FADE IN:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

TOMMY (early-20s) enters and flips on a light. He's a good looking kid, lean and muscular. He wears a heavy jacket, flannel shirt, paint-spattered jeans, and work boots.

Tommy toffees his keys on a side table and sheds his coat as he crosses the shabbily furnished room to the refrigerator. He grabs a beer and checks the freezer.

INT. KITCHENETTE

Tommy watches the frozen dinner rotate in the microwave, takes a swig of beer. The microwave finishes with a ding.

INT. APARTMENT

He sits on the sofa, remote in one hand, beer in the other. On his banged-up coffee table the microwaved meal cools, untouched.

His cell phone rings. He turns off the TV.

  TOMMY
  Hey... Where? Joey's house?
  (takes a swig)
  Who's there?... Nah, I feel like shit. I'm not going out tonight.
  (puts the bottle down)
  Oh, yeah? Come on over here and call me a pussy, tough guy.
  (stands)
  I didn't think so.
  (stretches)
  Alright, yeah, call me tomorrow.

INT. FLOOR

With his feet hooked under a battered, old barbell, Tommy pumps out a series of sit-ups, hard and fast.

INT. SHOWER

Tommy just stands there under the steaming spray, head bowed, lost in the water's embrace.

INT. COLLEGE BAR - NIGHT

Tommy weaves his way through the crowd, works his way toward the bar.
He's looking stylish in a sharp leather jacket, and a well-worn, fitted Red Sox cap.

Raised voices compete with loud rock music. He doesn't seem to notice several young ladies checking him out as he passes.

INT. BAR

APRIL (early-20s), plain but cute, tries unsuccessfully to get the attention of GENO the bartender. Tommy steps up.

    TOMMY
    Yo, Geno!

Geno looks over.

    GENO
    Hey! Is it ugly mick night again already?

    TOMMY
    Shut up and get me a beer.  
    (notices April)
    And whatever she's having.

    APRIL
    (to Geno)
    Two cranberry and vodkas.

    TOMMY
    You're a thirsty girl.

    APRIL
    Only one's for me.

    TOMMY
    If you say so.

    APRIL
    Stop it! It's true.

    TOMMY
    That's too bad, I only mess with girls who have drinking problems.

Geno sets up their drinks.

    APRIL
    Well, in that case, maybe they are both for me.

    TOMMY
    I thought--
A GUY backs into Tommy. Tommy shoves him - hard.

TOMMY
What the fuck, man?

GUY
Oh, hey, sorry. I didn't mean--

TOMMY
Didn't mean what? Didn't mean to get your fucking head busted in?

GUY
Settle down, dude. I said--

Tommy shoves him again.

TOMMY
How about we go outside and see if you can settle me down. Let's go!

April, horrified, takes her drinks and slips away.

GENO
Tommy! My man!

Tommy doesn't want to be distracted.

GENO
Eighteen for the drinks. Tommy!

Tommy turns his attention to Geno, the Guy uses the opportunity to get out of there.

TOMMY
Punk!

Tommy throws a twenty dollar bill on the bar, takes a long pull of his beer.

GENO
Listen, Tommy, stop fucking around. Dave let you walk away last time, but he's not going to cut you any slack if you pull that shit here again.

TOMMY
Fuck 'em.

Geno shakes his head, goes to help someone else.

Tommy turns and surveys the crowd. He spots a big JOCK across the room. Tommy gulps down his beer and heads that way.
INT. POOL TABLE AREA

The Jock jokes with some buddies. Tommy approaches, and it becomes obvious how much bigger the Jock is than him.

TOMMY
So what are you, some kinda faggot?

The Jock turns around, befuddled.

JOCK
What was that?

TOMMY
You heard me, motherfucker.

JOCK
Get the fuck away from me, asshole.

Tommy lunges at him and punches him square in the face, stunning the Jock.

The Jock's buddies go after Tommy. He takes some punishment, but gets in a few punches himself.

The Jock regains his wits and moves in. He plants a couple gut crushing body blows into Tommy's midsection.

TOMMY
Is that all you got? Pussy!

The Jock hammers Tommy to the floor with repeated punches.

EXT. COLLEGE BAR

Tommy, face swollen and bloody, gets dragged out of the bar by a YOUNG COP. They pass the Jock talking to a HEAVY COP.

TOMMY
Hey, man.

The Jock looks over at Tommy.

TOMMY
No hard feelings.

JOCK
Fuck off.

Tommy smiles a crooked smile as he's shoved into the back of the waiting police car.
INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Tommy lies on a wooden bench affixed to the wall, holds an ice pack to his face.

    JOEY (O.S.)
    Here he is.

Tommy peers around the ice pack and sees (through the bars of the door) JOEY, a burly officer, and DAN (mid-20s), looking like he just woke up.

    DAN
    Can I go in?

    JOEY
    You're not even supposed to be back here.

    TOMMY
    Don't let him in, you fat fuck.

    DAN
    Joey, please?

    JOEY
    If my sergeant sees you, I'll have to leave you in there 'til his shift ends, otherwise I'm screwed.

    TOMMY
    Do your job right for once, friggin' donut hole.

The Joey unlocks the door. Tommy groans in frustration.

    JOEY
    Maybe if you tried acting more like your brother here, your face wouldn't look like a crack whore's gash on the rag.

Dan enters the cell, Joey locks the door.

    TOMMY
    Maybe if you tried acting like a real cop they'd let you drive one of their shiny cars and play with the flashy lights.

Joey bristles, Dan heads off his angry comeback.

    DAN
    Thanks, Joey. I owe you one.
Dan calms down, hitches up his belt.

JOEY
    Knock some sense into him, will ya.

He glares at Tommy, and leaves.

Tommy lies back, covers his face with the ice pack again.

Dan takes stock of the surroundings. Leans against the wall, arms crossed.

DAN
    Ma was real happy to hear from you.

TOMMY
    I bet.

DAN
    Seems the only time she gets to talk to you is when you need bail.

TOMMY
    Why are you busting my balls. It's nothing to do with you.

DAN
    It is when Ma calls me at three in the morning crying her god damn eyes out because you fucked up again!

Tommy hurls the ice pack at Dan. It smashes against the wall next to him.

TOMMY
    Just leave me the fuck alone! It's what you're best at anyway!

DAN
    What's the matter with you? You gonna go around being mad at the world the rest of your life? It's time for you to grow up!

TOMMY
    What does that mean, huh? I should be more like you? Run away from my problems. Pretend like I'm above everything, and everyone.

DAN
    That's not-- I don't--
    (deep breath)
    Look, I'm sorry. Okay?
Okay? Oh, yeah. Everything's just sunshine and roses now, boy. Let's get me bailed out so we can skip off into the fucking sunset together, just like old times.

Tommy goes to the small sink, fills his cupped hands with cool water and carefully douses his swollen face.

Dan rubs the tension from his neck, takes a seat on the bench.

I know it must have been hard for you after I went away for school. You've got to understand that you're not the only one with problems.

At least with you around I had a fifty-fifty shot. Once you took off, that left him only one option.

I...

Dan leans forward, covers his face.

Hey, but at least I get to see you every couple of years, so I know how much you really care.

I don't have a good excuse, Tommy. I'm sorry, but I just don't. I couldn't take it any more. I knew what it would mean for you if I left, but I had to get out of there, before...

Dan chokes up, fights to hold it all in.

Tommy sits down next to his brother.

Ah, what the fuck. It toughened me up. I turned out alright, yeah?

Right. You're a regular model citizen.

They share a quiet chuckle.
TOMMY
I'd stay out as late as I could, you know. Right up until a minute before curfew, hoping that he'd be in bed already. He was always waiting up. Like handing out a beating was the only way he could get to sleep.

DAN
Remember that belt he had? The one from the seventies, or some shit.

TOMMY
With the metal rings on it? How do you think my front tooth got chipped?

A quiet moment passes, each wrestles with the memories.

DAN
What's going on with you, Tommy? They say this is the third time you've been hauled in for fighting.

TOMMY
I don't know, trouble just seems to find me, I guess.

DAN
Bullshit. You're killing Ma with this crap, you know that?

TOMMY
Hey, she wasn't there for us when we were catching hell as kids, the least she can do is be there for me now!

Tommy stands up and paces to the door to avoid looking at his brother.

DAN
It doesn't work like that. You're an adult now. You have to take responsibility for who you are, and for what you do.

TOMMY
Looks like you've got it all figured out, Oprah.

Dan gets up and goes to Tommy, who stares through the bars.

DAN
It doesn't take a genius to see that you're angry. You can't just take out your problems on strangers.
TOMMY
Don't even pretend like you know what I feel.

DAN
At some point you have to suck it up, and forget about it.

TOMMY
Is that what you tell your kids?

Tommy turns to face Dan.

TOMMY
Suck it up. Be a man.

DAN
Watch it.

TOMMY
Is it only Sean?

DAN
Shut your mouth, Tommy.

TOMMY
Or does your little Megan get smacked around, too?

Dan lashes out and punches Tommy in the face. He grabs Tommy by the shirt and cocks his arm back for another blow.

TOMMY
Yeah, dad! Just how I like it!

Dan pushes away, stalks to the other end of the cell.

Tommy laughs as he dabs the fresh blood running from his nose.

Dan, facing the corner, flexes his hand.

Tommy becomes quiet. Closes his eyes, leans his forehead against the unforgiving bars.

TOMMY
I'm sorry. I know you're a good father. I don't know why I...

Dan doesn't respond right away. Rubs his neck.

DAN
Everyone's fucked up in some way or another. Like you said, maybe that's what makes us who we are.
TOMMY
Maybe.

DAN
Yeah.

A wry smile overtakes Dan, he shakes his head.

DAN
Remember what he'd always do after?

TOMMY
No.

DAN
Come on. Never made sense to me.
Still doesn't. How could you forget?

TOMMY
I don't know...

Dan turns, looks at Tommy, who still has his back turned. Realization sweeps over Dan.

DAN
It almost seemed worth it sometimes.

Slowly, he goes to his brother and lays a hand on his shoulder. He turns Tommy around to face him.

DAN
C'mere.

Dan wraps his arms around Tommy and hugs him.

DAN
No hard feelings?

Hesitantly, Tommy returns his brother's hug.

TOMMY
No hard feelings.

Tommy hugs him tighter, like he's never letting go.

FADE OUT.

THE END.