

"GOODBYE, PRESTON"

by

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Based on a true story

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FADE IN:

West Hollywood, California, the early 90's. Dusk. Palm trees and weakening sunshine. A pink sky. Camera pans and rests on a building, THE GOLD COAST, a dive gay bar, situated right on Santa Monica Blvd. Camera begins to zoom into doorway.

"Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana starts to play.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GOLD COAST - NIGHT

A typical gay bar scene. Darkened room, loud music, a moderate amount of flashing lights. Loud laughter and the occasional crack of the pool balls can be heard over the din. Various shots of the action: men playing pool, men at the bar drinking, guys along the wall chatting and/or looking standoff-ish. One final pan and the camera rests on RICHIE HAMILTON, a lanky, long-haired white male in his mid 20's. He's standing along the wall, observing the crowd. It's his usual tradition. Maybe spot a familiar face, maybe meet someone new, who knows. Richie tilts back his glass of bourbon for the last sip, drinks, then heads to the bar for another cocktail. Just as he crosses the doorway, he almost bumps into PRESTON, who's entering the establishment. Preston, also in his mid 20's, is dark-haired, slightly rugged and drop dead gorgeous. A thin, leather boot lace, that's barely visible, is encircled around his neck.

RICHIE

Sorry.

His eyes catch Preston's and he's quickly stunned by the man's attractive looks. He wants to say something but all he can manage is a small:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Hi.

PRESTON

(offhandedly)

No problem.

Preston breezes off to the bar to leave a shocked Richie at the door. Richie shakes off his trance to think of a plan. He must meet Preston! Remembering he needs another drink, he too heads for the bar. Squeezing past the other patrons to get next to Preston proves to be a challenge. In fact, Preston is already making his way away from the bar by the time Richie starts to get close. Richie places himself within eyesight of Preston and tries to make himself get noticed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE  
Hey, man. What's up?

Preston glances back with his dark eyes, unaffected, then continues on into the crowd. Already near the bar, Richie decides on getting that 2nd drink... and to think of another plan of attack.

CUT TO:

GOLD COAST BAR, 25 minutes later. Preston is half-watching a game of pool, half-watching the other patrons. Not far away is Richie, still drinking... and still trying to come up with another way to get Preston's attention. Preston has looked over at Richie a couple of times, but hasn't given any real sign of interest. It appears as if Preston is over the bar scene for the night, he starts to head for the exit... and surprisingly stops right in front of Richie.

PRESTON  
How's it goin'?

RICHIE  
It's good..

PRESTON  
What's your name?

RICHIE  
...uh- Richie.

Preston shakes Richie's hand. The grip is slightly stronger than the average handshake.

PRESTON  
Preston. Nice to meet you.

He cuts right to the chase.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Feel like taking a walk?

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD - NIGHT

Richie and Preston are walking down the street. Fortunately, Richie's apartment isn't far. Preston begins to soften from his stand-offish behavior at the bar.

PRESTON  
So, where are you from?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

Illinois. Southern Illinois. A little town across the river from St. Louis. What about you?

PRESTON

The valley. Born and raised right here. Check it out. I'm a rare Los Angeles native!

RICHIE

Really? The valley? I hear the natives are very friendly there.

They both laugh

PRESTON

Do you work?

RICHIE

Yeah, I colorize black and white movies. Turn all those old, classic MGM films into color. Everybody hates me for it. It's just a job though. You know. It's not like I'm building bombs or anything.

(Richie glances over at Preston)

RICHIE (CONT'D)

What about you? You certainly don't look like the office type. More like somebody who could be occupying magazine covers.

They laugh.

PRESTON

Uh... no. Not quite. Would you settle for Macy's Model? I work there. In the BEDDING department. Sheets and smiles... all the way. How come I've never seen you at The Gold Coast before?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

I don't know. I go to San Francisco a lot. Maybe I've just missed you.

The pair stop walking. Preston pushes Richie back and seductively pins him against the wall of a building.

PRESTON

(leaning in)  
Maybe it's my lucky night.

Sensing what's about to come, Richie comes right out with important information.

RICHIE

Wait, there's something I have to tell you... I have HIV.

Preston pauses momentarily, but ultimately seems unaffected by the news.

PRESTON

You're positive?

RICHIE

...Yeah. Can't you tell? I'm still healthy but I just started taking AZT. I get it from the buyers club. They have to go all way to Mexico to get it. My friend Howard says it's making my eyes turn yellow.

Preston waits a moment then leans in further, Richie thinks to inspect his eyes. Instead, Preston places a warm, soft, lingering kiss upon his lips.

PRESTON

Aww, man. I'm sorry that happened to you but I'm ok with all that. Besides, we don't have to do anything risky. Let's just hang out. Get to know each other. Watch TV or something.

CUT TO:

## INT. RICHIE'S APT - NIGHT

Camera slowly pans from a darkened corner of Richie's living room... continues over a dimly lit desk and chair (with a shirt hanging from the back)... Camera finally rests on the form of two male bodies, heatedly entwined in a session of lovemaking. In the moonlight, we see Richie, completely naked, lying on his back on the couch. Above him, Preston is also naked, except for the thin, leather boot lace around his neck. Richie begins to glow with a pulsating, golden aura. Representing joy, satisfaction and release, it is an effect only he can see. The glow from the aura lights the space between the two bodies. Richie looks up at Preston. He finally sees the thin, leather necklace, plain as day. And although the light has revealed a small clue about Preston, Richie ignores it. Instead, he pulls Preston down to him. The aura fades away and the two men continue.

CUT TO:

## INT. RICHIE'S CAR - DAY (TRAVELING)

Dance music plays on the car radio as Richie and PATRIC drive through town. Patric is a dark-haired woman, slightly crazy but totally lovable. It's a typical Los Angeles day filled with sunshine and Richie is just as bright due to his night with Preston. We catch the two right in the middle of conversation:

PATRIC

And then what happened?

RICHIE

I thought he was going to lean in to look at my eyes but he kissed me! Then we went to my place and talked and hung out-

PATRIC

"Talked??" "Hung out??" Oh, pah-leeze, honey. Who do you think you're talking to? Tell mama what really happened?

RICHIE

Hehe, alright, so we did more than talk, but dude, seriously, he was HOT and passionate and it was just really cool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATRIC

(cooly)  
I bet it was.

RICHIE

(on a roll, not noticing  
Patric's tone)  
Plus he's just so damn  
gorgeous! No one has been this  
nice to me in a really long  
time.

(He pauses and suddenly  
becomes serious)  
It just sucks cause, you know,  
...HIV scares people. It  
scares me. It scares  
everybody. People don't know  
how to react. Sometimes people  
freak out. One time I had  
somebody faint when I told  
them I was positive. I swear  
to God. They fucking passed  
out. Fell right over on a  
bench. I've had people just  
get up and walk out. But, last  
night... I forgot all that.  
Preston made me feel alive,  
again. I loved it.

Patric realizes that Richie's happiness is more important  
than her hidden jealousy. She brightens up again.

PATRIC

Well, that's great. This guy  
sounds like he might be a  
keeper.

RICHIE

Yeah, no shit. I think we  
might have really connected. I  
gave him my number. Do you  
think he'll call?

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT NIGHT

Richie enters his apartment, sets down his belongings and  
begins his usual routine of listening to phone messages on  
his answering machine while sifting through his mail. The  
first couple of messages are indistinct and unimportant but  
the 3rd message makes Richie freeze.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON  
(from the answering  
machine)  
Hey Rich, it's Preston.

Richie can't help but smile.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Guess what? I've got a  
surprise for you.

The voice pauses for dramatic effect and Richie stands there, puzzled yet curious. He stares at the answering machine as if it will reveal "the surprise".

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Go, look outside your window.

Confused, Richie makes his way to his apartment window. He pulls back the curtain and finds Preston, standing there in the shadows. Although happy to see Preston, Richie is still unsure about what's going on until, finally, Preston reaches down into the darkness and produces a bright and beautiful bouquet of flowers. He flashes a huge, irresistible smile. Camera slowly pushes in on his face. A shot of Richie. The camera also pushes in as a smile starts to grow on his face.

"Bad Boyfriend" by Garbage can be heard as Richie leaves the window and runs for the door. Song continues to play as we...

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - RICHIE AND PRESTON

- A) Richie lighting several candles in the living room.
- B) Richie leaning over and lighting a joint that Preston's holding.
- C) Richie and Preston laughing hysterically in the smoke-filled living room as they pass the joint back and forth.
- D) Richie and Preston talking as they eat snacks.
- E) Richie and Preston lying on the couch in blissful silence, the candlelight growing dim.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Richie is sitting at his cubicle, hard at work colorizing an old black-and-white movie on the computer. Just then, the BOSS MAN appears.

BOSS MAN

How much longer on that shot?  
We really need to get this  
sequence finished before the  
client gets here.

RICHIE

It's almost ready.

BOSS MAN

Well, just a heads up.

Boss Man starts to walk away, takes a glance at Richie's monitor and comes back.

BOSS MAN (CONT'D)

Shirley's face looks too  
orange.

RICHIE

No, shit.

BOSS MAN

What?

RICHIE

It's the Max Factor effect.  
The skin tones always look too  
saturated if you ask me. I  
call it The Max Factor effect.

BOSS MAN

Whatever, just fix it. And  
hurry up.

Boss Man walks away, Richie rolls his eyes, breathes a sigh of relief and returns to work. After a few moments, he takes a break.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S OFFICE (DOWNSTAIRS) - DAY

Richie slips out of the office and heads to the pay phone by the building's entrance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks around to make sure the coast is clear then fishes a piece of paper and a phone card from his pocket. He punches some numbers into the machine and takes a deep breath.

PRESTON  
(over the phone)  
Hello?

RICHIE  
Hi, Preston. It's Richie.

PRESTON  
...Oh, hi, Richie. Good to hear from you!

RICHIE  
So, how are things going?

PRESTON  
Things are good, good. You're lucky you caught me, I'm just getting ready to walk out the door.

RICHIE  
Yeah, I didn't really even expect you to be home. I was just gonna call and leave a message.

PRESTON  
Yeah?

RICHIE  
Yeah, it's been crazy today and I needed to take a break. My boss is totally riding my ass.

PRESTON  
(playfully)  
Doesn't sound too bad.

RICHIE  
What, my boss?!?! No way!

Richie and Preston laugh at the joke.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
So, what's up? How's work going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON

Crazy. It's always crazy.  
Especially this time of year.

Richie smiles. Just listening to Preston is lifting his spirits.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

So, I gotta go, but hey: My roommate and I are throwing a party this weekend. You wanna come?

RICHIE

Party? Sure, I'd love to! That sounds like fun.

PRESTON

Cool.

RICHIE

Ummm, is it alright if I bring a friend?

PRESTON

Depends. Is this "friend" my competition?

RICHIE

No! It's a woman. Her name's Patric. She's a little wacky, but I'd love you to meet her.

PRESTON

A chick named Patric? I love her already. It's all set, then?

RICHIE

Definitely.

PRESTON

Ok, great. Look, I really gotta run. I'll fill you in on all the details later.

RICHIE

Ok, see ya!

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S CAR - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

Richie and Patric are headed to Preston's party. Patric's dark hair has a mistletoe-type of barrette and she's wearing a bright red sweater.

RICHIE

Don't you think the sweater is a bit much?

PATRIC

In case you haven't heard, it's the holidays? I want to be festive!

RICHIE

Well, have you ever heard of the expression, "Easy does it?"

PATRIC

(seductive)

Yes, easy does do it, and I can be easy, too.

They both laugh.

RICHIE

And what about that?  
(He points to the mistletoe)

PATRIC

That's for the festivities... bedroom festivities! Who knows what might happen tonight!

They both chuckle at Patric's craziness just as they pull up to Preston's apartment building.

RICHIE

Just try to behave yourself, will ya? I want to introduce you to Preston and I want you to make a good impression.

PATRIC

(sarcastically)

Yes, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Richie and Patric exit the car and make their way up to Preston's apartment. They knock on the door, it opens and the scene...

CUTS TO:

INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Preston's apartment is totally decked out for the party. Lights, holiday music and decorations fill the space. Other guests are already there and the party is in full swing. There's a baby grand piano off to one corner with a few people gathered around. Preston greets Richie and Patric at the door. With his trademark smile, he looks stunning as usual.

PRESTON

Richie—hi!

RICHIE

Hey, Preston! This is my friend Patric. Patric, Preston.

PRESTON

Hello, Patric. Come on in.

Patric steps forward and sees Preston's handsome looks. After the once over twice looks between them she's instantly smitten. Preston reaches for a handshake but she doesn't respond. Instead, she clears her throat, points to the mistletoe in her hair and offers him her cheek. Preston is momentarily confused, but graciously kisses Patric's face. Richie looks on and playfully rolls his eyes.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Alright, come on in, let's get you guys some drinks, food—

PATRIC

And husbands?!?!

PRESTON

(chuckling)  
If we're lucky.

He glances over to Richie and gives a seductive smile.

The trio advances into the apartment, Preston gathers drinks and they begin a short tour to show Patric the apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

PRESTON

...And legend has it that this  
is where Patti LaBelle died.  
(points to the tub in the  
bathroom)

PATRIC

Patti LaBelle's not dead.

PRESTON

Yes, she is. According to the  
stories, she took her last  
breath right here, soaking in  
the suds.

Patric glances at Richie and makes a face then over to the closet in the hall and spies a makeshift bed and a book, "The Leatherman's Handbook," on its floor.

PATRIC

(pointing to the bed)  
Well... what about this? Who  
died there?

PRESTON

(not offended)  
Hehe, that's no deathbed,  
that's where I sleep.

PATRIC

Sleep? What else do you do in  
there—

RICHIE

(cutting her off)  
Let's head back to the party,  
shall we?

They start to head back to the festivities. As they do so, Patric leans back to Richie to whisper:

PATRIC

Honey, you've GOT to get him  
out of here!

CUT TO:

INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - LATER

The party is still going but Preston and Richie have taken some time to enjoy each other on the couch. The pair is snuggled up.

PRESTON  
Are you having a good time?

RICHIE  
Definitely.

PRESTON  
Yeah, this is nice. Patric and Howard look like they're having a good time, too.

The guys look over to the other side of the room where Patric and HOWARD, a dark-haired young man, are laughing and drinking. Howard takes the mistletoe decoration from Patric's hair and attempts to clip it to his shorter, curly locks. Howard then tries to collect kisses from the male partygoers, just like Patric did earlier.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
So, you really look good tonight.

RICHIE  
Seriously?

PRESTON  
(laughing)  
Yeah!  
(Pause)  
I think you look great.

Richie takes a moment to find his next words.

RICHIE  
I've been wondering about something and I wanna ask you... does my... being positive-

PRESTON  
(cutting him off)  
Hey. Richie. I think you're hot. You're fun to be around and I really like you. That's all I care about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just then, Patric and Howard appear before the pair. Howard is now dangling the mistletoe above Preston and Richie. Patric is urging them on to kiss.

"Groove Is In The Heart" by DEEE-Lite starts to play.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS - RICHIE AND PRESTON

A) Richie and Preston kissing at a club. They break away and continue to dance.

B) Richie and Preston gardening.

C) Richie, Preston, Patric and Howard having dinner.

D) Richie and Preston running along the beach.

E) Richie and Preston soaping each other in the shower.

F) Richie and Preston having coffee at a restaurant.

G) Richie and Preston shopping for clothes.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL - DAY

Richie arrives early to pick up Preston from work. He's exchanging a shirt in a nearby department. A peppy CASHIER is helping him.

CASHIER

Alright... do you have the receipt?

RICHIE

(reaching into his pocket)  
Actually, yes!

The cashier takes the small paper, walks over to the cash register and works his magic. He comes back with a small stack of cash.

CASHIER

Here ya go.

RICHIE

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASHIER

(looking back at shirt)  
It's too bad you have to bring that back. We only had a few in stock to begin with and they flew right off the shelves! I'm sure it would've looked great on you.

RICHIE

(chuckling)  
Thanks. Actually, it looked better about 10 pounds ago. Besides, I plan on using this money to get something for -

CASHIER

Your sweetheart?

RICHIE

Yes, actually.

Richie walks away.

CASHIER

(watching Richie leave)  
Good luck, doll face. I hope you find what you're looking for.

CUT TO:

INT. MALL - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Richie heads over to Preston's department. He rounds a corner and instantly spies Preston and a HUNKY SANTA talking in the distance.

The Hunky Santa is muscular, shirtless and tan despite it being December. He's wearing a Santa cap and holding a tray of cologne bottles. Richie can't make out what they're saying, but based on their body language, it's pretty flirtatious. Richie watches for a moment, then advances forward, his curiosity piqued.

RICHIE

Hey.

PRESTON

Richie. You're early.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

(a bit annoyed that Hunky Santa and his cologne tray are still around)  
That shirt we bought TO-GETHER, didn't fit, so, I wanted to bring it back and get something else.

PRESTON

Oh... ok. Well, my shift is just about up. Let me run to the back and grab my bag and we'll be outta here. What do you want to do tonight? Want to get some Chinese food?

RICHIE

Mmm-sure.

PRESTON

Good, I'm starved. I'll be right back.

Richie turns to face Hunky Santa who's wearing a slight sneer. Suddenly, it becomes a classic Krystal/Alexis showdown.

HUNKY SANTA

So... you guys bought the shirt to-ge-ther?

RICHIE

Yes, together.

HUNKY SANTA

Look, you can relax. Preston and I are just friends.

RICHIE

Oh, really? Is that why you keep trying to spray him with that cheap perfume? You probably didn't care to ask, but Preston's taken. Go, ho-ho-ho yourself somewhere else!

Hunky Santa is stunned, but Preston returns before things can escalate.

PRESTON

Alright, I'm ready, let's go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Preston grabs Richie by the hand and exits the store. With a satisfied grin, Richie turns back and grins. Hunky Santa waits until the couple is out of sight before he slams the tray on the counter, the cologne bottles falling everywhere.

HUNKY SANTA

Ho, ho, f-ing ho, man. That sucks.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALL - DAY

Richie and Preston are heading to the car.

PRESTON

So what did you end up getting?

RICHIE

What?

PRESTON

That shirt you exchanged, what did you get instead?

RICHIE

Oh, umm, I just got the cash for now. I'll go back and find something when I've got more time.

PRESTON

Well, we could go back right now and take a look.

RICHIE

No, that's fine. Let's just go to dinner.

PRESTON

No, come on. I'll just put my bag in the car. We can take a few minutes and look around.

RICHIE

You mean a few minutes to go back and talk to Hunky Santa?

PRESTON

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

Hunky Santa. I saw the way you two were flirting.

PRESTON

Are you crazy? He's new and he's only gonna be here for the holidays. I was just trying to make him feel welcome.

RICHIE

And what about that ridiculous costume? She should go put something on before she gets frostbite on her perky waxed nipples.

(Preston seems slightly exasperated.)

PRESTON

Chill out, dude. He's got the body for it, the customers love it, everyone's happy.

Richie waits a moment, then takes a breath to cool down.

RICHIE

Ok. But seriously, let's just go eat.

PRESTON

Fine by me.

RICHIE

Do you mind if I invite Patric? I haven't seen her in a while.

PRESTON

No, Richie, you know what? I'd rather you didn't. Just call her tomorrow.

RICHIE

I bet if that slutty mall whore wanted to come you wouldn't care.

As quick as lightning, Preston's hand flies out and grabs Richie's arm. Preston has a never-before-seen fire in his eyes. Richie is completely startled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON  
 (cutting him off)  
 Look, I told you, I was just  
 being friendly! I don't wanna  
 hear about it, anymore! Do you  
 hear me?

Preston releases Richie's arm.

RICHIE  
 (completely stunned)  
 ...All right. I hear you.

PRESTON  
 Fine, then go. I'm hungry.

Preston walks on to the car, leaving a bewildered Richie  
 behind to rub his arm.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APTARTMENT - NIGHT (A FEW DAYS LATER)

It's rainy and wet outside. Inside the warm apartment,  
 decorations are on display: a tree, a wreath on the door,  
 some lights along the wall. Richie is at the table, wrapping  
 a small gift and listening to, "Jingle Bell Rock" on the  
 radio. He knows that Preston will be by soon for his usual  
 visit. Just then, a loud crashing is heard outside the  
 apartment. Richie springs up and rushes to the door. He opens  
 it and finds Preston on his knees, soaking wet and shoving  
 various things into his duffle bag. It appears as if Preston  
 has slipped and fallen outside in the rain.

RICHIE  
 (helping Preston to his  
 feet)  
 Oh my God, are you ok?

PRESTON  
 Yeah, I just fell!

RICHIE  
 Well, you're all right. Come  
 on in.

Preston practically storms past Richie in a huff. He throws  
 his duffle bag on the carpet. Richie tries to soothe him.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
 Look. It's alright, you're  
 fine. I'll make some coffee.  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Why don't you change clothes  
and-

PRESTON

(upset)

It's not that, alright!?! I  
got fired! Those sons o'  
bitches fired me today!

RICHIE

What?

PRESTON

Those idiots said I was  
stealing! Can you believe  
that? Accuse me of stealing?

Preston looks away and as if someone had hit a switch, his emotion changes. He exhales, reels in his anger and goes from mad to sad.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Christmas cards. Why would I  
want to steal cards? I was  
just putting them in my bag so  
I could buy them later. But  
those shitholes wouldn't  
listen. They were always  
trying to find a way to get  
rid of me.

(Pause)

What am I gonna do? I don't  
have a job, how am I gonna pay  
my rent? What the fuck am I  
gonna to do??

Despite his damp condition, Richie sweeps Preston into a warm embrace.

RICHIE

Don't worry about it. You can  
find another job. You can stay  
here, you know. With me.

Preston pulls back and looks Richie in the face.

PRESTON

...What? Move in here with  
you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

Yeah, why not? You're over here all the time anyway. Just an idea.

PRESTON

(brightening up)

Really? That would really help me out a lot!

RICHIE

Yeah, just move in here. I got cheap rent. You can look for another job without stressing out. It's time we made it official, anyway.

Richie and Preston embrace.

CUT TO:

EXT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Camera pans down from the closed door to the porch. There on the ground lies a wet, stray Christmas card. Just then, a gust of winter wind sweeps by and blows the card away.

CUT TO:

INT. ADULT NOVELTY STORE - DAY

Preston and Richie are in an adult novelty store known as THE PLEASURE CHEST. Sex toys, videos, creams and lotions are all on display. Preston is in the clothing section when Richie approaches him from behind.

RICHIE

So daddy, what's your pleasure?

Richie holds up two bottles of lubricant.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Which one do you like?

PRESTON

Both.

RICHIE

Good answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON

We're gonna need all the supplies we can get our... hands on.

RICHIE

Are we?

PRESTON

Yes, we are. It's going to be a very long, cold, lonely winter.

Preston leans in to give Richie a kiss.

RICHIE

Yes... I'm beginning to see your logic. The nights are getting longer...

PRESTON

You want me to get a basket and just start filling it up?

RICHIE

They got baskets?

Preston holds up a blindfold, a few pieces of black nylon rope and a "Bound And Gagged" magazine.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

You like to get tied up?

PRESTON

I want to tie YOU up.

Richie falls silent for a moment.

RICHIE

Well... I've never done that before.

PRESTON

It's fun. I'll teach you everything. It'll bring us closer together. I know you want that, right?

RICHIE

I'm game. What about porn?

PRESTON

Yeah, get some.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Richie knows he can't resist Preston.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
It won't be anything crazy.  
Let's just experiment a  
little.

RICHIE  
...I said, I'm game. I trust  
you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The conversation from the previous scene continues in voice over as we see Richie's living room. Some of the furniture has moved aside to make room for a single chair to stand alone. Preston leads Richie to the chair, in slow-motion, and sits him down.

PRESTON  
(v.o.)  
Just let me take control.

Preston removes Richie's shirt.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Sit still.

Preston grabs Richie's hands and pulls them carefully around the back of the chair. He begins to tie them with the black nylon rope.

RICHIE  
(v.o.)  
Who taught you how to do this?

PRESTON  
(v.o.)  
No one. I learned it from The  
Leatherman's Handbook. It's  
always been a fantasy of mine  
to tie someone up. Take  
control of a lover. You're  
about to make my dream come  
true.

Preston uses another piece of rope to bind Richie's feet together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

(v.o.)

Just be cool. Don't hurt me.

PRESTON

(v.o.)

Relax. Don't speak. You're safe with me. Just sit still.

Preston brings a blindfold to Richie's face and just as Richie loses his ability to see, we also see the screen go black.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Patric sits at a small table in a coffee shop, flipping through a magazine. We hear the door open and Patric looks up. Richie approaches, still dressed in his work clothes. He reaches the table, leans over to give Patric a quick kiss on the cheek then takes the seat across from her.

PATRIC

Well, well, well, howdy stranger. Long time no see. What the hell's been going on with my Richie? Tell mama, everything.

RICHIE

Well, dude, things are getting seriously crazy! Work is insane. Preston's becoming totally high maintenance. I feel like a crazy person... Do you have any Xanax? I brought some vodka.

Patric giggles. Richie pulls a flask out of his back pocket, takes a swig, and starts to relax.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

So, what's been going on with you, lately? Getting excited about your trip, yet?

PATRIC

C'mon, going back to Hooterville is not something I get excited about. It's such a drag.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATRIC (CONT'D)

I hate to fly and there's nothing to do once I get there. Plus, I'm going to miss all the new hot action here with you!

RICHIE

Aww, well, try to have fun anyway. Make a snow angel for me or something. I actually kinda miss that stuff.

PATRIC

Well, maybe I will. You got some time to hang out? Preston's always got you to himself now it seems.

RICHIE

You got that right. It's ok, though. I can hang. Preston says hi, by the way.

Just then, a waiter comes to the table with two cups of coffee. Richie and Patric begin to pour cream and sugar into their drinks. Patric looks up and sees that Richie has stopped smiling. He's slowly stirring his coffee with a preoccupied expression on his face.

PATRIC

Earth to Richie. Where'd you just go?

RICHIE

Hmm?

PATRIC

You ok? You look a little off.

Richie waves off her question.

RICHIE

I'm good. Just tired. Dumb and dizzy, you know me.

PATRIC

Well...I know that look. Something's going on in there.

RICHIE

Nothing's going on!

Patric doesn't give up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PATRIC

Well, if you won't talk, maybe  
the cards will.

Patric digs into her bag and pulls out an old, oversized deck  
of Tarot cards. Richie rolls his eyes.

RICHIE

Oh God, not the scary Tarot!

PATRIC

Come on, let's throw a spread.  
You know I'm a Catholic,  
Pagan, Buddhist, Witch and  
that worldly power needs to  
flow.

RICHIE

Oh no, not that crazy Pagan  
'Worldly Mama' freaky tarot  
stuff again, please!

PATRIC

Come on, focus your  
intentions!

RICHIE

Fine. I'm focused. Give me the  
cards. I'll shuffle.

Richie takes the cards, gives them a shuffle, cut's them 3  
times and hands them back. He quickly glances around the  
coffee shop to see if anyone's watching. Patric is taking the  
reading completely serious. She exhales and begins to lay the  
cards out. After Patric places the cards on the table, she  
begins to look them over.

PATRIC

Interesting. Very interesting.

Richie giggles.

PATRIC (CONT'D)

I see some good things here.  
Many good things, but also  
some transitions and  
challenges.

Richie rolls his eyes.

RICHIE

Sounds like every other  
reading you've given me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PATRIC  
(ignoring Richie)  
Except...

Patric stops talking and focuses on one card in particular. She reaches out and touches the edge of it. The Three of Swords.

PATRIC (CONT'D)  
This one... this one could mean there's a betrayal ahead. A true disappointment concerning a close friend or relative. Can you think of anyone?

RICHIE  
Hmm.

PATRIC  
Well... I would take caution. There may be a storm brewing. Keep your eyes open. There could be some unsettling news on its way.

RICHIE  
What kind of unsettling news?

PATRIC  
Well, I can't say for sure. Just guard your emotions. Your heart's really vulnerable right now.

RICHIE  
Tell me something I don't know. Besides, I always get that card. How much do I owe you?

Patric goes back into friend mode.

PATRIC  
No charge, just pay the check. Let's get out of here.

CUT TO:

EXT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie is coming home from a hard day's work.. As he approaches the apartment building, he notices his front door open and a shadowy figure appearing, but then the figure steps off the porch and quickly disappears into the night. Puzzled, Richie advances to the door and is relieved to see Preston inside.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie enters the apartment and closes the door. The entire space is clean and spotless and there's a delicious aroma of food cooking.

PRESTON

Hey!

RICHIE

Hey... how's everything going?

PRESTON

It's all good. I'm making spaghetti sauce.

RICHIE

(looking around)  
Yum, spaghetti, my favorite...  
but... what about that guy  
that just left?

PRESTON

Oh, Lenny?

RICHIE

Yeah, who's Lenny?

PRESTON

Oh, he's just a friend. You met him at the party.

RICHIE

...I did? I don't remember.

PRESTON

Well, you did. He's cool, he was just helping me clean up.

Richie takes another glance around the apartment. It's immaculate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)

So how was your day?

RICHIE

Not too bad. My boss had to handle a few heated phone calls. Apparently, there's a rumor going around that we're going to colorize the first 15 minutes of "The Wizard of Oz" and you'd think the entire world was going to collapse.

PRESTON

Well, Dorothy, dinner's almost ready. You can wind down and tell me and Toto all about it. Anyway, check this out... I've got a surprise.

Richie's expecting a beautiful bouquet.

RICHIE

What?

PRESTON

Come over here.

Richie makes his way over to Preston. Preston grabs his hand and places it squarely on his chest.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

What do you feel?

RICHIE

(smiling)

Your heart. Beating.

PRESTON

What else?

Preston slides Richie's hand over to his right pectoral. Instead of the natural, smooth curve of the muscle, Richie's hand comes in contact with something small, round, and metal.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Do you feel it now?

The foreign surface makes Richie pull back. Ignoring Richie's reaction, Preston pulls up his shirt to reveal his right nipple, newly pierced. The surrounding area is pink and tender.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
It's awesome, right!?! Lenny's  
been talking about getting  
piercings for awhile now and  
he finally talked me into it.  
It's great, isn't it great?

RICHIE  
...Yeah, it's great.

PRESTON  
(not really listening to  
Richie)  
The whole experience was hot.  
It was fucking scary hot.

Preston flicks his pierced nipple and gives a small wince. But the pained look on his face quickly fades away and is replaced with a satisfied smile. Richie just stands there, watching.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Mmm. Gotta heal a bit but... I  
hope you like it.

Richie isn't sure what to say. He continues to stand there in silence.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
...And I got something for  
you, too.

Preston walks over to the couch and picks up the bag laying there. From it, he pulls out 4 leather restraints and a studded dog collar with a leash. Richie is confused.

RICHIE  
For me?

PRESTON  
Yeah, for you. For us. They  
were on sale at the piercing  
salon I went to today. Playing  
with rope is fun but I wanna  
try these out, too.

Preston grabs Richie's hands and holds them behind his back.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
I have a feeling you're gonna  
like them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Richie doesn't know what to say. Just then, a mischievous light bulb goes off in Preston's head. He grins.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Come on, let's go.

Preston nods toward the bedroom and takes Richie's hand.

RICHIE  
Wha- now? But... what about dinner?

PRESTON  
Dinner can wait. Let's skip right to the dessert.

RICHIE  
But-

Preston takes the studded collar and leash and fastens it around Richie's neck. Holding it tight, he leads Richie out of the living room as if he were an animal.

PRESTON  
This is gonna help you relieve all that tension you've got built up. Come on, Boy.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's Saturday morning. Preston is cooking in the kitchen and Richie shuffles in. He grabs Preston from behind and attempts to kiss him on the back of the neck.

RICHIE  
Good morning.

Preston squirms in Richie's embrace a bit.

PRESTON  
(slightly exasperated)  
Watch out.

RICHIE  
What?

PRESTON  
Come on, can't you see I'm trying to cook!

Preston shakes free of Richie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE  
...Are you OK?

PRESTON  
Yeah, I'm fine.

RICHIE  
Are you sure? You don't act like it.

PRESTON  
You have to watch the piercing. It still hurts and I don't want anyone touching it.

RICHIE  
Sorry... you need help? Want me to make some coffee?

PRESTON  
No, things are under control here, I just need you to keep out of the way.

Richie begins to exit the kitchen.

RICHIE  
Alright, well we need to hurry. We're taking Patric to the airport this morning and I don't wanna be late.

PRESTON  
Don't worry. We've got plenty of time.

RICHIE  
Just want to make sure you remembered.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT - DAY

Richie's car pulls up to the curb and Patric emerges from the car looking like a strung out rock star. Richie springs out of the car to grab a suitcase from the back and to bid farewell to his friend.

RICHIE  
Well, mama, it's still not too late to turn around and go back.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Do you really have to go? What am I going to do without you?

PATRIC

Don't temp me! I'm only going away for a few days. Need to fatten myself up with some good down home cookin' and get some family love. I'll be back soon. Just miss me a little.

RICHIE

(smiling)

OK, just a little.

Patric glances over Richie's shoulder to see Preston still in the backseat of the car, looking unhappy.

PATRIC

Hey, you want a drink?

Patric pulls a flask out of her purse and offers Preston a swig.

RICHIE

No, he's fine. Just got in late is all.

PATRIC

Was he hanging out with Howard?

RICHIE

(unsure)

...Not sure, I think so.

PATRIC

Well, tell him I said bye. Tell Howard, too! I'll tell you all about my adventure when I get back!

RICHIE

(hugging Patric)

Have fun. Give everyone my love.

PATRIC

Alright, you two be good to each other, I'll see ya.

Patric leans in the car window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PATRIC (CONT'D)  
Bye, Preston!

RICHIE  
We will. Bon voyage!

Patric scoops up her bags and dashes into the building.  
Richie looks back at Preston, who still appears uninterested.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S CAR - DAY (TRAVELING)

Richie and Preston are headed back to the apartment. Richie glances over to see Preston staring blankly out the window.

RICHIE  
Hey, you wanna get some  
Neosporin for your nipple?

PRESTON  
No. I got some.

RICHIE  
Ok. So... you wanna see a  
movie today? You wanna call  
Howard?

PRESTON  
No, I don't want to see a  
movie. I think I'm just  
gonna go out once we get home.

RICHIE  
Go out? Without me? You come  
dragging in late last night  
and you're gonna go out again?

PRESTON  
(becoming angry)  
Look, don't worry about what  
I'm doing, alright?! Gimme a  
break. I'll be back later.  
Besides, didn't you hang out  
enough with Patric today?

RICHIE  
In case you haven't noticed, I  
was dropping her off at the  
airport. Thank you, very much.  
I don't know if I'd really  
call that hanging out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON

Well, whatever you wanna call it, it was more than enough.

RICHIE

There's something seriously wrong with you.

PRESTON

Patric is always hanging out with us, acting crazy. That shit gets old.

RICHIE

She's my friend.

PRESTON

(muttering)  
Your only friend.

RICHIE

That's mean, Preston! Don't talk like that. I've lost a lot of my friends. You need to chill out.

PRESTON

Just drive. Can we just get home? Huh?

RICHIE

Fine. I'll call Howard. We've been wanting to hang out, anyway. Howard's my friend, too, you know.

PRESTON

Right.

Richie takes one more sideways glance at Preston before turning his attention back to the road.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Preston returns from his day out. He enters and says nothing to Richie. Instead, he sits down at the table. Preston thumbs through the stack of papers there and begins to write out checks. From his viewpoint on the couch, Richie looks over in silence at Preston. In the same room and yet so distant. Richie looks over to the small table next to the couch. There's a picture of Richie and Preston, smiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Happy together and in love.

Richie sighs.

He knows that things are becoming different. That the happy days are coming to a close.

CUT TO:

INT. GAY/LESBIAN CENTER - DAY

Richie is in the waiting room of the center, waiting for his usual counseling appointment with EMILIO and picking up new medication. He waits, flipping through a magazine, not really paying attention to the pages. Around him, the usual waiting room behavior plays out: people seated, speaking in hushed tones and looking at publications. A television tuned to CNN plays overhead. Magic Johnson is having a news conference telling the world he's retiring from the NBA "because of the HIV virus that I have attained." Richie looks up to see another person in the waiting room gaunt, frail and obviously ill who is crying. The entire room drops what they are doing and stares, mouths agape, at the TV. Richie and the crying man share a glance and Richie mouths the word WOW. Just then, a MEDICAL ASSISTANT with a clipboard enters the room.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT

Richard? Emilio will see you now.

Broken from his trance, Richie gets up and follows the medical assistant out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. EMILIO'S OFFICE - DAY

Richie sits in a chair in front of a desk in a typical office. Across from him, behind the desk, sits his therapist, EMILIO, a man of Italian descent.

EMILIO

So you were able to get your prescription ok today?

Richie holds up a bag full of pill bottles.

RICHIE

Yeah, no problems this time. Did you just hear about Magic?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILIO

Magic Johnson? What's up with Magic?

RICHIE

He's holding a news conference right now. I just saw it in the waiting room. He just announced he's HIV positive and quitting the NBA.

EMILIO

What? Damn. Are you serious? That is huge. I'm sorry to hear that about Magic. How have you been doing?

RICHIE

Not too bad. Except for the medication's giving me really bad diarrhea. It's better than the alternative, though. Right?

EMILIO

Yeah, does the doctor know? Sometimes it takes your body time to adjust. It's important to keep a positive outlook, though. Besides that, what else is going on? Are you still working?

RICHIE

Yeah, I'm working, but it's difficult. I shit my pants almost everyday and I'm afraid to eat. I can't leave the house without a pocket full of Immodium and even then it's iffy.

EMILIO

Well, do what you can. It's important not to stop. The last time we spoke, you told me you were seeing someone. Is that still happening?

RICHIE

Preston? Yeah. We're still together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EMILIO

And still being safe?

RICHIE

Yes, we're safe. I guess.  
We're trying a few things I've  
never done before, but it's  
not risky in that way.

EMILIO

In what way? What things?

RICHIE

...Yeah. Preston has a thing  
for... bondage... and role  
play. He likes to tie me up.

Richie proceeds carefully. He doesn't want to freak out Emilio, but he wants to talk to someone about Preston. Emilio listens intently as Richie begins to open up about his relationship.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

We've been together a few  
months now and things are  
usually pretty good... He's  
very charming.

EMILIO

Usually pretty good and  
charming? What do you mean?

RICHIE

He's... I don't know... not  
easy to read. I don't know if  
I'm trippin or what.

Richie struggles to make sense of his thoughts.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

It started out being very...  
playful. I mean, it was really  
exciting in the beginning.

Richie stops.

EMILIO

And?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RICHIE

...And, now he'll only have sex if bondage is involved and it just keeps getting more and more elaborate. If you know what I mean.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie is lying on the bed, bound by an intricate array of ropes and restraints, gagged, and blindfolded.

END FLASHBACK

INT. EMILIO'S OFFICE - DAY

EMILIO

And how do you respond to that? How does it make you feel?

RICHIE

Well... I mean, it's ok. I like it, too. You know, it's fun and he's really into it so that's just what we do. It is scary sometimes, though. And sometimes I feel dehumanized.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Richie is blindfolded, tied to a chair and rock hard, just like his first experience. We hear the tick-tick-tick-whooshing sound of the gas stove being turned on in the kitchen. Unable to see, Richie turns his head to the familiar sound.

ANGLE ON:

Preston's hand holding a spoon over the gas stove flame.

RICHIE

What are you doing?

PRESTON

Just relax.

Preston leaves the kitchen with the hot spoon in one hand and a spoon in a bowl of ice in the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE  
Come on. What are you doing?

PRESTON  
Did I say you could speak?!?!

Preston approaches Richie, setting the bowl down on the floor.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Sit still. Trust me.

Richie struggles slightly in his bonds and gives a whimper. He's not so sure anymore about Preston's games and fantasies.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
I said SIT STILL!

Preston lifts the hot spoon to Richie's neck. Richie can feel the heat radiating from the kitchen utensil.

RICHIE  
Don't hurt me-!

Just then, Preston produces an ice cube from the bowl and with his free hand roughly presses it to Richie's neck. Despite the ice cube's harmless contact, Richie still lets out a wild scream and struggles with his bonds. He's near tears and Preston steps back to admire his handiwork. Preston gives a soft chuckle.

PRESTON  
There. There. That's a good boy.

END FLASHBACK

INT. EMILIO'S OFFICE - DAY

Having re-lived the disturbing memory, Richie is visibly upset. He takes a deep breath and composes himself.

EMILIO  
Richie? Are you Ok? You're safe here. You know if it's not consensual it's not Ok.

RICHIE  
Yeah, I'm know. It's consensual. We have a safe word. I just never use it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EMILIO

Have you tried talking to Preston about what you like and what you don't?

RICHIE

No. Not really. Not too much. It's hard for me to talk about sex. He doesn't really listen anyway. This... whole bondage scene... I just thought it was gonna be in addition to other things. You know, for variety. But after that first time... it was like opening... a floodgate or something. He wanted it all the time after that and our sex life became all about that and only that. It's all he'll do now.

EMILIO

Well, if you're not comfortable you need to talk to him. Is it the bondage and discipline scene in general you're unhappy with or what exactly is bothering you?

RICHIE

No... the B & D scene is cool. I don't have a problem with that. I just wonder sometimes if maybe... something else is going on up in his head and he's using that stuff as... an outlet for something bigger.

EMILIO

Well, again, you need to approach him about it?

RICHIE

...It's impossible.

EMILIO

Why not, Richie? Why is it impossible? Why aren't you honest with Preston?

RICHIE

Because... he does so much for me...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE (CONT'D)

I really want to make him  
happy. And, plus... I guess I  
just don't want to be alone.

EMILIO

Alone?

RICHIE

I don't want to lose Preston.  
I really do care for him...  
and I'm tired of always having  
to go through the whole HIV  
speech every time I meet  
someone new. I want my life to  
be with Preston.

CUT TO:

INT. GAY & LESBIAN CENTER (HALLWAY) - DAY

Richie finishes his session with Emilio and exits the office.  
As he walks down the hall, he spots a familiar face:  
Howard's. Howard is busy scanning a billboard and in his  
hands are several pamphlets dedicated to AIDS and HIV. Richie  
approaches.

RICHIE

Howard?

Howard's slightly caught off guard.

HOWARD

Richie.

RICHIE

How's it going? What are you  
doing here?

(looks over at the  
billboard)

Looking for a new apartment or  
something?

Howard pauses. He's silent, but Richie can tell that Howard  
wants to say something. Howard struggles to find the right  
words. After a moment, he finally speaks.

HOWARD

No, I'm not looking for an  
apartment.

He holds up the pamphlets for Richie to see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I'm here for The Hay Ride.  
It's a support group for  
people with HIV and other life  
threatening illnesses.

Despite Richie's own illness and familiarity with the disease, his reaction is genuine and sincere. He reaches out a hand to touch Howard's arm.

RICHIE  
Oh, shit, Howie... I didn't  
know. I swear I didn't know.  
How could I not know this?

HOWARD  
I thought you of all people  
could tell. This psoriasis on  
my head. It's not psoriasis.  
It's KS. I thought for sure  
you knew. I hope you're not  
pissed.

Richie exhales and smiles sweetly to show his understanding. Howard however, realizes who he's talking to and attempts to clean up his statement.

HOWARD (CONT'D)  
I mean- I just thought you  
knew- you know-

RICHIE  
(cutting him off)  
It's ok, it's alright. I  
understand. I guess my brain  
just wouldn't let me go there.  
I'm so sorry.

Both men fall silent. They look down at the pamphlets in an attempt to collect their thoughts. Finally, Richie, assuming the role of big brother, speaks up.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
So, how long have you known?

HOWARD  
It's been a while... but every  
time I think I get used to the  
idea, and want to say  
something, it's like I wake up  
and... I just don't want to  
believe it, either. I guess  
I've been in denial, too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

I know, it's rough. I've been going to therapy sessions for a while now and sometimes when I go in there, it's like I'm going in for the first time. You know if you ever need anyone to talk to, anything, you can come to me. Does Preston know?

HOWARD

Preston knows.

Howard pauses again.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

What am I gonna do, Richie? What's gonna happen to me? I'm Jewish for God's sake! Do you know what my parents will do to me?!? They don't even know I'm gay much less that their only son has AIDS!

Richie suddenly pulls Howard into a tight hug.

RICHIE

Shh... don't worry about that now, Howie. You're doing the right thing, getting the facts and coming here. I think you're on the right track and if you need any help or anything, just let me know, promise?

Howard brightens a little.

HOWARD

Promise.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's the weekend. Richie looks sick. He sits huddled on the couch, wrapped in a blanket with a thermometer dangling from his lips. Preston emerges from the bedroom upbeat and fully dressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

What are you doing? Are you going out?

PRESTON

Yes.

RICHIE

Out?

PRESTON

Yes, out. I need to get out of here.

RICHIE

Come off it... I'm sick.

PRESTON

So?

RICHIE

So, God Preston, I'm sick. I could be dying for all I know and you wanna go out?

PRESTON

Get a grip, Richie, you're not dying. It's just the flu.

RICHIE

News flash, Preston. HIV is NOT the flu.

PRESTON

(cutting him off)

Look, I'm just going down to The Faultline for beer bust. I'll be back in a couple hours. Call Howard or something.

Preston grabs his jacket and walks out the front door, leaving Richie all alone.

"Move Over" by Janis Joplin begins to play.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Richie on the couch, watching TV.

B) Richie on the couch, taking cold medicine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

C) Richie tossing and turning on the couch.

D) Richie smoking a joint.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Richie finally gets up and looks around. The apartment is still quiet and empty. He glances up to the clock. Richie throws back the blanket, stretches and stands up. He feels better after the medicine and joint. He stands pondering for a moment, then looks at something off-screen.

ANGLE ON:

Richie's car keys, resting on the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAULTLINE BAR - DAY

Richie pulls up and luckily finds parking right in front of The Faultline. He gets out of his car and enters the establishment.

CUT TO:

INT. FAULTLINE BAR - DAY

Richie wades through the crowd at the bar. He says hi to a few familiar people and scans the crowd for Preston. Not seeing him inside, he decides to try the back patio.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAULTLINE BAR (PATIO) - DAY

Richie politely pushes through the mass of people to search for Preston. He spends a few minutes looking around. Just as he's about to give up hope, he looks over to one corner and finally sees Preston.

Preston is not alone.

Next to Preston stands Lenny. He has one arm around Preston's waist. Richie notices that Preston is shirtless, his torso colored with bruises of various sizes and shades. With his free hand, Lenny reaches up to touch Preston's nipple piercing. He gives it a long tug. The nipple stretches and Preston's head falls back in ecstasy. Preston comes to and gives Lenny a hard, sloppy kiss. Richie's blood runs ice cold. He stares on in complete shock and disgust.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lenny and Preston continue making out, unaware that they're being watched. Finally, Preston looks up to see Richie standing there.

PRESTON  
(completely calm)  
Oh, hey Richie.

Richie doesn't respond. He gives one last sickened look at Preston before turning on his heel and marching out of the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie is at home sitting on the couch in nothing but his boxer shorts waiting for Preston to return from the bar. He can barely control his thoughts let alone his emotions. Just then, Preston enters and Richie unleashes his fury.

RICHIE  
So, what the fuck is up with you and Lenny? You don't let me touch you anymore but he's all over you at The Faultline. Don't you know I hear about you making out with all your "friends" when you go out and now I finally see it with my own eyes. You're nothing but a fucking liar. Look at yourself. What's up with all those bruises? What the fuck have you been doing? You didn't get all those today. No wonder you don't want to get next to me. You asshole! Why the fuck did you even come home? Why don't you just go be with Lenny? Doesn't he have a God Damn toilet you can sleep in. Jesus Christ, you make me sick. This relationship is over. Just take what you want and go. You don't love me. You just like living in a nice apartment in West Hollywood and being in the center of all the action. Well, guess what? You better take a good look around because you're never  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

gonna see me or any of this  
shit anymore after tonight. Go  
find yourself another place to  
live. Go find another fool to  
put up with your lies and  
bullshit. I never want to see  
your face again.

Preston is speechless and all the blood has drained from his face. He looks like he might pass out but instead he approaches Richie and straddles his body with his own and hits him with the back of his hand. Richie doesn't have time to respond before Preston strikes him again with the back of his other hand. Richie tries to get up and push Preston back but before he can get away Preston punches Richie hard in the face and Richie loses his balance. He falls into the living room window, breaking it with his head and right hand. Richie hangs half in and half out of the window. Not only does he taste blood, he sees it everywhere. It flows down from his face and his slashed-up hand. There is a piece of glass sticking out of the palm of his hand. Richie almost continues to climb all of the way out of the window. He is afraid to pull himself back inside and of what Preston might still do. There are sharp shards of broken glass all around the top of Richie's body and he freezes. Preston backs off and Richie carefully pulls himself back into the living room and exits out the front door bleeding and wearing nothing but his boxers.

EXT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie is kneeling down in front of an outdoor water faucet under an eerie street lamp trying to wash the blood off his face and his hand is still bleeding. He needs a bandage and he needs help, but even in the familiar West Hollywood environment, he suddenly feels so lost. Unable to stop the bleeding and still wearing only his boxers, Richie stands up and walks away. Nowhere in particular, just away. Away from Preston. Away from everything.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's a Preston-less apartment now. A place that was once filled with joy and companionship is now a tomb.

Quiet.

Empty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lifeless.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) The boarded-up window.

B) The empty kitchen, dishes in the sink and an overflowing trash can.

C) The dark, empty bedroom.

D) The now empty side table in the living room. Upon it rested the picture of Richie and Preston. Now the picture is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. MELROSE AVENUE - DAY

Richie and Patric are strolling down the street, on their way to the Bodhi Tree bookstore.

PATRIC

You're looking better today.

RICHIE

Thanks, dude. You're a terrific liar, but thanks.

PATRIC

No, really. Before I left, I could just sense that you were heading to a dark place. I could totally see it coming. And now that Preston is gone, your energy is totally cleaner.

RICHIE

It doesn't feel that way. I know I did the right thing but I still feel like shit.

PATRIC

Trust me. With a clean aura, you can start fresh. Things will get better from here.

RICHIE

Well... I have been working out and meditating and reading Marianne Williamson books and I do feel a bit better but...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
it's been two months since  
Preston left and... I don't  
know... sometimes it feels  
like he's still here. I can  
still feel him sometimes, is  
that weird?

PATRIC  
Yeah. You guys had a very  
strong psychic connection.  
It's gonna be hard to just let  
that go. I guess the...  
BOND... was too strong!

Richie shoots Patric an icy, "not funny" glare.

PATRIC (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

Richie's not buying it.

PATRIC (CONT'D)  
I never liked him, anyway. He  
dotted his i's with a smiley  
face.

They finally reach the bookstore. Patric quickly ushers him  
inside to hopefully distract Richie from her bad pun.

PATRIC (CONT'D)  
C'mon, let's find something  
enlightening and get you on  
your way!

CUT TO:

INT. BODHI TREE BOOKSTORE - DAY

Richie and Patric have separated inside the store. The place  
is quiet except for the gentle, rhythmic sounds of a  
meditation tape playing overhead. Richie walks along the  
stacks, his giant boots creating a THUMP THUMP sound with  
each footfall, breaking the tranquility of the atmosphere.  
Sheepishly, Richie looks back to the front counter to  
apologize to the CASHIER.

RICHIE  
(whispering)  
Sorry!

Richie continues to walk, his head turned away. Just then, he  
slams into a Lazy Susan bookstand, sending the various  
paperbacks and stand crashing to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Shit!

Richie scrambles to clean up the mess. The cashier dashes out from behind the counter to help.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Oops, I'm really sorry.

The cashier does not respond. Richie looks around to see who else may have witnessed his accident. As he scans the area, his eyes fall on a overhead clock. Richie suddenly remembers he has somewhere he needs to be. He quickly stands and glances around for Patric. She's nowhere to be seen. Richie quietly, yet quickly makes his way to the back of the store. He sees Patric sitting at a table, a cup of tea in front of her.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

We gotta go!

Patric is a bit confused.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

It's visiting hours! We can see Howard now. Let's go!

Patric suddenly gathers her things and gets up to leave, abandoning the cup of tea.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Richie and Patric enter Howard's hospital room. Despite the bright overhead lights, it's a grim scene: various machines emitting beeping sounds, a few of Howard's relatives standing in a corner wearing black and on the bed: Howard. His young body is horribly affected by the AIDS virus. His once dark, thick curly hair is now dull and thinning. His skin pale, flaky and covered with KS lesions. He lies there still. Lifeless. Cautiously, Richie and Patric slowly approach the bedside. They're both near tears. Richie leans forward to softly whisper:

RICHIE

Howard? Howard? It's Richie.  
Patric and I stopped by to see  
you.

There's no response. Richie looks back at Patric in despair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just then, Howard's hand shoots up, quick as lightning, to clutch Richie's arm. Richie jumps from the scare and Patric lets out a gasp.

HOWARD  
(weak)  
Preston?

RICHIE  
No, it's me. Richie.

HOWARD  
Richie?

RICHIE  
Yes.

Howard draws in a long, labored breath.

HOWARD  
Where's Preston?

RICHIE  
He's not here. It's just me  
and Patric, Howie.

Howard's head slowly lolls to one side, but he brings it back to focus on the conversation.

HOWARD  
Preston... you and Preston...

RICHIE  
Howard-

HOWARD  
No, listen. You and Preston...  
whatever the problem is... fix  
it... promise me.

Howard's eyelids droop. His grip on Richie weakens.

RICHIE  
Howard?

No response.

RICHIE (CONT'D)  
Howard?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Patric looks back to Howard's relatives. Beneath their black veils, their eyes manage to shine through, shooting daggers of complete hatred at Richie. One relative utters a seething whisper:

HOWARD'S RELATIVE

You... gays... did this.

Like a small army of Grim Reapers, Howard's relatives slowly begin to approach the bed. Creeped out, Patric grabs Richie's shoulders.

PATRIC

C'mon Richie, he needs to rest now. We'll come back tomorrow.

Defeated by seeing his dying friend, Richie allows Patric to lead him out of the room.

CUT TO:

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie enters his apartment after a long day. He tosses his jacket over a chair, sets down his keys and walks over to his answering machine to playback the day's messages. He barely pays attention to the first message as he picks up a small stack of mail to thumb through. The second message doesn't catch his attention, either. But the third message on the machine makes him freeze.

PRESTON

(from the answering  
machine)

Hello, Richie.

Alarmed, Richie stares back at the machine.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Hey, babe. How are you? I know that it's been awhile but I had to call. I have a surprise for you. Outside your door.

The setup is all too familiar to Richie, yet he doesn't know what to expect. A sweet, charming Preston with a bouquet of flowers? Or a more sinister Preston back for more torment? Excited yet scared, Richie cautiously approaches the front door. He opens it and finds Preston standing on the porch. Preston, who's more attractive and handsome than ever, steps inside. He smiles sweetly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Hi, baby.

Richie is speechless, practically overwhelmed with emotion. Should he welcome Preston with open arms... or run and hide? He doesn't have the chance to make a choice. Preston grabs him in a warm, strong embrace, an embrace that Richie has always loved and has admittedly missed. Richie practically melts in Preston's arms.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Baby... I miss you...

END DREAM SEQUENCE

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richie shakes violently and awakens from his sleep. He sits up, totally disoriented. His head snaps left, then right as he searches for Preston in his dark surroundings. A few seconds pass, then Richie begins to calm down as he realizes he's in his bed, not in the living room. His breathing slows and becomes normal as he realizes that he's alone, that Preston is not there. He realizes that he was dreaming. The mere thought of not having Preston next to him is enough to send Richie back into the state of sadness that he's been trying so hard to fight. Richie lies down, curls up and starts to cry.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie is sitting on the couch in his usual spot when the phone rings nearby. He waits for two rings before reaching over to pick it up.

RICHIE

Hello?

PATRIC

(on the phone)

Rich, it's Patricia.

RICHIE

Oh, hey dude.

PATRIC

What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

Not too much.

PATRIC

Are you ok? Did I wake you?

RICHIE

No, I'm just sitting here.

PATRIC

Ok. So hey, if you aren't doing anything, you wanna come out with me tonight? Let's go dancing?

Richie takes a moment. He lets out a sigh.

RICHIE

No, I don't want to go. I'm just gonna stay in tonight.

PATRIC

You sure? Let's go have a good time. Dance the night away. Come out with me.

RICHIE

No... thanks, but I don't want to go out.

PATRIC

Alright, well if you change your mind I'll be at Mickey's. Call me tomorrow, ok?

RICHIE

I will.

PATRIC

Ok, bye bye.

RICHIE

Bye.

Richie hangs up the phone and gazes over to the kitchen table. Preston used to sit there so often in the past. Sit at the table while Richie sometimes sat on the couch. Now, there was no Preston. To Richie, the apartment feels empty.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (LATER)

Richie is still at home, sitting on the couch. The phone rings again. This time, he ignores it and lets the call go to the answering machine. At first the caller is silent, but after a few seconds, we hear Preston's voice.

PRESTON

Richie? It's me... Preston.  
Hey. How's it going? I...  
uh... been thinking about you  
and wanted to call... see how  
you were doing.

There's a moment of silence. Richie stares at the answering machine in anticipation.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

So... hey, guess you're not  
there. Look, give me a call  
why don't you... I'm living in  
San Francisco now. I'm in the  
book.

Richie continues to stare at the machine.

"Special" by Garbage starts to play as we...

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

- A) Richie pacing the living room.
- B) Richie pouring a drink at the kitchen table.
- C) Richie pacing again.
- D) Richie smoking a joint.
- E) Richie working out at the gym.
- F) Richie dancing in a club.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie gets up from the couch. His gaze falls to the window across the room. The window is in perfect condition. No one would ever know that just a few months earlier, a horrific incident had happened there. It was as if there had never been any damage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Richie wonders if this is a sign that represents healing. Suddenly, the phone rings again and in a weak moment Richie answers.

RICHIE  
Hello?

PRESTON  
...Hi.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Richie?

RICHIE  
...Hello, Preston.

PRESTON  
Oh, God, hi Richie. I- I'm actually surprised you answered.

Silence.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
So... how are you?

RICHIE  
I'm doin' alright. Just trying to keep it together. Howard's been in and out of the hospital. And...

PRESTON  
Yeah, I've been worried. I heard he's been sick but the good news is he keeps recovering, right. He's going to be ok, isn't he?

More silence.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
So hey, the reason I called is... Are you still there?

RICHIE  
I'm here.

PRESTON  
I'm glad you picked up. I really wanted to talk to you. I miss you so much.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm really sorry about what happened, you know. I just wanted you to know that. I never meant for things to get outta hand the way they did that night. I did wrong. Will you please forgive me?

Richie doesn't respond.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

C'mon Richie. I've been thinking about it a lot, you know? I can't get it out of my head. I never meant to hurt you.

Richie says nothing. Preston attempts to change the subject.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

So, I guess you don't care, but I'm living in San Francisco now.

Richie still doesn't respond.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

It's great. Especially since I don't have a car. Now I know why you loved it so much. Have you been up here lately?

RICHIE

I haven't been there since before I met you.

PRESTON

Well, then, how about coming for a visit? There's a street fair next month. You wanna come?

Richie begins to soften a little.

RICHIE

That wouldn't be wise.

PRESTON

C'mon, what do you say? San Francisco misses you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You can still get a cheap room at the motor lodge, or just stay with me if you want. What do you say?

Richie ponders for a moment, but it doesn't take long.

RICHIE

That's not gonna happen, Preston. I do miss the city and the street fair would be fun but I really don't want to see you. That would be a big mistake.

Preston doesn't stop.

PRESTON

Well, just think about it. The city beckons. You belong up here, Richie.

A familiar smile begins to grow on Richie's face.

RICHIE

Goodbye, Preston.

"San Francisco" by Scott Mckenzie starts to play as we

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Richie getting a tan.
- B) Richie at the gym working out.
- C) Richie getting a hair cut.
- D) Richie at the mall shopping.
- E) Richie packing.
- F) An airplane leaving from LAX.
- G) Various shots of San Francisco.
- H) Richie on the MUNI, a smile on his face.
- J) Richie throwing down his bags on a hotel bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

K) Richie walking down a busy San Francisco street.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Richie is making his way through a busy yet familiar crowd. Coffee shops, flower shops, corner stores, he's seen them all before and their familiarity fills him with strength and joy. San Francisco is his second home. He's excited yet nervous at the thought of accidentally running into Preston but he can think of no better place in all the world than in San Francisco he'd rather be.

Richie arrives by foot to the Castro District and who does he see, standing there in front of the Bank of America building, underneath the giant gay flag, is Preston. Chills wash over Richie as he sees Preston. Preston is as handsome as ever! Their eyes meet. Preston flashes his trademark smile and walks over to greet Richie with a hug.

PRESTON

My God! What are you doing here? I didn't think you were coming.

RICHIE

I got a wild hair.

Preston lays a kiss on Richie. Despite his disdain for Preston, Richie is still a bit gratified by the contact.

PRESTON

Well... hey, you look great! Really, you're hot. Looks like life's been treating you well.

RICHIE

Yeah, it has, thanks.

PRESTON

Well, God, wow, you really do look fantastic!

Richie grins triumphantly with satisfaction.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

So, I guess you made it here ok. Did you fly or drive or what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

I took a very bumpy flight but I got a cool room at this funky place I like on Market Street, so that was cool.

PRESTON

Well... welcome back. Welcome home to San Francisco!

Richie laughs nervously.

RICHIE

Thank you.

PRESTON

And... welcome to The Harvey Milk Plaza!

Preston open his arms and turns in a circle then gestures up to the large rainbow flag.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Home to the biggest rainbow flag in the world.

RICHIE

(still giggling)  
Gee, thanks.

PRESTON

So, you wanna get a beer and take a look around?

RICHIE

Well, hmmm? I suppose we might as well. Where's the beer truck?

Preston doesn't waste any time. He grabs Richie by the shoulders and steers him into the crowd in search of refreshments. "Do You Wanna Funk" by Sylvester begins to play.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOLSOM STREET - DAY

The Folsom Street Fair is in full swing. People of all shapes and sizes are in attendance, wearing their very finest in leather, chains and fetish gear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Richie and Preston walk along the street, seeing the sights and intermittently making comments about what they see: a naked obese woman bent over and getting paddled by two "small people" dressed in leather; a group of muscular, tanned men in jockstraps drinking beer; an older man in a cop uniform getting his boots licked by a younger man in a hood.

Richie and Preston have lunch at the Cove Café (where they have their picture taken by a customer) and make their way over to Dolores Park where they find a quiet, shaded spot underneath a tree.

CUT TO:

EXT. DELORES PARK - DAY

RICHIE

Holy, shit. That was crazy cool. San Francisco is the freest most fun city on the planet. Where else could something like that happen?

PRESTON

I know, right? Did you see that woman getting paddled? I bet you could hear her screams all the way up at Twin Peaks!

RICHIE

Haha! Not only that, but with her tits hanging out like that, she was giving us a twin peek!!

Preston and Richie burst into laughter. Richie has finally and completely warmed up to Preston. Their day together has brought them back together again. Their laughter dies down and Preston decides to get serious.

PRESTON

It's great seeing you again.

RICHIE

Most definitely. I was secretly hoping I would run into you. I just wanted you to see how good I was doing. I didn't think we'd be hanging out together, though. And having such a good time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON

So, I meant what I said on the phone. I really am sorry about what happened. I hope you know that.

RICHIE

...I do. It takes two to tango. I take responsibility for my part but I won't go back to that kind of life. You have to understand that.

PRESTON

Listen. It was all my fault. You were the best thing that ever happened to me and... and I just want to tell you... that I miss you desperately. I miss seeing you. I miss being with you. I miss...

RICHIE

Please, Preston, just don't go there.

PRESTON

It's true, though, all of it... I still want us to be together.

RICHIE

No, Preston, there was something wrong with our relationship for it to get to that point. I'm not going to go back there.

PRESTON

(cutting him off)

Baby, I know. I know that. I'm sorry for what happened. I- I've been working on my issues. I've been going to counseling and I've really worked through that stuff.

RICHIE

Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON

Yes! Look, I just want nothing more than for us to be together again. Get it right this time. We had a family. I want to come home.

Richie takes a moment to gather his thoughts. He also musters up the strength to be honest with Preston.

RICHIE

Preston... all that bondage stuff- you get into it so much. I don't think you can live without it and I don't want it like that all the time. I don't trust you enough anymore. It's just not going to work.

PRESTON

No, baby, hey, if you want it gone, it's gone. I don't care that much about it anymore. Seriously... I'd rather have a life with you. Whatever it takes.

Preston pulls Richie into a soft kiss.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You can fuck me more. I'll suck your dick whenever you want. I'll give you everything you want.

Richie is quickly melting but there's still one item on the list. He pulls away from Preston.

RICHIE

What about Lenny?

PRESTON

Hey, I don't even talk to him anymore, he's gone. You're the one that I want. Not him. I want you. I love you. I choose you.

Preston leans in again to give Richie an all-conquering kiss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RICHIE  
Oh, man. I knew this would  
happen.

"Supervixen" by Garbage begins to play.

CUT TO:

INT. TWIN PEAKS HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Richie and Preston are back at Richie's hotel room, reunited physically and spiritually. The lovemaking that they're experiencing is nothing like they've never had before. It's passionate, wild and real. The act of love brings them back together... stronger than ever before. Everything is as it should be. Preston is coming home.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

ANGLE ON:

The photograph of Richie and Preston at the Cove Café restaurant, framed and resting on the living room side table. It now occupies the space where the old photo used to be. Camera pans over to kitchen where Richie is making breakfast. Preston enters and hugs Richie from behind.

PRESTON  
(whispering)  
Good morning, wild man.

RICHIE  
Mmm... good morning, yourself.

PRESTON  
Did we sleep at all last  
night?

RICHIE  
Hehe. Not too much... No  
beauty sleep for the wicked.

Preston laughs and suddenly breaks away from Riki.

PRESTON  
I need coffee, juice and  
bacon, please.

RICHIE  
Over on the counter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON

Good, because I need to make a toast... to more sleepless nights!

RICHIE

Pour one for me, too. I'll raise a glass to that!

They laugh.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

I'm really glad you're back.

PRESTON

I'm so grateful to be home. Things feel whole again. I'm right where I'm supposed to be.

RICHIE

I think so, too..

PRESTON

So hey, I wanna go see Howard today. Can you come?

RICHIE

Of course. Visiting hours don't start until after 1 but I want to see him, too. Howard's been through hell and back and I know he appreciates the company.

Richie turns back to the stove.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I'm gonna go over to the Hayride.

PRESTON

The Hayride?

RICHIE

Yep, it's a support group at The Center. Mostly people with AIDS and cancer but anyone's welcome. Emilio turned me on to it. It's actually pretty cool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON

What happens there?

RICHIE

We meditate, talk, do guided imagery, just hang out with other people in similar circumstances. You know, just clear our heads. Find out who needs help. Stuff like that. It's pretty powerful. You should come. You'd be a big hit.

PRESTON

Group meditation? I'll try that.

RICHIE

Ok-- but no cruising! It's supposed to be a cruise free zone.

PRESTON

I'm not going there to cruise, trust me. Oh hey, I wanted to ask you: have you seen my ring?

RICHIE

Your dad's ring?

PRESTON

Yeah, my Dad's ring, the gold one. I hope I didn't leave it behind in San Francisco.

RICHIE

I haven't seen it. Let's look for it when we get back.

PRESTON

You mean... after the Hayride! Giddyap!

Preston does a quick cowboy-twirling-the-lasso dance. Richie can't help but smile at Preston's charm.

RICHIE

No showing off, either!?!

Preston mocks Richie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PRESTON  
No showing off, either!

CUT TO:

INT. WEST HOLLYWOOD COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

The large multi-purpose room is set up for several activities: in one corner, massage tables are set up and a few people are receiving Reiki treatments; a long table with healthy snacks and water pitchers in another; and in the middle of the room, men and women sitting on the floor in a circle. Richie and Preston enter, both dressed in sweats and they join the group on the floor. Despite his first time, Preston takes the session seriously.

DISSOLVE TO:

A shot of the group, meditating, their eyes closed and breathing deeply. We can hear the group leader speaking gently in voice over:

GROUP LEADER  
Ok, one long, deep breath  
in... imagine a warm light  
inside your body...

DISSOLVE TO:

A shot of Preston. He's totally relaxed.

GROUP LEADER (CONT'D)  
(in V.O.)  
Exhale slowly...

DISSOLVE TO:

A shot of Richie. He too is relaxed.

GROUP LEADER (CONT'D)  
(in V.O.)  
Relax your body...

DISSOLVE TO:

A shot of Richie and Preston sitting on the floor. They're holding hands. It's as if the mere physical contact is strengthening their meditation. Their union making everything about them and around them stronger.

CUT TO:

EXT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Richie and Preston arrive home from the Hayride.

RICHIE

Now, we're just gonna change  
real fast and then head out-

As they approach the apartment, they see Patric sitting at the front door. She's holding the mistletoe barrette in her hands, slowly turning it over again and again.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Patti?

Patric lifts her face to Richie. She's been crying and her pained expression tells the whole story.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES CEMETARY - DAY

It's Howard's funeral. Grey headstones. Green lawns. Black suits. Howard's relatives and various friends are there. So are Richie, Preston and Patric. The plain pine coffin is slowly lowered into the ground and several of the people start to sob. Patric clings to Richie. While he tightly hugs her, he peers over her shoulder to get a last look at the coffin. Richie begins to wonder about his own time. His own time left alive. He realizes that his illness was just like Howard's and that he could end up sharing the same fate. A drastically shortened life.

Patric breaks away from Richie and walks away, wiping her nose. Preston comes up to Richie to hold his hand while the mourners around them begin to throw dirt onto the coffin.

PRESTON

I can't believe he's gone. At  
least he's not in pain,  
anymore.

RICHIE

Poor Howard, man. He didn't  
deserve this. He fought so  
hard to live and now he's  
gone. I just don't understand  
it.

Despite the nearby mourners, Preston hugs Richie and cries.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON

Promise that you'll never  
leave me. Promise that we'll  
always be together.

RICHIE

We'll always be together. I  
promise. I'll never leave you.

CUT TO:

INT. WEST HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Richie and Preston are at an elegant restaurant several days later. They're dressed in slightly upscale attire. Howard's tragic passage still hangs in the air, but the men are trying their best to cope, continue living, and move on.

RICHIE

A few of the people from The  
Hayride are going to a  
demonstration Saturday night.  
They're trying to de-fund the  
drug assistance program. I  
think I we should go.

PRESTON

De-fund the program for the  
AIDS drugs? We need more money  
not less. What the fuck?  
What's going to happen? Where  
is it?

RICHIE

Well, we're going to meet at  
Crescent Heights and march to  
Barney's Beanery to confront  
the owner and chant, "Shame on  
you. The whole world is  
watching" because of the  
"FAGOTS-STAY OUT" sign they  
used to have hanging behind  
their bar and printed on their  
matchbooks! They only took it  
down and stopped handing them  
out because the new city  
council asked them to. Can you  
believe that shit? He lives  
here and he has his business  
here and he had the nerve to  
hang a sign over his bar  
demanding fagots stay out!!!  
Fuck him!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

We're going to demand he come out and apologize to us. After that, we'll just head towards West Hollywood Park, through boystown and make some noise and demand the government stop all the red tape bullshit and do more research and provide more affordable drugs and stop firing us and stop evicting us and basically let the world know we're here, we're queer, and we're not going to take it anymore. For God sakes do SOMETHING. We're trying to get people out of the bars and into the streets. This endless waiting is killing too many of us. What else can we do?

PRESTON

Damn, boy, I'm scared of you. You're not going to get arrested are you?

Richie chuckles and holds up his two fingers Boy-Scout-Honor style.

RICHIE

I hope not! We got permits and the cops are going to be there to "escort us and protect us"

Richie gestures the quote signs with his hands.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

But I'm definitely in the mood to raise some hell.

PRESTON

Well, count me in, mister. I'm in a hell raisin' mood myself!

The pair sit in silence for a moment, enjoying each other's gaze across the candle light. Just then, Preston pipes up:

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Oh, hey. Look what I found.

From his jacket pocket, Preston produces a small velvet box. He places it on the table, slides it towards Richie and opens it. Inside is a familiar ring.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

Your father's ring! You found it!

PRESTON

Yeah, it was stashed inside a shirt pocket.

Richie takes an admiring look at it.

RICHIE

It's beautiful. You know, I'm glad you didn't lose it. I know how much it means to you.

He slides the box back to Preston.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD - NIGHT

A large crowd has gathered in the West Hollywood area to hold a demonstration. Banners and various signs are held by many of the people. Some have noise makers and whistles. Nearby traffic has slowed down due to the crowd. A few drivers honk their horns in support while cops on horseback circle the event. Several camera crews have set up their equipment along the boulevard to capture the action. A blonde reporter, JOANN LAKIN, stands in front of a camera. She clears her throat and tosses her hair back before beginning her report.

JOANN

Good evening, Los Angeles. I'm Joann Lakin and this is WeHo News. As you can see behind me, people have gathered here tonight in preparation to march through West Hollywood. Their cause? The acceleration of AIDS medicine. Very few medications have been available since the HIV/AIDS outbreak roughly ten years ago and the public wants something to be done about it.

Joann takes a look behind her. The crowd begins chanting, "Act Up! Fight Back! Fight AIDS" as they start to move down Santa Monica Blvd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOANN (CONT'D)

And the crowd has started moving. Several reports claim that the group will march all the way to The Century Plaza Hotel where the Governor is staying to get their message heard. All parties hope for a peaceful demonstration but police officers are nearby to ensure the safety of everyone.

Joann scans the crowd of marchers as they progress past her. Richie and Preston are approaching.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Let's see if we can get a few words from someone. (to Richie and Preston) Oh, excuse me? I'm Joann Lakin from WeHo News, care to say a few words?

RICHIE

Yes, Joann. Love you and love your show! Thanks for coming out. We need to get the word out. We need visibility. We need the world to hear us. Take a look around. A whole generation of gay men are disappearing. We're dropping dead like flies and no one seems to care. Don't think it can't happen to you.

JOANN

Thank you, I can feel your passion, but what about tonight's cause?

RICHIE

Well, we're marching across West Hollywood to get the word out: the FDA needs to expedite the approval of AIDS drugs. And there needs to be more education and prevention.

JOANN

I see. You don't think the FDA is doing enough to provide medication to individuals inflicted with AIDS?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

Absolutely not. It can take up to 10 years to have drugs approved. People with HIV live about 18 months after diagnosis! What's the point? That's got to change.

JOANN

Perhaps the FDA is making sure their experimental drugs are safe?

RICHIE

Absolutely, but in the meantime, people are dying. Some people feel that since they're terminally ill, it doesn't matter how experimental the drug is. We need to make some exceptions to the rule. We need more research. We need more affordable medication and we need it fast or we're all going to die.

Joann addresses Preston.

JOANN

And what about you, sir? Your thoughts?

PRESTON

He's right, totally right. Where's the outrage? Where are our politicians? Why hasn't the President said anything? People are dying. We need help. We need someone to speak out on our behalf. I'm out here to support my husband.

JOANN

Your husband?

PRESTON

(beaming)

That's right. This man right here is my husband, and the love of my life.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

We need the Mayor and the Governor and the President and everyone who hears this to stop sitting on their hands and do something.

JOANN

You two are certainly a lovely couple!

Preston punches his fist in the air and looks directly into the camera.

PRESTON

Act up! Fight back! Fight AIDS! Act up! Fight back! Fight AIDS!!!

JOANN

Well, good luck tonight and good luck to the two of you.

Joann turns her attention back to the camera.

JOANN (CONT'D)

And there you have it. Marchers and their supporters are out tonight in force for their cause. We'll be keeping everyone at home up to date with any breaking news. This is Joann Lakin for WeHo news.

Preston and Richie continue walking down the street. After a minute, Richie pulls Preston out of the crowd and off to the side.

RICHIE

Dude, you rocked! I am so proud of you.

PRESTON

You are? Does that mean you'll marry me? Now that I've found my fathers ring. I realize how important being a family is and how much I love you.

Preston gets down on one knee, pulls the velvet box containing his fathers ring out of his pocket, opens it, and offers it to Richie.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Richard Hamilton, will you  
marry me?

Richie looks shocked and puzzled. His jaw drops.

RICHIE

You're giving me your father's  
ring?

PRESTON

Yes. I want you to have this  
ring as a symbol of our love.  
I want you to be my husband.

RICHIE

Preston, that's beautiful.  
That's really beautiful. I'm  
just not sure I'm ready for  
this...

PRESTON

Let's do this, Richie. Say  
yes. Say you'll marry me. I  
have a date picked out next  
month and everything. Let's do  
it. Let's start making plans  
immediately-

Richie steps back, waves his hands in the air as if to stop a  
car about to run him over, and shakes his head back and  
forth.

RICHIE

No, Preston. I'm sorry. I  
can't get married yet. It's  
too soon. Next month is way  
too soon.

Preston stands back up and begins to get defensive.

PRESTON

Come on, Richie. What are you  
so afraid of? The sooner the  
better. I'm already using your  
last name.

RICHIE

Preston this is a bit fast for  
me. I mean, I love you, I do,  
you know I love you but this  
feels just a bit hurried.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

PRESTON

Hurried? What do you mean, hurried? And why should we wait? We love each other right? At least you say you do. Isn't that enough?

RICHIE

Of course, Preston, I love you, I do. I just... I just need a little time to get used to all of this. I can't just jump into marriage. I'm not even out to my parents yet.

PRESTON

I don't believe this.

RICHIE

Come on, just a little more time together, please? We're a couple. We're happy. I'm not going anywhere. I like the way things are right now. Sometimes being in love just isn't enough. I need more time.

Preston takes a moment to think.

PRESTON

Fine. We'll talk about this later. But in the meantime, I still want you to wear the ring. Just wear it for me.

Without waiting to hear a reply from Richie, Preston removes the ring from the box and places it on Richie's finger.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You can show it off to all our friends.

RICHIE

Fine, Preston, I'll wear the ring but can we not talk about this anymore right now? It sounds like you've made up my mind for me anyway.

PRESTON

What the hell is your problem?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

RICHIE

Preston! We cannot get married next month. I'm sorry. It's just too soon. It's not legal anyway. It's not even real. Why is getting married next month so important to you? What difference does it make?

PRESTON

Oh really? You don't think I'm real? You don't think our relationship is real? I stand behind you in your causes and show you that I love you and this is what I get in return? You know what? Just forget it.

RICHIE

Preston- That's not what I meant.

PRESTON

(cutting him off)  
I said FORGET IT!

Preston walks away, rejoining the march. Richie stands there, alone with his whistle and Preston's ring on his finger.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie and Preston are sitting next to each other on the couch, watching TV. A few awkward moments go by and Richie places Preston's hand in his. Preston glances over and Richie leans forward a bit in an attempt to kiss Preston. Instead, Preston turns his attention back to the TV screen, his face expressionless. News footage of the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman is playing on the screen. The brutal murders have been all over the news nonstop all day. Everyone is saying that OJ killed them in a jealous rage. Richie sits for a few moments in shock and silence. Slowly, he kisses Preston's shoulder. Once. Twice. Making his way up to Preston's neck, Richie continues his path of kisses. Preston suddenly jerks away.

PRESTON

Stop.

RICHIE

What's wrong? Are you still mad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON  
Just stop it. What do you  
think you're doing?

RICHIE  
Kissing you. Kissing your  
neck.

PRESTON  
I hate it when you do that.

RICHIE  
Well, excuse me for trying to  
be affectionate.

Richie scoots closer to Preston. Preston instantly explodes.

PRESTON  
GET THE FUCK OFF ME!

Preston breaks away and gets up from the couch to sit over at  
the dining room table. Several tense minutes go by.

RICHIE  
Are you gonna stop pouting and  
come back to the couch?

PRESTON  
I'm not pouting.

RICHIE  
That's terrific. You wanna  
tell me what's really going on  
then?

There's a moment of silence. Finally, Preston starts talking.

PRESTON  
I've lost my sex drive.

RICHIE  
What?

PRESTON  
I don't want to have sex  
anymore. I just don't want it.

RICHIE  
Are you kidding me? Is this  
because I don't want to get  
married right away?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON

No, it's not because of that, it doesn't have anything to do with that or you. I just don't have a sex drive anymore.

RICHIE

Dude, this is not normal. You suddenly just don't have a sex drive anymore? You gotta be kiddin.

PRESTON

Look, I'm not saying that you have to stop having sex, ok? If you need it, you should probably go and find it somewhere else.

Richie is puzzled.

RICHIE

Somewhere else?

PRESTON

Yeah, the bar, the bathhouse, whatever.

RICHIE

I don't want to get it somewhere else... are you trying to say you want to break up?

PRESTON

No, I don't want to break up. I just don't want to have sex anymore. Period.

RICHIE

Well, this is odd. Just like that? You just don't want to have sex? Are you that angry? Are you depressed? If you want, I might be able to set up an appointment with Emilio and maybe he can-

PRESTON

RICHIE! Are you deaf?!? I said I don't want to have sex anymore! Period! So drop it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Preston gets up, storms out of the living room and into the bedroom. He gives the bedroom door a hard slam. Richie sits on the couch, dumbfounded.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's late at night. Several hours have gone by since the argument in the living room. Richie and Preston are both lying in bed in the darkened bedroom, facing away from each other.

RICHIE

I can tell you're not asleep.

No answer. Richie turns over to face Preston's direction.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

I just... I just want to say  
I'm sorry.

PRESTON

You're forgiven.

RICHIE

It seems... like it's been so  
long since we've done  
anything. Why don't you want  
me to touch you?

PRESTON

I just have a lot on my mind.

RICHIE

Like what?

PRESTON

Like stuff. I have my own  
life, you know. You can't  
always rely on me for  
everything.

RICHIE

I know that. But, please, you  
rely on me way more than I  
rely on you. I pay the rent. I  
pay all the bills. I don't  
pressure you to get a job. I  
don't even care.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Besides, you never know what's gonna happen tomorrow or the next day, anyway. You never know when nothing anymore...

PRESTON

When what, Richie? When you're gonna get sick? When you're gonna die? When you're going to leave? You've been healthy for months, nothing's gonna happen. I could drop dead tomorrow. I don't know why you always have to turn everything into a big dramatic problem. You're always thinking about yourself.

The tension begins to build.

RICHIE

Well I have to, since it seems that no one else will. You know what else? I'm on to you. I hear stories all the time about you going out behind my back. Making out with your quote unquote "friends."

PRESTON

At least I have "friends."

RICHIE

Yeah, and maybe those friends will let you crash with them and live off them since you're so sick and tired of being with me!

PRESTON

That's great, that's just great. You know, this doesn't make any sense: if you're so deep and spiritual, then why are you being such an asshole?

RICHIE

Oh, now, I'm suddenly the asshole.

PRESTON

Screw you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

You know what? I don't want to do this again. You promised me when you came back that it would be different and that things were gonna change.

PRESTON

Things have changed! I don't even get to see my friends because of you! How's that, huh? Yeah, I'll tell you something, things have changed, alright. You managed to turn yourself into a whiny little cunt!

In a flurry of thrown bed sheets, Preston angrily springs from the bed and leaves the room. The quick movement startles Richie and he sits up in bed. He can hear Preston heading for the kitchen... but for what?

Silence.

Richie can tell that all of the apartment lights are still off. He doesn't hear any noise coming from the kitchen. He wonders what Preston's doing.

More silence.

Concern starts to grow inside of Richie. He tries to lean forward to see out of the open door, but his angle gives away nothing. Richie begins to wonder if he's in danger. He looks to the bedroom window... a possible way to escape. For an instant, Richie has a flashback of a broken window. Shards of glass. Sliced skin. Dripping blood. The image of the bloody body of Nicole Brown Simpson on the TV keeps playing over in his mind.

Richie looks back to the door. He jumps at the sight of Preston suddenly standing there, motionless and silent, in the dark. Richie tries to remain calm, but his fear is growing. Does Preston have a knife? Would Preston try to kill him like OJ killed Nicole and Ron? Preston walks out of the shadows and gets into the bed... empty handed and facing away from Richie.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You gotta wonder sometimes how mad a person can get before they want to kill someone. OJ must have been pretty mad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Preston snuggles down into the bed as if nothing's happened. But Richie's heart is still racing. He continues to sit up in bed until he's sure that Preston has fallen asleep. Finally, he lies back onto the bed... but he doesn't close his eyes.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACIOUS FIELD - DAY

Richie is running in slow motion through a large meadow. The knee-high grass is thick and dotted with beautiful flowers.

Richie is happy.

Richie is free.

He jumps as he runs, as if he were a child.

Unexpectedly, Richie falls. Still in slow motion, he hits the ground and realizes there's a slope. Now, he's falling downhill. Rolling downhill. Over and over again, rolling down and out of control.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richie stirs in his sleep and realizes something is wrong. He awakens to find himself being rolled over onto his stomach. His feet are already tied together. He's disoriented but realizes he can't move his hands which are trapped underneath his chest making it difficult to breathe. The bedroom lights are on and Preston is awake and standing over him.

An icy sheet of fear washes over Richie. He promised himself that he would watch Preston through the night. But he made a mistake. He fell asleep.

RICHIE

Preston, what are you doing??

Untie me-let me go!

Preston lunges forward to jam a pair of dirty underwear into Richie's mouth. Quickly, he secures it by tying a bandana tight around Richie's nose and mouth. Richie fights to get up from the bed, but Preston is too fast and too strong. Using rope already cut into various lengths, he roughly binds Richie's hands together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not behind his back like before, but in front as if he were praying. Richie screams NO through the gag and shakes his head back and forth.

PRESTON

Just relax, Richie. I'm giving you what you want. You said you want me to touch you. Isn't that what you said? You want to spend time together? Isn't that what you said? You say I never listen? Well, guess what? Tonight's your lucky night. I'm going to give you everything you want...

Preston drags Richie half-way off the bed. His lower body dangles over the edge. The awkward position and bindings make it difficult for Richie to breathe.

SMACK!

Preston gives Richie a full-force, open-handed slap on his ass. Richie cries out through the gag. Richie attempts to fight and get up but it's no use.

PRESTON

You like that? Remember how excited you used to get? Yeah... you liked that didn't you?

SMACK!

Preston slaps Richie's ass again. This time a red hand mark is left behind. Preston grabs a handful of Richie's hair and yanks his head back. Preston leans forward to speak into Richie's ear.

PRESTON

Just meditate.

Preston releases his hold on Richie's hair and turns his attention to Richie's butt.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Yeah... you're gonna give me that ass.

Preston spreads Richie's pink, inflamed butt cheeks apart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)

There it is. That's my  
asshole.

Without warning, Preston jams his index finger into Richie's anus. Richie releases an unnatural yell but Preston ignores it. Using his finger, he roughly explore's the inside of Richie's ass.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's my asshole.

Preston withdraws his finger and stands up. He holds Richie's head down with one hand and uses the other to force his erect penis into Richie. Richie squeezes his eyes tight in an attempt to shut out the instant and overwhelming pain.

Preston thrusts into Richie's ass, hard and fast without any concern. He pushes Richie's squirming and sweaty body down into the bed as he continues his violation.

Richie still attempts to free himself from Preston's hold. He bucks and writhes, resembling a fish that's out of water. His screams are now a mixture of yelling and crying and his face is damp with sweat and tears. He won't give up.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You need to shut up.

Preston reaches forward and clamps a strong hand over Richie's nose and mouth so he can't breathe or make any noise. He continues raping Richie.

The underwear shoved in Richie's mouth is now making him gag and he's trying not to vomit. He knows if he does he will choke and die. Eventually, Richie's strength begins to fade. He stops screaming and struggling. Preston is in control of his breath. He's semi-conscious, unable to breathe properly and choking. Eventually, his muscles release their tension. A fuzzy, unfocused sensation begins to wash over Richie's entire body. The pain, the bonds, the bed, Preston, the lack of air, all start to fade away and Richie falls into darkness.

For a moment all is black and silent until Preston allows Richie to breathe again. His surroundings return, but only for a moment. As soon as Richie regains consciousness Preston repeats his assault. This time, Richie truly slips into blackness.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Light slowly pours in.

The once-black void now fills with light. Shapes appear. Walls. A bed. The bedroom.

Richie's eyes open and his surroundings become familiar. With every second, things become more clear. He's lying half on the bed and half on the floor, his bonds are gone except for the bandana still tied around his face. Richie tears it off and pulls out the underwear that was jammed down his throat.

Richie coughs as he tries to suck in several gulps of air. He slowly gets up and stumbles into the bathroom.

Preston is getting out of the shower and leaves the room as if nothing has happened.

Richie's body is numb and there's a painful throbbing sensation in his hands and feet as the blood struggles to properly circulate within them again.

He makes his way past Preston without saying a word and leans onto the sink. He looks into the mirror and see's only a shell of himself. Next, he steps into the shower himself and turns on the water. As he runs the bar of soap over his body, he notices the bluish-purple color of his hands from being bound too tight. He feels as if he's been sliced right up the middle. His hands sweep out of sight and when he brings them up again, he notices blood. He's bleeding from his rectum.

Richie tries his best to clean up and is wincing through the pain. After, he makes his way back to the bedroom as if in a trance. He returns to bed, in a state of shock, and collapses. Physically, mentally and emotionally he's been destroyed.

Fade to black.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD PARK - SEVERAL WEEKS LATER - DAY

Richie and Patric are spending an afternoon at the nearby park. They're casually riding the swings.

PATRIC

I'm glad you decided to take  
some time off, you certainly  
deserve it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHIE

Yeah... that's for sure. I just need a break away from all the craziness. Real time to just let it all go... Let everything go.

Patric reaches out and takes Richie's hand in hers as they continue to sit on the swings.

PATRIC

It's all so hard to believe. You've been through so much. Testing positive. Losing Howard. That whole Preston thing. He's gone away for good this time, right?

RICHIE

Yeah, for good, definitely. I hear he's in San Diego now with Lenny. I should have listened to you, AGAIN!

PATRIC

So, have you decided what you're gonna do?

RICHIE

I'm just going to put a period after that part of my life and move forward. What else can I do?

PATRIC

It's not your fault, Richie.

RICHIE

Well, you know, there's no turning back the clock, is there? I'm going to move forward. It's going to be Ok. I have more empathy now. I feel stronger now. Wiser. And, in a weird way I feel more human than I did before all this. I feel like I have more direction. Have more to give. I feel like I can survive.

PATRIC

You blow me away. You are a survivor.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PATRIC (CONT'D)

And all this stuff that happened to you... I'm sure it was tough. But I see how strong you've become. That's the value of crises. The world crumbled beneath your feet and you flew. You're the strongest man I know, Richie. You make me proud. I'm honored to be your friend.

RICHIE

You've helped me more than you'll ever know. Thank you so much for always being there. Through everything. Really... through all of it. You were there for me. I don't know if I would have made it without you. Thank you for not running away when things got ugly.

PATRIC

My pleasure, Mister. You know I love you.

RICHIE

Yes, mama. I know. I love you, more.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Let's race. Let's see who can swing the highest!

Richie starts to swing as high as he can.

PATRIC

There's no stopping you, is there?

RICHIE

Nope.

Richie and Patric swing higher and higher.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie enters his apartment and sets down his belongings on the table. It's his usual coming-home routine. He walks over to the answering machine to check for messages, but stops. The answering machine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A device that over the past year had almost become a living entity in itself with its blinking red light and steady stream of good and bad information was silent.

Richie walks back to the bedroom and sits at the foot of the bed, where a few weeks earlier, he had been raped by Preston. The same place where he almost died. Before he had hidden his spirit and fought with his body but now his spirit was preparing to play offense. He was about to perform a metaphysical act in an invisible realm.

He looks around and reverently places his head in his hands. Acts of love and of hate took place in this room. Richie searches his memories. They play like a sped-up movie in reverse. Erratic rewinding and freeze-framing.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Richie and Preston meeting for the first time.
- B) Richie tied up and sitting in the chair.
- C) Richie, bloody under the streetlight.
- D) Howard grabbing Richie's arm when he and Patric were visiting him in the hospital.
- E) Richie and Preston getting their picture taken at the Cove Cafe.
- F) Preston being interviewed and pumping his fist in the air at the protest.
- G) Preston appearing in the doorway of the darkened bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Richie's mind touches on the bad thoughts, he "erases" them, cleansing himself of all the unloving things that has happened to him during the course of his relationship with Preston.

But that isn't enough.

Preston may have finally been gone for good physically, but Richie still needs to wash himself spiritually of Preston's presence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With his head still in his hands Richie spontaneously and unexpectedly, has an out of body experience.

Suddenly, Richie is looking down on himself from above the bed. At first, he's puzzled. Everything looks and feels the same except for the fact he's floating above his own body. After a few seconds, Richie realizes that he's separated his mind and soul from his body, only this time he's in control. Richie's astral body takes a closer look at his physical body and "sees" a black cord, wrapped around his chest. The end of the dark cord leads out of the bedroom window.

Moving with the speed of a tornado, Richie's astral body dives down to his physical body and begins to unwrap the black cord from his chest. Faster and faster, he flies around his physical body until it's free from the bond. The cord is now gathered like a huge ball of black string. Richie's astral body flies through the window, pushing the toxic cord away from his physical body and towards the source from whence it came.

"As Heaven Is Wide" by Garbage begins to play as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD. - NIGHT

Richie's astral body flies over the familiar boulevard, as if he were Superman turning back time and altering history. Down below, he can see the twinkling lights and heavy night-time traffic. As he speeds along, he continues to push the huge ball of black cord, determined to return it to its owner.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Richie's astral body flies through the walls of Preston's apartment just like a ghost. He flies through the apartment, through the living room, and right into Preston's bedroom. Richie's astral body sees Preston sitting at a desk with a pen in his hand staring at a blank piece of paper. Astral Richie is surprised that Preston seems totally unaware that "he" is in the room.

Looking down, Richie's astral body sees the other end of the black cord and it's emanating from the back of Preston's neck.

The black cord is emanating from Preston!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Astral Richie flies down through the air to shove the black mass back into Preston's body. The mass quickly "melts" into Preston's form. Preston still seems totally unaware.

Astral Richie is energized. He flies around Preston in an ethereal fashion, attempting to catch his attention. Astral Richie tries to move the papers on the desk. He tries moving Preston's chair. He even tries to shake Preston himself, all of which has no effect. Preston just stares at the blank paper before him.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Richie's sitting back at the edge of his bed, his head in his hands. He looks up and glances around. All is still and quiet, his mind is clear. He remembers flying over the Blvd. He remembers Preston at a desk... but no time has elapsed. Did he just imagine it? Did he fall asleep and have a dream? Richie tries to sort through his thoughts to find the truth. After a few seconds, he realizes he may never know. He doesn't need to.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's several hours later. Richie is sleeping alone, yet peacefully. The warm golden glow from before surrounds Richie's body. It shines strong and bright, illuminating the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. RICHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's the next day. Richie's in the kitchen, preparing a meal. He's feeling happier and stronger than ever before. He feels as if he can take on the whole world and win.

Just then, the phone rings. Richie wipes his hands on a small towel and runs over to the phone, catching it before it goes to the answering machine.

RICHIE

Hello?

PRESTON

...Hey Richie. It's Preston.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Richie's surprised by the call but he doesn't let it trip him up. Instead, he takes a moment to compose himself and gather his newfound strength.

RICHIE  
What, Preston?

PRESTON  
...How are you?

RICHIE  
I'm good. As a matter of fact,  
I'm great.

PRESTON  
That's good to hear. I'm  
really happy for you.

RICHIE  
Well, yeah, it is, but why are  
you calling? I don't want to  
see you or speak to you ever  
again. If you keep contacting  
me I'm going to call the  
police.

PRESTON  
Look, it was difficult for me  
to make this call... but I  
tried writing you a letter  
last night and I just couldn't  
get the words out so, I'm  
calling you instead. I thought  
maybe I could just leave a  
message. One last shot in the  
dark.

Richie's memory flashes back to the previous night. Flying over the Blvd. Pushing back the black cord. Preston sitting there at his desk holding a pen and staring at a blank page.

Richie hadn't dreamed or imagined it! He had actually been there and seen Preston! This was confirmation, Richie was free.

RICHIE  
Just say what it is you need  
to say.

PRESTON  
...It's the ring. My father's  
ring. The one I gave you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHIE

Oh, the ring. I was just getting ready to pawn it.

PRESTON

Well, I want it back. Will you give it back to me?

Silence.

When I gave it to you, I thought we were gonna be together forever and since we're not together anymore, I want it back.

RICHIE

You can have the ring back, Preston. I don't want it. You can have it. No problem, I'll put it in the mail tomorrow.

There's a pause.

PRESTON

So... what else is happening?

RICHIE

I'm cooking lunch for Patric.

PRESTON

Oh... well, tell her I said hello. If she does a reading for you I hope the cards are in your favor.

RICHIE

I gotta go.

Richie knows Preston can't see him, but it doesn't stop him from shaking his head.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Preston.

Richie hangs up the phone.

FADE OUT.

THE END

"Somebody To Love" by the Jefferson Airplane plays as the EPILOGUE and credits roll.

**EPILOGUE:**

Richie is alive and well and still lives in West Hollywood, CA. He works as a special effects artist and has not had any contact with Preston since that final phone call. He wrote this screenplay with his friend and writing partner, Johnny Smith. He likes the band Garbage. His activism remains strong.

Patric lives in Desert Hot Springs, CA with her cat, "Lucky." She is a telephone psychic and gives private tarot readings for clients. Her success rate is 70%. She and Richie are still close.