

FUGUE NOEL

written by  
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based on his short story  
"A Christmas Gift"

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<https://evenpunkgirls.github.io/>

FADE IN:

EXT. LIVINGSTON MALL, CHRISTMAS EVE 1983 - NIGHT

Surrounded on all sides by suburban sprawl, a scowling 18-year-old woman struts toward the doors in the falling snow.

She's got spiked hair, dark and thick makeup, and tattered clothes -- as well as a drawstring bag across her shoulder.

This is RUDI WEISS.

Over the SOUNDS of the punk classic "Fuck Christmas," she slams a door open with both hands and bursts inside.

INT. MALL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Rudi marches in the general direction of a WOMAN and two small CHILDREN, who are heading in the opposite way.

Frightened of Rudi, the woman pulls the children to the side -- causing Rudi to look even more belligerent.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rudi stomps inside and glances around.

A SALESMAN notices her, and rushes up to a SECURITY GUARD.

While pointing at Rudi, the salesman says something to the guard, who warily looks at Rudi before yanking out a walkie-talkie.

MEN'S DEPARTMENT

Rudi shuffles through some sweaters with lots of disinterest.

She stops and turns her head.

Nearby the guard glares at her while talking on his walkie-talkie.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rudi storms out. Though she comes to a sudden halt when she reaches a chocolate shop.

INT. CHOCOLATE SHOP - NIGHT

Rudi hustles toward the counter -- behind which stands a CLERK, who raises her hands in surrender, with eyes bigger than apples.

RUDI  
 (through clenched jaw)  
 A half pound of white chocolate.

LATER

The clerk offers Rudi a small paper bag of chocolate with her shaking hand -- and Rudi slams some money onto the counter and grabs the bag.

INT. OUTSIDE CHOCOLATE SHOP - NIGHT

Rudi marches out and stops.

Nearby a MALL SANTA plies his trade -- one who's way-too-thin and way-too-young.

Rudi sneers and rushes away.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - NIGHT

Rudi turns a corner and heads down a corridor.

Though again she comes to a sudden halt -- and turns toward the window of the store, which displays a miniature waterfall.

Mesmerized, she drifts toward it -- and, when she gets to the glass, she puts her hand on it.

RUDI  
 The best anywhere.

GIRL (O.S.)  
 There it is, Mommy -- there it is!

Against her will, Rudi takes a few steps toward the sound, and she peeks her head around the corner.

Where a small GIRL drags a reluctant WOMAN in a blue coat to a Cabbage Patch doll in the window.

The woman stares at the price, while searching for words.  
Slowly, she turns to the girl -- on the verge of tears.  
Rudi spins back around the corner.

RUDI'S STEPFATHER (V.O.)  
Not this year, little girl.

Rudi lowers her eyes.

GIRL (O.S.)  
It's okay, Mommy. Really.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
How about some hot chocolate?

Rudi slithers into the store.

INT. INSIDE A&O TOYS - NIGHT

Rudi approaches a counter -- behind which stands an OLD MAN  
in a vest, who smiles warmly at her.

OLD MAN  
Merry Christmas.

She looks around, thinking the man must be addressing  
someone else -- but there's no one else.

OLD MAN  
What can I do for you?

She looks at the waterfall in the window -- but she points  
to the doll.

The old man reaches for the doll and takes it out of the  
window.

OLD MAN  
You're lucky. This is the very last  
one. I literally couldn't keep them  
in stock.

He puts the doll in its box.

OLD MAN  
Would you like it gift-wrapped?

She looks out the window -- at the mother and daughter, who are sitting down with their drinks in the near distance.

RUDI  
Will it take long?

OLD MAN  
It won't take but a minute.

He grabs some fancy gold paper and starts wrapping the box -- with Rudi continuing to stare out the window.

RUDI  
You think you could do me a favor?

OLD MAN  
What's that?

She points to the mother.

RUDI  
You see that woman in the blue coat?

He looks out the window.

RUDI  
Could you give her the doll?

The old man turns to Rudi, looking confused.

RUDI  
Tell her, I don't know, tell her it's a store promotion -- or a contest. Tell her anything.

Again, he looks out the window -- and notices the woman's sadness.

And he turns back to Rudi and smiles -- even warmer than before.

OLD MAN  
(softly)  
What about you? Can I get something for you to give?

Ignoring the question, Rudi takes out a wallet from her drawstring bag and opens it. She further counts out bills -- and lays the entire contents onto the counter.

And she rushes out of the store, with the old man watching her with a fatherly expression.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - NIGHT

Rudi again turns the corner -- and again comes to a quick stop.

Slowly, she turns around.

The old man limps toward the mother and daughter, carrying a shopping bag with the gift-wrapped doll.

He stops in front of the woman and whispers something into her ear -- which causes her to become so shocked that she jumps a bit, with eyes even larger than those of the clerk in the chocolate shop.

Rudi smiles. She smiles in spite of herself.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

With the snow continuing to fall, Rudi rides a Harley onto the lot and stops.

Ominously, she turns her head -- toward Saint Barnabas Hospital across the road.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

With punk rock softly PLAYING, a frail and sickly man of 18 carries a large gift-wrapped box -- one lovingly tied with a big white bow.

This is TOMMY GOODWIN.

Looking faint, he stops in front of a modest Christmas tree, and he slowly lowers himself and the gift. He also coughs -- a loud hacking cough.

Quietly, Rudi opens the front door behind him.

Tommy struggles to put the gift under the tree.

Rudi looks as if she will cry. But she pulls herself together and enters the apartment, and closes the door.

He turns to her and smiles.

TOMMY

You've caught me.

RUDI

I don't have a gift for you.

TOMMY

You've already given me your gift.

RUDI

I do have a little something.

She walks up to him while taking off her drawstring bag.

And she reaches inside her sack -- and takes out a small box, wrapped with the same fancy gold paper the old man used on the doll. Which causes her to become even more shocked than the woman in the mall.

RUDI

I don't get it.

TOMMY

Get what?

RUDI

He, he must've slipped this into my bag somehow.

TOMMY

What are you talking about?

RUDI

I don't know. I really don't.

TOMMY

Can I open it?

RUDI

I don't even know what it is.

Gently, he takes the gift from her. Even more gently, he unwraps it -- and, while dropping the paper on a couch -- he reveals a plain white box. Which he opens and looks inside with surprise.

RUDI

What is it?

TOMMY

A card.

He takes out the card and reads it.

RUDI

What does it say?

TOMMY

A future.

EXT. WATERFALL, CHRISTMAS EVE PRESENT - DAY

Tommy stands in a forest clearing beside roaring water -- no longer frail or sickly. Instead, he's handsome and well-built -- and wearing an expensive suit and a wool overcoat.

He looks at his surroundings in bewilderment -- and then reads the card he's holding.

TOMMY

Returns till Christmas?

He flips over the card, and looks at it up close.

INSERT - CARD

It's the logo of A&O Toys.

BACK TO WATERFALL

Tommy puts the card back in the box and the box in his right overcoat pocket -- and he sits on a rock overlooking the falls with a dazed expression.

TOMMY

I was sick. And, and there was  
someone . . .

A phone RINGS -- with the tone of a ROTARY PHONE -- causing Tommy to lose his balance.

Quickly, he steadies himself -- and, with two fingers, pulls out a phone from his left overcoat pocket, which he looks at with utter confusion.

INSERT - PHONE

It displays "Darlene."

BACK TO WATERFALL

Hesitantly, Tommy presses a button on the screen, and even more hesitantly puts the device to his ear.

TOMMY

Hello?

DARLENE (V.O.)

I thought you were getting in last night.

TOMMY

Darlene? Darlene Windsor?

Darlene LAUGHS.

DARLENE (V.O.)

No one's called me that in thirty years.

TOMMY

Thirty years?

DARLENE (V.O.)

Hurry home -- Wendy's got big news.

TOMMY

Wendy?

DARLENE (V.O.)

We'll see you soon. Love you.

Darlene hangs up, and Tommy puts the phone back in his pocket -- at which time he notices he's wearing a smartwatch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 10:41 on 12/24.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - DAY

A shaky-looking Tommy exits a path and comes upon a long road with lots of parking spaces, but only one car -- an expensive one.

He reaches into his pants pocket -- and pulls out a keyless remote, which he gazes at. He further pushes the unlock button, and the car unlocks.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tommy looks around the dashboard.

TOMMY

How am I supposed to start this?

He fumbles around -- and stumbles upon the keyless ignition -- and the car starts.

FEMALE VOICE

GPS engaged.

Startled, he looks around the car.

FEMALE VOICE

Destination, please.

TOMMY

What?

FEMALE VOICE

Destination, please.

He feels around himself, and reaches into his jacket pocket -- and fishes out a wallet. Which he opens, finding lots of cash and credit cards. He also finds his driver's license.

Which shocks him.

Hurriedly, he looks at himself in the vanity mirror -- and becomes even more shocked when he sees the image of a 50-SOMETHING VERSION OF HIMSELF.

FEMALE VOICE

Destination, please.

He slowly turns from his image and looks at his license.

TOMMY

Three Seventy Overhill Road.

A map displays on the dashboard, along with directions.

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy's car turns onto the driveway of a big beautiful mansion, and it approaches a garage door, which opens.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Tommy slithers out of the car, and looks at a covered motorcycle parked nearby.

He drifts up to it, and removes the cover, revealing the Harley Rudi was driving back in 1983.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

A still shaky-looking Tommy passes a staircase. He further hears running FOOTSTEPS -- and stops and looks up.

At the top of the staircase stands WENDY -- a pretty 17-year-old girl with a huge smile.

WENDY

Daddy!

She storms down the stairs and jumps into Tommy's arms, and he awkwardly embraces her.

TOMMY

Wendy?

She breaks their embrace.

WENDY

I did it!

TOMMY

Did what?

WENDY

I got into Harvard!

TOMMY

Oh. That's good.

WENDY

Good? Just good?

DARLENE (O.S.)

There you are.

DARLENE appears down the hall. She's in her early fifties -- and gorgeous.

WENDY

I got way too many calls to make!

Wendy giddily rushes up the stairs.

Darlene shakes her head and marches toward Tommy.

DARLENE

You really did it this time.

TOMMY

Did what?

DARLENE

I don't know how you found time to tutor her -- but you did it!

She rushes up to him and gives him a big kiss, which makes him way more than uncomfortable.

DARLENE

I thought we'd celebrate by taking the girls to Disney World before heading back.

TOMMY

Back?

DARLENE

The Senate doesn't convene until the Third, right?

TOMMY

The Senate? The US Senate? You're saying I'm a senator?

DARLENE

(with a smile)

Hopefully not for long.

She hugs him.

DARLENE

Hopefully, this time next year  
it'll be President Elect Thomas  
Goodwin.

TOMMY

(mouthing)  
President Elect?

DARLENE

I'm so proud of you.

Tommy notices an enormous Christmas tree in an adjoining  
room -- one that's well decorated and has lots of presents.

Darlene breaks their embrace, and he steps toward the tree  
-- and she joins him while pointing to one of the gifts.

DARLENE

That came yesterday from President  
Clary.

TOMMY

President Clary?

DARLENE

You know, French President Clary.  
He also sent a card. Maybe later  
you can translate it for me.

TOMMY

I speak French?

She playfully slaps him.

DARLENE

Oh, you.

MICHELLE -- a way-too-cute 7-year-old girl -- skips toward  
them jumping rope.

DARLENE

Michelle, what did I tell you about  
jumping rope inside the house?

MICHELLE

You told me not to.

DARLENE

So, why are you doing it?

MICHELLE

I'm being subversive.

Darlene grins, and Michelle skips out of the room.

TOMMY

She's pretty cool. Both of them.

DARLENE

You're just now realizing this?

She heads back down the hall.

DARLENE

Oh, the realtor called -- they'll  
be showing your mom's house on  
Friday.

Struggling a bit for air, Tommy unbuttons his collar.

TOMMY

Darlene?

She stops and turns back to him.

TOMMY

Do you know, do you know where the  
keys are to the Harley?

DARLENE

The kitchen, I think. Are you going  
somewhere?

TOMMY

I was just gonna take a drive.

DARLENE

(with a grin)  
Last minute shopping?

TOMMY

Something like that.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

The door opens -- and Tommy speeds out on the Harley.

And he takes a deep, satisfying breath.

EXT. LIVINGSTON MALL - DAY

Tommy opens the same door Rudi burst through in 1983.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - DAY

Tommy cautiously enters.

INT. INSIDE A&O TOYS - DAY

Tommy approaches the old man in the vest, who hasn't aged at all -- and the man smiles warmly at Tommy, as warmly as he smiled at Rudi.

OLD MAN  
Merry Christmas.

TOMMY  
Merry Christmas.

OLD MAN  
What can I do for you?

Tommy pulls out the gift box from his pocket and opens it -- and he takes out the card, which he shows the old man.

TOMMY  
Did this come from here?

OLD MAN  
It certainly looks like ours. Do you wish to return it?

Quickly, Tommy pulls the card away.

TOMMY  
No.

OLD MAN  
So, you're happy with it.

TOMMY  
I don't know.

OLD MAN  
It's not an uncommon reaction. But it'll pass.

Tommy nods, and he puts the card in the box and the box in his pocket, and he turns to leave -- but spins back to the old man.

TOMMY

This is gonna sound crazy.

OLD MAN

Believe me, it won't.

TOMMY

I can remember being sick. Very sick. Even if the details are fuzzy. Actually, everything's fuzzy.

OLD MAN

Like you were in a fugue?

TOMMY

A what?

OLD MAN

Comes from the Latin word "fuga," meaning flight. It can be the flight of a melody around a scale, or a flight from yourself -- one you don't remember taking.

TOMMY

There's a person I don't remember, either. I just know this person was.

OLD MAN

Your existence in the present likely precludes this person's presence in your past.

TOMMY

It's really gnawing at me that I can't remember.

OLD MAN

It won't gnaw for long.

The old man points to a clock on the wall, which reads about 12:25.

OLD MAN

When Christmas strikes at midnight  
you won't even remember you were  
sick. And all the missing memories  
of your new life will fill in.

TOMMY

Why at Christmas?

OLD MAN

It is a Christmas gift, after all.  
And we want you to be happy with  
it. That's why we give you some  
time to decide whether you really  
want it.

TOMMY

Someone gave me this as a gift?

OLD MAN

I would think so.

TOMMY

Who gave it to me?

OLD MAN

That I can't say.

TOMMY

Could it have been the person I  
can't remember?

OLD MAN

It could've been.

TOMMY

And there's no way of finding out  
who this person was?

OLD MAN

Do you want to recall the details  
of your sickness as well? And all  
the pain associated with it?

TOMMY

I . . .

OLD MAN

And risk your new life, by  
introducing unpredictable elements  
to your decision?

TOMMY

I . . .

OLD MAN

Go home, Mister Goodwin. Go home  
and enjoy your gift. I can pretty  
much guarantee that the person  
responsible for it would be very  
happy right now.

TOMMY

How do you know who I am?

OLD MAN

You're famous, Senator.

TOMMY

There is a way I can find out about  
this person, isn't there?

The old man sighs deeply -- and he grabs a pair of glasses  
from inside his vest, which he places on the counter.

OLD MAN

If you wear these in places  
connected to your past, you can  
experience events that have no  
longer passed.

Hesitantly, Tommy reaches for the glasses.

OLD MAN

But I warn you.

Tommy pulls away his hand.

OLD MAN

The danger's not just yours. The  
present could change through your  
actions. Other people's present.

Tommy stares at the glasses for a few moments -- and grabs  
them.

TOMMY

How much?

OLD MAN

The price has already been paid.

Again, Tommy turns -- and again he spins toward the old man.

TOMMY

What time do you close today?

OLD MAN

You needn't return the gift here,  
if that's what you decide. Just  
discard the card, along with the  
box. That's all you have to do.

Tommy nods and once more turns to leave -- and this time he does so, with the old man expressing the same expression he expressed toward Rudi when she left his store.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - DAY

Tommy exits and stops in front of the store window, with a view of the old man standing behind the counter by himself.

TOMMY

Whoever gave me this gift must've  
been here.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Do you want to recall the details  
of your sickness as well? And all  
the pain associated with it? And  
risk your new life?

Tommy pauses in thought, and puts on the glasses.

Rudi pays for the doll and rushes out of the store.

He rips off the glasses, with a grimace and many shakes of his head.

TOMMY

Why would I have had anything to do  
with someone like that?

He starts walking, with a pensive expression.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Tommy drives his Harley down a long winding road that cuts through the forest, looking as if he were someplace else.

He hears a police SIREN -- and looks back -- at the police car behind him.

And he pulls over.

LATER

A POLICEMAN saunters up to Tommy.

TOMMY  
Was I speeding, officer?

POLICEMAN  
You're not wearing a helmet.

TOMMY  
So?

POLICEMAN  
It's against the law.

TOMMY  
It is?

POLICEMAN  
License and registration, please.

Tommy takes out his driver's license and looks around the bike.

POLICEMAN  
Is there a problem?

Tommy hands the policeman his license.

TOMMY  
I'm not sure where the registration  
is.

The policeman looks at the license and becomes surprised, and he glances at Tommy with an inquisitive expression.

TOMMY  
Is there a problem?

POLICEMAN  
Senator Goodwin?

TOMMY  
I . . .

POLICEMAN  
Why didn't you just tell me who you  
were right away?

TOMMY  
I . . .

POLICEMAN  
I know. You didn't want any special  
treatment. Figures. I read all  
about how you got that treaty  
signed and refused to take credit  
for it.

The policeman slaps the license against his palm.

POLICEMAN  
That's why I signed that petition.

TOMMY  
Petition?

POLICEMAN  
You know, the one asking you to run  
for president. I'd like to think my  
signature was what sent it over the  
top.

The policeman hands Tommy back his license.

POLICEMAN  
I guess I could let you off with a  
warning, being that it's Christmas  
and all.

INT. TOMMY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Darlene types into a laptop while sitting at a desk.

Tommy enters, and looks at the computer inquisitively.

TOMMY  
What are you doing?

DARLENE  
Making reservations for Disney  
World.

TOMMY  
On that?

She stops typing and turns to Tommy.

DARLENE  
How else?

TOMMY  
Travel agent?

DARLENE  
Oh, you. Did you want something?

TOMMY  
Do you remember this girl . . .

DARLENE  
Someone from your office?

TOMMY  
I'm talking about when we were  
teenagers. She was all, I don't  
know, punked out.

DARLENE  
I don't remember anyone like that.  
Was she in our class?

TOMMY  
I don't know.

DARLENE  
Our yearbooks are up in the attic.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Tommy, who's sitting on the floor, flips through pages near  
the back of a large hardcover book.

He reaches the end and closes the book -- one labeled  
"Columbia High School 1983" -- and puts it on the floor.

He further pulls out the gift box from his overcoat pocket and opens it -- and he takes out the card, which he stares at.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Tommy descends the last steps.

DARLENE (O.S.)  
Find your mysterious punk girl?

Tommy stops and turns to Darlene -- and shakes his head.

DARLENE  
Why are you looking for her?

TOMMY  
I'm not sure.

DARLENE  
Should I be jealous?

TOMMY  
(defensively)  
No.

DARLENE  
That was a joke.

TOMMY  
Sorry.

DARLENE  
Are you all right? You seem, not  
yourself today.

TOMMY  
You've noticed, too.

DARLENE  
You know you can talk to me about  
anything, don't you?

TOMMY  
We're happy?

She answers him with a smile.

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

The garage door opens and Tommy drives out on his Harley.

He comes to the end of the driveway and stops, and pauses in thought.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Go home, Mister Goodwin. Go home  
and enjoy your gift.

Tommy takes off down the road.

EXT. COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Tommy and the Harley enter a lot, and he parks -- with an expression of uncertainty.

TOMMY  
I don't even think I graduated.

He steps off the motorcycle and walks toward the empty school.

TOMMY  
But I do remember there were two of  
me. One who had lots of friends and  
loved football, and another . . .

BY SCHOOL ENTRANCE

Tommy stops near the doors and stares out into space, looking lifeless.

TOMMY  
And another who hated it all.

He takes out the glasses and puts them on.

STEPHEN (O.S.)  
It meets Sunday nights at the South  
Orange Recreation Center. I'll take  
you there myself.

RUDI (O.S.)  
Sure thing, sheriff.

Tommy turns his head.

Nearby Rudi struts toward the school with her drawstring bag over her shoulder. Alongside her marches STEPHEN -- a tall muscular man in his forties who has a crew cut and a suit.

STEPHEN

There's gonna be a lot of eyes on you here.

TOMMY

(whispering)

Who is she?

Rudi notices Tommy staring at her and she looks uncomfortable, but she can't break eye contact with him no matter how hard she tries.

She and Stephen reach the doors -- and she stops near Tommy and thrusts her hands onto her hips and glares at him.

RUDI

What are you looking at?

TOMMY

Who are you?

She grabs his coat and flings him into the wall.

RUDI

This is who I am!

Tommy suddenly looks alive and excited to be so, causing Rudi to become even more uncomfortable than before.

Stephen grabs the back collar of Rudi's jacket with one hand, and he effortlessly lifts her off her feet.

STEPHEN

Nice start.

RUDI

Fuck off.

STEPHEN

Cursing!

RUDI

Not where I'm from!

Stephen slams open a door with one hand and tosses Rudi inside the building with his other, with Rudi glancing back at Tommy.

TOMMY

What's your name?

Stephen enters the school, and the door closes behind him -- and Tommy opens the door and follows.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tommy stares into an empty and short entranceway that leads to a perpendicular hallway.

TOMMY

Hello?

There's no reply, and he hesitantly moves farther inside.

TOMMY

Someone like that doesn't care about anything or anyone. Just go home.

Instead, he reaches the hallway and looks both ways -- seeing no one.

TOMMY

Hello?

Again, there's no reply.

TOMMY

I can't even imagine what classes she could be taking.

TEACHER (O.S.)

We're gonna prep today for the AP test.

Tommy walks toward an open door from which the voice comes.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Miss Weiss, being new here, I'll give you the honor of finding all the first order partial derivatives of the function on the board.

Tommy peeks into the class -- at a complex calculus problem on the blackboard.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Do you even know what I'm talking about?

Rudi marches to the board, picks up some chalk, and, looking bored, solves the problem as rapidly as if she were doing simple addition.

She covers the entire board -- and flings the chalk down while still facing the board.

RUDI

Happy?

TEACHER (O.S.)

It, it took me thirty minutes to solve that last night.

Rudi shrugs.

TEACHER (O.S.)

You may sit down.

She turns around -- toward Tommy and his surprised expression -- and, once again, she looks uncomfortable.

The TEACHER appears in the doorway.

TEACHER

If you'll excuse us.

The teacher slams the door in Tommy's face.

Tommy removes the glasses and rubs his eyes, and he opens the door and looks inside -- at the empty classroom.

Quickly, he puts the glasses back on and hears FOOTSTEPS, and he turns his head down the hallway.

Where Rudi approaches a stairwell.

TOMMY

Wait up!

He rushes after her.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Tommy enters, a bit out of breath -- and he looks at the emptiness. He further sits at a table -- and hears FOOTSTEPS, and turns his head.

Rudi carries a tray of food past him.

She notices him, and, once more looking uncomfortable, marches toward the opposite end of the room.

She looks like she'll march right through the wall, but she stops at the last second and sits at a table -- and starts picking at her food while stealing glances of Tommy.

Who can't keep his eyes off her no matter how hard he tries.

Suddenly, she jumps up, and marches out a door in the back.

TOMMY

Can I go home now?

He stands up.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Tommy approaches the entranceway.

RUDI (O.S.)

This is so stupid!

Tommy stops and turns toward the door of a girls' bathroom.

RUDI (O.S.)

He doesn't care about you! Nobody cares about you!

Rudi slams open the door, carrying a bunch of books -- and she becomes embarrassed.

RUDI

Don't think for a second that I was talking about you.

TOMMY

Why would I think that?

She marches off -- and he follows a safe distance back.

They come upon OWEN -- a hulking 17-year-old bully holding a textbook over the head of PHILIP -- a geeky boy of 16, who quixotically reaches for the book.

PHILIP

Come on, Owen -- I need it.

OWEN

Reading stunts your growth.

TOMMY

(shaking his head)

God, how I hate that kid.

Rudi reaches Owen, and, against her will, stops. Tommy stops, too -- just inside the entranceway by a wall, and he faces the three.

RUDI

Just give him back the book.

OWEN

Who's gonna make me?

RUDI

You got three seconds: one . . .  
two . . .

OWEN

(with a grin)

Three.

Rudi drops all her books, except for a big hardcover one, which she flings across Owen's jaw -- sending him flying into a nearby locker, where he bangs his head and falls to the floor in a daze.

Looking as if nothing had happened, she kneels and picks up her things.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Detention, Weiss!

She sighs -- and turns toward Tommy, who's staring at her in shock.

Trying to hide her discomfort, she takes a threatening step toward him.

And he flies back into the wall, banging his head. He further smiles at her -- a smile that says "I get you -- and I like it."

This smile stuns Rudi.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Now!

Rudi rushes toward the voice -- and away from Tommy.

Who steps out of the entranceway and into the hallway -- and he turns in the direction Rudi went.

But she's not there.

Still, he walks that way.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DAY

Tommy approaches an open door.

A TEACHER exits and turns back toward the room.

TEACHER

I'll be right back.

The teacher walks past Tommy, and Tommy peeks inside the room.

INT. INSIDE CLASSROOM - DAY

With a copy of *The Catcher in the Rye* lying on the desk in front of her, Rudi draws something in a notepad.

Angrily, she rips out the page, crumples it, and flings it onto the floor.

Against her will, she leans down and grabs the crumpled paper. She further opens her bag by yanking its frayed drawstring, and stuffs the paper inside the bag.

Tommy approaches her -- and she crosses her arms and looks away.

He sits next to her, and he points to the copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

TOMMY

Good book.

RUDI

What's so good about a whiny little bitch moaning about how he can't get laid? What does that have to do with me and my life?

TOMMY

Nothing. But that's not what it's about.

She doesn't reply, and he turns from her, looking deep in thought.

TOMMY

It, it's actually about being alone. About being the only person in the whole fucking world. The only person who thinks and feels like you.

(lowering his eyes)

And being so scared because of this you don't even know if you want to live.

With surprise, she slowly turns to him while lowering her arms -- and he turns to her, and she sees her reflection in his eyes.

Without control, they inch toward each other -- closer and closer.

TEACHER (O.S.)

You can go home.

A bit frightened, Rudi stuffs the book into her bag and grabs the drawstring -- and she drags the sack along the floor as she rushes out.

Tommy follows.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM DAY

Tommy exits -- and looks down the hall.

Rudi turns into the entranceway, still dragging her bag.

He hurries after her.

INT. ENTRANCEWAY - DAY

Tommy stops and turns toward the doors.

Rudi violently swings her bag over her shoulder as she bursts out a door.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Tommy rushes out and comes to a sharp stop.

Rudi, who's kneeling on the ground nearby, frantically tries to collect her things into her bag, which has a broken drawstring.

The crumpled paper rolls toward Tommy in the breeze -- and he leans down to pick it up.

RUDI (O.S.)

That's mine!

Tommy opens the paper and looks at it.

INSERT - PAPER

It's an emotive drawing of Tommy.

BACK TO SCHOOL ENTRANCE

Tommy's jaw drops.

Rudi rips the paper from him, with her other arm holding her broken bag.

RUDI

I said, it's mine!

TOMMY

(pointing at picture)

Thanks.

RUDI

It's not you!

TOMMY

You're a much better artist than  
you are a liar.

She sneers at him, turns around, and heads off.

TOMMY

How is it?

She reluctantly stops, but doesn't turn around.

RUDI

How is what?

TOMMY

How is it you can see things in me  
I can't see myself?

She rushes off.

TOMMY

What's your name?

Rudi continues on.

TOMMY

Mine's Tommy.

She comes to a halt -- and spins toward him indignantly.

RUDI

And why would I care?

He points to the drawing -- and she hides it behind her  
back, with her face flush.

He smiles -- angering her.

RUDI

What's so funny?

TOMMY

I didn't know punk girls blush.

DEKE (O.S.)

Rudi!

Rudi and Tommy turn their heads toward the parking lot.

There stands DEKE -- a man in his twenties with shoulder-length hair, bloodshot eyes, and a menacing expression -- who's leaning against a Porsche from the early 1980s.

DEKE

Get in the car!

Rudi lowers her head and slithers toward Deke as if she were heading to her execution.

TOMMY

You okay, Rudi?

She doesn't respond, and Tommy notices a gun underneath Deke's jacket as he enters his car.

TOMMY

Rudi?

She steps into the car.

DEKE (O.S.)

Who the fuck is that?

RUDI (O.S.)

No one!

DEKE (O.S.)

Don't lie to me!

The car starts.

Tommy runs toward his Harley.

And he glances to his right.

By the school, Rudi approaches Owen, who's sitting on the ground with his back to the wall and his head down. Against her will, she stops next to him and gently puts her hand on his shoulder.

Owen looks up at her with lots of surprise.

Tommy turns his head forward.

The Porsche is gone.

Tommy looks to his right.

Owen and Rudi are gone, too.

Tommy stops.

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
Go home, Mister Goodwin. Go home  
and enjoy your gift.

With a sigh, Tommy steps toward the bike, and he hears a CRUNCHING PAPER sound, and he looks down -- at an old shriveled-up flyer in the dirt.

Which he picks up and unravels.

INSERT - FLYER

It's an announcement: "Columbia vs. East Orange at Underhill Field."

EXT. OUTSIDE UNDERHILL FIELD - DAY

Tommy and his Harley park in front of an empty high school football stadium.

EXT. INSIDE UNDERHILL FIELD - DAY

Tommy walks under the stands and reaches the edge of the football field.

CROWD (O.S.)  
Tom-my! Tom-my! Tom-my!

He smiles.

RUDI (O.S.)  
You must be eating this up.

Tommy turns to Rudi, who's standing next to him with her arms crossed and her face full of apathy -- and then he looks back at the field.

TOMMY  
Maybe a little. Maybe a little more  
than a little.

RUDI  
I hate football.

TOMMY

Yeah?

RUDI

And anything else that has to do with large groups of people who think alike.

TOMMY

Define a "large group of people"?

RUDI

Any greater than one.

He chuckles.

RUDI

I don't even know what I'm doing here. I could be seeing Bad Brains right now.

TOMMY

Is that a band?

She sighs, with great exasperation.

TOMMY

You wanna get a bite later? I know this great pizza place.

RUDI

What about your girlfriend?

TOMMY

Girlfriend?

Rudi glances down the sideline, and points with her hand.

RUDI

That fucking cheerleader over there.

Tommy glances down the sideline as well.

TOMMY

Darlene?

RUDI

She looks like she wants to rip my skull off and drink from it.

TOMMY

I actually don't have a girlfriend.  
You wanna know something? I've  
never had a girlfriend. Not a real  
one.

RUDI (O.S.)

(barely audible)

There's no such thing as fairy  
tales.

TOMMY

What's that?

Tommy turns toward Rudi, but she's gone. He further looks  
behind himself.

Outside the stadium, Rudi reluctantly gets inside Deke's  
Porsche, and it speeds off.

EXT. OUTSIDE UNDERHILL FIELD - DAY

Tommy climbs onto his Harley and takes off.

He drives a few blocks, and approaches Rudi, who's walking  
away from him.

He passes her and glances back -- at her bloodless face,  
covered in a cold sweat.

TOMMY

(with fright)

Rudi?

A horn HONKS.

He turns around and notices he's in the wrong lane, and that  
he's just about to smash into a pickup truck.

At the last second, he swerves into the right lane -- and  
pulls over. He also looks back.

Rudi's gone.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tommy stops his Harley at a traffic light -- near a  
restaurant called Reservoir Pizza. Which he glances at.

INT. RESERVOIR PIZZA - DAY

Tommy walks inside, and a WAITER carrying a pizza smiles at him.

WAITER

Tommy!

TOMMY

Hey.

The HOST -- a middle-aged man in a suit -- greets Tommy with a grin and a hearty handshake.

HOST

We were gonna close early, you know, for the holiday. But for you, for you we're always open.

The host turns to the CUSTOMERS.

HOST

Everyone, the next president of the United States!

The entire restaurant stands and cheers, and Tommy responds with an awkward smile.

LATER

Tommy sips a glass of water while sitting at a table in the empty restaurant.

Rudi marches up to him.

RUDI

Just so we're clear . . .

She grabs a chair and sits across from him, with the back of the chair facing the table.

RUDI

This ain't a date or nothing.

TOMMY

No date.

RUDI

We have nothing in common.

TOMMY

You sure about that?

The waiter puts a veggie pizza on the table.

WAITER

You need anything else, just let me know.

Tommy nods and the waiter walks off -- and Rudi glances at the pizza.

RUDI

Who told you?

TOMMY

What?

RUDI

What what? Who told you I'm a vegetarian?

He smiles -- angering her.

RUDI

What's so funny?

TOMMY

We have nothing in common.

RUDI

No football player is a vegetarian.

TOMMY

Yeah, and no punk cares about anything or anyone. They don't take AP classes and they don't protect little kids and they're sure as shit not kind to bullies they've just beaten up.

Rudi sneers, and Tommy grabs a slice -- and he notices she's not eating.

TOMMY

Aren't you gonna have any?

RUDI

I hate pizza.

TOMMY

Is there anything you don't hate?

RUDI

I'm not sure.

She grabs a slice and takes a small bite -- and can't hide her surprise.

TOMMY

Good?

She responds by taking another bite -- a much bigger one.

Again, he smiles.

RUDI

Now what's so funny?

TOMMY

That's not why I'm smiling. I don't even know why.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tommy stops his Harley at a traffic light, with Rudi sitting behind him -- her arms draped around his waist, her cheek pressed against his back, and a dreamy look in her eyes.

TOMMY

Where do you live?

RUDI

With Mister Cross.

TOMMY

The guidance counselor?

RUDI

He's my foster dad.

TOMMY

Wasn't he a Marine?

RUDI

You can imagine the fun we have.

TOMMY

Where does he live?

RUDI

I don't want to go home.

TOMMY

I know a great record store up in Irvington.

RUDI

You're not talking about Vintage Vinyl, are you?

TOMMY

As a matter of fact, I --

RUDI

-- All right, who's been talking to you about me?

TOMMY

I go there lots.

RUDI

I go there all the time, and I've never seen you there.

TOMMY

Ask Butch if you don't believe me.

RUDI

I don't know what to believe anymore.

TOMMY

So, where do you want to go?

RUDI

Anywhere.

TOMMY

I know the best anywhere there is.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - DAY

Tommy parks his Harley in the spot where he found his car earlier, and he and Rudi step off the bike.

RUDI

This is your best anywhere? I've been here lots. It's boring.

TOMMY

Only because you've never looked.

He heads down the path.

RUDI

Now where you going?

Reluctantly, she follows.

Deke's Porsche quietly parks next to the Harley.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Tommy leads an exasperated Rudi through some trees.

RUDI

Do I look like a Camp Fire Girl?

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

Tommy and Rudi reach the clearing and the water -- and her jaw drops.

RUDI

I never knew this was here.

TOMMY

Not many people know about it.

He sits on the same rock he sat on when he first arrived in the present.

TOMMY

These falls are really special to me. When my dad was dying, I came here almost every day. It's the one place I'm never alone.

She sits next to him and leans her head on his shoulder.

RUDI

This is the best anywhere.

Tommy's phone RINGS and again he loses his balance.

Again, he steadies himself, and notices Rudi's gone -- and he takes out his phone and looks at it.

INSERT - PHONE

It displays "Darlene."

BACK TO WATERFALL

Tommy answers the phone.

TOMMY

Hey.

DARLENE (V.O.)

Hey, hon. Your mom just called. She wants you to get her grandmother's tea service.

TOMMY

I know it.

DARLENE (V.O.)

She says it's in the kitchen. Oh, and we just got a really nice gift from Pete Simmons.

TOMMY

Pete Simmons?

DARLENE (V.O.)

You really are out of it today. Pete Simmons -- the CEO of Goldman. By the way, he mentioned they're in. All the fucking way.

TOMMY

In what?

DARLENE (V.O.)

The PAC! And the speech, too.

Tommy looks beyond confused.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy parks his Harley in front of a big home that has a For Sale sign in front.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Tommy tries the handle. But it's locked.

He looks around, and notices a flower pot -- and he leans down and checks underneath it, and he finds a key.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy approaches the swinging doors of a kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tommy pushes his way through the swinging doors -- and looks inside.

A bowl of chocolate bars lies on a nearby table.

TOMMY

Some things never change.

BY THE TABLE

Tommy searches through the bowl, and he finds a bar of white chocolate, which he picks up and unwraps. He further takes a big bite of it, with an expression of bliss.

RUDI (O.S.)

How can you eat that shit?

He turns to a grimacing Rudi, and he swallows what's left in his mouth.

TOMMY

It's my favorite.

RUDI

It's disgusting.

TOMMY

I have strange tastes.

Rudi sneers, and she rushes out of the kitchen.

TOMMY

Where you going?

Tommy puts the chocolate down on a counter and goes after her.

INT. OUTSIDE KITCHEN - DAY

Tommy pushes his way through the swinging doors, and he looks around.

Rudi's gone.

He hears FOOTSTEPS and rushes over to a staircase -- and he looks up.

RUDI (O.S.)  
Hate me yet?

TOMMY  
Not yet.

RUDI (O.S.)  
Let's see if we can change that.

He again hears FOOTSTEPS and heads up the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Tommy walks up to a closed door at the end of the corridor.

RUDI (O.S.)  
Your mom must be the Queen of  
Navarre.

He opens the door, exposing Rudi, who's gazing at an opulently furnished bedroom.

And he walks inside the room and closes the door behind himself.

TOMMY (O.S.)  
You shouldn't be in here.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An agitated Rudi turns to Tommy.

RUDI  
No, I shouldn't.

She starts to leave.

RUDI

See ya.

TOMMY

I meant in this room.

She stops and spins toward him with a sneer.

RUDI

Did you?

TOMMY

Why are you always fighting me?

RUDI

Who says I'm fighting you?

She again starts to leave.

TOMMY

Rudi --

Again, she spins toward him.

RUDI

-- Can't you see how fucked up I am? How I'd embarrass the shit out of you? What could you possibly see in me?

TOMMY

It's what you saw in me.

RUDI

What are you talking about?

TOMMY

Remember when we first met?

She thinks about it.

RUDI

When I threw you against the wall?

Tommy chuckles.

TOMMY

Before that. You were looking at me in a way no one has ever looked before. You were looking at me just like you are looking at me now.

RUDI

How?

TOMMY

Like I matter.

RUDI

(lowering her eyes)

I'm a nobody, Tommy. Even my mom thought so.

TOMMY

She was wrong.

RUDI

(raising her eyes)

And I'm no fucking cheerleader. Not even close.

TOMMY

I never wanted a cheerleader.

RUDI

I got a record -- a long one.

TOMMY

I don't care.

RUDI

I'm also an --

TOMMY

-- I don't fucking care!

She takes his hand, and they both blush a little.

RUDI

I'll only hurt you, Tommy. And I don't want to hurt you.

The door opens, and Tommy's MOM -- an attractive middle-aged woman stops in the threshold, causing Rudi to release Tommy's hand.

Mom looks at Rudi, with a mixture of shock and disgust.

TOMMY

Mom.

MOM

Who's this?

TOMMY

My . . .

RUDI

An acquaintance.

MOM

(through clenched jaw)

Will this, this acquaintance be staying for dinner?

TOMMY

Yes.

RUDI

No.

Rudi glares at Tommy.

MOM

By all means stay for dinner. I'm just dying to know more about you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tommy and Rudi plop down on a couch together.

RUDI

She hates me.

TOMMY

She doesn't hate you.

RUDI

And if I were her, I'd hate me, too.

He picks up a remote off a coffee table.

TOMMY

Wanna watch TV?

RUDI

I hate TV.

Rudi crosses her arms and turns away -- and Tommy turns on the television and changes the channel.

The Uncle Floyd Show appears on the screen.

Surprised, Rudi lowers her arms and turns her head toward the TV.

RUDI  
Except this show.

TOMMY  
What's that?

RUDI  
You really watch Uncle Floyd?

Tommy, whose focus is only on the TV, chuckles.

The two continue watching -- and they burst out into laughter at the same time, with the same intensity.

Slowly, they turn to each other.

MOM (O.S.)  
Dinner's ready!

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Rudi, Tommy, and Mom sit in front of a formal table setting, which Rudi stares at in confusion.

ELIZABETH -- a servant -- serves soup.

RUDI  
I don't think I've ever seen so many utensils.

TOMMY  
(glaring at Mom)  
We don't usually eat so formally.

MOM  
I thought it would be a nice change.

TOMMY

(to Rudi)

It's real easy. As the courses come, use the utensils farthest from you.

RUDI

Why not use the same utensils?

MOM

You can use your fingers if you'd like.

Both Tommy and Rudi glare at Mom, and Elizabeth finishes serving.

MOM

Thank you, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth nods and leaves.

Tommy and Mom pick up their soup spoons -- and, while watching them, Rudi picks up hers.

MOM

So, Rudi, do you go to school?

TOMMY

She's the smartest one there.

RUDI

That's not true.

TOMMY

You should've seen her solve this crazy-looking calculus problem. I bet not even Einstein could've done it that fast.

RUDI

(with embarrassment)

Tommy.

Mom sneers a bit at Rudi.

MOM

So, Rudi, is this getup of yours the new thing? Should I expect Tommy to be sporting a Mohawk?

TOMMY

Stop it.

MOM

Tommy, you'll never guess who I saw  
at the mall the other day: Darlene.  
Talk about flawless. So unlike

. . .

(to Rudi)

So unlike anything else.

Rudi lowers her eyes, causing Mom to grin.

TOMMY

I said, stop it.

MOM

Just telling it like I see it. I'm  
sure Rudi sees it, too. Don't you?

TOMMY

Mom --

MOM

-- Darlene was telling me she's  
leaning toward Princeton. But, of  
course, she's waiting to see what  
you decide.

TOMMY

She shouldn't.

MOM

Why shouldn't you two go to school  
together? And then afterward . . .

Rudi turns to Tommy, without looking directly at him.

RUDI

I'm sorry, but I'm feeling very  
uncomfortable.

TOMMY

I know how you feel.

RUDI

And this is just a small taste of  
what we'd get if we went together.

MOM  
(gasping in horror)  
Went together?

RUDI  
(looking away from Mom)  
No need to worry, Misses Goodwin.  
Your son and I have nothing in  
common.

TOMMY  
(with rising anger)  
Yeah, except for Uncle Floyd and  
Reservoir pizza and The Catcher in  
the Rye. But that's nothing. It's  
so nothing that she can look me in  
the eyes and tell me it's nothing.

Rudi boils, but doesn't respond.

TOMMY  
I'm waiting. I'm waiting for you to  
look at me and tell me that I'm  
nothing!

Rudi flings her spoon onto the table.

MOM  
Well, I never --

RUDI  
-- Shut up!

Rudi turns to Tommy, while trying to control her emotions.

RUDI  
It's you who needs to look at me!  
And not just at my hair or my  
makeup or my clothes. Look at who I  
am. I'll never be the girlfriend of  
someone like you.

Desperately, Rudi tries to keep herself together.

RUDI  
Let's not kid ourselves -- I'll  
never be the girlfriend of anyone.

Rudi jumps up and rushes off, and Tommy goes after her.

MOM

Let her go.

TOMMY

Shut up!

Tommy runs out, with Mom watching in shock.

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

On the verge of tears, Rudi finishes putting on an overcoat, and swings her bag over her shoulder as she opens the door.

Tommy grabs her arms from behind.

RUDI

Let go of me!

She yanks her arms away.

TOMMY

I'll drive you home.

RUDI

Why can't you let me be? I was doing fine until I met you. I never used to get so emotional, and now look at me -- I'm all fucked up!

She rushes out the door, with Tommy watching her from the threshold.

TOMMY

Rudi!

RUDI

I don't fit in your world! I don't even live in it!

Deke's Porsche pulls up beside her, and she stops, but doesn't look at it.

The passenger door opens.

With a stunned expression, she glances inside and then back at Tommy -- and she fearfully steps inside the car.

TOMMY

Rudi?

The car speeds off.

MOM (O.S.)

I understand all about rebelling.  
Did lots of it myself. But this,  
this . . .

TOMMY

Her name is Rudi.

MOM (O.S.)

I don't care what her name is!

TOMMY

You don't have to like her. But you  
do have to respect her.

MOM (O.S.)

I don't! She's never setting foot  
in this house again!

TOMMY

Then, neither am I.

Tommy walks out.

INT. STREET - DAY

Tommy and his Harley approach the South Orange Public  
Library, and he stops near the entrance.

TOMMY

I bet she did fine without me. But,  
but if I could know for sure.

He drives onto the lot.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Tommy looks through some stacks and comes upon the Reference  
Desk, where sits a female LIBRARIAN, who's working on a  
computer.

TOMMY

Excuse me.

She looks up at Tommy as if she recognizes him.

LIBRARIAN

Yes?

TOMMY

I'm looking for telephone directories.

LIBRARIAN

We got rid of those long ago. Everything's on the Internet now.

TOMMY

The Internet?

LIBRARIAN

You don't know what the Internet is?

TOMMY

Should I?

LIBRARY CORRIDOR

The librarian leads Tommy past numerous bookshelves.

LIBRARIAN

I guess you're not into computers.

TOMMY

I took a course in high school.

LIBRARIAN

That must've been a long time ago.

TOMMY

It doesn't seem like it.

LIBRARIAN

Has, has anyone ever told you that you look a lot like Senator Goodwin?

TOMMY

Actually . . .

LIBRARIAN

I have a really big crush on him. And not for the reason you think.

They stop in front of a set of computers.

TOMMY  
This is a computer?

LIBRARIAN  
This is a computer.

TOMMY  
No punch cards?

LIBRARIAN  
What's a punch card?

TOMMY  
It doesn't matter.

He sits in front of a computer, and the librarian points to the screen.

LIBRARIAN  
Just click in that box.

TOMMY  
How?

With a bit of a sigh, she takes his hand and puts it on a nearby mouse.

LIBRARIAN  
Take the mouse.

Startled, Tommy pulls his hand away.

TOMMY  
Mouse?

LIBRARIAN  
(with a smile)  
It won't bite.

Again, she puts his hand on the mouse and moves it around.

LIBRARIAN  
You move the mouse like this and click. See?

TOMMY  
Now what?

LIBRARIAN

Type in the name of the person  
you're looking for and hit Enter.

He types Rudi's name and hits Enter.

LIBRARIAN

These are summaries. You click on  
the blue underlined title and it'll  
take you to the information.

TOMMY

None of these summaries are about  
her.

The librarian clicks the Next button, and another screen of  
summaries display.

LIBRARIAN

What about these?

He carefully looks through the screen -- and he shakes his  
head.

LIBRARIAN

You sure about the name? The  
spelling, for instance.

TOMMY

I'm not sure about anything.

EXT. COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DUSK

Tommy stops by the doors and looks at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 4:46.

BACK TO SCHOOL ENTRANCE

TOMMY

Rudi? You around?

There's no reply.

TOMMY

Rudi!

Again, there's no reply -- and he tries to open a door. But it's locked.

TOMMY

Fine -- I'm just gonna go home and enjoy my Christmas -- and my happily ever after! And forget all about you! You hear me?

He starts toward the parking lot and reaches a large classroom window -- and stops.

TOMMY

Oh, what the hell.

He reaches down and picks up a big rock -- and he throws it through the window. The glass shatters completely, and an alarm RINGS.

Quickly, he rushes up to the window and climbs through it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DUSK

Tommy runs through the darkened corridor with the alarm softly RINGING.

TOMMY

Rudi?

There's no reply, and he comes to a stop, pausing in thought.

RUDI (V.O.)

What's so good about a whiny little bitch moaning about how he can't get laid?

He runs off in a different direction.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DUSK

With the alarm still softly RINGING, Tommy rushes toward an open door, gasping for breath.

TOMMY

Rudi?

KRASNER (O.S.)

I'm the teacher here -- Mister  
Krasner.

Tommy stops at the door and looks inside.

INT. INSIDE CLASSROOM - DUSK

KRASNER faces Rudi, who's holding a printout.

RUDI

Well, I'm the student here -- Ms.  
Weiss.

KRASNER

This is Honor's English.

Rudi looks at the printout.

RUDI

What a surprise -- that's what it  
says here, too.

Krasner marches up to her and grabs the printout -- and he  
reads it.

KRASNER

All right, Gertrude -- have a seat.

Tommy runs off.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DUSK

With the alarm loudly RINGING, Tommy approaches an open door  
leading to the room with the broken window.

The alarm stops.

A flashlight BEAM enters the room -- and Tommy jumps to the  
side of the door.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)

See anything?

POLICEMAN 2 (O.S.)

It was probably just some kids.

The flashlight goes out.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)

What about the bike in the lot?

POLICEMAN 2 (O.S.)

I'll check the plates.

Tommy peeks into the room, and he reaches inside and grabs a large textbook -- and he tosses it down the hall, where it makes a loud THUMP.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)

Let's go!

Tommy hears FOOTSTEPS rushing off -- and he sprints inside the classroom.

EXT. SCHOOL - DUSK

Tommy hurriedly climbs through the broken window.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DUSK

Tommy jumps onto his motorcycle -- and starts it -- and speeds off.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)

Hey, you!

EXT. SOUTH ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The librarian exits with a set of keys in her hands, and she starts to lock the door.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Wait!

She turns around, and Tommy runs up to her -- and, when he reaches her, he doubles over out of breath.

LIBRARIAN

You okay?

He rises.

TOMMY

I need to use that . . . what did  
you call it . . . the Internet.

LIBRARIAN

We're closed.

TOMMY

Please.

LIBRARIAN

It's Christmas Eve. Come back on  
Friday.

He opens his mouth to say something, but instead he turns  
around.

LIBRARIAN

Hey.

Quickly, he turns back to her.

LIBRARIAN

You really are Senator Goodwin,  
aren't you?

He shrugs.

LIBRARIAN

You know, if you hadn't gotten that  
bill passed, the sister I'm about  
to spend Christmas with wouldn't be  
around to spend Christmas with.

(nodding inside)

Come on.

INT. LIBRARY COMPUTER SECTION - NIGHT

Tommy rushes up to a computer and sits down -- and grabs the  
mouse.

TOMMY

I'll be just a minute. I promise.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)

Take your time.

INSERT - MONITOR

"Gertrude Weiss" displays letter-by-letter in the search box, followed by the sound of a KEY PRESS.

Search results display, and the mouse pointer stops on a link labeled "Gertrude Weiss, 17, Found ..." -- which is followed by a MOUSE CLICK.

A newspaper clipping displays, with a mug shot of Rudi and a photo of a motel called The Lucky Strike. The headline reads: "Gertrude Weiss, 17, Found Murdered in Motel Room."

BACK TO LIBRARY

Tommy reads the article in horror.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

The present could change through  
your actions. Other people's  
present.

Tommy pauses in thought -- and he jumps up and runs off.

EXT. THE LUCKY STRIKE - NIGHT

Tommy and his Harley exit an urban highway, and he pulls onto the lot of a crumbling motel and parks.

TOMMY

Rudi?

There's no reply, and Tommy gazes at the building.

TOMMY

I somehow remember this place.

Deke's Porsche enters the lot and stops near the office -- and Tommy closes his eyes and shakes his head.

TOMMY

Go home. Just go home.

Deke exits the car and swaggers inside the office.

Tommy opens his eyes -- and, against his will, he gets off the bike and marches toward the Porsche.

BY THE PORSCHE

Tommy raps on the passenger window -- and an angry Rudi rolls it down.

RUDI

What are you doing here?

TOMMY

What are you doing here?

RUDI

This has nothing to do with you!

TOMMY

I wish that were true. You don't know how much I wish it.

Deke exits the office and smirks at Tommy.

DEKE

You come to watch?

Rudi jumps out of the car and slams the door.

RUDI

Let's just get this over with!

Deke saunters toward a nearby room and starts to unlock the door.

Rudi rushes toward it.

TOMMY

Rudi, what are you doing? Do you know what's gonna happen?

DEKE

She knows.

RUDI

I told you, Tommy -- I don't live in your world. I live in a totally fucking different one!

TOMMY

Rudi --

RUDI

-- Go home! Go home and forget me!  
I'm trash!

Deke swings open the door of the room, and Rudi storms inside it. Deke then enters and blows Tommy a kiss.

DEKE

See ya.

Deke slams the door closed, and Tommy hears the deadbolt TURN.

Unsurely, he drifts toward his bike.

BY THE HARLEY

Tommy hesitantly climbs onto the motorcycle.

He hears a VIOLENT SCUFFLE coming from inside the motel room.

RUDI (O.S.)

Help! Somebody help!

He lowers his head.

BY THE MOTEL ROOM

Tommy rushes at the door -- and breaks it open with his shoulder. And he storms inside the room, with the door closing behind him.

Another VIOLENT SCUFFLE comes from inside the room.

DEKE (O.S.)

The funny part is she only came  
because I threatened you!

More SCUFFLING comes from inside the room.

DEKE (O.S.)

You came to watch, and now you're  
gonna watch!

A gun FIRES.

EXT. MOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

An ambulance rushes onto the lot with its sirens BLARING -- and parks in front of the motel room.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A PARAMEDIC rolls out a stretcher with a body completely covered by a sheet.

Two more PARAMEDICS roll out an unconscious Tommy and Rudi.

EXT. SAINT BARNABAS HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The speeding ambulance stops in front of the emergency room entrance.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A DOCTOR examines a still unconscious Tommy, who starts to wake.

TOMMY

Is, is she okay?

DOCTOR

The girl you came in with? She's gonna live. But you've lost a lot of blood.

A NURSE rushes over with a packet of blood, which Tommy stares at with great fright.

TOMMY

No. Don't do it. Don't do it!

DOCTOR

Just calm down.

Tommy falls off the stretcher onto the floor, and he desperately stumbles away.

DOCTOR

Come back! You'll die!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tommy staggers down the hall, looking as if he'll collapse at any moment.

TOMMY

Rudi! Rudi!

He approaches a nurses' station, behind which sits a NURSE.

TOMMY

Rudi Weiss. Where is she?

NURSE

Are you all right?

TOMMY

I need the room number for Rudi Weiss.

NURSE

You --

TOMMY

-- Just do it!

The nurse looks through some information and shakes her head.

NURSE

I don't have anyone by that name.

TOMMY

Gertrude! Gertrude Weiss!

The nurse looks again.

EXT. OUTSIDE RUDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy falls to the floor and coughs -- a loud hacking cough much like the one he had when he was sick.

Awkwardly, he sits up against the wall, next to an area covered mostly in shadow.

Rudi slithers out of the room in a hospital gown, with her face bandaged.

She checks her gown and slides down the wall, and sits next to Tommy, with everything but her head in shadow -- and with him looking straight ahead.

RUDI

So, now you must finally hate me.

He shakes his head.

RUDI

What do I have to do then?

He doesn't reply.

RUDI

(emotionally)

I told you I'd hurt you. I told you.

He still doesn't reply.

RUDI

You're such a stupid --

TOMMY

-- I love you.

She turns away from him in shock, with her head now in shadow.

RUDI

(gasping)

You love me?

TOMMY

I was scared back there. I was so scared. And I wanted to leave -- and I only didn't because I couldn't. I have no free will. No choice. I was meant to love you, and nothing can ever change that.

RUDI

Yeah, well, I love you, too.

Tommy turns toward Rudi.

RUDI

I didn't want to love you. I didn't want to love anyone, not even myself. But you're the most magnificent person I've ever met or will ever meet. You . . .

Rudi turns to Tommy, with her face coming out of shadow -- and he sees his reflection in her watery eyes.

RUDI

You're my fairy tale.

He takes her hand, and they blush a little, like they did at his mom's house.

Without control, they inch toward each other -- and he closes his eyes in anticipation of a kiss.

Nothing happens -- and he opens his eyes and sees that she's gone. Again, he coughs, and gets up and stumbles off.

INT. NURSES' STATION - NIGHT

Tommy approaches the same nurse he approached before, who's talking to a frightened and fully dressed Rudi -- whose face is bruised but no longer bandaged.

RUDI

They put people in ICU with the flu?

NURSE

It's just a precaution. He'll be fine.

Terrified, Tommy rushes away -- and coughs.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy, who's still coughing, desperately races toward the automatic doors.

Suddenly, he stops.

And feels a lesion on his neck.

BY RECEPTION AREA

A sick-looking Tommy walks up to a tall desk.

CLERK (O.S.)

Yes?

Tommy puts his elbows on the desk, and his head on his palms.

TOMMY

I'm looking for, I'm looking for  
Thomas Goodwin.

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR BANK - NIGHT

The second floor indicator lights up and a bell RINGS.

The elevator door opens and Tommy steps out -- and he stumbles down a corridor, looking even sicker than before.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

We need to run some tests on you.

RUDI (O.S.)

No.

Tommy turns a corner.

He approaches a couch where Rudi sits with her head down, next to Stephen -- the tall muscular man with a crew cut who led her to school earlier. Who's in a state of shock.

In front of them stands a worried DOCTOR holding a clipboard.

DOCTOR

You could be very sick, Rudi.

RUDI

(shaking her head)

I can't be.

DOCTOR

We need to test you.

She raises her head -- and turns to Stephen -- and cries.

He hugs her -- and she punches his back over and over with her mighty fists.

RUDI

It's not fair! It's not fucking  
fair.

Stephen cries, too.

Tommy continues down the hall.

He stops at the open door of a room, and staggers inside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy slithers up to an empty bed -- and he lies on it.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Tommy?

Tommy looks up at the foot of the bed, where stands the same doctor who had been talking to Rudi and Stephen.

DOCTOR

I, I have something to tell you.

The doctor pauses, searching for words.

TOMMY

What is it?

DOCTOR

We believe you have AIDS.

TOMMY

AIDS?

The doctor fades as he speaks.

DOCTOR

We think you contracted it through  
the blood transfusions you received  
. . .

The doctor disappears, and Tommy looks up at the ceiling -- and his REFLECTION.

REFLECTED TOMMY

You're gonna die, Tommy. You're  
gonna die.

RUDI (O.S.)

Tommy?

Tommy turns toward the door and Rudi's tear-soaked face.

TOMMY

Stay away from me.

He turns from her -- and she runs up to him and grabs his  
hand, which he pulls away.

TOMMY

Don't touch me! I'm infected!

RUDI

You can't give it that way.

TOMMY

How do you know?

RUDI

I know! I fucking know!

TOMMY

Go away. Please, go away.

RUDI

I'm not going nowhere.

TOMMY

I, I don't want you to watch me  
die.

RUDI

(with breaking voice)

Can I watch you live? Can I?

TOMMY

Find someone else.

RUDI

There is no one else.

TOMMY  
 (angrily)  
 Someone you have something in  
 common with.

RUDI  
 There's only you!

Again, she grabs his hand -- and he turns toward her and  
 pushes her onto the floor.

RUDI  
 Tommy?

TOMMY  
 You did this to me! You fucking did  
 this to me!

She starts crying.

RUDI  
 I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

TOMMY  
 I never want to see you again. Get  
 out. Get out of my fucking life!

RUDI  
 Tommy!

Two NURSES wearing surgical masks and rubber gloves rush in,  
 and they grab Rudi -- and they drag her out the door.

RUDI (O.S.)  
 I love you!

Tommy puts his hands to his ears and shakes his head as he  
 collapses into a fetal position.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy approaches the automatic doors -- and steps through  
 them with his head down.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy stops at the curb.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

This is a very contagious disease!

Tommy turns his head.

Nearby Stephen rushes after Rudi.

RUDI

If it were that easy to catch, half  
the fucking world would have it!

STEPHEN

Maybe they do! Maybe they do!

RUDI

Then, it doesn't matter if --

STEPHEN

-- You're not seeing him again!  
Ever!

A taxi pulls up in front of Tommy.

EXT. THE LUCKY STRIKE - NIGHT

The taxi enters the lot and stops by the Harley.

Tommy exits the back seat, and the taxi leaves -- and he  
climbs onto the bike. He also looks at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 8:22.

BACK TO THE LUCKY STRIKE

Tommy starts his Harley -- and notices a nearby motel room  
door ajar, with light coming from inside it.

MOTEL ROOM

Tommy approaches the door and knocks, just under the number  
13.

There's no answer -- and he knocks again.

Still, there's no answer -- and he opens the door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy looks around a place awash in fast-food refuse and empty liquor bottles, as well as other junk.

He sits on the bed and picks up a vodka bottle off the floor, which he stares at.

TOMMY

I remember. I remember everything.

He hears glass BREAK, and he looks into the bathroom.

The mirror there has been punched, with blood dripping down it.

Black Flag's "Room 13" PLAYS, and he turns and looks at himself in the room mirror -- and he sees that his head is shaved and that he's shirtless, with Black Flag's four-bar logo tattooed on his arm.

Furiously, he smashes the bottle onto the floor.

TOMMY

(singing)

Keep me alive! Keep me alive! Keep  
me alive! Keep me aliiiiiiiive!

He lowers his head into his fists.

TOMMY

Had enough?

He rips off the glasses.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy exits and marches toward the Harley.

His phone RINGS -- and he takes it out and looks at it.

INSERT - PHONE

It displays "Jack."

BACK TO MOTEL

Tommy answers the phone.

TOMMY

Jack?

JACK (V.O.)

Sorry to bother you on Christmas  
Eve, boss.

TOMMY

You work for me?

JACK (V.O.)

Are you trying to tell me  
something?

TOMMY

No.

JACK (V.O.)

Wesson's going negative, just like  
you said he would.

TOMMY

Negative?

JACK (V.O.)

I saw the ads. They're brutal --  
and Wesson's gonna blanket Iowa and  
New Hampshire with them right after  
Christmas. It's hardball time.

TOMMY

Hardball?

JACK (V.O.)

(softly)

You know. Like we talked about.  
Pass along that you-know-what  
before they can run those ads.

TOMMY

I don't know about this.

JACK (V.O.)

Hey, you're the one who said you  
can't win the presidency wearing  
white dinner gloves.

TOMMY

I said that?

JACK (V.O.)  
Actually, it was Lenin.

TOMMY  
I quoted Lenin?

JACK (V.O.)  
Paraphrased. There's a difference.

TOMMY  
Is there?

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy slowly drives his Harley onto the driveway, and the garage door opens.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy walks past the staircase.

TOMMY  
Hello?

DARLENE (O.S.)  
I'm in here!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy enters, and stops a short distance from Darlene, who's reclining on a couch watching TV.

DARLENE  
You missed dinner.

TOMMY  
Sorry.

DARLENE  
We understand. You've got an important job. There's some turkey warming in the oven.

TOMMY  
I'm a vegetarian.

She glances at him incredulously.

DARLENE

You haven't been a vegetarian in twenty years.

TOMMY

What?

She turns back to the television.

DARLENE

Remember all those barbecues you had to go to when you were running for the assembly?

TOMMY

I guess, I guess I'm not such a honest politician, after all.

DARLENE

You're the most honest there is.

TOMMY

That's pretty scary.

DARLENE

Come here -- our show's starting.

He walks up behind her, and she reaches back for his hand, which he reluctantly takes. He further looks at the TV.

TOMMY

Is Uncle Floyd still on the air?

DARLENE

Who?

TOMMY

You know, that crazy show from when we were kids. You had to watch it on one of those UHF stations.

DARLENE

I don't remember it.

The two continue watching the television.

Darlene bursts out into laughter, while Tommy looks on blankly.

TOMMY

This is our show?

Tommy notices Darlene's desk and the laptop on top of it -- and he points to it with his free hand.

TOMMY

Does that have the Internet?

BY THE DESK

Tommy looks at the laptop screen with a hopeless expression.

INSERT - SCREEN

There's nothing but meaningless links for Gertrude Weiss.

BACK TO DESK

Tommy takes out the pair of glasses -- and he stares at them.

EXT. COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Tommy, who's wearing the glasses, drives by on his Harley.

TOMMY

Rudi?

There's no reply or sign of her, and he continues on.

EXT. UNDERHILL FIELD - NIGHT

Tommy drives by the stadium.

TOMMY

Where are you?

There's no reply or sign of her, and he continues on.

EXT. RESERVOIR PIZZA - NIGHT

Tommy drives by the closed restaurant.

TOMMY

I'm sorry!

There's no reply or sign of her, and he stops -- and looks everywhere.

TOMMY

I'm so sorry.

He speeds off.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy pulls up to the curb, with Rudi speaking to Elizabeth by the front door.

BY THE DOOR

Elizabeth shakes her head.

ELIZABETH

I don't know what I can tell you.

RUDI

Could, could you call me if you hear anything?

ELIZABETH

Misses Goodwin --

RUDI

-- Please. Tommy, he's all alone.  
And I love him.

Visibly moved, Elizabeth looks inside the house -- and then turns back to Rudi.

ELIZABETH

(softly)

Give me your number. Quickly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Rudi aimlessly heads down a sidewalk.

A safe distance back rides Tommy on his Harley.

She approaches a small group of TEENS, who snicker among themselves while staring at her.

She lowers her head as she reaches them -- and they rush away from her like she has the plague.

BOY

You hear the one about the girl  
with AIDS?

Out of nowhere comes Owen -- the bully Rudi earlier beat up and then befriended -- and with great fury he pushes his way through the teens and marches up to Rudi from behind.

Gently, he puts his hand on her shoulder -- and she turns toward him with surprise.

OWEN

Been doing some reading.

They touch hands.

OWEN

Tell Tommy I'm pulling for him.

She rushes off.

EXT. SOUTH ORANGE RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

Rudi staggers inside a darkened two-story building that has one lit room -- on the second floor.

Tommy runs in after her.

INT. RECREATION CENTER, SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Gasping for breath, Tommy reaches the top of a staircase and approaches Rudi, who's leaning inside a doorway with her back to him.

PEOPLE (O.S.)

(hauntingly)

God, grant me the serenity to  
accept the things I cannot change.  
The courage to change the things I  
can. And wisdom to know the  
difference.

FRANK (O.S.)

Would you like to share something?

Rudi shrugs, but slowly steps inside.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Rudi stops up front, next to FRANK -- an aging man who's sitting beside a table covered in keychains of various colors -- and she faces forward.

RUDI

My name's Rudi.

PEOPLE (O.S.)

Hello, Rudi.

RUDI

I've been clean, I don't know, for about a week.

(to Frank)

I was doing real good before that. Almost a year.

He smiles gently at her, and Rudi turns forward again.

RUDI

Oh, I forgot to say I'm an addict.

FRANK

(softly)

It's all right.

RUDI

I guess, I guess I didn't say it because I like to pretend that I'm not. I like to pretend that I've licked all my problems, and that I'm strong and in control.

She lowers her head.

RUDI

But I'm an addict. And I'm not strong and I'm not in control and I'm just about to fall apart.

Frank reaches out his hand to Rudi and she grips it tightly.

RUDI

I've always been alone. Even when I was all fucked up I never let anyone near me. Never. And now, now that I . . . I don't even know if he's alive right now, and I don't know if I can make it if he's not.

She rushes out of the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROOM - NIGHT

Rudi storms into the hallway, watched by Tommy, who's standing by the side of the door and crying.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rudi rushes down the path heading to the falls.

Tommy parks his Harley in front of the path.

EXT. WATERFALL - NIGHT

Tommy enters the clearing, not far from Rudi, who's sitting on the rock he has sat on multiple times.

She crosses her arms as if she were holding someone.

RUDI

It doesn't work, Tommy. It doesn't.  
I still feel alone.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Rudi lifelessly staggers down a sidewalk.

A safe distance back rides Tommy on his Harley.

She stops at a house.

EXT. RUDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rudi slithers through the front door, leaving it open.

Tommy creeps up to the door, and, after some hesitation, he steps inside the house.

INT. RUDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy passes a staircase, and he hears FOOTSTEPS coming from upstairs -- and hides behind a wall.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

You have a phone call. Someone named Elizabeth. She says it's important.

RUDI (O.S.)

Elizabeth?

STEPHEN (O.S.)

She doesn't sound like a teenager.

RUDI (O.S.)

Oh. I'll get it.

Tommy hears FOOTSTEPS rushing down the second-floor hallway and then down the stairs.

Rudi runs past him and enters the kitchen -- and Tommy peeks inside it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rudi anxiously grabs the phone.

RUDI

You've found him?

She listens with horror.

And she drops the receiver onto the floor, and rushes out of the kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hurriedly, Rudi puts on an overcoat from the closet and grabs her drawstring bag. She further turns around -- and faces an angry Stephen.

STEPHEN

Who was that?

RUDI

A friend.

STEPHEN

It was about Tommy! I was listening!

RUDI

(with lots of anger)  
So, why are you fucking asking me?

STEPHEN

What did I tell you about him?

Rudi pushes Stephen away and starts toward the front door.

STEPHEN

You're not gonna see him!

RUDI

You can't stop me!

STEPHEN

The hell I can't!

Stephen runs up to Rudi, and he grabs her from behind -- and she flips him over her shoulder and onto the floor. And she continues toward the door.

Hurriedly, Stephen rises to his knees.

STEPHEN

You see him and you're never coming back into this house again!

The only reply is the SLAMMING of a door.

Stephen jumps to his feet and marches to the stairs and up them.

Quietly, Tommy heads toward the front door.

EXT. RUDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy exits into heavily falling snow.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

With snow and wind pounding upon her, Rudi marches up a long and steep and slippery hill.

A safe distance back rides Tommy on his Harley.

TOMMY

I'm not worth it, Rudi. I'm so not worth it. I'm a fraud. Go back. Go back and forget me.

She continues up the hill.

TOMMY

I know what you're thinking. I'm thinking it, too. I'm just saying these things so I won't feel bad about living.

He stops the bike, and lowers his head.

TOMMY

Is that so bad? Is it so bad to want to live?

He raises his head.

TOMMY

I, I may not be perfect, but think what I could do if I became president. I could do good. I could change the world!

He watches Rudi continue up the hill.

TOMMY

You'd want me to live. I know you would. And you know it, too!

He starts the bike and takes off -- and speeds past her.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tommy turns a corner.

Halfway down the hall the doctor talks to Rudi, who's covered in melting snow and ice.

DOCTOR

Even if he makes it through this bout, if he keeps doing what he's doing, I can almost assure you he won't make it through the next.

RUDI  
What can I do?

DOCTOR  
Ever heard of tough love?

Rudi nods.

DOCTOR  
You're the only one I see who can  
give it to him.

Tommy enters a room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy lies on a bed, with a blank expression -- and he turns  
away from the door.

TOMMY  
You kicked her out once . . .

Rudi comes to the door, and she puts on an apathy face  
before marching toward Tommy.

She reaches him, and grabs his hand -- and he pulls it away.

TOMMY  
I told you to leave me alone.

She grabs his hand again -- this time firmer.

RUDI  
You can't push me away anymore.

TOMMY  
Go. Please go.

RUDI  
Not until you look at me.

Reluctantly, he turns toward her and sees her fury.

RUDI  
There's gonna be some changes  
around here. From now on you're  
gonna take care of yourself. And  
you're gonna do what that doctor  
tells you!

Her fury morphs into tears.

RUDI

And, and you're gonna fucking love  
me!

She collapses on top of him and grasps his coat with her  
fists as she cries.

RUDI

Because I fucking love you. God,  
how I love you!

He tries to resist her. He tries and tries and tries.

Suddenly, he grips her neck with his hand and clenches his  
eyes closed -- and he shivers. She shivers, too.

RUDI

Tommy!

TOMMY

I can't live without you. It's not  
a figure of speech or hyperbole or  
whatever the correct term is. It's  
just fact.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tommy exits the room and staggers down the hall.

He comes to an open door and looks inside a somewhat  
darkened room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy approaches Rudi, who's asleep in a chair by the empty  
bed -- with an open college textbook in her lap and a  
Reservoir Pizza box on the table next to her.

He stops at the bed, and climbs onto it -- and he notices a  
diary on the nightstand. Which he picks up and starts  
shuffling through -- before coming to a stop at a page in  
the middle, which he reads.

TOMMY (V.O.)

It was the best part of the night  
-- the best part of my whole life:  
holding her and protecting her and  
feeling her breathe against me.

He turns the page.

TOMMY (V.O.)

This is actually the best incentive  
I have to keep living: so I can  
keep feeling her body clinging to  
mine. I even told myself I wasn't  
gonna die, and I kept saying it  
over and over till I believed it.

He closes the diary, puts it back on the nightstand, and  
turns to Rudi.

TOMMY

(softly)

Rudi?

She awakes, and smiles at him with overwhelming love.

RUDI

You okay?

TOMMY

Why? Why are you doing all this for  
me? Why?

She stands up, puts the textbook on the table -- and she  
sits on the bed next to him.

He scoots over a little, and they both lie down -- and she  
rests her head on his shoulder.

RUDI

Don't think for a second that I did  
any of this for you. I did it all  
for me. I'm the most selfish person  
alive.

He gently puts his hand on her wrist, and she gasps for  
breath.

RUDI

I was thinking. I was thinking  
maybe I could change my look some.

She pauses, and collects her thoughts.

RUDI

You know, get a new haircut, some new clothes and makeup. I could be, I don't know, I could be someone who doesn't embarrass you.

He doesn't reply.

RUDI

Tommy, did you hear me?

TOMMY

I fell in love, I fell in love with a girl who was no one but her. Nothing less would ever do.

She clenches her eyes closed, trying to prevent the tears.

RUDI

You were wrong, after all.

TOMMY

About what?

RUDI

You're the best anywhere.

TOMMY

And you're my fairy tale.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy approaches the automatic doors.

His phone RINGS, and he ignores it -- and exits.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy parks his Harley in the same spot he found his car that morning -- and he looks at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 11:43.

BACK TO FOREST

Tommy steps off the bike and starts down the path.

EXT. WATERFALL - NIGHT

Tommy sits on the same rock he has sat on multiple times.

He takes out the gift box from his overcoat -- and glances at it.

RUDI (O.S.)

What is it?

TOMMY

An illusion.

With his watch displaying 11:59, Tommy tosses the box.

The box hits the water below and splashes.

Tommy's watch turns to 12:00.

INT. TOMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

With punk rock softly PLAYING and snow falling in the window behind him, a sickly and frail Tommy -- who's sitting on a bed -- struggles to tie a big white bow wrapped around a gift-wrapped box.

Sweat drips down his face as he fails to tie it.

He takes out a handkerchief and wipes his face. He further looks at a nearby wall -- at Rudi's drawing of him inside a frame.

Inspired, he tries to tie the bow again, with lots of determination.

This time he succeeds -- and he slowly lifts himself off the bed, and even more slowly lifts the present. And he carries it, step-by-step toward the door.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

With punk rock still PLAYING, Tommy exits the bedroom with the present and continues forward.

Looking faint, he stops in front of a modest Christmas tree, and he slowly lowers himself and the gift. He also coughs -- a loud hacking cough.

Quietly, Rudi opens the front door behind him.

He struggles to put the gift under the tree.

She looks as if she will cry. But she pulls herself together and enters the apartment, and closes the door.

He turns to her and smiles.

TOMMY

You've caught me.

RUDI

I don't have a gift for you.

TOMMY

You've already given me your gift.

RUDI

I do have a little something.

She walks up to him while taking off her drawstring bag.

And she reaches inside her sack -- and takes out the bag of chocolate she bought at the mall in the beginning of the story.

LATER

With "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" PLAYING, Tommy and Rudi -- while sitting on a couch together -- each lift a big hunk of white chocolate, and they smile at each other.

They further intertwine their arms as if they were toasting with champagne, and they eat their chocolate, with expressions of bliss.

Slowly, they inch toward each other -- and they kiss.

And he finds himself wrapped in the arms of his gift.

FADE OUT.