INT. A CAR - AFTERNOON

A car is parked outside a house.

A giant stuffed mouse sits buckled in the passenger seat.

FRED leads a 10 year old girl out to the car.

The little girl opens the car door and smiles.

ROBERT This wasn't planned. This is not what always happens. But when it does...

Black.

ROBERT (CONT'D) ...it's nice.

INT. PRISON CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

2 weeks before.

Fred sits in a classroom with jeans and a white t-shirt on. The t-shirt has the number 696 printed on it.

A piece of chalk lies on the teachers desk.

ROBERT, late 50's, picks up the chalk and writes on the board

ROBERT The rules. Number one. No names. Number two. No cheating.

JERRY (O.S.) Do you know who we are?

Robert turns to the class.

Fifteen convicts stare at him.

JERRY, a prisoner, sits up in his chair.

ROBERT You're students. Number three. No personal questions. I will not ask you about your personal lives and I hope you will do me the same.

JERRY So I can't ask how your day is going?

ROBERT

No.

JERRY What about how your wife is in bed?

Robert stares at Jerry.

Robert walks over to the door to the classroom and knocks on the door.

A GUARD opens the door a crack.

ROBERT Hi. I need you talk to number 387 real quick. He's just being a bit disruptive.

The guard bursts through the door and walks firmly to Jerry.

He grabs Jerry and rips him out of the chair.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Неу...

Jerry curses at the guard but the guard shoves Jerry out of the classroom with ease.

The guard slams the door behind him.

Robert turns to the class.

ROBERT (CONT'D) Education in this country is considered a right. But, sadly, this class is a privilege. You guys have to treat it that way.

Robert turns around to grab a pile of books on his desk.

ROBERT (CONT'D) We're going to have to share the books, so everyone please cooperate. There's going to be an essay due on this so pay attention. On all your papers, please write your number and the date. You can call me Professor.

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - NIGHT
A television show.
An evil professor is working on a project.

Robert sits in a big arm chair watching the television. A commercial hits and Robert walks into the kitchen. He opens the refrigerator and looks inside. It's empty.

He closes the door and looks at the grocery list pinned to the refrigerator with a magnet.

INT. FLASHBACK OF ROBERT'S HOME - MORNING

A letter from a hospital lies unopened on the kitchen table.

A wrinkled hand writes on a notepad.

ANN Bread. Milk. Potatoes.

ANN carries the paper to the refrigerator.

She uses a magnet to pin the paper to the door.

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Robert yells out the kitchen.

ROBERT (yelling) Ann.

He waits for an answer.

He goes up stairs and looks into the master bedroom.

It's empty.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Ann.

He looks at a picture of Ann on their dresser. He realizes she's gone.

INT. FUNERAL - AFTERNOON

The picture from the dresser rests on table next to an urn and lighted candles.

Robert sits in the front row of the audience.

A PRIEST stands in front of the table.

PRIEST

Those who knew Ann well, knew of her dedication to charity and help for the unfortunate. She knew when to lend a helping, but more importantly she also knew when to let those in need, help themselves. This is the true grace of Ann Hobbes.

INT. FUNERAL - AFTERNOON

Robert stands in a line with his family, shaking hands and receiving condolences.

His son, Andrew, stands next to him.

Joan, and elderly woman, walks over to shake Robert's hand.

JOAN Ann was a wonderful woman. She always brought a feeling of giving amongst all of us in the church group. We were hoping you might consider attending some of the meetings if you have the time.

ROBERT Thank you very much, but I'm still rather busy with work.

JOAN At the prison.

ROBERT

Yes.

JOAN Well, I'm glad you're continuing Ann's sense of charity.

ROBERT

Thank you.

Andrew leans over toward his father.

ANDREW You should think about it.

ROBERT

What?

ANDREW Mom would like it. INT. PRISON CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Robert sit's at his desk while a class full of convicts write at their desks.

The door to the classroom opens, the guard peeks in and nods at Robert.

ROBERT All right. Pencils down everyone.

The convicts put down their pencils and then line up on the wall.

One young convict, Fred, keeps writing at his desk.

The guard walks over to Fred.

Fred keeps writing.

The guard bends down to stare Fred in the eyes.

GUARD Let's move Shakespeare.

Fred dots one more period and then lines up on the wall with the other convicts. The convicts file out of the classroom

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The WARDEN sits behind his desk, typing on his computer.

The warden is young. Too young.

A knock on the door.

WARDEN

Come in.

Robert opens the door and walks in.

WARDEN (CONT'D) Bob right?

The warden extends his hand to Robert.

ROBERT Dr. Hobbes.

WARDEN

Allrighty.

The warden withdrawals his hand and sits down.

WARDEN (CONT'D) So, you've been working here, umm twenty years now. ROBERT

Twenty-two.

WARDEN Right. You've been here longer than most of the prisoners.

The warden smiles.

Robert is not amused.

WARDEN (CONT'D) Let's get right down to business.

ROBERT This isn't a business.

WARDEN Yes, I'm sorry.

ROBERT I'm not helping my students.

WARDEN

What?

ROBERT The new rules. They're not working.

WARDEN

I know I'm new here but I have more than qualified credentials to run this institution.

ROBERT

So do I.

WARDEN

I'm sorry. I think we're getting off on the wrong foot here. How about we reschedule this meeting?

ROBERT These rules aren't going to work.

WARDEN The rules are there to protect you.

ROBERT Yes, but now it's impossible to help anyone.

WARDEN

Listen. I know you are one of the most experienced individuals on staff here, and I would love your input. But now is not the time. How about we reschedule for tomorrow? INT. ROBERT'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Robert opens the door to his home and goes inside.

ROBERT

Ann.

Robert goes into the kitchen and opens the refrigerator. It's still empty.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Ann.

Robert closes the refrigerator and looks at the grocery list pinned to the door.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Ann.

His expression changes.

He puts his head against the door.

He looks like he's about to collapse.

INT. FLASHBACK OF ROBERT'S HOME - MORNING

Ann writes on a notepad.

ANN Bread. Milk. Potatoes.

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - AFTERNOON
Robert recovers himself, and grabs the grocery list.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT
Robert walks down the bread aisle.
He looks at the list. It reads "Bread".
He looks at the wall of bread, in awe of it's size.
An employee notices Robert.

WORKER Can I help you sir?

ROBERT

Ya, I'm looking for just normal bread.

WORKER Well sir we have thin, large, and extra large. We also have store brand white, wheat, natural, and organic. But if you like a bit more flavor we have a special jalapeno style today.

Robert stares blankly at the worker.

The worker smiles.

INT. ROBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Robert lies in bed reading essays.

The paper he is reading has the number 696 at the top, followed by the date.

Robert reads the essay.

FRED (V.O.) The Great Gatsby stands as a mirror to America's heart. Revealing the absence of any beat or warmth. This is epitomized in Tom and Daisy's largely ignored child, Pammy. It strained me to read this part as it caused me to reflect on my relationship with my own daughter. My daughter is very loved, but she probably feels just as mistreated and disregarded as Pammy.

Robert reads more of the essay and then writes $"\ensuremath{\mathsf{B}}+"$ at the top.

He turns over and grabs the TELEPHONE from the night stand. He dials a number.

> ROBERT Hey son, how you doing there? Ya, I'm staying busy. I was just calling to see if you and the kids would like to come out this weekend. I understand. No, that's alright. Maybe another time. Okay. Bye, now.

Robert looks out his open window.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Robert opens the door to the wardens office and steps in.

WARDEN Dr. Hobbes, how are you doing today?

ROBERT Doing well, thank you.

They both sit.

WARDEN

I wanted to apologize for our last meeting, I was unaware of your personal situation at that time and I just wanted to say how sorry I was.

ROBERT I'm fine, thank you.

WARDEN

Allrighty. Now, the state is going to be cutting our funding this year, so a lot of changes are going to be happening at the end of this year.

ROBERT

Changes?

WARDEN

Yes, and I am doing everything that I can to make sure this facility is run as efficiently as possible. Do you understand?

Robert nods.

WARDEN (CONT'D) Great. I'm going to need you to sign a couple things here.

The warden pulls out a form and puts it on his desk.

It reads "Severance Package" at the top.

INT. PRISON CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Robert sits at his desk, reading papers and sulking, while the convicts read books.

Guard opens the door to the classroom and nods at Robert.

Robert waves the guard over to him.

ROBERT I need to see umm, 696, for a second, privately.

GUARD No. That's against policy number 44335.

ROBERT I've been here longer than anyone in this room right now. I'll put in a good word to the warden.

The guard takes a moment to think.

GUARD

Everyone up.

The convicts line up on the wall, and then file out of the classroom.

The guard pulls Fred out of the line quickly and leads him to stand in front of Robert's desk.

The guard stands at the doorway, watching Fred like a hawk.

A copy of Of Mice and Men rests on Robert's desk.

Robert holds an essay in front of him.

ROBERT Did you write this?

Robert turns the essay over so Fred can see it.

FRED

Yes sir.

ROBERT It's very good. Have you ever read this 696?

Robert holds up Of Mice and Men.

Fred shakes his head side-to-side.

ROBERT (CONT'D) It's a book by a man named Steinbeck. I want you to take this and read it. Then I want an essay on it, due next Monday.

FRED I can't sir.

ROBERT Why not?

GUARD Don't answer that 696. FRED I'm leaving sir. ROBERT You mean you're being released? FRED Yes sir. ROBERT Well then. Robert picks up the book and writes something inside. ROBERT (CONT'D) I want you to have this. I promise you'll enjoy it. Robert hands Fred the book. The guard leads Fred away. Fred walks out of the classroom and opens the book. Robert'S ADDRESS is written on the back of the cover. Fred rips the address out quickly and palms it. The guard grabs the book out of his hands and flips through the pages. He shakes it upside down. The guard looks at Fred menacingly. He hands the book back to Fred. EXT. TOWN - AFTERNOON Fred steps out onto a street. He breathes in the free air. INT. ROBERT'S HOME - NIGHT It's raining. Robert opens his front door.

ROBERT

Fred stands in the doorway, soaked.

I didn't think you'd show. Come in.

Robert shows Fred into the house.

Robert walks Fred into the living room and sits Fred down on the couch.

Robert tosses a blanket around Fred.

ROBERT (CONT'D) You've got to be freezing. How about a cup of joe?

FRED That would be great.

Robert walks into the kitchen and pours two cups of coffee from a coffee pot.

ROBERT I can offer you some natural thin sliced wheat bread if you'd like.

FRED (O.S.)

That's okay.

ROBERT I was beginning to think something had happened and they weren't going to let you out.

Robert walks into the living room and hands Fred one cup of coffee and sits down with his own.

FRED

Thanks.

ROBERT Do you know how long I've been at the prison?

Fred sips his coffee and then shakes his head.

ROBERT (CONT'D) Twenty-two years. They're letting me go at the end of the year, but I don't know if I see the point. To freedom.

Robert holds his coffee up to Fred's and the clink them.

Robert takes a sip.

He takes a moment to enjoy the coffee and he looks out the window.

He sees Fred move in the reflection. He turns toward Fred.

An expression of fear shoots across his face.

Fred holds a GUN at Robert's head.

Robert's expression changes to smile and he lifts his cup toward Fred.

The phone rings.

Fred shoots Robert in the head.

The machine picks up the call.

JOAN Hi, this is Joan Mill, from Ann's church group. Hi, Robert. I know this is a difficult time for you, so I was just calling to check-up on you. I remember when John died, last fall. If I didn't have the church I don't think I would have gotten through it. I just wanted to tell you, that it's good to stay active. Get involved in something. I know you're not the fondest of church, but I do hope you find your own way of getting through this. Bye, bye, now.

Fred takes Robert's wallet out of his pants.

He rummages though the house taking electronic devices and putting them in a large suitcase.

Fred goes up stairs, into the master bedroom.

Fred opens the dresser and takes out a box of jewelry.

He looks up and sees a picture of Ann on the dresser, the same picture from the funeral.

FADE OUT: