

# Magic Benji

By

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## Characters

**Benji** (mid-30s; he/him) – An eager but deeply uncool Las Vegas blackjack dealer who finds safety behind mental walls.

**Loo** (comparable age to Benji; they/them) – Benji’s companion from way back when. Their entire purpose is for Benji to live his best life.

**Simmons** (any age; they/them) – Mechanic with a passionate affection for the power of labor.

**Jonesy** (any age; they/them) – Diner owner/operator who feeds their soul through comfort, leisure, and good food.

**Baker** (mid-30s; he/him) – Benji’s father who tries to atone for a troubled past by playing the prototypical “good dad.”

\*Note: Benji’s mother appears occasionally as pre-recorded voicemail messages.

## Setting

- A blackjack table in a Las Vegas casino
- Rock Route, a vacation destination in Death Valley

## Time

The Present.



Prologue

*(The following is recited in darkness as the lights slowly rise over  
the course of the verses.)*

BAKER

When each of us are first conceived,  
Something magical occurs:  
We collect a tiny, shiny stone  
(In case you hadn't heard)

SIMMONS

Diamonds, as we understand,  
Are useless, pretty things,  
Something dug and cut and weighed  
And placed upon a ring

JONESY

But not the precious stones within,  
Those have a mighty heft  
They come to us before we're born  
And when we die, they've left

BAKER

At death, our stone becomes a star  
And waits up in the sky  
Until a newborn host appears,  
Prepared to start their life

SIMMONS

Rarely can a stone be heard  
Especially one unseen  
But always it is in the gut  
Guiding their machine

JONESY

Sometimes, folks ignore it  
(Or often, let's be real)  
When they die, the diamond dies  
(The diamond knows the deal)

LOO

But s'pose a stone won't be ignored  
And gifts its host a lift?  
S'pose it tests the person's limits  
And see if they resist.

END OF PROLOGUE.

Scene 1

A casino floor.

*(By now, the lights are fully raised on BENJI standing alone behind his blackjack table. Around him is the hustle and bustle of a Las Vegas casino. He wears the standard blackjack dealer outfit: dark pants, button-down shirt, tacky vest, and name tag.*

*He deals blackjack to invisible players.*

*LOO is unseen by BENJI as they speak.)*

LOO

This is Benji Yarrowburg  
Today, he's thirty-five  
The gift he thinks he gives himself  
Is simply to survive

They called him Magic Benji  
Back when he was a kid  
'Cuz that's how he explained the things  
That logic never did

His father left at thirty-five,  
Same age as Benji now.  
Ma told him Pop had run away,  
But he couldn't process how.

Pop was rough, his Ma would say  
(Of that, most would agree)  
But Benji chose to hold onto  
The things just he could see

That Pop was fun, and kind, and sweet,  
A rascal and a rogue,  
A cocky, funny, loving fellow,  
The kind you'd like to know

But Magic Benji's superstitions,  
As he turns thirty-five,  
Make him lead a boring life  
To ensure he survives.

*(LOO exits.*

*BENJI says goodbye to some card players and stands alert, eager, and welcoming at his blackjack table, waiting for more players.*

*BENJI's cell phone rings. He looks at the name on the phone. He stares at the name on his phone as it keeps ringing.)*

BENJI

Nope.

*(The phone continues to ring. BENJI continues to stare at it.)*

BENJI

No, thank you.

*(The phone rings louder and louder.)*

BENJI

No, quiet! Quiet! Quiet! Stop!

*(BENJI stops the call and puts his phone away. He returns to his stance.*

*LOO enters wearing any-and-all manner of evening wear and carrying a small box. They sit at BENJI's table.)*

BENJI

No, Loo, no. Please, don't. I'm working here.

*(LOO opens the box and pulls out a cupcake. They place it on the table. They pull out a candle and a lighter and ignite the cupcake.)*

LOO

*(Singing and clapping their hands.)*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR BENJAMIN  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

BENJI

Thank you, Loo. Now either play or git. My shift's still on.



Happy birthday, Benjamin.

LOO

I got that part.

BENJI

Did your mom call?

LOO

What? Did she send you?

BENJI

She never “sends” me, I am not “sent,” I am simply “around.” You just never reach out, is all. To either of us.

LOO

Go figure, she’s the easy one to ignore.

BENJI

She wants to talk to her son on his birthday.

LOO

I got that part, too. If you’re not here for her, then why are you here?

BENJI

It’s a special birthday, Benjamin.

LOO

I’m thirty-five-years-old, call me Benji—

BENJI

The big three-five!

LOO  
*(Ignoring BENJI.)*

Great, maybe I’ll run for president.

BENJI

All right, run with me here, you know what I mean. Your Pop vanished on his thirty-fifth... Y’all share a birthday... and, as your dearest, bestest pal ever—

LOO

BENJI

We're not friends, Loo.

LOO

Oh, "pshaw," I say to that. As your greatest friend of all time, as your most cherished companion and adviser, I'm doing a wellness check. Eat your cupcake, it's your favorite.

*(BENJI glances over his shoulder. When the coast is clear, he houses the cupcake in one bite.)*

LOO

This isn't *Mission: Impossible*, the cupcake's not exploding on you.

BENJI

*(Mouth full.)*

Peanut butter and jelly. Very nice.

LOO

Of course, it's peanut butter and jelly! And this chucklehead right here saying we're not friends.

BENJI

Whatever you want has to wait, I'm on shift here.

LOO

Hit me.

BENJI

Don't mess around.

LOO

Hit me, Benjamin.

BENJI

At least bet if you're gonna do this.

LOO

Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me.

BENJI

Fine. Fine! HERE. Take the lousy card.

*(BENJI deals an ace.)*

LOO

Ace! Lucky me. Hit me.

BENJI

Do you really wanna get kicked out of a casino? Folks think it's hard to get kicked out of a casino, but it is NOT. Watch—

LOO

You're not gonna kick me out.

BENJI

Tell me what you want or I'm never talking to my mother again.

LOO

It's a significant birthday.

BENJI

Is not.

LOO

Is so.

BENJI

It is not.

LOO

It is so!

BENJI

It isn't! Look at me, Loo. I'm not a little kid anymore who can be won over with a PB&J cupcake. I have a job, I had a shift today, I worked today. I'm in my thirties, birthdays don't fucking matter.

LOO

Sure they do! You and me, we're taking a trip.

BENJI

The only trip I want to see you take is down a long flight of stairs.

*(BENJI grabs his side in pain.)*

BENJI

Ow!

LOO

Serves you right, it was a very hurtful joke.

BENJI

Sorry, but I can't take a sudden vacation. I don't even take planned vacations. I need to cover my shifts, which involves asking people for things, I need to pack, I need to get my mail in order, I don't even know where we're going—

LOO

Rock Route.

BENJI

Way out in the desert?

LOO

You remember Rock Route.

BENJI

Of course, I remember Rock Route. Resort out in Death Valley, near the Sailing Stones where me and Pop camped illegally a couple-a times.

LOO

It's exactly what we need. A few days out in the sun, hanging with some old friends. They'll give us work out in the desert, get some exercise and fresh air, we'll eat at the diner. If we leave soon enough, it'll still be your birthday and Rock Route sure loves them some birthdays.

BENJI

I haven't been there in some time, I don't know if I got any friends there.

LOO

I'll be there.

BENJI

You're not my friend, Loo.

LOO

I love you too, buddy.

BENJI

Not today. Let me finish my shift and go home. The only thing Pop did wrong on his thirty-fifth was he didn't come home, and that's not a mistake I'm making.

LOO

Yes today. It's your birthday. I worked everything out with your boss—

BENJI

You did?

LOO

Tomorrow you had the morning shift at the five-dollar table. Maxine's taking that—

BENJI

She is?

LOO

Yup. She needs evenings off to deal with her daughter's tutoring, you know this—

BENJI

I didn't even talk to her—

LOO

I took care of it. You now have her Thursday evening rush—

BENJI

She's giving up rush hour tips for a morning shift?

LOO

She's taking your blackjack game and you're getting War.

BENJI

That was a dumb trade, I hate dealing War—

LOO

You weren't scheduled the next day, that was easy to figure out. The day after was also easy, Guillermo has an exam and wanted the night off to study. I tried to get rid of your shift entirely, but—

BENJI

How long is this desert trip going to last?

LOO

Three days. My job's got a pretty strict attendance policy, as well, particularly for indulgences.

BENJI

Then don't tell anyone what you're doing.

LOO

And LIE, Benjamin? How DARE you??

BENJI

Fine. Don't lie.

LOO

Three days. That's it. That's all we can afford. I want you to clear your head. I want you to have fun.

BENJI

At Rock Route? All I'll be thinking about is Pop. Oh, shit, that was the purpose.

LOO

Let's go to Rock Route. Maybe make a little peace with your past. Maybe give your mom a call...

BENJI

The only way I'm talking to her is if I make so much "peace" that I completely forget who I am.

LOO

So long as I'm around, there's no way you're losing yourself. I'm too good a friend to let that happen.

*(BENJI's cell phone rings.)*

LOO

Or you could just talk to her now and we don't have to bother with a trip.

*(BENJI considers this as the phone rings. He considers too long and the phone stops ringing.)*

LOO

Aww yeah, set the out-of-office reply, it's vacation time.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 2

Racetrack Playa in Death Valley,  
California.

*(Lights rise on the desert at dusk. Pitch black and brightly lit at once. Dry wind whistles through the brush. Insects chirp and scurry.)*

*The Sailing Stones sit in tracks formed naturally from resting on an old ice bed that experiences high winds. Please look this up, it is a real place and a real phenomenon.*

*BENJI enters alone.)*

BENJI

Hey, Loo!  
Where are we?  
Where are you? Loo, you're supposed to guide me.  
Ah, shit.  
Benji, you great dumbass.  
Gone and wandered into the fucking desert.  
Turn around, Benji. Turn around. Go back to Vegas, back home, back to safety.  
You snapped, just a little. You snapped. It's your birthday, you're the same age as Pop when he left. You're stressed. And stressed folks snap. They get stressed and snap and roam desolate terrains on their birthdays all the time.  
Holy cow, the stars sure are something out here. See if I remember the navigation Pop taught me. If you find the Big Dipper, the two stars at the end point to the North Star... which... is... bigger. Fuck, there's a shitload-a stars out here...

*(LOO enters.)*

LOO

Isn't dusk really something out here, Benjamin?

BENJI

Jesus, fuck! There you are.

LOO

Sorry, I saw an adorable little desert mouse! They woke their little eyes and they were very hungry, so—

BENJI

Where are we?

LOO

Seriously?

Context clues, Benjamin. The sandy clearing, the awesome expanse above us, the big rocks awkwardly sitting at the ends of long, dusty paths...

BENJI

The Sailing Stones.

We're in Death Valley already?

LOO

You used to love the Sailing Stones.

BENJI

They were magical to a little kid. Rocks that move themselves when no one's watching. They figured it out not too long ago, see, clearings like this one are old ice beds—

LOO

A magician never reveals their tricks.

BENJI

Pop told me they were magic.

LOO

When?

BENJI

He brought me out here to this wild desert where the shadows of mountains meet the towering, glittering sky. Remember? He told me, "In Sunday School, you learned that God created the light and the darkness, but only magic can combine the two."

LOO

You said that.

BENJI

Why would I say that?

LOO

Why would your Pop say that? He sneered whenever you talked magic. He told you to never go out into the desert alone, "that horizontal abyss will trick your little mind into insanity."



BENJI

That doesn't sound like something Pop would say. He told me that magic needs privacy, that's why there's nothing out here.

LOO

Again, you said that. I agree with you about the magic of this place, but there is no privacy here. See all those stars above? Each and every one is a sparkling little friend.

BENJI

Are you speaking to me in metaphors?

LOO

No, I'm being very literal.

BENJI

The stars are fire and... nuclear... reacting with the burning, and... all the elements swirling and copying themselves and crashing into each other... and BOOM!, or something like that.

LOO

You need to find better science texts than Wikipedia.

BENJI

But that's the gist!

LOO

When you look up at the sky in the city and it's that dark grey haze that fades into darkness, like a kind of blindness? That feels unknowable and we ground ourselves, we look down, we cling to that which we know. But the sky above the Sailing Stones, this elegant dome that we see curve away and can trust that it lands wherever a horizon may be. It feels secure to have a blanket of friends.

BENJI

Aw, Loo, that's adorable.

LOO

Don't mock me.

BENJI

Let's get to Rock Route, it's late. Let's see, this here is where me and Pop would camp...

*(A burst of flames appears and vanishes just as quickly.)*

What was that?  
BENJI

Was what?  
LOO

That flash. What was that flash?  
BENJI

I must not have been paying attention.  
Benjamin—  
LOO

“Paying attention”?  
BENJI

There’s something I should tell you about Rock Route.  
LOO

Now?  
BENJI

I wasn’t sure if you’d come if I told you earlier.  
LOO

Oh, what the fuck.  
BENJI

Your Pop’s at Rock Route. That’s where he ended up.  
LOO

Pop? How do you know?  
BENJI

I poked around Rock Route by myself a while back.  
LOO

You don’t have a right to go poking around in there.  
BENJI

I was worried about you, and I knew the place was significant, so I scoped it. And now we’re here! Maybe you’d... like to see him. Maybe even release him.  
LOO

BENJI

What, is he trapped?

LOO

It looked that way. I'm sorry, I should've told you back in Vegas.

BENJI

Of course you shoulda told me. I'm seeing my Pops! This is the best birthday present ever!

LOO

Good enough to call your mother?

BENJI

If I can bring him back somehow and show her that he's not a good-for-nothing, he's not a thief, he's not a cheat, he's a good guy, maybe we can get back to being a family again.

LOO

That's what I wanted to hear. Lead the way, Benjamin.

BENJI

Let me see... Pop asked me about Rock Route... I was sitting... there... so it's...

*(Orienting himself.)*

That way.

*(A low, whirring hum begins. BENJI searches for it and heads in its direction.)*

BENJI

That's Simmons!

LOO

Glad to hear it.

*(BENJI and LOO exit in pursuit of the noise, which grows louder and louder.)*

END OF SCENE.

Scene 3

The mechanic's shop.

*(The whirring turns into the scream of a table saw cutting through metal. Sparks fly. The saw stops. An alligator wearing a welding mask carries a long piece of metal and hammers down the sides.*

*BENJI and LOO enter.)*

BENJI

*(Over hammering.)*

Hello?

*(No response.)*

BENJI

Simmons! I'm talking to you.

*(No response.)*

BENJI

Hey, listen to me, you old jerk turd!

LOO

Well, golly, that's one way to greet an old friend.

BENJI

It was our relationship.

*(BENJI approaches SIMMONS, startling them. They lift their welding mask.)*

SIMMONS

Goddamn!  
Don't. Don't sneak up on people.  
I gotta hammer.

BENJI

Sorry.

SIMMONS

At least you had the wits about you to do it from the front.

BENJI

*(To LOO.)*

Gators don't chop from the front, they chomp from the sides. I learned that from Zoobooks.

SIMMONS

Hopefully the winds of time bought you here for more than just reciting books. Here, hammer.

*(SIMMONS holds the metal and directs BENJI to hammer.)*

BENJI

I'm not here to work.

SIMMONS

Of course you are.

BENJI

It's just a vacation.

SIMMONS

What's more relaxing than work?

BENJI

I don't even know what you're doing.

SIMMONS

I don't care. You know "work," right? The general concept of labor? Literally the only way we survive on this planet?

LOO

You two have a strangely combative relationship.

BENJI

Back when I was a little kid, Simmons and me, we'd be crusty old seafolk on the docks.

LOO

Aw, Benjamin, that's adorable.

BENJI

Don't mock me.

*(Adopting a rough-n-tumble seafolk demeanor and gravelly voice.)*

Whodya think you are, huh? You must have me confused with some other fool!

LOO

And it's a lot less adorable when it's a thirty-five-year-old.

SIMMONS

You refusing to help me with this?

BENJI

Depends.

SIMMONS

On what?

BENJI

Is it important?

SIMMONS

Depends.

BENJI

On what?

SIMMONS

On your definition of "important."

BENJI

It does depend, doesn't it?

*(Pause.)*

SIMMONS

It's a sage.

BENJI

You say, "a stage"?

SIMMONS

Correct, I say "a stage." We're celebrating a birthday today.

BENJI

And you're calling that "important."

SIMMONS

Of course. Birthdays celebrate life, we thank someone for continuing to exist, we cheer on the circumstances that brought them to be in this place. Birthdays are parties for endurance.

*(Pause.)*

BENJI

I agree.

LOO

I agree, as well.

BENJI

*(Dropping the voice.)*

Simmons, my old friend!

SIMMONS

Benji, you dumpy ol' asshole! How you been?

BENJI

Keeping clean. I'm here to see Pops, you know where he's at?

SIMMONS

You came here for your Pops?

BENJI

I gotta tip he was hanging around this place.

SIMMONS

Not to my knowledge, and I know everyone in town. Tell you what, get some hammering done while we figure this out.

BENJI

I'm not here to work.

SIMMONS

You're here, there's work to do. I don't understand the confusion.

BENJI

*(To LOO.)*

You said he was here.

LOO

I saw him! He was digging.

BENJI

Digging?

SIMMONS

Oh, sure, there's plenty of digging to do. The sooner you finish that stage, the sooner you can work on something else.

BENJI

I'm not doing your chores.

SIMMONS

Now see here, Comrade Lazy-Pants, there ain't a lot of folks here in Rock Route, but there's a lot to do. You can see I build, construct, design. Basic infrastructure, Benji. Jonesy, in the diner, they're all about the food and comfort of this place. That leisure takes labor. Then there's our town murderer, Baker—

BENJI

Baker? Baker. Baker!  
You nincompoop, that's Pop?  
Murderer...?

SIMMONS

This Baker was a drifter who took a life and now must work off his debt to the world. And he works diligently, every day, like a good citizen of Rock Route. He made a mistake in the past, but is proving his value through good, vital labor.

BENJI

That's gotta be Pop. Can I see him?

SIMMONS

Baker?

BENJI

Yes, where is he?

SIMMONS

I tell ya, I just do not know, seeing as I am not his keeper now, am I?

BENJI

The way you describe it, it sounds like you are literally his keeper.



SIMMONS

He's busy finding the Laser Rock.

*(SIMMONS points to a tarp covering a large device.)*

SIMMONS

Once Baker finds the Laser Rock, we can feed it into the Machine.

BENJI

What does the Machine do?

SIMMONS

Destroys the Laser Rock?

LOO

Laser Rock?

BENJI

I remember this one. The Laser Rock is this seismic element disrupting the stasis here, it's why none of the buildings have foundations.

SIMMONS

Another instance of desert magic. When we arrived, we created this wonderful little town, but the Laser Rock does not like to share territory. If we can get the Laser Rock and destroy it, then Rock Route becomes more than a resort, it becomes a home.

LOO

Weird.

BAKER

Any clue where I could meet Baker?

SIMMONS

It's his birthday we're celebrating, he's got the day off.

BENJI

*(To LOO.)*

Pops and me got the same birthday.

LOO

Yeah, no shit, Benjamin.

BENJI  
(*To SIMMONS.*)

You gave your prisoner the day off?

SIMMONS  
Now, that sounds like the American culture in you instilling some hyper-punitive instincts. Go loaf around the diner, I bet Jonesy's got something for you to do. You look able enough.

BENJI  
Jonesy! Where's the diner.

SIMMONS  
Past the scrapyard.

BENJI  
Right! Duh. "Mechanic's shop, scrapyard, road, diner."

*(BENJI exits, pursued by LOO.)*

SIMMONS  
Oh, okay, now you're the town expert all of a sudden. Sorry for giving those directions you asked ME for!

END OF SCENE.

Scene 4

Old-fashioned roadside diner. Oldies  
on the jukebox.

*(The diner is set up for BAKER's birthday.)*

*JONESY, a sock puppet, puts the finishing touches on a cake.)*

JONESY

*(To the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat.")*

SPIN, SPIN,  
SPIN THE CAKE  
SPIN IT 'ROUND AND 'ROUND  
PUT THE ICING ON THE CAKE  
WHERE'S THAT FUCKING CLOWN?

SPIN, SPIN,  
SPIN THE CAKE  
MAKE IT NICE AND NEAT  
KEEP IT CLEAN AND UNIFORM  
IT'S A TASTY TREAT

SPIN, SPIN,  
SPIN THE CAKE  
WE'RE MISSING THE CLOWN  
THEY'RE ABOUT AN HOUR LATE  
WHAT A BIG LETDOWN

FUCK, FUCK,  
FUCK MY LIFE  
THIS ICING LOOKS LIKE SHIT  
MAYBE IF I EAT A CHUNK,  
BAKER WON'T SEE IT

*(JONESY eats a wad of icing. BENJI and LOO enter.)*

BENJI

Jonesy? It's Benji! Have you seen—

JONESY

Benji?? Goddammit! You're back! Are you our clown? Where's your get-up?

LOO

Swear-y lot you've got here.

BENJI

Pop useta have me swear down at the casino for laughs, his pals gave me quarters.

LOO

You say that with such fondness.

BENJI

What get-up?

JONESY

Wig, make-up, suspenders, I don't know, I'm not the costumer.

BENJI

Make-up? Oh, rats. I'm sorry, Jonesy, I'm not here for—

JONESY

You were told it was a birthday party. You know what that means.

LOO

What does that mean?

BENJI

It means...

JONESY

It means now I gotta rustle something up for you.

*(JONESY goes into the kitchen.*

*A crackle of electricity comes from the kitchen.*

*JONESY returns with a clown costume and make-up kit.)*

JONESY

Here we are.

BENJI

It means I have to be a clown. Pop liked it when I was a clown.

JONESY

Hurry! Get dressed, we have little time. You can keep that dorky little vest on.

*(BENJI starts dressing like a birthday clown.)*

BENJI

What was that crackle from the kitchen? A bug zapper?

JONESY

No, just your run-of-the-mill magic portal.

BENJI

I don't remember a magic portal.

JONESY

You don't? It was here before any of us. It's a mystical blue light floating in the kitchen (in the exact spot I'd like to install shelving, might I add, but noooo, the portal comes first).

LOO

How does it work?

BENJI

Yeah, how does the portal work?

JONESY

We ask for shit and poof! We get it.

BENJI

*(To LOO.)*

Does that answer anything for you?

LOO

Ask a simple question, get a simple answer.

JONESY

You seem a little out of it. Lost in the stars tonight, Benji-boy?

BENJI

Something like that.

JONESY

We need you to focus for Baker's birthday!

BENJI

Yes! Today's Pop's birthday.

JONESY

Today's probably a lot of people's birthday.

BENJI

Like me!

JONESY

You're kidding.

BENJI

*(Dressed like a clown.)*

Would I kid?

JONESY

Well, do your job and make Baker laugh.

BENJI

Laugh?

JONESY

Yes, the physical inverse of crying, you should try it sometime, sour-puss. What do you got? Riffs? Pranks? You got dirty jokes?

BENJI

You wanna hear dirty jokes?

JONESY

Everyone loves a clown that tells fuck jokes.

BENJI

Fuck jokes?

JONESY

Yeah, jokes about fucking.

LOO

Do you know any jokes about fucking, Benjamin?

BENJI

Stop egging them on.

*(To JONESY.)*

I don't know any fuck jokes.

JONESY

Well, for shit's sake, son, do something—

BENJI

But, Jonesy—

JONESY

Leisure takes labor, too, y'know—

BENJI

I know, I work at a casino—

JONESY

Wonderful! You're a showman already. Make with the funny ha-ha, the party starts soon.

BENJI

Cards!

LOO

Cards?

JONESY

“Cards.”

LOO

Cards.

JONESY

Cards?

BENJI

Cards! Let's have some fun.

LOO

You? Wanna have FUN??

BENJI

Follow my lead, I gotta idea. You gotta deck?

JONESY

A deck of playing cards, you mean?

BENJI

Yeah, a standard deck. Fifty-two cards, four suits, no jokers.

LOO

Don't want any competition, huh?

JONESY

I can probably rustle something up. Lemme check.

*(JONESY exits to the kitchen.)*

BAKER

*(Entering.)*

Thanks for the stage, but the better gift would be a working backhoe.

*(BAKER, a dirty man in his 30s, enters followed by SIMMONS who rolls on the stage from earlier and places it by the jukebox.)*

SIMMONS

I'm working on it, but you gotta stick with the shovels for now.

BAKER

I've been sticking with the shovels for twenty-five years, they're all rusted out, they don't cut it, my friend. I even gashed my hand on one this week.

JONESY

Sounds like they cut it, just fine.

SIMMONS

Okay, chill out, Baker.

BENJI

"Baker"?

SIMMONS

You love your birthday. I'll get the damn backhoe, don't you worry.

BENJI

Just... there he is...



LOO

Notice anything weird about him?

BENJI

No... he hasn't changed at all...

*(BENJI grabs his side in pain.)*

BENJI

Agh!

BAKER

Holy shit, it's a birthday clown! And he's in pain!

BENJI

Da—da—d—Baker? You Baker?

BAKER

I am! You must be here for me.

BENJI

Damn right!

BAKER

*(To SIMMONS and JONESY.)*

Oh, you two. That's fun. Does he tell fuck jokes? That'd just be swell.

LOO

It'd be a hoot!

BENJI

I dunno any fuck jokes...

BAKER

Not one? Not a single fuck joke? Didn't your dad teach you fuck jokes as a kid?

*(BENJI reacts to the word "dad" with laughter.)*

BAKER

See? You seem to be thinking of one right now.

BENJI

Why doesn't he know who I am?

LOO

You're a quarter-century older now, aren't you?

BENJI

But he's not, why do I have to be?

LOO

You haven't been to Rock Route in a while. Time doesn't move the same.

BENJI

Whatever, I gotta routine to do.

SIMMONS

Well, get to it, then! Make with the funny ha-ha!

BENJI

Okay, well first—

SIMMONS

Get on with it, I said!

BENJI

I'm on it, you crusty old piece of bread!

BAKER

That is an adorable vest.

BENJI

“Adorable”?

LOO

That word sounds weird coming from him.

BENJI

*(Interrupting.)*

Thanks! It's my uniform, do you recognize it? I guess they changed the logo a few years back. I work at—

*(BENJI's phone rings. Lights come down on the diner and focus on BENJI. Ambient casino noise is heard.)*

BENJI

Oh, what the fuck?

*(BENJI looks at his phone. It's Mom.)*

BENJI

How the fuck did she get in here?

*(LOO steps out of the dark.)*

LOO

Ma again?

BENJI

She hasn't called this often in years.

LOO

Maybe it's serious.

BENJI

Nah, take me to the birthday party.

LOO

You're in charge, not me. Answer it.

*(The phone stops ringing.)*

*BENJI grabs his side in pain.*

*The sound of a voicemail notification.)*

LOO

Listen to it.

BENJI

Later.

LOO

Listen to it and we'll go back.

*(BENJI plays the message.)*

MOM

*(Voiceover.)*

Hey, kiddo. I know I don't often call this much, but I wanna talk. It's a big birthday, maybe it's a rough one for you. It is for me. Please pick up, Benji. I miss you. I know you're not this... cruel. I'm sorry, that was uncalled for. I don't wanna have a bad chat. I just wanna talk to you. Call me back. I love you.

*(End of message.)*

*BENJI deletes the message.)*

BENJI

We good?

LOO

You should call her.

BENJI

Take me back.

*(Ambient casino noise fades away. Lights back up on the diner.)*

SIMMONS

Tell some jokes, clown!

BAKER

This has gotten incredibly aggressive for a birthday party.

BENJI

I'm not doing the jokes! I don't know any, I already toldja.

SIMMONS

Oh, come on. You know what "fucking" is, right? You know what a "joke" is, right? Just smash the two things together!

*(Pause.)*

BENJI

Fine.

Um...

Knock-knock!

SIMMONS

A fucking knock-knock??

BAKER

Simmons, can I get a Coca-Cola in a glass bottle?

*(SIMMONS goes into the kitchen.)*

BAKER

Okay. Just you'n me. No one else here. Don't worry, you're doing a good job! This isn't quite your thing, huh?

BENJI

I always wanted to be the performing type.

BAKER

Cool! My name's Baker and I always wanted to be the life of the party, for everyone to have a great time, all the time. Today's my birthday, and if you're having fun, I'm having fun. So, you gotta knock-knock for me?

BENJI

I'm a grown man, man.

BAKER

Right, apologies. I was shooting for "accommodating," but I guess I hit "babying." Try it out on me, go ahead. If your Pop taught it to you, I bet it's great.

LOO

Pop never taught you jokes. He just directed them at you.

BENJI

That's not true. Look at him, he's a fun guy.

LOO

You don't remember a single joke he told you, do you?

BENJI

I bet I can piece one together.  
Knock-knock.

BAKER

Who's there?

*(BENJI has no idea who is at the door.)*

BENJI

A prostitute.

LOO

What the fuck.

BAKER

“A prostitute.”

“Knock-knock, who’s there... a prostitute.”

BENJI

That is correct, that is how the joke goes.

LOO

Yeah, great one, Benjamin, doesn’t even make grammatical sense, real deconstruction of comedic form there—

BENJI

Shut up, okay?

BAKER

“A prostitute” who?

*(No matter how hard BENJI tries, there is no punchline to this joke.)*

BENJI

...A sexy prostitute.

BAKER

*(Politely lying.)*

Not a bad joke!

BENJI

Sorry, I’m having a hard time focusing on the joke.

LOO

Then focus on him.

*(The blue light flashes from the kitchen with the sound of a bug zapper.)*

BAKER

Ah! My Coca-Cola!

BENJI

I don't know what you expect me to see in him.

*(JONESY reenters with a deck of cards.)*

JONESY

Just a deck of cards. Sorry it took a minute.

BENJI

Right, the cards!

*(Another crackle of blue light. SIMMONS returns with a Coca-Cola.)*

BAKER

Now that's refreshment.

JONESY

Here are your cards, *sans* jokers.

BAKER

Holy shit, you do magic tricks?!

BENJI

I do.

BAKER

I'd love to see you do some magic tricks for me!

LOO

He never wanted to see your tricks.

BENJI

He always wanted to see my tricks.  
Pick a card.

BAKER

Ten of clubs.

BENJI

No, you take a card from me. Oh, shit...

*(BENJI forgot to present the cards. He presents the cards to BAKER.)*

BENJI

Sorry, the deck is new, they're kinda slippery. Pick a card.

*(BAKER takes a card.)*

BENJI

Memorize it.

LOO

He's being strangely patient.

BENJI

What's your point? My Pops loved my card tricks. That's why he took me gambling with him, I was good luck.

SIMMONS

Magic Benji's got himself a magic voice.

BENJI

*(Adopting a mystical air.)*

That's right! The magic voices... and spirits! They surround me. They are attacking me right now. They think they understand me, they think they know my weaknesses, but they are wrong!

JONESY

The spirits!

SIMMONS

They are wrong.

BENJI

What they perceive as weakness, I perceive as strength. Simmons? Swallow that man's card.

*(SIMMONS eats the card. BENJI pretends to talk to a voice in the sky.)*

BENJI

Where? Where?



*(BENJI walks to the counter, places one card face-down in front of a stool, then looks to the sky for approval. He lays one card at each stool.)*

I see. BENJI

You're being ridiculous. LOO

Quiet, I'm reuniting. BENJI

Whatever you got to do to make right with this weirdly gentle version of your father. LOO

Go get a broom. BENJI

*(The others look at each other.)*

Get him a broom. BAKER

*(JONESY goes into the kitchen for a broom.)*

Wake the cards up! BENJI

"Wake the cards up!" LOO

*(BENJI slaps each pile of cards, seemingly at random, like breaking a code.)*

Rise and shine, magic playing cards! LOO

Fuck off, Loo. This isn't for you. BENJI

*(BENJI grabs his side in pain. The blue light crackles. JONESY comes back with a broom.)*

BENJI

Freeze in place, please.

*(BENJI stands next to the jukebox.)*

BENJI

Hey, Baker?

I hope you're gonna dig this.

*(BENJI taps the ground three times with the broom handle.*

*Blackout.*

*BENJI whacks the jukebox, which lights back to life and plays more oldies.*

*Lights up.*

*The cards are gone.*

*While the music plays, BENJI creeps around with the broom, watching the ceiling.)*

BENJI

You wanted me to have fun? Well, guess what. I'm having an absolute... blast.

*(BENJI taps the ceiling with the broom. Playing cards rain down upon the diner.*

*BENJI repeats the same number of times as there are piles. The diner fills with playing cards.)*

SIMMONS

Holy guacamole.

JONESY

Fucking wild.

*(A knock at the door.)*

BENJI

Knock-knock!

BAKER  
*(An excited child.)*

Who's there??

*(BENJI opens the door, picks up a playing card from the ground,  
and takes it to BAKER.)*

BENJI  
Is this your card?

JONESY  
Goddamn.

SIMMONS  
Baker, it's your card!

BENJI  
That's right, Pops.

BAKER  
Pops?

BENJI  
Yeah, Hi, Pops. You're here.

BAKER  
I'm here. And you're here.

SIMMONS  
Your Pops? But you're the same age.

LOO  
Uh, doy.

JONESY  
I thought so, too.

*(An abrupt change of heart.)*

But maybe.

SIMMONS  
On second thought... it's Benji's Pops!

LOO

Whatever you need to make right with Ma, but this is getting weird, Benjamin.

BENJI

You... left me. I'm sorry.

BAKER

No, no. I did, I did. I'm so sorry. Don't apologize to me.

BENJI

Pop. They said...

BAKER

Who said...?

SIMMONS

You mean me?

BENJI

Yeah.

BAKER

Oh. So, you already know.

BENJI

I do.

JONESY

About Baker being a murderer?

SIMMONS

Correct, we're talking about the murder Baker committed.

JONESY

It only makes sense to mention Baker's murderous past.

BENJI

Shuddup, the both of you.

BAKER

It was a long time ago, kid. It happened. A long time ago. Now, I'm working off my debt to the world.

That's why I saw him digging.

LOO

Manual labor?

BENJI

If he finds the Laser Rock, he's free.

JONESY

I've found lots of rocks! And sand and dead birds and tires. Just. No rocks shooting lasers.

BAKER

A surprisingly tall order!

SIMMONS

Can I help?

BENJI

Find the Laser Rock?

SIMMONS

Finding the Laser Rock is Baker's job.

JONESY

We do have a "no loafing" policy.

SIMMONS

He won't loaf, I'll make him clean or something.

JONESY

If he spends all his time with you, he'll become a useless baby.

SIMMONS

You want he should leave then? Wander back into the scorching desert? Off to die a scrawny, filthy death.

JONESY

We'll use my magic voice.

BENJI

What in the hell is a "Laser Rock"?

LOO

BAKER

What's this voice, exactly?

BENJI

It's a magic voice that guides me.

LOO

Sure.

BENJI

I did it. I'm magic, Pop. That's how I found you. We'll use the voice to figure out what this thing is and where it is.

BAKER

You can control this voice?

BENJI

I just did, kinda. I think.

JONESY

That was a nifty card trick and all, but it won't exactly excavate.

BENJI

What about the magic here in Rock Route? Just ask the blue light for the Laser Rock.

SIMMONS

We tried that. It was disgusting.

BENJI

"Disgusting"?

BAKER

It was unfortunate.

JONESY

It was atrocious. This putrid fart comes rumbling out and just the most dead-rat, rotten carrot, moldy-dirt butt stench covered the whole town.

BENJI

The blue light farted at you?

JONESY

Yes.

*(Short pause.)*

BENJI

Was Rock Route designed in a child's cartoon?

BAKER

Benji, you don't gotta do this.

BENJI

Give me three days. That's right, three days?

LOO

Two now, after today. At most. If you and me don't both leave this place by then, you will lose all sense of identity.

BENJI

Two days?

LOO

Rock Route's a magical place.

BENJI

Just two days. We'll use the magic voice, find the Laser Rock, then Pop can be free and we'll go back. We'll find Ma, we'll be a family again.

BAKER

I bet your Ma was pretty sore I left.

BENJI

She just needs to see you, the real you. I'll sleep in the diner, I'll even sweep up tonight.

JONESY

Music to my ears! That leaves one more thing: Cake!

BENJI

Absolutely. I need to speak with my magic voice real quick, so I'll be right along.

SIMMONS

That better not be a metaphor.

*(BAKER laughs.)*

BAKER

*That's a fuck joke.*

SIMMONS

I'm serious.

*(BAKER hugs BENJI.)*

BAKER

It's great to have you here. Son. Thank you.

BENJI

Happy to help, Pop.

*(BAKER, JONESY, and SIMMONS go into the kitchen.)*

LOO

Why aren't we getting cake right now?

BENJI

Why can we only stay here for three days?

LOO

I only rearranged your casino shifts for three days.

BENJI

But why just three days? Why can't I hang around longer? What if I wanted to stay here?

LOO

That's a bad idea.

BENJI

Why is that a bad idea? You love it here?

LOO

So do you, it feels familiar.

BENJI

So why isn't staying an option?



LOO

Because this is an indulgence. It's not home, it's an indulgence. I have a professional obligation to keep indulgences to a necessary minimum. It's like the no-call, no-show policy at the casino: three of those straight, and I'm done-zo.

BENJI

But what if I stay?

LOO

Just you? Then what becomes of me? Don't be selfish, Benjamin. If you have a good vacation and leave here with a better sense of your father, you might be able to repair that relationship with your mother. If you turn that vacation into a relocation, I'm gone.

BENJI

Don't be melodramatic.

LOO

You want melodramatic? Without me guiding you, there is no "you." I'm your entire personality, your entire identity is wrapped up in me. You'll have no relation to the world around you. It'll be the last act of *It's a Wonderful Life*, except it's Jimmy Stewart who forgot he was born. Anyway, shall we to cake?

BENJI

Maybe I like Benji here more than Benji out there.

LOO

*(Sternly.)*

No. I prefer that Benji. And that Benji better take me home in a couple of days.

JONESY

*(Off-stage.)*

Benji, hurry the fuck up! We lit the candles already like idiots, now there's wax everywhere!

LOO

Let's have fun! It's a party!

*(BENJI and LOO go into the kitchen.)*

END OF SCENE.

## Interlude 1

An empty stage.

*(The following is acted out via colorful hand puppets.)*

### JONESY

Casinos were a common place  
For Baker and his son  
A place to ease their burdens  
And have a little fun

Baker sat down at a table,  
Benji roamed the slots,  
Until the pit boss kicked him out  
For being just a tot

But Benji loved that shiny place  
That glitzy, gaudy swirl  
The cheering, happy tourists  
And wheels that whirl and whirl

Benji watched the magic happen  
Across the people's faces  
When, for no reason he could see,  
The machines lay forth their graces

A gambling floor was the last place  
A child should be seen  
But Benji could not run away  
From that old magic sheen

He made casino work his work  
He learned the gambling trade  
He loved to help facilitate  
The magic that got made

He loved the order of the chips,  
The rules of the games,  
The organization of the shifts,  
And learning people's names

He found this happy medium

Twixt work and having fun  
He hoped to never leave his rut  
Until his days were done

And sometimes Benji'd get assigned  
The table Baker'd play  
And standing there above the cards,  
He knew where he should stay

END OF INTERLUDE.

Scene 5

The Mojave Desert. The next morning.

*(BENJI and BAKER dig parallel holes. BAKER is working well, but BENJI is not enjoying it.*

*LOO is beside themselves with the beauty of the desert.)*

LOO

Benjamin! Look at the mountains, Benjamin!

BENJI

I know.

LOO

A perfect ridge! The earth itself, nesting us, cradling us. We're safe because of the mountains, Benjamin!

BENJI

I know.

LOO

Have you ever seen so much sky?? And think about all the little critters and creatures who are snuggled up under the sand or under a rock, all sleepy and tuckered out after vibrant night scurrying about and snacking and mating, and OH! That rock looks like a heart! Benjamin, lookit!

BENJI

I fucking know, okay? I've been here before.

*(To BAKER.)*

What time is it?

BAKER

Stop worrying yourself with the time.

BENJI

Is it almost afternoon?

BAKER

Still no.

BENJI

Is it even eleven yet?

BAKER

Benji, it's not even eight yet. Still. Just like it was only fifteen minutes ago. Time'll go faster if you just keep digging. C'mon. Little bit at a time.

BENJI

It's gotta be afternoon. It's real hot out.

LOO

You made this happen.

BENJI

Yeah, and it sucks shit.

BAKER

Don't be nervous, it's just digging. Here, you don't even have to dig.

*(BAKER grabs a sifter.)*

BAKER

How 'bout this: you go through the soil that I'm digging. Shake it loose like this, watch out for laser beams.

BENJI

Is it gonna shoot me?

BAKER

I don't think so. It might just look like you wandered into a snipers' convention.

BENJI

Snipers shoot.

BAKER

I don't know, kid, I'm just doing my job here.

BENJI

Prison isn't a job.

BAKER

It's not a prison, it's working off a debt. Okay, it's kind of a prison, even if they feed me good, treat me nice, give me a comfortable bed, and be my friends for a long, long time. But you're right.

BENJI

Don't you wanna get out?

BAKER

I dunno. I like Rock Route. This place brought me peace. I lived a rowdy life, I made mistakes. Look at you.

BENJI

*(Suddenly lashes out.)*

Hey, I ain't no mistake!

*(Pause.)*

LOO

You're not a mistake and I'm sorry he said that.

BAKER

Kid, that wasn't what I was saying by a country mile. Why are you lashing out at me?

BENJI

I dunno. Do you like that I showed up?

BAKER

Yes, of course, kid. Goddamn.

BENJI

I'm sorry. I don't know where that came from.  
Can I have some water?

BAKER

Where's yours?

BENJI

I thought you were bringing it. You were filling up a bottle.

BAKER

Yeah, my bottle. I don't have a second. You didn't bring it? You didn't even ask.

I just assumed.

BENJI

Why?

LOO

BAKER

Not to be difficult, kid, but how old are you again these days?

BENJI

Just turned thirty-five.

BAKER

Maybe act like it.  
We gotta find the Laser Rock before there's a next step. Let's focus on that.

*(They dig in silence.)*

LOO

What was that about?

BENJI

I don't know what you're talking about.  
Hey, Pop?

BAKER

Yeah?

BENJI

You gonna tell me about it?

BAKER

"It"?

BENJI

Who'd you—off?

LOO

Who'd he "off"?

BAKER

Guy I played cards with. Cheated me, wandered out this way.

BENJI

You chased him out here?

BAKER

He was wild. It weren't like I was hunting him down, he coulda relented, but he came at me. He's got this stick he lit on fire, he's waving this torch around. He drops it, I get it. I win. That's not the right word, winning fees good. It's late at night, I'm lost in the desert way out, middle-a goddamn nowhere. I hear Simmons working in their shop. I follow the sound, head pounding, hands sore and cut-up. I confess pretty quickly. I figure I'm in line for real clink-clank, beat-you-up, break-you-down, "prison" prison. Lucky for me, this place don't work like that.

BENJI

Why not just come home? Why confess? You felt so bad about something, you find two strangers and break down like a little bitch //

LOO

*(Interrupting.)*

// Benjamin—

BENJI

// instead of bringing that money back home to me and Ma. You went soft at exactly the wrong moment. You had to come out here to get soft.

LOO

You're lashing again.

BENJI

Thanks for the newsflash.

BAKER

I wasn't any good to you.

BENJI

Why does everyone say that? I turned out fine, my life is fine. My life is great! I had a blast with you, skipping school, going camping at the Sailing Stones //

BAKER

// Camping at the Stones was illegal.

BENJI

// paintballing, shoplifting video games from the mall You were the man, Pops.



BAKER

What about your Ma?

BENJI

What about her?

BAKER

Was she mad I left?

BENJI

Yeah. She thought you abandoned us. I didn't, but she didn't believe me. Just a lotta "Not your fault, Benji, not your fault, Benji." I dunno what she was on about, nothing even happened! But yeah, she was mad. That turned me around good. I needed to be a good kid for Ma, needed to do my work, get to class get a job, be places on time.

BAKER

You were always a good boy.

BENJI

It wears me down. I miss cutting loose with you, like when we'd hit the casinos. You at the table, me running through the slots and video pokers. When security came to kick me out, you said that was the gambling gods saying you were done.

BAKER

I don't remember that at all.

BENJI

That's exactly how I remember it.

BAKER

*(Abrupt change of heart.)*

Huh. Now that you mention it, I remember everything exactly like you described.

BENJI

It's why I work at the casino to this day.

BAKER

I'm glad you found something that makes you happy.

BENJI

I'm happier knowing you're here and you're on the straight and narrow.

*(BAKER drinks some water and hands it to BENJI.)*

BENJI

I always knew you were a good soul.

BAKER

A good soul works for their freedom. Any chance you can use that voice to help us?

BENJI

Hopefully.

LOO

I'm not working, this is supposed to be a vacation.

BENJI

I dunno if I can control it, is the thing.

LOO

Nobody controls me. I'm the wind, baby.

BAKER

But you used it to get here.

BENJI

It brought me here.

BAKER

But the card trick—

BENJI

But that was just because this place is—  
Correct. I did the card trick.

LOO

Please don't try to summon a magic voice, Benjamin.

BAKER

Try summoning the magic voice, Benji. Try.

BENJI

*(Into the ether.)*

Oh, magic voice.

LOO

Good lord.

BENJI

We seek the Laser Rock to destroy it and free my Pops from this captivity.

LOO

Does the Sorcerer's Apprentice need his magic broom again?

BENJI

Respect me, voice.

LOO

You tell me where the fucking Laser Rock is.

BENJI

Show me where to dig.

*(LOO points to the general desert.)*

BENJI

Show me specifically where the rock is.

*(LOO points to the sky.)*

BENJI

Show me the Laser Rock!

*(LOO points to BENJI.)*

BENJI

Show us this minute.

You better get us that rock, or me and Pop... we're gonna kick your ass!

LOO

I'm doing my very best to make you feel humiliated right now, so you know.

BAKER

So. While we wait for that magic voice of yours to come to us, why don't you just shake the dirt I dig?

BENJI

Sorry, Pop.

BAKER

It's okay. You got a magic voice! That's impressive enough as is.

BENJI

You used to make fun of me for believing in magic.

BAKER

I did?

BENJI

Yeah, a bit.

BAKER

I'm sorry I did that. Was I an angry man?

BENJI

I wouldn't say so.

BAKER

I had this idea in my head about toughness. Like, you remember the fun stuff, the dumb shit, but I was tough.

BENJI

Had to be tough to hang with Baker.

BAKER

Indeed you did. I don't want that energy in the world no more. That's not what I'm about. I know you want me to get free, but I feel a peace here in a way I never found anywhere else. You know what I mean?

BENJI

Kinda.

You're letting me work with you. Thanks for that.

BAKER

Glad it helps.

*(They go back to digging.)*

END OF SCENE.

Scene 6

The mechanic's shop.

*(SIMMONS welds parts of a backhoe together.)*

*BENJI enters, dirty and tired. He throws a broken shovel to the ground. LOO is in tow.)*

SIMMONS

What the hell? That's three. How many of these you gonna break?

BENJI

There are a lot of rocks. Little rocks, big rocks. I found an old computer, shoved my shovel through the screen. Do old computers use lasers? I don't know. And I squished a lizard by mistake. You want any of that?

SIMMONS

We put a particularly shiny lizard in the machine a few years back. It threw up a little and died.

BENJI

I reckon that wasn't the effect you were going for. I'm taking Pop somewhere different tomorrow, might not bust so many shovels. Somewhere real windy where I don't think he's dug yet. You know the Sailing Stones?

SIMMONS

Excuse me?

BENJI

Oh, it's a helluva natural phenomenon. These rocks sit on the prehistoric ice beds just to the east, and the wind pushes—

SIMMONS

You stay the hell away from those Stones.

*(SIMMONS ignites the welding torch threateningly.)*

BENJI

Whoa! Careful.

SIMMONS

You do not mess around with the Stones, you hear?

BENJI

No, I don't hear. Don't boss me around, if I wanna go to the Stones, I'm going to the Stones.

SIMMONS

You got the science-y idea of the Sailing Stones down. The windy ice beds, the friction, yadda yadda, etc., etc. But the magic, do you understand the magic?

BENJI

Of course I do, I harnessed that magic.

SIMMONS

Then you of all people better respect that magic.  
The moment you walk onto that ice bed and see rocks with trails they made themselves, like comets etched in sand, you know you're in a special place.  
They're fantastic, the Sailing Stones.  
The world changes, so slowly.  
Rocks erode, split, collide, all from powers outside themselves.  
The change is imperceptible to us,  
We're dead before it even matters,  
But there is progress.  
And there are rocks that move themselves, changing the world a little faster than before.  
That is an energy I do not want disturbed.

BENJI

That power extends through the whole desert, from mountain to mountain, from empty town to empty town. That same magic powers places like this, where you can walk into a diner kitchen and ask a blue light for anything you want. That power brought me and Pop out here. And that power's gonna bring him back. That power's gonna give me a family again.

*(SIMMONS hands BENJI a new shovel.)*

SIMMONS

I want that for you.

LOO

Right here, too, babe!

BENJI

You. You better start helping, Loo.

LOO

How? With what? I cannot find the rock for you, I cannot control any of this for you. I brought you here, but that does not make me in charge here.

BENJI

You want the same fate as Pop? You wanna stay and dig for a quarter of a century?

LOO

You wouldn't leave me, you're no one without me.

BENJI

I'll take my chances.

LOO

I am perfectly wired to you, everyone gets the same deal. If you somehow, some way, separate us and wander around without me, you

Will

Not

Know

Your

Self.

BENJI

Let's make sure that doesn't happen then.

END OF SCENE.

Scene 7

The Mojave Desert.

*(BAKER surveys the land.)*

BAKER

Where to look next...? Where to look next...? Perhaps we walk to the north, look in the mountain foothills. Or maybe to the west, with the brush and undergrowth. Nah. Brush and undergrowth won't have mystical stones. That's fresh earth, gotta have... ancient earth. Rocky earth, elemental earth. So, we head to the mountains. That'd be easier if Simmons'd finish the backhoe. Or a jackhammer! That'd be buckets of fun. But wait. Without a backhoe or jackhammer, it'll take longer, I can spend more time with Benji! Which is all I ever really wanted. So, we'll start with the brush and undergrowth. Won't yield nothing, but it's more time with Benji! More time to act like a father, get that kid feeling good about where he came from, who he came from. Or! What we do is we fill in all these holes I dug for the past twenty-five years, just cover everything up, the whole desert, like the big sandbox it is, and try, try, try again. If at first, you don't succeed... More time with Benji!

Let's he and I do this for another twenty-five years! We can dig all day, eat all night, dig all day, eat all night, dig and eat, dig and eat, and celebrate birthdays, and talk, and get to know each other! And play catch! You want to play catch, son? You want to go watch the airplanes take off, son? You want to go exploring, look at some caves? Some canyons? Some cricks? Well, son? Well?

*(BENJI enters with a shovel, LOO in tow.)*

LOO

Make it snappy, Benjamin, we're running out of time. If you could simply materialize this Laser Rock, or invent a Laser Rock, or just say "fuck it, bye," that'd be swell.

BENJI

Great, I'll get right on it. Just sit tight.

LOO

No. Three days. That's all you got. Frankly, I don't give a fuck what happens to him, I want you to rejoin the family you cut off.

BENJI

I'm here, aren't I?

*(To BAKER.)*

Sorry! Sorry! I'm late, I'm sorry. Please don't be mad at me.



BAKER

I'm not mad. You're just fine by me, Benji.

BENJI

I got sucked up into a dream then woke up late and my foot was asleep and I was stomping it around waking it up and then I stubbed my toe on a table and fell over—

BAKER

It happens, son.

BENJI

Do you have real vivid dreams here?

BAKER

Hard to say, haven't had much to compare them to.

BENJI

I feel like I can control them.

BAKER

That's called "lucid dreaming."

BENJI

I know the phrase, and I've had that one before. In the middle of a dream, I realized, "This is a dream," just like that, a very simple declaration. I didn't know how long it would last, so I jumped straight to the dream activity we cannot actually do: I floated in thin air. And for a few moments, I felt that gut-level sensation of the loss of gravity. Then I woke up.

BAKER

Can't say I've had that experience.

LOO

Can you fly here, Benjamin?

BENJI

What in the world are you talking about?

LOO

Why not? You flew in a dream, why not here?

BENJI

That was a dream. This is different. I'm actually here.

BAKER

And I'm damn glad you are.

BENJI

Rock Route sure doesn't have a lot of people, but I'm good with that; it sure is hot as hell, but I can get used to that. I'm a desert kid. I'm glad this magic voice brought us together. Maybe, if we don't find the rock today, I stick around a little longer.

*(BENJI grabs his side.)*

BENJI

Aggh!

BAKER

Whoa! What's going on?

BENJI

Hungry! Just... painfully hungry, is all.

LOO

Snap back to reality, my friend.

BAKER

You gonna be okay?

BENJI

Yeah, my dumb ass forgot breakfast, no big deal. Ow!

LOO

I'm telling you, fly.

BAKER

You sure you'll be good?

BENJI

I've got it. What're you looking at?

BAKER

I'm surveying out our next move.

BENJI

Then we're on the same page, I was thinking it's time to move, myself.

LOO

Flap your arms and fly there! You can do it! Stop ignoring me!

BAKER

We got a couple-a options. Over yonder to the west is the brush and cacti and what-all.

BENJI

That's easier soil.

BAKER

Bingo! But that might be a problem.

BENJI

But it might be producing a different kinda rock, rocks we don't have yet, rocks that might have lasers.

BAKER

See, that's smart thinking. The other option is going up north to the mountains. That voice isn't telling you anything, is it?

LOO

Benjamin, you found him. You thought he was dead, but you found him. He's here and he's good. Let's go home and call mom.

*(Pause.)*

BENJI

*(To BAKER.)*

Nothing.

BAKER

Have you tried?

BENJI

Of course I tried. It's not working.

BAKER

Okay, sorry.

BENJI

It don't work like that, okay?

BAKER

Okay.

BENJI

I don't really know how the voice works, if the voice works. It just sits in this pocket of my brain poking and prodding and pushing me wherever it feels like. It might seem fancy at times, but it's kinda obnoxious. Never mind, you can't understand.

BAKER

But that's the arrangement, you help me dig.

BENJI

I am.

BAKER

But with the voice.

LOO

Make the healthy choice, Benjamin, I'm begging you.

BENJI

*(To BAKER.)*

I gotta hunch.

BAKER/LOO

A hunch?

BAKER

Is it the mountains or the brush?

BENJI

We go east.

BAKER

East?

BENJI

Toward where we came here from.

LOO

Finally! Thank you! Just leave with him! Fuck it!

BAKER

I can't go back to Vegas—

LOO

Sure he can! Rock Route has no chains, no guards. Just walk away!

BENJI

No, not all the way to Vegas. You remember the Sailing Stones?

BAKER

No, absolutely not.

BENJI

We went there when I was a kid.

BAKER

Oh, I remember, and no.

BENJI

Oh, Jesus. You, too?

BAKER

You've already been told this is a bad idea, then.

BENJI

Simmons got a big ol' bee in their bonnet about it, but it don't matter. I'm not afraid of magic, I am magic, Pop. And I gotta hunch that we gotta go there.

BAKER

It ain't happening, y'hear?

BENJI

Pop, trust me—

BAKER

*(Changing in demeanor.)*

Y'HEAR ME, GODDAMMIT, OR NOT? HUH?

*(Returning in demeanor.)*

You don't gotta fear magic, but you gotta respect it. When the sun goes down over the Stones, and you look up and you see the whole damn galaxy before you? You tell me that ain't magic. Your grandma told me when I was little like you that when someone dies, that little Jiminy Cricket that sits on your shoulder, it floats up and becomes a star, waiting for the next person. Those Sailing Stones sit under the damn Milky Way in all its glory and the Stones move of their own accord. I'm begging you, kid, don't go there. It ain't worth it.

BENJI

I'm helping you.

BAKER

I know.

BENJI

I'm getting you outta this place—

BAKER

But this isn't the way—

BENJI

Why can't I make you go to the fucking Stones?

*(To LOO.)*

Why won't he obey? Why can't I just will this into being?

LOO

I don't know! You examine your own inadequacies for once.

BENJI

What in the fuck does that mean, you sparkly, shiny, useless, useless thing??

BAKER

Benji, listen to me. I wasn't nice out there. Sorry, kid, but stop thinking that.

BENJI

*(To LOO.)*

You making him talk now??

BAKER

I stole from your mom.

LOO

You know who's in charge here.

BAKER

I poached animals in the desert.

BENJI

Nope.

BAKER

I fought total strangers over, I dunno //

BENJI

*(Interrupting.)*

// Nope. //

BAKER

// bagging groceries too slow. I was so hungover one morning, //

BENJI

*(Interrupting.)*

// No, you weren't, I'm not listening. //

BAKER

// I got fired from two jobs in the same day. One of the few times I had gainful employment, I fucked it up. Now I'm here.

BENJI

That's right.

BAKER

What happened, happened. I started digging in here. I'm better in here than I was out there.

BENJI

Correct.

BAKER

All I want is to be best friends forever with my son whom I love with all my heart. What do you want from me?

BENJI

When I was a kid, I imagined us reuniting. Then I just... stopped, I guess. That part of my imagination fell out of reach. I don't know if this is what it looked like, but I know I want it.

LOO

Benjamin, grow up.

BENJI

What did you say to me?

BAKER

That voice saying something?

LOO

Yeah, do you hear the voice? Why can't I reason with you? You know everything you need to know about this man, about this place, but you just love it so much. You love this shitty little life, you love eating boring food alone, you love being employee of the month for dealing blackjack, you love ignoring the little family you have left, you love not dating, you love being so scared of risk because your father lived dangerously, you love rejecting all human contact, all of it!, because you've been hurt. That hurt is not your fault, these walls you built are not your fault, but if you drive a demolition crane to those walls and do not swing the ball, then that is one-hundred-percent on you.

*(BENJI's phone rings. Lights focus on BENJI. Ambient casino noise.)*

BENJI

Oh, goddammit! Not right now! Stop calling! I'm not talking to you, you liar! You miserable... miserable... stop asking for me!

LOO

Talk to your mother, Benjamin.

BENJI

Fuck her and fuck you, too.

LOO

We're on your side.

BENJI

She lied to me, she lied to the family, she lied to the cops, about Pop, about me, about everything.

*(The phone stops ringing.)*

*Sound of a voicemail notification.)*



BENJI

I suppose you want to hear this.

*(BENJI plays the message.)*

MOM

*(Voiceover.)*

Benji, please baby. Stop being mad at me and talk to me. I never blamed you, never once. I know the man your father was, I know you don't want me talking about him... you don't want me talking at all. Forgive yourself, baby. Forgive me, while you're at it. I love you, so, so, so much. I hope you'll call back.

*(BENJI deletes the message.)*

BENJI

Satisfied? Good. Back we go.

LOO

Maybe you are the cruel little fuck your father raised.

*(Ambient casino noise fades. Lights back up on the desert.)*

BAKER

Benji? You're hearing the voice, aren't you?

BENJI

We need to go to the Sailing Stones.

*(BENJI grabs his side and doubles over.)*

BENJI

Aggh! What the hell?

BAKER

What in the world? Benji, something's wrong.

LOO

Guilt can paralyze.

BENJI

I'm sorry, Pop, but I'm hungry as all hell right now. Can we go back and get some grub?

BAKER

I suppose so.

LOO

No, finish this, NOW.

*(BENJI grabs his stomach again and falls to the ground.)*

BAKER

Damn, son, you did miss breakfast.

BENJI

Sorry, Pops, my stomach's rumbling something wild.

*(BENJI starts back toward Rock Route.)*

LOO

Wrong direction, Benji-boy. Home is that way.

BENJI

Who's in charge here?

*(BENJI continues back to Rock Route.)*

END OF SCENE.

## Interlude 2

An empty stage.

*(The following is acted out via marionettes.)*

### SIMMONS

Benji played, a thousand times,  
The tale in his head  
How Baker up and went away  
And maybe turned up dead

His opponent stared down at his cards  
Baker went all in  
His opponent's sleeve let slip an ace  
Ensuring that he'd win

"I'm rich! I'm rich!", he screamed and screamed,  
He'd holler, cry, and hoot  
He grabbed the pot, clicked his heels  
And ran off with the loot

Baker chased that greedy friend  
Way off through the night  
He'd lost just one too many hands  
And went out for a fight

He met his friend among the Stones  
Beneath the Milky Way  
The men took to a fiery brawl,  
But just one walked away

This broken man was wracked with guilt  
He'd never stopped a life  
How to get back to the world  
To face that son and wife?

He heard a nearby buzz saw  
And headed to its source  
He found the old mechanic's shop  
And opened up the doors.

He said, "Please call me Baker,

And I've just killed someone.  
I come here seeking justice  
For the crime that I have done.

“I come here to redeem myself  
In whose eyes, I don't know.  
But please give me my just desserts  
To show that I can grow.”

END OF INTERLUDE.

Scene 8

The diner.

*(SIMMONS sits in a booth, fixing a ceiling fan. JONESY cleans the dishes.)*

SIMMONS

One thing I love about our crackling blue light is it allows me the opportunity to work on things. Instead of providing me with new things, it provides me with occupation. Labor is its own gift.

JONESY

The three words every mechanic wants to hear from the otherworldly bug zapper granting them every petty wish: Some Assembly Required.

SIMMONS

You're such a lazy old dog.

JONESY

At least one of those labels has to be false. I do not "laze," I clean, cook, and play good cop; I cannot be "old," for I've never aged; and I simply have chosen not to be a dog, that is my choice.

SIMMONS

Ironic, considering humanity's purpose to you is lounging on a large pillow in a sunny spot.

JONESY

You'll never find relaxation beautiful, will you?

SIMMONS

I find relaxation incredibly beautiful. Working with my hands solving puzzles, figuring out what makes the pieces of the world work, that relaxes me. Living idly would drive me flippin' bonkers.

JONESY

You've always craved focus.

SIMMONS

The mind is a muscle.

JONESY

Stop saying that.

SIMMONS

The mind is absolutely a miracle.

JONESY

The brain is its own separate organ. It processes stimuli, holds memories, understands and responds to the world.

SIMMONS

I said “mind,” not “brain.” And what you just described is muscle work, labor.

JONESY

Ironic that you-of-all-alligators denies the physical for the spiritual.

SIMMONS

Oh, shut up, who cares what you say?

*(BENJI, LOO, and BAKER enter.)*

BENJI

Chow time!

JONESY

My favorite! What’ll it be?

BENJI

Spaghetti.

*(JONESY goes into the kitchen.)*

SIMMONS

It’s nine in the morning.

BENJI

Forgot breakfast now, didn’t I?

SIMMONS

Don’t you both have work?

BENJI

We’ll get to it, maybe tomorrow.

*(The blue light crackles in the kitchen. JONESY comes out with a steaming pile of spaghetti.)*

BENJI

I've made an important decision that affects the entire make-up of Rock Route.

JONESY

You've found the Laser Rock!

BENJI

Not yet, and that's not a decision.

*(BENJI eats spaghetti.)*

LOO

It could be.

BENJI

Hot! Hot spaghetti!

SIMMONS

What's your decision?

BENJI

Okay, so, I don't quite know how the rules work with coming and going...

JONESY

Where? Rock Route?

SIMMONS

You came here.

JONESY

Which means you were gone from somewhere else.

SIMMONS

That must be how it works.

LOO

You should not come back to Rock Route ever again, frankly.

BAKER

What're you saying, kid?

BENJI

Well, without knowing if I can come and go, and it kinda doesn't feel like it, then I'm gonna stay here permanently, working with my Pops.

*(BENJI takes a bite of spaghetti. He grabs his stomach in pain.)*

BENJI

Aggh!  
Too much!  
I'm sorry. Please help me up.

SIMMONS

Didja pull something?

JONESY

Are you sick?

BENJI

That one really hurt.

*(Lying.)*

Ahh... I don't think that pasta's sitting so good.

BAKER

That's the same thing as out there, I think something's wrong.

BENJI

*(Making excuses.)*

I'm just eating different. It's the climate. I'm more relaxed. My stomach isn't as tight as usual. I don't know. Nothing's wrong at all.

*(BENJI grabs his stomach.)*

BENJI

Aggh!  
Too much! Too much!  
Uncle! Uncle!

LOO

Take me home now.

BENJI

No.  
Aggh!



*(The lights dim around BENJI. All other characters vanish, including LOO.)*

*A light rain of playing cards. BENJI sits on the ground, holding his stomach.)*

BENJI

Minimum bet: twenty-five  
Changing five hundred!  
Ace  
Showing five  
Ace  
Better split, split the aces  
Ten  
Jack  
Double blackjack!  
Thank you, sir  
Thank you, ma'am  
Changing one hundred!  
Good luck, good luck  
Seven  
That's a bonus jackpot, you just won four million dollars!  
Need to get the pit boss  
Pit boss!  
Good luck, good luck to all  
Very generous tip  
Thank you, ma'am  
I'm a good worker, I'm a very good worker.  
You're having fun, I'm having fun, we're having fun!  
Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me.

*(BENJI rocks back and forth in the darkness as the playing cards stop falling.)*

*LOO strolls out with a box of toys. They place it down next to BENJI, who starts playing with them.)*

LOO

Hello, Benjamin.

BENJI

D'you know my mom?

LOO

I do. Why do you ask?

BENJI

She calls me that, but I call myself “Benji.” Pop listens to me, but Ma doesn’t listen so good.

LOO

I don’t think that’s true. Do you know who I am?

BENJI

I dunno.

LOO

I’m your best friend, Benjamin.

BENJI

Say my name right.

LOO

I’m sorry. I wanted to introduce myself. I heard you use a real nasty word to your mom earlier, so I thought it was time we officially met. What are you making?

BENJI

A resort town.

LOO

Oh! How fun. Is it relaxing?

BENJI

Yes, very relaxing. If you like relaxing, you can go to the diner and get some pie. Here you go, chocolate pie.

LOO

With graham cracker crust?

BENJI

Oreos.

LOO

That’s a lot of chocolate.

BENJI

It’s very relaxing. And it’s a work camp!

LOO

A work camp?

BENJI

Yup. Everyone works hard and feels good and strong each day.

LOO

They like it?

BENJI

It's the law, but it's their law, so it's a good law.  
What's your name?

LOO

I don't have one.

BENJI

Your mom must be dumb.

LOO

*You* didn't give me one.

BENJI

Me? But I'm only six, I don't know you.

LOO

Does this sound familiar?

*(LOO squats down and speaks to the back of BENJI's head.)*

LOO

"You didn't mean to break Mom's glasses, but you should still tell her what you did."

BENJI

Hey! I know that voice! You're mean to me.

LOO

Does it feel like I boss you around?

BENJI

You never let me have fun, you don't like it when I go to the movies that cuss with Pop, you don't like it when I put the Reeses in my pocket without paying.

LOO

You're a good kid, I'm just making sure of it.

BENJI

I am a good kid. You should have a name.

LOO

I've had names before. Irene and Manuel and Victoria and Vladimir and Magda—

BENJI

Your name should be "Loogie."

LOO

... Like a hunk of spit?

BENJI

Loogie.

*(BENJI hocks and spits.)*

LOO

You know, I've helped animals, too, and they don't name me, so I don't need—

BENJI

Your name is Loogie. But it'll be a secret name. I'll tell everyone your name is Loo.

LOO

Loo. I can work with that. Thank you.

BENJI

You're welcome.

LOO

You gonna be mean to your mom again? She's good to you.

BENJI

She sucks.

*(BENJI grabs his side.)*

BENJI

Ow! Something hurts. Mom!

LOO

Saying your mom sucks is hurtful, Benjamin. I want you to be nice to her, she works really hard.

BENJI

Is that what you're there for?

LOO

I'm here to keep you being a good boy, a healthy boy, a friendly boy, someone everyone can trust.

BENJI

I can be trusted.

LOO

Can I trust you to apologize to your mom?

BENJI

I'm sorry.

LOO

Not me, her.

BENJI

Okay.

LOO

Thank you. Now, it's time to wake up.

BENJI

Huh?

*(LOO slaps BENJI in the face.)*

BENJI

What the fuck?!

*(The stage fills with bright light.)*

END OF SCENE.

Scene 9

Death Valley. Racetrack Playa. The  
Sailing Stones.

*(BENJI wakes up on the ground.)*

BENJI

Yeah, so? I know the way back to Rock Route from here.

*(BENJI looks around.)*

BENJI

I think. This doesn't... Over there should be... We dug... Those mountains... Should be...  
But... Where... Where??

*(Shouting to LOO.)*

Show me the way back! Where are you? Where did you go?

*(For the rest of the play, LOO is an off-stage voice.)*

LOO

I'm still in your imagination, Benjamin.

BENJI

No, but where are you right now?

LOO

Where are you?

BENJI

I'm at the Sailing Stones, can't you see?

LOO

I'll rephrase. *When* are you, Benjamin?

BAKER

*(Off-stage.)*

Benji! Goddammit, there you are, kid!

BENJI

Pop! I dunno what happened. I was in the diner, then I was here—

BAKER

The fuck you talkin' about the diner for? That was six hours ago. I meant, why the fuck'd you wander away from the fucking campsite?

BENJI

Campsite?

*(BAKER snaps his fingers in BENJI's face.)*

BAKER

What is going on in there?

BENJI

We're at the Sailing Stones. You're not allowed to camp at the Sailing Stones.

BAKER

You're not allowed to be a little bitch about shit like that. You're ten, act like it.

*(BAKER builds a fire. BENJI sits on a Sailing Stone.)*

BENJI

Sorry, Pop.

*(To LOO.)*

Am I imagining this?

BAKER

Imagining what?

LOO

No, Benjamin. You fell out of imagination.

BENJI

"Fell out"? Where am I?

BAKER

Imagining WHAT?

BENJI

Nothing.

BAKER

You're not imagining shit. It's goddamn gorgeous out here. Fucking cosmic. I'll get you some *salvia* sometime, turn that sky kaleidoscopic. Not today, though. Not till you're twelve. Maybe not even then, your little brain couldn't take even the weakest shit. Aw, Benji, the fuck you bring that shit for?

*(BENJI looks down. He's holding SIMMONS the alligator and JONESY the sock puppet.)*

BENJI

It's Simmons and Jonesy, they live in Rock Route, it's over there.

*(BENJI points toward Rock Route.)*

BAKER

Gimme that shit.

*(BAKER tosses SIMMONS and JONESY into the fire.)*

*The flames burst as like earlier in the play.)*

BENJI

Hey! Those are mine!

BAKER

You don't got shit. You didn't fucking buy them, you just sucked on them for a fucking decade. This is the shit I'm sick of, Benji. This little mama's baby boy bullshit. That woman warps you. Wake up. The world is fucking rough, and you can count the folks that give a fuck on one disfigured hand. Now come learn how to cook beans, learn some independence.

BENJI

I'm by myself all the time, making up games and playing with my imagination.

*(BAKER slaps BENJI in the face.)*

BAKER

Jesus, kid, you're fucking embarrassing. When you say that shit down at the casino? Yeah, you fucking embarrass me. Oh, Jesus Christ. Are you crying? You look like you're crying, are you crying right now? Goddammit, I didn't say anything to you! You can't take the mildest criticism! How do you expect to live to adulthood? How'd you even make it this far?

BENJI

I'm stronger than you think. Gotta be tough to hang with Baker.



BAKER

Believe me, kid, outside of the given circumstances, I wouldn't be your friend if we were the last folks in the world. You think you're tough enough for me?

BENJI

Yes.

BAKER

"Yes!" You actually said, "Yes!"

BENJI

I fucking said, "Yes."

BAKER

What was that?

BENJI

Nuthin.

BAKER

WHAT WAS THAT?

You getting hot, kid? You getting angry?

BENJI

No. Yes.

BAKER

You fucking mad at your Pops?

BENJI

YES.

BAKER

You wanna take me? You wanna? Huh? Hit me. Hit me. Hit me, Benji. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me. Hit me.

*(BENJI shoves BAKER into the fire and sits on him for as long as he can handle the flames.)*

*BAKER screams in the fire. He runs off, ablaze.*

*BENJI stares at the fire.)*

LOO

What were you staring at?

BENJI

His face. In the flames, it just... stopped being angry. It all just burned up.

*(BENJI's cell phone rings. Lights shift, ambient casino noise. He pulls the phone out of his pocket and stamps on it. The phone keeps ringing. He stamps and stamps, but the phone keeps ringing.)*

LOO

Answer it! Answer it now!

BENJI

Stop calling me!

*(The phone stops ringing. Noise fades and lighting returns.)*

LOO

Why didn't you talk to her?

BENJI

Why did you show me this?

LOO

I didn't realize you had forgotten.

BENJI

You didn't?? You didn't "realize"?? You know my imagination, my fucking shames and guilts, you fucking knew about this, but you dragged me on this idiot's quest. The fuck kind of conscience are you?

LOO

A good one.

BENJI

An ambitious one. Of course I'd get a conscience that's just trying to get one over on me. Why can't it just stay forgotten?

*(BENJI realizes something. He looks up at the stars.)*

LOO

I win if you win.

BENJI

For your sake, I hope that's true.

*(BENJI feels his side.)*

LOO

What are you doing?

BENJI

I found the Laser Rock.

LOO

You imagined the Laser Rock.

BENJI

And you're in my imagination.

*(BENJI grabs his side in pain.)*

BENJI

Ow!

Loo!

Loo!

Come out and play!

Ow!

*(BENJI punches himself repeatedly in the sides and stomach.)*

LOO

How do I make this clear, Benjamin? There is no Benjamin without me!

BENJI

Rock Route made Pop a new man, it'll do the same for me.

Oh, no, I'm gonna be sick.

*(BENJI gags and sputters. He hocks and spits a massive loogie. In it is the Laser Rock.)*

BENJI

You've been shooting me with lasers the whole time, you little shit.

BAKER  
*(Off-stage.)*

Benji! Benji, there you are!

*(BAKER enters.)*

BENJI

Stop!  
Which one are you?

BAKER

I'm Baker. I'm digging in the desert as punishment for my crimes.

BENJI

You don't gotta dig no more, Pop. I found it. You and me can live in Rock Route, basking happy in the sun together.

BAKER

You wanna stay here, Benji?

BENJI

So long as Simmons and Jonesy can keep me working.  
Let's go destroy this thing.  
Hey, Pop? Wanna have a catch?

*(BENJI tosses the Laser Rock to BAKER.)*

*The two men exit as they toss the rock.)*

END OF SCENE.

Scene 10

The mechanic's shop.

*(BENJI and BAKER present the Laser Rock to SIMMONS and JONESY.)*

SIMMONS

You were so smart to dig at the Sailing Stones, Benji!

LOO

I'm not ready for this.

BENJI

Worked out well.

SIMMONS

So, Baker. Your debt to society is served. You're free to go.

BAKER

I know.

BENJI

Or free to stay, right?

JONESY

Absolutely! The more the merrier!

LOO

Benji? Please. Benji, please. Listen to me? One last time. I'm still here for you, I'm still working for you, I'm always doing everything for you and always will! Do not do this, you will lose everything. You will wake up back in Vegas with nothing.

BENJI

I'm gaining back a father, closer to me than ever before.

LOO

Benji, it's a fake.

BENJI

Turn that machine on.

*(SIMMONS puts the Laser Rock in the Machine.)*

BENJI

Don't let my imagination run away with you.

*(Laser beams flash all around.)*

*Blackout.*

*BENJI appears in darkness. Sounds of a bustling casino, as in the beginning.*

*BENJI looks around, confused. He feels his face, his limbs, his body.*

*BENJI feels a soreness on his side. He lifts his shirt to reveal the bruises he made.)*

BENJI

Ow. Who hit me?

*(BENJI's cell phone rings. He answers it.)*

BENJI

Hello?

Who? "Benji"?

Chill out, lady, you got the wrong number.

*(BENJI hangs up on his mom.)*

BENJI

Strange woman.

Oh! A buffet.

*(BENJI exits toward the buffet.)*

END OF PLAY.