

STORYTELLERS

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FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE CITY - NIGHT

The scenery's obscured and illuminated from a fire nearby. Small flaming debris scatter the pavement. A PHONE rings -

9-11 DISPATCHER V.O.  
Nine - one - one, what's the nature  
of your emergency?

VOICE O.S.  
There's been an accident...

The roar of the FIRE becomes louder. It fades into -

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

A PLANE flies overhead. NICO TELLERS, (late 20's), strolls out and sends a text message.

*I'm home. Meet tonight?*

His hollow eyes glisten, looking around the familiar terrain.

INT. TRUCK STOP - BATHROOM - DAY

Nico's in the shower, eyes closed, enjoying the steaming water wash over his skin.

His enjoyment's interrupted by the dull sounding raucous of a Frank Sinatra rendition.

He peers around the corner. The source of the sound is BOBBY LOGGINS, (70's). He dresses and sings, oblivious or careless to who may hear.

Nico's quizzical gaze fades to empathetic recognition.

STORE FRONT

Bobby talks to some patrons. Nico watches discreetly behind a shelf. The STORE CLERK walks over.

BOBBY  
(to patrons)  
...That's what I sang at karaoke  
last night.

STORE CLERK  
You can't keep harassing the  
customers.

BOBBY  
Harassing? We're just talking.

The customers look uneasy and walk away. Bobby and the clerk approach the counter.

STORE CLERK  
Bobby, you can't keep coming around  
here.

BOBBY  
This is a truck stop isn't it? I'm  
a trucker. Give me a couple of them  
cigars.

The clerk's incredulous.

BOBBY  
I'm going to pay for it.

He pats at his pockets. No wallet. Nico slowly edges closer. He throws down a five dollar bill. Bobby faces him.

BOBBY  
See that? You sow bountifully you  
reap bountifully. The Lord loves a  
cheerful giver. Thanks, baby.

He takes the cigars and WHISTLES the same Sinatra tune from earlier as he exits.

CLERK  
Sorry for the scene. Old man comes  
around to reminisce sometimes.

Nico watches Bobby drive away.

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

TOMMY TELLERS, (late 40's), sits on an examining bed. DR.  
DARLENE LECLAIRE, (30's), presses a stethoscope to his back.

DARLENE  
Good. Again.

He takes a deep breath. She repositions the stethoscope.

DARLENE  
One more time. Any trouble  
breathing?

TOMMY  
Only when I'm looking at you.

She smiles, coquettishly.

DARLENE  
Mr. Tellers -

TOMMY  
Tommy, please.

She lowers the stethoscope and drops his shirt.

DARLENE  
You're breathing sounds better.

TOMMY  
That's good. Means there's  
progress, right?

She checks his ears.

DARLENE  
Small steps.

TOMMY  
If progress is measured in small  
steps, then duping my son into a  
conversation's going to be a rumba.

DARLENE  
I didn't know you had a boy.

She finishes and faces him. He hands her a picture of his  
son. As she hands it back, he lingers a stare.

DARLENE  
He's handsome. What's his name?

TOMMY  
Nico. We've visited each other more  
in pictures than we ever have in  
person. You got kids?

DARLENE  
A daughter. She's finishing her  
masters at the university of Texas.

TOMMY  
Just like her mother.

She glances down to her clipboard.

DARLENE

Yeah, just like her mom. Okay, Tommy. I scheduled your chemo therapy for next week. Until then, you need to get lots of rest and continue taking your meds. I refilled your prescription.

TOMMY

The one that's effectively disabled me?

DARLENE

Are you having trouble walking?

TOMMY

Honey, I could always walk. It's the direction I never got straight.

They chuckle as they approach the threshold.

DARLENE

I can put you on a generic brand --

TOMMY

I'll manage.

DARLENE

Okay. Well, remember to take them daily and no alcohol.

TOMMY

No smoking, no driving - now no drinking? You're killing me, doc.

DARLENE

I think you did that to yourself. But that's what I'm here for.

TOMMY

How about dinner than? Take our minds from all of this, even if it's only brief.

DARLENE

As flattering as that sounds, I don't date patients. I could lose my job. See you next week, Tommy.

TOMMY

What should I do until then?

DARLENE

A conversation with your son might  
be a good start.

Her sentiment hits Tommy hard.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The place bustles with people. Nico strides up to the bar.  
DENTON, 30's, the bartender, comes over cordially.

DENTON

Nico, You're back. Now famous, you  
disappear without telling anyone?

NICO

Just had to get away for awhile.

They shake hands.

DENTON

Good too see you all the same. Want  
a scotch or gin? Isn't that what  
all you writers like to drink?

NICO

Club soda, please.

Nico spots KANA (20's), at a table. Denton hands him the  
drink. He gestures a *thank you*, then sips it.

NICO

Can you send a vodka martini to  
that table for me? She's a friend.

Denton nods, then makes the drink.

DENTON

Hey, man. If you're not doing  
anything later, a few of us are  
getting together. I know everyone  
would love to see you.

Denton hands the drink to a passing waiter.

NICO

Yeah. All right.

The waiter hands Kana her drink and points to the bar. Nico  
holds up his glass. She scurries over.

KANA

The lone traveler returns.

They hug tight.

KANA  
Starting to think I wasn't going to  
see you again.

NICO  
Just needed some time.

They smile, sheepishly.

KANA  
Did you just come back for the  
funeral or are you back for good?

He shrugs.

NICO  
Think it'd be all right if I  
crashed with you... Stayed with  
you? Jesus, been back for an hour  
an already...

He rubs his head. She pulls him close.

KANA  
Of course you can, Nico. Some of  
Your stuff's already there.

NICO  
Thanks, Kana.

They linger in each other's eyes longer than friends should.

KANA  
Come on, we've got a lot of  
catching up to do.

NICO  
(To Denton)  
You still have my number, right?

Denton nods as Kana leads Nico into the crowd.

EXT. FRIENDS HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Nico sits among some friends, BARRY and BASTIAN, (20's).  
Denton strides over with some beer.

DENTON  
I'm a bartender by trade but after  
hours, you get your own drinks.

He passes the bottles out and sits beside them.

DENTON  
Sure you don't want one?

NICO  
I'm good, thank you.

DENTON  
Big shot writer won't share a beer  
with his buds no more?

NICO  
It's not like that.

BARRY  
How long's it been, now?

NICO  
Probably since the release.

BASTIAN  
Yeah, speaking of that, when can we  
expect the next book?

NICO  
Haven't really felt inspired to  
write anything since the accident.

BASTIAN  
God, that's right. Haven't thought  
about that in a long time. So sad  
what happened.

Nico looks away. Barry drunkenly gets carried away.

BARRY  
I didn't really know Ted.  
Apparently there was an anonymous  
caller. News said he was driving  
drunk and BAM!

He CLAPS his hands, springing everyone to attention.

DENTON  
Jesus, Barry.

Denton nods to Nico. Barry looks around. They're all on edge.

BARRY  
That was insensitive. I'm sorry.  
You guys were close, right?

NICO  
He was my best friend.

BASTIAN  
You know, I still see Bobby around  
town sometimes.

DENTON  
Who?

NICO  
Bobby Loggins. His son was in the  
other car.

BASTIAN  
Can't imagine what he's gone  
through. Always got a smile though.  
And a bible.

Nico perks up.

BARRY  
Hey, whatever get's him through it.

DENTON  
Loosing a son like that - no one  
should know what that feels like.

Barry rises.

BARRY  
Here's to Ted. Another one of those  
that life claimed too early.

He pours out a sip of his beer.

NICO  
...And to Wyatt. Bobby's son.

They hold up their bottles and cheers. Bastian nudges Nico.

BASTIAN  
Could be your next book. Just  
saying.

Nico looks at him, uneasy.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nico stares back at his reflection. He punches his face  
through the mirror. Kana runs in.

KANA  
Nico, oh my God.

## LIVING ROOM

Nico's on the couch. Kana walks in with a bag of ice and hands it to him. He puts it to his swollen fist.

NICO  
I'll replace the mirror.

KANA  
Forget about that. You have to stop punishing yourself.

NICO  
I thought getting away would change things somehow, but it hasn't. I feel like I'm backtracking.

KANA  
What happened - happened, Nico. Holding on to it is only holding you back.

NICO  
I can't keep this a secret anymore. I'm tired of feeling alone.

She looks into his eyes and squeezes his other hand tightly.

KANA  
You're not alone.

## INT. KANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nico slowly wakes on the couch. Kana drags two plastic boxes across the floor. Nico raises his head.

NICO  
Good morning.

Startled, she looks over to him.

KANA  
Here are your things. Coffee's fresh. I got to get going.

She's at a table near the door. Nico heads into the kitchen.

NICO  
Off to work? How's Abernathy been?

KANA

She passed awhile back. But that's part of it.

Nico takes out a coffee mug and pours himself some coffee.

NICO

Can't get attached to anybody.

She opens the door, then faces him. There's an infatuation.

KANA

Occasionally you can't help it. Thought about what you said -- about backtracking. Sometimes it's the only way to get ahead. Maybe it's time you told him.

She smiles a glimmer of hope as she exits.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE CITY - DAY

Nico jogs along a country road. Earbuds in. He stops around a corner and looks over the site, remorsefully. He runs away.

INT. ASSISTED LIVING - CAFETERIA - DAY

Employees deliver food to elderly people. Kana's at a table next to MABLE, (80's). She tries to get her to eat.

KANA

All right Mable, open up.

Mable sits blankly as Kana wafts a spoon in front of her.

KANA

You need to eat something.

MABLE

I want to see Ralph. Where's Ralph?

KANA

Mable, you know where Ralph is.

MABLE

He'll be at my party, won't he?

KANA

We can't have a party unless you get your strength. You need to eat.

Mable opens her mouth. Kana feeds her the spoon.

KANA

There you go. Good isn't it?

MABLE

I just want to dance one last time with Ralph. Tennessee Waltz. That's the song we were dancing to when he asked me to marry him.

KANA

I bet that was romantic.

MABLE

Oh, honey. You can hardly imagine. When you getting married?

Before she can respond, she notices an employee pointing her out to Nico from the entrance. She rises as he approaches.

KANA

What are you doing here?

NICO

I came to see you.

He grabs her hand, playful and smiles.

KANA

I'm smitten.

NICO

Actually, think I can use your car?

She pulls out her keys and hands them to him.

KANA

Where are you going?

NICO

Taking your advice.

Looking at Mable.

NICO

Who's this lovely lady?

KANA

This is Mable.

Nico reaches down and shakes her hand.

NICO

Very nice to meet you.

MABLE

Are you coming to my party?

Nico looks to Kana.

KANA

She's having a birthday party, but only if she eats every bite.

Mable takes a big spoon full of food.

NICO

I'd love to.

KANA

What advice?

NICO

Backtracking. Thank you.

He kisses her cheek and darts off.

KANA

Just make sure you're back by six.

He waves behind him as he shuffles off.

MABLE

Who's the hunk?

She stares after him, mesmerized, as he exits the cafeteria.

KANA

My husband...

INT. TRUCK STOP - STORE - DAY

Nico enters the truck stop from earlier. No sign of Bobby. He walks over to the counter.

NICO

Remember that old man that was in here yesterday? You kicked him out.

CLERK

You mean Bobby?

NICO

Yes. Know where I could find him?

CLERK

You a reporter?

NICO

No, nothing like that. Please, if you could help me find him, I'd really appreciate it.

The clerk takes out a note pad and writes momentarily.

CLERK

These are a few places I hear him talking about. What do you want with the old man?

He hands the paper to Nico.

NICO

Thank you very much.

He walks towards the door.

CLERK

Sad what he went through.

Nico stops and looks empathetic towards the man, then exits.

EXT./INT. KARAOKE BAR - DAY

Nico parks, looks at the paper, then the sign on the door. He walks in. No sign of Bobby. He exits.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nico types a destination into his GPS when he spots Bobby's truck at a Goodwill store. Nico turns into the parking lot.

INT. GOODWILL - DAY

Nico hunches behind an aisle and watches Bobby. He talks to some customers. They're entertained.

EXT./INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Nico peers through the window. Bobby approaches the front counter. He and the owner seem to have a rapport.

INT. PAROLE BUILDING - DAY

STAN STULUCCI, (40's), walks through a large office. Desks clutter the room. He's met by another OFFICER.

YOUNG OFFICER  
Stan, we're doing eighteen in ten.

He taps his wrist, motioning a "watch."

STAN  
Can't. Got a new client today.

YOUNG OFFICER  
Teresa's case? Who you got?

STAN  
Tommy Tellers.

The young officer walks with Stan.

YOUNG OFFICER  
Machine Gun Tommy?

STAN  
One and only. Just did fifteen.

YOUNG OFFICER  
Pushing small quantities of  
narcotics until graduating to gun  
trafficking - I know.

Stulucci grabs a folder from a colleague. He flips through it  
as they continue to walk.

STAN  
Thank you, sweetheart. Lives at  
1245 Mulberry ST. - his sisters  
place - recently deceased - one  
son, Nico Alamonde' Tellers.

YOUNG OFFICER  
Got a tail on him?

STAN  
Says here, kid didn't speak a word  
to him his whole stretch.

They approach Stan's office.

YOUNG OFFICER  
You got your afternoon full. I'll  
have to take your money next time.

STAN  
Not with that weak stroke of yours.  
Better practice up. I'll see you on  
the green next week.

YOUNG OFFICER  
Hey, what makes you think he's  
going to start talking now?

STAN  
Because this time around, time's  
the one thing he doesn't have.

He pushes open the door and enters.

OFFICE

Tommy stands near a desk. He holds a picture of Stan with  
some golfing buddies. Stan comes over.

STAN  
Mr. Tellers. How you feeling today?

He reaches out to shake his hand. Tommy hands him the picture  
instead and sits down. Stan replaces the picture.

STAN  
You a golfer?

TOMMY  
Where's Teresa?

Stan sits behind his desk and shuffles around some papers.

STAN  
Transferred. My name's Stan  
Stulucci. I'm the officer assigned  
to your case now. We're not going  
to have any hick-ups, are we?

TOMMY  
I've slipped through the cracks of  
time long enough. I just want to  
move on with my life.

STAN  
Glad to hear. First and third  
Fridays, you report to me.

He slides a folder over.

STAN  
I'll keep this brief. Here are the  
rules and guidelines you must  
comply with to keep in good  
standing. Sign the last two pages.

Tommy flips through the file and signs the pages.

STAN

And if you're willing to play ball,  
we may be able to work with you on  
some of that. I know you pride  
yourself on loyalty...

TOMMY

Loyalty? I think you've got a  
misunderstanding about me.

STAN

I understand you haven't said a  
word to your boy in over a decade.

TOMMY

Then you see, I discarded my  
loyalty to the one person who  
matters most long ago. I'm just  
trying to make it right.

STAN

Then let's make it right.

He stares deep into his eyes.

TOMMY

Are we done here?

STAN

One last thing.

He reaches into a drawer and pulls out a cup.

STAN

Fill it up.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Bobby sips a coffee cup and talks to a waiter. Nico's a few  
tables over. He sits back and watches him.

BOBBY

Did you hear the one about the  
Indian who drank too much tea?

The waiter's fidgety.

BOBBY

He died in his own tee-pee.

Bobby erupts in laughter. The waiter gives a courtesy laugh,  
then walks off.

Nico's nerve-stricken. He prepares himself, then ambles over to Bobby's table.

NICO  
Mr. Loggins...

Bobby tilts up at him.

BOBBY  
Well, it's Baudin now.

NICO  
My name's Nico. If you have a minute, I'd like talk to you.

BOBBY  
No - I don't want to talk to anymore reporters.

NICO  
I'm not a reporter. I'm a writer, but that's not why I'm here. I saw you yesterday at the truck stop.

BOBBY  
You following me?

NICO  
Wasn't too difficult to find you.

BOBBY  
Okay, sit down. Nico, what's that short for?

NICO  
It's short for Nico.

Nico sits across from him.

BOBBY  
Thought maybe it was short for Nicholas. As in Nicholas Baudin.

Nico stares, blankly.

BOBBY  
See, I'm from the French quarter of Louisiana. Had to change my name to elude all you writers.

NICO  
Why'd you choose him?

BOBBY

He was an explorer. I was a trucker for nearly thirty years. I've seen it all, baby.

Bobby sips his coffee. Nico pulls up a note pad. A large paragraph blankets the page. He prepares himself then -

BOBBY

What about me do you want to write?

Nico's caught off guard.

NICO

I - I wasn't actually writing about you...

BOBBY

Well, why'd you want to be a writer? 'Cause you can't think of anything to say.

NICO

For as long as I can remember that's all I ever wanted to be.

BOBBY

Let me guess someone read something of yours once and thought you had some precocious talent. Now fresh out of topics, you're trying to make a story out of nothing.

NICO

I want to write stories that'll transform the world - or at least the way people perceive it.

BOBBY

I've got many years under this skin and seen many things with these eyes. Some good - some bad.

Nico tears out the page and crumples it.

BOBBY

You're just a babe in a bush. What can you possibly write about life?

NICO

I may not be as old as you, but everyone's got a story to tell.

Bobby pulls out a pocket watch from his blazer pocket. He holds it up between him and Nico.

BOBBY

This here watch has out lived you  
twice over. It belonged to my  
father - the best man I ever knew.

He hands it to Nico.

NICO

It doesn't work.

BOBBY

All things expire at some point.  
Just think of all the memories it's  
held through the times.

NICO

You're not one of those people who  
believes in time travel, are you?

Bobby shuts his eyes.

NICO

What are you doing?

BOBBY

I'm going back in time.

NICO

I meant literally.

BOBBY

You think just because you aren't  
seeing a physical change that means  
nothing's changing? It's internal,  
baby - it's up here. And in here.

He points to his head, then taps his chest over his heart.  
The waiter arrives and tops off Bobby's Coffee.

WAITER

There ya go, Bobby. You like  
anything?

NICO

I'm fine, thanks.

The waiter walks away.

NICO

You know a lot of people, huh?

BOBBY

I'm quite gregarious at times. Like you said, everyone's got a story to tell. Why don't you tell me yours?

Bobby sips his coffee.

NICO

Mine?

BOBBY

Yeah. You want to interview me - tell me your story.

NICO

Guess you're right. I'm nearly thirty and still haven't done much.

BOBBY

Age is something to be embraced. Instead of running from it - learn to earn it.

NICO

I wrote a book one time.

BOBBY

There's an accomplishment.

Nico looks at the table.

NICO

One would think, right?

BOBBY

I started a book once. Only got one line down. Couldn't go any further.

NICO

What was it?

Bobby lights a cigar.

BOBBY

I'll love you until love dies, then I'll create love just to love you again. Hopeless and helpless was what I was going to call it.

NICO

Why didn't you finish it?

BOBBY

Some stuff is just too hard to say.

Nico stares hard into Bobbie's eyes.

BOBBY

...And some things you don't want  
to relive.

Nico's PHONE rings, springing him out of his daze. It's Kana.

NICO

Bobby, I'm sorry. I have to go.

He stands and holds out the watch. Bobby doesn't take it.

NICO

I almost forgot...

BOBBY

See that engraving there?

Nico looks at the watch. Engraved on the back -

*Glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering  
produces perseverance; Romans 5:3*

BOBBY

Maybe you should hold on to it  
until next time. May help you.

Nico gestures with the pocket watch.

NICO

Until next time then.

BOBBY

Writing's an important outlet but  
believe me - a single action can  
speak volumes more than a few words  
can ever transform this world.  
*That's* what the Word teaches us.

Nico gives him a small smile and hustles away.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Darlene types on her computer. Beside her is a microwave-  
dinner and a glass of wine.

Something catches her eye on Tommy's chart. She lowers her  
glass and knocks over a picture of her and her daughter.

She jumps up and finds a towel. She soaks up the spill, but  
stops and grips the picture. Tears well in her eyes.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nico and Kana wash dishes.

KANA  
You didn't tell him then?

NICO  
It didn't feel right. We're going  
to meet again though.

Kana puts some food away in the refrigerator.

KANA  
What makes you think that?

NICO  
He gave me his father's watch. Said  
to give it back next time we met.

They reach for the same dish and graze each other's hand.  
They exchange looks - dismissing the moment.

NICO  
Anyway, it feels good to just have  
talked with him. You know?

KANA  
It's good that you did.

She touches his shoulder, then goes into the living room.

NICO  
Hey, you still drawing?

He shuts off the water and joins her.

KANA  
Not so much.

NICO  
That's your niche. Look at these.

He points to some pictures hanging on her walls.

NICO  
If I had a talent like that...

Off her look.

NICO  
All I'm saying is you could be  
doing something else.

KANA  
I'm good at what I do.

NICO  
I know you are.

They look into each other's eyes.

KANA  
Maybe I haven't found my niche yet,  
like you, but I like what I do.

NICO  
Look, I'm sorry. I don't want to  
sound unappreciative.

She gives him a big hug.

KANA  
You got a lot going on, I know. But  
it's nice having someone around.

They break from the hug. She trots to her room.

KANA  
I'm going to bed. Night, Nico.

She stops in the hall and looks back. He's going through his belongings. She smiles and disappears around the corner.

He holds a newspaper with a picture of two crashed vehicles. The headline reads: Anonymous caller reports fatal wreck.

He studies the text with a somber stare.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A large crowd surrounds a casket. A PREACHER reads from the bible. Nico and Kana walk up late. They stand in the back.

PREACHER  
Gene's brother, Tommy, has asked to  
say a few words.

He steps away as Tommy takes the center.

KANA  
I thought your dad was traveling.  
Isn't that why you left?

NICO  
So did I.

Nico stares ahead. Tommy unfolds a piece of paper. He COUGHS for a spell, then reads aloud.

TOMMY

My memory isn't as sharp as it used to be. I'm not going to stand up here and pretend I've been the best person. No, that was Gene. I've made mistakes. Some worse than others but, who hasn't? I haven't seen many of you in years and that's sad. It's sad because we have to wait for someone that we love and care for to die to bring us all together. And it shouldn't be like that. There shouldn't be any holiday, in life or death, that obligates anyone to see anybody. Life's a celebration. We should be celebrating everyday we get to take another breath - everyday we feel the cool of a breeze or see the sun setting. It's the small things in life that often get overlooked. It's also the small things we think don't make a difference. Me, I'm a walking, talking, breathing bag of bones just like the rest of you. As long as we're here breathing - celebrate each and every moment. Share it with everyone you encounter and make new memories. Don't hold on to the old ones. Because at some point, these are going to be the days we'll be reminiscing in the years to come. Today we celebrate Gene's life - not mourn her death.

LATER

The funeral's wrapping up. Nico hugs some relatives. Kana stands nearby. Tommy paces over.

KANA

I loved your speech.

TOMMY

Thank you. Tommy - Nico's father.

He holds out his hand. They shake.

KANA

Kana. You were traveling around the world, right?

He looks confused.

TOMMY

The very small world of an eight by ten foot cell. Not much scenery.

Nico sees them talking and rushes over.

NICO

Come on, Kana. Let's go.

TOMMY

Wait, son.

NICO

Don't call me son. You haven't earned that right.

TOMMY

Can we talk for a minute?

NICO

When did they let you out?

TOMMY

Look, I'd just like to talk to you.

NICO

I've got nothing to say to you.

He grabs Kana's hand and darts off. Tommy watches, deflated.

INT. KANA'S CAR - STATIONARY - DAY

They sit in silence for a few moments.

KANA

When were you planning on telling me about your dad? In your book...

NICO

He's no traveler, okay? I was too ashamed to admit he's a convict. I made it up. Can we go now?

She's confused. She starts the car and drives off.

EXT./INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy exits a cab and walks into his house. He looks around briefly, then runs back outside WHISTLING to the cab.

It reverses. He gets back in. They speed away.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Tommy's dazed as he sips from a scotch glass. SYMKATCHA, (50's), walks up to him.

SYMKATCHA  
Machine Gun?

Tommy looks over his shoulder. He's shocked.

SYMKATCHA  
I heard you got released awhile  
back. Let me buy you a drink.

TOMMY  
I can buy my own drinks, Symkatcha.

Symkatcha taps a man on the shoulder. He gets up. Symkatcha plumps down next to Tommy.

TOMMY  
How'd you find me?

SYMKATCHA  
Only a matter of time before we ran  
into each other, Machine Gun.

TOMMY  
I'm not that guy anymore.

SYMKATCHA  
Appreciate you not rolling on me.  
Sure it could've saved a few years.

Tommy finishes his drink and motions for another.

TOMMY  
Maybe I should have.

SYMKATCHA  
That's not who you are.

The bartender sets down another drink.

SYMKATCHA  
It's on me.

TOMMY

I got it.

SYMKATCHA

I insist.

Tommy faces him.

TOMMY

Why are you talking to me?

SYMKATCHA

Lost a lot of money when you got  
busted. And product.

TOMMY

I'll find a way to pay you back.

SYMKATCHA

Never mind that. There's a job.

TOMMY

Look somewhere else.

SYMKATCHA

Maybe a scare sets us back  
momentarily, but it's the thrill  
that draws us back. Every time.

TOMMY

I'll get you your money somehow,  
but I retired fifteen years ago.

SYMKATCHA

People like you and me - we're  
never retired. See your son lately?

Tommy grabs his throat.

TOMMY

You don't go near my son, got it?

The bartender pulls up a small bat.

BARTENDER

There a problem here, gentlemen?

Symkatcha looks over - Tommy still clasps his throat.

SYMKATCHA

No problems.

Tommy releases his grip. Symkatcha rises and pulls out a piece  
of paper. He throws it down on the bar.

SYMKATCHA

Here's my number. My condolences  
about your sister. I'll be seeing  
you, Machine Gun.

He walks off. Tommy slams the rest of his drink.

EXT. CITY STRIP - NIGHT

Tommy stumbles out onto the sidewalk. He drifts into what  
looks like a bad part of town.

Passed out against a building is BONNIE LECLAIRE, (20's).  
Tommy drops some change into her tightly gripped cup.

She jolts awake.

BONNIE

You idiot - I'm not begging.

TOMMY

Take it easy.

BONNIE

I'm not homeless.

TOMMY

Could have fooled me. Look, I was  
just trying to do something nice.

She reaches into the cup and retrieves the change.

BONNIE

Seventy five cents. You're a saint.

She takes a sip.

TOMMY

What are you drinking?

BONNIE

Coffee. What's it look like?

TOMMY

I'll tell you what it smells like.

BONNIE

You know me? Why you talking to me?

She starts to come at him.

TOMMY

A girl your age shouldn't be out here alone at night.

She puts her arms on him.

BONNIE

Want to take me back to your place?

TOMMY

You're just a kid.

BONNIE

You don't think I know what to do?

She's drunk and tries to be sensual.

TOMMY

No. I don't.

He lowers her arms. Embarrassed, she reacts impromptu.

BONNIE

Who are you? Get away from me.

TOMMY

Look, I was just trying to help.

BONNIE

Did I ask for your help?

TOMMY

Calm down.

BONNIE

Get away from me, pervert.

She SCREAMS hysterically. People look over. He darts off.

EXT. KANA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nico and Kana get into her car and drive away. Tommy stands at a distance, watching. He COUGHS lightly.

INT. RESTAURANT - TABLE - DAY

Nico and Kana finish lunch.

KANA

If you knew your aunt lied, then why'd you keep it going?

Nico rises from the table.

NICO  
Sometimes we're afraid of how the  
truth might affect us.

He walks towards the front -

COUNTER

NICO  
Check, please.

An employee runs his credit card, then hands it back. Nico  
heads back to the -

TABLE

Kana laughs as he approaches. Bobby's in his chair.

BOBBY  
Oh my God. She is gorgeous.

NICO  
Bobby, what are you doing here?

BOBBY  
I told you we'd meet again.

KANA  
I actually need to get to work.

She stands from the table.

BOBBY  
Sure you can't stay?

KANA  
I'd love to, but I have to work.  
(to Nico)  
You going to be okay?

NICO  
I'll be fine.

KANA  
Pleasure meeting you, Bobby.

BOBBY  
The pleasure's all mine, baby.

She hugs Nico, then walks off. Bobby eyes her.

BOBBY

Oh my God. Are you guys...?

NICO

Don't think I could get Kana.

BOBBY

Get her? You just take her by the hand and say let's go, baby. That's how I did with my wife.

NICO

What are you really doing here?

BOBBY

I was thinking about your interview. I want to do it.

Nico notices a box in Bobby's hand.

NICO

What's in the box?

BOBBY

You play mancala?

INT. ASSISTED LIVING HOME - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Kana and a fellow COWORKER set up decorations.

COWORKER

I think this is going to be really good for her.

KANA

I hope so. She's been dwelling on memories of Ralph again.

Another coworker approaches.

COWORKER 2

Kana, Mable's asking for you.

Kana releases an inflated balloon. It flies away. She exits.

MABLE'S ROOM

Kana approaches the threshold. Mable's in bed facing away.

KANA

Hey, sweetie. You all right?

She sits beside the bed and grabs Mable's hand.

MABLE

I don't want a party no more.

KANA

What? Yes you do.

MABLE

No. I don't. I miss Ralph too much.

KANA

He's going to be there.

MABLE

Honey, I may be forgetful of a lot of things, but I could never forget my Ralphy. I don't want to have another celebration without the love of my life being there.

KANA

Mable, even if he's not there...

MABLE

God forbid you're where I am one day. There's not a pill in the world that allows your heart to forget the pain of losing the one you love.

KANA

I understand...

MABLE

I don't think you do. You're young. Maybe too young to understand now, but you will one day. You and that hunk husband of yours - ya'll are in love. I can see it.

Kana's speechless.

MABLE

Make it a point everyday to tell him you love him. Cause one day it's going to be too late. And all you're gonna have are the memories.

EXT. RESTAURANT - PATIO - DAY

Bobby and Nico play mancala. A small bible sits aside.

NICO

You always bring that with you?

Bobby looks at the bible, then to Nico.

BOBBY

Always. It's what gets me through the hard times. You read it?

NICO

Never got much from it.

BOBBY

You get what you put into it.

NICO

So, why me? Why now?

BOBBY

I was thinking about that. There's something different about you.

NICO

Different how?

BOBBY

It's like you actually care and aren't just chasing a story.

Nico takes out a pen and paper. Bobby lights a cigar.

NICO

Where do you want to start?

BOBBY

Wherever you'd like. Your move.

Nico makes a move on the game.

NICO

How about the early life?

Bobby makes a move on the game and puffs his cigar.

BOBBY

I was married for fifty years. We had two sons together. Wyatt and Chris. One's dead - but you probably knew that. You wouldn't be here talking to me if you didn't.

Nico looks at him.

NICO  
Where's your wife now?

BOBBY  
I don't know. I tell you, she was perfect. Tried to make me perfect. One day I just said get out. I don't want to be perfect no more. After fifty years - it wasn't all good, but it was good enough.

NICO  
If this, at any point, is too uncomfortable...

BOBBY  
I can do it. Not everything's suited for your comfort in this life. That's something you learn from this. Write that down.

He touches the bible. Nico plays a move on the game board.

NICO  
Can you talk a little about what happened? I mean...

BOBBY  
I know what you mean. Wyatt had just finished boot camp in the U.S. Navy. Good at everything. Then one night he was gone. My boy. You don't recognize someone's scent until only after they're gone.

He breaks down in tears.

NICO  
I'm sorry. We can stop.

BOBBY  
It's okay. I talked about it before, I can do it again. Hopeless and helpless. That's how I felt.

NICO  
What did you do?

BOBBY  
I was too much of a coward to kill myself so I started to live life in hopes of dying, but the Lord left me here to help other people.

NICO

Not too sure I believe in God.

BOBBY

Look around, Nico. He's everywhere.  
In all situations. Weather we  
choose to see Him or not.

NICO

Is there someone specific you know  
you've helped?

BOBBY

God brings people into my life  
everyday. Only they'll know if I've  
helped them.

Nico's entranced. Bobby plays another move.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

People crowd the room. Tommy enters. He looks around, then  
pours himself some coffee.

MAIN ROOM

People sit in a circle. Tommy listens, earnestly.

N.A. MAN

I would go back into my head and  
say, what a loser. Why can't you  
get this? I knew the old timers  
were judging me. If you're new -  
we're judging. You know what they  
say? Don't judge anyone in  
narcotics anonymous. You ever here  
that? But the one I love is, God  
doesn't give us more than we can  
handle. But you know what? If  
that's true, I wouldn't need God's  
help. The longer I've been  
separated from narcotics - the  
longer I've been in recovery, the  
longer I've needed Gods help. And  
N.A. has done for me what I could  
never do for myself. This is a  
disease of isolation. Of being  
separate, different and alone.

People CLAP.

MAIN ROOM - LATER

People leave, shake hands and hug. Tommy walks out. The PREACHER, 50's, approaches. They shake hands.

PREACHER

Tommy, we didn't get to hear from you tonight. I hope you were able to take something from all of this.

TOMMY

I don't think I belong here.

PREACHER

We're a family - to support one another in our recovery. Whatever your recovery may be, we're here for you. And so is He.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Nico's sober. Kana's intoxicated. A waitress sets another drink on the table, then walks away.

KANA

I'm worried.

NICO

Stop sweating it. She'll be fine.

KANA

You don't know her, Nico. She's such a good person. It's really going to affect me when she goes.

NICO

Age is a badge of honor. Should be embracing it. Not running from it.

KANA

Okay, melancholy.

NICO

What's that supposed to mean?

KANA

You were down in the dumps - now here you are joyous for life?

Nico looks at her, stunned.

NICO  
Normally people are happy to hear  
that sort of thing.

KANA  
You're right. I'm sorry. I'm drunk.

NICO  
I know. You're lucky you're cute  
when you're drunk.

KANA  
What am I going to do about her  
party? I'm out of ideas at this  
point.

She shuts her eyes and rubs her head.

NICO  
I'll grab the check.

He walks inside. Kana slurps down her drink and watches him.  
Moments pass. He walks back out.

NICO  
I think I have an idea.

He helps her up and escorts her inside. She rests her head on  
his shoulder. They both enjoy it.

INT. HOSPITAL - RADIATION ROOM - DAY

Tommy's under a big radiation machine. Darlene watches from  
behind a glass window.

DARLENE  
Keep still. Feeling okay?

He gives a thumbs up.

DARLENE'S OFFICE

Tommy sits across from Darlene. She types on her computer.

DARLENE  
Your spirits are high. That's good.

TOMMY  
Doc, shoot me straight. I've gotten  
bad news and even worse news. I  
already know I've got cancer. Where  
do I stand?

She clicks her computer mouse a few times, then rests her glasses atop her head.

DARLENE

Well, the chemo doesn't appear to be as affective as we'd hoped and the mass in your lungs has grown quite substantially. In light of the radiation treatment, there are other alternatives.

TOMMY

You mean surgery?

She gives him a sympathetic smile.

DARLENE

Tommy, when faced with a decision like this -- there are risks.

He makes himself more comfortable.

TOMMY

Of loosing my life? I've done that once. What would you do?

She takes a moment.

DARLENE

This is your best option.

TOMMY

Schedule it. Schedule the surgery.

She lowers her glasses and looks back to her computer. Tommy gazes a million miles away. Moments pass.

DARLENE

Okay, we can get you in next month.

TOMMY

Should I do anything in preparation?

DARLENE

Find a pastime. Talked to your son yet?

TOMMY

The opportunity hasn't quite presented itself.

DARLENE

Perhaps it's time you make the opportunity.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kana sits on the couch and draws in a sketch book. It's a picture of two people. She stares at it. Nico enters.

NICO

Hey, you're drawing.

She crumples it up in her hands.

KANA

Not really. How'd it go?

NICO

It's on.

INT. ASSISTED LIVING - GYMNASIUM - DAY

The place is packed with elderly people. They appear to be having a good time. All accept for Mable.

She's in her wheelchair, nonplussed. Kana and Nico huddle near a back door, restless.

KANA

Look at her. She said she didn't want a party. She hates me.

Nico looks at Mable.

NICO

Relax. She's going to love this.

He peers through the back door again.

NICO

Okay, show time. Go - go.

Kana saunters up to a microphone. She signals a coworker. The MUSIC shuts off.

KANA

Everybody - I hope you're having a great time. As you all know it's Mable's eighty-second birthday. Why doesn't everyone join me in song.

She guides the folks to SING. It's butchered and pathetic. She smiles to Nico. He laughs.

The song ends. They CLAP. Mable's still unamused.

KANA

Happy birthday, Mable. And as per request. This one's for you.

She signals the coworker again. 'Tennessee Waltz,' plays. Mable's head rises with intrigue.

Kana begins SINGING as Bobby walks up in full tux.

He looks to Nico, who points Mable out. Bobby walks over and kisses her hand. Her eyes light up.

BOBBY

Can I have this dance?

He helps her towards the middle of the floor. They start to slow dance. People join in. Kana looks over to Nico.

His smile fades and he just beams at her. She's beautiful. Bobby CHIMES in as Kana SINGS.

A tear rolls down Mable's cheek.

BOBBY

Happy birthday, darling. Think back to your fondest memory. Remember what it felt like to be dancing with your beau.

She grins with her eyes shut and pulls Bobby in tight.

MABLE

Oh, Ralphie. I've missed you. Some don't get the chance to share a day like we had. I'm a lucky girl. I'm gettin' to live it a second time.

Bobby pulls her back and spins her. She's gleaming. Bobby's having a blast. Nico stands back, taking it all in.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kana and Nico are excited as they enter.

KANA

Incredible. She looked so happy.

NICO

She was...

KANA

What are you doing?

Nico turns on some MUSIC, then pulls her into a dance pose.

NICO

We didn't get a dance.

They start to slow dance. They both smile. God, the Chemistry between these two...

KANA

Remember when we said if we never had anyone we'd always have each other?

Nico nods.

KANA

I have a confession to make. I kind of told Mable we were married.

He spins her. She comes up really close to his face. They both want it. He grabs her cheek. They kiss, passionately.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Tommy exits and hears some VOICES in an alley.

Some thugs are huddled over Bonnie. He SCREAMS and runs over. They scurry off.

Bonnie's passed out against a dumpster. Her pants are unbuttoned.

He kneels down and grabs her arm. Track marks. He slowly sets her arm back down and looks around.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy enters carrying Bonnie in his arms. He walks into his -

BEDROOM

He lays her in his bed. He takes off her shoes. A small knife falls to the floor.

He inspects the puny thing, then lays it down. He pulls the covers over her. She wakes.

BONNIE

What's going on? Where am I?

TOMMY

You're safe - don't worry.

She scoots up, more cognizant. She recognizes him.

BONNIE

You again. Okay, how much?

TOMMY

How much what?

BONNIE

How much are you going to pay me?

TOMMY

Look, kid. Whatever you're thinking isn't going to happen.

BONNIE

Why'd you bring me here then?

TOMMY

It was either here or the dumpster.

She jumps off the bed and finds the knife. She wields it out.

BONNIE

I said, I can take care of myself.

TOMMY

What're you going to do with that?

She swings it. He grabs it from her, then holds her arm up.

TOMMY

Sure taking care of yourself.

BONNIE

I didn't ask for your help.

She swings her fists. He grabs her and throws her to the bed.

TOMMY

You don't want my help, that's fine. But you're going to get raped out there, or even worse - killed. But you can take care of yourself, right? Go, there's the door.

He points to the front door. She sits back, startled. She slowly gets off the bed and grabs her shoes.

Tommy sits in a chair and COUGHS uncontrollably. She makes her way to the door, but turns back.

BONNIE  
What's wrong with you?

TOMMY  
Cancer...

He brushes past her and opens the door.

TOMMY  
If you're going to go then get out.

She doesn't move.

TOMMY  
I'm taking the couch.

He walks out and shuts the door. She sits on the edge of the bed and stares ahead.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

There's a KNOCK on the door. Tommy walks in. Bonnie rolls over. Sunlight illuminates her face.

TOMMY  
Hey, kid. I gotta be somewhere.  
Just rest.

BONNIE  
Bonnie. My name's Bonnie. Where are  
you going?

TOMMY  
Be back later. Make yourself  
something to eat. Nothing to steal  
so don't even think about it.

He smiles and shuts the door. She rolls back over.

EXT. POND - DAY

Bobby and Nico grab fishing gear from the back of his truck.

NICO  
She's probably got a few weeks  
left. You ever think about that?

BOBBY

Never. I live each day to serve  
others. I aint ever going to die.

Nico smiles as they trot down a path towards the water.

EXT. WATER FRONT - DAY

Bobby and Nico sit in silence. Lines cast far in the pond.

BOBBY

Baptized both my boys in this pond.  
Taught 'em to fish - swim. Fondest  
memories I have took place here.

Nico withdraws his line and throws it out once again.

NICO

My dad never took me fishing. Never  
taught me to ride a bike or court a  
girl. Sure wasn't baptized either.

BOBBY

Why's that?

Nico reels back his line.

NICO

He wasn't around when I was a kid.

He's about to cast out his line. Bobby grabs the pole.

BOBBY

Hold on a minute. Easy. You want to  
cast it far and gently reel it in.

He lets it go. Nico casts it back out.

NICO

Like that?

BOBBY

Good. Where was your father?

NICO

I was told he was a missionary  
traveling the world. Recently found  
out that wasn't true. Just a story.

BOBBY

Listen, baby. There are three sides  
to every story.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Your's, mine and the truth. The decisions he made, I'm sure he was thinking of you.

NICO

He still abandoned me all the same.

Bobby glances down at the water.

NICO

I saw him about a week ago. We didn't say much. I mean, what am I supposed to say?

BOBBY

Do you know what an anthology is?

NICO

Yes...

BOBBY

Our lives are formed by our decisions and those decisions make up the stories we tell. How we choose to tell them - that's going to determine what kind of storyteller we are.

NICO

Is that amphiboly?

BOBBY

I did something terrible after Wyatt was killed. It was horrible.

Bobby breaks down in a SOB.

NICO

What'd you do?

BOBBY

I told Chris it should've been him.

He CRIES harder.

BOBBY

I was hurt - I didn't mean it. I don't know why I said it but I did.

NICO

Oh my God, Bobby.

BOBBY

That was the last time we ever spoke. If he'd just let me apologize. Everybody deserves forgiveness, don't they?

Bobby casts out his line.

BOBBY

What do you want out of this life, Nico?

NICO

I'm not sure I've found my niche.

BOBBY

You need to figure it out 'cause if you don't make something out of this life - it's going to make something out of you - especially if you never learn to forgive.

Moments pass.

NICO

I guess I've always just wanted someone to be proud of me.

Bobby hugs Nico's shoulder. They silently cry together.

BOBBY

Get up.

Bobby and Nico come to a stance. Bobby SCREAMS as loud as he can. Nico looks at him, confused.

BOBBY

Do it.

NICO

What are you doing?

BOBBY

Just look out over the water and let it out.

Bobby SCREAMS again. Nico shifts his focus from him, back out over the water.

He lets out a small YELL but as he becomes more comfortable, he lets out a barbaric SCREAM from the bellows.

BOBBY

Feels good, doesn't it?

NICO

Yeah.

BOBBY

Sometimes you have to release what you've got stored up however you can.

NICO

Thought you were about to be baptize me.

BOBBY

You can only be baptized when you feel led to do so. And only you'll know when that time is.

INT. PAROLE OFFICE - DAY

Tommy enters Stan's office. Stan swings a club over an indoor putting green. The golf ball rolls past the open door.

TOMMY

I can come back.

Stan puts the club aside and sits behind his desk.

STAN

No, Tommy, have a seat. Sorry, haven't had a chance to hit lately.

Tommy sits across from him and hands over his paperwork.

STAN

How've things been going?

TOMMY

Fine.

Stan shuffles through the file.

STAN

The meetings helping?

TOMMY

I can relate with some of the folks but I was never a user.

STAN

Just pushing the stuff, right?

Tommy stares, blankly.

STAN

Look, Machine Gun. I know you can lead us to the source. Throw me a bone here. Give me a name.

TOMMY

I don't have time for all this.

STAN

Forgive me for sounding insensitive but it doesn't sound like you have much time at all.

TOMMY

All that's behind me now.

STAN

You don't actually think I believe that, do you? Once a career criminal - always a career criminal. One slip and guess what? Guess who's going to be there... That's right. I'm going to be there. And I'm going to bust ya'.

Tommy heads for the door. Stan rises, agitated.

STAN

Sit down. Sit. I'm trying to help you here.

Tommy edges back to his chair. Stan also sits back down.

TOMMY

You're help's going to get me killed or sent back to prison.

STAN

Nobody's going to get killed, all right? Not on my watch.

TOMMY

I'm no snitch.

STAN

Exitus acta probat - you ever heard that before? It's Latin. Means the outcome justifies the deed.

Tommy just stares at Stan.

INT. HOSPITAL - DARLENE'S OFFICE - DAY

Darlene flips through a patients chart as she enters. She's startled to find Tommy.

DARLENE  
Mr. Tellers, you don't have an  
appointment today.

TOMMY  
Maybe I'm old fashioned but I was  
raised to ask a girl out in person.

She looks curious.

TOMMY  
I understand policies, but I might  
not have much time left. Said to  
find a pastime. I want to spend  
whatever time I do have in the  
company of a beautiful woman.

She blushes.

TOMMY  
Come on, what'dya say?

DARLENE  
Okay, I'll have dinner with you.

TOMMY  
You can't keep calling me Mr.  
Tellers though.

He stands at the threshold, beaming.

DARLENE  
Next week.

TOMMY  
Okay, but you'll have to drive.

DARLENE  
Get out of here, Tommy.

TOMMY  
See you next week.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Tommy exits through the rotating doors. A large guy grabs him and escorts him to a car idling nearby.

He shoves him into the backseat. They drive away.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Tommy sits, shaken. Symkatcha's in the passenger seat. The other guy drives fast through the city.

SYMKATCHA  
Phone hasn't rang, Machine Gun.

TOMMY  
Had a lot going on.

SYMKATCHA  
My proposition wasn't a request.  
I'll end you quicker than cancer if  
you don't start cooperating.

TOMMY  
Why don't you find someone else?

SYMKATCHA  
Last time I checked someone else  
didn't owe me a lot of money.  
(to driver)  
Pull over.

The CAR screeches to a stop. Tommy gets out.

SYMKATCHA  
It's time you start living up to  
that name of yours, Machine Gun or  
you can forget about rekindling  
with your son.

Tommy stands at the curb. They drive away.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kana comes in and sets her keys on a side table. She notices a tent made out of blankets and her dinning set.

KANA  
Nico?

NICO O.S.  
In here...

TENT

The corner of a blanket rises. Kana crawls through. Nico opens his arm. She lays down beside him. They kiss.

KANA

Like what you've done with the place.

NICO

You ever do this as a kid?

KANA

I think every youth did. Hey, how'd it go with Bobby?

NICO

Remember the song Fast Car?

KANA

Tracy Chapman. Of course.

NICO

I've heard that song dozens of times over the years but I listened to it earlier. For the first time, I really heard what she was saying.

KANA

A fast car. That inspired you to make a fort in the living room?

NICO

She's talking about her life and what she hoped it'd be but at every turn, disappointment. She wished for some kind of escape.

Kana touches his cheek and kisses him.

NICO

A home is supposed to be a safe place - with a family. I never had that. This was my escape.

She rubs his chest, consoling.

NICO

And today with Bobby, we talked about life and forgiveness and I still couldn't tell him.

KANA

It'll happen when the time's right.  
Just like understanding the song.

NICO

A song would probably be easier.

KANA

Everyone's got a song to sing,  
Nico. You just need to find your  
music and start singing.

They kiss and catch a corner of the blanket. One of the  
chairs falls. The tent disassembles. They laugh.

KANA

Not such a safe place anymore.

They continue to be in love and kiss.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bonny strides over to the fridge in a bathrobe. Nothing to  
eat. She wanders around the cluttered house.

She picks up some pictures on a shelf. One of Nico and Tommy  
when he was younger. One of Nico as an adult.

She sets them back down when Tommy enters.

TOMMY

You're still here.

BONNIE

Where else would I be?

TOMMY

You eat'n?

BONNIE

What, condiments in your fridge?

TOMMY

Come on, let's go.

BONNIE

In this?

She raises her arms in question.

EXT. HOT DOG VENDOR - NIGHT

The vendor hands Tommy a hot dog. Bonny's almost done with hers. Tommy takes a bite while they walk away.

BONNIE  
I can't believe someone actually  
wore these clothes.

TOMMY  
Hey, she's passed. Be respectful.

BONNIE  
I'm sorry.

NEWSPAPER STANDS

Bonny jumps up and sits atop one of the stands. Tommy leans against the others.

BONNIE  
Finish what you were saying.

TOMMY  
Just saying, maybe I couldn't  
connect on an emotional level.

BONNIE  
Seem to be doing fine now.

TOMMY  
Guess I was scared of failing him.  
Probably too late for that, huh?

BONNIE  
Never too late to do what's right.

TOMMY  
You pick that up off the streets?

BONNIE  
I've got a mother.

TOMMY  
Yeah, and what's she think about  
you living this kind of life?

BONNIE  
Probably hasn't even realized I'm  
gone.

She lightly touches her cheek.

TOMMY

Why do you say that?

BONNIE

You don't know my mom. She has all these outrageous expectations for me. News flash, mom. Maybe I don't want to go to a ritzy school. Maybe I don't want to be your successor.

TOMMY

You don't think she know's best?

BONNIE

I know what's best for me.

He nods and finishes his hot dog. He throws the crumpled wrapper away.

TOMMY

I need something to wash this crap down. Want a drink?

She nods as he walks away. Bonnie stays atop the stands.

HOT DOG VENDOR

Tommy downs a soda. The cashier gives him his change. He glances over to Bonnie.

The two thugs from earlier surround her. He drops the drink and runs over.

NEWSPAPER STANDS

The two guys have handed her something that she pockets. Tommy approaches.

TOMMY

Leave her alone.

THUG

Not your business, old man.

She hops off the stands and jumps in between them.

TOMMY

I'm making it my business.

The guys edge forward. Tommy shoves Bonnie aside. One of the thugs swings at Tommy. He misses. Tommy punches the guy.

The other thug pushes Tommy into the newspaper stands. They fall over.

Tommy, back on his feet, tackles the other guy. The scuffle only lasts a few more seconds.

TOMMY

Don't ever come near her again.

THUG

You're dead, old man.

TOMMY

Yeah, more than you think.

The thugs book it. Bonnie hits Tommy's shoulders. He reaches into her pocket and pulls out the drugs.

BONNIE

They're going to kill me now.

TOMMY

If you want to throw your life away, go ahead. I'm not going to stop you this time.

BONNIE

It's too hard. You don't understand.

TOMMY

You don't think I understand this - this kind of life?

He holds up the drugs. She tries to snatch it from him.

BONNIE

Stop! I never asked for your help. Just worry about your own son.

TOMMY

You're just a kid.

BONNIE

No I'm not.

TOMMY

Yes, you are. What I wouldn't give to be your age again. Maybe I'd do it right a second time.

BONNIE

I need it.

TOMMY

No. You have so much potential and you don't even know it - you're throwing it all away.

She cries. He pulls her into a hug.

TOMMY

Justifying it to yourself, that's easy. But doing what's right - that's the hard part. If you don't want to do that, then your right here where you belong.

Tears streak her cheeks, maybe finally hearing the truth.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LATER

Bonnie's asleep in Tommy's arms.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy lays Bonnie down in his bed. He pulls the covers over her and grabs her clothes off the floor.

He flushes the drugs down the toilet.

LIVING ROOM

He puts her clothes into the wash, then sits down on the couch. He grabs a picture of Nico and stares it, entranced.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Nico and Bobby sit in a booth. Kana SINGS on the stage.

BOBBY

Beauty and a voice. She's got it all, baby.

NICO

You believe there's somebody out there for everyone? I think I'm in love with her.

BOBBY

You're just a cuss. You have to understand what love is before you can recognize it.

Nico smiles to him, then back to Kana. She finishes her song and walks back over to them.

KANA  
Nico, come sing with me.

NICO  
I can't sing.

BOBBY  
Get up there. Don't be gutless.

Nico just smiles, embarrassed. Kana turns to Bobby.

KANA  
Bobby, sing a duet with me?

BOBBY  
I'd be delighted.

Kana runs back to the stage. Bobby faces Nico.

BOBBY  
Nobody ever did anything meaningful  
worrying what others were thinking.  
Have fun for a change.

Bobby and Kana SING a song and stare back to Nico. He eventually makes his way on the stage - in between them.

He gradually lets himself go. Not a care in the world. Bobby drapes his arm around his shoulders.

INT. BANDY'S JEWELRY REPAIR - DAY

Nico strolls up to an elderly man behind a desk.

JEWELER  
Can I help you, son?

NICO  
You fix jewelry, right?

JEWELER  
As best I can, yeah.

NICO  
Think you can fix this?

He hands him Bobby's watch.

JEWELER  
Let's have a look-sy.

He takes the watch and looks it over.

JEWELER

Boy, this things a relic all right.

NICO

Can you fix it?

JEWELER

Things this old tend not to want  
any fixin'. I'll see what I can do.

INT. ASSISTED LIVING - CAFETERIA - DAY

Kana vacuums the cafeteria while residents have lunch. A woman holds a banana like a gun and points it at Kana.

Kana seems out of sorts.

MABLE'S ROOM

Kana stands in the doorway. The room's nearly empty. Movers remove furniture and clean.

Kana looks grieved. She touches her stomach and runs away.

BATHROOM

Kana swings open the door and hurries in. She kneels down next to the toilet - just in time.

She VOMITS violently. She finishes and sits back.

NURSES OFFICE

A nurse bandages a woman's arm.

NURSE

I think you're going to make it.

WOMAN

What about the flu? Everyone's coughing. Maybe I need a shot.

NURSE

I'll tell your C.A.

She escorts her to the door. Kana walks in.

KANA  
You're busy today.

NURSE  
Mrs. Carlson's cough's got everyone  
scared of the flu. You too, huh?

KANA  
It's the second day I've been sick.

NURSE  
Hop up - have a seat.

Kana's on the bed. The nurse puts a stethoscope to her belly.

NURSE  
When did you last have your period?

KANA  
Expecting it any day now.

NURSE  
I don't think you have the flu.

KANA  
Oh, God. Is it worse?

NURSE  
Just looking at you, I could tell.

KANA  
Tell what?

NURSE  
I think you better start looking  
for an obstetrician.

Kana gives a skeptical smile to the nurse.

KANA  
Are you sure?

NURSE  
I've got four boys, I know.

Kana's in hysterical joy. They hug.

NURSE  
Go on home. Take it easy. I'll let  
H.R. know you're taking the rest of  
the day off.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nico walks through, sweaty in his exercising clothes.

NICO  
Kana, you home?

He walks into her -

BEDROOM

She's asleep. Next to her lies a sketchbook and some pencils. He sets them on a night stand and sits beside her.

He rubs her head and kisses her lips lightly. She wakes.

KANA  
Hi.

NICO  
Go back to sleep. I didn't mean to wake you.

KANA  
I'm happy you did.

NICO  
God, you're beautiful.

He leans over and kisses her forehead, then her lips.

NICO  
I'm glad to see you're drawing.

KANA  
Look at it.

He opens the book. There's a drawing of him, her and a little baby. They look at one another.

NICO  
Does this mean what I think...

She nods her head with a smile. He kisses her.

KANA  
I found my niche in you, daddy.

They roll around hugging, lost in each other's eyes.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy's on the couch reading Nico's book. His bedroom door creaks open - Bonnie's in disarray. He shakes his head.

BONNIE  
It's too hard.

TOMMY  
It's going to be worth it.

He closes the door.

EXT./INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Tommy and Bonnie approach the church.

BONNIE  
Can't believe I'm doing this.

TOMMY  
You don't have to speak if you don't want to. Just listen to what these people have to say.

BONNIE  
And if I don't want to?

TOMMY  
Do it for me.

BONNIE  
Okay, dad.

MAIN AUDITORIUM

Bonnie looks better and sits next to Tommy, among a group of people. Someone finishes their gab. Silence. Tommy pines up.

TOMMY  
Hi, my name's Tommy Tellers. I've spent the last fifteen years in prison for selling guns, drugs, you name it. I never understood that kind of life, but I was good at it. I enjoyed it. Somewhere in the mix of it all, I lost site of who I was doing it for - my son or for me. Reality quickly answered that when I got locked up. The most amazing part about it was - that's not what really affected me.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

It was that I had failed my son,  
whether he knew it then or not. I  
knew eventually he would. My only  
hope today, now that I'm out, is  
maybe one day he can forgive me.

Bonnie takes this in.

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Nico and Bobby are at one of the tables.

NICO

How are you feeling today?

BOBBY

I could complain but I'm not gonna.

He pulls out a cigar and a zippo.

BOBBY

Been awhile since I've measured  
time by anything other than a  
cigar.

He lights it and puffs a cloud of smoke.

NICO

There's a reason I wanted you to  
meet me today.

BOBBY

What for?

NICO

Remember when you were talking  
about releasing things the only way  
you know how?

BOBBY

Yeah...

NICO

Well, I haven't been entirely  
truthful with you.

Bobby sits back - full attention.

NICO

Interviewing you wasn't originally  
why I wanted to meet you.

Nico takes a deep breath and prepares himself.

NICO  
It's about the night Wyatt died.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAR - NIGHT /BEGIN FLASHBACK:

Nico and TED, (20's), walk out of a bar, clearly very drunk.

TED  
You did it. You're on your way.

Ted throws his arm around him. They walk over to a convertible car.

NICO  
Maybe I should drive.

TED  
This is your night. And you can't hold your liquor like I can.

INT. CONVERTIBLE CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nico sits in the passenger seat as Ted flies down the road. Neither one of them recognize the speed.

TED  
You should be so proud. You're going places, man. Really going to be somebody.

Nico, very drunk, rises up in his seat. He clutches the top of the roof for support.

He raises his arms and closes his eyes. Ted cheers him on and speeds up.

CUT TO:

INT. WYATT'S CAR - DRIVING - SAME

WYATT LOGGINS, (20's), dressed in uniform, looks like he could fall asleep at any moment.

BACK TO:

INT. CONVERTIBLE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ted speeds up. They approach a curve in the road - Nico opens his eyes to headlights...

BACK TO:

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS/END FLASHBACK:

Nico finishes his story. Bobby, with tears in his eyes, hurries off the patio. Nico stands -

NICO  
Bobby, wait.

Bobby doesn't pay any attention to him as he jumps into his truck and speeds away.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Tommy and Darlene are at a table. A waiter comes by and clears the dishes. Tommy fills their glasses with wine.

TOMMY  
I know you suggested no drinking but tonight's special. It's been a long time since I've shared a meal with someone other than a hundred hormonally raging convicts.

He holds up his glass - they cheers.

DARLENE  
Were you nervous in there?

TOMMY  
Not as nervous as I am now. I know it doesn't show but -

She smiles and sips her wine.

DARLENE  
I normally don't date criminals.

She laughs, nervously.

TOMMY  
Not everyone who's locked up is a bad person.

DARLENE

I'm sure they're not. Bet it was tough.

TOMMY

The toughest part was knowing my son was out here and there was nothing I could do for him.

DARLENE

Tell me more about your son.

TOMMY

Not really much more to say. I'm not a bad guy. I had just lost his mom - I was young and scared.

DARLENE

I don't think you're a bad guy.

TOMMY

What's your daughter like?

DARLENE

Beautiful. Very intelligent. Not just book smart, street smart too. She was enrolled at the university of Texas. Pulmonology, like me.

TOMMY

Where's she now?

She looks uneasy.

DARLENE

Truthfully, I don't know. I'm not saying I was a great mother. Rasing a daughter alone and balancing seventy hours a week, something's going to get neglected.

TOMMY

Nobody said parenting was easy.

DARLENE

Maybe I pushed her too much or didn't listen enough. I think about the last time I saw her everyday.

TOMMY

What happened?

DARLENE

Typical teen giving lip about something - everything really. I don't know what came over me - in that moment, I just slapped her.

She sips her glass.

DARLENE

Thought I had it all figured out but, that was a sobering moment if I ever had one.

TOMMY

No one's got it figured out.

He grabs her hand.

DARLENE

You think you know where your child will end up in this life, but that was the last time that I saw her.

TOMMY

Where we think we should be sometimes isn't always, at the time, where we need to be.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bobby sorts through boxes of his sons belongings. He buries his nose in a shirt and sniffs it.

CUT TO:

INT. BOBBY'S PREVIOUS HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY/BEGIN FLASHBACK:

Bobby and his wife sit at a table. He grabs her hand.

BOBBY

I'm sure he's fine. He's going to call any minute.

A navy truck pulls into his driveway. Two sailors walk up to his front door. They press the doorbell - it fades into -

BACK TO:

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS/END FLASHBACK:

Bobby's PHONE rings, throwing him out of his daze. It's Nico. He CRIES and grips the shirt, tightly.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Tommy and Darlene walk out, arm in arm.

DARLENE

I had a really nice time tonight.  
It's been a long time since I've  
enjoyed someone's company.

TOMMY

Me too. Thank's for agreeing to it.

DARLENE

Thank you for asking me.

They near her car.

DARLENE

Thought anymore about the surgery?

TOMMY

Let's not talk about that tonight.

DARLENE

Any idea when you'll see your son?

TOMMY

I think about that moment everyday.  
Just as I'm sure you do.

DARLENE

I just wish I knew where she was.

TOMMY

You'll see her again. I believe it.  
There's a time for everything.

They gaze at one another. He gives her a small kiss.

TOMMY

I want to see you again.  
Professionally, but personally too.

DARLENE

I'd really like that.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy enters. The house is noticeably cleaner. Bonnie's in the kitchen stirring a boiling pot on the stove.

BONNIE

I hope you're hungry. I did a little shopping earlier, too.

TOMMY

I already ate, thanks.

BONNIE

Well, there's plenty of it.

Tommy sits on the sofa.

BONNIE

And if you didn't notice, I tidy'd up the place.

TOMMY

Looks great. Hey, what was the school you were attending?

BONNIE

U.T.

TOMMY

What was it you were studying?

He grabs her purse off the table and sifts through it.

BONNIE

It wasn't culinary arts, in case that's what you were wondering. I was going back and fourth between psychology and pulmonology.

He finds a small photo album and flips through it. He lands on a picture of her and Darlene. Bonnie eases in.

BONNIE

Why so curious all of a sudden?

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nico's on the couch, deplored. He dangles Bobbie's watch in front of his face.

The bible verse catches his eye. Epiphanized, he gets down on his knees and weeps a prayer.

EXT. OUTSIDE CITY ROAD - DAY

Nico runs down the same street as before, only this time he runs as if his life depended on it.

He stops in the same place as last time. He looks over the scenery.

CUT TO:

INT. CONVERTIBLE CAR - NIGHT/BEGIN FLASHBACK:

Ted drives the convertible. Nico stands in the passenger seat. Arms raised - eyes closed.

His eyes open, moments before the two cars crash together.

NICO

Watch out!

The sound of the two cars COLLIDING fades into -

BACK TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE CITY ROAD - CONTINUOUS/END FLASHBACK:

Nico, still looking around the area, is SCREAMING.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE CITY ROAD - DAY/BEGIN FLASHBACK:

The two cars are demolished and on fire. A few yards away Nico lays in the grass.

He bleeds small from a few bumps and scrapes but amazingly, he appears to be unhurt.

In panic, he rises and runs over to the scene.

NICO

Ted! - Ted, are you okay?

Ted's body is a bloody mess inside the car. He breaks down in adrenaline tears and runs over to Wyatt's car, which is upside down and burning.

Nico tries to get him out but he's too late.

He finds his phone on the side of the street - runs into a field and dials nine-one-one.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. DARLENE'S OFFICE - DAY

Darlene sits at her desk. A delivery man walks over and sets down a vase of white roses. She reads the card.

NOTE:

"There's a time for everything - meet me tonight. - T"

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - DAY

Kana enters. She sees Nico reading a bible on the couch.

KANA

What'chya reading there?

NICO

This is how Bobby gets through it.  
Thought I'd give it a shot.

She walks over and sits next to him.

KANA

You did the right thing, Nico.

NICO

Then why does it hurt so bad? Wish  
there was something I could do.

KANA

Do the one thing you know you're  
good at. Write what you're feeling.

She kisses his forehead and exits. He gets up and sits at the dinning table with his computer. He begins typing away.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy and Darlene walk in. Bonnie's been waiting for them. She edges forward. Tears in her eyes.

BONNIE

Hi, mom.

Darlene gives her a big hug. They cry from the happiness. Tommy walks out.

PORCH

He slides down the wall. Knees propped up. He stares at a photo of Nico.

INT./EXT. KANA'S HOUSE - DINNING ROOM - DAY

Nico types furiously on his computer, then comes to a stop.

PORCH

Nico steps out and locks the door. Tommy approaches.

TOMMY

Nico...

Nico turns to face him. A small smile creeps on his face.

INT. BAR - DAY

The bar's dim and scarce. Tommy and Nico sit in a booth in the back. A waitress sets a drink down in front of Tommy.

TOMMY

Sure you don't want anything?

NICO

I don't drink.

TOMMY

You don't drink - why?

NICO

Personal reasons.

TOMMY

If I would have known that we could have gone some place else.

NICO

It's fine.

TOMMY

I shouldn't be drinking either. I'm taking these pills that make my head funny.

NICO

What're the pills for?

TOMMY

I'm sick, kiddo. And it aint the getting better kind.

NICO

You're going to die?

TOMMY

There's a chance of that. Got a surgery in a couple weeks.

NICO

You scared?

TOMMY

Honestly, I'm more scared, here, talking to you.

They sit in an uncomfortable silence. Tommy sips his scotch.

TOMMY

Read your book. You've got talent, kid. Despite it all being a lie. I especially liked the part about us meeting in Tuscany. You know your grandfather was Italian, right?

NICO

I know. Aunt Gene told me.

A SONG plays and catches Tommy's attention.

TOMMY

You know this song?

Nico shrugs.

TOMMY

This was mine and your mom's song. We heard it together for the first time on our very first date.

NICO

Why are you telling me this?

TOMMY

'Cause I'm not sure you ever heard the truth. At least in its accuracy.

NICO

What, that you were a missionary and you left mom to die?

TOMMY

Son, it's more complicated than that. You know, whatever your aunt told you was to protect you.

NICO

Why does everybody think they know what people need protection from?

TOMMY

I don't know what you think you remember, but your mom died a few years after you were born.

NICO

That's not how I remember it.

TOMMY

That's how it happened.

Nico sits back, thinking.

TOMMY

It was just you and me there for awhile, kid. I loved you more than anything in this world. The thought of not being able to support you - growing up without a mother - I was terrified. I did the only thing I knew how - to provide for you.

NICO

Look where it got you.

TOMMY

Yeah, look where it got me. It's all I think about every single day.

NICO

Then why make up a lie? Why not just tell the truth?

TOMMY

Sometimes we simply don't want to face the truth. And I didn't want no son of mine living in the shadow of his fathers mistakes.

Nico becomes more congenial.

TOMMY

One day when you're a father you'll understand.

NICO  
My girlfriends pregnant.

TOMMY  
Congratulations. Fatherhood's wonderful. Not that I'd know much about it.

NICO  
I know I'd do anything to protect her and the baby.

Tommy grabs Nico's arm.

TOMMY  
I had no chance to be there for you. Let me be there for them.

NICO  
Ya' know, I've been reading the bible lately. Talks a lot about forgiveness.

Tommy's left in suspense...

NICO  
I want you to know - I forgive you.

Tommy's all smiles.

TOMMY  
I never stopped loving you, kid. And I wish I could do it all over again, but I can't. And I'm sorry.

NICO  
I know. I know you are. What now?

TOMMY  
How about a hug?

NICO  
I don't know if I'm quite ready for a hug. How about a handshake?

TOMMY  
I'll take a handshake.

Tommy holds out his hand. Nico slowly takes his.

TOMMY  
I can't make up for lost time. But I'm here now and I want you a part of however much life I got left.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. KANA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nico drives, searching for Bobby. He's nowhere in site.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kana lays in bed. Nico rests his head on her belly.

INT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

Nico walks up to the clerk.

NICO  
Have you seen Bobby?

The clerk shakes his head. Nico, saddened, exits.

EXT. GUN STORE - NIGHT

Tommy peers at the guns through the window. He takes out his cell phone.

TOMMY  
I'm in.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Darlene opens the front door, revealing Bonnie. She walks in. They hug, happily.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Tommy and Nico sit at a table, deep in conversation. Nico reads from a bible. They seem to be reconnecting.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Tommy's getting ex-rayed. He and Darlene exchange a smile.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Nico's alone at a table, looking around. He pulls out his phone and dials Bobby. The PHONE just rings and rings. He sets it down and goes back to his computer.

INT. CHURCH - MAIN AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Bonnie and Tommy sit amongst many people in an N.A. meeting. Bonnie talks, animatedly.

INT. PAROLE OFFICE - DAY

Tommy's about to leave. He and Stan nod to each other.

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - DAY

Kana, more pregnant, sleeps on the couch. Nico kisses her head, then goes back to his computer - next to an open bible.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy, Bonnie and Darlene have dinner. They smile and laugh. He and Darlene lock eyes, then kiss.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Nico's slumped down at a booth near the stage. He watches the person sing.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - OFFICE - DAY

Bonnie sits across from a counselor. She's all smiles.

END MONTAGE:

INT. KANA'S HOUSE - DINNING ROOM - DAY

Nico stops typing on his computer and sits back.

NICO  
I think I'm finished.

Kana, now really pregnant, leans over.

KANA  
That's great, babe.

She kisses the top of his head, then walks away.

NICO  
Now, just what to call it?

His PHONE rings. He looks to Kana.

KANA  
Answer it.

NICO  
Bobby...

EXT. POND - DAY

Nico and Bobby sit in silence near the edge of the pond. Fishing lines cast far into the water. Almost awkward, then -

BOBBY  
I'll ride the river with you. My  
daddy said that to me once.

Nico looks over. Bobby begins to CRY.

BOBBY  
That's the best compliment one  
cowboy could pay another. I've put  
this behind me so long that I've  
forgotten what it's like to love.  
I've been allayed - You reminded me  
what it was like to be a father.

NICO  
...And Bobby, you showed me what it  
was like to have a father.

BOBBY  
You have a father. And it's time  
you start forgiving him, baby.  
Mistakes are accidents. Forgiveness  
is a choice.

NICO  
I have. And it's because of you.  
I'm so sorry for what happened.

BOBBY  
I know you are and I've already  
forgiven you.

NICO  
I just can't understand, why me?  
Why was I spared that night?

BOBBY  
Sometimes it's hard to accept a  
miracle when it's not favoring you.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

But that's exactly what it was.  
You're here for a purpose, Nico.

Nico starts to CRY. Bobby pulls him near, hugging him.

BOBBY

But you need to forgive yourself.  
Just like I do. Don't want to end  
up like me - hopeless and helpless.

NICO

You're not hopeless, Bobby. I took  
your advice - But those who hope in  
the Lord will renew their strength.

BOBBY

That's right, baby. His word is  
sufficient when ours aren't.

NICO

Bobby, I think there's something I  
need to do. If you'd be willing...

LATER

Bobby dunks Nico under the water, then pulls him up.

Nico gleams a brilliant smile. This time, without hesitation -  
he SCREAMS with joy.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nico and Kana sit together in a small crowded restaurant.

NICO

Been some year, hasn't it? Never  
saw any of this coming.

KANA

Remember when I took that art  
class?

NICO

Yeah...

KANA

One time the instructor made a  
beautiful sculpture of a dove  
rising from two hands. I was so  
jealous. So I asked him, how do you  
do it? He said, I'm just removing  
what doesn't belong.

Nico leans in.

KANA

After removing what doesn't belong,  
all that's left is what does.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Kana and Nico walk along the edge of a creek.

NICO

For the first time I feel like I  
belong. Just one thing left to do.

He grabs her hand and props down to one knee. He pulls out a  
ring and holds it up.

NICO

...To make us complete.

She tears up

NICO

I was too stupid to realize it  
then, but I do now. It was you.  
It's always been you. You're the  
space to my jam - let's go, baby.  
Let's get married.

He slides the ring onto her finger and stands.

NICO

No matter how grim things may look,  
I will always be there for you -  
for our family. And so will He.

She lights up as they kiss.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tommy and Nico sit on the couch.

TOMMY

That's incredible. My son's getting  
married. We need to toast.

Tommy runs to the kitchen and pours scotch into two glasses.

TOMMY

There's no better feeling than  
having a family.

He rushes back, holding out a glass for Nico.

TOMMY

Oh, right. You don't drink - sorry.

NICO

You know what, I'll have it.

TOMMY

You sure - no pressure.

NICO

You're right. There is no pressure.

He takes the glass from Tommy. They raise their glasses up.

TOMMY

I really didn't think the day would come you and I would be sitting here sharing a laugh - let alone a drink. Now here you are, nearly a father - me a grandfather. As soon as you think your life's about to end, that's just about the time it starts to begin. To family.

They cheers and take a sip.

NICO

You scared about the surgery?

TOMMY

I'm not going to lie - a little bit. Yeah.

NICO

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all that hope in the Lord. Read that in the bible. Lots of good stuff in there.

TOMMY

Maybe I should skim through it.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Tommy finishes his scotch, then walks over and opens it.

TOMMY

Bonnie - come in.

Bonnie walks through. Nico looks over.

TOMMY

Bonnie, this is my son. Nico.

Nico walks over. They shake hands.

NICO  
Nice to meet you.

BONNIE  
He hasn't shut up about you.

Nico hands his empty glass to Tommy.

NICO  
Well, I have to get going.

TOMMY  
You sure? Have another drink.

NICO  
I've got something to do. We'll  
have another. You can count on it.

Nico holds out his hand. Tommy, expecting a hug, grabs his hand and squeezes it, tightly. Bonnie watches.

BONNIE  
You two are Priceless.

Tommy and Nico release hands.

NICO  
Keep your eyes on things above -  
not of this world. Bye, dad.

TOMMY  
Goodbye, son.

NICO  
(to Bonnie)  
Good to meet you.

Bonnie gives a small wave as Nico walks out.

BONNIE  
He's religious, huh?

TOMMY  
He's been given me the holy ghost  
shakedown.

BONNIE  
Having a little faith never hurts.

TOMMY

Hell, all we've been through...  
What're you doing here? Everything  
all right at home?

BONNIE

Yeah - Yeah, everything's perfect.  
And really, that's why I'm here. I  
have something to tell you.

They sit on the couch.

TOMMY

Leave me in suspense, why don't ya?

BONNIE

I enrolled back in school. I start  
next semester.

TOMMY

That's great, kid. Get an education  
you can actually use. Not the  
rugged life the streets teach ya'.

BONNIE

I guess, I really just want to  
thank you. None of this would've  
been possible without you.

She gives him a big hug.

TOMMY

You're a good kid. Would've done it  
with or without me.

His PHONE rings.

TOMMY

I got to take this.

BONNIE

I just wanted to stop by and tell  
you that. You coming over tonight?

TOMMY

If I do, it'll be really late.

She heads for the door.

TOMMY

Hey, kid. Thank you.

She smiles, then leaves. Tommy answers the phone.

TOMMY

Yeah...

VOICE O.S.

Eight o'clock. You know where.

CLICK. Tommy stares ahead.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Nico inches towards the counter. It's his turn. He hands a manila package to the clerk.

INT. CHURCH - MAIN AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The preacher sets chairs in a circle. Tommy walks in.

PREACHER

Tommy, meeting's not for another hour or so.

TOMMY

Not sure I'll make it tonight.

MOMENTS LATER

The preacher and Tommy sit in the chairs, huddled close.

PREACHER

Is what you have to do dangerous?

TOMMY

Danger's not what I'm afraid of. First time in fifteen years I've got my son back. Got a beautiful woman - with a great kid.

PREACHER

And you're afraid of losing them.

Tommy looks over at him, serious.

TOMMY

Maybe I don't deserve it. But now that I've got 'em, I'm afraid I'm going to do something to screw it all up. And to top it, I've got a surgery with no guarantee.

PREACHER

The enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy, Tommy. When you feel like you don't deserve the things you have, remember hope is found in Him and grace is given abundantly.

TOMMY

Sounds like something Nico'd say. I never had much faith, but I'm starting to think it's time I did.

PREACHER

There's never a wrong time to get to know the Father.

TOMMY

I just want to know - after getting all of this -- I just don't want it to be all for nothing. I'm scared.

PREACHER

Let's pray.

The preacher grabs Tommy's shoulder. They begin to pray.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Bonnie exits the community college campus and walks down the strip. The two thugs from earlier follow behind her.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Tommy's in the back with Stan and two other officers.

STAN

Everything's going to be fine. We've done this a thousand times.

He grabs a wire and holds it up.

TOMMY

You serious? Why don't you just go ahead and shoot me right here.

STAN

You got a better idea, wise guy?

TOMMY

I know these guys. A wire's the first thing they'll look for.

STAN

Without a confession, we've got nothing.

Tommy sits back and looks away - then to Stan.

TOMMY

Maybe we won't need one.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy walks up to an old industrial warehouse. The GARAGE DOOR slides open. He's met by two guys with guns.

They instantly check him for a wire.

TOMMY

Easy there, fellas.

Symkatcha walks near.

SYMKATCHA

Sorry for the officiousness. They only do what they know. You know a thing or two about that.

Tommy looks unnerved.

SYMKATCHA

This way.

They approach a hearse.

TOMMY

You got to be kidding.

SYMKATCHA

I thought you'd like it. Ya know, your final farewell and all.

TOMMY

Let's just get this over with.

Symkatcha opens the back of the hearse. There's an assortment of machine guns.

SYMKATCHA

Just like the old days, huh?

Symkatcha walks towards the drivers side. Tommy looks at him, then shuts the trunk door, keeping it ajar.

TOMMY  
Is that it?

SYMKATCHA  
Almost.

Symkatcha WHISTLES. The two thugs from earlier walk in holding Bonnie. Her hands are tied.

BONNIE  
Tommy!

TOMMY  
What is this?

Tommy lunges forward. Symkatcha stops him.

SYMKATCHA  
Not so fast.

TOMMY  
Let her go. She's not part of this.

SYMKATCHA  
Everyone's a part in someone's life  
whether we know it or not.

Tommy's uncertain of his next move. Bonnie trembles.

TOMMY  
What do you want with her?

SYMKATCHA  
Just a little insurance. Your  
hesitancy has bifurcated the name I  
used to respect. She serves a  
reminder of how this game's played.

TOMMY  
Don't you hurt her.

SYMKATCHA  
That all depends on you.

Tommy looks over to Bonnie. She's crying and frantic -  
squirming in the hands of the two thugs.

TOMMY  
Bonnie, I'm so sorry. I'm going to  
get you out of here.

Symkatcha opens the front door for Tommy.

SYMKATCHA

Come on - it's time.

The thugs hand Bonnie off to another big guy. They get inside the hearse.

Tommy slowly drags his eyes away from her and climbs inside. He holds the door open.

SYMKATCHA

What are you waiting for?

TOMMY

Sooner or later you're going down, Symkatcha - just like I did.

SYMKATCHA

Yeah, well, until the time comes.

Tommy looks at him, then slams the door.

SYMKATCHA

You can consider the debt closed after this. But do this job and do it well, 'cause if you don't - this is where her story ends.

INT. HEARSE - DRIVING - NIGHT

An ELECTRONIC GATE slides open. Tommy drives out. The three sit close together. A gun's pressed into Tommy's side.

TOMMY

Can you slide over some? You're jamming that thing into my gut.

The thug looks at him. Tommy adjusts his seat and feels a rope below. A glimmer of hope paints his face.

TOMMY

How old are you? You probably don't even know how to use that thing.

THUG 2

Care to find out?

Tommy flips the headlights off and on, turns on the windshield wipers, then tries both blinkers.

The guys look at each other. He slams the breaks, catapulting them forward. Then he presses hard on the accelerator.

THUG

What are you doing?

TOMMY

You want to get pulled over? Gotta make sure everything works.

They come to a stop sign. Tommy pulls a fast left.

THUG 2

Where you going? You were supposed to make a right back at the sign.

TOMMY

I know. You're friend didn't lock the hatch. Back door's open.

He parks the car on the side of the road.

THUG

I'll get it.

He gets out. Thug 2 keeps his gun pressed into his side. Tommy looks at the other guy through the rearview mirror.

TOMMY

I'm going to give you some advice I wish someone would've given me at your age.

THUG 2

What's that?

Tommy cracks his door.

TOMMY

Learn to keep your eyes on things above, not of this world.

In a blink of an eye, Tommy jerks the end of the gun away. He elbows the thug in the nose, then grabs the spool of rope.

EXT. SIDE OF STREET - SAME

Tommy jumps out of the car, cocks the gun loaded and FIRES several rounds near the thug.

For having a name like machine gun Tommy, doesn't seem like he know's what he's doing.

TOMMY

Drop it.

The guy drops the gun as Tommy walks closer. They walk over to the passenger side of the car.

He opens the door. The other thug slowly comes out. Tommy throws him the rope.

THUG 2

You won't get away with this.

The thug starts tying up the other guy.

TOMMY

Maybe not, but there comes a point in your life when you realize fast cash and thrills were just a distraction from the meaningful things. You're going to have plenty of time to learn that when you're locked away and forgotten.

Tommy kicks the guy down to his knees. He grabs the rope from him and ties up the other guy.

TOMMY

Maybe that'll be just what you need. It was for me. And there's hope for you yet, kid.

EXT./INT. WAREHOUSE - SMALL ROOM - NIGHT

Bonnie rests against a wall, trying to untie her hands. She leans down and pulls out the small knife from her shoe.

She begins cutting the rope.

FRONT OF THE WAREHOUSE

The hearse CRASHES through the electronic gate and into the garage door.

MAIN ROOM

Symkatcha and his men jump for cover, then run near, guns drawn. One man opens the door. No one's inside.

Another guy opens the back of the hearse.

GUY

They're gone.

SYMKATCHA

Get the girl.

One of the guys runs back to get Bonnie.

SMALL ROOM

Bonnie, looking hopeful, has cut through the rope. She jumps up, right when one of the guys walks in.

He stops as she wields the puny knife at him.

THUG 3

You little...

He edges forward. Bonnie swings the knife again. Tommy comes in through the back and hits him across the head with the butt of the gun.

The man goes down. Bonnie looks up, shocked. They embrace.

MAIN ROOM

Symkatcha and his men are apprehensive.

SYMKATCHA

Find him. Go. Go. Go.

Men run off. The van SCREECHES to a stop in the street. The men run forward, FIRING rounds. The van's destroyed.

SYMKATCHA

Kill him. Then kill the girl.

Rounds are FIRED from behind. A brigade of SWAT officers burst through the front and either side.

Tommy and Bonnie follow them in.

OFFICER

Get down on the ground!

All of the bandits fall to their knees and drop their guns. Symkatcha slowly kneels down with a maniacal smile.

SYMKATCHA

I knew this life suited you, just like that machine gun does.

Two officers walk over and handcuff him.

TOMMY

I never knew how to use one of those things.

SYMKATCHA

You saying your gun-slinging days were a fable? I don't believe that.

TOMMY

We tell stories to help explain the things we don't understand.

The officers pick Symkatcha off the ground.

SYMKATCHA

This isn't over, Tommy.

He nods to Bonnie.

SYMKATCHA

And I'll be seeing you again.

She punches him in the face. Officers push her back. Tommy pulls her back.

Officers take Symkatcha outside. Stan walks up to Tommy.

STAN

You did good.

He holds out his hand. Tommy looks at him and this time shakes his hand.

They turn and watch the officers swarm the place and escort the men away in handcuffs.

TOMMY

I never did understand this life.

STAN

You did the right thing.

TOMMY

This time I was actually on the right side.

He looks down to Bonnie.

BONNIE

Told you I could take care of myself.

They head out of the warehouse.

TOMMY

Let's not tell your mom about this.

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tommy lays beside Darlene and stares at her. He grazes her cheek with his hand and starts to CRY. She wakes.

DARLENE

Hey, what's wrong.

He SOBS harder. She pulls him close.

DARLENE

It's okay - come here.

TOMMY

As the time approaches, things are finally how they should be. I don't want to lose any of you.

DARLENE

We're not going anywhere.

TOMMY

I don't want to die - not now.

DARLENE

Look at me. You're not going to die. Everything's going to be fine.

She pulls him close, comforting him.

DARLENE

We're going to get through this.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Nico and Bobby sit at the same table that they met at.

BOBBY

Make sure you spoil that kid every chance you get.

NICO

You can count on that. But that's not why I had you meet me. It all started here, it's only right that it ends here.

BOBBY

Ends? This is just the beginning.

Nico pulls out Bobby's watch and hands it to him. Bobby notices it's working.

NICO

You were right. I did need to hold onto it for awhile. Now it can continue making new memories.

Bobby tears up. He and Nico shake hands.

BOBBY

It has and they've all been good ones - thanks to you.

NICO

You didn't have to forgive me or spend time with me, but you did.

BOBBY

They say, God works mysteriously.

A cab pulls up outside. Tommy gets out and walks in.

NICO

And because of Him, I have a relationship with my dad.

Tommy walks over to the table.

NICO

Bobby, I'd like for you to meet my father.

Bobby looks up at him and rises.

TOMMY

Thank you for all you've done.

They shake hands.

BOBBY

He's done it all for me. You got a good boy here.

Tommy looks to Nico.

TOMMY

Yes sir, I do.

NICO

Bobby, we got to get going. He's having surgery tomorrow.

BOBBY  
I'll keep you in my prayers.

TOMMY  
I'll take all the prayers I can  
get.

Nico gives Bobby a big hug.

NICO  
I've got one more surprise for you.

Bobby's son, Chris, stands behind them. Bobby erupts in tears  
and gives Nico another big hug.

BOBBY  
I'm proud of you, baby. You're  
going to be a great father.

Nico smiles to him, looks back to Chris, then he and Tommy  
walk to the back door.

Bobby and Chris are both in tears and hug firmly. Chris holds  
the manila package. He and Nico nod to one another.

Nico exits.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Nico, Kana and Bonnie sit in a small waiting room. Nico has  
his arm around Kana.

KANA  
Everything's going to be all right.

BONNIE  
Your dad's like the toughest dude I  
know. He's not going to let a  
little cancer stop him.

A doctor walks in.

DOCTOR  
We have a minute, if you want to  
say anything before we begin.

Nico walks out into the -

HALL

Tommy's on a gurney in a hospital gown.

NICO  
How you feeling?

TOMMY  
I've felt better.

NICO  
You look good in a dress.

TOMMY  
I'll wear all the dresses in the  
world if I can just get past this.

NICO  
You're going to be all right.

TOMMY  
The hardest thing I ever did was  
say goodbye to you, kid - I'm not  
going to do it again.

Nico grabs his hand and squeezes it tight.

TOMMY  
I'm going to see you grow old and  
that kid of yours grow even older.

Nico stands next to him, tears in his eyes. Bonnie and Kana  
stand at the door. The doctor comes back.

DOCTOR  
We better get started.

He grabs the gurney and begins to wheel Tommy away.

NICO  
I'm praying for ya'.

Tommy just stares at Nico. Tears in his eyes, Nico YELLS -

NICO  
I'll ride the river with you!

Tommy's head perks up. Nico runs over and gives him a hug.

NICO  
I love you, dad.

TOMMY  
I love you, son. My lungs may have  
given out but my heart hasn't. I'm  
coming back, you hear me? I'm  
coming back.

The doctor grabs the gurney once again.

DOCTOR  
We have to go.

He wheels Tommy through double doors, leaving Nico behind.

Kana and Bonnie walk up to him. Kana gives him a big hug.  
Bonnie waves to Tommy as the doors shut.

BONNIE  
Godspeed, brave one.

INT. O.R. - DAY

Tommy's passed out on the operating table. Many surgeons surround him.

The operation seems really intense. Machines BEEP, then there's a loud steady BEEP.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Time has passed. Bonnie's asleep in one of the chairs. Kana and Nico sit across from her - his head in her lap.

KANA  
I wanted to wait until later to  
tell you - we're having a boy.

The doctor comes into the waiting room. They all stand and meet him. Nico puts his arms behind his head, nervous.

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL - O.R. - DAY

Nico's in scrubs. Kana lies in a bed, delivering their child. Many doctors stand aside.

A doctor pulls the baby out and hands him to Nico. He holds him up.

NICO V.O.  
I heard it said once, I'll love you  
until love dies then I'll create  
love just to love you again.

He hands the baby over to Kana, then sits beside her. They are ecstatic. He kisses her cheek. All smiles.

TITLE CARD: ONE YEAR LATER.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Nico walks through the cemetery, alone.

NICO V.O.

Life is funny, don't you think?  
We're brought into this world  
kicking and screaming without a  
choice. Kind of like the way the  
wind blows or the natural flow of a  
stream - even the sun setting.

He's knelt down beside a headstone with some flowers.

NICO V.O.

I know I've done a lot of great  
things in my life but if you were  
to ask me, I wouldn't be able to  
tell you. There's so much love to  
give in this world and we try to do  
good things but no good deed goes  
unpunished.

He sets the flowers down, then stands beside the grave. He turns to meet Kana and their baby standing nearby.

NICO

Come on, let's go.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

A moving truck's in the driveway and a for sale sign in the yard. The house is nearly empty.

Nico grabs some boxes and puts them in the truck. Kana's beside an assortment of pictures leaning against a wall.

KANA

What about these?

NICO

Toss 'em.

She throws them into a big pile of trash, then comes back. Nico lifts the last few pictures and finds a record player.

Kana walks over as he sets the pictures aside.

KANA

Look at that. Does it work?

He finds the chord and plugs it into an outlet. Darlene and Bonnie drive up in an SUV and walk over.

He opens the top and turns on the record, then steps back next to Kana.

DARLENE

Hi, guys. Almost finished, huh?

Kana waves to them. Nico's mom and dad's SONG starts playing.

KANA

What is this?

He looks over to her.

NICO

This was my mom and dad's song.

Kana hugs him.

BONNIE

This would be your dad's song.

They stand back and listen in silence. All of a sudden, out comes Tommy with their little boy.

TOMMY

I thought I heard this song.

He walks over and gives Darlene a big kiss.

BONNIE

Yeah, great taste, Tommy.

NICO

I didn't know aunt Gene had this.

TOMMY

Used to be mine.

Tommy puts the kid on the ground.

TOMMY

Go to your daddy.

Nico kneels down. The kid wobbles over. He picks him up.

TOMMY

All packed up?

Tommy looks into the truck. There's only some furniture and a few boxes. He looks over to Nico.

TOMMY

Where's the rest?

Nico looks at him, then to the side.

NICO

No need to hold on to the past.

They stand facing the empty garage, listening to the record player. A giant pile of trash sits in the yard beside them.

BONNIE

Should've used the truck for trash.

TOMMY

What do you expect? He's my boy.

He and Nico smile to each other.

TOMMY

God sure has His way of bringing things full circle, doesn't He? What we believed was lost was stored for a time we couldn't appreciate, until now.

NICO

It's time we add a new story to this anthology of life.

Tommy grabs Darlene's hand. There's a ring on her finger. They kiss. Bonnie rolls her eyes. They walk to Darlene's SUV.

BONNIE

Oh my God. I'm going with you guys.

Bonnie gets in Kana's car. Nico faces his son.

NICO V.O.

I'll love you until love dies, then I'll create love just to love you again.

NICO

Come on, Wyatt. Let's go home.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

There's a sign in the front that says: *G.H.S. - Kids against drunk driving.*

*Nico Tellers presents: Hopeless and Helpless - The life and Times of Bobby Baudin.*

AUDITORIUM

Nico stands on a stage. He's giving a lecture - serious and animated. There's a large young audience below.

NICO V.O.

I never understood what that phrase meant - until now. All I'm saying is, there's plenty of love to give in this world - if you're willing to forgive. The choice is up to us. He just makes it possible.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The tombstone that Nico stood at earlier reads, Bobby "Baudin" Loggins - 1933-2019.

FADE OUT:

THE END