

WASTED TIME

written by

S. Armstrong

Marios Rush
Rush Law Corp.
Marios@rushlawcorp.com

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBS OF CHICAGO -- DAY

Glen Haven, Illinois. A once pleasant neighborhood now in decline. It's a mix of overgrown lawns and boarded-up houses. Liquor stores on every corner.

From a nearby alleyway, a JUNKIE emerges. He's got a noticeable limp, favoring his left side; the right leg coming around in small sweeping motions to avoid knee pain.

As he lumbers along the cracked sidewalk, we get a closer look at him. His shoes don't match, there are cigarette burns on his slacks, and dried blood on his collar.

He's rail thin with hollow cheeks, a sickly pale, almost green, complexion.

He has frightened eyes, hair chopped short like he cut it himself.

He wears a felt cap, a navy-blue hoodie ripped at the neck, and fingerless gloves with dirty fingernails.

When he arrives in front of a dated, split-level house decorated for Thanksgiving, he pauses. He really doesn't want to go in...

Finally though, he sighs hard and heads up the front walk. As he does, he passes a mailbox. Written on it in faded block letters is: The Tostigers.

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Arriving at the front door, RICKY TOSTIGER, 33, knocks hesitantly in the middle of a dried-out autumn wreath.

As he waits for someone to answer, he nervously occupies himself. He chances a look at a neighbor's second floor window and gets lost in thought for a moment.

When he hears the sound of someone approaching from inside, he licks his palms and smooths down his hair.

The door opens to reveal his ruddy-cheeked, older sister, TABITHA, 35.

TABBY

You came!

Tabby has curly red hair and freckled skin, a childlike jump to her step.

She smiles wide, almost too good-natured, then wraps Ricky in a hug that he accepts, uncomfortably.

When she finally releases him, she takes him by the arm and ushers him inside.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

As Tabby closes the door behind them, Ricky appears reluctant.

RICKY

I don't know if this was a good idea...

TABBY

Come on, don't. It'll be great.

She leads him down the front hallway, the boisterous, happy sounds of a large family bouncing off the walls. Aunts, Uncles, Cousins... they find most of them in the living room.

TABBY (CONT'D)

Look who's here...

The moment they see him, the conversation dies. His relatives stare at him, shell-shocked; the last person they ever thought they'd see today.

After a moment of silence, a few of them move aside to reveal MAUREEN TOSTIGER, 68. She has a greying nest of thinning brown hair.

RICKY

Hey, ma...

Maureen breaks the silence by hugging him. He lets her until his eyes start to well, then he breaks it off.

As his mother releases him, a man in the corner rises, tired and balding, from a recliner.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Dad...

ALLEN TOSTIGER, 72, is sweaty with a visible paunch. The wispy hairs he has left are in a comb-over. He refuses to look his son in the eye.

ALLEN

Richard.

Trying to keep things light, Ricky's mother interjects.

MAUREEN

Dinner will be just a little while.
Why don't you head upstairs and
grab a shower before.

Ricky nods, embarrassed.

RICKY

I guess I'm pretty ripe.

Maureen shakes her head, not wanting to hurt his feelings.

MAUREEN

No, no. And I'm sure there are
some clothes in your old room.

ALLEN

My office.

RICKY

What?

ALLEN

I turned it into an office a few
years back. Figured you weren't
using it...

RICKY

You're retired.

ALLEN

Still needed an office.

Ricky nods and heads upstairs. He's barely on the first landing when they start talking about him, in urgent, hushed tones. Ricky drops his head and continues up the stairs.

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ricky shuts the door quietly behind him. As far as "an office" goes, there's a desk pushed to the side piled high with tax forms. But besides that, the place is a shrine to the past.

Ricky takes a seat on his double bed with the "Alf" sheets. He looks around the room at his childhood.

The walls are covered in posters: hair metal bands, the Goonies, even a Tawny Kitaen Playboy spread peeking out of his open closet door.

He crosses to his bedroom mirror. It's lined with old photos from high school, including one of Ricky in a football jersey.

He compares the young, happy face in it to his reflection now. Too much time has passed. The lines in the corners of his eyes already prematurely aging him. Same for the sun-damage from exposure and his chapped and peeling lips.

He looks away before it gets to him.

INT. KITCHEN -- SAME TIME

Even though Ricky's upstairs, the family keeps their voices down. AUNT JOANIE, 58, has a suspicious, pinched face. She hisses at Tabby--

AUNT JOANIE

Why would you ever invite him here?!

MAUREEN

Seriously Tabitha, what were you thinking?!

TABBY

Someone told me they saw him in the city. I just wanted us all to be together one last time!

AUNT JOANIE

This is the same kid who stole from the church collection plate, who stripped the copper pipes out of Grandma Ronnie's condo. For Christ sake, he robbed little old ladies! You can't trust a single thing that comes out of his mouth. He's always working some angle...

(beat)

You know what? Give me this--

She takes Maureen's purse and her own and starts shoving them into a kitchen cabinet. Soon, the rest of the family follow suit...

In go wallets, money, jewelry, prescription pill bottles, even mouthwash.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, UPSTAIRS BATHROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky steps into the hot shower and buries his face in the stream. The dirt sluices off him. Down at his feet, brown water collects before circling the drain.

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM -- SOON AFTER

Now dry, Ricky pulls on a "Glen Haven High" sweater and a pair of track pants from a dusty bureau.

Remembering something, he kneels down and removes a false floorboard from beneath his bed.

He reaches deep within and comes out with a dried-up roach that he pockets for later.

As he returns the floorboard to its rightful place, there's a quiet knock on the door.

RICKY

Come in.

His sister enters and takes a seat across from him.

TABBY

How's it feel being back here?

RICKY

Ask me in an hour.

Climbing to his feet, Ricky sits back down on the bed.

TABBY

What do you think of the old place?

RICKY

Looks like the Amityville mansion now.

TABBY

I used to think we had the nicest house on the block.

RICKY

Really? I thought you hated it. You were the first of us to get out of here.

TABBY

Eh, you know how time is...

RICKY
So, how's that bartender?

TABBY
Oh, that's over. He cheated on me.

RICKY
Always hated him.

TABBY
Yeah? You could have given me a
heads up.

RICKY
You want me to plant drugs on him
and call the cops?

TABBY
But where would you ever get drugs?

They break down laughing. And for a moment, the color
returns to Ricky's face. He almost looks like a kid again.

TABBY (CONT'D)
It's good to see you smiling. I
think about you a lot. You know,
what's Ricky doing? It's just so
cold out there--

Her voice hitches and she bursts into sudden, heavy tears.
Ricky squirms, embarrassed.

RICKY
Hey, it's okay...

She waves him off.

TABBY
No, I'm alright. I swear. How are
you? I'm sorry that's a stupid
thing to ask. It's like asking if
you're excited for the holidays...

RICKY
It's just another day for me.

TABBY
I don't know, I always liked this
time of year. Family's all
together... peace on earth, good
will towards men, all that stuff...

RICKY
You can't be serious.

TABBY

What?

RICKY

This time of year isn't fun for a lot of people. I think of Christmas, I think of Ben.

TABBY

Don't do that to yourself.

RICKY

The world is a terrible place. Everyone's just in it for themselves.

Tabby stares at him, disappointed.

TABBY

You really think that, don't you?

RICKY

See for yourself. Just wait until dinner.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- HALF HOUR LATER

Stuffing, mashed potatoes, and all the other extras are already on the table when Allen enters with the turkey. It's a thirty-pounder; nearly too heavy for him. He barely gets it onto the table before he's wracked by a coughing fit.

ALLEN

Dig in, everybody.

Maureen comes to the table with an overflowing drink. She motions to Tabby.

MAUREEN

Move down, sweetheart.

TABBY

You don't want to sit next to Daddy?

MAUREEN

Ugh, can you imagine?

Tabby grabs her plate and slides down.

TABBY

Guess I should just be grateful you didn't put me at the single's table.

ALLEN

Yep, Tabby lost another boyfriend - we're so surprised.

Ricky's about to say something when his sister waves him off.

TABBY

It's just nice that everyone's here.

ALLEN

Not everyone...

TABBY

No, not everyone.

Ricky's eye drifts to a table in the corner with BENJI's framed SCHOOL PICTURE on it surrounded by unlit prayer candles.

As the family begins to tuck in, Ricky tries again.

RICKY

So what's new dad?

ALLEN

Nothing.

TABBY

Tell the truth.

ALLEN

I had some palpitations.

RICKY

What do you mean? You had a heart attack?

ALLEN

Yeah, you almost lost me.

MAUREEN

You know how hard your father works...

ALLEN

That's why no turkey.

He motions to his plate which is piled high with leafy greens. Ricky watches as his father lights a cigarette.

MAUREEN

Al, not at the table for Christ sake!

ALLEN

If I have to eat this rabbit shit, I'm gonna smoke! Would you quit riding me?! We're not married anymore and still you nag!

MAUREEN

You're just mad at the neighbors...

Tabby explains to Ricky.

TABBY

Dad's in a turf war.

ALLEN

I long for the days of the old tenants...

Tabby smiles, mischievously.

TABBY

So does Ricky.

Her brother blushes.

RICKY

Shut up.

TABBY

I heard through the grapevine she's married and pregnant now.

RICKY

Good for her...

ALLEN

You really screwed the pooch on that one.

RICKY

Dad, you always hated her.

ALLEN

Tell you whose life I wouldn't mind is that kid from your class.

RICKY

Who?

ALLEN

Google guy. Sold to Google.

Tabby chimes in, between bites.

TABBY

Max Bronstein. Ricky remembers.

RICKY

No, he doesn't.

TABBY

Oh come on, you tortured the kid.
You were always so hard on him.

RICKY

I have absolutely no memory of
that.

TABBY

Well, you did.

RICKY

I think I remember high school
accurately.

TABBY

You would! You were a golden god!
Not all of us were as blessed.

RICKY

Shut up, I was not!

TABBY

Okay, Mr. Big Man on Campus!

RICKY

Things were just different in the
eighties. All you needed was a
boss haircut and threads and you
could get into any party you
wanted. God, I miss those times.
Days when everything was
possible...

ALLEN

So, what happened?

RICKY

What do you mean?

ALLEN

Star quarterback, most popular kid
in school. Your choice of
colleges. You had so much promise.
What happened?

RICKY

Life happened.

ALLEN

You had every opportunity--

RICKY

You don't know what it was like
growing up in this house.

ALLEN

Oh, you were so neglected...

RICKY

You were never here! And when you
were you were fighting with Mom!

ALLEN

I never fought with your mother.

TABBY

Dad, come on...

RICKY

Then why would I have to tuck Mom
in every night because she was
passed out on the couch--

MAUREEN

--Excuse me?

Aunt Joanie jumps in to defend her sister.

AUNT JOANIE

You should be ashamed! You give
your parents such grief!

Ricky wheels around on her.

RICKY

Oh stuff it, Aunt Joanie! I know
for a fact no one invited you!

She balks, making a noise not dissimilar to a chicken.
Before she can say anymore, Ricky goes back to lambasting his
father.

RICKY (CONT'D)

You were always riding me. Always yelling. Every thing I did had to be perfect. I wasn't given a second chance. I had to get it right the first time.

ALLEN

Oh, you had second chances, third chances, fourth chances. You blew them all. You couldn't hold down a job even when your father went out of his way to help you get one. Instead, we got 3 a.m. phone calls from some random hospital because you never removed me as your in case of emergency. Watched as a staph infection that turned into MRSA or Hep-C or some other goddamn thing and instead of healing it, you called your dealer into the emergency room to shoot drugs into your IV bag. The constant drunk tank pick-ups. The time you sold my credit card information to a loan shark. All the rehabs, all the money we wasted on you--

RICKY

You can afford it!

Tabby tries fruitlessly to keep the peace.

TABBY

Please, my 2nd graders act better than this!

But Allen can't be stopped.

ALLEN

All you did was party and when the party was over you had nothing else to call your own.

RICKY

Well, I'm sorry--

ALLEN

Your 'sorries' don't mean shit anymore. You throw them out like they're nothing. We brought you up better than this!

RICKY

You didn't bring me up at all! I was your son--

ALLEN

I don't have a son. My only boy died in a car crash New Years Eve, 1988.

RICKY

Jesus Christ, dad...

TABBY

Can't we just have a nice Thanksgiving? We've had so few...

ALLEN

Every time I saw you, I thought it would be the last time. I kept hoping you'd get arrested, because then at least we'd know where you were. At least then we'd get a phone call. The sad truth is, you don't want to get high. I could almost understand that. What you want is to feel nothing. And if that's the case, then why don't you save yourself and the people around you a lot of trouble and just end it now.

The tears in his eyes betray the words coming out of his mouth.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

So here--

(reaches into his pocket)

--here's some money to put more of that shit in your veins. Here, just kick your problems down the line. Make them somebody else's--

He throws all the money in his wallet on the ground in front of Ricky.

Ricky stares at the bills, silently furious. Then, very slowly, he sinks to his knees to collect them.

RICKY

Take a good look, because I'm never coming back here again.

He dead eyes his family, gets to his feet, and walks out of the house.

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky hobbles down the front steps. It's only gotten colder. He pauses briefly to pull back on his cap.

He's halfway down the front walk when his mother emerges from the house, holding tupperware.

MAUREEN

Wait!

Ricky slows as his mother makes her way to him.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Please, I need to know you're eating.

RICKY

Mom--

MAUREEN

Just take it.

He sees there's no putting her off. He reluctantly takes the leftovers.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Take care of yourself.

She reaches out and kisses him on the forehead. She looks like she wants to say more, but in the end says nothing. She hurries back inside before she weeps.

Ricky watches her go. He turns back towards the street and continues on his way, dumping the leftovers in the first trash can he passes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN GLEN HAVEN -- MINUTES LATER

As Ricky passes the YMCA, there's an A.A. meeting just letting out. He looks at the sad sacks that make up their ranks with disdain and moves on.

EXT. DEDHAM HEIGHTS -- SOON AFTER

After he crosses the Cunsler Bridge, the neighborhood starts getting seedier. It's like Skid Row without any of the charm.

He makes his way onto a rusted-out PLAYGROUND. There's a man in a TRACK SUIT there, leaning against the swing set.

TRACK SUIT
Same as always?

RICKY
No, give me an eight ball.

TRACK SUIT
High-roller today...

They shake hands, exchanging something.

TRACK SUIT (CONT'D)
You need works?

RICKY
No, I'm good.

Ricky sets off at a healthy gait. As he exits the playground, he passes a chewed-up prostitute who tries to flag him down.

TRACEY
You want any, Ricky?

He barely acknowledges her.

RICKY
Not today, Trace.

In the town square, several businesses have started putting up holiday decorations. Ricky finds shelter under an anemic-looking Christmas tree. It provides just enough cover for privacy.

Digging around in his hoodie, he finds a used needle and rolls his sleeve up.

He takes a bic lighter and cooks the tin foil packet the man in the track suit gave him. When it gets too hot to hold, he switches hands.

As soon as it's bubbling, he sucks it into the barrel and uses his belt to tie off.

Pushing off, he looks up at the FADED STAR atop the Christmas tree and is engulfed in white light.

FADE TO:

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM -- MORNING, 1988

Ricky wakes in another time and another place. He's face down, drooling on his pillow when the alarm goes off.

The Police's "Every little thing she does is magic" comes blaring out of his clock radio. On reflex, he slams it off. As he sleepily sits up in bed, the CREDITS BEGIN.

He braces to lean on his hurt knee when he gets out of bed but finds it's strangely better.

Taking a tentative step, he lands on a "Simon" that chirps loudly. Before this, his eyes were only half open. But the noise wakes him right up.

He looks around at his childhood bedroom. There's none of the dust that covered his father's "office." It almost looks new...

In the place of his father's table, there's an unused IBM word processor and an exercise bike with yesterday's clothes slung over it.

There are Hulk Hogan and Pee-Wee Herman dolls, Van Halen tickets stapled to the wall, and an enormous one-sheet of "Rocky 4."

On his bedside table, next to his "California Raisins" figurines, he has a FISH BOWL. It's filled with business cards from various college recruiters he's collected.

Unable to trust his new surroundings, Ricky goes over to his bedroom mirror and checks out his reflection. He has peachy, youthful skin and muscle tone. He flexes a single arm in the mirror, not believing his eyes.

He throws open his bedroom curtains to reveal: an idyllic suburban winter, a cross between Norman Rockwell and Thomas Kinkade.

He dresses hurriedly, pulling eighties fashions from his drawers.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Ricky emerges cautiously from his room, looking this way and that before committing to exiting.

As he steps out, he hears LOUD MUSIC coming from downstairs and heads down the steps, curiously.

INT. REC. ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky peeks his head around the corner and sees his mother in head to toe lycra.

She's doing the Jane Fonda workout along with the tape. It's high-impact and she's out of breath.

When she sees Ricky though, she beams.

MAUREEN

Hi, sweetie!

RICKY

Mom...?

His mother is thirty pounds slimmer with wild, curly brown hair that bounces as she exercises.

MAUREEN

Feel free to join in!

Ricky's about to respond when a massive St. Bernard knocks him to the ground.

RICKY

Bastian! Oh my god, you're alive!

The dog covers him with the sloppiest kisses that Ricky takes without objection.

His mother looks at him oddly as she ends her workout.

MAUREEN

Honey, are you feeling alright?

RICKY

Course I'm feelin' alright -- I just love this dog!

He crawls into the filthy dog bed to play with Bastian.

MAUREEN

You're not worried about fleas?

RICKY

Fleas never hurt nobody -- did they Bastian?!

Maureen shuts her tape off.

MAUREEN

Well, when you're done here, breakfast is almost ready.

She leaves him there, wrestling with the dog.

EXT. BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

While the dog slobbers on Ricky, BENJI TOSTIGER, 16, is out back behind the house running routes and drills.

He's got a bucket of footballs that he keeps firing through a distant tire swing. Some touch the rubber, but all manage to go through.

Benji has All-American, boyish good looks and altar boy hair. He's currently in the zone, covered in sweat, listening to his yellow day-glo Walkman.

Just when he reaches exhaustion, he steps back and takes a much-needed pull from his INHALER.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MINUTES LATER

When Ricky's done with Bastian, he closes the dog door behind him. Bastian looks at Ricky through the bars, disappointed.

RICKY

Don't look at me like that you
emotional terrorist. I'll be back
later.

Bastian slinks off. As Ricky approaches the KITCHEN, he hears his parents talking and slows down to listen.

ALLEN (O.S.)

I saw it on the T.V. It's a spray
that pretends you have hair. It's
a miracle.

MAUREEN (O.S.)

What's the difference between that
and spray paint.

ALLEN (O.S.)

Well, this goes on your head...

MAUREEN (O.S.)

Before I forget, Tabby called from
college. She needs--

ALLEN (O.S.)

--I know what she needs. Money.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky leans against the doorjamb listening to his youthful parents chatter on.

ALLEN

Did I tell you that Glenn's grant came through? The big government one that's suppose to subsidize low-income housing? But all it's gonna do is bring Dedham Heights and all of their problems flooding into our town. But that's above my pay grade! No, that's an E-suite decision.

Allan sees Ricky in the doorway.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Hey, there he is!

Ricky enters. He sees his father hunched over the table, rubbing his temples and drinking both pepto and alka-seltzer. But both his parents brighten when they see him.

MAUREEN

Sit down sweetie, I'll get you a plate.

Ricky slides into an open seat next to his father.

RICKY

Dad, have you lost weight?

ALLEN

You know, I'm up to about ten crunches a night.

RICKY

Well, it shows.

ALLEN

I got a call from that Concordia recruiter again. Guy seems pretty serious. What does Rutiga say?

RICKY

(playing catch-up)

Uhh... you know Rutiga -- if it's not Division 1, he doesn't care.

ALLEN

I know that's true! Well, just remember we got the guy from Michigan coming Friday.

Maureen places a plate down in front of Ricky.

MAUREEN

I'm sorry for how rushed breakfast is. I'm swamped all day. I got the volunteer charity thing, the PTA phone-a-thon they roped me into, plus dry cleaning and errands.

Ricky looks down at the food. It's a stunning mix of bacon, eggs, pancakes, and freshly-squeezed orange juice.

RICKY

Looks good, ma...

MAUREEN

Oh, you're just placating me.

RICKY

Are you gonna eat?

MAUREEN

I ate already. Plus, I'm not very hungry.

As if Ricky reminded her, Maureen reaches into her apron and takes one of her pills.

Seeing this, Ricky frowns. He's about to dig in when he spots a spoon next to his plate. He slips it into his pocket as the back door opens.

BENJI (O.S.)

Don't tell me you started breakfast without me! Would it kill you to extend an invite?

Ricky looks up to see his brother walk in. He wraps Benji in a massive bear hug. His brother stands there, blinking.

BENJI (CONT'D)

This is weird...

Ricky refuses to let go.

BENJI (CONT'D)

Seriously, I probably smell from working out.

RICKY

I don't care.

He looks over his brother's shoulder and sees the surprised looks on his parent's faces.

MAUREEN

Are you sure you're feeling okay?

She touches Ricky's forehead but he just swats her away.

RICKY

I'm fine! Can't a guy give his brother an extended hug?

BENJI

Yeah, if you're gay...

RICKY

Well, if being gay is loving your brother then sign me up!

Benji manages to wrestle free.

BENJI

There's something very wrong with you.

As Benji sits, he tries to change the subject.

BENJI (CONT'D)

Dad, you see that game last night?

ALLEN

Don't remind me. I lost fifty bucks just because Watkins can't hold onto a football!

BENJI

That's what you get for betting against the Bears! You shit the bed.

ALLEN

Ugh, I would kill for a bowel movement--

BENJI

Ew, Dad!

ALLEN

What? It's the truth!

Benji's only a few bites into his breakfast when his Mom sees the clock above the oven.

MAUREEN

Look at the time, you kids are gonna be late...

RICKY

For what?

MAUREEN

"For what," he says! *For school!*

She's so anxious to clean she takes the plates out of her children's hands--

BENJI

Mom, I'm eating here!

MAUREEN

You can take it to go!

As she shoos them away from the table, Ricky remembers something. He sheepishly looks to his father.

RICKY

Hey uh, dad... I could use some walking around money.

ALLEN

Sure, my wallet is in my room on the dresser table.

RICKY

You want me to just go into your wallet?

ALLEN

How else you gonna get it?

He pats him on the back as he walks by.

RICKY

I'll pay you back.

ALLEN

I know you're good for it, kid.

He winks at him.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Just focus on Friday, alright?

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, DRIVEWAY -- MINUTES LATER

Tucking the money away, Ricky exits the house with Benji.

RICKY

You're pretty rank. You sure you don't want to shower?

BENJI

Nah, I got gym first period. I can shower then.

Ricky turns from his brother and stops in his tracks. In front of him is a gorgeous 1986 bright orange, custom-made TRANS-AM.

RICKY

Cornelius.

He runs his hand up and down the body, reverently.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Hello, old friend.

Benji glares at him.

BENJI

You're being weird today.

RICKY

You have no idea...

They get in. Ricky finds the keys in the visor and a smile breaks onto his face.

He starts it up, throws it in reverse, and peels out, white smoke steaming from the tires as he does a burn out down the driveway and out onto the street.

BENJI

You want to slow it down, Hasselhoff?

RICKY

Not particularly.

As Ricky drives, he can't stop looking at his brother, seemingly back from the dead...

BENJI

Quit staring at me!

RICKY

It's just good to see you.

Benji watches as they miss a turn.

BENJI

Hey, where are we going? This isn't the way to school...

RICKY
I gotta make a pit stop.

He heads across the CUNSLER BRIDGE and into the HEIGHTS.

EXT. DEDHAM HEIGHTS -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky pulls over next to the park he scored from earlier.
It's newer now. None of the rusted-out jungle gym equipment.

RICKY
I'll be right back.

BENJI
You can't just leave me here!

RICKY
Lock the doors, you'll be fine.

Ricky jogs over to the swing set. There's a TEENAGER there
in a track suit, a pair of ray bans, and a pager.

Benji watches as his brother exchanges a few words and shakes
hands with the kid. As Ricky crosses back to the car, Benji
sees him pocket something.

INT. RICKY'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky hops back into the driver's seat.

BENJI
What were you talking to that black
guy about?

RICKY
I think he's Dominican.

BENJI
You know what I mean!

RICKY
It's nothing. Guy owed me money.

Ricky puts the car into drive and gets back on the road. But
Benji won't let it go.

BENJI
I'm not an idiot, Ricky - I know
what drugs are!

RICKY

The fuck do you mean you know what
drugs are? What are you telling
me? You're doing drugs now?!

He grabs his brother by the collar.

BENJI

No, hell no. It's just... you can
tell me if you are.

Ricky releases his brother and smiles wide.

RICKY

Clean as a whistle.

EXT. GLEN HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL -- SOON AFTER

Ricky steers Cornelius into the school parking lot. It's a
sexy car and it gets a lot of looks, especially from the
smokers and bodacious babes cutting class.

They lower their sunglasses as Ricky pulls into a spot. He
hops out, loving the attention.

BABE #1

Heyyy, Ricky!

RICKY

Ladies, how we doing?

He sits on the hood of his car, stretching sleepily, his six-
pack showing. The girls swoon on the spot.

INT. GLEN HAVEN HIGH -- MOMENTS LATER

As they enter, Ricky and his brother pass a POSTER BOARD with
"Countdown to X-mas" on it. It's the time in between periods
when everyone's at their lockers. There are leg warmers and
flair pins on backpacks, shoulder pads and big hair.

BENJI

Is every girl just madly in love
with you?

RICKY

Oh that? That had nothing to do
with me. Twas the car they wanted
to fuck.

They arrive at Ricky's LOCKER and find several LETTERMEN
milling about.

One of them, NED TEDDERMAN, 18, comes from money. He has blonde, wind-swept hair and tall, almost Nordic looks like he just stepped off the ski slopes.

NED TEDDERMAN

Way to go, Tostiger! You missed homeroom!

RICKY

Ned Tedderman?! What the hell have you been up to?

NED TEDDERMAN

Bitch, I saw you yesterday! What's Little Ricky doing here?

BENJI

You know my name. It's Benji.

NED TEDDERMAN

Nuh-uh J.V. scum, you haven't earned a first name yet. Last I heard, only Varsity had made the playoffs.

BENJI

Is this that "hazing" thing all the after school specials were warning me about?

NED TEDDERMAN

You better get out of here, this is a "no virgin" zone--

He throws a fake punch Benji's way.

BENJI

Okay, I'm going!

When Ricky's brother is clear of them, Ned turns back to Ricky.

NED TEDDERMAN

Sweet kid.

RICKY

You're a monster.

STILLMAN

Yeah, you are!

Ned's best friend, STILLMAN, 18, wears a tank top and neon Zubaz pants, his wet jeri curl'd hair cut into a mullet.

He taps Ned in the balls which leads to an extended period of grab-ass that only ends when Ned waves him off.

NED TEDDERMAN
Stop! Stop! Time out! You play
too rough!

STILLMAN
Fine...
(beat)
Truce?

The second Ned shakes his hand, Stillman hits him in the balls again. Ned doubles over in pain.

NED TEDDERMAN
You son of a bitch.

As he tries to catch his breath, he looks past them and sees something in the distance.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Wait... look...

He points and the others turn to see: a dirty blonde with ringleted hair, an off-the-shoulder Flashdance sweatshirt, and tight acid-washed jeans.

TRACEY, 17, has inviting lips, suggestive eyebrows, and the attitude of a Long Island hairdresser.

When her classmates see her, they part like the red sea. Nerds openly drool at the sight of her.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
There she is... Tracey Bonachevitz.

STILLMAN
I think you mean Boner-chevitz.

Ned manages to stand up.

NED TEDDERMAN
Man, you are one lucky son of a
bitch.

RICKY
Why's that?

NED TEDDERMAN
Dude, don't pretend you haven't
been two-timing your girlfriend
with that skank all year!

Ricky's face clouds over as the boys continue to stare.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
 God, I want her to breast feed me.
 It's Breakfast in America and
 Poppa's hungry!

STILLMAN
 Who's Poppa?

NED TEDDERMAN
 I'm Poppa.

STILLMAN
 I thought you liked women to call
 you "daddy?"

As if sensing she's being talked about, Tracey sees them from down the hall. She breaks into an easy smile.

TRACEY
 Hi, Ricky...

Ricky waves, sheepishly.

NED TEDDERMAN
 Yesterday, I wrote a poem about her
 ass. I don't know what came over
 me. I've never written a poem in
 my life.

STILLMAN
 What's wrong with that?

NED TEDDERMAN
 It was 1600 lines long.

As Tracey passes them, she coos--

TRACEY
 Hi, boys...

NED TEDDERMAN
 Tracey.

Liking the attention, she drops her PUFF BALL PEN.

TRACEY
 I don't know what is wrong with me
 today -- *I am such a klutz!*

She leans over to pick it up, taking her time, and making sure she's on full display. We see the "butt" they're talking about...

It is, indeed, a symphony.

The boys moan just as Ricky's girlfriend, LINDA HALLICK, 17, appears at his side.

LINDA
God, would you look at the dumper
on that?! If she sat on your lap
she'd break your dick!

She smacks Ricky on the ass. He turns to face her and is dumbstruck.

She's got pale, porcelain skin, her dark hair done up in a fastidious ponytail.

She dresses like she's on her way to a clarinet recital; in a white, button-up blouse tucked into black slacks and finished with doc martins.

Her manner reads so composed, but the smile on her face is pure anarchy.

Ned looks over to see who has pulled their attention from Tracey.

NED TEDDERMAN
Ugh, it's you.

RICKY
Hey, behave--

But Linda needs no one to fight her battles for her.

LINDA
Ned, if you're here who's clubbing
the baby seals?

NED TEDDERMAN
Was that a joke? Because I've got
a joke of my own -- women's rights!

LINDA
For someone who pretends to hate
me, you sure do care a lot about
what's going on in my uterus.

NED TEDDERMAN
It's a uter-us, not a uter-you, you
crazy hippie. But seriously, I've
given it a lot of thought and I
would definitely let you fuck me.

LINDA

Oh, could I get crabs?!

Out of retorts, Ned blows a raspberry her way. When Linda finally looks back to Ricky, he's staring at her with unadorned love in his eyes.

RICKY

You'd never know there was a sixty-five-year-old Catskills comedian hiding inside you.

He holds her gaze just a beat longer than comfortable.

LINDA

Why are you acting so weird? I'm not used to all this... attention. Usually, you just ignore me until you want to fool around.

RICKY

I just haven't seen you in a while...

LINDA

You saw me yesterday, dummy.

They're about to kiss when VICE-PRINCIPAL BORGNINE, 49, storms up to them. He has a walrus-like build, his stomach spilling over his belt. His suspenders hold up stained khakis. And on his face: a pedo-mustache.

V.P. BORGNINE

Shouldn't we be going to class?

Ned smirks.

NED TEDDERMAN

Oh, do you have class too?

He and Stillman start giggling, but it's Ricky that waves them off.

RICKY

Ignore them, sir. It must be really stressful running a large student body. Looking out for their interests and just getting guff in return.

V.P. BORGNINE

It is, it really is...

(beat)

--hey, what are you up to?!

He leans in to poke Ricky in the chest.

V.P. BORGNINE (CONT'D)
Are you fucking with me?

RICKY
Never!

V.P. BORGNINE
Look here, Tostiger. I, for one,
haven't forgotten about your
history of malfeasance, vandalism,
and senior pranks. As God as my
witness, I will find out whatever
the hell it is you're up to. In
the meantime, let me rephrase...
(beat)
GET TO CLASS!!!

He sees some kids misbehaving down the hall and hurries off.

V.P. BORGNINE (CONT'D)
Hey, put him down! We do not throw
our classmates!

NED TEDDERMAN
We should book it, we're gonna be
late for Eggar's class--

RICKY
Oh, fuck me! That guy hates me!

They shut their lockers as Ricky turns back to his. While no one's looking, he puts the little baggie he bought in the park on the upper shelf of his locker. He slams the door and hurries after his friends.

He doesn't see the baggie fall to the ground. It sits below his locker for a moment before someone hurrying back to class kicks it.

It goes gliding across the waxed floor, where another person kicks it, sending it back the other way. And so on and so on...

Until it arrives at it's resting spot: at a pair of patent leather shoes. Vice-Principal Borgnine reaches down to see what hit him.

When he finally realizes what he's holding, his face turns red with anger.

V.P. BORGNINE
Drugs!

INT. MR. EGGAR'S CLASS -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky and Ned take seats in the back of the class as MR. EGGARS waddles in, placing his briefcase down. He is ovoid with a bow tie and pleated pants.

MR. EGGAR

We are quiet now, class.

As the volume in the room dies down, Ned leans over to Ricky to whisper--

NED TEDDERMAN

How long do you think it's going to take before he absolutely annihilates you?!

Ricky SHUSHES him. But it's too late. To Eggars, it looks like Ricky's still talking.

MR. EGGAR

Ah Mr. Tostiger, our preeminent scholar!

RICKY

Sorry, sir?

MR. EGGAR

Why, what for? Focusing all of your attention on football to the detriment of your studies? I know such behavior has served you well in the past, but in my class you will get no such luxury.

Eggars points to the dense writing behind him on the chalk board.

MR. EGGAR (CONT'D)

As we talked about in class yesterday, "Winter Dreams" was a dry run for themes Fitzgerald would later extrapolate on in Gatsby. What are the so-called "pitfalls of nostalgia" he tries to warn the reader of?

Ricky shrugs.

MR. EGGAR (CONT'D)

No idea? Perhaps the answer is somewhere on the board behind me?

When Ricky still doesn't answer, a smile blooms on Eggar's face.

MR. EGGAR (CONT'D)
You can read, can't you?

Ricky slips seamlessly into a southern accent.

RICKY
Why no sir, I never learned.

They glare at one another until Eggar finally moves on.

MR. EGGAR
Can anyone put Mr. Tostiger out of his misery?

No one bites until a young man in coke-bottle glasses quietly raises his hand in the front row. Eggars gratefully calls on MAX BRONSTEIN, 17.

MR. EGGAR (CONT'D)
Yes?

MAX
He's saying that while looking back can be a balm for people, it can also stop them from moving on, from living life.

MR. EGGAR
Thank you, Mr. Bronstein.

When Ricky hears the name, he tries to get a look at the kid. But Max has the poor posture of someone who wants to disappear. He keeps his head down throughout the rest of the class.

INT. MR. EGGAR'S CLASS -- FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER

When the change of class bell finally RINGS, Ricky stands before any of his peers in order to intercept Max Bronstein. But Ricky gets caught in the scrum of bodies, waiting to exit.

By the time, he reaches the hallway, Max has disappeared into the mass of students switching classes.

Ricky hopelessly looks for him as the JANITOR'S CLOSET opens behind him and a pair of women's arms pull him inside.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET -- CONTINUOUS

Tracey pulls the string on a dangling lightbulb partially illuminating the space.

TRACEY
Hello, sailor!

She runs her hands up and down his chest and through his hair.

RICKY
Tracey, this isn't a good idea...

TRACEY
But it was a good idea yesterday
when I gave you that hummer beneath
the bleachers.

RICKY
That was special. It definitely
was. But I have a girlfriend now.

TRACEY
You had a girlfriend yesterday
too...

RICKY
Yes, and it was wrong what we did.

TRACEY
So wrong!

She tries to nuzzle his neck, but he just barely manages to keep her at bay.

RICKY
Not in a fun way. A morally
reprehensible way!

TRACEY
I love it when you use words I
don't understand.

She tries to kiss him again but this time Ricky grabs her by the arms.

RICKY
Tracey, seriously. I can't cheat
on Linda anymore.

Sulking, Tracey plops down on an upturned bucket.

TRACEY

What does Linda Hallick have that I don't?! Sure she's in all the AP classes, but she's sooo boring!

RICKY

The heart wants what it wants.

TRACEY

This isn't over Ricky.

RICKY

I think it is. I want us to be--

TRACEY

--don't say it!

RICKY

--Just friends.

Tracey stands, turns, and props one leg up on the bucket to show off her best asset.

TRACEY

Friends who fuck?

Ricky shakes his head sadly and exits. After a moment or two though, he pokes his head back inside.

RICKY

This was really hard to say no to.
I just want you to know that.

He walks down the hall, moving his books to cover his visible erection.

INT. CAFETERIA -- NOON

Ricky eats lunch, ravenously. His friends stare at him until Linda finally puts a hand on his arm.

LINDA

You can slow down, you know?

He looks up. Seeing their judgmental faces, he responds sheepishly.

RICKY

Sorry, I'm starving. You just never know when you'll eat again...

NED TEDDERMAN

Well, you have some idea.

Ricky shakes his head.

RICKY
We could be living under a bridge!

LINDA
I know what's going on here.
You're pregnant, aren't you? I
knocked you up.

When a Janitor passes with a rolling GARBAGE CAN, Stillman tries to throw his lunch away. But at the last second, Ricky intercepts it.

RICKY
Are you crazy? There's so much
food left on your plate!

He pockets an unopened milk and scrapes the rest of Stillman's food onto his own plate.

NED TEDDERMAN
You're right. I'll ask the
maitre'd if they have doggie bags.

He motions to an invisible waiter for the check and Stillman LAUGHS.

Over his shoulder, Ned sees Max Bronstein exit the lunch line holding a tray of food.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Hey, don't look now, but there's
that kid who embarrassed you in
English class.

Ricky looks to see who he's talking about.

RICKY
I mean, I wouldn't say
embarrassed...

NED TEDDERMAN
Whatever. I'm still gonna fuck
with him.

RICKY
Come on man, don't do that.

But Ned is already on his feet.

NED TEDDERMAN
Hey dude, you parked in my space.

MAX

Excuse me?

NED TEDDERMAN

In the parking lot. You stole my spot.

MAX

It's not assigned parking--

NED TEDDERMAN

--*they're all my space!*

A look of animal panic crosses Max's face and makes Ned go on the offense.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)

Whoa girl, where you going?!

He puts both his arms up as if he's calming a horse. When Max turns to flee, Ned grabs him by the backpack loop.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)

Settle now! Settle girl!

Max tries hopelessly to get away, but Ned barely has to use two fingers on the kid. The visual is so ridiculous that most of the people in the cafeteria start laughing.

Realizing that it's hopeless to struggle, Max gives up and stands there motionless, letting the laughs escalate around him. Ned smiles when the kid finally goes docile.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)

Good girl. Carrot?

He grabs a wet carrot off someone's lunch tray and shoves it into Max's open mouth. Linda gets Ricky's attention.

LINDA

Are you gonna stop this?! Why are you even friends with him?

RICKY

He's usually good for a laugh...

As Max abandons his backpack and storms out of the cafeteria, Ricky follows after. When he passes Ned though, he throws out a dismissive:

RICKY (CONT'D)

You're such a dick sometimes!

Ned yells after him.

NED TEDDERMAN
Yeah? And you used to be a lot
more fun!

He laughs when he sees Max's BACKPACK still in his hands.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
I don't want this shit.

He hurls it deep into the cafeteria and watches, amused, as
it crowd surfs around the room.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CAFETERIA -- SAME TIME

Ricky catches up with Max just outside the Cafeteria doors.

RICKY
Hey, hold up a second!

Max spins around.

MAX
What do you want from me?!

RICKY
Just to talk for a second. I need
your help with something--

MAX
Why would I help you?!

RICKY
Because we're friends!

MAX
You stuck my head in a toilet
yesterday.

RICKY
I most certainly did not!

He sees Ned exit the Cafeteria behind Ricky.

MAX
Look, you and your jerk friends can
go eat shit for all I care!

He runs off as Ned arrives at Ricky's side.

NED TEDDERMAN
Just let him go.

Ricky turns on his friend.

RICKY
What is wrong with you?!

NED TEDDERMAN
Nothing a little of Jamaica's
finest can't fix.

He unrolls a fat bag of greyish-green weed.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Come on, we're going to Stillman's
van.

RICKY
No, I'm trying to stay clean.

NED TEDDERMAN
From weed?!

He holds the baggie up, smiling.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Come on. You can keep us company.

RICKY
You don't get it -- I'm mad at you.

Ned waves the baggie in his face.

NED TEDDERMAN
Come on! All the cool kids are
doing it!

RICKY
I will stand by the van, I'm not
going in.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- MINUTES LATER

At the far end of the parking lot, Ricky stands next to Stillman's van, shivering. It's been painted to resemble the A-team's van and the amount of smoke that's billowing from it is obscene. It looks like a fire has started.

RICKY
It's freezing out here!

NED TEDDERMAN (O.S.)
(from inside the van)
Then come inside. No one ever got
high from second hand smoke.

RICKY
You're so full of shit. But I'm so
cold, I don't even care.

He opens the door and plunges into the mist.

INT. STILLMAN'S VAN -- LATER

The three of them are so high they can barely speak.

RICKY
What?

NED TEDDERMAN
I didn't say anything.

The van is decorated for Christmas, lit with a string of
lights. Ricky moves a few of them aside to look at the CLOCK
on the dash.

RICKY
Shit, we missed fifth period.

STILLMAN
And sixth. That clock's an hour
slow.

NED TEDDERMAN
That's great then. School day's
over. Good work everybody. Anyone
for pizza?

EXT. DOWNTOWN GLEN HAVEN -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky, Ned, and Stillman walk into town, trudging through the
snow and clutching their winter coats about them.

They pass the town square, where workers are busy preparing
for the annual Christmas tree lighting. Friendly townspeople
wave as they go.

TOWNSPERSON #1
Give 'em hell on Friday, Ricky!

RICKY
You got it!

NED TEDDERMAN
Hey Stillman, did you know that
Ricky was the fucking mayor?!

They arrive at Brick Oven Pizza. There's a Salvation Army Santa out front collecting for charity. While his back is turned, Ned grabs a handful of change out of his bucket. Ricky swats him.

RICKY
Are you actually retarded? I
seriously need to know.

Ned cackles and leads the way inside. He and Stillman make it no problem, but when Ricky tries to enter, his way is blocked by someone exiting with a pizza. Ricky blanches when he sees who it is.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Mr. Hallick...

MR. HALLICK
Hello there, Ricky.

GLENN HALLICK, 53, has a country club tan and prematurely dyed white hair. He smells the air between them.

MR. HALLICK (CONT'D)
Nice fragrance.

RICKY
Oh yeah, I think somebody--

MR. HALLICK
Let's not.

Ricky's stricken quiet.

MR. HALLICK (CONT'D)
What my Linda sees in you is beyond
me.

He starts to walk away when Ricky responds.

RICKY
Maybe she sees my potential.

Hallick gives him a once-over.

MR. HALLICK
I don't.

Ricky bitterly watches him get into his car and drive off. After a moment, he joins his friends inside.

INT. BRICK OVEN PIZZA -- CONTINUOUS

Jingle bells announce the door opening. The place is half pizza joint, half arcade. To one side "Galaga" machines fight for floor space with "Donkey Kong" and "Duck Hunter."

Currently, Stillman and Ned are occupied playing "Paperboy." Ricky joins them, groaning.

RICKY

Of course Linda's dad had to see me high.

NED TEDDERMAN

Who cares? You're dumping her anyway...

RICKY

Says who?!

NED TEDDERMAN

You! Last week.

This is news to Ricky. Seeing that Ned and Stillman are occupied, he walks over to the counter to order.

To his surprise, Max Bronstein is standing there in a red golf hat and apron.

RICKY

Hey, small world!

MAX

(to himself)

Oh my god, why won't this day end?

(then, to Ricky)

Welcome to Brick Oven Pizza, where every pie's authentically Italian. May I take your order?

RICKY

What are you doing here?

MAX

This is my after school job. We're not all rich like you and your friends.

RICKY

Hey man, you got me all wrong. I'm not rich. I'm not the person you think I am.

MAX

I'm supposed to believe you've changed? That the guy who tied me naked to the school flagpole has suddenly found a conscience?!

RICKY

God, I really did a number on you, didn't I?

MAX

Can you just order?

Max stares off, trying desperately not to cry. Seeing the damage he's caused, Ricky changes his approach.

RICKY

Things don't end up well for me. I'm homeless. A pretty bad drug addict. And my family hates me.

MAX

What are you talking about?

Ricky leans in and lowers his voice.

RICKY

I'm technically... from the future.

Max tries to move on to the next customer--

MAX

--Next!

RICKY

It sounds ridiculous, I know. I should have lied, but you're literally the only person I know who might be able to tell me what's going on with me!

MAX

I'm not falling for it, so leave me alone!

By the look on his face, Ricky can tell he's serious. He reluctantly rejoins his friends in the arcade.

RICKY

You win?

NED TEDDERMAN

No, the fuckin' dog keeps coming out of nowhere--

COACH RUTIGA
GENTLEMEN!!!

The three of them whirl around to see COACH RUTIGA, 59, a gruff former marine with saggy skin.

COACH RUTIGA (CONT'D)
Do my eyes deceive me or do we not
have practice in three minutes?

Ned sputters, coming up with a lie.

NED TEDDERMAN
O-Oh yeah, we were just heading
there.

COACH RUTIGA
Then get the lead out!

He doesn't speak so much as growl. The boys hurry outside with Rutiga close behind.

EXT. BRICK OVEN PIZZA -- CONTINUOUS

As the three of them set off jogging back to school, Ricky sees something familiar across the street. His mother's car.

RICKY
Mom?

Maureen is parked next to the pharmacy, sobbing uncontrollably. Ricky's about to go to her when Rutiga bellows--

COACH RUTIGA
Let's go! Get a move on!

Ricky continues on, a concerned look on his face.

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Ricky makes his way up the driveway, exhausted from practice. He finds Max digging around in his garage.

MAX
What are you doing here?

RICKY
You're in the phonebook.

MAX
Not exactly what I asked.

RICKY
We need to finish our conversation.

MAX
Seemed pretty done to me.

Finding the tool he's looking for, Max returns to the LAWNMOWER he's working on.

RICKY
Expecting the grass to grow over the winter?

MAX
No, it looks like it's gonna snow soon and my Mom is always on me to shovel the driveway, so I'm seeing if I can rig something up to do it for me.

Ricky nods, impressed.

RICKY
Hmm, like a Roomba but for snow.

MAX
What?

RICKY
Nevermind.

Max works on his contraption for barely a moment before throwing a screwdriver down angrily.

MAX
The fucked up part of this is I would love to believe you! That time travel is possible. That my favorite sci-fi movies aren't full of shit. That life could actually be interesting. But none of this is going to convince me you've changed.

RICKY
What would?

Max thinks on it and LAUGHS.

INT. DEDHAM HEIGHTS YMCA, BASEMENT -- LATER THAT NIGHT

A line of homeless stand waiting to be fed. At the head of their line are Max and Ricky in plastic aprons and hairnets.

MAX

I volunteer here twice a month. It would be more but my job gets in the way.

RICKY

What are you a saint or something?

MAX

When I was a little kid I would see the bums on the street and ask my Mom why they were out so late. She'd say that they didn't have anywhere to go. And all I could think about was my nice warm bed back at home. I wanted to help. Now I know this is gonna be a bit of a culture shock to you but--

Without batting an eyelash, Ricky pulls up a chair next to two of the foulest looking hobos you've ever seen and starts chatting them up.

INT. YMCA BASEMENT -- SOON AFTER

Ricky is in the middle of a group of unhoused people holding court, telling tales from his life--

RICKY

--So the cop keeps waking me up. I'm like, "*this* bench isn't good for you, *that* bench isn't good for you -- I'm just trying to sleep off a hangover here!"

The homeless LAUGH their toothless grins at him between bites of food. Ricky makes brief eye contact with a family and takes in their two dirt-covered children. He throws them a warm smile and Max notices.

INT. YMCA BASEMENT -- LATER

As the last of the stragglers leave, Max locks up, exhausted. He throws a dirty rag down and takes a seat across from Ricky.

MAX

I'm not saying I believe you. But if I did...

(beat)

...who's the President in this made-up time of yours?

RICKY
George Bush.

MAX
Still?! He must be on his third
term.

RICKY
No, not him. The son. The one who
did cocaine.

MAX
A sitting President did cocaine?!

RICKY
Not in the White House! *In the
seventies!* He's not like blowing
lines in the Oval Office. Can you
imagine?!

MAX
That thing you told me at work...
the part about you being an addict?
Is that true?

Ricky nods.

MAX (CONT'D)
You've never been to rehab?

RICKY
No, I'm no quitter. I did
outpatient a couple times, but it
never took. They wanted to send me
away, but I always refused, always
had some reason. A lot of it is
giving yourself over to a higher
power. God or some shit. And I
just couldn't give him the
satisfaction after what he'd done
to me. I took Methadone for a
while, but I got tired of showing
up for it at the ass crack of dawn.
Plus, it makes you nauseous. But I
don't know if any of that matters
anymore. Since I've gotten here, I
haven't had the urge to fix. I
can't remember the last time I went
even a day without shooting. I
haven't used in hours and I'm not
even sweating.

MAX

Maybe you haven't built up a tolerance yet. That's good.

RICKY

How is that good?

MAX

Well, if shooting got you here it isn't so far out of left field to suggest that doing it again might send you back.

RICKY

So I just have to stay California sober and I can live here as long as I want?

MAX

Well, that's one theory.

RICKY

I can do California sober. I feel good for the first time in forever. I'm not strung out. I've got a body I can run into the ground and an erection that won't quit. I don't have to worry about a job or where my next meal's coming from or where I'm gonna sleep tonight... I can get it back... who I used to be. I can be a kid again. But do it right this time.

EXT. POPLAR FIELD -- FRIDAY NIGHT

Ricky accompanies his parents up the ramp that leads to the bleacher stands.

MAUREEN

Why are we here so early?

ALLEN

Ricky insisted. Said we had to go to Benji's game too.

MAUREEN

Maybe next time you don't park us all the way on the other side of the lot.

ALLEN

You park there so that you're the first person out when the game is over.

MAUREEN

Not if you have to walk to your car with everyone else!

RICKY

Can you guys please stop fighting?

ALLEN

Who's fighting?

The stands are sparsely populated; the J.V. game clearly not a draw. Finding seats, they spot Benji on the sidelines and give him a wave. He returns it, surprised as hell to see family at one of his games.

Nearby, the marching band warms up. Ricky sees Linda looking cute as a button in her uniform. When she sees him looking at her though, she yelps--

LINDA

Don't look at me -- I'm hideous!

Ricky LAUGHS.

RICKY

You look great!

She sticks her tongue out at him and turns back to her bandmates.

Ricky sits back. He finds himself seated next to his mother. Now's as good a time as ever...

RICKY (CONT'D)

Mom, I saw you in town the other day.

MAUREEN

Oh? When?

RICKY

You were crying...

MAUREEN

Oh, that? That was nothing. I stubbed my toe.

RICKY

Look, if there's something going on
with Dad you can tell me.

MAUREEN

Honey, your father is healthy.
There's nothing wrong with him--

The Hyenas score suddenly and Maureen jumps to her feet. As
the stands cheer, Ricky is almost completely drowned out.

RICKY

Not what I meant...

EXT. POPLAR FIELD -- LATER

It's late in the fourth quarter. The Hyenas are up a
touchdown, but the Milford Raiders are on the Hyenas three
yard line about to score.

Switching things up, the J.V. Coach swaps three players and
sends in relievers for the defensive line, one of them Benji.

MAUREEN

Hey, hey! They're putting Benji
in!

ALLEN

Yeah, just in time for an upset.

MAUREEN

Stop that! He'll do great!

As Benji's family collectively hold their breath, the Milford
Raiders Quarterback calls the play up and down the line.

Hiking it, he fakes handing the ball off to a runner and
instead fades back to pass. He sees a receiver deep in the
end zone and throws.

Only Benji is nearby. As the guy moves forward to catch,
Benji is able to reach him on the one yard line.

He drives his foot into the ground, pushing the receiver back
for a loss. When he finally goes down, the crowd erupts.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Dressing for the Varsity game, Ricky pulls on his football
pads. As he closes his gym locker, his friends come starkly
into focus.

Ned's preparing a syringe, pulling liquid from a clear bottle. He hands the needle off to Stillman, who sticks it unceremoniously in his ass.

RICKY
When did this start?

NED TEDDERMAN
It's just something a couple of us
are doing.

STILLMAN
Yeah man, helps with recovery.

NED TEDDERMAN
It's so we can go to state. You
want some? I got pills too.
Stillman just likes sticking things
in his ass--

STILLMAN
Hey, fuck you, man!

RICKY
No thanks. I heard it shrinks your
balls.

NED TEDDERMAN
You've seen my balls. I've got
balls to spare.

EXT. POPLAR FIELD, SIDELINES -- LATER

Everyone's serious now. The varsity team's up against their own fourth quarter crisis. They're down by two within field goal distance. Ricky calls a huddle.

NED TEDDERMAN
We going for three?

RICKY
They've been on us all night. In
what world do they not swat it out
of the air?

Ned smiles, knowingly.

NED TEDDERMAN
It's time for one of those Ricky
plays, isn't it?

RICKY
Maybe...

He leans in to whisper to the kicker.

NED TEDDERMAN
Care to share with the class?

RICKY
Just block like we're kicking it.
I'll handle the rest.

They line up and Ricky calls the play. As the teams collide, Ned hikes him the ball. Ricky makes like he's going to hold it for a field goal...

But as the kicker approaches, Ricky stands suddenly. He uses the kicker as a human shield, running behind him.

When one of the Raiders takes the kicker down, Ricky's suddenly all alone with two defenders moving in.

He makes a desperate, last-second jump and is just able to squeeze the ball into the end zone before being tackled out of bounds.

It's enough excitement to send the fans streaming out onto the field.

Getting to his feet, Ricky pushes through the crowd of well-wishers to get to Linda. He wraps her in an all-consuming kiss that drops her flute to the grass.

From the stands, Allen watches his son make out with his girlfriend, and a worried look crosses his face.

INT. ALLEN'S BUICK -- LATER

Allen drives his sons home silently, something on his mind. After a beat, he finds Ricky in the rearview mirror.

ALLEN
I don't want you getting too
serious with just one girl.

RICKY
You want me to get serious with
many girls?

ALLEN
You know what I mean. You want to
be free to play the field in
college, right?

RICKY

You don't know what you're talking about.

ALLEN

What if she gets pregnant, Ricky? I'm worried that you're gonna blow it all. You have a bright future in front of you as long as you don't get in the way of it.

EXT. NED TEDDERMAN'S HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Ricky leads his little brother up to a crowded mansion party.

RICKY

You seem nervous.

BENJI

I'm not you. I can't just walk up to a girl. You sure it's okay I'm here?

RICKY

You're with me. You're golden. But if you want to go just say the word.

Benji sees two girls making out.

BENJI

No, I'm good.

RICKY

Hey, if any of these girls get fresh with you, you just tell them you're waiting for marriage.

BENJI

(laughs)

Shut up!

Ricky knocks and the door almost immediately opens. Ned stands there sharply-dressed in a black turtleneck. He raises his snifter to the new arrivals.

NED TEDDERMAN

Hello, friends. Cognac? It tastes...

He takes a sip and winces.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
...like cologne.

RICKY
No thanks.

Ned steps aside to let them in.

INT. NED'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

As Ned shuts the door behind them, he shows his new guests the lay of the land.

NED TEDDERMAN
Welcome, Tostigers! Glad you could make it. This is my sophisticated shin-dig. Over here we have seasonal favorites: cocoa, egg nog, cider, hot toddies.

In the kitchen, they find the rest of the HYENAS. The moment the football players see Benji they start howling--

THE HYENAS
Little Ricky! Little Ricky!

Benji's so proud he doesn't even bother correcting them. He scans the party, liking the attention, and sees Tracey Bonachevitz dancing on a table. She winks at him and he nods, shyly.

NED TEDDERMAN
Little Ricky, there's jungle juice in the trash can. If you're a bitch though, there are wine coolers in the fridge.

RICKY
He's good.

BENJI
Don't talk for me!

Ned cackles, gleefully.

NED TEDDERMAN
Oooh! Ricky Senior -- where's the missus tonight?

RICKY
Had to study.

NED TEDDERMAN
On a Friday night?! What a nerd!

Those in earshot boo her as Ned grabs a hat filled with scraps of paper.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Just as well, she probably wouldn't want you to play what we're playing.

RICKY
What's that?

He shouts so the rest of the party can hear him--

NED TEDDERMAN
Seven minutes in heaven!

Everyone cheers. Ned digs two names out of the hat.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
And wouldn't you know -- Ricky
Tostiger and Tracey Bonachevitz!

Upon hearing her name, Tracey pauses perched on the table she's been dancing on.

RICKY
What?! There's no way--

He reaches for the slips of paper but Ned pulls them away.

NED TEDDERMAN
Nuh-uh, no sore losers -- now git, you two!

He pushes them towards the stairs. Ricky reluctantly heads up with Tracey as Ned yells after them.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
And if you're gonna have sex...
(beat)
Please, do it in my parent's bed.

INT. NED'S PARENT'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ricky enters the master bedroom and Tracey closes the door behind them.

TRACEY

God, you were like an animal on the field tonight. It's so nice to finally have some alone time...

She drops her Whitesnake jean jacket to the floor and kicks off her shoes.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something? Are my jeans too tight. That's what Vice-Principal Borgnine told me. He said he could see my underwear which is a total lie because I'm not wearing any.

RICKY

Jesus Christ...

TRACEY

You don't believe me?

RICKY

No, I believe you.

She pulls her acid-washed jeans down a bit to show him.

TRACEY

See?

Ricky stands there, breathing heavily.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

You're awfully quiet...

RICKY

You ever feel like God is testing you?

TRACEY

Huh?

RICKY

We can't do this Tracey.

TRACEY

No, we can. I go without underwear all the time.

He helps pull her pants back up.

RICKY

That's not what I'm talking about.
This! You and me. I won't hurt
Linda like this.

Tracey flops down on the bed, head in her hands.

TRACEY

Just once I want to be with a guy
who refuses to cheat on me.

RICKY

Your bar is set so very low.

TRACEY

All guys want to do is feel me up
and get a quick bj. No one's
bringing me home to Mom. And
that's a shame because I would be a
great daughter in law! I am
consistently the best student in
home ec! Which is ironic because
everyone thinks I'm dumb--

She breaks down crying. Ricky sits down next to her.

RICKY

Hey now, you just used
"consistently" and "ironic" in a
sentence. You're not stupid. And
I promise, you're gonna find
somebody. You just... you can't
give up on yourself. It doesn't
matter if other people think you're
nothing... it only matters if you
do.

She smiles through her tears.

TRACEY

Thanks Ricky, you're sweet. That
Linda's a really lucky girl.

INT. TEDDERMAN HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- SOON AFTER

Ricky comes downstairs alone. As he descends, he sees
Stillman hand his brother a beer. He hurries over.

RICKY

Whoa! What is going on?! Who said
you could drink?!

BENJI
Easy Mom, it's not my first.

STILLMAN
No, it's definitely not his first!

RICKY
Great, you're getting my brother
drunk.

STILLMAN
Because you weren't here to do it!

Benji sees Tracey sheepishly return from upstairs.

BENJI
Forget that, what was it like?

RICKY
Do you really think I'd cheat on
Linda?

NED TEDDERMAN
You have before...

BENJI
He has?

Ricky sees himself fall in Benji's estimation. He looks out over the party. It's gotten out of control...

There's a pizza on the turntable, a cheerleader doing body shots off a linebacker, and in the corner, a GUY announces:

GUY #1
Hey, Everybody -- I just learned
how to moonwalk!

He moonwalks for approximately a second and a half before he falls backwards, shattering a glass table.

RICKY
Okay, this party has about a five
minute shelf life left.
(to Benji)
Finish that, we gotta go.

BENJI
Ugh, we just got here!

Benji balks, but reluctantly listens to his brother. He chugs his beer and lets himself be dragged towards the front door.

They're about to exit when their way is blocked by a couple of new arrivals: the Dedham Heights football team.

Ned is on his feet, instantly. He goes right up to their Quarterback.

NED TEDDERMAN

Rico Tavalares, you greek wop. Who the hell invited you?!

RICO TAVALARES, 18, answers for his entire team.

RICO TAVALARES

I guess our invitations got lost in the mail cause we had to hear about your party from some hot piece of ass down at 7-11.

NED TEDDERMAN

I thought in the ghetto they called parties "barbecues."

Ned high-fives Stillman and the Hyenas laugh amongst themselves.

RICO TAVALARES

Yeah, we were gonna roast a pig, but then I remembered your mom was coming--

Ned snaps. Decks the guy. It ignites a brawl between Dedham Heights and the Hyenas...

Ricky tries to stay on the sidelines, but his brother is only too happy to participate. Benji tackles several linebackers and immediately gets on top of one of them, raining down punches.

Suddenly, the sound of POLICE SIRENS fills the air and blue & red lights shine through the house curtains facing the front yard.

NED TEDDERMAN

Police! Scatter!

It's utter mayhem. Everyone runs from the house. Ricky has to pull his brother off the unconscious linebacker he's punching.

RICKY

Benji, we gotta move!

Finally, Benji hears the sirens and nods. He gets to his feet and follows his brother out into the backyard.

EXT. TEDDERMAN HOUSE, BACKYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Some of the high schoolers stream into the woods, others chance running down the driveway to get to their cars.

Ricky pulls Benji through a hedgerow into a neighboring backyard. They land in a garden, trudging through dead and dying plants.

Hopping over a fence, they emerge onto a side street. Down the block, a SQUAD CAR is rounding up fleeing suspects.

Ricky and Benji turn to run the other way and are enveloped by a blinding white spotlight from a second COP CAR--

OFFICER LEVELL

Don't even think about running.

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, FRONT STOOP -- SOON AFTER

OFFICER LEVELL, 36, presents Ricky and Benji to their father.

OFFICER LEVELL

Like I said, I recognized your boy from last week's game and decided to cut him loose. Consider it a gesture of Christmas goodwill. But next time, he won't be so lucky.

ALLEN

I understand. Thank you, Officer.

Levell tips his hat and heads back to his cruiser. As he pulls off, Allen turns back to his boys.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Get in this house -- this instant!

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Once inside, Benji tries to explain, but Allen just waves him off.

ALLEN

I don't want to hear it! You -- go to your room!

Benji hurries off as Allen turns to his older son.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

And you. Do you have any idea how scary it is to be woken up by a cop? You could have ruined everything tonight. Just what were you thinking?!

RICKY

It was the wrong place, wrong time.

ALLEN

You got that right. How's your brother going to look up to you if you act like this?

RICKY

Don't worry about Benji. I've got Benji.

ALLEN

You sure? Cause you're doing a hell of a job leading by example. God, when are you going to get serious about your future, huh? I can't be the only one planning it.

RICKY

No one asked you to!

ALLEN

If I didn't, no one would! You've always been aimless. Ricky, if I had what you had there'd be no stopping me.

He runs a frustrated hand through his hair.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

It kills me to see you not trying. So for all our sakes... there comes a time in everyone's life when they have to ask themselves -- am I part of society or aren't I? If you are, then get in line!

He leaves his son standing there, fuming, and walks over to pour himself a drink.

As Ricky storms off to bed, he passes an open room. His mother's inside, still awake and obsessively vacuuming in her slip.

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ricky paces, angrily. He throws the curtains open to get some fresh air in the place and sees Linda in her bedroom across the way. She's sitting in her window frame writing in a journal. Ricky slides his window up.

LINDA

Well, hello there. Trouble on the home front?

RICKY

Oh, you heard?

LINDA

I think the whole neighborhood did.

RICKY

I just can't talk to that guy. Can you tell your dad to lay off my dad at work? Maybe then he'll lay off me. Just because his own life sucks doesn't mean he's got to take it out on me.

Ricky notices music playing at a low volume.

RICKY (CONT'D)

What's that you're listening to?

She motions over her shoulder at a Billy Joel poster.

LINDA

What else?

RICKY

You and your piano rock...

LINDA

Just as soon as that wife of his dies, I'm in.

RICKY

He's catchy and all, but I need something with some balls. Something that grabs you and won't let go.

LINDA

You're missing out. No one writes better love songs. Ones that say you're the only girl for me and I'm the only one for you.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

It takes courage to put yourself out there like that. Or balls, if you will.

Ricky smiles, bashfully.

RICKY

You know, I had a dream about you last night. We were married, going to dinner parties with close acquaintances at Christmas. You were all snuggled up in your winter coat with the rosiest cheeks and you're whispering your dirty jokes into my ear the entire ride home, so that by the time we get to the house I have to have you right then and there on the living room floor. We can't even make it upstairs...

She leans her head back, contentedly.

LINDA

I don't know what to do when you get sincere.

She stares at him, lovingly, but for some reason, Ricky can't keep eye contact.

RICKY

Linda, I gotta tell you something...

LINDA

Does it have to do with the cop car?

RICKY

In a way. I don't ever want to lie to you...

(beat)

...but I have in the past. I haven't always been faithful to you.

Linda sits up, straight.

LINDA

Wow, we're actually having this conversation.

RICKY

I'm only telling you this because I don't want to be with anyone else.

She stares off, still and quiet.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Please say something.

LINDA
I'm kind of tired. I think I'm
gonna go to bed.

Before he can object, she's closed her curtains. And Ricky is left alone with his thoughts.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MONDAY MORNING

Ricky exits his room, dressed for school. He hitches his backpack onto his shoulder and heads downstairs. On the landing, he passes Benji, coming in from exercising.

BENJI
Hey, where you going?

RICKY
I'm heading in early.

BENJI
Sure, let me just shower quick--

RICKY
No, you should catch the bus. I
got stuff to do.

BENJI
Come on, it'll be three minutes--

RICKY
--I gotta go. I'll see you later.

Benji watches his brother head out the front door, wondering what he did wrong.

INT. BAND ROOM -- SOON AFTER

Ricky knows where to find Linda at this time of day. The room is filled with band geeks tuning up their instruments. They stare at Ricky as he enters. He's on their turf now.

He makes his way through the acne, braces, and wispy mustaches to find Linda in the corner of the room, cleaning her flute.

RICKY
Can we talk?

LINDA

There isn't much to say. I'm not an idiot. I knew there was something going on. Maybe I turned a blind eye to it cause of the Ricky Tostiger thrill ride, but that wasn't right either.

RICKY

I know.

LINDA

Maybe this is a good thing. We're graduating in a couple months. Probably going to different schools. We should save ourselves some heartache, you know?

She starts packing her instrument up.

RICKY

Please Linda, I hate myself for what I've done--

She smiles, softly.

LINDA

I wish I hated you too.

She heads out of the room. Ricky sighs.

RICKY

I guess that's it...

GIDEON, 16, a saxophonist with stringy hair, scoffs.

GIDEON

I can't believe you're giving up that easy.

RICKY

Do I know you?

He hops down from a storage crate smoking a clove cigarette.

GIDEON

You get to date a literal angel and you're ready to throw in the towel? There's not a man in here who wouldn't cut off his bow hand for just one date with Linda Hallick!

RICKY

You don't think I know that?! What can I do? She wants to end it.

GIDEON

Man, you football players are dumb. That's not what she said... you know what?! Nevermind. I don't even know why I'm trying to help you. You've been a dick to me all year.

RICKY

I have?

A second geek rises, this one with an overbite.

GEEK #1

To me too.

Another stands with mutton chops.

GEEK #2

And me.

One-by-one, most of the geeks stand. Ricky looks around the room and feels shame. He stares at his feet.

RICKY

I'm sorry. I see I hurt a lot of you. I learned recently that I kind of used to be an asshole. It seems like I have a lot of growing up to do.

Gideon approaches the standing bass player with the lazy eye.

GIDEON

What do you think, Maurice?

GEEK #3

He seems to be on the up and up, but we've been burned before.

RICKY

Please, just tell me what to do!

GIDEON

You need to win her favor. And what better way than with a great, big, public display of affection.

RICKY

You want me to make out with her in front of everyone?

GIDEON

No! We want you to show the entire school how you feel. It's the only way she changes her mind.

RICKY

In football, we call those "hail marys."

GIDEON

If we agree to help you, do you promise that the bullying stops?

RICKY

Scout's honor.

Ricky throws up the "Star Trek" salute and most of them groan.

RICKY (CONT'D)

What?

GIDEON

I have a feeling I'm going to regret this.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- AFTERNOON

At a pep rally for the school's football team, Ned drones on endlessly, speaking in sports platitudes--

NED TEDDERMAN

We're gonna take the fight to them... and Dedham Heights won't know what hit 'em... because this is our house... and when it comes time for the Hyenas to roar...

BACKSTAGE

Max is in charge of audio for the pep rally. He stands at a large MIXING BOARD next to Ricky who's dressed in MECHANIC'S OVERALLS.

RICKY

I think I'm gonna vomit. I must be crazy for doing this...

MAX

You can still call it off.

RICKY

No, it's too late. Besides, I got shop class and the theater kids to chip in.

(beat)

They're doing "Grease."

MAX

Alright, then. Here goes nothing...

He presses a few buttons and holds his breath.

ON STAGE

Ned's still droning on.

NED TEDDERMAN

...and they better just watch out if they know what's good for 'em--

The lights go out just as Ned's mic is cut. Behind him, the curtain rises and Ricky's VOICE fills the room.

RICKY (O.S.)

I'd like to dedicate this to a young woman who doesn't think she's seen anything good today.

In the bleachers, Linda recognizes the voice.

LINDA

What is going on...

Tough, Italian harmonies ring out from the wings of the stage. They come from a couple theater kids dressed up as grease monkeys. They sing into their wrenches like they're microphones.

Ricky appears on stage, in the backroom of a garage getting ready for work. He takes a handful of brylcreem and combs it into his hair, slicking it back.

There's a *Sports Illustrated* layout of Christie Brinkley on the beach in his locker. Only he's plastered Linda's head onto her body. It gets a laugh from the audience.

As the Orchestra kicks in, Ricky opens his mouth and begins to serenade the picture--

RICKY

Uptown Girl! She been livin' in
her white bread world! As long as
anyone with hot blood caaaaaan! And
now she's lookin' for a downtown
maaaan! *That's what I am--*

The MECHANICS harmonizing with Ricky have come up with some elaborate choreography. There are backflips and pirouettes, with one of them doing an extended windmill, spinning around on his head.

The Mechanics hop down off the stage and hurry over to Linda in the cheap seats.

A large SPOTLIGHT finds them as they place a large SUN HAT atop her head.

They help her into a cardboard cut-out of a Rolls Royce that ushers her up onto the stage.

As they wax the car and shine the windshield, Ricky helps her out, her mouth agape with a mixture of bewilderment and amazement.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Come on, I know you know the
steps...

She reluctantly joins Ricky and the Mechanics in a line dance that she's somehow able to keep up with.

There are shoulder shimmies, body rolls, and pelvic thrusts; moves filled with sexual yearning.

As the song reaches it's epic finale, Linda stares at Ricky, blown away, as he hits that killer high note.

It all ends with one spectacular moonwalk. But unlike the guy at Ned's party, Ricky nails it. And it's the smoothest thing you've seen in your goddamn life.

He pulls Linda onto his bike and kisses her like the world's ending.

Together, they ride off on his Harley to showers of CONFETTI and insane APPLAUSE.

When it finally subsides and the HOUSE LIGHTS come back on, Ned awkwardly returns to the podium, dumbfounded as to how to follow that.

NED TEDDERMAN

Well, I guess...

(beat)

See you at the game Friday?

INT. MAX'S ROOM -- DAY

Ricky looks around Max's room, quietly impressed. It's a shrine to pop-culture. There are posters of "Robocop," Freddy Krueger dolls, Delorean models, even a sticker of Slimer from "Ghostbusters."

Ricky arrives at a work desk covered in the guts of broken Nintendos and Ataris.

RICKY

You're pretty handy with a soldering iron. What happened here?

MAX

Oh, I'm trying to add bits to the frame rate. Make the games more detailed. I think that's the future.

Max turns back to the notebook he's been writing in.

MAX (CONT'D)

So, I've been thinking a lot about your situation. What if you died and this is heaven?

RICKY

This can't be heaven - my dad's here.

MAX

What if you were sent back to kill someone Terminator-style?!

RICKY

No one springs to mind. Besides, in the sequel, the Terminator's a good guy protecting Sarah Connor--

MAX

There's a sequel?!

RICKY

Yeah, and it's better--

MAX

You shut your mouth!

RICKY

Wait and see...

MAX

You were telling me about Ned?

RICKY

Yeah, so he traps me and Tracy Bonachevitz in his parent's bedroom knowing full well I have a girlfriend.

MAX

He just thinks he can do whatever he wants because he's handsome.

Ricky arches an eyebrow towards his friend.

RICKY

Uh yeah, totally...

(beat)

Anyway, the Dedham Heights kids crashed the party and suddenly we're fighting. We end up getting arrested. It was a whole thing. My dad reamed me out. Told me I was a bad influence on Benji. I think maybe he's right. I'm going to start steering clear of Benji altogether.

MAX

Why? What happens to him?

RICKY

He gets into a car wreck coming home from a New Year's Eve party. You better believe, if I have to handcuff him to our front door he's not going to that party.

MAX

Well, that's if the universe lets you. There's a school of thought that says time will do whatever it needs to do to keep order. Including thwarting your plans.

RICKY

You're saying I won't even get a chance?

MAX

Why don't you put it to a test.
Take a major life event, something
coming up, that you can change and
see what happens.

Ricky nods, thinking.

MAX (CONT'D)

You've got one?

RICKY

This upcoming game against Dedham
Heights... I get clobbered on some
play. Blew out my knee. It's what
started me on pills.

MAX

If anything was worth changing...

EXT. O'HARE AIRPORT -- LATE AFTERNOON

Allen peers over the steering wheel through the foggy
windshield, trying to read door numbers.

ALLEN

I can't see a goddamn thing.

BENJI

You think it's maybe time to get
glasses?

ALLEN

I don't need glasses, I just need --
there she is!

Tabitha emerges from the crowd of passengers, smiling
ecstatically and waving.

TABBY

Hi, Daddy!

She jumps in the backseat and wraps her arms around him.

ALLEN

Hi, Button!

TABBY

Where's Mom?

ALLEN

Your Mom's back at the house having
a rest.

Tabby nods, disappointed, but doesn't push it. She tries to sit back and get comfortable but Benji is taking up valuable real estate.

TABBY

God, can't you move!

BENJI

Jesus Tabby, didn't you get the hint when Mom and Dad didn't have a second daughter? You were a mistake!

They stare at each other for a tense beat before bursting out laughing.

TABBY

Awww, I missed you!

BENJI

I missed you!

RICKY

What? Am I not in the car?

EXT. POPLAR FIELD -- NIGHT

The stands are packed for the annual Dedham Heights-Glen Haven game. On the sidelines though, Ricky refuses to talk to Ned.

NED TEDDERMAN

You've been hard to get on the phone. A lesser man might think you were ignoring him...

(beat)

Come on Tostiger, what did I do?

Ricky says nothing.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)

You're seriously gonna go into a playoff game giving your second-in-command the silent treatment?!

RICKY

You know what you did!

NED TEDDERMAN

Excuse me if I didn't know you were a born-again Christian when it came to your girlfriend. I was just trying to help a brother out.

RICKY

Dude, you punched the opposing team's quarterback in the face! You don't think that's gonna come back to haunt us?!

NED TEDDERMAN

Oh, I hope it does! Let those pussies come for me!

COACH RUTIGA (O.S.)

Ricky!

Ricky turns to see Rutiga waving him over from the stands. He's accompanied by Ricky's dad and a MAN he doesn't recognize.

COACH RUTIGA (CONT'D)

Come on over here. Ricky Tostiger, I'd like you to meet Bill Norman.

Allen mouths to Ricky:

ALLEN

Scout for Michigan.

BILL NORMAN, 59, extends his hand to Ricky.

BILL NORMAN

Pleased to meet you, Ricky. Sorry we missed you the other night.

RICKY

(shaking his hand)

Yeah, I'm sorry about that. I got my dates mixed up.

BILL NORMAN

Accidents happen. Just make sure you put on a good show for us tonight.

RICKY

You got it, sir.

Ned appears, out of nowhere, next to Ricky.

NED TEDDERMAN

Don't you worry sir, we're gonna put on a clinic for these chumps!

Bill Norman stares blankly at the interloper who's just arrived. When no one says anything, Coach Rutiga finally introduces him.

COACH RUTIGA
Bill, this is Ned Tedderman.
(beat)
He's one of our linemen.

Ned holds a hand out for Norman to shake.

NED TEDDERMAN
Currently, uncommitted to any
institution of higher learning.

The Scout nods, unsure of what he wants him to say.

BILL NORMAN
Uh son, you wanna give us a minute
here?

Ned finally gets that he's encroaching.

NED TEDDERMAN
Of course! Do your thing!

He walks away, turning red and fuming. Returning to the sidelines, he digs around in his equipment bag until he comes out with a baggie of oral steroids.

He opens a water bottle and starts unscrewing pills into it. He gives it a shake.

Looking around, he sees that Ricky has finished his convo with Bill Norman. As he kneels down to tie his shoes, Ned replaces Ricky's water bottle with the tainted one.

He watches as Ricky takes a healthy swig and goes running off to join the offense.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
You're welcome.

EXT. LINE OF SCRIMMAGE -- MINUTES LATER

As the Glen Haven Hyenas line up, they come face-to-face with the Dedham High Sentinels who are frothing with anger from the party brawl and are ready to kill.

The moment the ball is snapped, the Sentinels take their demons out on the Glen Haven team. The Hyenas defensive line is clobbered time and time again and even when they have the ball, Ricky gets sacked more than once.

EXT. POPLAR FIELD -- LATER

Everyone's exhausted. Ricky waves his team in. He joins the huddle, gritting his teeth. Ned, out of breath, says what he's thinking.

NED TEDDERMAN

I think we should run it, they're not--

Ricky cuts him off.

RICKY

Alright, shut up for a second. 37-
Bravo.

He pokes Stillman in the chest.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna pitch it to you on the outside. Stillman, when I throw, you better fuckin' be there!

Stillman's about to respond, but Ricky's already moved onto Ned.

RICKY (CONT'D)

And you. Your ONLY job is to stop them from rushing me. You think you can handle that?!

NED TEDDERMAN

Yeah, man.

When they hike it, Stillman's where he's supposed to be. But the second, Ricky tosses it to him, he's tackled right on the line of scrimmage.

RICKY

Goddammit!

Ricky looks at the clock. There's 3:51 left in the third quarter and they're down by two touchdowns. He calls a--

RICKY (CONT'D)

Timeout.

Then jogs over to the sidelines. But he doesn't stop there. He finds Max in the stands and waves him over to the railing.

RICKY (CONT'D)

This is it. This is when it happens. I fall back to pass and they blitz out of nowhere.

(MORE)

RICKY (CONT'D)

I break left when I should go right
and one of the defensive backs
spears me round the midsection.

MAX

You know what you're gonna do?

RICKY

I assume anything but what I did
the first time.

MAX

Well, good luck. We're all pulling
for ya.

Ricky returns to the line, the eyes of everyone upon him. He calls out the play and hikes the ball.

As he pulls back to throw, right on schedule, there's the blitz. He watches as a wall of 250 lb. linemen break through their defense. They demolish Ned, who tries to block in vain.

On blind instinct, Ricky turns in his tracks. He sees the fullback who speared him, approaching. As the guy goes in for the tackle, Ricky leaps with all his might, hurdling him entirely.

He lands on his feet, a clear path to the end zone. But when he pushes forward, two Sentinel defensemen come out of nowhere and hit him at the same time.

One collides with his top half, the other drives his shoulder into Ricky's ankle. The combined effect spins Ricky around in mid-air. He lands in a violent heap as the crowd gasps.

His family shrieks. Linda screams. They follow the Coach out onto the field, hoping beyond hope that he's okay.

INT. URGENT CARE -- SOON AFTER

Ricky's being attended to by a PHYSICIAN as his parents come rushing in.

MAUREEN

Oh, sweetie -- are you okay?

Ricky nods, tears in his eyes. His father, though, is all business.

ALLEN

Bottom line it for us, Doc.

PHYSICIAN

He'll need an x-ray to confirm but
it's looking like a ligament
sprain, maybe a mild miniscus tear.

ALLEN

Can he put weight on it?

PHYSICIAN

Can he put weight on it?! He
should be on bed rest.

ALLEN

No, he can't. He's got a game in a
few days.

RICKY

What do you mean?

ALLEN

We won. We're going to state.

RICKY

What?! Who took over Quarterback?

ALLEN

Ned. Isn't he second string?

RICKY

Jesus...

PHYSICIAN

I can give you a shot of cortisone
for the pain and a prescription for
Demerol. You can take these for
the time being--

He holds out a DIXIE CUP of pills, but Ricky shakes his head,
vehemently.

RICKY

No pills.

PHYSICIAN

Without pills the scar tissue will
become inflamed--

RICKY

I said no pills!

ALLEN

Ricky, come on, you're being
ridiculous!

RICKY
I don't want them.

ALLEN
Ricky, you're taking those pills.

RICKY
No way.

ALLEN
It's not time for one of your
stands to show how much of a man
you are. I'm your father and I say
take the pills!

Ricky finally does, making a big deal about it.

RICKY
You happy now?!

ALLEN
Ecstatic.

His parents go off to talk with the Doctor. The second
they're gone though, Ricky spits the pills right into the
trash.

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM -- THAT NIGHT

Ricky tosses and turns, unable to sleep. His sheets are
drenched in sweat, every moment agony.

He reaches for an open bottle of Tylenol and throws a handful
back. He even chews them so they'll digest faster.

He lays back on his pillow and waits for them to do
something, anything.

Somehow, he's freezing and sweating at the same time. He
sits up in bed, wrapping himself in a blanket. He says to no
one in particular:

RICKY
I'm not gonna make it.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- SOON AFTER

As Ricky hobbles back from the bathroom, he sees a light on
at the end of the hall. His parent's door is cracked.
They're up and arguing.

MAUREEN (O.S.)

It's not like anyone ever gives you
a manual on how to be a mother--

ALLEN (O.S.)

You're either manically cleaning
the entire house or you're
depressed in bed. There is no in
between!

MAUREEN (O.S.)

Because I'm raising these kids on
my own!

ALLEN (O.S.)

I guess I'm not at work sixty hours
a week providing for this family--

Ricky can't listen to this anymore. He limps back to his own
room and SLAMS the door.

INT. GLEN HAVEN HIGH -- THE NEXT MORNING

Ricky has dark bags under his eyes. Clearly hasn't slept.
He hobbles down the hallway, bracing his bad knee, and
wincing with each step. Down the hall, Benji sees him from
afar.

BENJI

Hey, you feeling any better?

RICKY

I can't talk right now, Benji.

BENJI

I was only asking--

Ricky passes him, somewhere to be. Benji watches his brother
go. He's soon joined by Ned Tedderman.

BENJI (CONT'D)

What is his deal lately?

NED TEDDERMAN

Spending all his time with that Max
kid.

BENJI

Who?

NED TEDDERMAN

Exactly. I hate to be the one to tell you this Little Ricky, but we can't ignore the signs anymore...

(beat)

Your brother's gay.

Ned claps him on the back.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)

Come on, we're hitting the weight room.

He leads Benji down the hall.

BENJI

But he's got a girlfriend...

NED TEDDERMAN

I believe the correct term is "beard."

INT. COMPUTER LAB -- SOON AFTER

Ricky finds Max working, hunched over a computer, the only one in the room not using the Apple 2's to play "Oregon Trail."

MAX

Jesus, you look terrible.

RICKY

Tell me about it. I feel even worse.

MAX

The pain pills aren't working?

RICKY

I wouldn't know. I'm not taking them.

MAX

Don't you think that's the wrong way to go about it?

RICKY

I don't care. I know where I end up. I'm never going back there.

Max watches as he dry-swallows a few more Tylenols.

MAX

What happened after you blew your knee out?

RICKY

I watched all my friends go to college and leave me behind. When the refills ran out, I started to dig around in my parent's medicine cabinet. When they caught on, I asked around and someone said "try the street." I told myself I wasn't a junkie because I never shot it, but that didn't last long. Soon enough, you wake up and all you can think about is everything you need to do. All the little errands you have to run until you can shoot again. Then one day you realize you're not even getting high anymore, you're just trying to get back to normal.

MAX

And you never tried to quit?

RICKY

Only a million times. But it affects the entire body. Aches and chills and sneezing and crapping yourself and vomiting on yourself. So you go back to it. And every time you try to break up with it, it's worse than before.

MAX

Do I need to be worried?

RICKY

Just help me find a way to save Benji. He's all that matters.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM -- SAME TIME

As Ned spots for him, Benji bench presses 200 lbs. He does a couple reps, popping the bar off his chest several times before asking, out of breath--

BENJI

How many is that?

NED TEDDERMAN
Doesn't matter -- we go to
exhaustion.

A few more reps and Benji's arms start shaking.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Come on, I know you got one more in
you!

Digging deep, Benji somehow manages to get the bar back up
into it's cradle, to the raucous sound of Ned cheering.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Ain't nothin' little about that!
Say hello to "Big Ricky!"

The football players in the room start chanting his new
nickname.

INT. GLEN HAVEN HIGH, DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MNUTES LATER

Freshly showered, Ned and Benji exit the gym after their
workout.

NED TEDDERMAN
What do you mean you've never had a
girlfriend?!

BENJI
Would you lower your voice?!

Benji looks around to make sure no one heard.

NED TEDDERMAN
Sorry, but you're how old?
Sixteen?

Benji nods.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
You'd think being the star of J.V.
would get you a lot of strange, but
maybe that's just Varsity. Look,
someone took me aside at your age
and I'm happy to do the same. The
trick is to always act cocky. And
once you got them, "treat 'em mean,
keep 'em keen!"

As they pass the library, Ned spots Tracy Bonachevitz in
study hall.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Come with me, I've got an idea.

INT. LIBRARY -- MOMENTS LATER

Ned and Benji stand in front of Tracy. She's got a skeptical look on her face.

NED TEDDERMAN
Tracy, I remember you telling me
you needed a tutor.

TRACEY
What I said was, I was failing
math.

NED TEDDERMAN
And Benji is here to save the day!

Tracy looks him over.

TRACEY
Is he smart?

NED TEDDERMAN
He's in all AP classes.

TRACEY
(to Benji)
And you think you can help me?

Benji realizes it's his turn to speak.

BENJI
No, I *know* I can.

Tracy shoots Ned an "is he serious" look, but Ned is already backtracking out the door.

NED TEDDERMAN
See? It's meant to be!

A librarian SHUSHES him.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Oh, shush yourself!

When he leaves, Benji takes off his backpack and sits down across from Tracy.

BENJI
You know, we've met before.

TRACEY

When?

BENJI

That party at Ned's last weekend.
You winked at me.

TRACEY

I winked at you?! Oh my god, what
a floozy! Please ignore me I had
way too much to drink that night.

BENJI

It's okay. I liked it.

TRACEY

You did?! But I was hooking up
with your brother!

BENJI

It's fine. Everybody makes
mistakes.

TRACEY

What do you mean?

BENJI

I mean that you went after the
wrong brother and I forgive you.

She smiles at his gall, shaking her head.

TRACEY

Can we please just focus on math?

Benji smiles.

BENJI

If we must...

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The entire Tostiger family, but mostly Tabby, decorate the
tree.

BENJI

Why do we always leave this to the
last minute?

ALLEN

Ask your sister. She wouldn't let
us get a tree until she got here.

TABBY

Because I'm the only one of you
grinches who actually cares about
Christmas!

She goes to put another decoration on the tree when she
remembers--

TABBY (CONT'D)

Oh, before I forget, my boyfriend --
yes I have a boyfriend -- is
supposed to be calling me sometime
this break, so if the phone rings
it's probably for me.

BENJI

You're not the only one with a
social life. Yours truly got
invited to a Christmas Eve party--

Ricky sits up on the couch where he's icing his knee.

RICKY

What party?

BENJI

At Ned's.

RICKY

Ned Tedderman invited you to a
party?

BENJI

Yeah, we're friends.

RICKY

You're not going to that.

BENJI

Oh, I beg to differ.

RICKY

Dad, tell him he can't go to that!

ALLEN

Why can't he go to a holiday party?

MAUREEN

Yeah sweetie, we know Ned. He's
very responsible.

RICKY

I can't believe what I'm hearing.

BENJI
You wanna go Tabby?

TABBY
No, I'll probably be busy talking
on the phone...
(beat)
With my boyfriend!

Allen and Maureen make quick eye-contact and roll their eyes.

RICKY
There's no way you're going.

BENJI
Why are you such a wet diaper?!

RICKY
I don't know, maybe because my knee
is on literal fire!

ALLEN
Then take something!

RICKY
Stop telling me to take something!
(then, to Maureen)
Mom, do we have any aspirin left?

MAUREEN
If we did, it'd be in my medicine
cabinet.

When no one offers, Ricky climbs to his feet, leaning on one of his crutches.

RICKY
Don't worry, I'll get it!

He hobbles off.

INT. PARENT'S BATHROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky looks around the counter for Tylenol, then checks the medicine cabinet. It's not in there either.

He's about to close the door when a little PILL BOTTLE seems to call out to him. It's an old prescription of Maureen's that reads "take as needed for back pain."

He almost doesn't, but changes his mind at the last second. He picks it up and gives it a quick shake.

Empty.

He SIGHS and returns it to where it came from.

INT. BENJI'S BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Coming up empty with his parent's bathroom, Ricky tries his brother's. He listens for a moment to the sound of his family decorating downstairs to make sure he's alone, then digs in.

Benji's medicine cabinet is unused, so he turns his search to the drawers. Most of them contain the typical (toothbrush, toothpaste, razors, q-tips...)

It's only in the last drawer that he finds a plastic baggy holding a vial of steroids and needles. Ricky groans.

EXT. NED'S HOUSE -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Ricky and the Band Geeks roll up to a roaring house party on a tudor-lined street.

RICKY

Thanks for the support, you guys.

MAX

Of course. I can't believe Benji Tostiger does steroids. Where do you think he got it?

RICKY

I have a pretty good idea...

MAX

What are you gonna say to him when you see him?

RICKY

I don't know yet.

MAX

You sure it's okay we're coming.

RICKY

Please, you're with me. No one's gonna give you any trouble.

MAX

Awesome, because I heard that even the ugly people at these parties get laid.

GIDEON

Ya hear that, everybody? We're gonna make love tonight!

They murmur, excitedly, as Ricky knocks on the front door. A moment later, Ned answers in a Christmas toga. He eyes the newcomers with suspicion, then whispers to Ricky.

NED TEDDERMAN

You can come in, but no underclassmen.

RICKY

Interesting. Because I'm pretty sure my brother's in there.

NED TEDDERMAN

Okay, they can come in. But if one person catches dork -- they're out!

Ned reluctantly opens the door and watches in disgust as the band geeks file in. Closing the door after them, Ricky takes Ned aside.

RICKY

What's going on? Why are you hanging out with my brother?

NED TEDDERMAN

Oh please, he's just my designated driver.

RICKY

So he's not drinking?

NED TEDDERMAN

As God as my witness.

Across the party, Benji is bleary-eyed, drunkenly dancing with Tracey. She's in the sexiest, most-revealing elf costume anyone's ever seen. When Benji sees his brother and the band geeks though, he glowers.

BENJI

The fuck are they doing here?

Tracey kisses his neck.

TRACEY

Who cares?

Benji does. He watches as Ned announces to the party--

NED TEDDERMAN
Beer pong table's open on the
patio! Get your name to Stillman
if you want in on the round robin!

Ricky motions to his plus-ones.

RICKY
What about these guys?

NED TEDDERMAN
I just assumed the Mormon church
frowned on drinking.

RICKY
Come on, you said you were still
putting your list together.
Unless you think you can't beat
them?

STILLMAN
Dude, let 'em in. We'll just knock
them out in the first round.

NED TEDDERMAN
Alright, they can play. But
they're in for a world of pain.

While people filter out onto the back patio, Ned beckons Benji over to his father's outdoor tiki bar. He holds out two shots.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Here, do these quick before your
straight-edge brother gets out
here.

Benji laughs and throws them back, one after the other.

As party guests settle into place to watch, one of the band geeks sits with the pot smokers and lights up his tobacco-filled Gandalf pipe. They look at him, impressed.

Max and Gideon take their places at the head of the table. Before they even know the game has started, Ned and Stillman sink two cups right off the bat.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Two-nil. Balls back.

Max fishes the ping pong balls out and hands Gideon one of the cups.

GIDEON
Is this a stout or a lager?

NED TEDDERMAN
Just drink it!

As Max and Gideon chug their drinks, Ned takes his second shot. It ricochets off the back row and he has a silent conniption fit.

Stillman takes his time setting up his own shot. Before he launches it, he smiles wide and winks at Max.

STILLMAN
It's all in the wrist.

Unfortunately, he misses by a mile. Ricky laughs as Max retrieves the ball.

GIDEON
If it's all in the wrist...
(beat)
Then I use my wrist a lot.

He sinks one. Max follows suit. They get the balls back and turn to each other to strategize.

MAX
What are you thinking?

GIDEON
Arc times Velocity?

MAX
I'd rather just use Bernoulli's principle.

NED TEDDERMAN
Will you queens just throw?!

They shrug and shoot. Again, they make both.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch!

Ned petulantly whips the balls back at them. Max and Gideon are about to shoot when Ricky interrupts.

RICKY
Re-rack.

MAX
What's that?

RICKY
They can put them into a line.

GIDEON
Oh, that'd be much easier!

MAX
I feel like I don't even need to
try now!

They shoot at the same time, sink two, and the game is over.

STILLMAN
What just happened?!

NED TEDDERMAN
Our unbeaten streak for all of high
school was ended by a couple nerds
who up until a few minutes ago
didn't know beer was wet!

STILLMAN
Don't turn on me!

NED TEDDERMAN
I'm not turning on you! I'm just
frustrated!

Max turns from celebrating his win only to come face-to-face
with Benji. Ricky's brother is swaying on his feet, close to
blacked out.

BENJI
I don't know what he sees in you.
I really don't.

Max is about to respond when Ned storms over to the tiki bar
and grabs a bottle.

NED TEDDERMAN
That was just beer. You think
you're such hot shit? I'd like to
see you take a shot of this!

Ricky tries to stop this.

RICKY
Don't do it Max, it's Everclear.
Pure grain alcohol. 190-proof!

Not wanting to give Ned the satisfaction, Max takes a quick
sip. He immediately winces, coughing. The onlookers laugh
as he's finally able to eek out:

MAX
God, that was terrible!
(beat)
Probably has a high burn rate
though...

He leans over to a stoner playing with a BARBECUE LIGHTER.

MAX (CONT'D)
Can I borrow this?

Max doesn't wait for an answer. He plucks it out of the kid's hand and takes another sip of Everclear.

When he spits it out, the lighter sets it ablaze, so that it looks like he's just blown a massive fireball.

It burns gloriously then dissipates over everyone's head. After a moment of shock -- they all cheer, drunkenly.

Max is unable to enjoy this though, because Ned is suddenly in his face.

NED TEDDERMAN
You could have burned my house
down! What the hell were you
thinking?!

RICKY
Come on, Ned. You didn't care
about the fireball -- which was
pretty choice, by the way! You
care about getting shown up at your
own party.

NED TEDDERMAN
Man, what is with you lately! This
isn't the Ricky I know! The Ricky
I know would run this nerd up the
flagpole by his rainbow thong!

RICKY
People change.

NED TEDDERMAN
I don't! And you're welcome, by
the way!

RICKY
For what?

NED TEDDERMAN

For saving your ass after you blew
your knee out. I stepped up and
got us that win!

RICKY

I think you've been drinking your
own kool-aid again.

NED TEDDERMAN

I want you out of my house. I
don't ever want to see you again.

RICKY

Oh, don't be dramatic, Ned.

NED TEDDERMAN

Do I have to throw you out?

RICKY

You and who else? I don't see
Stillman nearby.

NED TEDDERMAN

I don't need Stillman.

Several Hyenas loyal to Ned stand behind him. But Ricky
isn't alone for long.

MAX

You wanna fight Ricky you're gonna
have to go through me.

Ned LAUGHS. So do his cronies.

GIDEON

Me too.

The rest of the nerds fill in behind Ricky. There are kids
with retainers, cow licks, runny noses, and pit stains.

NED TEDDERMAN

Aw, that's really touching guys...

But his smile fades when he sees the rest of the party join
them.

RICKY

Looks like you're outnumbered.

NED TEDDERMAN

Just take your cool new friends and
get the hell out.

RICKY
I'm not going anywhere without my
brother.

Ned speaks through gritted teeth.

NED TEDDERMAN
Fine. Get him and go.

Ricky hurries off, but those standing behind him don't move
at all.

Down the hall, Ricky checks rooms, calling out as he goes.

RICKY
Benji, we gotta go!

Seeing that the first few rooms are virtually empty, he
knocks on the bathroom door.

It swings open, revealing Benji and Stillman, leaning over
the sink, doing lines of coke.

RICKY (CONT'D)
What the fuck?!

Benji's at a loss for words.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Get your shit, we're going--

He tries to grab his brother's arm, but Benji rips it out of
his grasp.

BENJI
I'm not going anywhere with you!

RICKY
Yes, you are!

BENJI
I'm not a child. You can't boss me
around anymore.

RICKY
Benji! Get in the goddamn car!

BENJI
No!

Ricky snaps. He throws his younger brother over his shoulder
and marches him down the hall.

BENJI (CONT'D)
Put me down! Are you fucking
crazy?!

When people see this they howl with laughter. But no matter how Benji struggles, Ricky holds tight. He carries him through the party, all the way out the front door.

EXT. NED'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Once outside, Benji kicks and screams to get free. But Ricky walks him all the way to his car, depositing him in the front passenger seat.

He slams the door and takes a deep breath, then crosses to his side, getting in.

BENJI
Do you have any idea how
embarrassing that was?!

RICKY
What other choice did you give me?

Ricky starts his car, throws it in drive, and peels off.

INT. RICKY'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky furiously drives home as Benji raves--

BENJI
You just ruined the rest of high
school for me! I can never show my
face in school again! And Tracey -
god, Tracey - saw that!

RICKY
If Mom and Dad don't want to parent
you - then I will!

BENJI
You probably think you're justified
because of what you saw in the
bathroom. But that was the first
time I've ever done that--

Ricky pops the GLOVE BOX open. Inside is the BAGGIE of STEROIDS that Ricky found in his bathroom.

RICKY
You want to tell me about that?

BENJI

You went snooping in my bathroom?!

RICKY

I was looking for aspirin. Why are you doing this shit?

BENJI

Why do you think I'm out there every morning working out? What comes naturally to you takes work for me.

RICKY

That's such horseshit.

BENJI

Think about it. Everything is just handed to you. You're Mom and Dad's favorite. Go ahead, tell me they wouldn't be happier without me?

RICKY

You're out of your mind.

BENJI

Come on! They've always liked you more. I'm just an afterthought.

Ricky shakes his head.

RICKY

You just think the sun rises and sets with me, don't you? I'm not someone who should be followed, Benji!

BENJI

Is that why you've been avoiding me lately?

RICKY

I don't want to get attached.

BENJI

What does that even mean?!

RICKY

It means find a better role model.

BENJI

Why? You're my brother--

Ricky smacks him upside the head. It's all he can think of.

RICKY
Don't be stupid! You hear me?!
Don't be stupid!

BENJI
Ricky, what the fuck--

As they pull into their driveway, Benji flees from the attacks. He jumps out of the vehicle, tears in his eyes. He hurries into the house as Ricky remains in the car, heartbroken, watching him go.

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Ricky wakes on Christmas morning to the sound of Tabby running up and down the upstairs hallway, knocking on people's doors.

TABBY
It's Christmas, wake up!

Ricky covers his face with a pillow as his sister sticks her head in his room.

TABBY (CONT'D)
Wake up, fart knocker! It's
present time!

RICKY
(mumbles)
Mmm, five more minutes...

This doesn't sit well with Tabby. She yells down the hallway.

TABBY
Ew, stop masturbating, Ricky! For
god sakes, it's Jesus' birthday!

RICKY
Alright, I'm up!

He sits up, groggily, and looks out the window. A layer of fresh powder has fallen overnight.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky's the last one downstairs. He sees a cozy Christmas layout.

There's a yule log burning in the fireplace, the hearth wreathed in stockings, tinsel, and holly. And the presents reach halfway up the tree.

Ricky gives his mother a hug.

RICKY
Merry Christmas, ma. You did a
good job.

Her smile's brimming over.

MAUREEN
I did, didn't I?

Allen leans in to correct Ricky.

ALLEN
I think you mean, 'Good job, Santa
Claus!'

Maureen glares at her husband as Ricky joins his brother and sister in digging under the tree for gifts.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- AN HOUR LATER

All the presents have been opened. There are wet boots in the foyer. "A Charlie Brown Christmas" plays on the T.V. screen. As it goes to commercial, a Hess ad comes on touting "the Hess truck's back and it's better than ever!"

Allen turns from handing out gifts.

ALLEN
I think that's the last of them...

BENJI
Good, I need to shower.

Seeing his children begin to scatter, Allen interjects--

ALLEN
Don't go too far, there's still the
annual Tostiger family football
game.

Ricky and Benji lock eyes.

BENJI
Let's just skip that this year.

RICKY
Yeah, no one's in the mood for
that.

ALLEN
Nonsense. It's tradition.

MAUREEN
The boy's knee, Al!

ALLEN
He's been on his feet all week.
He's got to keep putting weight on
it. You're good to go, right?

Before Ricky can answer, his father does it for him.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
Be outside in five minutes.

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, FRONT YARD -- MINUTES LATER

As Maureen settles into the family porch swing with a cup of
coffee, Allen sets the teams.

ALLEN
Okay, it's Ricky and me versus
Benji and Tabby.

Benji scoffs.

BENJI
Typical.

RICKY
You got something to say?

BENJI
I'll just let the score do the
talking. You kick off.

As both sides go their respective way, Ricky massages his
knee, trying to bring some life to it. He lets his father
punt.

Benji catches the kick off. He uses Tabby as a shield and
pushes her towards Ricky. When Ricky and Tabby collide,
Benji skirts the two of them, then quickly gets by his father
for a touchdown.

BENJI (CONT'D)
Ooh, is this a funeral home because
I am sorry for your loss!

He slaps hands with his sister, then tosses the ball harshly to his brother. Ricky catches it, wincing slightly, then heads for a brief huddle with his father.

ALLEN

I think we should--

RICKY

--no, I'm gonna run it.

ALLEN

You sure? What about your knee?

RICKY

Oh, now you care? Just hike it.

Allen doesn't say a word, but he's not happy about it. He hikes the ball to Ricky who makes like he's going to throw, then takes off running.

Unfortunately, Benji's on him right away. He goes for a tackle, but Ricky jukes out of the way. Benji goes sprawling and Ricky's able to walk it into the end zone.

But Benji's immediately on his feet--

BENJI

No touchdown.

RICKY

Fuck you mean, no touchdown?

BENJI

We said the rock was the boundary and you ran past it.

RICKY

Bullshit.

Benji throws his hands up.

BENJI

Hey, it's fine if you want to win like that...

ALLEN

Boys, it's one-all. I don't know what we're fighting about.

RICKY

You want us to take it again?

Benji shakes his head, bitterly.

BENJI
No, it's fine. The touchdown
stands. Our ball.

On the next hike, Tabby goes long and finds herself clear of her father.

TABBY
Here, I'm open!

But Ricky and Benji are acting like they're the only ones on the field.

TABBY (CONT'D)
What is wrong with you?! I said,
I'm open! Throw it to me!

Ricky's muttering mississippi's, counting the time until he can blitz. When the count's up, he surges forward and tackles Benji brutally around the midsection.

Benji lands hard on frozen ground, all the air expelled from him. Ricky stands over him, disdainfully, then moves on as Tabby hurries over.

TABBY (CONT'D)
You okay, Benny?

She helps him to his feet.

BENJI
I'm fine. You quarterback for now.

TABBY
You sure? I'm just a little itty
bitty girl!

BENJI
Funny.

Seeing that the roles have changed, Allen and Ricky switch places.

On the next hike, Benji goes long, but Ricky sticks to him like glue. Tabby hurls the ball deep into the end zone.

But when Benji jumps to grab it, he's pulled violently back to earth by Ricky.

As the ball sails over their heads, Benji WAILS--

BENJI (CONT'D)
Come on! That's holding!

Ricky scoffs.

RICKY

Hold this!

He grabs his crotch. Benji sees red. He tackles Ricky to the ground and suddenly punches are thrown.

Allen tries to break it up, screaming--

ALLEN

Stop it, boys! Stop this!

But his sons are too far gone. They're beaten and bloodied, ignoring the shouts from their Mother and Tabby.

The only thing that stops them is Allen falling to one knee and clutching his arm.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Oh god, what's happening--

He staggers back and topples over as Maureen SCREAMS--

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Allen!

And the entire family runs to his side.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM -- AN HOUR LATER

Allen's on a hospital bed, looking peaked. When a DOCTOR enters, his loved ones gather around to hear the verdict.

ER DOCTOR

Well, Mr. Tostiger... according to your EKG you had a minor myocardial infarction. A heart attack.

MAUREEN

Jesus, Al...

Tabby wails, unprompted.

TABBY

Oh, daddy!

She buries her face in his bed sheets.

ALLEN

When can I get out of here?

ER DOCTOR

We're not ready to discharge you
just yet. You'll need to stay
overnight so that we can make sure--

ALLEN

No can do, doc. We got Christmas
mass to get to.

MAUREEN

Don't be a fool, Allen. I think
you can miss it. You have a pretty
good excuse...

ALLEN

If I am dying, I'm not spending my
final minutes in a hospital!

MAUREEN

Do you always have to be so
bullheaded?!

RICKY

Yeah dad, this is no time for one
of your stands!

ALLEN

Okay, smart-ass! But Mass is a
Christmas tradition.

MAUREEN

That's what you said about the
football game and look how that
turned out.

ALLEN

This is ridiculous. I feel fine.
I'll take it easy the next few
days.

ER DOCTOR

Oh, because the holidays are
traditionally stress-free.

Allen gives the Doctor a humorless look and sits up.

MAUREEN

Listen to the doctor, Al!

ALLEN

Someone get me my clothes.

ER DOCTOR

Mr. Tostiger, if you leave here
it's against medical advice.

ALLEN

Look, you said "minor." I'll sign
anything you want me to sign, but
you're not charging me for a second
day!

Seeing there's no putting him off, Tabby rolls a wheelchair
over and his family reluctantly help him out of bed.

INT. OUR LADY IMMACULATE CHURCH -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Wearing a big, ugly Christmas sweater, Ricky enters with his
family. It's a dimly-lit church, hosting an intimate
service.

The Tostigers find seats among the center pews. As they
settle in, Ricky sees Linda in the church choir, wearing full
regalia. She gives him an embarrassed smile that Ricky
happily returns.

When the service begins and the pipe organ sounds out a hymn,
Ricky chances a look at his younger brother. Benji is
sitting in the row in front of him. Just looking at him
makes Ricky cry. He wipes his face, missing him already.

Lining up for the Eucharist, Ricky waves off the bread, but
drinks the wine.

On his way back to his seat, Ricky sees his family pausing to
light votive candles. He watches them pray, but it's not for
him.

The service moves into the Nativity Scene, the story of
Jesus' birth. Several members of the chorus play different
roles...

Ricky sees Linda done up as an angel, beatifically dressed in
white satin robes and a floating halo. She finds Ricky's
eyes and blushes.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM -- SOON AFTER

Ricky looks out Linda's window into his own bedroom.

RICKY

My room always looks so weird from
over here.

He turns around to see Linda loosening the halo hanging over her head.

LINDA
If you don't mind, I have to
change.

Ricky sits down on the bed, going nowhere.

RICKY
No one's stopping you.

LINDA
You think I'm the type of girl who
would undress in front of a
gentleman caller?

She lets her robes drop to the floor. Gives them a little kick.

She moves forward, oh so slowly, and reaches behind her.

LINDA (CONT'D)
But who would buy the cow, when he
can get the milk--

She unhooks her bra.

LINDA (CONT'D)
--for free?

She slides her underwear off, grinning.

RICKY
You know my father warned me about
girls like you.

She climbs on top of him.

LINDA
Oh yeah? What'd he say?

RICKY
For the life of me, I can't
remember.

He kisses her and together they start knocking stuffed animals off the bed to get the sheets down.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM -- LATER

Ricky and Linda lie in her tiny twin bed after having sex.

LINDA

We should get going. They're gonna wonder where we got to...

But Ricky won't let go.

RICKY

I don't want this to end.

The words seem to have the opposite of their desired effect.

LINDA

Ricky, I need to talk to you about something...

(beat)

I got a scholarship.

RICKY

That's great. Not that you need it...

LINDA

It's a Fulbright. To study overseas at a Conservatory...

(beat)

For a year.

Ricky finally gets what she's saying.

RICKY

How am I supposed to respond to that?

LINDA

Come on Ricky, how long can this go on for?

RICKY

It doesn't have to end. I can get a shitty apartment on the edge of campus. I'll work around your class schedule. I'd follow you anywhere.

LINDA

Why does it have to be so serious all the time? I just want to have fun before I graduate.

RICKY

We can have fun together!

LINDA

Yeah...

RICKY

You don't think I can make it there, do you? You don't believe in me.

LINDA

It's more like you never believed in you.

RICKY

What's that supposed to mean?

LINDA

It means that you've got your own ticket out of here and you're just pissing all over it.

RICKY

God, you sound like my father--

The door BURSTS OPEN and in storms Glenn Hallick.

MR. HALLICK

I knew it! Just changing your clothes -- what a crock of shit!

LINDA

Dad, don't you knock?!

MR. HALLICK

Get dressed, Linda. I'd like a word with your boyfriend here.

Linda looks nervously at Ricky, but he only nods.

RICKY

It's okay.

Gathering up her clothes, Linda takes them into the bathroom to change. Then it's just Ricky and Mr. Hallick.

MR. HALLICK

You won't stop until she's barefoot and pregnant, will you?

Ricky slides out of bed and starts getting dressed, forcing Mr. Hallick to avert his gaze.

MR. HALLICK (CONT'D)

You know, my daughter is gonna accomplish a lot of great things as long as she doesn't get sidetracked. So why don't you do the right thing and just walk away?

RICKY
Maybe I'm the right thing.

MR. HALLICK
We both know you're not. So what's
it going to take?

RICKY
Excuse me?

MR. HALLICK
How much? To leave her alone for
good.

He takes out his wallet as Ricky puts his shirt on.

RICKY
I'm not for sale.

He storms past Linda's father and down the stairs.

EXT. SKATING RINK -- MORNING

Max is seated in the stands of a public skating rink. He watches as down below, young kids are skating, some for the first time. Lots of scarves and red noses. He sees Ricky arrive at the bottom of the stairs and moves to stand.

MAX
How's the leg? You want me to come
down?

RICKY
No, I have to get used to the pain.

Ricky climbs the stairs and plops himself down next to Max.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Thanks for meeting me so early.

MAX
Well, you sounded desperate.
What's up?

RICKY
Linda's father caught us.

MAX
What do you mean, like *caught* you
caught you?

RICKY

Sometimes I think the only person
he'd accept going out with his
beloved daughter is him.

MAX

If you don't mind me asking -- what
ends up happening with you and
Linda?

Ricky's quiet for a moment.

RICKY

She got pregnant end of Senior
year. Was knocked up when she gave
her valedictory speech. I guilted
her into an abortion. Told myself
it was for her and her bright
future, but I think I was just
scared. Her father moved her away
afterwards.

Ricky watches the children skating.

RICKY (CONT'D)

If we had had one it'd be about
their age...

He stares off, lost in thought.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Whatever this is, I know it's not
forever. What happens when I go
back to that shitty life I made for
myself? Does anything change?

MAX

I don't know.

RICKY

It all feels like it's slipping
away. I have to be able to change
things. I couldn't stop my
accident from happening. I can't
stop Linda from leaving. And, from
the looks of it, I can't save
Benji. But this all can't be for
nothing. I can't go back to who I
was. I won't.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Ricky sits in full pads, taping his knee for the big game. When he's done, he stands and tests out his work. Not bad. Everything's staying where it should. He walks around putting weight on it as Ruttiga comes to the door of his office.

COACH RUTTIGA

Ricky, can I see you in here for a quick second?

RICKY

Sure thing, Coach.

INT. COACH RUTTIGA'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky enters and sees that they're not alone. Vice Principal Borgnine is leaning against the Coach's desk, arms crossed as if disappointed somehow.

RICKY

What's up?

COACH RUTTIGA

Ricky, there's been an allegation.

RICKY

Saying what?

V.P. BORGNINE

I think you know what we're talking about.

RICKY

I really don't.

V.P. BORGNINE

Have you now or have you ever taken a performance-enhancing drug?

RICKY

Hell, no! Coach, you know me! I'm all natural.

V.P. BORGNINE

Then you wouldn't mind taking a urine test... just to put all our minds at ease.

Ricky flashes back to hot-boxing Stillman's van. He swallows hard.

RICKY
Sure thing.

COACH RUTIGA
If Ricky says he's clean, then I
believe him.

INT. BATHROOM -- MINUTES LATER

The three of them stand around a DRUG PANEL waiting for the
results to come back.

Ricky chances a look at V.P. Borgnine only to see the man
staring right back at him.

V.P. BORGNINE
Does it feel like the walls are
closing in?

Ricky does his best to ignore him. He nervously taps his
foot as the exposure lines come into focus. When Borgnine
sees them, he smiles.

V.P. BORGNINE (CONT'D)
I told you I'd get you.

Ricky looks down at the test, not believing.

V.P. BORGNINE (CONT'D)
Positive for Marijuana and Human
Growth Hormone, whatever that is...

Ruttiga scowls.

COACH RUTTIGA
It's steroids.

He stares at Ricky, devastated.

COACH RUTTIGA (CONT'D)
I have to bench you.

RICKY
It's the State Championship! Who's
gonna take my spot?!

COACH RUTTIGA
We made do with second string last
time. We can do it again.

RICKY
You're replacing me with Ned?!

COACH RUTTIGA

What other choice have I got? I mean, dammit Ricky - why'd you have to go and do a stupid thing like this?!

Ricky slides down the bathroom wall at a loss for words. Borgnine towers over him.

V.P. BORGNINE

I'm afraid being benched is the least of your worries. It is my duty to inform you that you are no longer welcome here at Glen Haven High.

He breathes deeply, satisfied.

V.P. BORGNINE (CONT'D)

It feels good when there's some justice to the universe...

INT. TOSTIGER HOME, LIVING ROOM -- SOON AFTER

Like V.P. Borgnine, Ricky's dad is now hovering over him on the couch.

ALLEN

Do you have any idea what this could do?! This could jeopardize your draft status! They could blackball you to colleges! Everything we worked so hard for...

RICKY

There it is... we.

ALLEN

Yeah, we. Who woke you up at 4:30 am for morning practices? Who drove you two hours both ways to play some podunk team in the boonies? I did. And I'd do it again, because you're my son. But maybe I've been focused on the wrong kid. Maybe Benji has what it takes, because you don't seem to.

RICKY

I want to be with Linda anyway. She's going to school in England.

ALLEN

Don't be foolish! You should be going to a Big-10 school!

RICKY

Maybe college isn't for me.

ALLEN

What do you mean it's not for you?!

RICKY

I'm not smart. Not like you, not like Tabby, not like Benji.

ALLEN

Then for god sakes, focus on your strengths! Football can get you out of here. It can give you a good life!

RICKY

I don't want to play football, dad! I did it because my friends were doing it and it was fun, but all your pushing made it not fun!

ALLEN

Then what do you want to do?!

Ricky throws up his hands.

RICKY

I don't know!

ALLEN

For fuck sake Ricky, you've always been lazy, you've always been a quitter, but whatever I thought -- you were never a cheat. When did you start cutting corners?

RICKY

For the last time, I didn't take--

Ricky sees how futile it would be to plead his case. He trails off.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Steroids are the least of my problems.

ALLEN

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

Ricky's silent for a moment, then just can't hold it in any longer.

RICKY

I started drinking when I was nine. I couldn't stand the sound of you and Mom fighting, so I stole some of your vodka. I got high throughout middle school. In the eighth grade, someone gave me coke for the first time. I had never felt so interesting, like I had something vital to contribute. So, I did more and more until finally I couldn't sleep. Someone suggested heroin. And it made me cry, it was so perfect. It plugged up all my shortcomings, all my negatives, until I finally felt like a normal person. I thought, why can't this be forever?

He peters out, tears streaming down his face. Allen stares at his son, horrified. He tries to speak several times, but all the words ring hollow. Finally, he just lets go...

ALLEN

If something I did made you hurt yourself like this, then from the bottom of my heart -- I'm sorry. For what it's worth, I struggled in school too. I barely graduated. But then I met your mother. And I had something to work for. I never thought I'd have kids because of how I grew up, but from the moment your mother told me she was pregnant with Tabby, I've been happy every day of my life. And all of my kids make me feel the same way. I see bits of your Mom in all of you.

RICKY

If you're not careful, you're gonna lose her.

ALLEN

No, me and your mother are good.

RICKY

Dad, she's miserable. The second that to-do list she creates is done she starts drinking.

(MORE)

RICKY (CONT'D)

Which leads to crying. And you're always at work. One day, she'll get tired of being alone.

ALLEN

Why does she think I go to work every day?! It's to take care of all of you!

RICKY

Then tell her that. Find some way to show her that you see her and everything she does.

INT. SOUP KITCHEN -- EVENING

Ricky enters. He spots Max serving the homeless at the head of the food line. As Ricky approaches him, he sees a familiar face waiting patiently at one of the tables.

RICKY

Is that Stillman? What is he doing here?

MAX

I don't know he just showed up.

RICKY

Interesting...

MAX

Why? Why is it interesting?

RICKY

It just is.

MAX

You given any thought to how you're gonna get into that party tonight? You're not exactly Ned's favorite person...

RICKY

Any way I can. I don't care how mad I am at Benji, I can't let him die. How soon after do you think I go back?

MAX

Depends. If it's what you were sent here to change, I'd say pretty instantaneously.

RICKY

However tonight goes... I want to thank you for everything you've done, Max.

MAX

Oh, please -- thank you!

RICKY

For what?

MAX

For taking me to Ned's party. I got to be king for a night.

He cheerfully piles mashed potatoes onto a hobo's plate.

RICKY

If you had to guess, what do you think's going to happen to me?

MAX

Your timeline will either resolve itself based on the changes you've made here...

RICKY

Or?

MAX

Or you'll go back to your old life. And you'll figure it out.

RICKY

And if it doesn't work?

MAX

Then I'll see you on Monday.

Ricky nods.

RICKY

I'm really going to miss you.

MAX

Hey, remember what you told me...

RICKY

Cool guys don't cry.

He starts heading for the door when Max asks:

MAX

Hey Ricky, what happens to me?

RICKY
You sure you want to know?

MAX
Yeah.

RICKY
You sell your company to Google.

MAX
What is--

RICKY
It's a big computer company. Maybe
the biggest, I don't know. You're
a billionaire.

Max smiles. He stares off, happily.

MAX
I knew it.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, KITCHEN -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Ricky makes a clatter preparing dinner. He's got pots
simmering, the grill smoking, all while checking on the oven.

To make matters worse, Tabby's trying to talk to him from the
living room. She's wrapped in a blanket on the couch, crying
and surrounded by tissues.

TABBY
I don't know why he hasn't called!
Is it because I'm boring?!

RICKY
Who cares if you're boring?! What
matters is that you don't change
your life to suit other people.
You gotta love yourself before you
can properly love anyone else.

TABBY
So you do think I'm boring?!

RICKY
No, I don't!

In the worried silence, Tabby goes from playing with her hair
to plucking it out wholesale.

RICKY (CONT'D)
And you better not be pulling your
hair out!

Tabby hides the hair away.

TABBY
No, I don't do that anymore.

Ricky's father enters from the garage.

ALLEN
What's going on here?

RICKY
I'm making you and Mom dinner.

ALLEN
And it's... edible?

RICKY
Not only that -- it's heart
healthy.

ALLEN
Ricky, I'm a young man. I don't
need to eat like this.

RICKY
Just try it, okay? You can tell
mom you made it.

ALLEN
That's not a bad idea--

He hears someone coming in the front door.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
--here, get out of the way.

Allen takes over the saucepan as Maureen returns from running
errands.

MAUREEN
What's all this?

ALLEN
What does it look like?

MAUREEN
You did all this... by yourself?

ALLEN
Well, the boy helped a little...

Seeing them talking, Ricky ducks out to make a call.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky picks up the receiver and dials a well-known number. After a moment, Glenn Hallick answers.

MR. HALLICK

Hello?

Ricky groans silently and grits his teeth.

RICKY

Hello, Mr. Hallick. Is Linda in?

MR. HALLICK

No, she isn't. And don't call here again.

Ricky's left with a dial tone.

RICKY

That fucker hung up on me!

Tabby whimpers from the couch.

TABBY

Can you hang up the phone? He might be calling.

BENJI (O.S.)

He's not calling. Let it go!

Ricky hangs the phone up as Benji comes downstairs dressed to go out.

RICKY

Where you going?

BENJI

Where's it look like? There's a party at Ned's for winning state. Not that you had anything to do with it...

RICKY

Benji, you shouldn't go to that.

BENJI

Why not?

RICKY

Just please, don't go out tonight.

BENJI

No. You don't get to tell me what to do anymore.

RICKY

I have a bad feeling about tonight.

BENJI

You're just mad the party's not for you!

RICKY

I can't let you go.

BENJI

Funny, I don't see you stopping me.

He marches into the kitchen with Ricky in hot pursuit.

BENJI (CONT'D)

Mom, tell Ricky I can go to Ned's.

RICKY

No Mom, there's going to be alcohol there--

BENJI

--you absolute nerd!

ALLEN

I would imagine there'd be plenty of alcohol at a high school party.

MAUREEN

Yeah sweetie, they're just celebrating.

RICKY

Ever heard of drunk drivers?

BENJI

I'm the designated sober driver for tonight, so there'll be no drinking for me.

MAUREEN

See?

RICKY

You believe that shit?!

Benji slips out the front door, smiling. Ricky turns back to his parents, determined.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Looks like dinner's ready. Why don't you guys sit and I can serve you?

He motions for them to sit in the dining room. It's set up for an intimate dinner for two by candlelight.

MAUREEN

Why, thank you, Ricky! This is so nice!

Allen and Maureen sit, frankly dumbfounded their son could pull off something like this.

Ricky quickly finishes plating their meals then delivers them tableside. It's a stunning presentation of grilled chicken, cauliflower, and asparagus.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

This looks great. Are you sure you don't want to join us?

RICKY

Nope. This dinner's just for you two.

On his way out, Ricky lowers the dimmer switches to help set the mood.

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Ricky hurries down the driveway to Cornelius and peels out.

EXT. NED TEDDERMAN'S HOUSE -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky pulls up to Ned's house with a screech of his brakes. It's the party to end all parties and they're not even trying to hide it. There's a line of parked cars for blocks.

Ricky finally finds a spot and jogs back to the house.

INT. NED TEDDERMAN'S HOUSE, FOYER -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky lets himself in. He's only a few steps into the house when Ned himself blocks Ricky's way.

NED TEDDERMAN

Who invited you?!

RICKY

I'm just looking for my brother.

NED TEDDERMAN

He's somewhere here. But I'm afraid you won't be able to come in because we're at capacity.

RICKY

This isn't a nightclub, Ned.

NED TEDDERMAN

And yet, you can't come in.

RICKY

What happened to you? Why are you like this?

NED TEDDERMAN

I've always been like this. I'm just not your understudy anymore. I'm a leading man now. A star, if you will. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have freshmen to fuck.

He pushes Ricky outside and slams the door in his face.

EXT. BACKYARD -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky tumbles over an ivy-covered brick wall and lands in Ned's backyard. There's only a few partygoers outside and the ones that are seem to be making out.

Dusting the snow off of him, Ricky hurries to the back door. Thankfully, it's unlocked and he slips inside.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

The students of Glen Haven High are partying like they're on death row, a real "Last days of Rome" vibe. It's pure bacchanalia as kids drink straight from liquor bottles, lick whip cream off their dates, even have sex on the couches.

Ricky makes his way through the writhing, sweaty bodies looking for his brother. But Benji's nowhere to be seen.

After scanning the crowd, Ricky takes the stairs up to the second floor.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

It's quieter up here. Ricky starts clearing rooms. The first door he opens, the COUPLE inside shrieks.

RICKY

Sorry!

He shuts the door and tries the next one. It's empty.

He passes an open bedroom with a circle of people passing around a bong. None of them are Benji.

Ricky tries yet another door--

RICKY (CONT'D)

Benji, you here?

Seeing what's inside, Ricky immediately staggers back out into the hall. It's too much. He starts retreating.

Seconds later, Linda comes hurrying out, buttoning her shirt.

LINDA

Ricky, it's not what you think--

RICKY

--*What the fuck?!*

He wrenches his arm back, refusing to let her touch him. Benji exits the same room Linda came from. He can't even look his brother in the face.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Tell me I didn't just see that!

Benji's tough guy act is long gone.

BENJI

Ricky, I'm so sorry! I didn't mean it! Tracey and I fought--

Ricky flees back down the stairs, not stopping for anyone or anything.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky stumbles down the last few steps, dumbfounded. When people get in his way, he pushes them aside.

At the front door, Stillman sees him and brightens--

STILLMAN

Hey Ricky, man -- good to see you!

But Ricky just blows past him, numb to it all.

EXT. NED TEDDERMAN'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky storms over to his car. He gets in and pulls out, peeling rubber.

A few moments later, Linda comes rushing out the front door, frantically looking for Ricky. She asks anyone who passes, but no one seems to know.

NED TEDDERMAN (O.S.)

He just tore out of here.

Linda looks over to see Ned in the front seat of his idling Camaro, a couple of friends smoking in the back. His eyes are bloodshot.

NED TEDDERMAN (CONT'D)

We're making a beer run. We can take you to find him if you want.

Linda hesitates briefly, then climbs in the backseat.

LINDA

Yeah, thanks Ned. That'd be great.

The others make room for her. When the door shuts, Ned backs down the driveway and takes off.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky sneaks back into his house. From the looks of it, his parents date went well. They're cuddling on the couch together, sharing their truths.

MAUREEN

There was never any discussion over who would quit their job. It was just assumed.

ALLEN

I never knew it meant so much to you.

MAUREEN

I want to go back to work.

ALLEN

I think you should...

Tiptoeing in, Ricky finds his mother's purse. He quietly reaches in and steals all the money she has.

EXT. DEDHAM HEIGHTS PARK -- SOON AFTER

Ricky and Tracey are the only people in the park at such a late hour. As Tracey swings absently on the swing set, Ricky attends to something on one of the picnic tables.

RICKY

Thanks for meeting me here.

TRACEY

Well, what was I supposed to do?
You sure it was them?

RICKY

Saw it with my own eyes.

TRACEY

I guess it's better that I find out
now then down the line...

RICKY

Exactly.

Ricky unfolds a TIN FOIL PACKET, licking his fingers as he goes.

TRACEY

What's that?

RICKY

You've heard of heroin?

TRACEY

Yeah?

RICKY

It's heroin.

TRACEY

Jesus Ricky, how long you been
doing this?

RICKY

Couple years...

TRACEY

Any good?

RICKY

Why don't you watch me blast off
and if you're still interested
after, I'll be happy to give you
wings.

Tracey watches as he rigs a Bic lighter up on the picnic table to keep burning. He finds a spoon he swiped and cooks over the open flame.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I shouldn't be surprised. They're
two of the best people I know. Of
course they're gonna get
together...

When it's ready, he grabs a needle and sucks in as much as he can. He stares at it, knowing that this is the end.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I can't even be mad...

He rolls his sleeve up, undoes his belt and ties off. He plugs the needle into his arm, bites down on the belt, and pushes the plunger.

That old familiar heat runs down his arm. He lets go of the belt and lets it run throughout his whole body.

He smiles stupidly, a bit of drool running down his chin. He wipes it off, then kisses Tracey, taking her by surprise--

TRACEY

What the hell, Ricky?!

RICKY

What? They cheated on us, so now
it's our turn--

TRACEY

--Get off me!

RICKY

Come on! What the fuck are you
good for, then?!

She pushes him to the ground, crying.

TRACEY

Why did you do that? You ruined
everything! What is wrong with
you?!

She runs to her car as Ricky fades into a haze.

EXT. DEDHAM HEIGHTS PARK -- HOURS LATER

Ricky wakes, covered in a thin layer of snow. The needle's still in his arm and Tracey is long gone.

RICKY

Ugh, why am I still here?!

Pulling the syringe out, Ricky staggers to his feet. It's freezing cold and he holds his jacket tight to himself as he hurries over to his car.

He turns the heat on and blows into his hands before pulling out of the spot.

INT. TOSTIGER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky enters as quietly as possible, but it seems there's no need. Tabby and his parents are waiting up for him. He knows an intervention when he sees one.

RICKY

What's going on?

ALLEN

Ricky, something terrible happened...

Ricky's mind jumps to the worst possibility.

RICKY

Where's Benji?!

BENJI

I'm over here.

Benji stands from the chair he's sitting on in the corner. There are tears coming down his face.

ALLEN

Ricky, there was a car accident. Ned's dead. And Linda's in the hospital. They don't think she'll make it through the night.

Ricky looks about the room, unsure of what to say.

BENJI

I'm so sorry, Ricky...

Benji hugs him, but Ricky doesn't hug him back. He just stands there.

RICKY
I gotta get to the hospital.

BENJI
I can drive you.

RICKY
No, I want to be alone.

His parents make a move to object, but Ricky's out the door before they can.

INT. MONDALE MEDICAL CENTER -- MINUTES LATER

In the emergency room, Ricky asks a nurse for directions and she points him to a nearby room.

Inside, Linda lies unconscious in a bed, a big bloody bruise denting one side of her head. She's attached to a bunch of wires and a machine is breathing for her.

Ricky goes to her side. He can barely get the words out.

RICKY
Why did you get in that car?!

He picks up one of her lifeless hands and kisses it, shaking.

Behind him, Mr. Hallick returns from the cafeteria, a cup of coffee in hand. When he sees who's in with his daughter, he hurries inside.

MR. HALLICK
You got a lot of nerve coming here.
She's in a coma.

RICKY
I wasn't with her tonight. I
should have been...

MR. HALLICK
She crashes in a car with your best
friend. You think you have nothing
to do with that?

He clenches his fists.

MR. HALLICK (CONT'D)
It's taking everything I've got to
not choke the life out of you.

When Ricky doesn't respond, Linda's father tries reasoning with him one last time.

MR. HALLICK (CONT'D)
Look, if you really love her like
you claim to, you'll leave her
alone.

Ricky finally nods.

RICKY
You're right. If she makes it out
of this, you should move her away.
Far from here. Somewhere she can
forget all about me.

He kisses her gently on the cheek and without looking at Mr.
Hallick, stands and exits.

EXT. MONDALE MEDICAL CENTER -- MINUTES LATER

Ricky wanders out of the hospital in a daze. The sun is just
coming up.

He sees a church across the street. He watches as a priest
opens the basement door for those AA'ers waiting for their
morning meeting to start. They stub out their cigarettes and
head inside.

Ricky's feet start moving before even he knows where they're
going. He crosses the road and is one of the last through
the door.

INT. FIRST PRESBYTERIAN, BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Ricky walks into the room like a zombie, tears welling in his
eyes, threatening to fall.

He takes a seat in the circle of chairs. Stands for the
prayers.

The MODERATOR running the meeting, a dreadlocked man, is busy
greeting the others when he catches sight of Ricky.

MODERATOR
I've been doing this a long time.
I know when someone needs to talk.

Ricky looks around at the mix of indifferent and
understanding faces.

RICKY
I used to be depressed by you
people. I thought you were weak
and pathetic.
(MORE)

RICKY (CONT'D)

(beat)

No offense...

Some of them laugh.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Little did I know I was one of you.
We act like it's a Dedham Heights
problem, but I think maybe it's an
everywhere problem. I see you
looking at me and know what you
want me to say. I'm Ricky and I'm
an alcoholic... drug addict...
piece of shit. All of that.

He thinks back on his countless mistakes.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I made every bad decision. I
should have died a million times
over. But then why am I still
here? Max would say it's because I
haven't learned my lesson yet. You
tell yourself the people in your
life will be better off without
you. That the best thing they can
do is get as far away from you as
possible. That's the only way
they'll be safe. Because the hole
in me is never-ending. All it does
is consume and if I'm not careful
it'll eat them up too.

He finds himself shaking his head though.

RICKY (CONT'D)

But that's not right. All my life
I thought that way and where did it
get me? Right here next to you.
But I don't want to disappear
anymore. I don't want to say
goodbye. Because I need them. And
maybe they need me too...

That's when he notices it's snowing inside. And the drunks
have Christmas lights on them.

Ricky trails off, unsure of what is happening. They start
clapping for him as the ceiling bursts opens letting in
blinding sunlight.

Ricky throws an arm up to block it, but trips over his chair,
falling backwards.

Just as he's about to hit the floor, it shatters into a million pieces.

He goes right through, rushing through clouds, plummeting towards the earth.

He braces to hit the ground. But the impact never comes...

EXT. TOSTIGER HOUSE -- SUMMER AFTERNOON, 2003

Ricky sits up in a wooded area in the middle of a bush. And there's a five-year-old staring at him.

PHILLIP

Found you, daddy!

Ricky crawls out of his hiding spot.

RICKY

Yeah, you did...

The kid runs back to his mother. Linda steps off the porch of Allen and Maureen's old house.

She's got a London Conservatory of Music t-shirt on, her pregnant belly peeking out the bottom.

All that's left of her accident is a small scar on her forehead. Ricky walks right up to her and kisses her.

LINDA

What was that for?

RICKY

Just felt like a while...

Ricky looks at his surroundings. They're having a barbecue in the front yard. Max and Stillman are there, sharing an Adirondack chair.

Ricky hears the front door of the neighbor's house open and watches as Benji holds it open for his three-year-old to run out into the yard.

BENJI

I told you they'd be playing outside!

The toddler happily joins Phillip in splashing around in a baby pool. Benji supervises their play as his wife joins him. Tracey hands him a cup of coffee and cuddles into him.

Ricky waves to his neighbors. He finds a seat next to Linda in a lawn chair and together they watch the children splash around.

It isn't long before Tabby pulls into the driveway in a long station wagon, her parents in the back.

TABBY

Look who I found at the airport!

She's got a size-able wedding ring on her finger.

LINDA

You made good time!

Maureen emerges, carrying presents and already sweating.

MAUREEN

This weather! It's like we didn't even leave Florida.

Allen hurries around the car, leaner and healthier than he's been in years.

ALLEN

Where are my grandkids?!

Ricky and Benji's kids squeal.

TOSTIGER KIDS

Grandpa!

Ricky laughs as they run to his father. Allen scoops them up and spins them around.

And all three generations of Tostigers are together at last.

FADE OUT.

THE END