh my God! He loved it!

FREDO
 (flattered)
 Yeah?

ROSIE
 Oh my God, yeah. I did too. It's so cute.

MIMMO
 It is cute. I told you.

FREDO

I don't know that I was actually goin' for 'cute'.

NARDO

I told you, it needs more action.

AT THE FRONT END of the pool hall, Sabrina is now passing through the section of bistro tables... still carrying her folder. She stops to say hello to one of the older men, leaning down to kiss him... just as her eyes catch an older teenager placing his drink on the rim of a pool table. Barely having kissed the old man, she shoots up like a hawk...

SABRINA

Hey! You wanna eat that can?!

The teenager quickly picks up his can, trying to hide his embarrassment, as everyone turns to look.

AT THE BACK, Mimmo motions to Nardo with a smirk.

MIMMO

Here comes your sweetie pie now.

Nardo ignores the comment and takes a step in Sabrina's direction... waiting. She keeps walking toward the office, past them...

SABRINA

Hi, boys.
(to Nardo)
Hi, honey.

NARDO

Hi, honey?
(to Fredo and Mimmo)
Do you believe this girl?
(calls after Sabrina)
Where've you been? I called...

She ignores him... enjoying making him crazy.

NARDO (CONT'D)

Hey! Did you do it!?

Still ignoring him, she opens the office door. Nardo is dumbfounded. The others can't help but be amused.

INT. POOL HALL - PAULIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paulie is on the phone as Sabrina enters and goes straight for a filing cabinet...

PAULIE

(into phone)
I know, ma. But she's a big girl.

On hearing "ma", Sabrina silently mouths, "I'm not here".

PAULIE (CONT'D)

I'll tell her if I see her. I gotta go. Bye.

He hangs up the phone as Nardo comes in, confronts Sabrina.

NARDO

Well...?

Still no response... she is meticulously transferring receipts and paperwork from her folder into various files.

NARDO (CONT'D)

Don't play games with me Sabrina.
Did you do it?

SABRINA

(smirking)
Yes, Nardo. I did it.

NARDO

I don't fucking believe...!
(beat)
Paulie, would you tell your sister...

PAULIE

I'm not gettin' involved in this,
Nardo.
(to Sabrina)
Except to say, congratulations.

Nardo is dumbfounded.

SABRINA

Thanks, Paulie.

NARDO

Congratulations!?! The apartment's
almost ready!

SABRINA

Nardo, I told you... there is no way
I am livin' in your mother's basement
apartment. But... you put a ring on
this finger, and I might consider
lettin' you live in my new house.

NARDO

(to Paulie)
Do you believe this girl?

Paulie smiles. He does.

NARDO (CONT'D)

Are you gonna say anything?

Paulie holds both hands up.

NARDO (CONT'D)

Fine!
(to Sabrina)
You make me crazy!

He leaves. Sabrina is just about done with her filing.

SABRINA

You said you were gonna keep this
neat.

PAULIE

I am.

SABRINA

Neater. Don't be like Anthony. God rest his soul.

Sabrina shuts the cabinet, and takes the last article out of the folder... a cd. She hands it to Paulie.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

Fully updated.

He takes it and slides it through the money slot in the safe.

SABRINA (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

He looks at her, amused.

PAULIE

So... you really did it.

SABRINA

Yup.

PAULIE

Ma's freakin' out.

SABRINA

I know, Paulie. It's ridiculous. I'm across the street for God's sake. She used to go over there almost every day when Mrs. Connor was alive. Now she can come see me instead.

PAULIE

I know, but...

SABRINA

What?

(beat)

Aren't you ok with this?

PAULIE

Me? Of course.

SABRINA

Because you said you were.

PAULIE

I am.

SABRINA

I don't want you to feel stuck there.

PAULIE

I'm not stuck. I'd move back out if I wanted to.

SABRINA

Why don't you?

PAULIE

What for?

(smiling)

Who's gonna cook for me?

Paulie laughs. Sabrina rolls her eyes with a smile.

SABRINA
By the way. Rosie's here.

PAULIE
Oh, yeah...?

He tries to seem casual, but is clearly a little uneasy.

INT. POOL HALL - PUBLIC AREA - CONTINUOUS

Paulie and Sabrina come out of the office and join the others. Paulie gives Rosie a kiss.

PAULIE
Hey, Rosie. How you doin'?

ROSIE
Hi, Paulie.

Mimmo and Fredo approach Sabrina.

MIMMO
Hey, Sabri... congrats!

FREDO
When should we come over to paint?

NARDO
(sarcastic)
Yeah. Sure. Let's have a paintin' party. Where were you when I was paintin' the apartment?

They're all amused at Nardo's expense... as Paulie turns to Rosie.

PAULIE
So, Little Anthony with your sister?

ROSIE
(nods)
Dinner with the cousins. I have to pick him up in about an hour.

PAULIE
Well... I'm glad you stopped by.

She smiles. His eyes fall on Fredo's book, sitting on the bistro table. He casually picks it up, happy for a new focus.

PAULIE (CONT'D)
What's this?

Fredo panics and grabs for it.

FREDO
Oh... nothing. It's just...

ROSIE
It's his book.

PAULIE

His book?
 (to Fredo)
 You wrote a book?

SABRINA

A children's book. You haven't seen
 it? It's fantastic.

ROSIE

I just read it to Little Anthony.
 He loved it.

PAULIE

(to Fredo, ridiculing)
 You wrote a children's book?

FREDO

I was gonna tell you about it.

PAULIE

Yeah?

FREDO

Yeah, you know...

MIMMO

It's very cute.

PAULIE

Cute...?

NARDO

It needs more action.

PAULIE

(to Nardo, surprised)
 You seen this book, too?

SABRINA

(whacks Nardo's arm)
 It's a children's book, Nardo.

NARDO

So what? Pinocchio's a children's
 book. Lot's of action. And no flaws.
 (to Fredo)
 Not to say that your story has
 flaws...
 (beat. to Mimmo)
 Is my nose growin'?

Nardo cracks up. Mimmo has to laugh as well. Even the girls
 are a little amused... but the moment is broken by Paulie
 calling over to Chris' table.

PAULIE

Hey... Chris!

Chris starts walking over, as Paulie looks at Fredo.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

So, everybody here has seen this
 book except me?

They all look at him innocently... except Fredo.

MIMMO

I didn't realize you hadn't seen it.

Everyone's face confirms the same.

FREDO

(guiltily)

I was gonna... I wasn't sure how...

PAULIE

What age is it for?

Fredo is off guard.

ROSIE

Probably... 8 to 12.

(to Fredo)

I had to explain a few things to Little Anthony.

NARDO

There's a few things, could use some explainin'.

Chris has come over. Paulie turns to him.

PAULIE

How old are you?

CHRIS

14.

PAULIE

Close enough.

(hands him the book)

Go read this. Tell me what you think.

FREDO

Ah, c'mon, Paulie...

Chris frowns, but he can tell from Paulie's face that there is no getting out of this one. Fredo's cell begins to ring. He sighs in defeat, as Chris walks away with his book. He looks at his phone but doesn't answer.

FREDO (CONT'D)

Whatever.

(stands)

I'm gonna get going.

Rosie and Sabrina exchange a suspicious glance.

SABRINA

Hot date?

Fredo smiles. He picks up the NEWSWEEK magazine Mimmo had earlier... rolling it up, and shoves it in his back pocket.

PAULIE

Just don't be up all night. We might have that thing tomorrow.

Fredo waves... walks away.

INT. PAULIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The clock reads 6:36am. There is enough morning light to see signs of Paulie's childhood. This is the room he grew up in. On the dresser, is a photo of Paulie's daughter. Other photos, past and present, are stuck in, along the frame of the dresser mirror. A rosary is draped across the top of the mirror, and a crucifix looks down on Paulie over the bed. He's having a restless sleep. His cell phone rings. He shoots up, reaching for it, and looks at the screen... "Mimmo". He flips the phone open, very concerned...

PAULIE

Mimmo... what's wrong?

INT. PAULIE'S KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

MA, 60's, robust, wearing a plain black skirt and top, is pouring a steamy espresso from an old stove-top unit. Paulie walks in... still on the phone, now wearing pants and carrying a t-shirt.

PAULIE

(into phone)

I'm already gettin' dressed. Just wait. I'm gonna come see you.

(beat)

Aren't you at home? Where are you, then? I'll come get you.

(beat)

So, wait... you are at home, or you're not?

(beat, now angry)

How fine can you be? It's 6:30 in the mornin'!

(beat)

No, wait! Mimmo?

(looks at phone)

He hung up, the mother...

He restrains himself in MA's presence. Turns to her...

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Whadaya doin' up?

MA

I'm gonna go to the early mass.

(beat)

Everything alright?

PAULIE

Yeah. I dunno. Mimmo. 6:30 in the mornin'.

She puts an espresso on the table for him. He takes it, blows on it a few times, then takes a sip.

MA

You're very tense.

PAULIE

It's 6:30 in the mornin'!

(takes a breath)

Sorry.

He proceeds to putting on his t-shirt.

MA

I washed your new shirt last night.
So you could wear it to see Enzo.

She smiles, proudly.

PAULIE

Thanks, ma.

He takes another sip of his espresso. Something else is bothering him...

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Victor says Enzo's loosin' it.

MA

Yeah, well... bet Victor would say
that I'm losin' it, too.

PAULIE

Yeah, well...

MA

Not to say that I don't have reason
to... with what your sister is doing
to me.

Paulie simply holds up his hand, suggesting she better not start in on this. Ma would clearly like to, but instead, she holds up a black top, seemingly identical to the one she's wearing.

MA (CONT'D)

Which one you like better?

Paulie looks at them blankly...

MA (CONT'D)

Ah, whadda you know? I'm gonna go
wake Sabrina...

She walks out. Paulie flips open his cell phone, and makes a call. He waits...

PAULIE

(into phone)

Where the hell are you? You get me
outta bed at 6:30 in the mornin' and
now you don't answer your phone?

(threateningly)

Do I need to come find you!?

He ends the call and places the phone on the table. He stands and goes to the sink, rinses out his espresso cup... turns and leans against the counter, looking at his cell phone, and waits. It finally buzzes. He picks it up... a text message from Mimmo: "*Stop calling. I'm fine. Trying to get some sleep.*" Paulie seems somewhat satisfied with this. He begins to pull off his t-shirt... and heads back to bed, muttering.

A MONTAGE begins... set to MUSIC.

EXT. ENZO'S ELECTRONICS REPAIR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

A vintage Mustang, mint condition, pulls up across from the ELECTRONICS REPAIR SHOP. Mimmo gets out of the passenger door... looking hung over. The Mustang drives off as Mimmo drags his way across the street and gets into his own car...

He pulls out a pill bottle... opens it, shakes a bunch into his hand... and looks at them. He suddenly seems very dizzy. He puts the pills back in the bottle, and starts the car. Then, reconsiders, and turns the car off. He climbs out, steadying himself, and shakily makes his way over to the ELECTRONICS REPAIR SHOP... and unlocks the door.

INT. ENZO'S ELECTRONIC REPAIR SHOP - BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

The back room is quite large, and cluttered with boxes, tools, electronic equipment and parts. Mimmo walks in and heads straight for a small couch. He takes off his shoes, and lays down on his back. A moment later, he turns over on his side.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Paulie is laying on his side. He turns over on his back, sighs, and opens his eyes. He's clearly wide awake, and not very happy about it. He sits up on the edge of his bed.

CUT TO:

INT. FREDO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Fredo is sitting on the edge of his bed, having just woken up. He turns and looks at the BARE BACK of the woman next to him. His room is filled with stacks of books and manuscripts. He goes to his desk, picks up a 9 x 12 manilla envelope. He pulls out a magazine and looks at the cover letter accompanying it... a sense of pride and longing. He sticks the letter inside the magazine and moves it aside. Now, his focus is drawn to a photo frame on his desk... of him with the guys, including Anthony. He picks it up and slides out the photo to reveal another... of a WOMAN. She appears in her 20's, but the photo has clearly seen some years. The woman in his bed now stirs, and turns to face him... it's Bianca. He quickly hides the photo of the WOMAN back behind the photo of the crew.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULIE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The same photo of the crew is on the mirror of Paulie's dresser. Paulie walks to his dresser, having just come out of the shower. His new shirt is neatly laid out on the bed. He wipes his hair with a towel, then reaches for some gel, which he rubs in his hands and then through his hair. He picks up the towel again, and wipes his hands.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE RESTROOM - MORNING

Nardo is wiping his hands with some paper towels. The garbage can grabs his attention. It's a stainless steel Seville, complete with a shiny steel pedal. Nardo steps on the pedal. The lid flips open with a nice firm 'Fsshfft'. He likes the sound of it. He pulls out the garbage bag and empties it... puts the garbage can inside the bag, ties it... and walks out.

EXT. COMMERCIAL STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Nardo is putting the garbage can into the trunk of his car. He slams it shut, goes to the driver's door and gets into his car.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAULIE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Paulie is getting into his car. A crucifix dangles from the rear view mirror. He's wearing his new shirt, and is very cautious about keeping it unwrinkled. He drives off...

EXT. ENZO'S ELECTRONIC REPAIR SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Paulie is driving past the shop. He slows down, doing a double-take, as he notices Mimmo's car parked in front. Confused, he backs up, pulling up behind it. He goes to the front door and peers in. He sees the back door half open and reaches for the buzzer as the **MUSIC FADES...**

INT. ENZO'S ELECTRONIC REPAIR SHOP - BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Buzzer makes Mimmo stir. The second 'buzz' makes him shoot up to a sitting position. He suddenly feels very nauseous and rushes into the bathroom... we hear him vomiting.

EXT. ENZO'S ELECTRONIC REPAIR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Paulie, frustrated, walks back to his car. He opens the passenger door and then the glove compartment. He fishes around and pulls out a ring of about half a dozen keys.

INT. ENZO'S ELECTRONIC REPAIR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

We hear the toilet flushing in the bathroom. Mimmo walks out looking very groggy. He hears the front door opening and has a moment of panic, until...

PAULIE (O.S.)

Mimmo! You here?

Now, Mimmo winces. Paulie enters the back room dangling the ring of keys... Mimmo nods as he crosses to the work table.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

You look like shit.

Mimmo opens his mouth to say something, but then dismisses it. Paulie studies him.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

What're you...? I thought you'd still be home, sleeping.

Mimmo shrugs... speaking takes a lot of energy.

MIMMO

Hadda come in. Some early pickups.

Paulie studies him... he doesn't seem to be buying it.

PAULIE

So, why you sittin' back here?

MIMMO

I dunno. Because.

PAULIE

Because why?

MIMMO

Because I feel like it.

PAULIE

Front door's locked. You still closed?

MIMMO

Not really.

PAULIE

Not really? Who's gonna come in here... the door locked, you sittin' back here?

MIMMO

They could ring the buzzer.

PAULIE

Doesn't work.

MIMMO

It works.

PAULIE

I was just ringin' the buzzer.

MIMMO

I heard it.

PAULIE

You heard it?

MIMMO

Yeah.

PAULIE

But you didn't answer...

MIMMO

I was...
(beat)
That's right.

PAULIE

Why?

MIMMO

Because.

PAULIE

Because why?

MIMMO

Because I didn't feel like it.

Paulie is growing a little impatient.

PAULIE

What the hell's the matter with you!?

MIMMO

What?

PAULIE

I dunno... actin' like this.

MIMMO

Like what?

PAULIE

I dunno... strange.

MIMMO

What's so strange?

PAULIE

You.

MIMMO

What about me?

PAULIE

Everything.

MIMMO

Everything what?

PAULIE

Strange.

MIMMO

I know, but what?

PAULIE

You said you're open, and if a customer comes, he could ring the buzzer. But the buzzer rings and you don't answer. That's not normal, Mimmo, that's strange.

A beat. Mimmo wants to divert the issue.

MIMMO

What're you doin' here?

PAULIE

I stopped by.

MIMMO

Now? Aren't you meetin' Enzo?

PAULIE

Yeah. I saw your car.

MIMMO

So? You saw my car. You didn't
have to stop.

PAULIE

I...
(beat)
I was worried about you.

MIMMO

Alright.
(beat)
But don't worry about it. I'm fine.

PAULIE

You sounded str... funny. On the
phone.

MIMMO

Well, I am a funny guy.

Paulie sighs...

MIMMO (CONT'D)

Look, Paulie... forget about it.
I'm sorry. I'm fine.

PAULIE

You're fine?

MIMMO

Yes. Thanks for comin' by. I
appreciate it.

PAULIE

You want me to leave?

MIMMO

No, you could stay.

PAULIE

Damn right, I could stay.

He shifts for a moment, looks at the time.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

I really can't stay.

MIMMO

I know.

PAULIE

But you're tellin' me you're fine.

MIMMO

That's right.

PAULIE

And you'll be at the pool hall?

MIMMO

Of course.

PAULIE

Alright. I'm gonna go then.

(beat)

I'll see you in a bit.

Mimmo gives a nod to confirm. Paulie walks out. Mimmo, relieved, lets his arms and head sink onto the table.

INT. ENZO'S OFFICE - MORNING

ENZO is at his desk, with Paulie sitting across from him. VICTOR stands by the window. ENZO has a Rubik's Cube on the desk in front of him, which he periodically picks up, giving it a few turns. Paulie is fidgeting with something... a new brass plated door sign that says "PAULIE'S OFFICE".

ENZO

So, this new thing... that Montana's setting up...

Paulie looks up... slight concern.

PAULIE

The... Montana thing.

ENZO

Yeah. Spoke with him earlier. He's gonna... get us clearance, any day now. Could even be as soon as tomorrow.

PAULIE

Good. That's good. I... already have a buyer. He's just waitin' for my call.

ENZO

Good. Then we should jump on it as soon as Montana presents the opportunity. But it's gonna be short notice. Otherwise, we should hold off for the next one. We don't wanna sit on this stuff for too long.

PAULIE

No, no. We'll jump on it the first time. Even if I have to do it myself.

ENZO

Good.

VICTOR

Why would you have to do it yourself?

PAULIE

I wouldn't. I'm just sayin'.

VICTOR

If those guys can't handle something like this alone, we got bigger problems.

Paulie gives him a hard look.

ENZO

Victor has some concern with the boys.

PAULIE

Victor should keep his mouth shut.

ENZO

Paulie...

VICTOR

It's my job not to keep my...

ENZO

Victor...

They both ease up for a moment... but Paulie can't stay quiet for long.

PAULIE

No. I'm sorry, Enzo, but I gotta say... that's the third time he's referred to them as "those guys". Now, first of all...

(looks at Victor)

Anthony never had a problem with "those guys"... and second, Mimmo, Fredo and Nardo have shown their loyalty for years... now we're referring to them as "those guys", like they're a piece of shit?

ENZO

You're right.

Enzo looks at Victor... who understands the que.

VICTOR

I'm sorry. I didn't mean any disrespect.

Paulie nods acceptance, but clearly on Enzo's account.

ENZO

Good. So we're done.

VICTOR

Can I just say one more thing?

Enzo looks at Paulie, deferring to him. Paulie nods, slightly.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

It's not their loyalty that's in doubt.

PAULIE

Then what is it?

VICTOR

I'm just suggesting, since you're now tied up at the pool hall more, that maybe we need to add someone else into the mix. I don't mean get rid of anyone...

PAULIE

Well, that's nice of you.

VICTOR

I just mean... adding someone to our presence.

PAULIE

And I imagine you have someone in mind.

VICTOR

No. Not really. I'm just suggesting that we think about it. I mean, for instance, Ricardo...

PAULIE

Ricardo? Which? You can't mean Mancini, 'cause he's an idiot. And I know you don't mean Carbone, 'cause he's a real idiot.

VICTOR

He's not.

PAULIE

Which?

VICTOR

Either one. Carbone.

PAULIE

Carbone? Ricardo Carbone?

VICTOR

Yeah. Maybe to at least help keep Nardo in check.

PAULIE

(laughs)

You want Ricardo Carbone to keep Nardo in check?

Then, as if realizing what he may be insinuating...

PAULIE (CONT'D)

And Nardo doesn't need to be kept 'in check'.

Victor smirks, raising his eyebrows, clearly disagreeing. Paulie turns to Enzo.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Are we talkin' about that again?

But Enzo is now engrossed in his Rubik's Cube. Paulie turns back to Victor.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

I told you, I will address it. I didn't know anything about it until Enzo mentioned it.

VICTOR

Maybe you should've.

PAULIE

You said yourself, I was in Florida that weekend visiting my daughter...

VICTOR

Why wouldn't they tell you about it?

PAULIE

Maybe there's nothing to tell. I'm sure Mr. Bruno...

(turns to Enzo)

And with all due respect to Mr. Bruno...

(back to Victor)

I'm sure he's overly concerned. But like I said, I will address it. And if an apology is in order, I'll march Nardo's ass up to the Bronx myself.

(beat, an afterthought)

And if you're so concerned about their behavior, where the hell were you that weekend?

VICTOR

Are you suggestin' that they need lookin' after when you're not around?

PAULIE

Are you suggestin' I knock the shit outta you right where you stand?

Enzo finally jumps in.

ENZO

Alright...!

But it may be more in response to a move on the Rubik's Cube than in response to the argument in front of him. Nonetheless, a single word is all it takes. Paulie and Victor back off. Enzo takes a deep breath.

ENZO (CONT'D)

Paulie, it doesn't have to be Ricardo Carbone. Maybe it doesn't have to be anybody at all. I know you've been pretty much runnin' things since long before Anthony got sick. You don't need a new sign on the door to make that a fact. So, what I ask is this... that if, at any time, you feel it may be necessary to... add someone into the mix... you let me know. You would have full approval of course.

Contented, he glances at Victor.

PAULIE

Fair enough.

ENZO

I know you boys have a long history... in and outside of this thing... but I don't like to see you like this.

(MORE)

ENZO (CONT'D)

(beat)

You know I didn't acquire this business from my father. But it just seemed logical that my son would acquire it from me. Anthony's not here no more.

(swallows)

You two are all I got.

He lets the words sit for a moment.

ENZO (CONT'D)

Now, if you excuse me...

(the Rubik's Cube)

I would like to get back to this thing, 'cause it's makin' me fuckin' crazy.

Paulie begins to stand...

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE ENZO'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paulie comes out of the office, Victor right behind him. Paulie begins to make his way down the hall without acknowledging Victor...

VICTOR

Paulie, wait.

Paulie stops and turns, holds his hands out as if to say, "What?".

VICTOR (CONT'D)

I don't want you to walk outta here with the wrong idea...

PAULIE

No. I think I pretty much got the right idea.

VICTOR

Paulie, look...

(hesitates)

Enzo's not... He's losin' it, Paulie.

PAULIE

Don't start with that...

VICTOR

You don't see him every day, Paulie. He hasn't been fine since Anthony died. You saw him in there with that stupid puzzle thing... he's like a kid. It's makin' him crazy? It's makin' me crazy!

PAULIE

Everyone grieves in different ways, Victor. He lost his son, for cryin' out loud. I mean, our kids are a lot younger, but have you even stopped to imagine...?

Paulie obviously has. Victor almost looks ashamed.

PAULIE (CONT'D)
He's just grievin', Victor. That's all.

VICTOR
I know. But it's just gettin'...
I'm just sayin'... Enzo's not...
(as if conceding)
At some point... somebody's gonna
have to hold this thing together.
And I don't think I can do it. Not
with the people we have.

Paulie scowls.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Can you, Paulie?

PAULIE
Of course.

VICTOR
Yeah?

PAULIE
Yeah.
(calmly but adamant)
And that's all I'm gonna say about
it, Victor.

Victor sighs, frustrated, but backs off. Paulie turns...

VICTOR
Hey... another thing.

PAULIE
What?

VICTOR
You, uh... seen my sister lately?

PAULIE
(shrugs)
Last night, she stopped by.

VICTOR
She's been stoppin' by a lot.

PAULIE
She comes by.

VICTOR
To see Fredo.

PAULIE
Victor, that's none of my business.
I know she's your sister and you
have concerns. I understand that.
But don't ask me about it.

Victor nods, accepting Paulie's position on the matter.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

Besides, I got Nardo with my sister,
so you're not gettin' any sympathy
from me.

They both actually smile. We see signs of an old friendship.

VICTOR

Look, Paulie... I just wanna make
sure that we keep doin' ok.

PAULIE

(very matter-of-factly)
Then keep doin' what Enzo needs you
to do, and stay outta my way.

He turns to leave again... and this time, with no resistance.