

GRIEVANCES

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD (1994) - NIGHT

Two Major League baseball scouts, JOHN and GEORGE, are sitting in the bleachers of a high school baseball game. They are intently watching TED "GUY" DICKENS, who is currently at bat.

JOHN

George, you think he's actually clean this time?

George takes a moment to think about it.

GEORGE

I hope so. Once in a generation type of talent.

JOHN

I'll bet you already have the Sports Illustrated title all planned out. Heroin addict becomes Major League MVP. Already sell the rights to Disney?

GEORGE

(Laughing)

You're not going to get under my skin, John. But I don't have heroin in the title.

John laughs as a third scout, DON, leans over with interest.

DON

You guys been following him long?

JOHN

Since he was a freshman.

DON

What's the story with him?

GEORGE

Heroin. A lot of it.

DON

How the hell does a kid like that get into heroin?

GEORGE

His father was a junky, and to be honest, he lives in the wrong part of DC. Drugs around here, especially where he lives, are as easy to get as cigarettes. Might even be easier. It's a surprise he even made it back, to be honest. I thought we had lost him.

Don nods, satisfied with the information. The three men watch as Guy swings at the next pitch and hits a double. They all shake their head, impressed by his abilities.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD PARKING LOT (1994) - NIGHT

COACH RICHARD ASHBY is standing with Guy, John, George, and Don after the game. Guy is in his uniform standing shyly behind his coach. Coach Ashby is in his thirties, unshaven, and is highly protective of Guy.

DON

You're a little old for high school ball, Guy.

ASHBY

He missed a year. Rehab. As you can see, though, he's clean now, and strong as ever.

Coach Ashby grabs Guy's arm to emphasize his strength. Don nods, but remains doubtful.

DON

Ok, well great game, Guy. We'll be in touch.

Guy remains silent and shakes his hand. Don walks away, leaving John and George behind.

GEORGE

Hell of a season, Guy. Ready for the next step?

Guy nods.

GUY

Yes, Sir, I am.

George and John smile.

ASHBY

(Looking at George)

Guy, don't you have a celebration  
to get ready for?

GUY

Yep. I think I might hit the  
showers.

GEORGE

Don't you forget about our tryout  
this weekend, Ted Dickens.

GUY

Wouldn't dream of it.

They all shake hands and Guy departs.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA (1995) - DAY

DR. MIKE WEINBERG is drinking a Diet Coke by himself. He's in his mid-thirties, has well groomed dark hair, and currently in scrubs. He looks tired as he takes a sip of the soda, but when he hears his pager go off, he looks at it, grabs his nose and close his eyes, and then runs off.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (1995) - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Weinberg runs into a hospital room. Two young male interns are tending to a young white girl who appears to be nine months pregnant. The young girl, GRACE MIDDLETON, is filthy, her hair is matted, and her clothes are soiled. Two female nurses are assisting.

DR. WEINBERG

Ok, what do we got?

He approaches the girl and assesses her vitals.

INTERN #1

Young girl, late teens, heroin  
overdose!

NURSE #1

B.P. dropping! 80 over 50!

Dr. Weinberg pauses for a second to look at her face. The nurses notice that he has identified something important.

DR. WEINBERG

What's her age?

NURSE #2

Unknown. Appears to be in her late  
teens. What are you looking at?

DR. WEINBERG

Nothing. She's white, that's all.  
Just unusual for what we're dealing  
with.

Dr. Weinberg looks at the girl's inner arm. It is riddled  
with black and red injection points and badly bruised.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

Have we contacted Dr. Thompson in  
gyno?

INTERN #2

She's on her way down.

DR. WEINBERG

How about narcan?

INTERN #2

Administered. Unresponsive.

Dr. Weinberg looks at the intern and sighs, signaling his  
concern with that news.

DR. WEINBERG

Alright. Prepare .5 CCs of  
epinephrine. Secure her airways.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY (1995) - MOMENTS LATER

DR. THOMPSON, a mid-forties woman in a white doctor's coat,  
and Dr. Weinberg are pushing the pregnant girl down the hall.

DR. THOMPSON

Alright, let's get this baby out.  
It's our only option at this point.

DR. WEINBERG

And the girl?

DR. THOMPSON

Don't count on it. But we'll try.

DR. WEINBERG

Check her for HIV?

Dr. Thompson looks at him questioningly.

DR. THOMPSON  
Based on what?

DR. WEINBERG  
She's a young pregnant girl  
overdosing on heroin.

DR. THOMPSON  
Point taken. This is your stop,  
doctor. We'll take it from here.

Two assistants help Dr. Thompson push the girl through swinging doors into a separate hospital wing. They exit the scene. Dr. Weinberg is left watching them leave, appearing to feel helpless.

INT. HOSPITAL NURSERY (1995) - LATER

Dr. Weinberg and Dr. Thompson are standing outside the looking glass of the nursery. They are both very somber.

DR. WEINBERG  
Which one is it?

Dr. Thompson points to a particularly small child that needs further development.

DR. THOMPSON  
That one.

They both stand silently for a few minutes.

DR. THOMPSON (CONT'D)  
You heard she didn't make it?

DR. WEINBERG  
I heard.  
(Looking at Dr. Thompson)  
Did she have a chance?

DR. THOMPSON  
No. She coded instantly. You seem  
to be taking this one particularly  
hard, if you don't my saying.

Dr. Weinberg nods his head, attempting to re-establish himself as a doctor.

DR. WEINBERG  
And the boy?

DR. THOMPSON

Well, it was introduced to the world by the rude shock of narcan. He was comatose when we took him out, but he snapped out of it real quick.

DR. WEINBERG

He?

DR. THOMPSON

He.

DR. WEINBERG

Will he live?

DR. THOMPSON

He should live. He's going to go through a brutal weaning process, and...

DR. WEINBERG

And what?

DR. THOMPSON

And he's small. Like, abnormally small. Like even if he hadn't been born premature, he'd still be a runt.

They both turn and begin to walk down the hall together.

DR. WEINBERG

What'll happen to him?

DR. THOMPSON

It's complicated?

DR. WEINBERG

How is it complicated?

DR. THOMPSON

The boy is HIV-positive. You were right about the mother.

Dr. Weinberg nods, not surprised by the news.

DR. WEINBERG

Who the hell is going to adopt a newborn with HIV and a genetic drug problem?

DR. THOMPSON  
No one. No one's going to want  
this one.

INT. DR. WEINBERG'S OFFICE (2001) - DAY

Guy, now 26 years old, is sitting handcuffed to a chair in Dr. Weinberg's office. Coach Ashby is sitting beside him, but he is wearing a police uniform. Dr. Weinberg is looking down at some charts. Guy has been in and out of consciousness, but he is currently lucid and confused. He has stitches on his cheek and his elbow is bandaged.

ASHBY  
Guy, you remember Dr. Weinberg,  
right?

GUY  
(To Coach Ashby)  
Yes, I remember Dr. Weinberg. It's  
you I don't fucking remember.

Dr. Weinberg smiles to himself and looks at Guy.

DR. WEINBERG  
Mr. Dickens, do you mind if I call  
you Guy?

GUY  
(Still looking at Ashby)  
Everyone else does.

DR. WEINBERG  
Well, Guy, do you remember how you  
got here?

Coach Ashby signals to Guy that he is not going to help him answer the question. Guy looks disgusted.

GUY  
Shocker, you won't help me.  
(To Weinberg)  
No, I don't remember.

DR. WEINBERG  
You were brought here in an  
ambulance three days ago. You had  
almost chewed through your own  
cheek and had enough heroin in your  
system to kill a small donkey.

GUY

Well, that would explain my headache.

Dr. Weinberg laughs and looks at Guy with a sort of fascination.

GUY (CONT'D)

You should learn to give up on a lost cause, Doc. Next time you should just let me die.

DR. WEINBERG

(Laughing)

Next time? Well, I was hoping there wouldn't be a next time. And you're right, it might be in the best interest of this hospital, but I'm not good with letting people die.

GUY

We've tried rehab before, Doc. I've come to grips with the fact dirty needles are in my future.

DR. WEINBERG

Best thing about living in DC, heroin is one of two things you can find anywhere. Ain't that right Officer Ashby?

ASHBY

(Grumbling)

You can say that again.

GUY

(Annoyed)

What's the other thing? Dirty politicians?

Dr. Weinberg leans back in his chair and laughs.

DR. WEINBERG

You're funny, but no. I was actually going to say HIV.

Guy sits up a little straighter.

GUY

HIV? Like, the disease.

DR. WEINBERG

Yes, HIV the virus.

GUY

What the fuck are you gettin' at,  
Doc?

DR. WEINBERG

I was just pointing out that in DC,  
heroin and HIV are very ubiquitous,  
especially among African Americans  
and people with drug addictions.

Dr. Weinberg looks innocently at Coach Ashby, who isn't nearly as amused. Both Coach Ashby and Guy are now equally suspicious. Guy tries to bring his hand up to his face, but it gets caught by the handcuffs.

GUY

Is that your weird way of telling  
me I have AIDS?

DR. WEINBERG

No, Guy, that was my way of informing you that you have tested positive for HIV, not AIDS. It's remarkable that you haven't crossed the threshold to AIDS, actually, given your lifestyle. But your white blood cell count is well above 200.

Guy's face drops and he actively scans his brain. Coach Ashby places a hand on Guy's shoulder, but he is just as shocked.

GUY

You could be wrong. It could be a false positive.

DR. WEINBERG

We ran multiple tests on multiple samples, Guy. It's not a false positive. Fortunately, it hasn't manifested itself in any form of symptoms yet. This could be very manageable if you want it to be.

GUY

(Angry)

Manageable if I want it to be? Why wouldn't I want it to be manageable?

DR. WEINBERG

Well, forgive me, Guy, but you  
don't live your life as though you  
care about waking up tomorrow.

GUY

It has seemed a bit overrated  
lately.

Dr. Weinberg smiles, looking at Guy like he's his own son.

DR. WEINBERG

Look, when I say it's manageable, I  
mean, it's not the death sentence  
it used to be. It's up to you. If  
you choose to follow a strict  
medication regimen of retrovirals,  
you can live a long, happy life.

No one says anything for several seconds. Finally, Dr. Weinberg gets a page. He stands up, holds a finger up motioning he'll be a minute, and walks out. Guy looks at Coach Ashby.

GUY

Why the fuck did you arrest me,  
Coach?

ASHBY

I didn't arrest you.

Guy shakes his hand so the handcuffs make noise to prove his point. Coach Ashby sighs and reaches over and removes the hand cuffs. Guy doesn't want to say thank you, but he is noticeably grateful and begins to massage his wrist.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

You pass out and become hysterical.  
They were for your own safety.

GUY

So why'd you arrest me?

Ashby looks at him in frustration.

ASHBY

I found you passed out in a pile of  
your own shit. Literally. It was  
in a public restroom and you were  
in a pile of your own shit. You  
were probably hours away from  
dying. I won't apologize for  
trying to help you.

GUY

No, you just won't apologize for  
not helping me.

Coach Ashby leans back in his chair out of exasperation. He puts his hand on his night stick as though he wants to whack Guy over the head.

ASHBY

Well, congratulations, Ted, you're finally a statistic. You've always wanted that, right?

EXT. W HOTEL BAR (1995) - DAY

Dr. Weinberg is sitting at a table at the W Hotel rooftop bar, which overlooks the White House. He is joined by MATT MALONEY, who is dressed in an all black suit and has slicked back black hair, and BRIAN HANSEN, who looks like he just rolled out of bed. They are clearly old friends and all have beers in front of them.

MATT MALONEY

I just can't handle all the fags.  
You know what I mean?

Dr. Weinberg and Brian both look around uncomfortably. Brian holds his hands up, motioning for Matt to settle down.

BRIAN HANSEN

Come on, Matt, dial it down a bit.

MATT MALONEY

No, you know what? I don't mind the gays. As individuals when they're living normal lives, I could care less. But when they all amass in one place and rub it in our faces that they're gay and proud of it, it just irritates me.

Dr. Weinberg and Brian both take sips of their beers and look out at the view of the city.

DR. WEINBERG

(Still looking out)

That's what you get for living in DC. When a group of people has something to say, they say it in DC and they say it in public.

Matt smiles, realizing he has successfully goaded Dr. Weinberg into the argument.

MATT MALONEY

You know what's worse? These people come into our city and then casually spread their diseases to everyone. Why the hell do you think there's an epidemic taking place?

DR. WEINBERG

I beg your pardon?

MATT MALONEY

You're a doctor, you should know better than most. Fags are directly responsible for the disease.

BRIAN HANSEN

The disease?

DR. WEINBERG

He's saying gay people are responsible for the spread of HIV, an accusation that is both ridiculous and ignorant. Come on, Matt, you can't just make comments like that.

MATT MALONEY

Hey, no lie, my colleague at the Times just wrote an article that discussed a new report that said gay sailors are largely to blame. It was pretty damn convincing.

Matt grins when he finishes speaking. Brian spills on his shirt as he takes a sip, but casually brushes it off and moves on. Dr. Weinberg is noticeably agitated.

DR. WEINBERG

Gay sailors, huh? That sounds like quite the educational read. Maybe if you'd start writing for a real paper and spend some time in a hospital, you might understand how ridiculous that comment is.

MATT MALONEY

(Innocently)

First, I cover sports. But Brian, come on, back me up here.

Brian is currently looking at a stain on his sweats.

BRIAN HANSEN

I would, but I kind of think you're  
a moron.

All three of them laugh and cheers with their beers.

MATT MALONEY

It's good to see you guys again.  
It's been too long.

DR. WEINBERG

I've been busy. But we should  
definitely make more time.

BRIAN HANSEN

For sanity's sake, that'd be good.  
Twins are a little bit more  
difficult than the books make it  
seem.

MATT MALONEY

Bleh, there's a reason I've  
avoided... that.

Brian shakes his head, but looks exhausted and doesn't care.

DR. WEINBERG

How old are they now?

BRIAN HANSEN

Almost four months.

DR. WEINBERG

(Shocked)

Four months? Jesus, has it been  
that long already?

BRIAN HANSEN

Time flies when you're not  
sleeping.

They all sit in silence for a moment, enjoying the air and company.

DR. WEINBERG

So, there is something I wanted to  
run by you guys.

Matt dramatically rolls his eyes.

MATT MALONEY

Of course there is. I should have known your seemingly innocuous call for drinks had a more ominous motive.

Matt checks his pager as Dr. Weinberg tries to ignore his comments. He takes a sip of his beer before proceeding.

DR. WEINBERG

So Diane and I have been thinking about having a child.

BRIAN HANSEN

Oh please, you can have my child.

Dr. Weinberg and Matt both laugh as Brian continues to rub at a stain on his sweats.

DR. WEINBERG

That's a kind offer, but Diane was thinking about a child of her own.

BRIAN HANSEN

(Nonchalantly)

That's great. What's the big deal?

DR. WEINBERG

(Pauses)

Well, Diane has had some fertility tests done, and as it turns out, there is a very low probability that she'll be able to have... a child.

Matt and Brian both look at Dr. Weinberg, realizing this is not an opportunity for a joke.

BRIAN HANSEN

Mike, I'm so sorry. That's awful.

MATT MALONEY

No.

They both look at Matt in confusion.

DR. WEINBERG

No, what?

MATT MALONEY

No, you may not have my sperm, and Brian's wife will not carry your love child.

Dr. Weinberg closes his eyes and scratches his nose. Matt begins to laugh hysterically.

DR. WEINBERG  
Are you mentally impaired in some way.

MATT MALONEY  
In several ways, actually, primarily when I drink. To which are you referring?

Dr. Weinberg ignores him.

DR. WEINBERG  
So we want a little boy, and we can't have one. So we're thinking about adoption.

Matt and Brian don't say anything. They look at each other with skepticism. He doesn't give them a chance to respond.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Three weeks ago a young woman died, and she left a little baby. And they're having a little trouble finding a place for it to go live, so Diane and I were thinking we might step in and take him into our family.

MATT MALONEY  
That, uh, that potentially opens up some ethical dilemmas I imagine.

Dr. Weinberg clenches his fist like he's about to punch Matt.

BRIAN HANSEN  
Mike, if this is what you want, you know we support you.

Dr. Weinberg relaxes, but clearly has more to say.

DR. WEINBERG  
There's more, though. This little boy's mother was a drug addict. And she was HIV positive. Soooo... the little boy is HIV positive.

Matt and Brian both look horrified.

MATT MALONEY  
Why would you adopt a kid with AIDS?

DR. WEINBERG  
HIV.

MATT MALONEY  
Whatever. There are thousands of kids that need to be adopted, and you choose the broken one. Why would you do that?

DR. WEINBERG  
He just, he just seemed like mine. I can't explain it.

Matt laughs and looks at Brian and then back to Dr. Weinberg.

MATT MALONEY  
Jesus, Mike. I mean, would you subject him to school and to other school kids? I mean, he could infect them. All he has to do is spit on them and they're dead.

(To Brian)  
Brian, would you be ok sending your kids to school with him.

DR. WEINBERG  
You can't possibly be as uneducated as you come off.

BRIAN HANSEN  
How do you expect us to respond to that, Mike? I have to admit, Matt's a moron, but I don't know if I'd be comfortable with my girls being in contact with him. This - this disease isn't in our lives, and now you're throwing it at us. I'm not sure I can understand it.

DR. WEINBERG  
Look, that's fair. And I knew you two would have a strong reaction. But, when I looked at that child, I saw my son.

Dr. Weinberg waives his hand in the air and shrugs his shoulders.

MATT MALONEY  
How the hell are you going to raise a kid with HIV?

Dr. Weinberg takes another sip of beer and then stands up, preparing to walk off.

DR. WEINBERG

It's already done. I expect you both to be on board with this.

Dr. Weinberg exits.

INT. COACH ASHBY'S POLICE STATION OFFICE - DAY

Guy, now 35 years old, is once again sitting handcuffed to a chair. He looks how a 35-year-old heroin addict with HIV would expect to look, with clothes that belong in a dumpster, dirty and matted hair, and his emaciated skin is covered in grime and sores. A small box of donuts sits on the desk in front of him.

Coach Ashby is graying and balding, but has risen in the ranks of the police station. He looks at Guy in disappointment, softly shaking his head at the sight.

ASHBY

Want a donut?

Guy looks at Coach Ashby with disgust, exasperated by the seemingly ridiculous question.

GUY

Do I *look* like I want a donut?

ASHBY

Kind of, yes. And it turns out, the police stereotypes are true.

GUY

Well it turns out that heroin stereotypes are true as well.

ASHBY

What stereotype is that? Having an excuse for looking like Chinatown trash?

GUY

(Laughing)

And what's wrong with Chinatown?

ASHBY

Nothing in particular. I'm just stating a fact that you resemble a piece of trash that I'd expect to find on a sidewalk in Chinatown.

Guy laughs again and looks away, shaking his head.

GUY

Well, now that I'm here, I'd like  
to take out a restraining order on  
Laura.

ASHBY

Who's Laura.

GUY

That cute little nurse from NIH who  
won't stop calling me.

Coach Ashby pushes himself towards his desk to look at Guy with more emphasis.

ASHBY

You mean the one who has been  
keeping you alive all of these  
years?

GUY

Hey, because of me, she is  
gainfully employed. Although, to  
be honest, four calls a day is a  
lot, Coach. Maybe then I'll  
finally get to sleep peacefully.

Coach Ashby grimaces at the implication.

ASHBY

She's just giving you reminders.  
You're the one taking the  
medication, which leads me to  
believe you have no interest in  
sleeping peacefully, as you so  
eloquently put it. And when the  
hell did you start talking so much?  
I miss the days you were quiet and  
just wanted to swing a bat.

GUY

Well, if I'm annoying you, why  
don't you take these cuffs off of  
me and let me go on my merry?

ASHBY

On your merry? Who are you? Stop  
talking like an eighteenth century  
poet.

GUY

I like eighteenth century poetry.

ASHBY

Of course you do, and no, I won't uncuff you. I'm sick of uncuffing you.

GUY

Well, I'm kind of sick of you cuffing me, so maybe next year, we can skip our annual, 'Arrest Ted Dickens,' day.

ASHBY

Entirely up to you, Theodore.

Guy rolls his eyes and clearly thinks Coach Ashby is just paying lip service to him.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Seriously, Guy, when's the last time you ate something? Do you even remember?

(Pauses)

Look, if you agree to eat a donut, I'll take the handcuffs off, how about that? We both win.

Guy nods reluctantly. Coach Ashby stands up and reaches behind Guy, unlocking the handcuffs. Guy brings his hands around and eyes the box, which Coach Ashby opens and nudges forward. Guy looks at Coach Ashby with disdain, but realizes he has lost. He reaches out and takes a donut. The smell nauseates him, but he takes a small bite while Coach Ashby continues to stand over him. The substance burns his stomach, which he clutches at with his free hand. He dives for the waste basket and begins to dry heave.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Whoa, pace yourself. Slow steps.  
There's plenty to go around.

Coach Ashby takes a donut and returns to his seat.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Want some water?

Guy shakes his head and tries to take another bite. This goes down a little easier. He continues to eat, which makes Coach Ashby smile out of relief.

INT. COACH ASHBY'S POLICE STATION OFFICE - LATER

Guy is sitting in the chair. The box of donuts is empty. Coach Ashby is looking around his office for some more food to offer him, but is amused at how much Guy ate regardless.

GUY

Wow, I think I was hungry.

ASHBY

I know. I actually think I see some color in those eyes.

Guy begins to noticeably shake and grabs at his arm.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Listen, Guy, maybe it's time to talk about...

GUY

I'm not going to rehab, Coach.

Coach Ashby pauses for a moment to look at Guy, considering his next move. He places his hands on his desk and shakes his head as though he's had enough.

ASHBY

Tell me you want to get clean.

GUY

(Laughing)

What the fuck are you talking about?

ASHBY

You're thirty-five years old. I need you to tell me honestly that you honestly want to get clean.

GUY

Coach, I like you, but do you understand? I can't get clean. I don't have an illness I can just shake off. I am HIV positive. The rest of my life will consist of slowly dying a horrible, horrible death. That's my future. That's what I have in store for myself. And, here's the best part. I brought this on myself. I don't even blame anyone else anymore. I used to. I definitely used to. But this is me, now. I killed myself.

(MORE)

GUY (CONT'D)

So, yeah, I agree, rehab is  
pointless. So just put me in jail  
and let me rot the rest of my life.

ASHBY

Guy, you're a heroin addict. *That*,  
you can get clean from. You  
managed to live for like, what, ten  
years with HIV? As a heroin  
addict? It's retarded the odds  
you've defied. Now I have to  
believe that's because you know  
that you still have unfinished  
business. Now stop being a douche  
and go finish it.

Guy swallows deeply and looks down at his lap.

GUY

Just let me rot, Coach.

ASHBY

I'm sick of you feeling sorry for  
yourself, Guy. It's time to get  
over it.

Coach Ashby waits to see if Guy responds. He doesn't.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Listen, I've spoken with the judge  
about some options.

GUY

Oh great.

ASHBY

Just hear me out. I've spoken with  
the judge. Now, it goes without  
saying, he doesn't have a lot of  
confidence in you. However, he has  
agreed to go along with my ideas,  
so long as you stay clean and out  
of trouble, and...

GUY

And what?

ASHBY

And one hundred percent under my  
watchful eye.

GUY

(Laughing)

What does that even mean?

ASHBY

It means you'd come stay with me  
and my wife. You remember her.  
Julie. She used to come to the  
games.

GUY

Yeah, I remember her.  
(Skeptical)  
What's the catch?

ASHBY

The catch, Guy, is I literally  
can't let you out of my sight. And  
when you are out of my sight, you  
will either be working or locked in  
your room.

Guy laughs and picks up the donut box. He starts picking out  
crumbs and eating them.

GUY

What work?

ASHBY

I want you to come coach the team  
with me. Get back on the field.

GUY

The field? As in the baseball  
field? You want me to go play  
baseball? Do you realize I haven't  
touched a bat or a glove in fifteen  
years?

ASHBY

This is the offer, Guy. I think  
it's a damn good one myself.

GUY

Do you know how bad the withdrawals  
get? Are you prepared for that?  
Is your wife prepared for that?

ASHBY

We're prepared. Are you?

Guy bite his lip.

GUY

Baseball?

ASHBY  
Baseball.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM IN COACH AHSBY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Coach Ashby, Guy, and JULIE AHSBY are standing in Guy's new bedroom. The room is spotless and Guy holds his arms together as though he's scared his very presence will make it dirty. Julie is a petite, athletic woman and is warmly smiling. She and Coach Ashby are behind Guy, uncertain at how he'll react.

JULIE AHSBY  
What do you think, Theodore?

GUY  
It's very nice. Too nice.

JULIE AHSBY  
It's perfect. Do you have any belongings?

Embarrassed, Guy looks over his shoulder at her and shakes his head.

GUY  
Not many.

JULIE AHSBY  
Ok. Well I'll go get you a glass of water. Do you need anything else?

GUY  
No, thank you.

Julie nods reassuringly at Coach Ashby and exits.

ASHBY  
So listen, Guy, I'm locking the door when you're all set. The window is locked from the outside, but the air is on, so you should be comfortable. If you break the window, the alarm will go off, and police are on call for this house so they'll be here before you get off the property.

GUY  
That's a good plan.

ASHBY

Toilet's over there. It has no windows. I will ask that you don't bore through the walls.

Guy doesn't look where he points. He is focused on the bed and is beginning to sweat.

GUY

Why are you doing this, Coach?

ASHBY

(Ashamed)

Because no one ever has.

GUY

Well, I apologize in advance for anything that might happen.

Guy doesn't wait for Coach Ashby to leave. He steps towards the bed and falls face first on top of the covers. He is utterly exhausted. Coach Ashby doesn't leave. He stands protectively over Guy.

FADE TO:

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM (2000) - DAY

THEODORE "SMALL" WEINBERG, age 5, is sitting in his kindergarten class while drawing a picture of Superman. He is sitting next to his friend JAMES. James is eyeing the box of crayons that Small is using. The teacher, MS. MARDEN, is sitting behind her desk looking at Small. She looks extremely annoyed.

MS. MARDEN

Theodore, come here please.

Small continues to draw for a couple seconds, but finally puts the crayon down. He stands up and walks with his head down to Ms. Marden's desk.

MS. MARDEN (CONT'D)

Did you forget about your pills?

Small doesn't say anything. He stands, timid and silent.

MS. MARDEN (CONT'D)

I thought we talked about this.  
Here, take this now.

She holds out a large white pill that he reluctantly accepts. She goes to great lengths to not touch his skin.

SMALL

I don't really want to today, Ms. Marden. It makes my hands feel funny.

MS. MARDEN

Well, it's not really your choice, Theodore. Or do you need to sit in the red chair to think about it?

Small looks at the large red chair in the corner, sighs, and puts the pill in his mouth. He grimaces as it goes down.

MS. MARDEN (CONT'D)

Good. Now return to your drawing. You're not sharing your crayons, right?

SMALL

No, ma'am.

Ms. Marden nods in approval. Small walks back to the table.

JAMES

How come you take medicine everyday?

SMALL

I don't know. My dad says it makes me strong, cuz I'm small.

James eyes the box of crayons.

JAMES

You're always hogging that box of crayons. Why don't you ever share?

SMALL

Ms. Marden told me not to share these.

JAMES

Not uh, she wouldn't do that.

SMALL

Uh huh.

James grows agitated.

JAMES

You're a stupid liar... Unless you  
give me your blue crayon.

Small picks up a blue crayon and considers his options.  
Reluctantly, he holds it out to James, who reaches for it.  
Ms. Marden is too quick, though. She runs across the room  
and pushes James' hand away.

MS. MARDEN

No! James, under no circumstances  
are you to take a crayon that  
belongs to Theodore.

(To Small)

And Theodore! What did I tell you  
about sharing?

Small looks down at his lap in fear he's in trouble.

SMALL

It's his fault.

MS. MARDEN

It's his fault? It's his fault  
you're breaking a rule?

Ms. Marden closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. She  
looks at Small, who is on the verge of tears.

MS. MARDEN (CONT'D)

Ok. It's ok.

(In a loud voice)

Ok, class, who wants to go outside  
and play dodge ball?

The class cheers. Even James perks up, despite his fleeting  
jealousy of Theodore's coloring. As the students stand and  
begin to trickle out the door, Small stands up to follow.  
Ms. Marden puts a hand up to stop him.

MS. MARDEN (CONT'D)

No, Theodore. Stay in your seat  
and continue to color.

SMALL

But I don't want to color anymore.

MS. MARDEN

Theodore Weinberg! I have had it  
up to here today with your  
attitude. We have been over this  
time and time again.

(MORE)

MS. MARDEN (CONT'D)  
You are not allowed to take part in  
those activities. Now stay in your  
seat and continue to draw.

Small begins to sulk, but quickly turns angry.

SMALL  
No! It's not fair! I want to  
play!

He picks up one of his crayons and throws it at Ms. Marden.  
The crayon bounces off of her head. Ms. Marden grows  
furious.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL LEONARD'S OFFICE - LATER

Small is sitting in PRINCIPAL LEONARD's office eating a piece of candy. He is sitting across from Principal Leonard, an older man with a rotund belly, and next to MRS. JACOBSEN, a shorter woman with a plain purple dress and cropped brown hair. They both look at Small with extreme pity.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD  
How are you today, Theodore?

SMALL  
Fine, Sir.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD  
(Smiling broadly)  
Ooooooh, what a polite young man.  
Well, good sir, do you think we can  
have a real man to man discussion?

Small looks at him suspiciously and nods.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Jacobsen here says she calls  
you Small. Do you mind if I call  
you that too?

Small nods again. Mrs. Jacobsen looks very proud that she gave him his nickname.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD (CONT'D)  
It sounds like you had quite the day. Did you get in a fight with Ms. Marden?

SMALL  
No.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

No?

SMALL

No, I didn't fight with her. She fought with me.

Principal Leonard breaks into hysterics.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Yes, it does seem that she picked a fight with you. But you responded with quite a bit of anger. How come?

SMALL

She never lets me go outside. It's not fair.

Small begins to get more engaged in the conversation and moves up to the end of his seat. Principal Leonard smiles joyously and leans further over his desk to look at Small.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

No, that doesn't seem fair does it. Would you believe that she does it for your own good?

SMALL

That's not it. She just does not like me.

Small spots a jar of candy on his desk. Principal Leonard notices, but ignores it.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Small, do you know why Mrs. Jacobsen gave you that nickname?

Small thinks about this for a second.

SMALL

Because I'm small?

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

That's exactly right. You'll most likely get bigger soon enough, but in the meantime, you're a little bit smaller than the other kids, so we want to keep you safe. Is that ok?

SMALL

I don't get it, though. My dad told me I'm taking the pills to make me stronger. And that's because I'm small. So if I'm taking my medication, I should be able to play outside.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Eventually, if you keep taking them, you'll get stronger and be able to play outside.

Principal Leonard smiles, but knows he has not satisfied Small.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD (CONT'D)

In the meantime, Small, what do you think about going to another class with another teacher?

Small smiles and nods.

SMALL

Sir? Can I have a piece of candy?

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

I can live with that.

INT. BEDROOM IN COACH AHSBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Guy is covered in sweat and is shivering on his bed. He's clearly going through withdrawals. Julie Ashby is sitting on the bed with him trying to give him water and keep him cool. Coach Ashby is awkwardly trying to read him a story. Guy is looking at him, but is clearly thinking about something else.

FADE TO:

INT. OUTSIDE (1994) - NIGHT

Guy is walking down the street in his baseball uniform and holding a trophy. He walks into an extremely run down house. There are old McDonald's bags in the front yard, and the paint is peeling off the walls. There are lights on, and the door is partially opened. Guy pushes it open and enters.

EXT. GUY AND DAN'S FAMILY ROOM (1994) - CONTINUOUS

Guy walks into the family room and finds DAN sitting with two friends in the middle of the floor.

Dan appears clean cut, wearing jeans and a Polo shirt, but his two friends have soiled clothes and have lesions on their faces. Dan has a leather strap wrapped tightly around his bicep, and one of his friends is holding a syringe with heroin in it. Guy stands exasperated at what he finds.

GUY

What the fuck is going on, Dan?

Dan hadn't noticed him walk in, and is somewhat dazed to see him.

DAN

Oh, hey Guy. What's going on?

GUY

You're using again?

Dan feigns innocence.

DAN

Nah, nah, you know. Just real occasionally.

They stare at each other for a moment, and then Dan's friend proceeds to shoot him up. Dan immediately gasps in pleasure and leans back onto the ground. Guy is transfixed on what's happening, which Dan's friend notices.

FRIEND #1

You Guy, the big baseball star?

Guy nods absentmindedly, becoming overwhelmed with desire.

FRIEND #1 (CONT'D)

Need a fix?

Guy nods, which makes the man smile.

INT. PRINCIPAL LEONARD'S OFFICE (2003) - DAY

Dr. and Diane Weinberg are sitting in Principal Leonard's office alongside Small, who is now 8. Dr. Weinberg is tense, but does not want to be confrontational. Diane is beside herself.

DIANE

Small has done nothing wrong and should not have to switch schools to please others!

Dr. Weinberg put his hand on Diane's shoulder to calm her. Diane gives him a seething look, causing Dr. Weinberg to swallow and look at Principal Leonard.

DR. WEINBERG

Do you know how another school handles situations like this?

Principal Leonard leans back in his chair, making his stomach jiggle. He is mortified he is even having this conversation.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Well, no, I've never encountered a situation quite like Small's. To be honest, they would probably respond just like we do, so it'd make more sense to keep him here. But...

DIANE

But, what?

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Interactions with the other students and his class work are excellent. However, he does respond to the special treatment he receives, sometimes violently.

DIANE

My son is not violent.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Not in his heart, no, but his tantrums are becoming increasingly more violent.

DIANE

In what way?

PRINCIPAL LEONARD

Small was not allowed to play dodge ball, so he protested and began to throw crayons at his teacher.

DR. WEINBERG

Oh really?

He looks at Small, who sinks into his seat.

DIANE

Maybe he was trying to change the colors of the clowns you have running this place.

Principal Leonard and Dr. Weinberg both smile, realizing Diane is just letting off steam.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD  
Still no excuse.

DIANE  
Stop treating him like the plague  
and the problem goes away.

Dr. Weinberg grabs at his nose and closes his eyes. Diane sees that she's upsetting her husband, so she looks ashamed at her latest comment. Dr. Weinberg suddenly pulls his hand away and looks at Principal Leonard.

DR. WEINBERG  
What if we set something up where  
he plays outside in an entirely non-  
contact sport?

Principal Leonard leans forward, interested.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Like baseball.

DIANE  
With no sliding.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD  
Baseball is still a sport. It's  
very easy to bleed from baseball.

Dr. Weinberg sighs.

DR. WEINBERG  
First of all, the chances of a  
third grader drawing blood from  
baseball are slim to none.  
Secondly, educated comments should  
be a premium at an educational  
institution. It doesn't matter if  
he bleeds. It matters if he bleeds  
and another kid bleeds and they rub  
their blood together. This is why  
actual physical activity like  
soccer or football is frowned upon.  
Baseball, though, without sliding,  
is perfectly safe. Hell, we could  
even set up a tee-ball system so he  
could play by himself.

Diane looks at her husband with pride. Principal Leonard looks at Small, who os ecstatic by the thought.

PRINCIPAL LEONARD  
Baseball.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Small is standing in front of a large green free standing wall with MRS. EINHORN. He is looking at the rest of his class, who are busy playing dodgeball. Mrs. Einhorn hands Small a baseball glove and a baseball.

MRS. EINHORN  
Now try to have some fun.

She smiles and begins to walk away. He looks at the baseball glove, confused and slightly suspicious. He turns to the green board and throws the ball, which bounces back and rolls past him. He quickly runs to retrieve it, worried that Mrs. Einhorn will think he's messing around. To his horror, Mrs. Einhorn is walking back his direction. He's looking at the ground when she approaches.

MRS. EINHORN (CONT'D)  
Small? Small, look at me please.

He looks up.

MRS. EINHORN (CONT'D)  
When you throw the ball, step with  
this leg...  
(She taps her leg)  
...and when it bounces back, use  
the glove to field it, like this.

She gets down in a fielder's position and shows him. He nods intently, watching her every move.

SMALL  
Do I have to go back inside?

MRS. EINHORN  
What? Of course not! Have fun!

She smiles again and walks away. Small is giddy as he turns back to the board and tries again. This time the ball rolls back and he stops it with his glove. He tries again, with slightly better results. He does this for the rest of recess.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Coach Ashby and Julie are sitting on a blanket with Guy having a picnic.

Guy is already looking better, with better color and some added weight. He is wearing clean clothes. Julie is making a sandwich.

ASHBY

Guy, I've been meaning to tell you.  
You're beginning to no longer look  
like Chinatown trash.

Julie whacks him on the shoulder, which makes Coach Ashby giggle and then burp loudly. Julie shakes her head in disgust as Guy laughs.

GUY

Well you don't look like such a  
prick... in general.

JULIE ASHBY

You two are a match made in heaven.  
Here, Guy, have a sandwich.

Guy accepts the sandwich, which makes him flashback on his past.

FADE TO:

INT. GUY AND DAN'S FAMILY ROOM (1994) - MORNING

Guy walks into his family room from outside extremely hungover and going through withdrawals. He scours the house for anything that could tide him over. He finds a bottle of vodka and immediately begins to drink it. He begins to relax and falls onto the couch. He takes another sip. The phone rings. He answers it.

GUY

(Mumbling)

What?

ASHBY

Guy, is that you?

GUY

What? Who's this?

ASHBY

(Whispering)

Guy, it's Coach Ashby, where the fuck are you? I'm sitting with George Mennon, from the Rockies? Remember him?

GUY

Ok.

ASHBY

You are supposed to be giving them  
a showcase of your abilities. How  
the fuck can you forget about this?

GUY

Oh shit, Coach. I totally forgot.  
Maybe we can reschedule?

ASHBY

Reschedule? Do you know how many  
strings I had to pull to make this  
happen? This is your opportunity.

GUY

The thing is, Coach, I kind of hurt  
my arm.

Coach Ashby doesn't say anything.

ASHBY

You hurt your... you hurt your...  
arm? Guy, are you using again?

GUY

Ah, it's no big deal, Coach. Just  
once or twice to take the bite out.

Coach Ashby breathes deeply into the phone for a moment.

ASHBY

I'm sorry to hear that, Theodore.  
I never should have let you out of  
my sight. I'm sorry I failed you.

Guy starts to cry.

GUY

Coach, I think I need some help.

ASHBY

I know you do, Guy. I know you do.  
Take care of yourself.

Coach Ashby hangs up the phone. Guy continues to cry and  
then takes a sip of vodka.

EXT. PARK (2003) - DAY

Small, Dr. Weinberg, and Diane are standing in an open park. Dr. Weinberg has a large bag with him. Small is standing excitedly, wanting to know what's in the bag.

DR. WEINBERG

So, Small, sounds like you've been having some fun playing baseball?

Small nods. Dr. Weinberg gets onto one knee and reaches inside the bag. Diane is taking pictures.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

Well every baseball player needs his own glove.

He pulls a glove out and hands it to Small. Small is beside himself with joy.

SMALL

This is mine?

DR. WEINBERG

Yep, and so is this bat.

He pulls a bat out and hands it to Small who drops the glove to take it.

DIANE

Please be careful with that.

DR. WEINBERG

And, you need a jersey.

He pulls out a Cal Ripken Jr. Jersey and hands it to Small, who immediately puts it on.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

Cal Ripken is the Iron Man, don't you forget that.

SMALL

I won't. Can we play?

DR. WEINBERG

Of course! Come on, go stand over there. We're going to learn how to hit.

Small runs over to the spot Dr. Weinberg pointed to. Diane and Dr. Weinberg walk together for a few steps.

DIANE

I think we should tell him.

DR. WEINBERG

Tell him what?

DIANE

You know what.

Dr. Weinberg ignores her and turns towards Small.

DR. WEINBERG

Alright, Teddy, now hold the bat with both hands, like this. Then, pull it back behind your shoulder, bend your knees, and always keep your eye on the ball. Ok?

Dr. Weinberg demonstrates how to swing. Small watches intently and nods. He gets into position.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

That's perfect. Really good. Hold it in you fingertips. How does that feel?

SMALL

It feels good.

DR. WEINBERG

Now remember, always keep your eye on the ball. Alright, here we go.

Dr. Weinberg tosses the ball underhanded. Small watches it with complete concentration, but he doesn't swing the bat. Both Dr. Weinberg and Diane laugh. Dr. Weinberg throws his hands in the air.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

What happened?

SMALL

Nothing, sorry.

DR. WEINBERG

Ok, this time try to swing.

Small nods. Dr. Weinberg tosses another pitch. Small takes a vicious swing, but misses it. He looks at his parents in embarrassment.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

That's ok, Small. Excellent swing.  
Let's try again.

Dr. Weinberg takes another ball out of the bag and tosses it towards Small. Small swings again and this time hits a line drive past Dr. Weinberg. He looks at Small in amazement.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Teddy! What a hit! You're a natural.

He continues to throw pitches to Small.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK (2003) - LATER

Small, Dr. Weinberg, and Diane are sitting on a bench close to where they played baseball.

SMALL  
Am I in trouble?

DIANE  
What? Why would you ask that?

SMALL  
I'm always in trouble.

DR. WEINBERG  
Look, we know that your teachers haven't been treating you as well as they should be. We want to explain to you why they behave the way they do.

SMALL  
Because I'm small and they're mean.

Diane and Dr. Weinberg laugh.

DIANE  
You're getting too smart for your own good.

She leans over and kisses his head.

DR. WEINBERG  
It's because you're sick, Small.  
You were born with a virus and you can give that virus to other kids or other people if you bleed.

Small thinks about this.

SMALL

I don't feel sick.

DR. WEINBERG

I know you don't. But you know how your teachers give you medicine every day? And how sometimes you don't feel good and have to spend the night in the hospital?

SMALL

That's to make me stronger.

DR. WEINBERG

Well, in a way it does make you stronger. It makes you stronger because it counteracts the effects of the virus, which makes you weaker. Does that make sense?

Small ignores him.

SMALL

What is it?

DR. WEINBERG

It's called HIV, which stands for Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

SMALL

How did I get it?

DR. WEINBERG

You got it when you were born, from your mother.

SMALL

(To his mother)

Are you sick too, Mom?

DIANE

No, Small, I'm not sick. And while I'm your mom, I didn't actually give birth to you. We adopted you when you were only a few weeks old. Do you know what adopted means?

SMALL

It means my real mom didn't want me.

Diane and Dr. Weinberg both yell no. Dr. Weinberg grabs his nose and closes his eyes to think about what to say.

DIANE

Small, your mom was very sick, and she died very soon after you were born. It wasn't your fault, but since she was sick, it was very hard on her.

SMALL

So, I killed my mom, and she gave me her disease because of it?

DR. WEINBERG

Small, look at me. You did not kill your mom. In fact, you probably prolonged her life because she wanted to make sure you were born. And she was an angel, because she gave your mom and me our son. We're your parents now, and we love you more than anything, no matter what happens.

Small is silent as he ponders what this all means. His parents wait patiently for him to process this.

SMALL

So then, am I going to die?

Diane begins to tear up. Dr. Weinberg puts his hand under Small's chin and turns his head to look at him.

DR. WEINBERG

I am not going to let you die. You are going to have a long, healthy life. You're going to grow up and be the best baseball player in the whole world. How does that sound?

Small smiles and nods.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

Good. But do you understand why your teachers don't want you to play with the others?

Small nods again. Diane and Dr. Weinberg are unsure where to take the conversation.

DIANE

So what do you want for dinner tonight?

SMALL

McDonalds's.

Diane looks at him suspiciously.

DIANE  
Fine. This one time!

They stand up and walk away.

INT. DR. WEINBERG'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Weinberg is examining Guy's arm. His arm is still very damaged and looks infected. Coach Ashby is watching from a seat in the corner. He looks extremely tired.

DR. WEINBERG  
Well, it definitely looks infected.  
Can you make a fist?

Guy grimaces as he makes a fist. Dr. Weinberg nods.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
I'll give you some antibiotics.  
Clear that right up. A bad  
infection is the last thing you  
need right now. How long have you  
been clean?

ASHBY  
Thirteen days now.

Dr. Weinberg looks at Ashby and laughs.

DR. WEINBERG  
When's the last time you slept,  
Coach?

ASHBY  
You never sleep with a new child.

Dr. Weinberg laughs again and shakes his head. He slides back to look at a computer screen.

DR. WEINBERG  
How do you feel in general, Guy?

GUY  
Weak. Weak all over.

DR. WEINBERG  
Well, withdrawals can have some  
pretty extreme effects on the body.  
You're probably getting accustomed  
to having a clean system.

GUY

Maybe. Feels different.

DR. WEINBERG

I have to admit, it's very impressive you've been able to quit cold turkey like that. I know it's not easy.

ASHBY

You can say that again.

GUY

Coach hasn't had his morning donut.

Dr. Weinberg feigns laughter, but is preparing to say something bad.

DR. WEINBERG

Guy, I contacted the Whitman-Walker clinic, and they faxed over your medical history. Guy, your visits have been sporadic at best. You haven't had your counts or viral load checked in over eight years. Based on your blood work today I can tell that the virus has developed resistance to your retrovirals and they will need to be changed. Your white blood count is far too low and is hovering around the number that we would actually tell you that you have AIDS, which makes infection a dangerous possibility.

ASHBY

What does that mean exactly?

DR. WEINBERG

That means you're lucky that you have not contracted AIDS, Guy, and we need to adjust your anti-retroviral therapy immediately. The problem with this is that the drugs are expensive, and you are not insured. We can try and work with various programs in DC, but federal funding is in short supply.

ASHBY

How much are we talking about?

DR. WEINBERG  
20 thousand, easy.

Coach Ashby is stunned. Guy doesn't think anything of it.

ASHBY  
Are you shittin' me, Doc?

DR. WEINBERG  
On average, that's what it costs with no insurance, and these new drugs are experimental, so they have not been mass produced yet. But from the readings of your lab results, your body simply is not responding to the older medication they have you on. I'm sorry.

ASHBY  
Guy, how are you paying for treatment now?

GUY  
I don't know. They just show up.

DR. WEINBERG  
DC and the federal government have good services these days. NIH and the Whitman-Walker clinic organize drug therapies for people like Guy.

ASHBY  
So why can't they continue to pay for the treatment?

DR. WEINBERG  
It's not that easy. Like I said, some of the new treatments are very expensive and funding is getting stretched beyond its capacity. Couple that with some corrupt distribution practices and the whole scandal last year that uncovered DC's politicians pissing away HIV funding, and it's just not as easy as it used to be.

GUY  
Not to mention, I'm a 35-year-old heroin junkie.

They all sit silent for a few moments.

DR. WEINBERG

Look, my best advice is to work with the clinic on a dose to dose basis. I'll work on getting some samples; see if we can't sign Guy up for any sort of experimental treatment program.

Guy nods, but realizes the futility in trying.

GUY

Thanks, Doc.

INT. STARBUCKS - LATER

Coach Ashby and Guy are sitting at a table having some coffee.

GUY

Coach, I appreciate everything you're doing for me, but I think we need to accept that I might not have much longer, regardless of what happens.

ASHBY

Are you fucking kidding me?

GUY

It's something we have to consider. You taught me that.

Coach Ashby looks at him with contempt, but sighs and accepts.

ASHBY

Fine, you might not have that much time. So what? Is that your excuse to go back to drugs?

GUY

No. But... Is it ok that I'm at your house? I mean, I don't want to be a burden.

ASHBY

Even if you were, I certainly wouldn't throw you out at this point. But you're not.

Guy smiles and nods, accepting the answer. Coach Ashby looks annoyed and stares at Guy as he sips his coffee.

As he sips, Matt and Brian enter and sit at the neighboring table. Coach Ashby notices them.

MATT MALONEY

I don't get it, trillions of dollars in debt and we're shoveling money to Africa of all places because those people are too stupid to wear a condom.

BRIAN HANSEN

What do condoms have to do with anything?

MATT MALONEY

Are you kidding? If they'd wrap up their cocks, fifteen percent of the population wouldn't have AIDS.

BRIAN HANSEN

So wouldn't a little funding help buy condoms?

Matt looks disgusted, but Brian smiles, purposely goading him on.

MATT MALONEY

First of all, not a little funding. Billions. Thrown away. And it's not for condoms. It's for treatment for an incurable disease. So essentially, we're keeping people alive so they can have more time to spread their disease. Just ingenious policy.

BRIAN HANSEN

How about asthma medication? There's no cure for asthma, but we treat the symptoms.

MATT MALONEY

Touché, however, when I have an asthma attack and cough, I don't give others asthma.

Matt sips his coffee.

MATT MALONEY (CONT'D)

Christ, you're turning into Weinberg. The dumbass adopts an AIDS baby.

Guy and Ashby hear this and exchange looks.

BRIAN HANSEN

True, but the kid has lived for fifteen years now because of the medications and care that Weinberg has given him.

Coach Ashby moves to say something, but Guy stops him. He motions for them to leave. As they walk past, Guy coughs on Matt.

GUY

Oh, shit, apologies. Damn, you might need an HIV test now.

INT. GRIEVANCES THERAPY ROOM (2007) - NIGHT

Small and Dr. Weinberg are sitting next to each other in plastic chairs. They are part of a circle of men of all varieties. Small looks scared and shy. Dr. Weinberg is nervous about bringing Small, but is trying to look certain by smiling.

DR. WEINBERG

(Whispering)

Please don't look so glum.

SMALL

It's Sunday. I'm allowed to watch baseball on Sundays, not sit through class.

Dr. Weinberg begins to speak, but he is cut off by ROBERT JONES, who is leading the group. Robert is a thin black man wearing a spaghetti-strap tank top, Capris, and small sandals.

ROBERT JONES

Welcome to the Grievances Support Group For People With HIV/AIDS. My name is Robert Jones - although sometimes I go by Roberta.

The group laughs. Even Small is somewhat intrigued.

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)

I have grievances. I have grievances that I no longer have HIV; I have AIDS. I have grievances that when I walk down the street, people see that I'm a homosexual and immediately assume I have AIDS.

(MORE)

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)

I have grievances that I'm dying and that despite that fact, I have grievances that I'm a stereotype, a statistic.

Small is officially fascinated, being able to relate to Robert. He moves to the end of his seat and sits up straighter. Dr. Weinberg has no idea what to think.

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)

I have grievances that I got a parking ticket and that while I'm dying, I have to worry about that parking ticket. I have grievances that sometimes I'm afraid to touch others because I might get them sick. With that said, though, I am grateful for a lot of things, not least of which is this group. So thank you, all of you. Now, it appears we have new members.

(To Dr. Weinberg)

Would you like to introduce yourself?

Dr. Weinberg is stunned, not expecting to speak.

DR. WEINBERG

Uh, I'm actually just here to support my son.

ROBERT JONES

Well you're here, and you're affected by HIV, so why don't you introduce yourself and discuss some grievances you have.

DR. WEINBERG

Um... Sure. My name is Mike Weinberg, this is my son...

ROBERT JONES

Just yourself. We have our rules. He'll have his turn.

DR. WEINBERG

Sorry. So, I'm here because...

Small begins to look at his father with a new light. He had never seen him with such little confidence.

ROBERT JONES

You have grievances. It's ok, take your time.

Dr. Weinberg pauses and looks around the room. He felt he had no place there and takes a moment to gather his thoughts.

DR. WEINBERG

My name is Mike Weinberg and I have grievances.

ROBERT JONES

What are your grievances, Mike?

DR. WEINBERG

I have grievances that my son is sick. I have grievances that my son might die before I do. I have grievances that my son doesn't fully understand the implications of his condition.

Dr. Weinberg's lip begins to tremble and he tears up.

ROBERT JONES

That's good, Mike. Do you have any other grievances?

He looks at Small and nods.

DR. WEINBERG

Yes. I have grievances. I have grievances that people don't understand why I would adopt an infant that has HIV. That when I first looked at him, he was already my son.

ROBERT JONES

(To the group)

It's hard sometimes for people to relate. People are scared and rightfully so. We live through that and hope they overcome their fear. And let me tell you, not everyone will overcome it, but that's ok. We respect their fear and if they need our help, we give them our help. We cannot control their fear, but we control our actions.

(To Dr. Weinberg)

Thank you, Mike, for sharing that. Would you like to continue?

DR. WEINBERG

No, I think that's enough for today.

ROBERT JONES

Very good.

(To Small)

And how about you?

Small looks skeptically at his father, but is still fascinated by the rest of the group.

SMALL

My name is Ted, but most people call me Small.

ROBERT JONES

Do you have any grievances, Small?

SMALL

Yes, I have a grievance. My dad made me come to this group and because of it, I have to miss the ESPN Sunday night baseball game. It pisses me off.

The group laughs and cheers.

ROBERT JONES

Oh you are such a man! Do you like baseball, Small?

SMALL

Yes, I love baseball.

ROBERT JONES

How come?

SMALL

Because it's the only place I'm free and can be myself and feel good.

ROBERT JONES

So you'd say you're grateful for baseball?

SMALL

Yes, I'm very grateful for baseball.

Dr. Weinberg smiles with pride and puts arm around his shoulders.

ROBERT JONES

Well, maybe if you decide to join us again next week, you can talk about your grievances when you're not playing or watching baseball.

Small nods obediently.

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)

So who's next? Tommy, let's hear about your stepfather.

The group laughs. Small feels extremely comfortable.

INT. CAR - DAY

Coach Ashby and Guy are sitting in the parking lot of Arlington Batting Cages listening to rain pelt the car. They are both staring at the building as though it's very distance is an obstacle to overcome.

ASHBY

How's that pin cushion of an arm feeling these days?

Guy begins to flex his arm up and down.

GUY

It feels good. Strong... ish.

ASHBY

When's the last time you were here?

Guy turns to look at Coach Ashby.

FADE TO:

EXT. BATTING CAGE PARKING LOT - 2001 - DAY

Guy is standing in the parking lot staring at the building. He desperately wants to go in. He is going through withdrawals and is stick thin. He holds his arm close to his body due to the pain of infection. He is shivering and sweating. He begins taking small steps towards the door. When he makes it, he tries to open the door, but he can't do it. He falls to the floor and leans against the wall, crying.

CUT TO:

INT. ARLINGTON BATTING CAGES - MOMENTS LATER

Guy is standing in the batting cage. A ball comes and he connects for a solid line drive. He smiles to himself. Coach Ashby is standing at the fence with his fingers wrapped around the chain links. JENNIFER MIDDLETON, a late-twenties girl wearing a softball outfit, is hitting balls in the next cage.

ASHBY

Woooooo, gotta hold a that one.

Guy glances behind him and shakes his head. He continues to hit like he had never stopped.

INT. ARLINGTON BATTING CAGES - LATER

Guy and Coach Ashby are sitting outside the cage. They are both watching Jennifer hitting.

ASHBY

She's cute. Maybe you should say hi.

GUY

Right. Hi, I'm Guy. I'm a drug addict and have AIDS. Want to have a bagel?

ASHBY

You would've had her till the bagel part. Girls love to slum.

Guy continues to watch, but has to laugh.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

So listen, about this coaching gig.

GUY

I told you I'm in.

ASHBY

Good, first tryout is tomorrow.

Guy contorts his head around.

GUY

Are you serious? What the fuck, Coach?

ASHBY

I figured if I dropped it on you the last minute, you couldn't say no. Plus, there's a player in particular that I think you'll appreciate. He's come to a few of the summer workouts. He has your talent. He's that good. He's just... He needs a little urging.

GUY

Urging?

ASHBY

Actually, it's the Doc's boy. He's going to be a superstar. He's just, he's a little bit timid. Like he's afraid to touch people. And he won't slide. He reminds me of you. Hell, I'd say he even looks like you.

GUY

Why the hell would I be the solution to the superstar being too much of a chicken shit to slide?

ASHBY

(Ignoring him)

Oh, and you're starting a support group next Sunday night.

Coach Ashby shrugs his shoulders without looking at Guy.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Deal with it.

Guy begins to squeeze his hands around the bat, but his eyes fall back to Jennifer.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL FIELD (2009) - DAY

Small and his teammates James and TIM are standing outside the field in their uniforms. The game just ended and the team is standing around chatting.

JAMES

Good game, Small.

SMALL

Yeah you too.

TIM

Accept you got thrown out for not  
sliding. What's up with that?

JAMES

Hey, shut up, man.

TIM

What? Cost us a run. I'm sure the  
high school coaches in the crowd  
weren't very impressed.

JAMES

Small has his choice of schools to  
go to. He'll be starting his  
freshman year. You're just  
jealous.

TIM

Oh ok.

Tim walks away.

SMALL

You don't have to stand up for me.

JAMES

James is a douche. Hey, how come  
you weren't at the last game?

SMALL

(Pauses)

Just some family stuff.

JAMES

Does it have to do with all the  
medicine you take?

Small is taken aback, but tries to hide it.

SMALL

What? Why would you ask that? No,  
like I said, family stuff.

James realizes he crossed a line. He looks up ahead and sees  
a group of girls. He nudges Small.

JAMES

Hey, did you see who's here?

Small looks up and sees the girls. He blushes.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Dude, she came to see you play.  
You should go say hi.

SMALL  
She came to see us, not me. Why  
don't you go say hi?

James rolls his eyes.

JAMES  
Tim was right, you are a pussy.

James begins to walk over to them with Small a few steps behind. SHANNON, a 15-year-old girl with dark features, is wearing tight jeans and a tank top. She sees Small walking over and smiles. She begins to walk towards him, nervously locking her arms behind her back. They stop a few steps from each other. James continues towards the group.

SHANNON  
Hi, Ted.

SMALL  
Hey... Shannon.

SHANNON  
You played a good game today.

SMALL  
Um, thanks. Yeah, thanks for  
coming.

SHANNON  
Of course, I would have come to  
more, but you never invited me.

Small looks at the ground, blushing out of embarrassment.

SMALL  
I didn't realize I was supposed to  
invite you.

Shannon doesn't say anything, feeling slighted.

SMALL (CONT'D)  
I mean. I didn't know you'd want  
to come.

SHANNON  
Of course I do.

SMALL  
Most people call me Small.

SHANNON

Well I like Ted. Or Teddy.

SMALL

Teddy?

Small cringes. Shannon laughs and reaches for his arm. He instinctively pulls away. Small doesn't know how to explain what he just did.

SMALL (CONT'D)

Sorry. Um, it looks like my dad is ready to go.

He looks away in shame and begins to walk towards Dr. Weinberg.

SHANNON

Wait.

Small stops and turns.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I'm going to a movie tonight.  
Would you want to go with me?

SMALL

Really?

SHANNON

Yes really.

SMALL

Um, I mean, sure. That'd be great.

SHANNON

Ok, well I'll call you in a bit,  
ok?

SMALL

Yeah, yeah ok. I'll talk to you  
tonight then.

Shannon smiles and turns back towards her friends. Small begins to walk towards Dr. Weinberg, who had been watching. Dr. Weinberg gives him two thumbs up.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Guy and Coach Ashby are leaning against the dugout fence watching the team practice. Coach Ashby is holding a clipboard. CRAIG is pitching to Small. Craig throws a pitch and Small doesn't swing.

GUY  
Pitcher's opening up too quick.  
Good hitter will sit on his  
fastball and take it down the line.

Coach Ashby looks at Guy with skepticism. Craig throws another pitch. Small lines it down the first base line for a double.

GUY (CONT'D)  
See.

ASHBY  
Maybe you won't just be a waste of  
space after all.

Guy laughs.

ASHBY (CONT'D)  
That was Weinberg's boy.

GUY  
The one who needs urging?

ASHBY  
Reminds me of you. Center fielder.  
Has a stronger arm than you did.

Guy laughs again.

GUY  
Has a lot to look forward to.  
Gonna play him?

ASHBY  
Might not have a choice. Steve's a  
senior, though, might be hard.

Guy nods. Craig begins to pitch to another batter.

ASHBY (CONT'D)  
Don't forget you have your first  
support group tomorrow.

GUY  
Thanks, Dad.

Coach Ashby ignores him.

ASHBY  
(Yelling)  
Craig, keep your hips closed!  
(To Guy)  
(MORE)

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Guy, I'm glad you're here. You'll be a good coach.

Guy looks at Coach Ashby questioningly.

INT. SHANNON'S CAR - LATER

Shannon and Small are driving home from practice. She reaches over to touch his arm and he instinctively pulls away. He looks ashamed and Shannon is annoyed.

SHANNON

We've been dating for eight months, Small. I'm going to touch you.

SMALL

I know. I know. It's just new for me.

They sit in silence for a moment.

SMALL (CONT'D)

Thank you for driving me home from practice.

SHANNON

Of course. I love driving you home.

They sit in silence again. *Walking on Sunshine* comes on the radio. Small begins to hum along. Shannon smiles and looks at him.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Ted Weinberg, are you singing along to *Walking on Sunshine*?

Small looks embarrassed.

SMALL

I guess I was. Sorry.

SHANNON

Sorry? For what? I love singing. It's ok to have some fun in your life.

SMALL

I know. Hey, if you're not doing anything, want to go grab something to eat instead of going home?

Shannon is ecstatic.

SHANNON

Really? I'd love to. Let's head back into town.

She begins to turn the car around.

INT. GRIEVANCES THERAPY ROOM - NIGHT

Guy enters, unsure what to think. As he makes his way to a seat, he sees Small laughing and joking with other members. He's amazed. He sits at a seat near the back and continues to watch. The seats are no longer in a circle, but in rows. Robert Jones, wearing a dress, is standing at a podium in the front.

ROBERT JONES

Ok, everyone, gather around.

He waits for those standing, including Small, to take their seats.

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)

Hello my friends. I'm both pleased and very saddened to see new faces. We have thirty-three members, and that number seems to have peaked many months ago. It means that as our friends are dying, we are being introduced to new friends through very unfortunate circumstances. Since there are new faces, let me go over the rules and purpose of the group and then we can go from there. The Grievances Support Group For People With HIV/AIDS is a support group for people with HIV/AIDS and their family and friends. It used to be just for men, but behold, all sexes are affected.

Robert steps to the side to show his dress.

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)

We begin all of our statements with, 'I have a grievance, or I am grateful for,' because we live by one basic tenet: despite being sick, we are still alive, and anyone who lives life will have grievances and they will be grateful.

(MORE)

ROBERT JONES (CONT'D)  
Unfortunately, we don't always have people to share those feelings with. And if you can't share your experiences, than what is the purpose of living? With that said, allow me to begin. My name is Roberta Jones, and I have grievances. I have grievances that my gardener keeps killing my grass. He speaks Spanish so I can't communicate with him. I have grievances that when I cannot communicate with him and I watch my lawn be destroyed, I want to go drink again. I have grievances that I feel my throat tingle. But mainly, I have grievances that I have AIDS. I am grateful, though, that my mother came to have dinner with me on Friday. It was the first time she has spoken to me in over eight years, when I was first diagnosed. I no longer have a grievance with my mother. I cannot explain how grateful I am for that little fact. Thank you.

Robert steps aside and motions for Small to take the podium. He does so willingly, chomping at the bit to speak. He is all smiles when he faces the crowd.

SMALL

Most of you already know me, but my name is Ted Weinberg, and most people call me Small.

As he says that, Small notices Guy in the back. His face drops. He can barely speak.

SMALL (CONT'D)

I, I uh, I am grateful because yesterday I made the varsity baseball team.

The group cheers. Small remains fixated on Guy.

SMALL (CONT'D)

I have a grievance, however, that my coach is a member of my support group and now knows that I have HIV.

The group turns to look at Guy. Small is frozen. Guy, realizing he has somehow offended a regular, smiles and walks to the front. He puts his arm around Small and looks at the group.

GUY

My apologies. I certainly did not mean to take Small's thunder or in any way embarrass him. As Small said, I'm one of his baseball coaches.

Small moves out from Guy's arm and returns to his seat.

ROBERT JONES

I have a grievance...

GUY

Right. My name is Ted Dickens, Guy to my friends, and a lot of people have grievances with me.

ROBERT JONES

That's not true. If you're someone else's grievance, than they can talk. But you're no one's grievance.

GUY

The fact is, I don't really have a grievance. I don't remember much about my life, and I'm not sure what I feel grateful for.

ROBERT JONES

How about making Small feel insecure? Is that a grievance?

GUY

Not of mine.

Guy looks ashamed as soon as he said it.

GUY (CONT'D)

Ok. I have a grievance. I have a grievance with public restrooms. And more specifically, I have a grievance with toilet seat covers, and let me say why. Taking a crap in a public restroom is traumatic enough. First, they're just disgusting and full of bacteria and diseases.

(MORE)

GUY (CONT'D)

And when you finally get the courage to go do it, you have to carefully take your pants off in a tiny stall while navigating obstacles like piss on the ground and wondering what really is proper public restroom etiquette - ie, is farting allowed? - and then you look at the toilet and all you want to do is cover that thing up.

The group begins to laugh. Even Guy and Small are chuckling.

GUY (CONT'D)

So what do you do? You pull out the generic toilet seat cover, and as sure as day, that toilet seat cover will not fit the shape of the toilet seat. Ok, this piece of paper has one job and one job only, and it fails every, single, time! So what do we do? It's almost routine that we then reach for the toilet paper to fill in the gaps of exposed toilet seat. Why the hell don't we cut out the toilet seat cover in the first place and just go straight to the toilet paper? I'm convinced, there is a conspiracy by the manufacturers of toilet seat covers to socially train and trick us into using those covers. This tyranny of toilet seat covers has been a grievance of mine for a long time.

ROBERT JONES

(Cutting him off)

And is there anything you're grateful for?

GUY  
Toilet paper.

The room erupts.

ROBERT JONES  
Anything else?

Guy looks at Robert. He begins to understand he's not interested in his jokes. He takes a moment to think.

GUY

I'm grateful for being clean for 23 days now. And I have a grievance that no matter how long I don't use heroin, I'll still have HIV.

Robert looks content.

ROBERT JONES

Thank you for sharing, Guy.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

Small and Guy are standing together outside after Grievances.

GUY

You ok?

Small nods.

SMALL

I'd appreciate it if you kept this to yourself.

GUY

Likewise.

SMALL

You're a heroin addict?

Guy laughs.

GUY

I am. And your girlfriend's hot.

SMALL

She's 15.

GUY

Yeah she is.

Small laughs and looks around for his father.

GUY (CONT'D)

Your secret's safe with me. I'll see you at practice tomorrow?

Small nods.

GUY (CONT'D)

Alright. See you then.

Guy holds his fist up, which Small bumps. Guy leaves.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Guy has his hands on his knees, talking to Small before Small's at bat.

GUY

Remember what we talked about earlier. Rotate that back foot. Throw your hands at the ball.

SMALL

Got it, Coach.

Being called Coach made Guy pause.

SMALL (CONT'D)

Coach, do you think Roger's mad at me?

GUY

Nah. The best player plays. You earned it. He knows it.

Small begins to walk towards the plate. Guy looks behind him at the bleachers and sees both Dr. Weinberg and Shannon.

GUY (CONT'D)

Small.

Small stops and turns.

GUY (CONT'D)

Shannon is hot.

Guy laughs at his own joke before turning back to the dugout. Small shakes his head and heads to the plate.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - LATER

Dr. Weinberg is on the pitcher's mound. Guy is at the plate. Coach Ashby and Small are in the outfield.

GUY

Go easy on me, Doc, it's been a while.

DR. WEINBERG

Don't be upset if you can't hit my stuff.

Dr. Weinberg throws a pitch and Guy hits a line drive. He throws a second and Guy hits a home run. After a few more pitches, Dr. Weinberg throws his hands in the air.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Mercy! I can't take it anymore.

All four of them congregate on the mound.

ASHBY  
Still got it.

DR. WEINBERG  
My Lord, I'll say.

GUY  
Thanks for tossing me a few.

DR. WEINBERG  
Of course. Hey, you know, I play on a softball team and we can use a few extra players. Would you have any interest?

GUY  
Definitely. I'll have to pass it by my parental mentor, though.

Dr. Weinberg looks at Coach Ashby and realizes it's a joke.

DR. WEINBERG  
You're lucky you have someone who cares so much.

GUY  
I'm very grateful. You know, Small really is a special player. I think he has what it takes to really go far in the sport.

DR. WEINBERG  
Yeah, we're taking it one step - one year - at a time. He mentioned he saw you at the Grievances group.

Both Small and Guy look in horror at Coach Ashby, but it's clear he already knows the secret.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Alright, Small, your mom and Shannon are probably waiting for us at home. They're making us some dinner.

Small once again looked at him in horror.

SMALL  
Mom brought Shannon home?

DR. WEINBERG  
Ok, on that note, we'll see you gentlemen later. Guy, call my office, come in next week.

GUY  
Thanks, Doc.

They all depart.

INT. BATTING CAGES - DAY

Guy is sitting on a bench with a large softball bat. All of the cages are full. Jennifer is once again in the cage. Guy can't take his eyes off of her. She finishes her token and steps out. She goes and stands next to Guy.

JENNIFER  
Hello.

GUY  
Hello.

JENNIFER  
You come here to sit on the bench or swing a bat?

GUY  
I was hoping to swing a bat.

Jennifer looks at him like he's an idiot. Guy notices that she has two tattoos extending up to her neck.

JENNIFER  
You gonna do it from the bench?  
Cage is open.

She points to the cage she just left with her bat.

GUY  
You mind if we share?

She extends a hand to offer the cage. Guy gets up and begins to head over.

GUY (CONT'D)  
I'm Ted, by the way.

JENNIFER  
Jennifer.

GUY  
Ted.

JENNIFER  
You said that.

GUY  
People call me Guy.

JENNIFER  
How delightfully anonymous. Well  
have fun, Guy.

GUY  
Don't judge me. Softballs are new  
to me.

Guy puts a token in the machine and steps to the plate. Jennifer sits on the bench to watch. The first ball comes and Guy swings and misses. He can't help but look back at Jennifer, who gives him a thumbs up. He waits for another ball and this time he hits it squarely back up the middle. Jennifer begins to applaud him. When he finishes, he steps out and sits back on the bench.

JENNIFER  
Very impressive.

GUY  
Want to take turns?

JENNIFER  
That was the plan.

She remains seated. Guy looks down at her legs. When she sees him, he immediately looks away.

GUY  
So what do you do, Jennifer?

JENNIFER  
I'm a freelance writer in DC. How  
about you?

GUY  
I'm, uh, just coaching baseball  
right now.

Jennifer's eyes light up.

JENNIFER  
That's amazing.

GUY  
Yeah, I enjoy it. So come on. Get back in there.

JENNIFER  
Will you be here when I get back?

GUY  
Outlook is good.

She stands up and takes her turn. After a couple minutes she comes out and sits next to him.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Very nice form.

JENNIFER  
The coach approves.

GUY  
Oh I didn't mean that.

JENNIFER  
(Laughing)  
I know.

GUY  
So when did you start coming here?

JENNIFER  
I was hoping we'd be halfway through dinner before answering that.

GUY  
(Blushes)  
Sorry if that's too personal.

JENNIFER  
It's not. I love it here. Been coming here for 15 years. Never had such good company. But you're up.

GUY  
You'll be here when I get back?

JENNIFER  
Outlook is good.

They continue to switch for an hour. Finally, Coach Ashby pops his head in. Guy acknowledges him and begins to pack up. Jennifer looks hurt.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
Are you really not going to ask me out?

GUY  
Um, I want to. I definitely want to. I've been thinking about how to do it.

JENNIFER  
And your conclusion was to say nothing at all?

Guy smiles and looks ashamed.

GUY  
Well, I really like you. But, the thing is, I have HIV.

Jennifer stands up.

JENNIFER  
Ted. Me too.

EXT. SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

Small, Shannon, and James are walking through the high school quad. Small looks extremely pale and emaciated.

JAMES  
Jesus, Small, you look terrible.

SHANNON  
Yeah, Ted, are you feeling alright.

Shannon rubs her hand through Small's hair.

SMALL  
Just a migraine.

They walk a little farther before Small begins to stumble and then falls over. Shannon immediately begins to scream and bends down to help him. A teacher runs over to help.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. WEINBERG'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Weinberg is examining Shannon. Shannon's mother is watching.

DR. WEINBERG

Shannon, you most likely have been slightly traumatized, which is normal for the situation. To be honest, though, my son is very lucky to have you.

SHANNON

What happened? I've never seen someone faint like he did. I mean, I've seen people get sick, and I've seen people faint, but his...

DR. WEINBERG

Take your time.

SHANNON

It's like his life literally left his body.

Dr. Weinberg nods and takes his time to respond. He appears to be considering his next step. He finally leans forward.

DR. WEINBERG

Shannon, I think it's important to tell you something. I will tell you in full confidence, meaning I expect this information won't leave this room.

SHANNON

Of course.

DR. WEINBERG

Since Ted was born, he has been battling Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

SHANNON

What is that.

SHANNON'S MOTHER

It's HIV. It's AIDS!

SHANNON

What?

Dr. Weinberg grabs at his nose.

DR. WEINBERG

It's not AIDS, it's HIV. He is healthy and has a strong immune system. Shannon, I imagine Small has had a tough time making contact with you?

SHANNON'S MOTHER

(To Shannon)

You're sleeping with a boy that has AIDS?

(To Dr. Weinberg)

You let your boy sleep with other girls knowing he has AIDS?

SHANNON

We haven't slept together.

SHANNON'S MOTHER

Thank God. I want her tested. Even if they haven't slept together, HIV is like the fucking flu. Have you guys shared a drink, shared a brush, hell, followed one another at the water fountain? Oh my God. That school must be crawling with infected kids.

DR. WEINBERG

Of course we can test your daughter. I believe it is responsible to do so even though they are not sexual partners. With that said, I'm very sorry where you have received your information, but I assure you, you cannot transmit HIV via shared drinks and combs. It is a sexually transmitted disease, or through the blood.

Shannon's mother grabs Shannon and they begin to walk out. Dr. Weinberg begins to say something, but he stops himself.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Small is walking down the hall a few days after collapsing. Craig, the pitcher, sees him and flags him down. Small is reluctant to talk to him, but knows he has to. Craig stops a few feet away from him.

CRAIG

Hey, Small.

SMALL

Hey, Craig.

CRAIG

So is it true? Do you, you know,  
have AIDS?

Small looks defeated.

SMALL

How'd you hear that?

CRAIG

Shannon told us. She told  
everyone.

Small nods to himself.

SMALL

Yes, it's true.

CRAIG

Well, you can play ball, that's for  
sure. You're ok in my book. Just,  
uh, you know, don't bleed on me.

Small smiles and nods. He waves to Craig, ending the conversation. They walk past each other. Small continues down the hallway, confused that Shannon would betray him. He finally sees Shannon standing with some friends. When they see him, her friends form a barrier in front of her. Small stops a few steps away from them, only looking at Shannon.

SHANNON FRIEND #1

Ok, stop right there. We're clean  
over here. You're the dirty  
bastard who clearly has never heard  
of safe sex.

Small ignores her.

SMALL

Shannon, I would really like to  
talk to you about what happened.

SHANNON FRIEND #1

Your father told her everything she  
needs to know.

SMALL

(To Shannon)

I know he did. And I'm sorry I was  
never able to tell you. It was  
wrong of me.

Shannon looks like she feels guilty and wants to embrace Small, but her friends keep her back.

## SHANNON'S FRIENDS #2

Ted, you need to go away now.  
Shannon does not want to speak to  
you, and neither do any of us.  
There's probably a school you can  
go to in South East, where the  
fucking riff raff all have what you  
have.

## SHANNON FRIEND #1

Come on, let's get out of here.

Small holds a hand up.

## SMALL

No, I'll leave.

Small turns and walks away.

## EXT. KING'S DOMINION ENTRANCE - DAY

Guy and Jennifer are standing in front of King's Dominion, an amusement park. Guy's mouth is agape. Jennifer is concerned she did something wrong.

## JENNIFER

This is ok, right?

## GUY

I've always wanted to come here.

He instinctively leans over and kisses her. She is caught off guard, but likes it.

## GUY (CONT'D)

Oh my God, sorry, I couldn't help myself. Was that ok?

## JENNIFER

Outlook is good. Come on, let's go in. I'll take you on my favorite rides.

Guy is giddy and grabs her hand. They run towards the gates.

EXT. KING'S DOMINION RIDE LINE - MOMENTS LATER

Guy and Jennifer are standing in line. Guy is looking at everything, completely overwhelmed. He ducks when a roller coaster passes by overhead. They're still holding hands.

JENNIFER  
I promise they don't bite.

GUY  
What's this one called?

JENNIFER  
The Blast Coaster. My favorite as a kid.

GUY  
I think I've smoked something called the Blast Coaster.

Jennifer laughs and pulls him closer.

JENNIFER  
You can't say that around here.

They kiss again.

GUY  
This makes me wonder what our next date will entail.

JENNIFER  
I wouldn't know since you'll be the one planning it.

GUY  
I'll have to ask Coach Ashby for some ideas.

They both laugh as the line begins to move.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET NEAR THE CAPITAL - NIGHT

Guy and Jennifer are walking down the street drinking coffee.

JENNIFER  
Isn't this beautiful? I love it here.

Guy isn't nearly as impressed as Jennifer is. He is very tense, but is trying to act normal.

GUY

I can't believe I let you talk me  
into coffee.

JENNIFER

I didn't want the day to end.

GUY

It was a great day. Thanks for  
that.

She smiles at him and then sips her coffee.

JENNIFER

Is it too early in the relationship  
to ask a personal question?

GUY

Relationship, huh?

He pulls her closer. She doesn't respond.

GUY (CONT'D)

I'm an open book. Ask away.

JENNIFER

How did you contract HIV?

Jennifer is concerned that she offended him, but Guy just  
smiles and sighs.

GUY

Well, to be honest, I have no idea.  
I imagine I shared a needle with  
someone. Or slept with someone.  
Lord knows how many people I have  
infected. Sorry if that response  
is a cop out. Disappointed?

JENNIFER

No, impressed actually.

GUY

Impressed? For what?

JENNIFER

I've known people, lots of people  
in DC, who have fallen down that  
path and not come back. I'm just  
impressed you are where you are.

GUY

And you? How did you get it?

JENNIFER

Oh, well my story isn't as exciting as yours. I had a good life; wealthy, loving parents. But, I had to show my rebellious side. So I snuck out of the house one night, met some guy, and he took me to a party in a part of town I had never been to or seen. Can we just say the rest is history?

Guy nods. They walk in silence listening to the sounds of the city.

GUY

How old were you?

JENNIFER

Seventeen.

Guy accepts that answer and they walk in silence for a moment.

GUY

So, I like this area too. I used to live up the street a bit.

Jennifer perks up with excitement.

JENNIFER

Really? Can we go see it?

Guy looks at her reluctantly, considering her request. But then he pauses. He sees Dan walking towards them.

GUY

No... Not tonight.

Jennifer sees his change in demeanor and tries to see what he's looking at.

GUY (CONT'D)

Listen. I know this guy coming our way. Whatever happens, the goal is to leave as soon as possible. Do not accept any invitation he might give to us. Ok?

Jennifer nods apprehensively as Dan approaches. Dan is clearly still on drugs. His clothes are in tatters and his skin is hanging off his bones. Guy instinctively pushes Jennifer behind him. Dan stops when he sees Guy.

DAN

Guy? Guy is that you?

GUY

Hey, Dan.

DAN

Guy, you came home to me.

GUY

No, just walking through. We were just on our way to our car. It's good to see you, Dan. Take care of yourself.

DAN

Now hold on one sec, Guy. Why don't you and I and this lovely lady head back to my place and enjoy ourselves for old time's sake.

Guy freezes. He wants to go with him. Jennifer steps in front of Guy.

JENNIFER

No, I'm sorry. Guy and I have to be on our way. But thank you for your invitation.

Jennifer grabs Guy by the shirt and forcefully turns him around.

GUY

She's right, I'm sorry, Dan. Take care.

DAN

Well hang on, maybe just a few bucks then. Hey!

They continue to walk away from him. Guy is extremely tense. Jennifer is holding on to him as though he's going to run away.

JENNIFER

You did good. You did so good. I'm proud of you. Let's get you home so you can start thinking about your second date with me. Remember how much fun we had today?

Guy was in a daze and breathing heavily.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
Hey, remember the rides we went on?

Guy snaps out of it and looks at Jennifer.

GUY  
Yeah. Yeah those were fun.

Jennifer reaches up to kiss him.

JENNIFER  
And there will be a next time?

GUY  
I'm an addict. You're going to  
have a hard time getting rid of me.

INT. PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Dr. Weinberg, Diane, Coach Ashby, and Small are sitting in PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON's office. Tomlinson is a large, tranquil black man who wears a suit. The sun shines through the window behind him, making him appear as a silhouette. His hands are clasped on top of a large desk calendar.

PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON  
(Speaking slowly)  
So, can I assume we all know why  
we're here today?

DIANE  
No, why don't you spell it out for  
us.

PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON  
Very well. It has come to my  
attention that Ted here has a virus  
that is terminal, virulent, and  
highly infectious in certain  
vectors.

DIANE  
How candid of you.

Tomlinson grins and cocks his head to the side.

DR. WEINBERG  
And what exactly is your point in  
explaining to us our son's terminal  
and virulent virus?

## PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON

My point, Dr. Weinberg, is that there are over one thousand students at this school without a terminal and virulent virus. And each one of those students has two angry and frightened parents that would like to keep it that way.

## DR. WEINBERG

There's nothing illegal about having Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome, Principal Tomlinson.

## PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON

Well, for starters, no, it's not illegal to have the virus. At Ted's age, though, every method of contraction is illegal. Secondly...

## DR. WEINBERG

I beg your pardon. The methods of contraction are illegal? Well, let me apologize for Ted's actions. He is deeply sorry that his biological mother had AIDS and passed it on to him before she died at childbirth. And Diane and I, we are deeply apologetic for adopting Ted and giving him a good life when we knew what a burden it would be on you.

Dr. Weinberg stands up and Principal Tomlinson responds in kind. Tomlinson holds his hands up to settle Dr. Weinberg.

## PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON

I have no interest of making Ted leave Woodrow Wilson. I think he is a great kid and I think that would jeopardize his growth as a human being.

Both men sit.

## PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON (CONT'D)

All I'm saying is I have a responsibility to protect all of the kids at this school. So while I urge Ted to remain here, I am sorry to say that he can no longer participate in the school's athletics programs.

They're all stunned at his statement. Small hangs his head, defeated.

ASHBY

What? You can't take the team away from him.

PRINCIPAL TOMLINSON

Yes, Coach Ashby. I can. And I did.

DR. WEINBERG

(To Small)

Small, please go wait outside. We'll just be a second.

Small obediently stands and exits.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Small walks out into the hallway and looks around. He hears his parents yelling at Principal Tomlinson. The school is mostly empty, but then he sees Shannon. She is standing alone and is uncertain if she should approach. Small takes the initiative and walks towards her. He approaches her and she waits patiently. He reaches out to touch her, but she recoils.

SHANNON

Sorry.

SMALL

No, now I know how you feel.

She looks ashamed and looks at the ground.

SHANNON

And now I understand why. I can't believe you didn't tell me.

SMALL

You obviously wouldn't have stuck around as long as you did - or at all - if you knew the truth.

SHANNON

I would have liked the choice.

SMALL

You have the choice now.

SHANNON

That's so unfair.

They both remain silent for a moment.

SMALL

They kicked me off the team.

SHANNON

Ted, I'm so sorry. I know how much it means to you.

SMALL

Look, I know you don't want to be with me, but I'm going to be a little short of friends these days. I'd really like it if we could still be friends.

Shannon considers this and looks around to see if anyone sees her.

SHANNON

No, Small, I'm sorry. Not now.

Small nods as Shannon turns and walks away. He stands alone for a few seconds before his parents and Coach Ashby join him. Dr. Weinberg puts his arm around his shoulders.

DIANE

I'm so sorry, Small.

SMALL

It's ok. I think I'd like to go home now.

DIANE

Ok, Teddy.

ASHBY

Hey, Small, I know what happened today changes things, so don't take this the wrong way, but the team still wants you around. We would love it if you still wanted to come to the games. You can't play, for now, but you're still a member of this team.

SMALL

Yeah, Coach. Maybe I'll come tomorrow.

INT. GRIEVANCES THERAPY ROOM - NIGHT

Guy and Small are sitting next to each other. They are listening to a black woman with far too much make up on that's wearing a yellow dress straight out of the 1950s.

YELLOW DRESS

According to the Washington Post, the District of Columbia has spent over \$500 million dollars combating AIDS, which infects three percent of the DC population, or one out of every twenty people. Additionally, four percent of DC's black population is infected, and as high as 33 percent of black men that are gay are infected. 91 percent of infected women are black. These numbers are all lower than the actual numbers as they only pertain to people that have been tested. In fact, DC's infection rate is higher than that of West Africa, considered the epitome of losing control of the AIDS epidemic.

Guy and Small look at each other. Guy just shakes his head.

YELLOW DRESS (CONT'D)

But I am grateful, despite the dire situation, that I have all of you to talk to.

The room applauds as she steps down. Robert Jones stands up and looks around. He settles on Small.

ROBERT JONES

Small, would you like to share today, baby doll?

SMALL

Not today, I don't think.

ROBERT JONES

Ok, sugar, I would like to remind everyone, though, that having grievances and being grateful, having emotion, is the essence of being alive. We cannot afford to lose that. We have to fight every time we want to give up and cash it in.

SMALL  
I don't feel anything.

ROBERT JONES  
I'm very sorry to hear that.

Before Robert Jones can say anything else, Guy stands up.

GUY  
I have grievances.

ROBERT JONES  
Real grievances, Mr. Dickens?

The group laughs. Guy ignores him and walks to the front of the room.

GUY  
Hello, my name is Ted Dickens,  
although most people call me Guy.  
I have grievances. I have  
grievances that my friend Small  
cannot play baseball because of the  
narrow-minded school  
administrators. I have grievances  
that I am relegated to playing  
softball instead of baseball  
because of my own stupidity. But  
with that said, I am grateful. I  
had a date last week...

The group whistles and cheers.

GUY (CONT'D)  
It is a big deal for me. I haven't  
ever, or don't remember going on a  
date before. Definitely never  
sober. I actually don't even  
remember being with a woman. It  
got me thinking about this dream I  
have about dolphins. I never had  
any contact with dolphins or even  
seen one before, but in my dreams,  
the dolphins are screaming. Like  
they're about to be slaughtered.  
In the dream I'm not responsible  
for them dying, but I'm watching.  
And as I watch, I know I can help  
them if I want to, but I actively  
choose not to. I can't say why I  
choose not to, but I think I'm  
scared, like maybe I'll be hurt.

Guy shakes his head and starts to talk again, but he stops. He looks at Robert who is clearly touched by Guy's honesty. Guy decides he has enough, though, and steps away from the podium.

CUT TO:

EXT. NATIONALS PARK - LATER

Guy and Small are sitting in the stadium watching the Nationals. Small has a huge smile on his face.

SMALL

This is so cool.

GUY

I thought you'd like it. I just fucking love baseball.

Small nods.

GUY (CONT'D)

Hey check out Zimmerman.

Guy points to third base. Small smiles.

SMALL

Baseball's the best.

GUY

It's almost hard to watch sometimes. I would have been drafted straight out of high school if I hadn't fucked it up. Can you believe that? Such a moron.

SMALL

At least you were allowed to play.

Guy looks at Small and elbows him to get his attention.

GUY

There's more to baseball than just playing it. You can be a part of something without actually doing it. Believe me, it's something that Coach Ashby is teaching me, and I wish I had known a longtime ago.

SMALL

You're worse than my father is.

GUY

Maybe, but you know what, this group we're in, it has taught me something. Life sucks. You deal with it. You don't clam up like you have recently. You express it. Are you outraged? You express your outrage. You are not here to be dormant and die. You're here to start fires and pick grass and sleep with women and go to as many baseball games as you can afford. And when someone tells you no, you stick an M-80 up their ass and you do it anyway. Because that's what living is, Small. It's not about grievances and being grateful, it's about living. Yeah, you're dying. We're both dying, but pull your head out of your ass and accept that you're not dead yet. And promise yourself that when you die, you lived such a damn good life that heaven won't want you and hell will be too afraid to take you.

Small is quiet, letting the words sink in. They watch a batter get a base hit. The crowd cheers around them.

GUY (CONT'D)

Want a hotdog?

SMALL

Yes.

They both stand up and walk up the steps.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The team is sitting in the grass in front of Coach Ashby. Guy and Small are standing off to the side. Guy coughs. His cold is getting worse.

ASHBY

Principal Tomlinson has decided that Small is not eligible to play on this team. He said it's too dangerous to other players, such as yourselves. Well, personally, I think that's all a crock, of, shit. With that said, Small is still a part of this team, at least in my opinion.

(MORE)

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Now I want to know what you all think. This is a team sport, so you're all entitled to your opinion. So what do you guys think? Is Small still a part of this team? Do you guys want Small sitting in that dugout with you cheering you guys on as a part of this team?

Craig stands up.

CRAIG

Hell yes he's a part of this team.  
(To Small)  
Hell yes you're still one of us.  
You earned it fair and square.  
Right, Guys?

The guys all nod and say yes.

ASHBY

Good. It's settled. Small, help Coach Dickens throw soft toss.

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - LATER

The team is celebrating and eating pizza. Small is sitting at the table amongst them. Craig is holding a glass up.

CRAIG

We have seventeen straight championships, and let me tell you all, life is determined to make an eighteenth championship unattainable. We got new players, we got a crack head for a coach...

ROGER

A good coach, though.

CRAIG

A damn good crack-head of a coach. Hell, we even have Small over here with more talent than all of us and with AIDS for Christ's sake.

The whole team laughs. Small pretends to smile.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

But we're still here. We're undefeated.

(MORE)

CRAIG (CONT'D)  
And god damn it, we're winning a  
motherfucking championship.

The team begins to eat pizza and it appears that Small is enjoying himself. After a few minutes, he slips away and heads toward the bathroom.

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Small goes into a stall and pulls a medical scalpel out of his pocket. He examines it for a moment, and then he places it against his wrist. He leans back against the wall. He cuts his wrist open. He watches in awe as his blood drains onto the floor.

INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Guy and Jennifer are asleep. Guy wakes up to the sun streaming through the window and groggily looks around. Jennifer's room is perfectly clean and warm. Her pillow cases have flowers on them, she has family photos everywhere, and her desk has a laptop with several documents of notes.

Guy smiles and puts his head back on the pillow and begins to think of another bedroom he has woken up in.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM IN DARELL'S HOUSE (1994) - MORNING

Guy wakes up in a bedroom he doesn't recognize. He's naked and laying next to Grace, but he doesn't know who she is. There are no sheets on the bed and the walls appear to have been used as a urinal.

Scared, Guy tries to roll out of bed, but when puts weight on his arm, he collapses in pain. He looks down at it and sees that it has become infected. He takes a moment to let the pain pass, and then struggles to get on his feet and put his clothes back on.

Guy takes a look at the girl, debates if he should help her, but turns to walk out the door. He is stopped, though, by DARELL, a large black man, who is stark naked and looks angry.

DARELL  
Who the fuck are you?

GUY  
Um, no one, I'm just leaving.

DARELL

So you come fuck my woman and then leave? Is this a joke.

Guy gulps and braces himself to get hit. After a moment, though, Darell grins and starts to laugh.

DARELL (CONT'D)

Oh man, Guy, I'm just messing with you. How fucked up did you get last night?

Guy smiles.

GUY

Apparently pretty fucked up.

DARELL

Hey, who's the girl?

GUY

No idea.

DARELL

Mind if I have a go.

Darell begins to lick his lips and grabs at his crotch. Guy looks back at the girl. He knows he should stop it, but feels powerless.

GUY

Have at it.

Darell begins to climb on top of the girl as Guy walks out.

BACK TO:

INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer wakes up and rolls over to find Guy lost in thought. She drapes an arm across his chest.

JENNIFER

Good morning.

GUY

Hi. I didn't want to wake you.

JENNIFER

Mmm, thank God for Saturdays.

GUY

I know, I haven't slept that well  
in my entire life.

Jennifer gleams at the compliment.

JENNIFER

I like having you here.

GUY

I like being here. I can't believe  
what I've been missing. But, I  
don't think we were safe last  
night.

Jennifer cracks up.

JENNIFER

I think we'll be ok. How did I  
ever manage to find you.

GUY

You're a batting cage slut.

She playfully slaps his chest. He rolls her over and nuzzles  
his face into chest.

JENNIFER

What were you just thinking about  
when I woke up? You looked lost.

GUY

This room just brought back a  
memory. A high memory. More of a  
dream.

JENNIFER

Want to tell me about it?

When Guy doesn't say anything, she thinks she offended him.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Hey, you don't have to tell me  
anything you don't want to.

GUY

No, it's not that. I keep having  
these dreams. I don't know, or I  
can't say for sure, but these  
dreams... I think they're real.  
Or they're symbolic, so to speak,  
of this experience. I woke up next  
to this girl. She was dirty, and  
the walls around us were dirty.

(MORE)

GUY (CONT'D)

And she was naked. I felt so bad looking at her. Then a man came in. I wanted to help her. But I wanted to help myself more. I wanted to get out of there. I should have tried to stop it, but I couldn't. I just wanted to leave and be safe myself.

JENNIFER

Hey, you don't need to talk about this if it's too hard.

GUY

No, she... She had tattoos. She had dolphin tattoos.

(Has an epiphone)

The dreams make so much sense now.

Jennifer pulls him closer to her.

JENNIFER

I think it's time for a subject change.

They begin to kiss. After a few seconds, though, the phone rings. She doesn't want to answer, but reluctantly grabs it.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Hello? Oh hi.

(Motions to Guy)

Yes, yes it's good to talk to you too. Here he is.

Guy rolls off of her and rolls his eyes. He shakes his head as he takes the receiver.

GUY

Really? I can't enjoy a night away without an inquisition?

ASHBY

(In the receiver)

Guy, something happened.

Guy goes pale when he listens to Coach Ashby explain what happened to Small. He brings his hand up to his face. Jennifer looks on concerned. She reaches out and touches his leg. Guy nods into the phone and then hangs up. He immediately rolls off the bed and begins putting his clothes on.

GUY

I'm so sorry. Something happened to one of my players. I have to get to the hospital.

JENNIFER

Yeah, of course. I hope he's ok.

GUY

Me too. He tried to kill himself.

Jennifer gasps.

JENNIFER

What? That's terrible.

GUY

I know. It's... He means a lot to me.

He looks up at her. He knows she doesn't know what to say.

GUY (CONT'D)

Hey. I don't know if this would be weird, but do you want to come with me?

Jennifer perks up.

JENNIFER

Really? You want me to?

GUY

Absolutely.

She gets out of bed and begins to slide some panties on. Guy can't help but watch. Jennifer sees him.

JENNIFER

Hey, behave.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER

Guy and Jennifer are running down the hallway hand in hand. Jennifer's bright pink bra is noticeable through her white shirt. They see Coach Ashby sitting with Diane Weinberg and the rest of the team. Coach Ashby stands up and greets them. The team starts saying, "Hey, Coach."

GUY

What the hell happened?

ASHBY

We don't know. He went to the bathroom and cut his wrists.

Guy mouths, "What?" He shakes his head and refocuses.

GUY

Coach, this is Jennifer, from the batting cages.

Coach Ashby and Jennifer shake hands.

ASHBY

Jennifer, it's very gracious of you to come.

JENNIFER

It's my pleasure.

ASHBY

Guy, why don't you go say hi to Diane.

Guy nods and leads Jennifer over to Diane. She appears to be in shock, but acknowledges Guy.

GUY

Hi, Diane.

She looks at him as though he appeared out of thin air.

DIANE

Guy. Guy. Guy...

(Nodding)

...you should know you have changed Small's life. You're the first person he has been able to open up to.

GUY

Under the circumstances...

DIANE

I mean it as a compliment.

GUY

How is he?

Diane gets teary eyed.

DIANE

He's in a coma. He is mumbling, though. He says the word, grievance.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)  
We can't decide if he's alluding to  
the group or trying to say  
something else.

GUY  
Something tells me he has  
grievances.

Diane nods. Guy and Jennifer sit down next to her. Jennifer looks down at her outfit and sees her bra clearly through the shirt.

JENNIFER  
(Whispering)  
Guy, you didn't tell me my shirt  
was see through!

GUY  
(Smiling)  
I just figured I'd be taking it off  
later.

Guy takes off his outer layer and hands it to her. She gratefully puts it on. He then coughs and sniffles.

They all look as Dr. Weinberg walks up. He kneels in front of Diane and puts his hands on her knees. He looks at Guy.

DR. WEINBERG  
Hi, Guy. Thanks for coming.

GUY  
How is he, Doc?

DR. WEINBERG  
He... He needs blood. Small's  
blood type is O negative.  
Unfortunately, O negative blood  
right now is in short supply, and  
fifteen year olds with HIV who try  
to kill themselves aren't  
considered worthy of that blood.

Guy has an epiphany.

GUY  
I'm O negative. Take my blood.

Diane looks at him with exultation.

DIANE  
Would you do that?

GUY  
Of course I would.

DR. WEINBERG  
Guy, I can't even begin to tell you the risks involved with doing that. If your CD4 count is anywhere close to 200, this process could kill you. And judging from that hack of yours, you're in no condition to possibly have new infections introduced into your system. And let's be honest, I'd probably lose my license.

Guy and Jennifer laugh. Guy squeezes Jennifer's hand and looks at her. She nods in approval.

GUY  
I think it's worth the risk.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Guy is sitting in a chair. Dr. Weinberg is setting up the process to draw his blood. Jennifer and Coach Ashby watch.

DR. WEINBERG  
You know, I remember when Small was born. His mother was essentially dead. OD'd on smack.

GUY  
Tell me about her.

DR. WEINBERG  
Petite girl, so pregnant these fish tattoos on her hips were stretched beyond distinction.

GUY  
Fish tattoos? Like, dolphins?

Jennifer perks up when he says this. Dr. Weinberg nods.

DR. WEINBERG  
Could have been.

GUY  
How old is Small again?

DR. WEINBERG  
15.

Guy leans his head back as he considers this.

GUY

Doc, I know this will sound weird,  
but will you test my blood against  
Small's?

All three of them look at Guy with confusion.

DR. WEINBERG

Why?

GUY

I want to know if we're related.

Dr. Weinberg looks at him, but doesn't acknowledge his comment. He begins to draw blood.

DR. WEINBERG

Alright, here we go.

When the needle is inserted into Guy's arm, he becomes highly uncomfortable. Jennifer stands up and puts her hands around him and rubs his chest.

JENNIFER

Don't look at the needle, Guy.  
It'll be over soon.

DR. WEINBERG

Alright, we have a good flow.

Guy begins to breathe heavier. His eyes begin to flicker in and out. Suddenly, the blood slows to a trickle.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)

Ah hell, his vein collapsed.  
Something must have been introduced  
into his arm.

Guy's eyes roll into the back of his head.

JENNIFER

Guy!

Guy takes one last look at Jennifer before he completely passes out. Jennifer begins to panic and screams wildly. She doesn't want to let Guy go and is clutching to his shirt.

DR. WEINBERG

Ashby, get her out of here!

Coach Ashby grabs Jennifer around the waist and drags her out of the room.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
I need some help in here!

Dr. Weinberg seals off the blood and then begins to intubate Guy. Two nurses come running in the room. Jennifer continues to thrash in Coach Ashby's arms and is beginning to knock things over.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Someone deal with that girl!

A third nurse comes up to Jennifer and injects a shot into her arm. She immediately goes limp. Dr. Weinberg hands the vial of Guy's blood to one of the nurses.

DR. WEINBERG (CONT'D)  
Take that to room 512!

The nurse does as she's told.

NURSE #3  
What happened?

DR. WEINBERG  
His body was too weak to handle the shock of losing that much blood.  
He fell into a coma.

The nurses and Dr. Weinberg transfer Guy to a bed. He continues to work on him until he's stable. As they wheel him out to another room, Dr. Weinberg sees Diane, who looks afraid.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Jennifer is hooked up to an IV and resting in a hospital bed. Coach Ashby, who looks exhausted, is sitting quietly by her bedside. Jennifer gradually reemerges from her slumber. She looks around, confused.

JENNIFER  
Hello?

ASHBY  
Hi there. Welcome back.

JENNIFER  
What happened?

ASHBY

You were hysterical. They had to  
calm you down.

JENNIFER

Hysterical? Oh my God, Guy.

Coach Ashby stands and goes to her. He softly puts his hands  
on her shoulders.

ASHBY

You need to relax. Guy will be ok.  
You need to take it easy. Guy  
would want that. He really likes  
you know.

Jennifer, seemingly assuaged, let's her body relax. She  
smiles as she thinks about Guy and lets her eyes close again.

INT. SMALL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Weinberg is checking on Small's bandages. He strokes  
Small's hair and looks at his face. Satisfied, he picks up  
his chart from the end of the bed and sits in a chair. He  
takes a deep breath, knowing he will be looking at some  
potentially life-altering results. He flips the first page  
up to look at the comments.

The technician's notes read: Following a DNA analysis and  
correlation of Theodore Dickens and Theodore Weinberg, it is  
determined that there is a 99.9 percent certainty that the  
two are genetically related.

Dr. Weinberg closes the chart and begins to laugh. First  
it's a mere chuckle, but it cascades into all out hysterics.  
A nurse enters.

NURSE #4

Dr. Weinberg? Is everything ok?

DR. WEINBERG

Oh yes. Sometimes life is just  
funny.

NURSE #4

Do you really think it's  
appropriate to be laughing right  
now?

Dr. Weinberg stops laughing and scowls at the nurse.

DR. WEINBERG

Nurse, please go check with Dr. Rosenthal about Ted Dickens, and then have him wheeled in here. Under the circumstances, they should be together and I'll assume full responsibility for their care.

The nurse is tempted to say something, but realizes this is not a moment to challenge him. She exits.

Dr. Weinberg once again opens the chart to double check what he had read. He sighs and shakes his head.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

Dr. Weinberg and Diane are sitting at a table. Diane is crying. They're holding hands across the table.

DIANE

How are you not taking this harder?

DR. WEINBERG

Diane, eventually, I think you'll see the humor in this.

DIANE

Our son's going to be taken away from us, and you think I should find the humor in it?

Dr. Weinberg straightens in his seat and looks down on Diane.

DR. WEINBERG

Diane, Guy is in a coma, and if he wakes up, he's three months removed from being a heroin addict for roughly fifteen years. On top of that, he has HIV and can't afford the necessary medication. Something tells me our son is not going to be taken away from us.

Diane takes a moment to digest these comments. She realizes something.

DIANE

So Guy is Ted's father. Did he give him HIV?

DR. WEINBERG

It seems likely.

Diane sighs.

DIANE  
How's our son doing?

DR. WEINBERG  
He's stabilized. Still not responsive. Let's just give him time to let the transfusion work.

DIANE  
And Guy?

Dr. Weinberg opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Coach Ashby and Dr. Weinberg are playing catch.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Dr. Weinberg and Coach Ashby enter. Jennifer is washing Guy and Diane is washing Small. They don't see the two men enter.

DIANE  
How long have you known him?

JENNIFER  
Not long enough.

DIANE  
It looks like you really love him.  
He's lucky to have you.

Jennifer looks up at Diane and considers what she just said. She nods and smiles.

JENNIFER  
I'm lucky to have found him.

Diane notices her husband standing in the doorway.

DIANE  
Feel better?

DR. WEINBERG  
Much.

DIANE  
You look tired.

Dr. Weinberg acknowledges the comment and walks over to Small. He puts the baseball in Small's hand. Small's blood pressure increases.

Small's eyes open as he squeezes the ball. Diane immediately grabs him, like she doesn't want him to slip away. Dr. Weinberg transforms into a doctor. He has a medical light out and is looking at Small's eyes and checking his vitals.

DR. WEINBERG  
Hey, Small. Welcome back, buddy.

Small breathes in deeply and adjusts to the light. He looks at Dr. Weinberg.

SMALL  
Where am I?

DIANE  
You're at the hospital, baby.

DR. WEINBERG  
You've been in a coma for over a day.

SMALL  
A coma? How?

DR. WEINBERG  
You had an accident, Teddy, do you remember?

Small takes a moment to recall what happened.

SMALL  
Dad?

DR. WEINBERG  
Yes.

SMALL  
I stole your scalpel.

Dr. Weinberg laughs.

DR. WEINBERG  
You most certainly did.

Diane starts to cry.

SMALL

Mom, what's wrong?

DIANE

Nothing, baby. I'm just glad  
you're awake and ok.

Small looks around. He sees Coach Ashby and Jennifer.

SMALL

Hey, Coach.

ASHBY

Hey, slugger. You gave us a scare.

SMALL

(Looking at Jennifer)

Who's she?

JENNIFER

I'm Jennifer.

SMALL

Guy's Jennifer?

Jennifer begins to blush. She puts her hand on Guy's chest.  
Small follows her hand and sees Guy.

SMALL (CONT'D)

Is that Guy? Guy!

He tried to get up but Dr. Weinberg and Diane hold him back.

DR. WEINBERG

Small, listen. You needed blood.  
Guy gave you his blood. He saved  
you.

SMALL

Oh my God. He's in a coma because  
of me?

DIANE

No! What Guy did was his decision.

SMALL

What? How can you say that?

DIANE

Hey, Small, we never know who our  
angels are. Hey, look at me.  
Our angels could be anywhere, and  
whether we like it or not, they are  
going to help you.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)  
That man helped you, so don't you  
dare begin to blame yourself.

Dr. Weinberg grabs his nose. He lets it go to talk to Small.

DR. WEINBERG  
Small, there's something else you  
need to know about Guy.

DIANE  
No, Mike!

Dr. Weinberg ignores her. Jennifer walks to Diane and takes her hand.

JENNIFER  
Small will be fine. Let's go for a  
walk.

Diane reluctantly agrees. They exit. Small looks confused.

DR. WEINBERG  
Small, it turns out Guy is more  
than just your angel. He's your  
biological father.

Small takes a deep breath, both out of confusion and out of grogginess.

SMALL  
Really? That's weird. What does  
that even mean. Who was my mother?

DR. WEINBERG  
Your mother's name was Grace  
Middleton. She was eighteen, had  
HIV and was hopped up on so much  
heroin that she probably didn't  
even realize she was pregnant with  
you.

SMALL  
Jesus, Dad, what the fuck?

ASHBY  
(Laughing)  
Yeah, Jesus, Mike.

SMALL  
So, my name is actually Ted...  
Dickens?

Dr. Weinberg doesn't know how to respond. They don't see Diane re-enter the room.

DIANE

Your name is whatever you want it to be. That's the beauty of life, Teddy, you can be what you want to be and you can constantly change who you are. Or, in your case, you can constantly rediscover who you are.

Small nods, thinking about the implications.

SMALL

Will Guy be ok?

DR. WEINBERG

We'll have to wait and see.

Small looks over at Guy and then rests his head on his pillow. He touches his bandages.

SMALL

I'm so sorry.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Coach Ashby and Jennifer are sitting on a bench together. Jennifer is exhausted and hasn't changed her clothes. She still has Guy's shirt draped over her. She has her head on Ashby's shoulder.

ASHBY

How are you holding up?

JENNIFER

It's been a long couple of days.

ASHBY

That it has. Why don't you head home? Guy would want you to get some rest. You can come back in the morning.

JENNIFER

No. What if I... And he...

She trails off. Ashby lifts his hand up and strokes her hair like a father would to his daughter.

ASHBY

So you two met at the batting cages?

JENNIFER

You know we met there. You've seen  
me there. Don't change the  
subject.

ASHBY

Have you been going there long?

Jennifer laughs and takes her head off his shoulder.

JENNIFER

My whole life. Played softball in  
high school. Tried to play on the  
men's baseball team, but some law  
got in the way.

ASHBY

Title 9. Very famous law.

JENNIFER

You're lucky you get to coach.

ASHBY

You want to be a coach?

JENNIFER

We all have our dreams.

She puts her head back on his shoulder and closes her eyes.

INT. SMALL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Guy is still in a coma. His breathing begins to intensify,  
suggesting he's dreaming.

FADE TO:

INT. DARELL'S HOUSE (1994) - NIGHT

Guy is drinking a beer. He is not hiding his lust for Grace,  
who is looking back at him as she dances. Behind Guy, Darell  
has his arm around Dan. Dan tries to get Guy's attention,  
but Guy is completely consumed by Grace.

INT. BEDROOM IN DARELL'S HOUSE (1994) - LATER

Guy and Grace are sitting on the bed with no sheets. Grace  
is cooking heroin. She takes Guy's arm and injects him.  
Immediately, Guy's eyes sink into the back of his head and he  
leans back on the bed.

Grace bends over and begins to kiss him. Guy looks at her exposed midriff and sees dolphin tattoos.

GUY  
What do the tattoos mean?

GRACE  
My friend gave them to me. He said one means harmony and the other means resurrection.

GUY  
That's nice. That's really nice.

Grace sits up and begins to cook the heroin for herself.

INT. SMALL'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Small is reading anti-suicide literature and shaking his head. Dr. Weinberg, Matt, and Brian enter. Matt is still wearing a dark suit, while Brian is clad in jeans and a T-shirt.

DR. WEINBERG  
Hey, bud, mind if we come in?

Small puts the pamphlets down.

SMALL  
Yeah.

DR. WEINBERG  
Small, I want you to meet two of my closest friends, Brian and Matt.

Brian steps forward and shakes Small's hand. Matt stays in place, but kindly waves.

BRIAN HANSEN  
Small, your dad tells me you're a baseball player.

SMALL  
I was a baseball player.

BRIAN HANSEN  
Yep, believe me, I know the feeling. I used to play ball in college, but I got in a car wreck and wasn't able to play anymore.

Small looks at Dr. Weinberg for reassurance.

SMALL

Really?

BRIAN HANSEN

Yep, worst day of my life. One thing's for sure, though, the love never went away.

Small nods and looks down at his lap.

BRIAN HANSEN (CONT'D)

So instead of just sitting on the sidelines, I found a way to be involved.

Small looks up inquisitively.

SMALL

How?

BRIAN HANSEN

Small, I'm a reporter. Want to know what my beat is?

Small looks questioningly at Dr. Weinberg.

DR. WEINBERG

It's like the subject he writes about for the paper.

BRIAN HANSEN

It's the Washington Nationals.

Small gets excited.

SMALL

Are you serious?

BRIAN HANSEN

I am, and as it turns out, I'm going to need an intern for the summer. Preferably someone who loves baseball and loves to write.

Small looks at Dr. Weinberg, pleading for him to give a preemptive yes.

DR. WEINBERG

Don't look at me.

SMALL

Could I be your intern?

BRIAN HANSEN

Well, it's an awfully big commitment. You would be required to attend every single Washington Nationals home game and occasionally help interview the players. Are you up that?

Small's eyes open wide and he goes slack jawed.

SMALL

When can I start?

All three men laugh.

BRIAN HANSEN

As soon as you're healthy. I'll be in touch.

They shake again and Dr. Weinberg thanks them as he begins to show them out. As they walk out, the chirping of Guy's heart monitor becomes a permanent beep. Dr. Weinberg instantly shouts for assistance and begins to resuscitate him.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Small, Dr. Weinberg, Diane, Coach Ashby, Julie, and Jennifer are sitting at a funeral. Diane is consoling a distraught Jennifer. All the other seats are empty. They are watching a priest standing in front of them.

PRIEST

I never had the pleasure of knowing Theodore Dickens. I hear he had a tough life, one of struggle. But when we look through those struggles, we find a man who was naturally gifted, naturally loving, and continually thriving to be a better man. And now Officer Ashby has prepared some remarks.

As Coach Ashby stands to take the podium, he sees a group of people emerge in the distance, led by Robert Jones. The group includes the entire Grievances group, the high school team, and parents of the players. They fill in the seats and take up standing room. Coach Ashby waits for them to settle.

ASHBY

Thank you, all, for coming.

ROBERT JONES  
(Yelling)  
We're a family, honey!

The crowd laughs.

ASHBY  
Guy was a drug addict and he had HIV. He was also a natural baseball player, and he destroyed his own life. To many people, this defined him. To many people, there was nothing else there to see. But to those of us who were fortunate enough to actually get to know him, to understand what made him tick, we came to realize that all Guy wanted was to be was a good man. I had the privilege of arresting Guy on multiple occasions.

The crowd laughs again.

ASHBY (CONT'D)  
And I had the privilege of helping to nurse him back to health, which I know wouldn't have been a success without people like Small and Jennifer and Dr. Weinberg. But what many people don't know is that I also had the privilege of giving up on Guy when he was nineteen and I had the privilege of making sure that he stopped giving up on himself over fifteen years later. Guy always wanted to get clean, but no one ever showed enough faith in him to make that happen. When we finally did show that faith, we were able to witness a remarkable recovery. But we have to ask ourselves why that recovery was successful. Why now, of all times, despite the help we gave him, did he finally choose to get clean. When we first threw the idea around of working together to get better, he asked me why he should bother. He had nothing left to offer. No one cared about him. He was a waste of space. But I told him he was wrong.

(MORE)

ASHBY (CONT'D)

I told him that you never know when you can change someone else's life or when you can change your own life.

Coach Ashby pauses to look at Small. And then at Jennifer. And then at the team.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

I think it's safe to say that he ended up touching all of our lives. He made me appreciate the bonds of human connection. And he showed Jennifer here that falling in love is a powerful thing that will change you forever. And he showed Small.... He showed Small a lot. He showed him that even when it appears there's nothing left, there is still someone there that will give everything to make you happy. And that you never know when you'll discover something about your past that will help make you the man you're supposed to become."

Small nodded in agreement.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

I personally am going to miss Guy. I'm going to miss watching him play baseball. I'm going to miss arresting him. And most of all, I'm going to miss having him as a son that I get to watch realize who he really is and begin the relationships he was supposed to have.

Coach Ashby leaves the podium and sits back down. Small leans over to whisper to him.

SMALL

Nice speech, Coach.

ASHBY

Only ballplayers have coaches, Small. Don't ever forget that.

INT. COACH ASHBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Coach Ashby is hosting the funeral reception. There is a large banquet that is far too much food for the crowd.

Coach Ashby is standing in front of the dessert table. He looks around him and surreptitiously picks up a piece of chocolate. He looks around again and takes a bite. Jennifer sees him.

JENNIFER

You know, I've been told to help keep an eye on you and make sure you don't eat the junk food.

Coach Ashby looks at her and then rebelliously finishes it. Jennifer laughs and joins him.

ASHBY

Our little secret. I promise to control myself from now on.

JENNIFER

Uh huh. Well, since you tried it, I feel it's my obligation.

She picks one up and eats it.

ASHBY

I hate you.

JENNIFER

You're right, these are tasty.  
Let's get out of here before we eat it all.

They begin to walk around the house together. They look at the baseball team laughing together.

ASHBY

They're a good group of guys. I think they all liked Guy. He surprisingly was a great coach. Very patient.

JENNIFER

I know he really loved it.

ASHBY

He did. And how about you? What's next?

JENNIFER

Work. Batting cages. I'm going to miss him a lot.

ASHBY

It's funny how that works. Someone can make such a big impression in such a short amount of time. You know, he would have thought you look very beautiful today.

JENNIFER

(Blushing)

Thank you. I hope... I hope just because we don't have Guy around that it doesn't mean we can't stay in touch.

ASHBY

Absolutely. Actually, I wanted to talk to you about that. How's your work schedule?

JENNIFER

My schedule? Um, well, I do a lot of freelance reporting actually and do some freelance design work from home. So, you can say my schedule is pretty flexible.

ASHBY

You're a writer? Small writes, I think. You should talk to him about it.

JENNIFER

I will.

ASHBY

But, we digress. What I wanted to discuss is the team. We have an assistant coach vacancy at the moment. Are you up for it?

Jennifer looks confused and skeptical.

JENNIFER

Are you serious? You want me to fill in for Guy?

ASHBY

If you're up for it.

Coach Ashby sees her contemplating it. He looks over at the team.

ASHBY (CONT'D)

Hey, guys, how'd you all feel about Jennifer, here, filling in for Guy as our new coach?

The team begins to ogle Jennifer and smile and nod. Small sees that no one will answer.

SMALL

Only if I can help out!

JENNIFER

Deal!

CUT TO:

INT. GRIEVANCES THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Small stands in front of the podium, looking at the group.

SMALL

Hello. Most of you already know me, but I'd like to introduce myself again. My name is Ted Dickens Weinberg, but most people know me as Small. Today, I have no grievances. Despite losing my friend who I found out is my real father, and despite not being able to play the game I love, I have no grievances. But I am grateful. I am grateful that my parents love me. I am grateful that I know where I came from and who I really am. I am grateful that when I am in trouble, I know there are people who love me and will literally give their lives to help me. So I'll say it again. My name is Ted, and today I have no grievances.

The group gives him a standing ovation.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GRIEVANCES BUILDING - LATER

Small is walking away from the building. He sees a homeless man and pulls out his wallet. He gives him a dollar. The man is very grateful.

As he walks away from the man, he sees Shannon in the distance.

She almost appears blurry to Small, and he doesn't trust his senses that it is her, but he stands there and allows her to approach.

SHANNON

Hello, Small.

Small is reluctant to speak to her. He looks at the sidewalk, and then back up at her.

SMALL

I think I'm going to go by Ted now.

SHANNON

I like that name. I always have.

SMALL

Listen, I can't really talk, my dad will be here to pick me up any minute. I'm actually surprised he's not here yet.

SHANNON

I called him and asked if I could pick you up.

SMALL

That was presumptuous.

SHANNON

I know.

She shyly smiles.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

It was thoughtful of you to give that man some money.

SMALL

Well, I guess when someone dies trying to save your life, you realize you can do a little bit more helping others. You never know who your angel is going to be.

SHANNON

Very true.

Small looks at the plaid short skirt she has on.

SMALL

I like your skirt.

SHANNON

I know you do. I thought it might help smooth things over.

SMALL

Smooth things over?

SHANNON

Listen, Ted, I have no excuse. I was awful and I don't expect you to forgive me, at least not right away.

SMALL

Of course I can forgive you. To be honest, I owe you an apology too. I assumed if I told you, I would lose you.

She reaches out and takes his hand.

SHANNON

Ted, I'm so sorry I wasn't there for you last week.

She opens up his forearm and looks at the bandage. She touches it with her fingers and then moves up his arm. Finally, she pulls him closer and hugs him. He embraces it and hugs her back. He feels the warmth on his cheek and the firm muscles under her shirt. He breathes in the scent of her hair and feels her chest breathe up and down.

SMALL

You know what you're getting yourself into, right?

SHANNON

I know that I understand why you were so afraid. Which, by the way, Ted, is moronic if you have any idea how HIV spreads.

He blushes.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Listen, I don't know what our future holds, or how it will work, but I'm willing to talk about it if you are.

SMALL

Are you sure you're prepared to bring your sick boyfriend home to your parents, or sit next to me in front of your friends?

SHANNON

I think that if they have a problem with it, they aren't my friends or my family, and I think..... I think we have a lot to talk about. But, I want you to know, as long as you're honest with me...

She pokes him in the chest.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

".... I'll never react the way I did. I want to be there for you.

SMALL

I think I can get used to that.

He puts his arm around her shoulders as they begin to walk down the sidewalk.

SMALL (CONT'D)

There's a Starbuck's up here, can I buy you some hot chocolate?

SHANNON

On a Sunday night, Ted? Only on one condition.

SMALL

Ok. What's that?

SHANNON

We have to have more fun together.

SMALL

How do we have more fun?

SHANNON

We need to, you know, dance! And skip, and play. And when you want to sing, you sing!

SMALL

What was that song we were listening to in your car that one day?

She thinks about it a moment and then twirls out from under his arm.

SHANNON  
(Singing)  
We're walking on sunshine!

SMALL AND SHANNON  
Ooooh! And doesn't it feel great!

FADE OUT.

THE END