

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS
PILOT

Written by

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A self-obsessed obituary writer realizes he can kill people to write more viral obituaries and jumpstart his literary career, only to find that his brilliant, reclusive mother is orchestrating a far more insidious plot in their small, seaside town.

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ACT 1

INT. SALAZAR'S OFFICE, DAY

TONY, 26, sits in what appears to be a therapist's office, staring at a Modigliani-esque nude portrait of SALAZAR, 73, on the wall. Salazar sits in a facing armchair.

SALAZAR

Just a few boilerplate questions to start.

TONY

Of course.

SALAZAR

Any suicidal thoughts?

TONY

Why do you ask?

SALAZAR

(leans back)

I'm working on a short story about a suicidal. Fascinating character, really. The will they won't they of it all. Now I'm just hoping to see how the sausage is made, so to speak.

Long, awkward silence.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

So not suicidal?

TONY

No.

SALAZAR

Pity. Well, never say never I suppose.

She writes something in her notebook.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Now what about *homicidal* thoughts?

INT. WIDOW'S LIVING ROOM, DAY

Flashback to Tony killing the WIDOW, 70. An elderly woman who could be mistaken for Tony's mother lies face down on the floor of a very fancy living room.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

Tony?

INT. SALAZAR'S OFFICE, DAY

TONY

(dazed)

Sorry, what was the question?

SALAZAR

Am I boring you, Tony?

TONY

No, I'm just a bit preoccupied.

SALAZAR

With?

TONY

Who I am. What I want.

SALAZAR

(pause, probing)

Who are you? What do you want?

TONY

(pause, considering)

I'm a writer. I want to write.

INT. TONY'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Flashback to Tony staring at a blank computer screen. The top reads "MEMOIR."

SALAZAR (V.O.)

Why?

TONY (V.O.)

Because it's what I'm best at. And I need the validation to feel loved.

Trophies line his mantle in front of a reproduction of *The Fall of Man*.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

But?

TONY (V.O.)

But I'm worried I've run out of things to say.

Framed, faded newspaper clipping on the wall that reads "LOBSTERVILLE HIGH ALUM INKS MEMOIR DEAL."

SALAZAR

So?

TONY

So I've resigned to a life of mediocrity and a depressing day job.

INT. SALAZAR'S OFFICE, DAY

SALAZAR

Which is?

TONY

(defeated)

Writing obituaries for the local paper.

INT. LOBSTERVILLE LONGSHOT OFFICE, DAY

Ramshackle newspaper office. SERGE, 80, stands in front of a whiteboard that reads "IDEAS TO SAVE THE PAPER." Under that, "1. Sex sells." AMELIA, 25, sits on an office chair. Tony sits on a desk.

SERGE

Okay, to recap from last time.

(reading and pointing)

Ideas to save the paper. Number one. Sex sells.

(to Tony and Amelia)

I like it. Whose is that?

AMELIA

Yours.

SERGE

Huh. Is that so? Not really sure what I meant. If I had to guess, I'd say I was feeling horny...

TONY (V.O.)
 Our Editor-in-Chief is more or less
 senile. Our best reporter is headed
 for the exits.

SALAZAR (V.O.)
 And you?

TONY (V.O.)
 Me? I'm just the guy with the big
 ideas.

AMELIA
 What we need are...

AMELIA (CONT'D)	TONY
New advertisements.	(garbled along)
	Nor advertisements...

TONY (CONT'D)
 Exactly, that's what I've been
 trying to tell you guys.

AMELIA
 Right now all we have is the
 Robertsons' missing dog notice.

Rabid barking from behind a door.

SERGE
 (furious)
 How many times do I have to tell
 you? You *can't say*...
 (whispered)
 ...*"missing dog."* He *knows*.

AMELIA
 Jesus, do I have to do everything
 around here?

TONY
 How do you think I feel, having to
 churn out 1 to 2 obituaries *per*
month? No wonder I still haven't
 gotten around to writing my memoir.

AMELIA
 God, yeah, it must be hard to write
 a memoir when you don't have
 anything to write about.

TONY

Right, Amelia. The child of divorce who overcame everything to attend an Ivy League university doesn't have anything to write about. That makes a lot of sense.

(aggrieved)

I don't think you understand. I pour my heart into these people's obituaries. Research their life stories until I forget my own. Interview their wives, kiss their sons, double-check my spelling, and for what? Have their wives ever...

(air quotes)

...*"retweeted"* me?

Serge shakes his head vigorously.

TONY (CONT'D)

Have their sons ever *kissed me back*?

AMELIA

(annoyed)

What are you *talking* about?

TONY

I'm talking about sacrifice, Amelia. And praise. For those who sacrifice deserve praise, do they not?

SERGE

Like the troops.

TONY

Don't be crass, Serge. The troops put their lives on the line.

SERGE

Then like Christ.

TONY

Exactly. Like Christ. Except, you know, real.

(sighs)

Now all I need is a disciple.

A knock at the door.

TONY (CONT'D)

Oh my god, I totally forgot. You guys are going to love this.

Tony gets up and walks outside. Serge and Amelia exchange glances.

TONY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I said business casual. Forget it,
it's too late. They're all waiting.

Tony re-enters.

TONY (CONT'D)
Amelia, you've been saying we could
use another set of hands around
here.

AMELIA
Yes, *your* hands.

TONY
Right, so I took it into *my* hands -
if you'd let me finish - into *my*
hands to get us the help we need.
So without further adieu...it's
Bubs!

BUBS, 12, walks in wearing a soccer uniform.

SERGE
Bubs?

TONY
Our new intern. Well technically *my*
new intern. But I met some other
kids at the playground, if you want
one of your own. Great kids, just
not quite what I was looking for.

AMELIA
How are we going to pay him?

TONY
Amelia, Amelia, Amelia. That's the
beauty of hiring a child intern.
Legally, we're not *allowed* to pay
him. Because of child labor laws.

SERGE
That sounds right.

AMELIA
Does it?

TONY
Bubs, why don't you do some
research on child labor laws.

BUBS

Where?

TONY

(mocking)

"Where? Where Tony? Whereever will
I research child labor laws?"

(normal)

Well how about at your very own
desk.

Tony pulls out a toddler's high seat that's clearly too small
for Bubs.

TONY (CONT'D)

Here, let me help you get in.

Tony hoists Bubs up and tries to put him in the high seat.

BUBS

I don't think I'm going to fit.

TONY

(grunting, struggling)

Not with that attitude.

BUBS

I really don't think it's--
Just, you know what, put me
down. Put me down.

TONY (CONT'D)

Just give me a second. We've
almost got it. I just need to
buckle you in.

BUBS (CONT'D)

(thrashing, shouting)

PUT ME DOWN!

TONY

Ok fine, Jesus.

Tony drops Bubs onto the floor. Bubs picks himself up. Some
silence, like siblings fuming after a fight.

TONY (CONT'D)

So it said on your resume that you
can drive?

INT. TONY'S CAR, EVENING

Tony in the backseat, Bubs driving.

TONY (V.O.)

Just like that, Bubs and I were
like a little family.

TONY

Look at us. Like a little fam-- Red light. Red light. RED LIGHT.

Bubs slams the brakes.

TONY (CONT'D)

Jesus, who taught you how to drive?

BUBS

Are you talking to me?

TONY

No Bubs, I'm talking to the guy you almost just T-boned. Yes I'm talking to you.

BUBS

If you're so good at driving, why don't you do it yourself?

TONY

Great idea, Bubs. Let me go ahead and get my *second* DUI. This time with a child passenger-- LEFT. LEFT TURN.

EXT. SHANIA'S LIGHTHOUSE, EVENING

Car turns sharply into lighthouse driveway.

TONY (V.O.)

As for my actual family, well, that's where things get a *little* more complicated.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE KITCHEN, EVENING

Tony and Bubs sit at the dinner table with SHANIA, 59, and TONY SR., 57, in a very nice, modern kitchen. Tony shovels food into his mouth as he loudly explains his family situation to Bubs.

TONY

They're *divorced*. They don't love *each other anymore*. I mean there's a kind of love there, but mostly just resentment. She left him so she could live alone in this lighthouse. She's a *genius* and a *misanthrope*. She has *trouble connecting to people*.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

She invented a hyperrealistic virtual reality environment called "The Panopticon" to socialize herself, but then she sold it to the military for hundreds of millions of dollars. She thought they were going to use it to train cadets without incurring casualties, but instead they used it to torture detainees in Iraq. She hasn't been the same since. People say the War in Iraq was complicated, but it wasn't. Either you wanted Saddam to nuke us or you didn't--

SHANIA

Jesus Christ.

TONY

What? Did I miss something?

TONY SR.

My career?

TONY

Dad's an art teacher.

TONY SR.

I am a *teaching artist*.

TONY

At the middle school. He also coaches girls' volleyball.

TONY SR.

I coach girls' *self-actualization*. The volleyball is incidental.

TONY

(gestures to Tony Sr.)

We live together.

TONY SR.

And how about you, Tony? How's your career?

TONY

I don't know. I'm starting to worry I don't have what it takes to be an artist.

TONY SR.
My beautiful boy. All it takes is
time.

TONY
I meant like a successful artist.

TONY SR.
Depends on how you define success.
For me, it's seeing the smile on a
child's face--

TONY
Praise. For me it's praise. And
attention. I would do anything for
attention.

SHANIA
What else is new?

Tony pulls out a gun and points it at Shania.

TONY
What did you just say to me?

TONY SR.
(startled)
Jesus Christ.

SHANIA
(unfazed)
Here we go again.

TONY
Oh relax, it's a joke. Look, it's
not even loaded.

Tony fires the gun, shattering a window. Everyone is
startled.

TONY (CONT'D)
It's a *joke*.

SHANIA
Where the hell did you get a gun?

TONY
I don't know. I got it for
Christmas.

TONY SR.
From who?

TONY
Oh right, because that's how Secret
Santa works. The secret is that you
know exactly who gave you the gun
and there's no secret whatsoever.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

That's actually why it's so much fun, because you know exactly who gave you the gun and there's no secret--

SHANIA

Christ, Tony, you're such a disappointment.

TONY SR.

Shania--

SHANIA

Look at yourself. When did you become so desperate for attention?

TONY

I don't know, maybe when my mother *left me*. Before I'd even *finished breastfeeding*.

SHANIA

You were *eleven*.

TONY

This is the problem. Everyone expects too much of me. No wonder so many Ivy League graduates end up killing, like, a bunch of people.

BUBS

The Unabomber, one of the Menendez brothers...

SHANIA

The Unabomber published *his* memoir.

TONY

That wasn't a memoir, that was a manifesto about the perils of technology.

SHANIA

Sounds more interesting than a rich kid whining about how Brown turned him gay.

TONY

For the last time, Brown didn't "turn me gay." Brown turned me *bi*. And I don't know how you expect me to finish my memoir when I'm constantly churning out obituaries just to put food on the table.

SHANIA

I pay for your groceries!

TONY

Christ, has anybody in this town ever heard of a *metaphor*? Come on, Bubs. We're leaving. I don't want you to turn out the way I did. Not the bi thing, just the weird psychosexual games with your mother.

TONY SR.

Psychosexual?

TONY

And I'm soooooo sorry I'm not the Unabomber. I guess some of us don't need to kill people to impress their mothers.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SALAZAR'S OFFICE, DAY

SALAZAR

Let me ask you, Tony. Are you familiar with the concept of an (air quotes) "Oedipal complex"?

TONY

I don't think so, no.

SALAZAR

Me neither, but it keeps coming up in my son's murder trial and I'm always like, "What the heck are you guys talking about?"

TONY

Lawyers, am I right?

SALAZAR

Try marrying one. Christ was that a headache.

TONY

Divorced?

SALAZAR

Worse. Murdered.

She sighs for a long time. Then a beat.

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

Speaking of, what's with the jacket?

We see a leather jacket dripping with blood hanging on the coat rack.

TONY

(under his breath)
Christ, I really gotta get that to the dry cleaner's.

INT. MILAN'S LEATHER SHOP, DAY

Tony tries on a leather jacket dripping with blood as MILAN, 45, looks on.

TONY

And what do we think of the
shoulders?

MILAN

Fits like a glove.

BUBS

(snarky, looking at phone)
Yeah, O.J.'s.

TONY

(furious)
That's *enough*. Who taught you about
O.J.?
(grabs Bubs's phone)
And Blackberries?
(to Milan)
He's got a point though. Why is it
so bloody?

MILAN

(exasperated)
It's so *bloody* because I don't know
what the fuck I'm doing. That
jacket cost me four cows.

TONY

Why not stick to butchering?

MILAN

Because all these richie rich
tourists want are quinoa burgers
and fine leather goods. I'll tell
you, Lobsterville's changing.

AMELIA

Well that's actually a great segue
into why we're here, which is to
see if you'd be interested in
advertising your new business in
the Longshot.

MILAN

The Longshot? I thought you guys
stopped publishing years ago.

AMELIA

We're hanging on by a thread. But
with a couple more advertisers--

TONY

Ah ah ah.
(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

(whispering to Amelia
through gritted teeth)
He's a leather salesman. You have
to *show him the leather*.

AMELIA

What?

TONY

Listen, guy, we'd love to throw you
a bone and advertise your little
slaughterhouse here, but I'm not
even sure we have the space. People
are going nuts for this Lawrence
Collins obituary issue.

MILAN

Lawrence Collins? As in the dog
food magnate?

TONY

That's why I have to look sharp.
I'm about to go interview his
widow.

MILAN

Poor her.

TONY

(mocking voice)
"Poor her. Poor widow." Grow up.
It's not like he was murdered.

AMELIA

I think what Tony's trying to say
is if you want to get the word out,
this is the issue to do it. Collins
was a big shot.

MILAN

I don't know. Money's tight.

TONY

Tell you what. You let me test
drive this puppy...
(gestures to jacket)
...today and I'll see about getting
you a quarter-page ad in our center
fold.

AMELIA

No, Tony, we need *money*.

TONY

This is about so much more than money, Amelia. This is about the plight of small business in the American heartland.

AMELIA

We're in Martha's Vineyard.

TONY

(to Milan)

So what do you say?

MILAN

You're sure people will read it?

TONY

Or my name isn't Tony Ervolino.

Tony walks towards the door.

MILAN

Wait a second? Tony Ervolino? As in the teen writing prodigy?

Tony stops in his tracks.

TONY

(back turned)

I think you've got the wrong guy, buddy.

MILAN

No, I remember you. Your essay about being bi at Brown brought me to tears. What was that, seven years ago? What ever happened to you?

Tony turns around, pulls out his gun and points it at Milan.

TONY

I said I think you've got the wrong guy--

Milan immediately takes out his own gun and points it back at Tony. Tony puts his gun down and walks out.

TONY (CONT'D)

Christ, can anybody in this town take a *joke*?

EXT. WIDOW'S ESTATE, DAY

Bubs and Tony drive up a long, winding road to the widow's mansion. They park.

INT. TONY'S CAR, DAY

Tony in the backseat, Bubs in the driver's seat.

TONY

Listen, I'm going to let you come in for this one, because I've never told you this before, but you're more than just an intern to me. You're my protege, and in many ways my son. And I don't want to leave you in the car because it's hot outside and I had this dog once and Christ, was that a headache. Anyways, the important thing to remember is that this woman is grieving, right? She's inconsolable. So the most important thing is to be gentle. Right? Considerate.

INT. WIDOW'S LIVING ROOM, DAY

Tony and Bubs sit across from the WIDOW, 70, in a very fancy living room.

TONY

So just like that...
(claps hands together)
BAM. T-boned.

Widow nods her head, dabs her eyes.

TONY (CONT'D)

Wow. What a way to go. Did he see it coming?

WIDOW

I didn't exactly get the chance to ask him.

TONY

Well I don't know if he died on impact or if you saw him at the hospital. Did he die on impact?

WIDOW

Yes.

TONY

Probably for the best. Those hospital bills. Oof. I was just in for this nasty canker sore. 700 dollars to gargle saltwater and piss in a bedpan.

BUBS

Why'd you have to piss in a bedpan?

TONY

It's called getting your money's worth, smartass.

WIDOW

You know, I'm not sure why you're here. I told you on the phone my son's already written the obituary.

TONY

Listen, let me ask you something. Was your husband like any other man? Did your husband make you *laugh* like any other man? Pardon my French, but did your husband make you *come* like any other man?

Tony raises his eyebrows. Widow is stoic.

TONY (CONT'D)

Right? So why should his obituary be like any other man's? Listen, all these salacious details - the sexless marriage, the reckless driving, the widow's sudden turn for the ingenue obituary writer--

WIDOW

What?

TONY

All these little details are how your husband will be *remembered*. And trust me. I went to high school with your son. Pathos? Not exactly his strong suit.

BUBS

More like *pathetic*.

TONY

(to Bubs)

Are you kidding me right now? What did I literally just say about being considerate? Go wait in the car.

BUBS

But the dog--

TONY

Well I'll tell you what I told the dog, which is if you get hot, roll down a window. Now scram.

Tony waits for Bubs to exit. Then chuckles to himself.

TONY (CONT'D)

(wistfully)

God they grow up so fast. Do you have any of your own?

WIDOW

I think you should leave.

TONY

(sighs)

Maybe you're right. Hell, what was I thinking? A townie like me interviewing a widow like you?

Tony starts walking to the door. Then stops, and turns.

TONY (CONT'D)

But then again, I'm not like most townies. Most *townies* don't have a *wealthy mother*. Most *townies* don't have an *Ivy League English education...*

WIDOW

I'm pretty sure the leather guy went to Yale.

TONY

And most *townies* haven't even *heard* of Chekhov, let alone read several of his most famous quotes.

Tony pulls out his gun.

TONY (CONT'D)

I think we both know what Chekhov said about these things.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

But what ol' Chekhov seemed to
forget was that--

Tony accidentally fires gun, killing the widow. He looks
horrified.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. WIDOW'S LIVING ROOM, DAY

Bubs and Tony stand over the widow's corpse.

TONY

(nervous, manic)

So this guy bursts in through the
window...

(gestures to shattered
window)

...and he goes "Hey! I'm the guy
who killed your husband. And I
killed him because I love you. And
I want to be with you. So what do
you say?"

BUBS

(looking at corpse)

If he loved her, why did he shoot
her?

TONY

That's the craziest part. He shot
her by *accident*.

BUBS

What kind of idiot accidentally
shoots somebody?

TONY

Plenty of great men have
accidentally shot somebody.

BUBS

(sarcastically)

Like Cheney?

TONY

When were you born? How do you know
these people? Just shut up. Shut
up. The mayor's coming.

MAYOR, 34, and KREBS, 32, arrive at the scene.

TONY (CONT'D)

Mayor. Thank god you're here. The widow was murdered.

MAYOR

(sees corpse and sighs in frustration)

Christ, well, she couldn't have picked a worse time. It's about to be my birthday month. Krebs, I'm going to need you to take the lead on this one.

KREBS

But Evelyn, I'm already investigating the hit-and-run and the dog-napping and the deaths at the trampoline park.

MAYOR

Well, *Eric*, I just think it would be a *shame* if I had to start delegating my *needs* to somebody else.

Evelyn and Krebs stare at each other. They each lick their lips. They're both really into it. Amelia arrives.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Great. Amelia's here.

(to Krebs)

Go fetch my podium, bitch.

Krebs goes to lug a podium out of the backseat of a nearby sedan.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

That's it. Come to momma.

(waiting for podium, to Bubs)

Not really sure what to do with you. Too old to kiss and too young to vote.

Krebs finally gets the podium set up.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Great. Amelia, start recording. My fellow Americans. Today, the village of Lobsterville witnessed a heinous attack on one of our oldest and dare I say richest residents.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Mr. and Mrs. Collins's property taxes single-handedly funded some of Lobsterville's most urgent community projects, from our first-in-the-nation Trampoline Park for the Elderly, to the legal fees associated with the death of 4 senior citizens at our ill-conceived and ultimately ill-executed Trampoline Park for the Elderly...

TONY

(to Amelia)

Fuck, I forgot about those. You think I have to write one for each of them or can I kind of just lump them together?

MAYOR

...a project managed by my disgraced protege Eric Krebs. Trust me. Mr. Krebs has not gone unpunished. I have dressed him down in private, and disciplined him with a *firm hand*. By the end of our session, he was on his knees, begging for mercy. And you know what I said to him? Say it with me Eric. I said...

MAYOR (CONT'D)

(matter of fact)

Eric, I like you better on your knees. This feels amazing. I feel like a God.

ERIC

(matter of fact)

Eric, I like you better on your knees. This feels amazing. I feel like a God.

Everyone looks horrified.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

So just as I laid down the law with Mr. Krebs here, I will lay down the law with whatever man, woman, or child murdered Mrs. Collins. There was a suspiciously quiet little boy at the crime scene today. He will be interrogated *without a lawyer or legal guardian present*. Because Evelyn Lobster doesn't fight for unemployed children. Evelyn Lobster fights for *American workers* and the *generous billionaires who employ them*. Thank you, and may God bless Lobsterville.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

(end of speech)

Great. Thanks everyone. Eric, get the podium and the kid and the corpse. Tony, good luck with the obituary.

TONY

Christ, it never ends.

Krebs starts to handcuff Bubs.

TONY (CONT'D)

Just plead the fifth. I'll come pick you up at the station.

BUBS

What time?

TONY

(mocking)

"What time? What time?"

(normal)

What am I, your chauffeur?

(jogging after amelia)

Amelia. Amelia! Could I get a ride back. Bubs drove me here. I had a little bit too much to...
(mimes drinking)

INT. AMELIA'S CAR, EVENING

Tony lying down in the backseat, Amelia driving.

TONY

You ever feel like you have no idea what you're doing with your life and you just want to die?

AMELIA

You should really wear a seatbelt.

TONY

What's the point?

(pause)

I don't know how you do it. All the interviews and late nights writing and for what? It's not like anybody reads newspapers anymore.

AMELIA

(shrugs)

I've always wanted to be a journalist. It doesn't feel like work. It's what I love.

TONY

But don't you need praise? To know you're good?

AMELIA

(pause, considering)

I know I'm good. That's all that matters.

Tony is silent, moved. Eventually, they arrive at Tony's.

TONY

This is me.

Tony opens the door and kind of rolls out while the car is still moving.

AMELIA

What the fuck are you doing?

EXT. ERVOLINO HOUSE, DUSK

Tony picks himself up. Yells at Amelia through the car window.

TONY

I don't know. I'm *depressed*.

Tony limps into the house.

INT. TONY'S BEDROOM, NIGHT

Tony stares at a computer screen.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

Why did you stop writing, Tony?

TONY (V.O.)

I started to feel like I was doing it for everyone but myself.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

You know what Miles Davis said. "It takes a long time to sound like yourself."

TONY (V.O.)
Thats my problem. I'm impatient.

Tony has a fantasy of smashing his computer on the ground
over and over again.

TONY (V.O.)
And insecure.

Tony snaps out of fantasy.

SALAZAR (V.O.)
And?

Tony turns to his laptop and, after a beat, starts writing.

TONY (V.O.)
And for better or worse, I know
what people want to hear.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. LOBSTERVILLE LONGSHOT OFFICE, DAY

A haggard-looking Tony limps into the office.

SERGE

Tony! Thank god you're here. You're never going to believe it. They wrote up your obituary in the Globe.

TONY

What?

SERGE

In their coverage of the widow.
(reading from Globe)
"As local obituarist Tony Ervolino writes, 'Did the Widow Collins die at the hands of a lover, a 12-year-old boy, or both? The world may never know. But one thing is for certain...'"

SERGE (CONT'D)

(solemnly)
"Our humble hamlet will never be the same."

TONY

(mouthing along
silently)
"Our humble hamlet will never be the same."

SERGE (CONT'D)

Pure poetry! People are going nuts. Milan called asking about a full-page ad in the next issue. And the Robertsons are begging for a two-pager. One for their missing dog and another for their missing *kid*.

KID

(from behind the same door
as the dog)
I thought you were babysitting me.

SERGE

Shut up! Just shut up for a second!
(to Tony)
Christ almighty, I'm going to have to get a second muzzle.

TONY

You muzzled the dog?

SERGE

No, the kid just chewed through the first one. The dog I had to put down.

(long sigh)

Anywho, things are really looking up!

TONY

(haggard)

You hear that, Amelia? Things are looking up! Why so dour?

AMELIA

(concentrating on some documents)

Something's not adding up about this murder scene. Window shattered outwards. Gunshot to the stomach.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

And so soon after her husband died?

TONY

(garbled along)

An sro snoon apter her bluston die?

TONY (CONT'D)

God, I know! It's probably one of those mysteries that will never be solved and just drive everyone crazy.

AMELIA

Can we sit down and talk through what you saw? I'm writing a deep dive for the next issue.

TONY

Man, you know I'd love to, but I really gotta get going.

AMELIA

You just got here.

TONY

I know but my dad just texted me saying he has a stomach ache.

AMELIA

Why does that mean you have to leave--

TONY

Hold on one second.

(pretends to get a phone
call)

No way, you're kidding me. You're
kidding me.

(to Amelia as he starts to
walk out)

He says the stomach ache's gotten
even worse. I love you guys. I'll
see you next week.

AMELIA

Next week? It's Tuesday.

SERGE

Love you too, T. Tell Pops to hang
in there. If I had a stomach ache I
would straight up kill myself.

TONY

You and me both, brother.

Serge and Tony dab each other up. Tony keeps pretending he's
on the phone as he walks out.

TONY (CONT'D)

You've gotta be KIDDING me.

INT. ERVOLINO LIVING ROOM, DAY

Tony Sr. lies on a chaise lounge like he's in therapy. Tony
enters.

TONY

What's going on with you?

TONY SR.

(meekly)

Tummy ache.

TONY

Oh wow. Kismet. Did you hear? My
latest obit got covered in the
Globe.

TONY SR.

That's great. I'm proud of you,
son.

TONY

(dialing phone)

Well that's nice, but you're always proud of me, so let's see what mom thinks.

(to speaker phone)

Hello mother dearest.

SHANIA (V.O.)

(while eating,
preoccupied)

How many times do I have to tell you? Please do not call me mother dearest.

TONY

I just thought you'd be interested to learn that my latest obituary was written up in the Globe.

SHANIA (V.O.)

(mouth full of food)

Why would I be interested in that?

TONY

I don't know, maybe because I'm your son and you should be invested in my success.

SHANIA (V.O.)

Give me a break, Tony. I've invested thousands in your "success."

TONY

And what? You resent me for that?

SALAZAR

No, I'm just not inclined to praise you for every participation trophy.

TONY

Christ, will anything I do ever impress you?

SHANIA

I don't know. Are you planning on doing anything impressive anytime soon?

TONY

Well we can't all be war criminals.

SHANIA

No, some of us have to pretend to be writers.

TONY

(pleading)

Jesus, mom, every word I've ever written has been for you. Can't you see that?

SHANIA

Maybe that's your problem, Tony. Maybe you should start writing for yourself.

TONY

I don't know how to write for myself. I don't know who I am. I don't know what I want.

SHANIA

Bullshit. You know what you want. You're just too lazy to see it through.

TONY

(desperate)

What do I want? *What do I want?*

SHANIA

Tony, I have to go. My therapist is calling. I'll see you at Sunday dinner.

TONY

Wait, mother dearest—

Shania hangs up and the sound cuts out. We see Tony continue to yell into his phone - "Mother. Mother dearest!" - but hear nothing.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

I'm going to ask you again, Tony.

INT. SALAZAR'S OFFICE, DAY

SALAZAR

(solemn)

Who are you? What do you want?

TONY
 (shaken)
 I'm Tony Ervolino. And I want to
 make my mother proud.

Salazar looks at him, solemn, approving.

SALAZAR
 (nonchalant, holding up
 Tony's manuscript)
 These pages are a start.

TONY
 Really?

SALAZAR
 There's an emotional urgency here.
 Like you lived them yourself.

TONY
 Can you imagine?

SALAZAR
 With the right buzz, this could be
 big. Now you just need more.

TONY
 More?

SALAZAR
 Tommy kills the widow. Then what?

TONY
 (fearful)
 I don't know.

SALAZAR
 That's because you haven't lived it
 yet.

(pause)
 I'm not your typical editor, Tony.
 I expect my writers to live what
 they write and write what they
 live. To turn happenstance into
 metaphor. To use people as
 characters.

TONY
 But what if I don't want to use
 people?

SALAZAR
 My sweet boy. We all use people. To
 feel seen. To feel desired.

(MORE)

SALAZAR (CONT'D)

To feel loved. Writers are the only people who let themselves be used in return. To entertain. To provoke. To inspire.

TONY

(pause, considering)
Like the Unabomber.

SALAZAR

Exactly. Like the Unabomber. Now I want you to repeat after me.

INT. ERVOLINO LIVING ROOM, DAY

Tony Sr. paints a nude self-portrait.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

I know who I am.

TONY

I know who I am.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE, DAY

Mayor and Krebs face each other, Mayor in a pantsuit, Krebs naked.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

I know what I want.

TONY (V.O.)

I know what I want.

INT. MILAN'S SLAUGHTERHOUSE, DAY

Milan holds a gun up to the head of a cow, ready to shoot.

SALAZAR (V.O.)

I will do whatever it takes.

TONY (V.O.)

I will do whatever it takes.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE OBSERVATORY, DAY

Close-up on security cam footage of Salazar and Tony doing the incantation.

SALAZAR (V.O.)
And they will love me for it.

TONY (V.O.)
And they will love me for it.

SALAZAR (V.O.)
Good. Again.

As they repeat the incantation, we toggle between security cam footage of the scenes above.

<p>TONY (V.O.) (slowly) I know who I am. I know what I want. I will do whatever it takes. And they will love me for it.</p>	<p>SALAZAR (V.O.) (more intense) I know who I am. I know what I want. I will do whatever it takes. And they will love me for it.</p>
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SALAZAR (V.O.)
(more intensely)
Good. Again.

We slowly zoom out to reveal hundreds of small security screens lining the curved window of the lighthouse observatory, each one showing footage from a different part of Lobsterville.

<p>TONY (V.O.) (intense) I know who I am. I know what I want. I will do whatever it takes. And they will love me for it.</p>	<p>SALAZAR (V.O.) (intense) I know who I am. I know what I want. I will do whatever it takes. And they will love me for it.</p>
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SALAZAR (V.O.)
(ferociously)
LIKE YOU MEAN IT.

<p>TONY (V.O.) (ferociously) I KNOW WHO I AM. I KNOW WHAT I WANT. I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES. AND THEY WILL LOVE ME FOR IT. I KNOW WHO I AM. I KNOW WHAT I WANT. I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES. AND THEY WILL LOVE ME FOR IT.</p>	<p>SALAZAR (V.O.) (ferociously) I KNOW WHO I AM. I KNOW WHAT I WANT. I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES. AND THEY WILL LOVE ME FOR IT. I KNOW WHO I AM. I KNOW WHAT I WANT. I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES. AND THEY WILL LOVE ME FOR IT.</p>
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We continue to zoom out, revealing Shania in a swivel chair, back to camera.

TONY (V.O.)
I KNOW WHO I AM. I KNOW WHAT I
WANT. I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES.
AND THEY WILL LOVE ME FOR IT. AND
THEY WILL LOVE ME FOR IT. AND THEY
WILL LOVE ME FOR IT. AND THEY WILL
LOVE ME FOR IT. AND THEY WILL LOVE
ME--

Shania uses a remote to turn off Tony and Salazar's screen,
cutting the sound. She walks off. Sound of footsteps.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. LOBSTERVILLE INTERROGATION ROOM, DAY

Krebs and Bubs sit on opposite sides of an interrogation table.

KREBS

Can I get you anything to drink?
Maybe a coke?

BUBS

A coke would be great.

KREBS

Sure thing.

Krebs gets a coke from a mini-fridge in the corner and then viciously shakes it. Slams it down in front of Bubs. Bubs takes a beat, then cracks it open. It dribbles out a little bit. Krebs takes a beat, then gets right in Bubs's face.

KREBS (CONT'D)

(angry)

So where's the body, sicko?

BUBS

(gestures to corner)

It's right there.

The widow's corpse is propped up on a chair in the corner of the room.

KREBS

Ah fuck, we really have to get that
to the morgue. Do you mind driving?
I've had a little bit too much
too...

(mimes drinking)

END OF EPISODE