

PATH OF REDEMPTION

EXT. ATLANTA GEORGIA - CURRENT - DAY

OFF CAMERA VOICE READS WHILE WE SEE A PANORAMIC VIEW OF CITY. SHOT FLIES DOWN TO BUSINESS PEOPLE WALKING, THEN OUT ABOVE CITY AND THEN INTO A HIP CONDO WITH A YOUNG COUPLE GETTING INTO AN EXPENSIVE CAR. THEN BACK OUT AND DOWN INTO SKID ROW AND TENT HOMES IN THE STREET MOVING TO SHOT UNDER THE FREEWAY, MERGING INTO VARIOUS SHOTS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE. THEN PULLS ALL THE WAY OUT INTO SPACE WITH A VIEW OF THE PLANET.

ELISABETH (O.C.) (DAUGHTER OF HOMELESS
ACTIVIST HOSEA WILLIAMS)

In 2012 there were over 7,000
homeless in Atlanta, over 20,000
homeless in Georgia, over 600,000
homeless persons in the United
States. The conservative estimate
of the total population of homeless
in the world is around 200 million.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE TO AUDITORIUM - APRIL 15, 2008 - NIGHT

We see a man, BEN(45) leaning against the wall wearing a tuxedo. As the camera moves closer we see a tear coming from his eye, then he breaks down and slides to the floor with his head in his hands.

ELISABETH (O.C.) (BLACK WOMAN AGE 57)

As we are pleased to honor this
year, a man who has given so much
to those with so little. We ask you
take a look at the video screens
with this tribute to a remarkable
man and his worldwide efforts and
work ...

Music begins to play and the voice from the video starts. Elisabeth now as narrator, tells of a man's humble beginnings.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

Ben was born on April fourth,
nineteen sixty two in Atlanta
Georgia. His mother died giving
birth to him, leaving him to be
raised ...

Elisabeth's voice fades and we slowly begin to hear jazz music playing in the background with sounds of a nightclub.

FADE TO:

INT. MOM'S JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT (FLASHBACK TO APRIL 13, 1985)

We see a bar at a jazz club where two men are talking, one is drunk.

JAZZ (21 SKINNY LIGHT BROWN SKIN WITH AFRO)

Come on Ben, you know you can't drive. How many times do we have to go through this man.

BEN (22 BLACK MAN DRESSED SHARP WITH PROFESSIONAL HAIRCUT, DRUNK)

I'm fine! And when did you become my mother, mother fu..?

JAZZ

(interrupting)

Hey hey, hey, not here bro ... That time back in college when you were sitting on the curb outside of

BEN

Come on now, you said you would never bring that up again.

JAZZ

Yeah but I thought you would have learned by now I'm always going to look out for you no matter what. So give me the keys and let me take you home, or get some breakfast or at least get some coffee in you. Don't you have a closing tomorrow?

BEN

All right. But this is the last time. I don't need you looking after me like some schmuck ... Anyway, who's the one with the brains here?

JAZZ

Man you are the dude and you know it. I'm just some poor artist living the dream!

They laugh and stand up. Jazz helps Ben as he is too drunk to walk straight.

As they leave, Jazz looks back at the stage where a lady is playing the piano (MOM 43 Beautiful and elegant black woman).

MOM singing and playing piano in the background with the jazz quartet, looks at Jazz and gives a disapproving frown and shakes her head.

Jazz smiles back and mouths to her "I love you Mom" and walks out of the bar.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jazz fumbles with keys trying to open Ben's sports car door while holding Ben up. He puts Ben in the passenger seat and buckles him in. Ben is immediately asleep.

Then Jazz goes over to his beat up GREMLIN(15) (a car known as "A Pal to it's friends, and an Ogre to it's enemies") that has "JAZZ" on the license plate and pulls a Fed-Ex envelope out of his pocket and places it in the front seat, then returns to the sports car, and drives away.

Jazz turns on some fusion music. The music plays through the next scene.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE TO AUDITORIUM - 2008 - NIGHT

We now know it is Ben on the floor. He looks up as the light of a spotlight spills backstage. He stands back up as the light shines right on his face.

BEN
(speaking softly)
Jazz ...

CROSS FADE FROM
LIGHT OF
SPOTLIGHT TO
LIGHT SHINING
INTO CAR.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK TO 1985)

The music is still playing, as another car heads straight at Jazz and Ben. Jazz instinctively puts his hand on Ben's chest as the two cars collide.

A SERIES OF BLACK AND FLASHES OF LIGHT WITH SOUNDS OF A CAR CRASH THEN TOTAL BLACKNESS ... AND SILENCE FOR A BEAT.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

WE SEE JAZZ LAYING ON THE GROUND AS WE PAN TO CRASHED UPSIDE DOWN SPORTS CAR WHERE BEN IS STILL BUCKLED IN. HE COMES TO.

BEN
(screams out)
JAZZ!

Ben unbuckles his seat belt, falls on the roof, and crawls out of the broken passenger window. He has cuts on his face and his head is bleeding. He gets over to Jazz.

BEN (CONT'D)
(speaking softly)
Hey bud, hang in there. You're going to be just fine.

Jazz slowly opens his eyes and forces a smile through his bloodied face.

JAZZ
(barely intelligible)
You never were a good liar ... I warned you ...

As Jazz speaks he moans and coughs up blood.

BEN
I know buddy. You always had me pegged, right from the start.

JAZZ
Ben?

BEN
Yeah bud.

JAZZ
What was the score?

BEN
(with a soft fake smile)
I think you were ahead ...

JAZZ
There you go again ...

BEN

You're right, I was one up since that last best out of three. Got you on the capital of ..

JAZZ

(interrupts him)

I guess you're the winner ... I always knew.

As Jazz smiles, he reaches for Ben's hand and squeezes it, and closes his eyes letting out his last breath. Ben starts to cry holding his best friends limp body.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - 2008 - NIGHT

Video is playing on projection screens and a scene of a college campus comes on.

ELISABETH (V.O.)

He started his academic training at Georgia Highlands community college as a typical business major student. He would go on to take night classes in real estate ...

INT. BACKSTAGE TO AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

AS THE VOICE FADES WE SEE CLOSE UP OF BEN WITH A SMILE AND TEARS ON HIS FACE.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK TO FEBRUARY 1982)

We see Ben(18) walking with other students.

BEN

What's up for tonight?

BD (25 STRONG BIG BLACK MAN WITH STREET CONFIDENCE THAT IS INTIMIDATING)

How bout catching the action over at the sports bar. The odds are looking good for Dallas tonight and I know a brother who can take some bets.

GIRL 1 (19 CUTE SLIM BLACK GIRL)
 No, That's all you ever talk about.
 What's the odds on this, let's make
 wager on who will have the lowest
 test grade in psych.

GIRL 2 (19 CUTE SLIM WHITE GIRL)
 Yeah, is that all you think about?

BD
 You don't seem to mind when I'm
 spending my winnings on you? What's
 wrong with getting a little hustle
 on baby?

BEN
 How about we just get something to
 eat? I heard the Philly cheese
 steak sandwiches are kick ass at
 the 5th street deli, and they have
 something like, 100 different
 beers!

Everyone agrees except BD. They start walking in different
 directions.

BD
 (speaking at Ben)
 I'll catch up with you guys in a
 bit. Gotta go take care of this
 thing.

GIRL 2
 Yeah whatever. Maybe I'll see you,
 maybe I won't

BD
 Hey girl, you know you'll be
 anserin my booty call tonight!

BD laughs and walks off. Ben puts his arms around both girls.

BEN
 Looks like it's all me tonight
 ladies.

INT. DELI - NIGHT

Door opens to Ben and the GIRLS coming in. There is a little
 Jazz trio playing stuffed into a small back corner. We see
 young Jazz(18) with a full on Afro playing the sax.

Ben and the GIRLS find the only table open right in front of Jazz. It is so close they almost are touching the band and Jazz is killing it on the sax. He has two older guys playing with him.

As the song ends everyone is hollering and applauding, Jazz holds up the tip bucket with a sheepish smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE AUDITORIUM - 2008 - NIGHT

THE FIRST AND LAST SMILES OF JAZZ AT THE CLUB HOLDING THE TIP JAR AND JAZZ LOOKING UP AT BEN ARE SUPER IMPOSED AS THE IMAGE DISSOLVES INTO BEN'S TEARY FACE, THEN BACK TO THE NEXT SCENE.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAZZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK TO FEBRUARY 1983)
Ratty little studio apartment with beat up instruments on the walls.

Ben, BD, and Jazz are having a political discussion regarding the homeless, socialism, and self will.

JAZZ

When there are hundreds of thousands living in the streets of this country how can you say it's OK to spend one cent on a bullet?

BEN

Come on man, it's a violent world out there. We gotta protect our interests.

BD

Who's interest? Man those cracker ass mother fuckers don't give a shit about the black man. I'm with Jazz on this one.

Jazz and Ben look at each other and start to laugh.

BD (CONT'D)

(obviously annoyed)
What's so damn funny?

BEN

You are,
 (mocking like an old style
 pimp)
 you jive ass mother fucker!

BD stands, like he's getting ready to fight.

BD

What you say?

JAZZ

(laughing)
 Man, It's OK. We were just laughing
 cuz I'm half white. I know the afro
 threw you off!

BD

What da fuck?

JAZZ

Yeah, my dad's white and my mom's
 black. All good, and it's not like
 I don't know how folks are
 prejudice toward you. Man I get it
 from all sides. At least you knew
 what table to sit at in school. If
 it weren't for this thing I don't
 know what I would have done.

Jazz reaches for his sax.

BD

Damn Jazz, my bad brother, or
 should I say cracker brother mother
 fucker!

They all laugh.

JAZZ

(interrupts)
 OK got it bro!

BD gets a page. He looks at the number.

BD

Yo guys, gotta hit it, you need a
 lift anywhere Ben?

BEN

No man that's cool. Gonna hang with
 Jazz awhile. He thinks he knows
 something about trivia and I'm
 about to shut him down.

JAZZ

Let's get it on. I've got the board. Beginner or Master?

BEN

Master of course, unless you ain't up for it. What you say, best out of three and loser buys next time out?

JAZZ

Yeah OK, but it's not fair since you can put away twice as me

They laugh and forget BD standing at the door to leave.

BD

Yeah right, I'll just leave you gay nerds to yourself. Peace!

BD flashes them a peace sign and heads out the door.

JAZZ

Hey, why does he need one of those pager things man? I thought only drug dealers and doctors carried those and he is no doctor?

BEN

Don't ask. He's alright man. You don't know him like I do. He has always been there for me since back in the day. We grew up together in the hood. I didn't have a lot growing up and my father left when I was just a punk kid. BD looked out for us. He knew everyone and always just knew how to make money.

JAZZ

That's cool, but sometimes I am concerned for you. Some folks can handle that kinda life and some can't.

BEN

How do you know? You grew up fat and sassy in the money.

JAZZ

That may be for my home life, but I grew up since a baby in the clubs my mama would play in.

(MORE)

JAZZ (CONT'D)

I got to know a thing or two watching what was going on.

BEN

Your mama took you into those places? Come on. What did your pops say?

JAZZ

He was down with it. As a matter of fact, you and him are a lot alike.

BEN

How so?

JAZZ

He grew up on the south side of Philly with no dad or mom. He lived with his grandma and had to fight his way out. So he thought there was more learnin than what you got in school and it would be good for his son to see "the real" as he put it. Anyway, all the tough guys in the clubs knew me and treated me like their own son. Anyone mess with me "somptin bad wuz goin down"!

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - APRIL 15 - NIGHT

JAZZ

(speaking to officer
behind glass)

I'm here to get a friend?

SARGENT (48 PUDGY WHITE MAN WITH THICK
MOUSTACHE)

What's his name?

JAZZ

Ben.

SARGENT

Ben what, son?

JAZZ

Man, I just realized I don't know his last name!

SARGENT

While I am a man, you can call me sir. Do you know when he was taken into custody son?

JAZZ

Yes ... uhm ... sir. It was around 5:00am this morning near the college.

SARGENT

OK, got him. Only one Ben booked this morning. Do you want to post his bail?

JAZZ

Sure.

SARGENT

OK, you will need to go see the bail bondsman. It is one thousand dollars.

JAZZ

What? Man I don't have that kinda cash on me. Is there anything else I can do?

SARGENT

Man NO man. Next!

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - OUTSIDE BAIL BONDSMAN OFFICE - NIGHT

Jazz puts quarters into pay phone then pulls out a piece of paper with a number on it. He punches some numbers on the phone and the familiar BEEP BEEP sound of a page being sent is heard.

EXT. BAIL BONDSMAN OFFICE - NIGHT

Jazz is sitting on a bench in front the Bail Bondsman Office.

A new car pulls up with music banging and a power window rolls down on the passenger side.

BD

(talking from driver seat)
Got a little trouble, do you?

Jazz moves towards car.

JAZZ

Hey BD, thanks for coming down. Ben got busted for possession and the bail is one thousand. Can you help us out?

BD

Sure man, no problem, but why didn't he just page me in the first place?

JAZZ

Not sure. Let's get this over with so we can get him out of there.

BD

Alright, I'll handle it. I know what to do. Why don't you go back to your crib and we'll meet you there after I get him out.

JAZZ

No, can't. I was getting ready to go to a gig when he called, and I'm already late. I'll catch up with you guys later, or come down to the club. I think you will like it BD. Kinda sophisticated but dark at the same time. And anyway, it's my birthday so you have to come down and help celebrate. It's my big two zero.

BD

Yeah I'll be there for sure. Will see if he's up to it.

JAZZ

The address is on the card.

Jazz hands him a crumpled business card pulled from his pocket. BD starts to pull away, but then Jazz stops him.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

BD

BD

Yeah?

JAZZ

Ben was right about you.

BD

What's that?

JAZZ

You do look out for him. Thanks man.

BD nods.

Jazz walks away.

INT. BD CAR - NIGHT

Ben, in passenger seat, looks pissed.

BD

What the fuck happened Ben? It was supposed to be a simple drop off. Did you say anything?

BEN

Of course not. But you said the guy would be there right at 4. I sat at that bench for an hour and after the campus security saw me there the second time he came around, he stopped and started asking me questions.

BD

So? Big deal, he asks you questions, you give him answers he wants to hear.

BEN

I'm not fast on my feet like that and you know I can't lie worth a shit. Every time I do I start fidgeting and sounding stupid.

BD laughs.

BD

You're kinda sounding stupid now.

BEN

(now yelling and angry)
Hey man, it's not funny. I know you don't give a shit, but I'm probably going to get kicked out of school and lose whatever little scholarship I have, and my job in the cafeteria.

BD

What ever Ben. Relax. That job was bullshit anyway. Didn't you take those real estate classes?

BEN

I haven't finished them, but yeah. I was hoping to start selling properties on the side to help put myself through school. Now I'll lose my school housing and will have to get a job right away. How am I going to have time to finish or pay for it?

BD

Why don't you just stay with me for a while until you get back on your feet. It'll be just like old times in the hood when you would come over and stay with me at my moms house.

BEN

I don't know BD. You always have a lot going on if you know what I mean, and I didn't think you wanted anyone to get that close.

BD

Come on Ben, you're like family. If I can't trust you, who can I trust? Hey it's Jazz's birthday and he invited us down to his gig to celebrate. You game? Cuz I'm never one to turn down a reason to party!

BEN

He didn't say anything to me about his birthday coming up, yeah let's go. I need a shot after what just happened anyway, and he'll be happy we came down.

INT. MOM'S JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Jazz is on stage with his Mom and the same guys from the deli. Mom is the front person and, Jazz is a background player.

BD and Ben walk in as Jazz acknowledges them with a huge smile.

MOM

(on stage speaking into
mic)

This is a tune I wrote to
commemorate my son playing
professionally now for 10 years,
since he was 10 years old and the
first time he got paid to play
right here in this very club AND I
didn't hire him. He was a guest
soloist with the Sammy Smith Trio.
So Happy Birthday son!

Mom looks at band.

MOM (CONT'D)

OK boys, let's do it, one, and two,
three uhhh

The band starts to play featuring Jazz and his Mom on keys.
Both singing and laughing. Then, Mom sings Happy Birthday to
Jazz turning 20

INT. MOM'S JAZZ CLUB - LATER

After the set is over.

JAZZ

(to his mom)

Hey Mom, come over and meet my
friends from school.

Mom and Jazz walk over to where Ben and BD are sitting.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

Guys this is the one and only Mom.
Mom, this is Ben and BD

MOM

So finally I get to meet you Ben
after hearing so much about you.

BEN

It's a pleasure meeting you ma'am.

BD

Wow Jazz, you didn't say your Mom
was so talented and hot!

MOM

Excuse me?

JAZZ

It's OK Mom, BD just always says what's on his mind. He's a good guy when you get to know him.

MOM

Well OK then. Boys is there anything I can get for you?

BEN

No, that's OK, but thank you.

JAZZ

Hey, let her ... she owns the joint!

BD

Well in that case, a bottle of Grey goose please.

JAZZ

How about some catfish and some beers Mom. That would be great.

Mom gives BD and Ben a forced smile.

MOM

OK I will get them dropped and the beers on the way. Baby just tell Bobby it's on me tonight. Happy birthday sweetheart.

JAZZ

Thanks Mom. Love you. And the tune was awesome. That was the coolest gift ever. It meant a lot to me to get to premier it with you.

MOM

Love you to son. You take care OK?

Mom's eyes darts back and forth between Ben and BD as they look at one of the waitresses walking by.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - DAY

Jazz's parents home. Wealthy part of town. One nice car and a 1950's HARLEY DAVIDSON panhead motorcycle sit in the drive. The motorcycle is the same bike Henry road when he was in his old biker gang in the 1960's. It is running but, not in the best shape.

BD's car pulls up and Jazz, Ben and BD get out and walk up toward house.

BD

Damn boy, your folks are livin high bro!

BEN

Yeah Jazz. You never said it was like this.

JAZZ

It's theirs, not mine. They work hard for this.

BD

I need to find out their hustle.

The front door opens and HENRY(44), a large, muscled tattooed white man walks out wearing painters pants, hat and no shirt. One tattoo reads "Donec Mors Non Separat". He looks like he just got done working out but is holding a chisel in one hand.

HENRY

Hey fellas! What brings you out here on such a great day? Thought you would be chasing the girls or something more fun than coming by the folks house.

BD

(towards Jazz)

Who is this guy? Working on the house or something?

JAZZ

Or something like that BD. Never know with this guy!

Jazz runs up and gives Henry a big bear hug

BD looks at Ben

BEN

(mouths words)

It's his dad.

HENRY

Boys, Call me Henry. You must be BD and Ben. The misses gave me the scoop on you guys. Said you ran up quite a tab the other night at the club.

JAZZ

Well you know we were celebrating
for two.

HENRY

I knew about you, what's the other?

JAZZ

Got Ben out of jail!

Jazz laugh.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

Don't know nothin bout that, do you
dad?

HENRY

Well uh, that was a long time ago
and a different story. Ben, we
don't judge around here. We say
forgive and love, and we are all
human and make mistakes. As long as
we learn from them it was worth it.
Right?

BD

(talking to Ben)

I like this guy.

Ben looks freaked out Jazz mentions night in jail.

BEN

Yeah man, me too.

JAZZ

Yeah Dad, and BD came down and
bailed him out so I could get to
Mom's and my show on time.

HENRY

Good for you BD. Hey what does that
stand for anyway?

Everyone just looks at each other without speaking and as it
starts to become uncomfortable.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Whatever, let's go inside out of
the heat.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DAY

Everyone walks in as some soft jazz piano music stops in the background.

HENRY

Jazz, take the guys around the house and I'll get us some drinks. What will you have?

BD

Scotch on the rocks.

HENRY

I meant like a soda, tea, water. It is still only around two in the afternoon in this part of the world, but if you like ...

Mom comes in from the music room

MOM

No, I think these fellas had enough last night, don't you think?

Mom Looks at BD.

BD

Well, I can always go for whatever you are having Mom.

Mom making HUMPH noise. Henry chuckles.

MOM

Tea it is. Meet you in the den.

Jazz takes the guys on a tour as Henry motions for Mom to come with him.

HENRY

What was that all about?

MOM

I don't like those boys. And something's not right with that BB guy.

HENRY

You mean BD?

MOM

What ever. Did you see he has a pager? And the car he is driving at his age?

HENRY

Maybe he has folks like yours and money doesn't matter? Mmmm?

MOM

I don't think so.

HENRY

Well give them a chance. Jazz likes them, and we trust his judgment right?

MOM

Mmmm ... well, yes we do, but still.

HENRY

But still nothing. Come make some sweet tea with me baby, cuz no one makes it as sweet as you!

Henry pats Mom on the butt walking toward the kitchen

MOM

Now Henry, behave!

HENRY

Never my dear. Never!

Mom and Henry walk toward the kitchen.

MOM

(as they are walking)
Did you ask him about his finances? He's looking kinda thin like he hasn't eaten in weeks.

HENRY

You know how he is baby. Stop worrying bout the boy. He knows where the food is if he needs it.

INT. JAZZ'S APARTMENT - JANUARY 5, 1985 - NIGHT

Jazz and Ben playing trivial pursuit while eclectic music plays in background.

JAZZ

So how you liken living at BD's place? Must be nice with that awesome fitness center and spa, and ... don't they have like racket ball courts and an indoor pool too?

BEN
 (responding in not so
 excited tone)
 Yeah all that's kinda cool.

JAZZ
 That's it? Kinda cool? What's going
 on bro?

BEN
 Nothin. Your turn. Roll.

Jazz rolls and moves his piece and groans.

JAZZ
 Not sports man, not again! One more
 pie and it's over, anything but
 sports!

Ben gives a slight smile as he reads the question.

BEN
 Ha! What baseball player was known
 for his mustache and was a member
 of five World Series championship
 teams?

Ben waits a second with no response from Jazz

BEN (CONT'D)
 Come on! Even you have to know this
 one.

JAZZ
 Hey man, let me make up some trivia
 about musicians. Like, what
 composer had a famous father
 composer and played his first gig
 at 6?

BEN
 Who cares? That is only cool to you
 band nerds! Now what is the answer
 or we go on.

JAZZ
 I don't know ...

Ben picks up the die to roll.

JAZZ (CONT'D)
 (excited blurts out)
 wait ... I think I remember
 something about my Mom's food.

Ben looks surprised.

BEN

What? What does your Mom's food
have to do with baseball?

JAZZ

Her recipe for catfish.
(yells out and jumps up)

JAZZ (CONT'D)

CATFISH HUNTER BABY! Give me the
pie and weep loser!

BEN

Aaarrrrrrgg!

Ben begrudgingly puts the pie piece into Jazz's token.

BEN (CONT'D)

OK, you the dude bro. Where we
going tonight?

Jazz gets a serious look.

JAZZ

I got a deal for you.

BEN

Now what? Every time you look like
that you have some nerd thing
planned and I have to force myself
to stay awake at some

Ben makes quote sign with fingers

BEN (CONT'D)

cultural whatever ...

JAZZ

No bro. This will fill that hole in
your soul that's bugging you.

BEN

What are you talking about? I'm not
going to that crazy church of
yours. That one time they started
jabbering freaked me out. No no,
not again. Anything but that.

Jazz gets a huge Jazz only type smile.

JAZZ

Great then! We're not going to my crazy church which you actually said you dug the pastors message by the way.

BEN

OK, where then?

JAZZ

Trust me. Let's go.

BEN

Right this second?

Jazz grabs some cans of food out of his bare cupboard.

JAZZ

Yeah bro. If we hurry we can get there in time.

BEN

For what exactly?

JAZZ

For the filling of your soul bro. Now grab that bag and let's go.

Points toward the bag he was putting the can goods in.

INT. JAZZ'S CAR - NIGHT

Driving in Jazz's beat up GREMLIN, they pass a dilapidated part of town with homeless folks lying on sidewalks, and others sitting next to shopping carts filled with apparent junk.

BEN

Why are we here Jazz? I know this part of town.

JAZZ

Oh yeah? How's that?

BEN

Been down here with BD a few times. Some dude he knows around here. He said he was taking care of him and would go up and see him.

JAZZ

What's that all about?

BEN

Don't know. Didn't ask. I just sat
in the car making sure nobody got
close enough to steal the hub caps.
(Ben nervously looks from
side to side)

BEN (CONT'D)

I don't feel right without my
piece.

JAZZ

What the heck does that mean man?
Your piece? Are you for real?

BEN

Like I said before, we live in a
violent world and you have to
protect your interests, and that
for me is me bro!

JAZZ

Well, I guess it's who's eyes
you're looking through to see the
evil or possibilities in the world.
I see the power of hope in the
midst of seemingly hopeless
despair.

Jazz gestures toward a woman and a young child.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

Look at them Ben. What do you see?

BEN

I see a homeless woman with a child
who will be lucky to survive living
here, and if she does make it out,
the kid'll be lucky she won't turn
out like B ...

A second of silence

JAZZ

BD?

BEN

What?

JAZZ

You started to say be lucky not to
turn out like BD.

Ben fidgets and acts nervous.

BEN

No I didn't.

JAZZ

Come on man. Your fidgeting again.
What is up with all that?

BEN

Hey man, just drop it, OK?

JAZZ

Yeah man, that's cool. But what I
was saying was the love in that
mom's eyes for her daughter and the
way they were playing with each
other. Didn't you notice that? How
they could transcend all this
without any physical help?

Ben stares out the window away from Jazz. Jazz slows down and
turns into a parking lot.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

Ever wonder where they find that
strength?

BEN

I know where your going with this
and I told you I feel like
sometimes, yeah, there may be some
higher power or whatever, but I'm
not ever going to bow down and be a
slave to anyone or anything.

Jazz stops the car and starts to get out

JAZZ

That's OK bro. You can say God. But
know this, the God I say I believe
in is bigger than what we can
understand, and does not need you
or I to believe, or not believe in
Him, just like the evil you so
easily see does not go away when we
are at the hole playing our silly
trivial game.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jazz opens trunk and pulls out two bags gesturing towards Ben
with the bags in his hand.

JAZZ

Hey man, come on and grab that bag
out of the back seat.

EXT. IN FRONT OF HOMELESS SHELTER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Jazz shuffles the bags and keeps talking while opening the door.

JAZZ

So, since evil never takes time
off, neither do I ... well I do as
much as I can bro to fight back,
and you don't have to believe in
nothing except helping folks. Help
them see the hope that is all
around them through the love you
share tonight.

Jazz and Ben walk in.

As they do, Ben has a little smile when he sees a little boy that reminds him of when he was that age, and a small tear slips from the corner of his eye. He is quick to wipe it away.

Jazz sees him do it and puts his arm around him as they walk in.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - MUSIC ROOM - MARCH 19, 1985 - DAY
A few months later, after Jazz had taken Ben to shelter.

Mom sitting at piano working on some music with a pencil and eraser. She seems frustrated.

Henry walks in.

HENRY

How's it going baby?

MOM

It's going. I know how much this
means to him and I want it to be
perfect ...

HENRY

And?

MOM

It's just taking me longer than
usual.

(MORE)

MOM (CONT'D)

I want to be sure to get it done on time, and not sure if this will actually do what he thinks it will. He's just so naive about the business, and only thinking of the music. The responsibility of life, and the choices we make, and building for his future, have not hit him yet. I'm still not happy about where he is living.

HENRY

No wonder, your having problems finishing this. Your heart is divided hon. You did say you understood the boy needed his space right?

MOM

Of course, but

HENRY

And you know he gets his stubbornness from ... Mmmm

MOM

Yes dear, but

HENRY

And so you know why he refuses for us to help him right?

MOM

Yes, but

HENRY

So what's the problem?

MOM

Will you let me speak?

Henry gives a go ahead nod and gestures with one hand.

MOM (CONT'D)

He just spends so much time down at the shelter, then out in the parks, then driving folks all around. He is wearing himself out. I honestly feel like he's trying to fix the entire world on his own. When he realizes the problems never end or can never be truly fixed it will break him. His spirit is so ...

HENRY

Oh honey. Jazz is a beautiful boy,
and I know he has an inner strength
that might surprise us both.

MOM

I'm not saying he probably can't
handle life, but he is being ruled
by his passions, not his brain. He
has so much talent, and I just wish
he would focus more on himself and
developing his career instead of
fixing everyone around him ...
including those other boys he's
always hanging out with.

HENRY

Now don't start about Ben and BD.
Those guys

Mom interrupts.

MOM

Will you at least talk with him,
and find out what that jail
business was all about. My mamma
instincts keep telling me to get
him away from those two. What ever
happened to that girl he was
seeing?

HENRY

You remember. She got that
scholarship to go study in London.
I did like her. It would have been
nice to have two of us real artists
in the house!

Henry backs up laughing like he expects to get a slap.

MOM

Yeah, whatever. Just because you
got your big showing, you think you
da man! But let me tell you papa

Mom puts the pencil down and stands up.

MOM (CONT'D)

You are da man!

Mom gives Henry a big hug and kiss.

Mom speaks while they are holding each other. She looks
lovingly in Henry's eyes with a big smile.

MOM (CONT'D)

Henry, did I ever tell you how you really got me?

HENRY

Yes, but I never hate hearing it. Go on, tell it to me one more time.

MOM

You know how much my Mom and daddy loved the gallery, and that would be our idea of a family outing, like others would go to a movie or something.

Henry smiles.

HENRY

Yes. It's just one of the reasons I loved him so much. Go on.

MOM

You know, I don't think I ever admitted to you how much I truly hated those trips.

Henry holds her away a bit, like he is trying to focus on her.

MOM (CONT'D)

I thought, here we go. One more boring day shot while all my friends are doing cool stuff like going to the mall, or going to see the latest movies that I never got to see, unless I slept over at a girlfriends and didn't tell daddy we were going to one.

Henry acts like he's never heard this story.

HENRY

And so what happened?

MOM

Well, this one particular afternoon it was raining, and cold, so I was in a double mood, and there was no way of hiding it from daddy. In the car, on the way over, he says with a wink "little girl I think today your frown will turn upside down" .

HENRY

What could it have been I wonder?

MOM

Shush, and let me tell it!

Mom playfully pushes Henry back.

MOM (CONT'D)

As we walked in, there was this loud music playing. They had a live band, and there were these young black boys, and white boys playing together some type of bluesy, jazz with one kid talking over the music. His words were more melodic though, and different than anything I had ever heard, which was very exciting. I still didn't understand why there was a band until I moved through the crowd to see this amazingly muscular boy with tattoos, painting to the music on a piece of glass, that had a light shining up through it. I stood there transfixed, watching him. My parents asked if it would be OK if they went on to look at the other exhibits, and of course I'm like go on; while secretly I was hoping they would leave before he saw me. And as soon as they left I tried to pretty myself up and look as sexy as possible, but you never even looked at me!

HENRY

Hey, I was working. Business remember?

MOM

Yeah, OK stud. But after my insisting, I made daddy buy the piece you did in front of me that day, and that is what inspired me to start playing more Jazz instead of classical music.

CAMERA SLOWLY DOES RACK FOCUS TO REVEAL THE PAINTING ON WALL
OF MUSIC ROOM

MOM (CONT'D)

I became your biggest fan and
couldn't wait to go see another of
your showings but I never saw
another one where you would be
there in person again. I thought
that was that, until after my
freshman year home from Berkley, my
daddy surprised me with a party.

HENRY

Oh a party. Wow. I bet it was a
boring blast!

MOM

It was until you showed up with
that DJ to perform for us. I
thought I would die.

HENRY

And indeed I saw you that time.

MOM

And then you asked daddy if you
could take me out on a date. That
made him like you even more than
your talent did.

HENRY

And when your daddy suggested we do
a show together I knew the first
time I heard you play I would marry
you. You played with such grace and
strength and so much passion I was
afraid of what I might paint so it
was the worst painting I had done
in years!

Henry and Mom laugh.

MOM

But there it is. And I don't care
what you think. I love it.

CAMERA PANS TO THE PICTURE HANGING NEXT TO THE FIRST ONE

HENRY

That's why I'm the real artist in
the house!

Henry and Mom look into each other's eyes reliving those precious times.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Hey baby, can you just play that same piece you did that day. I have to start this series for Mr. Johanna, and that music always gets me going.

MOM

Sure baby. Can I come into your studio with my electric, or do you want me out here?

HENRY

Yeah, come in today. That will be fun, like old times.

MOM

(clearly excited)

OK! It'll take me just a second to get it together. Is there a spot for me?

HENRY

I'll make one while your getting your keyboard.

MOM

Great.

INT. BD APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY
That same day.

BEN

Man I just can't do this anymore BD.

BD

Do what?

BEN

Sit here and never know what your doing. That one time I did you that favor and got busted was one thing, but how can I know I'm safe from something more with

BD

(interrupts with a loud angry voice)

More what?

(MORE)

BD (CONT'D)

Like have I ever asked you to do anything? Hell man, you don't even pay to live here, but you have enough to get that nice ass ride, so what the fuck? I didn't know I was cramping your style bro. What I'm to hood for you now? You been hangin with the rich boy?

BEN

Hey man, don't bring Jazz into this. He only says nice things about you.

BD

Yeah, what ever. That little skinny fuck don't know shit, and all that esoteric bullshit he's been feeding you. Wasting all your time for what? To give scraps to some low life mother fuckers who don't have a pot to piss in?

Ben try's to speak but BD keeps going getting louder, more violent, and agitated.

BD (CONT'D)

And what's this I'm hearing about some homeless bitch your actually thinking of what? Dating? How's that work? You take her home and kiss her outside the dumpster? You finally got your head out your ass and using that real estate license making some real flow but you're still here spongen off of me. Well maybe it's time for you to get the fuck on up out of my house!

BEN

I stayed cuz I thought it was good to be here, and it was cool. But no worries bro, I'm outa here.

BD

Yeah, you too good to hang with me anyway, with that sobriety bullshit, and me being some big time drug dealer.

BEN

Hey man, I never said anything about any of that, and you know it.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I've always accepted you, and stood up for you when everyone else

BD

(interrupting)

What? What the fuck you sayin? Like I ever needed you to get my back! I think it was always your punk ass who I was protectin, and watchin out for.

BEN

I know brother. It's just that your lifestyle concerns me man, cuz I care and

BD

(interrupting again)

I DON'T GIVE A SHIT! And I certainly don't need your sorry ass standing up for me. I couldn't give a god damn about anyone who talks shit about me anyway. Who the fuck are they, and what do they know about me, or what I've had to do to survive! Fuck them, and you!

Ben just stares at BD in disbelief.

BD yells again.

BD (CONT'D)

So get the fuck on steppin.

Ben picks up a few of his things.

BD (CONT'D)

I said, get the fuck steppin! Or did you think that was a choice?

BD grabs Ben's shirt, pushing him towards the door.

Ben looks shocked, and sad at this realization of the side of his friend he always knew was there, but never acknowledged.

BEN

Get off me man, I'm leaving. I'll just get some new cloths.

Ben opens the door to leave and turns back.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hey man, I love ya bro, and I do appreciate all you've done for me all of my life. I don't know what's going on, but it'll be alright. You always figure it out.

BD

Oh yeah, just what I needed to hear. More of Jazz's peace and love bullshit. Just get the fuck out alright?

Ben walks out, and the second the door closes, BD sits down like a deflated balloon, and puts his head in his hands.

BD (CONT'D)

FUCK FUCK FUUUUUUCCCCCKKKK!

INT. BEN'S NEW SPORTS CAR - DAY

Ben driving his new sports car, pulls over. Walks to a pay phone.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Ben dials a number. Jazz answers the phone.

JAZZ (O.C.)

(in phone)

This is Jazz.

BEN

Hey buddy. It's me. Can I come over, and possibly chill with you tonight?

JAZZ (O.C.)

(in phone)

Of course. What's going on? You alright?

BEN

Yeah, just moving out of BD's place, and need a place to crash until I get somethin of my own.

INT. JAZZ'S APARTMENT - DAY

JAZZ

(on phone still)

Why so sudden? Not like I didn't think you should have moved out along time ago. Nothing against BD, but since you have been trying to stop drinking, and whatever, well you know.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

BEN

Trying? I've been good for 3 months and 22 days, and nothing is going to get me back at that life again. I've got more to live for now, thanks to you.

JAZZ

What do I got to do with that? I haven't done anything.

BEN

Whatever. It's just you being you bro, and I thank God for that.

JAZZ

You thank who?

BEN

Come on man. You know what I mean ...

JAZZ

(speaking with a smile)

Sure bro. I'm getting ready to go over to my folks house. Why don't you come over with me and say Hi?

BEN

I don't think your Mom likes me.

JAZZ

Ah man, that's just her way. It's cool, and anyway my old man's always asking about you.

BEN

Really? Alright. Tell you what, let me drive.

JAZZ

What, you embarrassed to be seen in my vintage GREMLIN?

BEN

(laughing)

No way bro. It's just a death trap, and my car has all the new safety stuff like air bags, and anti-lock brakes, and stuff. Plus it has that bad thumpin stereo, and I'll even let you listen to some of that fusion crap that annoys me so much.

JAZZ

Cool. And you know you love that stuff. You was rockin out your air guitar last time I was playing it at the house.

BEN

OK, you're right. THAT ONE record was cool, but can't beat George C and that low down dirty P Funk! See you in a bit. I'm on my way.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - HENRY'S ART STUDIO - DAY
Now later in the afternoon.

Mom softly plays a nice soothing Jazz piece, while singing along. Henry paints, turns to Mom and smiles, then paints some more. There is already one similar complete piece sitting next to the easel, where he is painting currently.

Sound of door opening

HENRY

(hollering out)

Is that you Jazz?

Jazz and Ben walk into house.

JAZZ

Yeah pops it's me and Ben.

AS JAZZ SAYS "YEAH IT'S ME" CAMERA IS ON MOM.

Mom's smile turns to a frown at the name of Ben. She noticeably misses some notes. Henry stops painting and turns towards her.

HENRY

Come on baby. It'll be alright.

Mom just mouthing so Jazz can't hear as he gets closer.

MOM

No it won't!

Jazz and Ben walk into Henry's art studio.

BEN

Hey Mr., and Mrs. Johnson. How are you this afternoon?

Jazz goes to his Mom, and gives her a hug. She is still sitting on the piano bench.

HENRY

Hey Ben, good to see you. We're doing great as ever.

JAZZ

Hey, I haven't seen you playing in pops studio in ages. That's cool. What's up? Getting ready for a gig?

MOM

No, we're done now. Can I get you something to eat?

Mom gets up, and tries to unplug the power from the keyboard. It's not coming out right away, and she gets overly frustrated. Henry droops his shoulders with a sad face.

BEN

I'm sorry if I interrupted you guys. Please don't stop on account of us.

JAZZ

Yeah Mom, this is cool. I can go make a sandwich. We'll just chill out on the deck for a bit.

HENRY

That's sounds good. Yeah baby, let's keep going. I was really in the groove. I think I can get all three done by tonight with your inspiration.

Henry looks at Mom pleadingly.

MOM
 No, I'm done.
 (pause)
 You'll do just fine without me.

Mom picks up her keyboard, and walks past Jazz, and Ben, without speaking, or looking at them.

Jazz moves over to Henry after Mom leaves the room.

JAZZ
 Is every thing OK dad? Mom seems kinda annoyed at something. Did I do something to make her mad?

HENRY
 No son. We'll talk about it later.

Henry turns around, and dabs his brush into some paint on his pallet.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 If you excuse me son, I really have to get this work done. I'll come out when I take a break.

JAZZ
 OK dad. You sure everything is alright?

BEN
 Sorry again sir, for interrupting you.

HENRY
 No problem Ben. Don't you think about it.

Ben turns and walks out.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 (speaking softly to Jazz)
 It's your Mom.

Henry shakes his head.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Later ...

Jazz nods and leaves.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - BACK DECK - DAY

Jazz and Ben eating, enjoy the view with the late afternoon breeze, and shade. Jazz is drinking a beer, and Ben has a glass of water.

Henry comes out on the deck.

HENRY

Hey fellas. Jazz, you didn't get Ben a beer? Let me get you one son.

BEN

No thanks Henry. I'm good with the water for now.

HENRY

Well OK, but help yourself if you change your mind.

Henry looks at Jazz.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Can you give us a minute Ben?

BEN

Sure Henry, no problem. You want me to go around front, and wait in the car?

HENRY

No, just relax. It'll just take a few minutes. Come inside with me Jazz for sec.

JAZZ

OK dad.

Jazz looks concerned, as they walk inside.

INT. KITCHEN BAR - DAY

Jazz and Henry walk in, and sit at the kitchen bar.

JAZZ

What's going on pops? You got me worried. What's up with Mom? Nothing going on between you two is there?

HENRY

No, no, we're fine. It's just your mother has concerns about.

JAZZ

(interrupting)

My work isn't it. Well, she doesn't have to worry about me, I'm doing fine, and I like where I live, and the car I drive gets me where I need to go.

HENRY

(with a small smile)

No, it's not that ... Well, not this time. It's about your friends.

Jazz becomes frustrated.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now, before you say anything, you know your mother loves you, and is only concerned with your well being. It's just these guys are so different than you, and the kind of kids you used to hang with. Hey, I like Ben, but I have to agree with your Mom. There's something about BD that is troublesome.

Henry puts his hand on Jazz's shoulder.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Now, you know we both trust you, and believe you always do what you think is right, but do you remember why I told you I didn't mind your mamma taking you to all those blues joints growing up?

Jazz nods, but does not speak.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Well, it's that same reason now we are both concerned. We feel that maybe you don't really know this guy, and he could possibly get you, and or Ben, into trouble you didn't see coming. You know, I don't judge anyone, and why. So, think about why we are having this conversation. What was Ben in jail for that time?

Jazz remains silent.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Son, please talk to me. What happened that night? Was it drugs? Drinking? Fighting? What? He doesn't seem to be the kinda kid who would mess with drugs, or fight, unless he got drunk? How does he handle his alcohol?

Jazz does not respond.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Son?

JAZZ

(slowly begins to speak)
I can't believe we're having this conversation.

A long pause.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

He was busted for possession dad. Is that what you wanted to hear? My great friend is a drug addict? What's next?

HENRY

Hey bud, slow down. What kind of drugs where there?

JAZZ

Drug dad, drug. Not drugs. It was weed. It's no big deal. I've seen worse at some of those same spots Mom used to sing when I was young.

HENRY

Does he have a habit? I'm just asking? And it is a big deal because it's illegal. This isn't a moral debate, just trying to get a handle on these guys.

JAZZ

(shaking his head)
Dad come on. We've never had to do this before. You know me. Why now? What's so different? It's Mom isn't it? She keeps freaking out on my lifestyle, because it's not all money like her family.

HENRY

No and yes. No, THIS conversation is about you thinking of not just what you do, but what those around you do also, and how you can share in the consequences of their choices. We love you so much son, and when your not here, and we don't hear from you, of course your mama gets worried. That's what mamas do.

JAZZ

How do you know. You never had one.

HENRY

Hey, come on now, that was not called for. I'm trying here. Let's not go down that path. We can have this conversation like adults OK?

JAZZ

No dad, I think I'm done with this. Bottom line is either you, or Mom, or both, don't like the friends I have and are still trying to run my life. Why do you think I left, and don't want any of your money. I know what I'm doing even if you don't think so. I'm sorry you don't understand.

Jazz gets up to leave.

HENRY

Please son don't leave like this.

JAZZ

It's OK dad, I understand. I'll be going now. Tell Mom next time to ask me herself.

Henry gives him a hug.

HENRY

Maybe you should talk to her.

JAZZ

I'll talk to her the next time I come down to the club. Later Dad.

HENRY

OK son. Be safe, and try to understand how much your Mom loves you.

JAZZ

I do Dad. I really do.

INT. MOM'S JAZZ CLUB - APRIL 13, 1985 - NIGHT

Jazz walks in with Ben.

BEN

I'm getting the catfish tonight boy. Your Mom's recipe is the bomb brother! Remind me to tell her how much I appreciate that first free meal. She's kinda like a dope dealer.

Jazz looks up surprised.

JAZZ

What? How so?

BEN

(laughing)

The first ones free, to get you hooked, then you have to pay full pop!

JAZZ

Yeah real funny.

A BEEPING comes from Ben's belt.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

(looking concerned)

What's that? Man you got one of those beepers too?

BEN

It's nothing. Lotsa people getting them now. Just an easy way to stay in touch with one another.

JAZZ

(not like himself)

Like who? BD?

BEN

(getting defensive)

Maybe, maybe not. Why do you care.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Matter of fact, it's none of your
business bro.

Ben's pager beeps again, and Ben reads the number and a silly
smile comes on his face.

BEN (CONT'D)
I gotta take care of this. Order me
just a coke, OK bud. Be right back.

Jazz motions to BARTENDER 1, as Ben walks toward the pay
phones.

BARTENDER 1
Hey Jazz how you doing? I didn't
know your playing tonight. You
know, Lee and the boys are playing
tonight. If your setting in, I'm
staying after I get off.

JAZZ
No. Not playing tonight. Was just
coming down to meet with my Mom.
She said she got some mail for me I
needed to read asap.

BARTENDER 1
Oh OK. Is it about your project?

JAZZ
Don't know, but hope so. Been
waiting for months now. How bout
getting me a couple of cokes, and
drop some cats in the fryer?

BARTENDER 1
You got it. You'll let us know if
it's good news right?

JAZZ
Sure thing. Hey looks like Mom's
taking a break. If my friend gets
back, tell him I'll be just a
minute.

Jazz walks toward the stage where Mom is talking and laughing
with some guests.

JAZZ (CONT'D)
Hey Mom, sounding good as always.

MOM
Thanks sweetie.

JAZZ

Can we go to your office for a sec?
I came to get that mail.

MOM

Oh, OK.

Mom looks disappointed after a second.

MOM (CONT'D)

What no hug or kiss for your mother
tonight?

Jazz gives her a light hug.

JAZZ

Hey Ben is here waiting for me. Can
we knock this out?

MOM

He's here with you again? Do you go
anywhere without him now?

JAZZ

Come on ma. Can I just get my mail?

MOM

OK. I'll get it. Where are you
sitting? I'll just have someone
bring it out to you.

JAZZ

No I'll walk back and ...

MOM

No, don't bother. You go be with
your friend. Don't keep him
waiting. It's no problem. Just give
me a minute. I want to freshen up a
bit.

JAZZ

OK. Thanks. Anyway, he was excited
about something, and wanted to come
here specifically to share the good
news.

Mom looks surprised, and turns to go.

Jazz walks back to find Ben sitting in front of three empty
shot glasses, and working on his second straight whiskey.

JAZZ (CONT'D)

Hey bud, getting started without me
huh?

Ben Looks extremely stressed out, and angry as he slams the remaining half of his drink.

BEN

Yeah.

JAZZ

Hey man, it's not a race bro.
What's going on? You all right?

BEN

It's nothing. Just feel like
getting wasted tonight.

JAZZ

But didn't you drive that new
sports car you love?

BEN

Yeah, and I don't love it. It gets
me where I'm going.

JAZZ

You talked forever about when you
sold enough houses you were going
to go get that thing. Man, it's all
you talked about.

BEN

We'll, I guess you don't know me as
well as you think you do.

JAZZ

Hey man, chill out bro. Why the
hostility?

BEN

Don't want to talk about it.

Ben turns on his stool looking right at Jazz.

BEN (CONT'D)

Really Jazz. Please. I just need a
friend tonight, not a councilor OK?

Jazz notices Ben's eyes are extremely bloodshot, and he is shaking.

JAZZ

OK bud, no problem. Just know I'm here for you.

BEN

(turning back and says as he is looking forward)
Great, then see if you can get us a tab, and keep em coming till I say stop or pass out!

JAZZ

We'll maybe we start with the food I ordered for us per your request.

BEN

Not hungry. You eat it.

JAZZ

Hey man, I'm not that hungry. I'll just tell her to throw it out.

BEN

What the fuck rich boy? What about those folks starving downtown. I guess your donating it to the trash food fund!

Ben starts to sob.

Mom walks up with a large fed ex letter, and places it next to Jazz. Mom looks at Ben.

MOM

Is he alright? I think he's had enough already, good lord.

BEN

Hey, I'm right here, and as long as I'm paying, why can't I drink like the next guy?

Mom looks like she is about to rip into Ben.

Ben orders another round.

JAZZ

Hey, you two relax. Mother please leave us alone for a bit.

Jazz gives Mom a nod to the left to move on.

MOM
 (pointing her big mama
 finger at them)
 OK, but we don't tolerate no
 nonsense from nobody in here. Don't
 make me get big Charlie over here
 to straighten you boys out!

JAZZ
 Mom seriously? Big Charlie?

MOM
 I am serious. Don't push me tonight
 Jazz.

While Jazz and Mom were talking, Ben manages to get two more
 shots ordered. Bartender 1 thinks they are for Jazz and Ben.
 He places one in front of each.

Ben slams one then grabs the other and slams that one also.

BEN
 (yelling)
 What the fuck? Where is my drink?

After a second of impatient waiting.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Forget it! I'm outta here.

In the background, the music starts up again with Mom at the
 keys.

MOM (O.C.)
 (over the PA)
 So, for those who've had too good
 of time tonight, we say thank you
 and be safe going home. This next
 song is for you.

Jazz puts his arm around Ben.

JAZZ
 Come on Ben, you know you can't
 drive. How many times do we have to
 go through this man.

BEN
 I'm fine! And when did you become
 my mother, mother fu..?

JAZZ
(interrupting)
Hey hey hey, not here bro ...
Bring it down a notch, OK?

BEN
Just leave me alone.

JAZZ
Remember that time back in college
when you were sitting on the curb
outside of

BEN
Come on now, you said you would
never bring that up again.

JAZZ
Yeah, but I thought you would have
learned by now I'm always going to
look out for you, no matter what.
So, give me the keys and let me
take you home or get some
breakfast, or at least get some
coffee in you. Don't you have a
closing tomorrow?

BEN
All right. But this is the last
time. I don't need you looking
after me like some schmuck ...
Anyway, who's the one with the
brains here?

JAZZ
Man, you are dude and you know it.
I'm just some poor artist living
the dream!

Jazz and Ben stand up. Jazz has to help Ben as he is too drunk to walk straight.

As they are leaving Jazz looks back at Mom.

Mom looks at him and gives a disapproving frown and shake of her head.

Jazz just smiles back and mouths to her "I love you Mom, and thanks", holding up the fed ex letter, and walks away.

INT. HOSPITAL ER WAITING ROOM - 7:30PM APRIL 13 - NIGHT

We see BD in waiting area, and clock on wall showing 7:30. A doctor walks out and speaks with BD.

INT. HOSPITAL ER ROOM - 4:55AM, APRIL 14 - NIGHT

We see clock on wall showing 4:55 with BD asleep in chair.

Ben, laying with IV and a cast on his arm and leg. He opens his eyes and he sees BD in the room.

BEN

(starts to say something)

Jazz?

BD wakes up, and stands next to Ben.

BD

(looking down at Ben)

I'm sorry bro. He didn't make it, but the Doc says you'll be just fine in a few months. May have a little hitch in your stride, but otherwise you'll be OK. I've made sure they don't skimp on the good stuff. Can't have my boy in pain, if you know what I mean.

BD leans forward and puts his hand on Ben's as tears come down Ben's eyes.

INT. BACKSTAGE TO AUDITORIUM - 2008 - NIGHT

Same time we saw Ben before. Now he is caught up in remembering the past, oblivious to the proceedings going on in the auditorium.

Ben untucks the front of his shirt, and pulls it up just enough to see a scar from the wreck. He rubs it for a second as the voice over from the video is heard.

ELISABETH (V.O.)

As a passenger surviving the crash which took the life of the driver, he moved on with more determination to reach his destiny. It was in these years the ...

Sound of the same song that was playing before Jazz and Ben's wreck starts to fade in as scene fades out.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SHABBY HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK TO MARCH 10, 1988)
First all is black, with song continuing to play.

WE ARE SEEING POV FROM BEN.

His eyes are closed. He is having a flashback of wreck, and as he opens his eyes the flashes from the wreck then closes eyes. Blackness. Then he opens his eyes to the brightness of the sun. Closes his eyes again, as we hear song playing on radio.

BACK TO LOOKING AT BEN.

On street, Ben is waiting, leaning on a Jazz's old GREMLIN. His cell phone rings.

BEN

Yeah, this is Ben. What? No. I'm not interested.

Ben yells, as another car pulls up.

BEN (CONT'D)

I said I'm not interested, so quit calling me!

Three people get out of the car. Two men, and a woman. It is another real estate agent, and his clients.

AGENT (52 WHITE MAN)

Wow! You must be doing great Ben. Only the top dogs in our office have one of those. What happened to your car? In the shop? I hate it when that happens and they give you an old beat up piece of crap.

Ben looks annoyed.

AGENT (CONT'D)

We aren't catching you at a bad time are we?

Ben still looks annoyed.

BEN

No. It is just this homeless shelter been calling me to see if I wanted to volunteer. They are so hard up they keep bugging me.

WOMAN CLIENT (35 NICELY DRESSED BLACK
WOMAN)

Why would they call you? Did you
ever work for them before?

Ben looks at her with no expression.

BEN

Why don't we look inside. It is a
perfect investment house. You can
get it for nothing and it has been
empty for about two years.

WOMAN CLIENT

A shame that there are homes
sitting empty, when there are so
many homeless here.

BEN

(as he opens the front
door)
Yeah, OK.

INT. SHABBY HOUSE - DAY

Front door opens, and Ben walks in with others.

BEN

As you can see, this is a definite
fixer upper, but was once a nice
home. Well built and all working
plumbing and electrical so no need
to rehab that. The walls and carpet
will need to be worked on, and
probably will need a new roof.
Everything though is up to code.

Ben walks into living room and keeps talking.

BEN (CONT'D)

It has a functional fireplace which
is unique for homes in this area.
Should help with your rental or
resale.

MAN CLIENT (43 NICELY DRESSED BUSINESS
CASUAL, BLACK MAN)

Oh hey, I think you misunderstood
what we are here for.

BEN

(looks at agent)
What's up?

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Are you guys wasting my time? What are we here for if you are not interested in buying this place?

MAN CLIENT

Sir, we are here on behalf of our church. We are buying affordable homes to rehab, and set up as transitional homes for those in need. This will possibly be the first home we get, and are very excited we can do this. So any ... uh ... help you can give us will be greatly appreciated, and go toward a good cause.

BEN

Well, I am happy for you, but the only good cause I care about right now is helping myself, and that means selling this place at the most I can get for it. So please keep your reasons to yourself. The price stands where it is. Take it or leave it.

Man Client and Woman Client look at each other, and seem to sense an inner pain with Ben.

AGENT

Hey Ben, relax old buddy. We can work it out.

Agent escorts his clients back outside. He stops at the door and turns to Ben so they cannot hear.

AGENT (CONT'D)

Ben, you need to get it together bud. I'm trying to help you out, and if this goes well we could be getting more of these trash heaps off of you.

Agent shakes his head.

AGENT (CONT'D)

I don't understand why you quit that other agency you were with, who was it? HomeMax? ... and why are you just sticking to these little slum houses now as an independent? I've been in this business for most my life, and must say you have a talent for this.

(MORE)

AGENT (CONT'D)

If you ever want to get back and really start making some money again, give me a call and I'll see about getting you on our team. We would love to have you.

Ben looks down.

AGENT (CONT'D)

OK then, you take care, and as a friend ... you might think about a breath mint if your going to drink before showing a house.

Ben gets back into the GREMLIN, and with one leg out the open door, he opens his briefcase and pulls out a small flask. He looks at it, and hesitates opening it, but then does and takes a couple of long swigs.

He closes the door, and has trouble starting the car. He gets frustrated, and beats on the stirring wheel, then it starts with a puff of smoke. He sighs.

BEN

(speaking to himself)

Just like my life old buddy. Worn out, and barely hangin on.

He drives away.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - MOMS STUDIO - MARCH 19 - NIGHT

Mom sitting at piano.

Mom attempting to play, but keeps making mistakes and gets more, and more frustrated, as Henry walks in.

HENRY

Hey baby, how is the new set coming along?

Mom glares at him.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What is it now?

Mom says nothing, looks into space, as a tear rolls down her cheek.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You have to let it go. He would have wanted us to live and be hap

MOM
(interrupting him)
You don't have any idea what he
wants Henry. How can you know what
he wants?

Henry tries to speak but Mom keeps going.

MOM (CONT'D)
Nobody can know what he wants,
because he is dead! Dead, because
of that drunken bum that pretended
to be his friend, but was just
using him.

HENRY
(trying to speak again)
Honey, now you

MOM
(interrupting again)
Don't speak to me! You can't deny
that our son would still be alive
if he had not hung out with that
idiot. He was too drunk to even
walk that night. And all the lies
he had been telling Jazz about
becoming a better person, and how
he had stopped drinking. Just lies,
and more lies ...

Mom starts to cry again.

MOM (CONT'D)
And now my little boy is dead
because he trusted that, that ... I
hate him, and all I wish for is
that it was him that died instead
of my boy!

Henry walk over to comfort Mom.

Mom stands up, pushes Henry away, then walks past him and
slams the door closed behind her.

INT. BD'S NEW HOUSE - KITCHEN - APRIL 15 - DAY

Ben is sitting on a bar stool watching BD cook breakfast.

BD

Hey dude, cheer the fuck up!
Remember I got us invites from the
one and only Mr. Dominique Wilkins
BABY! ... to the happnin Party
suite at the Omni for the ... BAD
TOUR tonight. We each have a plus
one brother! This is gonna be
crunk! The supa brotha Micheal J in
da house.

Ben stares out the window, looking rough, with two days
growth on his face, and an uneven fro growing out.

BEN

Man I'm not feelin that tonight.
You go on without me.

BD

Wait a minute. Did you hear who's
throwing this party? You know who
will be there tonight? Man this is
your chance to get in with some of
the big brothers here in town baby!

BD With emphasis waving his hands around.

BD (CONT'D)

YOU NEED TO GET YOUR SHIT TOGETHER,
clean yo nasty stankin ass up, and
put on sometin that's been washed
and don't look like you just wadded
it up. Then, your calling that hot
fine ass bitch I set you up wit the
other night, and have that candy
hangin on yo arm lookin like the
fly motha you are brother!

No response from Ben.

BD (CONT'D)

Come on bro, and get it together
before I have to drag your sorry,
sad ass out the door for your own
good! This is the last night of the
biggest show this town has ever
seen!

BD laughs, trying to cheer his friend up. Goes around the bar
and grabs Ben in a headlock, and starts to play wrestle him.
Ben gets pissed.

BEN

Hey, get the fuck off me man. I said, I don't want to go or have anything to do with those thugs you call friends.

BD lets go of Ben.

BD

(calmly)

Come on man. It's been how long now? You gotta snap out of it. Do you think that little dude woulda wanted to see you like this? He was a weird little fucker, but I must admit, he had a good heart bro, and I think he actually cared about both of us regardless of what his folks thought.

BEN

Not his dad BD. Not his pops. His pops seemed to know us.

BD

Yeah right. That dude looked like he'd been through it. Did you check those tats he had. I swear I saw some old biker gang ink on him. That one that was in Latin I think ...

BEN

I don't know about that, but it seemed like we just caused problems in that family. Problems that weren't there before ... before he started to hang out with us.

BD

His name was ... IS, Jazz, Ben. You can't even say his name.

BD pauses as we see a reaction from Ben.

BD (CONT'D)

Have you even talked to his folks since the funeral?

BEN

They don't want to see me. Hell, I would just want to beat my ass if I was them. I killed their son for christ's sake!

BD
That's it. I'm through with this
bullshit, and you are coming
tonight one way or the other and
that's final!

BD looks straight at Ben's eyes.

BD (CONT'D)
You got that?

No response.

BD (CONT'D)
I understand the man MJ has given
100 tickets to the Children's Wish
Foundation for terminally ill
children. I think even our boy Jazz
would have went to this show given
how much he liked to help folks ...
Including our loser butts!

Ben looks up at BD.

BD (CONT'D)
Yo brother, you got me? You know
what I mean right?

BEN
Yeah man, I'll go. Just shut up
about that night. Enough already.

BD
OK, but you need to get that shit
out of you before it kills you. You
got too much going on

BD tapping his head.

BD (CONT'D)
to let this destroy you. You know I
love having you back around, but it
was nice with your butt outa here,
and we gotta fix that. The Ben I
know was a fighter and

BEN
I said, enough alright? I'll go.

Ben grins.

BEN (CONT'D)
Give me some of that crap you call
breakfast, before you burn it!

BD
Alright! Comin up brother!

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry and Mom are eating dinner. Each at one end of long dinning table. Nothing is being said. Henry looks at Mom with no response from her.

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE OF OMNI - NIGHT

BD drives up to valet parking, and looks over to Ben with a big smile.

BD
Here we go my brother. This night
is all about you my man. How about
it?

Ben smiles, nods, then looks to the back seat where two beautiful GIRLS are giggling with excitement.

INT. OMNI COLISEUM - PARTY SUITE - NIGHT

Music is bumpin, and small group people (30-40) are socializing.

Door opens, and BD, Ben and the Girls walk in and show their ID's. They are let into the party. The Girls quickly move into the room socializing leaving Ben and BD to network.

As the sound of the party continues, we hear BD introducing Ben to some people.

THE SCENE CUTS VIDEO ONLY BUT KEEPS AUDIO OF CURRENT SCENE UNDERNEATH.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

VISUALLY BACK TO HENRY AND MOM AT THE DINNER TABLE

Henry speaks, and Mom gets mad. Henry pleads with Mom.

Mom stands, throws her plate against the wall. As this is happening, we hear BD introduce Ben to a man who interrupts, and tells Ben his name ...

HOSEA (62 BLACK MAN)
You're Ben Reed, I remember.

BACK TO:

INT. OMNI COLISEUM - PARTY SUITE - NIGHT

HOSEA (CONT'D)
I am Hosea Williams. You're the
friend of Jazz Johnson right?

Ben looks surprised.

BEN
Uh ... yes. How do you ...

HOSEA
I met him at the Shelter he was so
found of. I have an organization
that brings food over there when
they are a little short. I swear
that boy would have starved to
death giving away all his food if
it wasn't for his mamma.

Ben smiles and nods.

BEN
I guess you really knew him then.
You know, he brought me down there
a few times.

HOSEA
Yeah, I think I remember seeing you
down there more than once in a
while.

BEN
I don't know about that. I was

HOSEA
No, I remember it was you ... Oh,
I'm sorry.

BD working the room, passing out his cards, walks back into
the conversation.
Audio from this scene continues throughout next scene.

BACK TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

VIDEO ONLY.

Mom stands in front of the bathroom mirror getting ready for bed, with Henry at the door of the bedroom looking sad and defeated. Henry walks in.

BD interrupts Hosea and Ben

BACK TO:

INT. OMNI COLISEUM - PARTY SUITE - NIGHT

BD

Hey what's happening? Come on Ben,
I got some other folks for you to
meet. Jose, do you mind?

Hosea looks at Ben

HOSEA

No, that is fine. And Ben, please
come and see me sometime. I think I
may have something for you. It was
hers.

BD looks confused, but shakes it off.

BD

Come on brother.

BD drags Ben away.

Ben looks back at Hosea, and nods.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Early the next morning Ben, unshaven, is sitting having coffee. He is wearing the same clothes as he had on at the party at the Omni.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mom is cooking.

MOM

Do you want some eggs and bacon?

HENRY

Sure, baby. Any more coffee left?

Mom pulls coffee pot from brewer, and pours Henry coffee. Mom does not say anything, and barely looks at Henry.

Henry tries to be civil.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Mom, you remember when Jazz was what, about four, five, and we were at that little playground near your parents house.

MOM

The one with the purple dragon?

HENRY

That's the one. He was playing with those Mexican kids. Your old neighbors maids kids right?

Mom looks sad again.

MOM

He was five. Oh, I remember all of it.

HENRY

And how he always would lose
(making the quote symbol
with his fingers as he
says lose)

HENRY (CONT'D)

his toys and we would always see those kids with the exact toy ...

Henry looks at Mom.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Even then he was looking out for the less fortunate. He was one of a kind.

Mom puts down the spatula and looks up.

MOM

Stop, Henry. Just stop. Why do you do this to me?

HENRY

He's our son. Mom, you have to see someone. It was an accident, and things just happen.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

It is the way God made it, and
there is nothing we can do but
remember all the good he

Mom shoves the skillet, turns off the burner, then starts to
walk out as she speaks.

MOM

I said stop! Just be quiet, and
leave me alone!

HENRY

Now baby, I wouldn't be your
husband who loves you so much, and
cares for you if I do that, and you
know it. So, let me in baby. I'm
getting afraid for you.

MOM

Well don't! I'm just fine, and I
don't need you, or anyone else to
tell me how to grieve the murder of
my son by that drunk.

Mom looks, and points at Henry.

MOM (CONT'D)

If you want to help me, then forget
about me ever forgiving him for
what he did that night!

HENRY

I cannot, and will not. You, and I
know, that it wasn't that boy's
fault. You don't know what he was
going through, or ever cared to
even try to know him. Ben is a good
man, and he had been sober for a
long while, and was a good friend
as long as Jazz was concerned.

MOM

How dare you mention that name.

HENRY

Now Mom, your gonna listen to me. I
refuse to allow this to continue.
This is not healthy for either of
us, and takes away from everything
our son stood for!

MOM

MY SON, did not agree to get killed
by helping some drunk.

HENRY

(now raising his voice)
 THAT, is EXACTLY how he would have preferred it! How can you stand there and deny the truth of who OUR SON was, and what he stood for?

MOM

(hysterically)
 Get out! Just get out, and leave me alone!

HENRY

Fine. I'll go somewhere else to have breakfast. Somewhere where folks still live in reality.

Henry walks away, and slams the door on the way out.

EXT. HENRY'S MOTORCYCLE - DAY

Henry wearing a worn leather jacket with obvious spots where patches were removed, and a HELMET that looks just as old as the jacket and bike, is driving down the street on his HARLEY.

Henry sees a beat up GREMLIN on the opposite side of the street. He stares at it as he slows down and drives past.

He whips a u-Turn and parks in the next available spot which is right across from the cafe Ben is sitting at. He walks back up to the GREMLIN and sees the license plate with the familiar "JAZZ" on it. He stops like he saw a ghost. He looks around, and sees Ben sitting at the cafe.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Ben sitting having coffee.

Over Ben's shoulder, we see Henry standing next to the GREMLIN, looking at Ben for a second and then starts to walk across the street.

Henry comes up from behind and puts his hand on Ben's shoulder

HENRY

Hey Ben.

Startled, Ben turns, but sees it is Henry and gives a sigh of relief.

BEN

(obviously surprised)
Oh hey, Henry. It's good to see
you. What gets you up this early?

HENRY

I should say the same about you.
Had a late one did you?

BEN

Now Henry ... I was actually at the
Michael Jackson show last night as
a guest of Dominique Wilkins, and
met some fascinating people that
got me thinking.

HENRY

Wow. Sounds like a fun night.

There is a long pause as Henry looks at Ben sizing up his
state of being, while checking his bs meter. Ben is
transfixed on a point of space.

Henry breaks the silence.

HENRY (CONT'D)

So, what got you thinking to the
point of staying up all night?

BEN

How do you know I was up all night!

HENRY

Experience, son. Too much of it to
tell the truth.

Ben and Henry chuckle.

BEN

It was the people I kept running
into. Not just there, but it seems
like everywhere. People that speak
like Jazz. That have his same love
of others. That care more about
others than themselves ... Henry,
it's like he is everywhere I go ...
I see his face ... The first time I
met him ... That night ... and now
in my dreams, he's there, speaking
to me.

HENRY

What does he say?

BEN

The same thing over, and over.
Don't give up. There is still so
much to do. Don't give up.

HENRY

Sounds like good advise to me. I
wish Mom would listen to that.

BEN

What's going on with you two? Is
she OK?

HENRY

No son, she is not OK. She has not
been OK since that night.

BEN

It's my fault he is dead, Henry.
I'm so sorry fo

HENRY

(abruptly interrupting)
Now that's nonsense and you know
it. Just like I told Mom, it was
just an accident. It happens. It's
not your fault.

BEN

She's right blaming me. Now I'm
destroying the part that we loved
most about him.

HENRY

How's that?

BEN

You and Mom. You guys.

Looking down, Ben shakes his head.

BEN (CONT'D)

It keeps on going.

HENRY

Now wait a minute. You don't worry
about Mom and me. You have to look
out for Ben right now, OK?

Ben keeps staring down shaking his head.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Anyway, what about last night. What have you been thinking about till early in the morning? What did these folks say to you?

BEN

(looks up with a small smile)

A few of them knew Jazz from the shelter, and had worked with him. It turns out, that Michael Jackson had donated a bunch of tickets to some kids organization, and Dominique had invited representatives from that organization, and some other charitable groups there to have a celebration, and fund raiser for their different causes. I thought BD was taking me to some thug infested ego party, but I was happily wrong. Turned out to be a very cool night, and he had donated like a thousand bucks each for our tickets to get in. He said, he had made enough off of Dominique through his bets, it was only fair to give a little back to his fund raiser.

HENRY

You still hanging with BD? I like him, but know his type son. He eventually will fall, and when he does he will bring down everyone around him. I didn't know he was making that kind of money now, but doesn't surprise me.

BEN

He's not like that. I mean yeah, he's got his flaws, but he's always there for me. He was there at the hospital, and afterward helping me through all the Doctor visits, PT ... even bringing me breakfast at first when I couldn't get up. Then last night, he took me to that party even though I had no desire to go outside the house 'cept to go kill a few at the nearest bar.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

He is just a product of what his path allowed him to be. Given some different opportunities who knows?

HENRY

Who knows?

Henry pauses for a long second, looking over at his bike, then shakes it off.

CAMERA RACK FOCUS FROM HENRY TO BIKE THEN BACK.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I understand ... Just want you to know there's others that have been there for you too.

BEN

I know, Henry. Jazz was a great friend. I let him down.

HENRY

Sounds like he's still here for you. And son, you need to know I'm here for you too.

BEN

Henry, you don't ...

HENRY

(interrupting)

My son loved you as his brother. He saw something in you, and kept arguing with his mother defending you ... and convincing me, that it was OK to like you, and to trust you.

Ben puts his head into his hands, as Henry reaches over, and puts his hand on Ben's shoulder.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Son, my boy had a better understanding of the hope, and possibilities in people than anyone I have ever known. He has taught me ... teaching me, to listen to my heart, and to love like Jesus loved, like we're supposed to, like Jazz did ... without all that judgement.

BEN

I know about that. He took me to some crazy church before, but it's just not for me. So instead he found another way to heal my soul as he put it. He took me down to a shelter, to help feed the homeless.

HENRY

(laughing)

Oh not that place. I know the one. He was always taking food out of the cupboard to take down there. He thought we didn't know, and it drove his mother crazy.

BEN

(starting to smile)

Yeah, that's what he did with me. Always trying to raid my food, saying we ate too much anyway, and would brag about how Mom would always complain about how skinny he was, and just keep giving him more and more food, every time he would come and visit you.

HENRY

Then he would take it all down to the shelter, right?

BEN

Yep. Still in the same bag Mom put it in.

Henry and Ben laugh, and then Ben stops.

BEN (CONT'D)

He sure loved you guys, you know that, don't you Henry?

HENRY

Yeah. I know.

BEN

And, he just wanted Mom to understand who he was, and not be so angry about how he used his time in this life ... He always said, that our time here is precious, and that every breath, both in and out, is a gift, for nothing is promised, not even a breath ... He lived that Henry.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

He made sure that as much as he humanly could, he would use those breaths, both in and out, to make this world a better place.

HENRY

He could have done so much. It makes no sense some times, but I know enough to let it go, and enjoy the time we had with him.

BEN

Henry your wrong. He's still with us like you said. He's still helping me, and last night I found out he was working on a project to set up permanent funding for the shelter. A man named Hosea Williams knew him, and apparently, me also from the few times I came down to the shelter with Jazz. He said he thought that whatever Jazz was up to was about finished, and was supposed to have heard something around ... well, you know.

HENRY

I wonder if it had anything to do with what he had his mother doing for him.

BEN

Oh yeah, what was that?

HENRY

She was writing an original piece for him to put on a record, and he was waiting to here about some funding for the project. We just thought it was his attempt to make his own record, but he was so secretive about it, we just thought it was just Jazz being Jazz ... you know.

BEN

I understand completely! But anyway, it got me thinking about all he was doing and what he was ... Is trying to tell us Henry.

HENRY

What's that? Don't give up? But sure.

BEN

That's not all. With all these people I keep running into. It's like he is telling us to get out and do something tangible, right now. Not tomorrow. Today.

HENRY

But, what exactly are we supposed to do?

BEN

Well, I think I'm supposed to take up his work, and figure out a way to keep helping the homeless here in Atlanta.

HENRY

And what about me? I'm not the type to stand there and feed people. Sorry, it's just not me.

BEN

I think you are just supposed to love Mama!

HENRY

That's not as easy as it sounds sometimes Ben. She has a lot of anger, and deep sadness in her heart. I'm not sure why, but I just can't get to her.

BEN

I'm not sure what was happening with them, but that night, Jazz was not very happy with her, and they looked like they had been fighting. She was short with us, and when we left, I'm sure I saw her give him a kinda mean looking face. I think I asked him about it, but was pretty drunk at the time, as you know. It's why he was taking me ...

HENRY

I know, son. I know what happened.

Henry pauses to think about what Ben said.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It makes sense though, what you said.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

If the last thing she did was be mad at him, that's all she can focus on ... She never said anything about it to me, or anyone I know of, and being Mom was her greatest pleasure.

BEN

Well, Henry I have to get some sleep. I have a lot more to think about and do. You go home, and take care of Mom for all of us OK?

HENRY

I'll make a deal with you. You and I come back here once a week, and get caught up on how we are doing. What do you think?

BEN

I think Jazz would like that. It's a deal.

Henry and Ben shake on it as they get up to leave.

EXT. JAZZ'S CAR - DAY

Ben gets into the GREMLIN and it does not start after several attempts. Ben is calm, and does not beat on the steering wheel.

Ben gets out of the car, and walks back to the cafe where Henry is still sitting.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Ben sighs.

HENRY

Hey Ben, that was quick. Did you miss me already?

BEN

Yeah sure!

Henry and Ben laugh.

BEN (CONT'D)

No, it's that old GREMLIN. Just having a problem getting going. Can you give me a jump?

HENRY
The battery dead?

BEN
Have no idea. I've never been real good with mechanic stuff. BD always would help me, or had some guy he knew.

HENRY
Have you thought of getting rid of that thing?

BEN
No way. As long as it's around I feel more connected to Jazz. I just can't seem to let it go.

HENRY
Well, OK then. Let's go see what we can do.

Henry and Ben walk back to car.

EXT. JAZZ'S CAR - DAY

HENRY
Get in, and turn it over.

BEN
OK.

Ben gets in and tries to start car. It doesn't after a couple of attempts.

HENRY
Pop the hood, and let me check this out.

Henry opens the hood.

HENRY (CONT'D)
You know Ben, this old thing looks like you and Mom on the inside. Everyone needs some TLC and a little fixin up.

BEN
(laughing)
Your right. Maybe that's your calling Henry. The spiritual Mechanic!

HENRY

I don't know. That seems more like Jazz's M.O. Always looking out for all of us ...

Henry pauses and wipes a tear from his eye.

BEN

You all right Henry?

HENRY

Yeah, just got a little dirt in my eye.

Ben wipes a tear from his eye.

BEN

Funny, me too ...

Henry and Ben are quiet for a moment in their own space.

HENRY

I think I see the problem.

BEN

What's that?

HENRY

(wiggling some wires)
There's a couple of loose plug wires. Has it been intermittent?

BEN

Yeah, random and almost intelligent like ... Like every time I'm gettin wound up, and just want to get away ... it doesn't start and forces me to stop, and slow down a sec ... I think Jazz is still messin with me through this thing!

HENRY

Sounds like Jazz all right.

BEN

(looks up toward heaven)
OK Jazz, you got us together, so how about giving me a break and letting me go home now.

Ben tries again, and it starts right up. Henry gives him a thumbs up, and closes the hood.

Henry wipes his hands on his pants, and walks around to the driver window.

HENRY

OK Ben, see you next week.

BEN

Alright. I'll call you.

Henry turns to go, then looks back at Ben.

HENRY

Let's fix this thing up.

BEN

What?

HENRY

Let's fix this little GREMLIN up like new, you and me. What ya say?

BEN

You know I don't know anything about cars Henry. I never had a dad around to show me.

HENRY

Well, I guess it's high time someone taught you.

Henry looks up, then at Ben with a smile, and starts to cry. Ben gets out of car, and goes over to Henry.

BEN

What is it?

HENRY

It's just ... I wanted to do that with Jazz ...

Henry wipes his tears away and chuckles beneath the pain of losing his son.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Funny thing is, he would never let me do it, because he thought it was his responsibility, and was too proud to let me help him. He just kept insisting on ...

Henry breaks down again, and Ben gives him a hug.

BEN

Hey ... Henry. I would be honored to have you help me, and show me how to fix up Jazz's car. I think it may be good for both of us.

HENRY

OK. Well, I gotta get going.

Henry and Ben give each other a man size hug.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Thank you son.

BEN

For what?

HENRY

For being there for Jazz, and now for me. Your a good man Ben, and everything is going to be all right.

INT. BD LIVING ROOM - MARCH 20, 1989 - NIGHT

BD

(talking on phone)

I said, I would handle it! I got this.

BD paces the floor. He looks concerned and stops dead in his tracks.

BD (CONT'D)

Yes, I know. Yes sir. I can do that. Yes sir. Thank you. I will leave tomorrow.

BD puts the phone down, and sits down hard looking stressed. He looks over and picks up a little bonsai tree sitting on the end table, and shakes his head. He puts it down, and pulls out a pair of bonsai trimming scissors in the drawer on the end table, and trims a couple of places. He breaths deeply and exhales.

INT. BD FRONT DOOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK TO APRIL 5, 1985)

There are a few people in the house all ready. It is BD's house warming party, and the music is bumping with laughter and party sounds, as the doorbell rings BD goes to get the door. When he opens it, Jazz and Ben are there. Jazz hands BD a small Bonsai Tree.

BD

Hey! It's the birthday boys!

JAZZ

Hey Buddy, take this little tree as my wish it will help bring you peace.

BD

Thanks Jazz, it's really cool. I've always liked these miniature trees.

JAZZ

Your welcome. You know the early bonsai was regarded as a spiritual practice, meaning peace and tranquility. According to Japanese tradition, the bonsai represents the three virtues or shin-zen-bi, which translates into "truth," "goodness" and "beauty," and supposed to represent "heaven and earth in one container.

Then Ben holds up a box, and a bottle of Grey Goose Vodka.

BEN

(laughing holding the
bottle up)

I brought booze for ya! Your favorite.

BD

You guys gonna do some shots with me?

Ben shrugs knowing he will not take a shot.

JAZZ

(pointing at the box Ben
has)

In the box, are the tools to work on the tree and shape it as it grows. The Zen Priests believed the patient process of working on the plant, brings one peace, and harmony, and represents those and ordered thought. I like the other meaning though the most.

BD

What is that?

JAZZ

That it represents "heaven and earth in one container".

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BD LIVING ROOM - MARCH 20, 1989 - NIGHT

One small tear trickles down BD's face, as he sets the tree back down carefully. We can see there is a specific prominent place created for it.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOSEA SHELTER - APRIL 6 - DAY

Ben drives up in the GREMLIN, and parks. It now looks much better (not quite finished), and running like new. The interior still looks the same.

INT. HOSEA SHELTER - OUTSIDE HOSEA OFFICE - DAY

Hosea Williams office door is open. Hosea is sitting at his desk working, when Ben arrives and knocks on the door frame.

HOSEA

Hey Ben. I was wondering when I would see you. Come on in.

Ben walks in as Hosea gestures him to take a seat. There are many pictures on the walls of Hosea with many prominent people including one with both Michael Jackson, Domonique Wilkins and BD.

BEN

I hope you don't mind me stopping by without calling first. It's just been hard to come down here, you know? And then, at the front they just said go on in, so ...

HOSEA

It's OK, son. Don't think nothing of it. Have you thought about what we talked about?

BEN

Yes sir, and I would be honored to help in any way I can. I'm also ready for that package you've been holding for me.

HOSEA

Of course. I'll go get it. Just hang tight one second.

Hosea leaves the room. Ben sits, and stares at all of the pictures. He sees Jazz in a few of the pictures. One, he is building some sort of structure, and has carpentry tools. Another, he is sitting with an old woman, holding her hand. Another, he is with Hosea, and Elisabeth serving food to a group of people.

Ben stands up, and walks over to one picture, and takes it off the wall. Ben is staring at the picture when Hosea comes back in with a small cardboard box. Hosea gently takes the picture from Ben, and hands him the box, then lays the picture on the desk right in front of Ben.

HOSEA (CONT'D)

You OK son?

BEN

Yes sir. The pictures in here took me by surprise.

HOSEA

You didn't know your friends were so involved with our mission? Or was it just the one picture of her?

BEN

I think it was all of it, but yes ... seeing her face again. She was beautiful that day.

HOSEA

Yes she was. And it took something inside of you to see that here in this place. If you don't mind me asking, what has changed about you. You seem much stronger than the first time we met with your other friend at that charity event.

BEN

That would be Jazz.

HOSEA

Excuse me?

BEN

Well, his spirit, I guess. And, his pops. His dad's been sort of helping me get my mind back together.

HOSEA

You mean Henry? I could never get him to come down here.

BEN

Don't judge him too harsh, sir. He has his own reasons, but I know he supported Jazz and what you all were doing.

HOSEA

Are doing son! Are doing. And your going to be a big part of our future, if you are willing to do the work.

BEN

Yes sir, I'm ready. May I ask what was that picture there about? The one with Michael, Dom

HOSEA

(interrupting, and laughing)

The one with your friend who kept calling me, Jose?

BEN

Yeah. What the heck was BD doing with you all.

HOSEA

He insisted on giving us a nice donation, only if we would give him two tickets to the event where you and I met. We were not interested until he told us who his friends were, and why he needed those tickets. After that, it was no problem. That night when he slipped away, he got that picture made to put on this wall.

BEN

Wow. That sounds like him, but not like him. I don't know what to say.

HOSEA

You don't have to say anything, son. I can tell you, your friends loved, and love you dearly as a brother. Jazz always spoke well of you, and when you started coming down here, we all saw why.

Ben gets choked up a bit, as Hosea comes around the desk and puts his hand on his shoulder.

BEN

I just want to live up to what everyone else saw in me ... It still hurts, that night. It just makes no sense.

HOSEA

It's going to hurt the rest of your life. But, you already understand the source of strength that gets you through it, don't you? That's why, you will be able to do the great things Jazz, and BD knew you could do.

Ben nods, as he stares at the box.

HOSEA (CONT'D)

And now, why you have the strength to open that box.

Hosea picks up the picture off the desk, and places it in the box. Then Hosea offers Ben his hand to get up.

HOSEA (CONT'D)

Alright. You go home, and call me later next week, so we can get going on some of those properties you mentioned.

Ben gets up, and starts walking out the door.

HOSEA (CONT'D)

And, if you need anything, you know you can reach me here OK?

BEN

Yes sir. And thank you.

HOSEA

And don't forget to share with me more details on that Portal idea. Sounds like it could really work. Well, take care son. Be safe.

Ben walks out with box in hand.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - KITCHEN - APRIL 23, 2000 - DAY

Henry and Mom are fighting again.

MOM

I don't care. I need to get going to church.

HENRY

Let me drive you at least.

MOM

No, that's all right, I'll drive myself. I need the time to get my mind right.

HENRY

I wish you wouldn't leave like this. But, I know not to stop you.

Mom goes to the door, and gets her purse and a music binder.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I may not see you later. I have an errand to do.

MOM

What ever you need to do.

Mom walks out and closes the door.

HENRY

I love you baby. I wish you would let me help you, or at least someone.

Henry falls on his knees, and begins to pray.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Dear Lord, you know I don't talk to you as much as I should ... but I never ask for me. It's my wife ... can you please Lord be with her, and comfort her heart. It's been too long Father. She just won't let go.

The phone rings. Henry picks it up.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(sounding upset)

Hello, how can I help you this early?

BEN (O.C.)

(on phone)

Hey Henry, sorry to call so early,
but was hopin to catch you before
you guys went off to church.

HENRY

Well you got me, but Mom has left.
Good thing probably. What's up son?

BEN

I've been thinking about what
you've been saying to me, and heard
someone recently say the same
thing.

HENRY

What's that?

BEN

That there is a way for me to
handle my grief, and move on.
Through the love of God ...

There is a long pause. Henry clutches his chest, almost in
pain, but he smiles.

HENRY

Glad to hear it, son. I've prayed
you would come to Him for help.
There is just so much we can really
do for each other when experiencing
a deep loss like we have had. That
is the only way I could go on
myself. I just wish Mom could do
the same.

BEN

But doesn't she know God already? I
thought she was like that since she
was playing piano in church, as a
teenager, according to Jazz.

HENRY

She has been. But this has ... I
think, and please don't repeat it,
I think she has lost her faith son,
and for the first time I'm really
worried about her. There is nothing
I can do.

BEN

There has to be something you can do. You guys love each other so much. I don't understand.

HENRY

I know. None of us understands any of this ... and the whys are killing her day, by day.

BEN

Can we go to your church together? I would like to. Maybe we can pray with Mom and the PASTOR or something.

HENRY

That's great you want to go, but, I'm not sure it is the right time.

BEN

(sounding hurt and confused)

Well, OK then. Maybe some other time. I just thought, if anyone could help us all, it would be God in His house.

HENRY

No, your right son. We should go.

BEN

Are you sure?

HENRY

Yes, I'm totally sure. We have to do this.

BEN

OK then, let me drive.

HENRY

I'll be waiting. The early service starts in about an hour, so we gotta get going.

BEN

See you in 20.

Henry hangs up, and takes a big breath.

HENRY
 (speaking to himself)
 I sure hope you know what your
 doing, Henry. For Mom's sake.

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - DAY

People are pulling into parking lot, as Ben and Henry come in the now fully restored GREMLIN. They get out, and go into the church.

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

Ben and Henry walk in to music being played, and take a seat in the back pew. Mom is up playing piano with the orchestra and does not see them walk in.

After a song, the PASTOR walks up and starts to preach.

PASTOR (MIDDLE AGED BLACK MAN)
 Today's teaching comes from the
 book of Matthew eighteen, verse
 twenty one through thirty five. The
 Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.
 It tells us a great deal about the
 forgiveness of our Lord, and what
 our responsibility is, in receiving
 this gift. Today, right now, I want
 us to examine our hearts for any
 unforgiveness we may have not dealt
 with ...

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY - LATER

Ben and Henry are talking with the PASTOR, when Mom sees them. Mom, upset, has to walk past them to leave. Henry motions her to come over, and she does.

PASTOR
 (Pastor looking at Mom)
 The special music today was
 exceptional, as usual. Thank you.
 Now, do you all want to move into
 my office for a bit? I have about
 twenty minutes before my next
 appointment.

MOM
 I don't think that will be
 necessary.

Mom looks at Henry.

MOM (CONT'D)

You should have asked me first
before showing up to our church
with him.

Mom doesn't acknowledge Ben.

PASTOR

Mom, let's go talk about it in my
office. This is something all of
you need to work out. The Lord was
with us today, in a powerful way,
and had His hand in the message
spoken, and the passages we were
studying. I don't think it was an
accident, do you?

MOM

Excuse me PASTOR, but you just
don't understand the situation. I
have to go now.

Henry reaches to Mom, as she pulls away and walks off, never
looking at Ben.

Ben, the PASTOR, and Henry are left standing staring at one
another for a second before Ben speaks.

BEN

I am so sorry for imposing on you
guys. I never should have asked you
to bring me, Henry. I don't know
what I was thinking.

PASTOR

Now son, everyone is welcome in
this house. This church does not
belong to any of us, for it is our
Lord's house. We, are thankful you
came today.

HENRY

(speaking at the same time
as Pastor)

It's OK, son. Your always welcome
in God's house.

BEN

No, I understand about being welcome, but maybe, it was not right to just show up here at this church, knowing how Mom feels about me, and how she blames me for ...

HENRY

Now stop that, son. Did you hear the sermon today? It is more than just forgiveness. It is the power that allows us to move forward in life, past the things that have harmed us.

PASTOR

Henry is right, Ben. The forgiveness is something Mom needs to do, whether she is right, or wrong in blaming you. It took a lot of courage for you to come here today, knowing how she felt. I can see, you did it out of love.

BEN

Of course I did. I loved her son, like he was my own brother, and I miss him every day. I wake up thinking of him, and see his face all the time. Then, I think of how much Mom is hurting, and feel like Jazz is wanting me to comfort her, and say it will be alright ...

Ben starts to tear up.

BEN (CONT'D)

... But, I know it will never be alright. Her child is gone, and that is that ...

HENRY

(looks at Pastor)

Pastor, he came here today to help find, and understand the strength that has been helping him get by.

PASTOR

Do you know the Lord, son, as your personal savior?

BEN

(wiping the tears away)
No sir, but I think I would like
to.

Henry starts to tear up and puts a hand on Ben's shoulder.

HENRY

It will be fine, son. We can help
you understand.

PASTOR puts his hand on Ben's other shoulder.

PASTOR

Ben, if you want to accept the
Lord, just listen to me now OK?

Ben nods.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Ben, do you accept that you are a
sinner, and need the forgiveness of
our Lord?

Ben nods.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Ben, please understand, that all of
us have sinned, as it says in
Romans three, twenty three, for all
have sinned, and fall short of the
glory of God, and as we understand
this, we acknowledged that the
wages of sin is death, as written
in Romans six, twenty three, For
the wages of sin is death, but the
gift of God is eternal life in
Christ Jesus our Lord. And, as that
is true, Jesus took our place as a
pure and holy living sacrifice for
us so we may live. John three,
sixteen reads, For God so loved the
world that he gave his one and only
Son, that whoever believes in him
shall not perish, but have eternal
life. And lastly, if you confess
your sin, Jesus Christ will forgive
you, and redeem you through His
blood. First John one, nine, tells
us this. If we confess our sins, he
is faithful, and just, and will
forgive us our sins, and purify us
from all unrighteousness. Do you
understand Ben?

BEN
(speaking through tears)
Yes sir.

PASTOR
Then, son, repeat after me. Dear
God, I am a sinner, and need
forgiveness.

BEN
Dear God, I am a sinner, and need
forgiveness.

PASTOR
I believe that Jesus Christ shed
His precious blood, and died for my
sins.

BEN
I believe that Jesus Christ shed
His precious blood, and died for my
sins.

PASTOR
I am willing to turn from sin, and
I now invite Christ to come into my
heart, and life as my personal
Savior.

BEN
I am willing to turn from sin, and
I now invite Christ to come into my
heart, and life as my personal
Savior.

HENRY
Praise the Lord. Welcome to the
family brother!

PASTOR
Welcome, son. Let's pray.

All three men get down on their knees, as the PASTOR starts
to pray.

There is a faded shadow of the face of Jazz smiling looking
down at them, as Ben looks up right at the face, while the
other men have their heads bowed and eyes closed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOME - FRONT DOOR - APRIL 11, 2003 - DAY

Henry has a small suitcase in his hand, looking at Mom.

HENRY

(with a defeated spirit)
Well Mom, I guess you will get what
you want.

MOM

What, except you leaving me alone
now.

HENRY

Just that, you will be all alone,
with no one to be with. No one to
blame. No one to listen to. Just
safe, in your dying world, while
all those who love and care for you
are kept locked outside ...

Henry opens the door and turns.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I love you, my sweet, sweet
darling. I will always be here for
you, whenever you need me. I will
always just be a call away.

Henry walks out and as he gets to his motorcycle turns one
last time.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I love you.

Then Henry puts his little suitcase in one of the saddlebags
of his HARLEY, puts on his backpack, and drives away not
bothering to put on his HELMET, which is strapped on the
back, leaving Mom standing in the door.

Mom, slowly closes the door, stares at the dead-bolt with her
hand on it, until she hears his motorcycle drive away. With a
sigh, she hesitates, and doesn't lock the door, slowly
pulling her hand away, starting to cry.

We hear Mom's crying into next scene.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BD LIVING ROOM - DAY

We hear Mom's crying as we see a disheveled living room with some clothes on the floor, a few empty bottles and take out food cartons.

CAMERA PANS THE ROOM.

CAMERA SLOWS PAN, WITH LITTLE BONSAI TREE IN THE BACKGROUND JUST OUT OF FOCUS, SLOWLY BRINGING FOCUS ON CLOSE UP OF BD. BD is on the phone.

Mom's crying fades as BD speaks.

BD
(sounding worried)
Yes sir, I will handle this as
always. No sir, I am fine.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK TO SEE BD WITH SOME COCAINE AND VARIOUS PILLS ON COFFEE TABLE.

BD bends down, and chops up a line. Picks up a little tube off the coffee table, and snorts the line while still listening on the phone.

BD (CONT'D)
(shaking his head)
Yes, I will have it all by the end
of the month, sir.
(long pause)
Yes ... yes ... no ... at the usual
place. Yes sir

BD Hangs up and looks at the bonsai tree sadly.

CAMERA NOW PULLS FOCUS ON IT TO REVEAL IT IS ALL BUT DEAD WITH JUST ONE LITTLE PIECE OF GREEN LEFT.

BD (CONT'D)
(talking to tree like it
is a person)
I guess, I'm not you bro. I tried.
I don't know if I can get out of
this one.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - JULY 12 - DAY

BEN

How's it going, being a bachelor again old man? Sorry I couldn't be there to help you get settled in, I had that conference, you know?

HENRY

Don't worry about it.

(pause)

I try to not think about Mom, but that's all I do, day after day, is sit in that apartment, trying to do something constructive, and all I see is her slowly dying inside and out. Ever since she quit the church ... I'm not even sure she is playing at home anymore.

BEN

I know Henry. Have you tried to see her at all?

HENRY

She won't even take my calls. I must leave her a thousand messages a week. Sometimes, I get the message is full response, like she doesn't even listen to them.

BEN

Maybe, she is a woman, and just can't figure out how to delete them!

They chuckle.

BEN (CONT'D)

Why don't you send over some flowers? You know, those stupid expensive ones you told me she loved so much, and that you got her when you guys were dating.

HENRY

I would, but that is just the point you know? Between covering that mortgage, and my apartment and ... well, let's just say I'm not eating high dollar steaks over at my place nowa days.

BEN

Come on, Henry! Why didn't you say something. You and I have been trading off buying for each other, and you know I'm doing alright now.

HENRY

(with a smile)

I'll say. And I'm proud of you, son, and how, and what you are doing. You deserve every penny, and then some. How much did you give away last year? And all your doing for the homeless community now?

BEN

Whatever! That doesn't matter. The Lord has blessed me beyond what I could have imagined, so He can have a piece of what is already His, and if in the mean time we can help out folks here in need, the more of a blessing it is. If only we could help out one person in particular ...

HENRY

Don't kid yourself, Ben. Your starting to make a difference in this town ... And as for Mom, I know. You, and me both have been prayin for that miracle for how long now? I'm just about to give up. It's wearing me down.

BEN

Don't ever give up, Henry. If it's the last thing I ever do, it will be working to get you two back together, where you belong. I've never seen anyone who were more meant for each other.

Ben walks over and places his hand on Henry's shoulder.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'll make a deal with you OK?

HENRY

What?

BEN

Let me worry about the money, which is not mine, but His, and you focus on making some good art and loving Momma! OK?

HENRY

What do you mean?

BEN

I mean, I will open an account with your name on it just for flowers, and candies, and whatever you think you need to do for Mom.

HENRY

No way son, I can't let you do that. I'm fine.

BEN

You can't stop me, and it's NOT for you, it's for Mom. Agree with this Henry, OK? Please, let me do this.

HENRY

OK, but I'm afraid nothing will matter if she doesn't even want to play anymore. You know, that really breaks my heart. She's always found so much joy in that. I remember the days of us both working at the same time. When I would be in my studio painting, and could hear her working on a new piece. Her persistence, and striving for perfection always inspired me ... it was like that the first time we met.

Henry looks away from Ben.

BEN

Then it's settled. I've got a great idea you can help me with.

HENRY

Uh oh. I've seen that look in your eyes before. What are you up to now boy?

BEN

Just you wait and see. We'll get Mom playing one way or the other.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Then, it'll be just a matter of time before you two are back together again where you belong.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - SPRING 2006 - DAY

Ben is on the phone, and excited about the conversation.

BEN

So, we are in agreement then? No one will know who commissioned the work? ... Great! And to be sure you understand, if she does not accept, then I will not go forward with this donation for the new Center for The Arts. OK, then I will have the papers sent over today. Yes ma'am, me too. It will be nice to see her perform again. Yes, please keep me updated with your progress, and your sure that is a proper amount for that type of commission? OK, well, if it is not you let me know immediately, and I'll take care of it. You understand that getting her is my only concern in this endeavor, and whatever it takes ... OK. Great then. Talk to you soon.

Ben hangs up the phone, and bows his head praying.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - MOM'S STUDIO - DAY

Mom is sitting at her piano, and the lid is closed. The light reflects the thick layer of dust on the lid. A picture of Henry, Mom and Jazz from when Jazz was just a boy, sits on the top of the piano. It too is dusty.

Mom slowly lifts the lid, and tries to play, but nothing happens. Her hands just sit lifeless on the keyboard, waiting for the passion to return. Then, she just bangs on the keys, making noise, and closes the lid. Sobbing, she picks up the picture and wipes off some of the dust ...

MOM

Oh, Jazz, I'm so sorry baby. I tried to be a good mother to you son. Please forgive me
(looks up and pleads)
Lord, please help me. I can't take this anymore.

Sobbing, Mom collapses clutching the picture, as the doorbell rings ... she does not move, but it keeps ringing. She still does not move, but now there is a banging on the front door, and she starts to get annoyed. Wiping her tears, she puts the picture face down, slowly gets up, and walks to the door. As she walks through the house, we see all the drapes and curtains are closed. There are many dried, and new flowers all over the place, almost placed at random. In addition, there is an old answering machine next to the phone, blinking "msg full" in red.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

We see an express delivery person at the door looking impatient, beating on the door. Not a regular UPS, or Post office person, but one of those special delivery type, with their own little beat up car in the drive. It is a GREMLIN.

Then, the door opens, and Mom is standing there. DELIVERY PERSON gets a huge smile on her face. She is a young, vibrant, short, cute blonde girl, with typical cargo type short pants, and official type of shirt and hat, with her hair pulled back into a pony tail.

MOM

(annoyed)

What do you want? And why on earth do you have to be pounding on my door? What ever it is, I don't want it! Now go away.

Mom attempts to shut the door, but the Delivery Person puts her hand on the door to stop her.

MOM (CONT'D)

How dare you! Get away, or I will call the police!

DELIVERY PERSON

Ma'am, I have to hand deliver this package to you, and get your signature, or I don't get paid. Please, just sign here, and I will leave immediately.

MOM

What is it? My lord what ... Who sent this? I hope it's not something else from Henry.

DELIVERY PERSON

No ma'am. It is from the Atlanta Center of the Arts foundation.

(MORE)

DELIVERY PERSON (CONT'D)

They were quite specific, that only you receive this package, and sign for it.

MOM

How do you know who I am?

DELIVERY PERSON

I saw your picture on the wall, and they pointed you out to me, and may I say, you are more beautiful in person. They said you may not want to receive this, but I promised them I would deliver it personally to you, and you alone, and I would not stop until I had completed this delivery. You see ma'am, I have a perfect record of successful deliveries. That's why they hired me for this job.

Mom then notices the GREMLIN and pauses, then looks over her reading glasses, gets a little amused by the Delivery Person and her bubbly attitude.

MOM

Is that so. Well, then I guess I should sign this so you will leave me alone then correct?

DELIVERY PERSON

Yes ma'am. Thank you ma'am.

Mom signs, and hands back the signing devise, as the Delivery Person hands her the package

DELIVERY PERSON (CONT'D)

Thank you again ma'am, and have a great day!

MOM

Well, your welcome, and you too.

Delivery Person walks away, then turns and yells back.

DELIVERY PERSON

God Bless ma'am! Good bye.

Delivery Person gets into car and drives away.

Mom stands in the open door a minute, rather amazed at how she feels.

Mom closes the door, and walks back inside with the package. She goes to the kitchen table, and opens the package and reads the letter. She rereads it twice more, and sits with a blank stare on her face.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Ben is working at his desk, when the phone rings. He picks it up right away.

BEN

This is Ben. How can I help you?

BD (O.C.)

(on phone)

Thank God Ben your home. I really need you to help me out tonight, bro.

BEN

Sure man. What's up?

BD

Can't talk right now, but can I meet you somewhere in about an hour?

BEN

Hey man, just let me come on over. I'll pick us up some nice steaks, and whatever you want, or we could go to this nice new restaurant downtown on Peachtree. I hear

BD

(cuts Ben off sounding a little desperate)

No, no, man I need to have you help me do something tonight, and we gotta keep a low profile. I swear, it will only take a couple of hours, and then whatever.

BEN

(getting a little annoyed)

Come on brother. If you haven't noticed, I'm kinda past low profile. What're you trying to get me into? I can't afford to do anything stupid.

BD
Hey man, I've always, always been
there for you, haven't I?

BD doesn't wait for an answer.

BD (CONT'D)
Haven't I?

BEN
Of course you have, and you know
I'll do about anything for you, but

BD
No buts! I've stuck my neck out for
you. Back in the day, I put my life
on the line to get those real thugs
off your back, and made you, and
your grandmas house off limits. You
know how I did that? Do you?

BEN
No.

BD
Damn straight you don't know, and
you never asked, and I never needed
to tell you, cuz we iz brothers,
and that's what we do right? We
look out for each other.

BEN
(pissed)
And, we don't lie to each other. If
you expect me to risk throwing away
all I've built for some illegal
bullshit, without telling me
anything, ... that's not gonna
happen brother, and you shouldn't
even ask me to.

BD
(pleading)
Look, Ben, I am proud of you, and
how you come up, and have become a
for real player in this town. I'm
almost whicha, bro. I just need to
settle this last deal, and I can
get out. Ya know? I've been
stashing for that rainy day, like
our boy Jazz, and you always say.
So, come on man, and stop just
thinkin bout you for a minute.

BEN

It's more than just me BD! I have a lot of people that depend on me, and some just have no where else to go. You've gotta understand that.

BD

I understand. I understand your best, and longest friend needs you, and your MY last chance. My last hope. The absolutely only person I can truly trust to help me. I'm now that person who you say you help ... So please man. Help me this last time. I'm outta the sketchy shit after this. Got my eye on some property out of the city, and a little grocery store these old folks want to get rid of ... Just this time.

BEN

(gives in)

I don't know man. At least tell me what we're gettin into. You owe me that.

BD

I just need you to be my wheel man. I got into a tight situation last month when one of my boys got took down by the PD. He just picked up a load, and got popped for all of it. Now, I'm on the hook for payin it back, soz I gotta do this job to make it right, or they gonna take your boy out. Ya know what I mean?

BEN

Then your done ... forever ... right? No more fuckin around with this bullshit.

BD

Yeah man.

BEN

Swear on your mama's grave, and mean it.

BD

I swear on my mama's grave bro.

BEN

Never again. You got that. Never again. And after this, you and me are through bro. I can't be around you no more unless by some miracle you 180.

BD

(very grateful)

Yeah, I understand. And I don't blame you for it Ben. I really don't. You, and Jazz had it goin on, and I was always just flashin.

(gets quiet and intense)

Should of been me all those years ago.

BEN

What are you talking about.

BD

Should of been me in that car, not Jazz. He would have made this world a better place, and all I've done was take for myself.

BEN

We'll talk about that later. Just meet me at Blind Willy's out on 41. You know the place?

BD

Yeah, sure. See you, bro, in an hour, and thanks again.

BD hangs up, and Ben stares at the phone. He slowly hangs it up, and lets out a long breath. Then, he goes to a closet and pulls out an automatic pistol, and pops out the clip. He sees it's loaded then puts the clip back in, and slides it in the back of his pants.

FADE OUT.

INT. BLIND WILLY'S BIKER BAR - NIGHT

Ben, dressed in black jeans, and black leather coat, is sitting at bar. There are a couple of empty shot glasses, and one empty high ball glass. He finishes his drink, and the bartender comes over.

BIKER BARTENDER (BIG WHITE GUY WITH TATS COVERING MOST OF BOTH ARMS)

You want another?

BEN

Yeah. Make it a double.

BIKER BARTENDER pours him a double whiskey, and puts it down. Ben looks into the glass, swirls it around and takes another drink.

His mobile phone rings. He looks at the number.

BEN (CONT'D)

Not now. What do you want?

Ben answers the phone.

BEN (CONT'D)

(trying to sound like
himself)

Henry. What's up buddy?

HENRY (O.C.)

Just checkin in. You know how bored
I get at this pad, and I'm not a
big TV fan.

BEN

Me neither, I'm just like a, um,
you know?

Ben fidgets.

HENRY

What's wrong?

BEN

What? What do you mean? Nothing
Henry. All good.

Rowdy guys at the bar start laughing, making a lot of noise, clinking glasses, and doing shots.

HENRY

Are you at a bar Ben?

BEN

Maybe. So what if I am?

HENRY

You're a man, son. You don't answer
to me, but I'm your friend, and
friends look out for each other,
right?

BEN

That's right. And that's what I'm doing.

HENRY

What do you mean? How can you be looking out for a friend, by drinking again, after all you said about how it made you feel, and all the memories? I'm coming there. Don't you move OK?

BEN

No, Henry. That's not necessary. Just stay at home, and I'll be just fine.

HENRY

Well, hell no it won't be just fine. I have to let the paint dry on this last piece anyway. It's why I called in the first place, and if your gonna have a drink, then it will be with a me, since we have never had a drink together. OK?

BEN

You're your own man like you said, and I'd love to have a drink with you Henry.

HENRY

Then, tell me where you're at, and I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

INT. BD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BD is at a desk. He licks an envelope and places it on the top. "FOR Ben" is clearly written in bold black marker.

As BD leaves, he stops and picks up the dead bonsai tree and sighs, then sets it back down. He picks up two automatic hand guns on the counter. He puts them into a dual holster inside his coat. He goes into his closet and pulls out a black, mean looking shotgun, racks a round into the chamber, grabs a box of shells and puts them in his coat pocket. He pulls out his phone, and hits a button.

It rings.

CUT TO:

INT. BLIND WILLY'S BIKER BAR - NIGHT

BEN
(answers phone)
Hey man, where are you?

BD (O.C.)
On my way. Just had to get some
stuff settled before I left.

Silence.

BD (CONT'D)
You still down?

BEN
(sounding a little drunk)
Yeah, man. Let's fuckin do this
thing, and be done with it!

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Henry is riding his HARLEY as fast as it will go. This time he has his HELMET on. He barely makes a light and is driving on this side of reckless.

CUT TO:

INT. BD SUV - NIGHT

Music is bumping with heavy gangster type old school rap. BD reaches down, and grabs a pill bottle, and works open the lid. He shuffles two pills out, closes the lid, then slams them in his mouth.

BD
(screams)
YEAH! LETS DO THIS MOTHER FUCKER!

CUT TO:

INT. BLIND WILLY'S BIKER BAR - NIGHT

Ben sitting at bar.

The distinct sound of Henry'S HARLEY is heard.

Henry pulls up on his bike.

LOOKING FROM THE BAR SIDE TOWARD BEN'S FACE, THE FOCUS CHANGES TO OUTSIDE THE WINDOW AS HENRY PULLS UP. THEN IT GOES TO THE DOOR AS IT OPENS.

Henry walks in with his HELMET under his arm. He sees Ben, and walks straight over to him.

HENRY
 (to Biker Bartender)
 I'll take what he's having.

Ben turns, and sees Henry standing besides him.

Henry sits at the stool next to Ben, as Biker Bartender sets Henry's drink down.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 (takes a sip)
 Well, I never thought we'd get to do this, but, oh what the hell, right?

BEN
 What the hell!

They CLINK their glasses together.

HENRY
 (looks right at Ben)
 So, do we talk about what ever this is, or just sit, and watch each other get drunk for a while?

BEN
 Neither. I don't have the time tonight. Gotta go in a bit. Sorry.

HENRY
 (jokingly)
 You mean, you got me all the way down here to finally have a drink with you, and your gonna wuss out on me?

Henry forces a laugh.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 (before Ben can reply)
 No seriously, Ben. We are gonna talk about this. I'm not letting you leave here drunk like this.

BEN

Well, Henry, I know your a big guy,
and we like each other, but I am
leaving ... I have to.

HENRY

What do you mean, you have to?

BEN

I've got no choice. It's BD. He's
in some sort of trouble, and needs
my help tonight.

HENRY

Let me help. I'm still pretty good
in a fight, that is if anyone still
fights instead of just shooting.

BEN

No, Henry, No way. It's not that
kinda help anyway.

HENRY

What is it then?

BEN

You know better than to ask. I did
some research on that tat you got.
I know all about that gang, and
it's history.

HENRY

That was a long, long, time ago,
but your right. And, that history
is why I left and married Mom, so I
could have a good life without
looking over my shoulder, and be
able to lay my head down on my
pillow in peace, not feeling wrong
for the day I just had.

Ben is not listening, and downs the rest of his drink. He
taps on the bar with the glass, and Biker Bartender nods.

Henry forcefully grabs Ben, and spins him so they are face to
face. This surprises Ben because of the strength at which
Henry grabbed him.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Ben, don't be stupid, son. I will
knock you out, and drag you out of
here, if I have to.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

You have too much to lose, son, and I'll be damned if I let another son go. Not today. Not on my watch, boy.

BEN

Did you just call me ... boy?

Ben stands up with a little wobble, like he is going to do something.

Henry stands up, getting the attention of a few bikers in the place, who also stand up like they are getting ready to jump in. Henry takes off his coat, revealing his tat, which instantly sits everyone back down.

BIKER BARTENDER

Hey man, take that shit outside.

Looking at Ben.

BIKER BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Your drink will still be here, if you can walk back in.

The Biker Bartender laughs, as do a few others.

Ben is embarrassed.

HENRY

What'll it be, son? You're leaving either the easy way, or the hard way, and it looks like the odds are against you winning either way you choose.

Ben sighs, and slams the full drink in front of him.

Ben takes a swing at Henry.

Henry easily blocks it, and one punch knocks Ben out.

SMASH CUT:

INT. BLIND WILLY'S BIKER BAR - NIGHT

CAMERA LOOKS FROM THE BAR SIDE OUT TOWARD THE PARKING LOT THROUGH THE WINDOW.

Henry's bike is sitting out front but Ben's car is gone.

BD pulls up, and gets out. He looks around, stares at Henry's bike and walks in. He looks around for a minute and then with a dejected look, leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. JAZZ'S FIXED UP GREMLIN - NIGHT

Ben in the passengers seat, with Henry driving. Ben rubs his jaw.

BEN

Damn Henry. Why'd ya hit me?

HENRY

Really?

BEN

I was leaving, but I've played this scene out before ... me, drunk, getting a ride.

HENRY

It's not the same, son. It'll be alright this time.

BEN

I was just swinging out of frustration. I know I should be there for BD right now, but at the same time, I know I can't do it.

Ben stares out the passenger window watching the highway lines go by.

BEN'S FACE IS REFLECTED IN THE PASSENGER CAR DOOR WINDOW.

BEN (CONT'D)

I feel as confused right now as I ever have. What's wrong with me Henry? Can't I just leave the past behind, or am I doomed to keep living it, over, and over, no matter what I do?

HENRY

This is life, son. Plain and simple.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

We each have choices we make on our own, and the real of it is, that there is no one, or nothing to blame cept ourselves, if the consequences of our own choices does us wrong. You know what I mean?

BEN

(sort of smiles)
Yeah, Henry.

HENRY

What's funny?

BEN

Nothing, really. Just what you said.

HENRY

Are you sure your getting what I said? I don't think it's funny at all. This is serious stuff, son. Maybe your too drunk to get this deep.

BEN

No sir. It's just when you said "the real of it" ... Jazz use to tell me you said that to him when you were trying to make a serious point about something ... I guess ... I guess I just heard him one more time, right now as he echoed his pops to me in the past.

EXT. WAREHOUSE LOCKED GATE - NIGHT

BD is at the gate with some bolt cutters, looks around nervously, and cuts the lock. He pulls the chain off the gate, slides it open, goes back to his SUV and pulls in without the lights on.

INT. BEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben and Henry are sitting on the couch, each with a drink in their hand. They are quietly talking with the very, very, large screen on, playing some movie with the sound muted. There is soft jazz fusion playing in the background.

HENRY

Well, if that is how you see it. I don't agree. Your environment does play a part, but we all have a powerful tool to change what ever. It's called our mind.

BEN

Of course I agree. BUT, I can't totally agree. What about when you just never have had that good example to show, or teach you what, or how to be different than your environment did? The streets teach. That's the real of it right there Henry, and you of all people know this.

HENRY

Yes, but again, I will say that there is a desire, or not a desire, to do, or be something different. And the choices keep stacking up as we live.

BEN

Yes, and what if that stack is rigged? Like a deck of cards. When we're young, we all screw up, and make wrong choices. That's part of it. But what I'm sayin is, what if all those WRONG choices always lead to rewards early on, without ANY consequences? Then, that path starts to become a rut, and for some a huge chasm is dug without them even knowing what happened before it's too late?

HENRY

I don't think it is ever too late for

A news flash comes on interrupting the movie playing. There is a shot from a helicopter with a search light shining down on a warehouse with the SWAT team, and 20-30 police cars all around with their lights on.

Ben goes pale, hushes Henry and grabs the remote, turning up the volume.

NEWS CASTER (O.C.)

We can see that the suspect is holed up in the warehouse here on Fulton Industrial. We have been told that this is a storage facility for a local gun dealership chain ... One second ... We are getting word that shots have been fired.

Ben looks with horror at what he is seeing, and hearing.

HENRY

What is it? What's wrong Ben? ...
Is it?

Henry realizes that BD is in the warehouse.

BEN

It's his SUV. It's right there, can you see it? He was so proud of those rims when he got those ... Oh BD, what have you done?

Ben tears up.

On the TV, a door opens up from the building, and the bullhorn can be heard when the News cuts to the street level camera.

SWAT NEGOTIATOR

Walk out slowly with your hands behind your head.

We clearly see BD poking his head out of the door.

BEN

He's never going to give himself up?

HENRY

Why? What could be so bad he would do this?

BEN

Those choices caught up with him last month. He owes some really bad people a lot of money, and this was his redemption for that. If he failed then ...

Back on the TV, BD points a automatic rifle out the door shooting at the police. In an instant, he is shot dead by a sniper.

Ben cries out in agony.

BEN (CONT'D)
Why Lord? Why again?

Ben looks at Henry.

BEN (CONT'D)
And this is my stack! The result of
my choices again.

HENRY
No, it's not. How could this be
your fault in any way?

BEN
I wasn't there for him. I chose to
run away, and come here and hide.
If I'd been there, it may have been
different.

HENRY
The only thing different is that
you would have been there to get
arrested, or killed yourself.
That's all. Son listen to me.

BEN
What if I could have talked him out
of it? What if we could have?

HENRY
Didn't you say you already tried?
Didn't you just tell me that he had
no more choices? Look BD made this
choice.

BEN
(totally losing it and
sobbing uncontrollably)
But, what about her, and her son?
What choice did they make?

Henry looks confused.

HENRY
What are you talking about Ben?
Her? Her son?

BEN
That night. The night Jazz was
killed. They were murdered. Just
walking back to the shelter from
getting some ice cream.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

It was supposed to be my treat ...
but, it was because I sent them out
...

Ben collapses on the floor. Henry kneels down beside him,
with his hands on him.

HENRY

Son. Who are you talking about? I
don't understand.

BEN

Carol, and little Benji. His name
was Jimmy, but he liked being
called Benji, like the little dog.
Oh, Henry, ... I can see their
faces ... then Jazz, now BD ...

HENRY

OK, son, it will be OK.

They sit for a moment on the floor, then Ben slowly gets back
onto the couch with his head in his hands. Snot drips down,
and he looks up at Henry.

BEN

She was going to be my wife Henry.
We had gotten engaged, and her and
Benji ...

He starts crying again for a moment before he can continue.

BEN (CONT'D)

Benji ... we had started the
adoption procedures, and they were
going to move in with me into a new
house we all picked out together. I
wanted to share the good news with
Jazz and you guys so I asked him to
meet me at Mom's club. I was going
to tell him that night but ... But
then I got the page. I thought it
was her but they told me they had
been killed not far from the
shelter. Some drug addict just got
out of control trying to ...

HENRY

Oh, son ... I'm so sorry. We never
knew.

Henry reaches over and hugs Ben, who is crying again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORTAL FOR THE HOMELESS - FALL 2006 - DAY

Ben is standing at a microphone, and there is a yellow ribbon stretching across a doorway.

The building has a half round face with a bronze plaque on one side of the door. It is the first Path of Redemption Portal grand opening.

BEN

We would like to thank all of the people that made this moment possible today, bringing the reality of this Path of Redemption Portal to life. The main contributor, and who's name is on the plaque today of Portal number one. Bonnie Donner Stephison, or known to his friends as BD. BD showed us today, like our mutual friend Jazz Johnson, that some ... even after they are gone, can make this a better world. It was from a large contribution that Mr. Stephison left in his will that made this possible. It was his last wish and hope, to help those who could not help themselves, or that had no where to turn ... A place to come. A place to help. A place to show them, and really help them, to move forward, leaving the painful past, stepping through this Portal, into new possibilities. Ones that he or I never had.

Ben looks around at the crowd, the news cameras, all of the volunteers, and Elisabeth, Henry, the Pastor, and the church Clients who bought the first rehab homes from him.

BEN (CONT'D)

To BD, my dear friend, and the continuing Path of Redemption, we declare these Possibilities OPEN!

INT. JOHNSON HOME - MOMS STUDIO - 2007 - NIGHT

Mom is playing, and has music manuscript paper on the now closed piano lid. She is busily writing with a pencil, as she works on her new music. There is no dust in the room.

The phone rings.

Mom does not answer, and lets it go to the answering machine. It picks up, and we hear Henry.

HENRY (O.S.)

(over speaker of answering machine)

Hey Momma. It's time for me to bug you again, and just say how much I love you, and praying you're OK ... you know baby you can call, or text, or e-mail me anytime day or night if you want to talk ... you know your my one and only girl, and I will never stop leaving you these messages, unless you tell me to stop ... but since you don't pick up and speak to me, I guess it's OK ... well that's what I tell myself. That you're listening to them, and deep down in my heart I feel you still love me, and just don't know how to

The answering machine cuts off with a BEEP. Mom has a small smile on her face, and sits motionless for a moment, then gets right back at working on her music.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - APRIL 15, 2008 - DAY

Ben sits, working on his laptop, sipping coffee, as Henry walks up.

BEN

Good morning sir! Are you ready for the big day?

HENRY

I'm ready, but I don't think my stomach is.

Henry rubs his stomach, and sits down.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(pauses a second)

How was your trip? You know, I saw that article in the paper about you, and being named the Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year, and also being selected for the Mayor's special task force for the homeless! Very impressive. And now getting those Portals, in how many Cities?

BEN

Mmm, well thanks Henry, but this
isn't about me ... TODAY
(he laughs)

BEN (CONT'D)

But you know, we have been blessed.
It looks like we now have the U.N.
working with us to put these all
over the world with corporate
sponsors ... Mostly, those banks
who need a good face. Personally, I
don't care where, or who, as long
as they get built, you know?

HENRY

(nodding)

Now about tonight. I'm still not
sure if it's a good idea I'm there.
I don't want to take away anything
from her today. I'm just so
thankful she is doing this.

BEN

Well, you have a point. The last
time we just showed up didn't turn
out so good.

HENRY

And that was that.

BEN

Maybe, I have another idea ... mmm,
let me think.

HENRY

I'm all ears. Your ideas have been
pretty good so far.

BEN

Well, we can be there and watch,
but where she won't see us. I have
a private area I can use anytime
since ... well you know ...

HENRY

Since you threw them a ton of
dough, and moved mountains of red
tape to get it built ... yeah, I
know. They should be serving you
Dom anytime you show up!

Ben and Henry laugh.

BEN

Be that as it may, we could enjoy the performance, and if you feel it's appropriate, you can go see her. That way we can enjoy Mom's coming back into life, and you don't have to rush into anything.

HENRY

I wouldn't say five years is rushing anything, but I know what you mean.

BEN

Good then. It's settled.

Ben picks up phone and makes a call

BEN (CONT'D)

Hey Susan it's me. Yes thank you. I will be coming after all tonight with a guest. No not that kind of guest, a dear old friend. Yes, and we will be using the back entrance so please let security know we will be coming. Thank you and you too. Yes, see you tonight.

Ben hangs up and speaks to Henry.

BEN (CONT'D)

I've got to run. I'll come and pick you up around 6:30 OK?

HENRY

(sighs)

OK, let's do this!

They get up and hug one another with hearty slaps on the back.

EXT. BACK ENTRANCE OF AUDITORIUM - DAY

A stretch limo pulls up, as a security guard stops them, then let's them pass after checking with driver. It stops at the back entrance, and a man waiting outside dressed in a nice uniform opens the door. Ben, and then Henry, get out.

Henry cannot smile any bigger, as they walk toward the door.

HENRY

Wow! You are some sort of big shot.

BEN

Well, Henry, I have a confession to make.

HENRY

Oh yeah, what is that?

BEN

This is more than the opening of the center.

HENRY

Oh? What else is going on?

BEN

Well,

(pause)

I'm being acknowledged tonight ... for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.

HENRY

(looking speechless)

I don't know what to say! My Lord. CONGRAGULATIONS SON! Maybe if I'd watch TV sometimes ...

Henry gives him a big hug, and they go through the door.

As Ben and Henry weave their way through the back halls Ben stops and grabs Henry's arm.

BEN

I also have another confession to make.

HENRY

After that last one, I can't wait.

BEN

We are not sitting in my booth.

HENRY

OK. Where then?

Ben stares at Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Uh, cat got your tongue?

BEN

I'm setting you right next to Mom in the front row, right in front of the podium, so I can see both of you when I accept my award.

HENRY

WHAT? I don't think that's a good idea at all, son. No way. We don't want anything to spoil your big day.

BEN

Too late Henry. Those seats are reserved for you guys at my request. Of course, you can refuse to go in, but I am asking you as a friend to do this for me. Right?

HENRY

You know, I'll do whatever for you Ben. So, if you want to do this, I'm going in.

BEN

Great. I have to go and get ready. This person will escort you the rest of the way.

Another nicely uniformed person had walked up and is waiting to lead Henry away.

HENRY

One last thing? When will she know we are seated next to one another.

BEN

When she is escorted to her seat after she plays. She already knows about the award. They had to do a walk through rehearsal this morning, and then she did her sound check with the orchestra. It will be awesome!

HENRY

Well, OK then. Can we at least say a quick prayer about it?

BEN

(laughing)

Sure, but know that I have been
praying every day for you and Mom
since you saw me that first day at
the cafe.

Ben and Henry say a quick prayer, softly, where no one else
can hear. They hug once again and the uniformed person leads
Henry away.

Ben walks off.

INT. BACKSTAGE TO AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Ben is standing, breathing slowly, and tucking his shirt back
in.

In the background, we hear Mom's original composition coming
to an end, then loud applause.

ELISABETH (O.C.)

Thank you Ms. Johnson, for that
inspiring, original piece. Ladies
and Gentlemen, that was
commissioned by the Atlanta Arts
Foundation, just for the grand
opening of this Center. As we have
seen in the prior videos, we are
here tonight to pay respect and to
recognize a man for his work with
the homeless, and their struggle
... So how fitting was it, that Ms.
Johnson's piece be called, "Healing
Hearts", for our guest of honor has
been helping more than the physical
needs of those less fortunate, He
has made it a point, and it's why
the Nobel Committee love him so
much, as do we. He has made it a
point ... to also help heal their
hearts, and minds of past
suffering.

CAMERA CUTS TO MOM BEING SEATED NEXT TO HENRY.

Mom glances at Henry, then sits down.

Henry, moved by Mom's music, leans over and whispers.

HENRY

That was absolutely your best work.

CAMERA CUTS BACK TO PODIUM.

ELISABETH

It is now my great honor, and privilege, to present to you a man who has been recognized locally as The Atlanta's Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year, appointed to the Mayor's Special Task Force for the Homeless, and recent recipient of this years Nobel Peace Prize being recognized internationally for his tireless work with the homeless and the innovative strategy of his Portals for the Homeless and less fortunate. Please welcome a friend of all, Mr. Ben Reed.

Everyone stands and applauds.

INT. BACKSTAGE TO AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

CAMERA IS BEHIND BEN SHOOTING OUT INTO THE AUDITORIUM.

Ben takes a breath, straightens his coat and walks onto stage.

INT. AUDITORIUM PODIUM - NIGHT

Elisabeth shakes Ben's hand, then Ben steps up to the podium.

BEN

(motions for crowd to sit
down)

Thank you so much for that. Thank
you.

The crowd keeps clapping and some whistle.

BEN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

He tries to start his speech over the continued applause.

BEN (CONT'D)

As I stand here tonight, I think of
the long road it took to get here,
and the many paths that wound along
the way.

He pulls a piece of paper from his coat pocket.

BEN (CONT'D)

And I have a little short speech I wrote down, not to forget anything because you know, I'm actually kind of nervous for a change!

Audience chuckles.

Ben unfolds paper, and lays it neatly on the podium.

He takes his time flattening it out, and staring at it, so much so it almost becomes uncomfortable amount of time to not say anything.

BEN (CONT'D)

I uh, want to thank the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce for helping my foundation get the property for our first portal, and the late, uh ... Hosea Williams for all of the years of support, and his daughter, Elisabeth Williams-Omilami's continuing work with uh ...

Ben stops and stares down at the paper. He crumples it up, and stuffs it into his pocket.

BEN (CONT'D)

I have decided that I would just say this.

He looks at Mom.

BEN (CONT'D)

I am here because of one person. My best friend Jazz Johnson. He is no longer with us, but he lives on in me, and everything I do. All the good in me, was inspired by the good in him, and the good in him came from two, very special people. His mother, MRS. Johnson, or just Mom, as she is known by everyone, whom you just heard perform that wonderful piece,

Audience starts to applaud.

BEN (CONT'D)

Yes, please give her your applause for that wonderful music.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
It is so nice to have her back.
Isn't it Atlanta?

Audience continues to applaud.

BEN (CONT'D)
Mom, please stand so everyone can
see you.

Mom bashfully stands for a second, waves to everyone, then
sits down. Henry is beaming looking at her.

BEN (CONT'D)
and his father, Mr. Henry Johnson
...

Henry looks over at Mom, and sees a tear on her cheek, as he
also has one on his.

BEN (CONT'D)
Jazz and I had a good friend, from
our college days, BD, whom our
first Portal is dedicated to, and
was a leading contributor in that
first project. Well, BD and I
always envied Jazz. Not because he
was smarter than us, which he was.
Not because he was cooler than us,
which he was ... You see he was a
great musician like his mother, and
he played the sax, so he got all
the girls!

The audience laughs.

Mom laughs and puts her hand over her mouth.

BEN (CONT'D)
Yeah that's right, ... Not because
he was kinder than anyone we knew,
and would give away all his food to
the poor, and needy, to his own
demise.

Ben looks at Elisabeth and points to her.

BEN (CONT'D)
... and ELISABETH, you know it's
true. He was always so darn skinny,
and his mamma would always fuss at
him, "boy you better get some more
greens in you, and take home some
more of my fried chicken!"
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Lord knows she would try to keep
that boy fed ...

Everyone laughs again, and so does Mom as she looks at Elisabeth.

BEN (CONT'D)
Well, and it wasn't even because
his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ
was stronger, and he was a more
faithful, and dedicated servant
than any of us.

Ben looks at Mom and Henry, and stares at them a second.

BEN (CONT'D)
No, it wasn't for any of those
reasons ... Old BD and I envied our
friend Jazz, because of the love of
his parents, and how that was so
evident every time we saw them
together. When ever he spoke about
them. When ever him and his Mom
didn't see eye to eye. When ever
they were together. BD and I saw
the love, and the concern, she and
his Pops had for him, and for each
other as father and mother, as
husband and wife, as friends and
life long partners, facing the
trials of this world together ...
Together, teaching us all ... by
who they are.

Ben pauses, and takes a drink of water.

BEN (CONT'D)
So tonight, as I thank you all for
this great honor, I ask, that we
honor that of which all things good
come. A strong, and loving family
... and may we be that family, for
those who have never known that
kind of love. To my friend Jazz's
parents. To Mr., and Mrs. Johnson!

Auditorium bursts into applause.

CAMERA CLOSE UP OF MOM AND HENRY.

Henry looks at Mom.

Mom turns to look at Henry.

Mom and Henry look at each other for a second.

Mom slowly moves her hand on top of his, and squeezes it.
They are both now crying and smiling.

CAMERA SLOWLY ZOOMS IN ON THEIR HANDS HOLDING, UNTIL THEIR
HANDS FILL THE ENTIRE SCREEN.

FADE TO BLACK.

END