

# LEVELING UP

By

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# Leveling Up

## CAST BREAKDOWN:

IAN: Early 20's. Awesome gamer – Nevada State champ. A bit of a nerd. Very bright.

CHUCK: Ian's roommate. Early 20's. All around good guy.

ZANDER: Ian's other roommate. Early 20's. Very good looking. A bit of a wheeler dealer.

JEANNIE: Zan's girlfriend. Very sweet and innocent. Excellent student. 21

LEVELING UP is played in 10 Scenes without an intermission.

All action takes place in Ian, Chuck, and Zan's basement game room, save Scene 8, when we see Ian at work.

A slash / in a line indicates overlap -- where there is a / next character begins speaking

IAN, ZANDER, AND CHUCK'S APT. THEY LIVED THERE AS COLLEGE ROOMMATES AND, TWO YEARS INTO "REAL LIFE" REMAIN THERE. WE ARE IN THE BASEMENT GAMEROOM WHERE THEY SPEND NEARLY 20 HOURS A DAY. THERE ARE NO WINDOWS. THERE ARE 2 CHAIRS AND A COUCH FACING THE AUDIENCE AND EVERY TYPE OF GAMING EQUIPMENT IMAGINABLE -- ROCK BAND AND GUITAR HERO CONTROLLERS, RACING CAR STEERING WHEEL CONSOLE, COMPUTERS. WE DO NOT SEE THE FOURTH WALL OF MONITORS, BUT WE SEE THEIR REFLECTIVE GLOW.

As the audience filters in, Zander, Ian, Chuck and Jeannie are already playing, as they have been for hours. Zander has the steering wheel, playing a racing game. Chuck plays guitar hero. Jeannie is doing Dance Dance revolution. Ian is playing a World of Warcraft-type fantasy game on a computer keyboard. They each wear headphones, so they interact only with their individual screens, very intently. When the audience is in place, the lights fade.

## SCENE 1

(Lights up on Jeannie and Chuck, seated on the couch with xbox controllers in their hands. They are playing a Call of Duty-type war game and are deeply engaged in a military operation. Chuck is intent on the game and delighted to be teaching the prettiest girl who has ever come to their basement. Their speech is high energy -- they sometimes strain to be heard over the game, which we may or may not hear.)

JEANNIE

Because... I should live first.

CHUCK

Right?

JEANNIE

Get some real life experience. With actual kids.

CHUCK

Real life. Totally.

JEANNIE

But of course, my parents are like -- what? I mean, everybody in my family went to med school -- my siblings/ and my...

CHUCK

Cool. Move around to the other side of the roof. I'm gonna shoot that guy. Please head shot, please head shot. YES!

Ewwww. That was... JEANNIE

HA! Awesome, right? CHUCK

Ok... (Laughing) JEANNIE

Try to stay behind me. CHUCK

Yeah. JEANNIE

(They play for a beat.)  
So I'm taking the MCATS in case I want to be a psychiatrist eventually, but really, I'm like -- why? To dole out pills? When what I really want is to interact with actual kids/ you know?

Totally. CHUCK

In troubled neighborhoods. See what it's like in the trenches. JEANNIE

Right. Watch out here, we're surrounded. CHUCK

Not that there aren't plenty of troubled kids in regular schools, but if I go to some troubled neighborhoods, I think could really make a/ difference. JEANNIE

Ya. Troubled neighborhoods -- totally where you find the troubled kids. CHUCK

I mean, when you were in middle school, would /you have... JEANNIE

Let's go to that other rooftop. CHUCK

Oh. How do I... JEANNIE

CHUCK

You make him jump with this. See?

JEANNIE

Cool.

(They go to the other rooftop)

Would you have ever gone to your school psychologist with a real problem?

CHUCK

Nah.

JEANNIE

No way, right? And I so want to be that person, you know? Who /the kids feel..

CHUCK

Sure. Push this. To jump.

JEANNIE

...they can come to.

CHUCK

When they're troubled. Right.

JEANNIE

Does that sounds stupid? Like who the hell/ am I that

CHUCK

No! Not at all. Jump! Now! Jump!

(He pushes the button on her controller.)

JEANNIE

Oh! Thanks.

CHUCK

Sure. No. It's totally awesome that you care. I mean so few people/ really care.

JEANNIE

I do. I love kids. I really want to help.

(She shoots one of their own.)

CHUCK

Ahhh!

JEANNIE

Oh no! Sorry.

CHUCK

(Trying not to be upset.)

No. It's cool.

JEANNIE

O.M.G. I just shot down one of /our own.

CHUCK

Happens all the time dude. Friendly fire. You're gonna lose some points though.

JEANNIE

(She laughs)

One of our own. I can't believe I'm even playing this!

CHUCK

You're doing great.

JEANNIE

Thanks. Did you apply to grad schools?/When you finished...

CHUCK

Nah.

Stay behind debris and stuff, ok? Did you see that sniper? You almost got shot.

JEANNIE

Oops. Sorry.

CHUCK

No. You're doing great.

JEANNIE

Thanks for killing him.

CHUCK

Call of duty baby.

JEANNIE

Hah!

CHUCK

I got your back.

(Ian enters, extremely agitated.)

Hey. Where's Zander?

IAN

Hi Ian.

JEANNIE

E-man! You were out! In the real world!

CHUCK

Have you seen him?  
Jeannie?!

IAN

He was supposed to be here like...

JEANNIE

Where is he?!

(Texting Zan)

IAN

(They witness a crash.)

Noooooo!!!

CHUCK AND JEANNIE

I've been texting him for an hour.

IAN

(He exits to the back room.)

Hey. That guy came back again. He was asking some /crazy-ass things...

CHUCK

(Calling to Ian)

Oh no! Chuck!

JEANNIE

Ouch. Sorry dude.

CHUCK

You hit me!

JEANNIE

Shit. We need to find a tank and get out of here.

CHUCK

But I'm... I'm dead now. JEANNIE

Look. You're fine./ See? CHUCK

What? JEANNIE

Pick yourself up. Dust yourself off... CHUCK

Oh. Cool! (Laughing) JEANNIE

(Reentering) IAN  
When is he getting here??

(Laughing too) CHUCK  
Follow me.

Jeannie? Did you say? IAN

He was supposed to be here, like... JEANNIE  
(The screen)

Yikes!  
...like hours ago. Why?

(To Jeannie) CHUCK  
Nice save.

Thanks. JEANNIE

(To Ian) CHUCK  
Dude, that suit came by again.



IAN  
(His phone)  
God, Zan! Pick up!

JEANNIE  
Who came by?

CHUCK  
This creepy army dude is stalking Ian.

JEANNIE  
What? Someone from /the army...

IAN  
(Very important -- to impress Jeannie)  
N.S.A.

CHUCK  
He's come like three times. Only when Ian is out. Which is like, never, so it's /totally...

JEANNIE  
Wait. What?

CHUCK  
They called his parents. His old professors. Uncle Sam wants you dude. Bad.

JEANNIE  
What do they want?

IAN  
Now they want another interview. It's bogus.

JEANNIE  
The army wants you? For a job?

IAN  
NSA. Yup.

JEANNIE  
O.M.G., what job?

IAN  
If I tell you I'll have to kill you.

CHUCK

Are you gonna go? For the interview?

IAN

Nah.

CHUCK

Fuck, The National Security Agency? You should go dude.

IAN

(Notices their game – forgets everything else)

Holy shit. Is that Final Kill III?

CHUCK

Oh yeah, baby.

IAN

That's not out till next week!

CHUCK

Maybe for you.

IAN

How'd you get that? They broke the street date?

CHUCK

I have my ways.

IAN

Stellar graphics.

CHUCK

Right?

(Some catastrophe)

IAN

Ooooo. Epic fail. You guys suck.

JEANNIE

(Laughing)

We do/ We really do.

CHUCK

Well, Jeannie sucks.

JEANNIE

Shut up. Why do you /need Zander?

CHUCK

Nooooob. [like rube] Bringing me down to your level.

IAN

He fucking sold my Exponent Potency Mask of the Algorithm.

CHUCK

What?

IAN

On e-bay.

CHUCK

Holy shit.

JEANNIE

Your... Exponent...?

IAN

He auctioned it off.

CHUCK

No way.

JEANNIE

What's an /Ex....?

CHUCK

Exponent Potency Mask of the Algorithm. It's this friggin' awesome, virtual... How much he get for it?

IAN

Last time I give that asshole my code.

JEANNIE

Z wouldn't do that -- sell your...

IAN

I have the check. He fucking left me a check. He kept ten percent, and wrote me a check for the rest.

CHUCK

How much?

It's shit, man.

IAN

How much shit?

CHUCK

Nine.

(He kicks the table ineffectually)

Dammit!

He got ten k for that thing?

CHUCK

Wait. Ten thousand? Dollars?

JEANNIE

Dude. That's awesome.

CHUCK

Real American dollars? Ten thousand real American dollars?

JEANNIE

I mean, isn't that awesome?

CHUCK

For a make believe mask?

JEANNIE

IAN

(Deeply insulted.)

Make believe?? That was a level thirty Exponent Potency Mask of the Algorithm. That mask -- you put on that mask and you could do anything. Be anyone. Plus 53 Stamina. Plus 42 Agility. Increases your critical strike by ninety-fucking-seven. You know how many quests I won to level it up that high? You put on that mask, you enter the Jingpo Pakosphere, and you can defeat anyone.

(Zander enters. He is all American good looking.)

ZANDER

All hail the conquering hero! I come bearing beer!

(He goes to put it in the mini-frig.)

Asshole!

IAN

ZANDER  
Whoa. Ian. Did you see what I got you?

IAN  
I saw what you left me.

ZANDER  
Well, yeah, I took a percentage.

IAN  
Stole.

ZANDER  
Dude. It's a broker's fee. I mean, it's going to you for rent anyway, right?

JEANNIE  
Hey babe.

(Zander goes over and kisses her.)

ZANDER  
Chuckstein. [like Einstein]

CHUCK  
Hey.

IAN  
You owe me twenty thousand dollars, Zander.

ZANDER  
What?

CHUCK  
Whoa.

IAN  
That was a year's work there. That fucking mask is worth thirty k.

CHUCK  
Holy shit.

JEANNIE  
Wait. /What?

ZANDER

No Ian no. I asked around. I mean, I didn't sell to the first guy. I got offered 5k at first. I bargained it up. You should have seen /me. I...

IAN

I could have sold that mask for thirty thousand dollars. I would have lived off it... for like, FOREVER! And now -- how the hell am I gonna see that money? *You're* never gonna get it! God!

CHUCK

Dude. Chill.

ZANDER

That mask was worth thirty? No way.

IAN

A guy in China just got 30k for a mask that didn't have half the powers of my mask.

ZANDER

Wow E, I'm totally sorry. You should have said something. I mean, I had no idea it was worth thirty. Wow. I mean /are you sure...

IAN

Said something? Said -- "oh, by the way, please don't go sneaking into my account which I entrusted the code to you, and steal my mask?" Gee. It never occurred to me to tell you that. Next time I'll remember. /Thanks. Good advice.

ZANDER

You were going to get thirty for that mask? That's insane dude. That's totally/ insane.

IAN

What's insane is that you sold it for nothing. Dammit.

(He kicks the chair, ineffectually)

CHUCK

Easy on the chair E. Innocent bystander.

JEANNIE

(To Zander)

Call the guy back. The guy you sold it to. Tell him it was a mistake.

ZANDER

Babe.

JEANNIE

If you explain to him that it wasn't really your mask... maybe he'll understand.

IAN

And he'll just offer to pay an extra twenty grand.

JEANNIE

It's worth a try.

IAN

What planet do you live on?

CHUCK

Ian.

ZANDER

Oh God. I'm so sorry dude. Wow. Here, I thought I was gonna like... surprise you that I got this crazy dude/ to pay...

IAN

Yeah. I'm surprised.

JEANNIE

Well, it's virtual, right? It's in a game? Can you make another one?

IAN

Make another one.

JEANNIE

I mean, you did it once, /right?

IAN

Do you know what it takes to get to that level? Only one other person in the WORLD has gotten to that level. And it was the guy in China. And he sold it for 30k. By the time I get there again, plenty of people will have gotten there and it's going to be worth shit. You're all so/... ignorant.

ZANDER

Hey. Come on.

IAN

You are. You're..

(It's pointless. Kicks the chair and hurts himself.)

Whatever. Ow. Forget it.

(He sits down in his chair and fires up the screen. Begins playing during this.)

CHUCK  
He'll get you the money.

IAN  
Right.

CHUCK  
(To Zander)  
Dude. You have to get him that money.

IAN  
Forget it, Chuck.

JEANNIE  
No. He will. Right hon?

ZANDER  
Yeah, wow. I mean, I had no idea it was worth that much. /Are you sure...

JEANNIE  
But you have to. Pay him back.

ZANDER  
Ok, I will.

IAN  
Jeannie. He doesn't do anything. Don't you get that?

ZANDER  
What is that supposed to mean?

JEANNIE  
He does things.

IAN  
Ummm... no.

JEANNIE  
He'll get a job, right babe? He'll pay you back a little at a time.

IAN  
Uh huh.



Right babe?  
JEANNIE

Ou....ch. [a bomb exploding at the end.]  
CHUCK

Right.  
ZANDER

What job? Ahhh! Forget it.  
IAN

He's had jobs. Right Z?  
JEANNIE

Yeah, the thing is, with a job, you kind of have to show up.  
CHUCK

He gets money off his parents. Don't you know that? All through school while I was here working...  
IAN

Working?  
ZANDER

His parents just sent him money.  
IAN

Not any more!  
ZANDER

Yeah, I noticed.  
IAN

(To Zan)  
JEANNIE  
Why don't you sell things too? Masks and... swords or whatnot. There must be other things worth a lot, I mean, you play tons...

Jeannie. Dude. Zan is totally not at that level.  
CHUCK

Hey. Look. I'm plenty /respectable.  
ZANDER

CHUCK

I mean, nothing personal dude, but that shit that Ian does, what he's capable of.. that's like... it's like not even human. It's like not even in the same universe.

ZANDER

I've leveled up. Plenty. I was on level 37. On Quasar B. I had three level 70s with six more alts in the 30-45 range. But you know, I play a variety of games and /Ian just...

CHUCK

No way. Ian is like an artist. He's a total Nevcom genius.

JEANNIE

Yeah?

CHUCK

He was Nevada champion two years in a row. You didn't know that?

JEANNIE

Wow.

CHUCK

Nevada State Champion.

(To Zander)

You didn't tell her that dude?

ZANDER

Yeah /I did.

JEANNIE

Wow. No.

CHUCK

You are like, in the presence of greatness here.

IAN

(flattered)

Shut up.

CHUCK

I'm serious dude. We are not worthy.

ZANDER

Well, excuse me if I'm not at his level, but, you know, I have a life. I don't play twenty hours a day.

CHUCK  
You kinda do man.

ZANDER  
I have a real life in the real world.

IAN  
What? What is your real life? You can't even pay rent. I've been buying all the food.

ZANDER  
I just bought beer!

IAN  
What is your life? What do you do?

ZANDER  
I have a girlfriend.

IAN  
What does that mean? You're good at... what?

CHUCK  
Getting a girlfriend!

JEANNIE  
Ummm... I'm right here, so...

ZANDER  
That's more than you dude. I mean, where's your girlfriend?

JEANNIE  
Guys.

ZANDER  
Have you ever had a girlfriend?

CHUCK  
That's cold, Zan.

IAN  
You're saying you're superior to me because you have a girlfriend.

ZANDER  
No. I'm saying I have a LIFE because I have a girlfriend.

IAN

(Stymied)  
What the fuck. Who has been CARRYING you?

ZANDER

What?

IAN

I have been fucking CARRYING you on my back since college.

ZANDER

That's bullshit.

IAN

Did you pay last month's rent?

ZANDER

I just left you a check.

IAN

YOU LEFT ME A CHECK OFF THE MONEY YOU STOLE FROM ME!

CHUCK

Owned!

IAN

You owe me last month's rent and next month's rent.

ZANDER

That's your real life. You're a slumlord.

IAN

Are you fucking out of your mind? I was stupid enough to put my name on the lease because I didn't expect you to welch out on me and then /steal my mask!

JEANNIE

Guys. Stop. Come on. You're best friends. Stop it.

ZANDER

Ian dude. I'm sorry about the mask. That was totally fucked of me and I'm sorry. I'll get you that money. I will. I'll... somehow I'll get it.

JEANNIE

Of course you will. Of course you'll pay him back. You're friends. That's what's really important.

CHUCK

Totally.

JEANNIE

This was a terrible mistake, but Zander will make it up to you. You guys should just like, go out for a beer or something, you know? Or a movie? Get outside and hang out, right?

CHUCK

Outside?

IAN

I'm meeting a bunch of guys on Paraquad. But thanks.

JEANNIE

Online?

(Ian fires up his game . Chuck and Zan are mesmerized watching him play.)

Let's all get out in the fresh air. Go for a walk or something. We'll all feel better.

(Pause. They don't even hear her.)

I was reading in my Psych 3 about internet addiction, which I'm *not* saying you have -- at *all*, I'm just saying they think it's associated with reduced levels of dopaminergic receptor availability in the striatum. Which basically means, it can make you like totally depressed.

CHUCK

Huh. That's really interesting.

JEANNIE

Dopamine is a powerful drug.

ZANDER

That's fascinating babe. Maybe you're depressed E-man.

IAN

(Playing intently.)

I'm depressed you fucking gave away my fucking mask for fucking nothing!

ZANDER

Yeah, but listen -- Jeannie's right. You do take this whole gaming thing too seriously man.

IAN

What??

ZANDER

You need more dopamine. You're all uptight because you have nothing real in your life. You need to get off the screen. For your own good. You need to get a life man.

IAN

I have --- ALL OF THIS

(pointing to all the equipment)

I bought -- ALL OF THIS. With gaming money, with tournament money, with money I EARN. Leveling up other people, selling swords, magna clubs...

ZANDER

Out of this box, I mean. You have nothing /out of this...

IAN

And you play it. You play all of it as much as I do. You play all day and all night and you don't sleep and you forget to go to work and you stand up your girlfriend and all your "real life" things that are so fantastic, because you play as much as I do. More. But you are BAD at it. If I put in as many hours as you do at something, and I was still bad at it, I'd freaking kill myself.

(There is a silence. Everyone is shocked by the force of that statement.)

ZANDER

Wow.

JEANNIE

He's just upset honey. We /should all...

ZANDER

No. I'm done. That's fine. That's cool. I'm done. I'm not playing any more.

CHUCK

Dude. Don't even say that.

ZANDER

I don't need to play your shit.

IAN

Good. Go get some dopamine.

CHUCK

What will you play, dude? I mean, I have the Wii. You're always welcome to...

ZANDER

And I don't need to live here.

Whatever. IAN

Yo. Cool out. This is totally extreme. CHUCK

I'll get my own place. ZANDER

Great. IAN

Come on. CHUCK

ZANDER  
(To Jeannie)  
Or I can move in with you. Wouldn't that be awesome? If we...

JEANNIE  
Well... my roommates would kind/ of freak if...

CHUCK  
Hey. Come on. Let's just chill. How about some Ramen noodles?

(Pause.)

Guys?  
I'll cook.

ZANDER  
Look. I'll find a way to pay you back.

IAN  
Yeah.

ZANDER  
No. I will. I'm sorry. I didn't think... I didn't know it was worth that much.

IAN  
It was the whole breaking into my system and...

ZANDER  
No. No, I know. I'll never... That was fucked up. I'm sorry.

Ok. IAN

Yeah? We're cool? ZANDER

(Pause)

I have a life. IAN

Ok. ZANDER

I do. I have... people... in my life. IAN  
(Referring to the screen)

Those people are...

Well... ZANDER

What? IAN

They're not real. This is what we're saying. ZANDER

They're not real people. Playing. On their systems. Just like I am. Those are not real people. IAN

The gamers are real but you don't actually know them. I mean, dude, you don't actually ever leave this room. ZANDER

I do so. IAN

Well... not really. I mean, barely. ZANDER

(There is a beat as they all process that.)



IAN

(Referring to outside)

What makes that so much better?

CHUCK

Uh... reality dude.

IAN

No really, why should I do that instead of this?

JEANNIE

Ian, you can't spend your whole life playing games.

IAN

I am making a living. A real living. Most people spend fifty hours a week at some job they freakin' hate and go home to people they find boring and it's the same fucking thing day after day...

JEANNIE

But it doesn't have to be that. Real life can have meaning, Ian. Striving for some goal, that will bring, you know... satisfaction, and, and joy, and...

IAN

Where's the epic win in life?

There's no epic win. Ever.

JEANNIE

Epic win?

IAN

Where's the noble quest that requires a band of really smart, capable people.

CHUCK

Or Klarnogs, or Santorgs.

IAN

Those people I work with -- those people -- I can choose who I am, who I want to be --I can be myself with those people.

CHUCK

Or a Klarnog. Or a Santorg.

IAN

They don't care what I look like here. They don't want to make idiotic small talk about things I don't care about or know about -- all that superficial crap. It's not about that there. They show up and they work at optimum capacity so we can all achieve our goals.

Fucking awesome talented, smart -- Those are my people. That's who I spend my time with.

You may think it's less real because they're not here in this room, but that just shows your limitations, not mine. Those people I play with -- none of them would ever use my code and break in and...

ZANDER

Fuck! I said I was sorry!! And you don't know that. You don't know a fucking thing about those people.

IAN

I know them better than I know you.

JEANNIE

Wow.

CHUCK

E.

(Pause)

JEANNIE

Ian, finding someone to love is like that epic win, you know? Thrilling, surprising things can happen, Ian. Really. Any day something amazing might happen if you just go out and look for it. That day Zan asked me out...

ZAN

Aww babe.

(He kisses her.  
Chuck makes a gagging noise)

JEANNIE

You need to go out and find someone who makes you feel like life is worth living.

(Pause. Ian is struck hard by this.)

ZANDER

Dude. Ian. I'm sorry, man. I am.

IAN

Uh huh.

ZANDER

And I will. Pay you back. Get a... job. I will. A real job.

IAN

Ya. Me too. I can get a real job.

CHUCK

What?

IAN

I'm going to get a real job. In the real world. Faster than you.

ZANDER

You are?

IAN

Yeah. I'm going to fucking get that job with the N.S.A.

## SCENE 2

(Jeannie and Chuck have begun a role-playing game. He has her keyboard, creating her character.)

JEANNIE

Isn't it depressing?

CHUCK

You've never been?

JEANNIE

Nah.

CHUCK

You live in Vegas and you've never gone? Dude.

JEANNIE

I just turned twenty-one.

CHUCK

Congrats! You're a grown-up.

JEANNIE

(Laughing)

Hah! Like you're a grown-up.

CHUCK

You've got to come in some time. I'll show you around.

JEANNIE

Don't you see awful things? People losing everything...

CHUCK

It's pretty intense.

(The screen)

There.

JEANNIE

That haircut is so cute! I love it.

CHUCK

Good. Now we have to dress you.

JEANNIE

I'm dressed.

CHUCK

That's standard issue. We'll find something that's more "you".

JEANNIE

Oh! Fun!

So why did you choose black jack? Or do they/choose for you?

CHUCK

I used to deal Roulette, but I hated it. It was all luck. And these guys come in, they think they've got a strategy, I'm like, dude -- wake up. There is no strategy. That was sad.

Here, I'll give you some credits.

JEANNIE

What's that? Can't I earn them?

CHUCK

Don't worry. You'll pay me back. Mwah hah hah.

JEANNIE

Yikes.

Ok. You have 200.

CHUCK

Wow. That's a lot. Are you sure...

JEANNIE

(Laughing)  
You don't even know what they are!

CHUCK

Ok ok.

JEANNIE

Here. Let me take you to the store.

CHUCK

So isn't black jack just luck?

JEANNIE

Yeah, but there's skill too. And these guys, card counters, try to beat the system, and every once in a while they do. I like that. It's a real game, you know? If you can't win, it's not a real game.

CHUCK

But working all night. Don't you lose track of...

JEANNIE

Yeah. Totally. No windows. No clocks. The drinks are flowing. It's the twilight zone.

CHUCK

(The basement)  
It's like down here.

JEANNIE

Hah! Right!

CHUCK

(The game)  
OK. So now what do I do?

JEANNIE

Let's shop. Here. Stop me when you see a top you like.

CHUCK

JEANNIE

Ok.

So, is there something else you want to do? Like a career or... I mean, do you have plans?

CHUCK

Nope. Stop me when you see one.

JEANNIE

No. Eww. No. No. Stop! That's cute!

CHUCK

What??

JEANNIE

Why not?

CHUCK

Too frumpy.

JEANNIE

It's a peasant blouse.

CHUCK

Let's keep looking.

JEANNIE

Fine.

No. No.

CHUCK

Ahhhh! Yes!

JEANNIE

Chuck!

CHUCK

What??

JEANNIE

I'm not gonna wear that!

CHUCK

Jeannie. This is a chance to expand your comfort zone. Risk free. What color do you like?

Blue. JEANNIE

Which blue? Here, let me show you. CHUCK

This is so goofy. I don't even like shopping in life. JEANNIE

What kind of chick are you? CHUCK

Shut up. That's good. I like that one. JEANNIE

Peacock, eh? Awesome. You're going to look hot in that. CHUCK

Maybe my character isn't hot. JEANNIE

I have a feeling she's way hot. Skirt or jeans. Or shorts? CHUCK

What do you like? JEANNIE

Up to you. CHUCK

Oh, now it's up to me? JEANNIE

It's always up to you. I'm just the facilitator. CHUCK

Skirt. JEANNIE

Excellent choice. CHUCK

That one. That's cute. JEANNIE

Jeannie. CHUCK

Yeah? JEANNIE

My grandmother has a skirt like that. CHUCK

This is what... Daphne likes. JEANNIE

Ahhh.. Daphne. Hot name. CHUCK

Who are you? JEANNIE

I'm Earl. CHUCK

HAH! Earl!?! JEANNIE

I think Daphne would wear... this skirt. CHUCK

Daphne would not leave the house in that skirt. JEANNIE

Maybe she's staying in today. CHUCK

Chuck. JEANNIE

It's totally hot. CHUCK  
How about these shoes?

(Laughing) JEANNIE  
You're either a secret cross-dresser or a pimp.

Hah! CHUCK



JEANNIE

Earl totally wants to be Daphne's pimp.

CHUCK

Earl respects Daphne and wants her to feel good about herself. In whatever clothes he chooses. Here's a cute little handbag.

JEANNIE

Oh my God.

CHUCK

Wow. You look awesome.

JEANNIE

Don't let Daphne's mom see her in that outfit.

CHUCK

Daphne's mom lives like four hundred miles away. In... Fresno.

JEANNIE

Daphne did not grow up in Fresno!

CHUCK

Daphne is new in town. And Earl is going to show her around.

(Chuck hands the keyboard back to Jeannie and picks up his own.)

JEANNIE

I want to be someone else. You keep Daphne. I want to make up my own person.

CHUCK

Look, later you can pick out some things for Earl. Though, I have kind of an extensive wardrobe already.

JEANNIE

(Laughing)

This is what you do when the guys are out.

CHUCK

Come to Earl's pad, Daphne.

JEANNIE

I don't think I should.

CHUCK

You definitely should.

JEANNIE

Well, only for a few minutes. I need to study before my Adolescent Psychology class.

CHUCK

Blow it off.

JEANNIE

Noooo. Hey. Nice place, Earl.

CHUCK

Thanks. Have a seat. On the couch. I'll get you something to drink.

JEANNIE

I like your artwork.

CHUCK

Cost a fortune. Earl has expensive taste.

JEANNIE

Not in girls.

CHUCK

Hah. Here you go.

JEANNIE

(Laughing)

Martinis?? Who are you?

CHUCK

Cheers.

(He types something.)

JEANNIE

Why type -- it's just easier to talk.

CHUCK

But that's Earl talking.

(Jeannie laughs, and then types. He types something back. It is very suggestive. She looks at him, surprised.)

JEANNIE

Chuck!

CHUCK

Earl. Type it.

(She does. He types back. She types back something that surprises him. She is starting to play along. He looks at her. She looks at him, then back at the screen. Types again. He's amazed. And excited. He types back quickly. Then she does. They are both getting very aroused. He types.)

JEANNIE

No.

CHUCK

No?

JEANNIE

That's... we shouldn't.

CHUCK

We're not. They are.

(She types something. He laughs and types back. She pauses. Considers this. Types again.)

Mmmmm. Wow. Babe.

JEANNIE

Type it.

(He does. They have moved a bit closer on the couch, but are very tense about what is happening between them. They are breathing heavily. Typing fast and furious, over each other. More and more intense.)

How do I make her move?

(He shows her on her controller.)

How do I move her leg?

(He shows her.)

How do I move her hand?

(He shows her. She moves her character.)

CHUCK

Oh my God.

(They stop typing and just move their characters and watch, transfixed. They each occasionally involuntarily moan. This goes on for several moments.)

(Zander bursts in with a large box.. They quickly fumble with their controllers in a panic, turn off the screen. Jeannie jumps up quickly, guiltily.)

ZANDER

I have had the most fan-fucking-tastic day!

(He grabs Jeannie and gives her a long kiss, which is awkward for her and for Chuck.)

ZANDER

Man! Anybody want a beer?

(He goes to the fridge.)

CHUCK

Sure dude. Thanks.

ZANDER

Hey babe, you want?

JEANNIE

(Still flustered.)

Hey! No. Thanks. I should go... study.

ZANDER

Blow it off. You don't need to study any more. You're going to be a millionaire.

JEANNIE

What happened?

CHUCK

Did a rich uncle die?

ZANDER

(Bringing over the beers)

I went to this seminar today. What is today? Mark this day on the calendar! I went to this seminar that is going to fucking change our lives.

JEANNIE

Wow.

CHUCK

Is this a cult, Z? Do we need to deprogram you? Exorcism?

ZANDER

Joke on funny boy. This is easy easy money.

CHUCK

Ruh roh.

ZANDER

Where's Ian?

CHUCK

Off peeing in a cup.

ZANDER

Shit. I want him to hear this too. Oh well.

(Going through the box)

It's called -- Proneutra. It's this awesome supplement... but that's just the... the physical product. The thing you can hold. What it really is, it's a way of life.

JEANNIE

Yeah? I thought you had a job interview.

ZANDER

Baby, this is so much bigger than that. I'm not going to work for anyone else ever again.

CHUCK

Again? When /did you ever...

ZANDER

I'm the head of my own company now. And I can bring in everybody. I want all the people I care about to get in on this while it's in its early stages. The ground floor. Because, over time, all it does is grow.

CHUCK

Like this?

(He makes a pyramid with his hands.)

ZANDER

Listen. It's like capital. Eventually, it just grows by itself, while you're not even looking. You find other people, other... entrepreneurs, who want to own something, be part of something big, like yourselves...

(Chuck looks behind him)

ZANDER

And you get them in on it. And then they get their friends on board...

CHUCK

It's a pyramid scheme.

ZANDER

God Chuck! I knew you would say that. No! It's NOT. Ok, it is, but so what – it's a fucking awesome product. It's...

(He grabs a brochure and consults it.)

...multi-level marketing. Here -- look at the literature. Don't go judging it, bringing all this negativity to it, until you read it. And try the stuff. They gave me one supplement, early in the day. And look at me.

JEANNIE

Yeah?

ZANDER

Don't I look different to you?

JEANNIE

Maybe...

ZANDER

I feel totally different. I feel powerful, Babe. I feel like I could take on the world. And they have supplements for everything. I mean, you gear it to the client's specific needs. Does he want to boost energy, endurance, brain function, metabolism,

(Glancing at the brochure)

anaerobic threshold -- see? It's scientific man. It's totally... You have to read the materials.

(He's back to rifling through the box he brought in.)

JEANNIE

So... it's vitamins. Right? Are you selling... ?

ZANDER

But it's not. Or it is, but it's way more than that. Once I get some more training -- they have these periodic...

(Ian enters during this. He is wearing a short sleeve button-down shirt and a tie, which he takes off.)

CHUCK

E-man. Dude. How'd it go?

(Ian sits right down at his computer and starts playing.)

IAN

Hey guys.

CHUCK

Did you get the job? What is the job?

IAN

They're still trying to establish whether I'm a psychopath. And whether my blood and urine are government quality.

CHUCK

And what's the verdict? Psychopath or just sociopath?

JEANNIE

Did they tell you? What the job is?

IAN

They were commendably vague. Chaney vague.

CHUCK

How did they find you? I mean, why you?

IAN

My mad gaming skills and Ninja reflexes.

ZANDER

Dude. Fuck working for the government. I've got this opportunity for you. For all of us.

IAN

Yeah?

CHUCK

Zan's joined a cult.

ZANDER

Shut the fuck up.

(He goes to the box and pulls out a few bottles of pills.)

Here. Ian. Take this. You'll feel fantastic.

IAN  
Drug dealer? This is the opportunity?

ZANDER  
Just take one.

IAN  
Is the first one free?

CHUCK  
(Laughing)  
Fail Z!

ZANDER  
Just try it.

CHUCK  
Epic fail.

IAN  
Dude. I'm going to be peeing in cups for the next year. No thanks.

ZANDER  
It's good for you man.

IAN  
Is this nine to five drug dealing? What are they paying you?

ZANDER  
It's not that kind of job.

IAN  
The kind where they pay you?

ZANDER  
Stop for a minute and look at the literature.

(He holds out the brochures which Ian ignores, as he's still madly playing)  
Come on. These supplements are cutting-edge...

IAN  
Dude. Vitamins are an illusion. They don't do anything. It's proven. All they give you is expensive pee.



CHUCK

Man, you are totally obsessed with pee now.

IAN

Where are you going to peddle your wares? Besides this apartment?

ZANDER

Well, I only have samples now. But once I get five more people to sell, they'll give me the product.

JEANNIE

You have to get other people to sell in order to sell?

ZANDER

Well, with you three on-board, I only need two more.

JEANNIE

And then we would have to get five more people to sell? Each?

IAN

You're catching on.

JEANNIE

I don't know Babe.

CHUCK

I totally know. I'm out. But, umm... thanks for thinking of me.

IAN

Dude! It's a scam!

ZANDER

You're so closed minded. This is going to be one of those things where, ten years from now when I'm on my yacht and sending you postcards from Barbados or wherever, you're going to be thinking -- damn, I could have been in on that at the beginning, but I was a total asshole.

CHUCK

You'd send me a postcard Z?

ZANDER

I'm serious guys. It's your loss.

JEANNIE

So... is that all? You have to get five people and then you get the product?

ZANDER

Just about. Hey, when's your next class babe?

JEANNIE

I've got Adolescent Psych at 5. I should really be studying.

ZANDER

Maybe I'll tag along -- if we go a little early I can talk to some of the kids. See if I can drum up some interest.

JEANNIE

Ok. I guess. I don't know if Professor Maxwell /would like...

ZANDER

Outside the class. I'm not an idiot. I'll just hang out with you outside the class before-hand. Cool?

JEANNIE

Ok. I guess.

ZANDER

Dana would be good at selling I think.

JEANNIE

Why Dana?

ZANDER

She looks kind of healthy and athletic. I'd buy vitamins off her.

JEANNIE

Dana?

CHUCK

Oh snap.

JEANNIE

I don't think she's ever worked out a day in her life.

ZANDER

Yeah? She's got that kind of athletic...

JEANNIE

I don't even think she owns sneakers.

ZANDER

Well, whoever you think, babe. You know them better than I do. But I'm raring to go! Should we head over?

JEANNIE

It's a little early. I should really study first.

ZANDER

We can hang at the library. While you study I can drum up some future...

CHUCK

Entrepreneurs. Like ourselves.

JEANNIE

Ok.

(He grabs her and gives her a long kiss)

Ok. I'll get my books together.

(She goes upstairs)

ZANDER

Cool. I'll be right up.

So Ian, I need you to do me a solid.

IAN

Zan. Give up. I'm not pushing your product.

ZANDER

Nooo. That's fucked up, but that's not it. See, there are some minor start-up fees/ just for the first...

CHUCK

Oh Shit! Dude!

ZANDER

No. Just to get started. I have to give them five hundred.

IAN

You have to pay them to sell their vitamins.

ZANDER

You just have to put money down to -- these vitamins are not like what you get at CVS dude. This is some highly developed, scientifically... developed shit. They can't just let you walk out the door with this valuable shit without something down.

IAN

No, dude. No.

ZANDER

I'm not asking for a handout E. I'm just saying, could you hold off cashing that check?

JEANNIE

(From offstage)

You coming Hon?

ZANDER

Ya. Right there Baby!

Thanks a million E. You'll see that money with interest, within a week. I'm sure of it.

(He runs upstairs. Chuck and Ian look at each other and crack up.)

CHUCK

Few rounds of Final Kill?

(He sits down and fires up the program)

IAN

Sure. What the fuck.

(They fire it up and begin maniacally pressing their controllers, transfixed on the screen. We hear the sounds of bombs, machine guns, screams, soldiers shouting.)

CHUCK

Is that an /RPG?

IAN

Dude, it's an RPG!! Fire!

CHUCK

Ahhhhhhh!

### SCENE 3

(Lights up on Zander, Jeannie and Chuck all playing very intently together. Probably a fantasy role-playing game)

JEANNIE

OMG. What is that thing?! Where did it come from?

CHUCK

Santorg. That club has death rays, so use your shield.

JEANNIE

Yikes.

CHUCK

He's a shape shifter. We've seen him before.

JEANNIE

A shape shifter?

ZANDER

Let's climb the back of that cliff. Come on, Babe.

CHUCK

Remember that chick with the same club? That was him.

JEANNIE

Why would he look like that when he could look like her?

(Ian comes bursting in, in high spirits)

IAN

Huzzah! Good day good peoples!

CHUCK

E-man! Grab a controller. We're about to battle a Santorg

JEANNIE

We are?

IAN

Cool.

(He grabs a controller and joins them.)

Why are we up this cliff?

JEANNIE

Wait. What time is it? Oh shit! I missed my Early Childhood Development class. Shit shit shit!

ZANDER

Babe, you're a senior. It doesn't matter any more.

JEANNIE

It does if I want to go to grad school. Oh shit.

ZANDER

You've got like a 3.9. Relax.

JEANNIE

We've been playing for four hours??

IAN

Stand back guys.

(He clearly brings out the heavy artillery. We hear roaring and then moaning from the Santorg as Ian slays him. They are done with this level and stop playing.)

CHUCK

Awesome dude.

JEANNIE

That was amazing. What was that thing -- like a lazar? Where did you get that?

CHUCK

Ian's leveled to 49. He's got all the fun toys.

ZANDER

He really shouldn't be on our quest. It's not right.

CHUCK

Why not?

ZANDER

He should be on his own quest. For his level.

CHUCK

That's bogus.

ZANDER

You should fight at your own level.

IAN

(He goes to his screen.)

It's cool. I need to clock in on Paraquad. Some dude in New York is paying me a buttload to get him achievements.

JEANNIE  
What does that mean?

IAN  
I sign in and level him up so he can play his little Wall Street friends and kick their butts.

JEANNIE  
You can play for someone else?

ZANDER  
It's wrong. It totally taints the games.

CHUCK  
Like you don't buy cheats.

ZANDER  
I don't man.

CHUCK  
Right.

ZANDER  
I don't. I wouldn't do that.

CHUCK  
Ok.

ZANDER  
I don't Chuck!

CHUCK  
OK Dude!

JEANNIE  
So, people pay you to play?

IAN  
To level them up.

JEANNIE  
Really?

IAN  
There are warehouses in China with kids playing all day and night to level up these crazy rich guys for like two hundred a week. I can make twice that easy.

JEANNIE

Wow.

CHUCK

And how was your day at the office dear?

IAN

It was totally outrageously awesome. I passed the wacko test, and now I'm officially employed. They're training me.

ZANDER

Doing what? Just tell us something dude. Training you to what?

IAN

Can't say. But I said on the polygraph that I haven't smoked pot in two years, and I passed. So... if someone calls...

CHUCK

Ha! Me too. No pot. No beer.  
(He downs his beer)

JEANNIE

My dad said they're training gamers to do remote missile launches of... /what is it?

IAN

Why did your dad say that?

JEANNIE

Oh, I told him about how you were interviewing with the NSA/ and he said that maybe...

IAN

You told him? Why would you tell him that? Shit. Why would you say that? To your dad?

JEANNIE

I'm sorry. I /didn't think that...

CHUCK

Chill dude.

IAN

What exactly did you tell him?



JEANNIE

I just said that you had an interview. I mean, that you were this amazing player. Gamer. And that you had this interview with the NSA. That's all. That's all I know. So...

IAN

And he said...

JEANNIE

And he said that maybe they were recruiting you. To do, you know, these remote missile things. Drones! That you were probably operating these drones.

CHUCK

Holy shit. Is that what you're doing, E?

ZANDER

Probably doing some desk job, and he's just trying to make it seem like he's hot/shit.

IAN

I'm not doing anything yet. I'm just in training. And don't say anything to anybody. Any of you. I mean it. I signed a stack of papers. That I'm not going to tell anyone, not even my family, what I'm doing. What they want me to do.

ZANDER

Yeah, you also said you haven't smoked pot.

IAN

Look. I want this thing. I want this job. You said I didn't have a real life, right? I should get a life. So now I have a real life, ok? A real job. That I go to every day. So just don't say anything more to anybody.

JEANNIE

I won't. I'm really sorry Ian. /I won't.

ZANDER

She fucking said she wouldn't asshole. You have to be so self important about this whole thing. It's so top secret. You signed a /fucking paper.

CHUCK

Wow, Ian. That's so cool. I mean, if that's what you're doing.

IAN

Yeah. It's pretty mind blowing. If that's what I'm doing.

CHUCK

They use you, I mean, these guys they hire, they use them even if they aren't military?

IAN

Well, I'm not the pilot. I'm the S.O. -- sensor operator. These awesome pilots who've had years and years in real combat, you know, on the actual field of play, they fly the plane, fire the missiles.

CHUCK

That is so unreal...

IAN

And then the sensor operators use these laser instruments to make sure it goes to its target. And aim these awesome million dollar cameras that can see fucking everything. So, of course they need people with top-notch skills, you know? Gamers, the top gamers, have awesome reflexes.

JEANNIE

My dad said... oh. Never mind. Sorry.

CHUCK

No, what? We're not talking about you, Ian, we're just talking about these guys, not you. I mean, if Jeannie's dad knows about it and he's a...

JEANNIE

Dentist.

CHUCK

He's a fucking dentist, then it can't be that top secret. Right?

IAN

How does your dad know all this?

JEANNIE

He like, read it in the paper. Sorry.

ZANDER

(Howling)

HAH!! He read it in the fucking paper! Pwnd [poned] Ian. It's so top secret! It's in the friggin news.

IAN

Did I say it was top secret?

ZANDER

What else did your dad read, Babe? In the fucking Reno Gazette Journal?

(Jeannie looks anxiously to Ian.)

IAN

It's cool. I mean, you can talk about what your dad read. It's got nothing to do with me.

JEANNIE

Well, he said most of the missile, or drone attacks in...

IAN

The Predator. And the Reaper is the new one.

CHUCK

Wow.

JEANNIE

in Afghanistan and Iraq...

IAN

UAVs. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles.

JEANNIE

Yeah. They're operated out of here, out of Nevada.

IAN

Creech

CHUCK

Cool.

IAN

Airforce Base.

JEANNIE

And that they use kids, gamers 'cause there's no way to train people as much as... I mean, no matter how much some pilot could train, he wouldn't have been putting in 20 hours a day for years and years.

IAN

Plus, they're running out of pilots. There are more unmanned vehicles than manned planes. It's insane. They need more people fast. They'll give me like thirty hours of flight training and then...

CHUCK

Holy shit!

ZANDER

How many guys do they need? Are they looking for more gamers?

CHUCK

(Laughing)

Z! You were just ragging on this whole situation. What about your business dude? You're your own boss, remember?

ZANDER

Hey, I totally don't need to work for the government. Clock in clock out. How many hours you work?

IAN

It's going to be fourteen hour days for a while.

CHUCK

Holy shit.

ZANDER

Fuck that! All I need is two more recruits and I get the product. Maybe Karen, right babe?

JEANNIE

I dunno.

CHUCK

But Ian, this thing is nuts. I mean, you have your hand on the button? What if you fuck up?

IAN

It's not like that. It takes like seventeen steps to fire anything. It would be pretty /hard to...

CHUCK

Holy shit. It's so outrageously cool. You're like a spy.

IAN

Did your dad read about this? For surveillance, they also have these cameras in like, little hand operated planes. Like remote control toys. Your dad read about this, right? I mean, this is general knowledge.

JEANNIE

I guess.

CHUCK

Sure he did.

IAN

And on the screen, it's so mind-blowingly cool -- it's like you can see everything. It's as good as any shooter game. Better.

CHUCK

Amazing. You are like, the luckiest dude in America.

ZANDER

What's the big deal? If it's just like the games. He's doing the same thing we're doing, but he has to drive fifty miles to do it.

CHUCK

It's REAL.

How long do you train? When do you start really bombing shit?

IAN

They don't tell you. You have to be totally perfect for a long time, and then - boom - sometimes you're doing practice missions, sometimes you're doing real ones. You don't know. So it doesn't fuck with your mind when you blow out a village, you know? You might have done it, or it might have just been another simulation.

JEANNIE

But, you're going to really be killing real people.

IAN

Or not.

JEANNIE

But eventually you will. I mean, it stands to reason that you eventually will. If you keep at it.

IAN

Oh, I'm keeping at it.

JEANNIE

And then... I mean, doesn't that bother you?

IAN

Dude, did you hear what I said? I won't know. I won't know when it's real. Look, it's not as if I'm doing it. I don't give the orders. I don't even know who gives the orders. By the time it gets down to me, it's passed through ten guys. Sometimes I'm just, I mean sometimes the S.O is just surveilling the area. I'm like, the defense. Sometimes.

JEANNIE

I guess.

IAN

And if they didn't use me, they would use somebody else. They're going to do it. With or without me. But if they use me, they know it'll be done right. Innocent people won't get killed. Because I'm incredibly skilled. I'll get my target. I won't fuck up. So really, I'm probably saving lives doing it. I'll make sure it's done right.

JEANNIE

No, you're right. It's good that it's someone who's really amazing and accurate. You're totally right. I just mean I couldn't do it.

ZANDER

Yeah. I couldn't knowingly kill people.

CHUCK

Hah! You were just drooling over it dude.

ZANDER

And you know that there are always innocent casualties in these things. No matter how accurate you are. I mean, it even happens in the games.

IAN

Well, yeah, sometimes mistakes get made. That's part of war.

ZANDER

Then why do it? If you're/ killing innocent...

IAN

So you're saying there should never be any military action. What about fucking World War II? Are you saying we should have stayed out of WWII?

ZANDER

No.

IAN

So there should be killing, you just shouldn't have to do it. Let somebody else do it. Let somebody else have blood on his hands.

ZANDER

You don't have blood on your hands. You have a little controller in your hands. The blood is like thousands of miles away. You're in some air /conditioned...

CHUCK

Dude. Let's just... It's a totally cool job. I'm jealous as shit. You are going to learn things and see things... we can't even dream of.

IAN

Thanks man.

(He sits down at his screen and fires up. Chuck goes to his screen.)

JEANNIE

I can't believe I missed my class. Damn. And I like that class.

ZANDER

So let's go over there. You can get the notes from one of the other kids, right? And I need to talk to Karen. She's so close to signing on.

JEANNIE

I'd hate to run into Casey. She's such an awesome professor. And why did I miss her class? What excuse do I give? Video games? /Damn.

ZANDER

Hah! You are so fucking sweet babe. They don't notice who's there.

JEANNIE

I dunno.

ZANDER

Come on. I'll walk you over.

JEANNIE

I don't know where Karen's going to come up with 500 dollars, Z. I don't think...

(He gives her a kiss)

ZANDER

Don't worry. They all say they can't find the money, and then they do. Laterz.

CHUCK

Bye Z. Jeannie.

JEANNIE

Bye guys.

(They leave.)

IAN

You know, if you want to come interview, I could get you in.

CHUCK

What? Really?

IAN

I mean, no promise they'll sign you on, but they did say if I know anybody with serious skills...

CHUCK

Wow. Thanks. That's so awesome dude.

IAN

No problem.

CHUCK

I really appreciate that.

IAN

I'll give'm your name.

CHUCK

Yeah. But... you know, I don't think so.

IAN

Why not? Come on. You meet with them. They give you a bunch of tests.

CHUCK

I've kind of got things good at the casino.

IAN

Dude, how long can you stay there? That's a bad scene. You're gonna burn out man.

CHUCK

Maybe.

IAN

Come on. You're a smart guy.

CHUCK

Nah.

IAN

You need a fucking career. You /can't just...



CHUCK

I don't know. Maybe I'll go back to grad school. You know, in a few years. I don't know.

IAN

Well, think about it.

CHUCK

Ok. I appreciate the offer E. I really do. Thanks.

IAN

It's cool.

(They each put on headsets and start madly playing in their own private games.)

#### SCENE 4

(Ian is at his screen. We hear Jeannie come in upstairs.)

JEANNIE

Zan?

(Ian has his headphones on and doesn't hear. She comes down the stairs and sees him playing.)

Hey Ian, have you seen Zander?

(He doesn't hear her. She stands behind him and watches him play for a moment. Touches his shoulder.)

IAN

(Jumps)

Shit! Don't sneak up on me.

(He takes off his headset, but goes back to playing.)

JEANNIE

Sorry. Do you know where /Zan is?

IAN

Nope.

JEANNIE

We were supposed to meet at the student union two hours ago. He's not answering my texts.

IAN

How strange.

JEANNIE

I'm sure he just got caught up in his recruiting. He's really into it.

(Pause)

I should be studying anyway. Finals are in three weeks.

JEANNIE

(Nothing from Ian. He just continues playing.)

It's totally freaking me out. That this is it, you know?

(Nothing from Ian)

Did you feel that way? Your last semester?

IAN

No.

JEANNIE

Did you apply to grad school and stuff? Oh -- duh. Obviously not. I'm kind of glad I didn't and I'm also a little freaked, you know? At least with grad school, you have a few years to put off real life, right?

IAN

Hm.

JEANNIE

But... I figured, no -- time to grow up. Actually spend some time working with kids. Get to know them, rather than read about them in a text book.

IAN

That should do it.

(No idea what this means. She watches him play for a bit.)

JEANNIE

Wow. You're flying.

It's beautiful. You're so good at this.

(As she watches him fly, he looks at her. She's so beautiful.)

JEANNIE

It's like watching an amazing athlete like...

Oh my God, I can't think of any athletes! What is wrong with me? All I can think of is that kid who smoked pot -- the swimmer? Michael...

(He is caught staring and goes back to his game. She watches him for a while.)

Do you mind me watching you?

IAN

No.

JEANNIE

It's not distracting?

IAN

If you stopped talking I would probably forget you're here.

JEANNIE

Oh. Ok.

(She sits beside him)

JEANNIE

Do you want me to stop talking?

(He doesn't say anything)

You don't like me, do you.

IAN

I have no real feeling either way.

JEANNIE

Why?

IAN

...I don't understand what you're asking.

JEANNIE

Is it because I'm Zan's girlfriend and the two of you are best friends and you feel that I'm kind of usurping your place, or... taking up the time you would usually spend together?

IAN

You've been studying that psych.

JEANNIE  
You think I'm a total idiot, don't you?

IAN  
(Making a joke)  
Well... total?

(She gets up)  
JEANNIE  
Fine.

IAN  
Why are you with him?

JEANNIE  
What? Zander?

IAN  
No. Michael Jordan.

JEANNIE  
Huh?

IAN  
That's the name of a remarkable athlete, by the way. Next time you're trying to come up with a sports simile.

JEANNIE  
You want to know why I like Zander?

(Ian sighs.)  
I like him cause he's smart and funny and...

IAN  
Is he smart? Or funny?

JEANNIE  
You don't think so?  
(No answer)  
Sorry. I think he is.

IAN  
Ok.

JEANNIE

Well, he's like, your best friend. Why do you like him?

IAN

Do I like him?

JEANNIE

You've lived together for five years...

IAN

Right.

JEANNIE

And Chuck too, right? For like four years?

IAN

You've done your girlfriend due diligence.

JEANNIE

So why do you live with them?

IAN

Chuck's a great guy actually. And I can't afford the whole place myself.

JEANNIE

Then find other people you want to live with.

IAN

Who?

JEANNIE

There's nobody you like.

IAN

I enjoy many of the people I game with.

JEANNIE

Ian, you really don't know those people.

IAN

But I guess you really know Zan.

(pause)

JEANNIE

Zan considers you his best friend.

Sad.

IAN

It's sad for you.

JEANNIE

Why is that?

IAN

Because Zan really likes you. He's getting something out of the relationship. And, you're not.

JEANNIE

I used to get rent.

IAN

Is it because of the mask?

JEANNIE

No.

IAN

You want to know why I go out with Zan?

JEANNIE

Nah, it makes perfect sense. You're a good match.

IAN

Wow.

JEANNIE

You're attracted to his looks.

IAN

Well, sure, but it's more /than

JEANNIE

And he's attracted to yours. It's very shallow. But, if it works /for you --

IAN

It's more than that.

JEANNIE

No.

IAN

JEANNIE

Yes it is. How do you know? Yes it is so. It's his... manner. It's the way he... you know. I like the way he talks. And the way he moves. He has a sort of... charisma. He has this attitude like everything is ok --like it's all going to work out fine. I like that.

IAN

But it might not work out fine. Given his inability to attend to his most basic human needs, he may be completely mistaken. He may find that it's not all fine.

JEANNIE

Well, he gets by.

IAN

He's a user.

JEANNIE

Ian.

I think if you have his optimism, that way of approaching the world, things will work out for you. I think that attitude of well-being brings well-being to you.

IAN

(Pauses the game for a moment to talk to her)

Our society considers him good looking, and so he's given things. He doesn't have to work for what he gets. And he assumes he'll always be good looking, and he'll always be given an easy ride. That is what you find attractive. That is what draws you to him. That air of privilege. Call it optimism or whatever makes you feel good about your choice, but what you see in him is the cocky arrogance that comes with the easy ride. And you've clearly been on that same ride. So... great. Enjoy the ride together.

But... what happens if you get acid thrown in your face?

JEANNIE

What!??

IAN

Or you're disfigured in some other way. Or you get fat. Or you just age badly. What resources will you and Zander have to rely on then? You've blithely gone through life thinking you won't need to develop other strengths.

JEANNIE

I'm in school! I was at the top of my class in high school. I'm studying so that I could actually help someone. Help kids, kids who don't have anyone /to turn to.

IAN

(Sincere)

No. You're right.

JEANNIE

That's your fucked up thing --deciding that's all I'm about. That's you being shallow. That's not me, that's you.

IAN

No. You're right. That wasn't fair.

JEANNIE

Yeah.

(Beat.)

IAN

Chuck was there when you met Zan.

JEANNIE

Yeah?

IAN

And Chuck actually *is* smart and funny.

JEANNIE

No, I know. Totally.

IAN

Both Chuck and I were there. At the Radio Shack that day.

JEANNIE

Yeah. I remember.

(Pause. He goes back to playing)

But it was Zander who talked to me.

IAN

Ok.

JEANNIE

I mean, it was Zander who was joking around. Remember? And then he asked me out.

IAN

Right.



JEANNIE  
Any one of you could have asked me out.

IAN  
Right.

JEANNIE  
But it was Zan. Who did.

IAN  
Ok.

(Pause)  
But now it's several months later.

JEANNIE  
Yeah?

IAN  
And you actually know him.

JEANNIE  
Yes.

IAN  
And you're still with him.

JEANNIE  
Yeah...  
(They both just sit for a moment.)  
Guess I should really go study.

IAN  
Yup.

(Pause)  
JEANNIE  
You would rather I didn't come around here... unless Zan is here?

(He says nothing)  
K. That's cool.

IAN  
No.

(Pause)

JEANNIE

No, it's not cool or... no you wouldn't rather?

(He says nothing)

Do you mind? If I'm here? When Zan isn't here?

IAN

No.

JEANNIE

Oh. Ok.

Ok. See you.

IAN

Yes.

JEANNIE

When Zan gets in could you tell him...

(He puts his headset back on.)

Ok. See you later Ian.

(She leaves.)

## SCENE 5

(Chuck and Zan and Jeannie are playing with x-box controllers.)

ZANDER

Ok dudes. After this battle I've really got to go.

JEANNIE

Yeah babe? I'm coming too, right?

ZANDER

You're the sweetest, babe.

CHUCK

I thought I was the sweetest.

JEANNIE

I'm really proud of you babe. You're so close.

ZANDER

Thanks. Yeah. After Karen, one more recruit, and I'm golden. I think maybe Amy...

CHUCK

I'm proud of you too, babe.

ZANDER

Then you can be the first to buy some product.

CHUCK

Oh shit.

ZANDER

I'll do a whole workup on you. I'll shoot in some numbers and come up with the exact supplements and nutrients to fit your needs.

CHUCK

I'm aiming for perfectly perfect in every way. I'll take a bottle of that.

ZANDER

Let's work on some modest goals to start Chuckstein. Like, let's make you smell less.

(They all react to something on the screen. Big celebration!)

ALL

Woohoo! Yes!

JEANNIE

We did it? Right? We broke through? Is this... Is this it?

CHUCK

Now we must storm the castle!

ZANDER

Laterz. I mean, you guys can keep playing games if you want, but, you know, I'm about changing my life and the lives of all I encounter so....

JEANNIE

But I'm coming with, right?

ZANDER

Nah babe. That's cool. Why don't you just stay here and wait for my triumphant return.

JEANNIE

But I told Karen I'd come by. I think she's expecting....

(He stops her with a kiss, and then runs up the stairs.)

ZANDER

Be back in an hour! Love ya!

JEANNIE

Oh. Ok! Bye hon. Love ya.

(She stands uncertainly. He's just disappeared on her again.)

CHUCK

You wanna keep playing?

JEANNIE

Nah. Let's wait for Z to storm the castle or whatever.

CHUCK

K.

JEANNIE

Ya.

(Awkward)

CHUCK

You feel like fixing up Daphne's pad?

JEANNIE

I should really go study.

CHUCK

Come on. You're not going to just leave her homeless. I mean, she's welcome to bunk with Earl, but they might want a change of scenery now and then.

JEANNIE

I dunno, Chuck. It just feels a little weird.

CHUCK

What?

JEANNIE

We kinda.. I think we... crossed a line. Don't you?

CHUCK

No.

JEANNIE

I just felt a little weird after. Didn't you?

CHUCK

I felt like I needed some "alone time."

(Laughs)

Hey, it's just play.

JEANNIE

I know.

CHUCK

I mean, they're characters. It's not as if we're really doing anything.

JEANNIE

No, I know.

CHUCK

It was fun, right? Wasn't it fun?

JEANNIE

It was, but I just felt like...

CHUCK

What?

JEANNIE

Like.. Would we have played the same if Zan had been in the room?

CHUCK

Sure. He does role-play shit too. We should do it with him too some time. I mean, /we could all...

JEANNIE

You would have really done, or Earl would have done all that, with Daphne, if Zan had been watching?

CHUCK

I don't know. Maybe not. I don't know.

JEANNIE

Yeah.

CHUCK

Then, let's just fix up your place. Get you some furniture.

JEANNIE

Yeah?

CHUCK

Earl can be Daphne's moving man.

JEANNIE

Ok!

(She sits with him and he fires it up.)

CHUCK

I've given you another 500 credits.

JEANNIE

I can't keep taking your money.

CHUCK

Once Daphne gets a job she can pay Earl back.

JEANNIE

(Laughing)

A job? Oh my God. What will Daphne do?

CHUCK

Well, we'll have to see what she's good at.

(She laughs)

You like this couch?

JEANNIE

No.

CHUCK

Ok. Tell me when.

JEANNIE

No. No. Hey! That's like my friend Sandy's couch. In life.

CHUCK

Cool. Where should I put it?

JEANNIE

Put it against that wall.

CHUCK

Yes ma'am.

JEANNIE

Move it down just a little. A little closer to the window.

CHUCK

I like it when you order me around.

Why don't you sit on it and see if it's to your liking. We can exchange it if it's too...

JEANNIE

No. It's great.

CHUCK

Cool. What next? Coffee table... Pictures... Entertainment center...

JEANNIE

Why don't you sit too? See what you think?

CHUCK

Ok.

JEANNIE

Good?

CHUCK

Move down a little. I want to see if I could stretch out on it. You know, if Earl and Daphne have a late night playing canasta or something, and he decides to stay over - -- he wouldn't want to disturb her in the bedroom.

JEANNIE

Fine fine. Lie down.  
It's the perfect length.

CHUCK

That's what she said.

(Jeannie laughs and gives him a swat. He laughs and shoves her back.

She types something. He just looks at the screen for a moment. Thinks about it. Then types something back. They begin madly typing again. And then moving their characters.

They are getting very engrossed again, and clearly crossing the line Jeannie had been concerned about.

Ian comes in, exhausted, goes directly to his screen and fires it up.

They both freeze. Their characters are in compromising positions.)

Peoples.  
IAN  
(in sullen greeting)

E! Hey! You just getting in man?  
CHUCK

Hi Ian.  
JEANNIE

Ya.  
IAN  
(He begins playing.)

Get off me.  
JEANNIE  
(Quietly to Chuck)

Huh?  
CHUCK

Off. Daphne.  
JEANNIE

Oh! Sorry.  
CHUCK  
(He moves his character)

I should really go study.  
JEANNIE

You okay, E?  
CHUCK

Kinda burnt.  
IAN



CHUCK

How was it today? Were you flying again?

IAN

Finished my 30 hours. Which sucks. It was awesome. The flying. The real flying.

CHUCK

You're done already?

IAN

I'm doing three month's of training in three weeks.

CHUCK

Holy shit.

JEANNIE

You're just coming in... from yesterday?

(Ian nods)

Morning?

CHUCK

Holy shit dude.

JEANNIE

That's not healthy.

IAN

You think?

JEANNIE

You should go sleep.

IAN

It's cool. They're understaffed. Guy who had me up in the plane hadn't slept in like two days. It's just the way it is.

JEANNIE

How scary. My dad said...

(They all decide to ignore this.)

CHUCK

So now you're ready? For real combat?

IAN

I can neither confirm nor deny.

(Another awkward pause.)

CHUCK

We were just outfitting Jeannie's E-Chuck City pad.

IAN

Yeah. I noticed.

CHUCK

Want to join us?

JEANNIE

I should really go study.

IAN

Sure. Why not.

CHUCK

Wow! Ok! Cool.

IAN

None of my guys are on anyway.

CHUCK

Great.

(To Jeannie)

Ian is Captain Outstando.

JEANNIE

(Laughs)

Awesome. I'm Daphne. Or... she is.

(He joins them -- brings his character in.)

Hah. Hello Captain Outstando. He's cute.

IAN

You go for leotards?

JEANNIE

I like the cape.

CHUCK

I'm going to show you some tables, lamps, chairs -- get the place cozy.

IAN

Here's a couple thousand credits.

JEANNIE

No! Don't! I'll get a job.

IAN

I never play this anymore. You may as well have them.

CHUCK

Awesome. You should get like a grand piano for this room. And a real swag entertainment center.

JEANNIE

Guys. I wouldn't live this way if I won the lottery.

CHUCK

Daphne goes for the nice things in life.

(They type a few things to each other.)

JEANNIE

How do I... I want to offer you lemonade. How do I...

CHUCK

Lemonade! Daphne needs a liquor cabinet!

IAN

Here. Walk through here and we'll set up a kitchen.

(He takes her keyboard, and starts madly ordering her things.)

JEANNIE

I love that! Yellow, ok? Nice. No -- I want a breakfast nook!

(He does it.)

With bar stools!

IAN

Done. Here's your fridge. Stocked with...

(He clicks the controller)

lemonade.

JEANNIE

Wow. That's awesome.

Ok. You fellas go to the living room and I'll bring you some refreshments.

CHUCK

Yes, ma'am.

(They all move their characters.)

JEANNIE

I'll put yours here. On this very cute end table.

IAN

I'll take the couch.

CHUCK

Could you set up at least a cd player E. I want to put on some music.

(Ian does. We hear music coming from the screen)

JEANNIE

I love this!

(They all settle in and type and move for a few moments. Jeannie types. Ian types. Chuck types. Jeannie laughs. She types. Ian types something. Both Chuck and Jeannie look at him. Chuck types something back. Ian types again. Ian moves his character.)

CHUCK

What are you doing man?

(Jeannie is just paralyzed)

IAN

What?

CHUCK

Don't do that.

IAN

That's not ok? I thought that was ok. That's not ok, Jeannie?

CHUCK

Cut it out Ian.

IAN

You don't like that? Or... Daphne doesn't? It seemed like she does.

(Jeannie stands up. She doesn't know what to say. She just heads up the stairs. We hear the front door shut.)

CHUCK

What the fuck?

(Ian gets up and exits to the back room.)

## SCENE 6

(Ian is alone, playing a war game with an online friend. He wears his headset. We can vaguely hear shouting and gunfire and explosions.)

IAN

Look out -- there's someone behind that Humvee!

(His friend nails the guy.)

Oh, dude! Awesome! He didn't see you coming!

(They enjoy this together. We hear chatter over the lines.)

Oh crap. We're surrounded. We're going to need more backup... Wasn't Titan 27 gonna meet us here?

Where are Mongo and Bullet 6? They were supposed to be in this. What the hell, right? If you say you're gonna show up, show up.

Shit. There's too many of them. I don't think we can take 'em alone.

Ahhh! Frag out! I'm going to detonate!

(Explosion)

Awesome! Ok. Cool. You lead.

(A beat while they move to another location)

So listen, dude. You ever wonder, what if this thing was real?

Yeah, but I mean like... what if those were actual people we were blowing up and shit, you know?

IAN

Hah! Right. Get those bastards! Totally.

(Something happens on screen. Ian screws up)

Oh. Shit. Sorry dude.

Yeah, I'm a little slow tonight. I... I didn't get much sleep.

Right?

(Beat.)

But, what if it weren't soldiers. That you hit. What if...

No, I know. Collateral damage. Absolutely.

(We hear the guy on the other end barking orders faintly.)

Good one!

(He plays.)

But, listen dude. Listen. What if you've got this... this building in your crosshairs, you've been watching it, you know they're keeping weapons in there, you've done your surveillance. You've... you've done your job. You know it's a good target. You get the order, you fire, and just before the missile hits, like two seconds, this kid, this little girl, looks to be Addie's age – your sister's age, this... this kid walks around the shed. Out of nowhere. This little girl...

(Something awful happens on the screen. Ian covers his face which makes them crash. He is shaken, breathing hard. He comes back in.)

Ah! Oh fuck man. I'm sorry.

(Pause. He is very shaken.)

Wow, I'm really off tonight. Sorry.

Yeah.

(Beat)

Hey, where are you dude?

Hah. Yeah. No, I mean, I.R.L. Where do you live? I'm in Nevada, are you...

Oh. Yeah? No. That's cool. Totally. I should really go too, my buddy just got here.

Ok dude. See you later.

(He logs out. And just sits in the darkened room alone as lights fade.)

**SCENE 7**

(Chuck is alone, playing. Probably a fantasy game. Maybe the sound of a monster on screen.)

Zander comes in, wild eyed.)

ZANDER

Chuck. God. Is Jeannie here?

CHUCK

No. I haven't seen her in a like a week, dude. Did she tell you -- it was a little weird, last /time she was here....

ZANDER

You got to help me out. I don't know... I don't know what I'm supposed to do here.

CHUCK

What happened? You ok?

ZANDER

I went to get the product. To the.. Proneutra/

CHUCK

Yeah?

ZANDER

headquarters... or whatever.

CHUCK

Yeah.

ZANDER

And it's gone.

CHUCK

What do you mean? Did you have the right address?

ZANDER

Yeah, I had the fucking address. The building is fucking there. But... It's empty.

CHUCK

Oh shit.

ZANDER

They cleared out.

CHUCK

Oh shit man.

ZANDER

I gave them the money. I gave them the money from the five guys I got to sign on.

CHUCK

Fuck.

ZANDER

I'd given it to them. Jeannie too. I mean, I got Jeannie in on this.

CHUCK

Yeah. Wow.

ZANDER

And... they're gone.

CHUCK

You gotta call the cops man.

ZANDER

Yeah?

CHUCK

You gotta... the better business bureau or...

ZANDER

Do you think there's any way...

CHUCK

What?

ZANDER

Do you think there's any way it could just be... like a mix-up? Like, maybe they moved or... I don't know...

CHUCK

Dude. You were rooked. There's like... It was a fantasy dude. It was a con.

ZANDER

Fuck.

(He sits down and starts playing during this)



Yeah. CHUCK

Fuck. ZANDER

I'm sorry dude. CHUCK

Yeah. Oh fuck. I have to tell all those kids... Jeannie. ZANDER

Yeah. CHUCK

Shit man. I should just move. I should just... find a place I can... ZANDER

Call the cops. You gotta report this. CHUCK

You think maybe they'll catch them? Get the money back? ZANDER

No. CHUCK

Shit. ZANDER

But, who knows right? Maybe, right? CHUCK

Fuck. ZANDER

Yeah. CHUCK

God Chuck. What do I do? God. ZANDER

Well, first you call, before you even tell /any of the... CHUCK

ZANDER

No. What do I DO? I mean, what do I do? My life?!

CHUCK

Yeah.

ZANDER

I've got like.. I don't know.

CHUCK

You could try to go for training again -- for dealing. You could try craps this time. Or bartending.

ZANDER

Yeah. I'd have to find a different school.

CHUCK

You would have to show up. Every class this time.

ZANDER

And I'm broke. Totally broke.

CHUCK

Yeah.

ZANDER

I mean, I'm way beyond broke.

CHUCK

Sorry dude. Really.

ZANDER

I couldn't even swing the cost of the class. Do you think maybe Ian would...

CHUCK

No dude. I don't think so.

ZANDER

Yeah. I can't believe it. Those guys were so... I mean it was an awesome product.

CHUCK

Yeah.

ZANDER

And the whole thing... it seemed so...

Yeah. CHUCK

ZANDER  
It was such a great business. I can't believe this.

CHUCK  
Wasn't real man.

ZANDER  
Shit. What do I do?

(They are silent for a moment.)

CHUCK  
Go to the police station. File a report.

ZANDER  
Yeah. Maybe they'll catch them...

(He finishes his round for a moment. Gets up to go.)  
If Jeannie comes by, tell her... well, just... you know what, let me tell her, ok?

CHUCK  
Good.

(Zan stands at the bottom of the stairs for a long moment. Not moving.)  
You want me to come with you dude?

ZANDER  
Would you?

CHUCK  
Sure. One sec.

(He finishes something on the screen, and then joins Zan. They exit.)

## SCENE 8

(Ian is in his chair, playing a war game. We hear the crashes and screams and artillery fire and bombs that accompany it.

He puts on a headset. It's different from the one he usually wears to play. It's his work headset. The sound goes off from the video game and the lighting shifts so we only see Ian in his chair. Ian at work. We hear voiceovers of the men Ian hears over his headsets, including the pilot who sits to the left of him. The voiceovers are confusing and sometimes overlap.)

	V01
Roger received target/ 15.	
	V02
See all those people standing down /there?	
	V01
Stay firm. And open the courtyard.	
	V0.3
(Ian's Pilot)	
Pull back. Wide shot.	
(Ian does this.)	
	V03
Yeah roger. I estimate there's probably about 20 /of them.	
	V04
Hey Bushmaster element. Copy on /the one-six.	
	V03
That's a weapon.	
	V01
Hotel two-six; crazy horse /one eight.	
	V03
Bushmaster six-romeo. /Roger.	
	V01
Fucking /prick.	
	V03
Hotel Two-six. This is crazy horse one-eight. Have individuals with weapons.	
	IAN
Is that a weapon? Sir? /It looks like...	

V01

He's got a weapon too. Hotel Two-Six, Crazy Horse /one-eight.

V03

Have five to six individuals with AK 47s. Request permission to /engage.

IAN

Those aren't... Sir, no confirmation on the AK /47's, sir.

V02

Roger that. We have no personnel east of our position. So you are free to engage./  
Over.

V03

All right. We'll be engaging.

V02

Roger. /Go ahead.

IAN

We can't get 'em now because they're behind that building. /Sir.

V01

He's got an RPG!

IAN

That may be a camera, sir. That the guy in the /front...

V03

All right, we got a guy with an RPG. I'm gonna fire.

V01

Hotel Two-Six; have eyes on individual with RPG. Getting ready to fire. /We won't...

V02

Yeah. - and now he's behind the building. God /damn it.

V03

Uh, negative, he was, uh, right in front of the Brad. Uh, 'bout there, /one o'clock.

IAN

I didn't... I can't ID that... that /weapon.

V02

Just fuckin', once you get on 'em /deploy.

All /right. V03

I see your element, got about four Humvees /out along... V01

You're /clear... V02

What is he carrying? Sir. Permission to... /That's not... IAN

All right, preparing to deploy. V03

(This is to Ian)  
S.O. Prepare to target.

Yes Sir. IAN

Let me know when you've /got 'em. V01

And... Sensor, on target! V03

Roger. On target. IAN

Currently engaging approximately 8 individuals, uh KIA, RPGs, and Ak-47s. V03

Hotel... Bushmaster Two-Six. We need to move, time now! V02

(There is the sound of an enormous explosion. Ian covers his face as if it's happening in the room.)

Yeah, we see 2 birds and they're still on fire. V01

Roger. I got em. V03

(Ian is now staring at the screen, heart pounding, out of breath.)

V01

Two-six, this is two-six, we're /mobile.

V02

Oops. I'm sorry. What was /going on?

V03

God damit it Kyle. All right, /I hit'em

V01

All right. You're /clear.

V04

Bushmaster Six; this is Bushmaster 2-6. Got a bunch of bodies layin' /there.

V02

Yeah, we got one guy crawling around down there. But, uh, you know, /we got, definitely got...

V01

We're shooting some /more.

V02

Roger. Hey, you shoot, /I'll talk.

V01

Hotel 2-6; you need to move that location once crazyhorse is done and get pictures over. Sargeant Twenty is the /location.

V03

Pull in closer S.O. We need a body count.

(But Ian is frozen)

V02

Hotel Two-six; crazyhorse one-eight. Can we get a confirmation on that body count?

V03

(Firmly, to Ian.)

Pull in S.O. Now!

(Ian is frozen.)

Now S.O!!

IAN  
(Snapped out of his stupor.)  
Sir!

V01  
Crazyhorse one-eight; this is hotel 2-6 /over.

V03  
Oh, yeah. Look at those dead /bastards.

V01  
Nice.

V02  
Good shoot'n

V03  
Thank you.  
(To Ian)  
Good shootin' S.O.

IAN  
(Completely shaken and staring at the screen)  
Thanks.

V04  
Crazyhorse One-8; Bushmaster Seven. /Go ahead.

V03  
Location of bodies.

IAN  
(Checking the map which is over the live feed)  
Mike bravo 5-4-5-8-8-6-1-7

V03  
Hey good on /the uh...

V01  
Mike bravo 5-4-5-8-8-6-1-7 over.

V03  
This is Crazyhorse One-8. That's a good copy.  
(To Ian)  
Good work.



IAN

Thank you sir.

(He takes off his headset and the lights shift. Once again we hear the sounds of the war game and he has his controller in his hands.)

He looks around stunned, disoriented, out of breath, panting. Unsure where he is. There is an explosion on the screen. He jumps.

We hear the door upstairs. Ian is very startled. Shaken. We hear Jeannie's voice.)

JEANNIE

Zan?

(There is a pause. She is uncertain whether to come down. But she starts down the steps.)

Zander?

(She sees Ian and stops half way down the stairs.)

Guess he's not here. Ok. Sorry.

(Stands for a moment. Decides to come down.)

I guess we should talk about... what happened.

(Ian bends in half and holds his head as if it is aching. His eyes closed.)

Look, it was fucked up, what Chuck and I were doing. I know. It's just a game, but... So, I don't blame you for judging me. Really. I'm not gonna do it any more.

(He does not respond. She comes into the room.)

Are you ok?

(He doesn't respond. She goes to him.)

Ian?

You must be exhausted.

(Ian still has his head in his hands but he grasps his hair in fists as if he is holding himself together.)

Look, this job -- I'm sure you're great at it, but it's not worth it. It's not healthy. And you could do anything. I mean, you're smart and capable and...

(She goes to him tempted to stroke his hair. Stops herself.. He is coiled. Taut)

JEANNIE (Cont.)

I can't imagine what you've seen. So awful. And even if it is, you know, the "bad guys", if there are "bad guys" -- to have to kill them... I mean, they have lives too -- mothers and girlfriends and sisters...

(He moans slightly. She is overcome with sympathy and reaches out cautiously. Strokes his hair.

He springs up with a roar and grabs her hands before she can even scream,. Holds them above her head. Pushes her back so she trips backward. Falling partially onto the couch.)

IAN

Shut up shut up /shut up shut up shut up shut up shut up!

JEANNIE

Ouch. Ian. Stop! What are you doing? Stop it!

(He pushes her down on the couch and pins her with his knee.)

JEANNIE

Don't do this. Why are you doing this?

IAN

I don't know!

JEANNIE

Stop it. You're hurting me.

IAN

Is this happening??? IS IT??

JEANNIE

Let me go!

IAN

(He lets her hands go.)

Fight me. Come on! Hit me! HIT ME!

(She smacks him hard and pushes him off her. He doesn't fight back. She knocks him back and he falls. She smacks him again.)

IAN

(Not fighting.)

Again.

IAN

(She is about to hit him again. He makes no attempt to fight back. She begins crying.)

Hit me! I can't feel it! Hit me again!

(Zan and Chuck have entered upstairs and hear them. Rushing down the stairs)

ZANDER

What the fuck!?

(Zan charges in with a roar and starts pounding Ian.)

You fucking bastard! What the hell were you doing?

(Chuck tries to stop him.)

JEANNIE

Don't Zan. Stop. Stop it!

(Ian doesn't fight back, he just takes his pounding. He makes no sound.

Chuck pulls Zan off him. Ian is motionless on the floor.)

ZANDER

What did he do? I want to fucking KILL /him.

CHUCK

Jesus. What the /hell?

JEANNIE

Ian, are you ok?

ZANDER

What did he do to you?

(Chuck goes to Ian and tries to help him up. Ian does not respond.)

CHUCK

Zan, help me out here. Let's get him to the couch.

IAN

(In a dead toned voice.)

No. Just go. I'm ok. Just... just get out of here.

ZANDER

Come on Jeannie.

CHUCK

Do you need to like, go to the doctor?

IAN

No. Get out.

ZANDER

Fucking bastard.

JEANNIE

Just let him be.

ZANDER

Let him be?? What the fuck?

(He storms out. Jeannie runs upstairs)

CHUCK

You okay, man?

IAN

I don't know.

(Jeannie comes back down with some ice in a cloth. Goes to Ian. Puts it on his head. He pushes it away. She sets it down.)

IAN

Please, please just go.

CHUCK

Dude, you're bleeding.

IAN

I need... I'm sorry. I need you to go.

(They watch as he takes the ice, puts it on his bloodied head, and gets up, painfully. He goes to his chair and turns on the screen. We hear fireplay. They watch him playing as the lights fade.)

**SCENE 9**

(Ian is at his screen, cleaned up a bit. He plays throughout this. His voice is expressionless. Chuck is sitting on the couch watching Zan pack things into his backpack – cables, controllers, even some beer and Ramen noodles.)

ZAN

I think this controller was mine.

CHUCK

No dude.

ZAN

I'm pretty sure I got it when we went to radio shack that time and we/ got the cables for...

CHUCK

Ian bought them.

ZAN

Yeah?

CHUCK

Ian bought the cables too.

ZAN

Wow. I totally thought I/ bought the...

IAN

Take them.

ZAN

Yeah?

IAN

Take whatever you want.

ZAN

You sure?

CHUCK

E-man.

IAN

I'm sure.

CHUCK

Ian, what the fuck. He just beat the shit out of you. I mean, what the fuck.

IAN

It's ok. I had it coming.

CHUCK

Did you? What did you do?

IAN

I don't know.

CHUCK

No really, what happened here?

IAN

I don't know Chuck. Ok? I don't know what happened.

ZAN

I'm sorry I went ballistic on you. I saw Jeannie crying...

IAN

No.. You were right.

ZAN

Ok.

(He packs a bunch of things into his backpack.)

CHUCK

You don't even have an xbox. You don't even have a tv. You don't even have a place to live. What the hell do you need Ian's shit for?

ZAN

I'll find a place.

CHUCK

Where?

ZAN

I dunno. I'll just.. I'll let you know.

(He jams things into his backpack.)

CHUCK  
Did you tell Jeannie?

ZAN  
Well...

CHUCK  
Did you? Did you tell her anything? About the vitamins? About you /taking off?

ZAN  
I will. I'll let her know once I'm settled.

CHUCK  
That is so fucked up Z. That is totally fucked up.

ZAN  
I know.

CHUCK  
She deserves way better. She /deserves...

ZAN  
I know.

CHUCK  
So don't do it. Don't run out. Tell them all you fucked up. Find a way to pay them back. Come on.

ZAN  
I will. I'll totally pay everybody back. I will. I just have to find a place, like, make a new start, you know? Get myself situated. I might go back to my parents for just a little bit.

CHUCK  
What??? Aw dude!

ZAN  
Just till I get my shit together. Come on Chuck. I'm not gonna stay there.

CHUCK  
You are. You're gonna have your mom doing your laundry when you're ancient. You're gonna be 35 and like -- mom, where's my favorite Scuby-doo t-shirt?

ZAN  
Shut up.

ZAN (Cont.)

(He's filled the bag. Hard to actually say goodbye.)  
Ok guys. I guess... I'm off.

CHUCK

Asshole.

(Zan and Chuck chest bump and muss each other up a bit. It's tough for Chuck to say goodbye. He'll probably never see him again. Sincerely:)

Be well dude. Grow up into a fine young man ok?

ZAN

I'll try.

(He goes to Ian.)

Bye E.

IAN

(Still playing his game.)

See ya.

ZAN

I'll be sending you a check soon. Real soon.

IAN

Sounds good.

(Zander leaves. Chuck stands looking at Ian.)

## SCENE 10

(A couple of weeks have gone by. Ian is alone at his screen. He plays, but with little animation. We hear the door open upstairs. Jeannie calls out.)

JEANNIE

Hey!

(Ian hears her and stops playing. Needs to say something.)

IAN

(Almost to himself)

Jeannie.



(She comes to the top of the stairs, tentatively, and sees him.  
She's carrying a backpack)

JEANNIE

Oh. Ian. Hey.

(He looks up but still can't say anything)

I'm just getting a couple things – I'd left some of my stuff. In Zan's room. So... I'm  
just gonna get those things. And... head out.

(No response)

Ok.

(She turns to head back out)

IAN

Jeannie.

(She comes down a step.)

JEANNIE

Yeah?

IAN

(It's hard for him to speak at all, and really hard to find the  
words here.)

I've wanted to say...

(Pause)

JEANNIE

Yeah?

IAN

I've wanted to say...

(She comes halfway down the stairs.)

IAN

I don't... I don't know what happened. That day. That's not an excuse. There's no  
excuse. I just...

JEANNIE

Yeah.

(There's a pause. This sits between them.)

(Chuck comes in.)

CHUCK

Jeannie??!

JEANNIE

Hey!

CHUCK

Oh wow. Jeannie! Hey! How've you been? Wow.

(To Ian)

Jeannie!

JEANNIE

Sorry. I just came to get a few things I'd left in Zan's room.

CHUCK

Sure. Of course.

JEANNIE

And then I'll be... out of your hair.

CHUCK

You're not... in my hair.  
At all.

(Beat.)

JEANNIE

How've you been?

CHUCK

Ok. I guess.  
Hey, you're a graduate, huh?

JEANNIE

Yup. Last week.

CHUCK

Awesome! Congrats! Welcome to... Life!

JEANNIE

Thanks.

(They stand awkwardly for a moment.)

CHUCK

So... look at you. You're all grown up!

(She laughs)

JEANNIE

Yeah.

(Beat.)

CHUCK

I guess... you heard from Zan, huh?

JEANNIE

He finally answered after like, 50 calls.

CHUCK

Wow.

JEANNIE

Yeah.

CHUCK

It was totally fucked up he didn't say goodbye or anything. Sorry.

JEANNIE

Yeah.

CHUCK

He just freaked about having to break it to everyone. I told him -- man up dude. Just do it. But... /yeah.

JEANNIE

I had to tell everybody. That sucked.

CHUCK

Sorry.

JEANNIE

Karen was here on a scholarship. She has like, no money. Her parents were so pissed.

Yeah. CHUCK

Five hundred dollars. JEANNIE

Yeah. CHUCK

Guess we were all pretty stupid. JEANNIE

Nah. It seemed like a good thing. CHUCK

No, it didn't. JEANNIE

Yeah. No, it didn't. CHUCK

(They chuckle)

Zan's a good salesman. JEANNIE

He is. CHUCK

(Pause)

I got a job. At a daycare. JEANNIE

Cool. Good for you! CHUCK

Real life. We'll see how I do. JEANNIE

Right? CHUCK

(Jeannie sits on the couch)

JEANNIE

I guess I should get my things. I left a few things. In Zan's room.

CHUCK

You can still come around. You know, to... hang out. Play some games.

JEANNIE

Yeah...

CHUCK

-- you're really getting good on Hafadai. Level three battle gnome!

JEANNIE

Yeah. I think I'm kind of done with that.

CHUCK

Yeah? Ok.

We still need to get Daphne a job.

JEANNIE

I think I'll see how Jeannie does with a job first.

CHUCK

Right.

JEANNIE

You keep Daphne. Get her some nice thigh-high spiky boots and a riding crop.

CHUCK

Done and done.

(A moment.)

JEANNIE

I should really go.

(She continues not to.)

CHUCK

So, I won't see you online?

JEANNIE

Nah. I don't have any of that... stuff.

CHUCK

Right.

Yeah. JEANNIE

Well, we'll always have Facebook. CHUCK

Right. JEANNIE

(They laugh a little grimly. She gets up heads to the stairs.)

Ok. Well, good to see you. Both of you. Take care of yourselves. JEANNIE

Hey. CHUCK

Yeah? JEANNIE

How would you like to grab a bite? CHUCK

You mean ...food? JEANNIE

Yeah. CHUCK

Real food? JEANNIE

Why not? CHUCK

Out there? JEANNIE

I dunno. It was just a thought. CHUCK

How will we chat without the little box? JEANNIE

CHUCK

We could text each other. At the table.

(She hesitates for a long moment.)

CHUCK

Or some other time...

JEANNIE

I could use a burger.

CHUCK

Yeah??

JEANNIE

Yeah.

CHUCK

Awesome!! That's totally... that's just awesome! Yes!

JEANNIE

(Laughing)

Cool. Let's go!

(He starts to head out with her and then stops. Looks at Ian. He doesn't want to leave him alone.)

JEANNIE

Come on Ian. You're coming too.

IAN

Nah.

CHUCK

Come on E-man.

IAN

No thanks.

(Beat.)

CHUCK

Dude, you haven't left this room in two weeks. It's time.

JEANNIE

You're coming with us.

(She steps toward him. Holds her ground. Very clearly to Ian.)

JEANNIE

I'm only going to go if you come.

CHUCK

Dude!

(Ian thinks a moment. Decides to help out his buddy. He finishes whatever was happening on screen. It takes a few moments. Closes it out. Goes to them. They all climb the stairs. Chuck takes up the rear with a silent celebration. At the top they turn out the lights.)