

Brawler
by
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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 tosses 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?

TOMMY

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.

DAN

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.

TOMMY

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

DAN

I...

Dan leans forward, covers his face.

TOMMY

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

DAN

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.

TOMMY

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

DAN

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.