

RESCUE ME  
"Performance"  
by  
Ben Lee

RESCUE ME "Performance"

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. FIREHOUSE - BUNK ROOM - NIGHT

WEBCAM POV - A grainy view of an empty bed and the hallway. A nearby lamp casts an unflattering light on the nostrils of BART (aka Black Sean). His fingers THUMP against the mike as he adjusts the angle of the webcam.

SEAN enters, wearing a dress shirt, tying on a necktie.

SEAN

What's with the laptop?

BART

Settin' up the webcam. Everybody sayin' they seen the "Ghost of Jimmy Keefe" up here. Figured it's time we settled this, once and for all.

Sean looks at the webcam, sees the blue light.

SEAN

So you're recording, like, right now?

Bart doesn't answer; he's adjusting the settings on the laptop.

Sean starts to grin, growing more and more pleased with the idea of his image being captured. He stands a little taller, puffs out his chest, sucks in his gut, all while trying to appear "natural."

SEAN (CONT'D)

Does it record sound, too?

BART

Yeah, so?

SEAN

You should test the levels. I mean, as long as I'm here ...

He CLEARS his throat. Starts to HUM a little ...

SEAN (CONT'D)

(sings)

"It's a hard knock life! For us!  
It's a --"

BART

Come on now! For real?

SEAN

My mom took me to see "Annie" when I was eight. I used to listen to the record over and over, pretend I was an orphan. With a mop. And a spotlight. To this day I remember all the words for "Hard Knock Life" and "Tomorrow."

BART

(sensing what's to come)

No, no, no --

SEAN

(sings his heart out)

"The sun'll come out! Tomorrow!  
Bet your bottom dollar that  
tomorrow --"

BART

Man, you gonna scare the ghost  
away!

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

A different kind of MUSIC: in the back of the parlor, a MAN with a FLUTE plays a SOMBER IRISH DIRGE. A few dozen grieving RELATIVES in black suits wait in line to pay their respects to TOMMY'S FATHER, who lies in an open casket.

TOMMY GAVIN appears in the back. He GRABS THE FLUTE out of the flautist's fingers and CHUCKS IT out the window. It CLANGS against the asphalt outside.

He stays in the back with his arms crossed, watching, keeping to himself.

From the seats in the front, Lou, Franco, Sean and Mike cast glances backward at Tommy.

SEAN

What's the matter with Tommy?

FRANCO  
Grown man with a flute.  
Understandable.

LOU  
(worried)  
No, something's up ...

CHILDREN scamper by, giggling. One of them has a mop of red hair -- for a moment, from Tommy's POV, he's CONNOR, Tommy's dead son. Then the moment passes, and he's just another kid with red hair.

Nearby, a RANDOM COUSIN tells a YOUNG COUPLE how the senior Gavin died (at the end of Season 4).

RANDOM COUSIN  
They were at a Yankee game, sitting in the stands, and the old man's heart just gave out. Tommy thought he fell asleep, but he wasn't sleeping. He was --

TOMMY  
Get out.

Random Cousin turns and notices Tommy right behind him.

RANDOM COUSIN  
Tommy! I was just telling how --

Tommy SHOVES him in the chest.

TOMMY  
I'm serious. Get out.

RANDOM COUSIN  
Why? What'd I --

TOMMY  
"Yankee game"? The Yankees? My dad hated the Yankees. He woulda never given the Yankees the privilege of dying in their stadium.

RANDOM COUSIN  
Just what I heard, Tommy. If it wasn't the Yankees --

TOMMY  
It wasn't the Yankees. It was minor league.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

It was a bunch of nobodies with  
nothin' but love for the game,  
which is something that you and the  
Yankees would never, ever  
understand! Now get your ass outta  
here before I --

Random Cousin and the Young Couple book it out of there.  
Tommy turns and sees the guys watching. They look away as  
Janet approaches.

JANET

People are starting to talk.

TOMMY

About what?

JANET

How come you haven't gone up to say  
bye to Dad.

TOMMY

Let 'em talk. I already said my  
good-byes.

JANET

It would be good for them, for  
everybody, to see you do it here.

TOMMY

What the hell for?

JANET

It's like the passing of a torch.  
You're his eldest son. You're the  
new, what do you call it,  
patriarch.

TOMMY

Is that why they keep lookin' at me  
like that?

JANET

Would you just go? Otherwise,  
it'll haunt you, and you know it.

TOMMY

(stuttering)

Who said anything about haunting?  
Nobody's haunting me. Did somebody  
say something?

Janet GRABS him by the arm and PUSHES him toward the casket.

AT THE FRONT OF THE PARLOR

Tommy approaches and sees his dad lying in peace. He glances back, over his shoulder at everyone watching him.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Show's on, Dad. Let's give 'em  
what they're waiting for.

He takes a good look at his father.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
They put on enough make-up for a  
clown, didn't they. You ready for  
your close-up? This is the part in  
the movie where the son falls down  
to his knees and starts wailing at  
God, blubberin' like some --

And that's when Dad OPENS HIS EYES AND COMES ALIVE.

TOMMY'S DAD  
Hey. Richard Burton. Shut the  
hell up. You're next.

Tommy loses his balance and FALLS to his knees, scared  
shitless, as some of the crowd behind him SOBS, moved by what  
appears to be a son's expression of grief ...

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT ON FIRE - HALLWAY - DAY

The walls are BURNING fast. Tommy looks out of it -- his mind still back at the funeral parlor. He and Franco look on while LOU (aka Lt. Kenny Shea) DRIVES his halligan into the door jamb and tries to PRY it open.

TOMMY'S DAD (V.O.)

*You're next.*

Tommy's eyes widen with fear.

LOU

Tommy! Come on, you're next. I can't get the damn thing open.

Tommy doesn't move. SLOW ZOOM toward the door as the THUNDER of BURNING FIRES GROWS.

LOU (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for? It ain't gonna throw the first punch!

TOMMY

What do we want to open the door for?

LOU

I think there's somebody in there!

TOMMY

You "think"?

LOU

I heard a voice.

FRANCO

I heard it, too.

TOMMY

I don't hear nothin'. Maybe you oughta get your ears checked. Or your heads. First you hear voices, next thing you know, you see people that aren't there, fires that ain't even burning ...

He trails off, realizing he's describing himself.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
 Maybe we should just ...

He tips his head toward the exit.

LOU  
 What the hell is your problem?

TOMMY  
 (defensive)  
 My problem is the fires could be a  
 helluva lot worse behind that door,  
 I could open up a draft that gets  
 us killed -- any number of things!  
 All because you think you heard a  
 voice?

LOU  
 Franco!

FRANCO  
 On it, Lou.

Franco DRIVES his halligan into the door jamb. He puts his weight into it and manages to PRY THE DOOR OPEN!

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Franco and Lou enter to find an OLD MAN lying on the floor, raising his hand toward them, struggling to breathe.

Franco rushes to his assistance. Lou speaks into the two-way radio.

LOU  
 We got one on the fourth floor.  
 No, he's alive.  
 (shoots Tommy a look)  
 Barely.

Off the look of guilt on Tommy's face --

INT. FIREHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The men are gathered around the table, finishing some eggs and bacon.

FRANCO  
 He just stood there. Like he was  
 ... scared.

MIKE  
 No. Tommy?

FRANCO  
That's what I'm saying. Something  
ain't right with him.

Bart enters, carrying a laptop. He opens it up on the table.

LOU  
Cut the man some slack. He just  
lost his father. He's going  
through some shit.

BART  
More than that. Man lost his mojo.

MIKE  
What's a mojo?

SEAN  
It's like a mojito, only bigger.

LOU  
He did not lose any mojo.

BART  
Tommy lost it, and Lou's got it.  
Check this out.

He smiles and swivels the laptop around so the guys can see.  
A video is loading up.

BART (CONT'D)  
I set up my webcam to record the  
ghost of Jimmy Keefe last week.

SEAN  
Oh, yeah! You get anything?

BART  
Nothin' ... 'til around two a.m.

He looks at Lou, who now stops chewing his food.

LOU  
This wasn't last Friday, was it?

BART  
(nods)  
Upstairs, the bunk in the corner.

LOU  
You didn't.

SEAN

Wait, so did you get it or not?

Bart just smiles.

LOU

You did.

The VIDEO finally loads up and starts to PLAY: there's Lou and his pasty white butt on top of a MOANING WOMAN we've never seen before. All the guys WHOOP and APPLAUD.

Lou LUNGES toward the laptop, but Sean holds him back.

LOU (CONT'D)

Gimme that laptop! I mean it!

SEAN

Sorry, Lou. But this is just too good to be true.

LOU

An invasion of privacy is what it is! And all you guys looking at my ass like that -- totally gay!

They're still pointing and LAUGHING at the video, HOWLING like hyenas. But after a while, the laughter DIES DOWN, replaced by a strange, awkward SILENCE.

Meanwhile, the Woman's MOANS grow LOUDER -- she sounds sub-human, like a beast. The smiles are replaced by expressions of confused awe.

FRANCO

Jesus, Mary and Joseph ...

SEAN

How many times in a row is that?

FRANCO

Hard to tell where one ends and the next begins.

MIKE

(genuinely concerned)

Is she gonna be okay?

SEAN

She's more than okay.

Now Lou, on the video, pulls an unseen, unexpected move that causes every man in the room to JUMP back.

FRANCO

Holy ...

MIKE

What did you just ... How did you  
... What do you call that?

BART

(nodding)

Mojo.

SEAN

(hushed)

This is the greatest thing I've  
ever seen in my life.

MIKE

I didn't even know that was  
possible. I feel so stupid ...

Lou is now sitting at the far end of the table.

LOU

Can we please shut it off now?

SEAN

I mean it, Lou. This is like  
pitching a perfect game, this is  
art, this is holy --

TOMMY (O.S.)

Holy!

Tommy has entered the room, unnoticed until now. Lou on  
video has pulled another incredible move, and the Woman, by  
the sounds of it, has entered yet another level of ecstasy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(squinting)

Is that Lou?

CHIEF FEINBERG (O.S.)

Shut that thing off right now.

Chief Feinberg stands at the entrance to the kitchen with his  
arms crossed. Bart quickly shuts the laptop, and the guys  
disperse in every direction.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)

Tommy, can I see you for a sec?

IN THE REC ROOM

Tommy approaches the Chief.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Listen, I heard what happened in  
the fire last night.

TOMMY  
No big deal, Chief. Lou and I just  
had a simple disagreement --

CHIEF FEINBERG  
Look, if you need some more time  
off, to grieve, nobody's gonna hold  
that against you.

TOMMY  
I don't need any time to --

CHIEF FEINBERG  
Your father dies, you're allowed to  
go a little nuts. Just try not to  
do it out there, where lives are at  
stake, you know what I'm saying?

TOMMY  
Chief, I appreciate the concern,  
but --

CHIEF FEINBERG  
Just think about it.

Chief Feinberg walks back toward his office, leaving Tommy  
alone with his thoughts.

TOMMY  
(mutters)  
"Nuts" ...

Tommy walks out the door. The coast is clear, so the guys  
scurry back to the laptop. As the MOANS begin to play again--

INT. JANET'S HOUSE - DAY

Janet's in the kitchen, slicing vegetables. Tommy enters,  
carrying a cardboard box. He looks a little out of sorts.

JANET  
Tommy?

TOMMY

You know you left the door open? I realize this is a pretty safe neighborhood, but you really oughta, you know --

JANET

What are you doing here?

TOMMY

(re: the box)

Just some things that Dad wanted you to have.

JANET

(disarmed)

Oh.

TOMMY

You cooking dinner?

JANET

Bob's on his way home.

TOMMY

Right.

(awkward pause)

So you promise you'll lock the door from now on?

JANET

Cross my heart, hope to die.

TOMMY

Well, don't say that. What's the matter with you, in front of the baby and everything ...

Tommy kneels down to BABY WYATT, who is cooing in a bouncer on the floor, by the kitchen.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Come here, you.

He picks up Wyatt in his arms and rocks him back and forth. Janet looks at him for a moment.

JANET

You all right?

Tommy doesn't answer. He's too busy cooing at his baby boy.

JANET (CONT'D)

Tommy?

TOMMY

Go ahead, open it.

Janet reaches into the box and pulls out an antique tea set with a floral pattern on it. Tommy smiles, recognizing it.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

It was my mother's. He woulda given it to my sister, but all she wants is a shot glass.

JANET

It's beautiful.

TOMMY

Just be careful with it. You never know with these old things, with the lead and the mercury.

Janet laughs, but not Tommy.

JANET

You're serious.

TOMMY

It's just, you know, a stupid way to lose you -- lose anybody -- over a stupid teacup.

The look on Janet's face tells us that now she knows, something is definitely up with Tommy. He avoids her gaze.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

What else is there?

She reaches in and this time pulls out a small, navy blue, double-breasted suit with gold buttons. Not for a man but a little boy. A receipt falls from it, and Tommy catches it.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(reading the receipt)

He bought it the day before Connor died. I remember he mentioned how shabby Connor's suit looked at Uncle Eddie's funeral. I didn't think he'd actually do something about it ...

Tears come to Janet's eyes.

JANET

It'll be two years this March.

TOMMY

What do you want to do this year?  
You want to spend it alone again,  
or ...

JANET

Or what?

TOMMY

If you want to spend it together,  
as a family, I'd be up for that.  
And if Bob wants to be there, too,  
just so long as he keeps his mouth  
shut and stays outta my way ...

JANET

What would we do?

TOMMY

I ... I think we just say a prayer  
and remember him, as he was. I  
don't know, what would Connor want  
us to do?

JANET

(laughing through tears)  
He'd probably want us to have cake.

Tommy smiles. An unexpectedly intimate moment between them,  
as Tommy rocks Wyatt in his arms.

EXT. JANET'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy hands Wyatt back to Janet. He looks so reluctant, so  
worried for the child's well-being.

TOMMY

So I guess I'll see ya ...

He starts to walk down the driveway but stops when he notices  
something in Janet's sedan.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Who installed this carseat?

JANET

Bob. Why?

TOMMY

He strapped it in the old way,  
using the seatbelt. Doesn't he  
know how to use the LATCH system?

JANET

It's fine, Tommy.

TOMMY

No, it's not fine. It is not fine!

He opens the door, grasps the carseat and JIGGLES it.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

See that? That's an accident  
waiting to happen. I'm redoing it.

As he starts to uninstall the carseat --

JANET

You don't have to do that.

TOMMY

Yes, I do. I have to do everything  
I can, or else ...

He trails off and reinstalls the carseat using the LATCH  
anchors underneath the rear seat cushion. He sticks his knee  
into the carseat and YANKS the straps almost violently to  
tighten them.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

There.

He tries to jiggle the carseat, but this time it won't budge.  
He shuts the car door and turns to Janet.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry if I got a little--

JANET

(amazed at the apology)  
You are?

TOMMY

Bob's way isn't wrong. It just  
isn't the safest. This is.

Janet just stares at him for a beat.

JANET

Seriously, what's gotten into you?

TOMMY  
(kisses the baby)  
Take care, you two.

He walks away, leaving his wife confused but pleased.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Franco and Sean knock on the open door and enter.

FRANCO  
Chief, you wanted to see us?

CHIEF FEINBERG  
I got a call from my sister, who works for the mayor's P.R. department. They're getting a lot of heat about all the drunk driving lately.

SEAN  
What's that got to do with us?

CHIEF FEINBERG  
They want to shoot a public service announcement with a couple of real, live firefighters. And I thought --

FRANCO  
No, no, no --

CHIEF FEINBERG  
She wants the two prettiest boys on my squad.

SEAN  
Appreciate the compliment, Chief, but what about Tommy? I mean, he's got that long blonde hair -- talk about pretty. Or Mike; he's not that tall but he's friggin' ripped.

Franco and the Chief stare at him for a beat.

FRANCO  
You can't do this to us, Chief. PSAs are stupid. Joey D. in Ladder 14 did one five years ago, and he's still gettin' shit for it!

CHIEF FEINBERG

(unfazed)

They start shooting tomorrow, eight  
a.m. Make us proud.

Just then the ALARM SOUNDS, and the guys start to go.

SEAN

(to Franco)

We're prettier than Joey D., right?

EXT. HENRY HUDSON HIGHWAY - NIGHT

An awful car wreck. One car has smashed into the divider. The other car is upside-down and ON FIRE. On the curb, PARAMEDICS help a BOY, 15, with minor scratches, as he struggles to breathe into an oxygen mask and watches.

Lou, Sean and Franco try frantically to PRY open the driver's side door. Franco wields a slim-jim and WEDGES it in, under the window.

Inside, a LARGE WOMAN, 35, is behind the wheel, fading in and out of consciousness.

SEAN

Would you hurry it up, Franco?  
This thing's gonna blow any second!

FRANCO

Stop rushing me! The door's all  
busted, it's tricky!

LOU

It's been like five minutes! What  
kind of Puerto Rican are you?

FRANCO

Why don't you try it, you fat-ass  
mick?

Tommy stands at a distance, watching them work. He finds himself paralyzed again by an unfamiliar fear.

CHIEF FEINBERG

Gavin, what the hell are you doing  
back here?

Tommy takes a few steps forward, but then stops.

POV ZOOM INTO the burning fires, the dying woman. The fire ROARS louder and louder.

TOMMY'S DAD (V.O.)  
*You're next.*

Tommy snaps out of it -- who said that?

CHIEF FEINBERG  
 Come on, Gavin! You're next! Get  
 in there!

TOMMY  
 (weakly)  
 Sean'll do it.

CHIEF FEINBERG  
 Sean still thinks a slim-jim is  
 something you eat.

Tommy takes a small step forward, but no further.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)  
 Tommy!

Chief Feinberg **SHOVES** him in the back.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)  
 What's the matter with you? They  
 need you in there!

TOMMY  
 (softly)  
 My daughters need me. My son --

CHIEF FEINBERG  
 That's it! You're done!

Tommy turns to him, not understanding.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)  
 Go home, Gavin. You're suspended  
 until further notice.

A beat for this to sink in, and then **BOOM!** The car **EXPLODES**,  
 and its fires light up the night sky.

The other guys come running, carrying the Large Woman, barely  
 making it to safety.

On Tommy, watching the car **BURN** ...

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. FIREHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sean, Mike and Lou are gathered around the laptop again, analyzing the sex tape as if it were a football game.

Franco sits behind them, sipping coffee, pretending not to be interested. Bart enters and grabs a mug of his own.

SEAN

(to Lou)

See, now, what are you doing here?  
Look at her toes, they're curling  
up like cinnamon rolls.

Stay on Franco and Bart --

BART

Hear Tommy got suspended?

FRANCO

Ain't the first time.

BART

He's comin' back, right?

FRANCO

Maybe not. Boys up top are pretty  
fed up with T. Chief's makin'  
waves with H.R. about gettin' Tommy  
shit-canned.

BART

Shit.

(then, shaking his head)

Look at these white boys. Lookin'  
like they studyin' for a mid-term  
or some shit.

PAN to the guys studying the video on the laptop.

MIKE

My buddy in college said you're  
supposed to lick the alphabet.

LOU

(offended)

No. No!

He grabs the mouse, and now he's like John Madden, drawing  
WHITE X'S AND O'S on key spots on the laptop screen ...

LOU (CONT'D)

It's like playing an instrument.  
To make it sing, you have to  
listen. You have to feel. Here,  
here and here. Try different  
moves. Does her breathing change?  
Does her chest rise? Do her hips  
move? It's like any other  
communication from a woman: she's  
telling you exactly what to do  
without actually telling you.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Kenny!

Standing at the doorway is MARGARET, the woman in the video --  
40 and always in a hurry, trying to make up for wasted years.

Fearing that they've been caught, Bart shuts the laptop, and  
the boys stand in a row, forming a soccer wall to shield it.  
Margaret grabs Lou's hand and pulls him away.

MARGARET

Come on.

LOU

Now? I'm at work.

MARGARET

I can't wait.

She drags Lou off. The guys can hardly believe it.

FRANCO

Who knew?

BART

Seriously.

SEAN

I want to be, like, his apprentice  
or something.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

Lou finally forces Margaret to stop.

LOU

Margaret! What's going on?

MARGARET

It didn't work... I'm not pregnant.

LOU  
 (crestfallen)  
 Damn. I was so sure this time...

MARGARET  
 I know.

He leans against the wall, taking this in.

LOU  
 This morning, at the subway station, I helped a lady carry her stroller up the stairs. Beautiful little girl. Cheeks like marshmallows. Anyway, we get to the sidewalk, and I can't let the damn thing go.

MARGARET  
 No ...

LOU  
 Lady started freaking out, called me a molester. I'm like, lady, haven't you ever seen a man who just wants a -- wants a --

He gets too choked up to say "baby." Then Franco comes out.

FRANCO  
 What's the matter with you?

LOU  
 Just -- just thinkin' about Buckner in '86, Game 6, tenth inning --

FRANCO  
 Curse was lifted like four years ago, Lou. Get over it already.

Franco walks down the street, shaking his head.

LOU  
 Nobody understands ... the clock ticks for guys, too, you know.

MARGARET  
 I know. Sorry I got your hopes up. It was stupid of me to think, just because it happened for us once, twenty years ago, it could happen again, and I could prove all the doctors wrong --

LOU  
It wasn't stupid. You never know.

MARGARET  
(tearing up)  
I know now. I should've kept the  
baby when I had the chance --

LOU  
Don't. Don't do that. Come on.

He puts his arm around her to comfort her.

MARGARET  
You don't have to do that.

LOU  
I know.

MARGARET  
Waiting all these years for a  
husband is what cost me the chance  
for a baby.

LOU  
You still have a chance. We still  
have a chance.

Just then, Tommy arrives. He steps out of his truck and  
approaches them.

LOU (CONT'D)  
What are you doing here?

TOMMY  
Just gotta grab some things outta  
my locker. First my wife throws me  
out, now the chief -- both of 'em  
have all my crap! How'm I supposed  
to shave without my shaving cream,  
shit without my fiber pills --  
(to Margaret)  
Excuse me, hi.

LOU  
Tommy, this is Margaret. We used  
to go out, back when I was a  
probie. Turns out we order take-  
out from the same Chinese place.

MARGARET

(to Tommy)

Why are you looking at me like that?

TOMMY

(smiling, recognizing her)

Like what?

MARGARET

Whatever. Come by after work, Kenny. Don't be late.

She walks away.

TOMMY

What's the story there?

LOU

Got her pregnant when we were kids. She got rid of it, didn't want to be a mother then.

TOMMY

And now?

LOU

Now we have something in common: we're tired of waiting for the stars to align just to make a baby.

TOMMY

You gonna marry her?

LOU

She resents the whole institution.

TOMMY

So are you like a hired stud --

LOU

I'm the father! We're gonna raise the kid together, but live apart.

TOMMY

So you're skipping the marriage and going straight to divorce.

As Lou processes this thought, they turn and see the Chief standing guard at the entrance to the firehouse.

CHIEF FEINBERG

If you're thinking of stepping  
inside ... don't.

TOMMY

I'm just gonna pick up some of my  
shit. You got a problem with that?

CHIEF FEINBERG

I do.

Tommy steps closer.

TOMMY

I got rights, you know. My shit,  
my property.

CHIEF FEINBERG

My firehouse.

TOMMY

Who's gonna stop me?

The Boy from the car fire approaches on a bicycle, looking none too happy. Seeing hockey equipment near the firehouse entrance, he hops off the bike, picks up a hockey stick -- and without warning SMACKS Tommy in the gut with it.

LOU

Whoa, whoa, whoa --

TOMMY

Hey! That's my stick!

BOY

Are you Tommy?

LOU

You didn't think to ask him that  
before you hit him?

BOY

My mom -- it was my mom in that car  
last night. They pulled me out  
through the window, but my mom --  
she's kinda heavysset.

LOU

Tell me about it. I carried her.

The boy raises the stick again.

CHIEF FEINBERG  
Your mom survived, didn't she?

BOY  
She's still in the hospital. She  
breathed in too much smoke. You  
pulled her out too late!

Tears of anger fill his eyes.

CHIEF FEINBERG  
We did everything we could, son.

BOY  
(points at Tommy)  
Not him. He didn't do shit. I saw  
you yell at him for just standing  
there. You called him "Tommy."

Tommy doesn't know what to say. The boy approaches him  
aggressively.

BOY (CONT'D)  
That was you, wasn't it?

TOMMY  
(softly)  
I'm sorry, kid ...

CHIEF FEINBERG  
Why don't you take it easy, son --

The boy SWINGS the stick around, forcing the Chief to step  
back. Lou steps in, but the next swing catches his fingers --

LOU  
Shit!

BOY  
My mom could die because of you.  
Why didn't you do anything?

LOU  
Give me the stick, kid!

He SMACKS Tommy's neck. Tommy falls to his knees, in pain.  
When he looks up, the boy TURNS INTO CONNOR, his dead son.

CONNOR  
Why didn't you do anything?

TOMMY'S POV -- The hockey stick SMASHES against his face.

SMASH TO BLACK

EXT. STREET - DAY

A SMALL FILM CREW surrounds a smoking car that has apparently crashed into a minivan.

Sean and Franco stand behind the camera, munching on breakfast burritos from craft services. They watch an actor, GEORGE, 30, who wears fake blood and sits behind the wheel.

GEORGE  
(crying)  
What have I done?

George reaches over to the glove compartment -- and pulls out a bottle of "John" Daniels.

SEAN  
(to Franco)  
Doesn't look so hard, right?

WOMAN  
Cut!

The director, HEIDI, 35, turns in her chair.

HEIDI  
Anybody seen my firefighters?

Franco and Sean give her the chin-nod, still eating.

SEAN  
These are really good, by the way.  
You got any salsa?

A LITTLE LATER

On a fire truck with swirling lights. Sean and Franco rush out of the truck and survey the scene of the accident.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Not again! Another drunk driver  
who didn't stop to think!

Sean's a natural. He turns to Franco, who finds himself staring blankly at the camera.

SEAN (CONT'D)  
Dude.

HEIDI

Cut!

BLACK SCREEN. A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT SMACKS the marker shut. Sean and Franco are back in the same position.

SEAN

(with Shakespearean anger)  
Not again! Another drunk driver  
who didn't stop to think!

He turns to Franco, who opens his mouth to speak but nothing comes out.

SEAN (CONT'D)

(ventriloquizing)  
Good thing we're here! Otherwise --

FRANCO

(stammers)  
I -- I coulda died and shit! Shit.

HEIDI

Cut!

AT THE CRAFT SERVICES TABLE - LATER

Franco sits on a crate with a towel over his head. Sean approaches him.

FRANCO

Don't touch me, don't talk to me.  
This isn't me.

George comes up to Sean, pats him on the back.

GEORGE

That was awesome, man.

SEAN

Yeah? It felt good -- what a rush!

GEORGE

You ever take acting classes?

SEAN

In fourth grade, we did Annie the  
musical. I played Annie.

GEORGE

No shit. With the red wig and  
everything?

SEAN  
 Yeah. Beat out all the girls.  
 Don't tell anybody ...  
 (whispers)  
 ... but it was awesome.

GEORGE  
 You should come to class with me  
 some time.

SEAN  
 I don't know, man. I'm just a  
 firefighter ...

George is pulled away by a MAKE-UP ASSISTANT.

GEORGE  
 Think about it!

On Sean: he will ...

INT. MARGARET'S APARTMENT - DAY

Margaret is reclining in a chaise lounge, and her sweats are pulled down, exposing her left hip. Tense, with nervous anticipation.

MARGARET  
 Okay, I'm ready.

Lou kneels beside her.

LOU  
 Just relax.

He takes a LARGE NEEDLE and injects her hip with an ease and efficiency that comes with practice.

MARGARET  
 Thank you. I feel fertile already.  
 I feel --

She THROWS UP. It's all over her shirt, the floor ... Lou covers his mouth and tries not to retch.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
 What? You know it gives me nausea!

LOU  
 Maybe you should go lie down.

MARGARET

No, there's no time to waste. Time is our enemy, Kenny. Hurry up and get your pants off.

She approaches him, and he backs away.

LOU

Oh God, is that General Tso's chicken?

MARGARET

You were late, and I got hungry!

She brushes the chicken bits off her shirt.

LOU

I can never eat there again.

MARGARET

I'll make it up to you.

She approaches him again, this time more seductively.

LOU

I can still see the chicken.

She sighs. Starts to unbutton her shirt. Slows down to sex it up a little.

LOU (CONT'D)

It's still in your hair.

MARGARET

Kenny! We're doing this! Now just -- just --

She's so frustrated and hormonal, she starts to cry.

LOU

All right, all right. Stop that. Let me just ... why don't we move to the bedroom? Come on.

He takes her by the hand, and she goes along with it. As they walk together down the dim hallway --

LOU (CONT'D)

Or maybe the shower?

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY (DREAM)

The field where Tommy's dad died. Tommy peels and eats peanuts as he watches a BATTER come to the plate. He takes a closer look, and the batter turns out to be his Dad.

Dad, like Babe Ruth, makes a grand gesture of pointing at a spot in center field, where he's going to hit a home run. Then slowly turns and turns ... until his finger is pointing STRAIGHT AT TOMMY.

TOMMY'S DAD

*You're next.*

Tommy CHOKES on his peanuts and COUGHS violently --

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy wakes up in a hospital bed, COUGHING. He's got bandages on his head. Janet and Colleen come to his side.

COLLEEN

About time, Dad.

TOMMY

What are you doing here?

JANET

I'm still listed as your emergency contact. What happened to you?

TOMMY

I got in a fight with a ... I got in a fight.

JANET

What else is new.

TOMMY

It wasn't my fault. The kid -- the guy -- was out of control --

JANET

Whatever.

TOMMY

I didn't fight the guy, Janet. He fought me. He hit me, but I didn't hit back, I swear.

JANET

Why not?

TOMMY  
I ... I don't know.

JANET  
Doesn't sound like you.

TOMMY  
I know.

Janet looks almost pleased. Tommy, less so. He notices that she and Colleen are both dressed up.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
How come you look all fancy?

JANET  
I'm supposed to meet Bob at a company party, and Colleen has a date, but if you need us --

TOMMY  
All I need is to get out of this dump. It's makin' my head hurt.

JANET  
Maybe you should wait. The doctor said something about an MRI --

He's already out of bed, buttoning his shirt.

TOMMY  
Yadda yadda. You comin' with?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Tommy, Janet and Colleen wait for the light to cross the street. The "Walk" light comes on, and just as they step off the curb, a taxicab ZOOMS by.

ALL THREE GAVINS  
(overlapping)  
Son of a bitch! / Watch where the hell you're going! / Asshole!

As they resume crossing the street, Tommy reaches out and HOLDS COLLEEN'S HAND. Immediately, she pulls away.

COLLEEN  
Dad. I'm eighteen.

TOMMY  
So?

COLLEEN

I can cross the street by myself.

TOMMY

I know you can. And I know that cabbie can stop at a red light like he's supposed to. And I know that every other fight I've ever been in, the other guy landed in the hospital, not me! But things happen. For no good reason. And all we can do to keep them from happening is ...

He reaches out his hand. Colleen looks up at this strange man who otherwise resembles her father.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Just this once, all right? Give your dad a break.

She holds his hand.

COLLEEN

Just this once.

They cross the street together. Midway across, without Colleen noticing, Janet holds Tommy's other hand, and neither one says a word about it.

EXT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Tommy steps out of the car, and Janet follows. Colleen stays behind the wheel.

COLLEEN

(out the window)

I'm already late, Mom.

JANET

I'll just be a minute.

COLLEEN

One minute, and I'm leaving, I'm serious.

Janet catches up with Tommy.

TOMMY

You don't have to walk me to the door. I'm all right.

JANET

Are you? I talked to the Chief  
while you were out.

(whispers)

He said you got suspended?

TOMMY

Great. What else he tell you?

JANET

That you've been freezing up on the  
job, that --

TOMMY

Jesus.

JANET

What's going on with you, Tommy?

Tommy doesn't answer. Colleen HONKS the horn.

JANET (CONT'D)

Ever since the funeral, something's  
been off about you. That day you  
brought your Dad's things over ...  
you held Wyatt in your arms like  
you were afraid to put him down.  
Then, you jammed that carseat in so  
tight, I'll never be able to get it  
out. And then today, you held  
Colleen's hand...?

TOMMY

And you're complaining?

JANET

No. The opposite. All I'm saying  
is ... whatever is going on with  
you, maybe it's not such a terrible  
thing.

A moment of stillness between husband and wife. Then Colleen  
ROARS OFF in an impetuous, teenage blaze.

JANET (CONT'D)

Colleen!

TOMMY

She did say one minute. Come on,  
I'll get my keys.

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They step into the dark apartment. Tommy flicks on the lamp, but it SPARKS and BLOWS.

TOMMY  
Shit. I'm sorry.

He reaches past her and turns another switch.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
It's one of those fluorescent things, takes like five minutes just to --

JANET  
(quietly)  
Don't worry about it.

She kisses him. And their chemistry, which has never diminished, takes over.

TOMMY  
What about Bob?

JANET  
Shhh.

Another kiss, his hands now on her hips.

TOMMY  
Are you sure?

JANET  
I don't know. You gonna hurt me this time?

TOMMY  
I hurt you every time. I tell you I've changed, but I never do.

JANET  
Only this time, you haven't told me. You just have.

They continue to kiss. They don't notice when the lights above the kitchen FLICKER and TURN ON and BACK OFF.

On Tommy, over Janet's shoulder, with a dark look in his eyes -- has he really changed?

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. MALL - DAY

Tommy follows KATY, his youngest daughter (around 12) as she wanders past racks and racks of formal dresses.

TOMMY  
(holding one up)  
What's wrong with this one?

KATY  
It's too poofy.

TOMMY  
What about the last one? That  
wasn't too --

KATY  
You can't rush it, Daddy. You have  
to wait for the right one. That's  
the whole idea, remember?

Obviously, he has no idea what she's talking about.

KATY (CONT'D)  
Didn't Mom tell you what this is  
for?

TOMMY  
A couple times probably.

KATY  
My friend Wanda, every year her  
church throws this formal --

TOMMY  
Church? What kind of church?

KATY  
They're Baptists.

TOMMY  
Honey, we're Catholic.

KATY  
You haven't heard what kind of  
formal it is. Girls my age go with  
their fathers and take a vow of  
chastity until marriage. It's  
called a "purity ball."

This gives Tommy pause.

TOMMY  
Chastity, huh. Well, I'm all for  
that.

KATY  
(teasing)  
But you said we're not Baptists.

TOMMY  
Well, maybe we oughta convert.

Katy picks up a lovely white dress and holds it in front of  
her. Looks at herself in a mirror.

KATY  
This one.

Tommy looks over her shoulder at the dress in the mirror: it  
was worth the wait.

KATY (CONT'D)  
I did mention that this is a father-  
daughter thing, right? If you're  
too busy, I can ask Bob.

TOMMY  
No way.

KATY  
What if there's a fire?

TOMMY  
I won't be there. I'll be with  
you.

Katy looks up at him. She's not used to this.

KATY  
You're being weird.

She smiles and takes the dress to the fitting room. Tommy's  
cell phone RINGS. He answers it.

TOMMY  
(into phone)  
What? You're where?

INT. MATERNITY WARD - DAY

Swaddled BABIES, exhausted MOTHERS and NURSES in scrubs everywhere. Tommy wanders in search of someone. He approaches a PRETTY NURSE.

TOMMY

I'm looking for a friend of mine.  
Kinda tubby, with a moustache,  
looks like one of the Mario  
Brothers?

The Nurse points to LOU, who is standing at a window, looking lost. Tommy walks up to him.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Lou? What are you doing here?

LOU

Margaret and I had an appointment  
with a fertility specialist. He  
was running through all these  
options: in vitro fertilization,  
intrauterine insemination,  
ovulation induction ... I don't  
even know what that means, but I  
felt my heart racing, sweat running  
down my pits ...

TOMMY

Can't blame you.

LOU

And all I kept thinking was, we're  
not married. We have great sex  
every twenty years and happen to  
want a baby before we get too old.  
That's it.

TOMMY

So ...

LOU

So I ran out of there. Didn't even  
say goodbye. I kept running until  
I ended up here.

They look at the newborns in the next room.

TOMMY

You're not thinking of stealing  
one, are you?

LOU  
Tempted. Look how young the moms  
are. And some of them are with  
guys that aren't much younger than  
I am.

TOMMY  
Forget the baby, steal a mom.

LOU  
I'm not talking about pussy, Tommy.  
I'm just saying, I look in that  
room, and I'm not seein' a whole  
lot of women Margaret's age.  
Margaret's great, but maybe ...

TOMMY  
Maybe she's too old to have a baby.

Lou does not respond.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
Can't even say it, can you.

LOU  
I feel like such an asshole.

Tommy leans in, closer to Lou.

TOMMY  
Be an asshole, Lou. I'm serious.  
She'll hate you for a day, maybe a  
week, but she'll thank you later.  
You think you're doing her a favor,  
but really, you're standing in the  
way between her and a better man.

LOU  
(sarcastic)  
Thanks, Tommy.

TOMMY  
Accept it, commit to it, and don't  
apologize for it. Take it from me.

Lou looks through the window at all the young moms and their  
older husbands. He knows what he must do.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Tommy and Lou step out and light up cigarettes. PREGNANT  
WOMEN and NEW MOTHERS walk quickly past, annoyed by the  
smoke.

LOU  
How's Janet taking the whole  
suspension thing?

TOMMY  
Great. Had sex with her just last  
night.

LOU  
What about that real estate  
asshole?

TOMMY  
She's thinking of leaving him.

LOU  
For you?

TOMMY  
I know. She says I'm ...  
different. I've changed.

LOU  
Of course you have. Your father  
dies, now you're the oldest of the  
clan. Thing like that gives you  
perspective.

TOMMY  
On what?

LOU  
That you don't want to die. You  
don't want to lose what you got: a  
wife, two girls, a baby boy. They  
matter more. And she can probably  
see that.

TOMMY  
What if there's a trade-off? What  
makes me better at home, makes me a  
shitty firefighter.

Lou tilts his head as he contemplates the thought, which  
offends Tommy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
You're supposed to jump in now and  
say, "No, Tommy, you're not a  
shitty firefighter, you're the best  
there is."

LOU  
Tommy, I was there. At the door to  
that old guy's apartment, at the  
car fire --

TOMMY  
What are you saying?

LOU  
I'm saying, maybe you've lost that  
edge that you once had.

TOMMY  
I haven't lost anything! And if I  
have, I'll get it back!

LOU  
Why bother? You've got nothing  
left to prove. You're already one  
of the legends.  
(leans in closer)  
You've got your family back.  
What's more important?

TOMMY  
Why can't I have both?

On Tommy searching for an answer --

EXT. ROAD - DAY

On the set of the PSA shoot. Two TEENS wearing fake blood  
are carried on stretchers toward an ambulance as George is  
handcuffed and forced into a police car.

Sean turns dramatically toward the camera.

SEAN  
(brooding)  
Don't let this happen to you. Call  
a cab. Use a designated driver.  
Be a designated driver.

FRANCO  
Don't drive and drink!

HEIDI  
Cut!

BLACK SCREEN. The Production Assistant SLAMS the marker:  
another take.

SEAN  
 (pleading desperately)  
 Don't let this happen to you. Call  
 a cab. Use a designated driver --

FRANCO  
 Don't think and drive! Shit.

BLACK SCREEN. The marker SLAMS shut again: take three.

SEAN  
 (crying)  
 Don't let this happen to you --

FRANCO  
 Drive! Without drinking! Goddamn  
 it!

INT. GEORGE'S CAR - DAY

Franco and Heidi sit in "George's" car.

HEIDI  
 What if I give Sean all your lines?  
 You just have to stand there and --

FRANCO  
 Don't make me look like an idiot.  
 Next to Sean of all people.  
 Please, I can do this.

HEIDI  
 Well, what's stopping you?

FRANCO  
 I don't know! I never get nervous,  
 I never doubt myself except ... I  
 mean, my girlfriend is in Chicago  
 and thinking about leaving me --

HEIDI  
 Oh, my God. I so don't give a  
 shit. Just get it together, all  
 right? Whatever it takes!

She steps out of the car and SHUTS the door, leaving Franco  
 alone. He sighs.

He looks over at the glove compartment. Opens it. Pulls out  
 the bottle of "John Daniels" we saw before. He twists open  
 the bottle and smells it: holy shit, it's real.

FRANCO  
Whatever it takes ...

He takes a drink. And doesn't stop ...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sean and Franco are back in their positions, performing the same scene. Sean notices Franco swaying a bit as he stands.

SEAN  
You all right?

FRANCO  
Pshhh!

HEIDI  
Okay, from the top! Action!

FRANCO  
(too loud)  
Don't let this happen to you!

SEAN  
Dude, that's my line.

Franco looks incredulous.

FRANCO  
You crazy.

SEAN  
(sniffing him, fondly)  
God, you smell like Maggie.

FRANCO  
Smell this.

Franco grabs his crotch and in the process loses his balance -  
- both men tip over and fall to the ground. Franco passes  
out. Sean is stuck under him.

SEAN  
Uh, don't drink and drive?

EXT. TOMMY'S TRUCK - DAY

Tommy is driving along when the ghost of his father appears  
in the passenger seat.

TOMMY  
(without looking)  
Don't even start, Jimmy.

TOMMY'S DAD  
Jimmy never looked this good.

Tommy almost jumps out of his seat.

TOMMY  
Jesus, Dad! I thought you were --

TOMMY'S DAD  
I gave him the day off. Where're  
we headed?

TOMMY  
I ... I was going to Janet's.

TOMMY'S DAD  
This isn't the way to Janet's.

TOMMY  
(lying)  
I'm taking the scenic route.

TOMMY'S DAD  
Why don't you just admit you don't  
want to go over there?

TOMMY  
I am going there, and I'm gonna  
tell her --

TOMMY'S DAD  
Tell her what?

TOMMY  
(pause)  
I need to be with my family. I  
need to be with my wife. And I'm  
gonna.

TOMMY'S DAD  
All day? Why?

TOMMY  
Because ... because you're dead and  
I'm next.

TOMMY'S DAD  
(shakes his head)  
We're all next, Tommy.

TOMMY  
No, you said "you." "You're next."

TOMMY'S DAD

Whadda you, my grammar teacher? I meant you included. We're all next. Not all at once. You could be first in line, could be a million and first.

TOMMY

Well, which is it?

TOMMY'S DAD

Not for me to say.

Tommy stops his truck at the light. Turns to his side, ready to yell something, but now his dad is GONE. Great.

The light turns green, but Tommy's car doesn't move. Car horns HONK behind him. The SIGN ahead indicates that the Queens Midtown Expressway is to the right.

CLOSE on the look in Tommy's eyes, hardening with resolve.

He steps on the gas and makes a left turn from the right lane, causing other cars to swerve and skid around him.

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Tommy knocks on the open door to the Chief's office.

CHIEF FEINBERG

Until further notice, Tommy. That means --

TOMMY

I know I screwed up before.

CHIEF FEINBERG

Which time?

TOMMY

I'm telling you, Chief, I'm ready now.

The Chief sighs.

CHIEF FEINBERG

I've seen this happen before, Tommy. To the best of 'em.

TOMMY

Seen what?

CHIEF FEINBERG

Once you lose it, you lose it for good.

TOMMY

(shakes head)

No, no, this is temporary -- was. I've been fighting fires more than twenty years. Stories about the lives I saved have been passed down to the younger guys for years. Probies can't even look me in the eye, they worship me so much. Don't let it all end like this. I don't want to go out like -- like --

CHIEF FEINBERG

-- a coward.

Tommy gets fired up now.

TOMMY

I've put my life into this fire department. My whole life. I brought you respect. I brought you glory. There's goodwill here. This fire department owes me another chance. You owe me.

CHIEF FEINBERG

Why don't you go back to your family, Gavin. They need you more than we do.

TOMMY

Too late. I've done more damage to my kids than I can ever fix. If they ever amount to anything, it won't be because of me. It'll be in spite of me. But this ... I can fix this. This is my legacy we're talking about. It's the only thing I haven't ruined. Just give me a chance, Chief. Give me a chance.

CHIEF FEINBERG

(shaking his head)

I'm sorry, Tommy.

EXT. FIREHOUSE - DAY

Tommy storms out of there, carrying his uniform and his gear over his shoulder. Lou and some of the other guys are outside, smoking.

LOU

Tommy!

Tommy pulls Lou aside.

TOMMY

(whispers)

Next time there's a fire, call me.

LOU

What are you thinking?

But Tommy's already getting into his car, driving off.

LOU (CONT'D)

Tommy?

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. FIREHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Still obsessed with the sex tape, Sean and Mike stare with wonder at the laptop screen. Franco and Bart stand back, pretending to be less interested. Lou sits at the opposite end of the table, clipping the tip off a cigar.

BART  
Whatever happened with that PSA?

FRANCO  
They cut all my lines. Cropped me out of every shot.

BART  
Damn. You all right with that?

FRANCO  
(all bluster)  
Proof that I'm no drama fag? I'll take it. Director chick's kinda pissed, though. Promised I'd make it up to her. Hopin' Lou can show me how.

SEAN  
We'll never be able to do that. Let's just face it.

FRANCO  
Speak for yourself, pal.

Bart and Franco high five.

SEAN  
Oh, like you could?

FRANCO  
I'd have to stop for a sandwich --

BART  
-- maybe a nap --

MIKE  
You guys are kidding yourselves. You're right, Sean. It's hopeless.

LOU  
It's not hopeless.

Lou lights his cigar. Puffs on it.

LOU (CONT'D)

You just have to change your approach... Great sex is like great jazz. Improvisational, playful. And every once in a while, you develop a riff that just grows and grows, and you keep raising the intensity, the tension, until time stops and all anybody can do is wait and hope and ache for some kind of release.

A beat while the boys struggle to wrap their heads around what Lou is saying. Lou smokes his cigar.

SEAN

But we don't like jazz.

MIKE

Yeah, we like hip-hop.

LOU

(thinks)

Well, then you're screwed.

The ALARM SOUNDS. Everybody springs into action. On his way, Lou pulls out his cell phone and dials.

EXT. TOMMY'S TRUCK - DAY

Tommy answers his cell phone.

TOMMY

I'm on my way.

He pulls his truck around in an illegal U-turn.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - DAY

The guys are sitting in the truck, in full gear, on their way to the fire. The SIREN BLARES.

EXT. TOMMY'S TRUCK - DAY

Tommy reaches into the backseat, while driving, and grabs something. Pulls out his fireman's jacket. Starts to put it on one-handed.

EXT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A LARGE CROWD watches as fires blaze through most of the apartments around the 10th floor. A WOMAN, 25, SCREAMS from her window until she chokes on the black smoke.

The boys step out of the truck, and move into action.

FURTHER BACK

Tommy parks his truck and steps out, wearing his firefighter's gear. He sees Chief Feinberg directing some of the men to take the stairs, others to work the aerial ladder.

Tommy makes his way forward, waiting for the opportunity to jump in.

The crowd GASPS. With the fire now growing around her, the Woman at the window on the 10th floor steps out ON THE LEDGE -  
- and she's carrying a TODDLER in her arms.

Sean operates the hydraulic controls for the aerial ladder while Lou and Mike ride the platform bucket. They see Tommy approaching while the Chief's back is turned.

LOU  
(to Mike)  
Go join the others. I got this.

MIKE  
I don't know, Lou ...

Tommy approaches the bucket.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Dude, you're not supposed to be here.

LOU  
It's okay, Mike. I'll take the heat.

Mike reluctantly hops down and joins the other crew entering the building. Tommy climbs into the bucket.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Welcome aboard.

Sean pulls a lever and the ladder starts to RISE and telescope upward.

LOU (CONT'D)

Some nutjob on the tenth floor.  
He's about to lose his condo in a  
divorce, but doesn't want to give  
his wife the satisfaction. So he  
fills it up with gas from the stove  
and lights a match. Sets the whole  
building on fire.

The ladder suddenly SLOWS DOWN ... then comes to a complete  
STOP.

LOU (CONT'D)

(into two-way radio)  
Garrity, what the hell did you do?

SEAN

It wasn't me, I swear!

The hydraulic components of the ladder make noises like  
Godzilla as it struggles to rise. The bucket trembles but  
will go no higher. Seventy feet up, thirty to go.

INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Meanwhile, Franco, Mike and Bart climb the smoke-filled  
stairs. Charred pieces of the building fall toward them.

FRANCO

Heads up!

They barely manage to dodge them in time. Not making much  
progress.

EXT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The ladder remains stuck, amid hydraulic SCREAMS. Lou and  
Tommy look up at the Woman on the ledge and grow impatient.

LOU

Garrity!

TOMMY

Goddamn it!

DOWN AT THE CONTROLS

Sean struggles with the controls for the ladder. The Chief  
looks over his shoulder.

SEAN

I'm doing everything I can.

CHIEF FEINBERG  
I'm calling for another truck.

BACK IN THE BUCKET

LOU  
(watching the Woman above)  
It'll never get here in time. What  
do you think, Tommy?

Tommy doesn't answer. He stares down the rungs of the ladder. Sees where the ladder is stuck.

He hears the THUNDER of the burning flames. A VOICE in Tommy's head, barely recognizable as Tommy's Dad's, whispers: "You're next... you're next..."

TOMMY  
(to himself)  
All right, then. I'll go to hell.

He steps out of the bucket and starts to CLIMB DOWN the ladder.

LOU  
Tommy, get back in here!

But Tommy doesn't listen. He reaches the spot where the sliding parts of the ladder are stuck. Pulls out his halligan and BANGS on it.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Tommy! You're gonna break your  
head!

The Woman on the ledge clutches her Toddler in her arms and SCREAMS for help.

Tommy SMASHES his halligan so hard against the ladder it almost seems he's trying to break it. He puts so much weight behind it that he SLIPS -- and almost falls. But he recovers his balance ... just as the ladder starts to RISE again.

Tommy climbs back into the bucket, which comes closer and closer to the Woman on the ledge. They're ten feet from her, about ninety feet high, when the crane comes again to a HALT.

Tommy ROARS with frustration. Lou listens to his two-way radio.

LOU (CONT'D)

Sean says the other truck is five minutes away. We're gonna have to wait.

The Woman on the ledge SHRIEKS. The flames have reached her now and SET HER BACK ON FIRE. She holds her boy at arm's length, away from the building, trying to keep him from burning, too.

The Woman locks eyes with Tommy.

WOMAN

Isn't there a net down there?

LOU

Too much smoke below. They can't catch you if they can't see you.

Now, despite the excruciating pain, she finds a strange calm.

WOMAN

(to Tommy)

You can see me, can't you? You see this boy.

LOU

No, no. Don't do it, lady.

Tommy nods to her.

WOMAN

If you let my boy die, I swear to God --

CLOSE on Tommy --

TOMMY

I know. I'm next.

SLOW MOTION. The Woman flings her SCREAMING BOY into the air.

While the Boy is in mid-air, IMAGES flash through Tommy's mind:

--The hockey stick SMASHING his face.

--Connor's ghost asking, "Why didn't you do anything?"

--His father's ghost on the baseball field, pointing straight at him.

The toss is SHORT -- the Boy begins to FALL ...

With one hand, Tommy reaches back and GRABS the safety harness that he didn't have time to put on. He DIVES into thin air -- nine stories up, without a net -- and with his other hand he reaches out ...

... and GRABS the falling Toddler by the forearm.

Tommy hangs almost sideways now, with one hand on the harness and the other holding the Boy. They swing back and forth as the momentum of his leap of faith dies down. The Boy is WAILING and wriggling with fright.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
 Stop fighting me, kid.  
 (then, more gently)  
 I'm not letting go.

They swing for a moment longer, like a baby's cradle, before--

BUH-BUMP. CREAK. The ladder starts to move again, now, after all that. It reaches the ledge, and Lou grabs the Woman and enfolds her in a fire blanket, extinguishing the flames.

TOMMY (CONT'D)  
 (looking up at the sky)  
 Thanks. You couldn'ta done that a minute ago?

As the ladder begins to descend back to the ground --

INT. CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Tommy approaches the door but stops at the doorway, unsure of what's to come. The Chief looks up from his newspaper.

CHIEF FEINBERG  
 Gavin, come on in.

TOMMY  
 Listen, Chief, I know that what I did was --

CHIEF FEINBERG  
 Check it out.

He holds up the newspaper that he's reading.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)  
 (reads the headline)  
 "Hero Makes Miracle Catch."

TOMMY

It was a lucky grab.

CHIEF FEINBERG

They compare it to the catch Willie Mays made in Game One of the '54 World Series. Remember that one? Running to the fence, over the shoulder, like a wide receiver?

TOMMY

I remember. Listen, Chief, I understand if you want to --

CHIEF FEINBERG

What I want doesn't matter so much anymore.

He taps his finger on Tommy's face in the newspaper.

CHIEF FEINBERG (CONT'D)

People out there think this guy is an active member of the fire department. And I'm not gonna be the one to tell 'em they're wrong.

TOMMY

What are you saying?

CHIEF FEINBERG

I'm saying get back to work.

Tommy pauses to see if he means it. It seems he does, and he's not too happy about it.

TOMMY

You mean --

CHIEF FEINBERG

Now, Gavin.

Tommy nods -- humbled, grateful. Then walks out the door.

A wary look on the Chief's face. He's keeping an eye on Tommy.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

All the boys gather around and raise their shot glasses, all except Tommy, who holds a club soda.

FRANCO

To Tommy!

They down their shots and CHEER, celebrating Tommy's triumphant return.

FRANCO (CONT'D)

Hey, Tommy, we gotta head out. Me and Sean have a thing --

TOMMY

Get outta here.

SEAN

Good to have you back, bro.

TOMMY

Yeah.

As Franco and Sean leave, Tommy looks over --

AT THE BOOTH

Lou sits across from Margaret, who is now CRYING.

LOU

Margaret ...

MARGARET

No, it's okay. This is just hormones. I'm -- you know what, I'm relieved.

LOU

Okay ...

MARGARET

Twenty years ago, we were too young, too poor, too careless, but we had love. Now, we've got everything but. And maybe, without that, we're better off. The child is better off.

LOU

(pause)

Well, I gotta tell you, you're taking this a lot better than I --

Margaret reaches across the table and PUNCHES Lou in the mouth.

LOU (CONT'D)

I thought you said we were better off!

MARGARET

That was for the sex tape your friends have been whispering about since I walked in. I don't know how you recorded it, but I want it destroyed right now.

While she's up, she PUNCHES him again, once more in the mouth.

LOU

And what was that for?

MARGARET

For wasting my time!

She grabs her purse and walks off.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

George is driving with Sean riding shotgun. The RADIO plays smooth jazz. In the back, Franco and Heidi are MAKING OUT. Heidi pushes him off for a second.

HEIDI

God, I'm drunk.

FRANCO

You want to stop? Get something to eat? Maybe go dancing or --

HEIDI

Would you just shut up and look pretty? You have some serious making up to do ...

They go back at it, disappearing behind the front seats. Sean starts to turn around.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

Eyes forward, actor boy.

~~SEAN~~  
(MORE)

(to George)

You're not drunk, too, are you?

GEORGE

Are you kidding? "Don't drink and drive."

(pause)

Did smoke a ton of pot, though.

(off Sean's look)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's okay; it makes me paranoid, so I actually drive better.

Heidi starts to MOAN.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You're gonna love this party. Some really cool actors are gonna be there. Tobey Maguire, Benicio Del Toro. Hell, you'll probably be one of them some day.

SEAN

You really think so?

GEORGE

I'm telling you, Sean, this is your calling. If you want, I'll recommend you to my agent. He'll sign you on the spot, send you out to auditions for commercials, maybe some TV shows --

SEAN

(tempted)

I watch TV ...

GEORGE

Of course, it's gonna take a chunk of your time. Auditioning, acting lessons, networking -- you'd have to cut back on your job, maybe quit altogether.

Sean sees his image in the side mirror. Fixes his hair, considers the prospect of stardom. A distant siren RINGS and quickly FADES.

SEAN

Thing is, the guys I look up to, the guys I want to be like, they're not Tobey Maguire or Benicio McToro.

GEORGE

Then who?

SEAN

You know ... guys like Tommy Gavin.

GEORGE

Tommy Gavin. Did he go to Yale Drama?

Before Sean can answer, Heidi's MOANS interrupt him.

HEIDI

Up a little higher. Higher! More intensity. More ...

FRANCO

Wouldja turn up the radio? I need some more jazz over here!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Tommy puts down the club soda and puts on his leather jacket. Lou is sitting next to him, holding a bag of ice against his cheek, drunk.

TOMMY

I gotta head out.

LOU

Already? You're gonna miss round two. Margaret's coming back to knock me out, put me outta my misery.

Tommy puts his hand on Lou's shoulder.

TOMMY

It's gonna happen, Lou. Leaky diapers, spit-up everywhere, no sleeping, ever... You're gonna regret it, but it's gonna happen.

LOU

I need more ice. I think I saw some in the urinal.

Lou heads toward the bathroom. As Tommy starts to leave, the BARTENDER lays down a martini.

BARTENDER

Dirty martini, compliments of the ladies at the end of the bar.

MUSIC UP. Tommy looks down the bar at TWO HOT WOMEN, 30, sharing a dirty martini of their own.

One brings an olive to her lips ... and KISSES the other woman. They pass the olive back and forth as they watch Tommy out of the corners of their eyes. They smile at him invitingly.

Tommy gazes down at the martini -- vodka, his favorite ...

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Katy stands at the edge of the dance floor, wearing the beautiful white dress we saw before.

As she holds a plastic cup of punch in both her hands, she watches FATHERS in tuxedos and DAUGHTERS in pretty dresses dancing a waltz together. It's festive and sweet, though a little bit creepy.

Katy turns to the grand entrance and sees a TALL BLONDE MAN walk in. Not her father. The man greets his own DAUGHTER with a warm embrace.

Janet approaches, holding a cell phone to her ear.

JANET

He's not picking up. You want me to call Bob?

KATY

Mommy, no. Have a little faith.

JANET

Have faith in God, not your father. Don't make the same mistake I made.

CLOSE on Janet, full of regret.

JANET (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Same one I make over and over ...

Janet stands next to her daughter as patiently as she can. But she just can't stand the humiliation.

JANET (CONT'D)

Come on.

She grabs Katy by the arm.

KATY

No, Mommy --

Katy resists her pull, and raspberry punch SPILLS from the cup all over the white dress. People turn and notice.

Katy looks down and starts to CRY softly. Janet holds her hand and tries gently to lead her to the exit --

But Katy YANKS her hand back violently.

KATY (CONT'D)

I said NO!

Her hands tremble as she raises what's left of the punch in her cup to her lips.

KATY (CONT'D)

I'm staying.

Janet sighs. Picks up her phone and steps away again.

JANET

I'm calling Bob.

On a tearful, stubborn Katy, in her punch-and-white dress, alone at the edge of the dance floor as lights from the disco ball swirl by ...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Tommy continues to eye the martini.

TOMMY

(to himself)

Just a sip. A taste.

He raises the glass to his lips. Once he starts to drink, he doesn't stop -- can't -- until he downs the last drop. When he comes up for air, the two Hot Women from the end of the bar appear, one over each of his shoulders. Like the angel and the devil, except both of them are bad, bad, bad.

HOT WOMAN #1

How about another round?

Tommy looks at her ... then at the other one ... and we can tell by the small, rueful smile -- Tommy Gavin is back.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END