

"MENTAL LOCKDOWN"

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FADE IN:

EXT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A boxy-looking two-story building in Astoria in New York City's Queens borough.

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Smallish...blue walls...white table...two black chairs...a window links the space to a control room.

Two bottles of water rest on the table.

KENNY MARTIN (47, generous, bashful, Black) sits across the table from NANCY BRIGATI (43, methodical, temperamental, White), an NYPD detective.

Kenny looks pale, undernourished.

An exasperated Nancy stares at her watch.

NANCY
TGIF...ya know where I'm goin' when
this is all over.

She looks up at him.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Kenneth, do you understand why ya
here?

Kenny's nod is oh-so-slow.

NANCY (CONT'D)
This is a police station.

KENNY
Yes...I understand.

NANCY
Since this is a police station, I
gotta read this to you. It doesn't
mean ya under arrest.

Nancy lifts a small notebook from the table. She turns to the first page, then reads:

NANCY (CONT'D)
"You have the right to remain
silent. Anything you say can and
will be used against you in a court
of law."

Kenny shakes his head "yes."

NANCY (CONT'D)

"You have the right to an attorney.
You can have him or her...or
them...present while ya bein'
questioned."

KENNY

Okay.

NANCY

(still reading)

"If you cannot afford an attorney,
one will be appointed to represent
you if you wish."

KENNY

Yes.

NANCY

(reading some more)

"You can decide at any time and
exercise these rights and not
answer any questions."

Nancy closes the notebook, sets it aside, and eyes Kenny.

NANCY (CONT'D)

You understand these rights as I've
explained them to you?

KENNY

Yes...

Kenny catches Nancy's cross look.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Yes...Detective Brigati.

That cross look becomes a smirk.

NANCY

Thank you...now...you understand
that ya mother, Ella Martin, was
stabbed to death on January
twelfth.

(exhales)

Ninety-six days ago.

KENNY

Yes. That's correct.

NANCY

What a way to ruin the anniversary
of the J-E-T-S beatin' the Colts in
Super Bowl 3.

KENNY

Great game...somebody put it on
YouTube and I saw it on my phone.

NANCY

'Nuff of that.
(leaning in on Kenny)
Tell me 'bout you.

KENNY

Where do you want me to start?

NANCY

Doesn't matter.

KENNY

Well...uh...I'm the regional sales
manager for an electronics chain.

NANCY

Which one?

KENNY

I used to work at the Best Buy at
the Rego Center out in Rego Park.

NANCY

Oh...that one.

KENNY

I'd been working there since 2015.
Best Buy promoted me in 2019.

NANCY

Before that?

KENNY

I worked at the RadioShack in
Huntington from 1999 until 2014.
They promoted me to store manager
in 2003, then regional sales
manager in 2014.

NANCY

Uh huh.

KENNY

I got to go to all the stores in the region until the Shack closed all its stores. Just like I'm doing now with Best Buy.

NANCY

Good money, huh?

KENNY

(all smiles)

Yeah.

NANCY

Good enough to getcha outa those Hillside Park Apartments?

KENNY

Absolutely.

Nancy leans toward Kenny.

NANCY

Why didn't ya leave those Hillside Park Apartments?

The smile falls off Kenny's face.

He stares at the window...an adjacent wall...another wall...

NANCY (CONT'D)

Did it have anything to do with ya mother?

Nancy observes Kenny's heavy nod.

KENNY

She...liked it over there.

NANCY

Ya sister didn't.

Kenny gazes at the window again...

NANCY (CONT'D)

She told me...in fact, she got out the first chance she got.

...then he eyeballs Nancy.

KENNY

Yes...that was Jenny, all right.

NANCY
How 'bout you, Kenneth?

Kenny looks down on the table.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Kenny?

He takes a deep breath...

NANCY (CONT'D)
Kenny Boy?

...before he grits his teeth.

KENNY
I...had...an obligation...to Mom.

Nancy's nod is slow.

NANCY
So...ya wanna explain this
obligation to ya mother?

Kenny continues to stare down on the table.

NANCY (CONT'D)
I'm over here.

He looks up at her.

KENNY
It all started when I was
seven...in fact, the day I turned
seven.

FLASHBACK - EXT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS - NIGHT

A nine-story Jamaica-area building from the Kennedy years.

Its front entrance features a red, marquee-like sign.

SUPER: 9-11-1984

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kenny (then 7) and mom ELLA MARTIN (then 42, elusive, manipulative) sit on the sofa in this modestly-furnished space.

They look some kind of festive on this Tuesday night.

The TV's ON...Ella eyeballs her son.

ELLA
Your favorite show's getting ready
to come on.

PRETEEN KENNY
Yeah! "The A-Team!"
(tries to mimic Mr. T)
I pity the fool that tries to spoil
this night!

Ella laughs.

PRETEEN KENNY (CONT'D)
Mom, when are we gonna eat?

ELLA
Soon as your dad shows up with the
cake, that's when.

Kenny nods.

ELLA (CONT'D)
He should be here any minute.

PRETEEN KENNY
Good!

EXT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS - NIGHT

JOHN MARTIN (45), bakery box in hands, heads toward the front
entrance.

So does A MAN IN A NEW YORK METS BASEBALL CAP (30s).

MAN IN METS CAP
Hey! Can you help me?

John turns around...just short of the front entrance.

JOHN
What can I do for you?

MAN IN METS CAP
You got a cigarette?

JOHN
No. I don't smoke.

MAN IN METS CAP
Got any money?

JOHN
No...I'm broke.

MAN IN METS CAP
Then what's that box you're
holdin'?

John takes a heavy breath.

JOHN
It's...a...cake.

The man in the Mets cap nods in slow motion.

JOHN (CONT'D)
My son turned seven today...I'm
going upstairs and he and his mom
and I are gonna celebrate.

John hurries toward the building's front doors when...the man
in the baseball cap pulls out a .38 (or smaller gun).

The man in the Mets cap aims...fires...and shoots John in the
back with all the bullets in the gun.

John falls to his death...right on the cake box...short of
the front doors.

The man in the cap throws the gun down.

He sprints to John, lifts the dead man's wallet out, and
helps himself to any cash in it.

He pockets the loot, throws John's wallet aside, and...tries
to go after the cake box!

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ella and Kenny continue to sit on the sofa and watch TV...but
now the latter looks bored.

PRETEEN KENNY
Mom...why don't we go find Dad?

ELLA
You sure that's a good idea?

PRETEEN KENNY
Maybe something happened to him.

ELLA
Kenny, you talking gibberish.

PRETEEN KENNY
Mom, this is New York! Anything can
happen here!

Kenny earns Ella's disbelieving stare.

PRETEEN KENNY (CONT'D)
You said so!

Mother and son hear A KNOCK on the door.

ELLA
When?

Ella jumps up to open the door...and finds ALEXANDRIA "ALEX" ALCANTARA (then 27) on the other side.

Alex looks stricken.

PRETEEN KENNY
Hi, Alex!

ELLA
Come in. What's on your mind?

Alex walks inside the apartment before Ella closes the door.

Kenny and Ella go back to the sofa...Alex finds a seat at a lounge chair.

ALEX
Something terrible happened a few minutes ago...

ELLA
What happened?

PRETEEN KENNY
(staring at Alex)
Did you see Dad?

Alex shakes her head "yes."

ALEX
I think...we'd all better...better go downstairs...

Kenny hangs his head.

Ella grits her teeth.

EXT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Alex, Ella, Kenny, TWO POLICE OFFICERS (a man in his 30s and a woman in her 40s), and A FEW OTHER TENANTS gather around John's lifeless body.

FEMALE OFFICER

(to Ella)

You sure that's your husband?

A nodding Ella bursts into heavy tears.

Kenny wails...he hugs his mom.

Alex makes it a group embrace.

The male officer nods in understanding.

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Ella and Kenny sit at the breakfast table.

She eats somewhat heartily...but he picks at his food.

ELLA

You gotta eat better than that.

Kenny sets his fork on the table.

ELLA (CONT'D)

You gonna need to grow up big and strong.

(takes a bite)

You know you now the man of the house...you know that.

PRETEEN KENNY

But I'm only seven!

ELLA

Makes no difference.

Ella grabs Kenny's fork. She hands it to him...

ELLA (CONT'D)

Eat. I don't wanna raise no weakling.

...but he sets it right back down on the table.

ELLA (CONT'D)

You want the other kids at school making fun of you?

PRETEEN KENNY

No, Mom.

ELLA

Then you better eat this food!

She grabs his fork again, digs into his scrambled eggs, and aims the fork toward his mouth.

He covers his mouth with his hands.

PRETEEN KENNY
(through his cupped mouth)
Mom, I'm not hungry!

Ella thrusts the fork toward Kenny's still-covered mouth.

ELLA
EAT IT!

Kenny runs away from the table.

Ella sets the fork down.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You just like your father!

She leaves the table and heads in his direction.

Along the way:

ELLA (CONT'D)
You enough to drive an insane
person back to sanity!

Ella hears Kenny's bedroom door SLAM SHUT O.S.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nancy grits her teeth.

KENNY
Started right then and there...I
wasn't allowed to be a kid anymore.

NANCY
Ya weren't allowed to be a kid
anymore.

KENNY
I did everything from that point on
except get it on with her.

Kenny's interrogator looks alarmed.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Things went from just bad to a
living hell.

NANCY
I can imagine what it woulda been
like if she had sex with you.

He watches her go back to the notebook to write stuff down.

KENNY
I don't wanna imagine that.

NANCY
Where was ya sister when ya father
was murdered?

KENNY
Jenny was home at the time Dad was
killed. That was the first place
Mom called when she went to tell
Jenny about Dad's death.

Nancy's nod is slow.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Mom lucked out...Jenny had just
gotten home from work.

NANCY
Where'd she work at the time?

KENNY
Macy's.

Kenny fields Nancy's "huh?" look.

KENNY (CONT'D)
The one in Manhattan.

NANCY
Uh...huh.

KENNY
She'd just gotten the job right out
of college...she needed to pay her
student loan, so she took a job as
a sales associate at that Macy's.

NANCY
Where'd she live at the time?

KENNY

Jenny found a one-bedroom apartment in Manhattan...she lucked out finding that place, what with having to pay off that loan.

NANCY

So...she lived in Manhattan.
(sets notebook aside)
Wouldn't it be cheaper for her to stay home with her mother?

KENNY

Yeah...but...

Nancy leans closer to Kenny.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Jenny wanted to live closer to her job...and she didn't wanna live in the same borough as Mom.

NANCY

Ya sister did get outa there the first chance she got.

Kenny shows a slight grin.

KENNY

It was because Jenny got tired of hearing Mom put Dad down...and got tired of Mom putting me down.
(putting chin on fists)
She got tired of Mom putting her down, too.

NANCY

So...tell me 'bout ya mother.

KENNY

Mom was a secretary for one of the brokerage firms in the financial district.

Nancy exhibits fake surprise.

KENNY (CONT'D)

She was...before that, she was a secretary for a major Harlem church.

NANCY

Uh huh.

KENNY

Mom worked at that church from 1963 until 1994...then worked for that brokerage firm from 1994 until she retired in 2006.

NANCY

Why'd she quit workin' at that church up in Harlem?

KENNY

They wouldn't give her a raise.

NANCY

It's a church, for cryin' out loud!

KENNY

Yeah...but she told the pastor she was looking for greener pastures.

Kenny removes his chin from his fists, then rests those fists on the table.

KENNY (CONT'D)

She told me she was just tired...wanted a new challenge.

NANCY

What'd ya mom tell ya sister?

KENNY

Not a thing.

The detective shakes her head sideways.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Jenny heard it through the grapevine that the pastor over there wanted to get it on with Mom.

NANCY

This was ten years after ya dad got killed on ya birthday.

KENNY

Yeah.

He takes a swig from his bottle of water.

KENNY (CONT'D)

When the pastor found out Mom didn't wanna go out with him, he found a member Jenny's age...and he took her to a Manhattan hotel.

NANCY

Sounds like a good movie.

Nancy sips from her own bottle of water.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Speakin' of movie...tell me 'bout ya grandma...the movie star.

Kenny looks embarrassed.

NANCY (CONT'D)

She was in a lotta movies.

KENNY

Yeah...but she wasn't a star like Halle Berry or Viola Davis or Octavia Spencer.

NANCY

She did a whole lotta movies.

KENNY

Grandma Louise did...back in the Thirties and Forties and early Fifties...playing maids and other kinds of servants.

Nancy's is a slow, slow nod.

KENNY (CONT'D)

She got tired of it, too.

(leans back in chair)

The night she and Grandpa Thomas took Mom to the movies when Mom was little, that did it.

NANCY

What'd they go see?

KENNY

They went to see "No Way Out."

NANCY

No, they didn't.

KENNY

Yes, they did.

She grits her teeth...

KENNY (CONT'D)

This "No Way Out" starred Sidney Poitier...he played a doctor. It was his first film.

...then turns in her own look of embarrassment.

KENNY (CONT'D)

And it came out in 1950.

Nancy blows an imaginary bubble.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Five years before Kevin Costner was even born.

NANCY

Okay...how did "No Way Out" with Sidney Poitier change things for ya Grandma Louise?

KENNY

Well, uh, Grandma Louise heard about an all-Black theatrical ensemble company here in New York. She wanted to be in it, 'cause it meant not always having to play maids and other domestics.

NANCY

Okay.

KENNY

Grandpa Thomas didn't wanna give up his lounge on Central Avenue in Los Angeles...but he did.

NANCY

And that's how ya mother and her folks ended up here.

A smiling Kenny nods.

KENNY

He wanted to start another bar...but he settled for becoming a city bus driver.

NANCY

So that Grandma Louise could hang
on to her dream of stage glory.

An additional nod from Kenny.

KENNY

One thing about it: Grandpa Thomas
and Grandma Louise raised Mom to
watch everything...every little
this, every little that.

NANCY

Everything had to be perfect.

KENNY

And that's how Mom raised me and
Jenny. Everything had to be
right...everything had to be in
place. Everything.

NANCY

Or...

KENNY

We had Hell to pay.

NANCY

What was Hell like in that
apartment, Kenneth?

KENNY

All kinds of forms...especially
when Jenny or I went to the store.

FLASHBACK - EXT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS - DAY

SUPER: 12-17-1987

Ella (then 45) stands at the building entrance on this windy-
and-somewhat-cold afternoon.

Her heavy winter coat helps somewhat.

She watches in disgust as SOME PEOPLE stroll along the
street...a few folks enter the building.

One of the pedestrians about to go inside: Alex (then 30).

Alex waves at Ella...who doesn't return the greeting.

ALEX

Ella...you okay?

ELLA

Nope.

Alex stops right next to Ella.

ALEX

Anything I can do to help?

ELLA

Nope. I'll manage.

ALEX

Okay...but if you need anything,
I'll be upstairs.

ELLA

I'll manage. Thank you.

Ella watches a shrugging Alex saunter inside the building.

SEVERAL OTHER PEOPLE saunter along the street.

At last, Kenny (then 10), in his own heavy coat, totes a full bag of groceries on his way to the building.

As he heads toward the front entrance, Ella grabs him.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Where you been? What took you so damn long?

PRETEEN KENNY

Mom!

ELLA

Where you been, boy?

PRETEEN KENNY

I went to the store right after school...just like you said...

They go inside.

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Ella escorts Kenny into the kitchen, where he sets the bag on the counter. (Both Martins continue to wear their coats.)

She empties the bag, one item at a time.

PRETEEN KENNY

I tried to get everything on the list. I really did.

He pulls a shopping list from his pants pocket.

ELLA
Put it on the counter.

Kenny does just that.

Ella pulls a package of strawberry Kool-Aid from the sack.
She gives her son a withering look.

ELLA (CONT'D)
I told you to get grape Kool-Aid.

PRETEEN KENNY
They didn't have any.

He watches his mother slam the package to the counter.

ELLA
Don't lie to me.

PRETEEN KENNY
The store ran out of grape.

Kenny looks down on the floor.

ELLA
Look at me.

He turns his head to her.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Kenneth...do you love me?

PRETEEN KENNY
Yes!

ELLA
Then don't lie to me!

PRETEEN KENNY
Mom, they didn't have any grape
Kool-Aid in the store!

ELLA
How can a store that big run outa
grape Kool-Aid?

PRETEEN KENNY
They did!

Ella wags her finger at Kenny.

ELLA
You lying to me again!

PRETEEN KENNY
No, I'm not! I talked to the store
manager...and he told me they were
out of grape Kool-Aid.

ELLA
Siddown.

Kenny gravitates to the kitchen table, where he takes a seat.

Ella follows suit.

ELLA (CONT'D)
Why you trying to spoil my birthday
tomorrow?

PRETEEN KENNY
I'm not!

Kenny receives Ella's "yeah, right" look.

PRETEEN KENNY (CONT'D)
I tried to call you...but you
weren't home.

ELLA
When'd you call?

Kenny stares at the refrigerator...at the counter...

ELLA (CONT'D)
I asked you a question.

...at the window...then at Ella.

PRETEEN KENNY
About a quarter to four.

Ella's is a slow, slow nod.

ELLA
I was on the subway.

Kenny smiles...but Ella's scowl wipes his smile away.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You went to the store at Hillside
and Homelawn, didn't you?

PRETEEN KENNY

Yes, I did.

He jumps up to grab the receipt from the grocery sack, then hands the receipt to her.

ELLA

(accepting receipt)

You better not be lying.

PRETEEN KENNY

Mom, I'm not lying!

Ella studies the receipt for a few moments.

ELLA

(rises from her seat)

I'm gonna call the manager over there and see if they have any grape Kool-Aid.

(pointing to Kenny)

Stay in here. In fact, siddown.

Kenny sits back down.

Ella heads out of the kitchen...but along the way:

ELLA (CONT'D)

You better not be lying.

Kenny puts his chin on his fists.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny's chin rests on his fists.

KENNY

Those were ten really long minutes.

NANCY

Were ya lyin' to ya mother?

KENNY

No.

He rests his hands on the table.

KENNY (CONT'D)

No.

Nancy shakes her head "yes."

KENNY (CONT'D)
All that night, she kept telling
me:
(tries to mimic Ella)
"You just like your father."

NANCY
Tell me some more 'bout ya father.

Kenny stares at the window...at the table...

NANCY (CONT'D)
I'm right here.

...and then at Nancy.

KENNY
Well...uh...I know he was good to
me and Jenny and Mom.

NANCY
Jenny did say that about him, too.

KENNY
(with a slight grin)
I remember...I barely
remember...Dad drove a UPS truck.

NANCY
A UPS truck.

KENNY
That's correct.

He takes a swig of water.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I remember...it was about a year
before he died...he told me about
my not having to worry about a
thing...with both him and Mom
working, we all had a roof over our
heads and food to eat.

NANCY
In the first few years after ya
father died, what was it like for
ya mother?

KENNY
Don't ask.

NANCY
I've gotta ask.

KENNY
Well...uh...she started leaning on
me more and more.

NANCY
How?

KENNY
I had to start doing some of Dad's
chores as soon as I got old enough.
And as soon as I got old enough to
earn my own money, I did odd jobs
for some of the other tenants.

NANCY
How old were you when you started
doin' those odd jobs?

KENNY
Twelve.

NANCY
Did ya do anything else?

KENNY
Uh...when I turned thirteen, I got
a job as a carrier for "Newsday."

Nancy's mouth hangs open.

KENNY (CONT'D)
That's right, Nancy. "Long Island
Newsday."

NANCY
(snapping her fingers)
I forgot about that paper...did ya
make any money?

KENNY
I didn't do too bad. But a lot of
the money went toward helping Mom.

NANCY
I see.

KENNY
Another thing that happened not
long after I turned thirteen...Mom
started drinking.

NANCY

You said she was a church secretary back then.

KENNY

She hid it well...for a once-a-week drinker who drank on Sunday night.

Nancy grits her teeth as she eyeballs her watch.

KENNY (CONT'D)

When I asked Mom why she drank, she said: "It's none of your business!" But I listened in one day when Mom called Jenny...and it slipped out.

NANCY

What slipped out?

KENNY

That Mom's drinking was all about trying to keep from thinking about losing Dad.

NANCY

She ever borrow money from you?

Kenny shakes his head in the affirmative.

KENNY

Lots of times...once I started earning my own dough.

FLASHBACK - EXT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Two or three cars tool along the street.

SUPER: 1-12-1991

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On this Sunday night, Kenny (then 13) sits on the sofa and eats dinner (a TV tray stands in front of him).

With the TV ON, he watches Super Bowl 25.

The second quarter lurches toward the two-minute warning with the New York Giants marching toward Buffalo's end zone.

Things here are somewhat hush-hush...in contrast to THE O.S. CHEERING from across the hallway.

Now it's halftime...despite some food left on his plate,
Kenny wanders toward:

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - ELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He tiptoes into a well-furnished space that includes...a
collection of swords on one wall!

Kenny finds Ella (then 49) sprawled out on her bed.

He stops between the doorway and the bed.

An open bottle of whiskey rests on a nightstand.

He tries to strike up a quiet conversation:

TEENAGE KENNY

Mom...

Ella doesn't stir.

TEENAGE KENNY (CONT'D)

Mom...

Kenny's mom stays sprawled out.

TEENAGE KENNY (CONT'D)

Mom...do you have the ten dollars I
loaned you...that you promised to
pay me back?

ELLA

Get...outa...here...

A shrugging Kenny backs out of Ella's bedroom.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nancy takes another sip of water.

NANCY

Swords.

Kenny's nod is oh-so-slow.

NANCY (CONT'D)

What in the world was ya mother
doin' with swords?

KENNY

It's a long story.

NANCY

I got time.

KENNY

An old friend of Grandma Louise...one of those "B" movie stars from back in the day...he used to do a lot of action movies, Westerns...stuff like that.

NANCY

Uh huh.

KENNY

Well, when he heard Grandma Louise was gonna leave Los Angeles for New York, he gave her one of his swords from one of his old action movies.

NANCY

Why didn't he give that sword to ya Grandpa Thomas?

KENNY

I don't know...I guess Grandpa Thomas wasn't into swords.

Now Kenny takes a drink of water.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Anyway, when Grandma Louise died in 1980, Mom inherited that sword.

NANCY

Okay.

KENNY

During Holy Week the following year, the pastor at the church Mom worked at got to talking about how Peter cut off Malchus' ear as Jesus was about to get crucified.

NANCY

Wait a minute! Who's Malchus?

KENNY

He was a servant of the High Priest. It's in John eighteen.

Nancy snaps her fingers in defeat.

KENNY (CONT'D)
 Mom wanted a sword like the one
 Peter used.

NANCY
 She find it?

KENNY
 Yeah...took her two years, but she
 found it at a thrift store in
 Valley Stream.

NANCY
 What was she gonna do with it?
 Scare you and ya sister?

Kenny's look sours.

KENNY
 She almost did.

NANCY
 Which one?

KENNY
 Me...Jenny had long been gone.

FLASHBACK - INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: 8-21-1991

Kenny sits at a lounge chair; he's on the phone.

ON THE FAMILY TV: "Unsolved Mysteries."

Ella wanders into the room while she polishes her Valley
 Stream sword.

TEENAGE KENNY
 Jenny, I know you don't have much
 time...but...

INT. JENNY MARTIN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In a room featuring posters of past Broadway hits, JENNY
 MARTIN (then 28, cautious; Kenny's sister), her phone's
 receiver against her ear, sits straight up in a wooden chair.

"Unsolved Mysteries" PLAYS on her TV set, too.

Great, great view of the Manhattan skyline from her windows.

JENNY

You're right, Kenny. What can I do for you?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

TEENAGE KENNY

Well...I'd sure like to live with you...

Ella stops waxing her sword.

She points the weapon at Kenny...

JENNY

I've got a one-bedroom apartment! You know that!

...only to drop it and the polishing cloth.

TEENAGE KENNY

But I can sleep in the living room.

JENNY

You don't wanna sleep on my recliner.

TEENAGE KENNY

I'll sleep on the floor--

JENNY

Nothing doing!

Ella strides over to Kenny...

TEENAGE KENNY

Please...let me live with you. I won't be a burden--

JENNY

Hell, no!

TEENAGE KENNY

I'll pull my own weight--

JENNY

I said no!

...and knocks the phone out of his grip.

Kenny looks petrified.

Jenny moves her own phone's receiver from her ear and stares at the receiver in openmouthed shock.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nancy stares at Kenny in her own brand of openmouthed shock.

KENNY

That's exactly what happened...I'm surprised Mom didn't try to kill me right there.

NANCY

Why didn't you call the authorities about this?

Kenny looks down on the table.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Kenny...why didn't you?

KENNY

I...I...don't know.

NANCY

Ya coulda told some people at school...a teacher, the principal. Somebody like that.

KENNY

I was afraid they wouldn't listen.

Nancy shakes her head "yes."

KENNY (CONT'D)

And with Jenny out of our lives, well...I just felt like I had some sort of obligation to Mom.

NANCY

There's that word again.

KENNY

Yeah.

NANCY

Too bad ya mother didn't try to marry someone else.

KENNY

She wouldn't hear of that...the way she put it, nobody else could take the place of Dad.

NANCY

Nobody else.

KENNY

Even with all of Dad's faults.

The detective looks puzzled.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Mom's words. Not mine.

Kenny leans forward in his seat.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Mom used to worry all the time about Dad coming home on time from one of his deliveries. He didn't have a flexible schedule.

NANCY

Was that on him...or was that on his boss at UPS?

KENNY

I...I don't really know.
(leans back)
Maybe both.

NANCY

Uh...okay.

KENNY

It depended on the situation...at least that's what Mom told me.

NANCY

Speakin' of Mom...what was it like livin' with her in high school?

KENNY

I'm lucky I got a chance to even be a teenager.

NANCY

You have any friends at school?

KENNY

I had several...I didn't really have a best friend.

(slight grin)

I ran track and field in high school, though.

Kenny's grin becomes a smile.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I won a letter...but that was only because I went out for track all four years.

NANCY

Uh huh...where'd ya go?

KENNY

Hillcrest. Here in Queens.

NANCY

Get outa here.

KENNY

No. I did go to Hillcrest.

NANCY

Same school Fran Drescher did?

KENNY

That's the truth!

Nancy and Kenny grab their water bottles and sip away.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I was in one of their CTE programs...Business Institute/Virtual Enterprise.

NANCY

How were ya grades?

KENNY

Pretty good...pulled down a B-plus. Really liked it there...it was a break from what I had to face when I got home.

Nancy nods.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Constant nagging...constant browbeating...lotta faultfinding.

He exhales, then looks down at the table.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I was afraid to bring my friends
home...I was afraid they'd catch
Mom drunk...like during my
graduation day.

FLASHBACK - EXT. ALUMNI HALL - DAY

A medium-sized, Kennedy-era basketball arena on the St.
John's University campus.

SUPER: 5-5-1995

Kenny (then 17), Jenny (then 31), and Ella (then 54) join
with KENNY'S FELLOW GRADUATES and OTHER PARENTS to celebrate
(okay, at least observe) Hillcrest's Graduation Day 1995.

All the grads (diplomas in hands) wear purple caps and gowns.

Ella catches Kenny's look.

ELLA
Straighten up that cap! Why didn't
you get all the wrinkles outa that
gown? You look like a bum!

An embarrassed Kenny frees a hand to readjust his cap.

JENNY
Let me take a picture of you two.

TEENAGE KENNY
Uh...okay.

Jenny breaks out a camera.

JENNY
Move in a little closer.

Kenny and Ella do just that...but he cringes once he smells
the whiskey on Ella's breath.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Ready?

TEENAGE KENNY
I'm trying.

ELLA
Jenny, just take the damn picture!

Now Jenny cringes.

CLICK!

ELLA (CONT'D)
When's that damn cab coming?

JENNY
It's coming any minute, Mom.

TEENAGE KENNY
I think once we get in the cab and
get out to that restaurant, we'll
all feel better.

Ella stares daggers at her son.

LATER

Few families remain outside Alumni Hall...and the Martins are
part of the smaller crowd.

Jenny and Kenny wave when they spot a 1990-95 taxi. The two
stop waving when the cab pulls to a stop alongside the clan.

Ella, a relieved Jenny, and a beaming Kenny climb inside.

INT. CAB - DAY

All three Martins head for the back seat...but when Ella eyes
THE CAB DRIVER (a woman in her 40s), the eldest living Martin
tries to leave the taxi.

JENNY
Mom, don't embarrass us!

TEENAGE KENNY
It's all right, Mom. I'll sit in
back with you.

A reluctant Ella nods as Jenny goes to the front passenger
seat.

CAB DRIVER
Where ya going to?

Jenny's all smiles.

JENNY
Bruno Ristorante Italiano.

ELLA
WHAT?

Kenny's mouth flies open.

The cab driver shows puzzlement.

JENNY

That's right. Bruno Ristorante
Italiano...in Howard Beach.

CAB DRIVER

Well...you're the boss, ma'am.

Ella's progeny click their seat belts on as the cab driver pulls into the Utopia Parkway traffic.

Kenny stares his mom into fastening her own safety belt.

ELLA

Jennifer Lynn Martin, I ain't got
no Bruno Risto...Bruno Restaurant
kinda money!

TEENAGE KENNY

Mom...

ELLA

Stay outa this, son!

TEENAGE KENNY

Mom, wait a minute!

ELLA

(wags finger at Kenny)

I'm your mother. You don't tell me
what to do!

Jenny and the cabbie cringe.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I don't care if you just got
through graduating from Hillcrest
High School!

Kenny takes deep breaths.

He stares out the window on his side...he closes his eyes.

Dead silence in the cab...for a few seconds.

Then:

JENNY

Mom...dinner's on me. Every cent.

Ella looks stunned.

Kenny's is a slow, slow nod.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Another thing: I made the
reservation a week ago.

The cab driver's all smiles.

ELLA
(stares daggers at Kenny)
And you didn't even tell me.

TEENAGE KENNY
I didn't have any idea.

Ella reaches into her purse for a flask of whiskey. Kenny glances sideways.

TEENAGE KENNY (CONT'D)
Mom...please don't...

Jenny's sideways glance forces Ella to stuff the flask back in her own purse.

Ella wags a finger at her daughter, then at her son.

ELLA
Wait'll you and me get home.

Kenny shakes his head "no."

The cab driver casts her own sideways glance at Kenny.

CAB DRIVER
Now that you're outa high school,
whatcha gonna do with ya life?

TEENAGE KENNY
I've done a lot of thinking about
that, and...

Jenny and Ella eyeball Kenny.

TEENAGE KENNY (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go to St. John's.

Ella shakes her head sideways.

ELLA
Kenneth Charles Martin...that's
pretty damn stupid!

TEENAGE KENNY

No, it isn't!

ELLA

We ain't no Catholics!

TEENAGE KENNY

I know...but St. John's is the closest college to the Hillside Park Apartments.

CAB DRIVER

Kenneth...you gotta point.

Jenny gestures her approval at her brother.

TEENAGE KENNY

I just figured: "If something happens to Mom while I'm in class, I'm five minutes away from her."

CAB DRIVER

Makes sense to me.

ELLA

Well, it don't make no sense to me!

Ella's children cringe.

ELLA (CONT'D)

I still think it's stupid!
(glaring at Kenny)
And you know what? You stupid! What the hell did they teach you in that high school back there?

TEENAGE KENNY

I only thought of you...

Kenny buries his head in his hands.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny's head rests in his hands...for a few seconds.

Then:

NANCY

How was the rest of the day?

KENNY

I really didn't feel like eating.
Jenny just about walked out of that
restaurant, what with Mom doing all
that bellyaching.

NANCY

What happened after you and ya
mother got home from Bruno
Ristorante Italiano?

KENNY

Mom continued to jump on
me...talking about how I was
stupid...talking about me having
book sense, but not street sense.

Nancy's is a slow nod.

KENNY (CONT'D)

She even slapped me in the face.

NANCY

Whatcha do after that?

KENNY

I ran into my bedroom...closed the
door...hid in the closet.

NANCY

You hid in ya closet.

Kenny grits his teeth.

KENNY

I...felt like wanting to kill her
right there...

Nancy perks up.

NANCY

Was this the first time ya had
murderous thoughts about ya mother?

Kenny stares at the window...at a wall...

NANCY (CONT'D)

I need to know.

...then Nancy herself.

KENNY

Yes...it was.

Nancy's face shows an "ah hah!" look.

NANCY

Did ya try to act on any of these thoughts after that?

Kenny looks down at the table...then right at Nancy.

KENNY

I...did.

Nancy's eyes light up.

KENNY (CONT'D)

It was...it was...uh...not long after I enrolled at St. John's.

NANCY

Whatcha do?

KENNY

It was...uh...a month into my freshman year. I had to leave early one day for my first class.

NANCY

Okay.

KENNY

By then, Mom was working as a secretary at a brokerage firm. And that meant a long subway ride.

Kenny's inquisitor shakes her head "yes."

KENNY (CONT'D)

Anyway...Mom had to go to the bathroom to fix herself up for work. She loved to take her time.

Nancy scribbles away in her notebook...

KENNY (CONT'D)

I sneaked underneath the kitchen sink...and...I found a bottle of liquid cleanser.

NANCY

So whatcha do with the liquid cleanser?

KENNY

I...I...I...poured a couple of drops into her coffee.

...before she gives Kenny an openmouthed stare.

KENNY (CONT'D)

She was down to a half a cup...I thought she wouldn't notice.

NANCY

But she noticed.

KENNY

She noticed.

NANCY

Do you remember what color the liquid cleanser was?

Kenny gazes at a wall...for a few seconds.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Look at me. I'm right here.

He turns to her.

KENNY

I'm just trying to tell the truth.

NANCY

Okay.

KENNY

It was white.

NANCY

White.

KENNY

(slow, slow nod)

She confronted me about it after I got home from classes. She said: "Whatcha trying to do? Poison me?"

NANCY

Whatcha tell her?

KENNY

I didn't say anything...I just shook my head "no."

NANCY

Okay. What did she do after that?

KENNY

She chased me down with one of her swords...but I ran to my room and hid in the closet. And I stayed in my closet until she fell asleep.

Nancy exhales.

KENNY (CONT'D)

She was still angry at me for going to St. John's.

NANCY

It's a Catholic school, Kenneth.

KENNY

Yeah...but you don't have to be Catholic to enroll.

(with a small grin)

They've got a good interfaith ministry over there.

Kenny observes Nancy's embarrassed nod.

NANCY

How were ya grades?

KENNY

I pulled down a B...it was what it was, considering what I had to face at home.

NANCY

Ya pulled down a B.

KENNY

I graduated.

NANCY

Did ya mother go to the commencement?

KENNY

No...but Jenny did.

NANCY

Jenny.

KENNY

And I had to sneak around to tell her about the graduation ceremony...and I had to sneak out of the apartment building to go to the graduation ceremony.

NANCY

Whatcha major in?

KENNY

Business.

NANCY

Tell me about ya first job as a college grad.

KENNY

I went to work at the RadioShack store way out in Huntington.

NANCY

Huntington...damn!

KENNY

It's just like I said before.

Nancy snaps her fingers.

KENNY (CONT'D)

It was a RadioShack store back then. Now it's a T-Mobile store.

NANCY

How'd ya get out there from Jamaica?

KENNY

I drove...I bought my first car right after graduating from St. John's...a '75 Lincoln Mark IV.

NANCY

I'll...be...a...how'd ya mother feel about you goin' out there?

KENNY

Nervous...at first.

Nancy downs the rest of her water.

KENNY (CONT'D)

My commute to Huntington was longer than her commute to Manhattan.

NANCY

Yeah...

KENNY

Wasn't long before her nervousness about my job became anger.

NANCY

Whatcha do to piss her off?

Kenny looks exasperated.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Okay...what happened?

KENNY

Well...uh...it was my car.

NANCY

A drug car.

He shakes his head back and forth.

KENNY

My first car was twenty-four years old when I bought it...at an auto auction. Paid five hundred dollars.

NANCY

You're kiddin' me.

KENNY

I'm telling the truth.

A grin fills Nancy's face.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I had to give that car a whole lot of TLC...and Mom got upset at me about it.

NANCY

How so?

KENNY

Seemed like every month, something on the car or in the car needed to be replaced...all four tires, the battery, the brakes, the wipers, the taillights, the antenna...

NANCY

You woulda been better off buyin' a new car.

KENNY

I couldn't afford it...and besides, somebody would've stolen it.

Nancy snaps her fingers.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I worked four six-hour shifts at that RadioShack store...the whole day on Sundays.

(with a shrug)

And at first, I wasn't making enough money to buy a new car.

She shakes her head sideways.

KENNY (CONT'D)

It was a job where they paid commission on top of an hourly wage. And I didn't sell enough products at first.

NANCY

Those Lincoln Mark IV's were gas guzzlers, weren't they?

A frowning Kenny nods.

KENNY

Yeah...but they were sure comfortable.

NANCY

You said ya couldn't afford a new car back then. Could you afford ya own apartment?

Kenny stares at the ceiling for a few seconds...

NANCY (CONT'D)

I'm right here.

...before he eyes Nancy.

KENNY
Maybe a studio.

NANCY
Why didn't ya move?

KENNY
Every time I thought about moving
out, Mom used to ask me:
(tries to mimic Ella)
"Kenny...do you love me?"
(back in his real voice)
I'd say: "Of course, Mom."

Nancy shows a "been there, done that" nod.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Then she'd come back with:
(back in his Ella voice)
"Then stay with me, baby."

NANCY
How'd ya sister get away?

KENNY
(his real voice again)
I was thinking about that one day
at work. It was a Sunday.

FLASHBACK - EXT. HUNTINGTON RADIOSHACK STORE - DAY

A small white, early-Twentieth-Century building marked by a white sign with the familiar RadioShack logo.

SUPER: 7-18-1999

INT. HUNTINGTON RADIOSHACK SALESFLOOR - DAY

The place is well-stocked, with plenty of displays in the middle of the room.

ONLY ONE CUSTOMER (a woman in her 60s) does business here right now...and she stands across the counter from Kenny (then 21), who rings up her purchases.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Thank you for stopping in.

He hands her a receipt.

CUSTOMER
(accepting receipt)
Thank you!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
We hope you enjoy your new cellular
phone!

She heads out of the store...but stops short to eye Kenny.

CUSTOMER
I will!

With the customer gone, Kenny tidies the counter when store manager JABARI REESE (then 27, friendly, Black) emerges from the office.

Jabari catches Kenny's glum look.

JABARI
Kenny, is everything okay?

Kenny shakes his head "no."

JABARI (CONT'D)
Everything cool at home?

Kenny shakes his head left and right again as he tries to finish cleaning the counter.

JABARI (CONT'D)
It's all good...you can tell me.

Jabari saunters to the back of the counter.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
It's tough...it's tough...too damn
tough living with Mom...

Kenny takes deep breaths...Jabari nods in understanding.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)
When I'm here, I can be myself...I
could be myself when I was at
school...but when I'm home, I'm on
pins and needles nonstop...

JABARI
I know that's gotta hurt.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 It's like I can't do anything right
 according to Mom...no matter what I
 do, it just doesn't satisfy.

Kenny stops cleaning...Jabari drapes a shoulder around him.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)
 It's worse than death...

TWO NEW CUSTOMERS stroll into the store.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)
 I'd rather die than go back home.

Kenny covers his mouth when the two buyers approach the
 counter.

EXT. HUNTINGTON RADIOSHACK STORE - NIGHT

Early evening...Jabari and Kenny stroll out of the building;
 the former locks the front entrance before the two men wave
 at each other.

EXT. EAST CARVER STREET PARKING LOT #2 - NIGHT

In a space behind the RadioShack building, Kenny locates his
 1975 Lincoln.

He climbs inside the car, then...

INT. KENNY'S LINCOLN MARK IV - NIGHT

...he stuffs the key into the ignition.

Kenny rests his open hands on the steering wheel...and buries
 his head in his hands.

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kenny sits at the dinner table, where he devours his food.

Ella (then 57) stands next to him.

ELLA
 Where you been? And this time, you
 better tell me the truth!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 (through his bites)
 Mom, it's just like I said: I was
 at work.

ELLA

Not when you come home this late!
It's eight thirty!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

The store closes at six on Sundays.
It takes about half an hour to do
all the closing work. Then it takes
about forty-five minutes to an hour
for me to get home.

Kenny takes a swig of juice/milk/pop/water.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)

Depending on the traffic.

ELLA

Sure...

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

The other six days of the week, it
stays open until eight PM.

ELLA

Hmph.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

The store's about thirty miles east
of here. It's in Huntington.

ELLA

Hmph.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

I like it there.

ELLA

Why couldn't you find a job right
here? In Queens?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

I tried. Nobody here in Queens
really wanted me.

ELLA

That's a lie!

A seething Kenny pushes his plate away...regardless of what's
left on it.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
It's the truth! Some places told me
I was underqualified. Others told
me I was overqualified.

He downs the last of his drink.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)
Besides...you work in Manhattan.
And your job is about the same
distance from here as mine is.

ELLA
That's different.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
How's that different?

ELLA
'Cause I said so!

Kenny shakes his head "no."

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Mom...I like my job. The people I
work with are cool...and the
customers are, too.

ELLA
You shoulda gotten a job here in
Queens.
(wags finger at Kenny)
You wanted to be close to me,
didn't you?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
I tried.

ELLA
You shoulda tried harder.
(leaning in on Kenny)
I'm your mother...and I know what's
best for you.

Kenny bolts up from his seat.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
But I'm an adult! It's my life!

Ella continues to wag her finger at her son.

ELLA

You need to start acting like it!
 (pointing at Kenny's head)
 You need to learn how to think!
 Like your decision to go to a
 Catholic school when you ain't no
 Catholic at all!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

I graduated!

ELLA

So what? You got book sense, but
 not street sense!

Kenny strides out of the kitchen. Ella chases him.

ELLA (CONT'D)

DON'T YOU DARE WALK AWAY FROM ME!

She hears Kenny SLAM his bedroom door shut.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny shakes his head sideways as he takes heavy breaths.

NANCY

So...did ya think about killin' ya
 mother back then?

KENNY

No.

NANCY

Why not? She pushed ya buttons!

KENNY

I don't know...I don't know.

NANCY

What were ya thinkin' that night?

KENNY

I...I just wanted to be alone. Just
 wanted to hide.

NANCY

What about suicidal thoughts?

Nancy watches him grimace.

He then looks away...toward a wall.

NANCY (CONT'D)
I need to know.

Kenny stares at another wall...the window...

NANCY (CONT'D)
Suicidal thoughts or not? You need
to come clean with me!

...then Nancy at last.

KENNY
ALL RIGHT! I HAD 'EM!!

She nods.

KENNY (CONT'D)
(standing straight up)
ARE YOU SATISFIED??

Nancy gestures Kenny back into his seat.

NANCY
Why didn't ya see a counselor or
somebody like that?

KENNY
When could I?

NANCY
How about on a day off?

KENNY
I didn't wanna risk losing my job.
And besides...with Mom finding out,
I'd never hear the end of it.
(tries to mimic Ella)
"You crazy, boy! You sick in the
head! Nobody wants a crazy boy!"

NANCY
Oh.

She points at him.

NANCY (CONT'D)
On the other hand...couldn't you
have kept it confidential?

KENNY
 (back in his own voice)
 Not as long as Mom and I lived in
 the same space.

NANCY
 Ya shoulda gotten ya own place.

He grimaces again.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 It worked for ya sister.

KENNY
 I know.

NANCY
 If you'd gotten ya own
 place...maybe ya mother would still
 be alive today.

KENNY
 Maybe...maybe not.

Kenny grabs his water bottle...

KENNY (CONT'D)
 One thing's for sure: I still had
 an obligation to Mom.

...and drinks the remaining contents.

FLASHBACK - INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ella (then 59) and Kenny (then 24) watch TV from the sofa.

Mother and son look horrified at what they see...

SUPER: 9-11-2001

...planes toppling the World Trade Center, tower by tower.

ELLA
 So much for going out.

Kenny's is a slow, slow nod.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 I need to check up on Jenny.

He heads for the phone...Ella jumps up to block his path.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)
 Mom...Jenny lives and works up
 there in Manhattan!

ELLA
 No!

Kenny strains to reach the phone...to no avail.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 I just wanna make sure she's all
 right! I just wanna--

ELLA
 You only gonna ask her to let you
 live with her!

A shrugging, peeved Kenny walks toward his bedroom.

INT. HUNTINGTON RADIOSHACK SALESFLOOR - DAY

SUPER: 10-13-2001

Jabari (then 29) and Kenny notice a lull in business.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 Jabari, is it all right to make a
 phone call?

JABARI
 It's all right, Kenny. Go right
 ahead.

Kenny grabs his early-2000s cell phone from behind the
 counter.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 Don't worry. I'll be back in five
 minutes.

Jabari nods while Kenny heads for:

INT. HUNTINGTON RADIOSHACK BREAK ROOM - DAY

In this smallish, cluttered space, Kenny punches a number,
 then puts the phone to his ear.

Once he hears A RINGTONE, Kenny's eyes light up.

INT. JENNY MARTIN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A COLLEGE FOOTBALL GAME plays on her TV as Jenny (then 38)
 picks up her phone.

JENNY
 (into phone)
 Hello?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 (into his phone)
 Hi, Jenny...this is your brother.

Jenny looks exasperated.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)
 Don't worry. I'll make it short.
 And besides, I'm here at work.

JENNY
 Okay, Kenny. What do you need?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 I just wanna live with you. We can
 help each other--

JENNY
 I can't help you! Next thing you
 know, Mom's gonna get
 involved...and I don't need the
 drama anymore!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 We don't have to tell her--

JENNY
 She'll find out! You know that!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 Please...I'll help you move into a
 bigger place--

JENNY
 No, Kenny! It won't work!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 Please...give it a chance!

JENNY
 You've gotta stand up on your
 own...just like I did!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 It's not that simple for me--

JENNY
End of discussion! Goodbye!

Jenny hangs up...Kenny looks disgusted.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A sighing Kenny looks down on the table.

NANCY
Ya turned twenty four the day the
Twin Towers fell to the ground.

KENNY
Fate...who'd've known September
eleventh, 2001 was gonna be like
that?

NANCY
Whatcha been doin' on ya birthday
since then?

KENNY
Just another day...but then, for
me, it's been like that for most of
my life.

Nancy blows an imaginary bubble.

NANCY
Ya know...ya coulda left that
apartment on ya own.

KENNY
It's like I told Jenny: It's not
that simple for me.
(looks up at Nancy)
Ever since Dad died, Mom's been
calling me the man of the house.

NANCY
You did say that.

Kenny's is a slow nod.

NANCY (CONT'D)
But what about girlfriends? Ever
think about them?

He breathes hard.

KENNY

A losing battle with someone like Mom in the same apartment as me.

NANCY

A girlfriend woulda been ya ticket outa there.

KENNY

I had a girlfriend in high school...and a girlfriend in college. But Mom picked a fight with both of 'em.

NANCY

Didn't you try to stand up for 'em?

KENNY

Yes, I did. But in Mom's world, Mom was never wrong.

A grinning Nancy nods in understanding.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Mom always had the last word.

Kenny leans back in his chair.

KENNY (CONT'D)

If she said no lover was good enough for me, that was that.

NANCY

After college, didn't you try to get in a relationship with a woman other than ya mother?

Now he sits straight up...looks around the room.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I mean a romantic relationship.

He looks down at the table...

NANCY (CONT'D)

Look up. I'm right here.

...and breathes hard again as he looks up.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Damn it, weren't ya willin' to put ya manhood to the test?

KENNY

I tried!
(slams fist on table)
I tried!

NANCY

Ya tried.

KENNY

I tried to get into a
relationship...but I figured it was
useless...considering I had to come
home to Mom.

Kenny leans in on Nancy.

KENNY (CONT'D)

And that she'd attack any
girlfriend I'd try to bring home.

NANCY

Okay.

She leans in her seat.

KENNY

And there was no use trying to take
a woman out when I knew good and
well Mom would come after any extra
money I had.

NANCY

But ya mother was a secretary.

KENNY

She'd borrow money from me so that
she could buy booze.

Nancy looks puzzled.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Not just any booze...the best brand
on the market.

NANCY

Okay. I'll buy that.

Kenny joins Club Puzzled.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I'll buy ya story.

KENNY
Tell you the truth...

Nancy perks up.

KENNY (CONT'D)
When I was still at the RadioShack
in Huntington, one of the customers
wanted to go out with me...

NANCY
Male or female?

Kenny's grin is ear-to-ear.

FLASHBACK - INT. HUNTINGTON RADIOSHACK SALESFLOOR - NIGHT

SUPER: 10-21-2003

One hour left before closing time...SEVERAL CUSTOMERS do
business with new store manager Kenny (then 26) and TWO OR
THREE SALES ASSOCIATES.

THE THIRD GAME OF THIS YEAR'S WORLD SERIES is under way...and
playing on all but one of the TVs for sale.

It's the top half of the first...the New York Yankees are up
to bat against the Florida Marlins.

MAYA THOMAS (27, Black) saunters into the store.

First thing Maya does: Check out the game on one of the
television sets.

She doesn't like what she sees.

MAYA
C'mon, somebody! Get on!

Everybody else in the room turns to Maya.

Kenny strolls over to her.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Hi! Anything I can help you with?

MAYA
Not yet.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Well, let me know if you need
something. I'll be right with you.

MAYA

Thanks...but I need Giambi to get a hit...better yet, a homer.

Kenny moves to the counter to do other work while Maya groans...the Bronx Bombers go down one-two-three.

A COMMERCIAL comes on...and Maya walks to the counter, where she eyeballs Kenny.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Come to think of it...I'd like to buy that TV I was looking at.

Kenny's eyes light up.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

Will this be going into your living room or your bedroom?

MAYA

Oh, definitely, living room!

The twosome walk back toward the TV set of Maya's affection.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I'm so sick and tired of that bulky TV I've got that doesn't give me a full picture anymore.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

Got it!

Maya shakes her head "yes."

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)

We've got one in the back.

MAYA

Great!

EXT. EAST CARVER STREET PARKING LOT #2 - NIGHT

Kenny helps Maya load that new TV set (box and all) into her 1990 Chevy van from the back end.

MAYA

So...your name's Kenny.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

Yep.

Maya closes and locks the van's back doors.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)

Maya...

She gazes longingly at him.

MAYA

Yes?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

We hope you'll really love that new TV. It's a flat screen...and it's got the latest in technology for a better picture than you've ever seen in your life.

That gaze turns into a smile...

MAYA

Speaking of...are you doing anything tomorrow night?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

I'll be right here.

...that fades away.

MAYA

Uh...huh.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

How about Sunday night?

MAYA

That'll work!

Kenny's is an enthusiastic nod.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

Meet me here right after closing.

MAYA

That'll work, too!

Maya leans toward Kenny as if to kiss him...but:

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

I'm willing to wait 'til Sunday...if you are, too.

And the twosome shake hands.

EXT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Kenny and Maya stroll, hand in hand, toward his place.

SUPER: 10-26-2003

MAYA

Kenny, you're pulling my leg.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

No, I'm not...my grandma from California actually was a movie actor back in the day.

MAYA

Don't you mean actress?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

Nope...a woman can be an actor, too.

Maya looks shocked.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)

Just like a woman can be a host of a TV show...not a hostess.

The two lovers arrive at the front entrance. He holds the door while she goes inside the building.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY (CONT'D)

Well, I like to think so.

INT. HILLSIDE PARK APARTMENTS FIRST FLOOR LOBBY - NIGHT

Maya and Kenny get back to holding hands.

YOUNG ADULT KENNY

Just ask my mom.

Both head for the elevators.

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ella (then 61) watches TV ("Law and Order: Criminal Intent" is ON) when she HEARS the apartment door unlock.

She jumps from her seat in the lounge chair when Kenny and Maya come in.

He shuts the door...only to field Ella's withering look.

ELLA
Who's this?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Mom, I was getting ready to tell
you.
(gesturing)
Mom...meet Maya Thomas. Maya, meet
my mom.

Maya offers her hand to Ella...who shakes her head "no."

ELLA
Where'd you find him?

MAYA
I shop at Kenny's store.

Maya and Kenny take to the sofa...Ella returns to her seat in
the lounge chair.

MAYA (CONT'D)
I met him five nights ago.

ELLA
Oh, you did, huh?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
That's right, Mom.

Kenny's is a wide smile.

MAYA
I bought a TV from him.

ELLA
Does it work?

MAYA
Works like a top!

Ella stares daggers at her son.

ELLA
Is she lying?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Maya's telling the truth.

Maya's nod is emphatic.

ELLA
 (wags finger at Maya)
 Whaddya see in Kenny? You one of
 them goldiggers or something?

MAYA
 No, I'm not!

Maya bolts out of her seat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 I work in a bank!

Ella smirks.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 I'm a teller!

Maya sits back down...Ella bolts toward her until the two
 women are face-to-face.

ELLA
 Which bank?

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 Mom, you don't have to do this!

Ella wheels around to wag a finger at Kenny.

ELLA
 Stay outa this!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
 She's my girlfriend!

ELLA
 Stay outa this, Kenneth!

Kenny grits his teeth...

MAYA
 All right, Mrs. Martin, I work at
 Flushing Bank!

ELLA
 Which one?

MAYA
 The one in Jamaica.

ELLA
 What's the address?

MAYA
89-12 Sutphin Boulevard.

ELLA
How long you been working there?

MAYA
Three years.

...then he jumps from his seat.

ELLA
How'd you get the job? You sleep
with somebody?

A seething Maya rises from her seat.

MAYA
No, I didn't!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
Mom, that's enough!

Ella wags her finger at Kenny again.

ELLA
You don't tell me to shut up! Ever!

YOUNG ADULT KENNY
I didn't tell you to shut up!

Kenny's mother storms toward her own bedroom while Kenny himself hugs Maya.

The two lovers try to kiss when...Ella returns with a sword.

Maya and Kenny flee the apartment.

He slams the door shut...but Ella opens it.

Ella chases after them...to no avail.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny seethes.

NANCY
Did ya think about killin' ya
mother then?

KENNY
(with a slow nod)
No...no...no...I was thinking about
kissing Maya at that time.

NANCY
Uh...huh.

KENNY
I'll make a confession, though...

Nancy grows attentive.

KENNY (CONT'D)
A week after this happened, Maya
told me she thought about killing
my mom.

NANCY
She thought about killin' ya
mother.

KENNY
That's correct.

NANCY
Did Maya talk about actin' on it?

KENNY
No.

NANCY
Did any of ya other girlfriends
wanna kill ya mother?

Kenny stares at the ceiling...toward the window...gazes at an
adjacent wall...

NANCY (CONT'D)
Kenneth?

...then Nancy at last.

KENNY
I never really asked 'em.

Nancy nods.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Come to think about it...I had to think long and hard before trying to get into another romantic relationship after what happened with me and Maya.

NANCY

I...see.

KENNY

Speaking of thinking long and hard...when I was about five, Dad told Jenny that he had to think long and hard before deciding to marry Mom.

NANCY

Ya don't say.

KENNY

Lucky for Dad, it was a phone conversation.

(with a slight grin)

Jenny had already gotten her own place by then. Mom and I visited Jenny's place that day.

NANCY

Did ya mother listen in?

Kenny's grin grows wider.

KENNY

Nope...she was in the bathroom.

NANCY

Ya mother was in the bathroom.

KENNY

And the TV was on.

NANCY

Oh...kay.

Nancy writes in her notebook.

KENNY

Anyway...Dad told Jenny about how he and Mom used to get into all kinds of arguments...especially in the bedroom.

NANCY

How did Jenny feel about ya
parents' fightin' and arguin'?

KENNY

They were the biggest reasons Jenny
wanted to leave the apartment she
and I grew up in.

NANCY

How did you feel about all that
arguin' and fightin'?

Kenny takes a series of deep breaths.

KENNY

I hated it.

NANCY

Ya hated it.

KENNY

On a scale of one to ten...it
was...more like twelve.

A bewildered look crosses Nancy's face.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Things got so bad I'd hide in my
closet so I wouldn't have to hear
all that fussing and fighting.

Nancy nods in understanding.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Mom dominated those arguments...Dad
managed to get a word in whenever
he could. The way Mom dominated
those arguments, Dad had to go for
the zingers.

NANCY

Zingers.

KENNY

Well, that's what Jenny said about
Mom and Dad.

NANCY

Who was better for ya: Ya mother or
ya father?

Kenny folds his hands on the table. He gazes at those hands for a while.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Kenneth?

He looks up at her.

KENNY

Dad...whenever he was around.

Nancy's is a slow, slow nod.

KENNY (CONT'D)

But Mom used to get real upset at him for, as she put it, spoiling me and Jenny.

NANCY

That's funny...I thought ya mother was raised by a movie actor and her bus-driver husband who used to run a bar back in LA.

KENNY

She was...but from what I'd heard, Grandma Louise and Grandpa Thomas didn't really spoil Mom.

She stares him down...

KENNY (CONT'D)

They couldn't afford to...since not every Hollywood performer makes the big kinda money.

...then looks up at the ceiling before eyeballing him again.

NANCY

Ya right...they did mention that the last time the actors went on strike...2023.

KENNY

And even if Grandma Louise made the big money, she and Grandpa Thomas still wouldn't have spoiled Mom.

NANCY

But ya mother wanted you to spoil her.

KENNY
Especially after she retired.

Kenny grits his teeth.

FLASHBACK - INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: 9-17-2011

A COLLEGE FOOTBALL GAME plays on the TV this Saturday.

Kenny (then 34) tries to pay attention to the game from the sofa. A TV tray rests in front of him.

A drunken Ella (then 69) seethes from the lounge chair...where she clutches a half-empty whiskey bottle.

On the coffee table: A bucket of fried chicken...two bottles of pop...chips and other snacks...a pair of plates.

ELLA
Do you...love me or not?

KENNY
Mom...darn right I love you.

ELLA
Then why didn't...why
didn't...didn'tcha take me out?

KENNY
But you told me you didn't wanna go
out tonight.

Ella takes a swig.

ELLA
Fifty years...fifty years...fifty
damn years...

Kenny jumps up to grab a plate. He puts some chicken pieces on the plate.

ELLA (CONT'D)
What the hell good were they?

KENNY
Jenny and I wouldn't be here if you
and Dad hadn't tied the knot fifty
years ago today.

Kenny (full plate and all) sits back down...Ella (bottle and all) jumps out of her seat.

ELLA
 DON'T EVER MENTION THAT UNGRATEFUL
 SISTER OF YOURS AGAIN!

Now Kenny looks dumbfounded.

KENNY
 She's got a life of her own!

ELLA
 And she's too...too...too...stuck
 up to spend some time with me!

KENNY
 Mom, Jenny's a busy woman...what
 with running that Macy's in
 downtown Manhattan.

ELLA
 And I'm her mother! I'm
 the...the...the best friend she's
 ever had!

Ella takes another swig...Kenny shakes his head "no."

He rises up to go after her bottle...she shoves the bottle
 out of his reach.

KENNY
 Please...you've had too much...

One more sip for Ella.

Kenny tries again for the bottle...but Ella pushes him away.

Bottle in tow, she heads for her bedroom as he goes back to
 his plate.

He takes a bite of chicken...only to receive a poke in the
 arm from a sword-wielding Ella!

Ella's son grabs a napkin or paper towel to cover the blood.

ELLA
 Don't EVER mess with me again! I'll
 drink if and when I want to!

Kenny sprints off to the bathroom, one arm holding the other.

ELLA (CONT'D)
 (points sword Kenny's way)
 You just like your dad!

He frees a hand to slam the bathroom door.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny rests his chin on his fists.

NANCY

You keep tellin' me that ya mother
said you were just like ya father.

He manages a nod...

NANCY (CONT'D)

What did she mean by that?

...then rests his fists on the table.

KENNY

Well...uh...I guess...

NANCY

Try to think.

KENNY

Jenny used to tell me how Dad used
to run off someplace to hide when
he got tired of fighting with Mom.

NANCY

Okay.

KENNY

He'd go someplace to hide when he
got tired of Mom insulting him.

NANCY

Where'd he go?

KENNY

Sometimes, Dad would go hide in the
bedroom closet...sometimes, he'd
hide in the bathroom.

Kenny watches Nancy nod.

KENNY (CONT'D)

He figured he'd be safe if he took
a leak or something like that.

She shakes her head "no."

NANCY
She could hear him takin' a leak.

KENNY
Dad figured that out...so he'd just
leave the building altogether.

NANCY
And you ended up learnin' that from
ya father.

KENNY
He learned from his own dad: "If
you're in an argument with the
woman you love, and you feel like
punching her...just walk away."

NANCY
Ya mother collected swords.

Nancy exhales.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Ya shoulda gotten ya own place.

KENNY
I wanted to...but...

NANCY
Really?

KENNY
I had no choice except to stay in
there. It took a lot of dough to
keep Mom happy.

NANCY
Even with her gettin' a 401(k) and
Social Security?

KENNY
Even with her getting a 401(k) and
Social Security.
(folding his hands)
Once she retired, she wanted
different things out of life.

NANCY
Like more control over you.

Kenny's nod is oh-so-slow.

NANCY (CONT'D)
And ya stayed there and took it.

KENNY
Yes...yes, I did.

Nancy shifts in her chair.

NANCY
Those first few years after ya
mother announced her retirement
from that brokerage firm, did ya
ever think about killin' her?

It's Kenny's turn to exhale.

He stares at one wall...then another...

NANCY (CONT'D)
I need to know.

...then Nancy.

KENNY
No...not at that time.

NANCY
Not at that time.

KENNY
That's correct...I was still
thinking about the time I put
liquid cleanser in her coffee when
I was a freshman at St. John's.

NANCY
Did ya confess this to a priest?

Kenny chuckles.

KENNY
No...I would've confessed it to a
priest if I were Catholic.

Nancy snaps her fingers.

KENNY (CONT'D)
One thing was for sure: Mom's
quality of life was deteriorating.

NANCY
What kinda things did ya notice?

KENNY
Well...uh...she'd start to forget
certain things.

NANCY
Like what?

KENNY
Uh...sometimes, Mom would forget my
sister's name.

Nancy looks dumbfounded.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Sometimes, Mom would even forget my
name.

NANCY
What did she call you?

KENNY
Sometimes, she'd call me John...or
Thomas...or George...

She goes to her notebook to jot some things down.

KENNY (CONT'D)
One time, she'd call me Curtis.

Her eyes light up.

NANCY
Like the Pro Football Hall of
Famer. He used to be a New York
Jet.

KENNY
Yeah.

NANCY
How much of this was the alcohol?

Kenny strokes his chin for a few seconds.

KENNY
I don't know...but I do remember
she'd forget where she hid the
whiskey bottle.

NANCY
She ever ask you to help her find
the bottle?

He shakes his head "yes."

KENNY

I couldn't help her...I really didn't wanna know where she'd hide the whiskey.

NANCY

I...see...

KENNY

One of my classmates from high school had an alcoholic father...he found his dad's gin one day and poured it in the kitchen sink.

Nancy grits her teeth.

KENNY (CONT'D)

That classmate came back to school with broken hands.

Then she winces.

KENNY (CONT'D)

And I figured: "If that classmate of mine got his hands broken for pouring out his dad's gin, what would happen to me if I poured Mom's whiskey down the sink?"

NANCY

Good...point.

KENNY

Eventually, Mom quit drinking.

NANCY

When did she quit?

KENNY

Uh...let's see...she quit on July fourth, 2014.

NANCY

That's a funny time to quit drinkin'.

KENNY

That was the day her doctor picked out. Mom went to see her a week before that for a routine checkup.

NANCY
A routine checkup.

KENNY
The doctor found liver
problems...and she found out it was
because of Mom's drinking.

NANCY
Oh...kay.

KENNY
Mom resented going to the doctor.
But she did it.

NANCY
A routine checkup.

KENNY
But it saved her life.

Kenny covers his mouth...for a few seconds.

Then:

KENNY (CONT'D)
She got to live a bit longer.

NANCY
That's an understatement.

KENNY
One thing about it: Mom ended up
going on dry drunks.

Nancy's nod is slow, slow, slow.

KENNY (CONT'D)
And sometimes, she acted worse
during those dry drunks than she
did when she was still drinking.

NANCY
Did ya ever wanna kill ya mother
after one of her dry drunks?

Kenny looks at the window wall...an adjacent wall...the wall
opposite that one...

NANCY (CONT'D)
Kenneth...

...the ceiling...

NANCY (CONT'D)
C'mon. Answer the question.

...then to Nancy at last.

KENNY
Not at that time.

Nancy goes back to her notebook to write her findings down.

NANCY
Describe for me one of ya mother's
dry drunks.

Kenny looks at the ceiling...but quickly turns to Nancy.

KENNY
Man...she had a lot of 'em.

NANCY
Just pick the first one that comes
to ya mind.

He shakes his head "yes."

KENNY
Let's see...it was just after she
quit drinking.

FLASHBACK - HALLWAY OUTSIDE MARTINS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

SUPER: 7-11-2014

A rejuvenated Kenny (then 36) almost glides his way toward
Ella's and his apartment.

He unlocks the door...steps inside...

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

...and HEARS crashing noises coming from:

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - KENNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ella (then 72) slams CDs and DVDs off the shelves and onto
the floor of Kenny's well-furnished bedroom.

KENNY
MOM!!

ELLA
DON'T EVER YELL AT ME AGAIN!

He runs toward her while she continues to assault his collection of DVDs and CDs.

Kenny grabs one of Ella's arms.

She pushes him back with her other arm.

ELLA (CONT'D)
And another thing, boy: If I wanna drink, I'm gonna drink!

KENNY
That stuff'll kill you!

He tries again for her...

KENNY (CONT'D)
And we both know that!

...and manages to hug her.

Kenny tries to sidestep the strewn recordings and guide Ella to his bed.

They both barely make it onto the bed.

He continues to hold her.

ELLA
It's my body! It's my life! I'm the one raising you! You ain't the one that's raising me!

KENNY
Calm...

Ella gives her son a cross look.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I'm just looking out for you.

Now the twosome hold hands.

She takes labored breaths.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I had some good news for you...but when I find all my CDs and DVDs on the floor...

ELLA
What good news?

Kenny manages a smile...then:

KENNY
I've been promoted to regional
sales manager.

Ella's jaw drops.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I get a raise.

ELLA
How big's this region?

KENNY
Eastern New York...Northern New
Jersey...

Kenny's mother counts on her fingers.

KENNY (CONT'D)
All of Connecticut, too.

ELLA
How much time you gonna spend out
of town?

KENNY
The head of the sales region
wouldn't specify.

ELLA
That's stupid.

KENNY
I did ask him how long I'd spend
out of town. He wouldn't give me an
exact answer.

She stares him down.

KENNY (CONT'D)
He told me: "Maybe half the
year...maybe thirty percent...maybe
forty percent...it depends..."

ELLA
Just plain stupid.

KENNY
All I know is: I'll be going to a
lot of RadioShack stores.

ELLA

Hmph.

KENNY

And I'll be making a lot of money.

ELLA

But I won't know where you are.

KENNY

I'll call you...I've got a cell phone. Remember?

ELLA

You better remember.

Ella watches Kenny's slow-motion nod.

KENNY

Who knows? Maybe I'll be able to get my own place.

Ella breaks out of Kenny's grip.

ELLA

So that's it.

KENNY

Maybe.

ELLA

Look here, Kenny...I'm your world. This is my show.

He exhales.

ELLA (CONT'D)

(wags finger at Kenny)

You marching in my parade.

She rises and heads out the door.

Just short of the door, Ella eyeballs Kenny.

ELLA (CONT'D)

And pick that stuff up!

Kenny grits his teeth as Ella walks out.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny seethes.

NANCY
Did ya feel like killin' her then?

KENNY
No, Nancy...no.

NANCY
You know, ya coulda moved outa that
apartment any time ya wanted once
you became an adult.

His seething intensifies as he looks down at the table.

NANCY (CONT'D)
What happened to ya manhood?

Kenny breathes harder.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Doesn't everyone wanna get out in
the world and be on their own once
they get a certain age in life?

He jumps out of his seat...

NANCY (CONT'D)
SIDDOWN!

...and runs to a corner, where he buries his face.

KENNY
I COULDN'T!

Nancy leaves her seat...

KENNY (CONT'D)
No matter how much I wanted to...

...and saunters toward Kenny.

He turns around and spots her.

They walk back to their seats.

KENNY (CONT'D)
No matter how much I wanted to
leave...I couldn't.

Nancy's is a slow nod.

Kenny tries a series of deep breaths.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Jenny wasn't gonna look after Mom...especially after Mom kept pressuring her to get married and have a bunch of kids.

NANCY

I...see...

KENNY

Jenny wanted a life on her own terms...not anybody else's.

NANCY

Didn't you?

KENNY

I did.

Now he rests his chin on his fists.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I just felt I had no other choice but to stay with Mom.

Nancy frowns.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Especially since her quality of life started to deteriorate.

NANCY

Okay.

KENNY

And besides...she was still collecting swords.

NANCY

I...see...ya point...

KENNY

Mom kept asking: "Do you love me?" And I'd always say: "Yes, I do." Then she'd tell me to do this or do that or some other thing.

She shakes her head in the affirmative.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Not one week would go by where she
didn't tell me to stay with her.

NANCY
And you did.

KENNY
But in time...it got to be too
much...especially when she asked me
to clean up after her.

The detective looks confused.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Like in a nursing home.

NANCY
Oh...boy.

She scribbles in her notebook again.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Speakin' of nursing home...ya ever
consider puttin' ya mom in one?

Kenny shakes his head sideways several times.

KENNY
Too expensive.

NANCY
Too expensive.

KENNY
For me...and Mom.

NANCY
Ya coulda had that apartment to
yourself...or moved out and gotten
a place ya really liked.

He scans the room...one wall at a time.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Right?

Kenny exhales.

KENNY
It all came down to her sword
collection. She didn't wanna give
it up.

NANCY

Swords.

KENNY

Yeah...didn't wanna give it up.

FLASHBACK - INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MARTINS' APARTMENT - DAY

Alex (now 67) wears overalls, a baseball cap, and a winter coat on her way to Ella's and Kenny's place.

SUPER: 1-12-2025

In Alex' grip: A sprayer.

She sets the sprayer down and knocks on the apartment door.

No response after a few seconds.

OLDER ALEX

Maintenance!

Alex waits a few seconds more...only to find no one stirring.

She grabs a set of keys and opens the door.

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alex (sprayer in one hand) shuts the door with her free hand.

Everything normally found in the kitchen now rests on the coffee table, the sofa, the floor, and the lounge chair.

Alex looks pleased.

She notices an offensive smell...the smell of death.

That pleased look disappears.

Still, she moves on to:

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Alex opens shelf after shelf...drawer after drawer. She sprays each empty space.

The smell of death persists.

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Now Alex opens the cabinet(s) underneath the sink to spray away...with mortality's smell growing stronger.

She hurries to...

INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - ELLA'S BEDROOM - DAY

...where Ella (now 84) lies in bed, face up.

Ella's throat sports several bloody cuts.

Her Valley Stream sword rests on the floor...bloody tip and all.

Alex takes a bunch of labored breaths.

She sets the sprayer down and dredges her cell phone from her overalls pocket.

The maintenance worker punches 9-1-1...then:

 OLDER ALEX
 (into her phone)
 I need to report a dead body...

Alex stares right dead at Ella's corpse.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nancy looks perplexed.

 NANCY
 What was Alex from the rental
 company doin' workin' on a Sunday?

 KENNY
 Well...it snowed on the sixth of
 the month. They were supposed to
 spray that day...but the weather
 set everything back a week.

 NANCY
 She came out on a Sunday!

 KENNY
 She volunteered to come in.

 NANCY
 I guess she don't like football.

Kenny shrugs.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Anyway...Alex was asked about the dead body in ya mother's bedroom. She tried to get a hold of you the day of ya mother's death.

He shakes his head "yes."

NANCY (CONT'D)

How come ya weren't home that afternoon? Where were ya?

KENNY

I just wanted to be alone...so, right after Mom died, I went to church. And I stayed there until the staff shooed everybody out to lock up for the day.

NANCY

Did ya tell any members about ya mother dyin'?

Kenny rubs his forehead for a few seconds.

He shakes his head "no."

KENNY

Too shook up.

NANCY

Okay...but where'd ya go after ya got outa church?

KENNY

I got in my car and stayed in it for a while. It was still in the church parking lot.

NANCY

Okay. Did ya try to call anyone while you were in ya car?

KENNY

I called Jenny...I thought she should at least know.

Nancy nods.

NANCY

When'd ya call her that Sunday?

KENNY

Uh...let's see...it was about one o'clock in the afternoon.

Her next nod: Even slower.

NANCY

That checks out.

Kenny breathes relief.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Did she ask you about how Ella Martin died?

Now Kenny glances behind him...then at an adjacent wall.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Kenneth...

He stares at another wall before he faces her again.

KENNY

Yes...she did.

NANCY

Whatcha tell her?

Kenny puts his head in his hands...

NANCY (CONT'D)

I need to know!

KENNY

I'd rather not say.

NANCY

I NEED YOU TO TELL ME!

...only to remove his hands from his head.

KENNY

I told her: "I'd rather not say!"

Nancy and Kenny stare each other down for a few seconds.

Her stare becomes a nod of understanding.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Besides...Jenny wiped her hands of Mom as soon as Jenny could.

NANCY

Of course.

Kenny stares at the table.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Speakin' of ya mom...when'd ya get home that Sunday?

KENNY

Five thirty PM. It was getting dark outside by then.

NANCY

Ya realize Alex tried to get a hold of you that afternoon?

KENNY

(with a slow nod)

She did try to get hold of me. She left a message on the answering machine back at the apartment.

NANCY

She wanted to tell ya 'bout the dead body and wanted you to get rid of it soon as possible.

(slight grin)

Ella was smellin' up the place.

Kenny tries to hide his own grin.

NANCY (CONT'D)

On the day she died, did ya feel like killin' her then?

He stares at the table again...then down at his legs...then the window to the control room.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I'm waitin'!

Kenny's eyes lock on the window.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Did you or didn't you?

He breathes hard as he turns to Nancy.

KENNY

I wrestled with it.

NANCY
How much?

KENNY
Uh...about...fifty-fifty.

NANCY
Fair enough.

Kenny nods again.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Now...tell me 'bout the night
before ya mother's death.

Kenny resumes his hard breathing.

KENNY
We had an argument.

Nancy perks up.

KENNY (CONT'D)
She didn't wanna take her meds.

NANCY
What kinda meds?

KENNY
A muscle relaxer and an
antidepressant.

NANCY
I see.

KENNY
And then there was a sedative.

NANCY
So she could sleep.

KENNY
That's correct.

NANCY
What triggered that argument?

KENNY
All I did was tell Mom it was time
for her to take her meds. But she
said: "No, Thomas! I'm tired of
taking those damn things!"

She nods.

KENNY (CONT'D)

I asked her: "Mom...don't you wanna live longer?"

NANCY

Okay...

KENNY

Then she asked me: "Boy...do you love me?" I said: "Yes, I do." Then she told me: "Then stop telling me what to do! I'm your boss! You not my boss!"

NANCY

Then it went back and forth. Right?

KENNY

Yeah.

NANCY

What was the tipping point?

KENNY

When Mom pulled out her Valley Stream sword and stabbed me in my right arm.

NANCY

Whatcha do after that?

KENNY

I grabbed the nearest rag I could find to stop the bleeding...then I hurried to the bathroom to grab a bandage...then I went to an urgent care place.

NANCY

What time did ya both argue?

KENNY

Uh...it was...about eight o'clock that night. I got to the urgent care place about nine.

NANCY

When'd ya get home from the urgent care place?

KENNY
Five minutes to midnight.

Kenny takes another deep breath.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I ended up tiptoeing my way to my
bedroom...so she couldn't hear me.
I was lucky she was asleep by then.

NANCY
So was whoever killed her.

Nancy observes Kenny's strong nod.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Speakin' of killin'...in the time
since ya mother's death, did ya
ever think about killin' yourself?

Kenny stares at the table for a few seconds under the
heaviest of breaths.

NANCY (CONT'D)
It's all right...take ya time.

He continues his labored breaths a while longer before he
turns to her.

KENNY
I did.

Nancy writes it all down in her notebook.

KENNY (CONT'D)
It was the night of January
twelfth...hours after Mom died. But
it took me three months to try and
actually follow through.

FLASHBACK - INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: 4-12-2025

Kenny holds his now-healed right arm aloft.

In his right hand: A butcher knife.

He closes his eyes and opens them again as he brings the
knife to his left arm...all under labored breaths.

Kenny finds a vein in which to plunge the knife.

But...he stops short of popping that vein.

He turns the light off and heads out of the bathroom...butcher knife and all.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nancy and Kenny turn in grim expressions.

NANCY

Was there another time where ya
tried to kill yourself since ya
mother's death?

KENNY

(slow, slow nod)
Yes...it was the day after I tried
to stab myself.

FLASHBACK - INT. MARTINS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: 4-13-2025

At the counter, Kenny pours Kool-Aid into a glass...only to stop halfway.

KENNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was even starving myself back
then.

He grabs a bottle of detergent from off the counter.

He pours detergent into the glass until the glass is two-thirds full.

Kenny puts the detergent bottle back in its place...and grabs a bottle of liquid cleanser.

Now he squeezes enough liquid cleanser into the glass 'til the glass is completely full. He puts the cleanser back.

Next, Kenny swirls the glass a bit so that everything blends.

That doesn't do it...so he grabs a spoon.

When satisfied with the result, Kenny throws the spoon into the sink.

He closes his eyes.

He lifts the glass to his mouth.

Kenny takes a swig of this vile, bizarre cocktail...and spits it out.

He pours the remaining contents into the sink...he grabs a new glass to put water into it.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny closes his eyes.

KENNY

I felt so upset with myself...so angry with myself...that I had to ask my boss for some PTO.

NANCY

Yes.

KENNY

I just wanted to clear my mind.

NANCY

Didn't work out...did it?

Kenny shakes his head sideways.

NANCY (CONT'D)

You made one more try at takin' ya life...it was three hours ago.

He opens his eyes.

KENNY

That's...correct.

NANCY

Tell me what happened.

KENNY

I walked to the gas station at 187th and Hillside.

NANCY

You...walked...

FLASHBACK - EXT. HILLSIDE AVENUE CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

SUPER: EARLIER TODAY

In the early morning hours, Kenny saunters into a Mobil-Tim Horton's kind of operation.

KENNY (V.O.)

This was one time I didn't wanna drive. Thought the fresh air would do me some good...I thought.

A FEW CUSTOMERS pump gas.

Kenny waits for a bay to clear up.

When it does, he pulls out his debit card and sticks it into the prepay slot at the pump.

Transaction's complete.

Kenny selects a grade of fuel and lifts the nozzle.

He drenches himself in unleaded!

A 2015 GMC pickup truck pulls into the same bay...on the other side of Kenny.

Alex (in her work clothes) jumps out of the truck from the driver's side.

Her eyes go wide when she sees Kenny break out a lighter.

She hurries over to Kenny...and bearhugs him before he can set himself on fire.

OLDER ALEX

Drop it, Kenny!

He struggles to break free...she hangs onto him with all her very being.

OLDER ALEX (CONT'D)

Drop it right now!

Customers watch Alex struggle with Kenny...who drops the lighter at last.

OLDER ALEX (CONT'D)

C'mon! You're better than this!

She leads him into the store.

Alex catches Kenny's defeated look.

END FLASHBACK

INT. NYPD 113TH PRECINCT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kenny shows Nancy the same look of defeat.

NANCY

You confessed to Alex...then she called the police.

Kenny's is a slow, slow nod.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Not only did ya kill ya mother on January twelfth...ya even tried to place that Valley Stream sword on the floor to make it look like she killed herself.

He hides his face in his hands.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Why couldn't ya mother have a nicer hobby...like collectin' Three Stooges memorabilia?

Nancy's expression changes...

NANCY (CONT'D)

Better yet...why couldn't she collect scale-model trains?

...until it becomes a smile.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Great hobby.

Kenny removes his hands from his face before he manages a slight nod.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Speakin' of nice...whatever happened to walkin' away when ya feel like doin' bodily harm to somebody ya love?

He buries his face in his hands again.

Now his head (still in his hands) slumps to the table top.

Nancy watches...and nods in understanding.

KENNY

(head still in hands)

I just got tired...all I wanted to do was break the cycle.

She reaches for a pair of handcuffs.

KENNY (CONT'D)
I just didn't know any other
way...at the time...

NANCY
I need ya to stand up.

Kenny does just that.

When he sees the handcuffs, he holds his arms out and
clenches his fists.

NANCY (CONT'D)
Behind ya back.

A nodding Kenny complies...he places his clenched fists
behind his back.

Nancy applies the handcuffs.

NANCY (CONT'D)
You talk about livin' by the sword
and then dyin' by the sword...

She grabs a slow-nodding Kenny by one arm.

Nancy reaches for the door with her free hand.

FREEZE FRAME on Kenny's look of total grief as he and Nancy
leave the interrogation room.

FADE OUT.

THE END