

Omaha Street
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I24296

FADE IN:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The YOUNG MAN stands motionless. He stares straight ahead and he does not blink. The CLICKING sound of the court STENOGRAPHER resonates through the virtual emptiness of the COURTROOM. The JUDGE stares back at the young man. Papers SHUFFLE as he reads the charge sheet.

The PUBLIC DEFENDER whispers into the young man's ear causing him to look over his right shoulder where he sees the HALL FAMILY, JACK, CAROLINE and AMBER. Jack sits with a VAPID look on his face. To his right sits Caroline, she is gently WEEPING. To his left, Amber sits with her head on his shoulder. The young man quickly turns back towards the Judge. The young man is KODY WALKER.

JUDGE BEESON

(bellowing)

Kody Walker, the event that occurred on January second of two thousand four was of your own doing and no one else. The court understands that you are a product of the Minnesota foster care system and it saddens me to see yet another talented youth throw his future away.

Kody continues to look straight ahead.

JUDGE BEESON (CONT'D)

The court recognizes your plea of guilty to the charge of vehicular manslaughter, which brought about the death of Noah Aidan Hall, a human being, age fourteen. Do you fully understand the charges I have read and your subsequent plea?

Kody does not respond. He TURNS and looks toward the Halls. They are looking directly at him. Caroline's eyes are RED and filled with TEARS. Refusing to wipe her face, a dark trail of mascara STREAMS down her cheeks.

JUDGE BEESON (CONT'D)

(growing impatient)

Mr. Walker! Don't look at them!
You don't deserve to look at them!
You look at me!

The public defender GRABS Kody by the arm and JERKS him back into reality.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

He understands the charges and the plea your honor.

JUDGE BEESON

No! I want to hear it from him!

After another long PAUSE, Kody finally speaks.

KODY

Um' - yes, your honor, I understand the charges and the plea.

JUDGE BEESON

Before I announce your sentence, do you have anything to say this court?

KODY

No.

Kody turns back towards the Halls and gives them a SOLEMN look. The public defender jerks him again.

JUDGE BEESON

Kody Darryl Walker, having waived your right to a trial by a jury of your peers and having entered a plea of guilty to the aforementioned charge. I hereby sentence you to...

Beeson pauses suddenly, stopping mid sentence. He crumples up sheets of paper and tosses them into a wastebasket.

JUDGE BEESON (CONT'D)

Mr. Walker, I have the power to sentence you as I see fit. With this being a juvenile case, I am allowed some latitude in my ruling. Having agonized over this decision for quite some time I have weighed

each and every option. Ultimately I had to ask myself a couple of questions. -- First of all, do I process yet another young man through the Minnesota penal system? Do I sentence a young man to a life behind bars or do I actually make something of this seat and require someone to witness the results of his actions?

JUDGE BEESON (CONT'D)

I have spoken with the Hall family, most notably Mrs. Hall. -- I greatly value their testimony. So, having weighed and considered their wishes I have agreed to amend your sentence. -- It is the ruling of this court that in lieu of state custody, you will be remanded to the charge of the Hall family.

KODY

(overlapping)

What?

JUDGE BEESON

You will be placed under house arrest with close monitoring by the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

KODY

(to the Public
Defender)

What the fuck?

JUDGE BEESON

The length of this sentence will be determined by the state of Minnesota in conjunction with the Hall family.

KODY

Hell no! I'm not going to live with them! No way! No fucking way!

JUDGE BEESON

(slamming the gavel)
Calm down Mr. Walker!

KODY

I'd rather go to prison!

JUDGE BEESON

The Hall family will be your new foster family.

KODY

(to the public defender)
Do something man!

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Judge, I must object to this. Your ruling is highly irregular. There is no precedent.

JUDGE BEESON

Well there is now, and I am going to have order in this courtroom!

He bangs the gavel. Kody ERUPTS.

KODY

Fuck you!

Kody reaches for his chair and tries to throw it at the judge. The chair is bolted to the floor and it snatches an off balance Kody to the floor. The handcuffs cut into his wrists drawing BLOOD. The court officers grab and RESTRAIN him.

JUDGE BEESON

Young man, you'd better quit while you're ahead!

PUBLIC DEFENDER

Judge!

JUDGE BEESON

My ruling is final counselor.

He SLAMS the gavel again.

JUDGE BEESON (CONT'D)

An officer of the court will be assigned to monitor this sentence. The court will receive weekly progress reports on your behavior. You will adhere to all rules and

wishes imposed by the Hall family.
If you, at any time attempt to
escape, remove your device or not
adhere to the regulations imposed
upon you, you will be returned to
this court and I will impose the
maximum sentence the charge allows.

The gavel bangs.

JUDGE BEESON (CONT'D)
Court dismissed!

TITLE CARD

Omaha Street.

INT. CAR - DAY

Kody sits in the back seat of an unmarked state vehicle
driven by KYLE AUSTIN. Kyle has been assigned by the court
to oversee Kody's incarceration with the Halls. They are
following the Hall's SUV to their home on Omaha Street.

KYLE
Beeson is a smart guy. He must
really see something in you to give
an opportunity like this. -- Don't
fuck it up.

KODY
Yeah, whatever man.

KYLE
I don't agree with the Judge. --
But, it's on me to keep your ass in
line. -- Just know, this is your
last chance and I'm what's standing
between you and jail. It would
behoove you to get on my good side
and stay there.

KODY
I'm not afraid of jail -- or you.

INT. HALL SUV -- CONTINUOUS

The Hall family was not in total agreement with the Judge's decision. Especially Jack.

JACK
(to Caroline,
fuming)
I don't want that piece of trash
living in our house Caroline! I
can't believe you did this!

CAROLINE
I have my reasons.

AMBER
I agree with dad. I can't believe
it. This is so unreal.

JACK
He killed our son for chrissakes!

CAROLINE
(getting upset)
Oh, and you think I don't know that?
-- Jack, I want this -- this, -- I
want him to see what he's done to my
family. I want him to live with our
hurt and experience everything that
we've experienced. If we let him go
to prison he's getting off easy. He
needs to truly pay for what he's
done.

JACK
Yeah, but you still should have
discussed this with me!

CAROLINE
You were out of town.

JACK
And you couldn't call me?

CAROLINE
(assertive)
Why Jack? I knew what you'd say.
Look, this is something that I have

to do. If it doesn't work out then he still winds up in prison.

AMBER

There is no way that I'm living in the same house with him mom. God! This is so insane!

CAROLINE

I know this has been hard for you and I know how much you loved Noah. But, the judge has rendered his decision and it is over and done with! It'll all work out. I promise! Please support me on this. (glaring at Jack) -- Both of you.

Continuing to fume. He says nothing.

The cars turn onto Omaha Street. The quiet neighborhood exudes an affluent ardor. The fresh February snow hides the well-manicured lawns but it cannot hide the black ribbons that adorn each mailbox on the street. The incident that occurred several weeks earlier continues to hang like a pall over the neighborhood.

Kody tries not to notice but he can't stop himself from looking. In the front yard of the Hall residence stands a cross with a picture of Noah attached to it. Below the picture are the words *IN MEMORY OF A BELOVED SON*. The cars come to a stop in the driveway. Kyle gets Kody out of the back seat. Still handcuffed about the wrists and ankles he stumbles and FALLS to his knees.

EXT. DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

KYLE

I guess I need to take these off you now.

He removes the handcuffs and chains. They follow the Halls into the house. The huge house is pristine in its order. Kody looks up at the vaulted ceiling and feels dwarfed by its majesty. He has never seen a home this beautiful and well kept.

He knows that he does not belong. The Halls lead them into the great room that sits adjacent to the kitchen. Unwilling to hang around, Amber darts upstairs. Seconds later a door SLAMS. Kyle sits Kody on the sofa.

INT. HALL RESIDENCE -- CONTINUOUS

CAROLINE

Amber, come back down here!

The door opens.

AMBER

I don't want to be in the same room
with him. I hate him!

The door slams. The loud CRACK of the door causes Caroline
to jump.

CAROLINE

(to Kyle)

There's going to be a bit of a
transition. We'll work through it.

KYLE

I understand. Mr. and Mrs. Hall, I
want you both to know that I will be
here for you whenever you need me.
Day or night, I don't care. If you
need me, you call me. Here is my
card.

CAROLINE

Thank you Mr. Austin.

He gives her a smile.

KYLE

Ok, let's get down to business. -- I
need to give you these.

He hands them both a small black remote.

JACK

What's this?

KYLE

A remote monitor. This monitor will
allow you to follow his movements
from anywhere. Now, when I say
anywhere, I do mean anywhere. Mr.
Hall, if you're in Bucharest and
notice that he is somewhere he
shouldn't be, all you need to do is
push this button and it will send a
ten watt charge of electricity

through his lower extremities. It will instantly paralyze him.

CAROLINE

Paralyze him? Is that safe?

KYLE

Yes, it will only paralyze him momentarily. A ten-watt jolt is enough to disrupt muscle coordination and that's about it. Anything more than that could cause his heart to fibrillate and kill him.

JACK

(looking at Caroline)

The state pays for this right? -- So how does this thing work?

KYLE

The vendor is trying to sell these so they gave the state twenty-five for use on non-threatening inmates, at no charge. (Taking the monitor from Jack) There is a GPS chip imbedded in his bracelet. It's powered by a nickel cadmium battery which has a five to seven year life so you don't have to worry about it dying out on you. Now, if you press this button it will page me immediately. That way, I can have the police pick him up, from wherever he is, in a matter of minutes. I suggest that you keep this monitor with you at all times. At night, all you need to do is set it to alarm mode. If the prisoner attempts to sneak out of the house while the alarm mode is engaged, as

soon as he breaks a three-foot threshold from any door or window the alarm will activate. He will get the electrical charge and I will be paged.

JACK

How will this thing know if he breaks the what, the three-foot threshold? Not to mention the fact that he will have to go to school.

KYLE

Great question. Later today the vendor will come by to install a number of tiny sensors like this.

He shows them a sensor.

KYLE (CONT'D)

These sensors are on the same frequency as your monitor and will engage simultaneously when alarm mode is activated.

JACK

(looking to Kody)

Can these sensors fail or be removed by anyone?

KYLE

According to the vendor, no. These are the same sensors used at Fort Leavenworth and Riker's Island. They are guaranteed not to fail.

JACK

But what if they are moved?

KYLE

If they are moved or disabled in any way once they are set the monitor will engage and once again our prisoner will receive the electro shock. When he is away from home, at school et cetera just place the sensors on sleep mode. Since you will have the remotes if he isn't where he's supposed to be you can

still send the charge and have him
picked up.

CAROLINE

Amazing.

KYLE

(glaring at Kody)

Isn't it?

CAROLINE

What if the bracelet gets wet? Can
it be removed?

KYLE

It's waterproof and not tight on the
leg. It does have a little play and
it can slide between the ankle to
just below the calf. Only I can
remove it because I have the only
key available outside of the state
board of corrections. If the
bracelet is cut or broken, like with
a hacksaw for example, that won't
get it done. If its cut or
lacerated in any way, once again its
ten watts to the prisoner.

CAROLINE

Really?

KYLE

Absolutely. The prisoner is on
total lockdown with this device.
You and your husband are in full
control. Trust me. -- Do you have
any additional questions?

CAROLINE

(barely audible)
He's not a prisoner.

JACK
(pretending not to
hear)
What of his behavior? If we have
problems?

KYLE
Use your best judgment. If his
behavior gets to a point where he's
unmanageable, just give me a call
and I'll pick him up and take him to
jail. This is a zero tolerance
program. One strike, one slip up
and he's outta here. The judge has
made that very clear to me and I'll
follow it to the letter. I trust
that you will too.

JACK
(looking at Caroline)
Oh, you can bet on that.

CAROLINE
Indeed.

KYLE
Great. I'll check with you each
Friday at ten AM to get a report on
how he's doing. I will file my
findings to the court no later than
four PM each Friday. This is a very
rigid program. I just hope that it
all works out for the best. -- If
you don't have any additional
questions, that's all I have.

JACK
Okay, um no, I guess that's all
right now. We have your card and
we'll call if anything comes to
mind.

KYLE
Ok, with that being said I guess I'm
done here. Mr. and Mrs. Hall I look
forward to working with you. And

once again, I am sorry for your loss.

JACK
Thank you Kyle.

CAROLINE
Yes. Thank you very, very much.

JACK
I'll show you out.

He walks Kyle to the door. Caroline turns to Kody.

CAROLINE
(searching for something to say)
Are you hungry? Can I get you something to eat or drink?

He doesn't respond. Instead he looks to the pictures on the wall.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
You know, if someone asks you a question, you should be kind enough to answer.

KODY
(not looking at Caroline)
I ain't hungry, I ain't thirsty. Leave me alone. -- I don't want to be here.

CAROLINE
But you are here son.

KODY
Don't call me that. I ain't your son.

CAROLINE
No you're not, but all the same, you're here and you're gonna have to deal with this situation with my family and me. Get used to the concept.

KODY
Yeah, whatever.

Jack reenters.

JACK
We got a problem here?

CAROLINE
No, no problem. We were just
talking. -- Let's show him to his
room. -- Kody, follow us.

There's a moment of TENSION as Kody just sits there. He finally relents and follows them upstairs. When they get to the room Jack opens the door and guides him in. The room is still adorned with Noah's personal belongings.

INT. BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

KODY
(taken aback)
You've got to be kidding me.

JACK
This is what you took from us and
this is what you are going to have
to live with.

KODY
Look man -

JACK
(overlapping)
Don't you man me! You are going to
have to live with this and, at some
measure, go through what we've gone
through.

CAROLINE
(overlapping)
Still going through. - This will be
your room and everything stays as
is.

Kody stands there in disbelief.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
Settle in and get some rest. Dinner
will be in a couple of hours. I'll
let you know when it's ready.

KODY

I ain't hungry. Just leave me
alone.

They exit, closing the door behind. He stands in the middle of the room and looks it over. Posters of Torii Hunter, Kevin Garnett and Randy Moss cover the walls. Collections of Spiderman comics are on the desk. His PC is still on and the bed has a pair of jeans on it.

It's obvious that the Halls have not entered the room since Noah's death. He places his duffel and book bag on the bed. He pulls a chair to the bed, sits and opens the book bag. He pulls out an Ipod, puts on headphones and presses play. He leans back in the chair and closes his eyes.

INT. AMBER'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Amber is on her bed sobbing. Caroline knocks on the door.

CAROLINE

Hey, you okay in there?

AMBER

(wiping her face)

I'm okay.

CAROLINE

Can I come in?

AMBER

It's open.

CAROLINE

Oh, honey. It's gonna be all right.

AMBER

I know but I just miss him so much.
I don't want that person living here
-- with us in his room! Why did you
do this?

CAROLINE

I know it seems entirely unfair, but
Noah's gone. We've got to try to
move on, and this is the right thing
to do.

AMBER

But what about...

CAROLINE

(overlapping)

Don't worry about that, I don't. --
Hey, do you remember the last time
your brother was in your room?

AMBER

Do I? He was being such a pest that
day. He was trying his best to
impress Taffney. He had the biggest
crush on her you know. He was just
clowning around something crazy.
The pest.

CAROLINE

(laughing)

Yeah, he was a character. -- You
see, that is what we need to
remember when we think of Noah. How
he loved life, how much of a clown
he was and how, even when he was
being a pest he could still make you
laugh. I know this is very
difficult for you. But, I want you
to know that I'm here for you, I'm
strong, so is your dad -- and so are
you. We'll get through this. I
promise.

Amber nods.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I love you.

AMBER

Love you too.

They hug.

CAROLINE

(wiping her face)

Now, get off your ass and come help
me with dinner.

AMBER

(joking)
Only if I get to spit in his food.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- LATER

Kody is still sitting in the chair listening to his headphones. Jack knocks on the door. He does not hear. Unaware of this, Jack is angered and he slings the door open startling Kody.

KODY
Can't you knock man?

JACK
This is my house. I don't have to knock on any door in my house. Let's go. Soups on.

KODY
I ain't hungry.

JACK
Not good enough. This family always eats together.

KODY
This ain't my family.

JACK
You got that right, but in this household we all eat together. So let's go -- now!

Kody obeys. Reluctantly. He brushes by Jack as he exits the room.

INT. DINING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Everyone is at the table eating. Even Kody. He was obviously starving as he scarfs down his food. A very intense, uncomfortable silence hangs over the room. The only noise is from the scraping of knife and fork against china. No one makes eye contact.

Kody grabs his knife and twirls it. Everyone becomes uneasy every time he touches the knife. Jack keeps a watchful eye but the silence is nearly unbearable.

CAROLINE
The population is only fifty-five thousand in the entire country?

JACK

What?

CAROLINE

Greenland.

AMBER

Not that place again.

JACK

What with the sudden fascination with Greenland? Nothing ever happens there and it's, well you know -- far.

CAROLINE

Precisely. And it's a peaceful country. The Inuit are a very peaceful people. In the country's history they have never waged war and they are very receptive to visitors.

JACK

That doesn't make me want to visit them any more than I did six months ago. Or last week for that matter.

CAROLINE

I looked at some brochures at the travel agency a few days ago. They have some lovely tour packages available, and it's off-season.

JACK

Give me one good reason to visit Greenland of all places.

CAROLINE

Great fishing! Ninety-five percent of the country's exports are fish. They also have some great hunting tours.

AMBER

(sarcastic)

Wow! I just can't wait to go. Can we leave tomorrow?

CAROLINE

I didn't know that we had another comedian in the family.

Everyone's thoughts immediately go to Noah. There is an instant uncomfortable silence.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Um - Ted's office called today. The next appointment is scheduled for Tuesday.

Jack and Amber trade knowing looks. During the entire conversation Kody has been quietly eating with his head down. Jack changes the subject.

JACK

It seems our guest was hungry after all.

CAROLINE

Did you know that Greenland is the world's largest island? The arctic climate is really dry thus the temperatures are uncommonly comfortable.

AMBER

Mom, you sound like a brochure.

Caroline pulls out a brochure from under the table.

CAROLINE

It's funny that you would say that.

They laugh. Everyone but Kody. Sensing his exclusion Caroline tries to connect with him.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Um' Kody. You know you can have seconds.

He does not respond.

AMBER

May I be excused?

JACK

You've hardly touched your food.

AMBER

(looking at Kody)
I've lost my appetite. Besides,
I've got homework to do.

JACK

What are you working on?

AMBER

World history. We're studying the
Boxer Rebellion. I've got a paper
due next week, I really need to get
started on it.

CAROLINE

Sounds interesting. I don't
remember much about the Boxer
Rebellion. Refresh my memory. I'm
assuming the Boxers are more than
people who punch each other.

AMBER

Ha, ha very funny. Well, I've just
started my research on it but, in
China a secret society was created
to like keep the foreigners out or
something like that. There was some
fighting going on or whatever, I
think. I don't know. That's why I
have to read up on it.

CAROLINE

Sounds interesting. What was this
secret society called?

AMBER

They had this cool name. What was
it? - Something like the Shaolin
Warriors or...

KODY

(overlapping)
The Fists of Righteous Harmony.

Kody puts his head down and continues his meal. The Halls
look on, stunned.

AMBER
(glaring at Kody)
I am so out of here.

She gets up and runs upstairs. Seconds later a door SLAMS. Jack and Caroline just look at each other. Stuck in the middle, Kody says nothing.

INT. HALLWAY -- LATER

Kody's door slowly cracks open. He exits the room and heads down the hall. He stops in front of Amber's door, kneels down and slides an envelope under the door. He returns to his room.

INT. BEDROOM -- MORNING

Jack is in the bed asleep. The sound of Caroline vomiting and crying awakens him. He gets up and goes into the bathroom.

JACK

You okay?

INT. AMBER'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Amber finds the envelope on the floor. She opens it and begins to read its contents. She tosses it into the wastebasket.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Kody is sitting at the desk asleep. He has on his headphones.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Caroline knocks on Kody's door. No answer, she enters seeing him asleep at the desk she observes that the bed has not been slept in. She exits.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

The Halls are at the breakfast table.

JACK
Where is he?

CAROLINE

Still asleep.

JACK

Why didn't you wake him? We've got to get him enrolled in school today.

CAROLINE

I'm sure he's exhausted, physically and mentally. I figured I'd give him a few extra minutes. It's such a transition.

AMBER

He's a creep. I hope you don't expect me to hang out with him at school.

CAROLINE

No. I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do. -- How do you think the kids at school will treat him?

AMBER

He's gonna get his ass kicked.

JACK

Watch your mouth young lady! We don't use that kind of language. Not in this house. Thanks to that sound bite you're grounded this weekend.

AMBER

Dad! Mom!

CAROLINE

You heard him.

AMBER

This is so unfair!

JACK

That's enough. Go get ready for school.

She storms out. Moments later a door SLAMS.

JACK (CONT'D)

I really don't know about this. I mean -- this could really backfire on us. She is so fragile right now and it could completely push her in another direction. We've got to be sensitive to her needs and not make her feel slighted in any way. And to be honest I agree with her, the guy is going to get his ass kicked.

CAROLINE

We still have to try Jack. I've talked to Principal Anderson already and he has agreed to help with the transition. He will also keep a close eye on Amber. He's aware of the sensitive nature of what we're doing. I know everyone's gonna hate him for what happened at first but I'm confident things will go more smoothly than we think.

JACK

For all our sakes, I hope so.

CAROLINE

Have you talked to Roy about the job?

JACK

Yeah.

CAROLINE

What did he say?

JACK

He's willing to do it -- for us. Take him by after school.

CAROLINE

Ok. Thank you honey.

She kisses him.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Thank you for everything.

JACK

For you, anything.

They kiss again.

INT. HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Caroline is walking towards Kody's door. It opens, and he exits, dressed and ready to go. He has on his headphones.

CAROLINE
Good morning.

No response.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
You hungry? I made breakfast?

KODY
Ain't hungry.

CAROLINE
Like you weren't hungry last night?

KODY
Whatever.

CAROLINE
Ok, well. -- I'm glad to see you're ready for school. Everything is going to work out just fine.

KODY
Whatever.

She knocks on Amber's door.

CAROLINE
Come on Amber. Let's go.

INT. CAR -- MORNING

The Halls and Kody are silent. Jack is driving.

The car barely comes to a stop before Amber jumps out and heads into the school.

JACK
That's one good thing about this situation. I've never seen her so anxious to get into school.

Caroline smiles and gets out of the car.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'll wait here.

CAROLINE
Jack?

JACK
Right here.

He turns to Kody.

JACK (CONT'D)
You, out, now!

Reluctantly, Kody gets out and follows Caroline into the school.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Caroline and Kody are sitting in PRINCIPAL ANDERSON'S office. He enters.

ANDERSON
Mrs. Hall, good morning, it's good to see you again. How are you?

They shake hands.

CAROLINE
I'm well, thanks.

ANDERSON
I assume that this is Kody.

He extends his hand. Kody refuses to shake. Instead he slumps down in the chair. Anderson takes his seat at the desk.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
As you know, this is a unique situation. We will do our best to help him transition into the environment here at Everson.

CAROLINE
That's comforting to know. I really appreciate your help.

ANDERSON

My pleasure. Mrs. Hall, I will see to it that he gets to class, gets his assignments and gets caught up.

CAROLINE

Ok, but there is the issue with his bracelet.

Anderson reaches into his desk and pulls out a monitor.

ANDERSON

Got it covered. Mr. Austin came by yesterday and gave me all of the details.

CAROLINE

Ok, it seems like you have everything under control.

ANDERSON

I'll be sure to call you if anything comes up.

He gets up and walks Caroline to the door. He whispers something in her ear before she leaves. Kody notices. Anderson returns to his desk.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

(studying Kody's demeanor)
Ok, first things first.

Slumping in his seat, Kody looks away.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Sit up straight young man! Let's get something straight right up front. You don't come into my office with an attitude! There are people here who have committed themselves to helping you when they don't have to. I'm not going to have you come into my school and disrespect folks who are willing to give you a second chance when they don't have to. Everybody knows what

happened, everybody knows that it was an accident and we're all grieving. Nobody hates you; nobody is going to prejudge you. So I suggest that you check the me-against-the-world attitude and look at this not as a punishment but an opportunity.

Kody looks at him with a respect that no one else has seen.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Are we clear?

Kody nods.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Not good enough. I don't speak sign language.

KODY

Yes sir.

A slight pause.

ANDERSON

You know that the kids are going to be tough on you at first.

KODY

I don't care.

ANDERSON

Oh really? Well, what do you care about?

KODY

Nothing.

ANDERSON

You've got to care about something. -- I know what it's like son. -- I've been where you are.

KODY

And that means - what?

ANDERSON

I lost both my parents at a very young age also. I lost my dad to Vietnam, lost my mother to Lupus.

KODY
You an only child?

ANDERSON
That I am.

KODY
Really?

ANDERSON
Really. Kody, listen, this can be a cold world, especially for someone with a cold heart. At your age I can understand your bitterness.

KODY
But?

ANDERSON
But you have to make that bitterness work for you. Make it the fuel that stokes your fire instead of the thing that puts it out. -- I'm not going to sit here and give you a life lecture. You have to find your own way, just don't ever forget that the road that holds your life is paved by everyone you have met or will meet. -- Are you afraid?

KODY
Maybe -- no.

ANDERSON
Are you ready for this?

KODY
Do I look ready?

Anderson pauses and looks him in the eye.

ANDERSON
Let's go.

They exit. Anderson pats him on the back.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Kody follows Anderson as he leads him to his first period class. Anderson hands him his schedule as they walk.

KODY
Math? Just great.

ANDERSON
Not one of your better subjects I see.

KODY
No, not necessarily. I like numbers, I just hate equations. They make me sick. I mean physically, like throw up sick.

Anderson looks at him and keeps walking.

KODY (CONT'D)
Genetics, music appreciation, history, English lit, phys ed. Geez, who made this schedule? Hitler?

ANDERSON
Close, Anderson.

They reach the classroom.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Ok, here's your class. Remember what I said earlier. If you need anything call on me or any of the office staff. Pay attention and behave. I don't want any disruptions.

KODY
Yes sir.

ANDERSON
Welcome to Everson son.

Anderson opens the door, nods at the teacher MRS. OUTZ and leaves. Kody enters.

INT. CLASSROOM -- CONTINUOUS

MRS. OUTZ

Welcome. Come on in. Class, this is Kody. He is new to our school. Let's make him feel welcome.

The class gives a dry, sarcastic greeting.

MRS. OUTZ (CONT'D)

(pointing)
Kody, take the desk near the rear please.

Kody takes the desk near the back of the room. Mrs. Outz resumes the lecture. He sits in front of PEPPER and beside MELANIE. Pepper doesn't waste any time riding him.

PEPPER

Ain't you the sumbitch who ran over Amber's little brother?

Kody ignores.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Hey, Melanie. Ain't this the asshole that killed Noah?

MELANIE

Shhh Pepper! Don't start!

PEPPER

(whispering)
Fuck that. -- Hey punk, I'm gonna kick your fucking ass!

MRS. OUTZ

Pepper, do you have a question?

PEPPER

No ma'am.

She resumes the lecture.

MELANIE

(to Kody)
Ignore him.

INT. CLASSROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Later on during the class.

MRS. OUTZ

I want everyone to complete item six
in your syllabus and be ready for a
quiz later this week.

The bell rings and the students disperse. Pepper follows
Kody.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

PEPPER

Hey shithead!

KODY

You talking to me?

PEPPER

No, I'm talking to Justin fucking
Timberlake!

KODY

Oh, ok. I thought you were talking
to me.

MELANIE

Jesus Pepper, leave him alone! You
can be such an asshole sometimes!

Other students chime in led by STUDENT 1.

STUDENT 1

Yeah, leave him alone man.

PEPPER

Fuck you, you and you! I don't want
no murderers or manslaughterers in
my school.

KODY

Look man, I don't have a problem
with you so you need to back off.

PEPPER

Well, I have a problem with you!
I'm gonna kick your ass!

Pepper takes a SWING at Kody who ducks and sidesteps. He
doesn't retaliate. The other students grab Pepper and
restrain him. A TEACHER enters the hall.

TEACHER

What's going on here? Do we have a problem?

PEPPER
(looking at Kody)
No problem.

TEACHER
(to Kody)
How about you?

Kody and Pepper lock gazes.

KODY
No problem.

TEACHER
Ok, then move along. You're going to be late for your classes.

The students disperse. Melanie approaches Kody.

MELANIE
Don't let him get to you. He's a good guy but he can be a real asshole sometimes.

KODY
No sweat.

MELANIE
What's your next class?

KODY
Um, genetics.

MELANIE
Cool. I have anatomy; we're on the same hall.

KODY
And which hall is that?

MELANIE
Oh yeah, you are new here aren't you. Come, I'll show you.

KODY
Ok, thanks.

MELANIE

No problem. By the way, I'm
Melanie.

KODY

Kody.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Pepper walks around the corner and bumps into Amber.

PEPPER

Hey.

AMBER

Well, what happened?

PEPPER

He didn't go for it. I tried
everything; I even took a swing at
the guy.

AMBER

Shit!

PEPPER

I'm not doing that again. You're
going to get me expelled. Cut the
guy some slack.

AMBER

Cut him some slack? You can't be
serious.

PEPPER

I don't mean it that way.

AMBER

You gonna help me or not?

PEPPER

I wanna help you Amber but I'm not
gonna to risk getting kicked out of
school.

AMBER

Look, all we have to do is get him
to hit you. He can't get into any
trouble or he's going back to jail.

If he hits you, you can press charges and he's out of here.

PEPPER

I'm sorry. But, I can't do it.

Pepper walks away. Amber stands there for a moment punches a locker and walks away.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY -- LATER

After genetics class Melanie is waiting for Kody in the hallway.

MELANIE

Hey you.

KODY

Yeah.

MELANIE

How was it?

KODY

How was what?

MELANIE

Class.

KODY

It was ok. Nothing I can't handle.

They begin to walk.

MELANIE

Groovy.

KODY

Groovy?

MELANIE

Yeah, groovy.

KODY

What's your name again?

MELANIE

Melanie. My name is Melanie.

KODY

Ok, well -- Melanie, people don't say groovy anymore.

MELANIE

I do. I mean, you just heard me. I just said it.

KODY

But that doesn't make it a word. Groovy? What kind of word is groovy anyway? It's not really a word.

MELANIE

It is too a word.

KODY

No, it isn't.

MELANIE

Yes, it is.

KODY

Define it.

MELANIE

I don't have to justify groovy.

KODY

I'm not asking for justification. I'm asking for a definition.

MELANIE

Ok, ok, - groovy means, you know, like marvelous, wonderful, excellent. You know.

KODY

That still doesn't make it a word.

MELANIE

God! I can't believe we're debating the validity of groovy.

KODY

Use it in a sentence.

MELANIE

No.

KODY

Chicken.

MELANIE

Oh so now I'm being peer pressured
into using groovy?

KODY

No, you're not being pressured. You
used it in a sentence not a minute
ago. Unfettered.

MELANIE

Unfettered?

KODY

Groovy word ain't it.

MELANIE

Ha, ha, very funny smart aleck.

KODY

Where am I going? Better yet, where
are you going?

MELANIE

I have I.S.C.S.

KODY

And that is, what?

MELANIE

Advanced chemistry. -- What do you
have?

KODY

(struggling to
pronounce the name)
Music appreciation with Mr. um -
Kowalkowski?

MELANIE

Kowalkowski. Everyone calls him Mr.
Ski, though. You'll like him, he's
really cool.

KODY

Don't you mean groovy?

MELANIE

(rolling her eyes)
Shut up about groovy already!

KODY

Wrong. It's our word now.

MELANIE

Oh really?

KODY

Really. Where's my class by the way?

MELANIE

(smiling)

If I told you that wouldn't be too groovy. Find it yourself.

KODY

Thanks. You could have given me help, but instead you gave me so much more.

MELANIE

I gave you groovy.

Melanie walks into her class. Kody looks around. The hall is nearly empty; he's late for class. He takes off running.

He gets to MR. KOWALKOWSKI'S (SKI) class a little late. The door is locked. He bangs on the door. Kowalkowski answers.

SKI

This class is closed.

KODY

I'm new. I didn't know where the class was.

SKI

So you're Kody?

KODY

Yeah.

SKI

Ok, I'll let you in just this once. Don't be late again.

He lets him in. The door closes behind him.

TITLE CARD

Later that day.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD -- AFTERNOON

Kody is standing on the curb outside the school waiting for Caroline. He looks to his left and sees Amber get into a car with her friends. The car pulls off.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Caroline is in her car. She is coughing heavily.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Kody is now sitting on the curb waiting for Caroline. She pulls up shortly thereafter.

CAROLINE

I'm so sorry. I got held up.
Where's Amber?

KODY

Don't know. I saw her get into a
car with some girl.

CAROLINE

Wonder where she went. I assume
she didn't tell you where she was
going.

KODY

You assume right.

CAROLINE

Well I'm sure she'll be there when I
get home. But right now I need to
get you over to the Burger Hut.

KODY

The Burger Hut? Why?

CAROLINE

That's where you are going to work
for four hours per day during the
week and eight hours on Saturdays.
Jack is a close friend of the owner,
and he agreed to take you on.

KODY

Come on, I don't want to work at a
fast-food joint.

CAROLINE

Not negotiable. Part of this whole thing is to instill a sense of responsibility in you. Plus it'll be good for you to work and earn some money.

Silence.

KODY

This or jail huh?

CAROLINE

(angered)

Jail! Do you want to go to jail!
Huh? Do you want to go to jail!

KODY

Whatever.

She slams on the brakes.

CAROLINE

(irate)

Listen to me you little motherfucker! It's either this or jail! Where do you want to go cause I'll take your scrawny ass straight to jail right now!

He says nothing. Eyes watery, she glares at him for a moment and then she drives on.

INT. BURGER HUT -- AFTERNOON

Caroline delivers Kody to the Burger Hut. The owner ROY BURGER is there to greet them.

ROY

Caroline, hello, how are you? It's great to see you again. How are you holding up?

CAROLINE

Hi Roy, I'm fine, thanks. It's good to see you again too. You're going to have to come over for dinner one day soon.

ROY

That sounds great. So, is this my
guy?

CAROLINE

Yes, Roy this is Kody.

ROY

(extending his hand)

Hello Kody.

KODY

Hey.

ROY

Well, let's get to it. -- Jack
filled me in on everything and it's
gonna be fine. You can head on into
the back. There's an apron back
there, grab that and put it on.
I'll be back in a second to get you
started.

KODY

Ok.

Kody heads into the back and stops to ask Roy a question.
He overhears Roy.

ROY

Now, Caroline, really how are you
doing?

CAROLINE

I'm fine Roy, really. Never felt
better.

ROY

(pausing)

You have never been a very good
liar.

Kody decides to head on back.

CAROLINE

I'm -- I'm coping. It's everything.
All of this is still very new to me.
I mean, what do you do? When do you

ever accept or get used to losing a child?

ROY

That's the thing. You don't, you're not really supposed to I think. There's not one universal way to deal with the loss of a loved one, especially a child. But I think when the moment arrives...

CAROLINE

(overlapping)

The moment. Everybody tells me about the moment. Well, if you ask me, I'm not sure if I want that moment to arrive. -- My heart hurts. -- Where was I when...

ROY

(overlapping)

Don't do that to yourself, it wasn't your fault.

CAROLINE

Thank you for agreeing to take him on Roy. I really appreciate it. I'll be back here to pick him up at eight.

She exits.

INT. BACK ROOM - BURGER HUT -- CONTINUOUS

Kody enters the back room where he meets TELLY and NATHAN.

NATHAN

I can't believe you man. You are such a scumbag.

TELLY

How does that make me a scumbag?

I'm not a scumbag.

(to Kody)

Dude, am I a scumbag?

KODY

Man, I don't know.

Telly does a double take.

TELLY

Who the fuck are you?

KODY

Kody, who the fuck are you?

TELLY

Kobe Bryant, what's up my man?

Telly extends his hand to shake. Kody obliges.

KODY

It's Kody. K-O-D-Y. Kobe Bryant was named after the steak.

TELLY

What kind of steak?

KODY

(sarcastic)

Um, the Kobe steak you know.

TELLY

Nah, I don't know.

NATHAN

Asshole, it's that funky Japanese beef.

KODY

Yeah, that's it.

NATHAN

Hey man, excuse his manners. He's a scumbag.

(extending his hand)

I'm Nathan.

KODY

Hey man.

TELLY

Hey, you're that dude aren't you?

KODY

Yeah, I'm that dude.

TELLY

DAMN! - Yo, Nate! - This, -- this, he's the dude who did that thing, you know, Amber's brother!

NATHAN

Yeah, yeah I know. That was a real bad scene man. What's up with that?

KODY

I don't wanna talk about it.

NATHAN

At least you don't have to live with this scumbag.

TELLY

Your mothers a scumbag.

NATHAN

Don't talk about my mother man!

TELLY

Dude, his mom is like fat and shit. His mom is so fat; her blood type is Haagen Daas.

Kody chuckles.

NATHAN

Oh you got jokes? Laugh motherfucker laugh! At least my mom got both her titties.

TELLY

Ha nigger, your mom is so stank, she gave sourdough a yeast infection!

NATHAN

Who you callin' nigger? Nigger!

TELLY

I'm callin' you a nigger. Yo, this motherfucker so black he sweats motor oil.

KODY

Man, I don't even want to get involved in this.

NATHAN

Bitch, your breath is so bad, every time you talk your teeth duck!

TELLY

Man, your teeth are so yellow, you spit butter!

NATHAN

Yo mama!

Telly grabs Nathan and they begin to tussle. Kody doesn't know if they are serious or playing. Melanie enters.

MELANIE

Cut it out guys! God, do you ever do any work around here? We've got customers out there!

TELLY

Shut up!

MELANIE

Telly! Dad's gonna pop a vessel if you don't hurry up and get out there!

She turns to Kody.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Hello.

TELLY

Oh, hey, this is Kobe. Kobe damn Bryant.

NATHAN

He's that dude.

MELANIE

I know.

KODY

We gotta stop meeting like this.

MELANIE

What are you doing back here?

KODY

Um, the owner, boss guy told me to come back here.

TELLY

He's new, you know he gonna bust suds. - Wait a minute, you know this guy?

MELANIE

He's my brother and my God he's
bright!

KODY

We met at school today.

Telly glares at Melanie and tosses Kody an apron. Roy enters.

ROY

Hey folks, the action is out there.
Why is everyone in here?

TELLY

We were just...

ROY

(overlapping)
Save it! You were just doing
nothing as usual. Get back to work!

They exit. Nathan pushes Telly on the way out. Roy turns to Kody.

ROY (CONT'D)

So...

KODY

(overlapping)
Yeah, so.

ROY

No need to be uncomfortable son.
You're among friends.

KODY

Look, I don't mean any disrespect
but I've had enough lectures and
pats on the back for today. I don't
want to talk about it anymore. I'm
here to work. Put me to work!

ROY

Don't waste your hostility on me
son. Just come here everyday ready
to work hard. I won't ever ask you
to do more than anyone else around
here. Your working here is not a
punishment; so don't look at it that
way.

KODY

So what do you want me to do?

ROY

What every new employee does here on day one.

KODY

Bust suds?

ROY

Bingo!

Roy smiles.

Later.

Kody is out back dumping trash. Melanie appears in the doorway and startles him.

EXT. BACK ALLEY -- EVENING

KODY

Every time I turn around it seems, there you are.

MELANIE

Perhaps I'm the angel on your shoulder.

KODY

I need one huh?

MELANIE

You could say that.

KODY

Actually I just did.

MELANIE

You are such a smart ass.

KODY

It's not my ass that's smart, it's my mouth.

MELANIE

Mouth, ass, whatever, I can't make the difference.

KODY

Did you know that I'd be working here?

MELANIE

No.

KODY

Liar.

MELANIE

What?

KODY

You just lied.

MELANIE

I did not!

KODY

Yeah, you did. - Want to know how I know?

MELANIE

What are you talking about?

KODY

Your eyes.

MELANIE

My eyes? My eyes what?

KODY

They rolled up and to the right.

MELANIE

Excuse me?

KODY

Your eyes. They rolled up and to the right. It's an involuntary reflex action. The right side of your brain is the imaginative side. When you are searching or fabricating your eyes automatically roll up and to the right. That's how the cops know when someone is lying during interrogation. Got it?

MELANIE

Ok, I knew. But I didn't know until after school. -- Am I lying about that too?

KODY
Nah, I believe you.

MELANIE
What did my eyes do that time?

KODY
It doesn't matter. -- I'd better get back to work before your dad kicks my ass.

He blows by Melanie. She pauses for a second and then follows.

INT. CAR -- NIGHT

Kody is in the car with Jack.

JACK
So how was it?

KODY
Ok I guess. I don't know. I'm not much for burger work.

JACK
Hard work builds character.

KODY
Resiliency.

He looks to Kody.

JACK
What would you know about resiliency?

KODY
More than you think.

JACK
Ignorance and apathy.

KODY
I don't know and I don't care.

He looks to Kody again.

JACK
You're smarter than you look.

KODY
I'm smarter than you think.

INT. DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

Dinner at the Hall household. Kody is still quiet and withdrawn.

AMBER
I still can't believe I met Prince!

CAROLINE
Weren't you Johnny on the spot?

AMBER
For real. I mean, he is so something else! He was so nice. Taffney almost threw up but he was like so normal. I didn't think that famous people did stuff like pump their own gas.

JACK
Bet you didn't know your mom was a Prince fan?

AMBER
No way!

JACK
No lie. In our younger days we used to listen to Prince, The Time, Sheila E., all of the Minneapolis soul artists. Heck, we even went to some shows at First Avenue.

AMBER
Mom!

CAROLINE
I'm guilty as charged.

AMBER
Do you have any of his albums?

CAROLINE

No. I got rid of all that stuff
years ago.

JACK
So you thought.

CAROLINE
What?

JACK
I boxed all that stuff up. It's
stashed in the attic.

AMBER
No kidding!

JACK
Yeah, but it's all on vinyl though.

AMBER
What's vinyl?

CAROLINE
You have got to be kidding me.

AMBER
Huh?

JACK
Before the compact disc, we used to
listen to records that were recorded
on black vinyl discs. They were
played on a turntable.

AMBER
Like the Deejays use?

Sensing his exclusion. Caroline attempts to involve Kody in
the conversation.

CAROLINE
Kody, what kinds of music do you
like to listen to?

KODY
(surprised)
-- All kinds.

CAROLINE

Like?

KODY

Wu Tang.

JACK

Woo what?

Amber is put off with the shift of the conversation towards Kody. She pounces to regain the attention.

AMBER

The Wu Tang Clan. They're a hip-hop group. Dad, you are so -- old!

JACK

It's just a generation gap. You wouldn't know a lot of the artists that your mom and I listened to either.

AMBER

Oh yeah?

JACK

Yeah.

AMBER

Dad, you know I'm a music fanatic! - Tell you what; let's play a game. Make a bet.

CAROLINE

Amber.

JACK

No, it's ok. You're on young lady. What's the bet?

AMBER

You name a song and I'll name the artist.

JACK

Any artist?

AMBER

Within reason. Come on! - Give me three. If I get them all right then I'm not grounded anymore. Deal?

JACK
Yeah, ok. Deal.

They shake on it. Caroline looks interested. Kody tries to hide his interest.

KODY
Can I go?

CAROLINE
Come on, hang around. This might be fun.

AMBER
Come on dad. Let's do it!

JACK
Ok. Hey, what do I get when you lose?

AMBER
I'm not going to lose but, you name it.

JACK
(thinking)
You get to wash both our cars once a week for a month.

AMBER
Ok, deal. Let me have it.

JACK
Ok, here goes.
(pausing)
Who sang, Dream On?

AMBER
Oh, that's easy. Aerosmith.

CAROLINE
Way to go Amber. Woo-hoo!

Amused with Caroline. Kody smirks.

AMBER

Next.

JACK

Um, let's see. -- Who sang Wild World?

AMBER

That's easier! Cat Stevens!

CAROLINE

That's two! Let's go Amber. One more!

JACK

Ok, time to take the gloves off.
(pausing, rubbing his chin)
Who sang -- Sample and Hold?

Amber screeches to a halt.

AMBER

Dad! - Mom! That is so unfair!

CAROLINE

You made the rules.

JACK

Hah!

Amber pauses, THINKING. Jack begins to hum the Jeopardy time song. Stumped, Amber looks up and sees Kody mouthing the name of the artist to her. She reads his lips.

AMBER

Neil Young?

CAROLINE

Amber!

JACK

How did she know that?

AMBER

I guessed! Oh my God! I did it!

Amber leaps from her chair, hugs and kisses her parents. She runs out of the room and up the stairs.

AMBER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm not grounded, I'm not grounded!

Seconds later, a door SLAMS.

Kody is self-satisfied. Caroline cuts a look towards him. She knows what happened.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- LATER

Kody is in his room sitting at the desk. He has yet to touch Noah's bed. He has on his headphones. Oblivious, he does not notice Amber standing in the room. He turns, sees her and is startled.

AMBER

I hate you.

KODY

I know.

AMBER

I mean, I really fucking hate you!

Silence. Amber just stands there looking at him.

AMBER (CONT'D)

What were you listening to?

KODY

(sarcastic)

Prince.

AMBER

Yeah, right. Very funny.

KODY

Actually, I'm listening to -- It doesn't matter.

AMBER

I really hate you!

KODY

I really know.

She turns to walk out. She stops and looks back at him.

AMBER

Neil fucking Young?

KODY

Neil fucking Young.

Another pause.

KODY (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

AMBER

You think this changes anything?
You think helping me answer a
fucking question or writing notes
for a fucking paper and sliding it
under my door changes things?

KODY

No, I don't.

AMBER

You're goddamn right it doesn't!

KODY

I just dug the Boxer Rebellion.

AMBER

Who gives a shit about the Boxer
Rebellion, who gives a shit about
Neil Young! Who gives a shit about
you!

More silence.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Let me tell you something about my
brother!

KODY

Look, Amber.

AMBER

(overlapping)
Shut the fuck up!

Tears begin to stream down her face.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Noah wanted to be a doctor. -- He,
he wanted to be a doctor and help
people who couldn't help themselves.
People like you! And you took that
away from him!

He does not reply. Instead he looks her directly in the eye. His eyes are filled with tears. Amber looks at him and for the first time she actually sees him.

More silence. A silence that says a thousand words.

She turns and walks out.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Kody is sitting at the desk listening to his headphones. The digital clock on the desk reads 1:17AM. He gets up and walks out of the room, down the hall, down the stairs and into the kitchen. He looks into the fridge. Seconds later he hears a scratching at the door. It's Caroline's cat Squirmy. He goes to the door and notices that the pet door is jammed. He opens the door to let Squirmy in; the cat sees him, is startled and runs. Kody steps over the threshold trying to grab Squirmy when a JOLT of electricity pierces through his legs. He lets out a SCREAM and crumples to the ground face down. The bracelet around his leg begins to beep and vibrate.

INT. THE HALL'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

The remote begins to beep awaking Caroline and Jack. They both jump up. Jack grabs the remote and SPRINTS downstairs. Caroline follows. Amber is also awakened and comes out of her room.

INT. GREAT ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Everyone comes downstairs to find Kody crumpled in the doorway. He is temporarily paralyzed from the waist down and groaning in pain.

JACK

I knew the son of a bitch would try something!

Jack grabs him and drags him back in.

CAROLINE

(emotional)

Kody, why?

KODY

I wasn't trying to run away! I was trying to let the cat in!

CAROLINE

Jack?

JACK

He's lying! I'm calling Austin now!

Before Jack can call the phone rings. It's Kyle.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yeah.

KYLE

(filtered)

Mr. Hall, this is Kyle. Kody's bracelet, what's happening?

KODY

I'm telling you, it was the cat! I swear! The pet door is jammed and he couldn't get in!

KYLE

(filtered)

Do you need me to come get him? I can have a unit over there in a matter of minutes.

Jack looks to Caroline. She is on the floor helping Kody. He looks to Amber, she shrugs.

KYLE (CONT'D)

(filtered)

Mr. Hall!

Kody looks to Jack. Seconds later Squirmy sprints in and runs to Amber.

KYLE (CONT'D)

(filtered)

I'm on my way!

JACK

No! Everything is okay. It was a false alarm.

KYLE

(filtered)

Are you sure?

JACK

Yes.

KYLE
 (filtered)
 Is the kid okay?

JACK
 Yeah, he's fine. Everything is
 under control. I'm sorry for the
 mix up. I'll call you back if I
 need you.

KYLE
 (filtered)
 Ok. Call me at any time.

JACK
 Thanks.

There is a moment of silence as Caroline holds Kody.

KODY
 I can't feel my legs.

Jack and Caroline pull him up. Placing his arms around
 their shoulders, they carry him upstairs. Amber follows.

Two weeks later.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- MORNING

Kody awakens in Noah's bed. He gets up, sits at the desk
 and puts on his headphones.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Kody sits in Mrs. Outz class. Pepper is being Pepper,
 bothering Melanie. Kody is paying attention to the lecture.

INT. CLASSROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Amber is in history class. She has a copy of the paper on
 the Boxer Rebellion. She turns it in.

INT. HALLWAY -- LATER

Kody exits Genetics class and Melanie is waiting for him.

KODY
 Hey.

MELANIE
 Are you ready to talk to me now?

KODY

Huh? What do you mean?

MELANIE

You barely say a word to me in class or at work.

KODY

Look...

MELANIE

(overlapping)

You've been here for weeks now, and you still act like you don't know me. Are you angry with me or something?

Walking, talking.

KODY

Not hardly. Look, I've got to get to class. Ski is going to lock me out if I'm late.

MELANIE

Meet me for lunch?

KODY

Maybe. I've really got to go. Catch me after class.

MELANIE

Okay. Hey, by the way, I'm having a party this weekend at my house. You're invited and I won't take no for an answer.

KODY

(pointing at the
bracelet, walking
away)

But this thing might.

MELANIE

See what you can do.

Kody backs away looking at Melanie. As she turns to walk away, she gives him a smile. He smiles back. The bell rings making Kody late for Ski's class.

KODY

Shit!

He takes off RUNNING. Melanie laughs and takes off in the other direction.

Kody gets to Ski's room. The door is locked. He knocks. Ski comes to the door, looks through the window, sees Kody and walks away. Locked out, Kody walks away.

INT. SCHOOL -- LATER

Lunch period and unable to find Melanie, Kody is walking around alone. Some kids still look and point, some snicker, some whisper things to each other as he walks by. He sees Melanie sitting, talking with some friends. He sees Amber with Pepper, talking. Navigating the hallways he happens upon Ski's room. The room is empty, or so he thinks. He goes in and closes the door. He sits at the piano and pulls out his headset and puts it on. He begins to listen to music when he looks to his right and sees a violin lying on the table. He looks around, sure that no one else is around, and he takes the violin and begins to play. Expertly. He gets immersed in what he's doing as his level of playing is extraordinary. The CD player/headset is still playing. He has been listening to a classical violin piece the entire time. He is playing the exact piece. Unknown to him, Ski has been in his office asleep. He is awakened by Kody's playing. He looks out of the office window and is shocked to see that it is Kody playing the piece. He exits the office.

SKI

Hey!

Kody is startled.

SKI (CONT'D)

How long have you been playing?

He stops playing, and puts the violin down. He grabs his stuff and heads for the door.

KODY

(on his way out, not
looking back)

I'm sorry I missed class. I was
late.

He exits, closing the door with a THUD leaving Ski in a state of surprise.

SKI
(to himself)
That was great.

INT. BURGER HUT -- AFTERNOON

Kody is in the kitchen, washing dishes. Telly enters.

TELLY
Sup?

KODY
Yeah.

TELLY
What's the business?

KODY
Bustin' these damn suds man. My
hands are starting to prune.

TELLY
Rite of passage at the Burger Hut
dude.

KODY
No doubt.

TELLY
Hey, did Mel invite you to the party
this weekend?

KODY
Yeah.

TELLY
You comin' right?

KODY
Don't know. Doubt it.

TELLY
Nah dude, don't be like that. You
gotta come, gotta come, it's gonna
be like off the chain yo.

KODY
Off the chain huh?

TELLY

Like a motherfucker. Ya gotta come.

KODY

Really man, I doubt it. If I do come I'd probably have to come with Amber. And Amber - I don't think she likes me very much - for obvious reasons.

TELLY

It's not like you'd have to hang out with her once you get there. There's gonna be a lot of hotties there too. Besides, you'd get your motherfuckin' mack on. The honeys dig that silent bad boy type. Ya' know what I mean?

KODY

Perhaps.

The two are stopped by a COMMOTION in the front of the store. They hear yelling.

Melanie is at the counter with an irate CUSTOMER.

MELANIE

Ma'am, you ordered ten Burger Deluxe meals with cheese. I have the order right here in front of me.

CUSTOMER

No, no, no, I ordered ten Burger Deluxe, two with the works, two with bacon and six with just cheese. How could you screw this up!

MELANIE

(getting agitated)

Ma'am I have your order right here see! This is what you faxed in and as you can clearly see it just says ten Burger Deluxe with cheese!

CUSTOMER

You need to get some of that snippiness out of your voice young lady! I'm not paying for this order!

MELANIE

Ma'am.

CUSTOMER

Where's your manager? I don't want to speak to you anymore you twit! Get me your manager! Now!

MELANIE

Dad!

Roy enters from the rear.

ROY

What's going on here?

MELANIE

Dad, this customer has a complaint.

CUSTOMER

(overlapping)

You're damn right I have a complaint! You didn't get my order right!

ROY

Calm down ma'am, I am going to have to ask you to keep it down and to not use profanity. There are families with children in here.

CUSTOMER

I don't give a shit if the goddamn Brady Bunch is in here! I have a van full of hungry Mighty Mites outside! I faxed in my order and it's not right! If I take these burgers I'm not going to pay for them!

ROY

(showing her the fax)

Ma'am I saw your order and we prepared ten Burger Deluxe meals with cheese per this order.

CUSTOMER

I don't want to see that shit! I want my goddamn order!

ROY

Ma'am, I am not going to ask you again. Please refrain from using profanity in my place of business! If you can give us a couple of minutes we will redo your order.

CUSTOMER

Well I just don't have a few minutes! Can't you imbeciles get anything right around here!

Roy blows a fuse.

ROY

Well take your ass to Hardee's then!

CUSTOMER

What did you say to me!

ROY

You heard me, I don't stutter! Get the hell out of here!

CUSTOMER

Well I never!

ROY

And that's probably why!

The customer storms out. The other customers in the Hut begin to applaud. Roy hugs Melanie.

ROY (CONT'D)

Damn that felt good!

Kody and Telly have been watching through the window. Melanie sees Kody. They make eye contact, and he backs away.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- EVENING

Kody has the headphones on. He is reading a book on violin playing. He senses Amber in the room.

KODY

You don't knock do you?

AMBER

You wouldn't hear me anyway. What are you listening to all of the time?

KODY

Nothing. Just some stuff.

AMBER

What kind of stuff?

KODY

Nothing that would interest you.

Amber sits on the bed facing Kody and just looks at him. Saying nothing.

KODY (CONT'D)

Is there something you wanted to talk to me about?

AMBER

I talked to Melanie. She told me that she invited you to her party on Saturday night.

KODY

Yeah, and?

AMBER

You going?

Kody pauses. Sensing that Amber does not want him to go.

KODY

Yeah, I'm going.

AMBER

You know that mom's gonna make you go with me, don't you?

KODY

Yeah, I figured as much. Don't worry; I won't cramp your style. I'll stay out of the way.

She notices the book.

AMBER

Why are you reading a book on violins?

KODY
Class assignment.

AMBER
Really?

KODY
Yeah, really.

AMBER
Why don't I believe you?

KODY
Maybe because you don't trust me.

AMBER
Oh, am I supposed to?

KODY
No, you're not.

AMBER
Can I ask you a question?

KODY
What if I say no?

AMBER
Then I won't ask it.

KODY
What's the question?

AMBER
I feel really stupid asking you of
all people this question but, how can
a girl tell if a guy really likes
her?

KODY
Whoa, this is like some big brother
question. Are you sure you wanna
ask me?

AMBER
No, I'm not sure. But, you're here
and you're a guy. I think. So I'm
asking.

KODY

Well, since you put it like that, how could I refuse? - If a guy knows you but ignores you then he probably likes you. If he's a shy guy that is.

AMBER

Really? No way!

KODY

Yes way.

AMBER

Well this guy is rather shy. But I always get the weirdest feeling that he's like looking at me when I'm not looking at him you know.

KODY

Yeah, I do know. If he likes you then he'll probably get one of his buddies to set him up.

AMBER

Are you kidding me? I mean, his friend Steve told Taffney just today that he likes me. This is just like way, way, way too cool! So what should I do? Should I say something to him or should I wait for him to say something to me?

KODY

That depends.

AMBER

On what?

KODY

The personality of the guy we're dealing with here. Look, if he's too shy to really say anything then I seriously doubt that he's going to step to you at the party. But then again...

AMBER

(overlapping)

What?

KODY

If you're overly aggressive it could scare him off.

AMBER

So, what should I do?

KODY

Create a situation.

AMBER

What do you mean?

KODY

Well, you could initiate a conversation with him and make it seem totally spontaneous. Like, for example, you could bump into him and be like "Hi, I didn't know that you would be here tonight" and kind of like generate a conversation from that.

AMBER

I don't know about that. I really don't want to let on to him that I like him. I want him to come after me, you know?

KODY

You can't have your cake and eat it too, you know? Tell you what, when we get there, point this guy out and I'll set it up for you.

AMBER

What are you going to do?

KODY

Don't worry about that; just trust me.

AMBER

But I don't trust you.

KODY

Oh yeah, that's right. Well just follow my lead.

AMBER

I mean, like how am I going to know what to do?

KODY

I'll give you a sign.

AMBER

What kind of sign?

KODY

I'll wear my Twins cap. When we get there I'll have it on forward. When I turn it to the back that will be your sign.

AMBER

And then I do what?

KODY

Just follow my lead, ok? Trust me.

AMBER

But I don't trust you.

KODY

I know.

They both laugh. The sound of their laughter might as well be the sound of ice breaking.

Down the hall Caroline is in her bathroom vomiting.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Kody is in Ski's class listening to a lecture. At the end of class he gets up to walk out.

SKI

Mr. Walker, can I have a word with you please?

KODY

I really can't Mr. Kowalkowski. I'm going to be late for my next class.

SKI

No you're not. This is your lunch period. Come hither.

Kody follows him into his office and sits on the sofa.

SKI (CONT'D)

So, tell me. How long have you been playing violin?

He does not reply.

SKI (CONT'D)

Come on son, answer the question.
It's just the two of us in here.
It's not gonna kill you to tell me.

Another pause.

KODY

Since I was six.

SKI

Who taught you?

KODY

My foster mother. She was a retired music instructor. She played violin, and I kind of just picked it up from her. She died when I was eight, but I've been playing ever since.

SKI

So you're saying that outside of your foster mother you've had no other formalized instruction?

KODY

That's what I'm saying.

SKI

Amazing, simply amazing.

KODY

What do you mean?

SKI

Kody, you are a prodigy. -- The, the piece that you were playing is extremely complex. Highly experienced, classically trained violinists have trouble playing a piece like that and you were able to play it with barely a second thought. That is, astounding!

KODY

Yeah?

SKI

Absolutely! -- So, what do you plan to do with this skill of yours?

KODY

Nothing man. It's just a hobby you know, something I do.

SKI

Wrong. Dead wrong Kody. This is your calling. This is what you were put on this earth to do.

KODY

Perhaps it's not what I want to do.

SKI

Do you own a violin?

KODY

No.

SKI

So how do you practice?

Kody pulls out his headset.

KODY

I don't practice; I listen.

SKI

You play totally by ear?

KODY

Yep.

SKI

So you don't read?

KODY

You mean music? No, no way.

SKI

Astounding.

KODY

Enough with the verbs okay! I don't want to play violin for a living. I'm no prodigy; it's just what I do.

SKI

It's a shame to let your talent go to waste Kody. We should all be so lucky to have this kind of gift to share with the world.

KODY

No.

SKI

Ok, I'm not going to beat you over the head with this regardless of how talented you are. But, I tell you what. The violin in there, its yours.

KODY

I don't want it.

SKI

All the same, it's yours if you want it. I'll even go a step further. If you want, you can come in here during lunch or after school and play as much as you want. Uninterrupted. Okay?

KODY

Don't do me any favors.

SKI

It's not a favor Kody; it's an opportunity.

KODY

Opportunity. Now there's a word I've heard a lot recently.

He gets up and walks out.

INT. HALL RESIDENCE -- EVENING

Jack returns from a business trip. Caroline greets him.

JACK

Hey.

CAROLINE

Hey. I'm glad you're home. How was the flight?

Jack pulls her close and gives her a deep passionate kiss.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Oh, did you miss me?

JACK

Always. How are you?

CAROLINE

The same. No better, no worse.

JACK

That's a good thing. Where's Amber?

CAROLINE

Out with Taffney. They're getting ready for a big party that Melanie is having over at their house.

JACK

Party huh? So Roy finally gave in I see.

CAROLINE

Apparently.

JACK

And where's our distinguished guest?

CAROLINE

If you're talking about Kody, he's upstairs.

JACK

Any problems?

CAROLINE

No, none. However, Kyle did call. He will be here on Monday to check on things.

JACK

Great, now I need a drink.

CAROLINE

I bet you're exhausted. Sit, I'll fix it for you.

JACK

Now that would be perfect.

He sits. Caroline goes to the kitchen to fix a drink. They continue to talk.

CAROLINE (O.S.)
So how did the meetings go?

JACK
(loosening his tie)
Fine I suppose. The contracts still haven't been finalized at this point but it's more of a formality now. Everything is still ahead of schedule.

CAROLINE (O.S.)
So will you have to leave again?

JACK
Yeah, I will. I still haven't visited the Portland site. I would have gone yesterday but I was too tired and really wanted to get back here as soon as possible. I didn't want to leave you here to deal with everything alone.

She returns with the drink.

CAROLINE
You know, you don't have to worry. I'm okay. Don't let the business suffer worrying about me.

JACK
I know you're fine. I just wanted. I just, I just wanted to be here.

He pulls her onto his lap and they kiss again. Passionately. Kody enters from the stairs. They hear him and stop.

KODY
I'm sorry. I was just going to get a bottle of water. Is that okay?

CAROLINE
No it's okay. Go ahead.

He walks into the kitchen. Jack follows.

JACK

Hey.

KODY

Hey.

Kody drinks from the bottle. Uncomfortable silence.

KODY (CONT'D)

When did you get back?

JACK

Just now.

KODY

What is it you do?

JACK

I own my own business.

KODY

Really? What kind of business?

JACK

It's called, Hall International Distribution. We have a number of different functions but our primary business revolves around the purchase and distribution of electronics and software domestically, in Europe, Asia and the Far East.

KODY

That sounds really complex.

JACK

Somewhat. But, it's what I do. -- Tell you what, come by the office one day and I'll show you around. Play your cards right and I might even give you a job.

KODY

That sounds cool.

More uncomfortable silence for a few minutes, each waiting and searching for the next thing to say. Finally, Jack just walks out.

INT. CAR -- LATER

Amber, Kody and TAFFNEY are on the way to the party. Taffney is driving. Kody is in the back seat, the music is BLASTING. They pull in front of the house.

TAFFNEY

What time do you guys have to be home?

AMBER

Midnight.

TAFFNEY

Ok. Meet me back here at 11:30 if we get separated.

AMBER

Ok.

KODY

Yeah, sure.

They get out of the car and walk to the front door. Amber and Kody are walking behind Taffney.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE BURGER HOME -- CONTINUOUS

AMBER

(whispering)

Hat to the back right?

KODY

Yeah. Just be sure to point him out to me.

AMBER

Yeah, I'll find you.

Taffney knocks on the door. Seconds later Telly answers.

TELLY

Get your ass in here!

TAFFNEY

Hi Telly, good to see you again too.

They enter. Telly grabs Taffney's ass and she pushes him away. He gives Kody a pound.

INT. MELANIE'S PARTY -- CONTINUOUS

TELLY

Glad you came dude. Hang witcha' homey.

Kody goes with Telly. He looks back at Amber and she mouths the words "*find me*". He nods.

Telly takes him to a back room where Nathan and some other guys are playing Xbox and drinking beer.

TELLY (CONT'D)

Hey everybody this is my motherfucker Kody, give him a shout.

The guys respond in a slang fashion. Telly hands him a beer.

KODY

No thanks man, I don't drink.

TELLY

(looking surprised)
Suit yourself.

He SLURPS from the beer.

KODY

Why are you guys cooped up in here?

TELLY

Man fuck them motherfuckers! This is where the real motherfuckin' party at!

Nathan pulls out a blunt.

NATHAN

Bam!

TELLY

Fire that shit up nigga!

NATHAN

No motherfuckin' doubt nigga!

Kody's taken aback.

KODY

Telly, man, your folks are gonna smell that shit man. You can't blaze in here.

TELLY

The hell I can't! It's all good in my motherfuckin' neighborhood! The folks don't ever come down here. Don't sweat it. Hit this shit nigga!

KODY

Nah, no thanks. Hey, I'm gonna head back out here and catch up with Amber and her friend.

TELLY

Aight playa. Hey that Taffney's a bad motherfucker. Tell her I'm gonna holla at her later.

KODY

No doubt.

Kody exits.

TELLY

Hey! Puff-puff pass motherfucker!

INT. LIVING ROOM - PARTY -- CONTINUOUS

Kody reenters the living room where everyone is mingling. Loud music is playing, normal party atmosphere. Melanie spots Kody and approaches.

MELANIE

Hey you.

KODY

Hey.

MELANIE

So what made you decide to come?

KODY

(sarcastic)

I came to see you.

MELANIE

You are such a liar.

He shrugs.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

All the same, I'm glad you're here.
Can I get you something to drink?
We've got snacks in the kitchen.

KODY

No, I'm ok. -- But, what's the deal
with your brother?

MELANIE

Kody, if you look up the word
slacker in the dictionary you'd see
a big picture of him right there.

KODY

No doubt. I'm talking about one of
those big eight by ten color joints
too!

They laugh. Kody sees Amber out of the corner of his eye.
She motions for him to come over.

KODY (CONT'D)

Hey, excuse me for a second.

He heads over towards Amber. Melanie takes it as a brush
off.

KODY (CONT'D)

(to Amber)

Yeah.

AMBER

There he is.

In the corner by the fireplace stands BRADY.

KODY

Ok.

AMBER

What are you going to do?

KODY

Just follow my lead. Remember, hat
to the back.

AMBER

Ok, don't embarrass me.

KODY

Trust me.

He winks at her and heads over toward BRADY who is standing there with STEVE.

KODY (CONT'D)

(to Brady)

What's going on guy?

BRADY

Dude.

STEVE

Sup?

KODY

I ain't makin' no noise kid. Hella party huh?

STEVE

It's aight. Do we like know you or something?

KODY

Nah, you don't. But, check this out.

(to Brady)

There's this friend of mine, Amber Hall who really likes you.

BRADY

No way!

KODY

Yeah. I'm serious. Look, she wants to talk to you but she's all shy and shit and she's not really sure if you like her. So, she asked me to hook her in with you on the sneak tip but since I'm not one for playin' fuckin' games I'm just gonna to give it to you straight. She likes you and if you like her here's your chance.

BRADY

Yeah I do like her.

KODY

Good, that helps. Now I'm gonna to turn my hat to the back and that's going to be her sign to walk by and act like she didn't know you were here. What I suggest you do is either talk with her or tell her to get lost. Either way I really don't give a shit. You down?

STEVE

Now that was real son.

He gives Kody a pound.

BRADY

It's all good dude. I got this.

Kody turns his hat to the back and walks off. Seconds later Amber approaches.

AMBER

Brady, Steve, hi!

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Kody enters the kitchen. Pepper is there with HEATHRE and CYD.

PEPPER

Dude.

KODY

Come on Pepper, don't start with me tonight.

PEPPER

Don't worry about that man. I ain't got no beef with you.

KODY

For real?

PEPPER

For real.

(pointing to the girls)

Hey, meet Heathre and Cyd.

CYD

Hi.

HEATHRE

Hey.

KODY

Hey, I'm Kody.

HEATHRE

Yeah I know. You go to Everson right?

KODY

Yeah. Everybody knows me, eh?

CYD

Yeah, you were all over the news. Who doesn't know. That was a real bad scene and shit.

HEATHRE

Yeah, we were real sorry to hear about Amber's little brother. She's so cool.

CYD

Yeah, and her family is fucking loaded.

KODY

Yeah, whatever. I don't wanna talk about that.

PEPPER

Hey dude, I need to apologize for giving you such a hard time.

KODY

Don't sweat it. I wasn't bothered. Let's just chalk it up to a little new-kid hazing.

PEPPER

Hey girls, give us a second ok.

CYD

Ok. Nice meeting you Kody.

He nods. They walk away.

PEPPER

Look Kody, man, I just wanted you to know that Amber put me up to picking that fight with you.

KODY

Yeah, I know.

PEPPER

Really?

KODY

Yeah. I was born at night but it wasn't last night.

PEPPER

So, no hard feelings right?

KODY

Right.

They shake hands.

PEPPER

You hunt?

KODY

No. Why?

PEPPER

Me, my dad and some friends are going hunting in the morning. I was going to invite you along.

KODY

Oh, nah I can't call it. Never been hunting, 'preciate it though.

PEPPER

Right on.

They shake again.

KODY

I'll catch you later dude.

PEPPER

Yeah.

Kody leaves the kitchen. As he navigates his way through the mass of people he sees Melanie talking with some

friends. He walks by, she notices but does not acknowledge him.

He takes a seat on the sofa. He notices Amber and Brady holed up in a corner talking. He feels a rush of satisfaction. Heathre approaches and sits next to him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - PARTY -- CONTINUOUS

HEATHRE

John Mayer? Who listens to John Mayer?

KODY

Actually, I do.

HEATHRE

Why?

KODY

Why not? He's good.

HEATHRE

Yeah if you're in love or something. This is a party you know. They need to pop on some Lil' Jon, some Nelly, some Luda you know. Get this place kinda crunk up in here!

KODY

(looking at Heathre
like she's crazy)
This is Minnesota. People in Minnesota don't get crunk.

HEATHRE

We're trying! -- Gee, can you just dig the superficialness going on in this place tonight?

KODY

Kind of deep for party talk don't you think?

HEATHRE

I mean, half of the rich kids in here are drug heads. The other half are probably selling them. Rich

kids are a totally different breed
of animal you know.

KODY

Yeah I know. But whose problems
would you rather have?

HEATHRE

Meaning?

KODY

I mean, would you rather have rich
kid problems or poor kid problems?
Rich kids worry about shit like acne
and finding the right mechanic to
trick out their BMW. But, but poor
kids are worrying about how they're
going to find the money to go to
college and shit like that. Which
would you prefer?

HEATHRE

Neither.

KODY

I take it you're not rich?

HEATHRE

No, my folks are loaded.

KODY

Then why?

HEATHRE

(overlapping)

Because I'm not superficial.

KODY

What makes you so different?

HEATHRE

I just see things for what they
really are.

KODY

And you are going to enlighten me at
a house party?

HEATHRE

Not enlighten, inform.

KODY

Anyhoo.

HEATHRE

Anyhoo, teens are among the most ruthless animals on this planet Kody. I mean, think about it. If you're poor, rich kids...

KODY

(overlapping)

Like you.

HEATHRE

Yes. Rich kids like me never let poor kids forget how poor they really are.

KODY

(overlapping)

Or how rich you are.

HEATHRE

Exactly. We flaunt our parent's wealth like its some badge of honor and we walk around with this sickening aura of entitlement that elevates us beyond the common folk. We treat everyone with such disdain. Teachers, salespeople, the police, it doesn't matter. It's like we have this I-have-more-than-you-so-I'm-better-than-you mentality.

KODY

And you are telling me this, why?

HEATHRE

No reason. Just making conversation.

KODY

No need to dispense your guilt on me, I don't hate rich kids. You shouldn't hate what or who you are. You can control what you say or do. Just because you or your parents

have X amount of wealth, it doesn't
make you any better than anyone
else. You just have more options.
Just remember, there are no rich
people in foxholes.

HEATHRE

(in awe)

Deep. So fucking deep.

He sees Melanie walk through the living room to the back
room. He gets up to follow her.

KODY

Hey, excuse me a second.

Heathre looks on, disappointed.

Melanie walks out back to the pool area. The pool is
covered with a tarp. It's a cold Minnesota evening yet she
does not have on a jacket. Kody joins her.

EXT. POOL AREA -- CONTINUOUS

KODY

You wouldn't pass the initiation.

MELANIE

What?

KODY

You must purify yourself in the
waters of Lake Minnetonka.

MELANIE

Oh save it Kody! I've seen Purple
Rain a thousand times.

KODY

(sensing her anger)

What is your deal man?

MELANIE

(angry)

My deal? No, what is your fucking
deal! All I've ever done is be nice
to you and you treat me like I have
a fucking swastika on my forehead or
something.

KODY

Swastika? What a time for a Nazi reference.

MELANIE

Cut the fucking sarcasm ok! I don't have the patience for it tonight! Why did you even come here anyway?

KODY

You invited me remember?

MELANIE

Well I just uninvited you. Please leave!

KODY

Why are you mad at me?

She shoots him a COLD glare.

KODY (CONT'D)

Ok, maybe I deserve that look. But what did I do?

MELANIE

Nothing! Just leave!

KODY

No.

MELANIE

I'm sure Heathre is waiting for you.

KODY

I just met her tonight Melanie. Why do you care anyway?

MELANIE

I don't care. Do what you want with whomever you want.

KODY

Melanie. All of this, everything that's happened over the last few weeks has been like a whirlwind to me. Just think, I've gone from a life in prison to living with this wonderful yet grieving family whose grief I'm responsible for! I mean,

everyone has been so great towards me and I don't know how to take all of this in. Principal Anderson, Mrs. Outz, Ski, your dad, you. I mean everyone has pretty much gone out of his or her way to make me feel comfortable.

MELANIE

Kody.

KODY

(overlapping)

I just don't understand it, I can't understand it. It's not understandable! It's not that I don't like you because I do. You're very beautiful, nice and intelligent. I guess I just can't see why you would be interested in someone like me. I don't understand any of this. You hardly even know me. We hardly know each other!

MELANIE

Kody, you've got to stop beating yourself up about this. Everyone knows and understands that it was an accident. You didn't mean for any of this to happen and what is so wrong with people wanting to help you? Isn't that what the world is supposed to be about?

They pause.

They approach each other and kiss gently.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

All of this was meant to happen.

They kiss again. This time more passionately.

INT. HALL'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Caroline and Jack are in bed making love. Passionately.

JACK
The things you miss.

CAROLINE
I know exactly what you mean.

JACK
When did we get old?

CAROLINE
I have no idea. Somewhere between
the kids and the minivan I guess.

They laugh.

JACK
Tell you what; let's recapture our
youth.

CAROLINE
No how would we do that?

JACK
Remember 83'?

CAROLINE
Now how could I forget?

JACK
Let's go back there.

CAROLINE
Are you serious?

JACK
Sure I am.

CAROLINE
How could we do that? Now?

JACK
Is there a better time?

CAROLINE
We can't leave. Not now. Not with
Amber and Kody here and we sure
couldn't take them with us.

JACK

No, I don't mean now as in tonight,
this weekend or the next. But I do
mean let's plan to make it happen.
Sooner than later.

CAROLINE

In the spring?

JACK

Perfect.

They begin to kiss again. They hear the door open
downstairs as Amber and Kody arrive.

JACK (CONT'D)

Great.

CAROLINE

I'd better go check on them.

Jack turns over and goes to sleep.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- LATER

Kody is at the desk with his headphones on. Amber enters.

AMBER

Kody.

KODY

(startled)

Yeah.

AMBER

Thanks.

A long pause. He doesn't quite know how to react.

KODY

No problem.

She smiles at him and exits.

INT. BURGER HUT -- DAY

Kody is washing dishes. Melanie enters.

MELANIE

Kody.

KODY
Melanie.

MELANIE
Hey.

KODY
Hey.

MELANIE
How are you?

KODY
I'm good.

Uncomfortable silence.

MELANIE
Now isn't this uncomfortable.

KODY
Yeah. A little I guess.

More silence.

MELANIE
I'm really glad that you came to the party.

KODY
Yeah, it was kinda groovy.

MELANIE
Ha, ha! Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha!

KODY
Huh?

MELANIE
You said groovy! Ha, ha! You said groovy!

KODY
Ah, I was just testing you.

MELANIE
Oh sure you were. Whatever!

They laugh.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

So where do we go from here?

KODY

I have no idea.

MELANIE

Where would you like to go?

KODY

I really don't know. Tell you what; let's just take things one day at a time. Let's not complicate things by overanalyzing or attaching labels to whatever it is we're doing.

MELANIE

I couldn't agree with you more.

They embrace and kiss.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing tonight? Can you get away?

KODY

I don't know. I doubt it. The Halls are pretty strict and its kind of hard to get around with you know what attached to my leg.

MELANIE

Yeah. You don't think that they would let you out with me?

KODY

I don't know.

MELANIE

Well can't you ask?

KODY

I suppose. Sure.

MELANIE

It couldn't hurt.

Telly enters, says nothing and stares at Kody and Melanie.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(agitated)

What?

TELLY
Soylent Green is people!

He exits.

KODY
That is one crazy motherfucker.

MELANIE
I know.

INT. KITCHEN -- EVENING

Caroline is in the kitchen working on dinner. Kody enters.

CAROLINE
Hello there.

KODY
Hi.

CAROLINE
How was work?

KODY
Lots of soap, lots of suds. Fun.

CAROLINE
Singing the Burger Hut blues I see.

KODY
Yeah, tell me about it.

CAROLINE
Well it was nice of you to volunteer
to work on your day off.

KODY
That's me, the responsible team
player.

He goes in the fridge and grabs a bottle of water.

KODY (CONT'D)
What's for dinner?

CAROLINE
Oh, nothing special. Roast beef,
steamed rice, peas and corn. Now
doesn't that just rumble your gut.

KODY

Sounds good.

CAROLINE

What's your favorite dish?

KODY

I don't really have a favorite. I don't know.

CAROLINE

Look at it this way. If you were on a deserted island and could have only one meal, what would it be?

KODY

Really, I don't know. That's tough. I don't know, but I guess if I had to choose it would be macaroni and cheese.

CAROLINE

Really?

KODY

Sure.

CAROLINE

Well I guess I'll have to make sure we have it real soon.

KODY

No big deal.

CAROLINE

It's no trouble.

Kody wants to ask her about getting out for the night with Melanie but he doesn't have the guts to do so. He turns to walk out.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Kody?

KODY

Yeah.

CAROLINE

Tell me about your parents.

KODY

Huh?

CAROLINE

Did you know them at all? Do you know anything about them?

KODY

(pausing, thinking)

Some, not a whole lot. I don't remember too much.

CAROLINE

What do you know?

He pauses. A nerve has been touched.

KODY

My dad, about him I know next to nothing other than he was in the military. The Air Force. He was a heroin addict. He died of AIDS in 1990.

CAROLINE

I'm sorry.

KODY

My mom. She was a schoolteacher and she died when I was four.

CAROLINE

How did she die?

KODY

She hanged herself.

Caroline is speechless for a moment.

CAROLINE

Oh Kody.

KODY

I know.

He exits.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- EVENING

Later that evening after dinner, Kody is in his room.
Caroline knocks on the door.

CAROLINE

Kody?

No answer.

She opens the door. He has on his headphones. Sitting at the desk, he has his head in his lap. She enters and taps him on the shoulder startling him.

KODY

Oh, hey. I didn't hear you come in.
What's going on?

CAROLINE

You have a visitor.

KODY

Huh? Who?

Melanie enters.

MELANIE

Hi.

He perks up.

KODY

(to Melanie)

Hey.

(to Caroline)

Is this okay?

CAROLINE

Sure it is. I'll leave you two
alone.

She exits and closes the door.

MELANIE

I guess they wouldn't let you out.

KODY

I didn't ask.

MELANIE

Oh? Why not?

KODY

I was going to but after talking with Mrs. Hall I got kinda bummed out.

MELANIE

Why didn't you call me?

KODY

I don't know. I was going to. What made you decide to come here?

MELANIE

Oh, I was just in the neighborhood and...

KODY

(overlapping)

And you're lying.

MELANIE

So what. I just wanted to see you. Is that so bad?

KODY

No, it's not bad.

They kiss.

MELANIE

What were you doing?

KODY

Nothing. Just listening to some music and veggin' out a little.

MELANIE

Cool.

KODY

How long can you stay? It is Sunday night you know.

MELANIE

Don't remind me. I can't stay long. Actually, my dad thinks I'm at Wal-Mart picking up school supplies.

KODY

And you're risking your neck to see
little ol' me?

MELANIE

Now don't you feel special?

KODY

Special normal or short bus special?

MELANIE

Special normal you jerk.

KODY

I bet your dad would nut up if he
knew you were here.

MELANIE

Not really. I think he likes you.

KODY

You think?

MELANIE

Sure I do. I know that he
appreciates you. He said it himself
that you are the best dishwasher
that he's ever had.

KODY

That's me, sud buster
extraordinaire.

She sees a classical music cd case.

MELANIE

What's this? Is this what you're
listening to?

He snatches it from her hand.

KODY

So what if I am.

MELANIE

There's nothing wrong with listening
to classical music. I'm surprised
that you like it.

KODY

What you don't know about me you can
just about cram into the Metrodome.

MELANIE

But what I do know, I like.

She sits on his lap and kisses him.

INT. MUSIC ROOM -- DAY

Lunch period and Kody enters the music room. Ski sees him
come in and exits locking the door behind him. Not a word
is uttered. Kody picks up the violin and begins to play.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Caroline is in her doctor's office. He is explaining
something to her. She begins to cry.

INT. BURGER HUT -- DAY

Kody is in the back eating a burger. Roy enters.

ROY

Good food ain't it.

KODY

Now as far as burgers go, this
sucker stacks up number one.

ROY

Roy's special herbs and ingredients.

KODY

Angus?

ROY

Hah! Don't believe it. That Angus
thing, it's just a marketing ploy to
get more people to buy burgers.
There's not one bit of difference
between Angus or any other grade of
beef.

KODY

Mr. Burger I tell ya, you learn
something new every day.

ROY

Isn't life great?

KODY

Why are you always so happy?

ROY

I wouldn't call what I am happy.
More like actualized.

KODY

I don't understand.

ROY

Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
According to psychologist Abraham
Maslow, man's ultimate goal is self-
actualization. Me? I have self-
actualized.

KODY

Now I really don't understand.

ROY

Son, early on in my life I took a
long look at myself and determined
that the one thing that I wanted to
do with my life above all else was
to own a business. That is the
thing that would bring about my
ultimate happiness and as you can
see, that is what I have done with
my life. Self-actualization.

KODY

I can't even begin to say what it is
that I'd like to do with my life.

ROY

How old are you? Sixteen right?

KODY

Yeah, sixteen.

ROY

Then you should have some idea.

KODY

Really I don't.

ROY

Just take a moment and think. If
you, at this moment could choose one
thing to do that would completely

satisfy you. While making a living
at it to boot. What would it be?

Kody hears violins in his head.

KODY

Not a clue.

ROY

It'll come son. Sooner than later I
hope.

KODY

This is a really good burger.

Melanie enters, sees Roy and stops.

MELANIE

Oh, I didn't know that you were back
here.

ROY

I guess that means its time for the
old man to get lost.

He pats Kody on the back and exits.

KODY

God this is a good burger.

MELANIE

I made it myself.

KODY

I am so impressed.

MELANIE

Kody, Mrs. Hall called. She asked
if I could give you a ride home
tonight.

KODY

Oh? What's wrong? Where is she?

MELANIE

She didn't say. She didn't sound
like anything was wrong though.

KODY
Ok, that's cool.

He finishes the burger.

KODY (CONT'D)
Well, it's back to work I guess.
We're leaving at eight right?

MELANIE
Yeah, sure. I'll let dad know.

KODY
Ok, thanks.

MELANIE
(pausing)
Are you ok?

KODY
Yeah.

MELANIE
Are we ok?

KODY
We're fine. Why?

MELANIE
I don't know. You seem kind of
distant.

KODY
It's not that. Your dad just said
something to me that was very
profound that's all. He gave me
something to think about.

MELANIE
Not the self-actualization speech?

KODY
Oh, you've heard it before?

MELANIE
Who hasn't? I think everyone who
works here, has worked or will work
here is going to get that speech.

KODY
He makes a good point though.

MELANIE

Sure he does but my dad, he just fails to realize that everyone doesn't think like he does. I mean come on, we're teenagers. Give us a break.

ROY (O.S.)

Mel!

MELANIE

Gotta go. Be ready at eight ok.

KODY

Ok.

She exits. Kody stands there.

EXT. CAR -- EVENING

Kody and Melanie are in her car in front of the Hall house. They are making out.

KODY

I gotta go.

MELANIE

No, don't.

KODY

I've got to. I'm sorry.

They kiss again.

KODY (CONT'D)

I'm really glad I met you.

MELANIE

So am I.

KODY

I want to thank you for not judging me and giving me a chance.

MELANIE

I know you're not a bad guy. The moment I saw you, I saw good in you. You have a lot to give to people. You're -- you know, different.

KODY

Is that a good thing?

MELANIE

It's a great thing.

KODY

Let's go out next weekend.

MELANIE

Sure, where?

KODY

A movie?

MELANIE

Sure. I'd like that.

KODY

Ok. I'll square it with the Halls.

MELANIE

Promise?

KODY

Promise.

They kiss again. Kody gets out of the car and walks into the house. Kyle Austin is sitting in the great room with Caroline, Jack and Amber.

INT. HALL RESIDENCE -- CONTINUOUS

Hey. What's going on?

CAROLINE

Kody, Mr. Austin just dropped by to check on you and see how things were going.

KYLE

Yeah. I know that there was an incident over here. Something about you trying to let the cat in and it caused the bracelet to activate. I know you got quite a jolt. Are you feeling ok? No permanent damage?

KODY

Yeah man, I'm fine.

KYLE

Other than that, I'm pleased to hear from the Halls that things have gone well. Your behavior, interaction, ability to follow orders and responsibility ratings have all received favorable marks from the Halls.

KODY

Well, I'm trying.

KYLE

That's what I expect. The judge will be especially pleased. I'm sure you won't be surprised to hear that he had his doubts. Ok, well I'm not going to keep you all any further. As always, just give me a call if you need anything.

CAROLINE

Mr. Austin. We were just getting ready to sit down for dinner. Would you care to join us?

KYLE

No thanks. I don't want to put you to any trouble.

CAROLINE

It's no trouble. Have you eaten?

KYLE

No I haven't, but...

JACK

Then it's settled. Please Kyle, join us.

KYLE

In that case, I would be delighted.

Kody, less than thrilled.

INT. HALL'S BEDROOM -- LATER

Jack and Caroline are in bed. Caroline is reading a book and Jack is working on his laptop. Kody knocks on their door.

CAROLINE

Who is it?

KODY (O.S.)

Kody.

Jack and Caroline look at each other.

CAROLINE

Come in.

Kody enters fully dressed with his backpack.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Kody, what is it? What's wrong?

KODY

Mr. and Mrs. Hall -- I want you to call Kyle and have him come pick me up.

JACK

What? Why?

KODY

I don't deserve to be here. I don't deserve any of this. I've taken too much from you.

CAROLINE

No! You stop right there Kody!
Right there!

KODY

Mrs. Hall.

CAROLINE

(beginning to weep)
No! Don't you dare!

JACK

Do you really want to leave?

KODY

Mr.

JACK

(overlapping)
Honestly.

KODY

I killed your son. I killed Noah.
Accident or no accident, I am the
reason why he is not here today!
It's not right! Me, being here,
it's just not right!

Caroline continues to weep.

JACK

Kody -- I'm going to tell you
something about Noah.

(Pausing)

He was the kind of person that never
met a stranger. He was this
boundless ball of energy that had a
smile and a personality that could
take over a room and warm the
coldest heart.

Tears begin to stream down Kody's face. Amber enters.

JACK (CONT'D)

He was someone who even at age
fourteen, he knew exactly what his
destiny was in this world. He
wanted to help people. He was the
most giving; caring person and he
made us very, very proud of him.

KODY

And I took him away from you.

CAROLINE

No you didn't Kody! Fate took him
from us. It was an accident.

KODY

But why? Please tell me why?

CAROLINE

Why doesn't matter! You are here
for a reason. Just like Noah!
During his short time on this Earth
he touched the lives of so many
people. He may have only been
fourteen, but, in those fourteen
years he lived, gave and experienced

more than most people experience in
a lifetime!

KODY

But I hurt you!

CAROLINE

Of course you hurt us! But we
understand Kody! We understand that
it was an accident. We know that
you didn't mean for it to happen!
But you have also got to know
something. We need you Kody!

KODY

Why do you need me?

CAROLINE

To heal Kody! To heal!

She begins to sob uncontrollably. Jack comforts her.

KODY

I'm not Noah. I can't replace him.
I wish it were me who died instead
of him. He didn't deserve this!

AMBER

Kody. If you leave now you will be
taking from us all over again. We
don't expect you to replace Noah.
No one can and no one ever will but
you are giving us something by being
here.

KODY

Giving you! What could I possibly
give this family?

AMBER

Hope!

Kody begins to sob.

KODY

I didn't want to be with my foster
parents anymore. I was so unhappy
there. I just had to get out of
there. I had to be anywhere besides
there. I've passed by this
community everyday for the last two

years and I always wondered what it would be like to live in a place like this. -- On that day, I had no intention of coming here but for some reason I stopped. I took my foster parents car and I knew that they would report it stolen so when I saw the security officer I panicked and just took off. I knew that the streets were slick but I just panicked! When I lost control of the car I never saw Noah, I never saw him! Oh God, I never even saw him!

Sobbing uncontrollably he falls to the floor.

Caroline joins him on the floor and holds him. Amber joins in. Seconds later Jack joins in. They all hug and cry.

MONTAGE

Kody and the family growing closer.

Kody at school in class.

Kody on the violin.

Kody with Melanie.

Caroline at the doctor's office.

Caroline getting sicker.

Springtime.

Kody and the family getting closer.

The family gives Noah a birthday party.

END MONTAGE

TITLE CARD - 3 MONTHS LATER

INT. MUSIC ROOM -- DAY

Ski is in his office on the phone to Julliard School. He is attempting to contact DR. DONALD GOODMAN a friend of his from college.

SKI

Yes this is Stan Kowalkowski calling
for Dr. Goodman.

VOICE (O.S.)
One moment please.

GOODMAN (O.S.)
This is Dr. Goodman.

SKI
Donald, hello, this is Stan.

GOODMAN (O.S.)
Stan! You son of a gun, how are
you?

SKI
I'm good. Still trying to save the
world, one musician at a time.

GOODMAN (O.S.)
When are you going to take me up on
my offer to come work with students
who really do care about music?

SKI
One day when my mission is complete
and the world is safe for democracy.
Hey Don, I'm actually calling for a
favor.

GOODMAN (O.S.)
Sure. What can I do for you?

SKI
Don, I have a student here who is an
absolute prodigy on the Violin. I'd
like for you to take a look and
consider him for the early entry
program at Julliard.

GOODMAN (O.S.)
Stan, I'd like to help you but I've
committed all of my scholarships for
next year. I'm sorry but I just
don't have the room.

SKI

Don, perhaps you did not hear me.
This kid is a prodigy. You have got
to hear him.

GOODMAN (O.S.)

I don't have the room, or the
funding.

SKI

Is there anything that you can do,
anyone that you could talk to?

GOODMAN (O.S.)

The only thing that I can do is
contact the other department heads
and inquire as to who may have an
unused open scholarship. But, I'm
telling you, at this stage in early
spring most of next year's will have
been committed already.

SKI

Don, listen to this.

He puts on a recording of Kody playing violin.

GOODMAN (O.S.)

What was that?

SKI

That was my student.

GOODMAN (O.S.)

Was that Wagner?

SKI

Not just Wagner, but THE Wagner
piece!

GOODMAN (O.S.)

You have got to be kidding me!

SKI

No kidding Don. This kid is the
real thing!

GOODMAN (O.S.)

Ok, I'm going to talk to some people
and I will call you back today!

SKI

Great! I'll be here.

He hangs up and pumps his fist.

Springtime. Kody and the family have grown to care for one another. He has become an integral part of the family. His interaction with the family is natural and crisp. His relationship with Melanie is strong and loving. His violin playing is exceptional, as his relationship with Ski has matured into a friendship of respect and trust.

INT. MUSIC ROOM -- DAY

After school. Kody is in the music room playing the violin. Ski enters.

SKI

Could you possibly play any better?

KODY

Huh?

SKI

Don't answer that, rhetorical
question.

KODY

Oh, ok.

Kody resumes playing. Ski observes, listens. Kody hits a bad note.

KODY (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

SKI

You keep missing that transition. I
heard that same note yesterday.
Isn't that Wagner?

KODY

Yeah. I've been working on it.
I'll get it.

He tries again and misses.

KODY (CONT'D)

Shit!

SKI

What's giving you the biggest problem?

KODY

It's the transfer, I don't know I'm just not quick enough to keep time on this particular piece. Its frustrating the hell out of me. I'm just half a step short every time. It's a killer move and...

SKI

(overlapping)

Yeah and that half step ruins the whole piece.

KODY

This is just an impossible transition. I can't do it. I wonder how he did it.

SKI

If anyone can do it Kody it's you.

KODY

Nice to know you believe in me because right now I'm not so sure.

SKI

Do you think you'll be sure on May 11th?

KODY

What?

SKI

Kody, last week I placed a call to an old colleague of mine at Julliard and I told him.

KODY

(overlapping)

Told him what?

SKI

I told him that I had a prodigy on my hands. That he should take a

listen to and offer a full scholarship to study classical violin at Julliard. He said he didn't have any scholarships available, but when I let him hear a sample of your work, he agreed to arrange a private audition for their admissions board. They will be here on the 11th to hear you play, and I want you to do this piece.

KODY

Why?

SKI

What?

KODY

Why in the hell would you do something like that without asking me first? What gives you the right?

SKI

Kody, it's Julliard.

KODY

I don't give a fuck who it is! (pointing at his bracelet) What makes you think that I would even want to go to there?

SKI

It's one of the most prestigious fine arts schools in the world Kody. You have a tremendous gift and you owe it to yourself to use it to take you as far as you can possibly go. Julliard can play a big part in that. It's the opportunity of a lifetime and an opportunity that you shouldn't, you can't pass up!

KODY

I don't want to go to Julliard and I'm not auditioning so you might as well call your friend and tell him so.

SKI

Kody.

KODY

I'm not doing it and that's final!
I thought you were my friend.

SKI

I am Kody. That's what I'm doing
here, being your friend. It's ok to
let me help you.

KODY

Look man, I don't need your help. I
don't want your help. I've been
doing just fine on my own and it's
going to stay that way!

SKI

No you haven't.

KODY

What?

SKI

You haven't been doing just fine on
your own. If you had, you wouldn't
be here. But you have a chance to
change all that, to take control of
your life. If you don't use this
talent, you're not just letting
yourself down; you're letting down
everyone who has helped you,
everyone who sees you as more than
just another kid with a sob story!

He grabs his stuff and walks out slamming the door behind
him.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - BURGER HUT -- DAY

Kody and Melanie are in the alley behind the Burger Hut.

MELANIE

Why didn't you tell me you played
violin?

KODY

Now you? How do you know?

MELANIE

Ski told me. Why didn't you tell me?

KODY

I don't know. I didn't want anyone to know. It was just sort of my thing to do, you know?

MELANIE

I knew there was something. I think it's great.

KODY

Thanks. I'm sorry for keeping it from you.

MELANIE

Yeah, you think you know a person. So, what are you going to do?

KODY

I don't know. Geez, it's the last week of April already and the audition is scheduled for May 11.

MELANIE

I think you should do it. Ski would not have gone out of his way to make this happen if he didn't think you could do it.

KODY

Yeah and what if I get the scholarship?

MELANIE

Then you take the scholarship.

KODY

Melanie, Julliard is in New York.

MELANIE

So? After the changes you've been through these last few months, New York will be a piece of cake. Besides, I've always wanted to go to New York.

They smile at each other, and then Melanie puts her head on his shoulder.

INT. DINING ROOM -- EVENING

The Halls are at the table readying for dinner. Kody is still upstairs.

JACK

I'm starved. Where's Kody?

AMBER

He was in the bathroom.

CAROLINE

Get him down here please.

AMBER

(yelling)

Kody! Get your butt down here!
We're hungry!

No response.

AMBER (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Kody!

CAROLINE

Amber Nicole Hall! If you don't
stop yelling in this house! Just go
up there and get him.

Amber gets up to head upstairs. Suddenly the sound of a violin fills the room. Everyone looks at the stairs and it's Kody walking down, playing. Masterfully. They are all speechless as they watch and listen. He finishes and says nothing.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

That was beautiful. I had no idea.

AMBER

Awesome.

Jack, aghast.

CAROLINE

Truly amazing. How long have you been playing?

KODY

Almost ten years now.

CAROLINE

Why haven't you told us about this?

KODY

No good reason. It's just my thing you know.

CAROLINE

Who taught you?

KODY

My foster mother.

CAROLINE

I don't know what to say. So this is what you're always listening to? What brought this on?

He sits.

KODY

Since I started at Everson, my music teacher Mr. Kowalkowski has allowed me to use the music room to practice. Well, he has now taken it upon himself to arrange an audition with Julliard to potentially receive a scholarship for next school year.

CAROLINE

Kody, that is wonderful news. When is the audition?

KODY

May 11th at the school.

JACK

You're going to do it aren't you?

KODY

I don't know. I doubt it.

JACK

Why?

KODY

Um, Julliard is in New York and New York is like, far. I can't go that far, especially with this thing around my leg. I'd get paralyzed everywhere I go.

CAROLINE

Yeah. That would be a problem wouldn't it?

JACK

Maybe, maybe not. I'll call Kyle and ask him. Julliard is a very prestigious school and if you have the opportunity to study there you should be allowed to take it.

KODY

I still don't know if I'd want to go.

CAROLINE

Kody?

KODY

Hear me out. Look, for the first time in my life I feel like I actually belong somewhere. Like I'm part of something, a family.

CAROLINE

And you will always be a part of this family. It doesn't matter if you're in New York or Tokyo. You're one of us now. Besides, we'll come for a visit; it's a great reason to come to New York.

AMBER

Yeah. Shopping!

CAROLINE

Do it Kody. It's time you stopped running from yourself. You obviously have the talent to make this happen.

JACK

Yeah, go for it. We'll be there to support you one hundred percent.

KODY

Ok. I'll do it.

CAROLINE

Great!

She gives him a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I am so proud of you.

KODY

Thank you. Thank you all, for everything. I guess I better go call Ski.

He exits. They all look at each other with pride.

AMBER

Mom! I'm hungry.

INT. KODY'S ROOM - DAYS LATER

Kody is practicing the Wagner piece and still having trouble with it. Jack walks by the room and stops.

JACK

Trouble?

KODY

In a big way. I can't nail this transition. It's too complex for me.

JACK

What's giving you the most trouble?

KODY

All of it.

JACK

Well you've got five days before the audition. Are you going to be ready?

KODY

At this point I really don't have much of a choice. I'll be ready. I've got to be.

JACK

Don't worry, you'll do just fine.
You have all of our support.

KODY

Yeah and the pressure that goes
along with it.

JACK

I talked to Kyle. He said that if
this works, he can convince the
judge to let you free or put you on
probation at the very worst.

KODY

That's great. Thanks!

Suddenly they hear a scream from Amber.

AMBER (O.S.)

Oh my God! Dad!

Jack and Kody race downstairs to find Caroline collapsed in
the kitchen, unconscious.

JACK

Oh my God! Caroline! Quick, Kody,
call 911!

Jack takes her into his arms and holds her. Amber is on the
floor weeping. Kody is on the phone with 911.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA -- NIGHT

Kody and Amber are in the waiting area. Jack is in the room
with Caroline.

KODY

How come no one told me?

AMBER

She didn't want you to know. She
didn't want anyone to know.

KODY

Leukemia? What is that anyway?

AMBER

It's a form of blood cancer. It has something to with the body's inability to produce enough white blood cells to fight infections. I don't know. I don't want to know. I just don't want my mom to die.

KODY
How long has she known?

AMBER
It's been about two years now.

KODY
Is it fatal?

AMBER
I don't know. I guess. It's cancer.

Jack exits Caroline's room and approaches.

AMBER (CONT'D)
(beginning to cry)
Dad?

He holds her. Says nothing.

AMBER (CONT'D)
No! No! No!...

KODY
Is she?

JACK
No. She's in a coma. The doctor expects her to come out of it in the next eight to twelve hours.

KODY
Is she going to be alright?

JACK (CONT'D)
We don't know Kody. I'm going to be honest with both of you. It doesn't

look good. The cancer has reached an advanced stage. Bone marrow transplants are no longer possible. The medications that she has been taking have proven ineffective and so has chemotherapy.

AMBER

So she?

JACK

I'm afraid so.

Amber begins to weep uncontrollably. Kody is nearly catatonic.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA -- LATER

They are all still in the waiting area. Kody and Amber are asleep. She has her head on his shoulder. Jack is watching TV. A nurse comes to him.

NURSE

Mr. Hall, your wife has awakened from the coma. She is asking for you.

JACK

Can I go in now?

NURSE

Yes, we've examined her. She is stable.

He goes into the room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT

JACK

Hey.

CAROLINE

Hey.

JACK

You gave us quite a scare. If you wanted a nap you should have just said so.

She chuckles.

CAROLINE

I'm sorry. Where are the kids?

JACK

They're outside. Asleep. I didn't want to wake them.

CAROLINE

I think it's time.

JACK

I know. I know.

CAROLINE

Don't be sad. I'm ready.

JACK

(beginning to weep)
Well I'm not.

CAROLINE

We knew that this day would come.

JACK

But not this soon.

CAROLINE

You've got to be strong for Amber and for Kody.

JACK

I know. I will be.

CAROLINE

Look at the bright side. I'll get to see Noah again.

JACK

You be sure to tell him that his daddy loves and misses him.

CAROLINE

Can I see the kids please?

JACK

Sure. Both of them?

CAROLINE

No. Send in Amber first.

He kisses her and exits.

He awakens them and brings Amber in. He leaves them alone.

AMBER

(sobbing)

Mommy.

CAROLINE

Hey there.

AMBER

I don't want you to die. I love you.

CAROLINE

I love you too honey.

AMBER

You're going to be okay mom. You're going to be okay.

CAROLINE

Listen to me Amber. You're going to have to be strong for your father and take care of him. You're going to be the lady of the house now.

AMBER

Mom, please stop talking like that. You're going to be okay.

CAROLINE

It's okay honey. Really. I'm ready. I am so tired. So tired of fighting. I need you to be strong okay.

AMBER

Okay.

CAROLINE

Just remember, I will always be with you. Everywhere you go, everything you do, I will always be with you.

AMBER

Mom!

CAROLINE

I've left something for you. I want you to carry it with you always okay.

AMBER

Okay.

CAROLINE

I love you. My beautiful, beautiful daughter. I am so proud of you and what you've become. I know that you are going to do great things with your life.

AMBER

I love you.

CAROLINE

I love you.

AMBER

Mommy.

CAROLINE

Honey, please get Kody for me. I want to talk to him.

AMBER

Okay.

She kisses Caroline and exits.

Kody enters slowly. He approaches and hugs her, sobbing.

KODY

Why didn't you tell me?

CAROLINE

To be honest, at first I didn't think that you'd be around long enough to matter. You have experienced so much pain, so much loss in your life already. I didn't want to burden you with this.

KODY

You could never be a burden.

CAROLINE

You are such a fine young man.

KODY

Is this why you wanted me to come live with you? Did Noah know?

CAROLINE

Yes.

KODY

And I took him away from you.

CAROLINE

No, don't think that and don't say it. Everything happens for a reason, son.

KODY

I love you. You have been so good to me. Life is so unfair.

CAROLINE

Life is not fair or unfair; it just is. Sometimes it can be unpleasant, but it's how you handle the unpleasant things in life that defines your character as a person. Don't you forget that.

KODY

I don't want to lose you. I just found you.

CAROLINE

You're not losing me. I will always be with you.

KODY

No, God no!

CAROLINE

It's okay, I'm at peace. No pain. No anger. No fear. Everything is going to be okay. I love you, son.

KODY

I love you too, mom.

He kisses her and turns to exit.

CAROLINE

Kody.

He stops and turns around.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

Everything does happen for a reason,
but only if you make it so.
Otherwise it just happens. I want
you to go out and to have all of
this happen for a reason. That will
make it worth it. That will make me
proud.

KODY

I will make you proud. I promise.

He exits.

Jack enters.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA -- NIGHT

Kody and Amber embrace, crying. Seconds later Roy, Melanie and Telly enter. Seconds later they hear Jack weeping inside the room. They all realize it's over. Amber screams and Kody loses it. He runs to the elevator and gets on. Melanie follows.

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Caroline's burial. A very sad occasion. Lot's of crying. Kody puts his headset with the classical CD playing in her casket.

INT. KODY'S ROOM -- DAY

It's the day of the audition. Kody is in his bedroom getting ready. Jack enters.

JACK

It's time. Are you ready?

KODY

I don't know. It just won't be the
same without mom there.

JACK

She'll be there son. I promise
she'll be there.

KODY

Yeah. I know.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- DAY

Kody, Jack and Amber enter the auditorium. Ski, Anderson and the entire student body greet them.

KODY

(to Ski)

I thought this was a private
audition.

SKI

We couldn't keep them out. They're
all here for you. The panel from
Julliard knows the situation and
they are fine with it. Are you?

KODY

I don't think I have much of a
choice right now.

Kody looks to the front row and sees Melanie, Roy, Telly, Kyle and Beeson. He acknowledges them with a heads up. He takes center stage.

GOODMAN

Hello Mr. Walker. I'm Doctor
Goodman. Dr. Markham and Dr. Willis
join me. Of course we are from
Julliard and we are here for the
purpose of evaluating your
performance of your selected piece
with the violin. We have all
mutually agreed that based on your
performance we will confer and
decide whether or not to offer you a
full scholarship to attend the
classical program at Julliard
effective in the fall of 2005. Are
you prepared to perform the piece?

KODY

Yes sir. I am.

GOODMAN

At your time Mr. Walker.

A long, uncomfortable pause. The entire auditorium is silent. The tension is palpable.

KODY

The piece that I will perform is --
Wagner's 3rd Concerto.

Another long pause.

SKI

(to Jack)

This is the piece that he's had so
much trouble with.

JACK

Don't worry. He'll do it.

KODY

I'd like to dedicate this
performance to Jack and Amber Hall
and to the memory of my mother
Caroline Hall.

Kody begins to play flawlessly. The judges are instantly impressed. His playing is so beautiful and precise. The tension rises as he approaches the difficult transition that he has been unable to complete. In his mind he hears Caroline's voice. "You can do it, you can do it". In the rear of the auditorium he sees her image. Ski clenches his fist anticipating the moment. He reaches the transition and completes it perfectly. So perfectly that he does it twice. Tears begin to stream down his face as he completes the piece. When he finishes the crowd erupts with cheers and applause. Jack and Amber come onto the stage and they embrace. The judges nod their approval. No need to confer. Kody looks to the rear of the auditorium and sees Caroline's image slowly fade away.

FADE OUT:

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