(Pitiful and Incomprehensible Demoralization

by

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EXT. PAR-T-TIME LIQUORS. DAY.

Early morning. RUSTY COYLE, 38, crosses the parking lot of PAR-T-TIME LIQUORS, carrying a bottle in a brown bag.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Rusty opens the driver's side door of a 1993 Nissan Altima and plops behind the steering wheel. He takes the bottle out of the sack. He waits for a reaction from ISAAC WOYZECK, 50, who sits in the passenger seat.

RUSTY
You gonna stop me?

ISAAC
You're gonna drink *now*, Rusty? You haven't paid your rent in three months. You're 38 years old. You're unemployed. You're unemployable. And if your mom dies before you get--

RUSTY
I can't apologize to my mom sober, Isaac.

ISAAC
You understand how insane that is, right? Getting drunk, so you can do your ninth step amends, so you can stay sober.

RUSTY
I'll stop drinking again after I've talked to her.

Isaac doesn't comment.

Rusty seems lost in thought, staring across the parking lot.

ISAAC
You want me to drive?

RUSTY
Is your license still suspended?

ISAAC
What are you looking at?

Isaac follows Rusty's eyeline. Across the lot, a last-legs HOMELESS MAN drinks from a paper-bag wrapped bottle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The man starts coughing, hacking and wheezing. His eyes bulge. He looks like he might die right there.

But then he composes himself. He takes another drink.

Rusty keeps watching.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
We need to go. Kati usually gets there before nine.

Rusty hands Isaac the bottle. Isaac puts it back in the bag.

RUSTY
Don't let it break.

EXT. FREEWAY INTERCHANGE. DAY.

Rusty takes a ramp to move from one freeway to another.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Isaac has the bottle on his lap.

RUSTY
My mom's not gonna die.

ISAAC
She's on an oxygen tank.

RUSTY
I still have time.

Rusty comes around the curve too fast. Traffic ahead is at a standstill.

ISAAC
Watch out!

Rusty slams on the brakes. The bottle flies out of Isaac's lap and shatters.

RUSTY
Are you okay?

Isaac holds up the soggy paper bag full of broken glass.

A CAR HORN BLARES.

Rusty's eyes dart up to his rear-view mirror. His eyes fill with panic.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY (CONT'D)
What do I do?

Isaac turns to see.

A tank-like 1970s SEDAN hurtles toward them from behind.

ISAAC
Holy crap! Pull over! He's gonna kill us!

Rusty's eyes dart to the left. Traffic in that lane is stopped. They dart to the right. The lane is open.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Pull over! Pull to the right!

Rusty pulls his steering wheel to the right. The sedan in the rear-view mirror also pulls to the right.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Wait! He's pulling to the right, too!

Rusty pulls to the left.

The sedan goes by Rusty's window on two wheels. Rusty and Isaac hide their faces as wind, dust and exhaust blast through the window.

Then Rusty watches in horror as the sedan flips onto its roof and slides away down the embankment upside-down.

EXT. FREEWAY INTERCHANGE. DAY.

Rusty runs along the shoulder to where the black skid marks leave the road.

He peers down. A heavily-muscled and HEAVILY-TATTOOED MAN, 35, pulls an OVERWEIGHT WOMAN, 28, her clothes and hair soaked in blood, out through the shattered windshield.

When she's standing, she turns to pull a bleeding, unconscious young BOY, 7, through the windshield as well.

A crowd is gathering. A TV news crew is already setting up a shot.

The man looks angrily at his car and then out at the gathering crowd.

CONTINUED:

HEAVILY-TATTOOED MAN
WHICH ONE OF YOU DUMBSHITS PULLED IN FRONT OF ME?

He pulls a GUN out of his waistband.

People begin backing away and running.

Rusty looks to his car. Isaac is already running for it.

Rusty runs, too.

EXT. ANTIQUE MALL. DAY

Rusty parks in front of an antique mall and waits for Isaac to get out.

ISAAC
You're not calling the police, Rusty.

RUSTY
I have to.

ISAAC
Think! First, the police do nothing because you didn't break any law. Next--!

RUSTY
That's not clear--

ISAAC
Next! This clown sues you. Of course, he loses because he was driving too fast and you didn't do anything wrong. Then he--

RUSTY
I pulled into his lane.

ISAAC
Like six inches! To save your life! Because I told you to!

RUSTY
I was driving.

ISAAC
Then he loses the trial and then he's pissed, so he comes to your apartment and beats you to death. Then he goes to jail. So, you're dead and he's in jail and his kid
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ISAAC (CONT'D)
has no dad. This is good exactly how?

Rusty is near tears.

RUSTY
I was almost finished with my ninth step. I was almost finished apologizing to every person I ever hurt. I had, like, two people left on my list. I was gonna be spiritually clean for the first time in my whole friggin' life.

ISAAC
No one's spiritually clean, Rusty.

An overweight, heavily-made-up, dark-haired woman, KATI LIPP, 50, passes the car. She enters the antique mall.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
There she is. Don't abandon me.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL. DAY.

Isaac and Rusty sit on stools in a booth in a large antique mall situated in a converted 1940s department store.

Isaac pretends to repair a toy car while sneaking looks at Kati as she haggles with a customer over the price of a dusty Victrola.

The customer walks away in a huff.

Isaac catches Kati's eye. He smiles.

Her eyes are dead. She turns away.

ISAAC
Go ask her how much she wants for the Victrola.

RUSTY
I'm not getting in the middle of this, Isaac.

ISAAC
I didn't say to go tell her I'm committing suicide if she doesn't talk to me. I said to go find out how much she wants for the Victrola.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
I don't want a Victrola.

ISAAC
Pretend you want it long enough to get her to talk to you, and then I'll come up.

RUSTY
"We must be ever aware that our new rigorous honesty is not a garment we may choose to take on and off. It is, rather, like a body part, a part of our very existence."

ISAAC
Memorizing that book doesn't seem to have stopped you from buying a fifth of vodka.

RUSTY
I didn't drink it.

KATI (O.S.)
Isaac? What the hell is this? Did you put this in my booth? Is this yours? It's creepy.

Kati stands in the aisle just outside of Isaac's booth. She holds a creepy, leering PUPPET with REALISTIC GLASS EYES that stare intently.

ISAAC
I thought it was yours.

KATI
I saw it in your booth yesterday.

ISAAC
Customers pick things up and then just drop them wherever.

Kati slaps the puppet on a shelf in the booth next to Isaac's. The eyes look directly at Rusty.

Rusty looks back at the puppet with discomfort. He turns the puppet’s face away.

Kati lingers. There is an awkward pause.

KATI
I'm gonna close my booth here.

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAAC
Don't do that, Kati. I'll--

KATI
This place has turned into a friggin' thrift store. I mean, since when do VHS tapes qualify as "antiques"?

ISAAC
I won't--

KATI
My husband wants me to.

Isaac freezes.

ISAAC
Does he know?

KATI
He knows enough to want me to close my booth here.

Isaac is quietly panicking.

ISAAC
Please. I won't come near you. I won't even look at you. I just want to be in the same room with you.

KATI
Nice timing on the undying devotion.

ISAAC
I'll marry you now.

KATI
Really? You're gonna provide for three kids selling beat-up superhero lunch boxes? Which, by the way, also aren't antiques?

Isaac doesn’t have an answer.

KATI (CONT’D)
I gotta go.

She walks off. Isaac looks devastated.

CONTINUED: (3)

ISAAC
I could have married her right after high school. After she got divorced, I kept thinking it was too soon to ask her out. And then she marries some clown before I have a chance.

RUSTY
You're never gonna stay sober having sex with a married woman, Isaac. You'll meet someone else.

ISAAC
Do you have any idea how hard it is to find a confident, together, fat girl? They're all a bunch of insecure, sloppy, whiny messes.

RUSTY
Why don't you just date a regular-sized girl?

ISAAC
Because I'm not attracted to regular-sized girls, Rusty! Why don't you date someone who isn't a underage teenage-gymnast/meth addict/prostitute?

RUSTY
He was nineteen. And I broke up with him.

ISAAC
You don't break up with a prostitute, Rusty.

They sit there in silence.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
I wanna have three kids. At least three kids.

Rusty's cell phone dings. He checks a text message.

RUSTY
Garrick's taking me to my mom's at two o'clock. Will you come with me?

ISAAC
No.

CONTINUED: (4)

RUSTY
I came here with you.

ISAAC
You shouldn't be going there at all.

RUSTY
Will you?

Isaac gives in and nods.

EXT. RUSTY'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Rusty digs through a cardboard box at the bottom of a coat closet off the living room.

He pulls out a crude home-made BONG.

He thinks about it.

No.

He puts the bong away.

INT. GARRICK'S CAR. NIGHT.

Rusty sits in the passenger seat of a beat-up sedan in front of a upper-middle-class home in suburban Phoenix. GARRICK ABBOT, 45, is in the driver's seat. Isaac is in the back seat.

RUSTY
I can't do this, Garrick.

GARRICK
You've done it before.

RUSTY
It's gonna make me drink.

GARRICK
It's gonna make you *not* drink. You've never told your mother everything, Rusty. You're gonna tell her everything and soon you're gonna be done with your list and you're gonna be spiritually clean for the first time in your life. Don't you want that?

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
I won't be spiritually clean. I have new people to apologize to now.

GARRICK
What did you do since last night?

ISAAC
He didn't do anything.

GARRICK
It doesn't matter. We'll make a new list! But for the moment--

ISAAC
Don't tell your mom the thing about the wedding ring, Rusty. You're--

GARRICK
Shut up, Isaac! Rusty, tell her everything. *Everything*.

ISAAC
Step nine says to make direct amends except when to do so would injure them or others. She's--

GARRICK
(to Isaac)
And people use that as an excuse to not make their amends and then they drink again and they die!
(To Rusty)
Tell her *everything*.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

Rusty reads from a wrinkled stack of papers as his mother, MAGGIE COYLE, 59, using an oxygen mask, listens impatiently.

RUSTY
I stole your cigarettes from the glove compartment a bunch of times. Also a bunch of times I told you I didn't get a receipt from the grocery store so I wouldn't have to give you the change. I--

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE
You read me almost this exact same list last time, Rusty! I have to--

RUSTY
There are some new things! Let me finish! But the worst one was--

MAGGIE
Your brother is coming back with the boxes in ten minutes. I don't have time for--

RUSTY
Shut up and let me finish!

MAGGIE
Don't tell me to shut up.

RUSTY
I'm sorry. I just have one more major one.

Pause.

MAGGIE
What do you mean, a "major one"?

Rusty looks down at the paper, but he can't make himself read what's there.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Rusty. Your drinking isn't my problem. I don't care about any of this crap and--

RUSTY
I hocked Grandma Saunders' wedding ring.

Maggie freezes.

MAGGIE
No, you didn't.

Rusty can't answer.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
You're telling me that you sat here and listened to me blame your father for fifteen years and you said nothing?

Rusty can't answer. Maggie lets her words sink in.

CONTINUED: (2)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
And now he's dead and I can't apologize to him?

Rusty can't answer.

Maggie slaps him. Hard.

INT. GARRICK'S CAR. DAY.

Garrick and Isaac watch Rusty exit Maggie's house and head to the car.

GARRICK
You told her everything?

Rusty nods.

GARRICK (CONT'D)
You feel a lot better, right?

Rusty nods.

ISAAC
How does your mom feel?

Rusty ignores him.

RUSTY
(to Garrick)
Can you drop me off at Sweet Molly McGee's? I have a job interview.

ISAAC
Didn't they fire you?

Rusty ignores him.

INT. SWEET MOLLY MCGEE'S RESTAURANT. DAY.

Rusty sits across from an impatient MANAGER, 27, who examines Rusty's application.

MANAGER
So, you've been unemployed for two years?

RUSTY
Basically, yeah.

MANAGER
How do you mean, "basically"?

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
Well, I actually worked at the Sweet Molly McGee's on Apache. In that mini-mall they tore down?

MANAGER
Uh huh. Why isn't that on here?

RUSTY
Okay, so, I wanted to make an amends to the manager from there but I didn't know where he went after they tore down the mall. So, maybe I could I make an amends to you.

Pause.

MANAGER
What did you do?

RUSTY
I stole a ten-pound block of cheese from the walk-in. And then I also lied and said I didn't do it and the manager got fired for accusing me before he had enough evidence.

MANAGER
Exactly how long ago was this?

RUSTY
Two years ago?

MANAGER
That manager committed suicide.

RUSTY
How long ago?

MANAGER
Two years ago.

Rusty sits there, numb.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
So, you stole a ten-pound block of cheese from the walk-in. Anything else?

RUSTY
Do I get any credit for honesty?

CONTINUED: (2)

MANAGER
No, actually. You don't. Because you left it off your application, which is pretty much lying.

RUSTY
Leaving stuff off isn't lying.

MANAGER
Really? It isn't? What's your name? Rusty? Why would I even need to argue this shit with you, Rusty?

INT. ANTIQUE MALL. DAY.

Isaac sits on the stool in his booth, repairing the frame around an old print.

Rusty stands nearby, making the arms and legs of the creepy puppet move spastically.

ISAAC
You break it, you bought it.

Rusty puts the puppet down.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
That was a joke. If you break it, I'll throw it away. Play with it.

RUSTY
It's not from your booth.

ISAAC
She's never here. Play with it.

Rusty makes one leg kick in the air.

RUSTY
Look at the eyes. It's like it's possessed. It's like it wants something.

ISAAC
Did they call you? From that restaurant?

Rusty shakes his head.

RUSTY
My mom's gonna give me a few bucks for putting in her sprinkler system.

CONTINUED:

ISAAC
Then what?

RUSTY
I don't know. Isaac, I'm gonna get evicted. I can't stay sober if I'm homeless. I can’t get anyone to hire me.

ISAAC
You should have lied.

RUSTY
I *did* lie. He *caught* me lying, which is why he didn't call.

ISAAC
You should've lied bigger.

RUSTY
Rigorous honesty is gonna keep me sober, Isaac.

ISAAC
I promise you, whoever they hired for their stupid little busboy job lied their ass off.

Rusty makes the puppet slowly shake its head "no."

ISAAC (CONT'D)
Steal that puppet.

RUSTY
What? Why?

ISAAC
Steal it. It'll be good for you.

RUSTY
Good for me how?

ISAAC
You're trying to be perfect. Terrible things happen when you try to be perfect. You want to know what that puppet wants? It wants you to steal it.

Rusty slowly shakes the puppet's head "no."

Isaac sighs.

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAAC (CONT'D)
I'll see if I can get you a job running her booth.

EXT. MAGGIE'S BACKYARD. DAY.

Maggie watches from the house, stone-faced, as Rusty and his brother GERARD, 39, work in the yard. Rusty and Gerard have the yard dug up to install a new sprinkler system.

A small, yappy dog in the yard next door barks maniacally.

Gerard runs at the chain-link fence and tries to kick the dog through it. The dog goes even more crazy.

GERARD
Shut the hell up!

A VOICE calls from the house next door:

VOICE (O.C.)
You shut the hell up! What happened to our other dog?

GERARD
Somebody probably killed it because it wouldn’t shut up!

RUSTY
Dang, Gerard. Calm down.

GERARD
Bite me. What are you even doing here?

RUSTY
Helping Mom.

GERARD
Like you give a crap about Mom. How much is she paying you?

RUSTY
It's about being of service, Gerard. Being of service is part of staying sober.

GERARD
Weren't you "being of service" in your annoying little cult the last time you got drunk? And the time before that?

CONTINUED:

Rusty finishes gluing a sprinkler head onto a partially-buried PVC pipe.

RUSTY
Shut up.

Gerard goes to a control system box screwed onto the side of the house. He turns the sprinklers on. Water sprays from the sprinkler heads perfectly. The plants take on a thirsty shine.

All is as it should be. Except by the back fence, where a thin spray of water springs from the ground.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Is that a leak? Didn't we replace the pipe over there?

Gerard looks where Rusty is looking.

GERARD
Where?

RUSTY
Right there.

Rusty walks over to the spot. A puddle is forming.

Rusty digs his shovel into the ground.

GERARD
Leave it alone! I'll get it later!

RUSTY
What? Why?

GERARD
I just spread grass seed there. Leave it alone.

Gerard pulls the shovel away from him.

RUSTY
I don't see any grass seed.

Rusty gives the ground another look, then notices Maggie watching. He calls to her--

RUSTY (CONT'D)
How do you like your new sprinklers, Mom?

Maggie walks into the house without answering.

CONTINUED: (2)

Gerard is at the fence again, yelling at the dog next door.

GERARD
SHUT UP! SHUT! UP!

EXT. MAGGIE'S FRONT YARD. DAY.

Rusty and Gerard pull a large lemon tree out of a pot, carry it over to a hole nearby and drop it in.

Rusty shovels dirt around the root ball.

RUSTY
These trees are huge. How did mom get the money for these?

GERARD
You don't have to worry about Mom's money. She's not leaving you anything.

RUSTY
She said she would if I got six months sober.

GERARD
No, she didn’t! When did she say that?

RUSTY
You're going to bankrupt her before she has a chance to die.

GERARD
Not your money. Not your problem.

RUSTY
How did she afford these trees?

GERARD
I got them from work.

RUSTY
How much did they cost?

GERARD
None of your business.

RUSTY
You stole them.

CONTINUED:

GERARD
What does "none of your business" mean to you, exactly?

RUSTY
Gerard. If I'm helping you plant stolen trees and I don't go to the police, I'm involved.

GERARD
Who said they were stolen? You know what's great about "none of your business"? If you shut up and don't ask where the tree came from, you're not responsible for anything.

Rusty is distracted by a teen-aged boy, TYLER PIERCE, 16, in too-tight, slutty clothing, riding a bicycle up to the house across the street. There are two bags of groceries strapped into baskets on the back.

RUSTY
Who's that?

GERARD
Who's who?

RUSTY
That kid who just rode up to the Rooneys'. The kid on the bike.

Gerard sees who Rusty is talking about and sneers with disgust.

GERARD
some kid who's staying there.

RUSTY
They're already gone for the summer.

GERARD
Abel's staying to watch the house. Abel and whoever that kid is.

Rusty watches the kid bend over to unstrap the bags of groceries.

RUSTY
Is Abel gay?

GERARD
Stop drooling, Rusty. Jesus. That kid's like, fourteen.

CONTINUED: (2)

RUSTY
I'm not looking at him, Gerard. I was just asking because Abel seems like he's probably a serial killer and I'm worried about that kid.

GERARD
Maybe you can be "of service" to him.

RUSTY
If he really *is* fourteen, we need to go to the police.

GERARD
I don't *know* he's fourteen! I just made that up! Mind your own business!

Rusty takes one more look across the street. The kid has the bags of groceries in his arms and is giving Rusty a "What the hell are *you* lookin' at?" look.

RUSTY
I have to go.

GERARD
We have three more trees to do!

RUSTY
If I feel like I'm gonna drink, I have to stop whatever I'm doing and go to a meeting.

GERARD
I can't lift them myself!

RUSTY
I don't care. I'm gonna drink and if I do, I'm gonna die.
Gerard calls to the house.

GERARD
Mom? MOM! These three-hundred-dollar trees are gonna dry out because Rusty caught himself drooling over some slut gay kid across the street and needs to run off to his little cult to tattle on himself!

The kid is still watching from across the street. Rusty is mortified.

CONTINUED: (3)

RUSTY
Gerard. Shut up.

Gerard waits for an answer from his mother in the house.

Nothing.

GERARD
(to Rusty)
Go. You're useless.

Rusty brushes his hands off. The boy is still watching.

EXT. RUSTY'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Isaac honks his horn. Rusty runs out and Isaac opens the passenger-side door for him.

ISAAC
Get in! Can you believe it? I'm driving again! Isn't this exciting?

RUSTY
I have to see it first. Your license. Before I ride with you.

ISAAC
Why? You're not driving.

RUSTY
Still.

ISAAC
They have to mail it to me. But it's perfectly legal for me to--

Then they see a police car down the street a few yards, a POLICE OFFICER walks around Rusty's car. Rusty freezes. The police officer sees Rusty looking and calls to him.

POLICE OFFICER
This your car?

ISAAC
(whispering)
No. Tell him no.

RUSTY
(whispering)
I'm not gonna lie.

ISAAC
God, you're an idiot.

CONTINUED:

Rusty thinks for a beat, then turns to the police officer.

RUSTY
It's my friend's car. Is something wrong, officer?

POLICE OFFICER
Your friend is blocking this lady from being able to put her trash cans out.

RUSTY
Is that illegal?

POLICE OFFICER
Just rude.

RUSTY
Oh. Well, I have my friend's keys. I'll move it.

POLICE OFFICER
Uh-huh. Looks like your friend had a little trouble with a broken bottle of vodka here in the front seat. Sure this isn't your car?

Rusty makes eye contact with Isaac, whose eyes bug out a bit.

RUSTY
I'll move it for him, officer.

EXT. AA CLUBHOUSE. DAY.

Raucous applause. Rusty exits through a steel door in a cinder-block building. A cheap sign by the door reads FIRST STREET RECOVERY HOUSE. Rusty gently closes the door behind him.

He makes his way over to a bench under a scraggly desert tree.

Garrick peeks out the door to see where Rusty went. Spots him. Walks over.

GARRICK
What's the matter? The meeting's barely started.

Rusty doesn't answer.

Isaac peeks out the same door. He starts over as well.

CONTINUED:

GARRICK (CONT'D)
You drank again, didn't you?

RUSTY
No.

GARRICK
You lied again.

Rusty doesn't answer. Isaac joins them.

GARRICK (CONT'D)
You want some advice, Rusty?

ISAAC
Whatever he says, ask *me* before you do it.

GARRICK
Do what the winners do. The winners operate with rigorous honesty. Liars drink.

ISAAC
He's doing his best, Garrick.

GARRICK
There's no religious immunity in AA. I should probably go to the police and tell them what I know about that accident. I'm probably an accessory to a crime now or something.

Neither Rusty nor Isaac can think what to say.

GARRICK (CONT'D)
You need to do what I tell you,

RUSTY.
He walks back into the building.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET. DAY.

Rusty drives into a maze-like neighborhood holding a cellphone to his ear.

RUSTY
Because I still have three months on my lease, Gerard. That's why. Put mom on the phone.

He takes a sharp left.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Really, Gerard? That's your opinion? Did you get your high school equivalency yet? Because when you do, I'll sure want to hear your assessment of my psychological needs. Now, put mom on the phone.

He takes a sharp right.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
(Under his breath)
Moron.

He can't quite grip the steering wheel holding the cell phone and it slips through his fingers. He almost loses control of the car.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Mom? Yeah, hi. I can't break my lease. I can't pay rent to you and pay the rent on my apartment and-- No. Unless you want to pay the last three months on my lease. Theo will--

He makes another sharp left-hand turn.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
I'll tell you why, Mom. Because that's a lie. And the program teaches that lies will make me drink.

Rusty jerks the steering wheel to the right.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Great. Well, Gerard fakes he's mentally ill so he can get prescription drugs and you can't stop throwing money at him, but I'm actually trying to stay sober and you--

Suddenly, a YOUNG BOY runs into the street in front of him.

He slams on the brakes and jerks the steering wheel to the left.

A sudden thump and a SQUEAL OF METAL.

The car skids to a stop.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY.

CONTINUOUS.

Rusty steps out of the car. The head of a large TOY ROBOT is crushed under his rear tire.

A young girl and four other CHILDREN run out of a nearby house and join the boy. They surround crushed toy.

The boy begin screaming.

Rusty buries his face in his hands.

The children's burly FATHER, 30, runs up to Rusty's car. Rusty looks up.

FATHER
Are you nuts? There's kids on this street! How fast were you going?

RUSTY
I-- I'm not sure, but your son was playing right in the middle of the street. You can't--

The father grabs Rusty by the hair and smashes Rusty's face into the car door.

FATHER
That thing cost four hundred dollars!

Rusty pulls his head out of the father's grip and hits the gas. The father holds onto the car door as long as he can. He falls into the street and screams after Rusty.

FATHER (CONT'D)
I got your license plate, asshole! You're going to jail if I don't kill you first!

EXT. RUSTY'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Rusty carries a box of clothes to his car. Shoves it into the back seat, which is already overstuffed with other boxes.

He checks around to make sure no one is watching him. He heads back to his apartment.

INT. RUSTY'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN. DAY.

CONTINUED:

Rusty is haphazardly throwing kitchen utensils into another cardboard box.

THEO, 60, his apartment manager, opens the front door without knocking.

Rusty freezes.

THEO
Looks like you're moving.

Rusty tries to decide what to do.

THEO (CONT'D)
What happened to your face? Are you moving? Because you've still got three months left on your lease.

RUSTY
Someone's gonna kill me. Multiple people.

THEO
Are you high right now? You look like you're high.

RUSTY
I can't pay the rent here and somewhere else at the same time.

THEO
I don't care. You signed a lease.

RUSTY
If I stay here, this guy is going to come and kill me.

THEO
Rusty. That's the drugs talking.

RUSTY
I'm sober.

THEO
Rusty. Seriously. I use the rent from these apartments to pay the mortgage. I have to re-paint and re-do the carpet between tenants. I can't just--

RUSTY
You won't die if I don't pay the rent. If I stay here, I get killed.

CONTINUED: (2)

THEO
I'm gonna report you for breaking your lease and good luck renting a decent apartment again. EVER.

RUSTY
If I'm dead I won't be renting any more apartments anyway.

THEO
Your mom co-signed on the lease. You can tell her I'm going to screw up her credit, too.

Rusty buries his face in his hands. He thinks.

RUSTY
Don't do that. I'll come up with the money.

INT. RUSTY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. DAY.

Rusty carries a box into the living room while Maggie and Gerard watch TV.

MAGGIE
(to Rusty)
What changed your mind?

GERARD
There's this fourteen-year old boy in short-shorts across the street.

Maggie looks at Rusty to see if this is true.

RUSTY
I accidentally ran over some kid’s four-hundred dollar toy and his dad is gonna find me and kill me.

MAGGIE
Is this real or some paranoid nonsense you're imagining because you're strung out on meth?

RUSTY
Real.

MAGGIE
We're leaving tomorrow morning at seven. Does this guy know where you are?

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
No.

MAGGIE
You're not to bring any of your bar friends into my house.

RUSTY
I won't.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. RUSTY'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty sits looking out the window. He has it open just a crack so he can blow cigarette smoke out.

To his surprise, the boy is doing the exact same thing in the window directly across the street. They lock eyes.

A light knock on the door.

RUSTY
Yeah?

Gerard opens the door quietly.

GERARD
Are you smoking in here?

RUSTY
I'm blowing it out the window.

GERARD
Well, not *all* of it apparently, because I can still smell it.

RUSTY
It's my room.

GERARD
No, Rusty. It's *my* room. It's my whole house. You're not getting anything.

RUSTY
I actually care about Mom. Anyway, she’s not dead yet.

GERARD
When Mom and I come back in the fall, you're not staying here.

RUSTY
I apologized to Mom. She said if I get six months sober, she'll--

CONTINUED:

GERARD
You're not gonna get six months.

RUSTY
I'm gonna get my 30-day chip and--

GERARD
I'll be taking care of Mom all summer while you're here drinking and doing drugs and bringing homeless people over here to steal Mom's furniture.

RUSTY
I'm getting back in the will, Gerard. I'm working the program right this time.

GERARD
And doing things I don't even want to *think* about with that walking sexually transmitted disease across the street. And getting arrested.

RUSTY
I'm working the program right this time.

Gerard turns and walks out.

Rusty takes a breath. Then he turns back to the window.

The boy is RIGHT THERE AT THE GLASS, glaring. Rusty jumps back.

The boy turns slowly and heads back across the street.

INT. RUSTY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

Maggie comes through the front door overloaded with grocery bags. Gerard has two armloads as well.

Maggie drops the bags heavily on the counter.

RUSTY
Why did you buy all that, mom? I can just go shopping.

MAGGIE
I'm not giving you cash this time.

RUSTY
I'm sober, Mom.

CONTINUED:

Gerard lets out a derisive snort as he drops his bags as well. He heads out.

MAGGIE
You have food now and you have the gas card for gas. If you buy anything else but gas with the gas card, I'll cancel it and you can sit home.

RUSTY
When did I ever use the gas card for anything but gas?

GERARD (O.S.)
Where's my meds?

MAGGIE
All I'm saying is if you do, I'll cancel it.

Gerard comes back in, flushed.

GERARD
Where the hell are my meds?

RUSTY
They're in the refrigerator. You're supposed to keep them in the refrigerator.

GERARD
I don't need your help, okay?

Gerard digs in the refrigerator.

RUSTY
They'll go bad if you just leave it in the medicine chest. Where are Mom's meds?

GERARD
We're driving away in, like, three minutes. Are they gonna go bad in three minutes?

MAGGIE
(to Rusty)
So, there's no reason for you to go inside a grocery store or inside a gas station.

CONTINUED: (2)

RUSTY
I'm not gonna buy beer just because I went inside a grocery store.

MAGGIE
We already bought all the drip system supplies for the front yard and all the paint supplies, but if you need anything, you can use the card for that.

RUSTY
Mom, I really am sorry for everything. I--

GERARD
We have to go.

RUSTY
Can you give us two seconds?

GERARD
I have a doctor's appointment Tuesday morning at eleven! I'm not going to drive all night!

RUSTY
(To Maggie)
If something happened to you and I didn't have a chance to make things up to you, I'd never--

Rusty tries to hug his mother. She gently pushes him off.

MAGGIE
(to Rusty)
What do you call it? A “Living Amends?” Make it up to me by getting the drip system put in and then getting the inside of the house painted.

RUSTY
Okay.

MAGGIE
And don't steal anything. Or let your meth addict friends steal anything.

Rusty nods.

EXT. FREEWAY OFF-RAMP. DAY.

A beat-up sedan is upside-down and smoking. One tire is still turning.

Clank! The sound of metal hitting metal from somewhere inside the car. Rusty approaches the car cautiously.

Suddenly CLANK! CLANK! CLANK! CLANK! Rusty jumps away from the car.

INT. RUSTY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty wakes in his bed with a start. CLANK! He jumps again because the sound has followed him out of his dream.

CLANK!

He gets up and moves into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

CLANK!

Rusty looks down the hallway to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Rusty looks up at the exhaust fan grate, from where the sound seems to be emanating. The sound stops.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL. DAY.

Rusty wears a dress shirt and a tie. He and Isaac speak with RENEÉ, 65, the owner of the booth next to Isaac's. She hands Rusty a small key.

RENEÉ
Here's the key to the curio cabinet. If you lose it, it's a hundred bucks for a new one. And don't sell the curio cabinet. It's mine.

RUSTY
I won't.

RENEÉ
There's a book over here with the bare minimum price I'll accept.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

RENEÉ (CONT'D)
I'll give you twenty percent of whatever you can get.

ISAAC
Half.

RENEÉ
What are you doing to me, Isaac? I'm letting go of my family heirlooms here.

ISAAC
My friend Rusty here is gonna convince some dope to give you forty bucks for a pair of salt-and-pepper shakers shaped like wooden shoes.

RENEÉ
You're not gonna get forty bucks for those.

ISAAC
What? Reneé. Those are original 1950s Buskirks.

Reneé examines the salt and pepper shakers more carefully.

RENEÉ
What's a Buskirk?

ISAAC
Some fake designer I just made up to charge some idiot forty bucks for a pair of salt-and-pepper shakers shaped like wooden shoes! Give Rusty half! I'll help him!

Reneé notices the puppet Rusty was playing with earlier. She grabs it.

RENEÉ
(Calling out to the store)
Who keeps putting this stupid puppet in my booth? It isn't mine!

No one answers.

She walks across the aisle and puts it in someone else's booth. Once again, it’s staring at Rusty.

ISAAC
So?

CONTINUED: (2)

RENEÉ
(To Rusty)
I'll give you twenty percent of the bare minimum and fifty percent of whatever you get over that.

Rusty breaks eye contact with the puppet and looks to Isaac. Isaac nods.

INT. AA CLUBHOUSE. DAY

A room sparsely decorated with ragged signs proclaiming AA aphorisms including, "We're only as sick as our secrets."

Garrick goes over a stack of handwritten papers while Rusty watches nervously.

RUSTY
Some of this isn't fixable.

GARRICK
Of course it is. Do you know who the police officer was?

RUSTY
No, but I called the TV station about the accident and got the other driver's name.

GARRICK
Great! And...?

RUSTY
Isaac's right. This can only be bad. The guy'll lose the trial, kill me, then end up in jail. I'll be ruining his life.

GARRICK
You might also offer to pay for his car and his medical bills and *fix* his life.

RUSTY
That would take forever!

GARRICK
How long is it taking *him*, Rusty?

RUSTY
It was his fault!

CONTINUED:

GARRICK
If you really believed that, you wouldn't want to drink to cover up your guilt.

RUSTY
I'm not gonna do it, Garrick.

GARRICK
You will, when you realize your life is on the line. What about the other amends? What about the guy from high school? Did you make your amends to him?

RUSTY
He's one of the ones I'm doing at the reunion.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. RUSTY'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty is trying on an unfashionable sports jacket while Isaac watches. Rusty checks himself in the mirror.

ISAAC
Make an amends to him for *what*? The guy gay-bashed you! Like fifty times!

RUSTY
It's not about cleaning up his side of the street, Isaac. It's about cleaning up my side of the street. Does this look okay?

ISAAC
Nice shoulder pads.

RUSTY
It's at a country club. I have to at least wear a sports jacket. This is the only one I have.

They hear yelling from outside. A car revs up.

Rusty goes to the window. Isaac follows.

Across the street, ABEL ROONEY, 45, bangs on the driver's side window of a beat-up 1990s sedan. The teen-aged boy, Tyler, is in the driver's seat.

ABEL
I said NO!

CONTINUED:

Tyler puts the car in reverse. Abel holds on as long as he can.

The car squeals out of driveway.

ABEL (CONT'D)
I'm calling the police!

Abel watches the car disappear.

He notices Rusty and Isaac watching through the window. He starts across the street towards them.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

The doorbell rings. Rusty and Isaac look at it.

RUSTY
Should we answer it?

ISAAC
He knows we're here.

ABEL (O.C.)
Hello? Do you guys have a cell phone I could borrow?

Rusty puts the security chain on. He opens the door a crack.

RUSTY
What for?

ABEL
What do you mean, "What for?" You saw what happened! That kid just stole my car.

ISAAC
Are you high on something?

Abel thinks before answering.

ABEL
No.

ISAAC
The police would probably ask to come inside when they get to your house. Do you have any drug paraphernalia laying around?

ABEL
No.

CONTINUED:

ISAAC
Is that kid related to you?

ABEL
What--? Are you the police?

ISAAC
The police might wonder why an obviously-gay under-aged kid who isn't related to you is living in your house with a bunch of drug paraphernalia lying around.

ABEL
To hell with you. I'll find a pay phone.

But Abel heads back over to his house.

Rusty checks his watch.

RUSTY
I better go.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB BALLROOM. NIGHT.

A crowded room. Rusty reaches the BARTENDER at the front of the line at the cash bar.

RUSTY
I'll have a vodka cranberry, please.

BARTENDER
No, bitch. You'll have a cranberry juice and soda.

RUSTY
What?

BARTENDER
Aren't you program?

RUSTY
What?

BARTENDER
You shared at First Street last night. At the AA meeting? About getting ready to apologize to the guy who gay-bashed you? Oh, my God, is this it? Is this your reunion? Is the gay-basher guy here?

CONTINUED:

Rusty looks around. Through a set of glass doors he sees SONNY WEEKS, 38, painfully handsome, with a beautiful Latina girl, ELENA GARCIA, 28. The bartender spots Sonny, too.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Damn. Why are the violent ones always so sexy?

Rusty watches Sonny.

The bartender hands Rusty his cranberry-and-soda and gives him a little push.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Go do it now so I can watch.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB BALLROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty approaches Sonny and Elena.

RUSTY
Hey, Sonny.

SONNY
Oh, hey there...uh...

Sonny checks Rusty's nametag. He’s instantly disinterested.

SONNY (CONT'D)
...Rusty. Yeah. Hey. How you been?

Rusty turns to Elena. She smiles and shakes his hand.

ELENA
I'm Elena Garcia.

RUSTY
Wow, check her out! Times sure have changed, Sonny!

SONNY
How do you mean?

RUSTY
Well, you remember in high school when you were all, "Illegal immigrants this" and "Mexican chicks that..."

SONNY
What? No I wasn't.

CONTINUED:

ELENA
"Mexican chicks" what?

RUSTY
No, I'm just saying it's really cool that we've all changed so much.

SONNY
I never said anything like that.

RUSTY
No, you know how in the yearbook? Your quote in the yearbook that says--?

SONNY
Elena, let's go.

ELENA
No. "Mexican chicks" what?

RUSTY
I didn't mean to start something. I was just trying to be funny.

SONNY
Yeah. You're hilarious.

RUSTY
I actually came over to apologize for something. Do you remember when--?

SONNY
Yeah, I remember. You're the little faggot who told the guidance counselor I deliberately spiked a volleyball into your face.

ELENA
Don't call him a faggot, Sonny. What's wrong with you?

RUSTY
Well, it wasn't just the one time, Sonny. I mean, you-- But I didn't know Mr. Mills was gonna make such a big, dang deal out of it. That's what-- I owe you an apology, because--

CONTINUED: (2)

ELENA
(To Rusty)
Honey, you don't owe him an apology.

RUSTY
Yeah, I made a big deal out of it and it all got out of control and I hurt a lot of--

ELENA
(To Sonny)
What was the quote? In the yearbook?

SONNY
I don't remember!

RUSTY
The quote doesn't matter now, because he's changed!

ELENA
(To Rusty)
What was the quote?

RUSTY
Just something like that the Mexican border is a bigger threat to national security than Middle Eastern terrorists, which--

SONNY
Which it is.

ELENA
Sonny. Some little grandma sneaking across the border to clean houses is not the same as people with bombs strapped to their chests.

SONNY
Elena. When Mexican drug cartels are beheading American citizens right on our own border, you--

ELENA
Drug cartels? If you didn't have a brick of Mexican weed the size of your head in your dresser drawer, your argument might--

CONTINUED: (3)

SONNY
I'd stopped smoking weed for three years, but then you told me you couldn't get off if you couldn't have a joint to relax first! I hadn't--

RUSTY
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to start something. I'm sorry.

Sonny turns and puts a finger in his face.

SONNY
YOU. SHUT UP.

RUSTY
I just wanted to say sorry for getting you suspended in high school. And now, also for this, too. And for anything else I did to make you feel bad.

SONNY
I never even THOUGHT ABOUT you again until right now! Now, SHUT UP!

Rusty backs away and then runs.

Through the window, the bartender is laughing.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB. NIGHT.

Rusty is back inside, sitting on a couch in a little seating area off to the side in the main room, looking a little distraught.

He makes eye contact with the bartender, pleading. The bartender smiles, shakes his head and mouths "no."

A big-boned woman, KARLA MAIN, 38, approaches him.

KARLA
Can I sit here?

Rusty shrugs. She slugs down the last swallow of a frilly drink and sits down.

KARLA (CONT'D)
Do you remember me?

Rusty looks at her. Can't place her.

CONTINUED:

KARLA (CONT'D)
You took me to the prom.

RUSTY
Oh. Wow. Hi, Karla. I didn't recognize you. You look different.

KARLA
Different how?

Rusty freezes. Karla waits for an answer.

KARLA (CONT'D)
Different how? Like, fatter?

RUSTY
I didn't say that.

KARLA
Not answering the question is the same as saying yes.

RUSTY
No. No, it isn't. Not answering the question is not answering the question.

Pause.

KARLA
It's okay. I am fatter. *Way* fatter.

RUSTY
Not way fatter.
(Pause)
Fatter.

KARLA
Know when I lost control of my weight? When I threw myself at you after the prom and you didn't want to sleep with me.

RUSTY
"Every human being is allowed to set sexual boundaries consistent with his or her own values, without apology, simply because he or she is a human being."

Karla looks around.

CONTINUED: (2)

KARLA
Are you reading that off a card somewhere?

RUSTY
I didn't make you fat.

KARLA
I was so happy when you asked me to the prom. I thought, "This is the perfect boy for me. He’s not so smart that he’ll be able to out-think me and he’s not so handsome that he could get one of the primo girls.

RUSTY
Or one of the primo boys.

KARLA
But then when you didn't want me, I was all like, "Not even some mediocre guy wants me!" And I gave up and started eating.

RUSTY
"In life, we can only take responsibility for our own actions and decisions. Thinking we can control the actions and decisions of others is the ultimate arrogance."

KARLA
Stop doing that. That "affirmations-of-the-day" thing. It's creepy.

Rusty shrugs.

KARLA (CONT'D)
Wait. What did you say?

RUSTY
When?

KARLA
Just a second ago. Did you say, "one of the primo boys"?

RUSTY
Yeah?

Pause.

CONTINUED: (3)

KARLA
Was that a joke?

RUSTY
No?

KARLA
Wait. So. Are you gay?

RUSTY
Yeah?

KARLA
Were you already gay when you asked me to the prom?

RUSTY
I didn't--

KARLA
You asked me to go to the prom even though you knew you were gay?

RUSTY
What? It was high school.

KARLA
You don't do that to people! Even in high school! Especially not in high school!

RUSTY
I didn't do anything to you! I took you on a date. I spent, like, a hundred bucks on you.

KARLA
Oh, my God. Oh, my God. This whole time, I've been thinking, "This cute boy asked me to the prom and I blew it."

RUSTY
You didn't blow it. It was just--

KARLA
I thought, "He asked me out because he thought maybe I'd be a good person to date, but then I wasn't smart enough or pretty enough for him to want to kiss me."

Tears come to her eyes. She starts to cry.

CONTINUED: (4)

RUSTY
I didn't ask you out because I thought you'd be--

KARLA
Then why did you? Why did you ask me out if you knew you were gay?

RUSTY
I don't know.

KARLA
Well, I do! It was because everyone would think you were gay if you didn't ask someone to the prom!

RUSTY
Okay, no. You know why? I asked you to the prom because I knew Sonny Weeks was gonna be there. And I needed someone to take so I could see him in a tux.

KARLA
And you didn't think about how some fat girl would feel if a handsome guy like you asked her out and then didn't even want to kiss her at the door?

Rusty is speechless for a moment.

RUSTY
No. No, I didn't think about that.

KARLA
You're an asshole.

RUSTY
Oh, my God. I am. I'm an asshole. I'm really sorry.

Karla starts crying again.

KARLA
That was a terrible thing to do.

RUSTY
It was. You have beautiful eyes and I remember you told me this beautiful story about an orphaned baby bat you tried to bottle-feed.

CONTINUED: (5)

KARLA
Batty. Batty-the-bat. He died.

She cries harder.

Rusty takes her into an embrace and holds her tight.

KARLA (CONT'D)
And now I have this horrible, abusive husband and I only married him because after my first husband died, I didn't think anyone else would ever want me, so I...

Elena storms past.

Sonny chases after her. He smacks Rusty in the back of the head as he goes by. Rusty doesn't react.

INT. AA CLUBHOUSE. DAY.

Rusty, Garrick and Isaac are gathering folding chairs as meeting-goers make their way out.

RUSTY
It was beautiful. I've been doing all these amends, but I've never really been sorry. But with her, I really was sorry.

GARRICK
So, for the first time you saw the poisonous, disgusting human being your disease has made you.

RUSTY
Well, I don't--

ISAAC
That's not what he said, Garrick. What was the beautiful part, Rusty?

RUSTY
I felt clean afterward. Like something healthy happened.

GARRICK
Think how good you'll feel when you apologize to those kids whose dog you killed. And that family you made crash their car.

CONTINUED:

ISAAC
How he'll feel is dead, Garrick. Because that guy is a psycho who won't think twice about killing someone.

GARRICK
I've been at this a long time, Isaac. Rusty is not gonna stay sober until he makes his amends. For everything. You ready to do that, Rusty?

Rusty is hesitant, but nods.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. RUSTY'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty wakes up suddenly. He hears the clanking sound again, but this time it's mixed with a metallic scraping sound, almost like digging.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

He goes down the hallway again, slowing when he gets near the kitchen. He looks up at the fan grate with concern. He goes in.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Rusty looks up at the exhaust fan. Bits of dark lint fall from the grate to the floor.

The sound stops. Rusty checks the switch. It's off.

He clicks it on. An electronic buzzing, but the blades are clearly not turning.

He shuts it off.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. RUSTY'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty walks back to his bed. He's distracted by movement across the street.

EXT. ROONEY HOUSE. NIGHT.

Tyler moves around the outside of the Rooney house, unsuccessfully attempting to work windows open. He moves to another one. No luck. He thinks what to do next.

CONTINUED:

He notices Rusty watching him. He glares and moves around to the back of the house.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. RUSTY'S ROOM. NIGHT.

The clanking sound starts again.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. UTILITY ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty finds a small FLASHLIGHT in the closet.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Rusty turns the kitchen light on climbs up on a chair. He brings his face closer to the slats of the vent. The clanking and digging goes silent.

Rusty brings his face closer. He turns on the flashlight and looks between the slats.

THE GLASS EYE OF THE PUPPET FROM THE ANTIQUE MALL stares back at him. Rusty jumps back and drops the flashlight and falls off the chair.

The puppet's small hands appear, angrily yanking at the vent cover. Rusty backs away.

Loud KNOCKING at the front door. The digging, scraping and clanking stops. The hands are gone.

INT. RUSTY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty jumps up from a nightmare.

But the knocking is real.

Rusty climbs out of bed to answer the door.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Rusty opens the door. Tyler is there.

TYLER
Listen, I'm locked out. Do you think you could--

RUSTY
Would you help me with something?

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

Rusty puts a chair under the vent.

He grabs the flashlight.

RUSTY
I know I'm being ridiculous, but look in that vent and tell me what you see.

Tyler is hesitant, but he steps up onto the chair and shines the flashlight between the slats of the grate.

TYLER
What am I looking for?

RUSTY
Okay, there's this creepy puppet at the antique mall where I work? It keeps moving itself from stall to stall there. And it's like it's looking at me when--

TYLER
There's nothing in there. It's just a hole.

Rusty gets a hold of himself.

RUSTY
Do you believe we can get psychic messages in dreams?

TYLER
That sounds kinda stupid.

RUSTY
I think this creepy puppet is trying to tell me something.

TYLER
Well, I hope you can work that out. Listen, I'm locked out and I can't get Abel to answer the door. He might have OD'd.

RUSTY
What's your name?

TYLER
Tyler.

RUSTY
I'm Rusty.

CONTINUED:

TYLER
Okay, good. So. Can you come over and help me get in? Can I use that flashlight?

EXT. ROONEY HOUSE. NIGHT.

Rusty looks in the living room window. Sweeps a flashlight around. Nothing.

A bathroom window-- nothing.

The kitchen window-- nothing.

But through the door into the hallway, there's a foot. Rusty passes the flashlight to Tyler. Tyler looks in.

RUSTY
Does he do this often?

TYLER
You could just break in and wake him up. He might have told the police I stole his car, so if I break in, I'll get arrested. If you do it, you'll be a hero.

Rusty takes out his cellphone.

TYLER (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Stop!

RUSTY
I'm calling 9-1-1.

TYLER
No! There's, like, thousands of dollars worth of meth in there! He'll get arrested!

RUSTY
I'm not gonna stand here while he dies!

TYLER
He's just high! Break in!

RUSTY
It's against the law!

Tyler suddenly snatches Rusty's cellphone and runs back to the Rooney house. Rusty chases him. Tyler throws the cellphone through the kitchen window with a crash.

CONTINUED:

Rusty stands there shocked for a moment.

TYLER
Now you have a reason to go in.

Rusty turns back to his mother's house.

RUSTY
I'll use my mother's landline.

Tyler chases after Rusty and grabs him from behind and starts pleading. Rusty drags him along.

TYLER
You're overreacting! Don't be a dick!

They both see the COMMUNITY SECURITY GUARD'S CAR approach and slowly drive past. Rusty watches him go by, trying to decide what to do.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Please! I don't have anywhere to go! I just need enough time to get a job, then I can get out of there!

RUSTY
Are you having sex with him?

TYLER
No.

RUSTY
I know you’re lying.

TYLER
Okay, but it was my idea! I came on to him!

RUSTY
It's still rape!

TYLER
I'm sixteen! I could marry him if we were straight and lived in Mississippi!

Rusty thinks about that.

TYLER (CONT'D)
It was my idea!

EXT. ROONEY HOUSE. NIGHT.

Rusty pulls the last pieces of glass from the window Tyler broke with the cell phone. He undoes the latch.

Rusty climbs through the window. Tyler pulls himself up.

INT. ROONEY HOUSE. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

Abel is sprawled out on the floor. His head is surrounded by vomit.

Rusty checks for a pulse.

He shakes Abel. No response. He shakes him harder. Still no response.

TYLER
Is he dead?

RUSTY
No, but we have to call an ambulance.

TYLER
Let's drag him outside first! Help me!

RUSTY
No!

Rusty finds his phone on the floor and dials 9-1-1. Tyler opens the front door and, with great difficulty, he drags Abel outside.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hi. I need an ambulance. My neighbor is barely breathing and--

Rusty looks up. The red and blue lights of a police car outside light up the house.

EXT. ROONEY HOUSE. NIGHT.

The community SECURITY GUARD and two POLICE OFFICERS stand in the front yard. Rusty slips out the front door and joins Tyler.

TYLER
(to the police)
We don't live here. We were just trying to help.

EXT. HOSPITAL. NIGHT.

Rusty walks briskly from the hospital exit to his car. Tyler follows behind, trying to keep up.

TYLER
How am I supposed to get back to Abel's?

RUSTY
You're not getting back to Abel's! Go home! To wherever your parents are.

Rusty's CELLPHONE buzzes. He finds a text message from Gerard-- "Call me IMMEDIATELY."

Rusty snorts dismissively and puts his phone away.

TYLER
Did you notice the police didn't arrest me?

RUSTY
Why would they? The drugs were inside the house. The police never saw them.

TYLER
No, I mean the didn't arrest me as a runaway. I'm a runaway.

RUSTY
Don't tell me that! If I know about a crime, I have to report it! Did they even check?

TYLER
They always check. No one reported me missing. My parents didn't even report me missing.

Rusty takes that in.

RUSTY
You can't stay at my house.

TYLER
Just take me back to Abel's.

RUSTY
That's trespassing.

TYLER
He said I could stay there.

CONTINUED:

Rusty thinks some more.

RUSTY
Okay. So, if the police ask, I believed you when you said he said you could be there.

TYLER
There’s not gonna be any more police.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. DAY.

Rusty and Tyler pull up in front of Rusty's mom's house. All the lights are on.

TYLER
Did you do that? Leave all the lights on?

Rusty shakes his head "no".

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Rusty peeks his head in the front door. Maggie is asleep in her recliner, her oxygen tank next to her.

RUSTY
Mom?

Maggie wakes with a start. Rusty comes in. Tyler follows behind.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Where's Gerard? What are you doing here?

MAGGIE
Gerard is trying to kill me. He was stealing my meds.

RUSTY
How did you get here?

MAGGIE
I ran away. I got on a plane.

RUSTY
Mom. How many of those pills did you take?

MAGGIE
He was stealing my medication!

CONTINUED:

Rusty's cellphone buzzes again.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Is that him?

Rusty checks.

RUSTY
Yeah. What do you want me to tell him?

MAGGIE
Tell him I changed my mind and I want to stay here.

Rusty clicks his phone to answer.

RUSTY
(to Gerard)
She's here. She's fine. She wants to stay out here for a while.

GERARD (O.S.)
Tell her I'm on my way back out there tomorrow.

MAGGIE
What is he saying?

RUSTY
He's coming out here tomorrow.

MAGGIE
He's not staying here!

RUSTY
(into phone)
Did you hear that?

GERARD (O.S.)
Take her meds from her, Rusty. I'll get them from you when I get there.

MAGGIE
He's not taking my meds from me!

RUSTY
Did you hear that?

GERARD (O.S.)
She's gonna OD!

CONTINUED: (2)

MAGGIE
I know how many of my own pills to take! And I know how many were missing!

GERARD (O.S.)
She better not die, Rusty.

RUSTY
Mom's been taking her meds without your help for 40 years.

GERARD (O.S.)
And Rusty? If she does die? And you've talked her into changing her will? I'll slit your throat.

RUSTY
Okay, thanks.

Rusty hangs up.

MAGGIE
Did he say he was gonna slit your throat?

RUSTY
Yeah. He'll have to hurry before I do it myself.

MAGGIE
You can't commit suicide, Rusty. I need you to--

Maggie notices Tyler standing nearby.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Who are you? Are you that hustler from across the street?

EXT. ROONEY HOUSE. NIGHT.

Rusty stands in front of the window they broke earlier. Tyler tries to get past, impatiently.

RUSTY
What happens if they catch you?

TYLER
They’re not even looking for me.

Rusty steps out of the way and lets Tyler pass.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
Do you have enough food?

TYLER
I have enough food, yeah.

He starts to climb up into the window. He stops.

TYLER (CONT'D)
No. No, I don't. I don't have any food.

INT. ROONEY HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

Rusty pulls some tater tots out of the oven then spoons macaroni-and-cheese onto plates.

Tyler watches him, a little resentfully.

TYLER
Abel got me take-out.

RUSTY
Are you kidding me?

TYLER
No.

RUSTY
I can't afford take-out. Abel had a lucrative crystal meth business. I have my mom.

TYLER
Abel paid me a hundred and fifty a week.

RUSTY
What are you saying?

TYLER
I'm saying I don't work for tater tots.

RUSTY
Tyler, this isn't me paying you. I'm giving you this.

TYLER
I don't do anything for less than a hundred and fifty a week. And by "anything" I mean the bare minimum.

CONTINUED:

Rusty goes to the trashcan and scrapes one of the plates into it. He places the other plate on the table.

RUSTY
Enjoy.

He heads for the door. Tyler panics and grabs.

TYLER
Okay! A hundred! Seventy five! I'm sorry! Just stay! This one's free!

RUSTY
Let go of my arm.

TYLER
I'm calling the police. POLICE!

Rusty stops. They face off.

Pause.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Seventy-five a week.

RUSTY
I'm not interested in having sex with you!

TYLER
Everyone is interested in having sex with me!

Rusty is pissed.

Another pause.

RUSTY
It's not a matter of whether you're cute or not. You're a kid.

TYLER
If we were in--

RUSTY
I don't care what they do in Mississippi! Whether you know it or not, you're still a kid! Your brain isn't even finished developing yet! You're not equipped to make decisions about--

CONTINUED: (2)

TYLER
I don't have any parents! I don't have anybody to make decisions for me!

RUSTY
Well, I'm gonna make this decision for you.

Pause.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
I can get my mom to pay you fifty dollars a week. For yard work.

Tyler considers. He searches Rusty's face.

He nods.

EXT. MAGGIE'S BACKYARD. DAY.

Rusty and Tyler dig up the sprinkler system in the back corner of the yard.

RUSTY
The pipe back here has a leak. For some reason, Gerard wouldn't let me-- Ew.

Rusty moves back with disgust.

Tyler looks into the hole to see what Rusty sees. In the hole is the mud-caked skull of a small dog.

TYLER
Ew.

RUSTY
Gerard.

Rusty brushes himself off.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Garrick and Rusty sit in Rusty's car, watching the children from earlier play with a new, larger robot toy.

GARRICK
You can do this.

EXT. HOUSE. DAY.

Rusty and Garrick approach the house.

Dogs around the side of the house bark madly. An angry NEIGHBOR WOMAN is on the porch, pounding on the door. More dogs are barking inside.

NEIGHBOR WOMAN
I TOLD YOU IF I SAW YOUR KIDS PLAYING IN THE STREET AGAIN, I WAS CALLING CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES!

The dogs inside are heaving themselves against the door.

The father from earlier screams back.

FATHER
WHO ARE YOU? GET OFF MY PORCH! CINNAMON! SHUT THE HELL UP!

NEIGHBOR WOMAN
I LIVE ACROSS THE STREET! I TOLD YOU IF I--

FATHER
WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?

NEIGHBOR WOMAN
WHAT GUYS?

The woman turns and sees Rusty. Rusty calls to the man, loud enough to be heard through the door and over the incessant barking.

RUSTY
HI, SIR. MY NAME IS RUSTY. I RAN OVER YOUR KID'S--

FATHER
GET OFF MY PORCH!

NEIGHBOR WOMAN
(to Rusty)
Wait. Are you the guy who ran over the kids' remote control robot the other day? That's not your fault. They shouldn't be playing in the street on a blind curve! You--

RUSTY
MY NAME IS RUSTY! I RAN OVER YOUR KID'S TOY!

The door flies open. The dogs inside go even more insane.

CONTINUED:

FATHER
What? Where?

RUSTY
Not now. The other day.

NEIGHBOR WOMAN
I'm calling the county!

The woman leaves. The dogs are heaving themselves against the screen door.

RUSTY
A few days ago. I ran over that robot toy.

GARRICK
Rusty lives his life according to spiritual principals now and he--

One of more vicious-looking dogs has worked its head and one leg through the screen.

GARRICK (CONT'D)
Is that dog dangerous?

FATHER
Was it the Humana or the Emotazoid?

RUSTY
How many robot toys got run over the other day?

The dog has worked its way through the screen. It takes a threatening step forward. Rusty backs away slowly. The dog makes a low growl.

INT. HOUSE. DAY.

The father puts iodine on the puncture wounds in Rusty's leg.

GARRICK
Isn't it illegal to have this many dogs?

FATHER
I can't let them be put to sleep. Please. If you don't report me for the dog bite, I won't report you for the hit-and-run.

Rusty looks to Garrick. Garrick thinks.

EXT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Garrick unlocks the passenger-side door. Rusty limps over.

GARRICK
I'm still reporting him for keeping those dogs in inhumane, unsanitary conditions. And for letting the kids play in the street.

RUSTY
They'll get put to sleep! And the kids will get put in foster care! And he'll get me arrested!

GARRICK
You don't know that, Rusty. Our job is to do the moral thing and turn the results over to God. What's the other address?

EXT. MOBILE HOME PARK. DAY.

Rusty and Garrick pull up in front of a modest but clean double-wide. The tank-like 1970s sedan from the accident is alongside, still heavily-damaged and up on blocks.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Rusty takes a deep breath. Garrick turns to him.

GARRICK
Space forty. This is it.

The front door of the mobile home flies open. The boy from the accident hurries out the front door and runs past.

RUSTY
He's okay. That's the kid who was all bloody. He's okay.

GARRICK
As far as you know.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER. DAY.

Rusty knocks. He looks over at Garrick, who gives him a thumbs-up. The door opens.

CONTINUED:

Karla is standing there. Rusty is shocked. So is Karla.

KARLA
What are you doing here? How did you find me?

RUSTY
Um... Internet?

KARLA
How did you know my married name?

RUSTY
Is your husband home?

KARLA
He's not, but--? Wait. Rusty, you told me you were gay. Are you here to--?

RUSTY
What? No! I didn't mean--

KARLA
Then why did you ask if my husband --?

RUSTY
No, I just-- I have another apology to make.

KARLA
What kind of--? Wait. Rusty. Are you and he--? Oh, I see. I knew it. I KNEW it.

RUSTY
Knew what?

KARLA
All that hyper-masculine bullcrap! It’s always guys like him, isn’t it?

RUSTY
What--?

KARLA
Yeah, with his friggin’ Guns-and-Ammo subscription. Buncha repressed gay Soldier of Fortune secret porno bullcrap--! You seen that magazine?

CONTINUED: (2)

RUSTY
Uh-- No, but--

KARLA
Nothing but buddy-buddy phallic symbols! Phallic symbols and crotch bulges! So! Rusty! Humiliating me at prom wasn't enough? Now you have to humiliate me by doing my husband on the down-low?

RUSTY
On the--? I'm not--

KARLA
Of course, it’s not like these things are a one-way street. What, is he on, like, some gay biker website?

RUSTY
How would I know?

KARLA
You're the one ridin’ the chocolate speedway with him!

RUSTY
I'm not ridin’ the--! What? Listen! You had an accident! About a month ago!

She freezes and looks at Rusty suspiciously.

KARLA
How do you know that? Are you stalking me?

She closes her eyes.

KARLA (CONT'D)
You're not gay. Oh, my God. Back to square one. You’re stalking me. I knew you weren't gay. Some women don't have gaydar at all? I do. I know when someone's gay. And you never--

RUSTY
NO! I'm not stalking you! The accident-- I--

KARLA
How would you even know about it?

CONTINUED: (3)

RUSTY
‘Cause I'm the guy who caused it!

KARLA
What?

RUSTY
When your car flipped over.

KARLA
What are you talking about? Stuart caused that accident. He was going, like, eighty-five miles an hour.

RUSTY
I pulled out in front of him.

She lets that sink in.

KARLA
That was you--?

RUSTY
I can't deal with the guilt. I wasn’t--

KARLA
You didn't pull out in front of him. You pulled over, like, six inches and then pulled right back into your lane. He--

RUSTY
And that made him--

KARLA
It didn't make him anything! Stuart came around a blind curve doing eighty-five miles an hour with me screaming at him to slow down! He almost killed you! And me! And my kid!

GARRICK
But if Rusty hadn't--

Karla notices Garrick for the first time.

KARLA
Who are you?

GARRICK
I'm--

CONTINUED: (4)

KARLA
How was Rusty supposed to know whether Stuart was going to pull to the right? Rusty could have been killed.

She turns back to Rusty.

KARLA (CONT'D)
You could have been killed.

RUSTY
I-- I guess there was no way to--

KARLA
So, you really are gay?

RUSTY
What? Yeah.

KARLA
Well, you don't owe me an apology. But you do have to get out of here.

GARRICK
No. He has to apologize to your husband, too.

KARLA
(to Garrick)
Are you insane? He'll beat both of you to death!

GARRICK
You don't know that.

KARLA
And then when he finds out I know Rusty, he'll beat me to death!

GARRICK
You don't know that.

RUSTY
Wait. Does this guy hit you?

Karla struggles with her answer.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Why would you marry someone who hits you?

CONTINUED: (5)

KARLA
Do you know how hard it was to find someone who wasn't some scary fat fetishist when I'm this fat?

RUSTY
My friend Isaac is a good guy and he's crazy about fat girls!

KARLA
How was I gonna find someone like him?

RUSTY
You should have waited!

KARLA
You don't know what it was like! I had a good first marriage! Kevin was a good, stable man, with a good, stable job. He was a manager at Sweet Molly McGee's, but then this scumbag waiter lied about stealing a ten-pound block of cheese and Kevin got fired and he went into this terrible downward spiral of depression and he OD'd and I kept getting fatter.

Rusty is nearly paralyzed.

KARLA (CONT'D)
Stuart was in my Bible study group. He said he could help take care of Kevin Jr.

RUSTY
Oh. Oh, I--

KARLA
Please. Just get out of here, Rusty. As angry as I am with you, I couldn't bear it if something happened to you.

RUSTY
I think I need to tell you something else.

They hear the sound of a roaring engine coming up the block.

KARLA
Not now! Get out of here! Please!

CONTINUED: (6)

She pushes Rusty back and slams the door.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Rusty and Garrick pull up to Garrick's apartment building.

Garrick stares ahead, resolute.

RUSTY
I apologized to her. Why do I have to apologize to him, too? Can't we just say--

GARRICK
She doesn't make the decisions for him. You have to make your amends to him.

RUSTY
He'll kill me. I don't deserve to be killed for this. She doesn't deserve to be killed for--

GARRICK
Her wild imagination doesn't let you out of making your amends.

RUSTY
This is crazy. I made my amends. I'm done. I'm firing you. You're not my sponsor any more.

Garrick is shocked for a moment.

Garrick opens the door and climbs out.

GARRICK
I give it two days before you're drunk. Or dead. Tops.

He closes the door and walks away.

INT. AA CLUBHOUSE. DAY.

Rusty and Isaac sit next to each other in a meeting. Garrick sits across the room, pointedly ignoring them.

RUSTY
(to Isaac)
I have thirty days today.

CONTINUED:

ISAAC
I know. I left you a present in your car.

RUSTY
What present?

The MEETING SECRETARY reads from a tattered, PLASTIC-COATED SHEET.

MEETING SECRETARY
We give chips for varying lengths of sobriety at this meeting. Is there anyone here with one day of sobriety who would like to take a 24-hour chip?

No hands go up.

MEETING SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Is there anyone here with thirty--

ISAAC
Wait.

The secretary stops. Everyone looks Isaac's way.

MEETING SECRETARY
24-hour chip?

Isaac stands. Rusty looks shocked.

Isaac walks up to the front of the room.

He takes the chip and mutters--

ISAAC
Hi-I'm-Isaac-I'm-an-alcoholic.

There is a mumbled "Hi, Isaac" from the group.

Garrick lets out a little snort. Rusty looks concerned.

Isaac comes back and sits next to Rusty.

RUSTY
(to Isaac)
When did you--?

MEETING SECRETARY
Is there anyone with thirty days?

Rusty stands and moves toward the front of the room, sneaking a look back at Isaac.

EXT. AA CLUBHOUSE. DAY.

Rusty gives Isaac a hug before Isaac gets in his car and drives off.

INT./EXT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Rusty opens his car door and climbs in.

There's a sloppily-wrapped gift in the passenger seat.

Rusty pulls the paper away. It's the puppet.

Rusty freaks out and stuffs the puppet under the seat.

Garrick appears at the door.

GARRICK
That's what happens when you don't make your amends.

RUSTY
He apologized to Kati.

GARRICK
He didn't apologize to her husband.

RUSTY
Because she asked him not to.

GARRICK
Isaac's not gonna make it.

RUSTY
You don't know that.

GARRICK
He slept with someone's wife and he didn't make his amends for it. You don't do that and stay sober. You're not gonna make it, either.

RUSTY
Maybe not.

GARRICK
I've been at this a long time, Rusty. Let me tell you what's gonna happen next.

RUSTY
Okay?

CONTINUED:

GARRICK
You're already essentially homeless and living on your mom's charity. Next, you're gonna be *really* homeless.

RUSTY
I'm gonna show my mom my 30-day chip. Maybe she'll change her mind about me. Maybe she'll--

GARRICK
You're going to be really homeless. And then you're going to start drinking and doing drugs again. And then you're going to die.

RUSTY
Karla's husband will kill me if I go back there, Garrick.

GARRICK
You don't know that.

INT. ANTIQUE MALL. DAY.

Rusty watches as Kati and her HUSBAND, 40, pack up boxes in her stall. When her husband walks away with a box, Rusty approaches.

RUSTY
He drank.

KATI
I know.

RUSTY
How do you know?

KATI
He did it in my front yard. Yelling at my house. My husband called the cops. They were on the way when he left.

RUSTY
He really loves you.

KATI
He could have married me right out of high school. He could have married me after the divorce.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
When someone gets divorced, you have to wait an appropriate amount of time.

KATI
Two years?

Kati spots Isaac lurking in his booth, trying to listen to what they're saying. Kati calls out to him--

KATI (CONT'D)
The next time you have a chance with a sexy fat girl? Take it!

She goes out.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. DAY.

Rusty climbs out of his car with his cell phone to his ear.

RUSTY
(into phone)
No. I'm not going to count her pills, Gerard. I'm not going anywhere hear her pills.

Rusty puts his key in the lock. He tries to push the door open. It won't budge.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
They're prescribed, Gerard. Her doctor knows what she needs.

He pushes harder. The door doesn't move.

Tyler walks up.

TYLER
You got any more frozen dinners?

RUSTY
(to Tyler)
I put, like, fifteen of them in your freezer. You ate fifteen frozen dinners?
(into phone)
Well, mom says they're gone because you took them.

CONTINUED:

TYLER
At least you know I'm not smoking meth. Meth addicts don't eat.

Rusty pounds on the door.

RUSTY
Ma? What the hell?
(to Tyler)
Are you smoking pot, then?

TYLER
Did your mom change the locks?

RUSTY
(into phone)
Gerard, did you have some kind of extra lock put on the front door? It's not your house yet.

Rusty throws his weight against the door. It opens a little.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Ma?

He pushes again. He sees a bit of her bathrobe on the floor on the other side of the door.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
MA!

He pushes frantically.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty and Tyler sit near Maggie's bed. She's on an IV and wears an oxygen mask.

Rusty has a sealed envelope labeled "Rusty" in his hands.

Tyler points to it.

TYLER
Want me to--?

Rusty hands the envelope to Tyler. Tyler opens it.

He takes out the folded letter, but stops when he notices that MAGGIE'S EYES ARE OPEN.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Rusty.

CONTINUED:

Rusty sees. He pulls his chair over to the bed.

RUSTY
Ma.

She can barely move. She looks around. Then closes her eyes in frustration.

MAGGIE
Damnit, what am I still doing here?

RUSTY
Were you trying to kill yourself, Ma?

MAGGIE
What day is it?

RUSTY
Wednesday.

MAGGIE
Get me my purse.

Rusty hands it to her. She rifles around in it. She opens a pill bottle.

RUSTY
Wait! What's that? What are you taking?

MAGGIE
It's my toenail fungus pills. If I don't take them every day, the fungus builds up an immunity. Are you still sober?

RUSTY
What? Yeah. Thirty days.

He shows her his 30-day chip.

MAGGIE
Good.

She downs a few of the pills.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
I wanted to wait until you had six months, but since you could never get more than three or four days at a time, I decided to lower my expectations.

CONTINUED: (2)

RUSTY
Wanted to wait for what? To kill yourself?

MAGGIE
Did you read the letter?

RUSTY
I was too busy trying to make sure you didn't die. Gerard is gonna think I--

MAGGIE
You didn't call Gerard, did you?

RUSTY
I was on the phone with him when I found you! Wanted to wait for what?

MAGGIE
Did you read the damn letter? Where is it?

Tyler holds it up.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
(to Tyler)
Read it.

She takes some more of the pills.

RUSTY
How many of those are you supposed to take?

MAGGIE
(to Rusty)
Shut up!
(to Tyler)
Read it!

Tyler looks to Rusty. Rusty nods.

Tyler unfolds the letter.

TYLER
"Rusty-- First of all, do NOT tell Gerard what happened until you've done everything I've outlined here."

MAGGIE
Yeah. So, we can forget that part.

CONTINUED: (3)

Rusty closes his eyes in frustration.

TYLER
"Gerard doesn't think I know, but he has managed to have drugs prescribed for me and he's taking them himself. I've been of more use to him alive than dead. Otherwise, he would have watched me die or killed me a long time ago."

Rusty looks down sadly.

RUSTY
I've done worse things than steal your pills, ma.

TYLER
"I've changed my will several months ago. I was waiting to see if you could stay sober before I told you where it is. I rolled it up and put it in the hiding place you used to used for your drugs in high school."

RUSTY
Which hiding place, Ma? There were dozens of them.

Rusty turns back to Maggie. Her eyes are closed.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Ma? Wake up! Which hiding place?

Rusty stands and moves slowly to the bed.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Ma?

Maggie isn't breathing. Her eyes are slightly open.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
MA!

TYLER
Can you kill yourself with toenail fungus pills?

RUSTY
NURSE!

Rusty runs out of the room and down the hall screaming for help.

INT. RUSTY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Rusty sits at the kitchen table in a daze. Tyler has the countertops covered with food items as they go through everything in the cabinets.

TYLER
(to Rusty)
She said she "rolled it up" so I'm guessing she put it in something cylindrical, right?

Tyler digs around in an oatmeal canister. Rusty just stares into space.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Right?

RUSTY
I can't do this any more.

Rusty's cell phone rings. Rusty checks to see who's calling.

Grinds his teeth and answers it.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yes, I'm still in the house, I live here. What? Well, you're not here yet, are you?

Rusty hangs up.

TYLER
What are you gonna do?

RUSTY
My mom gave this food to me, right? So I can give it to *you*, right?

TYLER
That would be really nice of you. But what are *you* gonna eat?

RUSTY
Don't worry about it.

INT. ROONEY KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Rusty carries a large box of food into the kitchen while Tyler makes room in the freezer.

CONTINUED:

The countertops are covered with cans and plastic bags and boxes of food.

TYLER
Let me make you something.

Rusty heads back out without answering.

INT. RUSTY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Rusty and Tyler are loading up another box when Gerard pulls up outside the window in his SUV.

They watch Gerard get out of the car.

Gerard comes in. Notices what they're doing.

GERARD
What's in the box? Everything in this house is mine.

RUSTY
Food. You were there. Mom said it was for me.

Gerard takes in all the open boxes and canisters on the counters.

GERARD
What's with the mess?

RUSTY
You want to know? Rigorous honesty. Mom said she changed her will. She said hid the new will somewhere and I was looking for it.

Gerard looks at Rusty, trying to decide if this is true.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Wanna slit my throat?

GERARD
You want me to slit your throat?

Rusty doesn't answer. Tyler is nervous.

TYLER
Rusty, let's go.

GERARD
What if it's in the food you have in that box?

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
It's not. I checked.

GERARD
Nice try. Leave it.

Rusty just stands there.

RUSTY
She gave it to me.

Gerard goes to a nearby drawer and pulls out a vegetable knife.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Are you serious?

It appears he is.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Fine. Do it.

GERARD
And I'll do your little whore friend here, too.

RUSTY
Tyler, go outside.

TYLER
No.

GERARD
I was keeping Mom's meds away from her so she wouldn't kill herself.

RUSTY
And taking them yourself.

GERARD
You gave them back to her. So, basically, you killed her.

RUSTY
I didn't--

GERARD
How are you going to make an amends for *that*, Rusty?

RUSTY
I don't know.

CONTINUED: (2)

GERARD
I'll go through your stuff. If you haven't stolen anything, I'll get it back to you. You didn't touch her meds, did you?

RUSTY
They're in her purse. By the front door.

GERARD
Good. Because tonight I'm gonna celebrate my first night of freedom from her. And you.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Rusty and Tyler step onto the front porch, empty-handed.

GERARD
By the way, I wrote up my own will just in case. I'm leaving everything to Ex-Gay Ministries of America. So I guess nothing better happen to me.

The door slams.

INT. ROONEY HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty looks nervously around the living room. Tyler brings some sheets and blankets in.

TYLER
Rusty, stop. All the drugs are hidden away. You'd never be able to find them.

Rusty nods.

RUSTY
Okay.

Tyler pulls the couch out and lays out some blankets while Rusty looks around some more.

TYLER
Rusty?

Maybe Rusty didn't hear him.

CONTINUED:

TYLER (CONT'D)
It's been a really long time since anyone was nice to me when they didn’t want something back. Thank you.

Rusty looks at him, then looks away and nods again.

INT. ROONEY HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty lies on the couch, his eyes closed.

A tiny finger taps the bandaged dog bite on his leg. His eyes pop open.

Silence. He swallows.

Another tap. He looks down. Nothing but the fluid-soaked bandage.

He sits up.

Another tap. This time he sees it just as it disappears under the couch. The puppet’s hand.

When it taps him again, he snags it.

He yanks on it and the puppet’s arm stretches to several feet. It whips out of his hand and all over the room. It whips out the window and Rusty watches it go.

It zips out into the blackness.

Rusty is hyperventilating. He SQUINTS to see where it might have gone.

Nothing.

Then he sees it.

The puppet is on the roof of Rusty's mother's house, one arm wrapped around a ventilation pipe, the other arm dangling uselessly, smiling its insane smile.

Rusty screams at it.

RUSTY
LEAVE ME ALONE!

Tyler's voice comes from behind him

TYLER (O.C.)
Rusty?

INT. ROONEY HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Rusty bolts awake, covered in sweat. Tyler is beside him.

Tyler checks Rusty’s forehead.

TYLER
You’re sweating. Your head is hot.

Rusty checks his leg. The bandage on the wound from the dog bite is pulled aside. The wound is bleeding, swollen, and leaking pus.

TYLER (CONT’D)
You need a doctor.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. NIGHT.

Tyler is in the passenger seat. Rusty is in the driver's seat. Rusty looks despondent.

RUSTY
I give up. The puppet wants to tell me something, but I can’t figure out what it is.

TYLER
Rusty, you're delirious. We need to get you to a doctor. The infection's out of control. It's gonna kill you.

There's no indication that Rusty is listening. He sits still for a bit.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You can't just let the infection kill you.

Rusty thinks about that.

INT. URGENT CARE OFFICE. DAY.

Rusty sits on an examination table. Tyler sits nearby.

A DOCTOR examines Rusty's leg.

RUSTY
Will it kill me?

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR
It's bad, but you'll live through it. Just take the antibiotic and change the bandage at least once a day and put the ointment on it.

RUSTY
What if I don't take the antibiotic? Will it kill me then?

The doctor looks at him quizzically.

DOCTOR
It’s more likely the wound would just take a really long time to heal, and the scarring would be--

RUSTY
So it won't kill me.

DOCTOR
I couldn't say, but probably not. Why? Do you want it to kill you?

Rusty jumps up from the table.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I need to write you a prescription if you--

Rusty is gone. Tyler runs after him.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. DAY.

Rusty quietly unlocks the back door. Tyler follows behind.

TYLER
What are we doing?

RUSTY
I said go home.

Rusty pushes Tyler back and unlocks the door.

Tyler won't leave.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

Continuous.

Rusty lets himself into the kitchen. Tyler pushes his way in after him.

CONTINUED:

Loud female SCREAMS OF ECSTASY and CHEAP PORNO MUSIC blare from the TV in the other room.

RUSTY
(loudly)
Gerard?

Rusty goes to a drawer next to the sink. He gets a knife.

TYLER
What are you doing? You can't just kill him.

RUSTY
I'm not gonna kill him. He's gonna kill me. He's gonna slit my throat. And you'd better get the hell out of here if you don't want him to slit your throat, too.

TYLER
No! Gerard! Hey, Gerard!

Tyler runs into the living room.

TYLER (CONT'D)(O.S.)
GERARD! RUSTY'S GOT A KNIFE! YOU--

His voice suddenly stops.

INT. RUSTY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Rusty comes in with the knife.

Tyler stares in the direction of the couch. Rusty follows his line of sight.

Gerard is in front of the TV, his eyes-half closed, his pants and underwear down around his ankles, a dishtowel in his hand. Beer cans litter the coffee table and its surroundings. A pill bottle is on its side.

A DVD MENU with a repeating loop of a screaming woman being taken from behind is displayed on the TV screen.

TYLER
Is he dead?

Rusty checks Gerard's pulse.

RUSTY
Yeah. DAMNIT.

Rusty dials his cell phone.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Garrick. Yeah, hi. I need to stop taking half-measures. Call me back.

EXT. MAGGIE'S HOUSE. DAY.

Rusty walks quickly to his car. Tyler tags behind.

TYLER
You're doing something bad. What are you doing?

Rusty's cellphone rings. Rusty answers it.

RUSTY
Hey, Garrick. Yeah. I know. I'm sorry. I'm heading over to her house now.

TYLER
Don't go there, Rusty. Please.

RUSTY
(into phone)
No. I can't wait for you to get off work. I need to do it now, before I lose my nerve. Meet me there or don't. ‘Bye.

Tyler grabs Rusty's phone out of his hands. Rusty tries to take the phone back, Tyler runs away with it.

TYLER
Who is this? Garrick? Tell him not to do it! Hello? Hello?

Rusty arrives at his car. He takes out his keys and unlocks the car door.

Tyler pockets the phone and approaches slowly.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Please. Whatever you're about to do, don't do it.

Rusty turns to Tyler, then suddenly gives him an unexpected hug.

RUSTY
You have enough food to last for a month or so. The Rooneys won't be back until October. That should
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

RUSTY (CONT'D)
give you enough time to figure out what to do.

TYLER
Where will you be?

Rusty doesn't answer.

TYLER (CONT'D)
When I'm alone in the Rooney's house? Where will you be?

Rusty opens the driver's side door.

Tyler jumps in the back seat.

RUSTY
Get out.

TYLER
No.

Rusty tries to pull him out. Tyler slides back further and kicks at Rusty.

TYLER (CONT'D)
NO!

Rusty gives up and gets in.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Rusty drives, his face set.

Tyler dials on Rusty's cellphone and then puts it to his ear.

TYLER
Isaac? Do you remember me? The guy from the house across the street from Rusty? No, the other one.

Rusty reaches back and tries to grab the phone. Tyler dodges.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Rusty's going back out to that girl's trailer. The one who said her husband would kill both of them. Yeah, I know!
(to Rusty)
Isaac says you've lost your mind.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

TYLER (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Can you come out there?

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER. DAY.

Rusty pulls up a few yards from the trailer.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

Rusty sits for a moment, gathering his courage.

Tyler wraps his arms around Rusty's neck from behind, crying.

TYLER
Please. I need you. What am I gonna do? If he kills you, what am I gonna do?

RUSTY
People get jobs, Tyler.

TYLER
That's not what I mean! What if I care about you?

RUSTY
Shut up.

TYLER
What if when you said "no" to having sex with me and threw away those tater tots I felt like somebody cared about me for the first time in my whole stupid life?

Rusty starts to cry, too.

RUSTY
That would be horrible for you.

TYLER
You were nice to me and you didn't ask me for anything and that made me come back alive.

RUSTY
I killed my mom. I killed this girl's first husband and left her child fatherless. I need to--

TYLER
You can't do this.

CONTINUED:

RUSTY
I need to.

Just then, Karla kicks her way out the front door of the double-wide carrying a huge box to a beat-up 1980s Chevette.

KARLA
Kevin! Let's go!

Her son comes running out, also carrying a box.

Rusty gets out of his car. Karla's eyes go wide.

KARLA (CONT'D)
Get the hell out of here! Seriously! Stuart'll be back any second!

RUSTY
This will be very quick. I--

KARLA
No! This will not happen at all! Get out of here!

Kevin jams his box in among several other boxes in the back seat. He jumps into the passenger seat.

RUSTY
I stole that cheese! That ten-pound block of cheese! That was--!

KARLA
What? I don't give a rat's ass about any block of cheese! Get the hell out of here before you get me and my son killed! And yourself!

Isaac's car screeches up, blocking the driveway.

KARLA (CONT'D)
Who's that? Hey! You! Move your car out of the way! I have to go!

Isaac jumps out of his car.

ISAAC
Rusty! I thought we agreed this was stupid! What are you doing?

The ROAR of an engine draws their attention. It's STUART, the heavily-tattooed man from the freeway accident, in a souped-up 1970s Camaro. He pulls into the driveway in a cloud of dust, blocking Isaac in.

CONTINUED: (2)

KARLA
Oh God oh God oh God. KEVIN! ROLL UP THE WINDOWS!

Karla runs over as Kevin frantically does so.

Karla tries to jam her box in the back seat as well. The box tumbles out and the contents spill out onto the dirt. Rusty runs over and tries to jam the box in and get the door closed.

Stuart gets out of the Camaro, confused.

Karla jumps in the driver's seat and starts the Chevette.

Rusty has gotten the box in, but is still struggling with the door.

STUART
Where are you going? I said I'd be back in fifteen minutes! I'm back!

KARLA
Just going over to Goodwill.

Stuart stands in front of the Chevette. He notices the boxes in the back seat.

STUART
With everything we own? What the hell's in all the boxes?

RUSTY
Excuse me? You're Stuart, right? Remember that accident you had a couple of weeks ago?

Stuart ignores Rusty and looks over to see Garrick pulling up in his car and getting out.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
I caused it, Stuart. I was the guy in the other car. The guy who--

Stuart notices Rusty, Tyler and Isaac for the first time.

STUART
What? Who the hell are you?
(To Karla)
Who the hell are all these people?

Karla rolls her window the rest of the way up.

CONTINUED: (3)

KARLA
We have to go. The store's closing in, like, fifteen minutes.

STUART
It's two in the afternoon!

Stuart suddenly realizes.

STUART (CONT'D)
Karla. Get out of the car. Kevin. I said, get out of the car!

Kevin stays put.

Stuart grabs a nearby two-by-four.

STUART (CONT'D)
Karla?

Garrick grabs Rusty's shirt and starts pulling him away.

GARRICK
Okay, Rusty. You told him. Let's go.

STUART
Get out of the car, Karla.

Stuart suddenly swings the two-by-four at the back window of Karla's car. It shatters, showering Kevin with glass.

STUART (CONT'D)
I said, get out of the car, Karla!

Stuart pulls the two-by-four back for another strike.

GARRICK
Rusty! Let's go!

RUSTY
We can't just leave!

GARRICK
This isn't your problem!

RUSTY
Yes, it is!

GARRICK
No it isn't! You're being codependent!

Stuart smashes another window.

CONTINUED: (4)

RUSTY
What? I caused this!

GARRICK
Yeah! And you apologized!

RUSTY
WHAT?! NO!

Rusty yanks himself out of Garrick's grip.

GARRICK
RUSTY!

Rusty runs over to Karla's car.

Stuart pulls the two-by-four back for another strike. Rusty grabs it. Karla guns the engine and put it into gear. The car lurches forward and dies.

Stuart and Rusty tug for control of the two-by-four.

Karla gets the car started again. She guns it and digs up a cloud of dust in the driveway before the wheels catch and she drives onto the lawn to get around Isaac’s car.

Stuart yanks the board away from Rusty and runs down the driveway after Karla.

Karla hits the opposite curb just as Stuart arrives. He pulls the board back for another strike. Karla throws the car into reverse to make a K-turn. Stuart jumps out of the way just in time.

Stuart jumps in front of the car just as Karla puts it into first. She jams on the brakes and the car dies again. Stuart smashes the driver's side window as Karla screams. He knocks some dangling glass out of the way and grabs the keys out of the ignition.

He throws them into the distance just as the two-by-four comes down on his back. Rusty.

Rusty swings again, connecting with the side of Stuart's head. Stuart goes down hard.

RUSTY
(to Karla and Kevin)
LET'S GO! GET IN MY CAR!

Karla, Rusty and Kevin run for it.

INT. RUSTY'S CAR. DAY.

CONTINUED: (5)

Rusty gets the car started just as Karla pushes Kevin into the front seat and climbs in after him. She slams her door.

KARLA
(to Rusty)
I told you this would happen! Why didn't you just go?

She looks up at the windshield and screams--

KARLA (CONT'D)
RUSTY!

Rusty looks up. A bloodied Stuart is stumbling towards them trying to hold a gun steady. Rusty throws the car into reverse and it kicks up another cloud of dust. The air around the car goes white.

The wheels suddenly catch and the car flies backwards. They slam into something, hard.

With the jolt, the puppet pops out from under the seat, smiling.

Rusty throws the car into first and hits the gas. Another cloud of dust goes up.

Stuart FIRES. A BULLET whizzes through the car. Rusty hits the brakes.

Stuart FIRES again. Rusty panics and guns the engine, plunging blindly into the blinding dust ahead.

Another gunshot. Rusty tries to slam the brakes again, but this time, the pedal won't go down.

THE SMILING HEAD OF THE PUPPET IS JAMMED UNDER IT.

Rusty stomps on the brake pedal as hard as he can.

The puppet head finally shatters. Another shriek and a sickening thud and then the car jumps and falls twice.

It skids to a stop.

Quiet, as the dust clears.

EXT. KARLA'S FRONT YARD. DAY.

Rusty, Karla and Kevin slowly get out of the car to see what happened.

Garrick, Isaac and Tyler approach tentatively.

CONTINUED: (6)

Stuart's body is next to the back tire. And his head is underneath it. The gun is still squeezed in his hand.

Kevin pushes on the body with the toe of his sneaker.

ISAAC
(to Kevin)
Maybe you shouldn't look at that.

Kevin tilts his head to the side a bit and leans forward a bit for a better view.

KEVIN
No, it's okay.

Rusty turns his attention to Karla.

He swallows hard.

RUSTY
I am so, SO sorry.

Karla looks at Stuart's crushed head. She thinks for a few beats.

KARLA
Well. He was trying to shoot us. It's probably for the best.

RUSTY
Really? Because--

KARLA
No, it is. But Rusty?

RUSTY
Yes?

KARLA
Don't ever do anything else to help me.

RUSTY
Okay.

KARLA
And if you ever do anything bad to me again? Like, something that needs an apology? I don't want to hear about it. Okay?

RUSTY
Okay.

CONTINUED: (7)

GARRICK
No. Not okay. Rusty is in a spiritual program. When he's wrong, he promptly admits it. He--

Rusty pulls Garrick aside.

RUSTY
Garrick? You're fired again. I just killed someone. And I almost got two other people killed. I'm not ever going to--

GARRICK
Wait, was that it? Are you done with your ninth step?

Rusty thinks. He isn't sure.

Isaac approaches Karla.

ISAAC
You're Karla? Rusty was telling me about you. I'm Isaac.

KARLA
Yeah. The guy who's into fat girls.

ISAAC
Yeah.

Karla is silent.

A beat.

ISAAC (CONT'D)
So.

KARLA
So.

ISAAC
So. You're a widow.

Karla thinks about that. She nods.

KARLA
But I don't want some guy who's into fat girls. I've already lost two pounds on the Dr. Frankel Swimsuit-Model Diet. In three days.

CONTINUED: (8)

ISAAC
That's great.

KARLA
When I'm a swimsuit model, you won't want me any more. So we might as well end it now before we start.

Isaac does some math in his head.

ISAAC
Well. At two pounds every three days, it'll take at least a year until you're a swimsuit model, and by then, I'll--

KARLA
How much do you think I weigh? I'd have to weigh, like, five hundred pounds for it to take a year to--

ISAAC
And by then, I'll be in love with you.

She stops.

She searches his face for a moment. She looks away.

KARLA
I wanna have more kids. Do you want kids?

Isaac nods.

ISAAC
Very much.

She thinks again.

Then she buries her face in her hands and bursts into tears.

Isaac wraps his arms around her. She leans against him.

Sirens.

Tyler smiles at Rusty.

TYLER
I'm glad you're not dead.

Rusty nods.

CONTINUED: (9)

TYLER (CONT'D)
Are you glad you're not dead?

Rusty thinks about it.

He nods.

Tyler starts to cry, too.

TWO POLICE OFFICERS approach, taking in the scene. Everyone gathers around Rusty.

RUSTY
(to the officers)
This was self-defense. And one time, I told a police officer it wasn't my car and it was. But I hadn't done anything illegal that time, either.

The officers look confused.

Rusty turns to Garrick.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
That was it. That was everything.

Garrick smiles.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
You're still fired.

Rusty looks down and notices some pieces of the shattered puppet's head. He makes a sudden realization.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Oh, my God. The exhaust fan in the kitchen. The puppet was trying to show me-- Up in the-- I used to hide stuff up in the exhaust fan in the kitchen. That must be where my mother hid the will.

GARRICK
Wow. See? When you operate with integrity, everything works out. Isn't that beautiful?

Rusty looks around. Everyone looks like they've just been beaten up.

Or is crying.

Or is dead.

INT. RUSTY'S MOTHER'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

Rusty is up on a ladder, removing the cover on the exhaust vent in the ceiling as Tyler watches.

He reaches up into the darkness.

He pulls out a greasy envelope labeled "Rusty".

INT. PHOENIX CITY ZOO, BAT HOUSE. NIGHT.

Isaac and Karla are in the bat house, watching an upside-down baby bat biting into a juicy chunk of plum. Karla smiles.

Isaac kisses her forehead.

INT. AA CLUBHOUSE. DAY.

Rusty stands at the front of the room being presented with a cupcake with a single lit candle on top. He blows out the candle to happy applause.

EXT. FLEABAG MOTEL. DAY.

Garrick and his NEW SPONSEE, 25, knock on a second-story door at a creepy-looking, fleabag motel.

Garrick smiles confidently as he and the sponsee wait.

A SUDDEN BURST OF SHOTGUN PELLETS turns the door into splinters.

Garrick and the sponsee run for Garrick's car as gunfire explodes around them.

FADE OUT.