Victims by Patricia White

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TITLE: "NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK 1985"

EXT. CATERING HALL - NIGHT

There are two ambulances in the parking lot. TEENS exit the prom and police officers usher the curious and upset teens wearing prom dresses and tuxedos to their limousines. The situation is under control, yet activity flourishes around them - officers, paramedics and detectives work like carpenter ants among the lights in the dark night.

A COUPLE approaches an OFFICER.

TEEN BOY

What's going on?

OFFICER

Move along please; everything is under control.

TEEN GIRL

Did anyone get hurt?

OFFICER

Keep moving please. Thank you.

The couple continues down the steps towards the limo.

The officer looks over his shoulder towards the ambulances.

TEEN GIRL (O.S.)

I hear something happened to Toni Spresso.

A SECOND OFFICER stands behind an ambulance. We only see his back.

DETECTIVE MAZZELLA watches PARAMEDICS lift the body of the deceased, whose face and body is covered with a sheet, into the ambulance.

PARAMEDIC

One DOA, sir?

DETECTIVE MAZZELLA

One DOA and one critical.

PARAMEDIC

Do you need an additional ambulance?

DETECTIVE MAZZELLA

No, the male victim sustained minor injuries; I'll transport after questioning.

The Paramedic returns to his patients.

From behind, Detective Mazzella heads towards the SECOND OFFICER. The second officer hands a styrofoam cup to an INDIVIDUAL, who wears a blanket and sits at the edge of ambulance.

Before the identities of SECOND OFFICER OR INDIVIDUAL are revealed,

CUT TO:

TITLE "TWO MONTHS EARLIER - APRIL 1985"

INT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

TONI exits a stall wearing a busgirl uniform.

She bends and neatly folds her cheerleader uniform and then places it into a backpack. She walks to the mirror, opens her purse and places a menagerie of make-up on the mirror shelf. She flips her hair and applies lipstick.

She puckers her lips, licks them seductively and raises her brows. She poses a sexy "fuck me" stare in the mirror.

EXT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

JOHN, 21, is driving. His brother, COLE, 18, is the passenger.

Cole holds a bouquet of flowers.

JOHN

Full scholarship. She'll be so proud.

COLE

She's the one. One year from now, she'll be packing to head down to me.

JOHN

Then a big wedding, little kids.

COLF

You bet. Four years is going to fly by real quick.

JOHN

Whatever you say.

COLE

What? You don't think, just cause we're young, this won't last? I'm telling you, it will.

JOHN

I'm not saying anything. Think what you want.

COLE

She's perfect.

JOHN

Nobody's perfect.

COLE

Perfect for me.

INT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

Toni reaches down her shirt and lifts each breast higher into her bra to be sure her cleavage is showing. She sprays perfume on her neck, down her cleavage and in between her legs. She replaces the makeup to her purse. She fluffs her hair, opens and slightly tightens her lips and turns to exit the hallway in complete confidence.

IN THE SMOKING SECTION

GIRL in cheerleader uniform slaps SEAN across the face

GIRL

You were such a waste of my time! You suck! I am out of here, loser. Let's go girls.

Toni enters as Girl exits with entourage.

TONI

What did I miss?

SEAN

Absolutely nothing.

Sean looks her body up and down.

SEAN

(continuing)

But I know what I've been missing.

TONI

The flavor of the week.

EXT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY John and Cole pull into a space.

COLE

We'll cut across the courtyard. She has a free. She's always there. By the way, thanks for the ride.

JOHN

That's what brothers are for.

COLE

You coming?

JOHN

Why not. My interview's not until four.

COLE

Mt. Vernon, Right?

JOHN

I think I have a great shot.

John and Cole exit the car and head towards the courtyard.

INT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL SMOKING SECTION - DAY

TONT

You missed my entire sophomore year when I had a crush on you.

Sean moves closer.

SEAN

I like your outfit.

TONI

It's a uniform. Apparently, you're tired of uniforms.

SEAN

Not that one.

You should have been looking at me over a year ago, when I was looking at you.

SEAN

What's the difference? Better late than never.

Toni moves closer.

TONI

You want to know what you've been missing?

Sean moves in to Toni.

SEAN

Definitely my loss.

TONI

Now that Louisa's out of the picture.

Toni seductively places her arms around Sean's neck.

SEAN

Show me.

Sean and Toni's faces come together. They begin to kiss.

EXT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Cole stops short in disbelief. He sees them kissing from across the courtyard and turns abruptly to leave.

John pauses a moment and realizes.

JOHN

Oh shit.

John hurries to follow Cole.

Toni breaks from the kiss.

TONI

Now you know.

SEAN

What?

TONI

What you'll never have.

SEAN

You're a tease. The sooner you leave -

TONI

The happier I'll be. Bye, Loser.

Toni exits.

TONI

(to herself)

Jerk.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

John turns the ignition and looks over to Cole.

COLE

Not a word. Not one fucking word.

Cole tosses the bouquet of flowers out the car window.

EXT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Toni exits main lobby doors, practically skips to her car and drives off.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - DAY

There are two dining rooms, the front is larger than the back. Tables are set with gold tablecloths for parties of two to four or six. A large window exposes low shrubbery lit with tiny gold lights. There is a partial unobstructed view of the parking lot.

BEA, late 40's, enters. She styles her hair in two ponytails. Her uniform is adorned with Mickey Mouse pins, a name-tag and she wears a Mickey Mouse watch. She is bouncy, youthful, and energetic.

BEA

Did he see us?

CARLA

No, he went downstairs to get some cherries for the bar.

BEA

Did everyone sign the card?

CARLA

Everyone except Joe and Toni.

BEA

Is she on tonight?

CARLA takes the cake out of the box. Bea assists.

CARLA

She's usually on Fridays.

JOE enters from kitchen and puts bread in the breadbox.

CARLA

Who's on with you?

JOE

Toni's in the kitchen. That cake looks great.

CARLA

Sign the card. Bea, go get everyone.

Bea exits.

Toni enters through the kitchen door tying her apron.

TONI

That thing is so gross. Is that what we pitched in for? It's hairy.

Joe hands her the card.

JOE

Sign.

CARLA

Yes. That's his gift. Today he turns 30, and he's getting a spider.

Carla puts the candles on the cake.

ENTER Bea, HOSTESS, BOBBY the WAITER, JORDAN the COOK, AND MANAGER

BOBBY

Light the candles. I'll get him.

Carla and Joe light candles.

Bobby enters bus station and calls to Victor.

BOBBY

Victor. Victor!

Yes.

BOBBY

Could you come help me for a second?

VICTOR, 30, enters. His pallor is evident.

BOBBY

I just need you for a minute in the back.

Bobby and Victor enter the rear dining room. ALL burst out to sing "Happy Birthday".

VICTOR

Wow. Thanks guys.

Victor blows out the candles.

VICTOR

Thank you! This is really nice. Thank you.

CARLA

Now, make a wish, and cut the cake.

BEA

This is from everyone. We hope you like it.

VICTOR

(reading aloud from card)

We don't like you cause you're young and sturdy. We dig you cause you're old and dirty.

Victor picks up fish tank. Waves at tarantula with his index finger.

VICTOR

Hello cutie-shit. I like him. I used to have one of these. They're great.

JORDAN

Let's cook him!

TONI

You're gross.

VICTOR

Tortellini alla Tarantula.

Tonight's special.

CARLA

Couldn't be any worse than what you normally make.

JORDAN

I'm going to cook you too!

CARLA

I'd taste better.

VICTOR

Taste? When?

CARLA

You're an animal Victor. You need a girlfriend.

Carla exits into the kitchen.

Jordan follows a few steps behind.

JORDAN

She needs an enema.

VICTOR

Go give it to her.

JORDAN

That tight bitch?

MANAGER

Great cake. Happy birthday man. I've got orders to make.

He exits through the left dining room. The telephone rings.

HOSTESS

I got it.

Hostess exits.

BEA

I'm glad you like it Victor.

VICTOR

I'm going to put him on top of my TV.

HOSTESS

(Calling from the bar.) Bobby, your wife is on line one.

BOBBY

Ball and chain calls. Happy Birthday Vic.

(CONTINUED)

Bobby exits.

TONI

How will you get that thing home? Don't you take the train?

VICTOR

I mostly drive.

TONI

Where do you live?

VICTOR

In Queens, Ozone Park. I got an apartment. It's nice.

TONI

You drive from Queens to here everyday? That's pretty far for a bartending job.

VICTOR

I got a vending machine route. It takes me up north, this way. My parents live in Mt. Vernon. I go see them sometimes. It's not a bad drive at all.

TONI

You have two jobs?

VICTOR

I get up around six and I deliver a few days a week - some schools, gas stations - I work here at night.

BEA

That's why you look so tired all the time?

VICTOR

I hate these bags under my eyes.

TONI

I have make-up for that. It's for girls, but it will work on anyone.

VICTOR

Yeah? Will you put a little on me?

TONI

I'll get my bag.

Toni exits.

(calls to Toni) Meet me in the bathroom.
I'll be right there.

He takes one last bite of his cake and exits to the bathroom.

Joe and Bea are left to clear the cake dishes. Bea puts the tarantula on the breadbox. Joe starts to put breadbaskets and butter dishes on tables in the front dining room.

Bea is filling milk containers in the bus station. She notices Joe is in the front.

BEA

You got the front?

JOE

I got the front. Toni has the back.

BEA

Too bad. Victor won't be able to look at her.

JOE

She can take the front.

BEA

Let her take it. It's his birthday.

JOE

Whatever. The back's easier. He makes excuses to go back there anyway.

BEA

That's so cute. Don't you think?

JOE

I think it's sick. She's got someone.

BEA

He doesn't. Maybe they can get together.

JOE

She'll never be interested He's thirteen years older and he drinks.

BEA

It reminds me of being young and in love.

JOE

You are young, Bea.

BEA

You're too good to me, Joe. Besides, a good woman can cure a man of anything - even drinking.

JOE

That's not her job, is it?

WOMEN'S BATHROOM

Toni knocks gently and slowly enters the door to an open single toilet and sink bathroom. The room is small, and Toni and Victor are in close contact. Victor sits on the toilet and waits to be pampered.

Toni displays her concealer and begins to work on his face. She gingerly applies make-up under Victor's eyes.

As she works, Victor follows her movements and quietly admires her as she works. Victor's subtle breathing can be heard.

Toni leans and shoves her cleavage into Victor's face. Victor glares at her firm breasts. She stares intensely to be sure the concealer is distributed evenly. Then she steps back to double-check her art.

Toni drops and spins to retrieve a concealer. Victor stares at her voluptuous buttocks.

Toni bends under Victor's chin to look up under his eyes. She then bends into him and he can feel her breath on his face. She dabs under his right eye with her pinky and stands back for final inspection.

VICTOR

Do you do that on purpose?

TONI

Do what?

VICTOR

Do what? You're kidding, right?

TONI

Tell me.

VICTOR

Bend, move, get close. Show off your -

TONI

Tits? Is that what you were going to say? I was putting on make-up.

Seemed like more than that.

TONI

I think all men are pigs.

VICTOR

We are. Freud says so.

TONI

Well, I wasn't trying to show off. I like to look nice. Is that a crime?

VICTOR

We can make it one.

TONI

Would you cut the shit. I'm trying to help you here.

VICTOR

Forget it. Sorry. I appreciate this.

TONI

You're very welcome. It looks much better.

VICTOR

So, how's your boyfriend?

TONI

You kill me. He's just fine.

VICTOR

Does he go to your school?

TONI

My boyfriend? He's from Nyack.

VICTOR

So you could do naughty things and he'd never know. Besides, (indicating his face)
I owe you one.

TONI

I warned you. I'm done here.

VICTOR

I'm serious. I would like to do something nice for you... for doing this. Not many people are nice to me.

Maybe you don't deserve it.

VICTOR

Maybe no one gives me a chance.

TONI

Then don't gawk. Okay.

VICTOR

I hear you.

TONI

Fine.

CARLA (O.S.)

I need drinks. Where's Victor?

TONI

We have to work.

VICTOR

You know where to find me. I'll be the one behind the bar serving up the tarantula with a twist.

Victor exits.

Toni packs up her cosmetics.

TONI

This is such a weird day.

BUS STATION - NIGHT IS FALLING

Victor enters from the bathroom door. He addresses Joe and Bea who are folding napkins together.

VICTOR

How does it look?

BEA

Much better.

JOE

Looks the same.

BEA

No, definitely better. Honest.

VICTOR

I look more 'refreshed', right?

Two customers enter and are standing at the hostess stand of the front dining room.

BEA

I think your glow comes from Toni, not make up.

Victor raises his eyebrows and smiles.

JOE

We've got victims.

BEA

I'll seat them. Get that spider away.

Victor takes the fish tank and exits through the kitchen as Toni enters.

VICTOR

(to Toni)

Thanks again.

JOE

(to Toni)

Tease.

TONI

Excuse me?

JOE

Why are you leading him on?

TONI

I'm not. I offered to help him.

JOE

That's your problem. You open your mouth without thinking.

TONI

You're not the first one to tell me that.

JOE

My father says, "When you open your mouth too much, eventually shit falls in."

TONI

I can think of something much tastier than shit to fall in. Back off, Joe.

Toni takes the pitcher and two glasses and fills them at the customers' table.

Two more people come in. Bea seats them.

There is a commotion of noises: (DISHES, SILVERWARE, CHATTER,) etc. The restaurant is extremely busy.

MONTAGE - BUSY EVENING AT PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE

Toni clears the dishes from a party of four. She looks up and notices Victor looking up from his work to watch her. She returns a glance. Victor smiles. She returns an awkward smile.

MANAGER

Can I get you a cocktail?

BEA

I need one Miller Light, two gin and tonics, and a white wine spritzer.

POTS FALLING.

Victor sneaks a drink from under the bar when he sees no one is looking.

JORDAN

Shit!

CUSTOMER

I'll have baked clams oregano, and chicken Marsala. I'd like a side of spaghetti with marinara sauce, and a garlic bread.

VICTOR

I need coverage.

Victor bends down and opens a small refrigerator door concealed by the bar. He takes another swig from his drink and hides the glass in the refrigerator.

Manager stands behind the bar and takes over.

MANAGER

What can I get you?

INT. STORAGE BASEMENT

Victor takes a huge gulp of stashed liquor. He screws the top back on and returns up the stairs with his arms full of wine bottles.

A COUPLE approaches the hostess stand and peers into the reservation book.

(CONTINUED)

HOSTESS

There's a half hour wait. Why don't you have a drink at the bar, and I'll call you when the table is ready.

BEA

I need linens!

BOBBY

For dessert we have cannoli, spumoni, tortoni, chocolate or strawberry parfait, cheesecake, Napoleon, black forest cake, cappuccino, espresso, coffee or tea.

Toni looks up from the front dining room as she places coffee and dessert on a table and notices Victor is staring at her again. He wears an insidious grin. Toni is uncomfortable and focuses quickly back on the customer.

CARLA

I need 15 cleared, now!

Jordan's hand SLAMS the pick up bell repeatedly.

JORDAN

Let's go, let's go, let's go, pick up!

JOE

Jordan, look out!

TONI

Are you all finished here?

CUSTOMER

I'd like to get this wrapped.

VICTOR

Two frangelicas up.

BOBBY

Thank you. Have a good night.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Manager's keys lock the front door. Manager, Carla, and Toni wave and say their good nights.

MANAGER

See you tomorrow.

CARLA

Good night.

Bye.

Toni crosses the parking lot to a side street to her car. She notices Cole leaning up against her car and smiles.

TONI

What a nice surprise.

COLE

(sarcastically)

You gave me a nice one this afternoon yourself.

Toni realizes he's referring to kissing Sean.

TONI

(calmly)

Cole. Before you freak. Listen.

COLE

I'm listening.

TONI

That was Sean - the guy I had a crush on for over a year. I told you about him. I did kiss him, but that was all we did. I didn't even really kiss him. You know he pissed me off.

COLE

His face was your face.

TONI

But I didn't feel anything.

COLE

Oh, that's no problem then. It was just his tongue down your throat. You must have grabbed it and forced it down your throat.

TONI

No... you don't understand...he just made me feel...

COLE

Hot?

TONI

Wanted.

COLE

I don't do that for you?

Toni approaches and rubs herself against Cole's chest. She rubs her breast onto his chest and tosses one leg around his as she speaks.

TONI

Oh my God, you so do it for me - more than anybody ever has. I just; he just. I wanted to kiss him and then tell him to fuck off - just like he made me feel for a year when I had this sick crush on him.

COLE

You don't have a crush on him now.

TONI

Please, I'm so sorry. I swear I love you. I made a mistake.

Cole removes her snake like coil.

COLE

I've heard that before. That's what the last one said. I won't be lied to again Toni.

TONI

Cole, come on. You know what we have. I'm with you, and I would never do something like that again.

Cole pauses to consider.

COLE

You weren't going to tell me, were you?

Toni is silent.

COLE

I can't trust you. Even if I did forgive you, which I don't, I can't trust you. Even my brother saw you.

Toni lifts her hand to hide her face in shame.

TONI

Oh my God, I'm so sorry. You know I don't care about people. You're all I've got.

COLE

I will not go through this again. We're over.

TONI

(Desperate)

No. No, no, no, no. Don't throw away a year of us. It was just a kiss. At least give me a chance.

COLE

Don't tell me no, I'm out of here. Just a kiss. You were in public. I can imagine what you would have done if no one was around.

TONI

Wait, wait, please. Don't go. I love you; I don't want him. This is not my fault. I just wanted to teach him a lesson.

Cole dismisses her and begins to get into his car. He shuts the door on her, but the window is rolled down.

COLE

Denial is such a nice word for you isn't it? Let me explain: Since you chose to kiss him, I'm choosing to leave you.

TONI

Please don't leave me.

COLE

You're not alone; you have Sean.

Cole speeds off.

Toni stands sobbing.

TONI

It wasn't my fault. Why can't you understand?

EXT. GATE OF HEAVEN CEMETERY - DAY

Toni visits her parents' (Salvatore and Concietta's) gravesite. She wears her busgirl uniform and carries flowers.

The skies are cloudy and gray. A storm is brewing.

INSERT: TOMBSTONE READS

"Concietta Teresa Spresso Loving wife and mother January 22, 1941 to April 19, 1974 Salvatore Donigio Spresso February 11, 1936 to July 17, 1976"

A saddened Toni speaks to the grave. She rests the flowers and caresses the tombstone perimeter and speaks.

TONI

Hi Ma. I can't believe it's been almost eleven years. You're gone. Pop's gone; now Cole. I wish you were alive and Pop wasn't drinking. I wish I had a time machine. I remember when...

As she talks aloud, images appear from her childhood.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

YOUNG TONI, SALVATORE, and CONCIETTA exit the church after Sunday morning mass.

TONI (V.O.)

Pop was alive and we were happy.

Salvatore smiles and kisses Concietta and Toni goodbye as he leaves for a day at work.

TONI (V.O.)

We loved each other.

Salvatore chugs a beer while he steers his boat on a sunny day. Toni sits on Concietta's lap in the background, faces to the sun, wind blowing in their hair smiling.

TONI (V.O.)

Everybody was happy.

Salvatore plays poker, smokes a cigar, and Concietta and Toni serve the men at Salvatore's home.

TONI (V.O.)

Then you got sick with the cancer.

Concietta lies in the hospital on her deathbed.

TONI (V.O.)

Dad was drinking a lot.

Salvatore sits at kitchen table with bottle and cigarette. Toni comes down to comfort him.

SALVATORE

Get back to bed!

Young Toni runs back up the stairs frightened.

TONI (V.O.)

I didn't know what to do.

Salvatore cries over casket at Concietta's funeral.

TONI (V.O.)

I was so scared.

Salvatore yells in church at Christ on the Cross with clenched fists.

SALVATORE

Why did you do this to me?

TONI (V.O.)

He was so mean.

TWO ITALIAN MEN ring Salvatore's doorbell. They are dressed in fishing attire.

ITALIAN MAN 1

Are you coming?

SALVATORE

I can't. I got the kid.

Young Toni serves Salvatore two burnt burgers on a plate.

SALVATORE

You can't do anything. I got to do everything!

Salvatore tosses the food in the trash, plates and all.

Young Toni jumps in her seat.

TONI

I tried, Ma.

Toni takes the clothes out of the wash only to see they've been accidentally bleached.

Salvatore enters Toni's room and throws them at Young Toni

SALVATORE

You stupid, useless-

Salvatore turns, exits and slams the door shut behind him.

(CONTINUED)

TONI (V.O.)

I prayed.

Young Toni kneels at her bed and prays.

YOUNG TONI

Please God, make my father better. Make him stop drinking. It's not his fault. He's not a bad father.

TONI (V.O.)

I couldn't do anything to help him.

Salvatore catches Toni pouring water into his gallon of wine. Salvatore grabs Young Toni's arm.

SALVATORE

You little bitch!

Salvatore drags her across the living room and locks Young Toni into a hall closet.

TONI (V.O.)

He sent me away to camp, but I got so sick.

Salvatore picks up the kitchen phone.

SALVATORE

(on phone)

Chicken pox? Are you sure? I got to come now? When can she go back?

Salvatore slams down the phone receiver.

SALVATORE

(continuing)

Fongool!

TONI (V.O.)

I'm sorry.

Salvatore drinks while driving Young Toni home, her face is covered in Chicken Pox.

SALVATORE

(complaining)

I lost my freedom because of you. I don't go anywhere or see anybody or do anything because I got to take care of you. I got no life!

BACK TO PRESENT

Toni cries openly over the grave.

TONI

Oh, Ma. It's my fault.

RETURN TO FLASHBACK

Salvatore and Young Toni pull into the driveway.

SALVATORE

(screaming)

I can't even get in a day of fishing for this shit. Everything you, you, you. Today is me Toni; you stay here.

YOUNG TONI

Don't go Daddy. Stay with me. I don't feel good. Stay.

SALVATORE

This is bullshit.

Salvatore leans over and opens Young Toni's car door.

SALVATORE

Get out.

Young Toni remains seated.

SALVATORE

Out! Now!

Salvatore shoves Young Toni out.

Young Toni runs into the house as Salvatore peels off in a drunken rage.

BACK TO PRESENT

As Toni touches the tombstone, lightening flashes and thunder booms.

MATCH CUT TO:

During the storm, Salvatore is driving his boat in open rough water. It is raining.

There is THUNDER and lightening.

He tries to bait a hook and cuts his finger.

He attempts to retrieve a rag to absorb the blood.

A large wave pounds the boat. Salvatore slips, slams his head on a metal canopy pole, and falls into the tumultuous waters.

BACK TO PRESENT

The sound of THUNDER from the storm of the past coincides with the thunder of present day.

TONI

Please don't be mad.

The thunder bellows and Toni returns to her car.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - NIGHT

Victor prepares for the dinner shift, wipes down the bar and restocks napkins and stirrers. He straightens the coasters and pours some cherries next to the olives in the embellishing container. He plucks a cherry and devours it.

Toni has not yet removed her wet jacket from the storm. She rushes to the bar from the main entrance. Her hands shake from cold and nerves.

TONI

(with urgency)

Victor, give me a drink.

VICTOR

What can I get for you? You all right?

TONI

Gin and tonic.

VICTOR

You're kidding?

TONI

No, I'm not kidding. I'm dead serious.

VICTOR

Come on.

TONI

I need a drink. Please give me a drink.

VICTOR

Okay. Easy. Don't tell Bobby or Little Miss Hostess. It would be my ass.

Victor begins to prepare her cocktail.

Go heavy on the gin. Put it in a soda glass.

Victor serves her the drink.

VICTOR

Since when?

TONI

Since right now.

Toni hurries to the back and downs the drink. She walks through the kitchen back to the bar.

VICTOR

What happened?

TONI

I can't talk about it. Make me another.

Bobby enters.

VICTOR

You better get out of here.

Bobby enters as Toni plunges into the kitchen.

BOBBY

I've got some early birds. Give me two vodka martinis.

IN THE KITCHEN

Joe is preparing garlic bread in a large pan.

JOE

(to Toni)

Good, you're here. Take over. I need to set the back.

Toni grabs the panhandle.

JOE

You look flustered.

TONI

(sarcastically)

I feel great.

JOE

Okay. Whatever.

Joe wipes his hands on his apron and busts through the double doors that lead from the kitchen to the bus area.

TONI

I love making the garlic bread.

Toni samples a fresh, browned piece.

TONI

(continuing)

Damn, this tastes awesome!

A moment later the kitchen door swings open. Without acknowledging her, Victor walks past Toni and puts the rum and coke on the stainless steel counter.

Toni looks up and smiles at Victor. She bites into the garlic bread and washes it down with another cocktail.

COAT ROOM LATER THAT NIGHT

The dinner crowd has gone, the dining room has been reset. It is quiet. Joe is sweeping the back dining room.

Toni deposits a quarter into the payphone. She attempts to act sober, but her hands are clumsy and she drops the quarter. Her makeup has worn off.

Bea grabs her sweater from the rack and prepares to leave.

BEA

Good night, Toni.

TONI

Night.

Bea takes a closer look at Toni and notices she has black eyeliner under her eyes.

BEA

Toni.

Bea indicates her own eyes and points to them.

BEA

You have a mascara or eyeliner or something.

Toni looks at her reflection in the metal portion of the payphone.

Toni begins to wipe the black smudges away, but much remains.

Yeah, thanks, wow. It was hot tonight. Must of smeared.

Bea looks at Toni whose smudges not only remain, but have become exacerbated from rubbing.

BEA

It's stubborn, huh. You're going to have to work to get it off.

TONI

Once it clings, it gets in there. Yeah. Thanks. See you tomorrow.

The drunk Toni dials. Misdials, and dials again.

TONI

(on phone)

Hello. It's me. Listen. I want to tell you I'm sorry.

(beat)

I know you're mad.

(beat)

I'm sorry again anyway.

When?

I thought you were leaving in August. You're punishing me. I want you here, so you leave. I get it. Then go.

(she wipes her tears)

Go.

She hangs up the phone gently, quietly. Then she lifts it and slams it into the rest. She repeats this three times. Crying, she pulls her purse from the top shelf and exits into the main dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM

The tables are set for lunch the following day. The restaurant is dark and quiet. All are gone and the Manager is about to lock up.

Toni looks into the main dining room. It's her job to sweep, but she's too tired from drinking, so she kicks some crumbs under the carpet.

Victor enters from the parking lot into the front doors.

VICTOR

Did Bea leave?

Yeah.

VICTOR

Shit.

TONI

Why?

VICTOR

I need jumper cables.

TONI

(trying to maintain her

composure)

I think I have a pair in my trunk.

VICTOR

Can I use them?

TONI

Sure.

Victor and Toni walk to the car. Toni cannot walk straight and Victor must assist her. He positions her to lean against the driver's side-door.

VICTOR

So, how did you do tonight?

TONI

Good. I made \$52 clearing dishes.

VICTOR

From the looks of it, you dropped a couple of dishes tonight. How did you work a shift?

TONI

It just kind of hit me hard at the end.

VICTOR

Are you ever going to tell me what was wrong tonight? Were you crying?

TONI

Nope.

VICTOR

Don't say I didn't ask. (changing the subject)
Fifty two bucks is good - especially for your age.

(CONTINUED)

I'm not complaining.

VICTOR

You sure you're okay?

TONI

Too many rum and cocks, I mean cokes. Wow, sorry.

VICTOR

No problem. You'll be fine tomorrow. Drink water and have two aspirin before you fall asleep.

Victor opens her trunk and retrieves the cables. He hooks up the cables and runs his car.

He makes conversation while the battery charges.

VICTOR

You and Joe are good. Carla is a bitch, but she makes good tips.

TONI

She's cheap compared to Bea.

(beat)

Why are you so weird?

VICTOR

Weird?

TONI

You do scary stuff, Victor. I don't like when you stare at me.

VICTOR

I was just a little worried about you.

Victor tries the car and it turns.

TONI

Don't you worry about me. Is it done?

VICTOR

Let me make sure it doesn't die.

Toni becomes impatient.

TONI

Your car's a piece of shit.

You've got a lot of shit coming out of that pretty mouth tonight.

TONI

Better out than in.

VICTOR

You should put your lips to better use - on your stupid boyfriend.

TONI

There's no boyfriend. He's gone.

VICTOR

Good. You deserve it.

Toni rapidly unhooks the cables.

TONI

Give me back my cables. Asshole. I'm going home.

VICTOR

Miss Cheerleader. You're nothing but a piss-pot busgirl.

TONI

Beats being a loser adult alcoholic.

Victor pauses. Tears swell in his eyes.

VICTOR

(livid)

At least no one dumps me on my ass!

Toni attacks Victor and begins to pound on his chest. Victor recognizes the severity of his words, grabs her into his chest and attempts to comfort her. He strokes her head.

VICTOR

I'm sorry. Shhh. I shouldn't have said that. I'm sorry.

Toni looks into Victor's face. He is openly weeping. Toni mutually understands the impact of her words on Victor.

TONI

(remorseful)

I'm sorry too. I shouldn't have said what I said.

Victor sits on the hood of his car.

(through tears)

No one has ever had the nerve to say that to me - except my mother. $\label{eq:nerve}$

TONI

I know there's a good person under there; I see it.

Victor is softly weeping.

It is drizzling.

VICTOR

I don't want to be this. My mother said the same things.

TONI

Do you go for help?

VICTOR

I want to go to AA. I can't do it alone. I don't have anyone to go with.

TONI

(beat) I'll go.

VICTOR

You'll go? Don't say that unless you'll go. Please.

TONI

I'll help you, okay. I didn't mean to make you feel bad.

VICTOR

You promise?

TONI

I don't toss people away for one mistake.

VICTOR

I know what you think of me. Don't think that way.

TONT

I'll be your friend. I'll go. I'll help you.

They embrace.

(through tears)

Thank you, God.

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Cole is packing his suitcase. John sits at a desk in his room.

JOHN

Tell me why, again, you're leaving.

COLE

Revenge.

John takes a shirt from Cole's suitcase.

JOHN

Take that one.

COLE

Why?

JOHN

It's you.

COLE

You want it?

JOHN

No.

John tosses the shirt into the suitcase. Cole removes it and tosses it back on the bed.

JOHN

Punishment? You want to punish her?

COLE

She wants me here, so I'm going there. She figured it out, why can't you?

Cole stands in front of a mirror and puts two shirts up to his face. He packs a red one and puts aside a light blue polo. John notices the shirt he discards.

JOHN

Take this.

COLE

No, wrong color.

John abides and returns the shirt to its place.

JOHN

You have no sense sometimes.

COLE

Mind your own business, (kinder) if you don't mind.

JOHN

What time am I driving you?

COLE

About a half-hour.

Cole stuffs some underwear and socks into the suitcase and zips it shut.

COLE

I need to ask you a favor... watch over her.

JOHN

Now you're playing games.

COLE

I can't be there and here, too.

JOHN

Then stay.

COLE

If I don't go, she'll never take me seriously. If I make her suffer a little bit, then she'll know I mean business, and she won't take advantage of me again.

JOHN

You honestly believe that's going to work? Grow up.

Cole rolls his suitcase to the hallway. John follows as he lugs it down the stairs.

COLE

When it's time, I'll make it right.

JOHN

You know what you are? You're a baby, not a man.

COLE

I'm not asking what you would do. Trust me. Timing is everything. I'll owe you one. Please, trust me.

JOHN

One? Whatever you do out there at that college, don't major in math.

EXT. - PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - NIGHT

Bea approaches Victor and hands him a piece of paper.

BEA

Here are the directions to my house. I'll see you around 8:00. Is Toni coming?

VICTOR

Yeah, I'm giving her a ride.

BEA

I'm so glad you two have become friends. See you then.

VICTOR

Great.

John sits in his car across the street from Palazzo Italiana Restorante. He copies Victor's license plate and watches Toni and Victor get into Victor's car. They drive off. He follows.

EXT. BEA'S HOUSE AND YARD - NIGHT

Bea is throwing an annual evening pool party for fellow Palazzo Italiana Restorante employees. The atmosphere is lively. Guests are enjoying late night barbecue and swimming.

Toni and Victor walk up the path. Victor carries a box of cookies.

They enter through a wooden fence and are greeted by the hostess, Bea.

BEA

So glad you could make it.

Bea hugs Toni and Victor. Victor hands Bea a box of cookies from a pastry shop.

BEA

Swim, eat, have fun.

TONI

Thanks for having us - all of us.

BEA

You're more than welcome.

Toni notices all the fun in the pool - a heated game of water polo - waitresses/waiters versus bus people/kitchen staff.

BEA

You and Victor are on the bus people kitchen staff team.

Jordan misses a pass. The DISHWASHER yells.

DISHWASHER

What's with you, man? Don't you have no backbone?

JORDAN

Shut up, you. You missed three already. You are so fat. You cannot even jump.

JOE

You better get in here. Things are getting hot.

Toni starts stripping down to her bikini.

TONI

Help is on the way.

Bea comes dashing out with a Polaroid camera.

BEA

Oh wait, before I forget. Stand together.

Victor puts his arm around Toni. They pose and smile. Bea shoots the film. Bea enters into the house from the patio to return to arranging a platter.

TONI

We're going to kick some ass now. Come on Victor

Toni jumps into the pool making a big splash.

(CONTINUED)

Toni high fives her teammates.

Victor heads towards the kitchen via the patio door.

VICTOR

I'll be right there.

INT. BEA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

VICTOR

Little boys' room?

Bea is arranging the cookies on a platter.

BEA

Second door on the right.

IN BEA'S BATHROOM

Victor closes the door and locks it. He stands in front of the mirror and lifts up his shirt. He stops and shakes his hands to remove the nervousness. He lifts his hands and tries to steady them from shaking.

VICTOR

(to himself)

I can do this.

He inhales and exhales to relax. Then he removes his shirt. He examines the scar on his back that starts at his left shoulder blade and curves under his armpit extending to the lower ribs. He puts his shirt back on.

Victor sinks his chin into his chest. He grips and releases his hair several times.

He vomits into the toilet.

INT. BEA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

When Victor exits the bathroom, he pauses at a small table outside the kitchen. He takes the Polaroid of he and Toni in the bikini. He cuts across Bea's living room to a cabinet. He opens the cabinet to look for alcohol, but finds none. He crosses the room and exits via the front door.

EXT. OUTSIDE BEA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Victor walks in stealth to his car. He sits and pulls out a half-empty vodka bottle from under his seat. He crouches and swallows two long shots worth and then sprays his mouth with Binaca from the glove compartment.

He leers at the photo and crouches to adjust his position. Victor lifts his shirt and caresses his penis. He masturbates to the photo and ejaculates quickly.

EXT. JOHN'S CAR - NIGHT

John's car is parked immediately behind Victor's. John is hiding low in his front seat, and he witnesses the entire event.

Toni directs her call in the direction of Bea's house.

TONI (O.S.)

Victor, come on! We're catching up!

JOHN'S POV

Victor rushes from his car back to the front door of Bea's house.

INT. BEA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

He returns the Polaroid back to its spot.

He dashes out of the kitchen onto the patio and cannonballs into the pool with his shirt still on and makes a huge splash.

VICTOR

Woo-hoo!

He bounds towards Toni.

VICTOR

We're a team now, baby!

Toni smiles and raises both hands for a double high-five. Their hands slap together and clasp shut.

Toni's smile turns serious - a look of pain crosses over her.

VICTOR

What's the matter?

TONI

You're squeezing me.

Victor releases her grip.

VICTOR

I'm sorry. Are you ready to get in there and fight?

Toni smiles.

TONI

I'm going to open a can of whoop-ass on them!

VICTOR

That's my girl - you and me together.

Jordan blows a whistle. All take their places. Toni serves.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - DAY

John is speaking to Cole on the phone.

JOHN

I'm telling you Cole, this is not good. I don't like this guy. He's dangerous. (beat)

Your plan will backfire.

Get over it! Be a man.

(beat)

I'm warning you, you better come home.

You're putting her in danger.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Victor and Toni play tennis. They volley successfully. Toni misses a difficult shot.

VICTOR

I got you.

TONI

I can never hit those when they're so close to the line; I always think they're going out. It's too late before I know I can get it.

VICTOR

You're doing great.

They meet at the net.

TONI

Do you need me to come with you tonight?

VICTOR

Can't. It's a closed meeting.

TONI

I'm proud of you.

(halfheartedly)

I'm really trying.

The sun shines in her hair. She beams and smiles warmly at Victor. Her face is flush from exercising.

VICTOR

(continuing)

I have to say this to you. You look beautiful.

TONT

Wow, Victor, thanks. Sometimes you can be really sweet.

VICTOR

You're radiant.

TONI

Don't embarrass me. Please.

VICTOR

You don't like when I compliment you?

TONI

It's not that, I just ...

VICTOR

You don't want me to think about you like that.

TONI

I don't think that would help you.

VICTOR

What's a matter? I'm not good enough? Cause I drink, or drank?

TONI

I still have feelings for Cole.

VICTOR

Is that why you still wear his class ring on your necklace?

TONI

I never led you on, Victor. I do like you, but I know I still love him.

VICTOR

What if he were gone?

TONI

What do you mean, what if he were gone?

VICTOR

What if he were gone? Dead. Or what if you never met him? Then what?

TONI

I don't know. What kind of question is that? Don't get all weird on me.

VICTOR

Just answer. Could you ever want me?

TONI

Sometimes, since you've been sober.

VICTOR

I'm sober.

TONI

Will you stay that way?

VICTOR

I can.

TONI

Prove it.

Victor pulls her waist and kisses her aggressively, slobbering on her face.

Toni pushes away and slaps him hard across the face.

TONI

(continuing)

Not that way, you idiot! Show me with your actions.

Victor changes instantly.

VICTOR

Fuck you.

Victor darts away.

TONI

Fuck you, too!

Toni watches Victor in disbelief. He slams his tennis racket into the concrete and smashes it. He slams his car door and peels away.

Toni lightly punches the tennis racket with her fist.

TONI (continuing)
Great. This is just great.

Toni walks to a nearby payphone.

EXT. REAR OF SHOPPING CENTER - DAY

Victor pulls into the back of a shopping center behind the stores where there is mostly freight trucks and dumpsters. He parks haphazardly and turns off the ignition. His chest rises and heaves with anxiety.

He reaches across the dashboard and retrieves a bottle from the glove compartment. He opens the cap, opens his mouth and stops.

He closes his mouth and eyes. He takes a deep breath, and, with his eyes still closed, pours the entire contents out of the driver's side window. He puts the bottle on his lap and rubs his temple with his left hand while holding the bottle with his right.

The bottle is in his lap and his chin covers the top. He slowly brings the opened top to his lips as though he were not controlling his own movement. He slips his mouth and lips over the top and lifts the bottle back arching his neck backwards completely. He taps the base of the bottle and forces every tiny drop into his mouth.

He throws the empty bottle across the parking lot. He turns the ignition, speeds down the back way and stops illegally in front of a deli, which is the last store in the strip.

He enters the deli, rushes to the beverage case and pulls out a Colt 45. He pays and returns to his car.

Before pulling away, he unscrews the top, and, while still in the brown bag, Victor chugs the entire contents of beer.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

JODY, 17, pulls up and Toni plops into her front seat.

TONI

Thanks for coming. I'm sorry.

JODY

What happened?

TONI

Nothing.

JODY

Is this fun for you? It's our senior year, and we barely hang out anymore. You're always with Victor, and he leaves you stranded in a tennis skirt.

Toni pauses to consider.

TONI

Can I tell you something? But you got to swear you won't tell. I think about Cole all the time. He's in my dreams.

JODY

Then what are you doing with Victor?

TONI

He needs me.

JODY

Can I tell **you** something? I think he's way too old.

TONI

But he's getting better. I'm helping him.

JODY

This is senior year, Toni. It's what we've been waiting for - cheering, partying, our time. Tell him you need a little space.

TONI

I think he'd freak. He's in love with me.

JODY

But you're not in love with him.

TONI

No, I love him; I'm in love with Cole. I've never lied to Victor.

JODY

Does he know how you feel about Cole?

TONI

He's not listening to me.

JODY

Well you better make it very clear because this can get a lot worse.

TONI

As long as he's not drinking, I'm staying.

JODY

You can't cure him, you know.

TONI

I couldn't cure my father either.

JODY

Your father was not your fault.

TONT

I would never forgive myself if anything ever happened to him.

JODY

He's not your father.

TONI

Are you done?

JODY

Worry about yourself; Victor certainly isn't.

INT. CLOSED AA MEETING CHURCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

JIMMY, 50, Victor's sponsor, sits alongside Victor. There is a small group of three RECOVERING ALCOHOLICS who each sit with his or her SPONSOR. The MEETING LEADER concludes.

MEETING LEADER

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. And tonight we have embarked upon Step 3: We have made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.

(beat)

Let us now break for the evening with our sponsors.

The group begins to move and pair off. Victor sips his cold coffee hoping to mask his breath.

He pops some Tic-Tacks when no one is looking. Jimmy walks away from the Meeting Leader and returns to Victor.

JIMMY

I need to talk to you.

VICTOR

I wanted to tell you I was sorry I didn't
call. I'm doing very well, and I'm -

JIMMY

You're drinking.

VICTOR

I'm not drinking.

JIMMY

You're drunk now, Victor.

VICTOR

Are you giving up on me?

JIMMY

I'm not leaving you. I'm your sponsor, but this is crucial. I'll give you another chance. You're at this meeting, and that's a good sign. You need to come to ninety meetings in ninety days.

VICTOR

I know. I know. I'll be here tomorrow, I promise. I want to do this. I swear to God I try.

JIMMY

I know. I believe you. All right. Tomorrow then. We go for ninety in ninety.

VICTOR

Tomorrow.

JIMMY

One day at a time. Let's get you sobered up.

Jimmy indicates the exit sign. Victor tosses his coffee cup.

EXT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC FIELD - DAY

The CHEERLEADERS are practicing a routine. Jody leads the squad yelling a specific cheer and the girls perform in sync.

JODY

(yelling)

Hit the play button!

Bob Seger's "Old Time Rock and Roll" begins to blare. The cheerleaders perform a synchronized dance with cheerleader moves throughout the song.

Toni wears a cut-off white T-shirt and her cheerleader skirt.

The song ends.

JODY

Everybody, that was great. Ki-ki, remember to hold the beat two extra counts or Toni won't have time to spot after the split.

KI-KI nods affirmative.

JODY

See you tomorrow everybody.

The cheerleaders begin to disperse.

Jody and Toni gather some pom-poms and turn to head towards the main building.

JODY

Holy shit. Is that Victor?

Victor is standing on the far side of the athletic field. He is waiting for her to come closer.

TONI

What the hell does he want from me?

JODY

Your pom-poms, most likely. Do you want me to stay?

TONI

Go, I'll meet you in the locker room.

JODY

Don't be all day, will you.

As they approach, Victor's face is sober and kind.

TONI

What are you doing here?

Routine looks good.

TONI

Why are you here?

VICTOR

I've come to make amends.

Toni begins to walk away.

TONI

I don't think I want to.

VICTOR

Please, just listen. I've come to say I'm sorry. I over-reacted. I know you still miss Cole. But you're not a baby, and I'm going to tell you this like a man.

TONI

Talk.

VICTOR

He's off in Phoenix, and let me tell you something. I doubt he's sitting around waiting for you to call. I'd bet money he's moved on.

TONI

That's not what I want to hear.

VICTOR

But it's the truth, and you know it. College campus. Girls everywhere. Everyone wants to have sex. Don't be naïve.

TONI

He doesn't want to talk to me.

VICTOR

I'm talking to you.

He takes a jewelry box from his jacket.

He hands her the box.

Toni opens it and reveals a gold ring two open hearts intertwined that share a common diamond.

Toni is silent for a moment. She looks at Victor.

The hearts are you and me.

He takes the ring and pushes it gently up her finger.

VICTOR

My heart is open.

He kisses her neck.

Toni closes her eyes and swallows.

VICTOR

Can you open your heart to me?

They kiss softly and gently.

Toni looks into Victor's eyes.

TONI

I need more time. Just give me a little more time.

They embrace.

VICTOR

You tell me when. I'm right here.

INT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Jody stands at Toni's locker waiting for her to retrieve her books.

JODY

You study?

TONI

No, you?

JODY

Of course.

TONI

Best friends share.

Jody notices the ring.

JODY

We'll play pass the calculator. (holding calculator)
Nice ring.

TONI

Don't start.

JODY

I just said nice ring.

TONI

He's helping me too, you know.

JODY

To forget Cole? You're not convincing me.

TONI

I don't need convincing.

JODY

Suit yourself. Don't say I didn't warn you.

TONI

Don't we always look out for each other.

JODY

You finally remembered?

TONI

You trust me, right?

JODY

Big time.

TONI

Then let me be with him.

JODY

Is that really what you want?

TONI

Yes. I'm ready to try. I want to love someone and be loved back.

Jody hugs Toni. There are tears in Jody's eyes.

JODY

Okay. I just worry. Come on.

They enter a nearby classroom and sit. DR. ANDA, a nerdy scientist, organizes the papers and clears his throat. He speaks as he passes the papers to each student.

DR. ANDA

Now, boys and girls - clear off your desks. Be sure to have scrap paper, a pen and pencil, and a calculator. This unit test, as you know, counts twice. Good luck. Keep your eyes on your own paper. When you're done, flip the test packet over to maintain the integrity of the test. This is our last test before the final exam. You will have only one class period to complete this unit test. You may begin when you receive the test. Be sure to put your name and today's date at the top of the answer key.

The STUDENTS settle into the test. After a moment or two, Jody fills out the answer key. She then passes the calculator to Toni. Dr. Anda crosses quickly across the room and seizes the calculator from Toni.

TONT

We were just sharing the calculator. I forgot mine.

Mr. Anda ignores Toni and intensely reads the figures on the display.

MR. ANDA

Let's see here. One period three comma, two period one comma, three period four comma. You're doing a lot more than sharing this calculator, young lady. (clears throat) See me after class, ladies.

Mr. Anda confiscates their tests.

Toni looks over to Jody somewhat frightened.

JODY

Relax. He's not going to do anything.

TONI

I cannot afford a failure. A zero will barely dent your grade; I might not graduate.

JODY

Stop it. You think I'm not pissed. This will ruin my average. I'm the one who studied.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

Recovering alcoholics, friends, family, and sponsors gather filling rows of metal fold up chairs. Many people smoke and drink coffee. Toni and Victor sit as the gathering settles down.

A WOMAN approaches the podium.

Victor takes Toni's hand. She smiles warmly.

VICTOR

Pretty soon, I'll be up there.

TONI

You will. I know you will.

The room hushes as the new speaker begins her testimonial.

MONICA takes a sip of coffee and clears her throat. speaks calmly and with a southern accent.

MONICA

Good evening. I'd like to welcome everyone to this open meeting. Please join me as we open our meeting with prayer:

MONICA/AUDIENCE

"God, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

MONICA

My name is Monica, and I'm an alcoholic.

AUDIENCE

Hi Monica

MONICA

I never thought "One day at a time" and "Easy does it" would become my creeds. saw those words on bumper stickers and did not understand their meaning.

(MORE)

Tonight, today, right now, I've been sober for 90 Days.

The audience CLAPS.

MONICA

If you're here, it's because alcohol is ruining your life. I've been thinking about what exactly I wanted to say to you all tonight - what wisdom I could impart on newcomers and that is this: Alcohol does not discriminate - no race, religion, or money can keep it at bay. (sips coffee)

When I was young, a man said to me, "Honey, you're a goddess." That man was my Daddy. For my 13th Birthday, he gave me a sex manual. He showed me what to do, and then did it to me - or made me do it to him. I was too ashamed to tell anyone. What would they think? I was my Daddy's victim and that gave me a right to drink. Booze didn't judge me. Booze didn't care what I'd done and allowed to happen to me.

(takes a deep breath and exhales)
In spite of that, I had dreams. I wanted to be a supermodel. I won Miss Louisiana and wound up here in New York. I became a dog gone model. I escaped from my Daddy and started anew. I had it all figured out - scotch and soda for lunch, champagne for dinner. Puke doesn't photograph very well.

(beat)

The day I got fired was real cold. A woman was walking her dog when I entered that bar. By nighttime, I was on the street corner on all fours, barking like a dog. I woke up in the street next day feeling nothing but cold. I was ice. I thought I was dead. A woman poked me to see if I was alive. I asked her if I was in heaven. She said, "This is New York. You can buy your way into heaven if you want to. Closer to Hell if you ask me."

(beat)

I just started laughing. Think of that irony - I hadn't a dime left to my name and I was supposed to buy myself into heaven. Well, I laughed. I laughed so hard and long I felt warm again. Heaven. As if God would let me in.

(MORE)

God must of heard me, and he answered. He said I wasn't welcome. I may not enter the kingdom of the almighty. (beat)

I asked why? Why can't I join you? I want to die. Why not me? I got an answer: God said, "because I don't take victims. I welcome only volunteers". That was my epiphany ladies and gentlemen. I was not a victim, I was a volunteer. Alcoholism is voluntary. It is free will. If I am to meet God someday, it must be as a volunteer of free will, not as a self pitying, self-loathing, self-proclaimed victim of alcohol.

Toni listens intently.

QUICK FLASH --

Salvatore raises his fists in anger at God in the church yelling at Christ on the Cross.

SALVATORE

Why did you take her from me?

BACK TO PRESENT

MONICA

So after 90 meetings in 90 days, I'd like to put this in your minds: A sponsor, get yourself one; take it one day at a time, and stop buying into victim - you've been a volunteer all along.

QUICK FLASH --

Salvatore driving Young Toni home from camp in the car.

SALVATORE

I've got no life because of you!

BACK TO PRESENT

MONICA

Thank you and good night.

OUICK FLASH --

Concietta on her deathbed.

BACK TO PRESENT

The audience claps. Toni is moved to tears.

Victor leans over to Toni's ear.

VICTOR

I can do this.

TONI

You have to.

INT. MT. VERNON POLICE STATION - DAY

John knocks at DETECTIVE MOSES' door. It is ajar and Detective Moses sits at his desk completing paperwork.

DETECTIVE MOSES

Come in.

Detective Moses gestures to his chair.

DETECTIVE MOSES

Sit down, John. I see you're turning out to be a fine officer.

JOHN

I'm settling in.

DETECTIVE MOSES

What can I do for you?

JOHN

I keep hitting a dead end. I was hoping you help me obtain more information.

John hands Detective Moses a file.

Detective Moses examines it for a moment.

DETECTIVE MOSES

What business do you have with this man? He's not from our case files.

JOHN

I realize, sir. It's a personal matter.

DETECTIVE MOSES

This is some profile. Are you getting in over your head?

JOHN

No, no sir. I'm helping out a friend.

(CONTINUED)

Detective Moses lowers his chin and looks over the brim of his glasses.

DETECTIVE MOSES

(sighs)

Tell me more.

JOHN

What I don't understand, and cannot seem to find out is why Victor never became a police officer. It's not in the file, and all I'm getting are dead ends.

DETECTIVE MOSES

I'll see what I can do.

JOHN

Thank you, sir.

Detective Moses lifts his hands and shakes his pointing finger.

DETECTIVE MOSES

Just one moment. Information on this man is the only order of business you have with him. Am I correct?

JOHN

Absolutely.

DETECTIVE MOSES

Good. Well all right. You have a good day.

John stands and extends his hand.

JOHN

Thank you sir.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - NIGHT

It's about 30 minutes into the dinner shift. The restaurant is filling quickly. Victor puts bottles of white wine on ice. Bea approaches and orders.

BEA

I need a pinot and a merlot.

VICTOR

One second.

BEA

Victor, you look great.

VICTOR

That's nice of you to say.

BEA

So, you're doing better?

VICTOR

I'm doing better.

The Manager enters from the kitchen and adjusts his tie in the bar mirror.

MANAGER

Is this straight?

VICTOR

Yeah, sure.

BEA

No, no, no. It's way to the right. Victor, you can't see this isn't straight.

VICTOR

It looked straight. I don't know.

Toni enters eating garlic bread and salami.

The manager notices Victor's eyes are glassy.

MANAGER

Maybe you're not straight.

VICTOR

What do you mean?

BEA

Easy. Be nice.

Toni busts in from the dining room and signals Victor to come to her side of the bar.

TONT

Victor, I was thinking about what the woman said at the AA meeting. Did you get a sponsor yet?

VICTOR

Yeah.

TONI

Who?

VICTOR

Jimmy. His name is Jimmy. You want to meet him?

Victor walks to the opposite side of the bar to pour Bea's drinks. Toni follows from across the bar.

TONI

Take it easy. Your ugly words don't match your cute face.

BEA

I just told him that. He's got a glow.

Victor seems irritated.

TONI

Well, he's off the booze. I think he looks downright handsome.

MANAGER

(to Toni)

You look like you seen a ghost. You sick?

TONI

I do? (to Bea) More blush?

BEA

A pinch more.

TONI

Yeah?

BEA

Um-hum. You don't look bad. Just a little, you know, pale.

TONI

You all right?

VICTOR

I'm tired. Will you leave me alone?

TONI

Touchy!

Toni heads to the coat room.

Victor pours the last of the wine. Bea places the drinks on a tray.

BEA

Congratulations Victor. I'm very happy for you.

MANAGER

(sarcastically)

Yeah, thrilled.

VICTOR

I've got to finish stocking up.

Victor hurries down into the basement and enters a stock refrigerator. He pulls a liquor crate among stock and lifts it. It's empty and the bottom has been removed. As he opens the vodka and takes a swill, Jordan enters.

VICTOR

(startled)

Oh, shit.

JORDAN

(equally surprised)

Jesus, Victor. You scared the shit out of me.

VICTOR

What the fuck are you doing here?

JORDAN

What the fuck is your problem? I came down for tomatoes.

Jordan sees the bottle.

Jordan doesn't speak; he just looks at the bottle in Victor's hand.

VICTOR

Don't tell anybody.

JORDAN

Don't threaten me.

VICTOR

I'm threatening you. You tell anyone and I'll have your illegal immigrant ass shipped right back to Syria.

JORDAN

You're an asshole.

Victor grabs Jordan by his chef jacket. Jordan is frightened by the sadistic look in Victor's eyes.

VICTOR

You listen to me. I can do very mean things when I don't get my way. Do you understand?

JORDAN

I understand.

VICTOR

You didn't see me, and I don't have any problems with you.

Victor releases Jordan. Jordan grabs the crate of tomatoes and hurries out of the walk in fridge up the stairs.

EXT. JODY'S CAR - NIGHT

Jody pulls down her vanity mirror and takes a look. She applies some lip gloss and fluffs her hair.

JODY

Do I look all right?

TONI

What do you care? It's just me.

JODY

Adam's here.

TONI

We're meeting Adam? You didn't tell me.

JODY

Is it a big deal?

TONI

No. I adore Adam. I just thought it was me and you.

JODY

I take you whenever I can get you these days.

TONI

He won't mind that I'm here?

JODY

Mind? No way. It's my birthday. (She sings)

"It's my party, I'll invite who I want to." He totally loves you. Todd's with him.

TONI

Speaking of birthdays, I can't believe you got a car for yours. You're so spoiled.

JODY

I love being a Jewish princess. Don't forget, it took me eight years of almost straight A's and Hebrew school.

TONT

I love it. I'm just a little jealous.

JODY

Well, I'd like some tits, but you know. All the breasts in Westchester County have congregated on your chest. They look even bigger than usual.

TONI

Shut up! Let's change the subject. I feel like I haven't hung out with you guys outside of school, in like, years.

JODY

More time with us, less time with Victor.

TONI

I needed a break from him. I feel smothered, like I had to ask to come here tonight.

Jody and Toni exit the car.

IN AN ADJACENT PARKING LOT OBSCURED BY SHRUBS

Victor sits in his car.

POV Victor

Watches the girls cross the lot to the main entrance.

JODY

He made you ask?

TONI

It wasn't like that. I said I felt like I had to ask. I didn't actually have to ask.

JODY

Never ask.

TONI

I won't.

JODY

He's not your keeper.

TONI

Relax. Okay. I've got it under control.

JODY

Sounds like he's got you under control.

TONI

I'll let you know if I need help, okay.

Jody doesn't respond.

TONI

Okay?

JODY

Okay.

POV Victor

Watches as they enter. He exits his car and slams the door.

Victor sneaks across the lot and peers into the window of The Candlelight. He sees ADAM and TODD with the girls.

VICTOR

Bitch.

Victor quickly backtracks across the parking lot. He looks left and right to be sure no one is watching.

Victor walks alongside Jody's car and keys the side leaving a large scratch.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Toni and Victor toss a frisbee. A dog approaches and scoops up the frisbee. They pet the friendly dog.

TONI

I need to sit.

VICTOR

You need a rest?

TONI

Thirsty.

VICTOR

So sit.

They walk back to the blanket.

Victor opens the basket and pulls out what appears to be a champagne bottle and two champagne glasses.

TONI

Victor!

VICTOR

Relax. Sparkling Soda - it just looks like a champagne bottle.

TONI

Jesus, Victor. Don't do that.

VICTOR

Would you relax. Did you think this was real?

Toni touches her neck and upper chest.

TONI

My heart. Shit. Just get Perrier next time.

Victor opens the bottle.

VICTOR

Calm down.

Victor pours. Toni begins to relax.

VICTOR

Drink. You'll feel better after you drink.

Toni drinks a sip.

TONI

It's good.

Toni quenches her thirst and finishes the glass.

TONI

Sorry. I just got so scared. I thought -

VICTOR

I know what you thought. You were thinking, I've got him this far ... for nothing.

TONI

That's pretty much it. I didn't mean to doubt you. I should have had more trust. Sorry.

VICTOR

Nothing to forgive.

TONI

Sometimes you can be very kind.

VICTOR

That makes you happy?

TONI

Makes me feel good. I know you care because you show me you do.

VICTOR

I do care - very much. You know that.

TONI

I know. I feel like you know me, or a part of me I don't even know. Sometimes I can feel you when you're not there. It's like you're thinking about me and I know it.

VICTOR

How does that make you feel?

TONI

Scares me.

VICTOR

I want to tell you something, and I want you to really pay attention to what I have to say.

Victor and Toni's eyes lock. He takes her hands.

VICTOR

No one has ever given to me like you have. No one, aside from my own parents, would ever do what you've done for me. I have never been so happy without drinking, and I owe it all to you. My life is better. I'm better. I'm a better, happier man. If I can make you feel a fraction of what I feel for you.

TONI

I do feel for you. I care, deeply.

VICTOR

I know that. But there's so much more here. You just need to let me in.

TONI

I want to love someone again, but I don't want to make a mistake.

VICTOR

I don't understand.

Toni speaks slowly; she is holding back anger and tears.

TONI

Whenever I love someone, I make a mistake. I usually don't do something right, and I usually lose the person because of it. I don't want to lose anyone else.

Victor pulls her in to his body slowly.

VICTOR

You won't lose me. I'll never let you go.

TONI

I need to know Victor. Am I finally doing something good? You're getting better. I can't start this with you if it's going to hurt me. I need you to swear you won't drink again.

VICTOR

Try me. Just try. If you can't handle
it, I'll back off. But if we don't try -

He pulls her in even closer.

TONI

We won't know-

VICTOR

What's already here.

Victor gently cups her face. They kiss softly, sweetly, for a long moment.

Toni searches into Victor's eyes.

TONI

Promise?

VICTOR

I swear.

They begin to kiss again.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - DAY

Jody, Adam and Todd burst into the hostess area of the restaurant full of excitement.

Jody approaches the Hostess.

JODY

Could you please tell Toni Spresso we're here.

HOSTESS

Of course. One moment.

The Hostess exits towards the bus station to find Toni.

Victor, hearing Toni's name, enters from the bar.

VICTOR

Jody. What's going on?

JODY

I'm here for Toni.

VICTOR

Anything special?

JODY

Actually yes. We have tickets to Van Halen tonight, at Giant's Stadium.

VICTOR

Toni can't go.

JODY

Excuse me?

VICTOR

I have tickets to a Met's game tonight. Toni's coming with me.

JODY

Well, why don't you let her decide that.

VICTOR

You should just leave. You're wasting your time.

JODY

You know. I don't like you. You're not normal. A grown man does not belong with a seventeen year-old girl. There's something wrong with you.

Toni enters bright and cheery.

TONI

Hey guys. What's up?

JODY

We got four tickets to Van Halen, but Victor tells me you're already busy.

TONI

I'm sorry. Victor and I made plans. Why didn't you tell me about the concert?

ADAM

It was last minute.

TONI

Can you ask someone else?

JODY

Sure. Don't worry.

Carla rushes by with her hands full of dishes and empty glasses.

CARLA

Let's go Toni. I need 36 cleared, now.

TONI

I've got to go. Sorry. Really.

JODY

Go, it's okay. Go. You're at work.

(CONTINUED)

Toni enters the dining room and begins to clear a table.

Victor smiles victoriously at Jody.

VICTOR

See you around, Jody.

Jody, Adam and Todd exit towards the parking lot.

JODY

I hope not.

Speaking to herself as she exits

You've got it under control all right.

INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is plain. In the corner is an unmade bed with a cross and framed picture of St. Joseph above the headboard. To the rear is a door to outside. A modest TV, coffee table, and couch furnish the small apartment. In the kitchen is a small eating table with folding chairs on both sides.

An intense rainstorm plows through accompanied by equally tumultuous thunder and lightening.

Toni and Victor enter laughing. They are breathless from running from the car to the apartment. Both are soaking wet. Toni carries a blow-up New York Mets doll. Victor wears a Mets baseball cap.

Toni plops into the shabby couch.

TONI

I didn't even care when that guy spilled beer down my back. I was already wetter than a baby's diaper.

VICTOR

Did you like it? You understood, right?

TONI

I've never been to a game before. The stadium is huge. I loved it! I definitely want to go again.

VICTOR

Maybe a day when there's no monsoons in the forecast.

Victor notices how silly Toni looks. She is drenched.

VICTOR

You look like a cocker-spaniel with your hair back.

Toni turns to a mirror and cracks up.

TONI

Is that so? You look like Bea the waitress with your hair back.

VICTOR

I'm better looking.

Both begin laughing hysterically.

The LANDLORD yells from upstairs.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Hey, shut up down there. Will you. I'm trying to watch T.V.

VICTOR

Sorry, Paul.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Did you get rid of that stupid cat?

VICTOR

Next week. The new owner can't take him till next week. He's on vacation.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

I don't care where he is. You been saying that for two weeks. No goddamn pets. Get rid of that cat, or I'll get rid of it for you.

VICTOR

Good night, Paulie.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Yeah, yeah. And keep it down.

TONI

You have a cat?

VICTOR

I found a stray a couple of weeks ago. It's just a kitten. I can't let it go.

TONI

Do you really have an owner?

Victor retrieves the kitten from a cardboard box.

VICTOR

I'm looking. You want a cat?

TONI

No, you found it, it's yours.

VICTOR

I think it wants to go; sometimes it tries to get out.

TONI

Maybe you should set it free.

VICTOR

She's mine.

TONI

But your landlord?

VICTOR

Forget him. He just yells for a minute - I ignore him.

TONI

Sucks living in the basement, huh?

VICTOR

It's cheap. It's clean. Reminds me of Carla.

TONI

You're so bad.

Toni lightens up immediately.

TONI

(mocking)

Hi. I'm your waitress, Carla, and I love to give orders, I mean take your order.

Victor imitates Bobby.

VICTOR

Who's this?

In an Italian accent

(continuing)

Hey, yeah, we got muscles.

Victor flexes

VICTOR

(continuing)

We got clams too.

Victor mimics spitting

VICTOR

(continuing)

Whatever, we got everything.

TONT

We don't got a brain, though.

Victor sits and takes off his sneakers.

VICTOR

Braving a Mets game in the rain.. I love you're into so many things. Give me your wet things. You're such a great sport.

Toni gives him her shoes.

TONI

You taught me so much. You're a good tennis coach. I could barely hit the ball when we started.

VICTOR

I have a lot more to show you. I used to coach kids. I played myself - baseball too.

He removes his wet T-shirt.

Victor hangs the shirt in the bathroom and sneaks a guzzle of vodka - straight. He unwraps gum and begins to chew.

He places a towel around his neck and shoulders.

VICTOR (O.S.)

Do I need to take you home?

TONI

Nah. My aunt thinks I'm with Jody.

You should stay.

TONI

Here? All night?

VICTOR

I'll sleep on the couch.

Toni is reluctant, but simultaneously likes the idea.

TONI

It's cold and wet out there. The roads must be slippery.

VICTOR

Come on. It's so much easier for me. Please. I don't feel like driving.

Toni looks out window at the rainstorm.

TONI

I'll stay. So, do you still play?

Victor places shoes by the door.

VICTOR

Baseball? I almost went pro, but I don't play now.

Toni observes a picture slid into a framed US Flag and gun.

TONI

Your Dad?

VICTOR

Police Lieutenant.

Toni inspects the gun under the glass.

TONI

Was that his?

VICTOR

It's a 38 Snubnose. It was his off duty gun.

TONI

Cool. What happened to him? Did he die in the line of duty?

He was retired. There was an accident. I don't want to talk about it.

TONI

Okay. Are you going to at least tell me what happened with baseball? You said almost went pro? Talk to me.

Victor sits next to her.

VICTOR

We're having a good time. Let's not ruin it. I want to tell you... It's not that I don't want to tell you... I want to tell you and share this with you... I trust you. I was playing in the minors. I was good. Really good. I tried out for the Mets. I knew I had a shot - good as anyone else there. I know I made the cut that day, but the physical...When I went for the physical the doctor made X-rays...cancer. It was on my lung ...Christ. They had to cut me from the back and go in.

He reveals his scar on his back.

VICTOR

(continuing)

You've never seen me without a shirt - it's not cause I burn, but because of this.

TONI

I'm sorry.

She runs her finger down his scar slowly and holds her lips gently following the path of the scar with gentle, seductive kisses.

VICTOR

It was rough...really rough for me. I'm all right about it now. It was along time ago. I've learned to live with it.

TONI

How come you never bring it up in AA?

VICTOR

Because, when you're with me there, I don't feel bad or think about bad things.

(MORE)

I feel like I'm getting freed from the prison of me. Who needs to drink when I'm with you?

TONI

I told you, you were great.

Victor is touched by her words.

TONI

You're not like anyone I've ever met. I'm glad we're friends.

Toni is silent.

VICTOR

Here we go again. Toni, he's gone. He doesn't care about you. He left. I'm here, and I care.

Victor moves closer looking deeply into her eyes.

VICTOR

(continuing gently)

Stop wasting your time. You're young, beautiful ...smart.
You need someone who will treat you right. I treat you like a princess, and I always will. I love you. Love me.

TONI

(whispers)

I do love you.

They kiss.

VICTOR

Forget him and let go of your pain.

He holds her face in his hands and kisses her gently, slowly caressing her neck.

He kisses her neck.

VICTOR

This is no mistake.

TONI

I'm scared.

VICTOR

There's nothing to be scared of.

Victor stands Toni up and draws her closer to him. He touches her wet forehead and hair. He places her head to his shoulder and caresses his hand down her back. He smells her as if to absorb her through vapors.

Toni's breathing can be heard. She's never been touched like this by a grown man.

VICTOR

You feel good.

TONI

You, too.

Over her shirt, Victor begins to caress her erect nipples. He pinches them and begins to twist them.

VICTOR

(seductive)

Don't ever be scared with me. I will take care of you like he never could. I'm a man; he's a boy. A real man doesn't leave.

TONI

(softly)

Yes.

VICTOR

I'm going to do what you want me to do.

Toni nods, gently pressing her head into Victor's neck and shoulder.

He kisses her breasts.

VICTOR

(whispering)

I'm going hold you. I'm going make you my girl.

Victor sucks her nipples and begins to French kiss each.

VICTOR

(continuing)

I'm going put you on that bed and lick you all over your beautiful, naked body.

He lifts her to take her to the bed.

VICTOR

(continuing)

You're going to kiss me too. We're going to make love, then we're going to fuck, and then we're going to make love again.

Victor carries her to the foot of the bed. Toni looks into Victor's eyes. They kiss soft and long. His back is to the bed and he leads her to the bed as he's lifting her wet shirt over her belly. Toni does not wear a bra and her breasts are full and firm. As she sits her shirt comes off completely.

He stands over her, kisses her again, bends to his knees. He kisses her stomach and spreads her legs...

Thunder and lightening begins again as the camera pans to the rain spattering on the windowpane - their silhouettes shadow an outline in the window reflection.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - DAY

Victor emerges from the swinging kitchen door carrying a large bucket of ice. He sees Jimmy and comes around the back of the bar. He dumps the ice and extends his hand.

VICTOR

Jimmy.

Jimmy shakes Victor's hand.

JIMMY

I'm sorry to bother you at work, but I was worried. You weren't at the meeting.

VICTOR

I'm sorry about that. I wasn't drinking. I went to a Mets game with my girlfriend.

JIMMY

I understand, but this is serious.

VICTOR

I'll be there tonight.

JIMMY

I don't think this is going to work out.

VICTOR

Why not? Cause I missed one meeting?

JIMMY

It's ninety in ninety. And, you're drinking again.

VICTOR

What do you mean I'm drinking. I'm at work.

JIMMY

You're an alcoholic bartender. You might want to reconsider your job.

VICTOR

It's not your damn business what I do.

JIMMY

You're right. It's not.

Jimmy hands Victor a card.

Call me if you need another sponsor. I'll try to help you.

Jimmy begins to exit.

VICTOR

Thanks for nothing.

JIMMY

Goodbye Victor.

INT. TONI'S BATHROOM - DAY

Toni is sitting on the bathroom toilet. She holds a pregnancy test kit. Jody reads the directions as Toni follows the instructions.

JODY

"Hold the absorbent tip in your urine stream for five seconds."

Toni holds the stick and places it between her legs.

JODY

"Replace the protective cap on tip and lay the test on a flat surface. Confirm your results in just 3 minutes. A positive sign indicates HGH (Human Growth Hormone) and a pregnant result. A negative sign indicates you are not pregnant."

Toni places on the cap and lays the test on the floor. She flushes the toilet.

JODY

Okay. Starting now.

TONI

Don't look. Let's wait the 3 minutes to be sure it's right.

JODY

What are you going to do?

TONI

You mean, if I am?

JODY

Yeah.

TONI

I don't know. I can't think that far ahead.

JODY

You honestly had no idea?

TONI

Jody, I thought it was stress.

JODY

Two months?

TONI

Oh my God; the prom dress - it's formfitting.

JODY

Are you going to tell him?

TONI

He has a right to know. It's his baby.

JODY

Who else's would it be? Oh, don't even tell me -

TONI

No. It's not Victor's. I was only ... with him... once.

JODY

Toni.

Don't judge me, Jody.

JODY

I'm not judging you. Are you crazy? I'm scared for you.

TONI

I don't know what Victor's going to say.

JODY

It's not his baby.

TONI

Is it ready?

Jody bends down to the floor.

TONI

Please God. Let it read negative.

Jody lifts the test result closer to her eyes.

TONI

Just tell me.

JODY

You're pregnant.

INT. BLARNEY STONE BAR - NIGHT

Victor slouches over his almost empty scotch-on-the-rocks. The BARTENDER clears two empty beer bottles to Victor's right and wipes down the bar.

BARTENDER

I can't get you another.

VICTOR

I'm good.

BARTENDER

I thought you had a girl now.

VICTOR

She's got me. That's for sure.

BARTENDER

Ain't women a bitch?

VICTOR

I love her.

BARTENDER

You?

VICTOR

She, she makes me want to stop.

BARTENDER

Then maybe it's time to stop.

VICTOR

Maybe.

Victor slides off the barstool.

VICTOR

(to bartender)
I'll see you.

BARTENDER

Hope not.

Victor shuffles out the front door onto the sidewalk. He ducks into an alley to vomit.

He leans on the side of a brick wall and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

He looks to his right and sees a florist shop. In the window there's a large illuminated sign that reads "Roses". Underneath this word is a replica of the double heart in the same shape as Toni's ring.

Victor stumbles to his car, opens the door and plops onto the front seat. He turns the ignition. He places his hand on the shift and puts the car in drive. He stops and puts the car back into park.

He reaches under his seat and pulls a bottle out, unscrews the top and pours the contents out of his window.

He tosses the empty bottle into the trash.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - DAY

There are a few early birds already seated before the rush.

Toni looks out from the bus station and takes two baskets of bread and a pitcher of water.

She moves mechanically in shock from the news of her pregnancy. She performs her tasks in a perfunctory manner. She walks to the first table, places down the bread and pours the water. She approaches a customer alone at a cozy table that butts up against a large window, which provides a partial view of the parking lot. She can only see the back of his head.

TONI

Can I clear this setting?

JOHN

Presetting a table for two all the time is rather presumptuous, don't you agree?

Toni recognizes John right away and brightens up immediately. She hugs him.

TONI

What are you doing here?

JOHN

I was on this side of the bridge. Thought I'd stop by and see you?

TONI

How are you?

JOHN

Good. I'm in Westchester everyday. I'm on the force in Mt. Vernon.

TONI

Congratulations. You're practically in my back yard.

JOHN

Thank you. What's new with you?

TONI

I've been keeping busy - working. I work
a lot.

JOHN

Enjoying your summer?

TONI

My summer doesn't start until the end of June.

JOHN

Who's your prom date?

As of this moment, it's Jody. You making an offer?

JOHN

I'm available.

TONI

I'll have to take a rain check. I can only deal with one brother at a time.

Bea calls Toni away from John's table.

BEA

Toni, could you come here a minute, please.

TONI

Excuse me.

Toni observes Bea looking out the large window of the foyer/waiting area.

Bea's POV studying a man bending into Toni's car.

BEA

What is Victor doing in your car?

TONI

What?

BEA

Victor has been rummaging through your car for about five minutes.

TONI

My car?

Toni looks out and confirms.

TONI

I have no idea. Thanks Bea.

Toni exits and jogs quickly over to her car.

BACK INSIDE THE RESTAURANT

John peers out from his window and moves to the opposite side of the table to get an unobstructed view.

THE PARKING LOT

TONI

What are you doing, Victor?

VICTOR

I'm looking for something I left in your car.

TONI

What did you lose?

VICTOR

Nothing. I guess I didn't leave it in here.

ТОИТ

Bullshit. You didn't even ask. You just opened my purse, took my key, and went into my car! What's the matter Victor, don't you trust me? What are you looking for?

Victor uncoils himself from the car to face her.

VICTOR

Trust you? No. I don't trust you. You're a liar.

TONI

What are you talking about?

VICTOR

Who were those guys at The Candlelight? Huh? Who were they? You said you were meeting Jody.

TONI

You've been following me?

VICTOR

Yeah. I saw them. You met Jody and two guys that night. You don't think I know, I know. What else are you lying about?

TONI

Not that I owe any explanation, but Adam is Jody's boyfriend, and I've known Adam since 3rd grade. What is your problem?

VICTOR

Who's the other guy? You seeing him too?

Toni searches into Victor's red, tired eyes.

TONI

Have you lost your mind? Victor, you reek. You've been drinking.

VICTOR

I am not drunk.

TONI

You call your sponsor. You call him right now. Give me Jimmy's number.

VICTOR

I don't know it.

TONI

Where is it? I'll call.

VICTOR

I don't know.

TONI

Do you even have a sponsor?

VICTOR

I do. I do. Yes, I swear it.

TONI

Let me call him; you need help.

VICTOR

I'm trying. I'm doing it. I need you.

TONI

I'm right here.

Victor grabs her shoulders and pins her against the car.

VICTOR

You swear you're not cheating on me.

TONI

Victor, on my life. Stop this. Let me go.

He releases her and hangs his head in shame.

VICTOR

I thought you were cheating. Toni. I can't. You can't cheat on me. I cannot live without you. I thought I was losing you. I didn't drink. I did not drink.

(MORE)

I just spilled a little on my shirt - that's what you smell, okay?

Toni is silent.

VICTOR

Look at me. Don't be mad, okay. Okay?

Toni braces herself.

TONI

If I ever find out you're drinking, this is over. I will walk.

VICTOR

All right.

TONI

I'm serious.

VICTOR

I would die without you.

TONI

No, you wouldn't.

VICTOR

I would. I will if you ever leave me.

TONI

Don't lay that on me.

Victor looks at her.

TONI

(continuing)

You've got to have a little more faith in yourself.

VICTOR

I'm trying.

TONI

You're doing so well; don't blow it.

VICTOR

I won't. I'll call Jimmy. Come here.

Victor hugs her and she halfheartedly returns his affections. Toni stands as though weights are on each shoulder, her eyelids, her soul.

Toni looks up and sees John watching from through the window from his table. As they continue to embrace ...

VICTOR

So, who's the guy?

Toni breaks from the hug.

TONI

John, Cole's brother. He's here to eat dinner. Go ask him if you want to. God, you piss me off! Is that okay with you?

VICTOR

Relax. I'm just asking. Okay.

TONI

Okay. I thought you were giving me shit again.

VICTOR

No, but I have one more question.

TONI

Shoot.

VICTOR

Why was there a pregnancy kit in your car?

TONI

That's Jody's. She didn't want her parents to find it in her garbage and she asked me to throw it out for her.

VICTOR

She's going to have a kid?

TONI

No, it was negative. Don't say anything.

VICTOR

Who am I going to tell?

TONI

She swore me to secrecy.

VICTOR

I don't care. As long as it wasn't for you.

TONI

No. It's not mine.

Victor shuts her car door, locks it, and hands her the keys. They hurry back towards the restaurant.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - DUSK

John moves back to his original seat. He is clearly disturbed, but composes himself as Toni approaches.

TONI

Sorry.

JOHN

Can I do anything?

TONI

I've got to work. Say hi to your brother for me, okay.

John hands her a business card.

JOHN

Take my number. Call me if you need to.

Toni smiles and takes the card.

INT. TONI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Toni sits knees to chest on her bed. She dials. The phone rings. She panics, hangs up and dials again.

COLE (V.O.)

Hello.

TONI

Hi. Don't hang up.

INT. COLE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Cole sits on his bed, phone to his ear.

COLE

Are you sober this time?

TONI (V.O.)

I have something to tell you.

COLE

What, you're pregnant?

Silence. Then Toni begins to whimper.

Yes.

A beat.

COLE

It's okay.

TONI

I don't know what to do.

COLE

It will be okay.

TONI

I'm so sorry about what I did.

COLE

Forget it.

TONI

Are you still mad?

COLE

No. I'm not mad.

TONI

I need you.

COLE

I know. How long?

TONI

Almost 10 weeks, but no one can tell. I don't know what to do. I'm scared.

COLE

Did you tell anyone?

TONI

No. I saw your brother.

COLE

He told me.

TONT

I don't know what to do with Victor. You know I'm in deep with him. I've been helping him.

COLE

Stay away from him. There's things about him you don't know.

What do you know? He can be very good. I can imagine what John told you.

COLE

There's more to it. He's dangerous.

TONI

He's not dangerous. He loves me.

COLE

I'm coming home.

TONI

When?

COLE

As soon as I can. I want you to meet John tomorrow. Everything is going to be okay.

TONI

You'll help me? What about Victor?

COLE

Don't worry. Toni?

TONI

What?

COLE

I love you.

A tear streams down her cheek.

TONI

No, me.

Toni hangs up the receiver. She curls into fetal position in her bus girl uniform on her bed. Surrounding her are teenage artifacts - teddybears, posters, and pictures are stuffed into the perimeter of her dresser mirror.

DREAM SEQUENCE

The image fades from Toni sleeping to the following images. All that is heard is Toni's rhythmic breathing of REM sleep.

MONTAGE

Victor's face narrowing slowly in to his intoxicated eyes.

Salvatore walking backwards to meet Young Toni. He takes her hand and they walk backwards together. Young Toni releases her father's hand and looks over his shoulder. He continues to walk backwards and fades to grayish-white.

Cole walking towards Toni at the prom inviting her to dance.

Making love in Victor's apt., She looks as she did the night of the Met game, but when she opens her eyes to look at her lover, it is Cole, not Victor she sees.

Toni giving the final push in labor. The baby is placed on her abdomen.

Toni's breaths turn to the baby's cries.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. NEW ROCHELLE HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE OFFICE - DAY

MR. KOO, guidance counselor, sits across from Jody and Mr. Anda.

MR. KOO

Do you know why we've called this meeting?

TONI

Because I was borrowing a calculator.

MR. KOO

Mr. Anda has requested this meeting because he's concerned about you. Please, go ahead Mr. Anda.

MR. ANDA

Thank you. Toni, I believe you are a very bright young lady with great potential, but you don't apply yourself.

MR.KOO

What are your thoughts about that?

TONI

I guess I could do better. I don't have a lot of time to study. I need the money.

MR.KOO

We all have responsibilities outside of school, but that does not give you the right to neglect your duties at school. There are consequences to such actions.

(to Mr. Anda)

Are you giving me a zero on the test?

MR. ANDA

Toni, if I don't punish you now, than I'm not a very good teacher. If I let you think that cheating is acceptable, then I'm doing you an injustice. That is why you've failed for the year and will not graduate in June.

TONT

Please don't do this. I'll make up the test. I have to graduate. That's not fair.

MR. KOO

I'm afraid it is. All you'll have to do is attend summer school and make up this one class, then you can graduate.

TONI

I can't believe this. I work because I have no parents and I need to earn my own money. And now I'm being punished for it.

MR. ANDA

You're being punished for cheating, not working.

TONI

I hate this place. And I hate you Mr. Anda. I hope someday, something this bad happens to one of your kids.

MR. ANDA

You don't see it, do you?

TONI

You're right. You're not a good teacher.

Toni storms out of Mr. Koo's office.

INT. DINER - DAY

John sits at a booth sipping hot coffee. Toni enters and joins him at the booth.

JOHN

You seem jittery.

It's nothing, just some shit at school.

DINER WAITRESS approaches

WAITRESS

Can I get you a coffee?

JOHN

Yes. Coffee please. You?

Toni nods no.

TONI

Did Cole tell you everything?

MHOL

He did. And there are things I need to tell you.

TONI

Cole said he's dangerous.

JOHN

He is.

TONI

What do you know?

JOHN

I've been watching him.

TONI

Why?

JOHN

The truth? Cole asked me to. What exactly has Victor told you?

TONI

About what?

JOHN

His life, who he is, his dreams, his failures.

TONI

He's told me a bunch of things- he wanted to be a pro-baseball player, but he was diagnosed with cancer. He wanted to quit drinking and now he's happy and sober. JOHN

That's it?

TONI

That's what he told me.

JOHN

Victor is still drinking.

TONI

No he's not.

TOHN

Please don't make this more difficult for yourself. He is drinking. He never stopped - and that's the fact.

TONT

No. I've helped him. He's better.

JOHN

Quite the contrary. In fact there's more, and it's even more important.

The waitress places the coffee on the table.

JOHN

Victor wanted to be more than a probaseball player. Did he ever share that with you? He wanted to be a US Marshall. Do you know what they do?

TONI

Hunt down criminals?

JOHN

Yes. Do you know why he was rejected?

Toni nods indicating no.

JOHN

He failed the Rorschach.

TONI

I don't know what that is.

JOHN

It's part of a psychological test. They show you a card that supposed to represent a motherly figure - love, affection, comfort. Do you know what he said when he saw it? (pause) Cunt. (beat)

(MORE)

I'm not done. His father's death was no accident. The body was never found. The case is still open. Victor was questioned but never formally charged as a suspect.
Are you following this?

TONI

He loves me.

JOHN

He loves to control you. He does not love you. He is virtually incapable of love. This is a pattern to him. Destroy what you love most.

TONI

But I made him better.

JOHN

You have got to get away from him.

TONI

I can't. He said he loved me. I'm afraid of what he would do.

JOHN

He's capable of killing you.

TONI

I don't believe that.

JOHN

For your sake and for the baby, let me help you.

TONI

I don't want help. Victor would never hurt me. I don't want to hurt him.

Toni stands up to leave.

JOHN

What about Cole? Don't you love him?

TONI

I don't love anybody.

Toni rushes to exit.

INT. COLE'S DORM - DAY

Cole packs his suitcase. His room is bare. He places a tuxedo gingerly into a garment bag and zips it. He takes a velvet box from his desk and opens it to confirm the contents are inside. He smiles and closes the box. He puts the box in his blazer pocket, lifts the suitcase and tosses the garment bag over his shoulder. The door closes behind him.

INT. PALAZZO ITALIANA RESTORANTE - DAY

Victor waits for Toni in the basement. He is concealed between the walk-in refrigerator and separate walk-in freezer.

Toni walks down the steps and walks to the washer and dryer. She gathers freshly folded tablecloths and napkins and heads back up the stairs.

VICTOR

Wait.

TONI

Jesus, Victor. You scared me. You're here?

VICTOR

I want to talk to you.

TONI

I need to talk to you, too.

VICTOR

I know you were with him.

TONI

Who?

VICTOR

John.

TONI

You're following me again.

VICTOR

I won't be made a fool out of.

TONI

I could say the same.

VICTOR

No, you can't. I've been faithful.

TONI

But you're not honest.

VICTOR

Not honest? I'm honest.

TONI

You're drinking.

VICTOR

Who told you that?

TONI

I can smell it on your breath. Don't lie.

VICTOR

So what. I'm drinking.

TONI

I told you what would happen if you drink.

VICTOR

I tried. That doesn't make me -

TONI

I don't care. You lied to me, over and over.

Victor is silent.

TONI

How long, Victor? How long have you been making a fool of me?

VICTOR

I don't know.

TONI

Did you ever even stop?

VICTOR

I wanted to.

TONI

I can't be with you anymore.

VICTOR

What are you going to do?

It's over, Victor.

Victor stands up and retrieves a condom from his pocket.

VICTOR

Do you see this?

He sticks the open, apparently used, condom to her face.

VICTOR

This is his cum that you made him make.

Toni is frightened.

TONI

I never touched -

Victor slaps her across the face with it as he yells.

VICTOR

You want to go fuck him, go ahead.

Toni blocks him and tries to scuttle away.

TONI

Please. Stop it!

Victor throws the condom at her.

VICTOR

Whore. Go fuck his brother.

TONI

Why are you doing this? All I ever did was try to help you!

VICTOR

Help me? You used me. You've been leading me on all along. You're with me, and you're going to stay right here.

Victor pins her against the freezer door.

TONI

Let me go.

VICTOR

You love me!

Toni is breathing heavily. Victor finds it erotic and begins to kiss her.

Toni pushes him away. He permits the break.

Toni takes a moment to find the courage to speak.

TONI

In some ways I do love you. I tried. You promised me once that if I wanted out, you'd let me go. You need to set me free.

VICTOR

(whispers in her ear)
I'll kill him. I'll kill him, and then
I'll kill you.

TONI

drunk son-of-a-bitch!

Then kill me because I could never live one day without him. (beat)
Don't you ever touch him. You lying,

Toni uses all her might to knee him in the groin. He doubles over in pain. She runs up the stairs.

EXT. GRAVE SITE - DAY

Toni stands at her parents' headstone. It is overcast. She is hysterical and talks as she paces.

TONI

What have I done?

Toni talks to the sky.

TONI

God, what have I done? I don't want to live. Take me; take us both.

Toni waits.

TONI

Answer me.

Toni waits for a response.

TONI

I couldn't help my father. Then you give me Victor. You go to hell!

Toni walks up the hill to leave. She slips on the muddy ground and tumbles down the hill.

Toni laughs and sits up.

TONI

I deserve that.

She stands and grabs her abdomen. There is a sharp pain from the fall.

Toni looks down at her belly. Her back is to a large headstone and she slides down to sit Indian style.

She rubs her stomach and cries as she speaks.

TONI

Oh, my God. Baby, Baby I'm sorry.
Mommy's sorry. I didn't mean that. I
love you. I never met you, and I think I
love you. Please, please don't go.
Stay. I want you. You're my baby.
Cole's baby.

Toni slowly returns to her parents' tombstone. She stares at Salvatore's name.

INSERT HEADSTONE

SALVATORE DONIGIO SPRESSO FEBRUARY 11 1936 - JULY 17, 1976 LOVING HUSBAND AND FATHER

TONI

Shame on you, Daddy.

Toni walks back up to the top of the hill, turns and looks out at the cemetery hillside covered in headstones.

TONI

I won't let you down.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Anda is compiling and preparing overhead transparencies. He has many textbooks and has been cross-referencing for accuracy.

Jody enters slowly holding a test packet. She walks cautiously and, in almost slow motion, places her test on top of his transparencies. She speaks with a tone of reverence.

JODY

I don't expect you to grade this test, but I had to come deliver it to you personally. Toni read all the chapters and answered those questions the best she could. I know that doesn't sound like anything special, but it was a first for her. She never studied for anything like she did this. I would like you to forgive what we did, but like I said I don't expect you to grade this and pass her. I would like one thing though. (beat)

Can you tell Toni how she did?

Mr. Anda looks up quizzically from his glasses. He pauses and looks directly into her eyes. She meets his eyes with softness and determination. Mr. Anda begins to look over the test.

EXT. LOCAL STREETS - DAY

Victor swerves his car and strains to keep the road focused.

VICTOR'S POV

The road is blurred. The rains spatters as the windshield wipers rub dirt from Victor's glass windshield over the surface.

He drives in the rain to Toni's house. Her car is not there.

Infuriated, he backs out of the driveway. He slams his fist on the steering wheel.

VICTOR

Where is this fucking bitch?

INT. HAIR SALON - LATER THAT DAY

Toni and Jody prepare for the prom. Jody is getting a manicure. Toni sits facing her as her hair is being curled with a curling iron.

JODY

We're going to have a great time.

TONI

I'm nervous. Do you think anyone will notice?

JODY

You'll dance with me. Stay by my side.

Toni smiles.

TONI

It will be good. The prom closes the old door - end of the year, end of Victor. It's my fresh start.

Jody walks over to Toni and takes her hand.

JODY

I'm here for you, no matter what.

TONI

I've made my decision.

JODY

I'll go with you.

TONI

I'm keeping the baby.

JODY

But you're so young.

TONI

That's not the baby's fault.

JODY

I will help you.

TONI

I love you.

INT. VICTOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Victor rummages for booze.

The landlord hears the ruckus and begins to yell from upstairs.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Victor, that you? I want you to get rid of that damn cat. Today!

Victor ignores him.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Do you hear me? I'm calling the ASPCA.

Victor continues to search for alcohol.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Victor, I'm warning you, get rid of that cat or else...

The cat crosses Victor's path and lets out a meek meow.

VICTOR

You want me to get rid of the cat? I'll get rid of the fucking cat.

Victor strangles the cat with his bare hands and throws it.

VICTOR

There you go, cat's gone. Ah, fuck. Fuck!

Victor SLAMS down the gun/flag case and SHATTERS the glass. He grabs the gun and exits.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Cole waits for John outside the terminal. He wears a tux and carries a teddybear holding a balloon that reads "I love you."

John pulls up and Cole gets in. John pulls away.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

COLE

Did you tell her I'm coming?

JOHN

What do you think? No.

Cole removes the velvet box from his tuxedo jacket. It is an engagement ring. He opens it, looks at it, smiles at John, closes the box and returns it to his pocket.

JOHN

Congratulations.

INT. CATERING HALL - NIGHT

Toni is dancing with Jody and a group of friends. She is smiling and she and Jody laugh as they bump hips to the rhythm of the music.

The music is loud and the prom is festive. Jody and Toni hold hands and laugh as they dance. Toni breaks from the dance floor.

TONI

I got to pee.

Toni begins to weave her way out of the dance floor crowd towards the bathrooms located in the front by the main entrance.

IN THE DAVENPORT PARKING LOT

Victor sits in his car and calls over a YOUNG MAN walking past in a tuxedo.

VICTOR

Hey.

The young man turns and walks over to Victor's car.

Victor hands the young man some cash.

VICTOR

You know Toni Spresso?

YOUNG MAN

Yeah.

VICTOR

Could you tell her that Cole is waiting in the parking lot.

The young man takes the money and walks up the steps towards the main entrance.

Victor pulls his car around to the back so Toni will not recognize his car.

AT THE PARKING LOT ENTRANCE

John and Cole pull into lot.

John pulls up to the entrance and Cole exits.

He shuts the door and leans in to passenger's side open window.

JOHN

Well?

COLE

Well?

JOHN

Good luck, brother.

COLE

I'll see you when I see you.

Cole turns to the main entrance steps.

IN THE MAIN ENTRANCE

COLE walks through the lobby area up the staircase towards the ballroom.

Toni exits the bathroom and the young man approaches her.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, Toni. Some guy named Cole says he's waiting for you in the lot.

TONI

Get out. When?

YOUNG MAN

Just now, like one second ago.

Toni heads towards the front doors and takes a deep breath.

TONI

Here we go.

IN THE PARKING LOT

Toni walks onto the porch and looks around. She turns and begins to walk around the perimeter of the porch. The MUSIC can be heard in the background.

IN THE BALLROOM

Cole spots Jody and waves. Jody looks incredulous and they begin to move towards one another.

ON THE PORCH

Victor grabs Toni, covers her mouth and pulls her down the porch side steps into an alleyway. He drags her toward the dumpster and rear parking lot. It is very dark.

They struggle.

VICTOR

Calm down and I'll take my hand off. You know better than to scream.

What do you want?

VICTOR

You won't be with me, then you can't be with him.

TONI

I never loved you. I've loved Cole all along. Just let me go.

VICTOR

You were going to marry me.

TONI

I'm going to have his baby.

VICTOR

What about me?

TONI

You're no different than my father.

Toni struggles to free herself.

Victor grabs her by the throat and begins to strangle her. She squirms and struggles.

Cole runs up and pounces on Victor.

Toni falls to the ground.

Victor and Cole wrestle.

Cole pins Victor to the ground.

Victor reaches for his gun. His hand touches the gun.

The two men are visible only in silhouette.

There is a GUNSHOT.

Victor and Cole freeze.

John stands holding the just fired pistol in his hands.

Victor falls.

EXT. DAVENPORT - NIGHT

There are two ambulances in the parking lot. TEENS exit the prom and police officers usher the curious and upset teens

wearing prom dresses and tuxedos to their limousines. The situation is under control, yet activity flourishes around them - officers, paramedics and detectives work like carpenter ants among the lights in the dark night.

A COUPLE approaches an OFFICER.

TEEN BOY

What's going on?

OFFICER

Move along please; everything is under control.

TEEN GIRL

Did anyone get hurt?

OFFICER

Keep moving please. Thank you.

The couple continues down the steps towards the limo.

The officer looks over his shoulder towards the ambulances.

TEEN GIRL (O.S.)

I hear something happened to Toni Spresso.

A SECOND OFFICER stands behind an ambulance. We only see his back.

DETECTIVE MAZZELLA watches PARAMEDICS lift the body of the deceased, whose face and body is covered with a sheet, into the ambulance.

PARAMEDIC

One DOA, sir?

DETECTIVE MAZZELLA

One DOA and one critical.

An ambulance drives off.

An officer walks to the rear of an ambulance. He hands the Styrofoam cup to Cole.

Cole looks up to John.

COLE

Can I see her?

JOHN

Do you want me to come?

Cole shakes his head indicating no. He puts down the cup and approaches Toni's stretcher.

Her eyes are closed and she appears lifeless.

COLE

I'm so sorry. This is all my fault.

Toni opens her eyes about halfway, and her speech is barely audible.

TONI

Don't worry about who's to blame, just think about what we're going to do tomorrow.

COLE

I love you.

TONI

No, me.

Toni is lifted into the ambulance. As it drives off, Cole smiles joy through his tears.