

Gus

Written by
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FADE IN:

ON SCREEN MONTAGE of old faded Polaroid photos:

FAMILY OF FOUR in the early 60s.

A YOUNG MOM (early 20s) plays with a FIVE YEAR OLD BOY and a THREE YEAR OLD GIRL.

The five year old and the three year old in a wading pool in a yard.

A YOUNG DAD (late 20s) holds the five year old on one knee and the three year old on another.

GUS (VO):

I was born in the Midwest in the early 60s to good German stock. Least that's what everyone said back then. I don't even know what the hell that means. That I like cheese and sausage? Hell, I'm lactose intolerant and I can't stand eating meat shaped like a penis.

(beat)

Anywhoo, this is my story. If you'd rather not hear it, put in your ear buds and do whatever you want. Otherwise, buckle up. It's not what you think.

INT. GUS ARMSTEAD'S MOBILE HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

It's a double wide - living room and kitchen at the front, two bedrooms and two bathrooms at the back. Nothing fancy. But it's neat as a pin. Couch and chair in the living room. Kitchen table in the dining area.

GUS ARMSTEAD is watching football on TV when the DOORBELL RINGS. He gives the door a look, waiting to see if there's another ring. Then turns the volume up on his TV.

The DOORBELL...again.

GUS

Dammit.

He gets up from a worn reclining chair - tattered around the arms, but still functional. He moves quickly to the door - no aches or pains slow him down. He's old - 70 - but not decrepit. Jack LaLanne would be proud.

Gus looks out the side window by the door.

There's a guy in a suit carrying a very official looking briefcase.

GUS (cont'd)
What the...

He opens the door abruptly.

GUS (cont'd)
You see the sign...no soliciting.

Gus points at the sign for emphasis.

RICHARD NIXON, a 30-something lawyer, is on Gus's small porch, officially patient and determined.

NIXON
Gus Armstead?

GUS
Yeah, what about it?

NIXON
Your sister's passed.

BEAT.

GUS
Okay. There a funeral or something?

NIXON
She's left a will. May I come in?

GUS
What's your name?

Nixon hands him his card.

NIXON
It's there...on the card. Along with
the firm I work with out of Denver.

Gus takes the card then laughs.

GUS
Richard Nixon? You're kidding me?

NIXON
My parents were fans.

GUS
I don't like 'em already. And you
were already questionable.

Gus leaves Nixon at the door.

GUS (cont'd)
Game's on. You got 10 minutes.

Nixon follows Gus inside and starts to sit in a chair.

GUS (cont'd)
Not that one. It was my wife's.
(points to the one
next to it)
That one.

Nixon takes the other chair, looks around the place, then at the TV.

NIXON
You like football Mr. Armstead?

GUS
Yeah, news makes me angry. Football
just makes me frustrated.
(beat)
What about my sister's will?

NIXON
Yes, well, I guess we'll get right to
it. She's left you a sizeable amount.

GUS
Define sizeable. Fifty thousand, a
hundred?

NIXON
A million.

GUS
What the...!

NIXON
Yes, I think she surprised a lot of
people. But your sister was very
frugal, didn't have children, so now
she wants you to have it.

GUS
What's the catch?

NIXON
Catch?

GUS

Yeah, what do I have to do? No one in my family ever gave anything away without some stipulation. My dad, you want an allowance, clean your room. You want to go out, you gotta help me build that shed. Everything had a string attached. Like one of those traps you see those survivalist set for rabbits.

NIXON

I see. Well, this is a little different.

GUS

How?

NIXON

She wants you to make up with friends and family.

GUS

Make up? Like what? Apologize? Hug? Have a beer together?

NIXON

Her will states that you have to rectify old grievances with the people on this list she drew up before she died.

(beat)

I guess an apology will do.

Nixon hands Gus the list. Gus pulls a pair of glasses out of his front shirt pocket and looks the list over. One eye on the game.

GUS

This one's a cousin. This one's dead. Arthur Muller. That bastard should be dead! Some of these go back to middle school!

Gus tosses the list on to the coffee table.

GUS (cont'd)

I can't do this. There's a reason, hell there's a lot of reasons I haven't talked to those people in awhile. And don't live near them!

Nixon leaves the list untouched.

NIXON

Mr. Armstead, I understand, but here's the deal. You rent this mobile home month to month. You have about three thousand dollars in the bank. And you have a son and daughter in-law working two jobs each to live in a sketchy neighborhood where they're raising your granddaughter. This could help them.

GUS

Why not just give them the money and leave me out of it?

NIXON

I'm not sure, Mr. Armstead, but this is what she wanted.

GUS

You left out one thing.

NIXON

What's that?

GUS

I've got about six months to live.

(beat)

She didn't know that did she?

NIXON

No...she did not. I'm sorry.

GUS

But you did?

NIXON

Yes, yes, I did.

Gus picks up the list and looks at it more closely.

GUS

One million dollars to do a kum ba ya with each of these people?

NIXON

Yes, make your amends. Then call me when you're finished.

GUS

This is nuts, you know that, right?

NIXON

Maybe, but it's what she wanted.

Nixon stands up to go.

Gus gets up slowly, like he's squaring off.

GUS
How much time do I have...to let you know?

NIXON
She told me you wouldn't say yes right away.

GUS
Hmmm, yeah, I 'spose she would.

NIXON
Twenty-four hours. I can give you that.

GUS
And if I say no?

NIXON
The money goes to the next benefactor.

GUS
Not someone on that list is it?

NIXON
I can't say. It was the last instruction in her will.

GUS
What if I..I don't finish it?

NIXON
We'll cross that bridge when you get to it.

Gus gets up and follows Nixon the short distance to the front door.

GUS
Nixon.

NIXON
Yes.

GUS
My sister...who was with her, when she died?

NIXON

I wouldn't know. Maybe someone on that list does.

(beat)

My money's on you, Mr. Armstead. I have a feeling you're a man who finishes what he starts. I look forward to your call.

Gus closes the door and turns back to look at the list sitting on the coffee table.

GUS

Shit.

INT. BAR - NEXT AFTERNOON

It's a bare bones bar. Concrete floor. The top on the bar is worn where more than a few forearms have rested.

It's dark, even for daytime. A bit of light filters through the one window at the front and the one in the door.

A COUPLE OF OLD GUYS sit around a table playing poker.

Gus and his friend RICK RUIZ sit at one end of the bar. Rick's 10 years younger than Gus. They have the easy familiarity of two guys who've known each other a long time.

RICK

One million dollars! Shit, who can I apologize too?

GUS

Keep your voice down, man.

RICK

What? No one in here gives a shit. Plus, they're all deaf. Can't believe you aren't yet.

(beat)

You aren't thinkin' of passing it up are you?

Gus doesn't look at him. Takes a drink from the bottle of cheap beer in front of him.

RICK (cont'd)

Jesus. You are. You dumb bastard.

GUS

I don't need to apologize to a bunch of twits I haven't seen in twenty, thirty maybe even 60 years!

RICK

You got the list? I should be on it. I've been putting up with your shit for almost forty.

GUS

Screw you. That's different.

RICK

Yeah, maybe.

(beat)

So what kind of stuff are we talking about? You knocked up some girl and walked away? Broke some guy's nose in a fight? What?

Gus pulls out the list and hands it to Rick. Rick takes it and dives right in.

RICK (cont'd)

Jesus, you drowned a cat!

GUS

Almost drowned a cat. It lived.

RICK

You drove your Jeep over Mr. Yamamoto's front yard?

GUS

I was trying to prove something.

RICK

What? That you knew how to drive.

(beat)

How'd your sister know about all of this stuff? You guys haven't lived within 500 miles of each other since I've known you.

GUS

Parents made me take her everywhere. Dates. Dances. You name it. Then she had this network of friends when she got older. Like her own CIA. Nothin' got passed her.

Gus grabs at the list.

GUS (cont'd)
This doesn't surprise me.

RICK
Maybe not. But you need to do this.

GUS
I 'spose.

RICK
Look. You're a proud bastard. I get it. Hell, I've seen it. Remember when we first started pounding nails for a living? My mom used to call you El Toro, the bull. That wasn't a compliment.

GUS
She was a good woman.

RICK
Yeah, she was. But really. Landon, his family. This could help them.
(beat)
Besides, what would Janet, God rest her soul, say?

GUS
She's not here, so it doesn't matter.

RICK
But if she was...

GUS
She's not.

He downs his beer, puts money on the counter.

GUS (cont'd)
I gotta go.

RICK
You take that trip, I'm going with you. Don't want you dyin' out there by yourself.

GUS
I don't need you taggin' along.
'Sides. You got your business to run.

RICK
I'm good. I got help.

GUS

Who, Rodney? That dipshit doesn't know the difference between a drill bit and a thumbtack!

RICK

You got that right. But that 'dipshit' knows money and he's made me enough to let me join you.

Gus gets up and heads to the door leaving Rick at the bar.

GUS

We'll see.

Rick raises his beer bottle.

RICK

To the roads less traveled, my friend.

Gus waves him away as he goes out the door.

EXT. LANDON ARMSTEAD HOME - LATER

Gus sits in his old battered pickup across the street from a neat but small ranch home. The neighborhood has seen better days when it was new sixty years earlier.

He's watching KATE, his 35 year old daughter-in-law and ABBY his six-year old granddaughter chase each other in the front yard.

LANDON, a leaner, younger version of Gus, comes out of the house and sees his dad sitting in the pickup across the street.

LANDON

(to Kate)

How long's he been there?

KATE

Who?

LANDON

My dad. He's just sitting there in his pickup.

KATE

Well, go ask him?

ABBY

Pop Pop is here? He needs to come and see my new kitty, Cheeseey!

LANDON

Yeah, he will squirt. Let me see what's going on.

Landon starts across the street, but stops short when a black car with blacked out windows rolls by with a bass booming.

Landon comes up to the pickup window, but stops short of leaning in.

LANDON (cont'd)

Dad.

GUS

Nice neighbors.

LANDON

Same ones we had last time you were here.

(beat)

You just going to sit there or you coming in?

GUS

Was just watchin' the girls play.

LANDON

Yeah, well why don't you come on into the yard before the neighbors call the cops about the old perv in his pick up?

GUS

Shit. That would be everyone who lives in this "hood"... 'cept you guys.

LANDON

Yeah, Dad. I know. It's a shitty neighborhood. Come on.

GUS

All right.

Gus gets out of his pickup and follows Landon to his front yard.

Before the two can get there, Abby runs up to Gus full throttle.

ABBY

Pop Pop!

Gus picks her up.

GUS

Hey, there kiddo. How ya' doin'?

The years and some of the crustiness visibly melt away with Abby up in his arms.

ABBY

Good. We got another kitty. Do you want to see it?

GUS

Another one.

He gives Landon a look like what the hell were you thinking.

He sets Abby down and straightens up stiffly.

KATIE

Hey, Pop.

GUS

Katie.

KATIE

You staying for dinner?

LANDON

Yeah, he is.

GUS

Guess so.

ABBY

Come on, Pop Pop. I need to show you.

GUS

All right, slow your roll, kiddo.

Gus follows Abby away from her parents. When they're out of earshot...

KATIE

Did you know he was coming?

LANDON

Not a word?

KATIE

Well, this should be interesting.

INT. LANDON HOME - DINNER TIME

The family of four sits around a small, round wooden table placed in what barely passes for a dining area next to the kitchen. Old formica counters and faded painted cupboards. The upside is it's neat and tidy.

LANDON
So, Dad. We haven't seen you in
awhile. What's up?

Gus is focused on peppering the hell out of the mashed potatoes and fried chicken on his plate.

ABBY
Pop Pop sure likes pepper!

GUS
Puts hair on your...

KATIE
Head, Abby. On your head.

ABBY
I already have hair on my head and
Pop Pop is losing his.

LANDON
Abby...

ABBY
Well, it's true

GUS
It's okay. She's not wrong.

Abby reaches for the pepper Gus has just sat down, but Katie takes it before she can get it.

GUS (cont'd)
Been plannin' a trip.

LANDON
A trip. You haven't gone on a trip
since you and Rick rode down to
Mexico on that old Harley of yours.

GUS
Yeah, well, guess it's time I took
another.

(beat)
Makes you feel any better, I'll be
drivin' instead.

He takes a bite of his mashed potatoes, chewing through them real slow.

Abby looks on and copies him.

KATIE
So, where are you going?

GUS
East, North, maybe South.

LANDON
You don't know where you're going.

GUS
I'm a grown ass man. I think I'm allowed.

Now there's tension.

LANDON
I was only...

Katie nudges him with her leg under the table.

LANDON (cont'd)
I was only saying it might be good
for us to know...just in case.
(beat)
You're not gettin' any younger.

ABBY
Are you guys fighting?

LANDON
No, sweetie. You'd know it if we
were.

Gus looks at his son. The two lock eyes. Years of tension, frustration boil between them.

GUS
Yeah, all the more reason to go
before I can't.

KATIE
So how long will you be gone, Dad?

Gus looks away first. His attention now on Katie.

GUS
A few days, maybe weeks. Need you
guys to look after my place once in
awhile.

KATIE
We can do that.
(to Landon)
Can't we, sweetheart?

Before Landon can answer...

ABBY
Can I go on your trip, Pop Pop?

GUS
No, kiddo, you got school, your
pets...and your mom and dad here.

ABBY
When can I go on a trip?

LANDON
Enough talk about Pop Pop's trip.
(beat)
Yeah, Dad, we'll be happy to check in
on your place.

A LOUD CAR with the BASS BOOMING drives down the street.
Clearly heard inside.

GUS
Jesus...

LANDON
Dad, really.

KATIE
How about some dessert?

ABBY
Ice cream!

EXT. LANDON HOME - LATER

Gus gets in his pickup as Landon, Katie and Abby watch from
their driveway.

As he drives away...

ABBY
(top of her lungs)
Love you, Pop Pop!

Gus waves out of his window as he drives away.

KATIE

Well, that went about the way I expected.

LANDON

Never changes, does it? We don't see him for two, three months and it becomes a thing.

KATIE

Maybe whatever trip he's going on will help.

LANDON

He's an old cranky fart. It would take a miracle.

He picks up Abby and heads to the door.

LANDON (cont'd)

Come on squirt. You need to feed your animals!

INT. GUS' HOME - NIGHT

Gus comes in, turns on a light and gives the place a look. Taking it in - the old clock on a shelf.

A picture of a younger version of him, his wife, JANET, and Landon as a 10-year old standing by a Yellowstone National Park sign.

Another picture of the three of them fishing.

He picks up a picture of Janet and Landon - older teen - arm lazily draped around his mom's shoulder. He sets it down carefully.

He looks at the empty chair near his. His wife's favorite.

GUS

Shit!

Gus reaches into the pocket of his shirt and pulls out Richard Nixon's card.

EXT. RICK RODRIGUEZ HOME - TWO DAYS LATER - MORNING

It's a beautiful two-story custom Mediterranean home in a neighborhood of other customs. It's where doctors and lawyers would live in any town or city in the United States. Manicured yards. Big mature trees.

A fountain with a peeing little boy as the main element sits at the front of the Rodriguez home.

INT. RICK RODRIGUEZ HOME - BEDROOM

Rick is finishing packing. Mostly just throwing stuff in two large gym bags.

MELANIE RODRIGUEZ is watching him. Arms crossed. Her right hand patting against her left upper arm in a constant beat.

MELANIE

I don't like it. You going on this trip with him.

Rick goes back and forth from a dresser to a bag.

RICK

It will be fine.

MELANIE

What if he dies?

Then in a closet for a few more clothes.

RICK (O.C.)

(from the closet)

Then he won't die alone.

Now he's back from the closet putting more clothes in a bag.

MELANIE

How long are you going to be gone?
The way you're packing it looks like
you could be gone for months.

RICK

It's a long list.

He stops and takes his wife gently by the shoulders. She drops her crossed arms.

RICK (cont'd)

It will be fine. Besides, you keep
saying I need a break from the
company.

MELANIE

I was hoping it would be with me.

Rick hugs her and she returns it.

RICK
When I get back, it will be.

He lets go and she backs away looking at him.

MELANIE
Promise.

RICK
Promise.

MELANIE
You'll stay out of trouble? Last time
you two went off together you got
into trouble.

RICK
That was fifteen years ago.

MELANIE
He hasn't changed.

RICK
I'll be fine.

A HORN honks from outside.

MELANIE
He doesn't need to do that, you know.
The neighbors must love that.

RICK
Haven't said anything yet.

MELANIE
Not to our face.

RICK
Screw 'em if they did.

She gives him a playful slap on the shoulder.

MELANIE
We have to live with these people. He
doesn't.

Rick gives her a big kiss.

RICK
I love you, babe.

MELANIE
I love you, too.

She follows him to the door.

RICK
Once more for good luck.

He kisses her again.

MELANIE
For good luck.

She watches as he walks out the door.

Gus waves from his pickup. Melanie waves back, half-heartedly.

MELANIE (cont'd)
(shouting from the
front door)
Try to stay outta trouble.

Gus waves back.

AT THE PICKUP, Rick throws his bags in the back.

GUS
She give you any grief?

RICK
Tons!

GUS
I'll get you back in one piece.

RICK
Guess that's on me, too. Let's blow
this joint, baby.

They back out of the driveway and Rick waves at Melanie who stays at the front door watching them.

MELANIE
Hope this is worth it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING RUSH HOUR

Gus is focused on the road and traffic. Some OLD CLASSIC ROCK plays on his pickup's cheap radio.

Rick starts fiddling with the dials.

RICK
You really gotta get out of the 70s,
man.

He lands on a current Hip Hop music station.

GUS
What're you listenin' to these days,
gangster rap?

RICK
Do you even know what gangsta rap is?

GUS
Yeah, and it sounds like you don't
when you say it.

RICK
I'm brown. I can say it and get away
with it. You sound like some old
cracker when you say it. Gangster
rap.

A GUY in a TRICKED OUT TOYOTA cuts Gus off on the freeway
forcing him to do a hard brake.

GUS
Sonuvabitch! You see that guy?

RICK
Yeah, he's a dick. Let it go.

GUS
I don't think so. He's a dick and an
ass.

Gus floors it and cuts off the Toyota.

RICK
Jesus. What're you doing?

GUS
Exercising my rights!

RICK
To fucking die!?

GUS
To teach that little shit a lesson.

Gus finds a gap and floors it. The pickup has a surprising
amount of giddyup. But it's no match for the Toyota.

The two cars weave in and out of heavy traffic. Nearly
getting hit a few times.

CARS HONK when the two get too close.

RICK
Holy Jesus. Just pull over and let
him go!

GUS
Good idea.

Gus pulls up next to the Toyota and motions for him to pull over.

Gus stops his pickup off the side of the road. The Toyota pulls over, too. Parks in front of Gus.

RICK
Shit, we're ten minutes down the road
and we're both about to die.

GUS
No one's dying. Just stay here.

Gus gets out and heads toward the Toyota.

RICK
(yells out from the
pickup)
What do you want on your grave stone
if you die?

GUS
I'm not dyin'!

A YOUNG GUY, mid-20s gets out and comes toward Gus,
threatening.

TOYOTA DRIVER
Yo, old man. What the fuck? You wanna
die?

GUS
You gonna cap an old white guy's ass?
Here in broad daylight?

TOYOTA DRIVER
Yeah, I'll be gone before the cops
get here.

GUS
They're already on their way.

The Toyota Driver backs down a bit.

TOYOTA DRIVER
You're fuckin' with me.

GUS

Nope. My friend back there. He's got
9-1-1 on speed dial. He's old too.
Sometimes he falls and can't get up.

TOYOTA DRIVER

I oughta cap your ass anyway.

GUS

What for provin' you're a shitty
driver?!

The Toyota Driver pulls a gun.

TOYOTA DRIVER

That's it.

GUS

Go ahead. I got nothin' to lose. I'm
dyin' anyway.

Gus raises his hands away from his body.

The Toyota Driver gun raised, looks at Gus then at Rick.

Gus keeps his hands out.

GUS (cont'd)

What're you waiting for?

The Toyota Driver shakes his head, drops his gun and walks
back to his car.

TOYOTA DRIVER

Fuck you, old man.

GUS

Life already has.

(beat)

Have a nice day, asshole.

The Toyota Driver flips him off, and drives off, but not
before Gus gets in one more...

GUS (cont'd)

(yelling)

And I'm not sorry I called you an
asshole!

He walks back to Rick who sits in the front seat unable to
move, clenching his cellphone.

RICK

What the hell was that!

GUS
Teachable moment.

RICK
For who? That guy was gonna kill you!

GUS
No, he wasn't.

RICK
How the hell do you know that?

GUS
I just could. Didn't have it in him.

Gus starts up the pickup and pulls back on to the freeway.

RICK
Jesus, is this the way the whole trip
is going to be...tryin' to get
yourself killed before your time's
up?

GUS
Guy was an asshole...and a shitty
driver.

RICK
Yeah, I know. Two of the things that
really piss you off.

GUS
Yep - who knows what'll happen if we
meet a hypocrite.

He gives Rick a grin.

RICK
(shaking his head)
Jesus.

Rick starts to laugh - nervous relief.

GUS
What?

RICK
That was still a dumb thing to do.

GUS
Maybe, but it sure felt good.

Gus turns up the radio as the pickup stays in traffic
heading west.

EXT. HOME - EARLY EVENING

Gus and Rick pull up to a well kept home in a suburban tract neighborhood. They stop on the street, pickup still running.

RICK

You going to turn it off and do this?

Gus turns off the pick up.

GUS

Yeah.

RICK

And you're sure this is it?

GUS

Yeah, it's what it says.

RICK

What's the plan?

GUS

Plan? I go up, ring the doorbell, say sorry I screwed things up for you in sixth grade and leave.

RICK

Sixth grade! Really? Hell, we were all screw ups in sixth grade.

GUS

Yeah.

RICK

Wait. This one's serious?

GUS

Not really. I told a girl she was fat.

RICK

How many times?

GUS

Most of 6th grade.

RICK

That's kinda shitty.

GUS

Yeah, she also was my sister's best friend...back then.

(MORE)

GUS (cont'd)
(beat)
Well, here goes nothin'.

RICK
What if she's still...you know.

GUS
What?

RICK
You know...like heavy.

GUS
Ain't calling her fat now, asshole!

RICK
What if you callin' her that then
made her stay that way? Maybe that's
the point your sis is making.
Consequences.

GUS
(shaking his head)
You're an idiot.

Gus gets out of the pickup.

RICK
(soft yelling)
Consequences, buddy!

Gus flips him off and walks quickly to the front door. Rings the doorbell. Tapping one foot ready to walk away, now!

The door opens and VANESSA STAPLETON, an attractive woman, late 30s, answers the door.

VANESSA
Yes.

Gus is a bit speechless.

VANESSA (cont'd)
Can I help you?

GUS
I'm looking for Jennifer. Jennifer Stapleton.

VANESSA
That's my mom. She's out back. What's your name?

GUS

Gus. Gus Armstead. I'm a friend...a
classmate from elementary school.

VANESSA

Elementary school. That's new. Wait
here.

Vanessa leaves Gus at the front door.

Gus looks back at Rick who's making motions like what's
going on. Gus shrugs his shoulders. Then from behind him...

JENNIFER

Gus? You're Gus Armstead?

Gus turns and Jennifer is an old, overweight woman. She's
not sloppy. Her mostly grey hair is done. She's wearing
makeup. But she is definitely overweight.

GUS

Yeah. That's me.

JENNIFER

Why? I haven't seen you since, what,
sixth, seventh grade?

GUS

Yeah, that's about right. I was
around and wanted to stop in and
say...

(blurts it out)

I'm sorry.

JENNIFER STAPLETON

Sorry? For what?

GUS

Turns out, I called you fat. There.
That's it.

He turns abruptly and walks away.

JENNIFER

Wait.

Gus stops, turns slowly back around to face her.

JENNIFER

I remember. That was a shitty thing
to do.

GUS

I was 12.

JENNIFER

So was I.

(beat)

You know, it was a glandular problem.

Gus grimaces not sure how to respond. Waits awkwardly - wondering if he should leave or stay...and for how long.

GUS

Sorry.

JENNIFER

You said that already.

(beat))

You really came here to say your sorry for calling me fat almost 60 years ago?

GUS

My sister's idea.

JENNIFER

Clara was a good person. Well, tell her I said hello...and thanks.

GUS

She's dead.

JENNIFER

Jesus. Guess, now I'm the one who's sorry.

GUS

Yeah, well, I'll leave you be.

(beat)

And hope you get that gland thing worked out.

JENNIFER

It's permanent...asshole. Jesus... You fuckin idiot. What the hell are you? Get outta here.

Gus starts backing up and ducking when she starts heaving shit at him - anything she can find. A plastic pot. A watering nozzle.

GUS

I'm going! I'm going!

JENNIFER

Now, before I call the cops on you and the other perv sitting in that piece a shit pickup.

(MORE)

JENNIFER (cont'd)

(beat)

Jesus. What the hell!

Gus is walking as fast as he can to his pickup. Gets in and fires it up.

RICK

Well, that went well.

GUS

She'll get over it.

Jennifer stands fuming at the doorway and watches as Gus drives off.

Her daughter joins her.

VANESSA

Mom? Who was that?

JENNIFER

Some asshole from way back. He hasn't changed!

They both watch as Gus and Rick drive off.

INT. PICKUP - NIGHT

Gus and Rick ride in silence. An occasional car passes going the opposite direction.

JUDAS PRIEST "Living After Midnight" plays on the radio providing some background noise.

RICK

(singing to himself)

Lovin' after midnight. Bombin' to the dawn.

GUS

It's living after midnight. Rockin to the dawn.

RICK

No, it's not.

GUS

Yeah, it is. Listen.

He turns up the radio. The lyrics are even less clear.

GUS (cont'd)

See. Living after midnight.

RICK
What difference does it make?

GUS
It makes a lot.

He turns the radio down.

RICK
You're an angry, angry man.

GUS
No, I'm not.

RICK
Yes, my friend you are. Come on. Tell me. What are you so angry about?

Gus considers this before responding.

GUS
How long you got?

RICK
We're on a road trip. I have no idea where we're heading or when it will end. Humor me.

Gus takes a moment to think about this. Then...

GUS
Customer service for starters. Try speaking to a live person. They don't exist. Especially, at Amazon, Google, the electric company.

RICK
Ok, granted, but what do you want to call Google for?

GUS
Do you want me to keep going?

Rick motions for him to do so.

GUS (cont'd)
Bad drivers. Like that asshole earlier. Drive too fast. Drive too slow. Don't know where they're going. Everyone on their phone like they're taking a call from Jesus Christ himself.

RICK

Point taken.

GUS

Right. And don't even get me started on Prius and Tesla drivers -- saving their battery life for the planet. Don't even realize they're not doing either!

RICK

What else you got?

GUS

The people who laid us off.

RICK

(nods)

Yeah, those were some class A pricks for sure.

GUS

Oversized pickups driven by guys with small dicks. The government, regardless of who's in charge. People who treat politics like it's a team sport. Hypocrisy, arrogance, ignorance...and I already said bad drivers.

RICK

You're on a roll now, buddy. Get it all out!

GUS

People who didn't listen when I knew in my gut the thing I was saying was the God's freakin' truth!

Gus is gripping the steering wheel. He relaxes a bit.

GUS (cont'd)

I think that's about it.

Rick stares ahead, considering what Gus has said.

RICK

Shit, now I'm pissed off.

EXT. KOA CAMPGROUND - LATER

Gus pulls his pickup past the entrance, gives a cursory wave to the campground manager and keeps driving.

RICK
I hope this is another apology and
not where we're sleeping.

They pass a family of four sitting around an open fire.

GUS
It's where we're sleeping.

RICK
Hell no? I haven't been camping since
I was in Boy Scouts. We didn't even
camp on our trip to Mexico.

GUS
It'll be fine. I got two good
sleeping pads, new bags. Good tent.

They pass an older couple sitting beside their RV.

RICK
See, they've got the right idea.
Bring your home with you!

Then past a group of six older teens and early 20-somethings
partying like they're dying tomorrow.

RICK (cont'd)
If we're sleeping next to that, you
may be adding them to your list by
morning.

Gus slows down and pulls out a reservation. Hands it to
Rick.

GUS
What's the site number?

RICK
Thirty-two.

Gus stops.

Thirty-two is the spot next to the party.

RICK (cont'd)
You gotta be kidding me. Look, let's
just go into town. Find a motel. I'll
even pay.

GUS
No. We're here.

RICK
Jesus. I keep forgetting what a
stubborn bastard you are.

GUS
It's gotten me this far.

RICK
Yeah. And how's that worked out?

Gus pulls his truck into the parking spot for the camp site.

The party of teens barely notice. They are playing some
current Hip Hop -- LOUD.

Gus gets out and starts setting up a tent. He tosses a
couple of sleeping bags to Rick.

GUS
Here. Make yourself useful.

RICK
Guess we're doing this.

GUS
Yeah. Curfew's in about two hours.
Let's see what happens.

LATER

Gus and Rick are in their sleeping bags. The MUSIC is still
going -- mixed with loud whoops and cries. No let up.

Rick is asleep. Gus is wide awake.

GUS (cont'd)
That's it!

Gus pulls himself out of his sleeping bag.

Rick starts waking up.

RICK
(half asleep)
What're you doin'?

Gus is half way out of the tent.

GUS
Keepin' the peace!

Gus is all the way out of the tent before Rick can stop him.

RICK

Ah, shit.

Gus is on a mission as he goes up to the boom box and turns it off. Silence.

GUS

Party's over boys and girls.

One of the PARTY BOYS stumbles up to confront him. He's stoned, but pissed enough about the music to be belligerent.

PARTY BOY

Hey, old man. Party's just getting started.

GUS

I don't think so. Past curfew and the good people and animals here need their sleep.

The Old Couple is out of their RV. Both in their robes. Watching.

Rick is out of the tent, dressed and waiting to see what Gus will do next.

PARTY BOY laughs. There's some mixed laughter from his group.

PARTY BOY

It's a free country.

GUS

See that's the problem. Too many people mistake free with doing whatever they want. That's called disrespect.

PARTY BOY

What're ya gonna do 'bout it, old man?

Gus grabs the boom box.

GUS

I'm going to take this back to my tent and keep it nice and safe 'til morning. You...and your friends are going to take one last drink, toke, snort whatever and spend the rest of the night being real quiet. Got it!

Party Boy laughs then takes a swing at Gus. Gus uses the boom box to block his hit.

Party Boy hits it hard, but doesn't break it. He drops his hand and grabs it in pain.

PARTY BOY #1
Shit, man. What the fuck?

GUS
Take another swing and you'll break something.

Gus looks over at the partiers.

GUS (cont'd)
Anyone else want to take a swing? I can do this all night. Not sure this boom box can.

No one moves.

Party Boy is rubbing his hand, wincing. One of the girls comes up and leads him away.

GUS (cont'd)
All right, then. Wind it up and enjoy the rest of your evening.

The party breaks up while Gus watches.

He looks over at the Old Couple. They give him a thumbs up.

As he walks with the boom box toward Rick...

RICK
(shaking his head)
You're unbelievable.

GUS
Yeah, amazing what you can do when you know you're going to die. Come on, now we can get some sleep.

Gus climbs inside the tent and puts the boom box off to the side.

Rick comes in behind him.

RICK
That coulda gone south, fast.

GUS
Maybe. But I figured they were too
drunk or stoned.
(pats the boom box)
Were we ever like that?

RICK
I probably was, but you got a list to
prove it!

GUS
Yeah, I suppose.
(beat)
See you in the morning.

He rolls over and there's one more WHOOT from the group of
partiers.

EXT. CAMPSITE - EARLY MORNING

Gus and Rick back out of their camp site. The boom box sits
on their picnic table. There's a note on it - Sorry about
your hand.

Party Boy is just coming out of his tent and gives Gus and
Rick the bird as they drive past.

Gus waves out of his window.

INSIDE THE PICKUP

RICK
We sleep inside from now on.

GUS
Yeah, probably a good idea.

EXT. HAPPY PAWS VETERINARY OFFICE - LATER

It's a small, nondescript building at the outskirts of a
large town. A couple of cars and a few pickups are parked
out front.

As Gus and Rick pull into the parking lot, a CAT crosses in
front of them, forcing them to brake hard.

The CAT stops and just stares at them before moving on.

INT. PICKUP

Gus and Rick trade a "what the hell was that" look.

RICK
What the hell...

GUS
Don't start with some woo hoo, shit.

RICK
You're going to apologize for killing
somebody's cat and a cat shows up?

GUS
Almost killed her cat!

RICK
Whatever. You go do your thing. I'm
waiting here.

INT. HAPPY PAWS VETERINARY OFFICE

It's a small waiting room. Ten chairs lined up along the
wall. Clean but nothing fancy.

There are SIX PEOPLE in the room - each one has a cat. No
dogs, birds, or snakes. Just cats.

Gus walks in and all eyes, including the cats, are on him.
It's freaky.

He manages a smile, but more like a wince and walks up to
the window.

The RECEPTIONIST is sitting behind a counter with a sliding
window in front of it. She opens the window as Gus reaches
it.

GUS
I'm here to see Marianne Fromm.

RECEPTIONIST
Do you have an appointment?

GUS
No. This won't take long.

RECEPTIONIST
She's got a full schedule. Can I get
your name?

GUS
Sure. Gus Armstead. Really, I just
need a few minutes.
(MORE)

GUS (cont'd)

(beat)

Tell her it's about a drowned cat...
almost drowned.

RECEPTIONIST

Wait here.

She closes the window in front of her and heads off to the back of the building.

Gus looks back around at the people and cats still in the room. The latter keep eyeing him.

He's saved by the reception window opening.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

Come on back.

She closes the window and is at the door next to the reception window. Holding it open for Gus.

Just as Gus goes toward the door...

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)

Shame on you.

Gus turns abruptly to see if she's talking to him.

A WOMAN is picking up a cat that just relieved itself on the carpet.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Armstead?

GUS

Yeah, coming.

The Receptionist opens a door to an exam room.

RECEPTIONIST

Wait here.

She closes the door, giving Gus time to look around the room...and take in IMAGES of CATS, a CAT SKELETON, a CHART listing DISEASES of CATS. A FRAMED AD for some cat medicine.

The door to the room opens...

MARIANNE FROMM

Gus. Gus Armstead?

Gus turns and sees Marianne. She's an attractive older woman. Her clean white coat goes nearly to the knees of her women's suit pants. She stands patiently, iPad in hand.

GUS
Yeah, that's me.

MARIANNE FROMM
We know each other?

GUS
Yeah, high school.

She looks at him, but it's still not ringing a bell.

MARIANNE FROMM
High School. That was a long time ago. Did I miss a reunion or something?

GUS
No, hell I never cared about that.
(beat)
I'm here to apologize.

MARIANNE FROMM
For what?

Gus hesitates.

GUS
Oh, geez.
(beat)
You used to like cats, okay,...looks like you still do.

MARIANNE FROMM
And...

GUS
I almost drowned one of yours when we were in 9th grade.

Marianne takes this in, trying to place it. Then it dawns on her.

MARIANNE FROMM
Tabby! Now I remember. We found that cat barely alive down by the creek that ran behind our house.
(beat)
That was you?

Gus just nods.

MARIANNE FROMM (cont'd)
Why? It was a poor defenseless cat!

GUS

I know. I know. It was me and Danny Bostrom. He hated cats.

MARIANNE FROMM

And you went along with it?

GUS

Yeah, it was stupid. He thought it was dead. I went back and made sure it wasn't.

Marianne looks at Gus, hard.

MARIANNE FROMM

I don't know whether to hit you or thank you.

GUS

Both is fine...either way. Like I said, I just came to say I was sorry.

MARIANNE FROMM

Why now? This some kind of bucket apology list? You're dying and making last minute amends?

GUS

Yeah, something like that.

MARIANNE FROMM

How long's that list?

GUS

You don't want to know.

He turns to leave.

MARIANNE FROMM

I don't accept...your apology.

GUS

It's okay. I just had to say it.

MARIANNE FROMM

Did you mean it?

Gus stops and looks at Marianne square in the eye, but thinks before he responds.

GUS

Yeah, yeah, I did.

MARIANNE FROMM

Well, good luck with whoever else is
on that list then.

GUS

Yeah. Guess I might need it.

He leaves the room with Marianne shaking her head as she
watches him leave.

EXT. HAPPY PAWS VETERINARY

Rick is in the pickup listening to Eminem on the radio. He
sees Gus come out and he quickly changes it to a country
station.

As Gus gets into the pickup...

RICK

How'd it go? Do we need to be
worried? Any bad cat juju sent our
way?

GUS

No. But she didn't accept my apology.

RICK

Did she have to?

GUS

Guess not. Nixon said I just have to
apologize.

RICK

But you'd feel better if you thought
they all would say thank you?

Gus puts the pickup in gear, then stops.

GUS

Yeah, I guess so.

RICK

Well, my friend, maybe that's a
lesson you're supposed to learn here.
Stuff we do to people gets
complicated.

GUS

I didn't need this list to tell me
that.

RICK
Well, maybe you did.
(beat)
What's next?

GUS
We can get through three or four in
the next town.

RICK
Let's get going then.

Gus puts the pickup in gear and drives out of the parking lot.

The CAT that crossed them in the parking lot watches as they drive off.

EXT. MOTEL - LATER

It's a single story affair on the outskirts of a small town somewhere in Wyoming.

The No Vacancy sign blinks erratically.

Gus and Rick walk out of the office with their keys.

RICK
Ok. This is more like it.

GUS
Yeah, I suppose.

They pull their bags out of the back of the pickup and walk the few feet to their rooms. Before Rick unlocks his door...

RICK
Hey, man. Tomorrow will be a good
day. See you in the morning.

GUS
Yeah.

They both enter their rooms at the same time.

CLOSE ON the headlights of Gus' pickup. They're still on.

INT. MOTEL - RICK'S ROOM - MORNING

Rick is on his back snoring lightly. A small streak of light comes through the edge where the curtain and window frame don't meet.

GUS (O.C)
Sonuvabitch!

This gets Rick up. He's wearing red satin pajamas.

There's some BANGING AROUND outside - metal on metal.
Vehicle doors SLAMMING.

Rick steps outside.

OUTSIDE THE MOTEL

Gus has the hood up on the pickup. He's behind the wheel
giving the key a turn. Nothing but a click.

GUS
Shit!

Rick comes up to the side of the truck.

RICK
Hey, buddy. What's the problem?

GUS
Battery's dead. Must've left the
lights on.

Rick gives the parking lot of the motel a once over. No
other vehicles to be seen.

RICK
I'd suggest asking someone for a
jump, but...

GUS
Battery's done. Dammit.

He gets out of the pickup and slams the front door. Then he
notices what Rick is wearing.

GUS (cont'd)
What the hell is that?

RICK
What? They're called pajamas.
(beat)
Maybe you should try them sometime.

Gus shakes his head and walks to the Motel office.

RICK (cont'd)
What?

EXT. AUTO STORE - LATER

Gus and Rick are standing outside the store. A CUSTOMER walks by, gives them a look.

RICK
Why aren't we going in?

GUS
The old guy behind the counter?

RICK
Yeah.

GUS
He's on the list.

RICK
No, shit. How do you know?

GUS
The list. Said this would be the best place to find him.

RICK
Well, let's go. Get the battery and be on our way.

Gus hesitates.

GUS
Yeah. All right.

Gus goes in first.

INT. AUTO STORE

It's a smaller version of a chain like an Auto Zone.

DON MANYON stands waiting behind the counter - big guy, as in former high school lineman big. He might be 70, but he could still put the hurt on someone.

DON
Can I help you?

GUS
Yeah, need a battery. 1998 F-150.

DON
All right. Wait here.

Don goes off into the back of the store.

There are only TWO OTHER CUSTOMERS in the store looking down different aisles.

RICK

That's a big guy! You sure you don't want to ask him if you can speak to him in private.

GUS

No. I'm fine doing it here. Might need more witnesses.

Don comes back with the battery.

DON

Here you go. Should get you back in business.

(beat)

Anything else before I ring this up?

GUS

Nah, that ought to do it.

Don punches at the register and points to the electronic readout on Gus' side of the counter.

DON

There's the total. Bring in the old one, and I'll get you \$10 back.

Gus hands over cash. Don gives him some change back.

DON (cont'd)

Have a nice day, now.

GUS

You don't remember me, do you?

DON

You been here before?

GUS

No. Visiting.

DON

Sorry, you don't look familiar.

The Two Other Customers are now in line behind Rick and Gus.

GUS

Well, here's the thing. We knew each other in high school.

DON
High school?

GUS
Yeah, Gus Armstead.

Don looks at him. Then a slow realization comes over his face.

DON
Sonuvabitch.

RICK
(under his breath)
Shit.

GUS
I'm sorry. I took Becky, what's her name to the prom. You thought she was goin' with you.

DON
Sorry. Hell, I should be thankin' you!

GUS
What?

DON
Man, it was all for the better.

GUS
Really?

DON
Yeah, made me realize that was all bull shit. I got real focused on football. Went to Colorado on a scholarship. Made the NFL and enough to buy this place. Going on thirty-five years now.

CUSTOMER #1
Come on, Don. 'Nuff with the old home week.

DON
Sorry. One minute.
(to Gus)
You came all this way to apologize for that?

GUS
I was in the neighborhood.

Don reaches out to shake his hand. Gus takes it tentatively, then lets Don envelope it with his big, beefy appendage.

DON

Listen. You need anything else while you're here, you know where to find me.

GUS

Yeah, I will. Thanks.

He grabs the battery and walks past the Two Customers who both stare after him as he and Rick walk out the door.

OUTSIDE the AUTO STORE

RICK

That went better than expected. Do you think it even counts?

GUS

I apologized. It counts. Now let's get this battery in and get outta here. At this rate, I'll be dead before we get through that list.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Gus' pickup rolls across an interstate highway somewhere in the eastern part of Montana.

INT. PICKUP

Rick is asleep, head propped against the passenger side on a folded up hoody.

Gus is keeping his eye on the road. He takes a drink of water from a bottle on the seat next to him.

He starts to cough, hard. The pickup starts to weave.

This wakes Rick up.

RICK

What the?

Gus is still coughing.

RICK (cont'd)

Pull it over!

Gus fights through the coughing and gets the pickup off the highway, but not before getting a few LOUD HONKS from cars and trucks passing him.

The pickup sits still, engine idling. Rick reaches over to the keys and turns it off.

Gus has his cough under control. Wipes his mouth with a handkerchief.

RICK (cont'd)

Gus..

He motions to the handkerchief. It's spotted with blood.

GUS

Shit.

He wipes harder then throws the handkerchief out the window. He reaches for the keys, but Rick stops him.

RICK

I'm driving.

Gus gives him a hard look, like 'no way in hell.' Then starts coughing again, and backs off.

GUS

All, right.

Gus gets out of the pickup. Stops, gets his breath and looks up at the stars.

It's a moonless night. He and Rick are far from any major city or town. The sky is a blanket of stars.

Rick gets out from his side of the pickup. Watches Gus standing still looking at the big night sky.

RICK

Take your time, brother.

Gus takes a deep breath.

GUS

Whaddaya think happens to us.

RICK

When we die? I think we go to a place where we can do the things that made us happy with the people that laughed with us when we did them.

Gus thinks about this.

GUS

What if there's nothing there and you're it? Just you...nothing, no one else?

RICK

That would be hell, my friend. And you're not going there.

GUS

Hmmm. I'm not so sure.

BEAT.

RICK

You die on this trip I still need to know what you want on your grave stone.

GUS

Jesus.

RICK

That's taken.

GUS

(shaking his head)

Enough with the grave stone.

RICK

I'm just sayin.' You gotta decide.

GUS

You pick. You got six months to figure it out!

RICK

Maybe less.

GUS

I'm not done yet.

RICK

You keep tellin' yourself that.

Gus takes another deep breath. Pats the driver's side door.

GUS

You okay to drive awhile?

RICK

Yeah, we got about two hours to the next town.

Gus gets in the passenger side.

GUS
Wake me when we get there.

Rick starts the truck and pulls onto the highway.

Gus is already asleep as they drive on into the night.

EXT. REST STOP - MORNING

Gus is still asleep when Rick opens the driver's door. The noise wakes Gus up.

RICK
Rise and shine, sleeping beauty.

Rick has two coffees and a small bag in his hand.

GUS
Where are we?

RICK
Somewhere between the place we were
and the place we need to be.
(hands Gus a coffee)
Here. That nice lady over there and
her friends are serving it up for
free.

He waves at TWO MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN at a table with a sign
that says 'Free Coffee and Donuts.'

Gus sits up and takes the coffee.

Rick hands him the bag.

RICK (cont'd)
Go ahead. They had your favorite.

Gus reaches in and pulls out an apple fritter.

GUS
Holy shit. Apple fritter.

RICK
Yeah. Made me think about when we
first started working together.

GUS
Dunkin' Donuts at six a.m. for coffee
and these. Then ten hours of sawing
wood and poundin' nails.

Gus takes a bite and nods, a slight smile to himself.

RICK
Heaven, right?

GUS
Yeah, these would be there. For sure.

Rick takes a bite, and a swig of coffee.

RICK
I checked the list. We're about
thirty minutes from your next victim.

GUS
Well, what are we waitin' for?

RICK
All right, all right. You must be
feelin' better.

GUS
Yeah, take it when you can get it.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Gus and Rick pull up in front of a run down house in a very shitty neighborhood. A wire fence up front. An empty couch in the yard. Weeds growing up around it and the front.

A big pitbull barks incessantly across the street. It looks like it's ready to jump through the fence. Same fence that is in the front of nearly every house on the block.

Gus kills the engine, takes the list and looks at it.

RICK
And you thought Landon lived in a
shitty neighborhood.
(beat)
What's the deal with this one?

GUS
Remember that guy worked with us way
back that had just gotten outta
prison?

RICK
Tiny? The one threw the cop through a
windshield?

Gus nods. Looks at the list and the front of the house.

RICK (cont'd)
What the hell you do to him that
deserves an apology?

GUS
Got him arrested. Thought he stole my
toolkit.

RICK
Shit, I remember that. Cops came to
the job site and everything.
(beat)
Wait, you found that kit the next
day. You left it by the porta john.

GUS
Yeah.

RICK
The guy got arrested because you had
a case of the forgets and you didn't
tell the cops?

GUS
I tried. Turns out he had some
outstanding warrants...

RICK
That would've never come up had you
not said anything and tried not doing
what you always do which is...

GUS
Jump to conclusions. Yeah, I know.

He starts up the pickup.

GUS (cont'd)
Better keep this running...just in
case.

Gus gets out and Rick slides into the driver's seat.

RICK
I got you. Keep the motor runnin,
head out on the highway... All the
things.

Gus flips him off as he walks toward the house.

Rick watches as Gus goes up to the door and knocks. Nothing.

Gus looks back at Rick, shrugs like, 'now what?'

Rick motions for him to knock again.

Just as Gus does, the door opens.

Rick sees TINY in the doorway. He's a big older guy - huge actually. Long braided hair and double-braided, long gray beard.

Rick watches as Gus talks to Tiny. Tiny just stands there. Unmoving. Then he goes inside, leaves the front door open with Gus standing by himself.

Gus turns to look at Rick. Before he can look back to see if Tiny's there...

RICK (cont'd)

Run!

Gus turns and is trying to run as fast as he can.

Tiny is at the door with a shotgun.

GUS

Shit!

Tiny tries to get a bead on him.

RICK

Come on! Come on!

Tiny fires, misses.

Gus makes it to the pickup as Rick guns it. Gus clamors into the passenger seat as another gun shot goes off.

RICK (cont'd)

Jesus Christ. I take it he remembered.

Gus is breathing hard. Tries to catch his breath.

GUS

Yeah, turns out Tiny holds a big grudge.

RICK

Jesus. Why couldn't you have pissed off an old lady or something?

GUS

Just drive. That might be next.

EXT. CONVENIENCE MARKET - NIGHT

Gus and Rick pull up to a CONVENIENCE MARKET.

GUS
Wait here. I don't think this will
take long.

Gus goes inside while Rick waits.

Rick can see Gus talking to the guy behind the counter. There's a lot of motion from the guy. He makes shoving motions with his hands. Then he stops and reaches over and shakes Gus' hand.

Gus comes back out and gives Rick the thumbs up as he walks back toward the truck.

As Gus gets in...

GUS (cont'd)
He didn't remember anything. Finally
had to buy something just to get the
hell outta there.

He hands Rick a bag. Rick pulls out the contents.

RICK
Slim jims! You rock, man.

EXT. MANSION - MORNING

Gus and Rick pull up to a MANSION in a neighborhood of more mansions.

There's a gate, no other way in.

Gus gets out of the pickup passenger side and walks toward the gate.

Before he reaches the gate, two big German Shepherds run to the gate from nowhere, scaring the shit out of Gus.

He backs up carefully, then gets quickly into the pickup

GUS
That one's a bust.

RICK
What, you're not going to go jump the
gate and challenge the dogs to a
fight.

GUS
Just drive before they find a way
out!

EXT. SMALL FARM HOUSE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Gus is at the front door of the house. He knocksA YOUNG FARM
WIFE answers.

Rick can see the Young Woman from where he's parked in the
front yard.

Gus talks to her. She shakes her head. Then gestures out to
the fields near the farm.

Gus bows his head. She unexpectedly throws her arms around
him. He awkwardly lets her hug him for what seems like way
too long.

She lets go. Smooths out her dress and goes back inside the
house.

As Gus, walks back to the pickup, he shakes his head.

INT. PICKUP - TWO LANE ROAD

Gus drives in silence. No radio. Rick isn't singing.

RICK
What did her mom die from?

GUS
Same thing I got. Two months ago.

RICK
What did you have to apologize for?

GUS
Doesn't matter now.

RICK
Yeah. Guess not.

More silence. Broken by Gus' CELLPHONE RINGING. Gus hunts
around for it, while keeping the pickup in the right lane.

Rick hands it to him.

RICK (cont'd)
It's right here.

Gus grabs it. It's still ringing.

GUS
Armstead.

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
Mr. Armstead. Richard Nixon here.

Rick is cracking trying not to laugh.

RICK
Richard Nixon? That still cracks me up.

GUS
Shut up.

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
Mr. Armstead?

GUS
Sorry, didn't mean you. It's this pain in the ass with me.

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
I called to see how you're doing. It's been a couple of weeks.

GUS
Good. I'm gettin' through it.
(beat)
You know, some of these people are dead...some want me to join them.

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
You haven't been harmed have you?

GUS
Not yet.

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
We anticipated you'd hit a few snags. My money's still on you, Mr. Armstead.

GUS
You mean my sister's money.

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
Pardon?

GUS
Never mind. You're really going to make me get through this whole thing aren't you?

RICHARD NIXON (O.S.)
It's what your sister wanted. You
know how to reach me if you need
anything.

GUS
Yeah.

Gus hangs up and hands the phone over to Rick.

RICK
Richard Nixon.
(imitating Richard
Nixon)
I am not a crook.

GUS
Shut up.

RICK
You can do this, brother. I know you
can.
(beat)
Who's next?

GUS
Mr. Yamimoto.

RICK
Keep this thing off his lawn and you
should be just fine.

GUS
Shut up.

RICK
You said that already.

Rick leans back in the seat and closes his eyes.

RICK (cont'd)
Tell ya what. I'm going to take a
nap. That way you can drive without
my exceptional gift for gab.

GUS
Best thing you've said for days.

RICK
Wake me when we get to the next
apology.

GUS
We'll see.

EXT. YAMIMOTO'S NURSERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Gus and Rick pull up to a well kept nursery with a busy parking lot. They pull into a spot and both get out.

GUS
What're you getting out for?

RICK
Thought I'd look at some plants.

GUS
For what?

RICK
You're funeral, asshole.
(beat)
I like plants, you know that.

GUS
Now I do.

Gus shakes his head and leaves Rick at the section with the annuals.

Gus stops one of the nursery workers.

GUS (cont'd)
I'm looking for Mr. Yamamoto.

NURSERY WORKER
There is no Mr. Yamamoto. You sure
you don't want to talk to his
daughter. She runs the place. Has for
the last twenty years.

Gus looks around. Sees Rick picking up and admiring some petunias.

GUS
Well, I can talk to her then.

NURSERY WORKER
Ok, that's her over there.

He points to a 30-something year old Japanese woman talking with another nursery worker.

GUS
Alright, thanks.

Gus is behind the woman as she turns abruptly and nearly walks into him.

MS. YAMAMOTO
Oh, I'm sorry.

GUS
It's ok. Didn't mean to startle you.

MS. YAMAMOTO
Can I help you?

GUS
You're Mr. Yamamoto's daughter.

MS. YAMAMOTO
Yes. Why?

GUS
I knew him...met him actually...once.

MS. YAMAMOTO
What's your name?

GUS
Gus...Gus Armstead. He may not have remembered.

MS. YAMAMOTO
Gus Armstead? No, never mentioned it.

GUS
How about some guy driving over his lawn...Maybe fifty years ago.

MS. YAMAMOTO
You're the one.

Gus just looks at her as she starts to laugh.

MS. YAMAMOTO (cont'd)
My father did talk about you. The crazy white boy who drove over his lawn. Every time we put in a new lawn for someone, he'd tell us - don't be like that boy!

(beat)
You're the reason I never dated any white boys growing up...or anytime for that matter. I thought you were all hoodlums - my father's word.

GUS
Yeah, well, I can understand.

MS. YAMAMOTO
Are you here to apologize or
something?

GUS
Well, yeah, that is why.

MS. YAMAMOTO
No need. My father forgave you a long
time ago. He even turned you into a
bit of an ad campaign.

She points to a sign on an outside wall. TURF SO TOUGH YOU
CAN DRIVE ON IT.

GUS
Jesus.

MS. YAMAMOTO
There you go.
(beat)
Anything else...Mr. Armstead.

GUS
No, just I'm sorry. I had to say it.

MS. YAMAMOTO
Thank you. My father would have
appreciated that.

She leaves him where's he's at. Gus looks around and watches
her walk off.

Rick comes up behind him.

RICK
Well, you're still standing.

GUS
Yeah, turns out I'm a bit of an
inspiration.

He points to the turf sign.

RICK
What the...

GUS
I'll tell you about it in the truck.
Come on. We've got more to go. I
gotta make a stop first.

RICK
Again?

GUS
Not that, asshole. You'll see.

RICK
Good, cuz I lost track somewhere
around the fifth and tenth time
today.

EXT. COUNTRY NEIGHBORHOOD - EARLY EVENING

It's a group of low slung, small ranch style homes - each one is different. All of them are fifty to sixty years old. It's the midwest so there are no fences between any of them.

Gus and Rick pull up and stop at one of the smaller homes. Neatly kept front yard. A few toys a four or five year old would play with are scattered across the grass. A bike with training wheels. A big colorful ball. A hula hoop.

RICK
What's the big infraction with this person?

GUS
Nothing. I grew up here.

RICK
Oooh, you want to see what it looks like.

GUS
Yeah.

Gus gets out. Rick right behind him.

GUS (cont'd)
What're you doing?

RICK
Following you. My builder's brain is curious.

GUS
Suit yourself.

When they get to the front door, they HEAR a SMALL DOG barking.

Gus doesn't move.

RICK
You ringing that door bell or you want me to?

GUS
I'll do it.

Gus rings the bell and waits. There are MUFFLED VOICES from inside, then the door opens.

A YOUNG MOM, early 20s, opens the door. She's holding a one year old little girl. A three year old girl and a five year old boy stand close beside her.

A SMALL MUTT barks at her feet but not obnoxiously. Just letting Gus and Rick know he's there.

YOUNG MOM
Can I help you?

GUS
Hi, sure. My name's Gus, Gus Armstead.

RICK
I'm his friend Rick.

Gus ignores him.

YOUNG MOM
Okay? Do I know you? My husband's still at work. Swing shift. He's not in trouble is he?

GUS
No. No. Nothing like that.
(beat)
I grew up in this house. Long time ago. More than sixty years actually.

YOUNG MOM
You're kidding?

GUS
No. Early 60's then the family moved to Denver.

YOUNG MOM
Did you remember the people who lived next door?

GUS
Yeah, let me think.
(beat)
The Reynolds family. Two daughters, around my age.

YOUNG MOM

One of them used to live there. She died last year. Nice old lady.

GUS

Yeah, I bet.

Awkward silence.

YOUNG MOM

You want to come in. Look around. It's a bit of a mess. Kids you know.

GUS

Sure, I'd appreciate that.

RICK

I'll wait out here.

Gus moves past the woman and stops in the small living room. Taking it in. And the small kitchen right off of it.

MONTAGE

Gus as a SIX-YEAR OLD with his YOUNGER SISTER sitting at the kitchen table. His DAD and MOM at either end. They're playing cards. Laughing. Having a good time.

Gus looking out the front window at the snow coming down. His little sister comes up beside him and he puts his arm over her shoulder. Dad at the table with papers in front of him. Mother ironing nearby.

Gus dressed for school. His mother adjusting his new clothes. A bus HONKS outside.

PRESENT

Gus wipes a tear away.

YOUNG MOM

You ok, mister...?

GUS

Armstead. Yeah, I'm fine. Allergies.

YOUNG MOM

You want to see the rest of the house? Bet it's smaller than you remember it.

The two older kids stare at him. Silent. So does the little dog.

Gus tries a smile on all three of them, but it doesn't do much.

GUS

No. Thanks. It's just like I remember it.

(beat)

I might take a walk around the back yard if you don't mind?

YOUNG MOM

Help yourself. I gotta get these munchkins fed anyway.

GUS

Yeah. Well, thanks.

Gus goes out the door as the Young Mom closes it behind him.

He heads around the back yard. Rick is waiting for him. He's wearing a baseball glove and is tossing a baseball up in the air and catches it.

RICK

Boy does this bring back memories.

Gus doesn't say anything. Just looks at the house. The yard.

GUS

Where'd it go?

Rick stops throwing the ball.

RICK

What?

Gus wipes his eyes. Fighting back tears. He looks away composing himself.

GUS

Time...every last minute of it.

Rick looks at Gus. Takes him in, not quite sure what to do or say.

RICK

Yeah, I ask myself that more often than I used to.

He tosses Gus the glove. Picks up another on the ground near him.

RICK (cont'd)
Come on. Let's give time the finger
for once.

Gus eyes the glove, like it's a foreign thing.

RICK (cont'd)
Get back there. I'm going to put some
heat on this.

Gus puts the glove on, shakes his head like he's not sure.

RICK (cont'd)
Come on, man. Let's go. It's going to
be a pop fly to right field. You
better be ready.

Rick throws the ball. Gus catches it. Looks at it. Rolls it
around in his hand like he's getting used to it after a long
absence.

He throws it and Rick catches it.

RICK (cont'd)
There you go.

He throws it again. Gus catches it. Then throws it again and
drops back further when he does.

The Young Woman watches from the back window of the house.
Smiles to herself as Gus and Rick keep playing catch.

With each throw, Gus lightens up, breaks out in a smile.
Then an outright LAUGH with each catch.

RICK (cont'd)
That's what I'm talkin' about.
Freakin' Rollie Fingers out there!

GUS
Get ready. This one's comin' in hot.

Gus fires it.

EXT. COUNTRY NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

The Young Woman still holding her baby waves at Gus who is
in the pickup. He holds up his left hand toward her, waving.
He holds the baseball he and Rick were playing with.

Rick is in the front humming Sweet Caroline.

RICK
We needed that.

GUS
Yeah. Yeah we did.

He starts the pickup and drives away from the house. They reach the intersection from the neighborhood and pull onto a main road and head into setting sun.

EXT. MULLER CONSTRUCTION - MID-MORNING

The faded MULLER CONSTRUCTION sign for the company hangs outside an old quonset hut type building surrounded by a series of similar buildings all with different building and manufacturing names.

Doug's Custom Cycles.

Melbourne's Transmission and Brakes.

S & P Millwork.

Gus and Rick sit in the pickup on the side of the street.

RICK
Arthur Muller is on your list? He should be apologizing to us! That asshole laid us both off. At the same time!

GUS
Yeah, but you didn't cut his tires or put sugar in his gas tank.

RICK
You did that?
(laughs)
Least you didn't try to kill him.

GUS
Like Two Shits?

RICK
Yeah, hadn't thought about that guy in years. One in the morning...

GUS
One in the afternoon. He was definitely regular.

BEAT

RICK
What're you going to do?

GUS
No different. Tell him I'm sorry I
fucked up his pickup. Then leave.

RICK
Yeah, guy loved that thing.
(beat)
Hope he doesn't have a gun, he might
actually try to hit you.

GUS
Leave the truck runnin' if it makes
you feel better.

RICK
I am and it will.

Gus gets out of the truck. Stands a minute. Working up the
courage to get this thing done.

RICK (cont'd)
You can do it, brother. Go in there
and apologize like no one's ever
apologized before!

GUS
You're a dip shit.

Rick gives him a thumbs up.

Gus leaves him with that and goes to the door of Muller
Construction.

INT. MULLER CONSTRUCTION

Gus enters a bare bones office. An empty chair behind a
waist high counter. Two tattered and scratched chairs sit
off to the side. Beat up magazines on a small table between
them.

GUS
(under his breath)
Shit, place hasn't changed.

From a room behind the desk...

ARTHUR MULLER (O.C.)
Be right with ya.

Gus eyes the front door. Stays close to it.

ARTHUR MULLER comes out from the room and reaches out his hand to Gus.

ARTHUR MULLER
Arthur. Arthur Muller. That's me on
the sign out there.

Gus hesitates and takes the handshake.

GUS
Yeah, we've met. Long time ago.

Arthur looks at Gus, but there's no recognition.

ARTHUR MULLER
Don't look familiar.

GUS
Maybe the name is. Gus Armstead mean
anything to you.

Doesn't take Arthur long for this to register.

ARTHUR MULLER
Sonuvabitch!

GUS
I take it that's a yes.

ARTHUR MULLER
You're the fucker that ruined my
pickup. I fired your ass and that
little Mexican friend of yours.

GUS
He's Puerto Rican but yeah, that's
all true.

ARTHUR MULLER
What the fuck are you doin' here?

GUS
I came to apologize.

ARTHUR MULLER
Apologize. Late for that isn't it?

GUS
You'd think, but I've got someone
telling me otherwise.

ARTHUR MULLER
You can take that apology and stick
it up your ass.

GUS

You wouldn't be the first one to tell me that.

ARTHUR MULLER

Yet, here you are. You know how much that pickup cost me to fix? And while it was being fixed, I lost three jobs 'cuz I couldn't get out to give 'em an estimate. Shit, I shoulda fired you and your friend's sorry ass way before that!

(beat)

Why don't you drag your fuckin' ass outta here right now, before I call the cops. Apologize...Jesus Christ. You're still a fuck up!

Gus clenches up a fist, and his jaw. Takes a breath.

GUS

You know. People tell me I'm kind of an asshole some times. But you know what, took me some time to get there. You were just born that way.

(beat)

And for that...I'm not apologizing. Have a nice life.

Gus is at the door before Arthur can move.

Arthur picks up a container of pens and pencils and throws them at the door just as it closes behind Gus.

ARTHUR MULLER

Sonuvabitch! Go to hell!

Gus is walking quickly but deliberately to the running pickup and gets in the passenger side. Rick is behind the wheel.

GUS

Let's get outta here before he regrets letting me leave in one piece.

RICK

Say no more.

Rick guns the pickup and it takes off away from Muller Construction as...

...Arthur rushes out, breathing heavy, watching them drive away. He flips them the bird.

ARTHUR MULLER
Hope you die, asshole!

INSIDE PICKUP

Rick looks back at Mullar standing in the middle of the street, shaking his fist, breathing hard.

RICK
Can't believe you apologized to that shit. I want to go back and give him a heart attack.

Gus checks out Muller in his rearview mirror.

GUS
Not worth it. Besides he's probably going to give himself one.

RICK
Dickhead.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gus grabs his suit case out of the back. Rick grabs his.

RICK
Some day, huh. We're almost done, right?

GUS
Yeah, we can tick off the rest tomorrow.

RICK
All right. You hungry?

GUS
I think I'll call Landon. See how he and the girls are.

RICK
All right. See you in the morning.

They are at the doors of their respective rooms.

GUS
Yeah.

INT. MOTEL ROOM

It's a no frills affair. Queen sized bed. Desk. Industrial strength carpet. Fake painting of a pastoral scene above the bed.

Gus leaves the suitcase on the floor, throws a jacket on the bed. He reaches into the pocket and pulls out the baseball he and Rick were playing with.

He fingers it in his hand, smiles to himself.

He pulls out his phone and dials. It RINGS twice.

LANDON'S VOICE (O.S.)
You've reached the Armstead
residence. Leave a message...or not.
Your choice.

Gus holds the phone. Silent. For a moment.

GUS
Hey, son. It's...it's your dad. I
just wanted to say...well, I'll be
home in a couple days. I'll see you
and the girls then.

He hangs up and tosses the baseball up and down in his hand. Happens to look up and sees his reflection in the mirror hanging on the wall by the desk.

GUS (cont'd)
Hey, old man. I swore I wasn't going
to let you in. And here you are.

He keeps tossing the ball up and down. Gives himself a look in the mirror like maybe he's going to throw the ball at it.

He starts coughing. Can't stop. Coughs harder.

Goes to the bathroom. Stands before the sink and coughs more. Blood is in the sink.

He stands up and gets his breath. Takes a drink of water. Stares at himself in the mirror.

GUS (cont'd)
Shit. You can go fuck off. Ok. It's
not time yet.

He coughs hard and makes his way to the bed.

EXT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Rick comes out of his room and knock on Gus' door. Nothing.

RICK
Come on, old man. Rise and shine.

He knocks again. No response.

RICK (cont'd)
Shit, man. You better be alone in there.

Knocks again. More emphatic.

RICK (cont'd)
Come on, Gus. This isn't funny.

He's about to knock harder, when the door opens.

Gus is there, dressed in the same clothes he had on the night before. His hair is a mess. His skin sallow looking. He doesn't look well.

GUS
Jesus, keep it up and you're going to wake the dead.

He leaves the door open and goes back inside his room. Rick follows.

RICK
Looks like I already did.

Rick takes in the unpacked suitcase and the bed that was slept on, not in.

RICK (cont'd)
Jesus, did you fall asleep in your clothes?

GUS
Yeah.

Gus goes into the bathroom. Runs water in the sink.

RICK (O.C.)
You all right?

IN BATHROOM

Gus is cleaning up some remaining blood in the sink. Wets his hands and runs it through his hair.

GUS
Yeah, all good.

He comes back in the room. Rick is looking at him.

RICK
You got blood on your shirt.

GUS
It's fine. No worse than last time.

He walks past Rick to get his suitcase.

RICK
You look worse than last time.

Gus stops, getting pissed off.

GUS
I'm fine, all right. Let's cut the
b.s. and go.

RICK
All right. All right. I got it.

Gus grabs his suitcase and walks out the door leaving Rick to follow.

RICK (cont'd)
(under his breath)
Stubborn sonuvabitch.

GUS (O.C.)
I heard that.

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE MORNING

Gus pulls his pickup slowly through the gate and drives toward the far edge of the cemetery.

RICK
Was she on the list?

GUS
No, but she should've.

Gus slows the pickup and looks at the headstones as they pass. He stops abruptly.

GUS (cont'd)
Wait here.

RICK
Not going anywhere.

Gus gets out of the pickup and walks slowly to a head stone a few feet away. There are flowers at the base. He takes them and walks over to another head stone a few feet away.

He looks around like he's trying to find the words to say, something else to do.

He puts the flowers at the base of the headstone. Stares at it for a moment.

Finally...

GUS
Hey, sweetheart. Been awhile. Pretty soon...well it won't be. Guess hell's gonna have to wait.

(beat)
Been on this crazy thing Sis has me doin'. Apologizing. Yeah, I know. Somethin' I was never good at. But I did it and, well, Landon...and the girls. A million dollars. That;'s what they'll get. Still can't figure it.

(coughs a bit)
She shoulda had you on the list. God knows I got plenty to apologize for. Didn't dance enough. Coulda held hands more. Helped out more. Shit, it's a long list.

(beat)
Mostly not loving you enough. You deserved it and more. I don't think I ever thought I did...deserve you. I'm sorry, sweetheart.

He starts to cry. Not weepy. Just tears. He wipes his eyes, then coughs hard.

GUS (cont'd)
So...sorry.

He coughs harder, drops the flowers and falls forward, catching himself with his right hand against the headstone.

Rick comes up and takes his arm. Puts it around his neck to steady him.

RICK
All right, buddy. I got you.
Time to go home.

GUS
Yeah, I think so.

They walk away from the headstone - Janet Evelyn Armstead -
Heaven Has Another Angel. Born June 29, 1952 - Died June 28,
2020.

INT. PICKUP

Rick drives while Gus sits in the front seat. Barely
conscious. Watching the scenery go by. A weepy, old classic
country song plays on the radio.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Gus is asleep lying in a shared room. A curtain separates
him from the empty bed on the other side.

CLARA
Hi, Gus.

Gus comes to and sees CLARA, his sister, start to come into
focus. She's two years younger, but just as fit. By her
clothes and bit of jewelry, she's much better off
financially.

GUS
(groggy)
Sis?

CLARA
Yeah, it's me.

GUS
Am I...?

CLARA
No. Well, not yet.

GUS
You're...you're alive?

CLARA
Yes, and so are you. Now go back to
sleep. We'll talk when you're ready.

INT. HOSPITAL - TWO DAYS LATER

Gus is coming to and Landon is with him. He's asleep in a
chair next to his bed.

Gus tries to sit up, but it's a struggle.

GUS

Shit.

This wakes Landon. He pulls himself up, running his hands over his face to wake up.

LANDON

Dad?

GUS

Damn bed's too flat.

LANDON

Hold on, I'll get it.

Landon finds the controls and gets the bed to where Gus can sit up more.

LANDON (cont'd)

I'll go let the nurse know you're awake.

Before Landon can leave...

GUS

It can wait.

LANDON

Okay.

GUS

I need to say somethin'. To you.
Before everyone starts pouring back
in here.

(beat)

You know this trip I was on?

LANDON

Yeah, Rick, Clara. They told us.
Sounds like quite the adventure.

GUS

You know what it was about?

LANDON

Just that there was a list. People
you apologized to.

GUS

I didn't finish it.

(beat)

You should've been on it.

Now Landon sits down.

LANDON
It's okay, Dad.

GUS
No, it's not.
(beat)
I was hard on you, son. Sometimes. A lot of times, I let work come first. Following the booms. Trying to figure out how to make it through the busts.

LANDON
Dad. It's ok.

GUS
I need to say it.
(beat)
I didn't have the best role model. Your grandfather didn't have much of one either. But I tried. I did try. But I'm sorry...I'm sorry I didn't try harder.

Landon looks away, fighting back some tears.

LANDON
You know there were times I was on the field and all I wanted was just to see you, just once watch me play.

GUS
Yeah, but it was usually your mom.

LANDON
I see how you are with Abby. God, that kid loves you. You two together.... But sometimes... sometimes I wish you'd been that way with me.

GUS
Yeah. Me, too.

Gus reaches out a hand to his son. Landon hesitates.

GUS (cont'd)
I gotta little time left, yet. I can do what I can to make up for it. Can we do that?

Landon takes Gus' hand in a firm handshake.

LANDON
Yeah, I think we can.

GUS
Good. Now get me outta here, before
they're sorry they didn't let me go
sooner.

EXT. PATIO - LANDON'S HOME - MORNING

Gus is on the patio drinking coffee, sitting at an old picnic table. The back yard is well kept. A play structure is one corner.

Clara comes out with a coffee in her hand.

CLARA
Mind if I join you?

GUS
Grab a seat. You've got some
explainin' to do.

She sets her coffee down.

CLARA
Tell you what. Mind if we step out in
the sun. Might do you some good.

Gus grabs his coffee, gets up with some effort. Clara takes his arm, helping him steady himself. They walk this way out into the yard.

CLARA (cont'd)
You probably want to know why I had
Nixon tell you I was dead.

GUS
That's a good place to start.

CLARA
I didn't think you'd do it if I was
alive.

GUS
For a million bucks...

CLARA
You would've just called me and told
me to mind my own business.

Gus thinks about this, nods. He gets it.

GUS

So why those people? That list
could've been a helluva lot longer.

CLARA

Well, you didn't finish it. And
despite the vast 'spy' network I'm
sure you think I have...you did move
around a lot.

(beat)

You know it wasn't just about saying
your sorry. What'd you learn out
there?

GUS

(thinks before
answering)

I could've been better. Better
friend, better dad, better husband...
better person?

CLARA

You say that as if it was a question?

(beat)

We can all be better. It's just a
matter of what and how.

GUS

Jesus, now you sound like one of
those self help books.

CLARA

You want to hear this or don't you?

GUS

All right, I'm being better right
now. Go ahead.

CLARA

Take Jennifer. You took her at face
value. Made a judgment without
knowing the truth about why she was
the way she is.

GUS

All right. Point taken.

CLARA

And sometimes, people can take the
crappy things people do and say about
them and turn them into something
positive.

GUS

(chuckling)

Like Don the auto parts guy and Mr. Yamamoto with his tough turf. And the cat vet.

(beat)

What about Art Muller...the guy's still an asshole.

CLARA

Because he carried a grudge against you for a long time. What did it get him...or you?

Gus looks at his sister like he's seeing her for the first time.

GUS

Jesus, Clara, I never took you for being this...

CLARA

What, wise? I'm not. I just pay attention.

GUS

Evidently.

CLARA

You never stayed still long enough. Not too late to start.

GUS

Guess so.

CLARA

Life's short, Gus. You know that now. But never too short to learn a thing or two. I didn't want you to die without trying.

(beat)

Now there's one more person you need to apologize to.

GUS

I think I've run out of apologies.

CLARA

No. Gus. You've got at least one more left. You've been hard on yourself ever since you were a kid. You don't have to be anymore. It's okay to say you're sorry...to yourself.

Gus nods to himself, thinking this through.

GUS

I guess so.

(beat)

And the million dollars?

CLARA

Already in Landon's account. He just hasn't seen it yet.

GUS

You were going to do it anyway, weren't you?

CLARA

It's what families do, big brother.

GUS

Yeah, I guess it is.

CLARA

Listen, your doctor says you still have a few months. Spend it with the people who still care about you.

(beat)

Now, I better go tell your son about the money.

She walks away, leaving Gus in the yard.

EXT. LANDON'S HOME - LATE MORNING

Gus is walking on the side walk. Taking his time.

A BLACK SUV pulls up and goes slowly beside him. HEAVY BASS beat rolling with it.

Gus ignores it, keeps walking

The window rolls down.

RICK

Hey, old man. You want a ride?

Gus stops.

GUS

What the hell are you listening to?

RICK
Gangsta rap...just for you.
(beat)
Hungry?

GUS
Why not, but ditch the music.

Gus gets in and Rick turns up the music as they drive off.

INT. DINER - LATER

Gus and Rick are in a booth. A waitress comes up and refills their coffee.

RICK
You look pretty good for a guy who almost died.

GUS
Emphasis on almost.

RICK
Yeah.
(beat)
You know I need to say something.
Never got a chance while we were on our - what'd you call it - a kum ba ya tour.

GUS
Do I need to apologize to you, too.

RICK
No. I'm good.
(beat)
You know. I've known you for what... almost 40 years. You taught me how to drive a nail with two swings. Cut a straight line. Set trusses - even when I hated heights. Jesus, about crapped myself first time I got up on a three story back wall.

GUS
Yeah, I remember.

RICK
You were there for me, man. Even if you didn't know it.

GUS

Yeah, sometimes I was an asshole,
too.

RICK

Ok, yeah, that's also true. But you
were less of one with me.
(beat)

GUS

Yet, forty some years later and
you're still here.

RICK

Yep. Not goin' anywhere.

Gus takes a drink of coffee. Looks out the window and
watches the traffic go by. Then looks back at Rick.

GUS

You'll keep an eye on 'em? When I'm
gone?

RICK

You know you don't need to ask.

GUS

Yeah.

They both take another drink of coffee at the same time. But
neither notices.

EXT. LANDON'S NEW HOME - FOUR WEEKS LATER - LATE MORNING

Landon, Katie, and Gus help the MOVERS bring their furniture
into a modest single story ranch home in the country.

There's a wrap around porch with two rockers looking out
over an open field. Mountains in the distance.

Abby plays in the big yard as the movers bring in the
furniture.

Gus is carrying a couple of boxes. He sets them on the
ground, breathing heavy. He straightens himself up as the
movers go past him.

Landon sees him, starts to move toward him, but Katie stops
him.

KATIE

It's ok. I've got an eye on him.

Gus sees them watching. Gives them a thumbs up. Picks up the boxes and keeps moving.

INT. LANDON'S NEW HOME - CHRISTMAS

Gus and Clara watch Landon, Katie and Abby play in the snow. Throwing it loosely at one another. Playing tag.

Gus reaches over and puts his arm around his sister's shoulder, just like he remembered doing when they were kids.

Landon stops playing sees them and waves. Abby yells from outside loud enough to be heard inside.

ABBY

Come on, Pop Pop. Aunt Clara. It's fun!

CLARA

(to Gus)

You up for a little snow fight?

GUS

Why not?

From the window, we SEE Gus and Clara join in the fun outside. They all start throwing snowballs at each other. Gus moves slower than the others.

EXT. LANDON'S NEW HOME - SPRING - LATE AFTERNOON

Gus is outside in the front yard. He has the baseball he and Rick threw to each other. He's rolling it around in his hand. Looking out at the scenery - fresh leaves on the trees, daffodils blooming. Mountains in the distance with a spring snowpack on them.

Landon is on a riding lawn mower, cutting the grass. He notices his dad just standing there with the ball. He rides the mower over to this dad and stops.

LANDON

Dad. You okay.

GUS

Yeah.

(beat)

You still got those old gloves I gave you?

LANDON
Yeah, I've been waiting to teach Abby.

GUS
How about you take a break from the grass and we toss the ball a bit?

LANDON
Yeah, ok.

He starts to jog toward the house.

LANDON (cont'd)
You ok?

GUS
Yeah, go on. Won't be daylight forever.

Landon jogs to the house, goes in and comes out with two old gloves. He jogs back to Gus and hands him one.

LANDON
Ready for some heat?

GUS
Yeah, give it yer best shot.

Landon looks at him like he's not really believing this is happening.

GUS (cont'd)
Well, get back there.

LANDON
All right. Let's see what you got.

Gus fires one off. Landon catches it.

GUS
I was going easy on that one.

LANDON
All right.

Landon throws to Gus. He catches it. Again. Back and forth. Back and forth.

Katie and Abby step out on to the front porch

ABBY
Mommy, they're playing catch.

KATIE
Yeah, sweetie. They are.

She puts an arm around Abby.

Landon sees them and waves. Then fires one off for Gus to catch.

INT. LANDON'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The house is quiet. Gus lies awake for a moment.

BIRDS are CHIRPING as the sun slowly rises.

He gets himself out of bed. It's a struggle but he does it.

EXT. HOME - PORCH

Gus comes out on the porch and sits in the rocker he's gotten used to.

The sun is coming up over the mountains. A glorious set of rays shining through the clouds.

He looks over and a younger version of Janet is sitting next to him. The one in the pictures he had in his trailer.

JANET
Hello, darling.

GUS
I was hoping you'd be here.

JANET
Here I am.

GUS
It's time?

JANET
Yes, it is.

Gus looks out over the sunrise.

GUS
I wish I could have given you this.

JANET
You did. In your own way.

She takes his hand.

GUS
Is this heaven?

JANET
It will be.

Gus smiles and closes his eyes.

For a brief moment, the sun goes behind a cloud, then comes out even more spectacularly, lighting up Gus' face.

MINUTES LATER

Landon comes out and sees his dad. Gus's eyes are closed and he looks at peace.

LANDON
Dad. Dad?

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE MORNING

It's a gloriously sunny day. Gus's family, Rick, Melanie are there. Everyone's dressed in bright colors standing at Gus' grave.

RICK
Can't believe the old bastard's gone.

LANDON
Yeah. Me either.

KATIE
(to Carla)
Are you going to stay?

CARLA
No, I need to get back and you all need to get on with your lives.

KATIE
Thank you, for everything.

ABBY
I miss Pop Pop.

LANDON
We all do, squirt.

RICK
Come on, let's go get some breakfast.
Apple fritters on me!

MELANIE
Apple fritters?

RICK
It's a long story. I'll tell you all
about it on our trip.

MELANIE
Trip?

RICK
Yeah, just you and me.

ABBY
Wait!

Abby goes to Gus's grave, takes some flowers and puts them
on Janet's.

ABBY (cont'd)
That's better.

She runs back to her parents.

We SEE the two grave stones - Gus and Janet's next to each
other.

Gus's says Augustus Wilson Armstead. Loving Husband, Father
and Friend. Born May 7, 1954 - Died Sept. 25, 2024.

THE END