

RESILIENT: BELOW POVERTY

Written by

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**TEASER**

FADE IN:

**EXT. COLORADO STATE PENITENTIARY (CANON CITY, CO) - DAY**

SONG (V.O.)

"My scars tell me that I have  
survived it over and over  
My scars tell me that I'm alive..."

Antsy TOMMY WATSON, 20s, Black, charismatic, athletic build, with a maroon and gold University of Minnesota letterman's jacket on, paces beside his pimped-out mini-van glaring at the towering, ominous prison gate.

SUPER: "SPRING. 1993."

MUSIC FADES as the metallic prison gate CLANKS OPEN. Out walks MAE WATSON, 40s, Tommy's mother, a withered rose with optimism-filled eyes, her effects in-hand.

She stops just outside the gate. They lock eyes as the metallic gate WHIRS TO A RESOUNDING CLOSE.

Tommy studies Mae. Mae studies Tommy, unsure of whether he's happy to see her or just here out of obligation.

MAE

Hmm-hmm-hmm, who's that handsome  
young man coming to pick me up?

She crosses the street, warily approaching him. She saddles up to Tommy who's not smiling. They take each other in for a moment, then a boyish grin spreads across Tommy's face.

They embrace tightly as the years of animosity and acrimony dissolve between them.

TOMMY

I'm so happy to see you, Mom.

MAE

I missed you, too.

They separate. She appraises Tommy's stature.

MAE

Look at you. A Watson in college.  
(to Guards)  
That's right, I gotta son in  
college.

Tommy takes her bag, opens the passenger side door for her.

MAE (CONT'D)  
(to Tommy)  
I see they feedin' you up there.

TOMMY  
A little bit.

She hops in. Tommy tosses her back in the backseat, hops in the driver's side and drives off.

**I./E. DR. TOMMY'S VAN ON HIGHWAY (MOVING) - DAY**

Tommy raps along with the 90S HIP HOP playing on the radio as Mae takes in the breeze and her new freedom.

TOMMY  
(rapping)  
"Ain't nothin' but a g thang, baby/  
Two loc'ed out niggas so we're  
crazy/Death Row is the label that  
pays me!/Unfadeable, so please  
don't try to fade this."

MAE  
What is this you're listening to?

TOMMY  
This is Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy  
Dog.

MAE  
From Charlie Brown?

TOMMY  
From Compton. The LBC.

MAE  
Play some Frankie Beverly and Maze  
or some Earth, Wind, and Fire,  
that's some real music.

Mae playfully whacks Tommy on his arm.

MAE (CONT'D)  
And I didn't raise you to talk like  
that.

TOMMY  
(rubbing his arm)  
Okay-okay, jeez, your hits got  
harder in there.

MAE

I didn't like when your father  
talked like that and I definitely  
won't allow you to talk like that.

Tommy eyes Mae basking in the breeze brushing against her face, smiles.

TOMMY

How's it feel to be out?

MAE

Like heaven. I'm not going back  
anymore. I'm done living that life.

Tommy gazes out his window. Doubt leaking from his face.

MAE

I can't wait to see my son playing  
football for the University of  
Michigan. I'm so proud of you.

TOMMY

Minnesota, and it's not that bigga  
deal.

MAE

Not a big deal, my ass.

TOMMY

(mocking)

Mom, the language.

MAE

Boy, please, with all of the hell  
I've endured in my life, I'm  
certified as a curse specialist.  
But seriously, Tommy, look at me.

TOMMY

I'm driving.

MAE

Look at me.

Tommy looks at her intermittently as he continues driving.

MAE (CONT'D)

You're the only one of my family to  
go to college.

(tears up)

The only one. And I'm missing it.  
Robbing, stealing, and carrying on.

TOMMY

Well, you're out now. I hope you stay out for good.

MAE

Oh, I'm staying out, best believe that. I'm never going back.

Tommy considers Mae as he drives. He's heard this all before.

**I./E. TOMMY'S VAN ON CITY STREET - DAY**

Tommy's van descends into the trash-infested slums teeming with VAGRANTS milling about. They've just entered the "Five Points District" Community.

QUICK FLASHES: FIVE-POINTS STREET SIGNS

-- "27TH STREET"  
-- "26TH AVENUE"  
-- "WASHINGTON STREET"  
-- "WELTON STREET"

BACK TO SCENE

Mae tears up as she surveys the crumbling neighborhood: husked, vacant buildings, TWEAKERS making drug deals, PROSTITUTES working JOHNS, and GANG MEMBERS loitering.

MAE

Ain't changed one bit around here.

TOMMY

Probably worse since you been gone.

As they continue on, they pass a blacked-out Black Jeep parked on the street. As they drive on, Black Jeep begins to follow Tommy's van.

**I./E. TOMMY'S VAN ON CITY STREET - CURB - LATER**

RAP MUSIC BLARES as Tommy halts beside two cars to parallel park. Mae looks across the way, spots Five Points High School in the distance.

MAE

There's your old stomping grounds.

TOMMY

Yep.

MAE

I wish you could stay here longer  
with me.

TOMMY

I'll be back as soon as I take my  
finals.

Mae turns the radio dial down.

MAE

Why you listen to everything so  
loud? Make my head hurt.

Mae notices they have stopped.

MAE (CONT'D)

Why are we stopping here?

Tommy smiles as he reaches in his pocket, reveals a set of  
sparkling keys, hands them to Mae.

MAE (CONT'D)

What are these for?

Tommy looks past Mae, who turns, looks out the window, spots  
a towering apartment complex.

TOMMY

Your new place.

MAE

Whose new place?

TOMMY

Yours. We all pitched in and payed  
two months rent for you.

MAE

(tearing up)

You kids. I'm not going back this  
time? I'm staying clean. I promise.

TOMMY

Good, because I need you around so  
when I'm playing running back for  
the Broncos, I can buy you that big  
house overlooking the plantation  
like massa.

They laugh. Tommy wipes the tears streaming down her cheek.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

You ready to see it?

Mae turns her head, hiding her tears.

TOMMY  
It's okay to cry, Momma.

### MAE

Tommy puts the car in reverse, tries to maneuver it into the space. Nope. Resets, tries again. Nope.

MAE

TOMMY  
I got this.

MAE

Tommy checks his driver's side mirror, spots the Black Jeep creeping toward them **IN SLOW MOTION**.

The Black Jeep's passenger side window descends. TWO HANDS gripping automatic pistols stretch out the window, level the barrels at Tommy's van...

Tommy's mini-van windows explode - SSPPSSH!!

Tommy takes cover, shields Mae from the barrage of hot lead and serrated shards of glass.

As BULLETS RAKE THE VAN, Tommy and Mae slump motionless in the seats as the Black Jeep peels off down the street...

FADE OUT:

END TEASER

**ACT I**

FADE IN:

**EXT. SHRINER'S ACADEMY HS - DAY**

Distinguished private school. Wealthy suburbs. Elite.

SUPER: "28 YEARS LATER."

**INT. SHRINER'S ACADEMY - HALLWAY - DAY**

BLACK and WHITE STUDENT, 17, fight as STUDENTS cheer them on.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL DR. TOMMY WATSON (DR. TOMMY), 40s, Black, stern with a commanding aura, parts the crowd.

DR. TOMMY  
Cody and Jerome, stop!

He wrangles both boys.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Both of you, to my office, now. And  
the rest of you get to class.

The crowd disperses as Dr. Tommy hauls the two prize fighters toward his office.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S OFFICE - LATER**

The boys stew as Dr. Tommy calls up their files on his computer. His awards and degrees coat the walls and shelves.

DR. TOMMY  
So neither one of you is going to  
tell me who started it?

Silence.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Okay, then maybe you can find the  
truth in detention. Ten demerits  
for both of you.

JEROME/CODY  
It wasn't my fault.

JEROME  
I got practice, Dr. Watson.

DR. TOMMY

I gave you both a chance to have integrity and prove your character and both of you failed.

He hands them each a detention slip.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)

I expect you there. On time.  
Go.

As the boys leave, Dr. Tommy covers the phone with his hand.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)

Jerome.

Jerome pivots.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)

How many times do I have to tell you you can't do what they do? You have a chance to go D-1. You wanna end up like your brother or all these other knuckleheads out there doing god knows what?

JEROME

He and his friends were talking about my mom.

DR. TOMMY

Is it true what they said?

JEROME

No.

DR. TOMMY

Use your brain, son. Stay in the books and stay out of trouble. Got it?

JEROME

Yes.

DR. TOMMY

Yes what?

JEROME

Yes, sir.

DR. TOMMY

I'm not going to let you fail, you hear me?

JEROME

Yes, sir.

DR. TOMMY

Now, get to class and don't be late  
for detention.

Jerome nods, exits. Dr. Tommy plops down in his chair, exhales his pent up angst. He grabs a stack of letters on his desk, sifts through them. He opens a letter, reads:

INSERT LETTER:

"Wyndam Financial Services... Student Loan Division....  
Payment Past Due... \$8055... Total Outstanding Balance...  
\$394,852."

BACK TO SCENE

Dr. Tommy wipes his face with his hand, leans back in his chair, his bouncing foot revealing his worry. His CELL PHONE BUZZES. From "Carmen". He answers quickly.

DR. TOMMY

(into phone)

Hello? You okay?... I'm on the way.

Dr. Tommy grabs his coat and bolts.

**E./I. DR. TOMMY'S CAR ON CITY STREET (MOVING) - DAY**

Dr. Tommy's car speeds through mid-day traffic.

DR. TOMMY

(into phone)

How far apart are the contractions?... I'm two minutes away.

He hangs up, speeds ahead.

**EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

Dr. Tommy drives up into the emergency room parking, parks, jumps out of the car, sprints inside the hospital.

**INT. HOSPITAL - DAY**

He dashes up to the Nurse's station to NURSE #1, White, 20s.

DR. TOMMY

Hello, my wife, Carmen Watson, was brought in. She's in labor.

CARMEN (O.S.)

False alarm.

Dr. Tommy turns, spots his pregnant wife, CARMEN, 30s, Black, petit, glowing, but exasperated, being rolled out in a wheelchair by NURSE #2. Dr. Tommy crosses to her.

DR. TOMMY

You okay?

CARMEN

I'm sorry. I thought I was going into labor.

DR. TOMMY

Damn those Braxton-Hicks'.

He kisses her. Nurse #2 hands him Carmen's overnight bag.

DR. TOMMY

I beat my time by three minutes.

CARMEN

Good for you, Speed Racer. No tickets.

DR. TOMMY

I know-I know.

**E./I. DR. TOMMY'S CAR ON CITY STREET (MOVING) - DAY**

Dr. Tommy drives Carmen home. They pass a city sign that reads: "Five Points. Historic Cultural District."

CARMEN

The student loan people are calling again and again. Are we okay?

DR. TOMMY

Things are a little bit tight, but I'll handle it.

CARMEN

I'm sorry. I can go make some calls and do some house showings on the side to make a little cash.

DR. TOMMY

No, you need to rest. Doctor's orders. You've already been through a lot with this pregnancy.

CARMEN

I just don't want you stressed out over money.

DR. TOMMY

I'm not and we're not. Okay?

CARMEN

Okay.

Carmen notices the serene, suburban environment from a couple of blocks ago has morphed to the 'hood': trash-coated, low-income duplex homes, bars on windows, vacant buildings, liquor stores on every corner, open air drug deals, "R.I.P." murals on buildings.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Why are you going home this way?

DR. TOMMY

I-70's backed up.

Carmen's demeanor and countenance changes.

CARMEN

It's hard to believe you grew up here of all places.

DR. TOMMY

Yep. The 'Harlem of The West.' Today, it's the mecca of gentrification. Madame C.J. Walker would turn over in her grave if she saw what greedy politicians and real estate magnets are doing to her beloved Denver.

Dr. Tommy points to an odd-shaped historic building on a corner.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)

That's the Rosonna Nightclub. Black entertainers of the 60s and 70s performed there because they couldn't stay at any hotels or eat in any restaurants.

CARMEN

I heard about that place on a PBS  
Special.

They stop at a red light.

DR. TOMMY

This was the Boulevard. This was  
the place where all the pimps and  
hustlers hung out, my Dad included.

(points left)

That side led you to the suburbs  
where the rich people lived...

(points right)

And that side led you to where  
poverty, violence, gangs, and drugs  
lived.

CARMEN

(points right)

And you lived that way?

DR. TOMMY

Yep.

Carmen spies DRUG DEALER shove unkempt DRUG ADDICT to the ground and kick him repeatedly. She locks her door.

The light turns green. Dr. Tommy drives off as a local protest rages at Five Points High School in the distance.

**EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY**

Dr. Tommy and Carmen arrive at their quaint, A-frame, two-bedroom home, park. Dr. Tommy grabs the bags and helps Carmen to the house.

MS. BERTINA MARTIN, 60s, Black, independent widow, working in her garden, spots them.

MS. MARTIN

False alarm?

CARMEN

Yeah.

MS. MARTIN

I had seven myself. It happens. Dr. Tommy, did you see all the hoopin' and a hollerin' going on over at Five Points High today?

DR. TOMMY  
No, Ma'am.

MS. MARTIN  
It's a darn shame. Them kids need a  
strong male presence over there.  
They running the school like they  
ain't got no sense.

CARMEN  
Blessings to you, too, Mrs. Martin.

Dr. Tommy and Carmen head into the house.

**EXT. FIVE POINTS HS - DAY**

BLACK AND LATINO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS and PARENTS with "#BLM" signs and shirts memorializing a BLACK TEEN listen to protest leader, LAVON SMITH, 18, Black, a passionate, fiercely focused high school student.

LAVON  
(from bullhorn)  
Money for school!

PROTESTERS  
Not police!

LAVON  
Money for schools!

PROTESTERS  
Not police!

LAVON  
We can no longer sit by and leave  
our education in the hands of  
politicians and the school board  
who don't give a damn about us.

APPLAUSE.

LAVON (CONT'D)  
Every day I walk to school, I see  
less and less of the Five Points I  
grew up with and more and more  
gentrification. We can no longer  
sit by while Superintendent  
Hightower gives public school funds  
to the white schools in the  
suburbs. We matter, too. We matter,  
too.

PROTESTERS  
We matter, too! We matter, too!...

**EXT. SCHOOL BOARD OFFICES - DAY**

SUPERINTENDENT AMY HIGHTOWER, 40s, White, conservative local official, stands before REPORTERS and NEWS CAMERAS.

AMY

I understand the community's issues better than anyone. I was brought up in a single parent household and it was rough. What brought me out of that life was education. That's what we strive to give our students, the chance for a better life.

REPORTER #1

So, is there any truth to the rumors that you intend to close Five Points High School?

AMY

I'll state here, today, on the record, that I have no intention of closing any school that is serving our students well and preparing them for their future.

And with that, AMY'S TEAM whisks her away.

**I./E. AMY'S CAR ON CITY STREET (MOVING) - DAY**

Amy and her chief of staff, DONNA KEMP, (late 20s, White, shrewd, driven) drive through light traffic.

DONNA

Get Principal Peters on the phone. It's obvious he can't keep his animals on a leash over there.

Donna makes a call.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. FIVE POINTS HS - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

PRINCIPAL PETERS, 50s, White, watches the protest rage through his office window. HIS DESK PHONE RINGS. His secretary, MRS. SANCHEZ, Latina, 40s, appears at the door.

PRINCIPAL PETERS  
Is it her?

Mrs. Sanchez nods. He sighs, picks up his desk phone.

PRINCIPAL PETERS (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Superintendent Hightower, I was  
expecting your call.

AMY  
(into phone)  
Don't hello me. What the hell is  
going on over there?

PRINCIPAL PETERS  
The students have a right to  
protest.

AMY  
Not in my schools. I want a report  
on my desk tomorrow of every  
student who took part in this  
"protest."

PRINCIPAL PETERS  
I can't do that, Ma'am.

AMY  
Excuse me?

PRINCIPAL PETERS  
I cannot do that. It's their first  
amendment right and I won't trample  
on that. They've suffered enough.

AMY  
Then I expect your resignation in  
twenty-four hours.

She hangs up.

AMY (CONT'D)  
(to Donna)  
Find me an interim principal for  
Five Points High.

**EXT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - EVENING**

Dr. Tommy, with headphones on, jogs down the street toward his house. He spots Ms. Martin grabbing groceries out of the back of her hatchback. He veers toward her car.

DR. TOMMY

Here, Ms. Martin, let me get that  
for you.

MS. MARTIN

Oh, bless your heart.

Dr. Tommy grabs the bags, hauls them to the house.

DR. TOMMY

You know the stores can deliver  
this for you now?

MS. MARTIN

I ain't that old. And I don't want  
some stranger touching my food.

DR. TOMMY

I hear that.

MS. MARTIN

You hear they fired the principal  
over at Five Points?

DR. TOMMY

No, I didn't.

MS. MARTIN

The position's open. I can make a  
call for you.

DR. TOMMY

No, thank you. I'm happy where I'm  
at.

MS. MARTIN

That school may want you, but Five  
Points needs you.

Ms. Martin unlocks her door.

MS. MARTIN

Just set them inside.

DR. TOMMY

You sure?

MS. MARTIN

Yeah.

Dr. Tommy sets the groceries just inside the house.

MS. MARTIN

Thanks again. And remember what I said, I can make a call.

DR. TOMMY

If I change my mind, I will. Bye.

Dr. Tommy exits the house.

**INT. TOMMY'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER**

Dr. Tommy enters, heads to the --

**KITCHEN**

He spots Carmen at the stove covertly wiping tears from her eyes. He crosses to her.

DR. TOMMY

What's wrong?

CARMEN

How am I going to be a good mother if I don't even know the difference between real and fake contractions?

DR. TOMMY

Aw, come on now, don't beat yourself up. Every expecting mother goes through this.

CARMEN

Not my sister, Marjorie. She had three babies and ran a marathon the next day.

DR. TOMMY

Your sister got some other issues going on.

CARMEN

Hey, don't talk about my sister.

DR. TOMMY

You just did.

CARMEN

I can, you can't.

DR. TOMMY  
Oh really? What are you gonna do  
about it if I do?

They both put up their hands like they're fighting. Dr. Tommy playfully jabs her bulging stomach.

DR. TOMMY  
Body blow-body blow.

CARMEN  
I'mma body blow you all right.

He hugs her, rubs her belly softly.

DR. TOMMY  
Hey, it's okay. You're going to be  
an amazing mother.

CARMEN  
You think so?

DR. TOMMY  
I know so. You are loving, caring,  
nurturing, smart, vivacious --

Suddenly, smoke plumes from within the stove. Carmen sees it.

CARMEN  
No-no-no!

DR. TOMMY  
What?

CARMEN  
Let go, my casserole's burning.

She breaks from Dr. Tommy, opens the stove, removes the smoking casserole carcass, plunks it on the stove. Dr. Tommy eyes the 'seasoned' entrée.

DR. TOMMY  
But when it comes to cooking,  
Marjorie got you beat.

Carmen playfully whacks him on his arm.

CARMEN  
Don't talk about my sister.

## INT. DR. TOMMY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Tommy rubs her feet at the end of the bed as he checks his work emails. She's looking at homes on her iPad. The nightly news drones in the b.g..

CARMEN

The prices for homes and condos are outrageous right now. A 3-bedroom condo is \$890,000 over in Whittier.

DR. TOMMY

They're doing whatever they can to kick Black people out.

CARMEN

And send them where?

DR. TOMMY

Anywhere else.

CARMEN

They're kicking out families with children. There are some sick people out there.

DR. TOMMY

Hey-hey, don't worry your pretty little self about that. Stay in your happy place.

CARMEN

How can I knowing kids are homeless because they're Black and poor?

Dr. Tommy crawls up the bed, sidles up next to her.

DR. TOMMY

What do you want me to do? You want me to go round them up and bring them here?

CARMEN

I want them to be safe?

DR. TOMMY

And that's why I love you.

CARMEN

I wish we were millionaires, I'd buy them all a house.

Dr. Tommy sees the Five Points High School protest on the news. He grabs the remote, turns it up.

ON TV

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR reports as PRINCIPAL PETERS, 40s, White, chubby, leaves the school with his belongings in a box.

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 Five Points High School Principal Johann Peters was unceremoniously fired today by School Superintendent Amy Hightower over what she calls irreconcilable differences. Calls for Superintendent Hightower's removal have increased ever since it was reported that Denver Public Schools had the lowest reading and math test scores in the nation and Five Points High School scored the lowest of all secondary schools in the state...

BACK TO SCENE

CARMEN  
 Ms. Martin was right, you need to be over there.

DR. TOMMY  
 I fought tooth and nail to get out of there; I'm not going back.

CARMEN  
 They need a positive male role model who speaks their language.

DR. TOMMY  
 I don't speak their language.

CARMEN  
 Yes, you do.

DR. TOMMY  
 (abrupt)  
 No, I don't. Goodnight.

Dr. Tommy slides under the covers, cuts off his light as Carmen watches Lavon being interviewed by reporters on TV.

She eyes Dr. Tommy, who's not sleeping. She empathizes with his stance, but why the shortness.

FADE OUT:

END ACT I

ACT II

INT. AMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Amy works at her desk. Donna enters with a stack of files.

DONNA

So, I just go off the phone with  
Assistant Principal Morris.

AMY

And?

DONNA

She's out on maternity leave for  
another four months.

AMY

Great.

Amy sighs as Donna sets the stack of replacement principals' resumes on her desk.

AMY

I don't have time to look through  
all of these. Top three.

DONNA

Of course.

Donna hands her the top three files.

DONNA

That's Rowena Bowers, comes with  
excellent references. Good with  
kids, she's relatable, has enough  
education to be tenured professor.

AMY

Married?

DONNA

Two kids. One's special needs.

AMY

Financials?

DONNA

She has a mortgage, medical bills,  
but nothing overwhelming.

AMY

Who else?

Next file:

DONNA

Luis Ramirez. Harvard grad. Masters in Education. He's been assistant principal at Everest High for six months.

AMY

Harvard? Those kids will eat him alive. Next.

Donna sifts through more files. Comes upon Tommy's photo.

DONNA

What about Dr. Tommy Watson?

AMY

Where have I heard that name before?

Donna hands her Dr. Tommy's file. She studies his photo.

DONNA

He was a star football player at Five Points back in the 90s. He went on to play football at the University of Minnesota and had a short stint in the pros. He has a doctorate in education.

AMY

Any red flags?

DONNA

(skims file)

No criminal record. Background check is good. Drug test was clean.

AMY

What's his financial situation?

DONNA

Drowning in student loans. Over \$200k, with a baby on the way.

AMY

(studies Tommy's photo)

Bingo. We may have just found our man. Dr. Tommy, today is your lucky day. Where is he now?

**INT. SHRINER'S ACADEMY - AUDITORIUM/STAGE - SAME**

Dr. Tommy talks to STUDENTS during an assembly.

DR. TOMMY

(into mic)

Get all of the education you can. Never give up hope. You must have only positive expectations toward your future... When life knocks you down, get back up. Learn from the bumps in the road. Trials are not meant to kill you, they are here to make you stronger. Rise to the challenge and don't sell you or your future short. Thank you.

The students gives him a rousing standing ovation.

**INT. HALLWAY - LATER**

The doors swing open as students fill the hallway on the way to their next class. Dr. Tommy swims upstream through the crowd. SECRETARY, 30s, approaches.

SECRETARY

Dr. Tommy!

Dr. Tommy turns, sees Secretary approaching.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

I have an urgent message for you.

DR. TOMMY

From my wife?

SECRETARY

No, Superintendent Hightower.

DR. TOMMY

Thee Superintendent Hightower?

SECRETARY

The very one.

Dr. Tommy takes the note, baffled, heads to his office.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S OFFICE - LATER**

Dr. Tommy enters, closes the door, crosses to his desk. He picks up the phone, dials. Before punching the last digit, he takes a deep breath, pecks the last number.

DR. TOMMY  
(into phone)  
Hello?, this is Dr. Tommy Watson  
returning Superintendent  
Hightower's call.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. AMY'S OFFICE - SAME**

Amy, at her desk, picks up the phone.

AMY  
(into phone)  
Dr. Watson?

DR. TOMMY  
Yes, Superintendent Hightower.

AMY  
Nice to meet you. I know you're a  
busy man so I'll do without the  
pleasantries and get right to it. I  
don't know if you've been watching  
the news of the animal house over  
there at Five Points High.

DR. TOMMY  
I've heard about it.

AMY  
Well, that's why I'm calling. Due  
to unfortunate events, the  
principal has left the school and  
we are in need of a true leader who  
has the experience and leadership  
qualities to lead a school.

DR. TOMMY  
Okay.

AMY  
Dr. Watson, how would like to  
become the new principal at your  
old alma mater?

DR. TOMMY  
Excuse me?

AMY  
How would like to become principal  
at Five Points High School?

DR. TOMMY

I am flattered, but I already have a great job.

AMY

I've already talked with Dean Chesterfield, and though he adores you, he stated unequivocally that he does not want to stand in your way of becoming a principal.

DR. TOMMY

Wow, I'm flattered, and I appreciate you taking the time to contact me, but I'm going to have to respectfully decline. I love my job here.

AMY

Do you love it enough to turn down double the salary?

DR. TOMMY

I don't do it for the money, Superintendent, I do it because I love kids and I love education.

AMY

Fantastic. I'm emailing you the contract right now. Take a look at it, talk it over with your pregnant wife, Carmen, is it?

DR. TOMMY

Yes.

AMY

Congratulations, you're going to make a wonderful father I'm sure. Sleep on it and if tomorrow you feel the same way, that'll be that.

Dr. Tommy ponders for a few moments.

AMY

Dr. Watson?

DR. TOMMY

Okay, fine.

AMY

Great! Talk to you tomorrow.

END INTERCUT

Dr. Tommy hangs up the phone. He tries to wrap his head around what just happened. He opens his email, sees Amy's email at the top. He opens the attached contract, skims down to compensation... "\$120,500." He hits "print," rises, exits the office.

**INT. DEAN CHESTERFIELD'S OFFICE - LATER**

Dr. Tommy sits before DEAN CHESTERFIELD, 60s, gray hair, who skims the contract.

DEAN CHESTERFIELD  
Not bad for your first captaincy.

DR. TOMMY  
Am I doing a terrible job here?

DEAN CHESTERFIELD  
Absolutely not. You're one of our most beloved faculty members.

DR. TOMMY  
Seems like you're trying to get rid of me.

DEAN CHESTERFIELD  
On the contrary. We're not trying to hold you back. You have all the tools you need to be a great principal. And I believe it's God's will that you return to the place where it all started. The circle of life, you know.

DR. TOMMY  
Some circle.

DEAN CHESTERFIELD  
Listen, there's only three months left in the school year. Go and try it. If it's something you absolutely hate, you can come back here next year.

Dr. Tommy considers those words.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - FOYER - DAY**

Dr. Tommy enters, drops his briefcase at the door.

DR. TOMMY  
I'm home.

CARMEN (O.S.)  
Upstairs.

Dr. Tommy heads upstairs.

**UPSTAIRS BEDROOM**

Dr. Tommy stops in his tracks when he spots a ton of baby equipment: a crib, cradle, diapers. Carmen, relaxing in the recliner, smirks at him.

DR. TOMMY  
What's all this?

CARMEN  
Is there something you need to tell me?

DR. TOMMY  
Like?

CARMEN  
Were you offered a job today?

DR. TOMMY  
What does that have to do with all of this?

CARMEN  
Compliments of Superintendent Hightower.

DR. TOMMY  
Take it all back.

CARMEN  
This baby stroller is \$600. That crib, \$775.

DR. TOMMY  
I'm not taking the job.

CARMEN  
Why not?

DR. TOMMY  
Everything I worked for will go down the drain.

CARMEN  
You worked for?

DR. TOMMY

I mean we.

CARMEN

This is exactly what we worked for.  
For you to be in position to take  
whatever job you wanted to take.

DR. TOMMY

I don't want this job and I'm not  
taking it.

CARMEN

Thomas Cornelius Watson, what has  
got into you?

DR. TOMMY

(abrupt)

Nothing at all. Send it all back.

Dr. Tommy storms out.

**INT. GARAGE - NIGHT**

Dr. Tommy batters his punching bag ferociously. Carmen enters, sits on a work bench, watches Dr. Tommy pound his frustration out. Finally, he's punched out.

CARMEN

So?

DR. TOMMY

They humiliated me and my family  
every day when I went there.

CARMEN

I thought you were Mr. Football  
Star?

DR. TOMMY

That was my senior year. The other  
three years, they tormented my  
brothers and sisters and I, jumped  
us, talked about our Salvation Army  
clothes, called our parents heroin  
addicts.

## CARMEN

I'm sorry they did that. But that's not who you are anymore. You're Dr. Tommy Watson, Doctor of Education. Those kids, they won't stand a chance in this world if you don't save them. You know what the world has waiting for them: menial jobs, prison, and death. Somebody has to help them. I always thought that somebody would be you.

She kisses him on his shoulder, waddles inside. Dr. Tommy considers her words deeply. Is she right? He punches the bag with a furious blow.

## INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dr. Tommy grabs a protein drink from the fridge, gulps it down. He crosses over to the answering machine, sees the message light flashing. He presses play.

## MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Hello, Dr. Watson, this is Stanley from Wyndham Financial Services calling about your student loan payment...

Dr. Tommy hits "erase." Next message.

## FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Dr. Watson, Emily Shrecker from Wyndham Student Loan Division. We haven't received your payment...

Dr. Tommy hits "erase."

## ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)

You have no more messages.

## EXT. ACROSS FROM FIVE POINTS HIGH SCHOOL - EVENING

Dr. Tommy parks by the curb, glares at the school.

## FLASHBACK: DR. TOMMY'S HIGH SCHOOL DAYS

-- FANS CHEER as QUARTERBACK hands running back Tommy, 18, the ball. Tommy runs through the line, gets tackled hard for a loss of yards.

-- HEAD COACH PERKINS, 40s, White, slams his hat on the ground, grabs DR. TOMMY's face mask on the sideline.

COACH PERKINS

If you're gonna play this game, son, you got to run through the right freaking hole!!

-- Tommy and Mae are in Tommy's souped-up van after picking her up from prison. As Tommy tries to maneuver the van into the space,

MAE

Do you want me to park the car?

TOMMY

I got this.

Tommy checks his driver's side mirror, spots the Black Jeep creeping toward them IN SLOW MOTION.

The Black Jeep's passenger side window descends. TWO HANDS gripping automatic pistols stretch out the window, level the barrels at Tommy's van...

Tommy's mini-van windows explode - SSPPSSH!! -- as Tommy shields Mae from the barrage of hot lead and serrated shards of glass...

## BACK TO SCENE

Dr. Tommy's numb as he eyes the dungy, graffitied-coated school. He opens his agreement contract from Amy.

INSERT – PRINCIPAL AGREEMENT CONTRACT

*"Annual Compensation... \$120,500."*

## BACK TO SCENE

He starts the car, drives off.

INT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Tommy enters the room, spots Carmen's watching the news in bed. Palpable tension lingers from their earlier discussion. Dr. Tommy squats on the bed, eyes the news blankly as he gathers his thoughts.

ON TV

POLICE lead THREE BLACK BOYS in handcuffs to police cars.

FEMALE ANCHOR

The three teens caught stealing are students at Five Points High School. When asked why they stole the food, they said, "they were hungry."...

BACK TO SCENE

Dr. Tommy turns to Carmen who has now turned her back to him. Dr. Tommy's head slumps... He sighs, then,

DR. TOMMY  
Do you really like the crib?

Carmen eyes snap open, a subtle grin leaks.

**EXT. FIVE POINTS HS - DAY**

PARENTS and Reporters clamor around the podium where Amy, the SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, and Dr. Tommy make the announcement.

AMY  
As you know, we have had tremendous budget cuts over the last two years and that has caused a rift between the students, faculty, and the community. Some tough decisions had to be made.

PARENT #1  
Your job should've been cut.

AMY  
Truancy is at an all-time high, test scores are the lowest they've been in the last sixty years, teacher morale is demoralized, things look dire.

CROWD  
You got that right!

AMY  
But not anymore. As of this morning, the prodigal son has come home to save us. Dr. Tommy Watson, an All-American running back on the 1991 state championship team, has accepted the job as the new interim principal. Ladies and gentleman, welcome Five Points High's own, Dr. Tommy Watson.

Applause as Dr. Tommy stands next to Amy for press photos.

AMY (CONT'D)  
(through her smile)  
Don't make me look like a fool.

In the audience, Lavon looks on, suspicious of Dr. Tommy.

**LATER**

As Amy walks to her car, Dr. Tommy calls to her.

DR. TOMMY  
Superintendent Hightower.

She turns, sees Dr. Tommy approaching.

AMY  
You need something already?

DR. TOMMY  
I just wanted to thank you again  
for this opportunity and I wanted  
to give you this.

He hands her a piece of paper. It's a check.

AMY  
A bribe?

DR. TOMMY  
Thank you for the baby presents. My  
wife loved them.

AMY  
They're a gift.

DR. TOMMY  
I know, but, I would feel more  
comfortable if I paid for them.

AMY  
Suit yourself.

Dr. Tommy opens the car door for her.

AMY (CONT'D)  
And a gentleman, too. I see I made  
the right choice.

Amy gets in the backseat of her car. Dr. Tommy closes the door and the car leaves.

**INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Dr. Tommy unpacks his belongings, sets Carmen's photo on his desk. Principal Peters' secretary, Mrs. Sanchez, now his secretary, enters.

MRS. SANCHEZ  
Principal Watson, the faculty are  
ready for you.

**INT. WEIGHT ROOM - DAY**

Dr. Tommy stands before his new FACULTY.

DR. TOMMY  
(stern tone)  
I know many of you are asking, why  
are we meeting here? This is the  
place that changed my life. When I  
was a rail-thin freshman, I was  
picked on, bullied. I wasn't good  
in school, barely a D student. But  
when I came in here and started  
working out, I got stronger  
physically and mentally. That is  
what we're going to do for these  
students. Mediocrity is no longer  
an option. I had one dream. That  
was to play running back for the  
Denver Broncos. That woke me up  
every morning. That drove me. That  
kept me on the straight and narrow.  
What dreams do these kids have?...

Teachers stay silent.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
You are all correct. None. They  
have no dreams because nobody is  
telling them they can dream. I got  
a football scholarship to the  
University of Minnesota, and though  
I didn't get a chance to play for  
the Broncos, I got something ten  
times more valuable, an education.  
That's what I demand for everyone  
of our students. An education that  
will help them achieve their  
dreams. So, from now on, I expect  
you to demand excellence from them.  
This is not longer failure and  
dropout factory. Are we clear?

The faculty nod out of respect, but with no enthusiasm.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
And whoever has a problem with it,  
send them to me.

Dr. Tommy nods to Mrs. Sanchez who starts passing out papers.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Sanchez is passing out  
evaluation questionnaires. Please  
fill them out and get them back to  
me by 3pm. Be honest and truthful.  
Your voice matters. We got three  
months to improve test scores and  
change the culture of this school.  
Three months.

**INT. HALLWAY - DAY**

Dr. Tommy sidles between STUDENTS in-between classes, barks corrections as he sees them. He passes BOY WITH HAT ON. Dr. Tommy snatches the Boy's hat off.

BOY WITH HAT ON  
Ey!, what's up with you, man?

DR. TOMMY  
Young men don't wear hats inside.

TWO BOYS run past him. He grabs one by the shirt collar.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Stop running in the halls! If I see  
you running again, you're gonna run  
ten miles on the track, is that  
understood?

BOY #2  
Yeah.

DR. TOMMY  
Yes what?

BOY #2  
Yes, sir.

He hands Boy his hat back, moves on.

DR. TOMMY  
Now get to class and walk like you  
have some sense.

Boy #2 walks away. Dr. Tommy spots GIRLS congregating around a locker.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Ladies, where are supposed to be?

The girls scatter with attitude. The lone one standing at the locker is Lavon. Dr. Tommy stares at her incredulously.

Lavon, knowing he's staring at her, takes her time closing her locker. Dr. Tommy continues to stare.

CLASS BELL CLANGS. Dr. Tommy's still staring at her.

LAVON  
What? You ain't got nothing better to do?

DR. TOMMY  
I cleared my schedule so I can do this all day.

LAVON  
You're weird.

DR. TOMMY  
You're supposed to be in class.  
What's your name?

LAVON  
Raynisha.

DR. TOMMY  
Raynisha what?

LAVON  
Jennings.

DR. TOMMY  
You don't look like a Raynisha.

LAVON  
(smirking)  
What do I look like then?

DR. TOMMY  
You look like a Lavon Smith.

LAVON  
Why'd you ask me if you knew it?

DR. TOMMY  
(into radio)  
Mrs. Sanchez.

MRS. SANCHEZ (V.O.)  
(from radio)  
Yes, Dr. Watson?

DR. TOMMY  
What class is Lavon Smith supposed  
to be in right now?

A beat.

MRS. SANCHEZ (V.O.)  
Freshman English.

DR. TOMMY  
That can't be correct. She's a  
senior about to graduate.

MRS. SANCHEZ (V.O.)  
That is the class she supposed to  
be in, Principal Watson.

DR. TOMMY  
Thank you, Mrs. Sanchez.

He eyes Lavon, who's trying to hide her embarrassment.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Maybe if you'd spend as much time  
in your classroom as you do  
mouthing off, you'd be in your  
proper class. Get to class, Ms.  
Smith. Now.

Lavon, fighting back tears, slams her locker shut, heads down  
the hall to a classroom. She opens a classroom door, enters,  
slams it shut. Dr. Tommy marches to the classroom, whips open  
the door, storms into --

#### CLASSROOM

Dr. Tommy glares at Lavon taking her seat.

DR. TOMMY  
If you slam another door in my  
school, I will expel you. Now get  
over here and close the door like a  
sensible young lady.

Lavon doesn't budge.

DR. TOMMY  
I said, now.

Lavon bolts upright, crosses to the door, opens it, and shuts it properly, crosses back to her seat, and plunks down in it.

DR. TOMMY  
(to Teacher)  
If she or anybody gives you an iota  
of a problem today, send them to  
me.

Dr. Tommy marches out. Lavon, fuming, wipes anger-infused tears streaming down her face.

**MENS BATHROOM**

Dr. Tommy splashes water on his face, dabs it dry with paper towels. He stares at his reflection in the mirror. That exchange with Lavon took a lot out of him. It's the part of the job he doesn't like, but knows is necessary.

He tosses the paper towels in the trash, sizes himself up one more time in the mirror, game face back on. He exits.

FADE OUT:

**END ACT II**

**ACT III****INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT**

A thrilling girls basketball game is in progress. Dr. Tommy watches in the stands.

**SERIES OF SHOTS:**

-- Lavon backs OPPOSING WHITE DEFENDER down, shoots a fadeaway off the glass -- Good!

LAVON

You ain't that strong, Molly.

-- OPPOSING GUARD drives in for a lay-up, leaps. Lavon swoops in like a vulture out of nowhere, swats the ball into the bleachers. The crowd OOHs and AAHS!

LAVON

Get that weak stuff outta here,  
Becky!

-- Lavon dribbles up court. She stops on a dime at the 3-pt line, shoots a form-perfect jumper -- SWISH!

Dr. Tommy nods, impressed.

GAME HORN BLOWS. Five Points won. Final score, "79 - 21."

**EXT. FIVE POINTS HS - NIGHT**

Lavon exits out the back door. She's mobbed by STUDENTS who want her autograph and to take selfies with her. She signs a few. Takes a few photos. Continues on.

As she slides on her earpods, Dr. Tommy approaches.

DR. TOMMY

You only scored thirty-five.

LAVON

I went easy on them.

DR. TOMMY

If I was a college scout, I'd have second thoughts about recruiting you.

She stops, offended.

LAVON

What? What do you know?

DR. TOMMY

I know what D-1 scouts look for.  
Your skills are top notch, but all  
that taunting and mean mugging,  
unnecessary.

LAVON

Why? Because I'm a girl?

DR. TOMMY

Because that's not you.

LAVON

You don't know me.

DR. TOMMY

And you don't know me. You're  
better than that. I know your  
parents put some sense in you.

LAVON

You don't nothing about my parents  
so mind your business!

Lavon storms off in a huff as Dr. Tommy, caught off-guard a bit by her response, watches her march into the shadows.

**EXT. HOBO LANE - NIGHT**

Lined with sleazy, decaying motels, overflowing trash  
dumpsters, SASSY HOOKERS, DRUG ADDICTS, HOMELESS VAGRANTS  
living in tents in homeless camps, and HUMONGOUS RATS.

**EXT. DINGY HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER**

Lavon, with earpods in, walks quickly with her head down  
through the squalid surroundings to one of the dingy, run-down  
motels, KNOCKS ON ROOM 119'S DOOR.

The door opens. HARSH BABYSITTER, 30s, callous, boisterous,  
blows cigarette smoke in Lavon's face.

BABYSITTER

Where the hell you been?

LAVON

The game ran late.

Lavon sees THUG BOYFRIEND, 30s, lingering on the couch.

BABYSITTER

I gotta life, too. Go on and get  
these little bad kids outta here.  
You done messed up my night.

Lavon enters... She comes out with her brothers, TYRELL, 7,  
who's sleepwalking, and DARIUS, 6, who she's carrying.

BABYSITTER (CONT'D)

And you better pay me by Friday or  
we gonna have some problems.

LAVON

I'm gonna pay you, I promise.

Babysitter shuts the door. Lavon goes to the next door, "Room 117," opens it, enters.

**INT. LAVON'S ROOM/117 - NIGHT**

They enter into darkness. Lavon flicks on the light switch.  
No lights. She sighs, turns on her phone's flashlight.

She shines the light on the room: barren, filthy, clothes in  
trash bags, empty carry-out cartons, mice and roaches  
scattering about.

Lavon crosses the room, lays Darius on a soiled mattress.

TYRELL

I'm hungry.

LAVON

Did you eat dinner?

Tyrell shakes his head. Lavon cross to the fridge, opens it.  
Nothing but condiments, a half-eaten apple, and small  
packages of two saltine crackers. She opens a pack, hands one  
to Tyrell. He eats it.

TYRELL

Can I have another one?

LAVON

We need to save one for Darius in  
the morning.

TYRELL

I'm hungry.

LAVON

I know, I'm sorry. We'll get some  
food in the morning, okay?

She hugs Tyrell and lays on the mattress and falls asleep. Lavon sits next to her brothers humming to help them sleep. Once they are asleep, she cuts off the phone's flashlight and sits in the darkness.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Dr. Tommy's looking over the teachers' questionnaires in bed as Carmen reads, "What To Expect When You're Expecting."

DR. TOMMY  
Unbelievable.

CARMEN  
What?

DR. TOMMY  
Most of the teachers are saying there's no hope for these kids. Truancy, family issues, most of the kids are hungry and their asking teachers for money. And there's almost no parent involvement whatsoever. Class size is too big.

CARMEN  
Looks like you got your work cut out for you.

DR. TOMMY  
That's the understatement of the year.

CARMEN  
You'll figure it out.

DR. TOMMY  
Maybe. I met that young lady that was leading the protest today?

CARMEN  
And?

DR. TOMMY  
It didn't go well.

CARMEN  
I'm sure you had a good reason.

DR. TOMMY  
She's a senior taking Freshman English.

CARMEN

Maybe she hates English. I hated history.

DR. TOMMY

But you ended up class salutorian. Based on her reaction. It was like she was embarrassed about it.

CARMEN

Maybe she has a reading problem?

DR. TOMMY

Maybe.

CARMEN

Get some sleep.

Dr. Tommy gathers up the papers, sets them back in his briefcase, puts it on the floor, kisses Carmen and goes to sleep. Carmen continues reading the book.

CARMEN

And we have our doctor's appointment tomorrow at 4:30.

DR. TOMMY

I'm there. Night.

Dr. Tommy turns on his side still thinking about Lavon.

**EXT. SCHOOL BOARD BLDG - NIGHT**

Establishing shot. Home of the Denver School Board.

**INT. FIVE POINTS HS - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT**

Crammed with RESIDENTS. Amy and the SIX MEMBER SCHOOL BOARD (30s/50s, 3 Black, 3 White) sit at a table onstage during an emergency roundtable of the Budget Advisory Committee regarding school closings and funds for inner-city schools.

Dr. Tommy sits in the back row with a hat over his head.

AMY

(into mic)

... I propose we recommit to our three key priorities to ensure every classroom across our city is a vibrant center of learning: equity, instructional excellence, and collaborative teamwork.

Donna approaches Amy with urgency, whispers intensely in her ear. Amy nods turns back to the board.

AMY  
(into mic)  
Ladies and gentleman, I am very  
sorry but this meeting needs to be  
adjourned due to an emergency.

Parents voice their disapproval.

PARENT #1  
You can't keep stringing us on like  
this! Our kids need more resources.

MR. SOLOMON, 70s, Black Army Vet, chimes in.

MR. SOLOMON  
Superintendent Hightower, we know  
what you are trying to do. You have  
been trying to close this school  
since the day you got in office.

AMY  
(into mic)  
I have no interest in doing  
anything that won't better your  
kids' future. I'm sorry, I must go.

Amy grabs her stuff and leaves with Donna out the side door  
into her waiting car. As parents berate the remaining Board  
Members, Dr. Tommy stands.

DR. TOMMY  
Excuse me, everyone. Hello!

Everyone turns to him, quiets.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Hi, I'm Dr. Watson. I'm the new  
principal here. If you have a  
moment, I'd like to hear your  
concerns.

Dr. Tommy makes his way to the front.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
I know times are rough right now,  
but I believe together, we can work  
anything out. My goal is to make  
sure the top school in the state. I  
graduated from here. I grew up in  
this neighborhood. I came back here  
to help this neighborhood.

MR. SOLOMON  
How can you help us? You're one of them.

DR. TOMMY  
Them who?

MR. SOLOMON  
She hired you, didn't she?

DR. TOMMY  
She did.

MR. SOLOMON  
Then you must be one of her "boys."

DR. TOMMY  
I am nobody's boy, sir. I believe the superintendent and the board have very tough decisions to make and it's their job to vet every possible solution to make sure every school has what it needs to the best of their ability...

Parents voice their disapproval.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
All I ask is that you give the board a chance to do their jobs. You elected them, right?...

Silence.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Then let them do their job. Now, what else is on your minds?

**EXT. FIVE POINTS HS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

As the crowd disperses to their cars, Dr. Tommy hands out his card to the parents.

DR. TOMMY  
If any of you have any other problems or concerns, please give me a call. That's my personal cell.

Mr. Solomon approaches Dr. Tommy as he heads to his car.

MR. SOLOMON  
Hey, Watson.

Dr. Tommy turns.

MR. SOLOMON (CONT'D)  
I remember you. Number 32, fast as  
lightening.

DR. TOMMY  
Not anymore.

MR. SOLOMON  
It's good you came back. The kids  
need to see positive male role  
models like yourself.

DR. TOMMY  
I just wanna do my part.

MR. SOLOMON  
Do you really think you are  
qualified for this job? And when I  
say qualified, I don't mean not  
capable. Qualified.

DR. TOMMY  
My resume speaks for itself.

MR. SOLOMON  
The qualified I'm talking about you  
can't put on your resume or go to  
school for. I'm a war veteran,  
because I have been trained to kill  
doesn't mean I can kill someone  
when it's time. I would be very  
careful about who I stick up for  
until I know their true intentions.

MR. SOLOMON'S WIFE, 50s, Black, calls from their car.

MR. SOLOMON'S WIFE  
Percy, come on, I'm hungry.

Mr. Solomon turns, ambles to his car. Dr. Tommy watches him  
go, his brow furrowed.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - STUDY - NIGHT**

Dr. Tommy reads articles about Amy on his laptop. As he makes  
notes, Carmen waddles downstairs half-asleep.

CARMEN  
Hey, you comin' to bed?

DR. TOMMY  
In a minute. Just doing a bit of  
research.

CARMEN  
Don't stay up all night. Sleep is  
very important for principals.

DR. TOMMY  
I'll be up in two seconds.

Carmen heads back upstairs. Dr. Tommy reads more articles  
about Amy.

**INT. FIVE POINTS HS - HALLWAY - DAY**

Dr. Tommy walks the halls filled with students. As he sidles  
through, the students scurry to class, stop horsing around,  
and stay out of his way. He enters the --

**PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE**

Mrs. Sanchez gets Dr. Tommy's attention. He comes near.

DR. TOMMY  
What's wrong?

MRS. SANCHEZ  
(whisper)  
The Superintendent is in your  
office.

DR. TOMMY  
Oh. Is she upset?

MRS. SANCHEZ  
I can't tell.

Dr. Tommy straightens himself up, heads into --

**HIS OFFICE**

-- Sees Amy looking at pictures of Carmen and his degrees on  
the wall.

DR. TOMMY  
Superintendent Hightower.

AMY  
Principal Watson, sorry to just  
drop by. I was in the neighborhood.

DR. TOMMY  
My door is always open for you.

AMY  
I won't take up much of your time.  
I just wanted to say thank you.

DR. TOMMY  
For?

AMY  
Sticking up for our "team"  
yesterday. The other board members  
told me what you did after I left.

DR. TOMMY  
Was everything all right?

AMY  
Everything is fine, thanks for  
asking. Anyway, I wanted to tell  
you that in person. It feels great  
to have someone who understands how  
tough this job is.

DR. TOMMY  
I don't envy you, Ma'am, you have  
the toughest job and you make  
decisions people are afraid to  
make.

AMY  
I couldn't of said it better  
myself. And on that note, I will  
depart. Good day, Principal Watson.

DR. TOMMY  
Superintendent.

Amy leaves. When she's out of sight, Tommy's gracious  
demeanor turns suspicious. His eyes scan the office making  
sure everything nothing is missing.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT III

**ACT IV****INT. FIVE POINTS HS - FACULTY LOUNGE - DAY**

Dr. Tommy talks to a dozen TEACHERS. He has their evaluation questionnaires in his hand.

DR. TOMMY

How is it possible that 87% of our senior class cannot read or comprehend English on a 7th grade level. They're seniors for goodness sake!

FEMALE TEACHER

Most of the kids don't have parental supervision at home. There's nobody to reinforce the importance of education.

DR. TOMMY

This is we are losing our kids to drugs, gangs, and illiteracy. We have teachers who make excuses for them. Poor Tyrone can't read. He can't read because his teachers feel sorry for him because he has a rough life. If Poor Johnny can't read by the time he gets out of here, he's going to have a meaningless existence. No education means no job, no self-respect, and no future. Stop being their friends and be what you get paid to do, teach.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S OFFICE - DAY**

Dr. Tommy's on the phone with Carmen. He's viewing an ultrasound of the baby on his computer screen.

DR. TOMMY

(into phone)

So everything looks good.

CARMEN (V.O.)

(from phone)

Our baby is healthy and perfect.

DR. TOMMY

I needed to hear some good news.

CARMEN (V.O.)  
What's wrong?

DR. TOMMY  
I had to give the faculty a pep  
talk.

CARMEN (V.O.)  
It may take awhile before you see a  
change, but it's going to happen.

DR. TOMMY  
I hope so.

Dr. Tommy sees Mrs. Sanchez at his door.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)  
I gotta go, honey. I'll see you  
later on tonight.

CARMEN  
Bye.

He hangs up.

MRS. SANCHEZ  
There's a social worker here to see  
you.

DR. TOMMY  
Send them in.

Mrs. Sanchez retreats and in walks BERNICE PICKENS, 60s,  
Black, earthy.

BERNICE  
Principal Watson, Bernice Pickens,  
nice to meet him.

DR. TOMMY  
Mrs. Pickens? You don't remember  
me?

BERNICE  
Should I?

DR. TOMMY  
Tommy Watson. From Five Points.

She tries to remember, then,

BERNICE

Little Tommy Watson? You had four other siblings, um, um Meloni, Sherl, you, um, Martin, and the baby, Carmen.

DR. TOMMY

That's right. You remember?

BERNICE

How could I forget? Did your parents ever get off that heroin?

DR. TOMMY

Later. It wasn't easy though.

BERNICE

I bet it wasn't, as much as they used to get high.

DR. TOMMY

What brings you here?

BERNICE

I'm here about one of my cases, Lavon Smith.

DR. TOMMY

Okay.

BERNICE

It has come to my attention that she is missing school a lot.

DR. TOMMY

One second.

(into speakerphone)

Mrs. Sanchez, can you bring me Lavon Smith's attendance record, please.

BERNICE

Now she has two brothers, one's seven, the other's six. They're parents are drug addicts who are in an out of jail constantly.

Mrs. Sanchez enters, hands Dr. Tommy Lavon's file, exits. Dr. Tommy scans the file.

DR. TOMMY

Absent or tardy 127 days?

BERNICE

She's a habitual truant. As you well know, if I know these details, I have to act on them. And you know what that means.

DR. TOMMY

They'll be split up and put into the system.

BERNICE

Yes. And nobody wants to adopt a mouthy 17 year-old. But I don't want to separate them.

DR. TOMMY

She's a decent student, great athlete on her way to college, a pillar at this school. There's got to be something we can do to help her out a bit.

BERNICE

Well, there is something you can do. If you could pay them a visit from time to time, and if by chance we meet in passing, you can divulge, in passing, how they're doing.

DR. TOMMY

In passing?

BERNICE

In passing.

Dr. Tommy sits back in his chair, ponders what to do.

DR. TOMMY

This explains a lot.

BERNICE

She's had an extremely rough life...

(re: Tommy)

like somebody else I know.

DR. TOMMY

I get that...

He skims the file.

DR. TOMMY  
Her address is 5482 Middleton  
Court?

BERNICE  
That's her old address, before the  
parents went to jail.

DR. TOMMY  
What's the new address?

**EXT. FIVE POINTS HS - NIGHT**

The school is decorated for their girls basketball game. The school's dynamic drum line band performs on the front lawn with precision, rhythm, and showmanship.

**INT. FIVE POINTS HS - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT**

Dr. Tommy and a packed audience watch Lavon's girls basketball game.

-- Lavon plays aggressive defense on OPPOSING PLAYER, steals the ball, drives in for a layup.

-- Lavon grabs a rebound, dribbles downcourt, throws a sweet pass to her TEAMMATE for a layup.

-- Lavon drives past a DEFENDER, pulls up for a jumper --  
SWISH! --

FINAL GAME HORN BLOWS. Five Points won "104-52."

**EXT. FIVE POINTS HS - NIGHT**

Lavon's mobbed by students. She takes a few selfies, leaves. As she's walking, she checks the time on her phone. "8:54." She doubles time home.

As she starts off, a car's headlights illuminate, starts tracking her. It's Dr. Tommy.

**EXT. HOBO LANE/DINGY MOTEL - BABYSITTER'S DOOR - NIGHT**

Lavon grabs Darius and Tyrell from Babysitter's room and they enter their room, close the door.

**I./E. DR. TOMMY'S CAR ON STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

Dr. Tommy parks across the street. As he eyes Lavon's motel,

FLASHBACK:

**EXT. DINGY MOTEL ROOM - ROOM 117 - DAY**

Geared-up POLICE prepare to breach the door.

SUPER: "1980."

LEAD OFFICER signals to RAMMER, go! -- BOOM! -- Rammer pulverizes the door off its hinges with the battering ram. SWAT Team charges into --

**INT. ROOM 117 - CONTINUOUS**

SWAT Team members abruptly halt their charge upon spotting FIVE DISHEVELED BLACK KIDS watching cartoons on Tv: Tommy's older sisters, MELONY, 10, and SHERYL, 9, shield Tommy, 8, MARTIN, 6, and BABY CARMEN.

Lead Officer continues to the --

**BATHROOM**

BOOM! -- kicks the door open -- spots Dr. Tommy's father, WILLIAM, Black, late 30s, slumped over on the floor unconscious like a discarded ragdoll, and his mother, MAE, emaciated, unkempt, sprawled across the toilet seat in a nirvanic stupor.

**EXT. DINGY MOTEL - PARKING LOT - LATER**

EMTs roll William out on a gurney as Cops haul Mae, handcuffed, struggling to stand, out past the sobbing kids who are standing with BERNICE PICKENS, in her 20s.

As defiant Tommy tries to go after Mae, police restrain him.

TOMMY

Get off of my mother! Leave her alone! Mommy!

Mae, her eyes watering, turns away in sobering shame.

As teary-eyed Tommy eyes Mae in the police car,

TOMMY

Mommy!, where are you going?! Where  
are they taking you? Mommy!

**INT. LAVON'S ROOM/117 - NIGHT (PRESENT)**

Lavon struggles to get a tantrum-throwing Tyrell and Darius dressed. She checks her watch.

LAVON

What are you crying for?

TYRELL

(incoherent)

LAVON

Nobody's doing anything to you. Go  
to sleep.

DARIUS

I'm hungry.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Exasperated with her brothers, she rises, crosses to the door, opens it. It's Dr. Tommy.

DR. TOMMY

Good evening.

LAVON

What do you want?

DR. TOMMY

Rough night? Is your mother here?

LAVON

No, she's at work.

DR. TOMMY

Does she work at the jail she's in?

Dr. Tommy looks over Lavon's shoulder. Sees candles lighting the darkened house. It's disgusting: dirty dishes, clothes in trash bags, trash everywhere.

DR. TOMMY

You going to let me in?

Lavon sighs, let's him in. Dr. Tommy turns on his phone's flashlight, sees Tyrell and Darius staring at him.

DR. TOMMY

Those your brothers?

LAVON

Yes. That's Tyrell and that's  
Darius. Why are you here?

DR. TOMMY

I was in the neighborhood.

She stares at him in all seriousness.

DR. TOMMY (CONT'D)

I had a visitor come ask about you  
today.

LAVON

Who?

DR. TOMMY

They were concerned about you and I  
wanted to make sure that since I  
told them you were all right, that  
you were actually all right. Are  
you all right?

LAVON

I'm good.

Darius starts crying. Lavon's ready to explode.

LAVON

Darius, go to bed.

DARIUS

I'm hungry!

DR. TOMMY

Do you want me to go get something?

LAVON

I don't need your help, I got this.

DR. TOMMY

Let me help you.

LAVON

I said, no thank you.

DR. TOMMY

Listen, I understand exactly how  
you feel.

LAVON

No, you don't. Nobody does.

Lavon turns away to hide the tears welling in her eyes.

DR. TOMMY

I know it's rough. All the responsibility on your shoulders. I had it harder than you. You have two brothers, I have three sisters and a brother. We'd go for days without eating because our parents were either in jail or they were getting high and forgot about us. It's okay to ask for help.

LAVON

I can't! I can't let them take my brothers away from me. I can't.

Dr. Tommy hugs her tightly. She fights it, then relinquishes her pain into Dr. Tommy's chest long into the night...

FADE OUT:

**END ACT IV**

**ACT V****INT. FIVE POINTS HS - CHEMISTRY CLASS - DAY**

Lavon pours vibrant colored liquids into beakers, scribbles notes in her notebook. She's glowing, laughing with her CLASSMATES, being sociable, friendly.

Chemistry Teacher notices her pleasantness. He turns to the classroom door, spots Dr. Tommy looking through it at Lavon. Chemistry Teacher and Dr. Tommy share a look. Chemistry Teacher nods with respect. Dr. Tommy nods back and leaves.

**EXT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - BACK YARD - DAY**

Festive "BOY OR GIRL" decorations hang around the yard as FRIENDS and FAMILY listen to Dr. Tommy and Carmen.

CARMEN

So without further ado, let's find out. On the count of three,

EVERYBODY

1-2-3!

BALLOONS POP and blue confetti flutters everywhere.

Dr. Tommy's ecstatic as he kisses Carmen.

DR. TOMMY

It's a boy!!

**INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY**

As Dr. Tommy pushes a cart down an aisle, Bernice pushes a cart coming the opposite. They pass each, share a look. Dr. Tommy nods. Bernice nods, and they continue on.

**INT. LAVON'S ROOM/117 - NIGHT**

Lavon, Darius, and Tyrell enter. Lavon flicks the light switch out of habit. The lights come on! And the room is spotless and clean. A new mattress lays in the corner.

Lavon, in disbelief, opens the door, looks at the room number. "117." She closes the door.

Suddenly, the boys SCREAM. Lavon sees them at the refrigerator that is stocked with food.

She cups her mouth with her hand in shock. She clasps her hands together into prayer hands, starts to cry tears of joy.

**INT. DR. TOMMY'S HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Dr. Tommy and Carmen soak in a suds-filled bath together. They're laughing, talking, basking in each other's presence.

**INT. FIVE STAR RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Plush. Elite. Members only. Amy meets with JOHN RICHARDS, 60s, Texas real estate baron.

JOHN  
What's all sudden urgency?

AMY  
Where are you at with the zoning  
commission?

JOHN  
My guy only needs 24-hour notice  
and he can get all of the  
signatures and permits we need.

AMY  
Good, because we got the perfect  
fall guy in place. But when this  
goes down, we need to be as far  
away from here as humanly possible.

JOHN  
(intrigued)  
I'm listening.

As Amy divulges her diabolical plan to Richard, we --

FADE OUT.

**END OF ACT V**