

"Tapping"

Written by

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INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The door shakes a bit as someone unlocks it. The door opens to reveal PO (16). He closes the door behind him. This is the living room; small, one coffee table in front of two couches that should have been replaced years ago. A small TV at the front of the room. The walls are painted white, made ugly by the scuff marks all over all four walls. There are no decorations.

Po lays his bag against the wall near the door, then walks over and heads towards the basement.

INT. PO'S BASEMENT - DAY

The door to the basement swings open and Po walks down the stairs.

The basement is also small, and unfinished. Everything is on shelves, so compact that it looks like none of these things have been used in a while.

Po sees his mother, MARY (40) near the back wall. She is attempting to get the washer machine running. She has already put duct-tape over the lid, and due to the two large rolls of it on the nearby shelf, it seems that that is a necessity when it comes to using the washer. The tape rips. She sighs.

MARY

Damn it.

Po comes up behind her.

PO

Mom.

She turns around to see him, and smiles. Po glances at her neck, which now has a bruise on it. Po shudders, remembering:

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A man swings and hits her, and she falls back.

INT. PO'S BASEMENT - DAY

Po looks up to Mary.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO

Mom--

MARY

I fell.

PO

Bullshit.

MARY

Don't talk like that!

She hands him the duct-tape, and he walks over to the washer, and tapes it while she holds it down.

PO

Where's Daniel?

MARY

Aunt Karen's.

Po nods.

MARY (CONT'D)

The school called me to tell me that you guys are being let out early tomorrow to prepare for the school dance at Seven.

Po nods slightly. Mary grins.

MARY (CONT'D)

Did you know about this?

Po sighs.

PO

Yep.

MARY

And you didn't say anything?!

PO

I don't wanna go.

MARY

Po, you're sixteen years old. It's time you start looking for a wife.

Po laughs.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO

Why?

MARY

To give me grandchildren!

She slaps him lightly on the side of the head.

PO

I'm glad you're fine with me having children before finishing high school, but I'm not ready for that. Or a wife.

He smiles. Mary's smile fades.

MARY

(quietly)

When you find one, treat her well.

Po hugs his mother.

PO

I love you, Mom.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A clock dings, signaling seven O'Clock.

Po's brother, DANIEL (3), runs through the room. He shouts things in childlike glee, never happier.

Po barges into the room, grinning. He picks up Daniel, who squeals.

PO

Daniel!

He runs around the room, with Daniel in his arms. Daniel pretends to fly like he's Superman.

Po sets Daniel down on a mattress, and Po sits on the other one.

PO (CONT'D)

Good day?

DANIEL

Yes.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
What'd you do?

DANIEL  
I do school. What'd you do?

PO  
We talked about Einstein's "Theory  
of Relativity".

DANIEL  
What's that?

PO  
I have no idea.

He smiles.

PO (CONT'D)  
Alright, its time for you to go to  
bed.

DANIEL  
(sadly)  
I know.

Po smiles.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Will you read me a story first?  
Please?

Po smiles.

PO  
Sure. Go get one.

Daniel goes and gets a big cardboard book, from the corner of his room. There are only two books; the one Daniel picks has a dinosaur on it.

Daniel sits down next to Po, and hands him the book. Po looks at the cover.

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
The furry dinosaur.

Po raises his eyebrows. He turns the page.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
Venny is a dinosaur.

He turns the page.

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
Venny is furry.

He turns the page.

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
Venny is a furry dinosaur.

He turns the page.

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
Venny doesn't fit in.

He turns the page.

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
The other dinosaurs don't have fur.

He turns the page.

PO (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
It is what it is.

He closes the book. He rolls his eyes.

PO (CONT'D)  
That was inspiring.

DANIEL  
Yeah.

Po looks to him, smiling.

Daniel smiles back, and lays down.

Po gets up, closes his bedroom door, and locks it.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Po walks into his living room, ready for school. He picks his bag up off the ground. There is a note on it.

**"I took Daniel to school early. I'll see you later. - Mom"**

Po crumples up the note and puts it in his pocket. He walks to the kitchen.

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Po fills himself a cup of water, and while drinking it, walks back to the living room.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Po looks into the living room, where PO'S DAD (45) lays passed out on the couch. He walks over to him. He dumps the rest of his water on top of him. His dad wakes up in an instant, screaming in rage. He launches at Po, who is already at the door, opening it.

PO

That's for yesterday.

PO'S DAD

Hey!

EXT. PO'S HOUSE - DAY

Po runs out of the house with his bag at top speed. His father comes out the door, but doesn't chase after him.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Po walks into the school through a big door. Some other kids are nearby, talking. Po comes to his locker.

INT. PO'S LOCKER (SCHOOL) - DAY

Po opens his locker (which doesn't have a lock on it). He rummages through it, before hearing running.

Po turns around in time to see a big kid run at him, and skid to a stop at the locker next to him. This is CHUCKIE (16).

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
Hey, Chuckie.

Chuckie turns around, smiling.

CHUCKIE  
Hey, Po. How's it going?

PO  
I'm tired. You know about the dance  
tonight?

CHUCKIE  
Yeah, bro. I'm gonna find a lover  
tonight!

PO  
What?

CHUCKIE  
You know, I'm just trying to spice  
things up.

Po laughs.

PO  
Well, good luck with that.

Chuckie smiles.

CHUCKIE  
And you?

PO  
I don't know if I'm going.

CHUCKIE  
What?! Why not?

PO  
Well, first of all... I don't need  
a lover.

He smiles.

PO (CONT'D)  
And second, I'm not much of a party  
guy.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUCKIE

Well, it's not a party. It's a dance, which means you can show off your mean tapping skills. Besides, I can't go alone!

PO

First off, a dance isn't any better than a party. Second, it's tap-dancing, not tapping. And finally, why can't you go alone? Aren't you gonna find a... girl? I don't wanna be around for that! Cringe level ten.

Po grins.

CHUCKIE

I was joking around about the lover thing. But will you go for a little while? You never get a chance to practice, or show off. This is it.

Po thinks.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

Besides, I'm sure Mary would want you to go.

PO

How do you know that?

CHUCKIE

C'mon, I've met your mother. She loves events like this.

PO

She actually told me I should go to scout out future spouse options.

They laugh.

CHUCKIE

Exactly!

Po shrugs.

PO

I just don't like leaving them alone at the house.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

Chuckie's face softens.

CHUCKIE

I know, buddy. And I see what you're saying. It's up to you.

PO

They may go to my Aunt's. We'll see.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Po sets his bag down in the same spot that he put it the previous day. His Mom, Mary, is sitting on the couch, reading a book. She looks up when he comes in. Po smiles.

PO

What's going on tonight?

MARY

Dinner at Aunt Karen's.

PO

I'll go to the dance.

MARY

Yes! We need to get you some clothes.

PO

We can't afford it.

MARY

You can use Dad's wedding suit.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mary grabs a trunk from the closet and sets it on the bed. She opens it.

MARY

(remembering when she was newly-wed, and happy)  
Ohhhh. These are so beautiful!

She pulls out her wedding dress and lays it on the bed.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)  
I wish I could have a daughter!

PO  
(laughing)  
Wow, thanks Mom.

She gives him a skeptical look.

MARY  
In addition to you, of course.

They laugh.

Mary pulls out Po's Father's Suit. Mary smiles a bit. She sighs. She walks over to Po, holding the hanger with the suit on it. She holds it up to Po's chest.

MARY (CONT'D)  
It fits.

He takes it from her and looks at it.

PO  
It's nice.

MARY  
Yeah, it is.

She looks at a picture of her and her husband which is on the nightstand.

MARY (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
So was he.

INT. PO'S BATHROOM - EVENING

Po looks in the mirror, trying (not very hard) to fix his hair. He is wearing his father's suit, but without the jacket.. He comes out of the bathroom.

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Po comes into the kitchen, where his mom is putting a trash-bag into a cardboard box. She looks up at him and smiles.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARY

Oh, you look amazing! Where's the jacket?

PO

It was a bit big.

Po looks at the box in Mary's hand.

PO (CONT'D)

What's with the box?

MARY

Oh, it's glass.

(laughing)

I don't want to kill the trash-man!

Po stands still, wanting more. Mary sighs.

MARY (CONT'D)

Your father had a little bit of an incident yesterday.

Po purses his lips. Mary walks out the back door with the cardboard box. Po watches her go and put it out in the trashcan behind the house. She comes back inside.

Po gestures towards the bruise on her neck.

PO

Incident have anything to do with that bruise?

Mary sharpens the collar of her flannel around her neck.

MARY

Don't worry about it, Po.

PO

How? How can I not worry about something like this? You're my mother, for God's sake. We both know that this has to stop.

Po looks around.

PO (CONT'D)

What about Daniel? He's just a baby. He probably doesn't even understand.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mary leans against the counter. She takes a deep breath and then smiles.

MARY

Your father will get over this.  
It's a phase. You have to trust me,  
you didn't know him like I did.

PO

Yeah, 'cause one of my earliest  
memories of him was him coming to  
my bed and shaking me 'til I  
stopped crying and passed out. One  
long-ass phase.

Mary quiets.

MARY

Have a good time, tonight, Po.

PO

I'm not sure I want to go.

MARY

You and I both know that you'll be  
back long before he is. Besides,  
Daniel and I are gonna go to Aunt  
Karen's. Have fun, Po. You're  
sixteen. Live a little.

Po sighs.

PO

Three words a teenager should never  
hear his mother say.

They laugh.

Po, smiling, walks through the living room and out the front door, after grabbing a pair of tap-dancing shoes off the ground.

INT. SCHOOL, GYM - NIGHT

Po walks into the gym through a small door. The gym is big. There are a few people walking around, including two guys about Po's age setting up the DJ's table. Po sets his shoes down against the wall.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Po spots Chuckie and walks over to him.

CHUCKIE

Hey, Po! This is gonna be fun!

Po doesn't smile. He looks a little grim after the talk with his Mom. Chuckie realizes that something's wrong.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Po sighs.

PO

My Dad hurt my Mom again yesterday.

Chuckie shakes his head.

CHUCKIE

Dude. I'm not gonna act like I know what that's like... just, I'm sorry.

Po nods.

PO

Thanks.

CHUCKIE

If you wanna go, we can go to your house. Or we could go get coffee...

Po smiles weakly.

PO

My Mom said to have fun tonight. I'd like to just take one night where I don't have to be sitting at home, scared. My Mom is taking Daniel to Aunt Karen's.

Chuckie nods. He starts to smile.

CHUCKIE

Buddy, we are gonna have so much fun.

This time, Po really smiles.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO

Good.

INT. SCHOOL, GYM - NIGHT

Now there are a lot more people in the gym. It is packed full with people dancing.

The DJ happily stares at his laptop, which is connected to a converter, which is connected to speakers all over the gym.

A pop song is playing, and people are dancing to it enthusiastically.

Chuckie and Po are attempting to dance as well. The music is really loud, because they're near a speaker.

PO

(yelling over the music)

I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW HOW TO  
DANCE!

Chuckie laughs a little bit, watching Po.

CHUCKIE

YEAH I CAN SEE THAT.

Po rolls his eyes.

PO

LOOK AT YOURSELF. YOU DON'T KNOW  
HOW TO DANCE EITHER.

Chuckie looks down.

CHUCKIE

YEAH, I CAN SEE THAT.

The song ends.

Po and Chuckie rub their arms and legs. They laugh.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I'm so sore!

Po laughs as well.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DJ

Alright! Time for a fun one! Lets  
do a swing dance! Avery and  
Jonathan are gonna lead.

Po looks to a girl not far away, AVERY (16). He watches as  
she and JONATHAN (16) take the floor.

Avery notices Po and smiles. He waves slightly. Chuckie  
chuckles.

CHUCKIE

Ohhhh. Po. How sweet.

Po opens his mouth to say something back, then stops. He  
smiles a little bit.

PO

Screw you. At least I don't want  
her as my lover.

He sticks his tongue out at Chuckie.

The music starts. It starts slow, but not for long. The music  
is something familiar, something that all people have heard  
at some point.

The dance is a form of the *Balboa Swing Dance*. Lots of moving  
of the feet. They move across the floor quickly, having lots  
of fun, mostly.

Some other couples dance around near them, but none of them  
have the skill set that Jonathan and Avery have. Especially  
Avery. She is having fun too, smiling and laughing. Their  
shoes squeak against the gym floor.

Soon, most of the people are dancing around them, in  
different types and personal variations to the song.

The song slowly starts to fade out into another pop song, and  
Jonathan and Avery slowly disappear, in the crowd of people.

Chuckie and Po are now sitting down, backs against the wall.  
They've moved away from the speaker, so they can talk now.

CHUCKIE

This is nice.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO

Sitting around watching people  
dance?

CHUCKIE

Sitting here talking to you. I'm  
tired dude. It's only been like two  
hours.

PO

Well, you danced with like, six  
girls.

Chuckie smiles, dazed.

PO (CONT'D)

Any of 'em have that "lover"  
potential?

Chuckie laughs.

CHUCKIE

No. Just gotta wait for the next  
slow song. Then the perfect option  
will appear.

PO

I bet that  
(makes air quotes)  
The perfect option  
(Without air quotes)  
Will like how you're discussing her  
like a dog.

Chuckie glares at him.

CHUCKIE

You know I'm against that.

Po nods, and smiles. They sit in silence for a moment.

The music slows down.

Chuckie stands up, and helps Po up.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

See you after this song.

He winks.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

PO  
Chuckie, don't wink at me. It's  
creepy as hell.

Chuckie turns. Then stops. Looks back to Po.

CHUCKIE  
Hey.

PO  
Yeah?

CHUCKIE  
Go ask Avery to dance.

Before Po says anything, Chuckie rushes off before the song begins.

Po finds Avery near the at the concession table.. He watches as she drinks Soda. A lot of Soda. He doesn't say anything.

AVERY  
Something alluring about how I  
drink Soda?

Po bursts out laughing. We haven't seen him laugh like this yet. She grins.

PO  
I came to ask if we could dance?

Avery smiles.

AVERY  
Of course.

They walk out to the floor.

Avery puts her hands on his shoulders, and Po puts his hands on her hips. They move slowly.

PO  
Where'd you learn to dance like  
that?

AVERY  
It's not hard to slowly move back  
and forth. I mean, you're doing it.

Po laughs.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

PO  
I meant the swing dance.

AVERY  
Ahhh. That dance. Lots of practice.  
You just have to find someone who  
can do it, and convince them to  
teach you.

A beat.

PO  
Will you teach me?

Avery laughs.

AVERY  
Just a hobby.

A beat.

PO  
Are you from here?

AVERY  
Yep. Born and raised. You?

PO  
Yeah. Probably won't leave either.

She nods.

AVERY  
What are you doing for college? I  
know it's early, but we all have  
dreams, yeah?

Po sighs.

PO  
I'm not going.

AVERY  
Why?

Po doesn't say anything, wondering if he should tell her.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
If it's--

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (5)

PO  
I have to stay for my mother  
because of my father.

Avery shakes her head, genuinely sad for Po. Understanding.

AVERY  
(quietly)  
That's not fair.

A beat.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
But I understand that there's not  
much you can do about it.

He nods.

PO  
It's destiny.

The song ends.

PO (CONT'D)  
I like talking to you.

They let go of each other. She writes her phone number on the table cloth nearest to them, then rips it off. Po, surprised, laughs.

AVERY  
Well, there's my number.

PO  
But what about... Jonathan?

AVERY  
Ha! He's not my boyfriend! He just  
happens to know how to do the  
Balboa Swing Dance. That's why I  
dance with him.

Po seems relieved. He puts the scrap of tablecloth in his pocket.

PO  
You could teach me.

Avery smiles.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (6)

AVERY  
You should call me.

Po nods.

PO  
I will.

She grins at him.

AVERY  
See you later.

She holds up her hand for a high-five, and after getting one from Po, walks away. He watches her.

Po sits down against the wall.

INT. SCHOOL, GYM - NIGHT

Chuckie wakes up Po. Po looks around.

CHUCKIE  
The DJ is gonna play one more song.  
After that, they're gonna play  
something you know. Get your shoes  
on. It's time to show everyone your  
mean tapping skills.

PO  
Dude, it's tap-dancing. Get it  
right.

Po stands up. He blinks the sleep away.

PO (CONT'D)  
Know where I put my shoes?

Chuckie hands them to him.

Po sits down again and puts the shoes on.

The song starts to slow down. It stops completely.

PO (CONT'D)  
You're sure? I don't wanna start  
tap-dancing to a slow song.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CHUCKIE

Ha ha. Better get over there.

A few people start to trickle out of the gym. It's almost eleven O'Clock now.

Chuckie brings Po to the middle. This seems a little tense.

The song starts out. Po begins to tap. He starts slowly at first.

Then people notice him tapping and stop talking. They move out so he has a larger circle to tap in. He ramps up, and taps with the song.

People are excited. They have now gotten completely quiet, and are watching him in awe.

Po taps carefully, but quickly.

Po closes his eyes to concentrate. People are clapping with the music now.

The song ends with a quick beat drop. Po ends his tap dance at the perfect time.

He opens his eyes, smiling.

Avery starts clapping, along with everyone else in the gym. Po smiles. Chuckie high-fives Po.

DJ

Alright! That's it for tonight!  
Have a good rest of the semester!

People talk loudly as they walk out of the gym.

EXT. SCHOOL, PO'S GYM - NIGHT

Po walks out of the gym alone. He has tied his sneakers together by the laces, and is now holding them [the laces]. His tap-dancing shoes make a click-clack sound as he walks. He hears somebody running behind him, and turns around.

Avery hits him in the face.

AVERY

Oh!

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO

Ow! What was that for?

AVERY

(trying not to laugh)

I was running to fast to stop. I wasn't expecting you to turn around.

PO

What were you gonna do?! Punch me in the back of the head?

Avery can't hold it anymore. She starts to laugh.

A smile starts to cross Po's face. Her laugh is contagious. Po starts laughing too.

Po and Avery walk off down the street together, talking. It's unclear where they're going.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Po unlocks his front door, and walks inside. He sits down on the couch, and takes off his shoes. He sighs. He's happy.

The home-phone (on the coffee table in between the couches) starts to ring. Po picks it up. It's Chuckie.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)

Hey Buddy!

Po smiles.

PO

(into phone)

Hey.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)

So, I saw you leave with Avery.

PO

(into phone)

We had coffee.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)

Dude. It's like one in the morning.

Po smiles.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
(into phone)  
Yeah. I'm tired despite the coffee.  
Listen, We'll talk tomorrow.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)  
Bye.

Po puts the phone down on it's stand. He yawns.

Suddenly, the front door (which seems to never be locked) swings open. Po's Father walks in, looking better than we've ever seen him. Po's father glares at him.

PO'S DAD  
What are you doing?

PO  
I just got back from a school  
dance.

Po's Dad rolls his eyes.

PO'S DAD  
That's feminine.

PO  
It's not a strip club. It's like  
prom.

Po's Dad glares at his son.

PO (CONT'D)  
Did you ever dance with Mom?

Po's Dad's face seems to soften, but it happened so fast that it might not have. He [Po's Dad] looks around.

PO'S DAD  
Where is she?

Po shakes his head.

PO  
She decided to take Daniel and stay  
the night somewhere else, because I  
wouldn't be here.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO'S DAD

Now why would you need to be here?  
She afraid of robbers?

Now Po glares at his Dad.

PO

She's afraid of you.

Po's Dad shakes his head.

PO'S DAD

Well, I ain't stayin' here either.  
I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

PO

Yeah, maybe.

Po's Dad grunts, and walks back out the door. Po sighs.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Po is laying in bed. The window is open, and sunlight is coming in. Po wakes up. He is wearing his Under-Shirt from last night. Daniel is on the mattress beside him. Po puts on some pants, and walks out to the kitchen.

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Po gets a soda out of the fridge.

MARY

Good morning.

Po drinks some soda.

PO

Good morning. Dad home?

MARY

No. Know where he is?

PO

He said he wasn't sleeping here  
without you guys.

Mary shakes her head.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Daniel enters the room, hair wildly pointing everywhere. Po and Mary smile.

DANIEL  
What's f' breakfast?

MARY  
Whatever you make.

Po smiles.

The front door swings open, and in walks Po's Dad. He is drunk, and very, very angry. Po comes up to him.

PO  
Hey-

Po's Dad shoves Po.

PO'S DAD  
MOVE!

MARY  
(oh shit)  
Po, get Daniel.

Po, looking angry, grabs Daniel and locks them in the bathroom.

INT. PO'S FAMILY BATHROOM - DAY

Po covers Daniel's ears. Daniel shrinks into a little ball on the floor. Po breathes deeply. He can still hear them.

PO'S DAD (O.S.)  
WHERE WERE YOU LAST NIGHT?!! You  
can't just leave me alone!

MARY (O.S.)  
I was scared to have my baby near  
you!

Po hears his Dad shove Mary. She gasps. Po hears something metal. Probably a knife.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Get out. Get away from my family!

Po's Dad waits a minute, before stomping out of the house.

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - DAY

Po comes out of the bathroom, leaving Daniel curled up in there.

Mary sits on the kitchen floor with her back against the cabinet. She looks off into the distance. Po gets an ice-pack from the fridge and hands it to her. He takes the knife from her and sets it on the counter.

Mary puts the ice-pack to her neck and looks at Po.

MARY

I know. Things have to change. But he's the one making money, Po.

PO

You could get another job. So could I.

She sighs.

MARY

I'm worried about what'll happen if he has to go away.

PO

I'm worried about what'll happen if he doesn't.

Daniel comes out of the bathroom, trying not to cry. He runs to Mary, who holds him [Daniel] in her arms.

MARY

(whispering in Daniel's ear)

It's gonna be OK.

A beat. Daniel stops crying.

PO

Daniel, do you wanna watch a movie?

Daniel nods.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Po carries Daniel into the living room and sets him on the couch. Po turns on the crappy TV, and sees that something Daniel's age appropriateness is on.

PO

This good?

DANIEL

Yeah.

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - DAY

Po walks into the kitchen. He finds the large laptop in one of their drawers. Mary has stood up, and is dusting the kitchen. Po opens the laptop. Waits for it to boot.

MARY

What're you doing?

PO

Looking at the law.

Mary sighs.

PO (CONT'D)

If he ever touches you again I'm calling the police. And I want to know what's gonna happen after that.

MARY

Po, this isn't right. I think you know that.

PO

Mom. I want to go to college. Then I can come back with a degree. Then I can make money. We could be happy. I could find a wife. Have kids and live right next to you guys. Daniel can go to college, and have his own wife and kids with us here. He could go to a big city, make real money. And we'll grow old, me and my wife, Daniel and his wife, just living here taking care of you and each other.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO (CONT'D)

We can have a happy, American life.  
I can make money. I can pay for all  
of this.

He gestures around at their dump of a house.

PO (CONT'D)

We don't need Dad if I go to  
college. But I can't go if he's  
still around.

Mary hesitates.

PO (CONT'D)

And maybe it's selfish-

MARY

(quietly)

You're anything but selfish, Po.

PO

(ignoring her)

I just want to live a real life.  
And I want it for you, and for  
Daniel. A life without fear.

Mary nods. Then she smiles.

MARY

So, you've finally warmed up to the  
"wife" idea.

Po smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

Who'd you dance with last night?

Po rolls his eyes.

PO

(joking)

Chuckie.

Mary laughs, which makes Po smile.

Po looks back down at the laptop.

PO (CONT'D)

Not turning on today, I guess.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

He closes the lid, and puts it back in the drawer.

MARY

Do you have plans?

PO

No. I'll probably go to lunch  
somewhere soon, if that's Ok.

Po seems to remember something. He walks back to his room.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Po grabs his pants from the night before. He feels around in the pockets until he finds Avery's phone number. He smiles. He carries it to his parents room.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Po sits down on the bed and punches the number on the tablecloth onto the home-phone. It starts to ring. Po goes and closes the door. Avery picks up.

AVERY (O.S)

I've been waiting for you to call  
me all day.

PO

(into phone)

It's like, eight in the morning.

AVERY (O.S)

Yeah, but I didn't sleep last  
night... Did you?

PO

(into phone)

Yep. I slept fine. Unlike you, who  
had four cups of coffee.

AVERY (O.S)

Yeah I'm gonna crash soon.

PO

(into phone)

Well, do you wanna get some food  
later?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

                  AVERY (O.S)  
Yes! I haven't eaten breakfast.

                  PO  
                  (into phone)  
I was inviting you to lunch.

                  AVERY (O.S)  
Oh! I'll do that too!

Po sighs, smiling.

                  PO  
                  (into phone)  
How about waffles? That's something  
I can afford.

                  AVERY (O.S)  
Oh, yes! Take me out to a waffle  
place!

Po smiles.

                  PO  
                  (into phone)  
Have you had more coffee since I  
last saw you?

                  AVERY (O.S)  
Yes. See you in twenty minutes.

Po puts down the phone.

INT. WAFFLE PLACE - DAY

Po sits down in a booth at Waffle House, waiting for Avery.  
Po is wearing a T-shirt with a light sweater on top, and his  
sweatpants.

Avery walks into the store, and sits down across from Po.

                  AVERY  
Good morning.

                  PO  
Good morning.

They both pick up their menus.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY  
What will you get?

PO  
Well...

He looks at the menu.

PO (CONT'D)  
Waffles, I guess.

They laugh.

A waitress comes up to them.

WAFFLE HOUSE WAITRESS  
What can I get for y'all?

Avery smiles up at her.

AVERY  
I'll get a plate of waffles and a  
Cola.

Po shakes his head.

PO  
I'll get a plate of waffles as  
well. And water.

Avery smirks. The waitress nods, and walks away.

PO (CONT'D)  
You have a caffeine problem?

AVERY  
No, I'm addicted to Soda. I just  
happened to drink too much coffee  
last night.

Po nods slowly.

PO  
That's gonna ruin your kidneys, you  
know.

Avery smiles.

AVERY  
Wouldn't that be a cliché! Ha!

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Po laughs.

PO

That's like saying I eat a chocolate bar for Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner everyday, but I'm not really worried because me getting sick would be a cliché.

AVERY

Actually, my Mom lost her kidneys, and my Dad gave her one. So I'd have to get a fake one.

Po is laughing really hard now.

PO

What's a fake kidney? And where do you get one?

Avery leans forward, She is completely serious now.

AVERY

(quietly)

The black kidney market.

Po laughs. Avery smiles.

Their waffles arrive and they start to eat.

AVERY (CONT'D)

This is really, really good.

PO

Yep.

They finish. The waitress comes over with the bill.

Po realizes he doesn't have enough money. He grits his teeth, looks up to Avery.

PO (CONT'D)

(quietly, to Avery)

Listen I'm sorry, I-

AVERY

Po, I got it.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

PO

I have some money. I can get mine.  
I'm sorry, I should've brought  
enough money for both of us.

AVERY

It's OK, Po.

They both hand money to the waitress. She smiles.

WAFFLE HOUSE WAITRESS

Y'all are so sweet.

She walks away.

PO

Wanna go on a walk?

AVERY

Let's do it.

They walk out.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Po and Avery walk side-by-side, down a sidewalk. They are in  
the middle of a conversation.

PO

I don't know about that.

AVERY

Not at all?

PO

I've just never seen anyone that  
happy.

AVERY

Well, I have.

PO

Destinies just... are. They can't  
be taken away, and I don't think  
they can be shared.

AVERY

But what about people who are  
together forever? Like soulmates?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
Every relationship ends.

AVERY  
I don't think that's true.

PO  
Either they split up, or someone  
dies.

Avery says nothing, she's clearly lost the argument.

AVERY  
I guess we'll just have to wait and  
see, Po. But I hope you're wrong.

Po stops. Looks to her.

PO  
What is this? You, me? I know we  
met yesterday, but... Are we...?

Avery grins.

AVERY  
We're teenagers, Po. Don't make it  
a big thing. But to answer your  
question; Yes. For now.

Po laughs.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Po walks into the living room, smiling. His Mom is dusting.

MARY  
(still dusting)  
How was it?

PO  
What?

MARY  
Your date.

PO  
How'd you know I was on a date?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARY

I heard you talking to her on the phone.

Po waits for more.

MARY (CONT'D)

You know, on the other line.

Po tries not to smile.

PO

Wow, Mom.

But it's obvious that he doesn't really care. She laughs.

MARY

I just want to know what's going on. So, how was it?

PO

It was great. But I accidentally didn't bring enough money for both of us.

Mary laughs at him.

MARY

Yeah, your Dad still does that.

Po laughs, although it seems a bit strained.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL, CORRIDOR - DAY

Po comes up to Chuckie's locker, smiling. Chuckie turns around.

CHUCKIE

So, what's cracking?

Po smiles.

PO

Cracking? Well... I ate waffles yesterday

CHUCKIE

With Avery?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO

Yes.

CHUCKIE

Awesome! What do you think?

PO

I think that we like each other.

Suddenly, Avery runs up.

AVERY

Talking about me?

PO

Oh, um.

Avery smirks.

AVERY

Just kidding, I like being talked about. I already told all my friends about you.

She motions toward a group of janitors, who look over at her, surprised. She obviously hasn't been talking to them.

Po laughs. Chuckie appears confused, because he doesn't understand her humor yet.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'll see you guys at lunch.

With that, she walks away.

CHUCKIE

So... she eats lunch with us now.

PO

No, I mean, is that OK?

CHUCKIE

Yeah, yeah it's fine.

Chuckie is telling the truth. He's a good friend.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

But you better let me have some girls at our table in the future.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Po smiles.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

Po, Avery, and Chuckie sit at the end of a long table in the cafeteria. They all have trays of food. Avery has soda.

AVERY

Have any hobbies, Chuckie?

CHUCKIE

Well, I like to eat, and watch TV.

AVERY

What do you watch?

CHUCKIE

Well, I know it's old, but I watch  
FOUND. Over and-

AVERY

I love that show! I just started  
season Two!

CHUCKIE

Want me to tell you if they find  
Walt?

AVERY

NO!

They all three laugh. Po is happy. His best friend and his potential girlfriend get along fine.

**\*\*BEGIN MONTAGE\*\***

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Po and Avery sit at a restaurant, ignoring their food, talking and laughing. Avery drinks a soda.

INT. CHUCKIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chuckie, Avery and Po sit at Chuckie's house, in his beautiful living room, watching "FOUND". Po has fallen asleep, with his head on Avery's shoulder.

EXT. LARGE ALLEY - DAY

A very mean looking man plays the guitar for money. Very close-by, Po is tap-dancing, and not accepting money. Lots of people are watching, including Avery.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Po and Avery sit in a movie theater. They are holding hands. Faces illuminated by the big screen.

**\*\*END MONTAGE\*\***

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Avery and Po are on a park bench. Avery looks to Po.

AVERY

My parents would like to meet you.

PO

I'd like that. Anything I should know?

AVERY

Yeah, they're sexist.

PO

Both of them? But-

Avery laughs.

AVERY

I'm kidding. They're normal people and I'm sure they'll like you.

Po smiles.

PO

My Mom would love to have you over again. She told me to tell you a few days ago, but...

AVERY

(quietly)

But your Dad has been home.

Po nods.

INT. AVERY'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

Po sits across from Avery and her mother, Grace. Po sits beside Avery's father, who we'll know as Brad. They all eat the food.

PO

This is very good, Mrs. White.

GRACE

Thank you, Po... So, Avery tells me that you tap-dance?

Po smiles.

PO

I try.

BRAD

How'd you get into that?

PO

When I was seven, my Mom told me that I needed to find a hobby. She told me it needed to be something that I could do without her.

They laugh.

PO (CONT'D)

I tried a few things, before landing on tap-dancing, because all I needed were shoes. Of course, my Dad didn't approve, but my Mom... convinced him that it was a good hobby.

They smile.

AVERY

It is, it's very entertaining.

Brad sighs.

BRAD

Po, is your father abusive?

All happiness leaves Po's face.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

Dad...

BRAD

Avery told me that you don't like  
to talk about your father.

GRACE

Brad...

BRAD

Why is everyone saying my name? All  
I did was ask him a question.

(looks to Po)

If it's too personal, I'm sorry.

Po smiles weakly.

PO

No, it's fine.

Po looks to Avery.

PO (CONT'D)

My Dad has a drinking problem.  
Sometimes he comes home riled up.  
We just... haven't decided what to  
do about it.

BRAD

You and your mother can always stay  
with us. There's room.

GRACE

Of course.

Po smiles a little bit.

PO

Thank you for your kindness. But I  
think we're fine.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Po walks into his living room, and closes the door behind  
him. He looks to his mother, who is sitting on the couch  
reading a book.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
(gesturing to the door)  
Should I lock this? Like, ever?

Mary shakes her head.

MARY  
How was it?

PO  
It went great. They're nice people.

He sits down on the couch.

PO (CONT'D)  
He did tell me that I couldn't  
sleep with Avery.

Mary laughs.

MARY  
Good. I agree with that.

She pulls two phones out of her pocket. She hands one to Po.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I figured you'd like a phone. And,  
they were pretty cheap, so there's  
that.

Po laughs.

PO  
Thanks, Mom!

MARY  
Don't tell your father though.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Po walks out of his bedroom and into the living room. He is about to walk out the door, and his father walks in. He's drunk. Po is visibly angry. He sighs.

PO'S DAD  
Where do you think you're going?

PO  
Nowhere.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Po sighs. After his Dad leaves, Po sends Avery a text telling her that he can't go.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

Avery walks with a tray of food to where Chuckie is sitting.

AVERY

Where's Po?

CHUCKIE

Haven't seen him.

Avery sits down, bummed. They haven't seen each other in days.

INT. AVERY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Avery is standing in front of her mirror, putting on a scarf. She gets a text. She looks down at her phone.

**Po: Sorry Avery, I can't make it tonight.**

Avery stares at the message. She sits down against the wall. She tosses her phone, and it lands on the bed. She looks more sad and hurt, than angry. She doesn't cry. She just sits.  
*This is why I shouldn't trust boys.*

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Po has just sent Avery the text. His father comes into the room (His father had probably just entered the house minutes ago, which is why Po sent the text).

Po quickly tries to put away the phone.

PO'S DAD

(pissed off, but not  
drunk)

What is that?

Po stands up.

PO

Nothing.

He tries to walk by. Po's Dad puts a hand on his [Po] chest.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO'S DAD  
Do you have a phone?

PO  
Yes.

PO'S DAD  
Give it to me.

PO  
No.

We've never seen his Dad this angry. Mary walks into the room.

PO'S DAD  
(to Mary)  
You know that he has a phone?

MARY  
(quietly)  
Yes.

Po's Dad shakes his head.

PO'S DAD  
(to Po)  
Give it to me. Now!

PO  
What are you gonna do? Hit me? See  
if I give a shit!

Po's Dad swings and hits Po, HARD. Po almost falls down. Then he looks back at his father defiantly.

PO'S DAD  
You MAY NOT act like this. Mary, we  
should have talked about getting  
HIM A PHONE!

Po's Dad turns towards Mary. Mary tries to back away, but Po's Dad is quick. Po is quicker.

Po SLAMS into his Dad, and they hit the ground hard, and roll. Po and his father fight like animals.

Po gets pinned under his father. Po's Dad slams his [Po] head into the ground. Po is momentarily stunned. Po grabs his Dad by the shoulders and they flip over.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Po kicks his Dad in the groin. Po's Dad yells. They both start to get up, and Mary hits Po's Dad in the face with a pan.

MARY  
GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! DON'T COME  
BACK! STAY AWAY FROM MY FAMILY!

Mary is crying.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU ANYMORE!  
(quietly)  
We used to love each other.

Po's Dad backs up. He gets close to the door.

PO'S DAD  
Mary-

Mary throws the pan at him. Po's Dad runs away out the front door.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Po sits at a desk at school. He now has a scar in his left eyebrow. His face is bruised. When people see him, they look at him longer than they need to.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Po walks quickly through the cafeteria. Avery still sees him though. She runs to him, but before she has time to start talking, he's out the door.

EXT. PO'S HOUSE - DAY

Po tries to open his door, but it's locked. He's surprised. He takes the key out of his pocket, unlocks and opens the door, and walks in.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Po walks into the living room, and closes the door. His father is sitting on the couch. This surprises Po.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Po's Dad looks a little better than Po, he's bruised, and he has a large welt covering a large portion of his forehead.

PO  
(demanding)  
What are you doing here?

PO'S DAD  
I own this place, Po.

Po looks around.

PO  
Well, you're never here. Why are you here now?

PO'S DAD  
I'm your father, Po.

PO  
Genetically, yeah, I guess. Why are you really here. We don't need you.

PO'S DAD  
Your Mom has done nothing. She's raising you as a soft person.

PO  
Soft? Says you. You ran out of here pretty fast after a kid and abused woman chased you out of *your* house.

Po's Dad stares at Po harshly.

PO (CONT'D)  
Where's Daniel?

PO'S DAD  
Your mother has him hidden somewhere.

A beat.

PO  
Where's Mom?

A beat.

PO'S DAD  
Your mother had an... incident.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Po runs up to his Dad. He puts his foot over his Dad's crotch. He [Po's Dad] winces. From the night before.

PO  
Where is she!?

PO'S DAD  
She's in the hospital.

Po looks at him in horror.

PO  
I don't care what you say. You're a monster. WHAT'D SHE DO TO YOU?!!

Po runs out of the house.

EXT. PO'S HOUSE - DAY

Po runs as fast as he can. He's crying. He doesn't slow down.

Po runs out into the street. He's almost hit by a car that is driven by his neighbor.

PO'S NEIGHBOR  
Po! What's going on?

PO  
(crying)  
It's my Mom! She, she's hurt. I need to get to the hospital!

His neighbor nods.

NEIGHBOR  
Get in.

INT. PO'S NEIGHBOR'S CAR - DAY

Po sits in the passenger seat as his neighbor speeds through the streets. Po cries quietly. He puts his seat-belt on.

Po starts to have a panic attack. His throat and chest are closing in. His ribs feel like they are about to break.

NEIGHBOR  
Po! Po! Just, look at me!

Po is barely wheezing now.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

[Note: A panic attack is the most terrifying thing to go through. Even though they aren't directly dangerous, if you don't calm down, you could hyperventilate, pass out, etc.]

Po looks at his neighbor in absolute terror. *I'm dying here!*

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)

Po! Hands on the dash! Put your hands on the dashboard!

Po puts his hands on the dashboard. But he doesn't calm down.

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)

Deep breaths.

Po is trying to calm down. He'll pass out soon. At this point, that might be a good thing.

Po's neighbor puts a hand on Po's back and chest. He holds them still as Po tries to breath.

The car is hit from it's side by a truck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The car flips and hits the ground with a bang. The car has landed on the neighbor's side.

INT. PO'S NEIGHBOR'S CAR - DAY

Due to seat belts and airbags, Neighbor is OK. He looks up at Po.

NEIGHBOR

(croaking)

Po?

Po lays in his seat. Motionless. Dead to the world.

INT. PO'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Po lays in a hospital bed. He has a brace covering his ribs, and a tube connected to a bag of medicine beside him. Po looks around. For being in a car that flipped, he's pretty good looking.

Po unhooks his morphine. He sighs. Then he groans. Pushing through the pain, Po stands up. He comes to his door.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

A nurse walks in. She's very surprised that Po is up.

NURSE

Well, you look like you're in a hurry!

PO

(indecipherable)

My Mom.

Po's voice is gone. He starts to say it again. The nurse puts a hand on his shoulder.

NURSE

Your neighbor is completely fine. And so is your mother. You'll see her in a minute. First I need you to sit.

He does.

NURSE (CONT'D)

How do you feel?

Po shrugs. Makes a thumbs-up sign.

INT. MARY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The nurse helps Po into his mother's room. Mary sighs when she sees Po OK. Mary wears a neck brace, and is propped up.

NURSE

She has a very severe case of whiplash. She's lucky her neck isn't broken.

Po shakes his head, holding back tears as he comes up to his mother. He drops into the chair next to her.

PO

(Disbelieving, quietly)

He...

A tear goes down Po's face, then his mother's.

PO (CONT'D)

Is Daniel safe?

Po's Mom blinks slowly. Yes.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO (CONT'D)

OK. I'm calling the police. Enough is enough. It's not worth it, Mom. We can't do this anymore. I mean, look at you.

Po's Mom motions towards a pad on a small table next to her bed. Po holds it up for her to write.

"OK"

Po smiles, almost laughing. He hugs her.

PO (CONT'D)

I love you, Mom.

EXT. OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Po walks through the pouring rain to one of his favorite restaurants. He's been here with Avery. Po walks in.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Po, dripping wet, stands in line for takeout. Luckily, the hospital gave him jeans, and a sweater to wear.

PO

I'd like a small chicken zinger.

RESTAURANT RECEPTIONIST

To go?

PO

Yes.

He pays, then goes and stands by the glass door, watching the rain fall from the skies.

A car drives by outside. It squeals to a stop.

EXT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

The car's window rolls down. Avery is driving.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Po watches as Avery gets out of the car. She walks into the building. They both stand there, silent, expressionless, dripping wet, staring at each other.

AVERY

What gives, Po?

A tear goes down Po's face.

PO

(crying)

I'm so sorry I dragged you into all this.

Avery's face softens. She leads Po to a booth and they sit down.

PO (CONT'D)

(recomposing himself)

Avery... you... should get away from me. I just... it's not right for me to do this to you. You don't deserve this. I'm unpredictable, and so is my life. This just... maybe our destinies are pulling apart right now. I just--

AVERY

Po, I don't know what happened to you.

She holds his face. His bruises, his scar.

AVERY (CONT'D)

But I know that I'm not gonna leave you because your Dad abuses you. Po, I care about you. I want to grow old with you. And if you want, we can live right here and take care of your mother.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Daniel can grow up and have a real future. We'll both go to college together and live happy, American lives. You want that, yeah?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

A beat. Po calms. Sighs. Nearly smiles. He pulls out his phone.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
Who're you calling?

PO  
The police.

He waits. The receiver picks up.

PO (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Hello. This is Po Black. I live on  
2155 Gardens. My mother is in the  
hospital. Yes... My father  
has...Yes.

A beat. Avery looks very sad, supposedly thinking about Mary.

PO (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Yes, I believe my Father is at  
home.

A beat. Avery holds Po's hand.

PO (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
I'll be right there.

He puts the phone in his pocket and sighs with relief. Avery nods to him.

AVERY  
Now what?

PO  
I need to get to my house.

AVERY  
OK.

EXT. PO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Po and Avery pull up to the house around the same time as the police. They get out. A police officer walks up to him.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

POLICE OFFICER  
Are you Po Black?

PO  
Yes.

POLICE OFFICER  
And whose that?

She gestures to Avery.

PO  
Avery.

Avery nods.

AVERY  
Concerned friend.

POLICE OFFICER  
Do you have a picture of your  
father?

PO  
No, but... If you find anyone in  
there that's not my father...  
they're probably worth questioning.

Avery smirks. The police officer nods.

POLICE OFFICER  
Is he armed?

PO  
No.

The police officer nods. He goes and talks to the other  
police officers.

Po sees his father open the blinds a little bit. He then goes  
and locks the door.

The police move up to the door. There are two of them. Two  
more stand behind a car, waiting with guns just in case  
there's a problem.

Po and Avery hold hands.

A police officer tries to open the door to the house. He  
can't; it's locked.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

POLICE OFFICER

Mr. Black, open the door! We can  
ourselves, but we'd rather you open  
it!

No response. One of the officers pulls a small kit out of her  
pocket, and uses it to open the door. The two officers walk  
in.

From outside, Po's Dad is heard screaming.

PO'S DAD (O.S.)

They're lying! I don't know what  
they told you, but they're lying!

A beat.

PO'S DAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)

GET OFF OF ME!

The two cops come out a moment later, with Po's Dad in  
handcuffs.

PO

(to Avery)

I've been envisioning this for  
years.

AVERY

I'm sorry, Po.

The first cop car leaves. The police officer from before  
comes up to Po and Avery.

POLICE OFFICER

(looking to Po)

Where's your Mom?

PO

At the hospital.

POLICE OFFICER

Come on, we'll give you a ride.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Po and Avery sit in the back of the police cruiser. Two  
officers sit at the front.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

I haven't been in the back of a police car in ages.

The police glance backwards.

PO

She's kidding.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The police car drives down the quiet street.

INT. MARY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mary lays in her bed. She's looking better. She's sound asleep. Po and Avery sit on either side of her in chairs, talking quietly. Avery is drinking a Soda.

PO

Remember how much longer the nurse said?

AVERY

I can't remember. But they wanted to wait a little while.

Po nods.

PO

Thanks for being here.

AVERY

Of course.

PO

It... it means a lot.

Avery smiles at him.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Po, Avery and Chuckie sit at their table in the cafeteria. As usual, Avery has Soda. Po and Chuckie have water.

AVERY

I finished "FOUND" last night.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO

What?! Aren't there like six seasons?

CHUCKIE

Yeah, but if you stay up all night for a while, you can finish at a really good speed.

Po rolls his eyes.

PO

Are you guys doing anything next week? Because we should go see a movie.

AVERY

I have a dance recital thing.

PO

Really?

Really?

CHUCKIE

AVERY

(proudly)

Yep. I've been practicing after school three days a week.

PO

Is this with Jonathan?

AVERY

Yes.

PO

Ugh. You gotta teach me how to dance. I don't wanna go and watch you dance with some dude. It's really uncomfortable.

CHUCKIE

I've got an idea.

AVERY

Shoot.

CHUCKIE

'Cause Po here has a loyalty problem-

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO

What? Hey!

Avery laughs. Chuckie holds out his hand to Po.

CHUCKIE

No one's blaming you. Listen,  
Avery. Halfway through the dance,  
or whenever you want...

Chuckie stops, grinning.

PO

Chuckie!

CHUCKIE

Avery, halfway through the dance,  
you need to spit on Jonathan.

They all laugh.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

And don't make it seem like an  
accident! You gotta spit, and then  
be like; *"Oh, I'm so sorry, It just  
happens sometimes!"*

They all three laugh.

AVERY

I might do that, just to see what  
he says. But if he won't dance with  
me again, I'll have to teach Po.

PO

Win-win situation.

**\*\*BEGIN MONTAGE\*\***

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Po and Avery sit in the restaurant, talking. They don't have  
food. They laugh.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Po and Avery's Dad, Brad, sit watching a movie together. They're both laughing hysterically. They have similar humor.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Jonathan and Avery dance the Balboa Swing Dance. It's even more fluid than before, at the school dance. They finish their dance... to a standing ovation. Led by Po Black.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Po and Avery are laying on Po's mattress. Avery seems to think that Po is still awake, because she is excitedly talking. Po sleeps beside her.

**\*\*END MONTAGE\*\***

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Po walks into the kitchen, where Avery is making eggs. He watches her happily.

PO

Where do your parents think you are?

AVERY

They know I'm here. Taking care of you.

PO

I don't need taking care of.

AVERY

We all need help sometimes.

A large cloud of smoke is rising behind Avery. *There go the eggs.*

Po laughs a bit.

PO

Please don't burn down my house.

He motions toward the stove.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

Oh!

But she just stares at it. Po walks over and turns it off, laughing.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Wanna get waffles?

Po smiles.

INT. WAFFLE PLACE - DAY

Po and Avery sit across from each other at Waffle House. They're in the same booth that they usually sit in. Po sighs. He's tired.

AVERY

OK?

PO

I need to go see my Dad today.

Avery purses her lips. Doesn't approve.

AVERY

Why?

PO

My Mom and I agreed that one of us need to go see what's going on with him. And my Mom shouldn't ever have to go near him again.

AVERY

Do you want a ride?

PO

I'll take my Mom's car. I'd like to go alone.

Avery nods.

INT. POLICE DEPT. VISITING ROOM - DAY

Po sits in a chair. Across from him, behind a glass wall, sits his father.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

There are a few small holes in the glass, so that they can hear each other. They don't speak. Just stare at each other.

Po's Dad looks a bit better; he's not drunk. But he does have a bruise from the pan. He also looks a little bit emotional. Po sits like a stone.

PO'S DAD  
(almost crying)  
I'm sorry. I was a bad dad.

Po shakes his head. Not in anger, but knowing that his Dad is wrong.

PO  
No.

Po seems to anger a little bit now.

PO (CONT'D)  
No. You weren't a bad dad. You weren't a dad at all. If you were a Dad, there'd be two parents living in my house. As well as my brother. Not just me and my girlfriend. She feels like she has to take care of me; looks at me like a wounded animal.

Po leans forward.

PO (CONT'D)  
Because I am a wounded animal. There's something about going to school, and trying to avoid everybody. When asked, having to lie about my face. Coming home to find a self righteous asshole sitting on my couch. Telling me that my Mom had an accident.

PO (CONT'D)  
Going to the hospital and nearly getting our neighbor killed because you've scared the Hell out of me. Waking up the next day having morphine fed to me through a tube. Finding that my Mom has whiplash.

Po shakes his head. Starts to cry a little bit.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO (CONT'D)

I don't even want to think about how she ended up with that. And no matter what I won't forgive you. No. Maybe that's why I won't go to Heaven, and that's OK. I'll go to Hell before forgiving you. For doing that to my mother. A woman that maybe... maybe you used to love. I don't know what changed. When you decided to treat people like animals. And let me tell you something.

Po leans forward, right up to the glass. Po has stopped crying, but now his dad is crying.

PO (CONT'D)

If you had hurt Daniel, just touched him...

Po quiets down.

PO (CONT'D)

(quietly, with conviction)

I wouldn't have called 911. I would've fucking killed you. Slowly. I would have shaken you to give you whiplash, give you a scar above your eye, hit you, hurt you, curse you.

A beat. Po's Dad is crying.

PO (CONT'D)

And then I would commit suicide, because after doing all of that, I wouldn't be able to live with myself. Because I'm not you.

Po leans back.

PO (CONT'D)

You won't be seeing me again. Let alone Mom. But Daniel... He's gonna grow up one day. Wonder where his Dad is. And maybe he'll come and see you. He'll find wherever you are at that point in our lives.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

PO (CONT'D)

Ask you why he had to grow up  
without a father.

Po stands up. A policeman behind Po opens the door for him to  
leave.

PO (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Dad.

Po's Dad puts his head in his hands, sobbing. Po walks out,  
doing his best to hold it all in. But he's also crying.

INT. MARY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

Po sits with his mother in her hospital room. This time,  
she's awake.

PO

I talked to Dad.

MARY

(scratchy)

Well, how is he?

PO

He didn't say much. He seems to be  
sorry, but I've seen him sorry  
before. I think it's more of a  
depression thing. He feels  
betrayed.

A beat.

PO (CONT'D)

I told him that you won't be  
visiting him. But... legally, what  
are you gonna do?

MARY

I don't know yet. We'll see I  
guess.

Po nods. He gets a text, and pulls out his phone to check it.

**"Avery: Are you still gonna make it tonight? They'll  
understand if you can't."**

Po responds.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

**"Po: I'm with my Mom. I'll be there in twenty minutes."**

Po looks to his Mom.

PO  
I'm sorry, I was supposed to meet  
with Avery and her parents.

Mary smiles.

MARY  
I'll be home tomorrow.

Po kisses her cheek and leaves.

INT. AVERY'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

Po walks into the room behind Brad, who has just let him in.  
Po is holding a marble rye. Grace comes in.

GRACE  
Good evening Po!

PO  
Good evening, Mrs. White.

He hands her the rye. She smiles.

GRACE  
Thanks, Po!

Po nods, smiling. This place is like a second home to him.  
Maybe more than that.

Avery comes out of the living room and gives Po a hug.

AVERY  
(whispering)  
How was it?

PO  
(whispering)  
It was OK. I'm glad I did it.

They pull back out of the hug.

Grace and Brad smile at them.

GRACE  
Shall we eat?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO

Yes!

They laugh, and sit down at the table.

GRACE

Po, Brad tells me that the movie you guys saw was good. Was it really? Because I bet he was asleep.

PO

(smiling)

Oh, he was only asleep for about twenty minutes. Some guy yelled at us 'cause Brad was snoring so loud. I didn't even notice.

They laugh.

AVERY

Dad, you snore?

BRAD

Well, no-

GRACE

Yes, he does. It sounds like a train. Like, right after it's been derailed.

They laugh, especially Po.

PO

My... Mom is going to be out of the hospital tomorrow.

BRAD

That's great!

GRACE

Awesome!

BRAD

So... Avery, you can move back in with us.

He gives a knowing look to Avery. Avery grins. Po blushes.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PO

Thank you for letting her stay with me. I don't know what I would have done without her.

Grace smiles.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Po sits on the floor, with his back against the wall. Watching Avery as she sleeps.

AVERY

(muffled)

Something alluring about the way I sleep?

Po laughs a tired, content laugh.

PO

I thought you were asleep.

He stands up and pulls on a sweater. He doesn't even need the brace. He sighs. He sits back down on his bed.

PO (CONT'D)

Wanna skip school today?

Avery smiles. Turns over and glances at him.

AVERY

Yes. I think you should call Chuckie though. How long has it been since you've seen him?

PO

He came and visited my Mom yesterday. But I'll still call him.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Po sits in his living room, on the couch. He is waiting for Chuckie to pick up the phone.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)

Hello, this is the coolest person you know.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
(into phone)  
And this is Po. Join Avery and I at  
Waffle House?

CHUCKIE (O.S.)  
See you there.

PO  
(into phone)  
Alright, buddy.

EXT. WAFFLE PLACE - DAY

Po parks the car, and gets out. Avery follows him to Waffle House. He opens the door for her, she walks in, and Po follows.

INT. WAFFLE PLACE - DAY

Po and Avery walk to the table where Chuckie is sitting.

CHUCKIE  
Well, what are you guys doing  
together so early?

They all laugh at the expression on Po's face.

AVERY  
Chuckie, why didn't you come to my  
dance?

CHUCKIE  
Dude! It was totally sold out! I  
didn't know how early you had to  
buy tickets.

Avery rolls her eyes.

PO  
She did spit on Jonathan.

Chuckie slams his fist down on the table.

CHUCKIE  
I can't believe I missed that! Damn  
it!

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Po and Avery laugh.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

Po. Don't forget, I told the teachers that you were in Disneyland.

Po nods.

AVERY

That sounds like fun. How was it?

PO

Magical.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Po sits in class as a large, male, young teacher walks into the classroom. The teacher, MR. RIVERS (45) quiets the class. Then he notices notices Po.

MR. RIVERS

Po. You've missed quite a bit of classes.

Po nods.

PO

Sorry.

MR. RIVERS

Where were you?

PO

Disney World.

MR. RIVERS

Chuckie told me you were in Disneyland.

PO

Yep.

MR. RIVERS

So... where were you? Disney Land or Disney World?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
Land. Disney Land. It was cool.  
Super cool.

The teacher sighs.

MR. RIVERS  
Do you even know where Disney Land  
is?

PO  
(guessing)  
Nevada?

Chuckie rolls his eyes.

MR. RIVERS  
Missing class is unacceptable. I  
don't want to have to write notes.

PO  
Alright, fine. I didn't come  
because my Dad is in jail. I was in  
a car wreck. And my Mom is in the  
hospital.

Mr. Rivers looks embarrassed. He gulps.

MR. RIVERS  
Well, I'm sorry about that. Would  
you mind telling me what happened??

Po stares at the teacher in wonder. Makes a decision, and  
stands up to leave.

PO  
Alright. I think we're done.

CHUCKIE  
(to the teacher)  
What's your problem?

Po walks out of the classroom. Chuckie follows.

MR. RIVERS  
Po!

Po turns around.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. RIVERS (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry... I just wanted to  
say... You don't have to take my  
class. But if you don't do the  
project, you fail.

Po looks at him, waiting to hear what it is.

MR. RIVERS (CONT'D)  
Write about how you've really  
*affected* someone for the good.  
Changed them.

Po nods to him.

PO  
OK.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Po walks into his living room, with Avery behind him. Mary is  
standing up. She smiles when they walk in.

PO  
Mom!

They hug.

MARY  
Hi, Avery.

AVERY  
Hello, Mrs. Black.

MARY  
Avery, we're gonna eat dinner soon,  
will you eat with us?

AVERY  
Sure, I'd love to. If you let me  
help you cook.

Mary rolls her eyes.

MARY  
You don't have to do that.

AVERY  
It's my pleasure.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
Yeah Mom, she needs the practice.

Avery sticks her tongue out at him. Mary laughs.

PO (CONT'D)  
Mom, where's Daniel?

MARY  
He's staying with Aunt Karen until  
I'm fully recovered.

Po nods.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Probably a week.

INT. PO'S KITCHEN - DAY

Po stands in his kitchen, watching Avery and Mary cook. Avery wipes her brow with a shaking hand, leaning against the counter.

MARY  
Hey, alright?

AVERY  
Yeah, just, a little tired.

She smiles, and goes back to the food, as if nothing happened.

MARY  
Avery, what do you want to do when  
you grow up?

AVERY  
Well, I'd like to be a dancer, I'm  
really passionate about that.

MARY  
Yes, Po told me. Sorry I couldn't  
make your recital.

AVERY  
That's fine. It's not a real steady  
job though, so I'm gonna major in  
business. If things go my way, I'll  
start a dance school.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARY

That's nice. You know when I was your age, I wanted to be a teacher. I've always loved teaching.

Po smiles. He wishes that his Mom could have everything that she wanted.

Mary sighs.

MARY (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, not everything always works out.

Mary smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

You just have to make the right decisions.

Avery nods. They have been cutting vegetables. Avery stops and looks at her.

AVERY

What decisions?

Mary glances at her.

MARY

Everything is a decision. I know you're probably waiting for me to say something about the man I married, but...

Mary looks at Po, and smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

If I could go back, I wouldn't change a thing. Because I wouldn't have Po.

She smiles at Avery.

MARY (CONT'D)

And we wouldn't know you.

Avery is touched. She gives Mary a hug. Po smiles.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Po and Avery walk slowly down the street. They're holding hands.

PO

Man, I love the weekend.

Avery laughs.

AVERY

Says the guy who went to school once last week. Seriously, you have no reason to say that.

Po smiles. Avery coughs. Po looks to her.

PO

OK?

Some blood is coming out of her nose now.

AVERY

(joking)

Why did you punch me?

PO

What?! No, I--

Avery laughs at him, wiping it off her face.

AVERY

I'm kidding! Damn, you're knotted up today. All good?

PO

Just, I mean, you're bleeding--

Po looks pretty beat up over this. He may even be about to cry. Avery's face softens, and she hugs him.

AVERY

Po. I'm totally fine. In fact, this is like, one of my first nosebleeds, ever. They happen to everyone.

Po nods.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO  
I'm sorry, I just... I don't like  
seeing people hurt.

Avery smiles, walks toward her car.

PO (CONT'D)  
I'll see you tomorrow.

AVERY  
Yeah.

Avery gets in her car and drives away.

Po stands still, thinking.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Po gets off of his mattress. He walks to the living room.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Po finds his phone on the table. He has missed voice-mail  
messages. He plays the first one.

AVERY (V.O.)  
Hey, Po. I'm going to the ER cause  
my back really hurts and my Mom is  
freaking out because she thinks it  
might be broken or something. Which  
is odd, and fairly unlikely, which  
I told her, and now she's worried  
that it might be something on the  
inside. I'm in a lot of pain, so I  
probably won't see you today.

Mary has walked into the room.

MARY  
That's too bad.

PO  
Yeah.

Po plays the next message.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

EVERY (O.S.)

Hey. I've been checked in, and there are no doctors. They gave me Ibuprofen though. So... I totally could have done that from home. Anyway, I'm in room twenty-one, and if you tell the hall nurse that you're my cousin, she'll let you in without checking.

We can hear Brad laughing in the background before the message ends.

Po looks to his Mom. She sighs and motions towards the door.

MARY

You can take the car.

Po smiles.

PO

Thanks.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Po stands outside Avery's room. A nurse comes up to him.

HALL NURSE

Can I help you?

PO

Yes, I'm looking for Avery White, in room twenty-one... Uh, I'm her cousin.

The nurse nods. She opens the door for him. He walks in.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Po walks into Avery's room. She's still wearing her plain clothes. She is still in pain; she's breathing hard and seems to have a shortage of breath. Po looks concerned. So does Brad, who is sitting in a chair beside her. He stands up and shakes Po's hand.

EVERY

Good morning, Po.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO

Hi, Avery. Better or worse?

AVERY

Worse. But it's manageable, I guess.

Po sighs. Looks to Brad.

BRAD

We don't know what it is. No one has come to see us. I have no idea how we ended up with a room, but... There's just so many people here.

He looks to Avery.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Has an actual doctor even see you yet?

AVERY

No. I don't think so.

BRAD

It's unbelievable. We've been here for hours. There's just so many people here.

PO

Anything I can do?

BRAD

Nothing anyone can do, apparently.

AVERY

Thanks for coming. You're better company than 'Mr everything sucks', here.

Po laughs. So does Brad, despite himself.

Po sits down on a chair on one side of Avery, and Brad sits on the other.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Both Brad and Avery are asleep. Po sits still, holding Avery's hand.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Chuckie enters the room. Po motions for him to be quiet. Chuckie nods. Chuckie is holding a box of pizza, four waters, and a Soda.

Chuckie sits down in the chair next to Po. He pulls up the small table, and sets down the food and drinks.

PO  
(very quietly)  
Thanks, buddy.

CHUCKIE  
(very quietly)  
What's the update?

Po shakes his head.

PO  
(quietly)  
I mean, they don't know. But, I haven't seen a doctor and I've been here for hours. The nurse came once to give her more Ibuprofen.

CHUCKIE  
(quietly)  
Wow, they could've done that from home.

PO  
(quietly)  
I know. I think that the nurses are worried. They're not checking her out prematurely. But they're not seeing what her problem is, either.

Chuckie nods. Po and Chuckie eat silently.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

It's been hours. Po wakes up. Avery is still asleep, but Brad is awake now. Chuckie has left.

BRAD  
Your friend bought pizza.

PO  
Chuckie. He's a good guy.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Brad nods.

BRAD  
The doctor will see us in an hour.

Po nods.

PO  
About time.

BRAD  
Yeah.

Po looks around.

PO  
What time is it?

BRAD  
Almost nine.

PO  
Whoa. I've missed too much school.  
I should probably go.

BRAD  
Of course.

Po gets up to go.

BRAD (CONT'D)  
Hey.

Po turns around to look at him.

PO  
Yeah?

BRAD  
Thanks for doing this. You really  
are the best boyfriend she's had.

Po smiles.

PO  
Thanks. And you're the best father  
I've ever had.

Before Brad can say anything, Po leaves.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Po sits in the cafeteria, eating quietly with Chuckie.

CHUCKIE  
How's she doing?

PO  
Lots of pain. I haven't talked to her since yesterday. But they don't seem worried.

Chuckie nods. A beat.

CHUCKIE  
You know Po... you mean a lot to her. And me.

Po doesn't know what to say.

PO  
Well, thank you. You mean a lot to me.

Chuckie nods.

CHUCKIE  
I'm serious. You're the most positive person that I've met. It's... it's amazing, dude.

Chuckie sighs, puts a hand on Po's back.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)  
Especially considering your circumstances.

Po looks at Chuckie.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)  
And I believe that Avery really loves you.

PO  
Thanks, buddy.

They hug.

EXT. AVERY'S HOUSE - DAY

Po knocks on the door. Brad opens it, and smiles. Avery comes up behind him and gives Po a big hug. She doesn't look any better, but she's fighting the pain. Po helps her to the car.

They drive away.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

This time, Po and Avery are sitting on the same side of the booth. Po has his arm around Avery. She's breathing hard. They have food, but they aren't eating.

PO

OK, this is crazy. What did the doctor say?

AVERY

I didn't end up getting to see the doctor. My Dad and I checked out, and went home; the hospital didn't seem to think that that was a bad idea.

Po shakes his head.

PO

You've been in pain for like a week. This is crazy.

Avery sighs.

AVERY

Yeah.

A beat.

AVERY (CONT'D)

My Dad thinks that we should go to Atlanta.

PO

Why?

Avery shrugs.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

Better hospitals I guess. They aren't so busy there. But Po, I almost never get sick. So this could be what it looks like for me to have a fever.

Po nods. Avery has her eyes closed, head on Po's shoulders. She's worn out.

PO

I should take you home.

Avery sighs, sad.

AVERY

I'm sorry.

Po shakes his head, helping her up.

PO

This isn't your fault. You're gonna go to Atlanta, and then come back perfectly healthy, and we'll go out everyday. Because school... screw it.

Avery smiles.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MORNING

Po and Chuckie stand next to Po's locker.

PO

I don't think she'll come today.

CHUCKIE

We have a geometry final.

Po looks ashen.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

It's not hard, you'll be fine.

He again looks around for Avery.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

But, if she doesn't do the test,  
she'll probably have to do Summer  
school.

PO

I think they might go to Atlanta.

CHUCKIE

Today?

PO

No, no. It's a two or three hour  
drive. They aren't going today.

They both sigh.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Po walks through his front door. His Mom isn't home. He sees  
a note on the couch.

**"Went to Aunt Karen's to get Daniel. I'll be back tomorrow. I  
left the car for you."**

Po picks up his phone. He has a missed call from Brad, from  
ten minutes ago. He calls Brad. Brad responds almost  
immediately.

BRAD (O.S.)

Po?

PO

(into phone)

Hi Brad. What's up?

Brad breathes deeply.

BRAD (O.S.)

We're in an ambulance.

PO

(into phone)

What? Why?!

BRAD (O.S.)

Avery collapsed. I, I shouldn't  
have taken her home the other day.  
She... It's her kidneys.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BRAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
They failed. They might have failed  
five days ago. It's...

(emotional)  
Po, it doesn't look good. They  
might not even have any--

PO  
(into phone)  
Brad. Hey. Just, I'll be there.

He runs outside of his house.

EXT. PO'S HOUSE - DAY

BRAD (O.S.)  
I felt like I should call.

PO  
(into phone)  
I'll see you soon.

Po gets into the car, and speeds away.

INT. PO'S CAR - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Po fumbles with his phone while driving. He gets it set to  
calling Avery.

After a moment, she still hasn't responded.

PHONE MACHINE  
Avery is not available. If you  
would like to send a message, press  
"One".

Po presses "One".

PHONE MACHINE (CONT'D)  
Record Your message after the beep.

\*BEEP\*

PO  
Avery. I know you can't hear this,  
but I hope that you'll hear it  
soon...

He sets the phone down on the passenger seat.

EXT. STREET - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

The car speeds down the road.

INT. HOSPITAL ER - NIGHT - LATER

The following is silent:

Po runs into a large room. He hugs Brad, and Grace. A doctor comes in and gives Po a clipboard. He follows the doctor through a door, holding the form.

Brad looks to Grace in pained relief. They hug. Thank God.

Take a moment. Blackness.

FADE IN:

To beeping. A hospital.

**Title Card: "The Next Day"**

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Avery blinks awake to see Brad, Grace, a few nurses.

NURSE

Don't try to talk, honey. You've been in surgery. You're going to be OK.

The nurses check her eyes, then her throat.

NURSE (CONT'D)

You'll be leaving shortly.

Avery nods. The nurses leave, and it's just Brad, Grace, and Avery.

Brad and Grace sit in chairs on either side of her. Brad lets out a deep breath. A tear rolls down his face. *What? Why's he crying?*

Brad looks up to her. Takes another deep breath.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BRAD

Po gave you a kidney.

Avery smiles.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Po is a victim of panic attacks. Presumably because of his past. But, he had one during surgery, and... A nurse gave him medicine, that triggered something, she didn't know... and his body reacted violently. His kidney came out as planned... along with other...essential organs.

A look of horror comes over Avery's face. *No no no no no.*

BRAD (CONT'D)

They were in a hurry, and it was too late for him, so they saved you.

Avery knew what was coming. But it still hurts. A tear rolls down her cheek. Then she begins to sob. Slowly at first, then she lets it all out. Someone very dear to her has died. *Po is dead. Po is dead. Po is dead.*

Avery is hugged by her parents, who are also crying. But they didn't know Po like she did.

INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION - MORNING

Chuckie sits alone in the reception, crying.

INT. WAFFLE PLACE - MORNING

Avery sits alone at their booth at the Waffle place. She doesn't eat. Doesn't do anything. Just sits.

INT. RESTAURANT - MORNING

Avery sits in the booth that was usually occupied by both her and Po. Now it's just her. She sits in silence, staring at his side of the booth.

INT. AVERY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Avery sits in her living room, staring blankly at the TV, which is on mute. From the kitchen, her parents watch her.

On the TV, an ad for a dancing academy comes on. It shows a man tap-dancing.

Avery starts crying. Her shoulders shake as tears roll down her face. Brad and Grace rush in to console her.

GRACE

Oh, baby.

AVERY

He's dead because of me.

BRAD

No. Avery, Po chose to--

AVERY

(Crying)

And if I had been more healthy, he wouldn't have died!

GRACE

(crying)

We... we can't do that.

AVERY

(crying)

Why do bad things happen to good people?

BRAD

That's how life is, sometimes. We can't control it.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Avery slowly walks up to the casket. Her parents remain by the doors to the chapel.

Po looks good. His face is clean, and he is wearing nice clothes. He looks calm, at peace. But not happy. Not like he was when he was with Avery. When he was alive.

Avery sees this as Po lays in his casket. A tear goes down her face. She turns around, hearing footsteps.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

It's Chuckie. He's trying to hold it in. They pull each other into a hug.

AVERY

He shouldn't have died.

CHUCKIE

I know, Avery. I know.

He pulls back.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Avery sits in the second pew, immediately behind Mary. On the other side of Mary's pew is Po's Dad, in handcuffs that are hidden well underneath his coat. Policemen sit on either side of him.

Avery is rubbing Mary's shoulders. To her left, is Chuckie, and to her right, are her parents.

MINISTER

Good morning. Thank you guys for coming out. We'll start with a word from Avery, Po's friend.

Avery comes up to the stage. She stands behind the podium and takes a deep breath. The minister sits next to Mary.

AVERY

Chuckie was also Po's friend.

Avery glares at the minister.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I loved Po Black. Still do.

She looks down. Crushed.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Po... Po was always talking about his destiny. He brought it up everyday. His father was... an asshole.

A few heads turn to look at his Dad.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY (CONT'D)

But he still believed that he could have a future. Said that it's destiny, and destiny can't be taken away. And by future, I don't mean a... successful businessman. He wanted to grow old taking care of his mother. To be with family.

(crying)

And me. I'm not trying to rip myself apart here, but I can't see how a sixteen-year-old can go and act like that, loving me. But now I do.

Avery takes a deep breath. A tear slides off her cheek and drops on her paper that is on the podium.

We clearly see a few words, such as: "fucked up", "destiny", "not right", "true love". She silently folds the paper over, and looks back up. She has something else that needs to be said.

AVERY (CONT'D)

And I wanted to share that dream with him. The American life; growing old with your loved ones. It really is what we all want, right? I would have stayed with him forever. I... He affected me, and that's the main thing. He was the best person I ever knew. Always caring for others. I, uh... I didn't know him for long. But I think that I got to know him very well. We shared a few classes, although we had never really talked before the dance. Po was someone that I watched for years, not in a creepy way, but as you watch another classmate. For the most part, when we were younger, he was fun. Some might have gone as far as popular, but that's not saying much when you're talking about ten-year-olds.

A few nervous laughs. Avery has regained some composure. She's saying what the people need to hear.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

AVERY (CONT'D)

I always found it a little odd, how fast he changed. From what I know, life wasn't quite as bad before fifth grade. But, things really fell apart for him at home then. He didn't tell many people, just Chuckie knew, but... then he slowly faded away. He was just another person who was occasionally in my classes through the years. We shared quite a few classes this semester, actually, and I want to tell you about something that happened. He, uh... I don't know, but Chuckie told me later it was a rough week. Anyway, he was in the hallway, and a bigger kid was looking down at a smaller kid, about to do something. And then the big kid swung, and hit the small guy.

Avery is crying again. Composure gone.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Po reacted, and basically beat up the big guy, and later got in a lot of trouble. I... Maybe that story doesn't mean anything to you, but... I think that I've never seen anything more beautiful. You hear about looking out for the little guy, but what boy does it, just because it's right? Most of them just like fighting. Po? He was scared of it. For obvious reasons. But he didn't want that kid feeling what he felt. That... I didn't know him then but... knowing him brought light to that. And when I was feeling bad, he stayed by my side. When I got sick, he stayed by my side. He stepped up, and gave me one of his organs. And died. Some people might say that he didn't mean to die, to... sacrifice himself.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

AVERY (CONT'D)

But those of us who knew him know that he would have died for me, or another. Because that's who he was. And I wanted to say, his mother, Mary... he always took care of her. And--

(crying)

She didn't even know what he was doing...

Avery looks down to the now closed casket below.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'll love you forever, Po.

Avery goes and sits. The minister goes back on stage.

MINISTER

We will always remember Po. He was a great boy... No, a great man. He was the man in his family. He took care of his mother and those of us around him. He would never stop loving. Those of us touched by him will never forget him. Will never stop loving him. But let's not sink in our grief. Let's think about the amazing life that he had. Let's not think about the hard aspects of his life, but rather the good ones. Because, if you get past the hard things, his life was beautiful. He was blessed.

Avery can't listen to this bullshit any longer. She stands up. She hugs Mary.

AVERY

(quietly)

I'm so, so, sorry.

Mary shakes her head. *This isn't your fault.*

Avery walks out of the church. The minister keeps talking.

INT. AVERY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Avery stands, looking at herself in the mirror. She lifts her shirt, and runs her fingers along the scar.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

She hears a ding, and picks up her phone.

PHONE MACHINE

You have one missed message: Po,  
Black.

AVERY

DAMN IT!

She throws the phone across the room, where it lands behind her bed. She picks up her bag and throws it to the other side of the room too.

Crying, she falls to the floor. She punches her pillow, over and over, tears streaming down her face. She releases the anger that is bottled up inside of her. The gnawing realization that she killed Po.

AVERY (CONT'D)

(quietly now)

Po. God, I'm so sorry.

INT. CHUCKIE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Chuckie opens the door to see Avery, standing outside. They hug, and he invites her in.

CHUCKIE

Want pizza?

AVERY

You have pizza?

CHUCKIE

(unfortunately, yes)

Yeah.

AVERY

OK.

Avery sits on the couch, staring at the TV. There's nothing playing. Finally, Chuckie sets a pizza box down on the coffee table in front of the couch. He sits in a nearby armchair. They eat the pizza. This is awkward. But only because of what's happened.

CHUCKIE

Avery.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

Hmm?

CHUCKIE

How are you doing?

She sighs.

AVERY

I don't know Chuckie. How are you doing?

He sets down his piece of pizza. His hands are shaking. He pulls his hair out of his face.

CHUCKIE

Not... particularly well.

He leans forward, and clasps his hands, gripping tightly.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

I... was really close to Po. But... there was always this thought in the back of my head that... I was doing him a service. Or some kind of favor, just by being his friend. But, you know what? I'm having a little trouble living without him.

A single tear rolls down his face.

CHUCKIE (CONT'D)

He got something he didn't deserve.

AVERY

(quietly)

I know.

Avery looks out the window.

CHUCKIE

Avery... what you said at the funeral was... nice.

AVERY

It wasn't what I was gonna say. But everyone was expecting me to try to lift their spirits. And...

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

AVERY (CONT'D)

I realized I should take the opportunity. It's what Po would've done, I guess.

CHUCKIE

For sure.

INT. WAFFLE PLACE - NIGHT

Avery sits inside the Waffle Place, at their booth. The waitress comes up to her.

WAFFLE HOUSE WAITRESS

Hey, honey. It's been a while, hasn't it! Where's your guy-friend at?

AVERY

(very quietly)  
He passed away.

WAFFLE HOUSE WAITRESS

I'm sorry?

AVERY

He's dead.

Avery puts her head in her hands. *How does she have any tears left?* The waitress sits down beside her, hugging Avery.

WAFFLE HOUSE WAITRESS

Oh, baby. I know it's hard to lose someone. You're welcome to come here anytime, you know. I'm here.

Avery nods. The manager comes out from behind the serving bar and sees the embrace.

WAFFLE HOUSE MANAGER

What's going on?

WAFFLE HOUSE WAITRESS

Leave us alone.

INT. AVERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Avery lays in bed, staring up at the ceiling. She has her covers pulled up to her chin. Soon, Grace walks in.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

GRACE

Hey, honey.

She sits down on the side of the bed.

AVERY

Hi, mom.

GRACE

Mind if I get in?

Avery opens the covers, and Grace lays right next to her daughter.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You know, I used to come lay with you every night, just to listen to your beautiful breathing.

AVERY

(what do I say to that)

Oh.

They both laugh a bit.

GRACE

Avery, I... I came here to talk about when you were sick. I know I wasn't with you because I was at work--

AVERY

Well, someone had to work.

GRACE

Just let me finish. What I'm saying is that your father was there, and so was Po. Almost all the time. He and Brad got very close. When Po... passed away, I know that your Dad was very hurt. And I might not have seemed to be. I just want you to know that I really liked Po. And I miss him too, and I'm here for you.

Avery nods, grateful.

GRACE (CONT'D)

And what you said at the funeral was so beautiful.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

AVERY  
Thanks, mom.

INT. AVERY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Avery sits on the couch. The home phone rings, and she picks it up.

AVERY  
(into phone)  
Avery White.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)  
Hey, there. I was trying to reach you, but I couldn't.

AVERY  
(into phone)  
Yeah, I... my phone's gone.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)  
Really?

Avery nods, as if he can see her.

CHUCKIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Listen, Avery. I went to go see Mary yesterday. She's doing OK I guess, but... It would mean a lot if you visited her... I mean, if--

AVERY  
(into phone)  
I'll do that today.

CHUCKIE (O.S.)  
Thanks.

She sets down the phone. Brad and Grace sit down across from her.

BRAD  
Hey.

Avery nods.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BRAD (CONT'D)

Listen, honey, it's been almost a week, and we need to think a little about your school situation. You're grieving, and that has to happen. But, we can't forget about your future. So let's look into a tutor, or--

AVERY

I can do it. I can go back.

GRACE

Are you sure, honey?

Avery nods.

AVERY

Today I need to see Mary. Tomorrow I'll go to school.

Her parents nod.

GRACE

Why don't you take her something? She can have this casserole I made, and Brad and I will eat something else.

AVERY

Thank you.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary opens the door to Avery, standing outside with a casserole. They hug, and sit down.

MARY

I can't eat this whole thing.

AVERY

Maybe it'll last a while. You look good.

Mary looks pretty bad, but she was also recently in the hospital, so it's understandable. Her face isn't tear-streaked, but she's definitely been grieving the loss of her firstborn. Her hair is a mess, and so are her clothes.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARY

You do too.

AVERY

I just wanted to see how you were doing.

MARY

I'm just... grieving. Are you back in school?

AVERY

Tomorrow.

MARY

Are you ready? How are you doing?

AVERY

It's time to go back... so, I need to. As for how I'm doing... Not great. But neither is anyone else.

MARY

Yeah.

AVERY

I'm so sorry. I just--

She runs a hand through her hair.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I know I only knew him for months, not like you or Chuckie, and now he's gone, and if I had been more healthy--

MARY

Stop.

AVERY

He could've still been here and it's my fault--

MARY

Avery, Stop it!

Avery, hurt, shuts up.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY (CONT'D)

You know what? Yes. Maybe he still would be here. And maybe, if we hadn't fought back against his Father things would have worked out in the end. And maybe, maybe if the doctors were more careful, you'd both be alive. But no. Because we can't do that! No one can!

(sad)

We can't change the past, we never could and we never will be able to! And I'm not gonna let you say that my son is dead because of you, because he's not. He made a decision, because he loved you. And you will not come into my house and tell me that Po died on purpose, or that you killed him. Because he would not have willingly died, because he wouldn't leave us behind. I know that much. And you saying that you killed him is offensive, because I know that you loved him. And I too, love him. He made a choice, Avery. That's life. And now you have to choose whether you'll walk away as a stronger person, or a sad and broken person.

Avery nods.

AVERY

You're right. I'm sorry. I'm... thank you, Mary. You mean the world to me.

They hug each other.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Where's Daniel?

MARY

As usual, Aunt Karen's. And I'll be moving there soon. I just... can't clean out the house just yet.

AVERY

Oh, I'd love to help. And I know Chuckie would too.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY

He was here all day yesterday,  
cooking. Between you and me, he  
doesn't have a future with that.

Avery smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

The hardest thing is Po's room. I  
was only in there once, to drop off  
what he had on him.

Avery doesn't say it, but Mary knows she wants to go inside.

MARY (CONT'D)

Want to come see?

AVERY

If you don't mind.

INT. PO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mary swings open the door, and we see Po's room. This is hard  
for both Mary and Avery to see.

Then, Avery begins to see Po. Whether it's something he told  
Avery about, or a real memory for Avery, we see through  
Avery's eyes as:

(This sequence is silent, music will play over it)

Po lays Daniel down on his mattress, and puts his cover over  
him.

FADE TO:

Po standing in the middle of the room, holding his phone,  
wishing he could call Avery. He hears something in the other  
room.

FADE TO:

Po and Avery laying side-by-side. Avery talks excitedly,  
while Po sleeps.

FADE TO:

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Avery lays in bed, asleep. Po wakes up, and tries to get out of bed without waking her. She wakes up, and they smile at each other.

Back on Avery and Mary. Both crying. Remembering their beloved Po.

MARY

Do you see him?

AVERY

Yes.

They hug again.

INT. AVERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Avery sits at her desk, with a pen and paper in front of her. She picks up the pen, and starts writing.

AVERY (V.O.)

Mr. Rivers. My name is Avery White, I'm one of your students. Not long ago, you gave us a project, asking us to talk about how we've affected someone for the good. I haven't given much thought to this project, because when you assigned it, it was just another project. But circumstance has changed me.

INT. CHUCKIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Chuckie stares out the window. He's been crushed by grief, but he looks like he may have come out as a stronger person.

AVERY (V.O.)

I've been thinking about the word 'affect' and what it means. To me, it sounds like something permanent. For example, if you help someone pick up their books at school, you've done them a good thing.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary is surrounded by boxes. She pulls out a marker and marks one; "PO". She continues putting things into boxes.

AVERY (V.O.)

But have you affected them? No. Because not long after, they will forget what you've done for them. It takes a lot to change someone, because as people say, people never really change. But I think that they do. Yeah, people change.

INT. HOSPITAL ER - NIGHT

Brad and Grace stand, scared for their daughter. Brad turns around when he sees Po run in. Po is handed a clipboard and rushed through a door.

AVERY (V.O.)

But it's so rare that people think it's impossible. But it happens when someone affects someone else. I personally don't know if I've really affected someone. It's an odd assignment, because we're just teenagers. Maybe you should have told us to try and affect someone. Because I'm not going to make up some shit about someone that I helped. But I do know of one person who has affected many.

Brad looks to Grace and they hug. Their is hope for their daughter.

INT. PO'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Like before, Mary is surrounded with boxes. But Chuckie, Avery, and Grace are also there.

AVERY (V.O.)

Po, another one of your students. As you know, he will not be writing his report. Because of his destiny. So I'll write it for him. I believe that Po loved everybody.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

                  AVERY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Which is hard. Po's Dad has beaten  
him and his mother regularly. For  
many years at school, people  
ignored him, believing he had  
nothing to say.

INT. AVERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Before Avery wakes up, Brad sits, holding Grace's hands. He's about to tell his daughter that her boyfriend is dead. Because his kidney is inside of her. Because the nurses made priority of Avery.

                  AVERY (V.O.)  
But when he spoke... God, when he  
opened up, people were affected.  
Because Po is different. He's  
affected me more than anyone else I  
know. I will forever be changed,  
and I will always try to love  
everyone I come across. And of  
course, I can only write this today  
because of his kidney in my body.

Grace hugs Brad, holding his hand. Grace is crying.

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Mr. Rivers sits with Avery's paper in his hand. He has tears going down his face. He is moved.

                  AVERY (V.O.)  
So yeah. That's our report, because  
Po needed it more than me. And I  
have a feeling that Po has affected  
you too. He's affected everyone. If  
he didn't before, I'm sure that he  
has now.

INT. AVERY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Avery sets down her pen, and nods. Then she hears a sound. Her phone.

She finds her phone under her bed. Phone in hand, Avery sits down on the side of her bed. She plays the voicemail.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PO (V.O.)

Avery. I know you can't hear this, but I hope that you'll hear it soon. We've spent the last few months together. Despite my Mom being hospitalized, and my Dad being arrested, and you getting sick... This has been the best few months of my life. Getting to spend all this time with you has been a gift. I once told my Mom my dream for life. I wanted to get married, and go home. I wanted to grow old with my wife, and take care of my mother. I wanted my brother to have a real future, go wherever he wanted to go in life. And I met you. You were the most interesting person that I had ever met. And when my life spiraled down to my own personal Hell, you didn't leave me. And you reminded me of my dream for life. And I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I realized that you have the same dream as me. You've affected me deeply. We're gonna get through this. I'll give you a kidney, 'cause I have two anyways. But you're gonna have to teach me how to do the Swing Dance. It's only fair.

Avery smiles. She's crying. She looks over to something on her desk. It is an invitation to the next school dance.

INT. PO'S SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Avery stands in the middle of the gym. People are dancing, having fun. Avery stands still.

DJ

And now for our Swing Dance! Avery and Jonathan, welcome back.

People back away from her. Jonathan is nowhere. Avery takes a deep breath.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DJ (CONT'D)  
Where's Jonathan?

Avery looks around, at all these people who have watched her suffer.

AVERY  
It's Ok.

The music starts, and Avery does the dance, alone.

But she isn't alone. Because Po is dancing with her. Po knows how to do the Swing Dance, from watching her do it. It's beautiful. The dance is slower this time.

Everyone watches as Avery dances with herself. But they realize that she isn't dancing with herself. Because she's dancing with Po.

The song ends. Po fades away.

Silence. The entire school together, remembering Po.

And Avery smiles. Because he isn't just a memory. He's something else. Something present. This smile communicates it all.

THE END